

## Tennis Canada report: European U12 Player Development

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At a glance, some facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tennis is an important sport in Belgium but the Government is not as committed to sport like in France, Italy or Spain – funds are lacking</li> <li>The Ministry of Sport is currently re-organizing their funding allocation to the Federations according to performance, membership and sport popularity.</li> <li>Belgium Tennis Federation is run by two separate entities; the Francophone (AFNET) and the Flemish Federation</li> <li>The Francophone part of the country is separated in four major regional areas</li> <li>Girls and boys receives the same programs but many girls lose interest in the sport by age 15 despite having Justin Henin and Kim Clijsters as role models.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Spanish Tennis Federation (STF) has a new President since January. He made a gutsy decision based on years of complaint made to the previous President, to decentralize the National Tennis Center program (NTC) out of Barcelona back to the 19 regions that are regrouped in 4 major territorial areas (Madrid, Valencia, Barcelona, Sevilla). Last year, there was about a dozen players training at the NTC, this year only 5 (3 boys + 2 girls).</li> <li>20 years ago, the best professional players started to emerge from Barcelona. Now, the “wave” like they call it, has made it through four other strong tennis regions of Spain.</li> <li>Participation in competitive tennis is a lot higher in men’s/boys.</li> <li>They are 8,320 tournaments (professionals, juniors, adults, seniors) being played each year.</li> <li>The Federation has not been involved with U12 player development until this year where they began the new Enamorate program for girls due to the decline in participation and quality of future prospects.</li> <li>A large pool of top certified level coaches 500+ out of 8,500 are working at the best clubs, regional and national Federations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The #1 goal of the FFT is to develop players capable of winning the French Open.</li> <li>A new DTN, Patrick Dominguez has reduced the number of U14 players they are assisting in the national program. He closed 4 Poles (U14 training centers) and left only two operating (Poitiers, Boulouris) with a total of 17 players. As to the “Avenir” National program, only 120 players (10-13 years old) a subsidized training program for the 2006 season. They were helping 250 players in 2004 and 164 in 2005.</li> <li>The “tennis evolutif” concept is now a full blown program providing pedagogical material specifically for the U10 players but it clubs teachers have are also using it for adults.</li> <li>The rules of their mini-tennis program are different from Belgium (no doubles alley in the 18 meters court). With time, their intent is to have the same. It is a political process they must go through.</li> </ul>
U12 player development structure	<p>The AFNET is quite involved in the development of their best young players before the age of 12 years old. They have three phases of development:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The mini-tennis on the 12 meters court for 5-6 years old with the sponge ball</li> <li>2) The mini-tennis on the 18 meters court for 7-9 years old with the two color ball (winners)</li> <li>3) The full tennis court from 9 years old and beyond with the regular ball</li> </ol> <p>Notes: It is a transition phase for the 9 years old; the most talented may graduate during the year from the 18 meters to full court.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Enamorate program is under the responsibility of the Fed Cup Captain, Miquel Margats. Players’ selection process just finished in late October. Many details of the program are yet to be organized.</li> <li>With the decentralization NTC program back to the regions, the SF has four full time national coaches, each responsible of one territory. They visit each territory every 4 to 6 weeks and spend one day at each site. Each visit focuses on one age group at a time...U12, U14 and so on. A typical visit would include watching players compete in a tournament or a regrouping of the best players of that territory and/or working with the top players and their personal coaches.</li> </ul>	<p>The player development program consists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the best 7-8-9-10-11 years old, a structure is offered inside the “club junior” program, a FFT initiative. The best 8-9 years old play tennis 5-6 day/week. In addition, the program consists of inter-department regroupings and camps and form the basis of the Regional “Avenir” program</li> <li>For the best 10-13 years old, they have the National “Avenir” program (total 127 players having a training program paid by the FFT at a cost of 1.2 million euros)</li> <li>At the end of their thirteen years, the best are selected to the Poles (13-14 years old)</li> </ul> <p>From the Poles, then you go to the INSEP (boys) or Rolland Garros (girls)</p>
Talent ID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organized once a year in April at the NTC primarily with players age 7 years old. Physical tests are part of the testing. About 20 players are sent from the 4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 19 regions are responsible for their talent ID structure. It is primarily done at the club level. In the Barcelona Olympic tennis club that I visited and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent ID starts at age 7 years old within each league’s staff (CTR, CSD and one coach). It is normally done when they organized regroupings of</li> </ul>

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	<p>regions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Players are identified also through their U9 mini-tennis competitive structure. Tournaments are organized by a circuit leading to a Masters event.</li> <li>Selected players are offered the first level of player assistance program</li> </ul>	<p>where the Catalan Regional Ass is operating, they had three level of programs starting from the mini-tennis (5-6 years old only) to their Performance P1 to P5 for players born 98-94. The best players from 1993 and beyond were training at another club.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the SF, players are identified through their performance in U12 National tournaments</li> <li>The SF began the “Enamorate” program, an U12 girls program to stimulate the decline in good WTA female players they have in their system. The program selected 16 girls across Spain from a pool of 320 girls that were invited to a selection process.</li> </ul>	<p>their best 7 years old.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the national level, a one day is conducted in each region every year where the best 9 years old are invited. One of the two U12 National Coach attend the talent ID day.</li> <li>Once identified, the 9 years old will be provided more structure inside the “club junior” program. They will be offered to attend some league’s regroupings.</li> <li>They are not pleased with the talent ID program. They feel that the outcome is too much oriented towards those with the best tennis abilities. They are currently working at revamping the program and on how they are identifying the talent.</li> </ul>
<b>Programs and player assistance program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5-6 years old: PRO mini-tennis (promotion)</li> <li>7-8-9 years old: mini-tennis elite</li> <li>The best players from the mini-tennis elite are offered depending of their level/age, the next two programs:</li> <li>TR-1CL: AFTNET pays for 1-2 private lesson a week of 1 ½ hour with regional coach (private coach) + 1 regrouping at the NTC</li> <li>TR-2CL: AFNET pays for 2 privates/week of 1 ½ hour with regional coach + 2 regroupings at the NTC. This program is also offered to the 10-11 years old until their level call for their selection to the NTC program.</li> <li>45 players are currently enrolled on the two above programs for the 2005-2006 season at a cost of 150K euros.</li> <li><b>One National Coach travels weekly to the clubs to monitor and assist the above players and regional coach/private coach (hired by AFNET). Players receive assistance on a rotational basis due to the large pool (45) of talented players.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you are selected (16 years old) to the NTC in CAR-Barcelona, everything is free. If you decline to join the above program, you will receive a subsidy of 12,000 euros</li> <li>Top U16 and U14 players receive 3,000 euros for training subsidy.</li> <li>If you are a good U12 player, you will receive subsidy to train at the regional centers. Cost is not a factor to play tennis in Spain.</li> <li>You are considered to be on the National Team only when you are selected to play for the country for events such as the European Champ.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the NTC structure, please review the attached PowerPoint document “Presentation D. Poesy, stages EF”</li> <li>Players selected to the INSEP or Roland Garros may opt to stay home as long it is agreed by the DTN that it is in the best interest of the player. This is somewhat a new approach taken in recent months.</li> <li>Team Lagardere has become a viable alternative for players to receive the training and coaching services other what the FFT provides under their umbrella. They are very strong financially and as a result, are able to hire the necessary staff (coach, fitness coach, testing, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Competitive structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the 12 meter court, matches are organized internally at the clubs</li> <li>For U9 (born 1997 and after), on the 18 meters court with the winners’ ball, regional circuits are organized. Players cumulate points over the circuit and play the regional finals (masters). The best 4 players from each regional finals + 4 wild cards goes on to play in the AFNET finals.</li> <li>Same above circuit goes on for the 10 years old (1996 only) events on the 24 meters court with regular balls</li> <li>Same above circuit for U12 (born 94 &amp; 1995 only)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30+ ETA and ITF junior events</li> <li>2 U14 Nat’l champ (winter, summer)</li> <li>1 U12 National</li> <li>No U10 national events – done by the regions</li> <li>Selection camps are organized for U12, U14 to select teams for instance going to Les Petits As or for the European Champ.</li> </ul>	<p>They have adjusted their competitive structure to include <u>official sanctioned events</u> for the younger players that are training on the “tennis evolutif” program which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For 8 year old: on the 18 meters court with the two colors ball (winners)</li> <li>For 9 years old: on a regular court with the intermediate ball (easy play)</li> <li>For 10-11 years old: on a regular court with the regular ball. The 11-12 years old National Team Champ is now for the 10-11 years old. With the 12’s who were bumped out, they are getting a 12’s National Individual Champ.</li> </ul>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>U12: they are adding an U12 and U11 National Doubles Champ.</li> </ul>
NTC program	<p><u>The center:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Located in Mons, the NTC is a professionally run tennis facilities with highly qualified national coaches, sport science personnel and on-call medical staff.</li> <li>Players are monitored extensively and thoroughly with on-going physical and medical tests. Weight is taken weekly. Extensive blood test is taken every three months. Laboratory physiological tests are performed twice a year.</li> <li>Players/coach ratio is small thus providing a very individual training environment (players receive up to 5 private sessions a week)</li> </ul> <p><u>The facilities are:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 clay courts and 6 indoor courts (hard)</li> <li>A lodging building of 10 rooms (up to 4 a room, if needed)</li> <li>A 400 meter track and field + soccer field</li> <li>An office building for the AFNET (Federation)</li> <li>A cafeteria</li> <li>A 5,000 sq feet gym</li> <li>School nearby</li> </ul> <p><u>The players and staff includes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13 boarding junior players currently training (7 boys / 6 girls) aged 10.5 to 17 years old</li> <li>6 full time coaches (1 traveling on the Pro tour with Steve Darcis #150 ATP)</li> <li>1 full time Fitness National Coach + 1 part time</li> <li>1 part time Kane-therapist (4:30 – 7:00 PM / Mon-Fri)</li> <li>1 Educator/supervisor boarding from 5:00 PM to morning</li> <li>On-call medical personnel (Sports Doctor, Foot Doctor, Sophrologist, Sport Psychologist)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since the Barcelona Olympics, the government created 4 CAR Omni sports training center across Spain. These centers provide all of the necessary services for Olympic level athletes: training facilities, education, lodging, medical, sports science, etc. The STF is based out of the CAR Barcelona.</li> <li>The STF has three full time national coaches and one fitness coach based there.</li> <li>Only 5 players are in the program this year.</li> <li>Coaches travel once a week to near-by clubs or academies in the Barcelona area to play matches.</li> <li>If a selected player declines to integrate the CAR Barcelona, he will still receive a financial grant of up to 12,000 euros if he's an U18 player.</li> <li>For U16, the grant is \$3,000.</li> <li>Keep in mind, that a player may receive add'l funding through his regional association or club.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All of you know about the NTC program in Roland Garros for the girls and at the INSEP for the boys.</li> <li>An interesting recent development is that Team Lagardere is about to conclude an agreement with the FFT/DTN to provide all the laboratory physiological testing to the Davis Cup, Fed Cup and top junior players. Team Lagardere Headquarters is located within walking distance from Roland Garros at Parc Jean Bouin.</li> <li><b>The two U12 National Coaches responsible for the Avenir National Program (120 players) travel on an on-going basis to the league/department/club to monitor the players' progress. They have footage for each player and are using the Dartfish software program to evaluate the players' technique to provide recommendations. Anne-Marie and Gerard attend all of the U12, U10 events to see the player's progress in competition.</b></li> <li>The FFT purchased 10 Dartfish software program for the coaching staff.</li> </ul>
Coaching certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 certificates exist – Level 1 to 3</li> <li>Level 1 and 2 certification is done each year. Level 3 is done if the number of registration is high enough.</li> <li>Level 1 on-court workshops are done entirely on the 18 meter court.</li> <li>A 16 hours mini-tennis “module” is part of the level 1 course. This module focuses on the 12 meters court with the sponge ball for children 4-6 years old.</li> <li>At each certification level, they request the coaches to board at the NTC for a week with about 40-50 players (level 1). Coaches are responsible for the</li> </ul>	<p>There are 3 levels of certification:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Moniteur National – 270 hours course</li> <li>2. National Coach – 485 hours course</li> <li>3. Professor Coach – 600 hours course</li> </ol> <p>Spain, France, Germany, England looking at developing one European Coaching Certification program. A meeting is scheduled early January. <u>Should Tennis Canada join in these meetings?</u></p>	<p>FFT has about 8,500 certified coaches, 3500 coaching full time with 500 of those being certified at the highest level, the BE-2.</p> <p>There are three levels of certification:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The “intiateur” which is all about mini-tennis (75 hours)</li> <li>2. The BE-1 requires 520 hours.</li> <li>3. Same for the BE-2.</li> </ol> <p>A new coaching program is available to former players or certified coaches (minimum BE-1) that want to work at the professional level (ATP/WTA) or with top junior</p>

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	players on and off the court. Various topics are presented to the coaches during the off-court periods.		prospects. The program consists of 360 hours of training over twelve weeks with 90 hours of practical application. They started this program because they realized there weren't enough coaches capable of training high level competitive players (ATP/WTa and top junior prospects).
Coaches' benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beside their regular pay, the NTC coaches get a Hyundai HUV and a gasoline credit card. Car insurance costs also paid by the AFNET.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Federation is working on getting a car sponsorship for each of the four National Coaches that must now travel frequently to the regions to monitor the players' progress.</li> </ul>	
What I like in each structure!	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A National Training Center program providing the <u>very best</u> to their athletes in all components (coaching and fitness staff, medical support, sports science, facilities, education, on-the-road coaching and competitive program)</li> <li>2) AFNET is taking a <u>pro-active approach</u> in providing a subsidized training program to the best young players (7-11 year old) in the system – <u>they are not waiting for players to emerge!</u> They are selecting and nurturing them with the best coaches that the system can provide.</li> <li>3) The commitment of the AFNET to allocate one National Coach to work practically full time and travel to the clubs to work with the best young prospect and their coaches. Players receive assistance on a rotational basis due to the large pool (45) of talented players.</li> <li>4) A well coordinated mini-tennis development structure (training and competitive) allowing players to develop their skills from the 12 to 18 meters court until the age of 9 years old with progressive equipment.</li> <li>5) A coaching certification program providing the entire Level I course practical application on the 18 meters court.</li> <li>6) Coaches taking the certification course must board along with players (players' level matching coaching course) for one week where they are receiving practical application on and off the court.</li> <li>7) Fitness development is integrated in all training programs provided by the AFNET.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A very demanding though-out competitive structure allows their players to become better competitors (8,320 events). Level of play is extremely high in all age groups with many players to compete against thus, if you come out on top as a player, you ought to be really good!</li> <li>2) Great tennis conditions (outdoor, clay court) year round allowing players to develop soundly (tactically smart, great groundstrokes, run to the ball exceptionally well)</li> <li>3) Large pool (500+) of the top certified coaches is working with young players in the best clubs or for the regional programs.</li> <li>4) A coaching certification program that is developing very high quality coaches.</li> <li>5) The number of quality training programs is increasing every year. Now, they have 5 regions out of 19 with a top quality player development infrastructure.</li> <li>6) The number of clubs build is still increasing every year.</li> <li>7) The regional associations specifically those in the five strong regions have sound U12 player development structure within their clubs.</li> <li>8) If you have some potential as a young player, you will be helped by the club or the regional association and even by top coaches who may work for free with the player.</li> <li>9) Fitness development is integrated in all training programs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) They have streamlined their selection criteria for players eligible to the Poles and Avenir National Programs. As a result, the new DTN, Patrick Dominguez closed 4 Poles out of 6 and with the Avenir National program (10-13 years old) they have reduced the number of players they are providing assistance from 164 to 127. The budget is the same and is allocated to fewer players thus increasing the quality of the programs.</li> <li>2) The FFT has two full time U12 National Coach to work with and oversee the proper development of the 127 players in the Avenir National program. Budget allocated is over 1,200,000 euros for this program.</li> <li>3) A very sound U12 player development structure providing the tennis evolutif concept to training and competition. Recent addition of sanctioned events to integrate their tennis evolutif programs for the younger age groups.</li> <li>4) Very large base of young players that have their license: 88,000 under 8 years old, 49,000 of 9 year old!!</li> <li>5) The number of hours of the top 2 coaching certification programs (BE-1 + BE-2) is 580 hours, thus allowing the coaches to be properly trained.</li> <li>6) A new coaching certification program is available for coaches who want to work with ATP/WTa or top junior prospects. The program is very specific and realistic to the demands of high competitive tennis.</li> <li>7) Fitness development is integrated in all training programs</li> </ol>