

Objectives and Membership Requirements of the Junior Challenge Ladder Program

1. Objectives of the Junior Challenge Ladder Program:

- A. The main objective is to provide all participants with competitive matches during what is typically considered an off-season period. The Ladder runs for fourteen weeks from the end of August until the beginning of December. The program is designed to develop responsibility and initiative on the junior player's part as they must make all contacts and decisions concerning their matches. It provides the opportunity to play against opponents in other age groups who would not normally be met in tournament play, i.e., a ten year old could challenge or be challenged by players up to eighteen years old. The Junior Challenge Ladder is also designed to teach, promote and develop good conduct and sportsmanship at all times.
- B. The 2nd objective is to provide all eligible participants with a financial tournament assistance program.
- C. The 3rd objective is to administer an awards program giving the players an opportunity to earn recognition for their accomplishments and achievements.

2. Membership Requirements:

- A. All new players on the ladder must have played in at least two USTA sanctioned junior tournaments. All players registering at the beginning of the season that have met the requirements will be accepted.
- B. The ladder will be open to players outside the five-county, metropolitan Atlanta area (Fulton, Dekalb, Cobb, Gwinnett and Clayton Counties) with the following conditions imposed on non-metro players:
 - 1) **Players outside five county area** must play all challenge matches at a court in the five-county area and must be available to begin match play no later than 6:00 p.m. on weekdays. Players may play at an VGS approved facility in the annexed area provided both players agree.
 - 2) **Players outside five county area** must accept calls to set up challenge matches.
- C. A player must be 18 years of age or younger throughout the calendar year in which the ladder commences. A player meeting this age requirement is entitled to play in the entire ladder program consisting of fourteen weeks. A player must also have reached his or her 10th birthday in the calendar year in which the ladder commences.

Initial Placement Procedures for New Members of the Junior challenge Ladder Program

1. **Placement of new players:** Placement of new players will be at the discretion of the Vice President(s) and the Ladder managers. However, as a general rule, it is the intent to place ranked and older players close to their proper age group at a level where they will be competitive. Most new players will be placed at the bottom of the ladder by age.
2. **New players will not be placed on the Advanced Ladder:** No new player will be placed on the Advanced Ladder (Positions #1 thru #25). These positions must be earned and maintained.
3. **New player's position readjustment (if incorrectly placed):** To adjust an incorrect placement, any player winning two consecutive matches by such a margin that he or she has obviously been placed too low (matches resulting in scores such as 6-0, 6-0 or 6-1, 6-1) that player will be permitted a challenge ten positions above their current position. This player may continue ten-up challenges as long as they lose no more than two games per match. This procedure is also applicable for regular ladder play by players who are not new to the ladder. If a player improves their game sufficiently that low scores such as these are achieved, they will be allowed to challenge higher in the same manner as detailed above.

Challenge Procedures for Arranging and Playing Matches during the Regular Season

1. **Initiating a Challenge:** Players are to make their OWN challenges to another player. This can be done by phone, e-mail or text messaging. Parents may communicate in making transportation arrangements only.
 - A. Players must call, e-mail or text their Ladder Manager to register a request for a challenge or to inquire as to who is open for a challenge.
 - B. Players may not choose to challenge another player without their Ladder Manager's approval.
 - C. Players may e-mail or text their managers at any time; however, Ladder Managers are expected to respond, at least, between 7:00-9:00 pm each evening.
 - D. Match results must be reported to the Ladder Manager by phone or e-mail only.
2. **Challenging Up:** Players may challenge up to seven active positions above. Exception: See Placement Procedure item #3 which allows a ten-up challenge. Players on "hold" or in an inactive status are skipped over and are not counted by the Ladder Manager when counting up to see who is available for a challenge. If individuals are on "hold" they are not counted as one of the seven.

3. **Challenge Limit:** Players may be involved in only one challenge at a time; however, they may set up two challenges at a time for the weekends with the approval of their Ladder Manager.
4. **Contacting Challenged Player and Notification of Ladder Manager of Problems:** The player issuing a challenge MUST contact opponent within 24 hours of registering challenge. If the time, date, location of the challenge cannot be set within that time period, player must notify Ladder Manager no later than 9:00 p.m. the day after the challenge was granted.
5. **Notification of Ladder Manager Regarding Status of the Challenge:** Player must contact the Ladder Manager before 9:00 p.m. the day after the challenge was granted to either report the time, date, and location of the match or to report a problem in scheduling. Failure to make contact before the 9:00 p.m. deadline will result in the challenge being cancelled and the player issuing the challenge must accept the next challenge from below before being allowed to issue a new challenge above.
6. **Day and Time Scheduling of Challenges:** Day and time of match are to be mutually agreed upon and MUST be played within five days of the registered challenge. If players cannot reach an agreement on a date to play, each player alternately rules out a day he or she cannot play within that five-day time period. The player challenged gets first choice, the challenger gets second choice, and so on. If each rules out two days, the match must be played on the remaining day. **If the time of play on the remaining day cannot be mutually agreed upon, the match will be scheduled at 5:00 p.m. on that day.** Both players are equally responsible for scheduling the match and getting it played. If the challenger does not contact the opponent on the night the challenge is issued, the challenger must use the first day as his or her choice for elimination as that day has been wasted for play due to the time delay in making contact.
7. **Ball Supply:** Challenger supplies one can of new championship balls.
8. **Selection of Court Location:** The challenged player selects court location. If the challenged player cannot provide a court, the challenging player then gets first option to provide a court.
9. **Non-availability of Court by Either Player:** If the challenging player cannot provide a court, the obligation for getting a court reverts back to the challenged player who then must provide a court or be defaulted.
10. **Courts/Location, Conditions and Lighting Requirements:** All courts must be in the five-county, metro area. Courts must be in good condition and have lights. Any match unable to be played to completion due to darkness and no lights will result in the court provider defaulting the match.
11. **Payment of Court Fees/Charges:** Person being challenged must pay any guest or court fees at their home court selection. If both players agree to go indoors due to bad weather, the court fees will be shared.
12. **Reporting Match Play Results:** Winner reports results to Ladder Manager the day the match is played during the calling period from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Failure to do so will result in forfeiture of the win.

13. **Winner Challenge Protection:** After winning a match, a player cannot be challenged until 7:00 p.m. the next evening when calling time begins. Winner may request a new challenge at time of reporting.
14. **Challenging after a Loss:** After losing a match, a player cannot make a challenge until 7:00 p.m. the next evening when calling time begins.
15. **Time Limitation for Challenging the Same Opponent:** Players cannot challenge the same opponent within a two-week period of a prior challenge ladder match regardless of which player issued the prior challenge. Exception: The top ten players in the Advanced Ladder may be exempted from this ruling if approved by the Ladder Manager and the Vice President(s) after reviewing match players play activity.
16. **Rainouts and Weather Related Problems:** In the event a scheduled challenge match is rained out or the temperature is above 95 or below 32 Junior Challenge Ladder rule guidelines, the challenge may be voided.
17. **Failure to Play a Match in the Allotted Time:** If a match is not played in the allotted time (5 days) the uncooperative player will receive a default loss for the match. He or she will be dropped five positions on the ladder and will accept the next challenge from below. If one player cannot be determined at fault by the Ladder Manager or Vice President(s), both players involved will be treated equally in the forfeiture action. Both will be dropped five positions and will accept their next challenge from below.
18. **Official Notification of Defaults/Forfeits:** The Vice President(s) must be informed of all default/forfeit situations by Ladder Managers and both players must be informed that a default or forfeit penalty is being enforced.

Junior Challenge Ladder Rules

1. **Rule Base:** All ladder challenges are played under USTA rules unless amended by VGS rules as listed below (e.g. coaching).
2. **Match Play:** Matches will be two sets with a ten-point match tie break in lieu of a third set; however, players may agree to play a complete third set up to the time of the third set. Pro sets and short sets are not part of the Ladder program and will not count as a challenge match.
3. **Sportsmanship, Honesty and Behavior:**
 - A. Players are expected to display good sportsmanship at all times. Unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated (e.g. cheating, cursing, etc.). After two separate written reports, a warning will be given. After the third written report, the offending player will be suspended from ladder play for at least the remainder of that ladder year.
 - B. Examples of outstanding sportsmanship should be written up and forwarded to VGS recommending the awarding of a Sportsmanship Award Bag Tag. Players are asked to tell ladder officials about any exceptional occurrences so that they may be considered for recognition.

4. **Individual Match Play/Challenge Requirements and Penalties:**
- A. All active players are required to participate in a total of at least twelve matches for the ladder year if wanting to qualify for tournament assistance funds.
 - B. Each active player must play a challenge match at least every fourteen days or be lowered five positions.
 - C. After thirty days, without playing a challenge match, an active player will be subject to removal from the program.
 - D. Rulings listed in 4a, 4b, and 4c above will not apply to a player who is in an inactive status due to injury or extended illness.
 - E. If a Ladder Manager has given out a player's name for challenge, that member cannot either purposely avoid receiving calls or be unreachable and later make a challenge upward. If a challenged player cannot be reached by a challenging player, or does not return calls after messages are left with family members or on a recorder, the Ladder Manager will call to verify that the player does not answer or reply. If the Ladder Manager does not make contact, the challenge may be voided. At time of void, the player who could not be contacted will be flagged and required to receive a challenge from below before being able to place any more challenges upward them self. The player will be advised of this ruling by the Ladder Manager. There is no time limit to this ruling. No allowance will be given to players who unintentionally did not call back or were not available to receive calls. This ruling has become necessary to keep the ladder active and moving.
5. **Request for Inactive Status:**
- A. If a player is ill, injured or unable to accept a challenge (going out of town, etc.), the Ladder Manager must be notified immediately, and, if possible, in advance prior to a challenge being issued.
 - B. For illness, injuries or other extenuating circumstances extending over a fourteen day period, players must notify their Ladder Manager, explain the situation and request to be inactive immediately. Illness or injury, causing excessive inactivity, may require a doctor's excuse. Players should be prepared to provide one if requested.
 - C. Inactive status will not be considered for outside activities and in-town tournament play.
 - D. The ladder is a very active and dynamic process which is in constant motion involving a large volume of individual challenges and commitments. This could interfere with obtaining approval for inactive status or result in a default. Up until the ladder member calls to advise illness, injury or to request inactive status for any other reason, that member is vulnerable to a challenge. If a challenge had already been issued, with or without the prior knowledge of the member requesting inactive status, it still remains as an active challenge. Inability to play the challenge will result in a default and the member will be dropped five positions.
 - E. After any inactive period, the player must accept a challenge from below on the ladder before being allowed to issue a challenge to a higher position. This latter ruling is subject to a 48-hour time period from time of reactivation. If no challenge is received within that time period, the ruling is lifted and the newly activated member may challenge upward.
 - F. A player returning from inactive status cannot either purposely avoid receiving calls or not be available to answer or return phone messages during the 48-hour time period listed in item #5E above and then make a challenge upward. If a challenged player cannot be reached, the challenge may be voided. After the void is declared, the player who could not be contacted must receive a challenge from below before being able to place an upward challenge them self. There is no time limit to this ruling. The Ladder Manager will verify this situation and make this ruling in the same manner as is listed in item #4E above.

6. **Defaults**: Once a challenge has been confirmed, issued by the Ladder Manager, and time, date, location reported, any player who does not complete that challenge will be lowered five positions:
 - A. No player who defaults a match will be given credit for a match having been played. The other player will receive the default win and will receive full match value credit. The defaulting player will be lowered five positions but the person receiving the default win will advance no more than one position.
 - B. Default: Defined as the loss of a match by failing to be present for play within 30 minutes after the scheduled starting time. A default may be waived by the non-defaulting ladder member as long as the non-defaulting ladder member remains at courtside.
 - C. Default Wins-Match Counting: Default wins will be counted for Tournament Assistance Match count but will not be considered for “three wins in a row awards.”
 - D. Default Losses-Match Counting: Default losses will not be counted for Tournament Assistance Match count or for any other official Junior Challenge Ladder accountability.

7. **Challenges Following a Default**: The defaulting player must accept the next challenge from below before being allowed to issue a challenge to a higher position. (Consider this rule in terms of tournament competition--if a match is scheduled and a player does not show, becomes ill, is injured, etc., the opponent advances on the draw and the player is found in default.

8. **Coaching**: DURING MATCHES, PLAYERS WILL ACCEPT NO COACHING FROM ANYONE.

9. **Interfering with Ladder Procedures**: No one will interfere with the running of the ladder by Ladder Managers. No one shall harass any Ladder Manager but may at any time call the Vice President(s) with any complaints, suggestions, etc.

10. **Play Outside of the Ladder**: Should it occur that two Challenge Ladder members meet in the draw of a USTA sanctioned tournament, whether they are in a challenge with each other or not, the outcome of the tournament match does not count as a challenge match. Challenge Ladder matches must be played as reported to the Ladder Manager and independent of tournament play. Any high school match can be counted if prior to match it was approved by ladder manager and is the best 2 out of 3 sets played.

11. **Rain Outs and Temperature**: The Junior League Rules weather guidelines do apply to the Junior Challenge Ladder. If the temperature is below 32 degrees (Fahrenheit) or above 95 degrees (Fahrenheit) and both ladder members agree, the match may be played. Wind chill factor is not considered. A match may be voided due to rain or temperature. The match can be reinstated only by mutual agreement of the two ladder members and only with the approval of the Ladder Manager. It is recommended that both members try to work out rescheduling rather than void the match to conserve wasted time of additional challenging, etc.

12. **Special Situations**: Any special situations will be taken under consideration by the Ladder Manager(s) and the Vice President(s) of the program.

13. **Withdrawal from the Ladder**: To withdraw from the ladder, members must notify the Vice President(s) of the Junior Challenge ladder and advise reason(s) for withdrawal. Once a

member has withdrawn from the ladder, they may not rejoin the ladder during the currently active ladder season and they lose all rights of an active member of the ladder.

14. **Challenge Ladder Awards Program**: there are several awards made available to ladder members. These awards have specific requirements.
- A. “Three Wins in a Row”: For each series of 3 wins in a row, a player will win respectively these specially designed Challenge Ladder items: 1) T-Shirt; 2) Sweatpants or Sweatshirt; 3) Golf Towel. Note: a default win will not be included but will be skipped over when counting up continuous wins in a row. A default loss will break up a continuous win grouping.
 - B. Achievement Award Bag Tag: This award is given only once per ladder year following the end of the ladder.
 - 1) Award recipient must have played the entire session of the ladder.
 - 2) A player must have played a total of at least twelve matches over the ladder year and be recommended by ladder officials.
 - 3) Players’ records will be reviewed for any special considerations or rejections. Factors to be reviewed will include overall behavior, sportsmanship, special achievements, etc.
 - C. Ladder Manager’s Awards: At year end, one boy and one girl will be recommended by their Ladder Managers to receive a trophy and special bag tag as the player who the Ladder Managers thought was “Most representative of what the ladder is all about” that year.
 - D. Vice President’s Award: The Vice President of the Junior Challenge Ladder may give an outstanding player(s) an award for sportsmanship and contributions to the ladder program.

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