

UNIVERSAL TENNIS MYTH-BUSTERS FOR JUNIORS

Dave Fish, former Harvard Men's Tennis Coach (1976 - 2018) & ITA Hall of Famer, clears up some common misconceptions about the UTR Rating



Myth: I can call Universal Tennis to modify a score

Busted! Universal Tennis receives scores from sanctioned and official global tournaments, as well as Universal Tennis certified providers. If you believe a score is incorrect, contact the coach or tournament organizer. Universal Tennis does not and cannot modify results unless it is approved by the organizer.

My advice: if you didn't perform as well as you expected or wanted to, don't let it get you down. Think about what you can work on in your next match and give it your all.

Myth: Playing players rated lower than me will hurt my UTR Rating

Busted! Whether you play players rated lower than you or higher than you, you have an opportunity to positively impact your UTR Rating. The Universal Tennis algorithm calculates an expected outcome for a match based on the ratings of the two players. If you perform better than the expectation, your rating will go up; if you perform worse, then your rating may go down. We do not count matches where the difference in UTR Rating is greater than 2.00, unless the lower-rated player beats the higher-rated player.

My advice: try to play your best in all matches. College coaches look for players who can handle the pressure of playing well when they are expected to win. Learning to handle the pressure of performing well against lower rated players is essential for success later.

Myth: Once my UTR Rating reaches the range college coaches are looking for, I shouldn't play additional tournaments

Busted! College coaches will see that you have not continued to play and ask questions. Remember, coaches don't just look at your rating; they're looking at what kind of player and person you are, and how you'll fit with the team. They need players who can handle pressure, not players who have a track record of avoiding challenges. And since your oldest matches will be degraded in value over time, your rating may change anyway if you try to "protect it". You'll only be hurting yourself.

Myth: Now that players can self-post scores, it will be easy for them to cheat and manipulate their UTR Rating

Busted! We introduced self-posting scores so all tennis players could understand their tennis skill level and be able to find better matches. If you are playing in sanctioned/Verified/"official" events, you also have a Verified UTR Rating which only reflects those scores.

Players can only self-post unofficial match results that count for UTR Ratings. If you are playing in an official/sanctioned/Verified event or tournament, the tournament director will submit scores to Universal Tennis. Universal Tennis has checks in place to flag cheating, but we also ask players to help self-police the community in order to protect the integrity of the game.

Myth: Reaching the 7-game "Competitive Threshold" in a 2-of-3 set match means your rating will go up

Not exactly. The UTR Rating algorithm is based on who you played and the games won. It does not factor in an extra reward if a player reaches the 7-game Competitive Threshold.

The Competitive Threshold is a way of analyzing how effective a given competitive structure (e.g., a 14U sectional tournament) is in producing "competitive" matches versus "decisive" matches. Competitive matches are typically more fun for both winners and losers than decisive matches, and optimize each player's rate of improvement. There tend to be more competitive matches with level-based play than with age-based matches. All players need a healthy blend of matches up, matches down, and matches against evenly-matched opponents for optimum physical and mental development.

Myth: Universal Tennis can tell me why my rating changed

There are many reasons why a player's UTR Rating may change, including:

- Up: you've beaten players by a wider margin than the algorithm predicts.
- Up or down: a previous match in the past 12 months is no longer included
- Up or down: a player you've played goes "on a tear" or hits a bad patch.

It's a dynamic system, and it's not possible to pinpoint a single reason for any fluctuation. All athletes have to learn to avoid distraction to be successful. Your rating is valuable in many ways, but it may cause you to "take your eye off the ball." Every player has to learn to minimize distractions, including one's rating!

My advice: try to play your best every time, and focus on your development more than the numbers in your rating. College coaches are looking for "hardy" players, not "hot house" flowers that wilt under less-than-ideal conditions.