



JUNIOR DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2022

The last twelve months have been another very busy year in Junior Development with the committee working extremely hard to ensure the continued success and growth of junior tennis in Ulster.

2022 was the first year of full return to tournament play after two seasons interruption due to Covid, and the numbers of players taking part in tournament was very encouraging after such a long layoff.

With National Matchplays now discontinued, Ulster continued our own Regional and Provincial matchplays in the Spring at Under 14 and 18 level. This provides an important opportunity for players to earn ranking points to qualify them for selection for the Ulster Interprovincial teams in these age groups, as well as tournament experience at this time of the year. Thanks again must go to all those who assisted in supervising these events and also to the clubs who provided courts and facilities to run them during the Spring – Enniskillen, Omagh, Windsor, Belfast Boat Club, Portadown and the Ozone.

In July Will Boyd was appointed as Ulster Competitions Co-ordinator, and we welcomed his involvement in generating more competition for junior players as part of his position. We have already seen the benefit of this work as the number of competitive opportunities for junior players has increased with many further developments to come during this season.

The World Tennis Number (WTN) has been introduced into tennis throughout Ireland, and we welcome its role in moving towards allowing all players to play competitive events at a level which is most appropriate to their own standard. It is envisaged that WTN will eventually be used at for entry and seeding in all junior tournaments at the appropriate time. Ulster is organising junior WTN events at age group level this year to give players the chance to improve the WTN rating as well as give them more exposure to competitive matches.

The 2022 tournament calendar was very busy again, and the committee worked hard to support the events. The Ulster calendar was full during the main tournament weeks of the season. The introduction of Tennis Ireland Tour level events has proved successful in encouraging entries from a wider range of players, in particular Tour 250 (now Tour 200) and Tour 100 events for players who are newer to the tournament scene. Numbers playing tournaments across the different levels has shown a good increase.

The Junior Committee provides help and advice prior to each tournament, including assistance with draws. We ensure that the tournaments are run in accordance with Tennis Ireland and Ulster Tennis rules to be fair to all players and tournaments. The committee also try to visit all Tennis Ireland tournaments in Ulster. The UTP rankings continue for all Ulster tournaments and certain Irish events, and ITF, ETA and LTA tournaments. To promote Ulster events as much as possible the committee limits the tournaments outside of Ulster which are eligible for UTP ranking points. The UTP rankings form the basis of the Ulster Interprovincial team selections, and we also require players to play a minimum of three Ulster events in order to qualify for the Interprovincial teams.

This year the Junior Interprovincials were split into two separate events, with the Under 18s taking place at Waterford Tennis Club in August, and the Under 14s in October in Claremorris Tennis Club. Both events

were well organised and we thank both clubs and their respective branches for organising the two weekends so efficiently.

Our team selection was again based on the top four positions in the UTP rankings plus one wild card selection, aiming to reward tournament performances over the whole season. Both Under 14 and 18 teams performed very well against strong opposition, and the young Under 14 team will no doubt feature in the next year or two.

This year marked the last Interprovincials for some of the team, with Stefan van Walstijn, Andrew Hatrick, Eve Callaghan and Rachel McCrum all finishing their junior interpro careers this year. We wish them well for the future and in their transition into senior tennis. Congratulations to team captains Michael Blease and Adam Boyle for their hard work with the Under 18 team, and Carlos Miranda and Will Boyd for looking after the Under 14s.

At the Irish Open Championships at Fitzwilliam in August, Ulster had an Irish champion as Rachel McCrum won the Under 18 Girls Doubles title with Cliona Walsh. Many congratulations to both of them on their success.

At the end of 2022, Ulster was also fortunate to have Reese McCann finished ranked number one in the Under 16 age group in the Irish National rankings. This is a fitting reward for his hard work and success during 2022, and another great achievement for him.

In December, the committee held a meeting with Ulster coaches to discuss ideas to further improve different areas of junior tennis within Ulster and there were many good ideas put forward. A similar meeting with junior parents was held in January to get their views and again there were many different areas discussed. A further meeting with both coaches and parents will take place very shortly and we hope that this will be well-attended to allow junior tennis to progress further.

Many thanks to Ulster Performance Director Carlos Miranda for his hard work with the performance squads and programme over the last year.

I would like to thank all of my committee members who give their time willingly and voluntarily and would encourage all parents and children to remember the large amount of volunteer work these few people do for Junior Tennis. Thanks to Stephen Garvin, John Maguire, Will Boyd, Carlos Miranda, Simon McFarland and Greg O'Rawe for all their hard work on the committee. Also thanks must go to a number of people who have assisted at Provincial matchplays and other events, without whom these events would simply not be possible – Eileen Carlin, Jenny Lyall and Willie Noteman.

As usual, please contact the Junior Development committee for any help or advice regarding junior issues, matchplays, tournaments, or if you as parents need any advice.

Good luck to all players and parents for the 2023 season.

Rosamund Thompson

Convenor Junior Development