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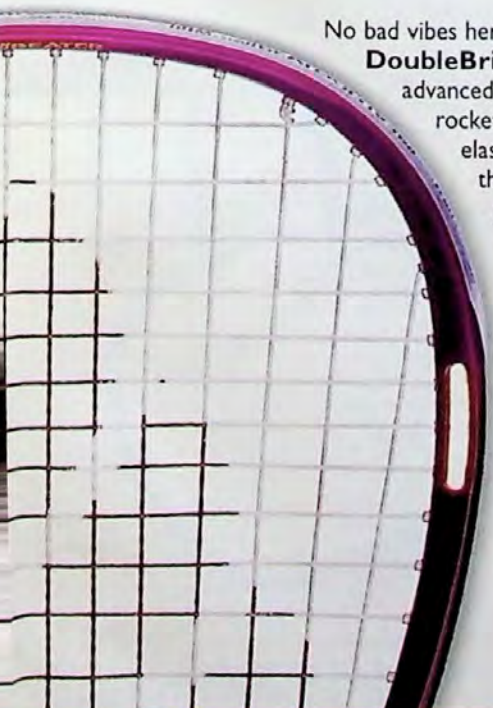
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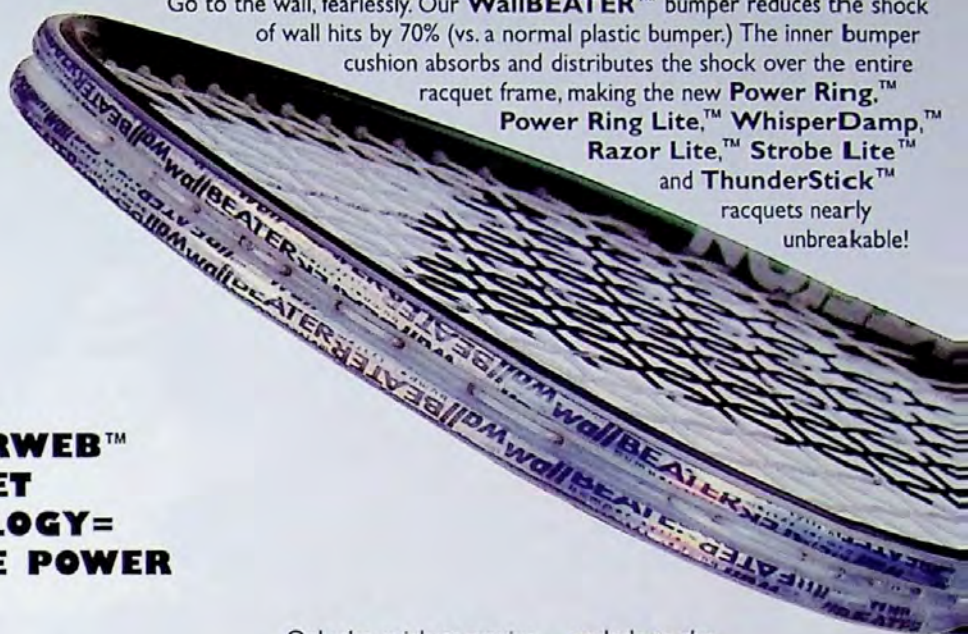
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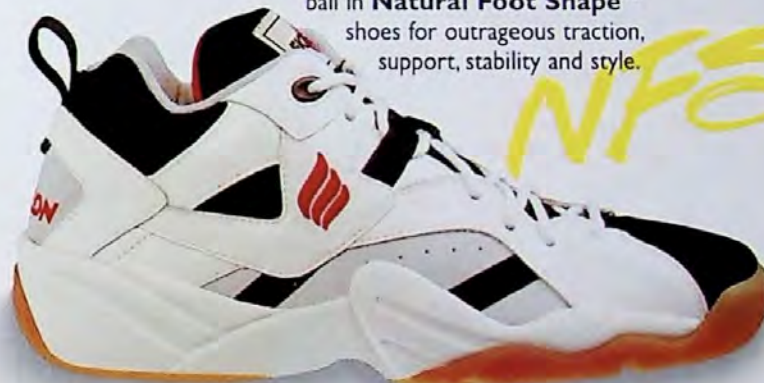


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Clockwise from top right: Marty Hogan, Michelle Gould & Cheryl Gudinas, Cliff Swain, Cartoon Sudsy



Cover:
Sudsy Monchik,
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Sudsy Monchik - The New IRT World Champion. / Cliff Swain - 4 time IRT World Champion and currently number 2 player in the world.

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TO LEAVE CENTER COURT
AND RETURN FROM THE
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IS HERE



The Sudsy Crash Course

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ONCE IN CENTER, YOU
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TO KILL OR PINCH
YOUR NEXT SHOT AND
END THE RALLY

AHHH; NOT
THE SUDSY CORNER
PINCH AGAIN!

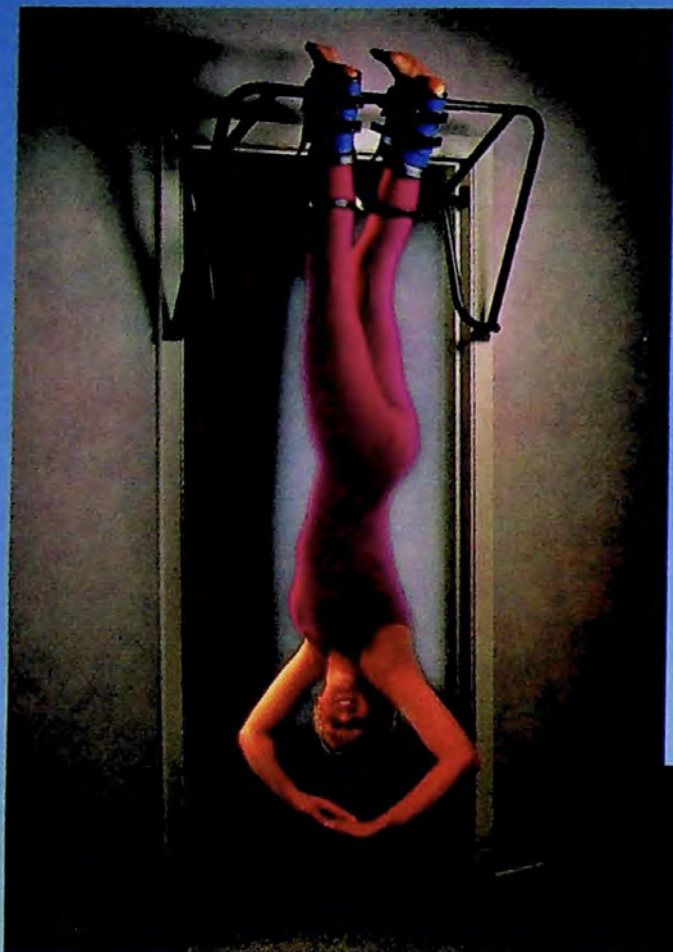
SO WHEN YOU ARE IN
THE BACK LEFT CORNER
DON'T GO CROSS COURT,
STAY DOWN-THE-LINE
AND THEN SHOOT TO
KILL THE SUDSY WAY

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ARTWORK: NATHAN BOWDEN



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Ready for Kindergarten?

Five years old. Conventional wisdom was that we'd never complete the first issue, much less hang around to complete the first year. But hang around we did and this issue completes our first five years of publishing **KILLSHOT** Magazine.

Most of the advice we received insisted that the game didn't need a glossy consumer oriented magazine that emphasized the color and action of the sport. More words of wisdom were that the industry wouldn't or couldn't support such an undertaking. And, by the way, why in the world did we want to align ourselves with a struggling professional tour that only had six stops in their season? Like most free advice what we received was worth just about what it cost so, for the most part, we didn't listen.

We did listen to one bad piece of

advice though. It was the rumor about those two guys in Florida who were planning a similar undertaking "so we'd better hurry if we were going to get anything out and not get left behind." Well, we pushed a reasonable time table out of the way and suffered the consequences. Turns out it must have been one of those urban myths that crop up from time to time, like the story about the cat in the microwave. Oh well, live and learn.

We created some problems because we never took ourselves quite as seriously as some folks thought we should and we promised ourselves that what ever happened we were going to have fun with it. For a while it was kind of a hard (and expensive) climb while most of the industry sat back to see if we really intended to do what we said.

The faces on the professional tour have changed over the past few years and the pro tour itself has evolved along with us. But five years ago three players were at the forefront of the sport and those three are still leaders in the game. Mike Ray, Michelle (Gilman) Gould, and Andy Roberts; all three are proof that quality and integrity doesn't tarnish.

The next issue will be our anniversary edition and we plan to include some of the highlights of the past five years: players who have come and gone, companies that appeared and disappeared, plus some trends that surfaced and sank.

We have learned a great deal over the past five years, mostly about what not to do. But the big thing we've learned is our education is just beginning.

Ready for kindergarten.

--SQ

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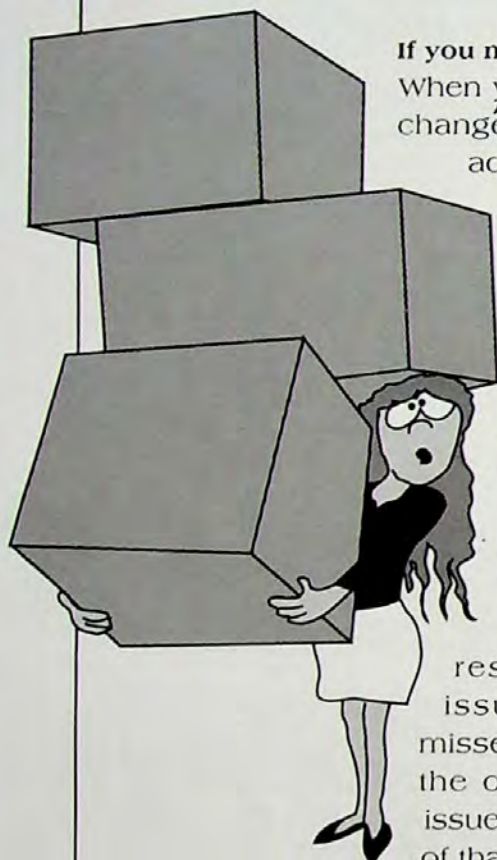
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KILLSHOT

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Viva Las Vegas

The Las Vegas Sporting House and I would like to thank you for sponsoring the 1996 FOXWOODS CASINO IRT & WIRT Pro Nationals Racquetball Tournament and making it a huge success.

We had over 540 amateur participants from 35 states and 5 countries along with 95 participants in both the mens and women's pro division. We raised \$38,000 in cash prizes making this the richest racquetball event to date.

This again could not have happened had it not been for sponsorships like yours. We look forward to working with you in upcoming events. Once again, thank you.

Mike Coulter
Events Director

Las Vegas Sporting House

Sudsy Rulz

As a reader of **KILLSHOT**, I enjoyed reading the articles written by William Huseman and John Boudman. I would like to take exception to the article written by Clay Walker. It makes some very unfavorable assumptions regarding Sudsy Monchik. (Instructional '95 issue, "think you can beat me?")

Clay Walker writes that many view Sudsy as a "brat". He uses this word with all the negative connotation he can muster. The fact is Sudsy is a brat. Sudsy is sassy and has a zest for life that few professionals can maintain with respect for the life they lead. The Suds may not be the composed and self-disciplined gentleman Cliff Swain is, but he makes each and every pro-stop I have ever watched a delight.

I wonder just how many matches Mr. Walker has watched. When any pro walks on to a court, it is an awesome display of how the game should be played. Serve, Ace. Serve, pass, kill. Sudsy walks on to the court with attitude. His smirks and grins may make him a "brat" to some but they have all the comedic pause of Jack Benny.

Like most racquetball players I know, only in my dreams could I ever play like a pro. I do not go to watch for a new technique or mechanics. I watch purely for the entertainment value and they entertain!

Professional racquetball players are in an athletic class unto themselves. They could not maintain their hectic schedules and awesome court ability without being intensely competitive. Some are obviously more humble than others. Some are truly temper-tantrum throwing, teched-out tyrants. There is one, and I write this with true affection, with no fashion sense, but they are all consummate athletes. If Mr. Monchik struts onto a court with a certain panache it is only because he executes the "no look" with flair. He can roll the ball out with a "behind the back" shot, on his knees and recover to center court with the agility of an Olympic gymnast.

Every sport that you tune into has their cast of characters. Most are written about on a national scale daily, weekly, monthly, and seasonally. To succeed, to hold the interest of an audience you need character. In racquetball, Sudsy Monchik is our character. Mr. Monchik has his audience in the palm of his hand and we love every minute of it!

May I suggest that Mr. Walker, who may know his way around a sentence, spend a little more time around the courts.
Dori Marshall

Jack Benny!?!?

Tournament Fees

Norm Blum's assertion that tournament entry fees should be \$10 - \$15 is ridiculous (**KILLSHOT** Spring 1996 *Norm Blum's Passing Shots*). Norm, have you ever run a tournament? I've been running them since 1976, and \$35 - \$40 is a very fair entry fee these days - if the tournament is run properly. We have a 3-day party at ours; everyone has a good time. We spend a lot on hospitality and prizes, and we make everyone feel welcome and part of the activity. Too many tournaments have become tedious and boring. Ours are still full of excitement, noise, and great action. We do three big tournaments a year, and still draw 250 to 300 players for each of them. It's not how much is charged, it's how it's run.

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Deliver with a Purpose

The Anatomy of Optimal Serving Strategy

By Del Villanueva
Head Coach

The University of California at Berkeley

The serve, first and foremost, will always be our most important shot! The serve is the only shot of the game we have total control and command of. Our goal — force a weak return to reward ourselves with an offensive opportunity. The fact is, too many of us passively put the ball in play and deprive ourselves of golden opportunities by Not Thinking. We have all recalled the serving strategy of a previous match and mumbled, “I could’ve and should’ve done this or that, but didn’t!” Mistakes and flaws in serving strategy are more often by omission than by commission. Let’s review, keeping in mind that the

hallmark of optimal serving strategy is *thinking...*

Win With The Basics (The best players still do!)

1.

Keep varying the type of serve, height, speed, and angle/direction of the ball.

This will keep your opponent guessing, honest, and prevent him from getting into a groove of returning familiar serves.

2.

Get feelers out early.

By varying your serves early in a game, you will be able to discover your opponent’s weaknesses/vulnerabilities sooner, and thus capitalize.

3.

Change a losing game/keep up a winning game

If your serves create many offensive opportunities for the receiver, or his serve returns continually force you into deep court, change your serves (strategy). If your serves force weak returns, Continue! However, as in #1. above, keep varying and changing so your opponent does not get in a groove of returning familiar serves. In other words, if your opponent has trouble returning “Z” serves (2 wall serves), keep serving them but throw in a good mix of fast and slow (lob) “Z” serves, and be daring enough to see what he/she does with the “Z” serve to the forehand (this player may have trouble with angles in general).

Win With The Basics

1.

Vary the type of serve

2.

Get feelers out early

3.

Change a losing game/keep up a winning Game

Simple Tactics Make Big Differences

1.

Serve from different locations in the service box.

This creates the illusion of different angles for the receiver. As a result, your opponent may get caught a

step too late, overrun the ball, etc., as the illusion consequently takes its toll as an element of surprise. Catching your opponent slightly off-guard may reward you with a gigantic setup and an occasional sweet ACE!

2.

Neutralize "shooters and power-returns".

When serving to someone who favors offensive returns (kills and pass-kills), and is consistently successful, keep the ball out of his/her "power hitting zone" by serving lobs. The "power hitting zone" is about knee high and below - a lob is received chest high and above. So, your opponent is forced to return serve defensively or hit an effective ceiling shot at best.

3.

Don't be a "Drive Serve Machine".

We all love to "crunch" the ball, but to live and die by the drive serve alone is playing a loser's game. As an opponent receives an over abundance of drive serves, he gets into a groove and starts returning serve more effectively and offensively. There is no substitute for changing-up to serve smart in optimal serving strategy.

4.

When fatigued, serve a lob.

Slow serves generally elicit slower rallies.

The importance of thinking between every point, then planning every serve, cannot be overemphasized, as we must consistently seek opportunities to end rallies fast, get the quick point and win sooner, partly because our efforts will minimize the number of times we would have to win back serve. Always capitalize on the potential that the game can and should be dictated from the service box.

As you develop a capacity for spontaneity (habit) in analyzing the current "situation" between points to plan your next serve, you will find a more focused and confident player with an elite sense of controlling a match.

Simple Tactics

1.

Serve from different locations

2.

Neutralize 'shooters'

3.

Don't be a drive serve machine

Could one of your weaknesses be simply overlooking the possibilities of how devastating your most lethal weapon can

be? If so, towel off, get back in there. Think, take a deep breath, then serve each serve with a purpose — to win.

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Buzz Words

What material seems to be getting quoted most frequently in training facilities these days? The answer may surprise you. While comparing the merits of strength training, speed training, and agility training is always near the top of the list, lately it seems that nutrition is the topic of choice in many gym conversations. In the unofficial, informal polling that we are so fond of doing, most of the trainers and insiders with whom we checked reported recommending the findings of authors in popular media such as Robert Haas or Dr. Bob Arnot. Specific titles such as *Dr. Bob Arnot's Guide to Turning Back the Clock* and *Enter the Zone* by Barry Sears with Bill Lawren came up often among the athletically enlightened.

It seems that the sport-crazed masses have devoured all the elite training principles and programs they could swallow for so long that now someone has noticed that all that work had been on only half the process. The catabolic or positive-stress-that-makes-us-grow-and-improve half of the cycle could only be as good as the anabolic or rest, restore, and rebuild part. Since there are only so many ways to rest, the missing key for a starved or pasta-bloated horde of would-be Schwarzeneggers must logically be nutrition. Hence, a new awakening to "feed forward" and "zone positive" eating has our health clubs and health-conscious Internet chat rooms buzzing.

If you are still missing the nutrition boat, it's high time you jumped on board. It's only a matter of time before some nutritionally correct phenom at maximum performance and enhanced mental productivity walks on the court and humiliates you.

Back to the future

Concerned for the future of your back? As promised back in the Winter 1995 issue, we've taken a closer look at the beating your back takes on the court and what can be done about it. Since our favorite sport delivers wear and tear in the form of compression and in the form of rotation, we did some digging to find a means of countering the potential damage from both forces.

Hang Ups, a division of Seattle-based STL International offers a complete line of inversion therapy equipment which may provide the answer. While most of us got our first taste of inversion when Richard Gere demonstrated his daily fitness ritual in the now-classic film *American Gigolo*, it seems that the technology has improved and this company has become the leading US manufacturer in the years since that film.



We caught up with the folks from Hang Ups fresh from their appearance on NBC's *Today Show* and got right to the backbone of the problems specific to racquetball.

Hoa Sierra, spokesperson for Hang Ups is quick to point out that for all its benefits, inversion is not for everybody. There are a number of conditions that contraindicate inversion, and anyone interested in trying it should consult his / her medical advisor for the OK and the proper guidelines. That having been said, it seems that inversion allows for the realigning of the spine that counters the negative effects of both rotational movement and compression of the vertebrae.

Here's how it works. The discs are fibrous, firm, doughnut shaped structures with a central soft spongy layer which act as cushions between the vertebrae.

During the course of the day, the average person can lose as much as one half to three quarters of an inch in height due to the naturally occurring effects of gravity.

Although discs are very strong, they are particularly vulnerable to twisting forces which can rupture their outer layer of cartilage allowing the pulpy gel inside to protrude. (referred to as disc protrusion or prolapse) These discs may also be damaged through the natural compression that occurs from standing upright and that is magnified by constant pounding on a hard surface such as a court floor. The desire to minimize damage creates the need for steps toward restoration of alignment and spacing on a regular basis to counter the effects of constant play.

Inversion therapy, as shown here, apparently helps vertebrae realign and takes undue pressure off the discs. According to the folks at Hang Ups, it takes only a short (a few minutes) session once or twice a day to accomplish this. The inversion table shown in the photographs has been designed to allow you to easily recline into an inverted position without any risky straining or jerking.

During the course of the day, the average person can lose as much as one half to three quarters of an inch in height due to the naturally occurring effects of gravity. This compression causes the discs to lose moisture which causes them to be less effective with age. The inversion process counters the natural compression and the compression effects of play by removing the pressure and by increasing circulation near the discs making it easier to regain fluid.

It seems that in addition to taking the stress off the discs, inversion helps minimize your body's tendency to compensate for the one-sidedness of racquetball. Since the dominate side gets more exercise, it enjoys more muscular development. Over time, your body will pull itself out of alignment in response to this action. Regular inversion tends to help correct this.

Inversion also additionally provides an increase in circulation in response to the change in the direction of the force of grav-

ity. This means better movement of oxygen throughout the body, as well as quicker removal of unwanted by-products of muscle metabolism such as lactic acid.

Inversion itself is nothing new. Athletes have developed various devices to the evolution of current equipment may prove extremely valuable to participants in a sport such as racquetball where there is such a need to protect and preserve the body, and such a desire for any exercise which could enhance performance.

Video Village

Looking for training techniques on video? For the on-court stuff it's hard to beat *Cliff Swain's Winning Edge* or Larry Adams' *Mastery of Racquetball*. But if cross training is your game, check out the well established speed training video with the IRT's Tim Doyle and speed training guru Scott Phelps. The newest (and one of the best) cross-training videos around is Ektelon's new *The Racquetball Workout: A Total Body Fitness Program* which is available free with the purchase of Ektelon's new NFS racquetball shoe, recently chosen the official shoe of the IRT.

A Heavy Decision

Thinking of weight training as a means of increasing your speed and power on the court? What should you consider when you incorporate weight training with racquetball? Plan for plenty of recovery time.

More and more athletes are discovering that with weight training, sometimes less is more. That is, they are discovering that fairly short but intense training sessions with plenty of recovery time may provide the best results. Even the most avid promoters of hitting muscle groups again and again are beginning to switch to more recent thinking that as little as one work out per week per muscle group may be enough.

If this is true for those who embrace weightlifting as a primary sport, it becomes even more important when including resistance training with a sport such as racquetball. The wear and tear on your body from hours on the court will slow the recovery times for your muscles. Calling on protein from time to time for on court energy demands will rob recovering muscle fibers of the ample protein they need to build.



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Norm Blum's Passing Shots

Repeat

When Mats Wilander won Wimbledon and secured the number one ranking several years ago, he faded quickly from the tennis scene. They say the most difficult aspect of becoming a champion is repeating the following season. We reported in the last issue of **KILLSHOT** that Sudsy Monchik, the new number one racquetball player in the world is hungrier than ever.

Many said that Monchik was simply experiencing the initial emotional surge of his number one ranking and would perhaps go down a notch or two and then perhaps regain the urge the following season. Wrong.

Monchik took his first real break this past summer. He literally didn't pick up a racquet for a month. "It was a long haul last season and I needed to rest up my arm and body," Monchik says.

Monchik continued to bask in the glory of being number one. HEAD came out with a Monchik poster and he signed hundreds of them -- even one for Staten Island borough president Guy Mollinari, the father of Republican Keynote Speaker Susan.

Monchik's goal this season is to be more consistent. "Last year when I started out the season I would play well and then lose in the 16's. It wasn't until the end of the season that I started putting it together. This year I want to start out strong. I know Cliff Swain and John Ellis will be gunning for me.

Ladies Night Out

We have all been to tournaments where the ladies turnout has been small. In

fact, in some tournaments they combine the 18+, 25+, 30+, and 35+ divisions since there are so few participants. No one in the industry was quite able to figure out a solution until recently. Mary Lyons, one of the sports leading authorities, heard all the naysayers but did something about it.

Lyons ran a women's only tournament but it was different from the others that had been tried across the nation. "Of the forty women who came, ten had never been to a tournament before," Lyons said. "We offered instruction and videotape analysis to all the players. We used a round robin format and played all day Saturday and half a day Sunday. After Saturday's matches we all had dinner together. For a lot of women it was the first time they had professional instruction. Most of them had learned from a boyfriend, husband or some guy at the gym."

Lyons says because tournaments are so male dominated, it intimidates and overwhelms many women. Lyons plans to hold more such events and it is such promotions that will increase the numbers in women's racquetball.

Potpourri

According to a reliable source, Michelle Gould, the number one ranked professional player for the last several years will finally stop playing in amateur events. "Because there are more pro stops planned she won't have to play in the amateur events," the source says. "The only reason she played before was because there were so few women's pro stops and it was really her only venue."...Was there a more touching scene in sport when Georgia's Ken Greene, in a wheelchair dying of cancer, watched his son compete in the 8 & under division at the Ektelon AARA Southeast Regional Championships last spring? Greene passed away a few days later. Sarasota's Rick Harmon was in a similar position. He too died of cancer after watching his kids in a tournament. He saw his daughter Lisa compete in her first women's open tournament. Lisa, by the way, made the US team.



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Monchik eats
up the
competition at
Bay 101's World
Championships
and Spalding's
Tournament of
Champions

Breakfast of CHAMPI NS



San Jose
Bay 101 World Championships
Bayhill Athletic Club

The Bay 101 World Championships' inaugural event will go down in the history books as a truly world class showcase of extreme racquetball, combining the efforts of the amazing IRT athletes, the first class venue of the Bayhill Athletic Club, and the prestige of Bay 101. History will reflect, as well, that it is the first time in the current racquetball era that Cliff Swain, the most accomplished player the game has ever seen, has been unseated as the number one player in the world. With his victory at the bay, Sudsy Monchik established himself as the world champion, and made good on his promise to be number one.

All season, **KILLSHOT** has predicted that Mike Ray and John Ellis would be the spoilers. Ellis' moments of greatness throughout the season gained him attention and respect, while inconsistencies kept him from rising beyond the number five spot. On the other hand, Ray's deadly consistency last year made him a terror for anybody facing him at anything less than 100%. Todd O'Neil's victory over Ellis in the sixteens left only number two seed Andy Roberts in Monchik's path to victory. Ray's elimination of the mighty Swain in the semis delivered the only blow that could have prevented Swain's finishing the season as number one.

The sixteens in San Jose gave us a look at the likes of Derek Robinson, Tony Jelso, Michael Bronfeld, and Brian Rankin, all young guns with unique abilities that

make them a welcome addition to the IRT. The match of the round, however was the classic matchup of Drew Kachtik and Ruben Gonzalez. One of the best rivalries of our time, this match is tough, physical, intense, and just darned exciting. In one of the most exciting pairings of the 90's, Gonzalez prevailed earning another quarter final

appearance despite age, injury, and the odds.

In the quarters, Swain easily handled Mike Guidry, as Roberts did O'Neil. The other matches pitted best friends as Ray eliminated Gonzalez and Monchik took out Mannino.

By now it seems that Monchik has

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It was all Sudsy Monchik at season's end. From Portland's Spalding Tournament of Champions, Monchik squares off in the final against Andy Roberts.



Sudsy Monchik

11-9, 5-11, 11-5, 11-6

Mike Ray

SEMIS

Ray d. Swain

11-8, 12-10, 10-12, 11-8

Monchik d. Roberts

12-10, 11-4, 1-11, 9-11, 11-8

QUARTERS

Swain d. Guidry

11-4, 11-5, 11-9

Ray d. Gonzalez

1-11, 11-6, 11-8, 11-3

Monchik d. Mannino

2-11, 11-5, 11-2, 11-7

Roberts d. O'Neil

11-2, 11-4, 11-4

SIXTEENS

Swain d. Robinson

13-11, 11-7, 11-3

Guidry d. Jelso

9-11, 11-6, 11-10, 11-1

Gonzalez d. Kachtik

10-12, 11-5, 2-11, 13-11, 12-10

Ray d. Katz

11-7, 11-5, 11-7

Monchik d. Clouse

11-3, 11-5, 3-11, 12-10

Mannino d. Bronfeld

4-11, 11-5, 11-9, 11-5

O'Neil d. Ellis

6-11, 11-7, 11-2, 11-6

Roberts d. Rankin

11-6, 5-11, 11-2, 11-5

San Jose Bay 101 World Championships

The largest upscale card club in California, San Jose's Bay 101 emphasizes luxury and security in an entertainment complex catering to the enthusiast as well as the general public. It is certainly not the dark smoky place one might initially think of as a card club. With 72 thousand square feet of floor space for 40 card tables, three first rate restaurants, a fun and relaxing sports bar, and meeting and banquet facilities, Bay 101 is a well lighted, well-ventilated, luxurious entertainment destination.

Bay 101 owner Tim Bumb, a racquetball enthusiast himself, is responsible for the club's involvement in professional racquetball through the inaugural Bay 101 World Championships event in 1996 at the Bayhill Athletic Club. A true world class event, the first year tournament proved a hit with fans and players alike. In fact, the same professionalism and attention to detail that make Bay 101 so distinctive have carried over into its namesake racquetball tournament. From all indications the first year, it seems we have witnessed the beginning of something very very special on the pro tour and an event that invites the rest of the world in grand style to compete for the world title.

Roberts' number. Still, in many ways they bring out the best in one another. Roberts, despite his size and thirtysomething status, moves with the speed and grace of a gymnast around Monchik. Monchik, adds depth well-rounded play to his trademark speed and power every time he faces the veteran. Their record last year speaks for itself.

Ray, Mr. Strategy, has engineered a gamestyle specifically for Swain. While on his best day Swain may be untouchable to mere mortals, on anything less, he will have his hands full with Ray. In an onslaught aimed at what few weaknesses Swain has, Ray upset the master in a close four at the Bay.

Ray's strategy was not enough to stop Monchik. Two conditions had to be met for Swain to be upset as number one. Swain would have to lose in the semis, and Monchik would have to win the tournament. Entering the final with one half of those criteria met, Monchik would not be denied the other. He was four games from history.

It was Monchik's efforts throughout the season that put him into position to

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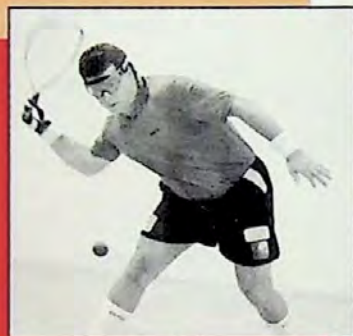
TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS



Portland's Rose Festival Tournament of Champions began as a professional racquetball exhibition between the top two rival players to coincide with the city-wide Rose Festival. In 1991, the format was changed to bring the top eight players from the pro tour to compete. While the top eight players from Oregon were invited for an opportunity to play against the world's best at this venue, they have always made a good showing, occasionally advancing past a touring professional in the first round.

From the days of the Hogan -Yellen rivalry, the back to back wins by Dan Obremski at the advent of the new format in 1991 and 1992, the temporary format change for 1994 to allow the pro nationals to be played in Portland during the Rose Festival, to today's array of young talent and the inclusion of the top WIRT pros in Spalding's season ending extravaganza, the Tournament of Champions has seen some amazing racquetball. Marathon matches before the biggest crowd of spectators on the tour have become the norm in Portland.

The spectacular Multnomah Athletic Club, site of the event since its inception, has traditionally provided a backdrop of grandeur for the prestigious event. One of the first established athletic clubs in the United States, the "M.A.C." is also one of the largest. Little wonder that earning a top eight ranking at season's end to compete at the Tournament of Champions has become such a sought after goal on the IRT. And little wonder that the play is so intense. With a field composed entirely of champions, what else could you expect.



**Past Tournament of
Champions Winners**
(Clockwise from top)
Marty Hogan, Mike
Yellen, Cliff Swain, Dan
Obremski, Ruben Gon-
zalez, and Sudsy
Monchik.

walk away with the championship. Monchik showed that his bravado was more than just talk. With depth incredible for such a young pro, Monchik came to play last season with plenty of weapons and plenty of heart. He won over fans and squelched the skeptics to prove that playing "the Sudsy way" could back up his level of what will now surely be called "Sudsitude."

Lest we forget, about ten years ago, an even younger player stormed the tour, then went on to set the standards for the pro game. That player is still at the top of the pro game, where he has grown accustomed to sitting all alone. Swain will not give up ground easily, especially after being ousted from a world championship by only ten ranking points. Less flamboyant, Swain has preferred carrying the championship with grace and quiet confidence and an all business attitude. It has served him well. The new season will surely witness the wrath of the mighty Swain. While many have predicted the return of Swain, and others the beginning of the Sudsy era, **KILLSHOT** predicts the most intense rivalry in the history of the sport.

Portland Spalding Tournament of Champions Multnomah Athletic Club

A tournament held only for champions was the vision for Portland's Rose Festival Tournament. The season-end tradition welcomes only the top eight from the IRT, and the top eight from Oregon in the most elite of competitions. With the largest viewing audience of any IRT event and in the most dramatic of host clubs, the Tournament of Champions is one of the most unusual showcases for professional racquetball.

With no round of thirty two, the players enter the late rounds a bit fresher than other pro stops. John Weatherbee, Erin Brannigan, Darin Campbell, Vince Kelley, Dennis Allen, Mat Hanners, Dan Darling, and IRT chief official Dave Sable filled out the round of sixteen, although lacking some of the upsets that have appeared in years past.

In the quarters, Monchik handled an apparently still-recovering Kachtik. Ray found little resistance from Ellis. Roberts rolled past a less-than-inspired Mike Guidry. Swain handled Mannino with relative ease.

For the second time in as many events, Monchik dispatched Ray. Though the two games to Ray's credit leaves one wondering if Ray has begun tailoring a gamestyle for Monchik.

SEMIS
Monchik d. Ray
11-7, 4-11, 11-3, 7-11, 11-3
Roberts d. Swain
9-11, 11-6, 11-6, 11-9

Portland Spalding Tournament of Champions

Sudsy Monchik

11-4, 11-2, 11-6

Andy Roberts

QUARTERS

Monchik d. Kachtik

11-7, 11-0, 7-11, 12-10

Ray d. Ellis

11-2, 8-11, 11-4, 11-5

Roberts d. Guidry

11-7, 12-10, 9-11, 11-7

Swain d. Mannino

11-4, 11-7, 11-3

Roberts frustrated Swain by coming back from one down to claim the other semi. Inside word is that Swain's sights were already set on the coming season and less on the tournament at hand.

In the final, Monchik handled Roberts with more ease than ever before.

Monchik's commanding backhand set the tone and his speed on the court set the tempo. In three quick games, Monchik walked away as the champion of champions and a suitable candidate for the front of a Wheaties box!

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G.I.R.T.?

Maybe changing the name of the tour to the Gould International Racquetball Tour wouldn't be such a bad idea. Michelle

Gould continues to stay on top, breezing her way to victory after victory with rarely any serious challenges. At the RAD Athlet-

ic Tournament of Champions in Portland, she pounded #2 ranked Cheryl Gudinas giving up a total of only 12 points in the entire match. Gudinas scored only 12 against Gould in Houston, taking a doughnut in the second game. She did, however, manage to force Gould into a tiebreaker in the third game of the match.

Jackie Gibson managed to take one game from Gould in Houston and could prove to be just the challenge needed to give the tour some additional spark this season.

Michelle Jensen



Michelle Gould

11-1, 11-8, 11-3

Cheryl Gudinas

SEMIS

Gould d. Brockbank

11-0, 11-1, 11-3

Gudinas d. Van Hees

11-9, 8-11, 11-5, 11-4

Portland RAD Tournament of Champions



Michelle Gould and Cheryl Gudinas battle it out in Portland at the RAD Athletics Tournament of Champions. Gould continues to be almost impossible to stop.



Dina Moreland and Cheryl Gudinas in the Quarters at Houston's Northwest Fitness Club.

Houston Northwest Fitness Club

Michelle Gould continued her stranglehold on the rest of the W.I.R.T. with impressive wins over Jackie Gibson, Laura Fenton, and Cheryl Gudinas. Gibson showed her strength as a serious contender, taking one game and battling to within 3 and 4 in two other games. Fenton also managed to score well against Gould but never enough to make the threat a serious one. Gudinas managed to take Gould into a tiebreaker but the other two games of their finals match were decisive 11-1, 11-0 losses.

The really intense fighting took place in the early rounds both the Laura Fenton/Lynne Coburn matchup and the Marcy Lynch/Kim Allen bout lasted over two hours, each going to five games. Fenton managed to outlast Coburn with a win in the fifth game. Allen and Lynch battled in a test of endurance with unbelievably close scores: 11-13, 11-8, 11-13, 13-11, 13-11. Fenton went on to defeat Amy Kilbane in three and Allen lost to Molly O'Brien.

Gudinas played into the final by neatly dispatching Dina Moreland and then Laura Fenton, each in three.

Portland Multnomah Athletic Club RAD Athletics Tournament of Champions

The two top ranked players of the W.I.R.T., Michelle Gould and Cheryl Gudinas, were invited to participate in Portland's

SEMIS

Gould d. O'Brien
11-3, 11-9, 11-3
Gudinas d. Fenton
11-6, 11-6, 11-7

Michelle Gould

11-1, 11-0, 12-10

Cheryl Gudinas

QUARTERS

Gould d. Gibson
11-7, 6-11, 11-5, 11-8
O'Brien d. Allen
11-7, 8-11, 11-5, 11-9
Fenton d. Kilbane
11-6, 11-7, 11-5
Gudinas d. Moreland
11-2, 11-2, 11-7

Houston

Tournament of Champions. The tournament, held in conjunction with the city's popular Rose Festival has a history of top competition within men's professional racquetball but this year marked an inaugural event for the women.

Gould played true to form and cap-

tured first in a final against the other W.I.R.T. finals standby Gudinas.

Gudinas' only real threat came in the second game of the match as she battled to within three. Gould stayed tough, won the game and then took the third game decisively 11-3.

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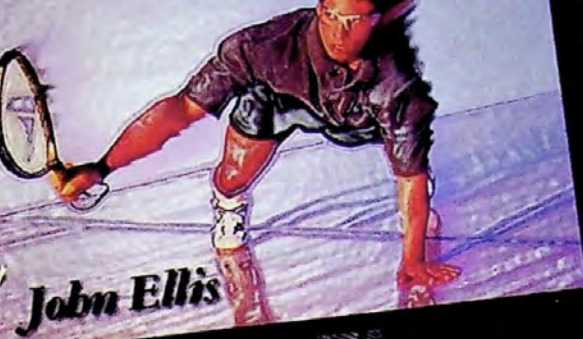
Sudsy Monchik
#1 ranked professional

Leader
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Cliff Swain
#2 ranked professional





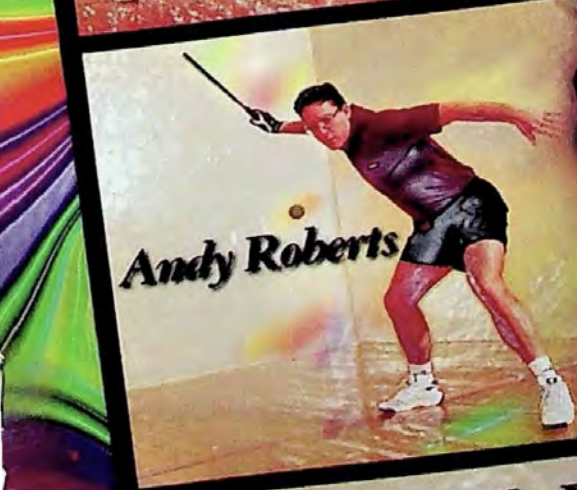
John Ellis



Cliff Swain



Michelle Gould



Andy Roberts



Mike Ray



Sudy Moncbik

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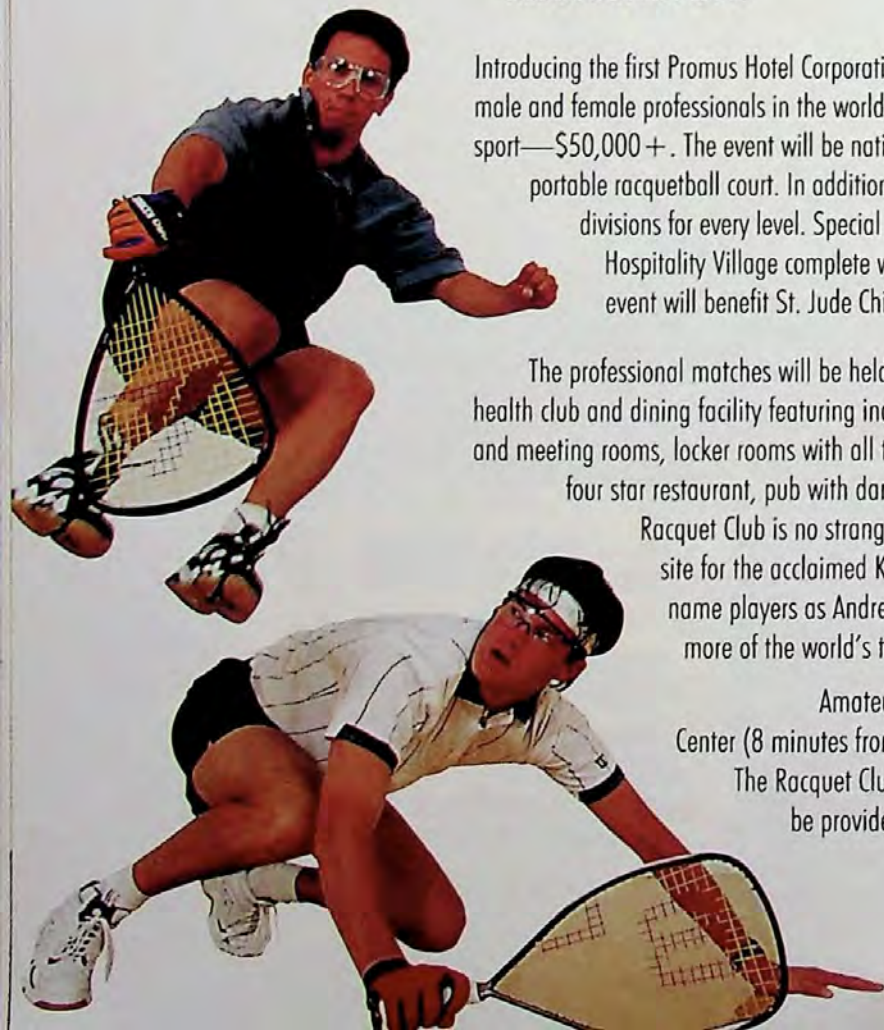
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The professional matches will be held at The Racquet Club of Memphis. The Racquet Club is a world class health club and dining facility featuring indoor and outdoor tennis courts, racquetball courts, elegant banquet and meeting rooms, locker rooms with all the amenities, state of the art fitness center, executive health club, four star restaurant, pub with dance floor, outdoor swimming pool, and much, much more. The Racquet Club is no stranger to hosting world class sporting events as they are the annual site for the acclaimed Kroger/St. Jude ATP tennis tournament which in 1996 had such top name players as Andre Agassi, Pete Sampras, Michael Chang, Todd Martin, and many more of the world's top men's tennis players.

Amateur divisions will be played at The University of Memphis Recreation Center (8 minutes from The Racquet Club) and Wimbledon Sportsplex (15 minutes from The Racquet Club). Complimentary shuttle service between all three facilities will be provided on a regular basis.



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Semi's	\$1,250
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PRO FORMAT

The Men's Pro draw will begin in the round of 64 with qualifying rounds scheduled as needed. The Women's Pro draw will begin in the round of 32 with qualifying rounds scheduled as needed. The Men's and Women's Open divisions will be made up of all Pro entrants who do not win prize money (i.e. lose in the round of 64 for Men or lose in the round of 32 for Women, and all players losing in qualifying rounds.) Players will not be able to enter the OPEN division directly without participating in the Pro division first!

HOSPITALITY VILLAGE

The nerve center of the Promus Hotels U.S. OPEN Racquetball Championships will be the U.S. OPEN Hospitality Village. Many activities are scheduled to take place in the Hospitality Village including an extensive industry trade show, hard hit contests, pro autograph signing sessions, live stage with entertainment, concessions, cash bars, and restaurant style seating. Admission is free for all spectators and players.

PARTIES, PARTIES AND MORE PARTIES

That's right! For those of us that like to enjoy ourselves during the evening hours the U.S. OPEN promises to be one solid week of non-stop fun beginning with our Tuesday evening Registration Party in the Pub at The Racquet Club. And that's only the beginning! Wednesday night, Thursday night, and Friday night will feature more of the same as DJ's spin the hottest tunes for your dancing pleasure. Free munchies will be served each night. Mingle with the Pro's and racquetball fans from throughout the country.

Saturday evening will top off the party calendar with the gala racquetball bash of the year—the first Annual U.S. OPEN "PARTY WITH THE PROS." Over 1,500 racquetball fans are expected to turn out at The Racquet Club Party Center for an evening of live entertainment featuring one of Tennessee's hottest dance bands. Elegant ice carvings, an extravagant buffet, huge dance floor, live auction for St. Jude, a cash bar, a multi-media slide show, and all the top racquetball pro's in the world will make the evening one to remember. Discount tickets will be available in advance for \$10 per person for all players in the tournament. The cost for guests and tournament spectators is \$25 per person.

MADE FOR TV PORTABLE RACQUETBALL COURT

One of the most exciting aspects of the inaugural Promus Hotels U.S. OPEN Racquetball Championships is that the first truly "made for TV" portable racquetball court will make its debut! The court will feature stadium seating for 800 plus luxury boxes for sponsors and VIP's. From the quarter-finals on, all Men's and Women's pro matches will take place on the stadium court. Dramatic player introductions, complete with laser light shows and booming music, will treat racquetball fans to a total entertainment experience never before seen in the sport of racquetball!



PRO MATCH SCHEDULE

Men's & Women's Pro Qualifying Wednesday, 9am-3pm
Men's round of 64 Wednesday, 4pm-11pm
Men's round of 32 Thursday, 11am-3pm
Women's round of 32 Thursday, 2pm-6pm
Men's round of 16 Thursday, 6pm-10pm
Women's round of 16 Friday, 11am-3pm

Men's quarters Friday 4pm-9pm
Women's quarters Saturday 10am-noon
Women's semi #1/Men's semi #1 Saturday 2pm-4:30pm
Women's semi #2/Men's semi #2 Saturday 5pm-7:30pm
Women's finals/Men's finals Sunday 12:30pm-3pm

STARTING TIMES

Available after 5p.m. on Monday, November 11th by calling The Racquet Club at (901) 765-4409.

PLAY BEGINS

Players must be prepared to play as early as 8 a.m. on the following dates. Requests for special starting times must be indicated on the entry form. Every effort will be made to accommodate special requests, however no guarantees can be made.

Wednesday Nov. 13th All Pro's, Men's A,B,C,D, 19+, 19+A/B, 19+C/D, 25+, 30+, 30+A/B, 30+C/D, 35+, 40+, 40+A/B, 40+C/D, 45+, 50+A/B, 50+C/D

Friday Nov. 15th Men's 50+, 55+, Women's A, B, C, D, 19+, 19+A/B, 19+C/D, 25+, 30+, 30+A/B, 30+C/D, 35+, 40+, 40+A/B, 40+C/D, 45+, 50+A/B, 50+C/D

Thursday Nov. 14th Men's 60+, 65+, 70+, 75+, 80+, Women's 50+, 55+, 60+, 65+, 70+ 70+

MEMBERSHIP

All players must be current members of the AARA. If you are not, a membership can be purchased at the event (\$20 per year). All players entering the pro draws must be current members of the IRT/WIRT Players Association or join at the event.

CHECK IN

All player registration will take place at The Racquet Club of Memphis and check-in is required prior to participating in the event. Hours for registration are: Tuesday Nov. 12th 6pm-10pm, Wednesday Nov. 13th 8am-9pm, Thursday Nov. 14th 8am-9pm, Friday Nov. 15th 8am-9pm, Saturday Nov. 16th 8am-3pm.

SKILL LEVEL VERIFICATION

All players entering skill divisions (i.e. A, B, 30B/C, etc.) must either have their skill level verified by an AMPRO clinician prior to the event (have certification card) or submit the enclosed verification form with entry. All information submitted will be subject to verification by the State Association President in your home state. Players must compete in the same skill divisions as they have played in during the three month period prior to the U.S. OPEN.



TICKETS FOR PRO MATCHES

All spectators will be required to purchase tickets for pro matches (see ticket application) and the Saturday evening "PARTY WITH THE PROS". Amateur and Pro players will qualify for discounted ticket prices. Seats are limited, therefore it is strongly recommended that you purchase tickets in advance. ABSOLUTELY NO VIEWING WILL BE PERMITTED WITHOUT A TICKET.

TRAVEL AND LODGING

The United States Olympic Travel Desk and United Airlines join the AARA in offering you the lowest possible airfares to the U.S. OPEN. For reservations, call UNITED AIRLINES Olympic Travel Desk at (800) 521-4041 between 8:30am and 8pm EST, weekdays. Be sure to reference the special AARA account number - 587WB to receive your lowest possible fare.

When making hotel reservations, mention the U.S. OPEN Racquetball Championships. Rates are good for up to 4 people per room.

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| 1. EMBASSY SUITES
1022 S. Shady Grove Road
Memphis, TN 38120
(901) 684-1777
Rate: \$128 per night | 2. HOMEWOOD SUITES
5811 Poplar Avenue
Memphis, TN 38119
(901) 763-0500
Rate: \$108-\$159 | 3. HAMPTON INN-Poplar
5320 Poplar Avenue
Memphis, TN 38119
(901) 683-8500
Rate: \$78 | 4. HAMPTON INN-Walnut Grove
33 Humphrey Center Drive
Memphis, TN 38120
(901) 747-3700
Rate: \$78 | 5. HILTON HOTEL
5069 Sanderlin Ave.
Memphis, TN 38117
(901) 767-6666
Rate: \$89 |
| 6. THE RACQUETBALL CLUB OF MEMPHIS
5111 Sanderlin Ave. | 7. UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS
630 Echles St. | 8. WIMBLETON SPORTSPLEX
6161 Shelby Oaks Dr. | | |

Regular shuttle service will be available between all three clubs throughout the event. In addition, transportation will be provided from each host hotel to The Racquet Club during select morning and evening hours.

HOSPITALITY

Limited hospitality for amateur players will be available at this event. However, The Racquet Club of Memphis features a four star restaurant for your dining pleasure as well as an extensive Hospitality Village with concessions throughout all hours of the tournament.

ST. JUDE HOSPITAL

The Promus Hotels U.S. OPEN Racquetball Championships is proud to name as our designated charity St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Founded in 1962 by the late entertainer Danny Thomas, St. Jude is dedicated to the successful treatment of diseases that afflict children. Having treated more than 13,000 patients from 47 states and 53 countries the hospital has been established as a world leader in the treatment of catastrophic childhood illnesses.

SILENT AUCTION & PRO/AM DOUBLES CHALLENGE

For the benefit of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and the U.S. National Racquetball Team, a silent auction will be held during the event featuring Olympic memorabilia and racquetball equipment from all the biggest manufacturers in the sport. Checks, cash and American Express, Visa or MasterCard are welcome. In addition, on Tuesday evening November 12, thirty two lucky amateurs will have the opportunity to play in a single elimination (1 game to 15) doubles challenge with a top professional player as their partner. All proceeds will be donated to St. Jude and each amateur player will receive a pro autographed racquet. Call 1-614-890-6073 for more information as spots are limited. Cost \$200.



RULES

All amateur divisions will be played according to official AARA rules. Pro divisions will use IRT/WIRT rules. For all age divisions, players must meet the proper age requirement as of the first day of the tournament (Nov. 13th). All divisions (pro and amateur) will use the ProPenn (green) ball.

RANKING POINTS

Amateurs: For all skill level divisions the U.S. OPEN represents the highest level ranking tournament of the year (level 6) and all winners will be deemed National Champions. For all Open Age divisions the U.S. OPEN will be a Level 5 event. Professionals: On the IRT/WIRT tours, prize money determines the level of ranking points associated with a given event. The U.S. OPEN is the largest prize money event of the season for both the Women and the Men and will therefore be worth more ranking points than any other professional tournament this season.

OFFICIATING

All players will receive \$5 for each amateur match they referee.

PROMUS HOTELS CORPORATION

The U.S. OPEN is very pleased to have as its title sponsor Promus Hotels. Promus is the parent company of Hampton Inn, Embassy Suites, Hampton Inn & Suites, and Homewood Suites. Recognized around the world as a premier developer and management firm of hotel properties, Promus Hotel Corporation has experienced incredible growth. With well over 700 hotels worldwide and opening new properties every month, Promus is a jewel in the hotel industry. As a publicly traded company, Promus Hotel Corporation's stock has consistently outperformed the hotel industry indexes. Lead by C.E.O. Ray Schultz, a long-time racquetball fan and player, Promus is poised to continue its explosive growth rate well into the next century.

TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS

Overall: Doug Ganim, Jim Hiser,
Marty Austin

Amateur: Margo Daniels

Professional: Hank Marcus

For More Information Call the Promus
Hotels U.S. OPEN Racquetball
Championships Headquarters at
(800) 678-5396.



PRO MATCH TICKET APPLICATION

	Price	Quantity	Total(\$)
SESSION #1:.....	\$5	_____	_____
Men's & Women's Pro Qualifying Wednesday, 10am-3pm			
Men's round of 64 Wednesday, 4pm-11pm			
SESSION #2:.....	\$5	_____	_____
Men's round of 32 Thursday, 11am-3pm			
Women's round of 32 Thursday, 2pm-6pm			
SESSION #3:.....	\$5	_____	_____
Men's round of 16 Thursday, 6pm-10pm			
SESSION #4:.....	\$10	_____	_____
Women's round of 16 Friday, 11am-3pm			
Men's quarters #1, #2 Friday, 4pm-6:30pm			
SESSION #5:.....	\$10	_____	_____
Men's quarters #3, #4 Friday, 6:30pm-9pm			
SESSION #6:.....	\$5	_____	_____
Women's quarters(all) Saturday, 10 am-noon			
SESSION #7:.....	\$12	_____	_____
Women's semi #1/Men's semi #1 Saturday, 2pm-4:30pm			
SESSION #8:.....	\$12	_____	_____
Women's semi #2/Men's semi #2 Saturday, 5pm-7:30pm			
SESSION #9:.....	\$18	_____	_____
Women's finals/Men's finals Sunday, 12:30pm-3pm			

BEST VALUE

TICKET PACKAGE (includes all sessions listed above).....	\$65	_____	_____
TICKET PACKAGE FOR PLAYERS IN AMATEUR DRAWS (also inc. PARTY WITH THE PROS)...	\$49	_____	_____
Ticket for PARTY WITH THE PROS	\$25	_____	_____
Saturday, 8pm-1:30am			
Discounted ticket to PARTY WITH THE PROS for Amateur players.....	\$10	_____	_____
Processing fee.....	\$3		\$3

Make check payable or use credit card and mail to:

U.S. OPEN Racquetball Championships
1685 West Uintah
Colorado Springs, CO 80904-2921

TOTAL

Seating is limited. Must purchase tickets in advance to be guaranteed a seat.
A very limited number of 4 person box seats (with table service) are available.
Call 1-800-678-5396 for prices and availability.

AmEx*/Visa/MC # _____ Exp. Date _____

Cardholder's Name (print) _____

Signature _____

*Use your American Express Card and receive a free souvenir US OPEN Poster.

ENTRY FORM

Name _____ Birthdate _____ Age _____
 Address _____ City/State/Zip _____
 Phone (day) _____ Phone (night) _____
 Seeding Information (i.e. National Ranking, State Ranking, Recent Results, etc.) _____

Players may enter a maximum of two (2) events.

Check one: Men's _____ or Women's _____

Skill Divisions (Formerly the Skill Level Nationals)*

Can only enter one from this group

A ☐	24 & under A/B ☐	35+ C/D ☐
B ☐	24 & under C/D ☐	45+ A/B ☐
C ☐	25+ A/B ☐	45+ C/D ☐
D ☐	25+ C/D ☐	55+ A/B ☐
	35+ A/B ☐	55+ C/D ☐

Age Divisions (Open)

24 & under ☐	40+ ☐	60+ ☐
25+ ☐	45+ ☐	65+ ☐
30+ ☐	50+ ☐	70+ ☐
35+ ☐	55+ ☐	75+ ☐
		80+ ☐

Skill Level Verification Form

(complete if you enter any Skill Divisions and do not have an AMPRO certification card)

Recent Tournament Record

Event	Division	Result
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____

I hereby certify that the skill level division(s) I have entered in the U.S. OPEN is the level at which I have competed in my state during the 3 months prior to this event. Further, I understand that the division(s) I have entered and the tournament record submitted above will be verified by my State Association President and that reclassification may take place if deemed appropriate by the Tournament Director.

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

Men's (IRT)** _____ Women's (WIRT)** _____

** The Men's Pro draw will begin in the round of 64 with qualifying rounds scheduled as needed. The Women's Pro draw will begin in the round of 32 with qualifying rounds scheduled as needed. The Men's and Women's Open divisions will be made up of all Pro entrants who do not win prize money (i.e. lose in the round of 64 for Men or lose in the round of 32 for Women, and all players losing in qualifying rounds.) Players will not be able to enter the OPEN divisions directly without participating in the Pro divisions first!

WAIVER: I hereby, for myself, my heirs, executors, and administrators, waive and release and all rights and claims that I may have against the AARA, IRT, WIRT, Ganim Enterprises, Inc., Promus Hotel Corporation, The Racquet Club of Memphis, Wimbledon Sportsplex, The University of Memphis, all other U.S. OPEN sponsors, or their respective agents for any and all injuries I may suffer as a result of participation in this event.

Participant Signature _____ Date _____
 (parent if under 18)

* All players entering skill divisions (i.e. A, B, 30B/C, etc.) must either have their skill level verified by an AMPRO clinician prior to the event (have certification card) or submit the enclosed verification form with entry. All information submitted will be subject to verification by the State Association President in your home state. Players must compete in the same skill divisions as they have played in during the three month period prior to the U.S. OPEN.

ENTRY FEES

Players may enter a maximum of two events. Only singles divisions are offered. Single elimination format will be used in all divisions and consolation will be offered only if court time is available. Players in two divisions may play back to back matches. Returned checks will be assessed a \$20 service charge. Phone entries will be accepted through the entry deadline with an \$8 service charge and a major credit card by calling the U.S. OPEN headquarters at (800) 678-5396. Maximum amateur draw is 550 players. Once filled, all additional entries received will be returned with refund.

First Event (Amateurs) (\$65) _____
 Second Event (Amateurs) (\$35) _____
 Pro Division (\$80) _____
 Late Fee (\$15) _____
 TOTAL _____

AmEx*/Visa/MC _____ Exp. Date _____
 Cardholder's Name (print) _____
 Signature _____

ENTRY DEADLINE: All entries must be received by Saturday November 2nd. No refunds will be given after the entry deadline. All entries received after the entry deadline will be assessed a \$15 late fee if space is still available in the tournament.

ENTRY FEE INCLUDES: Limited hospitality, free access to Hospitality Village and fan fair activities at The Racquet Club, souvenir PROMUS HOTELS U.S. OPEN shirt, and discounts on tickets to all pro matches and Saturday evening "PARTY WITH THE PROS."

Make check payable and mail to:
 U.S. OPEN Racquetball Championships
 1685 West Uintah • Colorado Springs, CO 80904-2921

*Use your American Express Card and receive a free souvenir US OPEN Poster.



Have you enclosed your Pro Match Ticket Application and payment for tickets? Seating is limited. Must purchase tickets to be guaranteed a seat. One check can be written for entry fees and tickets.

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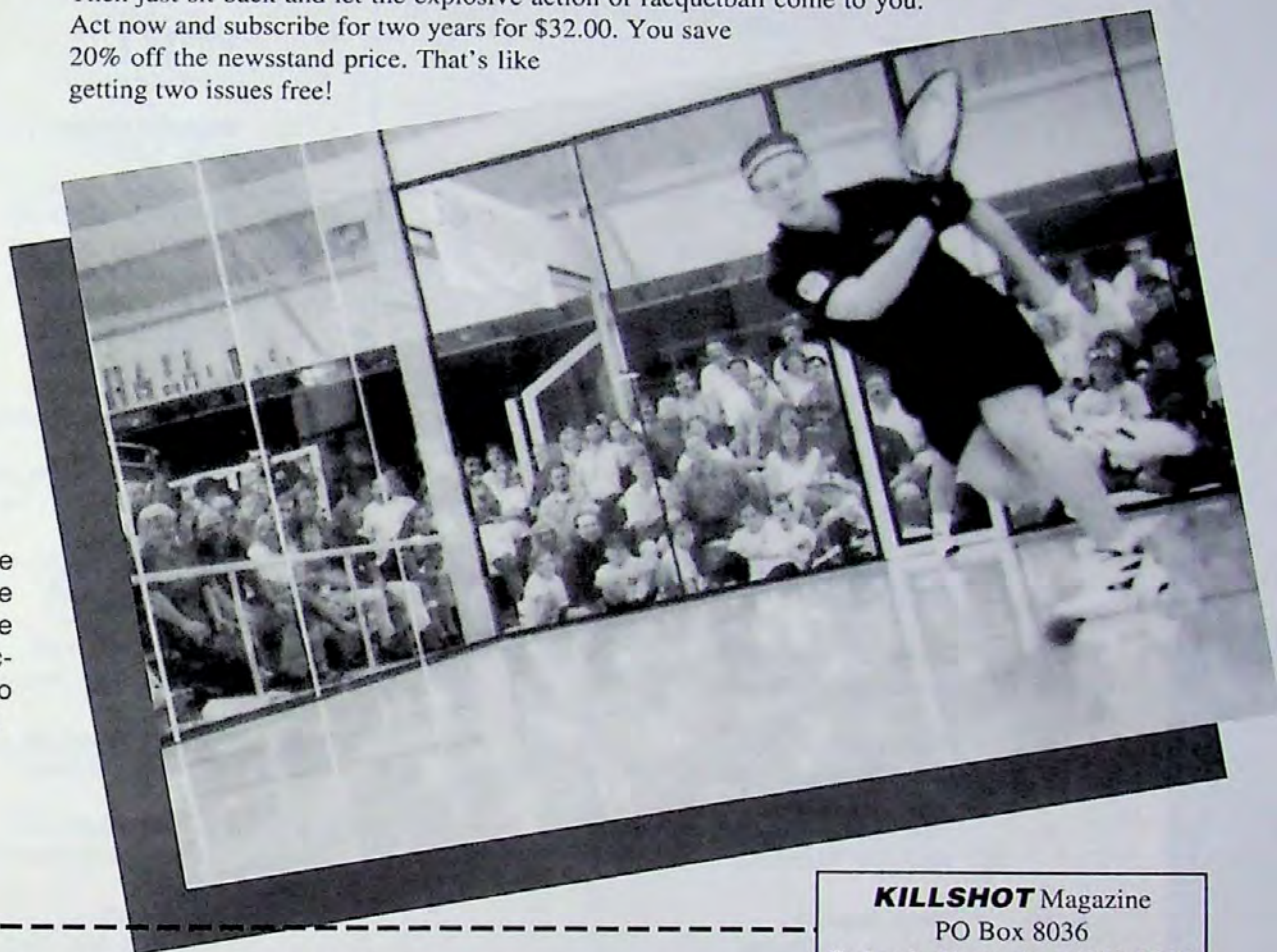
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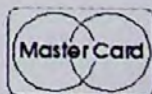
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VCI Spreadsheet

IRT

1. **Sudsy Monchik (1)**
Staten Island, New York
2. **Cliff Swain (2)**
Braintree, Massachusetts
3. **Andy Roberts (3)**
Memphis, Tennessee
4. **Mike Ray (4)**
Hilton Head, South Carolina
5. **John Ellis (5)**
Seal Beach, California
6. **Mike Guidry (6)**
Dallas, Texas
7. **Jason Mannino (7)**
San Diego, California
8. **Drew Kachtik (8)**
New Orleans, Louisiana
9. **Dan Fowler (10)**
Rockville, Maryland
10. **Tony Jelso (9)**
Ventura, California
11. **Louis Vogel (11)**
Albuquerque, New Mexico
12. **Adam Karp (12)**
Santa Anna, California
13. **Mike Engel (13)**
Bethesda, Maryland
14. **Brian Rankin (14)**
St. Louis, Missouri
15. **Woody Clouse (15)**
Truckee, California
16. **Derek Robinson (16)**
Indianapolis, Indiana

WIRT

1. **Michelle Gould (1)**
Boise, Idaho
2. **Cheryl Gudinas (2)**
Lisle, Illinois
3. **Amy Kilbane (3)**
Rocky River, Ohio
- 4T. **Marcy Lynch (4T)**
Horsham, Pennsylvania
- 4T. **Anita Maldonado (4T)**
New York, New York
6. **Kim Machiran (6)**
Ballwin, Missouri
7. **Molly O'Brien (7)**
Severna Park, Maryland
8. **Jackie Gibson (8)**
El Cajon, California
9. **Dina Moreland (9)**
Claremont, California
10. **Lynne Coburn (10)**
Baltimore, Maryland
11. **Chris Evon (11)**
San Diego, California
12. **Lorraine Galloway (12)**
Jamaica Estates, New York
13. **Janet Myers (13)**
Charlotte, North Carolina
14. **Doreen Fowler (14)**
Rockville, Maryland
15. **Michelle Wiragh (15)**
Laruel, Maryland
16. **Laura Fenton (16)**
Lincoln, Nebraska

PENN glove bonus pool: Includes all IRT stops and all those players wearing the PENN glove, official glove of the IRT.

- 1
Mike Ray
- 2
Jason Mannino
- 3
Louis Vogel
- 4
Mike Engel
- 5
Brian Rankin
- 6
Ruben Gonzalez
- 7T
Darrin Schenck
- 7T
Josh Messina

penn.

tacki-mac bonus pool includes finishes from all IRT events for those players using tacki-mac, the official grip of the IRT.

- 1
Mike Ray
- 2
Jason Mannino
- 3
Louis Vogel
- 4
Adam Karp
- 5
Mike Engel
- 6
Brian Rankin
- 7
Woody Clouse
- 8
Darrin Schenck

tacki-mac®

VCI Challenge Cup Series

1.
Cliff Swain
2.
Sudsy Monchik
3.
Andy Roberts
4.
Mike Ray
5.
John Ellis
6.
Mike Guidry
- 7T.
Drew Kachtik
- 7T.
Tony Jelso
- 7T.
Jason Mannino



VW CREDIT, INC.



Natural Selection

Winning racquetball can be determined by survival of the smartest

By Fran Davis
US National Team Coach

Working hand in hand with last issue's concept of court position, is the prospect of shot selection. Taking the right shot at the right time may well be the most critical part of any player's game.

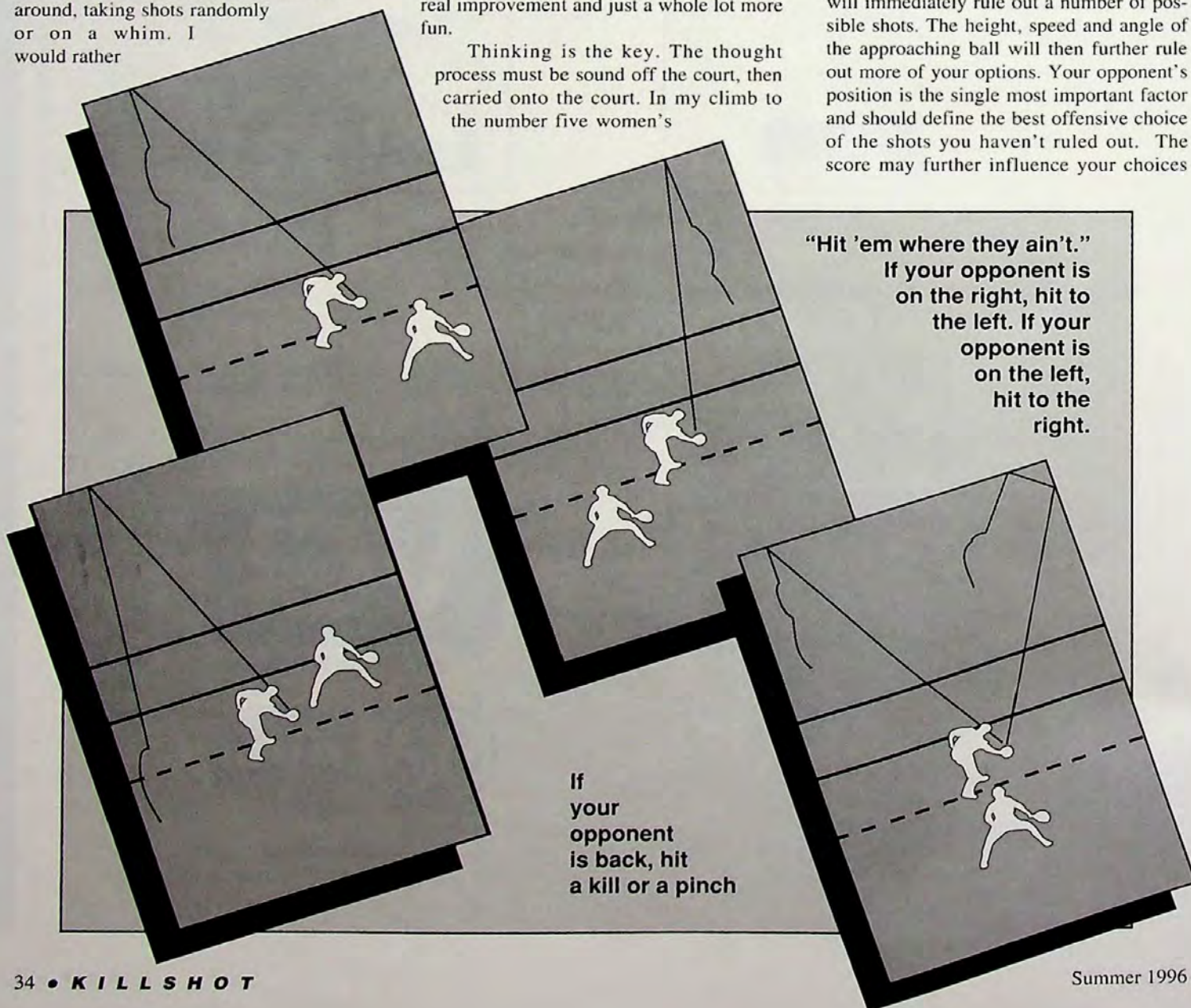
Unfortunately, I see players all over the country just playing "survival racquetball". That is, they just bang the ball around, taking shots randomly or on a whim. I would rather

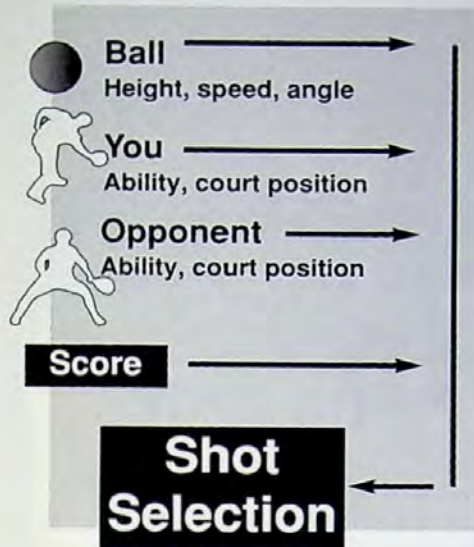
see them playing "thinking racquetball" by taking the most appropriate shot that will win the point. The mindless form means playing only from the neck down. The form that requires thinking couples strategy from above the neck with execution from below the neck. In the end, playing smart is much more rewarding, much more welcoming to real improvement and just a whole lot more fun.

Thinking is the key. The thought process must be sound off the court, then carried onto the court. In my climb to the number five women's

professional ranking in the world, I developed a method of thinking that is now also the standard for the U.S. National Team which says that proper shot selection depends upon you, your opponent, the ball, and the score.

Take into consideration your own court position and ability level since they will immediately rule out a number of possible shots. The height, speed and angle of the approaching ball will then further rule out more of your options. Your opponent's position is the single most important factor and should define the best offensive choice of the shots you haven't ruled out. The score may further influence your choices





consider is an opponent's court position, keep in mind three things in order to drastically improve shot selection:

1) Hit where your opponent is not.

If the opponent is on the right, hit to the left. If he is on the left, hit to the right.

If the opponent is in front court, hit deep with a pass or a ceiling.

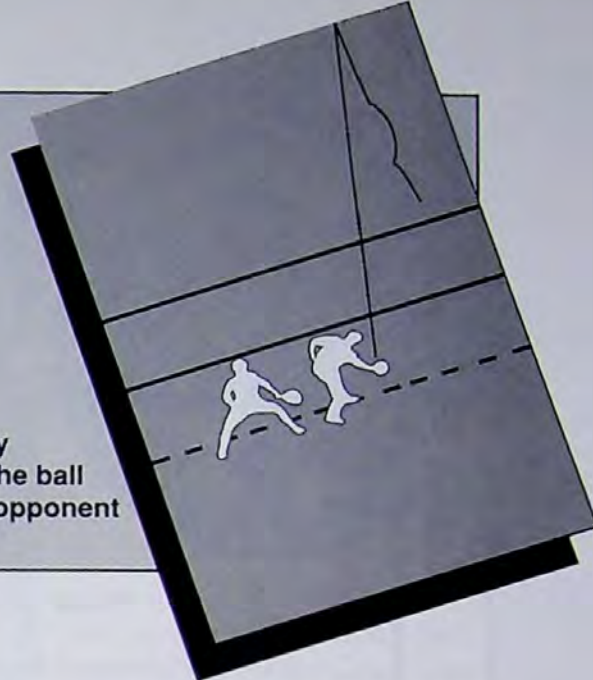
If the opponent is back, hit a kill or a pinch.

2) Try to keep your body between the ball and your opponent.

3) Always make your opponent run the greatest possible distance to get to the ball. If he is forced to hit on the run more mistakes will occur.

You can further provide a safety net for yourself by choosing shots whenever possible that will be effective offensive options even if you leave them up. Clean hard passes are usually such an option since they are often effective even if they are partially left up. In addition, with their greater margin for error, they make you less likely to skip your shot.

Keep your body between the ball and your opponent



since it may determine when to take risks and when to play it safe. Remember, what works in the beginning of a match when you are fresh and rested or your opponent is not warmed up may not work in the middle or the end when fatigue sets in or your opponent is warmed up. In the beginning of the match most players tend to kill the ball more. As the match goes on and legs get tired, you may kill the ball less, and you may be inclined to choose less effectively.

Since the most important aspect to

Shot selection is the key that will unlock the door to winning more matches with less effort. Hitting the right shot at the right time will simply win more rallies. You will be playing more aggressively and more efficiently. Racquetball, just as golf, basketball, or any sport, involves sound shot selection strategy to win effectively and efficiently.

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of the program.

Photo by John Foust



By Aaron Katz

Outside ^aKatz-eye Looking in view

Good News

The word from Junior Nationals was that the younger division had great turnouts, even though the quality and numbers in the 16's and 18's were pretty paltry. It could be a sign that racquetball has fought through its down period and is on the upswing again; or the participation levels in junior may not really be statistically significant with respect to the state of the sport. The clubs where I have been working out seem to have several players using racquets from the late '80's. Maybe people are starting to get tired of aerobics, stairmasters, spin classes, and the whole other host of equipment and programs which try to make working out fun. Hopefully people will learn that none of it is fun. I have always said, if you don't have a ball and you can't keep score, it is work, not fun.

Not the Cure All

While I am as excited about the US Open as anybody, I hope people don't expect it to have a real demonstrable effect on the state of racquetball. While the portable court is a progressive concept, I am not sure of its function right now. As I understand it, they are putting it in a stadium tennis court in the same club that has hosted a pro stop for the last several years. Having attended that event many times, I have never seen any problems accommodating the crowds. We still need to figure out a way to get non players to attend pro racquetball. By putting the court in the club, rather than a mall or a downtown area doesn't seem to accomplish that. Furthermore, I have heard that it has been built with television in mind. Well, that is fine, but what we need is a television network that has racquetball in mind. Since Jerry McKinnis has undertaken the productions for the IRT the problem has not been the production quality but the air time. Two a.m. just doesn't cut it! Racquetball needs to take the portable court and US Open concept and use them to reach new markets, not just have a great event for the players who already play in tournaments.

Who's the Greatest?

Michelle Gould may wind up being the Larry Holmes of womens racquetball. Unlike Lynn Adams who had Heather McKay, Shannon Wright and Caryn McKinney, Michelle has never had a rival to measure herself against. The current crop of womens pros do not stack up to that group. Who would win between Michelle and Lynn in their primes? Well, Michelle definitely has the edge in power, but does not have nearly as complete a game as Lynn or does not have Lynn's court coverage. If Lynn were able to return the serve with reasonable proficiency she would probably control the rallies. If the match were close, my vote would have to go to Lynn because of her great mental toughness. Hopefully Robin Levine or another young player will step up and challenge Michelle and cause her to reach her potential. As for the rumor I have heard about Michelle giving the IRT a shot, give me a break!

Scattershooting

Sudsy Monchik is the new king of professional racquetball. Sudsy may have been the most consistent player this season but was only 1-3 against Cliff Swain. His challenge this year is to retain the title and improve his head-to-head against Swain. Ruben Gonzalez' victory in the Amateur Nationals in Houston, while remarkable, came as little surprise to his comrades on the IRT. They have seen what he can do for the past 15 years. With the best younger players now committed to the IRT, Ruben went through the same group of players he would typically play in a round of 32 or round of 16 on the pro circuit. After beating most of them for many years on the tour, he had a huge mental edge in the close matches. Hopefully his victory will motivate some younger players.



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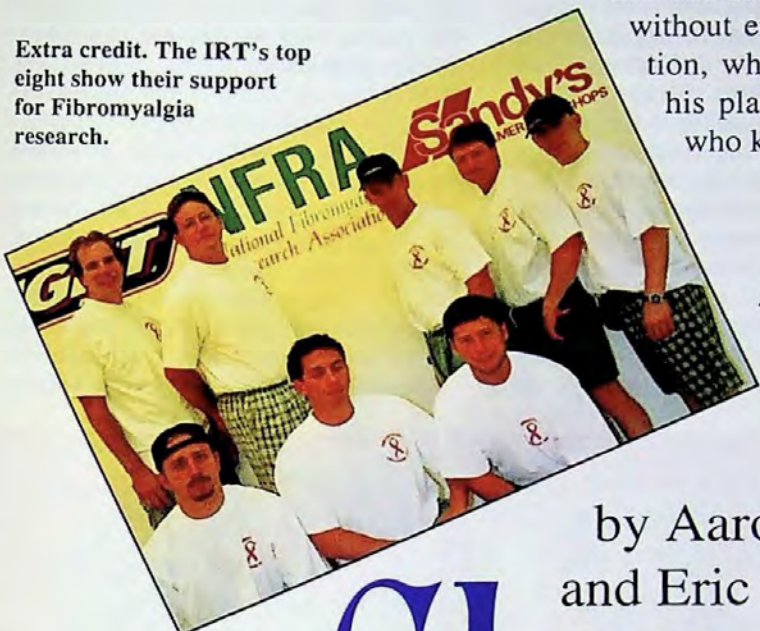
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"It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles of where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcomings, who knows the great devotion, who at worst, if he fails while daring greatly, knows his place shall never be with those timid and cold souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

-Theodore Roosevelt

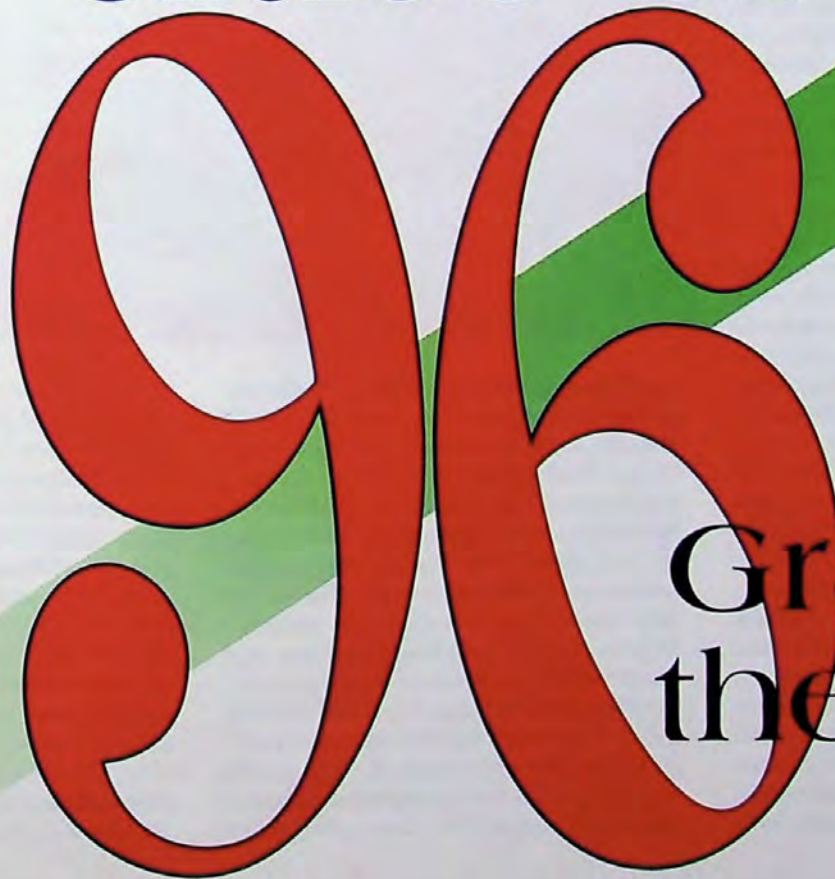
Extra credit. The IRT's top eight show their support for Fibromyalgia research.



As two cold and timid critics who are no longer in the arena, we offer our analysis of the most exciting season professional racquetball has seen in years.

by Aaron Katz
and Eric Muller

Class of



Grading the Pros

Sudsy Monchik: A

As they say on the PGA Tour "You da man!" Monchik answered all calls and challenges, accepted the pressure of being dubbed the "future" and stepped up huge—to be the present. Monchik did not fall prey to the pay-your-dues, keep-plugging-and-eventually-you-will-be-number-one mentality. He tasted victory in his short stint on the IRT and wanted more. Monchik possesses a unique combination of respect, disdain, and camaraderie for his opponents. He loves the spotlight and everything that comes with it. But does being "the man" in the sport of racquetball satiate Monchik's desire to be a "star?" A big fish in a small pond, he would prefer to be the big fish in the ocean. Much like Hogan and Swain, he wants to be respected as a great athlete, not just the best at a "fringe sport." Hopefully he will help lift the sport and carry it to prominence. A lot of pressure for a 21 year old you say? Well, "he's da man!"

Next season, Monchik must stave off Swain whom he bested by a mere 10 points. Swain, with the intensity of a caged animal, has not completely passed the crown to Monchik just yet. Indeed, Monchik's greatest test over the next couple of seasons will be how he matches up with Swain, a great competitor who has his back against the wall. What about Andy Roberts and the rest of the IRT and their hopes of catching Monchik? We don't think so. They should make for some nice scenery as Monchik and Swain embrace in what will be the most exciting rivalry in our sport since Yellen and Hogan in years past. Let the games begin...

Cliff Swain: A-

In the record book there is no asterisk attached to David Bledsoe's 1977 #1 ranking signifying that Marty Hogan won every tournament that season with the exception of the Nationals (which used to determine the number one ranking). There is no asterisk next to Mike Yellen's 1987 championship despite the popular belief that Bret Harnett was the best player that year. Likewise, no asterisk will denote that Cliff Swain lost the number one ranking in 1996 by a mere 10 points.

One might argue that Swain's demise was the result of an aberrant 1st round loss in Chicago to Tim Sweeney. Alternatively, an argument can be made that Swain matched up poorly against Mike "Don't-call-it-a-comeback" Ray who bested Swain four times during the season. Ultimately, however, the championship is decided over

the course of the entire season. Swain's destiny was in his own hands going into the final event. Had Swain reached the finals, his first place ranking would have been locked up.

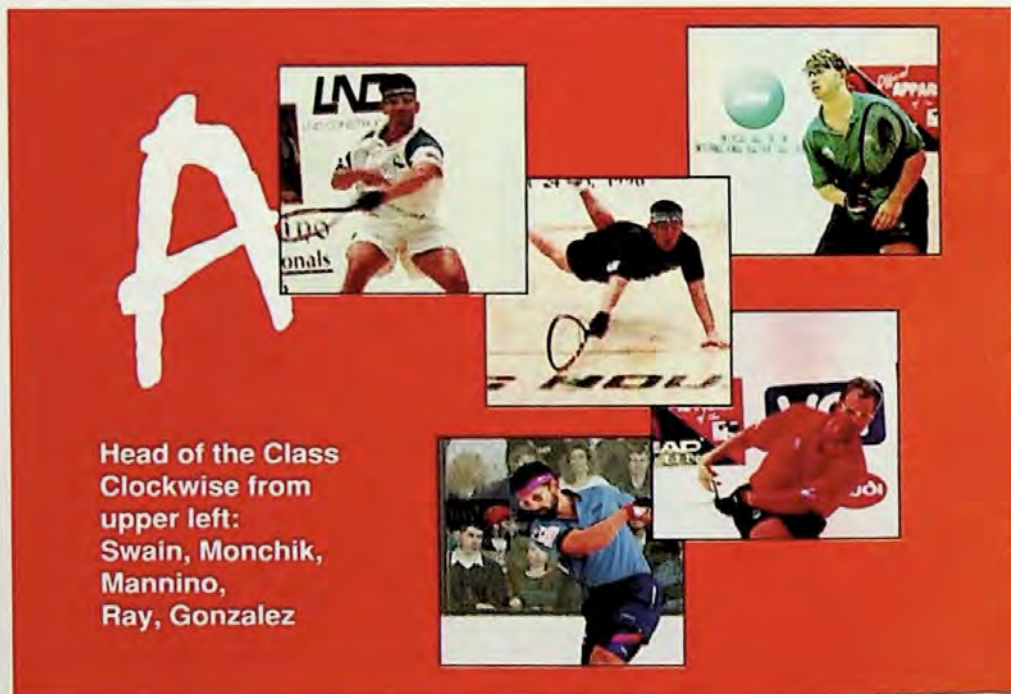
Will this loss tarnish Swain's place in history? He lost the brass ring in the first year that he was seriously challenged. He needs to win one more title to tie Hogan and Yellen's five national titles each. Without another championship season, history may not reflect his dominance and impact. Still, Swain's game is the prototype for the next generation of pro players.

Swain's season was certainly not without its highlights. Swain answered a tremendous amount of pressure from a burly, surly, and vocal home crowd by winning his homecoming event, professional

winners' circle. One thing is for sure - Swain hates to lose, maybe even more than he loves to win. He is not afraid of a challenge and he may just be the toughest competitor this sport has ever seen. At the end of the day, Swain is a 2-1 favorite to regain the title and the number two guy always works a little harder.

Andy Roberts: B+

Diligent, workmanlike, steadfast, focused, professional, polished—the list of adjectives describing Roberts goes on and on. What is missing, however, is a season ending number one ranking to add to his resume. Roberts has continually improved as a player, developing all aspects of his game. Improvements in foot speed and consistency in recent seasons have left him



racquetball's return to Boston. Under the watchful eye of his father, Red Swain, Cliff won the biggest event of the season, Las Vegas' Foxwoods National Championships, with surgical precision. In the finals of both events, Swain faced Monchik directly.

Swain's record against the younger generation bodes well for next season. He lost only two matches the entire season to Monchik, Guidry, Ellis, Mannino, and Karp. Veterans Roberts and Ray have developed game plans to contain him. Some minor tinkering with his game would go a long way to prevent their success. His biggest test will be whether he can channel his emotions positively and return to the

with few weaknesses. Although finishing number three last season, he had his best season ever, with two wins and three finals. Why no championship? In the two biggest tournaments of the season Roberts fell short to Monchik. Unfortunately for Roberts that may have been his best shot. Swain seemed a bit more vulnerable with players nipping at his heels all season and the weight of crown becoming a bit burdensome. Throughout the season, Monchik seemed to lack the maturity and experience to pull off the improbable.

What is in store for next year? Has he just signed another contract with Ektacolor? Roberts has assured the world he intends

stay in the mix. Being on the same side of the draw as Swain will probably be a welcome change as his 2-7 record against Monchik was his ultimate undoing. Few of the younger players have seemed to make much progress against Roberts. While he experienced his first career losses to Ellis and Mannino, there is no reason to believe that anyone will threaten his number three stronghold. However, an aging knee and fragile psyche should keep him from the promised land once again. A big heart and a unique ability to adjust his game will keep Roberts a major force on the IRT.

Mike Ray: A-

If last season was a race among the "Big Three", then the road to number one went through Mike Ray. A 4-3 tally made

ground to be a contender in '96.

Racquetball analysts have been pronouncing Ray D.O.A. at the beginning of each season for a few years now. Still, he continues to be more resilient and durable than a South Boston sewer rat. What drives Ray's success? How does he manage to find new ways to win in the face of younger, stronger, and faster opponents? Ray plays because he loves the game - he loves to compete and he loves to win. From his game style to his public image, Ray's game is built for longevity. He relies on his wits more than his athletic ability. Likewise, his mild mannered intensity and quiet confidence has built a cult following that makes Ray one of the most highly regarded, respected, and celebrated champions of the game.

Mike Ray knows that there will always be setups.

John Ellis: B+

Just like warm apple pie without the a la mode, John Ellis' season was delicious yet somehow not quite satisfying. In a sense, Ellis came of age this year and silenced any naysayers who declared this former amateur champion and four year tour veteran washed up at the tender age of 23. Ellis exploded out of the blocks at the beginning of the season. With the first win of his career, two second place finishes, and multiple wins over Monchik, Roberts, Ray, and Guidry, Ellis flirted with a top four finish and demonstrated his ability to run with the big dogs.

While there were many high points in Ellis' season, the year was marred by disturbing inconsistency. All of his big wins over Monchik and Roberts came during the first half of the season. During his four year ascent on the tour, Ellis seldom lost to players ranked below him, yet last season he was one of the best draws for ambitious players ranked below number ten. Ellis logged the worst loss by any top ten player last season that included a first round disaster against an unknown amateur player, Brian Simpson. In addition, Ellis has yet to advance past Cliff Swain who continues to elude him.

Finishing number five is certainly a step up for Ellis. The truth is that he's been better than several IRT veterans for a couple of years now, and should have finished in the top four. What is lacking may be motivation, desire or proper training. Ellis may be suffering from some of the same complacency problems that seem to be afflicting several young IRT players. Since Ellis plays his best racquetball when he maintains a rigorous training program, one season of intense training may do wonders for his performance.

Touted as the only player with the talent to go stroke for stroke with Monchik and pose a serious challenge to the impending "Sudsy era", the future can be bright for Ellis. However, Ellis has, in the words of the Beatles, a "long and winding road" ahead before he even cracks the top three. Some in the industry predict that Ellis will mature next season and make a big impact. Yet before Ellis well-wishers can mention his name in the same breath as Monchik's with a straight face, Ellis must play an entire season without so many wild swings in performance. One thing is certain - once Swain and Roberts are gone, Ellis is the last



Honor Roll
Top to Bottom:
Roberts, Ellis,
Fowler, Jelso

Ray the first player to notch a winning record against Swain since 1991. This contrasted with a paltry record against Sudsy. The "Mike Ray factor" (as racquetball historians may someday refer to it) reared its ugly head at the world championships in Milpitas where Ray's high arching lob nick proved to be Swain's undoing.

While Ray may have spoiled Swain's streak, he was not so far off from claiming the championship for himself. Ray unexpectedly lost some matches to journeyman pros such as Fowler, Clouse, and Reiff. Had the finals in Arlington not been on the same day as a five game semifinal slugfest with Swain, Ray may have gained enough

What of Ray's chances for the new season? Ray will have to turn finals' appearances into wins in order to compete for the top spot. That means either some off-season training or piecing together a game plan to unravel Monchik. However, Ray's toughest work will be defending his territory. Many players will see the number four spot as an achievable and worthy goal. Ray will have to defend his turf against young guns like Ellis, Mannino, and Guidry. We predict that he will finish no better than four and no worse than seven. However he may again prove us wrong. Bottom line, if you give him a set up, he will kill it, period. After 15 years on tour,

best hope of the rest of the IRT to challenge Monchik. Without him, Sudsy may reign for a decade.

Mike Guidry: C

Jimmy Johnson used to say, "You either move forward or you move backward, you can't stay the same." Well, after a year or so on the treadmill, Guidry took a step back. Fitness and retrieving ability kept him a consistent quarter finalist but there were many disappointing losses for Guidry. His only victory over a top five player was over Swain in Phoenix. He was "0-fer" against Ray, Roberts, Monchik and Ellis. Uncharacteristic losses to Louis Vogel, Dan Fowler, Derek Robinson and Adam Karp damaged his already fragile confidence. Lacking aggressiveness, Guidry appeared to be playing "not to lose".

We question whether Guidry is driven to be number one, or if he just likes making a living playing racquetball? If the answer is the former, then he needs to break down his game and assess his strengths and weaknesses. His game style is a bit of a "tweener" where he has neither the fire-power to avoid getting overpowered by the power players nor a good enough command of the control game to avoid getting outsmarted by the tour veterans. Clearly though, he has the physical talent to overcome the lack of a defined game. In the past he has shown a reluctance to tear down his game and rebuild it.

For the first time since he started the tour, players younger than Guidry surpassed him in the rankings (Monchik and Ellis). If he doesn't step up now, there will be a herd of other hungry young players looking to stake their claim. "The mission, Mike, should you choose to accept it..."

Jason Mannino: A

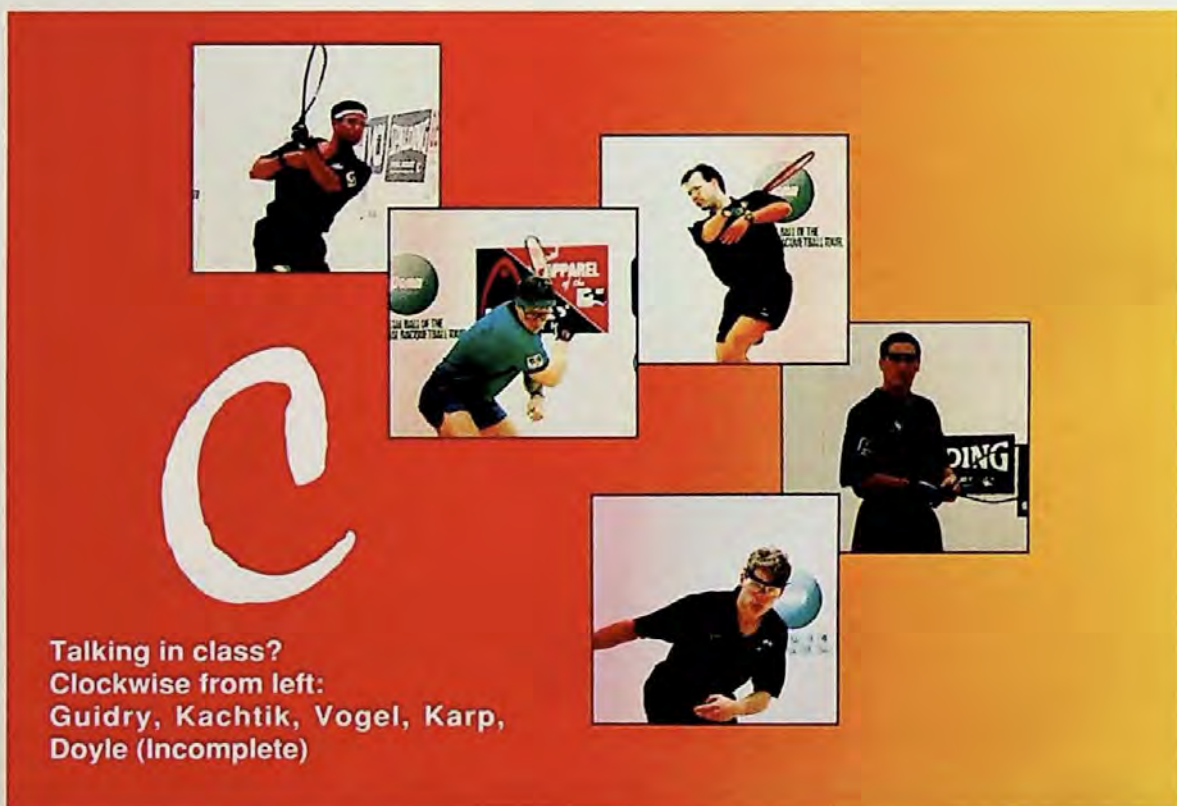
Having quickly gained the reputation on the IRT as the "Mouth That Roared", Mannino finally backed it up on the court. Jason stepped up when other, more experi-

enced players couldn't fill the holes in the top 8. From the midway point of the season, Mannino was a consistent quarter finalist. His highlight came in Phoenix, with a huge win over Andy Roberts en route to his 2nd semifinal appearance. He has yet to show any signs of being competitive with Swain or Monchik.

Mannino does not have a prototypical pro game. He has minimal power, no drive serve, and haphazard shot selection. However, he does possess a certain flair and mental toughness that few of today's younger players claim. Of long term concern to the enigmatic Mannino is his reckless style of play in combination with his lack of conditioning which may begin to

injury and uncharacteristic early round losses which manifested itself with an odd combination of apathy and frustration. What has been "A Long Strange Trip", culminated this year by Kachtik's being passed in the rankings by three players under the age of 25. Kachtik barely retained a spot in the top eight.

The season actually started out with some promise, early victories over Andy Roberts and Mike Ray and a return to the winners circle in Arlington, VA, had many observers commenting on Kachtik's return to form. However, some uninspired performances and mid-season shoulder and knee injuries brought his season crashing down. Of particular concern was Kachtik's inability



Talking in class?
Clockwise from left:
Guidry, Kachtik, Vogel, Karp,
Doyle (Incomplete)

cause his body to break down. At age 21, he is unlikely to be afflicted with any major problems for a couple of years. Mannino has a long history of winning, a pedigree that will serve him well as he faces the challenges that will be presented to him this season. We expect Jason to have a very solid season but not take the tour by storm. Look for him to stay in the top ten if he can stay hungry.

Drew Kachtik: C-

"Turn out the lights the party is over." This affable Texan's season was riddled by

ty to get by the lower ranked players. It has been sometime since Kachtik has been a threat to the top dogs, but his mental toughness and court savvy have always allowed him to advance to the quarter-finals with an occasional semi, thus maintaining his top five ranking. This year, however, Kachtik had more round of 16 losses than in the previous three seasons combined. Although partially attributable to the increase in the depth of the tour, one cannot overlook Kachtik's inconsistent and dispirited play at times.

Is Kachtik done for? Will his 1992

national title be looked at as a fluke by a hungry young player capitalizing on a small window of opportunity between the Hogan-Yellen era and the Swain era? Maybe so. One of the most colorful, exciting, and unpredictable characters both on and off the court, Kachtik can still serve up one of the best athletic exhibitions going. Anybody who has seen Kachtik compete at his best knows that his animal instinct and desire made him a champion capable of leaving his opponents cowering in fear. That time may have long past. Let's hope Kachtik can regroup and once again return to the upper echelon of IRT pros. We know we are rooting for him.

Tony Jelso: B+

Kudos to physically imposing Tony Jelso, the IRT's muscle bound journeyman, who ended the year with his first top ten finish. Jelso deserves credit for surpassing the expectations of the industry and for reigniting what was once a promising career. A consistent threat in doubles and the brightest star on California's radical outdoor racquetball circuit, Jelso brings the same characteristics to the IRT that Brian Hawkes did in the 1980's. In fact, Jelso became Hawkes' heir-apparent by dethroning the master in outdoor play for the first time in about a gazillion years.

Four quarter finals, two victories over top eight players, no first round losses, and attendance at every pro stop secured Jelso's #9 ranking. However, this record, while Jelso's personal best, was unremarkable by IRT standards. Jelso went relatively untested in pro stops against other 9-16 ranked players.

If Jelso is truly a top pro, he will have to chalk up some wins over more of the top eight (not an easy task from the number nine slot in the draw). Realistically, Jelso will probably not make a move in the rankings next season. Even if he were to surpass Kachtik, several other players such as Karp, Gelhaus, Fowler, Vogel, O'Neil, Rankin, and Clouse might just as easily finish ahead of Jelso. If Michael Bronfeld commits to full time touring, or if Tim Doyle and Bret Harnett should make a comeback, Jelso may find his current ranking to be short-lived.

Dan Fowler: B+

Fowler remains an enigma. On paper he has a natural pro style game with quick hands, power, cut off's, and shooting ability from anywhere. However, he has been mired in mediocrity for several years.

Semifinal appearances in Denver and Las Vegas including victories over tour mainstays Mike Guidry, John Ellis, and Mike Ray led one to believe that Fowler was about to reach his potential. But consecutive first round losses to Gonzalez combined with his recent suspension from AARA events left him with a great deal to consider before the start of the new season. If Fowler turns his recent misfortune into an opportunity to channel his focus into the IRT, he is top eight material. If not, he will still be a threat in every match he plays and a nightmare early draw for any pro on the tour.

Louis Vogel: C+

This tour journeyman looked like the early favorite to capitalize on the mass exodus of top players due to injury or retirement. However, after a few early season upsets, a rise to career best number six ranking, and his most notable tournament with his first career semifinal appearance in Boston, Vogel failed to advance past the round of 32 in the last several events of the season. Maybe his flirtation with the mental and physical commitment of what it takes to be a top player will motivate him to a more rigorous off season training program. He certainly has the talent. A bullet serve and silky smooth strokes on both sides produce, in spurts, some of the best racquetball the IRT has to offer. However, consistency and a clear lack of mental toughness has prevented him from climbing higher up the ranks. Vogel could make last season a huge stepping stone. Having previously advanced past the round of 16 only once in his career, his brief taste of success and top eight position could spur him on to greater things this season.

Adam Karp: C+

In his first full IRT season, Adam Karp appeared a bit content to be "one of the boys." Conventional wisdom deemed Karp as the most likely young player to join Monchik and Ellis in a "next generation" assault on the mainstays of the tour. Karp made a strong early season showing with big wins over Mochik, Ellis, and Roberts. However, the latter half of Karp's season was marked by inconsistency, questionable intensity, and a training regiment fit for a professional bowler. While maybe not the biggest disappointment of this year's tour, Karp did not fulfill the expectations of the experts.

While Karp's season was below par, he is still one of the best bets to make an

impact next season. Karp, a late bloomer, lacks the pedigree of other young IRT players. He needs to buttress his quickness, hand speed, and lob serves with more strength, stamina, and a drive serve. The bottom line is that Karp is a good enough player to move into the top eight without a lot more work. Were he to pull an Andre Agassi and give his career an honest effort, he is one of the few guys who has the talent to challenge Monchik in the next five years. He also may become mired in mediocrity, lamenting lost potential, and thinking about what might have been.

Other Notables

Roben Gonzalez: A

We said last year that if Ruben was able to return to the IRT and compete anywhere near the level he had attained before his injury, it would be his most remarkable accomplishment. Well, to the delight of fans everywhere, Ruben once again proves that he is a freak of nature. With two wins over Fowler and a win over Kachtik, he may actually be playing better than he was before the injury. Ruben will never again be able to compete consistently with the top guns on the tour nor will he be much of a threat to win any pro stops. However, chances are that he will continue to embarrass the 25 and under crowd on a consistent basis until he is in his 60's. Ruben is perfectly capable of finishing eight or nine next season. He just keeps going, and going, and going. . .

Tim Doyle: Incomplete

Nagged by chronic injuries, Tim Doyle was unable to compete full time on the IRT this season. Doyle's absence, while a disappointment for fans, was a delight for tour-also-rans and one-time-quarter-finalists who gleefully benefited from weaker draws.

Next season is still a question mark for Doyle, who is set to return to competition. If he is healthy, Doyle will breeze back into the top eight. However, as demonstrated by his few appearances last season and the end of the previous one, even a healthy Doyle will need to add a few wrinkles to his game to be a top four threat. Doyle's mental game inexplicably collapsed a couple of seasons ago, and the jury is out on whether he has the resources to rebuild it. Still, Doyle is a great competitor whose past success is indicative of his ability to win tournaments.

KILLSHOT cafe

Appetizer

Is it a waste of time to dive? I see the IRT pros do it all the time.

Diving will usually mean a weak return and severe lack of maneuverability and position for the next shot even if you do manage to get a racquet on the ball. The risk of injury on any given dive and the wear and tear on the body from repeated diving make it a last resort. The two keys for the IRT pros you see diving is that they can hit offensive shots from the dive, and they can recover composure and court position quickly.

If you go for the dive, remember these concepts. Dive with your racquet well extended and in a jabbing motion since you usually will have no prep or follow through while you are flying through the air (unless you are Ruben Gonzalez). Chances are that you will have to hit a ceiling ball or a conservative pass to stay competitive in the rally. Use your free hand and soft body parts to pad your landing. Keep your back arched to keep your head up and your knees clear of your landing. Landing in a slide will disperse the impact but don't dive or slide into a wall. You must return to your feet and good position in a fraction of an instant.

Don't dive if you simply give your opponent a plum when you do, or if your being on the floor causes an avoidable hinder. Remember, a hinder from your being on the floor is always an avoidable, never a play over. If you find yourself diving or attempting to dive all the time, better rethink your strategy and plan for some unavoidable injuries.

Woody Clouse IRT #15

Entree

I get really frustrated with opponents that constantly call hinders when the ball is down, or those that plant themselves in center court forcing me to hit a bad shot or risk hitting them. How can I get the hinder situation under control?

Basically, there are three types of potential hinders. The first occurs when one player is at risk of getting hit with his opponent's racquet. The second occurs when one player is at risk of getting hit with the ball. The third is when one player keeps the other player from getting to the ball. How you should deal with these and with your opponent's attitude depends on the situation. By that I mean whether it is a friendly game when you may cut one another more slack, or a tournament situation between evenly matched, accomplished players that requires more strict rule enforcement.

It is always the responsibility of your opponent to give you room for a reasonable prep, swing, and follow through on each shot. If he does not, it is his hinder. If you encounter opponents time and again who do not, check with a coach or teacher to see if you have an inappropriately wide swing. In the end, if your opponent is at risk of getting hit with your racquet, you should always hold up, no matter the situation. There is no reason to ever hit your opponent with a racquet if you can prevent it, even if it is his own fault. That means even if it costs you a shot. That point would never be worth the damage it would inflict.

Players should clear just enough to allow an opponent a clear down-the-line or cross-court shot. You needn't give up any more room than that. If doing that causes you to give up too much ground, your shots are coming too far off the side walls. Usually at B & C levels in a tournament, if you hold up, the referee will give you the play over hinder. If you take the shot, the referee will probably assume that you want the shot,

good or bad. In higher levels, the referee will probably want you to take the shot and let him determine if you were hindered. In either case, you may hold up a free hand to show the referee that you couldn't take your best offensive opportunity because of the risk of hitting your opponent.

It is always a judgement call as to whether you would have gotten a given ball if your opponent is in your path. If the ball is clearly down or clearly passed, there is no hinder. That becomes an extremely tough call to make with the getting ability of the IRT pros. To clear for the other player, you must give him the straightest path to the most likely position he will play the ball. There is no need to clear enough for him to chase the ball through its entire path.

Dave Sable, Chief IRT official

Dessert

If my opponent hits the ball hard enough to go to the back wall during a rally, then travel with enough momentum to hit the front wall after only one bounce, can I still play it, or do I have to get it before it hits the front wall?

No matter if it does hit the front wall, if it has only bounced once, it's still in play.

Dave Sable, Chief IRT official



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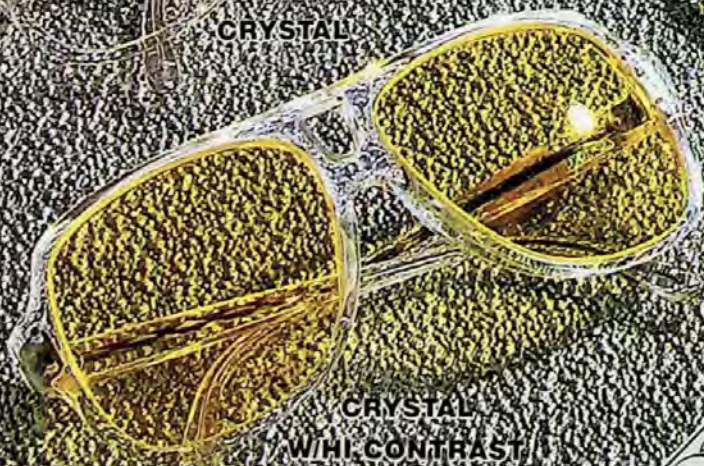
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