Junior Racquet Head and Grip Sizes

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Quick Start Junior Racquets – the head sizes of our 19-inch and 21-inch junior racquets are slightly smaller than those of larger name brands. Well, first thing to know is we made them that way on purpose.

I have spoken with too many childhood development professionals who argue that the equipment for younger children should be proportionate to the size of the children. Isn't this what the whole QuickStart and 10 and Under Tennis movement is all about?

Compare the racquet head width to the width of the child's chest. With the slightly larger racquet head sizes, the racquet head is often wider than the child! How would we play if we had a racquet wider than our chest? The truth is that sometimes manufacturers drive demand with designs that may not be best for the young tennis player.

There are no scientific studies which show that larger racquet heads help children develop hand-eye coordination faster and better in the long run. However, there are arguments and examples in many other sports where smaller (not just shorter), more manageable hitting, throwing, and balancing devices are more "child friendly" ...

- Kids' bicycles are smaller – height, length, pedals, wheels, etc.
- Snow skis are shorter and narrower
- Baseball bats are shorter and narrower
- Soccer balls are smaller
- Footballs are smaller
- **WHILE ... tennis racquets are shorter but with wider heads and disproportionately large grips.**

But, there is another BIGGER problem with wider racquet heads in junior racquets. We know that off-center hits create racquet "torque." The wider the racquet face, the more torque or twisting of the racquet the child will be exposed to. In other words, larger head sizes will tend to twist in the child's hand. The result? The children will inadvertently learn to squeeze their grip more tightly.

Is this the way we want our kids to develop strokes? With a tight grip? I don't think so. As they get better, relaxed grips = fluidity = faster racquet head speeds = more ball speeds. Tighter grips = less fluid swings = short choppy strokes = slower racquet head speeds = slower ball speeds.

The other side of the argument is that larger racquet heads make it easier for the child to successfully strike a ball. But, is this really an advantage in the long run? Do we want a forgiving racquet or do we want just a little "tough love" with the child being guided to learn that success is strike the ball in the center of the strings? We may well argue both sides, but I can say for sure that the manufacturers are not basing their designs on science.

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Another very good example is grip sizes. If you take an average child's hand size at various ages and compare it to the size of an average adult hand (men and women), it becomes very clear that the grips used for junior tennis racquets are simply too big. Yes, the grips of junior racquets are smaller than adult grips, albeit not by much.

Why don't racquet manufacturers make racquets with even smaller grips for young players? You probably guessed the answer. It's about money. The junior tennis racquet factories in China already own molds and machinery that make junior racquets with a certain range of grip sizes and racquet head sizes. It hasn't changed in years. Our racquet heads and grip sizes push the limit towards being more appropriate for the children using them. If you have comments or questions on this article, please email joe@OnCourtOffCourt.com.

19": 80 sq. in head size, 3 ½ in grip size
21": 80 sq. in head size, 3 ½ in grip size
23": 90 sq. in head size, 3 ½ in grip size
25": 90 sq. in head size, 3 ½ in grip size
27": 105 sq. in head size, 4 1/8 in grip size