

MANITOBA WHEELCHAIR SPORT ASSOCIATION

RETURN TO SPORT PLAN

WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

VERSION 1.1 - SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

Wheelchair Tennis – Introduction

This document outlines Manitoba Wheelchair Sport Association’s COVID-19 safety plan and pathway for reinstating the sport of wheelchair tennis as part of MWSA’s programs. This plan builds upon the existing recommendations for the Return to Sport Plan for tennis while making modifications to enable the facilitation of wheelchair tennis programming.

All staff, coaches, athletes, and volunteers will be required to adhere to the protocols established in this document as approved by the Province of Manitoba. All individuals involved in MWSA programming will be provided an orientation to these protocols prior to returning to our programming.

Please note: MWSA’s insurance will not cover claims related to the transmission of COVID-19. The absence of coverage related to COVID-19 is affecting the entire sport industry and is not a unique situation from MWSA’s insurance provider. All members returning to MWSA programming will be made aware of the absence of insurance coverage in this area and the risk they assume by returning to sport.

To mitigate risks, MWSA has developed several risk-management documents which must be completed by participants, parents/guardians, and coaches/staff/volunteers prior to attending MWSA programming, including assumption of risk/waiver documents and a declaration of compliance.

Each athlete’s health and safety are of the utmost priority. It is planned through this phased approach to eventually resume the new normal of wheelchair tennis. However, each phase will be evaluated and assessed to ensure our athletes, coaches, and everyone else’s health remains our top priority.

All questions regarding this document may be forwarded to:

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Principles of our Plan

The following principles have been used to guide the creation of this document:

Personal Hygiene	Staying Home When Sick	Environmental Considerations	Social Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequent Handwashing or sanitization ▪ No handshaking ▪ Promotion of healthy respiratory practices ▪ Wearing PPE when in close proximity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Routine screening using a COVID-19 screening tool ▪ Requiring those who are ill/not feeling well to stay home ▪ Requiring those who have travelled to self-isolate as required by the province 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequency of use of equipment ▪ Shared equipment ▪ Shared specialized equipment (ie. Sport wheelchairs) ▪ Enhanced sanitization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Smaller group limits ▪ Maintaining social distancing during programming ▪ Outdoor over indoor ▪ User groups in a location (multiple courts)

Athlete Demographic

MWSA provides programming to a wide variety of abilities in our sports which includes potential high-risk considerations for the athlete should they contract COVID-19. These can include:

- Chronic medical comorbidities
- Systemic immune suppression
- Required caregiver support
- Need for assistance in certain tasks (ie. help getting their wheelchair from a vehicle or storage)
- Common ailments that share symptoms of COVID-19 (autonomic dysreflexia, UTI's, etc.)
- Lack of function may mask symptoms
- Hygiene difficulties with manual chair use

Currently, there are limited cases involving athletes with a spinal cord injury (SCI) globally, and in the absence of data, it is difficult to distinguish what potential symptoms would be dominant in this particular population. As MWSA serves athletes with varying abilities, MWSA acknowledges the increased potential risk for our athletes in returning to sport.

General MWSA Protocols

MWSA will require the following throughout all phases of its Return to Sport Plan (RSP) until the mitigation of the COVID-19 virus. These requirements will be implemented system wide and includes all sports and programming offered by the association. These measures include:

REQUIRED FORMS

All staff, coaches, athletes, and volunteers will be required to fill out COVID-19 related forms, including:

- COVID-19 Declaration of Compliance
- Assumption of Risk Form (for individuals under the age of majority)
- Waiver Form (for individuals over the age of majority)

All individuals will be encouraged to have a discussion with their family doctor about the risks associated with them returning to sport while COVID-19 is active in our communities. Individuals will not be required to obtain physician approval prior to returning to our programming, however, individuals should consider their personal health in determining their ability to return to sport.

All individuals will be notified that MWSA's insurance does not cover claims associated with COVID-19. This lack of coverage is consistent with multiple insurers across Canada. All individuals involved in MWSA programming will be required to acknowledge the lack of coverage for this specific case

SCREENING

All individuals will be required to self-screen prior to attending sport programming provided by MWSA. Individuals in charge of programs will be provided with a self-screening tool and will be required to verbally verify with each participant before allowing the athlete to participate.

HANDWASHING

All individuals will be required to handwash upon arrival and prior to departing sport programming provided by MWSA. For indoor venues, individuals will be asked to wash their hands with soap and water in a washroom or will be provided access to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

All individuals who utilize a manual or power wheelchair will be required to sanitize the surfaces of their chair that are frequently touched by their hands (ie. push rims, joy sticks, etc.). This measure will improve the effectiveness of handwashing as it will reduce the contaminated surfaces the individual touches.

All individuals who have come in physical contact with a used piece of equipment (sport wheelchair, etc.) will be required to wash or sanitize their hands.

CHANGING

Individuals will be strongly encouraged to arrive to programming in suitable clothing that does not require changing at the venue. In situations where an athlete may require a space to change, MWSA will ensure access to sanitization supplies that the athlete can use to disinfect the space prior to using it to change.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

All individuals will be encouraged to utilize personal protective equipment in the following situations:

- In areas that are deemed high traffic
- During transport to/from the venue if using other transportation than a personal vehicle
- In situations where physical distancing is not able to occur

Further, the use of a mask will be mandatory in the following situations:

- Assisting an athlete in transferring between their primary wheelchair and their sport wheelchair
- Assisting an athlete who has tipped their wheelchair and requires assistance to be uprighted
- Assisting an athlete with adjusting their equipment while the athlete is in the wheelchair
- Other situations where an athlete requires physical assistance that cannot be done with physical distancing

Prior to assisting an athlete in the above situations, the individual shall wash their hands with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds or apply an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to their hands. After assisting the athlete, the individual must re-wash or sanitize their hands. If contact with another athlete or equipment occurs while assisting the athlete, the individual must re-wash or re-sanitize their hands prior to continuing to assist the athlete.

ATHLETE ILLNESS

Any athlete exhibiting potential symptoms of COVID-19 will not be allowed to participate in MWSA programming. MWSA acknowledges that there are other non-infectious conditions which may contribute to relatable symptoms of COVID-19, such as UTIs. In all situations, regardless of the source of the illness, any symptomatic individual will be required to stay home.

If an athlete develops or presents symptoms related to COVID-19 at the program, the facilitator shall:

- Acquire and wear personal protective equipment prior to assisting the individual
- Ask the individual to wear personal protective equipment as soon as possible
- Isolate the individual from the rest of the program group, including removing them from the programming space
- Assist the individual in arranging transportation home, if required
- File an incident report with the MWSA office to ensure follow-up on the individual's health

ATTENDANCE

All program facilitators will be required to maintain a daily attendance record and submit the record to the MWSA office upon request. This information will be maintained should a suspected or probable case arise with a program athlete/participant and will assist in contact tracing, if required.

TRANSPORTATION

MWSA will make considerations for athletes who utilize public transportation or private transportation in order to attend programming. Services such as Winnipeg Transit Plus often do not prescribe pick-up or drop-off times that coincide with the start or finish of a program. Individuals utilizing a transportation service with non-dependable pick-up and drop-off times will be prescribed a designated area that they can wait where there is a lesser chance of high-frequency traffic from the general public. MWSA will recommend where possible to obtain reliable pick-up and drop-off times that are consistent with the program times.

COVID-19 Case Response Plan

The following protocol will be implemented through all phases of MWSA's Return to Sport Plan until COVID-19 is considered mitigated.

The following measures will be implemented should a suspected or probable case of COVID-19 occur with an individual involved in MWSA programming:

1. ATHLETE TESTING

MWSA will encourage all athletes who are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 to be tested to confirm or rule out the virus. If an athlete tests positive for COVID-19, or if an individual at a facility or venue from another program tests positive for COVID-19, MWSA will implement the next stage of the protocol.

2. CONTACT TRACING

MWSA will compile attendance records for dates the individual was involved in MWSA programming and develop a list of other potentially affected athletes within the previous 14 days. MWSA will then notify all affected individuals of the case and recommend that those individuals self-isolate. MWSA will also notify all affected individuals should a suspected or probable case arise at a facility/venue in which programming has occurred. All attendance records will be provided to public health officials promptly upon request.

3A. INDIVIDUAL AT FACILITY TESTS POSITIVE

Upon identifying a lab-confirmed case of an individual who utilized the same facility or venue as our programming, MWSA will:

- Immediately suspend all programming that utilizes that venue
- Notify all individuals in MWSA programming that could be affected by this exposure
- Deep clean all equipment utilized at that venue and any vehicles or trailers that may have been in contact with contaminated equipment
- Work with the facility or venue to ensure the program location is properly cleaned prior to resuming programming
- Once the facility is properly sanitized, programming will revert back to a delivery method that allows for increased physical distancing. This will be implemented for a minimum of fourteen (14) days prior to resuming the current phase.

3B. INDIVIDUAL AT PROGRAM TESTS POSITIVE

Upon identifying a lab-confirmed case of an individual who has participated in MWSA programming has occurred, MWSA will:

- Immediately suspend all programming run by MWSA
- MWSA will notify the venue at which the program was held at to inform other potential users of the location of the positive case
- Notify all individuals involved in MWSA programming of the potential exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19
- Deep clean all equipment, storage spaces, office spaces, transport vehicles/trailers, and any other potential cross-contaminated space that MWSA has had cross contact with in the previous fourteen (14) days.
- After fourteen (14) days of program suspension, MWSA will evaluate the planned return to programming in consultation with the Province of Manitoba. The minimum period of suspension will be no less than twenty-one (21) days. This period will be extended indefinitely if there is documented spread amongst individuals involved in MWSA programming

Education

Education will be a strong component in ensuring all individuals' safety in returning back to sport. Prior to the start of sport programming, and continuing thereafter, MWSA will offer the following training and orientation opportunities:

ORIENTATION SESSION

All individuals involved in MWSA's programming will be required to attend an orientation session discussing MWSA's Return to Sport Plan. This session will cover MWSA's phased plan in returning to sport, our protocols regarding health and hygiene, and our plan to intervene should a positive case be identified. MWSA will discuss other health problems that share symptoms of COVID-19 and ensure that those who are experiencing these symptoms will remain absent from our programs until addressed and corrected. Individuals will then be provided the Declaration of Compliance and either the Assumption of Risk or Waiver form which will allow their participation in our programs.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

MWSA will work with Sport Manitoba, Coaching Manitoba, our National Sport Organizations, and other parasport PSOs across Canada to create educational opportunities for coaches who may be experiencing challenges in creating programming that adheres to the phased approach of our return to sport plan.

ONLINE EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Once programming has resumed, MWSA will provide weekly information bulletins on its website as well as educational resources related to COVID-19. Key tools, including the self-screening questionnaire will be linked on all sport pages, and a dedicated COVID-19 page will be implemented on the programs tab of our website.

PHYSICAL SIGNAGE AND MATERIALS

MWSA will produce educational signage that will be displayed at programs. These signs will include:

- Encouraging physical distancing where possible
- Information about screening for COVID-19
- Hand-washing information
- General information about MWSA's Return to Sport Plan

HIGH-RISK POPULATION MATERIALS

MWSA will produce an informational pamphlet for individuals who may be considered high risk for COVID-19 and will encourage all high-risk individuals to discuss with their medical providers about their return to sport programming.

Equipment

Compared to able-bodied sports, MWSA's sports and programs utilize more equipment that is shared amongst athletes/participants. This will require increased sanitization to lessen the chance of spread of this virus. MWSA's key considerations for equipment are included below.

STORAGE ROOM ACCESS

Storage room access will be limited to the facilitators of the program. No athlete or participant will be allowed in this space and must receive their equipment from the facilitator. Once outside of the storage room, athletes or participants will be allowed to handle equipment.

GENERAL SPORT EQUIPMENT

General Sport Equipment refers to common equipment used in our sports, such as basketballs, rugby balls, tennis racquets and balls, etc. MWSA will ensure that facilitators sanitize each piece of equipment that is used at the end of each program session. This equipment will last be handled by the program facilitators who will ensure the safe storage of the equipment.

SPORT WHEELCHAIRS

The use of sport wheelchairs for the wheelchair tennis return to sport plan will follow the approved phase in the "MWSA Sport Wheelchair Protocol".

Regardless of the particular phase approved in the protocol, MWSA will act on the following principles related to the use of sport wheelchairs owned by MWSA:

- Where possible and where numbers permit, athletes who have the ability to transport a sport wheelchair to and from a program will be allowed to take the wheelchair home with them
- Where equipment remains in the custody of MWSA, MWSA will work to ensure that specific wheelchairs are matched with specific athletes/participants where possible. Limits to this part will include:
 - Number of wheelchairs available
 - Sizes of wheelchairs and their ability to match the body types of the athletes/participants
 - Frequency of the participation of the athlete/participant
 - Location of the programming (some equipment may need to be transported to other programming groups in order to facilitate that activity)
- Ensure the sanitization of sport wheels and frames before and after the program
- Ensure the sanitization of seat upholstery at the conclusion of each program
- Limit the number of wheelchairs that travel between programs (example: chairs that serve both a basketball and a tennis program)

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Personal equipment, such as gloves, shall not be shared between athletes/participants. For sports requiring protective equipment in order to participate, MWSA will stock basic equipment that can be distributed to athletes on an as-needed basis. Personal equipment should not be placed in the storage room, instead, it should be taken home with the athlete each night.

Athletes will also be required to bring their own materials, such as tape, with them to each practice. Sharing of these peripherals will not be allowed between athletes. MWSA will provide some of these peripherals at its programs, and once distributed, will be in the possession of the athlete and should not be returned to storage.

Athletes will be required to bring a bag in order to properly dispose of personal peripherals at the end of practice. Where possible, athletes should refrain from using their mouth/teeth in order to remove items such as tape at the end of a practice.

Athletes should arrive with enough water or other hydration beverages for the entire program. Athletes should assume that facilities such as water fountains will be unavailable. At no point should athletes share water bottles between each other. All hydration bottles must be clearly labelled with the athlete's name.

DAY WHEELCHAIRS AND NON-SPORT PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

All day wheelchairs and other non-sport personal equipment should be placed in a safe, low traffic area of the venue where it can be distanced from other user groups of the facility/venue and from the program itself. Personal equipment should be appropriately spaced from each other to reduce the likelihood of close interactions between athletes.

All day wheelchairs, backpacks, and other bags should be positioned to allow for easy access from the sport wheelchair. If an athlete/participant requires assistance in reaching their personal belongings, the program facilitator shall handwash and/or sanitize their hands prior to and immediately after assisting an athlete with their personal belongings.

FIXING EQUIPMENT

Fixing equipment provides for situations where physical distancing may not be possible. When assisting an athlete in their sport wheelchair, both the athlete and the person assisting should wear personal protective equipment. When assisting in fixing equipment where the athlete is not presently using it, the individual should sanitize the equipment prior to making the repair. Wherever possible, the athlete should conduct their own repairs of their equipment.

Wheelchair Tennis Return to Sport Additions

The following outlines the additional protocols to allow for a successful return to sport for wheelchair tennis as a part of MWSA's programming.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING

This plan only reflects recreational programming as delivered by MWSA and through the use of its equipment. Matters pertaining to provincial team training will fall under the purview of Tennis MB's return to sport plan.

TRAINING GROUP SIZE

MWSA will implement a maximum training group size of eight athletes per court (four athletes per side) plus up to two coaches/facilitators for a maximum of ten individuals per court. This reduced capacity will address the additional space needed for wheelchair athletes on the court as athletes are not able to move laterally.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

All athletes and coaches will adhere to physical distancing on the court wherever possible (4m² separation). Coaching should instruct where possible from a centralized location while maintaining physical from all athletes. All athletes will remain physically distanced with the exception of brief changeovers or passing each other while on the court.

EQUIPMENT

The use of sport wheelchairs provided by MWSA will be done in conjunction with the approved phase in the "MWSA Sport Wheelchair Protocol". Athletes who own their sport wheelchair must transport their wheelchair to/from the venue and sanitize their equipment on arrival and prior to departing from the venue.

Tennis specific equipment will be provided to athletes with the opportunity to take the equipment home where possible, except for one-off demonstration opportunities. All tennis equipment will be sanitized prior to returning to MWSA storage.

BALLS

All instances of drills involving serving and instances of match play will utilize a new sleeve of balls with the participants initials on them. Each individual will have one sleeve of three balls assigned to them.

For general drills, groups balls will be used. The program facilitator will be responsible for the collection of balls throughout the session. Athletes may assist with ball pickup by pushing balls towards a centralized location with their racquet.

Due to alternative methods of picking up balls being unavailable (ie. using a foot), wheelchair athletes will be requested to refrain from using their hands to pick up balls wherever possible. However, in circumstances where that is not possible, hand sanitizer will be made available for athletes to sanitize their hands afterwards. Balls are to be sanitized after each session with a spray disinfectant.