

RACQUETBALL

RACQUETBALL

ILLUSTRATED

DECEMBER 1981
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**HOGAN BEATS
PECK IN \$10,000
CHALLENGE**

**How Hogan Prepares
For A Tournament**

**How To Perfect
PUSH SHOTS**

**1981 Holiday
Gear Accessory Guide**

**FICTION:
Excerpt From A
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Cover photo by David M. King



Professionalism

The fact that Marty Hogan played Dave Peck in a winner-take-all match is not noteworthy in itself. But the fact it could command a purse of \$10,000 and sell out at up to \$100 a seat is proof that racquetball is slowly becoming recognized as a professional spectator sport.

Racquetball has been accepted as a participant sport, and for the most part that is where it will stay. But there are a lot of people out there trying to raise it one level higher, and get the masses—instead of just relatives—interested in watching it.

One way of doing this is by having "special events" such as the Hogan-Peck challenge. However, racquetball must be careful it does not fall into the pit that pro tennis created. In those so-called winner-take-all tennis challenge matches with Jimmy Connors, Connors' opponent was taking home almost as much as Connors. The sport of tennis didn't suffer but the challenge match concept lost its credibility.

If challenge matches are not overdone—Hogan meeting the bum of the region every other Thursday—then the public can look forward to seeing more of these high-drama affairs in the future.

In addition to these matches, there are other things being done to try to raise the level of the game. Take the new men's pro tour format, for example.

Granted, there is a terrible injustice with the new invitational format locking out some of the better players. But aside from that, the pro tour is now a more professional package.

First of all, the pro tourney will not coincide with the amateur events. The amateur tourney will be held one week and the pros the following week. It always baffled me why this separation wasn't made sooner. Putting amateur tourneys in the middle of a pro event creates an amateur atmosphere regardless of how many kill shots Marty Hogan hits. Amateur players would be running around the club asking for yogurt and bananas and their brothers and sisters would be running along the hallways trying to find which court their match would be played on. It was pure minor league.

Don't get me wrong. Amateur tourneys are needed. The amateurs today are the top pros tomorrow. But the tourneys should not be held at the same time as the pros. Let the pros have the place to themselves. If racquetball is to attain a professional level, it must be played in a professional atmosphere.

Another change in the pro format is in scoring. The men will be playing three out of five games to 11. The women started an 11-point format last year. Games to 21 were too boring at times. If television is to get interested in the sport, an 11-point game offers more opportunities for closer games and commercials, not necessarily in that order.

Professional racquetball has been on cable television often and one event was even syndicated last year. But it hasn't hit network yet. That, however, may change in 1982.

Negotiations are underway with Madison Square Garden to hold next year's Catalina Championships and the DP Leach Nationals at either the Garden or the nearby Felt Forum in New York City. The Garden will help finance the needed portable glass court and if it gets in the Garden, chances are it will be picked up by national television.

As we've said before, racquetball's ultimate transformation from minor league status to major league status will happen when the pro game moves out of the club and into the arena.

Ben Kalb

Ben Kalb

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Ray Rickles and Company
FLORIDA: P.O. Box 402008, Miami Beach, Florida 33140 (305) 532-7301
GEORGIA: 3116 Maple Drive, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia 30305 (404) 237-7432

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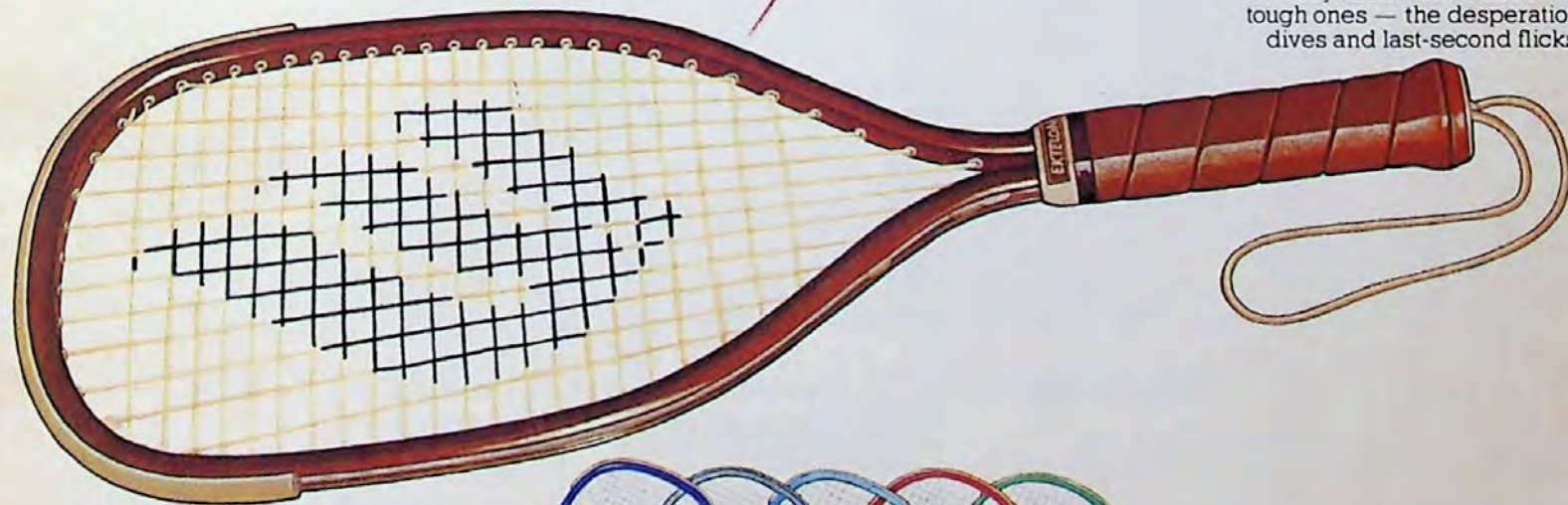
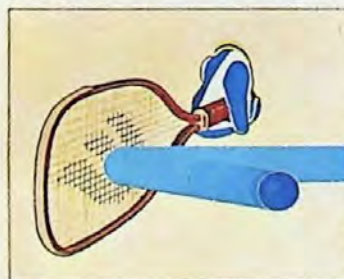


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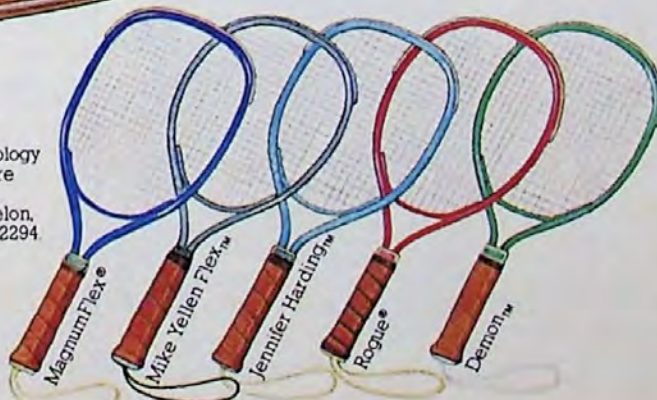
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Critical Writing

I just read the September issue of *Racquetball Illustrated* and want to congratulate you on the article about the definitions of the pro and amateur as well as the refing article, the athletic drink article and others.

The problem with the other national racquetball magazines is they rarely offer anything other than acclaim of the game and players. Good, critical writing and observation is important to the health of any organism, including a sport and a publication.

Richard Bruns
Napa, Calif.

The Backhand

My wife and I play racquetball regularly with each other and in challenge matches against others. She is a pretty good player with a good understanding of the various strategies of the game. Her weakness is her backhand. She is only 5-feet-1 and weighs 97 pounds. What can be done to strengthen her backhand?

Dave Fernandes
Steubenville, Ohio

Editor's note: We recommend you read detailed instruction articles on the backhand in the following back issues: November 1979, January 1980, or May 1981. We also have had articles on the advantages of being a short player (January 1980, November 1981).

Ball Guide

The one issue I look forward to reading more than any other you put out is your Ball Guide issue.

It is always interesting to me what the pros think is the best ball out there. I think most players play with any racquetball they can get their hands on but it is still interesting to see other people's preferences.

I was disappointed in one thing, however. Last year you ranked the balls first to last. This year you only ranked the top three. I would still be interested in knowing which racquetball the pros considered the worst.

Frank Melton
Brooklyn, N.Y.

October Issue

Your October issue was the most interesting I have read in the five months I have bought your magazine.

The stories on the Ball Guide, the new pro tour and the elbow injuries kept my attention and the instruction articles on height advantages and controlling the tempo of your swing were informative.

William Billingsley
Milwaukee, Wisc.

Pre-Match Sex

Wasn't it Dave Peck who said that his game starts with a "psych up." How, then, can he have sex up to 15 minutes before his match and expect to win?

Eileen Lukes
Rockford, Ill.

Realism

Great story and photos on Jay Jones' arm operation in your October issue.

Most other magazines tend to show us illustrations when it comes to a story on such an operation. I was surprised but pleased that you decided to show us pictures from the actual operation.

Some people will think they are too gory but to me nothing is better than realism. If anything will get young players to think twice about overplaying, it will be those photos.

Donna Braxton
Philadelphia, Pa.

Two Courts

Thank you for the terrific article. The "Tale of Two Courts" is extremely flattering coverage and I am proud to be associated with your magazine. Not only is the article well written, but it's accurate. What more could I ask?

I have to admit I wasn't familiar with your publication until March because it's not available at my club and my traveling only took on a national dimension recently. However, having read every issue since then, I can honestly say it far surpasses the other racquetball publications. The articles are diverse, informative, interesting, and of professional quality. Keep up the good work.

Caryn McKinney
Atlanta, Ga.

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PLAYERS



(Above) The *Hill Street Blues* cast showed up in force at the two-day celebrity event. Players included Steve Bochco, executive producer, and actors Ed Marinaro, Betty Thomas, Bruce Wertz and Jim Sikking (with pipe).

(Right) Actor-comedian Jimmy Walker gives a few racquetball pointers to former *Playboy* Playmate Lisa Welch. Walker's team took first place in the third annual Sports Connection tournament for the benefit of cancer research.



Photos by Roman Salicki and Craig Grimes



Actor Patrick Wayne, son of the late John Wayne, says hello to actress Persis Khambatta.

Television and movie celebrities teamed with over 200 amateur players to participate in the third annual Sports Connection tournament in Santa Monica, Calif. for the benefit of cancer research.

The event raised over \$12,000 to benefit the Committee To Cure Cancer Through Immunization (CCCI) in support of the John Wayne Cancer Clinic at UCLA.

Results:

First place: Jimmy Walker's team (Saul Abravia, Jack Howard, Larry Levin, Jimmy Walker, Carol Freed).

Second place: Lou Ferrigno's team (Don Saltzman, Fred Bush, Steve Yankelowitz, Les Senzon, Debbie Markowitz).

Third place: *Hill Street Blues* (Ed Marinaro, Bruce Weitz, Steve Bochco, Ben Kalb, Jim Sikking).

Fourth place: Dick Van Patten's team (Bob Hensley, Bob Schumacher, Bob Trinkeller, Dick Van Patten, Tina Rosenfeld).

Consolation: Whittier Police Dept. (John Young, Gary Hancock, Dave Carlisle, Chuck Ketelsleger, Jeff Morgan).



Donna Dixon (*Bosom Buddies*).



Sports Connection president Mike Talla and vice president Nanette Pattee with Lou Ferrigno.



Number two meets number two: Touring racquetball pro Lynn Adams, who played an exhibition match at the tournament, greets Lou Ferrigno (*Incredible Hulk*). Adams is ranked number two in the world. Ferrigno was the non-playing captain of the team that finished in second place.



Actress Sydne Rome.



Actress Melinda Fee (*Days of Our Lives*).



Showing off its third place trophies was the *Hill Street Blues* team of Ed Marinaro, Steve Bochco, Ben Kalb, Bruce Weitz and Jim Sikking. There were 48 teams entered in the competition.



Donna Dixon (*Bosom Buddies*) flanked by Rod McCarey (*Harper Valley PTA*) and veteran actor Tony LoBianco.



Dick Van Patten (*Eight Is Enough*).



Danielle Brisebois (*Archie Bunker's Place*) and Jimmy McNichol.



Marion Ross (*Happy Days*) with actor-comedian Jeff Altman.

THE \$10,000 CHALLENGE



Photos by David M. King

Marty Hogan (left) and Dave Peck are greeted by tennis star Billie Jean King prior to \$10,000 winner-take-all match in Long Beach, Calif. Hogan beat Peck in five games.

By Ben Kalb

When four-time national champion Marty Hogan was asked why he wanted to get involved in these winner-take-all challenge matches, aside from the additional money he could make, he said, "I'm going to do for racquetball the same thing (Jimmy) Connors did for tennis."

Hogan was referring to the national recognition that could come from highly publicized winner-take-all confrontations. That is something he can help shape and control. What he can't control is the quality of his opponents' play. With Hogan, you are likely to see some excellent racquetball. With Hogan's opponents, you never know what you are likely to see.

Such was the case at the Long Beach (Calif.) Athletic Club when Hogan and third-ranked Dave Peck battled it out for \$10,000 in the first of what pro racquetball hopes will be an on-going concept. Hogan won the match, 8-11, 11-8, 7-11, 11-4, 11-2, with the last game anything but a grand finale. If it wasn't the

Hogan beats Peck as winner-takes-all format makes it debut in pro racquetball.

worst game Peck has ever played, it had to rank somewhere in the bottom 10.

The Hogan-Peck challenge was hatched from the efforts of racquetball official Scotty Deeds, who decided he wanted to see something exciting to help celebrate his 59th birthday. "Everybody was expecting Hogan to face Peck in the finals of the Nationals," said Deeds. "When that didn't work out, we figured this would be a natural."

Deeds asked the Long Beach Athletic Club to put up \$5,000 and then got a commitment from DP Leach—Hogan's sponsor—to put up the other half of the purse. The winner would get the whole pot. The loser would get expenses and a thank you.

"I wouldn't have done it for three or four grand," said Hogan prior to the match. "But

\$10,000 is worth it for me. This could be the thing of the future.

"To beat Marty Hogan is to beat the number one player in the world. I created the standard in racquetball. If Dave should beat me, or at least make it close, it would create interest in more matches."

Peck agreed. "If I beat Hogan, I know I'm guaranteed at least two more winner-take-all matches. This could be a lucrative hobby."

Peck had not played a tournament since he was upset in the second round of the Nationals. He spent the summer giving camps and clinics. "I'm hungry to play him (Hogan). He is always ripe to lose at the beginning of the season."

Hogan also took the summer off from tournament competition but had played a "tune up" in Michigan the week prior to the challenge match and lost to Ben Koltun in the quarterfinals. "I hope I'm ready for this. I certainly hope I'm over the summer blues," said Hogan in a statement which, for perhaps the first time, reflected less than 100 percent confidence.

As it turned out, he didn't even need to be



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THE \$10,000 CHALLENGE

confident. Peck virtually gave Hogan the money.

The match drew a standing-room crowd of about 300 people, some of whom paid as much as \$100 for back wall seats. The match had been sold out a couple of days prior to the event, which prevented a walk-up crowd from coming down on the spur of the moment to buy tickets. "One guy offered to pay \$500 for two tickets," said a spokesman for the club. "But we had no tickets to sell him."

Interest was high in the match thanks partially to the write-up columnist Jim Murray gave Hogan in the *Los Angeles Times* and the television and radio coverage the week of the event. In fact, one could feel the so-called electricity in the audience as the two players took the court, moreso than even prior to the finals of the last three Nationals.

As expected, the first game was not high quality racquetball. The summer layoff showed. Hogan led 4-0 but Peck tied him at 5-5. The two were also knotted at 8-8 before Peck scored the last three points. "I blew it," said Hogan.

Peck led 2-1 in the second game before Hogan took a 6-3 advantage. Peck scored the next three points to even things up. The two were also tied at 8-8 but this time Hogan scored the final three points to win it.



Peck was off his feet and ready for action in the first three games against Hogan. But it was a different story in the final two.

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THE \$10,000 CHALLENGE



"I played at a steady level," said Hogan. "Peck played up and down."



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THE \$10,000 CHALLENGE

Peck broke a 6-6 tie in the third game and outscored Hogan 5-1 the rest of the way to win.

Leading two games to one, one would figure Peck to bear down in the next game. Everybody knew Hogan would try to raise his level of play, so it would naturally follow that Peck would raise his game too. He didn't. In fact, Peck's game took a vacation. It was almost as if Peck started thinking about everything but playing racquetball.

Hogan drove out to an 8-0 lead in the fourth game. Peck came back to 10-4 before Hogan put it away.

The decider was anything but suspenseful. Peck was never in it. He played too tight, never hitting a solid shot. Hogan led 6-0 on a backhand passing shot, a forehand pinch and four of Peck's skips.

Peck scored two on a Hogan skip and a backhand wide angle pass before Hogan ran it out. The final points came on two kills and three more skips. Of the 11 points, Peck skipped seven in.

"I was playing dumb," said Peck. "I went back to my old habit of thinking about anything but racquetball. I made stupid mistakes. Anytime I skip a ball that many times, it makes me sick."

Hogan admitted he was surprised at Peck's play in the last two games. "I couldn't believe it," says Hogan. "I expected to kill myself on every point. But those are the types of matches a player loves to win. Basically you let the other guy beat himself."

"In all the times I've played him, this was the only time I've ever seen him actually afraid to hit the ball. He was very tentative, nervous. He couldn't even hit through the ball. Maybe he was intimidated. It's scary when you're playing for \$10,000."

Continued





Although there were some shots of brilliance in the match, neither Hogan nor Peck thought their playing was worth \$10,000. "I've seen him play better," said Peck. "Of course, this is just the start of the season."

"I played at a steady level the whole match," said Hogan. "Peck played up and down."

Because of the interest the challenge match created, more matches are expected to take place in 1982. A lot depends on who does well during this season's pro tour, but chances are Mike Yellen will get the next shot at Hogan.

AND WHAT'S MORE: Craig McCoy and Laura Martino teamed up to defeat Don Thomas and Kippi Bishop in an exhibition mixed doubles match prior to the Hogan-Peck battle. Teams composed of members of the press and celebrities played a team racquetball match the day prior to the shoot-out. Hogan's team defeated Peck's team, 69-66. Peck and Martino defeated Hogan and Bishop in a mixed doubles match as part of the program. Among the celebrities playing were Bruce Weitz and Ed Marinaro of *Hill Street Blues*. In attendance at the Hogan-Peck match were tennis star Billie Jean King and her husband Larry.



After beating Peck, Hogan is expected to be challenged next by Mike Yellen. Yellen is ranked number two.



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"I've only got time for one game, then I'm due over the East Coast."

How To Prepare For A Big Tournament

By Marty Hogan

People have short memories. If I lose the Nationals, no one will remember my record, even if I win every pro stop during a season. The money is unimportant. I want the recognition as the best player in the world. So, I designed a special training program for the big tournament—The Nationals. The details of my program encompass seven fundamental principles which can be used for designing a program for any situation.

Timing

I begin my intensive training about six weeks before the Nationals. If I start too soon, my intensity will burn out before the end of the tournament. If I start too late, I won't reach my target in terms of physical skills and mental preparedness. I want to peak at the Nationals, not before or after.

Overloading

I spend the first three weeks overloading my whole physical and mental system. It's three weeks of pure hell which I endure because it ultimately produces the mental and physical toughness necessary to win the Nationals.

I get up at 7 o'clock every morning. I eat a medium-sized breakfast but nothing special. Between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m., I head to a club where I play for six hours interrupted only for a lunch break. That's right. Six hours per day, five days per week. I keep this schedule up for three straight weeks. It doesn't matter who I play, it's the on-court time that's important.

The first week is almost unbearable. After each workout, I eat dinner and then collapse. The torture goes on for five or six days. But surprisingly enough, my body adapts to the workload, and I get accustomed to the regimen.

However, one word of caution. This level of intensity is based on early season workouts of two or three hours of play per day. I've built up a conditioning base that allows me to double my workout intensity just for the Nationals. You'll have to scale down your workout intensity relative to the base you've developed. If you don't, you're open to injury to your skeletal and central nervous systems.

This overload technique is similar to using the overload principle found in weight lifting. To build muscle strength in minimum time, additional weights must be added whenever a muscle adapts to a given weight. By doubling my workout intensity prior to the Nationals, I'm overloading my system in hopes of



reaching the next physical plateau. After the first week, my body adapts to the workout intensity just like a weight lifter's muscle adapts to increased weight.

Filling The Reservoir

The intensity of the first three weeks has a second purpose: building up strength in reserve which can then be drawn upon in a real tough match. The workouts have to be longer, harder, and tougher than any match ever will be. That way, if I fall behind in a match, I can still increase the tempo of play by drawing on my reserve strength.

The strength reservoir gives me added confidence. Not only confidence from knowing that I can draw from the well, but confidence that I endured three weeks of workouts which are tougher than any other player is willing to endure. This means that anytime someone else tries to apply some pressure, I can, in turn, apply even more pressure.

Even though in the first three weeks I've reached the next strength plateau, my energy reserves are pretty low. Three weeks of strenuous workouts has broken down muscle tissue which hasn't had a chance to completely rebuild and has burned up almost all my energy reserves. The last three weeks are designed to do this rebuilding and at the same time build up my energy reserves.

In weeks four and five, I cut back to four hours of playing per day, five days per week, and in the sixth week, I cut down to two hours of playing per day. The cutback allows energy which would normally be burnt up to be channeled into reserve. By the end of six weeks, the cutback is translated into increased workout intensity for shorter durations because I have greater energy and endurance.

Although I do not use carbohydrate loading, the energy buildup from my training program is similar to the effects some people get from carbohydrate loading. Carbohydrate loading begins by exercising four or five days at an above normal activity level while eating below normal amounts of carbohydrates. This combination is intended to deplete the body of glycogen, the substance which the body uses to generate quick energy. Then, by switching to exercising at a normal activity level while eating above normal amounts of carbohydrates, the body stores above normal levels of glycogen which then forms the energy reserves.

Shot Flexibility

While the first three weeks are focused on breaking through a physical barrier, the last three weeks are aimed at breaking through the mental barrier. The attack begins by improving my shot flexibility.

Shot flexibility is a measure of the range of shots which can be hit from a given position. I want to be able to hit as many different shots from a given position as I can. The closer I come to attaining that goal, the greater my deception will be.

In order to obtain shot flexibility, you must be relaxed and hit with a fluid, natural swing. You have to hit shots over and over again until the timing is down. That's why I emphasize swinging all out on shots without worrying about the score when practicing. That's also why I play long hours rather than spending endless hours hitting alone. When I hit alone, I'm not under the same pressure to time my shots, and I don't get the same variety of situations that I get when I play someone else. These extra situations under playing conditions toughens muscles that would otherwise go undeveloped when practicing alone.

Maximum flexibility means that I can shoot down the wall, shoot cross-court, drive either direction, hit a pinch, or hit a reverse pinch all from the same court position. Substantial wrist strength makes it possible to hit all these shots with almost the same swing.

Specificity

Note that so far I haven't mentioned anything but playing racquetball as part of my intensive training program. I do practice shots alone on the court but not very much this late in the season. It's usually too late too worry about a kink in a shot that can't be solved by playing. I also run about five miles at the end of each day.

But I don't like weight lift or run agility courses or sprints. Again, it's too late; that should have been done at the beginning of the season. I do occasionally indulge in some pushups and situps but probably more out of habit than anything else.

In short, I practice racquetball primarily by playing racquetball and exclude anything that is not specifically related to playing racquetball. Although I do include activities such as running in my late-season workouts, I do so more for relaxation.

Focus

The final weeks of preparation are aimed at fine honing my aggressiveness, shot making, and concentration. By cutting back on the workout durations, I channel the same energy level into a short time period. Having stretched my shot range to its maximum extension in the first three or four weeks, I now focus my attention on refining my bread and butter shots—the forehand pinch from the deep left corner or my backhand kill off a deep ceiling ball.

By the end of the sixth week, I have developed a true hatred for playing racquetball which has been built up by the long court hours. This hatred manifests itself as a growing, controlled anger directed toward each shot. By this point, I am only interested in winning each point in the quickest possible way. I now literally attack the ball with full power at every possible opportunity. I am no longer interested in developing more shot flexibility or power but, rather, putting them to their greatest use.

I have often been accused of lackadaisical play in which I seem to toy with my opponents. Those claims are sometimes justified during the season. It's tough to concentrate 365 days out of a year without a challenge. But in the Nationals, no one gets a free ride. If I can win 21-0, I will because I have a totally different state of mind in the Nationals than in all the other tournaments.

During these six weeks before the Nationals, I narrow my focus on only one goal. Even everyday pleasures and vices are foregone during the quest. The discipline required to endure the six-week training program carries over into tournament week.

Food And Rest

So far I've led you to believe that I spend every waking hour playing racquetball, but adequate rest is as important as all the other elements. Without proper rest you cannot obtain the maximum benefit out of each training day and therefore you don't play at your maximum potential at the end of the training period.

After each day's workout, I forget about racquetball, and on weekends I engage in activities which are non-competitive. Your body must be given time to recover. This recovery will depend on your base. It may take a whole season or even years to build up a base where you can even play two hours a day, three or four times per week. Successive applications of overload and rest will increase your recovery periods.

I have no recommendations on the subject of food because I'm an occasional junk food addict (Ding Dongs are a favorite). But at some point in the future, age may change my habits. I have no hard vices: I don't drink, smoke, and I don't take drugs.

Conclusion

This has been a glimpse at intensive racquetball training. The general principles can be applied to training for any event.

1. Time the training period for adequate overload and recovery.
2. Use the overload principle to reach the next physical plateau in minimum time.
3. Follow the overload period with a workout cutback to build up energy reserves.
4. Workouts should aim at making demands tougher than those of real matches.
5. Work on shot flexibility and timing by playing.
6. Play to improve.
7. Get adequate rest relative to your conditioning and workout intensity.

It would be great if we all had the time and energy to use this program for every tournament. Unfortunately, we don't; even I can only endure such a program once a year. But the basic principles can be used as guidelines to tailor individual programs. Those with dreams of a national title, will see that the price of success is high.

DECEPTIVE SERVES

By Fran Davis

Serves are one of the most important shots in the game because you are in the driver's seat. You make all the first moves. You can dictate to your opponent what you want him or her to do with the return. When you can anticipate the opponent's return, then you can get in the proper position and hit a winner for the point.

When you get into the service box, you have one thing in mind—to score a point. Obviously, you cannot score many points if you don't serve well. You basically want your serve to surprise your opponent. Keep your opponent guessing. Which side is she/he going to serve to? What serve will she/he give me now? Once you have your opponent thinking, confused or apprehensive, you have won half the battle. This is where deception comes in. You want to learn to produce a good deceptive serve. Mix up your serves. Never serve the same serve over and over again. Do not give your opponent the opportunity to read your serve. Catch them off guard.

The most important elements of the deceptive serve are: ball position, feet position, shoulder position and racquet face position. You want to keep as many of these elements consistent so that all the serves appear the same to your opponent even though they may all be different.

Body Position

Facing right side wall,

1. Drives and hard Zs crouched in a serving position.

2. Lobs and high soft Zs more in an upright serving position.

Ball Position

Drop the ball in line with your shoulders an arm's distance from your body to the extreme left side of body.

Key - drop the ball in the same spot all the time regardless of which type of serve or to what side.

Feet Position

Start with your left foot in front of your right foot or vice versa, whichever feels more comfortable to you.

1. Left foot in front of right foot: Step slightly back with right foot and toward the front wall with the left foot a little further than shoulder width apart.

2. Right foot above left foot: Bring the right foot out and behind the left foot and now you are in the same exact position as in step 1.

This approach is used to hide the ball for a longer period of time. Your body is acting as a shield and covers the ball completely.

Key - your feet should remain in the same position all the time regardless of which type of serve you use or to what side you serve.

Shoulder Position

Your shoulder position is one of the elements that changes slightly for each serve:

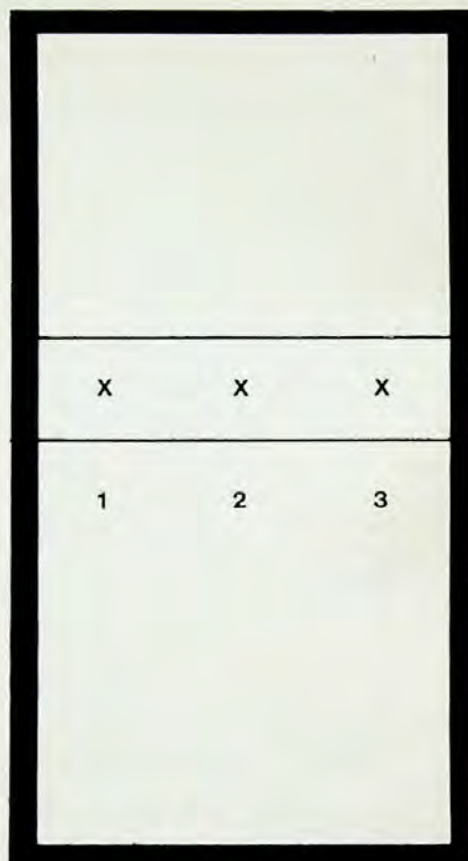
1. A serve to the right or forehand side requires your shoulders to be slightly open when contact is made with the ball. Shoulders are facing the right front corner.
2. A serve to the left or backhand side requires your shoulders to be square with the front wall when contact is made with the ball.
3. A Z serve to the forehand side requires your shoulders to be slightly closed when contact is made with the ball. Shoulders are facing the left front corner.

Racquet Position

The face of your racquet is dictated by the path of your shoulders. As a result, when your shoulders are slightly open, so is your racquet face. When your shoulders are square with the front wall, so is your racquet face.

To develop deceptive serves you must be aware of and learn all the key elements: body, ball, feet, shoulder and racquet position. By keeping your ball position and foot position the same you only have to vary the shoulder or racquet position. Now you have your opponent confused.

You have three positions available from which to serve. Never stand in the same position repeatedly. The better players move around the service box, keeping in mind the element of surprise. How many of you can remember playing someone who never left one position for the entire game or match?



Fran Davis says a server has three different positions from which to serve, and that a player should never stand in the same position repeatedly.

How many of you can recall your opponent service the same high lob to the backhand side for the entire game or match? This is not uncommon. Once again, you must vary your position in the service box to keep your deceptive serve working for you.

I have learned to serve from all areas of the service box. The best position in the box for a right-handed server is position three. It is the most offensive position because your body shields the ball quite well.

I have also learned to serve four or five different serves from one position. This is the key. Your opponent will be in the ready position expecting one type of serve and you fool him or her by producing another. Your opponent will be baffled. Continue this for four or five serves and your opponent will be frustrated. Continue this for a game and your opponent will lose concentration. Once your opponent loses concentration you have won the battle.

Here's one last trick: The walking serve. Take a few extra steps and walk into your serve and you may totally throw off your opponent.



FOREHAND-BACKHAND DRILLS

By Jean Sauser and Arthur Shay

Editor's note: This is reprinted from Beginning Racquetball Drills by Jean Sauser and Arthur Shay, Contemporary Books, Inc., Chicago, Ill., 1981.

Forehand Drop And Hit Drill

OBJECTIVE: To teach you the correct forehand stroke and to help provide an easy warm up before a game. Whether practiced immediately before a game or just as a drill on your own time, this drill helps develop the basic forehand sidearm stroke, aids serving ability (since the forehand is most commonly used in the serve), and improves your ability to control the ball and hence the game.

Steps:

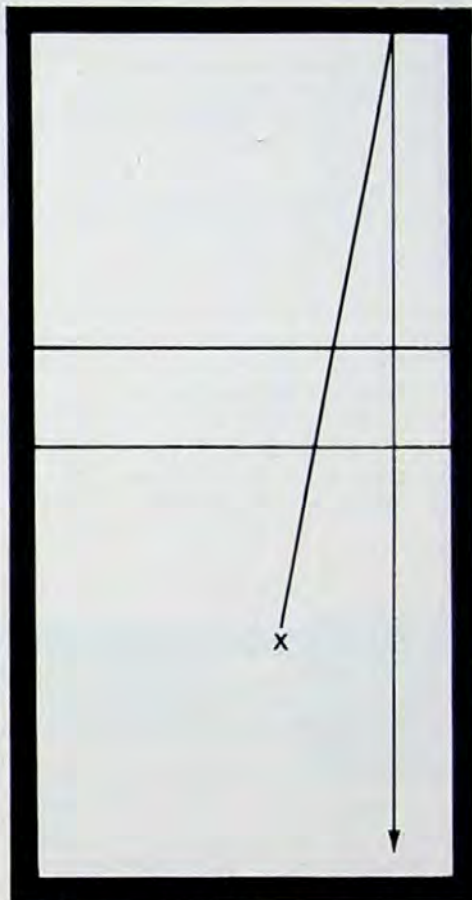
1. Position yourself so that you are facing your forehand side wall. Your toes are pointing directly to your forehand side wall (Racquetball is a sideways game. Most shots are made facing one side wall or the other). Your racquet is back in the ready position. You are standing straight, balanced on the balls of your feet, not rigid.

2. Hold the ball in your nonracquet hand (your off hand), slightly below waist level. The ball should be in the palm of your hand. Point that hand, with a fully extended but not rigid arm, to a slightly downhill position.

3. Allow the ball to roll off your fingertips, away from and in front of your body. Do not start your stroke until you hear the ball bounce! Yes, hear. This will allow you to contact the ball at a lower point and drive it into the front wall quite low. Low is where the points are.

4. Step into the ball, bending the knees as you hit the ball with a flat racquet face, snapping your wrist at the moment you feel the racquet on the ball. This snapping of the wrist is a kind of whip motion that resembles the wrist snap of an infielder throwing to first base or the wrist motion a golfer imparts to the ball at the last moment. It develops in improving racquetball players, coming with the forehand and backhand. It imparts great power from the body through the wrist to the ball and explains why some skinny kids with thin arms can really hit the ball.

5. Drive the ball slightly to the right of your body so that the ball contacts the front wall first and rebounds back past you on a straight-line path close to the side wall.



In a forehand drop and hit drill the player should drive the ball to the right of his or her body so that it hits the wall and returns down the line.

SUMMARY: Fifty drop and hit down-the-line shots should warm up your forehand stroke for a game. You should do this drill before every game you play. The pros do it, moving all around the court as they drop the ball and hit it.

Always start your drop and hit drills standing straight up. As the ball drops, bend your legs. The legs are vital to this drill—as they are to most shots in racquetball.

Remember to drop—not bounce—the ball. By dropping the ball you force yourself into the proper bent-body position.

Don't drop the ball too close to yourself. If you do, you won't be able to control the flight of the ball down the line—that is, straight up and straight back down the wall. When you crowd the ball your wrist snap too often forces the ball into the front wall and right back at you, instead of passing you down to the wall.

Backhand Drop And Hit Drill

OBJECTIVE: To teach you the proper backhand stroke and provide an easy and productive pregame warm up. Because the backhand is a very unnatural stroke for most beginners, this drill becomes especially important. It should be practiced more than the forehand drop and hit drill to increase its proficiency relative to the forehand, which is usually strong.

Steps:

1. Position yourself directly across from your backhand side wall. Stand near the center of the court. Keep your racquet back, ready to swing.

2. Unlike the forehand swing, in the backhand your off hand is positioned underneath the hand with the racquet. This enables you to get your racquet up high before you start your stroke. The ball is held in the palm of the hand and the racquet is at waist level, pointed slightly upward.

3. As the ball rolls off your fingertips, twist your body slightly away from the ball and twist your wrist slightly. This gives you the aspect of a coiling snake, getting ready to strike instantly. You're just kind of winding up for the stroke.

4. After you hear the ball bounce, uncoil that racquet so that you contact the ball about knee high. Again, try to snap your wrist in the whip motion described in the forehand drill.

5. Drive the ball slightly to the left of your body so that it hits the front wall first and rebounds down the line just past you on the left. You may want to vary this shot from different court positions as your skill increases. For the time being, accurately moving the ball down the line just to the side of you, near the wall, will do fine.

SUMMARY: Fifty to 100 of these shots will put you in fine fettle for a match immediately afterward. They will also help you begin to use the generally difficult-for-beginners backhand stroke in your game. Here are some pointers:

Make sure you get the ball away from you so that you are forced to step onto your right foot as you hit the shot. This adds to the power with which you drive the ball. The more power you put into a shot, the harder it will be, in most cases, for your opponent to return it.

The ball must be dropped well in front of you so that you can position yourself behind the ball when you strike it. The trick is to keep the ball where you want it to go. Imprecision will put the ball onto the side wall (sometimes

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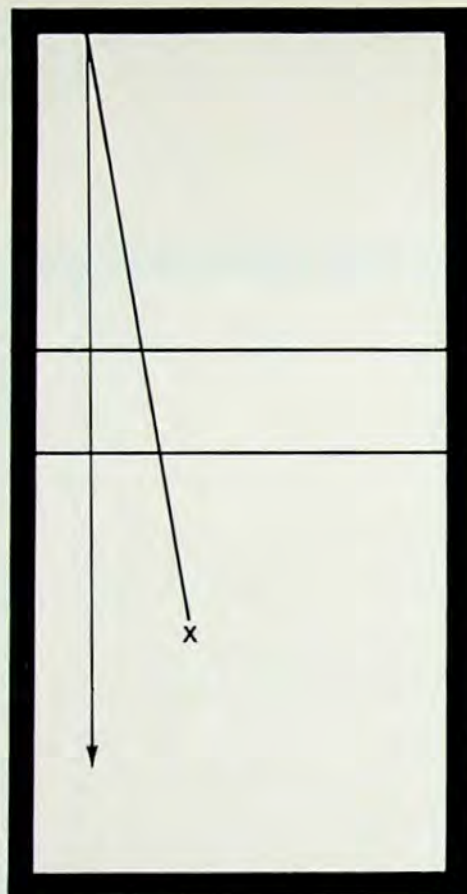
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INSTRUCTION



The backhand drill follows the same premise as the forehand. Jean Sauter recommends that you hit at least 50 shots in any given practice session.

a good thing) or onto the floor, which is always bad.

Keep the picture of that coiling and uncoiling snake in your mind before concentrating on the shot. Developing this snakelike, whipping wrist motion will vastly improve your developing game. The wrist motion is almost indescribable, but like the good golf shot or baseball hit, you feel it and then you go for that feeling again.

Forehand Off-The-Back-Wall Drill

OBJECTIVE: To aid you in developing back wall skills and to aid the further development of the sidearm forehand racquetball stroke.

Steps:

1. Position yourself right next to the back wall. Achieve this alignment by touching the back wall with your racquet. Stand five to six feet away from the forehand side wall. Toes point directly into the side wall; racquet is held back in a ready position.

2. With your hand toss the ball at medium speed into the back wall at waist level. The ball should then rebound off the back wall and bounce out in front of you. It is important to throw the ball slightly away from yourself so it can rebound out in front of you to that 11 o'clock position that was discussed in the

drop and hit drill for the forehand.

3. As the ball moves out and away from you off the back wall, shuffle with it until it drops below your waist. You must shuffle to keep your legs in proper alignment with the ball.

4. Allow the ball to drop to knee level and strike it, using a regular forehand sidearm stroke.

5. Hit the ball slightly to the right of your body to the front wall first so that it rebounds back down the line in front of you.

SUMMARY: Keep your eye on the ball. Practice shuffling. Remember that if you turn to run with the shot, your body will automatically rotate away from the ball and you will miss it.

Always toss the ball away from you in the back wall. This way the ball will rebound in such a manner as to give you enough room to step into the shot and hit the ball with force.

Backhand Off-The-Back-Wall Drill

OBJECTIVE: To help you develop the proper footwork involved in the execution of a backhand sidearm racquetball stroke. Also, this drill aids you in service return off the back wall. Because most beginners serve to each other's backhand, a beginner who develops confidence in waiting for high serves to come off the back wall on the backhand side becomes a tougher opponent and at the same time develops a precise backhand stroke.

Steps:

1. Position yourself to the back wall. Touch your racquet to the back wall when it is in the ready position to ensure that you are deep enough in the court. Thus, when you throw the ball, it will rebound out in front of you, enabling you to hit it.

Also, make sure you are in the center of the back wall, facing your backhand side wall. Toes are again pointing directly into the side wall.

2. With your off hand toss the ball at medium speed into the back wall at waist level. Throw the ball slightly away from yourself to enable room for your stroke. Because the backhand is hit with the shoulder leading, any ball that is not away from you will be missed totally or put directly into the ground.

3. Let the ball bounce past you as you shuffle with it.

4. Step into the shot, contacting the ball at knee level. Remember to drop your legs as the ball drops.

5. Stroke the ball slightly to the left of your body and into the front wall first so that it rebounds down the line in front of you.

SUMMARY: Let the ball get out in front of you. You will have to wait for what seems like forever before stepping into the shot and hitting it. After you've thrown the ball, give the wrist and the body a little twist toward the back wall. This will allow you to generate

more power due to the unwinding of your body's weight coming through your wrist into the ball.

Don't poke at the ball; stroke it. Always let the racquet unwind naturally into the ball. Be sure to step onto the right foot when hitting the ball. Most beginners are hesitant to put all their weight on their right foot when they hit a backhand shot. It feels awkward and is a motion that we rarely make in day-to-day living. If you practice stepping into your backhand, your stroke will become more balanced and precise.

Off-The-Front-Wall Drill

OBJECTIVE: Whether this is practiced with the forehand or the backhand, and it should be down with both strokes, the objective is to teach you how to set up your body just prior to hitting a ball coming directly off the front wall.

Steps:

1. Position yourself in the center of the court on the service line.
2. Face the side wall of the stroke on which you are working. Toes also point directly into that side wall. Legs are straight but relaxed, not rigid. Your racquet is held back.

3. With your off hand toss the ball high and lightly into the front wall first so that it will rebound and drop about two to three feet in front of you.

4. As the ball drops in front of you, shuffle forward and contact the ball at knee level off the front foot.

5. Drive the ball down the near side wall in a down-the-line angle.

SUMMARY: Never toss the ball unless your racquet is held back. Otherwise you will develop a windup swing that will cost you accuracy and, ultimately, points in a game.

If you find yourself too close to the ball, use a shuffling motion to get you away from the ball so that you can ultimately step into it and contact it off your lead foot, driving it with greater force and control into the front wall first.

Remember to bend your legs and step into the shot while the ball is dropping. As the ball drops, you must drop. If you drop down early to hit the ball, you will hit the ball back up again because the only momentum you can generate is upward. If you contact the ball with the downswing of your stroke and the dropping of your legs, you will hit the ball low and level into the front wall.



By throwing the ball against the front wall, you learn how to set up your body prior to the shot by moving to the ball.



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THE PINCH AND REVERSE PINCH

By Rich Wagner

One of the most effective offensive shots in racquetball is the pinch shot. Yet in amateur play, it is rare to see this fine weapon put into use.

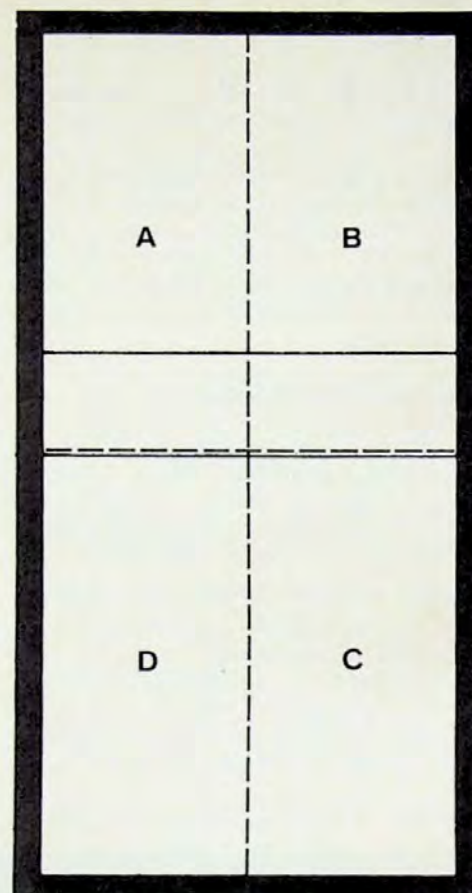
A pinch shot strikes the side wall and rebounds into the front wall. The ball should hit the side at a point fairly close to the front wall, two feet or closer. The ball should also be hit low enough to prevent the opponent from returning it. Ideally, you want a pinch to have the same result as a kill shot.

The importance of a pinch shot is easily understood once you learn how to read your

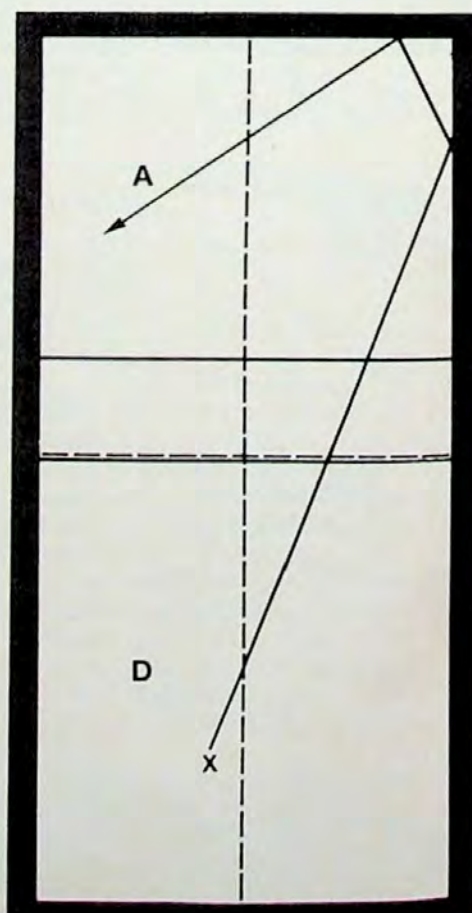
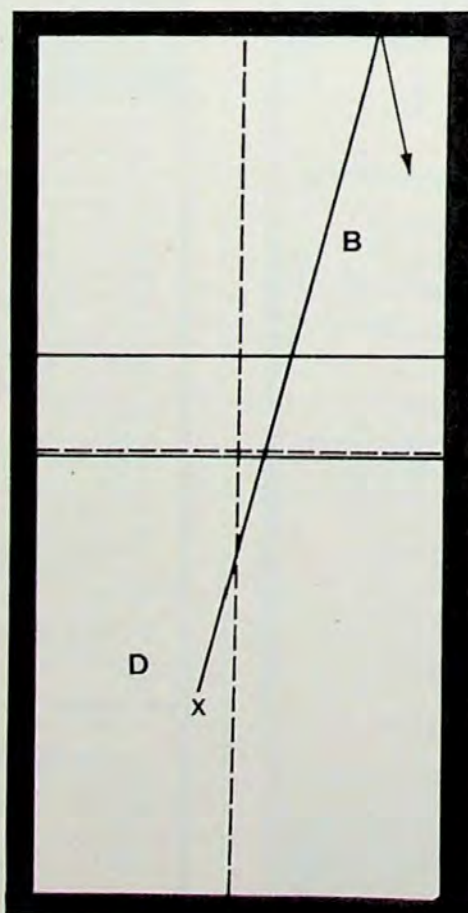
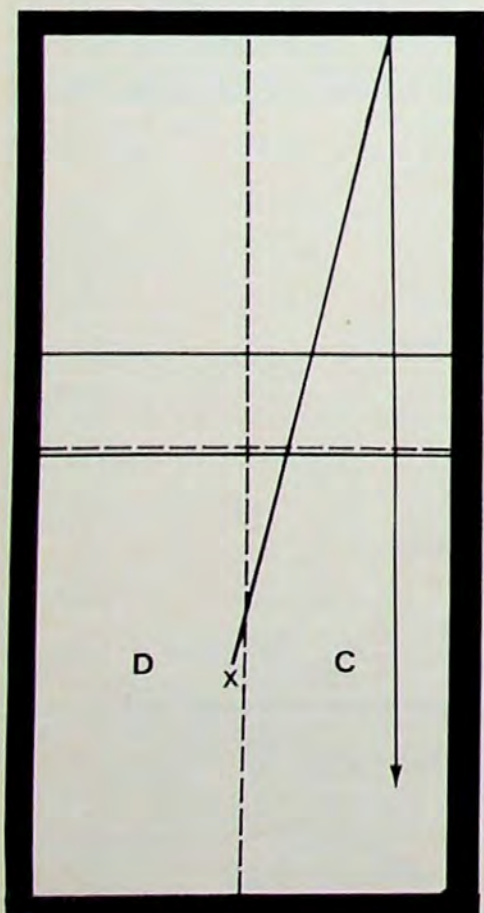
opponent's court coverage in relation to your choice of shots.

A racquetball court can be divided into four quadrants. Each quadrant is considered a separate coverage zone. An opponent can be maneuvered in and out of this area by varying the selection of shots. The front left zone is quadrant A. Quadrant B is the front right, C is the back right and D is the back left.

The average racquetball player hits 75 percent of his or her shots cross-court. If a player is righthanded, most of the forehand shots will go into quadrant D and most of the backhands will travel into quadrant C. But as a player becomes more advanced, other types of shots come into play. Instead of always hitting the ball cross-court, a player



Rich Wagner says a court is actually divided into four quadrants (right). A down-the-line pass will end up in quadrant C on a forehand (for righthanders), a kill will end up in quadrant B and a pinch will end up in quadrant A.



learns when to use down-the-line passes and kill shots.

When a righthander hits a down-the-line pass into quadrant C, the kill shot ends up in quadrant B. With a backhand, the same shot lands in quadrants D and A.

This brings us to the pinch shots. If a player has a setup from deep right center court (quadrant C), a cross-court pass will move the opponent toward quadrant D. A down-the-line pass will send the player to C, and a down-the-line kill to B. Only quadrant A remains. The pinch shot will get the opponent into A because the ball heads toward the side wall-front wall area of quadrant B and rebounds away into quadrant A.

When I first started working on the pinch, I would drop the ball and hit it a couple of hundred times a day. Eventually I would hit the ball off the front wall and then move to the ball and try to pinch it. But I didn't feel comfortable with it. I hadn't really mastered it.

With a little help from my coach, Carl Loveday, that changed. Loveday noticed my problem was with my stroke. My feet and racquet were positioned correctly, but on contact, I was pushing it, not hitting it. I was trying to guide the ball into the corner.

Now, after giving several clinics, I notice my students are making the same mistake. Love-

day told me to pretend the side wall is the front wall. The shot should be hitting the side wall as if it were a straight-in kill. Think of the side wall as the front wall and hit it.

The mechanics of the pinch shot are not difficult. When hitting down-the-line passes or kills, your feet should be parallel to the side wall, and the racquet should make contact with the ball in the middle of your body or a little further toward your back leg.

A successful pinch shot is achieved by turning your feet toward the right corner and letting the ball fall into the same hitting area as with the down-the-line shot. Be sure to aim for the corners.

If the shot was hit into the front wall or too far back along the side wall, you must adjust your feet.

Another important factor is to watch the ball. Most beginning players look up to see where the ball is going even before actual contact is made. This causes the shoulders to open too quickly. The ball will most likely hit the front wall first. Watch the ball and keep your head down until you have made contact.

Reverse Pinch

One variation of the pinch shot is the reverse pinch. A normal forehand pinch shot is hit on the same side of the court. A reverse pinch is basically a cross-court shot.

The normal pinch shot is used more often but most beginning and intermediate players use the reverse pinch shot because they have a tendency to hit most of their shots cross-court.

The reverse pinch shot is simple to hit. All one needs to remember is to hit the ball cross-court into the left side wall.

The basics are the same as with the normal pinch shot. Adjust your feet so that you are angled toward the left corner (for a right-handed player). Let the ball fall into the hitting zone. Then remember to think of the side wall as if it were the front wall, and hit it. The ball should hit the side wall less than two feet from the front wall.

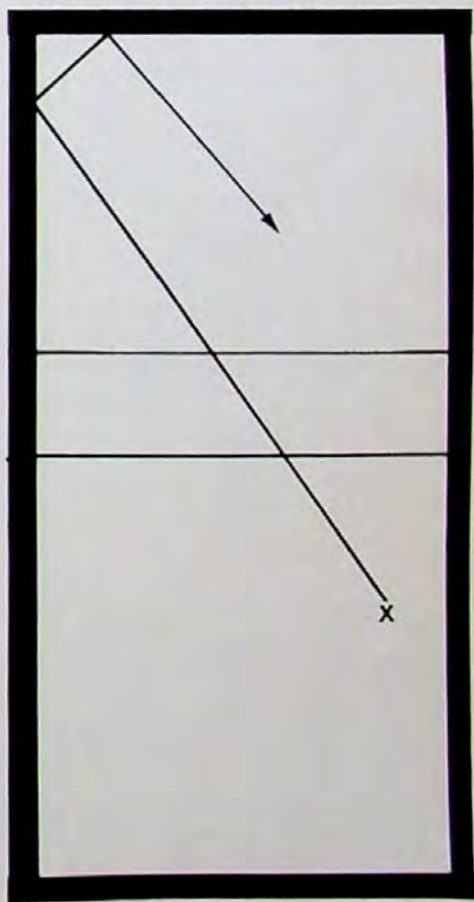
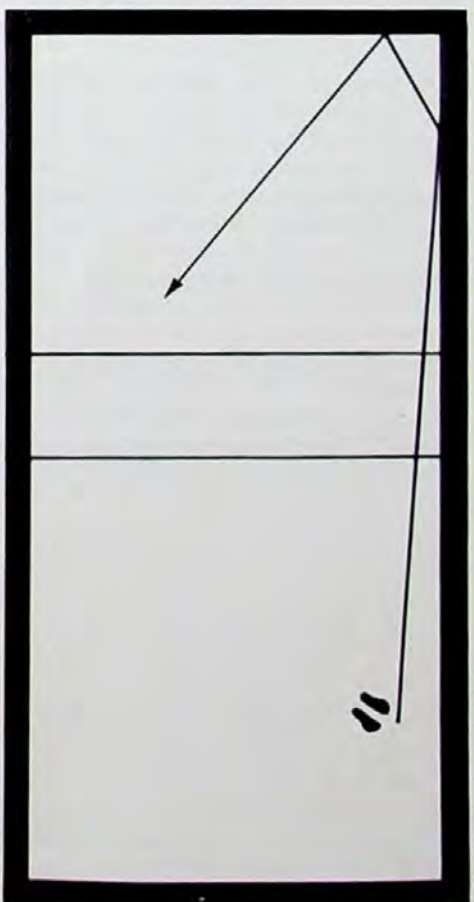
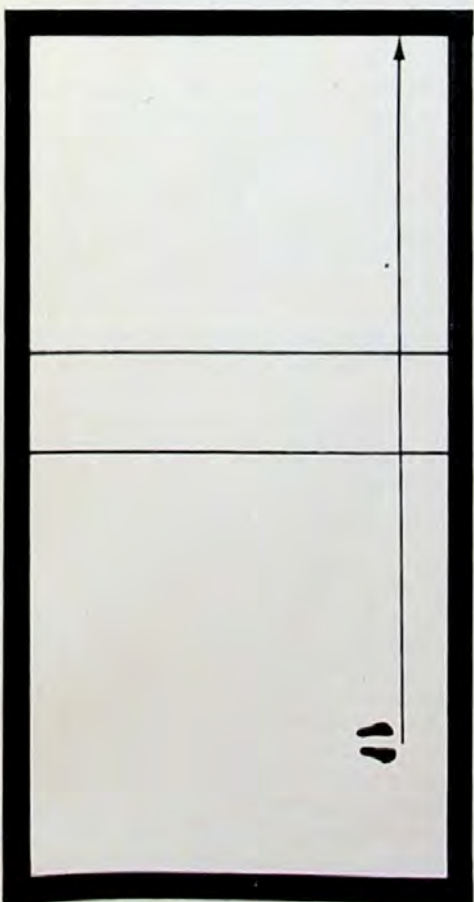
Here is one instance in which the reverse pinch shot is recommended. Let's say a player is fairly close to the left wall and is getting ready to hit a forehand setup. Three different shots can be used to move my opponent into quadrant D (or A if the opponent tries to cut it off). A cross-court pass will move the player into quadrant C. The reverse pinch shot will end up in quadrant B.

Many times an opponent will be anticipating a down-the-line shot, so even if your reverse pinch shot comes up high, the opponent will be caught off-guard and have to change the direction to get to it.



When you are hitting down-the-line passes, your feet should be parallel to the side wall. When you are hitting the pinch, turn your feet toward the right corner.

A reverse pinch is basically a cross-court shot. It is hit into the left-side wall and hits the front wall and rebounds away.



COURT REAL ESTATE— TRY THE BACK CORNERS FOR VALUE

By Mike Yellen

The analogy may be a bit unusual but think about it for a minute. Real estate executives always target specific land areas which they believe will help them achieve monetary goals. The same can be said about racquetball, where targeting certain areas of court "real estate" have proved time and time again to be rewarding.

What court areas am I talking about? The "high yield" back corners, of course. As a control-power player, I use the back corners frequently to frustrate my opponents.

Think of the back corners as commercial rather than residential property. You don't want to live there. You just want to control the land.

To me, maintaining back corner control means keeping control of center court, that seven-foot square behind the short line. What

you DO NOT want to do is let the ball pass through your center court position, because it may force you to give up center court and put you, instead of your opponent, on the defensive.

Instead, create in your mind, two small cubes which invisibly sit in each back corner. The cubes should be three feet high, three feet wide, and three feet deep. To control these corners, you should strive to hit your shots through these cubes. It doesn't matter how—just as long as the ball, at some point during a rally moves in and out of that cube.

Obviously, unless you're a glutton for punishment, you want to play to your opponent's weakness, back left if the weakness is a backhand. Don't overuse the strategy, though, because you want the element of surprise to be on your side. Keep them guessing.

What type of back corner shots you use will invariably depend on whether you're serving, your opponent's court position, your strength and quickness as a player, and the tempo (and score) of the game.

Basically, down-the-line drive serves, hard and soft Z-serves and even lob serves will serve the purpose of putting your opponent into a corner. Cross-courts, drives, passes—pretty much the whole racquetball repertoire—in turn, will keep your playing partner pasted to the corners while a point is in progress. With the area so tight and the angles acute, a mixture of shots which force a player to move his feet for a quick set up, make him on the run, or get "boxed in" a corner will prove effective.

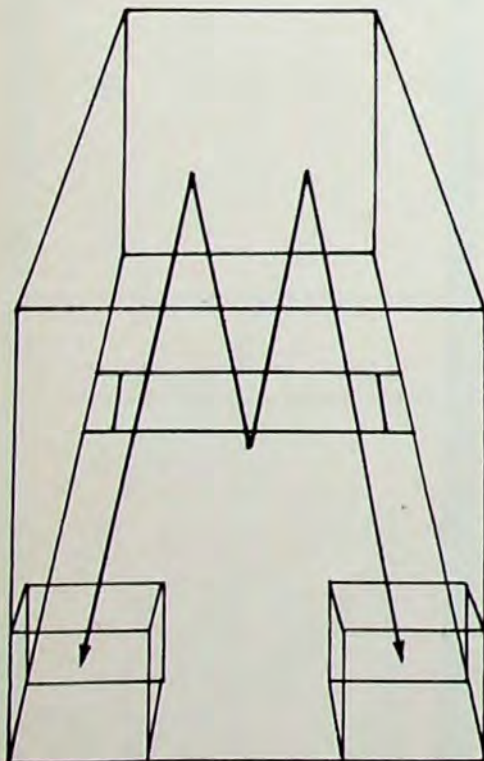
But what happens when the roles are reversed? What happens when you're the person being painted into a corner? They key



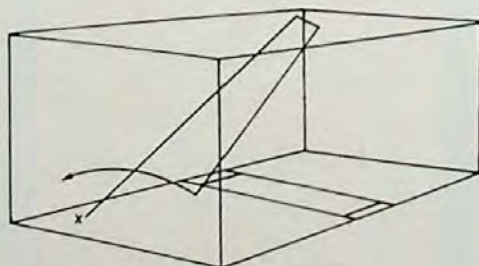
word in this situation is time. You want to buy yourself some. Unless you're set up, have a clear picture of your next shot—or just want to get the game over quickly—don't make any foolish attempts at kills or cross-court pinches from 38 feet away. Go to the ceiling. Use the ceiling shot to get yourself back into position, to prolong the point, allowing you time to recover.

Other shots—say, a high pass, around-the-wall ball, even an occasional down-the-line drive—may prove effective, but again, a lot depends on how close that corner is and your body/ball position.

Most professional players use the back corners effectively, myself more than most. Recently, however, I played my Ektelon teammate John Eggerman, in the finals of a summer tournament in Michigan. John drove his wall shots as well as I've ever seen him, putting me into the dreaded positions I've explained in this article. But I countered with ceiling shots, played a bit of a waiting game, and was finally able to defeat John to win the tournament. Fortunately, even after a summer without too many tournaments, I retained the quickness necessary to retrieve John's shots and eventually turned them into some points for myself. Hopefully, with some practice, my tips will prove just as productive for you.



To control the corners, imagine two small cubes sitting there. Your shots should be hit through those cubes.



To counter a player who has controlled the corners—so to speak—Mike Yellen recommends a ceiling game.

CEILING BALL DRILLS

By Jean Sauser and Arthur Shay

Editor's Note: This is reprinted from Beginning Racquetball Drills and Intermediate Racquetball Drills by Jean Sauser and Arthur Shay, Contemporary Books, Inc., Chicago, Ill., 1981

Forehand Ceiling Drill

OBJECTIVE: To enable you to practice and reflexively hit this shot from deep court. To make you aware of this shot's potential, especially for serve returns.

Steps:

1. Stand an arm-and-racquet's length from the back wall in the center of deep court. Face your forehand side wall.
2. Bounce the ball off your lead foot, step into it, and strike it with an underhand motion to the ceiling first.
3. Aim the ball three to four feet from the front wall but definitely contact the ceiling first. The ball should then rebound quickly into deep court.
4. If you have hit your ceiling ball properly, it will rebound back to you in deep court, where you will be ready and waiting with your racquet back to strike another ceiling ball. But this time it will be an overhand ceiling.
5. To hit the overhand ceiling, rotate your shoulders slightly away from the ball, then step forward and contact the ball slightly above head level, again sending it back to the ceiling using an overhand motion. This motion is identical to throwing an overhand baseball pitch. Another analogy is that it is simply a tennis serve that continues upward, not down and over a net.
6. Continue to return one overhead ceiling after another. Try to hit 50 consecutive ceilings. However, the minute the ball gets out of control or you miss a shot, stop. Pick up the ball and begin the rallies again, using the underhand stroke to get yourself started.

SUMMARY: Try to hit consecutive balls approximately the same place. Count aloud how many you have hit. When you miss a shot or the ball gets out of control, simply resume your count from the number you left off with.

Try to stroke the ball with a throwing motion every time. Contact the ball off the lead foot so you will have all your weight into the shot and place no unnecessary strain on your arm. After each shot, immediately pull your racquet up and back in preparation for the next ceiling shot.

Backhand Ceiling Drill

OBJECTIVES: To give you more confidence in your backhand service returns and to help you start to develop a backhand ceiling game for advanced play.

Steps:

1. Position yourself in the center of deep court, an arm-and-racquet's length from the back wall, facing your backhand side wall.
2. Start the practice sequence by bouncing the ball out in front of you. Then step into the shot and contact the ball with an underhand motion, driving it to the ceiling first, about three feet from the front wall.
3. Snap the wrist and follow-through in an upward motion toward the ceiling.
4. As the ball rebounds off the ceiling back in front of you in deep court, pull your racquet back. Remain on the side of the ball. Unlike the forehand ceiling, the body does not face the front wall; it remains squarer to the side wall.
5. Swing the arm out away from the body and upward so that you meet the ball off the front foot above head level.
6. Again, strike the ball to the ceiling first, with the same target as before. Try to do 25 consecutive ceilings in a row at first. This should be a good goal for you to use to help master the ceiling ball.

SUMMARY: Keep the feet pointing to the backhand side wall through the entire stroke. This will enable you to hit a balanced and proper ceiling shot.

Always remain on the side of the ball, allowing yourself room to step over into the shot.

Intermediate Ceiling Ball Drill

OBJECTIVES: To increase your skill in ceiling-ball shot execution and to teach you to hit the ceiling ball down the line or cross-court. After a two-year absence the ceiling ball is now coming back as the young pros develop accuracy to go along with their speed.

Steps:

1. Position yourself in the center of deep court. Position yourself an arm-and-racquet's length from the back wall.
2. To practice down the line, face the near side wall. Hit the ball to the ceiling first, slightly away from you so that the ball rebounds down your near side wall, requiring another ceiling shot by your opponent (in this case, yourself). Keep the ball coming down the wall by constantly facing the side wall and hitting it down the line slightly away from the side

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INSTRUCTION



To practice a cross-court ceiling shot, Jean Sauser recommends you start on the forehand side, hit to the center of the ceiling, move to the backhand side and return a ceiling shot with the backhand. Try to keep the ball in play.



wall so that all you can do to return it is hit it down the side wall again. Keep sliding that ball up and down the side wall until you can hit 25 balls where you want them without a mistake. Then try for 100. Pros often try the same shot in practice 100 times in a row.



3. To practice cross-court, start on the forehand side. Stand an arm-and-racquet's length from the side wall and from the back wall. Hit the ball cross-court by hitting it to the center of the ceiling. As the ball rebounds across the court to your backhand side, move cross-

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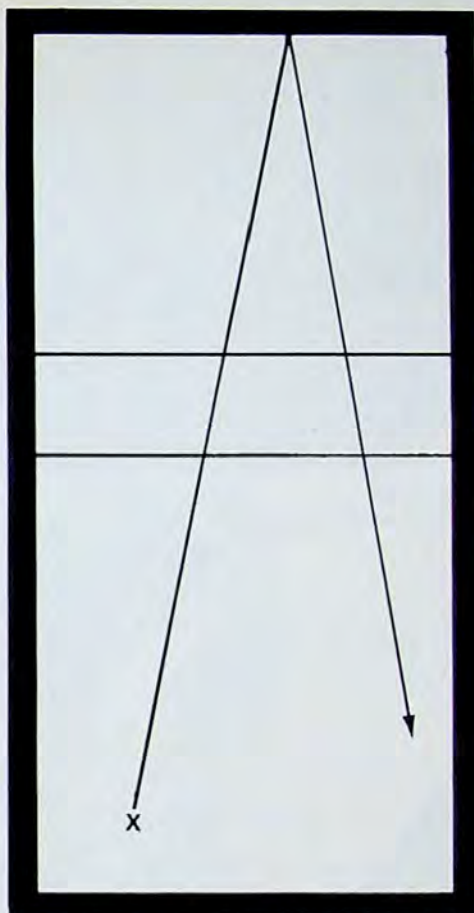
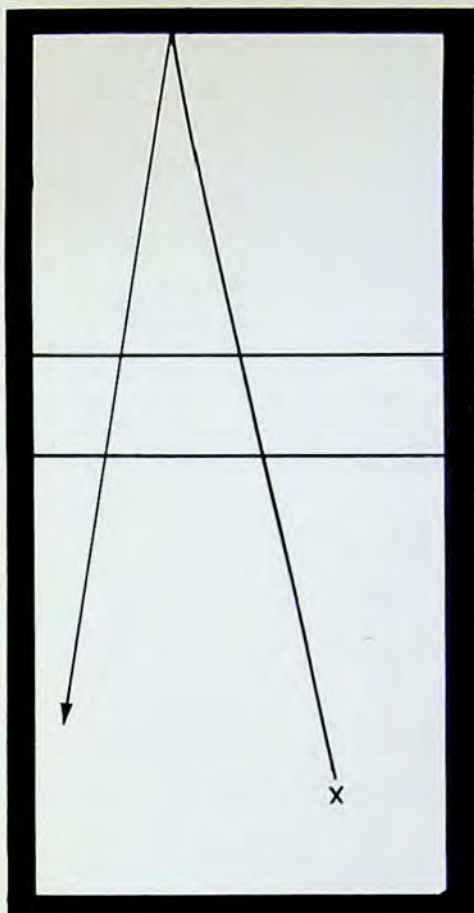
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Cross-court ceiling balls can be point makers if the angles are so precisely hit that the shots die in the back corners.

court, set up and return a backhand cross-court shot to your forehand side. Strive to keep the ball in play with these cross-court shots.

SUMMARY: Remember that ceiling balls in the intermediate level of play can be point makers if the angles down the line are so precisely hit that the ball dies in the back corners of the court. By constantly practicing these angles, you give your ceiling balls the best chance of forcing an opponent's error, a shot that you can put away, or, better yet, forcing a miss by your foe. Strive to hit your ceiling shots along these angles, and your point-making abilities will improve in direct proportion to your growing skill in placing the ball where you want it.

Ceiling Ball Off Back Wall Drill

OBJECTIVES: To teach you to recognize quickly when a ceiling is a setup off the back wall and not a defensive shot requiring another defensive shot. In short, an opportunity for a point. Players who can wait for and shoot mishit ceiling balls coming as setups off the back wall are adding points to their game. They also cause panic in their opponents, who find their most precious defensive shot against lesser players turned against them by an improving intermediate player—you!

Steps:

1. Get a live ball—the livelier the better, so that you can easily set yourself up with a ceiling ball of the back wall.

2. Stand an arm-and-racquet's length from the back wall. Hit the ball with good velocity to the ceiling and close to the front wall so that it rebounds high and off the back wall.

3. As the ball is coming, turn quickly and position yourself on the side with your racquet back early. Getting the racquet back early is the single most important factor when shooting off the back wall.

4. Drop your legs slightly. Use plenty of wrist action when you contact the ball. Shoot the ball straight in for a kill or cross-court for a kill. Corner pinches are usually too hard to hit at first, but try some anyway.

5. Practice the straight kill with your opponent's position in mind and practice the cross-court kill with your opponent in mind.

SUMMARY: Keep your eye on the ball and *do not pick your head up* until you have contacted the ball. This shot requires the utmost concentration. Concentrate on the ball, not on where it's going. More points are lost in racquetball (and other ball sports) by taking your eye off the ball than by any other mental lapse.



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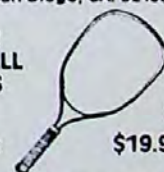
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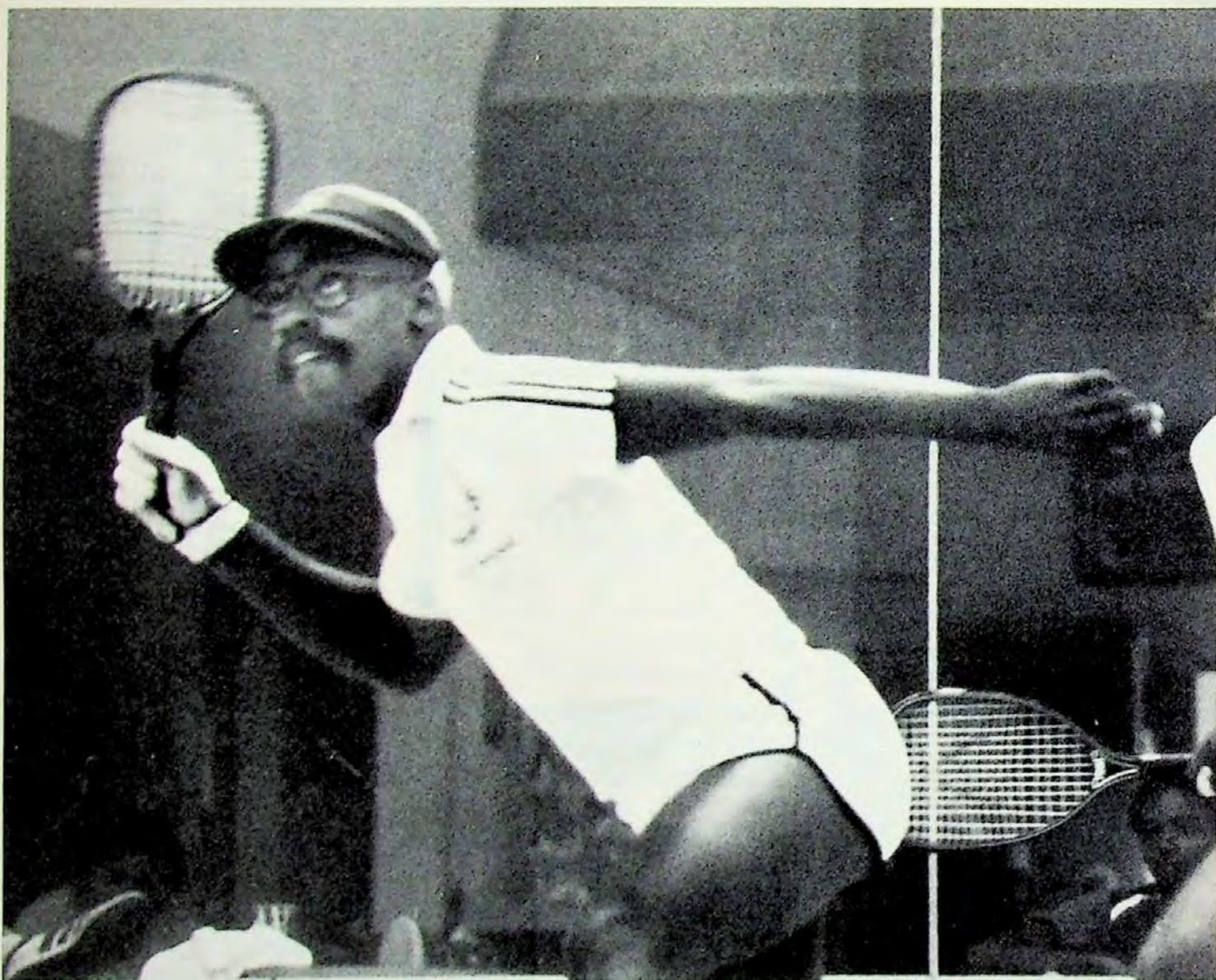
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THE BLACK FLASH



Photos by Jean Kretler and Carole George

By Edward I. Placidi

Although blacks have made names for themselves as football, basketball and baseball players, there is a noticeable void in the professional racquetball ranks.

Bobby Stocker of Los Angeles is probably the best black racquetball player in the country. Although he consistently wins or places high in local tournaments, he is not ranked among the top 25 professional racquetball players. He thinks he should be.

"I figure I'm about number 16...20th at the very least. I just beat Mark Morrow who is ranked in the top 20," says Stocker, who has never been known to shy away from touting himself.

Often the only black in an open division

Bobby Stocker may be the best black player around but he says he can't get no respect.

event, Stocker is hard to miss. He sports a Yul Brynner haircut combined with a thick, long-hanging moustache and he has a muscular body. His play is aggressive. In fact, after Stocker won one tournament, a competitor said, "Stocker plays with unbelievable intensity. He stampedes his way to the championship."

Stocker, of course, will tell you how good he is. "I think I'm one of the most exciting players to watch." He will also tell you why there are

not more blacks in the pro ranks. "There haven't been many blacks because we took up the game a lot later," he says. "We didn't have access to clubs. It costs money to join and then there's monthly dues. Financial reasons kept us out. We gave our kids a football or a basketball, not a racquet."

"Racquetball is derived from handball which is played in indoor clubs where you paid to play," says professional racquetball referee Larry Lee, also a black. "Blacks were excluded but it's changing now."

Perhaps, for this reason Stocker became more well known on the outdoor circuit where play time is free. He lost to Dan Southern in the finals of the Outdoor Nationals in 1980 and lost 21-20, 21-20 to eventual winner Brian Hawkes in the semifinals of this year's outdoor championships.



THE BLACK FLASH



"Racquetball companies should have a black on their advisory staffs endorsing their stuff," says Stocker.

Stocker says he began playing racquetball five years ago, picking it up by accident. Describing himself as a "hot tennis player around Orange County (Calif.)," Stocker wanted to try turning pro but couldn't afford to join the local clubs. Then one day, while waiting for a free tennis court at Santa Ana College, a friend asked him to play racquetball on one of the vacant outdoor courts. "He beat me bad but that was it," said Stocker. "One month later I beat him by the same score. I turned into a stone racquetball fanatic. I played six hours a day."

Within two years he had decided to make racquetball a profession, and began teaching at clubs and playing in as many tournaments as he could afford. Although many blacks are members of local racquetball clubs, Stocker sees himself as carrying the pro banner. "Most blacks are social players with no further ambitions," he says.

He also thinks he is not treated fairly by the press. "I don't know if it's because I'm black or what. I deserve the recognition many times but they won't write me up."

Generally speaking, the racquetball publications focus on the top professional players and Stocker rarely plays major pro events. Stocker does well on the local level but write-ups in local newspapers are infrequent and usually amount to brief listings of winners and scores.

Stocker also has a gripe against the racquetball manufacturers, whom he says shy away from endorsing him. "I'm disappointed," he says. "I hope they (the companies) know that blacks do play racquetball. They should have a black (he points to himself) on their advisory staffs—endorsing their stuff. I've become known by blacks around the country, mostly by word of mouth."

Although some would disagree with Stocker, he says that the racial factor has even come into play during matches. In the recent Southern California Pro-Am, Stocker defeated Morrow in the finals when Morrow walked off the court during the second game. "Morrow just didn't want to lose to a black man," says Stocker.

Morrow denies Stocker's claim. "I just think of him as another player," says Morrow. "I got

some bad calls (in that match). I've lost to him before. There's no prejudice that I know of in racquetball. Nobody gets any special treatment. The fact that he's black is not a factor. He should just be in there to play."

The pro players also deny there is any racial bias in pro racquetball. "Anything is open to anyone no matter what his ethnic background or race," says Jerry Hilecher, who finished last season ranked number four and also is without a sponsor. "A referee conceivably could be prejudiced for a point or two but that won't make a difference in who are the top players in the long run."

Stocker admits he hasn't searched high and low for a sponsor to finance his travels to pro tournaments. He says he was turned down by DP Leach and he hasn't pursued many other avenues.

"Companies are looking for images and maybe Stocker is not what they want," says Hilecher. "There's a fine line between getting and not getting sponsorship. It may be color but I hate to think that."

Pro Lynn Adams, a friend of Stocker, says she has never run across any prejudice in racquetball. She says Stocker's lack of pro victories has nothing to do with racial prejudice. "He's an excellent athlete—quicker than anyone else—who plays on a natural skill level," says Adams. "But on the pro level many players have speed and skill. Those on the top know the game better and that's the difference. He has the talent but he needs guidance to go further."

According to referee Lee, Stocker could well be one of the best amateurs in the country but "in the pro category he needs another year or two."

Currently Stocker is working as the club pro at Racquetball West in Culver City, Calif. and with Lee's help is hoping to go on an extensive tour around the country to give clinics and play in exhibitions.

Stocker admits other pro players may have better anticipation but he maintains there is no one quicker on the court. That is why they call him "Flash" or "Lightning."

"Everybody who sees me play says I am the quickest around," says Stocker. "Even the refs think I'm the fastest. I get to a lot of shots that they call two bounces on."

The question now becomes one of time. If Stocker is to make his move, he better do it soon. He is now over 25 and most of the top players are around 20. Lee thinks that it is now vital for Stocker to find a sponsor so he can travel to tournaments, and begin to seriously compete in the pro ranks.

But Stocker isn't worried. He says he is still on the rise. "A few years back blacks didn't know what the game was. If I'd been playing 10 years back I'd be phenomenal now. But I'm still improving, not like all the top white players. They've been at the same level for the last few years. I'm going to keep getting better and better."

And his goal? "I won't be satisfied," says Stocker, "until I win the indoor nationals."

Will The Real McCoy Please Stand Up?



By Mike Hogan

There's a new player on the racquetball pro tour. He's a tall redhead who sports a handle-bar mustache and mutton chop sideburns, which make him look like he would be more at home on a unicycle in the Roaring '20s than on a racquetball court in the 1980s.

But he's got it all. He's good, he's fast, he's a lefty with power and control and he has a backhand overhead volley he can drop right in your shorts. His name is Craig McCoy, and a lot of people think he has a great future in racquetball.

What? You think you've heard of him before? You think he may be that same guy who has been on the racquetball tour since Hector was a pup? The guy who had everything going for him, but he never seemed to put it all together?

Isn't he the same guy whom one tour observer described as one of those aging veterans who are "either treading water or going down for the third time?" Nope.

That was the old Craig McCoy. He retired. The new Craig McCoy is a born-again racquetball player who, while at the 1981 Nationals in Tempe, Ariz., had a vision of what the sport could mean to him. He saw the light sometime during his second-round match with second-seeded Dave Peck.

In his own words, he went into that game thinking, "Oh no, I'm playing the second seed again and Hogan is the only person he's lost to since Christmas. He's also either been to the semis or the finals all year and won two stops. I'll probably be going home early with my \$1,000."

But McCoy won the first game easily and lost the second only after a late burst from Peck. In the tiebreaker, he was leading 9-4 when Peck came back and closed the gap to 10-8. The old McCoy would have rolled over and figured that he had done well just getting that far. The old McCoy was so relaxed that it often was hard to tell if he was awake. But it was the new McCoy who appeared on the court that day.

"I maintained my concentration and was really pumped up," McCoy recalls. "The crowd wanted an upset and when I walked off court during timeouts, they would yell and scream my name."

"I'm usually very quiet on the court, but I was yelling at myself and trying to keep myself pumped up. I just wanted to beat the second seed and I don't even know how I did it. I don't even believe the shots I was hitting or the gets I retrieved."

Will The Real McCoy Please Stand Up?



Photo by Mike Hogan

McCoy's best friend and racquetball advisor is Al Shelby. One time while at a tournament in the East, McCoy took a ride to New York City and called Shelby long distance from Harlem.

For one of the few times in his career, McCoy acted as if he wanted to win.

After Peck, he quickly retired Don Thomas and Brett Harnett, bringing him into the finals against Hogan. Marty stopped the train 21-9, 21-12. But hey, who's complaining?

"I don't feel bad about losing to a four-time national champ whose tour losses can be counted on one hand," says McCoy.

"I played hard against Marty. Maybe I wasn't as sharp as in my previous matches, but I was pleased to make it to the finals and wasn't let down when I didn't win.

"There are only two a year who make it that far. So far it's only Brumfield, Strandemo, Bledsoe, Yellen, Hogan and I, so I feel as though I'm in a pretty select group."

And so it is at the ripe old age of 24, with many of the players he started out with either retired or on the way out, Craig McCoy is just starting his racquetball career. McCoy's best friend, Al Shelby, says that before the nationals, McCoy had been thinking he was on the downhill side of his career. He hadn't made it past the quarterfinals all year.

"I asked him if he was going to play hard in the Nationals," recalls Shelby, "and he told

me that he would try his best. I said, 'What will you do if you lose?' and he said, 'I don't know, maybe lay off for a year.'

But, once at the tournament, McCoy's attitude changed. Now he's thinking big bucks, especially since the new tour is limited to 12 pros and four qualifiers each stop. "If I could become the number two player by next year," McCoy muses, "my income would probably be somewhere between \$75,000 and \$100,000 just because of the new format.

"Peck, Hilecher and Yellen have traded that slot during the past couple of years, but if someone could hold on to it for more than a few months at one time, his income could go sky-high."

Sounds like a lot of ifs? Not at all, says John Weaver, DP Leach director of player promotions.

"You're talking about \$25,000 top prize per stop," says Weaver. "If he's number two, it means he's making the finals for seven events which comes close to \$50,000 plus bonuses and product endorsements. If he's number two in the country, he'll start making appearances. It's an easy \$75,000 if he handles it right."

But can he do it? McCoy finished the season tied for fifth with Thomas, thanks largely to his Nationals performance. It was his best year yet, and an uneven one at that. So what makes McCoy think the Nationals were anything other than his last hurrah?

Well, he isn't alone in his high opinion of himself. Those who know about such things aren't surprised that McCoy thinks he should be number two. They wonder why he isn't number two already.

"I think Craig is capable of challenging Hogan for number one," says Charlie Brumfield, a former doubles partner and someone who, McCoy says, had a hex on him for years. "Craig has always been known as a sleeping giant in racquetball because he has always had tremendous natural ability but never did anything with it.

"He has great fluidity and a tremendous arc in his swing because of the length of his arms. He looks like he isn't expending any energy on the court, and he probably isn't."

"His overall game is tremendous," adds Weaver, who has known McCoy and watched him play since 1976. "He is a tremendous physical talent who can step over and cut the



ball off. He moves well, he is strong and no one hits a reverse overhead the way he can.

"There isn't a single aspect of Craig's game that is bad except when he is mentally defeated. His biggest weakness is his lackadaisical attitude.

"If he plays his best, he's among the top four in the country. He can beat anyone consistently, and he'll even beat Hogan now and then."

McCoy was born in Pomona, Calif. His parents moved to Riverside and he's lived there ever since. Although he caught the racquetball bug early on, he has refused to be drawn the extra 100 miles south to San Diego where—conventional wisdom has it—the ambitious player should go to find the right daily competition.

McCoy used to drive to San Diego for lessons in 1970 and '71 but now he prefers the more placid existence in Riverside. He started playing racquetball in 1969 when a YMCA opened down the street from his home. McCoy was originally a right-hander, but after he broke his arm playing, and before the cast came off, McCoy began playing just as well with his left hand. He has been a lefty ever since.

Actually, McCoy is ambidextrous and a natural athlete, says Shelby, a former open racquetball player who first met him while giving lessons at the YMCA.

"He could have had a full basketball scholarship to college if he would have just kept at it," says Shelby. "He also was a great baseball player and lettered in tennis."

"I quit playing basketball after my sophomore year," says McCoy, "because it interfered with racquetball. Steve Keeley used to give lessons in Oceanside and I used to drive down every Wednesday afternoon. My basketball coach didn't like that."

McCoy could have cleaned up on national amateur titles, predicted Shelby, but he turned pro at an early age. However, he did manage to capture the 1975 International Racquetball Association open doubles title with Brumfield. McCoy fondly remembers those early days on the tour when the money was lousy and the camaraderie among the players was a greater reward.

"It was so loose," he says with an impish grin. "You could get away with almost anything."

Like the time a heavily-favored Brumfield found himself down 20-17 in the second game of the Canadian National Finals after a night of heavy partying. McCoy and some of the other contributors to Brumfield's delinquency began "accidentally" dropping towels onto the court or hiding the game ball when it was hit into the gallery. It gave the hungover Brumfield time to rest and eventually come back. Ironically, Brumfield used to be McCoy's nemesis, someone whom he just couldn't seem to beat.

"I finally beat him 11-10 in the tiebreaker of a tournament in Aurora, Ill., and after that, Charlie went downhill," says McCoy laughing. "He just didn't have anyone to psyche out anymore."

McCoy thinks he might have a similar block against Hogan now. "But so what," says Weaver, "doesn't everybody?"

"Whenever I was in trouble against McCoy," recalls Brumfield, "I would go into 'The Rage.' I would increase the aggressive level necessary to stay in the game through physical confrontation, excessive movement, hard-hitting shots and by putting the ball back into play quickly after every point. I was just trying to get Craig out of that syrupy smooth, Sam Snead swing of his."

Brumfield figures that because McCoy developed during the era of the slower ball and the "set-up-and-stroke" game, he has trouble tapping his full potential during today's high adrenalin shootouts.

"He always looks as though he has just chugged a bottle of Romilar Cough Syrup," says Brumfield.

Brumfield tells a story about a McCoy match back in the early days of racquetball. It was a tournament final in Long Beach, Calif. against Bill Dunn and the score was tied 20-20 in the third game.

"Craig was returning service," recalls Brumfield, "and just as Dunn was about to serve, I could see Craig turn around, look into the back wall glass and start combing his hair with his fingers to make sure it was neat."

Losing his cool on the court has never been a McCoy characteristic. He takes his calls without complaint and never shows hard feelings when he loses.

"It's important to win and play well," he reasons, "but it's stupid to get made over mistakes or bad calls."



Photos by David M. King

McCoy surprised everybody by making it to the finals of the 1981 DP Leach Nationals before his bubble was burst by Marty Hogan.

Will The Real McCoy Please Stand Up?

"If I had to name one player on the tour who could be classified as honest," says Brumfield, "Craig is that to a fault. Overall, he is the best-liked of all the professional players. He is just a superb human being."

Although he has a quick mind and an impish sense of humor, McCoy is usually as quiet off-court as he is during his matches.

"Craig is a loner. I mean a definite loner," says Shelby. "He has his family, his girlfriend, his dog and his TV. He has a lot of friends in town but he'd just as soon sit home and watch TV."

"A typical day for Craig is to watch TV until three or four in the morning, sleep until noon, get up and go down to the Tournament House to practice for a couple of hours. Then he'll go over to his parents' house for dinner and call me to see if I want to shoot some pool or something."

"I'm definitely a night person," McCoy admits. "I love watching TV. I've seen more old movies than they've made because I've seen them all three or four times."

Shelby is used to receiving telephone calls in the early hours to "come over and make fudge," or long-distance calls from an insomniac McCoy who loves to drive around on late night tours of pro-stop cities and then call his best friend to share what he has learned. At

last year's Connecticut stop, McCoy rented a car and drove down to New York City for a late night tour. Later, Shelby was awakened by a long-distance call from a Harlem telephone booth. "Guess who? Ha-ha."

"A lot of people may think he's stuck up because he's a big-shot racquetball player," says Al, "but he's not. He just isn't a talker, although he's real talkative with people he knows."

The strength of their friendship can be surmised from their constant banter: they never let up on each other for a minute.

Shelby: "Craig, are you afraid of people?"

McCoy: "Not little ones like you. If they get in my way, I just hit 'em."

Shelby: "You stole my dog."

McCoy: "I rescued him. He didn't like you anyway." (A few years ago, Shelby asked McCoy to watch his new German Shepherd pup while he moved into a new apartment. McCoy named the dog "Max" and later refused to give him back.)

Shelby: "Craig's best friend is my dog."

And so it goes.

But one couldn't say that McCoy works very hard at racquetball. He practiced only four of the 14 days leading up to the Nationals.

"I'm definitely not a Steve Strandemo," he adds.



"I've got that winning feeling now and I plan to keep it," says McCoy.

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"The only time Craig gets pumped up," says Shelby, "is when he's mad at his girlfriend or talking finance. He'll talk finance to you until the cows come home. I tell him I don't want to hear it, just take my money and show me the paperwork before you invest it."

McCoy, who has been dabbling in stocks and real estate with the help of his father since a teenager, loves to discuss the relative yields of different investments and plot their progress. Although he has never had formal training, he regularly reads books on business management and investing and, with a knack for math, has made the study a lucrative hobby. When his playing days are over, he hopes to open a business with his father.

He figures that won't be for several more years. Weaver gives him at least another four good years on the tour, plenty of time to make his mark. But will he?

"I like to take a more businesslike attitude toward that," says Weaver. "Whether or not the Nationals were a turning point for Craig remains to be seen. But I think he realizes now that he is no longer just out there hitting a racquetball around. It's a business, a profession, and he has spent too much time to let it all go down the drain."

Says McCoy, "I've got that 'win' feeling now and plan to keep it."



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Philadelphia Eagles cheerleaders Carol Woliung (left) and Patti Babb play regular racquetball matches at Clark's Uptown Fitness Center as part of training program.

On Court With The Liberty Belles



The Philadelphia Eagles cheerleaders use regular racquetball workouts as part of their conditioning program.

By Ron Higman

The four women sitting in the lounge at Clark's Uptown Fitness Center in Philadelphia's Franklin Plaza Hotel are Liberty Belles, cheerleaders for the National Football Conference champions, the Philadelphia Eagles. Each auditioned for one of the 40 spots on the squad in competition with more than 900 others.

Cheerleaders for a professional football team must have the slender good looks of a model, the physical conditioning of an athlete, the artistic ability of a dancer and the easy-going mannerisms of a public relations director. Part of the regular conditioning program for some of the Belles is regular racquetball workouts.

Although they come from diverse backgrounds and are motivated by different ambitions and goals, the four cheerleaders have some common characteristics. Each is extremely affable and has a passion for public contact. All four are in peak physical condition and enjoy dance. And to varying degrees, they share an interest in racquetball.

Patti Babb

Patti, 21, the youngest of the four, has a cherubic face and a relaxed, confident style on and off the court. She is by far the best racquetball player of the quartet, with well-placed serves, a strong backhand and good speed.

After watching her brother play near their home in Medford Lakes, N.J., Patti decided to give it a try and has been an active player ever since. "In the beginning, I noticed how you can get into shape without even realizing it," Patti says. "You're so worried about hitting that little ball, you run around like crazy for an hour. Before you know it, the time's up, and you've really had a great workout."

Patti, who is enjoying her first season as a Liberty Belle, works full-time as a receptionist

On Court With The Liberty Belles

for the PRW Corporation, a supplier of hospital emergency equipment in the Philadelphia area, but she expects one day to return to Villanova University and complete her undergraduate studies.

Patti is also a part-time model. She started about four years ago and hopes her association with the Liberty Belles will enhance her modeling career.

"The competition in modeling is unreal," she admits. "There are thousands and thousands of gorgeous girls out there waiting for that one spot on a magazine cover, or any kind of a break."

Patti plays tennis occasionally, but prefers racquetball because of its quick pace. "It's more exciting and faster," she explains. "Not only has it given me muscle tone where I've needed it, but if I've had a tough day at work or at practice, I just play some racquetball and I'm fine."

Patti played softball and field hockey in high school, but the other players kept growing and she didn't. In racquetball, she's found the perfect sport for shorter people. "Because of my size (about 5-foot-5) and small frame," she confesses, "a lot of people think I can't move or I'm uncoordinated. Until I start to play."

"There's a lot to racquetball. There's movement. Quick movement. And you need smarts. You have to know where to hit the ball and what type of shot to make. I beat gigantic men just by my shot selection."

Gail Steinburg

Gail, 29, is sophisticated and urbane. The mother of an eight-year-old boy, she is also president and executive officer of the Bulimia Foundation, a non-profit organization concerned with an eating disorder that affects



Gail Steinburg: "For me cheerleading is better than any ballet school I could go to."

women between the ages of 18 and 40.

Gail is a converted tennis player who appears tentative with the smaller racquet and faster pace of racquetball. "I was afraid at first because of the wrist movement," she explains, "but I found out it's a fabulous workout."

"It's much more exciting than tennis," she continues. "It's faster moving. It's terrific for your cardiovascular system. Tennis has that constant stop and go, even if you're playing a really good game of singles. In tennis, I don't think you achieve the same kind of fitness level as in racquetball. Also, I think the concentration level is just as intense, if not more so, in racquetball."



Carol Woliung (left): "I would say this group is as good as the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders."

Photos by Neil Benson

Through her work in the Bulimia Foundation, Gail hopes to disseminate information about this disorder in which an afflicted person literally starves herself to death. According to Gail, "Wherever there are upper-middle class women, it's becoming, unfortunately, a very prevalent disorder. At the foundation, we want to educate the public so that women who have this disorder will come out of the closet."

Gail, a Temple University graduate with a teaching degree, hopes to combine her teaching training, dance experience and organizational skills in the field of movement therapy. "I took one course, but be-

cause of circumstances, I couldn't finish. One day—hopefully I'll remain with the Liberty Belles a few more seasons—I'll go on to have my own business, possibly my own studio."

If she succeeds, she plans to devote her energy to two divergent groups with surprisingly similar needs. "I would like to work with handicapped children and handicapped older people—geriatrics," she says. "I find both very interesting and really wonderful to work with. I think that has something to do with my enjoyment of the Liberty Belles, because we do a lot of fund raising activities for handicapped children."

This is Gail's first year on the cheerleading

squad, but she is extremely enthusiastic. "I love everything about it," she says. "I'm such a frustrated dancer that the rehearsals alone are wonderful. It's dance. For me, it's better than any ballet school I could ever go to."

Mary Ann Alexander

Mary Ann, who likes to be called "Poochie" by her friends, teaches science and biology at Camden High School in New Jersey. She is a regular racquetball player who has nimble reactions and effective defensive shots.

"I started playing," she says, "when our school nurse told me there was a member-

On Court With The Liberty Belles



Mary Ann Alexander: "You have to keep your weight down to be a cheerleader and running around the court tones up your legs."

ship drive at a nearby club and they were giving discounts to teachers. I joined with some other people from our school, and I found out I really liked it."

For the last few years, Mary Ann has been playing two or three times a week when she doesn't have to spend extra time after school working with students. "I try to keep the touch," she explains. "You have to keep your weight down. Running around the court tones up your legs. It's good for your heart, too, and it keeps you strong."

In high school and college, Mary Ann participated in tennis, track, softball and basketball, but she is now an ardent racquetball player. "I like it more than other sports," she confesses. "It's inside and cooler in the summer, and you're more relaxed and at ease. If you put your heart into it, it does relax you."

This is Mary Ann's third year on the squad, and apparently the thrill hasn't worn off. The chance to communicate with various types of people is her reason for staying. "I love the public relations work," she confides. "I really do. I'm the type of person who likes to meet people and that contact really helps me out as a person. It's very rewarding."

The public relations aspect of being a cheerleader for a professional football team is a large part of the job. According to Mary Ann, the responsibility is divided equally among the 40 girls so that everybody gets a chance at the parades, charity work, promotions, modeling and telethons. However each girl is still kept very busy.

On wintry Sunday afternoons in Philadelphia, the routines the cheerleaders flawlessly

execute look easy and natural, but they are not as easy as they look. The graceful moves are accomplished through strict, demanding practices. "A lot of young ladies think there's nothing to it," says Mary Ann. "When the new girls came, some thought it would be really easy. Now that they're in practice, they're ready to die. It's very demanding, but it's exciting and rewarding. When those games come every Sunday, you really feel good about it. You're out there cheering your team on. I love it."

"I'll give my modeling career another two or three years. I still like it. I'll stay in modeling and the Liberty Belles as long as I can and for as far as I can go. I'd do it the rest of my life, but I don't think they'll let me." To prepare for the future, Mary Ann is working on her master's degree in computer science.

Carol Woliung

Carol, 27, has only played racquetball a few times. But after looking over the facilities at Clark's Uptown and finding some potential partners among the Liberty Belles, she's now decided to play regularly.

Carol, originally from Lawrenceburg, Ind., has lived in Philadelphia the last two years. She was selected as a cheerleader for the Cincinnati Bengals, but she moved to Philadelphia prior to cheering in her first game. This is her first season with the Liberty Belles.

In comparing tennis to racquetball, Carol says, "It's less area to cover, yet faster. There's no action when you first begin to play tennis. You can easily get bored. In racquetball, the ball keeps moving fast and you have to keep active."



Patti Babb: "I beat gigantic men just by my shot selection."

"I have to be honest," Carol admits, "I haven't played enough racquetball to be good enough to enjoy it as much as I do tennis, but I will say that it's better for you. It's much faster and exciting, and I think you get more exercise. It's good for coordination. You can use it to keep your cheerleader coordination sharp. And it's good for endurance."

Carol is a freelance model, but before becoming a Liberty Belle, she was a Playboy bunny at the Playboy Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City, N.J. When she was selected for the Eagles cheerleading squad, she therefore was forced to make a tough choice. Although she tried to fit both into her schedule, it became increasingly difficult. She opted for the Eagles.

Does she regret it? No way. Carol is infatuated with being a Liberty Belle. "I gave up being a Playboy bunny, which is some sort of a status symbol to some people. This is so much better. Just the appearances we do. The promotion-type work. Just meeting the people. You get to do so much more as a Liberty Belle. And you keep in better shape than you do wearing those three-inch heels and tight bunny costumes."

As her athletic appearance indicates, Carol enjoyed sports when she was younger, particularly gymnastics and volleyball, as well as cheerleading and baton twirling.

And what does she think of the Liberty Belles? "I would say this group is as good as the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders. We're right there at the top, even though we don't get as much publicity as they do. I think our girls are prettier and better."

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TOURNAMENTS

Natural Light Open

There is no truth to the rumor that the founders of the Natural Light Open are thinking of changing its name to the Mike Yellen Invitational.

Yellen won the event for the third time in four years by defeating John Egerman, 12-21, 21-7, 11-2, in the finals at the Davison (Mich.) Racquetball Club.

Yellen, who lives in nearby Southfield, picked up a \$4,000 payday. Egerman took home a check for \$2,000.

Yellen won the tournament's first two championships but lost out to Marty Hogan in the 1980 finals.

Yellen defeated Lindsay Myers, 21-6, 21-8, and Egerman defeated Ben Koltun, 21-15, 21-6, in the semifinals.

Quarterfinal action found Myers defeating Jerry Hilecher, 21-16, 21-11, Yellen topping Mike Levine, 21-14, 21-17, Egerman beating Don Thomas, 21-16, 21-9, and Koltun upsetting Hogan, 21-12, 18-21, 11-10.

The Hogan-Koltun match proved controversial at the end when Koltun scored the decider after Hogan weakly returned a serve he thought was short. Hogan appealed the serve but the call was upheld.

Etc.

● Catalina Pro Classic (remaining events): Nov. 19-22, New Haven, Conn. (Downtown Racquet Club); Dec. 10-13, Memphis, Tenn. (Memphis State University); Jan. 13-17, Honolulu, Hawaii (Honolulu Club); Feb. 18-21, Beaverton, Ore. (Beaverton Racquet Club); April, 1982 Catalina Championships, New York City (tentative).

● Bruce Radford defeated Kirk Williams, 21-19, 18-21, 11-3, in the men's open of Creative Tournaments' event at Center Courts in Van Nuys, Calif. Marci Drexler defeated Cindy Moore, 21-9, 19-21, 11-9, in the women's open. Other division winners included D. Schag, Gary Cohen, Jon Woodard, Gary Gilette, Lee Pretner and Jill Braasch.

● Bobby Stocker defeated Guy Texeira, 15-21, 21-16, 11-6, in the finals of the Anaheim (Calif.) Athletic Club tournament. Joanne Pokorny defeated Marci Drexler, 9-21, 21-12,

11-3, in the women's open. Other division winners included Clay Hollingsworth, Dave Dekramer and R.O. Carson.

● John Mack defeated Guy Texeira, 21-19, 19-21, 11-10, in the men's finals of the West Covina (Calif.) Athletic Club tourney. Joanne Pokorny won the women's finals. Other division winners included Wes Goulding and C. Neer.

● Bobby Stocker defeated Kirk Williams, 21-5, 18-21, 11-1, in the finals of the Coldwater/Chandler tournament in Sherman Oaks, Calif. Other winners included Bruce Cooperman, Earl Enzer, R.W. Luntao, Gary Cohen, Jay Streim, Mark Silva, Anne Tesoro and D. Goodman.

● John Mack defeated Dan Massari and Pee Wee Drexler topped Cindy Moore in the open division finals of the Diamond Bar (Calif.) Open. Other winners included Kevin Johnson, Mike Gustaveson, Tom Haasen, B. Wetzel, Ray Lienhard and Debbie Toast.

● Rob Baruck won Creative Tournaments' two Northern California events in Incline Village and Sacramento. Baruck defeated Guy Texeira in the Incline finals and topped Chip Skinner in the Sacramento event.

● Mark Martino upset Craig McCoy, Rich Wagner and Ed Andrews to win the \$1,200 first prize in the Hot Rod Classic at What A Racquet in Colma, Calif. Martino defeated Andrews, 15-12, 15-6, in the finals. Lynn Adams won the \$1,200 top prize in the women's pro division with a 15-10, 15-7 victory over Kippi Bishop. Runners-up took home \$900. Charlie Brumfield teamed with McCoy to win the doubles title from Wagner and Kyle Kamalu, 5-15, 15-2, 11-1.

● Correction: Benny Ricardo and John Vigil won the men's C doubles title in the AMF Voit Outdoor Nationals in Costa Mesa, Calif. The original information given in the October issue was that Ricardo and Joan Vigil won the mixed doubles title.

● Gonzales and Gautier defeated Morrison and Potter, 21-18, 21-8, in the USRA Florida Doubles Championships at Imperial Courts in Melbourne, Fla. Hamrick/Bullard won the women's open over Simpton/Montano, 21-17, 21-7.



Who Will Win?

Read next month's Racquetball Illustrated to
find out who the outstanding male, female and
most improved players of 1981 are.

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Short Shots

The Lawrence Foundation

In September 1980, *Racquetball Illustrated* ran a feature on Michael Lawrence, an A-level racquetball player from Denver who is battling and beating multiple sclerosis.

After the article came out, Lawrence was deluged with media coverage. He was asked to participate in Rod Carew's MS Olympics, Steve Garvey's Sports Classic for MS, and had several stories written about him in newspapers around the country. He appeared on many radio and television shows and was even interviewed for an appearance on NBC's *Real People*. There is also talk about a possible movie or documentary on his life.

But the most important thing to Lawrence is his Lawrence Foundation, the purpose of which is to "enhance the quality of living for all MS victims."

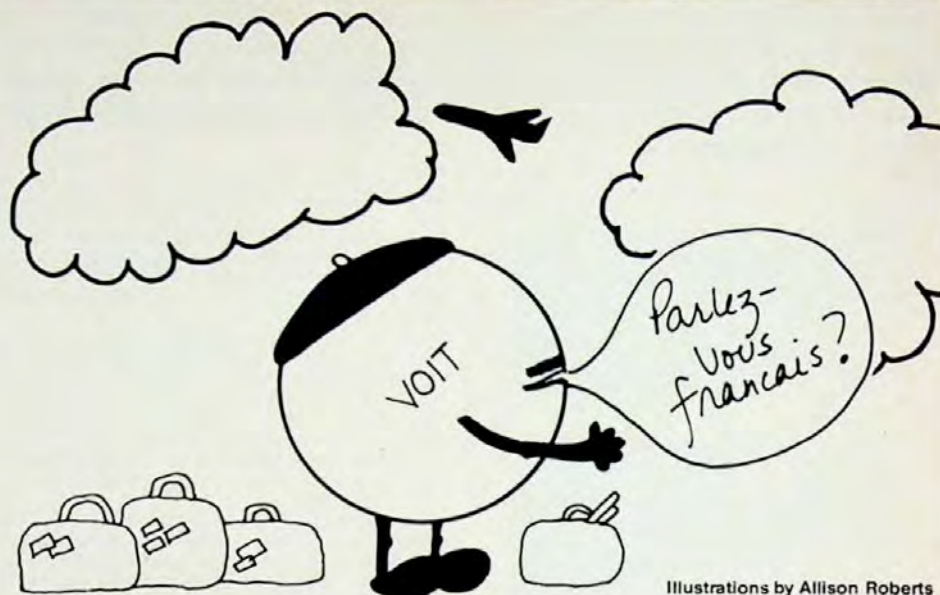
He is hoping to obtain money or services for a racquetball tournament, as well as such things as sports exhibitions and exercise workshops.

For information write P.O. Box 18898, Denver, Colo. 80218.

WPRA "Unified"

The Women's Professional Racquetball Association has said thanks but no thanks to a proposed invitational tour set up along the same guidelines as the current Catalina Pro Classic for men.

According to WPRA President Fran Davis, eight of the top women players were offered spots on a proposed women's pro tour which would coincide with the men's stops.



Illustrations by Allison Roberts

The French Connection

If racquetball ever becomes popular in France, the French can partially thank Los Angeles hairstylist Jean Philippe Benaim for it.

Benaim was raised in France but migrated to the United States several years ago and opened up a hair salon in Hollywood, Calif. Several of his relatives still live in France.

One of Benaim's nephews visited him in Los Angeles and other relatives in Chicago, and took up the game of racquetball. The nephew was so enthused with it, he took some racquets

and a can of balls back to Paris to play with.

After quickly battering that can of balls, the nephew put in a long distance call to Jean Philippe for more racquetballs to play with. AMF Voit supplied a case, and now more of their friends are getting into it.

"Right now they are playing it on a squash court," says Jean Philippe. "But who knows? Maybe someone will pick up on the interest and build a racquetball club."

There are no racquetball clubs in Paris as of yet, only squash clubs.

Davis said the offer was made by Charlie Drake, vice president and general manager of DP Leach and organizer of the Catalina package.

If most of the top eight had accepted Drake's proposal, it would have virtually finished the WPRA since it would be hard

for anyone to sell a high priced women's tournament without all the top players.

"We don't mind if he (Drake) wants to set up something in addition to our events but not in place of them," says Davis.

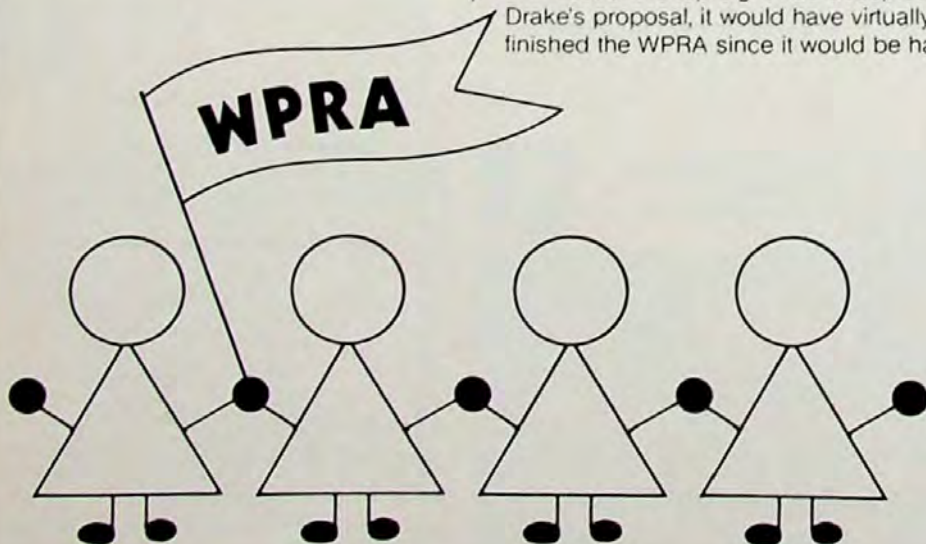
The biggest surprise came when national champion Heather McKay decided to stick with the WPRA. McKay is sponsored by DP Leach.

"I'm really psyched about the WPRA," said Davis. "The girls really unified. We really held together."

According to one source, there is still a chance that Drake will interest some of the women in an invitational tour and package one, but Davis predicts otherwise.

"I can't see it," she says. "If he can't have the best, he won't do it."

If, however, any player does join Drake's tour she will be banned from the WPRA. "It's in the by-laws that you can't play in a conflicting tour," says Davis.



Living Racquetball

Racquetball has long since moved out of the YMCAs and into fancy private clubs. The next step, however, may be racquetball courts right outside the back door of your condominium.

International Athletic Club of the Rockies is building a time-shared condominium resort which will feature 10 racquetball courts, a 25-meter glass-enclosed swimming pool, a complete fitness facility and a restaurant.

Nationally-known racquetball instructors will also be there to conduct occasional clinics.

The condominium-athletic complex is located near Keystone Resort, about 75 miles west of Denver. The athletic facilities will be ready by the fall of 1982. All condos will be sold via interval ownership and may be purchased for one or more weeks.

By Camelback

Endodontist Marty Lipsey (right) and certified public accountant Robert Cohen of Los Angeles "introduced" racquetball

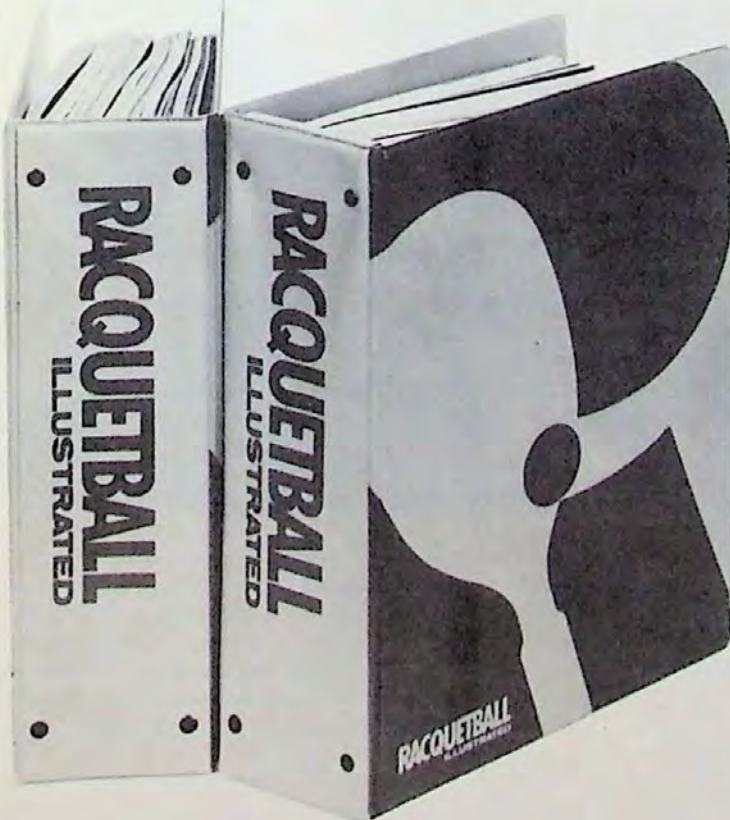


to Egypt when they took a racquet by camelback to the Pyramids and the Sphinx.

Traveling with a group called the International Association of Dental Students, the pair traveled to Giza, a suburb of Cairo, to view the Pyramids. From there

they went by camel to the Sphinx and asked a fellow traveler to snap some photos.

"We were with people from 22 different countries and a couple of people had heard of racquetball but most of them didn't know what it was," said Lipsey. **R**



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PLAYING WHILE HANDICAPPED



By Charlie Brittain

Sometimes it felt like autumn would go on forever for Marcia Nave. Autumn meant football games and as a cheerleader, football games meant long afternoons of tumbling and acrobatics. She liked the attention and excitement. She liked being in the center of things.

Marcia was one of those Southern California (Santa Barbara) Golden Girls. Not a care in

Marcia Nave gets around the racquetball court even on one leg.

the world. Vietnam, pollution, famine, politics, corruption, were distant. Nothing bothered these kids. You could see it in the cherubic faces gossiping over a soft drink after school. Nothing was ever going to go wrong. Maybe their image of life didn't wear the same

Barlon exterior as their parents', but it was close. They could see it coming. The same semi-responsible, semi-important, semi-wealthy jobs, homes, gardens, children, automobiles, frustrations, joys and sorrows of their parents would soon be theirs. It was a promise, it seemed.

The promise Marcia liked most was the assurance of physical ease, of being one in body and mind. Marcia thought of herself as an athlete. Nothing was going to change that. Even cheerleading was athletic. She worked



Photos by David M. King

"Naturally, I can't get to some of the shots," says Marcia. "I play better when I'm playing cutthroat and even better if I'm playing doubles."

at it. She practiced tumbling and gymnastics and kept in superb condition. What she did on the sidelines was just as demanding as what was going on in the field in her mind.

And when she graduated and moved to Los Angeles the promise never died. She found a job with the city as a clerk-typist. She kept up with her exercise and enjoyed her freedom. Then, one year later, Marcia lost a leg to cancer. The promise didn't seem so implicit anymore.

It's now seven years since Marcia's ordeal, and it is autumn again. Marcia is married, still working for the city, and still willing to keep the promise alive. To keep in shape Marcia plays volleyball and snow skis, but her favorite sport today is racquetball.

"I really like to play," Marcia says. "I was playing tennis for a while and then I found out I could play racquetball. My husband intro-

duced me to it. People said I'd never be able to play racquetball because it's too fast. But it's a smaller court.

"In the beginning I just stood there against the wall as the balls came whizzing by and I thought... 'Oh no, this isn't for me.' But each time I played, my balance got better and I moved faster. Now my balance is really good."

Marcia doesn't play with crutches or an artificial leg. Her operation took her limb at the hip so she is only supported by one leg.

"The slowest thing for me is to hop distances. I still don't hop really great, but each time I play I get better and better at it. Getting around is hard. I have to depend on accuracy. I pretty much stay in middle court and depend on my backhand. My backhand is getting a lot better, and I'm beginning to play off the back wall a lot to compensate for my lack of mobility," she says.

Marcia's been playing racquetball for about a year and a half now. She tries to play two or three times a week. Her husband (they were married a few months ago) is a physical education instructor and a student at a chiropractic college. It was he who introduced Marcia to the sport, but she plays with her girlfriends most often.

"My husband, Bruce, is so good at the game he just rolls them out. I just don't have a chance to get them back so I don't play with him. I play with a couple of friends I used to play tennis with. I told them how much more fun racquetball was, and how much more exercise it was, and got them playing. At first I was a little better than they, but now we've been playing awhile, they're about equal. In fact, one of them is better."

Joyce Birch, one of Marcia's partners, says, "We're all just beginners basically. Three

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R FOR WINNING

of us usually play cutthroat. Marcia is really a natural athlete. She really gets around well. She's got good balance and covers her area of the court. We don't cater to her at all. After a time you forget she has only one leg."

"Naturally I can't get some of the shots," Marcia says. "I play better if I'm playing cutthroat, and even better than that if I'm playing doubles with a partner. I always win if I'm playing with a partner. It never fails. We always win."

So Marcia never lost sight of the promise. Six months after her operation she wanted to get back to an active life, but she found the toughest goal was the role society wanted her to play.

But Marcia wasn't going to be relegated to the cripple's lot. Nobody was going to switch promises on Marcia in mid-stream.

"The main thing I've encountered," she says, "is people—even my parents—think I shouldn't do any of this because they're scared I'll get hurt. It would stifle me if I couldn't do it. I like to see what I can do each day. It really makes me feel good. I don't think of myself as a person with one leg. I can do anything anybody else can do. In fact I do more sports now than before I lost my leg."

"You should never think of yourself as handicapped. I hate that word. My advice to people is to just do it. I went to an amputee meeting once, and I walked out of there feeling nauseated. There were people my age with the same or lesser handicaps, and all they could think about were the bad things. They weren't involved in any sports and only associated with other handicapped people. And I thought how sad that they should always feel that way. They should just go on with their normal activities as if they weren't handicapped. They should take up some sports. Sports make you feel great."

Ron Argueta works with handicapped people. He is a Los Angeles physical fitness specialist with many years experience. He often encourages handicapped people to reach for a more positive outlook on life.

"If the handicapped have the potential to go out and do things, they should. If they are interested in keeping fit, they should try. Their only limitations are the limitations they place on themselves. There are no limitations on enjoyment," he says.

"Our society needs to be educated. It should be oriented toward everyone being healthy and strong and doing things no matter what their physical limitations are. If somebody loses an arm or a leg or two legs or is mentally retarded we slap a label on them and start heaping more handicaps on them. We don't encourage them to exercise so they have heart problems and are obese and smoke too much. More handicaps."

"The bottom line is handicapped people are people. No different than anyone else. Everybody needs to exercise. Just because



To reach tough shots around the corners, Marcia says she has learned how to hop-pivot around while waiting for the ball to come to her.

they have lost an arm or a leg doesn't mean they can't enjoy the benefits of sports like anyone who has all their parts.

"Handicapped people are like anybody else. If they want to do something they have to overcome the same inhibitions as everyone else. The physical barriers may be greater, but the same rewards will be there at the end. Mentally, it gives them the same highs as anyone doing it with no handicap. If someone is doing something on one leg, does it mean they enjoy it less?"

Argueta says that even severely handicapped people need and benefit from physical activity. "At one time I worked with some mentally retarded children," recalls Argueta. "Some of them suffered from a lack of mind and body coordination, so on rollerskate night we just gave them one skate. They still got the sensation of one foot rolling. Roll and walk. Roll and walk. They loved it. They went to the mountains. They went tobogganing."



When playing her husband Bruce and friend Joyce, Marcia rests between shots by leaning on her racquet.

They had a great time no matter what they did. Now their accomplishments might not seem like much to an experienced mountain climber or even an average weekend athlete, but using the yardstick of enjoyment, I'd say these kids were way out ahead of almost anyone.

"I consider the majority of our American public handicapped. They are handicapped by being overweight, by overeating, by lack of exercise, by smoking. There are a lot of people who are considered handicapped who are in better physical and mental condition than the so-called normal suburbanite in America today."

Marcia Nave probably isn't a good subject if you want to talk about handicapped people. Marcia's friends don't think of her as handicapped. Neither does she or her husband. Marcia took the promise of a fulfilling and active life at face value.

"I can't imagine what my life would be like without sports. I look forward to it everyday. It makes me a complete person. I don't think of myself as handicapped. I can do anything anyone else can."

"Except waterski, maybe, that's a real toughie."



THE GRIP THAT WON'T SLIP

Ever notice that racquet manufacturers don't have much to say about their grips. That's because they're not in the grip business, they're in the racquet business. And they all use the same grips. Leather. Leather is one of the best absorbers of sweat, dirt and body oils. So a leather grip soon becomes slippery...and your control disappears.

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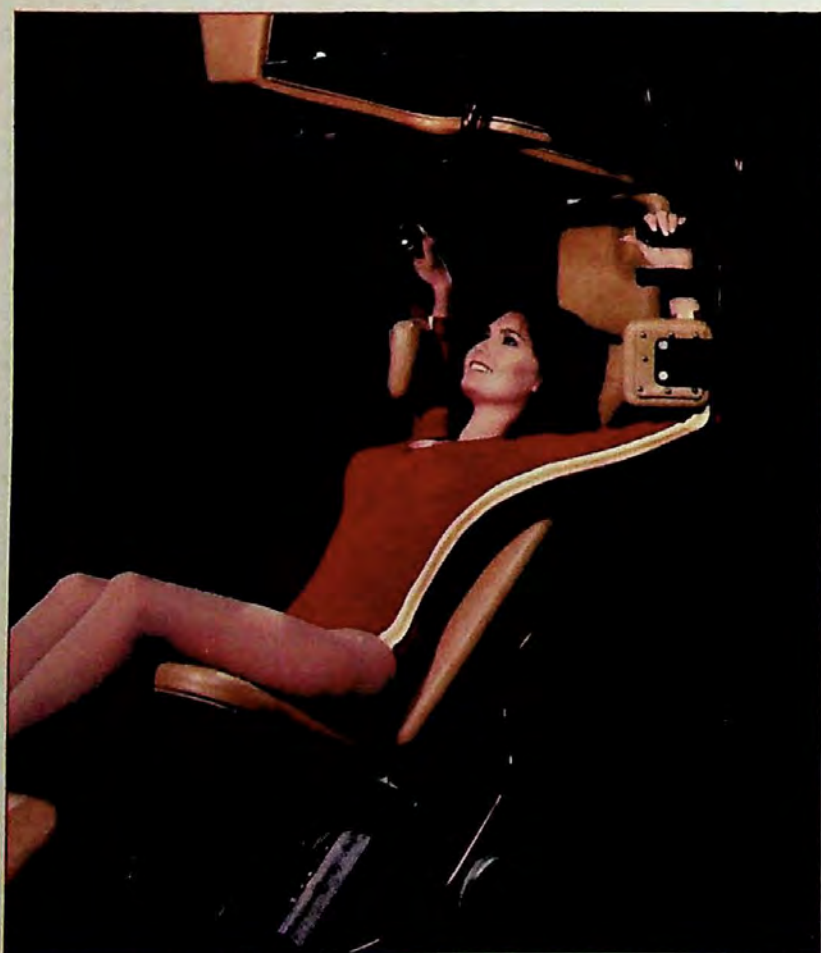


1981 GIFT/ACCESSORY GUIDE

The holiday season often presents a dilemma for shoppers in figuring out gifts for friends and family.

With that in mind, we offer our third annual Holiday Gift/Accessory Guide, a sampling of items that would make any racquetball bag complete.

The staff of Racquetball Illustrated wishes its readers a happy holiday season.



Double chest machine from NAUTILUS, \$3,980.



Racquetball cartoons by Gary Patterson from the THOUGHT FACTORY (Sherman Oaks, Calif.), \$10. (framed).



AMF VOIT collared pique knit shirt made of polyester/cotton, \$20.

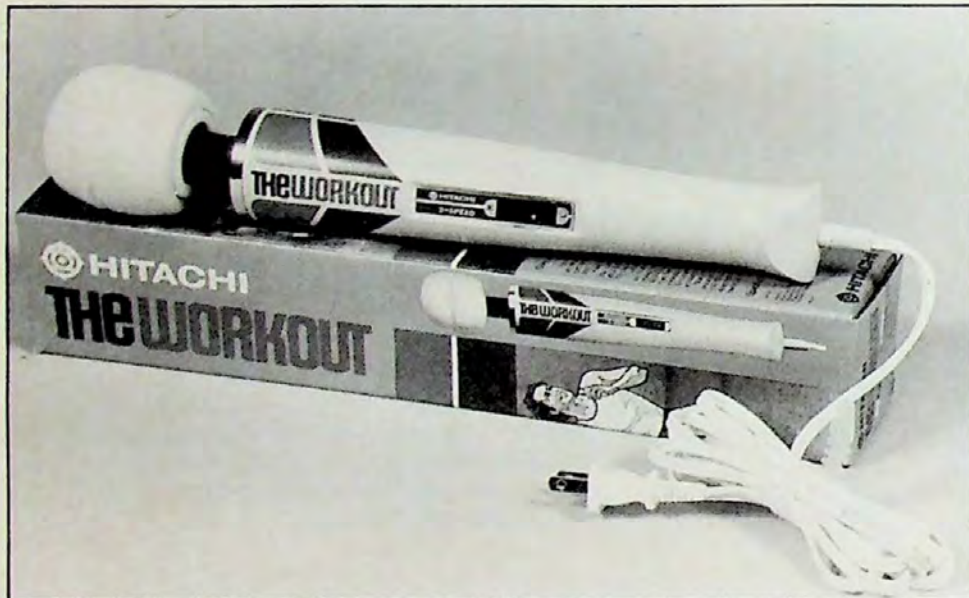
Melissa Metcalf and Gerry Kabala model racquetball wear from CATALINA. Melissa is wearing a red and white baseball-style outfit made of 50 percent Fortrel polyester and 50 percent cotton. Top, \$21, shorts, \$22. Gerry is wearing a green and white outfit made of 50 percent polyester and 50 percent rayon sateen. Top, \$20, shorts, \$22.

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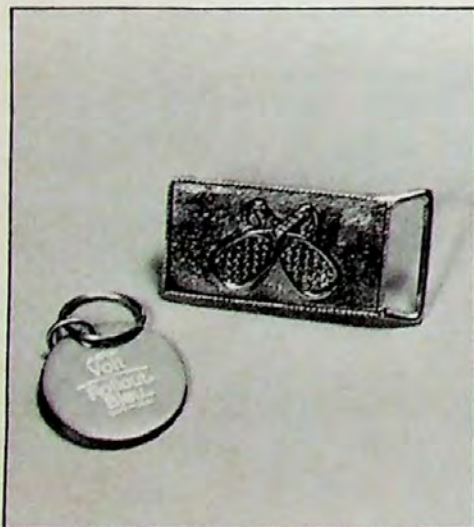
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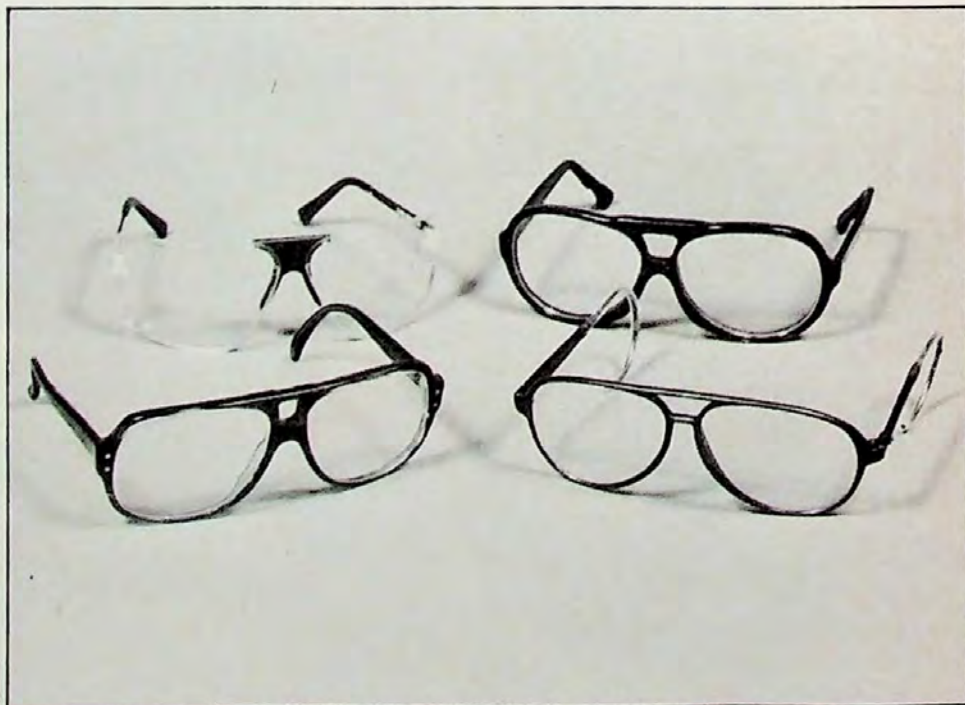
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National champ Marty Hogan is one of many touring pros to have played at The Sports Gallery.

THE SPORTS GALLERY Anaheim, California

Located less than one mile from Disneyland and a stone's throw from Anaheim Stadium, the Sports Gallery is generally considered one of the most beautiful clubs in Southern California.

Home of such pro tournaments as the Ektelon-Perrier Nationals, the AMF Voit-Self tournament and the Danny Thomas ST. Jude Hospital event, the Sports Gallery sports 20 courts, four of which can be viewed from a seating area which holds about 300.

The club offers a comfortable lounge area with a bar that serves cold food, beer and wine. Monday Night Football is popular because of the large screen television and special beer and hot dog prices.

Members can also enjoy a 20-meter lap pool, weight equipment and spa facilities which also contain televisions.

During the summer, the club plans special Thursday night pool parties with pizza and beer. Members also get together for snow and water skiing weekends. And members are still talking about the recent gambling-river rafting trip to Lake Tahoe.

The club opened in November 1978. Steve Groat and Lou Schmid are owners. David Dennis is general manager. Gary Berberet is head pro.

SPAULDING HIS AND HERS CLUB Arnold, Missouri

Take a large hockey rink, thaw out the ice and what do you have? After adding a few walls, you'll probably discover Spaulding's His and Hers Racquetball Club in Arnold, Mo., located 20 miles south of St. Louis.

Open since 1972 (Spaulding took over management in January 1981), His and Hers eight racquetball courts are a nice place to escape Missouri's icy winters and hot summers, according to manager Sue Breckenridge. "It gets nasty down here," she says. "When we have temperatures at freezing level, racquetball is a good way to warm up."

In Arnold's farming community, His and Hers features the usual Wallyball, whirlpool, saunas, weight room, and dancercise and slimnastic classes. "We're also a good tournament club,"

Breckenridge says. "The members are very loyal to each other. While mostly men play, many women come to have fun and socialize." This summer's mixed doubles tournament champions were Randy Huggins and Laura Gabler.

His and Hers also takes pride in its specialized children's program. "The Pee Wees," Breckenridge says, "are three to eight years old. We have them use smaller, lighter racquets and want them to concentrate on hitting the ball to the front wall." There is also a more advanced children's group called "The Targets."

"We tape up large Superman and cartoon characters and have the kids aim for the targets to develop accuracy," says Breckenridge.

The program developed after enthusiastic racquetball mothers placed their children in the day care nursery before going off to their own matches. The club was soon able to interest women in allowing their children to take up the sport in a supervised clinic-type setting.

HEALTH 'N SPORTS Westbury, Connecticut

Some racquetball clubs were converted from warehouses. Others used to house bowling alleys. And still others used to make headlines as arenas for basketball games and ice shows. Health 'N Sports in Westbury, Conn. was originally a movie house.

But nobody does much acting there these days unless it's a hotshot racquetball player trying to hustle up an easy match. And the owners have decided not to sell popcorn in between Saturday afternoon matches. It's just good, hard exercise for the members.

Health 'N Sports was said to be the first racquetball club to open on Long Island. It is located near major shopping areas, so there is no problem attracting members.

The club has 14 courts, four of which have glass. There are the usual amenities, including a 16-foot coed whirlpool which is one of the best social meeting places in town.

The club has the usual tournaments, leagues and challenge ladders, and it seems to draw some of the top racquetball players in the area. Says one member, "We have a lot of B division players here."

The club is made up of professional business people but more and more women seem to be signing up to play.

Club manager is Kenny Fitzpatrick. Coleen Gully is night manager.

COLLEGE COURTS

University of Missouri at Rolla

Students at the University of Missouri at Rolla ignore the fact that the campus lacks proper racquetball facilities. Because of tight funding, there is no bonafide racquetball building. Instead, students play on three outdoor courts.

But despite this handicap, racquetball is "going through a trend of popularity," says athletic director Billy Key.

Although there are no racquetball classes yet, many of Rolla's 6,500 enrolled students and faculty members take the initiative to organize games. "We have quite a few clubs on this campus," Key says, "and someday, if the popularity of racquetball continues, there is a possibility a club could be formed." Use of the courts operates on a first come, first serve basis, and court time is free.

Nestled in the heart of the Ozark Mountains, the Rolla campus primarily attracts Missouri residents, although many out-of-state students are lured to the school for specialized study in mining and

metallurgy, engineering and computer science. Located approximately 100 miles from St. Louis, the university has an extensive intramural program in which about 80 percent of its students participate.

"Our court hours are from 8 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. during the week," Key says. "We're open from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturdays, and from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Sundays. The outdoor courts opened in 1968, but there's no money at this time to expand a racquetball program or build additional courts."

Georgetown University

There is a small controversy at Georgetown University stemming from the university's refusal to grant academic course credit to students enrolled in racquetball and other physical education classes.

"At present, no credit is offered for racquetball or general sports coursework," says Mark Reiser, an athletic department spokesman. "The student government is trying to pass a bill to amend that policy and obtain at least one unit of credit for P.E. classes. The problem is that the building and facilities here are new (the racquetball courts celebrated their second anniversary in August) and the program is just peaking, so they are just starting to push for credit."

Physical education classes were once mandatory at the 10,000-student university, located just 15 miles from downtown Washington, D.C. But despite the Jesuit "sound body, sound mind" philosophy, physical training is no longer required, according to Pat Prather, executive assistant of instruction.

"We would like to provide credit for racquetball and other sports classes," Prather says, "but the university is split down the middle. It would certainly lend to our program and promote recreation."

Racquetball enjoys a healthy degree of participation at Georgetown, according to Reiser. "We have four indoor racquetball courts that are always booked up," he says. Students pay a \$60 athletic fee as part of their tuition to utilize all sports facilities.

"I've noticed in taking court reservations," Reiser says, "that it's mainly medical students who play racquetball. Dental students seem to prefer squash. The medical students come down

around 4 p.m., after their courses are over, and use racquetball to unwind from tension, more than to get exercise."

The average Georgetown students, Reiser says, plans to play tennis, but often switches to racquetball after being introduced to the sport. "Besides the team sports, racquetball is probably the sport that most Georgetown students play," Reiser says. "More play racquetball than swim or play tennis."

Courts at Georgetown are open to students, faculty, staff and university employees, in addition to members of Friends of Georgetown, a select group of individuals who have contributed either financially or in service to the university.

Four beginning and intermediate racquetball courses are offered each semester, each quickly filling to capacity with its maximum 12 students.

California State University at Long Beach

While California State University, Long Beach appears to be enjoying a racquetball boom, intramurals director Bill Vendl believes student participation could be higher.

"One reason there's not more participation," Vendl says, "is that we are surrounded by competitive courts within walking distance from campus. As players become more advanced, they realize they could be playing on better courts and they move on to regular clubs."

The 32,000-student university, located along the East Los Angeles County coast, houses two indoor and four outdoor racquetball courts, which remain in active use from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Approximately nine racquetball classes of various levels are offered each semester.

"We also run tournaments through intramurals each year," Vendl says. Men's singles usually attracts 100 players, while women's singles finds 65 to 75 participants. "This year, for the first time, we'll have a coed tournament," Vendl says.

The Long Beach courts were built about 20 years ago, and the flow of players has increased steadily over the years to the present point of being "always booked."

According to Vendl, "It's always busy. We haven't had much room to accommodate the general public."

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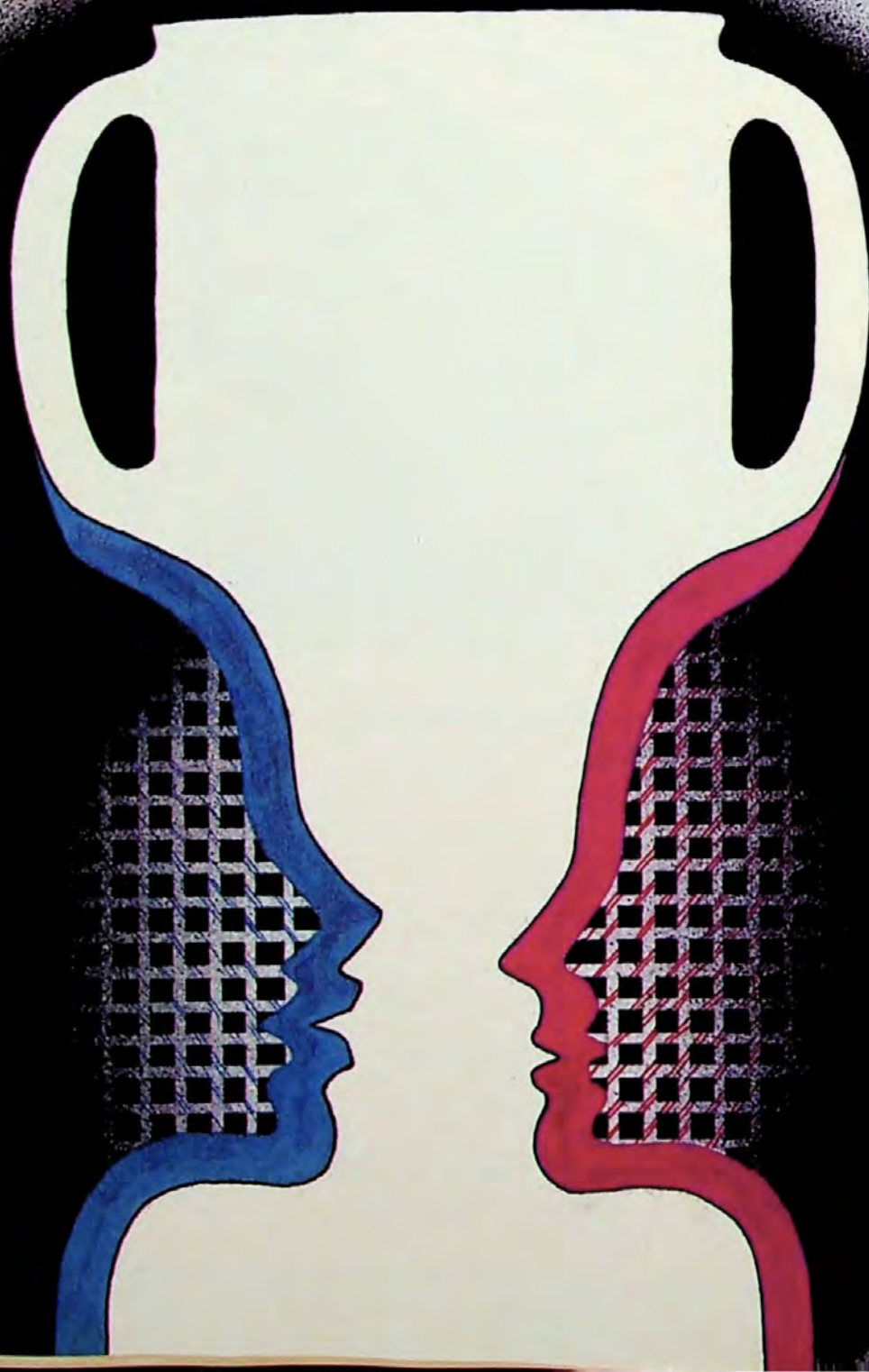


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FICTION

THE MATCH

What happens when a 34-year-old woman
meets a player half her age
with the winner qualifying for the pro tour?



By Richard Bruns

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from a novel-in-progress.

She was 5-foot-9 and 133 pounds with no excess fat; brunette with an olive complexion that made her blue eyes seem luminous. She was one quarter Cherokee Indian, one quarter Mexican and one half Irish, and at 34 years old, Kate was one of the most strikingly beautiful women the average man was likely to encounter. She had just blown her 17-year-old opponent off the court in the first game of their finals match in the California Grand Prix. The score had been 21-7.

Outside the court, Kate leaned back against the hallway wall to steady herself. Her knees felt weak and her hands were shaking. She knew the next game would be tougher. Her opponent was the child prodigy Karen Franklin, who although only half Kate's age, had been her standard of excellence for almost all of the two and a half years she'd been playing racquetball. Karen was a high school softball star, a top basketball player, and a champion long distance runner, but racquetball was her first love, as it was with Kate, and both were making a bid to go pro. That is why this match was so important. The winner would automatically get an invitation to join the women's pro tour.

Kate had never participated in anything athletic until turning 31 when she signed up for a swimming class and enrolled in a racquetball class at the local community college. She had even dated the racquetball instructor a few times, and while the relationship was short-lived, racquetball came to dominate her life. In a short time, she dominated all the students and teachers, including her first instructor. Later she joined the local racquetball club and began to dominate the challenge court.

It was soon apparent that Kate possessed the same kind of raw talent as Karen Franklin, who was only 14 at that time. But because Kate developed her physical talent so late and because she wanted to do it all so fast, she became a fanatic in her training. Her friends recognized the fire in her, and felt she had a chance to make pro depending on how much she wanted it.

In the hallway, she looked at her hands, one of them still holding the graphite racquet tightly in front of her. They still shook. It was more than her usual tournament nervousness, with which she had come to deal adequately. Instead, it was the hot adrenalin rush of having defeated Karen Franklin in the first game. It was the first time they had ever played each other, and it was hard for her to even consider toppling her own heroine, to dare believe that after all these years of seeming physically "inferior," she might actually be not only as good as, but even better than the barely pubescent adolescent she had first watched in that tournament over two years ago. Karen had blasted her way through the women's B division like a bullet through a window, and it was not long before she had

captured every national juniors age group title available. Kate said to herself, "I can deal with this."

Kate received her bachelor's degree in English literature at 22, finished her master's degree in journalism at 24, married immediately afterwards, and worked as a reporter for a small town paper in the Midwest. A year later, she bore Melissa, who was now 10 years old. She had been happy.

Then the fairy tale ended. A late-term miscarriage and its subsequent complications rendered Kate completely sterile at 26. She buried her grief and loss in work, devoting herself to her job with a zeal that resulted in promotions to the paper's city beat, the most demanding reporting job on the paper.

She dedicated herself to rooting out corruption in their town of 40,000 middle class Caucasian Americans and 373 Mexican-Americans, according to the last census. While exposing a handful of crooks who were involved in kick-back schemes with real estate dealers and developers, she was threatened several times. For the extended series she'd written, resulting in several convictions, she had been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. But that was history. No one on the racquetball tour had ever heard of her, or associated the nationally-acclaimed articles with her. Fully a third of the players on the pro tour, she realized wryly, were only between 12 and 16 years old at the time.

After six years of marriage, her husband asked for, and received, a divorce. He also asked for their daughter, Melissa. Kate asked Melissa, then close to six, what she wanted. The girl, who knew her mother mostly as a byline in the section just before the comics page, said, "Daddy."

Kate quit her job, packed up her string-book of articles, typewriter and savings account, and drove her 1967 European Volkswagen Variant to the wine country of Northern California, where she rented an apartment, joined the racquetball club and met Frank, who played racquetball and owned a magazine. Frank gave Kate a job reporting the social scene.

Kate was six months into playing racquetball when she met Frank at the racquetball club. He was a fair player, but didn't like the pressure of competition tournaments created, so he played socially a couple of times a week with friends, and let it go at that. Their first date was a picnic lunch at the town park, and they fell in love.

It was of Frank she was thinking during the last seconds of her two-minute between-game break, which she was trying to stretch out as long as she could. She was wishing he was here, wishing they were... still together. He used to help her relax, his deep warm eyes helping her to slow the rapid beating of her heart.

Karen Franklin opened the court door and told Kate that the referee was demanding that she return, that the two minutes were more than up. Kate nodded, quickly pulling off and tossing down the wet, slick glove, replacing it with a new, dry glove.

Kate had not expected to win this match, but with her victory in the first game, she knew she could do it, if only her damn heart would slow down, would stop wham-bam yammering it way through her chest, so that she could move into the mental pace necessary for total concentration on her game, without all these other distractions. But was Frank out there watching her?

Karen had served first in the first game. Now Kate had the first serve advantage. She hit the ball a few times, sliding it low into easy forehand and backhand kill shots, a few tight pinches in both corners, then walked to the service box, twisting the racquet grip in her hand to get the feel of the handle through her new glove. She lined her feet up on the short line, bent over low, elbows out and close to the floor waiting.

A few seconds passed, then the referee called, "Ladies, this is the second game. Zero serves to zero." Kate held her position for a couple of seconds more, concentrating, visualizing, focusing, then turned her head slightly to check Karen's ready position, the direction of her feet, the lean of her body, the intense look in her eyes. Kate met those eyes, dark, almost black, with her own determined stare. This one was not going to be quite so easy as the first game had been.

Kate dropped the ball lightly, moving her right foot behind her other leg, then stepping forward with her left foot. She stroked through the ball, contacting it a scant six inches off the floor. The ball cracked loudly off the tightly strung racquet strings with an almost deafening echo in the stillness of the court. The upper gallery audience was quiet with anticipation, the audience outside the glass wall inaudible. Hitting the front wall about 12 inches above the floor, the ball popped loudly as Kate quickly stepped back into left center court while watching the ball slip over the short line. Karen reached for the ball, swinging at it with a well-set backhand, but missed it entirely.

"Ace serve, and point," the referee called. Then, after winning for the players to regain a ready position, he said, "One serves zero." Thank God for a referee with good vision who knows his stuff, Kate thought, settling in for another attempt at her 100-mile-per-hour blistering drive.

"Two bounces, side out! Zero serves one."
"Skip, point! One serving to one."
"No! Good pass, side out."

And so it went, trading points, rallies, serve for serve, shot for shot, until each woman, both depleted of allotted time-outs, both winded, both nearly exhausted, both drenched with sweat, knuckled down for the last point. 20-20.

Karen lifted a high lob second serve from the extreme right end of the service box. Kate set her shoulder, cocking her racquet into the potential spring-trap of her lightning-like whip action backhand and watched the ball drop, drop, drop into the backhand corner, too high to intercept and cut off. With just enough final, lateral movement, the ball hit the floor inches from the back and side walls, and died.

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THE MATCH

"Ace serve, point, and game," said the referee. "Ladies, you have five minutes before the tiebreaker begins. Kate, you have the most accumulated points in the first two games. You will serve the tiebreaker. Please return on time."

Kate slipped the wrist tether from over her hand, tossed the racquet into a rear corner of the court, and stepped briskly out through the court door, heading straight for the rear hall exit. Outside, a stiff wind offered coolness to her soaking shirt while sweat poured into her eyes.

She had played well, better than she'd ever played before, and she'd almost pulled it off. Almost. But now it had to be done in the tiebreaker. Eleven points. Each point was an essay, a lesson in concentration, a tactical perfection. There could be no errors, no mistakes, no misjudgments. She would go for it as though an error would cost her her life. She settled back to refocus her concentration, absorbing the mistakes of the last game, assessing her own strengths and weaknesses, and those of her opponent, Karen Franklin.

As soon as Frank saw the serve drop into the backhand corner, and watched Kate go stomping from the court after slinging her racquet 15 feet into the corner, and hearing Karen's war-whoop of triumph, he slipped into the men's locker room. It would probably not do Kate's game any good to have her see him. There was a time that his presence helped her focus her concentration. Now he could only intrude on it, so he had stayed in the lobby background, barely visible from the court.

He hoped she would win. She wanted it so badly. It was incredibly important to her, especially since he had broken the news to her the week before, that after a year and a half of "trial" separation, he was returning to his wife and three children; that they were going for a second try. He wondered if she would resign from the magazine, but she hadn't so far.

Frank made his way back to his shadowy spot in the lobby and saw that the game was already in progress.

"Anyone know the score?" he asked a group of watchers nearest him.

"Five, zero, McCafferty," someone said.

Kate was ahead. Frank was surprised, but pleased. Kate had nearly spent herself in that second game, and he thought her age would catch up to her.

"Do it!" he thought so harshly to himself he almost said it aloud. His hands were clenched into tight fists. He wanted her to win.

"Six serves to zero."

"Ace. Point."

Karen Franklin looked up to the referee as she lifted her left hand flat to form a "T" with her racquet before he had a chance to call the 7-0 score.

"Time out, Karen Franklin. Karen, you have no more time outs; Kate you have both of yours remaining."

Then the tide turned. Kate seemed to lose her concentration, and Karen began playing well. Karen outscored Kate 9-2 over the next 15 minutes and the score was knotted 9-9 with Karen serving.

Frank felt the perspiration dripping down his body beneath his shorts and racquet club shirt. "Come on, babe!" he cried in agonizing silence to Kate. "Play percentage shots."

"Ace, point," said the referee. Karen had surprised Kate with a drive serve to the forehand side.

"Possible game and match point serves to nine." There were no time outs remaining for either player. This was the crunch. This was it. This was the dividing line!

Karen again surprised Kate with a drive to Kate's forehand, but Kate returned it to the ceiling. Karen dropped quickly to the backhand rear corner and popped another ceiling shot. The ceiling rally lasted nine more shots, and then one of Kate's returns came up short.

Frank knew it was over. He watched the grin flash across Karen Franklin's face as she cocked her forehand. There was a gasp from the collective audience as Karen's forehand pinch rolled out. Then an enormous explosion of applause filled the lobby and gallery. It was a match worth cheering for. Karen automatically qualified for the pro tour but everyone knew Kate would eventually get there.

Kate will have taken the lessons learned here, Frank thought, and turned them into re-inspired dedication. Perhaps, just perhaps, it would be a different story the next time the two faced each other. And he knew there would be a next time.

Kate shook hands with Karen and left the court quickly, feeling the echoes of Karen's whoops like a dart tossed at her gut. She grabbed her athletic bag and walked down the hallway towards the locker room not meeting the curious glances from friends and other players.

"Damn," she thought. "How could I miss that ceiling ball? Such an easy, stupid shot." It was the kind of shot Frank used to help her shake off and come back from.

At her locker she fumbled her combination open, shoved her gear in, took her wet clothes off, grabbed a towel and headed for the showers. The hot water bounced off her back while she stared at the swinging doors of the shower stall without really seeing them. There was no one to see the tears which replaced the last of her anger.

Oh, how she wanted that match. "Dammit, I almost had it," she whispered to the jetting water stream. The ghost of a smile was slipping onto her face. She knew she played well, and had played well despite Frank's absence. One stupid shot had blown the match. But one shot was not going to keep her from becoming a pro.

She had almost done it this time. Her smile grew wider now. She lost the match, but she had won hard knowledge and renewed concentration. Next time she would do it. Practice would begin tomorrow.

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★ RACQUETBALL GLOVES ★

Ektelon, Leach, or Foot Joy "Sta Soft"	8 49 ea
	or 2 for 14 99

ADDITIONAL

★ RACQUETBALL ACCESSORIES ★

Supreme Grips	3 grips for 14 99
Tourna Grip II	1 grip for 1 79
GEXCO Racquetball Saver	7 75
Ektelon T-Shirts (S.M.L.XL)	7 50 Ea
Gatorade	20-1 Gal. Packs 22 99

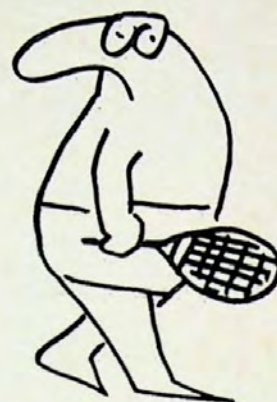
- All racquets come strung with factory covers when provided by company - specify grip size
- Add \$2 50 postage, insurance, handling on all orders
- All orders processed within 24 hours
- Super discount catalog available, write in, it's FREE
- Mastercharge/Visa accepted - Add 3% for handling
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When in Miami please visit our store. When in West Palm Beach visit our store at 1675 Forum Place



OFF THE WALL

Cartoon by Tony Saltzman



"Save the excuses, lady! No one plays on this court without a racquetball glove."

THE NEXT SHOT...

Our next issue is filled with some interesting features and instruction stories:

STATE OF THE SPORT

What is the outlook for racquetball in 1982?

SERVING

What Marty Hogan does that the others don't.

OLD TIMERS

A pair of elderly college professors pick apart their younger opponents.

BRET HARNETT

A feature on one of the rising young touring pros.

PLAYERS OF THE YEAR

Who will be named outstanding male, female and most improved players for 1981?

PLUS:

Results of the first Catalina men's pro tourney, instruction on back wall play, and an interesting story on improving your mental game.



THE 245 GRAM RACQUET. IT'S NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY.

Behind its lightweight exterior, the Impact L is a calculating performer.

Its modified tear drop head shape powers the ball with precision placement. And our exclusive new stringing pattern, 12 mains and 14 crosses, keeps the ball on the strings a split second longer. So control is increased.

The racquet also feels smoother because a unique 2-section throat absorbs string vibration.

Nicer yet, the Impact L comes in three grip sizes smaller hands will be happy to get a hold of.

Impact L from Voit. The light racquet that throws its weight around the court.

Santa Ana, CA 92704.

AMF
Voit

THE POWER OF STEEL

DP Leach state of the art technology brings the power of steel to racquetball.

Power and Speed — It's where the game of racquetball is today. If you want to have the advantage in this fast paced sport, you need equipment that will deliver all you've got to give.

DP Leach called on the respected name of True Temper to develop a racquet material that would be lightweight enough to swing correctly for hours at a time yet strong enough to deliver the power demanded by today's

rapidly improving players.

You will be delighted with the results: The Marty Hogan Steel. Made of lightweight chromalloy ultra high-strength steel, this racquet has the greatest resistance to permanent deflection of any metal racquetball racquet on the market. It will deliver shot after shot consistently.

This special steel alloy allows the frame to be "stepped down" just like a golf shaft with the frame ranging from a relatively large diameter thin wall section at the top of the head to smaller diameters with thicker walls in the throat. The resulting feel you'll get from this revolutionary new racquet is sheer power.

This is one racquet you simply have to try — it's awesome!



Diversified
Products
Opelika, Alabama
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Marty Hogan, racquetball's all-time leading money winner and four times Nationals champion.