



CASE STUDY:

INNOVATIVE WAYS OF INCREASING PARTICIPATION AND MEMBERSHIP

TE AWAMUTU SQUASH CLUB



SQUASH
NEW ZEALAND

OVERVIEW

A recent study highlighted declining levels of adult participation in sport and active recreation over a 16 year period. Some of the key barriers included not having someone to play with, a lack of confidence, the risk of injury, a lack of fitness and perceiving it is too difficult – all of which are common responses from non-squash players. To encourage greater participation in their region, the Te Awamutu Squash Club have been running social doubles squash programmes for the past three years over summer. This form of the game provides huge opportunities to reverse this inactive trend and is a solution to alleviate the listed participation barriers as group activities are a proven way to grow participation – after all, we are social creatures.

CHALLENGES

Enjoyment

Motivating people to be active by the fun and enjoyment from playing squash and allowing them to receive a holistic range of benefits – especially over the summer break when the squash season is at its quietest.

Court size and availability

A doubles squash court is 1.22 metres wider than a standard squash court but is the same length. There are only 16 possible doubles courts nationwide and many individual squash courts do not have moveable walls.

Player safety

Given there are twice as many people on the court, health and safety becomes more of an issue, especially if the players' technique is not the best.

SOLUTIONS

Doubles squash

Doubles squash is fun, social, better for the aged and easily injured and involves more people at any given time.

Grading

Divisions are based on combined grading points (top two players) and teams of mixed gender.

Courts

Matches are played on regular courts.

Match duration

Matches are played to 11 points (sudden death at 10), the best of 5 and take around 30 minutes.

Rules

Normal doubles rules apply.

Eyewear

To combat the safety issues players are encouraged to use protective eyewear (required in competition).

RESULTS

24

Teams (of 3-4 players) taking part in doubles squash.

8

Different clubs involved.

10

Weeks of regular participation – five before / after Christmas.

CONCLUSION

There are a limited number of squash facilities throughout New Zealand with the capability to hold full-sized doubles squash matches that meet the rules of the game. Although it is a far better game on a doubles court, the good news is that doubles squash can be played on a singles court. A lot of people enjoy playing doubles because it is more interactive and fun as you can mix and match playing abilities. Having a playing partner on court means you can go for your shots. The other advantage is there are twice as many people in the facility – meaning there is a greater social atmosphere after the match has ended.

The Waikato clubs run their summer doubles league similar to interclub but start earlier in the day and there is no supper. People are encouraged to stay and often do so because it is a social night out. Wearing safety glasses is encouraged but not necessary and most people who play are generally around 1400-1500 points or above.

Doubles squash organiser Cliff Nightingale says "the only feedback we've received over the three years we've run this is that it should start back after the Christmas break sooner as people can't wait to get back into it."