

Middlesex Training Guidelines



Squash is a fantastic sport, as we are all aware by now. It is also incredibly physically demanding, mentally difficult, and is an extremely technical sport. As such, we need to make sure that we're training correctly, both physically and technically, working on the right areas, and playing competitively regularly.

These guidelines are intended for reference as a general guide to squash training for parents and juniors. For more information and specific help with Physical Conditioning and Programming for you/ your Junior, contact Deputy Head Coach, Steve Thompson (Level 3 England Squash Coach and Strength & Conditioning Coach) at s.r.thompson@hotmail.co.uk or 07906 330 305.

and will cover the following areas which we believe all parents and juniors should have at least a basic understanding and awareness of:

1. Physical Conditioning for Squash
2. Warm Up, Mobility, Stretching & Recovery
3. Good Nutrition
4. Aspects of Optimal Squash Training
5. Weekly Training Diary Examples

1. Physical Conditioning for Squash

This is an important aspect of the game and best embedded into the routine of a squash player early on in the pathway. From starting out and developing ability in the ABC's, Agility, Balance and Coordination all the way up to perfecting the lunge technique and smooth & efficient movement around court, including appropriate physical conditioning as part of squash training is essential at all ages and levels. Of course, at different ages and abilities this physical conditioning will look very different. In this section, we'll look at a few areas that should be considered to be included in training.

Functional Movements

Here are a two movements that are very important to get right early on:

The squat - Being able to squat properly shows a level of control and awareness of your body that our squash players need to have at an early age. Being able to complete a bodyweight squat with good technique, a straight back, knees following the toes, bending through the hips and maintaining an upright upper-body position is a fundamental first step.

The lunge - The lunge is probably even more important than the squat, as we lunge into almost every shot we play on a squash court (or should do!). When the technique of the lunge has been developed, progressing onto multi-directional lunges around the squash court is a key next step. As squash players we do these movements all the time.

1. Physical Conditioning for squash (continued)

Key components of your physical conditioning

- **Jogging/ Sprinting** - A mixture of on-court and off-court running is a good combination (roughly 70% on-court, 30% off-court), made up of shorter faster runs (sprint sessions, court sprints, interval training, fartlek) and medium distance runs (no longer than 5km distance is necessary).
- **Ghosting** - An incredibly important aspect of physical conditioning. On court, off court (during lockdown and at home/ on holiday if needed), with a racket, using targets, having a partner call out shots to play, having a ghosting rally with options of shot with an opponent.
- **Balance/ Stability** - Isolating balance and stability exercises and including them into your programme can be really useful. As part of a warm up, or a separate session.
- **Whole body workouts** - Ensuring that your body is working well functionally is essential for squash. In order to have strong legs and core that are well balanced, stable, that are able to operate within the full range of motion to complete the extremely powerful, complex and dynamic movements demanded in a game of squash, we need to focus on building the technique, and foundations in our bodies to be able to perform these movements well under pressure in a game. Through circuit training, we can work on your lower body, upper body, core, and anaerobic capacity to perform at your best. Structured programming for young athletes can be very beneficial to improve in the areas that they are specifically weak or tight.

2. Warm Up, Mobility, Stretching & Recovery

The Warm Up

Preparing your body properly for training and competition is important to ensure you perform to your potential and to reduce the risk of injuries. As juniors, it's also a fantastic habit to get into and a valuable time to work on new aspects of training or maintaining other fitness elements if time is limited for your training.

The movement preparation sequence we will follow is built on the RAMP framework:

R - Raise body temperature & heart rate

A - Activate key muscle groups needed in the activity

M - Mobilise the joints needed

P - Potentiate, this is the sports specific aspect of the warm up, priming the body for the maximal intensities that will be required to produce

Squash is an extremely physical sport, and it's crucial that your body is prepared for the strain of the game. There's nothing worse than walking on court against a new opponent and finding yourself completely off pace, cold and stiff and not at all ready for the intensity.

Mentally too, the warm up plays an important role in equipping you for your match or training ahead, going through your game plan, mentally preparing yourself for the upcoming session. Give yourself the best possible chance for success by making you sure you always complete an appropriate warm up.

2. Warm Up, Mobility, Stretching & Recovery (continued)

Warm Up Stage	Exercise	Reps	Sets	Notes
R	Gentle skip/ high knees/ side steps/ side steps high knees	2-4 court lengths each	1	Quick transition between exercises
	Backwards jog, forward run	10 court lengths	1	Looking over shoulder, backwards jog to front wall, forwards run to back wall
A	Walking lunges	2 court lengths	1	Lunge forwards, then drive other leg forwards lifting knee up to chest
	Prisoner squats	12	1	Hands behind head, slow and controlled movement into squat
	Lateral lunge	12	1	Staying upright, step to the side bending the leading leg and keeping the planted leg straight
M	Frontal leg raises/ lateral leg raises	12 each side	1	Up against a wall, throw leg up to side, then turn and bend knee behind you to throw up in front
	Thoracic twists	12	1	Lying down on your back, rotate your right leg over to the side, use your left hand on your knee to guide towards the floor
	Spiderman lunge & rotation	6 each side	1	Start in a press up position, lunge forward and lean into the stretch to open up the hip. Rotate the arm of the lunged leg up and round.
	Running man - 1 leg	6 each side	1	Standing on one leg, squat down and rotate arms forward and back to aid balance and fluid movement
P	Footwork patterns	3 mins	1	A mixture of footwork patterns and routines to wake up the 'fast feet' and prepare for the first movement from the T
	Ghosting routines full court	3 mins	1	A 3 minute effort of increasing intensity looking at all corners of the court, lunging dynamically and explosively towards the end

2. Warm Up, Stretching, Mobility & Recovery (continued)

Mobility

What is Mobility and why is it important?

A person with great mobility is able to perform movement patterns with no restrictions. The movement is efficient and there aren't any compensations. They have the range of motion and the neuromuscular control and strength to move through the pattern.

For squash, that means the ability to lunge correctly, going through a full range of movement bending into and out of the front and back corners of the court smoothly and efficiently. If the lunge is not smooth and efficient with full range, then this could be due to poor mobility, poor stability and balance or due to a lack of strength in the legs and core.

How to improve Mobility?

1. **Dynamic warm up** - in a great warm up, you prepare the elements of mobility as you prepare for your session or competition
2. **Mobility drills** - These are exercises that are specifically geared towards training your range of motion around joints. They involve actively moving, contracting and relaxing muscles through the joints range of motion. Some of these may isolate, while others involve multi-joint movement patterns.
3. **Stretching** - Dynamic stretching as part of a warm up, and developmental or static stretching as part of a cool-down can help to improve your range of motion in movements.
4. **Self myo-fascial release** - Foam rolling, lacrosse balls and other tools are basically a type of self-massage. These techniques help you release tight spots in your muscles and can aid recovery

2. Warm Up, Stretching, Mobility & Recovery (continued)



Stretching

Dynamic Stretching - Also known as active stretching should be used as part of your warm up, in the mobility section of the warm up. This form of stretching improves speed, agility and acceleration and involves the active tightening of your muscles and moving your joints through their full range of motion throughout the stretch.

Static Stretching - Static stretching can improve your flexibility and range of motion, it can also help your muscles recover faster after a workout, leading to less pain and stiffness. Static stretching can also be used as a separate session as it is a great way to release stress and tension in your muscles, which can help you feel more relaxed.

Recovery

A brief discussion on recovery is important for squash because it's such a demanding sport on our bodies. Completing a great warm up sets you up well for your training or competition, and a good quality cool-down with gentle aerobic work and static stretching will kick start the recovery process.

Extra static stretching after competition may be necessary the next day or even daily up to a few days afterwards if the exercise has been particularly demanding. Using foam rolling as tool for the areas which are likely to be most sore from DOMS (Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness - which sets in between 24-48 hours afterwards), such as the glutes, hamstrings, quads, calves and back.

Cold water therapy is also fantastic, whether it's a cold shower, bath, or using ice on the areas which are quite sore. If you fear you have been injured during or after playing then seek medical help from a professional.

3. Good Nutrition

This is merely a guide for general good nutrition for squash players. It's important that we are fuelling our bodies with the right things so that we have the energy we need to perform at our best, and are aiding and supporting the recovery process as best as we can.

In this guide I'm not going to suggest a particular diet plan that you need to get you and your children on as soon as possible because it will 'revolutionise your life'! I won't be taking you through the benefits and pitfalls of the ketogenic diet, or intermittent fasting or any other methods for eating (or not eating!), those go beyond the scope of this guide. I will however, aim to provide hopefully some helpful discussion on the following areas:

- Hydration
- 'Top tips for healthy eating'
- What to eat before, during and after training/ matches
- Snacks during competition

3. Good Nutrition (continued)

Hydration

Up to 75% of your body is water. It's important to keep it topped up! Consuming water throughout the day helps to maintain the bodily functions reliant on a constant supply of water. The functions of these bodily fluids include digestion, absorption, circulation, creation of saliva, transportation of nutrients, and maintenance of body temperature. For every training session, every practice match, every competition, every workout and every trip to school you should have a water bottle with you. It's super important for your concentration, focus and in sport so that you can perform at your best!

Top Tips For Healthy Eating

Sugar - Limit the amount of unnatural sugars in your diet such as juices from concentrate, squash, fizzy drinks (especially low calorie drinks), sweets, chocolate etc. Read the labels that food manufacturers are now forced to slap on the packaging of our foods. To trick you into thinking that their products contain less sugar, they'll include words like sucrose, maltose, dextrose, fructose, galactose, arabinose etc when in fact they are all sugars. Look out for anything ending in 'ose'.

Gluten - Test yourself for gluten intolerance. Exclude all grains except corn, rice, buckwheat and millet for two weeks. If you feel a noticeable improvement in how you feel (besides weight loss and increased energy), you're probably intolerant and should avoid all gluten containing grains.

Milk/Dairy - Pasteurisation, homogenisation and farmers' use of growth hormones to increase the size of cattle are all issues worth considering before gulping down pints of the white stuff! If you are dairy intolerant, try goat's milk/products. Wherever possible, buy raw certified organic dairy products.

Processed foods (edible foodlike substances) - If a food has been messed with from its original form then it is a processed food and it's going to mess with your system. Processed foods are easy to spot as they have large, colourful, elaborate advertising as opposed to foods that naturally advertise themselves which we seem to ignore (the vibrant life-inducing fruits and vegetables). Processed foods tend to contain high levels of Trans Fatty Acids which led to heart disease and increased cholesterol.

3. Good Nutrition (continued)

Before you play - The goal is provide your body with the nutrients it needs to perform at your best. Avoid too much processed food for breakfast. If having carbohydrates, go for complex carbohydrates and lower GI (glycemic index) foods that will keep you full for longer and take longer to breakdown (and be used up).

Suggestions: 1. Eggs on brown toast with avocado (add mushrooms, tomatoes, greens or salad) 2. Porridge with honey, or add some nuts, dried fruit, berries, chopped banana. 3. Muesli with yoghurt & fruit.

While you play - The goal here is to support your training or match play. If your training or match is less than 45 mins, water should be sufficient if your pre-squash nutrition has been good. For longer periods, you could supplement with a fruit & veg smoothie, or a juice, or a few bites of banana to keep you going.

After you play - The goal here is to replenish your body with all that it has lost during your workout, and to aid recovery. You want a well balanced meal with protein, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals.

Suggestions: 1. Chicken breast with potato salad and chargrilled vegetables. 2. Spaghetti bolognese or lasagne with extra side vegetables. 3. Roast chicken/beef/lamb/pork with plenty of different veggies. 4. Spanish omelette with loads of vegetables inside, served with salad and humous.

Snacks during competition - The goals is easily digestible healthy snacks. Piece of fruit, yoghurt, smoothie, fruit & veg juice, healthy snack bar, chopped carrot & humous, small sandwich.

4. Aspects of Optimal Squash Training

	Matches	Group/ individual coaching/ training	Solo practice	Physical conditioning	Time commitment	Motivation of player
Beginner	1 match a week	1 session a week	Included in coaching	Included in coaching	1-2hrs a week	Try out the sport whilst playing others too
Intermediate	1-2 matches a week	1-2 sessions a week	1 session	1 session	3-6hrs a week	More interested in squash, motivated to get better and enter tournaments and competitions
Advanced	2-3 matches a week	2-3 sessions a week	1-2 sessions	1-2 sessions	5-10hrs a week	Squash is their main sport, they are committed to improving and compete in inter-county tournaments, weekend tournaments and want to improve their performance
Pro Player	2-3 matches a week	4-6 sessions a week	3-6 sessions	3-4 sessions	20-30hrs a week	Become the best they can be with the time they have outside of competition and tournaments

These are guidelines.

These are by no means maximum limits on any aspect of training.

4. Aspects of Optimal Squash Training (continued)



Squash Ability

Beginner Level - These are players who play once or maybe twice a week and enjoy squash. Any matchplay would generally be included in a group coaching environment, as would any solo practice (perhaps in the form of skills games), and the same for physical conditioning. At this level, matches, solo and physical conditioning don't necessarily need to be separate sessions.

Intermediate Level - These players have played for some time, and are keen to improve their squash game. More time commitment to squash, which is separated between more training, a solo practice and also a small physical conditioning session.

Advanced Level - At this level, squash is their main sport and they are motivated to improve their performance. We need to now increase match play, solo practice and turn the dial up on the physical conditioning.

Pro Player - A professional squash player on the PSA Tour, playing tournaments throughout the year and spending all their time focussing on their training outside of competition.

Types of Squash Training

Matches - At the Beginner & Intermediate level, matchplay may be included in coaching environments more so coaches can help with decision making and reinforcing understanding of strategy and the rules of the game. At the higher end, coaching and match play separate themselves more as the training programming becomes more sophisticated.

Group coaching/ individual coaching and training - Squash is a technical sport, so some coaching to start off to provide the basic understanding to get started is key. To start with, group coaching may be the way you enter the sport, but as you progress and improve, some individual coaching can be extremely useful to help accelerate your progress. Training, I define as any form of conditioned games that may be outside of a coaching setting, with friends or family.

Solo practice - Any form of hitting the squash ball by yourself is solo practice. At the Beginner level, this will be incorporated into your group sessions. At the Intermediate level upwards, you should be setting time aside for solo practice either before a match or coaching session, afterwards, or a separate session entirely.

Physical conditioning - These sessions could be anything from our physical conditioning section: Jogging/ sprinting, Ghosting, Mobility/stretching, Whole body workouts. At the Beginner level, this would be included as part of training or group coaching, and as we increase in ability, the physical conditioning parts of the week should be completed separately as there are more components to address individually.

5. Weekly Training Diary Examples

Here are a few examples of weekly training schedules for squash, for a Beginner, Advanced & Professional players.

Beginner - 2hrs 15 mins

Intermediate - 5hrs 5 mins

Advanced - 9hrs 20 mins

Professional Player - 25hrs 15 mins

Weekly Squash Diary - Beginner Player



Day/Date	AM Activity	AM Activity 2	PM Activity	Total time
Monday			Weekly Group Squash Coaching 6-7:30pm	90 mins
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday	Weekly Match with a friend 10-10:45am			45 mins
Sunday				
Total:				2hrs 15mins

Weekly Squash Diary - Intermediate Player



Day/Date	AM Activity	AM Activity 2	PM Activity	Total time
Monday			Physical Conditioning - whole body workout - 45 mins	45 mins
Tuesday			Weekly Group Squash Coaching 6-7:30pm	1hr 30 mins
Wednesday				
Thursday			Solo practice - 20 mins Individual Coaching Session - 45 mins	1hr 5 mins
Friday				
Saturday	Group Coaching Session - 60 mins	Weekly Match with a friend 10-10:45am		1hr 45 mins
Sunday				
Total:				5hrs 5 mins

Weekly Squash Diary - Advanced Player



Day/Date	AM Activity	AM Activity 2	PM Activity	Total time
Monday			Physical Conditioning - whole body workout - 45 mins	45 mins
Tuesday			Group Coaching Session - 90 mins	1hr 30 mins
Wednesday	Early morning run - 45 mins			45 mins
Thursday			Solo practice - 20 mins Practice match - 60 mins	1hr 20 mins
Friday			Group Coaching Session - 60 mins	1hr
Saturday	Solo Practice - 20 mins Individual coaching session - 60 mins Practice match - 60 mins		Physical conditioning - Sprints interval session - 60 mins	1hr
Sunday	Squash Tournament - 60 mins	Squash Tournament - 60 mins	Squash Tournament - 60 mins	3hrs
Total:				9hrs 20 mins

Weekly Squash Diary - Professional Player



Day/Date	AM Activity	AM Activity 2	PM Activity	Total time
Monday	Early morning run - 45 mins	Mid-morning group training session - 2hrs	Practice match - 90 mins	4hrs, 15 mins
Tuesday	Solo practice - 30 mins	Individual coaching - 60 mins Training - conditioned games - 60 mins	Physical Conditioning - In the gym - 60 mins	3hrs, 30 mins
Wednesday	Mobility/ Stretching session - 30 mins	Practice match - 60 mins	Physical Conditioning - Sprints interval session - 60 mins	2hrs, 30 mins
Thursday	Rest	Mid-morning group training session - 2hrs	Individual coaching - 60 mins Training - conditioned games - 60 mins	4hrs
Friday	Solo practice - 30 mins Mobility/ Stretching session - 30 mins	Physical Conditioning - Whole body workout - 90 mins	Training - conditioned games - 60 mins Practice match - 45 mins	4hrs, 15mins
Saturday	Early morning run - 45 mins	Mid-morning group training session - 2hrs	Rest	2hrs, 45mins
Sunday	Practice match - 60 mins	Solo practice - 30 mins Individual coaching session - 60 mins	Longer run with stretching & mobility - 90 mins	4hrs
Total:				25hrs, 15 mins