

SFN Team · Jan 27

Squash and the Olympic Games: From LA 28 to Brisbane 2032 – Opportunities and Challenges



The inclusion of Squash in the LA 28 Olympic Games is a monumental achievement for the sport, marking the culmination of decades of effort by the global squash community. However, this milestone is just the beginning of a longer journey. As the spotlight now shifts toward Brisbane 2032, questions arise about the future of squash in the Olympics. Can it build on this momentum to secure a more permanent place, and what are the key factors shaping its prospects? To understand this, we need to explore the broader context of how sports are categorized and selected for the Summer Games.

Categories of Olympic Summer Sports and How They Change

Olympic sports are broadly split into two main groups:

Core sports – the baseline set of sports that feature in every edition of the Olympic Summer Games. These sports make up the foundation of the Olympic program. For example, at Tokyo 2020, there were 28 core sports like Athletics, Swimming (part of Aquatics), Gymnastics, etc. These are the “guaranteed” sports that generally reappear at each Summer Games.

Historically, the number of core sports has fluctuated. In the recent past, the official limit for these core Summer Olympic sports has settled at 28. **This** is in line with the IOC’s commitment to keep the Games manageable in terms of athlete numbers and event logistics. The IOC aims to limit the total number of athletes (approximately 10,500) and the total number of events to keep the organization manageable.

Host-selected sports – additional sports each host city can propose, subject to approval by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Since the IOC’s Agenda 2020 reforms, host cities can propose one or more sports to be included in their edition of the Games. Tokyo 2020 famously added Baseball/Softball, Karate, Skateboarding, Sport Climbing, and Surfing—raising the total to 33 sports. However, being chosen for one Games doesn’t guarantee inclusion in future Olympics. For instance, Karate was dropped after Tokyo, replaced by Breaking (Breakdance) for Paris 2024.

Recognized But Not Included

The IOC recognizes more sports than it currently includes in the Games (e.g., racketball). Recognition is the first step, but these sports must campaign to become either a core sport or a host-selected option.

Squash has been officially recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) since 1986, when the sport’s global governing body (now known as the World Squash Federation, WSF) received IOC recognition. Being recognized by the IOC means that Squash meets the criteria as a global sport with a recognized international federation, but recognition alone does not guarantee inclusion in the Olympic Games program. Despite multiple bids to join, Squash is, for the first time, in LA 28 as a host-selected sport at the Summer Olympics.

Brisbane 2032

While Squash's inclusion in the LA 28 Olympic Games marks an incredible step forward, the journey to Brisbane 2032 is far from guaranteed. Various sanctioning bodies have announced plans to pursue bids for sports to be added to the 2032 Summer Olympics:

- In February 2021, Softball Australia, Baseball Australia and the World Baseball Softball Confederation
- In July 2021, International Rugby League (IRL)
- In August 2021, the International Cricket Council (ICC)
- In August 2021, World Netball
- In October 2023, the World Squash Federation
- In December 2023, the International Federation of American Football (IFAF)
- In January 2024, the World DanceSport Federation
- In April 2024, the World Flying Disc Federation
- In April 2024, the Trail Running Association of Queensland (TRAQ)
- In April 2024, the International Life Saving Federation (ILS) and Surf Life Saving Australia
- In May 2024, the Federation of International Touch

Key Announcements from the WSF Board at the 2024 Hong Kong AGM

During the WSF Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Hong Kong in December 2024, the WSF Board presented the following updates:

- **National Eligibility Criteria:** Information has been shared with Members to ensure that national eligibility rules are clear for those likely to participate in the Olympic Games and any qualifying events.
- **Qualification Process:** The WSF expects discussions with the IOC on the Olympic qualification process to start in early 2025 and conclude toward the end of that year. More precise timescales will be shared once confirmed.
- **Venue:** An announcement is expected in March/April 2025 regarding the Olympic venue for squash.

It was recognised at the AGM that the WSF has formed strong relationships with all Olympic stakeholders—the LA28 Organising Committee, IOC Sports Department, Olympic Broadcasting Services, and the Olympic Solidarity Programme. The year 2025 will be critical, working closely with partners such as the PSA and US Squash to continue preparations for the squash competition.

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