



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION I MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TENNIS COMMITTEE
AUGUST 22, 2022, VIDEOCONFERENCE**

Action Items: The NCAA Division I Competition Oversight Committee will be asked to approve moving the singles and doubles tournament from the spring to the fall and approve the associated qualifying pathways (see Action Item 2).

KEY ITEMS.

- **Fall individual championships.** The committee requests approval of the recommendation to move the individual singles and doubles championships from the spring to the fall and approve the associated qualifying pathways.

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- **None.**

2. Nonlegislative items.

a. Singles and doubles tournament date formula.

- (1) Recommendation. Move the singles and doubles championships from their current date formula following the team tournament in May to the Tuesday through Sunday before Thanksgiving.
- (2) Effective date. 2024-25 academic year.
- (3) Rationale. This recommendation is the result of collaboration among the stakeholders of college tennis – the Intercollegiate Tennis Association, the United States Tennis Association and the NCAA Division I Men's and Women's Tennis Committee – to initiate change on a topic that has long been discussed in the tennis community. The Division I singles and doubles championships have a long and storied history and are deserving of a move to the fall season to achieve a better student-athlete experience and proper focus on student-athlete health and well-being in both seasons.

The attached letter [Attachment B] from the USTA and ITA details the diligent and thorough, collaborative process involved in this recommendation. In reaching the decision on this recommendation, the NCAA tennis committee conducted an August 2022 survey of all Division I head tennis coaches regarding the full recommendation provided. The survey achieved a response rate of 46 percent, with 68 percent support for the recommendation. In addition, the ITA Division I Men's and Women's Operating Committees voted unanimously to support the recommendation.

Moving the singles and doubles championships to the fall achieves the following goals:

- **Clearly defines the fall and spring college tennis seasons.** The individual portion culminates in the fall with the singles and doubles championships and the team dual match season culminates in the spring with the team championships. The fall college tennis season traditionally starts in mid-September when coaches typically use four or five dates for individual competitions. This recommendation does not anticipate changing that but enhances it with a culminating championship experience for the individual-focused season.
- **Provides enhanced student-athlete experiences and improved student-athlete well-being in both seasons.** At the finals site, a student-athlete in both the team and individual championships could play for nine straight days, sometimes with two matches per day if in singles and doubles. Those who qualify only for singles and doubles must wait weeks from the end of their regular season until competing in the singles/doubles tournament without the support of their full team. The student-athlete impact statement below addresses this area further. The committee has witnessed exhausted coaches and student-athletes actually being relieved after losing at the singles and doubles championships – that is not a championship experience. A fall championship also provides an opportunity for broadcasting the singles and doubles championships on linear television, whereas the current timing does not.
- **Creates possibilities for renewed discussions regarding spring team format due to the decreased emphasis on individual results in the spring.** College tennis is a challenge to broadcast with 2.5-4-hour matches and six courts to follow. This change can provide an opportunity to explore alternate formats to enhance the team season and raise the profile of college tennis with a more broadcast-friendly product.

If approved, the committee will offer the currently awarded hosts (2025 – Baylor University and 2026 – University of Georgia) the opportunity to host in the fall of 2024 and 2025, respectively. Should either awarded host be unable to host in the fall, that particular year will be opened for bid.

- (4) Estimated budget impact. \$150,000 of additional dollars to cover additional team travel and per diem for those who qualify to both the team and individual tournaments; travel, per diem and lodging for committee and officials; and incremental host operational expenses to account for the practice days that are now standalone instead of overlapping with the team tournament.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. The health and safety of our tennis student-athletes is paramount. Asking student-athletes to compete for nine straight days at the finals site

if they compete in the team and individual tournaments does not adequately consider their health and well-being. The tournaments have historically seen withdrawals from student-athletes due to injury after a grueling spring team season. Over the last five years, the average withdrawal rate is 9 percent of men's singles and doubles and 6 percent of women's singles and doubles with a high of 12.5 percent of men's singles and 11 percent of women's singles withdrawals in one of the last five years. Moving to the fall should provide a better opportunity for the best players to compete at the championships and allow proper focus on the team season in the spring.

b. Singles and doubles tournament qualifying pathways.

- (1) Recommendation. Establish qualifying pathways to the NCAA Division I singles and doubles championships via four separate tournaments during the fall season: ITA All-American Championships, ITA Regional Championships, ITA Masters and ITA Super Regionals. Each event would count as one date and players would only have to reach the NCAA qualifying round in one of these tournaments to qualify for the singles and doubles championships. See Attachment A for a chart of the qualifying pathways with explanation included.

The ITA All-American Championships would be the first qualifying event of the fall season, starting the third Saturday in September. The draw sizes for both the men and the women would be equal with a 128 pre-qualifying draw for singles/32 doubles; a 64 qualifying draw for singles/32 doubles and a 64 main draw for singles/32 doubles. A total of eight singles players would qualify for the NCAA singles championships (four semifinalists plus four feed-in consolation bracket winners) and a total of four doubles teams would qualify for the NCAA doubles championships (four semifinalists).

The second qualifying event would be the ITA Fall Regional Championships with all regions offering a minimum draw size of 64 qualifying/64 main draw singles and 32 qualifying/32 main draw doubles. The finalists, two from each Regional Championship, would qualify for the NCAA singles championships and the winners from each Regional Championship would qualify for the NCAA doubles championships. The Regional Championships would occur the third week of October.

Every Division I conference would be provided the opportunity to host an individual conference championship, with the winners of singles and doubles receiving an invitation to participate in the ITA Masters Championships, or the conference could nominate one singles player and one doubles team to participate if they choose to not host a conference championship. The fourth weekend of October would be reserved for conference championships to be hosted throughout the country.

The ITA Masters Championships would be held the second weekend of November, which would include draws sizes of 32 for singles and 32 doubles. This event would include one representative from every Division I conference. The eight quarterfinalists would qualify for the NCAA singles championships and the four semifinalists would qualify for the NCAA doubles championships.

During the same weekend, four super-regional tournaments will be hosted on campuses in four separate parts of the country (North/South/East/West). Each ITA region will be assigned to one of these super regionals, which will be designed to reduce travel time/costs and ensure a competitive balance. The four singles semifinalists plus the two winners of the quarterfinal losers' playoff will qualify for the NCAA singles championships. The two doubles finalists plus the winner of the semifinal losers' playoff would qualify for the NCAA doubles championships.

The NCAA singles and doubles championships would be held the Tuesday through Sunday before Thanksgiving. This date would be exempt along with any practice days leading up to the event after the ITA Masters and ITA Super Regionals weekend.

- (2) Effective date. 2024-25 academic year.
- (3) Rationale. The NCAA Division I Men's and Women's Tennis Committee collaborated with the ITA, which formed a task force of head coaches, to develop the qualifying pathways model. This model is a paradigm shift from selection criteria established for a spring championship. With a move to the fall, there will be fewer results available to rely on traditional criteria like the ITA ranking, head-to-head, results vs. common opponents and wins vs. singles in the top 60 or doubles in the top 30 ITA ranking. This model is representative of qualifying for tennis tournaments at all levels of tennis – play your way into the tournament.

The qualifying tournaments feature already established tournaments, the revival of the ITA Masters and provide an opportunity for every conference to participate in the qualifying pathways. These tournaments are vetted by the coaches as worthy of serving as qualifying pathways. Many teams already send individuals to participate in these events annually. Every conference will have access to participate in an ITA Fall Regional event (every team is guaranteed one main draw spot in singles and doubles) and would also nominate a singles player and doubles team for the ITA Masters. On average, 11-13 conferences are represented at the NCAA singles and doubles championships on an annual basis. It is anticipated that at least the same number, if not more, will be represented under this new play-in system. Once a student-athlete has qualified for the NCAA championships, they are not required to participate in other qualifying events. Those who qualify from ITA All-American tournament can still play

in the ITA Regionals but those qualifying from the ITA All-American and ITA Regionals cannot participate in the ITA Super Regionals.

- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. The current spring selection process relies heavily on the ITA Ranking for selection to the singles and doubles championships. If one doesn't play enough highly ranked opponents, one cannot get a high enough ranking for selection, no matter how good one is. These qualifying pathways provide more opportunity to play one's way into the NCAA championships than the current model.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

- None.

Committee Chair: Glenn Layendecker, West Coast Conference
Staff Liaisons: John E. Bugner, Championships and Alliances
Michelle Perry, Championships and Alliances

NCAA Division I Men's and Women's Tennis Committee August 22, 2022, Videoconference	
Attendees:	
Jason Brough, University of Portland.	
Devon Hendricks, University of Texas at Austin.	
Sofia Hiort-Wright, Virginia Commonwealth University.	
Glenn Layendecker, West Coast Conference.	
D. Curtis Lawson, North Carolina Central University.	
Gretchen Maloney, Idaho State University.	
Cristina Moros, University of South Florida.	
Mike Penner, The Ohio State University.	
Peter Pilling, Columbia University-Barnard College.	
Cathy Rossi, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.	
Absentee:	
Jon Palumbo, University of Texas A&M-Corpus Christi.	
NCAA Staff Liaisons in Attendance:	
John E. Bugner, Championships and Alliances.	
Michelle Perry, Championships and Alliances.	
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:	
Kerstin Hunter, Championships and Alliances.	