

Benefits of Wheelchair Tennis

In wheelchair tennis, the player must master the game of tennis as well as the wheelchair. Learning mobility on the court is exiting and challenging and helps build strength and cardiovascular ability. Wheelchair tennis provides persons with disability the opportunity to share in activities with their peers and family, whether able-bodied or disabled. A wheelchair player who plays against an able-bodied person in singles or doubles is allowed two bounces of the ball while the able-bodied player is allowed one bounce. Playing wheelchair tennis adds to socialization and the normalization of life after sustaining a disabling injury. Wheelchair tennis is a fun and exciting sport to be involved in!

History and Rules

Created in 1976 in California, wheelchair tennis is one of the fastest growing and most challenging of all wheelchair sports. Since 1979, the sport has been promoted in the United States by the National Foundation of Wheelchair Tennis. The Wheelchair Tennis Players Association formed in 1981 under the auspices of the NFWT, allowed players to take an active role in the governance of the sport. January 1998 marked the merger of the WTPA into the USTA structure. Since then, the USTA has actively managed wheelchair tennis activities in the U.S.A.

Wheelchair tennis player must have a medically diagnosed, permanent mobility related physical disability, resulting in a substantial or total loss of function in one or more lower extremities. Examples of permanent disabilities that meet the eligibility criteria include paralysis, amputation, radiological evidence of limb shortening and joint replacement. Wheelchair tennis rules are the same as stand-up tennis, except the wheelchair tennis player is allowed two bounces of the ball. The wheelchair is considered part of the body; all applicable rules which apply to a player's body apply to the wheelchair.

Quadriplegic Tennis

Quad tennis is for those players with limited mobility, power and strength in both lower extremities and at least one of their two upper extremities. Included in this category are walking quadriplegics, power wheelchair users and triple amputees. Persons with little or no gripping ability use athletic tape or specially made devices to hold the racquet. Quad players may serve with a bounce or have someone toss the ball for them.

Recreational and Competitive Divisions

There are several divisions that identify the levels of play in wheelchair tennis. wheelchair tennis players play in able-bodied events with two bounces and can be rated according to NTRP characteristics.

OPEN: This player has had intensive training for tournament competition at the national and international levels. Excellent chair mobility.

A: This player has good shot anticipation and has developed power and/or consistency as a major weapon. Can vary strategies and styles of play in a competitive situation. Hits dependable shots in a stress situation. Solid chair mobility.

B: This player has begun to master the use of power and spins; is beginning to handle pace and vary game plan according to opponents. Good chair mobility.

C: This player has achieved improved stroke dependability with directional control on moderate shots, but lacks depth and variety. Learning consistent chair mobility.

D: This player is learning to judge where the ball is going although court coverage is weak. This player can sustain a short rally of slow pace with players of the same ability. Slow, inconsistent chair mobility.