



The Squash Canada Instant Squash program will be introduced to clubs across Canada for fall 2002. The program will be accessed and administered primarily through the web site, which is located on www.squash.ca.

The intent of the program is to introduce new players to the sport of squash, and to attract as many of these newly introduced players as possible to becoming regular players and new club members.

The Squash Canada Instant Squash Program was developed from the Instant Squash program initiated by Squash BC in the fall of 2000. The Squash BC program, in turn, had utilized the Instant Tennis Program that had originated in the early 1990's. At that time, Tennis Canada identified that they had become complacent with their success in producing world calibre players; and were doing very little to promote the youth movement and general growth of the game. Their numbers were declining and the average age of players was increasing. Tennis B.C. and Tennis Canada developed the Instant Tennis program to generate new interest in the game. Squash B.C. recognized similarities between the tennis demographics and the current situation in squash, and decided to create a similar program.

We need to increase the number of people playing squash. We need to introduce new people to the sport. This program can reach young and old alike. The concept is to make it easy and attractive for people to try the game. The barriers to participation are: equipment, accessibility, instruction and cost. By breaking down these barriers, we can have many more people playing squash. We know that once people get a few games under their belt, they're going to get hooked! It's up to us to get them to that stage. The Squash Canada Instant Squash program is one way to make that happen.

FLEXIBILITY & COOPERATION

To be successful, the program has to be flexible. It has to be flexible enough to be able to adapt to all venues and facilities – whether private club or public facility or academic institution, to all levels of equipment need – whether supplied by the program or not (racquets, eyeguards, balls), whether the individual is comfortable in group lessons or private lessons - whatever it takes to get the people on the court to try the game out.

There is a learning process to go through with the clubs. This is an important part. You need the facilities on board. You need to educate facility owners and managers that the number one priority is to get people on the court. If you can get them that far, the coach can take care of the rest. The cooperation between coaches, club managers, the Provincial and National Squash Associations is very important.

Here are some basic facts:

1. It is easier to sell court time or a membership if the person you are trying to sell enters the facility.
2. It becomes even easier to sell court time or a membership if the person you are trying to sell actually steps onto the court to try it out.
3. If you provide easy access, equipment and people, you will see a return on your investment.

LESSONS FROM THE SQUASH BC EXPERIENCE

The program is designed to go after new people to the game. That means trying to reach them. Advertisements for Health and Fitness Facilities get lost in a maze of ads. Advertise memberships for a squash club and you'll likely not get a big response. Advertise "Instant Squash", with emphasis on easy access, equipment supplied and instruction and you'll get responses. You want to get the people in the door and if the Instant Squash Program does that, the facility will come later. Shopping malls have excellent exposure. Universities with courts are excellent exposure areas. Community centres with courts are ideal. These are all very high traffic areas and will yield results. If you can come up with a display rack that will hold brochures or information, either manned or unmanned, you will get results.

In British Columbia there are several clubs which regularly run ads in their local newspaper for "Instant Squash". They do not mention membership or anything connected to it. The whole campaign is to get people in the door and experience the game. Their success rate in converting these people to members is very good.

Also in B.C., a display advertising the Instant Squash Program was set up at the front entrance of a couple of community centres that have squash courts. These centres have approximately 1 million visitors per year so you can imagine the traffic coming and going for one reason or another. The number of inquiries about the program was huge.

THE SQUASH CANADA INSTANT SQUASH PROGRAM

The Squash Canada Instant Squash Program has been developed to be accessed and administered on line. The link to the Squash Canada website will be www.squash.ca/instantsquash. Squash Canada will produce:

- Generic brochures for distribution to the clubs and provinces advertising the basics of the program, the website and the Provincial/Territorial contact information.
- Generic posters for distribution to the clubs and provinces advertising the basics of the program and the website
- Website for Instant squash. The website will support the clubs and the potential participants. The website will open up to a map of Canada, so that potential players can browse to the province/territory of their interest, view the potential programs offered by each club in their city, and register with the club (or province). Additionally, the club or P/T developing the program will be able to register their programs through the website. Depending on how the club and Province/Territory have developed the program, the individual's registration may go to the individual club or P/T.
- T-shirt – Squash Canada will be producing and Instant Squash t-shirt at a very reasonable cost, which is to be included with all instant squash programs. The t-shirt will be both a tangible part of the program, as well as serving to promote and advertise both the Instant Squash program and the sport of squash.
- Suppliers and sponsors – Squash Canada will negotiate with both suppliers of squash equipment and generic sponsors; and these suppliers/sponsors may be contacted by the program developers for inclusion in the respective programs.

The Instant Squash program was developed for a club to run a maximum of 3 program levels or 'packages', designed to meet the needs of their local community:

- Bronze Package (or basic program): e.g. the program may include loaned equipment and group lessons, so that the program can be offered for a very minimal cost to the participant.
- Silver Package (or enhanced program): e.g. the program may include an individual lesson as well as group lessons
- Gold Package (or optimum program): e.g. the program may include all equipment (racquet, eyeguard, ball) that the participant will keep; group and individual lessons, etc.

SPONSORSHIP OF THE PROGRAM

Squash Canada has spoken to several manufacturers of squash related equipment in regard to involvement with the Instant Squash program. These manufacturers are listed on the generic brochure and the website. The developers of the program can choose to contact these suppliers for product in regard to the Instant Squash Program.

You may choose not to go with a racquet sponsor, because some sponsored club professionals may be reluctant to promote the program if it is sponsored by a company that conflicts with the professional's sponsor. A generic sponsor would be ideal.

DEVELOPING YOUR PROGRAM

Each Province/Territory (and region) will have unique situations with regard to their squash community. It may be that the club manager &/or squash professional develops their own program with their own features and sponsorship unique to that club, and the P/T just provides additional support. It may be that the P/T will take the general Squash Canada program, and produce a provincial/territorial program that all clubs in that province/territory can join (perhaps including a P/T sponsor for the program).

The developer (club or P/T) will then determine how many packages they want to offer (bronze, silver, gold), and what components will be included in each package. The developer will then go to the Instant Squash website "for clubs only" section [with the password as supplied by their P/T], and register their program on-line. The developer will determine how best to advertise the program locally, order the required t-shirts from Squash Canada, and any equipment from suppliers. And then ... run a successful program!

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Contact - Wendy Gayfer, Sport Development Coordinator, at Squash Canada, 401-2197 Riverside Dr., Ottawa, ON K1H 7X3 (phone: 613-731-7385, fax: 613-731-6291, e-mail: wgayfer@squash.ca).



TESTAMONIALS

Jeff Boag - Head Professional; Denman Fitness, Vancouver, BC

"Sean (club owner) has been aggressive in advertising the Instant Squash program, in the community and by using elevator ads in buildings close to the club. During the 2001/02 season we had 60+ participants sign up. This means they have paid for the Instant Squash Program. Included at Denman Fitness is a free month's use of all the clubs facilities. Of those people, about half have joined the club in some manner. Court time has become more valuable and some players are now involved in the city league. In my opinion, the program has been very well received. Players are enthusiastic about learning. Some players have chosen to upgrade racquets and/or eyeguards.

In addition to the lessons/clinics I have and will again run an 'Instant Squash Fun Day'. This is a few hours on a Saturday open to all who have been involved in the program. It is run as a round robin but the main goal is to introduce the players to each other so they can start to set up their own times to play. It has been a great success.

Denman Fitness has even taken the idea and created our own 'Instant Fitness' program."

Steve Lawton - Head Professional; Vancouver Racquets Club, Vancouver, BC

"During the 2001/02 season Vancouver Racquets Club has put through approximately 50 Instant Squash packages. Of those we were able to convert approximately half into annual memberships. The program has been good for us. Most of our responses came from local mail distribution or references from inquiries to Squash B.C. We are continuing with the program."

Laura - Volunteer Coach; Blue Mountain Racquet Club, Coquitlam, BC

"Instant Squash has been very beneficial to our club, Blue Mountain is exposing the club to potential new members and giving current members an unbeatable opportunity to try another sport. I have taught 6 or 7 sessions to about 30 people. Some have joined and others have joined clubs closer to their homes. There has been a general increase in court usage and now we are organizing a league for these novice players. We are very thankful to Black Knight and Squash B.C. for this opportunity to attract new squash players. I would like to see the program continued along the lines of the Tennis Canada beginner 1,2,3 and 4,5,6 programs because the people participating in Instant Squash are primed for more but aren't quite ready for the full plunge into tough competition. "

Tom Brown - Squash Professional; Court Sports and Fitness Club, Winnipeg, MB

"Instant Squash was very well attended. The new players were very happy with the equipment and lessons. It was great having so many people that we had to split them into two groups.

We should try and do more promotion at universities and colleges, especially first year students. Students are more price sensitive and usually do not already have racquets and eye protection. They probably cannot afford private squash lessons either.

Overall the program was great!"