



**May 15, 2020**

## **TPA Insights and Perspectives**

As you may know, TPA Hour continues next week as we present a series of webinars where National Coach, Sylvain Bruneau, and Bianca Andreescu will join us. Be sure to tune in and check out all the details [here](#).

This is our fifth and final 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.

All past and upcoming articles are on the TPA website listed under [resources](#).

In addition to the interview, Tennis Canada's Director of High Performance Coaching Development, Jocelyn Robichaud, share's his perspective on the impact of confinement on kids and their level of play. Take a look at the article [here](#).

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](http://www.tpacanada.com).

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



**Adam Seigel**

Adam Seigel is currently involved with the following clubs under Tennis Clubs of Canada: Blackmore Tennis Club (13 years as General Manager), Marilyn Redvers Tennis Centre (5 years as General Manager and Co Owner) and Milton Winter Tennis Club (2 years as General Manager and Co Owner). He is Club Pro 2 certified.



**Christine Picher**

Christine Picher is currently the Coordinator of the Academy & Leader – Tennis-Études at Club de Tennis Île des Sœurs, and has been a tennis professional since 1984. She is Tennis Canada Certified Level 4.



## **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 (Adam Seigal)** – Our membership and lesson fees are prepaid. We have offered a prorated credit for any time missed. If a client requests a refund, we will honour that request. To date, only a handful of clients have requested a refund as opposed to a credit.

**CP (Christine Picher)** – Monthly fees are frozen and refund or credit will be applied on a case-by-case basis.

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

**AS** – We are continuing to compensate our Director of Development. All other employees have been laid off and contractors are not receiving compensation.

**CP** – All employees (coaches) have been laid off.

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

**AS** – We are continuing with our regular weekly and monthly inspections. In addition, as per the recommendation of our Insurance Broker, we have created a new “COVID-19” Inspection that we complete every other day.

**CP** – Yes.

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

**AS** – We hold an annual Symposium for all of our Clubs. One of the priority items on the Agenda is to review our pathways system. The focus is on increased integration of all members/clients to ensure that we meet our Vision of “Creating Players for Life”. The Symposium will be held in May. As the current situation is fluid, we will wait until our Symposium before making any significant changes to our policies and procedures. We have also created a Business Continuity Plan” to provide us direction through this period and during the reopening phase.

**CP** – We will start reviewing in preparation for the opening.



### **e) Who are you receiving guidance from?**

**AS** – We have reached out to our Accountant, HR and Employment Lawyer for guidance through this process. In addition, we participated in a Zoom meeting with the Mayor, Council and other Sports Organizations to share ideas on how we are all coping during this unprecedented time.

**CP** – Tennis Québec and the Provincial Government.

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

**AS** – We will not be able to take down our domes until the government provides permission to gather in groups of at least 30 – 50. Therefore, the domes will stay up indefinitely. We have turned off the heat and lights so our utility bill is simply based on the fan running to inflate the dome.

**CP** – N/A

## **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** – We feel that this is an opportunity to further develop our member/client engagement through digital platforms. In keeping with our Company Value of “Building Relationships”, it is crucial to maintain correspondence with our members/clients. Some of our coaches have run a number of online workouts that have been well “attended”. We hosted a trivia contest on April 13<sup>th</sup>, using a combination of Kahoot and Zoom. We are currently working on a systematic approach to engage members/clients on a regular basis. Specifically, members/clients can join the “TCC Tour”. The Tour will have a ranking system. Players will participate in a series of contests and, based on their results, will accumulate points towards their ranking. Currently in the pipeline, we’re looking at mock tournaments (e.g. greatest players, matches of all time, etc.), skills competition that can be completed inside your house or driveway and more trivia contests.

**CP** – We have kept in touch with the parents through e-mails, the players through e-mails, Instagram and Zoom. We have been reaching to the parents early on to let them know how we planned to stay connected with their kids while respecting the government’s directive. We are also guiding parents on how they can help their child pursue their tennis development sharing articles on physical, tactical, mental and technical aspects of the game. Our fitness coach (Vicente Mogollon) has sent



programs to different age groups which can be easily done at home or outdoor. For the sport-study players the program is regularly adapted. Our Sport Psychologist (Kirsten Bjorn) has set up small group meetings through Zoom on a basis of questions and answers.

#### **b) Your staff**

**AS** – We have consulted with HR to provide detailed info to our staff on the benefits available to them at this time. We check periodically with them to see how they're doing. In addition, we will be developing some opportunities for them that align with our member/client engagement project.

**CP** – Among the Academy coaches, we have created a very tight communication line through phone calls and e-mail to support each other and share ideas to put forward a different way of learning.

#### **c) What has the response been like?**

**AS** – Members have been quite positive and appreciative of our efforts. Considering the current climate, our members are in good spirit. Our staff have been understanding but have expressed the challenges they are facing at this time.

**CP** – The parents' response have been very positive, they seem to appreciate our different ways of keeping in touch with their kids. Coaches have been very cooperative and willing to explore different avenues. Our feeling (coaches) is that tennis is a key element in the kid's life, it is interesting to see that out of our 135 kids in the academy....as of May 4<sup>th</sup> only one parent pulled out his child from tennis!

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

**AS** – Using a combination of Kahoot and Zoom. We are currently working on a systematic approach to engage members/clients on a regular basis.

**CP** – For many of us coaches, it has been an opportunity to discover different social medias that gives us the benefit to reach out and stay connected with the players and parents.



**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** – We have ceased promotion for the time being. We are sensitive to the situation of our clients and are acting cautiously with regards to promotion. We have not set a specific date as to when we will ramp up our advertising for the summer camp.

**CP** – We have an outdoor banner for camps and newspaper ads. We also use mailing lists to promote our camps.

**b) Unique programming/training**

**AS** – I think the answer to this question will be dependent on Government allowances and restrictions. Initially, there may be government guidelines on physical distancing with respect to recreational activities. Our approach will be to work within any such parameters. In terms of specific content and pricing models, as we get closer to our return, we will engage our members in a detailed survey which will address some of these issues.

**CP** – We have encouraged all the players to find a wall and hit balls, sending us pictures and/or videos through Instagram and e-mails. Coaches have participated with videos of different exercises that can be done on a wall (Thanks, Xavier). We have launched a contest of the most imaginative tennis court to be built at home... pictures will be posted on our board once the club re-opens. We have sent links of pro matches with a questionnaire for them to do as a homework, challenging their observation skills (Ralph's initiative).

**c) Welcome back club member/players initiatives**

**AS** – Please see my answer above.

**CP** – As for the re-opening of the club, we have no dates yet and will follow the government directives.

**d) Community outreach program**

**AS** – I would think that this would be part of our strategy. Without knowing specifics at this point, we will be making a concerted effort to reenergize our clubs.

**CP** – N/A



#### **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** – Our approach will differ for employees and contractors. For our coaches who are employed, we will be addressing this issue specifically during our Symposium. For our independent contracted coaches, unfortunately, we will not be able to provide such guidance/training to ensure that we are not misclassifying them as employees.

**CP** – If we all want to get back to the pre-pandemic level of business and more, they should develop a sense of clientele development and administration skills. This is a rare ingredient in most tennis clubs.

#### **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** – As we find ourselves in unprecedented times, it is difficult to forecast the future as we don't have comparative models as a reference point. Our new normal is undefined. That being said, we believe that the staples of success will remain unchanged. Specifically, for our club our focus will continue on providing affordable tennis, providing something for everyone and an uncompromising commitment to customer service. We will certainly need to be mindful of the economic situation and potential fears of future outbreaks. We believe that the regulars will be itching to return. However, the development segment of our industry will require greater attention. This is an opportunity to look past the status quo, and venture into a new paradigm that focuses on creative programming, community involvement and relationship centric services. Future success, as has always been the case, is almost entirely dependent on our staff. Staff will need to renew their efforts toward growing our sport and truly understand and adopt a sense of community within the club.

**CP** – Our biggest challenge will be to keep our clientele. Due to the economic impact, tennis might not be a priority for some. Parents may decide not to send their kids to play tennis for a while, especially with the younger ones. If we lose players, in return some of our coaches will experience a salary loss.