

SFN Team · Feb 20, 2024

# Lee Beachill's Vision for All Glass Courts



In an enlightening discussion with Lee Beachill, the Chief Operating Officer of the Professional Squash Association (PSA), the Squash Facilities Network delves into the future of all-glass squash court design, which has become synonymous with top-tier squash competitions. With his extensive background as both a former world No.1 and an executive within the PSA, Beachill offers a unique perspective on the evolution, current state and future innovations of squash courts.

## Need for Innovation in Ball and Floor Colour Technologies

Beachill openly acknowledges the stagnation in the technology of all-glass courts over the years. Despite their aesthetic appeal and unique viewing experience, the design and functionality of these courts have seen little progress. He points out the complexities and high costs associated with experimentation in this area but emphasizes the necessity of pushing boundaries to enhance the sport's appeal and accessibility. The introduction of air conditioning within the court structure marks a significant step towards making outdoor play possible in a wider range of climates and addressing issues with humidity and players’ perspiration.

A key focus of Beachill's vision for the future is the aesthetic transformation of glass courts, particularly in terms of floor colour. Traditional floors don't meet the visual standards seen in other sports broadcasts and often appear outdated and worn. Beachill envisions a future where squash courts are not only functional and safe but also visually appealing, with vibrant colours and surfaces that enhance the viewing experience.

The visibility of the squash ball in television broadcasts has long been a challenge, with efforts primarily focused on optimizing the contrast between the white ball, the floor and the walls. Beachill proposes a radical rethinking of this paradigm, suggesting the exploration of different ball colours and materials to improve visibility. This opens possibilities for a broader range of colours for both the ball and court surfaces and could revolutionize the way the sport is presented and perceived.

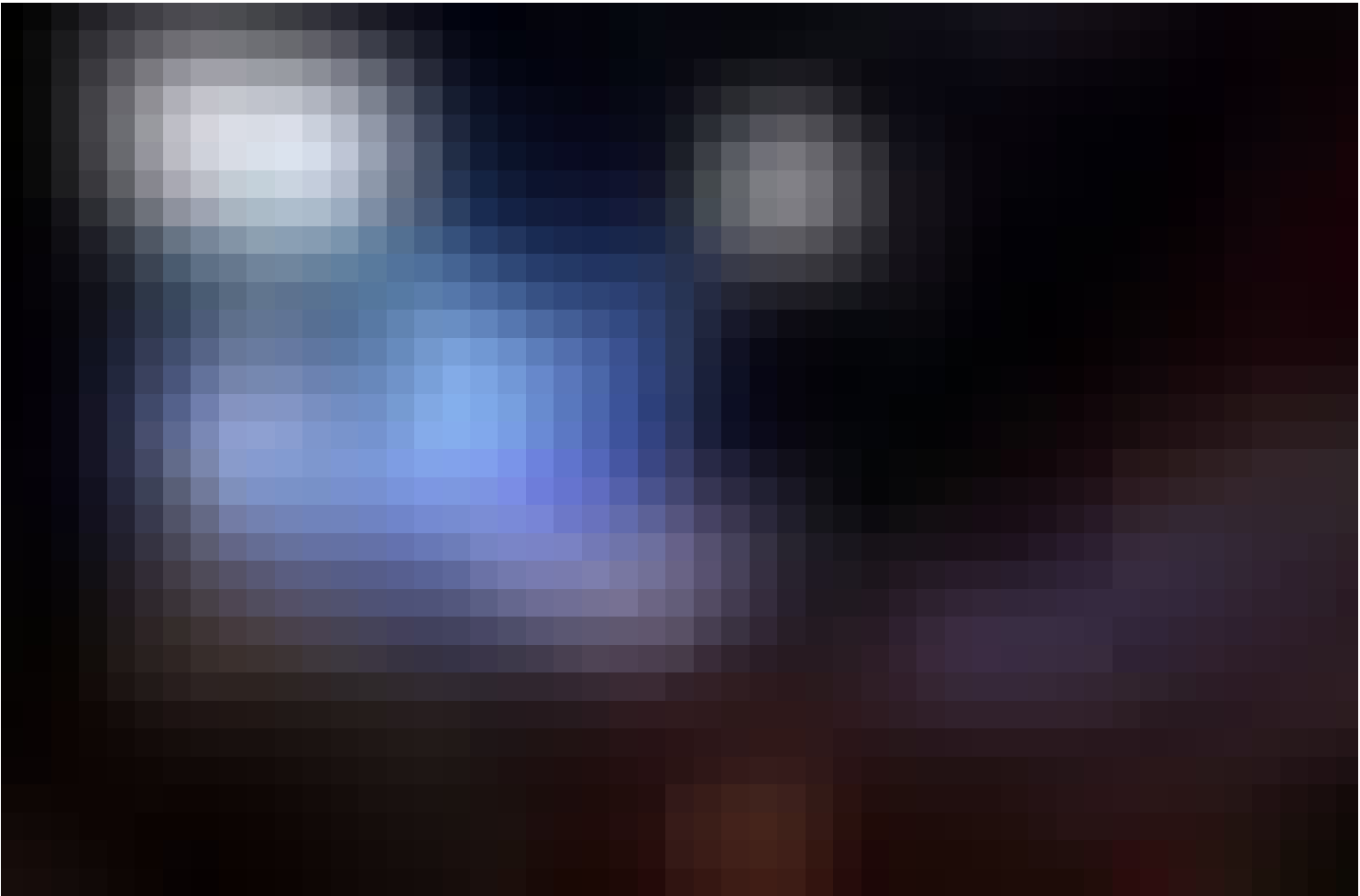
**Advanced Lighting and Camera Techniques: Enhancing Squash Broadcasts**

Beachill highlighted the critical importance of lighting in the context of all-glass squash courts. The elimination of dark spots and even light distribution across the court is essential. Dimmable LED lighting systems that can be controlled and adjusted are a must. This approach ensures that every action corner is perfectly illuminated, meeting the high-definition requirements of modern broadcasts, including super slow-motion replays that require flicker-free and brightly lit environments to capture every detail of the game.

The PSA utilizes between 10 to 12 cameras for its Squash TV live streaming, strategically placing them around the glass court to capture the dynamics and nuances of squash from multiple angles, offering viewers a comprehensive view of the game. Key camera positions include the main camera, offering a wide view similar to the referee's viewpoint; a secondary camera for detailed shots; corner cameras capturing player speed and agility; a front wall camera for a unique perspective not common in traditional sports broadcasts; super slow-motion cameras for high-frame-rate action replays; and commentator and in-vision cameras, adding a personal touch to the broadcast with live commentary and reactions.

**Optimizing the Spectator Experience with Strategic Seating Configurations**

Beachill's perspective on enhancing the squash viewing experience also delves into the meticulous design of spectator seating around all-glass courts. He advocates for seating configurations that not only draw spectators into the heart of the action but also guarantee unobstructed views for every audience member. For Beachill the Repertory Theatre in Birmingham, venue of the British Open, does have the best seating he have ever seen for a squash event.



*British Open staged successfully at Birmingham Repertory Theatre*

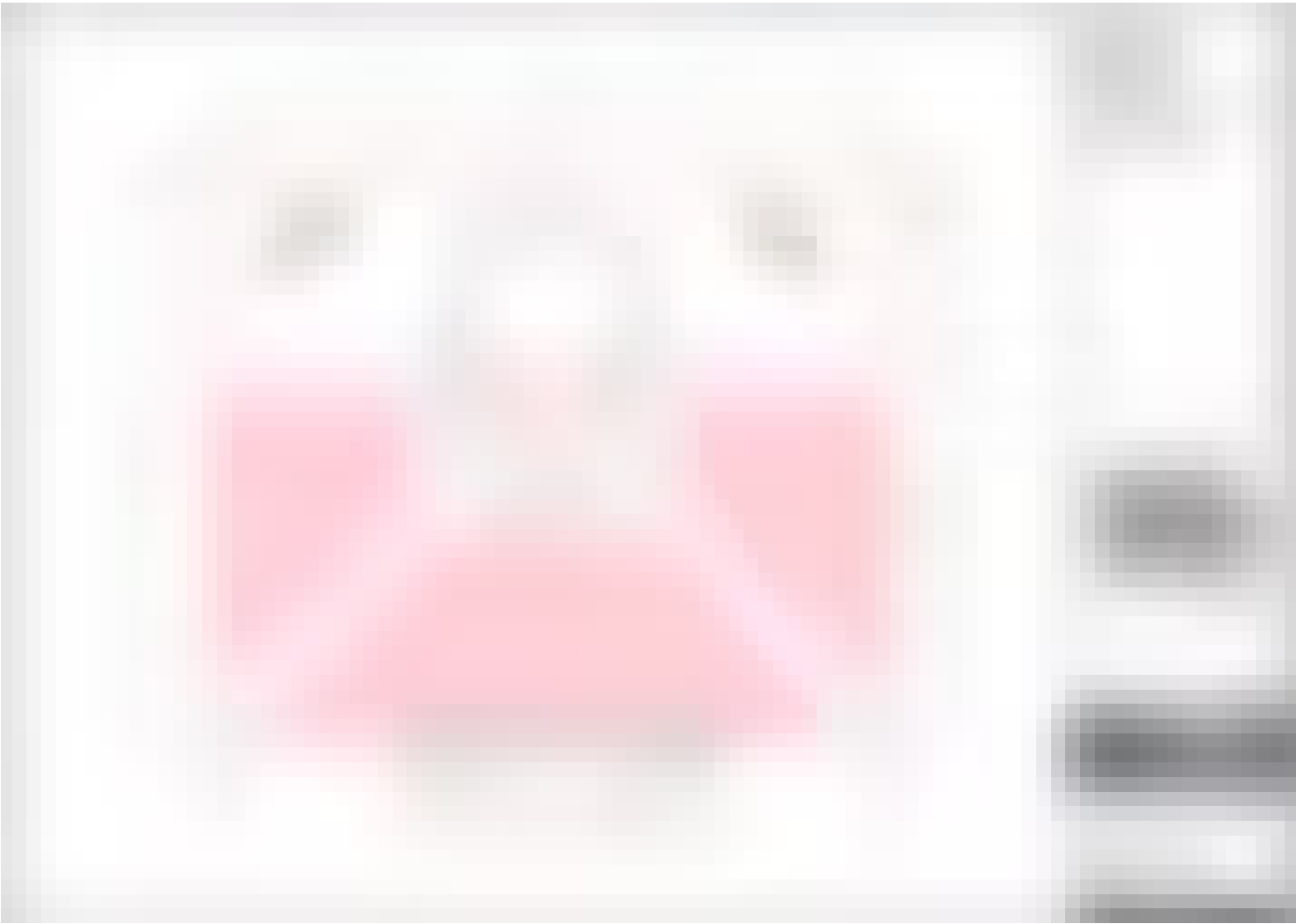
For PSA World Tour events, held in theatres or large halls, he suggests a seating capacity of about 900. Beachill add: “900 seats is about perfect for our events at the moment, because we can sell it out pretty much most days.”

In contrast, for permanently installed all-glass courts in club facilities hosting PSA Challenger Tour events or national tournaments, Beachill proposes a smaller seating capacity of 200 to 300 seats, with recommendations for facilities hosting PSA World Tour events to consider capacities

around 500 seats.

Glass Court and seating design for Permanent Locations

In cooperation with Beachill the Squash Facilities Network has developed a design for fixed installed glass court.





**Glass Squash Court**

At the core of this design lies the glass squash court, where only a mere 2-metre clearance separates the glass walls from the first row of seating. The court is raised by 60 centimetres. This creates an intense arena atmosphere, pulling spectators directly into the action. The transparency of the court ensures unobstructed views, making every match a visually impressive experience. The design includes special corners designated for players during game breaks.

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**Seating Capacity**

Accommodating up to 500 spectators, the seating arrangement is meticulously tiered to optimize sightlines, ensuring that every seat in the house offers a clear view of the pulsating matches. The ingenuity of the design allows for flexibility, with rows that can be added or removed.

**TV and Photographer Amenities**

With an eye towards media coverage and the global broadcasting of squash events, the facility boasts a dedicated TV room strategically located on the upper floor. This room is tailored for capturing the main camera angle, pivotal for broadcast quality. Commentators are afforded designated cabins, ensuring they have an unobstructed view of the court, which is crucial for live commentary. Additionally, the area behind the glass front wall is reserved for extra TV cameras and photographers, enabling comprehensive coverage and the capture of dynamic angles, ensuring that the essence of each match is conveyed to audiences worldwide.

Lee Beachill's vision for the future of squash court design heralds a new dawn for the sport, marrying ambition with a forward-looking perspective. By addressing the technological, aesthetic, and functional aspects of court design, the Professional Squash Association (PSA) sets its sights on enhancing the player experience, elevating broadcast quality and making the sport more accessible and enjoyable for fans across the globe.