

An introduction to Racketball (by Fraser Liversage)

Racketball is one of the fastest growing sports in the UK, and as well as being a great game for experienced squash players, Racketball is a perfect introduction for people looking to play a fun and competitive sport.

A forty minute Racketball match is also a fantastic cardio-vascular workout, for players of all abilities!

In the UK, Racketball is played on a court 32 feet long and 21 feet wide (an international Squash Court). In America they play the game on a court 40 feet long by 20 feet wide.



HISTORY

In 1950, Joe Sobek invented Racquetball at Greenwich YMCA in Connecticut, having experimented with games in a court used for Irish Handball. The ball, the size of a Lawn Tennis ball and the rackets with short handles make racketball a comparatively simple game to play when compared to squash, badminton or tennis. For most players and in particular those new to the game, the eye, hand, ball coordination is easier to grasp than in other racquet sports. By 1970, some 50,000 players enjoyed the game in America and Canada. In the American version of the game they use a *really* bouncy ball and even the ceiling is used as part of the playing surface!

In 1976, Ian D.W. Wright (Kent) introduced the game in England. The game was adapted so it could be played on a squash court and consequently we use a slightly less bouncy ball as the ceiling was not included in the play area. In 1984, the British Racketball Association was founded and later that year was confirmed by the English Sports Council as the Governing Body of the sport. The English version of Racketball is now played in Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Bermuda, France, The Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and other countries where there are squash courts. It is even played in North America on courts originally constructed for American (Hard Ball) Squash with 18 feet 6 inches wide courts.

On 1st September 1998, the Racketball Association merged with the Squash Rackets Association, now known as England Squash & Racketball.

THE SINGLES RULES (in brief) A full set of rules can be downloaded from www.englishsquashandracketball.com

PLAY

The game of Racketball is an ideal sport for all ages and played on a standard squash court. England Squash and Racketball have approved two balls - The 'Blue' racketball is recommended for almost every player from beginner to expert and the 'Black' racketball is for national and international competition. Each player has a regulation Racketball racket and takes it in turns to hit the ball to the front wall, the ball can only bounce on the floor once - that's really all you need to know so now you can get playing.

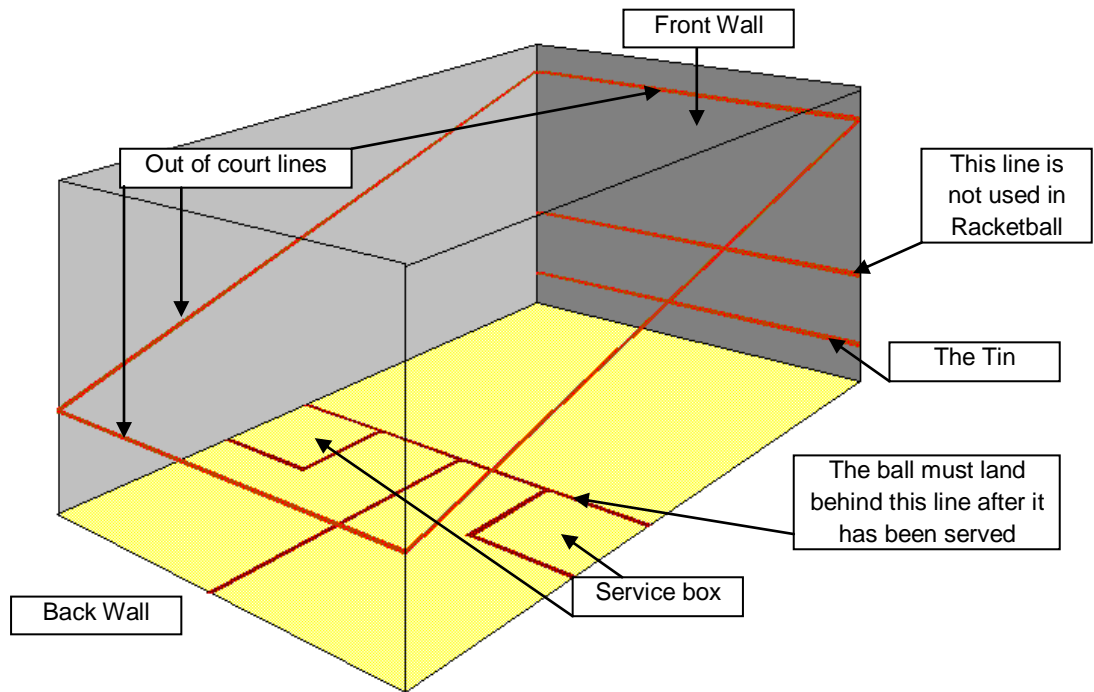
HOW TO SCORE

Matches are usually the best of 5 games (or if time is short, the best of 3 games), with each game being played to **11 points**. So, the player who first wins 11 points; wins the game, except that, if the score reaches 10 all, when the game is decided by a player achieving **2 clear points**, e.g. 12-10 or 19-17.

HOW POINTS ARE SCORED ("Point-a-Rally" system [PARS], sometimes referred to as "American Scoring")

In Racketball a point can be scored by either player, unlike squash (played under English rules) where only the server can win a point. After a "good" service has been delivered, the players return the ball alternately until one or other fails to make a "good" return, or the ball otherwise ceases to be in play. Failure to make a "good" return results in a point being awarded to your opponent. If you'd been the receiver when the ball was served and you win the point, you also win the right to serve the next ball and you continue to serve until you lose a point.

The ball must hit the front wall (the highest wall) before your opponent can play their shot. If you fail to hit the front wall your opponent wins the point and serves the next ball. The ball can hit any wall on its way to or from the front wall, but it can only bounce on the floor once. Playing a shot before the ball bounces on the floor is allowed and is called a "volley". The ball is "out" if it touches any of the high (red) out of court lines.



SERVING

The right to serve is decided by the spin of a racket or coin. Thereafter the Server continues to serve until he/she loses the point, whereupon the opponent becomes the Server, and so on throughout the match. At the time of striking the ball, the Server must have at least one foot in contact with the floor within the service box, and no part of that foot touching the line surrounding the service box.

The ball is dropped to the floor so it bounces once then hit directly to the front wall above the tin, which is the board about half a meter high right across the bottom of the front wall. The ball should return to the opposite back quarter of the court, where the receiver should be standing. If the ball falls in the front part of the court or hits the back wall without bouncing, the receiver does not have to hit it and the server can have a second serve. When a player first wins the right to serve, they can choose from which service box they serve, but thereafter they alternate the box from where they serve until they lose a point. If they regain the right to serve, then they can (again) choose which service box they want to serve from.

LETS & STROKES (Safety first!)

Generally, after a player plays a shot, he/she should make every effort to get out of the way for their opponent to have their shot. If there is any danger, for example players may collide or if you would hit the opponent with the ball or the racket, **stop**, and say "LET please". At "beginner level" the other player should always agree. No point is scored, and the rally is re-started.

Once you become more proficient there is a rule whereby if the player that stops and asked for a let could have made a winning shot, then he/she can be awarded a "STROKE" – this means that they win the rally and the point as a reward for safe play. Strokes in Racketball are very unusual and you don't need to worry about them quite yet. It is gracious to simply replay the point.

START PLAYING

OK, now you know where to play, what ball to use (the **BLUE Ball**), how to serve and score, it is time to enjoy your game.

Most importantly have fun.....

Good luck!