

THE ROLE AND
RESPONSIBILITIES OF A
REAL TENNIS TOURNAMENT
DIRECTOR

Alistair Lumsden

25 November 2014

1. The (sole) responsibilities of a Tournament Director.

1.1 To run the entire tournament in a professional, fair and timely manner.

In potentially selecting a Tournament Director, the three most important personal attributes would undoubtedly include:

- highly professional
- great integrity
- experience (dealing with the unexpected only comes from experience)

1.2 To manage/oversee the entry procedure.

1.3 To make and manage the draw including any changes.

1.4 To ensure that balls of the highest standard are guaranteed/available.

1.5 To ensure that markers of the highest standard are guaranteed/available.

1.6 To be the sole decision maker on lateness/disqualification.

1.7 To be the leading decision maker on on-court safety including suspension of play and injuries.

1.8 To ensure all financial arrangements are agreed, processed and distributed (after the tournament has concluded).

It is unreasonable to expect the Tournament Director to attend every match of a tournament (especially one of significant length such as the British Open). Therefore, it is suggested that an Assistant Tournament Director of similar capability works in conjunction with the Tournament Director.

2. Pre-Tournament Considerations.

2.1 To maximise the best potential draw, scheduling must consider a variety of different factors. The venue should be of a suitable standard to host the magnitude/importance of the tournament. The date of any given tournament, but most importantly for the biggest tournaments, should be attempted to be set a full six months in advance of the tournament, preferably one year. (See Appendix A)

2.2 Relevant National Association – are the requisite personnel in place and briefed to conduct the duties required of the tournament? Ticketing – responsibility and execution of ticket application/leaflet printing and distribution. Notification to all relevant clubs and parties of scheduling, ticketing and associated news/events.

2.3 Events – cocktail parties, dinners and AGMs etc - both their content and notification to be shared with all suitable parties.

2.4 Major sponsor liaison and involvement. What are the requirements of the major sponsor/sponsors? What marketing materials do they wish to produce – programme, posters, leaflets, banners, billboards, flags etc? What, if any, are the other on or off-court requirements of the sponsors?

2.5 It is crucial to understand the requisite timelines of the Sponsor and National Association and to work in conjunction with the Tournament Director, to get all materials delivered in a timely manner.

3. The Tournament - Chronological Management.

3.1 The Entry Form

3.1.1 Specific reference to the size of the draw. The example used here will be of the British Open. The British Open currently has a singles draw of 24 players and doubles draw with 12 pairs. When the venue in question has one court, this size of draw dictates that the tournament must last 10 days. It is therefore a very important consideration to marry the size of the draw with the availability of the court at the host venue. If as in the case of the British Open, and that all matches in the main draw will be the best of 5 six game sets, the maximum number of matches that can take place in any one day, is 6 (currently in the British Open on the Tuesday, with matches scheduled at 9am 11am 1pm, 3pm, 5pm and 7pm).

3.1.2 There must be a stipulation of how players will qualify by right for the main event. In the case of the British Open, seeding and qualification is determined firstly by the top ten players on the IRTPA world ranking list and then by singles handicaps on the RTO list (these are all determined on the closing date of entry).

3.1.3 In the case of a qualifying tournament, a maximum number of entrants must be stipulated and also potentially a maximum handicap level (more likely the larger the tournament is). There must also be a stipulation of how many players will then qualify into the main draw.

3.1.4 The entry form must also stipulate a venue, the time and date of the main draw and the time and date of any qualifying tournament, both singles and doubles if necessary.

3.1.5 There will be a stipulation under which tournament rules and procedures the tournament will be conducted eg. in the case of the British Open - the T&RA Laws of Tennis and the T&RA Tennis Tournament Rules and Procedures.

3.1.6 There will be a stipulation of both the time and venue for the draw taking place.

3.1.7 There will be a stipulation as to the level of fees, who has to pay them, where they can be paid and the precise closing time for fees being payable. This should coincide exactly with the time when the entries close, the exception to this being, at the instruction of the Tournament Director(s) until entry is confirmed.

3.1.8 There will be a clear stipulation of the precise time and date when the entries close.

3.1.9 There will be space on the entry form for players to enclose all necessary personal details, (especially contact details during the tournament), including doubles partner, if applicable.

3.1.10 There will be a clear indication of where entries need to be sent.

3.1.11 There potentially should be a clear indication of whether membership of a national or professional association is a requirement for entry.

3.1.12 Entry Form Timing Guideline for any tournament. The entry form should be sent out six weeks prior to the first match of the tournament with an entry closing of three weeks prior to the first match of the tournament. In the case of the British Open and potentially more significant tournaments, the entry form is sent out eight weeks prior to the first match of the main draw and the closing date for entry is four weeks prior.

3.2 Collation of Entries

Preferably one person should be tasked with the collation of all entries – possibly the Tournament Director or Assistant Tournament Director or available personnel within the National Association. Entries must be checked for their completeness and compliance as well as the payment of any fees. The person responsible for collation must also take great care in the accurate checking of handicaps, any specific player requests of match timing and any requests for accommodation.

3.3 The Draw

3.3.1. The draw protocol for the British Open is as follows:- the top eight seeds are given a bye into the second round. Seeds 1 and 2 are placed in position. Seed 3 and 4 are drawn in position. Seeds 5 – 8 are drawn in position. 16 balls are then placed in a hat to be drawn at random for the first round. The balls should be labelled 1-12 and Q1, Q2, Q3 Q4. The draw protocol of the British Open for the doubles tournament:- seeds 1-4 are given a bye into the second round. Seeds 1-2 are placed in the draw. Seeds 3-4 are drawn in position. Seeds 5 and 6 are drawn in position in the first round. 6 balls are then placed in the hat and drawn randomly for the first round. Balls are labelled 1, 2, 3, 4 and Q1 and Q2. These are both just provided as examples and will clearly vary depending on tournament size and the inclusion of any relevant qualifying tournament.

Please note:- the standard stipulation on the number of seeds in any given tournament is one-third the size of the draw (as in the singles for the British Open above). However, in certain circumstances, common sense must prevail. For the British Open doubles above, six pairs out of the 12 are seeded. The reason for this is that the top four seeds get byes and one would not want the fifth and sixth best pairs (potentially in the world) to play each other in the first round to perhaps get the first or second seeds in the second round.

3.3.2. Witnesses to the draw – the draw should be conducted by the Tournament Director, (possibly attended by the Assistant Tournament Director) and at least two independent witnesses. Any person participating in the event, may not place or draw any ball in the draw process.

3.3.3. Match Scheduling – in 10 consecutive days of a tournament, as in the case of the British Open, every effort must be made to allow any individual player at least 20 hours' free time before their next match is scheduled. In making this a possibility, it helps to designate a morning and an afternoon half of each draw. This is certainly the case in regard to the singles draw, but needless to say, may become impossible when doubles partners occupy different halves of the (singles) draw. Nevertheless, every effort should be made to grant the 20 hour spacing. Whilst every player will be treated equally, the Tournament Director must take account of the likelihood that the most highly seeded players will progress to the latter stages of the tournament.

3.3.4. Every effort should be made to accommodate the players' match time requests, especially when travelling from overseas.

3.3.5. The distribution of the draw to all parties, (globally) should be done 2-3 days after the draw has been made. This allows sufficient time for the Tournament Director(s) to make sure that all match timings are appropriate, meet with as many player requests as possible and avoid any mistakes being made.

3.3.6. The protocol for dealing with changes/withdrawals are covered in the tournament rules and procedures (See Appendix B)

3.4 Qualifying Tournament

The venue of the qualifying tournament should be selected with reference to several factors.

1. A suitably qualified head professional.
2. A venue which is most easily accessible to the majority of potential entrants.
3. Timing- in the case of the British Open where the Tournament Director is trying to maximise the accessibility of the tournament to all, ie. the largest draw size possible and open to amateurs and professionals, the qualifying tournament is held the weekend before the main event, (the doubles qualifying is held three days before the main event). In most other cases, the qualifying event should be held two or three days immediately preceding the main event itself. Clearly, the Tournament Director must liaise with the host venue to determine the most suitable dates of play.

The head professional will be responsible for the conduct of the entire qualifying event including the provision of suitable balls and all of the other responsibilities that the Tournament Director would assume for the main event itself as well as qualified markers. At the completion of the qualifying tournament, the Head Professional should inform the Tournament Director of all results so that all qualifiers are updated into the main draw.

3.5 The Main Tournament

3.5.1. Venue – The venue selected must be suitable for the appropriate size of the tournament.

3.5.2. Practice courts - the host venue should make practice courts available to all participants in the main draw the week before the event takes place. The current stipulation is that players will be given one courtesy court at which point the local head professional is responsible for

taking payment for all extra practice courts used. The more significant the tournament, the Tournament Director has the authority to stipulate that certain blocks of practice courts shall be held solely for overseas visitors depending on their time of arrival.

3.5.3. Balls – The number of balls required for the British Open is 260. 60 balls, which are made identically to the 200 for the main tournament. shall be provided as practice balls. The remaining 200 will be split and rotated into four sets of 50 balls. During the British Open sets 1, 2, 3 and 4 are used on days 1 and 5, 2 and 6, 3 and 7 and 4 and 8 respectively. The Tournament Director will then hand pick the best remaining balls for the singles and doubles final. An alternative to this is that one set is put aside after only one day's play and preserved for both the finals.

The balls should be manufactured to a tolerance of 73-75 grams. They shall be able to pass through the 3rd out of the 5 holes on the Ronaldson ball gauge. They shall pass without touching the sides on hole No. 2 and shall not be able to pass through hole No. 4 at all. Therefore, the tolerance on both the size and the weight must be very precisely controlled. Over and above these two variables, the ultimate quality of the ball will be determined by neatness of stitches, attention to stitching detail, tightness of felt, firmness of the ball and symmetry of the tying process. The balls shall be provided to the host event precisely one week before the first match takes place. During practice, the practice balls will be used on all occasions with the exception that sets 1-4 will be played with for a minimum of two hours and a maximum of 3 hours.

3.5.4. Marking and Marking Schedule – the selection of markers will be suitably matched to the level of event. The stipulation for the British Open is that every marker will be at least Level 2. (See Appendix C). The Tournament Director or Assistant Tournament Director should select a markers panel of suitably qualified markers a minimum of two weeks before the event. The quality of the marker should improve as the tournament advances. On court discipline, as per the governing bodies' rules, is at the sole discretion of the marker. The marker may ask for assistance from the Tournament Director as he/she sees fit.

At the British Open, the markers will start matches at their allocated time and not before. If the preceding match finishes early, markers can use the time before the next match to clean the floor. If the preceding match finishes on time or late, play shall be continuous.

3.5.5. Lateness and player disqualification. All players are expected to be at the venue and then on court five minutes before a match is officially scheduled. In the case of any player being more than 10 minutes late, the Tournament Director (and potentially the Assistant Tournament Director) is solely responsible for their disqualification. The exception to this is any form of force majeure. In the case of any force majeure, the player in question must make every effort to contact the Tournament Director or host club giving an explanation for their being late. If every effort has been made to reach the tournament site with significant time to spare, (at least 30 minutes) then the cause of force majeure may be deemed to be reasonable by the Tournament Director, at his discretion.

3.5.6. Dress Code - at the British Open, clothing shall be predominantly white. Shoes, having been deemed "equipment", can be worn in a colour, but only if the same model is unavailable in white. For all other dress code issues, please revert to National Association rules.

3.5.7. Results Reporting - depending on the significance of the tournament, results should ideally be reported immediately after a match finishes, on all relevant platforms.

3.5.8. Provision of Physiotherapy/Medical Resource - the Tournament Director should provide a highly qualified physiotherapy practice or reference to such facilities. The Tournament Director should also be aware of the location of the nearest hospital and emergency medical assistance. In the case of blood injury, every effort should be made to stop the source of the bleeding which may allow any given match to progress. In the case where it is impossible to stop the bleeding, the match will be deemed forfeited by the injured player.

3.5.9. Player Responsibility - at certain tournaments, players may be requested by the Sponsor, National Association or Tournament Director to attend certain events and potentially fulfil media commitments. The Tournament Director in such a case should make players aware of any such commitments as early as possible in the lead up to the event.

3.5.10. Stewarding - the Tournament Director, possibly in conjunction with the National Association, should organise stewarding throughout the entire event. This will include ticket collection, checking and payment and showing people to their appropriate seats.

3.5.11. Finals – the Tournament Director should have all parties prepared and understand their wishes for the prize giving ceremony, as well as the potential attendance of any events for the final phases of the tournament.

3.5.12. Financial Responsibility - it is the responsibility of the Tournament Director or Assistant Tournament Director to maintain a record of which round any given player progresses to and also the money they, or others, should receive from any marking completed. The Tournament Director should ensure that all results are recorded on RTO by a competent person. The Tournament Director, possibly in conjunction with the National Association and the IRTPA, shall be responsible for distributing the prize fund at the completion of the event. In conjunction with the Sponsor, there should be a clear understanding amongst the potential participants of both the prize fund and any relevant ranking points associated with the event. This

should be distributed separately in the pre-tournament information which could include the Entry Form.

3.6 Post Tournament Review

The Tournament Director and Assistant Tournament Director should make a complete list of all the improvements they feel can be made for the subsequent year. This will include a review of any rules. (It is simply impossible to predict the total number of unforeseen circumstances that arise at any given tournament in any given year – hence the need for periodic updates for improvements that can be included).

APPENDIX A

Extract from the IRTC National Open Rules regarding the timing of tournaments

1. The Championships are held annually in accordance with scheduling parameters set from time to time by the IRTC, after consultation with the International Real Tennis Professionals Association (IRTPA) and the National Association of each of the Host Countries.
2. Not less than 9 months before the scheduled start of the Championship, the relevant Host Country shall advise the IRTC, the IRTPA and each of the other National Associations of the choice of venue and the precise dates when the Championships will be played.
3. Not less than 6 months before commencement of the Championships, the Host Club shall form a Championship Committee to manage the event and it should appoint a Tournament Organiser, who would be the focal point for contact. The Championship Committee shall have overall responsibility for the pre-planning and day-to-day running of the Championship. The Championship Committee will be responsible to, and its membership shall be ratified by, the National Association of the Host Country.

APPENDIX B

Replacement of Seeds on Withdrawal from the T&RA Rules and Procedures

(a) Should any seeds withdraw after the draw has been conducted, but before commencement of the tournament, the following protocol shall be adopted:

(i) If seed 1 withdraws, seed 3 moves into seed 1 position and is replaced by seed 5. The 9th best player in the draw moves into the seed 5 position and is replaced by the next best entrant to the tournament * (if there is one).

(ii) If seed 2 withdraws, seed 3 moves into seed 2 position and is replaced by seed 5. The 9th best player in the draw moves into the seed 5 position and is replaced by the next best entrant to the tournament * (if there is one).

(iii) If seed 3 or seed 4 withdraw they are replaced by seed 5. The 9th best player in the draw moves into the seed 5 position and is replaced by the next best entrant to the tournament * (if there is one).

(iv) If seed 5-8 should withdraw the 9th best player in the draw moves into the seeds vacated position and is replaced by the next best entrant to the tournament * (if there is one).

*(The next best entrant to the tournament is the lowest handicap player in the qualifying event not to qualify from the final round of qualifying).

APPENDIX C

Summary requirements of Markers as laid out in the Markers' and Players' Protocol NB:
Check for the latest version of the Markers' and Players' Protocol

Marker's pre-match duties

Personal preparation, Safety (court playability), players' arrival on court

Marker's duties at the commencement of a match

Prepare and organise players, prepare and inform the spectators, pre match introduction

Managing a Match

Safety (personal, players and spectators). Maintain control and authority, clarity of calls and communication to players and spectators. Marking without bias

Managing the circumstances of an injury on court

Up to date certification, compassion

Marking a Match

Terminology, timing

Marker's Guidelines – (see Markers' Protocol Appendix 1) Recommended terminology for scoring

Players' and Coaches' Conduct on Court

Standards of behaviour by players and coaches

Disciplinary Procedures on Court

Procedures in the case of contravening good conduct

Marker – Recommended Actions

Recommended actions in the case of contravening good conduct

Club Professional Development programme

Summary of requirements of Markers who have attained Levels 1, 2 or 3

CPD Markers 1

By the nature of a CPD 1 Marker the Professional Marker will have limited experience.
Marking from the Dedans, the Professional is required to:-

••••

Accurately measure, call and record the chases and score.

Deliver all calls with audibility and clarity.

Facilitate the smooth progress of the match.

Observe players behaviour – leave the disciplinary actions to the Head Professional

CPD Markers 2

Having gained experience, confidence and developed Marking skills, a CPD 2 Marker may choose to mark from either dedans or net (always be aware of personal safety).

The Professional is, in addition to the above, required to:-

- Deliver improved vocal control and performance to communicate with audibility and clarity, the chases and score to the players and all spectators
- Have an understanding of the Markers' and Players' Protocol
- Observe players behaviour – deal with incidents, otherwise, leave the disciplinary actions to the Head Professional/Tournament Director

CPD Markers 3

A CPD 3 marker may choose to mark from either dedans or net (always be aware of personal safety). He/she should have the total comprehension of the Marker's and Players' Protocol, and having gained adequate experience of marking.

The Professional is, in addition to the above, required to:-

- Deliver a well-rounded vocal and authoritative performance to communicate with audibility and clarity, the chases and score to the players and all spectators
- Deliver a marking performance as laid out in the Markers' and Players' Protocol
- Observe players' behaviour – deal with all incidents as laid out in the Markers' and

Players' Protocol. Summary requirements of Markers as laid out in the Markers' and Players' protocol

NB: Check for the latest version of the Markers' and Players' Protocol