

SPORT CANADA ATHLETE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM SELECTION CRITERIA 2026-27

The purpose of the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) is to support athletes who demonstrate outstanding abilities and commitment to the sport of racquetball. It is intended to allow athletes to enter a training and competition schedule which, by design, will lead to consistent improvement thereby maximizing the likelihood of Team Canada's success at future international racquetball events.

For the 2026-27 carding cycle, Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) support to racquetball athletes is contingent to Racquetball Canada meeting the AAP requirements for NSOs eligibility.

1. Introduction

Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) assists international caliber athletes with their training and competition activities, through the provision of a training allowance and, where applicable, tuition expenses.

In August/September of each year, Racquetball Canada (RC) nominates athletes to Sport Canada's AAP according to criteria developed by Racquetball Canada to meet Sport Canada's AAP requirements. The recommendations come to the RC's Board of Directors through the High-Performance Committee for official approval. Carding nominations are submitted for the top Canadian racquetball athletes based on results from the International Racquetball Federation (IRF) World Championships. To qualify for SR1 carding, athletes must place within the top 8, top half of the draw.

The athletes are ranked conjunctively and strictly on the criteria listed in this document; that process continues whenever an additional card(s) is available, or a portion of an awarded card becomes available. The recommendations are based on the criteria in this document and support the athletes - male or female - who have the best likelihood of podium performances at future international competitions and continue to demonstrate ongoing improvement.

Currently Racquetball Canada has the equivalent of four (4) senior cards or an equivalent budget from Sport Canada. Please note that Sport Canada may review the card quotas and funding amounts for all sports at any time and that this exercise may affect the number of cards available to Racquetball Canada.¹

The carding cycle for racquetball athletes begins on October 1 and ends on September 30 of the following year.

For complete details of the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP), athletes should refer to the document published by Sport Canada, Athlete Assistance Program Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, Athlete Handbook available on the Sport Canada website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html>

¹ **Sport Canada Funding Update:** Due to reductions in funding from Sport Canada, Racquetball Canada as of November 28, 2025, currently has the equivalent of two (2) senior cards, or an equivalent budget (\$52,200).

2. General Requirements

To be eligible for consideration under AAP, each athlete must meet all the following general requirements:

- 2.1 As set out in the eligibility criteria of the International Racquetball Federation (IRF), the athlete must be eligible to represent Canada at major international events including the World Championships as of the beginning of the carding cycle for which the athlete is being nominated. The IRF rules require that the athlete must verify citizenship with a valid passport or a letter from their National Olympic Committee stating that they may represent that country in International Competition.
- 2.2 The athlete must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada as of the beginning of the carding cycle for which the athlete is being nominated. Permanent residents must have lived in Canada for the full year prior the carding cycle for which the athlete is being considered for AAP support. The athlete is expected (required) to have participated in NSO-sanctioned programs during that time period. The athlete must be available to represent Canada in major international competitions, including World Championships.
- 2.3 The athletes must sign the Athlete/Racquetball Canada Agreement and complete an AAP Application Form.
- 2.4 The athletes must have a clearly articulated program, approved by Racquetball Canada, with appropriate training and competition opportunities. The athlete's individualized annual training program must be based on year-round training principles that include daily training activities.
- 2.5 Once an athlete has been carded for three (3) years at the Senior National card level (SR), to be eligible for AAP support the athlete must meet the Senior International criteria (SR1/SR2) as described below at 3.2 and 3.3. Carding achieved while still a junior (21 and under) does not impact on this section.

3. Carding Criteria

- 3.1. Senior Cards and Development Cards are awarded individually based on three (3) different sets of criteria:
 - 3.1.1 Senior International Criteria (Senior SR1/SR2 Cards) - Sport Canada sets the International Criteria for Senior Cards. An athlete who meets the International Criteria is eligible to be nominated by Racquetball Canada for two (2) consecutive years, with the card for the first year being referred to as SR1 and the card for the second year being referred to as SR2.
 - 3.1.2 Senior National Criteria (Senior SR Cards) - Racquetball Canada sets the National Criteria for Senior Cards. Senior Cards based on National Criteria are awarded for one (1) year.
 - 3.1.3 Development Criteria (Development Cards) - Racquetball Canada sets the criteria for Development Cards. Development Cards based on Development Criteria are awarded for one (1) year. An athlete who meets the Development Criteria is eligible to be nominated by Racquetball Canada for the upcoming year.

- 3.2. Senior International criteria (SR1)
 - 3.2.1. To be eligible for an AAP Senior SR1 Card, athletes must place in the top 8 and in the top half of the field at the 2026 World Championships.

*Placement in the Team Event will not be considered.
 - 3.2.2. If two (2) athletes achieve SR1 criteria at the World Championships, each athlete will receive a 12-month (\$26,100) card. If three (3) athletes achieve SR1 criteria, each athlete will receive an 8-month card (\$17,400). If four (4) athletes achieve SR1 criteria, each athlete will receive a 6-month card (\$13,050).
- 3.3. Senior international maintenance criteria (SR2)
 - 3.3.1. To be eligible for SR2, an athlete must have an SR1 card in 2026-2027 and be selected to the National Elite Team for the 2027-2028 season. SR2 cards will not be available for the 2027-28 season due to the removal of carding from Sport Canada.
- 3.4. Senior national criteria (SR)
 - 3.4.1. If one (1) or fewer cards are allocated under Section 3.2.1, an athlete may be eligible for a Senior (SR) card based on the carding nomination criteria outlined in Section 4. Maximum allowable carding years at Senior National criteria is three (3) years, excluding any years of carding as a Junior Athlete (21U) and must demonstrate improvement and progress.
- 3.5. Development Criteria
 - 3.5.1. If there are cards remaining after the application of the Senior International and Senior National Criteria, an athlete may be eligible for a Development Card by being selected onto the National Development Team for the 2026-2027 season. The maximum number of years an athlete can be nominated for a Development Card is three (3) years.
 - 3.5.2. Normally, a Development Card cannot be allocated to an athlete previously carded at the Senior Card level (SR, SR1, SR2) for more than two (2) years. An exception may be made for an athlete carded at the Senior Card level while still at the IRF Junior age category.

4. Carding Nomination

- 4.1. Cards will be allocated to eligible athletes in the following order of priority:
 - 1. Athletes eligible for "SR1" cards
 - 2. Athletes eligible for Illness, Injury or Pregnancy carding under section 5
 - 3. Athletes eligible for "SR" cards
 - 4. Athletes eligible for "D" cards
- 4.2. If at any of those prioritization levels listed in 4.1 there are more athletes qualifying than there is carding available, the priority will go to the athlete(s) who had:
 - 1. The best result at the 2026 World Championships provided the result is in the Top 8 and top half of the draw

if a tie remains:

2. The highest finish according to the 2026 World Championships Team selection points

if a tie remains:

3. The best result in Singles at the most recent National Championships

if a tie remains:

4. The best result in Singles at the most recent Selection Event

if a tie remains:

5. The best result in Singles at the second most recent Selection Event; or

if a tie remains:

6. Highest rank in the Racquetball Canada National Ranking after the most recent National Championships

if a tie remains:

1. Gender: if the funding level remains at two cards, the card will be awarded to the gender that has not been nominated for carding.

- 4.3 If during the carding cycle the carding status of an athlete is withdrawn, the remainder of the carding support will be assigned to the next eligible athlete based on the 2026-2027 carding criteria, if at least four (4) months of AAP are available irrespective of gender.

5. Illness, Injury or Pregnancy

An SR1 or SR2 carded athlete who at the end of the carding cycle has not achieved the standard required for the renewal of carding status strictly because of health-related reasons may be considered for re-nomination for the upcoming year provided the following conditions are met:

- 5.1 The athlete has fulfilled all reasonable training and rehabilitation requirements aimed at a speedy return to full high performance training and competition during the period of his or her injury, illness or pregnancy or is continuing a rehabilitation program approved by the Racquetball Canada High Performance Director.
- 5.2 Racquetball Canada determined that the athlete's failure to attain the applicable carding standards is strictly related to the injury, illness or pregnancy.
- 5.3 Racquetball Canada, based on its technical judgment and that of a Racquetball Canada approved physician or equivalent, indicates in writing the expectation that the athlete will achieve at least the minimum standards required for carding during the upcoming carding period.
- 5.4 The athlete has demonstrated, and continues to demonstrate, his or her long-term commitment to high performance training and competition goals, as well as his or her intention to pursue full high performance training and competition throughout the carding period for which he or she wishes to be renewed despite not having met the carding criteria.
- 5.5 Racquetball Canada is provided evidence that the above requirements are being met to nominate athletes for carding based on the above provisions.

5.6 An athlete may qualify for a maximum of 2 health-related cards (excluding pregnancy).

6. Appeal Process

Appeals of Racquetball Canada AAP nomination/re-nomination decision or of a Racquetball Canada's recommendation to withdraw carding may be pursued only through the Racquetball Canada's Appeal Policy, which may include an appeal application to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC).

Appeals of AAP Decision made under [Section 6 \(Application for and Approval of Cards\)](#) or [Section 11 \(Withdrawal of Carding Status\)](#) may be pursued through [Section 13](#) of the [AAP Policies, Procedures and Guidelines](#).