



Mark Dickson Tennis Academy  
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## **STUDENT & PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

It is our goal to hold our Academy, our staff, our students and their parents to the highest level of professionalism. Participation in tennis is a privilege and Academy juniors are expected to represent themselves, the Academy, coaches, parents and fellow participants with honor and respect, both on and off the court, at all times. **Good sportsmanship and being a good citizen helps to build self-confidence and self-esteem and is a requirement for becoming and remaining an Academy student.**

The guiding cornerstones of our Academy are:

1. sportsmanship
2. character and leadership development
3. teamwork
4. positive attitudes, and
5. advanced professional tour skills, tactics and habits

This includes having behavior at all times that is sportsmanlike, respectful, trustworthy, reliable, fair and courteous to others. Unsportsmanlike behavior includes cheating, racquet abuse, demeaning the skills of fellow students, taunting, disrespectful language, verbal obscenities, intentional harm to others and lack of effort.

**THE ACADEMY STAFF MAY ASSESS PENALTIES, SUSPEND, REMOVE OR DEFAULT A PLAYER WHO DISPLAYS POOR SPORTSMANSHIP DURING DAILY PRACTICES, LESSONS OR ACADEMY COMPETITIONS.**

**PLAYING TENNIS IS A PRIVILEGE. REPEATED ACTS OF UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT OR DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR TOWARDS OUR COACHING STAFF BY A STUDENT OR PARENT WILL NOT BE TOLERATED AND MAY LEAD TO THE STUDENT'S SUSPENSION OR TERMINATION FROM THE ACADEMY AT THE DIRECTOR'S DISCRETION. NO REFUNDS OR CREDITS WILL BE GIVEN.**

Student and Parent Code of Conduct

Some portions adapted from the American Sports Education Program (ASEP)

## STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

1. **Respect** – treat all people with respect all the time and require the same of my fellow athletes.

**Respect for Coaches, Officials, Opponents and All Others** – eagerly follow instructions from coaches, treat contest officials and fellow competitors with courtesy and respect; don't complain about or argue with officials or opponents or decisions during or after an athletic event; show respect to parents and club members

2. **Trustworthiness** – be worthy of trust in all I do
  - a. Integrity – live up to the high ideals of ethics and sportsmanship
  - b. Honesty – no lying, cheating, stealing or engaging in any other dishonest or unsportsmanlike conduct
  - c. Attitude – display a positive attitude and outlook in daily practices, trips and events
  - d. Cooperation – freely cooperate with fellow students, coaches and parents
  - e. Reliability – fulfill commitments; do what I say I'll do; be prepared and on time to practices, matches and events; give 100% effort and realize that any lack of effort on my part is a form of stealing from myself, my opponent and unfairly impacts my teammates and the culture of the Academy.
  - f. I understand that players will be removed from the court or training areas immediately for lack of effort.**
  - g. Loyalty – be loyal to my Academy teammates and coaches
3. **Class** – be a good sport; be gracious in success and accept defeat with dignity by giving credit to my opponent; offer encouragement to my fellow athletes when they are struggling; compliment extraordinary performance; show sincere respect in all aspects of my participation
4. **Disrespectful Conduct** – do not engage in disrespectful conduct of any sort including profanity, obscene gestures, offensive remarks of a sexual, racial or religious nature, verbal abuse, taunting, hazing or other actions that demean any individuals

5. **Illegal Conduct** – no stealing, vandalism, possession or distribution of morally offensive materials, use or possession of illegal drugs of any kind including alcohol, tobacco products or steroids
6. **Responsibility** – practice reasonable and logical manners in all situations when representing the Academy and my fellow athletes
7. **The Importance of Education** – place being a good student as a first priority and commit to getting the best education I can. Be honest with myself about the likelihood of getting an athletic scholarship or playing at the professional level and remember that many universities will not recruit student-athletes who do not have a serious commitment to their education, the ability to succeed academically or the character to represent their institution honorably.
8. **Role modeling** – always remember that participation in tennis and the Academy is a privilege, not a right. I will consistently exhibit good character and conduct myself as a positive role model. I am a role model to my peers and younger Academy students. I will help teach younger students to develop their tennis and athletic skills and encourage them in their efforts with enthusiasm and a positive attitude. **Suspension or termination of the participation privilege is within the sole discretion of the Academy director.**
9. **Self-Control** – have the inner strength to overcome the temptation to retaliate, fight or show excessive displays of anger or frustration
10. **Community** – support the efforts of the Academy coaches and staff to create goodwill throughout the community; support organizers of events by volunteering to assist and increase awareness in the community about the health benefits of tennis and love of the sport
11. **Healthy Lifestyle** – safeguard my health; don't use any illegal or unhealthy substances including alcohol, tobacco and drugs, or engage in any unhealthy techniques to gain, lose or maintain weight or performance advantage

12. **Integrity of the Game** – protect the integrity of the game; don't gamble. Play the game according to the rules.
13. **Fairness** – live up to the standards of fair play; love to compete and respect the uncertainty of the outcome; be willing to listen, learn and be open-minded
14. **Caring** – demonstrate concern for others, never intentionally injure any participant or engage in reckless behavior that might cause injury to myself or others
15. **Teammates** – help promote the well being of Academy teammates through positive praise and encouragement, friendship and by reporting any unhealthy or dangerous conduct to coaches or directors. Good teammates and friends don't ridicule or demean the ability level of fellow Academy teammates.
16. **Citizenship** – Play by the rules and maintain a thorough knowledge of all competition rules; honor the spirit of the rules; avoid temptations to gain advantage through improper gamesmanship techniques that violate the highest traditions of sportsmanship. I will always compete hard and fair.

I have read and understand the requirements of this Code of Conduct. I understand that I am expected to perform according to this Code and I understand that there may be sanctions or penalties if I do not. I understand that Mark Dickson Tennis Academy will rely on my assurances that I will abide by this Code and that my acceptance into the Academy and further participation is based upon my agreement to fulfill my responsibility to honor this Code.

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Student's Signature:

Date:

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\*Portions of the Student Code of Conduct have been adapted from the American Sport Education Program.

Student and Parent Code of Conduct

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## **PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT & INFORMATION**

Parents, their child and Academy coaches are a team that needs to maintain proper balance in order to gain the maximum benefit from time spent together at the Academy and at tournaments. Parents need to be actively involved in the development process and we encourage your input. As a developmental tennis academy, we focus on the process of developing positive habits and fundamentals to help your child reach their full potential as a player and person.

We emphasize process goals, not outcome goals. For us, winning means giving your best effort, being a good sport and focusing on the process of improving your skills a little bit more every day. Students learn they can always control the process of improving themselves but not always the outcome of a match.

We respect and value the relationships we have established with our students and their parents and feel a huge responsibility to ensure that your child enjoys their childhood years, embraces learning and discovery and reaches their highest potential. We want to save you and your child from as much unnecessary stress as possible, help you manage expectations and thoroughly enjoy your experience of watching and participating in your child's development.

We realize the tremendous amount of time and money you are investing in your child's development and we are committed to offering our best insight into what we have observed over many years and what we feel is in your child's best interest. We have many years of junior, collegiate and professional experience with competitive coaching, parenting issues, tournament planning and budgeting that can help you maximize your returns and minimize your expenses. We have seen all sides of the issues as players, High Performance coaches and parents of a competitive tennis player.

We are here to help you and your child succeed and we will give our maximum effort as coaches and role models every day.

The following guidelines are suggested to maintain the optimum balance of the parent/player/coach relationship and your own enjoyment.

1. As a parent, two of the most important skills you can give your child for their long-term development are confidence and independence. Praising their effort and determination will help your child feel good about the progress they are making instead of focusing on the outcome of every match. Some of the best ways to

instill confidence are by always being positive, supportive and listening to your child. They are always watching and taking everything in.

Try to stay positive in every word you say to your child and in your every action. Be supportive when they are discouraged. Listen to them when they need a friend.

Your child will need to learn to be very independent, responsible and self-reliant to thrive in a sport as challenging as tennis. Please encourage and allow them to learn to rely on themselves as much as possible regarding checking match times, getting racquets restrung, arranging matches and practices and getting their own water.

Parents are always welcome at Academy practices and team competitions and are asked to be respectful of the working environment that students and coaches need to concentrate, maintain continuity and push through temporary physical and psychological barriers. Proper space from parents is required at all times for coach and student to communicate and work in a focused environment. Please show proper respect to coaches and allow them to do what they have been trained to do.

Tennis is a sport where the best progress happens through a combination of:

- a) intense focus and concentration on both the player's and the coach's part
- b) relaxed and calming talks between a player and coach. There will be many times where it appears that a coach and player are taking a quiet break before or after a strenuous session or just relaxing and this is often when the magic of mental or emotional conditioning happens.
- c) space to think and reflect in order to organize thoughts and prepare for the next phase of practice. There is an ebb and flow to every practice session as player and coach prepare for the next series of challenges.

While parents are welcomed at Academy practices their presence will not affect the decisions for court, drill, practice partner or match assignments by coaches.

2. During the week, players will routinely play with players at, above and below their ability level.

Many of the advanced skills we teach cannot be taught with players practicing or playing matches with higher ability players. The reason is that many times the ball is moving too quickly or with too much spin for a student to read the ball and correctly make the adjustment we are looking to improve. We teach players to take the ball very early, build weapons very slowly and ultimately, to play a very aggressive style of tennis. These skills are extremely difficult to learn against extremely strong competition or at too rapid of a pace.

We run very customized practices where each player may be working on varying tasks and technique to ensure that daily goals are achieved. We balance the use of courts, time, coaches and students to the best of our ability to operate the highest level practices.

We create an environment where all players are challenged daily on a physical, mental and psychological level. Players will be coached in practice to embrace and adapt to adversity and change.

Please remember role reversal. While you may want your child to play against a player of a higher ability level and experience, the parent of the higher ability player may now be unhappy that their child is playing against a player of lower ability.

As practitioners of a games based approach to learning, we use many forms of situational play and handicapping to match dissimilar ability levels and make drills, rotations and practices as competitive as possible. It all balances out and everyone improves while have lots of fun developing their skills.

Also, every child learns and processes information differently. No two players are the same, nor do they progress at the same rate.

3. We use a variety of successful, yet unconventional methods in the development of our students.

- a) During drills, we will often have a group of players on court rotating through “spiking” cycles of work that involve phases of playing, training and recovering/observing. We are trying to maximize and balance your child’s court time with a proper work/rest interval that approximates 1:3. At times we will be working in a cycle that can range from 1:1 to 1:4. This cycle is meant to simulate the work/rest intervals of match play on various surfaces and against a variety of opponents. The better their bodies’ energy systems can adapt, the better they will perform.

We are systematically training your child’s energy systems to increase their cardiovascular endurance and training their mind to have the will to fight, embrace adversity, love the struggle and stay in the point one shot longer than their opponent. During the recovery/observation stage your child will be taught how to study opponent’s grips, swings, tendencies and patterns.

This stage allows your child to further develop their anticipation and reaction skills. As much as possible, they need to see the point develop with other students before they play the point themselves.

Mastery of observation is a large determinate for what sets players apart.

This method has proven to be successful for many years in the development of international professional tour players and is a terrific way for players to slow down and study point construction. It is often overlooked by other players and coaches as being meaningless and of limited use. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Each phase of this “spiking” cycle is imperative in your child’s progress and as far as injury prevention and career longevity, recovery is the most overlooked and least understood component.

- b) The backboard is the best and most underutilized tool for becoming a great player and we use it as often as possible to dramatically improve the level of play and future potential of our students. Many of the greatest players in the history of tennis have routinely used the backboard to train.

We show our students how to practice with a purpose and gain the most benefit from using the wall.

Many parents and students feel that the backboard is not worthy of their time and feel that the tennis court is the place to play all the time. This is incorrect thinking.

On a tennis court, players at the baselines typically stand 78 or more feet way from one another trading groundstrokes. On a backboard, you can adjust many variables such as distance, height and angles to make workouts as easy or as challenging as possible. A well run workout on the wall, directed by an experienced coach, will allow a player to hit 3 to 4 times more balls in the same amount of time as a workout on the court. A 20 minute practice on the wall is often equal to an hour on the court and is typically much more strenuous.

No one seems to believe this is possible until they experience the workout first hand. It can be grueling.

We will run drills, conduct practice sessions and play many games on the backboard and our students will benefit tremendously.

To stand out from the crowd, our students must think and train differently from the crowd. We aim for extraordinary and will not settle for average.

If you have questions regarding your child's practice partners, practice routine, method of training or cardiovascular development please contact any Academy coach.

4. When attending tournaments, try to keep your distance to allow your child to mentally prepare for their match or enjoy the independence of being with their

peers. When watching matches, try to view from a distance that does not distract your child. Every child is different in their mood and stage of development, so don't be offended if your child needs more space than another child.

5. Parents should not coach during Academy practices or events and are strictly forbidden to coach during tournament matches by USTA and ITF Rules, except when allowed between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sets of a split-set match.
6. Academy coaches encourage students to keep their focus on the court during a match and not on parents or coaches. This focus is part of their daily training and is vital for your child's development. Please show your child respect and support our efforts.
7. Keep your emotions in check. Disputes over scoring or line calls must always be handled by the players. Please do not get involved with scoring disputes, line call disputes or any confrontations with other parents. Players need to be responsible and handle all situations without the assistance of their parents.

We have very simple rules on line calls at the Academy: "If an opponent calls the ball out, then you missed. Move on to the next point and don't hit so close to the lines. Learn to force errors from your opponent."

Players who feel they were cheated begin to look for excuses regarding line calls, the sun, the wind, etc. If parents and students continue to discuss the negative aspects of line calls after a match the focus is lost on the positives of the match. We want to remove all excuses and teach our students to take responsibility for their actions and results.

We are training champions who are tough and fair competitors and that means learning to handle unpleasant situations in a professional manner.

Players are not allowed to argue line calls with their opponents, cross the net to the opponent's side of the court or get into heated arguments. If a player feels that an opponent is cheating them, then the player should call for an umpire, calmly explain the situation and ask the umpire to call the lines. Due to the

tournament demands of many players, the umpire may not be able to meet this request.

Academy coaches will not get involved in the situation.

Again, students are trained to use court position, force errors from their opponents and not hit close enough to the lines that an opponent has the opportunity to make a questionable line call. This is not always realistic, but it is the best way to handle the situation in order for a student to maintain his or her composure.

Maintaining concentration and composure is paramount to being able to stay in a close match.

A player who is visibly distraught over a bad line call can expect only one future outcome – another poor line call. We encourage our students by saying, “Do your best to show your opponent your confidence and control over your emotions and try to just ignore it and move on.”

When playing a player with a reputation for giving questionable line calls, it is often best for our students to alert officials before the match and ask for an umpire. Please let your child handle this request.

Unfortunately, bad line calls are a part of tennis and oftentimes little can be done to remedy the behavior of unscrupulous opponents. Have faith that your child will always compete fairly and with honor even if other children do not.

8. After a match, let your child approach you. Let them know how proud you are of their effort and let them know how much progress and improvement you are seeing. Winning and losing always take a backseat to effort, progress, confidence and the joy of competing.

If there is an issue regarding lack of effort, please allow a cooling off period or discuss this privately with an Academy coach.

Lack of effort – tanking – is a common defense mechanism used by children. If they give their best effort and still lose then they have proven to themselves that they are not as good as their opponent. If they do not give their best effort then they have saved themselves the embarrassment and humiliation of feeling the loss.

By tanking, the child feels that they have not invested as much in the outcome of the match and losing doesn't hurt as bad. This is a psychological coping mechanism. Students who tank also cheat their opponent's out of feeling that the opponent earned a competitive victory.

There is nothing more frustrating for a parent than to watch their child give little or no effort. **Please, control your emotions and if necessary remove yourself from the situation to regain your composure.** Our Academy coaches will work our hardest to break your child of this destructive habit.

9. Please keep your composure and control your emotions and any gestures of frustration at tournaments. If you feel you cannot do this it is probably best to not to watch your child's match. When competing, your child needs as much support and as few parental and coaching distractions as possible.

How can a child be expected to maintain his or her focus and composure while playing if a parent is unable to maintain their composure while only watching?

10. Please respect the role of tournament officials. They are all very nice and trying their best. They are tremendously fair, unselfish, overworked and underpaid. Please be patient, tolerant and be a good role model for your child.

Umpires make mistakes. So do parents, coaches and players. Get to know the local officials. You will see them most weeks and can build up a nice rapport with them. They love tennis and we need them for the viability of our sport.

Talking negatively about umpires and other parents distracts students and undermines much of the work we do during the week to teach our students to move on and think positive thoughts.

11. Be involved in your child's tennis, but try not to smother them. Their interest in tennis will typically shift higher and lower depending on their age and development. Let them make mistakes and learn from their mistakes. Students are already under a great deal of stress and need their space to grow.
12. Please keep the Academy director informed if your child is going through any personal crisis at home or school and needs some special attention from our coaches. We are here to help with your child's overall well-being and development.
13. Please inform the Academy director if your child is injured, has trouble sleeping, is depressed or has any recent changes in his or her medical condition that need to be addressed to adjust your child's practice routines or competition schedule.
14. We have many valuable resources such as books and articles that have been of great help to us that are available for parents to borrow at any time. We want your experience to be as fulfilling and enjoyable as that of your child's.

We look forward to our journey together and thank you for the opportunity you give to all of us at the Mark Dickson Tennis Academy to work with your child and be an important part of their life.

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_