

In the **SWing**

Squash Wellington Newsletter

DOUBLING DOWN

It's been an exciting end to the squash calendar, with many of our district's squashies travelling to Tauranga to take in the excitement of the Nations Cup, and of course the NZ Squash Open. Hopefully the experience was just what everyone needed to energise them at the end of a long season.

The year's not quite over however, with clubs running their summer programmes, Masters Interclub returning, and of course a long run of doubles tournaments, pictures of which follow.

This month's In the SWing gets its geek on, as Catherine Sayer, self-promoted 'feature writer' (I thought she'd been at least at this level for a while) presents the first of a series of articles on technology in squash.

We also have some exciting news, courtesy of SW Chair Ann Smith, about some of our high-performing juniors, as well as reports of beautifully restored courts in the Hutt Valley.

In the SWing will be taking a break over summer, but keep an eye out for the 2023 Squash Wellington Tournament Calendar, to be published in the next couple of weeks.

Russell Henderson, SW General Manager



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PARTICIPATION – DOUBLES

DUBS BE GOOD TO ME

It's that time of year where, for many of us, squash ceases to be an individual sport, and we partner up, sharing the highs and the lows, the joys and the anguish (and a lot of laughs) with a playing partner.

Wellington has seen a growing number of doubles tournies, and next year will see the Wellington Doubles move to the tail end of the playing season, meaning that there will be ten doubles tournaments to participate in between October and December.

And it's not just about donning costumes and getting a bit silly; Jason Fletcher, Squash NZ Coaching Development Leader, recently ran a coaching programme in Kuala Lumpur, where junior squads train for doubles. Doubles is very much part of the performance programme in parts of Asia, and perhaps it'll go that way in this part of the world.

At the time of writing, Tawa Doubles is kicking off, with Wainuiomata coming up next week to round off the doubles season. Here's a collection of excellent costumes from the past few weeks of four-on-a-court fun, from Masterton, Red Star, Martinborough, Thorndon, Upper Hutt and Island Bay.



PARTICIPATION – DOUBLES



PARTICIPATION – DOUBLES



FEATURE ARTICLE

SquashAnalytics: a shot in the dark

This month, In the SWing's newly promoted feature writer Catharine Sayer presents the first part of a series examining squash's harnessing of technology.

All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely Players

It's difficult to beat live squash as a spectator sport, particularly when the opponents are evenly matched. Whether the viewing platform is a row of beanbags at the side of a Professional Squash Association Silver event glasscourt featuring the world numbers 2 and 4 or the upstairs gallery of a draughty plaster court in a local club, it's easy to get drawn into the pulsating back and forth of players, strangers even, vying for supremacy. There's a special kind of drama in witnessing commanding leads being established then eroded, the protagonists drifting in and out of focus, and outs, tins, flukes and mid-court looseners presenting in equal abundance as winners.

I'm the rare sort who relishes reffing or mark after my match, precisely as it affords me the opportunity to become engrossed in this theatre from the knock-up to the converted match ball. To my mind, the stress in squash falls almost entirely on the invested spectator, far more so than is typically felt by the players doing battle or the officials, for whom neutrality is enforced. For some, that investment can dial up the tension slightly too high for comfort.

...And one man in his time plays many parts

Enter stage left Island Bay player and squash father Luke Brown. A handy (ambidextrous even) player in his own right, some district squashies might recognise Luke as the father of Otis Brown, one of the district's top juniors. *[Surely the infant, mewling and puking in the nurse's arms? – Ed]*



Father and son Luke and Otis. (Photo by Milan Maric)

The Browns have been prolific tournament goers these last few years, and steadfast in their quiet support of each other. That quiet support belies the tension felt by the elder Brown in watching his son's exploits, its intensity warranting a diversionary tactic met by Luke's creation of what is now an in-match app, SquashAnalytics.

SquashAnalytics has come a long way from version 1.0, which, near the start of the season comprised Luke clutching a notebook and a fistful of coloured pens used to frantically jot notations the Enigma codecrackers would've taken at least a pot of tea and packet of chocolate HobNobs, or an episode of the Archers, to decipher *[Milo and TimTams? Country Calendar? – Ed]*.

Southpawpawing

If one looks and listens closely, with SquashAnalytics in hand Luke is now the quietest spectator of them all, esconced in the rhythmic jabbing of his phone as each shot is played. Luke records the way in which the rally was won (tin, out,

FEATURE ARTICLE

not up, stroke) or that it ended in a let, and the identity of its winner. The product is data on each rally length by number of shots, mean rally length per game and per match and the mean rally length for rallies won by each player.

“It’s definitely changed the way I watch the game: now when I see Otis hit it to the back there’s an excitement because I know he’s controlling the rally. And when the numbers of shots in a rally are getting up there – forty plus – it adds another level of excitement because I know this is a biggie and how tired both players are going to be after it, and that one of them – preferably not Otis – will inevitably start going for easy winners.”

Evidence-based thinking

The frantic tapping isn’t merely tension relief for Luke; the data has provided the evidence base to convince Otis to adjust his tactics. Evan Williams, Otis’s coach, advised him of three things this time last year: first, that he was generally the fitter player such that longer matches should generally go his way; second, that he needed greater patience before going for an attacking winner, and third, that boasting off a serve should be Plan C, after a straight drive or cross-court.

Without doubting his coach’s wisdom, solid evidence was called for. The eureka moment for Luke took place when acting as a technology advisor to secondary school pupils in the Waikato as part of a corporate community service programme. In a classic role swap, Luke grasped the potential of a simple coding language (Thunkable) he witnessed being used by the pupils to build mobile apps. Knowing just about enough to be dangerous he set to, building and refining SquashAnalytics over several months.

The data collected by Luke has proven Williams’s case.

“By my Dad showing me in between games just how long our rallies are going, and how after the longer rallies, it’s my opponent who is going for risky attacking winners that often miss, I’m motivated to play more patiently. In the past we’ve felt that there’ve been passages where I’ve been hitting the tin a lot but now the app actually proves when that’s happening. Seeing how I’m gifting points to my opponent, the actual percentage of my opponent’s winners scored off my tins, definitely makes me change tack within a match,” reflects Otis.

“It definitely showed me that I was losing most rallies when I boasted the return of serve, so that forced me to learn how to do straight drives off awkwardly landing serves.”

Moneyball

Stressed parents, coaches, and squashies familiar with Otis and Luke clutching white envelopes at the end of tournaments will no doubt be looking up SquashAnalytics to install it on their own phones.

“It’s not available in the app store but I’d like to finish it to the point where I can upload it and make it available sometime next year,” says Luke.

“It won’t be useful for everyone, given that it only measures a few aspects of a squash game, and needs a dedicated person to manually record data for the entirety of a match. On the plus side, the app does support trend analysis, in that we can have trips down memory lane looking at matches recorded over the whole season and see how the momentum has swung in his results against particular players.

“It’s a good challenge for me, though, to see if I can expand it to record other relevant things. Now that Otis has clearly taken the evidence-based approach to nail the attritional paradigm repopularised by Paul Coll,” jokes Luke, *“we’ll be trying to figure out what data to capture to support new tactical elements he*

FEATURE ARTICLE

If you've got ideas for something to measure to help your squash game, or you'd like a heads up when the app is available for wider consumption, email Luke at lukeb33@gmail.com and he can see if it's straight forward to include or let you know when you can try it out.

might think about bring in."

"Of course the constraint is the short timespan available during live play to capture whatever it is. What is recorded can't be too complicated or judgment-based."

"It'll also be a fun challenge working out how the app can be adapted to provide value to players at all levels of squash".

Bay City Rollers

So will Otis be paying greater heed to his coach from now on?

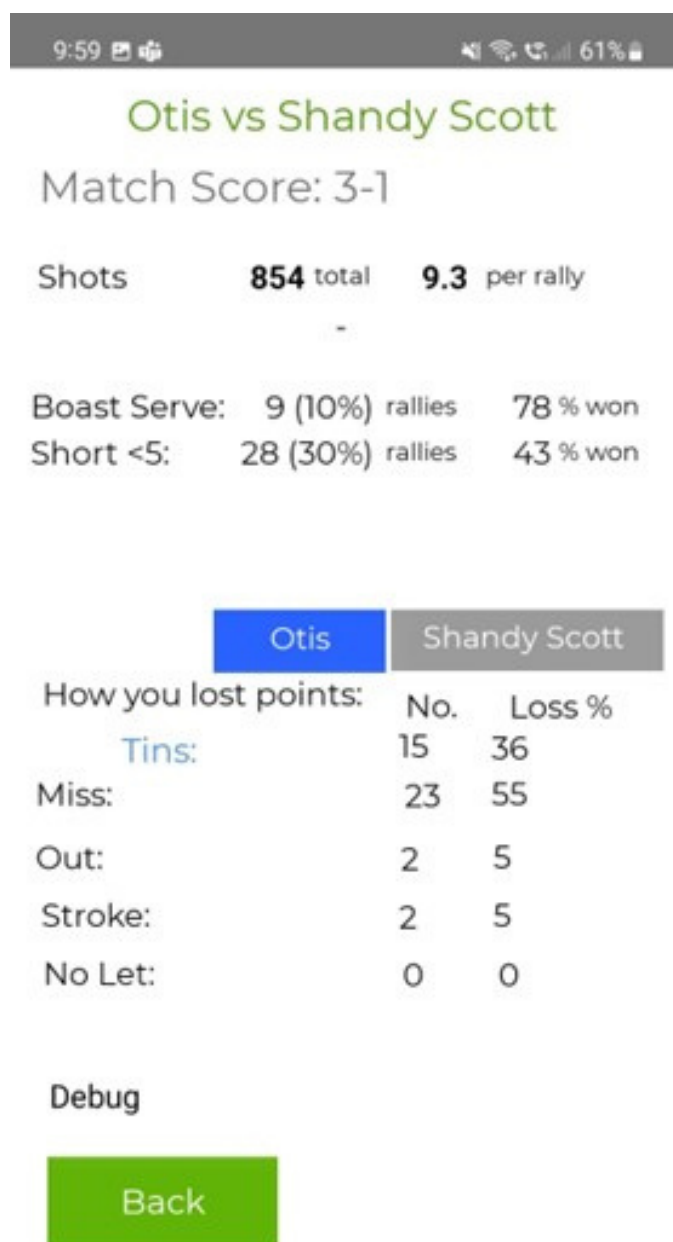
"Don't tell him this but he's been right on pretty much everything," sighs Otis.

"Even, unfortunately, the fitness. We've seen from the data sets we've captured on each other's matches the importance of fitness by seeing that we both tend to win more when the mean shots per rally is high. We know we need to get fitter to sustain that effort."

There's no danger that the app is turning Otis and Luke into robots, although creating a robot squash player is probably well within Luke's capability.

"Nah, we love a cross-court nick off the serve just as much as the next Island Bay man," quips Luke.

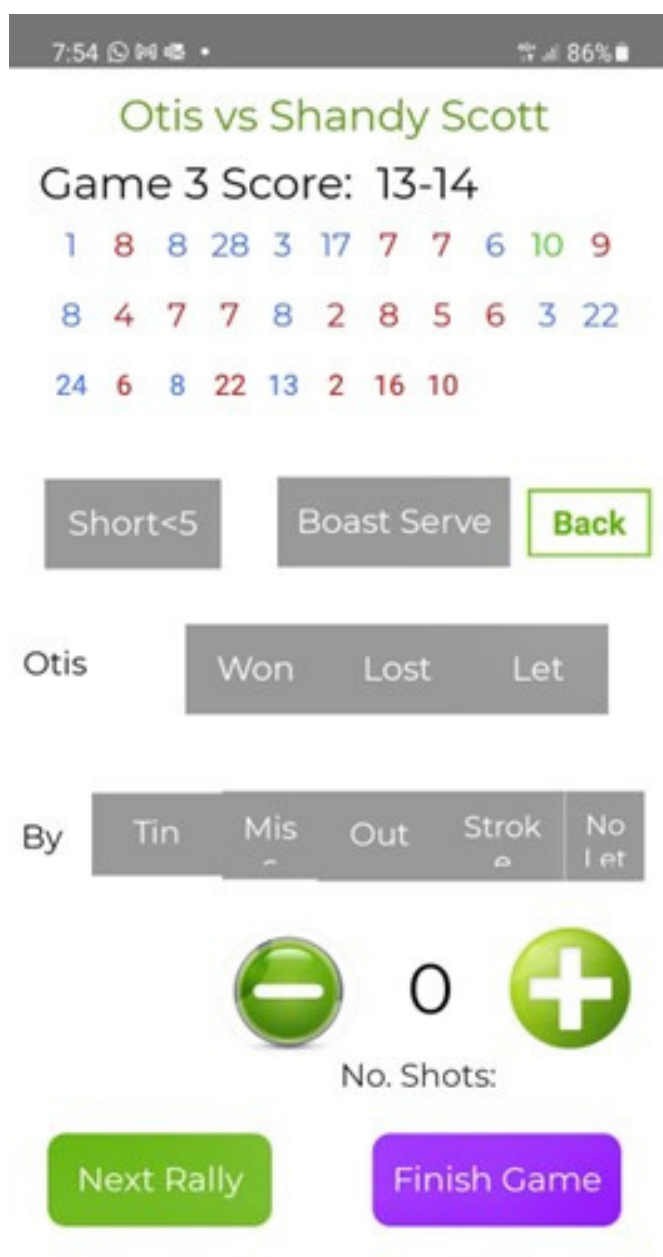
Whakaahua 1 – Match summary screen



"This one here shows the whole match data. I can see that the whole match – 4 games – had over 850 shots, the relative contribution of tins and misses to Otis's losing rallies, and how successful Otis boasting off the serve or taking the ball in short in the first 5 shots of a rally was."

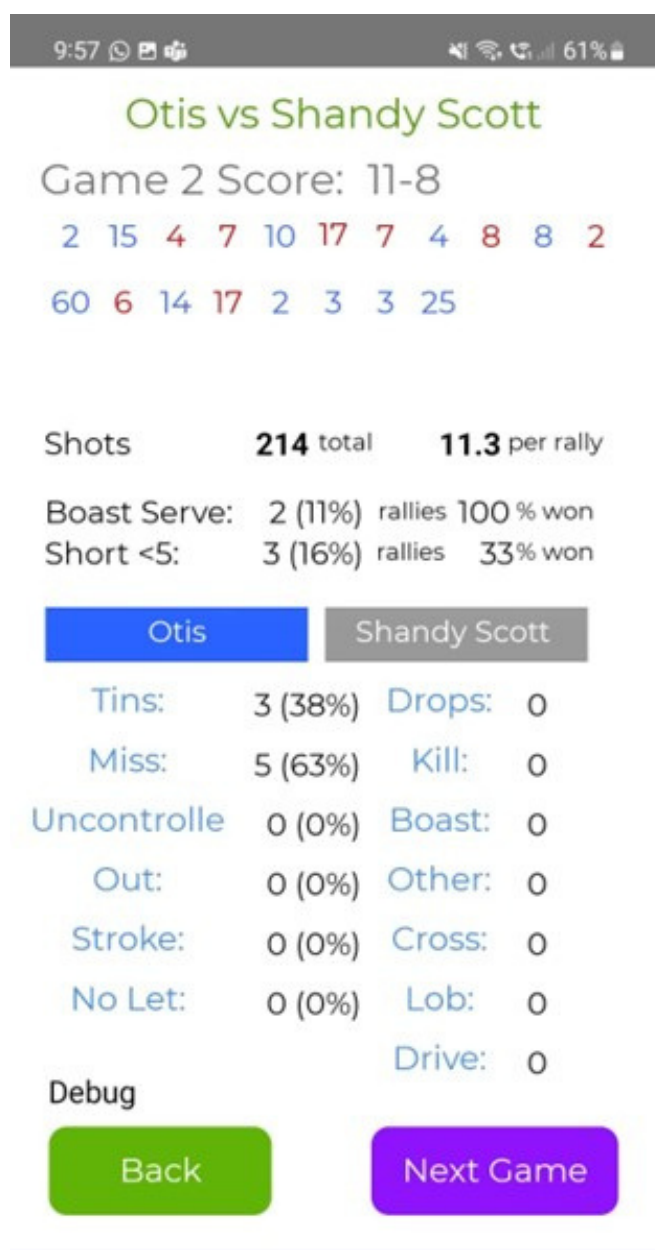
FEATURE ARTICLE

Whakaahua 2 – In-game screen



“This third game against Shandy was particularly stressful and it ended up going to 320 shots which was a new record for Otis. What made this better in terms of fitness or patience was that it built on the preceding long game. This screenshot is the in-game screen that I punch during each rally to record the number of shots and at the end of each rally to show how it ended.”

Whakaahua 1 – Game summary screen



“Here you can see that in this second game in the match against Shandy there was a rally of 60 shots won by Otis (blue numbers are the rallies won and red numbers the rallies lost), by far the longest he had played at that point, and definitely one that had the crowd in disbelief.

This game summary screen also shows that the mean rally length was 11.3 shots, which is right up there - mine is usually about 4.5!”

PERFORMANCE

HPSNZ Talent identification!

Over the last few months, Squash Wellington has been working with High Performance Sport NZ and recently accepted an invitation to participate in HPSNZ's Performance Pathways regional project in Wellington.

"Enhancing our performance pathways will be crucial to performances in 2028 Los Angeles and 2032 Brisbane Olympic cycles. Therefore HPSNZ's 2024 strategy is committed to developing an enhanced pipeline of talent through a network of Regional Hubs and Pods across the country.

Improving regional support for pathway athletes will enable them to train closer to their support networks while they develop their readiness to transition into high performance campaigns.

The pathway project targets pre-HP athletes, supporting them to transition into High Performance category over time and equipping them to manage the ongoing transitions that will be expected of High-Performance athletes".

Waimarama Taumaunu, Pathways Pilot Lead, Wellington

"This is a great opportunity for our sport to contribute to the future pathways that will guide High Performance NZ to support athletes. We are very proud to announce that after what has been an exceptional season, including their selection and participation at the World Junior Championships, Oliver Dunbar and Maiden-Lee Coe have been selected to represent Wellington and squash on this 12-month programme.

We know Oli and Maiden will thrive in this programme, working with emerging talented athletes from across Wellington. The cohorts' valuable insights will help shape the way high performing athletes are supported and nurtured along their journey". **Ann Smith, SW Chairperson**

On Monday 28th November Oli and Maiden will be officially welcomed on the programme, along with other identified athletes at official welcome evening. Have a great time Oli and Maiden!

To learn more about the programme and its objectives click [here](#).



AWARDS - COLLEGE SPORT AWARDS

The recognition continues...

The prestigious College Sport Wellington – Sportspersons of the Year Awards Dinner are integral to the recognition of elite sporting achievement amongst secondary school students of the Wellington region.

Nominated by schools and endorsed by Club and District this year's finalists were:

Girls

Diana Galloway – Hutt Valley High

Maiden-Lee Coe – Te Kura Maori o Porirua

Molly Hawkins – St Oran's College

Boys

Nate Kennerley – Hutt International

Shay Gannon – Onslow College

Oliver Dunbar – Scots College

Squash Players of the Year

Maiden Lee Coe & Oliver Dunbar.

Oli was also a finalist in the All Rounder of the Year category as well.

Congratulations to all nominees and winners, Maiden-Lee and Oli.



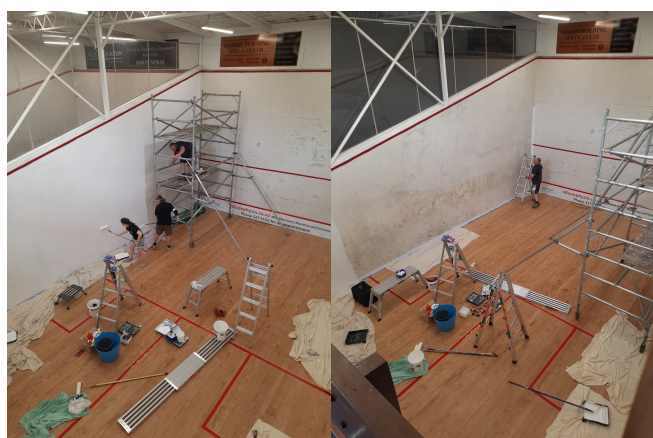
2022 SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR AWARDS

CLUB CAPABILITY

Court and Facilities Upgrades @ Upper Hutt

It's always a pleasure to share news of facilities upgrades. Full of character, our district's *seasoned* clubs require huge amounts of TLC to keep the courts playing well, and to preserve the facilities as the warm, welcoming places we know and love.

The team at Squash @ Upper Hutt have been hard at work, getting their courts in tip top nick.



"We have put a lot of effort into upgrading the courts in recent years. The floors have all been sanded, new LED Lighting installed and electronic scoring also installed on all courts."

"We are now repairing all our front wall cracks & holes and painting the courts to complete the upgrade. Court one was completed in October and court two is currently underway. We look forward to you all playing on them in the 2023 season."

"We are also planning the toilet area upgrade in the Men's Changing room for 2023 and long-term planning to have all the windows replaced with double glazed windows."

Vicky Webster, President, Squash @ Upper Hutt



COMING UP

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Tawa Doubles	25 November
Wainuiomata Doubles	02 December
Tawa Ham & Turkey	07 December
2023 Tournament Calendar	December

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Contact admin@squashwellington.org.nz for more details.