

Executive Director Report

January 2024

Overall

- Mississippi had 5% total growth in all combined registrations (tournament registrations, USTA Adult League, JTT) in 2024. This is what USTA Southern funding the state's is based on. Had growth in 3 of the 4 main categories
- Highest Junior USTA Membership total of all time with 4,830 members
- Wanda McPhail and Robert Dean will be inducted into the Mississippi Tennis Hall of Fame, and Becky Vest will be inducted into the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame

Grants & Community Tennis

- USTA MS active in giving out grants, as our association budgets for College Scholarships (\$8k), Facilities Grants (\$40-50k), Tennis Camp Scholarship, and numerous other grants with the intention to grow the game.
- Revamped the Tennis Foundation of Mississippi's player grant in 2023 to make it more accessible to players of all levels. Due to the change, 6 players were awarded grants totaling \$2,500 in just the last six months of the year.
- USTA Mississippi awarded 7 Player Development grants for close to \$4,000 total.
- Gave grants to 5 Adult League teams that advanced to National League Championships.
- Numerous grants given out to local organizations and facilities to host May is Tennis Month events and Fall Tennis Fests.
- USTA National introduced the "Growth Catalyst Grant" and USTA Southern will introduce the "Innovation Grant" in 2024.

What's New? What's the USTA and state focus?

- Adult Red Ball Initiative, piloting red/foam ball social events. STA giving grant to states to expand these programs in 2024
- Corporate League initiative in partnership with Cathead Distillery
- Rolling out a "Play Tennis Mississippi" logo in 2024 with an online store to purchase items as well as USTA Mississippi branded merchandise
- USTA Premiere Facility Initiative with River Hills & Snowden Grove named Premiere
- USTA National partnering with a data company called Kinetica to improve advocacy efforts with communities considering tennis facilities as well as converting to pickleball
- Tennis Industry Openings page on website to post tennis pro jobs & tennis clubs for sale
- Campus Kids Days were held in 2023, plan to hold in 2024
- College Showcase held for 2nd consecutive year in 2023
- Planning a 70's Adult League Championship in 2024
- New JTT Spring format and added a JTT Spring Championship to go along with the existing Summer & Fall Championships
- College tennis players from MS listed on website, highlight college tennis players
- Three new adaptive tennis initiatives by local organizations in Mississippi in 2023
- USTA getting more into coaching education with Level 1 workshops, more Community & Play Facilitator workshops, more awareness of careers in coaching and tennis
- Partnerships with both the MHSAA and MAIS organizations to impact high school tennis
- Plans to enhance Tennis Apprentice program, not only in partnership with Parks and Rec agencies (utilizing the STA Parks Grant), but any and all facilities in 2024.

January 18, 2024

Director of League Tennis Annual Report

2023 was a successful year for MS league tennis. Five teams competed in National Championships.

- 18&Over 3.0 M Fulton/JXN
- 18&Over 5.0 W Stewart/JXN
- 40&Over 4.5 W Walcott/JXN
- 18&Over Mixed 8.0 Worsham/NC
- 18&Over Mixed 9.0 Poole/PB

Other notable Sectional Champions/Finalists:

- 18&Over Mixed 2.5 McCrory/NC-Champion
- 18&Over Tri-Level 3.5-4.5M Do/JXN-Will advance to National Invitational in March
- 18&Over 2.5 W Pride/JXN-Finalist
- 40&Over 3.5 M Carmody/JXN-Finalist
- 55&Over 4.0 M Rayborn/SW-Finalist

Minor changes/additions to the National, Southern, and MS regulations:

- USTA: 40&Over format is changing to 1 singles, 4 doubles in 2024 (minimum roster of 9).
- Southern: Will use 1 singles 3 doubles for 40&Over due to contractual obligations; Mixed doubles will use straight levels, Tri-level matches will be included in year-end ratings
- MS: All 4.5 and above play will be held at the state championships

League participation was up in 2023 but has still not reached pre-COVID numbers.

Tennis Apprentice continues to be successful bringing in an average of 150 new players per year. Thanks to that program and countless others around the state, tennis continues to be a popular, recreational sport for adults.

MatchTennisApp has proved to be an excellent tool at championships for both players and staff.

In 2023 all championships went out for bid for the 2024-2025 years.

New hosts: Meridian, MS will host 65&Over and Brookhaven will host Tri-Level

Save the date: MS Multi-state 70&Over Invitational October, 4-6, 2024. More information coming soon!

Areas of focus for 2024: Lapsed players, Social leagues, and beginner programs.

Plans for a great 2024 are in progress with registration open in several leagues around the state already.

Jay Pacelli - USTA-MS Director of Community Development

Plan of Action/Plan Implementation - July 2023/**Updated January 2024**

CTA:

-Develop CTA State Workshop and put together CTA Committee. We have a 4 person group consisting of 3 CTA leaders and myself. Workshop has been scheduled for October 21, 2023 at River Hills. Organization is on-going. **Update – CTA committee meetings with Toni Jackson (Meridian), Joe Kusek (Northwest) and Jenny Cockrell (Gulf Coast) were help with primary purpose to organize a successful CTA workshop. CTA Workshop was held October 21, 2023 with 21 participants representing all are active CTA's. Topics included marketing, advocacy, JTT, Tennis Apprentice, state grants, CLDP program. Certified professional development, competitive tennis and an alternative to pickleball (Foam Ball Tennis). Guest speakers were Andrew Feldman from USTA Southern who discussed securing volunteers and Jamie Rasberry from the Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits who addressed how to organize your CTA.**

-Meet with each CTA in the state to make a strategic plan and set of initiatives. Met with CTA's from January-May 2023.

-Oversee MTA Facility Grant. Had 12 applications for 2023 with 10 receiving monetary pledges from the MTA.

-Oversee Community Coordinator initiatives on Gulf Coast as well as Northeast MS. Oversee their goals and payouts for goals met. Payouts made July 2023. **Update – Payouts made December 2023.**

NJTL:

-Work as staff liaison for Diversity Committee. Lead 2 meetings where DEI initiatives and goals were discussed. Next Diversity Committee meeting scheduled for August. **Update - had 2 additional diversity committee meetings. Highlights of meetings including discussion of a NJTL Summit and bringing tennis to our school districts and the developmentally disabled.**

-Helped identify STA, National and State Grants for NJTL's. **Update - Awarded \$3600 in state diversity grant to Friends of Battlefield NJTL, Ace2Deuce NJTL, and Greenville CTA. USTAF grant recipients included Ace to Deuce, Family Biz, Friends of Battlefield, Greenville, and Jackson Community Tennis Project.**

-Oversee and administer MTA Diversity Grant. Worked with NJTL's to approve funds using Mississippi Star System Chart.

-Serve as MTA liaison to setup Adaptive and Wheelchair programs working with both Diversity and Wheelchair committees. **Update - Adaptive programming in Meridian included a Christmas clinic involving Miss Mississippi and Santa Claus. Adaptive tennis is looking to expand to Hattiesburg, the Gulf Coast and Jackson for 2024. Wheelchair programming will look to expand past Brandon in 2024. Emphasis will be put on new partnerships with organizations throughout state**

-Visited NJTL's (Greenville, Tunica) and offer assistance/guidance with their programs.

Schools:

-Serve as liaison for USTA Schools Program. Received training by visiting a Shape America PE Conference (June 2023) attended by USTA Arkansas. Involved with both booth and teacher workshop. Afterwards, was prepared to offer training/workshop for Gautier school district PE teachers in July 2023.

-Will be organizing booth/presentation at MAHPERD Conference. **Update - Attended MAHPERD conference at Delta State University (November 2023). Presented parts of Net Generation Teacher's Workshop to 12 physical educators in attendance. Ran booth and assisted attendees in school registration and how to receive the Net Generation Equipment Package.**

-Taking steps to start middle school tennis league pilot with 4 Jackson schools in late Fall 2023. **Update - Middle school league pilot will be evaluated for Fall 2024.**

-Connect PE teachers wanting equipment with school partners

Parks

-Setup as vendor and partner at annual MRPA Conference in Fall 2023. **Update- Worked with Emillia and Hanane at booth during conference in Tupelo September 18-20. Promoted the USTA STA Parks and Recreation Grant to Parks Director and others in attendance.**

-Establish Tennis Apprentice and Ready to Rally programs through Parks and Recreation Departments. Reaching out to many throughout state and offering incentive of STA Parks and Recreation Grant. **Update - Parks and Recreation departments received STA Grant and ran Tennis Apprentices in Greenville, Cleveland, Vicksburg and Brandon. Tennis Apprentice was paired with the STA grant successfully and was started in other location including the one I ran at Castlewoods.**

January 17, 2024
2023 Annual Report
William Foreman
Competitive Pathway Director

2023 in Review

This past year saw good continued growth with junior tournaments and not any big decreases with adult tournaments. We had another successful College Showcase and brought back the Mississippi Tennis on Campus Championship for the first time in several years.

Junior tournament numbers saw a good increase of almost 500 players in 2023. Credit to all of the great tournament directors and players around the state for making that happen! People will come back to events that are well done, and will come to more events if they know the staff will do a good job. We even lost one of our Level 5 tournament sanctions, which are controlled by the USTA Southern Section. Our tournament directors got creative and we were able to take the doubles events from one tournament and turn them into a doubles only team event so that we still were able to have 5 Level 5 tournaments like we did the previous year. Of course, this doubles only tournament doesn't have the point value that singles events would have, and thus our entries dropped for that tournament this year. Much effort was put into finding players and making this team event work well, and despite the low numbers and exceedingly tough team creating aspect, overall went really well. The good news is that for 2024 we have been given another Level 5 sanction, so we are able to make this team event a full Level 5 tournament with singles and doubles again!

Outside of the higher level tournaments, we saw more providers trying out Junior Circuit tournaments and World Tennis Number (WTN) tournaments. Both of these options allow for more flexibility since they are not factored into the ranking engine that sanctioned tournaments have to account for. Junior Circuit tournaments are one day or half day events that allow for all junior players, ages 7-18, opportunities to play. They are also the only tournament that has the Playtracker points for the 10 and under players. These tournaments are a vital part of the competition pathway for juniors, providing them a competitive environment to start that also doesn't create bad experiences playing older more accomplished players.

WTN tournaments allow for more flexibility in tournament management. What has been working well for our providers is providing an open registration for all levels. For example, no matter a player or team's level they sign up for the event they want, either singles or doubles or mixed. After the registration deadline the tournament director can then use the WTN to divide players up into different groups and create draws depending on the registrations. This helps make for better draws, more competition and less bye rounds, while also allowing the players to see more people

signed up for the event instead of separating people out by level on the front end thereby creating the feeling that not as many people have signed up.

There are many adult tournaments around the state that are all run on either not USTA software or just run on paper. While each event is different and not all will necessarily work best for the players to be run on the USTA platform, I am continuing to reach out to providers and see where we can help either save time, or money, or provide a benefit to the players in the tournament by using our software. The perks are definitely there, in that we offer very flexible draws and events either through unsanctioned (unranked) tournaments or WTN tournaments. The fees are low, with the Serve Tennis credit card processing fee being 3.5% + \$.50 and our state head tax being only 3.5%. This makes for less than the Tennislink processing fees we used to have with tournaments. Players benefit from being able to search and find tournaments easier either online or through the USTA app, as well as having all the match data show up on their profile. Having one place to find their entire match history is definitely nice for those looking to keep track of their matches.

We had our first Tennis on Campus (TOC) state championship in several years in October in Ridgeland. This tournament was open to all schools anywhere, with preference given to Mississippi schools registering first, followed by other schools in the Southern Section. We had 12 teams register, with Ole Miss, Mississippi State, and Southern Miss all fielding at least one team. Teams from LSU to Washington University in St. Louis attended as well, and the players all had a great time. Congrats to Ole Miss A Team for taking home the big W in 2023!

The College Showcase was another success in 2023, with 15 coaches in attendance and 24 guys and girls on hand to play points and talk with the coaches. All players, coaches, and parents interested in the collegiate pathway were welcome to attend the coaches roundtable as well. All in all we had around 150 people on hand to listen to the coaches discuss the different aspects of college tennis, from NCAA Division 1 all the way to Junior College. Local news station WAPT was on hand to cover the event and we were lucky to have Devin Crotzer, USTA Southern Collegiate Manager, on hand to assist with running the event. Bill Riddle, coach at University of Tennessee Southern, joined in with Devin and together they ran the coaching roundtable with helpful prompts and jokes to keep everyone smiling while also learning all there is to learn about the process.

Looking forward to 2024

We plan on continuing to build on what we have accomplished in 2023. Main new additions will be to get back to hosting Player Development camps. We were unable to get one scheduled on a date that worked for players in 2023, and thus did not have enough turnout to have one make the way we wanted. We will plan on fixing the issues and get back on track with these camps. The parents and players love them and they

are a vital way for younger players to meet and compete with their peers, make friendships, and this also holds true for the parents as well!

We are working on putting together some focus groups with adult players as well, as we think there are a few tweaks we can make to adult tournaments to make them not only a better player experience but also easier for our providers to run. Having more opportunities for adults to compete and socialize and have those tournaments be easier to run sound like a win-win, and that is what we are going to work on making happen. We are also working on creating a team event for higher level adult players (NTRP 4.5+). More details to come as they get worked out, but the goal would be to create a competitive space for these players in an environment that doesn't have a lot of rules preventing them from competing with each other.

As the new USTA High School platform is rolled out more this year, we are hoping to see this become the main tool that our high school players will be able to use to create better records of their matches. Going into talking with a college coach and not having any of your high school season matches show up anywhere make it tough to prove your level and worth on court to a coach! This year we are looking to start rolling that out and continue working with our high school coaches on hosting tournaments and events that will benefit their players.

We are looking forward to 2024 being a great year for all levels and ages of players, and know that you are too. Please reach out if you have any interest in either running an event, have an idea for a new type of event, or if you or someone you know wants to become a USTA official!

Jr Team Tennis/Ready to Rally/USTA High School Classic

New in 2023- Spring Doubles Junior Team Tennis League;

- In the spring of 2023, MS held its first JTT in the spring season with a local league and a state championship.
- The spring league had a total of 44 teams and 346 players participating across the state.
- The state championship took place in Jackson, Ridgeland, and Brandon and included 27 teams and 231 players.
- At the championship, the MTA provided lunch on Saturday and Sunday, players and captains received a gift for participating.
- Additional activities at the championship included a hitting wall where a player was recognized as the "Queen of the Wall," and teams competed for the title of the Tackiest Dressed Team of the tournament.

There were two additional JTT state championships held, as the JTT Summer and Fall State Championships. Both had good attendance and participation.

Mississippi was represented well at the JTT sectionals in 2023. Tupelo's 10U team winning their division and the Southaven Ace Kicker's coming in second place in the 12U age division.

Mary Jon White is the new JTT Coordinator for the Oxford area. Mary John has been a JTT captain for several years.

Ready to Rally Programs:

- Ready to Rally concluded the year with 61 locations with 922 participants who learned basic tennis in MS. This marked an increase of 49% from 2022.

USTA MS High School Classic:

- The 2023 High School Classic had another successful tournament with 444 participants and 36 high schools.
- The 2024 Classic is scheduled for Saturday, February 10 in the Jackson/Ridgeland-Madison area.

Jr Team Tennis, Ready to Rally, and Team Challenges had a combined participation of 3157 in 2023. This reflects an 11% increase from 2022 and the second highest total for Mississippi.

Angie Deleon
Director of Junior Programs

MTA Marketing Report

- Continued doing a monthly email newsletter that goes to everyone in the state with a USTA number.
- Helped with finding bidders for the new state logo “Play Tennis MS” with new merch to be sold online.
- Created “Cathead Corporate Tennis League”. Responsible for finding the sponsor. 6-week league in the fall. Cathead offered free beverages on certain occasions.
- Working on 2024 Yearbook/Calendar.
- Started doing “Captain of the Month” for JTT and Adult League. Featured on social media and newsletter.
- Worked at both JTT & Adult League Championships selling merch, and taking champions photos. Now starting to work desk at JTT.
- Learned more about doing Facebook ads to gain a larger audience and spread our brand.
- Still growing on social media with FB, IG, TikTok.