

## **PREFACE**

The technical article below on Doubles Squash has been specifically prepared for the ongoing education of Squash Coaches at the grass roots participation end of our sport.

It is intended to provide a copy of this article to all Level 1 and 2 candidate coaches attending an NCAS coach accreditation training program or course anywhere in Australia.

It is also intended to include this technical article in the next edition of the Squash Australia "Squash Coaching and Resource Manual" originally published in 2000.

Contributors to this article are listed in the Acknowledgements section at the end of this article.

---

## **DOUBLES SQUASH**

### **Playing, Coaching, Refereeing and Summary of Rules**

#### **A) INTRODUCTION**

Doubles Squash is an exciting, action-packed and fun-filled sport. More players are discovering that Doubles Squash is the perfect route to fitness and fun. At the club level, players enjoy the social side of Doubles without the overall fitness requirements of Singles squash.

A Doubles Squash court is 1.22 metres (4 feet) wider than a Singles court and the same length. However, due to the lack of Doubles courts around the world, Doubles is usually played with 4 people on a Singles court.

The only full size Doubles squash courts in Australia are based at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre where there are moveable side walls on some Singles courts. Therefore, in Australia, Doubles is mostly played on a Singles court and due to the smaller space in which to play Doubles, safety aspects are important (refer to Section B on "Safety Considerations").

At the elite level, Singles Squash and Doubles Squash made their debut at the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Malaysia. Of the 5 squash events contested, 3 events were for Doubles – Men's, Women's and Mixed.

Another appeal of Doubles is that men and women, parents and kids, senior and juniors can all have fun playing together and against each other on a more equal basis than in Singles.

Another positive aspect of Doubles squash is that players can continue to play the sport they love because it does not require the same physical demands as the Singles game and it is therefore easier than Singles to play as you get older. Just as tennis players can continue to stay active and involved in the sport into their 60's, 70's and 80's, squash players can do similarly by playing Doubles squash and enjoying its many benefits.

## B) SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

1. The wearing of protective eyewear is mandatory under the current WSF regulations for Doubles Squash (refer to Appendix 6, WSF Rules – 2002/2003).

Key points when playing include:

- Eyewear must be of appropriate National Standard and must be worn “properly over the eyes at all times” – during warm up too.
  - If eyewear drops off during rally – side loses stroke – unless collision or interference or winner occurs.
  - If player(s) stop to wipe eyewear between rallies – not a problem as long as no delay or not too often.
2. The Squash Australia Protective Eyewear Policy, effective from 23 March 1997 and still current, states that:

*“Protective Eyewear which meets or exceeds the frontal impact requirements of AS4066: 1992 or ASTM F803, **must** be properly worn over the eyes by all players when playing in Doubles competition which has been organised or sanctioned by Squash Australia and/or any of its member associations or affiliates.”*

Item 3 in the Policy relates to Coaches and reads:

*“All accredited coaches who are employees, servants, agents and/or contractors to Squash Australia and/or its member Associations or affiliates **must** wear properly over the eyes protective eyewear which meets or exceeds the frontal impact requirements of AS4066: 1992 or ASTM F803 when coaching players who are eligible for 19 years and all younger age group competitions. This shall only apply to activities that take place on a squash court and involve rackets and balls.”*

This policy also applies to all Doubles competitions organised by clubs, which are affiliated with member associations. Coaches of Doubles players and organising officials of Doubles competitions may run the risk of being held liable if they fail to ensure this Policy is implemented.

3. Because of the nature of Doubles squash (i.e., four players competing in a confined area) players need to be aware of partner and opponent positions when playing the ball. This will ensure that Doubles squash is a safer game to play and enjoy, whilst reducing the risk of injury.

## C) CHOOSING A PARTNER

Doubles squash should be competitive but enjoyable, and not all out war. If you keep this in mind then friendships can stay on track, and not suffer under the strain of competition and winning at all costs.

Players must learn to share responsibility on court and respect one another’s playing abilities. A Doubles team wins better with teamwork. Both players have equally important roles and must contribute accordingly.

Personal enjoyment and compatibility are what keep most Doubles partnerships together. Look for a partner who compliments your style of play and even your personality. That is, a player's strengths may help compensate for their partner's shortcomings and vice-versa.

For example, a shot-maker teamed with a runner or more basic player often makes a strong combination. So, one player possesses the flair and the shots, hits his/her share of winners and the occasional error while their partner is rock solid where errors are minimal.

Players usually have a preference for sides, i.e., forehand or backhand, so a good combination would have both players playing on their preferred sides on opposite sides of the court. Despite this, it is better if players learn to play on both sides of the court as it gives the partnership extra options and perhaps more chance of winning. It also prevents players from being restricted to playing only backhands or forehands which could result in muscle soreness.

Finally, when choosing a partner you need to ask yourself, is your main goal to play competitively yet have fun and enjoy the experience both on and off the court or is it all about winning? If it is solely about winning then you may have to accept a partner whose style or personality you can put up with but the enjoyment and fun aspect of the match may be reduced.

## **D) RECOMMENDED DOUBLES TIPS AND TACTICS**

The following recommendations for tactical play are based on the WSF International Doubles Game played on a full size Doubles court. These may be modified for Doubles played on a conventional Singles court.

1. Whether you are playing and competing on the backhand or forehand side of the court, try to get in front of the player you are specifically matched up against. When your partner is hitting, move back behind your opponent, then rotate to the front position again when your opponents are hitting.
2. Look to volley whenever possible.
3. Unlike Singles, when taken to the front, generally don't drive straight due to the higher risk of being awarded a stroke against you. Best options are straight drop, tickle boast, lob, middle drive or wide crosscourt.
4. Always be ready to move forward.
5. Always expect your opponent's shot to be hit to your side of the court.
6. Only go short when racket preparation is early. A short compact swing is necessary at times.
7. Crosscourt drives are effective if hit very wide, up the middle or straight at an opponent.
8. Use the front court when the opportunity presents itself, however often on big points playing more length to the back may be a better option.
9. Lob is a good shot either from the front, or from the back across court when opponents are standing well forward.
10. Working a slower opponent to the front then hitting hard straight back at them is a good tactic.

11. The short half boast or tickle boast can be an effective short shot.
12. Drop shots can be very effective. A double or triple drop (3 drops in a row) is good provided you maintain the front position.
13. Cross-court drop off a boast can be effective.
14. If either you or your partner is out of touch you should revert to a safer game and direct the play away from yourself.
15. Consider playing more to the weaker opponent, or the player most likely to go for winners, thus depriving their partner from hitting. So when you do play to the other opponent they will tend to try to do too much to compensate for lack of involvement.
16. Consider changing sides to break up opponents' rhythm or when losing a game.
17. Players need to practice the "special" Doubles shots:
  - Tickle boast from front, mid and back court.
  - Drive directly at opponent or down the middle of the court.
  - Cross-court drop from a front court position.
  - Cross-court drive with extra width onto side wall.

## **E) 2002 DOUBLES RULES - SUMMARY**

The World Squash Doubles Rules of 1<sup>st</sup> March 2002 were used at the World Invitational Doubles Championships in April 2002 and the Commonwealth Games conducted in July/ August 2002. There may be some modifications after these events. The Rules will be ratified at the WSF AGM in late 2002 and will come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2003.

For the most part, the WSF Doubles Rules are the same as the WSF Singles Rules.

### **1. SCORING:**

Each team of two players is called a 'side' and a match consists of the best of either three or five games. Point-a-rally scoring to 15 is used and either side can score points. At the score of 14-all the receiving side chooses whether the game is played to 15 (set one) or 17 (set three).

### **2. PROTECTIVE EYEWEAR:**

The wearing of protective eyewear is mandatory under the current WSF regulations for Doubles Squash (refer to Appendix 6, WSF Rules – 2002/2003).

- Note: Please refer to Section B.) "Safety Considerations" for further details.

### **3. WARM-UP:**

The two sides warm up separately, each side using 2½ minutes. Sides spin a racket to choose who warms up first.

### **4. THE SERVICE:**

The partners of a side serve in succession retaining service until the side loses a rally. Serves must be from alternate boxes, unless a let situation occurs then the serve is from the same box.

The same player must serve first for a side for the entire match.

#### 4. THE SERVICE (continued):

Further points about Service include:

- Spin racket (again). Winner must serve.
- One serve only.
- At start of next game, winner of previous game must serve first.
- Receiving sides:
  - Partners must receive from same side throughout each game, but
  - Can change at start of each game.
- Players can stand wherever they want for serving/receiving, providing no interference to server or receiver.
- If receiver swings and misses, partner cannot return service.

#### 5. THE PLAY:

After a good service has been delivered, the sides return the ball alternately (either player of the striking side being permitted to hit the ball) until one side fails to make a good return (as defined by the rules of Singles Squash). The ball otherwise ceases to be in play in accordance with the rules or on a call by the Marker or Referee.

#### 6. INTERFERENCE:

Both partners have to make a reasonable effort to provide:

**a.) Unobstructed direct access to the ball.**

**b.) Freedom to hit the ball with a reasonable swing.**

- If too close and prevents swing and is hit or would have been hit by racket – stroke, if no effort to move; but
- If sufficient to affect but insufficient to prevent (a reasonable effort) – then let.

**c.) Freedom to hit the ball directly to any part of the front wall.**

- Being between ball and front wall is not a crime in Doubles – key wording is stroke if no effort is made to move out of the way.

**d.) No ‘fair view’ requirement exists for Doubles.**

Additional Points:

- No minimal interference requirement for Doubles.
- Only player (not partner) who encounters interference can appeal (unless both attempting to play the ball).
  - Possible that A1 normally would get a stroke as B1 appears not to be giving room for reasonable backswing, but if A2 is preventing B1 from moving – let.
- If both partners appeal – “stroke” overrules “let” and “let” overrules “no let”.

#### 7. STROKES:

Strokes are won if:

- Obviously if the striker hit his partner with ball (unless an opponent prevents partner getting clear).
- Wrong side “swings” at the ball and if an appeal is made at the time and if opposing side would have made a good return.
- A reasonable effort to clear is made but winning return (‘winner’ will be tricky with 2 opponents to retrieve).
- [No stroke if Turning or Further Attempts apply.]

## 8. NO LET:

No Lets are awarded if:

- Same-side obstruction.
- (As in Singles) striker does not make every effort is made to get to and play the ball.
- (As in Singles) striker could not have made a good return.
- (As in Singles) striker stops for fear of hitting an opponent, but opponent well clear.

## 9. HITTING OPPONENT WITH THE BALL:

Whether going direct to front wall or via another wall:

- Let – if good return.
- Stroke to opponents – if not good return.
- Stroke to striker's team – if would have been a winning return (although not too likely with 2 opponents).
  - BUT – let – if turning or further attempts – provided ball would have been a good return.]

## 10. REFRAINING FROM HITTING OPPONENT WITH THE BALL:

Even if the ball would clearly have struck one of the opponents with the ball going directly to the front wall, and for fear of hitting an opponent:

- Let – provided good return and a reasonable effort made.
- Stroke – if no effort is made by opponent to clear.

## 11. TURNING and/or FURTHER ATTEMPTS:

**...and hit opponent –**

- Let – provided ball would have been a good return.

**.... and refraining from hitting –**

- If interference – let – provided any reasonable effort was made to get to ball.
- If fear of hitting opponent – let – provided good return would have been made.

Note: Never can a stroke be awarded to the striker after Turning or Further Attempts, even if it would have been a 'winner'.

## 12. FALLEN / DROPPED OBJECTS:

(Unlike Singles) A dropped racket is the same as dropping anything else – stroke to the opposing side unless collision or interference or winner occurs.

### 13. SINGLES RULES NOT INCLUDED IN DOUBLES:

- Fair view.
  - Minimal Interference.
  - Turning:
    - No stroke to opponent if opponent hit after turning.
    - No provision for No let if turning was to create the opportunity to appeal.
  - No stroke provision for off-court distraction.
- 

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Squash Australia extends its sincere appreciation to the following people for their special contribution in the drafting and preparation of the technical article on Doubles squash:

- Chris Sinclair, as a Member of the WSF Rules Committee, for her expert advice in drafting and finalising the text, particularly her major contribution with the explanations and interpretations of the Rules of Doubles Squash.
- Jeffrey Wollstein for his overall management of this Squash Australia coaching project, technical contributions and efforts to bring this article to fruition for publication purposes.
- Dean Landy for his contribution in designing and drafting the original draft of the article.

Squash Australia also extends its gratitude to various other coaches who also provided some constructive feedback, particularly Geoff Hunt, Roger Flynn and Chris Doig.

Squash Australia gratefully acknowledges the support and financial assistance provided by the:

### **Australian Sports Commission**

...which has enabled the preparation of this first-ever technical article on Doubles Squash for the wider squash communities, especially for coaches.

\* \* \* \*