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# USAR-IP NEWS

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## WORKING WITH JUNIORS

When working with juniors it is important to understand that "one size does not fit all". What this means is that juniors of different ages and different skill levels require different programs for practice, learning and even enjoying the game.

This issue will concentrate on different approaches to instructing juniors at all age levels.

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## SPORT SAFETY AND JUNIORS

When working with students, but in particular juniors, it is important to practice sport safety.

If you have not taken the online sport safety courses, we highly recommend that you take them now. As a brief review, the next page outlines a few safety principles that you should implement when teaching juniors.

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## SPORT SAFETY FOR JUNIORS

1. Every instructor working with juniors should be CPR certified.
2. The instructor should be familiar with the junior's health record. Meet with the parents, if possible, to receive a summary of any health issues (asthma etc.)
3. Know the age and physical capabilities of the junior. Don't try to do too much!! Be knowledgeable of the appropriate skills for the age and skill level of the junior.
4. Never touch the junior without first asking permission of the junior (if appropriate) or/and the parent.
5. Try to teach juniors in a court that is visible to parents or others (glass back walls or overhead viewing).
6. All juniors must wear the proper safety equipment. Eye guards must fit and the racquets should have a safety thong.
7. If possible, and this is extremely important, always try to get other juniors involved in the process. Junior players become more involved when they can share their experience with other juniors. Groups of juniors have special safety issues (Review your sport safety exercises and benchmarks!)
8. Make each session fun but safe!!!!

ALL INSTRUCTORS MUST TAKE THE NEW USOC SPORT  
SAFETY COURSE: REFER TO LAST PAGE OF THIS  
NEWSLETTER

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## JUNIOR FACTS

- Surveys of six to seventeen year-old U.S. kids suggest that between 54 and 59 percent join sports teams. An estimated 70 percent of these kids drop out before their high school graduation. Even younger children are being affected. Between 2008 and 2013 there were 2.6 million fewer six to twelve year-old kids participating in sports.
- In the United States, 17 to 31 percent of children and adolescents are obese (Ahima, 2014; Ogden et al., 2014). This, in addition to the decline in pediatric sports participation and high dropout rates, is not good news for sports organizations because this reduces the pool of potential elite talent.
- Approximately 40 percent of pediatric athletes in one survey claim they dropped out of sports because they were not having fun.

Reasons for dropping out of sports:

|                                       | GIRLS | BOYS |
|---------------------------------------|-------|------|
| I was not having fun                  | 38    | 39   |
| I wanted to focus on<br>grades        | 36    | 26   |
| Didn't like the coach<br>or teammates | 34    | 40   |
| Had health or injury<br>problems      | 27    | 29   |
| Wanted to do other things             | 22    | 33   |
| Wasn't good enough                    | 15    | 15   |

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## WHAT IS BEING IN THE FLOW!!!

Being in FLOW means the athlete feels sufficiently challenged, yet not overwhelmed to the point of feeling incompetent. How quickly an athlete becomes anxious or bored determines if he/she stays with a sport. Learning requires that athletes stay interested and maintain a belief they can ultimately accomplish the skill. The coaching goal is to train athletes in small manageable learning steps so they remain in the zone of FLOW. Research indicates that educated coaches reduce kids' anxiety levels and lift their self-esteem.

One of the objectives of the USAR-IP program is to educate all instructors and coaches so they may implement the most updated instructional techniques and provide their students with the most updated information.

Coaches need to know what to teach at each level of growth. Teaching too advanced techniques at too young of an age will only work to confuse and reduce the athletes' interest in racquetball.

In this newsletter, we will attempt to divide junior development into three learning segments - 8 and under, 8 to 12 and 14 and over.

Each segment has its own physical and mental restrictions but remember the main element of each segment is FUN!!!!!!

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## JUNIORS 8 and Under

Although it is common practice to separate juniors by recreational player or tournament player, most of the players in this group would be considered beginning recreational players. A major focus would be on eye-hand coordination. It may also be beneficial to divide the court into 2 half-courts (front wall to short line and short line to back wall and play the side walls as the front and back wall respectively). The smaller courts provide an easier environment for the juniors to achieve success and thus positive accomplishment.

Drills - 1. Carry ball on racquet face from front to back wall. Normally an easy task but provides junior with sense of accomplishment as his first task. Lots of positive reinforcement by instructor!!!!

2. Bounce ball on floor and walk forward. Harder than #1 but beginners have some problem but with practice can usually accomplish during first outing.

3. Bounce ball on floor and hit towards front wall (assumes instructor provided the basics on how to hold racquet and swing). Looking only for decent ball/racquet contact and the ball hitting front wall in air. If too difficult can try nerd ball and small court. Select a number dependent on player's skill level and try to have them hit 5 (?) in a row.

4. Physical exercises - juniors like to run and test themselves. If you have a ladder try some very basic ladder exercises but if not have them jump over lines, run in and out of cans on court floor, star drills where they run to corner and back to center. Keep track of numbers and times as a goal for the junior every time. Fun, Fun, Fun!!!!

5. As the player advances and can hit the ball to front wall on a regular basis and perhaps even rally, you can implement more advance drills.

(We recommend lessons be 30-45 minutes long with plenty of positive

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## JUNIORS 9-13

In this age group, you will inevitably have players of different skill levels.

It is important that you manage your practice sessions and determine what skills and physical challenges each player can handle.

**BEGINNING LEVEL** - You may be repeating some of the skills practiced with the 8 and under group. This group should be able to handle more complex physical skills like more advanced ladder drills, star drills etc. Emphasize racquet prep with each exercise. If you make the students carry a racquet when doing the physical exercises it gets them used to keeping their racquet above waist level. Work on simple serves like lob and straight drive. Important at this stage to concentrate on serving a no fault serve. KEEP IT FUN!!! Provide a reward if the student gets 5 no fault serves in a row.

**INTERMEDIATE LEVEL** - should be able to hit a serve without faulting. Drive serve gets over short line and goes near corner. Lob serves bounce once after short line. Can start to use targets like wastebasket for lob serves and marks on front wall for drive serves. Can start on rally shots such as down-the-line (ball cannot hit any side wall). Physical exercises more difficult like: more intense line sprints (run to each court line and then back to front wall but do different exercises - high knees, skipping, butt kicks etc). Incorporate more difficult agility drills (ladder, star drills).

**ADVANCED LEVEL** - Athlete should be able to hit non-fault serves with consistency. Start more complex serves like Z serve and serves from different positions. Rally shots can start to incorporate pinch shots and wider angle shots. Incorporate physical exercises that incorporate agility, power and stretching exercises.

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## JUNIORS 14 AND OVER

Kids in this age group are moving into competitive or recreational type approaches to the game. Just like adults some kids choose to play racquetball as a lifetime sport but never really enter the competitive realm of racquetball while others will compete at the national level. Thus you need to make your practices specific for the skill level of the player **NOT** the age of the player.

**BEGINNING LEVEL** - Once again, this level may repeat many of the exercises listed for the other beginner age groups. Dependent on the physical condition of your athletes, you may be able to introduce more difficult physical activities (ladder drills, star drills etc). All beginners should concentrate on racquet prep and a level swing (use a table or stack of mats to practice a level swing).

**INTERMEDIATE** - Work on more tournament related drills. This can include practicing a variety of serves from different locations, also progression drills from drop and hit to setting oneself up off front wall to movement drills moving alternating backhand and forehand.

**ADVANCED** - Work on specific tournament related skills. Down the line(d-t-l) and pinch shot alternating drill - student stands in center court, instructor stands to his right and drops ball. Student moves to ball and hits d-t-l. Immediately moves back to center court and shadow drills same shot moving to other side and hits back hand. Can alternate with pinch shots. Concentrate on proper footwork (player can hit with open stance and crossover step). Practice more advanced serves with changing stance to hide ball, crack serves, walk out serves, etc.

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## USOC SPORT SAFETY PROGRAM

The *SafeSport* training consists of 6 main principles and covers 7 areas of topic:

- Monitoring and Supervision of the *SafeSport* program
- Policies Prohibiting Abuse and Misconduct
- Education and Awareness Training
- Mandatory Background Screening
- Reporting Concerns of Abuse
- Responding to Reports of Abuse

For more information about *SafeSport*, please visit the [\*SafeSport\*](#) page on the USAR website, where you may download the USA Racquetball *SafeSport* Handbook. Once on the page, follow the steps below to register and complete

the training.

- Click Start Training
- Follow the link below to the Team USA Prep Center
- Click STORE
- Choose *SafeSport* Training
- Click ADD TO BAG
- Click CHECKOUT (there is no charge)
- Follow the on-screen instructions for registering and completing the training.

If you have never created a log in for this site click REGISTER

- If registering for the first time, be sure to “+Add Membership” and select USA Racquetball and enter your current USAV Membership Number.
- (NOTE: If you don’t have your Membership Number, you may enter “official, coach, chaperone or your role”)





## To Us, The Ball Matters™



*"I love the Pro Penn Green ball. The fast crisp action off my racquet helped me win GOLD Medals at the 2015 Pan American Games and 2016 World Championships. No other brand compares to Penn!"*

**Paola Longoria**

*"All the Pro's on the IRT know that the Pro Penn HD ball is second to none. With today's lightweight racquets this is the only ball to play with. Its lightweight design and softer feel offers players of all levels the most comfortable experience on the court, even with shots exploding over 180 mph!"*

**Rocky Carson**

[pennracquet.com](http://pennracquet.com)

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## BEWARE OF INSTRUCTOR SCAM!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Beware of a national scam that targets sport instructors. The scammer will get your name, either by contacting the national association or local state organization, and then contact you regarding lessons for their children.

They will ask for lessons for two or three kids, ask for your rates etc. and then create some story regarding transportation for their kids etc. They will agree to all your fees, and then say they will pay you a certain amount of money and ask you to cover the fees of transporting their kids for usually 3 months, with a transportation service.

They will give you a credit card (fraudulent) that may pass initial security, but will soon prove to be stolen, and you will be forced to repay the funds to whomever the credit card belonged to, or whomever processed the card.

We recommend that you get all payment upfront and wait for at least a week after the card is verified before starting.

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If you have any questions please contact any of the above master instructors.

If you would like to submit articles or ideas for future articles please contact Jim Hiser .