



Irish Racquetball National Team Selection Criteria

Notwithstanding any existing eligibility requirements, the selection criteria set out in this document shall apply in full and take precedence. Accordingly, players may be considered for selection regardless of prior participation in a specified number of Open Tournaments within the preceding 12 months, where the selectors deem it appropriate based on performance, potential, or other relevant factors.

1. Team Composition

For each gender category (Men & Women), the National team will consist of:

- 2 x Singles Players.
- 1 x Doubles Pair (2 Players).
- 1 x Mixed Doubles Pair (1 player from each from opposite gender).

Total per gender: 4 players.

Total team size: 8 players.

2. Player Panel Eligibility Criteria

Athletes must:

1. For men, be an Open or B player. For women, be an Open, B or C player.
2. Compete in either the “All Ireland Singles and Doubles Championship” or the “Irish Open” in 2026.
3. Hold current Racquetball Ireland registration and insurance as required for all sanctioned events.
4. Be eligible to represent Ireland under international federation rules.
5. Be in good standing (e.g. no disciplinary actions, compliant with anti-doping policies).
6. Commit to team training, events, and travel obligations.

3. Performance-Based Criteria

Panel selections will be based primarily on results from:

1. All-Ireland Championships and Irish Opens.
2. Sanctioned National Open Tournaments.
3. Provincial Championships.
4. Relevant international competitions.

Panel Selection Metrics considered:

1. Win/loss records against domestic players.
2. Wins over higher graded or higher ranked opponents.
3. Consistency and competitive progression.
4. Performance under pressure (finals, tight matches, multi-match days).
5. Player self-reflection.

4. Trials and Evaluation Event

To ensure fair, transparent, and performance-based selection of the final team, formal selection trials will be held for eligible athletes.

Purpose of the Trials:

The trials will serve to:

1. Provide head-to-head competitive assessment under controlled, standardised conditions.
2. Evaluate singles, doubles and mixed-doubles compatibility (mixed doubles will be trialled after team selection).
3. Validate athlete readiness beyond tournament performance.
4. Ensure selectors have direct, objective, and up-to-date evidence of form.

This aligns with the principles of “good process” in Irish high-performance selection systems, ensuring decisions are based on relevant and current criteria.

Trial Format:

Trials will include:

Singles Trials

1. Round-robin or pool-based match play
2. Playoff matches as needed to separate rankings.
3. Matches played in regulation format.

Doubles Trials

1. Assessment of pre-identified or trial-based pairings.
2. Evaluation of communication, positioning, and tactical cohesion
3. Multiple matchups to evaluate consistency.

Mixed Doubles Trials (trialled after team selection)

1. Cross-gender pairing evaluations.
2. Compatibility testing (communication, movement patterns, strategy)
3. Match-play scenarios replicating competition conditions.

Trial Scoring & Evaluation Criteria:

Selectors will assess:

1. Match results and win/loss records.
2. Competitive intensity and ability to perform under pressure.
3. Tactical decision-making and shot selection.
4. On-court communication and partnership dynamics
5. Fitness, movement quality, and resilience
6. Attitude, professionalism, and adherence to team culture standards

Attendance Requirements:

1. Attendance at trials is mandatory to be eligible for team selection.
2. Exceptions (injury, illness, extenuating circumstances) may be reviewed by the Selection Panel using fair-discretion.
3. Athletes unable to compete may still undergo assessment through fitness tests, skills evaluations, or video performance review if permitted by the selection panel.

Impact of Trial Outcomes on Final Selection:

1. Trial performance will carry significant weighting, equivalent to major tournament results.
2. Selectors may prioritise athletes who perform strongly in trials even if their season results are marginally lower.
3. Doubles and mixed-doubles (trials after team selection) selections will heavily incorporate trial pairing performance.
4. Final selections will reflect both individual results and team-balance requirements (e.g., strongest combined lineup for singles + doubles + mixed).
5. If the situation arises whereby the winner or runner-up of the "Singles" trials also wins the "Doubles" trials, they will have to choose whether to compete in "Singles" or "Doubles".

6. Junior Wildcard Invitations

To support the development of emerging Irish racquetball talent and to provide a clear pathway from junior to senior high-performance competition, wildcard entries will be awarded as follows:

Wildcard Eligibility:

The following athletes will automatically receive a wildcard invitation into the National Team Selection Process:

1. Top 2 Under-18 Boys as determined by final standings at the All-Ireland Junior Even Championships
2. Top 2 Under-18 Girls as determined by final standings at the All-Ireland Junior Even Championships

This reflects Racquetball Ireland's commitment to integrating junior athletes into national-level structures and aligns with the junior-to-senior progression seen in national competition pathways.

Wildcard Benefits:

Athletes who receive a wildcard will:

1. Have a place on the National Team Panel
2. Be entered directly into the team selection trials.
3. Be evaluated on equal terms with adult athletes during:
 - Singles trials
 - Doubles assessments
 - Mixed doubles assessments (trialled after team selection)
4. Receive consideration for any senior team position (singles, doubles, mixed) if their trial performance warrants it

Purpose and Rationale:

The inclusion of U18 wildcards aims to:

1. Encourage high-performance development at youth level
2. Strengthen long-term national competitiveness
3. Provide exceptional juniors with exposure to senior-level match play
4. Create a transparent pathway from junior results into senior opportunities

This approach is consistent with high-performance best practices in Ireland, ensuring pathways are inclusive, merit-based, and process-driven.

No Automatic Selection Guarantee:

A wildcard grants entry into the selection process, not automatic placement on the team.

Final selection will still depend on:

1. Conduct and commitment
2. Trial performance
3. Compatibility for doubles or mixed doubles (mixed doubles trialled after team selection)
4. Physical readiness and maturity
5. Team balance

6. Fitness, Training & Commitment Standards

All selected players must:

1. Meet minimum physical fitness and movement standards appropriate to singles, doubles, or mixed
2. Attend all mandatory training sessions and camps
3. Comply with team tactical systems, coaching instructions, and performance monitoring
4. Maintain year-round training readiness (injury, conditioning, recovery)

If two athletes are close in performance, the better-conditioned or more committed athlete may be selected.

7. Conduct, Commitment, Professionalism & Team Culture

Players must:

1. Adhere to Racquetball Ireland's Rules, Regulations, and Code of Conduct
2. Display teamwork, discipline, and respectful behaviour
3. Maintain a positive training environment
4. Uphold Ireland's reputation when travelling and competing

Behavioural or sportsmanship (e.g. profanity, hitting court walls with racquet, threats to opponent or referee etc.) issues may override performance metrics.

8. Selection Panel & Process

Panel Composition

1. National Team Manager
2. National Team Coaches

Panel Responsibilities

1. Apply criteria consistently and transparently
2. Assess singles, doubles, and mixed suitability
3. Document and justify decisions
4. Consider both objective results and team balance
5. Notify athletes formally (selected & non-selected)

9. Discretionary Selection

Discretion may be applied when:

1. A top athlete has had recent injury but proven past excellence
2. Results are not reflective due to illness or temporary circumstances
3. Team balance (particularly mixed doubles compatibility) requires flexibility
4. Exceptional potential outweighs minor ranking deficits

All discretionary decisions must adhere to fair-process standards