

Lynch/van Otterloo YMCA and US Squash Announce Pilot Program Partnership

The Lynch/van Otterloo YMCA in Marblehead, MA and US Squash, the sport's national governing body, have announced a pilot program during which US Squash has hired Affeeq Ismail a US Squash Certified Teaching Professional at the facility beginning May 1, 2018.

Affeeq Ismail, originally from Kuching, Malaysia, graduated from Trinity College in Hartford, CT with a BS in Engineering. During his time at Trinity, Ismail started for the Trinity Men's Squash team all four years, and served as team captain for two seasons. Trinity won two National Collegiate Team Championships over his four years, and Ismail went on to win the Molloy Cup - East in 2017 and was also honored as Second Team All American. Before coming to the United States, Ismail played for the National Junior Team in Malaysia for 6 years, where he won the National Junior title in 2009 & 2011. In 2012, Ismail represented Malaysia in the Under 21 World Cup in Chennai, India.

Ismail has a diverse coaching background with experiences coaching in both Malaysia and in the United States. In the past, Ismail has been involved with the International Squash Academy Summer camps, US Squash Regional Camps, and New Haven Lawn Club. Ismail also spent a semester interning with Capitol Squash, an urban squash program in Hartford, CT. Affeeq will work within the YMCA's activity structure to drive participation and member engagement in squash.

The more than 14,000 members of the Lynch/van Otterloo YMCA, combined with squash's growing popularity regionally, provides the potential for significant and robust programming for adults, juniors, and families. Junior squash will become more integrated within the existing YMCA after-school and camp programming. Adult offerings will aim to build on an existing enthusiastic playing community, to boost league and clinic activity as well as women's participation. The facility features three singles courts and one hardball doubles court.

"Squash has been a longtime component of our YMCA, dating back to our Pleasant Street facility. Preserving it as a unique fitness and competitive offering for our members and the community has been a significant focus for our Y over the past year," stated Gerald MacKillop, Jr., Executive Director of the Lynch/van Otterloo YMCA. "I am thrilled for our members, the squash community and community at large to partner with US Squash, the sport's preeminent organization in the country. We are thankful to the team at US Squash for recognizing our Y as the right partner in this pilot program. My hope is that the success I anticipate can be replicated at other Y's across the nation."

US Squash anticipates that the experience and success from the pilot program will be applied to other programs with YMCAs and community-based facilities around the country. This model is a first for squash in the U.S., and follows similar program innovations, such as the Lynch/van Otterloo YMCA partnership with the Boston Ballet.

According to Kevin Klipstein, President & CEO of US Squash, "We really appreciate the Lynch/van Otterloo YMCA's trust in us in partnering on this pilot program. US Squash is focused on meaningful lifelong positive engagement in squash, and part of this role is delivering qualified, well-trained professionals to facilities across the country. We're confident that the experience will be a positive one for all involved, and will help set the stage of our ability to partner more deeply with organizations such as the YMCA to increase access to the sport."

What does this mean?

- We will have the first of its kind YMCA partnership with US Squash in the nation
- We will have a highly talented squash player and coach at the YMCA, dedicated full time to building the program and developing member's skills

- We have the potential to further develop squash as a cornerstone of the LVO YMCA, (think a strong junior program, significant junior and adult tournaments, etc).
- We have the responsibility to make the most of this opportunity such that other Y's and similar organizations can utilize the model to extend the reach of and access to squash.

How you can ensure the partnership is successful:

- The LvO YMCA and US Squash will hold three open houses to launch their new squash program and introduce Affeeq Ismail a US Squash Certified Teaching Professional who will be onsite full-time.
- **Open House Dates:**
Saturday May 5th, 2PM to 5PM
Sunday May 6th, 3PM to 6PM
Tuesday May 8th, 6PM to 9PM