

January 3, 2022

Dear USA Table Tennis,

We have received the announcement regarding 2022 youth team trials scheduled for February 19-21 and February 25-27, both in Fremont, California. We as USATT families, clubs, and coaches want USATT to firstly consider postponing to a later date and secondly to consider changing the format of the youth team trial events.

The COVID-19 situation continues to be very alarming right now as reported by the US CDC. The unfortunate situation of COVID-19 spread at USATT's own US Open event proves that USATT cannot manage to keep its attendees safe. Many US Open participants have gotten COVID-19 and we need to do all we can to protect our youths. We believe there is no reason that trials must be held so early in February and to put our youths in harm's way with the high transmission rates of COVID-19.

With the current format, the first position on each team isn't even decided until the US Nationals in July. The first youth International event for the selected team will be in late July or later. Further, all youths are in school and the events are held during times when there are no days off for most. For youths that are not from the San Francisco Bay area, this means they will be away from home (February 18-28) for 11 or more days and miss at least a week's worth of school days on top of travel expenses (for child and parent) and coach's expenses for 11+ days.

The format of the junior trials are also of concern. What is the purpose of having two events strangely grouped as U11/U13/U17 and U15/U19? Why not U11/U13/U15 and U17/19? It serves no purpose except to force players who are competitive in multiple age category teams to go to two separate events. Why not do two regional qualifier trials of all age groups that culminate in a national trials at the US Nationals to determine the entire team all at once? The players, including parents and coaches, would likely already be at the Nationals, and would not be missing school since it's in July.

We understand that USATT received bids from clubs across the country to host the Junior trials. While we are not part of the decision-making process in the final selection, it is hard to understand how a decision to have both trials occur in Fremont, California, one week apart, makes any sense from the perspective of the participants. It clearly works against the purpose of USA Table Tennis to support the entire country's table tennis constituency. Top youths come from the entire USA, not just the west coast, let alone only Fremont, California. Using the current 2021 Youth Team for example, on the boys' teams top 4 positions in U11, U13, U15, U17, and U19, only 4 out of 20 are from CA, others are mostly from the East Coast. The Girl's side has a similar situation with only 4-5 team members from CA. This causes a disadvantage to those who live outside of the San Francisco Bay area where the families would have to pay many thousands of dollars more for air fare and other transportation, hotel, food, tournament fees, and coaches fees, in addition to time away from school.

Please understand that the future of the US table tennis depends on our youths and the families that not only work hard, but invest in the sport. Parents must be able to see if the cost of participation and the opportunities that present themselves for their children are within their means. By creating such events and structure for the trials, it reduces the number of families that are willing and capable of spending the large amounts to get their children qualified for the national teams. If more families are unwilling to do this, it reduces opportunity for more children from the entire US and reduces the pool of players USATT can draw from.

We understand there are many factors USATT must consider and that the role that USATT plays is a difficult one. We hope you can see our perspective and reconsider the date, location, and format of the youth trials.

Sincerely,

Concerned USATT Families, Clubs, and Coaches