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Mr. Hopkins Goes To New York City

By Judy Myrden

Halifax squash enthusiast, player and raconteur **Paul Hopkins** returned from his annual January pilgrimage to New York City after watching the world's best professional squash athletes compete.

"It's a little treat each year... Total immersion, close to the live sounds, smells, noise, beginners around you trying to explain the rules," Hopkins told **In The Nick**.

This was his 12th time flying down to watch the **J.P. Morgan Tournament of Champions**, previously known as the **U.S. Professional Championships**, held at the **Vanderbilt Hall** in New York City's **Grand Central Terminal**.

The annual tournament is an amazing event for athletes, and this year tournament organizers offered equal prize money for men and women with a record total compensation of US \$440,000.

In 2011, Hopkins and a few other squash fanatics reserved a box seat (5 seats) and flew to the Big Apple to watch the tournament.



"It was a blowout - meeting top players and referees, hitting with them, dinners out at local pubs, steak houses and midnight sidewalk cart food," said the 76-year-old.

After about five years, the original box group split due to different schedules but Hopkins remains the lone soul continuing to go down each year (excluding COVID-19 misses in 2021 and 2022).

The inspiration to make the trek to NYC came after watching many of the world's top men's squash players in Halifax at the **Bluenose Squash Classic Tournament** held at the small and intimate venue at Saint Mary's University.

It was part of the **Professional Squash Association's (PSA)** tour which ran from 2006 to 2015 in Halifax and in the final year it was held in a glass court on stage at the **Rebecca Cohn Auditorium**.

Hopkins said the Bluenose tournament "really captured the enthusiasm of Maritime squashers."

Upcoming Events

Mar 8-10: [PEI Open](#)

Mar 20-24: [NL Provincials](#)

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

Mar 30: [Dal Junior Open](#)

Apr 4-7: [Atlantics \(PEI\)](#)

Contributions to **In The Nick** are welcome! Send in your letters, stories, or feedback to us here:

InTheNick@nssquash.ca



Hopkins poses with Ali Farag, PSA No. 1 ranked player since June 2023, and winner of the J.P. Morgan Tournament.

He recommends avid squash players and fans attend the NYC tournament as a “bucket list” accomplishment.

“If you have the time, go for the entire event... great elimination matches early on, 42 men and 42 women. Otherwise the last four days are max action!” he said.

Tickets for the J.P. Morgan Tournament start at \$15, and fans can also watch for free through the front wall at Vanderbilt Hall.

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Funding For Community-led Projects Targets Underrepresented Groups

By Judy Myrden & Emily Burke

Squash Nova Scotia (SNS) recently received \$33,800 in federal government funding to help grow squash in the province, with a focus on inclusiveness and increased access.

The new funding will allow SNS to immediately introduce two new squash programs in Nova Scotia and train facilitators to see the initiatives carry forward with future programming.

The programs include a four to six week squash program for “new to Canada” participants, with a focus on Muslim communities, and is expected to run at the SMUfit squash courts on Sundays commencing in the coming weeks.

A second program for people with physical disabilities will focus on wheelchair squash at Cole Harbour Place on a similar timeline.

“The initiatives are meant to give an opportunity for us to champion and support community leaders so that sustainable squash participation can continue,” **Adam Morris**, SNS administrative coordinator, told **In The Nick**. “We intend to give leaders the tools they need to succeed and drive sport participation for their community.”

Morris said the funding will be used to purchase sport wheelchairs, racquets, squash balls, and protective goggles, all of which will remain on permanent loan to Squash NS.

The money will also cover participant transport for newcomers, participation fees, court bookings, coach honorariums and other program expenses as needed, he said. Morris hopes to strengthen partnerships and run similar program initiatives in Kentville and Sydney.

The government announced the funding to remove barriers and increase participation in underrepresented groups across the country in February. SNS’s funding comes directly from Squash Canada which received \$766,000 from the federal program, known as the **Community Sport for All Initiative**.

More Than 100 Play In Ray Souchereau Classic

By Judy Myrden

With 110 squash players from three provinces, the fourth annual **Ray Souchereau Memorial Squash Classic** had its largest turnout on record.

Matt Bishop, squash player and a tournament sponsor, credits the large turnout to the framing of the tournament in memory of a well-known person in the close-knit squash community.

“It is more than just a squash tournament, we are playing in the memory of someone who has touched the lives of a lot of people in the squash community,” said Bishop, the winner of the men’s division 1.

The previous two years, 87 players participated, and the first year there were 66. (Tournaments were not held in 2021 and 2022 due to COVID-10 restrictions.)

The tournament is named in memory of **Ray Souchereau**, who passed away from pancreatic cancer in 2018. He was 57.

Bishop also handed out the **Ray Souchereau Spirit Award** recognizing a person in the squash community who embodies Ray’s commitment and dedication to the sport.

High level men’s squash player **James Wiseman** was given the trophy at the conclusion of the tournament to recognize his ongoing work introducing and developing juniors at his home club in Kentville.

The non-profit program known as **902SquashEd** runs out of the **King’s County Squash Club** and aims to empower students of African descent through the sport of squash.



Four of the 25 juniors who played in the tournament. From left: Leo Guilderson, Micah Zhang, Henry Quach, and Victoria Bishop. Photo by Sam Zhang.



Leah Boody (foreground) lines up a drive versus Niamh Campbell in the Women’s Division 1 Final. Photo by John Arnold.

One of Wiseman’s players from the program, **Julia Akao**, played in the tournament and won the title of junior girls champion, winning just two days shy of her 16th birthday.

Akao, of New Minas, started playing squash through 902SquashEd a year ago. Besides coaching her squash, Wiseman is also her Grade 10 math teacher.

Another player from the program, **Dorian Palmer**, won his first title in junior boys. He also made it to the men’s division 4 final, losing in a fierce match against **Greg Jones** of Halifax.

Palmer has been playing squash for two years. Originally from Jamaica, his family moved to Nova Scotia three years ago.

For the first time there was a division dedicated

Cape Bretoners Converge On Moncton

By Bill MacGillivray

Excited for one of the most fun and anticipated tournaments on the squash calendar, the contingent from Cape Breton made their trek to Moncton this past weekend to play in the **New Brunswick Open**.

For a club that has only a couple of dozen regular players-based out of one court at the YMCA in Sydney-the representation to Moncton was truly impressive, with seven players attending and several making it to the finals.

Nathan Crouse and **John MacPhail** had a battle royale match with John getting the upper hand in his Men's Division 2 win, eventually landing him 2nd place in the playoff on Sunday. Nathan was also successful and managed to win the Men's Division 2 consolation finals over his opponent **Seb LeBlanc**.

Also playing Sunday morning was **Brian Manley** who was successful in his Men's Division 3 Main draw finals match against the wily and talented local **Barry Williams**.

Belinda Beaton made it to the Women's Open finals against a tough opponent and Moncton favourite **Jolene LeBlanc**, who managed to keep the women's title in NB; while **Chantel Petitpas** won the Women's Consolation finals against PEI's **Simone Webster**.

to players over 60 years of age - the South 60+ division which attracted four men's players.

They included **David Stanley**, former manager of the Fenwick Club and a very good friend of Ray's, **R.T. (Tom) Evans**, **Stuart MacTavish**, and **Manny Drapeau**. Evans won the division.

Other winners included: **Victoria Bishop & Jase Wiseman**, mixed under 13; **Steve Nurse**, men's division 2; **Jack Foerster**, men's division 3; **Leah Boody**, women's division 1; **Ashley Cullis**, women's division 2; and **Nell Den Heyer**, women's division 3.



Home-baked cookies were delivered on Saturday by Jill Moore and Ashley Cullis.

From The Squash Nova Scotia Board: February 19, 2024

Community Sports For All: A 4-6 week program for youth ages 10+ from the Sabeel Muslim Youth Community Centre. This program will begin late March to early April on Sunday afternoons at SMUfit.

Para Squash: This initiative will support para squash to members living with physical disabilities and players in wheelchairs. This program will be 4-6 weeks long and held at Cole Harbour Place.

Website Designer Needed: SNS is planning to rebuild and/or design a new website. This will be a contract position. Interested candidates are invited to submit a resume, sample work product, and compensation expectations.

To express interest in any of the above, email **Adam Morris** at amorris@sportnovascotia.ca.

Ask The Ref!

Question:

“Is it an automatic stroke if the striker’s racquet interferes with their opponent; including in the follow-through?”

Answer:

First, we don’t consider anything to be an automatic stroke. Every situation requires judgement based on the rules. Secondly, the striker does not create interference. It is caused by the non-striker.

With those caveats in mind, the question is better expressed as: “What is the decision if there is racquet contact with the opponent in a rally; including on the follow-through?”

You can appreciate, given the confines of the court, and players crossing paths closely, that racquet contact may be a common occurrence and will range from slight or incidental, to the swing being prevented. The rules state:

A reasonable swing comprises a reasonable backswing, a strike at the ball and a reasonable follow-through. The striker’s backswing and follow-through are reasonable as long as they do not extend more than is necessary.

If the striker requests a let for interference to the swing, then:

- If the swing was affected by slight contact with the opponent who was making every effort to avoid the interference a **Let** is allowed, unless the striker would have made a winning return, in which case a **Stroke** is awarded to the striker;
- If the swing was prevented by contact with the opponent, a **Stroke** is awarded to the striker, even if the opponent was making every effort to avoid the interference.

Accordingly, the ref’s judgement needs to include the following:

- Was the swing a reasonable swing (versus excessively wide, e.g. fishing)?
- Was the opponent making every effort to clear? Or was their movement encroaching?
- Was the interference “slight contact,” or was it “swing prevented?” This requires judgement. If, for example, the contact knocks the racquet out of the striker’s hand, or alters the ball path, or the striker could not complete the swing, these would suggest the swing was prevented.
- Would the striker have made a winning shot in the absence of the interference? Again, judgement is required here.
- Although not a typical occurrence, if the contact is in the follow-through, judgement would have to be made whether the contact affected the swing (which would not be typical).

All of the above considerations are what a referee runs through their mind as a mental flow chart before arriving at the decision.

In The Nick is pleased to be launching a monthly column written by our local **Black Shirt Ref Crew** in response to questions from the readership about rules, specific situations, and officiating decisions in general.

Through this column, players will build knowledge into both their games and their own officiating skills.

Please submit your squash officiating questions by email to inthenick@nssquash.ca.

Mother-Daughter Tournament - A Tradition Begins

By Craig Potts

Overlooking the CN Tower 36 floors up above Toronto’s business district, the **10th Annual Goodfellow Classic** was hosted last week at the **Toronto Athletic Club (TAC)**.

Making her 3rd appearance since 2019, SMUfit’s **Judy Myrden** registered alongside her daughter **Ellen Withers**, returning to tournament play with her 2nd appearance, officially making this event an “Annual Mother-Daughter Tradition.”

SMUfit Ladies Night regular, **Heather MacElwee**, along with her mother, squash enthusiast of over 40 years **Lisa MacElwee** (Ottawa), got in on the action. They all converged on Toronto for what was “So much fun! We honestly had the *best time!*” according to the junior MacElwee.



From left: Ellen Withers, Heather MacElwee, Lisa MacElwee, and Judy Myrden.

Of the four, Withers came away with the best finish, winning the Women’s D Division outright with 4 straight wins, not dropping a single game all tournament. “You have to start somewhere!” Withers told **In The Nick** after cementing her division victory with her 4th win. Mother/Coach Myrden said “I was a nervous wreck” as Withers stepped on the court for her final Saturday afternoon match.



Playing in a very competitive Women’s C division, with co-coaching from Myrden & mom, MacElwee-junior battled hard across 4 matches to capture 3rd place. Hard to know who was most proud: Mom, coach, or player!

The tournament banquet on Saturday night saw the two mother-daughter teams recognized when TAC Event Chairman and Club Professional **Josh McDonald** called out to the foursome. He acknowledged the amazing spirit they brought to the event, their support for one another’s matches all weekend, and their part of what was the event’s best turnout for women numbers ever: 12 out of 82 entrants. “The whole room applauded. It was a special moment for Heather and I to be able to share the experience and love of the game with mom and Lisa,” said Withers.

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