

SQUASH



The sport of Squash in Oceania dates back to the 1930's and during its history has produced many great champions including Heather McKay, Rodney Eyles, Michelle Martin, Sarah Fitz-Gerald, Geoff Hunt of Australia and Susan DeVoy and Ross Norman of New Zealand. To some extent this is indicative of the number of active participants in the sport in Oceania. Recent statistical information reflects that there are 38,103 registered players and 326,880 non-registered players who play on a regular basis in the Oceania Region.

The Oceania Squash Federation (OSF) enters its 21st year of operation with positive signs for the future of Squash in the region and continues to support the world governing body, the World Squash Federation (WSF) in addition to co-ordinating and promoting the sport in association with its member countries.

Significant activities and events over the last 12 months and planned for the near future are summarised in the following paragraphs.

The OSF welcomed Vanuatu to full membership of the Federation in 2011, taking the number of full member countries/territories to nine, namely Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Norfolk Island, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu. With the recent construction of facilities in French Polynesia (Tahiti) prospects are encouraging for a 10th full member in the near future.

A major activity undertaken by the OSF and member countries in 2011 was a full

review of the governance and operation of the Federation. The OSF has been governed by a constitution developed when the Federation was inaugurated in 1992. To meet the challenges of a changing environment, improve governance and streamline its operation, a new constitution was adopted at the OSF General Meeting in October 2011. Structural and procedural changes are progressing and when fully implemented will provide a solid foundation for the sport to service its members over the coming years.

Six countries participated in the Squash program at the XIV Pacific Games in New Caledonia. The program included a Men's & Ladies Teams Competition, Men's & Ladies Singles Competition and Men's, Ladies & Mixed Doubles Competition. Host nation, New Caledonia, dominated the medal count with 7 Gold, 3 Silver and 2 Bronze medals, followed by Fiji with 2 Silver and 2 Bronze medals and Samoa with 1 Silver and 2 Bronze medals. The prestigious Phillip Cridge Memorial Most Improved Player Trophy went to Lyle Marsters of Cook Islands.

The Squash competition was well patronised and the new Singles & Doubles courts built for the Games provided excellent gallery seating & viewing for spectators. Local officials were assisted by technical officials from Australia and New Zealand in the running of the Squash Competition.

The Games "Pacific Attitude" theme prevailed and the event ran smoothly and while the on-court competition

was extremely competitive, everyone enjoyed the occasion. The New Caledonia Organising Committee is to be congratulated for hosting a wonderful XIV Pacific Games.

A comprehensive review of the Squash program is to be undertaken prior to the XV Games in Port Moresby by the OSF in conjunction with the participating countries and PGC in an effort to reduce costs and strengthen the competition. High costs and time commitments are impacting on the availability of many athletes to attend events of this type.

The 10th Oceania Squash Championships were held in conjunction with the Noumea Pacific Games and Games medal winners were also recognised and recorded as Oceania Championship winners. As Squash will not be on the Pacific Mini Games program in 2013 the Oceania Championships will be a stand alone event and hosted by Norfolk Island.

Squash is a sport that attracts participants of all ages - from the very young to the 70's plus. Masters Squash is very active and draws large numbers to the various Masters events especially in Australia and New Zealand. The Oceania Masters Squash Championship is an annual event and held in 5 yearly age brackets. Norfolk Island hosted the 18th Oceania Masters in 2011 and Cook Islands will host the 19th Oceania Masters in Rarotonga for the first time from 21st to 25th May 2012.

The Arafura Games is held in Darwin, Australia biennially and attracts competitors from both the Oceania and Asian regions. Squash is in the sports program and provides an opportunity for Oceania players to match their skills against their Asian counterparts. A successful Squash program took place at the 2011 Games attracting a wide range of entries. New squash facilities are being planned for the next Arafura Games.

Gold Coast, Australia will host the XXI Commonwealth Games in 2018 and we look forward to a large contingent of Oceania countries competing in the Games Squash Competition. An existing



Racahel Grinham

squash facility on the Coast will be significantly upgraded with additional singles and doubles courts and spectator facilities to cater for the Games. The Gold Coast will provide a wonderful environment for competitors, officials and spectators. A strong showing in the Squash Program at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow is anticipated.

The 2015 Commonwealth Youth Games will be held in Samoa and Squash is one of the sports on the Games program. Preparations have already commenced for the Games which include the construction of additional squash courts in Apia.

Squash is competing against a number of other short-listed sports for inclusion in the 2020 Summer Olympics. The OSF and its Oceania member countries are providing support to the world body in the bidding process and are hopeful that the vote goes our way at the IOC Congress in Buenos Aires in September 2013.

New developments in refereeing and the interpretation of the rules of both the Singles & Doubles Games are ongoing to assist in making the sport better for players, officials and spectators at all levels. Oceania is fortunate in having a number of very competent and highly qualified referees who also make a considerable contribution to the world body. A very sound structure is now in place for the examination and accreditation of referees and markers. There are over 230 markers and referees accredited across the region while Oceania now has 6 fully accredited Regional Referees.

The WSF has introduced a world Junior ranking system and instituted an Under 21 World Cup, providing an opportunity for furthering the development of our youth. Australia competed in the first Under 21 World Cup recently held in India and had a creditable performance, coming in 5th position.

Most Oceania countries with squash facilities hold a national open championship while Australia and New Zealand host a number of supporting events which attract overseas touring players. For example, over 40 men's and women's tour events took place in Australia in 2011. New Caledonia also attracted top PSA players to the territory.

The principal event for the region in 2011 was the Australian Open held at the Convention and Exhibition Centre in Canberra where a large contingent of the world's top ranked players competed on the all-glass court. The Open attracted excellent spectator attendances and wide media coverage (including TV) and is now listed as a major event on the squash circuit.

Oceania Squash remains committed to supporting the objectives of OSFO & ONOC and in playing an active role to foster and promote sport in the Region. The OSF is also committed to support the WSF in the governing and development of Squash throughout the world.

Colin J. Clapper AM
President
Oceania Squash Federation