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The Right Software for Facilities – A Quick Guide for Operators (Part 2)

An Interview with Ivan Starodub, Founder of Squashly



Ivan Starodub, Founder of Squashly

In our first article, we heard from SFN expert and facility co-owner Jess Nicol, who emphasized five key areas for choosing software for squash and racket sport venues: a powerful booking system, robust CRM, effective communication tools, features that enrich the member experience, and strong user support.

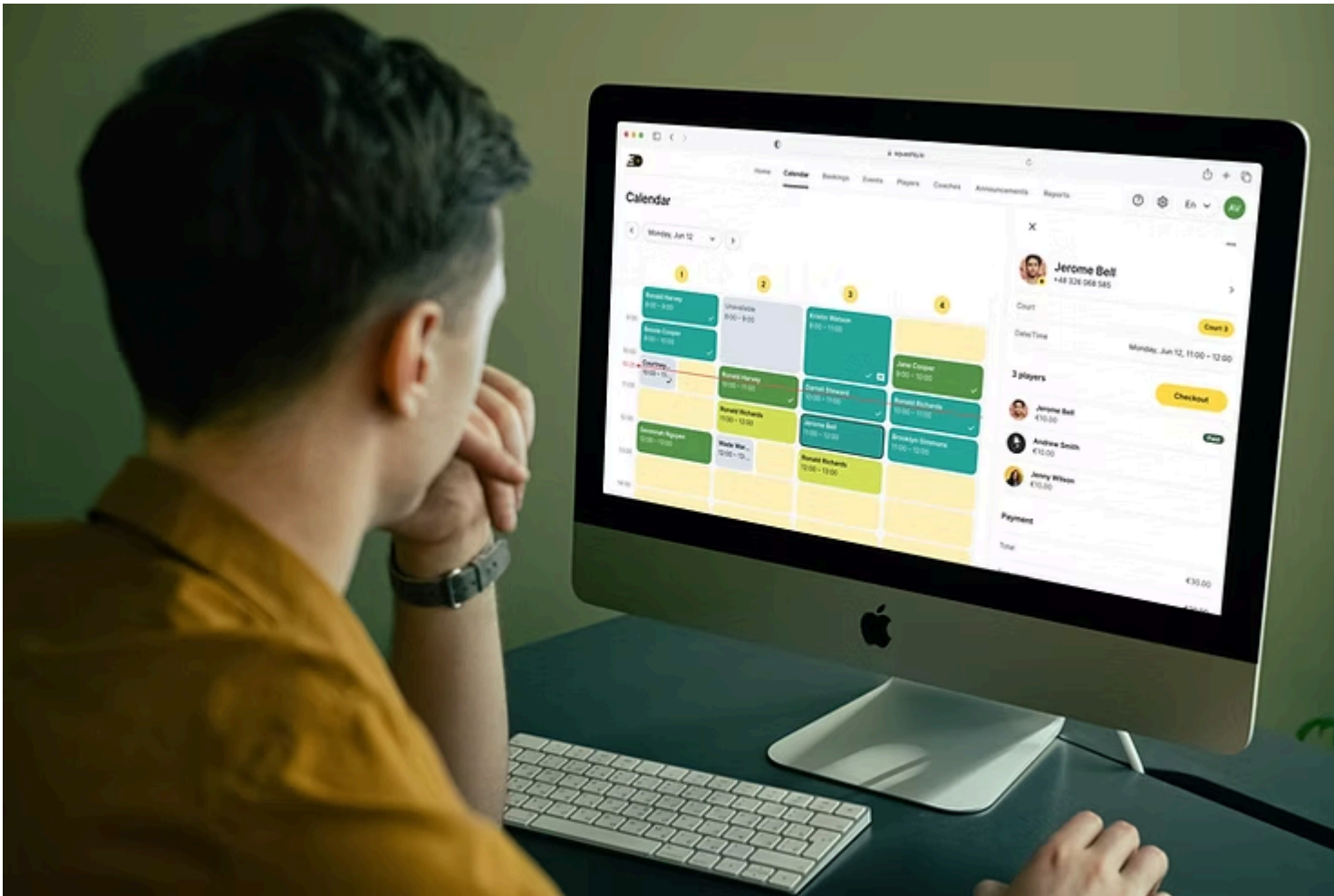
For this follow-up, we take a closer look at Squashly, a player-centric software solution developed by the startup founded by Ivan Starodub. Ivan, a recreational squash player and entrepreneur, shares the personal journey and motivation that led him to develop a holistic system designed to meet the needs of players and the broader squash community.

The Motivation Behind Squashly

For Ivan, Squashly wasn’t just a business idea—it was born from personal experience. “I started playing squash about four years ago,” Ivan recalls. “It didn’t take me long to notice that the ecosystem felt fragmented and underserved, particularly for recreational players, who make up over 95% of the sport’s participants.”

Traditional booking systems, Ivan found, only addressed one part of the player experience: securing a court. But for him, squash was much more than that. “The existing systems were outdated, inconvenient, and didn’t address the broader needs of players. There wasn’t much in terms of engagement or community-building—finding partners, joining events, or even discovering tournaments was complicated,” he explains.

Key Components of Facility Management Software



As Ivan Starodub explains, **"booking software is no longer just about reserving a court and making a payment. Today, it has to deliver much more to meet the needs of players, coaches, and operators."** Modern facility management solutions must go beyond these basics, offering functionalities that enhance the overall experience and strengthen the squash ecosystem. Besides booking features, there are four main components to consider when evaluating facility management software: event management, coaching tools, membership management, and player engagement.

1. Event and Competition Management

Ivan highlights the importance of tools for managing events, leagues, and tournaments. "This includes everything from organizing club events to running tournaments—whether it's a local club championship or larger-scale competitions," he explains.

2. Coaching and Coach Management

Facilities also need tools to manage coaching programs. "Whether it's connecting players with the right coach or handling scheduling and administrative tasks for coaching sessions, these features can significantly enhance the overall experience," Ivan says.

3. Club and Membership Management

Membership management is crucial for facilities operating as clubs. Ivan points out, "The difference lies in whether a facility is a membership-based sports club or a commercial company operating on a pay-and-play basis." Venues that follow a membership model need robust tools to manage member data, payments, and communications effectively.

4. Player Engagement

Perhaps the most innovative aspect of Squashly is its emphasis on player engagement. Ivan explains, **"Player engagement is much more than the traditional understanding of CRM. It's about keeping players connected to the sport and fostering a sense of community."**

He recalls the fragmented tools he encountered at venues: Facebook groups, WhatsApp chats, and even whiteboards with player contact details. "Sometimes coaches acted as matchmakers, but the whole process seemed unnecessarily complex," Ivan notes. These frustrations inspired the development of a unified, player-first solution designed to streamline community-building and engagement.

Squashly helps players find partners and events while staying connected within vibrant squash communities. Ivan believes this holistic approach benefits everyone—players, coaches, venues, federations, and clubs alike.

Integration and Payment Systems

Every business is unique, and Ivan believes software should reflect that through configurability and openness. “There is definitely a need for configurability so that specific needs can be addressed,” he explains, pointing to examples like cancellation policies and pricing adjustments.

Equally important is the ability to integrate with other systems. “Being open to exchange information—in a secure and reliable way—is key because you can’t address all the possible needs of every customer within a single platform,” Ivan states.

He emphasizes the importance of integrating with systems like access control, lighting, or accounting. “Not integrating means someone will have to manage it manually, which increases errors and overhead,” he warns.

Transparent Pricing and Payment Solutions

Ivan also stresses that pricing models should be transparent and avoid hidden fees. “If players are charged extra for using the platform, it discourages them from using it. This defeats the purpose of having software designed to streamline operations,” he explains.

Embedded Payment Solutions and Offline Transactions

Finally, Ivan highlights the need for flexible payment systems. “Payment processing should be embedded into the software,” he says, while also supporting offline payment options like payments made directly at the club’s reception.

Mobile Apps: Are They Necessary for Squash Facilities?

Mobile apps are a debated topic in facility management. While some view them as essential, Ivan offers a balanced perspective. “Mobile apps are definitely convenient, but players don’t want to install multiple apps for different venues,” he explains.

For member-based clubs, especially in the U.S., mobile apps can be an effective tool for engagement. However, in Europe, where facilities often follow a pay-and-play model, apps are less critical. Ivan suggests that a well-optimized website or integration into a broader platform may be more efficient for many venues.

Software Costs: Finding the Right Pricing Model

The best pricing model depends on the size and transaction volume of the club. Ivan explains, **“For smaller clubs, transaction-based fees can be beneficial. But as clubs grow in size or volume, predictability becomes more important, and a regular subscription fee may prove easier and cheaper to manage.”**

He also warns against the high costs of one-time licensing models, which require significant maintenance and often lead to outdated systems. Hybrid models that combine subscription and transaction fees add complexity, making it harder for venues to plan their expenses.

Services, Support & Training

Reliable service, comprehensive support, and effective training form the foundation of successful software adoption and sustained user satisfaction. A platform’s ability to provide timely assistance and proactively address user concerns is crucial for building and maintaining a strong reputation. Ivan underscores the importance of transparency, stating, “When a platform encounters an issue, attempting to hide it can quickly erode the established trust and confidence.”

Equally important is effective training. “The right training ensures that everyone who needs to use the software can do so effectively, without creating additional burdens for the facility,” Ivan explains.

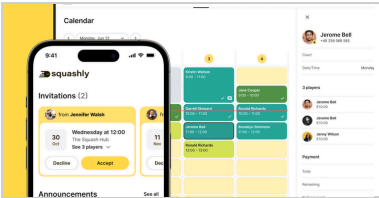
Finally, ongoing communication between developers and users fosters innovation. Squashly’s Beta community, for example, allows lead users to provide feedback before public releases. “This dialogue helps us build a better solution,” Ivan concludes.

Conclusion

Choosing the right software for squash facilities is about more than booking systems—it’s about creating a holistic platform that serves players, coaches, and operators alike. Key functionalities include event and membership management, player engagement, integration with external

systems, and flexible payment options. Transparent pricing and strong support services are essential for fostering trust and adoption.

Ultimately, the best software builds community and drives the sport’s growth while helping facilities operate efficiently. With the right tools, squash clubs can thrive and contribute to a sustainable future for the sport.



Squashly - Empower Your Squash Facility with an All-in-One Solution

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