

FITEQ NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL EDITION

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NATIONAL CHALLENGER SERIES CONTRIBUTES TO GLOBAL GROWTH IN ATHLETE PARTICIPATION

A concept that was created to overcome the effects of COVID-19 on international sport is proving to have a long-lasting impact on teqball's continued growth. The National Challenger Series was launched in July 2020 as a way to support National Federations, clubs and players with the return of competitive teqball events during the pandemic, but it is clear that its legacy will be far-reaching.

The purpose of the competition was to enable athletes to compete for World Ranking points and prize money, but also provide them with a clear qualification pathway for the 2020 Teqball World Championships. Unfortunately, FITEQ's flagship event was cancelled in 2020. However, the success of the National Challenger Series led to its extension into 2021, meaning that it will determine the quotas for each category – singles, doubles and mixed doubles – at the Teqball World Championships later this year.

Nearly a year on from its launch, 22 countries have hosted one or multiple National Challenger Series events, with many others scheduled to organise competitions in the coming months. Not only has the new event concept kept established teqball players active, it has also helped unearth new talent. Every country that has hosted a National Challenger Series event has seen a dramatic rise in the number of players registered on FITEQ's centralised athlete database. In Poland, for example, the number rose from 50 to 97, whilst in Senegal it rose from 12 to 165.

It is clear that the opportunities provided by the National Challenger Series have accelerated teqball's global growth, in spite of the limitations COVID-19 enforced on all sports. As international competitions begin to resume, notably FITEQ's Challenger Cups, the quality of play has improved and there is greater depth of high-level players. FITEQ Sport Director Matthew Curtain reflected on the impact of the National Challenger Series, saying:

"Our immediate priority when the extent of the pandemic became clear was to provide opportunities for people to keep playing teqball in a safe and secure environment. Teqball is a socially-distanced sport and together with medical experts we created clear guidelines on how to safely host events during the challenging times we face. The reception to the National Challenger Series amongst players and our National Federations speaks volumes. Players have welcomed the chance to keep playing regularly and the discovery of new talent is great for the sport. From the National Federations' perspective, they have gained invaluable experience of hosting events, which will set them up well for the future. Overall, the concept has been a resounding success and it is a demonstration of the resilience of the teqball family to not let anything stand in the way of our sport's continued rise."

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Our mailing address is: Place Saint-François 7 c/o Ametis Conseils SA 1003 Lausanne
You can reach us on sport@fiteq.org.



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