World Squash Federation
Courts & Equipment Commission
formerly known as the
Technical Committee
Courts & Equipment Commission

Chaired by Chris Herridge

• I first played squash in 1958 and became involved in Club Committees, County Committees and finally the England Squash & Racketball Technical Committee in the early 1980’s.
• I joined the WSF Technical Committee in 1987 and took over as Director in 1990.

The technical role consists of a number of different components:-

a) To provide a technical service for Federations, for delegates and for the general public
b) To look after the rules so far as they apply to rackets, courts, balls and eyeguards
c) To administer and promote the WSF Accreditation scheme
d) On request to Inspect facilities to be used for major events.
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a) The first role is to provide a technical service for Federations, for delegates and for the general public

This is mainly answering queries, almost exclusively by e-mail, and topics can range from simple queries such as ‘my front wall is in need of maintenance, what would you recommend?’
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to the more unusual –
’I am building a wooden squash court, would you recommend the boards on the playing surface run horizontal or vertical?’
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to the obvious –
Question - ‘the court is very dark’

Answer –
‘well you need more than one spotlight in each corner!’
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to the bizarre

Question – ‘the builder has finished the court but where is the door?’

Answer – the old pantomine favourite
– ALL TOGETHER NOW
- ‘it’s behind you!’
But most queries are now dealt with by reference to the re-written and re-issued Squash Court Specification in 2017.
The second role is to look after the rules so far as they apply to rackets, courts, balls and eyeguards.

The first example of rule changes came about during the AGM in Helsinki in 1991 and there follows a shortened version of a presentation I made in New Zealand in 2013.
Rackets
a brief history of size

Until about the mid 1980’s squash rackets did not vary much in size or shape, were mostly manufactured from wood and had a strung head size of around 250 square cms.
The rules included maximum length, width and length of string.
Then Prince introduced the ‘teardrop design’ which kept the basic racket head shape but because of the use of graphite and similar lightweight materials were able to omit the ‘throat’ and the strung area increased to around 350 sq cms.

The new design quickly became extremely popular but they were technically ‘illegal’ because the string length exceeded the maximum allowed. However their position in the buoyant market at the time was welcomed and the design initially went unchallenged.
Faced with a large and established market mostly following the Prince design the WSF needed to make the rackets legal so removed the rule which said the string length should not exceed 195mm.

And the law of ‘unintended circumstances’ took over and there was then a massive scramble by manufacturers to come up with new shapes and sizes – all within the revised rules and made possible by the availability of strong lightweight components.

However the rules were drafted in such a way that the maximum head size went from the original 250 sq cms to the popular 500 sq cms to an over large head of 660 sq cms to a theoretical maximum of 990 sq cms.
At the WSF AGM in Helsinki in 1990 a complete rewrite of the racket rules was proposed limiting the size to a maximum of 500 square cms. This was strongly contested by the manufacturers present who saw this as a restraint of trade.

But after a heated conference session lasting around 6 hours the new rules were agreed and have remained unchanged and unchallenged ever since.

To my knowledge there have only been two minor breaches of the head size by mainstream manufacturers over the past 28 years. This is largely due to a realisation that a bigger racket head might give more power but did not bring with it the necessary control.

Most professional players now use a head size well below the permitted maximum and this is unlikely to vary much unless completely new construction materials become available that change the balance and ‘feel’ of the racket.
c) The third and very important role of the Commission is to administer and promote the WSF Accreditation scheme

The WSF Accreditation scheme started on the 1st January 1998. During the first year there were 9 companies, a total of 10 products and Accreditation income of £21,500 representing 20% of the total WSF income.

In 2017 there were 25 companies, a total of over 50 products and total Accreditation income across all sectors including courts, balls, rackets and eyewear of £169,000 representing 40% of the total WSF income.

Every company and every product is inspected before Accreditation is granted. This has involved travel to over 60 countries during the past 30 years. And whilst advice and encouragement is given not all experiments proved successful .....
a) The last role of the Commission is when requested to inspect facilities to be used for major events

This has also been interesting, fun and at times exhausting, including

Grand Central Station, New York

Boston Symphony Hall

and more recently the court for the Youth Olympic Games showcase event - a trip that involved 2 cancelled flights and a door to door outward journey time of 42 hours!
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On a personal note I must thank the WSF office for all the support they have given me over the years, Jasmine, Carol and of course Lorraine – who likes to dress up on occasions

and Andrew who assures me he is not wearing a wig!
and finally whilst there will always be the dramatic locations such as

New Delhi

London

Qatar

Cairo
Squash is often enjoyed in the most humble of settings

Officers' club – New Delhi
but don’t neglect the changing rooms!
This is my 28th consecutive AGM

and my last

it has been a pleasure representing the WSF and In January 2019 I will be handing over the role to my successor Tom Oldroyd whom I am sure will provide you with many years of good advice.

The end