

# 2026-2027 Sectional & Invitational

## Eligibility Protocol Guide

### TOC Eligibility

To create system consistency across all Tennis on Campus (TOC) qualifying events, Sectional and Invitational tournaments now follow the exact same eligibility standards as the National Championship. This protects fair play, levels the playing field, and prevents last-minute disqualifications before Nationals.

### Why This Matters

- **One Standard for All Events:** Strict eligibility rules are now enforced at Sectionals and Invitationals, not just Nationals, to create a consistent qualifying pathway across all sections.
- **Protecting Fair Play:** Ensures club teams cannot stack rosters with former collegiate or touring athletes simply to capture a bid over honest club peers.
- **Preventing Late Disqualifications:** Proactive, early vetting prevents roster surprises and disqualifications after a team has already qualified for Nationals.

### Operational Timeline & Rules

#### 1. Self-Evaluation Phase (Continuous)

- **Action:** Clubs must self-check roster eligibility before competing using the official flowcharts:
  - [Collegiate Athlete Status Flowchart](#)
  - [ITF/ATP/WTa Status Flowchart](#)

#### 2. Pre-Event Window (Up to 14 Days Prior at 5:00 PM EST)

- **Who Can Submit: Own Club ONLY.**
- **Allowed:** Request formal rule interpretations, clarifications, or appeals for complex eligibility situations regarding your own players.
- **Not Allowed:** Submitting late pre-event appeals or filing challenges/protests against opposing teams or players.
- **Review:** The A.C.E. Board evaluates submissions and issues official decisions prior to competition.

**3. Tournament Competition Window (Active Tournament)**

- **Strict Lockout Period: ZERO** protests, appeals, or roster reviews are allowed on-site.
- **Matches:** Matches proceed as scheduled without on-site roster disputes. If a team requests an appeal during the event, Sectional Coordinators will provide a QR code to submit a post-event appeal.

**4. Post-Event Window (1–14 Days Post-Competition)**

- **Who Can Submit:** Participating Clubs.
- **Allowed:** Formally protest players who actively played in a match. A club may protest 1 opposing team and up to 3 players maximum on that team (each requiring separate documentation).
- **Not Allowed:** Protesting more than 1 team, protesting more than 3 players, or submitting appeals without supporting evidence.

**5. Resolution & Bid Reallocation**

- **Evaluation:** The A.C.E. Board verifies match activity with Sectional Coordinators and issues a final determination letter. Sectional Coordinators forward the ruling to the involved clubs.
- **Upheld Protests:** If an appeal is upheld, the protesting club gets a 7-day window to protest an additional team (max 3 players) as time permits.
- **Bid Forfeiture:** If an ineligible player competed, the non-compliant team forfeits their National Championship bid.
  - *Sectional Events:* The bid goes to the next best bid-eligible team (determined by the Sectional Coordinator).
  - *Invitational Events:* The bid goes to the next best bid-eligible team (determined by TOC Nationals Staff).

**APPEAL FORM**

This official submission portal is maintained by the USTA National Office and NIRSA to process formal eligibility protests following USTA Tennis on Campus (TOC) events. This form is reserved for those who would like to seek clarification on eligibility of a player and appeal a violation of eligibility. All submissions are reviewed centrally by the Appeals and Competitive Eligibility (A.C.E.) Review Board. [HERE](#)