

WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

Padel Takes Off in Italy

24/02/22 / **Keyword: padel**

When Covid stopped contact sports, Italians took to padel, a sport popular in Spain, similar to tennis with a dash of squash.



ECP coaches John and Kez playing padel in Gasteiz

At one of Italy's darkest moments in the pandemic, the government introduced a list of draconian rules to **halt** the outbreak of Covid, including which sports Italians would be allowed to continue participating in.

Among the activities the authorities considered safe were a few that Italians barely knew. One was padel, a fast-paced racket sport popular in Spain, similar to tennis but with **a dash** of squash thrown in. For Italians, it was love at first **smash**.

According to data from the Padel National Observatory, since early 2020 the number of padel courts in Italy has increased **fivefold**, up to almost 5,000. Padel schools and clubs have tripled, and the game looks likely to become the most widely-played sport in Italy after football.

Padel was invented in 1969 by a Mexican businessman, Enrique Corcuera, who wanted to build a tennis court at his holiday home in Acapulco. Not having enough space on his property, he decided to make a smaller court and to use the walls that delimited the area as an integral part of the game.

Padel is almost always played in doubles. The courts, about 25% smaller than tennis courts, are surrounded almost entirely by walls, part glass and part metal mesh. Unlike in tennis, the ball remains playable if, after being hit on the ground, it then hits the walls.

By the time Italy began to ease Covid restrictions, padel had **taken hold**. But, faced with hundreds of thousands of people **eager** to play, the few hundred courts around Italy were **overwhelmed**.

Padel in Italy is officially recognised as a discipline of tennis and is governed by the Italian Tennis Federation which, given the incredible growth of this sport, broadcasts padel matches every day of the year on its TV channel, Super Tennis.

The growth of padel in Italy follows in some way the growth of tennis in the country, and according to tennis enthusiasts it is a blessing the tennis federation is its governing body, otherwise the risk was that padel courts would replace tennis ones, with one sport potentially damaging the other.

The secret of the sport's strength is that it is a suitable sport for people of all ages, and this has contributed to making padel not only a sport but a real movement in Italy. 📄 📄 📄 *page 2*

Useful vocabulary

- to halt:** to suspend movement or activity, typically temporarily
- a dash:** a small quantity, usually, of a liquid added to something else.
- to smash:** to hit a ball or shuttlecock in a forceful overhand stroke
- fivefold:** five times as great or as much
- to take hold:** to become established
- eager:** strongly wanting to do or have something
- overwhelmed:** loaded or filled with an excessive amount of anything
- rallies:** exchanges of strokes in a court game ending when a player fails to make a good return

Let's chat about that!

1. **Do you like playing sport or working out?**
2. **When playing sport or working out do you push yourself hard?**
3. **Do you play or have you tried padel? What do/did you like about it?**
4. **Do you believe padel will have a negative impact on other racket sports? Why/ not?**
5. **What do you think makes some people become more serious about playing sport?**

LIVE! English Events

ECP's Cinema Nights

Every last Friday of the month at 18:30

Send a WhatsApp to John on 657 73 13 54

Coffee Saturdays

2021-22

11:00-12:30

Panadería Bertiz C/Francia 10

2nd October	5th March
6th November	2nd April
4th December	7th May
5th February	4th June



How do you play these sports?

And how do you win?



Photos © Rob Hextall



The sport is most popular, however, in Spain, where padel courts have long been a common sight. A lot of parents decide this is a good pastime for their kids because they can start playing it very young, it gives them hand-eye coordination and promotes teamwork. They can also start playing **rallies** immediately so they love it.

Another reason to love padel is that it's a sociable sport. You have two doubles teams in a small court, which makes social conversation between players an integral part of the game and, in the meantime, allows you to meet new people. It is also an entertaining activity to watch with spectacular points.

Adapted by ECP coach Darren Lynch from:

<https://www.pledgesports.org/2020/10/why-is-padel-growing-so-fast-in-spain/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/11/padel-italy-takes-off-no-sport-such-success-so-short-time>

Which sport are you made for?

Take this 60-second test!



Click the link below

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-28062001>

