

SFN Team · Apr 18, 2024

# Upswing in the Middle Kingdom: China's rising enthusiasm for squash

In recent decades, China has established itself as a global economic power whose influence can be felt in many areas. The country's interest is now turning to squash, a sport that has previously been somewhat of a backseat in the People's Republic. However, with its inclusion as an Olympic discipline for the 2028 Games in Los Angeles, squash has gained significant momentum.

## Growing infrastructure and government support

The recognition of squash as an Olympic sport meant that it was automatically included in the program of the Chinese National Games, which only includes Olympic disciplines. This development has encouraged many cities and regions to invest more in the development of squash facilities. Lim Chee Ming, Director of Coaching at Tengfei Sports Development in Shanghai, reported: "Most cities are now willing to invest considerable resources and effort in building facilities and demonstration programs, as well as hiring coaches, to make squash a major sport like badminton, table tennis and volleyball."



Junior Squash Clinic during the Hong Kong Squash Open

## The role of the Chinese Squash Association



The Chinese Squash Association, part of the Small-Ball Sports Administrative Center of the State Administration of Sports, is capitalizing on this momentum. In March, during the 15th East Asian Championship in Haining, it invited cities such as Beijing, Sichuan, Guangzhou and others to promote the development of squash in their provinces.

**Commercial interest and innovative approaches**

The increasing number of four-sided glass courts being built in China highlights the commercial aspect. These modern, aesthetically pleasing courts are not only attractive to recreational and social players, but also flexible to adapt to different venues. Lim explained: "These courts are designed for commercial purposes to attract more players. They are also easier to transport to different venues." One example of this is the eight four-sided glass courts that were used at the recent 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou and are now to be donated to schools in the region.

**Strong base in Hong Kong and international events**

The strong interest in squash in China is also driven by the already established squash infrastructure in Hong Kong. Players from Hong Kong are regularly ranked in the top 100 in the world, both for men and women. It has also been announced that the 2024 men's and women's world championships will be held simultaneously in Hong Kong in December for the first time. The Hong Kong/China team achieved a respectable 10th place at the last World Men's Squash Team Championships.



*Hong Kong Squash Open 2022*

**Collaboration with Alibaba**

Another crucial step was the signing of a memorandum of understanding between technology giant Alibaba and the World Squash Federation to promote the sport and environmentally friendly practices. Alibaba Cloud will support the content, management and commercialization of squash with advanced cloud and AI technology.

**Outlook**

LA 2028 is still four years away, but the impact of the IOC's decision to include squash in the Olympic family is already being felt in China. This could mark the beginning of a new chapter for squash in China.

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