



## MISSISSIPPI

### USTA Mississippi Committee Report

2024

**DUE: January 16, 2025**

**Committee Name: Officials Committee**

**Committee Chair: Billy Gip Clark**

**Committee Members: Billy Gip Clark, Dale Williamson, Felicia Ford, Sonia Kusek, Grant Eubanks**

---

#### **PROJECTS UNDER WAY and/or DISCUSSED:**

The officials committee's main responsibility is to help recruit new officials as well as help to retain the ones we have.

We have some new people interested in going through the officiating process, which is good. Always need more.

USTA Southern is working on a grant that will give new officials a \$250 stipend as a thank you for becoming certified. This also helps give an incentive to finish your certification as many start and do not finish.

USTA Southern also has a referral grant of \$50 to officials who help recruit a new official who gets certified.

At the end of 2024, Mississippi had a total of 29 certified officials and another 5 that are in the final stage(s). This is an increase of 6 during the 2024 year.

We continue to encourage people to go through the certification process and we certainly think the stipend will certainly help increase our numbers.



## **MISSISSIPPI**

### **USTA Mississippi Committee Report**

**2024**

**DUE: January 16, 2025**

**Committee Name: Ranking Committee**

**Committee Chair: Justyn Schelver**

**Committee Members: Justyn Schelver, Dave Randall, Steve Pennington, Neil Witherow, Michael Johnson**

---

**PROJECTS UNDER WAY and/or DISCUSSED:**

Starting in 2021, all rankings are handled by the USTA National Office for Adult and Junior players. MS no longer does our own ranking list each week.

As such, this committee handles all needs related to high level team competition that arise around the National Standing List. For example, creating and approving the team selections for Ozaki Cup.

Last year, there was discussion with other states on doing a more regional team competition tournament. This past November three regional Level 5 team tournaments took place. Mississippi played in a region with Alabama and Louisiana, with the tournament taking place in Mobile, AL.

This committee will also be involved in helping create/approve any other team selection or issues that arise related to the National Standing List and Rankings.

January 25, 2025

TO: Russ Denty, Executive Director MTA  
FR: Cleon McKnight, Chairperson of S & S Committee  
RE: 2024 Summary of Committee's Report

The overall goals and objectives of the 2024 Sanctioning and Scheduling Committee were met. There were no major issues or concerns.

**The Key Highlight and Goals:**

-Both the Adult and Junior USTA participating numbers were slightly up. In 2023 the Adult participating number was 2296 whereas the 2024 number was 2301, a 22% increase. The 2023 Junior Participating number was 5195 whereas the 2024 number was 5223, a 0.5% increase.

-2025 goals are to continue to work on adult and junior events that are easier to play. One day and half day events that offer good competition without the full weekend commitment is encouraged.

- To continue to encourage the TD's to be vigilant in keeping current their USTA Certification up to date, such as their "membership", "Safe Play" and "Background Check". The Committee also encourages all TD's running USTA Tournament in 2026 to complete their "Online Tournament Application Information" during the allotted time frame set by MTA Sanctioning Body



**SOUTHERN  
MISSISSIPPI**

## **USTA Mississippi 2024 Year End Committee Report**

**January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024**

**DUE: January 10, 2025**

**Committee Name: Diversity Committee**

**Committee Chair: Birlette Jelks**

**Committee Members: Birlette Jelks, Neal Robinson, Oscar Deleon, Chris Adams, Nyeshia Nealon, Myeshia Nealon, Toni Jackson, Akeelah Sartin. Jay Pacelli- staff liaison**

---

### **PROJECTS DISCUSSED:**

**Committee met throughout year to discuss how to increase diversity involvement in tennis in our state. Different committee members and NJTL's were to use National Tennis Month events, Open Tennis Fest events and the Tennis Apprentice program to reach out to diverse populations and introduce many to the game of tennis. Encouraged committee members to share information to their communities on USTA Play Facilitator and USTA Level 1 workshops happening throughout year. Both workshops are low to no cost opportunities to get everyone teaching the game of tennis and delivering it to all populations. Committee discussed speaking to HBCU colleges about having a Kids Day during one of their college matches. The Jackson State program has shown interested in doing one during the 2024-25 season. Committee would like to arrange a HBCU college showcase with coaches invited from HBCU schools in the South. Like to see if it can be started in 2025. Committee looked to be involved in the first combination NJTL State Leadership Camp and NJTL Cup in the summer of 2024. Event would bring many of our NJTL youth for a day of fun, education, and competitive play at a HBCU college and/or NJTL facility. Committee approved to have topics and guest speakers attached to diversity and inclusion at the first annual USTA Mississippi CTA/NJTL Workshop and Summit held last October. Finally, committee spoke of promoting tennis programming at heritage events throughout year. Committee members are being encouraged to have a tennis presence at celebrations and observances of heritage to show that tennis is truly an activity for everyone.**

## **PROJECTS COMPLETED AND ACHIEVEMENTS:**

- The committee oversees the grant process for the MTA Diversity Grant. The grant was awarded to 2 organizations totaling \$2400.00. The grants are offered for the purpose of supporting the development of NJTL's and to specifically impact increasing diversity.
- Five Mississippi NJTL's (Family Biz, Golden Triangle, Greenville, Ace2Deuce and Friends of Battlefield) had members 12-16 of age attend the 2024 NJTL Sectional Summer Leadership Camp in New Orleans, LA. Mississippi had the largest representation of NJTL's attend the camp.
- A group of our NJTL's delivered events during May's National Tennis Month. Meridian CTA, for example, focused again on offering tennis to the developmentally disabled at the Northeast Tennis Center.
- USTA Mississippi partnered with the organization "Tennis for Fun" to fund an adaptive tennis clinic in Hattiesburg throughout the year. Participants from the clinic went on to compete in the Special Olympics here in Mississippi and the first USTA Southern Sectional Adaptive Tournament in Chattanooga.
- Golden Triangle NJTL continued to benefit youth in Northeastern Mississippi by hosting its successful 5<sup>th</sup> annual Battle of the States tournament.
- NJTL's continued to offer low to no cost summer tennis options for youth in its communities. Camps were offered by Ace2Deuce, Friends at Battlefield, and Greenville. Greenville CTA/NJTL completed its 20<sup>th</sup> year of offering a 6-week Summer Tennis Camp at the Ward Tennis Center.
- Family Biz Builders provided a Summer Sports and Fitness program for the Tunica community.
- Greenville CTA/NJTL received a 30k grant from the USTA Foundation to resurface 6 courts at Wards Recreation Center in Greenville. Courts were completed in the summer and reopened with a ceremony involving USTA Mississippi and Mayor Errick D. Simmons on August 27, 2024.
- Family Biz Builders were offered a \$3500.00 grant from USTA Mississippi in the construction/surfacing of their court at their facility. In addition, USTA Mississippi has donated a portable Sport Court to further assist delivering tennis to the under privileged youth in the Tunica area.
- Diversity committee members assisted with the first annual NJTL State Leadership Camp and NJTL Cup at both Jackson State University and the Dorothy Vest Tennis Center (Battlefield Park). The event was held on July 27, 2024 with 36 participants from 5 NJTL's. The program included a tennis clinic with 4 tennis teaching professionals, a Quiz Bowl, speakers discussing college academic opportunities and tennis careers, and friendly competition amongst the NJTL's. Each NJTL received a travel and/or participation grant for attending. Friend at Battlefield Group NJTL and Greenville NJTL took honors in winning the "A" and "B" Divisions.
- Mississippi had strong representation at the USTA Southern Adaptive Tournament this past Fall. Robert Hansen of Hattiesburg, a representative of the "Tennis For Fun" clinic, won the Green Ball Level 4 competition. Karen Chesney, a participant at the Baddour Center in Senatobia, MS also competed in the event and represented Mississippi.
- Active adaptive clinics are now offered in Meridian, Hattiesburg, and, most recently, Ocean Springs/Biloxi. The REACH Adaptive Clinic was started by Gulf Coast CTA and Jenny Cockrell at St. Martin Courts.
- Toss N Serve Tennis NJTL is starting up in Southern Mississippi! Toss N Serve, led by Diversity Committee member Akeelah Sartin, will be based at the Friendship Park Courts in Columbia, MS for 2025. The NJTL will be partnering with Columbia Parks and Recreation.

- Birlette Jelks, 2024 chair of the Diversity Committee, won the 2024 USTA Southern Educational Merit Award. The award is given by USTA Southern to recognize an individual for their achievements.
- Greenville NJTL won the USTA Southern NJTL Chapter of the Year award for 2024.
- Nyesha Nealon and Myesha Nealon, alums of Greenville CTA/NJTL, were selected to participate in the USTA Level 2 Diverse Coach Scholarship Program.
- Family Biz NJTL offered free Fall programs in Red Ball and Cardio Tennis to community families to promote tennis and their organization.
- The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi gave a \$4000 grant for the College and Career Readiness Program at Family Biz Builders NJTL.
- Ace 2 Deuce CTA/NJTL had people from community try tennis by holding a Woods and Whites Doubles Mixer during USTA Fall Open Tennis Fest.
- Adult Red Ball Tennis was offered by Ace 2 Deuce NJTL and Friends at Battlefield Park NJTL for December 2024 to get more people of all ages into the game of tennis.
- Golden Triangle CTA/NJTL held a successful Tailgate Triples event for the community and USTA Open Tennis Fest this past September
- USTA Mississippi and USTA Southern co-hosted a Jack and Jill event on the Coast this past September with 30 participants learning the game of tennis and presented local opportunities to get involved in the game.
- A NJTL and Diversity session was included at the first annual USTA Mississippi CTA/NJTL Workshop and Summit held on October 5, 2024.

#### **FUTURE PROJECTS:**

- In-person Diversity Committee meeting scheduled at the USTA Mississippi Annual Meeting on January 24, 2025. Topics to be discussed will include the Spring season, National Tennis Month and how we can include our diverse populations. In addition, the committee will focus on state, sectional and national diversity grants, how the committee can get involved in heritage month events, a HBCU College showcase plan and suggested topics/ideas for this year's State CTA/NJTL Summit in that would be more NJTL/DEI specific.



**SOUTHERN  
MISSISSIPPI**

## **USTA Mississippi Quarterly Committee Report 2024 Year End**

**Committee Name: Wheelchair**

**Committee Chair: Robbie Sullivan**

**Committee Members: Allen Champagne, Johnny McGinn**

---

### **PROJECTS COMPLETED:**

**Held Rock n Roll Wheelchair Level 3 Tournament at Brandon City Courts in April the marquee event for the committee and wheelchair tennis in the state.**

**Applied for & received grants from USTA Southern & USTA Mississippi for assistance subsidizing the tournament as well as wheelchair tournament player travel for tournaments across the country.**

**There are currently 10 active Wheelchair Tournament tennis players in MS, and the group has traveled to tournaments in Baton Rouge, Houston (TX), Dallas, St Louis, & Atlanta.**

**Plans to have a Wheelchair Clinic in the spring, and the 2025 Rock n Roll Wheelchair Tennis Championships will be moving to the Fall (October 3-5)**

### **ADAPTIVE**

**USTA Mississippi has given grants to 3 new Adaptive programs in last 18 months(Canopy School, Tennis 4 Fun, & Meridian). These 3 locations, in addition to a program on the Coast, are all new Adaptive programs established in the last 2 years.**

**Mississippi sent players from Hattiesburg's Tennis 4 Fun Program as well as a player from Senatobia to USTA Southern's Inaugural Adaptive Tennis Championships.**

**Lori Duke's Tennis 4 Fun Program in Hattiesburg is winning the Wheelchair/Adaptive Program of the Year.**



## **MISSISSIPPI**

# **USTA Mississippi Committee Report**

**2024**

**DUE: January 16, 2025**

**Committee Name: Adult Competition Committee**

**Committee Chair: Amanda Mincey**

**Committee Members: Amanda Mincey, Dennis Butler, John Cox, Lisa Shaw, Ivan Michelli**

### **PROJECTS UNDER WAY and/or DISCUSSED:**

The committee will help solicit and put together the Callen Cup Team for Mississippi. Players will complete an online player application to assist in reviewing and selecting the top players around the state. Amanda Mincey and Jonathan Shemper will serve as the Female and Male Captains for the Callen Cup teams.

### **PROJECTS COMPLETED:**

Our Callen Cup team was filled and we sent a team in all age groups for men and women. All of our players enjoyed the fellowship and competition, with the Women's 55 team in the 3rd/4th playoff but didn't get to finish due to excessive amounts of rain received during the tournament.





## MISSISSIPPI

# USTA Mississippi Annual Committee Report

2024

**DUE: January 16, 2025**

**Committee Name: Junior Tennis Council**

**Committee Chair: Toni Lucas**

**Committee Members: Toni Lucas, Bo Gard, Courtney Ulrich, Jason Woods, Anthony Hiatt, Chad Rhoden, Walker Sahag, Sylvia Viljoen, Gina Bingham, Ivan Michelli, Robbie Wrigley, Dave Randall, Xiaohua Wu, Claire Kiamie, Dita Collier, Julia Gaines, Jennifer McCants, Jestine Corso**

---

### **PROJECTS COMPLETED:**

The committee met at the annual meeting and discussed the State Closed L5 Junior Tournament, potential updates to the L5 Open tournaments offered in MS, discussed the inconsistency of green ball between tournaments and JTT.

The committee also met virtually in April and approved sending 1 coach to each location for Southern Closed tournaments, instead of two to three of the sites in years past. Coaches this year were: Chicho Chaves, Cary 12s; Karem Graeber, Macon 14s; Justyn Schelver, Little Rock 16s; and Trey Randall, Mobile 18s. This saved \$4000 that was used to award travel grants to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place players in the State Closed L5 in each age group. Players were given a USTA MS novelty check during the trophy presentation, and mailed the travel grant check after the tournament.

MTA college scholarship recipients were selected.

Justyn Schelver, Chicho Chaves, Zoe Douglas, and Sylvia Viljoen were selected as Ozaki Cup coaches to accompany our top Mississippi junior players to this year's tournament in August.



**SOUTHERN  
MISSISSIPPI**

## **USTA Mississippi Year End Committee Report**

**January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024**

**DUE: January 10, 2024**

**Committee Name: CTA**

**Committee Chair: Jay Pacelli – Staff Liaison**

**Committee Members: Joseph Kusek (Northwest), Jenny Cockrell (Gulf Coast), Toni Jackson (Meridian), Eddie Reed (Northwest)**

---

### **PROJECTS UNDER WAY and/or DISCUSSED:**

**Staff liaison spoke to committee members and CTA leaders about their goals and objectives individually in 2024. Main focus was to add to our growing numbers in grass roots programming. In particular, look to grow more adult beginning programming (Tennis Apprentice) within their communities. Committee members and CTA leaders were encouraged to add social events, team challenges, junior programming (Ready to Rally/JTT) and adaptive programming to their sections. Committee members and other CTA leaders were encouraged to take advantage of grants available, particularly the Parks and Recreation Grant which would give funds (up to \$2000) to park associations that would introduce new USTA programming on public courts. Committee members were reminded of National Tennis Month in May to help kick off the summer season. Committee members met via Google Meet during the summer months and in September to specifically address the state CTA workshop in the Fall. Committee approved to expand the workshop to include NJTL leaders, have a NJTL track, and to call the event a CTA/NJTL Summit. Topics for the summit, discussed by the committee, included volunteerism, adaptive tennis, adult beginners tennis, junior beginners tennis, Adult Red Ball, advocacy, and training our next instructors and coaches. Committee ideas included having speakers from CTA and NJTL organizations outside Mississippi and to have an open discussion segment during the workshop where CTA and NJTL leaders can share their best practices.**

## **PROJECTS COMPLETED:**

**14 National Tennis Month events were had which included the communities of Toni Jackson and Jenny Cockrell. Committee members stepped up as their communities were some of the 21 Tennis Apprentices that were held in the spring and summer months. Meridian CTA did continue adaptive programming with providing a free clinic to developmentally disabled individuals. Adaptive clinics were offered at Tatum Park, Hattiesburg as USTA Mississippi partnered with Tennis for Fun out of Florida to provide free tennis play and lessons for the developmentally disabled. Jenny Coackrell and the Gulf Coast CTA started an adaptive clinic this past November at St. Martin courts. The CTA/NJTL Summit was held at River Hills Country Club on October 5, 2024. 26 representatives from the state CTA's and NJTL's attended. Five guest speakers from Tennessee, Louisiana and Mississippi gave presentations ranging from growing your CTA's with volunteers to CTA and NJTL best practices. USTA Mississippi staff led conversations on topics ranging from the benefits of Tennis Apprentice and Ready to Rally to using Kinetica data in your communities. The summit concluded with a presentation from Emillia Viljoen on coaching for communities and a successful Adult Red Ball event.**

## **FUTURE PROJECTS:**

**CTA committee will meet before the start of Spring season with new committee members from Oxford (Lance Hickman), Northwest (Pamela Johnson) and Tri-County (Karen Newman). New committee members will be asked to share their perspectives on how each CTA can grow tennis in their regions. The CTA committee's primary goal, as CTA leaders, will be to add new ideas to the 2025 Community Development Workshop and Summit. Other topics to focus on for 2025 will include school tennis, training new individuals to teach tennis, increasing grass roots programming options, and CTA's partnering with organizations that work with developmentally disabled individuals and getting them on the court.**