Section 3.05 Ladders

Ladders have been a fixture in club tennis for many years and serve a number of useful purposes at the club.

To begin with, they are a way of getting people to expand their choice of playing partners. Other players in the ladder can quickly become part of a member's regular base of partners.

They also help a player to track his/her level of play relative to the other participants in the ladder. In this way, someone can realize improvement in his/her level of play by tracking his/her position on the ladder.

Ladders provide competitive opportunities and match experience for players. This experience can assist a player in developing important match skills such as how to play the "big points" and how to "close" a set or match. However, unlike elimination events, a ladder offers the player the chance to develop these skills in an environment which is not "do or die". People are not eliminated from a ladder and they will always have the opportunity to challenge the opponent again in the future.

Finally, a ladder can provide the club with an objective means of establishing seedings for the club's year-end championship. This is a task which many club volunteers dread. It seems there is always someone who does not feel the seedings are correct.

By establishing a ladder at the start of the season, and informing the members that ladder results will be the basis for seeding, the club will find it has a ranking of the active members when the tournament comes around. This ranking will reflect both the present summer's membership and the most recent results. As the club has informed it's members that the ladder will be the basis for seeding, anyone who does not participate, and therefore is not seeded, will not have any justification to protest the seeding. Using a ladder will not guarantee you won't still get complaints. However, it will give you an objective means of answering the complaints.

Establishing and maintaining a ladder is a relatively simple process. While there is more than one way to do it, we will suggest a relatively simple method which has proven itself to work in the past.

To begin with, you would need to install the physical ladder in your clubhouse. This could be as simple as a long board with the various ladder titles (i.e. Woman's Singles, Men's Singles, etc.) listed across the top, placement numbers (from 1 onward) listed down the left side and cuphooks installed opposite each number under each title. Tags showing the player's name and contact telephone number could then be hung on each cuphook to indicate the player's position on the ladder.

You must then publicize the existence and uses of the ladder to the members (seeding for the year end club championships, for example). These can be communicated to the membership

through club newsletters, bulletin boards and posters at the courts and clubhouse.

Rules for the ladder should be simple. These rules should be kept consistent and communicated to all ladder members as they join.

For example:
Ladder matches should consist of an 8 game pro-set with a standard 12 point tie-breaker played at 7-all. This would ensure these matches can be completed within a reasonable court booking time.

Players may challenge up as many as 2 spots at a time (this could be 3 spots if that better suits your club). If the challenging player wins, then his tag is placed in the spot of the losing player and the losing player's tag moves down one spot, as would the tag of a player in between (if the challenge was two spots higher). For example, if number 4 challenges number 2 and wins, then number 4 moves up to 2, 2 drops to 3 and 3 drops to 4. A variation of this would have the two players just change spots. In the example above, this would mean 4 would move to 2, 2 would move to 4 and 3 would not be moved.

The number of challenges which a player must defend per month could be limited. As well, the number of times a player could make an excuse for turning down a challenge could also be limited.

Finally, new players who wish to enter the ladder could be allowed to do so at any time. In general, players are allowed to challenge their way onto the ladder at any level. However, if they fail to win their initial challenge, then they are automatically added at the bottom of the ladder and have to work their way up from there.

An active ladder which operates for a number of months will effectively rank the competitors and provide a good basis for seedings at year end tournaments.

Pyramid Events

These are like ladders with the exception that it is not possible to allow new competitors into the event once it has been started.

To begin with, notices are posted for the event and players sign up to participate. Based upon the number of entries, you prepare a pyramid shaped chart where the number of places on the bottom row of the pyramid is equal to ½ the number of entries. Every other level of the pyramid will have half as many spaces as the previous level. This chart is posted along with a list of the entrants and their telephone numbers.

Entrants then proceed to arrange matches against other entrants. As with the ladder, we suggest these matches consist of an 8 game pro-set. The winner of the match removes his/her name from the original list and fills in the first available position on the lowest level of the pyramid. The

loser leaves his/her name on the list and may continue to play others on the list.

From this point onward, players may advance to the next level in one of two ways. If there are open spaces on the next level, then players on the same level may play each other for the right to move up to the open space with the loser staying on the original level. If there are no open spaces, then a player may challenge a player on the next higher level with the winner taking the higher space and the loser taking the lower space.

This format continues until such time as someone has reached the highest position in the pyramid. At this point, that person could be declared the winner and the event would be over, or play could continue in a ladder format with players challenging others on a higher level. In the second situation, the person who retains the top spot for the longest period of time would eventually be declared the winner.