

## Selecting a First Full Size Tennis Racket ~ a Parents Guide

If your son or daughter is approaching the transition from a junior racket to a full size adult racket, there are lots of important things to consider. This guide is designed to highlight and explain as many of these as possible.

### **Weight**

Most junior rackets weigh a similar amount. Full size rackets have a large variation in weight. The correct weight for your child is unfortunately not a scientific measure! Factors such as their strength, maturity of technique, physical size can all play a part. The best way to find the most suitable weight is to try some demonstration rackets. It is always best to involve your coach in the decision - an incorrect racket can have an adverse effect on the development of your child's technique.

### **Head Size**

Adult rackets come in different head sizes from 90 square inches upwards! In general terms, the larger the head size the more power the racket has. The top performance players tend to use the 90 - 100 square inch range. Again, this is a decision best made with your coach, but in general, 100 - 102 is a good head size for a developing junior.

### **Balance**

The balance determines where the weight of a racket acts. Rackets are head light, even or head heavy. Head light rackets are easier to maneuver, but generally do not have as much power as head heavy rackets. The more important measure is swing weight which is a measure of how heavy the racket feels to play with, but not many manufacturers quote these figures - but we can work them out!

### **Grip Size**

Adult rackets come in different grip sizes - 0 (the smallest) to 5 (the largest). Most junior rackets are grip 0, and it is likely that your child will need a grip 1 or 2 to start with. It is very important that you select the correct grip size - the wrong grip size can lead to elbow or shoulder injury. Ask us to check the correct grip size for your child and periodically check the grip size as your child grows. Don't be tempted to just put another grip on top to make the grip bigger though, ask us to enlarge it 'the proper' way!

### **Composition**

Cheap adult rackets are either made of aluminium or a composite of aluminium, fibre glass and graphite. Manufacturers are falling over each other to use ever more space age materials in their top rackets. Basic, full graphite rackets sit in the middle and will always perform much better than any aluminium or composite racket.

### Key Factors to Consider

- Weight
- Head Size
- Balance
- Grip Size
- Composition
- Manufacturer
- String
- Price



## **1st Tennis racket/Cont**

### **Manufacturer**

All manufacturers produce good rackets. Each manufacturer tends to have certain characteristics designed into their rackets—these are down to personal preference and one is not necessarily 'better' than another! Your child may be swayed by the marketing hype, but try and steer them towards the 'best' racket for them rather than which professional player supposedly uses it!

### **String**

We cannot stress enough that when selecting a new racket, especially for juniors, the string they use in their rackets is equally as important as the racket itself. String is often overlooked by parents (usually because of lack of knowledge). Consider the strings to be the 'engine' of the racket. You wouldn't put a tractor engine in a super car, so you need to choose an appropriate string for your child's new racket. We have produced a separate Information Sheet on using the most appropriate strings.

### **What should I Pay?**

It comes down to how serious your child is with their tennis. Adult rackets start around £30 and go up to £200+. Expect to pay £70+ for a good graphite racket and £100–£150 for a good performance racket. The most expensive rackets tend to be the largest headed rackets and are unlikely to be suitable for juniors. If looked after, a racket should last several years so whilst they are a high initial outlay, over time they are much more reasonable.

### **Buy 2 Rackets?**

If your child is a serious tennis player, then you should budget for two rackets the same. Children develop very quickly as they move into their teenage years and will be hitting the ball harder and with more top spin. Their strings will begin to start breaking with monotonous regularity! Sooner or later a string will break at an important point of a match and to have another racket the same will not disrupt any momentum or have any psychological disadvantage! As they get older, having 3+ rackets in their bag will become more important, but not when they are selecting their adult first racket.

### **How Can We Help?**

At *Top Spin Tennis*, we have a significant amount of experience with helping kids make the transition from junior to senior rackets. Based at Performance Centres, we have helped many parents of performance children in all aspects of tennis development—and we have been through the process with our own 'performance' children! We stock all the latest rackets and have demos for nearly every racket we sell. This guide only scratches the surface, so please feel free to ask us for further, free advice!