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# Outdoor Steel Courts: An Interview with Robert Gibraltar



Outdoor Steel Court in New York, USA

The world of squash is experiencing another innovation thanks to the outdoor steel squash court, co-created by Robert Gibraltar and Jeff Anschlowar. In a recent interview, Gibraltar shared insights into his journey with squash, the technical specifications of this steel court, and the potential impact on the sport’s future.

## From Passion to Innovation

Robert Gibraltar discovered squash during his college years at Amherst in the early 1970s. Starting with hardball squash, he later transitioned to softball and carried his passion for the sport throughout his global career in marketing and advertising. Living in cities like New York, Paris, and Singapore, he played squash wherever he went. Upon returning to the United States, he became a dedicated volunteer for the Street Squash program in Harlem.

In 2019, Gibraltar's interest in squash took a new turn. Teaming up with Jeff Anschlowar, the President of Maspeth Welding and a structural engineer, the two leveraged Anschlowar's expertise in steel construction and the talent within Maspeth Welding to build a steel squash court in the company’s backyard. Gibraltar played a pivotal role as co-creator, developer, and promoter, utilizing his marketing skills and partnering with Freddy Ramirez from Restrung Media to gain visibility and attract players. With their combined efforts, alongside Vera Galvez, EVP of Maspeth Welding, they’ve introduced players worldwide—from neighbors to top athletes like Mohamed Elshorbagy—to experience this unique court.

*"Hands down the coolest court I've ever played on. The guys at Maspeth Welding Arts have created a masterpiece, and it plays just as good as it looks. I sense something exciting on the horizon—time for a facelift; these courts are made for everyone!"*— **Adrian Grant**, former world No. 9 squash player

*"What a treat this was! To spend Sunday afternoon chatting with Robert and testing out this amazing outdoor steel squash court. Aesthetically, it looks so cool, hits like a dream, and the sound of the ball hitting the steel wall was just appealing. Made me want to suit up and play more squash, just so I can keep creating the sound of the ball hitting steel! I love it. I also like this concept of bringing squash outdoors—a whole new fresh perspective, a fresh feel. Would love to bring or introduce this outdoor steel squash to the New Haven community—an outdoor racket sport and a functional art piece."*— **Lynn Leong**, Head Coach, Yale Squash

*"It's been so much fun playing on the metal court, I can't tell you. Robert and Jeff have done a great job, and it would be awesome to help get some of them out there for more people to experience. It really is like playing on a glass court—true, severe, rewarding, challenging, and fun outside!"*— **Chris Walker**, former world No. 4 squash player



## Technical Specifications of the Outdoor Steel Court

The technical details of the major components of the outdoor steel court are::

- **Walls:** Constructed from 5/16-inch thick steel panels. The walls are assembled using six pieces welded to steel columns spaced 21 feet and 32 inches apart. This creates a sturdy and stable playing environment.
- **Flooring:** Made of marine-grade plywood stained and screwed directly into steel beams. The floor is designed to withstand various weather conditions and requires minimal maintenance.
- **Glass Back Wall:** Features tempered glass akin to the design of frame glass back walls, providing visibility and an open feel without compromising durability.
- **Netting:** Utilizes construction-grade netting at the top, which effectively contains the ball while allowing for easy returns.

## Construction and Maintenance

One of the standout features of Gibraltar's design is the relatively quick and straightforward construction process. With all materials on-site, the court can be assembled in approximately four weeks. The foundation can be built on an existing asphalt base or a newly poured concrete slab,



depending on the location and requirements.

The \$11 Million Bridgeport project includes Gibraltar's steel court, which was completed for under \$100,000, including installation.

Maintenance is equally manageable:

- **Floor Care:** The marine-grade plywood floor may need occasional sanding and restaining every two to three years. The wood has proven to be robust, even when left exposed to winter conditions before initial staining.
- **Water Management:** A gap at the edges of the floor allows for efficient water drainage. After rain, the court can be squeegeed and ready for play in 10 to 15 minutes.
- **Winter Protection:** During snowy months, a simple plastic covering protects the court. Snow can be pushed off easily, ensuring the court remains playable year-round.

Advantages Over Glass Courts

While glass courts have been the standard for high-profile squash events, they come with challenges, especially for outdoor use:

- **Sun Glare Elimination:** Steel walls remove the issues of sun glare and visibility problems that plague glass courts in outdoor settings. Players can enjoy uninterrupted play without losing sight of the ball due to sunlight reflections.
- **Playing Experience:** The steel court provides distinctive sound and playing characteristics, offering a responsive surface that players find engaging. The acoustics are reminiscent of a steel drum, adding a new dimension to the game.
- **Durability:** Steel walls are more resistant to weather-related wear and tear, ensuring the court remains in excellent condition over time.

"These courts are made for everyone," says Gibraltar. By making squash more accessible and moving it outdoors, there's potential to attract new players and communities to the sport. Robert Gibraltar's outdoor steel squash court represents another innovation in the sport's infrastructure.

For more detail visit [Maspeth Squash here](#).

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