

WORLD SQUASH DOUBLES RULES 2008

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This revision of the World Squash Doubles Rules was adopted by the WSF AGM in October 2007.

These Rules will be used at the World Doubles in 2008 and the Commonwealth Games in 2010.

Following the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne 2006, it became clear that the Doubles discipline required an overhaul if it is to be successful at the elite level. Some matches had lasted too long (up to 150 min) and rallies often resulted in lets. This made the event unattractive to athletes and spectators.

COURT WIDTH (Appendix 5.1)

Squash New Zealand set up a Task Force to identify changes in the rules that would address this issue.

Widening the court to provide more room and angles to play winning shots was a key hypothesis and 0.8 metres was recommended by Squash New Zealand as the ideal increment. The finding was corroborated by Squash Australia who tested the new width in the 2007 Australian Doubles Championships.

WSF acknowledges that the change had been conceived with only elite athletes in mind and therefore recommended that the court width change be an alternative rather than the norm, and applies to elite players only.

The vast majority of Doubles courts around the world have “movable wall” technology and the new width can be accommodated with ease. This allows implementation at tournament level, particularly for World Doubles and Commonwealth Games and other tournaments of this stature, as well as for recreational purposes. It is expected that some players will continue to enjoy Doubles on a Singles court when a purpose-built Doubles court is not accessible, or on the existing Doubles courts where widening is not possible.

OTHER RULES AND GUIDELINES

Squash Australia tested a number of rule changes and interpretations designed to complement the wider court, encourage more positive play and reduce the length of matches.

Teams

Two partners together are called “teams” (not “sides”).

Serving order (Rule 2.1)

Doubles terminology is aligned with Singles.

The nominated first server from Team A serves. Team A loses a rally and the Marker calls “Hand-out”.

The first nominated server from Team B then serves. That team loses a rally and the Marker calls “Hand-out”.

The nominated second server from Team A then serves...and so on.

Hitting an opponent with the ball (Rule 9.5)

To encourage greater safety.

A Conduct Penalty must be given against the striker’s team if the referee decides the striker’s action is dangerous.

Scoring (Rule 2.2)

It was considered it would increase the excitement for spectators if games go to “sudden death”.

Scoring will be PARS to 9 points.

First team to win 9 points wins a game. At 8-all there is no “setting” the game further.

(Appendix 7). PARS to 15 is an alternative.

First team to win 15 points wins a game. At 14-all there is no “setting” the game further.

Distraction (Rule 13.1.1)

Doubles rule is aligned with Singles.

Off-court distraction is to be considered by the Referee on appeal.

Bleeding (Rule 16.1)

To allow a more reasonable time for this delay in play.

A maximum of 30 minutes (instead of “such time as is reasonable and necessary”) is allowed to stop bleeding, cover a bleeding wound, or change any bloodstained clothes.

Interference (Guideline 6)

Doubles terminology is more closely aligned with Singles.

To encourage positive play and reduce the number of rallies resulting in lets, a greater obligation to clear is imposed on strikers who hit the ball back close to themselves (as opposed to close to their partners) such that strokes will apply. This is a strengthening in interpretation of the requirement to make a reasonable effort to avoid interference where a player has sufficient time and space to do so, particularly on the wider court.

Interpretation of these changes should not encourage players to expect to be awarded strokes in situations where they are able to play on, even after encountering some degree of interference. It is considered that part of the excitement of the Doubles game comes from players who choose to play through interference rather than stopping, and this should continue to be encouraged positively.

1. If an opponent makes any reasonable effort to avoid interference, **Stroke** if:
 - The outgoing opponent has played the ball back close to the body and then does not make a **reasonable** effort to avoid interference, particularly for direct access to the ball and preventing a reasonable swing; or
 - The outgoing opponent has played the ball close to the partner's body and the partner does not make **any** effort to avoid interference.
2. If the striker refrains from hitting the ball owing to a reasonable fear of injuring an opponent:
 - **Let** if the outgoing opponent has played the ball back close to the body and there is a **reasonable** effort to clear, or **Stroke** if there is **no** reasonable effort to clear; or
 - **Let** if the outgoing opponent has played the ball back close to the partner's body and there is **any** effort to clear, or **Stroke** if there is **no** effort to clear.

Thankyou to:

- Squash New Zealand - Dave Clarke (then) National Coach;
- Squash Australia - Chris Sinclair WSF World Referee,
Damien Green WSF International Referee
John Small National Refereeing Manager.

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