

Dear all,

As you know, we have published the new 2019 USATT National Team Program and Selection Procedures + the USATT High Performance - 2019 Points System and I would like to take the opportunity to make this a little more understandable with some comments.

Selection Procedures:

With the "USATT National Team Program and Selection Procedures" we aim for international success, especially with the adults because here we are far from the world's top. For this, a structure and base are essential for USATT and the US table tennis community to achieve better results in the long-term future. A long-term development is needed, based on training conditions, requirements and environments which are aligned and adequate to international requirements in terms of amount, intensity and quality. Our other goals are to continue to establish our TEAM and the team atmosphere, the implementation of the unified TTTeam USA was a start here last year. We started to put more trust in the players, in which someone doesn't give them up right away, if they have a bad day like in the former one day- trial till 2017. Support and trust are the base here, but of course players have to earn this. The new system provides players with much more opportunities to recommend themselves.

The selection procedures themselves and the target group for them mainly appeal to the smaller part of our TT community in the US, and it's not for nothing called "high performance", which is the absolute top, even if procedures are accessible to all players because everyone should theoretically have the chance to belong to it. Therefore, we do not assume that everyone will see this path as good and right, or that these procedures will only be approved, which is also quite normal.

The goal of our athletes should not be "just to make the TTTeam USA" – NO – the National Team is considered to be successful in international comparison, this means goals should be higher, bigger and more internationally oriented. "It's taking part that counts" may not be the standard here! Players have to be ready to work hard, sacrifice, take on a lot without the ultimate guarantee of success and they have to start international, otherwise a membership in TTTeam USA makes no sense. Currently the funds of our federation are not enough to make this possible financially for the majority of athletes, we wish it would be different, means players have to invest partially by themselves to play international.

The 2019 selection procedures for TTTeam USA are based on the idea to find the best opportunity to be successful, also in the long term, and the goal is to win at the end. In a team sport like table tennis it's not necessarily the best individual players who are the best choice for this then, the best for the targeted goal should play. There are sports, like athletics or swimming, that fight against time, in which one day-trials or totally result based nominations work, no doubt, but team sports, and table tennis is a team sport, are different.

One could understand this now, that way that more decision-making power lies with the High Performance Director and the National Team Coaches and a certain objectivity is reducedNO, because the first decision is solely and only in the hands of the athletes themselves. They themselves can prove by competition and training that their nomination is self-evident. By showing world's top international competitiveness and by being the best everything is said and regulated by itself, in such a case one will certainly always be nominated. Decisions by the HPD or the NT Coaches usually only have to be taken for positions where this proof is not given, here we then don't speak of the absolute top performers, but rather of the rear positions and then may also be nominated development- and potential-oriented.

Points System:

The points system for the combined designated (national) qualifying tournaments is basically one of several ways for players to gain a spot on TTTeam USA, but in this case directly through national results. However, these tournaments do not replace the participation in international tournaments, they are rather an addition to this.

The idea behind it is to get players to prove their performance more often and regularly on national and international court, furthermore to give them the opportunity to have several good competitions in their own country throughout the year where they can recommend themselves for TTTeam USA and international tasks, especially for tournaments that take place in a timely manner.

Players can choose to participate in all qualifying tournaments or skip one, it is strongly encouraged to participate in all events, but a certain number of qualifying tournaments (in adults and youth categories) players must at least play to have a chance for TTTeam USA. For special efforts such as participation in the last World Cup or World Junior Circuit Final, there are special exemptions that allow players to replace a mandatory participation in a tournament and still receive points for the final ranking.

At the first qualifying tournament of a year two places per gender and age category for TTTeam USA are awarded there to the top two finishers, in addition to the points for the final ranking.

At the second qualifying tournament, the US Nationals, players can win again points for the final ranking, but there, in contrast to the first qualifying tournament, no direct places for TTTeam USA will be awarded, but following the US Nationals, the team affiliations will be evaluated and reviewed, means theoretically, changes on TTTeam USA can happen.

For the third qualifying tournament the direct qualification for the main draw is based on the points standing of the overall points ranking after the first two tournaments. Right after this event the two top finishers after the overall result of all three qualifying tournaments will gain a guaranteed place on TTTeam USA from the beginning of the following year. In this way one can earn this by national results and one makes him-/herself independent of other decisions.

As mentioned before, these national tournaments are one way of several to be recommended and certainly offer the chance to get into the spotlight as you are seen locally. Just before upcoming major international tournaments players should take advantage of this, to draw attention to themselves again and also to show that you are currently in good shape.

However, different than in the past, it's no longer aligned exclusively towards national results because at the same time, successes at the international level are no less important, because that's what a National Team is all about and that's why starting here on own initiative as an option is always advisable, too. The international tournament calendar of the ITTF offers enough possibilities.

Be the best (+ commit to the TTTeam USA program) and then no way leads past you ... this is something everyone has in his/her own hands.

Best,

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