IN THE NICK

March 1, 2026

Subscribe Here!

NICOLE BUNYAN | DAL OPEN WRAPPED | RAY SOUCH ROUND-UP

Open Border Fuels Record Squash Tournament Turnout

By Judy Myrden

With 55 women from five provinces competing, the **2026 DIVA Squash Tournament** in **Charlottetown, P.E.I.**, had its largest turnout ever.

Organizer **Jo Dalimonte** says this was the first year the tournament, which was held February 6-8, was opened up to the Atlantic provinces, players also came from **Ontario** and **Quebec**.

Upcoming Events

Mar 05-08: PEI Open

Mar 06-08: KCSC Valley Bloom Junior Tournament

Mar 26-29: Nova Scotia Open

Apr 10-12: 2026 Atlantic Championships

"The purpose of the tournament is to give women a space, not just in squash, but the sports world to play, and be comfortable playing, as well," Dalimonte told **In The Nick**.



Halifax's Zoe Boody (left) with her mother, Leah Boody, before playing in the Women's Division 4 Finals. (Photo By Jo Dalimonte)

"Normally, we go to tournaments and we play in a lot of co-ed divisions, which is great, and I actually enjoy playing men and women. But I feel the DIVA gives space to women to showcase our calibre, and our skill."

Nova Scotia had 14 players make the trek to the island for the three-day tournament, including many from the **SMUfit Ladies Monday Night Squash**.

For **Taylor Gazzard**, of Halifax, it was her first time playing in a tournament, and she placed 1st in the consolation round of Division 3.

Then, 16-year-old **Zoe Boody** won her first squash tournament title clinching the Women's Division 4 Championship.

She won in the finals in a fierce match against **Dawn Shea**, of **Stratford, P.E.I**. Shea, wife of well-known P.E.I. squash player, **Lester Jinks**, who stepped on the court for the first time at the DIVA in over 20 years.

Boody was down 2-1, and then rallied back to win two straight games in a nail biter to capture the title in five games.

Boody's mother, **Leah**, an elite squash player, was watching and offered this advice to her daughter before going back on the court for the final game:

"My coaching words between the 4th and 5th were....Dawn could hit 11 amazing serves in this next game, and win the match, and you will have still won because of how much you've improved over the past three months, and how you went back on court for the 4th and pushed through so many emotions."

Boody came off the court, giving her mother a big hug.

The DIVA Tournament dates back to 2007 and ran for about 3 or 4 years, and went on hiatus after the numbers declined, said Dalimonte.

Then in 2023, **Seana Evans-Renaud**, Squash P.E.I. Vice-President, pushed to bring the tournament back, and attracted eight players. Last year, the tournament had 18 players.

The tournament also included an exhibition match between Canadian Women's National Champion **Nicole Bunyan** and P.E.I. resident and Atlantic Canada's top ranked female player **Emma Jinks**.



Canadian Women's National Champion Nicole Bunyan, in the center back row, meets the Nova Scotia contingent who played in the 2026 DIVA Squash Tournament. (Photo by Ashley Cullis)

Nicole Bunyan: Empowering Women To Play Squash

By Judy Myrden



Canadian Women's National Champion Nicole Bunyan playing an exhibition match at the UPEI courts. (Photo by Judy Myrden).

One of the people impressed by the record number of players at the **2026 DIVA Squash Tournament** was Canada's National Women's Champion **Nicole Bunyan**.

She appreciated the large turnout of about 100 people who came out to watch her play an exhibition match on the Saturday afternoon of the tournament against Islander **Emma Jinks**.

"The turnout is unbelievable," Bunyan told the spectators watching the match.

"At some pro tournaments you don't get a quarter, if that, of the people who turnout to watch. It's just amazing. Also so many women and girls playing, which is kind of the point. Whoa!" she told the cheering crowd.

Organizers of the 2026 DIVA Squash Tournament brought the 32-year-old Bunyan to the tournament to raise awareness of women in squash.

"I live in **New York**, and been in the states for about 10 years now, but I always say, 'I love the Canadian squash community'. There's really nothing like it. Whenever, I come back to any part in Canada, I feel like just so at home, 'These are my people, so thank you."

She first picked up a squash racquet at the age of 7.

Her parents, **Greg Bunyan** and **Pinder Cheema**, were recreational squash players and took her to the squash courts. She and a friend played "hockey squash" pushing the ball around with their racquets.

She didn't like the game at first.

Then at at the age of 10 began taking lessons at the **Victoria Squash Club, B.C.**, under coaches **Stuart Dixon** and **Mike Johnson**, before playing in the Ivy League at **Princeton University**.

"That was really the best entry point because we just played once a week. It was very casual, we would have a semi-private lesson, and we didn't do anything else, he (Stuart Dixon) made it fun for us.

"The introduction and the way you are introduced to the sport matters the most," she said.

When Bunyan was 14-years-old she started playing multiple times a week, she was also playing competitive soccer, and had to choose which sport to pursue.

"So, from high school onwards I stuck with squash," said Bunyan who was born and raised in Victoria.

Bunyan is an ambassador for women and girls playing squash and encourages them to become more proactive about playing the sport.

"There's a lot of classes that are catered towards women for fitness, but I don't think there's enough organized squash for women, and there's not enough women taking ownership, and wanting to play for some reason, and I don't understand why?"

She said it seems women reach a certain age and just stop playing fun competitively, it doesn't become a social activity, which it does for men.

"I would say get either get a group of women, and make it social, or be proactive about organizing your squash because that's something that the women don't do enough."



Nicole Bunyan (centre left), and Emma Jinks (centre right) receive flowers from Finley Nakonechny (left) and Scarlett Gorman (right) following their exhibition match.

SquashNS Launches e-Store to support Junior Provincial Team

Following a soft-launch at this year's Ray Souchereau Memorial Classic Tournament, Squash NS completed its launch of its e-store in support of the Junior provincial team.

The store features hoodies and t-shirts in mens, womens, and youth sizes. All items can be customized with one of seven designs, all adorned with Squash Nova Scotia's logo on the left sleeve.

Purchases can be made at the store page through the following QR code:

2026 PEI DIVA
Tournament Highlights



SMUfit squash players Cindy Wheeler,left, and Taylor Gazzard played in the DIVA tournament. (Photo by Judy Myrden)



SMUfit squash player Darlene Acton won the prize of Queen of the Court t-shirt at the DIVA social. (Photo by Judy Myrden)



From left to right Jill Moore, Jennifer Tucker, Ashley Cullis and Johanna Graham, all from Halifax, had front row seats for the exhibition match with Nicole Bunyan. (Photo by Gail Lethbridge)



Lisa MacElwee, left, of Ottawa, and her daughter, Heather MacElwee, of Halifax chat with squash pro Nicole Bunyan at the DIVA social. (Photo by Judy Myrden)

Dalhousie Tournament Kicks Off Winter Squash Season

By Judy Myrden

It was a family match.

Tina Arsenault and her son, **Jeremi LeBlanc**, of **Canaan**, both won their division titles at the **2026 Dalhousie Open Squash Tournament** January 29 -February 1 at the **Dalplex** in **Halifax**.

LeBlanc won all of his four matches in All Mixed Division 4, only dropping one game in the final match against **Muhanad Hilaneh**.

Arsenault played in two divisions, winning All Mixed Division 5 by advancing through a nail biter semi finals match against **Henry Quach**, that went to five games, and then onto Finals where she played Dal Squash Club member **Hillary Ferguson** winning 3-0.

The tournament attracted 74 players, down from a record high the previous year of 105 players.

All Mixed Division 1 was a thrilling and tense match between **Josh Rudolph** and **Phil Anderson**, in which Anderson pulled out a win in the fifth game, 11-9.

Bryden Bone, of Halifax, captured the All Mixed Division 2 title winning all four matches.

Coming off a big title tournament win two weeks previously at the **2026 Mill River Squash Tournament** capturing Division 7 championship, in **SMUfit** player **Luke Boody** won the All Mixed Division 3.



Jeremi LeBLanc and his mother, Tina Arsenault, of Canaan, both won their divisions at the 2026 Dalhousie Squash Open. (Photo by Rawan Abouelela)

After going down 2-0 in his first round match, Boody turned it around, winning that match in 5, and then dominating his quarter-finals, semi-finals, and then finals each in decisive 3-0 wins.

The tournament also provided an opportunity for Black Shirt Referee **Abdo Abdelrahman** to raise awareness to get more referees certified.

Abdelrahman recently became a Provincial Assessor, the transition from Referee to Assessor is considered a natural progression for senior officials looking to mentor, educate, and certify others.

“When one decides to become a referee, you need to take a test, once that is passed you become a Club Level Referee,” he told **In The Nick**.

The next step would be a Local Referee where one needs to pass two assessments which consists of being watched by an Assessor while refereeing a match to see how you deal with the match when it comes to announcements, calls, and match management.

The Dal tournament saw Local Referee assessments done for **Dave Westwood**, **Johanna Graham** and **Justin Ching-Johnson**.

Junior Squash Players Elevate The Ray Souchereau Memorial Classic

By Judy Myrden

Top junior squash players continue to dominate the **Atlantic Canadian** squash circuit winning division championships at the 6th edition of the **Ray Souchereau Memorial Classic** in **Halifax.**

The tournament was held at **SMUfit**'s squash courts on February 19-22 in memory of a long-time squash enthusiast in the close-knit squash community. The tournament is named in memory of Ray Souchereau, who passed away from pancreatic cancer in 2018. He was 57.

There were 79 players competing in eight divisions from the four Atlantic provinces. Juniors took home three of the five championship titles in the main draw.



Matt Bishop digs out a backhand against Mike Buchanan in the Mixed 1 Division final.(Photo by Judy Myrden)

"The thing that stood out was watching the level of the juniors across all of Atlantic Canada has really improved, and here it was just P.E.I. and Nova Scotia, and the level of play is way higher and really fun to watch," Tournament Director **Leah Boody** told **In The Nick**.

Alemnesh Sanche-Spencer, a member of the **Junior Provincial Squash Team**, won the Women's Division 1 championship. **Louis Webster**, of **Charlottetown P.E.I.**, won the All Mixed Division 2 championship and another member of the Nova Scotia Provincial Junior Team **Jeremi LeBlanc**, of **Canaan**, won the All Mixed Division 3 title.

In the Junior Divisions the winners were Luke Boody, of Halifax, won the Junior Mixed Division 1 title, **Henry Quach**, of Halifax, won the Junior Mixed Division 2 and Raya Buchanan, of **Pleasant Grove, P.E.I.**, won the Junior Mixed Division 3 title.

Thomas Starratt, of Halifax, won the All Mixed Division 4 Championship.

Matt Bishop won All Mixed Division 1 Championship defeating **Mike Buchanan** of Pleasant Grove, P.E.I**.** 3-1 in a fierce match.

After winning the match, Bishop handed out the **Ray Souchereau Spirit Award** recognizing a person in the squash community who embodies Ray's commitment and dedication to the sport.

Craig Potts, SMUfit squash player, **Squash Nova Scotia Vice-President** and tournament-organizer-extraordinaire, was named this year's recipient of the "**Souch Spirit Award**".

Bishop picked up the large trophy, which has a few pieces missing, and told how the person receiving the award has been an integral member of the squash community and has been literally at every tournament and has been "glueing" this trophy back together over the years.

"It's quite ironic the person that is getting this award has been at squash for the past five or six years for every minute of it, glueing all the pieces together," the 48 year-old Bishop told the crowd including Ray's widow, **Marguerite MacNeil**, and his sister, **Linda Wilks**, were on hand for the presentation.

"He really has been the glue, which I think would symbolize exactly what Ray was about, his spirit, and he also plays squash, as well. And he plays with great sportsmanship and determination, as Ray did as well."



Craig Potts is the recipient of the Ray Souchereau Spirit Award for 2026. At a reception after the tournament Potts talks with Ray's widow, Marguerite MacNeil. (Photo by Linda Wilks)

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

Editor in Chief: Judy Myrden
Director: Rawan Abouelela
Layout: Justin Ching-Johnson
Contributor: Craig Potts
Logo: Fei Gao
Sport NS: Veronica Todd

@squashnovascotia

@squashns

squashnovascotia