

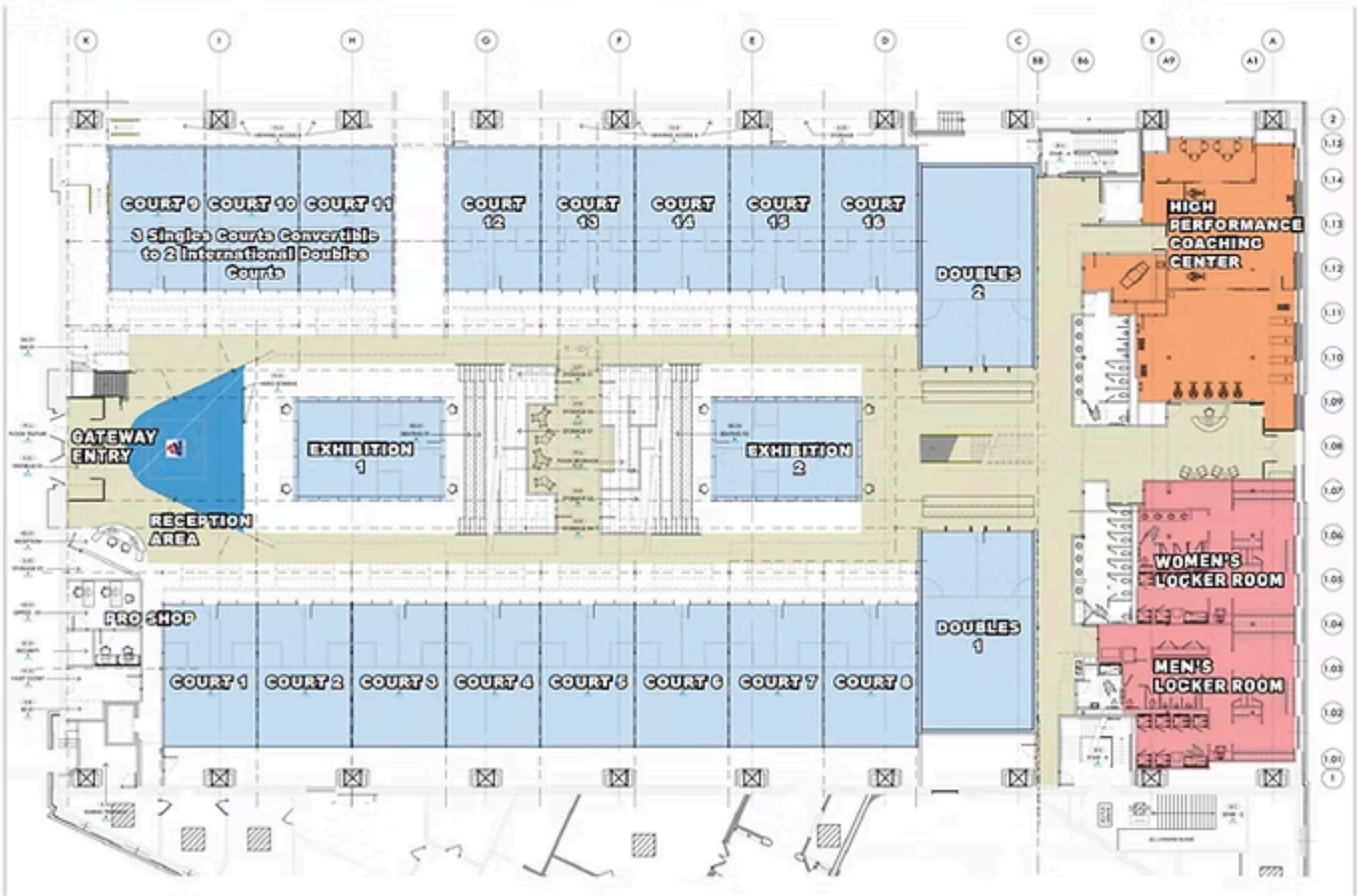
Markus Gaebel · Jun 3

Philadelphia’s Specter Center: The US National Squash Hub Built for Growth, Not Profit

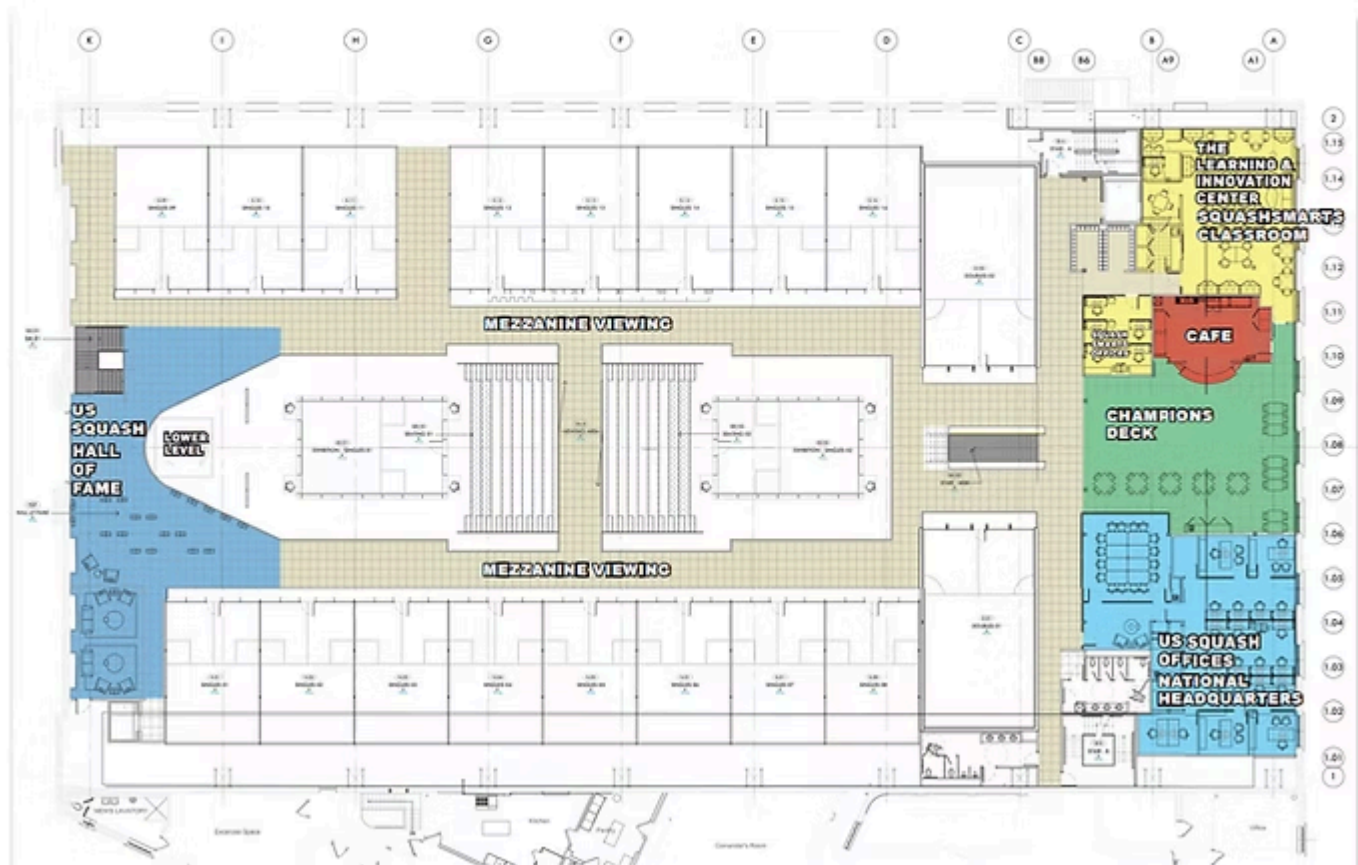


In October 2021, the Arlen Specter U.S. Squash Center opened in Philadelphia as the new home of U.S. Squash. Housed in a beautifully repurposed historic armory located ideally on Drexel University’s campus, in the heart of Philadelphia’s vibrant University City neighborhood, the center stands out architecturally as an innovative blend of preservation and modernization. The facility features a distinctive mezzanine viewing area, a dynamic U.S. Squash Hall of Fame exhibit, and cutting-edge spaces including a High-Performance Coaching Center equipped with advanced video analytics and biofeedback technology. The spacious interior design integrates the building's historical elements, offering players and spectators a uniquely inspiring squash environment that seamlessly combines tradition with state-of-the-art amenities.

GROUND FLOOR



MEZZANINE LEVEL



It offers 18 singles courts (two are all-glass show courts) plus two doubles courts—making it the U.S.’s largest squash complex by court count. Its mission, however, is sport development, not profit. Roughly US\$27 million in donor funding—including a lead gift from the Specter family—enabled USSquash to create a flagship facility whose “returns” are measured mostly in participation, performance, and profile rather than cash flow.

A Strategic Investment, Not a Commercial Club

The Specter Center operates under USSquash, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose goal is to grow the sport across the country. Running such a large building is expensive, and early financial statements by US Squash have shown annual deficits since the center opened. Yet, this recent annual shortfall is only in part due to the startup costs of the Specter Center, given the long tail of Covid-19's impact on the sport. It was also anticipated because the center is a long-term investment in squash's future.

“The Specter Center was built as a community facility as well as the home for Team USA,” says Nick Taylor, US Squash’s Ganek Family Head National Coach.

By focusing on access and excellence rather than operating merely as a commercial entity, the Specter Center aims to expand the overall player base—ultimately helping clubs in the area as more people become hooked on the game.

US Squash’s CEO Kevin Klipstein puts it this way, "We aspire to be a net exporter of squash players."

Home Base for Team USA

Seven full-time national-squad athletes are currently based at the Specter Center, working daily with USSquash’s coaching and sport-science staff. Players who train elsewhere—such as world No. 5 Amanda Sobhy—still use the center’s resources during training blocks.

“Our Team USA players have access to the gym, the courts, and the other resources,” says Nick Taylor.

Centralizing top talent has created a high-performance environment comparable to other national sports institutes and is already paying off in world-ranking progress.

A Magnet for International Talent

USSquash’s recently-launched National Squash Academy invites overseas professionals and juniors to train in Philadelphia for weeks or months at a time.

“Last month, 20 international players were based at the center,” according to Taylor, who has oversight of all programming there.

Their presence gives American athletes world-class sparring partners, while visiting players benefit from elite facilities and coaching. The result is a vibrant training hub that raises everyone’s level.

A National Stage for Major Events



With 18 courts—including two glass show courts—the Specter Center can host events impossible to stage elsewhere in the U.S. Junior Championship Tour (JCT) events, Junior Nationals, and the U.S. Open now run primarily in Philadelphia, supported by professional livestreaming and seating infrastructure. A single venue means consistent standards and better spectator experiences; it also creates cost efficiencies for USSquash and allows them to keep event revenues inside the sport for reinvestment. That the association moved its national headquarters to the center from New York has also yielded considerable savings for the organization. The full-time staff of nearly thirty collaborate closely across national initiatives, events, programming, and supporting Team USA athletes.

Blueprint for Future National Centers

By blending elite training, community outreach, and major events under one roof, the Specter Center offers a best-practice model for federations and investors worldwide. The message is clear: when stakeholders fund infrastructure that prioritizes access and excellence, the sport grows for everyone—from kids local to the facility to world-ranking pros to commercial club owners seeking new members.

As squash investors and facility operators look to the future, the Specter Center demonstrates that mission-driven facilities can be powerful engines of growth. Profit may not appear on its balance sheet today, but the long-term return is a stronger, broader, and more vibrant squash ecosystem—exactly the outcome our sport needs.

Community & Grassroots Engagement


The Specter Center dedicates significant court time to SquashSmarts, Philadelphia's squash and education program, which uses seven courts year-round for free coaching, tutoring, and mentoring of local youth. In addition, the center collaborates closely with Philadelphia's Urban Squash and Education program, further expanding outreach to urban youth and public schools to make squash accessible across socio-economic barriers.

Alongside this, the center runs its own Adult and Junior Academy offering pay-as-you-go clinics, leagues, and beginners' sessions. It also provides intensive elite and National Team training with on-site accommodations and professional mentorship programs, creating a comprehensive and inclusive developmental environment.


“We have a program for the nine-year-old who wants to play once a week and for the 15-year-old who wants to play three times,” says Nick Taylor.

The Philadelphia Public School League teams round out activities during the traditional winter season, engaging entire families who might otherwise never encounter the sport. This inclusive pathway not only moves promising juniors into the National Squash Academy but also ensures true beginners feel welcome at every step of their journey.


Programs at the Specter Center



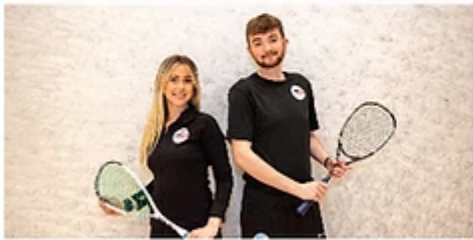
CLINICS
For Adults of All
Ages & Skill Levels
[LEARN MORE](#)




WOMEN'S PROGRAMS
From Women of All
Ages & Skill Levels
[LEARN MORE](#)




ROUND ROBINS
Singles
& Doubles
[LEARN MORE](#)



SQUASH LESSONS
Squash Lessons Available
Individual or Semi-Private
[LEARN MORE](#)



FITNESS SESSIONS
Fitness Sessions Available
for Individuals or Groups
[LEARN MORE](#)



NATIONAL SQUASH ACADEMY
High Performance Players
Player rating above 4.0
[LEARN MORE](#)

Bolstered by the recent recruiting of several qualified teaching pros, the Specter Center delivers a **comprehensive program portfolio** for juniors and adults at all levels—from first-time players to future pros.

Junior Programs run year-round and include weekly coaching sessions, school-term training, and **seasonal squash camps**. Players progress through levels, and advanced juniors can enter the **National Squash Academy**, a high-performance pathway led by national coaches.

Adult Programs include instructional clinics, round robins, social leagues, and private lessons. Players can choose between beginner, intermediate, and advanced options, with specialty sessions also offered (e.g., women’s-only clinics). Fitness and match-readiness are integral to the curriculum.

©2025 SFN (Squash Facilities Network) / [Privacy Policy](#) / [Accessibility Statement](#)

Programs are designed to be **inclusive and progressive**, combining structured development with community-building.

Membership at the Specter Center

The Specter Center offers a **flexible, accessible membership system** designed to welcome players from all backgrounds. In addition to hosting regular free introductory clinics, there are no initiation fees or long-term contracts. Members choose from several tailored options:

- **Champions Membership** provides unlimited play, early booking (6 days in advance), and discounted family add-ons.
- **Captains Membership** suits casual players with a limited number of court bookings per month and access to leagues.
- **Student Membership** offers full benefits at a reduced rate for those aged 26 and under.

- **Non-Resident Membership** is ideal for players who live more than 100 miles away and visit occasionally.
- **Sponsored Memberships** are fully subsidized for individuals who qualify, ensuring financial barriers don't prevent participation.
- **Corporate Memberships** give companies a way to offer squash access to employees while supporting the center's mission.

In addition, **drop-in court bookings** are available for non-members. Across all categories, members benefit from priority registration, social events, and integration into the broader squash community.

Find out more at spectercenter.org.