

Racquetball Reporter

Third Quarter 2000 (Sept.)

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Cole to Serve on USRA Board of Directors

After a brief hiatus while working on his professional work career, former RAM President Chris Cole has returned to the racquetball political arena. In June, he accepted a nomination to become an Athlete Representative to the USRA Board of Directors. To be eligible, a person has to be nominated by a current or former U.S. Adult National Team member and must also have been a team member at one time. Cole served on the U.S. Team from 1992-94 winning three gold medals in Honduras, Montreal and Bolivia. He was also the Junior National Team Head Coach from 1994-96.

He was then selected to be the USRA's Athlete Representative to the U.S. Olympic Committee's Athletes Advisory Council (AAC). This council is a powerful group made up of Olympic level athletes representing each of the USOC's National Governing Bodies (NGB) of which the USRA is a member. To be an AAC representative, one must have competed at the Olympic or World Championship level within the last ten years. Cole's 1992 World title in Montreal and his silver/bronze medals at the 1994/95 US Olympic Festivals in San Antonio and St. Louis qualified him for this position.

Additionally, USRA President Otto Dittrich selected the Michigan native to be on the decision-making Executive Committee for the USRA Na-

tional Board. This selection displays the level of respect Cole's viewpoints are given.

"I'm pretty excited about the different areas I will be representing," said the 33-year old originally from Flint. "With the AAC, I will be representing all racquetball athletes and the USRA amongst all the other Olympic sports. With the USRA, I will be representing the players and the game while also helping shape the course of the sport with racquetball companies and supporters. In each case, I will listen to those I represent and strive to do so with honesty and integrity."

One area that he will pay particular interest to is the U.S. National Adult and Junior Teams, especially since the U.S. lost the World Team Championship for the first time in history two months ago in Mexico to their arch rivals from Canada.

"I sit on the U.S. Team Committee within the USRA Board and now that we have finally lost for the first time, many things will probably start to happen, but I want to make sure panic doesn't set in. We no longer have dominating players representing us and other countries are developing as many skilled players that are being trained on the Pro Tour and at U.S. colleges. We need to provide a system that will assist our athletes and be a feeder for our juniors to excel and represent our

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View of the President

by W.T. Blakeslee

As I write this short note for the umpteenth time, I was remembering Bob Wilhelm and the article I wrote about him when I was 34 years old. Bob at one time was the best player in the state and the only guy in town that would have a chance of getting a point or two against Hogan or Yellen. I was older than Bob but, I remember his purple plum racquet, his terrific game, the Davison racquet club and their pro stop. In my article I commented why would a 34-year-old man pump iron, train and work out, and play lots of racquetball? At that time, it was with the hope that some day I could give Bob a game and score more than a point or two. Bob is long gone and now I am in my fifth decade and I still pump iron and train. In the 16 years since, all racquetball has done for me is provide me a body fit for life, created a lot of friends, had a lot of fun doing it, and if Bob was around today, it might be very interesting on the court. The point of this is that I believe racquetball is still a great game and has a lot to offer!

Last week as President, I received the usual membership listing for the State and was very pleased to see we had almost 400 RAM members. Over the last several years, we have struggled below that mark, and

during that time went from a top ten state in the USRA to a top twenty in membership. Last year RAM had several promotions to increase membership, and it is obvious that our membership is increasing. With the upcoming fall tournaments maybe we can now begin to climb our way back into the top ten states for membership. Congratulations to everyone and remember to renew your RAM membership and sign up your racquetball buddies!

I posted the tournament schedule on our Website in July. I should have said Kevin Thomas posted the schedule as Webmaster. KEVIN has done a tremendous job with this and be sure thank him at michiganracquetball.org. as it takes a lot of his time and effort. How do you like the site? Please let us know if there is something we can do to improve it.

Jimmy Floyd has moved back to Michigan and my vision is that he, Chris Cole, Mike Green and Jack Huczak will be playing over at Total Sports in February. What a terrific world-class open draw that will be, mark your calendars for the first weekend in February. We maybe even to attract some other open players from around the country. Wonder if I can get them to play the State Singles at the end of March? I was trying to avoid the mention of Jack because all the news in Michigan

Racquetball Association of Michigan

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President
(810) 468-2787

Jack Huczak
Vice-President
(810) 373-5255

Sharon Huczak
Secretary
(810) 373-5255

Lou Ellen Fecher
Treasurer
(810) 658-8097

Board Members
Nick Rallis
Felicia Mann
Kevin Thomas*

**Kevin Thomas is in the process of becoming a member of the RAM Board of Directors.*

Sanctioning
Tom Blakeslee
(810) 468-2787

Junior's Committee
Sharon Huczak
(810) 373-5255

Newsletter
The Racquetball Reporter
2834 Yale St.
Flint, MI 48503

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Cole, Huczek to Play Exhibition Match

Former World and National Champion, Chris Cole of Grand Rapids, will take on current Junior World Champion, Jack Huczek of Rochester Hills, on Thursday, November 9th at 6:30 pm. This exhibition match will be held at the Michigan Athletic Club and will raise money for Grand Rapids-area juniors heading to the Junior Worlds this December in California and Junior Nationals next June.

Cole, currently teaching lessons and clinics at both the MAC and Orchard Hills Racquet Club in Grand Rapids, won his two major championships back in 1992 at the age of 24. He now sees in his student Jack

all the tools it takes to become the best player in the world, even at the tender age of 17. "Jack is so far ahead of anyone else in his age group and is now one of the top adult players in the entire country." Indeed, young Huczek became the youngest player to ever qualify for the US Adult National Team by his Bronze Medal at this past May's National Singles in Houston.

On choosing the MAC for this exhibition, Cole explained its link to great tournaments and players in the state. "Joel Bonnett, Mike Anderson and Mike Stephens all have won major titles in the past while playing at the MAC. This facility also hosted one of the favorite stops on the Men's Pro

racquetball tour back in the late 80s (run by Anderson) and Ken Bonnett's Racquetball One series in the 90s. It is only fitting that people will get to see in Jack one of the best players of any age in the world today.

The MAC has always supported the game and wants to continue the tradition of providing great play for racquetball fans to be a part of."

Admission to the exhibition is free for both members and the general public. For more information, contact Racquetball Director Paula Spagnuolo at the MAC 616-956-0944.

Cole Appointed USRA Athlete Representative

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country at the international level. I intend to help provide such a system."

(To find out more about the IRF World Championships won by Canada, checkout the latest issue of the USRA's Racquetball Magazine or the USRA's website at www.usra.org)

As a representative on the USRA Board, Cole feels a great responsibility to listen to the people who drive this great sport: the players. "If you have a concern, comment or sugges-

tion that the USRA or RAM needs to be aware of, I want to hear about it. Please send it to me in the mail or on-line and I will give it my attention. You may not get a reply, but all mail will be read and accounted for. I am here working for the game and its constituents, not myself or special interests."

To send Cole a letter, mail it to: 3080 Woodbridge Drive, #203, Kentwood MI 49512-1973. He can also be reached via email at: ccole@scheldesports.com

VIEW OF THE PRES.....

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is usually about him and his tremendous success. I think next year he will win the Adult Nationals in Huston, anybody willing to bet against him? He is also turning out to be a fine young man.

I am trying to work with the clubs to have the State doubles at Total Sports and the singles at the East Lansing MAC exactly as we did last year. The dates are also the same first weekend of December and last weekend of March. Also mark your calendars the exact dates are on the website.

Strandemo Racquetball Clinic a Success

by David Dunn

Thirteen Michigan players went to camp – racquetball camp, that is – at Total Sports, September 15-17, 2000. They were led by pro tour veteran, Steve Strandemo.

During the three-day camp, the players benefited from Strandemo's more than 25 years of experience, study and analysis of the game. The weekend was filled with lectures, demonstrations, video-taping, and on-court play sessions.

Strandemo grouped the campers according to ability level to work on various match play situations. He taught valuable strategies and helped to refine each player's stroke mechanics through a videotaped analysis. The intensive weekend of instruction covered numerous aspects of the game. The three areas discussed further in this article are among the aspects Strandemo considers most important in playing winning racquetball.

Use the Zone 3 Strategy

The zone 3 strategy further illustrates the center court strategy. Strandemo refers to his strategy as "playing off your opponent's left-up shots."

Steve divides the court into three zones. Zone 1 is the service area (15-20 feet from the front wall), zone 2 is the area between the short line and the

dotted line, and zone 3 is the area behind the dotted line (25-30 feet from the front wall).

Through years of studying and analyzing countless racquetball matches with all levels of players, he has found the following numbers to hold true; in a match between two players of similar ability, about 15 percent of the shots are skipped, about 15 percent of the shots are killed (put away), and about 70 percent of the shots are left up (in a range from zone 3 or deeper).

Many players tend to play defense in zone 2 or even on the short line. If you play this far forward, you may dig up occasional winners but your reaction time will be greatly limited and you are inviting your opponents to pass you.

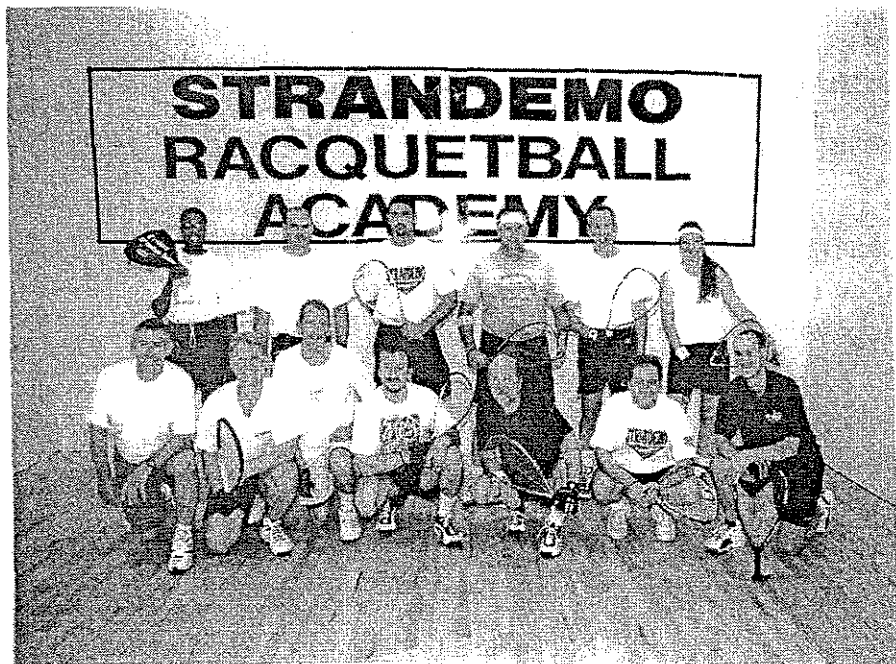
By focusing your defensive positioning in zone 3 when your opponent is attempting an offensive shot; you will be in the optimum position to get to the highest percentage of his left up shots.

Diversify Your Serves

The serve is one of the most important aspects of the game. Strandemo says, however, that too many players serve low drive and hard Z serves with no real plan of attack; they often put the ball in play without any specific idea of what they want to accomplish with these serves.

The object of the hard serves is to either ace your opponent, create a left up return,

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Michigan Players who attended the Strandemo Racquetball Clinic.

or cause a ceiling ball return. One of the best ways to do this is to diversify your serves. This means not only hitting serves from different locations on the court, but, more importantly, hitting different serves from the same location. This will allow you to disguise your serves, keeping your opponent guessing on which serve you plan to hit.

Diagram B & D illustrate two different court locations from which three different serves are hit from the same contact point. (The diagram illustrates low drives and hard Z's only). Strandemo stresses that you should practice these serves until you are able to visualize your front wall targets and the ball angles to properly execute each of these serves.

The goal of a low drive serve is to make the ball bounce twice before the back wall. To do this you want the first bounce to be in zone 2.

Hit From an Open Space

Although many players have been conditioned to believe an open stance swing is bad form; Strandemo considers this technique a crucial fundamental to good, efficient racquetball. The ideal situation would be to always step into your shot for the most power and control; transferring your weight from the back foot to the front foot and taking a full swing. However, the fast pace of the game often makes this impossible and dictates that you

must often hit from an open stance in the zone 3 area.

With an open stance your feet are pointed somewhat to the front right corner or front left corner depending on whether you are hitting a forehand or backhand; you hit this offensive shot without stepping into the ball and with your weight back. You use a shortened version of the full swing and therefore you'll be able to execute great shots with little reaction time. Also, by cutting balls off in the zone 3 area, you take advantage of your court position and add needed center court offense to your game.

Strandemo concludes, "open stance hitting in zone 3 has been

used by every top player (guy or gal) for the last 25 years; it is very unfortunate this information hasn't been properly conveyed to the players aspiring to improve. It would sure make their life easier in center court when there's very little time to hit."

Strandemo also teaches the 30-second drill to help develop ball control, and the ability to hit well-executed open stance shots. In this drill, you maintain a position behind zone 3 and keep the ball going for 30 seconds at a time, using an open stance when appropriate. You should practice both forehand and backhand shots, concentrating on controlling the ball.

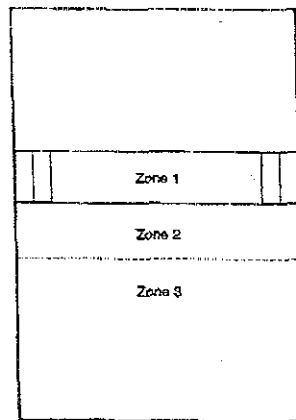


Diagram A

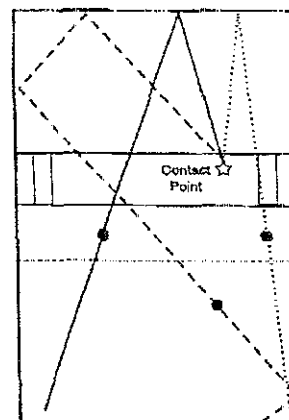


Diagram B

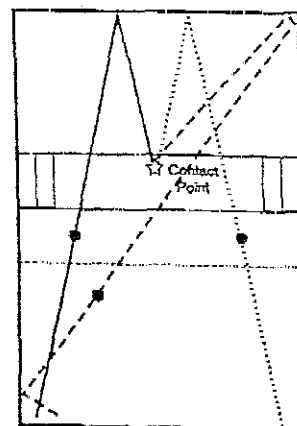
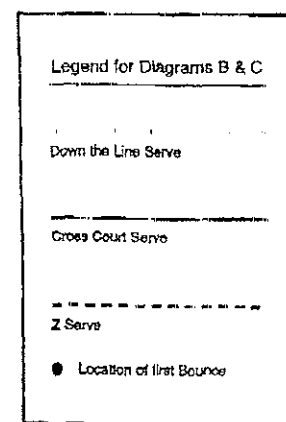


Diagram C



Seniors/Masters Tourney Set for November 3-5

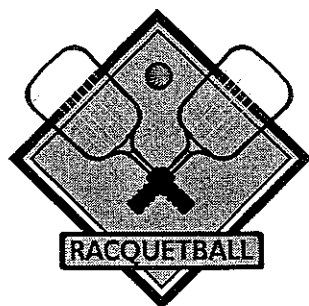
Michigan's 12th annual Seniors Masters Racquetball tournament returns to the Michigan Athletic Club in East Lansing. The date for the tournament is Nov. 3-5, 2000.

Competition in the tournament is in age groups for men and women from age 35 and up and there are no referees. This is a round robin tournament and players will play everyone who enters in their age group or in their flite and all are guaranteed a minimum of five matches. The tournament draws players from all over the Midwest and Canada.

If you have any questions you can call Jim or Dianne Easterling at (517) 887-0459 in the evenings.

RAM STATE DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS

DECEMBER 1-3,
2000



2000-2001 Tournament Schedule

Nov. 3-5	Midwest Seniors/Masters Michigan Athletic Club, Lansing
Nov. 10-12	8th Annual Turkey Shoot Maple Courts
Nov. 15-19	2000 Hilton US OPEN Memphis, TN
Dec. 1-3	RAM STATE DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS
Feb. 2-4	7th Annual Total Sports Championships Total Sports Club, Mt. Clemens
Feb. 24-25	Players Athletic Club
Mar. 16-18	Madison Athletic Club
Mar. 30- Apr. 1	RAM STATE SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIPS
Apr. 6-8	USRA Adult Regional Championships Florida
Apr. 19-22	USRA Adult Regional Championships Hall of Fame Fitness Center, Canton, OH
Apr. 27-29	USRA Adult Regional Championships Glass Court Swim & Fitness, Chicago, IL

*Please visit the USRA Website for a complete National
Tournament Calendar at www.racquetball.org.*

Building Junior Racquetball

by Dale Brown

It's not the 1950's baseball, basketball, football in kids' sports these days. Our young people enjoy an array of possibilities from jujitsu to water polo, from snowboarding to bowling. And the traditional sports have upped the ante, requiring more time and specialization. Hockey, baseball, basketball, and soccer now feature elite team programs that place heavy demands on children and parents. In the midst of this, how can racquetball hope to compete for the young athlete? That's exactly the challenge we've set for ourselves at Orchard Hills in Grand Rapids.

For two years, we have been running a junior racquetball clinic, and we're seeing heartening results in the number of players involved and in the high quality of the skills these players are developing. Racquetball has not only to contend with the many school and team sports that are more visible, it also has the issue of finding court time, often in clubs where memberships can be prohibitively expensive for kids. We've fought that battle with the gracious cooperation of a club that is willing to accept a \$5.00 fee to offer non-member juniors a shot at racquetball. The other major

issue is a psychological one. How do you keep the interest of juniors when they discover that racquetball takes a while to learn, that losing is a pretty sure thing, at least for a while? To that end, we've tried to establish a clinic routine that features skill development, competition between evenly matched opponents, and a considerable emphasis on fun.

Now the results of our investment are coming in. Our kids do well in tournaments. New kids keep joining up. They're developing aerobic and physical fitness as well as growing in the mental strength that racquetball enhances. Several of our players have discovered racquetball as a great off-season supplement for baseball and other hand-to-eye sports. We've seen local companies and older club players coming to be excited about the junior program and pitching in to help with equipment, sponsorship, and advice. And the major racquetball companies have been supportive too. The junior presence at a variety of Michigan tournaments last year was heartening. And we hope it grows on from here.



Contact us!

The Racquetball Association of Michigan would appreciate input from players and racquetball enthusiasts

We encourage you to attend a board meeting or submit an article or photo for publication in the newsletter. We also accept tournament results from USRA sanctioned events for publication. The newsletter is printed quarterly and mailed to all RAM members.

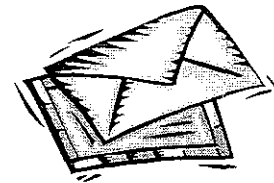
Please send information to:

The Racquetball Reporter
2834 Yale St
Flint, MI 48503

Or, feel free to e-mail Tom Blakeslee, President, at:

racketboat@aol.com

**WE
NEED
YOU!**



JOIN THE RACQUETBALL ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN

Membership includes:

- *Membership card, USRA official rule book, travel and equipment discounts
- *USRA medical, life and liability insurance at sanctioned events
- *Four issues of the RAM newsletter, The Racquetball Reporter
- *Six issues of the USRA national publication, Racquetball Magazine
- *RAM sanctioned tournament entry forms mailed to your home
- *Eligibility to play in all sanctioned tournaments and receive state and national ranking points

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

SUPPORT THE US NATIONAL TEAM DONATIONS TAX DEDUCTIBLE

DATE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

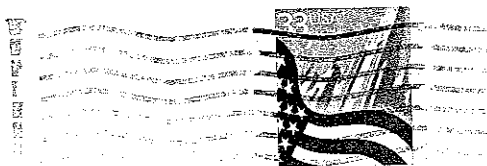
DATE OF BIRTH ____/____/____ HOME PHONE _____

- _____ \$20.00 Adult competitor _____ \$15.00 Junior Competitor
_____ \$10.00 Junior Competitor (without Racquetball Magazine subscription)
_____ \$15.00 Racquetball Magazine subscription only

MAIL TO: RAM, 9149 EMILY DR., DAVISON, MI 48423

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9149 Emily Dr.
Davison, MI 48423



DIANNE & JIM EASTERLING 112001
321 VILLAGE
LANSING MI 48911