Eye Protection for Real Tennis and Rackets

This document does not contain 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 our membership. We have therefore compiled the following information without prejudice to assist our members in making an informed decision on (1) whether to wear eye protection and (2) which type and brand to wear and how best to research it. Whilst we have done our best to accurately research and in some instances test eye protection, we are not qualified to give specific advice in this area and must clarify that you should carry out your own research before making any decisions or purchases.

In 2004 the T&RA conducted tests on numerous goggles that met the BSI specification for squash, 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 and while it is the T&RA's desire for there to be such standards it is likely to be many years before that is achievable. However, consideration may be given to those glasses/goggles/masks that have passed national standards tests for squash and other sports.

The T&RA has been studying the situation and is trying to devise and arrange some impact tests using both Real Tennis and Rackets balls. Due to resource constraints (both time and financial) these tests will have to be restricted to a limited selection of different eye protectors that appear to the T&RA to be suitable. Over time it is possible (although not guaranteed) that newer popular designs might be tested as well.

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** and offers some protection to the temple of the wearer. It is thought that temple protection is more important for Rackets (and perhaps also for Real Tennis doubles), where the chances of a direct shot or a deflection from the side or from behind is significantly greater.

2. Although polycarbonate eyewear may be advertised as very strong, there must still be some possibility of **deformation of the glasses** on direct impact. The stronger eyewear will likely suffer less deformation and therefore at the moment it is thought that it should protect better the eyes.

3. The **wider the field of view** the better. Some goggles have thick frames and padding around the inside of the polycarbonate lenses which might interfere with (or more likely distract) peripheral vision. In general the models with 'wrap-around' lenses or larger lenses will give better peripheral vision.

4. Be wary of considering **lens-less frames** for use at Rackets. The reason is that in some models the aperture for seeing through may not be small enough to totally prevent a Rackets ball touching the eye. The protection offered by strong lens-less glasses is thought to be much better than not wearing glasses at all, but it is better if any even slight touch to the surface of the eye can be prevented. Lens-less glasses are less likely to be a problem with the larger Real Tennis ball but assessment of whether in a hard impact the Real Tennis ball could make contact with the eyeball should also be a consideration.[1]

5. 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. Such a feature is highly recommended for Rackets, where the chances of an impact from a collision with an opponent's or partner's racquet or body is much greater than at Real Tennis. Note that if the width of the nose bridge is too small it can cause the protectors to rest too high.

6. 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.

7. Something that is not predictable by even trying on eye protectors in a shop is the problem of **misting up**. Many of the eye protectors are marketed with 'anti-mist' coatings which don't seem to be totally effective. If this is likely to be a significant problem for you then it is probably 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.

It is thought that once the impact tests are completed and the results published, the T&RA may also purchase a selection of the models that appear to be satisfactory regarding protection against impact and keep them at their office at the Queen's Club should any player wish to see which design suits them best.

There follows, at Annex A, a set of photos of glasses which exhibit some of the characteristics described above. It should be understood that the T&RA cannot (and does not) at this stage offer any recommendation regarding the ability of these glass/goggles/eyewear to protect. These photos are shown purely to provide the reader with an understanding of the important characteristics and are in no way a recommendation and are presented in no particular order.

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[1] Note that this aspect will also depend on the particular shape of the wearer's face (for example, whether eyes are more prominent on the face or not).

Annex A - Examples of current eye protection in use

Polycarbonate, wide uninterrupted field of view, good distance from the eyes, likely to have very good anti-mist properties

Polycarbonate, "bubble" lenses so slightly further away from the eyes than many glasses, comfortable nose bridge

Annex A - Examples of current eye protection in use

Polycarbonate, larger lenses than many and thus good field of view, comfortable nose bridge

Polycarbonate, wide field of view

Annex A - Examples of current eye protection in use

Polycarbonate, comfortable nose bridge

Polycarbonate, wide field of vision

Annex A - Examples of current eye protection in use

Polycarbonate, strong frames (Pelota eyewear), can be lens-free (for anti-misting)

Annex A - Examples of current eye protection in use

Polycarbonate, lens-free

Polycarbonate

Annex A - Examples of current eye protection in use