

National Racquetball®

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April, 1982
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On the cover . . .

Wouldn't you love to be able to hit a shot like
our cover photo? Just once at 20-20? For
more of author David Haifleigh's "Creative
Shot Options To Defeat The A Player," turn to
page 6.

—Photo by Joanne Halsey

Next issue . . .

An interview with Dr. Michael Easterbrook,
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From the Editor . . .

Telltale Signs Of Improvement

It seems most of my recent conversations with various dignitaries in the racquetball industry have been centering on the topic of change. Nearly everybody believes that racquetball needs change to maintain its position as a recreational/competitive leisure time activity.

You've read about people trying to change the rules; trying to change the scoring system(s); trying to change nearly everything. It is my opinion that if you're going to change, then you should do it in a big way.

The change that I see doing the most good for racquetball, if major change is necessary, is the inclusion of a telltale on the front wall. Now, *that's* change.

Before you load up your poison darts, bows and arrows, slingshots, or whatever else is handy to point in my direction, let me at least present the case for a telltale. (And I should add that only after serious study and experimentation should any national effort be expended to implement this change.)

A telltale is commonly and successfully used in squash and jai alai. It is the metal (sometimes wooden), 18-inch border that runs along the front wall, eliminating "kill shots," which are foreign to those games. The result is more emphasis on placement, finesse and rallying, as opposed to racquetball's current stress on power and kill.

The telltale would alter many facets of racquetball, with the primary changes being the following:

- 1) It would keep the ball in play longer, since there would be no kill shots, thereby giving participants a better workout. In addition, there would be fewer skip shots since "bottom board" would be 18 inches higher.
- 2) The resulting longer rallies would make the game more enjoyable to watch, with a greater emphasis on retrieving and placement and less on booming serve, weak return and ensuing kill shot, today's normal rally.
- 3) The more interesting rallies would lend themselves to far greater television coverage, since the primary problem with today's tv racquetball is the inability of viewers to see kill shots. This is a major consideration.
- 4) Since the kill would be virtually eliminated from the game, a greater need for skill development would occur, meaning that the power players would have less of an advantage than



they do now. In essence, you would be able to outsmart your opponent, rather than outblast him.

5) The game would be easier for children to take up because of all of the above, leading to a greater number of future players.

Many current court building companies already manufacture portable telltales for squash, which could be easily modified (it's already been done) for racquetball.

I suggest that club owners test the concept by purchasing a few telltales and setting them up in some of their courts. Players could then select the type of court on which they wanted to play, i.e., the purists could maintain play on a "regular" court, while we "radicals" could try out the telltale and see how we liked it.

As the modified game catches on (or doesn't) the club owner could add or withdraw telltales depending on his members' wishes. State racquetball associations could test the concept in local tournaments and report back to national bodies on the success/failure of tournament-variety telltale racquetball.

Eventually, one of the pro tour stops (or an independent event) could be established, with prize money, to attract the game's best players in order to give the idea its final test. Videotaping should be done at such an event, with close analysis of the taped matches done by professionals in the field.

It is possible, that the rallies will be so long that 21 points will be far too lengthy for games to last. In pro racquetball this is already an irrelevant point because neither the men's nor women's pro events are using 21 point games.

Now's your chance to use those poison darts. Is this a crazy idea from the head of a racquetball-dazed editor? Or is it the beginning of the change in racquetball that will lead us to the billions of players of whom we've long dreamed? I'd be interested in your comments. ●

Chuck Fave

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Haifleigh's Strategy: Utilizing Creative Shot Options To Defeat The A Player

Figure 1. Your opponent, poised and eager.



by David Haifleigh

The key to defeating the A player, especially if you are a C player, is to utilize a shot selection that is rarely seen by the A player. Disturb him! Change the way he sees the game.

The A player has seen countless ceiling balls, crosscourt passes, down-the-line kills, and pinches. As the C player, it will be to your advantage to disrupt the racquetball reality of the A player with a series of surrealistic shots requiring tremendous practice and force of will. The purpose of this article is to propose three unorthodox methods for upsetting the shot consciousness of the A player and to develop some alternatives for your own shot selection.

The first method of unnerving the A player is to exploit the subtle complexities of the crosscourt fake. Quite simply, the crosscourt fake is a shot that requires two Z's of the ball without the use of a sidewall. The shot demands tremendous control of the ball once it leaves the racket! Open your mind! Anticipating the crosscourt pass, your opponent will be poised and eager (see Fig. 1).

Before you hit the crosscourt fake you may even set up your opponent by telling him you're going to pass him crosscourt: "I'm going to pass you crosscourt."

Your opponent will be ready to hit the ball when it should Z to the sidewall (see Fig. 2). Confused, he will follow the ball thinking it is going to bounce off the sidewall back into plum center-court position. However, through advanced physics and the power of your mind, you will have caused the ball to Z harmlessly down the sidewall, bouncing twice.

For this shot you need tremendous control and technique, but do not become discouraged. Trust your instincts. Practice. Study this article and previsualize your way to success. Remember that the top pros practice this shot 456,086 times daily.

Another sure way of defeating the A player is to trick him into playing on a squash court. You must be assertive in selecting the court that you will play on.



Figure 2. Your opponent, confused.

Once inside the court, try to disguise the fact that you are on a squash court by keeping your opponent busy with talk about the weekend or discussions centered around the philosophical value of Kierkegaard's *Thus spake Zarathustra*.

Being a C player you can easily commandeer first serve. Say something like, "Let me serve first." Be your own boss. Once in the service area you should hit a high one-bounce set-up off the backwall. Being a true A player, your opponent will instinctively try to kill the ball, with the ensuing rollout attempt hitting the tin every time (see Fig. 3).

The tin is illegal and every clang of the metal is your point. After 21 "rollouts" you have the game. Try not to point at your opponent and laugh as it will only lead to his displeasure and he may become suspicious (see Fig. 4).

As a last tactic, recommend some ceiling balls—they are illegal too! More points! Win! But remember, the key to this technique is to keep your opponent from knowing that he is on a squash court! Be discreet. Even smoking a cigarette may distract him. . . .

Finally as a tactic to defeat the A player, the use of the sidewall pinch is recommended. Most pinches involve the use of a side-wall-frontwall relationship. This is the 1980's! Times change. Why not just use the sidewall? Pinching with one wall is a sure way to confuse your opponent, bring creativity to your game and score more at parties.

The key to a good sidewall pinch is to make the initial rebound off the front wall at an unorthodox angle (see cover photo). This will baffle your opponent and prevent the shot from looking like the crosscourt fake.

A players learn fast. Watch out! Like the crosscourt fake, the sidewall pinch produces two Z's of the ball without the use of a wall. Control is your key. Because the Z's happen quicker in the sidewall pinch, the pros and other racquetball elitists have nicknamed the shot Premature Z. Not to be confused with other types of premature. Practice these "wall-less Z's" as they are the basis for advanced shot selection, even at the C level.

Once you master these techniques you will discover that only your mind will inhibit your racquetball advancement. It always is so. Trust yourself. You are the only reason that your game is where it is. Practice. You are the only reason that your game will change. ●

Figure 3. Your opponent, hitting the tin.

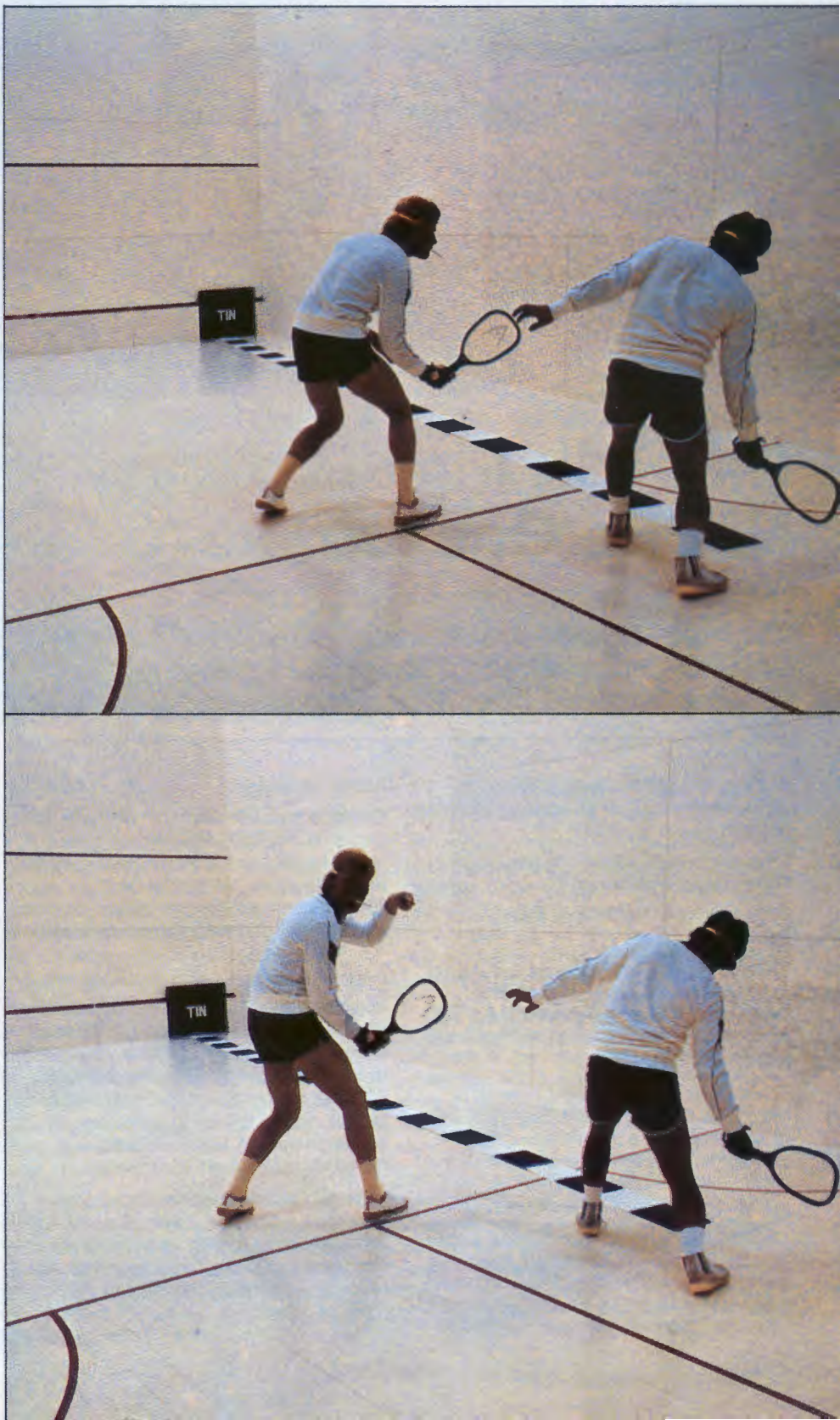


Figure 4. You, pointing and laughing.



—Photo by Arthur Shay

Can You Play Pro Racquetball And Not Be One Of The 'Catalina 12?'

'Yes,' says Charlie Drake, the man behind the Catalina Series, while Ed Murphy, president of Catalina, explains how 12 became the magic number.

Is there an opportunity to play professional racquetball for players not included in the Catalina Series?

Why aren't the Catalina events simply "open" in their format?

Why were only 12 players selected for those events?

These are the questions surrounding pro racquetball this season and Charlie Drake, the man in the middle of the swirling controversy, was ready for them. He answered directly.

"Look, we're not the only game in town," he said. "There is over \$200,000 in additional prize money being distributed this season all over the nation and in Canada. That money is up for grabs. There are no restrictions.

"In fact, that's more prize money than there was in all tournaments all last season. There's just as much opportunity for a youngster to play pro racquetball as ever. The Catalina Series is just an

added attraction."

Drake is arguably the most powerful man in pro racquetball, a reputation gained from his hard-nosed (but successful) business practices, his control of superstar Marty Hogan as Hogan's agent, and his major role in the selection of the Catalina 12.

The Catalina Series limits entry to a pre-selected 12 pro players. The selection of those players is based somewhat, but not entirely, on playing ability. One can understand how the Catalina Series (six \$20,000 events plus a \$40,000 Finals) seems closed to aspiring pro players seeking to reach fame and fortune in professional racquetball.

"The first misconception," says Drake, "is that the Catalina Series is a pro tour in the sense of tennis, bowling, golf, or even pro racquetball as it was structured under the National Racquetball Club (NRC)."

(From 1975 through 1981 the NRC ran one pro stop per month. In early years Leach and Seamco Sporting Goods put up almost all the prize money. In later years, as the ante continued upward, other sponsors were secured for individual events. Each tournament was open to any player who paid the entry fee, with the top 24 ranked players afforded direct entry into the final 32, and all others playing a rigorous one or two days of qualifying to reach the 32's.)

Drake and many others concerned about the future of the pro game feel it is vital to obtain sponsorship dollars from outside racquetball, as in bowling, golf, tennis, etc. Virtually every major firm within racquetball continues to support the pro game in one way or another, a point Drake does not miss.

"It is important that companies like Voit, Ektelon, Diversified Products, Leach, and others have maintained or increased their involvement in the pro game. This



—Photo by Arthur Shay

Charlie Drake: "Do you think we're crazy? We see good, young players on the way up, and you can believe they'll get their chance."

... The Catalina pros may be protected now, but the pressure's on them to maintain a level of ability."

helps our efforts to go outside the sport to secure sponsorship dollars," he says, "because it displays vitality and optimism within the industry."

Drake is the man who convinced Murphy of the viability of sponsoring the Catalina Series, and he has been active in pro racquetball since its inception in 1973. He is not only primarily responsible for building Leach Industries into the nation's number one racquet manufacturer, he has also managed to generate over \$1.5 million in prize money over the past seven seasons.

After the 1981 season, the NRC bowed out of the pro tournament business, creating a void, as Drake saw it. To fill the void, he went outside the sport and struck a deal with Murphy.

Catalina believes that racquetball is an activity that personifies their market— young, active, successful adults. As the nation's number one active sportswear firm, Catalina is no stranger to sponsor-

ing athletics. The firm has successfully supported over a dozen sports in both their men's and women's divisions.

"We sponsor racquetball, gymnastics and many other sports," says Murphy. Racquetball has been a good product line for us and frankly, we felt we should put something back into the sport. When we promote racquetball, we're also promoting Catalina."

According to Murphy, his firm has injected over \$800,000 in prize money, awards, clothing, promotion and administration fees. Yet instead of accolades reaching his office, there has been criticism, due primarily to the selection of 12 players rather than an open format.

So, why not open up the events, dress up the select 12 in Catalina garb, and let the best player win? The obvious answer is—what kind of exposure would there be for Catalina if four non-Catalina players reached the semis? For \$800,00 you can understand how Murphy might view

this occurrence as not particularly good use of his company's money.

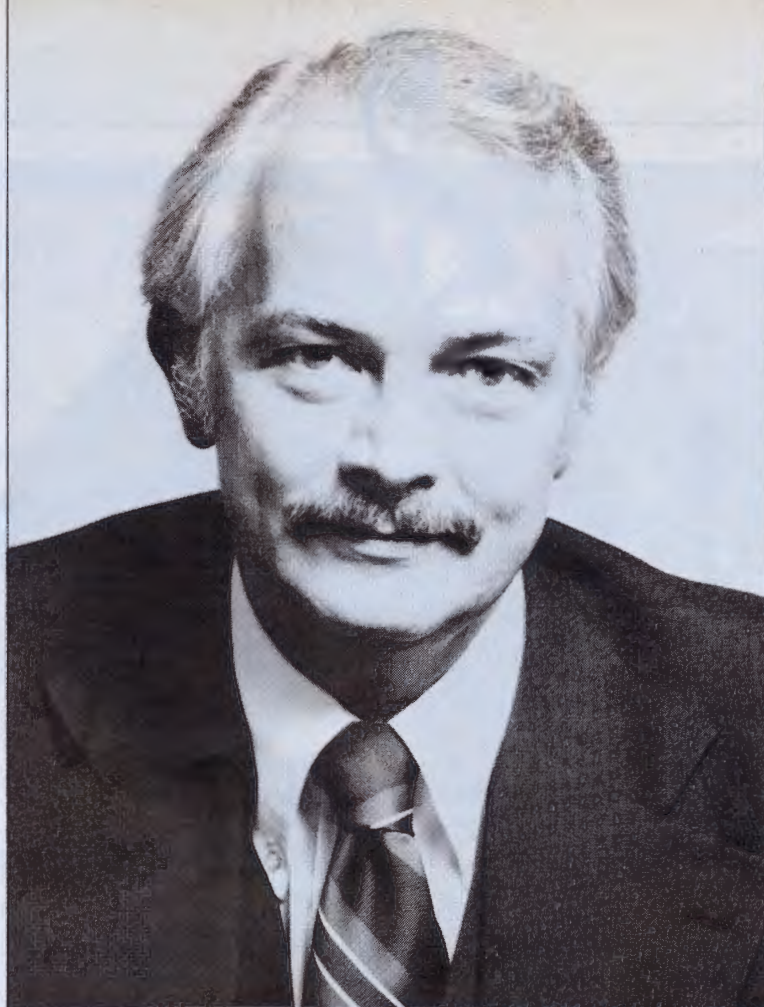
As one can imagine, if a company is going to spend as much as \$800,000 to promote its active sportswear, it wants to be certain who wears its clothing and under what circumstances. This was the key ingredient in the agreement between Drake and Murphy.

Catalina's budget allows for \$60,000 in apparel to be used in outfitting players. To provide the full line of sportswear in quantities adequate for pro players, the cost averaged \$5,000 per player. Thus the 12 player cutoff.

"I view each of our events as an advertising, promotional and sales event," says Murphy. "I want to promote Catalina products. And if I'm spending big dollars to show Catalina products, I want to know who's going to be wearing them."

"It was simply a matter of doing the best

Ed Murphy: "I view each of the events as an advertising, promotional and sales event. I want to promote Catalina products. And if I'm spending big dollars to show Catalina products, I want to know who's going to be wearing them."



with what we had," says Drake. "Catalina has specific goals they want to accomplish through racquetball promotions. Pro tournaments under the old formats just wouldn't work in this case.

"Hey look, Hogan isn't my only player. Don't you think that if we could have secured more prize money from other sources we would have? Sure we would, but it just wasn't there.

"I think Catalina has been overly generous to racquetball and the racquetball industry should be thankful to Ed Murphy. He should be hailed. Instead, he's received nothing but criticism."

As far as Murphy is concerned, he'd rather not get involved in what has turned out to be a racquetball industry controversy resulting from his generosity.

"Let me state one thing categorically. I'm a manufacturer. I am not in the least bit interested in being anything else in racquetball. I couldn't care less about being a czar or getting in any way involved in the running of the sport. I leave that to the racquetball experts."

One of those experts is Drake, whose implementation company (Organization, Innovation & Design, Inc., San Diego) has been hired by Murphy to organize and run each of the tournaments.

"I didn't care who the 12 players were,"

says Murphy, "as long as I felt they could represent Catalina in a professional, attractive way. I am shocked at the negativism associated with our investment.

"I'll tell you this, it's aggravating. It's taking too much of my time and doesn't mean that much to my business. The reasons I employ O., I, & D. is so that I don't have to be involved in it. The truth is it's getting to be more trouble than it's worth."

Drake also levels blasts at those who claim that young players have no chance of getting on the Catalina Series in future years.

"Do you think we're crazy?" he asks. "We see good, young players on the way up, and you can believe they'll get their chance. We will re-select 12 more next year, and you can bet there will be some changes. The Catalina pros may be protected now, but the pressure's on them to maintain a level of ability."

Drake maintains that as the economy worsened, corporate sponsorship from outside the sport became more difficult to obtain. His credibility on this score is tough to shake, because of his vast experience as the person responsible for selling sponsorships for the NRC.

"Catalina wanted exposure," he says. "And the only way to guarantee the

exposure was to have a closed, invitational-format series of tournaments. I felt it far better for racquetball to accept Catalina's investment under these conditions, than to turn away the money. This gives the up and coming players something to shoot for.

"If it's so easy to get money for pro racquetball tournaments, then why hasn't somebody else done it? I don't have an exclusive right to secure money for racquetball events."

So Murphy, who thought he might be regarded as a hero to the racquetball industry, is suffering through what he believes is unfair criticism. As a result, he's re-evaluating his investment.

"Prize money may not be the way to go," he says. "Because of the unanticipated negative feedback to our program, we may look toward other avenues."

Where does the Catalina Series go from here? Will next year's Series be of the "open" format? Will there be a Series next year?

"I just don't know what to say about it," says Drake. "I mean, after we as an industry slap the face of our greatest benefactor, well, how can we expect others to support our efforts?"

Good question. ●

Mike Levine: A Pro Without a Tour

by Charlie Garfinkel

Seventeen-year-old Mike Levine is getting tired of trying to prove that he belongs on this year's professional tour. In the past two years, he has defeated Steve Strandemo, Bret Harnett, Doug Cohen, and David Fleetwood. He also went three games with a player whose name is familiar: Marty Hogan.

These players are regulars on this year's pro tour. Levine isn't. How did he react last June when he found out he wouldn't be a full-time member of the 1981-82 tour?

Levine says, "A lot of rumors had been circulating about this season's tour. I didn't know what was happening for sure. I didn't know if the tour was going to be stopped or played on a limited basis. When I found out that I wasn't included in the 12-player format, I felt that I had to reevaluate my whole outlook on professional racquetball."

As Levine related these remarks in his room in Rochester, NY, one only had to look around to see how deeply involved he is in racquetball.

Huge posters of Hogan, Yellen, and Peck adorn one wall. Pictures of Levine with Hogan and with Yellen are on another wall. Upwards of 100 trophies, plaques, medallions, and other memorabilia are present throughout the room.

His closet contains clothing and equipment from one of his sponsors, Ektelon. In fact, the Ektelon garments outnumber his regular clothing, three to one. Beneath the clothing are neatly stacked sneakers, complimentary from another of his sponsors: Nike.

On his desk are scrapbooks crammed with articles from newspapers and magazines attesting to his national titles and accomplishments.

Is it any wonder he feels the way he does?

Levine continued, "My dad, who is my biggest fan and has been a tremendous help to me both emotionally and financially, and I had set various goals."

After he had won the AARA National 15-and-under Boy's Championships, Levine's first goal was to qualify on the pro tour during the 1979-80 season. Mike impressed everyone, not only by qualifying, but also by rising to the ranks of 18th in the country. At barely 16 years of



Mike Levine ponders his future, while in the background his father, Mort, allows his son time to reflect.

age, he was the youngest player in the country to rank that high.

During the 1980-81 season, Levine's second goal was to graduate a year early from high school. "I missed a lot of school and had to double up on some subjects. Fortunately, my marks were good, and the teachers were terrific about letting me take off early.

"During that year, I traveled from Ban-



gor, ME to Honolulu. The expenses were tremendous. However, I attained my goal of graduating a year early. I also managed to still be ranked in the top 24 nationally."

His third goal was to have been accomplished during the 1981-82 season. School was behind him. He could concentrate exclusively on racquetball, and move up the ladder to the upper echelons of professional play.

However, all of the hard work, both in school, and on the tour, seemed to be going down the drain because he wasn't selected to play on this year's tour.

Levine, who is now a part-time student at Monroe Community College, continues to work out, practice, and play tournaments as hard as ever.

"I've applied to four-year schools for next year. However, I'm playing better than ever, and still hope to be part of the tour full-time next year. I've been practicing a great deal, working out on Nautilus, and playing as many tournaments as I can.

"My big problem is that I don't have the opportunity to play against the pros on a regular basis. There are good Open players in my area, but unfortunately there are no pro level types."

He's even taken up skiing because he enjoys it, finds it good exercise and mentally relaxing.

However, don't think for a minute that Levine is giving up hope of rising to the number-one spot in racquetball. In various pro tournaments this season, he has done extremely well.

Earlier in the season, he defeated Cohen. He lost two close matches to Yellen, one in Davison, MI 21-15, 21-17, the other in Bangor, under the new pro format of three out of five games to 11 points. The scores in Bangor were 11-6, 8-11, 11-10 (after Levine had rallied from a 10-3 deficit), and 11-8.

However, the highlight of this season for Levine was his recent win of the Northeastern Regional Qualifier. In capturing this title, he established himself as the number-one professional on the east coast. More important, he qualified for the National Professional Championships later this year. However, because of the format of this year's tour, this is the only qualifying event that Levine will be eligible for.

Levine says, "As far as winning the qualifier is concerned, to say that I had an easy time of it would be a gross misstatement. Fortunately, I did well in the tournament. It's the other aspects that greatly disturbed me."

The Regional, which was a pro qualifier for the regular pro tournament the following week, was held in New Haven, CT. Levine had to travel seven hours by automobile to get there. He was there

four days and then had to drive back home.

He had to repeat the same procedure the following week to play in the pro tournament. Needless to say, he wasn't too thrilled about this situation.

Levine said, "If you lived in the immediate area, that was fine. However, the region included Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Delaware, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, District of Columbia, West Virginia, Virginia and Canada. One of the qualifiers had to travel all the way from Maryland for the finals the next week."

The qualifying tournament was played with AARA rules: two out of three games, each to 15 points. The professional tournament consisted of three out of five games, each to 11 points.

Levine, who lost a close five-game match to Don Thomas in the regular professional tournament, felt that the scoring system for the qualifying and professional tournament should be the same.

However, Levine liked the 11-point scoring system for the pro tournament, and the somewhat slower ball. "I practiced a lot with the ball. I feel that I can adjust to any scoring system. I've got a big serve, and the ability to string many points together. I don't have to worry about my opponent slowing the game down or stalling.

Instructor Jim Winterton (kneeling) with his two prize pupils, Levine (l.) and Peter Bluestone.



"Concentration is a must, and you have to be at peak efficiency right from the start."

As for the pro tournaments, he would like to see them as they once were, with an open format, and 24 spots in the main draw. Anyone who wanted to play would have the right to try to qualify, regardless of his level of play. He also feels that the draw should be expanded if necessary.

Levine, who has won four semi-pro tournaments in the east this year, says, "Because of the pro tour setup, I find that I'm playing with a greater intensity in every tournament that I play in. However, if the tour does expand, how will the tour officials know what I'm doing back east unless they're aware of my tournament record?"

At present, there is no representative from the east coast on the pro tour. Because Levine is the number-one professional in the east, he feels that he should be entitled to play at all of the pro stops this year.

In addition to not being able to play all of the stops on the pro tour, Levine has other problems. "I'm being discriminated against back east. I'm a professional without a tour. I try to enter eastern pro tournaments that have a sizable first place prize, such as \$1,000. However, the tournaments are invitational. I'm not invited to them. When I ask why, they say that I'm a professional or that the

invitations have already been sent out. If someone drops out, they'll call me. They can use whatever excuse they want, because it is an invitational tournament."

Some tournaments put on the entry blank that you can't enter if you've won over \$1,000. (Not even \$1,000 in a year.) This often happens when Levine is the only player in the area who has won that much money. Sometimes, they'll let other players in who've won more than \$1,000. However, they won't let Levine play.

Levine says, "It gets very frustrating, to say the least."

Actually, Levine has won more money playing in eastern pro tours than he did on last year's pro tour. He says, "Of course, who is to know what I would have made this year, if I had had the opportunity to compete. Money is really the least of my ambitions. Money is a by-product of what I'll get when I accomplish what I feel I can."

"I still want to be a professional and the number-one-ranked player in the world. I feel it's possible, because I know what I'm capable of achieving if I'm given a chance. Of course, I still want an education. I feel that I can achieve both."

While Levine has continued to play as hard as ever, other pros have literally left the game. Levine feels that he's young enough to wait out the situation and hope that the tour will open up for him, or the format will change. He readily admits that some older players have quit because they have to make a living.

Also, the lack of sponsors has hurt them. Sponsors aren't sponsoring players as they used to, because they won't be getting any return.

However, Nike and Ektelon both realize Levine's potential. Prior to the current tour, he signed a contract with Nike. Recently, he signed a financial contract with Ektelon. Even though he's not getting national exposure, he's still number one in the east. Ektelon feels that he is an excellent source for promoting their product.

Levine's parents have also made a tremendous investment in him because they feel that it is well worth it. Naturally, they're still hoping that he'll make it full-time on the tour.

As for Levine, he sums up his feelings by saying, "In this year's first pro stop, Jerry Hilecher had to qualify. Not only did he qualify, he went on to win the pro stop the next week. I'm very happy for him. He showed what he could do if given the chance."

"As for myself, I feel that there's only one thing wrong with this year's pro tour. I'm not on it!" ●

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Racquetball or Racquetball Ball?

(Part IV)

by Steve Keeley

(Editor's Note: This is the final part in a four-part series on racquetballs. This article discusses ball prices and the ball's relationship to court strategy, all spiced with more evolutionary anecdotes.)

They say the road to hell is paved with split racquetballs. If so, it's a four-lane highway and some souls here on earth are reaping a fortune on tolls. Balls aren't as cheap as, say, tomatoes or squash, so it pays to shop around.

There are a few points to wise ball buying. Better deals on national brands can be found in discount stores, though the return policy is sometimes more stringent. Wait for sales. If you're low on bucks and don't mind dead balls, approach advanced players for hand-me-downs. If you're completely in the dark on balls and their prices, ask around to see what the better players use. Ask why they use them. When you finally decide on a particular ball at a particular store, make sure there is a ball replacement guarantee, and ask if that store issues replacements or if you have to send directly to the manufacturer.

Finally, expense is definitely *not* an indication of ball quality. Rely on recommendations and personal experience rather than the price tag when shopping for racquetballs.

Balls are one of your largest ongoing expenses in playing racquetball, especially if you like to break open a new can for every workout. If you do, this sport is going to cost you dearly unless you learn how to be a ball miser. I'm talking about the player who always seems to finagle his court partner into providing the balls.

Ball misers come in assorted guises. One ploy is to carry around a broken ball that still has its logo. Your line is, "Sorry, I just broke my last new one."

Another ruse is to keep around a couple of oldies that are bald as cue balls. You dump the baldies out and exclaim, "Here, take your pick."

A more honest approach is to just never carry around any balls at all. But in this case be prepared for the time when you meet up with a fellow miser who also claims not to have any balls.

Court Strategy and The Ball

Racquetball has evolved from a thinking into a reaction game. Players of the early 1970's recall a game called racquetball which featured ten to twenty shot rallies, great reaching gets, metronome ceiling rallies, variety in shot selection, controlled swings and a smooth flow of somewhat predictable play.

Then, in the mid-1970's, the noble slow game was eviscerated by the fast ball. Consequently, players of the late 1970's are more familiar with a game called racquetball which has rallies (on the professional level) that last an average of three shots between serves. These consume less than three seconds and consist of flailing swings and a staccato flurry of unplanned shots.

It is the big game of serve-and-shoot, with little variety in serving and less in shooting. The ceiling ball has been forsaken as a worthless measure and, moreover, defensive measures themselves are basically worthless.

Judge for yourself. Has this evolution from a thinking to a reaction game been for the better or for the worse?

Whatever your opinion, the impetus for change has been the ball. From this, you can learn an important lesson regarding your own state of court affairs: different balls are conducive to different styles of play.

The most important ball characteristic influencing game style is *liveliness*. (Whether or not a ball is pressurized also has some bearing, though to a much smaller degree.) A lively ball caters to hard hitting serve-and-shooters; a slower ball favors the control player who strives to out-manuever his opponent. Got that? Fast ball = power play, slow ball = control play.

You probably want to play with the ball best suited to your game style. Assuming an absolute dichotomy in game styles, you must initially categorize yourself as a "shooter" or a "controller."

You are a *shooter* if you like to gorilla the ball on every shot. Your serves are

smoking drives (or, at least, you try to make them smoke) and your shot selection consists of the hard kill-shot and the harder kill-shot. You enjoy earning points by muscling the ball without much forethought about where it goes, just so long as it streaks low at 100 m.p.h. You know that even if you miss your mark, speed will compensate—your opponent's plodding reflexes will not reflex in time to make a solid return.

On the other hand, you are a *controller* if you like to S-L-O-W the game down. There must be time to think and react to shots during the rally. Your favorite serves are a garbage, a controlled drive or easy Z, all designed to put the ball into play safely rather than cop an immediate point via an ace or weak return. Your repertoire includes both offensive and defensive shots, and you pride yourself on taking the correct shot in nearly every court situation. You prefer the percentage method of garnering points, by hitting the ball where the opponent ain't. And you love to run your rival ragged until he melts onto the hardwood in a salty pile of gym clothes—vaguely similar to the Wicked Warlock of the West.

Now get this: 1) If you are a shooter by nature, you no doubt will fare better with a lively ball. In other words, the speedier the sphere the greater your advantage, assuming your opponent is a controller relative to your game style. 2) If you are a controller by nature, you should stick with a deader ball. The slower, the better.

Let me illustrate these guidelines with the classical match-up of the game's premiere shooter, Marty Hogan, vs. the game's premiere controller, Charlie Brumfield.

Brumfield dominated Hogan back in the era of the slower ball. He handcuffed the kid with drives into the body that stifled all that power, and he lulled him with a ceiling game that literally used to send Marty up a wall. I believe Brumfield can still take Hogan with a very slow ball. Charlie out-thinks Marty (and everybody else) and a deader ball allows for more thinking time on the court.

But the old man is no match for Hogan if you toss a livelier ball into the court. Thinking time is reduced to the point that



even Brumfield's lightning mind seems to plod in the face of Marty's scorching kills. Charlie openly admits, "*My analytical prowess and the ability to pinpoint my opponent's weaknesses have been neutralized by . . . the raw power to hit the ball 125 m.p.h.*" Brumfield, even at his best in the early 1970's, could beat Hogan only with a slow ball or if he stuck Kryptonite in his supporter.

Do you understand now that in an overall approach to game styles, a controller trying to play with a fast ball is like a dancer attempting to waltz to rock and roll music? And vice versa.

Let's briefly examine the three component areas of every racquetball rally to ascertain exactly where you, the shooter, or you, the controller, will find advantage or disadvantage when using the faster or slower ball. The rally breaks down into 1) serve, 2) serve return, and 3) rally. I shall deal with each of these from the standpoint of the shooter (with a lively ball), then from that of the controller (with a deader ball).

First, the *serve*. The *shooter's* service arsenal usually includes the drive and the hard-Z serves. The goal is an ace or weak return. The effectiveness of these power serves depends heavily on ball velocity (besides accuracy). It makes sense that a more lively ball attains more velocity off a given stroke than a slower ball; therefore, a power server has the upper hand with a superball. On the other hand, the *controller's* service repertoire usually consists of softer serves (garbages or half-lobs), medium speed Z's and medium speed drives. The aim of these is to control the rally from the outset with the serve, and a slower ball lends itself well to controlled serves.

Next, the *serve return*. The *shooter's* pervasive thought in returning serve is to blast the ball into the front wall for an outright winner or, at least, for a weak set-up. Hence, the shooter's service return is usually offensive—a kill or pass. And, whenever the call is for offensive shots, a lively ball is advantageous. The rationale here is that even if the power shot is slightly mis-hit, the ball's velocity forces the covering player to react more quickly and consequently to err more often. By contrast, the *controller's* service return mainstay is defensive—usually a ceiling ball. Sure, he'll go for a pass or kill against a weak service, but more than likely he'll play the odds when responding to a decent serve by neutralizing the relative court positions with a ceiling return. A slower ball aids the controlled service return by allowing the receiver an extra split second to think about and to swat back the power serve. Also, the receiver's ceiling return will carry just to the back wall for a strong neutralizing shot, rather than rebound off the back wall for a juicy set-up.

Finally, the *rally*. As I said before, the *shooter's* one-track service return strategy is to power the ball for a flat rollout or a weak return. If he does elicit a weak return, he again smothers it for another weak return, and so on until the point is won. A lively ball suits this strategy. The superball ball may be harder to control, but this is only of secondary importance to the shooter; the prime imperative is power. Thus, a fast ball is easier to power, brings about more set-ups and forces quicker reaction-time on every stroke by both players. However, the *controller* has contrasting needs and goals. He must have ample reaction-time on each shot, to think about where to place the ball, and to execute the place-

ment with a smooth, controlled swing. In short, slow-motion on every shot in a rally occurs only with a slower ball.

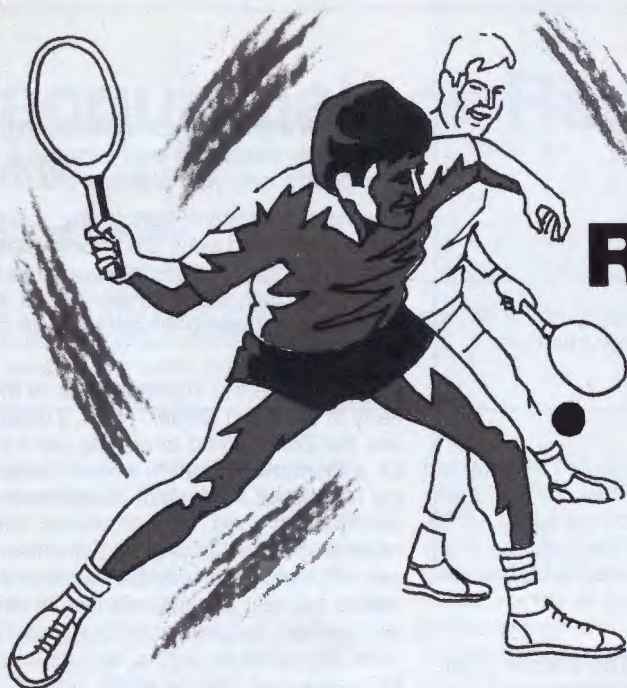
You now understand that on the serve, serve return and rally, the shooter has at least a 10-point per game advantage with a very fast ball; the controller has at least a 10-point per game advantage with a very slow ball.

I didn't realize the importance of all this early in my court career. Heck, I used to use the Zen method of picking out a ball for a tournament match, where I passed my hand over a bunch of racquetballs until one felt good. Now, however, I'm more prudent when picking balls for tournament matches. I use the squeeze test, ceiling ball test and bounce test to ferret out the best ball available for my game style. My game is control, so I usually go for a slow ball. Decide which type of player *you* are—shooter or controller—and then choose your ball accordingly.

Fair Warning

I have two suggestions to end this series of articles. One is to you and one is to the ball manufacturers. My final admonition to you, the beginning to intermediate player, may be redundant but is important enough to deserve a replay. Start with a slower, nonpressurized ball. Why? The slow ball lets you take your time moving around the court and allows you to stroke set-ups, rather than spasmodically swat at them. The nonpressurized ball also lets you groove your strokes and strategies because of its consistency and typically less lively bounce. In addition, pressureless balls are cheaper in the long run due to their better durability. Besides, I have always felt that fast balls are suspicious, scheming, spiteful and at times purposefully tricky. Indeed, some players grow to hate, even to fear them. You *think* you know what's inside them that causes them to bulge so, but you can't see for sure—can you? Truthfully, I have never come across a pressurized ball that I admired.

My final admonition to the ball manufacturers is also redundant yet urgent. Don't regress to the superball era by again deluding yourselves with the "more is better" theory that runs if bounce is good and bounce-bounce is better, then bounce-bounce-bounce is best. Where does one stop? We can use a beach ball on a basketball court or a croquet ball on a pool table, but what are the names of the sports if we do? Similarly, you can give us a superball on our racquetball court and we'll still be playing a game, but it won't be racquetball. ●



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Ask the Champ

by Marty Hogan

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

Question: I've been playing for a few years and am looking to add some riskier shots to my game. Any suggestions for an offensive shot to surprise my opponent from time to time?

Hogan: One of my favorite offensive weapons is the reverse pinch. It's a shot we're seeing more and more of these days, yet one that still is not being used all that much in daily play.

Regular pinches have been hit for years and a regular pinch is still a solid part of any decent player's game. However, there are times when your opponent will be looking for a pinch, particularly if you use it often, and that's when you give him the reverse pinch.

There's a number of reasons why I like the reverse pinch. For one, it generally stuns and surprises your opponent. The ball spins the opposite way from the regular pinch and travels in the opposite direction after hitting the front wall. Secondly, the ball tends to stay closer to the front wall after striking it.

However, as with all advanced, offensive shots, it is more difficult to hit and carries with it a greater risk of error. If you mis-hit a reverse pinch, you will more than likely find yourself watching your opponent field a perfect set up with his forehand.

Yet a good 80% of today's touring pros don't use the reverse pinch. If you have it and use it, it will definitely make you a better player. It's a good, aggressive racquetball shot and one that I highly recommend, especially if you regularly play the same opponents.

Although I don't know if you're a right-handed or left-handed player, I've noticed that lefties tend to use reverse pinches more than righties. Craig McCoy and Bret Harnett, both southpaws, use reverse pinches a great deal on the pro

tour. So, add it to your repertoire and your game will improve accordingly.

Question: Although I am a good junior and Women's A player, I am 20 pounds overweight. I'm told by better players that even though I have good strokes, I can't improve any more until I lose the extra pounds. How important is reaching that perfect weight?

Hogan: Playing at your most comfortable weight is a very personal thing. Only you know if your playing weight is too high and only you can do something about it.

We all know that racquetball is an outstanding calorie-burning activity, but racquetball alone won't shed the pounds. If you are going to get serious about the extra 20 pounds, then the best place to start is at the dinner table.

As for the importance of 20 pounds, just think how it would be to play a match if you were forced to carry a 20 pound weight on your back. If you are 20 pounds overweight, that's exactly what you are doing. Therefore, your court coverage is suffering, as is your stamina.

Many people think that extra weight gives you extra power. Don't believe it. Some of the leanest players around hit with the greatest power. People like Jerry Hilecher, Harnett and McCoy are tall and slender, yet they hit harder than anybody but me.

So to answer your question quite directly,—yes, your game will improve if you lose your extra 20 pounds.

Question: I'm a beginning player who is having a lot of trouble learning a backhand ceiling shot. It seems that whenever I'm in that backhand corner, my attempts at a ceiling shot either hit the side wall first, or don't hit the ceiling with enough power to bring the ball into deep court. What can I do to improve my backhand ceiling shot?

Hogan: The first thing to do is get off the court and into the weight room. As with most beginners, your natural stroke is a forehand and if you've been doing most athletic things with your natural side, then the muscles you use for a backhand ceiling shot are woefully weak.

Therefore, you need to strengthen those muscles and that means taking the time to do it properly. I recommend using free weights (very light) and practicing your backhand ceiling (and other backhand strokes) in front of a mirror while holding the weight. You'll feel the tension and immediately notice how weak this muscle group really is.

I suggest you do four groups of 10 swings each with your backhand. Rest, and then go at it again. As you keep doing these repetitions, you'll surely notice your improvement. But it is not an overnight process, so be patient.

Then take the campaign onto the court. With your greater strength will come greater confidence. Take the time to take to the court alone and try this drill: hit the ball to the front wall and play the shot as if your opponent hit it to you. Hit a ceiling ball from wherever the shot arrives and play against yourself hitting all ceiling balls (backhand of course).

Most beginners feel near-immediate confidence in their forehand games. And since most of their opponents are also beginners, the desire to win outweighs the desire to improve specific shots. You may be winning matches, but you'll never truly improve until you've got the backhand ceiling ball mastered.

Remember that your opponent is one of your best instructors because he is telling you where your weaknesses are. If he continues to hit balls to the deep backhand corner, you know it's your backhand.

When I was a kid, some days I'd play all day and never use my forehand. Four, five, even six hours a day, I'd play and purposely never use my forehand. I didn't care if I won or lost, because I knew that I was developing my backhand to the point of superiority to my forehand. To this day, it's my backhand, thanks to those workouts, that sets me above most other players. ●

Returning Serve

by **Steve Strandemo**
with **Bill Bruns**

Trying to get a rally started against a skillful server is one of the truly challenging tasks in racquetball. On his first serve, you can never really predict what he's going to hit, since he'll be diversifying his serves, ripping a low-drive to your backhand corner one time, then snapping a hard Z to your forehand. Moreover, he gives you minimum time to react by camouflaging his intentions the best he can and screening the ball—within the rules—so you may not get a full view of the ball until just before it passes by his body. Nor will you be hitting from the same footwork position serve after serve: some low drives will go straight into the back corner, others will just nick the side wall, and others will come shooting off into your body. The same applies for Z's hit with varying speed.

At times, returning the ball in advanced play has to come down to native strength and stretching ability as you extend your body out toward the side wall to dig up a low-drive. Yet there's much you can do to maximize the talent you already have by working on your efficiency in moving to the ball, your shot selection, and your execution.

Moving To The Ball

Since I want to be able to break easily in any direction, I await serve about a long stride off the back wall, midway between the side walls, with my weight evenly distributed. I hold a backhand grip (because the majority of balls come to our backhand) but I avoid leaning in that direction.

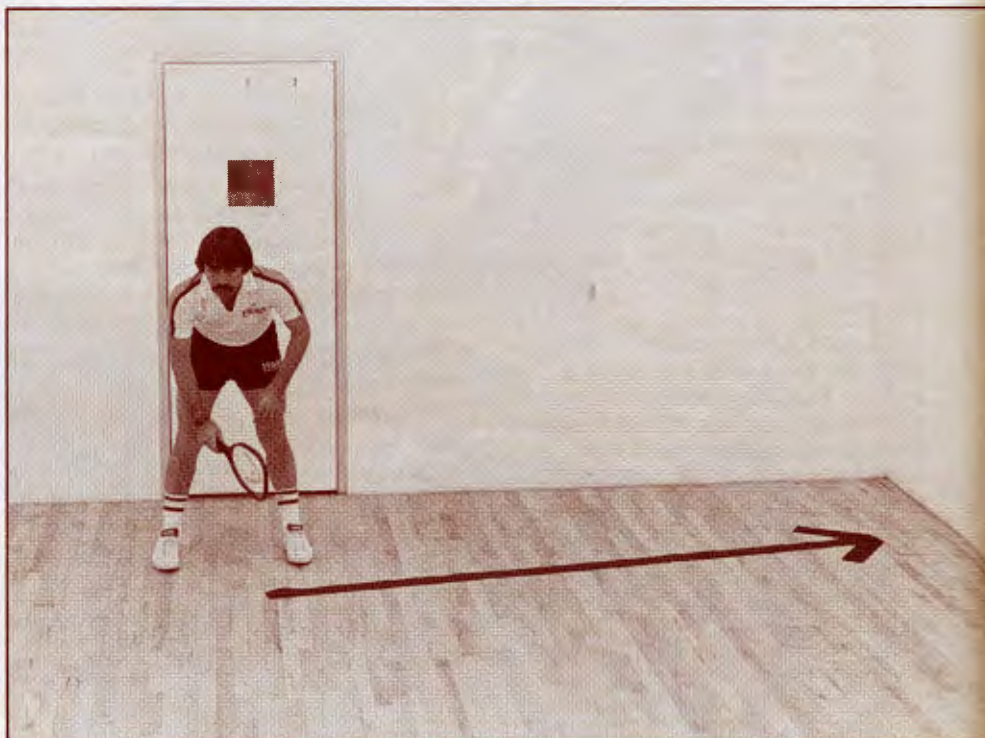
Standing relatively close to the back wall (1) gives you slightly more reaction time to reach a low-drive serve into either back corner and (2) enables you to move laterally rather than back on a diagonal, which forces you to hit while actually moving away from the front wall. It's okay

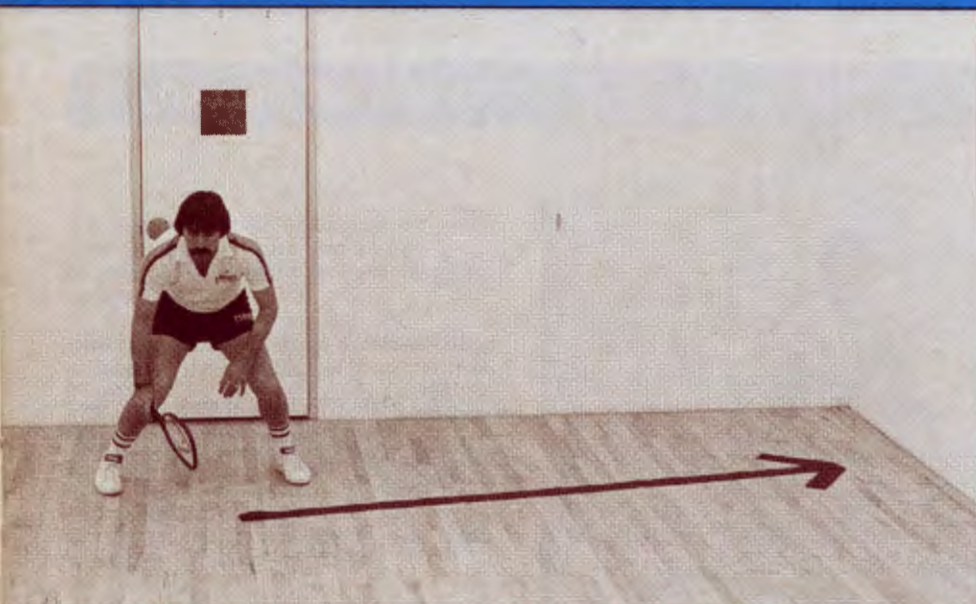
to stand a little further forward (five to six feet from the back wall) if your opponent's low-drives and hard Z's are continually popping off the walls as setups. But don't try to take a position almost halfway to the short line, thinking this will help you cover crack ace attempts that land just beyond the short line. This serve is Fantasyland, even in the pro game, and is going to occur far less often than an opponent's deep serves that force you to retreat—not to mention the low-drives that can get past you more easily for aces when you're positioned too far forward.

Mentally, you should be studying the server's motion, trying to determine what he's going to hit—and where. Against a power hitter who has good accuracy, and when playing with a live ball, some players might advise you to gamble on the first serve by simply breaking right or left in anticipation of a low-drive to the corner. But this is to play too much of a hit-

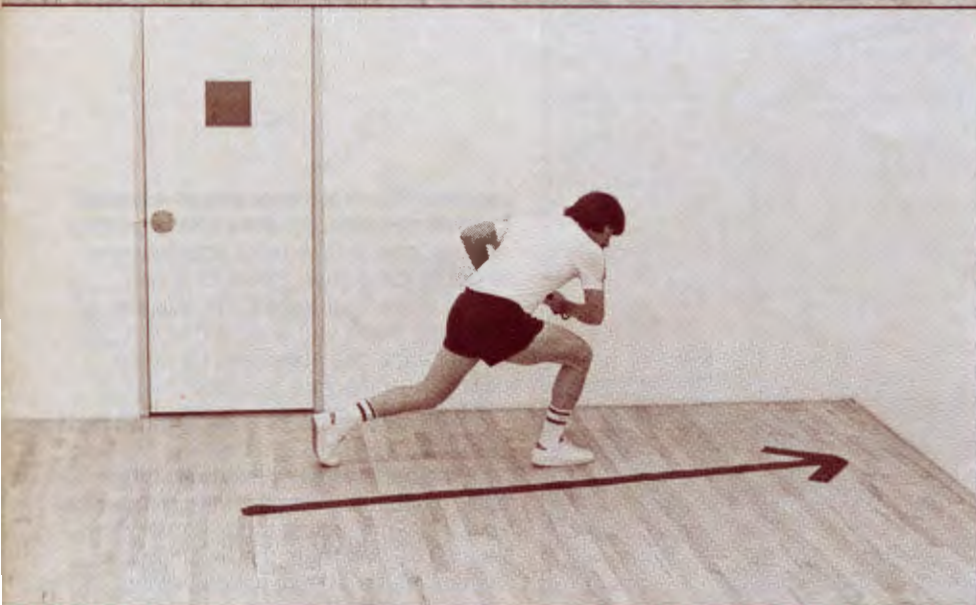
The Low-Drive Return

Unusual as it may look, many players hold this ready position until the server starts his movement into the ball.

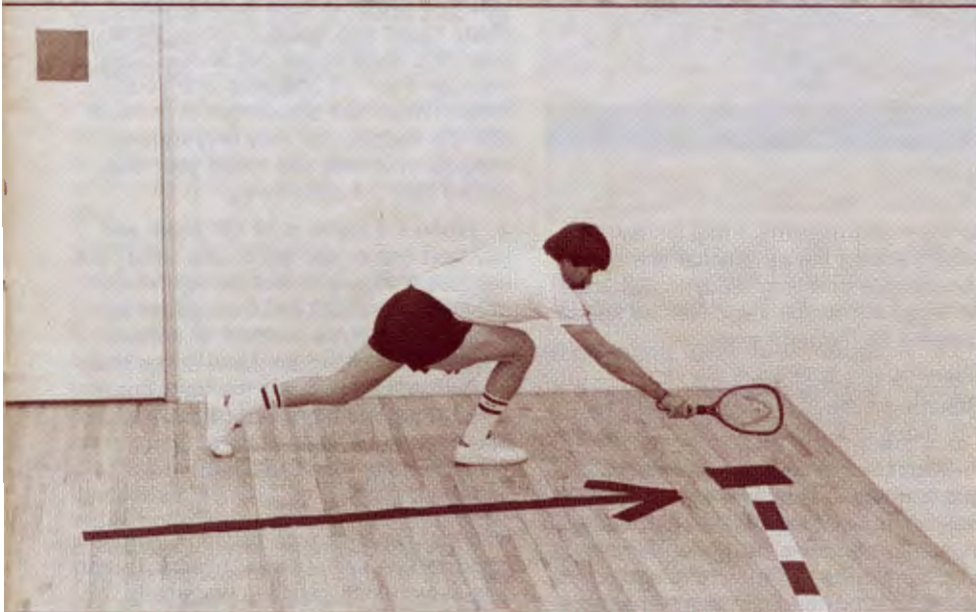




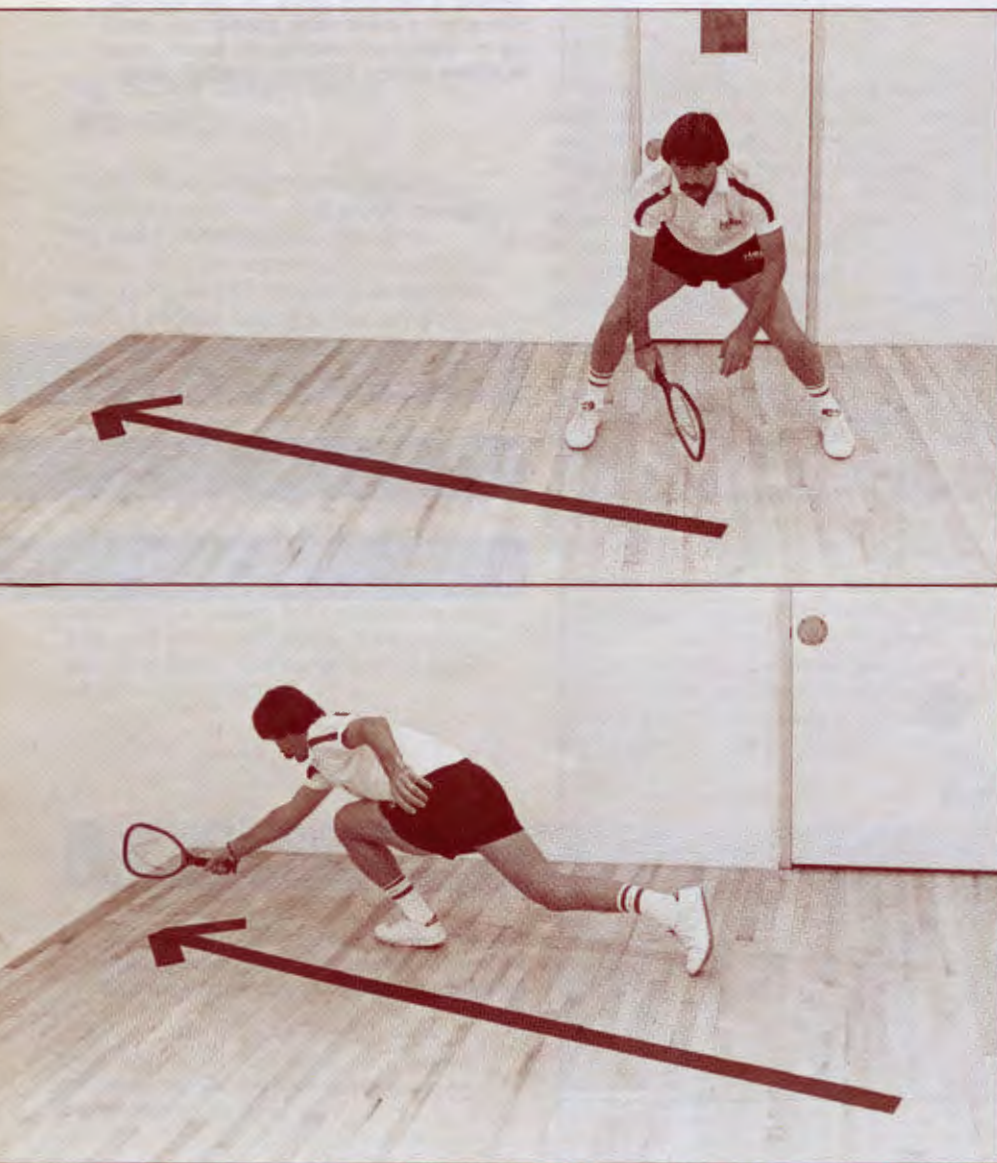
Sensing a low-drive serve, the returner now moves into a lower ready position (by widening his stance and bending his knees), which facilitates moving efficiently to either corner.



Forced to move quickly to the deep corner, the returner takes a long crossover step with his right leg as he pulls the racquet back for the hit.



Stretched out with his body, and his arm extended, he relies on good shoulder action and a wrist snap to hit the best return he can manage.



Notice the same principles at work when the defender must extend out to the forehand corner to reach a serve that goes tight along the side wall.

racquet. This cross-over step is essential in advanced play, for there's simply not enough time to take quick shuffle steps to get to the corner. Strive for a controlled movement toward the side wall so that even when you're stretched out, you can take the ball accurately up to the ceiling, pushing your opponent back while preventing the ace or the weak return.

2. If the serve is going to stay off the back wall but is away from the side wall, your initial movement to the corner may be a cross-over step, then a stride into the ball, and a strong, forceful swing. Or, you may prefer to take quick shuffle steps to get into hitting position. Whatever, this is an easier ball to reach and you can often be offensive with your return. When the ball comes even more into the middle, you may only have to readjust your feet and rotate your body before taking a solid swing.

3. When the serve is hit off-target and kicks off one or two walls as a setup, you can use a variety of foot repositions to get behind the ball and then go for a scoring shot. Even the best of servers have trouble hitting hard low-drives that consistently burrow into the back corner, so be ready for more setups than you may realize—and don't be afraid or unprepared to take the offensive.

Covering the Z Serve

The key here, through playing experience and practice sessions, is to learn to read this serve as it is angling diagonally across the court toward the side wall.

or-miss type of game. I feel it's better to simply accept the occasional ace and concentrate on being ready to capitalize on those numerous low-drives he keeps popping off the back wall.

Covering the Low-Drive Serve

Returns off the low-drive generally fall into these categories:

1. When the serve has been hit crisply and is going to stay tight along the side wall without coming off the back wall, you must learn to move over into the corner with a cross-over step, a long stretch, and then an extended reach with your

Covering The Z Serve

The numbers indicate where a properly hit Z serve should take its first and second bounces if the defender lets the shot run its course.

When the returner reads an excellent Z serve as it comes out of the front right corner (one hit with velocity and at the correct angle), he should quickly move over and contact the ball before it goes into the side wall. Hesitating here and allowing the ball to get into the back corner can lead to an extremely difficult return. Advanced players with good anticipation have the ability to move to the left wall and hit this return offensively.

Then you can make your shot-selection decisions without any real need for panic.

- If the Z is going to be good (contacting the front and side wall at the correct angle and height), you must either (1) move over and cut the ball off after it bounces and before it hits the side wall, or (2) let it come off the side wall. If you hesitate against the perfect Z, the ball may get too tight into the back corner or along the back wall and prevent you from taking a good swing.
- If the Z has been hit at the proper angle into the front wall, but too low, it will carom off the side wall and come in short off the back wall. So move over, let the ball kick off the side wall, then be ready to go for an offensive return.
- If the Z is long, it will carom off the side wall and back wall, then come to you as an offensive setup. Just make sure you're ready to go for the winner off this shot.

Covering Lob Serves

You'll be seeing a lot of lob serves in today's game, even against power hitters, since so many low-drive first serves land short. Therefore, get your ceiling game in precise shape. If your opponent's lob is accurate, just move to the corner and take the ball up to the ceiling as it approaches the back wall. If he's inaccurate, take advantage of your scoring opportunities off the walls. You may be tempted to move up and short-hop the half-lob attempt, but remember: this is a difficult shot to execute under pres-

sure and you lose the point if your racquet travels into the imaginary 5-foot zone too soon.

Relocating After Your Return

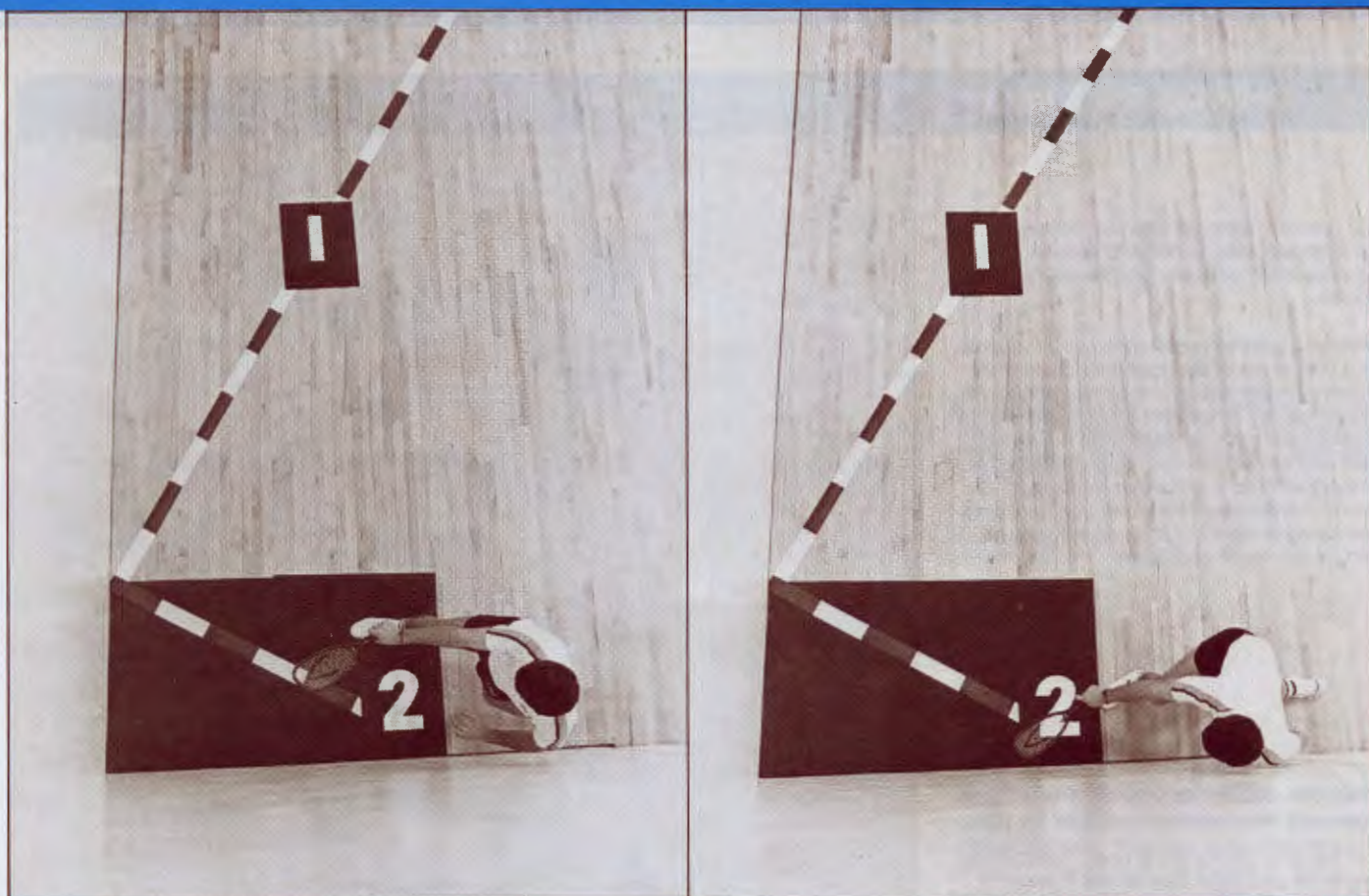
If you return the ball offensively, move quickly to the best coverage position you can reach, depending upon where your shot is traveling and where your opponent sets up for his shot. If you hit a ceiling return, simply stay back and slide off to the side, allowing your opponent to come back and hit. Then adjust accordingly as you see his intentions.

Serve Return Strategy

In developing overall strategy for your serve return, keep the following concepts in mind, but when you're actually playing, try to think only about flowing with the serve and trusting your instincts.

1. Before each serve, your mental approach should be that first you're looking for the chance to hit an offensive return, and when that opportunity isn't there you'll use common sense and go to the ceiling.
2. Your opponent should always feel the





The defender lets the ball carom off the side wall before making contact, generally going to the ceiling with his return.

A hard Z, hit perfectly, can angle sharply off the side wall and jam the returner tight against the back wall. Here he's trying to flick out the best possible return in a tough situation.

pressure of knowing that if he fails to execute an accurate serve, you have the skills and the confidence to go for an aggressive return to gain an immediate side-out. *You can't become an advanced player if you're scared to shoot the ball at the appropriate time.* If the serve comes into an area where you can take the offensive, you should be going for kill winners or passing shots. Even if a few of these balls angle into the middle of the court at your opponent, he may not have the necessary efficiency to rekill the ball.

3. However, if you realize that you're leaving up too many shots when you try to be aggressive and your opponent is cutting the ball off for winners, or setting

up for too many easy scoring shots, then change your strategy: pop the ball to the ceiling more often and wait for more opportune times to be offensive on your return.

4. Also, don't get caught up in your offensive thinking to the point where you take foolish chances against well-executed serves—low drives, Z's and lobs alike—by shooting every ball. Understand reality and hit the most logical shot: a ceiling ball. Against good players, you can't afford to gamble and consistently leave up your offensive returns in the action zone. Even if you mis-hit your ceiling ball and give your opponent a setup, he's still usually in the back three or four feet of the court and at least you can move up to cover his offensive attempt.

5. Remember to mix up your returns. Don't allow the server to lag deep because you're always passing the ball, or stay close to the service box because you try to pinch every return.

Improving Your Return

Here are some different approaches:

1. Evaluate just how effectively you're presently returning the ball under match-play pressure. When a friend is charting one of your matches, have him watch to see if your offensive returns are hitting low enough into the front wall to either go for winners, jam your opponent in center court, or go by him for effective passing shots. How well are you angling the ball away from him with pinches and passes? By comparison, how often do you leave the ball up and give him scoring opportunities? When you go to the ceiling, do you dictate another ceiling shot—or simply give him a setup?

2. When practicing with a friend, make sure you take a variety of serves to your forehand side so you're accustomed to reading the ball into that corner and executing from there while on the move or stretched out.

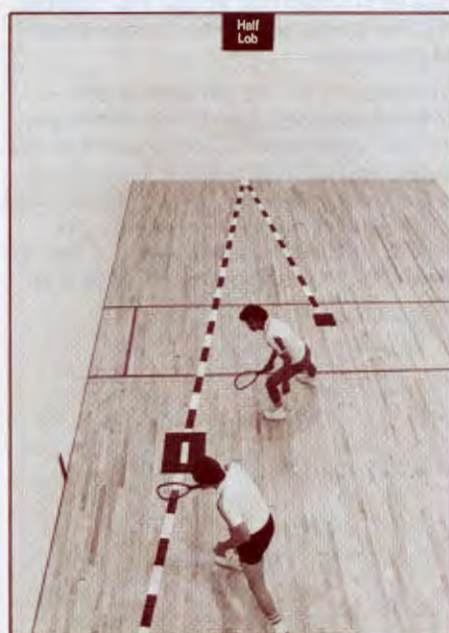
3. Help improve your judgment and reflexes against the Z by having a friend

Cutting Off The Half-Lob



A difficult way to keep from getting caught up in a slower style of play is to move up and contact the half-lob before it carries deep and forces a ceiling return. You can do this by either short-hopping the ball or hitting it on the rise.

The returner moves forward to cut the ball off in the air, but his racquet breaks the imaginary plane 5 feet behind the service box (left). This is illegal by some of today's rules, and the point is awarded to his opponent.



Here, the defender lets the ball bounce but hits it on the rise (right), going for a kill-pass either down-the-wall or cross-court.

hit Z's to you for five minutes while you call out "good," "short," or "long" before the ball reaches the short line. Also, when watching other matches study where the Z tends to travel after hitting into the front corner at different heights and angles—and how the Z pattern changes according to where the ball hits on the front wall.

4. Expand your capabilities against low-drives deep into the corners so that you can return more shots more effectively to the ceiling, and you can begin to hit offensive returns against serves that are not perfect, but which fail to come off the walls as setups. Since you have little time to get your racquet on the ball, concentrate on mastering that quick, fluid movement toward the side wall—starting with the cross-over step—so you're in a position to cut off some of your opponent's low-drives and take them low zone. At first, practice this complete

movement without the ball coming to you. Then, starting from your normal ready position, throw a ball over into the corner and go after it, hitting offensively and defensively as you are stretching out. Finally, work on this total unit as a friend hits low-drives into both corners.

5. In practice matches try to go for the offensive return when you normally might opt for the ceiling return, especially under tournament pressure. Also try to put the ball away instead of always using safer passing shots. Not that you turn the match into a circus by trying to shoot every return, skipping most of them and alienating your opponent, who wants to get into good racquetball rallies. Just stretch yourself a bit to see how effective you can be with a more offensive approach and to gain greater confidence in these shots. You're eventually going to need them to keep moving up the racquetball ladder. ●

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APRO Teaches:

For Players Of All Levels: Use the Lob Serve To Improve Your Game

by Michael D. Sipes

This article is one of a continuing series of instruction in three tiers, for beginner, intermediate and advanced players. Authored by APRO-certified instructors, this series will highlight one racquetball shot or situation in each issue.

As racquetball continues to develop younger and more skilled players, the game continues to change. New products are continually being introduced and playing surfaces vary widely. Thus, the game is in a state of constant evolution.

As the players and equipment continue to improve, strategy plays the most important role in your ability to adapt on the court. Today's players are stronger, quicker and smarter than their predecessors. Shots that worked so well against one player at one level may not work as well against another player at another

level. This is particularly true when it comes to the serve.

The serve is the only shot in racquetball where the server dictates the game's pace. When serving, it is extremely important to take the needed time to ensure proper placement, as well as making the crucial judgement as to which serve, what degree of power and to which side of the court you'll be hitting.

The main object lies in trying to force a weak return of your serve or, better yet, no return at all (those longed-for aces). Too many players hit all of their serves

hard and low, and for this reason many first serves are faults, leading to an abundance of double faults if the practice of drive, drive, drive is maintained.

In addition, as players become more proficient, the hard drive serve becomes less effective. The drive serve the beginner can't handle is apt to be returned defensively by the intermediate opponent and offensively by the advanced player.

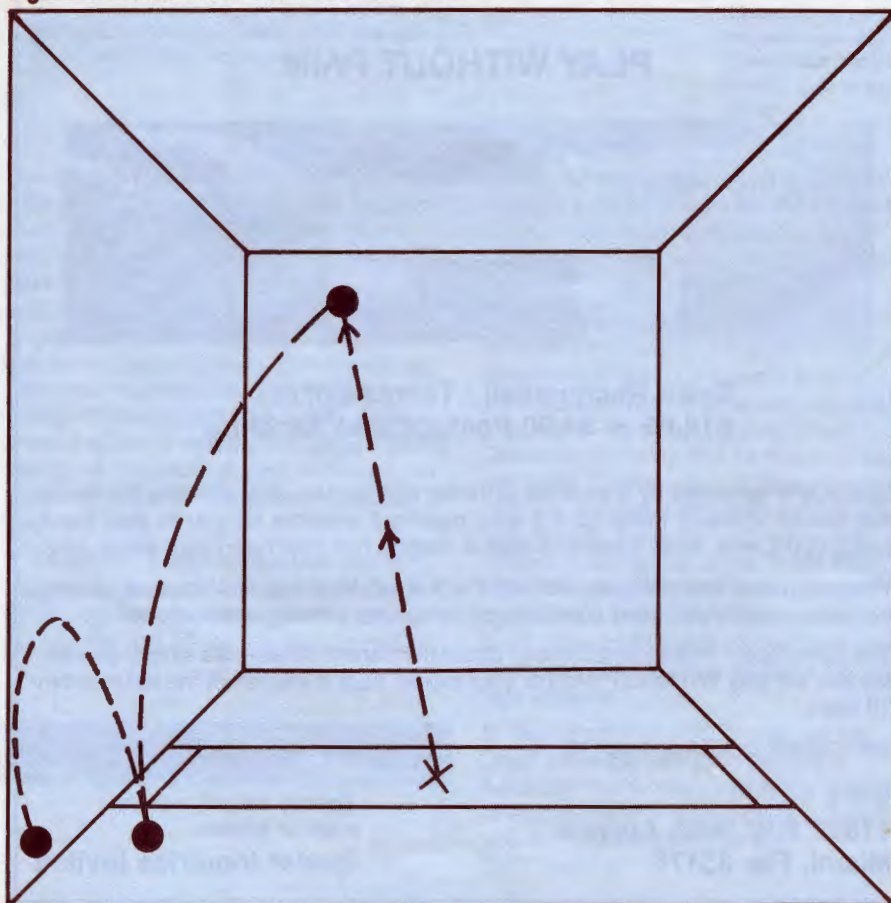
If the first serve is a fault, the server must then hit a second serve with less speed. That decreased speed allows the receiver more time to set up, increasing his ability to hit a well placed return. For this reason, it is imperative for players to develop good second serves.

Probably the best choice for your second serve is the lob. Its most effective target area is the receiver's backhand side (*Figure 1*). This particular serve is good for several reasons which vary depending upon ability level.

As you become proficient with this serve, you will find that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages at any level of play. The most important parts of the serve are pushing the ball to the front wall (rather than swinging through the ball as in most other shots) and controlling the speed as well as the placement of the serve.

The reasons for the lob serve's effectiveness are important to remember and as you understand the advantages of this serve, you will realize the importance of a safe, defensive return. With this knowledge you will gain the confidence not only to use the lob effectively, but also to return the lob when someone uses it on you.

Figure 1. The lob serve to the backhand corner.



Beginners: Learn The Lob—Then Use It

For a beginner, the advantages of the lob serve far outweigh the disadvantages because beginners haven't yet gained the power to hit effective drive serves and don't yet have the control necessary to steer the drives to the desired location. Other serves create a similar situation, making the lob an ideal choice for beginners because it's so easy to control.

Even more important, most beginners lack the backhand strength to deliver an effective return of a decent serve to the backhand corner. The combination of the relative ease in controlling the lob to this portion of the court, coupled with the difficulty in returning from this sector, put beginners who use the lob serve in point-gathering position.

Therefore, the lob serve is safer, easier to aim, and easier to hit than it is to

return. By picking on a universal weakness in the high, backhand return, the lob serve allows the server to maintain ideal court positioning after serving.

The disadvantage for the beginning player (yet one that can be overcome with a moderate amount of practice) is the lack of control or "feel" for the speed of the shot. For this reason, many beginners hit lob serves that bounce too far off the back wall or side wall. This does not usually cause a server too much trouble at the beginner level because the receiver hasn't yet acquired the skill necessary to hit winners off the serve, particularly the more difficult fly or short-hop returns.

Teaching methods vary slightly according to the skill level of the student but, for the most part, the steps remain the same

when learning the lob. The court diagram (Figure 2) shows lettered sections for where to stand and where to hit the ball to execute a successful lob serve.

Follow these steps to accurate lobbing:

Step 1. Stand in zone A (middle of the service zone), facing the side wall.

Step 2. Hold your racquet in a ready position about waist high with your other hand holding the ball about shoulder high (Figure 3).

Step 3. Drop the ball and allow it to bounce high into the air.

Step 4. With a stiff-wristed motion, move your racquet upward, contacting the ball at the top of its bounce. It is extremely important that the racquet guide the ball in a stiff-wristed motion. Do not break your wrist!

Figure 2. Stand in section A; the ball should hit the front wall in section B; and rebound in deep court section C.

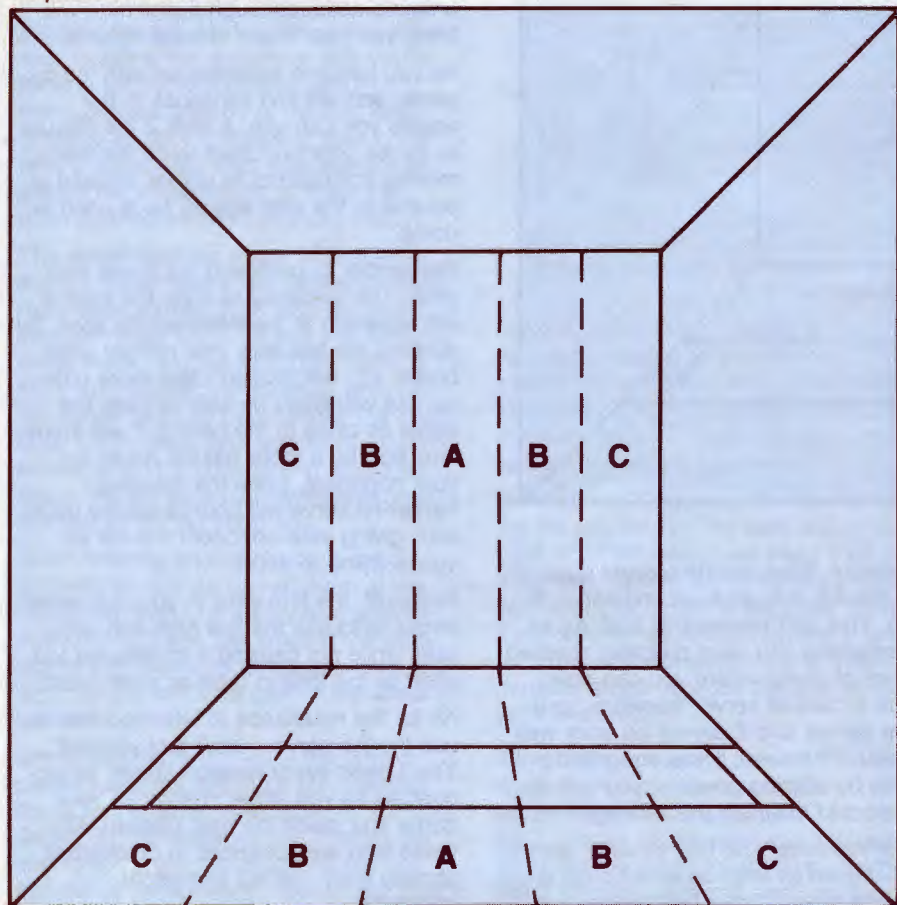


Figure 3. Hold the ball high with racquet ready, drop and strike it with stiff wrist at the high point of its bounce.



—Photo by Arthur Shay

Step 5. The ball should be guided toward section B of the front wall (note *Figure 2* again) and should make contact with the front wall about three to five feet from the ceiling.

Step 6. When you aim the ball from section A toward the front wall at section B, it should now rebound past the short line

and end up bouncing between sections B and C. The ideal area for the ball's first bounce is between the short line and the five foot restraining line.

Step 7. As the ball bounces, it will now drift high into the air and end up in the deep court segment of section C—your opponent's backhand.

Tip to work on: Experiment with your new stroke as well as with your placement. Five or 10 minutes alone on the court periodically should be enough for you to catch on to where your lob serves will be going, after you have struck the ball properly.

Intermediates: The Lob Shows No Weakness

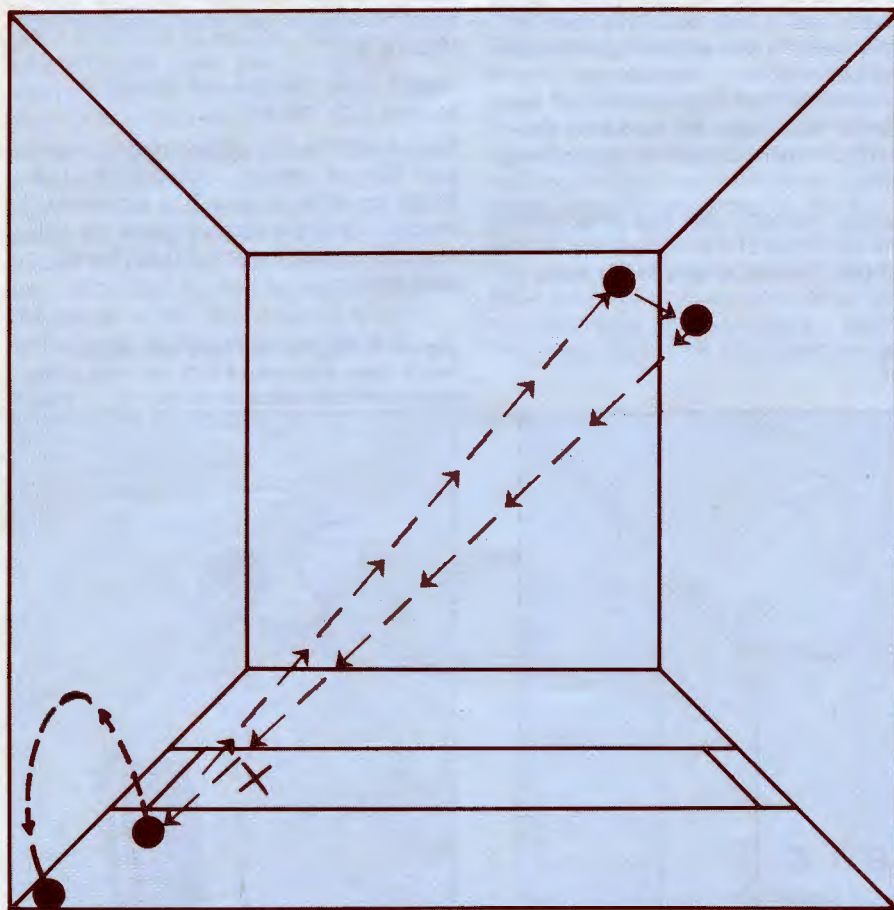


Figure 4. The high Z lob serve.

should feel comfortable going to a lob. The reasons are multiple. For one, the lob serve will help you change the pace of a power game; secondly, it will allow you a rest if fatigue is becoming a factor; third, you will still be maneuvering your serve to the universal weakness—the backhand corner; and fourth, you'll be able to maintain ideal court position for the return.

For an intermediate, the only real disadvantage is that the lob serve will rarely produce aces, although if well hit it will bring you your share of weak returns.

As you become experienced with the lob serve, you will find variations in the angles you can use. A high Z lob (*Figure 4*) forces your opponent to hit the ball moving from corner to corner, instead of parallel to the side wall as he is used to doing.

Remember to push and not break your wrist. The tendency to snap the wrist is still apparent at the intermediate level. By stroking the ball with your normal wrist break, you will probably feel more natural, but you won't be able to keep the serve as close to the ceiling. It will therefore also be a more natural return for your opponent, since the resulting harder-hit serve will bounce off the back wall, giving your opponent the set up you're trying to avoid.

However, the firm wrist in your lob serve stroke will keep the ball high and accurate, while not causing it to rebound too short or too long in back or short court.

As for the reluctance of intermediates to use the lob serve—don't fool yourself. You'll need every weapon known to racquetball as you strive to improve your game and reach the next plateau. And those who are advanced in racquetball already know the lob and use it effectively.

For some reason, many intermediate players are reluctant to use the lob serve. Of the three general categories of players (beginners and advanced being the others), intermediates probably use the lob serve least of all.

Apparently, intermediate players like to think of themselves as future advanced players (the proper attitude). And they see such an abundance of drive and other power-type serves being used at the advanced level that the lob is somehow forgotten.

Therefore, intermediate players generally use the lob only as a second serve, if then. This isn't necessarily bad. As an intermediate you have probably reached a level of ability where you can now place a hard-hit serve; therefore, your drive serves and Z serves do work well for you. Of course, if you are gaining points by utilizing power in your serves you should maintain this strategy.

But if you miss your first serve or start to get fatigued by your opponent's continual blasting away at your first serves, you

Advanced Players: Know The Lob And What It Can Do For You

As a player reaches an advanced level of ability, the shots are much more refined. The common mistakes (and "cheap" points) don't occur as often and players' strokes are smooth and natural.

For this reason, small mistakes in your serving game quite often turn into side outs. Therefore, you should develop a sound all-around game, incorporating the lob serve as an integral part of your serving repertoire.

The advantages of the lob serve for the advanced player are similar to those mentioned earlier, but are even more noticeable. Rest is needed during play at a higher level of ability, and the lob serve provides that rest. Although an advanced player has certainly fine-tuned his skills and strokes, the lob serve still picks on the last shot any player learns to control, the high, backhand return.

Most advanced players use the lob as an attempt to elicit a defensive return from the receiver. Against big-hitting, power players, the lob will force a ceiling return, thus initiating the defensive rally you're looking for. Advanced play requires a much greater amount of thinking and strategy as your analysis of your opponent's game, and thus your attempt to exploit his weaknesses, is often the difference between victory and defeat.

The disadvantages of the lob serve for the advanced player are similar to those mentioned earlier. First, you will gain very few aces although you can expect some weak returns. Secondly, there is little, if any, element of surprise with the lob serve—so you better make it a good one. Third, since your opponent usually knows when it's coming and where it's going, he will occasionally attempt to cut the ball off on the short hop.

Short-hopping should not be a major concern for you as server, even at the advanced level. It's a very low-percent-age shot and you can change the strategy of the short-hopper by changing the depth of the ball's bounce or the angle of its path.

Short-hopping is generally the power player's attempt to initiate an offensive thrust to the defensive nature of the lob serve. But percentages are against the short-hop return, particularly if the five foot barrier is enforced. One of the most

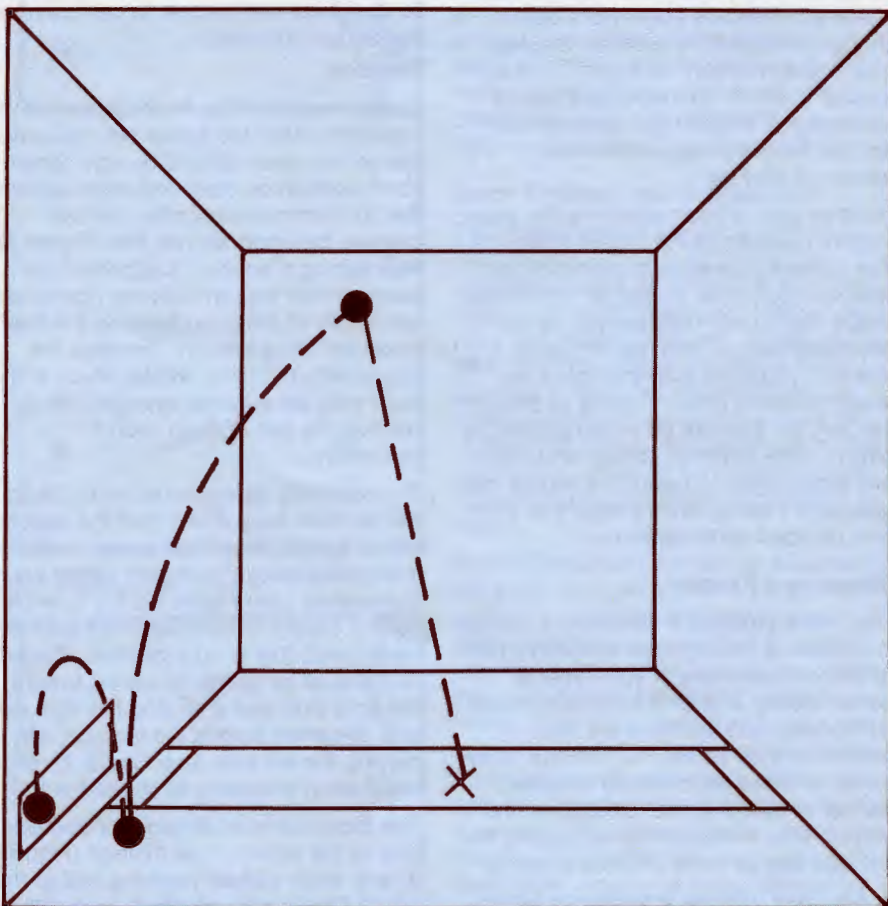


Figure 5. Contacting the deep side wall with the lob serve's second bounce.

comical sights in racquetball is the receiver charging forward for the anticipated short-hop blast, only to have to reverse himself instantly, to re-load for the extra-high lob. Don't concern yourself with short-hopping receivers.

By experimenting, you will find that having the ball contact the side wall deep in back court (Figure 5) will keep it off the back wall. Attempting to be this precise with your placement is definitely something only for advanced players. It is not recommended for beginners or intermediate levels because the margin for error is so slim.

If the ball touches the side wall too shallow in the court, your opponent will be set up with a backhand "plum" as the ball bounces off the side wall into center court. By the same token, if you hit the ball a little too hard and don't connect

with the side wall deep, then the ball will take a big bounce off the back wall, leaving the receiver with another set up, of a different variety.

However, when you do hit the good lob serve, your opponent will have no choice but to return defensively, enabling you to maintain control of the rally. And if you're not going to score with an ace, the next best thing is to control the rally and pick your spot for that offensive winner.

Michael D. Sipes is on the board of directors of APRO, as well as being a regional director of that organization. He has nine years experience as an instructor, is vice-president of the Ohio Racquetball Association, and a member of the Ektelon Advisory staff.

Double Your Fun—With Doubles!

by Terry Fancher

There are many excellent features associated with doubles play. It is a good change of pace from constant singles play; it is fun to play as a team and with friends; it is less strenuous but just as satisfying as singles; and average players can be more competitive with advanced players.

Doubles play is often scoffed at by many players because of the limited space for four players allowed in a regulation racquetball court. This feeling of "closeness" keeps many beginners as well as more advanced players from participating. It is true that you must give the opposing team members enough space to swing at the ball, yet this can be accomplished by paying close attention during actual play and simply moving out of the way of the opponent's swing even though you may give up good court position.

Choosing a Partner

One major problem in choosing a partner in doubles is finding a person who's compatible or supportive of your type of game. Ideally, it is best to have a strong left-handed partner if you are right-handed or vice-versa. The stronger shot-maker or more experienced doubles partner should play the left side, or the players may switch off, since playing the left side can be more physically taxing.

In any case, choose a partner to whom you can relate and communicate. Remember, two good singles players do not always make a good doubles team. Many doubles players become frustrated when their partner misses a few easy shots or one partner will blame the other for mistakes or losing. The doubles team must play together smoothly, as a breakdown in trust or support usually spells disaster.

Communication and Teamwork

Playing together as a unit is not as difficult as might be expected if some basic guidelines are followed. Of course, constant play with the same partner will instill confidence and cooperation. Communicating with your partner may be accomplished by talking after the rally ends to resolve any conflict or revise strategy. Having one partner call shots during the rally so there are no hesitations as to which player will return a given shot is helpful. A simple "yours" or

"mine" is the most effective way to quickly let your partner know who is responsible for a given shot; it is easier to designate one partner to call each ball throughout the match.

Position

Center court position in doubles is all-important. After the ball is put into play, the serving team should occupy center court position on their respective sides of the court immediately after the ball crosses the short service line (Figure 1). Maintaining a position just behind the short service line on both the right and left center of the court enables the team to control the game and provides the opportunity of hitting shorter shots to the front wall, yet allowing enough time to retrieve the ball in deep court if necessary.

The receiving team should try to return the serve in such a way that the opposition is forced away from center court, then move quickly to regain center court themselves (see Figure 1). Try to avoid getting caught behind the other team in deep court; this is poor position. Player's feet should be facing off-center toward the right side wall if playing the right side and off-center toward the left side wall if playing the left side (see Figure 2), especially when preparing to stroke the ball.

The most common division for doubles play is the side-by-side method (Figure 3) with each partner covering half of the court. This can be modified so that the left side player may cover more than his half of the court, especially on back wall shots slightly off-center to the right. A right-handed player playing the left side position should also take shots returned down the middle of the court with the stronger forehand stroke as opposed to the right side player returning the ball with a backhand stroke.

Players should not cross into each other's zone unless it is an emergency. This will help prevent the common problem in doubles—which partner takes the shot? It may also help eliminate injury from collision.

Serving

There are several types of serves that can be used in doubles depending upon your team's strength. Normally, a safe "Z" serve to the opposing team's weaker player is adequate to start play, or a high lob causing a defensive return. A drive serve is more risky since the receiving

team has both corners of the court covered and a hard drive serve that reaches the back wall can be returned equally as hard causing the serving team to have to react too quickly and mis-hit the service return.

Ideally, the serve should allow the serving team time to get into position on both sides of the court. As soon as the ball crosses the short line, the partner who is not receiving should immediately step into position on his side of the court just behind the short line, away from the side wall. A good habit to acquire for the non-server in this situation is to place the racquet between his face and the opposing team to prevent being struck in the face on a wild return.

Another good serve (Figure 4) is the power serve by the left-handed player which caroms sharply off the back wall thereby jamming the right side opponent. Rarely is there ever an offensive return of this serve.

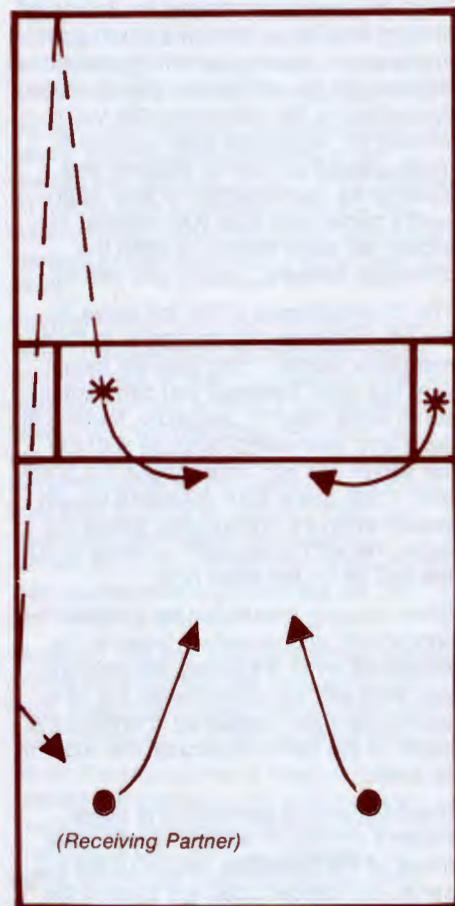


Fig. 1 Serve
Strive to maintain center court position after the serve.

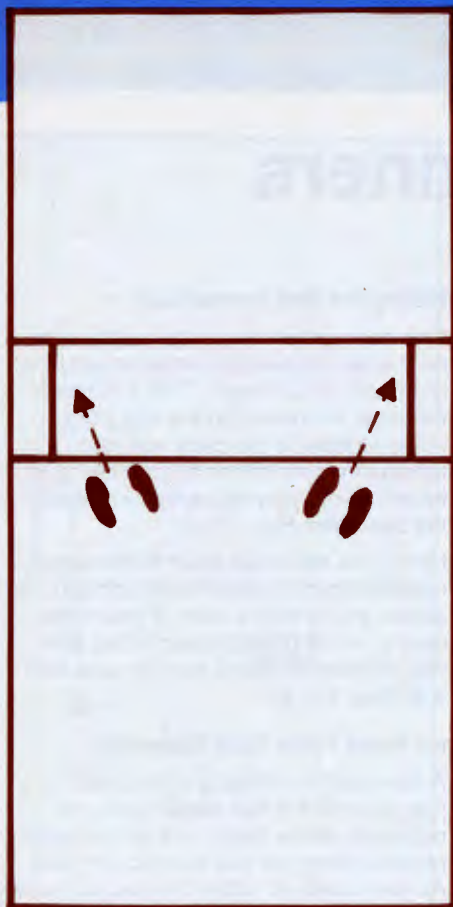


Fig. 2 Playing with off-center footwork.

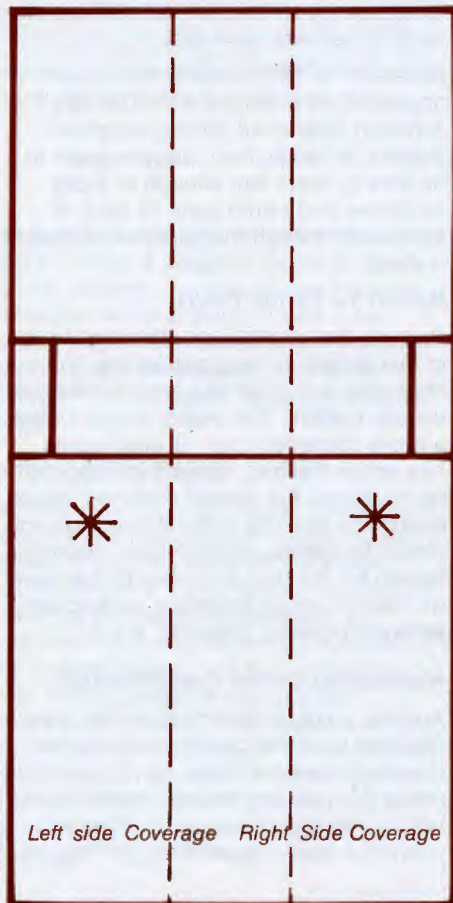


Fig. 3 Side by side coverage may take you slightly into your partner's side.

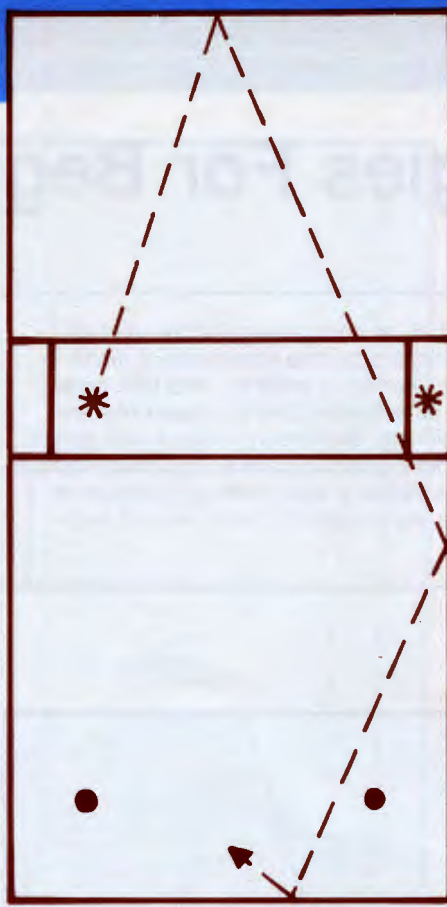


Fig. 4 Effective drive serve

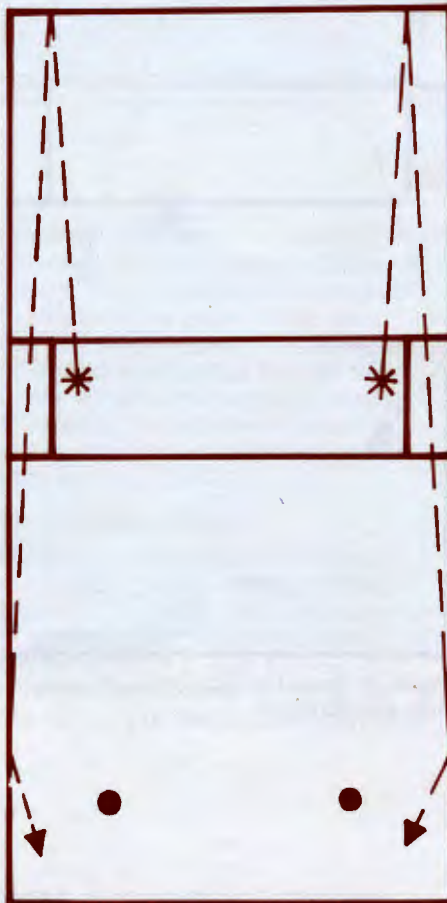


Fig. 5 Soft-garbage serve hugging side wall can be used by either partner.

A soft half-lob or garbage serve hugging the wall along either side wall is also useful (Figure 5). If the left side player is right-handed and all of the serves are fed to that side you can rest assured that constant bombardment will eventually cause weak returns of serve unless the player has exceptional backhand endurance. Often, if one team constantly serves to one opponent, an occasional serve to the other team member will cause a hurried and unexpected response resulting in a poor return.

Basic Strategy and Suggestions

The theme behind playing successful doubles is, of course, to play to the opposing team's weakness. If they reciprocate you must make your team's weakness the lesser of the two. Above all, your team must start out with a basic strategy in mind before beginning the match. If the plan works, your team has chosen the correct course of action; if the plan fails it will need some quick revisions if you hope to stay in the game or match.

Another important element of success is the ability to keep faith in your partner even if he or she is not playing well. Encouragement and support for each other is important throughout the match; this is evident in successful doubles teams. There is a certain calmness and self-assurance that somehow endures through tight situations until victory is assured. Some partners will shoulder the responsibility or the blame for losing or playing badly which can lead to severe frustration; winning or losing should be shared equally.

It works to the advantage of a team in doubles to show spirit if your team makes a good shot or wins a rally. A short, loud yell of affirmation can go a long way in undermining the other team's confidence and concentration, so make some noise as any winning team will do in any sport, but be careful not to become obnoxious in yelling, for you will quickly lose court friends.

In addition, keep in mind the pace at which your team plays best. If you score points steadily by quickly putting the ball into play on the serve, keep the pace fast; if the other team plays best this way, try to slow the game down to allow time to catch up again. Try to avoid letting the other team jump to a big lead early in the game, as this can be very difficult to overcome later. Although it appears easier to catch up in doubles play as opposed to singles because the physical burden can be shared, remember, this holds true for both teams. ●

Basic Strategies For Beginners

by Terry Fancher

If you are a beginner at the game of racquetball, or have played for only a short period of time, this article is written for you. It has been the experience of many teaching professionals that new players, men, women or children, who take either group or private lessons at a club, YMCA or other facility start to acquire needed fundamentals of the game right from the beginning. Conversely, players who participate in the sport for a period of months without instruction have a very difficult time in trying to correct bad habits. In short, it makes sense to start learning correct techniques from the outset of play rather than having to readjust poorly learned techniques later.

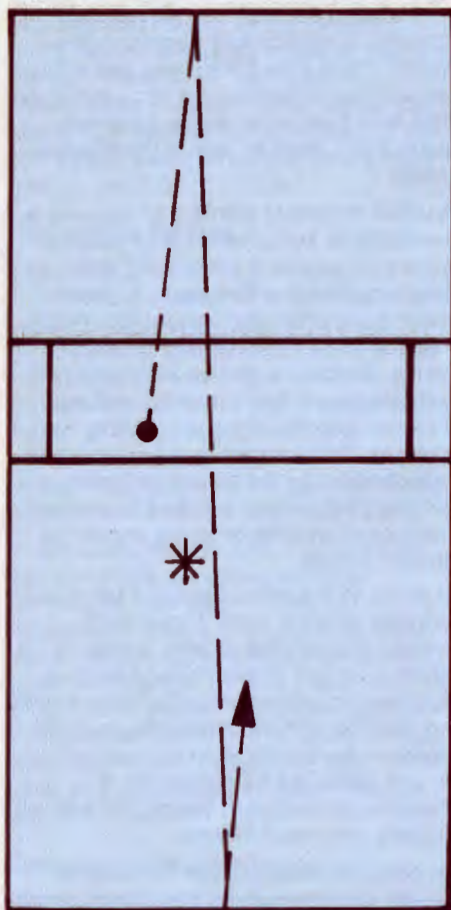


Figure 1: Avoid frequent back wall set-ups.

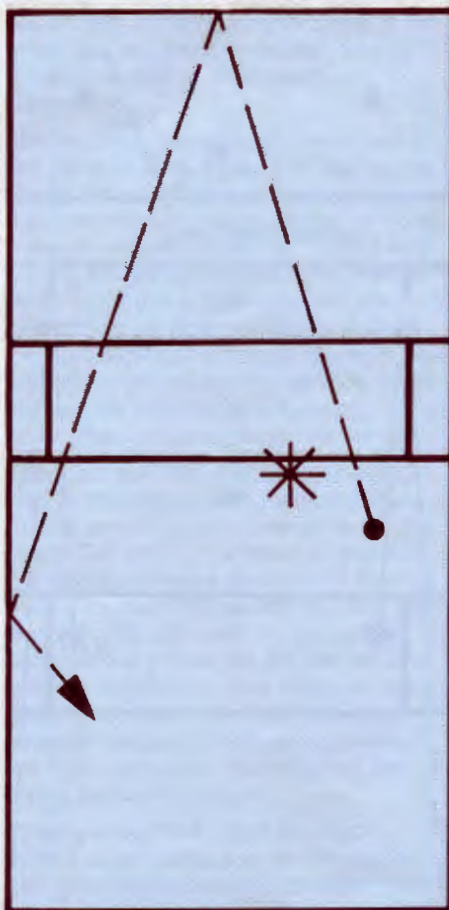


Figure 2: Stroke the ball cross-court—away from your opponent.

Hitting the Ball Cross-court

One concept which can be helpful is to hit the ball cross-court while actually rallying with an opponent. This practice is essential in preventing the ball from going straight to the back wall and rebounding into center court, making it easy for your playing partner to return the ball. (See Fig. 1 & 2)

Hitting the ball cross-court forces your opponent out of center court position and allows you to take it over. If your opponent is out of position near either side wall, hit the ball along the opposite side wall (See Fig. 3).

Hit Away From Your Opponent

A key point in volleying at all levels of play is to hit the ball away from your opponent. Many beginners are conscious of only hitting the ball to keep it in play. As your ability to return the ball increases with time, make yourself more aware of where your partner is during play and force him to run the furthest possible distance to retrieve your shot.

Do not try to hit the ball *through* your opponent, hit it *around* him. This is a common error even among excellent players. In racquetball, players seem to be able to react fast enough in many instances and return balls hit back at them even though they are handcuffed or rushed.

Return To Center Court

Perhaps the single most important factor in racquetball is court positioning. In observing any good player, this quality is usually evident. The player should make a move to center court as soon as he has struck the ball, keeping in mind that he must give his partner time and space enough to execute a return shot and not hinder the other player's vision. Getting a feeling for the flow and pace of the game will help in timing the move back to center court position. (See Fig. 4 & 5)

Maintaining Center Court Position

Another point to remember is that a ball returned to you in center court can be quickly played out of the air (on the fly) rather than playing the ball off the back wall or letting it pass you by. This will prevent a hasty retreat from good court

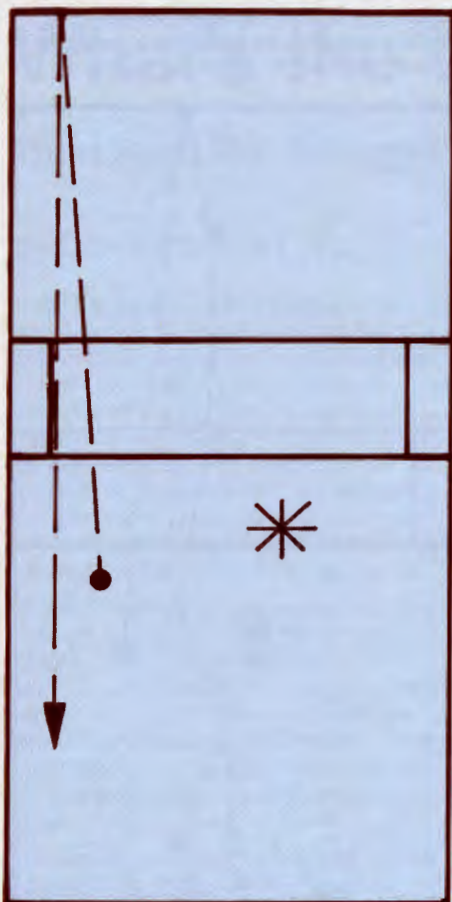


Figure 3a: Backhand down-the-line pass.

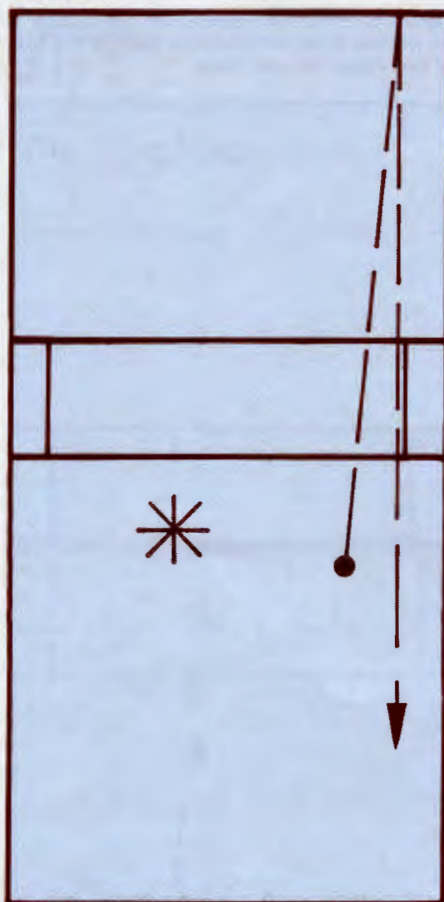


Figure 3b: Forehand down-the-line pass.

position and allow you to maintain the center. When a player is forced to constantly retrieve, a proportionate increase in fatigue will take place. When a ball comes within racquet reach and you are basically in a set position—cut it off. Your partner will again be forced to react quickly.

Watching The Ball

Another very important aspect of racquetball play is focusing attention on the ball (notice photos of professionals in this issue). This is a tricky subject because in watching the ball there is always a chance of being struck by it. To relieve this anxiety players are encouraged to wear either protective eye guards, glasses, or frames. In my opinion, watching the ball will help prevent being struck by the racquet because a player realizes only by watching the ball that he is out of range of his opponent's swing and can react accordingly.

A common occurrence for beginners is to stare blindly at the front wall, positioned in center court while the ball is rebounding straight at the player off the back wall. This playert usually is following the ball and does not realize that the ball or racquet will strike his partner if he takes a full swing. The result—one player is struck by the racquet or the ball or both. (See Fig. 6)

Serve to the Backhand

Most novice racquetball players should put the ball in play by serving to their opponent's backhand. The more accurate the placement of the serve, the more likely there will be a weak service return. Many new players come to the service zone, do not look back to see where their

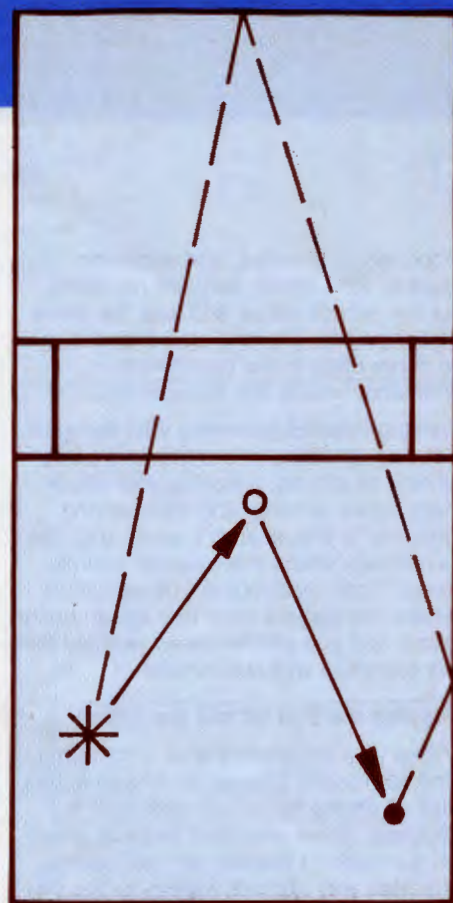


Figure 4: Return to center court after the ball is hit.

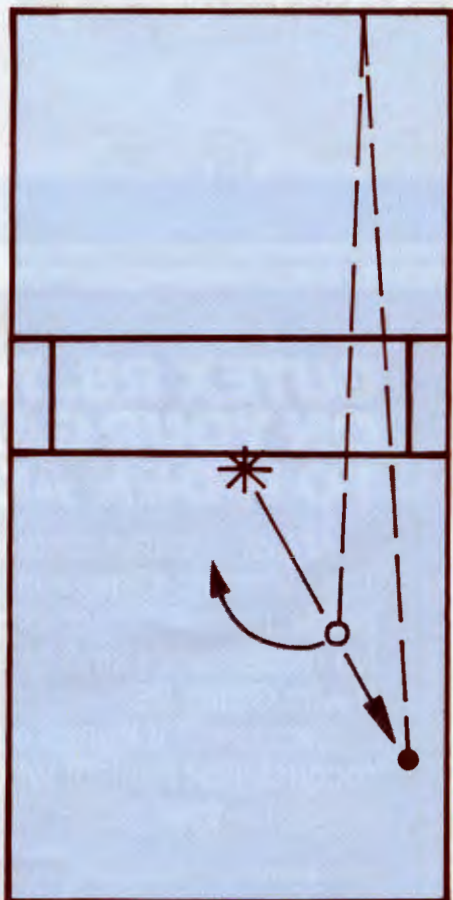


Figure 5: As your partner races to retrieve your shot, quickly move out of his path and return to center court.

opponent is standing, and serve too quickly. As a result, they are not ready for the service return and lose the serve again quickly. There is also a tendency to serve often to the opponent's forehand, usually the stronger side.

Serving requires gathering your thoughts, pausing, deciding where the next serve should be placed, watching your opponent before serving, and then serving primarily to the receiver's backhand; this is normally where the weakest returns occur. I can recall numerous occasions where two players went through an entire game and one partner never realized that his opponent was left-handed.

Playing the Ball off the Back Wall

When your opponent's shot is hit with a firm stroke and there is no time to cut the ball off on the fly, a back wall shot is required. Three important aspects of this shot include 1) tracking the ball back to the back wall and not waiting for the ball to come to you, 2) keeping the ball away from the body on the rebound off the back wall and 3) letting the ball drop to about waist height on the rebound off the back wall before swinging. (See Fig. 7) ●

Figure 6. Player has a back wall set up and his partner is locked in center court in the line of fire. Player X must move.

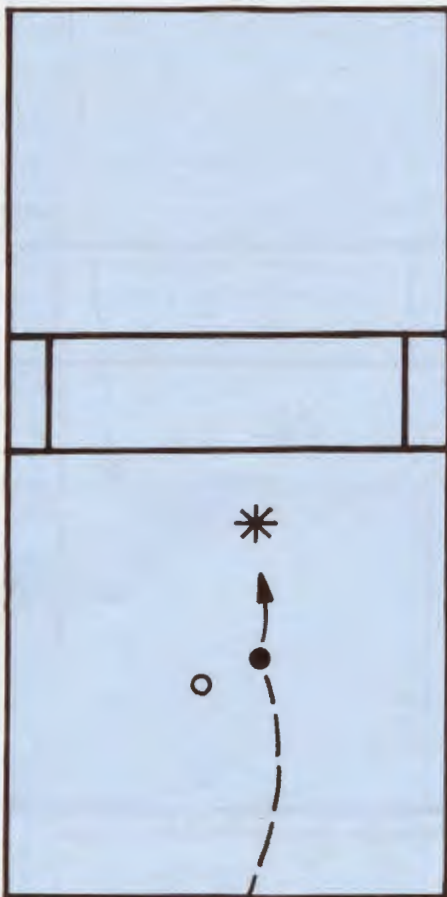
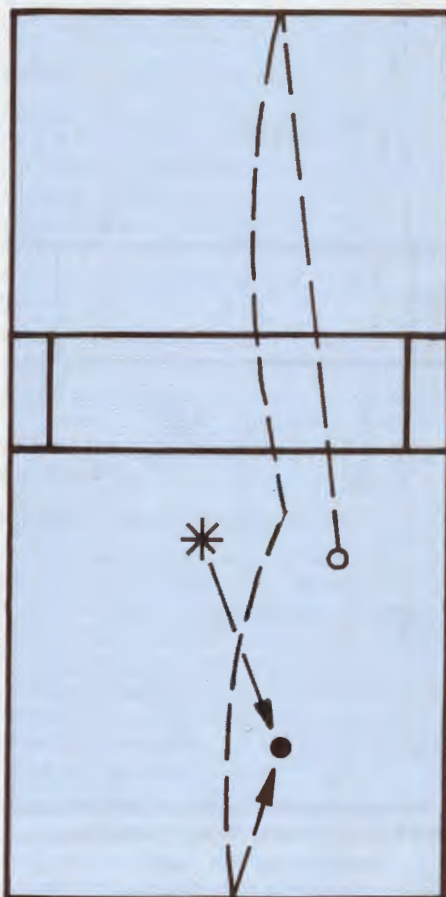


Figure 7. Track the ball back, keeping it at arm's length from the body, allow the ball to drop to waist height before swinging.



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What's the Call?

Thou Shalt Not Infringe On The Five Foot Line

by Dan Bertolucci

One rule which is still a source of frequent questions and widely subject to misinterpretation is that concerning the Fly Return, Rule 4.7 (c). In order to understand the Fly Return, we should first focus on Rule 4.7—Return of Serve (a) Receivers(s). This reads: *"The receiver or receivers may not infringe on the Receiving Lines until the ball has either bounced beyond the Short Line or passed the Receiving Lines on the fly."*

In other words, the receiver(s) may not execute a fly return within the five-foot "safety zone." Violation of this rule by the receiver(s) results in a point for the server. Such a call is a judgment rendered by the referee, when there is one, or by the server, usually, when two people are playing for fun. The ruling is not appealable.

Further interpretation of this rule can be derived from section 4.7—Return of Serve (c) Fly Return, which states: *"In making a fly return it is illegal to strike the return of serve on the fly in front of the receiver's five-foot restraining line. After the server has struck the ball, the receiver may cross the five-foot line to return the serve, provided the ball bounces between the short line and receiving line. If the ball does not bounce the receiver cannot hit it. Any serve that passes the five-foot line in the air may be returned on the fly. Violation by the receiver results in a point for the server."*

This rule has been modified from its original form to help prevent needless injury to the server. Formerly, receivers were allowed to enter the safety zone and strike serves on the fly as long as their racquet or body did not enter the service area, either while striking or during followthrough. However, this interpretation did not achieve its safety goal because after serving, the server usually would back out of the service zone, into the safety zone, in order to assume center court position for the receiver's return.

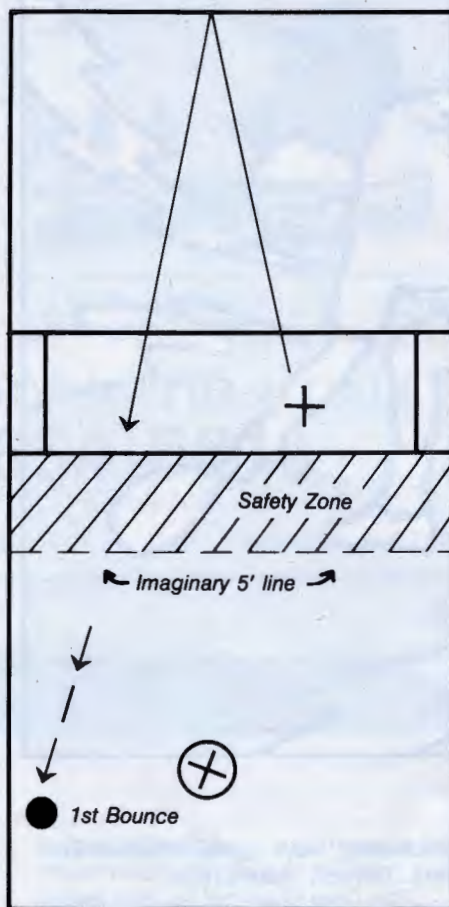


Diagram 1. The imaginary five foot line creates a safety zone which cannot be entered to return serves that pass through the zone on the fly.

This situation caused a definite safety hazard as receiver raced forward to hit a fly return and server backed into position. The rule now specifies that you (as receiver) cannot enter the five-foot safety zone until the ball has done one of two things:

- 1) bounced within the five-foot zone, i.e., between the five-foot line and the short line, or
- 2) passed the hash marks often seen on the side walls of courts, corresponding to

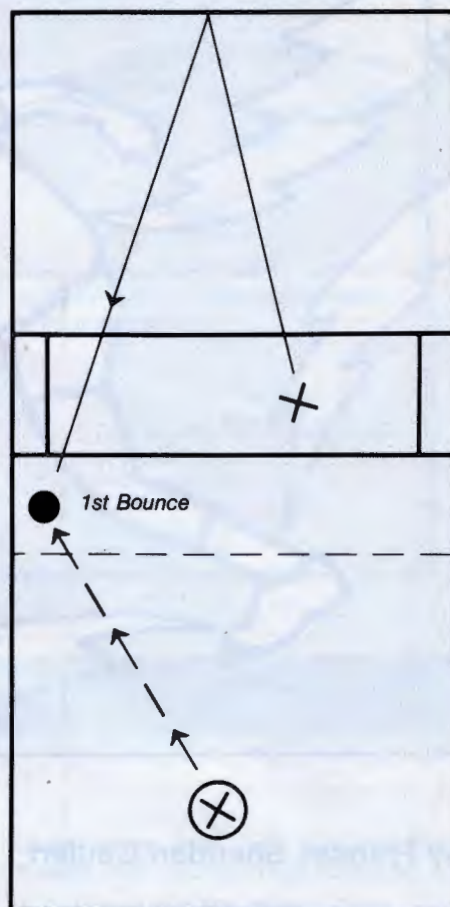


Diagram 2. Serves that bounce within the safety zone may be returned from within the zone after they bounce once.

the imaginary five-foot line on the court.

Once the ball has done either of the above, the receiver is free to enter the five-foot safety zone.

Good luck next time out. Remember, if you don't have a referee, hold up if it looks as though there's a risk you might hit your opponent. Safety first for better racquetball! ●

Only When It Hurts: Remedies For Common Racquetball Injuries



by Frances Sheridan Goulart

Every athlete has his Achilles heel. And if you're a racquetball player, it probably isn't your heel either. There are 500 muscles in the body but injuries in sports occur most often to only 5% of them.

Here are a few of them and how to troubleshoot them yourself:

Racquetball Elbow

Fibro myositis is a condition in which small rips or micro-tears develop in the tendons of the forearm muscles near the elbow and chronic inflammation results—usually in a player whose forearm isn't strong enough to hold or control the racquet correctly.

Also, say experts, consistently squeezing the grip of your handle—especially with the small and ring fingers—may contribute to the condition.

Remedy/Prevention:

"Over 90% of all patients can be improved without the need for a surgical

procedure," says sports physician Burton L. Benson. Here's how:

1. Get a systematic strengthening program for shoulder and forearm muscles going. For instance, try exercising the wrist and forearm by lifting dumbbells of progressively greater weight twice a day.
2. Buy or make a shock absorber for your racquet handle. Companies that manufacture such a gadget use $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick plastic or rubber foam which when wrapped around the handle provides extra comfort and absorbs some of the shock.
3. A lighter racquet and ball, a slower surface and looser strings help in the fight against both occurrence and recurrence.
4. Strengthen your whole arm. (Get a 2-3" ball or use a squash ball.) Squeeze it tightly then release. Repeat until wrist and fingers holler "uncle."
5. Pick the right racquet. An undersized grip may make the fingers unstable and cause you to whip the racquet putting

strain on wrists and joints.

6. Learn proper form. When you play with lots of racquet slips or wrist movement, the impact of the ball often falls on the elbow joint and tendons and the cumulative stress can result in racquetball elbow.

Racquetball Back

Anything can happen to your back, and usually will if you stick with a sport long enough. A back injury may involve any part of the back's complex structure which consists of bones, ligaments, muscles, tendons, nerves and more.

A drawback of most racquet sports is that they build up an unbalanced muscular strength, which stresses the spine and often results in lower-back pain.

Remedy/Prevention:

1. Should you stoop to conquer? Only if you do it right. Arching way back triggers injury. You pick up the ball hundreds of times in an hour of play, so do it correctly to avoid lower-back strain and injury. Never bend from the waist with your legs straight. The safest way to retrieve the ball is to place it between your heel and racquet and lift it up. Get good at this technique and save a lot of energy. Don't rush to pick up a ball out of play; save your energy for the game.
2. Practice the pelvic tilt. This is the foundation of all back strengthening and flexibility programs. Lie on your back with knees bent and hips arched. Press back against floor. Hold for a count of 10. Repeat 10 times.
3. Do "the fish." Lie on your stomach, hands behind your head. Lift elbows, squeeze shoulder blades together, elevate chest. Hold for a count of 10. Repeat 10 times.

Racquetball Player's Toe

Purplish discoloration of the first and second toes with pain? Your shoe, if it grips so firmly that your toes are forced to the front of it in sudden stops, is often the cause.

Prevention:

Joggers and racquetball players can minimize the damage by:

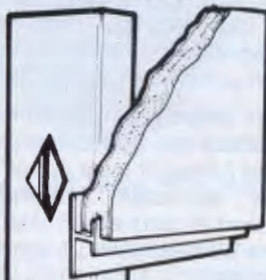
1. Wearing shoes specifically designed for the activity. Racquetball shoes should firmly support the arch and provide



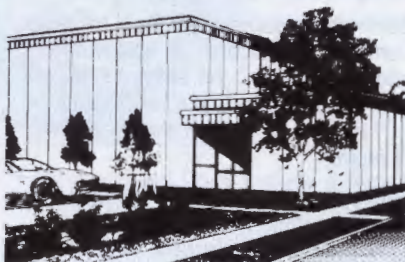
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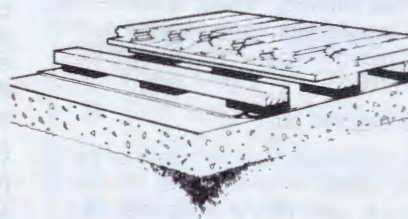
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ample space for toe movement.

2. Trim nails straight across and use a foot powder. Keep feet dry and clean.

3. Warm-up, stretching and flexing exercises before and after each workout can reduce pain and strain and improve performance.

4. On the court, avoid pivoting on the back foot without lifting the heel when it is at right angles to the leading foot.

Racquetball Ankle

A lot of the accidents that befall racquetball players each year are of the ankle-strains and sprains variety. A quarter of all injuries of the lower extremities in fact affect the feet. The many turns and changes of direction increase the risk.

Prevention:

1. Reduce your salt intake, says the *American Family Physician*, and you'll reduce the pain in that ankle sprain or strain.

2. Take a tip from Billie Jean King and strengthen those ankles.

a. Lifts: Standing, pull right knee to the chest; return right foot to the floor, and repeat with left leg (eight each leg).

b. Heel raises: Standing, rise up and down on toes (do 20).

c. Standing a couple of feet from a wall or fence, lean against it with your hands, keeping the body straight. Push heels down, and let your rear end sag in toward the wall or fence.

Racquetball Shoulder

This variety of shoulder tendonitis occurs more in racquet sports because of the variety of shots executed at such a variety of angles.

Shoulder injuries usually result from acute or chronic strain of the small muscles along the inner edge of the shoulder joint, known as rotator cuff muscles.

Remedy/Prevention:

1. Arm circles: Holding arms out to the side at shoulder level, circle forward, then backward (15 each way).

2. Shoulder rotations: With arms hanging

loosely at the sides, circle shoulders first forward, then backward (six each way).

3. Two-way shoulder stretch: Clasp hands in front, and raise both arms over head. Pull hands back, stretching the shoulders but keeping the back straight. Unclass hands, hold arms out straight from shoulders and move arms back, keeping them at shoulder height.

What helps when it still hurts?

Apply moist heat, using a heating pad or hot water bottle over a wet washcloth. Keep hot for 15-30 minutes. Follow this with a gentle massage.

Note: Recent Injuries

In general, for injuries less than 24 hours old, the magic formula is ICE: Ice, Compression and Elevation. The idea is to inhibit accumulation of the serums that cause swelling.

So bandage that sprain fairly snugly, prop it up with an ice-pack on top, and let it rest.

You'll be back on the courts in no time. ●

Who's Playing Racquetball?

Surgery Hardly Slowed Him Down

On the afternoon of October 8, 1981, Lon Dunkelmann, owner of the Racquetball West club in Monroe, LA, was conducting business as usual at his interior design shop, preparing to go to the post office in his car. But his head felt suddenly light, and he had difficulty moving around—he bumped into furniture and couldn't quite seem to grasp things when he tried to pick them up.

Then he blacked out.

His wife, Elizabeth, was with him at the shop and called an ambulance. As she describes it, Lon, who is a big man (six feet, 210 pounds), was difficult to control because although "he had a pleasant expression on his face," his physical behavior was violent and combative.

After being hustled into the ambulance, where he was held down by medics, Lon was taken to the Emergency Room at St. Francis' Medical Center in Monroe. Fortunately, Dr. Jose Bermudez, a neurosurgeon with wide experience of intracranial neoplasms, was on duty that day in Emergency and recognized Lon's seizure for what it was—a symptom of a brain tumor.

After a week of extensive tests, including a brain scan and X-rays, the diagnosis was confirmed: Lon had a tumor on the right lobe of the brain, specifically a parietal meningioma. He was 59 years old—but in peak physical condition.

For three agonizing days, Lon waited for an operating room to become available. "Those days were the worst," Lon now says. "I was very anxious—there was no way of knowing if the tumor was benign or malignant, if I'd be a vegetable or even be alive."

The surgery lasted over five hours. The pathology report came back. The tumor was benign, the prognosis good.

Surrounded by his loved ones—his wife, daughter and grandson—and supported

by the affection of friends, Lon awoke in intensive care to confront a terrifying loss of function in his left arm and leg (motor function in the left side being controlled by the right side of the brain).

Dr. Bermudez assured him he'd be okay, but Lon had his doubts. "It was frustrating and frightening," he says. "You look at the limb, you can feel it, and you think, 'I wanna move that thing.' But it won't move."

Gradually, however, with the help of his physical therapist, Betty Krapfl, whom Lon characterizes as terrific, he began to regain movement and coordination.

"About two weeks after surgery, when I first moved my fingers, I started to cry," he recalls. "Then I wiggled my toes, and one morning Dr. Bermudez came in the room and said 'Now just you move that arm!' and I did!"

No small victory. On November 11, two and a half weeks after his operation, Lon walked out of the hospital with the aid of a cane rather than the wheelchair he had feared. His recovery to this point had been remarkably rapid, and since then he has never looked back.

Among the many reasons for Lon's regaining his health so rapidly—an excellent rapport with his doctor and therapist, the support of his family and friends, his own go-for-it attitude and strong sense of humor—Lon credits his high fitness level as a frequent racquetball player and the incorporation of racquetball into his therapy with his speedy recovery.

Early along in his convalescence, he was itching to get back on the courts. He describes himself as a racquetball addict in need of a fix. "I wanted to hit that ball so bad I could feel it," he says. "I set a goal to play my first game on December 15"—two months after brain surgery!

His therapist approved and accompanied him to his club, where together they worked out a program using the fitness

equipment to restore Lon's coordination. On December 11, he achieved his goal and played his first game.

An ex-varsity football player (Tulane) and Air Force pilot, Lon began playing racquetball four years ago, when he decided to take advantage of a new public handball court constructed by the city.

"The first Saturday I went to the court, I noticed these two dudes hitting a ball with what I thought were cut-off tennis racquets," he recalls. "That was my first introduction to racquetball. Just like everyone else who tries, it, I got hooked immediately!"

Around that time he met Rick Cunningham, now the manager of his club. They saw the need for a racquetball facility in their area and decided to do something about it. After a couple of years of homework, Racquetball West, Inc., was born. Today they have a membership of 500 and provide a wide range of fitness equipment and services.

Lon's game hasn't suffered as much as you'd expect from the ordeal he went through. He had instructed Dr. Bermudez to "put in a super backhand" while his skull was open, and he was very anxious to try it out. He's back to playing three times a week, and while he was an average B player before the operation, now he rates himself a medium C. He is being treated with phenobarbital, which slows his reaction time, but he has full mobility and expects to reach his previous skill level when off medication.

He cannot emphasize enough how much he thinks racquetball helped him through his illness. His fitness, for a start, which reduces the risks attendant on all surgery, his determination to get back on the court, and the cooperation of his therapist in making racquetball part of his therapy—all made an immeasurable contribution to his present health and ability to enjoy life fully.

Lon Dunkelmann's forehand form looks pretty good as he steps into the ball . . .

. . . connects at the proper spot . . .

. . . and follows through. The protective headgear is a safety precaution for his still tender skull following brain surgery.



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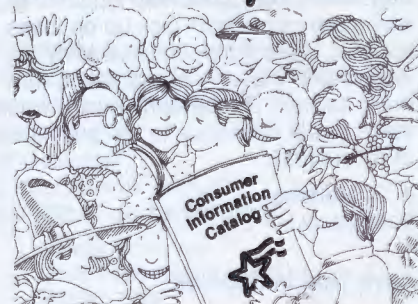
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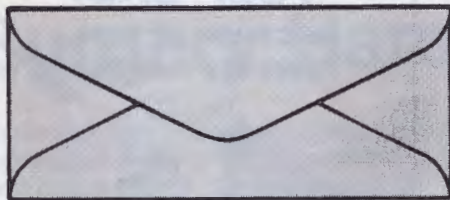
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Letters



High School Racquetball

Dear Sirs:

I am a high-school student (female) who likes to play racquetball but I don't get much chance to since I work part-time after school. I would like to take racquetball as part of my phys. ed. requirement but my school doesn't offer it. Isn't there some way high schools could arrange for students to play? Do you hear from other high-schoolers about racquetball in school? I'd like to know what other kids around the country think.

Mary Lillis
Beaver Dam, WI

Editor's note: National Racquetball is currently looking into teen/high school racquetball. Check upcoming issues for full update.

Likes One-Way Glass

Dear Sirs:

Thank you for your article on one-way glass in the February issue. I enjoyed it very much, but I can't help wondering why more clubs don't pick up on ideas like that. Even if they mean a fairly big investment, it seems to me courts that make t.v. and photography easier would make a real difference to the popularity of racquetball.

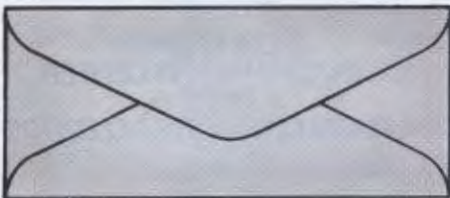
J. D. Martens
Passaic, NJ

Save That Instruction

Dear Sirs:

Enclosed please find my check in the amount of \$16 for my annual renewal subscription to *National Racquetball*. I thoroughly enjoy your magazine. I keep every copy for future reference, especially the instructional articles. Keep up the good work!

Michael Watson
Englewood, OH



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Of Origins

(Editor's note: The following anonymous text was found under a pile of old gym socks in our editorial offices. We have dated it tentatively as late 16th century. The manuscript has been donated to the Library of Congress.)

When that racquets strung both thin and taut
Replaced old paddles ('tis believed some fought
New fangled notions—but that's by-the-by);
Then balls acquired a tendency to fly
Which made the players hit them very high.
So ceiling shots were born, and after that
The story of the game is quite old hat.

A club was built, and soon more clubs and more
Sprang up across the land as though the spore
Of some exotic plant o'erlaid the ground.
Then folks came flocking in and soon they found
That they could make their bodies very sound
Without much hassle. Promptly word got round
That here was quite the most delightful pleasure
Conferring wondrous benefits without measure,
And beating out all other forms of leisure.
'Twas better, so they said, than drugs or sin,
Or rambling, gambling, horseback-riding, gin,
So riotously they trundled, bundled in.

And thus did rapture, health and wealth begin
From that small paddle which in antique days
Was such a thing as nobody now plays
With; outdated it now in museum lays.

At length the tattered cutoffs, nasty clothes,
And sneakers vile that did offend the nose,
Gave way to court shoes, shorts and shirts and things,
Co-ordinated colors such as kings
(Or princesses at least) are now to wear.
'Tis nonetheless a verity that still
You may go out there dressed just as you will
(But hang around the lounge decked-out to kill),
To hit a few around and have some fun—
The clothing revolution's just begun.

A sport is but a sport, so think not badly
Of players whose get-up is rather sadly
In need of reparation—if their game
'S enough to make you wish you played the same.

Once started writing couplets, poets find
That they've no way to stop their foolish mind
From going off at tangents, on the wing . . .
Enough! As Hamlet said, "The play's the thing!"

Upcoming Events

AARA Junior Nationals

June 24-27, 1982
Capitol Courts
3759 Gross Circle
Carson City, NV 89701

Tournament Director: Rich Bennett

All junior events, boys and girls including 8-and-under through 18-and-under. For further information call 702-882-9566.

AARA National Singles

May 27-31, 1982
McKinley Park Racquet Club
S 3950 McKinley Parkway
Blasdel, NY 14219

Tournament Director: Luke St. Onge

All major events and age categories for men and women. For further information call 901-761-1172.

Catalina Pro/Am Nationals

May 19-23, 1982
Fort Worth Athletic Club
3900 Benbrook Highway
Fort Worth, TX 76116

Tournament Director: Jim Krick

Most major events, \$40,000 men pro event, amateur events for men and women. For further information call 817-244-0076

Ektelon/Pony Nationals

May 5-9, 1982
Sports Gallery
2560 E. Katella Ave.
Anaheim, CA 92806

All major events, pro and amateur, men and women. For further information call 714-634-1919.

1st Annual Over-The-Hill Racquetball Tournament

April 23-25, 1982
Sawmill Athletic Club
3111 Hayden Rd.
Columbus, OH 43220

Tournament Director: Chet Baker

Singles events for players in age categories 35+ and over. All events round robin. For further information call 614-889-7698.

Women's Racquetball Classic

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

Tournament Director: Jose Phillips

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

Women's East Coast Championships

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

Tournament Director: Doris Horridge

For further information call (617) 336-5600

WPRA Tour—Fishkill, New York

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

Tournament Director: Bill Austin

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

Racquetball Camps

Third Annual Dave Peck Summer Camps

July 30-August 8, 1982
All Sport Fitness & Racquetball Club
240A North Rd.
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Camp Directors: Dave Peck, Jim Winterton

Juniors camp August 1-6, 1982; Adult weekends July 30-August 1 and August 6-8, 1982. For further information call 914-452-5050.

Daku/Hendrickson Canadian Summer Camps

July 25-August 21 (three sessions)
Foothills Court House
1912 MacKay Rd., N.W.
Calgary, Alberta, Canada T3B 1C7

Camp Director: Ian Thumliert

For further information call 403-286-3132

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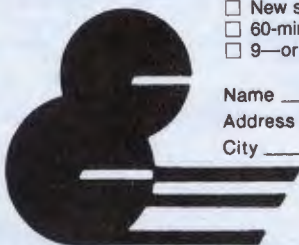
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Tournament Results



Jim Winterton shows the power serve as he tops Charlie Garfinkel for the AARA New York Seniors Singles title.

Arizona

ARA State Singles Championships
February 23-25, 1982
Tucson Athletic Club

Men's Open

Semi-finals: Jankovsky d. Trella; Taylor d. Dignan

Finals: Jankovsky d. Taylor

Men's B

Semi-finals: Abidin d. Drapper; Ettinger d. Swenson

Finals: Ettinger d. Abidin

Men's C

Semi-finals: Rillos d. Knagge; Thurmond d. Lopata

Finals: Thurmond d. Rillos

Men's Senior Open

Round Robin: Durant d. Lankford

Men's Senior B

Semi-finals: Oxman d. Fisher; Almazon d. Dykema

Finals: Almazon d. Oxman

Men's Masters

Semi-finals: Burns d. Fischer; Northwood d. Daley

Finals: Burns d. Northwood

Men's Juniors 17-and-under

Semi-finals: Walker d. Fung; Linn d. Wheeler

Finals: Walker d. Linn

Men's Juniors 15-and-under

Semi-finals: Bradley d. Kuchynka; Beck d. Fairchild

Finals: Bradley d. Beck

Women's Open

Semi-finals: Wojcik d. Pranka; Swenson d. Muenzenber

Finals: Wojcik d. Swenson

Women's A

Semi-finals: Saffell d. Grady; Arnold d. Curt

Finals: Saffell d. Arnold

Women's B

Semi-finals: Grant d. Oxman; Howard d. Morey

Finals: Howard d. Grant

Women's C

Semi-finals: Halle d. Smith; Heather d. Witt

Finals: Halle d. Heather

California

Self/Spalding Racquetball Classic Finals
Los Caballeros Sports Club, Fountain Valley
February 14, 1982

Men's Pro Am

Hillecher d. Stocker 21-7, 20-21, 11-2.

Men's B

Plotkin d. Brickel 21-2, 21-5.

Men's C

Cortes d. Licausi 21-13, 21-3.

Men's Seniors

Gumoe d. Dunn 21-10, 21-12.

Women's Pro Am

Panzeri d. Gilreath 21-10, 20-21, 11-2.

Women's C

Albano d. Markey 21-5, 21-17.

Illinois

Fourth Annual Freeport Open
YWCA Racquet Center
February 19-21, 1982

Men's B

Semi-finals: Wolfe d. Morse 20-21, 21-14, 11-10; Dickey d. Papke 13-21, 21-7, 11-6

Finals: Dickey d. Wolfe 21-15, 21-7; 3rd—Morse d. Papke 21-15, 21-16

Men's C

Semi-finals: Paulson d. Enloe 21-10, 21-7; Spencer d. Asche 21-20, 21-3

Finals: Paulson d. Spencer 21-20, 17-21, 11-8; 3rd—Enloe d. Asche 21-14, 16-21, 11-3

Men's Novice

Semi-finals: Todd d. Kerr 21-4, 21-8; Bolin d. Capps 21-11, 21-18

Finals: Todd d. Bolin 21-12, 17-21, 11-0; 3rd—Capps d. Kerr 21-16, 21-19

Women's A

Semi-finals: Connors d. Commean 21-3, 21-8; Mustybrook d. Highland 21-3, 21-5

Finals: Connors d. Mustybrook 14-21, 21-9, 11-6; 3rd—Commean d. Highland 21-11, 21-14

Women's C

Semi-finals: Johnson d. Rasheed 21-20, 21-11; Hendrix d. Feagan 19-21, 21-15, 11-8

Finals: Johnson d. Hendrix 21-20, 21-11; 3rd—Rasheed d. Feagan 21-15, 21-8

Kentucky

Fourth Annual McDonald's-Ashland YMCA
Open
February 12-14, 1982

Men's Open: 1st—Dan Brannan, Marietta, OH; 2nd—Frank Pruitt, Lexington, KY; 3rd—Donnie Harris, Lexington

Men's B: 1st—Keith Hawes, Vienna, WV; 2nd—Jeff Davis, Huntington, WV; 3rd—Terry Blevins, Coal Grove, OH

Men's C: 1st—Jim Ryan, Ashland, KY; 2nd—Bob Wells, Morehead, KY; 3rd—Barry Meneghelli, Dunbar, WV

Men's Seniors: 1st—Tom Shivel, Ashland; 2nd—Mike Brown, Morehead; 3rd—Jim Knickerbocker, Columbus, OH

Women's Open: 1st—Lois Holmes, Glasgow, KY; 2nd—Janice James, Glasgow; 3rd—Cheri McKay, Barboursville, WV

Women's C: 1st—Jerri Black, Huntington; 2nd—JoAnn Newman, Ashland; 3rd—Sherry Hacker, Richmond, KY

Mexico

San Luis Potosi—1st International Open
Lomas Racquet Club & Club Deportivo Punto Verde
February 12-15, 1982

Men's A: 1st—Victor Martinez Puente; 2nd—Raul Flores Torres; 3rd—Mario Hernandez

Men's C: 1st—Nicholas Vazquez; 2nd—Javier Garcia; 3rd—Adalberto Puente Perez; 4th—Jorge Gonzalez Verduzco

Men's D: 1st—Carlos Martinez; 2nd—Othon Terrazas; 3rd—Adalberto Puente Santana

Men's Novice: 1st—Joaquin Barbosa; 2nd—Victor Manuel Bocanegra; 3rd—Rafael Esparza

Women's A: 1st—Rosa Elena Rodriguez; 2nd—Anaiza Esparza; 3rd—Yania Esparza de la Rosa

Women's B: 1st—Teresa de la Rosa; 2nd—Maria del Carmen Torres; 3rd—Teresita de Munoz

Women's Novice: 1st—Lourdes de Leura; 2nd—Leticia Gonzalez; 3rd—Maria Rosa Barrera

New Brunswick

Cadbury/Schweppes MacLean Pro Am Classic
Saint John Racquet Club
January 22, 23, 24, 1982

Men's A Finals: Harvey d. Valin 14-21, 21-20, 11-3

Men's B Finals: Fulton d. Shea 21-9, 21-11

Men's C Finals: McPhee d. Olive 21-15, 21-10

Men's Senior Finals: Thornhill d. Melanson 21-15, 21-18

Men's Junior Finals (19 and under): Fitzpatrick d. Booker 17-21, 21-18, 11-5

Boys' Finals (16 and under): Doiron d. Melanson 21-15, 21-17

Men's Doubles Finals: Bowes/Daku d. Valin/Koumoralis

Women's A Finals: Devine d. Maida 21-4, 19-21, 11-6

Women's B Finals: Ogler d. Cheslock 21-20, 21-16

Women's C Finals: Christison d. Stewart 21-16, 21-19

Women's Doubles Finals: McKerhan/Oldford d. Ogler/Jacquard

New York

More than 400 racquetball players from all over the state of New York competed in the AARA 1982 New York State Open Championships held Feb. 19-21 at All Sports Fitness and Racquetball Club, Fishkill, NY. Final results follow:

Men's Open: Obremski d. Cardillo 21-16, 21-16

Men's B: Rubin d. Cooper 21-1, 21-6

Men's BB: Schwellke d. Ryan 17-21, 21-13, 15-7

Men's C: Hooper d. Watts 18-21, 21-9, 15-9

Men's CC: Consiglio d. D'Antonio 21-5, 21-2

Men's C Veteran (30+): Komisar d. D'Antonio 21-20, 21-14

Men's Seniors (30+): Russell d. DeVito 21-16, 16-21, 15-4

Men's Seniors (35+): Winterton d. Garfinkel 21-9, 21-13

Men's Veteran Seniors (40+): Stauffer d. Walsh 9-21, 21-16, 15-9

Men's Masters (45+): Waltz d. Wheeler 21-3, 21-2

Men's Veteran Masters (50+): Gabriele d. Carpouzis 21-14, 21-19

Men's Golden Masters (55+): Lesser d. Cowie 21-7, 21-17

Boys' (16 and under): Klien d. Tumina 15-12, 15-2

Boys' (14 and under): Juron d. Trembley 15-4, 15-1

Boys' (12 and under): Doyle d. Glantz 15-5, 15-11

Boys' (10 and under): Millian d. McGee 15-13, 7-15, 15-12

Men's Pro Am Doubles: Winterton/Peterson d. Packer/Meltsner 21-18, 21-10

Men's B Doubles: Tumina/Corso d. Thomas/Nastasi 14-21, 21-9, 15-14

Men's C Doubles: Doyle/Juron d. Finkelstein/Markowitz 16-21, 21-10, 15-11

Men's Senior Doubles (35+): Waltz/Kearney d. Garfinkel/Shapiro 21-17, 21-16

Women's Open: Hajjar d. Sottile 21-13, 21-14

Women's B: Calderon d. Leach 21-10, 21-12

Women's BB: Grossman d. Monchick 13-21, 21-4, 15-4

Women's C: Loveri d. Passarelli 21-7, 21-8

Women's CC: Martin d. Pitegoff 21-5, 21-12

Women's Veteran Seniors (35+): Meger d. Doyle 21-2, 21-5

Girls' (14 and under): Levine d. Upson 15-9, 15-8

Girls' (12 and under): Doyle d. Drury 15-8, 15-3

Women's Open Doubles: Pallas/Burden (round Robin winners)

Women's B Doubles: Meredith/Martin d. McGee/Liparelli 21-13, 21-9

South Dakota

The Lewis Drug/Pepsi Pro Am at Racquetball of Sioux Falls, February 5-7, 1982, was the largest tournament ever held in SD with 280 entrants. Mark Hegg defended his title in a two-hour finals match against Dan Ferris, winning the title and a new Seiko watch. Winners in each division were awarded prizes provided by Lewis Drug.

Men's Open Singles

Semi-finals: Hegg d. Domangue 15-3, 15-7; Ferris d. Halger-son 15-1, 15-5.

Finals: Hegg d. Ferris 21-13, 15-21, 15-10.

Men's A Singles

Semi-finals: Runge d. Centra 15-9, 15-4; Simonsen d. Klompka 15-10, 15-2.

Finals: Runge d. Simonsen 21-6, 11-21, 15-10.

Men's B Singles

Semi-finals: Canfield d. Wenz 15-11, 15-10; Mundhenke d. Quinn 15-6, 15-12.



Jerry Hilecher

Finals: Canfield d. Mundhenke 21-7, 21-13.

Men's C Singles:

Semi-finals: Jankevicius d. Van Orma 15-4, 15-5; Jacobsen d. Leyse 15-7, 15-4.

Finals: Jacobsen d. Jankevicius 14-21, 21-9, 15-9.

Men's Senior Singles

Semi-finals: Gorman d. Dittich 15-5, 15-12; Carpenter d. Harley 15-5, 15-8.

Finals: Gorman d. Carpenter 15-5, 15-8.

Men's A Doubles

Semi-finals: Domangue/Orduna d. Taunton/Taunton 15-14, 14-15, 11-10; Halgeron/Ferris d. Synhorst/Hegg 15-6, 15-9.

Finals: Halgeron/Ferris d. Domangue/Orduna 10-15, 15-10, 11-10.

Men's B Doubles

Semi-finals: Gross/Erikson d. Friesth/Simmons 15-9, 10-15, 11-7; Jacobson/Harley d. Hooser/Candia 15-6, 15-5.

Finals: Gross/Edelen d. Jacobsen Harley 15-4, 14-7.

Men's C Doubles

Semi-finals: Anderson/Patee d. Eggebraten/Zea 1-15, 15-14, 11-2; Aakhus/Murray d. Stahl/Davis 15-5, 15-8.

Finals: Aakhus/Murray d. Anderson/Patee 15-14, 10-15, 11-2.

Women's A Singles

Semi-finals: Hiatt d. Wiedman 15-4, 15-4; Lee d. Meidinger 15-4, 15-9.

Vicki Panzer

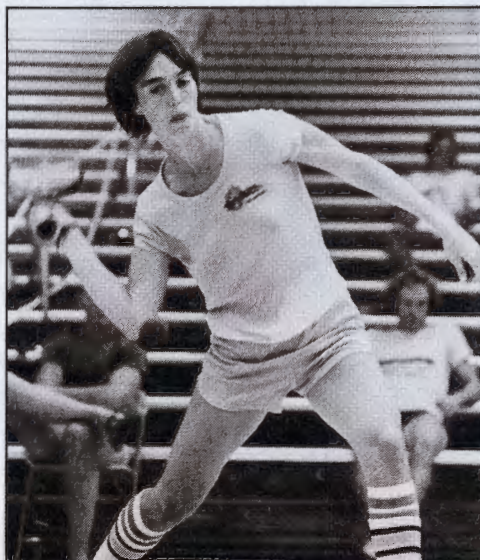


Photo by Arthur Shay

Finals: Hiatt d. Lee 21-16, 21-7.

Women's B Singles

Semi-finals: Decker d. Wiedman 15-11, 9-15, 11-2; Case d. Doman 15-6, 15-12.

Finals: Decker d. Case.

Women's C Singles

Semi-finals: Witkowski d. Pisel Nixon 7-15, 15-14, 11-5; Ritsche d. Berens 15-11, 15-8.

Finals: Ritsche d. Witkowski 21-7, 21-14.

Virginia

The Ace of Clubs at Greenbrier recently completed its 2nd annual Armada Hoffer/Cross-Wetmore Inc. Racquetball Classic. Co-sponsors were Snow Jr. & King, Inc., and J. D. Miles Roofing. The results of the Finals:

Men's Open: 1st Foley, 2nd Bailey, 3rd Daly

Men's Senior: 1st Allen, 2nd Whitbeck, 3rd Lake

Men's B: 1st Long, 2nd Westbay, 3rd Cannady

Men's C: 1st Mejia, 2nd Smith, 3rd McCall

Women's Open: 1st Naminsky, 2nd Baumler, 3rd Katz

Women's B: 1st Parrish, 2nd Roberson, 3rd Ashley

Women's C: 1st Allen, 2nd Woodall, 3rd Russell

Hogan Back On Track In Oregon Catalina Stop

by Thomas J. Morrow

Four-time defending national champion Marty Hogan bounced back on the winning track, after being derailed in Honolulu by Dave Peck, to win the \$20,000 Catalina Classic V in Beaverton, OR, beating Rich Wagner, San Diego, February 21.

Hogan, 23, who has lost his top seed position only twice in the last two years, was in the secondary seed position behind Peck of El Paso going into this fifth event of the 1981-82 \$200,000 Catalina Classic Series.

Peck had given the fans in Hawaii a storybook finish, coming from behind 2-0 to win the final three games and to take the top seed position from Hogan in Beaverton. The Oregon fans were certainly expecting a rematch between these two great stars, but a 25-year-old blond control player from San Diego fouled up the plans; Rich Wagner upset Peck in the semifinal match, beating the 24-year-old Texan three straight games to meet Hogan in the final round.

"Rich was playing great ball and I just wasn't in there," said Peck after the Saturday evening match which ended his

Hogan rips a forehand against Wagner in the finals. The champ regained his form, as did the runner-up.



—Photos by Arthur Shay



Semi-final action finds Peck about to deliver his booming forehand off the back wall while Wagner moves into retrieving position. Wagner's win gained revenge for his earlier season defeat at Peck's hands.

hopes of a second straight tournament victory, and his third for the season. *"There's no way I should have lost. I'm not trying to take anything away from Rich; he was playing great throughout the tournament, but if I'd had my head in the game, there's no way he would have beaten me."*

Wagner had eliminated Doug Cohen, St. Louis, in the first round Thursday, 11-4, 11-2, 11-7, to advance to the quarter-finals against 17-year-old Bret Harnett, Las Vegas. Wagner found himself trailing the high school senior 2-1, but managed to come back and win the last two and a ticket to the semi-finals against Peck.

In the bottom bracket, Hogan met Steve Strandemo, San Diego, in the opening round, beating him 11-4, 9-11, 11-6 and 11-9. Next, the champ met Don Thomas, Mesa, AZ, in the quarters, taking him in three straight games, 11-6, 11-7 and 11-9, to go on to face Yellen in the semi-finals.

Yellen, who was playing very well throughout the earlier round when he downed Hank Marcus, Portland, a qualifier in the Catalina Northwest Regional Open tournament and fourth-ranked Jerry

Hilecher, Solana Beach, CA, was able to stay up with Hogan in only two games, losing their semi-final match 11-4, 11-5, 10-11 and 11-10.

Peck found himself against the winner of the Northwest Regional Open, Jeff Larsen, Portland, in the opening round, but dusted him in three straight 11-6, 11-2 and 11-8. Peck then met Scott Hawkins, Santa Clara, CA, a fellow Catalina team player, who had entered and qualified in the Regional Open. Peck again blasted his opponent off the court with his powerful serves and backhand, beating Hawkins 11-8, 11-2, 11-4.

After Peck lost to Wagner, the scene was set for the former Paterson, NJ player's second finals appearance of the Catalina season. Wagner had previously played and lost to Peck in a five-game championship match in Burnsville, MN. Wagner is playing the best of his career and looked good against Hogan—but not quite good enough for the perennial champion.

Hogan was ahead of Wagner 2-0 in less than 30 minutes and it looked as though he would polish off his fellow San Diegan before the hour was gone, but Wagner



One of the better quarter-final matches found Yellen (r.) able to overcome Hilecher's power game.

retaliated, winning the third game 11-8 after being down 8-4.

Hogan has a habit of letting up after he has his opponents on the ropes. He did it in Honolulu with Peck, and the Texan came storming back to win the last three games. He looked as though he might do the same thing in Beaverton, but Hogan was able to keep Wagner out of the win column by taking the fourth game and the \$5,500 first-prize money. Wagner had to settle for the \$3,500 second prize.

The victory ties the Catalina Series between Hogan and Peck at two victories apiece. Hilecher has the other lone win, at Westminster during the opener in Orange County, CA.

Next stop on the Catalina Series was the Sportrooms of Coral Gables, FL, for the \$20,000 Catalina Classic VI, for the Southeast and Central States, March 18-21. This event took the place of the canceled Memphis tournament last December.

The \$40,000 Catalina Championships will be held at the Fort Worth Athletic Club, May 19-23, when the Catalina team players will be joined by the qualifying players from the six regional tournaments. Each of the four qualifiers from the various regional tournaments receives \$500 expense money for the Championship meet.

Current Money Winnings After Five (5) Events Of The Catalina Series:

RANK	PLAYER	EARNINGS
1.	Marty Hogan	\$17,750
2.	Dave Peck	\$16,250
3.	Mike Yellen	\$10,000
4.	Rich Wagner	\$9,500
5.	Jerry Hilecher	\$9,250
	Bret Harnett	\$9,250
7.	Don Thomas	\$7,750
8.	Scott Hawkins	\$4,500
9.	Craig McCoy	\$3,250
10.	Doug Cohen	\$1,250
11.	Peter Britos	\$1,250
12.	Ed Andrews	\$1,250

Tournament Results

McKay, Adams Take WPRA Pro Stops



Heather McKay



Rita Hoff

Heather McKay regained her number one position in the Women's Professional Racquetball Association (WPRA) rankings last month by capturing the \$12,000 Pepsi Pro/Am in Federal Way, WA.

McKay, who did not participate in the previous WPRA event (and thus lost her ranking edge) defeated Lynn Adams, who had replaced her as number one, in straight sets 3-1, 3-1. The victory paid \$1,920 to McKay with Adams earning \$1,123 second place money.

The tournament was held at the Pacific West Sport and Racquet Club February 18-21, the second of eight scheduled WPRA stops through July of this year.

The only major upset to occur along the way found eighth seed Rita Hoff, St. Louis, stopping fourth seed Marci Greer in the semi-finals. Their grueling match went to a tie-breaker with Hoff outlasting Greer 15-14.

The other semi-final found Adams scoring her second victory of the season over former national champ Shannon Wright. Each lady shut out the other 3-0, before Adams took the tie-breaker.

Three weeks later at the \$6,000 WPRA/Lite Beer Pro/Am Open, Adams gained some measure of revenge by stopping McKay in the finals. This time the match was far closer with Adams finally gaining the upper hand 2-3, 3-2, 15-11. The match took nearly two and one-half hours to complete, with both players receiving a 10 minute standing ovation at its completion.

Upsets were the order of the day in this tournament, hosted by the Holiday Health and Racquet Club, Bangor, ME, March 11-14. Hoff, who jumped to the fourth seeded position on the strength of her showing in Washington, was victimized in the round of 16 by WPRA president Fran Davis 2-3, 3-1, 15-11.

Davis moved all the way to the semi-finals where she encountered McKay, the former number one ranked professional squash player. However, McKay was ready for the battle and emerged with straight set 3-1, 3-2 wins.

Greer rebounded from her loss to Hoff by going all the way to the semis, where she came up short against Adams 3-0, 3-1. Marci had eliminated Janell Marriott and Heather Stupp in earlier rounds. Unranked Stupp almost pulled one of the upsets of the year, having Greer on the ropes before succumbing 3-2, 1-3, 15-14 in the round of 16.

All victories in the WPRA/Lite Beer Pro/Am were somewhat shallow, however, since none of the wins counted in the WPRA's ranking system. According to WPRA rules, for a tournament to count in ranking statistics, it must have a minimum of \$10,000 prize money.

The next stops on the WPRA tour were March 25-28 at the Glass Court, Lombard, IL for the Diet Pepsi Pro/Am, and April 21-25 at Allsport Fitness and Racquet Club, Fishkill, NY.



Lynn Adams

The Pied Piper of Racquetball

A traveling salesman who can't travel has a problem. That was Gerry Lapierre's problem in the spring of 1965. A severed achilles tendon made it impossible to maintain his normal three-weeks-a-month on the road schedule as an electronics salesman. He was in the middle of therapy and little did he know the next 15 years would launch an avocation that would earn him well-deserved recognition as "The Pied Piper of Racquetball."

Lapierre's rehabilitation called for exercise. First he tried swimming. *"I fell asleep swimming,"* he says. *"Too boring."*

Next he tried jogging. *"It was more boring than swimming, and I lost my concentration to the point that I kept falling on my nose."*

In desperation, he tried handball, a sport he hadn't attempted since his high school days. All this was at the Cleveland, OH, Central YMCA, a bastion of top handball in those days. *"They laughed me off the court,"* he recalls.

Then he spotted his first racquetball racquet.

"I picked it up and never put it down," he says. *"I went into the squash courts alone and practiced and practiced. It was just what I needed. I came to love the game."*

That love blossomed to the point that 10 years later, Lapierre was married on the glass championship court at the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas during the 1975 USRA National Championships. But let us not get too far ahead of the story.

With the entire United States as his sales territory, Lapierre hit the road again, this time with racquet and gear in hand. For the first few years, the pickings were indeed slim. Finding a racquetball match was no easier than finding a decent meal on the road. You do the best you can.

By 1968, however, Lapierre had found enough racquetball around to be able to identify those few facilities where it was played, and also to recognize that the game's popularity was on the upswing. But the key was when he picked up a flyer announcing the first national tournament (*National Racquetball*, February, 1982).

"I was headed up towards Milwaukee anyhow," says Lapierre. *"So I figured why not. I wanted to see what was going on."*



Taking the vows on the racquetball court . . .

What was going on astounded even Lapierre, who was easily the most knowledgeable racquetball aficionado in the nation. Clearly nobody knew more about where the game was being played than he did. Yet he was blown away by the turnout in Milwaukee.

"My goodness. There were players from Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Louis, Cleveland, Louisville, Williamsport, PA, all sorts of places," he recounts. *"Why, I'd been going into St. Louis and parking at the YMCA, not even aware that the JCCA (Jewish Community Centers Association) had a huge racquetball program going. That Milwaukee tournament was not only an eye opener, it was a real turn-on."*

So Lapierre, Larry Lederman and some of the others sat around planning or at least attempting to plan a future course for this new sport that still didn't have an official name, rules, or equipment specifications. When the group elected to turn the promotion of the game over to Bob Kendler and the U.S. Handball Association, Lapierre volunteered his services.

"I never asked for any financial compen-

sation nor got anything out of it," he says. *"I was a traveling man looking for a game, so I offered to help in any way I could."*

Mort Leve, Kendler's right hand man, suggested Lapierre start taking notes about his racquetball experiences and Gerry became an instant columnist in the racquetball section of *Handball* magazine, and later in the first racquetball publication.

"I just tried to mention names," he says, *"you know, get local people mentioned in a national magazine. As time went on, I found people in each area who were willing to help the association and start organizing in their region."*

The biggest problem in those days, circa 1970, was court availability. A shortage of courts for handball alone was a reality, and the sudden expansion of racquetball interest added more pressure for court time. There was no such animal as a court club.

"Sure, limitation of courts was the primary problem," says Lapierre. *"If racquetball was allowed, it was allowed in*



... and cutting the traditional cake a few minutes later.

most places only with restrictions. You might be able to play during certain hours, or on certain courts."

Lapierre is hesitant to attempt to count the actual number of places he visited, or matches, clinics and exhibitions he participated in. A safe guess would be more than a thousand.

"I found a keen interest in developing the game," he says. "It was an entirely different attitude than today's. There was definitely a far greater camaraderie among players. It seemed that people's greatest interest was in learning what others knew.

"I really enjoyed it. I looked forward to going out into the field. I'll tell you this, I met a lot of wonderful, wonderful people."

Lapierre, ever the salesman, handled each city he visited as if he were making a sales call. From New England through Dixie, from Raleigh through Stillwater and more, Lapierre spread the gospel of racquetball. He'd call every athletic or physical education director in each city at any facility. Often, he found himself in a den of staunch handball territory, with angry handballers berating racquetball for robbing them of their courts.

"It wasn't as big a problem as most people made it out to be," he says. "I

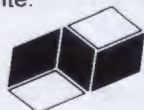
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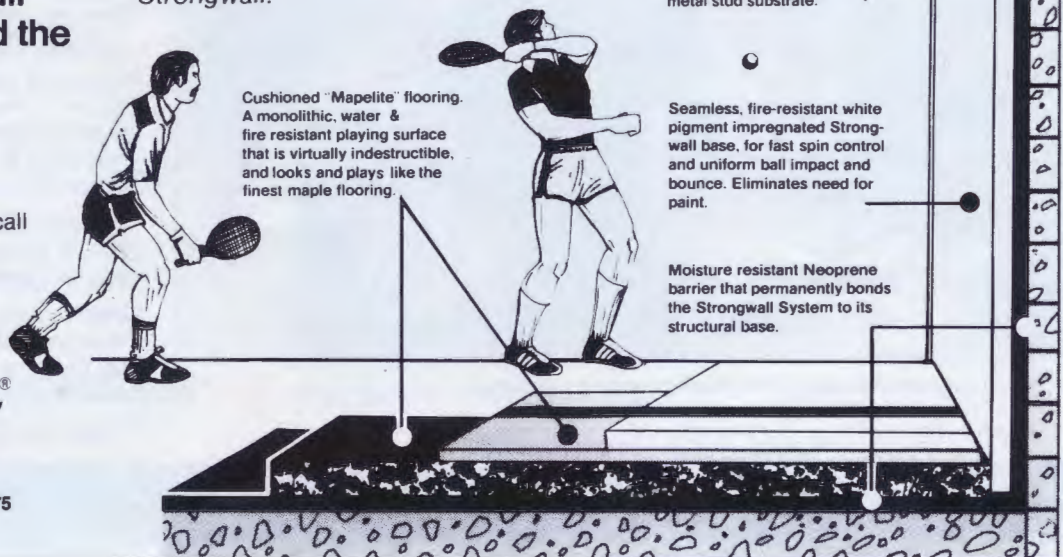
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Lapierre explains how the big one got away with Bob McNamara to whom he lost the third place match in the 1972 Nationals, Masters Division.

was usually able to win them over. At the very least we were able to sit and talk things over. I like to think I helped pave the way."

After a while, Lapierre began getting invitations to visit. And by 1973, he was traveling pre-planned racquetball schedules as well as electronics sales calls. In some cities he'd do clinics. In others it might be an exhibition. Sometimes, just 30 people watched him play against anybody who showed up.

"Clinics were a big part of it back then" he says, "because nobody knew anything about the game. I was doing as much teaching how to play as I was how to play well."

Around this time he ran into Harland Diamond, a well known Cleveland businessman, who had just purchased a building that housed an athletic club. Diamond took Lapierre off the road and put him into the club, where he is today. At age 52, he still plays racquetball every day.

Lapierre turned his promotion and organizational abilities to the local Cleveland area. He helped start the Ohio Racquetball Association (his current term as president expires next month) and soon ran into Reed Gunselman, then playing out of the Brooklyn (OH) YMCA.

They began a home-and-home schedule of matches between the two facilities (Lapierre's club was then known as the Executive Athletic Club) and eventually built a mammoth city-wide league from there.

Now, about that marriage. Gunselman, you see, had an attractive secretary by the name of Patricia Keating, and well, she and Lapierre took a liking to each other and, well, let Gerry explain.

"Pat didn't mind the idea of being married on the court," he says, "so I called Chuck Leve who had taken over running the association from his dad. Chuck was organizing the national championships in Vegas and he liked the idea.

"What the hell, we were going to get married anyhow. Why not add a little class to the nationals?"

Despite many victories over the years, it's certain that that day in Las Vegas was Lapierre's biggest win ever on the court. ●



Lapierre (in background) displays his floor managing technique.



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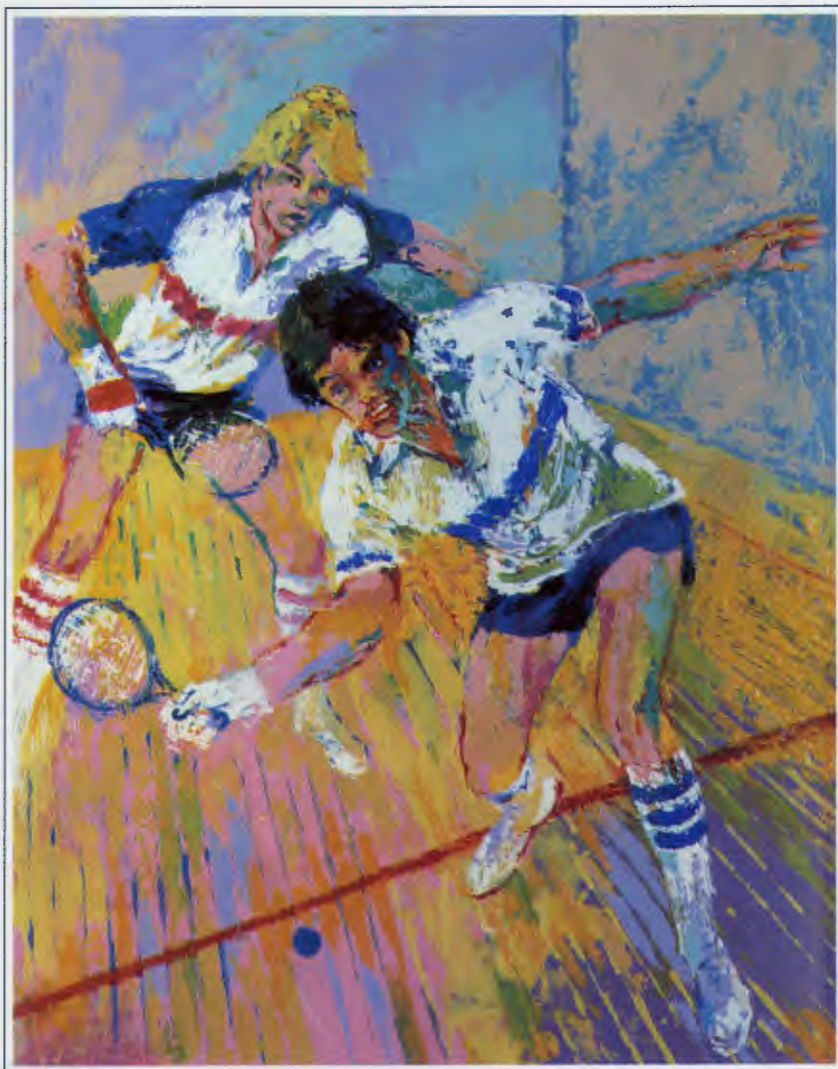
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