

# An Update on the Wet Squash Walls

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As those of you who play squash would know for the last few years the club has a moisture issue which affects the squash court walls on an intermittent basis, primarily during winter. For the rest of the year the courts are absolutely fine.

During what is usually the busiest time of year for squash players, the wet walls and skidding ball caused by this issue can make a game vary from frustrating to almost unplayable. It's the equivalent of playing tennis on a rainy day. While it doesn't happen every day, it's frequent enough to be a serious issue for our players.

The purpose of this article is to bring you up to speed on what we know about the issue, what causes it and what we are doing to address it.

## Read Here For The Short Version

We are now aware of the majority of the issues which cause moisture on the courts. We are engaging a number of companies to quote to reduce (not fix) the issue. No one supplier we've engaged so far will guarantee their solution, but all claim it will significantly reduce the issue.

We will be at a point soon where we will have enough quotes to consider and will make a decision on what solution to go for, but the price tags on these fixes make this an important decision for the club not to take lightly.

## Read Here For The Long Version

There are multiple contributors to our moisture problem (and multiple fixes required):

- We are situated in a 'bowl' that also happens to have a large moisture source (the stream which occasionally becomes a raging torrent).
- Our building does not have insulation to retain warmth (and keep out moisture) or a double wall with an air pocket to separate the air inside the club from potential moist air outside.
- The vents we have around the club are useful in summer to enable air flow but on wet days serve to introduce moist air to the inside.
- Players! People exhale moist air, the players exhale even more. Without a way of dealing with that moisture it ends up sitting on the walls.
- The Sauna will be an additional contributor of moisture
- There is no air flow system in the club to disturb, treat or remove the moisture within the club
- Condensation is created when there is a difference in the temperature of the walls and the outside air (made worse without any insulation).
- The outside walls which form the 'front' of each court are essentially untreated concrete, which means that moisture can (and is) absorbed by the porous material.
- There are some holes on the outside of the building which allow moisture into the inside environment.

- Some years ago, we painted the squash court walls. Whether the wrong paint was used or whether it was bad advice, this has meant that we now have a squash court surface which doesn't breathe ie moisture accumulates on the walls.

## What Will Fix The Problem?

A Combination of the following are likely to significantly reduce, if not entirely fix the problem:

- A Ventilation and air movement system (e.g similar to heat pumps or Home DVS - just on a larger scale)
- Insulation for under the floors and the ceiling
- Doors to prevent the Sauna air from circulating to the courts
- Blocking the vents and any other holes on the outside of the courts
- A double-wall system (ie cladding) for the building
- Sanding back the court walls and re-doing with a Plaster system

## What Have We Done So Far?

We commissioned an engineering report within the last few years which identified the list of issues above and recommended a number of potential solutions which were a combination of heating and air ventilation systems, insulation and structural changes to the building.

Since receiving the report, we've engaged a number of companies to quote for the ventilation system as that was the 1 component of the overall solution which was likely to have the quickest impact in reducing if not eliminating this issue.

It's fair to say that the price tag on that particular solution has varied, from approx \$5k per court to over \$20k per court, and that's not including the price it would take for the other structural changes which would reduce the problem even further. My best estimate would be an overall price of \$30k per court.

## What We Will Do Next

Once we have a range of quotes, we'll review those and decide on a way forward. We will make an application for funding, but to set an expectation now, we have found it an increasingly competitive environment which may imply we will have to take a staged/multi-year approach to the fix.

## What Else?

For the detail freaks and engineers, I'm more than happy to share any details on quotes and submissions we have received. You can contact me through the club office. Your input and advice are welcome.

**Cheers, Howard Smith**