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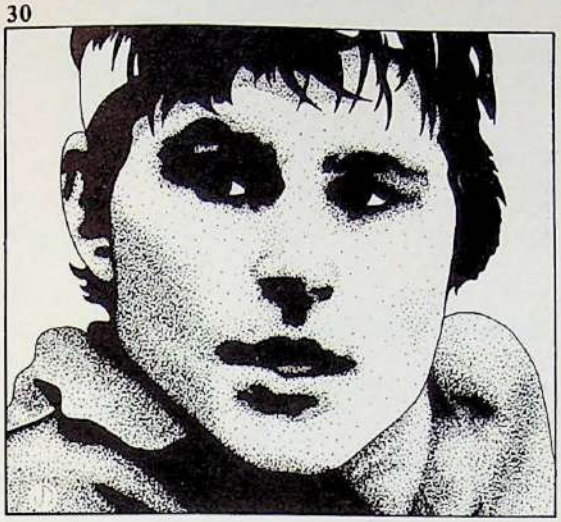

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Cover photo by David M. King

UP FRONT

Special Yearbook

The issue you hold in your hands is another first for us. We have called it a "Special 1981 Yearbook" because it reviews some of the major aspects of 1981 and previews what to expect in 1982.

Normally, this would be called our January issue. However, as we are changing our cover date system so that our January issue will come out in January instead of in December, we are calling this a 1981 Yearbook.

We don't want to confuse our subscribers, however. This issue is counted as one of the 12 issues which make up a year's subscription. It is not an extra issue.

What is extra are the number of stories we have given you. We have included special stories on the "State of the Sport" and an analysis of the USRA/NRC situation.

This issue also offers our annual choices for Players of the Year.

Each of the three winners for 1981—Marty Hogan, Heather McKay and Rich Wagner—will be honored at a press/celebrity cocktail party in January, and each will receive an award.

This issue also features some interesting stories. The serving article by Marty Hogan is one of the best instruction pieces we have ever printed. There is a psychological feature on coping with slumps and plateaus written by Bruce Hale of Penn State University. There are also two interesting articles dealing with senior citizens.

One, titled "Still Hustling After All These Years," is about two professors (ages 75 and 63) from Murray State University in Kentucky, who challenge and consistently beat students and faculty members. The other asks the question "Should Senior Citizens Take Up Racquetball?" and then lets various medical personnel offer their opinions.

We also have a report on Jerry Hilecher's upset victory in the first Catalina men's pro stop, a win that he says came because he had "a purpose."

Ben Kalb

Ben Kalb

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Special 1981 Yearbook VOL. 4, NO. 13

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SIDE OUT

Pro Tour

In my opinion Charlie Drake and Catalina are setting our great sport back 10 years. They have made a mockery of the professional tour, preventing some of our leading pros from earning their livelihood, and killing the hopes and ambitions of our up-and-coming young players.

I saw the first pro stop in Los Angeles. I had the feeling it was 1969 again and everyone was groping around trying to get it all started. No Brumfield, no Bledsoe, no excitement to the 12-man invitational format. The only charisma was shown by uninvited Jerry Hilecher, who really stuck it to them by winning the tournament.

It is easy to criticize and not be constructive without offering suggestions for improvement. Therefore, I offer this. Reinstate freedom of choice on the tour, freedom for any player to qualify in any one or all of the tour stops. This will get the established players and the new stars back into the act and will give the tour some needed pizazz. No one wants to see the same people play all the time. The expectation of a possible upset brings out the spectators. There are plenty of open players out there capable of springing an upset.

Vance Lerner
Highland, Calif.

Editor's note: See page 53 for coverage of Hilecher's surprising win.

Invitation Only

Congratulations on an excellent article on the pro exhibition tour. I thought both sides were covered well.

Mark Fairbairn
Tulsa, Okla.

Future Tournaments

I have been a reader of your magazine for six months now and there is one question I need answered. Why don't you publish the dates for upcoming tournaments? I would like to know where and when they are so I can go watch. I would also like to know about racquetball camps, so I can improve my game.

Neil Colgrove
Palmdale, Calif.

Editor's note: As we've said several times before, we publish advance notices of the major pro events in the tournament section. But we don't publish advances of the smaller pro events and the amateur events because most of the time tournaments are set up only a short while before the actual event, thereby missing our advance deadline. Most of the time, in fact, tournament promoters never even bother to send the information. For those interested in camps and clinics, we publish a camp guide for two issues at the beginning of the summer.

Military Players

I have recently separated from the United States Air Force. Since having become an avid racquetball player and *Racquetball Illustrated* reader, I cannot recall reading anything on racquetball within the military.

The different branches support racquetball as part of their physical conditioning programs.

I would like to see some recognition given to some of our citizens in uniform.

Johnny Cervantes
Laredo, Tex.

Editor's note: We have had a few short shots and tournament results dealing with racquetball in the military but as of yet no in-depth feature. We, too, would be interested in learning about this subject—especially in Europe—but so far we have not seen a good free-lance article on the topic.

Hogan Articles

I want to congratulate you on the fine instruction series by Marty Hogan.

His articles are some of the most informative I have read. He keeps them simple but at the same time, he expands on the subject far more than most of the other players.

His article on "quick-draw forehand" in the November issue was interesting to me, and I think it will help me in my game.

Gerald Lyons
Cincinnati, Ohio

Cover Story

I can see it now. You will be getting hundreds of letters admonishing you for showing us sexy Pamela Sue Martin on your November cover.

Well, before those letters reach you, I had to let you know that I thought it was a great cover, and Pamela Sue is one of the finest actresses on television.

D.L. Larson
Denver, Colo.

Pamela Sue

I have nothing against Pamela Sue Martin, and I think she does a fine job on *Dynasty*, but I want to know why she was on your cover wearing a "let it all hang out" top.

Karen Carlton
Dallas, Tex.

Editor's note: Racquetball Illustrated *provided Pamela Sue Martin with an outfit as it does with every celebrity cover subject. Ms. Martin decided she wanted to wear her own outfit.*

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Covering the Covers

For our special 1981 yearbook issue, we review our celebrity cover subjects.

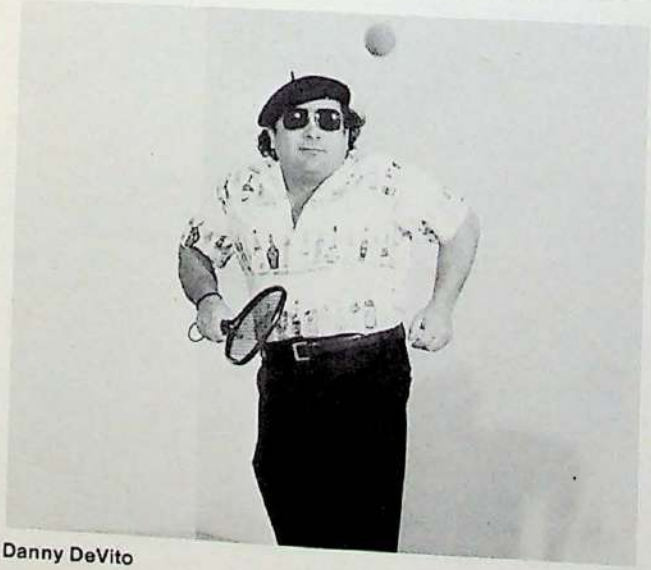
The 1981 cover roster: January—Robert Walden of *Lou Grant Show.* February—Barbi Benton. March—Greg Evigan of *B.J. and the Bear.* April—Danny DeVito of *Taxi.* May—Willie Stargell of the Pittsburgh Pirates. June—Jeff Conaway of *Taxi.* July—Danielle Brisebois of *Archie Bunker's Place* and Michael Young of *Kids Are People Too.* August—Steve Kanaly of *Dallas* (inset pro Heather McKay). September—pro Marty Hogan. October—Bruce Weitz of *Hill Street Blues.* November—Pamela Sue Martin of *Dynasty.* December—pros Marty Hogan and Dave Peck. Yearbook—Donna Mills of *Knots Landing.*

Robert Walden

Willie Stargell

Barbi Benton

Greg Evigan



Danny DeVito

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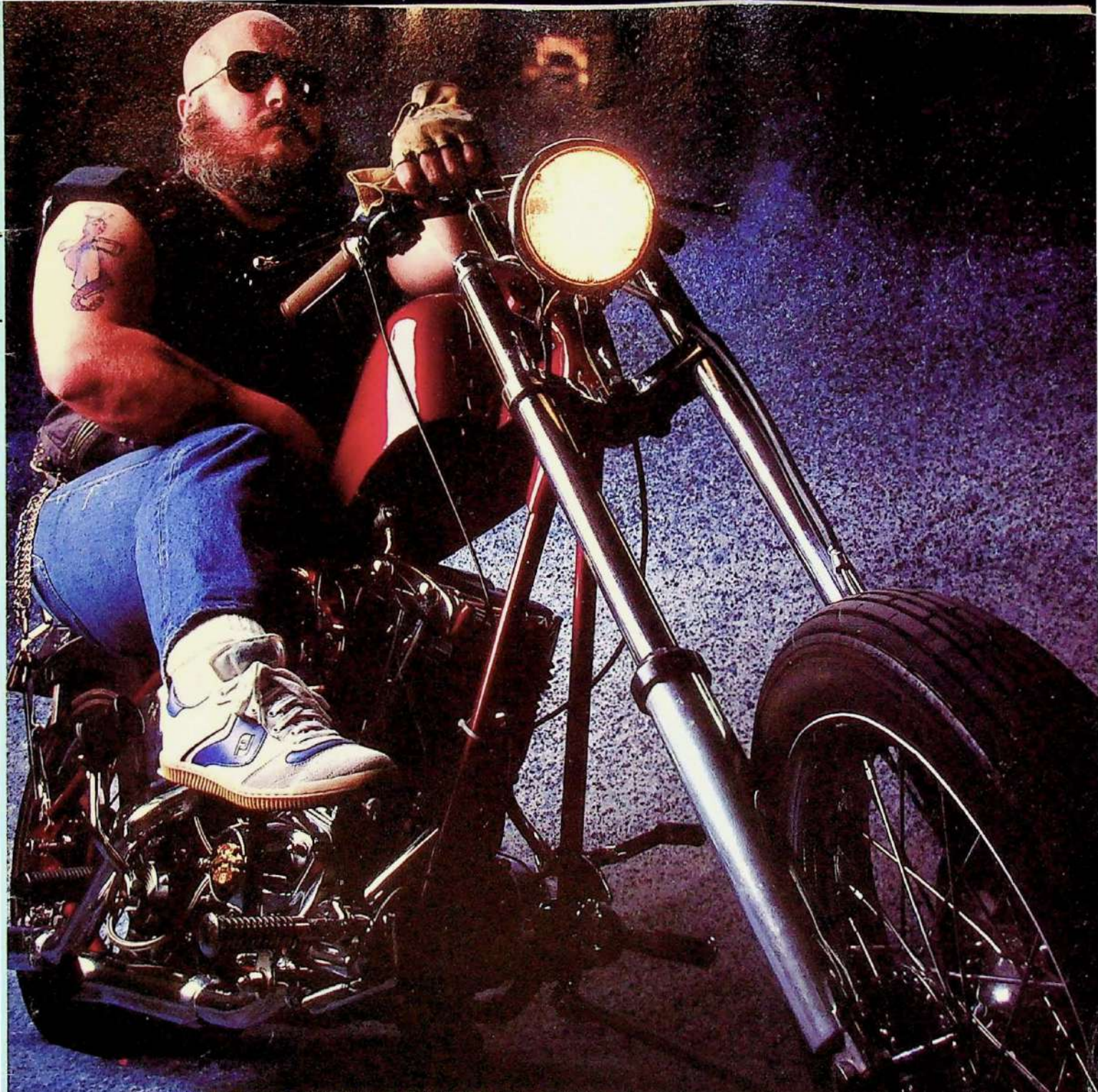

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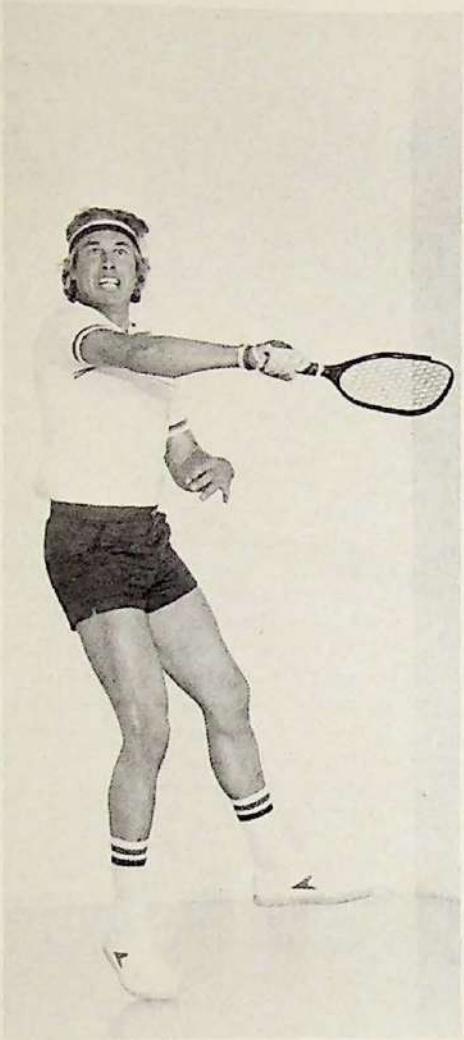
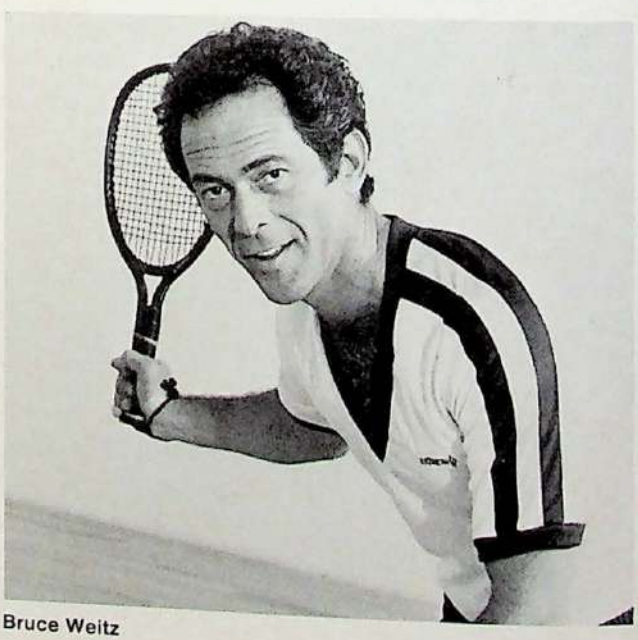


Steve Kanaly

Michael Young

Danielle Brisebois

Jeff Conaway



Bruce Weitz

Pamela Sue Martin

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No Dancing in the Big City

Photos by David M. King

By Beau Alain Max

Donna Mills spent most of her young life training to be a dancer. Then she went to the University of Illinois to study drama. Later she enrolled in private acting classes and was cast in *Come Blow Your Horn* and *The Reluctant Debutante* at Chicago's Drury Lane Theatre in her first amateur efforts. The applause and accolades kept coming. So much for her dance career.

"I wanted to be a ballerina," said Mills, now the co-star of CBS' *Knots Landing*. "I feel like I spent my entire childhood with my foot on a ballet barre.

"After my first endeavor on stage, my dance teachers told me that I wouldn't pursue dancing after acting. I remember saying, 'No, no. I'm just going to do one more play.' But they were right. After I heard the laughter. . . the emotion of the audience, I decided this is for me. Once you get bitten by the bug, that's it."

Mills left Chicago and followed the road of many would-be serious actors and actresses by traveling to New York City. After numerous casting calls and auditions, she wound up with several parts in off-Broadway productions before she made it to Broadway to perform with Lauren Bacall in *Don't Drink the Water*.

Once Donna Mills *(Knots Landing)* switched to acting, there was no turning back. Now acting and exercise are her top priorities.

That is when a CBS casting director offered her a part in the daytime soap opera, *The Secret Storm*. Although they decided to "kill off" her character after three months, CBS then recast her as the lead of another soap, *Love Is A Many Splendored Thing*. Her character in that one managed to last three years.

"I got bored with soaps. After three years it was enough. It is a good training ground and a wonderful experience. But who needs a 52 week-a-year grind?"

She then left for Hollywood and almost immediately landed a role in an episode of Burt Reynolds' long-gone television series, *Dan August*. From there it was a big role—probably her best known—as Clint Eastwood's girl friend in *Play Misty For Me*. "I left *Dan August* on Friday and started *Misty* on Monday."

If all this sounds easy, you don't know the business. It took a lot of hard work and at times it was even frustrating.

Off the screen, Donna is as beautiful as she is on. With blazing blue eyes and a humble smile, Mills could be right up there with the rest of the poster pinups. But that's not her style. She projects herself as a serious actress. The craft is more important than the sexy image.

"I'm happy about acting. I really love it," she says. "I even like to rehearse. I know that success comes and goes and if you don't like the work, you are in big trouble. This is not my hobby. . . something I am doing until I grow up."

But even with the success of *Knots Landing* and *Play Misty For Me*, some people don't recognize Mills. In fact, at the *Racquetball Illustrated* photo session, one onlooker said,

No Dancing in the Big City

Photos by Harry Langdon

Donna Mills: "When you do a lot of different parts, people don't seem to identify with you. They know you but they can't think of your name."

"She's not as tall as Donna Mills... she can't be that short (5-feet-4)."

"When you do a lot of different parts, people don't seem to identify with you," says Mills. "They know you but they can't think of your name."

Most people don't know that between *Misty* and *Knots Landing,* Mills played in 21 made-for-television movies, portraying everything from a nun to a lawless fugitive. And most people don't remember that she co-starred with Larry Hagman (now J.R. on CBS' *Dallas)* in a short-lived NBC series called *The Good Life.*

"Larry and I may be television's scoundrels now but we were once a sweet, young, innocent couple working as the maid and butler of a wealthy household," recalls Mills. "We only lasted for one season. *All In The Family* was opposite us. It was their first season. Needless to say, no one watched us."

But that's not the case these days. A lot of people are watching *Knots Landing* in which Mills plays Abbey Cunningham, the resident divorcee of a small community. Her character has become a rival to J.R. as one of the most scheming, unscrupulous, manipulative and nasty characters on the tube. With a stable of free baby sitters, a whole collection of handsome husbands to be stolen away and people's careers to be devastated, Mills has one of the juicier roles on television.

And even though the series is aimed at the

Photo courtesy of CBS

Two of television's best-known "scoundrels" are Larry Hagman (standing) and Donna Mills (seated at rear). Since *Knots Landing* was a spinoff from *Dallas,* Hagman made an occasional appearance on that show last season. Mills and Hagman once worked together several years ago on another television series.

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No Dancing in the Big City

Photos by David M. King

Mills, very fitness conscious, always does a series of stretching exercises prior to playing racquetball.

soap opera mentality, Mills does it justice. "Abbey lets me get out all those other kinds of urges I have had," she says. "Everyone has the urge sometimes not to be so nice or so moral. It's really a change for the audience to live vicariously—to live out those things you always think about doing but never do.

"Abbey loves life. She has a great lust for it. On the one hand, that is a very good trait. And I guess in that way we are the same. I play her with a joy that is infectious.

"On the other hand, I guess I am the woman everyone loves to hate. I'll bet you're wondering which is the real me."

Although no one can find the "real" Donna Mills in a two-hour interview, from first impressions, one gets the feeling that Abbey is not the real Donna. Mills seems to be the quiet, unassuming type, perhaps even shy. She is definitely not the Hollywood flashy type.

"I like the beach. I like camping. My soul is in the mountains," she says. "I've seen the Hollywood scene but I never got into it. I never really liked it. It never interested me. The people I like to be around are not really the people involved in it."

Mills is now in her 30s, although she looks younger. One reason may be her stringent exercise program, which includes dance lessons, running, exercise, vitamins, tennis and racquetball.

"I work with a trainer... run up hills around my house very fast without stopping... exercise on my Total Gym... and take my vitamins. Also, I'm off coffee again."

When growing up in Chicago, Mills was into ice skating as a competitor. Although she ice skates once in awhile for recreation, she prefers tennis, and just recently, racquetball.

"My brother taught me racquetball. He's a very good player," says Mills. "I have found it an excellent alternative to tennis. You can play it anytime because it's indoors, which eliminates the factor of weather.

"And the degree of expertise to play is not as great as it has to be in tennis. Almost anyone can have a good, competitive game. The game is definitely growing on me. I am constantly moving. It's almost like going into a sauna. It's a good place for some healthy sweat."

She is also not afraid of a little competition. One week she was scheduled to play in a celebrity tennis tournament but a *Knots Landing* cast rehearsal spoiled that, and the following week she was scheduled for a celebrity racquetball tournament but that had to be missed because she was chosen to serve on the voting committee for the Emmy Awards.

As for the future, her plans include a physical fitness/exercise book and an eventual industry change from actress to producer. She has recently formed her own production company.

"By the time *Knots Landing* goes off, I'll be a producer," she says. "That's a long way from dance school."

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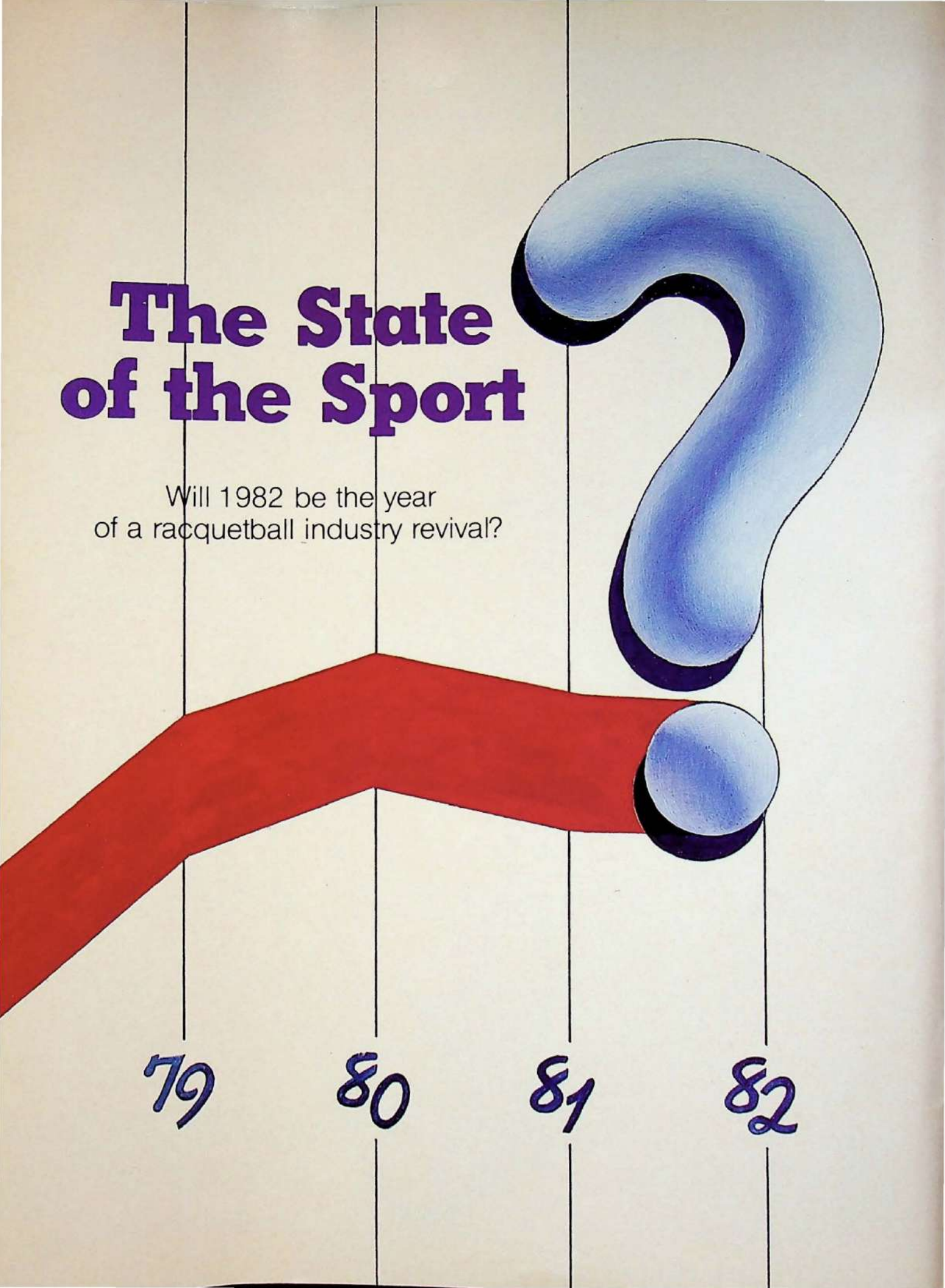
The State of the Sport

Will 1982 be the year
of a racquetball industry revival?



By Mike Hogan

Will 1982 be the year of the racquetball revival?

Everyone seems to agree that the sport slid into the doldrums in 1980 and the early part of 1981 after a fantastic growth rate from 1976-79 and everyone seems to agree that in some areas of the country there was a slight resurgence in late 1981. The question remains how to get it back on the 76-79 interest track. And the answers vary, depending on whom you talk to.

"Our challenge right now is to get television exposure," says Tom Morrow, publicist of the Catalina professional tour. "That will make or break professional racquetball, and amateur racquetball depends on the pro level.

"Right now, racquetball is in purgatory. The growth has leveled off and until we can break out of this enclosure we are in and into a mass television audience, the sport won't grow."

"It's going to take more than a cameo appearance on *CBS Wide World of Sports* to get the ball rolling again," says Frank Pace, who heads Ektelon's public relations team. Pace brought the 1980 Ektelon/Perrier National Championships to 50 million viewers of ESPN. Racquetball also has been seen twice in 75 cities on the Public Broadcasting System program *Sports America*, notes Pace, but it hasn't seemed to have bolstered the sport's slowing growth rate.

"The fact is that the future of the sport doesn't lie with TV," he says. "It lies with the ability of individual court clubs to promote their own club and the ability of manufacturers to provide them with the kind of grassroots events they can promote."

Not that television wouldn't help. In fact, Pace is, even now, making arrangements for the nationwide syndication of the 1981 Ektelon/Perrier Championships.

"Network television would be a good short-term catalyst," he says, "but it isn't going to sustain us over the long run."

In the meantime, the heady player population growth rates enjoyed in racquetball's halcyon days have disappeared. Some say there are 10 million racquetballers. You can also get other estimates ranging from 7.5 million to 12 million. Sound figures are hard to come by because racquetball has yet to progress to the point where extensive marketing studies have been done.

There is no manufacturers association to fund much research. The only court club association had such little support that it merged with one from tennis, and the National Racquetball Club (NRC)/United States Racquetball Association (USRA), formerly the most powerful group in the sport, has recently become inactive.

Bob Kendler, who once fancied himself the godfather of racquetball, has ceased publication of *National Racquetball* magazine (he is trying to sell it) and has been cut out of pro tour involvement by a leaner and hungrier Charlie Drake of DP Leach.

Part of racquetball's problem is identifying the problem, says Luke St. Onge, executive director of the American Amateur Racquetball Association (AARA). Aften an industry-wide meeting at the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) trade show last year, neither the players associations, court clubs owners nor manufacturers could answer the fundamental question of why players drop out of the sport.

"Ninety-nine percent of court clubs don't even conduct exit interviews of members who drop out of the club," notes St. Onge. "They just go out and spend dollars to attract new players."

Court business is way down in some areas and on the rise in others. In San Diego, the so-called capital of racquetball, clubs such as Racquettime, the George Brown chain and Mel Gorham's club have closed their doors. Others such as Rose Canyon would like to become office buildings if only the economy would let them. They are quietly up for sale or charging a pitiful $1.75 to $2 for non-prime play.

In the Chicago area, densely populated by about 65 clubs, courts such as Sky Harbor and many others are suffering similar fates. In fact, reports of clubs being converted to offices, sold or just closed are rife. At the same time, it should be noted that many court clubs throughout the nation—especially in the South and East—are doing very well, and there are still isolated growth markets even in this depressed economy.

Things are better at the manufacturing level but, says Bob Pekarek, National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) western regional manager, "The bloom is definitely off the rose."

According to NSGA's annual surveys, equipment sales peaked in 1979. Industry-wide racquet sales alone were $82.5 million that year, up from $50.7 million in 1978. But those sales slipped to $73.8 million in 1980 and are expected to have declined another 12 percent to $65 million in 1981. The number of racquets sold in 1981 is estimated to have declined to 2.8 million, down from four million sold during the record 1979 year.

Even the big boys in the racquetball business—DP Leach and Ektelon—report a "leveling" in sales last year although they add that things are picking up again. Not all manufacturers, however, got over the hump.

"There has been a substantial decrease in the number of low-end manufacturers," observes Ektelon National Sales Manager Barry Marassi. "At one time, there were 100 racquet manufacturers, but now that number is way down. It's become a lot harder for quick-buck artists to market racquets without a recognized brand name."

DP Leach, which used to support 12 pros on the racquetball tour, is now fielding only five. Ektelon has dropped to nine.

Sales are soft, budgets are being more closely examined and there have been some people laid off, says DP Leach Director of Player Promotions John Weaver.

Does all this mean that racquetball is going to hell on a handcart? Not at all.

"We are just going through a shake-out process," says St. Onge. "We put the cart before the horse. We jumped in with too many facilities, for example, before we had people to put in them."

It's just the end of the "quick buck," says Weaver, the time when all the hangers-on fall off the bandwagon. "It's the kind of thing all growth sports go through at one time or another," says Pekarek.

The NSGA's figures may indicate overall a decline in racquet sales, for example, but that isn't the entire story. Hidden within those numbers are trends which suggest that racquetball is just going through growing pains.

Two interesting statistics:

- In 1978, discount and department stores sold 48 percent of all racquets, and the average price of a racquet industry-wide was $18.78.
- In 1980, those same stores were selling less than 41 percent of all racquets, and the average price had risen to $26.74.

Typically, in this case, "low-end" outlets sell beginner equipment: plastic racquets mass-produced in Taiwan. The decline in their sales graphically shows the decline in the number of players entering racquetball and purchasing their equipment for the first time, says Pekarek.

At the same time, the rise in the average price of racquets indicates that there is a hardcore group of dedicated players out there who are "buying up." "They are improving their equipment as their skills improve," says Marassi.

Ektelon can't make its new CBK composite racquet quickly enough to keep pace with all the people who want to pay $165 for the privilege of owning one. Its $100 250G graphite composite has sold well since it came on the market three years ago. Likewise, not even a $197 price tag, the highest in the business, is enough to dissuade players from snatching up DP Leach's Marty Hogan Graphite USA.

"The sport has become more sophisticated, and the players have become more sophisticated," says Weaver. "They know what a racquet like the Hogan Graphite can do for them. We are so back ordered on it that it's a joke in comparison with the far less expensive racquets in our line."

DP Leach's entire product line is shifting upward. It's a change of strategy for the company which has been a dominant force in the game almost since it started. DP Leach became the largest racquetball equipment manufacturer (with Ektelon a close second) primarily by appealing to the mass market. Initially it rode that wave of new players making their first purchases, but now that business has softened.

The economy is partly to blame. Large merchandisers such as K-Mart don't want to stock much inventory now that interest rates for warehouse construction are in the 20 percent range. The same is true for smaller manufacturers, the "mom-and-pops," as Weaver calls them, "who bought six or seven thousand frames from Taiwan when the market was hot and are now dumping them. That just saturates the market and makes it difficult to set up long-term accounts." It also makes it hard to maintain racquet production schedules.

Illustrations by Helen Weekley

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The State of the Sport

"We have been hit by interest rates in every phase of the business," Marassi agrees. "That's what brought new club construction to a halt, and we have to look at the cost of money in everything we do whether a new product investment, an investment in inventory or a promotion we might be considering."

Non-racquetball related sponsors of the NRC pro tour aren't exactly dropping racquetball from their sports promotion budgets, says Weaver, but it was a real "hard sell" for Drake when he sought sponsorship for this year's pro tour.

"Sponsors are re-evaluating just where they want to be with racquetball," says Weaver. "That was a major reason why he (Drake) changed the format, dropping all but 12 pros from the tour and giving Catalina exclusive clothing rights."

"The primary thing is the economy," says Bob Beebe, product manager for Penn racquetball, "especially in the Central Region. The steel industry, the auto industry, the tire industry are all hurting, and people's discretionary income is reduced. If it comes down to racquetball or food on the table, you're going to buy food."

Penn was the major sponsor of the Women's Professional Racquetball Association (WPRA) tour last year, but dropped out this year citing tight budgets and a desire to pursue a more broad-based marketing approach.

"I'm very impressed by the WPRA," says Beebe. "They paint an extremely good picture of racquetball. But we think we can do more good for ourselves and the sport as a whole by taking our promotional dollar right down to the grassroots level."

No one has been hit harder by the sour economy and high interest rates than court club owners down there in the thick grass. They're caught in the pincer. On the one hand, some markets are saturated and more clubs are competing for fewer players. At the same time, some areas on the Eastern Seaboard and in the Southwest, such as Dallas and Houston, are still growth markets.

But interest rates are killing the construction industry, and that includes contractors who build racquetball courts. Many places where there are players anxious to play, there aren't enough prime-time courts available for them to play on.

"You are seeing courts crowded at peak times which also turns people off to the sport," notes Pekarek.

Non-prime time hours are still not being filled in most clubs. "Because of the economy, many of the ladies who used to fill those daytime courts are now working," says John Wineman, a partner in Chicago's metro clubs.

What to do? Well, that depends on whether you subscribe to the "filter down" or grassroots theory.

If you're an adherent of the former, you believe that greater media exposure will be the salvation of the sport. That means television and that means something suitable for TV consumption—namely, a pro tour extravaganza.

"If we don't produce some sort of mass television audience over the next two or three years," notes Morrow, "professional racquetball will be in trouble from the sponsor standpoint."

The reason many sponsors are having second thoughts about underwriting professional racquetball is that it hasn't yet achieved high visibility. A pro stop is seen by only about 1,000 people and gets a write-up or two in the local paper, maybe even a shot on the local news.

"And sometimes the newspapers will even eliminate the name of the sponsor from the tournament name," says a frustrated Morrow whose job it is to hype the tournament and sponsors alike.

That just isn't good enough for the company who is kicking in a few hundred thousand dollars in the hopes of selling more racquetball clothing, equipment or soft drinks.

"If Catalina hadn't come forward, I don't think anyone else would have jumped in either," says Weaver. "We owe a lot to Catalina. But I can tell you flat out, if they don't sell clothing as a result of this venture, they will get out."

This year's tour will be the largest prize money tour in history with $325,000 offered for nine events compared with $215,000 last year. Administrative costs bring the total up past $400,000 with Catalina's $225,000 being the major contribution and a dozen other sponsors splitting the balance of the cost.

Morrow figures that racquetball will crack the cable television market within the next few years after the manufacture of a practical and portable one-way glass court so that racquetball can be played in arenas such as Madison Square Garden. The rules of the game also need to be changed slightly to make it more "viewable" by television audiences, he believes.

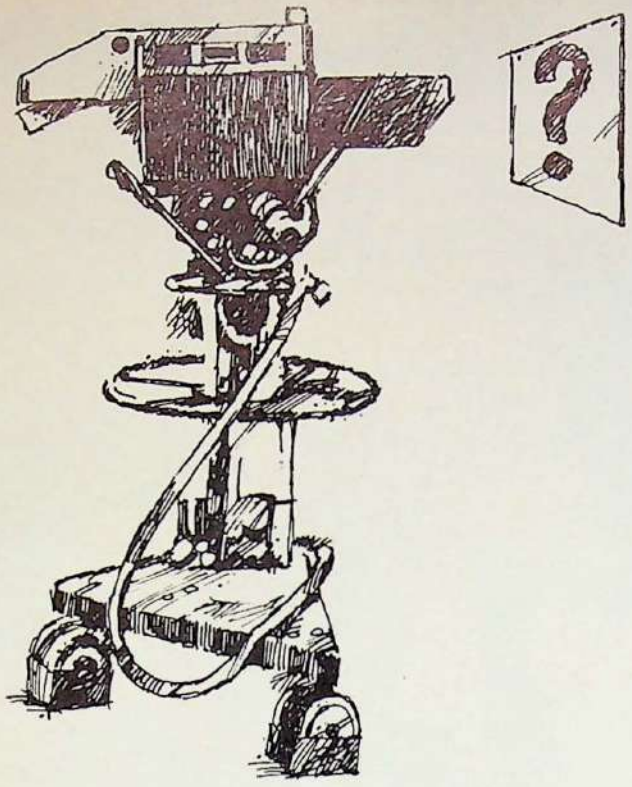
Racquetball may already have been on television, he notes, but not in a truly palatable form. "It just hasn't exuded that atmosphere of excitement that is racquetball.

"People who don't play racquetball don't even know Marty Hogan. But, if we can get into 8 to 10 million homes with the Catalina tour regularly over a seven or eight month period, just think how many more people will get interested in the game and go out and buy a racquet.

"The Catalina tour with only 12 players wasn't designed to freeze anyone out. It was designed to make the sport stronger by showcasing 12 serious-minded players and giving amateurs a better chance to break into the pros."

The concentration of Catalina's publicity on 12 pro players will make them bigger names and, therefore, more "saleable" to the media, reasons Morrow.

"The DP Leach philosophy is that it will all filter down," says Morrow. "For every 100 kids who see Marty Hogan play, 20 will go out and



buy a racquet. The money generated will then be spread to junior and other amatuer-building programs.

"I think we're closer now than we have ever been to getting on network TV," says Morrow. "It's just a question of getting the right people's attention."

Others disagree with that approach. All the easy gains have been made and now we must lay plans to attract and hold new players through grassroots organizations, they say. We can never expect another big surge in player growth rates and must settle down to slower but steadier growth.

"To get the sport to grow steadily, we will have to go back to promoting racquetball on an institutional basis," says Pace. "Ektelon will be promoting racquetball, rather than Ektelon. It will be a more generic emphasis because, in order for us to prosper, court clubs have to prosper, and so we plan to put more of our resources into getting people onto their courts."

Ektelon plans more regional tournaments, merchandising and court club promotional tie-ins: region-oriented marketing to build up racquetball's base.

"Racquetball readily attracts players because the sport is so easy to learn," says Wineman. "But, ironically, it loses them just as easily for the same reason."

"We may be gaining four million players a year," agrees St. Onge, "but we're losing four million too. The biggest problem in the sport is the retention of these players."

Racquetball should take a lesson from soccer and tennis, he believes, and develop a junior feeder system.

"We want to see people grow up with racquetball, not have them just come in and leave after trying it for a year or so," says St. Onge.

"Up until now, we've had major promotions, big tournaments hoping to get enough attention to keep the sport growing. Now we have to approach it from the other end."

The AARA with 28,000 registered members plans to sanction more than 300 junior and 500 adult amateur tournaments, clinics and camps this year, stage 50 intercollegiate state championships, an intercollegiate national championship, 16 regional singles and doubles championships and national singles and doubles championships.

It also will participate with groups such as the National Youth Council, the President's Council on Physical Fitness, the Explorer Scouts to develop instructional and other programs to further participation in the sport.

Court clubs of the future will be mostly high-end membership facilities with a variety of amenities such as weight training, aerobics, swimming, etc., which turns them from mere racquetball clubs into "health clubs." "This broadens the club's market to other types of sports enthusiasts as well as racquetballers," says Steve Grosslight, general manager of Mid-Valley Athletic Club in Reseda, Calif. Grosslight and a dozen other San Fernando Valley club owners and managers representing about 50,000 players have pooled their advertising budgets and now "promote racquetball like the Milk Advisory Board promotes milk."

"I think everyone in the industry is going to have to help solve the problems of others," adds Wineman. "No one in racquetball has ever really worked together before. We each have always been concerned with just promoting our own product.

"Now, manufacturers are going to have to really work with club owners and club owners with manufacturers and the player associations and magazines to get this thing rolling again."

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What Happened to the USRA/NRC?

Photo by David M. King

Robert Kendler (in background) threw up his hands at the entire USRA/NRC situation. With Kendler out of the power seat, DP Leach official Charlie Drake became the head man for the pro tour.

By Len Ziehm

The United States Racquetball Association and National Racquetball Club, leaders in the sport's boom times during the 1970s, are now seemingly inactive.

Depending on whom you talk to, the two groups have either all but folded or are in the process of a major overhaul. Either way, the developments of September 10, 1981, at the USRA office in Skokie, Ill., are cause for more than passing thought from all segments of the racquetball industry.

On that date, Bob Kendler, president of the USRA and NRC, dismissed Dan Bertolucci, the NRC director, and Terry Fancher, the USRA director. Carol Brusslan, editor of the USRA magazine, and secretary Rene Copplan were also given a week's notice on their employment.

"Joe Ardito (Kendler's right hand man) came to our office and said the boss has decided to close things up," reported Fancher later that day. The word spread quickly to leading members in the racquetball community.

Irv Grossman Public Relations of San Diego, Calif., which represents the pro tour, issued a release saying Kendler "was disbanding" both associations and "was disassociating himself from racquetball."

Kendler, who once declared he "owned" racquetball and has been a pioneer in its development even in the eyes of his critics, insists the NRC and USRA are not dead. "Sure, they are still in existence," said Kendler, when questioned by this reporter. "No doubt about it. We're just making some changes in policy."

He would not, however, say what those changes would be other than to suggest a secondary professional tour may be in the works. Nor did he set a timetable for making any future announcements.

"There's been no major developments here," Kendler said. "Somebody's been spoofing you. Don't believe everything you hear. We think our changes will be beneficial."

Several hours later, however, Kendler received a call from Charlie Drake, vice president of DP Leach Industries. "I asked him for his official position," said Drake. "He said the magazine *(National Racquetball)* was up for sale and that the USRA and NRC are still in existence. What this means, I can't say. How much activity you'll see from that office is uncertain, because he virtually eliminated his staff. I believe that Bob won't put any more of his money into operating it. He's lost much more than he's put in."

Fancher, who started working for Kendler in 1976 and was formerly married to his daughter, played down Kendler's expressed intention of keeping the racquetball groups going. "He doesn't like to show any weakness," said Fancher. "But he's sick of the entire thing. There's not enough left to salvage anything."

But why did all this happen?

"It came as a surprise and a shock to us," said Fancher. "We knew there were problems, but we thought they could be worked out."

The USRA did have some obvious problems.

- It was hampered in recent years by legal fees involving a court battle with a California ball company. The case has been tied up in court for years.

- The sale of Seamco Sporting Goods, which had provided the USRA with royalties on its racquetball sales, was a blow to the USRA. The sale removed Seamco president Al Mackie, one of Kendler's staunchest allies, from a position of prominence.
- A number of USRA state chairmen protested what they considered too high USRA membership costs for too little in the way of benefits in return. Some set up what amounted to rival groups, which wooed away USRA members with better tournaments at less cost to the player.
- The NRC, which conducted a tour for professional players, was hurt by the formation of a new circuit by Drake.

Added together, those factors meant considerable difficulties for Kendler and his groups. The U.S. Handball Association, also headed by Kendler and operated out of the same offices, survives thanks to financial help from Spalding Co., according to Fancher.

While refusing to declare an end to his racquetball involvement, Kendler, who has become a multimillionaire in other business ventures, did admit, "the racquetball industry is not spending any money these days. People are not spending money on leisure-time activities. It's murder out there. I've never seen the racquetball industry so confused or depressed as it is now."

Fancher admitted things had changed when he started his second stint with the USRA last January. "I noticed a lot of things had gone downhill," he said, "particularly in the amateur part. In the end we felt we had a lot of fun and did a lot of good. But there was too much reliance on old friends."

Drake, who had worked with Kendler since 1973, was one of those, "old friends." He's one of the few early leaders of the sport still around, a survivor of both the sale of Leach Industries to a conglomerate and the problems encountered by the pro tour. He attributes the USRA's problems to "opposition of the sport to a major change."

"Our new tour," Drake said, "marks the first time we've gotten a non-industry manufacturer (Catalina) to put up a large amount of money for racquetball. We feel good about that. To do it we had to reduce our commitment to the NRC.

"There is still a need for an NRC. But an association has to be able to change with the times, and Bob was slow to do that. A lot of it had to do with his age and his health. You have to be able to keep pace."

Drake also refuted Kendler's assessment of the economy as it pertains to racquetball. "All industry has been hurt," he said.

"Good cash management is what is needed. Last month we (DP Leach) were up to $960,000 in sales. That's consistent with our previous years. I don't see any of it slowing down."

So what happens now?

Clearly, the next move is up to Kendler. One or two people have been approached about buying *National Racquetball* magazine. In fact, one person thinks Kendler would sell the magazine for "the goodwill and the mailing list plus the indebtedness."

(Editor's note: The publication was eventually sold to Publications and Management, Inc. of Glenview, Ill.)

But nobody is jumping to set up another ruling body for amateur racquetball to compete with the surviving American Amateur Racquetball Association.

"We're not gloating over it," said the AARA's Hallie Singer. "That's not our style. The competition was healthy, but whether the USRA is there or not doesn't really matter. It won't change any of our approaches to what we're doing."

Fancher is planning to return to Florida, where he had worked previously for a chain of court clubs. "You can live a lot cheaper there than in Chicago," said Fancher. "It's rough finding a decent-paying job in racquetball now."

Bertolucci has found a part-time position as commissioner of a group called Men's Professional Racquetball in North America. In short, he will become "the top executive responsible for officiating and execution of (Catalina) pro events."

As for Kendler, many people think that he "has had it" with racquetball, and will let it go its own way without him. Others, however, know Kendler is a tough man to count out and are awaiting some dramatic announcement from him.

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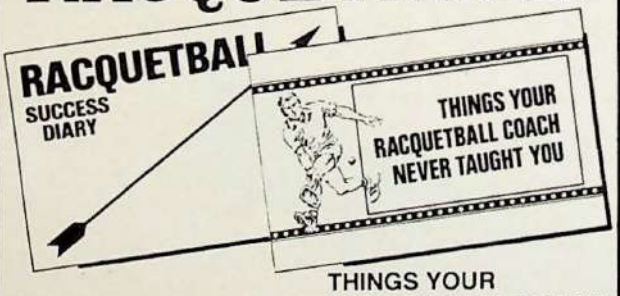

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CHAMPIONSHIP SERVICE STRATEGY

By Marty Hogan

Unquestionably, the serve is the most important shot in racquetball. As the philosophers of racquetball always preach, the serve sets the tempo for the ensuing rally. There is no other shot where you have complete control of the future. So, it is obvious that a player should use a serve to his or her greatest advantage.

The service strategy is surprisingly simple in the power racquetball game: Hit a hard drive serve to the backhand. Assuming you are playing a right handed opponent, your bread and butter serve should be the low, hard drive serve angled into the left, rear corner. The second bounce should hit the floor near the side wall directly opposite the receiver's position. The objective is to hit the serve low enough so that the second bounce hits before the ball reaches the back wall but close enough to the side wall so that the receiver has to reach a long way. The idea is to hit the serve hard enough so that your opponent can't pounce on it and hit an offensive return.

The angle of the drive serve also adds a degree of difficulty to the return. By angling the ball right to the left across the body, the ball will move away from the backhand. Thus, there is a very limited region in which the receiver can effectively return the ball. And if a ball is moving at a high speed, your odds of a weak return are even greater.

But trying to hit the serve into the left, rear corner allows maximum room for error. The worst situation is when a serve comes off the back wall. This is a plum for your opponent. Another serve to avoid is one that catches the side wall high. Contrary to popular belief, aiming for the side wall is basically a poor strategy. Any ball hitting a side wall slows down considerably. It then becomes a virtual setup unless the ball jams the receiver or takes a bad bounce.

I recommend the "three-one rule." This "rule" says that for every three drive serves I hit to the left, rear corner, I hit one different strong serve. I may use a 1. drive down the right wall to the right, rear corner; 2. hard Z to the forehand; 3. jam serve to the left. All three serves are hit with the same motion as the drive serve to the left, rear corner. If the receiver is leaning to the left, the surprise serve will earn a bundle of aces or setups on the return.

The drive down the right wall is hit like the drive to the left except that the contact point is a little further back. The serve should run down the right wall without catching it. Again, the second bounce should ideally hit before the ball gets to the back wall. But even if the serve does hit the back wall, if it is along the side wall, you can still get a weak return because of the surprise element. The secret is in making the drive to the left a fearsome serve which must be reckoned with in every service situation. Later in the match, the serve to the right can be effective because fatigue will have dulled the receiver's reaction time. His legs will be moving to the left while his eyeballs are moving to the right.

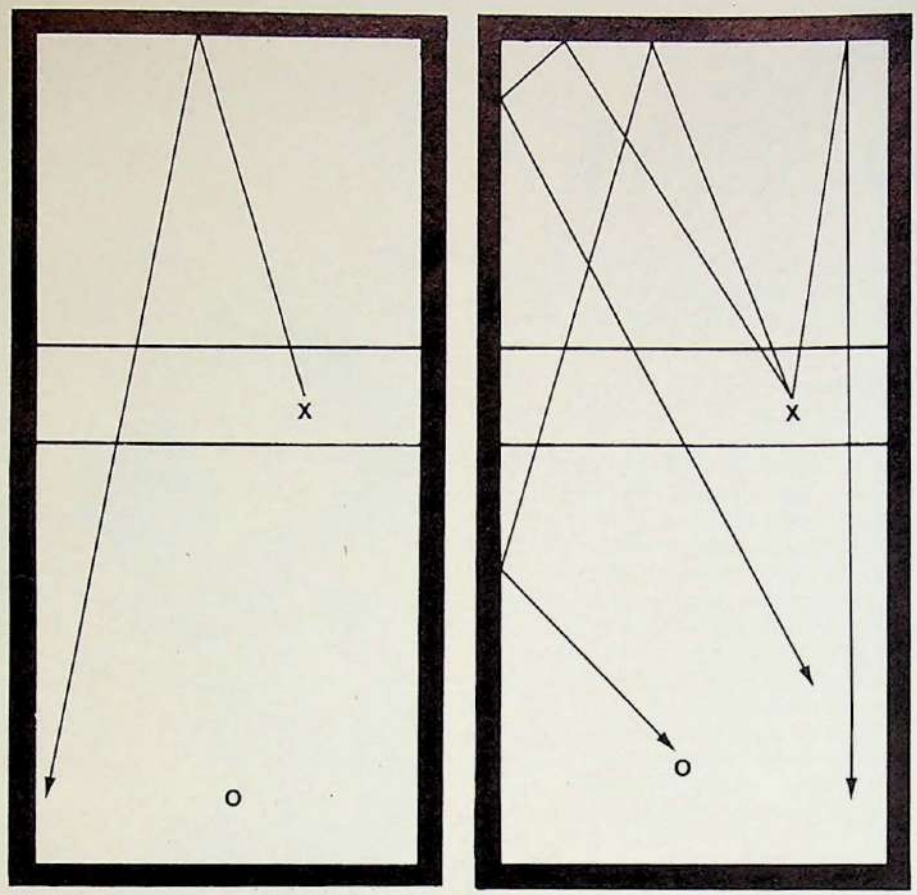
The hard Z to the right should be hit three or four feet high on the front wall with the intention of catching the right side wall in the rear after the first bounce, or it can be hit about six inches high with the intention of just clearing the service line and taking its second bounce near the right wall about 10 or 15 feet in front of the back wall. The low Z serve can be effective against players who are fatigued and/or have trouble moving forward quickly. The low Z complements the drive serve to the left because not only does it move the receiver in an opposite lateral direction from the drive left, but it also moves him in an anterior direction. Of course, if you mishit the low Z, it's a virtual plum.

The jam serve is hit so that it catches the side wall near the floor. You will have to experiment to find the best spot on the side wall because the position of the receiver, the liveliness of the ball, and the bite of the side wall all contribute to the final trajectory of the serve. The result must be a fast serve which comes into the receiver's body. Hopefully, the receiver is anticipating a drive left and has started his turn to the left. When he discovers his poor judgment, he'll have to spend some time back pedaling to adjust to the incoming serve. If the ball doesn't lose much speed off the side wall, the receiver will be jammed.

Some pros use the drive serve to the right because they think they can partially screen (though legally) the serve. But I don't like or depend on that strategy. In most cases, pro players can read the serve. It's almost cheating. And I think more restrictive service rules will eventually take that serve away.

The proper place to start the serve is from about one step to the right of center in the service zone. The step off-center is required to get the proper angle. Starting in the center reduces the needed angle.

Photo by Milo Muslin



The drive serve to the backhand (left) should be a player's most effective serve but surprise serves such as the drive to the forehand, the hard Z to the forehand and the jam serve are also important.

Starting off-center opens you up to a strong return down the left wall. However, I have found that the benefits of this off-center starting position far outweighs the potential losses. Most likely, the service motion will carry you almost into the center of the court. A single step will get you to the left side of the court and another step will get you to the side wall, so you will not be as far out of position as you might think. However, if you are the kind of server who serves and stands, there is the danger that you'll be burned almost every time by even a mediocre return.

After every serve, I look for and expect an offensive opportunity. I look for an attempted kill or pass down the left wall. If the return turns out to be a ceiling ball, I still have time to recover and return the ceiling ball with another ceiling ball. The drive serve left is moving far enough away from the backhand so that a pass to the right is almost nonexistent or at best weak. The most frequent weak return I get from the drive left is one which catches the left side wall and comes out toward the center of the court. When this happens, the receiver is trapped in back court. Then, I pinch the shot into the left corner. Even if the receiver can recover and get to the pinch, he'll have to run a long distance. Then, he would be lucky if he can even hit a decent shot. The long-term effect of all this runing is fatigue and frustration which leads to more errors.

There's no secret to executing the serve. It's a normal forehand power stroke. The contact point is slightly in front of and anterior to the right hip and about five inches off the ground. Take a full pendulum swing, and hit it almost flat with lots of wrist snap. Most racquetball players tell you to aim for a spot on the front wall. But have you ever tried to watch the front wall and the ball at the same time? Nonsense!

Experiment with different contact points and weight shift directions until the serve ends up where you want it. Then, repeat the shot until it's second nature. But not only must the serve end up where you want it, but it should also feel smooth and effortless. If not, keep experimenting. This "feel" method of practice will do a lot more for you than counting the number of times that you hit a spot on the front wall.

You should devote many hours practicing the drive serve and its complementary serves. To get that one-two punch effect of the drive serve strategy, you need to make the service motion natural, effortless, and seemingly identical for all the hard serves. At the beginning of the season, I spend many hours practicing the drive serve combinations in hopes of regaining the magic usually lost over the summer months of less concentrated playing. Unfortunately, the magic of the combinations is easily lost because of the critical role that timing and deception play in hitting a good service/combination. But even without the array of complementary serves, the drive serve to the left still can bring many moments of what looks like offensive brilliance. There have been many times when I have gone into the tie breaker with nothing to depend on but the drive serve. History shows that in those moments, I have more often than not come out winning by eight or more points just because I spent the hours necessary to hit an effective drive serve for a longer duration than any other player on the tour.

Once the serve is working, you should vary the delivery speed. Variance in delivery speed will throw the receiver's timing off because he won't be able to time the return. Receivers tend to start leaning at the same point in a server's delivery. So if you vary the delivery speed, the anticipated weight transfer of the receiver is thrown out of tune. This situation also leads to loss of confidence and balance and subsequently loss of performance.

If you have a bionic arm, you could then hit the drive serve using the "three-one rule" for a whole tournament. Unfortunately, no one is that strong, not even me. So you have to pace yourself. There's nothing worse than being so tired that the drive serve becomes a setup and the rest of your game deteriorates along with the serve. This means hitting some junk, lob, and soft Z serves occasionally so that you can conserve enough energy for an entire tournament. A nice side benefit is that soft serves throw off a lot of players especially when they've seen five or six hard serves in a row and their body has adjusted to reacting to a drive serve.

Unlike the hard serves, spin can aid in hitting the soft serves. Use some underspin (although not overly exaggerated) when hitting a junk or soft Z. The underspin allows you to hit the serve deeper without losing control of the serve. The result: less balls coming off the back wall. Use some overspin or topspin when hitting junk or high lob serves. The topspin lets you hit the serve more shallowly on the first bounce but carries high and deep enough so that the ball is much higher than normal once it reaches the receiver. Thus, the junk serve can be hit effectively with either top or underspin.

Some players preach that you should continually vary your serves to keep the receiver off balance. But I believe that once a serve is working, you should stay with the winning game plan. If a player has a weakness, that weakness will only get weaker with time. The weakness may not show up right away, but as a match gets older, those weaknesses will invariably show up. The drive serve is just the ticket for revealing those weaknesses. The power game revolves around the drive serve. Master the drive serve, and you've got about 25 percent of the game in the bag.

THE SURPRISE FOREHAND SERVE

By Scott Hawkins

Recently fellow pro John Egerman and I were watching a taped replay of last year's Ektelon-Perrier finals between Marty Hogan and Mike Yellen.

At one point, Yellen served a beautiful ace to Hogan's forehand. Hogan had been napping. Egerman smiled, turned to me and said, "Great shot. Hogan was sitting on that backhand serve. That's an excellent way to score some points on him."

Yellen obviously thought so, too. The very next serve he blasted another forehand down the line. Mistake. This time Hogan was right there. Rollout.

The Yellen-Hogan exchange underscores the point of this instructional: the surprise forehand serve can prove a surprisingly effective weapon if players will break the backhand habit and use it. But it must be used discreetly.

This instructional, then, deals with two phases of the surprise forehand serve: when to use it, and how to defend against it.

A drive serve should be hit low and hard, hopefully so it will bounce twice before hitting the back wall. And it should aim straight for a corner.

To accomplish this, your service motion—and this is important—should be the same as hitting a forehand: step into the ball using your legs and knees to bend low, with your toe open to the corner. One of the most important aspects of serving is to keep everything consistent.

Your body should never change from serve to serve and you should drop the ball in the same spot every time. The key to hitting the ball to either side is the wrist. With a hard snap of the wrist, you can blister a backhand serve, and by opening your wrist a bit you can fire off a forehand serve. Deception keeps your opponent honest. Ninety percent of the players today serve from the middle of the box. But what's wrong with hitting a serve from the right or left hand side of the service box?

As you set up in the service box, sneak a peek back at your opponent. Check where your opponent is playing. If he's cheating to the backhand side, rattle a forehand down the line once in awhile. If he's playing in the middle but has trouble with his footwork, use the forehand serve to mix him up.

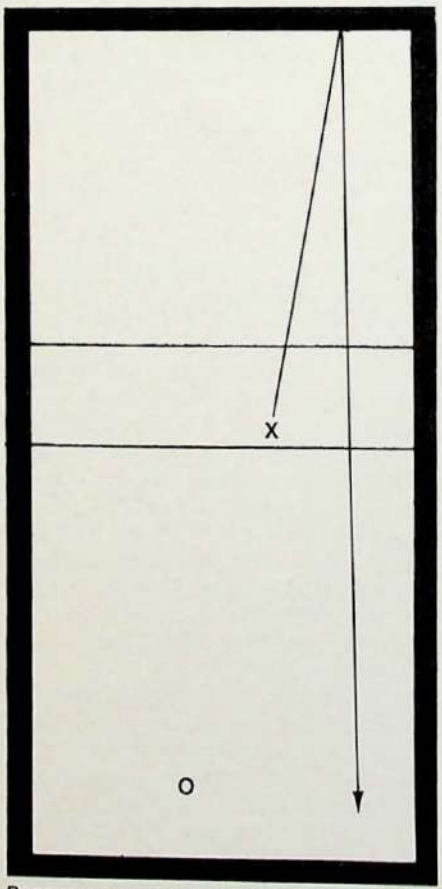
To gain confidence in your serving, practice by picking a spot on the front wall. Look at it before each serve. Then strive to hit it. If your opponent has trouble moving to his or her right and can't set up for a forehand that quickly, use it to your advantage. Play on it until your opponent proves he can return it.

The Return

Obviously, as Yellen did with Hogan, everyone is going to get surprised with a forehand serve once in awhile. But the key, as Hogan so aptly demonstrated, is to not be beaten twice or more in a row.

There are a couple of keys, actually. First if you know your opponent, you'll know his or her strengths and weaknesses. If your opponent can't—or won't—serve a forehand to save his life, then forget about it. Play a couple of steps to the left of center and concentrate on your backhand return.

However, if your opponent likes to mix it up and keep you honest, then be honest, don't cheat those steps. But anticipate. Concentrate on the game situation. Look for those clues. Is this the time for a surprise? Is the server sneaking peeks? Is it the first or second serve (very few surprise forehand drives will come off the second serve)? Where are the server's feet and hands pointed?



Because a receiver tends to lean toward his backhand, Scott Hawkins recommends a surprise drive serve down the forehand side.

You have to get off to a fast start in service return. There's no way around it. Don't wait for the ball to enter the backcourt before moving. React as soon as it is hit.

As the ball is served, note where it will hit the front wall. You'll immediately be able to anticipate the serve and you can adjust your movement accordingly. Get your racquet into position as soon as possible.

The only forehand serve you have to worry about is the drive. On the Z or lob, you'll have more time to react. So where should you return the drive?

If the serve allows for a kill, by all means kill it. Generally, however, based upon the difficulty of the serve—its speed, direction and element of surprise—your options should be ceiling, pass and kill, in that order.

Your first consideration should be to keep the ball in play, allowing you to get into second-shot positioning. You have to remember racquetball is primarily a game you play with your legs, not your arms. You have to be in position to shoot a shot before you can complete it. So, to keep a game going, anticipate what might happen and where that serve will go.

BACK WALL PLAY FOR BEGINNERS

By Rich Wagner

At the professional level, shots coming off the back wall are considered easy setups and usually result in a rally-ending shot.

For beginners, however, a ball coming off any wall other than the front will create havoc because of the ball bouncing off at unusual angles.

There are two basic types of back wall setups. One is the shot that travels directly from the front wall to the back wall and then rebounds into the deep or midcourt area. The second shot is the one that comes off the ceiling to the back wall. This happens when the ceiling shot is hit too hard or too close to the front wall.

The biggest problem for beginners is their postioning. They usually set up too far in front of the ball. There they are, waiting to hit the ball, when all of a sudden they realize the ball is behind them. They wind up reaching behind them and consequently, do not hit the ball square. A player wants to make good racquet contact with any shot, so it's obvious that if you hit the ball too far in back of your body, you are weakening your shot.

To avoid this, you should place yourself behind the point where you think the ball will wind up. This will take some practice but the best way to work on it is to hit the ball high on the front wall and follow its path to the back.

Once you have a good idea how far the ball is going to come forward off the back wall, you are ready for the next step.

If you are behind the ball (or the point where you think the ball will land), you can now shuffle forward into the ball. This is a lot easier than trying to move back to it. Moving forward gives you momentum, which, in turn, gives you more power.

To practice this shot, toss the ball into the back wall and shuffle forward until the ball is in the proper hitting area. Then hit it. As you get your timing and footwork down, you can make the drills a little more difficult. Hit the ball into the front wall and let it rebound off the back wall. Then you can progress into letting the ball hit the front wall, then a combination side wall—back wall return.

As for the back wall shot off a hard ceiling return, you are dealing with a slightly more advanced shot. The ball is falling down off the back wall, not rebounding away from it. Because you have less time to adjust, your timing for this shot will require more practice.

With this type of shot, you must set up even further back from the point where you think the ball will land—possibly all the way to the back wall.

The rest of the shot is similar. Shuffle forward until the ball is in your hitting area and then hit it.

One area of caution: don't be overly aggressive with this shot during a match. That is, make sure the ball is going to come far enough off the back wall so you can get a full stroke into it.

You don't want to be embarrassed by setting up for a shot, and then having your racquet hit the back wall instead of the ball.

You should also realize that if your opponent hits a good ceiling ball, the smartest shot to use to return the ball is another ceiling shot.

To practice the back wall shot off a ceiling ball, all you have to do is keep hitting hard, long ceiling shots. Then set up behind the ball, and shuffle into it.

Timing is the key. Different balls will have different patterns. Prior to a match, you should check how the ball reacts off the ceiling.

Also remember to keep your eye on the ball and your head down.

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HOW TO PLAY CONTROL AND POWER PLAYERS

By Francine Davis

Imagine you are playing in the finals of a tournament. You have already lost the first game, 15-9 to a power player, and you are losing the second game, 10-5. What do you do? You call time out and walk over to your coach (mine is Jim Winterton of Poughkeepsie, N.Y.), and you say, "I'm lost and frustrated."

The coach then encourages you and says, "Remember you are playing a power player so you must change the tempo of the game. Instead of pounding the ball back to your opponent, slow the game down. Hit the ball softer and higher instead of low and hard."

The match has totally turned around and you are now in the driver's seat. You pulled out the second game, 15-12, and you have the momentum going into the tie-breaker. Again you consult your coach.

"Just continue to keep the pace of the game slow and your opponent will grow even more frustrated than the second game," he says.

The tie-breaker game finishes in your favor thanks to a change in strategy. You slowed the game down and made your opponent play "your" game. This should be a lesson that when you play a power player you cannot fight power with power. You must analyze your opponent's game and change the pace.

Many of us can look back over our experiences and identify with this situation whether at a tournament or just during a league match. What one must learn to do is walk on the court and begin to analyze what type of player we are playing. A player looks to see if her opponent is a right-handed or left-handed player, so you must also figure out whether she is a power player or a control player.

Generally speaking, a power player is one who:

1. Likes to hit the ball hard.
2. Likes to shoot the ball from anywhere on the court.
3. Likes to go for bottom board.
4. Attempts lower percentage shots that with practice become more offensive. This person would be known as a run-and-gun player on a basketball team.

A control player, on the other hand, is one who:

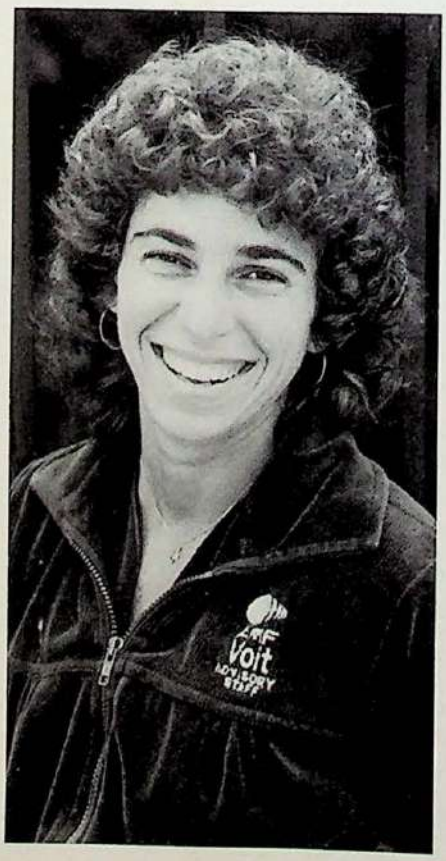
1. Likes to control the ball.
2. Uses passing shots instead of going for the bottom board.
3. Attempts high percentage shots such as the ceiling or around-the-wall balls.

This type of player on a basketball team does not shoot unless he is open and thinks he has a good chance of making it.

There are three key elements which we must focus on when dealing with power and control players:

1. Tempo of the game (change of pace).
2. Serves.
3. Shot selection.

	How to Play the Power Player	How to Play the Control Player
Tempo of the Game	Slow the game down. Change the pace of the hard hitting, slam bang rallies to a slower, softer game.	Speed the game up. Change the pace of the soft ceiling high balls to the hard and low rallies. Use down-the-line shots.
Serves	High soft lobs High soft Zs Soft half lobs Half speed drives	Hard drives Hard Zs Keep pace on the ball
Shot Selection	Keep the ball high and deep. Keep the ball off the back wall. Use ceiling balls, around-the-wall balls, and high Z balls.	Hit the ball hard, but with direction. Hard passing shots. Hard balls hit at your opponent's feet—jamming.



By executing the above plan you will begin to add a few points to your game, if not a few victories to your career.

Where do you fall on this spectrum?

Power Player — **Control Player**

Pretend you are on the extremes of this spectrum, and one day you are playing a poor match. Your shots are missing slightly. Your attempts to roll the ball out are skipping in. Your attemps at good passing shots come off the back wall and your opponent gets easy plums. You hit ceiling shots which drop short and your opponent rolls them out. So how do we combat those "blah" days? The key is to learn to adjust. We have to adapt to the situation at hand. You cannot learn one way of playing. You have to become a good all-around player. You should aim to be in the middle of that spectrum or as close to the middle as possible.

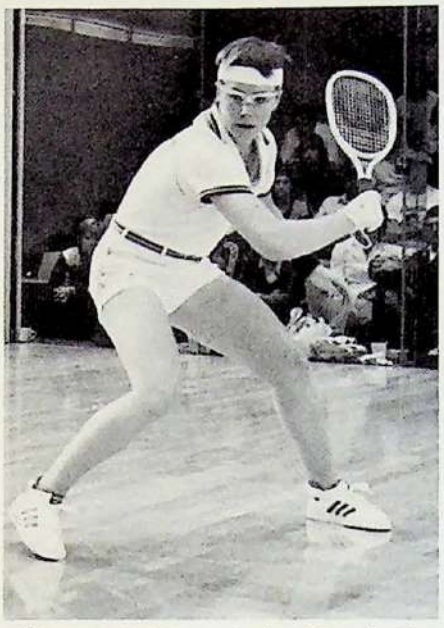
Power Player — **Ideal Position for the Combination Player.** — **Control Player**

Although power racquetball is still popular, more and more top players are changing to the combination player (control/power). To compete, whether at the professional level or the club level, the "combo" plan is the way to go.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE PROS

Editor's note: The following quotes were taken from past issues of Racquetball Illustrated.

Davey Bledsoe on the **forehand:** "The forehand is not the sum of the arm and the wrist and a big giant step into the ball. You need coordination with the hips, shoulders and feet as well."



Shannon Wright on the **backhand:** "The backhand is the most powerful stroke in racquetball... When a right-handed baseball player hits a home run, his right hand swings a forehand and his left hand swings a backhand—simultaneously. The backhand pull contributes more than the forehand push to generate stroke power."

Lynn Adams on **serving:** "Serving is the only time in a game situation where you are in total control of what happens. The receiver is at your mercy. If you take that knowledge to heart, you don't ever want to walk into the service area and just put the ball into play. You decide what you are going to serve, why you want to hit that particular serve and then concentrate on executing it correctly."

Sarah Green on **service return:** "A proper service return won't score you many points unless you catch your opponent off-guard. But it will keep you in the rally in hopes of getting that setup. A ceiling return will send your opponent to the back court which will give you the opportunity to move into center court."

Rich Wagner on **eye contact:** "From the very start of a match, my eyes rarely lose sight of the ball. Eye contact improves concentration. When the mind is able to focus on one thing, be it a goal or a ball, you become alert, able to visualize success."

Rita Hoff on **concentration:** "Concentration is as important as a good kill shot but don't expect to turn it off and on like a light switch. It must be cultivated and applied to every aspect of your game. Your match should begin in the locker room approximately 10 or 15 minutes before you walk onto the court. Think about your game, your shots, your strategy."

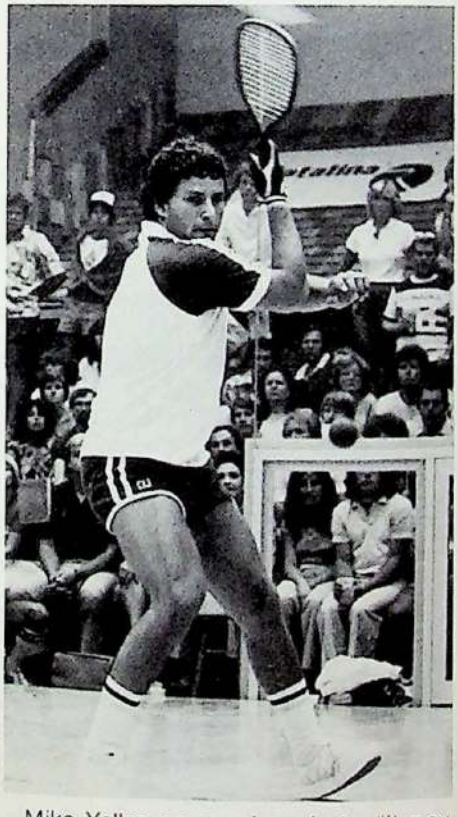
Continued

Dave Peck on **strategy:** "The most important thing to remember is to play your own game. The second most important thing to remember is to keep your opponent from playing his."

Jean Sauser on **shot selection.** "The primary considerations on selecting your shots are your position on the court, your opponent's position on the court and where you are likely to be relative to each other when you make contact with the ball."

Jennifer Harding on **positioning:** "Racquetball is really a course in geometry. In a rectangular box, figuring out where a speeding ball will bounce is really a matter of mathematics. The obvious key to controlling a rectangular court is staying in the middle—maintaining the center court positioning."

Jerry Hilecher on **playing the glass:** "On a regular court, you can guess where the ball will come off the front or the side wall. With glass you have to slow down before you react."



Mike Yellen on **passing shots:** "It may never replace the kill shot for thrills and chills but the passing shot is a much better all-around weapon. In general, you should go to a pass if your opponent is in the forward two-thirds of the court. If he is deep, use a pinch or kill."

David Fleetwood on **diving:** "Diving is an action/reaction type of thing. You don't plan it. It just happens. Usually, you are caught off-guard and the only chance you have to keep the ball in play is to hit the ball and hope for the best."

John Egerman and Scott Hawkins on **doubles.** "A great doubles team need not be made up of great singles players. A doubles team that plays together and learns each other's moves can defeat two outstanding singles players."

Marty Hogan on **overall play:** "In order to obtain shot flexibility, you must be relaxed and hit with a fluid, natural swing. You have to hit shots over and over again until the timing is down. That's why I emphasize swinging all out on shots without worrying about the score when practicing."

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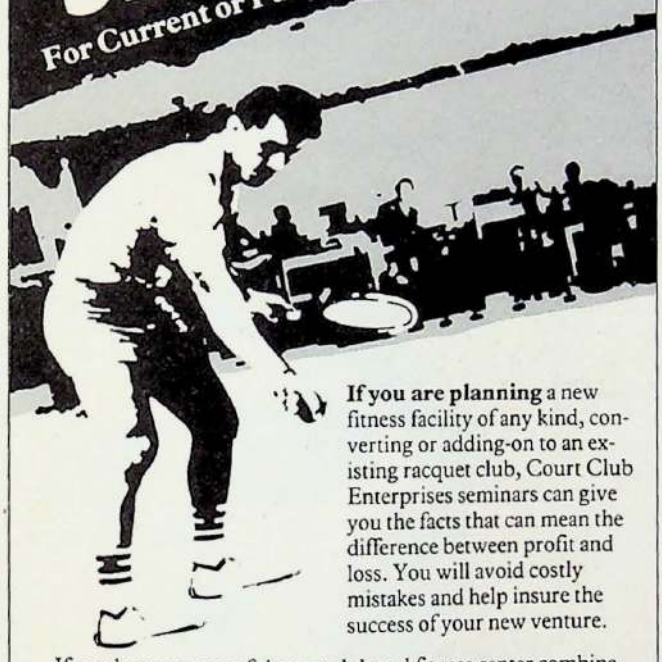

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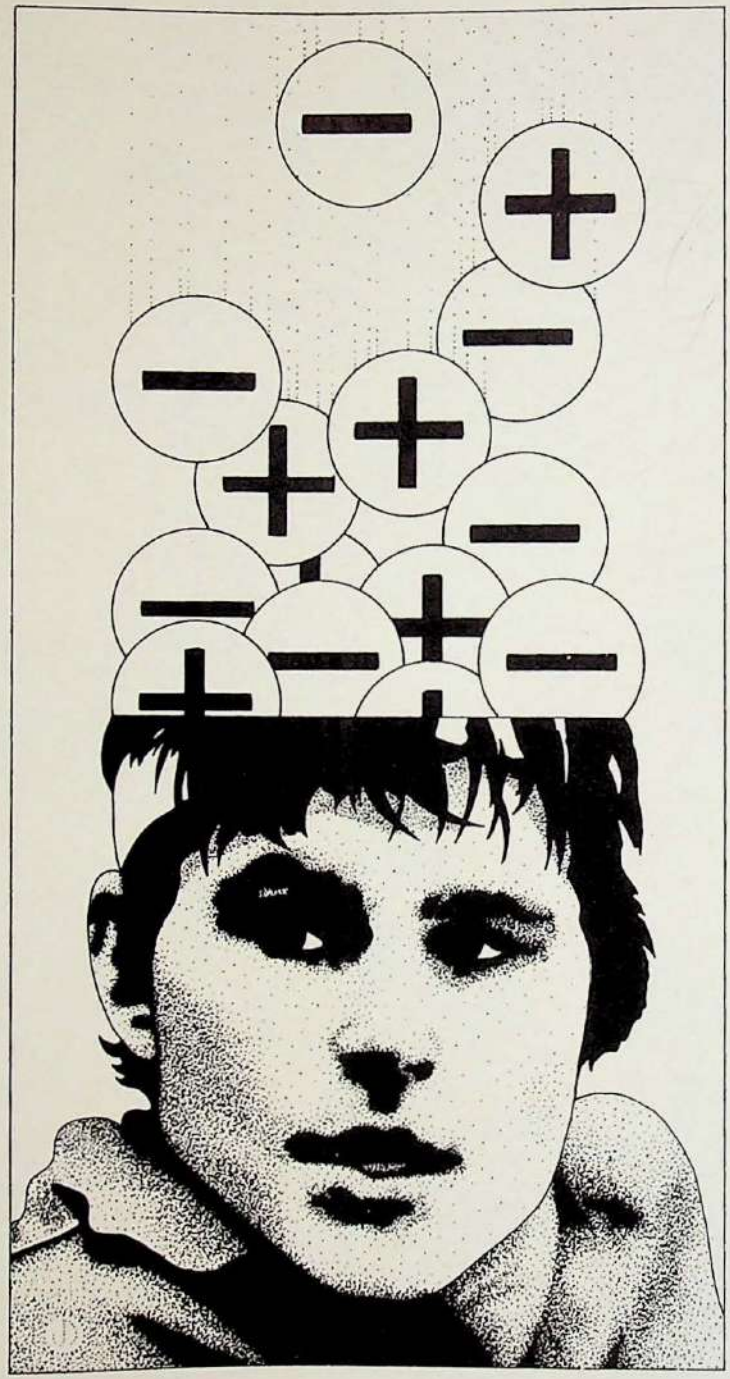
HOW TO COPE WITH SLUMPS AND PLATEAUS



By Bruce D. Hale

Editor's note: The author is a Ph.D. in sports psychology from Penn State University.

Coping with Slumps and Plateaus

All players experience peaks and valleys in their play. But consistent players learn how to limit their bad days on the court. In effect, they have learned how to cope with slumps.

Slumps

"Slump" is one of the most feared words in a racquetball vocabulary. It begins as a couple of missed back wall returns or service double faults and countinues as persistent mistakes on skills you thought you had mastered a long time ago. Gradually you begin to dread hitting a particular shot and become certain that it will be a failure even before you attempt it. Your game continually deteriorates until you've lost the match in your head before you step onto the court. You try every new technique you read about, but these "band-aid" solutions fail and more frustration follows. Finally, you stoically accept the fact that sooner or later it will end. The slump has achieved a god-like status in your mind which will powerfully determine the fate of your next performance.

This slump scenario does not ever have to happen. You must realize that although slumps may be physically induced, they are actually cognitively advanced and accepted. Your expectations of a particular playing situation determine the positive or negative label you attach to that situation. In a slump, your expectations greatly exceed your current capabilities or performance. You focus on your whole game as a total negative experience without any positive components. A simple analogy might be that a player in a slump views a glass of water as half empty rather than half full. The acceptance of this "slump" label adversely affects your future racquetball behavior.

Plateaus

The best method for eliminating slumps is to learn to rationally evaluate your physical and mental game. For instance, if you believe that a mediocre performance is just a physically-induced "learning plateau" or an "off day" rather than a devastating slump, you will be better able to cope with periods of little improvement. A plateau is a substantial period of time during which your skill level remains the same. For example, your percentage of successful front wall "kills" stays at about 50 percent for several weeks, or you are still unable to score more than 10 points a game against an opponent you've played with for three months. In order to successfully cope, you must interpret several episodes of poor play as a changeable plateau, not an uncontrollable slump.

The better the player, the higher the probability of encountering plateaus. If you have exceptionally high performance (i.e., you expect to make 90 percent of your back wall kills), you must also expect more valleys and plateaus. Furthermore, as your skill level nears perfection, advances will not be as dramatic or constant as when you first began playing. For example, the kill ratio for a skilled player may remain stable at 80 percent for several months. An understanding of this natural learning curve will save you from much unnecessary frustration and disappointment.

Causes and Cures

Often through a little introspection you can pinpoint causes of a slump. One common cause is the lack of a clear-cut goal for a particular skill or match. Sometimes you become frustrated and angry because you have only a vague idea of what you want to achieve (i.e., "I want to win.") A narrow, vague goal only allows you to attain success and

Illustration by Jeff Dungfelder

happiness through one means. If you lose, a good performance is often not appreciated. Instead, try setting a concrete, behaviorally-oriented goal for each skill or daily match in addition to the long-term goals. Goals should also be performance-oriented (i.e., proper body position on a ceiling shot) in addition to being results-oriented (i.e., game point or success of shot). Success comes in many ways.

Many players set competitive goals, but their goals are based on unrealistic expectations of their ability or present skill level. Constant failure to achieve your goal or to progress satisfactorily will cause you to become frustrated. In this instance, you should reassess the difficulty and effort required for your goal (e.g., 50 percent successful kills instead of 90 percent) and then set reachable short-term goals. Break your original goal into smaller steps that allow for immediate success and opportunities for self-reinforcement as you progress. Intermittent success provides continuous motivation to pursue further improvement.

Other players slump because they are afraid to take risks. Often you reach a level in ability where in order to further progress you must attempt more difficult shots or strategies. Identify the benefits and costs of such risks. If the costs outweigh the benefits, then you must be satisfied with little more improvement. But if the benefits are greater than the costs, determine the smallest risk necessary for positive change. Practice the new skill or strategy until it can be used successfully in a match. In order to improve, you must be willing to take chances.

Recording your progress toward achievement of your goal can also help to eliminate slumps. A journal or training log can help you to continuously obtain playing information which can be crucial to your evaluation. Then instead of focusing your attention on the fact of several matches lost in succession, you can appreciate that you've increased your average service aces from two to five in a match. As you are able to realistically observe your improvement on paper, you will realize that your play has not really been poor and your progress has been substantial. Give yourself a pat on the back for improvement.

Limiting Plateaus

Since plateaus are natural occurrences in a learning progression, they can't always be avoided. But they can be understood and limited as a negative influence on your performance. Plateaus can be reduced by gaining additional external evaluation and information. Ask a playing partner or instructor to evaluate a particular component of your game that is slowing improvement. Spend extra warm-up and practice time correcting this skill until you can successfully accomplish it for several repetitions. You must first believe in your ability to perform a skill before you can use it effectively in match play. "Correct" practice makes perfect.

According to the part-whole theory of skill learning, it is more efficient to learn new skills by dividing them into rehearsable components and practicing each one in progression. This "back-to-basics" strategy is also appropriate for ending a plateau. First pinpoint the skill or game situation which is causing difficulties. Then break the skill into components and concentrate on perfecting each part. In a match where you are frustrated and not playing up to par, try a more conservative strategy. Allow your opponent to make mistakes trying to kill difficult shots. Your success at basic skills will breed the confidence necessary for low percentage shot-making.

Plateaus can often be caused by common physical or mental fatigue. The old adage of trying harder when the "going gets tough" is not necessarily correct in all instances. Continued failure just leads to frustration. Sometimes it's useful to rest for several days to regain motivation and insight into problems. Even a change in warm-up routine or basic strategy can help to rekindle motivation. A few days away from the court can help rebuild a positive attitude.

Mental preparation techniques can also be used to limit performance plateaus. If no external information is available to isolate problems, mental imagery can be an alternative coping technique. By using external imagery (where you watch yourself perform a movement from a third-person perspective), you can identify errors in technique or strategy. Once identified, the problem can be broken down and each component mentally practiced for a series of corrections. This correction process can then be transferred to kinesthetic imagery practice where you imagine your muscles performing the actual movements for several repetitions. For instance, you could mentally practice feeling your knees bend deeply and your arm swing low on a successful kill shot.

As another back-to-basics approach, you could rehearse fundamental concentration skills. Some players experience a plateau simply because they forget to concentrate on the ball. If you focus all your attention on ball color, texture, and other features as you hold a ball in your hand, this exercise will provide powerful practice images that can be subsequently mentally rehearsed. Development of a longer concentration span on one object and a more flexible attentional style for location of visual cues by concentration exercises and mental practice can promote consistent performance of well-learned skills. No one can play well when their concentration is on the front wall instead of the ball.

Final Plateau

Slumps do not have to be a natural part of your competitive record. Once you realize that your attitude is crucial in creating and maintaining slumps, you should be able to learn coping techniques to eliminate them from your game. Although plateaus are a normal part of any learning process, they can be limited to very short periods by identifying the problem promptly and taking appropriate steps to counter negative playing trends. With continued practice of these coping techniques, only one plateau will ever haunt you. That plateau occurs when your skill and game strategy reach perfection.

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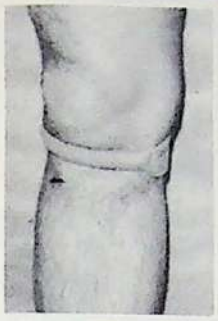

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1981 RACQUETBALL ILLUSTRATED PLAYERS OF THE YEAR

Past Winners

	Male	Female	Most Improved
1979	**Marty Hogan**	**Shannon Wright**	**Marci Greer**
1980	**Marty Hogan**	**Heather McKay**	**Lynn Adams**

Male Player of the Year

MARTY HOGAN

Once again, there is really no other choice for Male Player of the Year.

Although Marty Hogan did not dominate the pro scene during the first part of the 1980-81 season, he was unstoppable the later half of the tour.

Beginning with the January 1981 event in Honolulu, Hogan did not lose a regular pro tournament, again winning the Nationals for the fourth consecutive time.

Hogan is still pro racquetball's only recognized celebrity, and he has done more than any other player to bring it to a major league level.

Finishing behind Hogan for 1981 were Dave Peck and Mike Yellen.

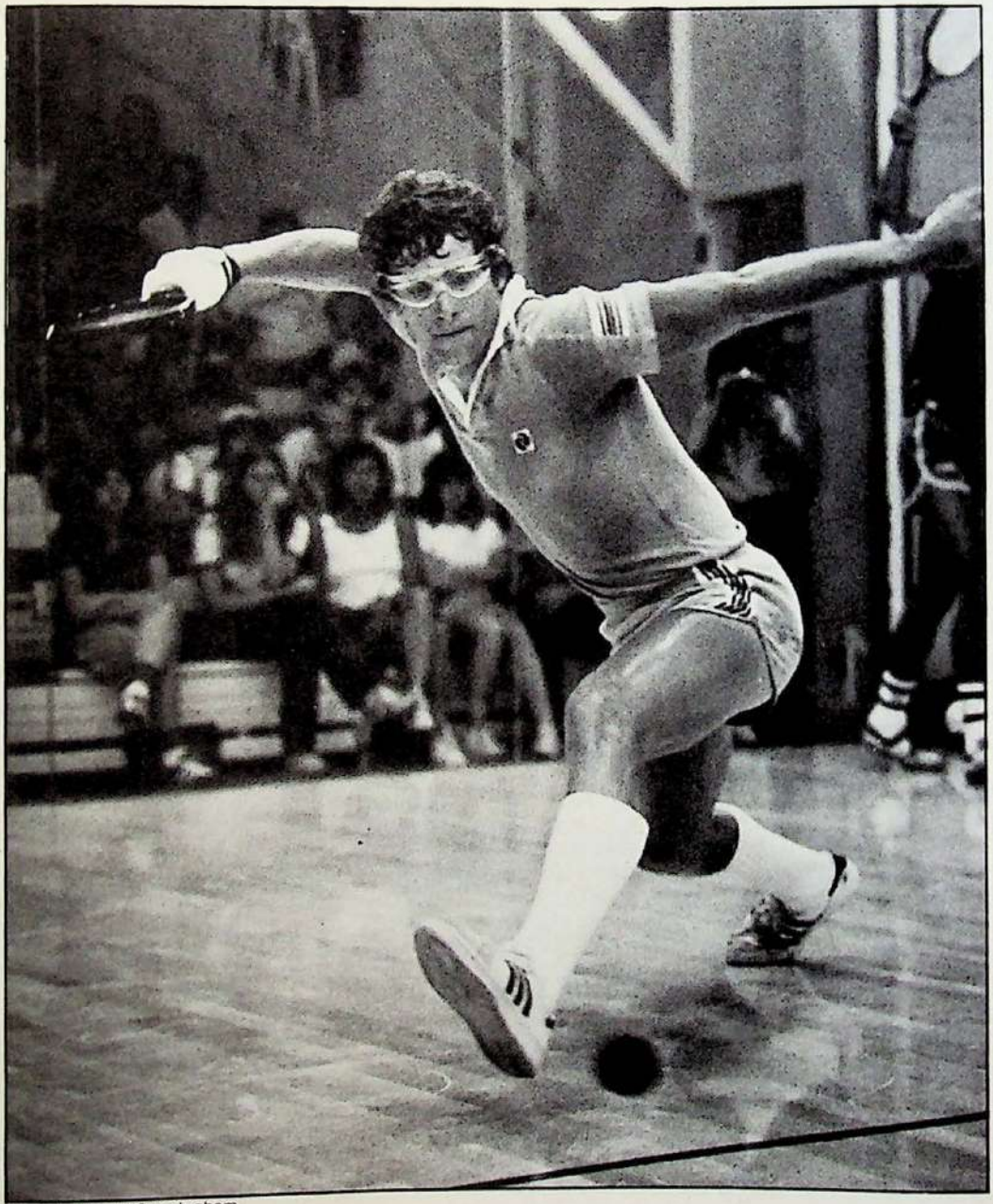


Photo by Sheila Cunningham

Female Player of the Year

HEATHER McKAY

For the second consecutive year, Heather McKay wins the Female Player of the Year honor.

In a season filled with some strong competition, McKay managed to keep her number one spot over Lynn Adams and Shannon Wright.

McKay did not dominate last year's tour but was victorious enough to earn the magazine's award. Adams was a close second, followed by Wright and Marci Greer.

McKay, who held the world squash championships for over 15 years, also won her second consecutive WPRA Nationals.

Most Improved Player of the Year

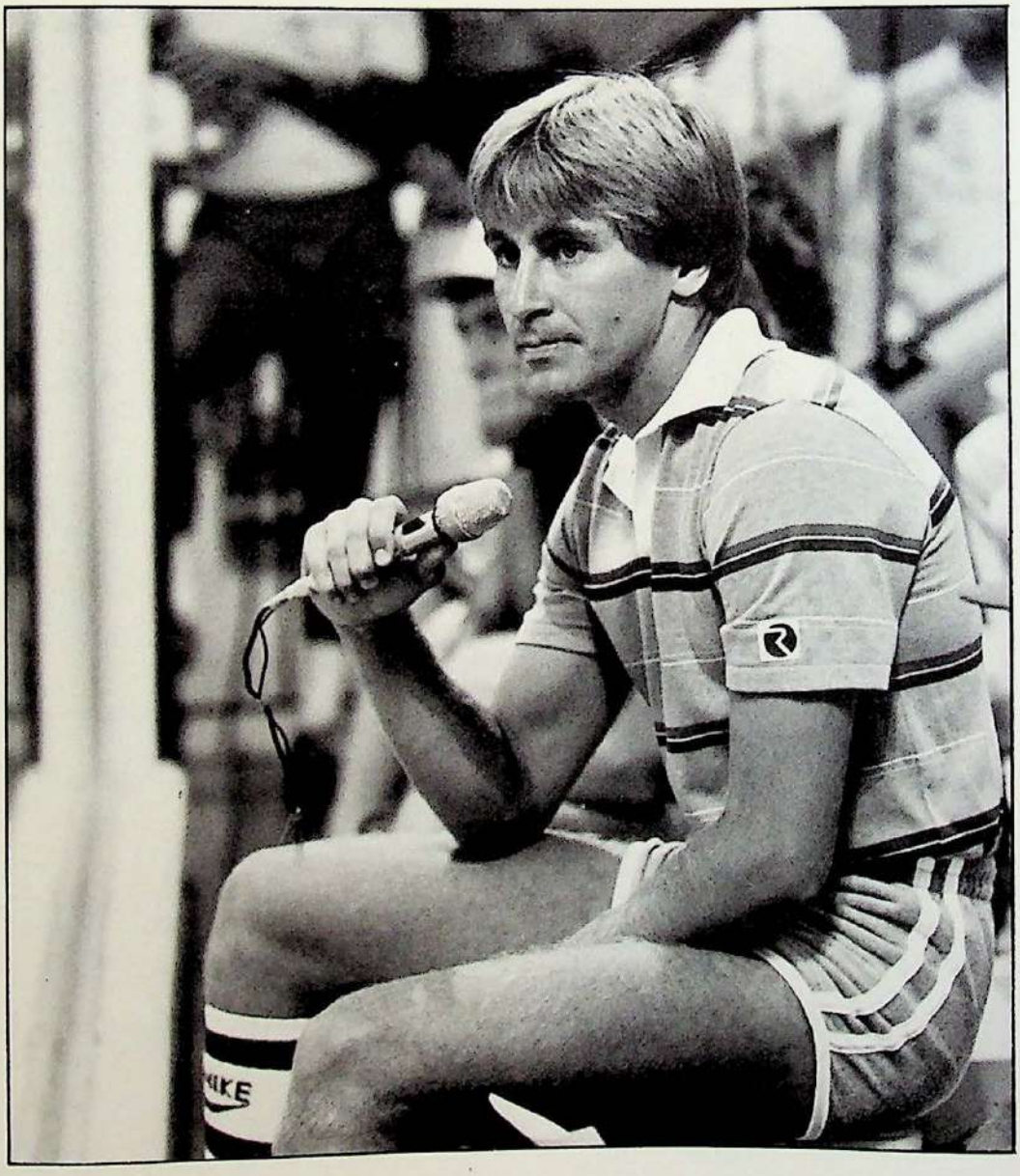
RICH WAGNER

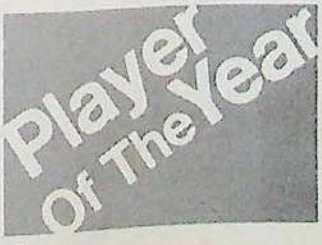
In a year in which many first and second year players made their marks in professional racquetball, it was a tour veteran who managed to win the Most Improved Player of the Year honor.

Rich Wagner, beset with personal problems in 1980, the worst of which came from alcohol, managed to get his head and his game together in 1981.

After finishing in the top five in 1979, Wagner dropped to a ranking below 20th in 1980. But after making it to the quarters or semifinals in most of last season's tournaments, he worked his way up to a ranking of number seven.

Others considered for the "Most Improved" honor were Craig McCoy, Scott Hawkins, John Egerman, Bret Harnett, Laura Martino and Peggy Gardner.





THE RISE TO PROMINENCE

By Tom Bruny

Bret Harnett has his sights set on rising to the top in racquetball and then embarking on an entertainment career.

Around Las Vegas, Nev. he is called the "Showman." He takes the court dressed in a flashy outfit with his name emblazoned on the back. He leaves the court—usually victorious—and is mobbed by pre-teens for his autograph. That is one world, a world in which he is recognized.

But there is another world. Among his peers at Las Vegas Valley High School, he receives none of that adulation. He is relatively unknown. The football players and basketball players are heroes. Most of his classmates just wonder why he's out of town so often.

For 17-year-old Harnett, the idea of getting respect for himself and the sport of racquetball is among his priorities. And if Harnett has his way, he will be riding the crest of professional racquetball when it reaches national status.

Harnett and his manager Gary Naseef have a game plan that will take Harnett to the top of the racquetball world and also into show business. Although not cocky, Harnett says he is confident he will soon become the top professional racquetball player in the world. Currently he is ranked 11th.

"Racquetball is going to boom," says Harnett. "It will be bigger than tennis in a few years."

Naseef agrees. "Take racquetball out of the courts and put it in arenas with portable glass courts and you're going to see something more exciting than any sport you've seen in your life," says Naseef.

Naseef, who has been a rock promoter for the last 20 years, is now using his expertise to promote Harnett as well. This past summer Naseef had Harnett on a 32-stop, 41-day tour of the Midwest, and then followed that up with a 25-city tour of the East. Later he hopes to send Harnett to Europe and Japan.

"We're going to expose him to people who don't get to the pro stops," says Naseef. "We're going to promote him like a rock and roll band which goes on the road and plays its gigs.

"We want to keep him busy, get him exposure. This was a personal appearance tour to promote him. In his field, he is like a Tracy Austin or an Andrea Jaeger."

A typical three hour appearance starts with exhibitions against three of the area's top players. He then sets up a microphone to answer questions. "At first the sessions were 30 minutes but now I have to cut it off at 50 minutes," says Naseef. After a night's sleep, he's on the road again to the next stop.

Harnett was born in Las Vegas and did not take up the sport until 1977 when he was 13. His rapid advance in only four years is astounding.

"My dad is a real strong player (a former Nevada State Seniors champion) so I started playing," says Bret. "I used to play baseball and football but I wanted to take up something new, even though none of my friends were playing it."

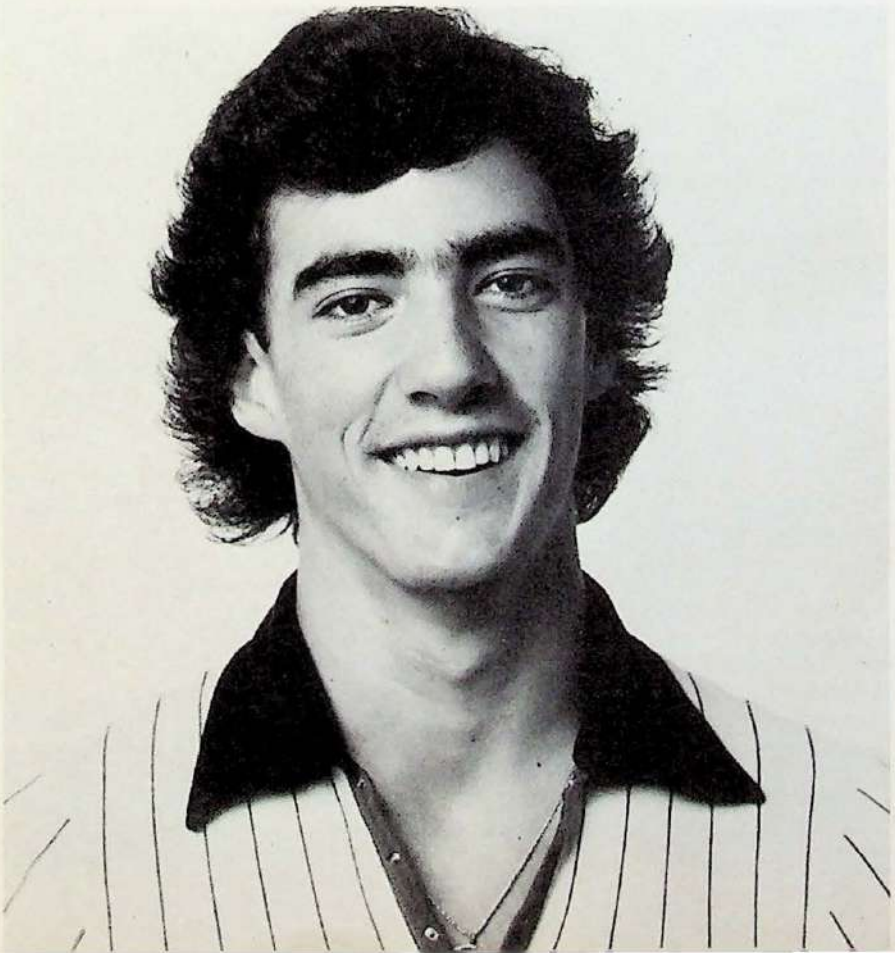
But what started out as an avocation, turned into a profession. First he won state and national junior titles and then strode into the racquetball limelight by winning the 1980 National Amateur title—coincidentally played on his home court, the Las Vegas Sporting House.

Harnett defeated a field of 286 amateurs, finally beating Ed Andrews (who won the 1981 amateur title) in the finals. But did this impress his fellow high school students? Nope.

"I told coaches and teachers that I just won the national amateur championship and they thought it was a 16-and-under title. They couldn't comprehend that I had just won one of the most prestigious events," said Harnett.

"A lot of people in school know I play racquetball but it's not a school sport so they

Harnett: "A lot of guys are playing the sport to make money. I'm playing it to make money and be number one."



don't recognize the accomplishments."

Before going on the pro tour to face the likes of Marty Hogan and the gang, Harnett scored three victories in small-money tournaments in Reno, Nev., Stockton, Calif., and Sacramento, Calif. Then he participated in a pro stop outside Boston where he beat high ranked pros Davey Bledsoe and Steve Strandemo before losing in the quarterfinals to Dave Peck, 17-21, 21-19, 11-8.

Then came the tournament that really gave him his recognition—the 1981 Nationals in Tempe, Ariz. Harnett, ranked 20th, upset former national champ Bledsoe, 21-13, 21-18, then upset third-seeded Jerry Hilecher, 11-21, 21-14, 11-3, and then upset Strandemo, 21-11, 10-21, 11-9. He trailed 9-4 in the tiebreaker before pulling it out.

Harnett's string of upsets broke in the semifinals when he lost to Craig McCoy, 21-14, 21-6. "Craig played real well but I might have been a little down," said Harnett. "I had beaten him once before but this time he just plain outplayed me."

Even though he lost, Harnett impressed his fellow pros. "Harnett is an extremely good player," says Rich Wagner. "He's almost as good as Hogan was at that age.

"Whether he will be the heir apparent to Hogan depends on his mental attitude. If he can come back from his losses when he's young, he could be the dominant figure in racquetball in a few years. He's a tough player. He's offensive minded. He shoots the ball well from both sides. The key to success is his mind."

Harnett is well aware how large a part the mental game plays in developing a winning attitude. "Matches are played below the waist but won above the ears," he says. "Half the battle is thinking you can win."

Harnett works out two hours on the court, usually with former women's national champ Shannon Wright. He also jumps rope and spends another two hours lifting weights. "I'm trying to get stronger so I can take my opponents out quicker," he says. "None of this 11-9, 11-10 stuff."

Harnett says a lot of people try to give him advice but the only ones he listens to are his father and Naseef. "I listen to my Dad and Gary a lot. Anyone else is just wasting my time and disrupting my thoughts. I stay away from other people before a match because they all try to tell you something. They think they are helping you but they're really screwing you up."

Some would say Harnett was superstitious. He says no, but admits to having disposed of some clothes that brought him "bad luck." It seems he lost four straight matches in the outfit.

Harnett's goal now is to supplant Hogan as the top player within two seasons. "I've finally worked my way up where I can say my next goal is number one from 11th," he says. "I'm surely not going to say my next goal is to be number 10.

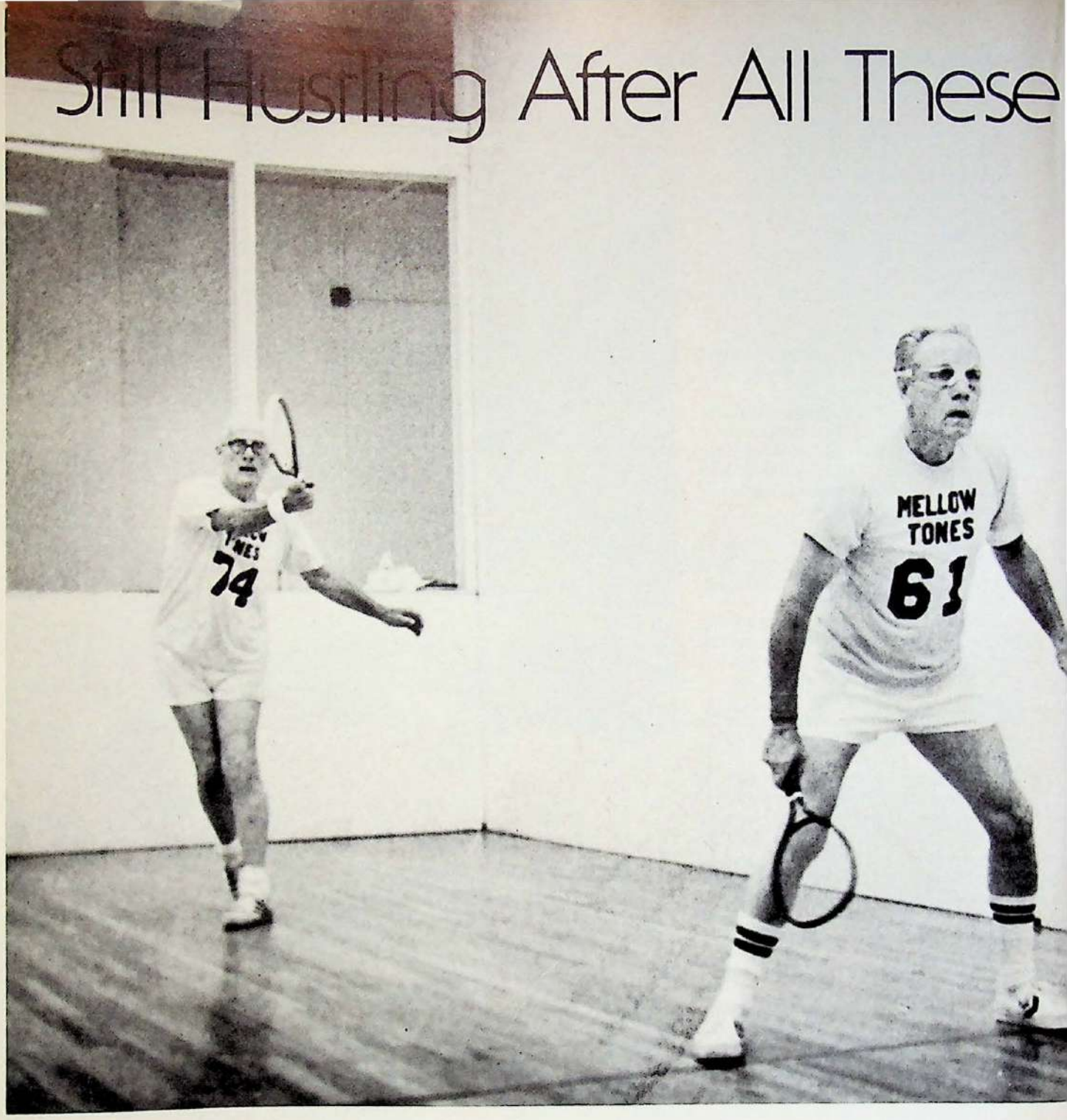
"I want number one real bad. I'd love to be ranked first. A lot of guys are playing the sport to make money. I'm playing it to make money and be number one."

Says one opponent: "Whether he will be the heir apparent to Hogan depends on his mental attitude."

But racquetball is not the only thing at which he wants to be successful. With appearances on the syndicated *Teen Scene* and the *Mike Douglas Show* and features in such magazines as *Tiger Beat* and *Super Teen*, Harnett is building a personality that he hopes will be the start of an acting career. "I'd like to get into acting or some other form of entertainment," says Harnett. "Racquetball is for getting my name and personality out where people can see it."

That's where Naseef comes in. "My job is to get him into other things stemming from racquetball but not to forget that racquetball is the vehicle, the nucleus," says Naseef. "From a business angle, the question is whether he can take hold of that number one ranking and make it produce. And we're all confident he's going to be number one."

Still Hustling After All These



By Joe Baust

Two Murray State University professors (ages 75 and 63) have been known to beat many younger challengers in pick-up doubles matches.

While most senior citizens are enjoying the fruits of a life's work, maybe rocking on a porch, Auburn Wells and Wayne Williams are hoping someone will come to their racquetball court and ask them for a pick-up game of doubles. It isn't miraculous that one is 75 years old and the other 63, but what is fantastic is their continual domination of challengers, all of whom are younger.

Rumors abound concerning these two competitors, some almost bizarre as "the one that got away" fishing stories. Since both are professors at Murray State University in Western Kentucky and both reportedly are accurate in the lectures addressed to their students, it seems astonishing that they allow such racquetball stories to circulate amongst students and faculty at the university. One history professor has told the story of these two gladiators of the racquetball court asking some unsuspecting hot shot faculty duo if they wanted to play a game. It seems Wells and Williams told the challengers of their ages and asked them to take it easy. Wells and Williams then reportedly rented wheelchairs, parked them outside the court and walked in with canes. No need to ask who won.

Wells and Williams are competitors seeking nothing but a sound victory. A colleague of Wells, a good racquetball player in his own right, made a statement that pretty well sizes up the situation, "I'll be glad when I get older so I can be as good as Auburn."

Wells and Williams started playing racquetball in 1973 after playing competitive handball for 12 years. "Handball was an excellent entree into racquetball, especially when it came to doubles teamwork," says Williams.

Opponents claim, if somewhat facetiously,

Years

Wells, a professor emeritus of political science, retired a number of years ago from lecturing and the chores of academia, but his roots certainly explain his interest and tenacity as a racquetball foe. A native Western Kentuckian, he had the distinct honor of playing guard, punter, fullback and halfback on the second football team ever to play at Murray State University. He also lettered on the first basketball and baseball teams.

Wells reminisces that his favorite sport was football, with his most memorable moments coming on the team that won the Mississippi Valley Conference in 1928. "I have a record of never having had a punt blocked in all of my college career," he says. "But maybe part of the reason was my team used the 'quick-kick' on third downs as an offensive weapon."

Wells had been a high school football coach and principal before his 25-year career as a college professor. As the football coach in a small Kentucky town (Athens), he began a program with a group of players who never saw the game before. "The starters played in the first game they ever saw," said Wells. "If they were told to dribble the ball they would have."

Williams, the other part of the duo so fondly named by another faculty member as the "Mellow-Tones," is a person who reflects his competitive spirit in what he does off the court. At 63, the junior member of the team, Williams has completed 33 years of teaching. He is an ardent church worker, a substitute preacher who gets called on Saturday evening for the Sunday service, and one who has also worked with prisoners in the Kentucky State Penitentiary. Currently, Williams works with student teachers to help them "polish their skills." This attitude of teaching extends to the racquetball court where Williams takes pride in helping others learn how to improve their game. Or so he says.

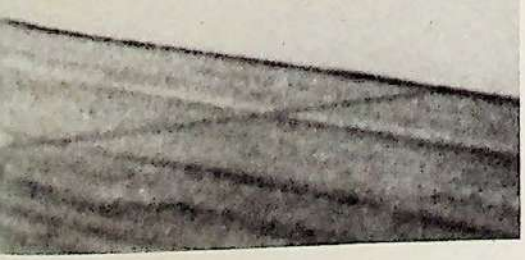
A colleague tells the story of Wells teaching him to play racquetball. This person, a member of the political science department, was considerably younger and figured Wells would be a cinch to beat. Wells won 21-0. "He didn't let up," says the younger professor.

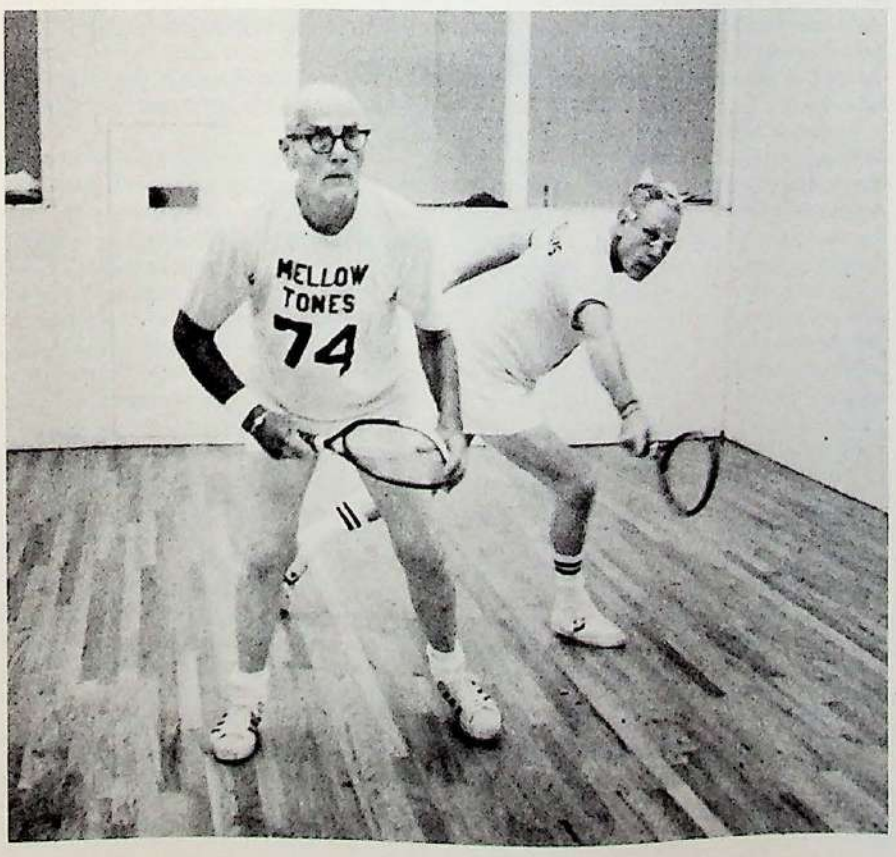
Williams also learned very early that Wells plays to win. "It took me three years to win a handball game against him. After I did, I celebrated by having my glove bronzed," recalls Williams.

Of all the interesting stories Wells and Williams have to tell, they most enjoy the one about the contractor. Six courts were built for racquetball and handball at the school, but the contractor did not know much about the sports. Consequently, there were large gaps between the walls and the floor creating quite an interesting hazard. A carpenter then tried to make the rooms prettier and put a quarter-round molding around the floor to fill in the gap between the floor and walls. They learned to play "local rules" with the molding as a hazard. On a service, for example, if the ball hit the molding, it was replayed.

Other interesting hazards Wells and Williams had to contend with included a back wall of heavy gauge chicken wire, a light switch, a light switch guard and an airvent. "I was never able to master back wall chicken wire shots but then again neither could my opponents," recalls Williams.

A light switch inside the court was constantly being broken by wooden racquets and people crashing into it, so a wire guard was placed around it. Wells says he and





Auburn Wells (wearing number 74) and his doubles partner Wayne Williams were dubbed the "Mellow-Tones" by a fellow faculty member. The pair are "mellow" everywhere but on the court.

the reason Wells started playing racquetball was because "his eyes were getting bad." Williams naturally followed his partner into racquetball because as one colleague said, "they had exhausted all their opponents in handball and couldn't find anyone willing to enter the court with them." Whatever the reason they are a popular team on campus. Chad Stewart, head of Murray State's physical education department, says, "Both are good competitors; that's what I like about playing them."

Still Hustling After All These Years

Wells retired from teaching a few years ago but Williams (above) still attends to his classroom duties every day.

Williams and many opponents still have scars on their backs from the wire guard as a result of running into it during a game.

Serves to the right back corner were a problem because often the ball was lost to an airvent that was open. "The secret was to put some spin on the ball and let it glance off the surface of the airvent. When this happened, no one could return the ball," says Wells.

Wells and Williams usually play anywhere from an hour-and-a-half to two hours two or three times a week when school is not in session. During the fall and spring when students on campus are vying for court time, they have to reduce their sessions to an hour.

Williams attacks and places the ball as strategically as he places money containers around town for his favorite charity, one for retarded children. Wells coils like an attacking rattler when his forehand is in reach of a shot. Wells and Williams know where each other will be during a doubles match. Finesse is the way to describe their game, but they can use the "hard-shot" when they have to.

Wells, sometimes referred to as the "Coach" by Williams, earned this name because of his competitive spirit. If Williams makes a mistake, Wells will remind him by thumping his foot. But what upsets Wells most is not his partner's mistakes. It's his own mistakes after a good play by his partner.

Beyond the joys of competition, why do both of these persons play racquetball regularly? "Camaraderie, exercise, physical activity," says Wells. The benefits are obvious to an observer. At 6-foot-3, Wells still retains his football playing weight of 190-200 pounds. Williams, too, is amazingly firm and extremely fit. Everyone at Murray State is amazed at how well racquetball has kept these two in shape. If there is ever any question about this, one needs only run into one of them during a game to feel a solid mass of muscle. One guesses this is the reason Wells never received an injury at racquetball. It was golf that sidelined him.

Wells decided to take up the sport of golf at age 64. One day he stepped in a hole not visible in the fairway and crushed the lining between two bones in his ankle. Not realizing the extent of his injury he continued playing racquetball and golf until, after a full year, he decided to see a doctor. At this point the only recourse for Wells' foot was a fused joint which has prevented its full movement. Jumping for a ball during racquetball is not easy, but his teammate Williams compensates for this minor problem. Wells and Williams also have a reputation as court hustlers. One time they challenged and beat two players on the varsity tennis team. "We get challenges every week or so," says Williams.

Despite the fact Wells and Williams like to play and win on the racquetball court, they never hesitate to help anyone with court instruction. Their professional habits are too ingrained to forget this role, even on the court. Many times when playing students with deficient racquetball skills, they will be gentle and allow the other team to find success. This doesn't mean they allow opponents to win, but the natural teacher in them encourages the positive in others. It is only when an opponent becomes lackadaisical, careless, or cocky that Wells and Williams assert themselves and win resoundingly. Yet as a colleague puts it, "They never hold a grudge. Once the game is over, they are friendly."

One may wonder if there are any moments of guilt after these matches. Indeed, there are some. Wells tells about the time he played a student when the court was 95 degrees and felt like a sauna. "I decided to let the ball get pretty wet," says Wells. "By bending before a service, I touched the ball to the inside of my leg. I ran 10 straight points. The student never knew why the ball seemed to explode off the floor. But I had to get out of that hot room as quickly as possible."

Williams recalls playing a person 34 times, never losing. "I remember the times Auburn beat me that often."

After a game, Wells can be found in one of three places—his vegetable gardens, at a Murray State University sporting event, or reading. "My greatest pleasure, besides racquetball, is raising strawberries, corn, tomatoes, and any other edible one can imagine." Most of these are organically grown, and because he usually grows an overabundance of food, Wells enjoys sharing this wealth with his racquetball companions and their families. Williams, on the other hand, is so busy and constantly in motion that he is hard to pin down. "But I'm always ready to challenge someone in a game of racquetball."

As many unsuspecting students and faculty members have found out.

SHOULD A SENIOR CITIZEN TAKE UP RACQUETBALL?

By Lynda Huey

Each day we age. Some more quickly than others; some more gracefully than others. But the aging process is real and not to be ignored. Doctors are concerned about senior citizens who want to play racquetball, but they all tend to agree that a person's age isn't nearly as important as the fitness level maintained throughout that person's life.

"In general, the more physically active you are, the better off you are," says Dr. Bill Shapiro, an emergency room physician for Centinela Hospital in Inglewood, Calif. "I don't think there's any age at which you should stop sports activity. Baseball's Pete Rose makes a shambles of the idea that you have to retire at 35. He still out-hustles the 20-year-olds. High jumper John Dobroth is over 40 now and jumping. I suspect he will still be jumping at 65."

But Shapiro, one of the world's finest quarter-milers in the early 60s, tempers his comments, realizing that not all people have stayed in shape.

"You have to be reasonable," he says. "A person who has been an athlete his entire life is very different from someone who has led a sedentary existence. The problem with most 65-year-olds is that they haven't stayed in shape and racquetball would simply be too hard for them. That's why most older folks play golf and shuffleboard instead."

Southern California podiatrist John Pagliano expresses concern that older people are more likely to sustain injuries to the foot or lower leg. "At those ages, the vascular (blood) supply to the foot and ankle are lessened. Without proper circulation, an injury heals much more slowly. Foot problems are more liable to occur because there isn't as much fat on the feet and legs to serve as cushioning as we age. The bottom of the heel is especially vulnerable because of its lack of cushioning. I recommend that older racquetball players add an inner sole to their shoes and make sure that their shoes have at least one-fourth of an inch mid-sole cushion under the ball of the foot and a one-fourth to one-half inch rear sole cushion.

"Nearly 40 percent of the blood supply to the Achilles tendon has become restricted in most adults over 65 so that area must be carefully warmed up prior to activity in order to avoid potential damage. The most common racquetball injuries we see are heel spurs or plantar fascitis, Achilles tendonitis and a forefoot strain. These problems usually come from slapping the foot down, from bad timing or bad coordination.

"We suggest that racquetball players definitely go to a court shoe; their running shoes probably won't be adequate. Vaseline should be put on hot spots that could turn into blisters and a cotton sock should be put on top of the vaseline."

The importance of a thorough warm up prior to a racquetball game and a complete warm down following the game are considered vital by most doctors. If muscles and connective tissue are perhaps stiffer, less supple in those over 65, then more caution must be exhibited and a longer warm up carried out. The warm down can include a massage to any aching areas.

"Racquetball can be a stressful sport if one doesn't prepare properly," says chiropractor Dr. Leroy Perry of Pasadena, Calif. "It's important to stretch the calves, the hamstrings, the groin muscles and the Achilles area before starting play. The entire body should be kept flexible. Because racquetball is a unilateral or one-sided sport, it requires precautionary pre-exercise planning to strengthen the opposite side of the body. But those rules apply whether you are 15, 35 or 65. Learning proper technique for the sport is important, too, since improper mechanics can create joint and muscle problems."

Dr. Ron Lawrence calls himself "the original holistic doctor before anyone thought of that term." He is a neurologist, yet sits on the state chiropractic board and is an assistant clinical professor in psychiatry at UCLA. His first concern for aging racquetball players is the eye.

"Structures harden as you get older, and the eye is no exception," he says. "Older adults can't withstand a blow to the eye like young players. I strongly emphasize the importance of wearing proper goggles. An impact to the eye could cause retinal detachment, lens detachment or bleeding within the eyeball.

"Musculo-skeletal injuries are more common in the over-65 players. It's only logical. By that age nearly everyone has some form of

racquetball

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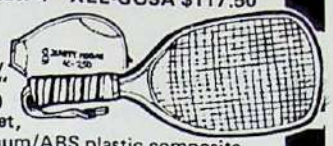

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'silent arthritis.' The bone has demineralized and calcium deposits have begun forming around the joint capsules. These deposits are silent until some vigorous activity jolts them loose. The areas most affected by this are the knees, the lower back, the shoulders and the neck. Racquetball obviously is a vigorous activity and could trigger this. Degenerative disc disease can also remain silent. The disc shrinks, the vertebrae move closer together with no symptoms until a sudden swing and then boom."

But perhaps the major concern of senior citizens is the heart. According to Lawrence, more deaths due to heart attack and heart disease occur in tennis than any other sport. And because racquetball is akin to tennis, that fact becomes significant.

Dr. Albert Kattus is the Director of Cardiac Rehabilitation at Centinela Hospital. He considers himself semi-retired now after 27 years as chief cardiologist at the UCLA Medical School. He has seen the gamut of heart conditions, from the healthiest to those re-strengthening after massive heart attacks.

"Over 65 is a high-risk age group," says Kattus. "The primary cause of death for people in that age group is heart attack and heart disease due to clogged up arteries that can't handle the work load when stress is placed on it. And if someone over 65 is also a smoker, has high cholesterol or high blood pressure, that increases the risk for stroke or heart attack.

"Racquetball is a sport that requires bursts of high intensity efforts. That creates a saw-tooth pattern of stress—peaks and valleys contrasted with an aerobic endurance effort such as walking or low-level jogging. These bursts of intensity can develop severe stress on the heart, the heart rate may get extra high and we have the high risk situation.

"At 60 or 65 everyone should have a maximum stress test to determine the working capability of their heart. Anyone younger than that who has symptoms, of course, should do the same. But even if a person has been active his whole life, he should have a reassessment at 60 simply because problems can sneak up on you with no symptoms whatsoever."

Therefore one should consider spending $150 on a maximum stress test, which usually takes place on a treadmill. Your local hospital or medical association can help locate such a test. This test monitors the normal functions of the heart during stressful exercise. As the treadmill is inclined to an increasingly higher grade for walking or running, the heart rate increases. Blood pressure is taken every minute and a doctor or highly trained technician is on hand to detect any possible danger signals that would necessitate stopping the exercise. The participant continues working either until exhaustion or limitation by symptom.

"It's extremely valuable to know what your limit is," says Kattus. "That gives you an index of what you can do safely. Once we know a person's maximum safe heart rate, then we make sure the heart rate doesn't go above that threshold level. We teach patients to check their own heart rates by counting their pulse on the neck for 15 seconds, then multiplying by four. Racquetball players should check their heart rates after any quick burst or long rally to make sure they are within their safety range. They can also help themselves by regulating intensity of play, duration of play and their choice of opponents. If a rally goes on for a long time, they have to be able to say, 'Forget this point.' They can't get too caught up in the competitive aspects."

The most cautious opinion toward racquetball play for senior citizens came from Dr. Ronald Mackenzie of the National Athletic Health Institute (Inglewood, Calif.), a foundation specifically designed to treat athletes. These opinions were formed even though he works with many people between 65 and 70 who are in superb condition.

"It is extremely valuable to know what your limit is."

"I didn't start playing racquetball at 56, myself, because I hadn't started the game at an earlier age," he says. "You ought to be pretty fit before starting to learn the game. Racquetball requires good vision, and most people over 60 wear glasses. That becomes a bit of a problem when trying to wear goggles. By 65 nearly everyone has some form of osteo-arthritis from wear and tear. The sudden starts and stops of the game are hard on the joints. I hate to be negative, but I know the problems that arise with people who try things they are not prepared to try. I can see problems with lower backs, knees and hips.

"Racquetball takes place in close quarters that create an intimate atmosphere. It could certainly fire up the adrenalin. Anyone who has a competitive nature should exhibit extreme caution so as not to over-do too soon. Actually, I think it might be interesting to try to slow the game down a bit. Maybe redesign the ball."

On the other hand, Dr. Shapiro thinks the speed of the game is just fine. "Since racquetball promotes quickness," he says, "it is more advantageous for people than golf, which gives you no cardiovascular benefit. Plus the game requires that you use your brain, make quick judgments and think. It's always been a cliche that if you don't use it, you'll lose it, and that's true physically and mentally. I think racquetball helps with both. As far as I'm concerned, age in itself is no contraindication to sports."

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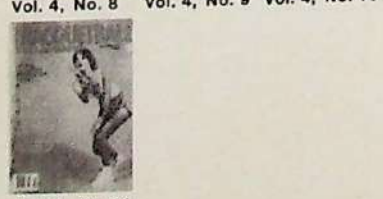

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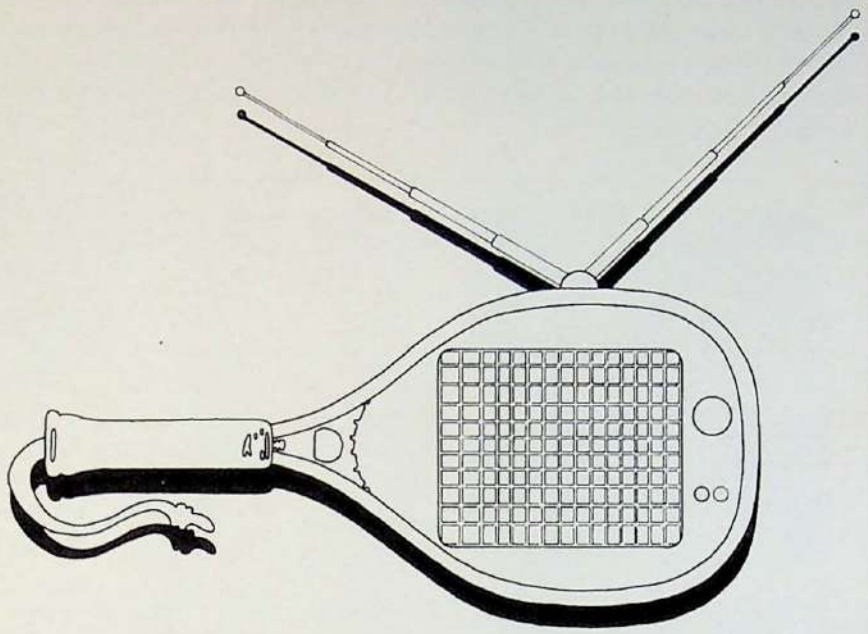
Short Shots

Not The Answer

Former Team Tennis Commissioner Larry King, husband of tennis star Billie Jean King, says the racquetball industry should not bank on television to make it successful.

"Tennis didn't make it because of television. It became a big sport because it became a spectator sport," says King. "You have to set it up so racquetball can be played in arenas where five or 10 thousand people can watch them at one time."



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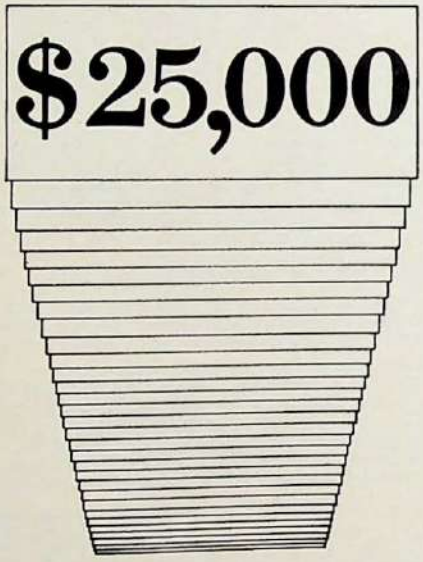


The Challenge

In our November 1981 issue, pro Charlie Brumfield said, "With a slower ball, there is no question I am the best player. Give me even a medium-speed ball and I'll play the top guys for $25,000 of their own money."

National champion Marty Hogan takes exception to Brumfield's boasting. "I will play Charlie Brumfield any time, any place and with any ball he chooses. All he has to do is find a backer and I'll match him with my own money."

And the outcome? Says Hogan, "It won't even be close."

Shorter Shots

John McCarthy of Massachusetts has been named executive director of the International Racquet Sports Association. . .

With the help of AMF Voit, Miller Lite and a 32-foot motor home from Coachmen Industries, Joe Garcia, the self-proclaimed "Mr. Wallyball," is in the middle of a 23-stop United States Wallyball Court Club tour. The tour will take him from California to as far east as Pennsylvania and Virginia, as far south as Florida and as far north as Montana and Minnesota. . .

The Marriot Hotel at the Atlanta Airport has added two indoor racquetball courts. . .

The Fourth International Symposium on the Effective Teaching of Racquet Sports will be held June 9-12, 1982 at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. One topic will include biomechanic findings in racquetball by University of Illinois assistant professor Dr. Jack Groppel. For information contact Mary Bussert, University of Illinois, 116 Illini Hall, 725 S. Wright St., Champaign, IL 61820. . .

AMF Voit and the advertising agency of Benton and Bowles received the CLIO award for its advertisement "Many Happy Returns" which ran in *Racquetball Illustrated* last year.

Racquetball In Saudi Arabia

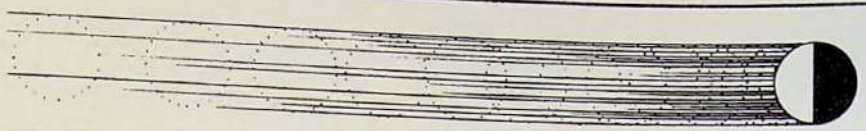
There is only one outdoor court, and even though there is no ceiling and only half a back wall, the employees at Lockheed in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia have gotten together to form a popular racquetball program.

"We have approximately 30 players who work for Lockheed," says sheet metalist Phillip Jackman, one of several Americans in Saudi Arabia training the local people to "maintain an efficiently running air force."

According to Jackman, the court is located in the family housing area which also contains tennis courts, basketball courts, baseball and football fields, swimming pools and weight rooms. There is talk about building two more outdoor courts because there are not enough funds to build an indoor court. "It gets so hot here that you have more people wanting the court at 5 a.m. than you do in the afternoon," says Jackman.

Jackman also points out that racquetballs are more expensive to buy in Saudi Arabia—a can costs $5.

The club's top players, Ed Barksdale and Sam Roydson, will join Jackman and some other players at the kingdom-wide tournament set later this year in Yambu.



Two-Tone Racquetballs

A report circulated recently that Penn was about to mass produce a new two-tone tennis ball (yellow and orange). It doesn't look as if the same will be done for racquetball, however.

"The initial tests were not good," said Bob Beebe, product manager for Penn. "We tried it because it worked so well with tennis balls but it doesn't seem to be an improvement with racquetballs."

According to Beebe, the balls tested were colored blue on one half and either red, yellow or orange on the other half.

Although one tester said he liked the two-tone ball because it increased his attention span, Beebe says most other tests showed visibility problems.

"Because the ball is moving so fast and because it spins, it caused the two colors to blend, thereby forming a third color.

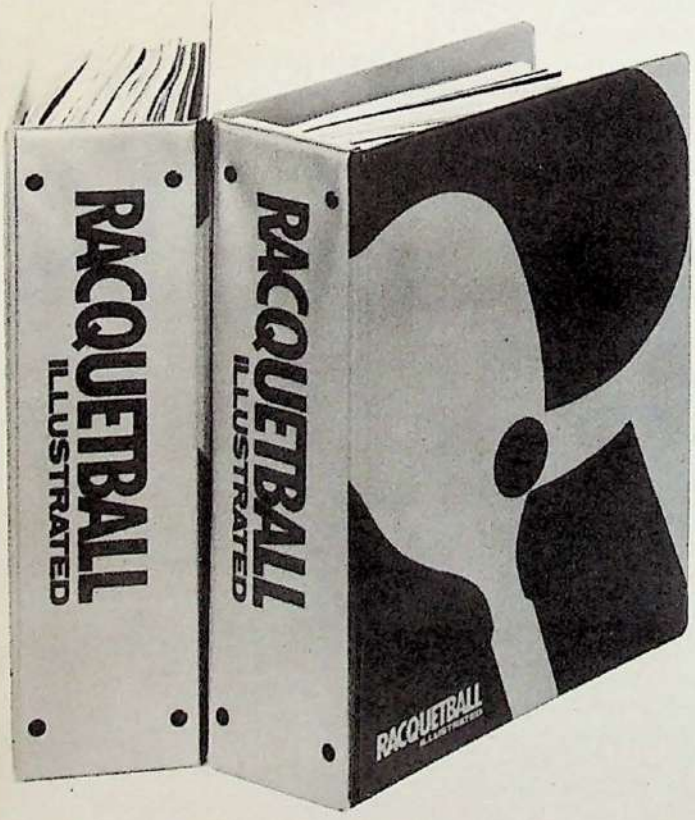
"In tennis the ball is always out in front of you. In racquetball the ball is near a wooden floor, or it is behind you coming off a wall and it's moving much faster."

So is the experiment finished? "I'm not saying we are going to give up on it," says Beebe. "We are just playing around with it now. But we won't produce it unless we see a value to it."

New Board

Dan Bertolucci has been named commissioner of Men's Professional Racquetball in North America, the official organization of the men's pro tour. Bertolucci, the former director of the now inactive National Racquetball Club and United States Racquetball Association, will become responsible for officiating and administrating pro tour events.

Named to the new board are Ed Murphy, president of Catalina Men's Wear; Norm Peck, player representative of Ektelon; David Armstrong, executive vice president of Organization, Innovation and Design, Inc., Robert Larsen, marketing director of AMF Voit; Mike Skinner, product manager of AMF Head, and Charles Drake, vice president and general manager of DP Leach.



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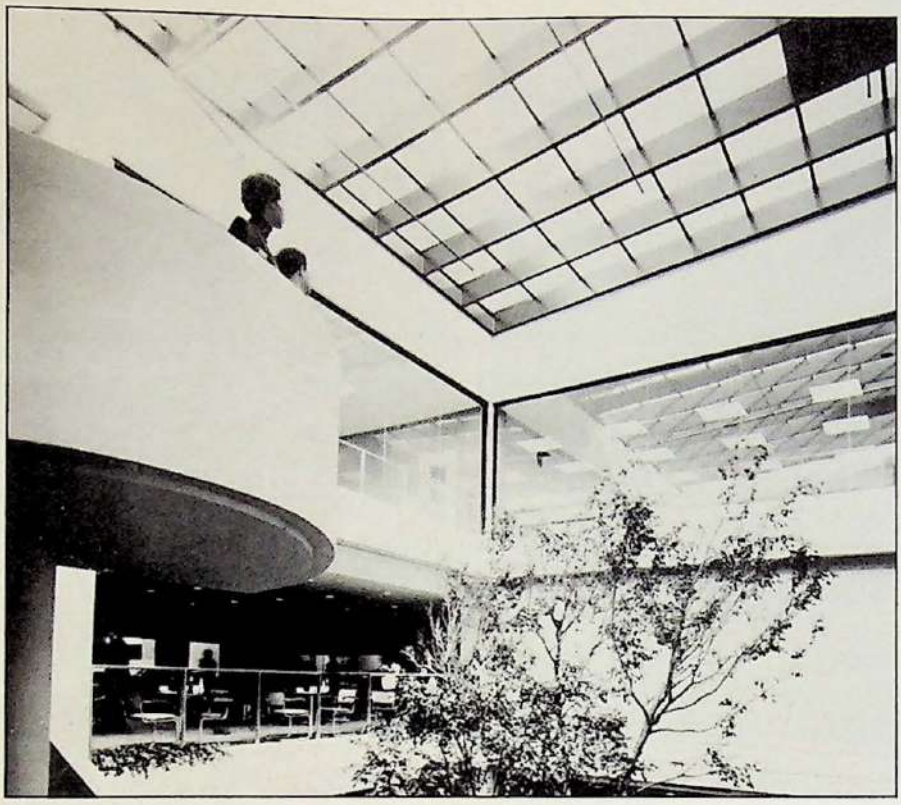

EAST BANK CLUB
Chicago, Illinois

Can you picture yourself traveling along a Chicago riverfront via speedboat for racquetball practice? It's not so unusual at the East Bank Club in Chicago.

The East Bank Club is one of the most unusual recreational private clubs in the country. The $18.2 million complex consumes three full city blocks along the east bank of the Chicago river and its eight racquetball courts are constantly in use.

"The racquetball courts are holding their own, as though they were a separate club," says Ray Baladad, club manager.

Since the East Bank's opening in December 1980, more than 6,000 members have taken advantage of tennis and racquetball courts, an indoor golf center, Nautilus and physical fitness rooms, basketball and volleyball courts, indoor and outdoor swimming pools and a quarter mile indoor jogging track overlooking a panoramic view of Chicago.

For those seeking help with their racquetball game, two part-time racquetball professionals (Paul Susz and Jeff Siegel) are on hand for individual and group lessons. The lessons cost $10 for individuals and group instruction is offered during a six-week period, one hour a week for $45.

Club racquetball championships are also held for singles and doubles competition. In addition, the American Professional Racquetball Organization holds its testing and clinics there.

A one-time initiation fee of $600 is required for membership. Members then pay an annual fee of about $480 a year. Racquetball players must also pay for their time spent on the court which varies from $10 to $12, depending on the time of the day for which the courts are reserved.

BACK BAY CLUB
Boston, Massachusetts

At first glance one feels transported to ninteenth-century England. However, the five-story mid-Victorian Back Bay Racquet Club is located in the heart of Boston and is not adjacent to a bay.

The Back Bay is one of Boston's most well-known racquetball clubs. The Victorian exterior has been completely preserved while the interior has been modernized to house 12 racquetball courts. And although it is now a good distance from Boston Harbor, the structure stands on an area of the city that was once covered with water—hence the name.

Converted to a racquetball club only two years ago, the Back Bay Club already claims to have more than 1,400 members on its roster. Members have their choice of three different types of weight training equipment—Universal, Paramount and Nautilus—as well as a sauna, whirlpool and pro shop.

"The winter is our busy time," says Jeff Landis, membership coordinator. "People can't go jogging in the winter so they come to the club and do their exercise."

Tournaments are also held at the club. Last summer, the Jubilee 351 Pepsi Challenge attracted more than 180 players who competed for trophies in nine divisions.

"A lot of people will also come into the city before work and during lunch to have a workout," Landis says. "We also have a restaurant and bar so members can relax before they go home in the evening."

Prospective members have a choice of two different membership packages. Both include a one-time initiation fee of $200. Monthly fees can range from $25 a month with a court fee of $8 an hour to $42 a month with no additional court fees.

Three part-time instructors are also available for racquetball, aerobic dance and karate classes.

MARINA CITY CLUB
Marina del Rey, California

It's where the elite meet to play racquetball. And what more ideal setting than the Southern California coast?

The Marina City Club in Marina del Rey, Calif. is a community within a community. Many of the 3,000 members live in the tri-tower apartment complex and a small percentage of them take advantage of three racquetball courts.

The $80 million complex opened its doors 10 years ago and has since been remodeled. In addition to the racquetball courts, the club offers six tennis courts, two paddleball courts, three swimming pools, separate men's and women's weight rooms, spa, jacuzzi, sauna, steam room, a lounge and a restaurant overlooking the marina.

"Without the courts, this club wouldn't be anything," Jim Bennett, spa manager says.

The club holds racquetball tournaments four times a year. The men's top players include Rick Kyger, Tom Reed and Don Rothgery. The three top women players are Bobi Kreiner, Elizabeth Hanson and Rieneke Gomez.

Club pro is Al Green.

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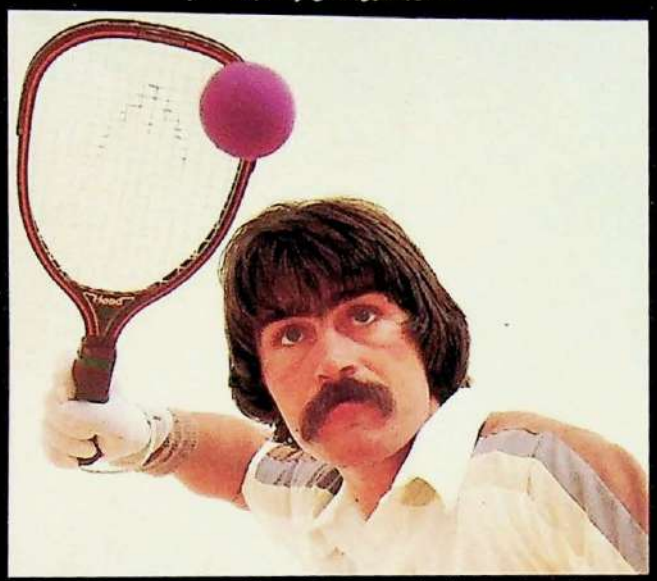
Steve Strandemo



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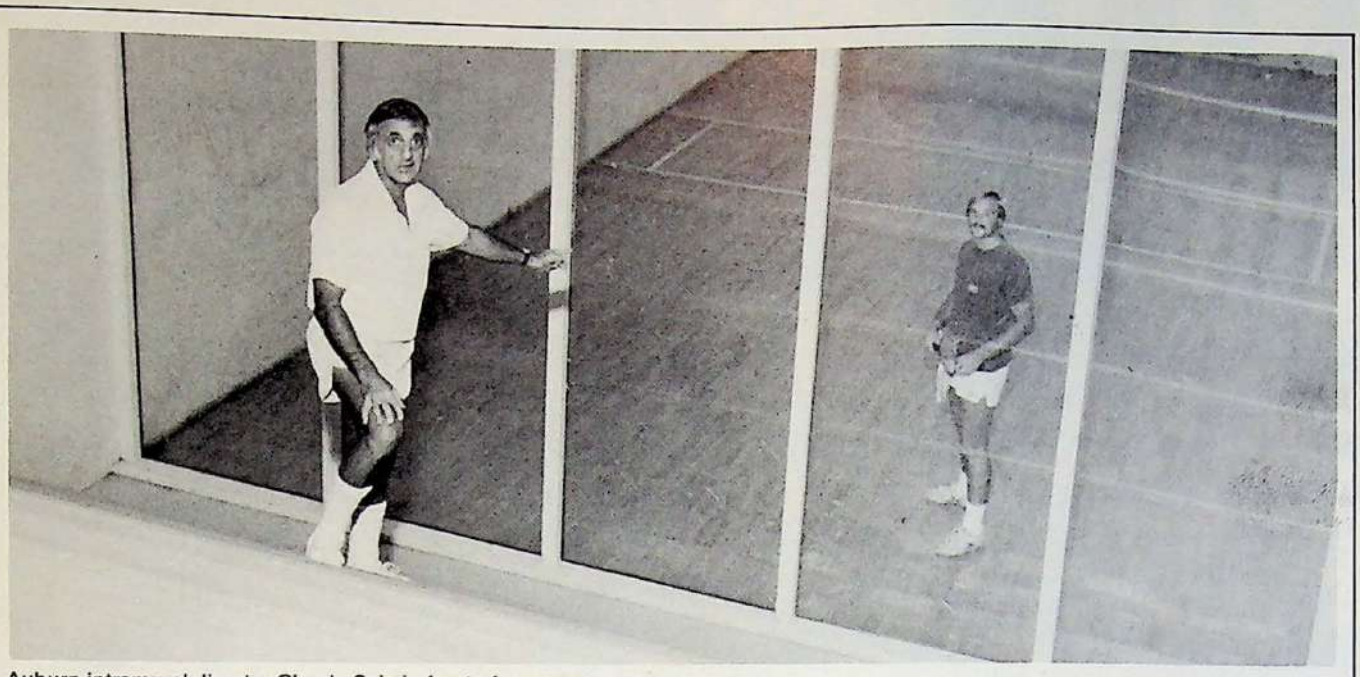

Auburn intramural director Claude Saia in front of a campus court.

Auburn University

Lucky for Auburn University that Diversified Products is located in Opelika, Ala., a few miles from Auburn, Ala. Diversified Products is the parent company of DP Leach, the sponsor of four-time national racquetball champion, Marty Hogan, who often stops by the university when in town to put on exhibitions.

But Hogan didn't need to stimulate interest at Auburn. The interest is already there. Out of 18,000 students, the university calculated that it averages about 16,000 student visits on its 10 racquetball courts each season. This, of course, includes repeat visits.

"We really need about 10 more courts," Claude Saia, intramural director says. "Racquetball is becoming more popular, particularly during the winter because it's too cold to participate in outdoor sports."

The Auburn Racquetball Club is ranked third in Alabama, according to Saia. Auburn's top players include Ted Trupp, who placed second in the state tournament, Jennifer Jarvis, who is the number-three ranked woman in the state, and club president John Morris, Alabama state champion.

More than 70 sororities, fraternities, independents and dorm teams vie in an all-campus racquetball tournament each year.

New Hampshire University

The setting at New Hampshire University in Durham has to be one of the most picturesque in the country. There is a beautiful lake and a 95-acre recreational facility.

"Our courts are busy whenever they're available," boasts Lynn Heyliger, assistant director of recreation.

Although the campus is not equipped with racquetball courts, Heyliger says players find the nine squash courts built in 1965 to suffice.

"The courts were built in a time when the popular sports on campus were squash and handball," Heyliger says. "Racquetball is much more popular now, though, because it's easier to pick up. I would say that about 85 percent of the use on the courts now is for racquetball."

No plans, however, are in the offing to build racquetball courts. "The interest is there, but the dollars aren't," Heyliger says. There are not broad-based taxes such as sales tax or income tax, so the revenue is low and nothing is available to state institutions. NHU rates way at the bottom."

This doesn't discourage racquetball enthusiasts, however. A racquetball club meets once a week. Instructional clinics are also offered and ladder tournaments are held regularly. Matches with other clubs in the area are also arranged.

Community recreational passes are available for $50 per year and $75 a year for the whole family, but the racquetball courts are usually reserved during the day for physical education classes. Students pay $15 a semester for the pass.

Passes entitle students use of the skating rink, facility field house and outdoor recreational facilities, including picnicing areas as well as sailing or canoing on the lake.

Michigan State University

Michigan State University in East Lansing looks back with pride on one particular alumnus, Steve Keeley, a former top racquetball pro.

It was Keeley who helped develop interest in the sport at Michigan State. "Racquetball has developed within the last five years," Dr. Frank Beeman, intramural director, says. "It used to be a rarity, for example, to see a woman player on the courts but now it's 50/50. That accounts for the crowded courts. Not only do you have the men but you've also got the women."

Even with 19 racquetball courts, Beeman says the facilities are overcrowded. "We simply don't have enough courts," he says. "We have 44,000 students enrolled and every night 50 people are there waiting in line to get reservations for the next day. From eight in the morning to 11 at night, the courts are filled solid."

To ease the problem, Beeman instituted the "challenge system." A couple of courts are set aside for players who would like to challenge other players. This way, if someone can't get a reservation to play, he or she can always challenge the winner of one of these courts. "That allows more people to play," Beeman says. "We've had to do this in order to better serve the people."

The 339-member racquetball club at MSU frequently holds tournaments with other clubs around the area. The top player is a Steve Keeley protege, Ron Glosser.

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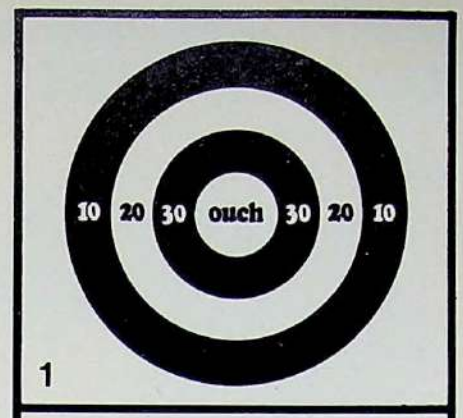

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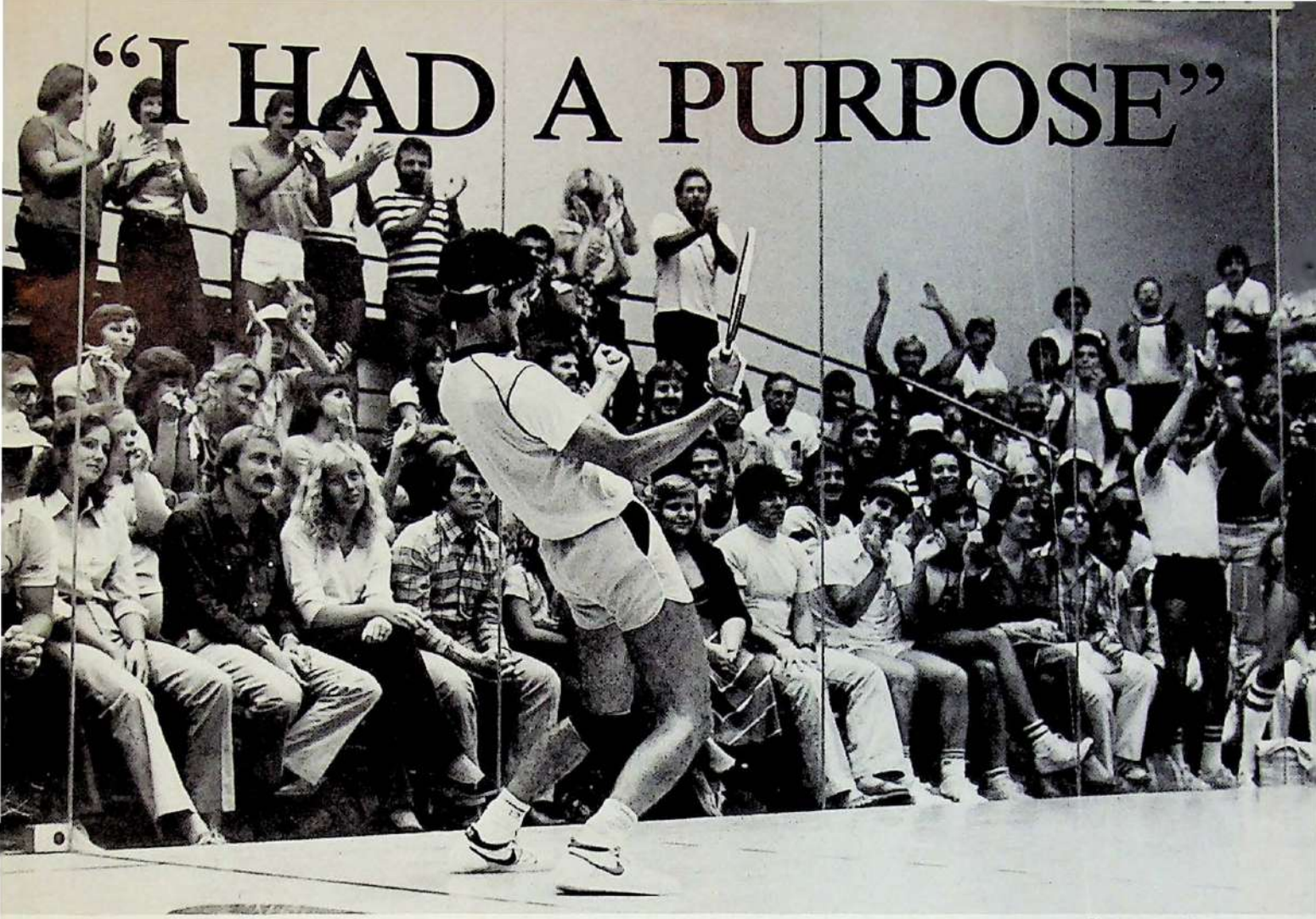


Photo by Frank Wong

By Ben Kalb

Jerry Hilecher upsets everybody, including the sponsors and organizers, by winning the season's first pro tournament.

Call it justice. Call it divine providence. Call it whatever you want. But considering the circumstances, Jerry Hilecher calls it the sweetest victory he has earned to date.

Hilecher upset top-seeded Marty Hogan in the semifinals and then defeated second-seeded Mike Yellen in the finals to win the Catalina Classic at King's Court in Westminster, Calif.

The victory was sweet for Hilecher because he had not been invited to participate in this year's men's pro tour, a seven-stop invitational with more prize money than ever before.

"I had a purpose for this tournament," said Hilecher. "I felt I was playing for everybody who was not there. I truly felt I was representing them."

This year's tour was limited to 12 players (14 counting alternates) and was chosen by the sponsors mainly on the advisement of DP Leach vice president Charlie Drake. Hilecher was the highest ranked (fourth) of several players to be left off the invitational list.

Under the rules, Hilecher was eligible to qualify for one of the regional stops and if he did so, he was automatically eligible to compete in the Catalina Championships next April. That still left him out of five big-money tournaments.

To try to get a spot on the new tour, Hilecher took legal action in San Diego against the "backers" of the tour—Catalina, Drake and Organization, Innovation and Design, Inc. Hilecher was trying to prove that the sponsors were depriving him of his "right to earn a living," so that the court would order the sponsors to include 24 top pros on the basis of ranking—a similar format used in past years. U.S. District Judge Earl B. Gilliam sided with the tour sponsors, however, saying, in effect, that if the Westminster stop did not come off the other players would be hurt financially.

With an automatic spot in the draw unavailable to Hilecher he was forced to qualify in a tournament the week before, which he did along with Ed Andrews, Mark Martino and Lindsay Myers.

The four qualifiers were put in the same bracket, with Hilecher defeating Martino and Andrews to advance to the semis against Hogan.

Hogan, looking as if he were playing a charity exhibition instead of a semifinal match, drove out to a 9-2 lead in the first game but allowed Hilecher to get back in the game and take a 10-9 lead. Hilecher had a chance for a first-game victory but couldn't put away a back wall plum. After Hogan pulled his collar, letting the crowd know he thought Hilecher had choked, he put the first game away with a kill off a BB back wall setup.

Hogan was never in trouble in the second game, leading 5-1 and 7-3 before winning 11-6.

The third game was the best of the match with Hilecher breaking a 9-9 tie by scoring the next two points. Hogan missed an overhead off a lob Z serve to the forehand to give Hilecher the game.

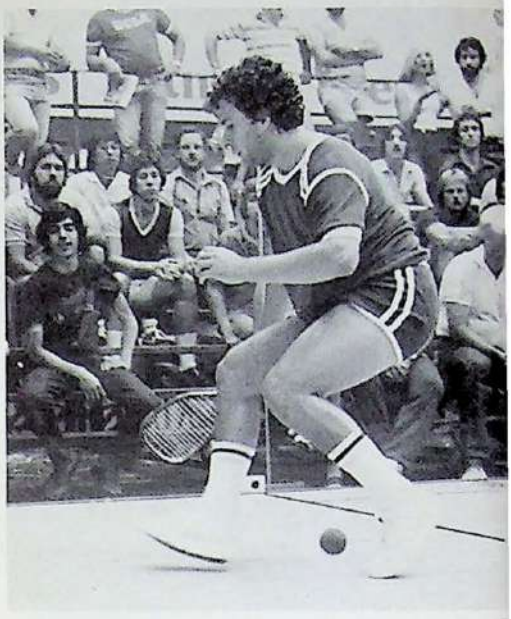
Hilecher led 8-4 and 10-6 before winning the fourth game 11-8 on a forehand pinch.

The fifth game had to be one of Hilecher's best and Hogan's worst. Hilecher led 4-0 before Hogan scored a point—his only point of that game. Hilecher ran off seven more unanswered points to win the match.

"I told myself to keep hitting forehands into the right corner," said Hilecher. "But in the first game I started flailing cross-court. If I do that I have no confidence and Marty would have beaten me. In the third game I just decided to start hitting it where I wanted no matter what the consequences.

"I kept the pace slow because I knew he would have a problem staying in the game. I could have lost the third. The fourth was not

"I HAD A PURPOSE"



Top left: Hilecher dives to reach shot in finals against Yellen. Above: Shot gets by Yellen who was trapped in front court. Left: Hilecher gets set for a kill in semifinal win over Hogan.

Photos by Frank Wong and David M. King

as close as the score indicated and the fifth was the best game I had played in years.

"He (Hogan) was having his problems. He was super tight in the fifth game. He was playing more defensively than normal."

Hogan let it be known that he thought his performance was poor. "I stink," he said afterwards. "Hilecher is a B player but I proved out there that I was a novice.

"I was determined to lose. I was out there to jerk around. I was determined to stay out there as long as it took me to lose.

"I could have beaten him in three but I didn't maintain my intensity. I gave it to him. He had some good shots in the last game and when it came time to turn it around, I couldn't."

When asked if he thought Hilecher was psyched up to play in this event because he had been locked out of the invitational tour, Hogan said no. "It has nothing to do with politics," said Hogan. "He's a veteran. He's been out there before. If he started thinking about all the problems, he would have played worse than he did."

Hilecher's opponent in the finals was Mike Yellen, who had advanced by defeating Gregg Peck, Craig McCoy and Dave Peck.

In the Yellen-Dave Peck semifinal matchup, Peck broke a 6-6 tie in the first game and ran off five straight points. Yellen turned things his way in the second game by breaking a 7-7 deadlock with four straight points.

Yellen won the third game, 11-6, and easily took the fourth, 11-1. In the last game, Peck skipped in most of his shots.

The 1981-82 men's pro tour is being played with a ball made by AMF Voit, a ball that is slower than the Seamco one used in past seasons. According to Yellen, his game is favored by the new ball.

"With this ball I'm able to be more offensive because the ball stays up on shots hit from off-balance positions, so it limits a power hitter's offensive attack," said Yellen.

"With a Seamco ball, Dave would be a little more effective. He hits the ball harder than I and with a Seamco when it hits the front wall, it would jump. This ball stays up on those shots."

Yellen also tried something rarely seen in pro play—a backhand lob Z serve. "This was the first time I really used it," said Yellen. "I wanted to control his play from the backcourt."

The Yellen-Hilecher finale took almost three hours to play. But there was nothing boring about it. Both players had their moments, and although neither player played his best, neither played like an amateur.

Yellen and Hilecher were tied at 4-4 in the first game before Hilecher outscored his opponent 7-3 the rest of the way to win it, 11-7. Yellen never trailed in the second game and won, 11-6.

Continued

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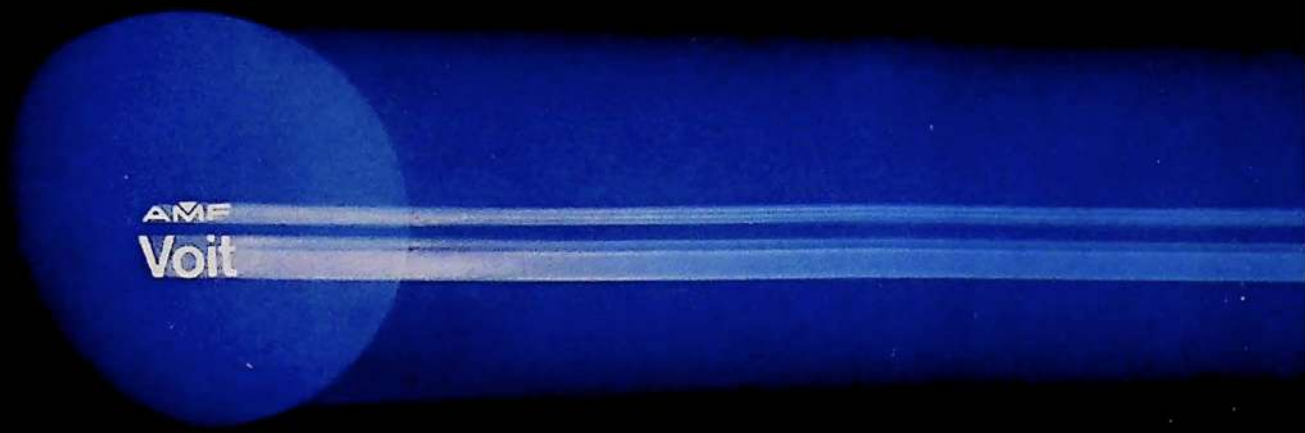

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"I didn't play great," said Hilecher. "But I stayed on top of him. I played agressively." Photo by David M. King

The third game had a good share of drama in it with Yellen leading 9-3 before Hilecher rallied to tie things up at 9-9. Yellen then scored the final two points on forehand kills off weak serve returns.

Hilecher broke an 8-8 tie in the fourth game after Yellen had been leading 7-3 and won 11-8, setting the stage for the grand finale.

Pinch shots, an ace and a skip drove Yellen out to a 7-1 lead when Hilecher started to connect. He tied it at 7-7 but Yellen regained the advantage at 8-7 on a skipped ball. Hilecher tied it at 8-8 and then scored the last three points on kills to win it.

Following the match, Hilecher yelled out, "I did it," and his wife Debbie thanked the crowd for rooting him on. It was obvious that Hilecher was the crowd's favorite during the week. Said one fan, "I don't particularly like Hilecher but I'm glad he won. I'm glad he showed them he deserves to be on the tour."

The Catalina people were somewhat speechless when they realized they had to present the winner's check to a player who was not wearing one of their shirts on the exhibition court and a little more embarrassed when Hilecher said, "I'd sure like to have a couple of those shirts to wear."

Hilecher admitted that he hadn't been so sure of victory himself. "A lot of times I wanted to give up but I draw more intensity from playing with a purpose and I had a purpose for this tournament.

"I didn't play great. But I stayed on top of him. I played aggressively. I covered the court well."

And does he think he proved something? "I don't feel I have to prove anything. Other people make me have to prove something. There is no substantial reason why I should have been left off the tour."

Yellen shied away from discussing Hilecher's purpose for winning, saying only, "The match could have gone either way. I was a little weak on some ceiling shots in the last game and he took advantage of the offensive opportunities."

For his victory Hilecher took home $6,000 ($5,500 for the win and $500 for qualifying the week before). Yellen collected $3,500.

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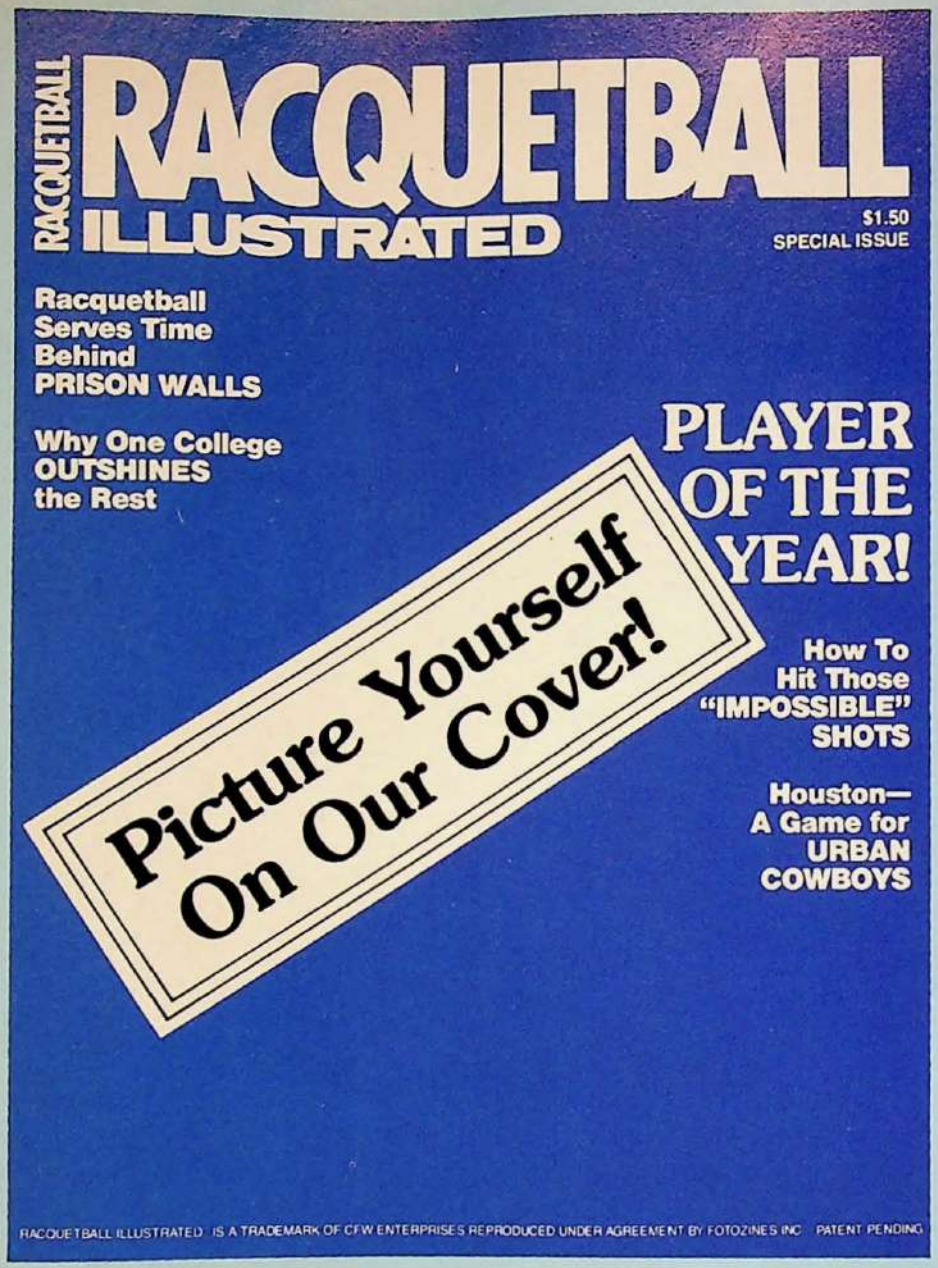

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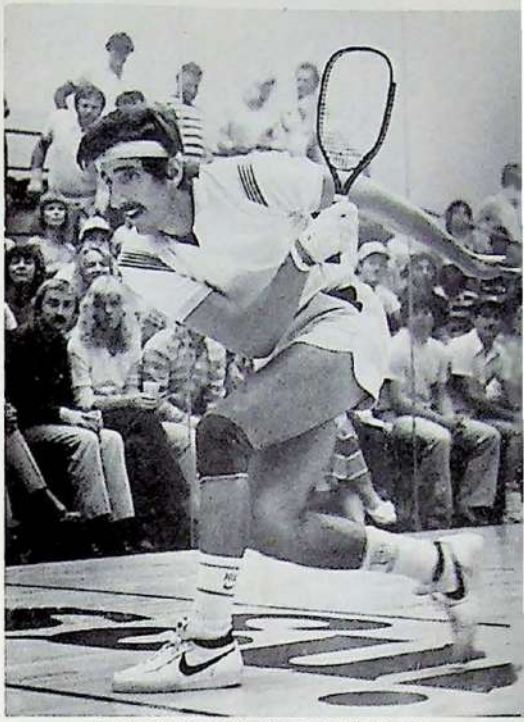

Photos by David M. King and Milo Muslin

Top: Hogan goes in the air for a kill shot in first game against Hilecher. Top right: Hilecher's serve was consistent throughout the finals. Above: Dave Peck goes high on the glass to avoid shot by Bret Harnett in quarterfinals.

Prize money was originally announced at $25,000 per stop but for the first tournament (and possibly some others) the purse was reduced to $20,000. According to Tom Morrow, media representative for the pro tour, the purse was reduced $5,000 to cover costs for the "legal expenses" incurred on the two Hilecher hearings in court.

That, of course, didn't sit well with some of the players. "It doesn't make any sense to take it out on the players," said Hilecher. "My suit was a legitimate suit against Drake and Catalina. It had nothing to do with the players."

Hilecher was not the only one upset with the circumstances. "He's (Drake) taking this out on the players," said Gary Naseef, manager of pro Bret Harnett. "He's taking money out of my client's pocket."

Semifinalists received $2,000 each and quarterfinalists each picked up checks for $1,250. First round losers received nothing.

RESULTS

First round—Wagner def. Hawkins, 11-9, 11-1, 11-6; Andrews def. Myers, default; Hilecher def. Martino, 11-2, 11-7, 11-5; D. Peck def. Fleetwood, 11-1, 11-2, 11-1; Harnett def. Thomas, 5-11, 11-6, 11-9, 11-4; McCoy def. Egerman, 11-10, 9-11, 11-9, 11-1; Yellen def. G. Peck, 11-9, 7-11, 11-10, 11-1; Hogan def. Cohen, 11-9, 11-5, 10-11, 9-11, 11-5.

Quarterfinals—Hogan def. Wagner, 11-5, 11-9, 5-11, 11-2; Hilecher def. Andrews, 11-4, 11-3, 5-11, 11-10; Peck def. Harnett, 11-6, 11-1, 11-10; Yellen def. McCoy, 11-10, 3-11, 5-11, 11-5, 11-3.

Semifinals—Hilecher def. Hogan, 10-11, 6-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-1. Yellen def. Peck, 6-11, 11-7, 11-6, 11-1.

Finals—Hilecher def. Yellen, 11-7, 6-11, 9-11, 11-8, 11-8.

HILECHER IS IN

Following his victories in the Catalina Pro-Am in Westminster, Calif. and the CBC Classic in Winnipeg, Canada (see tournament section), Jerry Hilecher was added to the Catalina tour.

Hilecher replaces Steve Strandemo, who decided to temporarily drop out due to "personal and family problems."

Strandemo is expected to rejoin the tour in Janauary.

CBC Classic

By John Glazebrook

Jerry Hilecher played some of the toughest racquetball of his career and defeated Marty Hogan and Mike Yellen to win the CBC International Racquetball Classic at the Court Sports Club in Winnipeg, Canada.

The tournament is unique in that it is the only official pro stop held in Canada every year, is one of the few tournaments taped for television (ESPN in the United States, CBC in Canada), and it pits competitors in a country vs. country (United States vs. Canada) situation.

The players battled for the Catalina Cup and a total purse of $15,000 ($10,000 for the men and $5,000 for the women).

Americans dominated the men's competition, winning all eight first-round battles. Hogan defeated Canadian junior champ Dwayne Kohuch, 15-7, 15-12, Yellen defeated Sherman Greenfield, 15-5, 15-10, Ben Koltun topped Wayne Bowes, 15-4, 15-9, Davey Bledsoe beat Canadian champion Lindsay Myers, 3-15, 15-11, 11-4, Jerry Hilecher defeated Brad Kruger, 15-7, 15-14, Dave Peck beat Wes Hadikan, 15-2, 15-9, Craig McCoy beat Bob Daku, 15-7, 15-12, and Don Thomas defeated Wendell Talaber, 15-3, 15-7.

In the quarterfinals, Hogan defeated Koltun, 15-8, 15-11, Hilecher defeated Bledsoe, 15-7, 15-6, Yellen beat Thomas, 15-4, 15-7, and McCoy upset Peck, 4-15, 15-12, 11-10.

Yellen defeated McCoy in one semifinal, 15-3, 15-12, using a powerful serving arsenal to gain the upper hand.

The other semifinal, pitting Hogan against Hilecher, was the best match of the tourney. Hogan built up a lead but Hilecher tied it at 14-14 before Marty scored the deciding point. Hogan led 6-0 in the second game but Hilecher changed the tempo and outscored Marty 15-1 the rest of the way.

Hilecher led 10-7 in the tiebreaker but three skips by Jerry knotted the score at 10-10. Then the controversy hit. Hilecher's weak return off a Hogan drive serve allowed Marty to apparently end it with a side wall-front wall pinch kill. Hilecher appealed the shot and the referee's call was overruled.

Hilecher lost his serve and again Hogan had an apparent victory with a pinch. The ref called Marty's shot good but he again was overruled. Hilecher had another chance and this time he came through.

His hard drive serve was returned down the backhand side by Hogan. Hilecher dove for the ball and managed to get his racquet on it. The ball made it to the front wall and rolled out, giving Hilecher the victory, 11-10.

In the finals, Yellen won the first game, 15-3, and Hilecher took the second, 15-12. In the tiebreaker, Hilecher built up a 9-1 lead but let it slip away and Yellen battled back to even things up at 10-10. After five tries at match point, Hilecher won.

In the women's competition, Susie Dugan of Texas defeated Linda Forcade, 15-9, 15-3, and 17-year-old Canadian champ Heather Stupp beat Karin Walton-Trent, 15-10, 15-3. Stupp and Dugan advanced to the semis against Shannon Wright and Heather McKay.

Wright trailed Dugan 14-11 in the first game before winning 15-14. The second game was no contest with Shannon winning, 15-4. The big surprise came when Stupp upset two-time women's national champ McKay, 15-14, 7-15, 11-2.

In the finals, Stupp defeated Wright in the first game, 15-5, but her string of upset hopes ended there. Wright won the next two and the match, 15-6, 11-6.

Pernod Grand Prix

Bruce Radford defeated Guy Texeira, 21-19, 21-12, to win the men's open finals of the Pernod California Grand Prix at the Del Amo All Pro Athletic Club in Torrance, Calif.

Radford defeated Steve Lerner, 8-21, 21-15, 11-10, and Texeira topped J. Mack, 21-14, 17-21, 11-8 in the semis. Lerner was top seeded.

Cindy Moore defeated Cindy Donnelly, 21-16, 21-4, in the women's finals. Moore defeated Joanne Pokorny, 21-17, 21-10, and Donnelly beat top-seeded Marci Drexler, 8-21, 21-20, 11-5, in the semis.

Top prize in the women's division was a Lifecycle and top prize in the men's division was a trip for two to England, courtesy of Grand Metropolitan Hotels of London.

Texeira came back in open doubles to team with C. Brusman to defeat Radford and Kirk Williams, 21-19, 21-11. Moore and K. Watson defeated Drexler and J. Sholem, 21-18, 17-21, 11-9, in the mixed doubles.

Bruce Cooperman defeated Steve Gartrell, 21-15, 21-12, in the men's A competition and Mike Gustavson topped Keith Denton, 20-21, 21-16, 11-4, in the B division. Carol Montalbo defeated Jill Braasch, 21-7, 21-8, in the women's B division.

Other winners included Steve Rametta and Sherrla Boyea (C), Radford (veterans), Gary Guilette and Terry Esser (seniors), and Bob Wetzel (masters).

The event was put on by Creative Tournaments.

Etc.

● Ken Smith defeated Kevin Chambless to win the men's open division of the Oklahoma Grand Prix Shootout at The Center in Weatherford, Okla. Smith then teamed with Chambless to win the open doubles. Mike Keel won the Penn fast serve contest with a clocking of 106 mph.

Photo by Steven Shulem

Bruce Radford takes a backhand off the wall in finals against Guy Texeira in California Pernod Grand Prix. Radford won, 21-19, 21-12.

● Bill Land of Shreveport, La. defeated Mark Malowitz of Houston, Tex., 21-4, 21-14, to win the Lite Open men's title at the Beaumont (Tex) YMCA. Land won $400. Joe Aguglia was third. Donna Embree defeated Cammy Coyne, 21-4, 21-14, in the women's open. Rosie Newberry was third. Paul George and R. Arceneaux won the men's doubles and Embree teamed with Donna Guthrie for the women's crown.

● John Mack defeated 15-year-old Jeff Conine, 21-18, 21-12, and Terri Gilreath defeated Tracy Brunmeyer, 21-6, 21-10, in the finals of the Western Cook-Out at the Irvine (Calif.) Clubhouse. Conine defeated two-time tourney champion Dave Bush in the semis. B winners were Mike Lerner and Myra Karas. Roger Ehren won the seniors.

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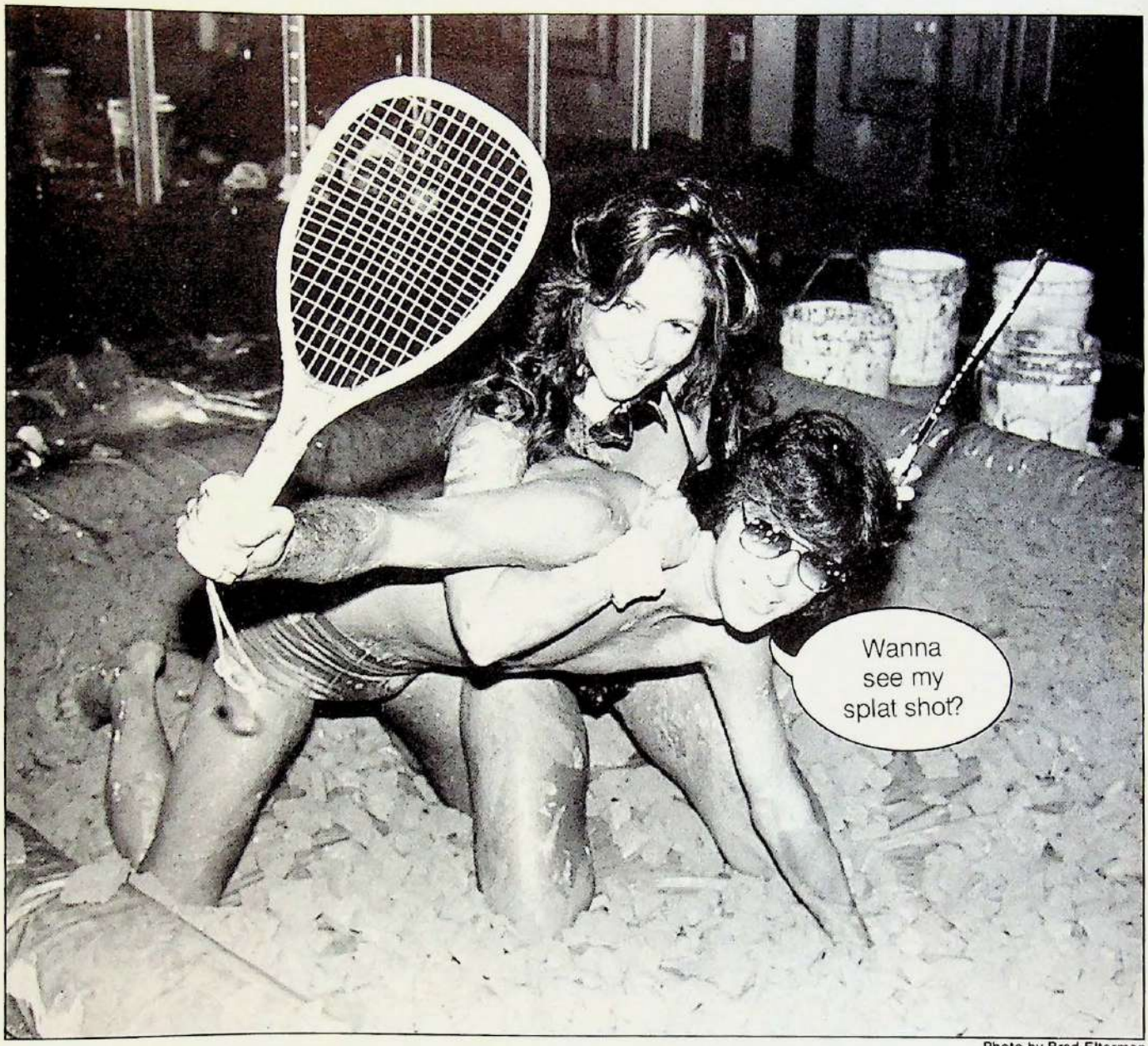

Photo by Brad Elterman

Singer Michael Quatro, brother of singer Suzi Quatro, gets in an unusual mud wrestling match with Dyan Del Campos at Chippendales in West Los Angeles, Calif.

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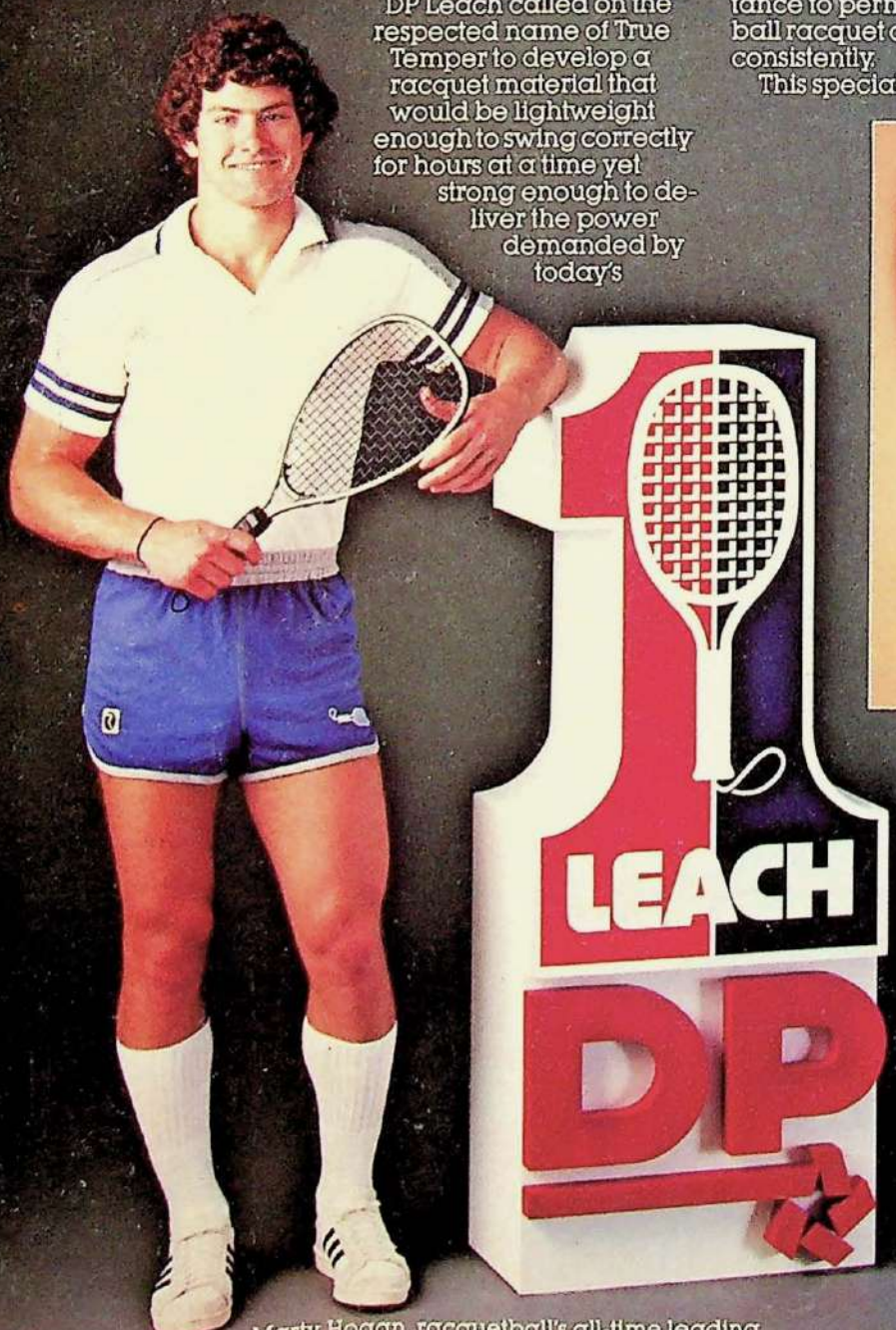

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