

# Nebraska Blue Dot Doubles Squash

## Summary of Rules

The rules for “Nebraska Blue Dot Doubles Squash” are essentially the same as those of the standard “North American Doubles” which are summarized and paraphrased below. The game derived its name, because it started more or less unofficially in Lincoln, Nebraska. Lincoln has dozens of racquetball courts but only two squash courts - and only one of those two courts is the regulation 20 feet wide. So Nebraska Blue Dot Doubles Squash was a game born out of necessity but continued because it is good squash and a lot of fun.

**Court:** This form of squash is played on a racquetball (RB) court which is 20 ft by 40 ft, marked with a 19 inch “tin” line, an 8 foot 2 inch cut or service line on the front wall, and an 8 foot out of bounds on the back wall. The backcourt service line coincides with the dashed or interrupted back line of RB court and the service boxes are 4 ft square. The side boundaries are 18.5 feet for the first 28.5 feet and 13.5 feet for the last 11.5 feet. These boundaries are the same proportions as the NA Doubles court. The side boundaries are not required but are ideal. See specifics below.

**Ball:** The ball for this game is the old Dunlop “blue dot” ball or the new Dunlop Blue “Max” ball, because these are the liveliest of the Dunlop squash balls and have the longest “hang-time”. This is a lively softball game.

**Players:** A team consists of a “right-waller” and a “left-waller. This means someone more comfortable or competent on the right side of the court and one more comfortable or competent on the left side (backhand side for right handers and forehand for left handers) of the court. With time people find out where they like to play or will become competent on both sides.

**Points:** (Rule 1) the game is to 15 points with a point awarded with each serve unless a “let” is called. At “13 all” the team first reaching 13 must announce before the next serve “no set” or “game” (i.e. game to 15 points), “set three” (three more points), or “set five” (five more points). At “14 all” provided the score has not been “13 all” the team first reaching 14 must choose “no set” or “game” (game to 15 points) which is one more point or “set three”.

**Service:** (Rule 3) Start of the game is decided by the spin of a racquet. The first server may choose the side to start and will thereafter alternate sides. She/he has only one turn, which lasts until a point is lost. Thereafter each team has two servers. The first Person in, serves on alternate sides until a point is lost. The second person continues on the next side (and then alternates) until the next point is lost. The first to serve chooses the side but thereafter, the side alternates. A server has two chances to make a good, inbound serve. At the end of a game, the winner shall have the choice of serving or receiving to start the next game.

**Right to Play the Ball:** (Rule 5) Immediately after a side has struck the ball, each player must allow the opponent to have a fair view of the ball and a fair opportunity to strike the ball from any position on the court they so elect. As there are four persons on the court, each with a racquet, an excessive swing or blocking an opponent’s view will not give the opponent a fair opportunity. In general, this works because players know where they should be which is, in general terms, on the right or left side of the court depending on which wall one plays. Beyond that, the usual care for safety of oneself and others rules.

**Stroke:** (Rule 6) A “let point” or “stroke” is offered an opponent by a player who violates the above i.e. obstructs the view or ability of the opponent to fairly strike the ball. The most frequent violations of this rule is when the striker hits the ball back to her/himself thereby obstructing the vision of the opponent (Rule 6,a,4) and when the striker uses a sweeping tennis stroke (6,a,2). No one should have to duck a swing or “go through” a player to make contact with the ball. In squash, it is good etiquette to offer the point rather than to wait for it to be requested. When a striker hits the ball back to her/himself and the opponent refrains from striking it and calls a “Let”, she/he should be offered and given the point irrespective of whether or not she/he could have struck the ball for a winner. The intent is to penalize the striker for the bad shot that placed her/him or her/his partner in the poor position That is sportsmanship at its best and is a hallmark of the game of squash.

**Lets:** (Rule 7) because there are four persons on the court, a “Let” is a necessary and frequent call. This call is usually made in the following circumstances:

- Automatically, should the striker be required to “come around” on a shot. This is mandated, as there would be a finite period of time when the striker is unable to see all of the opponents or where she/he will strike the ball.
- whenever there is not unanimous agreement as to whether or not a ball is out of bounds or has touched the “Tin” line. If there is a “Tin” installed, this is of less concern.

Whenever the striker does not have full view access to the front wall from wherever she/he is on the court or could not make a shot without hitting an opponent or her/his teammate.

Whenever the striker is impeded in her/his effort to reach the ball to attempt a point. Possibly, rule 6 may apply in this situation.

**Play without a Referee:** Most matches are played without an official referee. For this reason, if the players are unable to agree with respect to the circumstances of the “Let Point rule” (Rule 6), the point shall be a “Let”.

### **Court Dimensions Specified**

- If it is a true RB court, the 20' height is fixed. If it is higher OK - or better
- Court size of 40' by 20 ' is regulation RB size
- Upper front wall out of bounds is set at 18'6" only to have some out of bounds above it
- The height of the first 28' 6" is 18' 6" (proportional to NA doubles dimensions). The height of the next 11' 6" is 14' 6" - notice the change from a 5' jog in the regular North American Doubles court
- Back wall out of bounds is at 8 ft or the lower edge of any gallery or present line. This may vary as some courts have viewing galleries or windows etc.

### **Court Markings**

- The lines are 2" as in the International softball courts (this is optional).

- Height of upper edge of the cut line is 8'2" as per NA Doubles.
- Height of the "tin" is 19" (the international softball height).
- Tell-tale beveling is ideal. Use either a removable tin or some raised device at 19" to assist in determining ball height. (You call a lot of lets if you only have the 2" line if the court is still used as a RB court).
- The service line is placed where the back interrupted line on a RB court is placed to reduce confusion on the floor.

The service boxes have been made square, as this is the International softball shape. The 4' square for size seems to work well.

The center of the backcourt centerline should be 10' from each wall of a 20' court ;-). It would be appropriate to include on promotional blurbs that the ball is the Dunlop blue "Max" or the old Blue Dot soft ball feels most like NA Doubles played in the larger (25' by 45') court. Of course, the playing surface should be unvarnished natural wood for safety reasons. You may note the International softball points throughout such as 2" line thickness, square service boxes, and a 19" tin. The side-wall heights with the jog is NA Doubles style which sort of ties this game (NBDDS) to the Standard NA Doubles game.

### **Comments**

Doubles Squash played on a Racquetball sized court was born out of necessity. Virtually all those who have played it find it enjoyable and "good squash". Those who have played standard North American Doubles remark that the game feels very similar despite the difference in the ball and court size.

For those of you who have not played standard NA Doubles squash, it is played on a 25 ft by 45 ft court with a very hard, yet bouncy and fast ball. The tin is at 17 inches and the back wall out of bounds is at 7 ft. These courts are usually 22 to 24 ft high with the upper front and most of the side boundary at 20 ft.

Doubles squash is played at all ages and by both sexes but finds its greatest popularity in the above 40 age group as it is more social and less physically demanding than singles squash on the 21 ft or 20 ft by 32 ft court. "Nebraska Doubles" is a great transition game between the softball International singles and NA Doubles and there are a lot more RB courts around than NA Doubles courts. It is also a game that will develop and maintain squash in areas with few or no squash courts but with committed squash players.

Racquetball players finding they have reached the acme of their game find this an especially energizing change, as the bar of excellence is considerably raised. The challenge of squash with its fast pace and chess-like strategies is part of why they very quickly develop the taste for squash.

If you love the game of squash, you will love this brand of Doubles. The experience I have had is that "cut in" is the most popular as one only has to show up to play and not try to "arrange" a match getting four players to agree on a time. Just advertise the days you available (for

example) Tuesday and/or Thursday afternoon (4 to 6) and Saturday mornings and see who shows up. It won't be long before you will be starting a second court.

ENJOY  
Charles H. Pierce, MD, PhD  
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