



ESSENTIAL BUYS

Yes, the racquet is key, but injury prevention also comes into the equation



SQUASH TIPS

1 GET A COACH. Have lessons. This will make sure your technique and tactics are sound and ingrained from the start. If you don't, you'll never really improve, have a generally miserable time and eventually give up.

2 DON'T PLAY IT TO GET FIT. They don't call it the heart-attack sport for nothing. Train to a reasonable level of fitness, then start running around a squash court. You're a health-risk otherwise.

3 FIND A REGULAR OPPONENT WHO IS EITHER AT YOUR STANDARD OR VERY SLIGHTLY BETTER. This will make you give everything, every game, to win – and you'll improve. Play someone worse than you, and your game declines amazingly quickly. Play someone too good and you'll wonder what the point is.

4 THINK ABOUT PROTECTION. Many old hands will scoff, but this is a fast sport in a small box, and accidents can happen. I've been hit by squash balls countless times, and my grandad got one in the eye and lost it. His eye, not his temper.

5 GET THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT. It's a punishing, high-impact sport, so do anything you can to make it easier on your body: find a dedicated squash and tennis shop with decent, informed advice, if you can.

Jansher Khan, used to wear a practice opponent to exhaustion, then call another one in for the same treatment. Then another.

Played properly, the game is all about timing, positioning and thought, and when you get into the zone where it's all working together, it's a fantastic feeling. It's fun, but it's a proper bloody test into the bargain.

The best and worst thing about squash is that it never leaves you alone.

WORDS OF ADVICE

Australia has got a long tradition in squash, but just like a Disney movie, evil property developers have wiped out swathes of decent courts and put up flats, instead. If you do manage to

find a local club, with a coach you like, it'll probably have a series of competitions, too, so you can find your level and work your way up.

Try to ease into genuine squash fitness. The first few times you play, you'll ache the next day, especially in the glutes, as your body tries to get used to all that lunging and sprinting. Make sure you are very well hydrated and regularly topping

up: 40 minutes of competitive squash will make you sweat like never before. Beware of ambient heat, too. If the court is not aired or airconditioned properly, a hot day turns it into something out of *Tenko*.



Eye Guard

Not a bad precaution, and you'll be glad you're wearing them the first time a ball caroms off you at the speed of light.

Pro Kennex Infinity Eye Guard, \$30



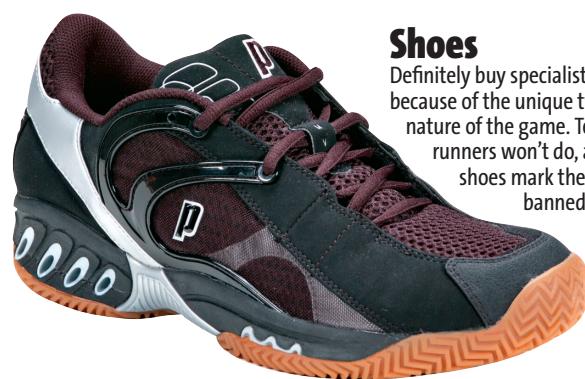
Racquets

The racquet is the most important decision, so get advice. There are racquets for different pocket-depths, for power players and for touch players, with string types and tensions to match. These racquets are just a starting point.

Dunlop Blackmax Carbon 520, \$170
Head i.X130, \$280

Ball

The club will sell you balls. Different dots mean different speeds. Go for a single red-dot type if you're a beginner. \$4 each.



Shoes

Definitely buy specialist squash shoes, because of the unique twisting, lunging nature of the game. Tennis shoes or runners won't do, and black-soled shoes mark the court and are banned. These have especially good heel cushioning.

Prince MV4, \$149

WANT MORE INFO?

- Head to www.squash.org.au, where you'll find an impressive amount of information on everything from events to Aussie squash legends, clubs, rules and regulations, equipment and more, with special areas for your part of the country.
- In addition, try www.nswsquash.com.au, qsquash.com, www.squashvic.com.au, www.squashsa.asn.au, www.wasquash.asn.au, www.squashact.asn.au and www.squashnt.com.au.
- Want coaching with the academy of Aussie legend Rod Eyles? Go to www.squashacademy.com.au. Visit www.squashsite.co.uk/videos7.htm for handy YouTube tips, and search "Lords of squash" on YouTube for a tribute to Jahangir and Jansher Khan, to see how the best do it.