

## Interview with Ari Novick

### **Q: What is the importance of using the correct equipment?**

**A:** Using the proper equipment is especially important for introductory-level players because it provides them with the opportunity to easily become successful and thus enjoy our sport from the very start.

### **Q: Is the correct equipment important for both adults and juniors?**

**A:** Yes, it is important for juniors as well as adults to have the proper equipment. Introductory tennis balls should be used with both juniors and adults because they allow players to exchange the ball with one another almost immediately. Introductory balls are not as lively and leave more time for players to react to the ball, thus allowing for quicker development of rallies. The use of these balls also helps promote better stroke development as it encourages stroking of the ball rather than just "bunting" it over. Ultimately, this encourages success from the very start, which leads to further improvement and enjoyment of the game.

When young children are first learning to play the game, they should use the foam or foam covered tennis balls. As they progress they should use the decompressed (soft) tennis balls which look and feel like a regular tennis ball, but do not bounce as high.

Using the correct racquet is important for young children in particular because they need to be able to manipulate and control the racquet from the moment they start to play. In the past, kids would use adult-size racquets and choke up on the grip, causing the racquet to feel heavy and making it difficult to enjoy the game. Nowadays there are many shorter, lightweight racquets that allow kids to control the racquet head and hold it properly at the grip. Generally, for kids 4-5 yrs. or less than 119cm tall, the racquet should be 21" in length; kids 6-8 yrs. or 119 to 137cm tall, should use 23" racquets; kids 9-11 yrs. or 137 to 152cm tall, should use 25"/26" racquets; and 12 yrs. + should use 27" racquets.



### **Q: Do other countries use special equipment?**

**A:** Many European countries also use a progressive approach to development where players start right away with modified equipment that allows for immediate success and enjoyment of the game. France,

home to some of the best players in the world, has introduced tennis through the game of 'mini-tennis' and modified equipment for many years. This approach is also becoming much more popular in the U.S.

**Q: How does someone get this type of modified equipment in Canada?**

**A:** The TPA through our relationship with Wilson Sports and Head have recently added modified equipment to our list of available products. TPA members can now purchase 16 ft. 7 in. Wilson mini-nets at a special discounted price. These nets allow a club to run a Junior Development Program with up to 16 kids on court at a time. By using 6 nets going across the court widthwise, a club is able to maximize their court space and place kids in an environment that is much more appropriate for their level of play.

The TPA also has junior tennis racquets and 2 different types of balls (from Head and Wilson) available at a discounted rate. These balls include:

- Foam balls (great for indoor use, whether in a club or school gymnasium)
- Decompressed : "Winners" balls available through our Wilson discounts and "Pro Penn Stars" balls available through our Head discounts.(similar look and feel to a regular tennis ball, but much softer; great for indoor and outdoor use)

As well, the TPA has just signed a deal with Bertin International to provide discounts on cones, markers and lines - equipment that allows for better organization of court space, which is key when working with large groups. These tools are necessary to divide the court up into different court areas with defined targets and help ensure an organized and efficient use of space which will lead to greater chances of success. Through Bertin International the TPA is also offering equipment for high-performance players, such as medicine balls, skipping ropes, hurdles and ladders.

**Q: How can you order this modified equipment?**

**A:** TPA members can order discounted Wilson/Head equipment online through the TPA website. There will also be a new link which displays the Bertin International offerings and discounts with information on how to place orders, located in our resource section of our website. We recommend that every club, Instructor, Pro and Coach in the country have this type of equipment available to them.