

The Case for Tennis

On April 30th, 2020 Director Amy Acton signed a public health order extending the stay at home order for recreational sports leagues, fitness centers and public recreation centers. In Franklin County, the order has been interpreted to close indoor tennis facilities and outdoor tennis courts. **The Greater Columbus Tennis Association (GCTA) believes that tennis can be played utilizing safe distancing and other sanitary means and should be waived or allowed under the order.**

Exceptions have been made to the order for other recreational activities. Specifically, golf has been allowed despite the continued closure of country clubs and public recreational centers like golf courses. Golf has done so by demonstrating an ability to meet many of the requirements of Section 21 of the public health order. **Tennis can meet or exceed these safety standards as well.** Consider:

- Tennis is played on a court where six-foot social distancing is easily obtained.

Adequate

social distancing in retail settings requires 9 square feet for customers while waiting in line (example: 6' spacing in a retail setting for four people in a checkout line). General dimensions of a tennis court are 120' x 60' feet or 7,200 square feet. Allowing for the maximum number of tennis players on a court provides 1,800 square feet per person. While players certainly move about the court in the course of a match, they maintain well beyond the 6' social distancing guidelines as per the public health order.

- In the same way golf has been allowed to place additional safety requirements on its players, tennis can be adapted and accommodated. For example:
 - Each player can bring their own tennis balls to serve, eliminating the need to comingle tennis balls amongst players. Tennis racquets and other equipment are already not shared or handled by other players.
 - Every player can provide their own drinks, eliminating shared water/refreshments.
 - No shaking hands or "high-fiveing"
 - Remaining apart from other players when entering courts
 - Avoid touching gate handles
 - Every player can provide their own towels
 - Use racket/foot to pick up balls to direct to your opponents
 - Perform a self-health assessment before playing
 - Locker room facilities and showers can remain closed similar to golf courses.
 - Hand sanitizer or other disinfectants can be provided for all players
 - Scoring placards usually attached to the net posts need not be utilized,

eliminating another potential common touch point.

- A golf round of 18 holes averages 4.5 hours. Tennis matches can be limited to 2 hours.
- Signs and other visual cues can be placed in and around the tennis courts as reminders to “PLAY SAFE!”
- Tennis’ national governing body, the United States Tennis Association (USTA), has published guidelines for safe play which guided the list we have included with this document.

As we hope you agree, tennis is a safe, contactless sport that can be played in an adapted manner that at a minimum complies with social distancing requirements. It shares many similarities to golf, where common sense procedures can be easily adopted to address any public health concerns. We are currently performing our planning activities which involve payments to third party vendors for scheduling and other logistical concerns. Our target start date for our league is June 1st.** Thank you for your consideration.

The GCTA is the USTA Community Tennis Association for Central Ohio founded over 50 years ago. The GCTA, a non-profit organization, supports tennis in the central Ohio area and is comprised of a volunteer Board of Trustees, and an Executive Director. The GCTA is affiliated with the USTA and belongs to the USTA Midwest Section’s Ohio Valley Tennis Association district. The organization donates over \$20,000 annually. Columbus Rec & Parks generally receives a grant of over 50% of that amount with the rest being allocated, also in the form of grants to other tennis related activities in the Columbus area.