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# A Multi-Racquet Facility for Tennis, Squash, Padel, and Pickleball: Wolfgang Denk's Vision at the Racket Center Graz



Tucked away in the heart of Styria, the Racket Center Graz (RCG) has become a powerhouse for racquet sports under the leadership of Managing Director **Wolfgang Denk**. Right at the start of our conversation, Denk highlighted how each racquet sport delivers a unique experience and learning curve:

*“While tennis may demand more refined technique, sports like padel and pickleball are simpler to grasp, which helps new players quickly get hooked. Squash offers its own dynamic intensity—it really depends on what you want to feel on court.”*

Boasting indoor and outdoor tennis, squash, padel, pickleball, table tennis, and an indoor golf simulator—not to mention a lively bistro and pro shop—the RCG is the largest multi-racquet sports facility in the region. It also serves as a training ground for young athletes and curious beginners alike, thanks to dedicated academies for each sport.

## From Tennis Roots to a Multi-Sport Racquet Facility

After securing a long-term lease in 2016, Denk gave the grounds a major upgrade, installing modern surfaces for the tennis courts. Soon, he broadened the center’s horizons by introducing padel and, most recently, pickleball. Four squash courts, multiple table tennis tables, and an

indoor golf simulator completed the package, creating a destination where everyone—from seasoned pros to total newcomers—can find a sport they love.

Reflecting on how the center has evolved, Denk is certain about one thing:

*“If I had to do it all over again, I’d definitely include multiple racquet sports. I see real value in giving people different ways to play, stay active, and explore something new.”*



## A Growing Pickleball Scene

The most talked-about addition to the RCG lineup is pickleball. Widely known as *“the fastest-growing sport in America,”* pickleball has exploded in popularity in the United States, where **USTA (United States Tennis Association)** reports show more tennis courts are being repurposed or shared for the emerging sport—especially in public parks and retirement communities.

*“In America, pickleball initially became huge in senior residences,” Denk explains. “People who couldn’t manage the physical strain of regular tennis doubles found pickleball much easier on the joints. Whole armies of seniors started playing!”*

Yet, at RCG in Austria, a different trend is emerging. Many of the new pickleball players are younger people who aren’t necessarily experienced in racquet sports.

*“We see students and young professionals just trying something new,” Denk observes. “They pick up a paddle, and before you know it, they’re hooked.”*

## Pickleball Courts for Under-8 Tennis

A surprise twist came when Denk discovered how well the pickleball courts dovetail with junior tennis programs.



*“The dimensions of a standard pickleball court nearly match those required for under-8 tennis,” he says. With the net at just the right height and some extra lines marked on the court, the space transforms perfectly into a training ground for young tennis hopefuls. “Now, every afternoon, we run under-8 tennis lessons on our pickleball courts,” Denk adds. “Instead of sitting empty during slower times, those courts are filled with kids learning the basics. It’s a win for everyone.”*

This dual-purpose setup maximizes court usage, gives children a comfortable starting point for tennis, and offers them a glimpse into other racquet sports happening around them—sometimes piquing their curiosity to try squash, padel, or pickleball next.

## Squash: ‘It’s Back!’



Another key part of the RCG revival is squash. Denk proudly highlights the four newly installed courts, emphasizing how important it was to bring squash back into the facility.

*“Squash has this intense, dynamic quality that a lot of people love,” he says. “We wanted to make sure it had a home here alongside tennis, pickleball, and everything else. Now, it’s one of the sports that keeps our players excited and always coming back for more.”*

Squash also contributes to the social atmosphere in the club. Once a match is over, players often head to the bistro for a drink, swapping stories of their favorite rallies and toughest shots. Denk sees this camaraderie as one of the biggest strengths of offering multiple racquet sports in one place.

## Community and Crossover



But do players naturally jump from one sport to the other? Denk says it takes time and effort to foster genuine crossover.

*“People won’t automatically switch from squash to tennis or pickleball. You need to spark their interest—maybe invite them to try a different sport at an open day or a friendly tournament.”*

Nevertheless, having everything under one roof creates a sense of community and keeps energy levels high. Off-court, the RCG is equally known for its lively bistro, where players gather for post-match drinks.

*“My squash, padel, and pickleball players generally go for beer,” Denk jokes, “while tennis folks—especially the older ones—tend to prefer a glass of wine. Either way, everyone’s having a good time!”*

## Looking Ahead

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Though tennis remains at the RCG’s core, Denk believes a varied portfolio is key to maintaining enthusiasm among members.

*“People enjoy discovering new sports,”he says. “Offering them a place where they can try padel one day, pick up pickleball the next, or book a round of indoor golf keeps them coming back. That’s how you keep a club truly alive.”*

With pickleball on the rise, a robust junior tennis program, and a menu of racquet sports for all ages, the Racket Center Graz stands as a testament to Denk’s forward-thinking approach—one that blends tradition and innovation to create a vibrant, inclusive sports hub for everyone.