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ITF:

**Player Pathway
Review**

**Independent
Review
of Integrity
in Tennis**

APPENDIX

SUBMISSION TO INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL ON BEHALF OF ITF
PLAYER PATHWAY REVIEWS

1. This paper updates the ITF's submission to the Independent Review Panel from December 2016. In that submission, the concept of a new professional player pathway structure was outlined; this update outlines the work undertaken to finalise the key principles of that restructuring.
2. The ITF undertook from 2013 to 2016 the most comprehensive reviews of the Professional and Junior Circuits in our sport's history. The reviews analysed all player data from 2001 to 2013 and identified several issues with the current professional pathway exacerbated by various factors and changing trends. These included the cost of participation for professional players with break-even points on the annual earnings list of 336 (men) and 253 (women) before coaching costs were accounted for; increasing numbers of professional players (13,736 in 2013); no growth in the number of hosting nations and increased challenges for emerging talent to transition into the professional game.
3. The Reviews, which included working groups with representatives from 24 ITF nations and both the ATP and WTA Tours, set out a number of recommendations to address these issues. These include:
 - The reduction of the number of players competing at the highest level through the introduction of a 'truly professional player group' (defined as those players competing for Tour ranking points);
 - The implementation in 2019 of a new competition – an ITF 'Transition Tour' – to ensure job opportunities to all players transitioning into and out of the new 'truly professional player group';
 - The introduction of a set, and appropriate number of, job opportunities for players at all levels of the game.
4. The ITF's Pro Circuit vision is to offer a sustainable and successful circuit that supports entry into professional tennis, attracts emerging talent, retains the best players and delivers them to the Tours and provides opportunities in all member nations for aspirant professional players.
5. Since the ITF's December submission to the IRP, the ITF has undertaken an in-depth review of playing opportunities and playing activity (i.e. supply v. demand) of professional players across various ranking bands in an effort to establish and propose a structure which fulfils its remit.
6. The ITF's modelling work indicates that a truly professional group of players, numbering no more than 750 men and 750 women will ensure a structure that is fit for purpose. Any fewer will risk compromising the long term sustainability of tennis as a global sport by reducing the number of nations hosting professional events and penalising players from large numbers of tennis playing nations.
7. In the men's game, the number of 750 players can be achieved by repositioning all existing Level I events (\$15k) as Transition Tour events. This leaves an excess supply, equivalent to 31 events, of playing opportunities for players ranked 1-750. However, an additional supply of up to 71 events is required to provide playing opportunities for players (circa 150) feeding up from the Transition Tour. This is achievable through retaining existing Level I events in regions where a shortfall is identified.
8. On the basis that sufficient playing opportunities are provided for male professional players ranked 1-750, it is proposed that players in this ranking band are not permitted to play in Transition Tour tournaments. Acceptance into ATP Challengers/ITF Level II tournaments (\$25,000) will be based on ATP ranking, followed by ITF Entry Points on the Transition Tour (new), followed by National Ranking, followed by a random draw. It is further proposed that up to 5 qualifying or main draw places are reserved for players based on their ITF Entry Points on the Transition Tour at ITF Level II tournaments to ensure that highly talented new players have a chance to transition to the professional ranks quickly.
9. ATP ranking below 750 will be the first criteria for the acceptance process for Transition Tour tournaments and thereafter acceptances to be as provided above. ITF proposes that a number of

places (to be determined) in Transition Tour tournaments are reserved for ITF Junior ranked players in the top 50 (to be confirmed) to reward and encourage participation in the Junior Circuit.

10. A similar approach would be adopted in the women's game, as the ITF believes strongly that the same structure should be in place for both men and women. A Transition Tour comprised of Level I events only provides a deficit supply of playing opportunities for female professional players ranked 1-750, equivalent to 13 events, and while 57 additional events are required to provide for players feeding up from the Transition Tour, this can be achieved in the same way as described in [7] above.
11. On the basis that sufficient playing opportunities are provided for players ranked 1-750 at professional level, it is proposed that players in this ranking band will not be permitted to play in Transition Tour tournaments. Acceptance into ITF professional tournaments (\$60,000, \$80,000 and \$100,000) will be based on WTA ranking, followed by ITF Entry Points on the Transition Tour (new), followed by National Ranking, followed by a random draw. It is proposed that up to 5 main draw places (25% of main draw) are reserved for players based on their ITF Entry Points on the Transition Tour at \$25,000 tournaments, with consideration to be given to extending this concession to \$60,000 tournaments.
12. WTA ranking below 750 will be the first criteria for the acceptance process for Transition Tour tournaments (\$15,000) and thereafter acceptances to be as provided above. ITF proposes that a number of places (to be determined) in Transition Tour tournaments are reserved for ITF Junior players ranked in the top 50 (to be determined) to reward and encourage participation in the Junior Circuit.
13. The ITF intends for its Transition Tour and Level II tournaments to be a 32-player main draw and a 24-player qualifying draw to enable tournaments to take place over seven days. This will ensure no overlap in events from week to week and ensure there is no requirement or pressure on players to depart a tournament early in order to sign-in at the following week's tournament.
14. New 'play up' and 'play down' rules will be put in place to limit the numbers of Tour ranked and junior players playing Transition Tour events.
15. The ITF addressed the issue of data sales in its first submission to the IRP. In addition to being an important revenue stream, a centralised data rights agreement contributes to the protection of integrity by mitigating the threat of courtsiders, and deterring the collection of unauthorised data and the creation of any unregulated betting market (both of which we are reliably informed pre-existed any ITF data rights agreement). Even with a data rights agreement in place, courtsiders continue to attempt to gain access to Pro Circuit events, and so without that agreement there is a significant risk that unauthorised data collection (and unregulated betting markets) will increase significantly. With or without a data rights agreement, additional integrity protection measures would need to be put in place to mitigate this threat. Therefore, data rights agreements should be permissible for all tennis events, including an ITF Transition Tour, subject to appropriate measures of integrity control being in place at those events.
16. The following key principles in relation to the player pathway were approved by the ITF Board in March 2017:
 - Creation of a Transition Tour (with the recommendation that it is comprised of ITF Level I tournaments);
 - Level II tournaments to remain as part of the professional tour, subject to a reduction in number (the precise number to be determined);
 - A fixed number of professional players (with the recommendation of 750 men and 750 women).