

Eye Protection for Real Tennis and Rackets

A recent survey across T&RA members on Real Tennis and Rackets sports injuries, conducted by a team of medical practitioners, has prompted the Seacourt Board to issue the following information to Seacourt members.

While the survey covered all sports injuries, it revealed that 10% of respondents had sustained some sort of head injury, the majority of these being to the eye.

This document does not contain specific advice as to whether eye protection should be worn. However, the T&RA recognise that this may be an issue or concern for some of its membership. We have therefore compiled the following information without prejudice to assist our members in making an informed decision on (1) whether they or their children should wear eye protection and (2) which type and brand to wear and how best to research it.

In 2004 the T&RA conducted tests on numerous goggles that met the BSI specification for squash, (BS7930 Part 1) but using a Rackets ball travelling at 90mph instead of a Squash ball. At the time there was just one set of goggles that passed that test at that speed. Since that time there have been improvements and a multitude of designs manufactured and the choice for an individual has become much more difficult.

There are no eyewear standards yet for Rackets or Real Tennis, so no guaranteed 100% protection, however, consideration may be given to those glasses/goggles/masks that have passed national standards tests for squash and other sports.

In the meantime this advice is offered regarding the factors that are considered of most importance when selecting a set of protective eyewear:-

1. Generally, it is thought that it is an advantage if the model of eye protector has an obviously strong polycarbonate frame.
2. Models with soft silicone nose-pieces, as opposed to solid, hard nose-pieces that are integral parts of the frame, are usually more comfortable to wear and offer better protection from a racquet impact.
3. Some models have a strip of foam attached to the top bar of the protectors, above the lenses, that sits on the eye-brow. This feature has two benefits; a) it gives extra protection from any impact, due to the cushioning effect of the foam, and b) it may help to reduce the problem of sweat running down onto the inside of the lens.
4. Misting up can be a problem. If this is likely to be a significant problem for you then it may be best to choose an eye protector which has plenty of room and ventilation around the eyes – examples of such are the iMask and also the lens-less eye protectors. Wearing a headband and/or a cap will help to minimise misting up problems.

While all players indulge in racquet sports at their own risk it is worth considering the opportunity of reducing the risks, particularly to the eyes, since a serious eye injury may be life-changing.

While the Board can only advise members to do research and make their own decision about themselves or their children, it should be noted that all Juniors under the age of 14 must wear eye protection when under instruction from a club professional.

The club does provide safety glasses for use by members but there is no guarantee they provide protection in all circumstances. Members may of course, choose to buy their own eye protection.

The T&RA recommends the use of eye protection on court. However, neither Seacourt Tennis Club, nor the T&RA recommend or endorse any specific type of eye protection and there is no guarantee that the Club-supplied glasses or any other type of eye protection will work well in all circumstances.

The Board of Seacourt Tennis Club