

Stating the Case for Tennis

AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK, I GET AN email or a call from someone looking for information they can use to help them make the case for tennis.

Often it's a person from a Community Tennis Association, park and rec association, school district or other community group hoping to get data or research they can present to local officials or boards on the need for tennis courts, facility renovations, tennis staff or programming. Or it might be a tennis director at a country club or commercial facility who has to report to his or her board or management. Even teaching pros and retailers have been in touch about finding resources that can help not only their businesses, but also help to grow the game.

The common thread, of course, is that all these groups are looking for ways to ensure tennis remains vital in their communities.

A lot of our colleagues in this industry—whether you earn your living from tennis or are a volunteer—can use information and guidance when it comes to growing this sport at the local level. Who should you approach? What should your “pitch” be? What numbers can you use to “state the case” for tennis? How can you show how important tennis is to a community?

Many years ago, I attended the first meeting of a Tennis Advocacy Task Force that the USTA put together. That turned into the USTA Advocacy Committee, which worked to state the case for tennis in ways that ranged from local advocacy to lobbying in Washington, D.C. In 2013, rather abruptly and for reasons that were never really made clear, the USTA did away with its

staff devoted to advocacy, and with the Advocacy Committee itself.

For those of us committed to growing the game, advocacy is what it's all about. It's time we brought this important group back.

While the Tennis Industry Association and different USTA committees and departments all contribute to “advocacy” in their own ways, the fact is, we could benefit from more coordination, and less duplication of effort. We should be developing easily accessible tools and resources to help state the case for tennis that everyone involved in this sport can use.

Lobbying for tennis on Capitol Hill is important, but right now, we need to focus on providing the right tools, resources and research to help advocate for tennis in local communities—to get the two courts built in the small town, to resurface school courts, to get racquets into the hands of kids, to get funding for a local tennis league.

We need to make everyone in this sport an advocate for tennis.

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