

Squash New Zealand

Referee Development Strategy

**ATTRACTING VOLUNTEERS
TO HELP RUN OUR SPORT**



SQUASH NEW ZEALAND, an incorporated society, is the official national body for 18,500 registered squash players in NZ who play out of 196 affiliated clubs (within the boundaries of our 11 Districts). Squash NZ runs a Referee Programme aimed at providing officials for prestigious national events, and educating club players about rules and their correct interpretation.

Currently there are **21** National Referees, **52** District Referees and **668** Club Referees volunteering their time for the good and growth of the sport.

This document was produced in **November 2012**.

Background

Objective: To provide a clear progression pathway for referees that facilitates recruitment of new referees, and provides development opportunities for referees at all levels.

Aims:

1. All 11 districts affiliated to Squash New Zealand have a structure of qualified referees at National, District and Club level, as well as a refereeing coordinator managing recruitment and education at a local level.
2. New Zealand produces referees qualified to international levels (Regional and/or WSF).
3. Barriers to refereeing are minimised, with prospective referees able to receive information and training, and 'try out' refereeing without needing to make excessive commitments of time or money.



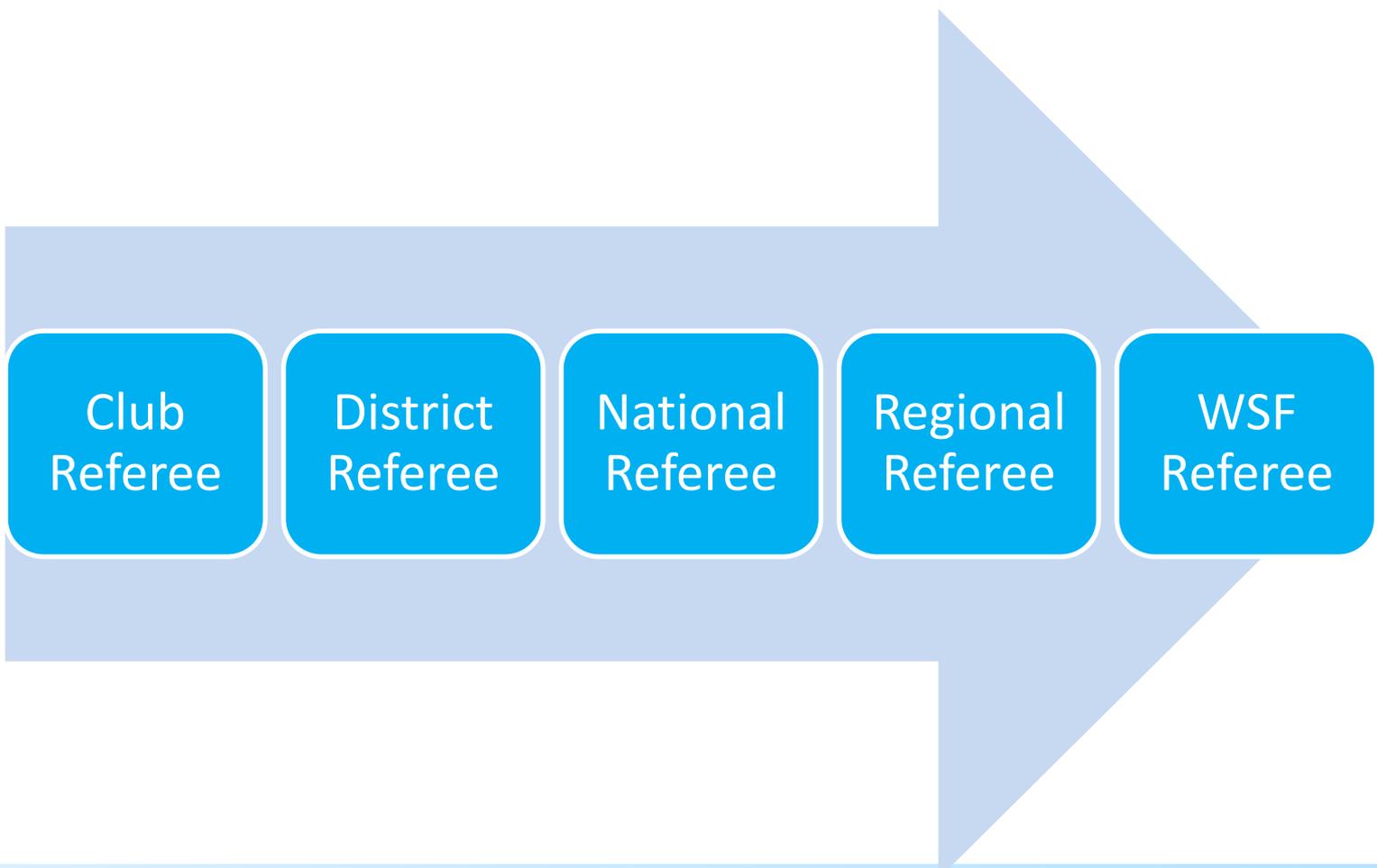
Success Measures

- Number of refereeing coordinators.
- Number of club, district, national, regional and WSF referees.
- Number of training seminars delivered.

Squash New Zealand has identified a number of opportunities to strengthen the refereeing progression pathway and increase the number of refereeing volunteers contributing to the sport at all levels. These are outlined in the strategy below.

Simplistically they involve increasing the quantity and quality of refereeing volunteers around the country. Increasing the quality will require **'bottom-up'** interventions, while improving the quality will largely involve **'top-down'** solutions.

Figure 1: Refereeing Pathway



Strategy

Squash New Zealand's strategy to provide a comprehensive pathway for referees, and attract and retain more referees, is split into three key phases.

Phase One: Lower Barriers to Entry

Bolster the lower end of the refereeing progression pathway by introducing a Club Referee qualification.

This qualification should:

- Be relatively easy
- Be able to be studied for using an educational DVD resource
- Encourage people to give refereeing a try
- Get more people involved in the refereeing pathway, eventually resulting in higher numbers of district and national referees.

Phase Two: Comply with World Squash Qualification Standards

Update Squash New Zealand's referee programme qualification standards to be consistent with the World Squash Federation.

This will facilitate the process for top New Zealand referees to progress to higher (international) levels of qualification.

NB: it will make qualification as a national referee more difficult.

Phase Three: Implement Referee Recruitment Measures

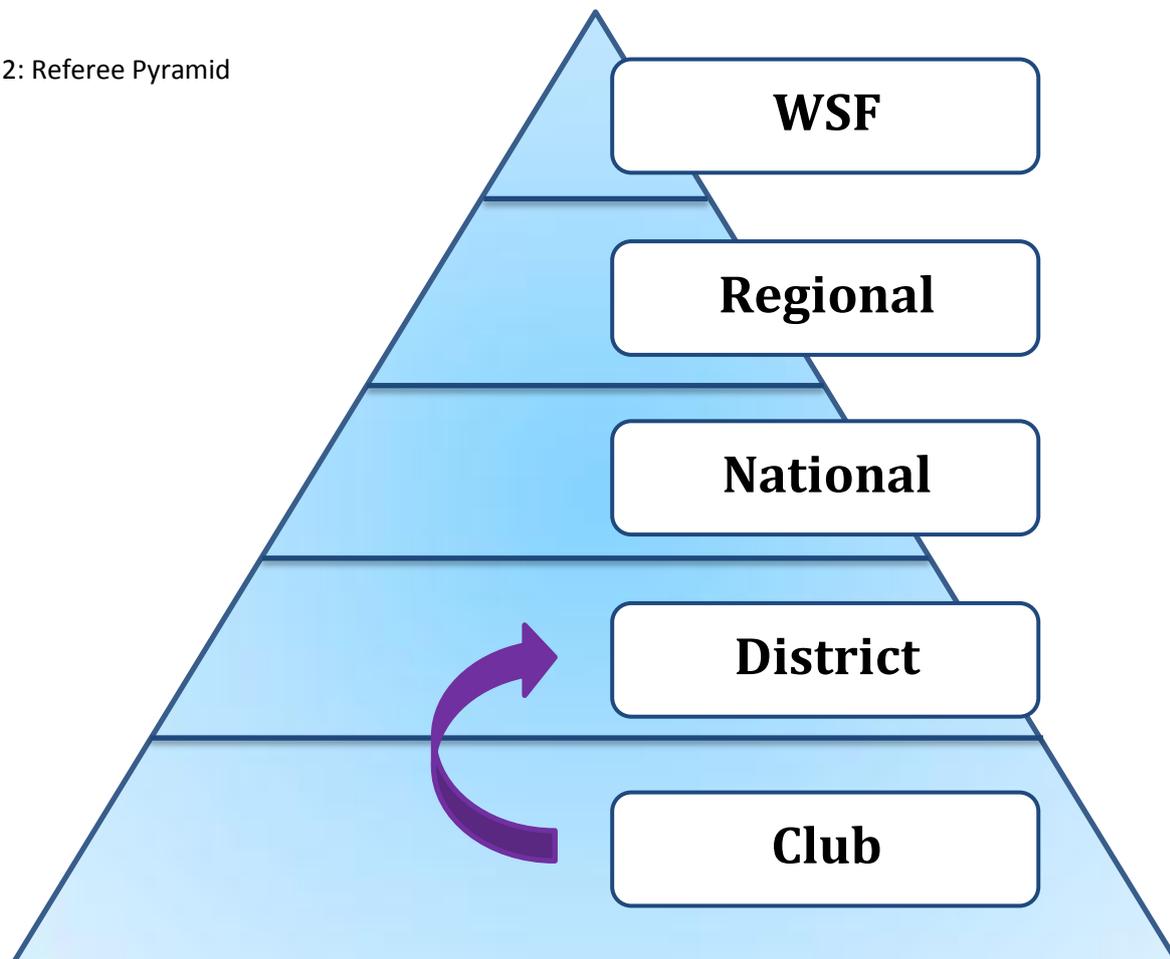
Specific measures and campaigns to recruit more referees. These will include:

- An online version of the Club Referee test, as well as other refereeing tests and resources
- Attractive refereeing resources for clubs to display to increase rules awareness
- Lead a creative national promotional campaign using social media
- Creating a standardised referee development programme for new referees to be delivered by districts.

In order for the Squash New Zealand referee development strategy to work successfully, an infrastructure of qualified and proactive referees in each district is of vital importance. Referees at all levels need access to mentoring and training, so that they can improve their standard and progress along the pathway to higher honours. Existing referees will be required to train and mentor new recruits, and conduct assessments towards qualification as district referees. In the longer term workloads should ease as more referees qualify at higher levels and become able to educate, mentor and assess new referees.

Increasing Numbers

Figure 2: Referee Pyramid



This figure illustrates the desire to widen the net and capture more potential referees in the sport.

It also highlights the critical success factor of district buy-in. Districts need to run aligned programmes to provide further development opportunities (education, training and mentoring) for club referees. It is important to ensure that programmes provide new referees with the skills they require to progress through the referee pathway, and are aligned and consistent between districts. Many district associations lack the resources and/or expertise to do this: there is therefore an opportunity for Squash New Zealand to develop an integrated education programme.



Risks

While the strategy should be able to produce higher numbers of qualified referees at Club, District and National levels, the process of qualifying to the international levels of Regional and WSF will remain costly. With New Zealand a relatively isolated country, the top level international competition required for national referees to progress towards international qualification is difficult to access. Aspiring Regional or WSF Referees generally need to travel to Australia (or further) to access development opportunities and assessment. These opportunities include training, refereeing workshops, mentoring and informal exchange of ideas, and the opportunity to be assessed towards higher levels of qualification. These opportunities only come with large international tournaments. Squash

New Zealand has a limited budget to help referees progress beyond National qualification level, and interested referees are generally required to make personal sacrifices to their campaign. Opportunities to ease this process will therefore need to be sought.

Progress to date

Phase One:

The club referee qualification has attracted interest and boosted the number of qualified referees. At this stage number increases have occurred solely at the Club Referee level; with time we expect these increases to flow on to District and National levels. It is important that qualification as a Club Referee is viewed as the *first step* to recruiting referees, and that districts *engage* with new referees to offer progression opportunities.

The crucial aspect of the club referee qualification is its delivery of names and contact details to districts. If numbers are to increase at district and national levels, it is important that districts communicate with newly qualified club referees and offer them further training, mentoring, and/or assessment towards qualification as a district referee. By engaging with as many referees as possible, districts will maximise their chances of recruiting district referees in the medium term.



We have also successfully gained a license to reproduce Squash Australia's educational rules and refereeing DVD 'Decisions'. This DVD is now available for districts, clubs and players to purchase, and has initially proved very popular.

Phase Two:

The process of updating New Zealand's National Referee qualification standard to be consistent with the World Squash Federation is underway. However, more work is required to raise the bar to this level. Change will therefore will be effected gradually to ease the transition.

In order for the transition to occur, existing referees all need to be assessed at the new qualification standard, and the 'bar' for qualification as a National Referee also needs to be raised (so that all new referees are qualified to the right level). Assessment of existing referees, in particular, is a time consuming (and therefore expensive) process, as it soaks up limited existing referee resources and requires Squash New Zealand to fly in WSF assessors from Australia.



Phase Three:

No progress has yet been made on specific referee recruitment measures. This stands out as the next key opportunity to be grasped to increase the number of volunteers contributing to grassroots squash through refereeing. Squash New Zealand has plans to lower barriers for potentially interested parties. These include (listed from least to most expensive):

- Youtube recruitment videos. **[free]**
- Online refereeing tests (including club referee qualification test). These tests will make it easier for players to gain the Club Referee qualification, and also provide an avenue for players to test their knowledge of the rules and their practical application through 'practise tests'. It is planned that these tests will include text, picture and video questions to aid comprehension to all types of learners. **[low cost]**
- Posters for clubs outlining some of the 'trickier' (and less understood) rules, and aiming to recruit more volunteers by providing details on how to become a referee. **[low cost]**
- A centrally organised, nationally aligned training resource for districts to provide to Club Referees looking to qualify as District Referees. **[high cost]**



Many of the measures of phase three require additional (outside) funding to implement; but will provide enormous benefit to districts, clubs and players.

Next Steps

Whilst work continues to align New Zealand's National Referee qualification standard with that of the World Squash Federation; more work needs to be done to recruit and retain refereeing volunteers.

The introduction of the Club Referee qualification has resulted in a sharp increase in refereeing volunteers. The challenge now is to retain them, and provide them with development opportunities so they remain in the refereeing pathway.

The measures outlined under phase three will go a long way to achieving this. Due to budget restrictions low-hanging fruit will need to be targeted first, and funding applications prepared for larger/more expensive measures.

CAN YOU HELP?

If you would like to support the recruitment, development and retention of referees, please contact Squash New Zealand.



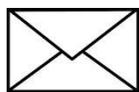
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