

# **Squash at Our Lady of Mercy High School**

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[http://www.mini-net.com/john\\_coach/](http://www.mini-net.com/john_coach/)

## **March 2011**

As board president of the Rochester Squash Raquets Association, it is my mission to grow squash in the Rochester area.

With the help and support of the Hagen family (daughter Hannah is at Mercy), we had a very informative and positive meeting with the director of athletics (Mr. Nick Schlierf).

As the director of squash at the Midtown Athletic Club, I would like to offer Mercy our club facilities to start a club level squash team.

Rochester used to be a stronghold of junior squash in the U.S., with the Weymullers (Fred and Carol) leading the program. Such was their dedication, the womans U.S. open championship is now named after Carol.

see :-

<http://www.ussquash.com/news/content.aspx?id=4012>

Squash is growing in the U.S., particularly at the high school level, and I would be very happy to have Mercy be the first school in Rochester to start a club squash team.

## **Overview**

Squash is a popular international game and it's easy to understand why. It is an energetic game perfect for both beginners and experts, because it's simple to pick up for a beginner (anyone can hit a ball against a wall) and a challenge to master. High level players are involved in a high paced physical battle of wits, often described as 'playing chess at 100mph'.

In North America, it was the 'hardball' version of squash that was played until the 1990's, but from that time the hardball games has been deprecated in favor of the 'softball' (international) version. As a result of this change, which involved changing the courts (so many were simply lost to the sport), squash took a hit, but now squash is growing again in the USA.

## **In College and Schools**

There are plenty of top level U.S. universities with varsity squash programs (including all the Ivy leagues), which is driving demand at the school level.

- Participation in junior squash tournaments is up over 40% in the last year alone. Five year figures are 196% growth for boys, 179% growth for girls. The number of junior tournaments was up over 30% last season.
- More than 150 high schools have programs, public schools in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey now recognizes squash as a varsity sport.

- Squash offers strong social, community and networking aspects, and the sport is broadening its reach to new audiences.
- the U.S. Junior Womens team finished 4th in the World in 2009.
- Squash, as an indoor game, can be played all year round.
- Squash does not require investment in facilities, many private and commercial clubs partner with schools across the country for court usage in non-peak times.

see :-

High School Squash Presentation

<http://www.ussquash.com/uploadedFiles/USQ/PDF/High%20School%20Squash.pdf>

Scholastic Squash Reaches New Heights

<http://www.ussquash.com/news/content.aspx?id=5528>

U.S. High School Championships:

<http://www.ussquash.com/news/content.aspx?id=5716>

CSA Womens Squash Teams

[http://www.ussquash.com/ssm/pages/leagues/league\\_results.asp?id=450](http://www.ussquash.com/ssm/pages/leagues/league_results.asp?id=450)

<http://collegesquashassociation.com/>

## **Showcase: Amanda Sobhy**

In June 2010, the USA won the World Junior Women's Squash Championship. Amanda Sobhy (17, Sea Cliff, New York) defeated Nour El Tayeb (17, Cairo, Egypt) in four games to win the 2010 World Junior Women's Squash Championship in Cologne, Germany.

She is the first ever American to win a world squash title, at any level. This is a tremendous achievement, considering the strength and depth of squash players through out the rest of the world, and shows how squash is growing in the USA.

Amanda Sobhy is going to college this year, that college is Harvard.

see :-

video of Amanda Sobhy, World Junior Champion 2010.

[http://www.mini-net.co.uk/john\\_coach/links.php](http://www.mini-net.co.uk/john_coach/links.php)

Amanda Sobhy Wins World Junior Squash Championship

<http://www.ussquash.com/news/content.aspx?id=4918>

Sweep for U.S. Girls at Junior Open Squash Championships

<http://www.ussquash.com/news/content.aspx?id=5540>

## **Costs**

Playing squash does not take a large investment, once you have a racket (cost: \$50 to \$200), a ball (cost: around \$3) and a court - your ready to go. A modern squash racket should last you several years (unlike the old wooden ones) and the ball several months.

As for the courts, I am able to offer Mercy the use of the facilities of the Midtown Athletic Club. So there is no need to build any new school facilities.

Also, the U.S. manufacturer Harrow, offers great support for U.S. schools and juniors, giving discounts on equipment for all teams.

see :-

<http://www.harrowssports.com/>

## **Testimonial From a Local Player**

In playing with and talking to a local female player, I asked her for her thoughts on starting a school team and what squash has meant to her.

Eliza Calihan, Sophomore at Harvard :-

That is great news! I am happy to hear that squash is expanding in Rochester. I am more than happy to help/promote in any way I can!

It is hard to express over an e-mail, but squash has definitely changed my life. First, I should get the simple, shallow benefits I have received out of the way -- this is a point that should not at all be the reason someone starts playing, but it is relevant. Because squash is still an uncommon sport in the U.S., especially in Rochester, it is definitely a good way to get recruited into a top university; Yale, Princeton, Harvard, Trinity, etc.

Squash also introduced me to people that I would have never met otherwise - both in the world of junior tournaments, and now on my team in college which includes girls from Sri Lanka, India, Wales, Canada, etc.

I have also learned lessons from squash that carry into my everyday life; dedication, hard work, individual initiative, responsibility, and time management.

Thats what comes to mind for now, but feel free to send me any other questions/comments that would help you!

## **Articles – Interesting Reading**

### **Forbes**

Aimed at adults in general, they search for the 'healthiest' sport, and squash comes out as No. 1.

[http://www.forbes.com/2003/10/01/cx\\_ns\\_1001feat.html](http://www.forbes.com/2003/10/01/cx_ns_1001feat.html)

## The New York Times

The longest winning streak (by far) in the history of U.S. college sports :-  
the Trinity mens squash team, 239 matches, 13th consecutive national-championships, and counting...

NB. although it is currently the case that the best squash players come from outside of the USA, this is quickly changing due to the expansion of the game in U.S. schools, eg. Amanda Sobhy.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/20/magazine/20Squash-t.html?\\_r=3&scp=5&sq=squash&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/20/magazine/20Squash-t.html?_r=3&scp=5&sq=squash&st=cse)

## The Boston Channel (TV)

Shows how squash helped a student gain ivy league admission, into Dartmouth.

[http://www.mini-net.co.uk/john\\_coach/resources/articles/thebostonchannel/](http://www.mini-net.co.uk/john_coach/resources/articles/thebostonchannel/)

## U.S. SQUASH News

A full collection of all squash news in the USA, school, college and professional.

<http://www.ussquash.com/news/index.aspx>

## **Local Opposition**

There are opportunities for playing other local/regional squash teams, and as the sport grows, so will the number of possible matches.

Buffalo has a U.S. SSP league, see :-

[http://www.ussquash.com/ssm/pages/leagues/Team\\_Information.asp?id=5275](http://www.ussquash.com/ssm/pages/leagues/Team_Information.asp?id=5275)

Midtown Athletic Club and The Genesee Valley Club have junior programs, and can provide teams.

There are also some near by colleges with teams, and they may be interested in playing a match, in the interest of supporting squash development and providing the opportunity for the players to visit a college campus. eg. Cornell, William-Smith, Hamilton.

## **Vision for Rochester**

Mercy may be the first school to start a squash program, but I hope to follow it quickly with more local schools. Once we get four school teams going, Rochester can be recognized by U.S. Squash and become a part of their Scholastic Squash Program (SSP).

In the longer term, as the squash program grows in Rochester, we would have to look into the possibility of building some new squash courts to keep up with the demand. This may be a combined effort by the schools, providing a shared facility - who knows ?

see :-

Middle and High School Squash

<http://www.ussquash.com/functions/content.aspx?id=1580>

## **In Conclusion**

In terms of physical fitness/health and mental development (from a sport), squash is about as good as it gets. It suits athletes at all levels and particularly rewards hard effort and intelligence.

It is a very international sport and will provide plenty of interaction with people from outside of the USA.

It is the lesser known and played sport, so it is easier for players to stand out from the crowd and attract the interest of universities.

High (and middle) school squash is growing rapidly in the U.S., and I would like to take a Mercy team to the U.S. High School Team Championships, February 2012.