

# TENNIS NEUTRAL

## Nick Kyrgios Foundation's "Tennis Neutral" app for iPhone and Android

- *a tremendous aid for competitive players, parents and coaches engaging with UTR*
- *set 'UTR positive' target scores for matches*
- *lower stress levels*
- *nuance knowledge of player performance under different circumstances*

The **Tennis Neutral** app is available for download from both Apple's App Store and Google Play. Proceeds raised from sales go directly to the Nick Kyrgios Foundation (NKF).

"I'm incredibly proud that NKF is distributing Tennis Neutral," said NKF Head Christos Kyrgios. "Younger players on their way up are using the app to get a handle on the stress that UTR can trigger, and parents and coaches are benefitting too."

The NKF's Tennis Neutral (TN) app takes the UTRs of any two players and returns the ratio of games that UTR's algorithm predicts the players will win in a match, together with example results. It can also take a match result and determine for which player the result is UTR positive.

"The inspiration for developing the app came from the stress many younger players were under because they didn't know what score they needed from a match to get a UTR positive result," said TN producer Ric Curnow.

"The stress was particularly acute when playing a player with a lower UTR – kids didn't know how much they needed to win by to be UTR positive and unfortunately that was having a heavy negative effect in some cases. What we've found from experience is that in most cases, simply knowing where the neutral point lies removes most of that stress, regardless of the actual match outcome," said Curnow.

Since introducing the app, the TN team have seen it put to work in four ways:

### By players (and parents):

1. Removing the unknown. Many younger players get stressed because they don't know by how much they must win (or 'not lose') a match for it to be UTR positive. Simply knowing where the neutral point lies removes much of that stress. The kids then get on with playing their best without worrying about the unknown. After a match, they can check a result and see if it was UTR+, and move on.
2. For the ultra-competitive. These kids look at where the neutral point lies in a forthcoming match and set that as a target to exceed. This is important for kids making a tilt at a national training program or an elite level event, or anything that requires a UTR at a certain level by a certain date.

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## By coaches:

1. Times will arise when coaches have two players of differing UTRs hitting together. Often those kids want to work competitively. The coach might, for example, say: 'According to TN, Emily should win 60% of games and Jane 40%. So go slug it out for an hour and let's see which of you is working harder today, which of you can exceed expectations.'
2. The app makes possible more nuanced tracking of performance across different circumstances. Does a player perform better on grass/clay/hardcourt? At their first match of the day, or subsequent matches? Against opponents they like/know/don't know/don't like? Or any other parameter (eg. wind, day/night, etc). By keeping a record of the ratio of UTR + to – outcomes, coaches get a more nuanced assessment of performance in different conditions than with simple 'match win' statistics or 'feelings'.

The Tennis Neutral app was developed around an algorithm derived by a team of volunteers from the Australian National University, building on earlier work by PhD students from Columbia University in the US. With finishing touches applied by a UI professional to ensure ease of use and elegant design, the final product was donated to the NKF for distribution.

"We're immensely grateful that the TN team has chosen our Foundation to gift the app to, and immensely proud to be distributing a tool to help young players better manage their development," said Kyrgios. "We encourage you to give it a go, and make a donation to the Foundation at the same time."

(Authorised by Ric Curnow, 31 May 2023)

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Estimate where the UTR neutral point lies between players with different UTRs.

