

The History of Squash Timeline

By James Zug

Notes

- * *Historically, both **racquet** and **racket** have been used in the game; here **racquet** is used for consistency and historical accuracy, except when referring to an organization's title.*
- * *International squash (or softball) is the norm, unless the North American version of squash, hardball, is indicated.*

1850s

Boys at Harrow School outside London, England create a version of the popular game of racquets. They use a small rubber ball—rubber having just been vulcanized in the 1840s—and sawed-off racquets and play in alleys and courtyards.

1865

In January Harrow opens three courts for the game of Rugby fives or handball. The schoolboys use the courts to play their new game which they called baby racquets, soft racquets or squash racquets.

1883

The first squash court outside Harrow is built by an Old Harrovian at his home in Oxford, England.

1884

In November James Conover, a teacher at St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire, USA, builds the first squash courts outside England; Conover copies the Harrow courts by consulting with his college roommate, an Old Harrovian.

1890

In March the Boston Athletic Association in the USA, having just opened a clubhouse with a Rugby fives court, hosts what is believed to be the world's squash tournament; it is won by Richard D. Sears, the U.S. national tennis champion.

1901

The first book on squash, *The Game of Squash* by Eustace Miles, is published in New York, USA.

1902

The Fitzwilliam Lawn Tennis Club in Dublin builds the first court in Ireland.

1903

The world's first inter-club squash league is founded with seven Philadelphia, USA squash clubs.

1904

First court in Canada is built at the St. John's Tennis Club in Newfoundland. It is modeled after the Rugby fives courts at Marlborough College in England.

US Squash, world's oldest national governing body, is founded in Philadelphia.

The world's first professional event, with six entries, is held in Philadelphia.

1906

The first court in South Africa is built at the Country Club Johannesburg.

1907

First court in New Zealand is built, at the Christchurch Club.

First U.S. nationals are held in Philadelphia; John Miskey, a local doctor, wins.

The pro at the Racquet Club of Philadelphia, Fred Thompkins, builds world's first doubles court, inventing the game of squash doubles, now called hardball doubles.

1908

In April the Tennis & Rackets Association (T&RA) meets at Queen's Club in London, Great Britain and forms a subcommittee to look after squash.

1910

South Africa forms a national governing body.

1912

RMS *Titanic* sails from England with a squash court on the F and G decks; the twenty-four year-old pro, Fred Wright, goes down with the ship.

The first courts in Kenya are built at the Muthaiga Club in Nairobi.

1913

Squash Canada is formed.

The first court in Australia appears when the Melbourne Club converts a racquets court into two squash courts.

1920

The British battlecruiser HMS Renown, built in 1916, is renovated with a squash court on the port side; the Prince of Wales, an avid squash player, sails on the ship to Australia and New Zealand later this year and to India and Japan the following year.

US Squash standardizes 18 1/2 foot court width.

The Professional Championship of the British Isles is held in London.

1921

Harvard, in Boston, USA, starts the world's first university team and hires first coach, Harry Cowles.

1922

First British Open women's tournament is held at Queen's Club in London.

17-inch tin standardized for U.S. Hardball.

Bath Club Cup, the London squash league, is started.

The world's first annual international match, Lapham Cup (U.S. v. Canada), is started.

1923

In January the Royal Automobile Club in London hosts a meeting of delegates from English squash clubs; they form a more robust sub-committee under the Tennis & Rackets Association.

Great Britain hosts its first national championships at Lord's.

First intercollegiate match in the world (Harvard v. Yale) is played in New York, USA.

1924

Great Britain sends a touring side to North America, marking the first time a squash team travels overseas.

1925

First Oxford v. Cambridge varsity match and the first British public schools match are held. A group of Boston pros form New England Professional Association, the original ancestor of today's Professional Squash Association.

1926

The Drysdale Cup (now the BU19 draw at the British Junior Open) is started at the Royal Automobile Club.

The T&RA issues official rules for softball squash.

1927

In January the first courts in France appear when four are opened on a former real tennis court at the Jeu de Paume in the 16th Arrondissement in Paris.

Women switch from 15-point, point-per-rally scoring at the British Open to 9-point, hand-in, hand-out scoring.

1928

In December the T&RA's squash committee in London separates to form the Squash Rackets Association; they standardize the 21-foot wide court and 19-inch tin.

The women's British Open goes from a challenge system (with the defending champion waiting until the finals to play) to a regular knockout tournament; the men's British Open waits until 1948 to follow suit.

1930

In February the New England Professional Association (now the U.S. Professional Squash Racquets Association) hosts its first pro tournament; now called the Tournament of Champions, it is the world's oldest annual pro event.

In December the first British Open draw for men is held.

1931

Egypt forms a squash association; Egypt's F.D. Amr Bey wins his first of six British Opens. Australia starts its amateur championships.

1932

New Zealand hosts its first nationals in Christchurch with ten men in the draw.

1933

Bruce Court at Lansdowne Club in London opens with room for two hundred spectators; it hosts the British Open seventeen times from 1948 to 1967.

1938

In February Test squash starts when Scotland plays Ireland.
Heights Casino in Brooklyn, New York hosts world's first doubles tournament open to pros (now called the Johnson Doubles)

1945

The Second World War ends. The damage to clubs in London is considerable: Bath Club, the leading club, burned down; Ladies Carlton Club, which had a proper hardball doubles court, was bombed; Thames House Club, with fifteen courts, was commandeered by the storage of files and only three courts were playable after the war. The only countries that continued to play their national championships during the war were Ireland and Sweden.

1948

In September the Squash Rackets Association becomes the first national governing body to have a full-time employee and an office.

1951

Hashim Khan of Pakistan wins the first of seven British Open titles.

1953

India forms a national governing body.

1954

First United States Open is held in New York.

1959

In January squash is televised for the first time, in a local broadcast at U.S. Open in Pittsburgh.

1965

A glass window is added to a court in Hobart, Australia, to enable filming.

1966

In January England Squash hosts a conference that leads to the formation of International Squash Rackets Federation; Australia, Canada, Egypt, Great Britain, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa and the United States send delegates.

In December, Birkenhead Squash Rackets Club in England unveils a court with a partially glass back wall; the glass panel measures sixteen feet long and five feet high.

1967

In January the ISRF holds its first official meeting.

In August the ISRF starts the men's World Team Championships with five teams playing in Australia.

1968

World's first entirely transparent back wall is built on a new court at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

1971

An all-glass back wall, using suspended assembly, is constructed at Abbeydale Park in Sheffield, England at a cost of GB£31,000; the British Open in 1972 is played on this court. *Squash Player*, the British squash magazine, is started.

1973

Jonah Barrington creates the International Squash Professionals Association, the men's pro softball tour.

In April the European Federation hosts the first European Championships in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The West German Squash Rackets Association is founded.

1974

The British Open, having been closed to only amateur women since 1922, allows professional women to enter tournament; the finals are filmed for television by the BBC.

1976

The first individual World Championships is played in London in February for men in February and in Brisbane in August for women; Geoff Hunt and Heather McKay are the winners.

1977

Heather McKay wins the last of her record sixteen straight British Open titles.

1978

In September six hundred people watch the world's first portable court tournament, played on a court with a glass back wall erected in the Swedish national tennis centre in Stockholm.

1979

In March the first Women's World Team Championships are held in Birmingham, England.

1980

The first Men's World Junior Championships are held in Sweden.

Squash formally goes open as the ISRF abolishes distinctions between amateurs and professionals.

The British Open is played on a portable court for the first time, at the Wembley Conference Centre.

1981

World's first transparent side wall is installed on a court in Walton, England.

In November the World Open, held in Toronto, is played on a portable court with a glass front and back wall.

1982

The men's and women's British Open are hosted together for the first time. Bob Callahan at Princeton University in New Jersey, USA starts the world's oldest annual squash summer camp. In November the first four sided portable court event is held at the men's World Masters in Leicester, England. This featured 'Perspex' a lighter forerunner to glass.

1983

The Women's International Squash Players Association splits away from the ISRF; it hosts its first AGM at the Belfast Boat Club in Northern Ireland in April 1984.

1984

In March the French Open uses a blue floor and white ball. In November Mark Talbott beats Jahangir Khan 18-16 in the fifth in the finals of the Boston Open in America's first portable glass court hardball tournament.

1985

The first Hong Kong Open is won by Philip Kenyon.

1986

In November Jahangir Khan's five and a half year squash winning streak in pro softball events ends in Toulouse, France when Ross Norman beats him in the finals of the World Open.

1987

In October 3,526 people attend the finals of the Men's World Team Championships at Royal Albert Hall in London, England.

1988

The game of softball doubles is standardized at the Royal Automobile Club.

1989

Men's pro squash switches to 15-point, point-per-rally scoring; the British Open doesn't switch for men until 1995.

1990

Men's pro squash switches to a 17-inch tin.

1992

The International Squash Rackets Federation changes its name to the World Squash Federation.

1993

In January the pro hardball and pro softball men's associations merge to create the PSA.

1995

In March squash is played for first time in the Pan-American Games in Argentina.

In June the Tournament of Champions is staged in Grand Central Terminal in New York.

1996

In May the Al-Ahram International is played in front of the Great Pyramids of Giza, Egypt. Greg Zaff starts *SquashBusters* in Boston, USA, first urban youth enrichment squash and education program.

1997

In October *Squash Magazine* in America publishes its first issue.

1998

In September squash is played for first time in the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2000

The men's pro hardball doubles tour splits from the PSA and forms the International Squash Doubles Association.

2001

The Squash Rackets Association becomes England Squash.

2004

In February pro squash is first streamed live on the Internet with the semi-finals of the Tournament of Champions.

2005

The men's pro tour switches to 11-point, point-per-rally scoring.

2007

The Women's Squash Doubles Association for hardball is founded.

2009

The women's pro tour switches to 11-point, point-per-rally scoring

2011

In March the PSA begins to use a video referee and player appeal system.

2012

The men's pro hardball doubles tour in North America is reconstituted as the Squash Doubles Association.

2015

In January the PSA and WSA (formerly WISPA) merge to create a new PSA; it is one of the very few global professional associations that includes both men and women.

In September, the PSA lowers the pro women's tin to 17 inches; amateur play still uses a 19-inch tin.

In September, squash's bid for inclusion in the 2020 Olympic Games ends; this follows previous failed bids for London 2012 and Rio 2016.

2016

In October the PSA switches from a three-referee system with a fourth video referee to one referee with one video referee.

2017

Equal prize money for men and women in major PSA events is extended to embrace almost all of the World Series events.

2018

In April Nicol David of Malaysia plays in her sixth straight Commonwealth Games, dating back to the first time squash appeared in the Games in 1998 in Kuala Lumpur.

In November the WSF selects Club Locker to be the exclusive world championship event provider.

2019

In February the Paris 2024 Olympic Games announced that breakdancing, climbing, skateboarding and surfing will be recommended for inclusion, excluding squash again.

In February Chicago hosts the first \$1 million prize money tournament, the 2018-19 PSA World Championships, with \$500,000 for the women's draw and \$500,000 for the men's draw.

In July Andrew Shelley steps down as WSF executive director after nine years.

In October Cairo hosts the 2019-20 PSA World Championships, the first time in history that a women's world championship has a higher purse than the men's world championship (played the following month in Doha).

2020

In March squash temporarily shuts down during the coronavirus emergency, leading to the closing of clubs and the postponing and cancellation of thousands of tournaments.

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