

## **Running Tournament at Low Cost** **By Sami Sidia (ITF Development Officer, Southern Africa)**

We have noticed at the ITF over the years, worldwide numbers of national tournament, tournaments with prize money and without prize money, being hosted by National Federations are dwindling. The importance's of national tournaments are very important for the player development of up and coming player, whether is it on a participation basis or high performance! The numbers of International Tournaments have been increasing gradually however national tournaments have not been. There have been many reasons for this but the one that keeps coming up is the lack of money to run tournaments. This document serves as a guide or tool to help organizers and federations realize that a huge budget is not needed to run national tournaments or for that matter any type of tournament.

Firstly we would like to go over what is actually needed to run a tournament namely:

- Tennis Courts
- Tennis Balls
- Entry forms
- Tournament Organizer/Referee/Director
- Umpires
- Ball persons
- Trophies/prizes
- Advertising
- Accommodation
- T-Shirts
- Format (relative to time)
- Participation

### **Tennis Courts**

Unfortunately without tennis courts we are not able to run competitions. Therefore the possible court hire that one has to pay is unavoidable. Unless one could make a deal with the club to run the tournament in down times where the courts are not that busy could be an alternative. As much as possible proper negotiations can be made with Club or owner of courts to explain the need for tournaments to raise membership or to help juniors develop their tennis skills. Court hire cost could be offset from the entry fees raised from the participating players.

### **Tennis Balls**

Much the same situation as tennis court, we need tennis balls. No tennis balls, no competition. New balls for every match are NOT compulsory, and only 2 balls are needed for one match. Once these balls are used in the competition they can be kept and put into the training program. Just like court hire, entry fees can offset ball cost.

### **Entry Forms**

With entry forms one does not have to go to great extents or cost, entry forms can be done through Microsoft Word and a printer and to make additional entry forms one can use a photocopier. Should one have a sponsor then one can easily copy and paste their logo on to the entry form for brand awareness for the sponsor. Entries can also be made via email as an alternative and no printer or photocopying would be necessary.

### **Tournament Organizer/Referee/Director**

One is in need for a person for running the tournaments. This person could be a member of the federation, a coach, a volunteer, parent, or player. In certain examples around the world, tournament organizers have taken on many forms. In some countries a Parents Committee is formed and Parents take in turn organizing the tournaments. In other examples older children have taken in turn to run tournaments, children that have had a lot of experience of playing tournaments locally and Internationally. At times one is forced to pay an individual to run the tournament however, this could be budgeted and a sponsor or entry fees could cover this cost.

### **Umpires**

Umpires or roving umpires are sometimes necessary especially in a high profile national tournament or tournaments with a lot of ranking points on offer. One way of getting around this expense is to have players that have just completed a match umpire the next match on court.

### **Ball persons**

Ball persons are not required for any type of tournament and sometimes can be a hindrance to the player. Only if one has a healthy budget one should look into this. It can be beneficial to the ball person if they have just started playing tennis and can learn from watching higher-level players playing in a tournament.

### **Trophies/Prizes**

For motivation sake Trophies or Prizes are needed probably for the winner and runner up and in case of a feed in consolation formats prizes can be given for 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Prizes don't have to be substantial. One can easily give a can of tennis balls to the winner. Sponsors are normally very keen to help in this manner particularly on a junior level so they can get brand recognition. For example sponsors can give T-shirts or their products as gifts hoping that the players of the tournament and prizewinners will use their product in the future. Recommendation is not to give cash for prizewinners at junior level. Entry fees can be used to offset expenses in trophies or prizes.

### **Advertising**

Advertising for the event can be done through making one page notices and displaying them at other clubs and in prominent position in town or where tennis players will see them. Printing can be done on a computer and additional copies using a photocopying machine. Much the same situation as the entry form putting a logo of the sponsor would be very easy to give the sponsor coverage. Should you have a sponsor, sponsors are more than willing to advertise

tournaments through their existing marketing budget. Please also keep in mind when approaching sponsors to start of with small budget and then build up interest and participation gradually into a successful program, at which point you have the results and then can approach the same sponsor for more money or different sponsors.

### **Accommodation**

A large part of participating in National, Regional, and International tournaments is the costs associated with accommodation. The tournaments organizers can always set up a system of asking members of the club or parents of participating players to host travelling players. This would reduce cost and therefore increase participation.

### **Format**

Knowing the different types of formats is sometimes useful to helping with participation in tournaments for the reason that we need to adjust according to the desires of the competition players. Tournament matches sometimes take a long time and we are not sure when they are going to finish to enable other matches to take place. We therefore recommend the following formats to experiment with and use the ones that are more convenient to your tennis community.

#### ***Feed in Consolation***

A popular format to be used to increase the number of matches being played, and to get away from the situation of if you lose your first match you are finished in the tournament.

#### ***Competitions according to time***

Playing knock out or round robin matches that is based on time. Say each match is scheduled for 1 hour and the person leading when time is up wins.

#### ***Round Robin leading to Knock-out***

Using groups to have round robin format and then the best 2/3 players going on to a knock out format.

#### ***Masters Series***

This format is good to use to submit a tournament proposal to potential sponsors. The idea is to have 8-10 tournaments over the year using Feed in Consolation format so at the end of each tournament you have ranking of all the players that participated. At the end of the year it culminates into a final tournament with only the best 10-12 players participating according to points earned in each tournament. The benefits are that the sponsor gets coverage the whole year and it keeps the interest of the players and forces them to play each tournament. Use of press, local newspaper to publish leader board would also give good coverage for the sponsor and motivates players.

### ***Leagues***

Federations should be proactive in setting up leagues to promote participation and competition. There are two types of leagues namely:

- School-either mini-tennis or normal tennis
- Club-to create inter club rivalry

Much the same as Masters series the use of press, local newspapers to publish leader boards are great coverage for sponsors and motivates teams. This will also create interest by non-playing people to playing tennis and league.