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Junior Newcomers to Canada Hit The Courts

By Judy Myrden

For **Rayaan Saleh**, learning how to play the fast-paced sport of squash has been a long time coming.

The 17-year-old was first introduced to the sport when she was 8 years old and came to **Saint Mary's University** squash courts to watch her aunt and a friend play.

"I really wanted to learn how to play the game," Saleh, of **Halifax**, told **In The Nick** court-side recently. "When I saw there was an opportunity to learn, and it was on the weekend, and free, I signed up right away."

Saleh is one of 20 youth (a group of 10 boys and 10 girls) from the **Sabeel Muslim Youth & Community Centre** located in **Bedford**, learning how to play through the **Squash Nova Scotia** pilot program introducing the racquet sport to "new to Canada" participants.

The six-week program was held on Sundays for an hour for each group, starting in April and ending in May. It was one of two inclusive squash initiatives. The other six-week program was the para squash program at **Cole Harbour Place**.

"It's a lot of fun and a great way to get rid of anger," she says with a laugh.



Rayaan Saleh gets instruction from Community Instructor Heather MacElwee. Photo by Judy Myrden.

Upcoming Events

Jun 20-22: Squash Canada Annual General Meeting

Adam Morris, Sport Nova Scotia representative, said there is plenty of evidence to suggest that those new to Canada experience a variety of difficulties integrating in Canadian life and culture.

"After a very positive initial consult (with Sabeel), we decided to move forward with a partnership for this pilot," said Morris.

He said it also offers coaches, administrators and sport organizations a new experience.

Squash player and Coach **Mahmoud Abouelleil** is the coach of the pilot program, along with Community Instructors **Heather MacElwee** and **Rawan Abouelela**.

"The program has been a great experience. It's been really fun getting to introduce squash to new juniors," MacElwee told **In the Nick**.

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The aim of the pilot program is to have more kids playing the sport and help engage new communities in squash and remove any barriers to participation, said Morris.

Squash Nova Scotia received \$33,800 from the federal government in January for the two programs from the **Community Sport for All Initiative**.

The newcomer program cost \$7,000 that included transportation for the youth from Sabeel community centre to Saint Mary's University, coach fees, court rental, snacks and drinks and equipment, including racquets, balls and goggles.

Halifax Squash League Results

The 2023-2024 Halifax Squash League season wrapped up on May 1 after four weeks of playoff matches. The **Clean Nickers** defeated the **Ham-Stringers** by a narrow 1-game margin to secure the league championship.

1st Place: **Clean Nickers** (SMU) - Manuel Drapeau, Michael Howard, David Pappas, Remy Stein, Alex Sio, Louis Westergard

2nd Place: **Ham-Stringers** (Dal) - Sukhpreet Singh Aujla, Dan Hasselman, Ryan Ingham, Meaghan Leishman, Evan Smith

3rd Place: **SWAT** (Dal) - Tim Hatcher, Michael Jacot, Lee Kirby, Harjot Dod, Alea Varen

4th Place: **CHP 1** - Darlene Acton, Chris Gallant, Marcel Petipas, Luke Poirier, Johnny Young

5th Place: **Unsquashables** (Dal) - Gabrielle Morin, Abdelrahman Abdallah, Emily Burke, Hossein (Sam) Sharifzadeh, Emily Byron

6th Place: **Drive to Survive** (SMU) - John Arnold, Purvasha Dewanjee, Leanne Huck, Cameron Reid, Bill Wilkinson

7th Place: **Tight Shots!** (SMU) - Heather MacElwee, Julia Pelton, Craig Potts, Cindy Wheeler, Sam Zhang

8th Place: **SMU 2** - Garreth Beckles, Jack Comeau, Greg Jones, Megan Nearing, Kate Swanson

9th Place: **Dal 4** - Vishesh Bhat, Ron Cormier, Chris Cowper-Smith, Wes Crawford, Ian Fergusson

10th Place: **Grumpy Lobsters** (CHP) - Graham James, Chris Jourdeuil, Phil Jourdeuil, Elvira Mitraka, Dave Thomson

11th Place: **The Untouch-a-balls** (CHP) - Fernando Beckles, Roy Den Dulk, Blaise Kavanagh, Christopher Lien, Louis Nguyen

12th Place: **The Control** (SMU) - Anvi Ahuja, Luke Boody, Chris Feargrieve, Cordale Hann, Judith Myrden, Adele Workman

13th Place: **SMU 3** - Aran Brady, Johanna Graham, Steven Hart, Katherine Stringer, Angelia Vanderlaan

14th Place: **Dal Force One** - David Westwood, Angelos Yiannou, Bikramjit Singh, Chris Morel, Maegan Burke

Adam Morris Says Farewell To Sport Nova Scotia

By Judy Myrden

A week after being hailed as a “rock star” for being the voice of squash in Nova Scotia, **Adam Morris** announced he’s leaving to head out West to become a medical student.

“I have some tough news to share,” Morris, **Sport Nova Scotia** provincial squash representative, wrote in an email to the squash community on May 17.

“I’m sad I won’t be working with you folks going forward. It’s been a great past year and a half and I’m very proud of what we accomplished.”

He apologized for the short notice, but is returning home to **Saskatoon** to start medical school at the **University of Saskatchewan** in the fall and to get married.

This news comes just a week after **Leah Boody**, President of **Squash Nova Scotia**, gave Morris a big shout out at the association’s annual general meeting for all his work promoting squash.

“The amount that he does behind the scenes would blow you away,” Boody told about 40 members at the meeting. “Adam is incredible and he’s done so much work for us.”

Born and raised in Saskatoon, Morris moved to Halifax in 2018, and graduated from **Dalhousie University** with a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology in 2022.

During his time at Dalhousie he combined his love of sports and biomechanics doing research with sport applications.

A competitive water-skier, the 24-year-old competed provincially, nationally and internationally during high school in water skiing competitions securing several titles. He was also a competitive cross country skier.

Before joining Sport NS in January 2023, he worked at a water-ski school at **Morris Lake** in **Dartmouth** for a summer, then had brief stints as a barista and a server.

“I think a health career has always appealed to me and aligns more with my interests, values and talents compared to a career in sport,” Morris told In The Nick. “I will always be interested in and love sport, but don’t necessarily want it to be my forever career.”

He’s “grateful” for the opportunity to work at Sport NS as the representative for squash and also Judo and Cheer.

“The collaboration in sport in this province is unparalleled and I’m very thankful to have learned from so many amazing people, including career sport folks, PSO (provincial sport organization member) board members, volunteers, and the players and coaches at the community level.”

Outside of work he also enjoys coaching and facilitating **National Coaching Certification Programs**.



Squash N.S. Finances Remain In The Black

By Judy Myrden

Squash Nova Scotia (SNS) remains in a stable financial position and there's money in the bank for other squash programs, said **Leah Boody**, President of SNS.

As of March 31, 2024, the association has a cash balance of \$32,887, compared to \$35,692 the previous year.

Boody attributes the "healthy" bank balance to \$45,000 in federal government funding from the **Community Sport for All Initiative (CSAI)**, and \$10,000 of the cash balance is reserved for these inclusive programs.

She said the remainder of the cash balance is a carry over from prior year surpluses.

"Over the summer months, the board will develop a two year budget. It is intended that the surplus cash will be utilized for programming that is aligned with the strategic plan," she told **In The Nick**.

One key area will be to target programs for junior players in the province.

"Juniors really are the future," she told about 40 people who attended the association's AGM at **The Duke's Public House** in downtown Halifax on May 10.

Junior development is "critical" to the future success of SNS to ensure growth and sustainability, she added.

"Each generation that is not exposed to the sport results in a reduction of the number of participants in the following generation. Additionally, a large percentage of our funding from **Sport Nova Scotia** is tied to metrics related to junior development and excellence," she said.

The federal funding went towards two new inclusive squash programs, including wheelchair squash and the "new to Canada" group focusing on the Muslim community.

To date, SNS has spent \$11,000 on training and programming and \$24,000 on wheelchairs, from CSAI funding, according to the year end financials.

For the fiscal year, the association received \$25,000 in funding from Sport Nova Scotia and expects to receive the same amount over the next two years.

Other expenditures included \$9,000 for "athlete/coach support." This included partial funding for the **Nova Scotia Masters Team** to compete in the **Canadian Masters Team Championships** in **Winnipeg** and for junior travel to camps and tournaments outside of Nova Scotia.

Boody said paid membership increased 37 per cent over the past year from 187 to 257 paying members (and there are approximately 700 total members including associate members).

The number of players entering tournaments grew to 628 in 2024, compared to 491 the previous year.



Leah Boody speaks at the Annual General Meeting. Photo by John Arnold.

2023-2024 Squash Season Snapshots



Clockwise from top left: Nell den Heyer, Sara Stout Grandy, & Shelley Joyce; Victor Onyebuchi & Jack Comeau; Harjot Dod, Sukhpreet Singh Aujla, & Cordale Hamm; Michael Jacot, John Arnold, Chantel Petipas, Emily Burke, Dan Hasselman, Noah Reader, Emily Byron, Maegan Burke, Marcel Petipas, Ryan Ingham, & Toby Tong; Jen, Ava, & James Wiseman; Lilly Bishop.

Centre: Sterling MacQuarrie, Emma MacGillivray, & Luke MacQuarrie.



Ask The Ref!

By Lee Kirby & the Black Shirt Ref Crew

Question (from Michael MacDonald): “What is the ‘foot fault’ rule during the serve?”

Answer: Among other criteria for what constitutes a good serve, Rule 5.7.2 of the World Squash Singles Rules of January 1, 2024 reads :

“At the time the server strikes the ball, one foot is in contact with the floor inside the service-box with no part of that foot touching any boundary of that box...”

The server can be in the process of stepping out of the box toward the T as long as he/she does not lift the foot from the floor before the racket strikes the ball. It is also acceptable for part of the foot (e.g., the heel) to be above the line, but not touching it.

Question: “Is this rule generally enforced?”

Answer: Of course, the official answer is that all rules should be enforced. The reality, however, is that this call is sometimes not made. There are at least three possible explanations. First, some inexperienced referees fail to recognize that a foot fault has occurred. Second, some referees act as though a foot fault comes in various degrees and they erroneously feel that it is unnecessary to call minor infractions; according to the Rules, the foot fault is a binary call (“yes, it was a foot fault” or “no, it wasn’t”). Third, in matches between lower-ranking players, the referee may take an “educational” approach and wait until the end of the rally to tell the offending player that “you almost had a foot fault there” and to explain the rule if the player seems quizzical.

Question: “What recourse does the receiver have if they feel the foot fault rule is not being enforced?”

Answer: The player who loses the rally can appeal what he/she perceives to be the marker’s failure to call the foot fault. If the referee is not sure if a foot fault occurred, the referee’s call is “play Let”.

Question: “If a foot fault occurs, what is the referee’s call?”

Answer: As for the failure to meet any of the criteria listed in Rule 5.7 for when the serve is good, the correct call is “Fault”. The term “foot fault” may be used to explain the reason for the call.

Each month our local **Black Shirt Ref Crew** responds 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.

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