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Squash Injuries: Prevention, Conditioning, and the Health Benefits of Racquet Sports

By Dr. Stephen Workman

Another *do as I say, not as I do* story: In squash, we all know safety matters, but that doesn't mean I always remember to follow it. Take, for instance, my experience with an eye injury when I wasn't wearing safety glasses (see In The Nick October 2024). And, as it happens, recent events on the pickleball court reminded me why injury prevention and management are so important.

"So, let's go play some pickleball!" says my wife, **Susan Hayden**. It's a cool day, ideal for a light hit.

Fifteen minutes in, a short drop shot pulls me up to the front on the backhand side. I lunge onto my left leg (wrong footing myself) and manage the counter drop, only to be rewarded by Susan crossing the ball with a beautiful forehand winner.

As I land on my left foot—snap!—a sudden sensation runs through my lateral hamstring. I barely bicycle home.

I consider calling my physiotherapist, **Joe Ghosn**, who has treated my three previous hamstring injuries and my wonky left knee. But hey, I'm busy, and it starts feeling better fairly quickly. I go back to hiking and biking as the pain fades.

Two weeks later, I figure I'm better, so I show up to hit with the squash crew on Sunday afternoon. We're warming up, and twenty minutes in, **Cordale Hann** sends a short cross-court shot into the backhand corner.

I lunge again onto my left leg. Ping—there goes my hamstring. Again. Worse than before. I call Susan to cancel our Cape Breton hiking trip scheduled for the next day.

Five days later Ghosn gives me the 'good news' that my lateral hamstring tendon is 'probably' intact and I am off court for at least 8 weeks.

Upcoming Events

Jan 10-11: [KCSC Winter Thaw Junior Tournament](#)

Jan 16-19: [Dalhousie Open Squash Tournament](#)

Jan 24-26: [2025 Canadian Masters Teams Championships \(Moncton NB\)](#)

Jan 31-Feb 2: [Mill River PEI Squash Tournament](#)

Feb 7-9: [Lighthouse Junior Gold Open](#)

Feb 13-16: [Ray Souchereau Memorial Classic](#)

Feb 28 - Mar 2: [2025 Renee Blanchard Law NB Open](#)



Dr. Workman with wife Dr. Susan Hayden

Why Squash is a Great Sport

Squash is an incredible sport; everyone who plays knows that, but it bears repeating. Amateur racquet sports players are some of the longest-lived and healthiest athletes.

Few sports promote athleticism and neuroplasticity as well as squash—four walls, infinite angles, and a never-ending attempt to outsmart and outwork your opponent. But there's an admission price, as squash is exceptionally demanding. As local retired top professional PSA Player and Coach Neil Harvey says, *"You don't play squash to get fit; you get fit to play squash."* So, strength training, aerobic exercise, and exercises for balance, agility, and flexibility—all readily available online—are wise investments. The fitter you are, the more fun the game becomes.

Consider the following as you train, prepare, and play:

1. **Injuries Are Not Accidents**

Injuries don't happen randomly. They occur for a reason. If you suffer a significant injury (i.e., one that keeps you from playing squash or interferes with playing your best), take the time to learn from it. Fatigue, inadequate fitness, poor technique? Doing a root cause analysis can be illuminating and save you a repeat injury.

2. **If you get injured see a physiotherapist**

Injuries do not always start where they end up, and weakness anywhere along the kinetic chain can lead to damage elsewhere. (For example, I pull my hamstrings due to inadequate glute activation, aka. "dead butt syndrome.") A physiotherapist can pinpoint these underlying issues and speed recovery as well as help prevent recurrence.

3. **Achilles Tendon Ruptures: The Big Bad Wolf**

Among squash injuries, Achilles ruptures are the most feared. An easy risk assessment is checking ankle flexibility. Here's a quick test: Kneel on your left knee with your right foot on the floor with the toes five inches from the wall, the left shin flat on the ground behind. Bend at the ankle to touch your right knee to the wall (and repeat on the other leg). If you can't reach the wall with your knee, you're at higher risk for Achilles injuries. Increasing range of motion gradually and doing calf exercises regularly is always a good idea. And for older athletes, remember that extended time off is a significant risk factor for an achilles tendon injury so stay trained and start back slowly.

4. **Cold Tendons Are Stiff Tendons**

Tendons need time to warm up, especially in winter. Wear track pants during warmups and spend time on a bike or rowing machine before starting. Remember that in tournaments, the 4 minute warm-up is more for the ball than for the players.

5. **Avoid Static Stretching Before Matches**

Static stretching (holding a toe-touch for 10 seconds, for example) can temporarily weaken muscles and ligaments. Evidence suggests that dynamic stretching is better before a match to prepare muscles and enhance agility without compromising strength.

6. **Squash is Start-Stop, and Once You Start, You Don't Want to Stop**

High-intensity interval training (Google "HIIT for squash") is an effective and time efficient way to train, especially if you're already reasonably fit and pressed for time. I advocate rowing as it works the entire body, much like squash, and it's non-weight-bearing, so it doesn't aggravate or cause injuries but cycling, running, X fit, etc all good options. Twenty to thirty second bursts at 100% seem to work quite well and as fitness increases the rest period can be shortened. I started with 30 seconds on 90 seconds off.

Train efficiently Get some sessions with a personal trainer--if you put in the time to train make it quality time. Whether you're looking to minimize injury or maximize fun, these tips can help. So, play smart, stay fit, and remember: don't make the same mistakes I did—both on and off the court!

4 Tips to Reduce Injury in Squash

By Joseph Ghosn, BSc Kine, MSc (PT)

1. Warm-Up Properly

A good warm-up is essential in squash, a fast-paced and dynamic sport. Begin with light exercises that activate key muscles, such as glute bridges or band walks for lower body strength. Incorporate compound movements like lunges or shoulder swings, and add high-energy drills like jump rope to prime your nervous system. Consulting a physiotherapist can help tailor a warm-up routine that suits your needs.

2. Stretch After Matches

Squash places intense demands on muscles like the quadriceps, hamstrings, calves, and upper body muscles (trapezius, pectoralis major, latissimus dorsi). Stretching these muscles post-match can prevent tightness and maintain flexibility. Develop a stretching routine to target these large, multi-joint muscle groups and optimize recovery.

3. Use Foam Rolling Strategically

Foam rolling can release muscle tension and prepare you for play. It's most effective as part of your warm-up routine, kneading muscles to improve readiness. However, it's not a substitute for stretching and should complement a well-rounded injury prevention plan.

4. Know When to Seek Professional Help

Feeling sore after squash is normal, but persistent pain warrants attention. Physiotherapists can assess and treat injuries, provide referrals for imaging, or develop prevention strategies. They're accessible without a doctor's referral and offer expertise to optimize your performance and recovery.

Joseph Ghosn is a Halifax native and physiotherapist at Dalhousie Physiotherapy Clinic. Passionate about sports and community health, Joseph specializes in musculoskeletal physiotherapy, concussion management, and dry needling. He brings advanced training and a personal commitment to helping athletes and individuals achieve their goals.

Canadian Junior Open



Seven (7) **Nova Scotia** Juniors squared off against an international field of over 350 athletes from over 15 countries at the 2024 Forthlane Canadian Junior Open December 7th-10th, hosted at **The Club at White Oaks** and the new **Jack Aylott Squash Center** at **Ridley College** in Ontario.

From left to right: **Zakareeah Hussein** BU11, **Garreth Beckles** BU19, **Jack Comeau** BU17, **Adele Workman** GU17, **Sophia Myers** GU11, **Kayin Burrell** BU17, **Cohen Riley-Zwicker** BU17, **Rohan Gorman** (PEI) BU17 NS Provincial Coaches **Josh Rudolph** & **Janet MacLeod**.

Club Locker Introduces New Optional Paid Features

By Judy Myrden

Club Locker, a U.S.-based squash ranking and tournament platform, launched a paid tier service last month in Canada locking features behind a paywall that were previously free.

“This new model introduces some exciting new features that our membership can access with a paid Club Locker subscription, but unfortunately means that some of the access our membership has become accustomed to receiving for free will now require a paid subscription,” **Cameron Reid, Squash Nova Scotia** director of Competitive Programming and Club Locker Lead, wrote in an email November 26, 2024 to 258 Squash Nova Scotia (SNS) members.

For example, he said, players without a paid subscription can no longer see other players’ match history, but their competitive membership still allows them to see rankings and ratings of all players, as well as their own full match history.

A competitive membership for SNS is currently \$30 a year. A portion of membership dues is paid to **Squash Canada** for rights and access to Club Locker, with the lion’s share of dues going towards such things as, programming, association administration, operating costs, and player insurance.

Access to the new optional Club Locker features launched in Canada on December 1 will cost Competitive Members \$11.99 U.S. per month, or \$6.67 U.S. per month for an annual membership, according to a November 8 Squash Canada news release.

In fact, **U.S. Squash** introduced it last year and Squash Canada delayed the implementation until Dec. 1, 2024 and Squash Canada assembled a Task Force (including five provinces including **Nova Scotia**, along with senior Squash Canada staff) to work with Club Locker for improvements, ad functionality and support with fair profitability goals.

“What will change for our membership is how much of your match history will be available to you, and how much match history you will be able to access of other Club Locker users,” Reid told **In The Nick** in an email.

The original roll-out of Club Locker technology was in 2014, and since then has expanded into serving clubs, individuals, organizations and federations. Squash Canada began using Club Locker for all of its nine national championships and international events, beginning with the **2018 Canadian Junior Open**.

“Since 2018, Club Locker has kept its fee structure static at 2.5% of tournament/program fees. This model has proved insufficient for developing and maintaining the growing platform,” according to Squash Canada’s news release.

The technology was initially developed for use in the United States by U.S. Squash which invested \$1 million in Club Locker from 2014 to 2018.

NS Attends the PEI Fall Classic 2024

Crew of Halifax players make the trek out to PEI to compete in the annual **PEI Fall Classic 2024**, November 29 - December 1

From left to right: **Evan Smith, Justin Ching-Johnson, Sukhpreet Singh Aujla, Vishesh Bhat, Maegan Burke, Cordale Hann** (photo taken by Sukhpreet Singh Aujla)



SMUfit Ladies Monday Night Tournament

By Heather MacElwee

For the third consecutive year **SMUfit** squash player **Darlene Acton** took home first place in Division 1 in the **SMUfit Ladies Monday Night Squash Tournament** held on Monday December 9 at the glass-backed courts. **Brooklyn Boudreau** won Division 2 and it was her first time playing in the tournament after learning how to play earlier in the year. There were 14 players in the tournament with many close matches. The ladies night is held every Monday night from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. with women of all ages and skill levels and runs from September to April.



Division 1 & 2 Winners Darlene Acton & Brooklyn Boudreau (Photo by Heather MacElwee)



*Some of the players in the tournament included: back row from left to right: **Monique Guilderson**, **Shelley Joyce**, **Aimee Hopton**, **Brooklyn Boudreau**, **Heather MacElwee** and **Johanna Graham**. In the front row from left to right: **Darlene Acton**, **Sara Stout-Grandy** and SMUfit Monday Ladies Night coordinator **Judy Myrden**. (Photo by **Kate Swanson**)*

SMUfit 2024 Christmas Calcutta

By Heather MacElwee

The 6th Annual SMUfit Christmas Calcutta took place on December 7th at **SMUfit**, organized by **Dave Malyk**. It was a resounding success, raising over \$1,000 for **Adsum House** and **Hope Cottage**. The event culminated in an exciting final match between **Brent Kleineibst**, **Evan Smith**, and **Cordale Hann**, with Kleineibst winning the event. **Alfie Seaman** won the top prize of a one-year membership to SMUfit. A special thanks to **Dan** and **Jenny Hasselman** for hosting a festive social event afterward with catering by **Ela! Greek Taverna**.



Ask The Ref!

Rulings for Fallen Objects During a Rally

By Lee Kirby, Abdo Abdallah, Zal Davar, Elvira Mitraka, Thomas Hori

During a recent HSL match, a player's glasses fell off. Neither his opponent (who won the rally) nor the Referee, noticed the dropped glasses until the rally ended. Both players wondered what the correct ruling would be. In such a situation, the Referee should initially seek clarity from both players on the facts – what occurred, when it occurred and when the opponent noticed the dropped item. [Rule 13.4 below should then guide the Referee's decision.](#)

13. FALLEN OBJECT

13.1. A player who drops a racket may pick it up and play on, unless the ball touches the racket, or distraction occurs, or the Referee applies a Conduct Penalty.

13.2. A striker who drops the racket because of interference may request a let.

13.3. A non-striker who drops the racket because of contact during the striker's effort to reach the ball may request a let, and Rule 12 (Distraction) applies.

13.4. If any object, other than a player's racket, falls to the floor during a rally, play must stop; then:

13.4.1. if the object fell from a player without any contact with the opponent, the opponent wins the rally;

13.4.2. if the object fell from a player because of contact with the opponent, a let is allowed, unless the striker has struck a winning return, or requests a let for interference, in which case Rule 8 (Interference) is applied;

13.4.3. if the object falls from a source other than a player, a let is allowed, unless the striker's winning return was interrupted, in which case the rally is awarded to the striker;

13.4.4. if the object was not seen until the rally ended and had no effect on the outcome of the rally, the result of the rally stands.

In this case, the result of the rally would stand and the opponent would be awarded the point. If the player whose glasses fell had won the rally, that result would also stand because there was no interference experienced by the opponent.

If either the opponent or the Referee **had noticed** the dropped glasses (or any dropped item other than a racket), play should have been stopped in the interest of safety. The opponent would be awarded the point unless the dropped item was due to a collision between the players (in which case, a Let would generally be the call (Rule 13.4.2).

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.

Players should generally avoid wearing anything that can easily fall off. For eyewear, straps can be helpful. **Note that approved safety eyewear must always be worn properly by juniors at all times when on court** ([see guideline](#)).

If an object such as glasses becomes loose during a rally but does not reach the floor, the Distraction rule (Rule #12.1 and 12.2 below) may apply.

12. DISTRACTION

12.1. Either player may request a let because of distraction, but must do so immediately.

12.2. If the distraction was caused by one of the players, then:

12.2.1. if **accidental**, a let is allowed, unless a player's winning return was interrupted, in which case the rally is awarded to that player;

12.2.2. if **deliberate**, the Referee must apply Rule 15 (Conduct).

ANNOUNCEMENT

Josh Rudolph Selected as NS Junior Squash Team Coach

Squash Nova Scotia (SNS) is forming a Junior Provincial Team with **Josh Rudolph** recently accepting the 18 month term position of Head Coach. Rudolph has been involved in squash for over 25 years as a successful player, and currently heads the junior squash programming at **SMUfit** in **Halifax**.

NS Provincial Junior Team Selection will commence early January 2025... watch **Club Locker** for registration details soon!



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