

Memo to: NCAA Division I Championships/Competition Cabinet Subcommittee

From: David A Benjamin, Executive Director - ITA

Subject: In response to the memo sent on September 23, 2002, to "Selected Coaches Associations," concerning the NCAA Playing & Practice Season Survey.

Due to a clerical oversight, the ITA did not receive the September 23rd material from the subcommittee of the NCAA Championships cabinet until the last week of October, when it was emailed to us at our request. Regrettably, this delay occurred during our fall tournament schedule and we were not able to begin to survey our tennis coaches until early November.

Although we responded as quickly as possible to reach out to our membership through our website and email, we simply did not have enough time to get an adequate and informed response from our membership by the November 15th deadline.

Accordingly, it was decided by the ITA Division I Operating Committee to formulate an ITA survey for both our coaches and student athletes, to be administered online by a professional survey service. Our goal was to attempt to put together a great deal of statistical information in a very short period of time, and in doing so, establish as objectively as possible what our coaches and our student athletes believe is important and fair in the sport of college tennis.

We are enclosing in an Appendix the actual online surveys and their statistical results, along with a few bar graphs, and also a compilation of some of the more cogent written comments by our coaches, and one unsolicited but particularly insightful letter from a student-athlete.

In little more than one week, we received completed online surveys from 370 Division I Varsity Tennis Coaches (138 men's coaches, 167 women's coaches, and 65 coaches of both men's and women's programs), and 1312 Division I Tennis Varsity Student-Athletes (we only surveyed sophomores, juniors and seniors: among the respondents, 566 were men, 736 were women, and 10 chose not to indicate their gender).

Overall, the percentage of coaches and student athletes who responded was very high, which provides additional weight to the statistical information. All of the surveys were completed in privacy, and with complete confidentiality. We are planning to share the statistical results with our membership, as we continue to discuss these issues of great concern. We are also willing to provide the NCAA Championships subcommittee with access to our online survey service, if the committee would like to explore in greater detail our methodology and/or review individual responses.

Our goal in creating this online survey was to put together in an unbiased format a set of questions which would conform to the spirit and essence of the questions in the initial NCAA survey of September 23rd. We divided our questionnaire into three basic areas: 1) Practice & Playing season; 2) Out of Season -- during the academic year; 3) Activities during the Summer months.

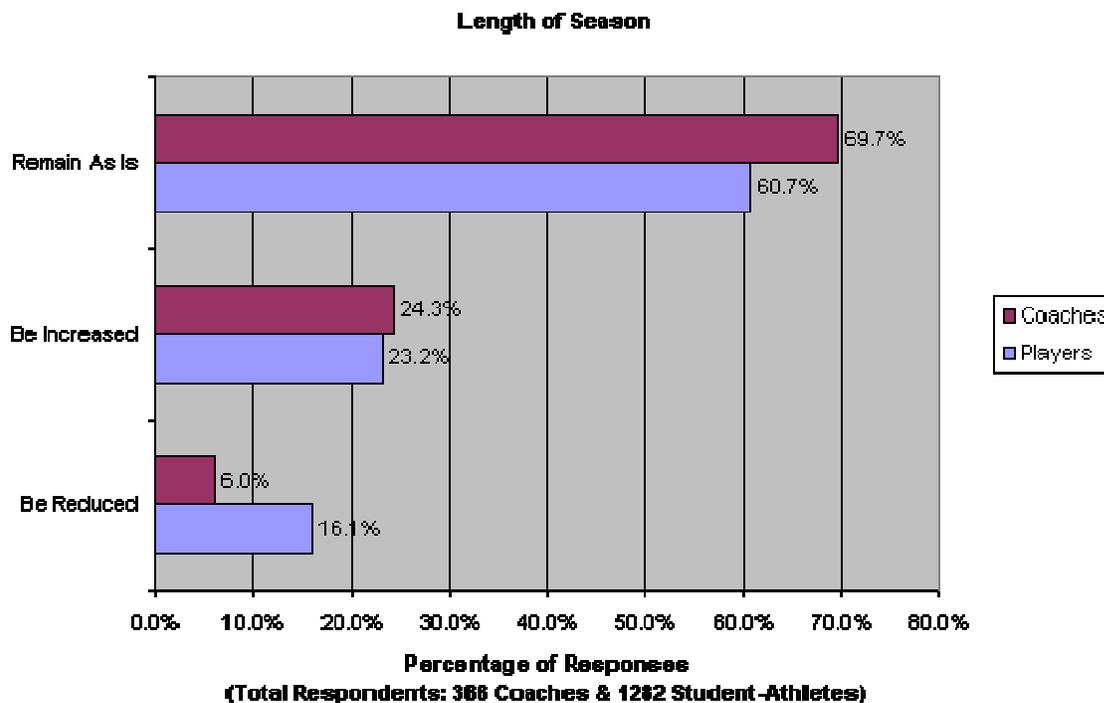
The results of the feedback from our coaches and student athletes are very similar in almost all categories, and in almost all areas both the coaches and the student-athletes clearly indicate that the current set of rules and policies work well and should not be changed. And further, if these policies were to be amended, both groups expressed a strong desire for an increase in practice and competitive opportunities and flexibility of scheduling.

Both the coaches and the student-athletes were asked to provide Grade Point Average (GPA) information, and here too there was significant correlation between the answers provided by the coaches (in terms of a team GPA, 9.3% indicated a team GPA over 3.5; 73.1% a GPA between 3.0 and 3.5; 17.3% a GPA between 2.5 and 2.99; and only .3% 2.49 and below) and the student-athletes (replying in terms of their individual GPA: 33% indicated a GPA of 3.5 and over; 38% a GPA of 3.49 -3.0; 22% a GPA of 2.99-2.5; and 7% 2.49 and below). It should be further noted that in the case of our student-athletes, there seems very little difference in the GPA between the fall and spring semesters, even though the latter is a far more intensive period of practice and competition. Even allowing for modest "boasting" and "self grade-inflation," the overall academic profile of the varsity tennis players is very positive, and hardly needful of remedial attention, or reconstruction through reduction.

The obvious question, asked repeatedly by our tennis coaches and tennis student-athletes (and undoubtedly by coaches and student athletes in a number of other NCAA sports as well, especially those with individual/team components similar to tennis {e.g. golf, swimming, etc.}), is why should there be a "mandate for reduction" on the part of the NCAA Division I Board of Directors? To quote from the September 23 memo:

"...It is important to note that the Division I Board of Directors has already determined that playing and practice seasons should be curtailed to address time demands on student-athletes. Therefore, it is not necessary for you to determine whether the playing and practice seasons will be reduced, but how you think they should be reduced."

With all due respect, it should be considered essential for associations such as the Intercollegiate Tennis Association to help in determining whether such reductions make sense and would be positive for the student athlete experience; or whether such reductions are not necessary and would, in fact, prove harmful to the student-athletes experience and their pursuit of excellence in their sport and in the classroom. To this point, 69.7% of the 366 coaches responding to our survey feel that the playing and practice season should remain as is, and 60.7% of the 1282 student-athletes also support keeping the status quo; and 24.3% of the coaches and 23.2% of the student-athletes have indicated that there should be an increase of the practice and playing season. These statistics speak for themselves!



The NCAA memo of September 23rd states that, "...our opinions and feedback are not only valued, but also vital to the work of the subcommittee." In this case, we should not be presented with a *fait accompli* involving further reductions and restrictions in a sport that neither needs nor deserves such measures. We urge the subcommittee to take the overwhelming evidence that we have compiled into serious consideration as it examines these critical issues.

I would like to close this letter on a personal note. For 26 years I served as a Division I Varsity men's tennis coach (Princeton University: 1974-2000), and during this period, I also served for six years as the Chair of the NCAA Tennis Subcommittee. And for over a quarter of a century, as the Executive Director of the ITA, I have also worked closely with the NCAA officers, committee members, and staff administrators on a number of important issues. Over these many years, I have witnessed a number of NCAA policy decisions which have had a major impact on Division I tennis, and which were almost always made in an "across the board" manner for all (or almost all) NCAA sports, a "cookie-cutter" percentage approach. In 1990 I had a private meeting at the men's Division I Championships in Indian Wells, California, with Dick Schultz, early in his reign as Executive Director of the NCAA. At the time, certain restrictions had recently been passed which were very difficult for a number of college tennis programs and our student-athletes. I explained our concerns at length to Dick Shultz, and our perception that we had been affected by a generic policy that was not reasonable or fair to tennis. Dick Schultz reassured me that the NCAA was in the process of restructuring its procedures, and that soon there would be more of a "sports-specific" approach. We needed to remain patient, as remedies were definitely ahead.

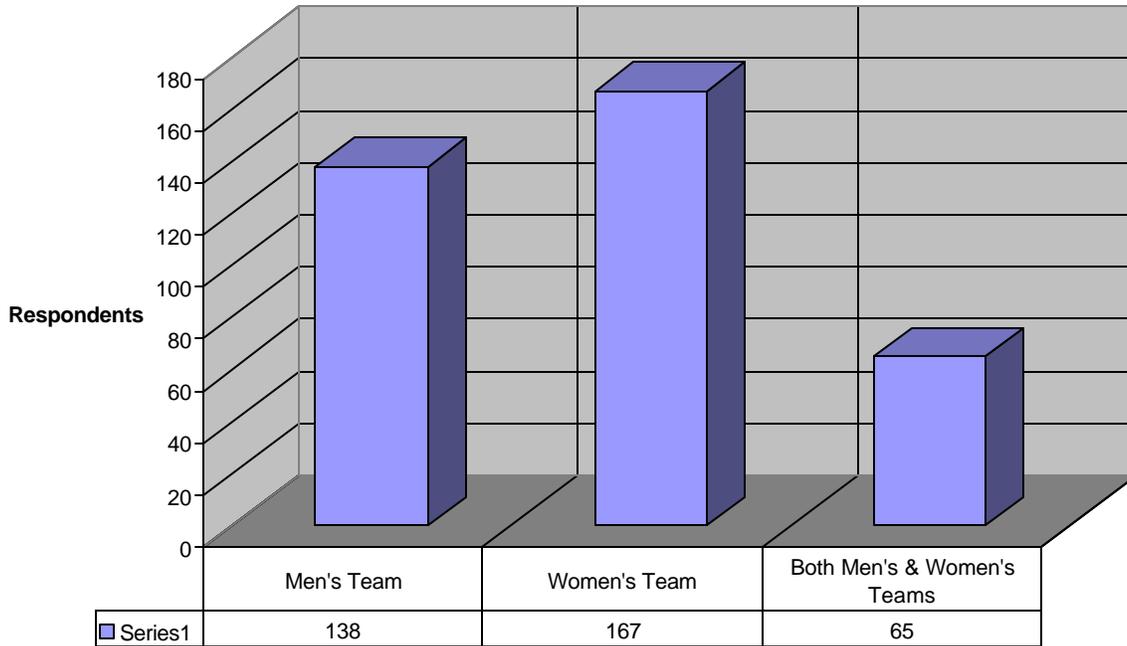
Thirteen years later, it is certainly time to look at issues such as reduction of practice and playing seasons on a sports specific basis. Any other approach would be absolutely unfair to our student-athletes, to our coaches, and to our sport.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please let us know if there is any further information that we might be able to provide. I would of course welcome the opportunity to visit in person or over the phone with the subcommittee to discuss these matters in greater detail.

BAR GRAPHS

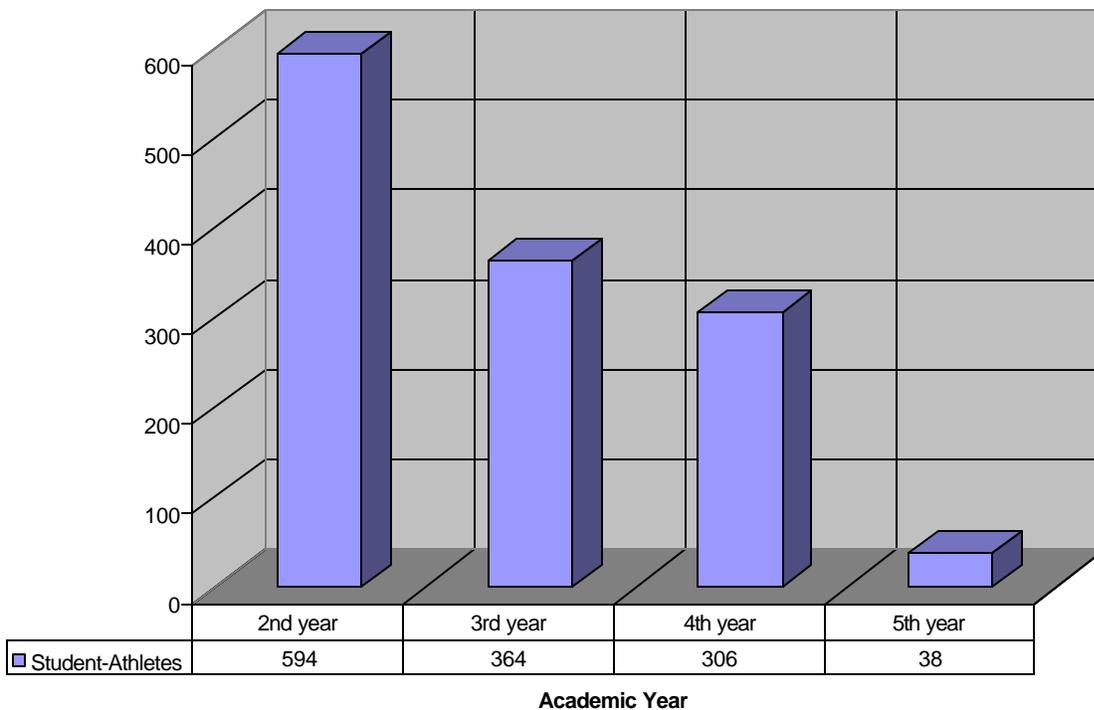
Gender Coached by Respondents

Head Coaches by Team's Gender

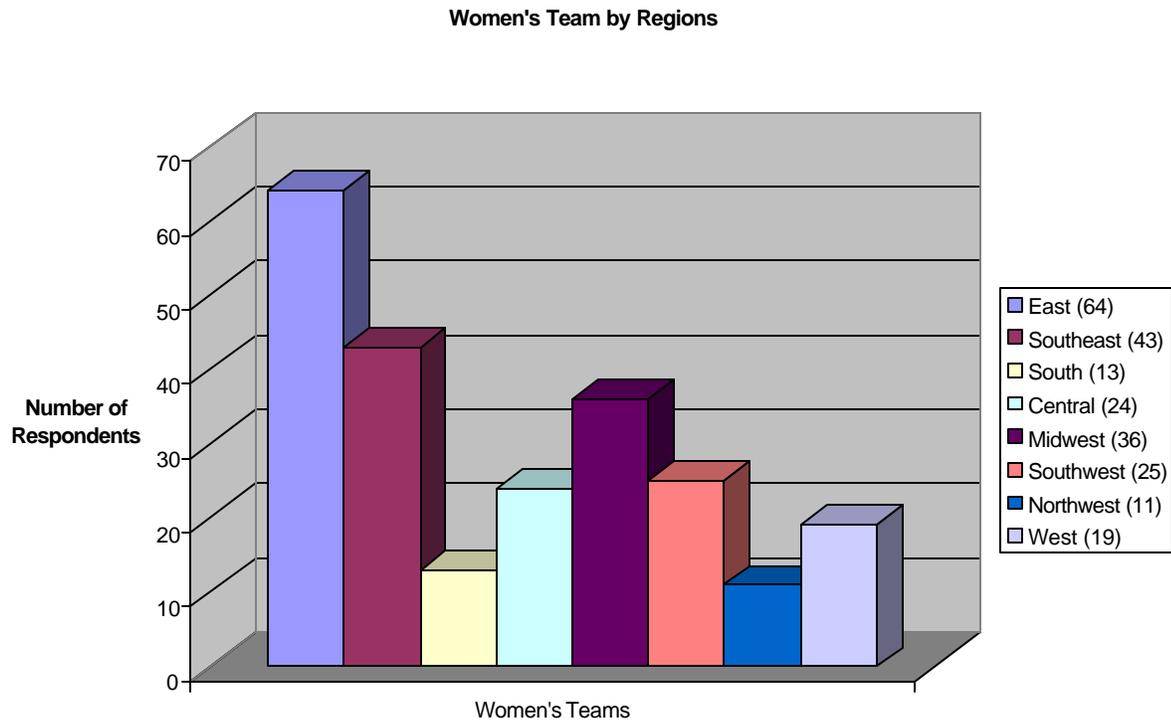


Current Academic Status of the Student-Athletes Who Completed the Survey

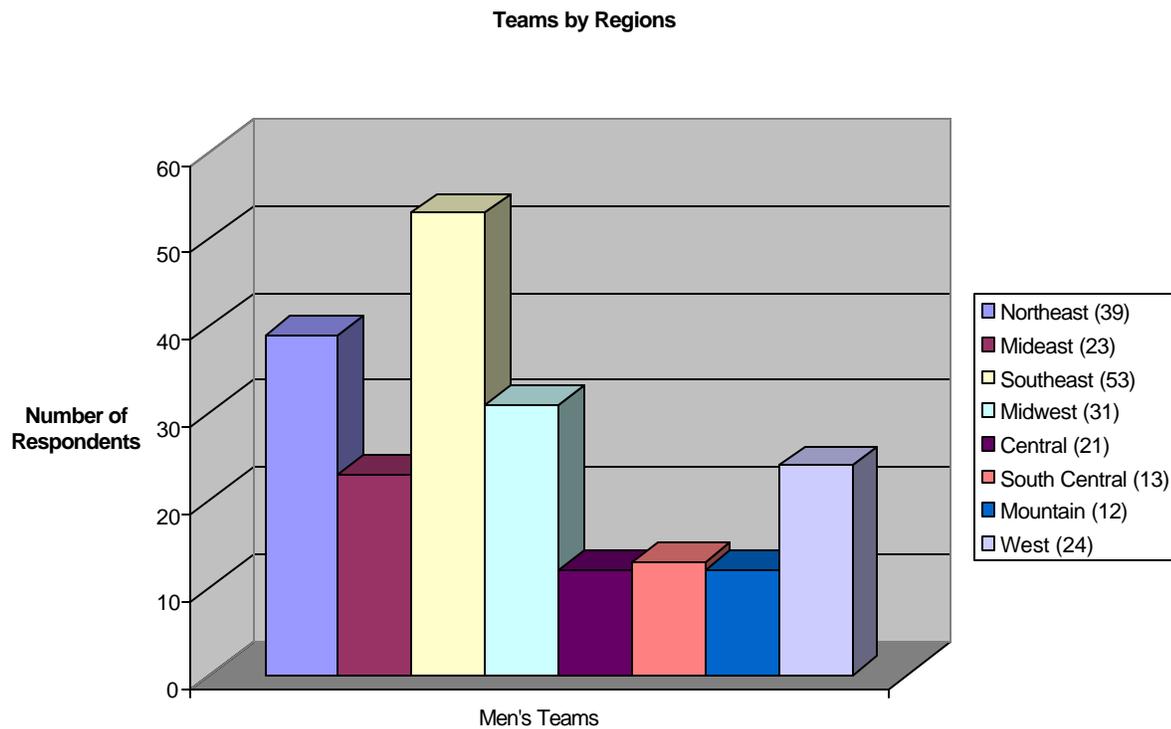
Current Academic Status



Women's Head Coaches who responded divided by Region



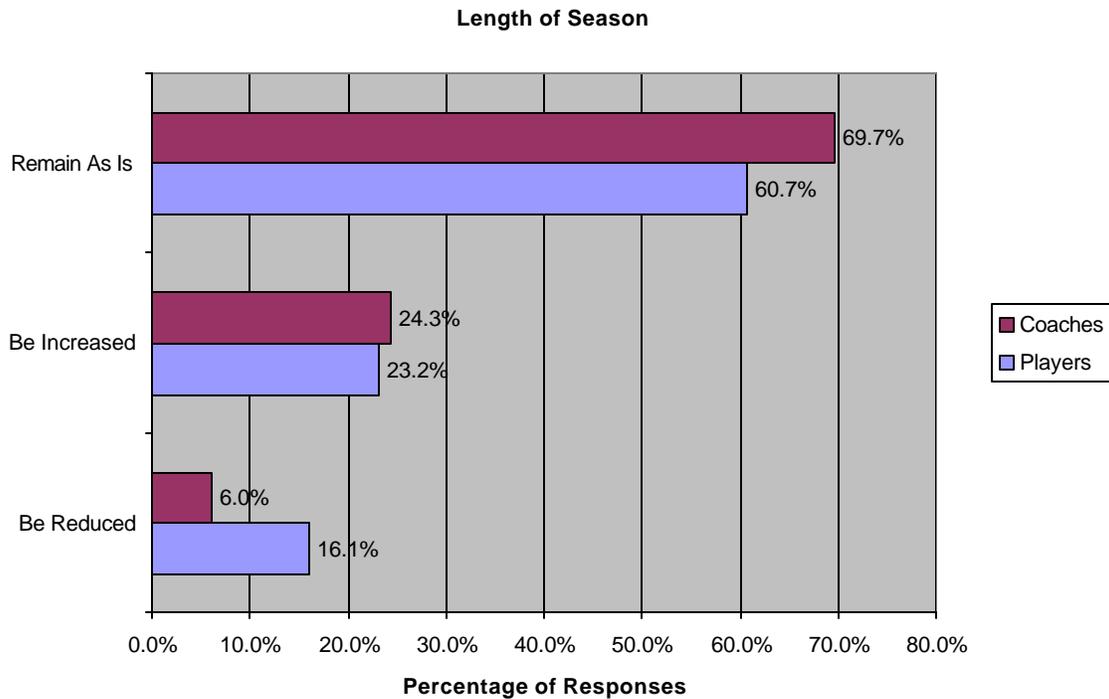
Men's Head Coaches who responded divided by Region



Playing and Practice Season:

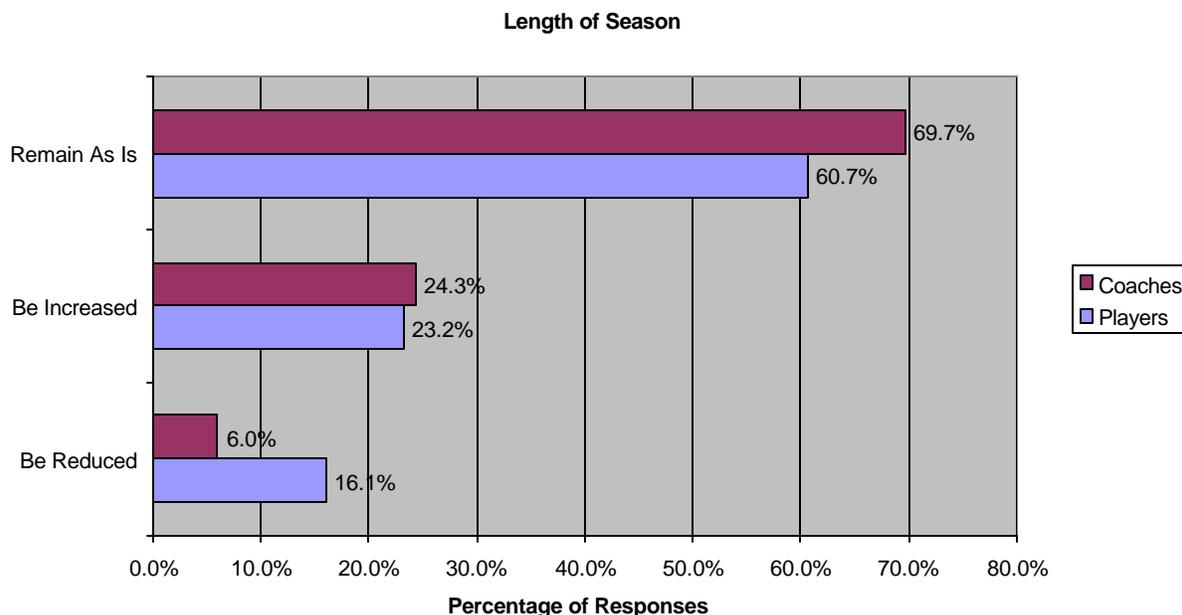
1. Currently in NCAA tennis, the length of the playing and practice season is 24 weeks (144 days), which is divided into two segments/seasons (fall and spring semester). As a college tennis player/coach, which would you like to see the number of total weeks of the playing and practice season:

	<u>Coaches (366 Responses)</u>	<u>Players (1282 Responses)</u>
a. Remain as is:	255 (69.7%)	778 (60.7%)
b. Be increased:	89 (24.3%)	298 (23.2%)
c. Be reduced:	22 (6%)	206 (16.1%)



2. Current NCAA rules allow for a maximum of 6 days per week of athletic participation within the playing and practice season (which includes practice, weight training, etc.). Would you like to see the number of days per week:

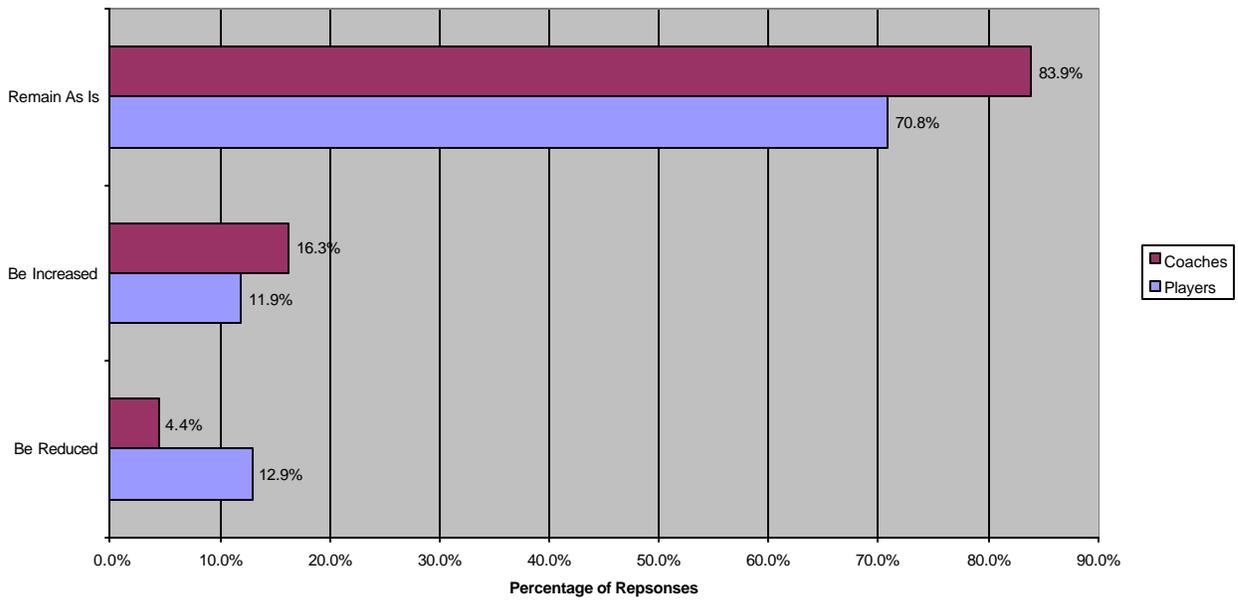
	<u>Coaches (366 Responses)</u>	<u>Players (1282 Responses)</u>
a. Remain as is:	341 (93.2%)	1004 (78.3%)
b. Be increased:	8 (2.2%)	75 (5.9%)
c. Be reduced:	17 (4.6%)	203 (15.8%)



3. Current NCAA rules allow for a maximum of 20 hours per week of athletic participation within the playing and practice season (which includes practice, weight training, etc.). Would you like to see the hours per week:

	<u>Coaches (366 Responses)</u>	<u>Players (1282 Responses)</u>
a. Remain as is:	307 (83.9%)	908 (70.8%)
b. Be increased:	43 (11.9%)	209 (16.3%)
c. Be reduced:	16 (4.4 %)	165 (12.9%)

Hours of Participation per Week



4. Currently the NCAA permits 25 dates of competition (individual and team) during the tennis practice and playing season (this includes fall and spring semesters and excludes certain events from counting towards that number such as conference and NCAA championships). A date of competition is a single date on which any match or joint practice with another institution’s team or individual from another institution’s athletics team takes place. Do you believe this number should:

	<u>Coaches (366 Responses)</u>	<u>Players (1282 Responses)</u>
a. Remain as is	202 (55.2%)	643 (50.2%)
b. Be increased	159 (43.4%)	471 (36.1%)
c. Be reduced	5 (1.4%)	168 (13.1%)

Dates of Competition

