

National Racquetball®

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OFF THE WALL

by Joe Massarelli



Clubs are Crucial to Our Growth

It was a curious gathering of those directing the future growth of our sport. There were manufacturer and association members, club and player representatives and, of course, the media in the form of *National Racquetball's* publisher . . . me!

The gathering I'm referring to was a recent meeting of the Racquetball Manufacturers Association (RMA) at the Bonaventure Hotel in Ft. Lauderdale. As usual at such forums, roll call was taken, minutes were read, financial conditions were reported, and the meeting was officially adjourned just about on time.

But, the real meat of what was discussed — and what this column is all about — came from the club representative, Dean Kachel, of The Quadrangle.

This Coral Springs, FL facility (actually there are two clubs) offers racquetball, tennis and exercise programs to its membership. It was Dean's mission to report to the Board his views of racquetball's future, as well as those of the club owners he represents.

After relating the fact that no new clubs have opened in Broward County during the past year, he sadly reported that in fact two clubs had closed in just the last few weeks. His opening remarks certainly were not music to the Board's ears, but what impressed us most were the comments that followed.

Kachel went on to remark that, while racquetball is beyond the fad stage, very little is being done at the club level to stimulate the sport. He was even more specific. First, he mentioned the trend to diversify activities as an attempt to maintain a profit — or at least break even!

But, much of this diversification is being wasted because, in his opinion, clubs are not promoting themselves properly in the first place. There is little, if any, racquetball oriented promotional activity and virtually no professional training or educational programs being offered at most clubs. Further, he knew of no support being provided to attract high school interest and participation. And, a juniors or grass roots development effort is virtually nonexistent, with the exception of the efforts being made by the American Amateur Racquetball Association (AARA).

When you couple these facts with the complete lack of television coverage or exposure and no properly planned or promoted demonstration programs in place, it's no wonder that racquetball's popularity and its growth curve are flat.

We were impressed with Dean Kachel's self assessment. His comments were candid and his observations of our industry were uncomfortably critical — though valid and necessary. More importantly, he said what had to be said to those who orchestrate our sport's future. No punches were pulled. No words were minced. But, most important in our view was the courage it took to say it like it is!

Dean conceded that he and other concerned club owners didn't have the answers to many of the problems facing the club owner and the sport in general, but it's Dean's belief that you can't solve a problem if you won't admit to one in the first place.

After the meeting adjourned, I had the opportunity to chat with Dean briefly. And, just as I expected, his

two clubs were doing quite well. But that shouldn't surprise either of us. Dean exhibits professionalism in his business and the results are positive. With more Dean Kachels involved in the sport of racquetball, only good things can happen to all of us. □

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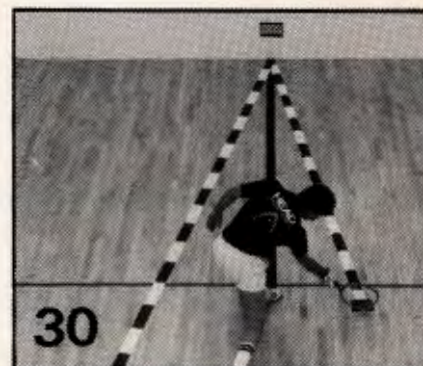
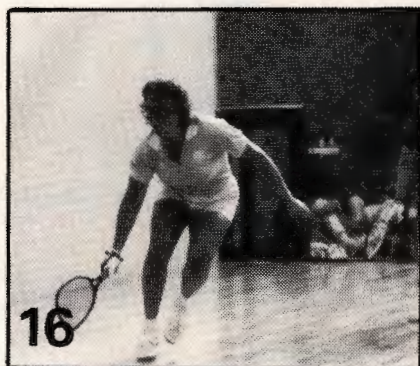
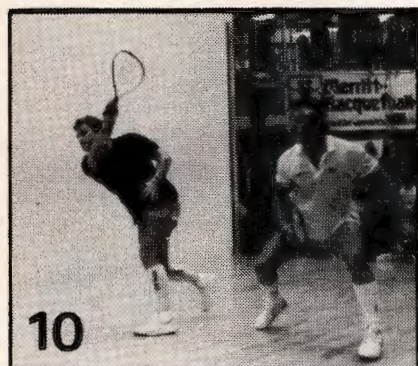
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National Racquetball



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FIRST SERVE

by Chuck Leve



New Rule Gets Grade: A+

It may be coincidence or cause and effect, but whichever reason, I think a great, big "well done" ought to go out to Jim Hiser, new commissioner of the Racquetball Manufacturer's Associations (RMA) pro tour. Since Hiser has come on board, a new rule has been instituted that has already had a positive impact on the professional game.

The rule, put into effect at the Toyota Pro/Am (see results, this issue) shortens the service zone to 14 feet, eliminating the three feet closest to the side walls. Thus, those nasty drive serves that pass between the server and the side wall are now a thing of the past.

And good riddance, too! For too many years, actually since the advent of the drive serve as the dominant serve in the game, big hitters have been hitting screens and near-screens between themselves and the wall — and for the most part, they've been getting away with it.

And while many professional watchers wonder if the new rule will have an impact on the effectiveness of some of the game's biggest hitters like Cliff Swain, Bret Harnett and others, in reality, if the rule eventually makes its way to amateur play, it will have a positive effect on the entire game.

There's really no reason why a player should have to hit a serve that goes behind his back and squeezes through a tiny opening on its way to back court. And while that very well might be a screen serve and very well might be called a screen serve in professional play by a professional referee, that in no way means that

would be the case on the amateur level.

We've all played recreationally and we've all been reluctant to call the screen on the server when we're sitting in back court trying to receive. Oh sure, the serve that whizzes past the server's ear, causing him to duck, stumble and dive out of the way, yes, that's a screen.

But that gremlin-like serve between the server and the side wall — that baby ought to be outlawed and I'm glad that Hiser sees it that way.

At press time, it was unclear from my information, whether the 14 foot rule applies to all serves, including those that would not be affected, i.e., a Z serve from the left, for example. On that serve, of course, the location of the server would be moot since the serve never passes that close to his body.

But most of us can hit a Z serve from three feet closer to center court just as well as we can from against the side wall. Therefore, I would hope the rule would be in effect on all serves.

The fact that the Hiser-run pro tour has already implemented the rule, with the full support of the professional players, is a good sign for the rest of us. Hiser is also vice president of the American Amateur Racquetball Association (AARA) and his clout should go a long way toward the speedy adoption of the rule by that body.

We all recognize that screen serves continue to be a difficult and sensitive rule to write, call, interpret and enforce. I support the movement afoot to have screens redefined as "fault" serves, meaning that if you

serve one screen you only get one more serve.

Currently, by allowing a screen to be a non-fault serve, we are simply giving the server an invitation to go for the screen knowing he's got nothing to lose. And any rule that asks to be broken surely will.

By the way, this is no recent phenomenon. The drive serve behind the server's back dates back to the early 1970s when used (I'm not sure who gets credit for introducing it) by four-time national champion Charlie Brumfield as well as Steve Strandemo and other top pros.

Brumfield used to aim for the crack at the juncture of the side wall and floor about a foot behind the short line. This was his ace territory and during his reign, his serves seemed to be drawn to the area like a magnet. Strandemo modified the shot by moving closer to the left wall, putting the server in a no-lose situation and the receiver, therefore, in a no-win posture.

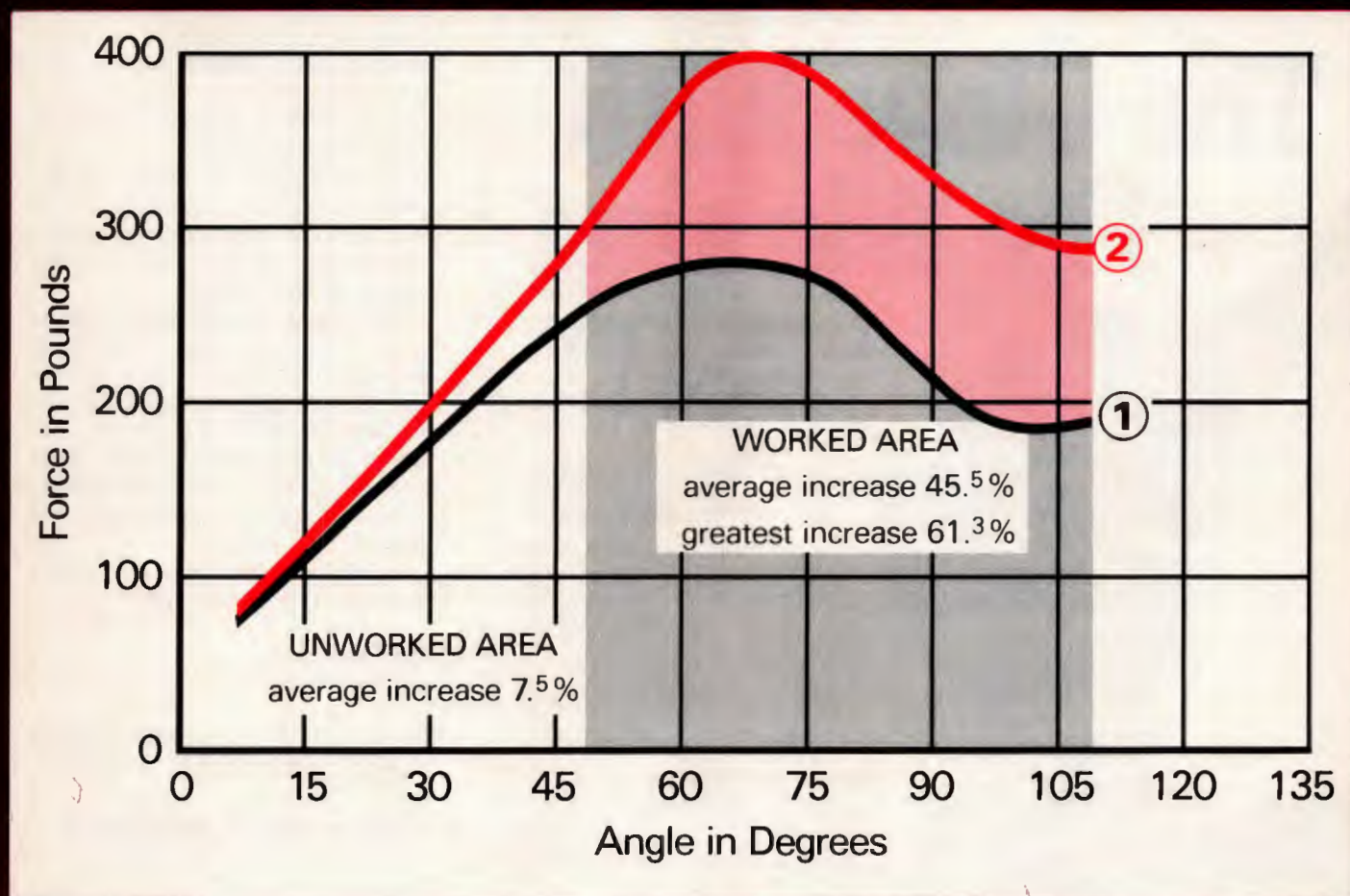
If the serve was hit properly it would first freeze the receiver who didn't have a clear view of it and then, crack out or nearly so. The server would expect (and often get) an "ace" call, claiming that the receiver would not have been able to retrieve it anyhow. If the serve was mis-hit, it nearly always was mis-hit "light," causing a short serve.

The server would then go to what ever his standard second serve might be, none the worse for wear.

So after all these generations of players and ruling bodies, we finally have a reasonable response to the problem of at least one, if not all of the screen serves. □

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If you would like to write a letter to the Editor, please send your comments to: Letters to the Editor, National Racquetball, P.O. Drawer 6126, Clearwater, FL 33518-6126. All letters become property of this magazine. We reserve the right to edit for clarity or space considerations. Letters will not be returned.

Curve Ball

Charlie Garfinkel's May article on the oversized racquet quoted a comment by Danny Obremski citing Mike Yellen's shots as curving on the backhand with an oversized racquet.

My frequent doubles partner, Bruce Christensen, who I have played in singles at my Sportsclub in Albany, regularly hits his backhand so hard that it actually curves. Garfinkel indicates that he is dubious of this

but the fact is that it is true. It does curve.

I attribute this phenomenon to the fact that there is such a top spin placed on hitting on top of the ball by a "hard hitter" with proper form. Recently, Bruce switched to an oversized racquet and I estimate he generates 145-150 mph with it. The ball now curves on the forehand and the backhand as well.

It may sound like something for "Ripley's Believe It Or Not" but it is a fact that the ball curves. Besides, Obremski's eyesight is fine so he further verifies the fact.

As a matter of information, Charlie Brumfield challenged Christensen and me to a doubles match, winner take all, against himself and Garfinkel. I'm sure you'll be able to get "The Gar" to verify the ball curves when he sees Bruce hit it with the oversized racquet (if we decide to play the match).

In any case, tell Gar to stop being dubious. The ball curves!

Vince Wolanin
Albany, NY

We told him and "The Gar" said, "I'll believe it when I see it!" — Ed.

Yellen The Champion

In mid-April Mike Yellen played an exhibition with Gerry Price to commemorate the grand reopening of our San Jose facility. Prior to that exhibition a free throw contest was being held in the newly constructed gym.

Mike, more or less on a lark, said he would like to enter. He went on to shock his 30 or so opponents by sinking a cool 18 of 20 from the line, grabbing the \$100 first prize. Yellen immediately handed the check over to me to go toward the Junior Western Regionals.

Two years earlier at the Schoeber's Christmas Classic Pro Stop, Mike bought \$50 worth of junior raffle tickets, which were promptly given to the

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kids to be filled out in their own names.

I am not a close friend of Mike's, but I have on several occasions had reason to associate with him in various tournaments, exhibitions and personal appearances.

During these events he has illustrated time and again what a true gentleman and champion is. When others were too busy to talk with a kid, he found the time. While lesser players strutted and talked down to our staff, he was polite and unassuming. The difference between a "Champion" and a #1 ranking is in how much a person gives back to the sport that made them great.

Mike Yellen is a true Champion!

Bob Smith
Fremont, CA

Mike is what the word 'professional' is all about. — Ed.

Scorekeeper, Anyone?

Does anyone out there make a score-keeper for racquetball, like the baseball umpires have?

Reginald A. Goodman
Lumberton, TX

Don't know of any. Readers, please help, if you can. — Ed.

Screen Serves

I just read the May issue and would like to comment on the subject of the "screen serve" which was discussed in the Letters to the Editor and the AARA Rule Changes article.

I agree with Jim Hiser's proposal to change the AARA rule on screen serves. If the first serve is a screen, it should be considered a fault serve leaving the server with one additional serve, not two.

But the response in Letters to the Editor on screen serves needs to be addressed first. Rule 5.B is too vague. The referee in a tournament situation needs a specific guideline in order to reach a fair decision, to both players, as to whether a serve is a screen or not. A receiver should

always have a fair chance to return a serve, and likewise the server should be credited with a great serve that he or she has worked long and hard to perfect.

I hope that the AARA gives this subject the consideration it deserves prior to changing the rule on fault service.

Sherry Carder
Arvada, CO

See Chuck Leve's column on page 4 for more information on screen serves. — Ed.

Setting Negative Examples?

I do not play racquetball and I have not seen many tournaments, but I have a keen interest in the sport. I was amazed — and dismayed — to see two of the top pros playing in the recent Ektelon Nationals minus eye protection. What a negative example they are setting for the younger generation!

How pleased I am to now see the outcry in *National Racquetball* on this topic. I was particularly impressed with the letter from Stephen D. Ducoff (May 1986). I would rearrange the three suggestions he made to make eyeguards mandatory:

(1) Court owners make eyeguards mandatory to protect themselves against liability suits (oh yes, it will come to that).

(2) Racquetball equipment manufacturers enforce mandatory eyeguards with those whom they sponsor.

(3) With this authority behind him the tournament director could then enforce mandatory eyeguards.

Lynn Adams said that if a ball she hit caused an eye injury to a player minus eyeguards, the effect on her would be tremendous and twofold — the injury itself and the terrible feeling that she would have as a result.

As a grandmother to a professional player, I might add, "Better to lose a game than an eye."

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Since 1975, I have taught over 6,000 lessons and for at least nine years I have advocated eyeguards for my students by telling them that if they play long enough, they will be hit in the eye. The question is *when* —

today or 10 years from now.

My interest in responding to this issue has gotten me to estimate the number of games I have played since 1973. As an average, I have played five games per day, five days per week since beginning to play. At that rate, I have played at least 16,900 games and in that time I have been hit in the eye only once. But that once so *opened* my eyes that you will never see me play without my eyeguards. I just don't want to risk

another hit.

However, in my 6,000+ lessons, I have been hit in my eyeguards several times. My beginner students can be a bit inaccurate and in my effort to see their stroke, I have to watch the ball through contact which is obviously (to those who know) too long to watch. My eyeguards have protected me every time.

As a man, I am distressed to see how stupid men can be, especially regarding eyeguards. I cannot remember one female student to resist my sermon on eyeguards. However, I cannot count how many of my male students still do not wear them. "Macho" is a heck of a price to pay.

Since we live in a democratic society, why not let the majority of the players choose whether to wear eyeguards or not? I think our conscience and intelligence will provide the proper results. Eyeguards are a must and you'll see most of my students wear them. I hope everyone will soon.

Royle Berry
Houston, TX

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Take It From One Who Knows

I have been following the eyeguard controversy in *National Racquetball* which I find very interesting. I cannot agree with your position more about the problem of eye protection while playing.

As a racquetball player I had to learn the hard way just last September when I was the victim of getting hit in the eye with a racquetball. I could not see for about six hours.

Later, I spent two days in the hospital with both eyes covered. At first, the doctors thought I had a tear in the retina, only to discover later that this was not the case.

While I also lost a week from work, I could have lost the sight in my eye. I was very, very lucky and all is okay now.

I got a good scare but I am back playing racquetball again, wearing eyeguards all the time. Prior to my injury I would wear eyeguards and not wear eyeguards, depending on

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how I was playing, if you know what I mean.

I also preached to my two sons who play (one is sponsored by Ektelon) the importance of eye protection. It became a lesson in practicing what you preach!

Thomas Leonard
Lyndhurst, NJ

This Y Is A Step Ahead

A recent experience at the Itasca County Family YMCA prompted me to contribute these comments to you regarding mandatory eyeguard wear.

Along with the opening of our YMCA in 1981 came the decision to have from inception mandatory eyeguard wear as policy. This was a well accepted policy, in fact, for over five years. However, as the tour-

naments expanded and the better players arrived to participate in our tournaments, there were a few who did not wear eye protection. Rather than enforcing the mandatory eyeguard wear, the fitness director recommended the policy be changed to "strongly recommend eyeguard wear."

With the help of a petition signed by physicians in the medical community, strong support from people who play racquetball, and your recent articles in *National Racquetball*, we were able to convince the board of directors of the YMCA to continue mandatory eyeguard wear.

I believe that your editorial was helpful along with the other articles in convincing people of the value of this policy.

Thomas R. Edwards, M.D.
Grand Rapids, MN

Preparing for the Match — The Banana Method

by Tom Grobmisi

I always eat a banana before a big match (it would be rude, if not illegal, to eat one during the match). Some people believe in the banana because they say it helps prevent muscle cramps; others laugh at the banana, calling it a "frivolous fruit." While others stay away from the banana, attributing all kinds of sexual connotations to eating it. Most people just say, "A banana . . . who cares?"

I like to eat the yellow eclipse before a match because it relaxes me. It helps me take my mind off the match and become calm. First you have to get your mind to accept the fact that, in the midst of all the turmoil going on, you're actually going to sit down and consume a banana. Then you have to concentrate on peeling it, looking for and removing brown spots, then chewing and swallowing. If someone comes by and tries to break my concentration, I usually say something like, "Can't you see I'm in the middle of eating my banana?" and they usually leave me alone.

Eating a banana sounds quite simple, but there's a few things pros forget to mention when they recommend them: First, they're often in short supply at tournaments, so bring your own. Secondly, never pack your banana in the same compartment as your racquet. Third, don't get frustrated if you have trouble with your banana . . . seek advice of an expert, coach, or one of the more experienced players. Finally, don't allow yourself to become physically or emotionally dependent on bananas. If you find yourself needing one the first thing in the morning, every time you pick up the phone, or after sex, that's banana abuse.

Note: The banana has been erroneously singled out as one of our most serious littering problems. The classic stereotype of the poor, innocent, nice-person slipping on the banana peel is nothing more than a major anti-banana propaganda campaign by the federal government and cartoon industry, designed to undermine the banana republics. □

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Hogan Regains Top Spot In Baltimore

The Toyota Pro/Am in Baltimore seems to bring out the player's best efforts each year. Not only is it the last ranking tournament prior to the prestigious Ektelon Nationals, but the first place prize of a 1986 Toyota MR-2 is the largest, single prize on tour.

Tournament director Dave Pivec introduced the finals as a "match made by the racquetball gods." It was the first time this season that Marty Hogan and Mike Yellen met in the finals and again, first place ranking was on the line.

Yellen had barely regained the top seed after winning the Beaverton, OR event in February. Hogan, however, had held the number one position most of the season and obviously wanted it back.

From the beginning, it was evident that Pivec's description was accurate as both players exhibited an intensity not seen earlier in the tournament.

Hogan and Yellen exchanged serves and points in the first game, with Yellen finally taking a 10-9 lead and needing four times in at 10 before finally winning the game.

The second game displayed the best of professional racquetball. Both players made great, diving gets and continually forced the opponent to make perfect shots to win points. Once again, Yellen grabbed a slim 10-9 advantage and finally won on a Hogan backhand skip.

In game three, Hogan's serve and retrieving ability proved the difference as he easily captured the 11-4 game, exhibiting unusual enthusiasm and determination. "I was going to give it all I had," he said after the match. It was obvious that he did.

The fourth game started much like the third with Hogan going out to a quick 7-1 lead. But just when game five appeared inevitable, Yellen regained the momentum and worked his way back to a 10-8, match point lead. Hogan's frustration was evident as he yelled at himself to play,

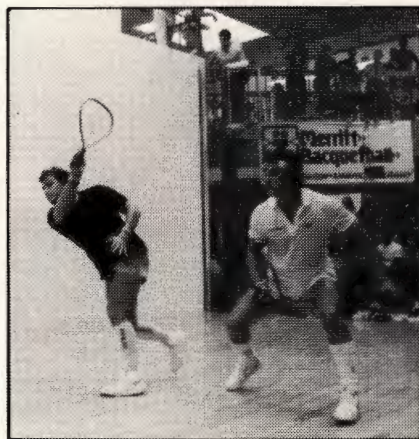
and then called time out.

When play resumed, Marty regained the serve and tied the game at 10-10, setting up the turning point of the match. Mike hit a backhand pinch that rebounded to center court. As Marty moved back to return, he hit Mike with his racquet. The referee called an avoidable hinder and the game went to Hogan, 11-10.

The match didn't necessarily hinge on that single call, but other, similar situations in game five haunted Yellen to the end.

Hogan served first and grabbed a

3-0 fifth game lead when Yellen recaptured the serve, setting the stage for game five brouhaha number one. Hogan retrieved a near-perfect Yellen pass with a diving get, but found himself pinned against the back wall as Mike prepared to bury the set up for



Yellen demonstrates professional follow through against Hogan in the finals.



Gregg Peck during semi-final battle with Hogan.



Hogan begs the gods for a good call.

his first point. Just as Yellen started his swing, Hogan circled around him to try and get into retrieving position.

Yellen, apparently felt Hogan blocked his view, because he completely stopped his swing. The referee called hinder, although Yellen argued that Hogan had taken away a setup and was looking for an avoidable call.

Once again, a long rally followed with Marty hitting a backhand pinch set up to Mike in center court. As Mike began to swing he hit Marty with his racquet and immediately looked to the referee for the call.

"Hinder," said the ref.

"Why not avoidable?" bellowed Yellen.

"Hinder," said the ref, and Mike never seemed to recover. Marty played errorless ball, and with his forehand as accurate as ever, went on to win the game, match and Toyota MR-2, 11-2.

It was certain that Hogan wanted this tournament as much as any. A Baltimore favorite, Marty lost here last year and that, plus his desire to regain top seed was the stimulus he needed to generate a new enthusiasm. But a Hogan/Yellen final always lives up to expectations and this was no exception.

In the semi-finals, the top four seeds were matched. Yellen, Mr. Control and consistent passer against Cliff Swain (#4), power server and shooter. That's how the tournament program described the players, but the opposite seemed to take place on the court.

Yellen came out serving strong, counting three aces among his early points en route to an 11-6 first game win. Swain rebounded with big serves and great diving gets to take a 9-2 second game lead, only to have Yellen play his famous errorless style, forcing Swain to make perfect shots.

Mike inched back, tying the game at 10 and finally hitting a backhand pinch for the 11-10 win. A demoralized Swain couldn't make a contest of it in the third, and Yellen entered the finals with an 11-4 victory.

In the other semi-final, Hogan's ability to get his first serve in dictated the outcome against Gregg Peck (#3). That booming serve forced Peck into weak service returns and an 11-6 win in game one. Gregg took

an early 4-0 second game lead, but Marty fought back on the strength of his uncanny retrieving ability and forehand kills for an 11-9 victory.

In game three, Hogan seemed to put everything into overdrive, making some unbelievable retrieves and shots, winning the game and match 11-8.

In the first quarter-final match, Peck took on Ed Andrews, who had a 10-15 advantage and seemed to

have total control of the game. But Peck regained the momentum off two back wall cracks and managed to salvage the victory 11-10, after Andrews skipped his forehand from center court at game point.

Game two was a mirror image of the first, with the deadlock coming at 9-all and Andrews again hitting his forehand into the floor. Peck served out for the 11-9 win. Although Andrews managed to win game

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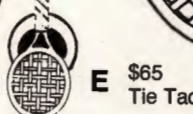


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three, Peck easily captured the fourth, 11-3.

The second quarter-final battle found Swain pitted against Atlanta's greatly-improved Mike Ray (#6). Many on hand wondered if the tour's new service rule (server can't stand closer than three feet from the side wall on a drive serve down the same wall) would neutralize Swain's devastating service arsenal.

Game one answered all doubts as Cliff kept Mike off balance with near perfect drive serves both left and

Hogan, center, accepts a gleaming red Toyota after winning in Baltimore.



right, 11-7. Swain continued to play his talented aggressive style and captured game two in similar fashion. But an appeal call early in game three almost switched the momentum totally to Ray.

Between games, Mike was informed by a friend in the gallery that Swain was foot faulting regularly on his big serve. Sure enough, on the first drive serve of game three, the recently informed referee called a foot fault on Cliff, whose serves seemed to lose their zip from that point on. Ray won game three 11-6 and appeared to ride momentum to victory.

But we all know "Big Mo" once captured is hard to hang onto. Down 2-6 in game four, Swain made an eye-blinking diving get, which Ray appealed as a double bounce pick up. The line judges split decision made the referee's "no call" stand and the point went to Swain. The call seemed to dishearten and distract Ray and Cliff came back to take the match.

Reuben Gonzalez, no stranger to the quarter-finals, started his match against Yellen with an awesome array of execution, so devastating that Yellen did little more than laugh at his misfortune. At one juncture, Reuben actually fell against the wall in total disbelief as he rolled out a diving, backhand get. Needless to say, game one went to Gonzalez, 11-1.

But one game does not a match make, and Mike came out strong in the second with the consistency and accuracy of a champion. Reuben cooled off quickly and decidedly as Yellen stormed back to take the match 8, 6 and 2.

The last quarter-final found Hogan against nemesis Gerry Price, a grudge rematch of their quarter-final battle in Beaverton, won by Price in four. Showing that West Coast play and



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East Coast play can be similar, Price won game one 11-7 and held a seemingly commanding 7-1 second game advantage as the crowd began to wonder if their favorite would once again falter on the way to the Toyota. Their fears were for naught.

Suddenly Hogan began to get his first serves in and fought back to take the second game 11-10. With his service arsenal in full blast there was to be no stopping Hogan this time around. As everyone on tour knows, when Marty's getting his first serves in he's virtually unbeatable. Price certainly learned it again as Marty won in four.

Only Scott Oliver of the top eight seeds was unable to reach the quarters. Andrews eliminated Oliver, who barely escaped the 32's, needing five games to put away Dolwain Green (#27). It was three straight games in the Andrews/Oliver round of 16 match.

Three other of the top seeds had difficulty in the 16's, as Peck, Price and Hogan all had to come from behind to eliminate John Egerman (#20), Corey Brysman (#23) and Jim Cascio (#15) respectively. These tough early rounds emphasize the

even quality of play among the top 24 as many of the tournament's best matches routinely take place in the 32's and 16's.

Pivec and his crew should be congratulated not only for presenting one of the tour's finest events, but also for raising more than \$5,000 for a local charity tied into the tournament. Dave's continued efforts to bring the Toyota Pro/Am to Baltimore and the annual donations to charity are greatly appreciated by the racquetball community.

The Merritt Racquetball facility is without a doubt one of the top in the country. The finals drew a full gallery, as usual.

Results:

Round of 32:

Yellen d. Griffith 11-1, 11-7, 11-3;
David Gross d. Embray 11-6, 11-7, 11-10;
Dave Peck d. Plotkin 11-4, 11-2, 11-3;
Gonzalez d. Foley 10-11, 11-2, 11-0, 11-3;
Ray d. Obremski 11-5, 11-5, 11-10;
Cohen d. Clark 11-7, 2-11, 11-3, 11-8;
Andy Gross d. White 11-1, 11-7, 11-4;
Swain d. Newman 11-0, 11-7, 11-9;
Gregg Peck d. Carter 11-2, 11-1, 11-4;
Brysmen d. Inoue 11-1, 11-6, 11-5;
Andrews d. Daly 11-0, 11-1, 11-3;
Oliver d. Green 11-2, 7-11, 10-11, 11-9, 11-3;

(continued on page 42)

Hogan Takes Saranac Too

In an event with a definite St. Louis flavor, Marty Hogan captured the Saranac Pro/Am, stopping fellow St. Louisian Jerry Hilecher in the finals.

The match was a real show-stopper as Hilecher had Hogan on the ropes in what tournament attendees claimed was the best racquetball match ever played in the nine-year history of the Green Bay, WI event.

Sponsored by the Saranac Glove Company, the event also had an exciting pro doubles division. Hogan, teaming with Mike Greenberg almost upended the favored Hilecher/Doug Cohen tandem, which couldn't muster enough on the last day, bowing to a well rested Andy Gross/David Gross duo.

Hogan, smarting after his doubles loss, vowed to return next year and win doubles as well as singles.

Dave Neubauer, founder of the tournament, did his usual excellent job of preparing and running the event. □

RESULTS

Men's Pro Finals:

Hogan d. Hilecher 7-11, 11-9, 3-11, 11-5, 11-0.

Semi-finals:

Hogan d. D. Gross 11-8, 11-6, 11-10
Hilecher d. A. Gross 11-7, 11-9, 11-3

Quarter-finals:

Hogan d. O'Connell 11-10, 11-8, 11-6
D. Gross d. Negrete 11-3, 11-1, 11-0
A. Gross d. Cohen 11-6, 11-8, 11-4
Hilecher d. Munroe 11-2, 11-4, 11-9

Men's Pro Doubles Finals:

Gross/Gross d. Hilecher/Cohen 11-10, 11-8, 2-11, 10-11, 11-8

Semi-finals:

Hilecher/Cohen d. Hogan/Greenberg 11-7, 9-11, 11-9, 10-11, 11-8

Gross/Gross d. Negrete/Negrete 11-8, 11-0, 11-3

Quarter-finals:

Hilecher/Cohen d. O'Connell/Graham 11-4, 11-2, 11-2
Hogan/Greenberg d. Henke/Tanko 11-8, 11-1, 11-7

Negrete/Negrete d. Hermans/Berhow 11-9, 11-7, 11-10

Gross/Gross d. Branvold/Lindquist 11-1, 11-0, 11-8

Other Finals

Men's Open: Hermans d. Bogenschutz

Women's A: Ashton d. Schmidt

Men's 35+: Johnson d. Gross

Men's 40+: Krueger d. Bassuener

Men's 45+: Stoltman d. Hock

Juniors 17-: Olson d. Ellenberger

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Hogan and Adams Reign Over Ektelon Nationals

Marco Perez and Joy Paraiso Capture Amateur Titles

In a year in which upsets have been the rule rather than the exception in professional sports, the 1986 Ektelon National Racquetball Championships, held April 30 through May 4 at The Sports Gallery in Anaheim, has restored order.

Top-seed Marty Hogan edged second-seed Mike Yellen for the men's pro division title, while defending women's pro champion Lynn Adams defeated second-ranked Caryn McKinney to pocket her second consecutive Ektelon crown.

Despite the highest level of parity among players in recent years, the Ektelon men's pro division conformed to pre-tournament billing. Hogan, now only the second man to win two Ektelon championships (his first was 1981), entered the tournament with the slimmest of margins over second-place Mike Yellen in the national rankings. A capacity crowd at The Sports Gallery got exactly what it wanted when five-time national champion Hogan emerged from preliminary play to meet Yellen, the men's national racquetball champion for the past three years.

Though admittedly erratic, Hogan got to the confrontation with Yellen by dispatching Steve Lerner, 1985 Ektelon winner Cliff Swain and third-ranked Bret Harnett (1984 Ektelon champ) in gruelling give-game matches.

Yellen, effectively using his over-size racquet, knocked off Jerry Hilecher, Ruben Gonzalez and came from behind to overcome 1985

Ektelon finalist Gregg Peck, thus avenging a loss to Peck in last year's Ektelon semifinals.

In the battle for the \$10,000 first-place check, Hogan opened by recording impressive 11-6, 11-6 victories in the first two games of the best-of-five match. Yellen quickly evened the contest by blanking Hogan in the third game, 11-0, and setting up the decisive tiebreaker with an 11-5 verdict in the fourth.

The Ektelon Championships marked the third time this season that Hogan and Yellen had met in the finals of a pro racquetball tournament. Yellen was the first to hit paydirt last October in Omaha. Hogan evened the count at an April tournament in Baltimore that served as a tuneup for the Ektelon Championships.

The final game was all Hogan. Riding his blistering serve and amazing retrieving ability, Marty quickly grabbed a lead he was determined not to relinquish. Yellen never seemed to regain the precise shot-making that won him games three and four, and with the outcome rarely in doubt, it was Hogan, 11-2 in the fifth.

The Big Four in men's pro racquetball squared off in the semi-finals and both matches went the distance. Hogan battled off the floor (literally and figuratively) against Harnett, coming back after being down two games to one.

It could have been a much easier match for Marty, but Harnett's shooting in the clutch won him game one

11-10 and game three by the identical score. Since Hogan captured the second game 11-8, a twist here or retrieve there could have won Marty the match in three straight.

Instead, the number one ranked player found himself staring elimination in the eye as they entered game four. But under the intense pressure, Hogan's game flourished and he took the final two games 11-6, 11-7.

On the other side of the draw Yellen found himself in a nearly identical position, on the verge of not reaching the finals, where he hoped to regain the top spot. Peck, on the other hand, had his own ideas.

After a relatively easy 11-5 first game win, Yellen was unable to control big Gregg's power game and the easy-going Texan grabbed 11-9, 11-7 back-to-back victories to put himself in position for another shot at the title. But he didn't count on the vaunted Yellen comeback.

And what a comeback it was. As if he were entering a higher level of play, Yellen dominated Peck in game four, 11-1 setting up the tie-breaker much to the delight of the racquetball-rabid fans. The fifth game was anything but anticlimactic as Mike was forced to work as hard as possible to take the 11-7 win and a trip to the finals.

Only Harnett had an easy time of it in the quarters where both Yellen and Hogan were extended to five games. Bret, who reached the quarters with wins over the Gross brothers in the first two rounds, rapidly eliminated Mike Ray, the southpaw Georgian fast making his mark on the tour.

Peck stopped Ed Andrews who came in fully rested by virtue of his injury forfeit victory over Richard Wagner in the round of 16. But Andrews was no match for Peck, who took the road to the semi's 11-4, 8-11, 11-4, 11-8.

The true entertainment in the quarter-finals came in the top seeded matches. Hogan met arch-rival Cliff Swain and the lithe lefty gave Marty all he could handle. In fact, he managed to put Hogan on the brink of defeat. Swain took game one 11-9, Hogan grabbed the second 11-3, and Swain came back to take the two-games-to-one advantage 11-9 in the third. It was time for Marty to turn it on again.

Uncannily, he was able to do it. Out-muscling Swain's muscle, Marty drove his way to fairly uneventful



Mike Yellen (R) in Ektelon Championship Finals action against Marty Hogan.

11-2, 11-5 fourth and fifth game victories.

Yellen was having his own troubles at the bottom of the draw as Ruben Gonzalez set his sights on the semi-finals. As with Hogan in the semi-finals, Yellen could have had an easy time of it had he been able to put Ruben away in game two of their eventual five game battle. Up one game to none, Mike was unable to take advantage of serving game point in game two, and Ruben came back to take the 11-10 thriller. Mike

won the third game 11-4, but Gonzalez, pushing himself to the limit, evened the match 11-7 in the fourth game to set up the tie-breaker.

But the three time national champ was able to hold off his New York combatant and rode an 11-6 victory into the semi-finals.

A lot of familiar names fell by the wayside in the first two rounds, most notably Gerry Price, who came up short to Wagner in the first round 11-9, 11-5, 11-9. Ray eliminated

Lynn Adams (L) drives a forehand against Caryn McKinney in Ektelon Championship Finals.



highly regarded Bill Sell in the same round 11-5, 11-8, 5-11, 11-5.

Perhaps the best match of the round was Danny Obremski's valiant, although losing effort against Yellen. The quick Pennsylvanian held a two games to one advantage over Yellen before Mike put it into high gear for a thrilling 2-11, 11-3, 8-11, 11-3, 11-4 victory.

In the round of 16 it was Hogan's turn to be scared early. Steve Lerner, playing in front of many hometown supporters, took the first two out of three games from Marty and held on through part of the fourth before

Before playing McKinney in the finals, Adams dismissed Laura Martino, Sandy Robson and Terri Gilreath. At the same time, McKinney sliced through Linda Porter, Molly O'Brien and Vicki Panzeri without losing a game, setting up what has become a predictable and traditional rendezvous with Adams in the finals.

Equally predictable was the outcome of the championship bout, as Adams ousted McKinney with precision, 21-16, 21-7, 21-9. Clearly on a level of consistency equal to that of Martina Navratilova, Adams is easily

scare from Gilreath before capturing the match 21-17, 22-20, 21-12, and McKinney likewise had to endure some tight moments before stopping Panzeri 21-11, 22-20, 21-12.

One had to go back to the round of 16 to find some tough matches in this division. And there were plenty. Robson eliminated tour veteran Jennifer Harding in four tough games 10-21, 21-16, 21-20, 21-15 to set up her shot at Adams.

O'Brien almost didn't make the quarter's due to the fine play of lefty Bonnie Stoll, who had victory in sight before falling 21-19, 18-21, 13-21,



Ektelon general manager, Norm Peck, presents a \$10,000 check to Marty Hogan (above), winner of the Men's Pro division and \$4,350 check to Lynn Adams (left), winner of the women's Pro division.

Hogan took control 11-2, 4-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-4.

Meanwhile, in what appeared to be "just another day at the office," Costa Mesa's Lynn Adams was perpetuating her one-woman racquetball dynasty, eliminating would-be competitors without losing a single game en route to a \$4,356 winner's check and her second straight Ektelon title.

Atlanta's Caryn McKinney, enjoying her finest year as a professional with a berth in the finals of every tournament in which she has played, continued that tradition. And for the sixth time, in the 1985-86 WPRA season, McKinney lost to Adams, her nemesis this year.

on her way to her third women's national racquetball championship.

Unlike the men's division, the top four women came through to the semi-finals unscathed. In fact, all four of the quarter-final matches went the three game minimum.

Adams stopped Illinois' Sandy Robson 21-11, 21-11, 21-7 while Fran Davis could do no better against Gilreath (21-2, 21-11, 21-9). Panzeri had a bit more difficulty ousting Cindy Baxter 21-17, 21-16, 21-19, while McKinney easily did in O'Brien 21-8, 21-9, 21-15.

Even the semi-finals, often the scene of great matches, went almost routinely for the two top seeds. Adams survived a second game

21-7, 21-15. Panzeri, always tough in this tournament, edged Toni Bevelock in a well played five game 18-21, 21-2, 10-21, 21-15, 21-11.

The men's and women's professional finals of the Ektelon National Racquetball Championships were videotaped for rebroadcast on ESPN. KABC-TV Sports Director Ted Dawson was on hand to provide the play-by-play, with Dave Peck, two-time Ektelon Championship winner providing color commentary. The first ESPN broadcast will air in November. □

Photos and text provided courtesy of the Phillips Organisation, San Diego, CA.

Ektelon National Racquetball Championships

April 30 — May 4, 1986 The Sports Gallery — Anaheim, CA

MEN'S PRO DIVISION

Round of 32:

Hogan d. Moskwa 6-11, 11-4, 11-4, 11-3;
Lerner d. Griffith 11-10, 11-9, 11-5;
Oliver d. Gervais 11-7, 11-5, 11-2;
Swain d. Nichols 11-4, 11-4, 11-9;
Ray d. Sell 11-5, 11-8, 5-11, 11-5;
Cohen d. Eggerman 11-10, 11-3, 11-5;
Andy Gross d. Inoue 11-1, 11-6, 11-5;
Harnett d. David Gross 11-7, 5-11, 11-1, 11-8;
Gregg Peck d. Navarvo 11-4, 11-10, 11-10;
Cascio d. Roger Harripersad 6-11, 11-7, 11-7, 1-11, 11-10;
Andrews d. Johnson 11-7, 7-11, 11-4, 11-5;
Wagner d. Price 11-9, 11-5, 11-9;
Gonzalez d. Nolan 11-5, 11-6, 11-2;
Dave Peck d. Newman 11-8, 10-11, 11-1, 11-3;
Hilecher d. Brysman 9-11, 11-10, 11-2, 11-10;
Yellen d. Obremski 2-11, 11-3, 8-11, 11-3, 11-4.

Round of 16:

Hogan d. Lerner 11-2, 4-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-4;
Swain d. Oliver 11-3, 11-6, 11-4;
Ray d. Cohen 11-10, 11-2, 1-11, 11-6;
Harnett d. Andy Gross 11-3, 11-5, 11-6;
Gregg Peck d. Cascio 11-3, 11-6, 11-3;
Andrews d. Wagner Forfeit due to injury;
Gonzalez d. Dave Peck 9-11, 11-8, 11-9, 4-11, 11-7;
Yellen d. Hilecher 11-4, 11-6, 11-10.

Quarter-finals:

Hogan d. Swain 9-11, 11-3, 9-11, 11-2, 11-5;
Harnett d. Ray 11-9, 11-1, 11-5;
Gregg Peck d. Andrews 11-4, 8-11, 11-4, 11-8;
Yellen d. Gonzalez 11-6, 10-11, 11-4, 7-11, 11-6.

Semi-finals:

Hogan d. Harnett 10-11, 11-8, 10-11, 11-6, 11-7;
Yellen d. Gregg Peck 11-5, 9-11, 7-11, 11-1, 11-7.

Finals:

Hogan d. Yellen 11-7, 11-6, 0-11, 5-11, 11-2.

WOMEN'S PRO DIVISION

Round of 32:

Adams d. Fischl 21-17, 21-8, 21-19;
Martino d. Paraiso 21-17, 21-14, 21-14;
Robson d. Cherry 21-8, 21-6, 21-8;
Harding d. Rasmussen 21-18, 14-21, 21-18, 13-21, 21-12;
Davis d. Hjlem 21-13, 21-9, 21-16;
Dee d. Wojcik 21-17, 21-7, 21-11;
Lynch d. Burton 21-20, 21-17, 2-16;
Gilreath d. Kuhfeld 20-21, 19-21, 21-11, 21-15, 21-8;
Panzeri d. Doyle 21-9, 21-18, 21-11;
Bevelock d. Nichols 21-12, 21-11, 16-21, 21-15;

Paraiso d. Evon 14-21, 21-14, 21-14, 21-15;

Baxter d. Drexler 21-18, 21-16, 21-18;

Stoll d. Fried 20-21, 21-11, 11-21, 21-11, 21-13

O'Brien d. Goblish 21-15, 21-4, 21-13;

Porter d. Paese 21-17, 21-17, 17-21, 21-16;

McKinney d. Bohling 21-9, 21-10, 21-9.

Round of 16:

Adams d. Martino 21-15, 21-12, 21-8;

Robson d. Harding 10-21, 21-16, 21-20, 21-15;

Davis d. Lynch 21-15, 21-18, 21-12;

Gilreath d. Dee 21-17, 21-14, 21-18;

Panzeri d. Bevelock 18-21, 21-2, 10-21, 21-15, 21-11;

Baxter d. Paraiso 21-11, 21-20, 20-21, 21-9;

O'Brien d. Stoll 21-19, 18-21, 13-21, 21-7, 21-15;

McKinney d. Porter 21-8, 21-9, 21-15.

Quarter-finals:

Adams d. Robson 21-11, 21-11, 21-7;

Gilreath d. Davis 21-12, 21-11, 21-9;

Panzeri d. Baxter 21-17, 21-16, 21-19;

McKinney d. O'Brien 21-8, 21-9, 21-15.

Semi-finals:

Adams d. Gilreath 21-17, 22-20, 21-12;

McKinney d. Panzeri 21-11, 22-20, 21-12.

Finals:

Adams d. McKinney 21-16, 21-7, 21-9.

MEN'S OPEN SINGLES

Semi-finals:

Perez d. Flores 15-14, 15-13;

Parkin d. Silva 15-10, 15-12.

Finals:

Perez d. Parkin 13-15, 15-12, 15-9.

WOMEN'S OPEN

Semi-finals:

Wielhesson d. Nicols 15-5, 15-10;

Paraiso d. Thulin 15-13, 15-8.

Finals:

Paraiso d. Wielhesson 5-15, 15-8, 15-9.

MEN'S VETERAN (30+) SINGLES

Semi-finals:

Doyle d. Berberet 10-15, 15-7, 15-6;

Corcoran d. Wroclowsky 15-14, 15-6.

Finals:

Corcoran d. Doyle 4-15, 15-13, 15-9.

Glass Walls: Use Them to Your Advantage!

by Charlie Garfinkel

Watching professionals play racquetball on courts with one, two, three or even four walls composed of glass can be very deceiving.

Because of constant practice and tournament play on these courts, the professionals make play on them appear relatively easy. This is due to their tremendous reflexes, superb eye hand coordination and ability to keep their eye on the ball at all times.

However, don't let their awesome display on glass walls fool you. If they hadn't spent considerable time on these courts, they'd have difficulty following the ball too.

I have played on courts with one, two and three walls of glass. Playing on a court with three solid walls and one glass back wall isn't too hard to adapt to. In fact, I play on that type of court at least four times a week, at my home club. Two to three weeks of solid play on a court with a glass back wall and you'll find, regardless of your level of play, that you'll be able to adapt quickly.

Playing on a court that has one side wall of glass, regardless of

whether the back wall is glass or solid, is a completely different story. Unless you're a touring pro, (and how many of us are?) five to six weeks of concentrated play will get you acclimated to this type of court. Even then, you'll encounter some difficulty, regardless of how much you practice or play.

I have found that a side wall glass court is more difficult to play on than a full glass back wall, for a variety of reasons.

First, the background appears to be darker and more distracting than on back wall glass. Whether or not you're playing on a left or right side glass wall court, you're constantly looking into the glass when you're shooting a shot near that side.

If spectators are sitting outside the court, you're continually looking directly at them or noticing them with your peripheral vision as you hit your shot. On shots off the back wall glass you're usually facing the front wall only. Therefore, you can concentrate mainly on the ball.

Second, the bounce of the ball off the glass is faster, often causing a

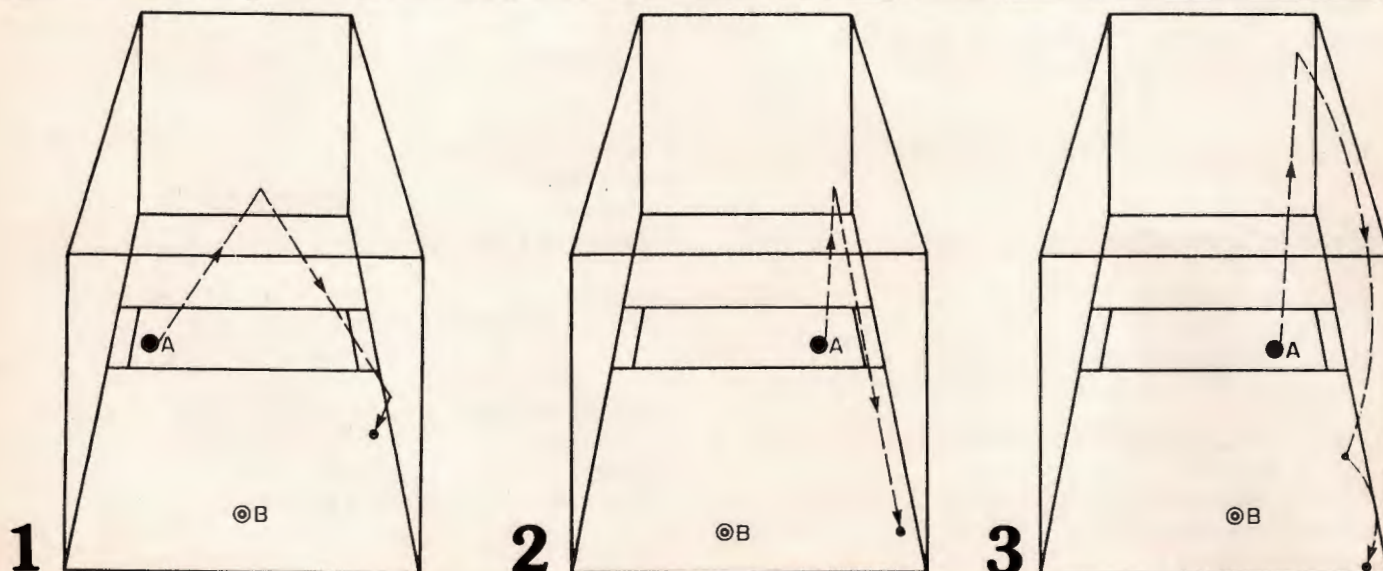
sliding effect. This causes great difficulty in your reaction time, which makes it extremely difficult to return a forceful shot.

Although, as I mentioned earlier, you should practice and play as much as possible on glass wall courts, especially side wall glass courts, I realize that is sometimes impossible. This is especially true if you live in an area that doesn't have any glass wall courts.

Often, when you're playing in an out-of-town tournament, regardless of your level of play, you don't know which court you're going to be assigned to, until the last minute. If you're assigned to a court with a glass side wall, don't panic. Most likely, your opponent hasn't had much experience with this type of court either.

You'll find that most courts with glass side walls have the glass on the right wall of the court. Therefore, you should practice as many shots as you can on that side.

Keep your eye on the ball at all times. Hit a number of shots as close to the right side wall as possible. As



you warm up, instead of hitting one shot, picking up the ball, then hitting another shot, continually hit the ball. This will force you to concentrate on the ball and your footwork, shot after shot. It will also help you to become more acclimated to the side wall glass.

1 Once play begins, be smart. Use the right side wall glass to your advantage. An excellent first serve to use is a drive serve from the left. Standing 3—4 feet from the left side wall, the serve should be hit in the direction of a V, to the right side of the court. (*Diagram 1*).

You should be trying to hit the crack on the right side wall, just behind the short line. Although this is difficult to do, the serve will still prove to be very effective, even if it doesn't precisely hit the crack. Once the ball hits the right side wall, your opponent will have difficulty following the ball, as it will be traveling off the glass at a great speed.

2 Another serve that will prove to be effective is a drive straight down the right side (*Diagram 2*). Standing 6—7 feet from the right side wall, you should serve the ball straight down the line. It isn't imperative that you crack out the serve. Be sure that the ball will bounce twice before it hits the back wall. As with the other drive serve, your opponent will be struggling to return, due to the proximity of the ball to the glass.

3 A serve that is effective for a second serve is a high lob, straight down-the-line. To hit this serve correctly, stand 4—5 feet from the right side wall. (*Diagram 3*). The ball should hit the front wall, 4—5 feet from the ceiling, 1—2 feet from the right side wall. It will then carry to the deep right court, often just skimming the right side glass wall. Because of the height of the bounce of the ball and your opponent looking into the glass as he attempts to return the serve, he'll find that he'll have great difficulty returning the ball successfully.

Due to the fact that the ball has a tendency to slide or move quickly off a glass wall, in contrast to a solid plaster or panel wall, a right side wall pinch is an excellent shot to use when the ball is in play. Often, I have seen an opponent stationed at the short line ready to anticipate and return the pinch shot. But, because the ball was moving so quickly off the right side wall glass, he couldn't react to the shot in order to make a good return.

4 To hit the right side wall pinch shot, you should aim as close and low as possible to the right side wall-front wall corner. Although *Diagram 4* depicts the shooter in front of his opponent, on occasion you can shoot the pinch shot off the glass with your opponent in front of you. Remember, the speed of the ball off

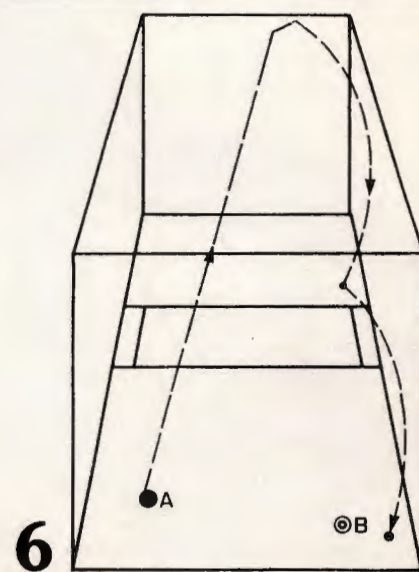
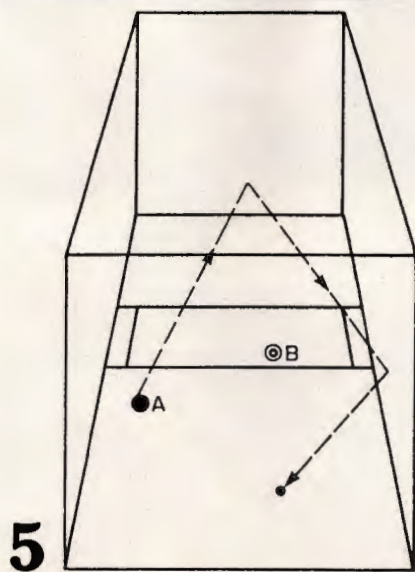
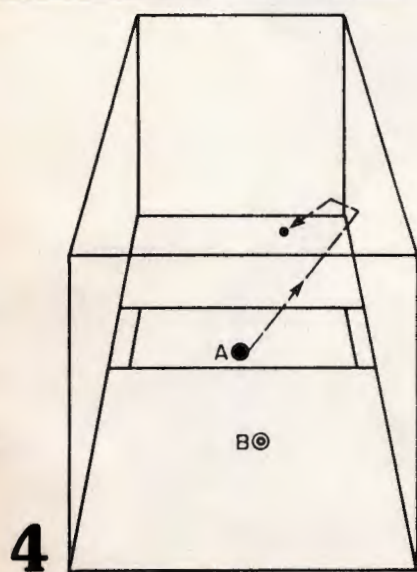
the glass, will severely limit your opponent's reaction time.

5 Another shot that is effective is a hard backhand cross court pass. When your opponent is stationed in front of you, near the short line, and you're stationed to the side of him on the left side of the court, hit the cross court pass about 4 feet high off the front wall, 2—3 feet to the right of center (*Diagram 5*). The ball should then hit the right side wall, parallel to your opponent, or just behind him. In either situation, he'll have an extremely difficult time returning a fast moving shot. In addition, he'll be looking directly into the glass on his attempt to return.

6 Often, if you're scoring consistently by hitting into or near the right side wall glass, your opponent will attempt to hit deep ceiling balls to your backhand. If he or she does this, simply hit a continual stream of cross court ceiling balls back to the forehand side of the court. Sooner or later you'll hit a shot close to the glass that your opponent will have difficulty returning, you can then pounce on it for an easy put-away. To hit the cross court ceiling ball effectively, hit the ceiling, 1—2 feet to the right of center, 3—5 feet back from the front wall (*Diagram 6*).

7 Another alternative to the continual ceiling ball onslaught to the left is an overhead kill into the

(continued on page 44)



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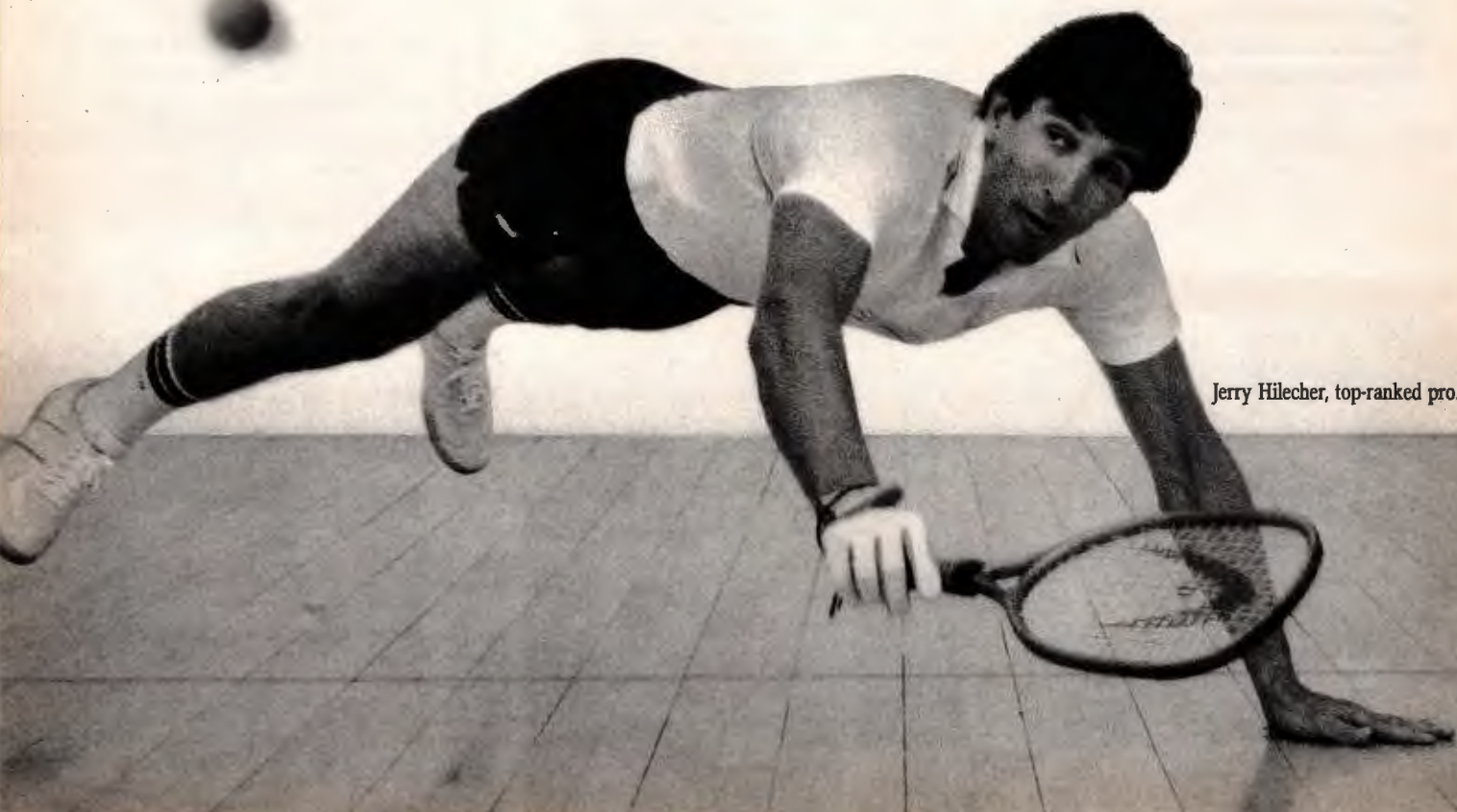
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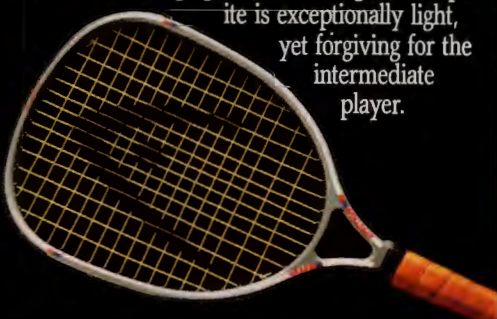
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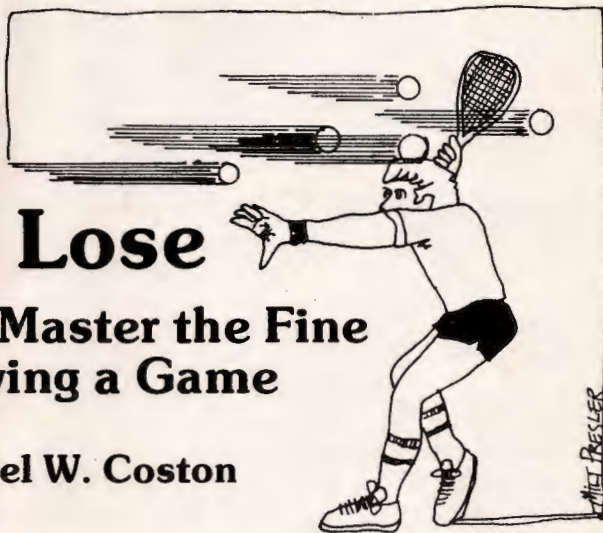
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How to Lose

Six Ways to Master the Fine Art of Throwing a Game

Humor by Daniel W. Coston

Don't get me wrong — I hate to lose. But, while racquetball has become very popular among the trim athletic types of the '80s, it has also held broad appeal for us tubby relics of the '70s. For us, knowing how to lose may be the only way to preserve our battered egos, even our dignity.

I descend from a long heritage of racquetballers. My introduction to the sport came when a seedy, beady-eyed uncle convinced me to offer my services as a ball retriever at a local tournament. All I had to do, he said, was to kneel by the net. From there, losing was a step up. I have been doing it, and doing it well, ever since. Even though I have had the opportunity to learn more than just the rudiments of the game in the last 10 years, I have passed them up in order to perfect my skills as a loser.

Both of my brothers share my unnatural compulsion about the game. The difference between them and me is that, while they look like they would be easy to defeat, they are not. My father just looks old, and he probably is. (We can't find anyone who can translate the hieroglyphics on his birth certificate.) Even so, I've only defeated him twice. Once when he fell asleep, I won 21-19 and once I beat him when it seemed he just lost interest. His backhand got weak and he staggered a lot. Later we found out he'd had a stroke.

Racquetball has found popularity for several reasons that bear pointing out here. First, it is played on a smaller court than other racquet sports, approximately a well-lighted closet. Combine this with the fact that every shot sets the ball on a bee-line for your beanie, and almost all pursuit movement is eliminated from

the game. I am convinced that a scientific study of racquetball would show that three-fourths of the motions players make during a game are to avoid being hit in the head. These are short, frantic, terrified bursts of energy, and strangely, they appeal to many of us more than a torturous six-mile sprint before dawn each morning.

Another appealing factor is the length of the average game. Discounting my personal speed-loss record of four minutes and 38 seconds, a close estimate of the average game time would be 20 minutes. This time can be nearly doubled if one player insists on carrying his half-finished beer in his free hand. A three game match will last an hour; and I can only stand that much fun in one week.

Perhaps the most attractive feature of racquetball is the amazingly short time required to learn the rudiments of the sport. Within two months, a novice can learn enough about the game to look proficient. And remember, the hazard factor comes to bear during this period. Racquetball law number one is: If you don't hit it, it will hit you. You'd be surprised (or maybe you wouldn't) at how much that speeds the learning process. So for the first few weeks, a new racquetballer is particularly vulnerable. Certain unscrupulous, immoral vultures among us prey on new players. Since I was once a victim, I can justify doing it to every novice I can find. Nothing personal.

My style of play has been called everything but stylish. My friends used terms like "comedy" and "epilepsy". I have since changed friends. But I know now that they were probably right, and as the expert, I want to share with you some of the finer points of the

(continued on page 29)

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DP Racquetball Gloves

DP offers a full line of racquetball equipment, including the DP Racquetball Gloves, the DP Freshold Racquetball Grip and DP Headbands and Wristbands. The DP Racquetball Glove is crafted of thin genuine leather for a perfect second skin feel, and has a Spandex two-way stretch back, elastic wristband and self-adhesive closure. Panel finger construction with opening between fingers provides ventilation. Other features are a set-in "no stress" thumb and absorbent, tacky palm surface. Available in left and right hands, sizes of X-small, small, medium, large and X-large.

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Tacki-Mac Grips

Tacki-Mac racquetball grips are used by more than 75 top national level players (Cliff Swain, "The Gar" and Jack Newman), including some 17 national champions. Popularity of the grips among all levels of players nationwide is reflected in 13 consecutive months of record sales in the Racquetball Division of Tacki-Mac.

Number two ranked women's pro Caryn McKinney uses Tacki-Mac racquetball grips, as does Doug Cohen, number 10 ranked men's pro. Memphis State — with nine straight NCAA titles — has designated Tacki-Mac as its team grip. For the pro or the amateur, the beginner or the veteran, Tacki-Mac racquetball grips are your best bet. (Now in pink and gray, too.) For more information, contact: Tacki-Mac Grips, Inc., 5891 New Peachtree Road, Suite 107, Doraville, GA 30340, or phone: (404) 451-0514.



Improved Eyewear

A revolutionary new racquet sports eyeguard, designed to improve wearer comfort and increase protection from high speed impacts, has been introduced by Leader Sport Products, Inc.

The new "Dallas" eyeguard, pictured above center features a unique design which distributes impact force along the wearer's forehead, rather than across the bridge of the nose and cheekbones. The removable sweatband and silicone nose rest included in the wrap-around design offer maximum comfort.

The "Dallas" eyeguard complements the Marty Hogan Pro Series, Leader's line of one-piece protective racquetball eyewear. The Pro Series includes the "Albany" (left) with its wrap-around hingeless lens/frame. The "New Yorker" (right) offers a hingeless bubble design.

All three models are constructed from impact- and shatter-resistant LEXAN polycarbonate resin. They offer wide peripheral vision and anatomically-shaped, impact-absorbing silicone nosepad for cushioned comfort. A secure, one-time adjustment strap is also included.



Champion Tigergrasp

Champion Tigergrasp Model 613 provides the ultimate comfort in a racquetball glove, with soft, absorbent, foam-backed terrycloth, and a thin, durable Hair Sheepskin palm. Helanca finger inserts stretch comfortably with every movement of the hand. The placement of the vent and tab allows wrist action to its very maximum. Available in men's and ladies' sizes, lefts and rights, in royal blue with white trim or white with red trim. For more information, contact: Champion Glove Manufacturing Co., 2200 E. Ovid, Des Moines, IA 50313.



The LEXAN polycarbonate used in all three models is UV-screened, optically correct and coated to resist both fogging and abrasion. All three are available with a clear lens/frame.

For more information, contact Leader Sport Products, Inc., 60 Lakeshore Rd., Essex, NY, 12936-0271, or phone: (800) 847-2001 or (800) 341-2722.

I've been building racquetball courts and pre-fab sport halls in Europe for the past five years. It all started in a barber chair in Falmouth, MA just before Christmas 1980, and *National Racquetball* most certainly had a hand in the whole affair.

I was sitting getting clipped, thumbing through the December '80 issue of *NRB* and, WHAMMO! There it was! A neat ticket to one of my back-burner dreams right in the middle of Ivan Fuldauer's article about the 1980 International Sport Exhibition (ISPO) in Munich, Germany. A Racquetball Court Company had the initiative to set up a full-sized portable court complete with glass back wall, and then recruit a couple hundred U.S. military personnel stationed in Germany to play a continuous round-robin during the four nine-hour days of the fair.

The article went on to describe the immediate interest generated as spectators swarmed to this corner of the huge exhibition and jammed five and six deep against the glass wall, watching players of this sport which was virtually unknown in Europe at the time (two clubs in Holland and a proposed club in Hamburg, Germany).

I was getting so excited reading this article, my barber had to warn me about the possibility of losing an ear lobe if I didn't sit still. The previous winter, while on my annual ski vacation and renewal of my love affair with Southern Germany which had started way back in 1957 during my Army days and had never abated, I had taken a couple of racquetball racquets and balls with me.

The Late, Great Racquetball Boom In Europe

by Bob Reid

I played with some German friends on a squash court. I wanted to show them how great the sport was. They immediately fell in love with racquetball. They were all "A" squash players, so I thought, even back then, perhaps racquetball could have a chance of duplicating its Stateside growth here in Europe; and here was Ivan Fuldauer quoting people a year later in his article. They were all predicting that the sport would take off like a rocket: "19 courts sold to date and at least 100 courts in place by the end of 1981", assertively stated the court builder who had brought the portable court to the ISPO show.

"How fast will racquetball take off?" asked the leading glass wall manufacturer in Europe, and then he answered his own question by stating: "In 1973 there were only five squash courts in Germany. Four years later there were 30. Now, seven years after the first squash court was built, there are 1,500; and the end is nowhere in sight. I expect racquetball to easily parallel that growth."

Well, all that was good enough for me. I had been trying to figure out for years how I could live in Germany for part of the year and run my business in the States the rest of the time. And here it was. I would sell off my business and go and ride that racquetball wave in Europe by building courts and promoting the sport over there.

I pushed off for Europe in July 1981 and fully expected that by the same time the following year, I would be a well-established court builder.

The paradoxes of life never cease to amaze me. Perhaps if I had paid more attention to the only 'non-expert' quoted in Ivan's article, I would not have followed my dream. This gal, a Munich physical education teacher said: "It (racquetball) will have to compete with squash, which is quite popular. It's the 'in' sport here in Germany right now."

I was to find out a year and a half later just how right she was. Squash was and has remained the 'in' sport all over Europe and most assuredly in Germany, and to date, racquetball has most definitely not been able to compete with squash.

Back in 1980 there were a couple of tennis/squash sports centers in Holland which also had a few racquetball courts, and there were a lot of enthusiastic players among the Dutch. In Germany, Club Jenfeld in Hamburg was nearing the final planning stage and would be the first all-racquetball sports center in Europe with 11 courts.

Today, almost six years later, the situation has not really changed that much. The Dutch clubs are still going strong. Club Jenfeld, after a few very shaky years, seems to have recouped and is now doing very well mostly due to some dynamic promotion by new management. In the intervening six years several squash club owners have built racquetball courts as part of their facilities. Hirsch Garden in Munich with its 28 new squash courts and indoor tennis facilities put two racquetball courts way off in a corner of the basement as an experiment. These have since been converted into aerobic dance rooms and fitness rooms.

Several other clubs in Germany and Switzerland have followed this pattern by abandoning trial attempts to see if racquetball could compete with squash, and it simply has never made the grade; while squash, on the other hand, continues to grow and grow in popularity.

My own experience indicated clearly that if I wanted to build racquetball courts in Germany, I had better find another market than the Germans. In league with well-known German sports figures, I tried for 18 months to promote racquetball and get sports club owners to put in courts. One such owner summed up the entire situation accurately by saying: "Why should I take a chance on a sport I don't know at all when I've got a gold mine here in squash? And, besides, squash courts cost much less to build to boot."

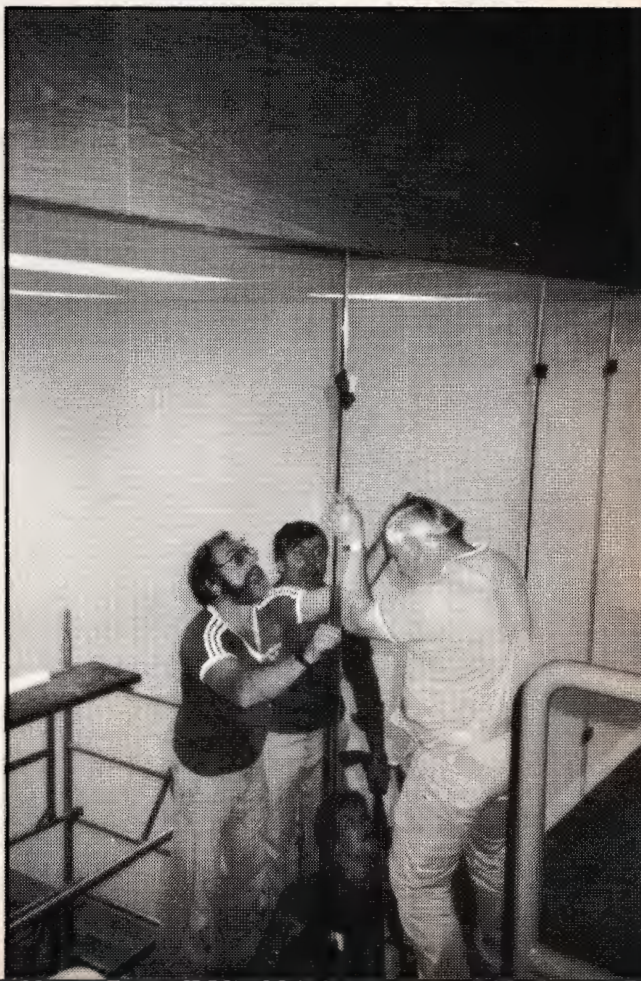
Fortunately for me I had registered with each of the U.S. military contracting offices here in Germany when I first got over here. I thought at the time that I could build a few courts for the military while my other business, the German market, was 'taking off like a rocket' (along with my slice of those 1,500 courts).

Military procurement was a whole new ball game for me, and it took a while to learn the procedures and contracting time-frames. They are very, very slow moving, but once rolling they carry a weighty inertia that keeps the whole thing zinging along nicely. So, after a 14 month wait, finally, we got our first contract to put in two racquetball courts in a converted Luftwaffe hanger in Bremerhaven, Germany for the U.S. Army. With this contract, my company, Racquetball-Europa, was off and running, because if Germans would rather play squash, you can bet that the U.S. soldier and airman is most definitely committed to playing racquetball. □



The insulation goes up on a single court being built at a NATO Air Base on the German/Dutch border. (Above).

The author (left, with beard), struggling with that last piece of a 20 ft. glass back wall at the beautiful U.S. Military Recreation Center in Garmisch, Germany. (Below).



Since that first contract, Racquetball-Europa has built a number of racquetball courts all over Germany in a variety of types of facilities: (1) Repairing old cement-walled courts (most often totally incorrectly dimensioned); (2) Building courts inside already existing gymnasiums (usually converted former WWII German Army warehouses, airplane hangers, even stables for cavalry troops' horses). (3) Building free-standing, pre-fab single and double hall buildings with one or two courts, glass back wall, viewing area and shower rooms.

So, like many dreams, mine did not turn out quite like I initially envisioned it sitting in that barber chair thumbing through a copy of *National Racquetball*; however, it did turn out very well for me indeed.

The military business is not a booming one, but it is steady — with seven to eight good-sized projects per year, and it is very satisfying in many ways. U.S. Military personnel are starving for adequate facilities and they literally line up at building sites waiting for projects to be completed.

When I'm working on a site, and after they find out I'm the builder and an American, soldiers invariably check in with me daily to get a progress report. At least 20 times a day a contingent will approach me and ask; "Hey, man! When do you think you'll be finished so we can play?"

When I go back to each project six and 12 months after completion for a routine maintenance check, I'm often told by sports directors that the courts are continually in use seven days a week, usually 14 to 15 hours a day. At some sites where troops work split shifts, like at the Nuremburg U.S. Army Hospital, the court is in use 24 hours a day.

So, if you ever plan to visit Germany, and you want a



The foundation being poured on a single racquetball court going into an isolated missile site near Luxembourg.

few games of racquetball, unless you're in an area like Hamburg, where you can play at Club Jenfeld, which is open to the public, you'd better get to know a G.I. so he can sign you onto a U.S. military base. There you'll find either fairly new regulation courts (might even be one built by Racquetball-Europa) or some 'other-world' box that passes for a racquetball court, and that, hopefully, will become a future project for Racquetball-Europa so I can continue to realize one dream that did come true for me after 27 years of simmering on a back-burner. □



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(1) **Pick the right opponent:** Play only the best. There is no better rationalization for your peace of mind, or for the club smart-mouths, than to say your most recent opponent is on the pro tour. As long as you play out of your class, mediocre players will consider you mediocre. If you play against mediocre players, you will be considered lousy.

(2) **Keep moving:** Never play on the same courts twice if you can help it. You can avoid gaining a reputation merely by staying a step or two ahead of it. If you are forced to return to a court where you have played before, make sure there is a margin of at least two months. I have found disguises to be helpful too.

(3) **Use excuses:** Excuses have always been the loser's boon, and with a little imagination, you may never have to use the same excuse twice. Some of my all-time favorites are: "I just had corneal transplants, and my eyes still water a lot." "I don't like the way the air pressure keeps changing in this building." "I've got to get this racquet restrung." (After all, tennis players have been using that one for years.) "My psychoanalyst thinks the shock therapy has taken care of most of my aggressive tendencies." The point is to apply a little imagination. There is an excuse for every situation.

(4) **Fake an injury:** Wrap elbows, knees, ankles and wrists (in any combination) with elastic bandages. Try to do this in the presence of your opponent. These are implied excuses which can be called into service at any point in the game to stop the needless sacrifice of your dignity. They are also badges of honor, giving mute testimony to your dedication to racquetball at some unspecified earlier date.

(5) **Fake a sucker's bet:** This strategy requires some planning, so use careful judgment. First, you must overdramatize the fact that you really can't play racquetball. Tell that to your opponent at least 15 times before your first game. Feign complete resignation to your incompetence every time you miss a shot; it is a feeling you have encountered many times with complete sincerity. Pretend that you are letting him win by an 18 point margin. Then, at the end of the first game, offer to play again for a "friendly wager of say, 20 bucks a point". Your opponent should be convinced that you suckered him in on the first game to bet on the

second. If that is true, you must really be a phenomenal player who can win at will. It is a strategy that can get you out of a game and make you look good too. Of course, I don't have to tell you that you should eat live snails rather than play a second game for money, so I won't.



(6) **As a last resort:** When nothing else works, try winging a couple of shots into your opponent's back. Two or three of those swollen red welts that dissolve slowly into technicolor bruises should convince him to wait for your returns plastered against a wall or huddled safely in a corner. In one game, I only had to hit my brother twice. When he finally stopped hopping around, he punched me in the chest and stalked off the court without a word. When I finally caught my breath, I realized I had won by default. So you see, effective losing is sometimes worth a win.

These techniques are not always successful. You will still be disgraced every once in a while, and, heaven forbid, you may win occasionally. Don't worry. It will happen less and less as you perfect these techniques and develop a few of your own. Just remember, there is plenty of room in the world of racquetball for one more loser, and it might as well be you. □

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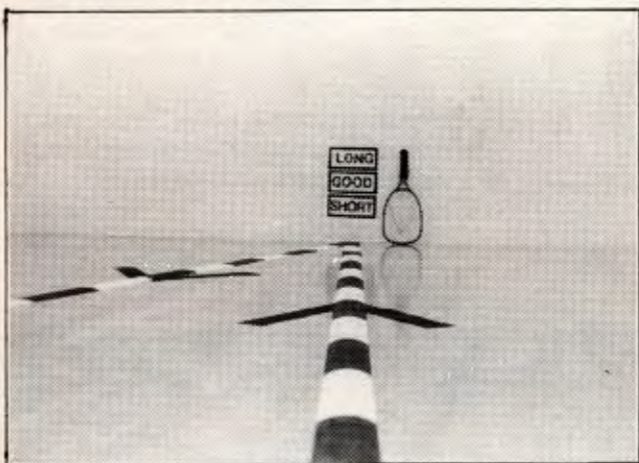


The Strategic Game

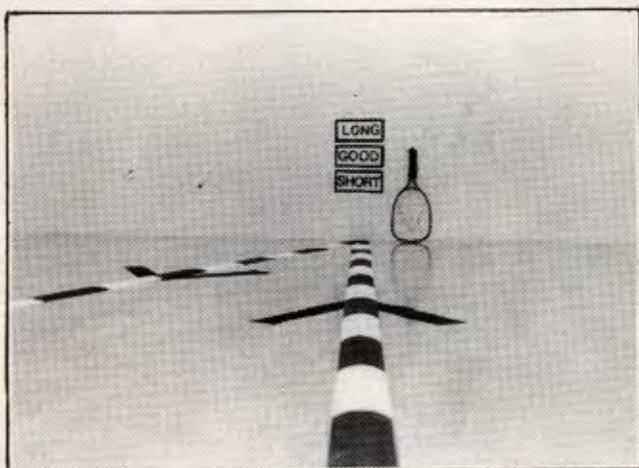
Part Four: The Serve

by Steve Strandemo
with Bill Bruns

If you're interested in ordering an autographed copy of Strategic Racquetball please write to Strategic Racquetball, Inc., Box 591, Coronado, CA 92118.



This photo shows the desired serving target for an open-level player who really rips a low-drive serve. His good area is between 11 to 13 inches on the front wall, and he contacts the ball in the service zone, approximately five inches off the floor.



Here's the target for a top B player who doesn't contact the ball quite as low as the open player and fails to hit as hard. His ball contact is 8 inches off the floor and his front-wall target is 16 to 18 inches high.

When you enter a competitive arena against opponents of varying playing styles (for example, in tournaments and league play), how many different serves can you accurately hit under pressure? Do you have only one trusted serve, or have you developed an arsenal that includes low drives, hard "Z's," high-lob "Z's" and lobs?

In the next three articles I will try to help sharpen your serving skills, and perhaps broaden your repertoire so that you have (1) the flexibility to keep your opponent off-balance, unable to "cheat" in anticipation of a predictable serve, while (2) allowing you to exploit your opponent's particular weaknesses. Without this variety — and the confidence to hit the serve that is called for in a pressure situation — your potential success will be severely limited.

The Low-Drive Serve

Whatever your ability level, some nitty-gritty details may be limiting your low-drive effectiveness. Here are some key check-points:

1. Have you found your exact *hitting* range on the front wall? When players simply rely on "touch," they often fail to realize just how small their desired front-wall target is and how low they must consistently hit to keep their serves off the back wall. The best way to determine where you should aim, in relation to your power, is to have a friend place colored stickers on the front wall to indicate where the ball hits when you hit a low-drive serve that (a) lands between you and the side wall, and (b) bounces twice before the back wall. The area formed by these stickers is what you want to ingrain in your memory (adjusting your target laterally when you hit from different locations in the service zone).

2. Your ultimate goal is to keep this serve off the back wall, so if you're going to err by missing your ideal target area, do so *short*.

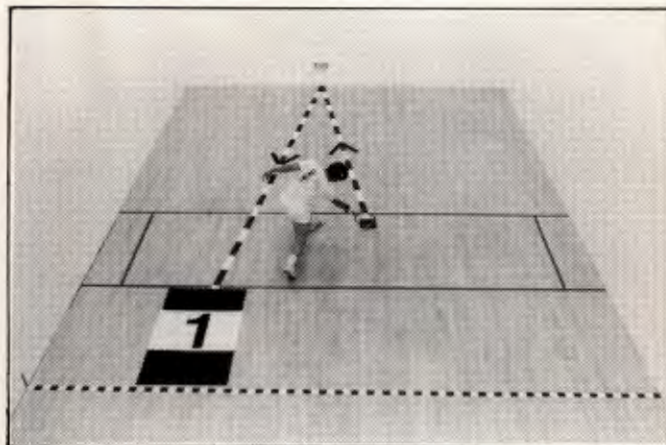
A low-drive needs velocity, but not at the expense of accuracy. If you can get the ball to land just past the service line (in that 20- to 25-foot range), nearly every serve will take 2 bounces before the back wall. But you should

realize that when you are short on the first serve by hitting too low on the front wall, you still have a second serve that should force your opponent to the ceiling. Why risk losing your serving advantage by initially hitting a low-drive off the back wall for a setup?

3. In my mind, a two-step motion *toward the target* (a short preparatory step followed by a long stride forward) is still the most efficient way to maximize direction and then power into a shot.

Many players try to fool their opponents by stepping in one direction and hitting to another, but their accuracy doesn't allow them that luxury and they tend to misdirect the serve. Only after mastering a reliable serving motion should you try to learn to hit different serves off the same two-step motion, where you stride in a different direction than your actual target.

Also be sure here that you're not trying to hit the ball so hard that your momentum forces your trailing leg to come forward to provide balance. This back leg should act as your pivot leg for relocation, and if you let it swing around as you follow through, you'll be too far forward (by about 3 or 4 feet) to effectively relocate and handle a low-zone return. You want to stride forcefully into the serve, but keep your weight back.



This is the proper direction for a good low-drive serve. The ball must take its first bounce in the boxed area shown (between 20 and 25 feet) to keep from rebounding off the back wall. So serve it good or short.

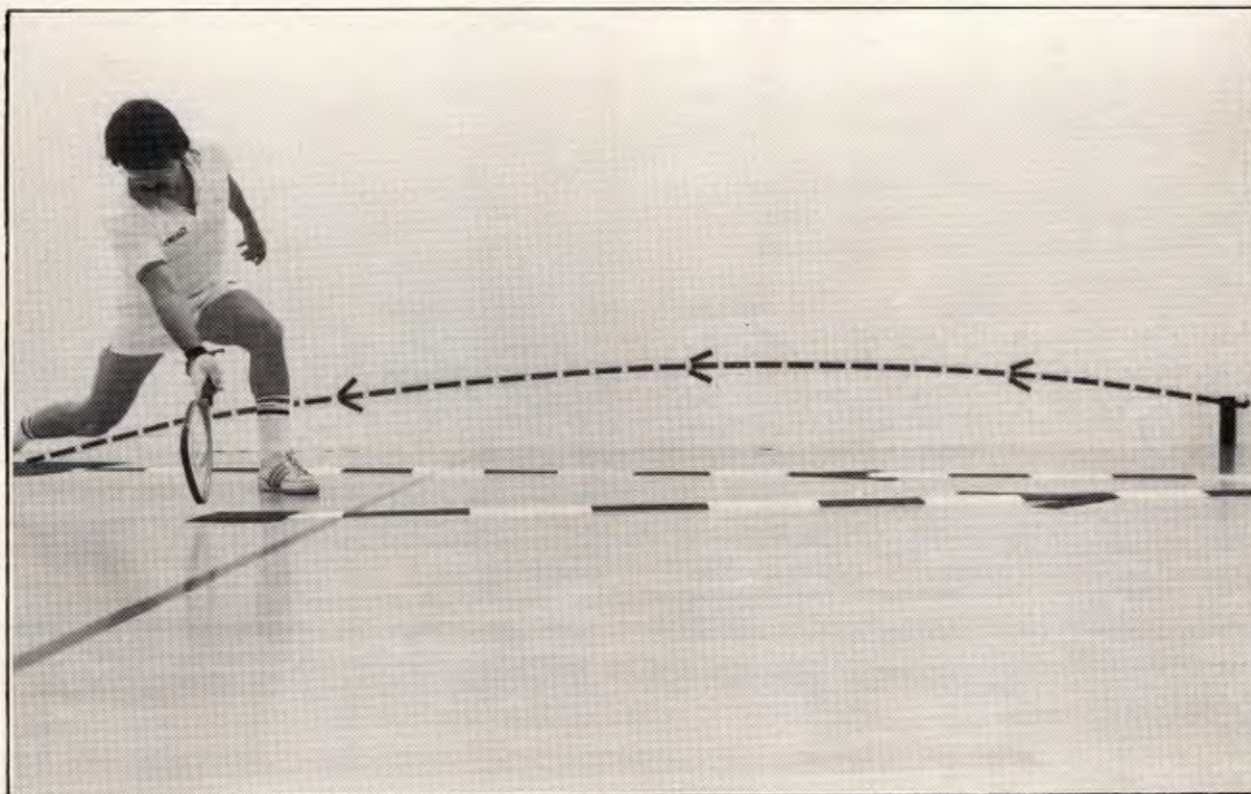
4. Your actual hitting motion should incorporate the key elements of a sound forehand stroke as you strive to contact the ball as low as comfortably possible. Three common problems:



This player is getting ready to serve. When he uses a 2-step motion on low-drives and hard "Z's," the first step and the bounce occur at the same time.



The most common errors players make in serving low-drives are to hit the ball too far left or too high — or a combination of both.



This is a side-wall view of the arc taken by a good low-drive serve. To achieve this arc, you must make low ball contact and hit with a slight upward arc into the front wall.

- Instead of taking the racquet back and then down through the ball with one continuous motion, some players set the racquet early, hesitate, and then come down. This allows the returner to easily sense the intended path of the serve.
- Many players are afraid to snap the serve straight in to the front wall, for fear of getting hit by the ball. As a result, they have a tendency to come across their body and pull the ball left of their desired target area, sending it rebounding off the left wall as a setup.
- Most players also have a tendency to hit too high into the front wall because they bounce the ball too high as they stride into the shot, or they fail to let the ball drop low enough before contact. They are hitting on too high a plane.

5. Once you've determined your front-wall target area, try to bring the ball into this area on a slight *upward* arc. This enables you to hit the ball hard and still have it carry just past the short line on a low, skimming angle. (At contact, try to get the racquet low via good leg bend, but realize it's also quite acceptable to drop the racquet face to make lower contact.)

Relocation

Good relocation after the serve actually starts with your two-step motion into the ball. After hitting off your left

foot (if you're a righthander), you want to be able to pivot quickly around on the trailing right foot and drive back with the left leg. Then use a couple of basketball-type shuffle steps to reach your initial coverage position at about 24 feet, near the middle of the court.

If you're baffled as to why you're continually jammed or passed by an opponent's low-zone return, one reason could be that you're letting the trailing leg swing forward after serving. You can correct this problem by simply practicing the desired movements: Plant the front foot as you hit an imaginary serve, then pivot off the back foot and pull back with the front.)

Ideally, you should see where the ball is going as you take your pivot-back step; then begin to study your opponent's intentions up until the moment he contacts the ball. This will maximize your anticipation and coverage ability. If you simply take a quick peek at your opponent and then turn back to the front wall before he actually starts his swing, you'll have no idea if he's going low-zone or high-zone with the return.

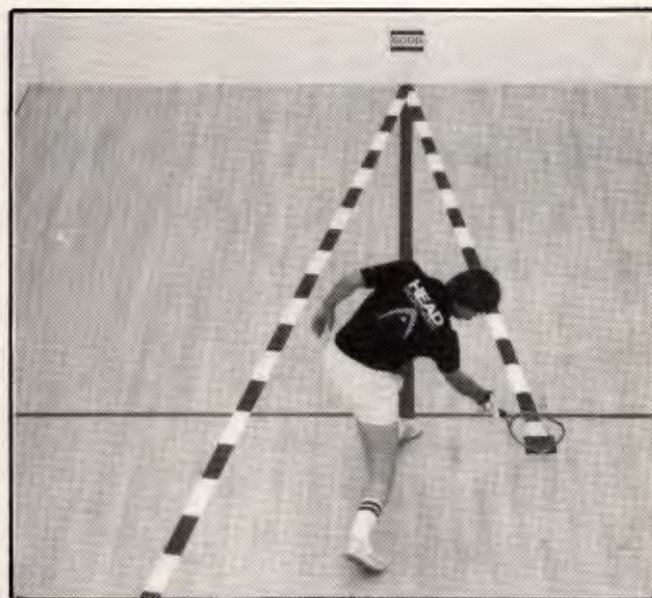
When you see your opponent going to the ceiling, immediately retreat, since your next shot is going to be hit from somewhere in deep court and you want to be in an appropriate position to either shoot or go back up to the ceiling yourself. If you hesitate around the service zone too long, you will find yourself in a race with the ball and be forced to flick the ball back to the ceiling way too often.

If you see that you've hit a high or mis-angled serve, you can anticipate a low-zone return, so what counts is

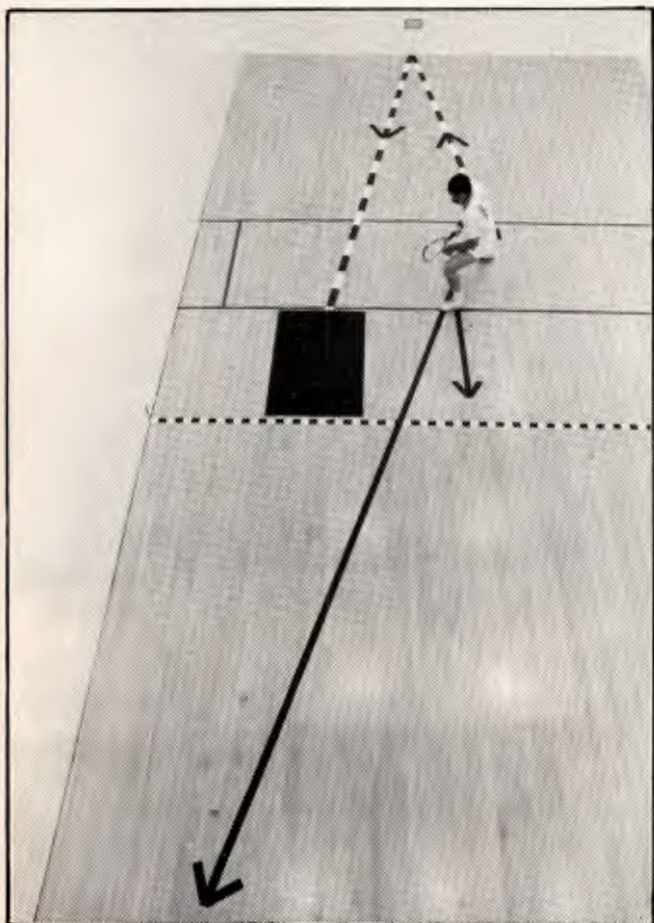
how well you can read your opponent's body motion in order to sense *where* he's trying to go with the shot. Equally important is the fact that you want to be mentally and physically ready to cover his leftup shot aggressively. Instead of thinking you should relocate at about 20 feet when you know you've hit a lousy serve (in order to cover your opponent's kill attempt), remember the shortcomings of this strategy. You still can't reach a shot that dies inside 15 feet, and you will be easily handcuffed by many of the hard-hit shorts that are left up. So, as a result, you're ineffective against most of your opponent's low-zone returns.

A final note about relocation. After serving your low-drive into either corner, the temptation is to shade (cheat) to that side as you relocate, in order to cover the down-the-line return. However, this opens up too much of the court for a cross-court pass by your opponent. Better to relocate directly back so you can react to a variety of returns from a more equidistant point.

Next: Steve will discuss the pros and cons of the hard 'Z' serve. □

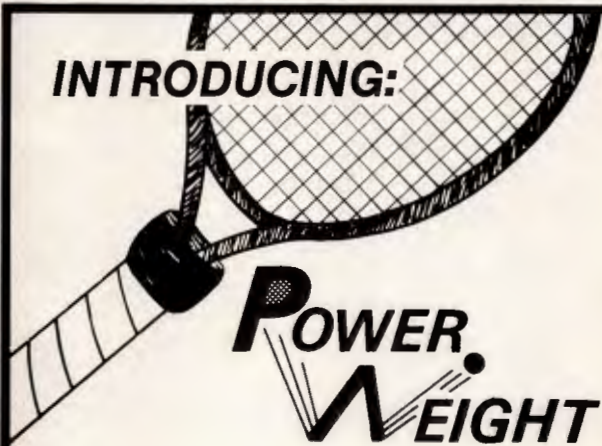


To angle the ball into the back left corner, the server should hit the front wall about 2 feet to the left of where he makes contact in the service zone. Notice that this front-wall contact point is directly in front of the server's body.



When the server relocates after hitting a low-drive serve, he tries to gauge what his opponent is going to do. If he reads his opponent going to the ceiling, he immediately hustles to deep back court. If he sees his opponent going low-zone, he works hard to locate at about 24 feet and to be ready to play off a leftup shot.

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Your Spine . . . Part II

Ligaments, Muscles and the Delicate Balance of Vertebrae

by Jacque Hooper

Man is not merely a bag of bones. Last month we explained that the basic foundation of your back consists of 24 vertebrae, with cushioning discs between each, all resting on the pelvic girdle.

All foundations must be held together with mortar. In the case of your backbone the mortar that holds your column of bones together — your ligaments, tendons and muscles.

the fibrous tissue) or rupture (pull entirely away from the bone).

Once a ligament has been torn, the only way to repair it is surgically. If the injured ligament is not repaired, normal motion will be lost at the involved joint. This can lead to actual damage of the joint and other supporting structures.

Many ligaments connect and hold the building blocks of the spine together. A few ligaments in particular

brae, but this time they connect each side of the bones of the spine between the transverse processes. They are especially important in preventing you from bending too far to one side or the other.

(3) *The Ligamentum Flavum*. This dense yellow ligament binds the rear segments of the vertebrae forming the roof of the spinal canal. This ligament is the most elastic of all the ligaments. It acts as the protective

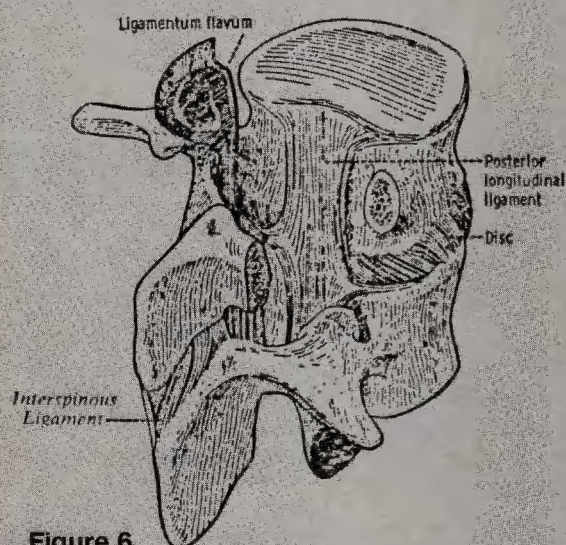


Figure 6

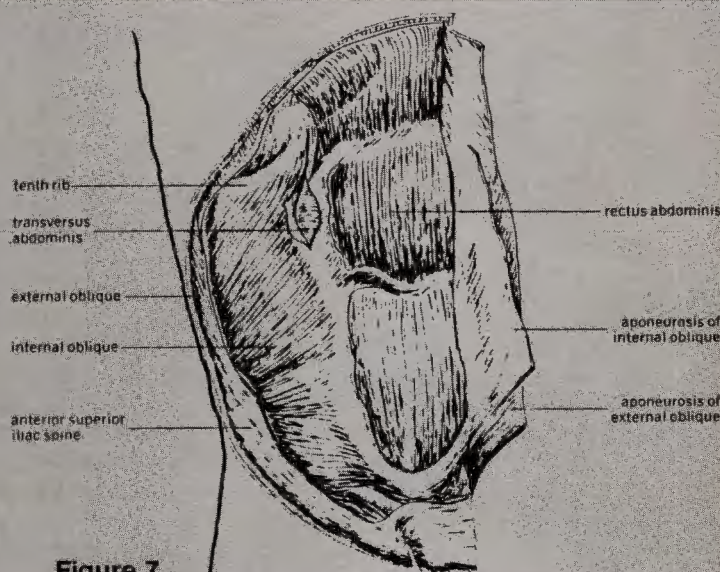


Figure 7

All foundations must be held together with mortar. In the case of your backbone, the mortar that holds your column of bones together — your ligaments, tendons and muscles.

The Ligaments

Ligaments are tough, thick strands of fibrous tissue that attach one bone to another. They are flexible in order for everyday motion to occur, but they have a limited amount of elasticity, similar to leather which can be bent in many different directions but stretches very little. Thus, ligaments can only be stretched to a certain point before they tear (minute rips in

can cause disability and pain if they are damaged. *Figure 6* gives an example of two of the major ligaments of the back.

(1) *Interspinous Ligaments* are the bands that travel from one spinous process to another over the entire length of the spine. They relax when the spine extends or bends backward but become tight when the spine flexes or bends forward. This is a safety mechanism designed to limit the motion which can occur between each of the vertebrae. Severe flexion of the spine results in the tearing or rupture of the ligaments.

(2) *Intertransverse Ligaments* are bands that extend between verte-

covering for the spinal chord. Damage usually occurs from a traumatic blow.

(4) *The Annulus Fibrosus* is an extremely strong ligament composed of multiple circular layers. Each layer is arranged to increase the ligament's strength. The main function of annulus fibrosus is to again restrict excessive motion between vertebrae and to keep the disc in place to ensure a maximum cushioning effect.

(5) *The Anterior and Posterior Longitudinal Ligaments*. These two ligaments are very long and extend from the top of the spine to the bottom of the sacrum. One ligament spans the

front of the spine and the other the back of the spine. The front ligament of the pair is much thicker than the rear one.

Constant leaning over in the sitting position as in prolonged desk work can lead to a sore or injured lower back. Prolonged slouching tires the muscles, so the support of the spine is taken over by the ligaments. Your body weight is then merely being held by the ligaments, which are not designed for this. Chronic pressure of this kind on your vertebrae can cause the intervertebral discs to protrude or slip from under the safe housing of the vertebrae.

As you can see, all ligaments are elastic to a certain degree and function primarily in allowing the spine to be a flexible rather than a rigid column.

Muscles also allow an otherwise stationary column the ability to move. The muscles allow you to twist, bend forward, backward and from side to side.

Muscles do countless things for you. Unfortunately, we often don't do enough for them. Weak and inflexible muscles are a direct cause of low back pain and injury. Eighty percent of low back pain is due to muscular deficiency because of lack of adequate exercise.

Don't be fooled by the phrase "back muscles". When we refer to the back muscles, we do not mean just the muscles *in* your back. We mean both the muscles *in* and the muscles that are *associated* with the movement of the back. Muscles that are not anatomically in your back can play a very significant role in pro-

ergistically — together and inter-dependently reliant on each other.

Imagine three vertical guy wires supporting a flag pole. In order for the pole to remain standing, each wire would have to exert a pull equal to the other two. If one wire was weak or slack, regardless of the strength of the other two, the pole would not remain upright. It would lean in the direction of the taut wires.

Your backbone responds in the same manner. If one muscle group is weak, as a direct cause of inadequate exercise, the posture of the spine will be altered.

The Abdominal Muscles

As seen in Figure 7, the abdominal muscle group consists of:

- (1) the *rectus abdominus*,
- (2) the *internal oblique*,

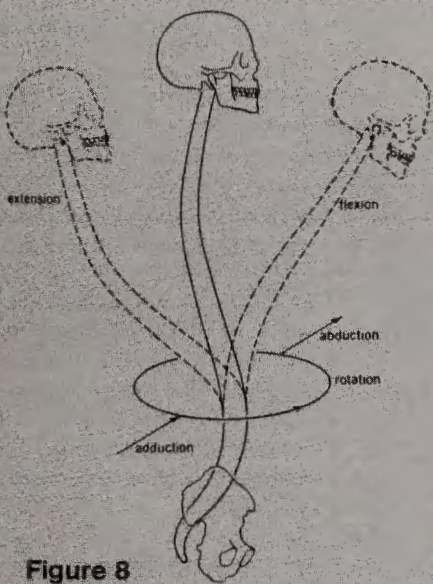


Figure 8

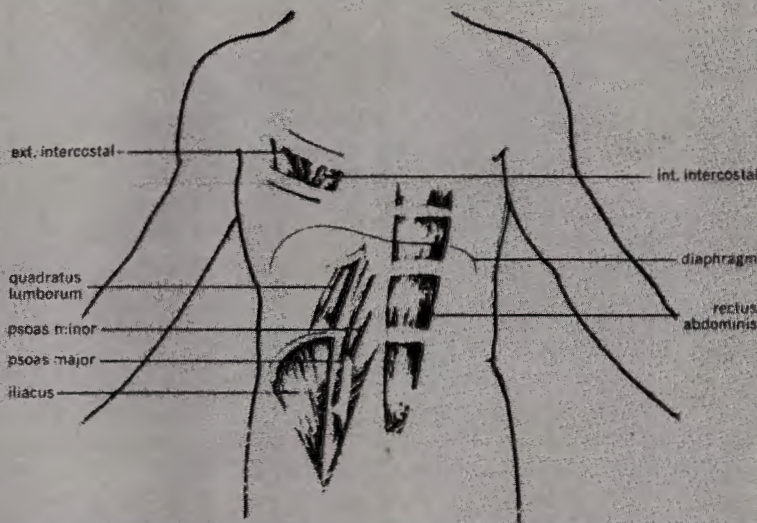


Figure 10

The Muscles

The spine would not stay upright if there weren't any muscles. While the ligaments of the spinal column act as checks, helping to stabilize and prevent excess motion, they do not keep the column upright. It takes muscular action to keep the spine in the erect position.

An example of the importance of muscles is easily understood when you consider what happens when a person faints. A person simply collapses. When you lose consciousness, all muscular activity is interrupted. It is similar to pulling the plug on a computer. All systems are immediately shut down.

ducing back pain.

Four general muscle groups affect your back. They are:

(1) *The Abdominal Muscles* provide frontal support for your back.

(2) *The Extensor Muscles* support the back of the spine keeping your posture upright.

(3) *The Lateral Muscles*, as their name suggests, provide lateral back support and motion.

(4) *The Hip Muscles* are not located in the back. However, due to their relationship to the pelvis, they are involved in the movement of the spine.

Although the four muscle groups are listed separately, they work syn-

- (3) the *external oblique* and
- (4) the *transverse abdominis*

The stomach muscles as a group keep your posture tall and straight. Can you picture a person with weak stomach muscles? What picture comes to mind? A pot belly? How do you think this protruding stomach affects the low back?

Shifting the stomach forward results in a more accentuated curve in the area of the lumbar spine. This causes a rounded or swayed low back. Doesn't it hurt just thinking about it?

Weak abdominal muscles are due to either inadequate exercise, being

(continued on page 38)

overweight or poor posture. However, all can be corrected more easily than trying to rehabilitate a slipped disc.

The Extensor Muscles

Three muscles of the back, known collectively as the *erector spinae* or *sacrospinalis*, extend or arch the spine in the backwards direction (Figure 8). The *erector spinae* form the major postural muscles or rear guy wire, that hold our back straight when we sit or stand. These muscles have the greatest demands placed on them when you push or pull a heavy object, stand at attention, or perform backbends.

Figures 9a and 9b picture the anatomical location of the *erector spinae*: the *ilio-costalis*, the *longissimus* and the *spinalis* muscle groups.

The Lateral Muscles

These muscles, the *quadratus*

pelvis on both sides of the spine. The *psoas major* is referred to as a "two-joint" muscle because it not only affects your back but also your hips. When the thigh is held in place, the *psoas group* (*major* and *minor*) and another muscle called the *iliacus* flex or bend the spine forward at the hips. The flexor muscles of the spine can be a cause of constant pain when they are injured. Just think about how many times a day we bend forward!

The Hip Muscles

What do the hips have to do with the back? The hips are attached to the pelvis which is attached to the spine. Remember the knee is connected to the kneebone game? What happens in the hip may have a profound effect on the back. This is due to the intimate relationship of the muscle groups.

Each of your hips have four groups of supporting muscles:

(1) the *hip flexors*,

The groin muscles or the adductor muscle group: the *adductor brevis*, *longus* and *magnus* muscles, the *pectineus* and the *gracilis* muscles enable you to squeeze your legs together.

Last, but not least, are the massive muscles called the hip extensors. These muscles make up your derriere. The largest muscles of this group are the *gluteus maximus* which are important in daily activities as climbing stairs, and sports concerns as the speed and power in running. However, if it wasn't for the *hamstring muscles*, you wouldn't even be running. These muscles allow you to bend your knees as well as go from a sitting to a standing position.

The vertebrae or individual bones of the spine are not stacked neatly one on top of the other. Instead, each vertebrae rests on the one below it at a slight angle. This configuration looks like a large S-curve. The vertebrae are held in this precarious position by ligaments and muscles.

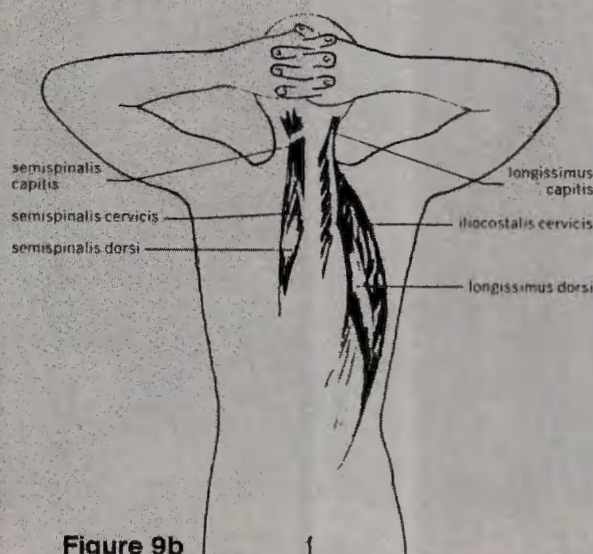


Figure 9b

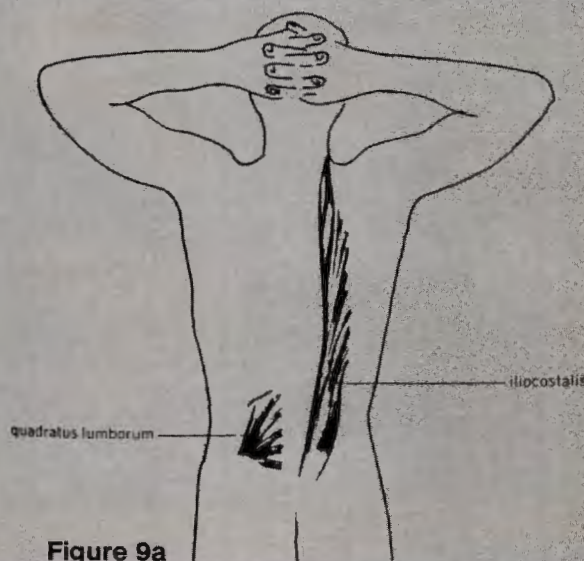


Figure 9a

lumborum and the *psoas major* muscle groups are pretty well hidden from view (Figure 10). They lie against the side walls of your spine.

The *quadratus lumborum* pulls the lumbar vertebrae causing your spine to bend from side to side. This is the muscle group that is easy to remember because it is responsible for a women's wiggle when she walks. They also are called upon in most front wall racquetball shots.

The *psoas major* muscle is one of the largest single muscles in your body. It attaches the top of the thigh bone just below the hip joint to the

- (2) the *hip abductors*,
- (3) the *hip adductors* and
- (4) the *hip extensors*

The *sartorius*, *rectus femoris*, *iliac psoas*, and some of the *tensor fascia lata* muscles make up the hip flexors. These muscles run across the front of your hip and enable you to raise your thigh upward.

The hip abductors run from the top of the pelvis along the side of the hip. The abductors made up of the *gluteus medius* and *gluteus minimus* muscles allow you to stand on one leg by holding the other leg straight to the side.

In fact, the lumbar vertebrae are perched on the sacrum at such an angle that the ligaments and muscles prevent the vertebral column from literally slipping off the pelvis.

Now consider the delicate balancing of 24 vertebrae, separated by jelly-like discs that absorb shock and prevent undue wear and tear, all held in an S-shaped suspension by ligaments that prevent excessive motion and muscles that give the column character through mobility. The back is a complicated but remarkable piece of machinery!

(continued on page 42)

A Canadian's View of Protectionist Policy

by Sigmund Brouwer

American professionals note: Check your racquets in at the border, gentleman. CPRO offers nearly \$40,000 a year in prize money, and none is heading south.

Policy, set by players, dictates that the Canadian Professional Racquetball Association is strictly protectionist. No Americans allowed. CPRO president, Lindsay Myers, once ranked as high as 7th among the American professionals, says, "American professionals are the best. On their scale of 1-10, our pros rank as low as 3." In other words, the Canadians would lose badly on their home turf.

Short term, the policy makes sense. The tour is sponsored by Canadian money, through the work of Canadian organizers. Nationally, Canadian Pacific Airlines and AMF Head provide support. The rest of the prize money is provided by local sponsors. The feeling is that Canadian money should go to Canadians. Myers says, "There is only \$5,000 or \$6,000 per tournament. We have difficulty supporting our own pros with that money. If there were enough (\$15,000 to \$20,000 per tournament), we would gladly open the tour."

To that end, he has contacted reps of the American RMA, seeking additional sponsorship to beef up prize money, thus making possible American player participation. According to Myers, "They said it looked interesting, and would look at it when their own tour had solidified."

Long term may show the protectionist policy hurts the Canadian tour. In any sport, bigger names mean bigger money, bigger publicity, and most importantly, better marketability, which is what professional racquetball needs, especially in Canada. Canadian sponsors might prefer the greater exposure afforded by drawing top name pros from south of the border.

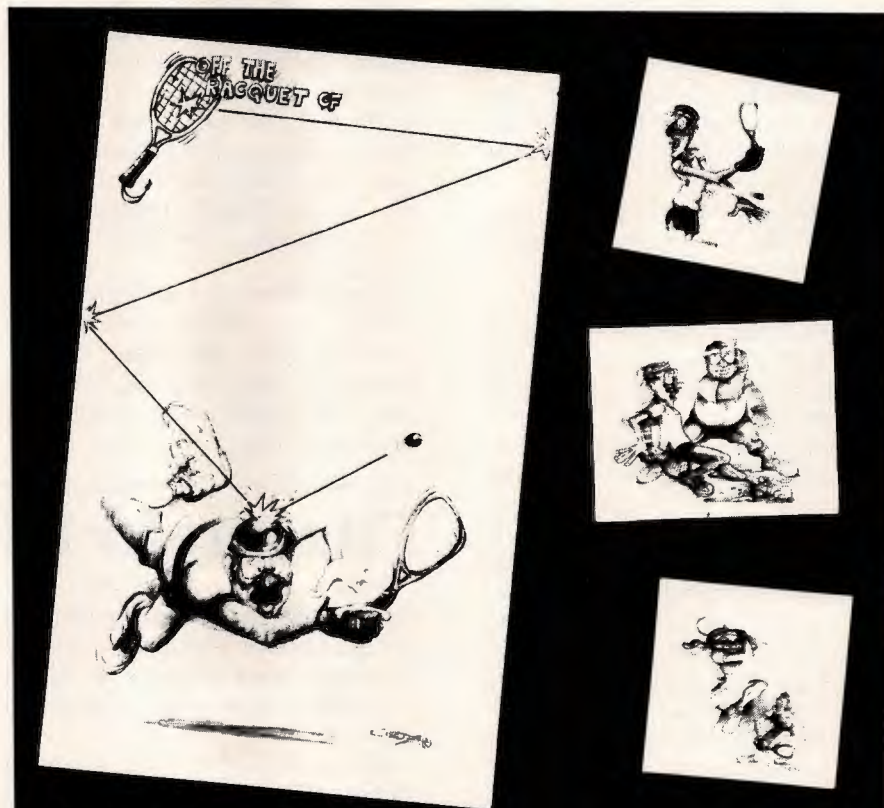
In addition, the Canadian level of play can only benefit from stronger competition, even if it means some lean years in the Canadian public eye. The Canadian pros cannot

remain buffered indefinitely, and the sooner they leave the protectionist womb, the sooner they will be competitive at world level.

CPRO should consider alternatives, opening a few stops each year to their American counterparts. The added excitement for Canadian

racquetball fans, extra exposure for Canadian sponsors, and the incentive for Canadian professionals might prove to be more constructive than unyielding protectionism.

The next CPRO event is the Canadian Junior Nationals in Quebec City, Quebec on July 2-5. □



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AROUND THE COURTS

Important industry news that you should know about in the world of racquetball.

Wagner Signs With Omega

Rich Wagner, a top-ranking professional racquetball player, recently signed with Omega Sports to represent the sporting goods manufacturer on the men's pro tour and in promotions, personal appearances and clinics throughout the U.S.

Currently, Wagner ranks in the top 25 of the RMA pro Racquetball Tour. He was also voted as one of the top 10 racquetball players of all time by his peers in a recent survey.

Wagner, who uses Omega's Titanium racquet, said he is pleased to represent Omega.

"More and more players are discovering Omega racquets," Wagner said. "With the Mad Raq feature, the Omega racquet offers a real improvement for players."

Omega's racquets sport the Mad Raq stringing pattern, a three-directional stringing arrangement that is patented. A key benefit is added control without the loss of power as the ball stays on the racquet surface longer. Players also enjoy its up to 16 percent larger "sweet spot" and up to 8 percent larger "power zone."

In laboratory tests, the Mad Raq has been shown to provide up to 11 percent less shock to the wrist, arm and shoulder because vibrations are deflected in six directions instead of four, as with conventional stringing patterns.

Originally from Paterson, NJ, Wagner began playing racquetball at age 13 at the YMCA where he worked. In his teenage years, Wagner won in the East Coast regionals and junior regionals.

He came to California in 1974 to attend the University of San Diego. The city attracted him, he said, because it was a mecca for professional racquetball players. As a professional, he has won pro stops in Buffalo, NY and in Los Angeles.

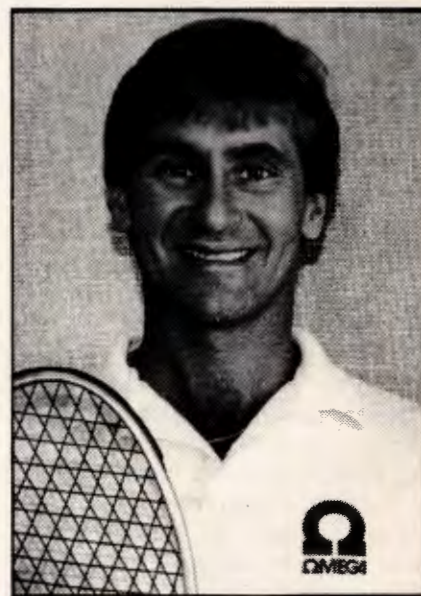
Wagner said he looks forward to the many pro stops he'll play in 1986. Now a resident of Riverside, CA, he is co-owner of the Tournament House Racquetball Club, a full-scale fitness

center in Riverside. He also has been seen on television in a shoe commercial, but says he's not aiming for a career in acting.

Coordinating the contract was George Egon, vice president of marketing for Omega Sports. "We're glad to have Rich representing our racquets," said Egon.

On the amateur circuit recently, Omega was named the official racquet of the 1986 International Amateur Racquetball Federation World Championships, to be held in Canada in August.

Omega Sports is a division of Jason Empire, Inc., which is located in Overland Park, KS. Jason Empire, founded in 1949, also manufactures and distributes Jason telescopes and binoculars.



Rich Wagner

Fitzgerald IRSA President

Robert W. Fitzgerald has been elected president of the International Racquet Sports Association (IRSA). Fitzgerald was chosen by IRSA members at their 1986 convention recently.

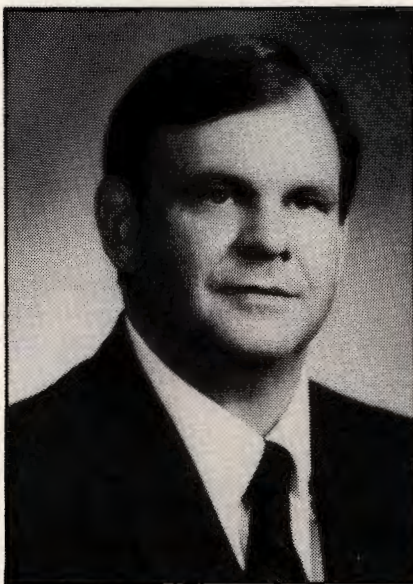
Fitzgerald is the chief operating officer of Chicago based TCA, which

owns and/or operates 24 clubs throughout the country. He was a co-founder of the Court House Sports Clubs, Inc., which developed the first racquetball court club in Illinois in 1973. Fitzgerald was also a founder and is currently treasurer of the Chicagoland Racquetball and Fitness Association.

He received an architectural degree from the University of Notre Dame where he was the school's top rated varsity tennis player. He earned a master's of science degree in civil engineering from Northwestern University.

IRSA is a not-for-profit trade association serving the investor owned, commercially operated sector of the fitness, racquet and athletic club industry. IRSA's primary purpose is to help clubs achieve high quality, profitable operations through the development of information and communication services. Over 1,000 clubs nationwide are IRSA members.

IRSA is governed by a nine member Board of Directors on which Fitzgerald served for two years prior to his election as president.



Robert W. Fitzgerald

OFF COURT FITNESS

by Jean Sauser



Once In A Lifetime

There is nothing in this world like making a dream come true. Maybe it's because it doesn't happen very often, but when it does, it feels like (and often is) once in a lifetime. When one of my first big dreams came true in racquetball, I learned that dreams may not always happen as planned, but close enough is more than good enough.

It began with a daydream in 1975. I'd just begun to try my hand at professional racquetball. The first couple of trips out to various pro stops around the country were quite successful. I created a few upsets and managed to play to the quarter-finals more often than not. Then I had my first match with Peggy Steding.

In 1975, Peggy Steding was already a two-time defending national champion, and she was number one with a margin the size of the Grand Canyon.

I was anxious to play any pro back then and I even thought I was ready for Steding. So, when I phoned across the country from Chicago to a pro stop being held in Tucson, I was ecstatic to find out that my first round opponent was Peggy Steding, defending champion of everything.

"Finally! My big chance!" I yelled enthusiastically over the bad connection to the tournament director.

Mistaking my enthusiasm for sarcasm, he told me to tell him now if I was forfeiting so that he could re-do the draw.

"Are you kidding?" I told him. "I've been waiting for this!"

"You must be real good, or you must really think you're good," he told me in his western twang, "Or,

you've never heard of the Peggy Steding death sentence."

"The only thing I'm dying of is the chance to play *her*," I kidded him.

"Consider yourself dead," he drawled back at me and hung up.

"Boy," I naively thought to myself out loud as I hung up my phone, "some people sure are negative."

Two days later, on three-wall glass, in front of more than 100 spectators, I got *negative* handed to me by Peggy Steding on a silver platter. Game one was a 21-1 blowout. She let me make my one point.

In the second game, I served first. Steding allowed me to run up four quick points, for the crowd's sake. After that, I never served again. The final score was 21-4. The entire match took less than 15 minutes.

As I sat alone in the locker room totally embarrassed, wiping the sweat mixed with tears from my face, my big racquetball dream was born.

"I don't give a damn if I'm not in the same league as that woman right now." I told myself, "Someday, I am going to beat her, just once."

The dream became an obsession. It carried me through more on-court practice sessions and off-court training drills than any other kind of motivation could possibly have done.

Every time I needed to run a few more miles, or lift a few more weights and didn't have the energy, I would tell myself, "If you can do this, you can beat Steding." Consequently, along the way, my on-court and off-court training habits put me past a lot of other pros and into the top 10.

As for Steding, the scores got bet-

ter, but still, I couldn't even take a game off her. Three years went by — into the summer of 1978. I began running in order to condition for racquetball. Since everyone was outdoors for the summer, I also concentrated on improving my shots to new heights by practicing alone.

By September, I was strong, aerobically conditioned, and confident. In the second tournament of the fall season, I upset highly ranked Rita Hoff in the round of 16 to face Steding in the quarter-finals.

Our match was scheduled for 9:00 on Saturday morning. None of the players I was staying with at the hotel would get out of bed that early to see me play because they knew I would lose. When I arrived at the club ready to play, I found no one there except Peggy and our referee.

I told myself that this wouldn't be the day to beat her because this scenario wasn't like my dream at all. In fact, it was kind of lonely and depressing. When I daydreamed about beating Peggy Steding, I always filled the gallery in my mind and put TV cameras all around. My friends and family were always there, too.

Instead, here we were, all alone, miles away from my family and friends and national television coverage. In what seemed like slow motion, I won the coin toss to serve and began to shoot the ball around the court to an 11-4 lead. Barely aware of the score, I just kept hitting the ball were she wasn't. The suddenly, game one was over. And I'd won 21-11.

The reality of my dream maybe coming true today began to hit me between games. I suddenly became

(continued on page 42)

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RMA 1985-86 MEN'S PRO RACQUETBALL TOUR

Contact: Jim Hiser,
Commissioner
(313) 653-9602

WPRA 1985-86 SEASON SCHEDULE

Contact: Caryn McKinney,
President
(714) 641-7452

AARA NATIONAL EVENTS

August 4-11

World Championships
(Qualifying required)
Orlando Tennis & Racquet Club
Orlando, FL
Contact: AARA
(303) 635-5396

October 30-November 2

National Doubles Champ.
(Qualifying not required)
Racquet Power

3390 Kori Road
Mandarin, FL 32217
Tom Collins
(904) 268-8888

AARA TOURNAMENTS

July 6-27

AARA Elite Training Camp
(Qualifying required)
N. Michigan University
Contact: AARA
(303) 635-5396

July 10-13

Sunshine State Games
Tampa Bay Courthouse
7815 N. Dale Mabry
Tampa, FL 33614
Carl Nicks
(813) 932-5321

July 11-13

Redwood Empire Open
Rancho Arroyo Racquet Club
85 Corona Road
Petaluma, CA 94952
Chris Oakes

(707) 795-5461

July 18-20

Racquetball Players Assoc.
P.O. Box 324
River Road
Bryans Road, MD 20616
Robin Duble

July 24-27

Sports & Fitness
11103 Brookhurst St.
Garden Grove, CA 92640
Jim Ross
(714) 774-0672

July 24-27

Sports Gallery
2560 East Katella
Orange, CA 92806
Jim Ross
(714) 774-0672

July 25-27

PPRA
The Racquetball
5165 Adanson St.
Orlando, FL 32804
Jim Thompson
(305) 645-3999

Fitness

(continued from page 41)

very scared. My heart started racing and I didn't dare look at Peggy because I didn't want her to sense my fear.

Game two went as smoothly as game one. This was my day. I finished the match with a second game win of 21-11, when something I'd never planned for in my dream happened. I got a free lesson in class.

Peggy Steding turned out to be a champion in defeat as well as victory. She congratulated me on playing the

best match of my career. I heard no complaints and no excuses, something the rest of us did constantly when we lost.

That morning is one the best memories of my racquetball career. The big dream came true. As for the television part of it, well, that was their loss!

Baltimore

(continued from page 15)

Price d. Mintabano 11-3, 11-7, 11-8;
Egerman d. Lerner, forfeit;
Cascio d. Sell 11-3, 11-0, 10-11, 11-2;
Hogan d. Levine.

Round of 16:

Yellen d. D. Gross 11-0, 11-1, 11-7;
Gonzalez d. D. Peck 11-8, 11-5, 11-6;
Ray d. Cohen 11-5, 11-3, 11-9;
Swain d. A. Gross 11-6, 11-1, 11-4;
G. Peck d. Brysman 11-4, 11-3, 0-11, 7-11, 11-6;
Andrews d. Oliver 11-0, 11-4, 11-2;
Price d. Egerman 5-11, 6-11, 11-10, 11-1, 11-2;
Hogan d. Cascio 11-4, 10-11, 11-7, 2-11, 11-7.

Quarter-finals:

Yellen d. Gonzalez 1-11, 11-8, 11-6, 11-2;
Swain d. Ray 11-7, 11-8, 6-11, 11-8;
Peck d. Andrews 11-2, 11-9, 11-3;
Hogan d. Price 7-11, 11-10, 11-9, 11-4.

Semi-finals:

Yellen d. Swain 11-6, 11-10, 11-4;
Hogan d. Peck 11-6, 11-9, 11-8.

Finals:

Hogan d. Yellen 8-11, 9-11, 11-4, 11-10, 11-2.

The Spine

(continued from page 38)

Proper maintenance comes first in the form of simply understanding the involved structure of the back... and secondly, in preventing the initial weakness that could lead to the domino effect of total back failure.

In upcoming issues we will help you evaluate if you are a candidate for a low back problem, offer simple exercises that you can do to reduce or prevent such a problem and suggest simple adjustments that you can make in your lifestyle which will lessen your chances of developing a problem in the first place.

RANKINGS

The sources for these national rankings are as follows: Men's—Official RMA Pro Racquetball Tour rankings; Women's—Official WPRM Tour rankings; Amateur—Official AARA national rankings.

RMA PRO RACQUETBALL TOUR OFFICIAL PROFESSIONAL RANKINGS MAY 18, 1986

Ranking Player	Points
1 M. Yellen.....	518.55
2 M. Hogan.....	484.36
3 B. Harnett.....	406.11
4 G. Peck.....	398.03
5 C. Swain.....	282.90
6 M. Ray.....	253.96
7 R. Gonzalez.....	247.37
8 D. Peck.....	244.69
9 E. Andrews.....	241.99
10 S. Oliver.....	231.10
11 G. Price.....	225.97
12 J. Hilecher.....	204.63
13 D. Cohen.....	176.97
14 S. Lerner.....	171.06
15 A. Gross.....	168.20
16 D. Gross.....	158.28
17 J. Cascio.....	147.04
18 J. Egerman.....	138.14
19 E. Inoue.....	119.39
20 M. Griffith.....	117.41
21 B. Sell.....	106.68
22 D. Obremski.....	105.97
23 R. Navarro.....	105.73
24 C. Brysman.....	99.30
25 J. Newman.....	79.68
26 R. Wagner.....	65.48
27 D. Green.....	54.99
28 M. Levine.....	51.87
29 J. Nolan.....	46.54
30 D. Johnson.....	38.48
31 S. Moskwa.....	37.16
32 S. Clark.....	27.70
33 R. Harpersad.....	27.30
34 J. Plazak.....	24.19
35 A. Roberts.....	24.15
36 M. Plotkin.....	18.84
37 A. Embry.....	18.34
38 D. Ganim.....	15.28
39 E. Terry.....	13.63
40 B. Williams.....	13.42
41 B. Wilhelm.....	12.42
42 W. Clouse.....	11.74
43 M. Ceresia.....	11.06
44T E. Hansen.....	10.98
44T T. Stead.....	10.98
44T T. Thielen.....	10.98
44T J. Britos.....	10.98
44T D. Zirkle.....	10.98
49T C. Nichols.....	10.56
49T M. Gervais.....	10.56
51T R. Montalbano.....	10.13
51T J. Daly.....	10.13
51T A. Carter.....	10.13
51T J. White.....	10.13
51T E. Foley.....	10.13
56 B. Koltun.....	9.36
57 D. Simonette.....	9.05
58T T. Krause.....	8.63
58T J. Housegard.....	8.63
58T J. Gilman.....	8.63
58T H. Marcus.....	8.63
62 D. Negrete.....	8.28
63T J. Botello.....	8.20
63T L. Gilliam.....	8.20
65 L. Meyers.....	5.21

WPRM RANKINGS MAY 4, 1986

Ranking Player	Points
1 L. Adams.....	200.00
2 C. McKinney.....	160.00
3 T. Gilreath.....	115.00
4 V. Panzeri.....	93.75
5 F. Davis.....	75.00
6 M. Drexler.....	69.00
7 J. Harding.....	48.00
8 L. Alvarado.....	47.50
9 M. O'Brien.....	44.00
10T S. Robson.....	41.25
10T B. Stoll.....	41.25
12 M. Lynch.....	35.00
13 C. Evon.....	31.00
14T T. Bevelock.....	26.25
14T J. Jackson.....	26.25
14T L. Martino.....	26.25
17 C. Baxter.....	18.75
18 L. Porter.....	18.00
19T B. Bell.....	17.50
19T C. Nichols.....	17.50
19T L. Wojcik.....	17.50

AARA/ARHS NATIONAL RANKING MEN'S OPEN MAY 20, 1986

Ranking Player	State
1 A. Roberts.....	TN
2 D. Negrete.....	IL
3 D. Obremski.....	PA
4 C. Nichols.....	FL
5 K. Vantrease.....	IL
6 D. Ganim.....	OH
7 A. Katz.....	TX
8 D. Kelly.....	CO
9 T. Hansen.....	FL
10 D. Aceto.....	MA
11 J. Sumner.....	UT
12 S. Gonzalez.....	FL
13 T. Gabriel.....	IN
14 R. Harpersad.....	CA
15 S. St. Onge.....	MA
16 O. Gonzalez.....	FL
17 M. Spugnardi.....	ME
18 S. Rubin.....	NY
19 M. Ceresia.....	CD
20 F. Calibreese.....	RI
21 M. Morrison.....	FL
22 T. Anthony.....	OH
23 P. Hawkesworth.....	MA
24 J. Ciine.....	NJ
25 M. Levine.....	NY
26 S. Moskwa.....	IL
27 S. Moody.....	CA
28 K. Pillion.....	PA
29 J. Jeffers.....	IL
30 B. Bona.....	UT
31 R. Lamontagne.....	MA
32 F. Snow.....	WA
33 P. Marino.....	CA
34 P. Panarella.....	CT
35 R. Strout.....	UT
36 R. Gonzalez.....	NY
37 M. Lowe.....	CA
38 V. Ganley.....	FL
39 S. Fitzpatrick.....	CA

40 J. Negrete.....	IL
41 J. Roudebush.....	IN
42 M. Smith.....	PA
43 E. Andrews.....	CA
44 D. Zirkle.....	CO
45 S. Hastings.....	MI
46 S. White.....	AL
47 S. Thayer.....	CO
48 S. Deaton.....	AK
49 S. Lucky.....	UT
50 B. McDermott.....	NY
51 J. Hamilton.....	IN

AARA/ARHS NATIONAL RANKING WOMEN'S OPEN May 20, 1986

Ranking Player	State
1 C. Evon.....	IL
2 C. Fried.....	CA
3 T. Latham.....	TX
4 M. Dee.....	NH
5 E. Mardas.....	OH
6 T. Rasmussen.....	CA
7 S. Robson.....	IL
8 M. Mook.....	CA
9 N. Higgins.....	NH
10 M. Lyons.....	FL
11 F. Davis.....	NJ
12 C. Doyle.....	NY
13 K. Kuhfeld.....	IN
14 C. McCarthy.....	FL
15 K. Despain.....	UT
16 C. Shields.....	IL
17 C. Baxter.....	PA
18 J. Burke.....	MA
19 K. Cremeans.....	IN
20 J. Kelleher.....	NH
21 J. Hastings.....	MI
22 M. Wielhesen.....	CO
23 J. Azeka.....	IL
24 M. Labonne.....	IN
25 T. Eagleson.....	CA
26 L. Price.....	IN
27 T. Bevelock.....	TN
28 L. Diamond.....	FL
29 J. Curtis.....	FL
30 D. Adams.....	CO
31 B. Stoll.....	CT
32 S. Morgan.....	FL
33 L. Wetherby.....	MA
34 L. Porter.....	TX
35 L. Basch.....	FL
36 L. Hjelm.....	CA
37 D. Mackell.....	IN
38 D. Bullard.....	FL
39 A. Katz.....	CO
40 J. Kilpatrick.....	AK
41 C. Nichols.....	CD
42 R. Rodriguez.....	AK
43 D. Mauser.....	OH
44 T. Spangler.....	WA
45 L. Coutu.....	DE
46 T. Singletary.....	OK
47 L. Anthony.....	CA
48 M. Gilman.....	OR
49 C. Gudinas.....	IL
50 K. Kuhfeld.....	IL
51 J. Myers.....	NC

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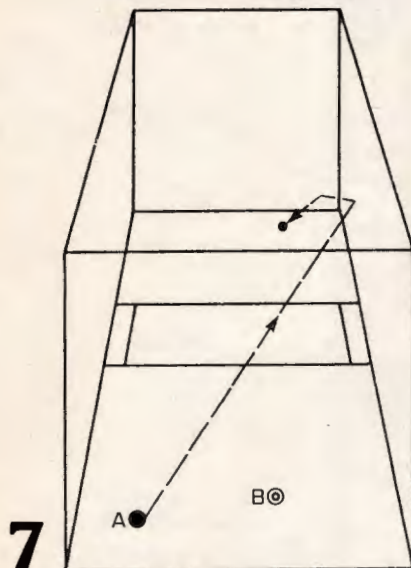
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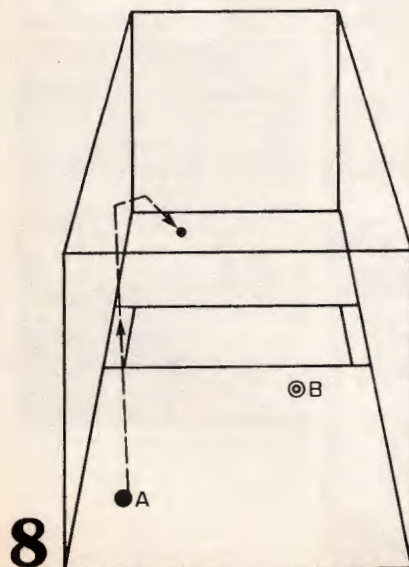
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right corner (Diagram 7). Like the right side wall pinch, the ball hits the right side wall-front wall corner so quickly that your opponent doesn't have time to react.

8 Occasionally you'll find yourself playing on a court with a left side glass wall. When a ball is hit to the deep court, slightly left of center, an excellent shot to hit is a forehand pinch into the left side wall-front wall corner (Diagram 8). Not only will the glass restrict your opponent's chances of returning the ball, he will also be surprised that you have hit a pinch into the left corner from your court position.

Hopefully, you play at a club or facility that has glass walls on the back or side. Constant practice will greatly help you. If you don't have this luxury be sure to follow the advice that we have suggested — and good luck! □



CANADIAN REPORT

by Sigmund Brouwer



Slowing Down the Game

Canada's west coast has a few players tinkering with ways to slow a racquetball. They call it progressive thinking. For them, no more photon ball or Captain Crunch serves. It's old style control instead.

Immediately, graphite racquet players think of oldsters clinging to an era lost 10 years back when Burn-and-Shoot Hogan dethroned Let-Me-Give-You-a-Tour Brumfield. Or failing that motive, perhaps then it is sour grapes and envy of the blurred-blue rocket launchers. The truth is neither.

These players are young, weaned on might-is-right racquetball and capable of playing with nearly anyone. Still, in their small group on Vancouver courts, they try whatever it takes to slow the ball down: Covers left over the strings or paddleball racquets; and pin hole punctures in racquetballs, or old paddleballs. The slower the ball moves, the faster the action for them.

These players say a faster ball makes shot execution too much more important than shot selection. Power and unstructured rollouts with the help of a fast ball can replace too much hard earned experience. The wrong shot hit with the right pace and height can still be a winner; stroke mechanics can be learned much quicker than court savvy. These players argue the slow ball is a truer test of their game.

These players say a slow ball extends their rallies beyond "serve, return, and maybe return" at the open level. Nearly any shot is retrievable in slow ball, and it takes three or four good shots in a row to set up the rally ender. Brains and legwork, they point out, are more important than just a stroke.

These players say, at their ranking level, even in Canada, they'd be rich with a slow ball. Long rallies, visible strategies and a ball which can be seen would hold unsophisticated television viewers from commercial to commercial. Just like tennis. Large appreciative audiences attract big sponsors and provide essential money to support professional players in numbers more than 20 at a time.

All this, these players say as they try a slower ball. And most others may call it a waste of breath.

Old time racquetball may never return. The power game provides the action and excitement of devastating kills. Still, as these young Canadians learn old lessons, few shots satisfy more than a good antiquated slow lob over an opponent, who is racing up to cover an equally antiquated corner drop shot. It's called a "tour", and there is time for glee before the ball lands. □

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