

GAME

ON

GREAT BRITAIN'S DISABILITY TENNIS PATHWAY

 TennisFoundation

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Great Britain is a world leader at providing opportunities for disabled people to fulfil their potential and I'm proud of what we've achieved at the Tennis Foundation to date.

Amongst a number of charitable activities, the Tennis Foundation supports grassroot opportunities for beginners and recreational players so that disabled people can play at their local venue with family and friends. However, we also recognise that disabled players sometimes need specific sessions to get the most out of their game. There are many different variations of tennis for disabled people – wheelchair, learning disability, hearing and visually impaired – some have changes to the full format and others do not, so there is always a variation that's right for you.

We want to make sure Great Britain continues to lead the way in providing opportunities for all disabled people to play. If you've ever dreamed of representing your country at tennis, but didn't know where to start, read on. If you think you have what it takes, or if you coach someone with potential, get in touch. With determination, effort and our support, it might be your turn to enjoy medal success.

Geoff Newton, Executive Director, Tennis Foundation

WANT TO KNOW MORE

The Tennis Foundation is Great Britain's leading tennis charity. Our vision is a truly inclusive sport that's accessible to every community. The Tennis Foundation works across education, with disabled people and with disadvantaged communities so that people can maximise their potential through tennis.

Put simply, we provide a combination of funding, tennis equipment, training and advice to individuals, venues and organisations to make tennis accessible to all.

The LTA is the national governing body for tennis and we work in close partnership with the LTA, as well as a wide range of other partners to achieve our vision and aim.

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You may have seen our best wheelchair tennis players competing at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, where Gordon Reid MBE, Alfie Hewett, Andy Lapthorne, Jamie Burdekin, Jordanne Whiley MBE and Lucy Shuker all enjoyed medal success. Great Britain won six medals, the most of any country at the Wheelchair Tennis event.

Geraint Richards, Head of Disability Player Performance, Tennis Foundation

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This booklet is for tennis players with a disability that may have the talent and desire to progress from a casual recreational level towards a more structured and competitive playing schedule within their impairment group. It describes the different pathways available for the four impairment groups to develop towards the highest level of the sport. There's also information to help coaches identify players that show talent and the next steps to take to ensure their players maximise their potential. We would like to raise the awareness of the opportunities to compete and develop within wheelchair tennis, learning disability tennis, deaf tennis and visually impaired tennis so please do share this booklet with others.

We want Britain to carry on leading the world in tennis for disabled people. Will you play your part?

THE PATHWAYS

There are development pathways for people with a physical disability, those who have a hearing impairment, those with a learning disability and those who are blind or partially sighted. You can play in impairment-specific sessions, competitions and tournaments or with and against non-disabled tennis players within existing tennis programmes and competitions.

The most well-known impairment-specific version is wheelchair tennis, for those who have a physical disability, and this has been part of the Paralympic Games since 1992. We also have athletes competing at the highest level in the Deaflympics, INAS Global Games for those with a learning disability and World Championships in deaf, learning disability and visually impaired formats of the sport.

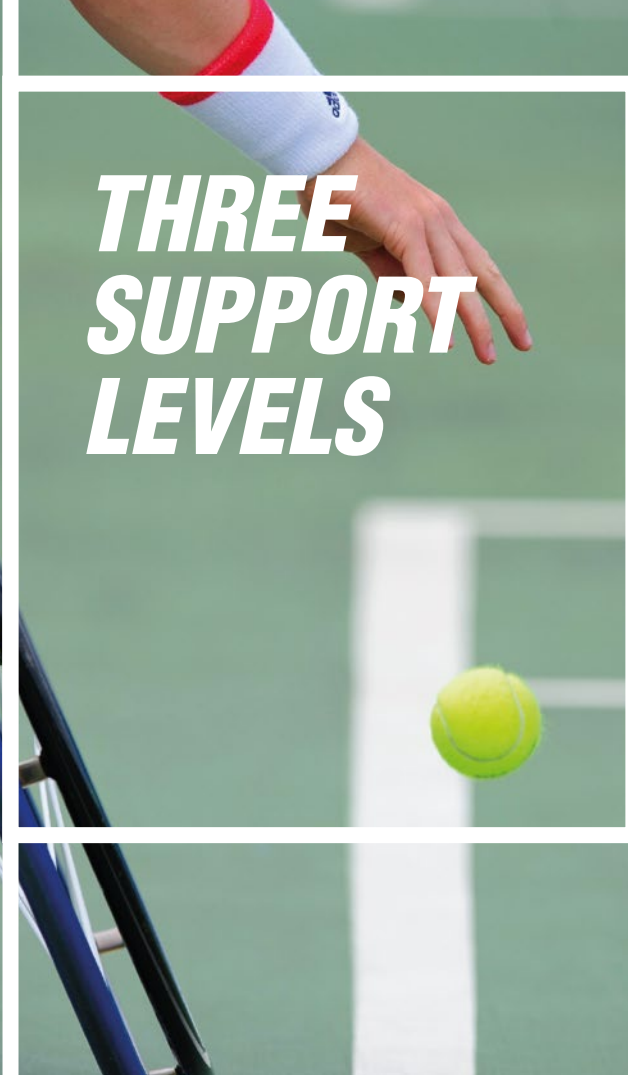


The Rio Paralympic Games was our best ever performance and the culmination of 4 years of hard work and dedication by the players and Tennis Foundation team. We hope this success motivates others to get out there and be more active and try tennis. You never know what you might achieve along the way.

Karen Ross, Head of Coaching and Talent, Tennis Foundation



THREE SUPPORT LEVELS



There are three levels of support that the Tennis Foundation offers:

LEVEL 1

Grassroots and development:

We are looking for players with a motivation to learn, showing potential and wanting to compete. Talent ID is built into all Tennis Foundation activities.

LEVEL 2

Selection and Futures:

Players who demonstrate key mobility, technical skill and tactical awareness. They have some structured training and competition. Players are supported by the National Coaching Team.

LEVEL 3

Elite: Players have progressed through the stages of development and increasing support by the National Coaching Team; they have experienced competition success and are mastering complex strategic skills.



THE TWO BOUNCE RULE

This version of the game has only one rule change which is to allow players up to two bounces of the ball prior to hitting it.

WHEELCHAIR TENNIS PATHWAY

THE GAME

Anyone can play wheelchair tennis recreationally, but to play in wheelchair tennis competitions and be assessed as part of our Talent ID Programme you must have a medically diagnosed permanent mobility-related physical disability, resulting in a substantial loss of function in one or both lower extremities.

There are two divisions in wheelchair tennis – open and quad. In the open division there are men's and women's competitions. The quad division is mixed gender and is for those with a more severe disability affecting three or more limbs.

Disabilities for both divisions can include or result from (but are not limited to):

- Amputation
- Spinal cord injury
- Brittle bones (osteogenesis imperfecta)
- Cerebral palsy
- Muscular dystrophy
- Multiple sclerosis (MS)
- Spina bifida.

Athletes that typically perform well at the elite level are people:

- who retain core muscle function
- with lower-limb loss
- with prior competitive tennis experience
- with experience in other wheelchair sports.

One of the great things about wheelchair tennis is that a broad range of people can excel. This version of the game has only one rule change which is to allow players up to two bounces of the ball prior to hitting it. Only the first of these bounces has to be within the confines of the court.

GET INVOLVED

You can play at any tennis venue including tennis clubs, indoor tennis centres, parks and other leisure facilities. To find your local provider please visit www.lta.org.uk/go-hit-it. To find specific wheelchair/physical impairment tennis sessions near you please visit www.tennisfoundation.org.uk/findyourlocalsession.

COMPETITIONS

If you want to compete against other wheelchair tennis players the Tennis Foundation supports and hosts regional, national and international wheelchair tournaments, details of which can be found on our website.

You can also compete in non-wheelchair specific tournaments. For more information please speak to your coach or the Tennis Foundation.

DEVELOPING TALENT

The Tennis Foundation wants to nurture players with talent and the will to win so they can fulfil their potential. If you show some talent for tennis you should be identified by your coach and referred to our performance coaches. Following an assessment, we'll recommend the best route for your development: to continue locally for now or to join the Great Britain development squads which have several performance camps each year to develop your skills.

If you feel you have what it takes to go all the way then why not attend one of the Tennis Foundation's Wheelchair Tennis Camps or Push2Podium events where you could be spotted by one of our Talent ID coaches. Or alternatively get in touch to discuss the options available to you: wheelchairtennis@tennisfoundation.org.uk.

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**I can be better, I can be the best,
I want to be number one.**

CURRENT PLAYERS

Andy Lapthorne

Career titles: 41 (at time of print)

Andy has won one bronze and two silver medals at the Paralympics as well as a collection of Grand Slam titles.

”

There's no such word as can't.

COACH

ZONE

CURRENT PLAYERS

Jordanne Whiley MBE

Career titles: 71 (at time of print)

Jordanne has won two bronze medals at the Paralympics and a collection of Grand Slam titles. In 2014 she became the first British tennis player in history to complete a calendar Grand Slam.

If you coach a player with a physical disability who has some of the qualities below please get in touch:

- Shows some skill around striking the ball
- Good hand eye co-ordination and can maintain a rally of a couple of shots
- Good wheelchair mobility skills.



DEAF TENNIS PATHWAY

THE GAME

Deaf tennis has a long history in Britain and no changes to the game are needed.

You can play against other deaf tennis players and alongside or against non-deaf opponents, friends and family.

In deaf tennis competitions, the removal of hearing aids is required to ensure an equal playing field.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO PLAY

If you have a hearing impairment of 55 decibels or more in your best ear and a passion for tennis, you could be considered for our development and performance squads.

GET INVOLVED

You can play at any tennis venue including tennis clubs, indoor tennis centres, parks and other leisure facilities. To find your local provider please visit www.lta.org.uk/go-hit-it. To find specific deaf tennis sessions near you please visit www.tennisfoundation.org.uk/findyourlocalsession.

COMPETITIONS

If you want to compete against other deaf tennis players the Tennis Foundation hosts the annual National Deaf Tennis Championships which is open to players of all ages and abilities. Details of this tournament can be found on the Tennis Foundation website.

You can also compete in non-deaf specific tournaments. For more information please speak to your coach, the Tennis Foundation or the LTA.

DEVELOPING TALENT

The Tennis Foundation wants to nurture players with talent so they can fulfil their potential. If you show talent for tennis you should be identified by your coach and referred to our performance coaches. Following an assessment, we'll recommend the best route for your development which may include joining our performance squad which compete in major international events including the Deaflympics, European and World Deaf Tennis Championships.

If you feel you have talent please get in touch to discuss the options available to you: deaftennis@tennisfoundation.org.uk.



The opportunities in deaf tennis allow me to achieve my goals and get the best tennis out of me, I love it.

CURRENT PLAYERS

Phoebe Suthers

Phoebe won gold and silver medals at the 2016 European Deaf Tennis Championships and a bronze medal at the 2015 World Deaf Tennis Championships.

LTA rating: 5.2 (at time of print)



Tennis has brought a lot to my life, it's given me so many chances and opportunities which have been amazing.

CURRENT PLAYERS

Esah Hayat

Esah won a gold, silver and bronze medal at the 2016 European Deaf Tennis Championships and gold at the 2015 World Deaf Tennis Championships.

LTA rating: 4.1
(at time of print)

COACH

ZONE

If you coach a deaf tennis player who has some of the qualities below please get in touch:

- Good hand-eye co-ordination and can maintain a rally of a couple of shots
- Competes in local and/or county level competitions
- Part of any performance squad organised by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA).

A female tennis player with a learning disability is captured in a dynamic pose on a tennis court. She is wearing a white t-shirt, black shorts, white socks, and white sneakers with red accents. She has a white headband with the 'Wilson' logo and a white wristband on her right wrist. Her mouth is open in a shout or exertion, and she is holding a tennis racket with a red and white striped handle. The background shows a green tennis net and a blurred figure of another player in a blue shirt. The overall scene is set on a green tennis court with a red border.

LEARNING DISABILITY TENNIS PATHWAY

The game can be adapted according to a player's ability level; for example by playing on a smaller court or using larger and slower balls.

THE GAME

Mencap defines a learning disability (LD) as "a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities which affects someone for their whole life". Individuals with a learning disability can play tennis with no changes to the rules. The game can be adapted according to a player's ability level; for example by playing on a smaller court or using larger and slower balls.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO PLAY

You can play learning disability tennis if you have a learning disability or difficulty which may include but not limited to: Down's Syndrome, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Asperger's Syndrome.

To be considered for our performance and developments squads and to compete in LD specific regional, national and international tournaments a player needs to have an intelligence quotient (IQ) of 75 or less. However, we work with organisations such as International Mixed Ability Sports to deliver competition for all players including those with an IQ greater than 75.

Special Olympics and INAS run national and international competitions for players with an IQ of 75 or less but have different rules; Special Olympics is aimed at development level where as INAS is focused on performance. For further information please see their websites (see page 27).

GET INVOLVED

You can play at any tennis venue including tennis clubs, indoor tennis centres, parks and other leisure facilities. To find your local provider please visit www.lta.org.uk/go-hit-it. To find specific learning disability tennis sessions near you please visit www.tennisfoundation.org.uk/findyourlocalsession.

COMPETITIONS

If you want to compete against other LD tennis players the Tennis Foundation supports and hosts regional, national and international tournaments, details of which can be found on our website.

You can also compete in non-LD specific tournaments. For more information please speak to your coach or the Tennis Foundation.

DEVELOPING TALENT

The Tennis Foundation wants to nurture players with talent so they can fulfil their potential. If you show some talent for tennis you should be identified by your coach and referred to our performance coaches. Following an assessment, we'll recommend the best route for your development: to continue locally for now or to join the Great Britain development squads which have several performance camps each year to develop your skills.

If you feel you have talent please get in touch to discuss the options available to you:

learningdisabilitytennis@tennisfoundation.org.uk

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I'm determined to do my very best for my country and work hard to succeed and be one of the world's top players.

CURRENT PLAYERS

Thomas Mellor

Thomas has won two gold, three silver and one bronze medals at INAS World Championships/Global Games.

LTA rating: 7.1 (at time of print)

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Becoming part of the Tennis Foundation's Performance Pathway has helped me become world No. 1 and world champion and every time I go on court I feel great pride.

CURRENT PLAYERS

Fabrice Higgins

Fabrice has won eight gold and three silver medals at INAS World Championships/Global Games.

LTA rating: 5.2 (at time of print)

COACH

ZONE

If you coach a player with a learning disability who has some of the qualities below please get in touch:

- Skill around striking the ball
- Good hand-eye co-ordination
- Can maintain a rally of several shots.



VISUALLY IMPAIRED TENNIS PATHWAY

THE GAME

The game of tennis was first adapted to be played by blind and partially sighted people in Japan in 1984 and has quickly grown in popularity and is now played in over 30 countries.

Visually impaired (VI) tennis is for blind (classified as a B1 player) or partially sighted people (dependent on the level of sight loss they are classified in the spectrum between B2-B5). The game is adapted using a smaller court, with lower nets and using an audible ball so players can hear it bounce and being hit. Depending on an individual's sight level they may have up to three bounces of the ball before they must return it back to their opponent.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO PLAY?

Domestically, VI tennis uses British Blind Sport's classification rules (www.britishblindsport.org.uk/classification):

B1: This category encompasses no light perception in either eye up to light perception, but inability to recognise shapes at any distance or in any direction.

B2 & B3: Both of these categories involve a low level of usable partial vision, those in the B3 category will be able to see more than those graded as B2.

B4: This is a good level of partial sight. Anyone with more than roughly 25% of normal vision is likely to be too sighted for this category.

B5: This category used to be referred to as B4+ and has no top limit.

In order to compete at an international level, players must meet International Blind Tennis Association's (IBTA) classification rules. For more information on this please visit www.ibta-takei.com.



GET INVOLVED

You can play at any tennis venue including tennis clubs, indoor tennis centres, parks and other leisure facilities. To find your local provider please visit www.lta.org.uk/go-hit-it. To find VI tennis sessions near you please visit www.tennisfoundation.org.uk/findyourlocalsession.

COMPETITIONS

If you want to compete against other blind or partially sighted players the Tennis Foundation supports and hosts regional tournaments across the UK which leads to the National Visually Impaired Tennis Championships.

DEVELOPING TALENT

As VI tennis is still in its infancy, the game was only launched in the UK in 2007, the pathway for players is being developed and the Tennis Foundation is working to create more opportunities for blind and partially sighted people to participate in tennis.

If you feel you have talent please get in touch to discuss the options available to you:

visuallyimpairedtennis@tennisfoundation.org.uk.

COACH

ZONE

If you coach a blind or partially sighted player who has some of the qualities below please get in touch:

- Some skill around striking the ball
- Can maintain a rally of several shots (ability to return the ball if a B1 player).

COMPETITIONS



The Tennis Foundations supports and organises a range of competitions across all impairment groups, from beginner to elite level. We would also encourage players to take up the many competitive opportunities that our partner, the LTA, provides.

Competitions are a great way to challenge yourself against others. Players who'd like to develop their skills and progress along the pathway should compete regularly and make the most of local, regional and national competitions.

For those who play wheelchair tennis, you could even become a full-time player and compete around the world on the international wheelchair tennis circuit – if you've got the confidence, talent and determination!



COACH

ZONE

Competition is a great way to keep players engaged in the sport and we have different categories for beginners (novice categories) up to elite level. Coaches can play a key role in encouraging players to start competing. If you're unsure which tournaments might be suitable for your players, get in touch – we'd be happy to advise.

Local match-play activities within your group, or against other local groups are a great way to introduce competition in a fun and social environment.

TOURNAMENT LEVELS

Most tournaments are open to entries from anyone, but some require entry at the regional level to qualify for the nationals. They do get progressively more competitive and require more skill the further up you go. If you are unsure of the level you should be playing please contact our competition team who will be happy to advise you.

1. **Grassroots participation:** matches played within weekly and monthly sessions
2. **Initial competition experience:** local, social, fun, team or individual, at your playing venue, inter-venue competition
3. **Regional Tennis Foundation competitions:** Learning Disability Regional Tournaments, Visually Impaired Regional Tournaments and National Wheelchair Tennis Series
4. **National Tennis Foundation tournaments:** National Wheelchair Championships, National Learning Disability Championships, National Deaf Championships and National Visually Impaired Championships
5. **International:** Paralympics, Deaflympics, World INAS Games and World Championships.

For more information and to see a full list of the competitions on offer please visit www.tennisfoundation.org.uk/events.

DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE SQUADS

SELECTION

We have tennis coaches constantly on the lookout for talented individuals through a selection of activities which include:

- Weekly and monthly impairment sessions within our grassroots network programme
- Regional and national disability events such as National Paralympic Day and British Paralympic Association Sports Festivals
- Tennis Foundation regional tournaments
- Tennis Foundation camps and festivals throughout the year.

If you meet our selection criteria, we will invite you to join the appropriate level performance squad training camps where you will receive advice from our world class coaches on all aspects of your game.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO EXCEL IN TENNIS?

Becoming a performance player doesn't happen overnight, but if you have the following then you could be on your way:

- Talent
- Mental toughness and dedication
- Physical fitness
- An ability to set goals – planning ahead and regularly reviewing progress
- A supportive network – parents and coaches.

Whatever level you play at, we want you to be the best you can be. For those with the hunger for success and the determination to win, the opportunity to represent Great Britain on the world stage is there.



COACH

ZONE

Our squads and training camps are not just for the players, we are also keen to develop coaches' skills too.

If you would like to know more about our performance pathways and how you might get involved please do get in touch. We'd love to hear from you and support your learning and development as a coach.

OUR GAME, OUR COURT

GRASSROOTS NETWORK PROGRAMME

The Tennis Foundation increases the opportunities for disabled people to access and get involved in tennis. We have set up a national grassroots programme to offer both impairment specific and integrated sessions at many tennis venues across Great Britain to give disabled people a choice of how to play.

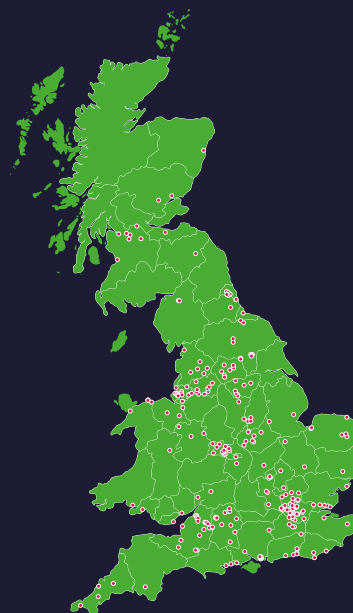
The Tennis Foundation provide venues with advice, support, training, equipment and sometimes funding to increase opportunities for disabled people to play regularly.

The four game options delivered by tennis providers in the network are matched to our player pathways; wheelchair, hearing impaired, learning disability and visually impaired. The venues involved in our network programme are fully accessible, have good transport links and experienced coaches delivering quality tennis instruction to participants.

We have partner venues in most major cities across England, Scotland and Wales and the programme is constantly expanding, with a focus on local participation. If you play at one of these venues and have some of the skills highlighted in this guide then you will be spotted by the experienced coaches delivering your sessions.



There are over 330 venues supported by the Tennis Foundation providing opportunities for disabled people to have fun and stay healthy playing tennis. These are spread across England, Scotland and Wales, so wherever you live, there's somewhere to play near you!



USEFUL CONTACTS

www.lta.org.uk

www.uksport.gov.uk

www.itftennis.com/wheelchair

www.paralympics.org.uk

www.ukdeafsport.org.uk

www.deaflympics.com

www.uksportsassociation.org

www.inas.org

www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk

www.mixedabilitysports.org

www.britishblindsport.org.uk

www.ibta-takei.com

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Champions keep playing until they get it right.

Billie Jean King



Great Britain's leading tennis charity

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