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On the cover . . .

Racquetball instructor Jim Schatz has the undivided attention of two youngsters as he teaches them the specifics of No Bounce racquetball. Details on this latest development in the junior arena are on page 6.

—Photo by Milo Muslin

Next issue . . .

You won't want to miss April's great instructional section featuring more excerpts from Strandemo and a new series from APRO certified pros, the best teachers in the nation. Also an article on Mike Levine, more Keeley and coverage of the latest tour stops.

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From The Editor . . .

No Bounce: The Best Idea Yet



Hats off to Ed Martin, Dwayne Grimes, Luke St. Onge and the AARA!

Now, coming from me, that's some compliment. Most people know that over the years, I haven't especially seen eye-to-eye with the AARA and some of the developments within that organization. But guys, you did good this time.

I speak of Eight-and-under No Bounce, the junior development program currently being run under the auspices of AARA. This program began in the experimentation stage nearly three years ago and has developed into a full-fledged competitive and promotional program.

Nothing the AARA could do would be more important. In fact, if the AARA did nothing except their junior development program, their time would be well spent.

The racquetball industry has long been plagued by the lack of junior promotion. Our initial successes were adult, either participants from other sports moving into our game, former athletes seeing racquetball as their cure-all, or non-jocks making their first attempt. But with few exceptions, there was never room for the kids.

As racquetball grew the court club boom began creating a situation that led to lack of junior involvement in clubs. For one, club owners didn't want a bunch of kids running around their clubs. After all, the courts were already filled with adults, why throw in kids? All they do is dirty up the place, get in the way, and irritate the adults who come to the club as a place to get away from the kids.

Well, now the courts aren't so filled and most club owners would welcome a strong base of junior players, particularly in the many non-prime hours when kids are available.

A second problem that retarded the growth of junior racquetball in clubs was the cost factor. Court time or monthly dues were too expensive for most kids to afford. Again, the highly competitive club

industry can now offer juniors an economic incentive to play, simply because they need the money.

The third reason many kids didn't take to racquetball was the trouble the littles of the little had in learning the sport. The "big" racquets and "large" handles made the already difficult eye-hand coordination increasingly so.

In No Bounce racquetball, the kids can have their parents or teachers modify their racquet to make the grip more suitable.

In fact No Bounce racquetball could eventually lead to partial solutions for all of the above-mentioned ills. And why not? It's creative, fun, competitive and instructive.

No Bounce is probably the creation of Lou Fabian, a Pennsylvanian teaching pro, and board member of the American Professional Racquetball Organization (APRO). As word of the game spread, people like Martin and Grimes picked up on it (see p. 8).

Variations of No Bounce can also be an exciting change and challenge for adults. I remember playing a version of No Bounce (it was really two-bounce) against Ron Rubenstein back in 1972 when Ron was ranked second in the nation. Although I lost, I was able to manage 17 or 18 points per game and make a fun and competitive hour for both of us.

So let's continue the trend. Embrace No Bounce for the kids and watch racquetball's future take to the courts. ●

Chuck Fave

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'No Bounce' Racquetball Craze Has Juniors Lining Up Nation-wide

—Photo by Milo Muslim



Instructor Jim Schatz makes a point to his young students as they prepare for a No Bounce racquetball game.

It was a sight to warm the innards of any club owner, racquetball manufacturer, or one who truly cares about the future of racquetball.

Here were two youngsters, ages seven and eight, scurrying around the court, in hot pursuit of the darting racquetball. One would eventually track it down and get it to the front wall, while his opponent rested, leaning against the side wall.

Here came the return. The resting child bolted after the ball, allowing it to hit the backwall on its fifth bounce and catching up to it near the short line. He walloped it back to the front wall while his opponent was catching his rest along the opposite wall.

And so it went, time after time, as the two kids enjoyed the latest in racquetball's long line of evolutionary developments, something called Eight-and-under No Bounce racquetball. Remember it well, because before long your child will be playing "No Bounce," the latest racquetball craze to sweep the nation.

"We hit on No Bounce a few years ago as a method of introducing racquetball to the eight-and-under age category," said Luke St. Onge, executive director of the American Amateur Racquetball Association (AARA). "Our initial success led to a resolve on our part to continue to promote No Bounce as a means of generating a major junior development program."

Junior development, the key to the success of virtually every other sport in the United States, has been an open sore in the racquetball industry. Primarily due to the nature of the game and the nature of

the facilities, kids simply have not had the opportunity to jump into racquetball like other sports.

Yet no dissenting opinion has been heard over the years to convince the powers-that-be of anything other than the truth: if racquetball is to survive over the long haul, it desperately needs a viable junior development program.

"The problem," said St. Onge, "is that we're getting to the kids too late. Add to that the reluctance on the part of many club owners to allow kids to run around their clubs and you have a deadly combination. We're trying to break it with No Bounce."

One man who deserves much of the credit for getting No Bounce off the ground is Dwayne Grimes, former manager of the Supreme Court West Racquetball Club in his hometown, Wichita, KS. Grimes is president of the AARA's youth council.

"I have a son who was six-and-a-half and liked to get on the courts," said Grimes. "But there was no way he could play. He'd have to wait and wait for the ball to enter his hitting zone and he just didn't have the eye-hand coordination necessary to make contact. The frustration was turning him off rather than on to racquetball."

Grimes had seen many other kids of similar ages, peering out of the club's nursery windows, itching to get on the court like Mom and Dad. So he designed the No Bounce prototype.

At first, the game resembled organized chaos similar to a couple of frisky puppies trying to retrieve a stick. Eventually Grimes and a crew of AARA cohorts modified the rules to make a workable and enjoyable game.

"This was in late 1978 and early 1979," he says. "We ran an AARA junior regional tournament and we experimented with No Bounce. People saw it, liked it and it began to spread. I started getting calls from all over the nation."

Among the callers was Ed Martin, the AARA's junior commissioner. Ed ran one of the AARA's 1981 junior regionals and incorporated No Bounce into an eight-and-under division of play. The results were astonishing.



Boom! A blistering drive serve off the racquet of the 1995 men's open national champion.

Word spread rapidly through racquetball's well-oiled grapevine and soon play sprouted in Florida, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, New York and southern California.

"I went up to Ed's tournament in northern California and saw Eight-and-under No Bounce for the first time," said Jim Schatz, president of the Southern California Racquetball Association (SCRA). "I then went to the AARA junior nationals and saw it again. I went back to Los Angeles and immediately began our own Eight-and-under No Bounce program."

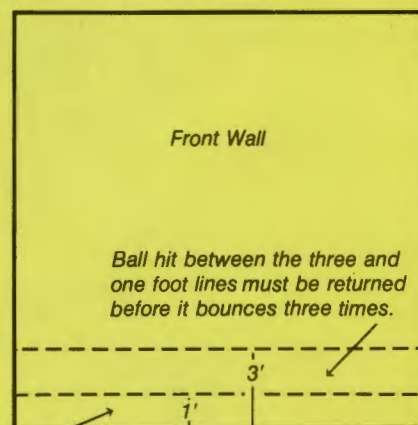
That program has evolved into a regular series of events, the Southern California/Seamco Junior Racquetball Winter

Rules For No Bounce Racquetball

1. A legal serve must be hit.
2. After a legal serve, the ball may bounce as many times as the receiver wants until he or she swings once to return the ball to the front wall (in other words, you get one swing at it).
3. The ball may be hit at any time during the rally, but it *must* be hit *before* it crosses the *short line* on its way *back* to the front wall.
4. The receiver can hit the ball before it hits the back wall or may play it off the back wall but cannot cross the short line *after* the ball contacts the back wall.
5. The exception to crossing the short line is if the ball is returned to the back wall on the fly from the front wall (without touching the floor). In this case the receiver may cross the short line, but he must play the ball on the first bounce.
6. "A line is drawn or taped on the front wall at the three foot (off the floor) level and at the one foot level. If the ball strikes between the two lines during the rally, it has to be returned *before* it bounces the third time. If the ball strikes below the one foot level during the rally, it must be returned to the front wall before it bounces twice (as in
7. "In the back court a line is drawn or taped dividing the court in half, parallel to the side walls. Depending on whether the player is right or left-handed, he must hit a forehand on one side and a backhand on the other. This forces players to develop both strokes.
8. Games are to 11 points, scoring by server only. Matches are best two out of three games.

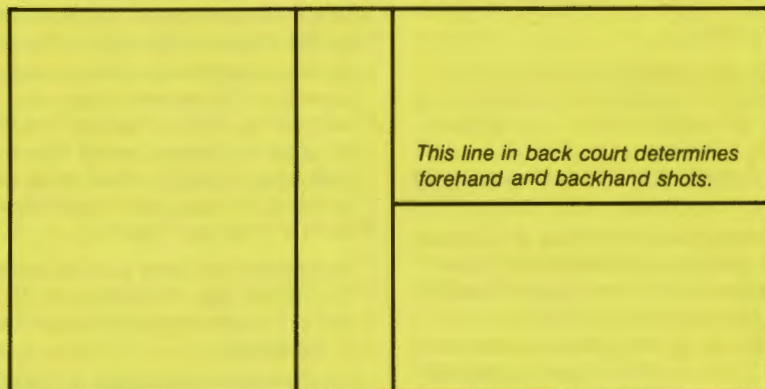
*Rules six and seven are optional, but should be applied at the earliest possible time.

Front View



Balls hitting the front wall below the one foot line must be returned before the second bounce.

Top View



Grand Prix. Five major junior tournaments (each with an Eight-and-under No Bounce category) take place from December through March up and down southern California. Schatz reports the results have been tremendous.

"The game is the easiest I've seen to get the kids involved," he says. "The

concept of letting the ball bounce an unlimited number of times is very useful in getting the kids to enjoy their time on the court. And the game is fun. I even had fun teaching it."

Wichita's Grimes agrees. "There are occasions when I'll play regular racquetball against my son, who's playing No

Starting them early is the goal of No Bounce. As long as the child is bigger than the racquet, he can learn the game.

Jean Sauser, teaching pro at the Milwaukee, OR Racquetball Club gives pointers to two juniors.



—Photo by Lauren Shay

Bounce," he said. "It's fun, challenging for both of us and it's not unusual for him to win. It's great. The kids come home and tell mom, 'I beat Dad at racquetball today.'"

In addition to organizing tournaments, Schatz spends a great deal of his time planning and running clinics in southern California. Each clinic he puts on includes a session of Eight-and-under No Bounce.

"If racquetball has any future at all," he says, "it needs large numbers of players. Eight-and-under No Bounce teaches the kids racquetball at an early age and allows parents to bring their children to the club to play under supervised conditions. I wouldn't be surprised to see hundreds of clubs across the nation start offering No Bounce as a means of developing junior players.

"Our future depends on development and growth. This program will have a great impact."

Schatz claims to be able to teach the game to kids in as short a time as 30 minutes and has done so in his clinics. And the children seem to recruit their own peers to try out the game, beginning

the snowball effect that can only improve the future of racquetball.

Besides the rule modifications, No Bounce allows racquet alterations that help the children accomplish the difficult eye-hand coordination. Since virtually all racquets on the market today are designed for adults, the kids find the racquet grips too large to wield effectively. (Think how difficult it would be to play if you could only get your hand half-way around the racquet handle.)

The remedy has been a bit of craftsmanship. Grimes has modified over 300 racquets in the two years he's been involved with No Bounce.

"I recommend the lightest, smallest racquet in any of the available lines," he says, "and then we suggest cutting down the handle grip so the child can get his or her hand around it.

"If that doesn't work, then go to a cut-down version of squash or badminton racquets."

Any racquet within reason is allowed in No Bounce competition so players, parents and coaches need not concern themselves with regulations involving the equipment. The important thing from all



—Photo by Arthur Shay

points of view is to get the kids on the court and involved.

"Our overall goal is like any junior development program," said Grimes. "Other sports start the kids at seven, eight and nine years old—soccer, baseball, football, all of them. Why shouldn't racquetball?"

No Bounce for eight-and-under kids will be offered in each of the AARA junior regional tournaments (there are 13 sites throughout the U.S. and Canada) May 7-9, as well as the AARA junior nationals, June 24-27, at Capitol Courts in Carson City, NV.

How old should your son or daughter be before it's wise to let them try No Bounce? Grimes has had them as young as three-years-old, with plenty in the four- and five-year-old range. When the children are this young it takes them a few weeks to catch on.

"And you do have to watch them," he cautions. "Their attention span is about 10 minutes, maximum. We have to vary the activities on the court, but we keep coming back to No Bounce racquetball. They really love it."

Both Grimes and St. Onge are predicting record entries in the Eight-and-under No Bounce category at the junior nationals. The demand is increasing and the kids are enjoying themselves.

"You'd better believe it," says Grimes. "They're playing all over the country and it's just beginning. It's already successful and will be more so as the word spreads.

"A lot of 12, 13, and 14-year-olds have younger brothers and sisters that they're getting to play No Bounce. It allows them to play with and encourage their younger family members and it gets more and more kids on the court."

For further information on No Bounce contact Grimes at (316) 942-1661, St. Onge at AARA headquarters (901) 761-1172, or Martin at (916) 920-0606. ●

Racquetball or Racquetball Ball?

(Part III)

by Steve Keeley

Racquetball has progressed in less than a decade from a YMCA micro-monopoly to a commercial court club free-for-all. The reason for the game's burgeoning popularity can be explained deductively. This country is made up of untold millions of Walter Mitty jocks who are anxious for athletic activity; racquetball is an athletic activity which any Walter Mitty can easily play; ergo, anybody and everybody is playing racquetball. The real mystery is, *why* is the game so easily played? The simple answer is the lively ball.

What is "lively?" The rules state that the racquetball, being of sound mind, $2\frac{1}{4}$ " in diameter and weighing 1.40 ounces, should rebound 67-72" when dropped to the floor from a height of 100" at a temperature of 76°F. When was the last time you saw a tournament official (perhaps a designated ball person) test a ball with this protocol before a match? Never?! It would be impractical. Plus, it's confusing. Heed the wit of Charlie Brumfield, who once told a clinic, *"I can't believe that you guys play with this (brand) ball up here. A broken ball of my (brand) is more lively than an unbroken one of yours."*

So, let's take a more practical and less confusing definition of a lively ball. (At the admitted risk of oversimplification, because actually there is a gradient rather than a distinct demarcation between "live" and "dead".) For the sake of convenience: a ball hit firmly to the ceiling which reaches the back wall on the first bounce is fairly *lively*. A ball hit in exactly the same manner which does not reach the back wall after the first bounce is fairly *dead*.

Environmental factors

With definitions out of the way, let's consider the many environmental factors which influence the liveliness of a given ball. Do you recall the 76°F during the 100" drop from the rule quoted above? This is one of the influences—*temperature*. The warmer the court, the more lively the ball and vice versa.

We had one tournament in Houston where the courts were like refrigerator rooms. Most players wore sweats throughout their matches, though it might



Steve Keeley showing his perfect forehand form.

have been wiser to put little jackets on the balls to warm *them* up since they didn't bounce worth diddly in the cold air.

Another environmental influence (which the rules neglect to mention) is *altitude*. A ball that bounces in mile-high Steamboat Springs as though injected with helium may plop in sea-level San Diego as though filled with cement. Hence, as you go higher so does the ball.

Then there are the *court factors* which affect ball liveliness. I'm referring to the amount of spring/solidity in the floor, walls and ceiling. One of the first bits of gossip that circulates among pro players upon arriving at a tourney is *"How do the courts play?"* . . . *"Oh, the ceiling is a sponge, but the floor is a trampoline."*

Besides the environmental influences, there are many variables that affect liveliness which are intrinsic to *the ball itself*. After all, the racquetball ball is the godchild of Charles Goodyear's serendipitous discovery of rubber vulcanization, and Goodyear told us over and over that rubber is a fickle substance to work with. That makes bounce-consistency a

tough goal. The kind of rubber, the thickness of the walls, and pressurization all interact to give the ball its bounce.

Even color affects ball playability. For example, there was a rash of breakage when the first green balls came out in 1974, the year of the inaugural pro tour. *Kelly green* was the official tour color for balls, shoes, t-shirt trim, etc.; I got sick of celebrating St. Patrick's Day every tournament. The manufacturer traced the problem to the green dye used to color the rubber during processing—it weakened the ball, making it more likely to break.

Relative Bounce Tests

Now let's examine the four common methods of determining the *relative bounce* of a ball. The first method is in accordance to the *rules*, where you bounce the ball from 100" to see if it rebounds 67-72". As I said, it's rare to have this procedure performed at tournaments nowadays, though it was more common in the old days of two-tournaments-a-year (the nationals and the national invitational).

In fact, back in the early 1970's, heated controversy sometimes arose surrounding this ostensibly straightforward rule test. For example, one often repeated ploy occurred if a shady player wanted to use a slow ball (that wouldn't bounce up to the required 67") when none were available. No problem, he would steal off to the locker room with the dead ball hidden in his shorts or gym bag. There he would stick the sphere under hot tap water for a minute. This heated the internal air (similar to, but quicker than, the sauna technique) and thus livened the ball. The player then returned to the court, submitted his heated ball to the referee who administered the 100" bounce test and often congratulated—*"Gee, this is a great ball. Where did you get such a lively one?"* Of course, the ball cooled down to normal internal temperature about midway through the first game and started bouncing like an overcooked garbanzo bean, which is what the shady player wanted in the first place.

The second method of determining the relative bounce of a ball is the *ceiling ball test*, which I mentioned earlier. When you see a couple of pros on the court before their match hitting ceiling balls—each with a half-dozen different balls—they aren't limbering up their arms. They are looking for a dead ball, a live ball or (as is usually the case), for an argument with the other player about how *"You aren't hitting your test ceiling balls very hard so your ball seems dead but really isn't because everyone knows you like a fast ball...!"*

The familiar argument invariably brought

about by the ceiling ball test is invariably settled by the third method of ascertaining relative ball bounce—the *drop test*. In this, you drop two balls simultaneously from shoulder height. Sir Isaac Newton says that they'll hit the floor at the same time, and Sir Keeley says that the more lively one will rebound higher.

The final relative bounce method is the *squeeze technique*. This is the same as when you test bicycle tire pressure by squeezing the rubber between your thumb and forefinger. A rabbit ball (fast) will squeeze like a pool ball and a turtle ball (slow) will feel like a marshmallow.

Ball Shenanigans

Note that a ball loses its liveliness with use, even if it wasn't at one time hyped up in hot water, in a sauna or with a needle injection of air. You don't believe me? Save an old ball and compare it to a new one by the same company. The oldie will be thinner walled, slicker and have less spring in its step. The pros are frequently petulant on this point, and often ask for a change of balls in the middle of a game. People in the gallery often can't understand this request for a switch—*"What the heck, the thing still bounces."*

Unless the call for a ball change is a psychological ploy or a stall for time, the reason is that enough air has been pounded through the pores of the rubber walls to render the ball a mere languid version of its original lively self. The referee may or may not agree with the player who requested the switch. If the ref agrees that the ball is too dead, then the second game ball (which was also chosen ear-

lier, at the game's outset) is tossed in. But, in the event that the ref does not assent, the player may appeal to his opponent for an agreement to change. Only if the opponent concurs is the ref overruled and a new ball thrown in.

This ball change rule also holds for allegedly out-of-round balls or any other ball peculiarity which one player may claim. Incidentally, the strategy-wise racquetballer in a tournament will almost never agree to a ball change should his opponent call for it. Let the grouch worry about the present ball and, moreover, let him get upset that you disagree with his opinion that the ball is unusable.

This brings up a curious anecdote about two pros in the 1979 Los Angeles pro stop. It was a round of 16 match with Don against Salty Sam. (The names have been changed to protect the guilty.) Don is a power player who prefers a fast ball; Sam is a controller who likes a slower ball. The pre-game negotiations were lengthy, but somehow the two players agreed to first and second game balls. The first ball apparently heated up in the initial game, more than Salty Sam had anticipated. The now-fast sphere catered to Don's power game, and it was a routine cakewalk for him.

But Salty Sam is no strategic slouch. He disappeared during the first-second game break and couldn't be found... funny thing, the game ball couldn't be found either. Don, a house of a man, is no strategic clod either. He began stomping around the court bellowing, *"Where is he? Where is the ball? I know Sam is somewhere changing balls on me."* About that time, in walked Salty Sam. Don said suspiciously, *"Is this the same ball?"* And Salty Sam said that yes, it was the same ball. *"Ok,"* Don snorted, *"we'll start with this one, but if it's different then we change."* You don't argue with Don.

Well, it was different, all right. The first ceiling shot fell so short of the back wall that you'd have thought the ball was just pulled from a decompression chamber. Don didn't even bother to return the short ceiling shot, but plucked the ball from mid-air with his meaty fist, hurled it over the back wall to the ref and said, *"We're changing balls."* The ref concurred and tossed in the earlier picked second game ball. It was slow, much slower than the one they had used in the first game. But Don was legally handcuffed: the referee had deemed the ball playable and certainly Salty Sam would not agree to substitute a faster ball. Result? The deader orb took the steam out of Don's powerful serve and shoot attack and he dropped the next two games for the match.

You may be asking what happened to the original lively ball they used in the first game? Members of the audience wondered the same, until they examined

Keeley against Rich Wagner: dive if you have to, but get the ball back.





Keeley versus Jerry Hilecher in deep court.
Touch is what you need on those ceiling balls.

that ball which Don had tossed over the back wall. No, it was the same ball used in the first game . . . but it had a needle hole in it where, between games, Sam had removed just enough air to deflate Don's power game.

Let's leave the professionals and their shenanigans to focus on the amateurs. I remind you that the lively nature of the racquetball is one of the main reasons for our sport's short learning curve; consequently, the ball is directly responsible for racquetball's phenomenal growth over the past few years.

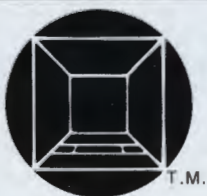
In retrospect I think the ball manufacturers hurt the run-of-the-court amateur players with the superball of the 1974-75 era. This ball was simply too fast for the average hacker to keep up with. (More on this in a minute.) Indeed, and this should serve as a future warning, they almost wrung their own necks by exploiting the familiar "more is better" principle. The companies apparently reasoned that if "bounce" was good and "bounce-bounce" was better, just think what "bounce-bounce-bounce" would do. Thus evolved the dead . . . to fast . . . to super-fast racquetball.

Fortunately, the instinct for self-preservation by the ball companies prevailed and the ball went from bounce-bounce-bounce back to bounce-bounce. That is,

the most prevalent balls in use today are the (bounce-bounce) medium bounce variety where ceiling shots reach the back wall but do not rebound over it.

I feel that even the medium speed ball may be too fast for beginning players. The unconditioned reflexes of most novices can't cope with the wingless rubber hummingbird darting around the court, and what fun is the game if you can't catch up with the stupid ball until it ricochets unexpectedly off some dumb wall onto your noggin? I encourage my novice students to play with a *slow ball* that allows them to develop their timing strokes and court thinking in a more realistic dimension of reaction time. Your rallies will be longer, you'll have more fun and you'll get a better workout if you start with a turtle ball . . . then graduate to the rabbit. ●

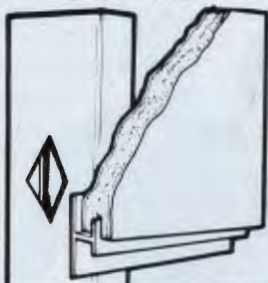
(Editor's note: Next issue—In the concluding portion of this four-part series, Keeley discusses ball price and game strategy, suggesting that the road to competence may be paved with split racquetballs.)



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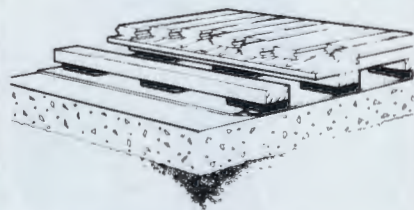
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Doubles Champ Ken Garrigus Fights For More 'Action'

by Mort Leve

Four "lethal weapons" in the cozy confines of the four-wall court seem to scare off many racquetballers from interspersing their singles competition with occasional doubles action. Walk into a club with 10 or more courts and you'll rarely find more than one doubles match taking place.

Phoenix' Ken Garrigus is one of the exceptions. As half the national doubles championship team (with Keith Fleming), he concentrates mainly on doubles and concedes that because there are four racquets instead of two the player has to know his way around the court and concentrate on that elusive ball at all times.

When Dr. Bud Muehleisen erected the first Phoenix area court club in Mesa (10 courts), Garrigus was there, starting his pro teaching career. He subsequently made the rounds of Center Courts, Phoenix Athletic Club, and presently is resident pro at Village Tennis Club, which offers tennis, swimming, exercise facilities, and four racquetball courts as amenities. (One of the original outdoor

tennis courts was converted to a four-court racquetball building.)

With the increasing number of facilities there emerged a neophyte group of players and Ken found much demand for individual and group lessons and frequent clinics. He had been self taught and had the initial exposure with such renowned local players as Bobby Bolan and Don Thomas.

"Kamakazi Racquetball" is the term Ken uses when describing doubles. Although its immense spectator appeal far outshines singles, as yet doubles has not been given any consideration in the pro ranks and is usually given second rate consideration in tournament scheduling, generally.

"Colgate was going to sponsor a pro doubles tournament a couple of years ago but it fizzled out at the last hour", Garrigus recalled. "It was to be held in San Diego. There was one held in Boise (sponsored by Boise-Cascade) which worked out well."

Just recently Garrigus and Fleming teamed up against pros Ben Koltun and Steve Serot in an exhibition at the

Scottsdale Civic Center Racquetball Club. Koltun-Serot won it by one point in the fifth game of 11-pointers and as witnessed by your reporter it was definitely lightning-quick action galore. It was the acme of doubles with Garrigus and Serot, lefthanders, complementing their righthanded partners.

At 27, Garrigus emphatically prefers the doubles over singles. He simply enjoys team play that much more. "In doubles there is a difference in shot selection—more ceiling shots and pass attempts rather than all kill shots. Unless the kill attempts are flat the opponents usually will be able to retrieve, and even re-kill on top of you.

"Usually we will be playing two righthanders and will most likely concentrate our bombardments on the left side player. I will invariably use a driving serve, seeking the weak return. In essence we are isolating that right side player. Boiling it down we go in there seeking to "blow them right out of the court".

Garrigus adds that rallies tend to be longer than the current style of serve and

Garrigus (r.) with long-time partner Fleming (foreground, l.) in a recent doubles match.



—Photos by Dick Belleue



Ken Garrigus

shoot singles, and stressing the need for more shot control and a wise selection.

Garrigus/Fleming usually employ the "I" formation, with Ken taking everything deep and off the back wall, with Keith in front court digging out kill attempts and putting the ball back in play or flattening out such digs to end the rally.

With the better players and offensive shots going on a low trajectory it isn't necessary to give up court position. The players will nimbly jump over the ball, again never taking their eyes off that moving target. If they don't, you will see the black and blue wounds of battle up and down the back of the legs when the battle ends, another reason many shy away from doubles.

Garrigus reports that players like Charlie Brumfield and Steve Strandemo, not on the current pro tour, are playing a lot of doubles around San Diego, and are hopeful that someone will put a pro doubles package together one of these days and move it to the forefront.

"I think it is definitely a far better spectator sport, combining more action and acrobatic movements", Garrigus said.

He also feels, on the question of whether a larger court (ala tennis and squash) would add to the popularity of doubles: "I don't think a larger court would be the answer. There is plenty of room in the present standard court providing the players know where that ball is and move properly. Even with a larger court the lesser talented players in doubles would have the same problem of taking their eyes off the ball and this is what leads to difficulties."

Specific Q's and A's

Do you notice much turnover at the Valley clubs because of this?

Yes, that's one of the underlying reasons. Perhaps there's economics, move-outs and other factors.

With the trend toward the inclusion of supervised exercise programming do you feel interspersing court play with scheduled circuit weight training and/or exercise classes helpful?

I personally work out with Nautilus and free weights and find them beneficial in giving me more strength and, more important, flexibility. To gain more stamina I will either work out on the treadmill or get out and do some concerted 40-yard wind sprints. Incidentally, I do very little with free weights as I have found it takes away my snap in racquetball if overdone. I don't go through the entire circuit but concentrate on those machines that relate to racquetball play . . . upper body—chest and "pecs", and the legs. And then I will do a lot of stretching exercises to increase flexibility.

How much doubles do you now play compared to singles?

It isn't that easy to line up doubles games with my peers, and it's no fun to get in with a bunch of "crazies" just for the sake of playing doubles. Often I will

just get in the court with Keith, have him go up front and attempt drilling shots by him, and in general work on our patterns.

Are there many tournaments available with doubles?

The past six months have been terrible. It seems we're not getting the full information on schedules out here, but now I am learning of some coming up and hope to get into gear. Keith and I had Wells Fargo sponsorship last year, covering our expenses, and hopefully we can line that up again.

How did you get into concentrating on doubles?

Playing lefthanded I soon found the advantages of a lefty-righty combination and it was very enjoyable to knock off tournament opponents. Then, on going back to singles, I found it somewhat boring in comparison. I just couldn't get motivated to play singles after playing doubles. It was so satisfying to score a win in the Western Regionals about five years ago over Dr. Bud Muehleisen and Gary Lusk. This was really our first big win and gave us the incentive to continue. ●

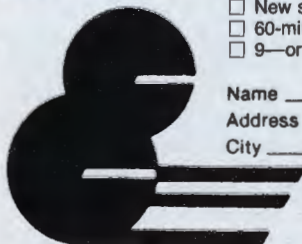
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Back To Basics: Reeling, Writhing, And Racquetball

by Steven L. Stern

In recent years, sports pros, physicians, and down-and-out insurance salesmen have bombarded us with books about racquetball. These books all begin much the same way:

Racquetball's growth has been nothing short of phenomenal! Before 1960, only a handful of elderly tramps living on the Oregon coast played the game. But today, players number in the quintillions. Indeed, each month hundreds of children reportedly spring from their mother's wombs fully clad in racquetball gear...

While the sport's popularity cannot be argued, it is only fair to point out that such accounts do contain an element of exaggeration. Actually, at least two dozen elderly tramps (all of them Republicans) are known to have played racquetball as early as 1955. And as for those miraculous "racquetball births" widely publicized on "60 Minutes"—well, no more than 10 have been medically documented, all of them in Los Angeles.

Rally Round the Racquetball

Why racquetball became so popular is still a much debated question. There are three distinct schools of thought on the subject. The Physical Fitness school contends that racquetball is popular because *"it is a healthful activity that conditions your cardiovascular system and tones your muscles."* The people who believe this are the same ones who eat overripe berries and small insects for breakfast, and then go out to jog, run, canter, or gallop. These people have few friends and spend all their free time in front of mirrors. The Mental Health school holds that racquetball became popular because *"it provides an effective psychological release for your frustrations."* In general, supporters of this opinion have been in analysis for six or more years and have come to despise their psychiatrists. Members of the Fun and Frolic school attribute the sport's popularity to the fact that *"it's, you know, like fun and easy, you know."* These people, most of whom majored in English in college, tend to be young, blond, and oversexed and live in warm climates.

While racquetball certainly has its hordes of enthusiasts, the sport is not without its



detractors. In 1979, for example, when the Department of Housing and Urban Development razed an entire Chicago suburb to make room for the fashionable Valhalla Racquet Club and Vivisection Clinic, many of the ousted families expressed annoyance. There were also scattered protests early this year when Ektelon purchased the state of Rhode Island.

Many devotees of competing racquet sports have similarly taken a stand against the spread of racquetball. Tennis players, outraged by racquetballers' ability to bend their wrists, are among the most vociferous opponents. Mobs of angry tennis players have been known to attack racquetball clubs, covering court floors with vaseline and filling whirlpools with huge quantities of bubble bath. Squash players too have been active in the protest movement, demanding that racquetball players be required to use squash balls for their game, rather than balls that actually bounce.

On the whole, however, people who like other sports also enjoy racquetball. Golfers marvel at the discovery that the number of racquetballs they lose in sand

traps, lakes, and jungle growth is minimal. Hunters delight in knowing they won't have to strap their victims across the hood of the car. And even ice hockey players, notoriously hard to please, gleefully proclaim that they have as many teeth at the end of a racquetball game as they did at the beginning. As one goalie expressed it: *"Thith ith a thuper thport!"*

Here, There, and Everywhere

That racquetball has received widespread acceptance both here and abroad is further evidenced by the sport's pervasive influence in other areas of society. Some examples—

Medical racquetball:

Researchers have been using racquetball to explore physical capabilities and limitations. A noted Swiss scientist recently discovered that when a player's heart exceeds 1,300 beats per minute, the need for rest outweighs any desire for victory. Further, it was reported that rats in a Stanford University research lab could indeed develop an effective kill shot if provided with a properly designed racquet. Experiments probing a possible link between tuberculosis and locker

room air, however, have thus far proved inconclusive.

Commercial racquetball:

Products tied in with racquetball have become increasingly popular as the sport has spread. Racquetball yogurt and racquetball mouthwash are commonplace throughout Europe and Asia. In this country, "Racquet Crispies" had been on everyone's shopping list until a troublesome consumer group made public the cereal's unusual ingredients.

Television shows and motion pictures too are capitalizing on the sport. *Have Racquet, Will Travel*, the violent saga of a pro for hire, has been at the top of the Nielsen ratings for months. *Court Lust*, filmed entirely on location in a San Diego racquet club, is television's most popular afternoon soap opera. And Brian DiPalma's latest movie, *Racquet of Terror* (based on Stephen King's bestselling book) is packing them in at drive-ins everywhere. Even the record industry has entered this lucrative market with the Bee Gees' smash, *Racquet Fever*.

Some aspects of commercial racquetball are, of course, just silly. Many stores nowadays carry a full line of racquetball posters and coasters, cocktail napkins and key chains, ashtrays and coffee mugs. All of these products are manufactured in Taiwan or Hong Kong by people who believe that *racquetball* is another word for "novelty item" in English. Some shops even sell gag items: six-fingered racquetball gloves, exploding racquetballs, and plastic inflatable club managers. Why anyone would buy such things is a mystery, although the inflatable manager can serve as an effective ice-breaker at slow parties.

Religious racquetball:

The sport has also been credited with a recent upswing in religious observance. "There are no atheists on racquetball courts," is a slogan well known to all players, of course. Nevertheless, a movement to ban prayer from racquet clubs is gaining support in certain areas.

An interesting sidelight here: Canadian etymologist Jean Lemur suggests that the term *racquetball* may have its origins in a religious ceremony. Dr. Lemur explains that the ancient Egyptian sun god was named Ra. Each year, the people of Egypt would celebrate Ra's birthday with an elaborate formal dance, or ball, held along the shores of the Nile. Many Egyptians brought to this celebration one or more cats which, as everyone knows, were revered and worshipped animals in Egypt. By 950 B.C., Dr. Lemur tells us, this festival had come to be known as "Ra's cat ball." This phrase was often shortened in conversation, as in: "Do you have a date yet for the Ra-Cat-Ball?" Dr. Lemur theorizes that after the Persians conquered Egypt in 525

B.C., the yearly festival gradually evolved into a nationwide sports event. One of the competitive games carried over from the Egyptians retained the name *racat-ball*, or as the Persians spelled it, *racquetball*.

Educational racquetball:

Not surprisingly, racquetball has also become an integral part of our educational system. Universities in Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Minnesota now offer degrees in racquetball. Students take courses in "The History and Philosophy of Racquetball" (3 credits), "Racquetball as a Second Language" (6 credits), and "Racquetball Physics" (27 credits). High schools in the Midwest even require students to pass a basic racquetball skills test in order to graduate. Students who fail must attend an intensive 12-week "Remedial Racquetball" class.

Racquetball Repercussions

Where the popularity of racquetball will ultimately lead remains to be seen. Recent figures indicate that there are already more than 11,000,000 racquetball players. If these players were laid end to end along the ground, the resulting line could encircle the state of Iowa 71 times. While such a display would serve little practical purpose, it would nonetheless give Iowa a much-needed tourist attraction.

Will racquetball be good for the United States? Well, yes and no. With millions of people playing and then showering every day, we can expect continued water shortages. That's bad. (The alternative, though, is worse.) On the other hand, racquetball serves as a stimulus for the American economy. Bell Telephone earns almost a billion dollars a month just on people calling their clubs to make, break, or change reservations. Johnson and Johnson sold more band-aids to racquetball players last year than to herpetologists and entomologists combined. And just think of all the people employed by racquetball clubs, especially the reservation-makers, money-takers, and towel-givers. Where would these people find jobs if it wasn't for racquetball? Who would hire them? After all, there are just so many openings in government.

Where will it all end, you may wonder. Will children be collecting and trading bubblegum cards bearing pictures of famous racquetball players? Will the day come when forced busing of tennis players to racquetball clubs is no longer necessary? Will the United States ever have a racquetball-playing President?

Perhaps. *Newsweek*, in fact, is currently investigating such questions. Still, only Time will tell. ●

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The Adventures of Racquetball Ronnie

by Mel Baker

Whitey Hale opened the door to Court One and slammed it back forcefully. He stomped over to the corner table, slammed down his racquet and ripped off his glove. Boomer Bob, who was sitting nearby, watched his actions with interest. Something was brewing.

A few seconds later Racquetball Ronnie stepped out of the court. He looked sweaty and tired but there was a smile on his face.

"Loser buys!" he called out. "You want the usual, Whitey?"

Whitey did not answer. Ronnie pointed at Bob who nodded that he would take one. Ronnie bought the beverages and passed them out. Meanwhile, Boomer Bob was wondering how come the winner was angry and the loser was smiling. Very, very unusual.

Whitey started the conversation. "Would you believe that Old Ronnie over there actually set me up and then closed the trap? He did it so smoothly that I was enjoying the process until the 'Sting' hit me!"

Boomer Bob snuck a quick look over at Ronnie who was quietly sipping his apple juice. Ronnie nodded his head to indicate that Whitey's charge was true.

Whitey pointed his finger at Ronnie and exploded, "That fellow, there, is a sneaky, tricky hustler! You gotta watch yourself when you play him. He'll steal the strings out of your racquet if you're not careful!"

Ronnie's smile increased as if he was enjoying the praise.

"You fellows must have had some game," commented Boomer Bob. Both Whitey and Ronnie nodded in agreement.

Whitey picked up the conversational ball. "Ronnie and I have been playing each other about two times a month. I usually beat him but he puts up a good game. Little did I know that he was measuring my game and setting up a real sneaky trap!"

"Today, I won first serve and got a little jump on Ronnie. He countered by hitting the ball off the ceiling and the front wall. He constantly forced me to the rear of the court. Then he started to drop his kill shots."

"Did he give you that 'Mickey-Mouse' three-wall kill that drops dead parallel to the front wall?" asked Boomer Bob.

Whitey nodded.

"That shot is called the 'Three-Wall-Nick'. It's a legitimate racquetball shot," interrupted Ronnie.

"Well," continued Whitey, "Ronnie's Three-Wall-Nick and other kill shots were not working. Ronnie would force me back and then drop a shot to the front wall. Each time the ball came up and



hung in the air just waiting to be put away, I would rush up from the rear court and hit the ball for a good kill or a good passing shot. Each time Ronnie would say—'Wonderful shot!' or 'Terrific Hustle' or 'Nice shot, you caught me flat-footed!' "

Whitey paused to sip his drink and then continued, "I didn't notice that I was doing all the running and Ronnie was not even breathing hard!"

"Ronnie had the first serve in the second game," continued Whitey. "He

whipped in a couple of quick points and then started to work on me. He kept driving me into the rear court with his high ceiling shots. I returned those shots and started to rush to the forecourt as I had done in game one. . . ."

"Can I make a guess as to what started to happen?" asked Boomer Bob. Whitey nodded and took another sip.

"Let's see if I've got Ronnie figured right. . . . The Three-Wall-Nick started to drop in for neat, dead kills and his regular kill shots started to roll out flat. . . ."

"Yep," answered Whitey. "And he made his shots just smooth enough to make me feel that if I could get forward fast enough I could get the ball. Old Ronnie kept encouraging me saying 'Almost got it, Whitey'—'Just one step too slow, Whitey'."

"Ronnie does that very nicely," commented Boomer Bob. "It's his stock-in-trade."

Whitey continued, "Ronnie had me behind 17-15 before I woke up. He had almost sprung the trap!"

"What did you do?" asked Boomer Bob.

"Why, I just gave him some of his own medicine," replied Whitey. "I served him deep to the left rear corner and then shot to the right front corner for a pinch corner kill. Turn about is fair enough."

"You made Ronnie run the diagonal length of the court? That's a long trip," commented Boomer Bob.

"Sure is," interrupted Ronnie. "I kept on hollering 'Come on legs!' but my old legs could only make the trip a couple of times." Ronnie had a wistful look on his face as he quietly said, "A few years ago I could have moved up to take Whitey . . . Not anymore. He beat me 21-18. Close, but faraway!"

"All I've got to say," said Whitey as he picked up his bag and racquets, "Whenever Ronnie starts to be nice to you . . . watch out for yourself. He's looking for a place to give you the 'Sting' . . . Ronnie's a hustler."

Ronnie looked up at Whitey. "Next Friday?" he asked.

"Yep," replied Whitey. "But you better be ready to take a lot of pressure. I'm out to pay you back!" ●

Ask the Champ

by Marty Hogan

Four time and current National Champion Marty Hogan answers questions about improving your game as this exclusive series returns to *National Racquetball*. Readers are encouraged to submit questions about their game to Marty Hogan, c/o Ask The Champ, National Racquetball, 1800 Pickwick Ave., Glenview, IL 60025

Question: I am an average player, but I'm really short. Is there any special strategy I can employ in my game?

Hogan: Size truly doesn't have much to do with racquetball success. If it did, I certainly would not be national champion!

However, very short or very tall players will have to use somewhat different game plans. Short players tend to cover the court better than lanky or tall players, while tall players usually have better front court ability.

If you are small, a good strategy would be to keep your opponent out of center court, especially if your opponent is quite tall. Normally, tall players have a good reach and take up a lot of space. That means they'll be able to cover the front court better than most and at the same time create problems for you visually if they're in front of you. Besides that, tall players seem to get the benefit of many hinder calls due to their extended reaching capabilities.

Against taller players I recommend an abundance of ceiling shots mixed with solid passes. The main objective is to keep your opponent behind you.

On the pro tour Craig McCoy is probably the biggest opponent I regularly face. He has a tremendous reach and is extremely dangerous up front. By keeping him behind me I am able to take away this most potent aspect of his game.

Question: A year ago I played in a tournament and got beaten by a lesser player. Since then I have practiced hard and can now easily beat people who kill this person. However, I still can't seem to beat him. What will it take?

Hogan: Although your problem could be psychological, let's assume that it is not. As I've said many times, you have to be able to self-analyze your game. Why

does he beat me? What exactly does he do that wins points?

One thing you cannot do is measure success by other opponents. Many times in all sports one player beats another, who beats another, who can't beat the first player. Such skill "measuring" is no more realistic than thinking that an unusually warm day in February means summer is here.

More than likely it is a problem of style. Certain players, no matter their skill level, do some things better than others. Beginning and intermediate players must concentrate on playing important matches to their strong points. You say that you've practiced hard and have improved to the point that you are winning against players who normally beat this one opponent. I suggest that you do two things: first, analyze how and why you are beating those players. What are your strong points? Your point-earning shots? Then attempt to incorporate these shots into your matches with this problem opponent.

Secondly, I think you should analyze why the other players are winning against your tough opponent. What are they doing to create points? Are they using shots you don't have? Are they exploiting weaknesses in your opponent's game that you haven't noticed?

Apply the positive aspects of your game to your opponent, exploit his weaknesses, and you should come out ahead.

Question: I'm a solid B player and recently purchased a video cassette machine. Where can I find some racquetball tapes for instruction?

Hogan: If you write Leach Industries, 10251 Scripps Ranch Blvd., San Diego CA 92120, they can send you full information on *Power Racquetball*, a 30-minute instructional videotape, starring yours truly. If I do say so myself, it's the best

videotape instruction I've seen and is not particularly expensive.

Question: Although I have good control of most of my shots, I have been unsuccessful in mastering my down-the-line strokes. Is it my footwork or something fundamentally wrong in my stroke?

Hogan: I think you're probably looking in the wrong place for a remedy. Although you might have basic inefficiencies in footwork or stroke technique, odds are that those same problems occur in all of your strokes and not just on your down-the-line shots. Therefore, forget all that.

What you should not forget is where the ball must hit on the front wall to effectively stay down-the-line without either hitting the side wall or coming off the back wall near center court.

If your shots are consistently hitting the side wall before reaching deep court then your shot is striking the front wall too near the side wall. Sometimes the spin on your shot exaggerates the angle, causing you to think you've hit it far enough from the side wall when in reality you've hit a poor shot!

This situation is truly a racquetball crime because if you're in position to hit a solid down-the-line ball, you're in pretty good shape in this particular rally. To then have the ball hit the side wall too soon is a shame because it will leave your opponent in center court with a set-up, usually on his forehand side. You've gone from your good opportunity to your opponent's best opportunity.

If your down-the-line attempts are not striking the side wall, but rather are not close enough to the side wall, chances are they are often coming off the back wall. Again, you've gone from your advantage to your opponent's in one easy stroke.

If your down-the-line shots are hitting the side wall, simply adjust your front wall contact point toward the center of the court. If your down-the-line attempts are coming off the back wall, lower your front wall contact point and move it slightly toward the side wall. One practice hour alone should be more than enough for you to find that sweet spot on the front wall that makes your down-the-line shots picture perfect. ●

Improving Your Game

by Steve Strandemo
with Bill Bruns

If you've been relying on playing experience to lift your game another notch, you may be thinking, "I'm playing twice a week, but I'm not improving, so I'll add a third day." Unfortunately, natural athletic ability and years of experience can take you only so far in racquetball.

When you're seeking long-term improvement and striving for an all-round game, you must set aside time each week to actually work on your stroking technique and all of your shots—free of the pressure and the shortcomings of trying to win a match. Even if it's only a 30-

minute session, or an extra 10 minutes before you play, get by yourself or with a friend and really *practice* with a purpose in mind. At higher playing levels, this time is vital not only to maintain your current playing level, but to incorporate new shots into your game.

This article will help you organize your practice time, by mixing workout sessions with practice matches, so that you have fun as you make some worthwhile advances.

Practicing Alone

Like a golfer at a driving range, it's important that you know how to practice by yourself, whether it's a planned ses-

sion or an unexpected five minutes when your playing partner is late arriving. Use this time for concentrating on stroking technique, to improve your power and control, and to test different shots—without the distractions of another player. The following 10 drills will give all your important shots (except for the service return) a realistic workout, using the walls as a perfect backboard.

1. As a confidence-builder and to work on your timing, stand about five feet behind the short line, drop the ball, and hit it off the bounce as low as you can into the front wall. Get used to hitting one winner after another, striving for an early setup, a whipping action as you stroke the ball, and solid racquet contact. Practice forehands like this for about 10 hits, then move back a couple of feet. Keep moving back until you're next to the back wall—then switch to your backhand and start the process all over again.

2. For a better game-type situation, hit the ball easily to yourself off the front wall so it comes back into your power-hitting zone. Focus on your stroking motion and strike to kill the ball, but avoid constant skips and try to keep your misses low enough so they bounce twice before the back wall. Hit from both sides of the court and work your way back to 38 feet. Just for fun, save your ball cans and line them up along the front wall. You'll likely discover that it takes much longer than you imagined to actually knock one over.

3. Practice rallying up and down each side wall, working on just one stroke at a time, but continually readjusting your position and hitting a variety of shots: straight-in kills, down-the-line passes, ceilings, and balls off the back wall.

This is an adjustable, ad-lib type of drill—just like in a real match—and your goal is to kill the ball at every opportunity, while trying to keep it off the side wall. If the ball bounces two or three times before it reaches you, still hit it back to the front wall to keep a continuous rally going. When you're forced to the middle of the court, slide over quickly and try to drive the ball down the wall with the same stroke.

4. Now shift from straight-in kills and passes to corner pinch shots. Starting again from a few feet behind the short line and moving your way back, practice pinching low and hard so the ball bounces twice before reaching the oppo-

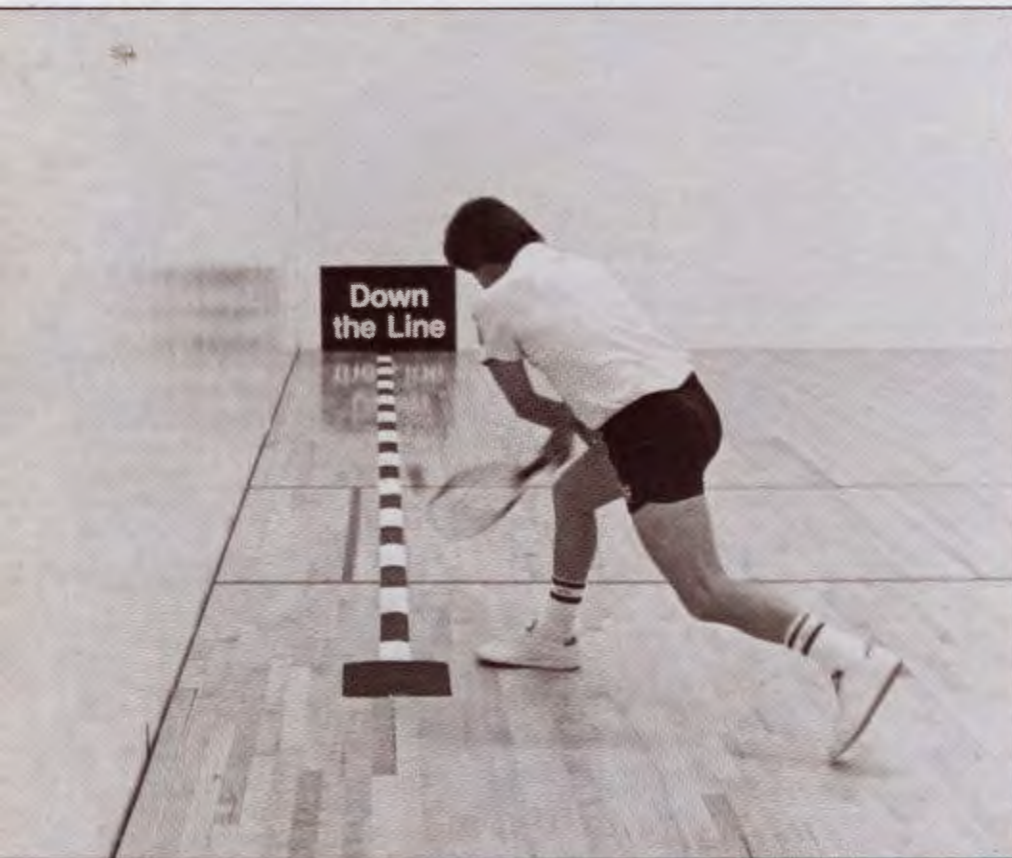


Figure 1. This player is practicing by himself, just dropping the ball (or setting himself up) to start a rally along the left wall, and then striving to keep his backhand shots off the wall. Learn to keep this rally going as long as possible by moving laterally in about a 10-foot area, using shuffle steps and cross-over steps, while hitting from different stances.

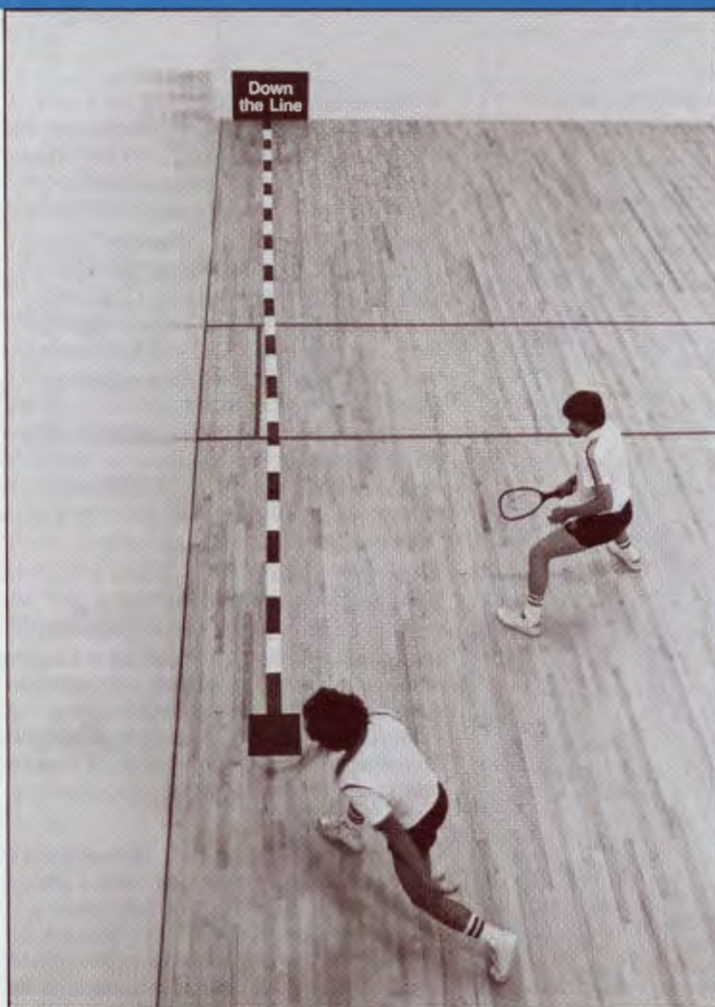


Figure 2. This is an excellent drill for working on a down-the-line backhand, with both players trying to keep the ball going up and down the left side. Here, the player up front is practicing holding his position and cutting the ball off when appropriate, and he'll interchange positions with his partner when he's driven deep.



Figure 3. Players take their forehands for granted and think it's easy to rally up and down the right wall. Try this drill with a friend and you'll realize that it's harder than it looks.

site side wall or the front line of the service zone. One way to start this drill is to drive the ball off the front wall into the side wall so that it comes back to you in the center-court area (thus simulating a typical rally situation). For variety, you can also practice going down-the-wall or cross-court against balls coming out of the front corner.

5. To work on your reaction-type shots, begin at the same place as with the other drills and start a low-zone rally by hitting the ball with good pace to the front wall. Be aggressive and cut off as many shots as you can that come through your area at waist height or lower. Go for the put-away (straight-in or as a pinch), but don't worry if you skip the shot or leave it up six feet. The object is to hone your center-court play by becoming a little more daring while working on your stroking

technique from different footwork positions.

6. Now progress and work on shots that come off the back wall. Practice moving back far enough with the ball so that as it rebounds you can move forward and hit an offensive shot.

7. Hit ceiling balls to yourself up and down both walls and try to see how long you can keep a ceiling-ball rally going. If that shot is long, short, or off the side wall, take it down into your low zone, just as you would in a match. Mix in some overhead drives against the short ceiling to diversify your offensive attack. Also, practice hitting your ceilings cross-court so you're comfortable directing the ball to the backhand corner against a right-hander and a left-hander.

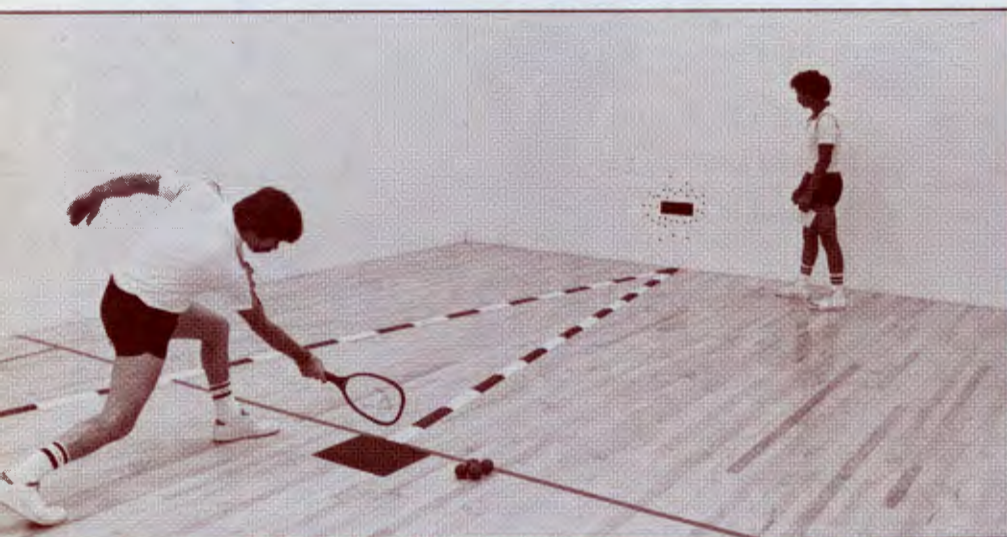
8. In practicing your serve, have at least

four or five balls available to save time. Then focus on a number of key elements: your front-wall targets, your two-step motion into the ball, your stroke, the accuracy of your serves and your relocation.

9. Unless there's a ball machine for rent at your club, you can't really practice hitting your service return by yourself—but you can emulate the desired movements. Assume your normal waiting position, then angle a ball into either corner and follow it over by taking your cross-over step and a long stretch. Practice hitting the ball offensively and defensively in this drill.

10. Now you're ready for a one-person rally covering your entire hittable area. Start the rally and just keep it going with all the shots in your arsenal, taking the

Figure 4. Have you actually determined your exact low-drive target areas on the front wall? As shown here, have a friend apply small removable stickers to indicate where your serves make contact, while you study the ball's path into the back corner. I think you'll be amazed at how small your target area must be in order to hit effective serves, and how the slightest error in missing this target is magnified in the back court.



appropriate shot—in most situations—but going for kills at every opportunity. You've already worked on kills off easy setups; now practice being offensive when you're under pressure, on the move, and in uncomfortable hitting positions.

At times, shoot the ball no matter how impossible the kill may seem, just to get a feel for those shots that you will some day want to incorporate into your attack. Since many of your low-zone shots will be catching a side wall as you hustle from one side of the court to the other, you'll have a chance to cover the different-angled shots that will challenge you in a match.

To help make these solitary practice sessions more enjoyable—while sharpening your concentration—use your imagination to simulate game situations. Become a kid again, fantasizing yourself in the finals of a big tournament.

For example, it's 10-all in the tiebreaker and you're in a ceiling-ball rally. The pressure is intense. You're hitting for both players and you see your opponent's ceiling coming in short. So you're thinking, "I'm going for the flat rollout. I

need this point to win the championship." Can you now execute?

Practicing With A Friend

Treasure the person who wants to spend time practicing his game without a need to rush right into a competitive match, for he (or she) is going to help you improve immensely. Here are realistic practice drills the two of you can incorporate into a workout, with mutual benefits.

1. Adapt some of the individual drills

given earlier by simply dividing the court, with one person hitting forehands to the other person's backhand. One example would be to stand on opposite sides about five feet from the back wall and work on deep cross-court passing shots. This sounds easy, but you both may be humbled by how short some of these rallies are.

2. Start a ceiling-ball rally and play it out to a conclusion, but remember: your basic goals are to focus on your stroking technique, read your opponent's ceiling (seeing how early and accurately you can decide your intentions as the ball approaches), and breaking up the rally with a low-zone shot. Also, when you see that your friend is going low, practice studying his stroke and moving into proper coverage position.

3. Move up to just behind the short line and start a low-zone "reflex" drill, with both of you trying to cut the ball off and put it away. This is a difficult drill to sustain beyond two or three hits, but it still gives you experience reacting quickly to a ball off the front wall and using adaptable form (another typical situation that is going to come up many times in a match).

4. Put a few cans along the front wall and hit easy setups to each other off the front wall. See how many shots it takes to knock a can over, and who can do it first. The loser buys the next can of balls.

5. Another challenging drill is to rally up and down a side wall, with both players going for straight-in kills and down-the-line passes. (If the ball comes back too high, play it off the back wall.) This can be a humbling experience if you think it's easy to keep the ball off the side wall for more than six or seven hits. But it's also an excellent way to groove into that sequence of watching your opponent's stroke until impact, then turning to the front wall and reacting.

6. To end a workout, have one player hit five serves while the other hits five returns, then alternate. Play each rally to the end if you want, but don't keep score, since you want to avoid the ego involvement that comes with worrying about who's "winning" the most points. Instead, feel free about experimenting with something new or concentrating on a particular problem area.

For example, as the returner you might want to see just how many serves you can hit back down the line for winners. You may skip a few balls and leave a lot up, but that's no big deal to either player, because you're working on a more offensive approach—and your opponent is focusing on aspects of his serve.

Playing Practice Matches

When you're involved in organized competition such as tournaments, leagues, and challenge ladders, your other matches should take two approaches.

First, you'll want to schedule matches where you're going all-out to win against a strong opponent—hitting your best shots, getting into long rallies, and staying in touch with playing the pressure points. Second, and more important, arrange matches where you're concentrating on specific areas of the game and the final result is not really a concern. (To me, an ideal workout would include several practice games with this philosophy and several games to 11 or 15 where you try to play with tournament intensity.)

Whatever your competitive nature, when it comes to making long-term gains, reward yourself for working on improvement, not for how many practice matches you win. As you try to improve your stroking technique or add a new shot, you may feel a little awkward at times and you usually must work through a stage where your efficiency goes down

when you play. Don't worry; the polish will come through *patience and persistence*. But if winning is an overriding priority every time you go out to play, then these values get short-circuited, for it's human nature to scrub what is uncomfortable, unfamiliar, or unproductive and—under pressure—to revert to the same old way of playing.

So, you must have practice matches where you can experiment freely with your game, exploring new areas and trying out a particular shot you've been afraid to use in your competitive matches for fear of losing an important point or a side-out. Take this opportunity to break away from your comfortable shot-selection patterns and work on the shots you'll eventually need to beat your tough opponents. For example:

- If you always hit cross-court passes with your backhand, try hitting a few down-the-line. If you can't do it without a skip or a shot that travels around the walls and comes off as a plum, go to work on your technique in practice sessions.
- Look for opportunities to hit a reverse pinch.
- Try to cut more balls off.
- Hit some overhead drives off the short ceiling ball, instead of always taking it back to the ceiling.
- Strive for more power on your low-drive serve by covering a longer distance with your two-step motion and getting lower with your body as you swing.
- When you see your opponent edging too far forward as you move to set up for a forehand, practice hitting the wide-angled pass to get the ball around him.

In arranging practice matches, test your game by opening yourself up to stiffer competition. Better players will challenge you to execute more efficiently, to cover more of the court, and to expand your shot-selection strategy. You may get blown out, but view the match as an opportunity to see what progress you're making and where improvements have to be made.

Meanwhile, when you find yourself playing a weaker opponent—your boss, let's say—use this time as a way to work on basics. Take some pace off the ball, avoid your kill attempts, and just concentrate on moving the ball around the court with solid passing shots (not dinks) so the two of you can get into decent rallies. Learning to control the ball like this is much harder than you think if you're basically a power player, but it will pay



dividends on those days when your kill-shot timing is off and you have to diversify your attack.

Adding New Shots To Your Game

The shots we've discussed are all valuable in certain situations as you try to gain higher playing levels and you come up against different types of opponents. If you haven't learned to hit all of these shots, or if you realize that you're avoiding certain ones under pressure, then you're limiting your shot-selection potential and the progress you can make in this game. Here are some steps to follow as you work on a shot that will eventually make you a better player.

1. Go on a court by yourself, bounce the ball, and just hit the shot over and over again, learning your target area and the

Figure 5. A video-cassette unit is an invaluable tool for recording your stroking technique on a practice court, and to analyze your strategy and positioning under match-play conditions (providing the cameraman films from the gallery, or through a glass wall).

angles involved from a particular location. If it's a reverse pinch, for example, concentrate on where you must hit the opposite side wall to make it work, and study the ramifications of a shot that is hit too high or at the wrong angle. When you miss, notice where you should reposition yourself according to the ball's path and where your opponent is likely going to hit.

2. Have the ball come to you off the front wall, then practice hitting this new shot from different areas on the court. Focus on where the ball travels in relation to where it contacts the front wall, and become familiar with the patterns involved.

3. Start looking for opportunities to hit the shot in practice matches; open up your horizons and don't be afraid to change comfortable but limiting shot-selection habits. However, be careful not to overuse the shot, where you're disrupting the flow of the match and taking the fun out of it for your opponent by constantly skipping the ball or hitting it wildly around the walls.

4. As you begin controlling this shot and gain more confidence, gradually incorporate it into your competitive matches, while learning its virtues and limitations.

5. Always have in mind a specific shot to

work on when you go to your club, in case you find yourself with an extra five minutes on an empty court. If it's a wide-angled cross-court pass, you can hit a quick 25 or 30 shots into the front wall, trying to angle the ball so it strikes the side wall just behind the service box and takes two bounces before the back wall.

6. Work hard but be patient, for it will take time to have this new shot become a comfortable, reflexive, and reliable part of your game. This is exactly how the pros put together a solid game.

Working On Your Stroking Technique

The more you learn, the more you may realize that your strokes need a major overhaul—or perhaps just some small refinements—to give you more power, control, and consistency. Undoing “muscle-memory” patterns in a swing and making the desired changes is a long process, but certainly worth the time and effort you invest.

Basically, try to incorporate the fundamental checkpoints we've shown in the photographs, but adapt them to your own “naturalness.” By evaluating your swing in several ways and just practicing the desired motion on an empty court, you can begin to sense what you want to be doing and mistakes to avoid. Basic flaws may persist, limiting the ultimate effec-

tiveness of a particular stroke, but don't let overall technique inhibit you from broadening your shot selection.

If you have a grooved stroking motion on the forehand side—good, bad, or indifferent—you can add almost any shot to your arsenal by using the stroke you have. Simply begin with practice sessions where you hit the ball hundreds of times into the appropriate front- or side-wall target areas, then build from there, trying to refine your stroking technique as best you can.

Evaluating Your Game

To go that extra length in improving your game—by uncovering crucial shortcomings in your strokes and court coverage that are choking your progress—seek out the objective feedback offered by a number of outside sources: videotape, a friend who can watch you play, a qualified teaching pro, and even a mirror.

Videotape

Try to have a friend videotape one of

Figure 6. When playing or practicing, you may think you swing a certain way—until you actually see yourself on videotape, or in still photographs. Try to have a friend shoot a roll of black-and-white film as you hit your various shots, and then either look at the contact sheet or some small prints so that you can check your stroking technique against the desired fundamentals.





Figure 7. Yet another way to see if you're addressing the correct fundamentals is to check yourself against a mirror.

your matches and you'll be amazed at what you can learn when you see yourself in action, humbling as that might be to your ego. Videotaping is the most valuable self-teaching device I know, for it allows you to see for yourself just how well you are actually moving to the ball, stroking the ball, and covering your opponent's shots.

There may be a big gap between the perception you have of yourself as a racquetball player and how you actually look on the television screen, but that's of great value. I know that it motivates me to go out and work on my game with a fresh and objective perspective.

A knowledgeable player can see the more blatant flaws in your stroke with his naked eye, and point these out to you, but very often it may take videotape to actually convince you just how late you're setting up for your shots, even when there's ample time. Or, when you see your swing in slow motion, you may realize that your follow-through is weak and incomplete, or that your legs are too stiff and not involved in the total swing. Equally important are the discoveries you make about your court coverage—bad habits you may have fallen into unconsciously, deficiencies in your movement to the ball, inefficient relocation after your serve, and so on.

Once you've identified these weaker areas of play, you can go to work on them in practice, then make another tape in three or four weeks to see for yourself if you're making the desired improvements.

Check around your club for access to videotaping equipment, and share expenses with a playing partner or two; for \$15 to \$20 you can buy a six-hour tape and use it over and over again, filming each other as you play and studying the results at home.

Other Methods of Evaluation

● If videotape isn't practical, try having a friend film all your strokes inside a court with a Super-8 camera, using high-speed film. Or, he can use a 35mm camera. Hit a ball to yourself and have him snap a picture as you're setting up, as you're contacting the ball, and as you follow through. Then you can study key checkpoints right on the contact sheets (using a photographic magnifying glass) without having to make prints.

● I've pointed out many ways a friend can help you improve by evaluating your

game from the gallery. If he has a good eye for racquetball technique, he can study your swing as you play a match, using the guidelines and checkpoints you've given him. He can't accurately determine what is happening in the hitting zone, since this action is occurring too fast, but he can give you feedback on what you're doing before and after. He can also notice just how effectively you're covering your opponent's shots.

● When practicing by yourself on the court, it's crucial that you have an accurate image of what you should look like—and what you should be striving for—as you swing. To facilitate this, study your strokes against a mirror, comparing yourself to instructional photographs carried here and in previous issues and trying to duplicate the key fundamentals.

Check your stroke at different stages by stopping and seeing how you look in the mirror. Get a feel for being in that position, and notice the relationship between your body movement and your racquet position at that stage of the swing. Then go through the stroke in slow motion and, as you watch the different movements happening, concentrate on those sensations. Remember that in the end, when you're on the court hitting, *you have to teach yourself how to play this game right.* ●

How To Make The Most Of Your Court Hour —Practice!

This article and those in subsequent issues has been prepared by The American Professional Racquetball Organization (APRO), the only national certifying body for teaching pros. APRO certified instructors offer these articles to aid players of all levels.

by Lou Fabian

To improve your racquetball game at every ability level requires practice. Racquetball is no different from other sports in that execution of fundamentals leads to success. Whether it be blocking in football or a pirouette in dance, practice of fundamentals is essential.

To improve your racquetball ability, at least one hour a week should be devoted to structured practice on the court. Professionals require more practice time than playing time, because they receive enough playing from tournament to tournament.

Practice is needed to improve various aspects in your game or to iron out common mistakes. Practice will improve your self-confidence and concentration.

Adopt an attitude of self-improvement. This attitude is beneficial to your growth and development every time you play a competitive racquetball match.

For example, after each game (win or lose) ask yourself, "What shot should I improve for the next time?" "Why do I find myself out of position?" Then answer or ask someone how to answer your questions.

Develop a purpose in your mind while playing or practicing. For example, to improve your pinch shot, attempt to hit one at every opportunity. Forget about the score, forget about winning and losing; playing or practicing with a purpose will improve your racquetball skills, add to your self-confidence, and ultimately show positive results in your win column.

There are many ways to practice, e.g., with a partner, two-person drills or while playing under game conditions; or alone by practicing one shot over and over again. I use both of these methods at different times depending on my purpose.

The following format is a system of practicing many of the important aspects of

racquetball in the same hour. Generally, this system is geared to intermediate and advanced players. Beginners need to master specific shots and court strategies with consistent repetition before this system will meaningfully improve their games.

This system differs between intermediate and advanced players in the following manner. The intermediate player should practice all the shots by *permitting the ball to bounce* prior to making contact. This develops control, timing, improves stroke mechanics, and aids eye-hand coordination. The advanced player should practice most of the shots by hitting the ball *out of mid-air* (without a bounce). This speeds up the swing, adds velocity to the ball, quickens the reflexes, and better simulates actual game conditions.

I recently had the privilege of interviewing Craig Guinter, one of the top Eastern United States players for many years. The most fruitful part of the interview came when Craig said, "*The difference between the good player and the great player is the great player's ability to kill the ball out of mid-air while on the run. I practice the same way.*" In other words, the great players hit accurate and powerful shots because they practice hitting shots out of mid-air.

To make your practice time more efficient, divide the court into areas which approximate where most shots occur during a game. *Diagram A* identifies nine positions from which different shots should be practiced. Beginners should practice from positions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 until they attain an 80% rate of success, then from all nine positions prior to moving to the intermediate techniques. The same rate of success applies to intermediate players before they move to the advanced level.

Warning! Without proper stroke mechanics and consistency, practicing at the more difficult skill levels will be wasted

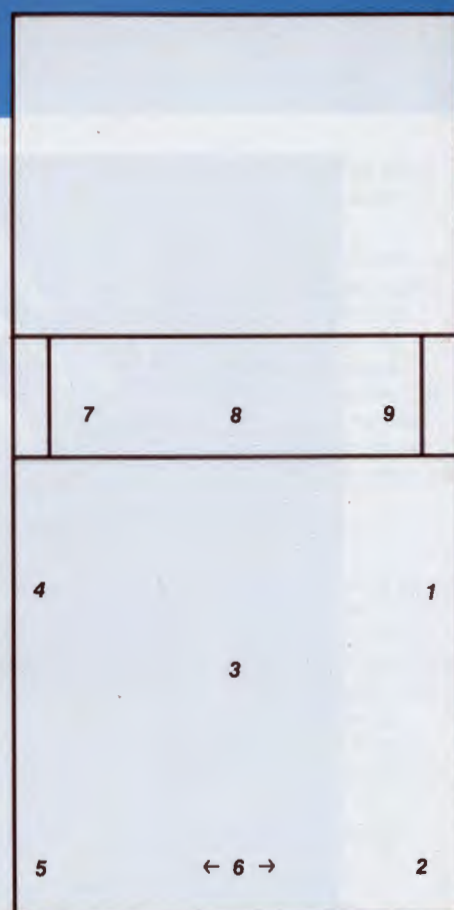


Diagram A. The nine practice positions.

time because you will be negatively reinforcing flaws in your game.

Players of all skill levels should begin every practice hour with a series of warm-up exercises including stretching, light ball throwing followed by gradually harder ball throwing and finally, free-form racquet swinging, both forehand and backhand.

General Forehand and Backhand Strokes

Positions 1-5 in *Diagram A* offer a variety of shot selections for you to practice, including most types of passes, kills, and pass/kills from both forehand and backhand sides. The following diagrams describe the shots that should be practiced from each position. During play anywhere from 80-90% of all shots will occur from these positions. Keep in mind while practicing to try to develop a rhythm along with accuracy.

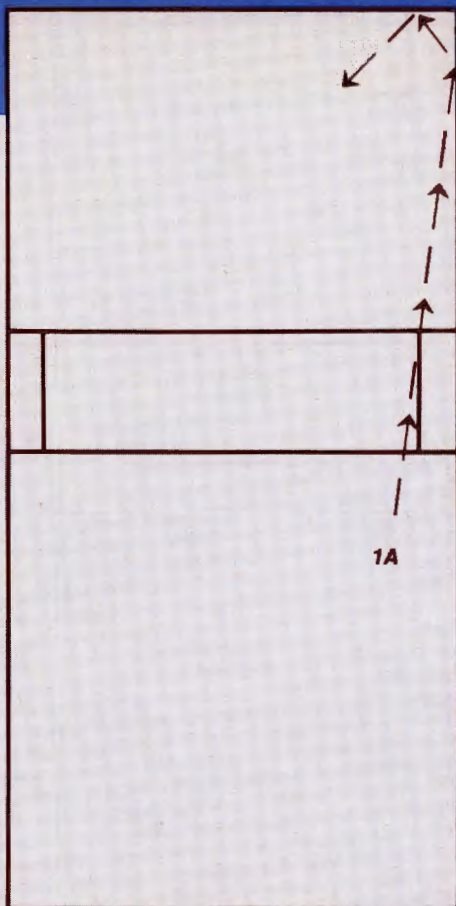


Diagram 1A. The forehand corner pinch kill.

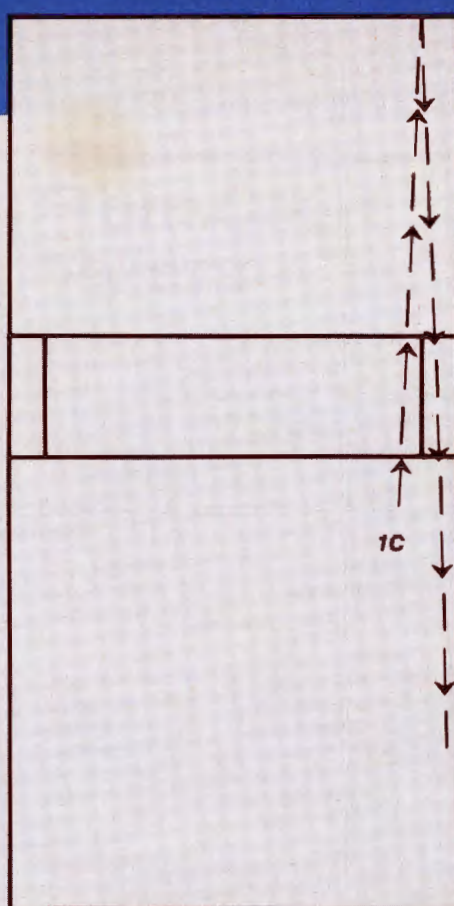


Diagram 1C. The forehand down-the-line pass/kill.

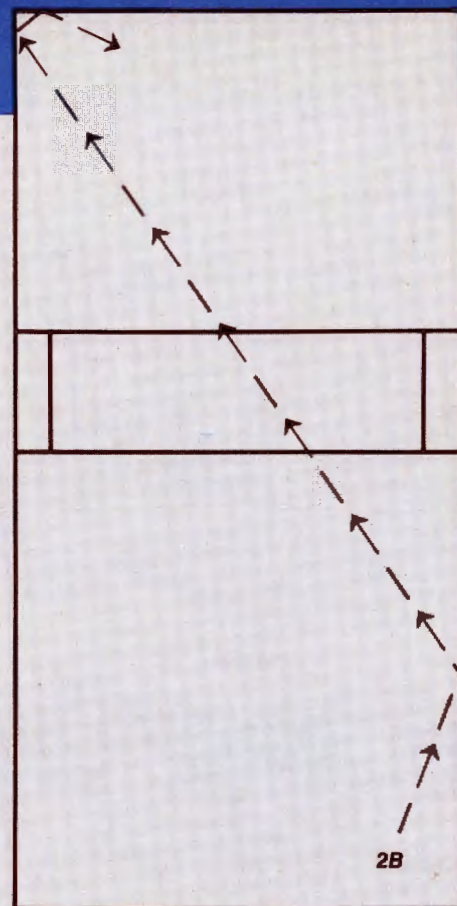


Diagram 2B. The forehand splat from 39 feet.

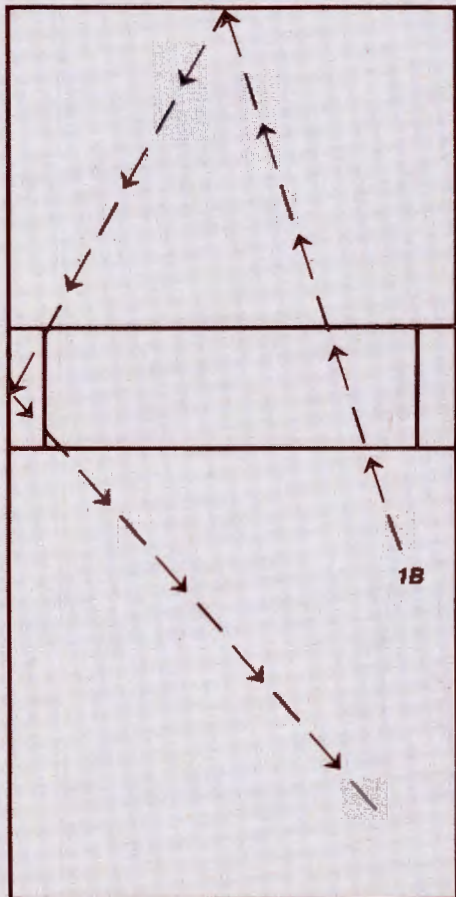


Diagram 1B. The cross court wide angle pass.

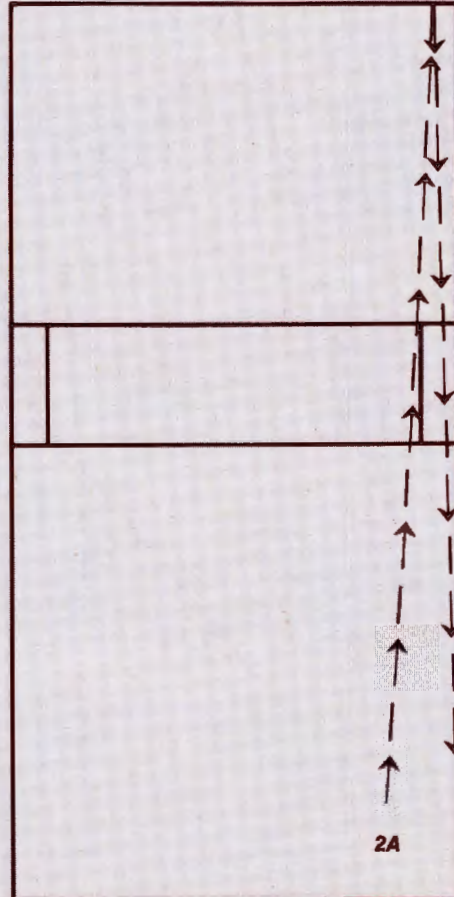


Diagram 2A. The deep court, forehand down-the-line pass/kill.

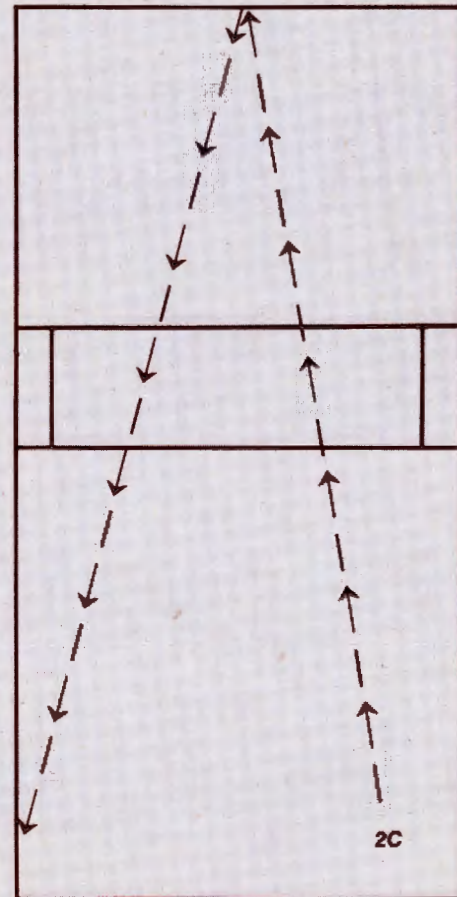


Diagram 2C. The forehand cross court pass/kill.

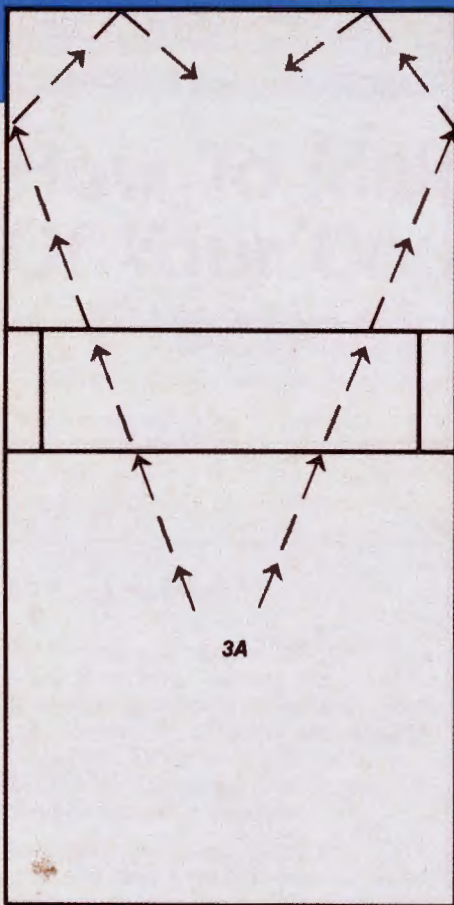


Diagram 3A. Forehand and backhand wide angle pinch kills.

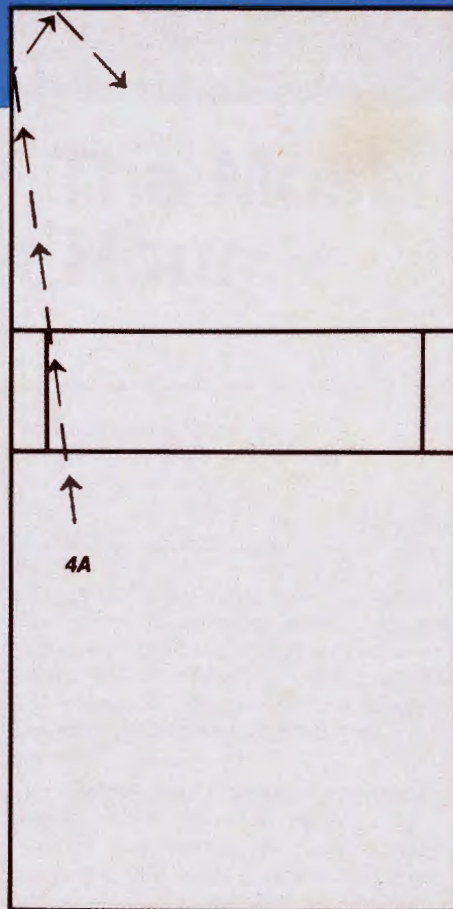


Diagram 4A. The backhand corner pinch kill.

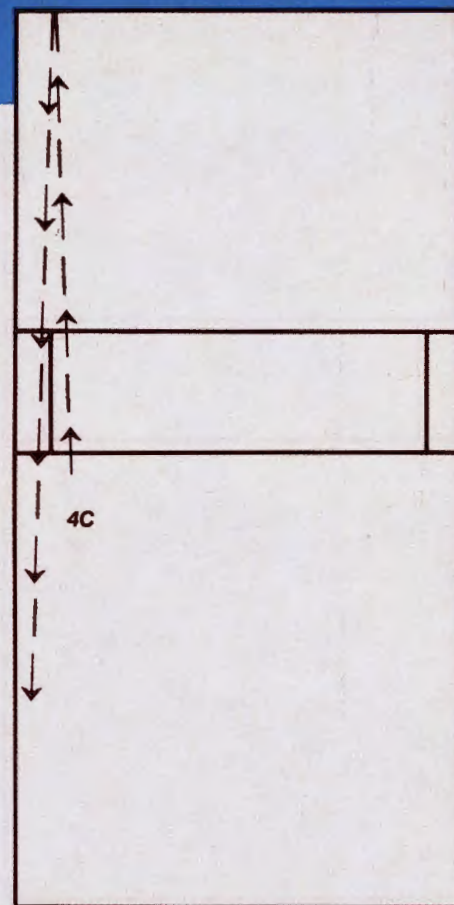


Diagram 4C. The backhand down-the-line pass/kill.

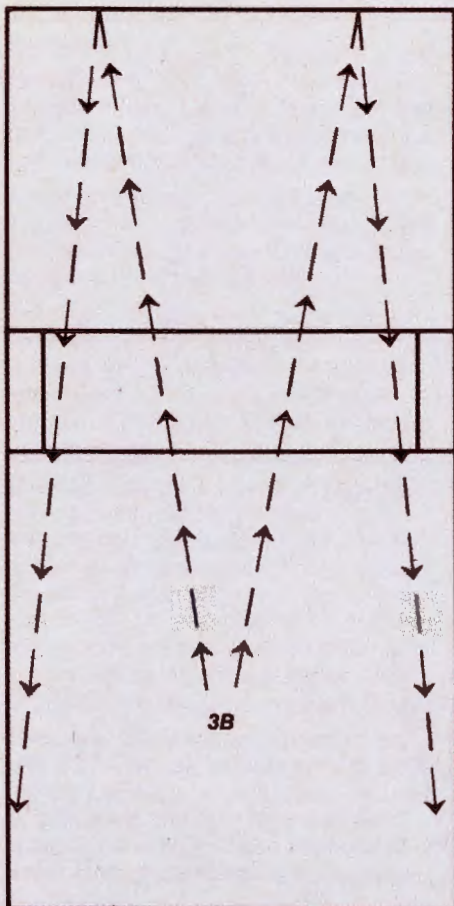


Diagram 3B. Forehand and backhand pass/kills, down-the-line and cross court.

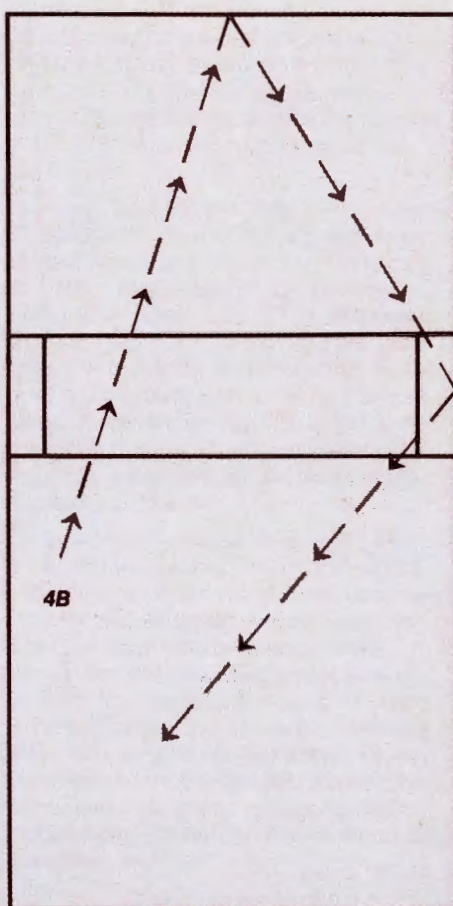


Diagram 4B. The backhand cross court wide angle pass.

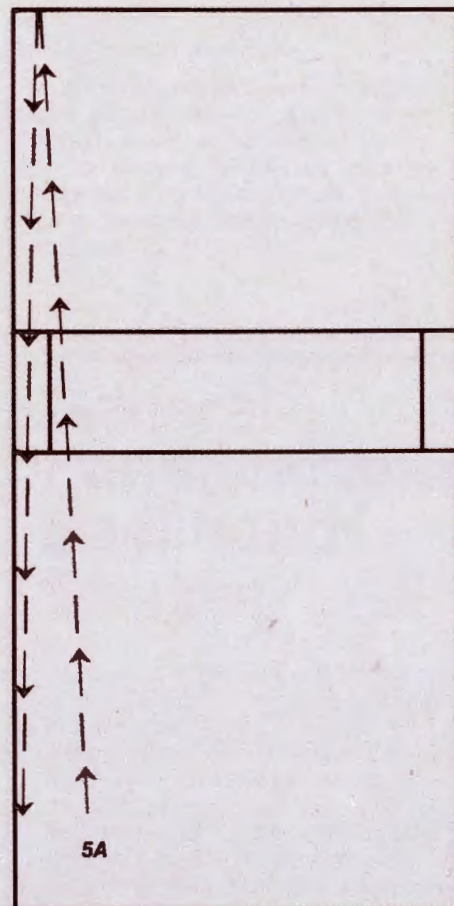


Diagram 5A. The deep court, backhand down-the-line pass/kill.

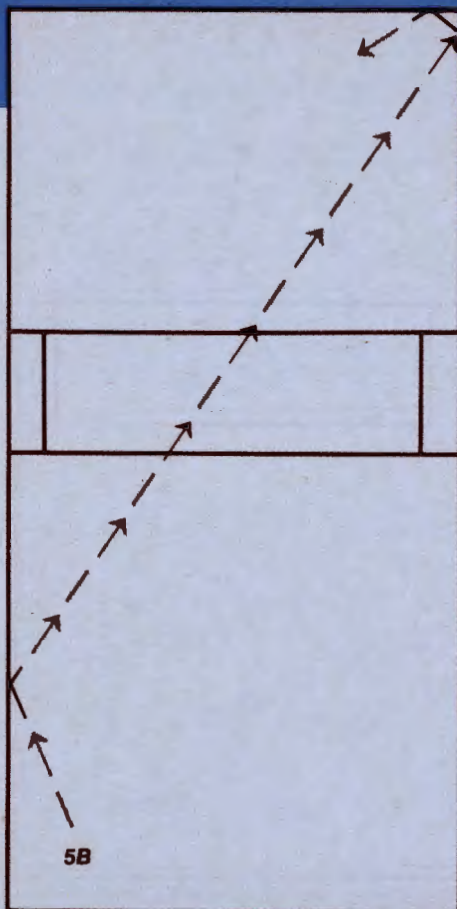


Diagram 5B. The backhand splat from 39 feet (good luck).

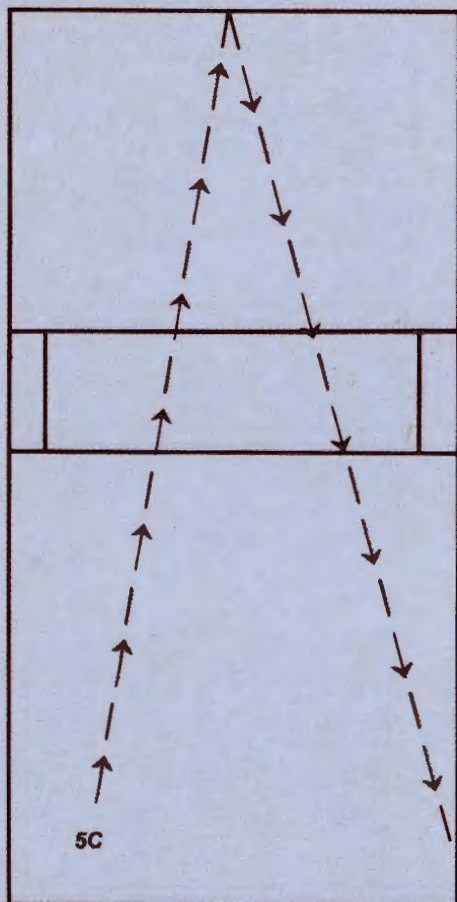


Diagram 5C. The backhand cross court pass/kill.

Front Court Volleys

The opportunity to play the racquetball in mid-air from front court occurs more than most people believe. Fully two-thirds of all shots are retrievable from center court (position 3) and about one-half of those are playable in mid-air.

Because you already have center court position and your opponent is behind you, cutting the ball off, i.e., taking it out of mid-air or on one bounce, gives you a distinct advantage over your opponent.

Diagram 3C. The front court volley involves hitting the ball to the front wall three to eight feet high and as it comes back to you, striking it out of mid-air for a corner kill. A variation from this position is to hit the ball down either line as you take it out of the air.

Diagram 6A. Additional practice can be had by using the side wall as your volleying point. Toss the ball against the side wall and strike it out of the air for either a straight-in kill or down-the-line pass/kill.

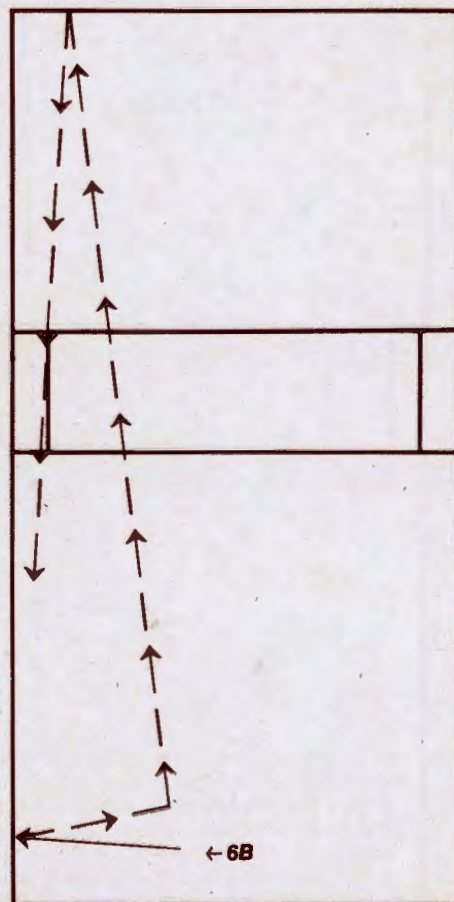
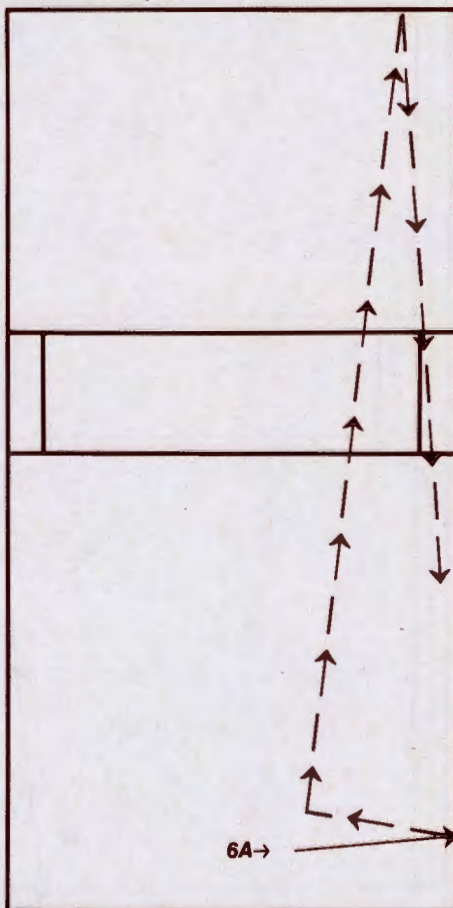
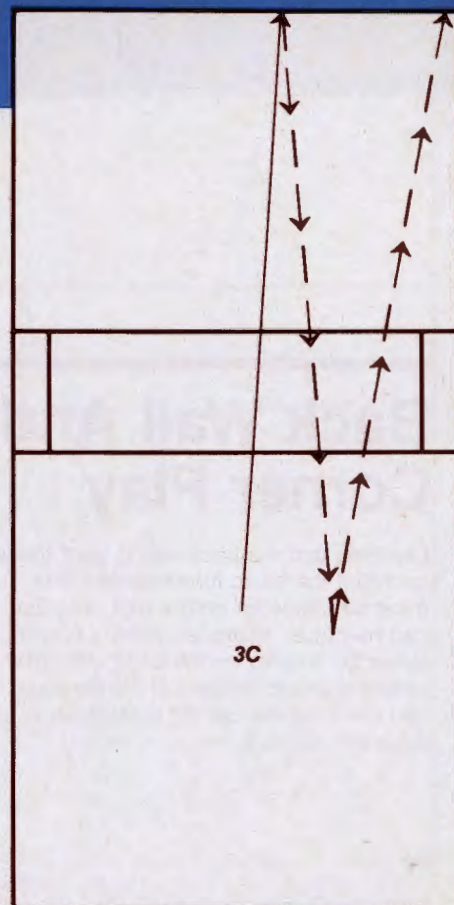


Diagram 6B. On the backhand side the drill is the same.

Back Wall And Corner Play

Learning that the back wall is your friend is one of the basic fundamentals that must be mastered before real progress can be made. However, often a player relies too heavily on the back wall when volleying would better suit his purpose. If you can't cut the ball off in front court, the back wall is for you.

Diagram 2D. Toss the ball into the back wall and as it comes back to you use your forehand, shooting for a straight-in kill.

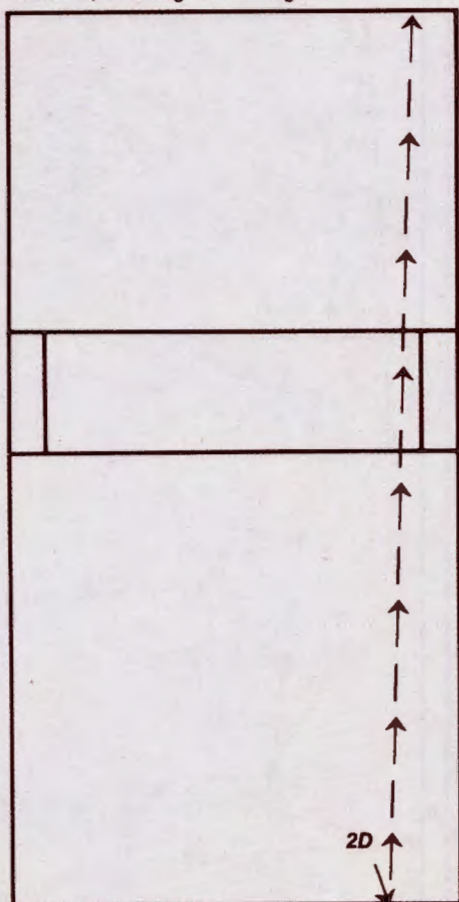


Diagram 2E. Toss the ball into the back wall and as it comes back to you hit your forehand down-the-line pass.

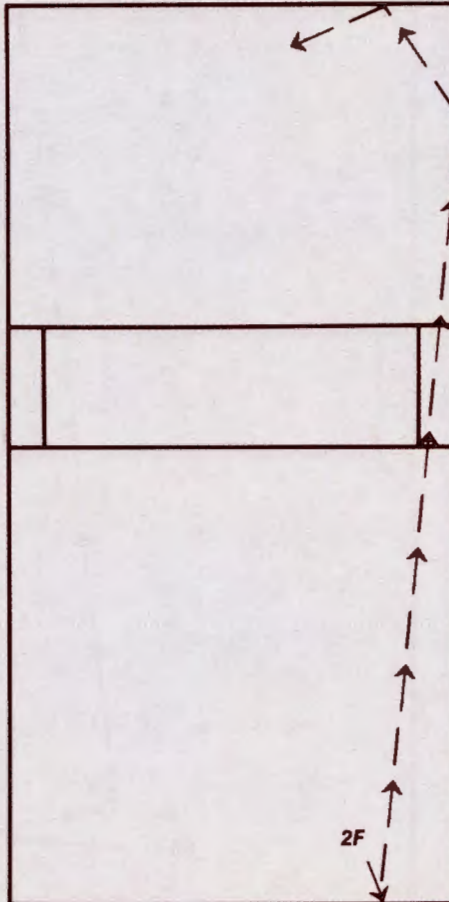


Diagram 2F. Toss the ball into the back wall and as it comes back to you use your forehand, hitting a pinch kill off the side wall.

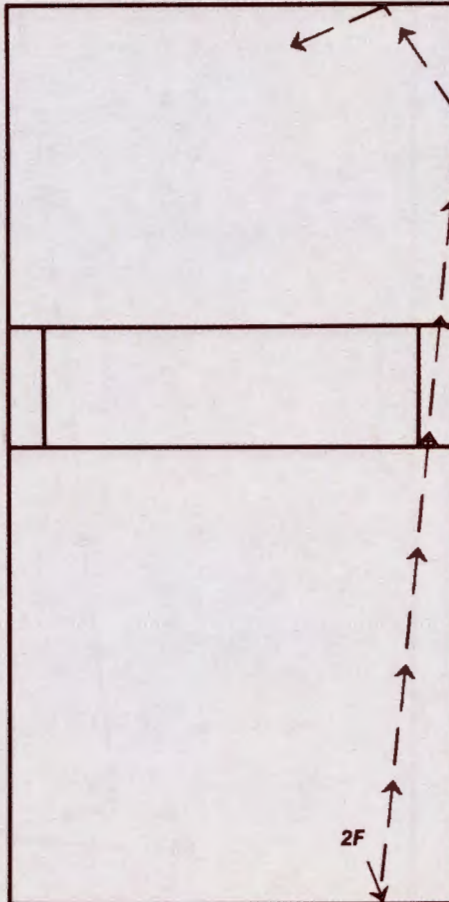


Diagram 2G. The same sequence, only this time hitting a forehand cross court pass.

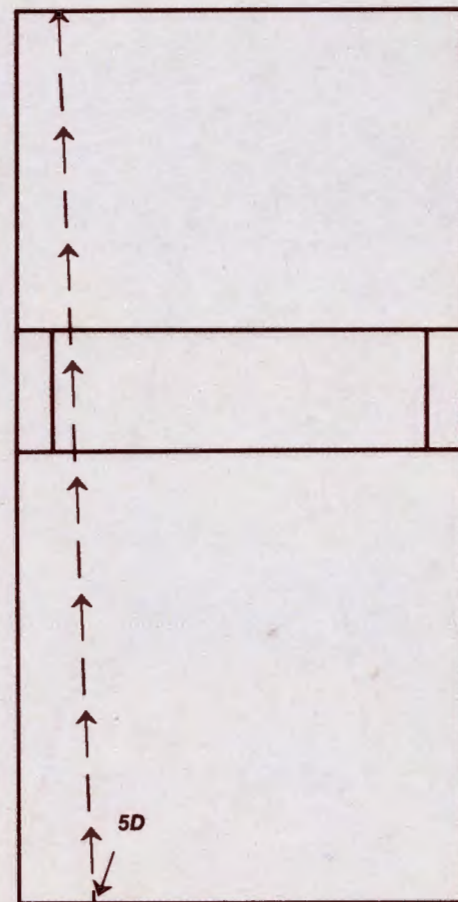


Diagram 5D. As with the forehand, toss the ball into the back wall, then hitting a straight-in kill, this time with your backhand.

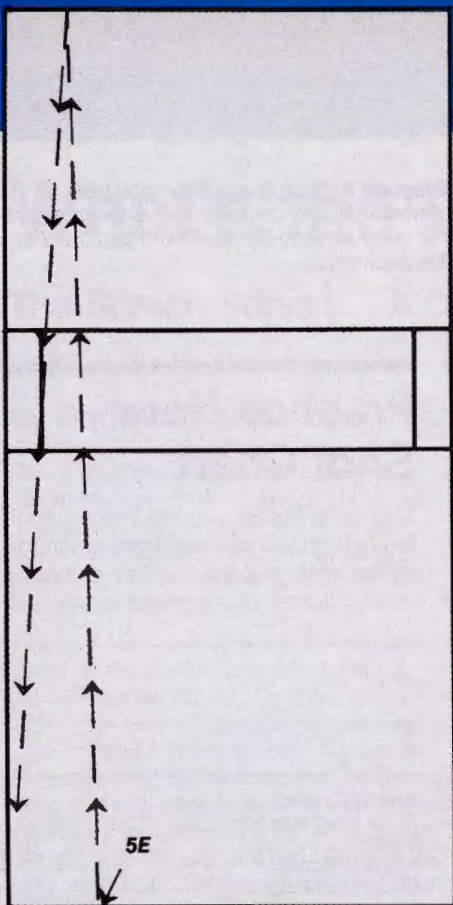


Diagram 5E. Using the back wall, now move to the backhand down-the-line pass.

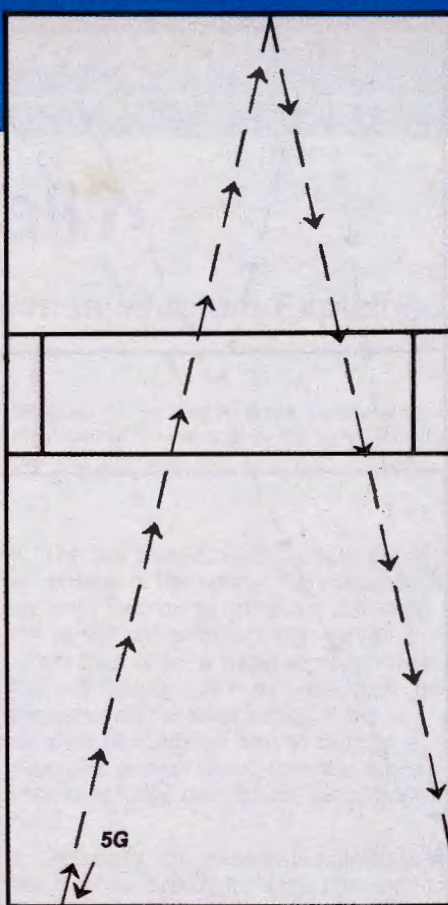


Diagram 5G. The off the back wall backhand cross court pass.

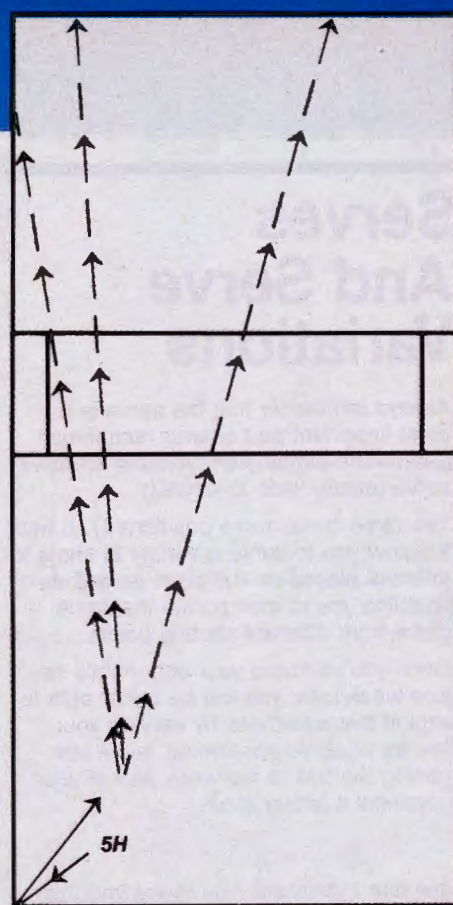


Diagram 5H. Now repeat the sequence, this time with your backhand.

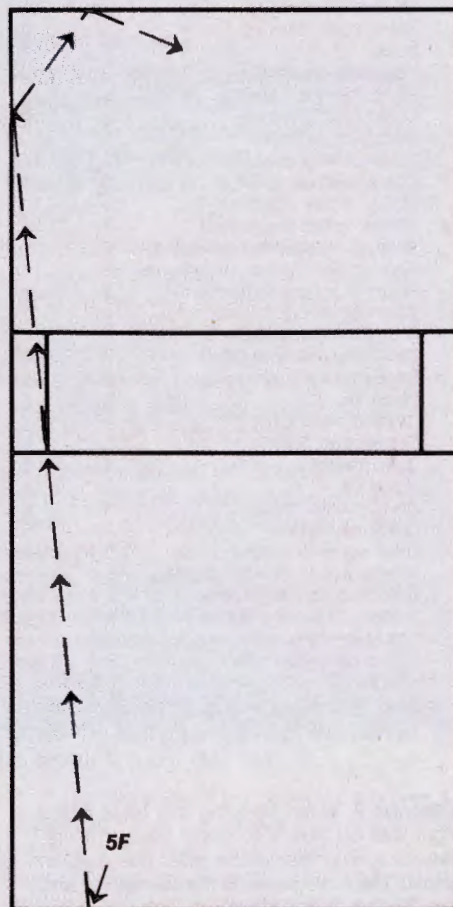


Diagram 5F. Staying with your backhand, practice the ball wall pinch kill.

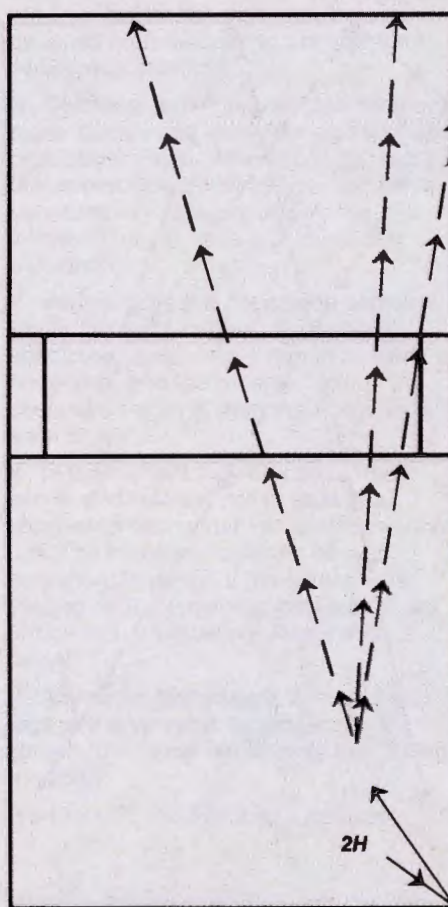


Diagram 2H. Playing the corner during the rally is one of the toughest of all racquetball shots. Practice by tossing the ball into the corner and choosing each of the shot selections—pinch kill, straight-in kill and cross court pass, all with your forehand.

Serves And Serve Variations

Always remember that the serve is a most important part of your racquetball game. The player with the most effective serve usually wins the match.

The three basic serve positions (7, 8 and 9) allow you to serve a variety of shots to different places on the court as well as enabling you to incorporate the same serve from different starting points.

Once you've found your opponent's service weakness, you will be better able to exploit this weakness by varying your serves or serve positioning, while still getting the ball to the weak part of your opponent's hitting zone.

Diagram 7. Most common serves from this position are the drive down the left wall and Z to the backhand corner. You should hit at least three of each during your practice hour, more if possible.

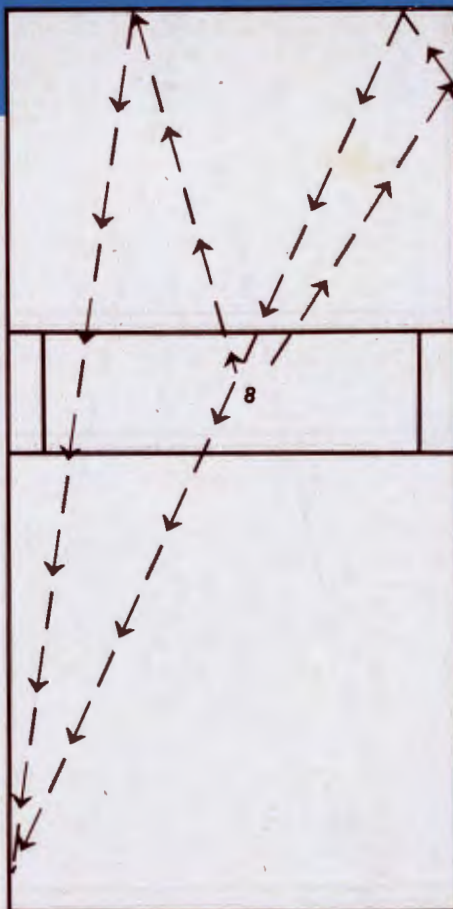
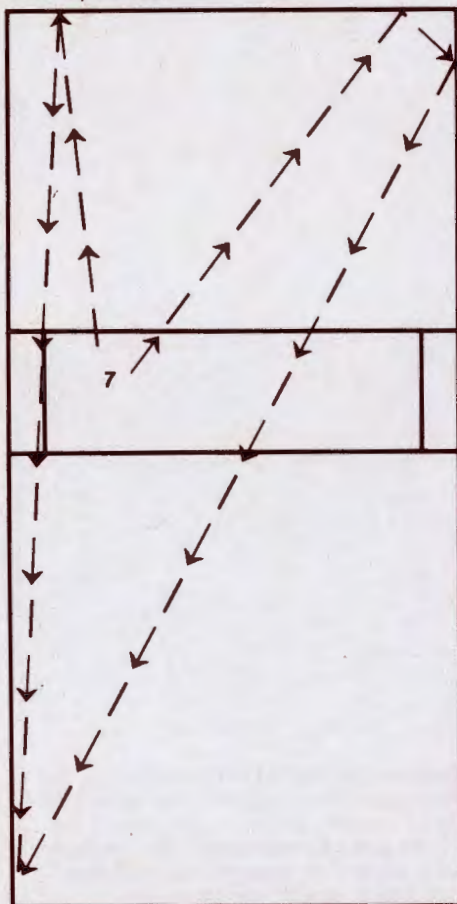
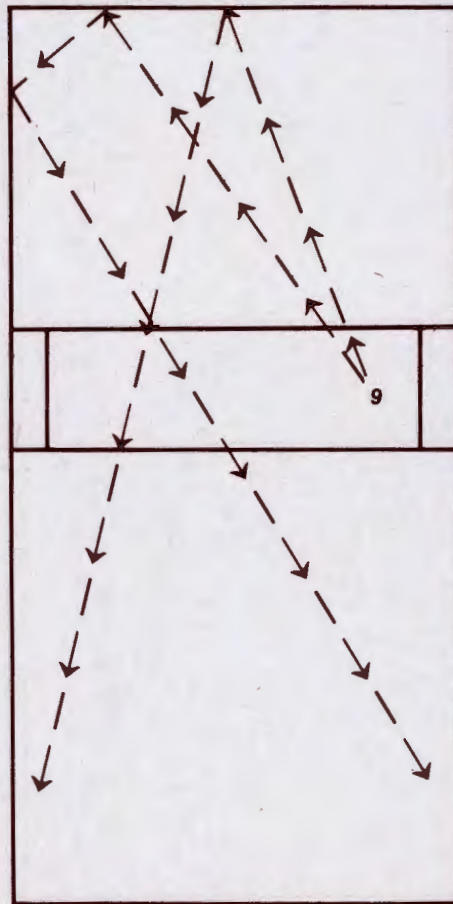


Diagram 8. From this position you have almost unlimited choices. This diagram shows the drive serve to the backhand and the Z to the backhand.



Practice Hour Shot Chart

This table shows you the specific shot to practice, the position from which to hit the shot, and the number of times to hit it during your practice hour.

Shot	Position	Repetitions
Straight Pass/kill	1	10
Cross court wide angle pass	1	10
Pinch kill	1	10
Straight Pass/kill	2	10
Cross court Pass/kill	2	10
Splat	2	10
Straight Pass/kill	4	10
Cross court wide angle pass	4	10
Pinch kill	4	10
Straight Pass/kill	5	10
Cross court Pass/kill	5	10
Splat	5	10
Forehand pinch kill	3	10
Down-the-line Pass/kill	3	10
Cross court pass/kill	3	10
Backhand pinch kill	3	10
Down-the-line pass/kill	3	10
Cross court pass/kill	3	10
Mid-air volley (forehand)	3	10
Mid-air volley (backhand)	3	10
Volley down-the-line (forehand)	3	5
Volley down-the-line (backhand)	3	5
Volley cross court (forehand)	3	5
Volley cross court (backhand)	3	5
Forehand volley re-direct	6	5
Backhand volley re-direct	6	5
Back wall kill	2	5
Pinch kill	2	5
Down-the-line pass	2	5
Cross court pass	2	5
Back wall kill	5	5
Pinch kill	5	5
Down-the-line pass	5	5
Cross court pass	5	5
Drive serve to forehand side	7/8/9	3 each
Drive serve to backhand side	7/8/9	3 each
Z Serve to forehand side	7/8/9	3 each
Z serve to backhand side	7/8/9	3 each
Lob to forehand side	7/8/9	3 each
Lob to backhand side	7/8/9	3 each

Diagram 9. When standing this close to the right wall be careful to cover down-the-line returns to your backhand side. This diagram shows the drive serve to the backhand and the Z serve to the forehand.

What's the Call?

The Screen Serve . . . A Common Problem Explained

by Dan Bertolucci

One of the most-repeated questions asked by players of all levels is just what constitutes a screen serve? A fellow player ran into this problem as he proceeded to serve his 20th and 21st point in a game with a friend.

The question revolved around the screen serve. Both players agreed that when the ball passed by Player A on the serve, it was more than a racquet's length away from his body. Nonetheless, Player B, the opponent, still claimed that he did not have a fair chance to see the ball and so it should have been played as a screen. Player A, on the other hand, felt that as long as the ball passed his body at least a racquet's length away, it was not his responsibility to make sure that his opponent was in proper position to see the ball.

Well, yes and no.

First, let's clearly restate the rule and its effect. Second, since this is a judgment call, I'll list some things to keep in mind the next time you or your opponent can't decide whether or not the serve was a screen.

Screen serves fall under rules 4.3 and 4.4 incorporating defective serves and dead ball serves. Technically, a screen serve is a dead ball serve, meaning that the serve results in no penalty and the server is given another serve without cancelling a prior illegal serve. (Translation: You get to try it again.)

Screen serves are defined by rule 4.4 as "any serve that passes too close to the server . . . to obstruct the view of the receiver."

Having read the rule, keep the following hints in mind next time you and your opponent can't decide for yourselves:

1. There is no "18 inch rule" or other definitive rule prescribing a length or distance the ball must be from the server. It is strictly a judgment call.
2. A screen should be called whenever it is believed that the server's body blocked the ball to such an extent that the receiver was not allowed a fair chance to see the ball well enough to make a reasonable return.

Diagram 1. The classic down-the-line screen: the receiver (B) never sees the serve until it's past the short line.

3. The call should never work to the advantage of the server. Referees should be more inclined to make the call when the server hits a really tough serve, rather than when a weak serve is made that will likely result in an easy return for the receiver. (In other words, if the receiver has enough time to react to a poorly hit screen serve, then the referee should not take that "plum" away from him.)

4. Generally, the receiver is entitled to see the ball directly from the front wall to his racquet.

5. On drive serves hit down-the-line it is not automatically a screen if the ball hits the floor before the side wall. It truly depends on how close to the wall the server was standing.

6. Referees: remember the call must be made quickly and loudly enough so that both players stop. When in doubt, call the screen. It is better to have the serve unnecessarily replayed in defense of fairness, than to have a point unfairly awarded.

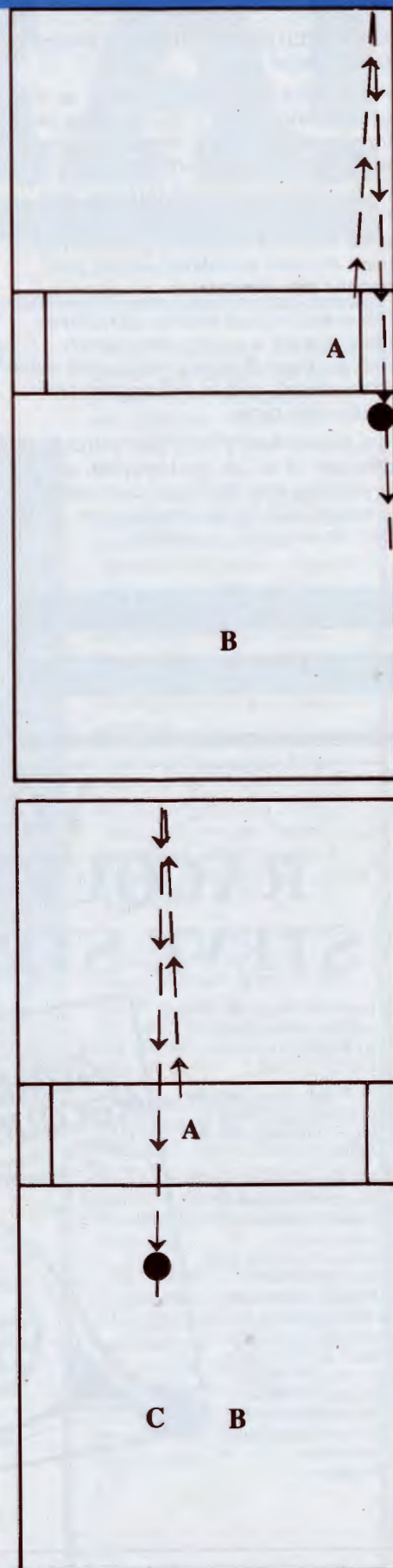
7. Perfect aces are not screen serves. I stress the word *perfect*. If a serve is absolutely unreturnable due to its own perfection, and the receiver had no chance to return it, then the ace stands, seen or not.

8. In tournament play be careful (both server and referee) not to allow the receiver to decoy you into a screen serve call. The receiver may think he was screened; however, if the screen was caused by the receiver's own movement (inaccurate anticipation) then it's not a screen.

9. Any serve that passes through the legs of the server is automatically a screen (this is not necessarily true during the rally).

Next month: the 5 foot rule revisited.

Diagram 2. Screen or no screen? The identical serve is a screen when served to Player B, but not to Player C, just a few feet away.



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APRO, National Racquetball Reach Accord On Exclusive Instructional Series

The American Professional Racquetball Organization (APRO) and *National Racquetball* have reached an Agreement whereby APRO, through its over 400 certified teaching professionals, will author an exclusive series of instructional articles in each issue.

The series, which will officially begin in the April issue of *National Racquetball*, will analyze a specific shot or strategy in detail, highlighted by a three tiered approach to the subject—for beginning, intermediate, and advanced players.

"We are extremely pleased to be able to offer the vast knowledge and expertise of APRO's instructors to our readers," said Hugh Morgan, National Racquetball's new publisher. *"In our opinion, there is no group better qualified to research and author instructional material than APRO."*



Chuck Sheftel, president APRO

"Most importantly, the three tiered approach will bring a fresh look to the subject. It will allow our readers to graduate from one level to another."

The Agreement, negotiated between APRO's president Chuck Sheftel, APRO National Coordinator Nancy Taylor, and *National Racquetball's* Associate Publisher/Editor Chuck Leve, also calls for continued and ongoing support for APRO's work within the racquetball industry.

"National Racquetball has joined APRO as an Associate Member," said Sheftel, *"and has pledged to do everything within reason to alert the racquetball public to our efforts."*

"At the same time, we at APRO recognize that National Racquetball is serving as a stabilizing force in the racquetball industry and we wholeheartedly endorse that effort."

The new series will be an extension of the "APRO Teaches" concept which calls upon the experience of the teaching professionals in developing solid instructional material.

"Our readers have told us they want a meaningful base of instruction in each issue," said Morgan. *"We can think of no better source than APRO. We are extremely excited about the positive impact their articles will surely make."*

Penn Names Two Vice Presidents

Richard F. Wendt and Martin Roth have been named to two newly created vice presidencies in Penn Athletic Products Company, an operating unit of The General Tire & Rubber Company. Penn is the nation's largest manufacturer of tennis balls and a leading producer of racquetballs.

Wendt, 37, was named Vice President-Manufacturing. Formerly Director of Manufacturing, he is based in Phoenix, AZ, where Penn maintains its largest production facilities and a development center.

Roth, 47, was appointed Vice President-Marketing. He is based at Penn headquarters in

Monroeville, PA, and is responsible for the firm's advertising, marketing, sales and promotion programs. He formerly was Vice President-Marketing of GTR Wallcovering Company, another General Tire unit in Hackensack, NJ.

Stretching Your Way To Fewer Injuries

Is your idea of a warm-up socking a few balls around before you begin playing for points?

If your answer is "yes," then you have probably (at least a few times) pleaded, gasping in pain, for a time-out because your back/shoulder/forearm/thigh/other felt as if it was on fire.

Then you gratefully lowered your wrenched, traumatized limbs into the whirlpool, vaguely hoping its soothing warmth would repair the damage you did on the court.

You learned quickly that serious injuries such as torn ligaments, tendons or muscles are *not* alleviated in any substantial way by the deceptive comfort of the whirlpool.

But help is at hand. All you have to do is *stretch*, before and after you play.

So says John Beaulieu, an educational psychologist with 14 years experience as a teacher of karate (in which he holds a Black Belt). Beaulieu has served as a consultant to professional athletic teams such as the NBA Portland Trailblazers, developing and refining stretching programs for players.

His research indicates that the more flexible player is able to avoid injury, becomes fatigued less quickly, and generally feels better. All of this translates into improved performance. And the way to develop flexibility is to stretch.

Muscles must be continually stretched to minimize the effect of natural contraction. Although muscles are partially stretched with the movement and activity of daily life, this does not condition them to lengthen sufficiently to allow a full range of motion. Because of the natural tendency of muscles to contract and shorten, any movement beyond normal activities will still be limited.

But, you argue, I play racquetball a couple of times a week. I *am* working my muscles beyond the range demanded by "normal activities."

You're still not off the hook, however. If you're like the majority of Americans, you spend the rest of your time lolling in a car or chair, or involved in physically undemanding tasks. This can spell danger when you hit the court for a stimulating, vigorous workout.

If you lack flexibility, the twisting, reaching and bending movements in rac-

quetball can result in torn muscles, as you hustle across the court and extend past your limit for that chance to put the ball away. And soft tissue injuries are among the most painful and persistent ills that flesh is heir to.

Even if you avoid injury, your lack of flexibility is working against you in another way. Short, tight muscles that resist movement make you work harder than muscles that have the capability to lengthen as you move. What this amounts to is that your own stiffness acts as a force that resists the motion you're attempting. You're fighting with yourself, using up energy that you could conserve.

By stretching and developing your flexibility, though, you improve your range of motion and endurance and, indirectly, your speed. A limited reach, jump, stride or bend is a great handicap to your racquetball game, whereas unrestricted movement can mean better retrieving, improved point of contact, and the use of less energy.

Before you begin, there are a few things you should keep in mind.

Ideally, you should stretch both before and after you play racquetball, but if you only have time for one, then do it before. Stretching after will help speed up your flexibility development very slightly, since your muscles are warm after the game and will yield to the stretch a little more easily. But the benefits of pre-game stretching are more important—protection against injury and improved performance.

A short warm-up should *precede* your stretching routine. Warm muscles stretch more easily and are less susceptible to injury. Do something aerobic for five or 10 minutes—mild jogging or rope-jumping. Wear a sweatsuit and don't push yourself, but keep at it until you literally feel *warm*.

Then you can begin stretching. Stretch the muscles slowly and consistently, until you feel some tension but never to the point of pain. Don't force yourself past your limit by bouncing or jerking. Keep it smooth and moderate.

The following illustrations show a series of stretches that Beaulieu devised especially for racquetball players. If you can't do them all, at least do those exercises outlined in gray. ●

1



With legs crossed, lower body to floor. When stretch is felt, hold. Keep elbows in front of knees. (**Lower back**)

2



Assume the position shown by grabbing left foot with right hand. Pull the left foot towards the buttocks until stretch is felt and hold. (**Quadriceps**)

3



Pull knee to chest and raise the head to the knee. When stretch is felt, hold. (**Hamstrings**)

4



Push the upper torso back with the arms until stretch is felt and hold. Push head as far back as it will go. (**Abdomen and Chest**)

5



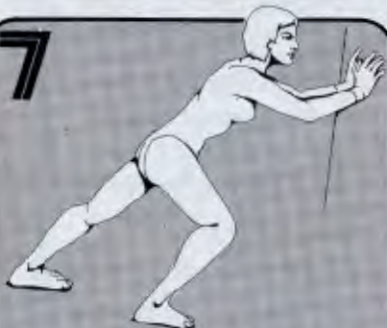
With legs crossed and arms out, turn body until stretch is felt and hold. **(Hip and Oblique)**

6



Put elbow behind the head. Gently pull elbow toward the center of back until stretch is felt and hold. **(Shoulders)**

7



Leaning on wall, keep back foot flat and head up. Slowly bend arms and lower body toward wall until stretch is felt and hold. **(Lower Leg)**

8



Put bottoms of feet together, pull heels toward groin and body forward until stretch is felt and hold. **(Groin)**

9



Assume position on back with knee up and leg pulled into side. Slowly lower knee until stretch is felt and hold. **(Quadriceps)**

10



From position shown, grab ankle and pull body forward until stretch is felt and hold. **(Hamstrings)**

11



Rock gently back and forth about 8-10 times. **(Back)**

12



Bring legs over head as shown. When stretch is felt, hold. Use the hands to keep balance. **(Back)**

13



Cross left leg over the right and bring right arm through as shown. Push on leg with arm and twist body until stretch is felt and hold. Turn head to the rear. **(Hip and Oblique)**

14



Behind shoulders, reach down with one hand. Bring other hand up, palm out. Grab fingers. When stretch is felt, hold. **(Shoulders)**

15



Interlock fingers behind back. Have partner raise arms slowly until stretch is felt and hold. **(Shoulders)**

16



Raise toes of right leg and slowly slide the leg away from the body until stretch is felt and hold. **(Groin)**

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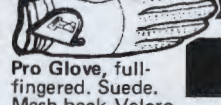
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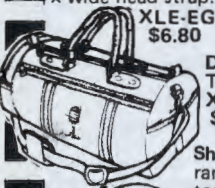
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Upcoming Events

Budweiser Killshots For Cystic Fibrosis: Racquetball's Biggest Promotion Ever?

From February thru April, 1982, over 200 racquetball facilities throughout nine Midwestern states will be hosting the Budweiser Killshots Competition. During Cystic Fibrosis Week at each club, both members and the general public are invited to stop in, offer a minimum donation of \$3, and see how many consecutive killshots they can hit. A killshot is 18 inches or less from the floor, hit from the back 10 feet of the court. Prizes will be awarded to the winners of the three men's and three women's skill level divisions and all are eligible for Grand Prizes including Caribbean cruises, televisions, and other valuable prizes.

The net proceeds will go to the local Cystic Fibrosis Chapters to help fight the nation's No. 1 killer of children and young adults.

This Midwest program could be the largest single promotion in the history of racquetball in terms of number of participants, number of facilities, and total dollars raised. Budweiser is underwriting the major expenses and will be quarterbacking general publicity in the market areas, thus providing racquetball with a tremendous amount of publicity. The Killshots program will be offered nationally beginning October, 1982.

WPRA Diet Pepsi Pro/Am—Lombard, Illinois

March 25-28, 1982
The Glass Court
830 East Roosevelt Rd.
Lombard, IL 60148

Tournament Director: Lynne Farmer
Women's pro events plus most amateur divisions. For further information call (312) 629-3390.

WPRA Tour—Fishkill, New York

April 21-25, 1982
Allsport Fitness & Racquet Club
17 Old Main St.
Fishkill, NY 12524

Tournament Director: Bill Austin

Women's pro event plus most amateur divisions. For further information call (914) 896-5678.

Chicago

Marshall Field & Co., Wilson Sporting Goods, Thomson Vacations and On TV are joining with Metro Clubs, the largest racquet sports and health and fitness organization in Chicago and its suburbs, to offer more than \$70,000 in prizes and souvenirs during the 1982 citywide "Racquetball Shootout" beginning the weekend of April 2-4. Gatorade will be

the tournament's official drink.

"With more than 640 prizes and 2,000 souvenirs," says Lynne Farmer, the tournament's director, "we expect the 1982 'Racquetball Shootout' tournament to be the largest racquetball tournament ever staged in the U.S., certainly in metropolitan Chicago."

Winners in each of the 10 divisions of play will receive a Thomson Vacations trip for two to the Bahamas or a Caribbean island plus a \$250.00 gift certificate from Marshall Field & Co.

Runners-up in each division will receive a \$200.00 Marshall Field & Co. gift certificate plus an On TV hookup and six months of On TV viewing. (On TV is Chicagoland's largest pay-TV outlet).

WSB-Radio Courtside Racquetball Open

April 1-4, 1982
Courtside Racquet & Fitness Center
2 Dunwoody Park
Atlanta, GA 30338

Tournament Directors: Gerald Cleveland and Steve Wiegand. Most major events, including \$1,300 prize money in Men's Open, Women's Open and Open Doubles. All participants eligible for trip to San Francisco via Delta Airlines. For more information call (404) 393-0003.

Women's Racquetball Classic

April 30-May 2, 1982
Sacramento Handball/Racquetball Club
725 14th St.
Sacramento, CA 95814

Tournament Director: Jose Phillips

Most major events, including Open, B, C, D, Seniors, five junior categories and three doubles divisions. For further information call (916) 441-2977.

Women's East Coast Championships

May 7-8, 1982
Racquetball International Club
350 Fall River Ave.
Seekonk, MA 02771

Tournament Director: Doris Horridge.
For further information call (617) 336-5600

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Handball's Alvarado Defeats Davis In Third Hands Vs. Racquet Battle Of The Sexes



Despite the power generated by Fran Davis' racquet on the hard handball, national champ Naty Alvarado was able to use his control to devastate Fran and become the first male handball player to win this Hands vs. Racquet Battle of the Sexes in its three year history.

It was tough sledding for WPRA President Francine Davis against the United States Handball Association's champion, Naty Alvarado, in the Hands vs. Racquet Battle of the Sexes, part of the K mart/AMF Voit Super Bowl III tournament at Killshot, Ltd., in Bloomingdale, IL.

Although Davis hustled all over the court, it seemed she could not do anything right.

Alvarado, a 26-year-old from Hesperia, Ca., blew Davis out, 21-8, 21-7. He thus became the first male to claim the Hands vs. Racquet Battle of the Sexes title that previously had been won by two women, WPRA touring pro Jennifer Harding, and WPRA professional national champion Heather McKay, both playing against Vern Roberts of Chicago.

Alvarado made it look easy, using hooks, reverse spin and speed on breaking balls. "The idea was to keep her off-balance all the time," he said.

Davis, on the other hand, wanted to serve Zs hard and low to both Alvarado's sides—hard, because that was her "weapon," and low, because "he would have trouble returning low shots."

Davis won the coin toss and quickly moved out to a 5-3 lead in the first game. But Alvarado came back with three

straight scores, thus taking his first lead at 6-5.

They traded points until Alvarado overcame a 7-7 tie with a six-point outburst that began with an ace. Davis then tallied what was to be her last point of the first game to bring the score to 8-13. But that was it for her. Alvarado closed out the game with eight straight points, the last a rollout killshot.

Did Davis change her strategy between games? "I tried to concentrate more," she said, "but I didn't change.

"One of my troubles was I did not get my first serve in. When it went in, I got a few points. But I couldn't get the momentum to put pressure on him.

"I was going for the right shots, low, hard shots down the line, but I was missing them.

"I'm used to playing with a racquetball. The timing is slower with a handball. Naty had more time to set up and hit as many kills as he did," Davis explained.

Alvarado had first serve in the second and ultimately decisive game and he really took control of the match. He built up a 12-0 lead while hitting three aces and three kills during the surge.

Davis, ever the sportswoman, was quick to congratulate Alvarado for his great shots, and she gave him his seventh point on a hinder call. But she lost serve twice at 0-9 by a foot fault and skip ball.

Davis picked up her first point in the second game on a kill when she was down 0-12. She quickly followed it with another point when Alvarado missed a return. She notched her third point on a kill, her fourth when Alvarado's backward return volley through his legs skipped, and her fifth on a kill.

With the score 14-5, Alvarado got back down to business and scored six more points, two on aces, one on a passing shot after a terrific rally and three on Davis's errors.

With the score 5-20, Davis picked up her final two points with passing shots. But then she lost serve and the match, 21-7, on two skips.

Other results Men:

Open: Ric Dern over Steve Mondry, 21-5, 21-8

A: Bill Lyman over Gary Pescirillo, 21-17, 20-21, 11-2

B: Clifton Gill over G. L. Smith, 21-20, 7-21, 11-6

C: Gary Hunley over Ray Bruntz, 21-16, 21-9

Novice: Matt Klein over Scott Stopinski, 21-20, 21-7

15 & Under: John Talty over Scott Stopinski, 21-18, 20-21, 11-2

Senior/Masters: Marshall Waldo over Herb Grigg, 19-21, 21-18, 11-5

Open/A Doubles: R. Dem/J. Lynch over S. Mondry/E. Scheyer, 21-10, 21-19

C Doubles: R. Shymanski/S. Wolkow over R. Williams/J. Williams, 21-13, 21-7

Women:

Open: Chris Evon over Sue Carow, 21-13, 21-16

A: Diane Fields over Diane Rowe, 21-16, 21-19

B/C: Yvonne Puhlman over Judy Young, 21-12, 21-18

D: Carol Klier over Janet Reichart, 21-4, 16-21, 11-3

Open Doubles: Glenda Young/Sue Carow over Coleen Shields/Claudia Loizzo, 21-20, 21-12

Military

150 military personnel, active duty and retired, from 18 different states, representing the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and the Coast Guard participated in the 1st Annual U.S. Military Racquetball Tournament at the Las Vegas Racquet Club, February 1-5, 1982. The competition was fierce and the hosts, The Showboat Hotel and the Las Vegas Racquet Club, were superb!

Men's Open: 1st—George Heagerty, Air Force, Nellis AFB, NV; 2nd—Fred Jenkins, Air Force, Hill AFB, UT; 3rd—Tom Strutz, Army, Ft. Lewis, WA; 4th—Bryan Shul, Air Force, Holoman AFB, NM. **Consol.**—Don Luehm, Air Force, Seymour Johnson AFB, NC.

Men's A: 1st—Alfredo Viramontes, Army, Presidio, CA; 2nd—Frank Toney, Air Force, Hill AFB, UT; 3rd—Joe Vigil, Air Force, Goodfellow AFB, TX; 4th—Robert Skier, Air Force, Hill AFB, UT. **Consol.**—David Garrard, Navy, Fallon NAS, NV.

Men's B: 1st—Karl Ginyard, Air Force, Lowry AFB, CO; 2nd—Ronald Scott, Marines, Barstow M.S., CA; 3rd—James Goodwin, Army, Ft. Huachuca, AZ; 4th—Kurt Kamrad, Air Force, Pope AFB, NC; **Consol.**—Napoleon Wright, Army, Ft. Irwin, CA.

Men's C: 1st—Enrique Fernandez, Army, Santa Ana, DRC, CA; 2nd—Mike Gaertner, Air Force, Edwards AFB, CA; 3rd—Bruce Nelson, Navy, San Diego, CA; 4th—Larry Randlett, Air Force, Nellis AFB, NV; **Consol.**—Kenneth Riley, Air Force, Beale AFB, CA.

Men's D: 1st—Robert Bikofsky, Air Force, Pope AFB, NC; 2nd—Kevin Topp, Army, Ft. Bliss, TX; 3rd—Stephen Perry, Air Force, Castle AFB, CA; 4th—Charles Spitz, Army, Ft. Bliss, TX; **Consol.**—Dan Faust, Army Ft. McPherson, CA.

Men's 30+ L 1st: Mike Crum, Air Force, Castle AFB, CA; 2nd—Gordon Perry, Navy, Fallon NAS, NV; 3rd—Clifton Brown, Air Force, Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ; 4th—Tom Strum, Navy, Goodfellow AFB, TX; **Consol.**—George Paul, Army, Sierra Army Depot, CA.

Men's 35+ : 1st—Richard Allman, Army, Ft. Lewis, WA; 2nd—Cliff Hogue, Air Force, George AFB, CA; 3rd—Ted Schacker, Air Force, Nellis AFB, NV; 4th—Jerry Johnson, Air Force, Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ; **Consol.**—Russ Latimer, Air Force, Kapaun, Germany.

Men's 40+ : 1st—Robert McNabb, Air Force, Hill AFB, UT; 2nd—Pat Drennon, Navy, San Diego NAS, CA; 3rd—Ace Untalan, Air Force, Castle AFB, CA; 4th—David Garcia, Army ROTC, Utah University, UT; **Consol.**—Eugene Hindle, Air Force, Pope AFB, NC.

Men's 45+ : 1st—Mike Mojer, AF/Ret, FL; 2nd—George Garcia A/Ret, CO; 3rd—Leo Young; 4th—Ed Hopkins, Marines, M.C. Barstow, CA; **Consol.**—John Mooney, AF/Ret, CO.

Men's 50+ : 1st—Francis Shroyer, AF/Ret, CA; 2nd—Charles Bushong, A/Ret, OR; 3rd—Jim McBride, AF/Ret, CA; 4th—George Dwyer, AF/Ret, CO; **Consol.**—Art Goss, AF/Ret, CO.



Women's Open: 1st—Jane Treadwell, Air Force, Nellis AFB, NV; 2nd—Laurie Potter, Navy, Pearl Harbor, HI; 3rd—Diana Reyes, Air Force, Lackland AFB, TX; 4th—Deborah Van De Van, Air Force, Pope AFB, NC.

Women's C: 1st—Alicia Mullins, Army, Ft. Bragg, GA; 2nd—Barbra Cahil, Air Force, Lackland AFB, TX; 3rd—Ruth Barr, Air Force, Seymour-Johnson AFB, NC; 4th—Lyddia Mead, Army, Presidio, CA.

Women's D: 1st—Debra Bontrager, Air Force, Pope AFB, NC; 2nd—Vicki Boyd, Army, Ft. Bragg, GA; 3rd—Ann Steinkellner, Petaluma, CA; 4th—Ola Davis, Philadelphia, PA.

Military winners, Men's divisions: (l. to r.) Heagerty, Viramontes, Ginyard, Fernandez, Bikofsky.

Military winners, Women's divisions: (l. to r.) Bontrager, Treadwell, Mullins.

Florida

1st Annual March of Dimes Racquetball Classic

January 29-31, 1982

(All results championship matches)

Men's Open: Morrison d. Pfahler 21-18, 21-18.

Men's B: Clement d. Grayson 21-15, 21-13.

Men's C: Cradick d. Corrente 21-16, 21-7.

Men's 30+ : Philman d. Key 21-14, 21-14.

Men's 35+ : Latimer d. Easterbrook 21-14, 19-21, 11-2.

Men's 40+ : David d. Roe 21-17, 19-21, 11-10.

Women's B: Ginsburg d. Davis 21-7, 21-13.

Women's C: Partlow d. Davis 21-18, 21-18.

Juniors' 13-17: Piwniczka d. Ovellette 14-21, 21-17, 11-8.

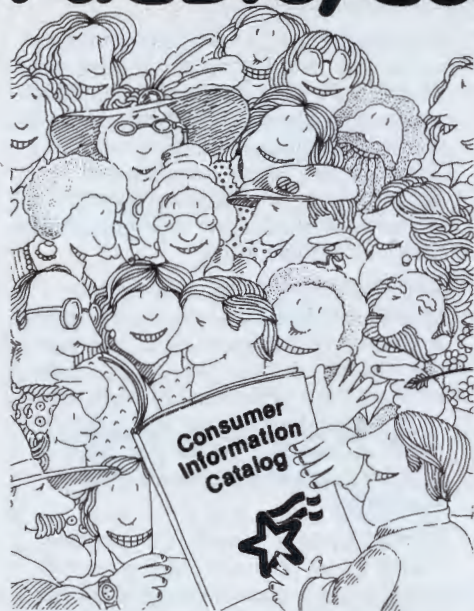
Men's Open Doubles: Serbia/Morrison d. Porta/Lefor 14-21, 21-17, 11-8.

Men's B Doubles: Owens/Caraway d. Patrick/O'Brien 15-14, 4-15, 11-10.

Women's B Doubles: Goldstein/Wells d. Smith/Bailey 15-3, 15-3.

Juniors' Doubles (Round Robin): Piwniczka/Cowher d. Stoer/Buellette.

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First IRSA Convention A Rousing Success

The International Racquet Sports Association (IRSA), the national association of racquetball and tennis club owners, is feeling good these days, basking in the afterglow of the most successful National Convention and Trade Show ever promoted by their segment of the industry.

IRSA, which was born through the efforts of the National Court Clubs Association (NCCA-racquetball) and National Tennis Association (NTA-tennis) in June of last year, spent most of the latter half of 1981 re-organizing and re-directing its efforts to combine all clubs under the one IRSA roof.

That accomplished in theory, the test of the theory came January 17-22 in Las Vegas, the dates and site of IRSA's first effort at a National Convention/Trade Show. IRSA was far from rookie status,

however, drawing on five years of NCCA and eight years of NTA experience with annual Conventions and Trade Shows.

Most IRSA insiders were hopeful of a 400 owner/manager turnout to complement an anticipated 70 booth Trade Show. What they got was nearly 700 owners/managers and 95 booths, literally turning some manufacturers away in the last days prior to the Convention.

"To say we're as pleased as can be would be one of the year's major understatements," said John McCarthy, IRSA's executive director. *"The truth is that we were overwhelmed by the turnout, support and progress made at the Convention."*

The IRSA Convention was subdivided into three categories each of which zeroed in on a major aspect of the club

business. First and foremost, IRSA dealt directly with owners and managers on issues relating to the business of running a club. Secondly, there was the two-day Trade Show, highlighted by the over 60 firms occupying 95 booths. Third, was a special program for developers of clubs to aid those trying to get into the club business by providing them with accurate and timely information.

The Convention opened Sunday night, January 17, with a welcoming cocktail party for all attending. Between the food, drink and camaraderie, one could sense that the Convention week was going to be a good one. Conversations were vivid, hospitality was outstanding and when the lights were dimmed to announce an end to the evening, a nearly-full house was still on hand.

Host for the week was the lavish Tropicana Hotel, sporting their five racquetball courts (which got a good workout from conventioners during the six days) and eight tennis courts (on one of which the trade show and round table meetings were convened). And although the enticing Tropicana casino provided a constant temptation to conventioners, most were disciplined enough to try their luck after Convention hours.

After the general opening session, Monday's activities were highlighted by panel discussions on the health club concept of membership sales and the trends toward more exercise programs within clubs. In addition, marketing racquetball was a major topic Monday, with well-known racquetball personalities like Jim Bronner, Bob Petersen, Steve Strandemo, Chuck Spaulding, Connie Peterson and Jennifer Harding making presentations or participating on panels.

The racquetball owners and managers got a first-hand lesson on creative promoting with an instructional touch Monday evening when *"The Peter Burwash Show,"* was presented. Burwash, an internationally known tennis instructor, author, player, and coach wowed the full audience with his team of young players and their spirited show.

After Tuesday morning's three hour round table session featuring everything from energy management to putting out a club newsletter, the Convention moved to its first of two afternoons of trade show. As the attendees moved from booth to booth, it became obvious that three or four product categories were most interesting.

Without trying to rank levels of interest, it's fair to say that sun tanning booths/rooms were a major product, with four companies represented at the IRSA Trade Show, all seeming to do a brisk business. Since tanning units take up little space and turn a good profit, it is

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Continued on page 42



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City..... State..... Zip..... City..... (415) 552-9916



A view of the round table seminars . . . over 600 owners/managers were on hand.



Outgoing IRSA president Norm Cates

—Photos by Sy Gross

Continued from page 40

likely you'll start seeing more and more of these products in your local club.

Las Vegas' January weather (and the IRSA folks got all kinds) was alternately cool (50's was the temperature and we heard no complaints from the midwestern and eastern representatives), rainy and windy. However, thanks to the abundance of tanning machines, many of the conventioners went home well-tanned.

Not surprisingly, exercise equipment companies were another major force at the trade show, with nearly a dozen well-known firms occupying vast spaces. The trend toward exercise machines as an additional amenity in clubs continues and the topic of converting one or two racquetball courts to exercise areas was definitely a "hot" item during the week.

As club operators become more sophisticated in overall physical fitness development, they see the value of exercise machines in their clubs. Not that every racquetball player wants to become the next Incredible Hulk, far from it. However, strength is important to one's racquetball game and the proper utilization of this equipment can have a very positive effect.

Computers, as usual, commanded a great deal of interest, as one might imagine. In an effort to better serve club members, owners are relying more and more on computers to get the job done. Everything from finding you a compatible partner to servicing your membership more efficiently was highlighted by the computer software.

Virtually every major racquet and ball manufacturer was on hand at IRSA's show, indicating the great interest shown by these firms in the progress of the racquetball industry. Countless meetings were held during the week with the discussions usually returning to the generic promotion of racquetball. Spreading the

good news about racquetball was uppermost in the minds of the racquetball manufacturers and owners, and the need for national promotion was continually emphasized during the week.

Wednesday's program continued the round table meetings (34 separate topics were addressed that morning alone) with internal club programs and promotions the general topic for the day. The second afternoon trade show followed, enabling owners and managers to fully take in the many displays.

Thursday morning found the owners in two separate sessions, one dealing with the financial aspects of clubs and computers, and the other on motivation of staff personnel. The latter topic was high on the minds of owners, who responded forcefully to *National Racquetball's* court club survey (November issue). It was there the owners read that front desk personnel are a major reason for the approval or disapproval shown a club by its members.

Thursday afternoon welcomed a variety of speakers on the various approaches to fitness programs, delving into the specific programs that have been successfully run in different parts of the nation. Simultaneously, programming was heavily discussed, with dance and aerobics, along with examples of good programming, the main topics.

The day's meetings culminated with a panel entitled "*The Future of the Racquet Sports Business*" that included well-known racquetball club owners John Wineman and Jennifer Wayt as well as multi-purpose facility owner Curt Beusman. Beusman's final address, one of the most stimulating and outrageous presentations ever heard at an owner's convention, left the entire Convention on their feet.

The grand finale to the day was a complimentary dinner show at the world-famous Folies Bergere at the Tropicana,

with special "up-front" seating for all IRSA people. The Trop allowed IRSA into the showroom an hour early for its annual awards banquet, and followed with dinner and show—an eye popper for sure, especially from the down-front seats.

Taking office during the week as 1982 IRSA officers were Richard M. Caro, Jr., CitiSport, Inc., New York, as president; Jennifer Wayt, Chalet Sports Core, Willow Springs, IL, as vice president; Ted Torcivia, The Racquet Ball Clubs, Milwaukee, WI, as vice president; and John Doyle, Circle Racquetball, Long Beach, CA, as treasurer.

The Convention's final half-day Friday, was a "take off your coat and tie and let it rip" session. Called "*The Idea Machine*," it provided owners, managers and pros the opportunity to voice their opinions on any subject on their minds. Some subjects introduced were pro racquetball (men's and women's varieties) racquetball's rules and scoring systems, and ideas to further promote and improve the sport.

Throughout the week special meetings were held for those individuals interested in developing or expanding clubs. The usual topics were addressed including financing, site selection and demographics, design and construction, membership and operations.

All in all, the IRSA National Convention/Trade Show succeeded well beyond the planners' wildest dreams. By working together to make the club business a more efficient, responsible and profitable enterprise, the owners can bring to all players better clubs and atmospheres in which to play.

For further information on how you can attend next year's convention, or if you'd like to find out how your club can join the IRSA movement toward better clubs, contact IRSA executive director John McCarthy at (617) 864-8810.



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Letters



Likes Fancher Instruction

As a racquetball player of four years and a subscriber to *National Racquetball* for almost as long, I would like to express my compliments on the article "Prematch Drills To Improve Your Game," by Terry Fancher in the January issue.

As a fairly strong intermediate player, I enjoy playing and practicing racquetball three to five days a week. I sometimes have difficulty trying to balance my practice sessions in order to work on the various shots in which I lack confidence and need improvement.

The article really covered all the bases and was written in such a way as to help the beginner on up to the open player. It was clear and concise and the step-by-step methods toward improvement described by Mr. Fancher were easy to follow.

Thank you very much.

Bruce Childs
Escondido, CA

He's Having Fun!

Dear Editor:

Re: Article on "Are you having fun?"

The four or five "best feelings" I've had on the court? Feeling my arm had been stretched out an additional 12 inches; feeling my legs had turned to lead weights; knowing my clothes had turned into wet rags; feeling my right hand would never open again; and having a shower feel like a million dollars.

These feelings came after beating a man

whom I had never beaten. He was, and still is, above me in playing ability. I was in my first league and he eventually won the league. But this one night I put it all together. It was a beginner's league and the man I beat has since gone up to the intermediate level. I hope this summer to move up myself, and maybe . . . we'll meet again.

It wasn't the fact that I won, but more that I finally put together everything I learned in one year, and seemed to do everything right, on this one night. Now that I know I can do it, I feel more confident every time I go on the court, against anybody.

I'm looking forward to winning my league this winter.

Stephen Lebit
Seaford, NY

Thanks For The Kind Words!

Dear Chuck:

What a pleasant surprise to find out that you are the new editor of the magazine on racquetball.

How well I recall the early days of pro-am racquetball! You even bought me a meal when I officiated the pro finals of the first pro-am at the Houston, TX, Downtown YMCA back in '74. In fact, you'll recall inviting me to join your standing game of "hearts." I'm glad you're a better editor than hearts player.

In all seriousness, it is pleasurable to have you back in a position where you can influence the game and its players. You have always been a contributor and your January issue is proof of your value as a teacher through the medium of print. The instructional articles are of extreme importance to the avid racquetball enthusiast. Even at my age I thoroughly approve of the informative articles on the game and realize how helpful they are.

Even national champions can learn from the fine presentations in *National Racquetball*. My partner Ike Gumer at age 68 eagerly awaits his copy. I wish you well in your new endeavor.

Irv Zeitman
Louisville, KY

Ball Collection

Dear Editor:

I am with the Recreation Division at Scott AFB in southern Illinois near Belleville, and have a collection of racquetballs which date back to the early 60's and up to today's balls.

The article by Steve Keeley in the Jan. '82 issue sure brought back a lot of memories about the past balls. I am enclosing a list of all the balls I have on hand and the ones missing from the collection.

If at all possible, can you contact Mr. Keeley so that maybe he can help me in procuring the balls I am missing or any balls that I may not know about. I would like to get the address of the club in Eugene, OR, to maybe trade some of my extra balls with them.

If there is any way you can assist me with the enhancement of my collection it would be greatly appreciated.

Yours in racquetball—

Bill Durham
Scott AFB, IL

Variety Is The Spice . . .

Dear Chuck:

January's issue was a very complete one—thanks for the variety. I didn't expect the variety to be stretched to the extreme it was!

When I read Cecile Hoyle's "Pro-Files of Penmanship" and compared Marty Hogan's signature in the article to his signature in the back-cover ad for Leach's racquet . . . hmmm, very different, indeed.

If I bought the racquet, would it be a true Hogan signature, or some ad man's interpretation of the way Hogan writes?

Keep up the excellent work on *National Racquetball*.

John Generoso
Parsippany, NJ

Are You A Winner?

If you are a winner . . .
you play because you thrive
on the love of a sport.

If you are a winner . . .
you play the sport
for competition.

Competition—a striving with another
or others for profit, prize, or position
. . . a contest, match, or other trial
of skill or ability.

If you are a winner . . .
you do not see winning as everything.
Losing is a necessity from which
you obtain knowledge.

Remember: everyone can be beaten; and

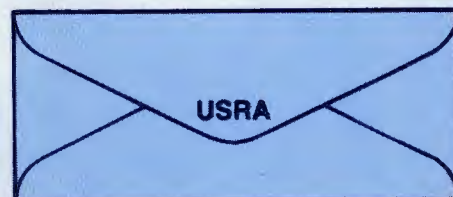
although you beat some—some beat you!

If you are a winner . . .
Never should anger overcome you
to the extent of possible danger
to your opponent. A mutual consideration
goes without saying, or should.

If you are a winner . . .
you can turn to your opponent
after the game, shake hands,
and exchange words of appreciation
for the challenge.

If you are a winner . . .
you need not ask anyone,
for others are telling you
by asking—"Would you play
again sometime?!"

Lucy E. Kupish



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Penn Athletic Products Company, 200 Mall Boulevard, Monroeville, PA 15146.



Brumfield, Serot Nearly Fight In Lansing, Michigan, Semi-Final



Serot tells Brumfield exactly how he feels as the tension mounts...

Date: February 8, 1975

Tournament: Seamco Pro/Am, Lansing, Michigan

Site: Lansing YMCA

Division: Men Pro Singles

Round: Semi-finals, Upper Bracket

For the racquetball world February, 1975, was an exciting and explosive time. Off the court the political battles between the International Racquetball Association (IRA) and National Racquetball Club (NRC) were at a peak. On the court the style of play and intense feeling created by the IRA-NRC war created a friction that was obvious.

In the fall of 1974, the IRA and NRC pro tours were mutually exclusive, i.e., players who participated in NRC events were not allowed to play in IRA tournaments and IRA players were contractually prohibited from playing the NRC tour. As a result, half of the top players (Charlie Brumfield, Bill Schmidtke, Steve Strandemo, Jerry Hilecher) played the IRA events and the other half (Steve Serot, Steve Keeley, Ron Rubenstein, Mike Zeitman) played the NRC.

Saner heads prevailed, however, and in January, 1975, the two tours came together for an event in Sunnyvale, California (won by Strandemo). A month later, at the Lansing, Michigan, YMCA, the tour rolled on.

It should be said that court etiquette during these days was anything but gentlemanly. In fact, the style of the times included blatant attempts at intimidation—yelling, screaming, shouting, pushing, shoving—basically anything the player could get away with. It was not a pretty sight. A kill shot would be followed with a bellowing "All Right!" A winning pass could find the player making any kind of gesture in an effort to unnerve his opponent. It was downright ugly.

One of the ugliest of the ugly, yet a match which eventually included probably the best sustained racquetball action ever played, occurred in Lansing.

Charlie Brumfield never really cared for Steve Serot. Brumfield, the dominant force in racquetball throughout the 1970's, viewed Serot as the only real threat to his racquetball kingdom. Serot, then barely 19 years old, possessed the physical skills Brumfield never had, including a devastating backhand kill and uncanny retrieving ability. Brumfield had made a point of doing everything within his power, both on and off the court, to retard the development of Serot's game.

Part of that effort included verbal and sometimes physical intimidation. Although the psychological ploy worked well for Brumfield over the years, it worked particularly well against Serot, who was an impressionable 15-year-old when he first burst on the national racquetball scene. Serot's victories over Brumfield could (and still can) be counted on one hand.

In Lansing, most of the top seeds reached their quarter-final round, with Serot stopping Ron Strom, Brumfield knocking off Schmidtke, Keeley eliminating Zeitman, and Strandemo defeating Rubenstein.

The upper bracket semi-final match-up was Serot versus Brumfield. To that date Serot had lost all 14 of his matches with Brumfield, many due to Brum's psyching antics. Although they had been former national doubles champions as teammates, the relationship between the two had degenerated to the point that it was written, "these two men now show only hate in their eyes."

Serot had been gaining with recent outings and in Lansing the first game of the match went his way 21-10. Along with his brilliant combination of kills, passes and "gets," Serot had obviously made a conscious decision not to be intimidated by Brumfield. In order to do that, he elected to beat Brum to the punch, so to speak, by being the first to quip, psyche or otherwise unnerve his opponent.

Unfortunately, his first-game quips soon became insults, voiced in screams rather than tones. And with the 1975 Nationals only two months away, Brumfield was in no mood to allow his edge over Serot to vanish. He knew what it would take to win the match and he was ready to go the distance.

As game two developed, this intensity began to show itself on the court. The movement during rallies became increasingly crowded; shots regularly whizzed by a player's ear; and each rally ended with an emotional and verbal outburst by one or the other. The tauntings and antagonisms finally reached their zenith with the score tied at 5-all. Ironically, the event that lit the fuse occurred after the rally, not during.

I'm not really sure exactly what happened, said Serot. I remember I lost the rally, but that it was one of those push-and-shove affairs. I wasn't happy at all.

"Generally, Charlie and I had very long, endurance type matches, with long, sustained rallying. I'd try and shoot at every opportunity and he'd retrieve and send me on his tour. After the rally, he'd turn to me and say something like, 'Serot, don't ever try that again!'

—Photos by Arthur Shay



... and Brumfield, not to be intimidated, tells Serot exactly what he thought of that last shot.

"I hated to be touched during play, either with his racquet or worse, with his habit of pushing off. This particular rally was very physical, with a lot of pushing and I hated it. After the rally I just walked back toward my position and he was in my way. I didn't alter my course and tapped him to move."

Serot attempted to pat Brumfield on the rear with his racquet, or at least he appeared to aim for Brumfield's rear. Brumfield, whose back was to Steve, was in the process of turning around, and instead of the butt, Serot's racquet hit Brumfield in the groin.

A pushing match ensued and the two six-

footers squared off in center court, racquets up, each ready to bash in the other's head. Only the quick feet of tournament officials saved bloodshed, separating the two players and giving each a technical foul, stern warning and referee's time out.

"There's no way Charlie was going to fight," says Serot. "And I'm no fighter. It was just a confrontation that I don't think either of us wanted. We were playing a game, an inner game, within the scope of the match. It was something between Charlie and me."

When play resumed it was awesome. For the next 15 minutes they ran, dove, spun, dodged, grunted, killed, dove, passed, dove and dove again. Sweat-stained hardwood, bloody knees and a never-before-seen intensity marked the play. And after 15 minutes the score had only reached the original 5-all (both players had lost a point due to their technical fouls).

Those who were there claim it was the best racquetball ever played. The rallies were clean, the verbalizing was eliminated and the two players did what they did best, play the greatest brand of racquetball imaginable.

Brumfield finally won the second game 21-16, setting the stage for the deciding third round. In 1975, all games of a match were played to 21 with a 10-minute rest period between second and third games. (This served as an effective cooling-off period for both players.)

"I was frustrated," said Serot. "I had been playing against him for years and never won, although I had been close on several occasions. I had won the first game many times."

"As far as the 'encounter' we had in the second game, well, I believe I'm partially to blame. The frustration factor was there, plus there was an energy flowing between Charlie and me that had been building. I guess it overflowed in Lansing."

The brilliant play continued into the third game as Serot, utilizing his devastating backhand kill and cat-like diving ability, emerged with an 18-14 lead.

"This is it, this is Serot's match," was heard around the packed gallery. "He's finally going to do it."

The two "gentlemen" discussing the events. A second later the racquets were up and near-chaos ensued.





Back to the match and the intensity shows in Brumfield's wild eyes . . .



. . . and Serot's willingness to hit the hardwood for a retrieve.

But nobody told Brumfield. Fighting back like a cornered rat, Brumfield covered the court like nobody thought he could, scrambling up front to save Serot's near-bottom boarders, and then sending Serot on the vaunted "tour of the court."

His relentless comeback began, whittling points off the Serot advantage at a snail's pace, one by one. Serot had numerous chances to increase the lead and put the match away, but he failed.

"I thought I had him beaten," says Steve. "There were several occasions where I had absolute plums, particularly with my backhand (his strongest side). But I didn't stay with the game that got me the lead. I turned conservative, waiting for his errors, but Charlie was too good to make the critical mistakes."

It took seven innings, but Brumfield scratched and clawed a point here and a point there to run seven straight and take the third game and match, 21-18.

There was no post-game handshake. No patching up of differences. Serot stormed off the court, ripping his racquet against the wall (the shattered frame actually struck a spectator—and Serot later apologized to the dazed man) and heading for the locker room.

"I couldn't handle the loss," said Steve. "The incident in game two brought out the fight in me more than anything ever could. I wanted to win more than ever."

As for Brumfield, he went on to continue his mastery over the sport until the rise of Marty Hogan in the late 1970's. Brumfield won the 1975 Nationals in Las Vegas (beating Strandemo in the finals) and many other national titles, earning him well deserved acclaim as (by far) the best player of his era.

For Serot, the future continued to hold promise, most of it never realized, however. He continued to maintain his position in the top four and did eventually

beat Brumfield three or four times. However, the potential was never maximized and as the game evolved to a serve-and-shoot style, Serot's lack of a big serve seriously affected his competitiveness. In 1980, he retired from active play at age 24. Today he is a highly successful insurance broker in St. Louis.

As for the on-court etiquette, most observers agree that Lansing was racquetball at its worst (and in some ways its best), and that the trend was toward a more civilized court demeanor after that nadir.

"Looking back, I don't think that type of conduct was the best thing for the sport," says Serot. "We shouldn't have been allowed to do it. It was just our way of staying in the flow and protecting ourselves."

This chapter is closed. Thank goodness. ●



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