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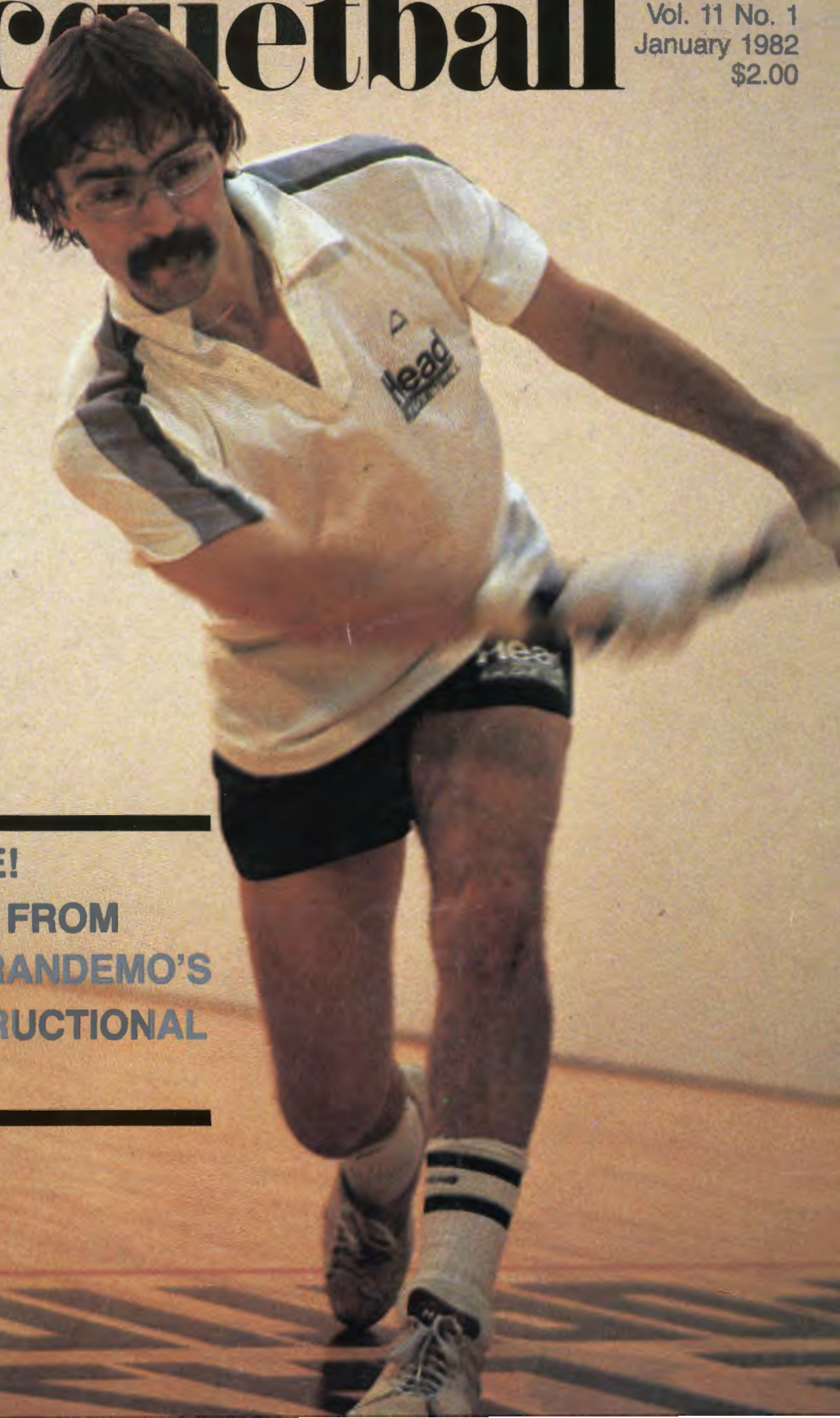
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## Contents

### Editorial

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| From the Editor | 4 |
|-----------------|---|

### Features

|                                                          |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Racquetball or Racquetball Ball? by Steve Keeley         | 6  |
| Racquetball in Asia by CDR Glenn R. Allen                | 10 |
| Pro-Files of Penmanship by Cecile Hoyle and Carol George | 14 |

### Instructional

|                                                                                 |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Ask the Champ by Marty Hogan                                                    | 17 |
| The Fundamentals of Advanced Play by Steve Strandemo and Bill Bruns             | 18 |
| Front Diving-Safely by Rusty Rischuk                                            | 23 |
| The Hula Hoop Re-Kill by Dave Peck                                              | 24 |
| Doing It the Hard Way by Mike Yellen                                            | 26 |
| Court Position and Shot Selection for Beginners by Ken Wong                     | 28 |
| Four Basic Serves by Steve Keeley                                               | 32 |
| Pre-Match Drills To Improve Your Game by Terry Fancher                          | 34 |
| What's The Call? by James Hillman                                               | 36 |
| New Products                                                                    | 37 |
| Fiction                                                                         |    |
| The Tie-Breaker by Thomas Christensen                                           | 38 |
| Tournament Results                                                              | 41 |
| Health                                                                          |    |
| Sprouts for Sports: How to Grow Your Own Super Food by Frances Sheridan Goulart | 42 |
| Who's Playing Racquetball?                                                      |    |
| The Diet Lady by Stella Hart                                                    | 43 |
| Letters                                                                         | 44 |
| Greatest Matches of All Time                                                    |    |
| Schmidtke Tops Finger for 1971 IRA Open Singles Championship                    | 46 |

### On the cover . . .

*This issue begins an exclusive series of excerpts from Steve Strandemo's new book Advanced Racquetball. Strandemo, one of the world's best players, is particularly recognized as one of the most outstanding instructors in our sport. Steve's first book, The Racquetball Book, was highly acclaimed, and this one is even better. See for yourself, page 18.*

## National Racquetball

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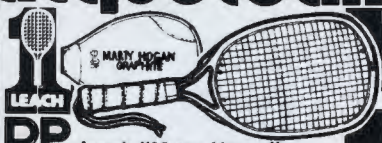
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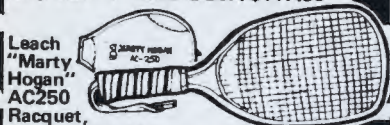


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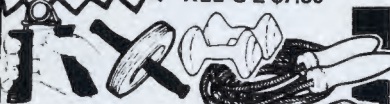


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From The Editor . . .

## Are You Having Fun?

I've been spending a considerable amount of time recently reviewing back issues of *National Racquetball*, from what we affectionately call the "Near-derthal" days of racquetball. Great lessons, somebody once said, can be learned from history. And so it has come to pass that I learned (or perhaps re-learned) a great lesson.

A common thread ran through the pages of those early magazines. It was the excitement, the thrill of being a participant in something new and something in which you believed. It's a feeling that was shared by the first few hundred thousands to become racquetballers—and I sincerely hope it is being shared by you.

Racquetball is recreational physical fitness. Nothing more. It is played by you and me, he and she, young and old, fat and slim. We play it because it's the best exercise we can get in such a short period of time, while simultaneously having fun.

There are countless other recreational physical fitness activities, and lord knows, they've probably put the latest one into your local club. Well, I've pumped an iron (a long time ago, and just one, thank you) and I've run (Chicago winters—no thanks), and I even played tennis once (2 a.m. to enhance incognitus verifius). In my youth I even played, gasp, handball, and once, when they weren't looking, I tried four-wall paddleball.

But when I stumbled upon racquetball it dawned on me that, this was a game a pseudo-jock like myself, could really get into. I mean, here I was, fresh out of college, competitive juices flowing, and no activity to which I could dedicate my sweat glands. Racquetball satisfied my need immediately with good workouts, and a short time later when I actually reached lousy, I was truly having fun.

And so I ask you, my fellow racquetballers, are you having fun? Are you deriving the utmost from your racquetball hours? Fun is not necessarily two straight 21's. Fun is knowing that your body has just absorbed 60 minutes of exercise, complete with stretching, thinking, running, bending, swinging and more.

That fatigue you feel is even greater fun, with the knowledge that your heart muscles have been strengthened, along with



your lung capacity and your entire cardiovascular system. You are a healthier person today, because you played racquetball yesterday.

The fun is even greater, though, when you win. Or at least give a better opponent a pretty good game. Yea, that back-hand kill shot off his best drive serve was fun; that "thud" when he vainly attempted to cut off my cross court pass was fun; the exhilaration that wells up inside when he commits too early and goes left, while you adjust your swing and hit the ball to the right,—now that's fun!

You want fun? I'll give you fun. The one time two years ago when you dove, flat out dove parallel to the floor, and actually re-killed in the right corner—ah, was that ever fun. They still talk about it around the club when the subjects is "most astonishing occurrences in the history of court five."

Fun is your first real, live Z ball against an opponent who's never seen it before; the ace down the right, while your opponent has headed left; and the time at 20-20 when your mis-hit ball cracked out at the base of the back wall instead of rebounding back into center court. Sure, it was lucky, but you deserved it that day. Fun!

Fun is pretending you're Marty Hogan in the five minutes before your opponent shows up, trying to blast away (and feeling fortunate not to have pulled every muscle in your body); fun is trying to explain to your wife that incredible purple welt on your left bun; and certainly there is fun in a game well played.

I'm having fun and I certainly hope you are too. Take a minute, if you will, and jot down the three or four best feelings you've had on the court. Send them to me at the address listed on page 2, and we'll publish as many as we can. Let's tell the world how much fun we're having!●

*Chuck Fere*

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# Racquetball or Racquetball Ball?

by Steve Keeley

Is it a racquetball or a racquetball ball? Call it what you will, the evolution of our sport's sphere would entice Charles Darwin. In 1972, my first tournament year, the balls were slow and mushy. Of course, even if they bounced like Play Doh we didn't term them "dead" because there was no standard at the time. "Dead" and "live" were not in our ball vocabularies.

Still, there was selective pressure among the players for a faster ball. I remember that often tournament committees would designate a "ball person" to be responsible for keeping the tourney balls hyped up. The ball person usually accomplished this by placing boxes of balls (no cans back then) into a hot sauna just before the tournament matches started. By game time, the balls were good and lively due to increased internal pressure brought about by the expansion of air within.

If no sauna was available, the ball person sought out a doctor, who in turn procured a syringe and small gauge needle (26 gauge or smaller) to pump 3-5 cc of air into each ball. Thus, each ball could be custom pressurized. It worked but was time-consuming when you consider that tournaments even back then went through racquetballs by the gross.

Another drawback was that each of these living techniques—the sauna and the needle—kept balls peppy for only a game or so. Eventually, the air in the sauna-superheated balls cooled while the air was pounded back out of the needle hole of the injected balls. In either case, the ball person had to be called upon for ball resuscitation.

### Broken Balls and Superballs

The year 1973 was pivotal in the racquetball's liveliness evolution. During this season, the manufacturers heeded the player's pleas by quitting the nerf balls. Instead, they began producing a pumped-up ball that was acceptable by the common standard of that age: A well hit ceiling ball would reach the bottom of the back wall on the first bounce.

The only shortcoming was that these livelier balls broke rather easily. In 1973, the first year of the pro tour, three to five balls typically broke per pro match. In one match in Detroit, Mike Zeitman and Steve Serot broke a record 10 balls in their three-game contest. Even allowing that these two jock-strapped gorillas bashed the ball harder than most players, you can understand that a lot of balls bit the court dust in 1973.

Most balls broke before the logo wore off, and any ball still bearing part of the logo was replaced free of charge by the manufacturer. Ball replacement created a heck of a logistics problem with the makers; I'll bet you a new can of greenies that in 1973 the manufacturers replaced as many racquetballs as they sold.

(Before you take that bet, remember that one ball originally purchased could be replaced many times over.)

Another era in the racquetball's lively evolution dawned in 1974 and lasted almost two years. During this period, the breakage outbreak, though not eradicated, was brought under control. The manufacturers began reaping a deserved profit and the players fell to their knees in service boxes to give thanks that the big bust was over. But, alas, a new problem surfaced—the out-of-round ball.

An out-of-round ball bounces inconsistently because of a bulge somewhere on the otherwise flawless sphere. This posed a control problem to that era's players who likened the situation to trying

Steve Keeley





*Keeley takes his turn at swatting for the radar gun back in '76. This was the day Marty Hogan reached his vaunted 142 mph.*

to roll a strike when there was a big wad of bubblegum stuck on the bowling ball. But, we should think of 1974-75 as the age of the "superball" rather than the out-of-round balls. (Only a minority of the balls were out-of-round, but they *all* were faster than speeding bullets.) And, I do mean they were *superballs*. The game's rallies back then consisted of trying to swat down a round rubber hummingbird that darted berserkly around the court. Obviously, this ball changed the game dramatically. Ceiling ball rallies went out of vogue because, in fact, ceiling balls often went over the back wall and out of the court. The drive serve supplanted the garbage and lob. Blazing kill shots made pass attempts strategically laughable. Thus, the speed-up in balls speeded up the whole game of racquetball . . . and precipitated the power player. Hello, Marty Hogan and imitators.

1976 to 1977 was a heyday for both the manufacturers and the players. The sport was exploding across the country with thousands of court newcomers demanding a less lively ball which they could keep up with within the four walls. The pleasurable result was ball stabilization at somewhere between lively and super-lively. In addition, the rash of ball busts continued to be held at bay and out came the bubblegum bulge.

From 1978 to present marks the age of ball "zaniness." There are now dozens of manufacturers showering us with an astonishing array of racquetballs. This is a far cry from 1972 when a single company supplied periodic ball shipments to a dozen racquetball hot spots scattered throughout the country. There are now very bouncy and not so bouncy balls, pressurized and non-pressurized balls, green balls, black balls, pro balls, hack balls. There is a ball you can inflate to whatever liveliness desired, and another (although rumored to be out of production) that is pocked like a golf ball to

(theoretically) increase spin and encourage weird bounces (a throwback to the bubblegum bulge ball?). There seems to be only one constant in this universe of ball inconsistency: almost all come packed two to a can, so they don't get lonely. Now that's *really* freedom of choice. If you don't believe me, pay a visit to the court club in Eugene, Oregon where a locked trophy case displays 32 different racquetballs. It's like looking at a collection of chubby butterflies that had their wings pulled off.

Our brief historical bounce through the racquetball's history has probably aroused only Darwinians; most players are no doubt more interested in tips on how to choose the right chubby rubber butterfly from the collection available. In this and the next three issues of *National Racquetball*, we'll tell the true story of the racquetball as well as discuss the

main characteristics to examine when choosing a ball. These characteristics include color, breakage, pressurization, liveliness, price and relationship to court strategy. Perhaps these sound like drab features, but remember that we're talking about a very simple sphere. Not to worry. We'll liven the discussion as we go with anecdotes out of the racquetball ball's not-so-very-simple past.

### A Colorful Past

The racquetball started out as the "pinkie." This ball of the late 1960's was actually the inner core of a tennis ball without the fuzz jacket. It got its name from its color—a gaudy, popsickle pink that camouflaged itself well against the hardwood floor. After the pink came the black, then the green, followed by the blue, and more recently by a whole crayon box of colors. Any time now, I'm expecting some imaginative manufacturer to inject the hormones of a chameleon into the ball's rubber, which will cause it to change colors depending on the hue of the background walls.

The wide spectrum of balls available today presents a color dilemma to some serious players. This is illustrated by a player who showed up at a 1979 Michigan tournament unaware of which was

*Keeley the author, expounding on the virtues of ceiling balls, round balls, out of round balls, etc.*



*The fast ball era led to many a deep court race, Keeley vs. the ball. Here against Jeff Bowman, it appears the ball won.*

the event's official ball. During the first game warmup, the ref tossed down the tournament ball—an orange sphere which looked like . . . well, a shrunken orange. Apparently, our player thought it bounced as such too, for he heaved it back up to the ref and requested another. The next ball bounced just as rotten, as did the next. Finally, the exasperated player screamed, "No, we want a blue one or a black one or a green one. Anything but orange."

Unless you play on glass-walled courts, don't worry a lot about ball color per se. They haven't made a floor-colored ball yet (though the court gods know they've tried like heck—witness the pinkie and the orange), but there are plenty of ball hues which you can lose against a glass wall. Green, black and blue—the most common ball colors—blend very nicely into glass, and if you ever tried to pick a wallpaper ball off a glass side wall, you can verify the playground saying, "You can't hit what you can't see." I don't mean to come down heavily on the ball companies; from their standpoint there is no true solution to the ball blending into a glass wall. Glass is a black hole which absorbs *all* colors. It's going to take one-way glass walls and more eye concentration by you to avoid the problem of ball camouflage.

My final color advice is that if you want to see what you hit, stay off glass. Then, choose whatever color which happens to come with the type of ball you like.

### Ball Breakage

The average player's major concern with the racquetball is: How long will it last before bursting at the seam and spilling its invisible guts all over the court? A ball normally expires by developing a small split along the seam, then it whispers a "WHOSH" (the ball's forewarning death rattle) and collapses to the floor. This is the case with *most* balls, but not with all. I once saw Marty Hogan bash a ball that traveled lickety-split to the front wall and, upon hitting that wall, slid down like a sleepy slug on the side of a house. Examination of the ball—you might call it an autopsy—revealed a definite peculiarity in the corpse: A chunk was missing from the ball wall. Even more odd and amazing, this missing hunk of rubber was located nowhere near the seam. The ball looked like a green orange which someone had started to peel and then abandoned.

There have been other mysterious ball deaths. I once saw Bud Muehleisen hit a truly artistic "kill." The scene was San Diego, and I can't remember who Bud was playing. Nonetheless, he took one of



his opponent's shots with his forehand in deep court about equidistant between the side walls. The ball literally exploded in half upon racquet contact, splitting at the seam and coming off the strings as two separate halves. One rubber hemisphere floated toward the right front corner and the other toward the left front corner. Then, as if orchestrated by the court gods above, each half hit the front wall almost simultaneously and within a couple feet of the bottom board. I'm sure this was the game's first and only double rollout.

You need not shed a tear for these or for your own broken balls. What you call the end of the world for a racquetball that breaks, the ball itself may call a relief. Think about that, then save the crying for *yourself* because you may be the unwitting victim of planned obsolescence. Yep, like light bulbs and shoe laces, isn't it conceivable that some racquetballs might have a life span predetermined by the manufacturer? After all, it wouldn't make good business sense to construct an indestructible sphere.

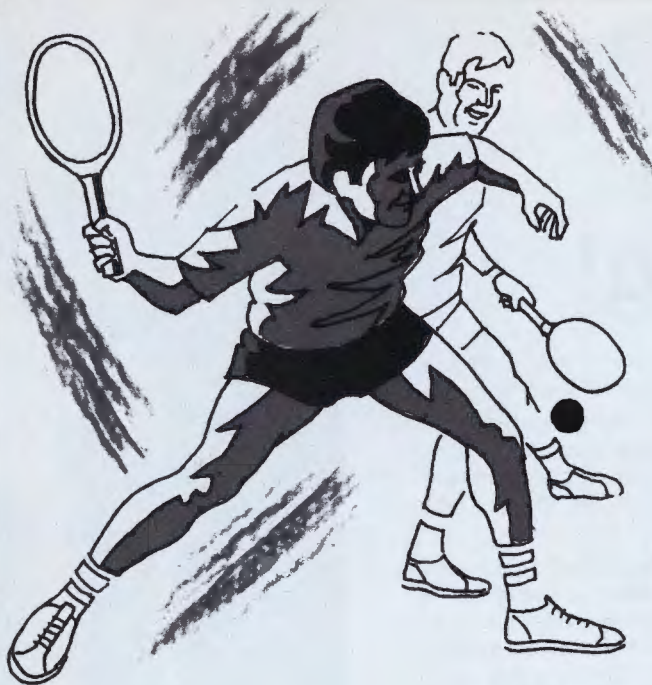
A friend of mine attended a 1979 Milwaukee tournament at which he overheard a ball manufacturer's rep blistering about how, when his company was getting started some years back, they made a batch of 100 dozen balls that just wouldn't break. The tough orbs lasted six or eight months of play at which time they had to be discarded because the walls had thinned and slickened beyond playability. "We took care of that problem quick," the rep said. He indicated that his company's present balls are programmed for a much shorter life span.

Don't worry about planned obsolescence because there's nothing you can do

about it, except to buy balls that don't give up so early in life. On the whole, nonpressurized balls break much less readily than their pressurized kinfolk. Similarly, the deader (less pressurized) a pressurized ball, the longer it will last without breaking. Realize that most ball manufacturers will replace your racquetballs should they break before the logo wears off. One ball company proudly advertised a "double guarantee." It would give you two balls if your original broke before the logo eroded away. This is honorable in intent, I suppose, but the catch is that most logos disappear by the time you've warmed up and are ready to begin play. I'm still waiting for the quarter-inch thick logos that will hang around for a couple of games.

A final scenario with a final message: you have been using a dead ball every day for a month, just waiting for the constipated thing to give up the ghost and split. But, it tenaciously hangs onto its life-air by never developing a wide smile at the seam. You're finally compelled to toss the stubborn thing into the trash because its hide has become unbearably thin and shiny. Now is the moment you've been waiting for during the past month—you break open a fresh *new* ball and introduce it to your racquet. It zings and zips around the court better than the shiny one did even in its youth. But . . . your new ball breaks in the first game. You have just been introduced to Murphy's Law of Racquetballs: A good ball breaks sooner than a bad ball. ●

*(Editor's note: Next issue Keeley compares pressurized to non-pressurized balls, hypothesizing that balls were invented by air as a method of transporting itself from one player to another.)*



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# Asian Racquetball— On The Upswing!

by CDR Glenn R. Allen

Avid racquetball players are like wandering minstrels, no matter where they are in the world they must make their own music and play, play, play! As a career navy man and a long standing racquetball nut, I have found that no matter where the Navy sends me there are racquetball courts and friendly players who welcome the opportunity to play visiting challengers.

My current tour of duty which started in March 1979, resulted in my travelling racquetball show leaving the highly competitive east coast racquetball scene (Virginia/Washington DC/North Carolina) and the less competitive but still avid mediterranean racquetball experiences of Spain, Italy, Turkey and Greece (see July 79 issue of *National Racquetball*) for an assignment to Okinawa as part of an Amphibious Group Commanders Staff was the opportunity to travel onboard various U.S. Navy amphibious ships for visits to other Asian countries. As a result of these cruises, I would like to update readers concerning the court facilities and racquetball opportunities that exist in Okinawa, Japan, Korea, The Philippines, Diego Garcia, Guam, and Singapore. In all of these countries, visiting racquetballers can easily find courts and a game at either military bases or at new clubs and commercial sports facilities.

## Guam—Where America's Day Begins

Located exactly 6007 miles from Los Angeles and only 1350 miles from Tokyo, the island of Guam is roughly 35 miles by 10 miles in area and features a hilly terrain with sandy beaches, tropical jungles and a hot humid climate. Guam is also the United States largest and most western possession in the Pacific, which has resulted in the territory being eight to 13 hours ahead of the rest of the United States, and thus gaining the popular description "where America's day begins".

For years Guam has been the home of thousands of Navy and Air Force men and women who work at the various Navy bases scattered around the Island and the giant Air Force base located on

the northern corner. More recently, Guam has become a popular tropical tourist retreat for both American and Japanese visitors who come to enjoy the beaches and warm weather.

Racquetball is also popular in Guam as evidenced by the heavy usage of the 13 courts on Guam military bases and the two civilian courts located at the Windward Country Club. The top player on the Island of Guam is Joe Flores, a navyman from the Naval Station who plays on the two regulation courts in the base gym. Other courts located on Guam naval facilities include 2 at the Naval Air Station near the International Airport and three more at the Naval Communications Station.

Points of contact for racquetball players looking for a game in the central part of Guam are:

Windward Country Club  
Phone: 789-1612/1712

Naval Communications Station Guam  
court reservations: 355-5623

Athletic Director Naval Station Guam  
P.O. Box 169  
FPO San Francisco 96630  
Phone: 339-2155

Naval Air Station Guam  
court reservations: 344-5136/8125

Joe Flore 344-6101

The other Guam racquetball facilities are located in the northern part of the island at Anderson Air Force Base. Anderson currently has two smaller than regulation courts and two new 20×20×40 courts which were completed last summer. Bill Rice is a top player at Anderson and can be reached for a game at 366-5284. MSGT Richard Dooley is the Athletic Director and his address and phone is:

Athletic Director, 43rd CSG/MWR  
Anderson AFB, APO San Francisco  
96334  
Phone: 366-8282/6100

If you are a racquetballer who enjoys white beaches, scuba diving and jungle exploring—visit Guam, but be sure to bring your racquet as you can also find



spirited racquetball competition on this small tropical island.

## Racquetball Philippino Style

The Philippines have been described as the worlds most luxuriant tropical islands. To a racquetball enthusiast however, this Island nation offers a rather unique opportunity to play the standard U.S. style game on the two large military bases on the main island and also to participate in a home grown form of racquetball called *pelota* which has become a popular national sport of the Philippines.

There are about 7,100 islands with a land area of 116,220 square miles in the Philippine group, but most of the population centers and major cities are located on the largest island, Luzon. The climate is decidedly tropical with only two seasons; hot and dry in the winter/spring months followed by the hot and rainy



*The American Club Singapore, main entrance.*

season in the summer/fall. With an average annual temperature of 80 degrees, all enclosed U.S. style courts must be air conditioned while the Pelota courts are uniquely constructed to take advantage of prevailing winds for ventilation.

American racquetball can be played at the two giant military bases on the island of Luzon—the Subic Bay/Cubi Point naval complex and Clark Air Force Base. Subic/Cubi Point is really two bases; a naval ship repair facility and a naval air station located side-by-side on the west coast of Luzon near the Philippine city of Olongapo (often referred to as liberty or fun city by fleet sailors). Subic/Cubi Point has a total of six regulation, air conditioned tournament courts. There is also a Pelota court adjacent to the Subic courts which is used by both Americans and Philipinos alike.

The U.S. population at Subic/Cubi Point is for the most part transient, as large

numbers of U.S. Navy ships and aircraft are continually stopping at Subic/Cubi for periods of one to three weeks. As a result, courts are usually available when the fleet is out but much more crowded when an aircraft carrier or group of amphibious ships with 3,000 embarked marines is in port.

Regardless, there are several hundred active racquetballers at this base with whom games can be arranged. Some of the top players permanently stationed at Subic/Cubi Point and base athletic directors are listed below in case a visitor might want to arrange a game.

If you do have the opportunity to visit the west coast of Luzon, by all means stop and play racquetball or pelota at Subic Bay, but also don't miss the sights and sounds of Olongapo. A good description of Olongapo might be "outstanding sun, shopping, and liquid refreshments at unheard of cheap prices". World famous

San Miguel beer is 20¢ a bottle in a snack bar and only 60¢ a bottle in a night club complete with a top quality country and western band and beautiful native hostesses. At the same time while you are enjoying the nightlife, an expert tailor located next to the nightclub is sewing for you by hand, a complete suit of clothes for \$35 or less. Often compared to Tijuana, Mexico as it was 20 years ago, Olongapo has a well-deserved reputation among U.S. servicemen as the best port in the western pacific.

Subic Bay/Cubi Point  
*Racquetball players*  
 CDR Griffin 49898  
 LT Buell 46311

*Subic Bay*  
 Athletic Director  
 U.S. Naval Station  
 Subic Bay, PI  
 FPO SAN FRAN 96651  
 46151/49547



New racquetball court construction site, Subic Bay Navy Base, Philippines.

#### **Cubi Point**

Athletic Director  
U.S. Naval Air Sta.  
Cubi Point, PI  
FPO SAN FRAN 96654  
53502/53201

Clark Air Force Base is located about 70 miles inland from Subic Bay near the Philippino city of Angeles. Like Subic, Clark is also a hotbed of racquetball activity. With seven racquetball courts and several pelota courts scattered around the base, Clark offers adequate facilities for just about anybody who swings a racquet. Several of the courts are slightly larger than regulation, but that does not seem to diminish the enthusiasm of the Clark players. The top players at the base have taken it upon themselves to organize racquetball tournaments on the base and welcome outside competition. The address and phone number of the base athletic director to be used when arranging matches or court time is:

Athletic Director  
Clark Air Force Base  
Base Gym  
APO SAN FRAN 96256  
335-5560

#### **Pelota**

For 350 years, from the 15th century to 1898, the Philippines were under Spanish rule. As a result, Spanish is still spoken as a second language and many Spanish customs/beliefs including the Catholic faith are still dominant. One of the most unique blends of Spanish and American customs has taken place in the sports field where the Philipinos have combined the Spanish game of Jai Alai with American racquetball and squash to come up with the distinct Philipino racquet sport known as *pelota* or more properly *Pelota Filipina*.

Pelota is played on a two or three wall court consisting of a front and side wall or front, side and back walls with ceiling utilizing U.S. made racquetball racquets and racquetballs. The dimensions of a pelota court are 40 to 50 feet in length by 21 feet in width with walls 16 feet in height.

Ceilings are not used for play and a 17 inch "Chapa" or tell-tale board is placed along the bottom of the front wall in a similar manner as squash. Both doubles and singles can be played and as in racquetball, the most effective shots are the pinch kill, the lob and low, hard passing shots.

Pelota Filipina is a very fast game that U.S. racquetball players can quickly learn

*Racquetball complex, Subic Bay Naval Base, Philippines.*

and enjoy. It demands much more running and court coverage than racquetball because of the longer court and the need to cover the pinch shot which rebounds out the open side wall area and the lob shot to the back court. Scoring is similar to squash with 22 point games and a point awarded on every rally regardless of which team or individual is serving.

Pelota was founded in the late 1950's by Mimil Heredia who purchased a Sportcraft paddle racquet from the United States and gave it to Piling Toda who then built the first two wall court in his home in San Juan, Rizal. By 1966, many wealthy Philipino residents in Manila had courts built in their homes and most major hotels on the island of Luzon had Pelota courts included with the hotel recreational facilities. Tournaments were conducted in the late 60's and by 1974 strong players from all major cities were participating in local and regional tournaments.

The trend in the 70's and 80's has been to construction of 2-wall courts with outside perimeter screens 10 feet beyond the back and side in-play boundary lines. Today many thousands of citizens are enjoying Pelota on courts located in hotels, private homes, government parks and local fire stations. In addition, several dozen U.S. military racquetball players assigned to bases in the Philippines have also taken up Pelota to supplement their racquetball games.

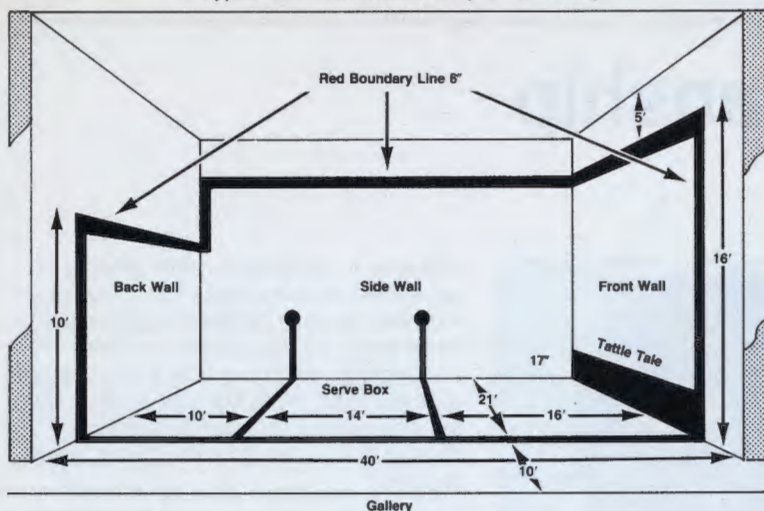
I strongly recommend that all racquetball players who plan to visit the Philippines try the unique game of Pelota. Check your hotel first as more than likely there is a court somewhere on the grounds. Pelota is not only good exercise and highly competitive, but offers visitors to this island nation the opportunity to meet and become friends with Philipinos of all ages and skill levels.

#### **Racquetball In The City Of The Lion**

Situated at the crossroads of East and West and the gateway to fascinating southeast Asia, Singapore, a city of 2.4 million, is the cleanest, most orderly city in Asia. Originally a British trading post in the early 1800's and then a British Crown Colony for 140 years, Singapore became an independent republic in 1965 but retains it's strong British ties and customs. This British influence is readily evident by the tremendous popularity of squash which is almost a national sport in this beautiful city referred to by most residents as the city of the Lion.

Despite the more than 400 squash courts located in posh private clubs, government recreation centers and military

Philippino Three Wall Pelota Court (With Back Wall)



Russel NG, racquetball committee chairman, the American Club Singapore, awaits service from recently converted squash player Khoo Kay Lin.

bases throughout the city; racquetball for the first time is alive and well in Singapore as a result of the recent completion of two championship caliber, fully air-conditioned courts at the American Club of Singapore.

Located just down the street from the Holiday Inn, at 21 Scotts Road, the American Club of Singapore is a private club in which the majority of Americans who work and reside in Singapore retain membership. In addition a large number of ethnic Chinese educated in the United States also have become American Club members. The racquetball courts completed in March 1980, have become exceedingly popular with American and Chinese alike as evidenced by the difficulty in obtaining court reservations. To promote racquetball in Singapore a racquetball committee has been formed to schedule clinics, ladder tournaments and club tournaments.

During my visit to Singapore, I had the chance to play with some of the committee members including businessman Russel NG, the committee chairman and navy man William Brady who is the self-proclaimed Singapore champion. Other top intermediate players include Rick New and Ron Steele, both of whom are converted squash players. At present there are about 40 active men and women racquetball players of various skill levels, most of whom welcome the opportunity to play visiting racquetballers.

Although the American club in Singapore is a private organization, it is possible to arrange guest privileges for visiting players by calling one of the below listed racquetball committee members at the club or at their business phone number.

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| American Club Singapore | 737-3411 |
| Ron Steel               | 734-0082 |
| William Brady           | 221-6266 |
| Rick New                | 737-0110 |
| Russel NG               | 737-3411 |

If you have the opportunity to visit Asia,

don't miss beautiful Singapore. The City of the Lion has much to offer, including good racquetball.

### Diego Garcia—Sometimes The Courts Are For Sleeping

Strategically located at the approximate mid-point of the Indian Ocean, the island of Diego Garcia has received heavy media attention during the last few years



*CDR Glenn R. Allen is a veteran of 15 years of naval service and has been active in racquetball for the past five years. A former U.S. Navy racquetball commissioner (1975-1977), he is the president of the Okinawa Racquetball Association and the 1980 Western Pacific All Navy and 1981 Okinawa Interservice racquetball champion. He is also a former national interservice racquetball seniors champion and finalist in several seniors regional tournaments.*

*CDR Allen was transferred to the Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, Virginia in June 1981.*

because of its importance as a support base for U.S. Navy ships and aircraft patrolling the volatile Middle East. Recently, the small island has become home for several hundred U.S. Navy men who normally serve an unaccompanied tour (without families) of 12 months. To satisfy the need for physical activity and as an alternate to the 18 hour days that many of the men are required to work, the Naval Support Activity recently built two standard sized racquetball courts which are utilized 24 hours a day, sometimes for racquetball, other times for sleeping.

Let me explain. With the recent build-up of military personnel on Diego Garcia, the air conditioned racquetball courts have sometimes been pressed into service as motel rooms for visiting personnel because of the lack of available temporary living facilities on the island. This might interfere with a hard core players midnight game, but it is only a temporary inconvenience as new living facilities are under construction which will ensure the courts are used for their primary purpose.

In the January, 1980 issue of *National Racquetball*, Lt. Commander Rick Brown, U.S. Navy wrote an article which detailed recent racquetball activity on Diego Garcia. There are still plenty of active players on Diego Garcia, but don't ask your travel agent for a plane ticket to this island resort. Chances are the only way to play racquetball at Diego Garcia is to either join the Navy or sail your own yacht the 3000+ miles from Australia or the Philippines. Nevertheless, if you do have the opportunity to visit Diego Garcia, you could be one of the few to claim, *I racquetballed on D. G.* ●

*Next issue: More Asian racquetball including reports from Korea, Japan and Okinawa.*

# Pro-Files of Penmanship

by Cecile Hoyle and Carol George

What would you think if you were filling out a membership application at your local racquetball club and the person standing next to you said, "*Your handwriting is really fascinating. Do you mind if I take a closer look at it?*" You might be no more impressed than if an amateur astrologist at a party inquired, "*What's your sign?*" You would probably conclude that the person at the club, just like at the party, was trying to come on to you . . . and in that case you're probably right.

But to a lot of people, handwriting analysis is a lot more than entertainment at a nightclub or a fast buck at the county fair. In Europe, graphology, the study of handwriting, is taught at major universities. But even in this country, acceptance seems to be growing.

One of the main reasons that graphology has suffered a similar reputation to astrology, tarot cards, palmistry, crystal balls and the like, is that until recently there was no standard of certification. So anyone could buy a 25¢ booklet at the grocery store check-out stand and call him or herself a handwriting analyst. But now the Chicago-based International Graphoanalysis Society (IGS) certifies handwriting experts—and that image is changing.

Cecile Hoyle of San Diego is a Master Graphoanalyst\* who has been studying and practicing handwriting analysis for the past 17 years, including the completion of IGS's general and graduate courses.

Currently she keeps a busy schedule of lectures, radio talk shows, and television appearances, in addition to doing analysis for both individuals and businesses.

According to the International Graphoanalysis Society, more than 2,000 (and growing) American firms now use handwriting analysis as an aid in personnel selection, to augment resumes and interviews as a way of determining personality, honesty, and suitability for the job.

\*Graphoanalyst and Graphoanalysis are registered trademarks of the International Graphoanalysis Society, Inc. for the scientific handwriting analysis performed by it or under its authority or direction.

—Photo by Carol George



Cecile Hoyle, handwriting analyst supreme

But how can anyone analyze a person's handwriting when it changes all the time? The answer is simple: people are constantly changing, so an analysis of handwriting is only a reflection of personality at the moment of writing. Some traits of handwriting (and personality) remain consistent, while others fluctuate due to physical and emotional factors. When a person is happy and optimistic he or she tends to write uphill; depressed or pessimistic the writing slopes downhill. If handwriting slants to the right, it indicates the writer likes to be around people. A left slant indicates a feeling of rejection, and those people who write without any slant are not responsive emotionally.

A listing of individual traits could go on and on, but the trick to a good Graphoanalysis is to put all the pieces together, not just looking at the dot of the "i" or the cross of the "t" or the tail on the "g". Hoyle says it takes approximately six hours to analyze someone's handwriting, but even in a glance she can tell certain things. (As I take notes during our interview she says I'm probably a good writer because the way I connect the cross of the "t" to the top of the "h" in the word "the" indicates an ability to keep ideas connected and flowing. Of course she's right.)

We all learned to write identically in primary school, so shouldn't we all have identical personalities? Well some of us got A's in penmanship (which usually

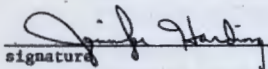
indicates a conformist), while others developed our own styles (which could indicate creativity or deviance). Sometimes we try to copy someone else's handwriting, but this is only a reflection of a desire to be more like that person. During adolescence our handwriting is the most erratic as we go through the "identity crisis."

Graphoanalysis is used professionally in other ways besides screening job applicants. Psychologists use it to uncover hidden personality traits that may surface in someone's handwriting even though she or he may not be consciously aware of them. Even more recently there has been research done in a new field called "psychographology", based on the theory that we can change the personality traits we don't like in ourselves by consciously altering our handwriting.

Some medical doctors have had surprising success in diagnosing their patient's illnesses, even detecting cancer, with the aid of Graphoanalysts. The interesting thing about graphology is that the person need not be present for the analysis. So historians are now looking at the handwriting of famous persons of the past. In the future you might not even have to make a trip to your doctor or psychologist or career counselor; just send a sample of your handwriting.

I asked 10 well known past and present racquetball professionals to send handwriting samples to Cecile Hoyle. The players were asked to write two or three sentences and sign their names. People's signatures are often completely different from their normal writing styles, because the basic handwriting reflects the basic character while the signature expresses the social facade. (So beware of anyone who claims to analyze your personality just by looking at your signature.)

The following are short profiles of each player. Cecile Hoyle had never heard of any of the players, much less met them, talked to them, or seen them on television. Yet every one of the pros who read their profiles was amazed by Hoyle's accuracy. But she wasn't. "*You are what you write,*" she insists.

  
signature

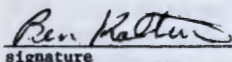
**Jennifer Harding:** You tend to look backward in your life. This is shown by the left slant in your writing. Somewhere along the way you felt rejected by someone on whom you counted. This is a frequent trait with left-handed people, however all left-handers do not necessarily have this trait. Both right- and left-handed people can show it. With growth and maturity, you may be able to overcome your tendency to dwell on the past.

You seem to have a strong need for approval from others. Because this need is frequently not met to your satisfaction, you compensate with self approval which at times may serve to isolate you from others (see your exceptionally tall "t" and "d" stems).

Those open looped "t" and "d" stems show that criticism can pierce your thin skin. You allow your imagination to see the censure where it may not even exist.

Vital physical energy (indicated by heavy writing and forward slant), aggressiveness (push away strokes on lower loops of your "t"s) and your enduring determination (firm downstrokes on your lower loops) as well as your ability to analyze your opponent (v bases in your strokes), are all keys to your successful game.

Your aims for accomplishment appear to be very practical. You like the plans you make to be workable and reachable (shown by mid-range "t" crossing)

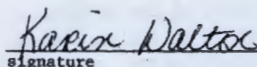
  
signature

**Ben Koltun:** Ben, you are a friendly (moderate slant), dignified (retraced "t" stems), and well-mannered person. You make an effort to be tactful in your dealings with others.

You will go out of your way to avoid censure as this does strike a blow to your sensitivity. This feeling of undue criticism is often a product of your own imagining (watch those wide looped "d" stems).

Your game shows good physical stamina (looped small "p" stems), enthusiasm and power (long sweeping "t" bars). Your desire to acquire as indicated in your beginning hooks, is a spur to your accomplishment. You appear to keep this in good relationship to what you feel is due you.

The high crossings of your "t" bars are proof that you will not be content with coasting along on current laurels. You look ahead to yet greater achievements and you make your plans accordingly.

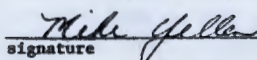
  
signature

**Karin Walton-Trent:** Karin, although you like people and are sympathetic to their feelings, your closed "a"s and "o"s show you are not normally a talkative or expressive person. It seems difficult for you to communicate your warm feelings that hide underneath.

You are a vigorous, active person, giving lots of energy to your sports activities. You are quick to analyze (spread v bases in your "m"s and "n"s) your opponent's play and are prepared for your return attack.

You enjoy the variety (long lower loops) of travelling to other areas to play racquetball. You keep your goals within conservative, apparent reach, planning only what you think is attainable (low to mid-range "t" crossings).

Since your lower loops intermingle with the line below it, it appears you have too many projects going at one time. If you gave your full attention to racquetball, you might be number one.

  
signature

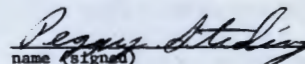
**Mike Yellen:** Mike, you are very particular about your form in racquetball, (retraced small letter "p" stems). You will persist until you get things just right to suit you. Vitality and stamina (heavy writing), and

aggressiveness (push away strokes on lower loops) are very evident in your writing.

Your good spacing between letters, long finals, and your forward slant all show that you like people and will get along well with a group.

Being of a secretive nature, you will keep your problems to yourself. You are not one to "tell all" to your friends (see the tie loops on the right side of your "a"s and "o"s).

You can figure out your opponent's strategy and quickly come back with your own approach. (Your "m"s and "n"s show this analytical ability by their open v bases). You set your goals realistically. You want to feel sure of accomplishing them, as indicated by your mid-range "t" crossings.

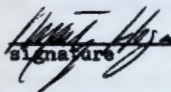
  
name (signed)

**Peggy Steding:** Peggy, since you are an independent thinker, you want to do things your own way. Although you will adhere to custom, you like to set your own standards. If you find a way that works best for you, you will use it even if it may be an unusual style. You prefer the individualistic approach.

Although open and expressive, you tend to keep to yourself, being very selective about your friends, as noted by the slender lower loops in your writing.

You can easily figure out your opponent's strategy. Being an aggressive player, you are able to quickly respond to your own advantage with force and strength, (your push away strokes on some of your lower loops give evidence of aggressiveness).

Even though your physical stamina is good, you appear to be slackening off. You need to give your chosen sport your best efforts (downward slanting lines and "t" bars indicate some pessimism).

  
signature

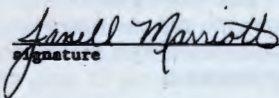
**Marty Hogan:** Marty, you show a lot of drive in your writing (strong forward slant), but you do not expend it needlessly. The v bases in your "m"s and "n"s show that you make your moves count by analyzing and executing them with care.

Watch those downward slanting "t" bars and lines because they indicate that you look on the gloomy side, feeling that luck is not with you and the worst may happen.

You have a tendency to expect people to try to take advantage of you, or impose on your time so you are alert to that imposition (see the inflexible beginning strokes on some of your words).

Even though you know you should get certain things done, you tend to put them off "until tomorrow" (indicated by "t" crossings that precede the stem).

A highly expressive person (forward slant), you will let people know how much you feel. A bit stubborn, you are not easily influenced to another's way of thinking ("t" stems that are spread apart at the base).

  
signature

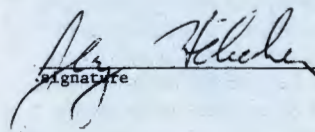
**Janell Marriott:** Janell, you are a low-keyed person who does not waste any effort, as indicated by the light line writing. Your concentration is quite good, allowing you to focus on your immediate endeavor, (fairly small writing and good spacing).

You are well organized (good spacing and equal loops on letter "f") direct and to the point (no beginning stroke on letters which originate in the upper zone such as the small "t"). You approach a task in the most efficient manner and waste little time getting the job done.

The low-crossed "t" bars show that you underrate your abilities, being satisfied

with less than the best you could achieve. Long loops below the base line tell me that variety is the spice in your life. You like to visit new places and see new things.

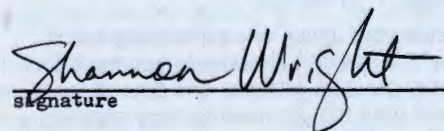
You are sympathetic, sensitive, and usually alert to other people's feelings. You anticipate their reaction and try to act accordingly.

  
signature

**Jerry Hilecher:** Jerry, you seem to know just where to place your shots. Your heavy writing indicates strength and endurance, the v bases of the "m", "n", and "h" reveal calculation, and the equal loops of the letter "t" show the organization of a seasoned player.

You appear to be satisfied with your current status in your chosen field as you don't seem to be looking ahead for further conquests (low to middle "t" crossings).

Your "t" stems are at least two times the height of the lower case letters. This shows that you like approval and will work hard to gain that approval. You have a sociable nature, getting along well with your friends and associates. However, a bit of impatience (jabbed "i" dots) and stubbornness ("t" stems spread apart at the base) can put you in an unfavorable light with others.

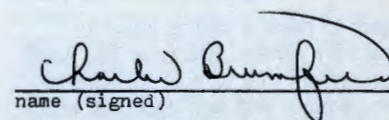
  
signature

**Shannon Wright:** Shannon, you are a power player with lots of physical energy as indicated by heavy writing and forward slant, as well as the lower loops of the small letter "p". You size up your opponents quite accurately and make your shots pay off.

Your very active imagination, as shown by the large loops on your "y" and "g", indicate that you sense criticism even when none may be intended. You allow your feelings to be hurt too easily.

Frequently outspoken, you often come back with a sharp reply. Your sharp pointed "t" bars are like darts that usually hit their mark.

Your imagination (broad loops) and easy command of words (figure 8 strokes in the lower loops of your "y" and "g") indicate some writing ability. I hope you will put that talent to good use some day.

  
name (signed)

**Charlie Brumfield:** Charlie, you have some good strength and energy as shown by your firm, moderate-weight writing. The vertical up-strokes show me that you seldom lose your cool, calm poised exterior, however the spread of the bases of your "t" stems indicate stubbornness.

You are both logical and investigative in your thinking. This is revealed in the rounded tops on the "m"s and "n"s and the inverted vs on your "r"s. You use past experiences and new information in coping with either a game or a new situation.

Your mid-range "t" crossings are evidence that you are a practical person with a realistic outlook on life. You reach only for what you feel is achievable since you like to be assured of success.

For a short analysis like each in this story—Hoyle charges \$15. For other types of analyses Hoyle and other certified Graphoanalysts require several pages, written on unlined paper with pencil. For more information and schedule of fees contact Cecile Hoyle at P.O. Box 23335, San Diego, CA 92123, 714-563-5756. ●

# Ask The Champ

by Marty Hogan

Four time and current National Champion Marty Hogan answers questions about improving your game in this exclusive *National Racquetball* series. 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:** My 12-year-old son has the racquetball bug. In order for him to improve his game, what type of practicing should he be doing?

**Hogan:** What a lot of people don't realize is that I am so good today because when I was 13-years-old I used to play ungodly amounts of racquetball. I mean, I was on the court hours and hours without stop. Many days, and I stress, many, I played eight hours straight. I would play all day whether I had a game or not. And then I'd play anybody.

I wasn't really working on any certain thing, I was just playing racquetball. To me, this experience at such an early age, enabled me to develop my own natural swing and style, something very important for young players like your son.

I know that I was very lucky to play at the JCCA (Jewish Community Centers Association) in St. Louis, where they didn't charge for the courts and they let me play as long as I wanted. Besides that, there were lots of top players around, young and old, for competition.

However, most clubs are pretty good about letting kids play. They'll allow you to play if the courts aren't being used, in off time, especially if you're a promising player. Sometimes they'll let you play in exchange for working a few hours on the weekend, picking up towels, or whatever.

**Question:** What is good practicing?

**Hogan:** When players take up racquetball, they tend to move toward whatever is easiest for them; whatever gives them the most early success. In most cases, that's their forehand. It's extremely important to learn to hit well from both sides, especially if you're a young player looking to play competitively for years to come. It will take you much longer to develop your backhand if you don't do it early.

In fact, I advocate practicing your backhand more than your forehand. The

backhand is more difficult to master, but it will save or win you games many times over. Everybody in top racquetball has the big forehand, complete with power and bread-and-butter shots. It's the backhand that makes the difference.

**Question:** What about for older players, the average club player who might get on the court three or four times a week?

**Hogan:** It's most important to set aside some time to get on the court by yourself. Hit and hit and hit and hit. Hit forehand kills into the right corner, the left corner, straight in. Hit backhands the same way. Repetition is the best way to improve a specific shot. I know some players who actually hit 2,000 forehands and 2,000 backhands a day! Now, that's an extreme, but it makes the point. If I'm having trouble with a shot, I'll hit it 25 times or so to see if I can analyze where I'm off technically.

An hour or two every two weeks will really sharpen your game, if you spend that time on the court alone. You'd be surprised to see what it will do for your game. Just working on one shot at a time helps a great deal. Re-live a situation that failed during a match and practice it over and over again until you get it right.

**Question:** How do you deal with the many distractions that you must encounter at tournaments?

**Hogan:** When I'm ready to board that plane for the next tournament, it means I've worked out hard and prepared both mentally and physically to play top racquetball for four days. Matches are not really won on the court, but in the preparation before and time spent at the tournament. I could be in my best shape, playing the best racquetball of my life, but if I don't properly gauge myself at the tournament site, if I don't constantly look toward that next match and plan my day for it, I could waste a whole month of preparation. In a word (or three): take it seriously.

I have to be on guard every minute of the day, there are so many distractions. I have to watch out. And since I'm well known, many people want to talk to me, if just to say hello. Traveling, time changes, getting proper food and rest, different beds, proper rest, it all counts.

A lot of players like to hang around the club at a tournament, especially the younger guys. I think it's an ego thing. They're recognized, attention is paid to them, they like to be around all the time as a big person. But hey, I've invested a lot of grueling hours, an enormous amount of time and effort in preparation and I'm in this town to win the tournament, nothing else is acceptable. Sure, there are a lot of sacrifices, but there is no excuse for those who don't win because they stay up late or don't do things properly off the court.

When I was younger, just coming up, I'd sit for hours watching the top players and it helped me to a certain extent. And it's much more fun to go to the courts and hang around. But it doesn't help you win, and for me, it helps me lose. I end up exhausted after a day at the courts. It took a couple of losses early in my career to teach me that I can't allow myself that luxury. It's just one of the sacrifices I have to make.

In those matches I lost, it was because I was mentally tired, my concentration wasn't there. And I knew it while I was on the court. When you see me yelling at myself, taking lots of time, calling time outs, then you know my concentration is not there.

I like to relax between matches, just thinking about playing that next match. I guess that makes me a loner. Many players meet their buddies, have roommates, socialize and so forth. That may be the best way to have fun but I don't think it's the best way to win tournaments. I stay by myself and am constantly preparing for my next match. ●

# The Fundamentals Of Advanced Play

by Steve Strandemo with Bill Bruns

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*This issue begins a series of exclusive excerpts from Advanced Racquetball by Steve Strandemo with Bill Bruns. In case you're new to racquetball the Strandemo/Bruns doubles team has already connected on one "winner," the immensely successful The Racquetball Book, also by Simon & Schuster. Advanced Racquetball takes the sport that extra mile to where we all would love our game to be. The editors of National Racquetball are pleased to be able to bring this outstanding work to the instructional pages of each issue.*

Racquetball has been described as a sport in which "any semblance of stroking style is probably accidental" and where "98 percent of the strategy is based on hitting the ball as hard as you can." This may certainly be true for beginners, and even for those players who can intimidate opponents with their uncontrolled power. However, if you're hooked on this game as a competitive outlet, I'm sure that an important motivation is the endlessly absorbing challenge it presents for you to play well and to reach higher skill levels. Advanced racquetball, played the way it is intended, is not a mindless, helter-skelter, let-it-rip contest where neither player knows where the next shot may end up. It's a game of power, but also of patience and control, and many pieces must all fit together—reliable strokes, intelligent shot selection, efficient court coverage, and a grasp of match-play tactics.

My presumption is that you're familiar with the basic shots and strategy, and you have a playing style that is comfortable for you—but you're looking for ways to play better under pressure and to win more matches, whether among your regular playing partners, opponents on the challenge ladder at your club, or in league and tournament competition. If you're willing to experiment with concepts and techniques that may challenge you to change the way you play now, then I'm confident I can help you make impor-

tant breakthroughs to better play. There are creative ways to gain a better mastery of this game, and I'll give you practical, realistic guidelines that have been gleaned from three perspectives: (1) my own experience as a playing pro since 1973, (2) my teaching experience giving summer camps and clinics around the country, and (3) my own homework—watching numerous amateur tournaments and substantiating my judgments through videotape analysis and matches at every playing level. So I know how the game *should* be played, but I'm also familiar with the common problems that might be limiting your efficiency as you play—and your progress.

To lay the groundwork for the rest of the book, this first chapter will describe the crucial concepts underlying advanced play, whether you're a C player in San Diego or an open player in Wisconsin. This overall approach I'm presenting is reality—the way the top pros strive to play the game today after years of emulating one another, experimenting with new theories, and continually refining their games as they've searched for those methods of hitting the ball and covering the court that work best for them, with prize money and rankings at stake. There isn't a mystery style you must uncover as you try to work your way up to the next playing level. What counts is how well you can execute the key fundamentals while adding the important nuances through experience and common sense.

## Ten Crucial Checkpoints

Racquetball is still a young sport, several hundred how-to books behind golf and tennis. Yet while stroking techniques and tactical philosophies are continuing to evolve, only so much evolution can take place inside this 20-by-40-foot court. And now that the game has been sufficiently influenced by two distinct playing styles—control and power—we can isolate the most important elements and

blend them together into "advanced racquetball."

Check your own game against the following list of characteristics the top players share in their overall playing style. You may come in at the struggling end of a particular fundamental, or you may have already successfully incorporated it into your game. But whatever your playing level, I hope this list will challenge you and open your eyes to ways you can advance your playing ability by developing a well-rounded game. When you go to work on your game, periodically review these guidelines to see specific areas in which you have improved . . . and where work still remains.

1. On both forehands and backhands, you have the stroking techniques—and an aggressive attitude—that when an offensive opportunity exists, you try to either kill the ball, angle it away from your mispositioned opponent, or at least hit it low enough so that it takes its second bounce before caroming off the back wall. This gives you offensive weapons that keep constant pressure on your opponents.
2. You have good solid swings on the forehand and backhand that enable you to minimize your exploitable areas, allowing you to hit with strong force and accuracy—into your offensive "low zone" and to the ceiling—so that you're not at the mercy of an opponent who can direct the ball into the back corners or tight along the side walls and score at will.
3. When serving, you have the correct mechanics (for instance, a two-step motion into the ball) and you know your front-wall targets so that you can drive your opponents deep into the back corners with properly placed low drives and hard "Z's," while minimizing the setups that come off the side and back walls. You also mix in correctly angled half-lobbs and high-lobbs that keep your opponent on the defensive.
4. After serving, you relocate quickly and efficiently behind the service box as you study your opponent to see if he's going for an offensive return or if he's going to the ceiling—and you're ready to react accordingly.
5. When returning a serve, you are able

to react and move quickly to either corner and you have the strokes to hit effective offensive returns or, if the serve is really tough, to go defensively to the ceiling.

6. You cover the back half of the court (the "action zone") with a blend of quickness, strength, and agility—plus an attitude that you want to try to put the ball away at every appropriate opportunity. In the front part of this area (center court) you know when to cut the ball off and when to let it come off the back wall. In the deeper part, during low-zone rallies, ceiling ball exchanges, and against the serve, you use common sense in deciding when to be offensive and when to go back up to the ceiling.

7. You have good "adaptable" form from varying stances so that you can hit quickly and forcefully, with a good degree of accuracy, when you don't have time to take your normal swing or you're not in a position to step into the ball (for example, in center-court or when the ball is driven by you and you must stretch and reach to make the hit).

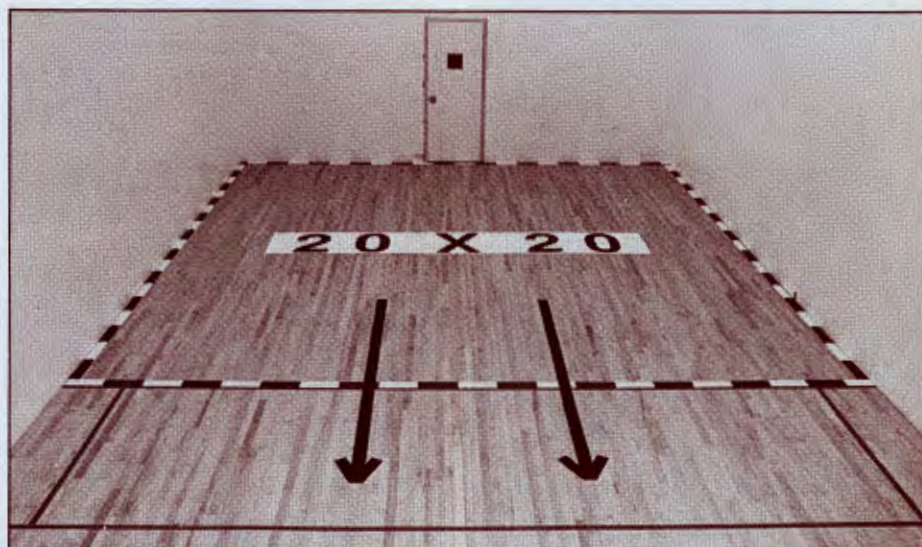
8. Going into an important match, you've thought about a "game plan" and an alternate strategy, you're warmed up properly, and you're ready to play at full throttle on the very first point.

9. You can adjust your game to the type of ball being used, your opponent's particular playing style, and the patterns of a rally and the match. When you're ahead you stick with what's working; when you're behind you make strategy changes and use time-outs to gain the momentum back.

10. Percentage racquetball is your goal; you know the value of power *and* control and you strive to blend both elements; you have a sense of when to hit the ball offensively and when to go to the ceiling; you strive for a putaway but you minimize skips; you maneuver your opponent around the court with solid shots—passes, pinches, straight-in and cross-court kill attempts, and ceiling balls; and you recognize the importance of using one shot to set up an easier second shot, rather than having an all-or-nothing philosophy of shot-making.

### The 20-by-20 Concept

While researching this book, I charted tournament matches at every level of play, looking for statistical patterns, and I was amazed by one basic similarity: after the serve and service return, over 80 percent of the shots in a match—and



**Figure 1.** Over 80 to 90 percent of the shots in a rally are taken from the 20-by-20-foot area behind the service box. Advanced players are efficient at covering all parts of this "action zone" and, as the arrows indicate, have the ability to thrust and stretch forward into the service box to dig up potential kill shots.

often 90 percent—are taken from behind the service box. Agreed, this is a game of kill-shot attempts, but only rarely do we have time to actually move into the service box or closer to dig up those shots; the ball either dies in front of us or comes into the back half of the court. In other words, *this game is played deeper—far more often—than we commonly think*, and this dictates several basic premises for advanced play.

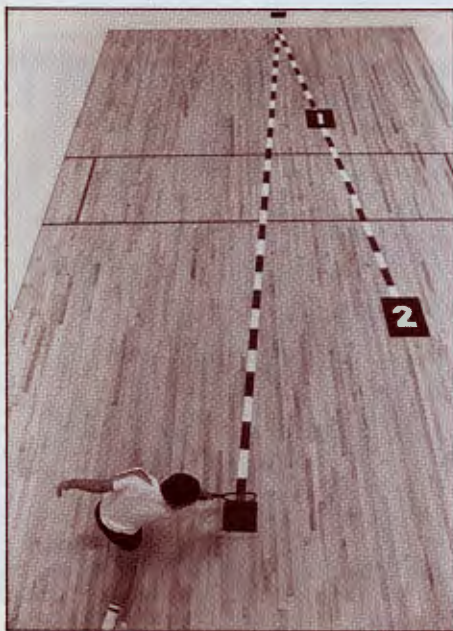
First, although the court is 40 feet long and 20 feet wide, your success is actually going to depend upon how effectively you learn to cover the entire back 20-by-20 area—what I term the "action zone." Eventually you're going to need the ability to thrust forward to dig up shots in the service box, but day in and day out you'll prove yourself in the back 20-by-20 area as you cover and hit groundstrokes, volleys, ceiling balls, and other shots.

Second, to maximize your efficiency inside the action zone—in terms of both coverage and shot-making—you may find that you need to cover your opponent's offensive shots from a slightly deeper position than you may be presently playing. Your basic coverage position should fluctuate from around 23 feet to 28 or 29 feet, depending upon your opponent's position and his ability to put away the shot you've given him.

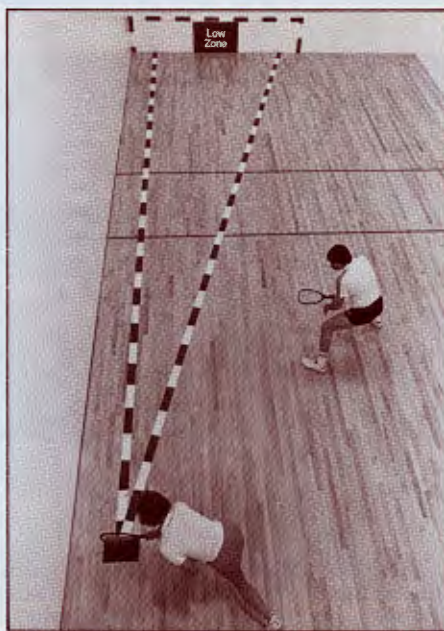
Third, instead of worrying about being in a position to dig up your opponent's per-

fect winners in the front 15-foot area, be much more concerned about your readiness to cover the shots he leaves up, because nearly all of them will carry back to the action zone. Make that critical breakthrough by learning to cover your opponent's offensive shots with an attitude of "I'll concede you any shot that bounces twice inside of 15 feet—since this is basically an irretrievable area—and instead I'm going to play off all of your mistakes." It's true, of course, that as your playing level moves up, your opponents will be hitting an increasing number of successful kills. However, the problem isn't going to be your positioning, but the fact that you're probably giving them far too many offensive opportunities. Keep the pressure on with accurate shot-making and even your toughest opponent will continually leave the ball up, giving you a chance to score again.

If your progress has leveled off, one major factor holding you back may be that you're trying to buck reality by constantly rushing up near the back service line as your opponent goes to hit, thinking you can add some pressure and also dig up more kill attempts. True, you may make the occasional spectacular rekill from up here, but far more of your opponent's shots are going to come back into the action zone that jam you or easily angle past you. You put too much pressure on yourself while giving your



**Figure 2.** Even a kill attempt that hits just 12 inches high on the front wall will usually take its first bounce near the front red line and its second bounce about 25 to 30 feet from the front wall—in the opponent's prime hittable range.



**Figure 3.** The hitter is aiming for her low-zone target area on the left half of the front wall, below about 3 feet. The lines on the court indicate her prime angles for straight-in and cross-court kills and passes.

opponent greater leeway in his shot selection.

The reason nearly all shots are taken in the back half of the court once the rally begins is that *the ball carries deeper than we tend to realize* (and much more frequently). This is a game where inches on the front wall dictate feet on the court, and the slightest error in accuracy is magnified, especially when there's good pace on the ball. For example, if a skilled player varies his shots more than 12 inches up and down on the front wall and maintains the same velocity, it means the difference between a successful kill shot and a setup off the back wall. Even a straight-in kill attempt that hits just 12 inches high will actually take its *first* bounce near the front red line (15 feet) and then carry well into the action zone. (If you're not convinced, get on a court and just drive balls hard into the front wall from about 25 to 30 feet and watch where they take their first bounce and the second bounce—in relation to how high they were hit. It helps to have a friend stand near the front wall and mark the spot where each shot hits. Look for

the same relationships the next time you watch a match.)

#### *The Virtues of a Deeper Coverage Position*

When you fluctuate your prime coverage position from about 23 feet back to almost 30 feet, here are the advantages you gain over a more inflexible position just behind the service box:

- You'll feel more in control of your play because you'll be getting jammed less often.
- You'll be much less vulnerable to having the ball driven constantly by you, cross-court or down-the-line.
- With slightly more time to react to the ball, you'll reach more shots. That extra split second can also make the difference between setting up on a shot or just flicking the ball back to the front wall.
- You gain much greater efficiency in the action zone; you can cover a bigger area more effectively because you're more equidistant from the shots that you'll be forced to hit.

Perhaps you're wondering, "If I lag deeper against a hard hitter in my different coverage positions, doesn't this simply give him more room to kill the ball in the front court?" Yes, but only slightly. Since his ball has added pace, his shots have greater depth and he must keep his kill attempts very low on the front wall to keep them from rebounding back to you in the action zone. Also, power players are far less accurate than you might think when they have to hit while on the move, stretched out, or when they don't have time to uncork on the ball. So lay back a bit and realize that you're putting pressure on the shooter to execute, for he knows that when he has the shot, he has to make it. If he errs to the high side, then you're ready to cover his shot when it comes into the action zone; you have slightly more time to get into position and this will help your execution, which in turn should lead to more winners for you.

#### *Testing the 20-by-20 Concept*

If you're still hesitant that you should maintain deeper coverage positions than you may use now, do some objective homework and find out for yourself why some changes in your approach to this game could be dictated.

First, chart matches between players at different ability levels. In the first game, put a dot on a court diagram to indicate where every shot is taken after the service return. In the second game, note how few kill-shots attempts actually die in the front 15 feet versus those that travel into the action zone.

Second, have a friend chart you and an opponent during the first game of a serious match, noting where both of you take all of your shots after the service return. In the second game, have your friend chart only your shots.

Third, get on a court and see for yourself just how low you must hit the front wall to make the ball bounce twice before the front red line (15 feet). Then, as you hit from about 30 feet, have your friend indicate where each shot hits the front wall while you watch to see where the second bounce occurs.

Fourth, when watching matches at your club, notice where players are positioning themselves as their opponent hits—and where the ball takes its second bounce.

Fifth, in practice matches try to analyze how often the ball is coming to you in the desired hitting zone—from calf to thigh height—and where you were positioned for that particular shot as your opponent

went to hit.

(You may find that you only have to play a long stride deeper than you presently do, but a 2-to-4-foot change on a court this size can be tremendously important in adapting your game to basic realities and to the kind of racquetball you want to play.

### The Overall Goal: Power With Control

Your ability to hit with power is crucial in today's game—and can help move you many pegs up the ladder—but aimless, uncontrolled power will get you in as much trouble as the good that it brings and will sabotage your efforts to develop a sound game. Conversely, you can't expect to win big matches with a totally defensive game, where you simply keep the ball in play by hitting ceiling balls, passing shots, and lob serves while waiting for your opponent to make all the errors.

Ideally, the goal to strive for is what we might call "controlled maximum velocity," where you blend power and control in your strokes, your shot selection, and your overall approach to the game. The realists in advanced racquetball are learning that to become complete players who can adjust to every type of opponent, they must develop confidence in their ability to play with both power and control.

### Keeping Power in Perspective

The great virtue of controllable power is that it enables you to play tough against any type of player. When you can pound the ball accurately, low enough to keep it from coming off the back wall as a setup, you generate more mistakes by your opponent (such as left-up shots and balls that carom unintended off a side wall) because you cut down on his reaction time and put him on the defensive—either by jamming him or forcing him to move quickly and to hit while on the move or stretched out. This lowers his scoring efficiency while increasing your offensive opportunities.

For example, power with control will nearly always beat the adept control player because you can hit at a speed that minimizes his chances to set up comfortably and hit accurately and thus keep the game controlled to his liking. This same power in your game will help keep the blaster at bay by keeping him under constant pressure. As one of the original control-era pros, I've had to change my swings on the forehand and backhand to gain more power. Now I can hit the ball hard enough to stay in the

rally against the "shooters" and create my own offensive opportunities. Power itself is not the crucial factor when killing the ball straight-in or as a pinch—accuracy is what counts—but it does help give you more chances for the knockout punch by putting your opponent on the defensive and forcing weak returns.

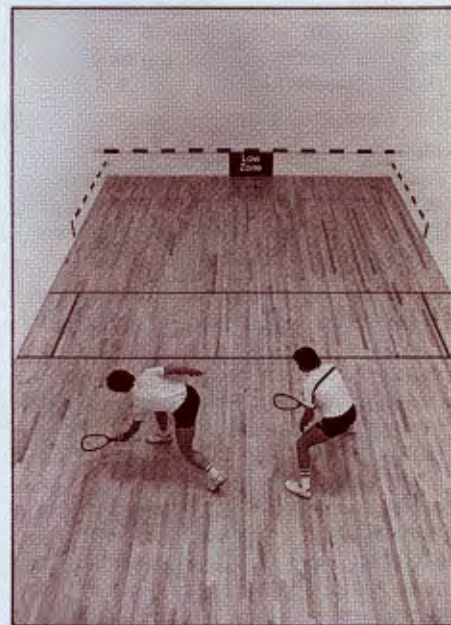
Therefore, have an appreciation for power (and study Chapters 2 and 3 for ways to add it to your forehand and backhand), but remember that *your ability to sting the ball unbelievably hard is not enough to keep you advancing if you can't keep the ball low with a minimum of skips*. If you're a dedicated shooter and you're on your game and getting setups from your opponent, you'll bury him. But when you're out of the groove and wild, your opponent doesn't have to be awed or intimidated by your power—he must simply hang in there until you skip the ball or wait for his chance to rekill your shots in center-court, off a side wall, or off the back wall.

### The Important Elements of Control

Increasingly, as I see the game evolving, a preoccupation with all-out power can't hide the fact that the big hitters must know how to hit good ceiling balls and passing shots as well as the control player.

First of all, whatever your playing style, there are many times in a match when you have no other logical choice but to go to the ceiling—in response to an opponent's well-placed serve, when you don't have a good offensive opportunity during the rally, and when his ceiling ball dictates another ceiling return. As much as fellow pro Marty Hogan may be identified as the ultimate blaster, he doesn't crunch every shot from all over the court; he flips to the ceiling when he can't be accurately offensive and he will stay in the ceiling rally with a nice feathery touch until his opponent makes an error or he gets a better shot.

Second, as you add power to your game, you'll find that you need help from your opponent—in terms of left-up shots—and perfect timing in order to build your attack around kill-shot attempts. Instead of trying to live-or-die with a power approach like this, master your down-the-line and cross-court passing angles so that you can also move the ball around the court and thus keep your opponents on the move. This realization came to a junior player from Illinois, who was working out in San Diego and who told me, "All of a sudden the guy standing next to me is hitting just as hard—or maybe



**Figure 4.** In advanced play, your low-zone target area from virtually any place on the court will move lower on the front wall and extend back along both side walls—for kill attempts and effective passes and pinches.

*harder—than I am, plus he's much more accurate. I've always depended on power to win all my matches, but now I realize I've got to get with some of the smarter pros and learn how to play.*" What he needed was to incorporate power and control together.

### Playing The Percentages With A Kill Shot Philosophy

Many power players believe they've got to "hit the bottom boards" ultimately to play this game right. They like the spectacular approach, often getting into competition with other power players to see who can hit the most phenomenal kill shot with the most velocity. Yet since their margin of error is so small between a skip, a winner, and a setup off the back wall, they end up playing a "feast-or-famine" type of game. I certainly favor an aggressive, offensive approach to racquetball, but one that also takes reality into mind, and the percentages. Since you can't depend on the spectacular kill to win matches week in and week out, here's my shot-making philosophy in a capsule: Go for winners at every reasonable opportunity, but (1) minimize

your skips, (2) try to keep the ball from coming off the back wall, and (3) learn to use good passing angles and pinches to create additional scoring opportunities.

#### *The Low-Zone Approach*

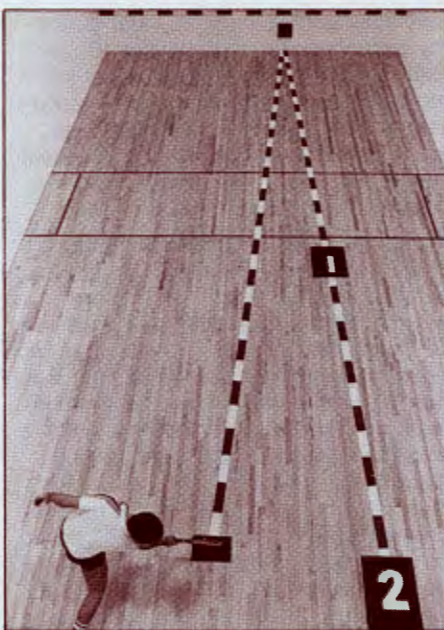
Offensive efficiency begins with an understanding of your "low-zone" target areas, on the front and side walls. There's a two-stage process here, relative to your particular ability.

At first, as you are building a foundation for advanced shot-making, visualize your offensive target area as a 3-foot-high net stretching from the nearest side wall (including your pinch-shot angle) to mid-court on the front wall. By hitting into your low-zone area, you're aiming for a kill but your higher misses will still bounce twice on the floor before reaching the back wall (or will barely carry off the wall). This gives you good passing shots or low, hard drives into the heart of the action zone that puts constant pressure on your opponent. By focusing on that low zone as you go to hit, and executing an attitude that "I'm going for winners, but I must get the ball to bounce twice before the back wall," you're not giving your opponent setups and you maximize his potential for error. Against your passing shots, he must either try to cut the ball off or hustle deep, knowing that if it gets past him, you'll score on the shot.

Stage two comes gradually as your skill level rises and you hit with greater confidence into your low-zone area. You must break this monolithic block into specific target areas for pinches and passing shots and move them lower. The pros find they must constantly be hitting below 12 inches as they strive to observe the two-bounce maxim when they fail on their kill attempts. Keep thinking "low zone" as you play, but become more exact in hitting your targets, since your opponents will be more efficient at scoring off your 3-foot-high misses that come into the action zone.

#### *Minimize Your Skip Shots*

Ultimately, you should be constantly funneling in and saying, "I'm aiming low and I'm going for winners—but I don't want to skip the ball in." When you can play with this attitude and you're not giving your opponents gift points with constant skips, you force them to beat you with good shots and they must all deal with you. Certainly skips are going to happen as you gain more power and you're forced to hit the ball closer to the floor, but don't accept them as a natural trade-off for being offensive. If you're hitting more



**Figure 5.** If you fail to put the ball away for a kill, your next goal is to hit the ball low enough to make it bounce twice before coming off the back wall.



skips than winners, you're not playing with common sense; you're taking too much responsibility off your opponent and digging your own hole. Why gamble with a "bottom-board" philosophy, trying for perfect rollouts, when you can raise your aim a couple of inches and still hit winners? If you're going to error, learn to do so on the high side and force your opponent to reexecute a good shot. Also remember that many times your opponent will be out of position as you go to hit, and just good placement on your part—away from your opponent—will do the job as well as a flat-out kill.

#### *Be Patient in Creating Scoring Opportunities*

Advanced racquetball often turns into a flailing duel when two players go toe to toe, hitting the ball as hard as they can until the rally ends with some kind of a kill shot or a skip. You want to be able to rip with the hitters—when the opportunity

is there—but I feel it's also crucial to know how to play a more patient game where you use well-executed passing shots and pinches to force the weak returns that give you safer kill attempts.

#### **Working On Hitting The Ball Low**

1. Determine your general low-zone area by standing about 30 to 35 feet from the front wall and hitting the ball straight in, low and hard, until you learn how far up you can hit and still have the ball bounce twice on the floor before it hits the back wall.
2. Mark off your low-zone area with a horizontal line and play a practice match with a friendly opponent, while a friend in the gallery charts how many of your offensive shots hit below the line (as kills, skips, and others) and how many hit above (noting how many come off the back wall as setups). These statistics should help you be objective about your game, in terms of realizing just how few shots actually hit in the low zone and knowing the relative role played by skips and kills.
3. Use practice drills and practice matches to gain confidence at hitting the ball as low as you can without skipping the ball in. Developing the right mental approach is enhanced when you get into situations where you can attempt kill shots without being inhibited by the fear of losing the rally with a skip.
4. If you're going for your low-zone area, always try to be thinking "Shoot down," however high you're contacting the ball. There's a relentless attitude required here, a persistence to stay low with the ball as you play.

#### **The Influence of The Ball**

We know that the type of ball being used (slow or fast) will influence how a match is played and perhaps force some slight adjustments in target areas. However, the smart players prepare for any eventuality by becoming familiar with all types of balls in practice sessions. They can then take any match as it comes, adjusting to however the ball might be affecting play. My feeling is that if you can develop sound strokes and a grasp on basic strategy, you can adapt the fundamentals in this book to any speed of ball and play a solid game of racquetball. For instance, if you're going to play in a tournament, find out in advance what make of ball will be used (which is usually noted on the entry blank) and then practice and play with that ball for a couple of weeks before the tournament. ●

# Front Diving —Safely

by Rusty Rischuk

*Sweat spots dotted the hardwood floor as two powerful bodies jockeyed for an advantage. The blue ball slammed into the front wall centimeters above the floor only to be struck again before it could manage a second bounce. On the next shot the ball pinched on the side wall, abruptly lost speed and fell gently towards the floor. The victor raised his racquet in triumph only to witness his opponent dive forward, racquet poised, to lob the ball to the back court while cat-like he regained his feet and the rally continued. . . .*

In top level racquetball one can witness many of the world's best players making incredible saves by diving towards the front, sides and even the back walls. Why dive? Why take a chance of serious injury to continue playing a point you might lose a shot later? Can one learn to dive in a safe scientific fashion or is the skill hereditarily determined like eye and hair color?

There are several important reasons why a player should dive during all parts of the match. Diving is not dangerous at all if a person has learned to do it in the volleyball style because he would then be able to dive and slide, dive and stop, and even dive and change direction in the air.

To dive and make phenomenal saves puts greater pressure on your opponent forcing him to try to hit the ball harder, lower and more accurately. This stress placed on him often yields an error as he worries over your great retrieving ability. Also it can convince the referee early in the match what an extended range you have and he will allow you more favorable hinder calls having been convinced of your ability to rescue difficult shots.

In 1964 the Japanese National Men's Volleyball coaching duties were handed over to Mr. Matsudaria, a man whose goal was to conquer the volleyball world and win the Olympic gold in 1972. He succeeded with innovative and colorful play. In one creative move, the "Matsudaria Circus" was formed—a team noted for its spectacular defense through the use of front dives. "Impossible" balls



were recovered, to the extreme delight of the crowds, enabling the team to score points in spite of other teams' fire power.

The front dive for racquetball is a simple gymnastic move where a player can dive forward while running, land safely on his chest and quickly regain his feet. To teach the dive the instructor can demonstrate the dive without racquet and then ask the pupils to mimic the maneuver. Approximately 80% of my students can learn to do the dive just from observing it being executed once or twice. For the people who find the dive a frightening and unnatural experience, the Japanese devised a three step method:

- Step 1. Sit on your knees and fall straight to the floor breaking your momentum with your arms and landing firmly on your chest like a clown in a circus routine.
- Step 2. On one knee with the other knee up, fall forward on the chest again breaking the impact with the hands while arching the back and neck. Do this action several times.
- Step 3. Crouch with your feet on the floor, knees low. Dive forward breaking the fall with your hands while giving your feet a little flick

to cause the body to arch naturally.

Practice can be done on mats or heavy carpet for the faint of heart.

After the dive has been successfully completed once or twice, the athlete must commit it to memory by doing 20 to 30 repetitions each night for several weeks. The more natural the dive becomes the more likely this habit will transfer to the racquetball game.

To condition oneself for racquetball, one can dive with racquet in hand, hit a gentle lob, release the racquet, land, spring quickly back to one's feet, and regain the correct grip on the racquet. This action should be attempted only after the dive has been overlearned (habit). In matches the dive will be done by the player on reflex action as he scrambles after difficult backhands and forehands that would otherwise be lost.

I have taught the dive to many up and coming players. The most notable are Joe Kirkwood of Winnipeg and Heather Stupp of Montreal. As the skill is relatively simple I hope to teach it to all my players and the coaches that I instruct so that this exciting and valuable tool becomes more widespread. ●

# The Hula Hoop Re-Kill

(Third in a Series)

by Dave Peck

Having shown you the right way to hit a kill shot and talked about the "ideal" kill shot situation, now it's time to discuss the less-than-perfect.

The higher you go in racquetball, the less you'll see of those nice back wall set-ups. In fact, set-ups of any kind are rare by the time you reach the open level or above.

In most cases, you'll be running, diving and stretching for the ball, off-balance and reacting without time to set up. It becomes more important than ever to have a good, sound base in stroke fundamentals just so that you can creatively break those rules and not have your shot fall apart.

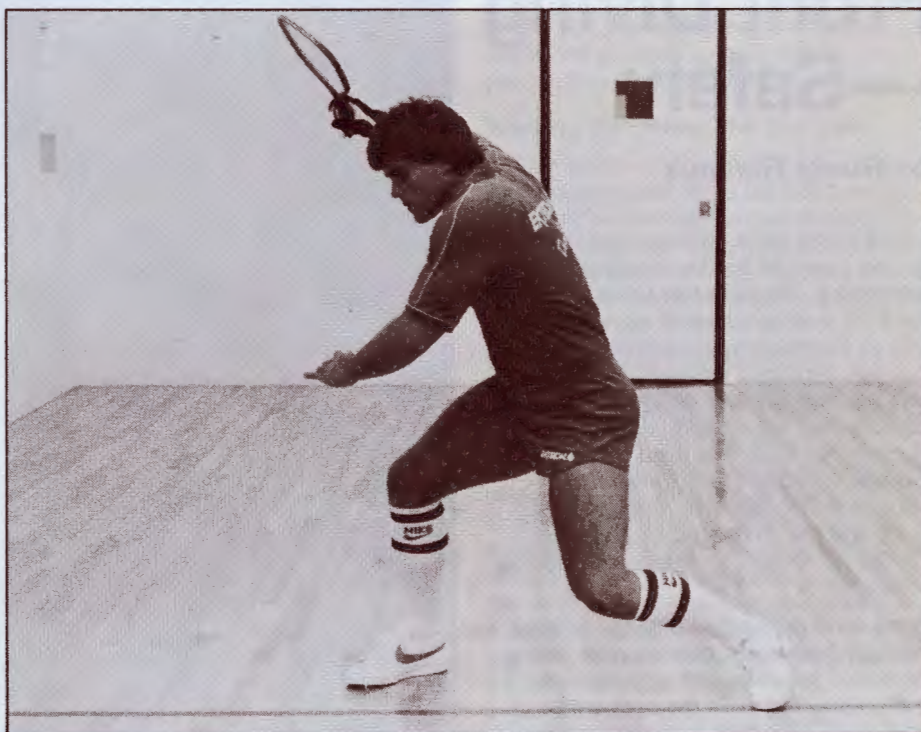
That's especially true in the forecourt for the very obvious reason that there is less time between the ball's contact with the front wall and the point where you have to do something with it. It's a re-kill situation and one in which I always use a specialty shot I call the hula hoop re-kill.

You and your opponent might be side-by-side shooting it out at the short line or you might have just taken a step back after service when your opponent tries to blast a winner that doesn't quite stay down.

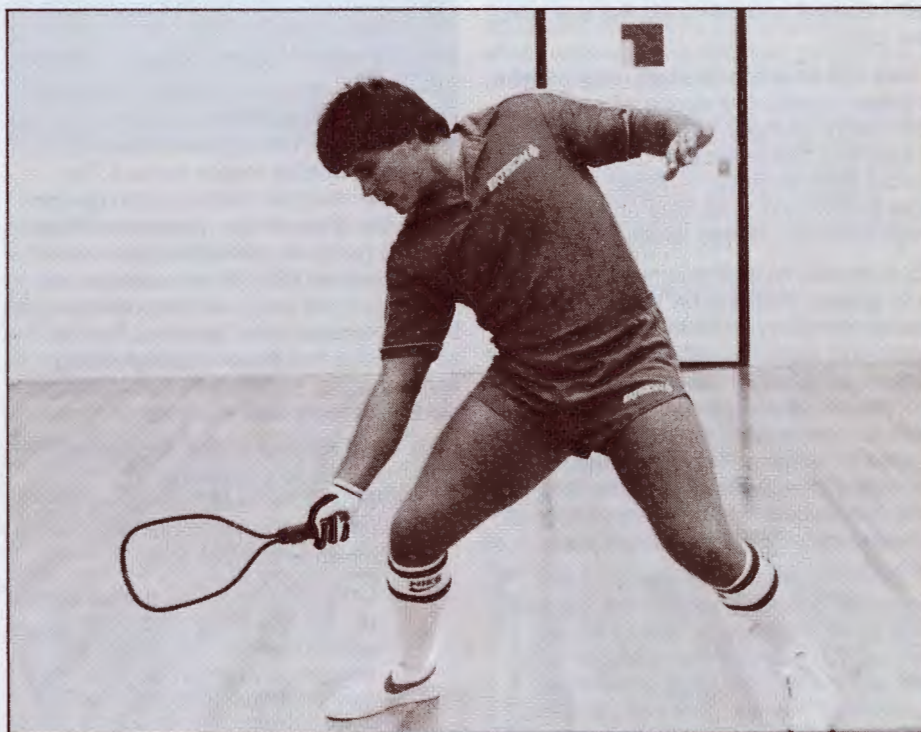
You'll usually be caught in a straddle stance with time to do little more than get your racquet up and stroke. But that's all the time you need with this kind of shot.

It's a hybrid kill in which your upper body mechanics are normal, but your footwork is different. I call it the hula hoop re-kill because, instead of gaining momentum with the normal step-in, you stay with your feet spread and use your hips to propel the ball with a motion similar to that we used to keep our hula hoops afloat when we were kids.

The strategic aspects are pretty simple. After service, you'll have jumped back with a half-turn and be watching your opponent's return out of the corner of



**Figure 1:** Get your racquet up for the hula hoop re-kill just as soon as you know to which side the ball is headed. Note my straddle stance and "cocked" hips ready to twist.



**Figure 2:** At point of contact, your racquet's face should be flat and its bumper guard pointing into the side wall. Your hips snap in a hula hoop motion to facilitate your stroke

and add the little bit of power necessary for the re-kill. Your opponent's shot should have left the ball with plenty of pace, so concentrate on placing the ball rather than killing it.



—Photos by Mike Hogan

**Figure 3:** This is how it looks in practice. Women's pro Laura Martino helps me demonstrate.

your eye. You should immediately determine whether he's going high with a ceiling ball or other defensive shot or low with a kill simply by the height at which he contacts the ball.

You also can tell the direction of his shot by his foot placement. If he steps toward the side wall, the shot is going down the line. If he opens his stance, it is probably going crosscourt.

If your opponent is beside you shooting it out, you also have a pretty good idea of what he is doing. Deception is rare.

Of course, you have to make all these observations in a split-second. The action goes one-two: serve-return or shoot-shoot; just like that. It's important to decide quickly whether the ball will be coming to your forehand or backhand and get your racquet up because the ball will be coming fast and hard.

As a matter of fact, there will be enough pace on the ball for two shots—yours and your opponent's—so you don't have to add much to re-kill it. Just concentrate on directing the ball to where you want it to go.

Bring your racquet down from its cocked position, swivelling your hips, and just meet it with a flat racquet. What little power you need will be supplied by your stroke and the hula hoop motion of your hips.

Keep your knees slightly bent for added stability and your racquet's bumper guard pointed toward the side wall. Don't let the racquet face tip up or down at point of contact or you'll get a sloppy lob or skipped ball.

If you keep your racquet's face flat, the ball will, in effect, rebound off it with proper pace and direction without the exertion of a full power stroke. I should emphasize, though, that the hula hoop re-kill requires a full stroke complete with follow-through. You don't just stick your racquet out.

It doesn't work at all, though, for those players with the pendulum-like stroke we discussed in the October issue because the body gets in the way.

The hula hoop re-kill is pretty much the same on the backhand side. You'll have to adjust to the backhand grip.

If necessary, slide a little to the left or right to get into position for the ball. Naturally, if the ball is so far out of reach that you have to use a cross-over step, you won't be using the hula hoop re-kill, but rather the normal kill stroke.

Since you can't expect all your killshots to stay down, it doesn't hurt to use the side wall à la roll-corner kill or crosscourt or down-the-line pass/kills for insurance. Just turn your racquet's face a little to the left or right for these shots, but be careful to keep it perpendicular to the floor.

To summarize:

—Proper mechanics are as important for the hula hoop re-kill as for the normal kill shot. Only the footwork changes.

—Get your racquet up as soon as you know to which side of the court the ball is headed.

—Keep your racquet's face flat at point of contact, concentrating on supplying direction rather than power to the ball.

—A hula hoop motion with your hips will facilitate a proper swing and follow-through normally provided by the step-in.●

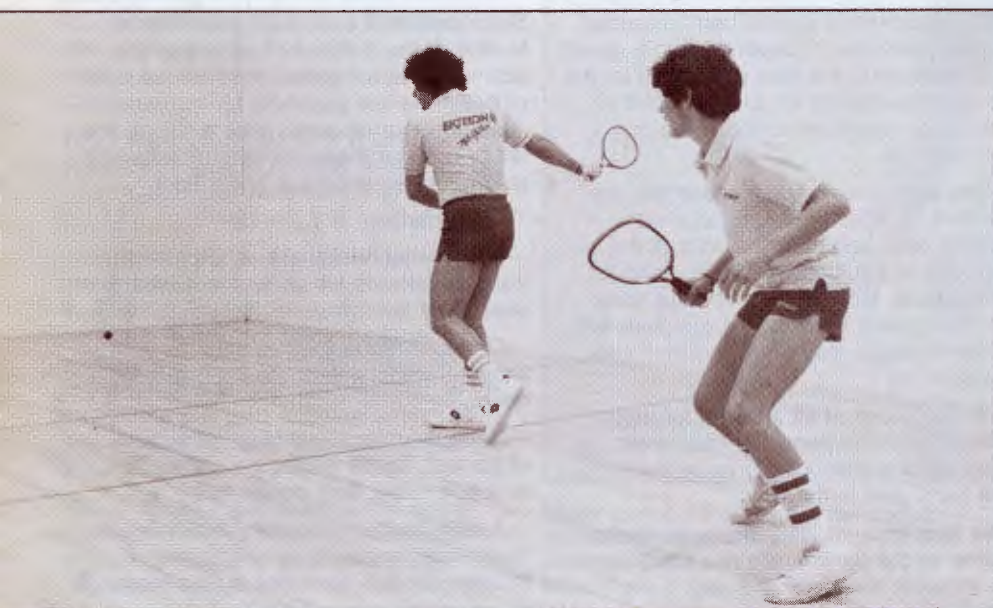
# Doing It The Hard Way With The Backhand Reverse



**Figure 1:** The first use of the backhand reverse pinch is the classic pinch situation with my opponent behind me and both of us off to the right. Here, however, the normal backhand pinch would send the ball right back to me and draw a hinder. Nathan Martin positions himself to cover that or the cross-court pass.

—Photos by Mike Hogan

**Figure 2:** A backhand reverse pinch catches my opponent moving the wrong way. He would logically assume that my choice in this situation would have been the safer cross-court pass.



I'm usually a staunch advocate of doing things the easy way, playing the percentages and taking the most sensible shots. But there are times when you have to break the rules and do it the hard way with a less-than-sensible shot. The backhand reverse pinch is one of those low-percentage shots.

For starters, the backhand reverse pinch is as clumsy as the name sounds. You are shooting low, from your weak side and across your body. It's definitely more difficult than your standard backhand or forehand pinch and I don't like to go to it very often. But there are at least two situations during a rally when nothing else will do.

The first is one of those classic pinch situations in which you are in front of your opponent at about midcourt, but both of you are left of center and the ball is coming to your backhand. You'll recall that pinches and kills are the optimum shots when your opponent is behind you; passes, lobs and ceiling balls when he is in front of you.

In this case, though, the usual backhand pinch into the left corner would send the ball toward the right side of the court back to you and your opponent. If your pinch didn't roll out (and they seldom do), you would have a tough time getting out of your opponent's way. He could run through you after the ball, draw the hinder and save the point.

Another option here would be a cross-court pass into the left rear corner or a pass down the right wall. The latter would be much easier than the former but, as can be seen from Figures 1 and 2, my practice partner Nathan Martin has a better-than-fair chance of digging out either shot, especially with his good wheels.

Likewise, he is as aware of that wide space to the left as I am and is anticipating the pass. Percentage-wise, that cross-court is still the safest way for me to go, but I can't always play the percentages. Otherwise, a jackrabbit like Nathan will second-guess me and be there before I swing.

To keep guys like that honest, I occa-

# Pinch

by Mike Yellen

sionally do what I'm not supposed to do and go to a more difficult shot like the backhand reverse pinch as shown in Figures 1 and 2. Nathan is caught moving away from the ball. Hopefully, he'll stop and think twice before committing himself in the next passing situation and that will give me the extra second I need to make the pass work.

As for the mechanics of the backhand reverse pinch, they don't differ appreciably from the standard pinch. Change your grip to the backhand grip; contact the right side wall anywhere up to two feet away from the front wall and about six inches high. There is a tendency to overcompensate and pull the ball too far to the right, so don't.

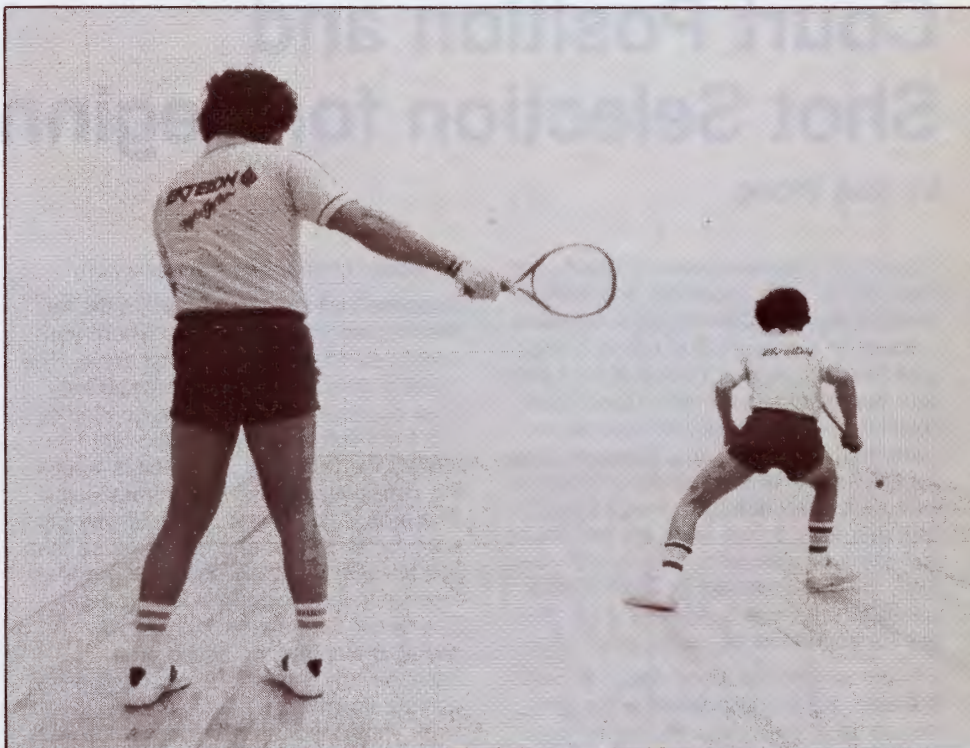
The other most common situation for the use of the backhand reverse pinch is almost the flipside of the first. You and your opponent are in the left rear portion of the court, but he has the positioning advantage over you as shown in Figure 3.

Standard operating procedure when your opponent is up front is to pass. It will work with a poor retriever, but not with a good one. A smart player will be watching your feet when you set up for your shot. If you point them into the left side wall, he will read down-the-line pass. If you open up your stance, he will anticipate a crosscourt pass. As Figure 3 shows, Nathan is again in a pretty good position to cover both passes.

But you also open up your stance for the backhand reverse pinch and, as Figure 4 shows, you can either catch your well-positioned opponent leaning the wrong way or force him to pull up to see what the ball is going to do. That will help your crosscourts work.

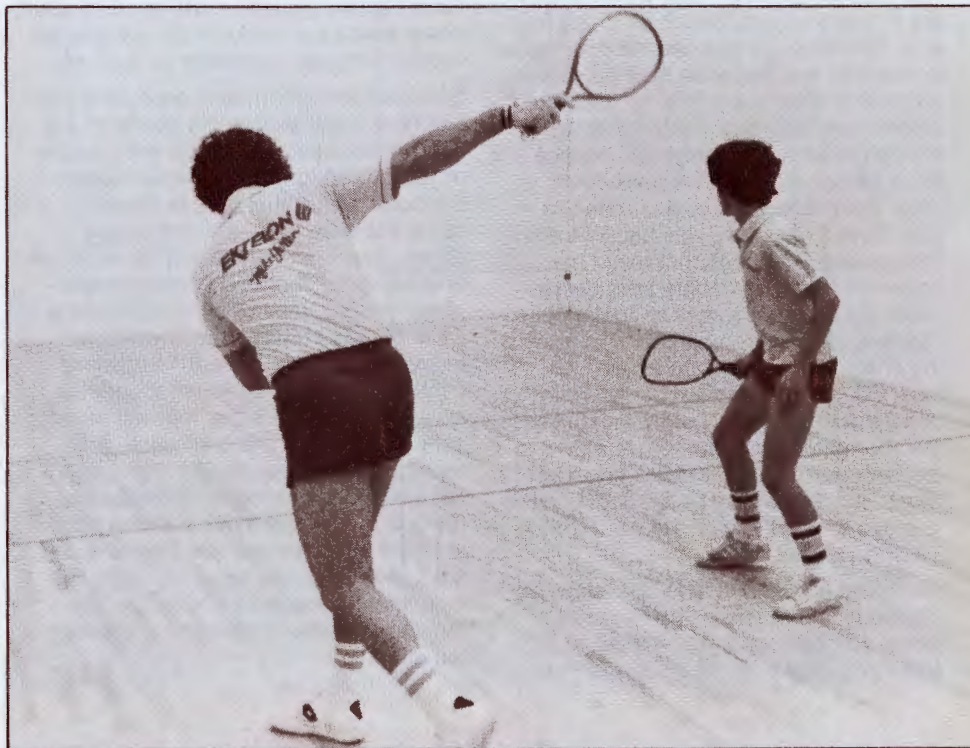
Naturally, you have to be pretty accurate with your shot. If you leave it up, an opponent in center court will be able to dig it out and put it away.

As I said, it's a low-percentage shot and not one I would use too often. But, sometimes you have to play against the percentages in order to keep them working in your favor. ●



**Figure 3:** In a second backhand reverse pinch situation, the more common shot would be a crosscourt pass. But Nathan is in position to cover that pretty well.

**Figure 4:** The more difficult backhand reverse pinch forces Nathan to draw up to see where the ball will go. That gives me enough time to make the shot work.



# Court Position and Shot Selection for Beginners

by Ken Wong

This article discusses court position, and shot selection for beginners and intermediate players. Court position is your position on the court after hitting a shot; shot selection is your choice of shot after your opponent hits the ball. Good court position and shot selection is easier to learn than shot execution; however, players tend to be so emotionally involved in their shot execution (how they hit the ball) that they do not learn the two topics that are fundamental at all levels of play. First, the fundamentals of court position are discussed with examples; then strategy for each level of play is given.

The proper court position depends on the situation, but in most cases, a player should be in an area called center court (see *Figure 1*). Center court is an area on the court, not a point. The position where you should stand within center court is determined by the situation (i.e. whether you just served, attempted a kill, hit a weak shot, hit a ceiling ball, etc.) The biggest mistake made by most players is that they play too close to the front wall. Beginners do not need to play close to the front wall because their opponents hit most of their shots into the back court; seldom are their opponents accurate enough to hit a shot which will bounce twice before reaching the back court area. Advanced players don't need to play close to the front wall because they anticipate well enough that they can cover the front court shots from center court. By placing yourself in center court position, you will be able to cover most of the shots with a minimum effort. Also from this position you are daring your opponent to hit a kill shot; in most cases, the shot will be high; since it is easier to move forward than backward when hitting a ball, you will be in the right position to move forward toward the ball for a re-kill or pass shot.

The basic principle in all of the following situations is that you play in an area where you can cover most of the shots and move only after your opponent can

no longer change his shot selection.

Suppose that you just served to the left rear corner. *Figure 2* shows where you should stand if you hit a good serve. The "hitting area" is an area between two lines drawn from the ball position to the two front corners. If your opponent hits toward the front wall, this area is where the possible offensive return may occur. The proper position is then half way back from the short line and to the left so that you are either slightly outside the hitting area or slightly inside the hitting area. The better the serve, the more you should move into the hitting area because 1) the possible return will probably be down the left wall, or 2) you can force your opponent to hit down the wall. However, if you move too far into the hitting area, you are purposely blocking your opponent's shot, and you can be called for an avoidable hinder.

From the position in *Figure 2*, you are cutting off most possible avenues of return; down the wall shots or cross court shots which are not kill shots usually are setups with your opponent behind you.

Suppose you are in back court, and you just hit a weak shot to the center of the court. Most beginners make the mistake of rushing up to the short line to cover the possible kill shot or stay back to cover the pass shot; the first choice allows your opponent to win the point on an easy pass shot; the second choice gives him too easy of a chance to hit a kill shot. It is better to move using two movements (see *Figure 3*): first run to center court; then as your opponent swings, determine if the shot will be a kill shot or a pass; if it is a kill shot, start running up to cover the kill; if you can't tell where he is going to hit the ball, make a guess and move with the shot. It is better to guess and run than to stand flat footed at center court. By using two movements, you will be able to cover most shots without committing yourself too soon.

Suppose you just attempted a kill shot from back court. The biggest problem I notice is that players stand after hitting a kill shot because they think that the point is over. You should always follow up a kill shot by moving to center court to cover the possible return. By doing this, you will find that when you do hit balls higher than desired, your opponent will rekill your shots less frequently; you will put pressure on your opponent even when you miss a shot. Beginners sometimes cannot hit a good kill shot even on a setup if they know that their opponent is moving back to position.

Suppose you just hit a pretty good ceiling ball down the left wall. *Figure 4* shows the proper position after hitting a good ceiling ball. There is no reason to run back up to center court. You should see if your opponent is going to attempt an overhead; if he does, move forward with the shot, not before. If he hits another ceiling, you will already be within a few steps of the right position.

In order to play effectively from center court position, you should watch your opponent out of the corner of your eye as he prepares to return a shot especially from back court. You should not look directly at your opponent unless you are wearing eye protection. A helpful hint is to turn your body slightly towards the ball; this will allow you to see the ball better and move with the shot easier. Some players like to use their racquet as a guard as they watch their opponent. This enables them to look longer yet still be protected. *Figures 5 and 6* show the stance for shots into the back left and right corners respectively. The racquet should be in both hands in the ready position, and you should be leaning forward ready to move. At first, the stance may feel awkward, but try it for a few weeks and you will find that you will be more prepared and therefore hit more offensive shots.

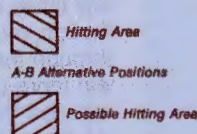
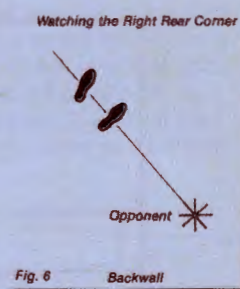
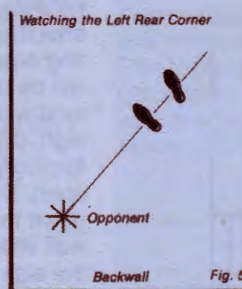
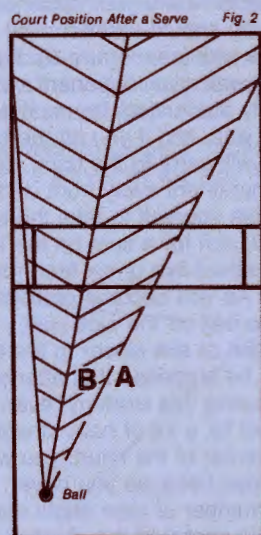
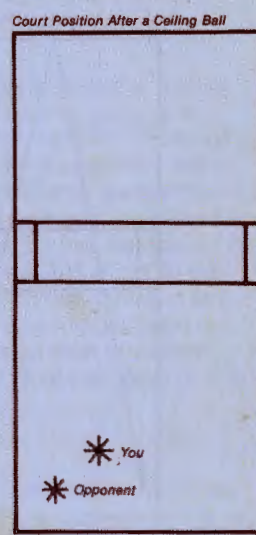
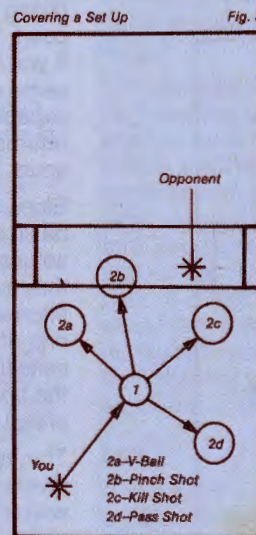
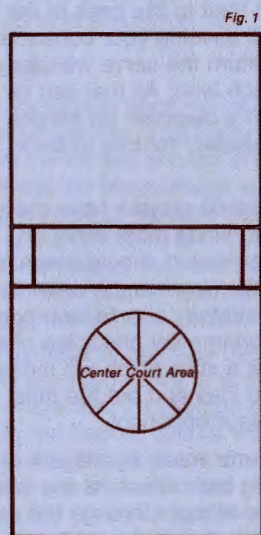
Once you are playing in the right area of the court what shot should you select to

# Four Basic Serves

hit? The shot selected will depend on many variables: your ability, your opponent's ability, the score, etc. The skills of a beginner and an intermediate player are more easily adapted to a set of rules for shot selection. Shot selection for advanced players will be discussed in a later article because the problem is more complicated for the advanced player than the beginner or intermediate player. Before discussing shot selection, let me define a beginner and an intermediate player. In my mind, a beginner has trouble controlling almost any shot well; an intermediate player can hit all of the shots fairly well if standing alone on a court but does not hit too many kill shots during a game.

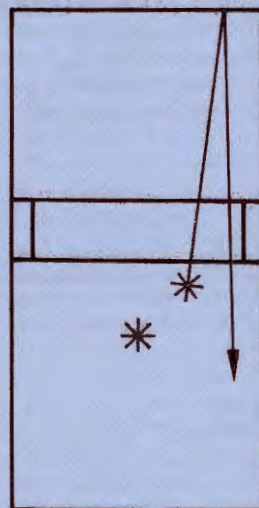
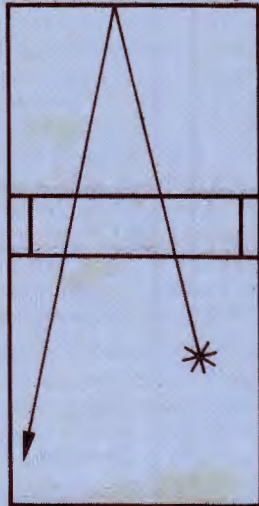
Since beginners have trouble just hitting a ball straight, they should use a strategy which will allow them to develop an ability to continue a rally. Most beginners should concentrate on a very simple strategy. One such strategy is to hit a v-ball or cross court on all shots (see Figure 7). Try to hit the ball so that it does not hit the side wall; this will make your opponent work for his points because he will get very few easy setups in the middle of the court. The key to controlling the ball is to get the racquet back to the set position early and let the ball drop to at least waist high. As you become proficient at hitting balls which die in the back corners, start using intermediate strategy. This strategy will help develop your strokes because your mind has to make very few decisions (i.e. hit the ball to the other side of the court). While playing, you should concentrate on court position and getting your racquet back to the set position. Your concentration should not be on the steps involved in the forehand; you should concentrate on shot execution during warmup using a drop and hit drill or practice sessions, not during a game. Shot selection for beginners is simple: hit cross court.

For service returns beginners should start returning serves by concentrating on



# Court Position and Shot Selection for Beginners

Cross Court or V-Ball Fig. 7



Down the Wall Fig. 8

meeting the ball in front of their body and hitting a pass shot to the back of the court. You will develop your consistency if you try to return the serve with the same shot each time. All that can be expected from a beginner on service returns is consistent returns to back court.

Since intermediate players have the basic skills for hitting most shots on setups, their selection should emphasize their best shots. However, in order to improve, the strategy should incorporate one of the fundamental principles of shot selection: pick a shot which will minimize the points you lose and put the most pressure on your opponent.

The biggest error made by players of all levels is hitting balls which hit the side wall and come straight through the center of the court; not only is the shot a setup, but you must give up center court position. On all shots where your opponent is behind you, you should attempt a kill shot down the wall (see Figure 8). By hitting down the wall, your opponent's view will be partially obstructed, he must contend with the wall, and if you hit the ball high, the ball will carry to the back corner forcing your opponent away from center court. Discipline yourself to take the shot down the wall; aim for a spot on the front wall which is about five or six feet from the side wall. As you become proficient at keeping the ball off the side wall, move your point of aim closer to the side wall. You will be surprised that after a few times of using this strategy, even though you will hit a lot of balls straight through the center of the court, you will win more games because you have reduced the number of slow shots coming through the center of the court. Balls which come near the center of the court but do not hit the side wall are usually moving too fast for your opponent to hit an effective shot. By hitting down the wall, the worst that could happen is that you get a hinder called against you when you hit the ball straight back at yourself.

By using this strategy, your opponent may win a point by hitting a good shot, but you will never lose a point.

When you are in the back court, try to hit a pass shot to your opponent's weak side which is normally his backhand. After hitting the ball, try to move to center court. In hitting the shot, try not to catch the side wall. If you find that you cannot move your opponent out of center, hit a ceiling ball.

By combining the technique of center court position and intermediate shot selection, you should get more shots at front and midcourt. You should attempt kill shots on setups in front and mid-court whether you are proficient at this or not. Do not attempt kill shots from back court until you are proficient at killing from that far back. By practicing on your shots, you should develop proficient kill shots from more areas of the court; as you do this, be more offensive by taking more kill shots, but keep your opponent honest by occasionally hitting cross court.

At the intermediate level, you should learn patience and the fundamentals of an offensive game. As mentioned in the article on service returns, do not try to kill most service returns; return the serve with a ceiling ball. Be patient during rallies and wait for the percentage shot, the shot which you can kill with a high degree of accuracy. This strategy will begin to teach you control, discipline, and patience which is fundamental in a well-rounded advanced game.

In this article I discussed court position and shot selection for beginners and intermediate players. The two basic principles of court position are "play and hold center court" and "move with your opponent's shot, not before." Beginners should try to develop their court position and strokes by hitting mostly cross courts. As you become proficient using this strategy, try the intermediate strategy of hitting down the wall from front court and to your opponent's weak side from back court. ●

# Four Basic Serves

by Steve Keeley

The most important part of racquetball is the serve. You may coast by with weak strokes or leaky strategies, but not with ineffective services. Therefore this—lesson number three—is the most significant of all.

## Preview

Before going into the four specific services understand four things. First the serve is *not* a totally offensive shot as in handball or tennis. In racquetball serve either to put the ball safely into play or to elicit a weak return. The pure ace is more often inadvertent than intended in our sport. Second serve from approximately the center of the service box. When you stand too close to either side wall, you sacrifice the all-important center court position at a time when that strategic central station is free for the taking. Third serve to your rival's weaker stroke—almost always his *backhand*—most the time. Fourth choose about *three* services from the ones described here. Inventing exotic variations each time you step into the service box confuses you more than your opponent.

Now for the *four basic serves*. They are the garbage, lob, drive and Z. In each case I will provide a starting position in the service zone, a bull's-eye to aim for

on the front wall, and the resulting presentation to the receiver. Thus, each serve boils down to standing at position "X", hitting bull's-eye "Y" and having the ball go to presentation "Z".

## Garbage

The garbage is short on looks but long on effectiveness. The starting position is within the central service area. The bull's-eye for the garbage to the *backhand* is midway up the front wall and a foot to the left of center. If you follow these directions, then the ball presents itself to the receiver shoulder high and deep in the left rear corner.

The garbage is half-way between a lob and a low-hard serve. It is often called a half or low lob. To execute it bounce the ball to the floor in such a way that the rebound peaks at about chest height. Contact the sphere at this chest high peak. The stroke is a *push* rather than the normal forceful forehand swing. Pretend you are a shot-putter putting the ball rather than hitting. Tap it into the front wall and it drifts with deceptive ease at the receiver. It bounces four or five feet behind the short line and rebounds upward and to back court.

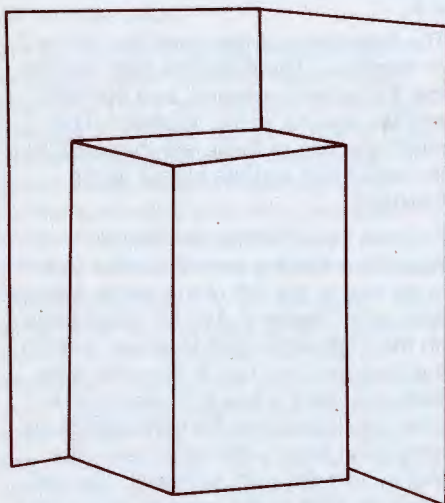
If you wish to utilize a "crutch" with the garbage serve, try the Box Theory.

Envision a four-foot square box with an open top in the left rear court corner. Try to drop your garbage (after its single floor bounce) into the top of this box to achieve optimal effectiveness. Note *Figure 1*.

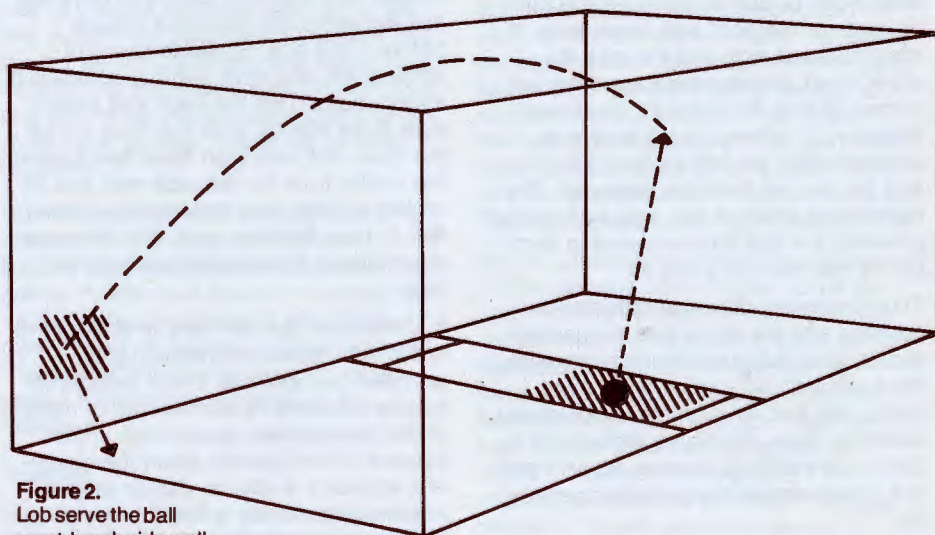
The garbage to the *forehand* is equally as deceptive and equally as easy to execute as to the backhand. The starting station and receiver presentation are the same as with the serve to the backhand side. Use a chest high push or putt of the ball. The bull's-eye for this service is midway up the front wall and a foot to the right of center. With both garbages to either side make sure the ball does *not* hit the side wall more than three feet from the rear wall, if indeed there is side wall contact at all.

## Lob

Now for the *lob*. The lob serve is simply a loftier version of the garbage with a side wall thrown in. See *Figure 2*. Initial positioning is three or four feet to the right of center. The front wall bull's-eye is three-quarters of the way up on the front wall and about a foot to the left of center. The receiver presentation is similar to the garbage serve—around head high. As with the garbage contact the lob at the zenith of its chest high bounce from the

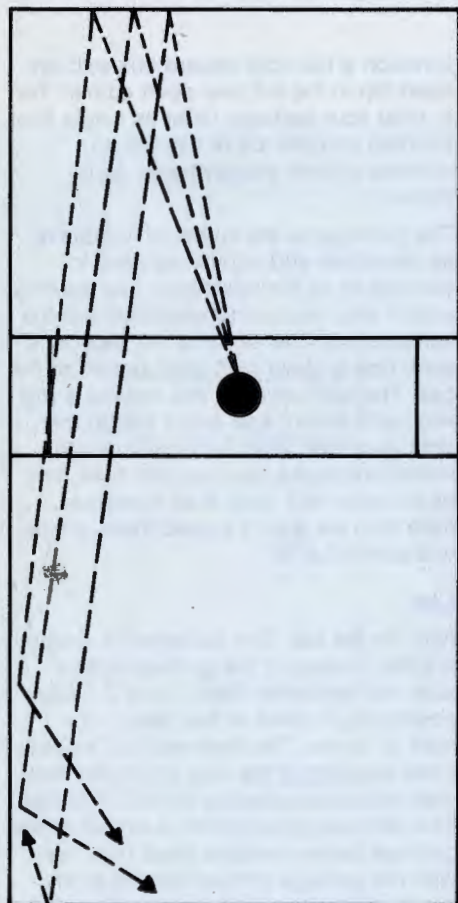


**Figure 1.** Imagine or place a box in the rear corner for a drop in target for the garbage serve.



**Figure 2.** Lob serve the ball must brush side wall to be effective.

**Figure 3.** Drive serve center court position. Three basic paths of the drive to the backhand.



floor. Push or putt or softly loft the ball upwards at the front wall target area. It must rebound high and traverse the upper court atmosphere toward the left corner. During the sphere's downward trajectory, it strikes the left *side wall* approximately six feet up from the floor and six feet out from the back wall. The dampening effect of this side wall contact prevents the ball from rebounding hard off the rear wall for a set up.

Thus the main difference between the garbage and the lob is that the garbage avoids side wall contact unless very near the back wall, whereas the lob must brush that side wall during its downward plummet. Also, the higher altitude lob is much more difficult to serve up with control. I recommend the garbage over the lob.

### Drives

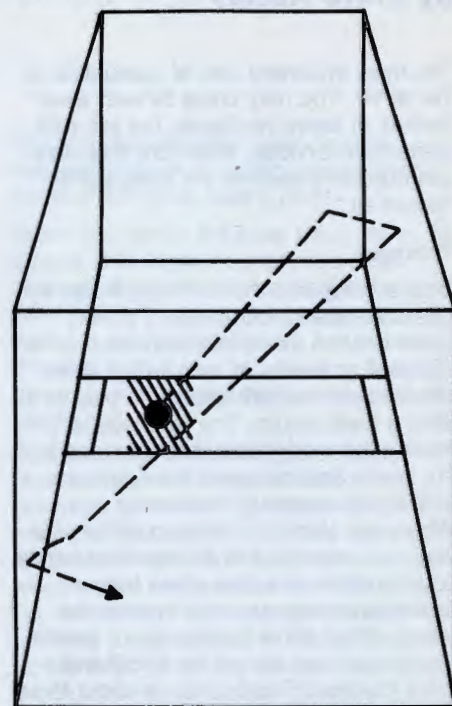
Let's look at the *low hard services*. The drive serve to the backhand probably elicits more weak returns than any other service. Unfortunately, it is also the most difficult of the serves to control. Examine *Figure 3*. The starting stance is in the center or a foot to the left of the central service box. The front wall bull's-eye is about three feet up from the floor and a foot to the left of center. When driven into this target area, the ball rebounds, hits the floor a few feet behind the short line and skips quickly to the receiver at about knee height.

The stroke for the low drive serve is the basic drop-and-hit. Bounce the ball so it peaks off your front foot at knee height or lower. Strike it with 80 per cent power at the knee high or lower bounce zenith. The most common errors among greenhorn servers in this regard are to clobber the low drive too hard and too high. Both these misexecutions cause the ball to rebound off the back wall for a routine set up.

The Box Theory may also be applied to the drive serve. Imagine a three foot square box sitting in the left rear corner. The side of the box facing the front wall is open and the idea here is to drive the ball *through*—not bounce it into as before—this box. Stated in terms of dimensions, the drive serve is effectual if it rebounds (1) off the back wall lower than three feet up from the floor, (2) off the back wall less than three feet toward the center from the left side wall and (3) off the left side wall first less than three feet in from the back wall. It's obviously much easier to visualize an imaginary box.

In conclusion the low hard or drive serve is a potent means of initiating play, provided you execute it with thread-the-needle accuracy. It is a favorite of many of the professional players late in the second or third games when the receiver's accuracy is shaky due to fatigue. Another helpful hint is that the livelier the ball the more effective the controlled drive serve. Serve up most of your drives

**Figure 4.** "Z" serve to backhand.



to the *backhand*, though an infrequent well-camouflaged drive to the forehand may earn an ace. Generally do not aim for the crack (the exact juncture between the side wall and the floor) on the low hard serve. The beginner will as often as not miss the crack and serve up an easy plum ball.

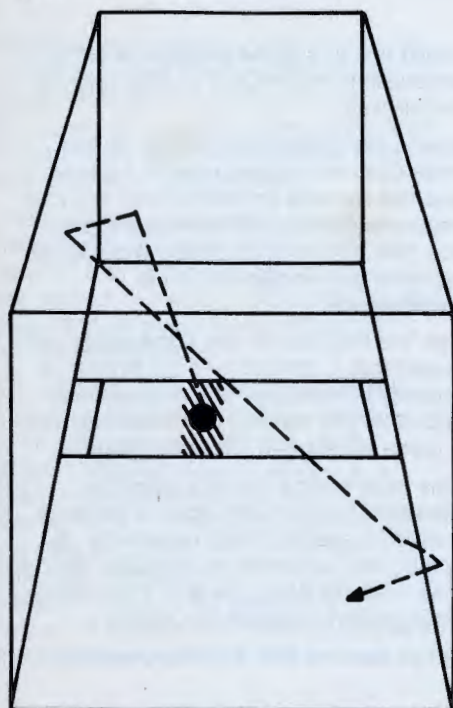
### Z's

The final serve of the basic four is the Z or *Garfinkle*. There are the high and the low Z's to the backhand, and the high and the low X's to the forehand. The most effective of these are the low Z to the backhand and the high Z to the forehand.

#### First the Low Z to the backhand.

Assume a starting serving stance three to six feet to the left of the center service box, as in *Figure 4*. Aim for a bull's-eye on the front wall about four feet up from the floor and one foot in from the right side wall. After a few trial runs on the court you'll discover the more significant dimension here is the latter one—the foot in from the right side wall. The ball presents itself to the receiver about chest high after angling rather sharply into his body off the left side wall.

Figure 5. "Z" serve to forehand.



The stroke for the low Z is the same as for the low hard drive. Only now drive the ball into the forementioned Z-ball front wall target area. The sphere strikes the front wall, ricochetes briskly into the right side wall and then travels cross-court and posteriorly. After the floor bounce it hits the left side wall three to five feet in from the back wall and three to five feet up from the floor.

Try the low Z to the backhand a few times and have someone retrieve your attempts. You'll be surprised at how fast you pick it up. Next try it in a game. You will be further amazed at the number of forced weak returns. When someone comes to me and asks for a five point improvement in their game in just five minutes, I teach them the low hard Z.

Now for the *High Z to the forehand*. This serve is as multi-angled as its kindred lower Z to the backhand, but that is where the resemblance stops. Note *Figure 5*. Starting stance for the forehand Z is the service box midpoint from either side wall. Front wall bull's-eye is one foot in from the left side wall and six to eight feet up from the floor. The ball carooms off this target into the left side wall and

courses cross-court toward the right rear corner. Receiver presentation is head high.

The stroke for this serve is more of a garbage-like push then a drive-like slam. Propel the ball into the bull's-eye with about 50 per cent power. After the floor bounce the ball comes off the right side wall four to six feet high and four to six feet in from the back wall. Obviously this is not that difficult to serve to return, but it's effective because it's easily executed and cannot be blasted back offensively, unless the receiver rushes up to volley it on the fly.

Ruminate a moment on these two Z variations with their respective angles, heights and velocities. Restudy their diagrams. It becomes apparent that the low hard Z to the backhand is essentially a multi-walled drive serve to the backhand. The higher Z to the forehand is essentially a multi-walled garbage to the forehand.

#### Practice

These have been the four fundamental racquetball serves. Unlike strokework, you will master the services after just a

Diagram 1

| SERVE                                     | STARTING STANCE                                                            | FRONT WALL BULLSEYE                                                               | RECEIVER PRESENTATION                                  |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| GARBAGE<br>(TO BACKHAND)<br>(TO FOREHAND) | CENTER OF SERVICE BOX<br>CENTER OF SERVICE BOX                             | MIDWAY UP AND 1<br>FOOT LEFT OF CENTER<br>MIDWAY UP AND 1<br>FOOT RIGHT OF CENTER | SOFT AND<br>SHOULDER HIGH<br>SOFT AND<br>SHOULDER HIGH |
| LOB<br>(TO BACKHAND)                      | 3-4 FEET RIGHT OF<br>CENTER IN SERVICE BOX                                 | THREE-QUARTER UP<br>AND 1 FOOT LEFT<br>OF CENTER                                  | SOFT AND<br>SHOULDER HIGH                              |
| DRIVE<br>(TO BACKHAND)<br>(TO FOREHAND)   | CENTER OR 1 FOOT LEFT<br>OF CENTER IN SERVICE BOX<br>CENTER OF SERVICE BOX | 3 FEET UP AND 1<br>FOOT LEFT OF CENTER<br>3 FEET UP AND 1<br>FOOT RIGHT OF CENTER | HARD AND<br>KNEE HIGH<br>HARD AND<br>KNEE HIGH         |
| LOW Z TO<br>BACKHAND                      | 3-6 FEET LEFT OF<br>CENTER IN SERVICE BOX                                  | 4 FEET UP AND 1<br>FOOT LEFT OF<br>RIGHT SIDE WALL                                | MEDIUM HARD,<br>ANGLED AND<br>WAIST HIGH               |
| HIGH Z TO<br>FOREHAND                     | CENTER OF SERVICE BOX                                                      | 6-8 FEET UP AND<br>1 FOOT RIGHT OF<br>LEFT SIDE WALL                              | SOFT, ANGLED<br>AND CHEST HIGH                         |

couple of one-half hour *practice sessions*. And since service is the cornerstone of good overall play, the time spent drilling garbages, lobbs, drives and Z's is worthwhile. By the way solitary service practice is boring unless you employ a bagful of balls, or a triever, or both.

Diagram 1 outlines the starting stance, bull's-eye and receiver presentation for each of the four serves. Take this synopsis into the court and start with the garbage serve. Hit thirty to the backhand and ten to the forehand. Then practice the lob to the backhand. Then go to the drive serves. Hit thirty to the backhand and ten to the forehand. Do the same for the low backhand and high forehand Z's.

As you practice *innovate*. Does it help to hit the garbage serve higher up on the front wall than I recommended? Maybe you attain more side wall english on the low hard Z by adding a slice to the served ball. Also, as you play, ask for *feedback* from your practice opponent. Ask "Which serves were hardest to return?" "Which were easiest?" An offshoot quotation is particularly applicable here: "If only we could see our serves as other people see them." ●

# Pre-Match Drills To Improve Your Game

by Terry Fancher

A question frequently asked of a racquetball teaching pro is "What type of warm-up exercises or shot drills should I do before playing a match?" There are two answers to this question. The first relates to stretching exercises, the second to practice drills.

It is a sound practice to stretch the muscles prior to engaging in heavy exercise, thereby decreasing the chance of muscle strains or tears. A common mistake among club players is to enter the court at the beginning of an hour reservation, hit the ball a few times and then begin to play a full speed, vigorous game of racquetball. This is the normal way to begin a match for many players because of the pressure brought about by the time factor.

However, watching most people toward the conclusion of the hour reveals that they are fatigued and not concentrating on the game. Why not spend the first 10

minutes of the hour in proper preparation for the next 50?

To begin with, stretch and loosen the body's large muscle groups, specifically the legs, back and upper body. It is important to emphasize that muscle groups be stretched slowly and without jerky motions or bobbing-type actions which may cause tearing of muscle fibers.

Try to delegate the first five minutes on the court to stretching, or better yet, if you arrive early to play, do the exercises outside the court. Everyone is familiar with calisthenics from physical education classes and rather than recommending specific exercises, let it be generally said that you should stretch the muscle groups that are most used while playing.

The second phase of pre-match drill involves the execution of practice shots. Ideally, the drills and shots used prior to playing resemble the shots a player

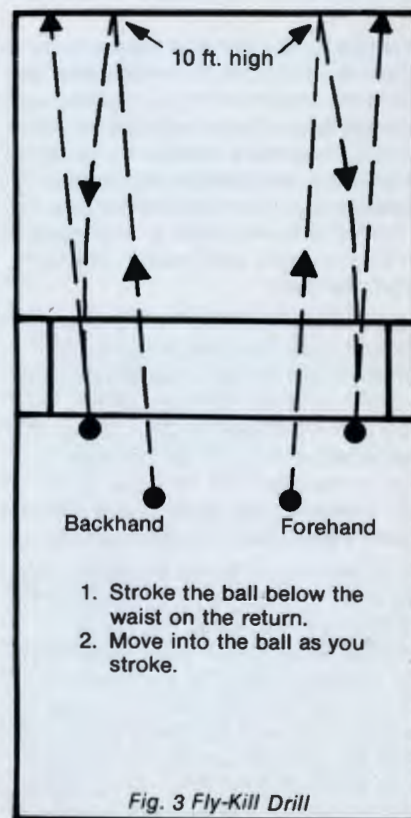
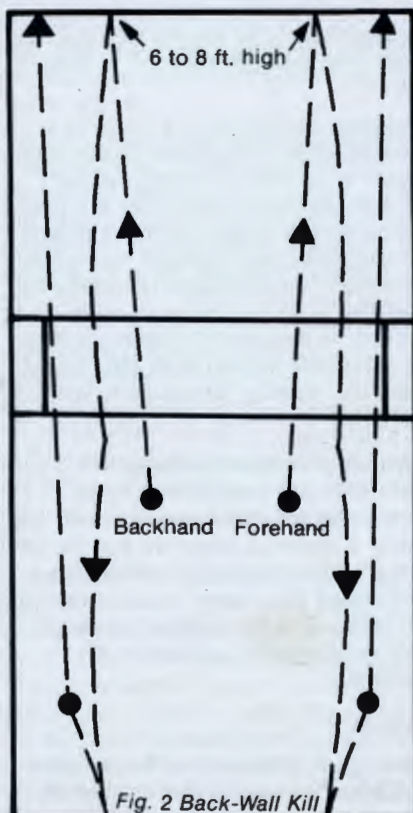
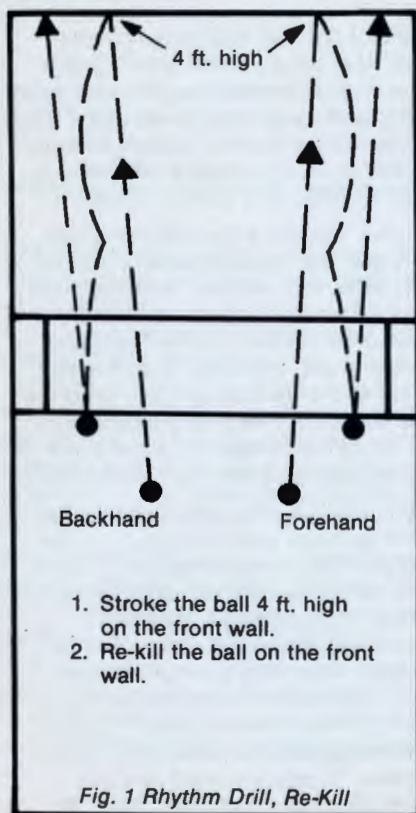
would use in a game situation to aid in establishing rhythm and co-ordination of the strokes.

Spend five minutes of practice on the most common strokes used in a game and five minutes on strokes that are your weaknesses. Many players spend practice time only on their strong shots while warming up,—neglecting their weaknesses.

Yet, the only way to feel comfortable with a shot that is difficult is to go through a process of repetition with that particular shot until you can relax and execute it in a game situation to your advantage.

One must realize that in a practical approach to pre-match drills, a player is practicing specific shots repetitively. In actual play, when the most logical shot to take presents itself, the only thing left to do is properly execute the stroke.

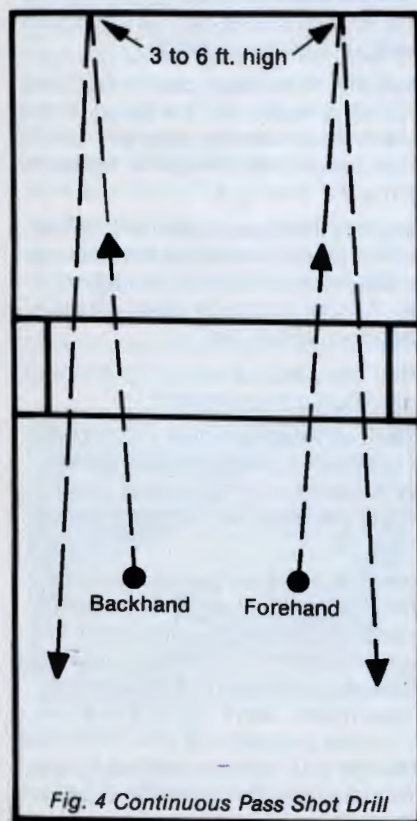
Let us assume that this shot presents



itself five times during a match and when it does you want to make the shot successfully a high percentage of the time. If you have spent practice time on the shot, you will have the confidence and relaxation required to perform well.

The drills and practice techniques described in the following diagrams are used by one or more of the top pros or are those that I have found helpful for the players of all levels because they are fundamentally sound.

Note that all drills on the forehand side should be finished first before switching to the backhand side or vice versa. Strokes should be practiced one at a time unless otherwise indicated. Of course, on kill shots the ball can strike the side wall before hitting the front wall. The drills are designed for two people on the same court at the same time to derive the maximum number of strokes in the minimum amount of time.



In *Figure 1* a good rhythm drill is depicted. It requires that the player hit himself a half-speed, set-up shot about four feet high on the front wall, then kill the ball on the front wall. Repeat the drill at least 10 times.

The back wall kill in *Figure 2* requires that the ball be stroked six to eight feet high on the front wall from center court position with enough force to cause the ball to rebound off the back wall. The player should follow the ball back, set up, and stroke the ball low to the front wall. Remember that the earlier you can set up for the back wall shot, the more time you will have to ready yourself for the rebound and to execute the stroke without being rushed.

In *Figure 3* a very important shot, the fly kill is demonstrated. The ball is hit approximately 10 feet high on the front wall and stroked below the waist and killed on the front wall. Emphasis should be placed on moving into the ball prior to contact.

The pass shot in *Figure 4* is a continuous drill requiring that the player control the ball down either side wall by repetitively stroking the ball approximately three to six feet high on the front wall. Avoid striking the side wall with the ball before it hits the front wall or it will rebound to center court.

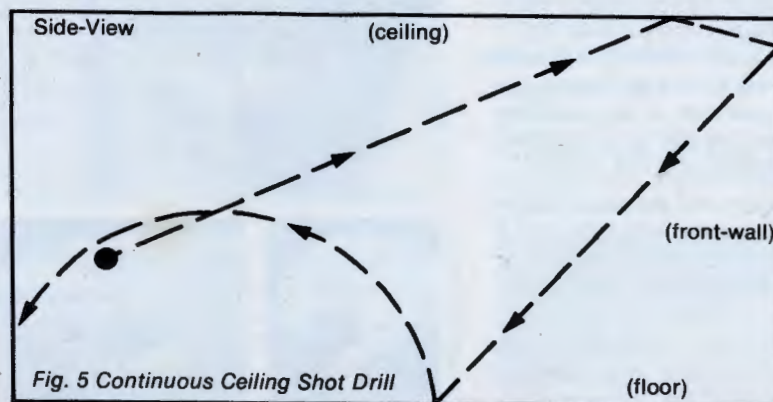
The ceiling shot drill in *Figure 5* is a continuous drill in which the player constantly hits ceiling shots to himself trying to keep the ball hugging the side wall and deep in the court without rebounding

off the back wall. Emphasize control without swinging too hard; a common error for beginning or intermediate players is wasting effort on the overhead ceiling shot.

In summary, let me point out that these are simple drills and not the only ones that can be used to warm-up; any shot used in a game can be isolated and practiced individually anywhere from 10 times to 500 times if one has the time or desire to do so. In my opinion, a combination of practice alone on all shots, especially ones that are weaknesses, as well as constant play and competition, are the way to improve rapidly in racquetball.

Repeating a stroke correctly over and over will eventually allow a player to feel comfortable to use that shot in game situations. You should be aware, however, that it is far different to practice shots while casually warming up as opposed to the same shots under the stress, fatigue and rapid movement which are match conditions.

It has been my observation as a teaching professional that a player will not improve his backhand, for example, only through playing. Practice alone or before a match, especially with supervision, is the prerequisite for obtaining a sound, well-rounded game. It is also important to mention that while practicing or playing, concentration must first be given to the ball and secondly to the feeling and positioning of the racquet. The body will react to both. ●



# What's the Call?

by James Hillman

## The Racquetball Referee . . . A Helpful Commentary

I already know. You have never made a bad call in your life. And why? That's simple. The game of tournament racquetball is not just player A vs. player B, but player A vs. player B vs. the referee. Remember, the ref doesn't like to be a loser either.

The referee is committed to be a good judge (sometimes an even better fake). Just a blink of the eyes could turn those beautiful 90 mph rollouts into questionable skips: *"Skip! That ball was a mouse! You've had too many beers! Go back to the prime-time lounge where you belong!!!"*

Now that was fun, wasn't it? By this time your heart is palpitating faster than the Ohio State Drum Corps. Somehow you get up enough courage and say *"Call stands, side out."*

The players run, they sweat, they pinch, they dig the most impossible balls out of corners—but who takes all the mental abuse in the long run? It's the referee.

Please take note that the referee is not a perfect breed. That's why in sticky situations there are linesmen and side judges, supposedly they are—thumbs up, agree, thumbs down, disagree (a flat palm indicates no decision, as well as a possible manicure). What a great system!

If you are a novice player, the odds that you are a novice ref stand in your favor. So the first thing you want to do in preparation is to *avoid* reading the rule book. Rules will only confuse you more.

Before the match begins, it is advisable to go court-side and introduce yourself to the players (victims) in question. I normally use someone else's name, like, um, Dan Bertolucci. That way the players already know the ref will be flawless. After that, go over half of the court hinders (save the other half as a surprise), flip the coin, and get the hell upstairs.

The server serves and the match begins. On side outs it is especially important to turn the score card half way around, otherwise a somewhat lop-sided match will result.

If you see a foot fault, call it—most players still don't even know what a foot fault is. Besides, a call of this nature really

makes you a popular person. By the same token, don't make it a point of looking for a foot fault. By the time you switch your focus from the server's feet to the ball, you may have missed all kinds of neat things, like short serves, ace serves, three-wall crotch serves, and obscene gestures by members of the gallery.

And what about the old double bounce? It's another one of those blink or don't blink kinds. Before every tournament season begins, my advice is to visit an ear specialist. Having acute hearing will be an advantage to the ref—you'll be able to pick up that extra "squeak".

Now that the match is well under way, you seem to be gaining more and more confidence. Control is the key to any referee's success and if you have confidence, you'll have control. Too bad that one of the players on the court is a 13-year-old who shoots a backhand kill shot you can't even see and, lucky for the

sport of racquetball, has a father in the gallery with venom flowing and teeth gnawing, ready to stalk his favorite prey—you, the referee!

Tension mounts. Concerned people ask why your shirt is moving all by itself—the heart is racing. And the sweat is streaming down your face even more than in the tie-breaker you just finished winning. What's worse, you snapped the #2 pencil used to keep score. *"Excuse me. Official time out. I need another pencil!"* is a classic line to break all the pressure to which you've been subjected.

But Dad is duly concerned because Sonny just lost a rally on a somewhat questionable call. *"Another call like that and I'm going to the director and request a new ref!"* father bellows.

Believe me, this is not the time to get upset over trivial matters, like a father-son vs. referee conflict. Remain composed, if that's within reach, and handle the situation accordingly. For example: *"I love giving technicals out to little 13-year-old brats when their fathers act like idiots!"* should cool some tempers.

A final suggestion that I'd like to pass on to the novice ref (also to those seasoned vets who would like to improve on their double-standard of officiating excellence!) has to do with calling out the score near the end of a game or match.

Personally, if I've been playing my heart out to win a match and I'm losing 9-10 in the tie-breaker with my opponent serving, the last thing I want to hear is *"Possible match point serving 9."*

During this intelligent statement, I'm on the court ready to collapse from exhaustion. But my mind is clear enough to think *"I know it's match point—there's no need to remind me."*

By that time, an ace serve has zoomed across court. End of match!

So don't drive people nuts with ambiguous jargon like possible match point or possible game point or possible anything. Just say the score: 20 serving 19, or 9 serving 10.

Refereeing is not as bad as everyone wants it to be. It actually has its good points (when I think of some, you'll be the first to know). So next time you hear a request for refereeing a Mixed Open doubles match, don't hide in the showers, or glue yourself to a stool in the bar, or change your name to protect the innocent. Just go out there and be a pal, ref a match. ●



— Lauren Shay photos

## New Products



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For more information, contact AMF Voit, Inc., 3801 South Harbor Boulevard, Santa Ana, Calif., 92704, or by phoning 714/546-4220.

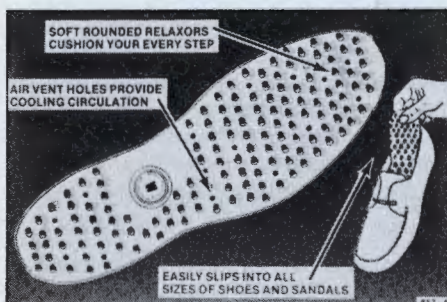
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Contact: Court Products, Inc., 1500 Old Deerfield Rd., Highland Park, Ill. 60035 1-800-323-9388



# The Tie-Breaker

by Thomas Christensen

The acrid atmosphere of the East Side Racquetball Club's locker room welcomed everyone who entered its doors, like icy water that greets the diver. At once Jerry knew he had arrived at sweat palace, and the pressures mounted automatically, just a little now, but they were still there; even after all these visits, they remained.

"How's-a-Jer?"

"Hey, Jerry baby!"

"Lookin' good, Jerry."

"Welcome back, Jer-boy."

Jerry smiled warmly in reply, flicking an extended hand as it met his, slapping any bare bottom that dared not to duck. It was difficult to realize that it had been almost six months since he had breathed this stagnant air and heard these challenges, bold but empty. Soon he stared joyfully, reassuredly, at his locker. His hand reached up and nervously twirled the dial to its magical three numbers. The lock fell open as if struck with a wizard's wand.

"How's it going?"

"Not bad really, Bill, not bad at all."

"Think you're ready for the courts?"

"Oh sure. The doctor told me it was ok. Nothing to worry about."

"That's great, Jerry; it's good to see you back."

"Thanks, Bill."

The trunks were still warm from the drier and felt good against his cool skin. Jerry noticed a tightness around the middle as he buttoned them, something he hadn't experienced in a little over a year. His rolls of fat were what got him to join the Club in the first place.

"You're getting so tubby I can't even hug you anymore, Jerry."

"Then I'll get rid of it."

That's all he said to Claudia, but he meant it. He usually acted on what he said. That's why Claudia never mentioned his fat again. She knew she didn't have to. What she didn't know, however, was that Jerry was about to have an affair, a dangerous, self indulging, time consuming, demanding affair, not with another woman, but with a game, a game called racquetball.

At first Jerry played only occasionally, once a week and once in a while on a Saturday morning. Like an approaching train, racquetball soon began to demand more and more of his attention.

In college Jerry had been a successful intramural athlete, playing on many winning teams. At times he envisioned himself receiving the real applause of the cash paying spectator. Now from nowhere, like a shot of sun light on a cloudy day, he realized that his dream of attention receiving, of stardom of a sort, could materialize. His natural quickness and powerful wrist muscles seemed to have been molded just for racquetball.

"\$45 for a racquet! Isn't that a lot of money?"

Claudia was beginning to hear the sounds of distant thunder, the ominous sounds of a storm.

"Look, Honey, you can't expect me to play in tournaments with my \$14.95 special, can you?"

"Yes."

Jerry grinned, displaying his boy-like imperviousness to the feelings of others, especially those close to him.

"Now, now, Claudia, it's better than drinking."

"Says who! I like to drink, but I sure hate racquetball."

True, Jerry tried to convince Claudia to join the Club with him; he even offered to give her some lessons.

"Bill's wife is always looking for a partner," he said.

But not Claudia. If she were going to sweat, it wasn't going to be in some oversized playpen with another woman.

Jerry tried, he thought, but Claudia chose another bed to sleep in. It had nothing to do with racquetball, no sir. Gradually, like a growing baby in a womb, Claudia's affair blossomed. The lover was an old friend, a friend of both of them actually, a divorcee, successful, a man who knew how to say the right word, at first a substitute, a gap filler, a time passer. Now he was much more than this. Bradley was the man Claudia desired all the time, to be with in a car on a rainy day watching the lake goose pimpling with the rain drops, to be snuggled next to in a quiet lounge sipping Manhattans with and

sensing the warmth of liquor matched by the warmth of Brad's touch.

Then Jerry had a heart attack.

"Mr. Royal, you're lucky to be alive."

Claudia heard the doctor in the hospital room clearly. And she cried, not because she was relieved that Jerry "made it", but she cried because she was angry. Jerry was back home; egad was he back home! It seemed that she couldn't get out of his sight.

"Where are you going? When will you be back? Bring me home some of this and some of that."

Jerry was home again, and the baby that was her "relationship" was aborted just before the birth. Even Claudia couldn't face the outrage of asking for a divorce just after her husband's heart attack.

"What your husband needs is special care, Mrs. Royal. With the right kind of attention and nurturing he'll be back on his feet as good as new before you can say . . . well whatever it is people say before they expect something to happen."

"It's yippee," Claudia said to herself.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Royal."

"Oh nothing, Doctor. Thank you for everything. You can be absolutely sure that Jerry will get the best possible care that I can give him."

And Claudia meant it. The Shah of Iran didn't receive better care. She smiled and praised so much that her teeth hurt, but Jerry never saw a sad face or heard a harsh word. His meals, pills, bedding, exercise routine, all were followed meticulously. Sex was avoided on the assumption that it would be bad for his heart.

"You know what a tiger you can be, so let's wait until you're well again."

Claudia managed brief encounters with Bradley. Once she even finagled a weekend away under the pretense of visiting her sister in Texas. She had to involve her sister in some of the details, but it was worth it. Besides, Samantha loved a little clandestine sex herself, so she was more than willing to cooperate. As Claudia expected, Jerry never suspected a thing, and the weekend went well, enchantingly well.

"Jerry, you are doing remarkably. I can't believe you've made such progress."

"That great to hear, Doctor. The credit belongs to Claudia. She has hardly left my side, hasn't allowed me to make one mistake."

Claudia smiled impersonally, like a tooth paste ad.

"Well, Jerry, I'm taking away some of the restrictions. Number one, I think you could go back to work half time if that's possible."

*"No problem, Doctor. It'll feel good to be productive again."*

Jerry gave Claudia's hand a little squeeze and looked at her with his boyish grin and winked. Claudia pulled her hand free and began to busy herself straightening Jerry's bed. She found herself each day withdrawing more and more from Jerry. The boyish grins and winks that once were accepted tenderly were now stimuli to feelings of revulsion. Jerry was now just an obstacle, something that grew between Bradley and her, a fungus. She hated him.

*"Doctor, thank you for everything you've done for me. Because of you and Claudia I'm alive today, and I'll never forget either of you. Thank you."*

*"You're a lucky man to have a wife like Claudia. You've done a marvelous job, my dear. I hope you have the good sense, Jerry, to never lose her."*

*"Don't worry, Doctor; she'll never get away, never."*

Claudia sensed that Jerry was beginning to suspect that everything wasn't just right between her and him. She knew that she had to be very careful, even more attentive than she had been.

The first day that Jerry went to work Claudia had to risk a visit with Bradley. They spent the entire morning together on the outskirts of town.

*"He'll never let me go, Brad. I know it. I can sense it. He's like a big kid who never wants to lose. He's top salesman at his company as well as top racquetball player at the Club. He can't lose at anything. I'm just another trophy to him."*

*"Do you think it would help if I spoke to him?"*

*"That would be the worst thing we could do. If he knew you existed, he'd never let me out of his sight. I don't know what to do, Brad."*

About noon their plans had been established.

Jerry had reserved a court just to loosen up, nothing too strenuous at first. The rhythm of his strokes remained smooth and accurate at about 70 per cent of his full power, much better than he had anticipated. By the end of half an hour his kills were beginning to catch the corners occasionally the way he intended them to; his serves were too weak to be effective, but Jerry was certain that would be remedied soon. All in all Jerry was pleased with the first workout after six months of inactivity. On the way to the locker room he reserved a court for the next evening.

*"I saw you working the corners real good, Jerry."*

*"Now bad, considering. I'll be after your hide sooner than you think, Bill."*



*"Who's the old timer?"*

Jerry twinged at the term "old timer" and spun to face the broad, cocky smile of Brian Clancey, the current club leader.

*"Jerry, have you met Brian Clancey yet?"*

*"No, I haven't, Bill."*

*"Jerry Royal, meet Brian Clancey."*

The two men exchanged hand shakes, each curiously testing the grip strength of the other.

*"When you're ready, old timer, give me a call. I'll give you a racquetball lesson."*

Anger flared up quickly deep inside Jerry's bones.

*"Yes, we'll do that real soon."*

By the end of the week Jerry's strength and timing were 100 percent improved.

*"Hey, old timer, I'm still waiting."*

Jerry glared across the locker room at Brian Clancey. He had been checking up on Clancey, and everyone seemed to think the kid was very good, fast and accurate.

*"Ok, Clancey, how about next Sunday at 4:00 in the afternoon?"*

Brian stopped tugging at his shoe laces and stood up straight.

*"Three days from now?"*

*"Right, in three days."*

Everyone in the locker room stared at the two men. Jerry Royal, the old timer, and Brian Clancey, the young upstart. The room became very silent, like just before the first, summer thunder blast.

*"Yea, old timer, that'll be fine, just fine."*

The news spread faster than the spoiled reputation of a use to be virgin.

Bill met Jerry going out the door.

*"You can't do it, Jerry; you're not ready, and that peacock is good."*

*"Don't worry, Bill, I can take care of myself. See you Sunday."*

Bill called Claudia who had no more success changing Jerry's mind than he did. The shoot out was scheduled, and nothing was going to stop it.

The next three days went incredibly fast.

Jerry woke up Sunday about 10:30 fresh and invigorated. He rolled over and made rapid fire love to his wife almost before she was awake and then popped out of bed like a 10-year-old on Christmas morning.

*"Jerry, what was that all about?"*

Jerry was crunching away on his cereal and reading the newspaper when Claudia walked into the breakfast nook.

*"That, my dear Claudia, was to prove to all those old jocks who live by myths that love making doesn't hurt on the day of a game."*

*"Then you're going through with it."*

*"Now, Claudia, let's not get into that old argument again. The doctor says I'm well, and I feel great."*

*"The doctor said you could engage in light physical work outs—not play some snot-faced kid for the honor and glory of Jerry Royal..."*

Jerry reached over and pulled Claudia close to him. Tenderly he kissed her frowning mouth and tear-filled eyes.

*"See you at six."*

*"You're leaving already. It's only 11:30."*

*"I've got things to do."*

Jerry was nobody's fool, and what he was going to do now was to visit Lance Quinton whom Jerry had hired to film Brian Clancey's last few games.

Silently the two men watched the movies over and over again.

*"Well what do you think, Jerry?"*

*"Good pictures, Lance. I'll see you at the Club."*

Jerry could see that he was going to be in for a tough afternoon, but he thought he spotted a few weaknesses and felt certain that he could win. Now he wanted to jog slowly for about half an hour and think about his game.

Amazingly, the Club was jammed. The challenge game drew a bigger crowd than the tournament did. In a way it was youth vs. experience, and everyone in the stands easily identified with one or the other. The first time that the combatants looked squarely at each other was

as they entered the court, and this was only a brief glance.

Brian won the serve and the match started.

Before Jerry could adjust to the speed of Brian's serve, the score was 6-0. Jerry anticipated this problem and shook it off. He knew that soon Brian would make a mistake, and the serve would come across the line a little higher or slower than intended. The seventh serve bounced exactly where Jerry wanted it, and he slammed the return past Brian's lunging backhand. Jerry's serve was almost as effective as Brian's, and after about 15 minutes the score was tie at 11 a piece.

The adrenaline was still roaring inside both players, and neither showed the slightest sign of fatigue.

Jerry was leading 20-19 when he served a lazy lob that fell into the backhand corner, caught the crotch of the wall and the floor, and bounced out of Brian's futile, leaping swing, giving him the first game victory.

"Nice game, old timer. Think you can handle another?"

"Try me, Sonny."

Jerry was determined to put Brian away early, but Brian seemed to be getting stronger. On the other hand Jerry's breathing was becoming more rapid, and

his legs were getting heavier. A pain grew in his left arm, at first unnoticed like the first snow flake of a blizzard, Jerry ignored it, willed it away. Sweat rolled freely off the top of his head and into his eyes. The score was Brian 17, Jerry 12.

Common sense told Jerry to coast the rest of this game and to save himself for the tie breaker, but common sense wasn't one of Jerry's strong points. He played each point as if it were the three and two pitch in the bottom of the ninth, with bases loaded, in the seventh game of the World Series.

Brian won the second game 21-18.

"Want to call it quits, old timer?"

Jerry forced a sneer as he shook his head no. He could hear the crowd applauding wildly. His body was screaming for him to stop, but no way was Jerry going to quit now.

The Club announcer informed the spectators that an 11 point tie-breaker would decide the match.

Bill flung open the door of the court and dashed to Jerry.

"Ok, Jerry; you proved your point. You're good, even Brian will admit that. Let's call it off now. No one will blame you. You're damn near dead on your feet."

"Bill, get the hell out of here. We've got a tie-breaker to play."

Bill gestured helplessly and left to the cheers of the crowd.

Jerry was playing on instinct now. He knew that Brian played a little too deep, and he chipped a couple of soft kills into the front forehand corner before Brian adjusted. He next flung deep ceiling shots into both back wall corners.

Brian was making rapid game plan changes, but Jerry was creeping ahead—3-1, 4-2, 6-4, 8-5.

Suddenly, Brian served four straight aces. Jerry dove desperately each time, but Brian out guessed him and served one fire ball to the left and the next one to the right. All at once the score was 9-8, in favor of Brian, before Jerry won back the serve.

Jerry stopped to wipe the sweat out of his eyes and for the first time glanced at the crowd. Claudia was sitting in the front row, watching. But Claudia never watched him play any more! What was Bradley doing here, too? He hadn't seen Bradley in months. "Yea, he came to the hospital to visit me. In fact he brought Claudia with him."

"Your serve, old timer, unless you want to concede."

"Concede . . . concede . . . No; give me that bloody ball."

Jerry won the next point with a perfect passing shot that just about used all the strength that he could muster. 9-9. Two more points.

The pain in his left arm was now a full blown winter storm. He forced it out of his mind. He could hardly breathe. Two more points, then he could rest.

He turned to look at Brian who smiled back at him, cocky as ever, breathing easily. Over Brian's shoulder Jerry could see Claudia, watching impassively like a Roman empress viewing her gladiators.

If only the pain would go away, so he could end this ordeal, so he could talk to Claudia and find out why she was there with Bradley.

Then he saw that they were touching each other's hands, and he knew everything. He knew the pain wouldn't stop, not this time. He looked at Brian, and Jerry knew about him too. Everything was suddenly very clear, and he couldn't do a damn thing about it, not now.

Tears filled his eyes as he turned to serve. The ball fell lazily from his lifeless hand and bounced harmlessly into the corner. Jerry was dead before his racquet hit the floor.

Claudia and Bradley paid Brian \$500 for his job well done. ●

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a/c 602. 991-0253

*Thomas Christensen is an English professor at Macomb Community College in Warren, Michigan and "occasional" racquetball player.*

# Tournament Results

## Kentucky

The 1981 Fern Valley Racquetball Classic, sponsored by Hatfield-Weber Insurance Agency, Allied Sporting Goods, W A M Z Stereo FM 97, and Penn Athletic Products, was held at Racquetball Plus on November 13, 14, and 15 in Louisville.

### Results

**Men's Open:** 1st—Jack Newman, 2nd—Frank Pruitt, 3rd—Robert Pinto, **Cons.**—Ed Sword

**Men's B:** 1st—Roger Schuman, 2nd—Joe Schneider, 3rd—Vince Hymen, Sr., **Cons.**—Bob Bronger

**Men's C:** 1st—Tom Dench, 2nd—Mark Haby, 3rd—Steve Ames, **Cons.**—Ron Stinson

**Men's Novice:** 1st—Ron Twigg, 2nd—Dave Meeks, 3rd—Doug Lyons, **Cons.**—Dick Johnston

**Men's Club:** 1st—Don Collini, 2nd—Mark Steurer, 3rd—Buddy Scroufe, **Cons.**—Jerry Clark

**Juniors:** 1st—Eric Hogge, 2nd—Jim Watson, 3rd—Steve Syware, **Cons.**—Kevin Hyman

**Women's Open:** 1st—Kay Kuhfeld, 2nd—Gerri Stoffregen, 3rd—Sharon Fanning, **Cons.**—Linda Zeller

**Women's B:** 1st—Lisa Faquin, 2nd—Nancy Mylar, 3rd—Sharon Ostertag, **Cons.**—Brenda Strickler

**Women's C & Novice:** 1st—Danielle Car, 2nd—Corliss Biven, 3rd—Patty Lohman, **Cons.**—Cecilia Ridge

**Women's Club:** 1st—Marta Hollis, 2nd—Liz Higgins, 3rd—Peggy O'Leary, **Cons.**—Patti Johnston

## New York

5th Annual Long Island Open  
Sponsored by Lite Beer from Miller and Arby's  
Roast Beef Restaurants  
November 13-15, 1981  
Universal/Centre Courts

### Men's Open

**Quarter-finals:** Horton d. Ranson 21-11, 21-20; Winterton d. Pali 21-17, 18-21, 15-9; Jacklitsch d. Marriott 3-21, 21-18, 15-1; DiGiacomo d. Diemar 21-11, 10-21, 15-10

**Semi-finals:** Horton d. Winterton 21-14, 21-12; Jacklitsch d. DiGiacomo 21-11, 21-20

**Finals:** Horton d. Jacklitsch 21-14, 20-21, 15-6

### Women's Open

**Semi-finals:** Marriott d. Rubin 21-13, 21-1; Hajar d. Taylor 6-21, 21-18, 15-11

**Finals:** Hajar d. Marriott 21-15, 16-21, 15-11

### Men's Open Doubles

**Semi-finals:** Diemar/Winterton d. Horton/DeFillippos 21-12, 14-21, 15-11; Jacklitsch/Morris d. Diamond/Algood 21-14, 18-21, 15-4

**Finals:** Diemar/Winterton d. Jacklitsch/Morris 21-6, 21-16

### Men's A:

**Semi-finals:** McDermott d. Teape; Klein d. Schoehaus

**Finals:** Klein d. McDermott

### Women's A:

**Semi-finals:** Jaeger d. McCarrick 21-9, 21-3; Pease d. Freedman 21-8, 21-9

**Finals:** Jaeger d. Pease

### Men's B

**Semi-finals:** Nowicki d. O'Neil 21-13, 21-11; Botteglieri d. Nastasi 21-10, 21-9

**Finals:** Nowicki d. Botteglieri 21-7, 21-14

### Women's B

**Semi-finals:** Cain d. Hanna 11-21, 21-16, 15-7; Cohen d. Loube 21-15, 21-3

**Finals:** Cain d. Cohen 16-21, 21-19, 15-10

### Veteran Open

**Semi-finals:** Klein d. Swartz 21-14, 21-4; Devito d. Colona 21-18, 21-19

**Finals:** Klein d. Devito 21-19, 15-21, 15-9

### Men's Seniors

**Semi-finals:** Crispi d. Fiore; Torres d. Carioscia

**Finals:** Crispi d. Torres

### Women's Seniors

**Semi-finals:** Andresen d. Saraceni, forfeit; Bike d. Cannella 20-21, 21-17, 15-8

**Finals:** Andresen d. Bike 21-11, 21-7

### Men's Masters

**Semi-finals:** Wheeler d. Bierman 21-19, 21-9; Kundel d. Nurbini 21-3, 21-9

**Finals:** Kundel d. Wheeler 7-21, 21-17, 15-7

### Men's Golden Masters

**Semi-finals:** Krodman d. Zuro 21-11, 21-8; Lesser d. Meade 21-3, 21-8

**Finals:** Krodman d. Lesser 21-8, 21-13

### Boys 16 & Under

**Semi-finals:** Costleigh d. Norris 21-11, 21-8; Walsh d. Fritzman 21-13, 21-1

**Finals:** Costleigh d. Walsh 21-6, 21-9

### Boys 14 & Under

**Semi-finals:** Millian d. Shapiro 21-18, 21-18; Perweiler d. Varvaro 21-8, 21-11

**Finals:** Millian d. Perweiler 21-13, 18-21, 15-8

1981 Winter Tournament—Racquetball Fifth Avenue  
New York City, Dec. 5-6, 1981

**Men's B:** 1st—Steven Rubin, 2nd—Charles Evans

**Men's C:** 1st—Mario Mejias, 2nd—Bill McKenna, 3rd—Bill Manfredi

**Men's Novice:** 1st—Brett Shevack, 2nd—Murray Meadow, 3rd—Matthew Kachur

**Women's Novice:** 1st—Nancy O'Connor, 2nd—Melinda Tanner, 3rd—Eileen Joyce

## South Dakota

The University of South Dakota Raquetball Club garnered 16 points for a first place win at the first South Dakota Intercollegiate Raquetball Championships. The meet, held Nov. 21 at the Triad Courts in Aberdeen, was sponsored by Penn Athletic Products Company and sanctioned by the American Amateur Raquetball Association.

Tournament participation was restricted to full-time undergraduate students from South Dakota colleges and universities.

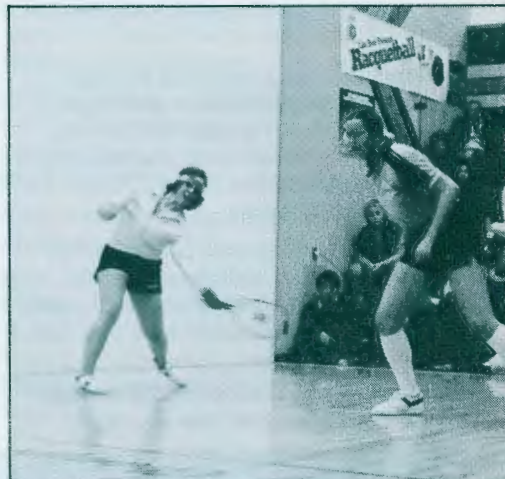
Teams were awarded one point per match won. The four men and four women on each team played two singles and two doubles events.

USD took the top spot with 16 team points. Northern State College was in second place with 11 points and South Dakota State University collected nine points for third place.

—Photos by Paul Stevenson



Jacklitsch goes for a backhand against eventual winner Horton, at the Long Island Open.



Winner Hajar putting one away against Marriott, at Long Island.

# Sprouts For Sports: How To Grow Your Own Super Food

by Frances Sheridan Goulart

If the high cost and hassle of eating well to stay fit for sports has got you down, take up sprouting.

Sprouts are an excellent source of vitamins A, B, C, D, E, G, even K and of electrolyte lost in perspiration, minerals such as calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and sodium.

According to studies Doctors Bunkholder of Yale University and Bailey of the University of Minnesota, sprouted grains contain 150 times more protein than ungerminated seeds, and sprouting often increases B vitamin content by 100% to 1,500%.

Although the rate of vitamins increase during sprouting varies with each type of seed, studies have shown that the vitamin C content in sprouting soybeans, for example, soared from 108 to 702 milligrams in just 72 hours.

And unlike meat, sprouts contain no-fat protein, are low in sodium and rich in unrefined carbohydrate, therefore a super source of "go" power, and less than 100 calories in a cupful.

Sprouts are also easy to digest and contain live enzymes that help you digest other foods.

In addition, sprouts are good preventative medicine.

According to Dr. Chiu Nan Lai, a biologist at Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute in Texas, the extracts of sprouts, particularly from wheat, counteract carcinogens. It is believed that chlorophyll which is known to help build and oxygenate the blood, may be the responsible factor. (*Vegetarian Times*, August 1979)

## Hints

1. You can sprout almost anything that you eat in its adult form: grains; wheat, (millet, which is a very good substitute for people who cannot digest wheat), brown rice; beans, which have a very high nutritive value; radish and mustard seeds; fenugreek seeds, which are used in curries; celery, dill, carrot and caraway seeds; sunflower seeds, which don't have to have their hulls on and sesame

seeds, which do. The major exceptions are in the night shade family of plants: tomato, eggplant and green pepper.

2. Use seeds sold for food consumption. Seeds sold for planting are sprayed with fungicides such as mercury.

3. Although you can buy some seeds already—sprouted alfalfa and soy bean, for example—it's like home-grown vegetables vs. supermarket produce. Also, sprouted mung beans in the market have often been given a light chlorine bath because they are grown in large quantities and are prone to fungus. Also packaged beans sold in supermarkets are kiln-dried and sometimes enzymes within the seeds have been killed by too much heat.

## How To Sprout Jars

1. Use a large wide-mouth glass jar such as a quart Mason jar. Use a square of cheesecloth, gauze, netting or nylon to cover the top of the jar. Hold in place with rubber band or the outer ring of the Mason jar lid.

2. Add  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of seeds for sprouting (see sources). A good beginners mixture is 3 teaspoons alfalfa plus 5 teaspoons of lentils. The lentils help spread out the very fine alfalfa sprouts; mung beans can be mixed, too.

3. Fill jar with tepid water. Agitate and pour off water to wash seeds. Now fill jar  $\frac{1}{2}$  full with water and soak seeds overnight. Save soak water for soup or drinking. It's full of vitamins, enzymes and minerals. After draining, place jar on its side in a warm dark spot in the kitchen. Rinse and drain twice a day with tepid water. Place container in indirect sunlight or daylight for higher chlorophyll content after 2 days. (NOTE: If your water contains flourides, or other strong chemicals, these may interfere with the sprouting process.)

4. Most seeds will sprout in 3 to 5 days. When the "tails" are about twice as long as the seed itself, they are ready to use. For maximum nutrition eat the whole sprout and eat it raw.

If chilly nighttime temperatures hamper the sprouting process where you are, place dark wool socks around 1-quart Mason jars. The needed warmth and moisture is retained and the sprouts actually grow faster in the dark. Mungs sprout  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch after 24 hours and alfalfa may grow long enough to eat the next day. (Coffee percolator baskets and large fine-mesh strainers can also be used as home sprouters.)

## Recipes

Try them in salads, in yogurt, on top burgers, soups, minced and cooked in casseroles, meatloaves, cheese dishes, omelettes. Or use alfalfa sprouts instead of spaghetti under your favorite sauce, or blend with milk for a pick-me-up shake.

### Breakfast Sprouts

Serves 4 to 6

- 2 cups wheat or rye sprouts (3 days old)
- 1 cup hulled sunflower seeds
- 3 apples, grated or chopped
- 3 bananas, sliced thin, or other favorite fruit
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup currants or raisins
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup yogurt

Blend all ingredients together. Sweeten with honey, if desired.

### Sprout Arian Saltines

- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup whole wheat flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup alfalfa sprouts
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sesame oil
- Sea salt to taste, or substitute kelp

Combine everything. Moisten if needed with milk. Roll out, score and bake 10 minutes at 375° or until brown.

## Sources

Minimum purchase from these companies is usually one pound, but the seeds last well over a year if stored in glass jars in a cool, dry place. Companies that supply seeds for sprouting include the following: *Johnny's Selected Seeds*, Albion, ME 04910; *The Natural Development Co.*, Box 215, Bainbridge, PA 17502; *Nichols Garden Nursery*, 1190 North Pacific Highway, Albany, OR 97321; and Walnut Acres, Penns Creek, PA 17862. ●

# Who's Playing Racquetball?

## The Diet Lady

by Stella Hart

For Mary Lou Rizzo, dieting is a way of life.

The owner of a diet control center in Kenil, New Jersey, an idea she developed which houses a food store, restaurant and exercise salon, Mary Lou herself has successfully dieted away 75 pounds.

"I know I must always diet," Mary Lou says, "and find new ways to both lose weight and maintain it when I reach my goal."

"Because I know this, I am constantly looking for new and innovative ideas to help the dieter. That's why I was so pleased to hear about racquetball from my daughters."

Her daughters, Donna, Angela and Lisa, all play racquetball. In fact, they are all part of Let's Be Slim, Inc., the company formed by Mary Lou to help people like herself, people with a weight problem.

"I understand the triumphs and disappointments facing the dieter," says Mary Lou. "I share them. And because I understand them I decided to start the diet center."

Mary Lou, who does all the cooking for the restaurant, is a constant encouragement to the overweight person. Her charismatic personality coupled with her ability to help people has been her recipe for success.

—Photos by Anne M. Cousineau



Mary Lou does her own cooking for the Let's Be Slim restaurant.



Mary Lou with daughters Angela, Lisa and Donna at the Racquetball Club in Flanders, New Jersey.

"But, I am well aware I must never stop looking for direction for the dieter," Mary Lou says. "The dieter can't find themselves getting bored because dieting for the overweight person is a way of life. So, you can imagine how happy I was to

find racquetball, a fine supplement to help the dieter."

"Right now racquetball and I are just getting acquainted, and I love it," says Mary Lou whose unique concept, that of housing everything for the overweight person under one roof, is a dieters delight. "I know in time I can learn to play racquetball well."

Her enthusiasm for the sport caused her to become a member at the Racquetball Club in Flanders, New Jersey where she and her family play.

"Now, not only do my daughters play, but so do the men in my family," she says referring to her husband and two sons, as well as her son-in-law.

"And for me and my busy schedule, that isn't easy."

For Mary Lou, her busy schedule includes diet lectures, diet cooking and diet recipes, as well as operating what has become a very successful family business.

"I never dreamed it would develop into a family affair," Mary Lou says. "I just wanted to help other people with a weight control problem."

"I know I have a problem and, just as I tell my fellow dieters, being aware of your problem is most important, pretending it isn't there won't make it go away."

"But, I'm very fortunate, my family is my encouragement."

Referring to daughter Lisa who manages the store, and daughters Angela and Donna who work constantly by her side, Mary Lou continues, "after all, they introduced me to racquetball, didn't they?" ●

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## Letters



Dear Chuck:

I was delighted to learn that the *National Racquetball* magazine had recently been purchased by PMI and that they had named Chuck Leve as Associate Publisher/Editor. I can't think of a more qualified person to be associated with this fine publication and will look forward to many great things happening to this already established publication in the immediate future. FOOT-JOY has enjoyed its business relationship with *National Racquetball* during the past few years and will look forward to improving this relationship and building upon it in the years ahead.

In closing, I want to wish you the very best in your new position, and at this time of the year I send my best wishes to

you and your family for a happy holiday season. Best regards.

James R. Ireland  
Vice President  
Foot Joy, Inc.

Dear Chuck:

Just found time to look at my November *National Racquetball* and found that you're running the show once again. My congratulations! Good to see you taking the reins once again.

Jeffrey N. Bairstow  
Managing Editor  
*Tennis Magazine*

Dear Editor:

For the past several years I have played in the L.A. Open, 1980 Las Vegas Nationals, 1981 Western Regionals and 1981 Tempe Nationals. I thoroughly enjoyed every one of them, but I am slowing down. Playing Veteran Golden Masters at 66 years old seemed to be taking its toll and after conditioning did not seem to improve my play, I turned to medicine.

A series of tests brought forth a problem that had shown none of the warning

signs, so I entered the Hospital of the Good Samaritan in Los Angeles, the same group that made open heart history in closed circuit use of by-pass procedures.

The surgery has been done and now I am on the way to recovery. Both my chief surgeon and senior staff surgeon (as well as both cardiologists) tell me I should be able to return to play in the Nationals, 1982.

So now, my request. My subscription will be renewed in March, 1982 as required. And please make a reservation for me in the 1982 Nationals, Veteran Golden Masters division.

Perhaps this will encourage others to go to one of the comprehensive testing programs relative to their physical conditioning in a major medical facility.

I recognize that my physical condition from racquetball, plus early diagnosis in a major, critical care diagnostic hospital, saved me from a very severe heart attack, enabled me to receive proper surgical treatment and hopefully return to a normal, fruitful life.

I write this looking out my hospital window with the hope it may help someone else. I have to go now to take my walk-



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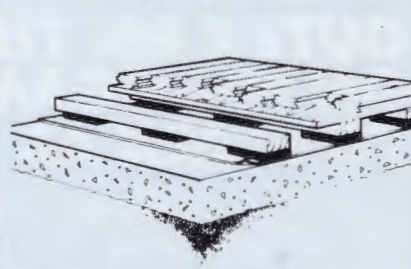
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ing exercises. Here's wishing everyone a Happy New Year!

Tom McEachern  
Pacific Palisades, CA

Dear Sir:

Congratulations on an excellent article *Court Club Survey: The Readers Speak* published in your November 81 magazine. Also, let me tell you how much I enjoyed reading the magazine.

I am the Vice President for Cardiovascular Health of the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington, and in this capacity manage a facility which has 6400 members. We would be interested in obtaining a copy of the original questionnaire used in the survey. Please send me a copy if permissible.

Herman B. Gohn  
YMCA of Metropolitan Washington, DC



## The Game Of Racquetball . . . by Marshall Friedman

I play racquetball for exercise and fun  
And it's not that important who lost or won  
Good hard competition and honesty is the game  
An exciting sport that helps keep you sane

Some players bend the rules & get uptight  
And argue & hassle and that's not right  
We all have problems we don't care to report  
And aren't looking for more when we get on the court

So your serve was an ace & he called it short  
And you think he's a cheater & lousy sport  
You made a fabulous get extending every ounce  
But he told you for sure it was a double bounce

He goes the wrong way and your pass shot is really keen  
But he crashes into you on purpose & calls it a screen  
Now you're angry and there's a churning in your gut  
Oh how you would love to give him a doughnut

When you're just playing lousy & getting beat  
Don't use short serves, hinders & double bounces & cheat  
If your shots are high and you can't make a kill  
It's not your opponents fault, it's your lack of skill

Learn the real rules & enjoy the game more  
That's more important than any score  
An opponent's good shot or get deserves your praise  
Instead of pouting with animated craze

Practice your weakness & learn from each mistake  
And give all of your opponents a fair shake  
Shake hands after a loss as well as victory  
Good sports are winners always; that's history!

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# Schmidtke Tops Finger For 1971 IRA Open Singles Championship

**Date:** April 27, 1971

**Tournament:** 3rd International Racquetball Association National Championships

**Site:** Deseret Gymnasium, Salt Lake City

**Division:** Open Singles

**Round:** Championship

*It is only appropriate to begin this series of The Greatest Matches of All Time with the one match that could very well be the greatest single encounter of all time, Bill Schmidtke's 1971 victory over then-defending national singles champ Craig Finger for the open singles title of the IRA Nationals.*

Schmidtke, then hailing from Port Edwards, Wisconsin where he was physical director of the local YMCA, was seventh seed and not given much chance against the wily, number one seed Finger, a psychology major at the University of Michigan, who had dominated the 1970 national championships. Finger's game was a beautiful blend of control, finesse, stamina and smarts. Schmidtke, on the other hand, was known to be weak with his backhand, while training on Budweiser.

The match has gone down in history as the most astonishing comeback in national tournament competition and merits the inauguration of this series due to the importance of the match, the method of Schmidtke's win, and the effect it had on each player's career.

★ ★ ★

In 1971 there were no professional racquetball players. There was no pro tour. In fact, tournaments themselves were few and far between. Racquetball was barely a year removed from being called "paddleball," "paddle rackets," or whatever the local version was. The three-year-old governing body, the IRA, annually held one "national championship," the only event during the season that brought together all the top players from across the nation. The winners of each division automatically became "national champion" until the next year's competition, and the open singles winner was universally recognized as the best player in the land.

The pressure of the IRA nationals was enormous. Every top player took aim at this single tournament every year. You either made it or were broken at the IRA



*Obviously fatigued, Schmidtke accepts the championship trophy from then-IRA president Bob Kendler. Ah, the moment we all dream of.*

nationals. One bad day, one twisted ankle, one mis-placed shot at a crucial moment could wipe out a year's worth of preparation.

Schmidtke reached the finals with wins over Paul Lawrence (Finger's doubles partner), Charlie Garfinkel (who had upset second seed Charlie Brumfield earlier in the tourney), and 15-year-old Jerry Hilecher in a tough, three game early round match. Finger stopped Ken Porco (seeded fourth), and Jim Austin (he of the unsurpassed backhand), en route to the finals. Without question, Finger was

the odds-on favorite to repeat as champion.

Game one, won by Finger 21-15, was closer than most expected. After taking a quick 6-0 lead, it was nip-and-tuck to a 15-15 deadlock, with never more than two points separating both players. Schmidtke continued to maneuver around his backhand, often rubbing his rear end against the left side wall in order to utilize his forceful forehand.

But Finger's superior control outdueled Schmidtke toward the end of game one and Craig tallied the final six points for the win.



Finger being patched up by Drs. Bud Muehleisen (l.) and Vince Cutshall (r.) after running into a Schmidtke backswing early in game three. It was just a nick that didn't affect play.

"I remember thinking that he had me playing his game," said Schmidtke. "I knew I'd have to shoot more and play the ceiling better."

That wouldn't be as easy as today, because in 1971 it took a pretty good wallop to get the ball to the ceiling. And the mushy racquetballs then used would stay up unless your kill attempt was bottom board or nearly so.

Game two was again an early struggle, with Finger grabbing a 6-4 advantage, but needing eight innings (two serve exchanges equals an inning) in which to do it. Then Schmidtke got hot. He reeled off five straight points in the ninth inning, making it 9-6. Bunching points became Schmidtke's calling card not only in this match, but throughout his illustrious career.

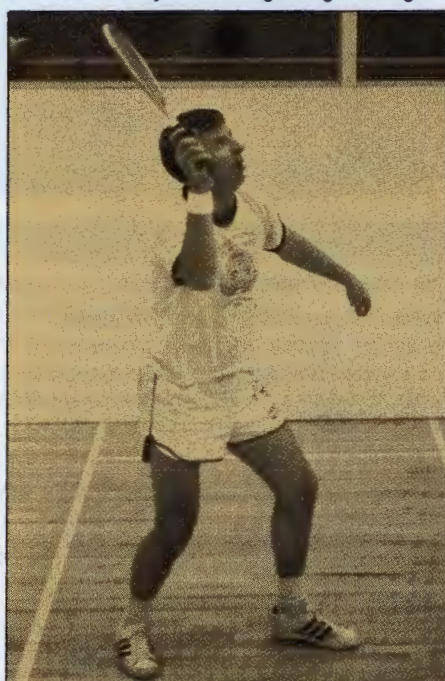
When Finger closed to 8-9, Schmidtke held him there and the two each served twice more without scoring. When scoring did come again, it was in Schmidtke bunches, as Bill tallied seven points over three innings to one for Finger. It was in this streak that Bill's forehand kill shot heated up (he connected on nine of 12 back wall kill attempts during the game), and his lead was increased to 16-9.

After one more scoreless frame, Schmidtke went out with a flourish, scoring five times in the final inning, combining Finger errors with his own strong offensive game.

"My forehand started to come around," said Schmidtke, "and I was able to generate more power. My confidence was up."

Finger quickly changed all that in game three. Showing exactly why he was defending national champ, he used a mixture of pinch kills and down the line passes to take a 7-2, then 11-2 advantage in the deciding game (remember that back in '71, all three games of a match were played to 21). Schmidtke called time outs at each juncture, but nothing seemed to stop Finger's relent-

Schmidtke, lobbing, "when I switched to the drive serves, my offensive game got rolling."



Schmidtke, preparing to use the drive—the first successful offensive use of the serve in championship play.

less march toward 21.

Even a slight forehead cut couldn't stop Craig, who took an injury time out when nicked by a Schmidtke backswing. Soon the lead was 14-3 and the fans settled back into their "I told you so" mood.

To this point in the third game, Finger has served seven times and scored 14 points. He would serve eight more times and score no more points. Over the same span Schmidtke would score in seven innings for 18 points including two innings of five and one of four.

Although the history is a bit cloudy, it went something like this. At 3-14 Schmidtke scored once, put out Finger and stepped into the service box down 4-14. Using a hard drive serve (unlike the high lobbs and soft Z's then in vogue) Bill aced Craig into the deep left corner for his fifth point and then followed with a forehand kill at the end of an exhausting rally to make it 6-14. Finger called time out.

"You have to remember," said Schmidtke, "that in 1971 the rallies lasted a long, long time. Each rally was like a miniature chess game. Great conditioning was taken for granted, but it still took a lot out of you."

When play resumed, so did Schmidtke, who didn't let the time out phase him in the least. Three more points followed, two just by controlling the rally and outmaneuvering Finger around the court, the third on another ace, again a drive to the deep left corner. Finger regained the serve with a backhand kill, but Schmidtke was back in the match, although down 14-9.

Of the next five serves, only Schmidtke was able to score, and merely a single point at that—on a Finger backhand skip. When he next stepped up to serve, Bill was still behind 10-14, but the atmosphere was electric. You could sense the swing in the game. Schmidtke, not Finger, was controlling the rallies. Schmidtke, not Finger, was making the offensive shots. And Finger, not Schmidtke, was making the critical errors.

"To this day," says Schmidtke, "I don't remember anything past that point in the match. I remember his time outs early, but I honestly don't remember what happened. I guess that's what concentration is all about. All I can remember was trying to score."

And did he ever! In what many still



Finger moves in for a forehand during the finals. Note Finger's low, near-underhand stroke much used in the late '60's and early '70's. Today's players cock that backswing behind their ear for greater wrist snap and power.

An instant before victory, Schmidtke, in a classic pose, takes a forehand off the back wall when anybody else would have taken the shot backhand.

believe to be the most perfect five consecutive rallies, Schmidtke scored point 11 on a forehand pass cross court; a forehand back wall kill made 12; another drive serve ace to the deep left corner was 13; another pass made it 14-all; and Bill's first lead came on an absolutely flat roll out with his forehand off the back wall, 15-14.

Finger regained the serve, but again was unable to score, thanks to another back wall, forehand Schmidtke kill. *"They tell me I couldn't miss with my forehand,"* he says. *"I wish I had more days like that."*

With the serve and the lead at 15-14, Schmidtke must have known the importance of the next few rallies. Without concentration, there is the natural tendency to relax after a long comeback instead of continuing on toward your only real goal—21.

Finger knew the same, so when what was probably the match's best and certainly longest rally ended with another point for Schmidtke, Craig called time out. By now Finger was truly bewildered. He had been trying everything in his vain attempt to stop the Schmidtke steamroller, but nothing worked. He had seen his commanding 14-3 lead vanish to the point that he now was struggling to stay in the match. And this, the final game of the final match in the once a year, only chance, national championship.

So Schmidtke stepped up to serve at 16-14 and promptly hit a backhand kill, a forehand kill into the right corner, and a cross court pass left for a 19-14 advan-

tage before the string ended with one of his rare forehand skips.

When Finger didn't score, Bill added point 20, another forehand, cross court pass and after stopping Finger one last time, the game, match and national title went to Bill Schmidtke on a pass down the left wall, 21-14.

An astonished gallery has just seen a run of 18 consecutive points in the third game of the national championship match! And against the defending national champion, who most believed was immune to such an occurrence!

For Bill Schmidtke, that match back in 1971 launched his great racquetball career, despite the fact that he was 29-years-old at the time. By the time pro racquetball came along in 1974, he was truly in his twilight, yet for four years, to age 38, he was among the best on tour.

For Craig Finger, well, he never recovered from his loss and less than two years later, was out of tournament competition. The former paddleball and 1970 racquetball national champion attempted a brief comeback in 1973 but found by then the game had changed, with different balls, newer players, better players and brand new strategies.

Schmidtke was quoted after his match as saying, *"Had Finger scored one more point at 14-3, I think it would have been over, I don't think I could have come back."*

Craig Finger, we're sure, also wonders what would have happened, had he been able to score that one more point. ●



Craig Finger putting his patented lob serve into play. The first, major evolutionary change in racquetball occurred when Schmidtke effectively used the drive serve instead of the lob.



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