
Inter-Counties policy change

Background

There are several requests on an annual basis to authorise girls to play in the boys' Inter-County competition. The Inter-County competition rules currently don't provide for girls to play in the boys' competition and there is currently no formal policy to permit this. There has been a desire for a number of years for England Squash to review this policy and provide clear guidelines to Inter-County competition team organisers of our intentions regarding girls' inclusion.

Context

Important points to note:

1. Over the past three years, we received approximately a dozen requests per season for girls to play in the boys' Inter-County competition. This is primarily due to:
 - A) there not being enough boys to complete a team so a girl is required to participate;
 - B) a county having a strong girl and so in order to get the strongest team to represent their county, dispensation was requested; or
 - C) the county not having a separate girls' team and therefore the girl(s) has no opportunity to play county squash.
2. We have not received a single request to authorise a boy to play in the girl's competition to our current knowledge in the past three seasons.
3. At England Squash we also now have an "ability based" performance programme where entry to the programme is not based on gender.
4. Our participation figures are currently approximately 75-25 in favour of boys' participation throughout the sport.
5. We have consulted other sports and National Governing Bodies and researched their findings and procedures.

Summary

Following changes to the relevant legislation (including the coming into force of the Equality Act 2010) and due to the volume of requests received from the Inter-County competition, England Squash has reviewed its policy towards authorising girls to play in the boys' Inter-County Competition U11-U19 (inclusive).

We consider that, having taken into account various factors (including those set out above), there is no reason to prevent girls under the age of 19 playing in the same competition as boys and therefore, with immediate effect, girls under 19, in all age groups, **shall be permitted** to take part in the Inter-County competition.

Similarly, we are required to offer the same opportunity for boys to play in the girls' competition. Team captain's wishing to consider boys for selection in the girls competition should request dispensation in the same way.

At a senior level, we are yet to collate our findings in respect of whether to extend the age at which men and women can play in mixed teams, however, in the meantime, we will consider requests on a case by case basis. We refer team captains to Rule 16 should they wish for dispensation for a woman to play in the men's competition.