

BEHIND- THE GLASS

Squash Canada's Officiating Newsletter
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SUMMER 2019

This being the post-nationals edition of the BTG, we would have thought by now that we would have received the Pulitzer Prize for journalism in Squash. So again, we remain at a loss to explain what the heck happened – and you can be sure we've got a crack team of investigators on the case. Meanwhile, we've got a line up of stuff for you featuring the kind of quality you've come to expect from our keen staff at BTG's international headquarters.

THE DATABASE (<https://www.squashcanadaofficial.com/>)

We've got to remind you again about this treasure trove of all things officiating. It's **the site** for Canadian refs to find out pretty much everything about our program – including the records of your assessments. Updates continue to smooth things out in there – and hopefully you'll soon be able to keep your own match logs there as well. Take some time to view the many video modules there, which touch on just about all of the troublesome aspects of officiating – including proper explanations, blood and injury situations, and pretty much every form of interference. If you haven't registered there yet – this is the time.

Back at a Tournament of Champions event in NYC, after the Referee had allowed a "Yes Let" to Anthony Ricketts, his opponent Gregory Gaultier asked: *"Why is that a let?"* It was my shot." The ref replied: *"After you played your shot there was interference as he tried to get to the ball!"* Gaultier replied: *"Yeah, yeah – it's always about interference with you guys!"*

TIME FOR GLORY

The following folks are moving on up the ranks – where constant adulation no doubt awaits them for having crossed new personal barriers in the world of officiating Squash.

- Colin Shirley (ON)
- Steve Bachiu (SASK)

...have both achieved the lofty height of PROVINCIAL REFEREE

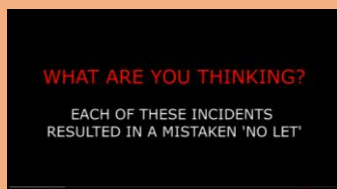


So, congrats to them. It ain't always easy or fast to climb through the ranks – but persistence is a virtue. The old saying goes: *What doesn't kill you makes you stronger – usually!* ☺ These are the people who move our standards up and help make our program among the best on the planet.

RULES NITTY GRITTY: WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

Your way of thinking has, of course, a great influence on your decisions – but what if that thinking is messed up? That's our topic for this edition – and it's specifically directed at access interference.

There are only 7 rule-based justifications, which you can use to deny a let: no interference, minimal interference, created interference, played through the interference, lack of effort to play the ball, a good return not possible, and the rarely applied 'not the striker'. Now, before going any further, you should check out this video compilation in which every let request has been denied. Examined properly, you'll likely see that none of those denials can be justified using one of the seven reasons. Go ahead; we'll wait



Some people might casually say that those were just simply Referee mistakes – and that stuff like that happens in the sport. Sure, but what we want to do here is explore the 'why' of those mistakes – as a sort of cautionary tale for fair decision making.

AN UNFORTUNATE INSTINCT

Unfortunately, quite often, instinct prevails over the rules - and that's what happened here. The difficult-to-deny instinct in question is the urge to punish the incoming striker because he put himself in a bad spot with his poor previous return. The refs here are essentially labeling these situations in their minds as created interference, but none of those situations are that – nor do any of them qualify for any of the other justifications listed above. And lest you think that being wrong footed qualifies as justification – it does not! All of that was made clear in the days when the rules contained guidelines – specifically Guideline 11 of 2001.

Adding to the injustice, there seems to be neither a consideration of the non-strikers' complete lack of clearing effort, nor of their having hit returns which they never could have cleared in the first place. And worse, it's not unusual to hear non-strikers claim that the striker should be forced to play around the interference that this striker himself has 'caused'. There is no such rule.

GRASPING AT STRAWS

Obviously, that video compilation featured flagrant examples, but there's little doubt that such poor thinking also creeps in for lesser degrees of similar situations where it's easier mask the poor thinking with specious reasoning. Even in these clips, we find highly questionable explanations, including references to there being another line, or the ball being past the player, or the ball being too good, or wanting to see more effort, or even having gone the wrong way. What Referee, even with moderate experience, would claim that players like this couldn't make those returns, or that they failed to make every effort, or that the interferences were insignificant? Unjustified explanations must not be used to hide what is often in effect, the sacrifice of fairness in an attempt to produce fewer requests for lets.

MAKING THE PROPER DECISION

Other than being aware of these mistaken instincts, the most useful advice for similar access-interference cases is to develop the mental discipline to mentally erase the non-striker from the play. Simply imagine that he/she isn't there - and then ask the routine questions about the player's ability to make the return and the effort to do so. And remember that, on its own, the incoming striker's poor previous return should be immaterial to your decision.

Now, go ahead - check out those clips again.



In case you've never been to it, our Officiating Program has its own YouTube site where video modules (listed in the 'Resources' area of our database) are available for immediate playback – without any time-consuming download time (unless of course, you want the module stored on your own computer).

TIP FOR USE: *Simply click on the camera icon to the right of the title.*



This year is the 7th time that Squash has been a part of the Pan American Games – the 2019 version will take place starting July 25th in Lima, Peru. Approximately 6700 athletes will represent the 41 competing countries from North America, South America, Central America and the Caribbean. A number of our qualified Canadian refs applied, and we can now proudly congratulate the three who have been selected: Dave Howard, Andres Orozco and Viano Oghenekevwe. It will no doubt be a memorable experience for them. Go Canada!

It was a Men's C Consolation Quarterfinal match – Peter serves and the ball dead nicks and rolls across the floor. He apologizes to his opponent and walks across to the other service box. The ref quips to Peter that if he was truly serious about being sorry, a let could be played. Peter replied with a smile: "*Not that serious*".

NEW ASSESSOR STATUS?

The Squash Canada Officiating Program currently has a few Assessors who've been around for quite some time and might be considering retirement from some of the typical officiating functions – including actual refereeing. Yet, some still want to contribute to the program - so the SCOC is mulling over the idea of an 'emeritus' status to allow such officials to dedicate themselves principally to assessments and presenting clinics.

'Emeritus' ('emerita' for women) is an honorific title, which would be granted to individuals who qualify, recognizing their high level of competence all while allowing a continuing relationship with the program.



The proposal under consideration would require the candidate to have been a National Assessor for at least 5 years. As well, the candidate would still be required to comply with QCP (Quality Control Process) standards every 3 years - as must all Assessors.

At the PACE CLASSIC a few years ago, after a long rally with Hisham Ashour, Wael El Hindi asks: *"May I have a time out?"* to which the ref replies: *"No - play must be continuous."* El Hindi then tries again with: *"How about a commercial break?"*

XVII 2019 Junior Squash Pan Am

June / Junio 16 - 22, 2019

The XVII Pan American Junior Squash Championships were held for the first time in Canada, from June 16-22, 2019 at Mayfair Lakeshore in Toronto. There were 12 countries represented with Referee representation from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Cayman Islands, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and USA. From Canada, we had our Tournament Referee Dave Howard with Referees Wayne Smith, Bob Mansbridge, Roozbeh Amirian, Gio Piccolino, David Fishburn and Viano Oghenekevwe.

Wayne held symposiums the evening before the start of the event and the day following. There were also daily training sessions led by Dave Howard, David Fishburn, Bob and Viano which, through feedback from participants, significantly added to the Referee learning experiences. We've recorded Wayne's all day training session and hope to put a link to it on our Web Site. Stay tuned 😊

The event consisted of Individual and Team competitions as well as Men's, Women's and Mixed doubles competitions. The Canadians fared well including a gold in the Women's Team event!

The Referee performance was exceptional and the players well behaved with only one conduct stroke recorded over the event. The Referee team worked well together and had a great time both at the courts and off. Overall a great success!



PROPOSAL FOR REMOTE VIDEO ASSESSMENTS

Another suggestion the SCOC is mulling over is to establish a protocol to formalize assessments done solely by video – both for the conventional upgrading of Referees, and for QCP (Quality Control Process) requirements. It's clear that Referees wanting assessments are often stymied by the availability of appropriate matches, and Assessors to actually perform the assessments. Allowing a remote video assessment would go a long way to alleviating these problems.

Certainly, the ideal way to assess is to have the Assessor live at the match – and assisted by video backup. That way, the Assessor can observe both the match and the Referee – using the video as reference during the debriefing.

Failing the availability of an Assessor, a remote video assessment is the next best option. In this case, the Assessor would work solely with a video submitted by the candidate. If the video is of sufficient quality, then such an approach can work quite well – especially because video replay is available. Of course, In order to find an appropriate match and avoid selection bias, the candidate would first need to get the match in question approved by the TR or PTA or SCOC.

Anyway, this is all part of the SCOC's efforts to take the program to more people - so stay tuned.

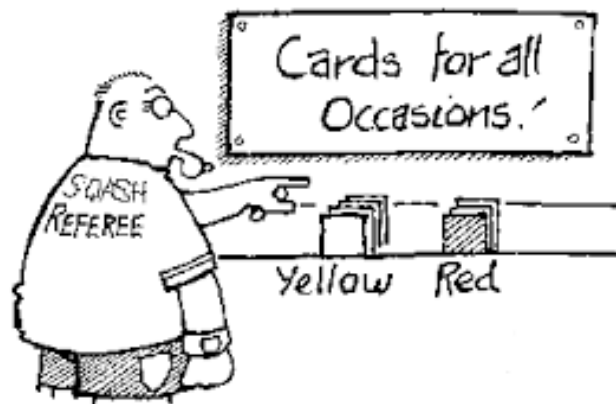


OFFICIATING SYMPOSIUMS at the 2019 PAN AM JUNIOR SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIPS

In mid-June, on the evening before the 2019 Pan Am Juniors in Toronto, 12 people attended a symposium based on Rule 14 ('Injury, Illness, & Bleeding') – presented by our very own Wayne Smith, a WSF Referee no less! As if that wasn't enough, after the break he followed it up with yet another session, this one dealing with Rule #15 (a.k.a., the Conduct Rule). Wayne proceeded to outline many example scenarios to help get the concepts across – along with practical tips that could be applied in matches. He added some new ideas and techniques for handling those particularly difficult behavioral situations, and as well, he reinforced current knowledge with examples from his own experiences at the many events he's attended over the years.

Then as an encore, on the day following the official end of the event, he came up with yet another symposium - this time a 5-hour session with 15 attendees. This presentation featured some unusual topics rarely seen in such Referee-education seminars, including one titled "Critical Mental Skills" - designed to teach Referees how to handle those really challenging matches. To wrap it up, the final class featured an interesting analysis of a match which he estimated could have had at least 75% fewer appeals had proper decisions and match management techniques been employed.

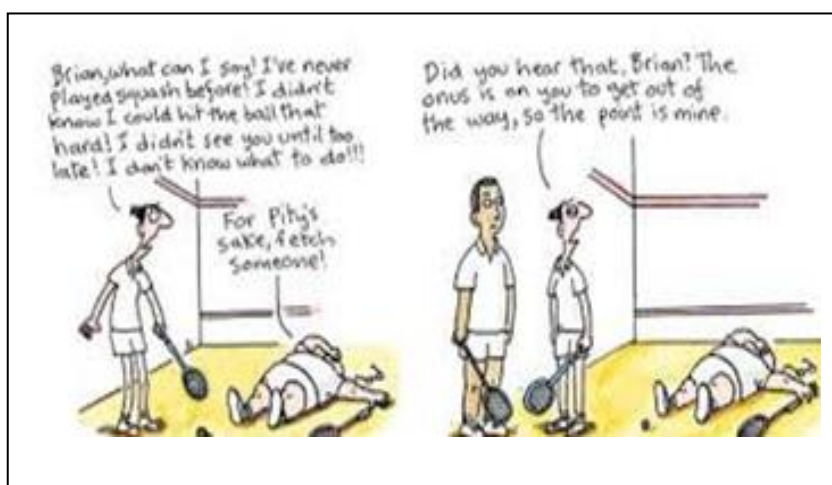
Always remember you're unique - just like everyone else.



*Do not walk behind me,
for I may not lead.
Do not walk ahead of me,
for I may not follow.
Do not walk beside me either.
Just pretty much leave me the hell alone.*

During a quarter final at the Bermuda Masters, Thierry Lincou requests a let after a collision with Nick Matthew.

"Yes, let" says the ref. Nick Matthew then interjects with: "No, it was me requesting a let because he was pushing me." And so the ref replies: "OK, you can have one too."



THE SQUASH CANADA OFFICIATING COMMITTEE

Again, we just want you to be aware of the folks keeping all of this together - the 5-person SCOC composed of Dave Howard (ON) (Chair), John Roche (BC), Les Homme (ON), Joe Ellis (AB) and Barry Faguy (QC). The committee also includes the Squash Canada Programs Manager (Geoffrey Johnson) and WSF representative (Wayne Smith). And we rush to acknowledge the very helpful work of some key refs on the periphery of the SCOC who have been helping with the various projects on the go. They are Curtis Gillespie (AB), Noman Nadeem (ON), Bob Mansbridge (ON), Greg van Staveren (ON), and Andres Orozco (ON).

FEEDBACK & INPUT

That's it for the summer edition of 2019 – and a fine vintage if we do say so ourselves. The next one is in the fall once the season gets rolling again. Of course, if there's some kind of national Squash emergency needing immediate circulation, then we'll send out a 'flash' edition. If before then you've got something to say - email Geoffrey Johnson (Squash Canada Programs Manager) at: geoff.johnson@squash.ca