

Junior Ranking Divisor Calculation Adjustment

Points-Based Ranking Divisor: Background

The US Squash junior rankings are a points-based system in which players earn points determined by their finishing position in a division, the size of that division, and the level of the tournament. Points earned in any given tournament are active on a player's ranking for 11 months, after which they become inactive and are no longer factored into a player's ranking calculation.

A player's ranking is created by taking an average of the points they have earned in their highest points-earning tournaments. The number of tournaments used for this average is called the "divisor", and the number of tournaments in a player's divisor is determined by how many tournaments in which a player has participated in the last 11 months, in a specific age division. As a player competes in more tournaments, the divisor also increases.

Once a player's point average is calculated using the divisor, that player's ranking is based on that points average relative to the points average of all other ranked players in that age division.

Current Divisor and Planned Adjustment

Currently, the ranking points divisor is determined by the following formula (A completed tournament in a given age divisions within the last 11 months is 1 "exposure"):

- 3-12 exposures → divisor = 4
- 13-15 exposures → divisor = 5
- 16-18 exposures → divisor = 6
- 19-21 exposures → divisor = 7
- Each time a player's exposure count increases by an additional 3 tournaments, the divisor will continue to increase by 1

As of September 7, 2022, the ranking points divisor will change to the following:

- 3-8 exposures → divisor = 4
- 9-11 exposures → divisor = 5
- 12-14 exposures → divisor = 6
- 15-17 exposures → divisor = 7
- Each time a player's exposure count increases by an additional 3 tournaments, the divisor will continue to increase by 1

This change will be implemented through a transition plan where all players will be reduced to no more than 4 total exposures per age division on September 7, 2022:

- The exposure count for all players will be reduced to 4 as of the September 7, 2022 ranking date
 - If a player has fewer than 4 exposures in a division, they will retain the same number of exposures
- By default, the best 4 exposures (based on points earned) out of a player's most recent 8 tournaments in an age division will be selected to remain. Only tournaments still active as of the September 7 ranking date (tournaments from the last 11 months) will be considered
 - Alternatively, if a player does not wish to take the default assignment, that player will be able to request which 4 active tournaments they wish to retain

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- Only the 4 exposures that have been automatically chosen, or the 4 selected by the player, will remain a part of the player's exposure count and ranking calculation as of September 7, 2022
- Players will submit their selections in the 2 weeks following the final summer Gold tournament: August 15-28. US Squash will communicate the mechanism for this selection to all families prior to this selection period, and all selections will be processed ahead of the September 7, 2022 transition date
 - All exposure selections will be a one-time adjustment, and therefore cannot be modified or changed later
 - Note: Any current late withdrawal or other ranking penalty exposures will remain through this transition in addition to the 4 chosen tournaments, which may result in that player having more than 4 tournament exposures in the September 7 ranking calculation

Rationale for the Divisor Adjustment

The planned change to the ranking points divisor occurring on September 7, 2022 returns the policy to what was in effect prior to March 2020 and the shutdown caused by the pandemic.

Why was the divisor policy changed in 2021?

- The divisor policy was changed (to start increasing after 12 tournaments instead of after 8 tournaments) in May of 2021 as part of the transition process back to full junior tournament competition and ratings-based rankings. This transition also involved the creation of 4 “phantom points” tournaments to provide a starting point for player rankings, along with the addition of extra Gold-level and JCT points-level tournaments over the summer of 2021. The combination of these phantom-point tournaments and additional summer tournaments resulted in US Squash increasing the exposure/divisor count as a part of the transition back to competition.

Why is the divisor policy now reverting to the previous policy from before the pandemic?

- **Ranking Mobility:** The points-based rankings rely on the ability for players to improve their rankings based on recent tournament success. This is why there is overlap in the value of points awarded between different levels of tournaments—as players have success at one level, they can move up and qualify to compete in high-point value events. The higher divisor threshold can reduce mobility by allowing players to simply sit on a larger set of old results and maintain their ranking, making it harder for up-and-coming players to break through certain ranking levels, even if they are experiencing strong results. The divisor currently beginning to step up after 12 exposures means that players currently have more “throw away” tournaments that have no effect on their ranking—allowing them to play more events without seeing their ranking reflect the level of those more recent results.
- **Ranking Accuracy:** A higher divisor threshold means that players can play many more tournaments while having their ranking be based off a smaller percentage of those results. For example, currently, the points average for a player with 12 active exposures only factors in 33% of that player's active tournaments played. This low percentage means that the rankings are less of a representation of a player's overall tournament performance. Coupled with the mobility elements listed above, the rankings are now showing bunching of player points averages in certain areas of the rankings, further exacerbating accuracy concerns.

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- **Location and Cost of Tournament Participation:** In some circumstances, a higher divisor threshold benefits players who can compete in the most tournaments. Lowering the divisor threshold mitigates this effect, which in turn reduces the amount of tournaments some players need to play in order to achieve the best possible ranking that accurately reflects their tournament performance. This also takes into consideration the variation in tournament availability and travel requirements across different regions, as well as reduces the total costs of tournament participation and travel for many families.

Why is the transition process structured in a way to start each player with 4 exposures?

- Through this point, families have made decisions about which tournaments to play based on the current divisor policy of not increasing until a player has more than 12 active exposures in their age division. By resetting every player to 4 active exposures per age division, it creates a level starting position from which future results can fairly affect rankings, and players who have played larger numbers of events are not penalized for this competition.
- By keeping the 4 top points-earning events from their current results, players retain credit for their best competitive performances
- While there is a default assignment of tournaments, the ability to customize which 4 tournaments they select allows players to take into account their forward-looking plans for competition and allocate points fairly towards their ranking

Additional Considerations

- **Change Tolerance:** Primarily driven by the pandemic, there has been significant change in the competition structure over the past several years. While additional changes to the junior points-based ranking structure could show incremental improvements to accuracy and mobility, US Squash believes this single change is best positioned to make a positive impact, while also retaining the core of the current system. Additional changes beyond what is planned run the risk of overcorrection within the system, causing instability. The planned change simply reverts the ranking structure back to that which existed prior to March 2020. This will provide a level of consistency that allows players and families to continue planning a meaningful calendar of competition without adjusting to major new changes.
- **Summer 2021 Points Roll-off:** As stated above, as part of the transition back to competition and points-based rankings, there were many additional large points-earning events available in the summer of 2021. As these points roll off player averages in the coming months (due to the standard 11-month tournament points expiration), the system should see further normalization, and the ranking system will continue to find balance through reduced ranking average inflation.
- **Current State of Player Exposure Counts as of April 26, 2022:**
 - 3-4 exposures in the last 11 months in any given division: 42% of ranked junior players
 - 5-8 exposures: 31% of ranked junior players
 - 9+ exposures: 27% of ranked junior players

A full listing of current junior squash policies is always available here:

[Junior Squash Policies and Guidelines](#)