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National Racquetball

The official publication of the
United States Racquetball Association
is published monthly by
Publication Management, Inc.
1800 Pickwick Ave.
Glenview, Illinois 60025
(312) 724-7856
National Racquetball • (ISSN 0161-7966)

Publisher

• Hugh Morgan •

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Advertising information requests should be
addressed to Advertising Manager,
National Racquetball Magazine
1800 Pickwick Ave., Glenview, Illinois 60025,
Or call (312) 724-7856
Copy subject to approval of publisher.

All editorial communications should be
addressed to the Editor,
National Racquetball Magazine
1800 Pickwick Ave.,
Glenview, Illinois 60025.

Manuscripts must be typewritten
and double-spaced.

Color and black-and-white
photographs are welcome.

Please enclose a self-addressed envelope
for return of manuscripts and photos.

Subscriptions are \$16 for one (1) year.
Rates are for U.S., possessions and
military and Canada.

All subscriptions payable in U.S. funds.

Foreign subscriptions are
\$20 per year plus postage.

Second class postage paid at Glenview,
Illinois and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster send form 3579 to
National Racquetball

1800 Pickwick Ave., Glenview, Illinois 60025.

(Please allow 6 to 8 weeks
between the time subscription form is
mailed and receipt of first issue.)

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On the cover . . .

The nicely filled beer steins lead us to our
health feature this month. "Puff, Puff—Guzzle,
Guzzle—How Smoking and Drinking Affect
Your Game." With so many racquetball outlets
serving alcohol and providing ash trays, we
checked into the specifics of what booze and
butts do to your game (page 36).

—Photo by Balthazar Korab

Next issue . . .

Another full 16 pages of instruction highlights
the June issue along with an analysis of early
bird racquetball, how to rate your teaching
pro, a profile of Rita Hoff, and coverage of the
major tournaments as the competitive season
reaches a climax.

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These Ridiculous Rules

I guess I'm hung up on rules. Yet hardly a day passes that I don't get a call or letter involving this rule or that; this interpretation or that; or this controversy or that.

In preparing this issue, two specific, glaring problems in the rules jumped out at me. The first is detailed in "What's The Score," an analysis of the various scoring systems now in use around the country (page 12).

The real question here is, why are there different scoring systems? I know of no other sport where the four governing bodies all use different rules. But for that matter, I know of no other sport that has four governing bodies.

The second issue which grabbed hold of me came while doing a little work on "What's The Call" (page 33), the monthly column authored by Dan Bertolucci, the head referee on the Catalina Series pro tour. Dan's column addresses the rule surrounding second serves after a hinder.

As some of you may know, for over 10 years I did exactly what Bertolucci does, referee the pro tour and before pro racquetball, most major amateur tournaments, including the Nationals. And like Dan's article says, we all know that after a hinder, the rally is re-played with the server entitled to two serves, regardless if the rally in which the hinder occurred was begun on the second serve.

Even though I know the rule, for the fun of it, I looked it up. Egad! The rule book doesn't confirm the interpretation put forth by Bertolucci (and nearly universally played coast-to-coast). In fact, after re-reading and re-reading and re-reading, cross checking and then looking it up in the USRA, NRC, AARA and even local rule books, the matter still wasn't clear.

The crazy thing is that after such close scrutiny, I think the rule really states the opposite—that the hinder-ending rally should be re-played all right, but with the server entitled to however many serves he had at the beginning of that specific rally.

But that's crazy. Nobody plays it that way. Nobody calls it that way. And nobody interprets it that way.



Why are we writing rules for one game, yet playing another?

The point of all this is that racquetball, if it is ever to gain the credibility it so richly deserves, had better get its act together. And one of the first things that must be done is a comprehensive, unified (all governing bodies) re-examination of the rules.

I don't mean a bunch of us self-proclaimed experts should sit down in a dim room and decide how the game should be played. I do mean that the rule books of all organizations should be consistent with one another and accurately reflect the game that's played on the court.

If necessary, I offer my services and the services of *National Racquetball*, as an independent host-observer to the much-needed conference to deal with this problem.

It may just be that professional play and amateur play need different scoring systems. And it may just be that after a hinder, you get only one serve if you had only one coming before the rally. Frankly, I don't care how many points it takes to win a game, nor do I care if you get one, two or 10 serves.

But I do care that the racquetball world looks ridiculous in the eyes of the sports industry. And I do care that spectators can't follow the action because nobody knows how to keep score. And I do care that not even "qualified" referees know the proper rule interpretations. And I do care that the rules are not consistent with the game.

So let's do something about it. Let's all work together to solve this one problem. Perhaps then we can move forward and solve some others. ●

Chuck Line



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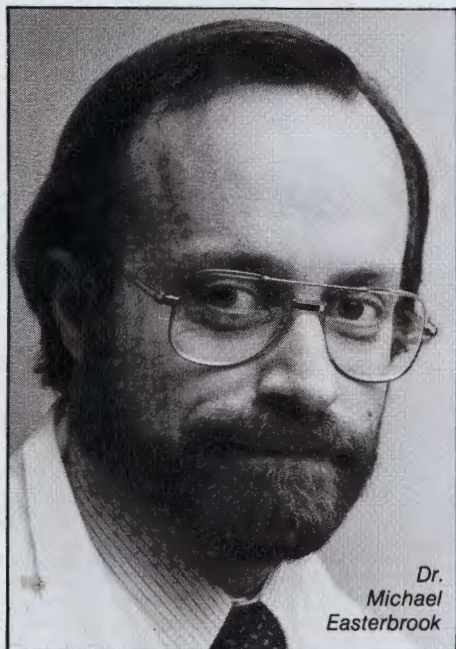
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THE TOUGHEST SHOES ON THE COURT.

Dr. Michael Easterbrook: Working To Save Your Eyes



Ever been hit in the eye by a racquetball? Ever had a close call? Ever been hit while wearing eyeguards and then, thanked the heavens that you had them on? Ever spent six days on your back in a hospital bed praying that your eyesight would not be impaired when they removed the bandages?

Yes, the incidence of eye injuries on the racquetball court is increasing each year, the rate of increase slowed only by the natural slowing of the rate of new participants in our sport. And short of mandatory eyeguard wearing at every racquetball facility known to man, the problem will continue to be with us as long as two to four people bang the ball about the court.

Yet the governing bodies in the racquetball industry have yet to mandate any comprehensive protective rulings related to eye safety, with the one exception of the AARA's junior program. Is anybody out there working toward increased eye safety on the court?

The answer is yes, and his name is Dr. Michael Easterbrook, who, along with Dr. Paul Vingar and a handful of other dedicated and concerned ophthalmologists in North America, have taken it upon themselves to do what the racquetball industry has failed to do—actively work toward a safer game.

There are two methods of attacking the eye safety problem in racquetball. The first is to promote the use of eyeguards for all players; the second to ensure that those eyeguards on the market meet basic specifications for safety purposes. Dr. Easterbrook, who would like to see more of the former, is intimately involved in the latter.

"Let me state at the onset," says Easterbrook, "that any eyeguard is better than nothing. But wearing any eye protective device does not absolutely guarantee that you cannot be injured during play.

"I don't think you can design an eyeguard to protect every player for every second of every game. However, if players wore those eyeguards that met basic specifications, then they would be afforded protection under most circumstances."

Dr. Easterbrook and countless other ophthalmologists across North America have seen scores, if not hundreds, of eye injuries as a result of racquetball, squash and tennis. It was the alarming increase of such visits by patients that led to his current work.

He is chairman of the task force of the Canadian Standards Association committee on eye protection in racquet sports and as such is responsible for testing and setting standards for eyeguards. He is also active on what is known as the F8 Committee of the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM), a group that works closely with the National Society to Prevent Blindness (which also has a committee dealing with the problem).

"I am the one responsible for seeing to it that Canadian and American standards are the same," says Easterbrook. "My personal wish and that of the manufacturers is that different standards are not set.

"Basically, we want to get the junk off the market. Setting standards will do that."

That eye injuries are a problem in racquetball shouldn't surprise most participants since racquetball is a sport that teaches players to keep their eyes on the ball. Any time you are encouraged to do anything that calls for keeping your eyes on a moving object in close proximity to your body, the possibility of injury exists.

Easterbrook's contention, and he has the proof to back it up, is that even when wearing eyeguards, players are lured into a false sense of security.

"I personally know of at least 60 players who have been injured in spite of wearing eyeguards," he says. "The most common injury is hyphema (bleeding) and that is an injury preventable with eyeguards currently on the market."

What Easterbrook is saying is that some eyeguards don't give you the protection you think you have. In particular, he cites those eyeguards with openings for your eyes.

"It has been proven that any open eyeguard on the market can be penetrated by a racquetball traveling at only 50 miles per hour," says Easterbrook. "And the average beginning player hits the ball over 70 mph."

Easterbrook has spent hundreds of hours in the laboratory using headforms, eyeguards, different makes of balls, slingshot and cannon-type ball throwing devices, and high speed film to dissect what happens when ball strikes face.

"The results were astounding, if not altogether incredible," he says. "We found we were able to measure a 35 percent distortion of the ball as it hits the headform, even at 50 mph."

This distortion of the ball compressed its size (try squeezing a racquetball with your hand), making it able to penetrate virtually any open eyeguard on the market.

With such overwhelming documentation on the dangers of the sport, why then don't more than the estimated 30 percent of all participants wear eyeguards?

"The first reason is the old standard, 'I never thought it could happen to me,'" says Easterbrook. "Many people think only inexperienced players can be hurt. We've found that experience does not protect you.

"The second reason is that players claim the eyeguards are unsightly or uncomfortable. Yet, I can't think of anything more unsightly or uncomfortable than a serious eye injury.

"The third reason comes from people who say, 'I've never worn glasses and

they obstruct my peripheral vision. Yet these same people commonly wear sunglasses while driving their automobiles, and sunglasses obstruct peripheral vision far more than racquetball eyeguards."

Easterbrook is no crazed professor relishing the minute details of research. He does not enjoy the testing process, but he enjoys less the eye damage that comes through his doors.

"I hate this testing job," he says. "It's boring and tedious. But it has to be done. I also hate all these committees, but standards must be set."

Easterbrook still spends most of his court time playing squash, which he's been doing for over 10 years, about twice as long as he's been a racquetballer. And he has definite opinions on what types of eyeguards players should wear.

"Polycarbonates are by far the best impact resistant material we have for eye protection," he says. "They're even better than industrial safety thickness plastic (known as CR-39). Both are good and neither will break up to 100 mph. Street wear plastic, as in normal glasses, does break."

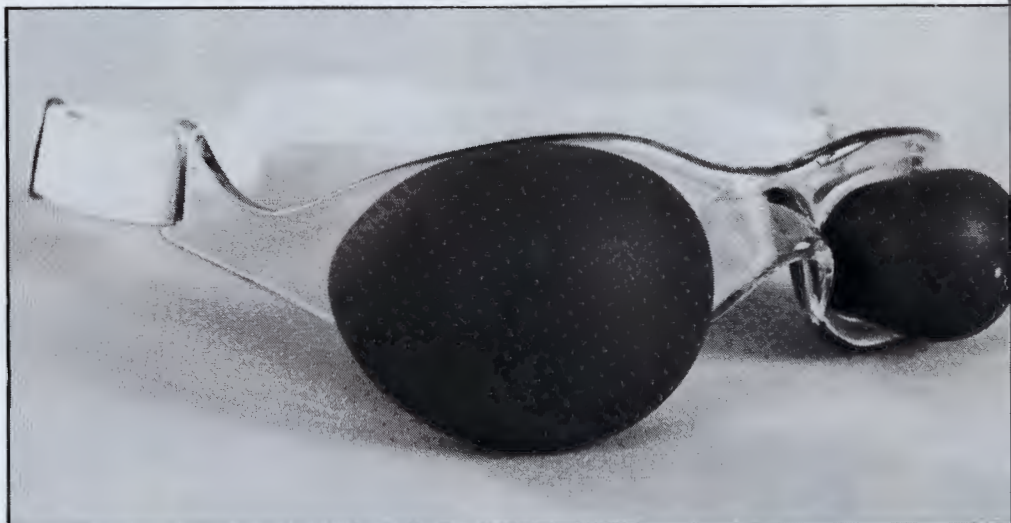
Easterbrook has a ready answer when questioned about all the time and money being spent on research and testing as opposed to promotion of the use of any eyeguards. And it should be stressed that he is an ophthalmologist, not a p.r. man.

Yet the question often asked is, "Why spend all these hours and dollars (the ASTM is trying to raise \$30,000 for additional research—and not having much luck) to test eyeguards, when the same expenditures could have more immediate results in getting more people to wear protective devices?"

"I think the public is limited because there are no standards," he says. "The consumer has no idea what is a good eyeguard and what isn't. Not even the pro players know. So how can you buy the proper protective device, when you don't know how good any of them are?"

Easterbrook does have definite ideas on promoting eyeguard use.

Both a racquetball ball and squash ball can penetrate the openings in some eyeguards.



"I believe that eyeguards should be mandatory for all juniors," he says. "Adults should have freedom of choice."

Mandatory usage, of course, leads one to the inevitable discussion of product liability, an open sore with manufacturers and club owners. Some former eyeguard

manufacturers have literally gone out of the business due to the astonishingly high insurance costs of product liability. And legal opinions obtained by various racquetball associations have stated that if you legislate mandatory usage and an injury occurs, then you are liable for damages.

Sedwick Racquetball Courts Make Eyeguards Mandatory

At Sedwick Racquetball Courts, in Orange, VA, they've gone all the way. Eyeguards are mandatory equipment on the court for all players. No ifs ands or buts.

"Sure we had some problems," said Rod Sedwick, owner of the club. "One fellow was adamant about not using eyeguards and he voiced his opinion in very definite terms. I voiced mine right back. I've been reading the magazines, I've been around people who got hit — just the other day I got hit myself in the eyeguard. I explained the facts to him. End of problem. Now he plays about four times a week—with eyeguards."

"This guy really wallops a serve. People like that aren't hard to convince. For the three to five percent advantage you gain by not wearing eyeguards, it doesn't make sense to risk losing an eye."

"With some of the ladies, and the recreational players in general, it's not so easy. We've been open since January 1

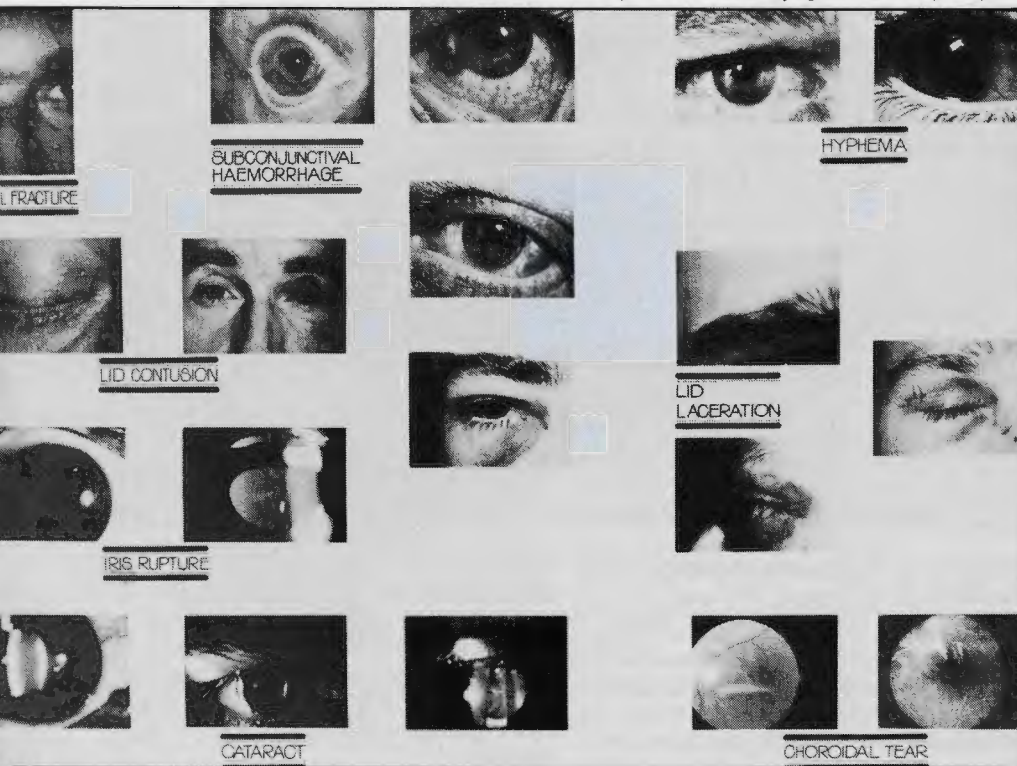
—running full-time since February 1—and the first few weeks I did see a lot of people playing without them, but gradually people got adjusted. Two of our three courts have glass walls, so I'd just knock on the glass and put my hands over my eyes."

Sedwick's expertise as the best player in the club, and the one who has taught most of the members to play, gives his position authority.

"The point I got across is that everybody wears them. The members see me play the second best player in the club, and I spot him 13 in a 15 point game. That impresses other players."

"We've had no problem at all getting the kids to use eyeguards. They want to wear them. But with the older players, well, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. I expected some objections and I got them. People like to make their own decisions, but I made this one for them."

If you don't wear eyeguards, take your pick.



"We've addressed that issue in squash," says Easterbrook. "The squash people have had legal opinions indicating that if they **don't** do something to promote eyeguards, then they could be open to legal liability. On the other hand, if they promote the use of specific eyeguards and an injury occurs, then they could be liable in another way."

From time to time Easterbrook is questioned by attorneys on the topic, but he doesn't do much testifying in court.

"I tell them that I'll testify," he says, "but that I'll say under oath that any eyeguard is better than none. This usually ends the conversation."

Almost every racquetball player knows of somebody who has been struck by the ball or racquet in, on, or near the eyes. And nothing could be more damaging to racquetball's growth than the public perception that the sport is too dangerous. Especially when it need not be.

Proper instruction should and does encourage eyeguard wear. Many top professionals (although unfortunately, not all) wear eyeguards. And there is a

Since Sedwick's club is the only athletic facility in the town of Orange, and serves a surrounding county of 15,000, he is in a particularly advantageous position to make such a decision for his players. He played football for three years at Virginia Tech, where Don Strock, now a Miami Dolphins quarterback, got him interested in racquetball. When he graduated in 1974, he missed racquetball acutely.

"There was nothing in town," he says. "Ever since high school, I wanted to have a key to some place where I could work out. It cost more than I thought, but I got it!"

Sedwick's family background in construction and building supply equipped him to do much of the design and building himself. When he was planning the club, he went to Mort Leve's seminar in Washington, DC, and visited other clubs around the country. The message he got was loud and clear: eyeguards are essential to safety in racquetball.

"The club managers I talked to, from the Courts Royal in Richmond, VA, to Devil's Creek in Gainesville, FL, all said that if

they'd had a mandatory eyeguard rule from the inception of their club, they would have saved themselves a lot of trouble.

"I figured that from the insurance standpoint, the rule would alleviate a lot of hassle. As long as we don't let someone continue playing when we're aware that they're not wearing eyeguards, we're in good shape insurance-wise. Now that we've been operating a couple of months, we never see anyone without them any more."

Recognizing that the club is important to its members, Sedwick felt able to enforce the rule about eyeguards. With three courts, a weight room, nursery, steam rooms, an aerobic dance room, and a TV lounge area, the club promises to become a central part of the life of the town.

"We have signs all over about the use of eyeguards," says Sedwick. "They don't recommend that players wear them, they **require** it." ●

Spaulding Does The Same For Juniors

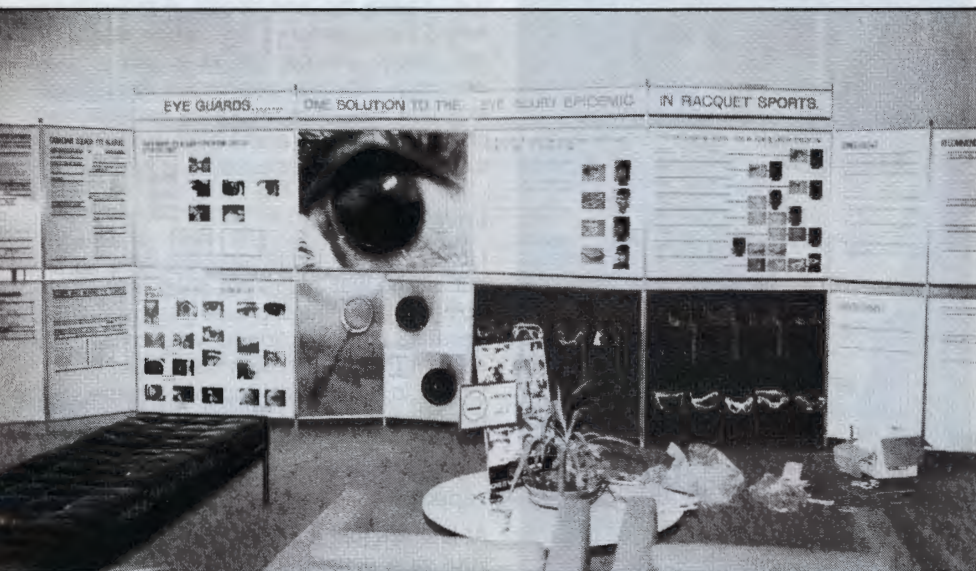
Spaulding Racquetball Clubs, the St. Louis based 30 + club chain, have taken positive steps to reduce eye injuries in their clubs. Eyeguards are mandatory for juniors, and other players are encouraged by a variety of methods to wear them.

We asked Scott Bemis, Vice-President of Spaulding, how the program was working and whether the members were responding positively.

"Over 50% of our approximately 75,000 members still do not wear eyeguards when they play," Bemis said. "We have considered making them mandatory for all players, but we're not quite at that point yet. We'd love to, but adults object to being told what to do, so we can't pressure them too hard."

"We find that people who have been playing six to 12 months have seen at least one close call—someone who was either injured or barely escaped

One of the exhibits developed by Dr. Easterbrook detailing the injuries that can occur while playing racquetball and squash, whether or not the participants are wearing eyeguards.



gradual movement toward mandatory usage on the junior level.

Yet the racquetball industry is still light-years away from solving the eye safety problem. The solution must be a concerted, industry-wide promotional effort

aimed at getting players to wear any eyeguard. Dr. Easterbrook and his colleagues will see to it that specifications and standards are implemented.

"The bottom line," says Easterbrook, "is that at the present time there is good

injury—and that helps break down their psychological resistance to wearing eye protection. I've had a close call myself when I got hit by a fast ball in the ear and had ringing in that ear for nine months afterwards. Now you better believe I wear eyeguards. Another couple of inches and I could have lost an eye.

"Most people know they should wear them, but they have all kinds of excuses. They really just don't want to get used to them, and let's face it, you do have to adjust. But the arguments that they're ugly or uncomfortable won't wash anymore.

"We're still seeing too many eye injuries on the courts, but these days they're almost exclusively among the adults," said Bemis. "The mandatory eyeguard rule for juniors has existed for two years or so, and in that time we just haven't been getting reports of eye injuries among those players."

At first, Bemis had to be flexible with the kids, because they couldn't always be fitted with junior size eyeguards. After that, getting them to comply wasn't much of a problem.

We just told them if they wanted to be in a league, they'd have to wear eyeguards," said Bemis. "They accept that."

Bemis hasn't given up on the adult players. Use of eyeguards is mandatory for all Spaulding staff members.

"I'll pull staffers off the court for not wearing them, and they know it, he says. "But mostly they're smart enough to wear them without being told. We don't want people on the front desk with a bashed-in eye."

With his staff setting the example for members, Bemis also tries to reach adult members in other ways. Signs posted in all Spaulding clubs remind them of the importance of eyeguards. The mandatory rule for kids indirectly reminds parents of eye safety. But what makes people wake up more than anything is to see *why* they need eyeguards.

"One woman will be injured in league play," says Bemis, "and we'll sell three dozen pairs of eyeguards the same day." ●

protection on the market that is comfortable and can be worn by anyone who can wear sunglasses. In my opinion, anybody who plays racquetball without eyeguards is nuts.

"To put it another way, there is more energy in a racquetball traveling at high speed than there is in a bullet."

If that doesn't convince you, well, give us a call from your nearest emergency room. ●

If credentials are what you're looking for, here's the rundown (briefly) on Dr. Michael Easterbrook:

- Assistant professor, University of Toronto
- Staff ophthalmologist, Toronto General Hospital
- Staff ophthalmologist, Wellesley Hospital
- Consultant ophthalmologist, Princess Margaret Hospital
- Member, Sports Medicine Committee, Canadian Ophthalmologist Society
- Consultant, National Society to Prevent Blindness
- Consultant, U.S. Squash Racquets Association
- Consultant, Canadian Racquetball Association
- Chairman, Task Force, Canadian Standards Association on Eye Protection in Racquet Sports
- Member, Eye Protection in Racquet Sports Committee, National Society to Prevent Blindness
- Author of over 100 articles, papers, speeches and exhibits related to eye safety in sports
- Eye Surgeon, Toronto Maple Leafs Professional Hockey Club

If you wish to contact Dr. Easterbrook, address all correspondence to him at Suite 303, 1849 Yonge St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4S 1Y2. ●

The Crazy Racquetball World

by Steve Keeley

Over the years I've had the good fortune of witnessing enough unusual occurrences in the racquetball world to log a diary of such events. It seems that the more I see, the loonier our world becomes. Three of my favorite tales follow.

The Hogan Warm-Up

I thought you might like to know that superstar Marty Hogan doesn't act weird on the court just because that's what is expected of a champion these days. Marty was that way even before he became a champ.

Hogan's first trip to any quarter-final round of any pro tournament was in 1975 in Burlington, VT. Big-mouthed and overbearing at the time, he nonetheless had a knack for getting people to like him. Indeed, the Burlington gallery adored this unknown, sawed-off shooter from St. Louis.

Who could resist the energetic munchkin as he bounded on to the court for his quarter-final warm-up? Hogy did a dozen quick jumping jacks while making faces into the back wall glass, then he popped off a dozen push-ups in the service box.

After that, Marty began his inimitable tour of the court perimeter. He started in the right rear corner and sprinted full blast to the right front corner, stopping just short of smashing his nose against the front wall. There he sprang high into the air and yelled, "Yah!"

Then it was a slow jog to the left front corner, followed by another dash to the back wall. Again, he stopped just short of smashing his face into the wall, and leaped into the air with another "Yah!"

He jogged to the next corner, jumped and yelled, and so on until he had circled the court three times. Marty reminded me of an excited puppy exploring a new yard, running around and around but pausing in each corner to do his thing.

The gallery may have loved it, but Hogan's quarter-final opponent slouched outside the court staring balefully through the glass back wall. That opponent was current (at that time) national champ Charlie Brumfield, who couldn't believe that a no-time national nothing could be so cocky. But Hogan was that cocksure for sure—before that match, and especially after he beat Brumfield, then Steve Serot, then yours truly to win his first pro tournament.



Hogy would warm-up before matches from now on in a similar manner, like a toad having fits, and people in the gallery would make remarks like *"when you're the champ, you can get away with anything."* But you and I know that Marty was that way even before he became a champ. His antics aren't because he's the top pup, but because he is himself.

Love at First Hit

Do you see all those racquets hanging out on the wall of the pro shop? It's going to be a tough choice. Be careful because that selection may become anything from a fiendish instrument of torture to an ethereal tool of pleasure. Keep looking. Does *one* particular model sort of jump off the wall at you—love at first sight? Here's how it usually happens.

At first, it's just a passing glance. Then your eyes come back for more. Nice shape, good lines and very pretty string. You grab it, lovingly feel its handle and gingerly pluck its string. You'd swear at this tender moment when your grip first embraces its grip that this racquet was custom made for you by the Divine Forger in the sky.

So, you take it for a trial fling on the court. Your first few swings are awkward and tentative, but soon your shots zip off the strings effortlessly. You feel the



power, seemingly with little backswing or follow through. No games are necessary.

I write this with only part of my tongue in cheek. Most players are too hasty when selecting a racquet. If this is one of your first flings, please take heed: try it before you buy it. Take it out to the court for a few shots. If the pro shop doesn't allow this, borrow someone else's that is the same model, and take her for a spin on the court. Make your passes, go for the kill.

Once you sign the check, the two of you are likely to spend the rest of your natural lives together. Big handles, a shapely head, nice strings, a sworn warranty and a cheap price are all secondary considerations.

Try out your racquet before you marry it.

Bleach Bottle Miracle?

Court news spread quickly in the late 1960's in San Diego, the mecca of racquetball and Charlie Brumfield's home town. Of course, that news was often exaggerated as it passed from one tongue to another in locker rooms and jacuzzis. So, when the word circulated that "Brumfield beat D.C. with a bleach

bottle!" many folks were understandably skeptical. Was it true, or not?

The full report was that The Brum, then champion of everything, had again performed a miracle on the court. He had beaten highly-ranked A player Dave (D.C.) Charleson in a paddleball match where Chas used a plastic bleach bottle for a paddle. Hordes of hardwood fanatics flocked to the allegedly chagrined D.C. for verification.

"Before the match started," said D.C., "Charlie and I both realized that he had to be handicapped to make it fair. We decided he should use something in lieu of the regular paddle.

"Initially, Brum tried using a whisk broom, but that didn't work because he couldn't serve the ball past the short line without a dead-center hit. Then he tried a dustpan, but that wasn't much better. Besides, it made too much noise. Then, he walked into the court with a plastic bleach bottle.

"Our first game was tight. At about 8-8, Charlie rolled six shots in a row off the front wall with that damn plastic bottle! I'm not kidding—he could actually control the ball."

Here D.C. paused in his story and shook his head as if it was still hard to believe. He took a long, deep breath before continuing, which allowed the seed of possibility—that indeed a miracle had occurred and Brumfield had won—to germinate in the minds of his listeners. Some of those listeners assumed this hiatus signaled the end of the story. Without waiting to hear the rest, they scrambled out of the jacuzzis and locker rooms to be the first to break the news to the rest of the racquetball world that "Brumfield beat D.C. with a bleach bottle!" Had they jumped the gun?

Yep, they had. Those rumor-mongers should have stayed around for the completion of D.C.'s account.

"When he killed those six straight shots to take a 14-8 lead, I thought I was in the tank," said D.C. "But somehow I pulled that first game out 21-17. The second game I settled down and it was a piece of cake, 21-10."

Thus, though many diehard Brumfield fans to this very day will refute it, D.C. was the winner in that paddle vs. bleach bottle contest. The Brum, for once, had lost. ●

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What's The Score?

—An Analysis Of What It Takes To Win—Sometimes

This is a true story. The guy in the next office is an avid racquetballer and when I moved in here, the natural challenge was made. Could I unseat the perennial office champ? We made our date and strolled down to the locker room, changed, and wandered out to court 6.

My sweaty palms were doing their thing, my tight muscles began to loosen and the blood flowed warmly as I broke my pre-game jitters with perspiration. With the match about to begin, my strategy was based on what I knew of my opponent and what I saw in his warm-up—I didn't think he could go the distance.

I'd keep the ball in play, risk dropping a bit behind early, then reach back for stamina, my natural ally, overtake him and probably win going away 21-15 or so. Game two would be easier, probably a 21-10 victory with his fatigue coming earlier than in game one. Game three would be a moot point, with me working on my Z serves, just for the sake of practice.

My opponent then hit the first winner of the match, without touching the ball.

"What'll it be?" he asked and stated at the same time. "Three out of five to 11, right?"

Three out of five to 11 sounded terrible, actually, but who was I, the newcomer on the block, to argue? I gave it a feeble attempt.

"Ahem. Where I come from we play two out of three to 21, with an 11 point tie-breaker," I offered.

"Oh no, they haven't played that way in years," he responded with an air of finality. "The pros play three out of five to 11. If it's good enough for the pros, it should be good enough for us."

I was had.

* * *

This is another true story. My accountant is a neophyte racquetball player, having taken up the game a few weeks before this happening in an effort to shed as many pounds as possible off his body, not unlike his efforts to shed dollars off my tax return. In partial payment of his normally outrageous fees, I offered to treat him to an evening at our local club, which was hosting a women's pro tour stop.

My connections got us first rate seats and we settled down to enjoy the best there is in women's professional racquetball. As I waited in line to gather two beers, the match began. By the time I returned to my seat, game one was nearly "over," and my friend had a most quizzical look on his face.

"You look confused," I said. "Any problem following the action?" "Well, to be honest, yes," he said. "I knew they were playing to 11, but for the life of me, I can't tell who's winning or who's scoring when. There doesn't seem to be any normalcy to the scoring method."

"Nah, can't be," I said. "I've been around a long time and there can't be anything radical going on. You just have to get used to the different style the women play."

So we sat down to watch some of the next game while I secretly figured that I'd better seek out a new accountant, because this guy can't even count to 11.

The server stepped up and blasted a drive to the receiver's backhand. But the receiver was ready and buried a kill into the front left corner, a beautiful, this-is-how-you-do-it shot.

"Side out," I purposely stated in my mind.

"Point," said the referee. "One serving zero."

I stopped thinking about a new accountant and started trying to figure out what was going on. My friend turned his quizzical look directly at me, the expert, and said, "What was that score?"

Fortunately (and to my everlasting embarrassment) the young lady sitting behind us, obviously enjoying our confusion, intervened to give us the low down.

"The WPRA plays scoring on every rally," she said. "It's explained right here in the tournament program."

"Oh . . . thanks," was the best I could retort.

* * *

The questions of who scores when and what number is victory are at present confounding the racquetball world. What part of the country, or for that matter, what club in a city you're playing at, will dictate the method of scoring. In fact, it's not unusual for different methods to be used within the same tournament.

So, who scores when and to what?

Racquetball's scoring roots come from handball, dating back to 1968 when the U.S. Handball Association assumed the responsibility for promoting racquetball. The handball system was easy enough—only the server could score points and a match was two games out of three to 21. No need to win by two, with 21-20 games not unusual, and plenty exciting.

The governing body in those days was the old International Racquetball Association (IRA) and nothing much changed for about five years, until the rival U.S. Racquetball Association was formed, along with its professional counterpart the National Racquetball Club (NRC).

In an effort to put some spice into the pro game (and at the same time shorten the notoriously long matches), the USRA/NRC initiated the 11 point "tie-breaker," which was really just a shortened game. All other rules remained the same.



And although the USRA/NRC have not sponsored or sanctioned many events in recent months, many of its affiliates and former affiliates still use the 21-21-11 scoring system as their standard.

The IRA, which later became the American Amateur Racquetball Association (AARA), never adopted the 11-point tie-breaker. Instead they embraced a 15 point tie-breaker, making life slightly difficult for players who liked to play events sanctioned by either group. And perhaps if this was where the differences ended, we could all live with such a small inconsistency.

But then, the AARA decided that 21 might not be the best, so they began tinkering with 15 point games and have now made 15 pointers the rule for all junior play. That not being bad enough, it's not a straight 15-15-15. Rather, it's two games to 15, and if a third game is needed, it's played to 15 (where you have to win by two) or to 21 (where you can win by one).



In AARA "national" events (Nationals, Regionals, Intercollegiates, etc.) the matches are 21-21-15, win by one. Everybody else has their choice.

"We're doing some experimenting," admitted Luke St. Onge, AARA executive director. "We allow any sanctioned tournament other than national events to score however they like and report back to us. We're still studying each system."

That's just great.

"We've got a proposed rule change on our agenda for the next board meeting," St. Onge continued. "I think we'll go to 15-15-11, except juniors."

Wonderful.

If any aspiring amateurs want to make it eventually in the professional ranks, then they'd better forget all they've learned strategically about 21 or 15 point games. The pros, as my office opponent stated so well, play three out of five to 11.

Somebody convinced the powers that be in pro racquetball that 21 point games were either a) too long, or b) too boring, or c) not well fitted for television. Thus, this season, we find the men's professional tournaments (particularly the Catalina Series) playing exactly that way.

Each game is to 11 points, with only the server scoring. Games may be won 11-10, and there is a one minute time out between games. The first player to win three games wins the match. The idea is to have each point seem more important to the viewer and offer a "natural" break between games for commercials, sandwich making, or body functioning.

The changes have forced many pros to re-evaluate their games, knowing that fatigue will never lose a match, nor will superior conditioning ever win one. At the same time, Hogan's first round win will be 11-1, 11-2, 11-0 rather than 21-6, 21-4. Although that's not much to choose from, the principle seems to be sound.

Not to be outdone, the WPRA took the most radical step of all the governing bodies, electing to install the scoring on every rally system. But just in case they didn't confuse you with that, the WPRA decided to take a page out of tennis' book. So now if you find yourself watching a WPRA match, you'll find them playing three out of five to 11, scoring on every rally, in order to win a set. Two sets wins a match.

What happens if the players each win one set? Don't ask.

Okay, I'll only say it once, so get it straight. If the players each win one set, the WPRA plays a 15 point tie-breaker, win by one. I stress win by one, because in the "normal" three out of five to 11, they play win by two.

Now, before you memorize this one (at least a full season's job), you should know that the WPRA is reconsidering their position.

"It was initiated as an experimental scoring system," said Buffy Gordon, administrator of the WPRA. "The WPRA is re-evaluating the entire thing."

This should come as a relief to Gordon, who must explain the system to the spectators before each WPRA match (I suggested she make a tape recording, then she can change it as many times as she wants, just like a radio commercial).

These are the scoring systems currently in use in most (some?) major events in the racquetball world. Add to that the various balls in play, the unusual hybrids or combination systems, and you have, well, I'm not sure what you have.

Will insanity do? ●



ANALYSIS OF CURRENT SCORING SYSTEMS

Governing Body	Points For Game	Points For Tie-Breaker	To Win Match	Scoring
USRA/NRC	21; win by 1	11; win by 1	2-21's or 1-21 & 1-11	Server only
CATALINA TOUR	11; win by 1	No tie-breaker	3 games	Server only
AARA NATIONAL EVENTS	21; win by 1	15; win by 1	2-21's or 1-21 & 1-15	Server only
AARA JUNIORS	15; win by 1	15; win by 2 or 21; win by 1	2-15's or 1-15 & 1-21	Server only
WPRA	11; win by 2 3 games out of 5 wins set	15; win by 1 Use only if split sets	2 sets or 1 set & tie-breaker	Every rally

Georgia's Next National Champ?

by Kevin Wall

At noon Stegeman gym on the University of Georgia campus is quiet. It is the only hour of the day when there are no classes and the floor is not crowded with students playing basketball, badminton and racquetball. On this particular lunch hour there are only six guys in the gym, playing a game of half-court basketball. They play hard: cutting, passing, taking good shots. A bearded fellow calls out the score after every point. The three shirtless players glisten, and sweat dots the floor and the ball.

The players pause for a moment as the door at the end of the gym clangs shut and a tall, lanky fellow walks toward them. He looks as if he might want to get in on the game, but he is carrying a racquet and he passes on by towards the racquetball courts. The game continues.

Two more baskets are scored, and before the action can begin again one player asks, "What's that noise?" The other five stand motionless and listen. It's a sudden, sharp "pop" echoing in the rafters of the gymnasium. It pops again, slightly louder, and still the players listen. It pops again and again, quickening in pace until it becomes like a pulse beating every four seconds.

"It must be that fellow with the racquet," the bearded player says. "Let's play, it's 12-11." The game continues.

* * *

Mike Ray has been playing racquetball for five years. He began when he was 14, when Courtsouth Racquetball Club opened in Marietta GA. He got a job washing towels in exchange for free court time. When the club was not busy he would play for hours at a time.

After a couple of months he played in his first tournament, winning the junior division easily. He moved up to the C division, but struggled for a year and a half before winning. Although he never took a lesson, working at the club was like a constant lesson. He spent a lot of time watching Atlanta's finest racquetball players, then he would enter a court alone and try to duplicate what he had seen.

Mike Ray, hitting the books in his dormitory room. Although the state champ, he's no BMOC, just another student.



He entered the B division but remained only two weeks, winning two consecutive tournaments. After two years he had reached the rank of Open competition, but it took another year of solid practice and competition before he proved himself. He did that with exceptional facility, however, winning the 1980 Georgia State Racquetball Championship at the age of 17.

In 1981 Mike won 11 of 25 tournaments, finishing second five times, and taking his second state title. With a partner he also won the state doubles title. He has traveled as far as California and New York to compete, and he has played against some of the pros. He is one of the two best racquetball players in the Southeast, losing only to Florida teenager Sergio Gonzales.

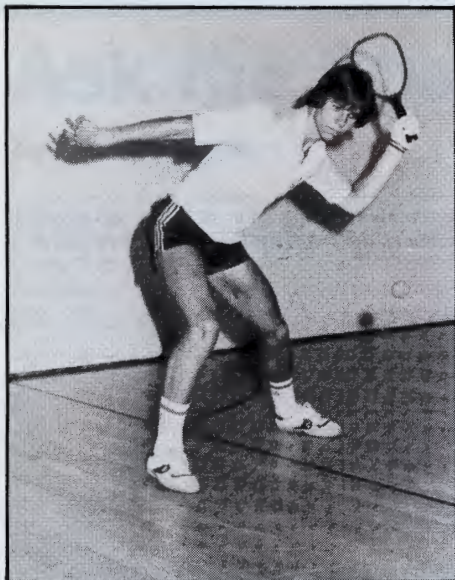
Ray could be pursuing the professional racquetball tour. Or he could be living in a hot racquetball town like San Diego or Chicago. He could even be a member of one of the few formally organized intercollegiate racquetball teams like Memphis State or Illinois. But he's not. Mike Ray is a freshman at the University of Georgia.

"There are several reasons for my going to school here," Ray explains. "First of all, the Catalina tour has been limited to only 12 players, so only the top guys with the biggest sponsors get selected. I think it's all political, and in my opinion it's not best for the game."

"Also, I wanted to go to college. Since I can't play on the Catalina tour right now, I may as well be in school. A lot of my friends are here, and I figure I can play racquetball anywhere there's a court. My parents just moved to Chicago, but all the good Chicago players go to school. So why go up there? I can play them when I visit. There's really no place I'd rather be."

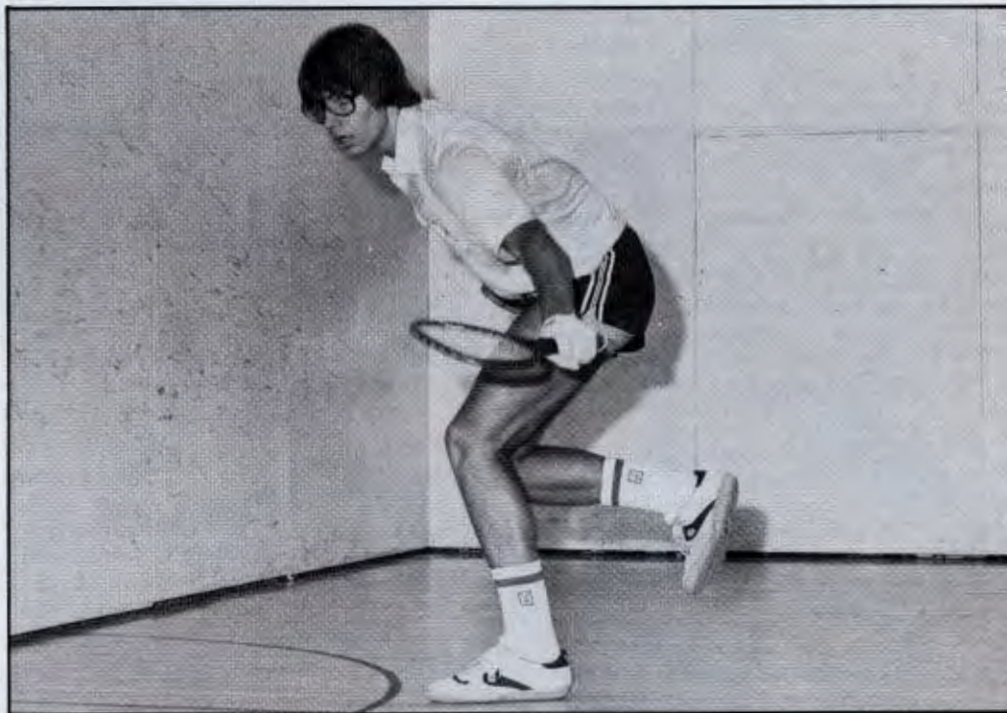
Ray is one of the new breed of racquetball players. He is quick, smart and capable of hitting a "winner" at any time. But most important, he is young. The best player on the pro tour, Marty Hogan, is 24, and has been leading the pack for five years since overtaking Charlie Brumfield.

But now the competition is closer. Hogan no longer wins them all. And there are many youngsters such as Ray nipping at the heels of Hogan and his colleagues,



Ray's forehand style is textbook perfect, yet he's had no formal instruction. Watch and imitate, along with an abundance of practice, has been his schooling.

Ray follows through on his backhand down-the-line. From gawky-looking student to champion racquetballer, all with just a change of scenery.



Dave Peck, Mike Yellen and Jerry Hilecher. In fact, Hogan was beaten once last year by 16-year-old Gregg Peck, younger brother of Dave.

But for now the youngsters are biding their time, watching from the outside. The pro tour, still in its first decade of formal existence, is still evolving.

There is not much doubt that with a little more experience in the pro ranks Ray could be competitive. He played two of the top 12 last year, losing to Rich Wagner 21-8, 21-8, but beating current tour hotshot Brett Harnett 15-21, 21-15, 11-3.

"It's consoling to know that at least the pros know I'm out here," Ray says. "My mom was sitting in front of Mike Yellen when I was in the finals of a tournament in Jacksonville. I had lost the first game 21-7, and was down 20-15 in the second. The guy who was sitting with Yellen said it looked like it was over for me. But Yellen said, 'I'll bet you Ray comes back and wins.' And I did."

In his half-year at Georgia, Ray's racquetball reputation has remained a secret. On the court his ability is obvious, but on campus he's a nobody. In street clothes he appears gawky, almost skinny—hardly athletic. But on the court his 6'2, 180-pound frame is transformed. He is long and lean with muscles defined. And he moves with a quick certainty that comes from hundreds of thoughtful hours on the court.

"Some of the guys on my hall know how good I am because they see me with a racquet and word gets around," he says. "But a lot of them don't believe it anyway. They just say, 'Aw, I'll play you any day, and for money too!'"

"I've only run into three guys on campus who have recognized me from a tournament. There just aren't many serious players here. And whenever anyone sees me with a racquet and asks how well I play, I never tell them I'm the best in the state. I just say that I play all right. You know, I could probably be making some money up here.

"Right now, my interests are in classes and enjoying college. I'll try to play in some of the bigger amateur tournaments, particularly if they have prize money, but it's really hard to get motivated for a tournament if I've already beaten everyone that's entered. I finally won the Ektelon/Perrier Atlanta tournament on my fifth try.

"And I'll play in the Nationals in June. I played well in both the AARA (American Amateur Racquetball Association) and USRA (United States Racquetball Association) championships last year, but lost. I want it real bad this year. A national title will look good to the sponsors and make my chances better to play pro."

Ray's doubles partner and one of his mentors is Bobby Siegel, owner and pro of The Racquetball Centre of Atlanta.

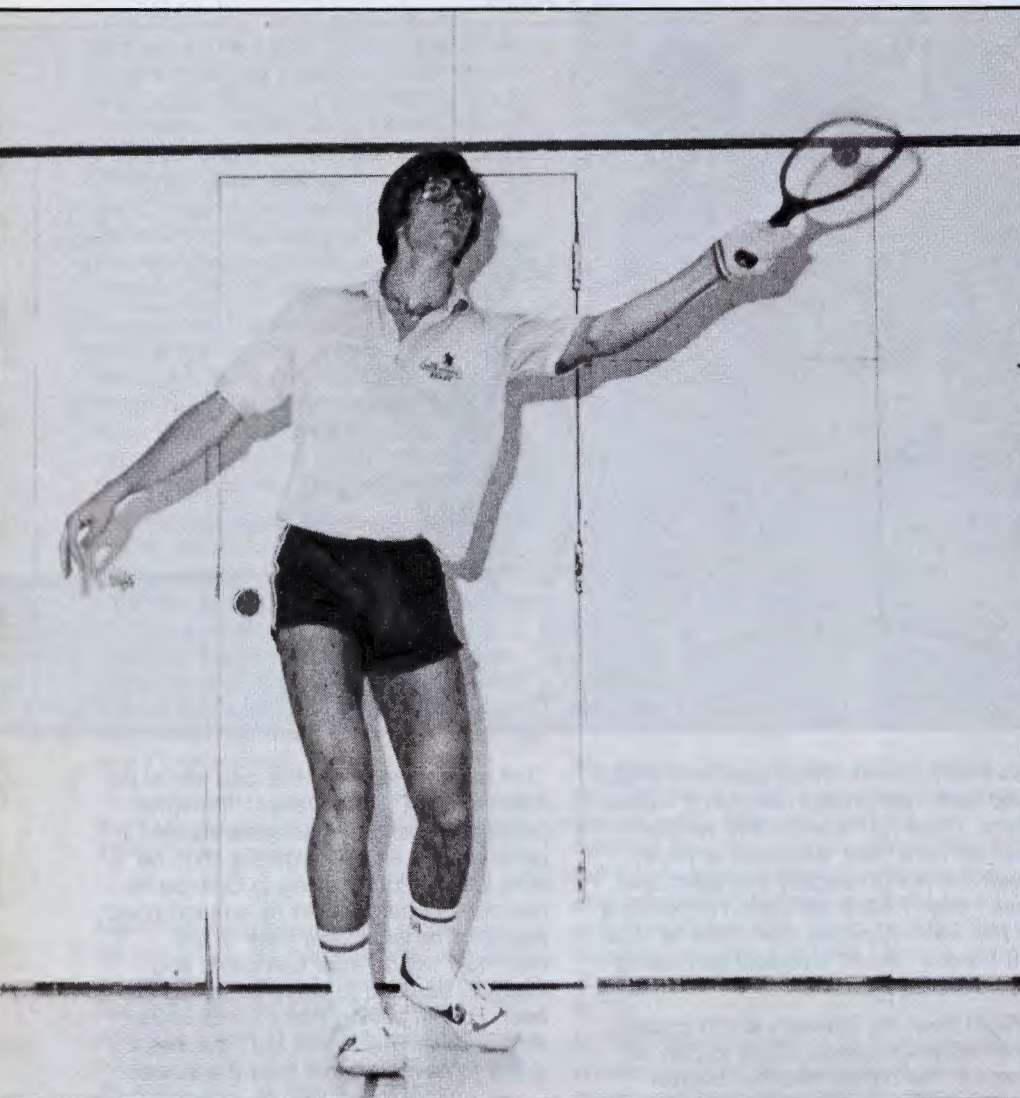
"I'm not so sure that Mike can win at the national level," Siegel says. "Sure, he has the physical talents: great range, good power, and if he gets a shot, he puts it away. But playing in Georgia he just doesn't get pushed by enough good players. The guys he'll meet at the Nationals will be from California, and they will be used to playing against the best. I'm not saying that it's impossible. But for Mike Ray to win the Nationals it's going to have to come from the inside."

Kevin Semenas, the man Ray beat in the finals of the 1981 state tournament, describes him as "almost unbeatable." "His backhand is much better than his forehand," Semenas says. "He is quick, covers the floor well, and anticipates. Plus, he's young and he can last. He's also an offensive player. Rarely can you catch him off balance and force him to play defense. Even then, he can still put the ball away. In our match he took the offensive from the start, and I just couldn't catch up."

Wayne Vincent, another top Atlanta player and a close friend of Mike's, says that what Ray has accomplished is amazing. "He's had no formal coaching," Vincent says. "He didn't grow up

Georgia's Next Racquetball Star

by Tom Ivers



The forehand ceiling shot, as in any top player's arsenal, is the basis for Ray's defensive game.

came back and won 21-12. Right before the tie-breaker, he walked over to me and snarled, 'I'm gonna beat the hell out of you.' I just smiled and said, 'Oh, OK John.' Then I got in the service box and aced him. I won 11-2. I think he was a little too psyched."

To comprehend just how good a racquetball player Mike Ray is, a person must see him play. Prior to the 1981 state tournament, it was generally agreed among Atlanta's racquetball elite that Semenias, fresh from Florida, would give "the kid" all he could handle. Appropriately, the pair met in the finals, but the outcome was a surprise—to everyone but Mike Ray. He won the match easily, 21-10, 21-17.

"When I play serious ball," Ray says, "I simply relax and think of nothing but the ball. If you worry about losing, or try to outthink your opponent, you can choke. If you've practiced enough and you're good enough, all you have to do is relax. The shots will come automatically."

Seeing him practice is a lesson in precision. His left-handed swing appears effortless; there is no wasted motion. The power comes from exact timing and a snap of the wrist. Hitting a rollout is no longer a chance occurrence—it is more like the product of a fine-tuned machine.

He chooses to practice at noon for both convenience and solitude. He will practice for one hour, hitting hundreds of shots, each as it was designed. As he works on his backhand, standing 33 feet from the front wall, the ball seems to be on a conveyor belt, traveling the same course over and over, always at the same speed and always with the same result: a resounding "pop" and a winning shot. ●

in St. Louis with a lot of pros around like Hogan did. He's just practiced and practiced all on his own. He's a smart player who can motivate himself to get what he wants. But physically he can only go so far on his own. When he reaches that peak, the only way he can improve is to play the very best."

But Ray is perhaps the least concerned about not gaining ground or getting rusty. "I'm not worried about losing my game by not playing in San Diego or Chicago or even Atlanta," he says. "The closer it gets to the Nationals, the more tournaments I'll play in. And I'll keep practicing in between. I'm confident that in one month's time I can be better than I ever was."

"When you reach this level of play, it becomes more of a head game. Almost everyone can produce the shots; that's got to be mechanical. The guy who can play his own game, force his opponent to alter his type of play, and make the fewest mistakes will win. Strategy is usually simple: recognize your opponent's weakness and attack it, while at the same time defending your own."

"It doesn't happen often, but some guys will try to psyche you out. I was in the finals of a tournament in Tennessee against a big guy, a real heavy hitter. He blew me out the first game, 21-10, I think. But he let up in the second, and I

Ask the Champ

by Marty Hogan

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

Question: I've seen you play a few times and I've noticed that many of your shots seem to spin in funny ways. How do you put spin on the ball and what effect does the spin have?

Hogan: The truth is that there is no way to control spin on any racquetball shot. The strange way my ball sometimes reacts is just the natural result of my unique stroke coupled with the "pancake" effect that the racquetball goes through when it hits the front wall.

When struck with the extreme velocity that professionals or top amateurs can hit with, a racquetball will mash nearly flat when it hits the strings of the racquet and again when it hits the front wall. Therefore, any spin that you might be able to put on the ball would be negated by the impact of the ball on the racquet or wall.

But there are times when I do purposely put spin on the ball, especially on some of my hard drive serves. When I blast a serve directly into the front wall, if I've used heavy underspin, the ball seems to pop up off the front wall. This takes a hard drive serve that probably would have been short, and causes it to barely sneak over the short line for a near perfect serve and usually an ace.

This shot is extremely difficult to master (I haven't really mastered it yet), so much so that no other player that I know of even has tried it. The margin for error is huge—if you're concentrating on spin you'll definitely lose accuracy. That's why nobody wants to learn it, it's just not worth the trouble.

Any spin you see in a racquetball match is natural spin from the ball, strings and walls. Anybody who claims to be doing it on purpose is grossly exaggerating his ability. In fact, many errors occur in racquetball when a player tries to put spin on the ball. Since such spin means that you're not contacting the ball flush with the racquet, you'll have far too many mis-hits.

Question: The club where I play has two back wall glass courts, one of which has a glass side wall as well. Whenever I have to play on one of the glass courts I really have trouble. Are there any secrets to playing on glass?

Hogan: When you learn the secret, would you please let me know? Confidentially, of course.

Actually, I've been playing on glass so long now that it's become second nature to me. In fact, I think practice is truly the only way to become comfortable on glass. In my early years, when I didn't have three wall glass down to the floor to practice on, tournament play was extremely difficult and there were definite problems to overcome.

Depth perception is probably the biggest problem on glass, especially for players who wear corrective eyeglasses. I remember Charlie Brumfield always had trouble on glass—boy he'd complain like the dickens. At one tournament he even demanded that special floor covering be used outside the court to help the situation.

Pass shots are the most difficult to pick up and return on glass. It's just real tough to judge the ball, where on a conventional court the same shot would not only be no problem to return, it could very well be a set-up. On these courts I often hold back my kill shot and attempt different angle shots into the glass.

When you get on a court with sidewall/back wall glass, the problems are even magnified. I think glass courts were one reason that drive serve became so popular. I know I love to blast the ball into that blind corner and cause real trouble for the receiver, forcing him to make an instantaneous decision.

When hitting drive serves in this situation try to shoot for the deep corner and make sure your serve hits the back wall first. The ball will shoot straight back for

the front wall and if your opponent misjudges the shot for an instant, it's all over—ace for the good guy.

I also recommend hitting your passes with a sharper angle than on a normal court, especially cross court. The best way to win on glass is to take advantage of the disadvantages before your opponent does. Hit into it and go for the problems areas.

Question: I seem to have better luck when I use my Z serve to my opponent's forehand. Yet I am reluctant to do this very often because I know I'm playing into his strength. When should I be using this serve?

Hogan: It's not unusual for a player to have a more effective Z serve to the forehand side than to the backhand. This is because the forehand stroke is more natural, coming across your body. The right-handed player, therefore, can usually hit a more effective Z serve to the forehand because of it.

If there is any advantage lefties have in racquetball, it is with the Z serve. Since their natural body motion brings their forehand Z to the righthanders backhand corner, lefties always seem to get much better results from this shot.

Many players believe that 95% of all serves should go to the backhand. These same players believe that at least 60% of those should be hard drives. The truth is that nobody in the game today has enough confidence to consistently serve to his opponent's forehand. And that's not surprising because I know of no top player who has a stronger backhand than forehand. Only Steve Serot in his hey-day could make that claim.

Yet serving to your opponent's forehand is one of the best strategies for throwing his pace off. When your opponent starts leaning toward the backhand side, inching his receiving position over that way—that's when you drive the ball to his forehand, either down-the-line or Z. This shot need not be perfect and even if you don't get an ace, your opponent won't be able to wind up and rip it.

You'll also be showing him that you have confidence in your own game and that you're not intimidated by his forehand. To my mind, it's always worth the chance. ●

Covering Your Opponent's Shots

by Steve Strandemo with Bill Brunns

After you hit the ball, you can't control what happens next, yet you can certainly improve your odds by (1) being in the best possible coverage position as your opponent goes to shoot, and (2) moving quickly and efficiently to the ball.

Your opponent may be hitting the right shot, but if you're positioned properly—by having studied his stroke, anticipating his shot selection, and knowing his capabilities—you'll make it much more difficult for him to score points. You'll also make it easier for yourself to reach more balls and to hit more shots from good positions. This in turn helps keep your opponent on the defensive and more likely to give you weaker returns—if you're executing.

Obviously, you're going to find it easier to effectively cover more of the court by having an agile body and strong legs. Yet you can certainly compensate here by using your head when you play and mastering the subtleties of court coverage.

Key Factors in Positioning

Unless you're in a ceiling-ball rally, your prime coverage position for an opponent's particular shot should fluctuate in relation to the following factors (and change subtly as the match progresses and you learn more about your opponent):

- the type of shot you've hit
- where your opponent will be hitting
- what type of shot he is likely going to attempt
- his capabilities and tendencies with that shot.

Top players know they can't afford to get locked into one prime position whenever their opponent is going low zone. So they try to cover as many shots as possible from a position that floats from about 22 feet back to nearly 30 feet, and is about midway between the side walls—but shaded slightly to their opponent's side (unless they are "cheating" by anticipating a predictable shot). When driven out of his zone by their opponent's shot, they fight to get back in after hitting. And when they hit a misdirected shot that forces them to move aside and open up hitting lanes for their opponent, they hone back in the moment the ball passes.

Adjusting to Your Opponent's Ability

As you watch your opponent move to the ball, play off his likely hitting position, but also try to sense: whether your shot will give him an offensive opportunity and, if so, what is his scoring potential from this particular spot on the court?

For example, if you've driven him deep with a passing shot and he's going to be hitting while on the move, you can usually lag back at around 28 to 30 feet and play the percentages: if he tries to go low zone, his chances of killing the ball are slim and his shot is much more likely to rebound back into your hitting zone.

However, if he's hitting from about that same area on the court, but setting up on a ball that's going to carom off the side wall—and he has a much greater chance of killing this ball—you'll want to migrate up about a stride. From this position you can cover any shot that comes within your range, but you're especially ready to thrust forward to either re-kill or dig up his potential winner. (Note the photographs which show typical coverage situations that arise in every match.)

Against a new opponent, try positioning yourself at around 25 feet when you've given him an obvious setup. *Make him prove that he can indeed kill the ball—consistently in front of you. If he can, fine.* You'll be forced to hold your position and be alert in your court coverage.

But if he's leaving all his shots up, learn to lag back a bit more and adjust your positions accordingly. Don't let a fear of your opponent's potential kill shots lure you too far forward as he goes to hit. Remember: you'll rarely reach a ball that bounces twice inside of 15 feet and you'll leave yourself vulnerable to being easily passed or jammed the closer you are to the back service line.

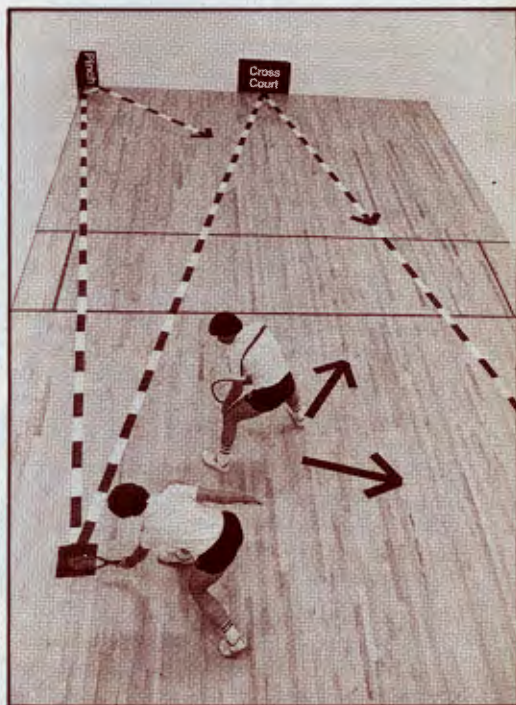
More of your opponent's kill attempts are going to be coming back deeper than you think, so stay back a bit, ready to cover those misses. When a smart opponent sees that you like to hug the short line, he can simply adjust his shot selection and continually direct the ball around you with wide-angled passing shots. You also give him the confidence that he doesn't have to hit an effective kill in the front 15 feet to win the point, thus taking the pressure off him and putting it back on yourself to cover all of his shots.

Playing Off Your Opponent's Tendencies

When playing a person for the first time, cover his shots straight up until you begin to sense his shot-making tendencies as well as his abilities. All players have preferences when hitting offensively from specific areas on the court, but many fall into a comfortable and predictable pattern of shot selection. If you're alert, this lack of diversification can allow you to overplay one side of the court, or to move up or lag back as he goes to hit.

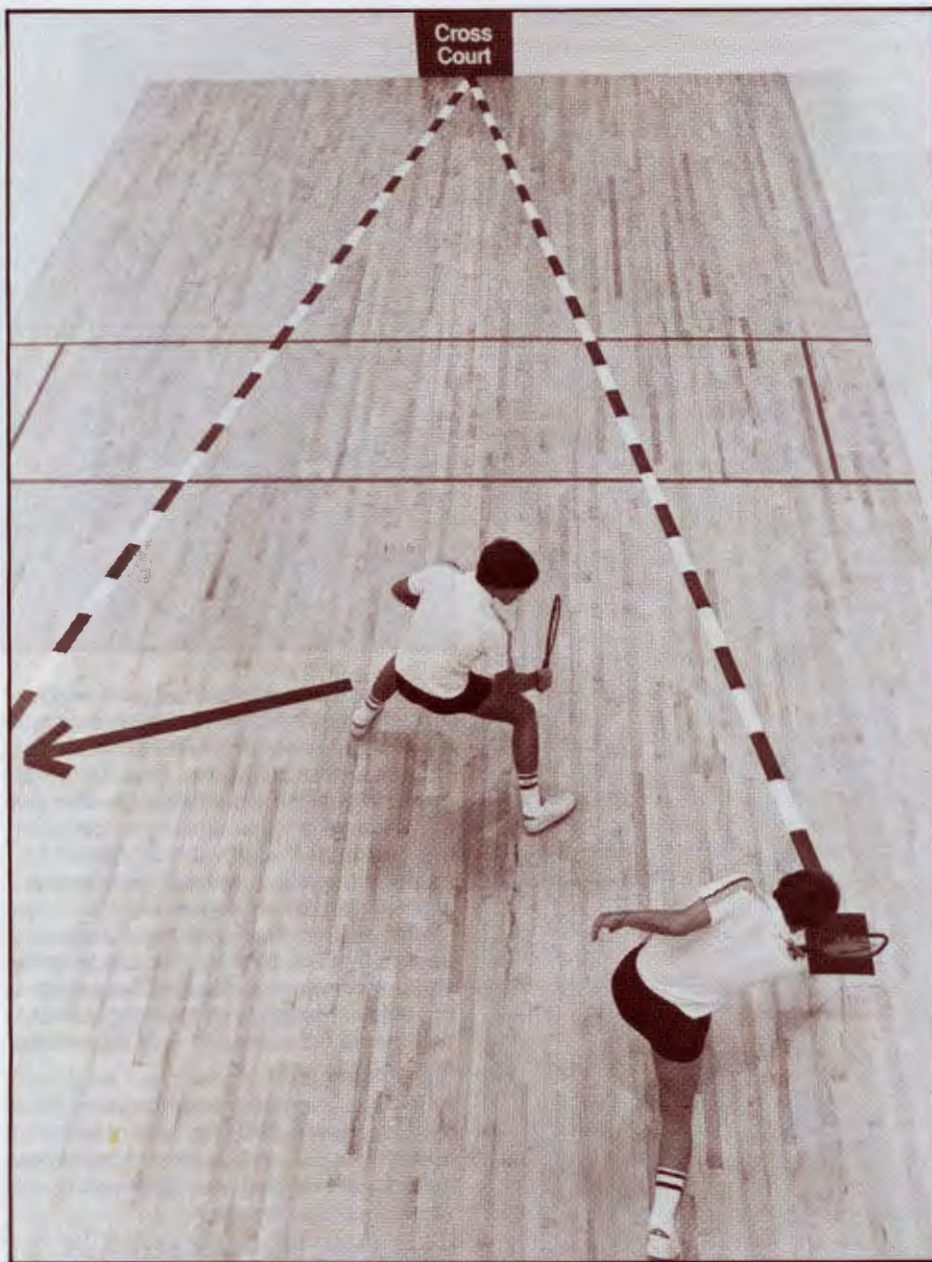
On a court where a foot or two difference in any direction has a critical influence, this extra edge in covering your opponent's offensive shots places greater pressure on him to execute. Play off these tendencies until he begins to prove you wrong—not with one great shot that catches you flat-footed or moving the wrong way, but a number of good shots.

Here are several common examples of positioning strategies:



Many hitters tend to pinch the ball off the side wall or drive it cross-court when going low zone from fairly deep along the side wall (left). Therefore, the defender here is studying his opponent's swing and is ready to cover off to his right (as the arrows indicate) to capitalize on this predictability. Anticipation like this can make it difficult for the hitter to execute successful offensive shots.

Most players, when they get into pressure situations, tend to hit the same type of shot from a particular area of the court (right). If the hitter here always tries for the same cross-court angle in key situations, the defender should "feel" that tendency and be ready to move directly to the left side of the court to minimize this shot's effectiveness.



- If your opponent sets up on the forehand side and always tries to either pinch into the right corner or go cross-court, shade to the left of center, since the ball is heading here if he leaves either shot up. Challenge him to pass you cleanly down the right side.
- If another opponent is aggressive from the forehand side with good down-the-line and cross-court kills and passes, and

also possesses a tough pinch, he forces you to play more honestly in your coverage. Here you must position yourself far enough on the right side to respect that 6- or 7-foot alley down the right wall—but be equally ready to break left for his cross-court attempt, or to go up for a pinch.

- This same opponent with a versatile forehand may tend to hit every backhand

cross-court, in which case you should edge over to the right side and lag a bit until he proves he can hurt you with passes down the left wall or pinches into the left corner.

After playing an opponent several times, you'll start to have a mental book on him when he hits from a particular location on the court. But if he still continually burns you with a certain shot, try to watch his match against another player. See if his shot selection is obvious and how this other opponent adjusts. (It's also easier to notice these patterns when you're not playing.) Meanwhile, when observing potential opponents around the club, look for tendencies in their shot selection that you might anticipate when you play them.

Studying Your Opponent's Swing

Good anticipation starts with your ability to watch the ball and then your opponent's stroke *right up until impact* (or just slightly before). This enables you to look back to the front wall already knowing that he's going to the ceiling or low zone—and you're ready to react accordingly.

Advanced players try to camouflage their low-zone intentions by hitting all their offensive shots off the same motion. Yet many of these players fail to hide these intentions as well as they think they do, and by studying how they set up on the ball and their body positioning you can begin to sense what they're going to hit.

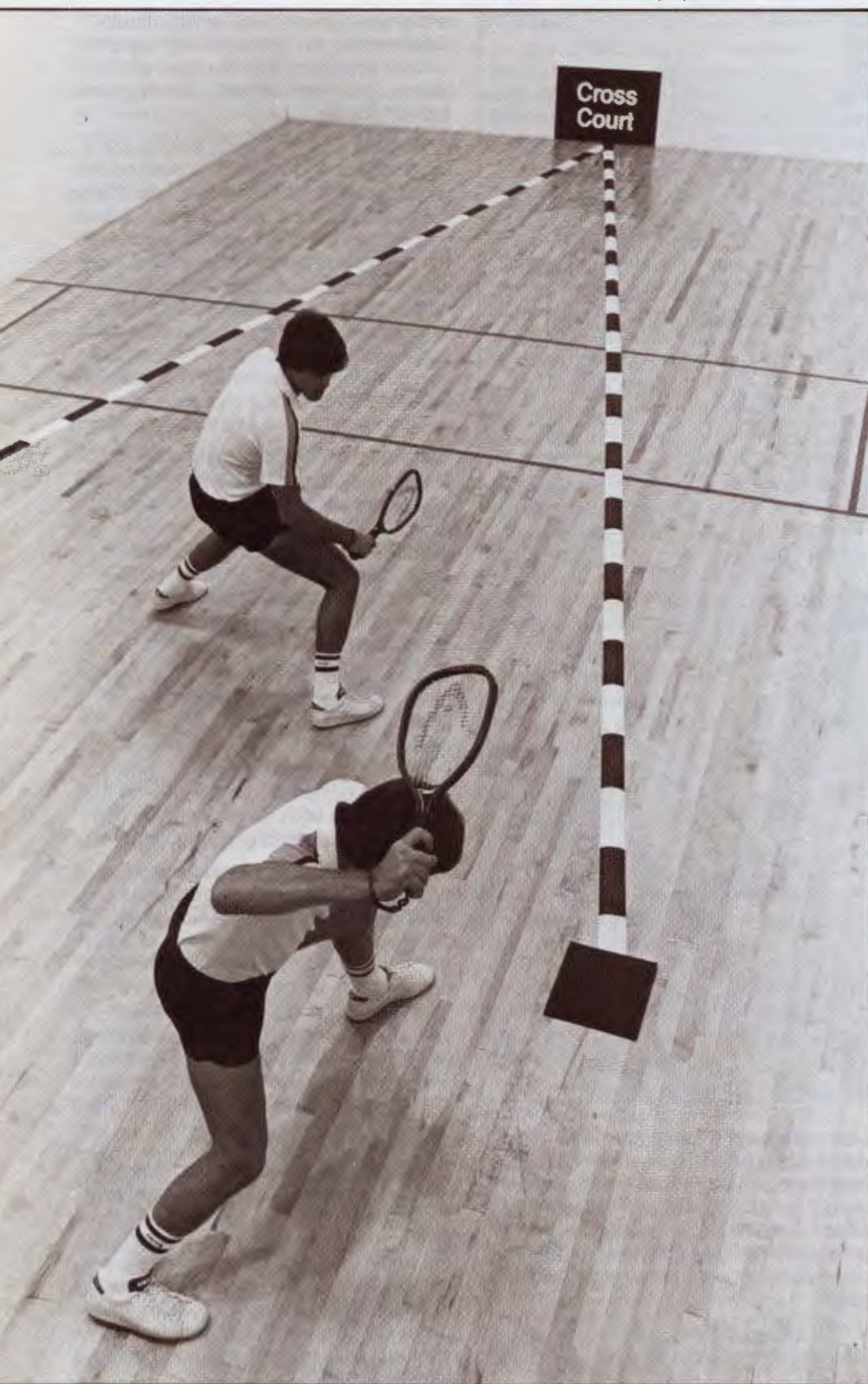
If you're hesitant about studying your opponent's swing when he's behind you, fearing you'll get hit in the face, then wear eyeguards. After a period of adjustment, you should find yourself playing better with them on, since they give you confidence to watch the ball right into your opponent's racquet, free of fears of being badly hurt (which in turn helps you play more aggressively and with greater concentration). I highly recommend them.

Moving To The Ball

Try to keep your body relaxed and fairly erect as you watch your opponent take his swing. Then, if he's going low zone, widen your base slightly as you turn to the front wall, keeping your knees comfortably bent. You want to remain flexible, in a low, stable position so you're able to move strongly and fluidly to track down a shot that isn't killed or that doesn't come directly at you.

Covering The Ball . . .

The defender is in center court, studying his opponent's stroke and trying to anticipate the shot. Note how he's ready to move quickly in any direction from a solid coverage position: a wide stance, knees bent, and body open to the front wall. . .



. . . the defender turns back to the front wall slightly before or just at impact, ready to react to the shot. . .



Experience is going to teach you which footwork methods get you to the ball quickly and in control, ready to execute your best possible stroke. From good covering position, you should be able to move seven or eight feet in any direction and reach the majority of your opponent's left-up shots with no more than a stride (or a cross-over step) and a stretch. But to reach those well-angled passes that are tight against a side wall, your serve-return technique is essential: the quick cross-over step, a long stretch, and then a full extension with your hitting arm and racquet.

When analyzing your court movement (on videotape or with the help of a friend), look for unnecessary movements that may be slowing you down and/or wasting excess energy.

For example, even some top players have a bad habit of unconsciously jumping up slightly as their opponent hits, instead of getting into a solid position and staying low when they turn to the front wall. This may sound like a trivial problem, but I've found through frame-by-frame videotape analysis that when a player hops up like this (or stands upright instead of getting into a lowered position), his opponent's low-zone shot is practically to the front wall by the time his

... he moves left with a cross-over step to cover the cross-court pass while his opponent moves into a coverage position.



feet are firmly set to move. The ball is moving so fast that these lost split seconds can make the difference between barely reaching the ball—and reaching it in time to rip away.

The Value of Retrieving Ability

You can strengthen your game in two important ways when you have a determination to fight for every point and the ability to get your racquet on one apparent winner after another, even if you can only flick the ball to the ceiling or the front wall.

First, by at least keeping the ball in play when you're stretched out to the side or thrusting forward, you force your opponent to try to kill the ball again. He should put away the setup you've given him, but if he leaves it up slightly or skips it in, you may come out smelling like the proverbial rose.

Second, when your opponent knows that you not only can chase down some of his best shots, but you're a threat to kill any setups he gives you, this puts greater pressure on him to execute. He realizes that if he's not hitting the ball perfectly, you're going to keep the rally alive and he's not going to win many easy points; in a tough rally, he may be tempted—out of frustration—to take

unreasonable risks in hopes of winning the point early. Which is exactly what you want.

As a match progresses, your retrieving ability can begin to take a psychological toll on most opponents, chipping away at their concentration if they begin to dwell on your "gets" and the times they let you off the hook with poor execution.

However, your continual saves are unlikely to have much effect if your opponent knows you're not really a threat to keep pressure on him once you've scrambled back into the rally. You can't rest content by simply being a great retriever because, eventually, advanced opponents will make enough of their setups to keep you at bay; they just have to work a little harder for the victory.

Retrieving ability starts with quick anticipation of your opponent's shot, but you can work on the required movements right at home. Clear a 10-foot area (the distance from the middle of the court to a side wall) and actually practice what it means to extend out with your racquet and swing at an imaginary passing shot that's hugging the wall. Work on that unit—the long cross-over step, a stretch, then the extended arm and a snapping of the wrist—and see how much distance you can cover today . . . and a month from now. This drill stretches your muscles nicely and gives you a feeling of the racquet control that's required. Do the same thing thrusting forward on a diagonal and back on a diagonal.

Then when you're playing, add that crucial psychological factor: a willingness to "go for it," even if you miss. Let yourself be free to just move and hit, striving for the best shot you can manage under the circumstances, whatever your technique. It's tough to be a good retriever without a little of this reckless abandon. Not that you have to leave your feet and dive for the ball, but be ready to at least stretch your body to the limits. (If you want to dive for the ball—and you know how to do it safely—you'll cover more of the court, but save the risk to your body for high competitive levels.)

Covering Specific Shots

The Straight-in Kill or Pinch Attempt

When moving into your coverage position and reading your opponent's low-zone intentions, mentally concede the put-aways inside of 15 feet—but don't let him lengthen his effective kill-shot area much further than that. The service box, in advanced play, should be a diggable, sometimes killable area once you have the ability to thrust forward and stretch out for your opponent's near kills.

If you see the ball heading into the corner as a pinch, be thinking to yourself, "If he makes it, okay; but when he misses, get to the ball." Know the path the ball is going to take if it's left up and move accordingly to kill, re-pinch, or drive it away from your opponent.

Against the power player, be ready for the unexpected when he tries a straight-



Contesting every possible shot is crucial in advanced play. Here, a passing shot is almost past the defender for a winner, but he's extending back, with his hand on the floor for support, trying to at least keep the ball in play with a flicking backhand motion.

The defender stretches forward to the short line with his racquet extended as he digs up a kill attempt and keeps the rally alive. See how far you can thrust out like this, while in control, and then work to expand this distance. Just six or nine inches will improve your retrieving ability.



Rarely will you have to fear the overhead kill, one of racquetball's most difficult shots. You may need to cover this shot from about 26 or 27 feet if your opponent happens to have unusual accuracy, but the ball will nearly always funnel back into the action zone.

The Ceiling Ball

When your opponent goes to the ceiling, stay deep enough to handle three possible options:

1. If the ball has been hit short, play it as it is coming down off its arc from the front court. You should have plenty of room to set up and go for a good offensive shot.
2. If the ball is coming long, it will rebound high off the back wall, so let it go by as you move back—then come out with the ball, set up solidly, and go low zone.

in kill (or a splat) from close along the side wall. This shot may catch the side wall but, because of its speed and the way it has been hit, will come spinning off the front wall with heavy "english" that can force you to react in various directions.

The Overhead

Given the opportunity—generally a short ceiling ball—a skilled opponent will try to force you deep with his overhead drive, while he then moves into a strong covering position. Few players can consistently apply this pressure by keeping the ball from rebounding off the back wall, but when your opponent poses this threat, be alert. Watch his stroke carefully and be ready to move immediately.

If you have the necessary skill and confidence, break sideways or on a forward diagonal to cut the ball off on the rise (after its first bounce) and then punch it into a front corner. Otherwise, move back toward the corner, ready to take the ball up to the ceiling. You're moving quickly and you'll have trouble getting set for a low-zone attempt; plus, your opponent is ready to cover any left-up shot.

Since the target areas are about 10 feet apart, your opponent's stroke and the position of his body can tell you if he's going to try an overhead drive—toward the middle of the front wall—or a kill attempt, which should be a tight pinch.



In a ceiling-ball rally, move off toward the middle of the court to give your opponent room to swing, but stay back and wait for her ceiling shot to funnel back deep, even if it's slightly mis-hit. . .

3. A good ceiling ball will hit no higher than 2 feet up on the back wall (if you were to allow it to go by), so take it about shoulder level and hit either another ceiling or an overhead drive.

Defending Against the Z Ball

You've likely learned through experience that even a well-hit Z ball is not a shot to fear as it comes out of a front corner toward the opposite side wall. Your basic task is to anticipate the ball's angle as it caroms off this side wall toward the back wall—and then to choose the best place to make contact. Ideally, you'll have room to let the ball drop low as you set up for an offensive opportunity. But if the ball strikes the side wall deep enough, you may be forced to take it to the ceiling before it becomes an irretrievable shot tight against the back wall. Other times you'll sense that you can let the ball strike the floor and kick off the back wall for a setup.

The Around-the-Wall-Ball

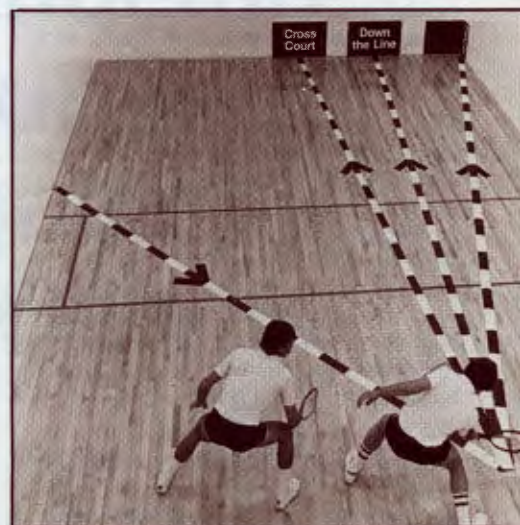
Your best strategy against the properly hit around-the-wall ball is to cut it off in the air after it caroms off the side wall

and is crossing the heart of the action zone. You've been given an offensive opportunity and you want to capitalize by moving into a position to fly-kill for a winner.

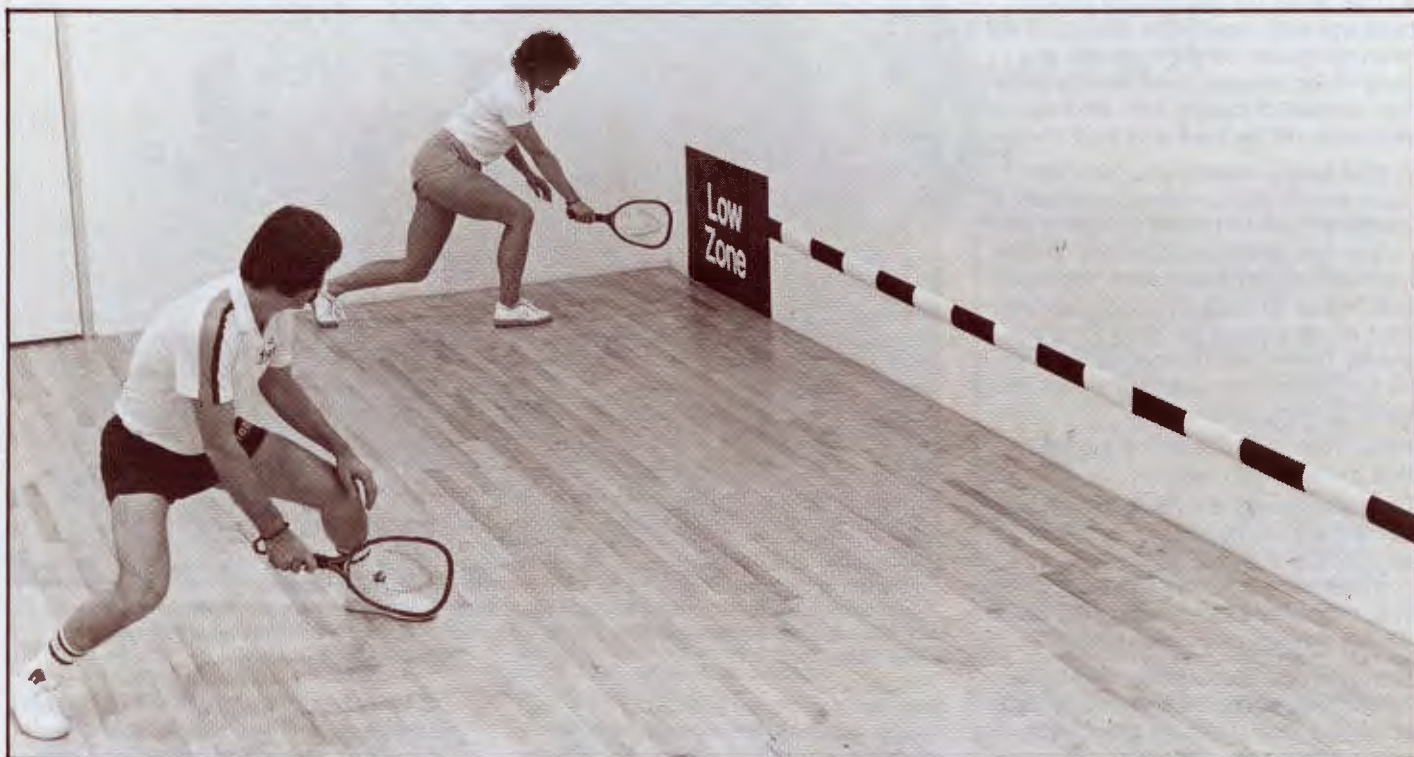
A more defensive option is to let the ball bounce and then take it up to the ceiling, just before it reaches the opposite side wall or just after. Also use good discretion if you're going to let this shot carom off the wall, for too often the ball dies quickly and is tough—if not impossible—to dig out.

However, with experience in reading this shot along its entire path, you'll know when the ball's been hit too high and you can let it go by, confident that it will carom nicely off the back wall. Similarly, when you see the ball come in too short off the side wall, just let it bounce and then set up for your kill attempt.

Even when you're alone you can practice defending against the around-the-wall ball. For example, stand at about 25 feet and hit the shot into either side wall. Study the ball's path and what it does after coming off the walls. Then start



When appropriate, the best defense against an around-the-wall ball is to cut the shot off in the air (after it comes off the left side wall), either pinching it into the corner or going for the kill or pass. When the ARWB comes in short of the hitting area shown here, let it bounce and then go for a scoring shot. If it comes in too high or hard, let it carry off the back wall for a setup.



... if you see that your own ceiling shot is going to come in short and give your opponent an offensive opportunity, move into center court and play off the shot that she leaves up.

moving into positions where you're comfortable at hitting the ball on the fly as it angles downward (a more difficult skill than it appears).

Although you may go an entire match without seeing this shot, make sure you work against it in practice so that you're ready to respond aggressively against the occasional opponent who plays a slow, methodical game and likes to hit one around-the-wall ball after another. Also, at higher playing levels, when an opponent uses it to "buy time" as he retrieves, you don't want to let him climb easily back into the rally.

The Shot into the Back Wall

When an opponent drives your shot into the back wall your coverage will depend upon how well he manages to hit the ball.

- If he drives the ball on an upward angle, it may carry to the ceiling and take a ceiling-ball pattern. You can't cut this shot off before it bounces, but it generally lacks enough force to reach the back wall, so stay deep and prepare to go low zone.

- If he drives the ball straight into the back wall with reasonable velocity, it will rebound directly off the front wall and carry in the air back to around 25 or 30 feet. Instead of cutting it off, let it bounce and come off the back wall as a plum.

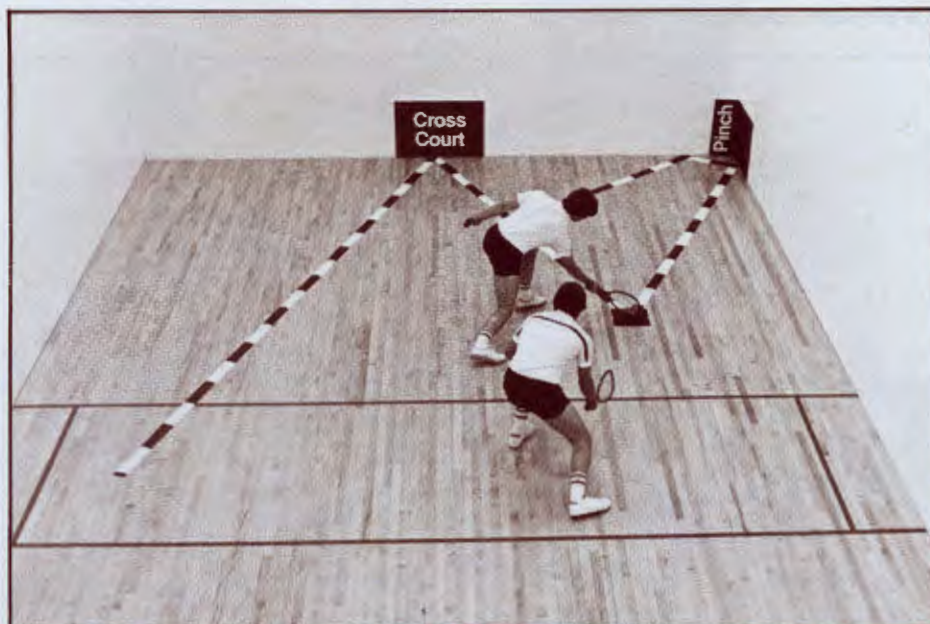
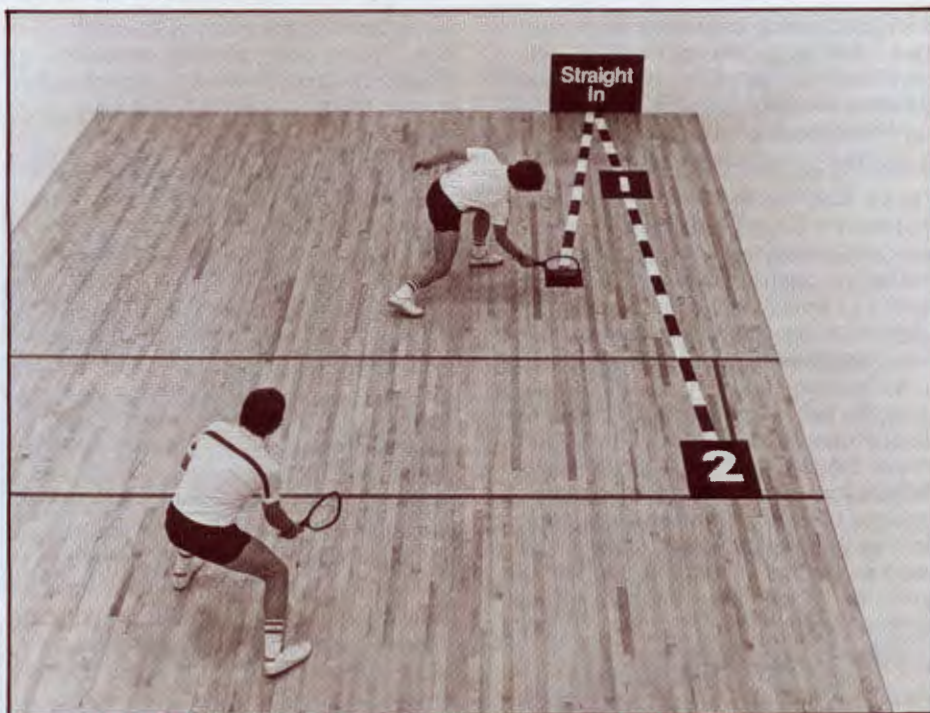
- If he barely reaches your shot and takes an off-balance swing, anticipate a weakly hit ball and move forward quickly so you can fly-kill it as it comes off the front wall, somewhere before the short line. Hustle up there, for if you hesitate, the ball will bounce and may force you to quickly retreat and hit from as deep as 35 feet while your opponent moves into a good covering position.

When Your Shot Travels off the Back Wall to the Front Court

Occasionally you are going to hit the ball so hard and so high that it travels in the air from the front wall to the back wall and then rebounds way forward, offering your opponent a plum in the front court. Where should you position yourself?

Some players like to move right up behind their opponent, trying to distract him into a skip or hoping to somehow dig up his kill attempt. This might work the first time against some opponents, but a smart player knows that his opponent

If your offensive shot travels well off the back wall and into the front court (left), take a basic position in center court and at least force your opponent to hit an accurate scoring shot. In the situation here, his best shot is a straight-in kill attempt that, if left up, will still travel down-the-line and extend you to the side of the court. . .



. . . when you run up behind the hitter (right), trying to rush him or to dig up his straight-in kill attempt, he should adjust his shot selection and either drive the ball cross-court or pinch it away from you.

can easily drive the ball past him if he keeps his head. A sounder strategy is to simply position yourself around 22 feet as your opponent is moving up to hit. He should score, but if he leaves the ball up

just 12 inches, it will travel back into your hittable area and you may suddenly win the point or gain a side-out with an efficient passing shot. ●



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Variations Of The Overhead Backhand Kill

by Craig McCoy

—Photos by Mike Hogan



FIGURE 1. The forehand overhead kill is the flipside of the more difficult and psychological rewarding backhand overhead. The shot, though still tricky, is effective at catching an opponent who is not re-occupying center after hitting a ceiling ball. Hit the overhead kill as you would a ceiling ball, but let the ball drop a little lower before making contact and use the side wall to pinch the shot.

In the December, 1981, issue I explained how to succeed with the impossible shot—the overhead backhand kill—and how it will cut your opponent's psyche to shreds if you do.

There are some variations on this shot which you also should know, including the forehand overhead kill and the forehand and backhand overhead drives. Even if you make them, these shots don't quite have the same psychological impact on your opponent as the overhead backhand kill. But then, they're a lot easier to execute too.

These are surprise, jack-in-the-box shots where you cut the ball off in mid-flight. They're risky. But, as in most things, the greater the risk, the greater the potential reward. They give a "volley" dimension to your game.

The forehand overhead kill is, of course,

the flipside of the backhand overhead kill. This forehand shot is no different from its backhand counterpart than the forehand ceiling ball is from the backhand ceiling ball—both forehand shots are easier.

You are able to generate more power

You are able to generate more power with your forehand so, if the shot pops up after hitting the front wall, your opponent doesn't quite have the same slow-paced shot he would with a mis-hit backhand.

You'll recall that the overhead kill is often used to break up ceiling rallies. Let the ball drop a little lower than you would for a ceiling ball—say about shoulder height—and make contact a little more in front of you.

If you see your opponent dragging his feet in deep court instead of re-occupying center court after each ceiling ball, pinch

FIGURE 2. Hopefully, the pinched forehand overhead kill will roll out as shown above. If not, it at least serves notice on your opponent that he can't assume that you will go to the ceiling just because you're in deep court. He'll have to work harder to cover both the front and back court.





FIGURE 3. The forehand overhead drive is a volley shot which can be effective at quickly getting the ball past an opponent who is playing a little too far off to one side of the court in anticipation that you will play a high shot off the back wall. It can be used anywhere from the short line to deep court (shown here).

the ball in the opposite front corner from you with an overhead kill. I say opposite corner only because you will usually find yourself in one rear corner or another during ceiling rallies, and it is almost impossible to hit a pinch down the side wall. Of course, if you find yourself in the middle of deep court, you have your choice of front corners.

You can also use this shot to move an opponent who effectively dominates center court, the guy who plants dead center facing the front wall and forces you to shoot around him. Why try?

Charlie Brumfield calls it the "I-ball" as

in, "Do you mind? I would like a shot at the front wall."

You don't have to hit the guy. Just coming close is usually enough to send a message.

The forehand overhead kill becomes the classic volley shot when used in front court to cut off an opponent's shot that rebounds high off the front wall. Under most circumstances, you would let such a shot rebound off the back wall before killing it. But if your opponent is out of position—way off to one side of the court—you can often catch him flatfooted by snatching the ball out of the air for a

kill or drive.

The drive can be backhand or forehand, cross court or down-the-line. Just as long as you hit it to wherever your opponent isn't. Contact the front wall about three feet up and with only about three-quarters of the power you would use for a normal drive.

Because they travel to deep court so high, overhead drives are less effective than the normal passing shots. They have greater chance of rebounding off the back wall.

Overhead drives should not be confused with the habit many beginners have of just blasting the ball high and hard off the front wall. They should be calculated shots used only under special circumstances.

Specifically, use the shot only to catch an opponent out of position. Your opponent may have dived for a low one, gone far into the forecourt for a dink that doesn't stay dinked or just let himself get trapped between the side wall and your shooting lane. As funny as it sounds, the best time to use these volley-type drives is when the other guy has fallen down. It happens!

If a guy is too far forward or off to one side of the court, use the appropriate cross court or down-the-line overhead drive to blow the ball past him. If he has hit the ball high off the front wall, he may figure that you will take it off the back wall, giving him time to regain position. Take advantage of his mistake in judgement.

As I mentioned earlier, your opponent isn't going to fall apart if you work one of these shots. They don't have the same psychological impact on him that the overhead, backhand kill does, but they aren't that hard to hit either.

Don't make a habit of using them all the time. Part of their success depends on the element of surprise, without which your opponent will figure ways to counter them.

They aren't bad weapons to have in your arsenal, though. You never know when the other guy will "fall down" in his game. ●

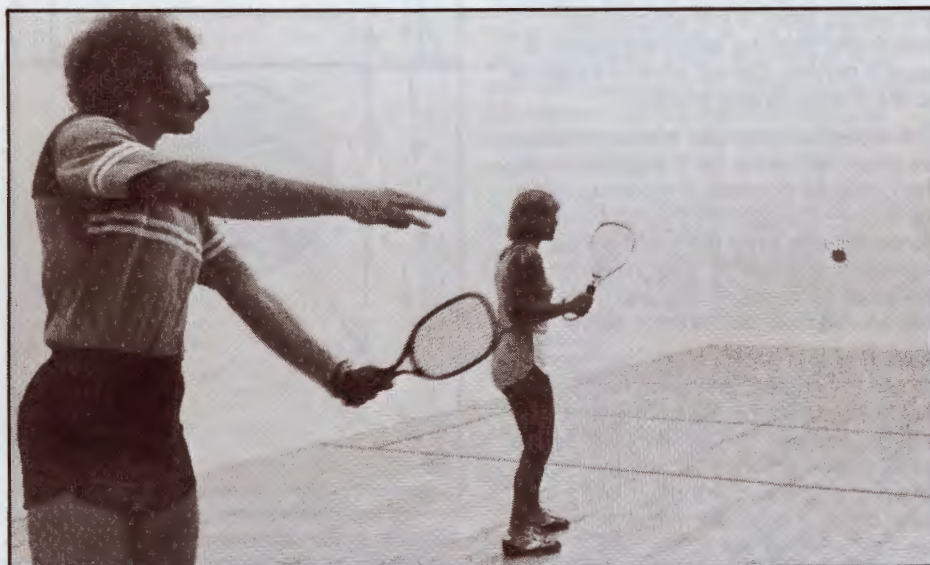


FIGURE 4. For an opponent who is playing up, though a little too far off to one side, the backhand overhead drive is a better choice than the backhand overhead kill.

APRO Teaches:

Serve Return Strategy

by Jim Winterton

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

The return of serve is the second most important shot in a racquetball match, and *the* most important shot decision if you are the receiver. In most racquetball games, only the server can score points, so the receiver is at a definite disadvantage. Although most players don't like to view it this way, the receiver must win two consecutive rallies to win a point (his first rally wins the serve, his second wins the point).

The reason the receiver is in such a negative position, is that his return of serve will be dictated by the serve he receives. A lob serve shoulder high will lead to a ceiling ball return; a drive serve to the forehand will lead to an offensive return, etc. But, of course, the receiver has no idea what serve is coming at him until it does.

This initial exchange (serve/serve return) is unquestionably the most important exchange in any racquetball rally. A good racquetball axiom to remember is that if two players are of equal ability, the player with the better return of serve ability will generally win.

Yet serve return can be a stimulating and exciting segment of a racquetball match. While the server has the hope of exhilaration that an ace brings, the receiver dreams of flat, rollout kill returns off the hard drive serve to his backhand. The essence of racquetball as a competitive activity is isolated in this serve/serve return exchange.

The return of serve should be divided into two categories: offensive and defensive returns. Generally speaking, the basic offensive returns are more difficult to master than are the basic defensive shots. Therefore, most beginning players will lack strong, offensive serve return capability. For that reason, beginners will usually concentrate (and properly so) on defensive serve returns in order to keep the ball in play and not lose the point quickly.

The basic defensive returns are ceiling, lob and passing shots. The more advanced defensive returns include the around-the-wall ball and Z ball, but both are difficult to master and really do not afford the player any greater effect than does the ceiling or lob return.

Beginners: Your friend, center court

Since the beginning player has a limited arsenal of shots to work from, only one idea or concept should be stressed. That concept is the importance of center court position—how to get it and how to maintain it.

Beginners should start with the lob return of serve (*Diagram 1*). The lob is the easiest to hit accurately and the results are usually okay, if not spectacular. Remember that the beginning player is usually playing against another beginner, so we stress general strategy.

Therefore, the beginner who is thinking lob return will really be doing little more than what he normally does when returning serve—trying to hit the front wall. However, with even the small added ingredient of purpose, beginners can take the initial serve return flail and mold it into an effective lob return of serve.

Instead of that flagrant flail, the receiver should experiment and soon he'll find that special spot on the front wall for his return (*Diagram 2*). That spot will be the general area which, if hit, will take his return over the server's head and into deep court. It does not matter at this juncture whether the lob caroms to the backhand, forehand or center portions of

the court. What does matter is that you move the server out of center court.

One of the biggest mistakes often made by beginners is the tendency to hit the return of serve and stand around admiring their shot. This is a deadly error because it negates the effect of the serve return, the purpose of which is to get your opponent out of center court so *that you can occupy it*. If you don't move to center court you've accomplished nothing.

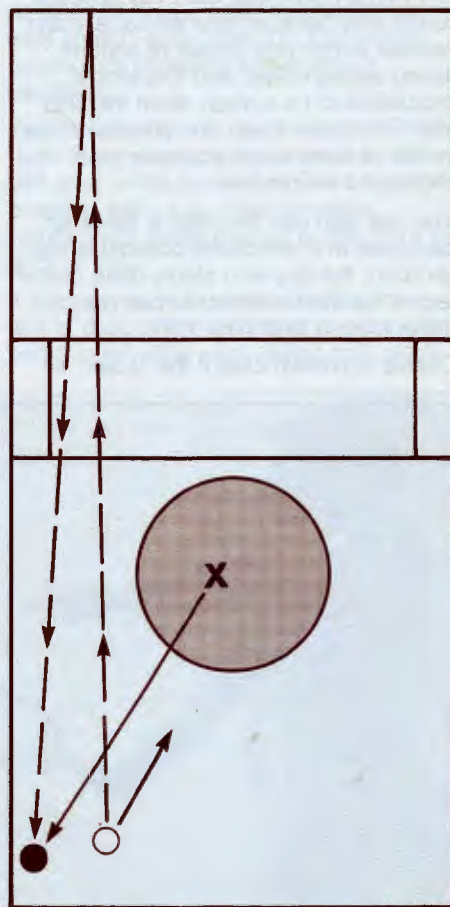


Diagram 1. The beginner player should use the lob return of serve, forcing the server (x) out of center court position (shaded area) and moving to occupy it himself (o).

Once in center court, you now have the advantage. Any mis-hit by your opponent will result in a set-up with you in ideal position (center court) and your opponent in the worst position (deep court). You have effectively turned the tables on him.

As you progress to relatively good control of the lob return, then graduate to forehand and backhand ceiling shots. The forehand will come a lot easier than the backhand. As with the lob, beginners should stress hitting the ball to deep court first, then gradually move the ceiling shot to the backhand side.

Once the beginner gains control of the ceiling game, it's time to move on to the passing shots as defensive serve returns. By now, the beginner is really more of an advanced beginner and thus should be able to hit passes off most serve returns.

The reason for not introducing the passing game earlier is that the lack of control of most beginners would result in the

attempted passes being little more than set-ups for the server. The worst pass in racquetball is the one that doesn't pass your opponent. With the server standing in center court awaiting a weak return, when he gets that weak return you've probably lost the rally.

In addition, since most serves will come to your backhand side, the beginner must be able to use his backhand passing game for serve return. That means the need to develop a strong enough backhand to be able to drive a pass down-the-line past the server, or cross court and out of the server's reach. The beginner who can consistently hit this shot, is no beginner at all. He has graduated to the next level.

Intermediates; Be selective

The intermediate player has a wide range of serve return shots at his disposal, including the already accomplished lob and ceiling return, the offensive and defensive passes, plus a smattering of true offensive shots.

Therefore, the key for returning serve at the intermediate level is not how to hit a shot, but rather, which shot to hit. Racquetball necessarily becomes more complicated for the intermediate because determining which shot to hit includes many variables.

What is the score of the game? Is it the first game or second or third game? What are your opponent's weak and strong points? What kind of serves is he hitting to you? What are your own capabilities?

The game becomes even more complicated because your opponent will be, just as you are, a better player. You will receive a wider variety of serves, harder hit and hit with more accuracy. Therefore, you must develop the ability to recognize different serves, mentally chart the path and speed of the serve, accurately select the most advantageous serve return shot and then execute it.

Yet the basic philosophy of returning serve remains the same: obtain and retain center court position. Only the means are different.

The primary defensive serve return shot for the intermediate player will be the ceiling ball. (Diagram 3). No player can improve past this point without an effective ceiling shot, both forehand and backhand. Too many serves demand a ceiling return as the only viable defensive alternative, so learn the ceiling game and learn it well.

In addition, stress should be placed not only on hitting the ceiling return to your opponent's backhand, but also (and more importantly) on making sure the ceiling return carries into deep court (Diagram

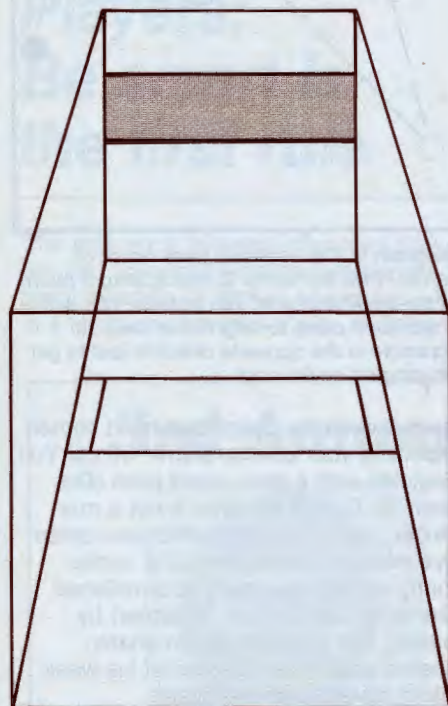


Diagram 2. The area on the front wall where the lob return of serve should hit. Since the ball's rebound will depend on the degree of power in the shot, experiment to find the best spot for you.

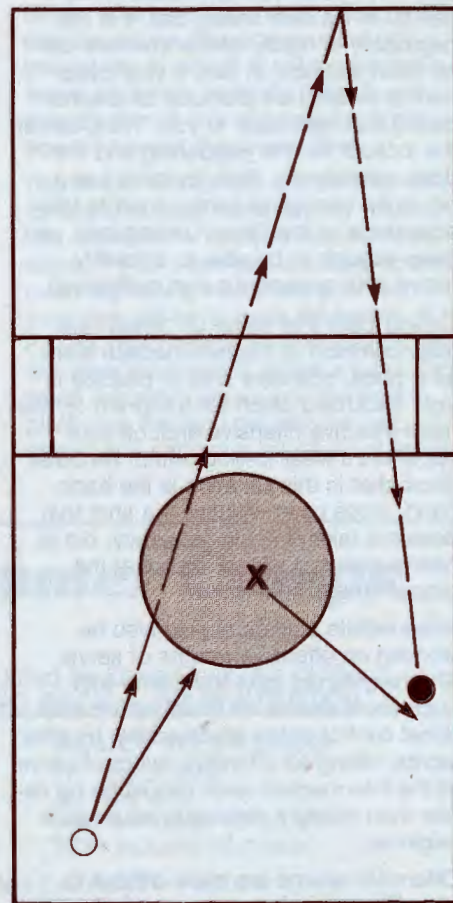
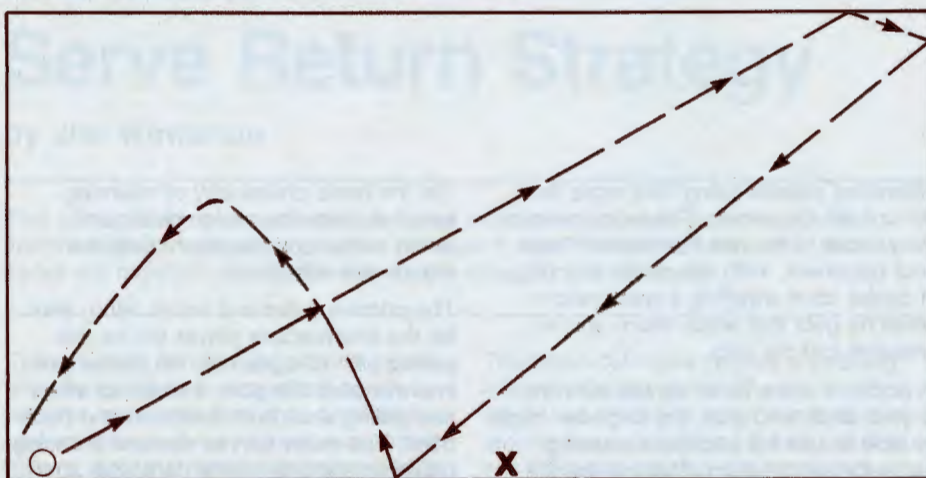


Diagram 3. The cross court ceiling ball return. Again, note how the server is forced out of center court and the receiver then moves to occupy this position.

Diagram 4. Path of the properly hit ceiling ball.



4). So the intermediate player will hit a ceiling return attempting to move the server to the deep, backhand portion of the court, while taking possession of center court himself.

However, since your opponent will probably have decent (intermediate level) control of his own ceiling ball, it is not necessary to rigidly desire absolute center court position. In fact, if your opponent is smart, he'll probably hit another ceiling ball right back to you. Thus, be on the lookout for this happening and if it does consistently, then lay back just a bit, close enough to center court to take advantage of the "short" ceiling ball, yet deep enough to be able to smoothly return your opponent's own ceiling ball.

Ceiling balls that come up "short" are fairly common at the intermediate level, so a good, offensive shot to practice is your backhand pinch kill (Diagram 5), the most effective offensive shot off your opponent's weak ceiling return. (Another good shot in this situation is the backhand, cross court kill/pass—a shot that does not take pin-point accuracy, but is nearly always a winner if shot at the proper time.)

Intermediate players should also be working on offensive returns of serve. The heightened risks that come with such shots should be offset by the additional control of the intermediate. In other words, hitting an offensive return of serve at the intermediate level should be no riskier than hitting a defensive return as a beginner.

Offensive returns are more difficult to plan for, since you are pretty much at the mercy of the server. If his serve is a garbage to your backhand, shoulder high, it would be ridiculous to attempt a kill shot,

or any other offensive return. Therefore, you have to mentally be ready to recognize the opportunity for an offensive return and then pounce on the chance.

Offensive pass shots are probably the best, first offensive shot for the intermediate to master. As your opponent

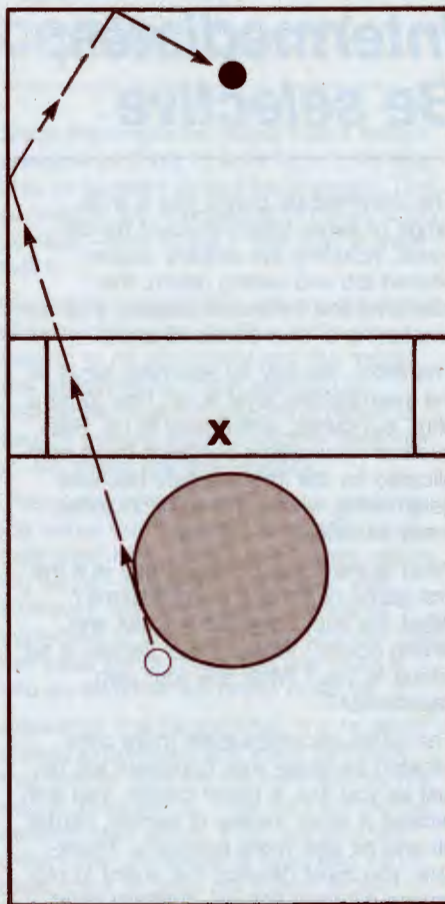


Diagram 5. The backhand pinch kill hit off a ceiling ball that came back "short" (did not carry into deep court).

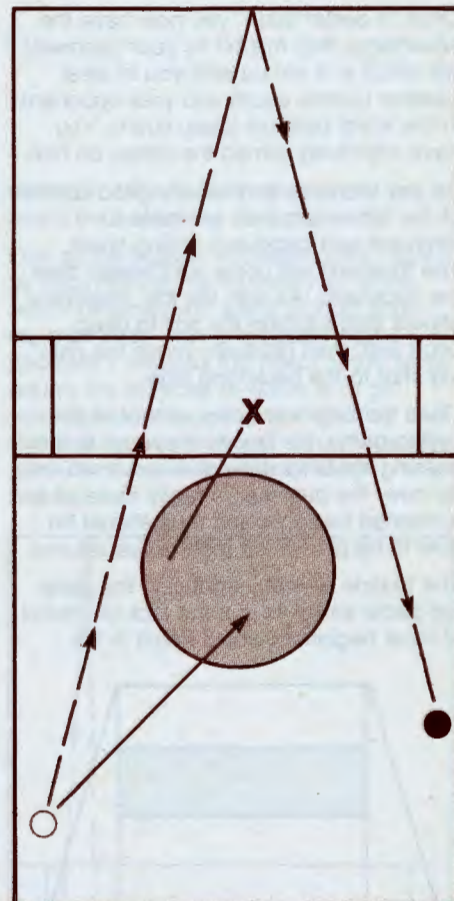


Diagram 6. The offensive pass return of serve. While the server is anticipating a return to the backhand side, you surprise him with a cross court pass, forcing him at best to scramble in the opposite direction just to get his racquet on the shot.

leans toward the deep, backhand corner, expecting your ceiling return—boom! You level him with a cross court pass (Diagram 6). Even if the shot is not a true winner, you've accomplished your defensive mission (move him out of center court) and you've nearly accomplished your offensive mission (a winner) by making him scramble for an unanticipated shot. Your chances of his weak return have greatly increased.

Many intermediate players like to play a gambling style of serve return, i.e., using their new-found confidence in offensive returns to really go after the game. Although relying too heavily on offense at

this level can result in disaster, there are plenty of benefits to be had, nevertheless.

For example, if you are significantly behind in the game, you've got nothing to lose by going for the kill or pass on serve returns. This doesn't mean the backhand, overhead, cross court, reverse pinch variety. You still must have an opportunity to go on offense before you can do so.

By the same token, if you are way ahead in a particular game, you can put your opponent away by taking a few more chances, without the pressure accompanying a tight game. It makes sense to go for the offensive serve return at this point, remembering, however, not to give your opponent too many points as a result.

Advanced Players: Be smart is the first rule

The difference between advanced players and advanced intermediate players is not a question of strokes or accuracy. It is a question of mental ability, of being

smart. Knowing your capabilities, sizing up the state of the game, and having the ability to keep alternative plans in your mind as you get set to return serve will make the difference.

Those players who can hit and think will always come out on top of the players who can only hit. How does this translate on to the court?

The advanced game will find an abundance of drive serves coming your way. Therefore, you must be able to hit offensively and defensively off this standard serve. In reality, it is easier to hit offensively in this situation because the server is providing a great deal of the power that you will need. In addition, the server who gives his all to generating his hoped-for super-hard drive, will more than likely leave himself off balance and unprepared for an offensive return.

If you find your opponent consistently blasting his serve toward your backhand corner, it's time to start cheating. No, I don't mean adding a repertoire of avoidable hinders. Rather, I mean edge toward your backhand, lean toward your backhand and attack the drive serve. The best attack is the cross court pass, the second best is the cross court pass/kill

In addition, the game situation calls for certain returns. If you're way behind, you'll want to seize every available offensive opportunity in order to quickly regain serve to start making up points. But be intelligent. If you aren't able to set up and

get full strength into your offensive return (plan A), then revert to plan B, a defensive shot. Hitting offensive returns when off balance or handcuffed will simply speed you on your way to a loss.

In a tight game odds are you're going to be more careful in your selection of serve return shot. In this case, plan A will be a defensive return, with plan B, the offensive shot, when the opportunity occurs. You certainly don't want your offensive game in mothballs at the crucial point of a tight game. But neither do you want to lose your composure and go for bottom board when the percentages are against you.

So here's where your smarts really come into play. The worst thing you can do is either force an offensive return or squander an offensive opportunity. Your understanding of the situation coupled with your ability to adjust to your opponent's serve, plus your flexibility (plan A and plan B) should give you enough brain power to select the proper shot.

Remember what shots are winning rallies for you and keep maneuvering yourself into situations where you can hit those shots. If your opponent is having trouble matching ceiling shots with you, then your plan will be to go to the ceiling. If it's you that's having trouble staying up top, then your plan B will be a pass. Only when the serve allows you the time to plant your feet and get into the ball, should you attempt a kill return of serve. ●

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What's The Call?

The Last Hinder Is Where The Buck Stops

by Dan Bertolucci

Since I travel to virtually every major racquetball tournament, and since I often occupy the referee's chair at these events, it is not unusual for me to be approached by avid racquetballers requesting an "official" interpretation of a particular rule.

At the Catalina Series tour stop in Coral Gables in April, one such fan described one of the classic confusion-causing, on-the-court situations. He said it's happened to him half a dozen times and I'm sure you'll recognize that it's probably happened to you.

Player A faults on his first serve. His second serve is good and both players get into the rally. After four or five exchanges, player B returns the ball, which strikes player A on its way to the front wall.

Player A then steps up to re-serve, and promptly faults again.

"Double fault," player B yells, as he moves toward the service zone.

"No way," says player A. "I've still got another serve coming"

Who is right?

If you answered player A, you too, are correct. The server in this situation does indeed have his second serve coming, and here's why.

The rally in question ended on what is termed a "dead ball hinder," which encompasses most of rule 4.10. Dead

ball hinders are basically "no fault" hinders and cause the rally to be replayed. However, the fact that the ball was already in play, i.e., player A had served a legal serve to initiate the rally, wipes out the previous fault serve.

Therefore, as a result of the dead ball hinder, player A has two serves coming.

The reasoning behind this rule is sound. Player A had already passed the test of being able to serve his second serve legally. The issue at hand during the rally revolved around the hinder, not the serve. Why should the server be penalized in the serving sense (by granting him just one serve) when the serve was not a question in this rally?

The inquiring racquetballer claimed to have had this situation occur in a tournament match some time ago. The point in the game was 10-8 and player A went on to win the game. Player B protested the game based on this call, which he felt to be erroneous.

This leads to a second issue, namely, when can a point, game or match be protested? And although this truly opens the proverbial can of worms, suffice it to say that even if player B was correct (which he was not), he would not have been awarded any compensation for the improper call because he improperly protested.

If you're in tournament play and believe that a rule has been improperly interpreted, then it is your duty to request the

referee check his rule book or seek out the head referee or tournament chairman. The issue must be resolved then and there.

I always carry a rule book with me when refereeing, since it's part of the job. What few people know is that I also carry one in my duffle bag when playing a tournament match. I don't carry it as much to look up a rule as I do to have ready verification of my contention of the wrong call.

If you let the game go on, then there's no way you can go back to a previous portion of the game to resurrect a potential protest.

Remember, though, that we're talking about an improper (or perceived improper) *interpretation*. We are *not* talking about a judgement call. After you've appealed to linesmen on judgement calls, you have no other recourse than to accept their verdict. Therefore, don't bother to dream up "interpretation" arguments about skip balls.

As a referee, I admit to occasionally forgetting a rule. Every top referee has done it from time to time. And the way racquetball's rules seem to change every six months, it pays to be up on them. So don't just take the referee's word for it if he says he's positive that his interpretation is correct. Ask for and be sure you get the official in charge to take a look at your situation.

And if you have your rule book at hand to support your contention, then you should win your case. Unfortunately for player B in our opening scenario, he was wrong and rule 4.10 would have verified the point.

Besides hitting your opponent with the ball on its way to the front wall, many other occurrences in a rally may create dead ball hinders. These include court hinders (a pre-agreed upon flaw in the court), inadvertent and unintentional body contact, screen balls, straddle balls, backswing hinders and anything else the referee deems a hindrance. ●

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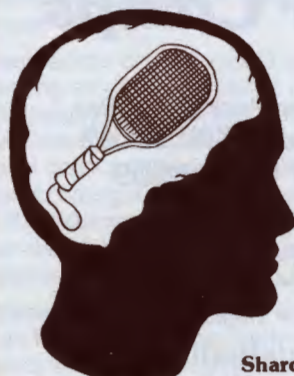
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Who's Playing Racquetball?

The Sport For Everyone

by Stella Hart

How many times have you gone to your favorite club to play racquetball thinking only of the excitement of the sport that gets those competitive juices going, but never thinking that to other people racquetball can have an even deeper meaning?

There is a group of young men and women in Morris County, NJ to whom racquetball means the opportunity to experience normal living.

Gail Johnson knows this. Gail is program director for the Morris County Adaptive Recreational Program (McARP), an organization co-sponsored by the Association for Retarded Citizens, Morris Unit (ARC) and 17 participating municipalities in Morris County.

McARP provides year round opportunities for recreation, leisure time activities and a social life for the county's handicapped.

While most of those participating in the program are mentally retarded teenagers and young adults there are programs open for all age groups with any physical and neurological handicap.

And while the list of interests ranges from dancercise to bowling, roller and ice skating, swimming, basketball and "special olympics", Gail is always open to new ideas.

"I'm constantly looking for new things for our young people to do," Gail says. So when Nelly Tsonopoulos, co-director of the Canteen, a special social group for the retarded, mentioned that she and co-director Cheryl Marcovic were members of the Morris County YMCA and played racquetball at least once a week, Gail decided to "bring some of my young people down to give it a try."

Noting that handicapped teenagers are no different from other teens, Gail found that those participating in the sport had a great time.

"They thoroughly enjoyed themselves playing racquetball and, playing at their own pace, they learned quickly," she noted, "In fact they enjoyed it so much they would like to make it a permanent part of our program."

"And we are looking for a club right now where our group can meet weekly at a designated time, adding racquetball to the many activities in the McARP program."

Bob Franchi (l.) prepares to return serve against Joe Waradzyn. Both are members of Canteen of Morris County, NJ, Adaptive Recreational Program (McARP).



Victoria Iona (r.) delivers a lob serve to Gina Rosenberg as part of the McARP racquetball program.

McARP, which relies heavily on volunteers, offers the handicapped a social life outside of school or work. "Something like racquetball can be very rewarding both to the handicapped person and the volunteer," says Gail.

With over 12,000 mentally retarded people living in Morris County, a program such as McARP is invaluable, according to the director. "We must reach out to as many of our handicapped persons as possible, offering them programs like racquetball. Programs that will keep them in touch with sports as they are today."

"I was very pleased at how easily our

participants took to racquetball," she said. "They were excited about it but calm enough to thoroughly enjoy it."

According to Harry F. Wilkinson, executive director of the Association for Retarded Citizens, Morris Unit, which co-sponsors McARP, 100,000 babies are born every year who will be mentally retarded, one baby every five minutes. These babies are born to every race, religion, and nationality; into every educational, social and economic background. In fact he noted that this condition is four times more common than rheumatic fever, nine times more prevalent than cerebral palsy and affects 15 times more people than blindness.

Nelly Tsonopoulos (l.) co-director of McARP shows Victoria Iona the proper grip, while co-director Cheryl Marcovik (r.) gives the same instruction to Gina Rosenberg.

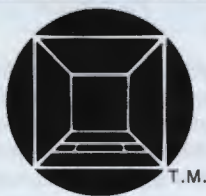


Besides the McARP program, the ARC, which has worked with the retarded for 28 years, provides for the needs of the handicapped by offering programs from pre-natal care to early intervention, infant enrichment, pre-school specialized groups, crisis intervention, counseling and PEP, Parents Encouraging Parents, a program which offers helps for parents of newborn or newly handicapped children to better understand their children's needs.

"I've played racquetball myself now for some time," says Gail, "but when I play now I not only enjoy the sport, I enjoy knowing what it means to the many handicapped people in our area. Nothing can give you a better feeling than that."

For information on programs for the mentally retarded, contact the Association for Retarded Citizens, Morris Unit at P.O. Box 123, Morris Plains, NJ 07950. ●

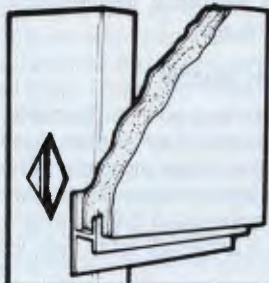
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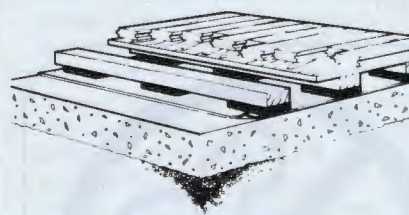
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Puff, Puff—Guzzle, Guzzle— How Smoking and Drinking Affect Your Game

You know the litany. What smoking and drinking do to your heart, liver, lungs, stomach, arteries, brain tissue, nerves. The awful things they'll do to your health—atherosclerosis, cirrhosis, hepatitis, pancreatitis, gastritis, ileitis, colitis, psychosis, emphysema, Buerger's disease, Raynaud's phenomenon, Werneck's encephalopathy, hangover, seizure, myocardial infarction and death. You probably know all about the fearsome toxic substances in smoke—acrolein, cyanide, nitric oxide, acetone, ammonia and carbon monoxide, to name a few.

But do you know what they'll do to your racquetball performance?

Puff, Puff

Let's look at cigarettes first. According to Dr. Richard Herbert, Director of the Oak Brook Sportsmedicine Clinic, Oak Brook, IL, one of the short term effects of a cigarette or two before a racquetball game may even be positive, although illusionary.

"The nicotine acts as a stimulant right away," Dr. Herbert says. "Nicotine is a very powerful drug. It causes a rapid release of adrenalin, just as fear or excitement do. The adrenalin may give your game a boost and improve your reaction time for a short while, by raising your heartbeat and pushing up your blood pressure to channel blood to the organs and muscles involved in strenuous effort."



But this "positive" effect assumes that you have a healthy heart. If your heart is less than sound, nicotine can set off ventricular fibrillation (uncontrolled contractions of the heart muscle), or spasm of the coronary arteries and cardiac arrest.

You never know if you have undiagnosed heart disease. You have to assume your ticker's going to keep ticking for a bit, or you won't make it out of bed in the morning, let alone head off to the courts for a racquetball game.

So you figure your heart's healthy. You're in good shape, you play often and you don't smoke habitually. Still, the effects of a cigarette here and there before a game are absolutely undesirable.

"Nicotine causes elevation of systolic blood pressure, which is harmful to performance because it impairs the distribution of blood to muscles," Dr. Herbert says. "But the smoke has another acute effect. It contains gases which irritate the bronchial passages, causing them to constrict. This interferes with the absorption of oxygen which in turn permits carbon monoxide to get into the bloodstream immediately, where it 'locks up' the red blood cells and prevents them from taking in oxygen."

"In short, smoking a cigarette before you play racquetball won't harm your reaction time. But it will impair the exchange of oxygen in the lungs, and poison the red blood cells with carbon monoxide so that their capacity to carry oxygen is greatly reduced. By raising systolic blood pressure, it adversely affects the distribution of blood to muscles. If enough oxygen is not being absorbed in the first place, and the red cells are incapacitated from carrying oxygen, then the blood is not circulating properly to carry oxygen to the muscles. Clearly those muscles are not going to be supplied with enough oxygen for maximum performance."

But nobody smokes just one or two cigarettes, or only before playing a racquetball game. Your average dyed-in-the-wool career smoker chugs his way through anything from half a pack to two or more packs a day. The cumulative or chronic effects of cigarettes are what really interfere with your game.

"Long-term smoking blocks not only the coronary arteries, but also the arteries which supply the lungs and the brain," says Dr. Herbert. "Thus basic physical functions are impaired—the strength of the heart muscle itself and its capacity to pump blood to the rest of the body; the efficiency of the lungs, and of the brain, where reduced oxygen supply means impaired reaction time, eye-hand coordination, and coordination generally."

"Additionally, smoking increases the viscosity or thickness of the blood. In an effort to compensate for their decreased capacity to carry oxygen, the red cells multiply and the blood literally becomes too solid, preventing adequate nourishment of the muscles."

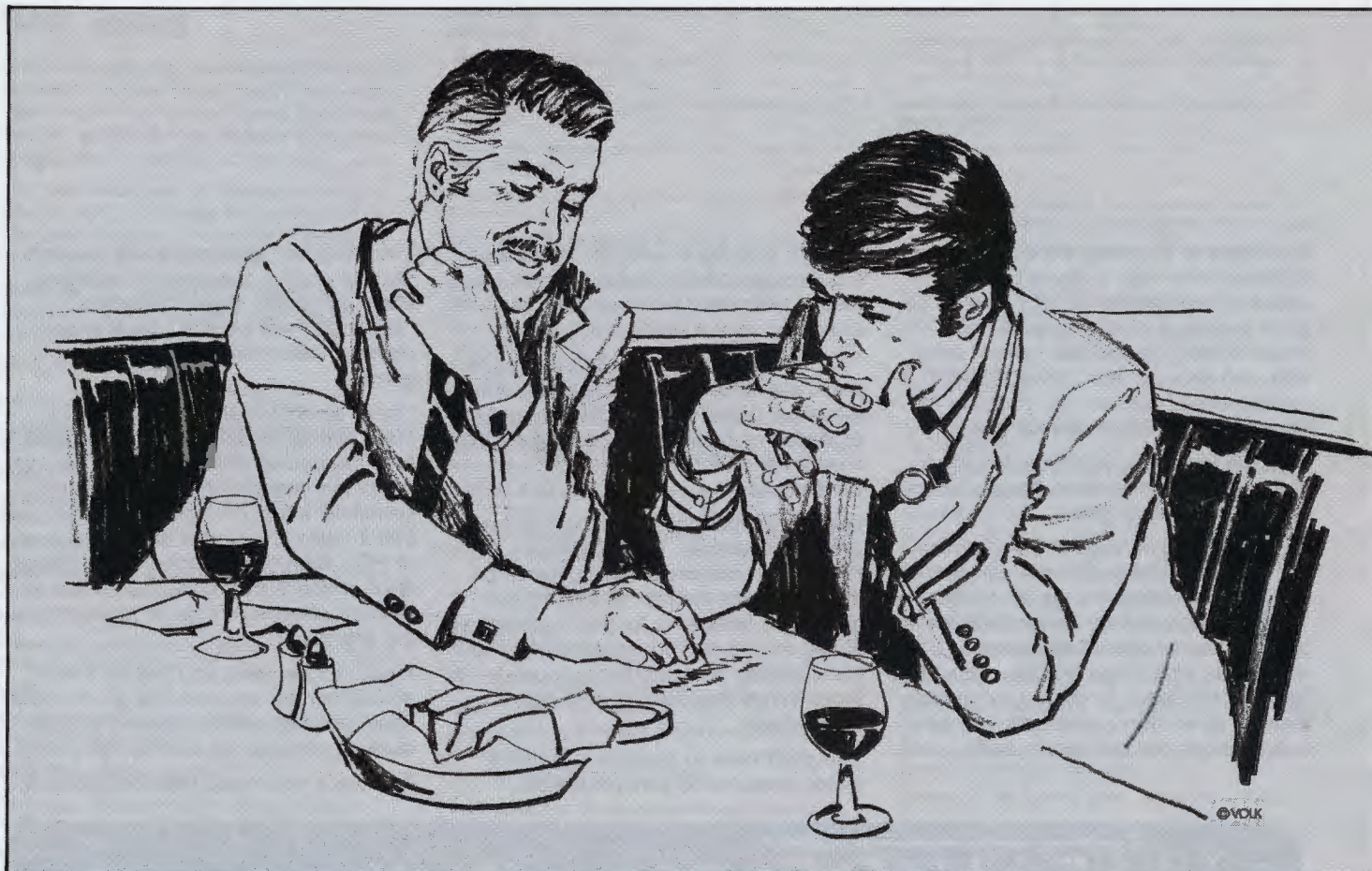
"Again, long term smoking interferes with oxygen exchange in the lungs, by paralyzing the cilia—small fibers in the bronchii whose function is to cleanse the air of impurities—so that they become clogged with the pollutants they can't throw off."

The net effect of smoking, then is a distinct lowering of your fitness level. It puts a real dent in the workings of your cardiovascular system, and since the purpose of that system is to sustain all other systems, everything suffers. For your racquetball game, this means reduced endurance, more rapid muscle fatigue, shortness of breath, and decreased speed, alertness, coordination and concentration.

Guzzle, Guzzle

OK, let's say you don't smoke, and many of us racquetball fanatics don't. You like a martini or two at lunch, but you're hardly an alcoholic. Even when you've a game scheduled for the afternoon, you figure a drink will relax you, loosen you up.

Trouble is, it may loosen you up too much. Even in small amounts, alcohol delays the availability of ATP (adenine triphosphate), the prime source of energy in the body. Although alcohol produces a "high" it does so by suppressing higher brain activity which in turn releases inhibitions in lower neural functions. You may have heard that the superego is rapidly soluble in alcohol—that means you loosen up all right, but at the expense of



judgment and fine-motor control. The "high" in other words is a release phenomenon, caused by the *suppression* of cerebral stimulation. If you drink enough of it, alcohol is always a depressant.

How much is enough of it?

By Dr. Herbert's account, a small amount of alcohol may be consumed just prior to playing racquetball with no ill effects. An average adult male ordinarily can metabolize (turn into water and carbon dioxide, and thus render non-toxic) about 2/3 ounce of straight whiskey, or eight ounces of beer, in one hour. If you drink more than that and then head for the courts, you can expect some effects.

"The lower ranges of blood-alcohol have no effect on athletic performance," Dr. Herbert says. *"But as you get into the upper ranges—the amount of alcohol that remains in the bloodstream after two or three martinis drunk before lunch—you find a progressive slowing of reaction time and decrease of eye-hand coordination. Of course, alcohol, like any other caloric substance, serves as a source of fuel in the form of carbohydrate which will compensate to some extent for the drop in coordination."*

On the other hand, if you tank up on the drinks at lunch and head off for your game with a good "buzz on," you can expect *"severely impaired reaction time,"* Dr. Herbert says, *"and severe interference with eye-hand coordination and whole body coordination."*

One of the acute effects of drinking alcohol is diuresis, or the loss of body water.

"Diuresis can occur particularly if you drink rapidly, causing the alcohol level in your bloodstream to rise rapidly," says Dr. Herbert. *"Alcohol suppresses the release of antidiuretic hormone (ADH) from the pituitary so that your kidneys go into overdrive."*

This plays havoc with your endurance in a game like racquetball where you need fluids to regulate body temperature and blood pressure. Everyone has heard by now that it's important to drink lots of water before prolonged physical exertion, to get your total body water level up. Alcohol has the opposite effect of causing your body to discharge water. You'll tire and become overheated more rapidly as a result.

Again, alcohol in whatever amount acts as a fuel source for the muscles, but if you're half paralyzed it's not going to do

your game any good. To get in that kind of shape, an average person of 150 pounds would have to consume anywhere between three to six drinks within an hour. That's pretty heavy drinking, and you probably wouldn't feel like playing after that much anyway.

So you can *probably* have a beer at lunch and still go play a good racquetball game within the next few hours. "Probably," because we've been talking in terms of averages, and hardly anyone is average. If you get tipsy on two beers or one martini, maybe you're one of the people who don't metabolize alcohol rapidly; or you're drinking on an empty stomach which permits the alcohol to be absorbed—fast—through the small intestine; or you're physically smaller than average; or not used to drinking much; or any one of a great number of complex variables. If you're not sure about your own tolerance, the safest bet is not to drink at all before a game since alcohol may hurt your performance and it sure won't help.

What can be predicted with more accuracy are the effects on your health and on your racquetball game of large amounts of daily alcohol, what the medical profession calls chronic drinking. You

don't have to put away three quarts of Richards' Wild Irish a day to be a so-called chronic drinker. A daily dose of six to 24 ounces of alcohol qualifies you—three martinis, or cocktails before, wine with, and liqueurs after dinner, if you make them a habit, will get you in at the low end of the chronic drinker category.

Over the long haul, you'll feel the effect of this kind of moderate-to-heavy drinking on your racquetball game.

"It causes deterioration of the coordination centers in the brain—the cerebellum and cerebral cortex," says Dr. Herbert. "That damage can be irreversible. It also causes deterioration of liver function, which sets off a chain reaction. Impaired liver function leads to decreased muscle mass; it slows nerve conduction times and destroys nervous tissue; and,

through a series of complex processes, it depresses cardiac output, which means your heart isn't pumping as much or as well as it should.

"Chronic drinking in addition depresses pancreas function, with a resultant drop in normal blood sugar regulation and the digestion of foodstuffs, all of which have a negative effect on physical performance."

Like most other drugs, alcohol has toxic effects if overused. Many of these reverse themselves once you knock off the booze, but the fact is that habitual drinking is anathema for your racquetball game, fouling up your reaction time, your coordination, your endurance, speed—all those things that depend on a high fitness level.

You don't have to become a Buddhist monk, however, to play racquetball.

There's good news too. Small amounts of daily alcohol may have a beneficial effect on health, says Dr. Herbert, *"although I still wouldn't recommend drinking within three hours before a game."*

"Daily alcohol intake in the range of three ounces or less (a couple of drinks over the course of the day or in the evening) can indirectly have a long term beneficial effect on blood cholesterol, in that it helps to promote an optimal level of HDL (high density lipoprotein) cholesterol, which is desirable. HDL helps to fend off atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries."

If you smoke, then, you pay an inexorable price. But you can indulge in a little minor boozing without causing your racquetball game to fall apart at the seams.

And that's your good news for today. ●

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Tournament Results

New Jersey

Jim Cascio and Francine Davis, top-seeds in the Miller Lite Beer East Coast Open, were upset in the men's and women's open finals held at the Woodbridge Racquet Club, Woodbridge, NJ, February 26, 27 and 28.

The tournament, run by Directors Warren Searles and Teri Gatarz, and sponsored by Lite Beer, Empress Travel, Fords Jewelers, and Ektelon, had 280 entrants.

Gonzales and Marriott each collected the \$300.00 first prizes for their victories in the open divisions.

Final results follow:

Men's Open

Semi-finals: Gonzales d. Francavella, Cascio d. Bierman
Finals: Gonzales d. Cascio 15-8, 13-15, 11-9

Men's A

Semi-finals: Costleigh d. Rubin, Tumminia d. Appel
Finals: Costleigh d. Tumminia

Men's Senior

Semi-finals: Munson d. Wasserman, Steinhoff d. Werner
Finals: Munson d. Steinhoff

Men's B

Semi-finals: Cirelli d. Garrido, Petroccia d. Heimberg
Finals: Cirelli d. Petroccia

Men's C

Semi-finals: Corso d. Lucchetto, O'Hanlon d. Gillman
Finals: Corso d. O'Hanlon

Men's Open Doubles

Semi-finals: Bierman/Francavella d. Munson/Vanore; Teape/Montalbano d. Allgood/Diamond

Finals: Bierman/Francavella d. Teape/Montalbano 15-3, 15-4

Men's B Doubles

Semi-finals: Salvato/Jenkinson d. Wasserman/Farko; Schub/Cohen d. Lupia/Lucchetto

Finals: Salvato/Jenkinson d. Schub/Cohen

Women's Open

Semi-finals: Marriott d. Fischl, Davis d. Gatarz
Finals: Marriott d. Davis 11-15, 15-13, 11-8

Women's B

Semi-finals: Schwartz d. Grubow, Hurley d. Monchick
Finals: Schwartz d. Hurley

Women's C

Semi-finals: Loprete d. Benko, McNamara d. Munson
Finals: Loprete d. McNamara

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania State Singles Championships
Sawmill Racquetball Clubs
York, PA, March 5, 6, 7, 1982
Harry O. Fishel, Director

Men's Open: Obremski d. Montague 16-14, 15-10;
3rd—Kress

Men's A (30-34): Montague d. Emes 15-13, 11-3; 3rd—Zewe

Men's A (35-39): Miller d. Powell 15-13, 7-15, 11-6;
3rd—Felicetti

Men's A (40-44): Krevsky d. Felicetti 15-4, 17-15;
3rd—Capozzoli

Men's A (45-49): Jackman d. Curtis 15-12, 15-11;
3rd—Krevsky

Men's A (50-54): Kroll d. Eaxor 15-9, 7-15, 11-4;
3rd—Simkins

Men's A (55 and over): Simkins d. Steighner 10-15, 15-7,
11-8; 3rd—Lee

Men's B Open: D'Alonzo d. Fetterhoff 15-5, 16-14;
3rd—Reck

Men's B (30-39): Overton d. Gotwalt 15-13, 9-15, 11-5;
3rd—Forry

Men's B (40 and over): Downs d. Schulman 15-14, 15-9;
3rd—Lee

Junior Boys (18 and under): Obremski d. Wong 15-9, 15-7;
3rd—Haberstroh

Junior Boys (16 and under): Klein d. Anderson 15-2, 15-1;
3rd—Garis

Junior Boys (14 and under): Heckman d. McKinney 15-8,
15-8; 3rd—Daniher

Junior boys (12 and under): Lewis d. Corneal 15-5, 15-5;
3rd—McCutcheon

Women's A Open: Baxter d. Fischl 15-10, 7-15, 11-7;
3rd—Hajjar

Women's A (30-39): Farrell d. Ross 13-15, 15-5, 11-7;
3rd—Hopkins

Women's B Open: Fogel d. Conway 15-3, 15-3; 3rd—Geiling

Women's B (30-39): Heckman d. Wilkins 15-11, 12-15, 11-9;
3rd—Gray

Women's B (40 and over): Ching d. Kepler 15-7, 15-6;
3rd—Hopson

Junior Girls (12 and under): K. Pinola d. S. Pinola 14-16,
15-3, 11-6; 3rd—Lee

Illinois

Mt. Vernon Racquetball Club
Spring Open Tournament, 1982
Sponsored by Western Sizzlin and WMIX
Radio 94
Mt. Vernon, March 5, 6, 7, 1982

Men's Open: 1st—Erleben; 2nd—Fulkerson; 3rd—Clair

Men's A: 1st—Lewis; 2nd—Jones; 3rd—Pearce

Men's B: 1st—Martin; 2nd—Burison; 3rd—Speiser

Men's C: 1st—Shaw; 2nd—Zeigler; 3rd—Hales

Women's Open: 1st—Nance; 2nd—Clement; 3rd—Laster

Women's A: 1st—Williams; 2nd—Lewis; 3rd—Hawks

Women's B: 1st—Bumpus; 2nd—Van Zant; 3rd—Smith

Women's C: 1st—Crowell; 2nd—Felderman; 3rd—Engler

Wisconsin

Second Annual Playboy Pro-Am Invitational
Playboy Health and Racquet Center
Playboy Resort and Country Club
Lake Geneva, March 12-14, 1982

Men's Pro

Finals: Dan Ferris d. Paul Bakken

Semi-finals: Ferris d. Steve Mondry; Bakken d. Jack Newman

Quarter-finals: Ferris d. Sean Moskwa; Mondry d. Joe Wirkus; Bakken d. Jim Wirkus; Newman d. Ric Dern

New Jersey

YMCA Men's Pre-Spring Tournament
Sponsored by Millville Y Men's Club
Millville YMCA, March 12-14, 1982
Directors: David W. Dennis; David Mitchell

Men's A

Quarter-finals: Keuthen d. Gonzales 15-0, 15-4; Travis d. Norton 15-4, 15-9; Willson d. Madden 15-6, 15-12; T. Pepper d. Dalton 15-10, 15-8

Semi-finals: Willson d. T. Pepper 15-8, 15-12; Keuthen d. Travis 15-3, 15-5

Finals: Kuethen d. Willson 15-9, 15-9

Men's B

Quarter-finals: Leard d. Wangstrom 15-10, 15-10; Dalton d. H. Shapiro 10-15, 15-12, 11-0; Mitchell d. Bye; Madden d. Finch 15-6, 15-10

Semi-finals: Leard d. Dalton 15-9, 13-15, 11-5; Mitchell d. Madden 15-8, 15-10

Finals: Leard d. Mitchell 15-14, 10-15, 11-8

Men's C

Quarter-finals: Zappariello d. Bye; Edelstien d. Leonette 15-11, 13-15, 11-1; Fazzaro d. LoBiondo (forfeit); Atkinson d. Bye

Semi-finals: Zappariello d. Edelstien 15-12, 15-8; Atkinson d. Fazzaro 15-3, 15-4

Finals: Atkinson d. Zappariello 15-1, 15-0

Oregon

1982 Cambridge Classic Racquetball
Tournament

Sponsors: Wally's Thriftway; Boyd's Coffee;
International Foods
Gresham Court Club
Portland, March 17-21

Men's Open: 1st—Krause; 2nd—Westwood; 3rd—Rudolph

Men's A: 1st—Matheson; 2nd—Sherman; 3rd—Norquist

Men's Seniors: 1st—Ooon; 2nd—Hawes; 3rd—Consruck

Men's B: 1st—Faust; 2nd—Welton

Men's C: 1st—Greenwood; 2nd—Whitley; 3rd—Weakley

Men's Open Doubles: 1st—Westwood/Krause; 2nd—Frank/Matheson; 3rd—Guinta/Hodgson

A/BC Doubles: 1st—Eizenzimmer/Woolhiser; 2nd—Robinson/McGlone; 3rd—Johnson/Haynes

Women's A: 1st—Sherman; 2nd—Henke; 3rd—Jeffery

Women's B: 1st—Gould; 2nd—Bromfield; 3rd—Byers

Women's C: 1st—Anderson; 2nd—Quartley; 3rd—Hansen

Women's Doubles: 1st—Johnson/Hewitt; 2nd—Jeffrey/Shelly; 3rd—Larrain/Bromfield

Pennsylvania

Fourth Annual St. Patrick's Tournament
Sponsored by Seamco
Racquettime, USA
Hatfield, March 19, 20, 21
Directors: Joyce Rosati and Doreen Ross

Men's A—Double Elimination

Semi-finals: Musselman d. Hoehn 11-21, 21-15, 11-2; Garis d. Hoehn 14-21, 21-13, 11-9

Finals: Musselman d. P. Garis 21-13, 12-11

Men's B—Single Elimination

Semi-finals: Snyder d. McDermott 21-15, 21-18; G. Garis d. Parnier 21-18, 21-18

Finals: G. Garis d. Snyder 21-20, 10-21, 11-4

Men's C—Single Elimination

Semi-finals: Myers d. Patterson 10-21, 21-13, 11-10; Braun d. Hulmhanz 21-9, 21-16

Finals: Myers d. Braun 21-20, 19-21, 11-8

Men's Novice—Double Elimination

Semi-finals: Mele d. Ruth 21-17, 21-6; Ruth d. Myers 21-17, 21-14

Finals: Mele d. Ruth 21-12, 21-14

Men's Doubles—Double Elimination

Semi-finals: Snyder/Campion d. Clemens/Kulp 21-1, 21-12; Kulp/Clemens d. Braun/Bermos 21-18, 21-2

Finals: Snyder/Campion d. Clemens/Kulp 21-12, 21-20

Hogan Back On Top With Coral Gables Win

by Thomas J. Morrow

As has been his style for the past few years, Marty Hogan, the four-time defending national pro racquetball champion, started slow and is finishing in a blaze of glory.

Hogan edged Dave Peck to take his third tournament victory of the season at the \$20,000 Catalina Classic of Coral Gables, capturing the undisputed top seed position going into the national championship round of the 1981-1982 \$200,000 Catalina Classic Series in Fort Worth, TX, May 18-23.

Going for his unprecedented fifth national title, Hogan, was tied with Peck at two tournament wins each going into this sixth and last regional stop before the \$40,000 Catalina National Championship at the Fort Worth Athletic Club. Except for the October, 1981, opening tournament in Westminster, CA, where Jerry Hilecher won, it has been a Hogan-Peck show all season on the Catalina Series. Peck won the second event in Burnsville, MN, defeating Rich Wagner; Hogan downed Bret Harnett to win in New Haven, CT; Peck beat Hogan to take the Honolulu stop; Hogan stopped Wagner in Beaverton, OR; and the Coral Gables event was filled with suspense as to who would emerge numero uno.

The stage is now set for the finale of the season and the three big tournaments for men's pro racquetball: the \$22,000 Ektelon-PONY Championship at the Sports Gallery of Anaheim, May 5-6; the \$40,000 Catalina National Championship in Fort Worth, May 18-23, and the \$70,000 DP Leach National championship, pro racquetball's super bowl.

The Hogan-Peck match in Coral Gables was every bit as good, if not better, than their previous meetings over the past two years. For the first time this season, both players sent themselves diving, leaping and colliding. The match in which Peck ousted Hogan from his perch at the top of the bracket in Honolulu seemed like a picnic compared to the one they played in Coral Gables.

Hogan took Peck in four hard-fought games, 11-0, 11-8, 1-11, and 11-8. Peck, who was slightly injured in that fourth crucial game while down 8-6, regained his composure and momentum and tied the game 8-all.



"I got anxious when it was tied at 8, then I let him get some good service returns on me and then he made two good shots to put it away," explained a dejected Peck afterward. "I really thought I could get him again, but you can't give Marty a thing—he's the best at taking advantage of his opponent's mistakes."

Hogan finished the match with a smashing backhand kill from back court to claim the \$5,500 first place money. Peck had to settle for \$3,500.

One of the bright spots on the pro racquetball trail this season is the rise of 26-year-old Rich Wagner of San Diego. Since being named by the National Racquetball Club last season as its "Comeback Player of the Year," Wagner has



made a steady climb from a season-opening rank of 21st to his present number three seed and \$11,500 in his pocket. Wagner has made the finals twice this season on the Catalina Series and has won a couple of smaller independent tournaments. He met Hogan in the semi-final round in Coral Gables and stunned the audience by jumping to a 2-0 lead, forcing Hogan to win three straight (7-11, 7-11, 11-2, 11-0, 11-6) in order to escape to the finals against Peck.

Probably the biggest surprise of the Florida tournament was the ouster of Mike Yellen, the event's number three seed (Wagner was seeded number four going in) by ninth-seeded John Egerman of Boise, ID, who had not won a match in five starts this season on the Catalina Series.

In a see-saw battle in the round of 16, Egerman edged Yellen 11-7, 3-11, 11-5, 4-11, 11-9, to advance to the quarter-finals against Harnett.

Harnett, who beat qualifier Mark Morrison of Jacksonville in the opener, 11-8, 11-4, 2-11, 11-3, lost to Egerman in another back-and-forth battle in the quarters 11-5, 8-11, 11-6, 6-11, 11-3.

Peck defeated Steve Strandemo in the opening round of 16, 10-11, 11-7, 11-5, 11-4, before going on to beat Don Thomas in the quarter-finals 11-5, 11-4, 11-8. Thomas defeated Ben Koltun of St.

Louis in the opening round, 7-11, 11-7, 11-2, 8-11, 11-9.

Peck was given a good workout by Egerman, but the youngster from Idaho couldn't keep up as the Texan won in three straight 11-2, 11-4, 11-4. In other action Jerry Hilecher downed qualifier Matt Matthews of Orlando in the round of 16, 11-4, 11-7, 11-2, before he lost to Wagner in the quarters 11-3, 11-4, 3-11, 11-8. Wagner beat Doug Cohen of St. Louis in the opener on Thursday, 11-10, 11-3, 11-4. Hogan defeated young Gregg Peck in the opening round 11-6, 11-4, 7-11, 11-4, before going on to beat the Southeast Catalina Regional Champion Sergio Gonzales of Miami. Hogan played at about three-quarter speed to give the audience of some 500 a good show and Gonzales one of the toughest workouts of his life, going the full five games, 6-11, 11-7, 11-7, 10-11, 11-6.

After picking up the \$5,500 first place money, Hogan expressed his respect for Peck who had put up a tremendous battle for the top prize and honor.

"I really enjoy playing Dave because you can always count on a tough match," said Hogan. "The key to playing a player like Peck is to maintain pressure at all times. If you let up, he'll eat you alive!" ●

Results as of April 1, 1982

Catalina Classic I, Westminster, CA—Hilecher def. Yellen
Catalina Classic II, Burnsville, MN—Peck def. Wagner
Catalina Classic III, New Haven, CT—Hogan def. Harnett
Catalina Classic IV, Honolulu, HI—Peck def. Hogan
Catalina Classic V, Beaverton, OR—Hogan def. Wagner
Catalina Classic VI, Coral Gables, FL—Hogan def. Peck

Player Rankings

1. MARTY HOGAN	Won 16 matches, lost 3	\$23,250 in winnings
2. DAVE PECK	Won 15 matches, lost 4	\$19,750 in winnings
3. RICH WAGNER	Won 10 matches, lost 6	\$11,500 in winnings
4. BRET HARNETT	Won 8 matches, lost 6	\$10,500 in winnings
5. JERRY HILECHER	Won 7 matches, lost 5	\$10,500 in winnings
6. MIKE YELLEN	Won 8 matches, lost 6	\$10,000 in winnings
7. DON THOMAS	Won 7 matches, lost 6	\$9,000 in winnings
8. SCOTT HAWKINS	Won 4 matches, lost 5	\$4,500 in winnings
9. CRAIG MCCOY	Won 3 matches, lost 6	\$3,250 in winnings
10. JOHN EGERMAN	Won 2 matches, lost 6	\$2,000 in winnings
11. DOUG COHEN	Won 1 matches, lost 5	\$1,250 in winnings
12. PETER BRITOS	Won 1 matches, lost 1	\$1,250 in winnings
13. SERGIO GONZALES	Won 1 matches, lost 1	\$1,250 in winnings
14. ED ANDREWS	Won 1 matches, lost 1	\$1,250 in winnings
15. STEVE STRANDEMO	Won 0 matches, lost 3	\$00.00 in winnings
16. GREGG PECK	Won 0 matches, lost 6	\$00.00 in winnings

Tournament Results

Adams Recaptures Number 1 After Diet Pepsi Win

Lynn Adams scored her second 1982 victory over national champ Heather McKay as she took home the \$2,000 winner's check in the \$12,000 Diet Pepsi Pro Am Racquetball Championships at the Glass Court, Lombard, IL. Scores of the finals were 3-2, 2-3, (15-12) at the March 25-28 tournament. Adams now moves back to the number one ranked position in women's professional racquetball.

"After losing to Heather in Seattle (February) I went to the mountains and collected some self-confidence. I'm not afraid of playing Heather now," said Adams in a post match interview. *"It takes guts and determination to play such a fine athlete as Heather McKay."*

"Lynn played very well," said McKay. *I haven't been too pleased with my game lately. I feel fortunate just to make it to the finals."*

Adams racked up two easy games in the beginning, and McKay came back to win the third. In the second set the score reversed with McKay leading 2-0.

"If I'd won the second set 3-0, I think I would have gone into the tie-breaker with more confidence," said McKay.

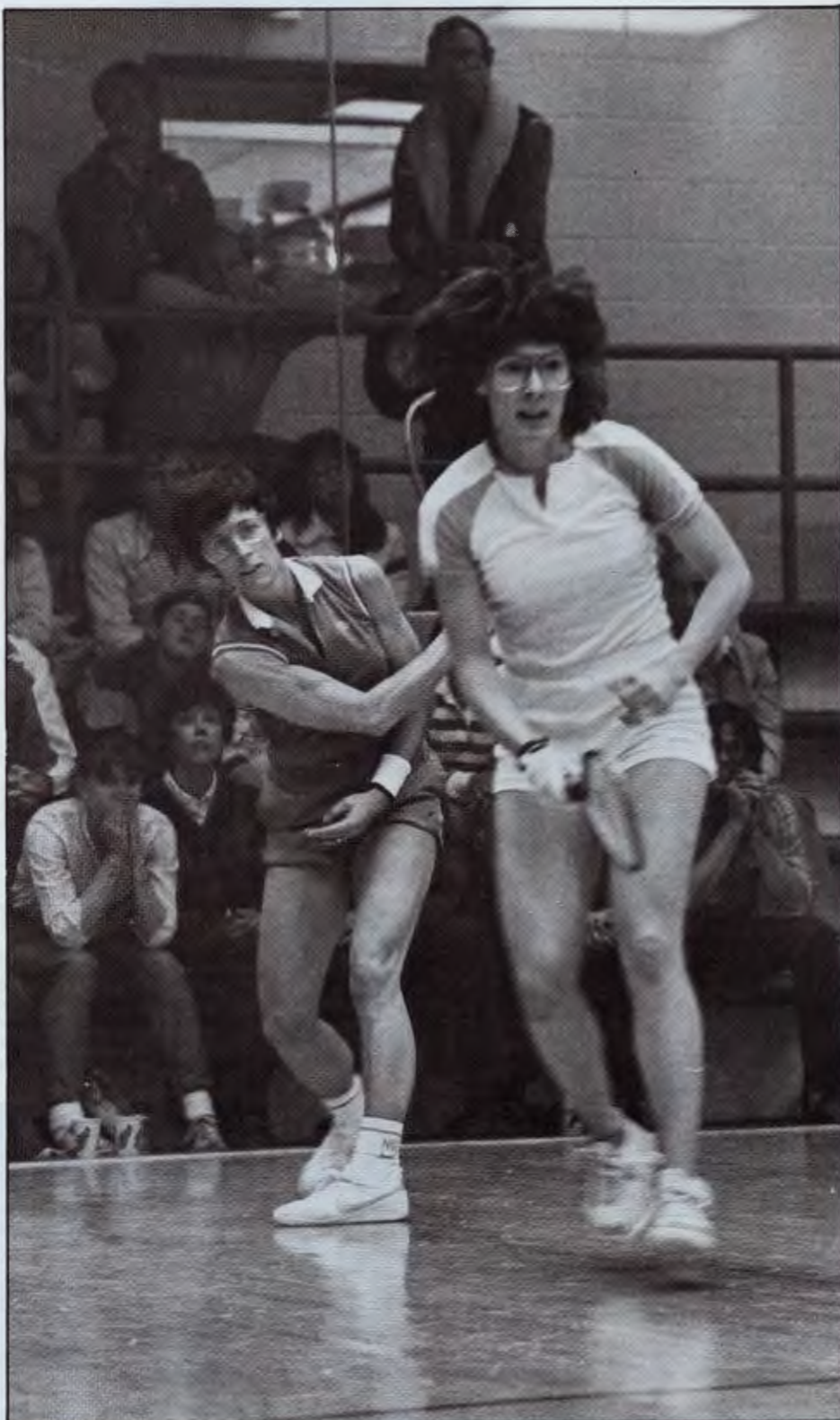
The tie-breaker see-sawed until Adams was serving at 13-12. A backhand pinch shot from the corner moved Adams ahead 14-12 and serving. Adams led McKay into a ceiling ball rally then exchanged passing shots—the final one out of McKay's reach for the win.

Neither finalist had an easy time of it in the semi's. McKay was closest to being ousted, needing a thrilling tie-breaker victory to get past third seeded Marci Greer. After losing the first set three games to one, McKay came back to take the second set 3-0, setting the stage for another of the WPRA's 15 point tie-breakers.

This one went back-and-forth, with McKay eventually emerging on top 15-13.

Adams, who was fighting the flu all weekend, took on two-time national champ Shannon Wright in the bottom bracket semi-final. With her fiance looking on, Wright gave it a valiant effort, but was unable to overcome Adams, with Lynn reaching the championship match 3-0, 3-2.

—Photos by Ivan Fuldauer



McKay wallops a forehand off the back wall in the finals against eventual winner Adams, who seems to be bracing for impact.

Upcoming Events

Take Another Step in Improving Your Career

The 1982 APRO National Convention will take place Friday, July 30, through Sunday, August 1, at the All Sport Fitness and Racquetball Club in Fishkill, NY.

The keynote speaker will be Steve Keeley who will discuss "Racquetball: For Your Ears Only," among other topics.

Others slated to speak are John McCarthy, Executive Director of IRSA; Francine Davis, WPRO President; Luke St. Onge, AARA President; Chuck Sheffel, APRO President; Jack Groppe, Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois; and Jim Winterton, Lou Fabian and Connie Peterson will also share their expertise.

APRO is the only professional racquetball organization for teachers in the world. Last year's convention was regarded as highly successful by those who attended, and it is expected that this year's will again provide opportunities for teaching pros to upgrade their careers and teaching skills, and a forum for the exchange of ideas between professionals.

For more information, contact APRO, 307 S. Milwaukee Av., Suite 126, Wheeling, IL. 60090 (312) 541-5556.

Symposium on Effective Teaching of Racquet Sports

The Fourth International Symposium on the Effective Teaching of Racquet Sports, to be held at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, June 9-12, 1982, is a comprehensive, intensive four-day symposium designed to provide practical assistance to the professional teacher of tennis, badminton, racquetball, or squash. Major emphasis will be on improving instructional techniques in racquet sports and developing an understanding of sports medicine related problems.

The symposium will be conducted on an *applied* level, addressing the areas of private and group instruction, effective stroke development, error detection, individualized instructional methods, equipment selection, and strength development. In addition, the symposium will examine the latest trends in sports medicine as well as show how the latest research findings can be translated directly to practical applications that can be used daily by the teaching professional.

For information write Conferences and Institutes, 116 Illini Hall, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 725 Wright St., Champaign, IL 61820



Wright is all concentration as she prepares for an overhead drive against Adams in the semi-finals. Shannon just didn't quite have enough this time around.



Greer (r.) commits the cardinal sin of jumping to get out of the ball's path as McKay follows through with her backhand, in their semi-final battle.

None of the four semi-finalists were forced to tie-breakers in the quarters. Adams stopped Janell Marriott 3-0, 3-0, after Marriott had upset fourth seed Rita Hoff in the round of 16, although Hoff was hampered by a twisted knee, the injury occurring mid-way through the 15-12 tie-breaker.

Wright didn't have quite so easy a time with Laura Martino, who had bested former squash champ Barbara Maltby in the 16's. Shannon topped Laura 3-0, 3-2.

In the upper bracket, McKay stopped Peggy Gardner 3-0, 3-0 after Peggy had won the tournament's closest match, a 2-3, 3-1, 15-14 victory over Vicki Panzeri in the 16's. It was the third time Gardner and Panzeri have met this season and the third time the match has gone to a tie-breaker. Gardner's win in Lombard gave her a 2-1 advantage in this head-to-head series.

The final quarter-final match found Greer against crowd-pleasing Martha McDonald. McDonald, with her patented whip-stroked, short hop serve, nearly took the second set, before succumbing 3-0, 3-2. Earlier in the day she had topped seventh seed Jennifer Harding 3-1, 3-1.

The tournament marked the first attempt at the pro game by world-famous marathon swimmer Diana Nyad, who was bested in the qualifying rounds by local Chicagoan Sandy Robson 3-2, 3-0. Robson, though, was forced to play Adams in the first round and went down to defeat 3-1, 3-0. ●

Haber's Hands Beat Muehleisen's Racquet In Court Sports 'Match Of The Century'

Date: January 29, 1972

Tournament: None: Exhibition Match

Site: Memphis State University

The year 1972 was to become a pivotal one in the development of racquetball with the opening of the world's first two commercial court facilities. Such court clubs as they came to be known were the result of the huge demand placed on those courts already in existence. The combination of handball players and new-found racquetballers created overflows at most YMCA's, JCC's and other buildings housing the 20 x 40 rooms.

As a result, a great deal of animosity was created between the two camps of players. Handballers resented not being able to get a court because of all the racquetballers. The handball camp further felt that these courts were "theirs," since it was their membership money that built the courts in the 1940's, 50's and 60's.

Of course, the racquetball players felt guiltless. The courts were there, their game was catching on, it was easier and more fun than handball, and they paid their dues just like anyone else.

The battle over supremacy of the courts culminated one mild January day in 1972 when an exhibition match was staged in Memphis pitting perennial handball national champ, Chicagoan Paul Haber, against racquetball's winner of everything at one time or another, San Diego's Dr. Bud Muehleisen. The match would be played on a neutral site, the Memphis State University's three-walled glass championship court.

Memphis was ideally suited as host, being a hotbed of both sports and having more than its share of both good and bad natured competition between the two groups.

Haber's reputation off the court was as a fast living, chain-smoking, beer guzzling, rather crude and earthy man of men. On the court he was nationally famous as a gutsy, determined, aggressive, brilliant and win-at-all-costs battler. Most racquetballers believed Haber epitomized handball.

Muehleisen brought with him an opposite reputation. "The White Knight" as he was called by some, was pure as the driven snow. A dentist by vocation, he did good during the day fixing the mouths of America's kids and he did good by night, using his extensive ability to promote racquetball. On the court his left-handed strokes were the textbook of the day and his game was marked by power and control, forehand and backhand.

The key to the match was the use of the handball as the equalizing factor. Haber would be used to the ball and its spin, while Muehleisen would have reach and tremendous power advantages.

Adding to the drama were two additional sidebars. First was the money. Although no prize money was offered (pro racquetball was still three years away), it was general knowledge that large sums were wagered on the match, with each player to receive a percentage if he won (the rumor was that if Haber won, he'd buy a round for the entire gallery; if Muehleisen won, he'd donate it to his favorite charity).

Although the real truth will never be known, estimates of the amount wagered went as high as \$60,000, with \$40,000 probably being a lot closer to reality.

The second sidebar was the infusion of national attention. Sports Illustrated magazine not only agreed to publish the results, it sent staff reporter Dan Levin and a photographer to Memphis to cover the event. To ensure impartiality of coverage, Levin sat between handball's Mort Leve and his son, racquetball's Chuck Leve, with each bending one ear.

It was agreed that the referee (there were no linesmen in those days) was to be the most honest man in all of Memphis, the late Smitty Schippers, himself a racquetball player and Muehleisen's adamant hedge against Haber's well known referee-baiting and intimidating antics.

And so before a standing room only house of 350 spectators (from as far away as San Diego, Chicago, Milwaukee, New York, Birmingham, Louisville and St. Louis) the match began.

Referee Smitty Schippers



Muehleisen won the toss and served first in what was to be the first of three 21 points games (no tie-breakers in 1972). He immediately went to the top of his list of 16 reasons why he'd win (he had even given the list to SI's Levin, to help the reporter follow his progress). That number one factor was power and "Dr. Bud" blasted his first serve faster than anybody's speeding bullet, at least 200 mph.

Haber was surprised at the velocity and had trouble returning, resulting in a quick point for Muehleisen. In fact there were a lot of quick points early in this game almost all for Muehleisen. Haber was able to let many of the power blasts come off the back wall, but the speed was still too much to allow him to return effectively. Muehleisen played offensively from the start and showed fine back wall kills, power passes and overhead drives.

The score rapidly reached 11-2 Muehleisen and as *Handball* magazine reported, "threw a quick pall over the handball backers."

Only a double fault at this point lost the serve for Muehleisen and Haber seized the opportunity, scoring four points of his own. It seemed that neither man was able to handle the other's serve very well, Dr. Bud having trouble with the handball "hop" and Haber reeling from the racquet's power.

Muehleisen recovered and regained control of the game, again using a power, drive serve primarily to Paul's left. Errors, aces and weak returns led to a 15-6 racquetballer advantage and after two side out exchanges it became 17-6.

Muehleisen takes a forehand off the back wall as Haber allows plenty of room for the rock-hard handball.

Dr. Bud's best serve was becoming the drive left, which due to the speed, forced Haber to let go. The ball would carom around the deep left corner and kick out toward the opposite wall, off the back wall. This is normally a handball set-up, but the ball's speed forced Haber into exhausting track-it-down-and-try-to-get-it-back-to-the-front wall returns—far from being able to set up and hit with any mustard.

Demonstrating surprisingly good deep court, backhand control, Muehleisen kept the pressure on. The score mounted to 19-9 and Dr. Bud coasted in 21-10.

If there was ever a day in sports where there was a sure bet, the racquetball camp knew it was this day. From Muehleisen on down to the racquet wielding towel boy, this was going to be the easiest money ever made. As he left the court for the two minute rest period, Muehleisen flashed the "A-OK" sign to Levin, occupying front row center at the left wall short line.

For the good doctor, it was to be the last time things would be A-OK on this day.

It is difficult to describe what was going on inside this match. On one hand Muehleisen's confidence bordering on cockiness was justified. He dominated and controlled game one—no question about it. Yet Haber did not appear demoralized, nor even bothered that he lost the first game.

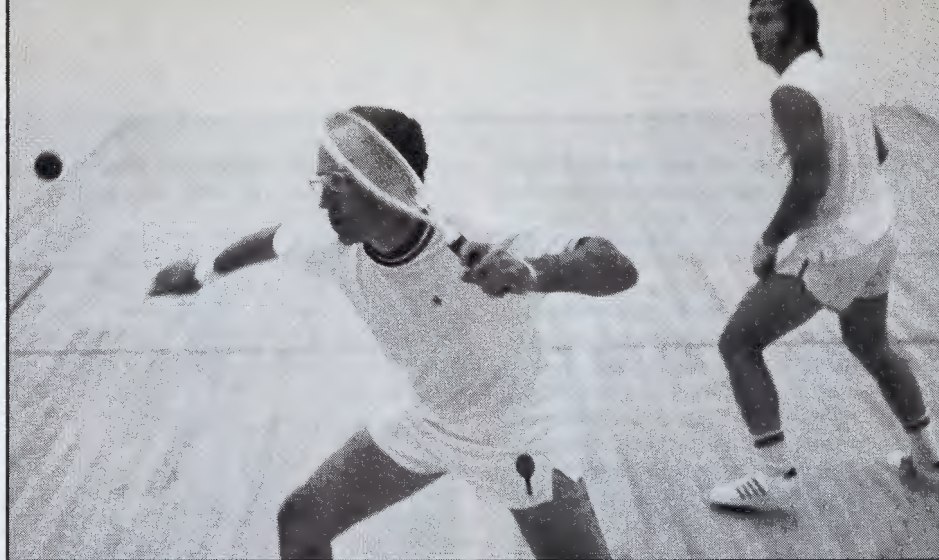
"I wasn't sure, but I thought Haber was ready to make a move," said Mort Leve later. "It took nearly two-thirds of the first game for him to get comfortable with the speed of the ball. Once he did that, then he could start searching for weaknesses in Muehleisen's game."

"It appeared that Paul was able to play Bud just about even the last third of the first game."

Haber did far better than play even at the outset of game two. Choosing to serve Muehleisen's forehand and follow with cross court ceilings to Bud's backhand became sound strategy. Muehleisen began to err repeatedly with his ceiling game and Haber started mounting points.

An avoidable hinder on The White Knight gave Haber a 2-1 lead; a deep court skip made it 3-1; an unreturnable near-ace on a "reverse hop" serve counted 4-1; two Haber left-handed, deep court kills made it 6-1; and another Muehleisen skip off the serve was 7-1. Suddenly, Dr. Bud's control had vanished.

Muehleisen tallied once and four straight scoreless serve attempts followed before another left hand kill gave Haber an 8-2



advantage. It was obvious that the crafty Haber was winning points by keeping the ball in play, allowing Muehleisen to make the critical mistakes. In particular, Bud's backhand ceiling game simply abandoned him, with an eventual nine errors occurring on this one shot alone during game two.

As the score mounted one could feel the mood of the gallery swing. The handball camp started to get some color back into their faces, while the racquetballers urged Muehleisen to settle down.

A backhand ceiling error by Dr. Bud gave Haber a 9-2 lead; ditto for 10-2; followed by another error for 11-2; and a Haber kill for 12-2. Only Haber's first inkling of offensive gambling cost him the serve as he went for an off balance kill from 37 feet and skipped it in. Rather than risk a quick run of points by Muehleisen, Haber called time out.

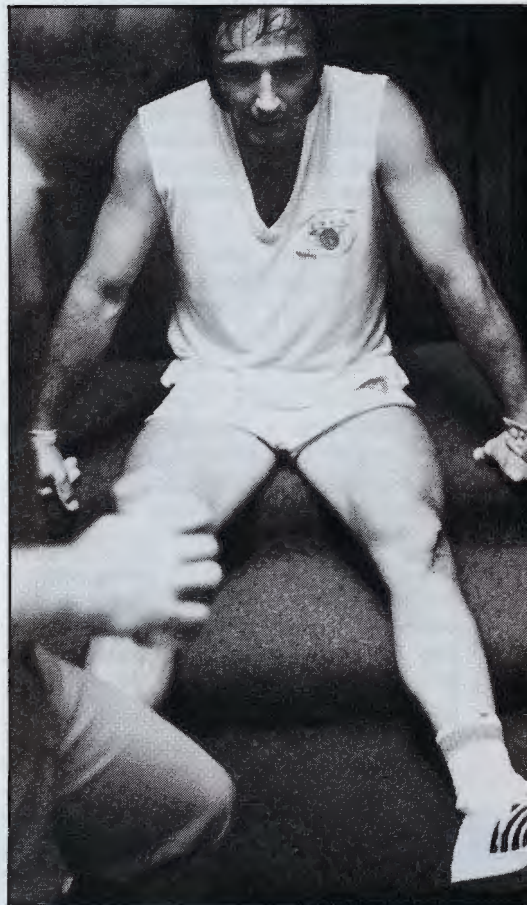
What a strange atmosphere! Muehleisen's first game confidence was now replaced by obvious perplexity. Yet Haber's body was taking a woeful beating despite his large lead. Although he was bleeding from both knees and sweating as if in a steam bath, Haber's outward expression never changed. He zeroed in on that little black sphere and nothing else.

At 3-13 Bud connected on a forehand kill and followed it with an ace to cut the margin to 5-13, but missed a dump kill attempt to lose the serve. Haber quickly got the two points back on two more Muehleisen errors before three scoreless rallies.

Then Bud made his move. He finally connected with a big inning, scoring four times (two backhand kills and two Haber errors) and after losing serve, regained and scored three more unanswered points making the score 12-15, definitely within reach.

With his confidence creeping back, Dr. Bud kept the pressure on, closing to 14-16 and then he brought the crowd to its feet with a 35 foot overhead corner kill and 15-16.

Between games Haber has ice applied to his scraped and bloodied knees.



But never has a man played a court sport with the ferocity and tenacity of Paul Haber. Diving, scraping, bruising, hustling and covering corner to corner, Haber just wouldn't let go. And his desire paid off in points as a right hand kill stopped Muehleisen's streak.

Another backhand ceiling error gave Haber a 17-15 lead and another Haber right hand kill made it 18-15. As if fearing to give up the serve lest he never regain it, Haber went for the jugular as game two neared its end.

Boom! A right hand kill into the front right corner. Boom! A low, reverse hop ace to the right. Boom! A left hand back wall kill into the front left corner. Score game two for Haber, 21-15.

The one certainty between games was that no one was certain what would happen in the third game. Muehleisen's comeback, though short in the second, plus Haber's fatigue were enough to give wary confidence to the racquetball camp. Haber's stunning second game win was all the handballers needed to get revved up.

But game three caught everybody off guard. And I do mean everybody.

Muehleisen served first and promptly lost the serve when he skipped a forehand kill attempt and Haber took fast advantage, scoring once on his own kill, twice more on two backhand errors and he made it 4-0 on a left hand kill. Each player failed to score the next time in and then Haber lowered the boom. And it was a big boom. One of the biggest ever seen.

Handball's champ came in and scored 13 consecutive points without losing the serve! That's right, those two calloused and gnawed hands outshot Bud's one racquet to run up a 17-0 lead!

There was no need to guess which camp a spectator was in. The handball fanatics were on their feet, shouting, screaming and pleading for the famous donut; the racquetballers were in shock. They saw it but they didn't believe it.

How did it happen? The big inning went like this: skip, ace, ace, kill, kill, skip, avoidable, error on serve, overhead skip, skip, return of serve skip, and back wall kill.

Muehleisen was at Haber's mercy. He could do nothing right, Haber did nothing wrong. Four points away from a miracu-

ous and stunning victory, still serving, 17-0, Haber had one more twist to pull. He called time out.

"I was physically exhausted," he said later. "I hurt, I couldn't catch my breath. I was certain I wouldn't be able to serve the ball over the short line. I needed rest more than I needed points, so I called the time out."

It nearly cost him the match.

A down-the-line pass got Dr. Bud the serve and a fly kill got him on the board. Another kill made it 2-17 but he stopped himself with a double fault. Haber added one making 18-2, but his tired right arm wasn't quick enough and he blew an easy set up to lose the serve.

This was just the opening Muehleisen needed. Four fast points made it 6-18 and after losing serve, Bud regained it on a brilliant pass. He then followed with three more on a forehand pass, fly kill and ace to the left, 9-18.

Again Haber took the serve and again Bud regained it. And as the racquetballers cheered and the handballers squirmed, Muehleisen came storming back. A kill into the right corner and it was 10-18; a fly kill left made it 11-18. A forehand deep court skip lost the serve.

Haber was physically beaten. But somehow he managed to gut it out. He kept the ball in play long enough for Dr. Bud to skip in a set up for a 19-11 lead. Muehleisen regained the serve, sensing that if he could just keep the ball in play, the match could be his.

A backhand kill made it 12-19 and with Haber all over the floor, somehow retrieving the racquet's bullets, Bud kept his cool and hit another fly kill, the best shot in his arsenal, 13-19. But the errors continued and Paul grabbed the serve on another skip, then lost it when Bud killed, again after three miraculous Haber gets.

Another exchange with neither man scoring. Then a minor collision, Haber wanted hinder, Muehleisen got the point instead, 14-19. Exhausted, Haber couldn't reach the front wall with his right; 15-19 and the handball troops were stirring. Bud managed a forehand pass down the line and it was 16-19! The game and match were within reach—after being down 0-17!

But Dr. Bud couldn't add to the total and after losing the serve skipped a backhand and it was 20-16 with Haber serving for the match. Once Muehleisen got the serve back but couldn't score. Twice Muehleisen got the serve back and couldn't score. He never got the third chance.

In an ending that still is argued over in locker rooms from Memphis to San Diego, the final point forever snarled the match in controversy. Haber served a drive to Muehleisen's backhand and Bud returned cross court to the left. Haber stayed with the ceiling and Bud tried to cut the ball off and pass left. Slightly mis-hit, Dr. Bud tried to move out of the way and in so doing, moved into Haber.

You guessed. Avoidable hinder. Game and match to Paul Haber, 21-16!

A sight none of the 350 will ever forget was Bud Muehleisen standing hands on hips at the short line glaring at Smitty Schmippers, while Paul Haber grabbed his hand, gave it one token shake and was out of the court in his fastest move since early in game one.

"I think one of the keys was Haber's hop serve," said Muehleisen later. "It gave me much more trouble than I thought it would. Next time I'll practice more."

"As I said a long time ago, our primary goal was to obtain national exposure for the sports. The only thing wrong with the match was the ending. The wrong guy won."

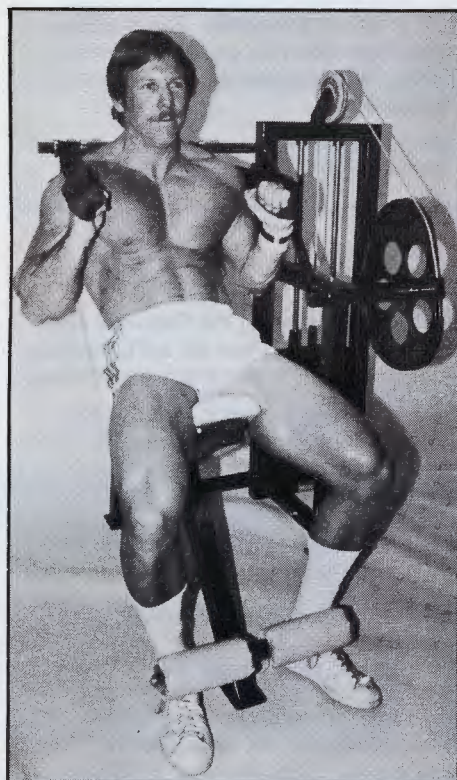
Yes, there was a re-match and Muehleisen regained some of racquetball's honor by winning it. But in the annals of racquetball/handball lore this first-ever hands versus racquet battle will truly go down as what the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* said, "the most exciting match ever played." ●



Muehleisen collides with Haber at the moment of truth. The avoidable hinder was the match-ending, controversial call.

New Products

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For further information, write: Defender, Inc., 26th & Reed Streets, Dept. P, Philadelphia, PA 19146. Or phone: 1-800-523-1502 if out of state; otherwise, (215) 465-8838.

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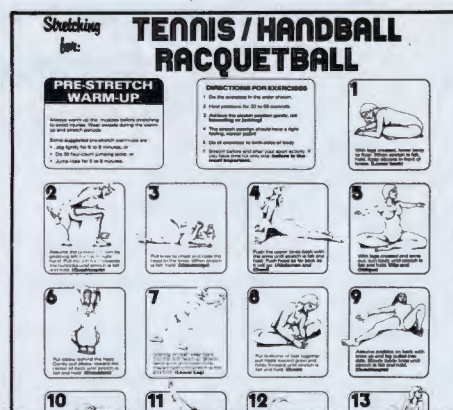
It forever ends the need to clean eyeglasses with handkerchief, towel, t-shirt, paper towel, shirt-tail, etc., plus it completely eliminates the possibility of scratching a lens, especially a plastic lens.



The unit is made of sturdy plastic and is small enough to fit in any size pocket or purse, ready for instant use.

Each Kleer Vision™ eye glass lens wiper comes with a full money-back guarantee and retails for \$3.49 postage paid. It is available from A.C. International, 2160 Payne Ave., Cleveland, Ohio 44114.

Stretching Charts



The stretching routine featured in the March issue (page 34) was created by John E. Beaulieu, author of *Stretching For All Sports*. This routine is available in an attractive 23" x 35", two-color wall chart, one of a series of 13 charts created by John Beaulieu. These charts are used world-wide by coaches, trainers, and athletes of professional and collegiate teams. They are excellent for clubs and personal use. Each chart is \$3.25ppd. For more information contact: Stretching Charts, P.O. Box 3288, Eugene, OR 97403.

Letters

Hard To Read?

Dear Editor:

I find it very difficult to read the "Ask The Champ" page in each issue because of all the different shades from the picture of Marty Hogan. Could you put the picture on the top of the page and please leave the reading section all white?

In your February issue Marty says that time outs rarely work and "It's rare to see a time out stop somebody's momentum." It's kinda funny then, to read on page 42 that "Peck defeated Hogan when he took a one minute time out, which turned the match around."

I always enjoyed your "Letters to the Editor" section and hope that its omission from February's issue won't become policy. Love the "EXTRA" section, too.

Judi Myers
Pinedale, WY

This is the first time we've had somebody request that the "Ask The Champ" page be printed without the 10% screen (as it's known in the magazine business) of Hogan because of difficulty in reading. If more readers feel that way and let us know, we'd be happy to change. Perhaps we'll experiment with a

5% screen in future issues. As for time outs—Hogan doesn't accept the author's interpretation that the Peck time out was responsible for his victory. And as you can see, "Letters" are back.—Editor

Novice Surprises Self

Dear Editor:

At the ripe old age of 32, I entered my first tournament this winter, the Greater Boston YMCA's Mixed Handicap Racquetball Tournament (and concurrent Novice Tournament), held February 27 to March 7.

I entered as a novice and played my first game against a woman. My nervous system played most of the game without me, and I won the match. Phew! I won against my next two opponents—a man and a woman. My final game was against a very good male player, who beat me quite easily in the first two games. That still meant I finished second—in my very first tournament!

Beyond the exhilaration of winning, the tournament provided an arena for some very good games. People pushed themselves to their limits and felt good about

it. Some matches introduced total stranger who found themselves setting up future racquetball dates. The matches were well attended, and allowed many Y members to experience the enjoyment of racquetball.

Sharon O'Connor
Jamaica Plain, MA

Small World

Dear Editor:

It was great opening the February issue to see the fine job you did with my story about the court in the cow barn. Thanks.

Last week I was playing a new friend, Jim Moreland, from Milwaukee. He once taught school in Darlington, WI, and to my surprise he said that he had begun playing on the barn court. Jim is a former Wisconsin Class C Champ, and is now a good A player.

I also want to compliment you on a great story about Larry Lederman. In that article my dad (Bill Schultz, Sr.) is mentioned as having beaten Bill Schmidtke in the 1st National Championships in 1968. I was there, and the championship match was a very tough, physical three games going down to the wire. Surely one of the greatest matches of all time.

William A. Schultz
Madison, WI

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Brightens her Day

Dear Editor:

I am writing this letter to tell you how much I enjoy Steve Keeley's features, "Racquetball or Racquetball Ball." I am responsible for opening the Boulevard Mall Racquetball Club, and it usually means being on the job by six o'clock in the morning. This is not always the brightest hour of the day but has become so since I began reading these features. Your magazine is written with authority on the subject of racquetball, but it also contains well measured humor.

In fact I can empathize with Steve's personification of the raquetball (racquetball ball?) so much that I find myself greeting the display cases of racquetballs every morning when I arrive! My early morning friends and I look forward to next month's feature, and another good laugh at the zany world of racquetball. Thank you for such a well written and informative magazine.

Anne Marie Coughlin
Buffalo, NY



LeRoy Neiman

Internationally famous LeRoy Neiman stands alone among contemporary artists in capturing the color, spectacle and excitement of today's sporting scenes. Neiman's art is sought after and acquired by prominent art collectors, galleries and institutions throughout the world. His unique eye for subject matter has captured the likes of Sinatra, Ali, Namath, Borg, Nicklaus, Kennedy, Mays. And now...

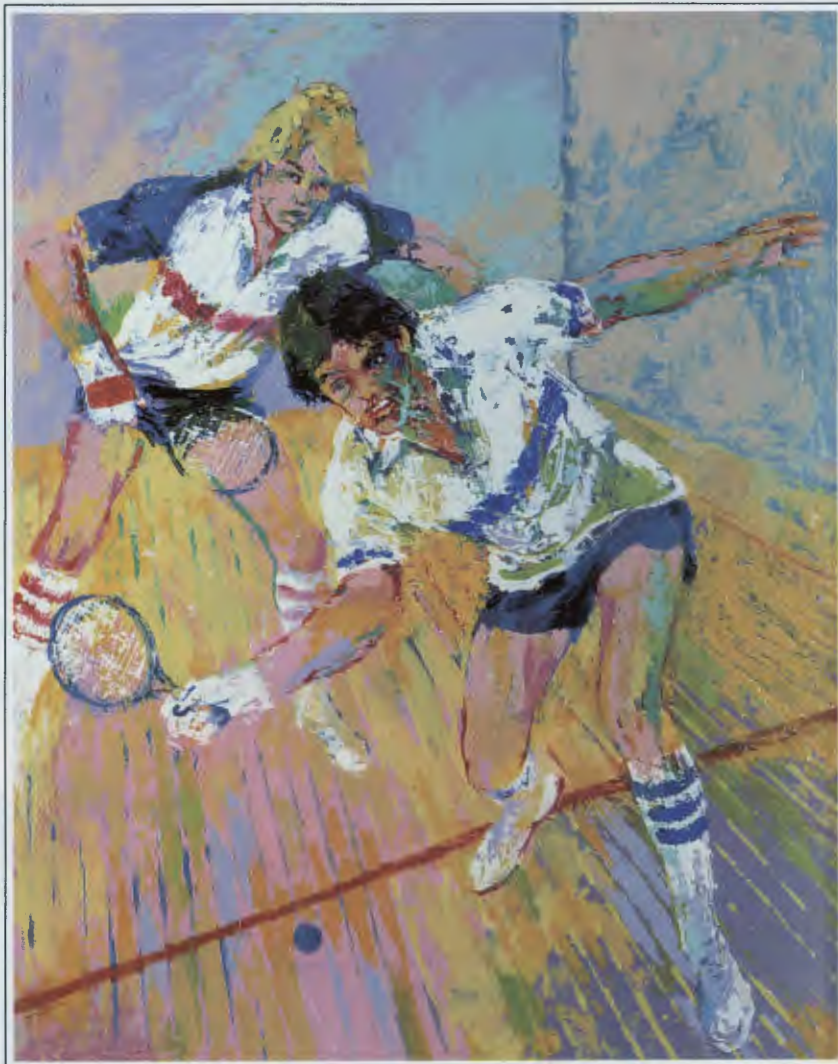
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