



Timeline: Money & More in Women's Professional Tennis

1968	In April, Virginia Wade wins the first tournament of the Open Era at Bournemouth, but retains her amateur status and foregoes the winner's cheque; later that spring, Nancy Richey captures the first Open Grand Slam event at Roland Garros
1970 September 23	Frustrated by pay inequality of 8:1 and threatened with sanctions, the Original 9 women pros break with the sport's establishment by signing \$1 contracts with promoter Gladys Heldman to compete at the groundbreaking Virginia Slims Invitational in Houston <i>Original 9: Peaches Bartkowicz, Rosie Casals, Judy Dalton, Julie Heldman, Billie Jean King, Kerry Melville Reid, Nancy Richey, Kristy Pigeon, Valerie Ziegenfuss</i>
1971	Building on the success of the Houston event, the first World Tennis Women's Pro Tour (better known later as the Virginia Slims Circuit) of 19 events kicks off in San Francisco in January; by October, Billie Jean King has become the first woman athlete to earn \$100,000 in a season
1972	Precursor to the WTA Finals, the first Virginia Slims Championships are held at Boca Raton, Florida. The \$100,000 purse is the largest to date for a women-only event, and the \$25,000 winner's check easily outpaces all the majors. Chris Evert wins the title but as a 17-year-old amateur, has to forego the record pay-day
1973 June 21	Calling for strength in unity, Billie Jean King founds the Women's Tennis Association with the support of fellow players at a meeting at London's Gloucester Hotel – by the start of August the new organization has 64 members
1973	The US Open becomes the first of the four majors to offer equal prize money – with King's bargaining power bolstered by the newly-formed WTA; Bristol Myers' deodorant brand 'Ban' stumps up the extra cash
1974	The WTA signs a groundbreaking television broadcast contract with American network CBS which sees a series of VS Circuit finals broadcast in the spring of 1975
1975	WTA launches computer rankings , with Chris Evert as World No.1, rubber-stamping a dominance that would take the popularity of tennis to new heights
1976	WTA executive director Jerry Diamond announces the Colgate International Series with more than \$1 million in prize money at 24 events in 1977 and a \$600,00 performance bonus scheme; Chris Evert becomes the first female athlete to pass \$1 million in career earnings
1977	In their sixth year, and held in March, the Tour's season-ending championships begin a two-decade tenure at New York's Madison Square Garden
1978	In April, the WTA ends its partnership with Philip Morris and the Virginia Slims brand, amid philosophical and business differences on how to grow the sport. Avon Cosmetics , already the sponsor of a Futures Circuit, steps up by increasing its investment in women's tennis – announcing support of \$2.2 million for the main circuit and futures events in 1979

1979	The Avon Championships – the eighth edition of the WTA Finals – become the first tournament to offer \$100,000 to the champion, Martina Navratilova
1981	Toyota announces plans to underwrite the International Series, replacing Colgate
1982	Martina Navratilova becomes the first woman tennis player to earn over \$1 million in a single season, and eclipses both Evert and Jimmy Connors as the leader in tennis career prize money – a gender first
1983	After their sponsorship hiatus, Virginia Slims returns (replacing the likes of Colgate, Avon and Toyota) to sponsor the first unified circuit worth over \$10 million
1984	The Australian Open joins the US Open in offering equal prize money for its women’s and men’s events; Navratilova becomes the first woman to earn \$2 million in a season
1986	Martina Navratilova eclipses \$10 million in career prize money
1990	Kraft General Foods signs on as title sponsor
1990	The WTA Finals at Madison Square Garden are the first \$1 million event in women’s sports history
1991	A dominating Monica Seles earns more than the top-ranked male player, Stefan Edberg, a feat she repeats in 1992 (Edberg)
1994	Anne Worcester is appointed the first female as CEO of the WTA, making her the first woman to lead a major sports organization; followed by Stacey Allaster in 2009
1995	The WTA Players’ Association merges with the Women’s Tennis Council to form the WTA Tour and new age eligibility rules and professional development programs are introduced to protect young athletes from injuries and psychological burnout
1996	New season kicks off with Canadian Software company Corel as title sponsor
1997	On March 30, Martina Hingis becomes the fastest player to earn \$1 million in a season and by the end of the year is the first woman to earn \$3 million in a season
2000	Sanex , maker of bodycare products, becomes title sponsor for three years
2001	The Australian Open restores equal prize money, after a five-year break (1996-2000)
2001	The WTA makes its Middle East debut with events in Dubai and Doha; in 2005, the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships becomes the third event to apply an equal prize money policy – Lindsay Davenport is champion
2003	Kim Clijsters becomes the first WTA player to earn \$4 million in a season
2005	Sony Ericsson becomes worldwide title sponsor in a \$88 million, six-year deal – the largest and most comprehensive deal in the history of tennis and women’s sport
2007	Roland Garros and Wimbledon offer equal prize money to women and men, bringing pay parity to all four majors for the first time; Justine Henin sets a new benchmark by earning \$5 million on the season
2008	The WTA opens its first Asia-Pacific headquarters in Beijing, heralding huge expansion in the region
2009	Serena Williams earns prize money of more than \$6 million on the season
2011	Peachy Kellmeyer , the WTA’s first employee, is inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame for her efforts to build women’s tennis over four decades
2013	As the WTA celebrates its 40 Love season, 25 players finish the year with prize money earnings in excess of \$1 million from a record purse of \$118 million – Serena Williams earns \$12,385,572 for the year – a record that still stands

2014	Singapore becomes the first city in Asia-Pacific to host the WTA Finals season finale, beginning a successful five-year tenure
2017	WTA Charities is launched – the organization’s first unified, global philanthropic arm
2018	A record six WTA players take home prize money of more than \$5 million
2019	The WTA Finals in 10th host city Shenzhen offer record prize money of \$14 million, with champion Ash Barty taking home \$4.42 million – the biggest paycheck in tennis history (men or women)
2020	Despite a five-month stoppage due to the Covid-19 pandemic , the WTA rallies to stage 24 tournaments, including several in new locations
2022	Medical technology company and women’s health specialist Hologic is announced as new global title sponsor of the WTA Tour
2023	After 50 years, the Hologic WTA Tour is comprised of over 70 events and four Grand Slams, spanning 30 countries and regions across six continents with a global audience of nearly 900 million