

# A comparison of wheelchair tennis player development pathways, focusing on changes in regional representation



ITF Wheelchair Tennis  
Vista 2013 Sport Science Conference  
Bonne

# Player pathway

- A player pathway is the route that someone takes in order to compete for their country, or they need to go on to get to the level they want to participate at. (Lincolnshire Sports Partnership ,2013)

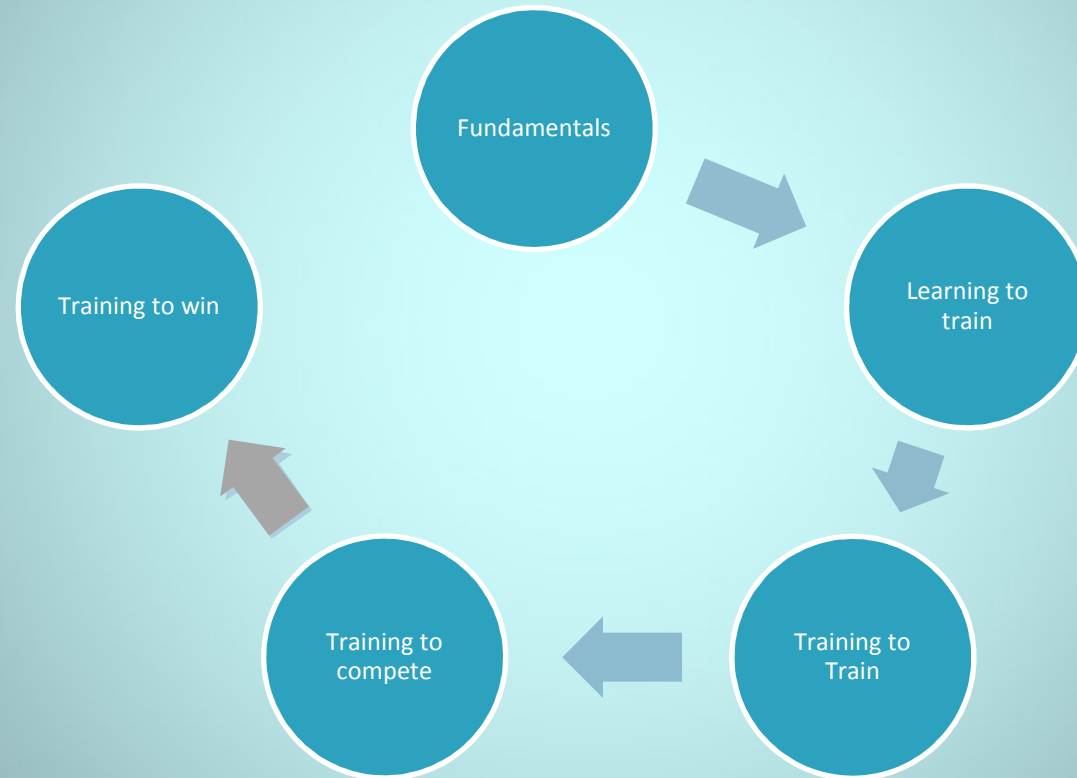


# Player pathway

- Many different factors contribute towards sports participation and athlete development.
- Biological eg. Player power, strength, agility etc.
- Psychological – eg. Mental and tactical strength, mental toughness
- Social \* - eg. Local training opportunities, national programme
- Wheelchair sports – start time influential on pathway

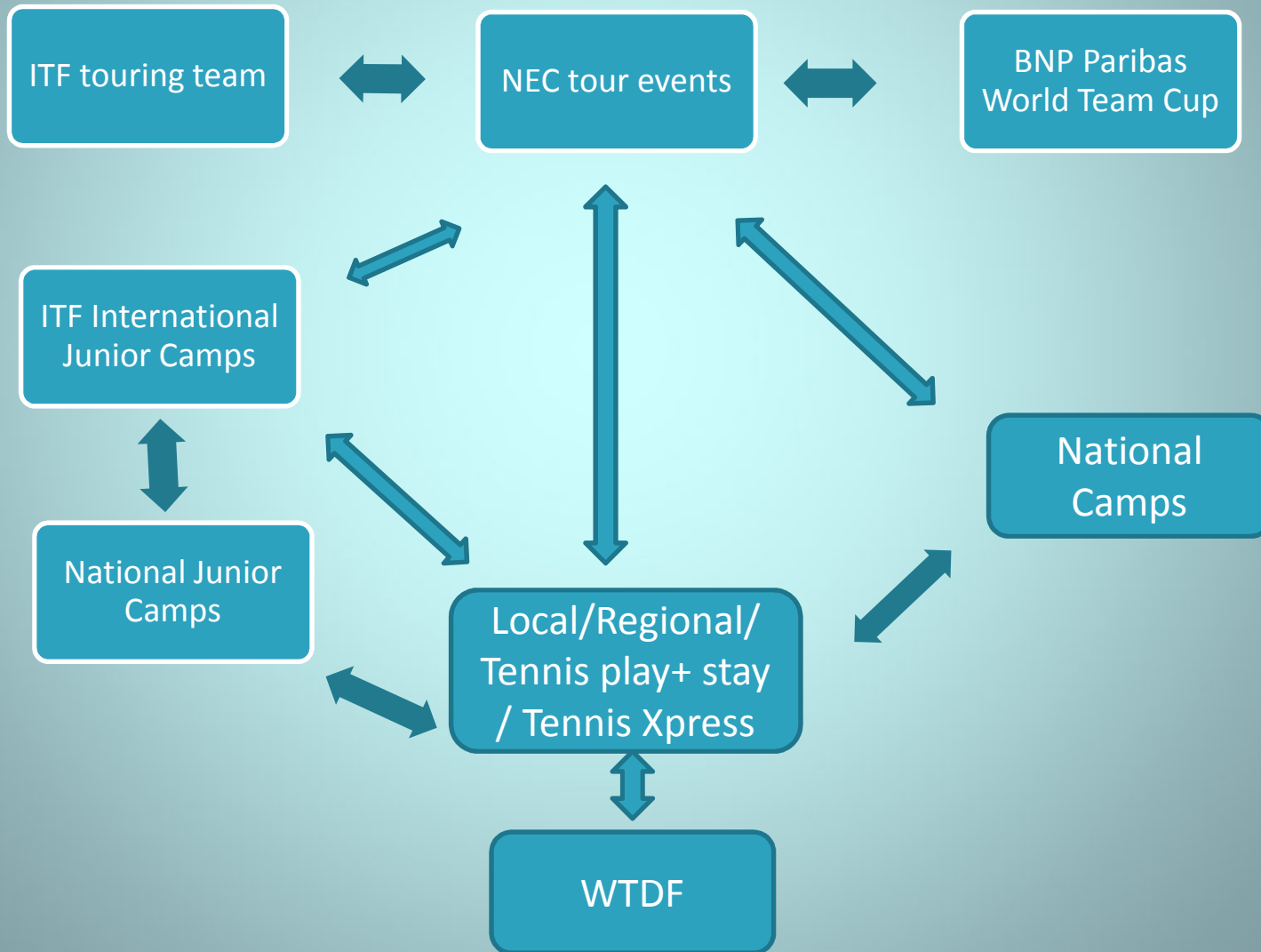
# Long Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD)

(Stafford 2005 cited in Bailey et al. 2010)

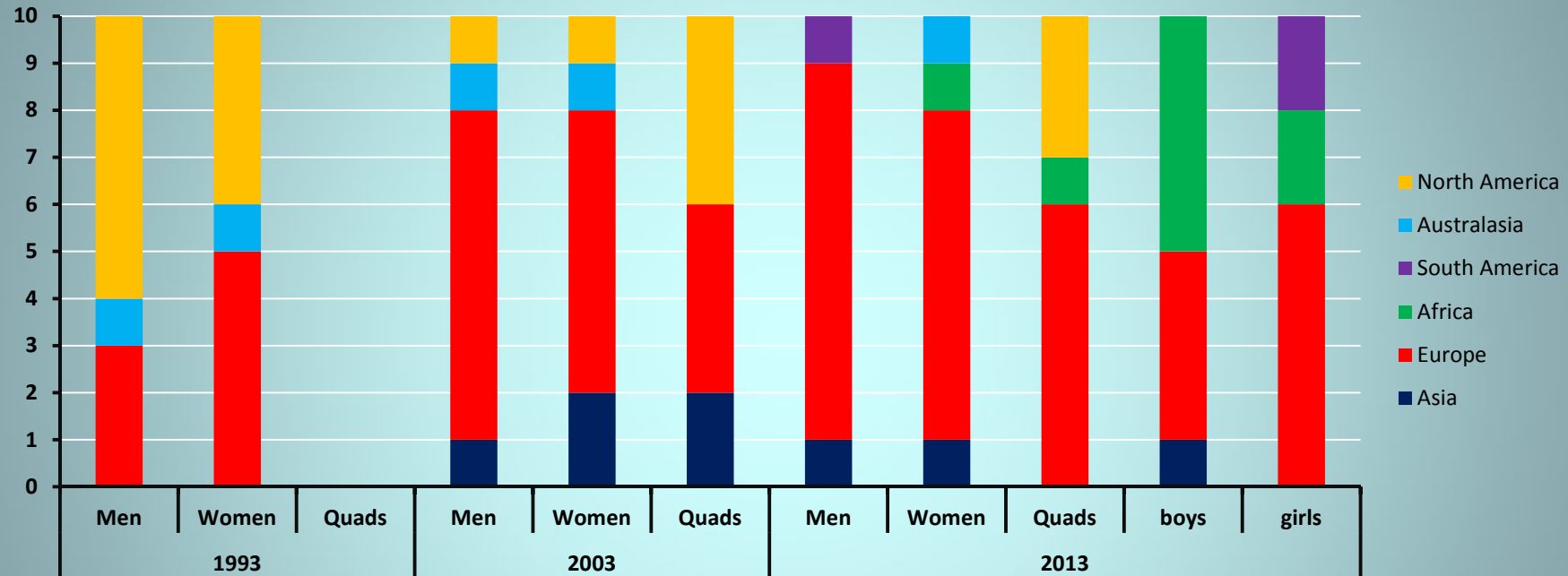


- The progression of a player to the elite level is quicker than that of an ND competitor
- Often regional/national playing opportunities do not exist and from training locally players progress to competing internationally

# ITF player pathway

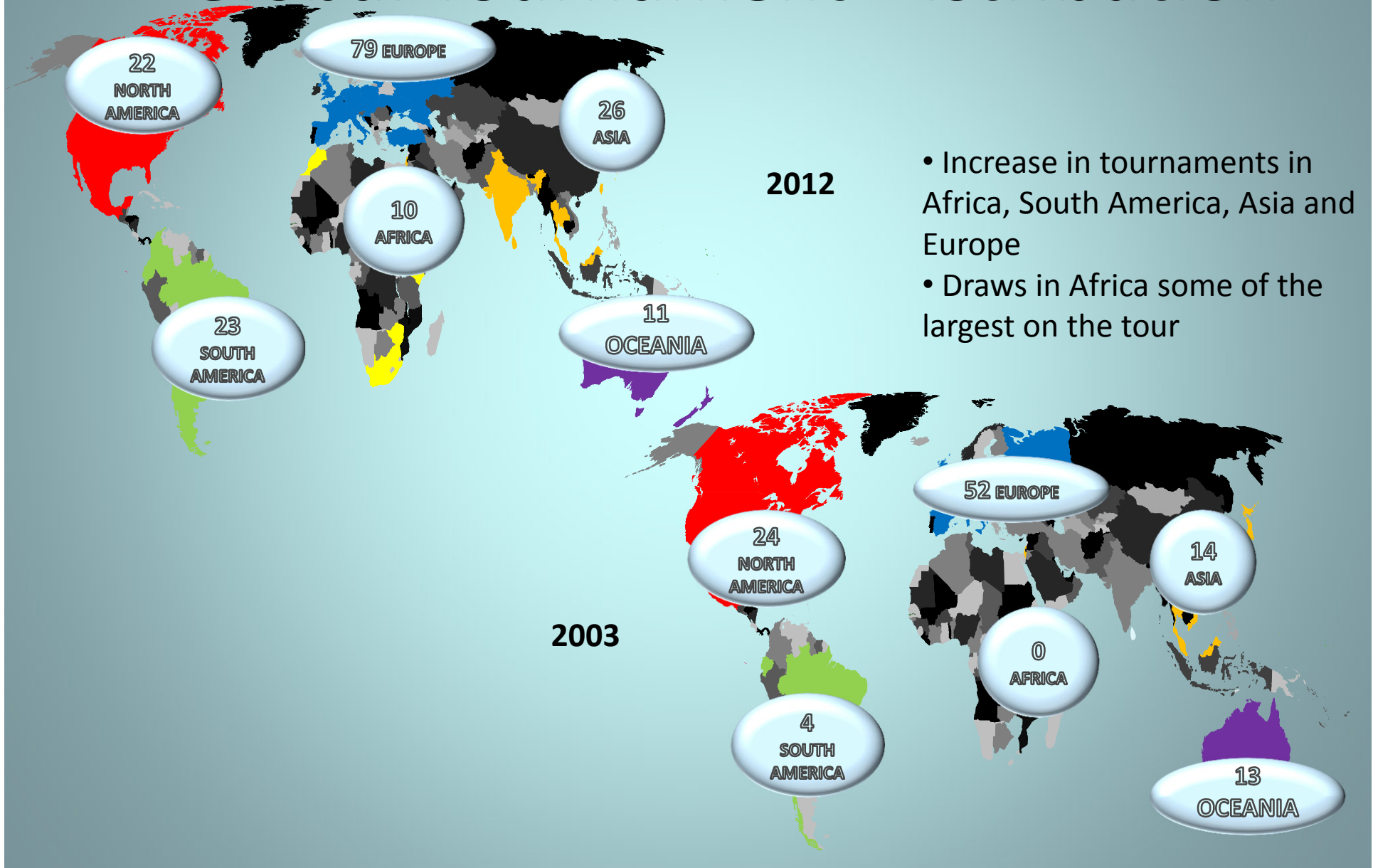


# Continents in World Top 10



- Shift in countries dominance with North America having reduced presence in top 10
- In last 10 years Africa (South Africa) and South America (Argentina) have emerged
- Africa dominate the Junior rankings.
- Asia presence predominately Japan, in Junior's Iraq is now emerging.
- WTDF countries largely present in the Junior rankings

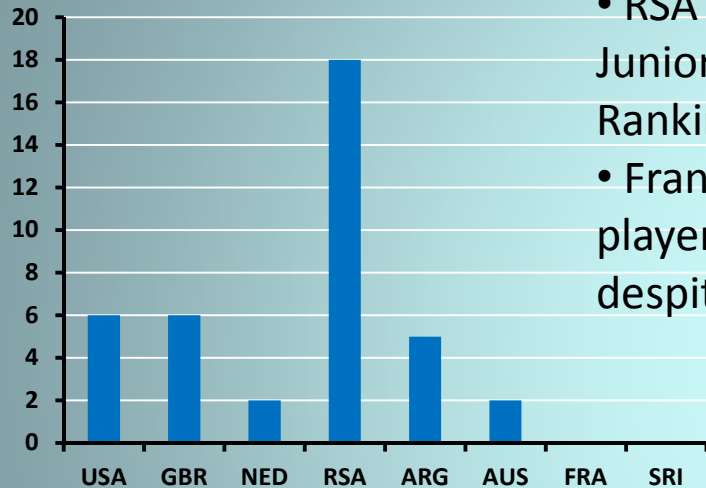
# Global Tournament Distribution





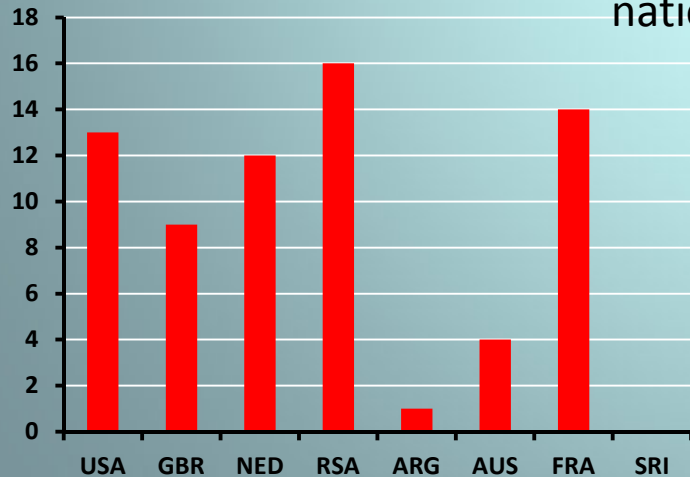
# Ranking numbers by country

## Juniors



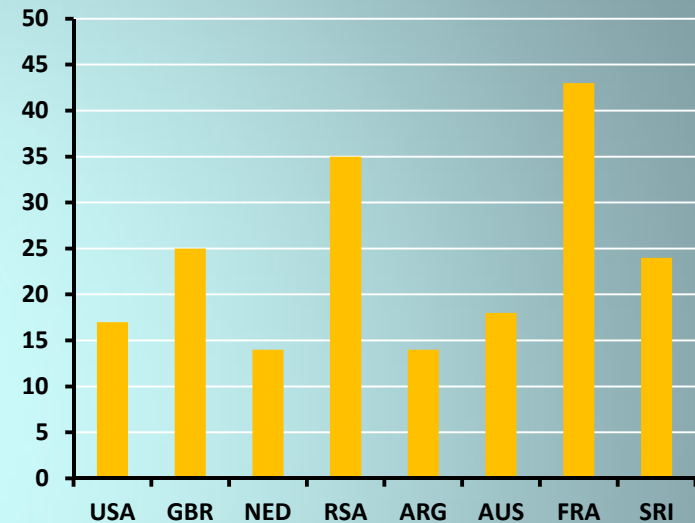
- RSA largest number of Juniors and women on Ranking.
- France only has 4 male players born in 1985 or later despite highest no. males.

## Women

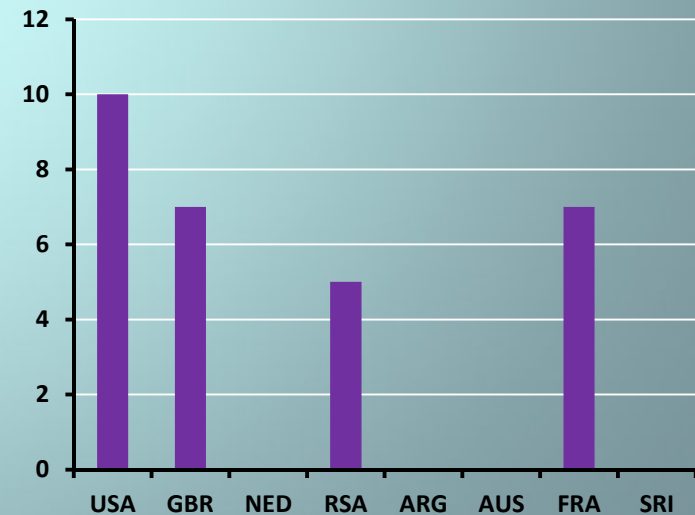


- ARG lacks depth of other nations

## Men



## Quads

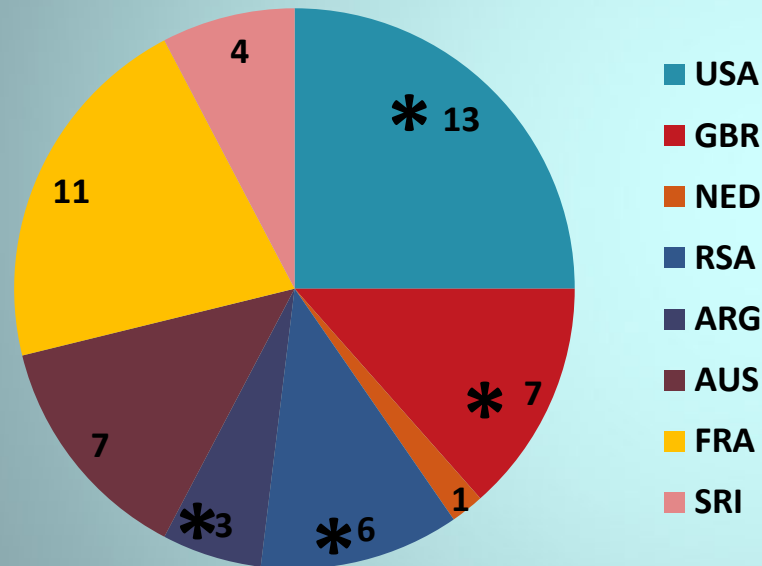




# National programmes

- RSA and GBR: local, regional and national camps/set up – reflects traditional ND set up: some of few countries to have regional development officers/coaches
- USA: local and national set up – USTA tournaments to lead into ITF but run alongside ITF events
- ARG: strong local and national level – predominately based within one region. Focus on Juniors and integrated training.
- FRA: little for Juniors, trying to start developing this presently.
- SRI: Local and national/international training
- AUS: Regional development officers but increased activity required to give support to players. Few Juniors taking part on an international level
- NED: Strong performance academies, local and grass root programmes exist.

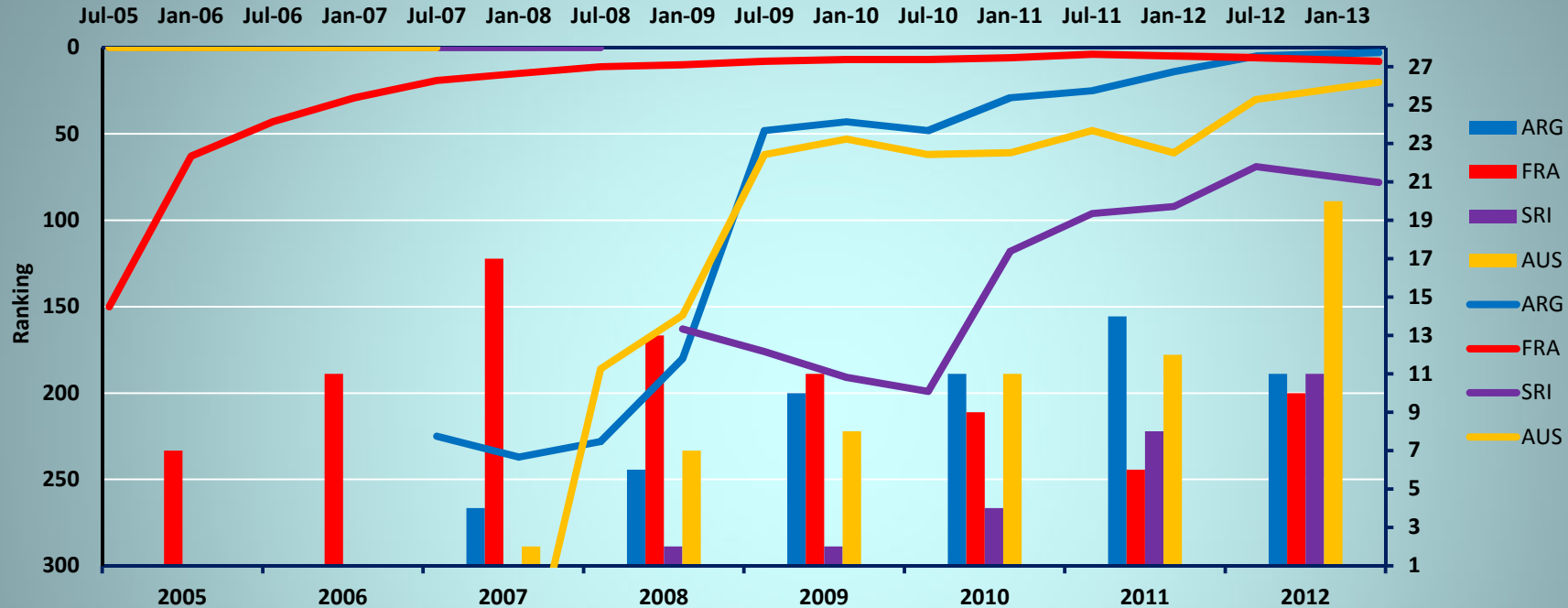
# Number of tournaments in countries



\* Junior draws

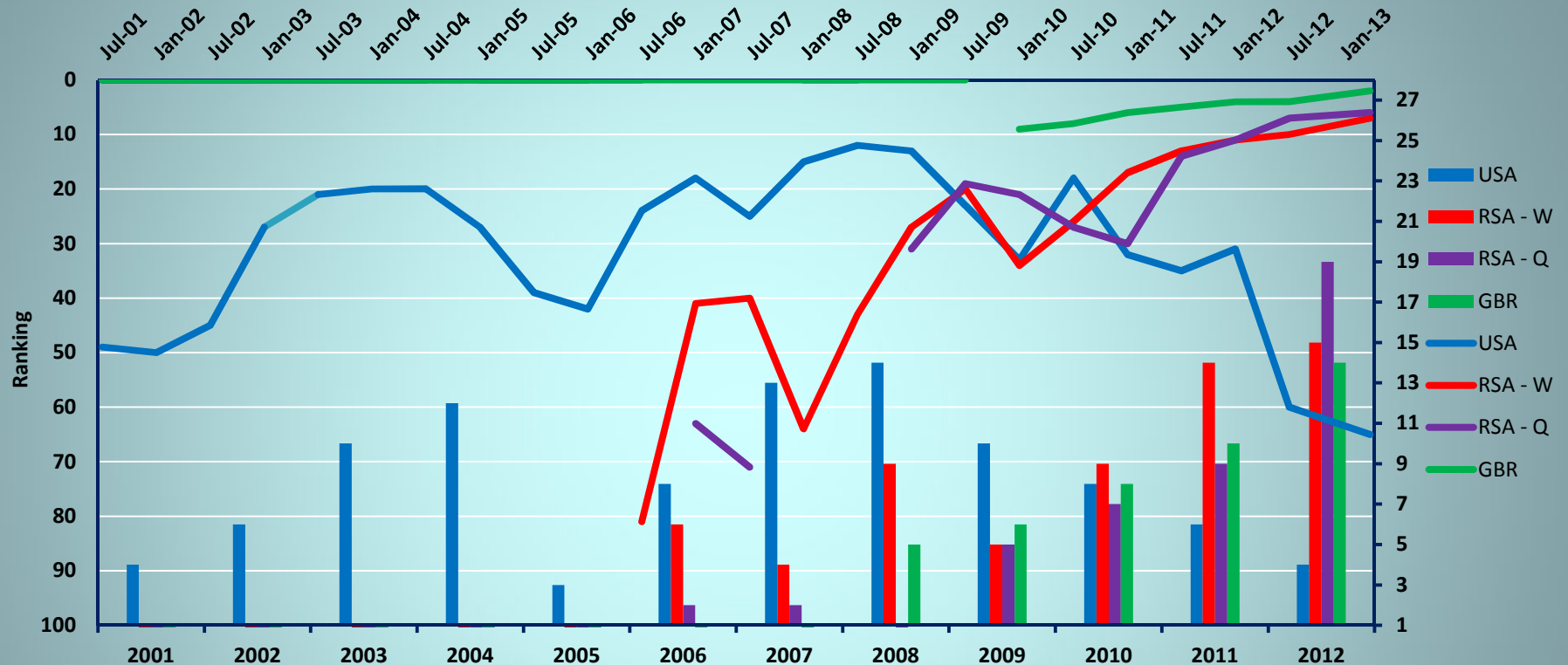
- Those holding Junior tournaments have highest number of Juniors on ranking
- AUS and USA despite holding more tournaments than RSA still have fewer men and women.
- NED only hold one tournament a year, reflects number on ranking compared with other countries.
- All countries with adults players in top 10 host a tournament

# Male case studies



- ARG, FRA, AUS participants 1990- 1994 birthdays.
- ARG highest ranking at transition from Juniors to Seniors – strong Junior programmes, participate in International camps/ tournaments (including adults) and travel.
- SRI predominately ex-military – funding restrictions to travel.
- Number of tournaments influential but not only factor (FRA). Results and tournament grade also affect ranking.

# Female/ quad case studies



- Appears correlation with number of tournaments played and ranking
- USA - playing the least number of tournaments, RSA the most
- GBR quad was playing in men's division previously before being classified (320 at point of introduction into quads)

# Conclusion

- Shift in dominance of countries – Africa/South America now emerging with the founding countries eg. North America becoming less successful.
- Reasons for success:
  - Increased focus on Juniors by the nations (Junior camps, host Junior tournaments etc.)
  - Increased competitive play inter/national
  - strong leaders in countries are vital
  - Clear player progression: local, regional, national and international camps/programmes exist
  - Location benefit (Europe)

# References

- Lincolnshire Sports Partnership (2013) Player pathways in disability sport. Available from: <http://lincolnshiresports.com/sport/inclusive-sport/player-pathways-in-disability-sport/>
- Bailey R., Collins D., Ford P., MacNamara A., Toms M. And Pearce G. (2010) Participation and development in sport: An academic review. Available from: <http://www.sportscoachuk.org/sites/default/files/Participant%20Development%20Lit%20Review.pdf>