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The Business of Sports

## The Power of the U.S. Open Goes Well Beyond Two Weeks in Queens

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COURTESY USTA

*Today's guest columnist is Lew Sherr, CEO and executive director of the United States **Tennis** Association.*

The **U.S. Open** is many different things to many different people. It's America's Grand Slam. It's one of the world's largest sports and entertainment events. It's the confluence of sport, celebrity, fashion and entertainment. It's a food and wine festival. It's where the titans of industry converge to watch the biggest names in tennis compete on the sport's grandest stage. It's the place where kids receive free tennis racquets on Arthur Ashe Kids' Day.

To me, though, the U.S. Open is, above all else, inspiring. It represents the pinnacle of our sport, but also the embodiment of how we make our sport accessible to all. At the same time as our hospitality patrons are enjoying one of the most premium experiences in sports, fans can enter the grounds for free during U.S. Open Fan Week, or for as little as \$35 early in the tournament. Thanks to our **official partners**, we can bring our sport to more people in more ways than ever before.

The tournament nets nearly \$200 million (after deducting costs, including \$60 million in player prize money) from ticket sales, sponsorship and broadcast revenues. These revenues are invested back into our sport at every level from the grassroots to the pinnacle of the game.

Each year it seems we have another inspiring story that helps drive this growth, and, of course, this year it's **Serena Williams**, who has had such an indelible impact on our sport. The people coming to see Serena will be able to sit in a stadium named for Arthur Ashe within a public park complex named for Billie Jean King, two icons who have done so much for humanity well beyond the tennis courts.

The Open is the tangible representation of this drive to inspire. It puts all our ideals into action, and motivates our fans, moving them to embrace our game and to be open to all.

And this is vitally important beyond the fortnight of the tournament. The **USTA**, as the national governing body of the sport of tennis and as the owner and operator of the U.S. Open, is not just about tennis. We are about health and wellness. Multiple medical studies have shown the direct benefit of playing tennis on people's physical and mental health, as well as their longevity. We want to contribute to people's lives, help them to connect with others and embrace their communities, and add to the overall well-being of our country.

And we are doing just that. Earlier this year, the USTA announced that more than 22.6 million players took to the court in 2021, a 27.9% increase from 2019—and an increase of 4.9 million players from 2019 to 2021. This growth includes demographic expansion, with significant gains in participation from Black Americans, Hispanic Americans and youth ages 6-17. The entire USTA, including our 17 USTA Sections, the USTA Foundation and its National Junior Tennis and Learning network, and every one of our members will continue to play, enhance and share our love of the sport—so that we can help others gain and enjoy the benefits.

That is what we do, not only during the next two weeks, but throughout the year, and that is why the U.S. Open inspires me.

*Sherr became the USTA CEO in May, after serving as the organization's chief revenue officer. Prior to the USTA, Sherr was senior vice president, marketing partnerships, for Madison Square Garden, where he directed all sponsorship activities of MSG's Entertainment Division.*