

SFN Team · Nov 5, 2024

# Best Practice of the Month, Part 1: Choosing the Right Squash Ball for Beginners



12 Students from the University of Witten/Herdecke in the Ruhr Area of Germany tested different Squash Balls

As part of our "Best Practice of the Month" series, we're thrilled to present a comprehensive analysis of the best strategy for selecting the right squash ball for beginners. In the coming weeks, we'll delve into the critical aspects of choosing the right ball for different types of players. This series will culminate in a webinar where experts will share their insights, and attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions.

## The Importance of Selecting the Right Squash Ball

Choosing the appropriate squash ball is vital for the enjoyment and development of beginners in squash. Zena Wooldridge, President of the World Squash Federation (WSF), highlights that a ball suited for beginners increases player retention and satisfaction. Balls with higher bounce enable longer rallies and make it easier to learn fundamental techniques.

Jethro Binns, CEO & Founder of SquashSkills and Co-CEO of LevelTech, points out a central issue: "90% of first-time squash players never come back. Squash needs to be more accessible for newcomers. Proper guidance is key to retaining them." This underscores how essential the right ball choice and adequate guidance are for engaging beginners and keeping them in the game long-term.

Seemingly many get their hands on the double dot ball, a catastrophe for first time players. You can imagine the difficulty they must have tried to experience the wonderful facets of our great game. The ball doesn't bounce, it dies in the front and back corners, it costs lots of energy to actually hit the ball.

They don't get to run around much. No sweat. No sense of achievement., no feeling of success when playing. No wonder the level of enjoyment isn't very high. No wonder they think twice before playing again.

Our ownness is as center operator, coach and experienced player to guide & advise them as to which ball is the best for a genuine experience.

### Insights from Facility Managers

Facility managers report varied strategies for ball selection based on local experiences.

- **Thomas Troedsson, Club Malmö:** "We lend beginners the Karakal Black Ball for free, while advanced players use the Dunlop Yellow Single Dot."
- **Barrett Takesian, Portland Community Squash:** "We mainly use red dots for beginners and yellow dots for most club members."
- **Vincent Bradley, Oase Bochum:** "We primarily sell blue dot balls, as beginners find them easier to use and enjoy the game more."

### Overview of Available Squash Balls

Squash balls differ in bounce and speed, which are indicated by various colors and dots. Here's a quick overview (noting that there are differences among manufacturers):

- **Intro Ball:** An oversized ball developed for young players to learn the game.
- **Blue Dot:** Offers higher bounce and faster speed, ideal for beginners as it allows more reaction time and longer rallies.
- **Red Dot:** Slightly slower with moderate bounce, suitable for intermediate recreational play.
- **Yellow Dot:** Slower and less bouncy, suitable for advanced players seeking a more challenging game.
- **Double Yellow Dot:** The slowest and least bouncy, preferred by professionals and tournament players.

### Insights from the Squash Ball Test at Oase Health & Sports Club in Bochum

In a test organized by SFN expert Vincent Bradley at the Oase Health & Sports Club in Bochum, Germany, 12 students (gender-balanced) from the University of Witten/Herdecke participated in evaluating different squash balls. The group included two complete beginners, seven players with a few months of experience, and three who had been playing squash for over six months. Although the sample size isn't large enough for statistically rigorous conclusions, the results provide valuable insights and highlight several interesting trends in squash ball preferences among new and intermediate players.



1 = Decathlon Initiation Yellow / 2 = Mystery ball (Dunlop Prototyp) / 3 = Karakal Big Ball / 4 = Decathlon Initiation Red / 5 = Dunlop pro double yellow dot / 6 =Dunlop Intro Blue dot / 7 = Dunlop Competition yellow dot / 8 = Decathlon Perfly

The group tested different squash balls to determine the best options for beginners and recreational players. Balls from Dunlop and Decathlon (Perfly), along with a Karakal ball and a Dunlop prototype, were included in the test. Here are the detailed findings:

**Bounce:**

- The test group evaluated the bounce of each ball on a straightforward scale. Larger, more bouncy balls were generally seen as "too lively," while classic balls like the Dunlop Pro provided a better experience. However, some participants found the Dunlop Pro to be slightly too slow, illustrating that preferences can vary even among beginners.
- The balls with the best bounce, which provided the most enjoyable experience, were the Dunlop and Perfly Blue Dot balls. They struck a good balance between bounce and control, making them highly recommended for beginners by most participants.

**Visibility:**

- The color and size of the balls significantly influenced the playing experience. Black balls on white walls were rated as the most visible, whereas colorful balls were sometimes found less suitable. A few participants noted that colorful balls could be visually distracting and not as easy to track.
- Black balls were generally preferred, especially because they blend well with typical court conditions and are easier to spot on most wall colors.

**Control:**

- When it came to control, classic balls like the yellow dot and blue dot were easier to handle, while larger, bouncier balls proved more challenging. Testers reported that the classic size and moderate bounce made these balls more predictable and easier to control.
- Balls with a high bounce, however, were harder to manage, which could frustrate beginners and make the game feel more demanding.

**Fun Factor:**

- Enjoyment is a critical factor for motivation to continue playing. Testers stated that classic balls, especially the Dunlop and Perfly blue dot balls, offered the most enjoyable playing experience. These balls allowed for dynamic gameplay without excessive strain, providing a balance of control and fun.
- The "fun factor" correlated with the difficulty level of the balls. Slower balls, like the Dunlop Pro typically recommended for advanced players, were harder to handle for beginners and reduced the enjoyment level.

Recommendations from the Testers:

- While opinions were mixed, the Perfly Blue Dot ball stood out as the clear favorite. It was rated highly for its balanced characteristics in terms of bounce, control, and visibility, making it the top recommendation for beginners by the majority of participants.
- Interestingly, the Perfly Blue Dot ball from Decathlon scored well across nearly all categories, emerging as the overall test winner. This demonstrates that balls outside the traditional Dunlop lineup can also offer an optimal playing experience for beginners.

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In the upcoming weeks, we'll continue to explore insights and recommendations from experts on the topic of squash ball selection. At the end of the series, SFN will publish a comprehensive guide for facilities to optimize their ball strategy to improve player retention and enhance the playing experience. Don't miss our upcoming webinar, where you'll have the chance to engage directly with experts and learn more about best practices in squash ball selection.

Let's work together to make squash more accessible and enjoyable for everyone!



**Best Practice of the Month: Choosing the Right Squash Ball for Beginners**  
28 November 2024, 16:00–16:45 CET | Webinar

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