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Is Squash the Most Underrated Sport Aligned with the IOC's Criterias?



The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has laid out a bold and forward-looking vision for the future of sport—through **Agenda 2020** and **Agenda 2020+5**—focusing on sustainability, youth appeal, gender equality, global accessibility, innovation, media engagement, integrity, and fair play.

But let's ask the uncomfortable question:

**Is there any sport that meets the IOC criterias more comprehensively than squash?
And if not—why is no one talking about it?**

Squash might just be the textbook example of a sport that perfectly reflects Olympic ideals—yet remains almost invisible on the global stage. It's time to change that.

Is Squash the Gold Standard for Meeting IOC Criteria?

Squash embodies everything the International Olympic Committee claims to prioritize in modern sport—it's **dynamic, inclusive, sustainable, and deeply connected to community engagement and youth development**.

Recognized by the IOC since 1992, squash is played in over 185 countries worldwide, making it one of the most globally accessible and practiced sports. It is already an established part of nearly all major international multi-sport events, including the Commonwealth Games, the Asian Games, and the Pan American Games. Rather than being a footnote, squash should be seen as a leading example of Olympic values in action.

Youth Engagement – Squash Speaks the Language of the Next Generation

If there's one area where squash absolutely shines, it's youth development. Across continents, local, regional, and national initiatives are proving that **squash captivates young people like few other sports can**.

In Poland, the "Hasta La Vista" facility connects with **over 3,500 schoolchildren every week**, serving as a model for successful school partnerships.



Kids at Hasta La Vista in Wroclaw, Poland

Across Europe, **more than 300 schools and universities** house squash courts. In the U.S., **over 180 institutions** include squash as a core campus sport. The US College Squash Association runs a comprehensive competition and development program that's binding young athletes to the sport long-term.

In the **elite junior sector**, structured competition circuits for **U13, U15, U17, and U19** exist across the U.S., Europe, and Asia—**stepping stones to the pro PSA Tour** and beyond. In Europe alone, over **2,100 boys and girls** took part in the European Junior Circuit last season—an impressive testament to the sport’s reach and rising popularity among the next generation.

And these are just the highlights. Dive deeper into the squash powerhouses—**Egypt**, with its world domination, and the rising force of **USA Squash**—and you’ll find their secret weapon is simple:

Squash - “It’s all about kids.”

Squash & Education Alliance: Where Courts Meet Opportunity

If you still think squash is just a game for elite athletes, think again. Squash and Education Alliance (SEA) proves that squash is a **global tool for transformation**.

This \$150 million initiative backs 21 U.S. programs and 7 international partners with a further **\$30 million annually** to sustain operations. The goal? Use squash to change kids' lives by combining sport with academics and social support.

SEA’s International Partners include Khelshala in Chandigarh, India, Egoli Squash, in Johannesburg, South Africa, Squash Urbano Colombia in Cartagena, Colombia, Squash Dreamers in Amman, Jordan, Urban Squash Toronto in Toronto, Canada, SquashBond in Ra’anana and Haifa, Israel and the Nicol David Organisation (NDO) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

And SEA is just the **tip of the iceberg**. Around the world, squash-based programs are proving that a squash court can be a **launchpad for opportunity**.

Gender Equality – Squash Walks the Talk

Squash isn’t just preaching gender equality—it’s **living it**.

The Professional Squash Association (PSA) has offered equal prize money for men and women at major events for years—something even many Olympic sports haven’t achieved yet. As of the 2023–24 season, women’s prize money reached **\$4,838,013**, which represents **84% of the men's total**. This is a dramatic increase from past years, supported by a broader structural shift in the sport: **over 400 women’s events** were sanctioned during the 2023–24 season—compared to just **82 in 2014–15**.

All **Gold-level tournaments and above** now feature both men's and women's draws with **equal prize money**, setting a clear precedent for equality at the elite level.

National and regional efforts further reinforce this momentum by promoting girls and women in grassroots squash, ensuring balance from the base to the top.

On the **European Junior Circuit**, the shift is already happening: this year, the **U19 team features two boys and two girls**. In 2026, the **U17 team** will follow suit, and by 2027, **every junior team will be 50/50**—a clear commitment to equality, not just in principle but in practice.

No vague promises here—**equality is the reality**.

Integrity & Fair Play – Squash Stays Clean

When it comes to integrity, squash is among the **cleanest sports in the world**. Doping cases are practically non-existent—with only one minor case in recent memory (marijuana-related). Squash has built a **deep-rooted culture of fair play**, sportsmanship, and mutual respect—a **rarity in modern elite sports**.

This isn't just about compliance. It's about **character**.

Sustainability – Squash is Flexible, Efficient, and Future-Ready

Sustainability isn't a buzzword in squash—it's **baked into the sport's DNA**.

Demountable all-glass courts can be assembled in iconic city locations or within existing buildings within days, **minimizing material use and environmental impact**. Unlike many sports, squash doesn't leave behind concrete skeletons—it **adapts to its environment**, not the other way around.



A packed audience watches world-class squash in the stunning Great Hall of Manchester Town Hall during the PSA Manchester Open—where heritage architecture meets the modern game.

Most modern facilities worldwide now operate with **eco-conscious infrastructure**:

- LED lighting

- Solar panels on roofs
- Heat pumps and efficient insulation

Squash is showing how a high-performance sport can also be a **low-footprint sport**.

Urban Sport – Squash is Already There (and Ready to Boom)

Squash is an **urban sport by nature**—and yet this enormous potential is still being overlooked.

With nearly **10,000 squash-equipped facilities worldwide**, the vast majority are in **densely populated urban areas**. There isn't a single major capital city without central squash courts. Take **"Squash on Fire" in Washington DC**, built atop a fire station. Or rooftop courts in parking structures, shopping malls, and hotels.



Squash On Fire is uniquely located atop a fire station in the heart of Washington, D.C.

Now imagine this: One-Wall-Squash—a simplified, portable version of the game—could be squash's answer to **3x3 basketball**. Quick to set up, visually striking, easy to learn, and ripe for integration into **music festivals, social media campaigns, and pop-up city events**.



One-Wall-Squash in a school gymnasium

Squash has the tools to become the **next big thing in urban sport culture**—it just needs the spotlight.

Conclusion: The First Step Has Been Taken – Now Let’s Go Further

Yes, squash is set to debut at the **LA28 Olympic Games**—a huge milestone. But let’s be clear: **This is just the beginning.**



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Squash doesn’t merely align with IOC values—it **embodies them**. Authentically. Powerfully. Consistently. There are few—if any—sports that tick every IOC box as convincingly as squash.

So why is this not widely known? Why is squash still flying under the radar in global sports conversations?

It’s time to change that. It’s time for stakeholders across the sporting ecosystem to recognize squash’s unmatched alignment with the Olympic vision—and to back it accordingly.

The message is simple: Squash isn’t just Olympic-ready—it’s Olympic-worthy. And the world deserves to know it.