

# THE LTA WILD CARD POLICY 2024

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A 'wild card' is a player included in the draw of a tennis event at the discretion of the tournament's organising committee or organisation.

Both main draw and qualifying wild cards may be made available at events.

Because the LTA runs and organises some tournaments (**LTA Staged Tournaments**), the LTA is able to allocate wild cards in the draws of the events within those tournaments. This policy is a general policy that explains how the LTA chooses the players which receive those wild cards and how the LTA nominates individuals to receive wild cards for The Junior Championships, Wimbledon from the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club Limited (the **AELTC**). The number of wild cards that are available to the LTA at ITF World Tennis Tour (Men's & Women's), ATP and WTA tour level events held in Great Britain is outlined in appendix 1.

### Specific Tournaments and Events

If you would like to learn about a particular tournament or event, you should read the relevant tournament information. For LTA tournaments, you can find tournament-specific information packs in the competition resources area of the LTA website.

## 2. WHAT THIS POLICY EXPLAINS

This policy (the **Policy**) explains how the LTA will allocate wild cards for LTA Staged Tournaments and how the LTA chooses the individuals who they will nominate to the AELTC to receive wildcards for The Junior Championships, Wimbledon. Where references are made to allocating wildcards in this Policy, in relation to The Junior Championships, Wimbledon, such references shall mean nominating individuals for wildcards.

This Policy does not apply to:

- (a) tournaments that are run by individual clubs, County LTA's or by organisations other than the LTA, even if they are 'LTA approved' (including the men's and women's events at The Championships, Wimbledon as this is not staged by the LTA and therefore wild cards are allocated at the discretion of the AELTC);
- (b) the Winter County Tour or the Winter Regional Tour; or
- (c) mini tennis tournaments and/or events.

All LTA Staged Tournaments are run in accordance with the rules of the relevant governing body. This might be the LTA's own rules and regulations or those of Tennis Europe, the ITF, the ATP or the WTA.

The LTA will apply this Policy in a way that is consistent with the rules and regulations set by the relevant governing body for each tournament or event (the **Tournament Rules**). Where there is a conflict between this Policy and the Tournament Rules, the Tournament Rules will have priority. The aim of this Policy is to ensure that players with similar profiles for the purposes of wild card allocations are given fair and equal consideration.

### **3. HOW THE LTA MAKES WILD CARD ALLOCATIONS**

It is important to note that a wild card is normally awarded when a player has not been accepted into a draw on their own merit. Therefore, a wild card place is often providing an opportunity to a player that they would not otherwise have based on either their current ranking or stage of development. The objective for awarding wild cards will therefore differ at each stage of the pathway, with the overall aim of helping players progress to the next stage of the pathway. These are outlined as follows:

- **ATP / WTA Tour and Challenger events (including ITF 100K and 60K Women's Circuit events):** to provide an opportunity to accelerate the progress of player's showing the highest level of potential to reach the top 100 ATP / WTA singles ranking and / or based on merit (ranking) are the most likely to be successful in this level of event.
- **ITF World Tennis Tour / ITF 15K and 25K Women's events:** to give high potential young players 21 and under (normally Men's and Women's Programme (MWP) players the opportunity to compete at the entry stage of the Pro Circuit and / or to reward players who have had good results and are on an upward ATP / WTA ranking trajectory.
- **ITF and Tennis Europe (TE) Junior events:** to give high potential young players aged 12-18 (normally National Age Group Pathway (NAGP) or National Academy (NA) players), the opportunity to gain experience against international peers, to provide an opportunity for players on the LTA Player Pathway to accelerate their ranking progression or to recognise and reward good results for players who are competing in ITF Junior competition.
- **LTA Grade 1 and 2 Competition:** to give identified junior players (likely to be players attending county training and / or the NAGP) the opportunity to compete at a higher level or in an older age group to help accelerate their development; and likelihood of progressing to the next stage of the pathway.

In order to achieve these objectives, the allocation of wild cards is underpinned by the following principles:

- (a) Wild cards must be earned through performances that suggest the player is capable of competing with players at the level of the competition;
- (b) Wild cards are used to provide carefully planned competitive development experiences for players on the LTA player pathway; and
- (c) Wild cards are a privilege and not a right of British players.

Therefore, when selecting which players should be allocated wild cards the LTA, using both their expert judgement and relevant sources of evidence (including match reports, physical testing data and results / ranking profiles) where applicable, will take into account the factors below:

- (i) **Development opportunities:** consideration will be given as to whether specific players will gain a particular benefit from playing in a higher age-group or standard of competition than can normally be accessed. At times the Head of Men's Tennis or the Head of Women's Tennis (or their nominee) may seek to provide such opportunities to junior players or players transitioning from junior to adult tennis as a matter of priority. This might mean that players with a lower ranking or less experience may be awarded a wild card. This decision will normally be based on player assessments and recent results that show success within an existing schedule and readiness to progress. When this is based on player assessments, the following will be considered (in no particular order of preference or weighting):
  - The player consistently demonstrates a clearly defined game style that is likely to be successful at the level of event under consideration now or in the next 1-2 years;
  - The player has clearly defined and consistently applied weapons which are likely to be successful at the level of event under consideration now or in the next 1-2 years;
  - The player demonstrates the highest levels of commitment, professionalism and dedication towards their tennis throughout the preceding year in competition and training;
  - The player is medically and physically ready and able to perform at the required level; and
  - The player is committed to a training and competition plan appropriate for the age of the player and the level of event under consideration.
- (ii) **Ranking:** significant weight will be placed on the ranking most relevant to the circuit and age group of the relevant draw. For ATP, WTA and ITF Pro Circuit events, appendix 2 outlines the average ranking cut off for the main draw and qualifying draws by event category in 2019. This information is designed to help players understand the expected standard of the competition and it should be considered by players before making a decision to apply. Consideration will also be given to players who have achieved good rankings in higher age groups or circuits.
- (iii) **Recent results:** the quality and consistency of recent results in other events will be considered, particularly where players have made progress within events close in standard to the event under consideration. This will normally mean ATP/WTA, ITF,

Tennis Europe or Grade 1 national events. In addition, consideration will also be given to players who have consistently beaten players at a ranking likely to feature in the event under consideration. As a guide, results from the last three months will be the most relevant.

- (iv) **Recent injury or illness:** Players returning from injury or illness will be considered in case a wild card might support an effective return to a former standard. Results prior to injury or illness, as well as recent reports and assessments regarding fitness, will be considered.
- (v) **Changes to schedule:** In the majority of cases, this will only be relevant to adult competitions. Players who need to change their tournament schedule to ensure an appropriate and effective timetable of competition may be considered for wild card allocations to allow participation in tournaments that were not entered or which were entered as a low preference. This will only be considered for junior players in exceptional circumstances. Juniors are expected to make every effort to enter and play events in the normal way.
- (vi) **Public profile:** players with a significant public profile at national or local level may be granted a wild card in order to encourage public support and interest and to enhance ticket sales. When considering the allocation of a wild card to a player because of his or her public profile, the LTA will consider the ability of the person under consideration to participate at an appropriate standard. Where this involves an international player, the LTA will always request a reciprocal wild card arrangement with the relevant national association before awarding it.
- (vii) **Previous wild cards (women only):** because the WTA and ITF impose limits on the number of wild cards that can be allocated to each player in women's events, the LTA will take into account previous allocations in order to avoid making allocations that would lead to a player exceeding this limit.
- (viii) **Representing Great Britain:** consideration will be given as to whether the player is eligible and makes themselves available if selected to play for Great Britain in the Davis / Billie Jean King Cup (or other representative events as applicable to the age of the player) and how they perform when doing so.
- (ix) **Participation in the National Junior Championships:** as the flagship junior event in our new competition calendar, it is expected that all eligible players will make their best efforts to compete in the U16 and / or U18 National Junior Championships. Players who choose not to will not be considered for wild cards during the grass court season (this includes ATP / WTA / ITF (Pro Circuit and Junior) events).
- (x) **Conduct:** the conduct of the player may be taken into consideration, including if the player has been in breach of any LTA rules, regulations or codes of conduct or those of the ITF, ATP or WTA tours.

#### **4. WILD CARDS AWARDED FOR TOURNAMENT WINS**

Each year, the LTA makes a small number of wild cards available to players who win key events. These wild cards are typically to allow the winner of one event to 'play up' in an older age group in subsequent British tournaments or to play in a higher level of competition staged by the LTA. This creates incentives for players to compete within their own age-group in the first event and allows the players who achieve a significant win to gain experience against potentially higher ranked opponents at events of a higher level.

Where wild cards are committed to players in this way, the number of wild cards available for allocation under this Policy is reduced accordingly.

## **5. VARIATION FOR SPECIFIC EVENTS**

The LTA reserves the right to vary the tournament specific wild card rules for individual events, such as by creating additional wild card qualifying events. Any special wild card rules will be recorded in the information published regarding the relevant event or tournament.

## **6. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALLOCATIONS**

Unless stated otherwise by the LTA for specific tournaments, responsibility for the allocation of wildcards is as set out below.

Wild cards for events for players aged 14+ will be allocated by the LTA Men's or Women's Tennis teams as appropriate after consultation, where relevant, with the Competitions team, the Performance Director and the National Pathway team. Wild cards for events in the 12U and 14U age category (or younger) will be allocated by the National Pathway team after consultation with, where relevant, the Head of Men's and Women's Tennis, the Performance Director and with the Competitions team.

From the Women's Tennis team, allocations will normally be made by the Head of Women's Tennis or their appointed nominee(s).\*

From the Men's Tennis team, allocations will normally be made by the Head of Men's Tennis or their appointed nominee(s).\*

\*For major events (WTA & ATP events) the allocation of wildcards will be the responsibility of the LTA Men's or Women's team in conjunction with the Major Events Team (which may include the Tournament Director) and the LTA CEO.

## **7. APPLICATIONS AND ELIGIBILITY**

- i. **Men's Tennis:** All players appearing on the qualifying and alternate lists will be given consideration for a wild card. Therefore, wherever possible, players who wish to be considered for a wild card should enter the relevant event in the normal way before the entry deadline. Please note, you only need to submit an application if you have not entered, are competing overseas the previous week or

if you believe there are exceptional circumstances that need to be considered. In this instance, you must email Imogen Woodham ([Imogen.Woodham@lta.org.uk](mailto:Imogen.Woodham@lta.org.uk)) outlining your reasons for the application by **midday on the Thursday** before the tournament starts. The process for awarding men's Wildcards can be viewed online <https://www.lta.org.uk/4af975/siteassets/pro-players/wildcard-request-process.pdf>.

- ii. **Women's Tennis:** For all WTA or Women's ITF events, all players must submit a wild application by **midnight on the Monday the week** before the tournament starts by completing the [Wild Card Request Form](#) (if there are any questions please contact Imogen Woodham ([Imogen.Woodham@lta.org.uk](mailto:Imogen.Woodham@lta.org.uk))). Given the ITF and WTA regulations on wild cards into Women's events (<https://www.itftennis.com/media/9258/2023-wta-rulebook.pdf>) players must express an interest in order to be considered. The process for awarding women's wildcards can be viewed online <https://www.lta.org.uk/4af975/siteassets/pro-players/wildcard-request-process.pdf>.
- iii. **Returning from injury:** Players who would like to be considered for a wild card because they are returning from injury or illness must provide information and evidence regarding their injury and evidence that they are ready to compete at the requested level.
  - a. Players entering LTA staged Grade 1 and Grade 2 events using LTA Online Tournament Entry (OTE) can provide this information as part of the entry process.
  - b. Players making manual entries or entering other LTA Staged Tournaments must contact the LTA to provide the information. Please email [imogen.woodham@lta.org.uk](mailto:imogen.woodham@lta.org.uk)
- iv. **Late requests from juniors:** The LTA will not ordinarily issue late entry wild cards to junior competitions. Players must enter tournaments on time in order to be considered for a wild card. The only exception will be ITF Junior Circuit and TE Junior Tour tournaments held in Great Britain, which are sanctioned by the ITF & TE respectively, and whose regulations state that a wild card may be granted to a player who has not entered the tournament. In such a situation, players who did not enter the event in time but who wish to be considered for a wild card must contact the LTA (at [imogen.woodham@lta.org.uk](mailto:imogen.woodham@lta.org.uk)) to including details of their request and an explanation of the exceptional circumstances which prevented a normal entry.
- v. **Late requests for adult events:** Players entering adult events might be considered for a wild card after the entry deadline, subject to consideration of the factors set out in section 3 above. Players are strongly advised not to rely on the allocation of wild cards in place of timely entry to tournaments. If a player needs to change their schedule and would like to be considered for a wild card for a tournament that they have not entered, or which they originally rated as a low preference, they need to contact the men's or women's tennis team as appropriate as soon as possible to explain their request (at [imogen.woodham@lta.org.uk](mailto:imogen.woodham@lta.org.uk)).

Players must consult the detailed information about each event to ensure that they understand how the tournament will be run. Tournament information can be found in the competition section on the website.

## **8. CONFIRMATION OF ALLOCATIONS**

It is always the responsibility of individual players to check the entry/acceptance lists and tournament draws on the relevant website (e.g. the ITF and the LTA) to confirm wild card allocations.

For ITF Women's World Tennis Tour events, the main draw wild cards will be published on the official acceptance list available via the ITF website on the Thursday preceding the event. Main Draw wildcards will normally be confirmed the week prior to the event via email. Qualifying wild cards will either be confirmed at the sign in or communicated ahead of sign in via email.

For ITF Men's World Tennis Tour events, Main Draw wildcards will normally be confirmed the week prior to the event via email. Qualifying wild cards will either be confirmed at the sign in or communicated ahead of sign in via email.

For ATP / WTA events, main draw wild cards will be confirmed by the Head of Men's Tennis, the Head of Women's Tennis or their nominee.

The LTA may sometimes allocate a wild card for a specific player in advance of the usual allocation date. This would normally be when:

- (i) the player has a ranking high enough that he or she is certain to be allocated a wild card regardless of the other players under consideration; and
- (ii) the decision regarding wild card allocation could have a significant impact on the player's international travel and competition schedule.

Upon being awarded a wild card the LTA may request the player to participate in promotional activity (for any aspect of the event or the LTA's work) during the course of the event. The promotional activity may take the form of internal or external media interviews, competition meet and greets or other similar activity for use on LTA social channels or website either during or after the event. By accepting the wild card a player would agree to participate as requested in these commitments.

## **9. GENERAL AVAILABILITY OF WILD CARDS**

For LTA Staged Tournaments, the number of wild cards available for each event/draw is determined by the LTA in accordance with the rules and regulations of the relevant sanctioning body. The LTA will not always allocate the full number of wildcards if an

insufficient number of players are deemed to qualify taking into consideration the factors set out at paragraph 3 above. In these situations, the tournament acceptance criteria will be used to complete the draw.

For Tennis Europe or ITF events hosted in Great Britain, the LTA will not always have access to the full quota of available wild cards as the host club/venue is sometimes provided with a percentage of the total wild cards to be allocated. Each of these tournaments are organised differently and will use their own selection criteria for awarding the wild cards they have available.

On very rare occasions, the LTA will 'swap' wild cards with other national federations in order to secure the availability of wild cards to British players into overseas tournaments. This will reduce the number of wild cards available within the draw for British players and the remaining wild cards will be allocated on the basis of this Policy. Where the LTA has access to wild cards in international events, this policy will be followed for their allocation.

Under exceptional circumstances, individual tournament organisers or directors may need to vary the allocation of wild cards from those determined under this policy to ensure the safe and effective running of an event. In these circumstances, the LTA will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that this Policy is adhered to.

## **10. RECORDING OF WILD CARD DECISIONS**

The LTA will maintain records of the wild card allocations that it makes and the reasons for them.

## **11. AMENDMENTS TO THIS POLICY**

The LTA may amend this Policy from time to time. Any amended Policy shall be published on the LTA website.



**Appendix 1 – number of wild cards available to the LTA in ITF World Tennis Tour, ATP and WTA events held in Great Britain**

MEN'S	Main Draw Size	28	32	48	56
No. of Wild Cards	ATP 500		3	4	5
	ATP 250	3	3	4	5
	Challenger		4		
	ITF \$15k; ITF \$25k		4	4	4

MEN'S	Qualifying Draw Size	16	24	28	48
No. of Wild Cards	ATP 500	3	4	4	5
	ATP 250	2	4	4	5
	Qualifying Draw Size	32	48	64	128
	Challenger	6			
	ITF \$15k; ITF \$25k		6	7	8
			5	7	8

WOMEN'S	Main Draw Size	28/30	32	48/56	60/64	96
No. of Wild Cards	WTA 1000 / 500 /250	4 (2 Top 20 and 2 regular)	4 (2 Top 20 and 2 regular)	5 (2 Top 20 and 3 regular)	5	8
	ITF W15;		4			
	ITF W35 - W100		4	5		

WOMEN'S	Qualifying Draw Size	8	16	24/32	48	64+
No. of Wild Cards	WTA	2	2	4	6	8
	ITF W15;			5/6	7	8
	ITF W35 - W100			4/5	7 8	

**Grass Court Events:**

ATP & WTA:

Rotesay Open Nottingham (WTA 250) – June 2024

Rothesay Classic Birmingham (WTA 250) – June 2024

cinch Championships (ATP 500) – June 2024

Eastbourne International (ATP 250 & WTA 500) – June 2023

ATP Challenger Tour:

Lexus Surbiton Trophy – May 2024

Rothesay Open Nottingham– June 2024

**Other events throughout the year will be published on LTA website when confirmed**

**Appendix 2 – 2019 average event cut offs**

The following tables show the average ranking cut offs for the main draw and qualifying by event category. These ranking guidelines should be considered by all players before making a decision to apply. The ranking data is based on information published by the WTA and ITF on their website. There is no information for ATP challenger events.

**Table 1 – ITF Men’s Circuit**

	Main Draw	Qualifying Draw
15k	979	NR
25k	770	NR

**Table 2 – ATP Men’s Circuit – 2017 data – 2018 data to follow once available**

	Main Draw	Qualifying Draw
GS	99 (104)*	229 (242)*
ATP1000	54 (62)*	134 (151)*
ATP500	63 (80)*	132 (246)*
ATP250	83 (102)*	182 (294)*

**\*Indicates final cut off after withdrawals**

**Table 3 – ITF Women’s Circuit**

	Main Draw	Qualifying Draw
15k	827	NR
25k	508	NR
60k	336	NR
80k	344	NR
100k	243	NR

**Table 4 – WTA events – 2019 data**

	Main Draw	Qualifying Draw
Grand Slam	103	220
Premier Mandatory	62	104

Premier 5	45	104
700	49	166
International	89	182
125k	196	230