



## **Pathways to Become an International Tennis Player within Northern Ireland**

### **Introduction: The Northern Ireland Act 1998**

Within Northern Ireland all citizens have the following birth right; "It is the birth right of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, and accordingly to hold both British and Irish citizenship."

This internationally recognised agreement called the Belfast Agreement is encompassed in legislation through the Northern Ireland Act 1998, it allows the citizens within Northern Ireland to choose their identity and subsequently hold either a British or Irish passport or both if desired.

### **Sporting Landscape in Northern Ireland**

The Northern Ireland Act 1998 impacts on every area of life in Northern Ireland and sport is not immune, however the Sporting Landscape within Northern Ireland is very complex and diverse. We have a combination of Governing Bodies within Northern Ireland; All Island bodies, British bodies, and Northern Ireland bodies who all affiliate directly to either a European or an international federation. Subsequently the sporting pathways for athletes differ depending on the sport you play and its governing structure.

### **The Tennis Landscape in Ireland and the UK**

The Governing structure within Northern Ireland for Tennis is through the All-Island Governing Body of Tennis Ireland and who governs in the two jurisdictions of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Ulster Branch of Tennis Ireland (UBTI) is the branch with of Tennis Ireland with responsibility for Northern Ireland. The Governing Structure for Tennis in Britain is through the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA).

### **Tennis Governing Bodies Commitment to the Northern Ireland Act**

All Governing Bodies in the UK and Ireland have a duty to honour this international agreement which both the British and Irish Governments have signed up to. To honour this agreement, we must allow the people of Northern Ireland personal choice to identify themselves as British, Irish or both. Allowing personal choice however is not enough to ensure compliance with the legislation we also have a duty to promote the right of an athlete in Northern Ireland to represent Great Britain as well as Ireland. In trying to fulfil this duty Tennis Ireland & UBTI worked with the LTA within the UK who provided guidance and support to enable Tennis Ireland & UBTI to produce this information document.

## Purpose of this Document

This leaflet outlines all routes within the UK and Ireland for any tennis player within Northern Ireland to become an international tennis player. Tennis Ireland and UBTI wants to ensure that any tennis player within Northern Ireland can make an informed decision regards their potential tennis career and ultimately, they can choose which nation they would like to represent.

<b>Relevant Rules &amp; Regulations</b> <b>(Please Note: These rules may be reviewed on a yearly basis. Date of last review– April 2019)</b>	
ITF Davis Cup rule 34.1 & Billie Jean King Cup rule 30.2	Any tennis player who is in good standing with his National Association in accordance with Appendix D shall be eligible to represent that Nation as a player or captain if: (a) He has not previously represented any other Nation in the Competition (other than Junior Davis Cup) or the Olympic Tennis Event; and (b) (i) Is a citizen of that nation and has held a current valid passport of that nation for a minimum of two years (24 months); (ii) Is a citizen of that nation, but in circumstances where that nation does not issue its own passport has held a qualifying passport issued by or on behalf of that nation for a period of two years (24 months) which confirms the player's place of birth as that nation; or (iii) After a consecutive period of five years (60 months) of residence in that nation, he can provide a genuine reason for being unable to hold or make application to hold a current valid passport where: (a) he was born, or has a parent or grandparent born in that nation; or (b) he has obtained or procured the right to remain permanently or has been granted humanitarian protection in that nation.
ITF Davis Cup rule 34.2 and Billie Jean King Cup rule 30.3	A National Association may apply to the ITF Internal Adjudication Panel for permission to nominate a player who is not eligible under Regulation 34.1, on the basis that the full circumstances warrant an exception being made. The initial application must be received by the ITF Executive at least three months prior to the event for which the player wishes to be nominated.
ITF Senior Circuit rule changes 2018—rule 25.7	A player or captain who represented a nation under the Regulations for the ITF Young Seniors/Seniors/Super-Seniors World Team Championships in force at 31 December 2016 or prior thereto shall continue to be eligible to represent that nation even if he/she is no longer qualified to do so under the terms of this Regulation save that he/she must remain in good standing in accordance with Appendix V.
LTA Rules 17th May 2018—rule 34. National Qualifications— 34.1	The qualification of a player to represent Great Britain shall, subject to any regulations for a particular match or competition, be in accordance with the appropriate ITF Rule. In the application of that rule the term “National” means “British Citizen” (as defined in the British Nationality Act 1981 as amended from time to time), and “Country”, in connection with residence, refers to Great Britain, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.
Olympic Charter 2017– Rule 41 Nationality of competitors	1. Any competitor in the Olympic Games must be a national of the country of the NOC which is entering such competitor. 2. All matters relating to the determination of the country which a competitor may represent in the Olympic Games shall be resolved by the IOC Executive Board. Bye-law to Rule 41 -1. A competitor who is a national of two or more countries at the same time may represent either one of them, as he may elect. However, after having represented one country in the Olympic Games, in continental or regional games or in world or

	<p>regional championships recognised by the relevant IF, he may not represent another country unless he meets the conditions set forth in paragraph 2 below that apply to persons who have changed their nationality or acquired a new nationality. 2. A competitor who has represented one country in the Olympic Games, in continental or regional games or in world or regional championships recognised by the relevant IF, and who has changed his nationality or acquired a new nationality, may participate in the Olympic Games to represent his new country provided that at least three years have passed since the competitor last represented his former country. This period may be reduced or even cancelled, with the agreement of the NOCs and IF concerned, by the IOC Executive Board, which takes into account the circumstances of each case.</p>
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Event Type	Category	Can I change Nationality?	Application of Relevant Rules & Regulations
<b>Representing a Team at an International Level</b>			
Olympics	Juniors	Yes	<p>To represent Ireland the Olympic Council of Ireland state that players must have an Irish passport (a British passport is not sufficient). Tennis Ireland then apply Davis Cup rule 34.1 and Federation Cup rule 30.2 &amp; players cannot change their nationality once they've played. In GB the British Olympic Association apply Olympic Charter rule 41 stating that a player can change nationality provided that at least 3 years have passed since the player last represented their former country. However, players must have represented GB in Davis or Fed Cup, and they cannot change nationality once they've played. Players must meet the Games-specific eligibility requirement, which are published by the ITF for each Olympics.</p>
	Seniors	No	
Paralympics	Wheelchair	No	<p>The 'eligibility to represent a nation' rule contained in the Wheelchair Tennis Regs is applied (essentially the same as applying the DC/FC ruling for Olympics). Once a player has represented a nation at a World Team Cup event or Paralympics, they will not be able to change nationality in relation to either competition.</p>
Davis Cup/ Fed Cup	Juniors	Yes	<p>In both Ireland &amp; GB ITF Davis Cup rules 34.1 &amp; 34.2 and Fed Cup rules 30.2.&amp; 30.3 apply. Once a player has represented one nation in this event they cannot represent another. In Ireland &amp; GB a junior can only represent one nation as a junior player. However, within these rules individuals can play as a junior for one nation and as a senior for another nation.</p>
	Seniors	No	
ITF Team Events (including Wheelchair Tennis)	Wheelchair	No	<p>In wheelchair tennis, once a player has represented a nation at a World Team Cup event they will not be able to change nationality.</p>
	Veterans	No	<p>In Ireland and GB a player cannot change the nation they represent in the relevant age group once they have competed for that nation and this is subject to ITF Young</p>

			<p>Seniors/Seniors/Super Senior rules 25.1 (which is the same as Davis Cup rule 34.1 /Federation Cup rule 30.2 above). The ITF Senior Circuit rule changes 2018– rule 25.7</p> <p>also applies. In GB the LTA Rules 17th May 2018 including rule 34. National Qualifications– 34.1 apply. This means a players can compete in the women 35 age category competition for one nation and then in the 40-age category for another nation.</p>
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<b>Playing Individually in Tennis Europe &amp; ITF Circuit Tournaments (Including ATP &amp; WTA Pro circuit &amp; Grand Slam events)</b>			
Tennis Europe & ITF World Tennis Tour Juniors, Men's & Women's ITF World Tennis Tour (including ATP& WTA, and Grand Slam events)	Junior and Senior	Yes	<p>A player from Northern Ireland can choose the nationality that they wish to be displayed when they register for an IPIN. Players should note that the choice of nationality that they make for their IPIN display may impact on their national rankings, seeding at tournaments and wild card allocation in the nation that they choose to represent and/or in the nation that they choose not to represent.</p> <p>When a player first applies for an IPIN they should state their nationality as shown on a valid passport they hold. In the event that a player decides that they wish to change their nationality display, they will need to contact the ITF and either the ATP or WTA via email stating their name, IPIN and current displayed nationality and give their reason for wanting to have their displayed nationality amended. The player must also include proof of the new nationality to be used. The ITF will process this, and the new nationality will take effect only for any tournaments players submit an online entry into AFTER the change has been made on the ITF database. To change their nationality on the IPIN display a player should email mens@itftennis.com or womens@itftennis.com if they hold an IPIN for the Pro Circuit and juniors@itftennis.com if they hold an IPIN for the Junior Circuit.</p>
Commonwealth Games	Junior	N/A	The Commonwealth Games does not place any restrictions on players who represent Northern Ireland to represent Ireland or GB.
	Senior	N/A	
Four Nations	Junior	N/A	This is not an ITF sanctioned event and representing a nation does not impact the ability of a player to represent either Ireland or GB in ITF sanctioned events.
	Senior	N/A	
	Veteran	N/A	
UK School Games	Junior	N/A	Players represent NI and there is no representational impact for Ireland or GB as this is not an internationally sanctioned event.
VI World Championships	Senior	No	<p>-This is an internationally sanctioned event.</p> <p>-In Ireland players are selected through national qualifiers from programmes attached to affiliated Tennis Ireland clubs.</p> <p>Approved eligibility criteria is still being developed in Ireland for this event.</p> <p>-In GB the LTA Rules 17th May 2018 rule 34. National Qualifications is applied. Once a player has represented another nation at a World Championships, they cannot represent GB.</p>

**Please note:** The above events are generally independent, and players do not necessarily have to play in one of the events listed to be eligible for another higher-level event listed. However, ITF rankings are normally part of the selection process following establishment of a player's eligibility.  
Players will be subject to the rules and regulations of each event.

For the **Tennis Ireland Player Pathway** see <https://www.tennisireland.ie/coaches/long-term-player-development-pathway/>

For the **LTA player Pathway** see <https://www.lta.org.uk/compete/performance/player-pathway/>

For the **Tennis Foundation Wheelchair Tennis Pathway** see <https://www.tennisfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/World-Team-Cup-2018-Selection-Criteria-15.02.18.pdf>

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## **Other Information**

### **High Performance Systems**

Whichever National Federation a tennis player from Northern Ireland chooses to represent, they should consider the time, commitment and financial costs attributed to each system.

The Irish High Performance Centre is at DCU in Dublin.

The GB Elite Support programme is based at the National Tennis Centre in Roehampton.

### **Register for IPINS**

Tennis Europe - <https://www.tenniseurope.org/page/16409/Guide-for-Players>

ITF- <https://www.itftennis.com/en/about-us/organisation/about-ipin/>

Useful References to Rules & Regulations

ITF Davis Cup- <https://www.daviscup.com/media/278272/278272.pdf>

Billie Jean King Cup - <https://www.billiejeankingcup.com/en/organisation/rules-regulations.aspx>