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CRLS squash program has varsity hopes

By [Matthew Wuschke](#)

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Tien-Yi Lee

CRLS and Brookline teams huddling up before matches start.

The loud thuds of rackets hitting balls and squeaking of shoes echo throughout Harvard's Murr Center as Cambridge Rindge and Latin School students dart across the courts. A squash ball's about the size of a walnut, so the students must hit with precision.

The CRLS squash program, established last year as a club sport by its founder and team captain, sophomore Milo Miller, is in the middle of its second year and looking to take a step up to a varsity sport.

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Two years ago, Miller was playing in squash tournaments on his own and realized that nearly everyone participating went to a private school and played on a team. Miller, 16, wanted to stay in public school, but CRLS didn't have a team, so he decided to start one.

Miller was unsure of how to start the program, but when he learned Massachusetts Squash's high school commissioner, Steve Lantos, was looking for new public school teams, Miller got in touch. Lantos, who is a chemistry teacher at Brookline High School and coaches its girls' squash team, worked with Miller to create a plan to bring squash to CRLS.

"He asked my son, and my son was like, 'Yeah, nobody knows what squash is. Everybody's like, 'You play squash? What's that?'" So [my son] was like, 'Yeah, I'm all in,'" said Tien-Yi Lee, Milo's mother and parent liaison for the program.



Tien-Yi Lee

CRLS and Brookline players facing off in pre-game player introductions.

The program is co-ed and has 26 players, divided into two teams, a varsity squad and a developmental squad. The first team holds weekly practices and competes in matches against a mix of varsity and club teams from other schools; the team has a 4-6 record so far this year. The developmental team also practices weekly but is focused on internal matches along with some matches against other schools.

For most of the team members, this is their first time playing squash. Some hadn't even heard of the sport much before they joined.

"Even though Harvard has one of the most beautiful facilities anywhere in the Northeast, there are people in Cambridge who probably just think squash is a vegetable," said Andrew Frishman, one of the coaches.

“So when we put up posters and started emailing it around to all kinds of parent lists, we had tons of kids come out and more kids than we could ever even possibly accommodate.”

Ninth-grader Elijah Vanterpool, who joined the program this year, had never picked up a racquet before this season.

“It’s hard at first and very confusing,” Vanterpool said, “but once you get a groove for it it’s pretty fun.”

Frishman’s daughter, Jordan, didn’t have much experience before starting two years ago. Since then, squash has taught her a lot both on and off the court.

“I think it’s a great way for people to learn how to work together, but also for themselves, since it’s more of an individual sport when you’re in a game,” said Jordan, a 16-year-old sophomore. “I’ve definitely learned how when you work for something, you can get better by pushing and putting dedication towards it.”

Miller said he didn’t expect the squash program to go from idea to varsity team in just two years.

“I’m really surprised with how fast everybody’s improving,” he said. “I honestly didn’t think that they would be at the level that they are now and I’m really happy with the improvement that they have made.”

The CRLS coaches credit the Cambridge community for supporting the program. Squash has a reputation as a sport for the wealthy, but the CRLS program and Cambridge community are breaking down those barriers.

The program received a \$1,000 grant from the Cambridge Public Health Department to help cover some of the operational costs of renting equipment and courts.

“One of the things that we are really committed to is making sure that this would be available to any kid, regardless of income,” Andrew Frishman said. “We want to make sure any kid who wants to, can walk on the court and play.”

Aside from the efforts put in from the community, the coaches said they are committed to utilizing their resources the best they can. Since the CRLS program is technically still a club and working toward becoming a varsity sport, there have been some struggles along the way.

“There are probably a million reasons that [a squash team] shouldn’t happen,” said Andrew Frishman. “We thought, ‘How are we gonna get equipment? How are you gonna cover insurance liability?’ And rather than thinking about, ‘what are all the things we don’t have,’ we tried to imagine, ‘What would this thing look like if it was successful?’ We don’t have to wait for all the conditions to be perfect. We said, ‘What do we have? We’ve got a bunch of people who care about it. We’ve got some kids who want to play squash.’”

Regardless of the struggles, the CRLS team wants to make sure that their presence is felt in the squash community throughout Massachusetts.

“We want to be a dominant force that not only gives any public school squash team a run for its money, but also beats up on the prep teams,” said Andrew Frishman.

This story is part of a partnership between Cambridge Day and the Boston University Department of Journalism.

 CRLS, squash

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