



May 8, 2020

TPA Insights and Perspectives

As you know, earlier this week we launched a new challenge called 'So you think you've got Tennis Talent'. Remember to submit your videos to us by June 1st, and show us all how you've managed to keep tennis as part of your daily activity! All videos are published to the TPA website [here](#).

If you missed our previous emails, our goal with these articles is to provide our coaches and professionals with a compass to ensure that when we do get back to our new normal, we will be prepared and have the necessary tools and ideas to provide the best possible experience for our stakeholders. To view last week's article, [click here](#). All past and upcoming articles are on the homepage of the TPA website, under "Latest Resources & News".

This is our fourth week of providing informative and in-depth Q & A's from some of Canada's TPA leaders in clubs/Academies. The series is called "Insights and Perspectives", and asks leaders about their actions and initiatives taken to date along with their impacts, as well as delving into valuable insights and strategies they are pursuing for their club, staff and members/players. This diverse group is comprised of a cross section of private, municipal, bubble, and commercial clubs and academies from across Canada.

Our hope is that in sharing this diverse industry knowledge from across Canada with our TPA membership, we will be better equipped for the challenges to come and for the new journey ahead. We hope you agree.

Tennis Professionals Association

The Tennis Professionals Association (TPA) is a member-based association dedicated to growing the profession of tennis coaching throughout Canada. The TPA was developed by Tennis Canada for Canadian Certified Instructors, Coaches, and Club Professionals. The TPA's mission is to support members in their contribution to the growth of tennis in Canada. For more information, visit www.tpacanada.com.

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This week, we will be featuring the following TPA Members:



Andy Sutton

Andy has most recently been The Assistant Head Professional at the Donalda Club for 2 years, the Tennis Director at Unionville Tennis Club for 5 years, the Head Ontario Coach Developer since 2012, a consultant to ACE Tennis, the Ontario tennis Association, and Tennis Canada, and is a member of the board of the Philpott Foundation (charity). Andy is certified as a Club Professional 3 & a Coach 3.



François Giguère

Facility Manager/Tennis Director of the Cougar Dome, in NS. Holder of a diploma "baccalaureat in administration" at the University of Quebec in Trois-Rivières, François Giguère is a Tennis Canada Level 2 Coach and CP2. He has worked 10 years as Regional and technical director at Tennis Quebec. He had occupied previously the position of Sport Director for the tennis programs at the Tennis Intérieur Mauricien for 11 years. In 2004, Giguère received a Tennis Canada Distinguish Award for his contribution for his outstanding work for the tennis in Quebec.



1. How has the Covid-19 virus pandemic impacted your Club/Academy?

a) Are you still processing monthly membership/Academy fees or have you put them on freeze? Will the time/program be extended or will refunds be issued?

AS (Andy Sutton) – Like all clubs in the Toronto area we are currently closed and an opening date is not clear at this point. For the private club, winter section fees cover the current timeframe and were charged long ago. It is unclear when summer section fees will be charged. For the outdoor club we are waiting until later to decide.

FG (François Giguère) – Without knowing the period we will be closed, we have set some quick measures to keep communications opened with our members/users to inform them about their particular situation.

1. Tennis players - Your tennis membership will be extended for the period the Cougar Dome is closed
2. You have paid your current tennis lessons - Your booking is kept and confirmed when the session will re-start
3. Other cases - Please email us and will address your case individually

b) Did your Club/Academy continue compensating employee and independent contractors, or lay them off?

AS – The private club provided information on CERB and did not compensate contractors. Operations at the outdoor club were not to start until early May, so no action has been taken yet. We will see if the staff qualify for the 100% summer job compensation from the government for part of the time that has been missed. We think there will be play at some point and they will then be working in a more typical manner.

FG – We were in the obligation to lay off our staff. As soon as the CERB programs were announced, we have communicated with everyone about how to proceed. Our facility is closed for the moment and we are operating with minimal staff to insure safety of the facility and Admin.

c) Are you currently initiating any club maintenance/cleaning work at the facility during this shutdown?

AS – Courts are being readied for the summer season.

FG – Yes. After closing the facility, all courts and club house have been cleaned and we have made a service call for the maintenance of our bubble.



d) Are you currently reviewing your Tennis Department/Academy processes and procedures, schedules, lesson plans, changes in delivery of program?

AS – Yes

FG – Yes, all current programs (Tennis Academy, Recreational tennis programming and High Performance tennis programs) are under review. We are revisiting and updating all schedules and procedures.

e) Who are you receiving guidance from?

AS – I am looking at as many sources as possible (online) and will consult with other local club leaders on what they will be doing. After this survey my staff and I will determine the best plan for our club.

FG – Main guidance comes from our Bank Services Advisors and our Accounting firm. Our board members are very active in the process too.

f) For those with domes, what is the plan for take down this Spring? (Given that labour workers are unavailable and restricted).

AS – Unclear at the moment.

FG – It was our plan to put the bubble down, but our Constructor advised to not proceed with this unless very necessary. A deflation of the bubble for more than 1 month could lead to mold problems. Therefore, we have decided to keep the bubble up.

2. Communication is crucial for an effective and efficient business operation, and now during a pandemic, even more so. What methods and frequency are you using to communicate and engage?

a) Your members/players/parents

AS – Personal phone calls, group emails as necessary.

FG –

- Newsletter for all on a weekly basis
- Updates on our Website/Facebook page/Instagram page on a weekly basis
- All tennis programs participants were called by phone when we had decided to shut down (March 15th)
- All March break camps participants were called by phone on March 15th to warn them about camp cancellations



b) Your staff

AS – Previously bi-weekly conference calls. Starting April 17th we have moved to weekly calls.

FG – All staff were informed right away about being laid-off and regular communications by email and video conferences were used to inform them about the Emergency Programs for COVID-19 for Federal and Provincial Government.

c) What has the response been like?

AS – Staff appreciate the opportunity to connect and members appreciate that they are being thought of and have less uncertainty.

FG – They have been understanding.

d) Have you already, or are you now considering online, virtual technology?

AS – We will be looking at using Zoom to connect.

FG – We are using Skype...We are a small organization.

3. Marketing for your Club Tennis/Academy business is an ongoing and creatively challenging process at the best of times. During this time of uncertainty, what are you doing now and planning for in the near future with respect to:

a) Summer rec/HP Camps

AS – For the outdoor club, information relating to when we will have final answers regarding camps have been sent out the week of April 20th. The goal is to make members aware that we are still thinking about them and that it's too soon to make any firm decisions at this time. While we expect camps to run we have to wait to be sure this is the case.

FG – We are not there yet.

b) Unique programming/training

AS – For the outdoor club we will arrange a number of programs/promotions to entice members to reintegrate into the club environment:

1. Special payment plans for to allow for those affected by covid-19 to still manage to attend sessions/lessons.



2. Groups will have lower max numbers to help manage fear of groups and attempt to maintain social distancing.
3. Procedures will be put in place to make ball pick up contactless (disposable gloves, ball tubes, new balls for each client (1 or 2 cans each lesson), etc. – will all be considered as methods to achieve this).
4. We will conduct a survey to see how comfortable members are to help determine some of the specific strategies we will use to entice members back to the club.

FG – We are planning to see if we can organize a free open house specific for the upcoming programs.

c) Welcome back club member/players initiatives

AS – The method chosen will depend on any governmental restrictions/recommendations on numbers of people allowed to gather. Once it's possible to have groups assemble it will be important to arrange something to start the healing process and have people think about a more 'normal' way of being.

FG – With the help of Tennis Nova Scotia, we are looking to options when the facility will re-open. The main focuses will be on safe social distancing and following directions from the Health NS. We are also working on this with our outdoor club.

d) Community outreach program

AS – We would definitely choose to be part of a promotional drive. It will be important for clubs, pros, and players to stand together to help the sport recover and thrive. We can get back from this, but it will take effort.

FG – During that COVID-19 time, a special committee is working on fundraising initiatives to prepare our re-opening

4. What advice and guidance would you offer your tennis coaches and professionals as employees/independent contractors for now and over the next two years to assist them in their career?

AS – For the outdoor club we will continue to hold staff development. We used to focus more on things to help the coaching staff in their on-court roles, but now more time will be devoted to personal development. Off-court topics will include:

- Social media promotion and community building
- Virtual lessons
- Developing long term plans and managing 'homework' with clients (get players more responsible for their development), etc.



FG – Providing them with videos for improving their coaching... We have received a ton of them, regular video conferences about ideas for the new programming, regular communications about COVID-19 and impact.

5. What do you feel are the biggest challenges and opportunities for your Club/Academy and our Canadian Tennis Industry over the next 2 years? How can the coaches/professionals play an active and important role?

AS – The biggest challenges will be getting back to an environment where the social aspect of tennis returns. We will likely be able to start business operations in the next 2 months or so, but, if as I suspect, this happens in slow stages where only small numbers are allowed to closely associate, we will lose one of the most important parts of what makes our sport attractive – the sense of connection & community. We need to find new ways of getting people to feel connected and drawn to play in a club environment until they feel safe and we can get back to a situation closer to what we used to have.

FG –

Challenges:

- Insuring that people will return to play their favorite sport in a safe and healthy environment. We are anticipating that this will be a slow process
- Re-hiring staff according to revenue generation
- Our first priority will be to get the tennis programming up and going following the recommendations of the Provincials and Municipal governments.

Opportunities:

- Reviewing all programs and enhance them with the help of the coaching staff
- Updating all our processes and policies
- Finding new ways of regular communications with our tennis players, members and users