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## N.S. Sees Opportunity In Canada Winter Games Squash Courts

By Judy Myrden

Four portable squash courts used by athletes in the 2023 Canada Winter Games in P.E.I. are up for sale.

And Squash Nova Scotia president **Leah Boody** has her eyes on the prize.

“If we could get a group together to find a building and create a new club, that would be amazing,” Boody told **In The Nick**. “That’s my dream.”

With the sport recently being added to the program for the 2028 Olympics, Boody is keen to seize on this opportunity to purchase the state-of-the-art courts and find a new home for them in Halifax.



*Jack Foerster playing in the 2023 Canada Winter Games.  
Photo by Len Wagg.*

The Town of Stratford is listing the four courts for \$200,000.

“I think now is the time, having just been brought into the Olympics, (if) we could buy those courts and find a place to put them in Halifax. That would be amazing,” she added.

**Jeremy Pierce**, Town of Stratford Deputy Administrative Officer and Director Recreation, Culture and Events, said while the town can’t make a business case to keep the courts, it’s hoping they stay in the Maritimes.

The courts were originally purchased and installed by the Canada Games Host Society for just over \$500,000, he said.

The four courts were made in Canada by court builder **McWill Canada** of Toronto, with mechanized moveable side walls to widen the courts for doubles.

In return for its investment of \$242,000 towards sponsoring the games on the Island, Stratford received

### Upcoming Events

Jan 5-6: [Junior Valley Thaw](#)

Jan 11-14: [Dalhousie Open](#)

Jan 19-21: [Mill River Open](#)

Jan 26-28: [Canadian Masters Teams Championships \(MB\)](#)

Feb 8-11: [Ray Souchereau Memorial Classic](#)

Feb 23-25: [NB Open](#)

Mar 21-24: [NS Open](#)

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## Join a Squash League!

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[SMUfit Junior Squash League](#) will run January 7 to April 14 with matches on Sundays from 1-3 p.m.

Plus, the [Halifax Squash Academy](#) coached by **Josh Rudolph** is starting on January 4 for juniors of all ages.

[Halifax Premier League](#) will resume at SMUfit on January 16 with sign-ups closing on January 7. Matches are held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

[Halifax Squash League](#) for members of SMUfit, Dalhousie, and Cole Harbour Place is accepting sign-ups for spares throughout the season. Matches are held Wednesdays from 7-10 p.m.



*Calcutta and Christmas Social organizer, Ashley Cullis, shares a hug with fellow squash player and friend, Tim Mannette.*

the squash courts.

The courts are currently dismantled and in a heated storage facility in Marshfield, just outside of Charlottetown. During the winter games the courts were housed in the Eastlink Centre in Charlottetown.

“We explored the opportunity to have them in our community, but unfortunately we don’t see a fit.”

“We’d love to see the courts in use, but at the same time we have to represent our taxpayers who funded these,” he said. “The squash population on P.E.I. said if there was any preference, they would love to see them in the Maritimes.”

Pierce said the town is “open to discussions” about the asking price of \$200,000, and keen to see them being used.

Several groups in British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario have expressed interest in acquiring the courts. But to date no sale, he added.

He said the “sheer cost” of shipping them from the East Coast to the West Coast is quite expensive.

A group in Kelowna, B.C. was interested in buying the courts, but the wildfires put that project on hold, he said.

“We’d love to see them in the Maritimes,” Pierce said.

## SMUfit Calcutta Delivers the Holiday Spirit

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 The 5th annual Christmas Calcutta was hosted at SMUfit on December 9th. The event, organized by **Dave Malyk**, **Ashley Cullis**, and **Craig Potts**, saw a record 45 entrants across five divisions. The proceeds from the Calcutta went towards sponsoring two children from Parker Street. The success of the event allowed for every item on their wish lists to be fulfilled!



*Division winners, from left: Lucas MacQuarrie, Heather MacElwee, Dave Malyk, Harjot Dod, Michael Howard*

## SMUfit Ladies Night Squash Hosts Fall Session Tournament

By Craig Potts

Twenty-five women registered for the second annual SMUfit Ladies Night Squash Tournament last month, up from nine last year, including organizer **Judy Myrden**.

Introduced to squash at the courts in the basement of Dalhousie's Howe Hall as a teenager by her father, Myrden went on to play recreational squash during university.

She came back to the game after a 30 year hiatus in early 2014, attending a Saturday afternoon squash clinic at SMU run by world renowned squash coach, **Neil Harvey**.

Myrden told **In The Nick** after her loss in the finals in the Nova Scotia Open Women's Division D of that year, she decided she "wanted to compete in the real sense of the game."



*Coach Judy Myrden (bottom row, 2nd from right) and the SMUfit Ladies Night Crew.*

Harvey answered the call, saying, "Judy was one of the special few students (he's coached worldwide) that fully embraced his coaching philosophy." In short: Focusing on simple things; once they are doing well, taking them to the next step; and building a strong foundation.

Myrden ascended to Women's A Division in 2017, and according to Harvey, "found an outlet in squash that inspired her passion for a new sport" and she can now pass along her skills.

Myrden tried on the coaching hat in 2018, taking the mantle at SMUfit Ladies Night, and that year was recognized as Squash Nova Scotia's Volunteer of the Year for her commitment to growing women's squash in the region.

Five years later, with a weekly email going out to over 60 women promoting Ladies Monday Night Squash from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., she gets a turnout of 15 to 20 women.





*Judy Myrden gives squash player Cindy Wheeler encouragement during a match.*

Myrden played in the 2023 Ray Souchereau Memorial Squash Classic at SMUfit, and was recognized once again at the closing ceremony, receiving the Ray Souchereau Spirit Award.

Thirty-two women competed across four divisions, with tournament organizer and player **Leah Boody** commenting, “I’ve never seen as large a Women’s Draw in Atlantic Canada before,” crediting Myrden’s contributions as the award was announced.

“It’s rewarding to see the women playing for their physical and mental well being. They all look forward to Monday nights now so much, and I never want to disappoint them,” says Myrden. She works with Harvey occasionally behind the scenes to structure the Monday night programming so all participants, regardless of skill level, come away with a positive session.

Newcomer to squash and Ladies Night attendee, **Cindy Wheeler**, echoes the feedback **In The Nick** has received from several players and says Myrden is “beloved” by the group.

She added, Myrden “has a unique ability to motivate players to want to work hard and improve their game. She is very well respected and players seek her praise.”

Myrden retired in October 2023 after 38 years in journalism. Amongst other retirement goals, Myrden says she plans to write less and play more squash!

## Halifax Juniors Compete Nationally

Three Halifax juniors joined 360 top and up-and-coming squash players in the world at the Canadian Junior Squash Open, held last month in Ontario.

**Garreth Beckles**, **Jack Comeau**, and **Adele Workman** competed in the prestigious event in the boys and girls divisions BU19, BU17, and GU17 respectively.

It was a learning experience and a very high level of playing, Beckles told **In The Nick**. The three players also represented Nova Scotia at last year’s Winter Canada Games.

Squash Canada, the sport’s national governing body, said in a news release that this year’s competition was the largest in its 27 years and has become a premier event for players and coaches.

The contingent from Halifax was part of 200 Canadians competing in the five junior divisions over the four-day event Dec. 9 to 12 hosted by The Club at White Oaks in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Squash Canada also hosted a NextGen PSA Satellite event for athletes to gain experience in high performance competition, and Halifax squash coach and player **Mahmoud Abouelleil** participated.

In addition, two provincial squash referees **Elvira Mitraka** and **Abdelrahman (Abdo) Abdallah** attended the event on their path to becoming a national referee. Abdallah received his first signature towards that status, calling a semi-final match of the Men’s NextGen tournament.

## Tribute Bench At Dal Squash Club Up In The Air

By Judy Myrden

Dalhousie University has removed a wooden bench installed by members of the Dal Squash Club at the Dalplex squash courts.

“With the bench being homemade and open for public usage, there is increased liability in the event a client got hurt while using equipment that was not provided by the Dalplex,” a university official wrote in an email Dec. 15 to **Emily Burke**, Vice-President of the Dalhousie Squash Club.

Dalhousie said it was brought to their attention the bench was brought into the courts on Nov. 30, but due to a miscommunication late last spring between the Dal Squash Club and Dalplex, the official okay to go ahead was never received.

Squash club members **Michael Jacot**, who spent five months building the bench, and Burke acknowledged bringing the bench into the gym was “mishandled” and hope the decision can be reversed.

She said the bench, which had members' names burned into the wood, served a practical purpose, but its “bigger issue was to be a symbol of the community we have built.”

Dalhousie said it is bringing down 15 chairs to increase seating in the squash court area, in addition to a bench that was previously there.

The Dal Squash Club has grown significantly over the last three years from about five or seven regular players to over 30 every week.

Dal squash player **Jumana Abouelela** became the club President in Sept. 2019 until Apr. 2022, and seized on the opportunity to begin transforming the club.

She immediately started “talking up” the Thursday night drop-ins from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the four courts located in the ground floor of the Dalplex on South Street, in Halifax.

At the time only about four players were attending, so she started sending out weekly emails as a reminder of the event and other activities going on at the club.

Other changes included restructuring the executive team from three members to 13, delegating duties amongst them from organizing tournaments to managing social media accounts.

The club also attracted a coach to provide lessons and weekly clinics, and got a new tournament sponsorship stream.

“Really happy to see the squash club continuing to grow, there’s more happening,” she said during the unveiling ceremony with about 40 members in attendance.



*From left: Jumana Abouelela, Michael Jacot, and Emily Burke test out the tribute bench at its debut.*

*Drop-in times: Thursdays 6-8 p.m. and Sundays 4-6 p.m.*

## Remembering Squash Player Tom Calder

By Judy Myrden



**Tom Calder**, a familiar figure at the SMUfit squash club, died Dec. 5 in a Calgary hospital.

He was 63.

Calder is being remembered by family and friends for his love of playing squash and being generous with his time to offer instruction to others learning the game.

Calder, with his longtime friend and squash partner, **Tim Roberts**, re-started the SMUfit Friday night squash drop-ins in 2011, and also organized many squash Calcuttas over the years.

“Tom was part of the extended squash community, not just showing up and playing a game and leaving,” Roberts told **In The Nick**.

He described him as a tenacious squash player.

“Tom was very friendly and willing to have a game with anyone,” he recalled.

Calder, a successful Halifax property manager, was diagnosed with colorectal cancer in 2020.

As his health situation deteriorated, he still remained “optimistic” about playing one more squash tournament, said Roberts.

Calder, an avid and skilled hockey player as a teenager who played high school hockey, was introduced to the game of squash 22 years ago by his nephew, **Farley MacLeod**.

MacLeod said his uncle was “skeptical” at first, but was totally won over in the end.

“In the past year and a half, one of the things that kept him going was a strong desire to get back on the court, and up until shortly before his death, one of his main goals was to play squash again.

Unfortunately, that didn’t happen, but I believe it was helpful for him to have something to strive for,” Macleod said.

He is survived by his wife, **Pam Etheridge**, and his son, **Nicholas Etheridge Calder**, of Calgary.

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