

Wheelchair and Adaptive Tennis to be included in USPTA and PTR certification

For the past few years, the USTA has been engaged in researching and redefining the tennis coaching certification landscape. More recently, the USTA has been recognized and named as the National Accrediting Body of Tennis Coaching Education in the United States. In that role, the USTA sets quality standards and partners with the United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA) and the Professional Tennis Registry (PTR) as the two main certification organizations. Both organizations adhere to these standards that the USTA has put in place. The main impetus behind the change was based on the need to raise the standards across every category. These standards, and new format, can now be seen in what the USTA has coined as the Tennis Certification Conceptual Framework.

Although there are many exciting facets of the new framework, one that stands out is the recent inclusion of both Adaptive and Wheelchair tennis. As far as one can tell, neither entity has ever been part of the standard course of study for aspiring and prospective tennis professionals since the inception of tennis coach certification. With this new framework, Adaptive and Wheelchair tennis will be required learning. Coaches will have to learn about the basic tenants in Levels One and Two while completing online courses. Moreover, they will have to demonstrate understanding of these basic concepts while engaged in face-to-face workshops.

This is indeed exciting for the adapted sport community. One of the most common themes across all adapted sport academic literature is that there is an overwhelming lack of formal education opportunities worldwide. The USTA is once again endeavoring to innovate, be proactive, and inclusive. The coaching framework will also recognize that Adaptive and Wheelchair tennis programs need not exist on their own. In other words, inclusive teaching and coaching will be a salient topic covered in coursework. Even in current mainstream programming, coaches may not recognize that their students (both junior and adult), may have specific needs. Thus, the notion of differentiation of coaching based on a student's specific needs will be signaled.

All learners have both emotional and multiple intelligences. Adapting one's coaching for students with a special need will only enhance a coach's teaching ability. With any new framework, it will take time to build a culture that leads to ultimate success. Most importantly, the USTA is committed to being inclusive in this new culture of rigorous and relevant coaching education.