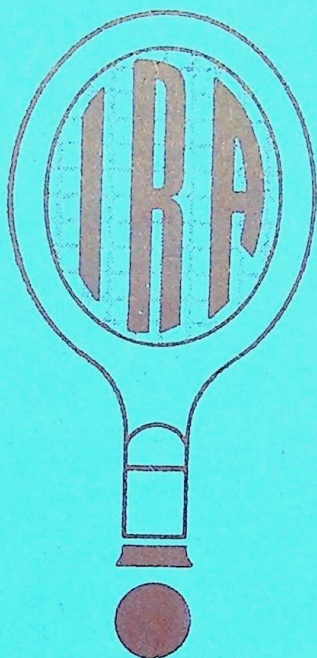


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# Official Racquetball Rules

plus

## Instructional Articles



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### International Racquetball Association

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# International Racquetball Association

The International Racquetball Association was established in 1968 through the resources and leadership of Bob Kendler and the United States Handball Association. IRA brought together the many splinter groups of racquet and paddleball players across the nation.

The purpose and aim of IRA is to unify rules, equipment, tournaments and offer a democratic "Player's Fraternity." Membership in IRA includes a subscription to Handball Magazine, an official membership card, and the opportunity to participate in IRA-sanctioned tournaments including the annual International championships.

Though still in its blossoming stages, the International Racquetball Association has grown rapidly since its beginning with over 2,500 members throughout the world. More players are being added every day as more people take up the "gut" (strung) racquet game. It has been found that the physical well-being derived from racquetball appeals to the young and the old, as well as women and men.

The game is easy to learn and appeals to anyone who has played tennis, badminton, squash, handball, or table tennis. Racquetball is less strenuous than handball because there is less bending and the game therefore prolongs the court life of the players. Another advantage of racquetball is that it does not demand the use of an "off hand" as in handball. Many handballers have switched to racquetball because of advancing years, back miseries, injuries to one hand, and many other reasons.

The Skokie, Illinois headquarters and "clearing house" for USHA took on the same responsibilities for IRA, which in 1970 employed a full-time executive secretary. There is a close coordination between IRA and USHA with the official bi-monthly publication, Handball Magazine, devoted to both sports. Bob Kendler, president of USHA serves in the same capacity for IRA.

From the inception of the International Racquetball Association Larry Lederman, a long-time promoter of the gut racquet game and athletic director of the Milwaukee JCC, acted as national commissioner of the non-profit IRA. In 1972 Lederman was voted to the Board of Directors and Ken Porco, of Louisville, Kentucky was elected to the commissionership.

Through the support of its members and their endorsement of official IRA products—Sportcraft racquets, Seamless 558 balls, Saranac Racquetball gloves, Frederick-Willys gym bags and SML uniforms—IRA is able to maintain a self-supporting position. We appreciate the patronage of our members and every cent that comes into the Association goes back into the game for its further progress and promotion. We invite you to use the convenient membership-subscription form on the back page of this booklet to join the "Player's Fraternity."

# OFFICIAL IRA FOUR-WALL RULES

## PART I. THE GAME

**Rule 1.1-Types of Games.** Racquetball may be played by two or four players. When played by two it is called "singles," and when played by four, "doubles."

**Rule 1.2-Description.** Racquetball, as the name implies, is a competitive game in which a racquet is used to serve and return the ball.

**Rule 1.3-Objective.** The objective is to win each volley by serving or returning the ball so the opponent is unable to keep the ball in play. A serve or volley is won when a side is unable to return the ball before it touches the floor twice.

**Rule 1.4-Points and Outs.** Points are scored only by the serving side when it serves an ace or wins a volley. When the serving side loses a volley it loses the serve. Losing the serve is called an "out" in singles, and a "handout" in doubles.

**Rule 1.5-Game.** A game is won by the side first scoring 21 points.

**Rule 1.6-Match.** A match is won by the side first winning two games.

## PART II. COURTS AND EQUIPMENT

**Rule 2.1-Courts.** The specifications for the standard four-wall racquetball court are:

(a) **Dimension.** The dimensions shall be 20 feet wide, 20 feet high, and 40 feet long, with back wall at least 12 feet high.

(b) **Lines and Zones.** Racquetball courts shall be divided and marked on the floors with 1½ inch wide red or white lines as follows:

(c) **Short Line.** The short line is midway between and is parallel with the front and back walls dividing the court into equal front and back courts.

(2) **Service Line.** The service line is parallel with and located 5 feet in front of the short line.

(3) **Service Zone.** The service zone is the space between the outer edges of the short and service lines.

(4) **Service Boxes.** A service box is located at each end of the service zone by lines 18 inches from and parallel with each side wall.

(5) **Receiving Lines.** Five feet back of the short line, vertical lines shall be marked on each side wall extending 3 inches from the floor. See rule 4.7(a).

**Rule 2.2-Ball Specifications.** The specifications for the standard racquetball are:

(a) **Official Ball.** IRA's official ball is the black Seamless 588. The ball shall be 2¼ inches in diameter; weight

approximately 1.40 ounces with a bounce at 65-70 inches from 100 inch drop at a temperature of 76 degrees F.

**Rule 2.3-Ball Selection.** A new ball shall be selected by the referee for use in each match in all tournaments. During a game the referee may, at his discretion or at the request of both players or teams, select another ball. Balls that are not round or which bounce erratically shall not be used. The Seamless 558 ball is official for all IRA sanctioned tournaments.

**Rule 2.4-Racquet Specifications.** The specifications for the standard racquetball racquet are:

(a) **Official Racquet.** IRA's official racquets are the Sportcraft 13178 and 13188 (wood frames), 13175 (aluminum frame), and 13185 (steel frame).

(b) **Dimensions.** The official racquet will have a maximum head length of 11 inches and a width of 9 inches. These measurements are computed from the outer edge of the racquet head rims. The handle may not exceed 7 inches in length. Total length and width of the racquet may not exceed a total of 27 inches.

(c) The racquet must include a thong that must be securely wrapped on the player's wrist.

(d) The racquet frame may be made of any material, as long as it conforms to the above specifications.

(e) The strings of the racquet must be gut, monofilament, or nylon, but cannot be of steel or metal.

**Rule 2.5-Uniform.** All parts of the uniform, consisting of a shirt, shorts, socks and shoes, shall be clean and light or bright in color. Warmup shirts and pants, if worn in actual match play, shall also be white, light or bright but may be of any color if not used in actual match play. In IRA-sanctioned tournaments, the tournament chairman or his delegated representative shall instruct doubles teams to wear uniforms of a different color. Only club insignia and/or name of club or racquetball organization may be on the uniform. Players may not play without shirts.

### PART III. OFFICIATING

**Rule 3.1-Tournaments.** All tournaments shall be managed by a committee or chairman, who shall designate the officials.

**Rule 3.2-Officials.** The officials shall include a referee and a scorer. Additional assistants and record keepers may be designated as desired.

**Rule 3.3-Qualifications.** Since the quality of the officiating often determines the success of each tournament, all officials shall be experienced or trained, and shall be thoroughly familiar with these rules and with the local playing conditions.

**Rule 3.4-Rule Briefing.** Before all tournaments, all officials and players shall be briefed on rules and on local court hindrances or other regulations.

**Rule 3.5-Referees. (a) Pre-Match Duties.** Before each match commences, it shall be the duty of the referee to:

(1) Check on adequacy of preparation of the court with respect to cleanliness, lighting and temperature, and upon location of locker rooms, drinking fountains, etc.

(2) Check on availability and suitability of all materials necessary for the match such as balls, towels, score cards and pencils.

(3) Check readiness and qualifications of assisting officials.

(4) Explain court regulations to players and inspect the compliance of racquets with rules.

(5) Remind players to have an extra supply of adequate racquets and uniforms.

(6) Introduce players, toss coin, and signal start of first game.

**(b) Decisions.** During games the referee shall decide all questions that may arise in accordance with these rules. If there is body contact on the back swing, the player should call it quickly. This is the only call a player may make. On all questions involving judgment and on all questions not covered by these rules, the decision of the referee is final.

**(c) Protests.** Any decision not involving the judgment of the referee may on protest be decided by the chairman, if present, or his delegated representative.

**(d) Forfeitures.** A match may be forfeited by the referee when:

(1) Any player refuses to abide by the referee's decision, or engages in unsportsmanlike conduct.

(2) After warning, any player leaves the court without permission of the referee either during a game or between the first and second games.

(3) Any player for a singles match, or any team for a doubles match fails to report to play. Normally, 20 minutes from the scheduled game time will be allowed before forfeiture. The tournament chairman may permit a longer delay if circumstances warrant such a decision.

(4) If both players for a singles, or both teams for doubles fail to appear to play for consolation matches or other play-offs, they shall forfeit their ratings for future tournaments, and forfeit any trophies, medals, or awards.

**Rule 3.6-Scorers.** The scorer shall keep a record of the progress of the game in the manner prescribed by the committee or chairman. As a minimum the progress record shall include the order of serves, outs, and points. The referee or scorer shall announce the score before each serve.

**Rule 3.7-Record Keepers.** In addition to the scorer, the committee may designate additional persons to keep more detailed records for statistical purposes of the progress of the game.

## PART IV. PLAY REGULATIONS

**Rule 4.1 - Serve-Generally (a) Order.** The player or side winning the toss becomes the first server and starts the first game, and the third game, if any.

(b) **Start.** Games are started by the referee calling "play ball."

(c) **Place.** The server may serve from any place in the service zone. No part of either foot may extend beyond either line of the service zone. Stepping on the line (but not beyond it) is permitted. Server must remain in the service zone until the served ball passes short line. Violations are called "foot faults."

(d) **Manner.** A serve is commenced by bouncing the ball to the floor in the service zone, and on the first bounce the ball is struck by the server's racquet so that it hits the front wall and on the rebound hits the floor back of the short line, either with or without touching one of the side walls.

(e) **Readiness.** Serves shall not be made until the receiving side is ready, or the referee has called play ball.

**Rule 4.2 - Serve-In Doubles. (a) Server.** At the beginning of each game in doubles, each side shall inform the referee of the order of service, which order shall be followed throughout the game. Only the first server serves the first time up and continues to serve first throughout the game. When the first server is out—the side is out. Thereafter both players on each side shall serve until a hand-out occurs. It is not necessary for the server to alternate serves to their opponents.

(b) **Partner's Position.** On each serve, the server's partner shall stand erect with his back to the side wall and with both feet on the floor within the service box until the served ball passes the short line. Violations are called "foot faults."

**Rule 4.3 - Defective Serves.** Defective serves are of three types resulting in penalties as follows:

(a) **Dead Ball Serve.** A dead ball serve results in no penalty and the server is given another serve without cancelling a prior illegal serve.

(b) **Fault Serve.** Two fault serves results in a hand-out.

(c) **Out Serves.** An out serve results in a hand-out.

**Rule 4.4 - Dead Ball Serves.** Dead ball serves do not cancel any previous illegal serve. They occur when an otherwise legal serve:

(a) **Hits Partner.** Hits the server's partner on the fly on the rebound from the front wall while the server's partner is in the service box. Any serve that touches the floor before hitting the partner in the box is a short.

(b) **Screen Balls.** Passes too close to the server or the server's partner to obstruct the view of the returning side. Any serve passing behind the server's partner and the side wall is an automatic screen.

(c) **Court Hinders.** Hits any part of the court than under local rules is a dead ball.

**Rule 4.5-Fault Serves.** The following serves are faults and any two in succession results in a handout:

(a) **Foot Faults.** A foot fault results:

(1) When the server leaves the service zone before the served ball passes the short line.

(2) When the server's partner leaves the service zone before the served ball passes the short line.

(b) **Short Serve.** A short serve is any served ball that first hits the front wall and on the rebound hits the floor in front of the back edge of the short line either with or without touching one side wall; or

(c) **Three-Wall Serve.** A two-side serve is any ball served that first hits the front wall and on the rebound hits two side walls on the fly.

(d) **Ceiling Serve.** A ceiling serve is any served ball that touches the ceiling after hitting the front wall either with or without touching one side wall.

(e) **Long Serve.** A long serve is any served ball that first hits the front wall and rebounds to the back wall before touching the floor.

(f) **Out of Court Serve.** Any ball going out of the court on the serve.

**Rule 4.6-Out Serves.** Any one of the following serves results in a handout:

(a) **Bounces.** Bouncing the ball more than three times while in the service zone before striking the ball. One bounce is counted each time the ball hits the floor within the service zone. Once the server is within the service zone and the receiver is ready, the ball may not be bounced anywhere but on the floor within the service zone. Accidental dropping of the ball counts as one bounce.

(b) **Missed Ball.** Any attempt to strike the ball on the first bounce that results either in a total miss or in touching any part of the server's body other than his racquet.

(c) **Non-front Serve.** Any served ball that strikes the server's partner, or the ceiling, floor or side wall, before striking the front wall.

(d) **Touched Serve.** Any served ball that on the rebound from the front wall touches the server, or touches the server's partner while any part of his body is out of the service box, or the server's partner intentionally catches the served ball on the fly.

(e) **Out-of-Order Serve.** In doubles, when either partner serves out of order. Any points which may have been scored during an out-of-order serve will be automatically void with the score reverting to the score prior to the out-of-order serve.

(f) **Crotch Serve.** If the served ball hits the crotch in the front wall it is considered the same as hitting the floor

and is an out. A crotch serve into the back wall is good and in play.

**Rule 4.7-Return of Serve.** (a) **Receiving Position.** The receiver or receivers must stand at least 5 feet back of short line, as indicated by the 3 inch verticle line on each side wall, and cannot return the ball until it passes the short line. Any infraction results in a point for the server.

(b) **Defective Serve.** To eliminate any misunderstanding the receiving side should not catch or touch a defectively served ball until called by the referee or it has touched the floor for the second time.

(c) **Fly Return.** In making a fly return, no part of the receiver's body or racquet may enter into the service zone. A violation by a receiver results in a point for the server.

(d) **Legal Return.** After the ball is legally served, one of the players on the receiving side must strike the ball with his racquet either on the fly or after the first bounce and before the ball touches the floor the second time to return the ball to the front wall either directly or after touching one or both side walls, the back wall or the ceiling, or any combination of those surfaces. A returned ball may not touch the floor before touching the front wall. (1) It is legal to return the ball by striking the ball into the back wall first, then hitting the front wall on the fly or after hitting the side wall or ceiling.

(e) **Failure to Return.** The failure to return a serve results in a point for the server.

**Rule 4.8-Changes of Serve.** (a) **Hand-out.** A server is entitled to continue serving until:

(1) **Out Serve.** He makes an out serve under Rule 4.6 or;

(2) **Fault Serves.** He makes two fault serves in succession under Rule 4.5, or;

(3) **Hits Partner.** He hits his partner with an attempted return before the ball touches the floor a second time.

(4) **Return Failure.** He or his partner fails to keep the ball in play by returning it as required by Rule 4.7(d).

(5) **Avoidable Hinder.** He or his partner commits an avoidable hinder under Rule 4.11.

(b) **Side-out (1) In Singles.** In singles, retiring the server retires the side.

(2) **In Doubles.** In doubles, the side is retired when both partners have been put out, except on the first serve as provided in Rule 4.2(a).

(c) **Effect.** When the server or the side loses the serve, the server or serving side shall become the receiver; and the receiving side, the server; and so alternately in all subsequent services of the game.

**Rule 4.9-Volleys.** Each legal return after the serve is called a volley. Play during volleys shall be according to the following rules:

(a) **One or Both Hands.** Only the head of the racquet may be used at any time to return the ball. The ball must be hit with the racquet in one or both hands. Switching hands to hit a ball is out. The use of any portion of the body is an out.

(b) **One Touch.** In attempting returns, the ball may be touched only once by one player on the returning side. In doubles both partners may swing at, but only one, may hit the ball. Each violation of (a) or (b) results in a handout or point.

(c) **Return Attempts.** (1) **In Singles.** In singles, if a player swings at but misses the ball in play, the player may repeat his attempts to return the ball until it touches the floor the second time.

(2) **In Doubles.** In doubles if one player swings at but misses the ball, both he and his partner may make further attempts to return the ball until it touches the floor the second time. Both partners on a side are entitled to an attempt to return the ball.

(3) **Hinders.** In singles or doubles, if a player swings at but misses the ball in play, and in his, or his partner's attempt again to play the ball there is an unintentional interference by an opponent it shall be a hinder. (See Rule 4.10)

(d) **Touching Ball.** Except as provided in Rule 4.10, (a)(2), any touching of a ball before it touches the floor the second time by a player other than the one making a return is a point or out against the offending player.

(3) **Out of Court Ball.** (1) **After Return.** Any ball returned to the front wall which on the rebound or on the first bounce goes into the gallery or through any opening in a side wall shall be declared dead and the serve replayed.

(2) **No Return.** Any ball not returned to the front wall, but which caroms off a player's racquet into the gallery or through any opening in a side wall either with or without touching the ceiling, side or back wall, shall be an out or point against the players failing to make the return.

(f) **Dry Ball.** During the game and particularly on service every effort should be made to keep the ball dry. Deliberately wetting shall result in an out. The ball may be inspected by the referee at any time during a game.

(g) **Broken Ball.** If there is any suspicion that a ball has broken on the serve or during a volley, play shall continue until the end of the volley. The referee or any player may request the ball be examined. If the referee decides the ball is broken or otherwise defective, a new ball shall be put into play and the point replayed.

(h) **Play Stoppage.** (1) If a player loses a shoe or other equipment, or foreign objects enter the court, or any other outside interference occurs, the referee shall stop the play. (2) If a player loses control of his racquet, time should be called after the point has been decided, providing the rac-

quet does not strike an opponent or interfere with ensuing play.

**Rule 4.10 - Dead Ball Hinders.** Hinders are of two types, "dead ball" and "avoidable." Dead ball hinders as described in this rule results in the point being replayed. Avoidable hinders are described in Rule 4.11.

(a) **Situations.** When called by the referee, the following are dead ball hinders:

(1) **Court Hinders.** Hits any part of the court which under local rules is a dead ball.

(2) **Hitting Opponent.** Any returned ball that touches an opponent on the fly before it returns to the front wall.

(3) **Body Contact.** Any body contact with an opponent that interferes with seeing or returning ball.

(4) **Screen Ball.** Any ball rebounding from the front wall close to the body of a player on the side which just returned the ball, to interfere with or prevent the returning side from seeing the ball. See Rule 4.4(b).

(5) **Straddle Ball.** A ball passing between the legs of a player on the side which just returned the ball, if there is no fair chance to see or return the ball.

(6) **Other Interference.** Any other unintentional interference which prevents an opponent from having a fair chance to see or return the ball.

(b) **Effect.** A call by the referee of a "hinder" stops the play and voids any situation following, such as the ball hitting a player. No player is authorized to call a hinder, except on the back swing and such a call must be made immediately as provided in Rule 3.5(b).

(c) **Avoidance.** While making an attempt to return the ball, a player is entitled to a fair chance to see and return the ball. It is the duty of the side that has just served or returned the ball to move so that the receiving side may go straight to the ball and not be required to go around an opponent. The referee should be liberal in calling hinders to discourage any practice of playing the ball where an adversary cannot see it until too late. It is no excuse that the ball is "killed," unless in the opinion of the referee the ball could not be returned. Hinders should be called without a claim by a player, especially in close plays and on game points.

(d) **In Doubles.** In doubles, both players on a side are entitled to a fair and unobstructed chance at the ball and either one is entitled to a hinder even though it naturally would be his partner's ball and even though his partner may have attempted to play the ball or that he may already have missed it. It is not a hinder when one player hinders his partner.

**Rule 4.11 - Avoidable Hinders.** An avoidable hinder results in an "out" or a point depending upon whether the offender was serving or receiving.

(a) **Failure to Move.** Does not move sufficiently to allow opponent his shot.

- (b) **Blocking.** Moves into a position effecting a block, on the opponent about to return the ball, or, in doubles, one partner moves in front of an opponent as his partner is returning the ball, or
- (c) **Moving into Ball.** Moves in the way and is struck by the ball just played by his opponent.
- (d) **Pushing.** Deliberately pushing or shoving an opponent during a volley.

**Rule 4.12 - Rest Periods.** (a) **Delays.** Deliberate delay exceeding ten seconds by server, or receiver shall result in an out or point against the offender.

(b) **During Game.** During a game each player in singles, or each side in doubles, either while serving or receiving may request a "time out" for a towel, wiping glasses, change or adjustment. Each "time out" shall not exceed 30 seconds. No more than three "time outs" in a game shall be granted each singles player or each team in doubles.

(c) **Injury.** No time out shall be charged to a player who is injured during play. An injured player shall not be allowed more than a total of fifteen minutes of rest. If the injured player is not able to resume play after total rests of 15 minutes the match shall be awarded to the opponent or opponents. On any further injury to same player, the Commissioner, if present, or committee, after considering any available medical opinion shall determine whether the injured player will be allowed to continue.

(d) A time-out may be called by the referee, at the request of a player and after substantiation by the referee, because of faulty equipment or uniform. Two minutes are to be allowed for any uniform adjustment needed and 30 seconds for any equipment adjustment.

(e) **Between Games.** A two minute rest period is allowed between the first and second games, at which times the players should NOT leave the court, without approval of referee. A ten minute rest period is allowed between the second and third games, at which time players may leave the court.

(f) **Postponed Games.** Any games postponed by referee due to weather elements shall be resumed with the same score as when postponed.

**Rule 4.13 - Masters.** Forty will be minimum age for all competition in singles. In doubles, one participant - 40 minimum, the second must be at least 45 years of age.

## PART V. TOURNAMENTS

**Rule 5.1-Draws.** (a) If possible, the singles draw shall be made at least two days before the tournament commences. The seeding method of drawing shall be approved by International Racquetball Association.

(b) The draw and seeding committee shall be chaired by the IRA Executive Secretary and shall consist of the Executive Secretary, the National Executive Co-ordinator and the host tournament chairman. No other persons shall participate in the draw or seeding unless at the invitation of the draw and seeding committee.

(c) In local, state and divisional tournaments the draw shall be the responsibility of the tournament chairman. In divisional play the tournament chairman should work in co-ordination with the IRA representative at the tournament.

**Rule 5.2-Scheduling** (a) **Preliminary Matches.** If one or more contestants are entered in both singles and doubles, they may be required to play both singles and doubles on the same day or night with little rest between matches. This is a risk assumed on entering both singles and doubles. If possible the schedule should provide at least a one hour rest period between all matches.

(b) **Final Matches.** Where one or more players have reached the finals in both singles and doubles, it is recommended that the doubles match be played on the day preceding the singles. This would assume more rest between the final matches. If both final matches must be played on the same day or night, the following procedure is recommended:

- (1) The singles match be played first.
- (2) A rest period of not less than ONE HOUR be allowed between the finals in singles and doubles.

**Rule 5.3-Notice of Matches.** After the first round of matches, it is the responsibility of each player to check the posted schedules to determine the time and place of each subsequent match. If any change is made in the schedule after posting, it shall be the duty of the committee or chairman to notify the players of the change.

**Rule 5.4 - Third Place.** In championship tournaments; national, state, district, etc., the loser in the semi-finals must play for third place or lose his ranking for the next year unless he is unable to compete because of injury or illness. See Rule 3.5(d)(4);

**Rule 5.5-IRA Divisional Tournaments.** Starting in 1969-70 the United States was divided into five divisions.

(a) Only players residing in the area defined can participate in a division tournament.

(b) Players can participate in only two events in a division tournament.

(c) Winners of open singles and open doubles of divisional tournaments will receive round trip air coach tickets to the IRA International Tournament. Renumeration will be made after arrival, entry and play of at least one match.

(1) If the winner(s) of open singles or open doubles has previously won such trip through qualification in a previous IRA-sanctioned tournament, the second place finisher(s) shall be awarded such trip. If the second place finisher(s) has won such award previously, the third place finisher(s) shall be awarded such trip and so on.

(2) Doubles teams winning divisional championships must remain intact and compete as such in the International Tournament to qualify for this award.

(d) An IRA national officer will be in attendance at each divisional tournament and will coordinate with the host chairman.

**Awards:** No individual award in IRA-sanctioned tournaments should exceed value of more than \$25.

**Tournament Management:** In all IRA-sanctioned tournaments the tournament chairman and/or the national IRA official in attendance may decide on a change of courts after the completion of any tournament game if such a change will accommodate better spectator conditions.

**Tournament Conduct:** In all IRA-sanctioned tournaments the referee is empowered to default a match if an individual player or team conducts itself to the detriment of the tournament and the game.

**Amateur Definition:** We hold as eligible for racquetball tournaments anyone except those who engage in, or promote racquetball for a profit.

**Pick-A-Partner:** The essence of the "Players' Fraternity" has been to allow players to come to tournaments and select a partner, if necessary, regardless what organization or city he might represent.

## ONE-WALL AND THREE-WALL RULES

Basically racquetball rules for one-wall, three-wall and four-wall are the same with the following exceptions:

**ONE-WALL - Court Size** - Wall shall be 20 ft. in width and 16 ft. high, floor 20 ft. in width and 34 ft. from the wall to the back edge of the long line. There should be a minimum of 3 feet beyond the long line and 6 feet outside each side line and behind the long line to permit movement area for the players.

**Short Line** - Back edge 16 feet from the wall. **Service Markers** - Lines at least 6 inches long parallel to and midway between the long and short lines, extending in from the side lines. The imaginary extension and joining of these lines indicates the service line. Lines are 1½ inches in width. **Service Zone** - floor area inside and including the short, side and service lines. **Receiving Zone** - floor area in back of short line bounded by and including the long and side lines.

**THREE-WALL - Serve** - A serve that goes beyond the side walls on the fly is player or side out. A serve that goes beyond the long line on a fly but within the side walls is the same as a "short."

# Instructional Articles . . .

## EMPHASIZE POSITION FOR WINNING RACQUETBALL

By GERARD LAPIERRE

There are certain basic factors to consider when hitting the ball—good balance, position and meeting the ball correctly. Like most sports, balance is the key—both feet should be in a proper stance so the weight of the body is positioned in such a way to obtain maximum effort or force on the swing and a smooth follow through. The player in an unbalanced position when hitting the ball leaves himself vulnerable to a poor return and out of position for the next shot. Therefore, at all times be in POSITION!! Don't let the ball crowd you or put yourself in a stance that will result in an awkward swing.

If you have good balance and position, but hit the ball incorrectly, all is wasted. All shots should be returned below the knees and close to the body excluding the lob shot. On the forehand shot the racquet should be vertical to the floor when meeting the ball on the backhand, it should be at a slight angle forward.

*Balance, position and hitting* involves proper stance and footwork. Waiting for the return shot: Body should be facing the front wall in a slightly crouched position with the feet semi-spread. Your weight should rest on the balls of the feet even though the entire foot is on the floor. This will allow you to start and move in any direction quickly. The front play does not afford the player much time to obtain a good position on the ball. So remember proper balance, semi-spread feet with the body slightly crouched is the key. When executing the shot, the opposite foot will move half a step forward when swinging at the ball. This stance will also allow the player to make excellent use of the backhand in front of the body, giving him the advantage of placing the shot cross corners more effectively.

If the feet are spread too far apart, a player may lose half a second on recovering, causing him to lunge or push the ball resulting in a poor shot.

*Play off the back wall:* With the body parallel to the side wall the weight should be on the back foot at the start of the downward stroke; shifting the weight to the front foot at the start of the swing. The full weight would be on the front foot when the racquet meets the ball allowing a smooth follow-through and, at the same time, giving the player the forward impetus to a good front court position. Whether the shot is executed for the kill or passing, the ball should always be struck below the knees. I know of only one player who can hit the ball above the shoulder with any degree of accuracy—Marlowe Phillips—and he is an ex-handball player who won the Masters singles and doubles at the first International in 1969.

## FOR THE BEGINNING RACQUETBALLER

By BILL SCHULTZ

To learn to play this game of racquetball, you must **WORK AT IT. PRACTICE** is the key to success. Too many people begin the game by "trying" to play the game immediately without a practice session or proper instruction. Many begin playing without knowing the rules, or even how to hold the racquet correctly or the proper way to hit the ball. **THIS IS WRONG!**

When beginning the game, you should go into the court **ALONE** and just practice "**HITTING THE BALL.**" Learn to hit the ball accurately and deliberately. You should try for the front wall shots (lobs and kills). Learn how to take a ball off the back wall. Attempt to hit the ball slow at first and gradually work up to being able to "**REALLY SMACK THE BALL HARD.**"

You can play simple games by yourself with the racquet and ball. For example: How many times can you hit the ball to the front wall with the ball only bouncing once, hitting the ball to the front wall with no bounce, etc.

The player should attempt to develop a smooth, easy swing, with flexible wrist action.

Don't start playing the game until you have thoroughly studied the rules and regulations of the game. Understand the dangers. Know what you are trying to do. Think out every shot and every play from the very beginning.

The beginner must learn the proper stance and how to bring the total body into each shot, shifting his weight properly as he makes contact with the ball.

Practice the fundamentals of:

—Always being on your toes.

—Pivoting before moving toward a ball.

—Hitting the ball with a relaxed swing.

—Not crowding the ball.

—Waiting until the ball drops to knee level before going for the kill.

—Getting set for the shot and not try for a shot when off balance.

—Keeping eye on the ball at all times.

**REMEMBER**—the expert player does not **CHASE THE BALL** around a court, but goes to the point where he knows the ball will end up.

Ability is developed by practice and as time goes on, the new techniques will come easy.

**AND—REMEMBER**—you can learn by watching the better players. Watch them and **SEE WHAT THEY DO.** See how they maneuver their opponents out of position; when they are set up for a kill shot; how they always get set before they hit the ball.

YES—and play these better players whenever you have an opportunity to do so. The players will coach you on your mistakes, but will also take quick advantages of your WEAKNESSES. Watch for it and correct these weaknesses.

Never miss the opportunity of teaching what you have learned to a newer player than yourself. By teaching, you will learn. Also, play the beginners. This is for the reason that you will be able to perfect certain shots which you are now afraid to attempt in better competition.

Early in your learning experience, you will begin developing a game that is suited to your strength, coordination, speed, and ability. Don't copy another's style. Develop your own style of play based on your strength.

*Hints to be a winner*—You should be aware of some fundamental FACTS if you expect to perfect your game of racquetball. If there is repetition in some of the items already prepared, the repetition will ONLY RE-EMPHASIZE the points and make them more permanent in your mind.

1. A good player will practice and work hard on his game.
2. Keep your eye on the ball.
3. Keep on your toes and always expect your opponent to return your shot.
4. Pivot before you move toward the ball.
5. Develop a relaxed swing with good wrist action.
6. Don't crowd the ball and wait until it drops to knee level for the kill shot.
7. Watch where your opponent is and then hit the ball WHERE HE ISN'T.
8. Try to get your opponent to move before hitting the ball. Use the feint. Don't telegraph your shot. Keep him guessing.
9. Get the center position of the court at all times. control the game.
10. The wrist must always be cocked and flexible. The ball must be hit deliberately and accurately.
11. Don't chase the ball. Go where the ball is going to end up.
12. You must be in such physical condition as to always maintain a fast pace.
13. Develop several different types of serves (the slow lob, the fast low, the cross-court) and mix them up during a game.
14. Don't hurry your serve—take your time and THINK.
15. Always be in a state of readiness for the next shot.
16. Always try to hit the ball so as to maneuver the opponent out of position and then ready yourself and get position for the point-winning shot.
17. Watch for the opponent's fundamental weaknesses

which will cue you in to the proper tactics to use against him.

18. **THINK** in your racquetball game. When your opponent is slow, speed up the game by volleying; when he is fast, slow the game by high shots, soft corner shots, etc. Keep the ball close to the wall if it looks like your opponent prefers the open court and shys away from the wall.
19. Don't let your opponent crowd you. Take a hinder.
20. Many times, use the theory that if you return the ball back to an opponent fast enough and quick enough, he will not be set for a return shot.
21. Concentrate on the shot being played. Build up a tactical position several shots in advance. When the time is **RIGHT**, get set for the point maker.
22. Remember—racquetball is a **LOT OF HUSTLE** and a **LOT OF SKILL**. When you play enough, you know by instinct the shot your opponent will be forced to make most of the time, and you move **RAPIDLY** to the spot as the ball is hit.
23. Don't anticipate the opponent's shot before the shot is hit or you will find yourself "**WAY OUT IN LEFT FIELD**" with the ball going to the **RIGHT FIELD**.
24. Avoid errors and keep the ball in play. Follow this piece of advice and you will have accomplished a great deal.
25. Keep the opponent in the rear of the court, and don't go for a point maker (kill shot) unless you are in perfect position.
26. Watch the opponent's racquet out of the corner of your eye, but don't turn your body out of position.
27. Have the desire to **EXCEL** and the **DETERMINATION TO WIN**. Study the game. Control your emotional excitement.
28. **FINALLY**—always warm up before play. A great many sprains, pulled muscles and soreness result from neglect of the warm-up period. You can warm up in or out of the court. Simple twisting and turning exercises, stretching exercises, jogging, a run around the gym, a few pushups, and deep squats for a few minutes is absolutely necessary.

**“AND—THE BEST WAY TO TRAIN FOR RACQUETBALL IS TO PLAY RACQUETBALL . . . .**

## **TIPS FOR CONTROL AND RETURNING THE SERVE**

By **DR. BUD MUEHLEISEN**

1. **CONTROL**: “The ability to do what you want with the ball, from any position on the court.” This is the real key to the game. Hitting it where, when and what speed is the secret.

II. **EQUIPMENT**: It stands to reason that in order to

perfect your touch for better ball control, you must start with the racquet which is most ideally suited for you with regards to the overall weight, swing weight, grip, size of the handle, and the proper string tension. In other words, the racquet should merely feel like a continuation of your arm and hand, both in holding it at rest and during the swing.

III. GRIP: Make sure that you have the proper grip: Merely shake hands with the racquet for the forehand and turn the racquet about one quarter of an inch to adjust for the backhand. Utilize your free hand during the backswing to hold and balance the racquet as you adjust your grip. This will also aid you in obtaining a set starting point from which to start your forward swing.

IV. FOOTWORK: Turn and get your body and feet into the proper position whenever possible—BEFORE THE BALL EVER REACHES YOU! In other words, be ready to take a balanced step into the ball so as to be able to make contact in the ideal hitting area with the ball in the proper relationship to your body. (This is the most common error with almost all players.)

V. HITTING AREA: Assuming your body is perpendicular to the front wall with a slightly open stance, try to contact the ball right opposite the front foot when the arm is extended. A good way to work on this is to tell yourself to "REACH" for the ball as it approaches. For a "kill" shot try to contact the ball as low to the floor as possible. For a "drive" or "pass" shot the ball is best controlled from about waist high. For a "lob" or "clearing" shot try to meet the ball as high as possible off the floor.

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Possibly the most important shot in Racquetball is the return of serve. However, there is probably no other shot which is hit more, yet is discussed less. Any player of merit will only be as good as his return of serve. No other shot requires as much mental preparation, instant computing, and above all—TOTAL CONCENTRATION!

A. MENTAL PREPARATION: This includes a concentrated evaluation of the situation at the time with regards to the score, what has worked and/or failed in the past, plus the regaining of one's total composure from the preceding rally.

1—All of the above is to be concluded *before* getting into position to receive the next serve.

2—Positive thinking must enter and dominate at this time! Go with the alternatives that you *know* will work.

3—Be ready to move your body into the proper relationship to hit the ball—before the serve ever reaches you.

4—With your best return percentage alternatives already computed, concentrate now on the served ball itself. Do NOT determine what return that you will hit or attempt before the serve is hit. (This is like a baseball batter who makes up his mind beforehand that he is going to swing at the next pitch.)

B. COMPUTE:

1—Alternatives: Your complete repertoire of returns

from either the forehand or backhand should include: kills, drives, lobs, ceiling balls, drop shots, and around the walls.

2—Force the served ball itself, as it approaches, to final-  
your selection of a return. Once the selection is made—  
stick with it!

### C. TIPS AND OBJECTIVES:

1—The first intent is to regain the center court position or advantage.

2—Don't shoot too often on the return, depending of course on the situation and the served ball itself.

3—Move right into the center court position with the momentum from the follow through of the return.

4—Try to prevent the "serve and kill" rallies. Top players make half of their points this way.

5—Utilize the soft lob, it is hard to perfect but it pays great dividends.

6—Make a concentrated effort not to overswing and thereby sacrifice control.

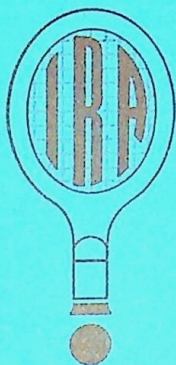
7—THE EYE BEFORE THE HAND, BUT THE MIND BEFORE THE EYE.

## Instructional Writers . . .

GERARD LAPIERRE — IRA's "Roving Ambassador." He is IRA's National Executive Co-ordinator and Eastern Area Commissioner, who, through his travels, has become the game's number one promoter. Himself an excellent player, Gerry has taken time to put on countless clinics, teaching and exposing racquetball throughout the country.

BILL SCHULTZ — Bill is one of the top Master's players in the nation. He won the 1962 National Open Paddleball and the 1968 National Open racquetball titles. In 1970 he was a Master's singles quarter finalist, eliminated by eventual champion Glenn Turpin in a thrilling three game match. Bill's home court is the Madison, Wisconsin YMCA where he is General Secretary.

DR. BUD MUEHLEISEN — "Muehlie" the San Diego sportsman-dentist is in the elite of the racquetball world. In the first IRA International Championships in 1969 he won the open singles title, and took third place (with Charlie Brumfield) in the open doubles. In 1970 Muehleisen finished fourth, eliminated in the semi-finals by eventual champ Craig Finger. After a leg injury forced him out of the 1971 Internationals, he came back to capture the 1972 Master's singles title.



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