

# INTEGRATION - WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

## First of all, what is integration and why do we need it?

Integration is a simple idea. In every community, there are many tennis programs available for able-bodied players. Those programs cover a wide variety of offerings including ages, skills, days, times, genders, formats and geography. These offerings also include drills, tournaments, leagues, and specialty events for adults and juniors.

However, there are few organized wheelchair programs available in most communities.

The solution for growth is to make all tennis programs open to all players. Community Tennis Associations need to take the lead on pushing inclusion in all of their tennis programs for wheelchair players. So how do they do that and what are the first steps?

- **Initiate an Up/Down league.** Up/Down is the pairing of one able-bodied player with a wheelchair player on court at the same time. The Houston Tennis Association has their women's league teams play mixed doubles with area male wheelchair players each week. They play out of the local parks and have a few volunteers responsible for recruiting players for these matches. Austin Tennis Association has done the same, and is adding a club tour to take wheelchair tennis to private clubs in the area.

### BENEFITS OF UP/DOWN

- \*Players get to meet other players from the community and form friendships.
- \*Wheelchair players get to play at least once a week.
- \*Community Tennis Associations find future new members/add league revenue.
- \*Wheelchair tennis gains awareness/exposure/acceptance

## 2. The next step is to invite wheelchair players to participate in USTA Leagues and USTA sanctioned tournaments (adult and juniors).

### Here are other things you can do to increase wheelchair participation:

1. Know who the wheelchair players in your community. Keep them informed.
2. Review your Web site and printed materials to include wheelchair players' results/photos/events.
3. Review existing and proposed programs. Ask, "How can wheelchair players participate?"
4. Add wheelchair divisions to tournaments and events.
5. Invite wheelchair players to join boards and committees. Have them volunteer as tournament/site directors, etc.
6. Recruit players from other wheelchair sports to participate in and learn about tennis.
7. Make sure there are wheelchair certified tennis pros in your area. Contact the **United State Professional Tennis Association (USPTA)** or **Professional Tennis Registry (PTR)**.
8. Apply for grants that make courts and facilities more accessible to the disabled.
9. Take pictures and get the word out about opportunities to play and compete!

## So what happens if a wheelchair player enters one of your tournaments or leagues?

There are specific USTA rules that govern matches between wheelchair and able-bodied players.

In the 2006 edition of the USTA's "Friend at Court" handbook of rules and regulations, please refer to pages 31-32. **Paragraph F** specifically addresses the Wheelchair vs. Able-bodied player match rules. Make sure tournament directors and referees know these rules!