

## Rules of Wheelchair Tennis



### Wheelchair Tennis Rules

The game of wheelchair tennis follows the same rules as able-bodied tennis as endorsed by the International Tennis Federation except the wheelchair tennis player is allowed two bounces of the ball. The player must return the ball before it hits the ground a third time. The wheelchair is part of the body and all applicable ITF Rules which apply to a player's body shall apply to the wheelchair.

#### 1. The Competitive Wheelchair Tennis Player

a. In order to be eligible to compete in sanctioned ITF wheelchair tennis tournaments and the paralympic games, a player must have a medically diagnosed permanent mobility-related physical disability. This permanent physical disability must result in a substantial or total loss of function in one or more lower extremities. If, as a result of these functional limitations, the player is unable to play competitive able-bodied tennis (that is, having the mobility to cover the court with adequate speed), then the player is eligible to play competitive wheelchair tennis in sanctioned ITF wheelchair tennis tournaments.

b. Examples of permanent disabilities that meet the eligibility criteria are: paralysis; amputation; radiological evidence of limb shortening; partial to full joint ankylosis or joint replacement. Such physical disabilities must consistently interfere with functional mobility. Findings such as soft tissue contracture, ligamentous instability, edema or disuse atrophy, or symptoms such as pain or numbness, without other eligibility criteria listed above shall not be considered a permanent physical disability.

c. A quadriplegic division player shall be characterised as one who meets the criteria for permanent physical disability as defined above in at least three extremities.

Any questions or appeal as to a player's eligibility to participate under this rule will be decided under the procedures listed in Appendix IV (See 2001 Friend at Court).

#### 2. The Service

a. The served ball may, after hitting the ground in the service court, hit the ground once again within the bounds of the court or it may hit the ground outside the court boundaries before the receiver returns it.

b. The service shall be delivered in the following manner. Immediately before commencing to serve, the server shall be in a stationary position. The server shall then be allowed one push before striking the ball.

c. The server shall throughout the delivery of the service not touch with any wheel, any area other than that behind the baseline within the imaginary extension of the centre mark and sideline.

d. If conventional methods for the service are physically impossible for a quadriplegic player, then such a player or another individual may drop the ball for such a player. However, the same method of serving must be used each time.

### **3. The Ball in Play**

The ball is in play until the point is decided. The ball must be returned into the opponent's court prior to it touching the ground a third time. The second bounce can be either in or out of the court boundaries.

### **4. Player Loses Point**

A player loses a point if:

a. He fails to return the ball before it has touched the ground three times.

b. He uses any part of his feet or lower extremities against the ground or against any wheel while the ball is in play.

c. He fails to keep one buttock in contact with his wheelchair seat when contacting the ball.

### **5. Wheelchair/Able-Bodied Tennis**

Where a wheelchair player as defined in Rule I above, is playing with or against an able-bodied person in singles or in doubles, the Rules of Wheelchair Tennis shall apply for the wheelchair player while the Rules of Tennis for able-bodied tennis shall apply for the able-bodied player. In this instance, the wheelchair player is allowed two bounces while the able-bodied player is allowed only one bounce.

**ITF Note:**

The definition of lower extremities is: the lower limb, including the buttocks, hip, thigh, leg, ankle, and foot.