

Will the PSA and Tennis Channel's Understanding: "vastly expand squash's presence and visibility"?

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The World Squash Federation (WSF), United States Squash (US Squash), Professional Squash Association (PSA) and others are all doing many things right in their Stewardship of Squash Rackets as a participant sport. It is true that, (1) the Junior game is growing the World over, (2) the Collegiate Game is thriving with an unprecedented enthusiasm in which the Collegiate Squash Association (CSA) of the US is now being matched by the World University Games, (3) the Glass Courts and SquashTV have further engaged those who know the game mostly as a participant sport, (4) there is an exponential increase in numbers of tournaments (Professional and Amateur), (5) they maintain an equitable distribution of purses to sustain the lower ranked Pros and finally (6) the Ambassadors Program of Players includes far flung corners of the Squash World's 188 nations to retain representation in the game. These are all landmark and far sighted decisions and programs that have been instituted by these Administrative Bodies. They may even partially justify this statement attributed to PSA's CEO Alex Gough in the story reported in Daily Squash Report on 2/27/2015:

"We are delighted to have reached an agreement with Tennis Channel and feel certain that this is the beginning of a partnership that will be of huge benefit to squash not just in America, but all around the world," said PSA CEO Alex Gough.

"Tennis Channel will take live squash into the homes of millions of American citizens and to an audience who have never before engaged with the sport and we look forward to working closely with the team to ensure squash becomes a valuable part of their portfolio throughout the coming years."

Perhaps this is where we need to pause and re-consider the single most important problem facing the game as framed by this question! Why is Squash, which has been around for 140 years, with approximately 25 million players in 188 countries, still not regularly scheduled on commercial TV (perhaps with the current possible exception), does not have revenues matching these figures as a sport, is not in the Olympics after 60 years of sustained efforts and despite the contrary evidence from head to head competitions and other methods is still considered an inferior Racket Sport by most non-players? Answer: its communication(President Clinton's campaign motto)!

The answer is simple: the complexities of the game are nearly impossible to communicate with today's TV technology. The density and range of small movements, of the Squash Ball, the Racket Work, the Footwork, the Posture and the Spatial Orientations of the Players, etc...are all lost on SquashTV as they will be on TV from the Tennis Channel. The Tennis ball is 4.5 xs larger (i.e. volume) than the Squash Ball,

with a large court that the cameras can cover more easily than the Squash Ball and Court. At its fastest the Squash Ball (Cameron Pilley's 175 mph) covers the short diagonal distance from corner to corner in 0.14 seconds! One can just imagine the quickness the Player must have in cutting it off, and the Camera coverage that would be required to catch the details of the ball, player, moves and the strokes.

Consider another key problem which is in making the little Moves, Holds and Delays etc., that are so important in the inter conversion of Strokes, standout on TV! So e.g. the top 5 players know/do things on the court that the next 5 ranked players do not have a clue about and e.g. get wrong footed! The next #s 5 -10 know/do things that the next #s11-15 that the latter do not have a clue about and so get e.g. wrong footed and so on ...down to our levels of play! Despite decades of playing the game we still cannot see many of the things that all of the above Pros do! Now we go beyond this and ask a Naive, non-playing TV audience to see and understand all this - especially when the Optics/Imaging/Cameras cannot even capture these images! And then pay to do so!!!

This is a small part of the problem! The sad part is that this problem can be easily solved! The Science, Optics, Computation and Technology needed to solve it does not belong to that of current broadcasting. It does belong to frontline research labs in Optics, Imaging, Neuroscience and Super-computation - (where Nobel Laureates revolutionize the way humans think!). They can even capture images of atoms, molecules and cells at time scales of that of 1 electron orbital per atom (1 femtosecond) i.e. the time it takes an electron to complete 1 orbit around its atom! And so processing and communicating images of Squash Balls, Rackets and Players on the Court is an easily solved problem with adaptations of this Science.

Super-computers and Software can collect, process, store and recall these images in real time allowing more visibility of all those images ranging from the fleeting and small images of Squash Balls, Rackets, Player's small moves all the way up to Panoramas of the Court making commentary more effective! Communication of Squash on TV would jump into clarity! The technology has been assembled from Taxpayer Funds and would be made available to Squash if we could convince Scientists e.g. Neuroscientists, Imaging, Computational and other Engineers of a useful scientific return to them. That too is very possible.

The problem requires a scientific solution and neither can be solved by Public Relations nor by Showbiz nor by Show Courts nor by a deft Administrative move that some imagine is the source of the solution. It cannot be solved with another 'App' or with more access to TV retaining its current limitations!

The solution is predicated more on a Saturn V launch than on a Model T tune up – although both technologies are available, if you get the drift! This is the one thing that the WSF, US Squash and PSA continues doing that retains the most serious impediment to the development of Squash – not addressing the inability to

communicate and so grow the game! It upends all their good work by locking the game into its current form, which for all practical purposes, cannot be effectively televised!

At the risk of belaboring the point, some links to published articles, are copied below. They deal with these issues in different ways, with more data and in greater detail.

While this deal between the PSA and the Tennis Channel is a good 'stop gap' measure for Squash it will not catapult the game, in any conceivable way, into the realm of Tennis where it needs to be to become viable! This TV based economic transition is needed not only so Squash can stay in the Olympics (if it ever gets in!) but of more importance so it can grow and the game as well as our Racket Athletes, who are among the best if not the best, can take their rightful place in the World of Sports!

Our leaders need to be enlightened enough to plan for the long term growth of the game that they have chosen to Steward - in addition to meeting its immediate needs for survival!

Links:

- (1) http://www.dailysquashreport.com/2_27_15_psa.htm
- (2) ['Promoting Squash or The Key To The Olympic Door' FSN Interviewed by **Framboise Gommendy**, Owner and Publisher of **Carte Blanche In SquashSite** 04 April2014.](#)
- (3) ['Promoting Squash or The Key To The Olympic Door' - **Francoise Gommendy**, **Carte Blanche In SquashSite** Pre-Edited Version. 4.5.2014. on **Ferez'nSquashDocs**.](#)