

# CONFIRMED CHANGES FOR THE 2026 SYDNEY BADGE SEASON

## OVERVIEW

In preparation for the 2026 Sydney Badge season, Tennis New South Wales undertook a structured review informed by feedback from across the Sydney Badge community. This included feedback from clubs and delegates, reviews conducted with the Sydney Badge Panel, stakeholder survey responses and internal review processes.

As a result, the following confirmed operational changes will apply for the 2026 season. These changes focus on fairness and transparency for clubs, consistency across the competition and maintaining the integrity of Sydney Badge.

### 1. KEY PRE-SEASON AND GRADING PROCESS CHANGES

#### REMOVAL OF APPEALS

- The Appeals process will no longer apply for the 2026 season.
- Grading will be final following the Men's and Women's Grading Panel meetings.
- Clubs remain responsible for ensuring all players are entered into their respective teams and all relevant information or supporting evidence is submitted prior to Grading.

#### TEAM COMPOSITION

- The minimum number of Base Players per team will increase from four (4) to six (6) with the maximum remaining at twelve (12).

#### GRADING

- Grading will now be determined with reference to the top six (6) Base Players by UTR as listed in team entry.
- This ensures a consistent Grading approach across all teams and divisions.

#### VENUE CAPACITY FORM – NEW FOR 2026

- A Venue Capacity Form will be introduced for the 2026 Badge season.
- The form will be distributed to all clubs **following the closure of team entries**.

This form replaces the previous process of clubs providing venue capacity and availability via individual emails. The standardised approach will allow Tennis New South Wales to collate venue information efficiently and support the preparation of the Badge draw and the scheduling of fixtures for the season.

## 2. RESERVE PLAYERS

### UTR UPPER LIMITS RETAINED

- UTR upper limits for each division will continue to be set by the Grading Panel's and Tennis New South Wales following Grading.
- **UTR upper limits only apply to Reserve Players** and do not apply for Base Players.
- Division 1 will continue to have no UTR upper limit set across all competitions.

### REMOVAL OF "BADGE UTR'S"

- Tennis New South Wales will no longer allocate manual Badge UTR's.
- All reserve player eligibility assessments will be based on the player's official UTR rating, whether provisional or verified.

### REMOVAL OF 'OPEN' AND 'CLOSED' RESERVES

- The previous distinction between 'open' and 'closed' reserves has now been removed.
- All reserve players will now be classified under a single reserve category.

### RESERVE POOL RETAINED

- The Reserve Pool will be retained for the 2026 season. However, it will not be mandatory for players to register.
- Registration in the reserve pool is **optional** and is not a requirement for reserve player eligibility.
- Tennis New South Wales will provide club delegates and team captains with access to the reserve pool document, which lists players who have registered and consented to being contacted regarding reserve opportunities.

### PLAYERS WITHOUT A UTR RATING

- If a Reserve Player does not hold an active UTR rating at the time of selection, the club or team must seek written approval from Tennis New South Wales prior to the player participating in the match.
- Tennis New South Wales may approve eligibility for a specific division and retains the right to reassess eligibility if required.

### 3. UNSPECIFIED PLAYERS ENTERED INTO SCORECARDS

- Where it is identified that a team has entered an unspecified player in the scorecard, Tennis New South Wales will notify the relevant team captain and club delegate in writing.
- The team will be provided until 12:00pm on the Friday following the match to:
  - o Ensure the player is registered with a valid Tennis Australia Competitive Player Profile and
  - o Correctly enter the player into the scorecard.
- If the player is not correctly entered by the specific deadline, or if it is determined that the player was not eligible to participate (for example: the player's UTR is too high for the division or the player does not have an active UTR rating and played without prior approval), the relevant rubbers will be forfeited.

### 4. PLAYER SUBSTITUTION

- For the 2026 Badge season, the existing "Player Injury" rule will be replaced with a **Player Substitution** framework. This has previously been in place for Finals matches only but will now be implemented during the regular season.
- A player who has retired from their first rubber, may be replaced for their second rubber of the match.
- The replacement player must be a Base Player for that team.
- A player can only be replaced for their second rubber where the first rubber has been forfeited due to retirement.
- **A player cannot be replaced after completing their first rubber.**

### 5. PRIZE MONEY

- An increase in prize money will apply for the 2026 Badge season, with the total prize pool increasing to \$15,000.

