

Executive Director Report

January 2025

Overall

- Mississippi exceeded its total registrations YOY, going from 29,055 in 2023 to 29,172 in 2024. This stat is the primary measuring tool used for funding to USTA districts as well as the "health" of USTA programs, and measures tournament registrations, Adult League registrations, Jr Team Tennis registrations, as well as a few other categories.
- Adult Tournament participation was the leading growth statistic, as registrations in USTA Adult Tournaments were up 22%, while Jr Tournaments were slightly up (1%). USTA Adult League participation was down 3.7%, but Adult Social Play continued to grow
- On the USTA Membership side, Mississippi has the 4th highest (out of 9 states) junior USTA membership total in the Section with 7,049 active members, and the 7th highest total of Adult Memberships with 6,057 members.
- SB Buck of Greenville and John Cox of Cleveland are the 2024 inductees into the Mississippi Tennis Hall of Fame.

Grants & Community Tennis

- USTA MS active in giving out grants, as our association budgets for College Scholarships (\$8k), Facilities Grants (\$40-60k), Tennis Camp Scholarships, and numerous other grants with the intention to grow the game.
- Revamped the Tennis Foundation of Mississippi's player grant as well as the USTA MS Player Development Grant to make grant funding accessible to all junior player participating in tournaments, regardless of income.
- USTA Mississippi awarded Jr Player Development Grants to 14 different families (\$7,900 total in grants) participating in Level 5 (or above) tournaments to offset costs associated with junior tournament tennis.
- The Tennis Foundation of Mississippi gave out grants to an additional 8 families of junior tennis players that are participating in junior tournaments.
- 15 sites hosted National Tennis Month Events and 21 sites hosted Open Tennis Fest events, taking advantage of the USTA Southern grant and marketing for those events.
- USTA Southern introduced its "Innovation Grant" in 2024, and will continue it in 2025 for any provider that has an idea to grow tennis.
- Canebrake Country Club's new facility won a USTA National Outstanding Facility Award. Canebrake is one of several locations to open new tennis courts and new facilities in 2024 (Madison County, Southwest MS Community College, Madison Ridgeland Academy, Petal High School, Snowden Grove/Southaven Tennis Center, and more)
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What's New? What's the USTA and state focus?

- Governor Tate Reeves collaboration and promotional video during National Tennis Month
- USTA MS Youtube page highlighting new event videos produced through a 3rd party company
- Adult Red Ball Initiative, 12 separate Mississippi sites filled out the USTA National Form indicating interest in running a pilot program, several executed a program.
- Established a "Play Tennis Mississippi" logo through a 3rd party vendor. That vendor setup an online store for USTA MS where logo items and apparel can be purchased.

- USTA National partnering with technology/software companies Kinetica & Quorum to give states more data about tennis player vs tennis court density, as well as data about communities considering tennis court vs pickleball court construction/resurfacing.
- Tennis Industry Openings page on website to post tennis pro jobs & tennis clubs, USTA National working on an industry openings and careers in tennis website also.
- Held first ever state "NJTL Leadership Camp & NJTL Cup," with NJTL's from around the state participating and competing in formal match play against one another.
- Campus Kids Days held for the 2nd consecutive year with colleges that reached out to participate
- College Showcase held for 3rd consecutive year in 2024
- Held our first ever 70 & Over Invitational in Vicksburg, with 13 teams in attendance.
- Four local programs for the Adaptive Tennis population have been created in the last 24 months, and two locations sent players from MS to USTA Southern's 1st ever Adaptive Tennis Tournament.
- Held 3 Play Facilitator Workshops, one Coaching Fundamentals Workshop, and two High School Coaches Workshops to provide education to potential new tennis coaches about how they get more training and become certified.
- USTA Southern, in partnership with USTA National, launched a new "Southern Facility Fund," aka "Enhanced Facility Fund," to offer a grant of a minimum of \$350,000 to aid in the construction of new public courts.
- Applied for an Innovation Grant through USTA Southern that was adopted by USTA Southern section-wide (grant for NEW certified USTA Officials).
- Seven new officials from Mississippi gained certification in 2024, and we now have 29 currently certified officials.
- Enhanced the Tennis Apprentice program and push in 2024, with 32 sessions offered statewide, producing close to 400 new adult players. Culminated with a Tennis Apprentice Playoff event amongst participating facilities.
- Continue to offer College Scholarships, Tennis Facility Grants, Camp Scholarships, assistance for Adult League teams traveling to Nationals, Wheelchair & Adaptive programs, CTA's & NJTL's, and many more grant opportunities!

January 10, 2025

Director of Adult League Tennis Annual Report

2024 was a successful year for MS league tennis. Two teams competed in and won National Championships.

- 18&Over 3.0 M Jonathan Sims/JXN
- 18&Over 4.0 M Hector Custode/JXN

Other notable Sectional Champions/Finalists:

- 18&Over Mixed 2.5 Kaitlyn Hennessey and Levi Sumrall/PB-Finalist
- 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.



**SOUTHERN
MISSISSIPPI**

USTA Mississippi Year End Community Development Director Report

January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024

DUE: January 10, 2025

Name: Jay Pacelli

CTA:

- Planned CTA/NJTL State Workshop and Summit with the assistance of our CTA committee. Date of the Summit was October 5 at River Hills Country Club. Twenty six CTA/NJTL leaders were part of the Summit and speakers from Louisiana, Tennessee and Mississippi spoke during the program.
- Met with various CTA's in the state to discuss strategic plan(s) for 2024. Emphasized the importance of grass roots programming to all regional CTA committees. Incentives for planning Tennis Apprentices and Social Play events.
- Oversaw MTA facility grant. Pledges have been made to 11 organizations in 2024 totaling \$58,500. Six organizations completed their projects by the end of 2024 with an overall commitment from USTA Mississippi of \$34,000.
- Oversaw community coordinator initiative on Gulf Coast as well as Northeast MS.
- Served as liaison for USTA National Facilities Grant.
- Oversaw Community Growth and Participation Grant (CGPG). Ten CTA's applied for the grant at the end of 2024. Four CTA's showed an overall increase in adult and junior participation while 2 CTA's had statistically equal number participation to 2023.
- Oversaw National Tennis Month. State of Mississippi had 14 events to promote NTM throughout the state. In addition, Mississippi had 21 approved events for Open Tennis Fest this past Fall.
- Starkville CTA was reestablished in 2024 and began several new grass roots programs for both juniors and adults.
- Assisted in establishing new presidents and leadership with both Oxford and Northwest CTA. Oxford is presently led by Lance Hickman and Northwest by Pamela Johnson.

NJTL:

- Staff liaison for MTA Diversity Committee. Committee meets in-person and via Google Meet four times a year. The committee and staff liaison are dedicated to organizing plans to increase diversity involvement in tennis in the state of Mississippi.

- Oversaw and administer MTA Diversity Grant. Two NJTL's applied and received a total of \$2400.00.
- Established first year NJTL Cup and State Leadership Camp. Had a play event, tennis clinic, quiz bowl and guest speakers for participants of 5 of our state NJTL's on July 27, 2024. Participation and travel grants totaling \$950.00 was divided amongst all NJTL's.
- Planned first state CTA/NJTL Summit for October 5, 2024 at River Hills Country Club. Invited all NJTL leaders and significant parties. NJTL specific topics of discussion were emphasized and a "NJTL Track" was offered.
- Looked to contact HBCU's to see if they will offer Tennis Apprentice on campus. Jackson State University, a HBCU Collegiate Hub Grant recipient, conducted a Tennis Apprentice on their college courts.
- Offered assistance and scholarships to NJTL's and participants that want to attend NJTL Sectional Leadership Camps in New Orleans. Five of our NJTL's did attend and I visited the camp at the historic Atkinson-Stern Tennis Center to support the leaders and players.
- Served as MTA liaison to setup Adaptive programs. Have adaptive programming in Meridian, Hattiesburg, and the Gulf Coast this Fall. Looking to expand to other areas of Mississippi and have CTA's and others aware of grants offered by USTA Mississippi and USTA Southern. Currently partnering with "Tennis for Fun" to deliver tennis opportunities for developmentally disabled individuals. Tennis for Fun was the recipient of the USTA National Adaptive Tennis Community Service Award at the 2024 USTA Annual Meeting and Conference.
- Helped reestablish the Toss N Serve NJTL, now in Columbia, MS. Akeelah Sartin is partnering with Columbia Parks and Recreation to offer juniors in need tennis programming at the Friendship Park courts.

Schools:

- Serving as liaison for USTA Schools Program. Continuing to look for schools to have a training workshop for their PE teachers. With Emillia Viljoen, TSR for Mississippi, conducted school workshop sessions for the Greenville School District.
- Was a vendor with a booth at the MAHPERD conference. MAHPERD had a convention on October 17 & 18 in Oxford. Attend and look to connect PE teachers with school partners and equipment. Emillia and myself conducted a Red Ball presentation during the afternoon session.
- Continued to assist PE teachers on how to register on usta.com and get connected with school partners and equipment.

Parks:

- Was a vendor at the MRPA Executive Meeting last March. Goal was to promote USTA Southern Parks Grant to Parks Directors and to encourage new Tennis Apprentice programs at various Parks Tennis Center locations.
- Assisted parks with holding tennis events for National Parks and Recreation Month in July. Thirteen tennis offerings for both juniors and adults occurred in Brandon, Jackson, Columbia, Meridian and Vicksburg.
- Continued to be lead in establishing Tennis Apprentice programs in Parks, Colleges, CTA's, and with Tennis Pros. Goal was to establish 25 Tennis Apprentice sessions throughout the year. USTA Mississippi has developed 32 new Tennis Apprentice sessions throughout state at year end. Park and public facility Tennis Apprentices took place in Meridian, Ridgeland, Clinton, Brandon, Cleveland, Hattiesburg, Greenville, Amory, Horn Lake and Houston.

January 10, 2025
2004 Annual Report
William Foreman
Director, Competitive Pathway

2024 in Review

We saw another positive year of growth in 2024, with both our adult and junior tournaments numbers increasing. We continued to host two great annual events in the College Showcase and the Mississippi Tennis on Campus Championship. We added new tournaments to the calendar, including a fun team regional junior tournament, and created new travel grants for players in our state closed junior championship tournament.

In tournaments, both our junior and adult numbers were positive for 2024. Junior tournaments saw a small growth of 28 players to a total of 5223 for the year. Adult tournaments saw a larger growth of 505 players to a total of 2801 for the year. We saw the addition of several new adult tournaments on the calendar this year, the largest of which was the annual Battle of the States hosted by Golden Triangle tennis and Vanita Phinisey. This is a great annual team tournament with teams from all over the region coming to compete. Shoutout to all of our adult tournament directors and facilities as there were increases across the board in existing tournaments as well as new tournaments.

We have continued to host two annual events in the College Showcase and the Mississippi Tennis on Campus Championship. The College Showcase is a favorite event of any high school player who is looking to compete at the collegiate level. We have coaches from every level of college tennis, from NCAA D1 to Junior College and every level in between, participate in a round table discussion where parents and players can ask them any questions about all aspects of the college recruiting process and experience playing college tennis. We also hosted the Mississippi Tennis on Campus Championship, with this year's tournament moving to Oxford. We had such a good response to teams wanting to play last year, this year we needed a larger facility. We had 19 teams competing from 6 states, with all players having a great time in a great town.

The Junior Tennis Council approved a new appropriation of their budget this year, instead of sending 7 coaches to the 4 different locations for the USTA Southern Closed Championships this year, we sent 1 coach to each tournament. This allowed us to use \$4000 in the budget for a different purpose, which was chosen to be given out to the winners of the State Closed Level 5 tournament as travel grants. Players who came in 1st, 2nd, or 3rd in each age group received travel grant money for their success in that tournament. This was met with overwhelming positive feedback and we look forward to making this a regular offering.

All of the junior staff within the Southern Section also worked together to create 3 new Regional Championship tournaments that took place in November. These Regional Level 5 tournaments happened at the same time, with Mississippi playing in a region with Alabama and Louisiana. This tournament took place in Mobile, AL, and featured players signing up for the tournament with a mixed doubles partner from their same state. Doubles teams competed in a dominant duo format, where each round players played a doubles match and two singles matches, with the team who won at least 2 courts won the round. Points were also awarded to

the players' state for each court they won. This year Louisiana won our regional, but we'll be ready to take it from them next year!

The USTA launched the new Adult Red Pilot program this past year, and this also coincided with USTA Southern's Catalyst Grant for Adult Red/Foam ball programs. We have been working on getting these implemented in MS, with 10 providers signing up to run events around the state. These adult red ball programs can be leagues or single events, with adult participants playing on or off a court (off court locations include parking lots, gyms, anywhere there is a flat-ish surface big enough to set up a mini 36 ft tennis net). Players use smaller 23in or 25in racquets and either red felt balls or foam balls. These are very fun experiences as the level of play is accessible to even first time players, and players of all levels can play together on a court with success. We look forward to this continuing across the state and helping to keep tennis fun and easy!

The new USTA High School Platform was a beta test product in 2023 and became a pilot this past year. The MidSouth Association of Independent Schools (MAIS) signed on as a partner with us at the start of the 2024 tennis season. Our TSR for Mississippi, Emillia Viljoen, is also USTA Southern's High School Specialist, and was instrumental in helping this platform expand this past year. Emillia created onboarding documents and we helped individually invite and onboard over 50 schools into the new database. We continue to help run both the MHSAA (public schools) and MAIS (private schools) state team and individual championships as we have done in years past. The overall feedback from the new platform was positive, with coaches being able to create rosters, create and enter scores for dual matches, as well as create and participate in tournaments. The ability for players to have more matches tracked on their profile is invaluable when looking at college tennis as coaches can see your match record all in one place.

We have added more USTA Flex App leagues and ladders in 2024, with River Hills Club continuing to pilot a private facility program that is only available to the club members. These leagues last year saw 55 participants in 2023, and in 2024 that number increased to 122 participants. In addition to the River Hills league, we started a Jackson area league open to all players. In 2024, the Jackson league saw 147 participants. These leagues are offered as singles leagues, for men and women separately, with players grouped based on a combination of their World Tennis Number, NTRP, and previous record within the flex matches.

In addition to the flex leagues, we partnered with the USTA National office to pilot Tennis on Campus ladders with 2 club teams, Ole Miss and Mississippi State. We had 40 players on campus join these ladders and the feedback from those players was overwhelmingly positive. This served as a model that went on to a USTA National TOC pilot in the fall that saw many schools using the flex ladders as a way to create friendly competition on campus and help grow club tennis participation.

Looking forward to 2025

We plan on continuing to build on what we have accomplished in 2024. Main new additions will be to get back to hosting Player Development camps. The Southern section is adding money into helping make this happen, as well as creating a pathway for all the states to follow that will feed into sectional camps. We are looking forward to these becoming annual camps that all the players are looking forward to!

Jr Team Tennis/Ready to Rally

JTT:

This was our second year to have 3 successful championships.

Spring League/Championship; teams are coed and the match format is one girl and one boys doubles, and one mixed court.

Spring Championship was held in Jackson on Cinco de Mayo weekend. We provided players with a photo booth keeping the Cinco de Mayo theme. Players who were nominated for sportsmanship during the championship were able to have a swing at the piñata.

Tacos and chips were served for lunch.

Summer League/Championship; this is our only league that advances to Sectionals. The match format is one girl and one boys singles; one girl and one boys doubles. We provided lunch for captains and players. The photo booth theme was silly tennis props. Players who were nominated for sportsmanship during the championship was given USTA swag.

- Mississippi was represented well at the JTT sectionals in 2024. Tupelo's 10U and 12U teams were Finalist. 14U Advanced teams from Jackson/Madison were champions.

Fall League/Championship; this is our college like format. Teams play 2 doubles courts and 4 singles. Players play both singles and doubles. We provided lunch to captains and players and the photo booth theme was Super Hero's. Players who were nominated for sportsmanship during the championship was given a JTT 25th Anniversary commemorative.

Bo Gard is the new JTT Coordinator for the Gulf Coast and Marko Lovrinovic is the new coordinator for the Central MS area.

Ready to Rally Programs:

- Ready to Rally concluded the year with 60 locations with 788 participants who learned basic tennis in MS.

Jr Team Tennis, Ready to Rally, and Team Challenges had a combined participation of 2981 participants.

Angie Deleon
Director of Junior Programs

2024 Tennis Service Representative Report by Emilia Viljoen.

1. 2024 Initial goals and expectations:

- Continue to expand the scope of TSR High School Specialty in serving providers of High School tennis.
- TSR Visits would be in person, phone calls, emails and other electronic communication.
- Collaborate with USTA MS staff to grow and promote tennis in Mississippi.

2. Day to Day tasks of the TSR in the field:

Tasks included assisting providers with programming solutions, Kid's Day community events, Junior Circuit events, Open Tennis Fest events, High School team tournaments, Junior Team Tennis, Serve Tennis, connect providers to USTA National Tennis Venue Services for assistance with facility needs and grants.

Highlights and Events for 2024:

1. High School Specialty:

- **USTA National High School Council:** Much progress was made with the High School Platform. More state organizations adopted and utilized the product in 2024, resulting in it being tested by a larger group of providers. The first national High School Summit was successfully hosted at the National Campus. I was part of the core group to organize the summit. MS was represented by the MAC Tennis chair and Brandon coach, Scott Huskey.
- **Southern High School Team Tournament pilot grant:** I worked closely with the Southern School Committee to make a grant available for providers of High School Tennis to host a Team Tournament. MS was one of three states that had a grant recipient.

2. USTA Coach Academy:

Continued training and education through the USTA Coach Academy enables me to deliver Coaching Fundamental Workshops, Community Coaches Workshops, Play Facilitator Workshops and High School Coach Workshops. I delivered Community Coach Workshops in Tupelo, Jackson and Oceans Springs, one PE Teacher Training Workshop in Greenville, MS and three Coaching Fundamentals Workshop across the Southern Section and one High School Coach Workshop in collaboration with USTA National.

3. Event attendance:

- Mississippi Pro Workshop
- USTA Mississippi Annual Meeting
- USTA Mississippi High School Coaches Workshop
- USTA Southern Annual Meeting
- Southern Section Staff Exchange
- USTA Southern Tennis on Campus Sectional Tournament
- Second annual USTA Mississippi Tennis on Campus State Championship
- USTA Southern Adult League Sectionals Auburn, AL
- USTA Southern Combo Championship Mobile, AL
- MHSAA State Team and Individual Championships
- MAIS State Team Championships
- Mississippi State University Men's Tennis Team Game Day Kids Event
- Riverhills Pro Circuit Event Kids Day
- Southaven Pro Circuit Event Kids Day
- USPTA National Convention, Palm Springs CA
- McGill-Toolen High School Girls Invite Mobile, AL
- McGill-Toolen High School Boys Invite Mobile, AL
- Represented Mississippi at the Callen Cup in Huntsville, AL
- USTA National High School Summit
- Rock and Roll WC Tournament – Tournament Director

- PE Workshop Wheelchair Training, Peachtree City, GA
- Mississippi College Showcase
- Jack & Jill MS Coast Chapter Family Day - Biloxi Tennis Center
- 55and Over State Combo Championships – Vicksburg
- Wheelchair Awareness Day during Southern 18's Closed Mobile, AL

4. Certification and Continuing Education:

- USTA Officials Certification completed
- 22 CEU's accrued during 2024

5. What to expect in 2025:

There will be a shift towards more in-person visits as done in previous years, as well as continued collaboration with state staff to grow and promote tennis in Mississippi. I will continue to serve as TSR for South Alabama as well.

Let's grow tennis together in 2025.