

Junior Participation & Tournament Play



Research and best practices from colleges, universities, sport institutions, psychology and medicine aimed at determining what is best for child well-being and development have come to the following conclusions:

- Early success in sports is not an indicator of future success or high achievement in sport competitions as an adult
- Competitions for youth have evolved to become professionalized following adult competitive models. As a result, this has led to a high rate of child burn out and fewer children participating in sports later in life.
- Many sport organizations internationally are reevaluating their youth competitive structures to focus more on long-term player development that does not include rankings or national championships for pre-pubescent youth
- Lastly and most of all, the top reasons that youth list as most important for participating in sports is for fun, exercise and playing with friends

With these fundamental considerations, USA Pickleball is taking a progressive path that is in the best interest of youth participating in the sport of pickleball, a path that emphasizes skill development, multiple play opportunities and positive and healthy social interactions.

Junior Participation & Tournament Pathway

The following competition pathway has been developed to help maximize youth participation in the sport and ensure competitive opportunities are structured in a manner that are in alignment with youth development and sport experts.

Level 1: Introductory Clinics/Programs

- Physical Education, after-school, summer camps
- Pickleball Parties
- Skill Challenge Events

Level 2: Developmental Opportunities

- **NETS – Non-Elimination Tournaments**
 - Half day format to provide kids a supportive and structured introduction to competition
 - Two skill levels: Beginner & Intermediate
 - Round Robin Non-Elimination Draws
 - Individual/Team Format Options
- **Intramural/Interscholastic Play**

Level 3: Local/Regionals Competitive Opportunities

- **Age Division Tournaments (Sanctioned & Non-Sanctioned)**
 - Three age divisions: 12U, 14U & 18U
 - Round Robin Non-Elimination Draws

Level 4: Nationals

- Two age divisions: 14U & 18U
- Current tournament format
- Development Camp for 12U – Match Play & Coaching (12U Champs Camp)

Level 5: Playing up in an adult tournament

*Juniors may play up in the junior age divisions or participate in the 19+ adult division, however, they may not play in both junior and adult divisions in the same tournament.

**Junior tournaments will not utilize a system of player ratings for category/skill differentiation.

***Players that participate in a junior division will not receive UTPR credit.