

## **TENNIS NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR (TNL)**

### **GUIDELINES & CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PARENTS OF RECREATIONAL & COMPETITIVE PLAYERS**

#### **BACKGROUND & PARENTAL GUIDELINES**

Research has shown that tennis is one of the healthiest; least injurious sports young people can play. Tennis is a lifetime sport. It builds self-confidence and self-esteem. It teaches self-discipline, self-reliance and respect for others. But, above all, it provides a good way of performing physical exercise **while** having fun.

Today, more children than ever before are taking part in tennis. However, there's a big difference between learning the basic strokes to play the game at a recreational level, and competing successfully at a high level.

Individual competitive sports like tennis usually teach young people how to work hard, manage stress, perform under pressure, and test emotional and physical balance. However, they can also impose pressures, which are damaging if not handled appropriately.

Sometimes competitive junior tennis can be especially difficult for both parents and children because there are many factors, which affect this competitive environment, which are usually new for everybody.

For parents, competitive tennis can become a complex experience, especially if they themselves have not played at a competitive level before. For young people, problems can occur because the demands of competitive tennis can appear to lie beyond their control and abilities.

You, as a parent, want to help your child to manage this new situation, as you do in other aspects of your child's life: school, friends, family, etc. You want your child to be happy, to have fun and to learn to play tennis at a reasonable level – no doubt this is why you encouraged them to be involved in the sport in the first place.

You know that it is not always easy to be a good parent. The reality is that it is also challenging to be a good parent of a tennis player. Knowing how to help your child and when and where to do it is not always easy. With respect to this, parents will have a lot of questions. However, in the absence of clear guidelines and

direction it is not always clear how they should approach getting answers to their questions. Consequently, it is not uncommon for problems to occur because parents, unsure of how to best help their child, pursue approaches that are not always the most supportive of all parties.

Not surprisingly, research has shown that the support and interest of parents is crucial to the child's continued participation and success in tennis. However, it has also shown that some of the physical and emotional stress affecting the performance of junior players can originate with parents.

The consequences of excessive stress in junior competitive tennis are uniformly negative. It can often lead to burnout and possibly result in the premature departure of the young person from the sport. In addition, if parents place unreasonable and unproductive pressure on their child it can also have a negative impact on their long-term relationship with their son or daughter.

The reality is that parents have a very important role to play in their child's tennis activity, whatever the level of participation. However, all parents can benefit from some guidance on how best to prepare and support their child.

### **How to be a Supportive & Effective Tennis Parent**

1. Try to look positive, content, determined, calm and relaxed during matches. Avoid showing negative emotions by looking nervous or disgusted on the courtside when, for example, your child makes a silly mistake.
2. Keep your sense of humour and try to have fun through your child's tennis. Avoid acting negatively or appearing overly critical. Know that it takes emotional control to be a good tennis parent.
3. Stick to your parental role. Avoid trying to be your child's coach (i.e. become too involved in strategy, technique, etc.).
4. Live your own life apart from tennis. Remember you have personal needs too. Don't totally neglect them. Avoid trying to live out some of your unfulfilled dreams through your child's tennis.

5. Recognize and be generous in your applause of the performance and effort of your child's opponents. Avoid ignoring or criticizing your child's opponents.
6. Be ready to help emotionally and offer encouragement especially when your child faces a difficult time. Avoid using punishment and withdrawal of love, affection and warmth to get your child to try harder or perform better.
7. Make your child feel valuable and reinforce their self-esteem especially when he loses. Avoid criticizing your child's results.
8. Recognize that it's your child who is playing the match and that you will be there encouraging them if they want you to be. Avoid saying, "We're playing today," as if you were going to be on court too.
9. Acknowledge your child's achievements in tennis but keep their feet firmly on the ground by keeping sporting results in perspective. Avoid placing them on a pedestal.
10. Emphasize that, "Win or lose, I love you just the same". Avoid getting upset or treating your child differently when he/she loses a match.
11. Stay throughout the match and show your child by not overreacting to positive or negative situations, that regardless of the score, you care and you value his effort. Avoid walking away from a match because your child is doing badly.
12. Ask questions such as, "How was the match?" "How did you play?" "Did you enjoy it?" which shows that you care about your child and their performance/enjoyment rather than the result. Avoid asking, "Did you win?" after your child comes back from a match.
13. Avoid excessive training and burnout. Don't forget that your child is still growing.
14. Be positive with your child reinforcing that you are happy to support their involvement in tennis.

15. Avoid fostering guilt by making your child feel that he owes you for the time, money and sacrifices you have made.
16. Encourage your son or daughter to be self-reliant and to think independently. Avoid coaching from the sidelines.
17. Stay throughout the match and show your child by not overreacting to positive or negative situations, that regardless of the score, you care and you value his effort. Avoid walking away from a match because your child is doing badly.
18. Ask questions such as, “How was the match?” “How did you play?” “Did you enjoy it?” which show you care about your child and their performance/enjoyment rather than the result. Avoid asking, “Did you win?” after your child comes back from a match.
19. Avoid excessive training and burnout. Don’t forget that your child is still growing.
20. Be positive with your child reinforcing that you are happy to support their involvement in tennis.
21. Avoid fostering guilt by making your child feel that they owe you for the time, money and sacrifices you have made.
22. Try to encourage your child to be independent and to think for him/her self. Avoid coaching from the sidelines.
23. Following a loss by your child, keep the loss in perspective by emphasizing that it is only a tennis match. However bad the result was, the world hasn’t come to an end and the sun will come up again tomorrow. Avoid verbally or physically abusing your child at all times - particularly following a loss.
24. Try to be honest and consistent when communicating with your child about their tennis. Avoid lying.
25. Encourage your child to take responsibility for their success or failure and to face up to the reality of the match and their actions (e.g. “it was the same surface for both of you”). The main objective should be, whatever the

conditions, to help them to focus on doing their best. Then they will always be “true” winners Avoid making excuses for your child (“the court was too slow; the opponent was lucky; or the umpire unfair” etc.).

26. Show your interest in your child’s tennis by attending events occasionally. However, avoid attending every practice and match.
27. Let the coach decide how much your child should train and practice. Avoid forcing him/her to train beyond identified expectations and do not criticize your child for failure to play more tennis. Remember, when it comes to training the quality is more important than the quantity.
28. Understand the risks and look for signs of stress (sleeplessness; hypercriticism; cheating during matches; etc.). Avoid being insensitive to your child’s expressions of insecurity and anxiety, resulting from their involvement in competitive sport.
29. The only expectation that you should have from your child’s involvement in tennis is that playing tennis will help your child to become a better person and athlete. Anything else will be a bonus. Avoid assuming or expecting that your child will become a successful professional player.
30. Encourage your child to play other sports, to build relationships and to participate in other activities. However, for competitive players, tennis should remain the priority sport with respect to training, practice and match play.
31. Compare your son or daughter’s progress with their own ability, potential and goals. Avoid comparing your child’s progress with that of other children.
32. Try to motivate your child in a positive and caring way (e.g. positive reinforcement). A ratio of 3:1 positive to critical comments is a good guide for giving effective feedback to your child. Avoid harassment or using sarcasm to motivate your child.
33. Ensure your child respects the principles of good sportsmanship, behavior and ethics. Avoid ignoring your child’s poor behavior (cheating; throwing rackets; using abusive/profane language; or treating others with disrespect) or overlooking critical areas of your child’s development at the expense of

tennis. If this type of behavior occurs get involved quickly and be prepared to act and support staff and TNL in their actions to address any unacceptable behavior and conduct.

34. Reward your child for what he is as a human being not as a tennis player. Avoid tying special privileges, prizes, external rewards, etc., to tennis results.

35. Understand that you and your child need to share other interests and will often need a break from tennis. Avoid arguing or spending too much time speaking about tennis with your child.

36. Your child's welfare and well-being is the most important consideration. Avoid letting your child's tennis become more important to you than your child.

37. Realize that tennis players usually need some space when they lose. A pat on the back or an unemotional word of encouragement is often sufficient as the player leaves the court. You can discuss the match at a later time when they are less emotional. Avoid forcing your child to talk with you immediately after a loss.

38. Take injuries seriously and if in doubt consult a doctor. Do not ignore aches and pains and never force your child to play when injured.

39. Let your child know that you are ready whenever possible to provide transportation for them to tournaments and practice. Avoid insisting on accompanying your child to every lesson and match.

## **TENNIS NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR (TNL)**

### **PARENTAL CODE OF CONDUCT**

The goals and mandate of Tennis Newfoundland and Labrador (TNL) include the promotion of good sportsmanship, civility and respect in all TNL-affiliated activities, programs, events and tournaments, including without limitation any Atlantic Tennis Alliance and/or Tennis Canada activities, programs, events and tournaments (hereinafter, collectively, “TNL Activities”). A related goal is to help all junior tennis players involved in TNL Activities (hereinafter “Junior Players”) participate in, enjoy, learn and excel in the sport of tennis – not only today, but for a lifetime. To help realize this goal TNL expects parents and guardians of Junior Players (hereinafter, each, a “Tennis Parent”) engaged in any TNL Activities to conduct themselves in a considerate and respectful manner at all times.

It is TNL’s intention to ensure that all Junior Players, Tennis Parents and other persons involved in the sport, including without limitation any TNL Executive Director, Technical Director, coach, board member, official, volunteer, spectator or other TNL employee (hereinafter, each, a “TNL Member”) are treated respectfully and remain protected from inappropriate, unsportsmanlike, disrespectful and/or abusive comment and behavior, and are at all times provided with a safe, supportive, healthy and productive environment for tennis development and related activities – whether on or off the court.

TNL shall not under any circumstances tolerate abusive or disrespectful behavior, contact or communication on the part of Tennis Parents towards any Junior Players, other Tennis Parent, and/or TNL Members. Further to this, TNL prescribes the following code of conduct for all Tennis Parents:

1. Tennis Parents must at all times respect and adhere to all tennis matters, standards, rules and procedures prescribed or adopted from time to time by TNL respecting staffing, direction of programming and rules of conduct and play at TNL Activities, and such matters, rules and procedures shall be binding upon Tennis Parents and will not be subject to modification excepting as may be specifically sanctioned and directed by the TNL Executive Director and/or TNL’s Technical Director.

2. All Tennis Parents must respect, observe and adhere to all applicable tournament rules, etiquettes and regulations as may apply to TNL Activities.
3. Excepting with the TNL Technical Director's express permission, no Tennis Parent is permitted to be on court during any TNL Activity.
4. All Tennis Parents shall act in an appropriate, sportsmanlike, respectful and civil manner towards all Junior Players, other Tennis Parents and TNL Members in any contact, communications and/or meetings of any nature.
5. In the event that any Tennis Parent wishes to meet on any nature or matter of complaint with any TNL Member, including the TNL Executive Director or Technical Director, he or she must adhere to the following procedure: Always make initial contact with the concerned TNL Member by email or phone, and advise of the subject matter for the requested meeting. During such contact the Tennis Parent may request a specific meeting date. When doing so the Tennis Parent should take into account that the TNL Member may offer a meeting date and time that fits into the TNL Member's working time frame/ calendar. On no occasion should a Tennis Parent appear unannounced and in person to seek a meeting with a TNL Member. TNL Members are not expected to make themselves available under such circumstance.
6. Failure by any Tennis Parent to respect, observe and comply with any of the elements of this Parental Code of Conduct, as shall be determined by TNL's Technical Director upon reasonable inquiry, may result in the following disciplinary actions and sanctions:

**(a) First infraction**

- (i) At the discretion of the TNL Technical Director, to be exercised in consultation with the Junior Development representative on the TNL Board of Directors, any first breach of this Parental Code of Conduct

by a Tennis Parent may result in:

- Loss of the right or privilege to attend TNL-sponsored activities, programs, events and/or tournaments for such time period as may be specified; and/or
- Loss of the right or privilege to attend Atlantic Tennis Alliance-sponsored and/or Tennis Canada-sponsored activities, programs, events and/or tournaments for such time period as may be specified.

**(b) Second or Subsequent Infraction**

- (i) At the discretion of the TNL Technical Director, to be exercised in consultation with the Junior Development representative on the TNL Board of Directors, any second or subsequent breach of this Parental Code of Conduct by a Tennis Parent may result in a more severe sanction than for a first infraction, including a longer period of the loss of the right or privilege to attend TNL-sponsored and/or Atlantic Tennis Alliance-sponsored and/or Tennis Canada-sponsored activities, programs, events and/or tournaments.
  - (ii) In addition, depending on the severity of the second or subsequent breach of this Parental Code of Conduct, the TNL Technical Director, in consultation with the TNL Board of Directors, shall have the discretion and authority to permanently exclude and bar the offending Tennis Parent from all TNL Activities.
7. In the event that any issue of a potential breach of this Parental Code of Conduct involves the TNL Technical Director, the process and sanction(s) prescribed in section 5 shall apply, with the exception that such process and sanction(s) shall be determined solely by the Junior Development representative of the TNL Board of Directors except to the extent reasonably necessary to allow the said Junior Development representative of the TNL

Board of Directors to make reasonable inquiries in respect of the issue of breach and/or sanction(s).

8. In the event of any sanction imposed upon a Tennis Parent under this Parental Code of Conduct, no fees paid to TNL, Atlantic Tennis Alliance and/or Tennis Canada by such Tennis Parent shall be reimbursable.
9. This Parental Code of Conduct shall form and shall be deemed to constitute a condition of each and every Tennis Parent's attendance at or participation in any and all TNL Activities.
10. It is a further condition of any Tennis Parent's attendance at or participation in any and all TNL Activities that he or she shall respect and comply with any sanction imposed by this Parental Code of Conduct at any place or venue hosting any TNL Activity, including without limitation Greenbelt Tennis Club, Riverdale Tennis Club and Mount Pearl Tennis Club.