

COLLEGE TENNIS ADVOCACY PLAYBOOK

COLLEGE COACHES



IN PARTERSHIP WITH



CONTENTS



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SECTION 2.1: RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO CAMPUSES

Dear College Tennis Coach,

This advocacy playbook has been designed for the relatively new college tennis coach in mind. This said, college tennis coaches, regardless of experience level, will find many links to helpful resources since there have been many upgrades to the ITA offerings & those of the USTA Collegiate Department in recent years; coaches may still not be 100% aware of these upgrades.



ITA - PERSONNEL, INFORMATION, GOVERNANCE

The [Intercollegiate Tennis Association](#) (ITA) was founded in 1956 and serves as the governing body of college tennis as well as the college tennis coaches association. The ITA is both an advocate and an authority for the sport and its members.

The mission of the ITA is to *"serve all of college tennis within the world of higher education, advancing our sport, and returning the leaders of tomorrow"*. The ITA administers rules and rankings; hosts national championship events; sanctions tournaments; manages a robust awards program; oversees the ITA Men's and Women's Collegiate Tennis Halls of Fame; facilitates coach governance; certifies officials; conducts an annual coaches convention; operates a year of service program for college tennis players called [Tennis For America](#); and manages a number of coach-education initiatives.

It is important for coaches to familiarize themselves with the ITA Staff Directory found [HERE](#) so that you can receive the most up-to date answers to any questions you may have. Coaches can also find many of the answers to their questions in the member-only Coaches Resources when they sign up for their membership. To gain access to the Coaches Resources you must have a team membership which you can purchase [HERE](#).

Once you have signed up for a membership please inform the ITA if you believe you are not receiving correspondence. It is vital that you read all emails sent from the ITA so that you do not miss any important deadlines or updates.

The ITA has created a robust governance structure

unlike any other coaches association with Operating Committees (members elected by their peers every three years) for each of the five divisions and a [Board of Directors](#). The Board of Directors is charged with overall strategic direction of the ITA while the Operating Committees are charged with tennis specific oversight (e.g. format changes, ITA tournament advancements, rankings, NCAA legislation discussions, etc.).

ITA governance includes several other committees, including a Rules Committee. Coaches are sent a survey on an annual basis to suggest amendments to the rules and/or new rules to be adopted. Coaches receive an updated Scorebook, which includes the amended rules on an annual basis. The rulebook and dual match score sheets can also be found in the ITA Coaches Resources.

It is important coaches understand that many decisions made on behalf of college tennis are actually made by the individuals on these committees and not necessarily by the ITA staff. The ITA staff works to execute on these decisions while ensuring a fiscally sound, highly functioning organization to represent college tennis and its coaches.

Here is the [ITA Governance Tree](#).

The ITA separates itself from many other coach associations due to its extensive coach governance system. If you would be interested in joining a committee, as positions open, please contact your divisional manager to alert them of your interest. You should also continue to check emails and the ITA Coaches Workspace for nomination forms and deadlines.



COACHING RESOURCES - COACH EXPECTATIONS/MEASUREMENTS/ TEMPLATES, RECRUITING TOOLS, TEACHING RESOURCES

College Tennis Health Index

In 2015, the ITA developed a Health Index to assist coaches and their administrators evaluate their tennis programs in the areas that truly matter, and to influence administrators to look beyond just the wins and losses of the program. In 2020, the ITA developed one Health Index for each division and two for Division I.

- [D I P 5 Health Index](#)
- [D I MM Health Index](#)
- [D II Health Index](#)
- [D III Health Index](#)
- [NAIA Health Index](#)
- [JUCO Health Index](#)

Coaches should consider the ITA Health Index an example of how their programs could be evaluated on an annual or bi-annual basis. If a coach is concerned about their Health Index score they should contact the ITA Director of Coach Education at coachservices@itatennis.com to develop a plan to increase their score the following year. This Health Index is simply a starting point for coaches to consider; they should adapt the Health Index to match their goals and vision for their own program.

Recruiting Tools

There are several free and paid tennis specific recruiting services available to college coaches. Some popular free services include the [ITF players](#) and results pages to search for international players. They can also find a full list of active domestic players broken down by their high school class at [TennisRecruiting.net](#).

The ITF and the [World Tennis Number](#) provide a rating for players all around the world for coaches to compare with their current team members and future recruits. The WTN of college players can be found on the player profiles for all ITA member programs. You can search for [teams](#) and [results](#) on the ITA website.

Several recruiting agencies around the world will send coaches bios of players and their contact details. Here are a few to help coaches get started; you can find many more with a simple google search.

- USA - [USP](#)
- UK - [TennisSmart](#)
- Global - [CollegeScholarshipsUSA](#)
- Europe - [Keystone Sports](#), [FirstPointUSA](#)

Coach Education Resources

The ITA provides coach education materials under the [COACH EDUCATION](#) tab in the Coaches Resources of the ITA website. There are 25 chapters of a college tennis coach Masterclass, covering topics such as *Recruiting, Community Engagement, Player Development, Strength and Conditioning, and DEI* to name just a few. Each chapter includes interviews with coaches or experts, webinars, podcasts and other resources related to the topic. These materials are specific to the college coaching profession.

Coaches should also apply to join the 7-month ITA credentialing program, [CoachUP](#) and the ITA/USTA Mentorship program when they meet the necessary requirements. An ITA membership also includes a free membership to the ITF Academy which houses articles, scientific research papers, and high-quality videos from world tennis conferences.

The ITA offers monthly Coach Circle calls for a variety of coaching demographics to discuss coaching best practices and develop relationships with other college tennis coaches.

For more information on any of these programs please contact the ITA Director of Coach Education.

Many coaches also teach other levels of the game on or off their campus. In order for coaches to provide the most up to date information and instruction to clients they may consider pursuing their teaching certification with either the [United States Professional Tennis Association \(USPTA\)](#) or the [Professional Tennis Registry \(PTR\)](#) or both.

Some other resources coaches report using for their professional development include:

- [USTA Player Development](#) - FREE
- [Brain Game Tennis](#) - PAID
- [GreatBase Tennis](#) - FREE

- [Division III](#)
- [NAIA](#)
- [JUCO](#)
- [Additional ITA Committees](#)
- [ITA Staff](#)
- [USTA Play College Tennis](#)
- [Contact the USTA Collegiate Team Staff](#)

TENNIS CONSTITUENTS

Coaches

- Collegiate Tennis Committees
 - [NCAA Division I](#)
 - [NCAA Division II](#)
 - [NCAA Division III](#)
 - [NAIA \(Men's\)](#)
 - [NAIA \(Women's\)](#)
 - [NJCAA \(Men's\)](#)
 - [NJCAA \(Women's\)](#)
 - [California Community College Athletic Association \(CCCAA-Men's\)](#)
 - [California Community College Athletic Association \(CCCAA-Women's\)](#)
- NCAA Competition Committees
 - [Division I Competition Oversight Committee](#)
 - [Division II Championships Committee](#)
 - [Division III Championships Committee](#)

Administration

- ITA Operating Committees
 - [Division I](#)
 - [Division II](#)

Additional Resources

- [GroundRule](#) - facility design, upgrades & project management
- [California Sports Surfaces](#) - tennis court resurfacing services
- [Mark Kovacs](#) - coach/player advisory, player performance, facilities
- [SP Athletics](#) - tennis industry consulting, collegiate athletics consulting, coaching searches

List of ITA partners - <https://www.wearecollegetennis.com/ita/sponsors/>

USTA Community Hub:

- [Community Hub Playbook](#)
- [Collegiate Community Hub video](#)
- [FAQ - Collegiate Community Hub](#)

Please contact Scott Treibly - scott.treibly@contractor.usta.com at the USTA if you would like to learn more about Collegiate Community Hub Grants.

“

Be sure to have your talking points ready, as you never know who you might meet and how they could be willing to support your program.

”

SECTION 2.2: THE BENEFITS OF COLLEGE TENNIS ON CAMPUS

When a coach is assigned a new sports supervisor they should consider sharing the College Tennis Advocacy Playbook for Athletic Administrators to help educate them about college tennis and the tennis industry as a whole.

Coaches should consider how they would like to advocate for their programs within their own communities. Despite the efforts of the ITA and the USTA the person best positioned to advocate for the importance and sustainability of the tennis program is the coach.

When discussing with community stakeholders the importance of college tennis on your campus, consider the areas you want to highlight. Be able to express succinctly why your tennis program is vital to the athletic department's success, and how it helps create a sense of community on the campus.

For example, coaches fortunate enough to have use of their own facility might discuss how the campus has benefited from opening up the courts for student use and how it has generated revenue through camps and clinics.

Coaches with some international representation on their teams may want to discuss the diversity their team brings to the campus and community and some of their team's academic achievements and community service contributions.

Other talking point to consider could be the following:

- Traditional high net worth of tennis players and their families
- Relatively low-cost program compared to many other team sports
- The fact that tennis is the most popular individual sport in the world with approximately 87 million tennis players worldwide as reported by the ITF
- The increase in the popularity of tennis during COVID-19 citing statistics from the Physical Activity Council (PAC) stating that tennis grew by 22.4% during the pandemic
- The importance of tennis being a "sport of a lifetime," allowing alumni to stay as an active participant in the sport long after graduation, which will help keep them connected to their alma mater

Your talking points may take many different directions, but it is vitally important for college tennis coaches to build relationships with key stakeholders and decision-makers on their campuses and in their communities. Many coaches report that they have had considerable success building these relationships by visiting local country clubs by themselves or with their teams for some interactive sessions between the program and the members. Be sure to have your talking points ready, as you never know whom you might meet and how they could be willing to support your program.



VISION & GOALS OF COLLEGE TENNIS

The ITA's Vision Statement is *"To ensure the long-term prosperity of college tennis as one of the most vibrant college sports; and, to insure a sustainable, thriving, business model for the ITA as an independent global leader in the tennis/sports world."*

The ITA and the USTA are working towards this vision in the following ways:

- [ITA/USTA Shared Initiatives Agreement](#)
- Developing coach education resources for current and future coaches to help raise the standards of coaching
- Partnering with best-in-class technology

companies and tennis industry leaders to create savings for college tennis programs ([corporate sponsors](#) and [corporate members](#))

- Continued commitment to the marketing of college tennis through a variety of sources (social media channels, website, content partner relationships, streaming and broadcasting services)
- Facility development assistance and grants
- A robust awards program for coaches to highlight their programs successes

THE IMPORTANCE OF TENNIS IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

1

**Tennis is a safe sport
for a lifetime**

2

**Tennis is a connective
tissue to faculty,
staff, student-body
and the community**

3

**Tennis is a globally
diverse sport, and one of
the top seven participation
sports in the World**

4

**Tennis attracts exceptional
student-athletes and citizens**

High GPA's and campus leaders
who transition to roles as
professional leaders, artists,
teachers, and scholars

5

**Tennis produces
engaged alumni with
a very strong potential
for giving**

6

**USTA (NGB) support
of college tennis is
very unique in
collegiate athletics**

7

**Tennis venues
can be profit
centers for
an institution**

8

**Tennis venues are shared
facilities on campus with PE
(with instruction), student
body and the community**

9

**Streaming of ITA
Championship and Year-
Round College Tennis Story
Telling through the ITA**

10

**Tennis is a sport
with small rosters
and is cost efficient**



"To promote and develop
the growth of tennis"



"We are college tennis"

SECTION 2.3: THE SITUATION - EASILY UNDERSTOOD DATA POINTS



EXPECTATIONS/OUTLOOK

Since the 2020-21 academic year, approximately 51 tennis programs have been added or reinstated to Athletic Departments throughout the country.

Due to the recent boom in tennis, the safety of the sport, the investment of the USTA, and their financial commitment to college tennis, we believe that the future of college tennis is extremely bright. The USTA and the ITA are ready and committed to assist any and all universities interested in reinstating or introducing college tennis to their campus.

Coaches would benefit from finding ways to stay up to date with the ever-changing world of intercollegiate athletics by staying abreast of potential changes, impending rules, and current trends. NCAA Divisions I, II and III coaches may enjoy some quick daily updates through the following free links:

- [D1 Ticker](#)
- [D2 Ticker](#)
- [D3 Ticker](#)

Athletic Directors have expressed differing reasons for canceling tennis programs over the last several decades, with financial reasons leading the way. Once

a decision has been made by a university to eliminate a sport there is very little, if anything, that can be done about it. It is important for college tennis coaches to remain vigilant at all times and not take their program or position for granted. Legendary Stanford Coach Dick Gould has often been quoted as saying that despite his teams' consistent success (17 NCAA DI Team Championships), he never believed his program was safe from possible athletic department cuts. He and other coaches have worked diligently to endow many aspects of their programs to insulate them from elimination consideration. Additionally, coaches have found ways to capture the attention of their athletic directors, university president and community leaders through community engagement initiatives and volunteer service within their communities.

The job of a college coach has become more complex in recent years and the ITA has invested heavily in coach education to provide coaches with many ideas about how to operate successfully as a coach. To find a list of coach-education initiatives click [HERE](#).

You can also find Coach Education updates on Instagram and Twitter @ITA_Coach_Ed.



Due to the recent boom in tennis, the safety of the sport, the investment of the USTA, and their financial commitment to college tennis, we believe that the future of college tennis is extremely bright.



SECTION 2.4: ADVOCATING FOR YOUR PROGRAM

These three governing bodies (ITA, USTA, and NCAA) all play an important and critical role when it comes to college tennis.



GAINING SUPPORT - CAMPUS, CONFERENCE, NATIONAL, COMMUNITY

Identification of issues/projects for coaches with access to on-campus tennis facilities that will resonate with the campus, athletic department, local community and USTA Section:

Campus/Athletic Department:

- How the campus community and the local community will benefit from the tennis facility on campus that houses the varsity tennis teams
- How the tennis facility can be a revenue generator for the athletic department and/or university college through the USTA's "Community Hub" Program
- How many donors/potential donors are tennis players or would like to play tennis?

Local Community:

- As mentioned above, being a "Community Hub"
- After-school and/or National Junior Tennis and

Learning Programs (NJTL)

- "Open" tournaments that attract local community residents to the campus and expose them to the university/college and its athletic programs
- What does the community need most?
- Is there a need for youth activities?

USTA Sections:

- An on-campus facility that can host USTA Section tournaments, clinics, and coach-education sessions.
- USTA Sections can provide the campus/athletic department with an active partner invested in promoting the growth of tennis and can help promote a university/college's facility and men's and women's programs (the "demonstration effect" for young players, whose aspirational goal is to play college tennis).



ALUMNI/SUPPORTERS - INVOLVEMENT, COMMUNICATION, NEEDS

It is important to develop a clear, concise message or "elevator pitch" regarding tennis on your campus – why it is important and who it benefits (participating student-athletes, Tennis on Campus participants, staff/faculty, and the local community, to name a few).

Identify your allies and supporters. This could include, but are not limited to, former players, athletic department donors, supporters, and those affiliated with the local USTA Section (Community Tennis Associations [CTAs], National Junior Tennis and Learning Programs [NJTLs], Tennis Service Representatives [TSRs]), as well area tennis clubs and facilities, local parks and recreation programs,

tennis retailers, and tennis professionals/players.

It is also important to identify detractors - i.e., individuals or groups that may, for whatever reason, lobby against collegiate athletics or collegiate tennis. Understanding or uncovering any opposition can help you to prepare additional arguments and support for your pro-collegiate tennis positioning.

Having already identified collegiate tennis allies and supporters, communicate regularly with these groups and ask for their assistance to help achieve your goals. By joining with others who support tennis you can establish a broader group to help garner support.



CAMPUS LEADERSHIP - INVOLVEMENT, COMMUNICATION, NEEDS

Again, identify your allies and supporters (participating student-athletes, Tennis on Campus participants, staff/faculty, and the local community, to name a few). This could include, but is not limited to, staff/faculty that are active tennis players or who have an interest in the sport. It could also include those on the Board of Trustees, as well as university/college donors who are active tennis players or who have an interest in the sport.

Having already identified collegiate tennis allies and

supporters, communicate regularly with these groups and ask for their assistance to help achieve your goals. By joining with others who support tennis, you can establish a broader group to help garner support.

These are items/issues that are unique to each university/college campus and deal with a wide variety of complexities that are unique to each campus/athletic department. However, there are resources available to assist you in your efforts that will hopefully result in a positive resolution.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HEAR THAT A PROGRAM IS IN JEOPARDY?

- Inform the [Intercollegiate Tennis Association \(ITA\)](#) of your situation as soon as possible. (Contact ITA COO Dave Mullins (dmullins@itatennis.com).
- Contact your [USTA Section's collegiate coordinator](#).
- Communicate with your tennis and general alumni with messages of concern and requests for general support with a specific call to action (i.e., "Request more information by sending an email to Coach Thomas").
- Form a core group to serve as the brain trust to direct a campaign.
- Communicate with your current team members and their parents.
- Reach out to influential members of your community.
- Reach out to your booster club members and influential tennis alumni.
- Research the financial situation of your athletic department. Know the relationship of your team budget to the overall athletic department budget.

- Ask for and try to schedule meetings with your university administration (President, Board of Trustees/Regents, Athletic Department, etc.).
- Find contact information (name, mailing address, phone number, email address) for all decision-makers who may be involved in this issue and provide this to the ITA, your boosters, and members of the community.

EMPHASIZE THE VALUE OF COLLEGE TENNIS:

- Attracts new students
- Showcases top student-athletes
- Enriches student life
- Builds relationships
- Potential for the program/tennis facility to generate revenue

WHAT THE INTERCOLLEGIATE TENNIS ASSOCIATION (ITA) CAN DO:

- The ITA will write a letter of support to the President, Board of Trustees/Regents and/or Athletic Department.
- The ITA may provide counsel in preparation for key meetings.

- The ITA may be able to help identify influential personalities that may be willing to assist your efforts.
- The ITA may also be able to provide assistance to bring positive media attention to the situation.
- The USTA will help to identify influential people who might help.
- The USTA may be able to provide some stopgap, emergency funding.

WHAT THE USTA CAN DO:

- The USTA will write a letter of support to the President, Board of Trustees/Regents and/or Athletic Department.
- The USTA Section will assist with your local campaign.
- The USTA may provide a representative(s) to attend key meetings, whenever possible.



SECTION 2.5: RAISING THE BAR OF A CURRENT COLLEGE TENNIS PROGRAM



BUILDING THE CASE/NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT COACHING - QUALITY, QUANTITY, EXPECTATIONS

There are two tennis teaching certifying organizations in the U.S.A.; the [United States Professional Tennis Association \(USPTA\)](#) and the [Professional Tennis Registry \(PTR\)](#). Approximately 60% of current college coaches hold either one or both of these certifications. These certifications are particularly helpful for coaches who run additional junior and adult programming along with their duties as a college coach.

As mentioned previously, the ITA has recently launched a [credentialing program](#) designed specifically for college tennis coaches. This program educates college tennis coaches in areas such as recruiting, fundraising, building a team culture, developing a coaching philosophy, to name just a few.

When hiring coaches, Athletic Administrators should consider the following:

- Experience coaching at the collegiate level
- Experience coaching different levels of the game
- Ability to engage with the larger tennis community and demonstrate an understanding of the importance of community engagement as a key role of a college tennis coach
- Positive recommendations from their coaching peers, especially in the area of sportsmanship and student-athlete interactions
- Familiarity with the resources available to them through the ITA and USTA to help assist with their day-to-day operations - coach education, technology, awards program, sponsor discounts, and grants

- Demonstrated commitment to lifelong learning
If you are looking for a college coaching role or need to hire an assistant coach, please view the [ITA Classifieds Page](#) for more information.

Here are a few potential questions you might receive from an athletic administrator when interviewing for a job:

- Can you tell us about your coaching philosophy and vision for the program (with tennis being an individual sport but also with a team element)?
- Can you share how you have engaged campuses and communities and USTA Section(s) in previous positions?
- What rankings/ratings and other resources will you use for recruiting both domestically and/or internationally?
- Can you provide a couple of examples where you have conveyed or demonstrated the highest ideals of good sportsmanship with your team or individual players?
- Can you explain how you might integrate tactical, technical, physical, and mental aspects of the game with your players?
- How might you manage your time between responsibilities with current team, recruiting for future teams and building a program that emphasizes the importance of community engagement?

See below for a basic sample Assistant Coach Job Description.

Assistant Coach Job Description Sample

Position Summary:

The Assistant Tennis Coach is responsible for assisting the head coach with all facets of the tennis program.

Duties Include:

- Coaching of players individually and as a team
- Recruiting student-athletes
- Match preparation
- Administration tasks to include: scheduling of competition and travel, budget, helping with speed & conditioning training, fundraising, summer camps; and other duties as assigned.

This position must be knowledgeable of and in compliance with all NCAA/NAIA, conference and university rules and regulations and must display professional integrity.

Minimum Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent combination of education and experience.

Preferred Qualifications:

- Intercollegiate competitive experience as a player.
- Ability to recruit top-quality student-athletes.
- Demonstrated administrative, and organizational skills.
- Ability to establish good rapport and working relationships with student-athletes, administration, coaching staffs, university personnel, and the general public.
- Coaching and administrative experience with summer camps, if desired.

Background Check: Applicants who are selected as final possible candidates must be able to pass a criminal background check.

Please contact and send resume and cover letter to:

Head Coach: Name, email, phone number



Some of the most successful college tennis coaches were not the most decorated players. What they may lack in playing experience they make up with a drive to learn and the ability to work towards a clear vision.



SECTION 2.6: PROMOTING COLLEGE TENNIS



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

To assist new coaches in the generation of ideas on how best to engage their community for the betterment of their programs, the ITA staff, in conjunction with significant input from experienced college tennis coaches, developed the [ITA Coaches Guidebook to Community Engagement](#).

If you have any additional suggestions or ideas to add to this guidebook, please share them with the Director of Coach Education, at coachservices@itatennis.com.

Coaches, at many programs, receive limited assistance from their athletic departments when it comes to promoting their tennis programs. College tennis coaches not only have to be excellent tennis coaches and recruiters, but they must also develop their marketing and promoting skills.

At a minimum, coaches should establish channels on at least two popular social media platforms. Coaches should use these platforms on a regular basis to provide important updates, successes and a “behind the scenes” view of their program for key stakeholders, such as Alumni and future prospective student-athletes. Consider developing a social media committee on your team to take responsibility for a social media calendar and capturing their life as a student-athlete to share with a larger audience. Be sure you approve all the content before they hit SEND! Some coaches have engaged local volunteers, e.g., students from the school’s marketing department, to assist with their social media management.

Coaches may also want to consider sending a short monthly newsletter to fans, alumni, university staff, parents, etc. You can update these constituencies on issues like the team’s progress, future planning, fundraising needs, match schedule, game day promotions, links to live streaming opportunities and maybe even a tennis tip for readers to try on the courts themselves!

There are many accessible, relatively cheap software options available to help coaches promote their programs and develop engaging content:

- Social Media Channels - Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, etc. Go to section 2.11 (Content Sharing) in this playbook for a deeper look at how coaches can use social media for many aspects of their day-to-day job
- [SmugMug](#) for photo storage and sharing
- [Canva](#) for graphics and templates
- [Mighty Networks](#) for Alumni Groups
- [Inshot Video](#) for video editing
- [Photogrid](#) for photography editing.

You can find additional ideas and coaches’ perspectives on community engagement and marketing in the ITA Masterclass Chapter on [Marketing & Community Engagement](#).

SECTION 2.7: CONTENT SHARING PLATFORMS



DEVELOPING GREAT CONTENT

Developing Meaningful Content

Tennis programs' successes may not all take place on the court. They can also take place in the classroom, on campus, or in the community. These achievements may routinely occur, but few people may be aware of these "victories" that can help develop campus and community involvement and support. Developing a plan to actively and effectively promote these accomplishments (as well as those on the court!) to the community can play an important role in a collegiate tennis program.

One of the biggest keys to promoting your program is an awareness of when and where to promote content. When you have something noteworthy to promote, the question then becomes, what can be done to share the positive aspects of the program? Analyze what avenues are the best to reach the constituents of your program. Once you identify these outlets, cultivate them through the production of consistent, substantive content. The content can be delivered several different ways based on the vehicle used to deliver it.

1. Pick the Right Social Media Channels

Picking the right social media platform is the "101" of building online and fan relationships. You don't want to waste time on social media platforms that do not accurately reflect what your supporters predominantly use. Finding the most used social media channels is not difficult. Just put out a quick survey and research your competitors to figure this out.

2. Leverage Your Team

Let's be honest. Your roster is younger than you are, which means they're probably more in tune with social media and communications tools. Furthermore, because an undoubtedly large percentage of your student-athletes actively use social media, they can create and distribute great content faster than most

in older demographics can. What are your teammates interested in? What do they want fans/supporters to know about them? How do they enjoy social media and how can the team leverage that? Video development, story creation, promotional concepts and so much more are likely in their wheelhouse, so ask them how they would like to get involved and help.

3. Leverage User-Generated Content

User-generated content is a brilliant way to strike the right chord with your supporters on social media. User-generated content is when users essentially create content for your brand. Using user-generated content strategies, your customers feel more valued and satisfied. This will have a massive positive impact on your customer retention and loyalty.

This can be done in various ways. For example, you can create a user-generated content campaign with a specific hashtag, and ask your customers to post on social media using this hashtag. You can then reward them by featuring them on your social media, sending them some goodies, or providing them some great access that others do not have.

Another way to implement a user-generated content strategy is by asking your customers for future ideas, campaign themes (for the next season?), or anything similar that is meaningful to your tennis community.

4. Personalize and Humanize every Conversation

Just being a brand won't work in your favor as much as showing your human side will. Consumers today don't connect with brands. They connect with the faces behind the brand. This is why it is very important that you show the face behind your brand on social media. Doing things like using first names when addressing your supporters and addressing their specific needs go a long way.

5. Reward your Supporters/Fans

Rewarding your supporters is a great way to

increase their affinity toward your team and even earn new fans. Rewarding your fans makes them feel extra special. And when they have a community to share a team's wins (and fan's wins), the reward becomes even more special. You can also feature your contests and giveaway winners on your social media feed and stories to further strengthen your relationship.

You can reward your customers by holding contests and giveaways. Contests are a fun way to grab the attention of your customers and increase brand awareness while doing so. You can also hold special events and giveaways; the giveaways can be as simple as court time or meet-and-greets on campus. Whatever you choose, ensure that the rewards that you offer are precious for your fans, otherwise, this won't work. Ask them what they want, what is important!

6. Be Quick with your Responses

Social Media has created a world in which people are highly impatient and don't want to wait for responses. The team that offers quick responses gains brownie points.

Quick responses make the supporters feel important and valued. Your customers will start perceiving your brand as reliable and trustworthy because you are always there for them.

7. Go Live on Social Media

Social media lives are one of the best ways to connect with people and build strong relationships with them. Social media lives enable you to have personalized interactions with your supporters in real-time and establish a special connection among those who are engaged. You can go live on a relevant topic or even host an "Ask Me Anything" (AMA) session with your social media followers.



WHAT TO DO WITH GREAT CONTENT

Leveraging Local & Digital Media

You likely already use Twitter to announce team-based promotions, but creating a hook to get followers to engage further is important. In fact, your primary focus can be to get media outlets that follow your team/athletic department's social media to request additional information, imagery or video, which, in turn, drives additional fan/community/campus support.

As teams look for ways to promote the accomplishments of their student-athletes and coaches, it is important to cultivate relationships with local media outlets more directly than simply through your SID. The media (and social media) managed by these local relationships allow tennis programs to reach not only their own school environment, but also the broader community. In the same manner as building relationships with student-athletes and other constituents, similar effort should be exerted with local TV, social media influencers and print media in your area.

A few ways to develop relationships with local media:

1. Connect with reporters and news outlets in person, on Twitter, LinkedIn or Facebook.

News agencies and reporters have an online presence and often are very interactive in these forums.

2. Be genuinely complimentary of their work when warranted.
3. Interact with them and promote their work to your program and network.
4. Invite them to program functions or events such as your Hall of Fame inductions, rivalry games, alumni events and awards ceremonies.
5. Don't forget about smaller publications that are in need of content.
6. Be available and provide information, inside access, materials, photos and videos, even for last-minute requests. Make their job as easy as possible.

Digital tools (website, email, SMS/text messaging) and social media vehicles are great resources to distribute information about the positive aspects of your tennis program. Remember that each social media outlet has its own unique voice, and this means that teams have to be prepared to format their posts accordingly; perhaps by assigning different people to track different social media channels (e.g., Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, etc.).

1. Make consistent periodic posts to social media platforms to grow your followers.
2. Include photos and videos because they are enormously important online. Posts with video content generally receive the highest levels of engagement.
3. Encourage your followers to share program updates with their friends. This simple effort will improve your reach and visibility.
4. Be positive about your program. This will help to engage followers and allow them to connect to your message.
5. Be interactive. Connect with others online and look for opportunities to serve others as well as promote what you are doing.
6. Actively seek followers of your team who are well received on social media so you can provide information, inside access, materials, photos and videos, even for last-minute requests. Make their ability to share your “story” as easy as possible.

The promotion of your team and its accomplishments should be viewed as a byproduct of your team doing the right things and not the goal itself. If you weave off-field accomplishments into the culture of your program, your constituency and local media will recognize these achievements as part of your brand and will be more open to promoting the results they see as genuine. The best part of promoting the positive, non-game-related aspects of your program and gaining public recognition is that it allows others to acknowledge that your program is about a more holistic, education-based athletic experience and not just about winning seasons and championships.

Leveraging Social Media

Your fans and followers (potential and current) already have an active social media presence. This is really a fundamental reason to make social media an integral part of your team efforts. Good social media helps you to increase your team awareness and loyalty, drive traffic to your website (your athletic department is tracking it!), and build strong fan relationships as well.

Posting contents, updating images and videos, using social ads, creating polls: All these actions are included in any Social Media Marketing (SMM) strategy. Having a strong social media presence demands knowledge of some essentials.

1. Analyze your Competition

You competitors in this case could be other tennis teams, other teams in your athletic department, or even local tennis clubs and events. The information you get about your competitors can help you better understand what works (and what does not) when trying to promote your team.

- Follow your competitors on social media to keep an eye on their activity.
- Don't just follow their posts. Read the comments to see how others on social media are reacting.
- Don't be afraid to repurpose great ideas via your own social media.
- Compare your social media efforts to theirs.

2. Optimize your Social Media Profiles

Social media profile optimization is simply making sure that your followers know “who you are” as a team. It starts with school branding (logo and imagery), but also includes the athletic department brand, and then gets more customized by including simple data about the team and season. Your profile is a way to tell your story quickly and efficiently. A few key things that you need to do are:

- Pay attention to your “About Us” section.
- You may want to develop slightly different profiles for each social media channel since people use them differently (i.e., Facebook is different from LinkedIn).
- Choose images that tell your story (e.g., school logo, athletic department logo, student-athletes, coaches, facilities, etc.).
- Have relevant links to your other social media profiles.
- Include contact information.

3. Get to Know your Key Followers

Who are your most loyal fans and followers? Try to actively engage with that audience by understanding what they like and then helping to deliver (access, messaging, communication, opportunities to share your content/information, etc.)

4. Publish Relevant and Informative Content

Quality content matters to users as well as technology (such as search engine optimization and user experience); relevant content also gains more shares on social media. There are numerous measuring sticks to take into consideration and following these steps will help you:

- Determine your fans' pain points (not knowing your team, not knowing your schedule, not understanding collegiate scoring, not being able to follow you on the road, etc.).
- Figure out how you can eliminate or reduce fans' pain.
- Have your marketing liaison develop a (social) keyword research to help potential fans find you/your team.
- Have your marketing liaison help you check your content performance (likes, follows, shares, etc.).
- Consider using social media ads to get word out about your team. Perhaps you can do so right on your own athletic department website and social media channels.



HOW TO MEASURE AND SHARE SUCCESS

Success is a popular idea for a reason. It feels good to feel successful, whether that's being ranked at the national level, having more visibility within your athletic department, or seeing a student-athlete share the value that their team/coach has added to their life. (OK, that last one is probably coming from alumni rather than current student-athletes.)

Success is a moving target, but identifying how to measure true success can help keep you on track and motivated toward your desired outcome.

How do you measure success?

Identify your core values

Getting in touch with your team's core values can be a powerful starting place. It's hard to know what will make you feel successful without stating your core values and goals.

- Make a list of what you value most and then order them by importance, e.g.,
 - Student-Athlete Development
 - Win/Loss Data
 - Fan Engagement
 - Campus Awareness
 - Community Engagement
- Set a SMART goal that measures success: (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-Based)
- Track your progress over time (short, mid- and long-term)
- Limit your measurement of success to a small set of annual tasks

In any job, daily deliverables must be prioritized. But losing track of the annual goals and achievements

that need to be worked on as well can be detrimental to achieving success in the workplace. In order to stay on track, speak with your Athletic Director about the annual targets that he or she wants to see you hit, then allocate a specific amount of time each day to work toward these overall goals and achievements.

Be honest

Most individuals consider themselves to be better than average drivers; statistically, that simply cannot be true. Be honest with yourself when assessing your success. Ask for peer input, administrator feedback, and realistically consider the measures (input and results) that you use. If your vision is skewed or otherwise out of focus, you will lose the ability to truly succeed.

Spend time on communication

When you feel successful, are others aware of that feeling? Certainly, wins and losses tell a certain story, but outside of the team record be sure to communicate wins related to core values that may not be as obvious to others. Your administration, athletic department, fans, and supporters need to know what success looks like to you and how you are tracking on those efforts.

You likely have time scheduled with your athletic department administrators to discuss your team. (If not, get on their schedule!) But setting goals with your administrator that pertain to your team's overall performance is also important. If you find that months have gone by without an opportunity to check in and discuss your progress, take the initiative to put time on your AD's calendar to do so.

SECTION 2.8: FUNDRAISING FOR COLLEGE TENNIS

Collectively, college tennis coaches have raised hundreds of millions of dollars through the years to help build some of the best tennis facilities in the world. In order for college tennis to remain a viable option for athletic departments at all divisions, it is vital that college tennis coaches recognize the need to develop their fundraising acumen.

To that end, the ITA partnered with a fundraising education company, [CoachRaise](#), for the 2021-22 academic year to provide college tennis coaches much-needed education on fundraising best practices and techniques. CoachRaise provided a total of 4.5 hours of fundraising education at the 2021 ITA Coaches Convention in Las Vegas and offered an additional free virtual fundraising workshop in June 2022. Due to the tremendous feedback from coaches who participated in these sessions, the ITA will partner with CoachRaise in 2022-23 to offer similar learning opportunities. Coaches should follow the [@ITA_Coach_Ed](#) Twitter and Instagram channels, and open emails from the ITA to learn more about fundraising learning opportunities through the ITA.

Some quick fundraising ideas for coaches include the following:

- Develop a list of needs and the associated cost for each need in case a potential or current donor asks how they can help your program.
- Make a list of your top 10 donors and create a calendar of touchpoints throughout the year to remind them of the impact they are having on the team and in the community.
- Develop a strong relationship with your athletic department's development staff by working together to identify leads and by staying engaged with the alumni base.
- Identify key staff members inside and outside the athletic department that can be helpful to the project (marketing, finance, volunteers, networking).
- Seek assistance and information from the athletic department's development office or foundation in the form of donor data, information/databases, software, and support services. They understand the fundraising culture and climate better than anyone.
- Coaches should ask for clarity from their sports supervisor as to what extent they are expected to fundraise and if certain donors or alumni are off-limits.
- Develop a structure that encourages regular contributions and continually works to identify new donors.
- Establish lines of communication that reach a broad spectrum of constituencies with inspirational messaging to get donors involved.
- You never know who might be watching! Be sure to always look and dress professionally and act with a high degree of sportsmanship and professionalism during your matches. Donors want to know that the person spending their donation dollars will always act with integrity and class.
- Always thank the donor after receiving a donation and share with them how you expect to spend the money they have contributed to your program.
- Keep track of all your donations and set goals for how you can beat those numbers year over year.
- Value your donors more than their donations. People do not like to be treated like ATMs.

Additional resources and interviews with college tennis coaches on fundraising practices can be found in ITA Masterclass Chapter III - [Fundraising](#).

Some other ideas submitted by coaches can be found [HERE](#).



COACHES ITA ADVOCACY PLAYBOOK CHECKLIST

- I have read the entire Playbook and reviewed all the imbedded links
- I am familiar with the ITA Website, Coaches Workspace Page and Coaches Resources section of the ITA Website
- I have checked to ensure I am receiving updates from the ITA
- I have the contact details for my ITA Divisional Manager and know who my Divisional Operating Representative is for my Region and my ITA Regional Chair (DI only)
- I have completed the ITA Program Health Index for my division
- I have developed an elevator pitch as to why my tennis program is vital to the college campus and athletic department
- I have explored the Coach Masterclass and scheduled time to listen/watch/read the masterclasses in my programs areas of weakness as identified in my completed health index
- I have developed a list of key stakeholders within my community and campus

This concludes the ITA/USTA Advocacy Playbook for coaches. This playbook will be updated annually and we would appreciate any feedback you could provide on additional sections or resources.

Good luck!



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