

National Championships Vaccination Statement

7.8.21

Not surprisingly, we have been receiving a great deal of feedback, both positive and negative, about the requirement that all participants in this year's National Championships be vaccinated to enter the Indian Wells Tennis Garden (IWTG). While many people have applauded the decision, others are troubled by it because they are not and will not get vaccinated. Accordingly, I would like to give you some background on the situation and respond to the statements, questions and suggestions we have seen on social media and received via email over the past 3 days.

First, it needs to be reinforced that the decision to require vaccinations to enter the venue was made solely by IWTG ownership and management and it applies to all events. Second, we did not have any input in the conversation and were not informed of the decision until last week. Any claims being made on social media or elsewhere that we have known of this situation for a long time and withheld this information are totally false.

We realize that this decision will prevent some of our members from participating in this year's Nationals, not only as players but perhaps as fans, volunteers, and referees. We understand that many of you have made plans to attend which will need to be changed. This is certainly troubling to us but we fully respect IWTG's right to establish the rules and protocols for their venue. They have been a good partner to us, and we know this decision was difficult for them. Keep in mind that the vaccination requirement goes well beyond just our National Championships as it pertains to all events at the facility, including the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in October, an event much larger in every aspect than ours. We know that IWTG management, along with its health advisors, feels it is doing the right thing to protect the people at the venue, particularly given concerns about the Delta variant of COVID 19 that is starting to emerge in California. It is hard to argue against protecting public safety.

Provided below are responses to some of the questions and suggestions we have received.

- Moving the Nationals to another location is not an option for a variety of reasons. There are few, if any, facilities in the country that could handle an event of this size, particularly on such short notice. Also, to move the event would inconvenience the many people who are or will be vaccinated who have made their plans to attend. We also have a contract to honor with IWTG which prohibits any such move.
- Adding a second facility near IWTG for play by unvaccinated players was considered, but that cannot work logistically since at some point unvaccinated players would have to play at IWTG over the course of the tournament.
- Playing with a mask is not an option as IWTG is requiring everyone entering the facility to be vaccinated during our event. There are no exceptions to the vaccination mandate.
- We have received an inquiry about refunds on membership dues. Decisions regarding the IWTG vaccine policy are not associated with USA Pickleball membership, and as posted over the years, we do have a no refund policy. Please remember that

membership supports the sport of Pickleball for everyone, be it recreational or tournament players, including all programs, governance, and related rules and standards.

- There has also been an inquiry regarding qualifying tournament expense reimbursement. This is not reasonable as all players enter tournaments and incur the cost of doing so at their own expense, with the knowledge that there is no guarantee of winning and qualifying. In fairness to all players who competed in all qualifying tournaments, no matter the outcome, we cannot make any monetary accommodations.
- We inquired whether players at the BNP Paribas Open are required to be vaccinated, and we learned that they are not, however, the WTA Tour and ATP Tour have comprehensive COVID protocols in place along the lines of those established in the major professional sports leagues (NFL, MLB, NBA, NHL) that include extensive testing, reporting, monitoring and significant staffing at their tournaments around the world to implement the program. Such an effort for the 2,000+ athletes at the Nationals is not feasible.

We understand this decision is upsetting for many people, and for us as well. We respect everyone's right to make their own decision on whether to get vaccinated. It is a polarizing issue in this country, but our focus needs to be on pickleball, and we have no other option but to move forward with the guidelines established by IWTG. There are still some outstanding issues to be resolved, and we will continue to keep you posted on any new developments. Thank you for your understanding.

Stu Upson
CEO