

Girls' Tennis Post Season Meeting

October 28, 2025 @ 10:30am

- I. **Welcome and introductions:** Sandy Mamary, NJSIAA (chair); Vicky Browne, Kent Place (AD); Frank Malta, East Brunswick (AD); Michael Mitchell, New Brunswick (coach); Colleen Senior, Clearview (coach); Courter Smith, Tournaments Director; Meaghan Williams, Academy of Holy Angels (coach)

- II. **Review of previous meeting minutes/business**
 - Coaches' clinic at Princeton last year was well attended and well received. On Friday, January 9 at Princeton, the NJSIAA will hold its 2025-26 coaches' clinic – info was sent via blast on October 15 and will be transmitted again in December.
 - UTR and WTN – UTR fully functioning around the state, with very few programs not registering entire teams. The USTA is engaging with the NJSIAA to implement its rating system (WTN) – discussions are ongoing.
 - Multiple matches in one day – a few schools appear to have utilized the new rule. It will be a point of emphasis in Leagues & Conferences – helpful for schools starting season before school starts, for those who want to ease scheduling issues, and for makeups. Well-received and no negative feedback received.
 - Carryover rule was in effect for this season – was not used at all! Concern about wording and enforcement, which will be addressed in later correspondence/proposal.
 - Challenge matches online – the piloting was done, and it is very easy for coaches to enter all scores into UTR, for both singles and doubles. Perhaps making the challenge form editable and stored on the NJSIAA site is an option. This will appear in later correspondence/proposals.

- III. **Correspondence/Feedback regarding the 2025 season (regular- and post-season):**
Request/correspondence; discussion at meeting; recommendation/comment/action
 - *A lot of new coaches –A virtual meeting will be set to review rules, expectations, etc. **Next summer, there will be some sort of virtual meeting to assist new coaches from around the state navigate the start of the season and review expected procedures. The Tournaments Director will host the session.***
 - *Officiating was a problem. Lack of uniform enforcement of rules (and knowledge of some rules), limited numbers of officials, and officials unwilling to get involved when on court and requested by players. Multiple ADs and coaches have said that they will no longer request officials except when mandatory since the quality is varied. There is a definite shortage of officials around the state – one of the assigners noted that spreading out the state tournament over more days (per round) would allow more coverage, but the committee had no interest in spreading out the earlier, mainly non-competitive rounds of the tournament to provide officials for every opening round match. However, we need to recruit more officials so that there are plenty of options for the more*

competitive matchups. There were also discrepancies in pay, with some officials asking for more money than is listed in the regulations. **Efforts to recruit more officials is underway, and will continue – outreach to local tennis clubs and college club tennis programs will continue in an attempt to get passionate tennis enthusiasts with some flexibility in their schedules to enlist as members of the official organization and pursue some basic training on the role of an official and the rules of the high school game**

- *Please post regulations and modifications before August 1 of each year – waiting until the first day of the practice makes it extremely difficult for new coaches to prepare for the upcoming season, for teams to host pre-season meetings, and for all involved to have a clear understanding if there are questions.* The committee unanimously approved this motion, with no reservations. **Sandy will bring this up within the office; As in any season, the rules/regs will be posted on the first day of the season.** The quick start sheet that is located under “Schools” will give most coaches and AD’s the information that they need.
- *UTR works well, but two schools have said we are switching to WTN. Is this true, and if so, why?* UTR has proven to be accurate in singles, with more volatility in doubles UTRs throughout the season; easily explained by the fact that early in season, since most players don’t focus on doubles out of season, there are not many doubles results until the high school season is well under way. The NJSIAA is very pleased with UTR, its accuracy, and the support received. We use UTR to gauge relative quality of play – particularly useful when comparing players with no common opponents, different strengths of schedule, and/or are in different age groups. **The recommendation of this committee is to continue to use UTR as a tool to assist with seeding and selecting players for the individual tournaments. Flight tournament results should be entered by the tournament directors, and all coaches are encouraged to enter their team’s challenge match results in UTR as well, thereby increasing the number of matches for every player, and making UTR even more accurate. Discussions between the USTA (WTN) and NJSIAA will continue, as there is no opposition to examining the inclusion of WTN.**
- *Request to make the challenge match form editable online and have all results entered UTR. These results then automatically would be included in player profiles and readily available to all interested.* This would help non-tournament players increase the number of matches played to provide a more accurate UTR for every participant. Connected to previous discussion point about UTR opportunities, this potentially should provide ALL players with more results to include to help develop a most accurate UTR rating. **Recommendation of the committee was to investigate feasibility of making the form editable.**
- *Request for clarification on doubles lineups changing because of continued challenge matches.* If a 3rd singles player loses a challenge match and is now out of the lineup, but

is clearly going to be in the doubles lineup, can a quick one-set match suffice for inclusion in the doubles lineup? Otherwise, there is a chance that a player could be out of the lineup for multiple days because there may not be time immediately to play the full best of three matches. The committee felt that one-set was acceptable, and most thought that was already the rule since it was not the official 1st vs 2nd doubles match result. Since the player may have had no doubles results, there should be a grace period within which the one-set challenge would suffice. Within seven days of losing the 3rd singles position, however, an official best of three match result would be necessary – in keeping with the substitution rule. **Recommendation of the committee was to amend the wording on the challenge form and within the rule modifications to note that one set would be sufficient for short-term changes, but that after 7 days (not matches) a best of three results would need to be shown on the challenge match form.**

- *Request to clarify/explain what criteria are used to determine “exceptional” for entry into the state individual tournaments.* Last year, the committees felt that the individual tournament selection committees had become too liberal in the granting of wildcards, so this year’s seeding/selection committee followed the non-amended guidelines strictly and provided a minimum UTR (based on the median of the past three tournaments) for consideration of wildcards. As a result, there were fewer awarded, and some players/pairs from “strong/good” programs were not granted wildcards, based on records, UTRs, and/or performance against other teams in contention for wildcards. This made some unhappy because those players/pairs are better than players/pairs in the draw – there is truth to that claim, but last year’s committees did not want to adjust the standards for automatic qualification (and the seeding/selection committee had no inclination for that), some players/pairs who face less rigorous competition and/or are in less competitive regions of the state were in the tournament. However, every 1st singles player who applied with above the 5.38 minimum this year was awarded a wildcard; every 1st doubles pair that applied with a combined UTR above 7.0 was awarded a wildcard. 2nd or 3rd singles players who were below non-qualifying players were not considered because they can’t beat their teammates, so they could not be expected to beat their teammates’ competition. And with 2nd doubles wildcards, they who oppose other teams’ weakest players – any losses, have to be to teams in the draw and/or likely seeds – the two 2nd doubles teams granted wildcard entry this year were undefeated, playing behind seeded 1st doubles teams, were seeded themselves, AND both made the quarterfinals – they were exceptional. Other 2nd doubles teams were good 2nd doubles teams but not deemed exceptional at even the position – the fact that some schools have better players/depth and/or play better competition is true and clearly pays off in team competition, but that doesn’t mean that all players on those teams should be selected for the individual tournaments. Is the bar higher for 2nd doubles teams? Yes, because they face the least rigorous competition every match and really need to stand out as EXCEPTIONAL, not just good and/or on good teams. Additionally, the committee noted that the regulations say quite clearly that **as a rule,**

2nd doubles will NOT be considered – the selection committee is sticking its neck out to include any 2nd doubles team, thus the committee made very deliberate choices. In other high schools' sports, where each group is guaranteed a number of spots in championship meets and then wildcards are awarded to the next x number of athletes, regardless of group – there are always athletes who will not qualify based on their group yet are better than automatic qualifiers. The explanation given to the athlete is this: if you are not the best singles player/doubles pair on your own team, then there are very few cases indicating that you are exceptional – and the committees can utilize the prescribed criteria to assist in their determination. **Recommendation of the committee was to continue utilizing the stated criteria. The committee felt that the criteria was clearly explained at the start of the season and consistently applied when wildcards were granted. Next year's singles UTR will be 5.41 and doubles will remain at 7.0.**

- *Request to clarify/change the 50% participation rule to be eligible for post-season play, which is applied to all NJSIAA-sponsored sports.* The committee totally supports the NJSIAA decision to essentially require athletes to meet a minimum % for participation in the post-season, so that athletes don't make part-time commitments to their high school teams and then magically appear in the state tournaments. However, in tennis, there are no substitutions so there are likely only 7 (maybe 8) players who can meet this requirement – if someone gets hurt late in the season, a team might have to forfeit a position! If a JV/alternate player makes great strides over the course of the first half of the season and earns a spot in the lineup by the tournament season, but has not played 50% of the matches, then (s)he can't play in states? The committee overwhelmingly supported changing the verbiage to account for the unique situation of a tennis program in meeting this requirement. **Recommendation of the committee was to change the verbiage in the modifications as soon as possible, considering presence at matches, continued participation in challenge matches, and/or playing in JV matches as possible ways to meet this requirement.**

CHAMPIONSHIP ELIGIBILITY

A student competing on an interscholastic tennis team must participate as a member of his/her high school team in at least 50% of the school's total matches to be eligible for the NJSIAA Team State Tournament. **For tennis, due to the inability to substitute on a given day, participation means being present for an entire match and/or participating in the JV match on the day of a varsity match.**

Students who experience extraordinary circumstances, which are limited to injuries/medical reasons or return from academic ineligibility, must play in at least 50% of the school's matches, up to and including the cut-off date, less those matches in which the student was not able to compete due to extraordinary circumstances. Extraordinary circumstances shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the NJSIAA upon request by the school.

IV. Review of the post-season

- Thanks to the seeding/selection committee for diligently examining so much information fairly in a short period of time to create draws that were very accurate, but also easily justifiable. We need to keep reminding ADs and coaches that strength of schedule is important – teams that have losses to good teams are not going to be “punished” for losses – the committee wants to see strong matchups among players and teams.
- The singles and doubles brackets were not “filled” this year – the tournament ran very smoothly and there were more competitive matches than in years past in the early rounds, in large part because the top players/pairs ended up with byes, so other players had more of a chance to compete against more comparable opponents in round one. Suggestion to make the first round a “play-in” so that there are fewer byes was well-received; the Tournament Director will work with the seeding committee next season after determining the number of automatic qualifiers and seeing how many players may qualify for wildcards to format the draw. **The minimum UTR for singles wildcard entry consideration next season will be 5.41 and for doubles it will remain 7.0**
- Match results were posted daily by the NJSIAA in UTR and on the NJSIAA website. We will check with njadvancemedia.com (nj.com) to see whether the draws can be posted/updated daily on that site as well.
- Regarding singles/doubles tournaments, Princeton University’s new indoor/outdoor facility was procured as the site for the quarter/semis/finals rounds – the quarters and semis were played indoors at Princeton on a rainy Saturday, but the finals were played at Mercer County Park a week later (due to the state of emergency that required delaying the finals, there was a major college tournament conflict at Princeton). Princeton’s facility was phenomenal, and Mercer County Park (as its director, Marc Vecchiolla) always came through for the NJSIAA by providing an amazing public facility for the Championship matches, as well as all early rounds of the individual tournaments, and the Group Championships. Veterans Park in Hamilton was equally accommodating in graciously hosting a full slate of matches on the opening weekend of the individual tournaments. We hope to continue to play at Princeton for the late rounds, since the facility has indoor/outdoor capability which pretty much guarantees that we can stay on schedule, regardless of weather. And we look forward to continuing to work with Mercer County Park and Veterans Park.
- Officials were difficult to find in many sections for state tournament matches; continued outreach efforts to recruit more officials are needed.

V. **Girls’ Calendar for Fall 2026 -**

Start Date: practices/tryouts may start on August 10, 2026

Competition Starts: August 17, 2026

Cut-off: September 23, 2026 (with download on September 24 at noon)

Seeding Meeting: September 25, 2026

Team Tournament Dates: September 29-October 15, 2026

Individual Tournament Info:

Tournament Dates: October 3 and 4, 10 and 11, 2026

VI. Proposals for rule modifications:

- *Proposal to eliminate the two-coach rule.* The committee saw no reason to reconsider adding more coaches eligible to speak to players during a given match.

Recommendation of the committee was to keep the two-coach rule in place.

- *Proposals to allow in-match substitution – “During team matches, a coach can substitute one (1) player into a set any point at 1st or 2nd doubles **ONLY**. This substitution can be due to the inability to play due to injury or lack of performance at the position. Once a player is **replaced**, they cannot return. The replacement player must be on the singles ladder of the challenge match form and must not have been announced into the varsity lineup (i.e. no singles players or moving a 1st singles player to 2nd doubles). Replacement player must assume the serving position and return position of the replaced player. If a warning and/or point penalty has been assessed for violations of CONDUCT to any of the four doubles players, a replacement player may not be used in that match. The player that started the match is the player of record. The CAL, Olympic, and Tri-County conferences have introduced this measure into regular-season matches with success. Committee concerns related to permanent removal of a player for the match – in other sports, you can reinsert a player removed for poor play, etc., but this proposal does not allow for that. If the committee revised the proposal to allow for re-insertion, would it be fair to have a serving specialist (for example) just on court when serving, and would that be like a form of stacking? The committee felt that proposal, while potentially providing an avenue to avoid injury defaults/retirements and perhaps allow an additional player to participate in certain matches, provided a very easy path to stacking in the doubles, and also potentially denies a struggling student-athlete (play-wise, not injured) the opportunity to persist through a difficult stretch of play. More consideration is possible if limited to being used in cases where an injury occurs during the match, but concerns about stacking persist as well as faking injuries. Increased support for the injury replacement idea each time this has been proposed. **Recommendation of the committee was to not adopt this proposal, as it is not NFHS-approved.***
- *Proposal for coaching during games.* In the college environment and within some professional tournaments, coaching/communication is allowed between every point, provided it does not disrupt the pace of play. We should include this in high school play, too. The committee had no interest in allowing coaching during games, or even between games – slowing the pace of play, making monitoring more difficult, but also because that change on the high school level has not been approved by the NFHS, nor has it

been included in any junior tournaments (UTR, WTN, or USTA). Last week, the NFHS sent out a survey about this topic to all state federations – very few states showed any interest in adopting this for use on the high school level. **Recommendation of the committee was to not adopt this proposal, as it is not NFHS-approved.**

- *Proposal for revision of the carryover rule.* The committee supports initiatives to promote sportsmanship, teach accountability, and include an individual consequence for poor behavior and/or sportsmanship. There were no issues during this initial season, but concerns about how it will be enforced, and concerns about the idea that other players on court will be given a consequence for a teammate’s behavior. The suggested changes to the verbiage are below. **Recommendation of the committee was to adjust the verbiage in the modifications, and to remind coaches and officials that any match officiated during the regular season or county/conference tournament which has an issue MUST have a report filed by the official with NJSIAA, which will then have the AD enforce the penalty on the offending party. Court officials and tournament directors (county, conference, and/or state) will be able to issue suspensions for observed behavior at their respective tournaments. During the state tournament, the assigned official will issue the code and inform the tournament director and player’s coach. A player’s coach may implement this consequence (with or without an official present) at any time on a member of that coach’s program, as the committee wants to empower and encourage coaches to always promote good sportsmanship.**

Suggested verbiage for modifications: SPORTSMANSHIP CARRYOVER PENALTY

If a player commits a code violation at the end of their match in either an individual or team match during any NJSIAA tournament, the **POINT** penalty shall be assessed to the highest remaining singles player still on the court at the start of the next game ~~or immediately in a tiebreak.~~

If there is no singles player remaining on court, then the penalty shall be assessed to the highest remaining doubles pair still on the court at the start of the next game or immediately in a tiebreak.

If the team match has been completed, the carryover penalty shall be assessed at the start of that player’s next match. If that player is not playing in the next match, the penalty shall be ~~assessed to the No. 1 singles player in that next match~~ **assessed to the No. 1 singles player in that next match as a three game penalty in that player’s next match.**

If a player commits a code violation at the end of their match in any NJSIAA individual tournament, then the **three-game** penalty will be assessed at the start of their next match, either individual or team. If the season is completed, this code violation will be assessed during the next season. If the player is a senior, we encourage the school to take appropriate action.

Any violation/issuance of this penalty must be reported to the NJSIAA Tournament Director.

Proposal for tournament amendment:

- *Proposal to switch from four public school sections to two sections.* As it stands, there are almost no draws that get filled with 16 automatic qualifiers, and there are several very weak teams entering out of obligation. The current system has unbalanced numbers of entries in every draw, and the top teams generally have one or two blowouts in each section. Under this proposal, the combined draws would increase in size to 24 teams (from 16), and the top 8 teams in each draw would get a bye. North 1 and North 2 would be combined, and Central and South would be combined. Presumably, early matches would be more competitive, as would each successive round. Travel might be an issue, but it would be limited by the number of dates involved and there is a chance that there would be no increased travel. Only the two section winners would advance to Mercer County Park. Power points will be used for determining the 24 teams in any bracket. The seeding committee then could consider UTR, strength of schedule, record, head-to-head results, etc. to seed the bracket. As there will be difficult decisions made in all brackets, the selection committee will continue to value head-to-head results more than any other factor but then will look at UTR and strength of schedule concurrently, with record and common opponents after that. To address the yearly concern/criticism about teams not playing enough matches by the cutoff, this proposal will prohibit any program that has NOT played 8 matches by the cutoff from receiving a top four seed in its section – this would have impacted only 7 schools this past fall, but that means extra travel for teams failing to play the minimum number of matches. This committee was presented with what this fall’s brackets would have looked like had the proposal been in place. Mr. Smith noted his initial reluctance to this model but said that after looking at the NJSIAA’s anticipated groupings for next year and examining this season’s numbers, he quickly became a huge advocate in favor of the proposal; the sample draws reinforced the idea that the tournament will be much more competitive state-wide, while having relatively few drawbacks. After some initial reluctance and questioning, this committee’s review of the proposed/sample brackets was similarly overwhelmingly positive - the traditional sectional rivalries remain, but with some new more competitive foes being added to a draw – and it appears that more challenging, more exciting, and better tennis should result. **The recommendation of the committee was to quickly share this proposal at league/conference meetings and to show the sample bracket to others for feedback. Implementation next year should be considered – no need to delay, especially since we will be entering a new two-year classification cycle in the fall. This potential switch will be presented at the boys’ post-season meeting.**
- *Proposal to allow each team playing at 9am on Group day to have a bank of courts for a warmup, prior to introductions.* The teams starting play at 9am must leave their schools before light, so there is no opportunity to warmup – the teams arriving for 11am starts would have been able to hit at their home courts or even local parks. Since there are

courts available at Mercer County and the Tournament Director can assign those courts, everyone would have equal opportunity to stretch a bit and hit before play.

Recommendation of the committee was to adopt this proposal – the Tournament Director will assign each participating 9am school with two courts from 8:10-8:40 on the morning of the Group Championships. *This will not take away from the standard warmup between opponents after introductions.*

VII. Good of the Order

VIII. Meeting adjourned at 1:05pm