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KILLSHOT

The Nine Lives of Aaron Katz

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world's most improved
player

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- 4 Short Serves
- 9 Editorial
- 10 Being the Best You Can Be
- 12 The Eyes Have It
- 13 Letters
- 14 The Pass, the Pinch, and Other
Offensive Intentions
- 17 IRT Tour
Oh No, We've Created a
Monchik!
- 24 Rankings
VCI Spreadsheet
- 28 The Names of the Game
- 30 Serve 'Em Up
- 32 IRT News
- 34 New Faces on the Tour - New
Champion at the Nationals
- 37 Ten Things That Halt Your Progress
- 38 Home Court

- 41 **KILLSHOT** Cafe
- 42 The Nine Lives of Aaron Katz
- 47 TCB

He's outspoken, he's controversial, and he may just be the most improved racquetball player in the world. He's Aaron Katz and he's spilling his guts for **KILLSHOT**. Page 42 *The Nine Lives of Aaron Katz*



Cliff Swain has dominated the IRT with the most famous serve in the game. Find out how he does it - straight from the master himself. Page 30 *Serve 'Em Up*

With the season coming to a close, the players of the International Racquetball Tour have pulled out all the stops to deliver the best action of the season. Jim Daly covers the excitement including the VCI World Championships and VCI Doubles World Championships Page 17 *Oh No, We've Created a Monchik!*



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SHORT SERVES



Career Opportunities

John Ellis of Stockton, California and Sudsy Monchik of Staten Island New York both chose the IRT stop at the Shop N Save Pro Am in Pittsburgh to officially terminate their amateur standing.

Players are allowed to maintain amateur status while playing the pro tour through a complicated system that channel any winnings into a special trust fund. The system was designed to allow top amateur players to test the waters of pro racquetball without making an immediate commitment. Many of the top pros had elected to take advantage of the option until 1992. At that time the IRT Executive Board, seeing the success of the pro tour, elected to build into the system major advantages to officially turning pro upon reaching the top sixteen if not before. The decision combined with a series of steps to help set the stage for the tremendous success of the IRT.

Both Ellis and Monchik had seen stellar careers in the amateur ranks, including an amateur national championship for Ellis, and a clean sweep of juniors age divisions for Monchik.

OK, Two Out of Three for the Tab?

Five time national champ Mike Yellen and managing editor Marvin Quertermous iron out the details of Yellen's upcoming feature series in **KILLSHOT**. With a wealth of racquetball knowledge and tremendous insight into sports in general, Yellen will be a welcomed regular addition to the team.

"He has some innovative ideas that I think will be a big hit with readers," stated Quertermous. "I've worked with Mike many times in the past and I have a great respect for his abilities."

The question is, can two such competitive individuals work together without killing one another?



Norm Blum's Passing Shots

The Inside Scoop

It's been several months since Prince acquired Ektelon and here's my perspective on what's going on in the corporate boardroom. With an entire new management team, Prince is going through a transition. In its first year they are staying with Ektelon's game plan. They are assessing the strengths and weaknesses and will implement their own agenda in year two. Prince feels Ektelon has pumped more money into the industry than anyone else and is largely responsible for keeping the sport alive. They want to analyze which programs really work and not just be the company that is fronting the money. Ektelon has about 60 percent of the industry market share. It remains to be seen whether Prince, known as a tennis company, can develop a new racquet and bring it out to the market place.

Prince made some quick changes. Not only did they move the company from San Diego to New Jersey, but they use their own sales force. Ektelon used rep groups in the past. Several years ago, Head went through a similar transition in the past in which the tennis reps became responsible for racquetball as well. Head reps seemed to put racquetball on the back burner because at the time the numbers were in tennis. Their product was great in terms of quality, but the reps ignored the smaller clubs and sales diminished. Ektelon, meanwhile, thrived because a lot of their reps lived, breathed, and ate racquetball. Prince should have easier going because the Ektelon name is like an icon.

But it is possible for the market share to dwindle. Spalding has the name recognition and a great line of racquets with some great names. Head has made a commitment with the signing of **Cliff Swain** among some other really positive marketing and innovative racquets. And let's not forget the experienced **John Weaver** at Pro Kennex. With his savvy, he could vault his company right into the top spot.

Pro Racquetball Potpourri

The biggest surprise of the year has to

be **Aaron Katz**. A smart, consistent player, his style of play reminds you of **Mike Yellen**. Until this past year Katz has never been more than a quarter finalist. Just when you figure the power game would cause him to fade from the scene, he's gone to the next level...Can someone offer an explanation of what happened to **Drew Kachtik**? The top player a few years ago, he'll lose in the second round of tournaments and it surprises no one. Hmmm...Another disappointment has to be **Andy Roberts**. I thought he'd have four or five national titles by now. He's about the only one who can handle **Cliff Swain**, but just can't seem to capture that No. 1 spot...One of the great sights next season will be the return of the youthful **Ruben Gonzalez** who was injured playing basketball...Rumor Mill. **Mike Yellen's** going down. He's getting married. First hand details from this columnist who is attending the wedding.

Soapbox Time

It's time for me to lecture and offer a theory or two. To me the essence of sport is when **Milt Layton**, after several close calls, wins the 45+ national title. What really irks me is to see **Michelle Gould**, the top professional in the world play in an amateur event. I really don't care if she is eligible due to some technicalities which allows professionals to compete in amateur events. A national amateur championship should be for players who are working stiffly during the day and play racquetball after work. It shouldn't be for professionals! If the AARA really wants to expand the game internationally then they shouldn't stack their team with professionals. The best thing that could happen to racquetball would be if Mexico or some other country

Gonzales. Time for a break.



©1991 SK

would whip the US National Team. That would enhance the game. Now the American team routinely humiliates its opposition. Racquetball could make a statement by not allowing professionals on its team and not following the footsteps of tennis and basketball. It was refreshing to hear **Sudsy Monchik**, an up and coming pro, announce his intentions to play professionally full time. Monchik was thankful to the AARA for the opportunity they gave him during his formative years.

Potpourri II

Racquetpower, host of the 1994 AARA Nationals, has lost its head pro, **Mary Lyons**. Lyons was at the club for a record 11 years. Lyons, who ran some of the largest tournaments in the nation said management altered its philosophy toward her company, Off the Wall. "They think the courts will bring in people and that you don't need programs. Everyone in the industry knows that isn't true," Lyons said. She hopes to hook up with another club or racquetball related company.

Have You Ever Seen The Kind Of Bruise A 180 mph Serve Can Leave

"Nice Serve Cliff!"
[Wow!]

"Nice Serve Cliff!"
[Was that a serve or a missile!]

"Nice Serve Cliff!"
[Had to be a wetball serve!]

"Nice Serve Cliff!"
[Maybe the video caught it?]

"Nice Serve Cliff!"
[This is getting old fast!]

"Nice Serve Cliff!"
[Okay, I'm just gonna guess!]

"Nice Serve Cliff."
[Guess again!]

"Nice Serve Cliff."
[Hey got a piece of one!]

"Nice Serve Cliff."
[Is this a double elimination journey?]

"Nice Serve Cliff."
[This Sucks!]

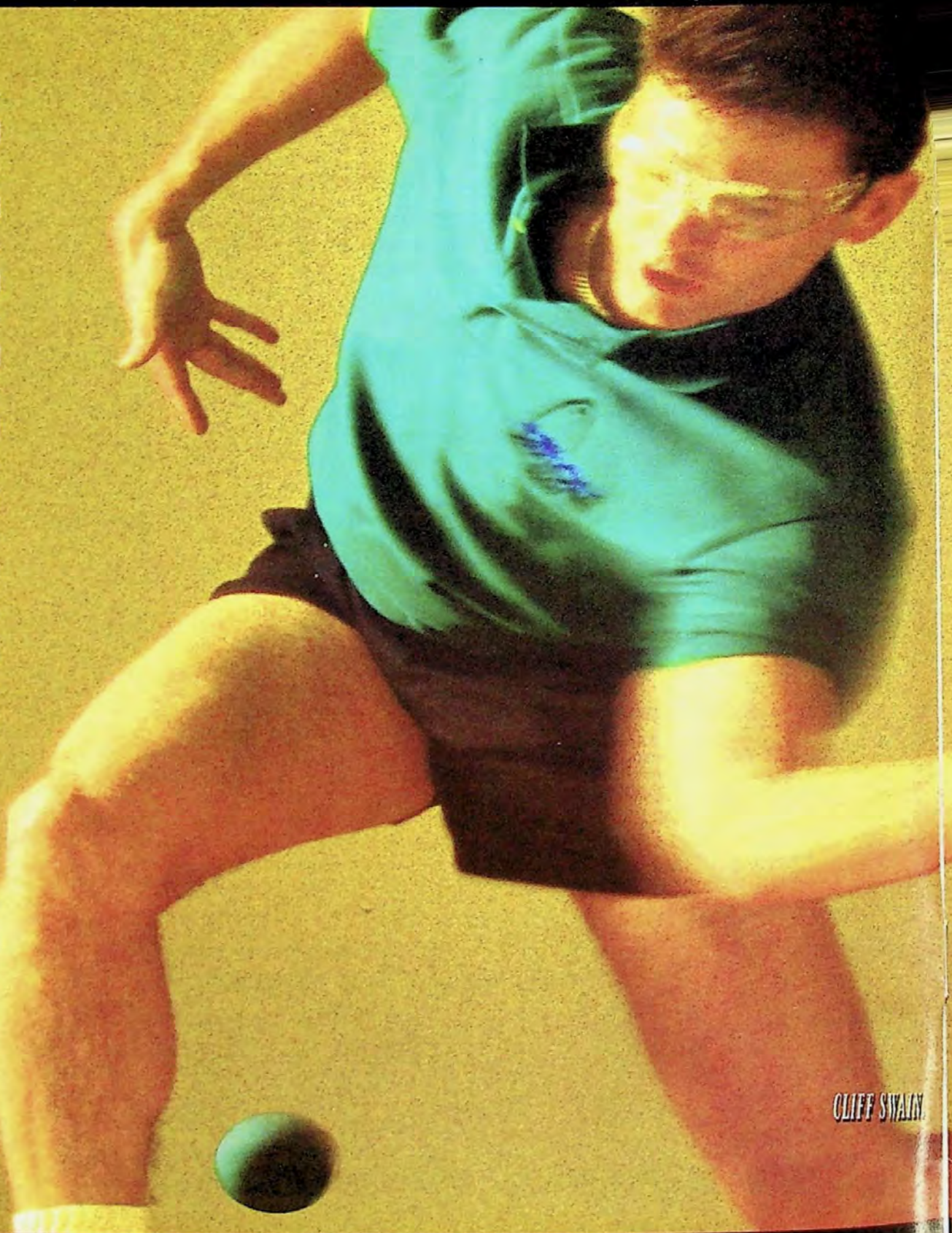
"Nice Serve Cliff."
[I suck!]

"Nice Serve Cliff."
[Great, I choked one back.]

"Nice Serve Cliff."
[This just eats the big one!]

"Nice Serve Cliff."
[I'm not even gonna get to serve!]

"Nice game Mr. Swain."
[Jerk!]



CLIFF SWAIN

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I Guess it Finally Sunk in

Novel idea, huh? I guess it's beginning to sink in that to encourage racquetball growth something needs to be done at the club level. Traditionally clubs have sort of been lost in the shuffle with all the talk about Olympic status and taking the game to new levels. Mind you, there is nothing wrong with pushing toward the Olympics and the credibility gained from the exposure would definitely create additional interest in the game. But the fact remains, racquetball is a club sport. When someone comes into the game it's generally through a club, or a Y or a J center. And even if new interest is created by achieving recognition from the Olympic Committee those new players will still have to go to a club to actually play the game.

Most parts of the country aren't equipped with free outdoor facilities to encourage participation from the "unclubbed" masses and even if they were there is no way for a potential player to fig-

ure out on his own how to play. Ahh, but all that is changing. The agreement between ESPN and the IRT for a four event package to be broadcast in the fall will ensure visibility by millions of potential players. The broadcasts will not just be play-by-play coverage. Realizing that racquetball is unfamiliar to a majority of the remote-wielding populace, the thinkers at JM Productions are planning an approach that would also include features outlining rules, tips, some basic instruction, and information about the game. These broadcasts will not be programs shotgunning out on a shoestring budget just to get some exposure. This will be well orchestrated coverage planned for maximum exposure and entertainment.

Coincidentally (I don't know about you but I don't believe in coincidence) while all this is happening the IRT has added to the number of its satellite events making pro-level play more accessible across the country. There is also an added

emphasis on the grass roots players from the sporting goods manufacturers associated with the game. They realize the strength of the sport depends on club leagues, in-house tournaments, recreational and casual players and kids - groups normally ignored over the years in efforts to only recognize sanctioned tournament players.

But the clubs can't be left to do all the work building the programs to make the sport stronger. They need assistance and education on how to develop the programs, what works and what can be unrewarded effort. The manufacturers have banded together with that in mind and are exploring ways to increase club strength and provide methods to create growth. I predict you will be hearing a great deal about the "grass roots" racquetball player in months to come and I think you will see renewed commitment from the manufacturers to take the game to new popularity. Novel idea, huh?

--SQ



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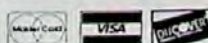
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Being You The Best Can Be

Aaron Katz

We all set goals for ourselves in racquetball — winning certain tournaments, achieving a certain ranking, defeating our arch rival, or simply improving our game. All of these goals should be accomplished within the framework of being the best player you can be. That should be the ultimate high in sports, constantly improving and striving to maximize your physical and mental capabilities.

Fundamentals

No matter what level you have reached, the first step in overhauling (or even tuning up) your game is reevaluating your execution of the fundamentals. The house is only as sturdy as the foundation and if the foundation is susceptible to cracking then the roof will often cave in. The more I watch the IRT players the clearer it becomes that those who are the most fundamentally sound are the ones who have been the most consistent throughout the last several seasons.

What do I mean when I refer to fundamentals? I mean stroke mechanics, footwork, racquet preparation, etc. Spend some time addressing these fundamentals. If you have a mentor or someone to question about your game, by all means involve that person in this process. Ask point blank, "If you were to tear me down and rebuild me as a racquetball player what would you change about my fundamentals?" Here is a little checklist to guide you in this process.

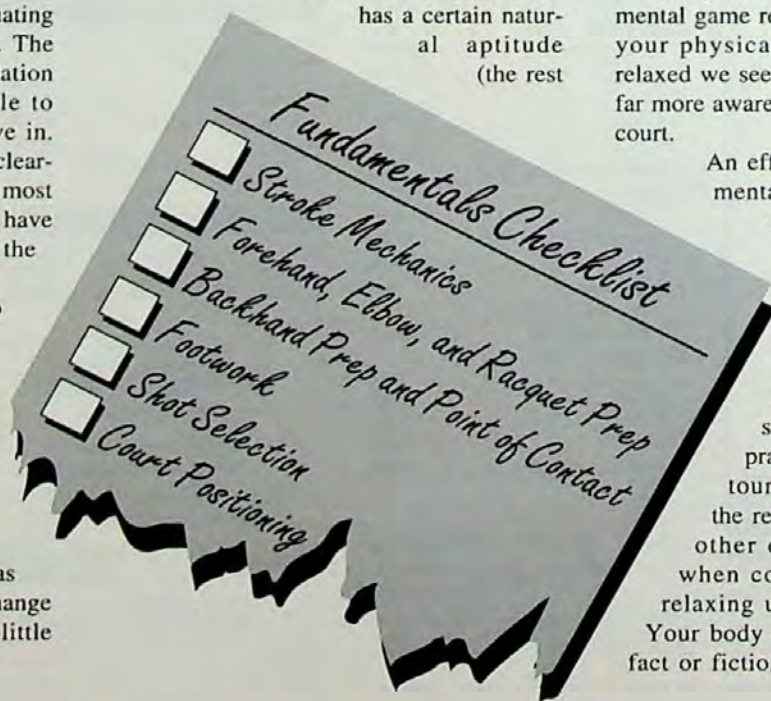
Mental preparation

The mental aspect of racquetball is the least utilized and developed of all of the tools necessary to be successful in the sport. Most avid players spend plenty of time practicing, working out, and perfecting their shots. However, most players have a tendency to ignore the mental part of the game. I believe the reason for this omission has been the myth that a player either has a good mental game or he doesn't. Nothing could be further from the truth. The mental aspect of the sport is like any other skill. Each of us has a certain natural aptitude (the rest

is left to our ability to further develop it). You would never hear someone say "my forehand can't get any better," or "I can't get any stronger."

In order to reach your potential you must address your mental game just like you do strokes, footwork, or any other skill. What exactly is the mental game comprised of? I am glad you asked. The most important aspect of the mental game is to learn how to relax when competing. How many times have you come off the court after a tournament match and thought I was so nervous or hyper that I didn't even get a chance to play my game. Learning how to relax your mind and body allows you to execute your skills. Said differently, a good mental game results in the manifestation of your physical abilities. When we are relaxed we see things much clearer and are far more aware of what is happening on the court.

An effective way to improve your mental game and your ability to relax is the effective use of visualization or mental imagery. Using visualization and imagery properly in your practice matches and drills will allow you to relax in pressure situations. When you are practicing, picture yourself in a tournament situation, imagine the referee, the crowd, and all the other emotions you experience when competing. Concentrate on relaxing under these circumstances. Your body cannot distinguish between fact or fiction so if the mental image is



clear enough your body will adapt to the higher pressure situation.

The second most important aspect of the mental game is the ability to focus. Unlike most touring professionals, amateur players have much greater concerns in their life than their ability to hit a backhand pinch. Work and the family consume the lion's share of their daily thought processes. This makes it critical to learn to block out whatever other concerns you have when you enter the racquetball court. Concentrate on playing one point at a time each time you step onto the court. Once again, rehearsing the same mental techniques each time you perform will help them be properly developed come tournament time.

Physical Conditioning

Weak legs make cowards of us all. The grind of tournament play forces the body to break down much quicker than during a normal practice program. For this reason it is critical to develop a well rounded physical fitness regimen. Three major aspects of fitness should be addressed by competitive racquetball players.

Aerobic/Cardiovascular Fitness

This is, in short, the ability to maintain endurance throughout the course of a match. Biking, stair climber, or a variety of other 'torture' machines are out there to improve this area of fitness. 30 minutes three times per week in addition to racquetball should be enough.

Strength Conditioning & Flexibility

This is critical to injury prevention as well as day to day success over the course of a tournament. Don't expect strength training to greatly increase your power, this is 90% technique. Resistance machines, free weights, dips, push-ups, pull-ups, etc., are all effective ways to improve strength. Two to three times per week should be plenty but make sure you seek professional

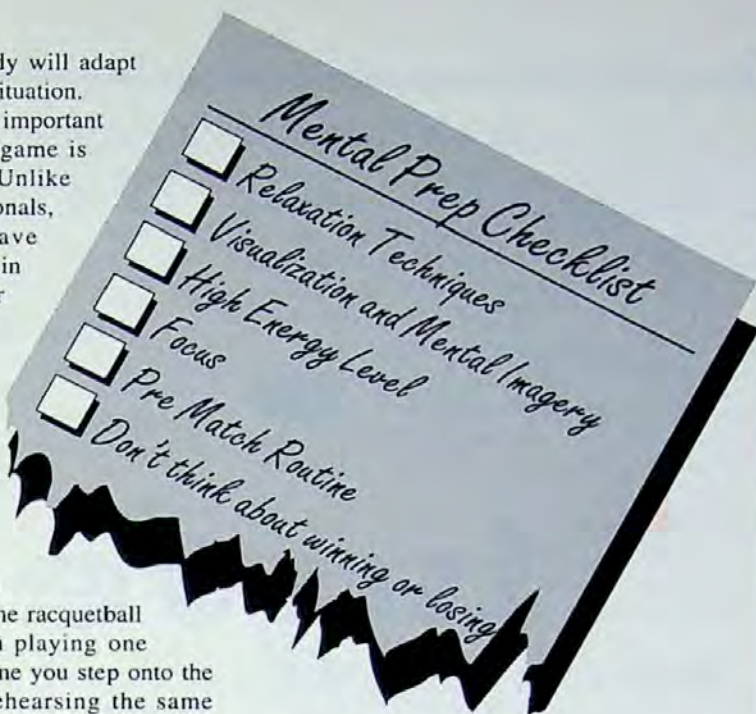
advice, preferably from someone who has played or understands racquetball.

Anaerobic Conditioning

This is the ability to recover from point to point. Getting your wind back after three to seven seconds of explosive movement is crucial in this sport. On-court sprints, shuttle drills, or any exercise that simulates racquetball movement is effective. Two or three times a week for 10 to 15 minutes should be enough.

Don't feel the need to become obsessed with your conditioning. Keep in mind that racquetball is primarily a skill sport and although a solid, well balanced, fitness routine is very important, developing technical skills and the mental game are probably a higher priority if you are dealing with a finite amount of time.

A book could easily be written on each aspect addressed in this article. Use the suggestions and the checklists to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses and then set out to improve the areas you have identified as trouble spots in your game. Professional instruction, weekend camps, or going to watch an IRT event are great ways to provide yourself with new ideas and develop your game. You can always improve and the constant quest to be the best should be the carrot that keeps us all enthused about the sport.



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KILLSHOT • 11

The eye is a very delicate structure and must be protected
at all times when playing racquetball.

the EYES have it

Richard Honaker M.D.

The eye is an oblong globe-shaped structure which is recessed in the bony orbit of the skull. The white portion of the eye is called the *sclera*, and the internal lining of the back of the eye is called the *retina*. The sclera acts as a protective membrane, and the retina is made up of small cells, called *rods* and *cones*, which function to transmit light into impulses to the brain, resulting in vision. The *optic nerve* is at the back part of the eye which carries these impulses from the retina to the brain. Inside the eye there is a thick nutrient fluid called *vitreous* and *aqueous humor*. This fluid acts as nourishment of the retina and to the structures in front of the eye. The colored part of the eye is called the *iris*. This is really a round muscle which contracts when light shines on it and dilates in the dark. When this round muscle enlarges, the hole in the middle transmits more light to the retina. This hole is called the *pupil*.

Inside the pupil is the small delicate *lens*. This is a group of transparent cells which are able to collectively change shape and structure as needed to focus visual images onto the retina. The *cornea* is the clear protective covering over the pupil and iris. Between the cornea and the iris is a small space called the *anterior chamber*. It is in this area where glaucoma can create serious problems. The eye muscles attach to the sides of the eye and move it in its different directions.

If an eye is struck by a racquetball or a racquet, injuries may only be minor; however, they may be extremely severe, resulting in blindness. The most common injury

that we see is bruising around the eye resulting in a black eye. This is usually of minimal significance. If the globe itself is struck, there may be broken blood vessels, which results in hemorrhage and bruising inside the sclera of the eye. This will result in redness in the sclera. Bleeding may also occur inside the eye and this may obstruct vision.

A less common injury results from bleeding inside the anterior chamber between the cornea and the iris. This is called a *hyphema*. When blood accumulates in this small anterior chamber, it can obstruct the flow of fluid through the anterior chamber to the back of the eye. This can result in acute glaucoma and threaten the vision. This type of injury requires complete bed rest and hospitalization to be sure healing occurs without glaucoma or scar tissue.

A *corneal abrasion* occurs when the top cell layers of the cornea are scraped off. These are very painful and cause a great deal of pain when in bright light. The eye will become very red with this injury and requires the care of a physician to instill a yellow-green dye which collects on injured areas of the cornea. When a black light is shined on such an eye, the dye will glow fluorescent green and reveal the sight and depth of injury. Corneal abrasions which go through the cornea are emergencies and require the care of a skilled eye surgeon. Superficial corneal abrasions are extremely common and heal quite rapidly with one or two days of eye patching and pain medications.

Trauma to the globe can also result in a detachment of a part of the retina on the back of the eye. This may result in visual field losses or a wavy, irregular vision such as seen in carnival mirrors. Severe injuries to the globe can also result in rupture of the globe with leakage of the vitreous and aqueous humor fluid. Lens dislocations often require surgical correction to restore appropriate vision.

The body has very fine tuned reactions to protect the eye from injury, and the blink mechanism is extremely fast to prevent foreign material from going in the eyes. Despite these adaptive mechanisms, one should always use protective eyewear. Medical studies involving mannequins and the use of open eye guards have demonstrated that a racquetball hit at high speeds fits easily inside these open eye guards to cause complete rupture of the eye itself. Poorly fitting eyewear can also be knocked off and result in eye injuries. Individuals who have lost sight in one eye from previous injuries or from birth, should be encouraged to play other sports due to the devastating nature of an injury to their good eye.

Any injury to the eye which causes more than slight discomfort should be evaluated by your physician. Tests can be done to look for internal bleeding, corneal abrasions, and other traumatic lesions. Prevention is the best treatment. Don't count on your instincts and reflexes to prevent what could be a vision ending injury. Always wear your approved eye guards when playing racquetball.

L E T T E R S

Hooked on Boudman

I am writing this letter to inform you of the excellent review your magazine was given by someone whom I look up to very much in the racquetball field.

Shortly after being introduced to racquetball I had a need to have my racquet restrung. A friend suggested a place called The Racquet Stringer. The owners of the store, John & Linda Boudman were fantastic! Even though I came in their store with a cheap starter racquet they treated me as an old friend. While I was there I was amazed at the knowledge and background John & Linda had not only in the field of stringing racquets but with their intense work with the elite players and key personnel in the sport.

Having been in their shop several times (about every week) and always looking for an edge to help my game, I picked up an issue of a magazine called **KILLSHOT**. John told me that this magazine could help my game because of all the information inside the covers. After taking the issue of **KILLSHOT** home and reading it from cover to cover I was very pleased. **KILLSHOT** has the viewpoints that I wanted to see showing me not only the good points of my game, but also what I must correct on the weak side of my game.

I wanted to say thanks to John & Linda Boudman for being special people by taking time out of their day to help a newcomer into this exciting sport. For if it were not for those people who are willing to extend their hand in friendship, this would be a very lonely sport.

The Racquet Stringer has become my source for the finest equipment that I can swing. It's nice to know that John & Linda will sell NO equipment that they wouldn't use themselves or stand behind after the sale.

And now, thanks to John, **KILLSHOT** has become my Encyclopedia for Racquetball. If it's about Racquetball and it's in print you will find it in **KILLSHOT**.

J. Forry
Hershey, Pennsylvania

Unfortunate Choice

We called our tournament 'The Battle at the Border' and billed it as an Oklahoma versus Kansas battle. This was our inaugural tournament and the battle took place in Ponca City, OK at the YMCA. It was sponsored in part by Wilson Racquetball, Global Management, Inc., and various other Ponca City businesses. The turnout was less than hoped, but it was an enjoyable weekend of racquetball.

Perhaps the turnout was affected because of the world event that occurred in Oklahoma City just nine days prior to our tournament -- the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building. The most unbelievable

part of this story is that the tournament T-shirt design and entry form, designed in March, included a bomb and a Caution sign that warned of a Blast Zone. The entry forms and T-shirt design were mailed and submitted before April 19. It now appears as though what we did was done in bad taste, however, nothing could be further from the truth. I have enclosed a photo of the T-shirt design and an entry form.

I want to thank all of the contributors and all of the participants who came out to play a game during such a tragic time.

D. Brandenberger
Ponca City, Oklahoma

Video Tapes?

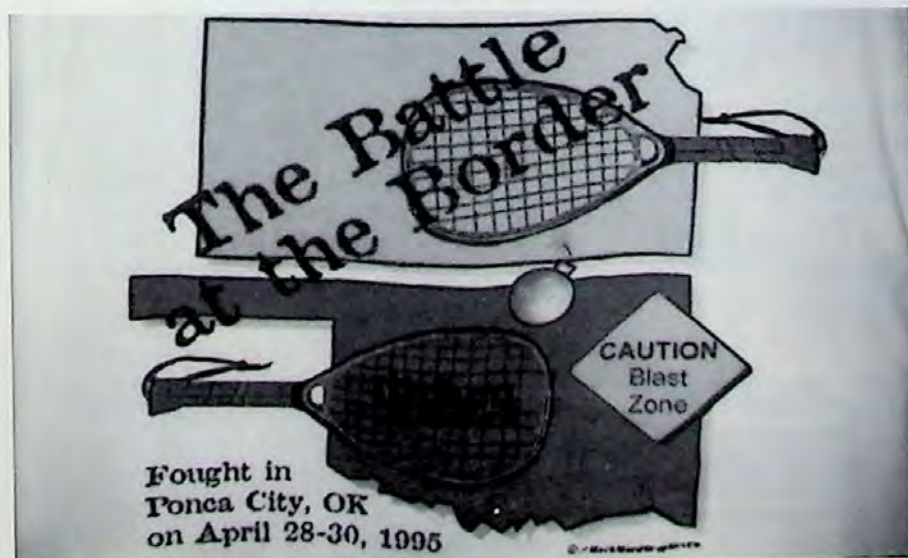
I'm really impressed with the **KILLSHOT** magazine. I'm just curious if you have any video tapes of pro matches, or a list of some sort. I have the *Playing Smart*, *Play Like the Pros* video. I've been playing since 1991, but I really didn't get serious until 1993. I'm with the military and I never saw pro play until 1994 in Vegas. I could hardly believe the way these guys get after that ball. I have some power behind my swing, but I know I'd have a lot more if I had been taught properly at first, how to keep the ball down low. I'm just looking for some good guidance on video. The tapes I have are good but I wonder if you have some instructional tapes. I'm 25 now, I think I'm kinda set in my ways. So, it'll be kinda tough to change some things. I would like to go to a camp but I move around quite a bit in the military.

When I first started, I enjoyed the sweat, and the individual ability to win a match. But I knew of no tournaments until two years later. I'm a low C player but it's the small things that keep me where I am. I'm not patient for a set up. I have the quickness and power but I also need some control. Do you have some kind of video to get me going straight?

J. James
Sgt USMC

Try contacting America's Most Wanted Racquetball Camps. They have a terrific instructional video that's also fun to watch. 1-800-ROLLOUT

A clever design and creative concept became a reminder of sadness. Ponca City's "Blast Zone" T-shirt was designed and produced several days before the tragedy in Oklahoma City that shook the world.



The Pass, the Pinch,

and Other Offensive Intentions

One of the most appealing aspects of racquetball is that at any time during play there is always an offensive opportunity. In fact, a common thread among accomplished players is their recognizing and executing the most effective offensive choices in the heat of rallies. Bottom line, you can return everything you can, wait for your opponent's error and win a few rallies. Or, you can get a little aggressive, force some awkward positioning or hasty decisions that result in weak returns by your opponent, and win significantly more rallies. Or, you can learn to read the situation, choose wisely, and take command to play winning racquetball every venture onto the court.

You never have to settle for just returning the ball. The best players have a motive behind every shot they hit. Even from a amazing get, there is some "offensive intent". Obviously, the better the set up you have, the more effective winner you should attempt. But where most players go wrong is from the less-than-perfect opportunities where they should still be hitting to force the weakest play from their opponents. The more effective your winner, the more desirable the result, but the more difficult to produce.

The killshot is an unreturnable shot that will end the rally. The trouble is, there are about a gazillion conditions that have to be right to effectively make the ball do that.

Only when you have a perfect set up with your opponent in good position is it time to go for the kill. Without the perfect set, chances are that you'll leave it up or skip it in. With your opponent in anything less than perfect position, it is a waste since there are plenty of other winners you can hit that do not have the risk factor of a kill attempt. Still, killing the ball is a necessary skill since those situations do present themselves.

A shot that is appropriate much more often is the winner that is not unreturnable like a flat roll, but still ends the rally since it beats your opponent. Shots such as passes and pinches fall into this category. They are the bread and butter of a successful player since they present themselves much more often than kills, and have much fewer risks. Also less accuracy is necessary in hitting these shots. In fact, these shots hold another advantage because they end the rally while causing your opponent to run and thus waste energy, while a perfect kill does not. The trouble is, these shots aren't always winners if your opponent is able to hold center court and so get most of these.

With that in mind, the next offensive shot is one that "controls" your opponent, by forcing him into a specific position to set you up for the winner on the next shot. Ceiling shots that pull your opponent back so that you can pinch, or passes that pull him so far to one side that you can end the rally by then passing to the other side are examples of control shots.

In the most desperate of situations, there may not even be time to shoot for this kind of direct manipulation. Still, even if you consider yourself lucky just to get a racquet on the ball, you can still take a few precautions that deny your opponent a set up or even the advantage of center court. This means things like keeping your balls from "kicking out" etc.



The Pass

If there could be only one weapon in your racquetball arsenal, it should be the pass. It can be used as an attempt at a winner, as a controlling shot to set up a situation for a winner, or simply as a denial shot to prevent your opponent from setting up too easily for a winner.

Unlike the kill or even the pinch, it doesn't have to be perfect, just effective. It's a winner if it gets by your opponent, but at the very least it should be back center court for you.

An effective pass does not kick off the side wall, or come back into play off the back wall. Passing down-the-line on the side of the court from which you shoot is particularly effective since your opponent cannot move in until you have completed your swing. If your opponent begins to get a jump on the down-the-line, the cross court will place the ball on the side from which he is moving away and be awkward at best.

The Pinch

As a winner, the pinch or side-front is a great shot when your opponent is behind you. The trick is that the margin for error with a pinch is greater than a kill, but less than a pass. If your opponent successfully covers your pinch he's out of center court, but is now probably in front of you and in a dangerous and powerful position. Because of this its use to control your opponent is questionable. It may be an OK denial shot if it is low enough that he cannot return it offensively if he gets it.

The Ceiling Ball

While a ceiling ball is rarely a winner, it is certainly a beautiful offensive shot. There are fewer better control or denial shots under any condition. The only times not to use the ceiling ball to back up your opponent are when you have a set up for a winner, or when your opponent is better in a ceiling ball rally than you.

The Kill

The rules for the killshot are simple: lay the ball out flat, celebrate your point. Don't shoot it if you don't have it, don't waste the shot with garbage if you do. Put it out of your mind and go on to the next point.

The Serve

Since the serve is always hit from a setup, it is the very best offensive opportunity. A service winner is a dream come true. However even the best of the best work more toward achieving a weak return to set up the winner on the third shot than on the ace serve. If you play the standard amateur game with two serves, you should be shot if your first serve is not a blatant offensive attempt. Even the lob serve is an offensive shot if it forces a weak return.

The Return of Serve

The service return is probably the easiest time to fall into defensive thinking. Take things one step farther. Instead of thinking defense, think of the control shot and back up or pass your opponent, or at least go for the denial shot and keep him away from the winner on the third shot.

Key Points to Remember:

- 1) Control your opponent with passes, ceilings and angles.
- 2) Deny your opponent by keeping your shots frustratingly out of center court and his reach.
- 3) Shoot the winner if you have it, otherwise try for the control shot to set up for the winner next time.
- 4) Remember that this is the plan, but anything can happen out there, be ready to shrug it off when your opponent controls or denies you.
- 5) Always think and act offense
- 6) Offense means hitting a winner when it's time. Maybe that's the next shot, maybe that's five carefully placed and successful offensive shots from now.
- 7) More is not always better - no need to kill when a pass will work.
- 8) None of this matters if you don't practice your shots until they are there when you need them!

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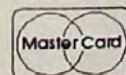
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Oh No, We've Created a ... Monchik!

Newly turned pro, Sudsy Monchik breaks out with a vengeance for three wins in five events.

By Jim Daly

Phoenix
SAMBA Pro-Am
Planet Fitness

• Big upsets earn Fowler and Karp quarter final points • Strong play by Texas pals Guidry and Kachtik • Monchik delivers tell-tale wins over Ray, Roberts, and Kachtik • Swain "breezin'" til he hits the Monchik wall • Best final of the season • Shelly McGann and crew host a first class event and introduce the IRT to Samba •

If ever a tournament culminated in a grand finale, this one was it. Number one ranked Cliff Swain had breezed his way into the finals without losing a game (becoming something of a habit for the mighty Swain). Underdog Sudsy Monchik's road to the final had been a little less of a walk in the park. After an exciting first round win over longtime buddy Jason Mannino, Monchik managed to oust veterans Mike Ray and Andy Roberts. The crowds had already counted him out following a first game loss to each. The win in the semis over fifth seed Drew Kachtik came with a bit more assertiveness in three straight.

With Swain's recent domination of the IRT, the final seemed to be stacking up as another likely win for the master, and a good battle between two of the most aggressive, most powerful and fastest players on the tour. Monchik's decisive first-game win, however, began to tantalize the crowd with legitimate indicators toward the upset. The Phoenix crowd grew more intense in pace with the players as the match progressed. Monchik won the third game and had Swain down 10-4 in the fourth before Swain buckled down for a 12-10 comeback victory. After the gut-wrenching extended fifth game and some of the most explosive action of the season, the boy-wonder from New York seized the upset and the second event victory of his less-than-two-year IRT career.

Sliding by almost unnoticed in the shadow of the tremendous upset final in Phoenix, some other pros gained some important ground as well. Aaron Katz continued the best season of his career with yet another berth in the quarters, this time at the expense of Woody Clouse. California's Adam Karp bounced back beautifully from two down to upset third seed Tim Doyle in the sixteens. Baltimore's Dan Fowler impressively dispensed a frustrated John Ellis in an astonishing three straight. Eric Muller showed more of a pro style than ever before in a three game defeat of big Tony Jelso. In the underestimated category, Todd O'Neil and Kelly Gelhaus fought through a brutal five game opener that was the highlight of the thirty-tvos.

Monchik goes fully horizontal against Swain in the Phoenix final.



Woody Clouse



Woody Clouse



Above Left: Swain makes a risky move into front court against Guidry in Phoenix.

Above: Kachtik clears for a powerful Monchik forehand.
Below: Guidry lunges to cover Swain's down-the-line.

Sudsy Monchik

11-2, 5-11, 11-9, 10-12, 12-10

Cliff Swain

SEMIS

Swain d. Guidry

11-2, 11-0, 11-3

Monchik d. Kachtik

11-8, 11-6, 11-3

QUARTERS

Swain d. Katz

12-10, 11-3, 11-7

Guidry d. Fowler

6-11, 11-1, 11-8, 11-6

Kachtik d. Karp

11-3, 13-11, 11-9, 11-2

Monchik d. Roberts

9-11, 11-5, 11-4, 11-4

SIXTEENS

Swain d. O'Neil

11-3, 11-5, 11-2

Katz d. Clouse

7-11, 11-5, 11-5, 11-9

Fowler d. Ellis

11-6, 11-8, 11-4

Guidry d. Rankin

11-9, 8-11, 11-2, 11-4

Karp d. Doyle

2-11, 7-11, 11-2, 11-7, 11-5

Kachtik d. Vogel

11-9, 11-6, 11-9

Monchik d. Ray

5-11, 11-3, 11-4, 11-5

Roberts d. Muller

11-3, 11-2, 11-1

Phoenix



San Francisco
VCI World Doubles Championships
Schoeber's Athletic Club

• Doyle and Monchik capture the crown •
Ray and Jelso play spectacularly to upset
amateur national doubles champs Ellis and
Muller • Gelhaus and Paraiso grab an
exciting victory over Kachtik and Guidry •
Swain and Sweeney breeze to the semis •
return of doubles' crown event courtesy of
VW Credit outshines wildest expectations •

In the five years since the last pro doubles championship, the speculation about "dream teams" and the undoing of reigning champs Ray and Gonzalez has run rampant. The tremendous excitement stirred by the team play at the VCI championship was marked by long rallies and great gets. Each pro's abilities and strategic creativity were pushed to the limit.

With Gonzalez sidelined because of a torn Achilles' tendon, Ray found a suitable replacement in Tony Jelso. With the broadest combined wingspan in the event, the newly formed team covered the court beautifully without ever taking a step. Ellis and Muller, the 1994 amateur national doubles champs, displayed classic teamwork, but the patient Ray and the powerful Jelso were able to withstand the pressure.

Gelhaus and partner Joey Paraiso beat the number one seed "Best of Texas" team of Kachtik and Mike Guidry in another exciting five-game match. Their victory was particularly sweet since neither Gelhaus nor Paraiso are ranked in the top fifteen singles.

Swain and Tim Sweeney quickly dispatched the veteran team of Brian Hawkes and Gerry Price in three, as Hawkes and Price had just done to the speedy team of Mannino and Woody Clouse. In the semis, Swain and Sweeney could push but not overthrow the dynamic duo of Doyle and Monchik in a spectacular dose of classic doubles with an infusion of serious power.

The hard-serving, power-hitting game of Doyle and Monchik won out over the control style of Ray and Jelso. With such a gap since the last doubles competition, one has to wonder what would have happened if teams such as Roberts and Jack Newman or Dan Obremski and Doug Ganim had still been playing together. And, for that matter, if a healthy Gonzalez would have been a major factor. Still, Jelso gets big credit for filling big shoes, and Doyle and Monchik share some well-deserved gold.



Doyle and Monchik left Ray and Jelso on the ground after this hard fought point at the VCI World Championship Doubles.

Woody Clouse

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Above: Ellis shoots a low boards winner from an off-balance stance in the quarters with Ray, Muller, and Jelso looking on.

Right: Ray fires from a center court setup in the final.

VCI

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Woody Clouse



Tim Sudsy
Doyle / Monchik

3-11, 11-5, 3-11, 11-9, 12-10

Mike Tony
Ray / Jelso

SEMIS

Mike Ray / Tony Jelso
11-4, 11-3, 9-11, 7-11, 12-10
Kelly Gelhaus / Joey Paraiso

Tim Doyle / Sudsy Monchik
11-9, 11-9, 9-11, 3-11, 11-5
Cliff Swain / Tim Sweeney

QUARTERS

Kelly Gelhaus / Joey Paraiso
11-7, 8-11, 11-13, 11-5, 11-5
Drew Kachtik / Mike Guidry

Mike Ray / Tony Jelso
5-11, 11-2, 2-11, 11-1, 12-10
John Ellis / Eric Muller

Cliff Swain / Tim Sweeney
11-4, 11-5, 11-3
Brian Hawkes / Gerry Price

Tim Doyle / Sudsy Monchik
11-9, 11-5, 8-11, 11-9
Todd O'Neil / Michael Bronfeld

San Francisco

**VCI World
Championship
Doubles**

Cliff Swain

11-3, 11-8, 11-4

Andy Roberts

SEMIS

Swain d. Ray
11-8, 11-5, 6-11, 11-8
Roberts d. Greenfeld
5-11, 11-3, 11-7, 12-10

QUARTERS

Swain d. Kachtik
11-7, 11-1, 11-4
Ray d. Guidry
11-5, 11-5, 11-4
Greenfeld d. Rankin
11-3, 12-10, 11-6, 11-1
Roberts d. Monchik
7-11, 3-11, 11-4, 11-4, 11-1

SIXTEENS

Swain d. Brumwell
11-2, 11-4, 11-0
Kachtik d. Ellis
2-11, 11-7, 12-10, 11-4
Ray d. Muller
11-6, 11-6, 11-9
Guidry d. Harpersad
11-6, 12-10, 11-7
Greenfeld d. Doyle
11-4, 11-3, 9-11, 11-6
Rankin d. Katz
5-11, 8-11, 11-9, 11-7, 13-11
Monchik d. Clouse
11-7, 11-8, 10-12, 12-10
Roberts d. Mannino
11-4, 11-7, 11-2

Saskatoon

**Saskatoon
Cameco Classic
Riverracquet Athletic Club**

• Swain storms back on track • Canadian champ Greenfeld puts on a show for the home folks • Rankin scores an exciting victory over Katz to make the quarters • Riverracquet crew present an exciting sequel to last year's Inaugural Cameco Classic •

It's cold in these Canadian flatlands, but the warmth of the friendly spectators of Saskatoon more than compensated for the frigid air that greeted the IRT in this Canadian tourney. Swain captured his second consecutive Cameco Classic before a crowd that probably would have preferred a victory by homeboy Sherman Greenfeld. Greefeld played his most successful IRT tournament to date but was stopped cold by Roberts in the semis.

In the closest match of the event, Brian Rankin upset number seven ranked Katz. Rankin came from a two game deficit to out last Katz for the early round victory. He couldn't maintain that level of play, though, and was handily defeated in the quarters by Greenfeld.

In another close quarters match Roberts beat Monchik after coming from behind two games to zero. In the tiebreaker Roberts played with a vengeance pounding Monchik 11-1.

In a contrast of styles, Ray easily handled Guidry in three quick games also in the quarters. While Guidry has become a veteran on the IRT, he still lacks the considerable edge Ray has in the experience category, and fell victim to Ray's precise "lob knick" serve.

Roberts had some trouble with Greenfeld in the semis, as the Canadian took the first game but went on to beat Greenfeld three straight.

Swain had little trouble on his side of the draw as he coasted through the tournament. He dispatched the scrappy Kachtik in three straight games. Kachtik usually gives Swain trouble but he couldn't hold off the southpaw's onslaught this time out. Swain's toughest match came against Ray, the only player to take a game from him during the entire tournament.

Roberts came into the finals with the knowledge that Swain had defeated him in their last two finals meetings. This meeting proved to be no exception as Swain rolled over the powerful Roberts in three games.



Swain continues his undefeated streak in Saskatoon with his second Cameco Classic victory in as many attempts.

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Swain 11, Guidry 0 Phoenix 16s
Swain 11, Katz 0 Columbus Semis

Swain 11, Brumwell 0 Memphis 16s
Katz 11, Vogel 0 Columbus 16s

Las Vegas
1995 US Open
Las Vegas Sporting House

• Monchik captures second pro stop •
Doyle and Roberts battle for #2
ranking • Ceresia upsets Ellis in
first round • Guidry maintains his
edge over Kachtik for #4 spot •
Mike Coulter and company go all
out for pro racquetball in Vegas •

Gambling is the meal ticket
for Las Vegas and always sets the
tone for the anything-can-happen
atmosphere at the Las Vegas US
Open. Appropriately, the player best
known for his willingness to gamble and
play against the odds captured this IRT
event. Monchik emulates the aggressive
serve-and-shoot game style of mentor
Swain, and in this tournament he also emu-
lated Swain's ability to breeze through a
draw relatively untouched. Monchik was
never seriously threatened here, and no one
took more than one game away from him
all weekend.

Sudsy Monchik

9-11, 11-6, 11-4, 11-3

Tim Doyle

SEMIS

Monchik d. Guidry

11-5, 11-4, 7-11, 11-4

Doyle d. Roberts

11-3, 6-11, 11-8, 9-11, 11-5

QUARTERS

Monchik d. Swain

10-12, 11-1, 11-8, 11-5

Guidry d. Kachtik

11-3, 11-4, 11-1

Doyle d. Ray

12-14, 11-2, 11-5, 11-4

Roberts d. Katz

11-6, 11-5, 14-12

SIXTEENS

Swain d. Jelso

11-6, 12-10, 11-2

Monchik d. Ceresia

11-3, 11-3, 11-2

Kachtik d. Vogel

8-11, 11-5, 11-4, 11-5

Guidry d. Karp

2-11, 11-5, 11-7, 11-3

Doyle d. Greenfeld

11-2, F

Ray d. Rankin

11-2, 11-8, 11-2

Katz d. Clouse

11-8, 11-8, 9-11, 11-2

Roberts d. Engle

11-4, 11-5, 11-8

Las Vegas

Woody Clouse

Guidry flies in preparation for a spec-
tacular get in Las Vegas.





Above: Monchik serves for the big Swain upset in the quarters.
Right: Rivals Doyle and Roberts Square off in the semis.



Woody Clouse

Early round play saw Mike Ceresia knock Ellis out of contention but his next match was against Monchik who was set toward the finals. In the Texas battle for the number four ranking, Guidry managed to hold his lead over Kachtik by decisively knocking him out in three games.

Monchik's play was so commanding that even Swain, looking to avenge his finals loss against Monchik in Phoenix, managed to put only a small dent in Monchik's game plan. Down 9-3 in the first game, Swain came back and won 12-10, but Monchik won the next three, sending Swain off to the card tables.

Doyle beat Roberts 11-5 in the fifth game tiebreaker of a contest befitting a clash between these titans. This victory over a focused and fine-tuned Roberts pushed Doyle closer to the coveted #2 ranking he lost to Roberts in Pittsburgh.

In the final, Doyle edged Monchik 11-9 in game one but Monchik came back strong to win the next three. After coming back from that first game defeat, Monchik set his sights toward victory and never looked back.

Monchik took his role as odds breaker seriously and turned out to be the only sure bet in Vegas for the weekend.

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VCI Spreadsheet

IRT

1. Cliff Swain (1)
Braintree, Massachusetts
2. Andy Roberts (2)
Memphis, Tennessee
3. Tim Doyle (3)
Huntington Beach, California
4. Mike Guidry (4)
Dallas, Texas
5. Drew Kachtik (5)
Dallas, Texas
6. Mike Ray (6)
Hilton Head, South Carolina
7. Aaron Katz (7)
Dallas, Texas
8. Sudsy Monchik (11)
Staten Island, New York
9. John Ellis (9)
Stockton, California
10. Woody Clouse (10)
Jacksonville, Florida
11. Ruben Gonzalez (8)
Staten Island, New York
12. Brian Rankin (14)
St. Louis, Missouri
13. Louis Vogel (12)
Taos, New Mexico
14. Dan Fowler (13)
Silver Springs, Maryland
15. Adam Karp (15)
Los Angeles, California
16. Eric Muller
Kansas City, Missouri

WPRA

1. Michelle Gould (1)
Boise, Idaho
2. Robin Levine (2)
Sacramento, California
3. Marci Drexler (3)
San Diego, California
4. Cheryl Gudinas (4)
Lisle, Illinois
5. Lynne Coburn (5)
Baltimore, Maryland
6. Caryn McKinney (6)
Atlanta, Georgia
7. Laura Fenton (7)
Lincoln, Nebraska
- 8T. Chris Evon (8T)
San Diego, California
- 8T. Molly O'Brien (8T)
Souderton, Pennsylvania
10. Robin Whitmire (10)
Atlanta, Georgia
11. Roz Olson (11)
New Paltz, New York
12. Michelle Wiragh (12)
Baltimore, Maryland
- 13T. Janet Myers (13T)
Charlotte, North Carolina
- 13T. Kim Machiran (13T)
Ballwin, Missouri
15. Dee Ferreira-Worth (15)
Anaheim Hills, California
16. Kim Russell (16)
Atlanta, Georgia

VCI Challenge Cup Series

Final Results

1. Cliff Swain
2. Andy Roberts
3. Tim Doyle
4. Mike Guidry
5. Mike Ray
6. Sudsy Monchik
7. Drew Kachtik
8. John Ellis

American Amateur Racquetball Association

Open

1. Michael Bronfeld, California
 2. Doug Ganim, Ohio
 3. Jimmy Lowe, Kentucky
 4. Chris Cole
 5. David Hamilton
-
1. Kerri Stoffregen, Ohio
 2. Robin Levine, California
 3. Amy Kilbane, Ohio
 4. Karin Sabotta, Washington
 5. Dana Sibell, Minnesota

Racquetball Canada

1. Sherman Greenfeld
 2. Simon Roy
 3. Mike Ceresia
 4. Haydn Jones
 5. Doug McQuarrie
-
1. Carol McFeiridge
 2. Sue McTaggart
 3. Josee Grandmaitre
 4. Vicki (Brown) Shanks
 5. Linda Ellerington

Wheelchair Racquetball International Rankings

1. Chip Parmelly, US
2. Gary Baker, US
3. Mark Cormack, Canada
4. Jake Smellie, Canada
5. Ken Michaylenko, Canada
6. Carol Mulholland, Canada
7. Liesl Tesch, Australia
8. Steve Kuketz, US
9. Dennis May, Ireland
10. George Simons, Great Britain
11. Darren Cunningham, Australia
12. Rune Lorentsen, Norway
13. Colin Dawson, Australia
14. Ray Boudreau, Canada
- 15T. John Finn, Ireland
- 15T. Tom Hynes, Ireland
- 15T. Oscar Diaz, Argentina
18. Philip Smallman, Australia
19. Mark Fowler, Great Britain
- 20T. Anna Tavano, France
- 20T. Hector Zuniga, Argentina
22. Danny Aykroyd, Great Britain
- 23T. Karen Darke, Great Britain
- 23T. Gary Vaughan, Great Britain
25. Charles Heerey, Australia
26. Steve Jones, Great Britain



VW CREDIT, INC.





Steve Lerner

Clockwise from above:

Ray comes off the ground with a backhand against Swain in the quarters of the VCI World Championships. Roberts blasts a backhand down-the-line against Doyle in the semis. Monchik reaches for a landing from a dive against Doyle in the quarters. Ellis clears for Roberts' shot up the middle in the quarters.

SEMIS

Swain d. Katz

11-7, 9-11, 11-8, 11-0

Roberts d. Doyle

12-10, 11-1, 11-4

Andy Roberts

11-6, 11-8, 13-11

Cliff Swain

QUARTERS

Swain d. Ray

11-6, 11-4, 11-4

Katz d. Guidry

11-13, 11-6, 11-8, 15-13

Doyle d. Monchik

11-6, 11-3, 13-11

Roberts d. Ellis

12-10, 11-5, 11-9

SIXTEENS

Swain d. O'Neil

11-1, 11-4, 11-1

Ray d. Clouse

11-3, 13-15, 11-5, 11-9

Katz d. Vogel

11-1, 11-6, 9-11, 11-0

Guidry d. Ceresia

11-2, 11-9, 11-8

Doyle d. Fowler

11-6, 12-10, 11-7

Monchik d. Rankin

11-9, 11-8, 11-6

Ellis d. Kahtik

11-9, 11-5, 6-11, 11-9

Roberts d. Muller

11-4, 11-2 11-3

Columbus

VCI World Championships





**Columbus
VCI World Championships
Sawmill Athletic Club**

• Roberts: clean sweep throughout the tournament • Katz into the semis at Guidry's expense • Ceresia and Karp in each other's faces • Ellis handles Kachtik with little difficulty • Doug Ganim handled every detail for the quintessential world championship event •

All descriptions fail to do justice to Roberts' display of racquetball with surgical precision in Columbus. Not only was the big Tennessean pinpoint accurate, but crushing the ball as well. During his onslaught, Roberts became the first player other than Swain since the last decade to win a tournament without losing a game.

Other than the final, the only real upset of the event was Ellis' early dispatching of Kachtik in the sixteens. Ray found himself on the brink of disaster with underdog Dave Sable serving for the match in an ultra close fifth game before fighting back for the 12-10 win.

Tempers flared between Karp and Ceresia in a marathon that saw Ceresia fight back from two down with Karp serving for the match in the third. The former Canadian champ Ceresia managed to gut it out in a very tense and vocal confrontation.

Katz posted yet another great showing in a season that has been the best of his career. He found his way into the semis but only after eliminating fellow Texan Guidry.

As much an amazement as the phenomenal play, the VCI crown jewel boasted tremendous hospitality, professionally produced and well choreographed player intros, and a sound and light spectacular. The fabulous Sawmill Club also hosted a sort of mini trade show that drew top brass from several racquet, string, and accessory companies.

The capacity crowd witnessed possibly the best action of the season. But even with Roberts' win, Swain sat comfortably in first place and walked with the best of the VCI Challenge Series.



Steve Lerner Roberts' played brilliantly to capture the match and the tournament, Swain had already sewn up the VCI Challenge Cup with a berth in the final.

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The Names of the Game

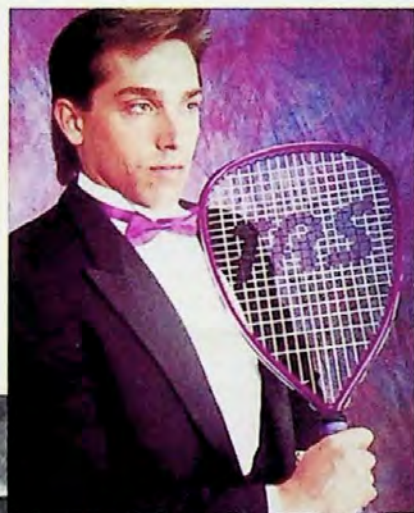
The racquet's the thing

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Johnson stayed in the IRT top eight for several seasons, and reached a career high ranking of number three. Johnson found success as well among the best of Southern California's radical outdoor players. With good looks and a surfer's attitude, Johnson was at the core of an elite group of hard hitting, high flying "bodybuilder" pros. Always a gentleman on the court, Johnson's colorful personality and flair with people made him easily recognizable off the court.

With Johnson's retirement from the IRT in 1993, Transition Racquet Sports dropped the Johnson Signature designation, but kept the popular Phase II as one of the key components of its racquet line.



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SERVE 'EM UP!

The Concepts That Make a Serve a Weapon By Cliff Swain

When you watch competitive players at any level, you will notice that the best players have the fewest weaknesses. When you exclude mental toughness, what usually separates two players with no glaring weaknesses is some kind of weapon. Racquetball is, by its very nature, an aggressive game. To be the best at any class (be it a club, a region, or the world), you must have at least one good weapon.

In racquetball, a strong serve is the weapon of choice. It is the easiest part of your game to improve. More importantly, it is the only time in the match when you can hit the ball right out of your hand. Too many times I see people use the serve just as a way to begin a rally. I want every effort I make on the court to contribute to forcing a rally to play out to my advantage. The serve is my most powerful means to that end!

When I'm serving, my main goal is to force my opponent into a weak return. My drive serve is by far my favorite weapon for that. The starting point is to perfect the mechanics of the service motion. It's very difficult to learn that from an instructional article. Remember to use your body and especially your legs to generate the power for drive serves. Your job is to do that on the court, with some help if necessary. Having done that, I've determined four elements that I can bring together to force the weak return I want. These four concepts together with a quality lob to fall back on will make your serve a deadly weapon.



Deception

No matter how hard you hit the ball or how good your angle is, if your opponent knows where your shot is going, his return is probably going to be more offensive and you've just lost your advantage.



Variety

If you don't vary your serves (including the pace), you are not going to hold an advantage very long. The most effective servers can drive to either side of the court, as well as into an opponent's body. Variation is a key to making your serves more effective because using it successfully doesn't allow your opponent the advantage of knowing where the ball is going. Even power pitchers like Roger Clemens or Randy Johnson have to have a good setup pitch like the curve ball to make his fast ball effective.



Angle

Adding angle to variety and deception can often result in an ace or very weak return. You should position yourself in the server's box so that your serve will be consistently close to the side wall, no matter if you're hitting to the forehand or the backhand. You want to make your opponent reach to get your serve. If you hit the ball closer to the middle of the court right onto your opponent's racquet, you've again lost the server's advantage.



Power

The icing on the cake! Adding power to deception, variety, and a good angle may help you overwhelm your opponent any you may find yourself a victor with a lot less effort than you're used to. Power is very important to overwhelm your opponent, but without the first three elements, this element can become ineffective. I've

The number one player in the world today, Cliff Swain has put together a weapons arsenal that is nothing short of amazing. Still, with all his talents, the most famous aspect of his game is his serve. Totally unpredictable and tremendously powerful, Swain's serves have set a new standard for the sport.



Steve Lerner

seen many players with powerful serves but lack deception, variety, and angle. Those are the people usually on the losing end of a match.

A serve with these four elements can put enormous pressure on your opponent and sometimes take the heart right out of him. If you improve your drive serves, you'd better practice your setups, because you're going to get a lot of them!



I feel the lob just gives your opponent a better chance at an offensive return, yet it is something that I continue to practice for these three reasons:

- 1) Some people can't stand the slow pace.
- 2) It further increases your variety of options. Just when you think your opponent is getting a groove on your serve, throwing in a quality lob may drive your opponent crazy. I stress quality because a weak lob results in a lost rally. Nobody serves well from back court.
- 3) No matter how hard you practice, you will have days when your drive is off. It is important to have the lob to fall back on.

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Woody Clouse

With the crowning of the first VCI Doubles World Champions in San Francisco, the IRT welcomes back an exciting element to the pro game. Pictured right to left: Ed Ray of VW Credit Inc. Champions Tim Doyle and Sudsy Monchik, Runners up Tony Jelso and Mike Ray, and IRT commissioner Hank Marcus.



HEAD to HEAD



Tim Doyle vs. Andy Roberts

Final count for '94 - '95 season: Roberts 4, Doyle 3

Riverside
October 1994
Doyle d. Roberts
11-8, 11-1, 8-11, 2-11, 11-8

Montreal
November 1994
Doyle d. Roberts
11-6, 8-11, 9-11, 11-5, 11-1

Baltimore
November 1994
Roberts d. Doyle
4-11, 11-4, 11-7, 6-11, 11-8

Memphis
January 1995
Roberts d. Doyle
7-11, 11-6, 11-0, 11-6

Pittsburgh
March 1995
Roberts d. Doyle
11-5, 11-6, 11-0

Las Vegas
April 1995
Doyle d. Roberts
11-3, 6-11, 11-8, 9-11, 11-5

Columbus
May 1995
Roberts d. Doyle
12-10, 11-1, 11-4

3 More Years for Spalding/IRT Agreement

Spalding Sports Worldwide and the International Racquetball Tour have reached an agreement continuing the company's status as the official racquet of the tour for the next three seasons. As part of the agreement Spalding will be present with signs and product displays at each IRT event and will also introduce the *Spalding Power Serve* fast serve rankings, featuring a fast-serve gun at each tournament site. At the conclusion of each season, the tour's fastest servers will be honored with cash bonuses.

John Doleva, director of marketing, Spalding Leisure Products Group, is enthusiastic about the lengthened agreement. "By extending our relationship with the IRT, Spalding is reaffirming its long-term commitment to the game of racquetball," said Doleva. "The IRT has helped us foster relationships with the nation's top racquetball pros and the on-site exposure continues to strengthen our leadership status in the sport."

Two Events on Slate for Wheelchair Racquetball

Two Wheelchair Racquetball events are scheduled for summer and early fall for 1995, according to David Hinton, chairperson of the Committee for Athletes with Disabilities of the International Racquetball Federation. Both tournaments will be qualifying events for the 1996 Paralympics.

The International Wheelchair Games will be held July 22-30 at Stoke Mandeville, England. The second event, September 13-30, will be the Pan American Wheelchair Games held in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The International Racquetball Tour recently signed an agreement to support and assist in the international development of Wheelchair Racquetball. For further information about either event contact David Hinton, Gloucester, Ontario, Canada, (613) 744-0215 or fax: (613) 748-5644.

PENN glove bonus pool: Includes all IRT stops and all those players wearing the PENN glove, official glove of the IRT.

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- 2 Mike Guidry
- 3 Brian Rankin
- 4 Woody Clouse
- 5 Louis Vogel
- 6 Todd O'Neil
- 7 Dan Fowler
- 8 Jason Mannino

penn.

HEAD Anatom Bonus Pool. The official clothing and footwear of the IRT offers the largest bonus pool in racquetball history to the 32 pros wearing HEAD Anatom clothing and footwear.

- 1 Cliff Swain
- 2 Tim Doyle
- 3 Mike Guidry
- 4 Mike Ray
- 5 Brian Rankin
- 6 Woody Clouse
- 7 Louis Vogel
- 8 Dan Fowler
- Mike Engel



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New Faces on the Tour, New Champion at the Nationals

The WPRA season closes with some new riders and a new driver behind the wheel

From information submitted by Cheryl Gudinas and Jen Yokota

It was becoming a sure thing. Gould, Gould, Gould, but now the WPRA has a new national champion and the cry has become Marci!, Marci!, Marci!

For the first time in five years the Women's Professional Racquetball Tour has a new champ as Marci Drexler took the nationals in three straight from Rockin' Robin Levine in the finals. These two combatants both possess an aggressive attitude that calls for all out action and win-at-any-cost play. Michelle Gould who has dominated women's racquetball both in professional and amateur ranks in recent years was forced to forfeit early in the tournament because of an injury. Levine and Drexler have been playing in Gould's shadow the last few years as she has taken over women's racquetball.

To go along with the change at the top the tour has also received some new competitors among the ranks. Diane Gronkiewicz, Jean Heckman, Julie Dechene, and Andee Glomberg have joined the expanding tour.

Syracuse

The WPRA hit Syracuse, a tradition on their schedule, in March. Michelle Gould, Robin Levine, and Cheryl Gudinas had just returned from the Pan-Am Games in Argentina three days prior to the event and there was some question on their readiness to play again so soon. The three proved to be more than up to the task, however, with Gould capturing the tournament, Levine finishing second, and Gudinas playing into the quarterfinals where she was upset by the always tough Lynne Coburn.

Levine was able to stay close to Gould in the early going in the finals with her patented diving gets and scrappy play but couldn't endure the pressure and lost the match in three. To get to the finals, Levine had to get past another wall crusher, Marci

Drexler. This battle of the two southpaws lived up to its potential and Levine won the match after dropping the first game.

The other semifinal match was not an easy victory for Gould. She dominated the first game of the contest, winning 11-1, but Coburn took advantage of some uncharacteristic weak spots in Gould's game to get within two the second game and three in the third. Gould showed she had the stamina and the mental game to hold on through the attack and outlasted Coburn.

Coburn had already survived one tough match as she upset Gudinas in the quarters. In other quarterfinal action, Gould knocked out Marcy Lynch in three straight. Drexler was nearly eliminated by Laura Fenton who slipped past to take game one 11-10 and then dominated game two 11-1. Drexler came from behind to capture the next three in usual form to advance.

Chris Evon took Levine to an 11-10 game in the remaining quarters match but couldn't keep the pressure on, dropping the next two 11-2, 11-0.

There were no surprises in the round of 16 to set up the quarters with all the expected players advancing without any serious difficulties.

Michelle Gould

11-7, 11-6, 11-4

Robin Levine

SEMIS

Gould d. Coburn

11-1, 11-9, 11-8

Levine d. Drexler

10-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-3

QUARTERS

Gould d. Lynch

11-5, 11-5, 11-6

Coburn d. Gudinas

11-9, 11-6, 11-8

Drexler d. Fenton

10-11, 1-11, 11-4, 11-6, 11-5

Levine d. Evon

11-10, 11-2, 11-0

SIXTEENS

Gould d. Myers

11-0, 11-0, 11-0

Lynch d. Olson

11-3, 11-3, 9-11, 11-5

Coburn d. Galloway

11-3, 11-3, 11-9

Gudinas d. Whitmire

11-8, 11-3, 11-7

Drexler d. Wiragh

11-9, 11-7, 11-10

Fenton d. Crawford

11-5, 11-1, 11-6

Evon d. Maldonado

11-6, 11-0, 11-5

Levine d. Kilbane

11-4, 8-11, 11-5, 11-7

Syracuse

The Nationals Marci! Marci! Marci!

Drexler and Levine. The battling southpaws met again in an all out slugfest, this time to decide the national championship in Baltimore. With Gould eliminated because of an injury forfeit, Levine and Drexler were left to fight for the bragging rights. The match was decided in three and Drexler's reaction was "Boy, I really wanted to win this!"

In semifinal play, Gudinas was matched up against Levine. With her serve on mark Levine rolled to an 11-0 victory then eased up slightly, still winning 11-6, then 11-8.

Most of the quarters action was decided in three games, Gould over Lynch; Levine over Evon; Gudinas over Kilbane. The exception was a four game match between Drexler and Coburn.

The surprise of the tournament was a two-and-one-half-hour bout between #6 seed Laura Fenton and an unseeded Amy Kilbane. Kilbane has come on strong with a new dedication to the game. With a two game lead over Fenton, Kilbane lost the third after a controversial call at 10-10. Fenton was able to hold on to the fourth game by the same score (11-10) but it was Kilbane's mental toughness that came through in the grueling fifth game with a 14-12 victory.

In other round of 16 action, Coburn convincingly defeated Caryn McKinney in four, Lynch eliminated Molly O'Brien in a 12-10 super tiebreaker, Susan Morgan Pfahler took Evon to five and the remainder of the matches were decided in three games each

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Ten Things That Halt Your Progress

1. Playing the same opponent

When you play only one or only a few different opponents, pretty soon, everybody is playing the same game. The weaker players tend to make the most initial progress as they begin playing up to the stronger players' level.

To become a more diverse player, round out your game, and build confidence, you must play a variety of opponents. If you have no intentions of ever playing tournaments but want to improve over a given opponent, work on numbers three through ten.

2 Only "playing up" or "playing down"

If you only play stronger players than yourself, many aspects of your game will improve, but your confidence and your ability to maintain control will not. If you only play weaker opponents, you may become complacent or lazy and your game will stagnate.

3 Omitting solo practice

Playing matches is a necessary part of training and will improve many skills such as placement and movement. However without solo practice, it is impossible to do the necessary "fine tuning" on your shots. Relying on matches as your only practice is one of the surest ways to remain at the same level for a long long time.

Practice makes perfect if you practice perfectly. Master the basics in your time alone, then keep up the drills on a regular basis.

4 Not maintaining your equipment

Haven't changed your strings since the Reagan years? Are the soles of your shoes caked with mud and gravel? Not making the most of what you have is a sure fire way to limit your abilities.

5 Too much emphasis on a weapon

One of the worst things that can happen to a promising player is finding a natur-

al weapon too early during development. Weapons like a strong serve, a great overhead, or an amazing behind-the-back double reverse splat with a full twist will become the winner attempt in all too many rallies and cause development to be very disproportionate.

6 Overcompensation to hide a weakness

Ever run around a ball to set up a forehand to avoid having to hit a weak backhand? Ever go to the ceiling because you had no confidence in your ability to shoot the ball? There's no better time than right now to identify your weaknesses and start working to improve them. Life's too short to go on and on playing badly because you never fixed a fundamental flaw in your technique. This is a problem that can be fixed so easily if you will seek out a good teacher and invest some practice time.

7 Being trapped by the psych game

Never buy into someone else's hype. Your opponent's level of confidence should never undermine yours. If you're stuck because another player has convinced you that you deserve to lose, then maybe you do. On the other side of the coin, if you easily psych out the players in your home club, you may never face the challenge that forces you to improve until you travel to a tournament. Save the head games for tournaments, allow your homeboys to play their best game to give you the best run for your money.

8 Preoccupation with outside factors

No way around it, a bad day at work, family problems, fighting with a mate, and dozens of other real life problems find their way onto the court with you. This may be a more difficult problem to remedy than a weak backhand, but simply identifying it can restore some confidence since you will know it's not your ability that lacks. A little work on focus and concentration may help.

9 Too little or too much conditioning

If you're out of shape, you won't play as well as you know how. Racquetball is great exercise, but you may need more than that to play your best. Overtraining will take the drive out of your game as well as a serious toll on your body.

10 Poor understanding of court position and strategy

If you haven't caught on to what this game is all about, you're in for some real fun. It's time to start reading and/or get with a pro and bone up on center court position, offensive opportunities, left up balls, playing percentages, and all the other concepts that make this such a great game!

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HOME COURT

news from the hood

Leagues = Success

By John Lipe, Owner Union County Racquetball Club

After 17 full years of racquetball in a town the size of Cobden, Illinois (1200) people are always asking me for a reason that I have been able to remain open for that period of time when many other racquetball facilities in southern Illinois have closed. There are several reasons, of course, but I usually say that my leagues, which I keep in progress year round are the main reason for the success. Here are the results of Winter League play:

Open Division

Fred Diprete, Dongola
Knut Connell, Lake of Egypt
Bob Jansen, Corbondale
Jim Hommers, Murphysboro

AA Division

John Veach, Vienna
Philip Jones, Goreville

Denny Bruggerman, Marion
Rich Stearns, Lake of Egypt

A Division

Mike Martin, Murphysboro
Debbie Braden, Cobden
Loy Addington, Cobden
Cliff Manus, Anna

Las Vegas Open

The biggest Las Vegas event in recent memory, the 1995 US Open Racquetball Championships saw 404 players competing in the amateur draw accompanying the IRT stop. The sponsors, LV Discount Golf & Tennis, Coors of Las Vegas, Ripe Plum, Las Vegas Sporting House, Western Cab, Powerade, Pro Penn, Sav Mor, Desert Plumbing & Heating, Powerbar, Caribbean Stud, Eliminator, Made in the Shade Window Tinting, JCH Wire & Cable, Saranac, Las Vegas Athletic Club, and MC Racquetball Promotions combined to produce the successful event.

Men A

Alan Brint
Joe Hassey

Women Open

Debbie Tisinger
Rosie Torres

Women A

Brooke Brumitt
Chow Phan

Men B

William Brown
Roy Perez

Women B

Debbie Colegrove
Ashley Weatherby

Men C

Manuel Ceballos
Tim Martin

Women C

Kim Nakamura
Melissa Deneil

Women D

Vicki Hahn
Teresa Zavala

Men 30+

Steve Lerner
Joe Hassey

Men 35+

Alan Brint
Rich Clark

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Battle at the Border

Oklahoma and Kansas Shoot-It-Out
for Racquetball Dominance

What began as a clever marketing device turned into a sad reminder of the tragedy in Oklahoma for Ponca City's Battle at the Border tournament. The bomb theme T-shirts and brochures were done in the weeks prior to the Oklahoma City bombing, but appeared to be a poor taste reminder when the event actually took place. The event was held and turned out to be an exciting, enjoyable weekend of racquetball.

Billy Perrone, Kansas State Singles champion and #1 seed, did not lose a game on his way to the finals. Chris Jones, 4-time Regional Intercollegiate champ and #2 seed, dropped only one game to fellow Oklahoman Joe Still. In the finals, Kansas took the bragging rights as Billy Perrone easily dismissed Chris Jones in straight games, 11-9, 11-4, 11-3.

Results

Open

1. Billy Perrone 2. Chris Jones 3. Joe Still

A Division

1. David Guentert 2. Vince Blatt 3. Chad Hatfield

C Division

1. Jamie Epperson 2. Gary Tindel 3. Kirk Norris

D Division

1. Chuck Matthews 2. Gerald Arrington 3. Kevin Kreger

Novice Division

1. Joe McElroy 2. Dave Kinney 3. Jerad Going

Open/A Doubles

1. Billy Perrone/Chris Jones
2. Joe Still/Chad Hatfield
3. Kip Bird/Dave Rockstraw

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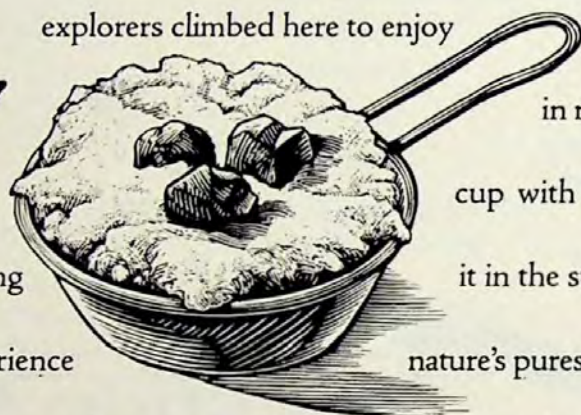
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Appetizers

Should I adjust my court positioning to play power players?

As usual, center court position is just as vital against the blasters as the dinkers. The difference comes with your depth in the court. For the power players, adjust your coverage tendencies a couple of steps back. Unless they flat roll the ball, the second bounce will be much deeper for power players. Playing back will afford you more time to react.

This puts you in a position where you have to cut off most balls before they come off the back wall, since they will come off the back wall with much greater velocity and kick farther out into the court. However, cutting off the ball a couple of steps deeper will be easier than cutting it off in true center court. Remember, (unfortunately) it gives your opponent more of a chance to position himself in front of you, so if you give him setups, he is in prime position for pinches and other put-aways.

By playing back, you have more time to position yourself to set up, so don't waste these opportunities. Remember, the mistakes you make shooting the ball will be magnified in deep court, so you should put in some practice putting the ball away from deep.

Mike Ray, IRT #6

Entrees

I've spent hours on the machines and weights, and my game is no better. What's wrong?

To improve in racquetball you must spend the most training time on the court. Strength training, endurance training, and other types of specialized forms of cross-training can help, but use them to correct deficiencies, not as the majority of your training. So many players in the late 1980's overemphasized fitness training. Since there are only so many hours in a day, too much strength or cardio training takes away valuable court hours. Going to the extreme and overtraining will leave you with nothing left to take to the court. Resistance training and cardio training are great, but if your goal is to improve your racquetball, you have to get on the court and work your game.

A good regimen of court drills will correct mechanics for the fundamental skills and help develop weapons. Practice games will lead to better understanding of court positioning and strategy. Speed drills will help to improve getting ability. Games such as **BI RAK IT** will help develop the neuro processes that aid with timing and coordination. All of these will increase consistency and confidence.

Use strength and cardio training to look and feel better and be generally healthier, but train on the racquetball court to be a better racquetball player.

Aaron Katz, IRT #7

What is the most important thing I can I do while in a tournament to perform better?

Aside from the basics such as appropriate diet, plenty of rest, etc., the best thing you can work on is the "instant replay". That is, visualize your play in your last match and improve it mentally. As accurately and in as much detail as possible, visualize the instances where you played especially well and lock them into your thinking. Remem-

ber the instances where you choked, and play it out mentally adjusting your play to turn it into a perfect play in your mind. This technique will definitely help you play better as the tournament goes on.

Mike Guidry, IRT #4

My skills are good in practice. I know what to do and when to do it, but I still lose more than I should. Any suggestions?

Sometimes the key to putting it all together is mental rehearsal. Using visual imagery will help you rely on your skills even in a tense match, help with anticipation, and sharpen your ability to play strategically even when the tempo heats up.

U.C. Berkeley head racquetball coach Del Villanueva teaches mental imagery as the link between physical proficiency, and winning in competition (Imagine That, **KILLSHOT** #15, Instructional Special 1994).

Remember, visualization is the key only if your physical skills are right on the money. If you can't consistently execute the basics, the mental work alone will not get you where you want to go.

Drew Kachtik, IRT #5

Today's Special?

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The Nine Lives of Aaron Katz

By Marvin Quertermous
Managing Editor

Q: Aaron, how do you suddenly become a top eight player after seven years on the tour?

AK: It has a lot to do with focus, commitment. I started playing the tour in '87 - not exactly the high point of racquetball. The game was suffering big disappointments. My second year on the tour, 1988, was the year the tour was cancelled in mid-season. There was no future in pro racquetball. I made the most reasonable decision for me at the time - to go to law school. Then, in the following years, while I was absorbed in school and playing a few pro events each year, some pretty amazing changes started happening. Hank Marcus' involvement not only saved the tour but made it stronger, more stable, and more exciting than ever. When I graduated from law school in 1994, I saw a pro tour that was tremendously successful and growing daily. Professional racquetball had become a legitimate contender as a career choice. I made some honest assessments and decided to make a real commitment to the pro game for the first time.

Q: So, have you trained differently?

AK: I've trained, that's different. In the past, I've always worked out, to stay in shape, but not specifically for racquetball. After surgery to correct some arthritis in my shoulder last June, I set up a serious program complete with speed drills, strength training, and court regimen. I tried to look at each of my weaknesses and work to improve those. I had to exorcise a lot of demons, develop focus, zeal

Q: And as the season has gone on?

AK: Well, I immediately got some really positive reinforcement. I beat Sudsy

[Monchik] in New Orleans, then Ruben [Gonzalez] and Andy [Roberts] in Stockton, so I knew I was on the right track. By playing better, it was easier to see my weaknesses to know what to work on. Most of the adjustments I had to make through the season were with my mental game. Let's face it, I had to overcome a history of losing. I had to learn to blank that out and develop a winning mentality - expect to win.

Q: You've mentioned before, that the top players genuinely expect to win every time they play.

AK: Absolutely. Certainly you see it with Cliff [Swain] and Andy. Even if they aren't at the top of their game they expect to win every time they walk on the court. I think you also see that in players like Sudsy and Drew [Kachik]. When they come to play they have no concept that they might lose a match.

That's really where I differ from the other IRT pros. I didn't come up through the traditional junior ranks, and I never aspired to be a touring pro

Q: And what about somebody like [John] Ellis?

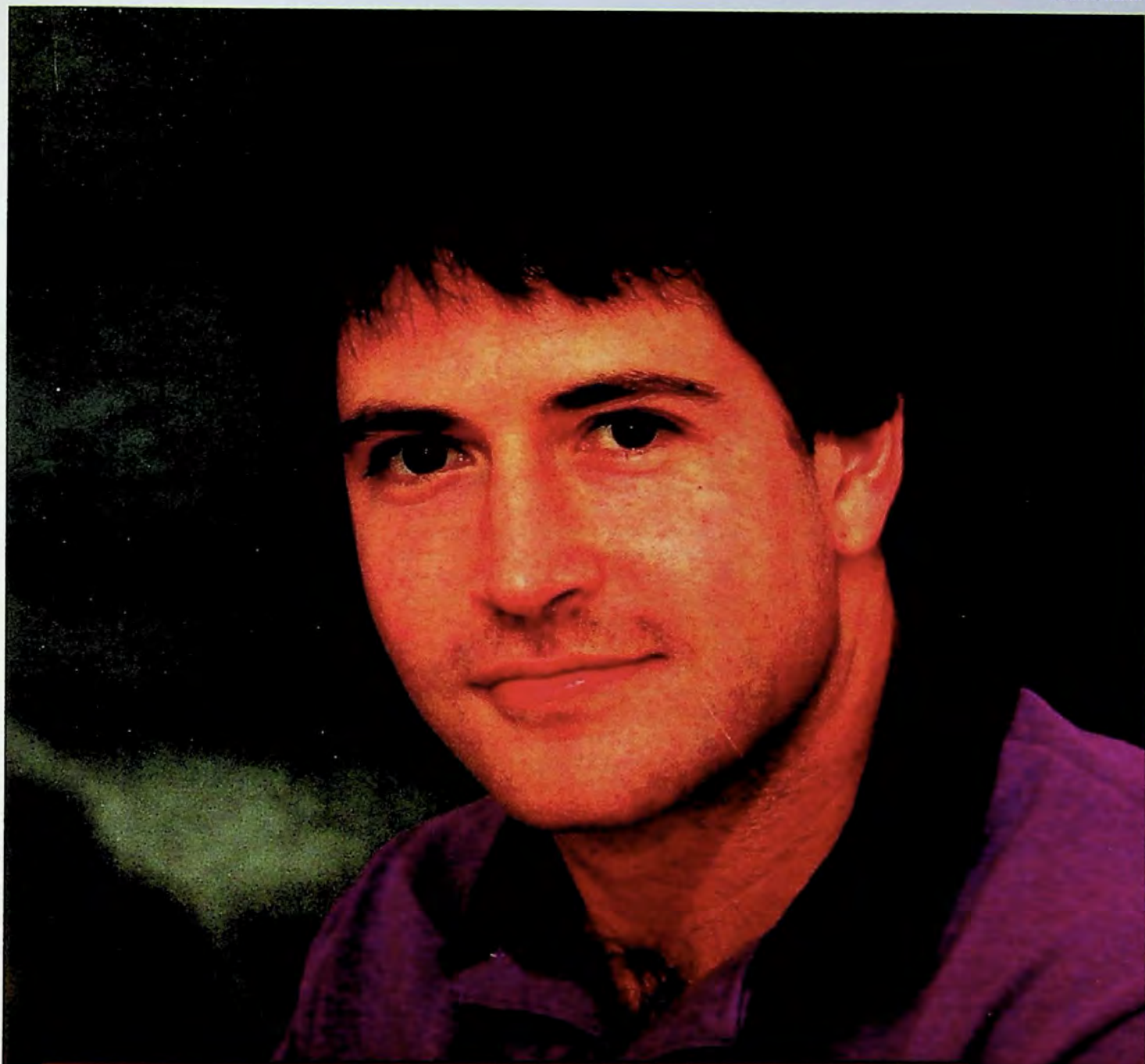
AK: He has a great game, tons of physical talent, but has sort of reached a mental plateau. I think he is top four material, but not without some soul-searching. That's really not so unusual. Really, the Hogans and Swains that have the mental toughness to dominate immediately are the unusual ones. Players that take time to mature are more the norm, players like Mike Ray that made more typical progress - ranked twenty, then fifteen, then nine, then four, then one over the course of several years.

Q: How did you get involved with racquetball in the first place?

AK: Accidentally, really. I grew up around one-wall handball with my father in New York. But he encouraged me more toward basketball and tennis. In college, I started out on the tennis team as a freshman, but quit after some serious disagreements with my coach. I started playing racquetball to fill time. To be honest, girls hung out at the gym, so that's where I went. From there I started taking it seriously and gathered a group of fairly serious players. From that beginning, we went on to build a solid [racquetball] team, and one of the best inter-collegiate conferences in the country. My interest grew, and I started looking for a career involving the club industry.

Q: So why the move to Dallas?

AK: Mostly because I was tired of New York. I had become a solid open player and I understood the industry. After college, I came to Dallas and literally slept on a friend's couch until I found a job. I saw an opportunity to make a good living in racquetball. That's really where I differ from the other IRT pros. I didn't come up through the traditional junior ranks, and I



After seven uninspired seasons of pro racquetball, Aaron Katz has come alive to leap into the elite IRT top eight. With a pro career that has come about nearly as much by accident as by design, Katz has maintained a closer link to the club industry than any other top pro.

A series of past incarnations have seen Katz through the fabled world of New York City's one-wall handball, the forefront of Texas' booming racquet club industry, and most recently, law school and the early steps toward a limited law practice.

Katz is known for openly expressing his often controversial views regarding the game and its top players. **KILLSHOT** editor Marvin Quertermous caught up with Katz recently and explored some of the more interesting aspects of his very diverse career.

never aspired to be a touring pro. I saw potential in racquetball clinics and promotions.

Q: So what did you find in Texas?

AK: The Peck brothers just dominated Texas throughout the early 1980's. Later, it would be Drew that would dominate. The Pecks set the standard, so by necessity, I learned a lot from watching and playing them. Soon I was ranked in the top four in the state and began rivalries with Drew and Mike [Guidry].

Q: Both Kachtik and Guidry have been more successful on the pro tour than you, at least up until this season. How did it go in Texas against them?

AK: Drew and I sort of took turns dominating each other. Wins came in streaks for each of us but came out pretty close to even in the end. One season, the two of us were in the finals of thirteen of the fifteen events on the calendar. Mike and I always just sort of traded off. Neither of us ever dominated the other.

Q: So what was your relationship with the Pecks?

AK: We were and still are great friends. We never had a teacher-student relationship, but I learned a lot from them just from being around them and facing them on the court.

Q: The Texas group has a history of being so close-knit, did that begin with the Pecks?

AK: Well, they started sort of watching one another's backs at a time when every player on the tour stayed off by himself and there wasn't the comradery you find now. It was a win-at-any-cost mentality in those days among the pros, and there were no friends. The Pecks would room together, watch each other's matches, and coach each other. They were huge support for one another when nobody else had any allies, and it worked tremendously to their advantage. To a lesser degree, they started doing some of the same things for some of the rest of us that they took a genuine interest in. I think that was a huge factor in Cliff's success, not only did he adopt much of the Pecks' control-power style, but the confidence he gained by immediately being taken

into their circle had to heavily contribute to his immediate success on the tour. Now Drew, Mike, and I try to give each other that same kind of support.

Q: Do you feel that their play influenced today's players?

AK: No question. Dave set the standard for stroke mechanics that we see today. At least four of the top eight use most of his techniques. Aside from very individualistic players like Mike Ray, almost all of the top eight employ some of them. His teaching directly affected players like Guidry and Swain.

Q: I think you touched on that somewhat in your feature about the best of all time in the last issue (The Greatest, **KILLSHOT** #17, Winter 1995). Incidentally I got some strong reactions to that piece in your not rating Hogan as the greatest player ever. Did you get any calls or mail?

AK: Most of the response I got applauded my reasoning and the criteria I used to build the case for my ratings. My approach has been traditionally relied on in other sports. For instance, Connors was a great tennis player, but lost ground by being dominated by both Borg and McEnroe. I got good direct response and I stand by my statements.



Steve Lerner

Q: What do you see today in racquetball in general?

AK: There's no doubt that the real growth in the sport has been with the pro tour. The IRT has just exploded. Participation in racquetball at the club level continues to sag in many parts of the country, but interest in the pros has grown beyond all imagination. The tour is a tremendous success and the result of some incredible vision and dedication by Hank Marcus and by VCI, Spalding, Penn, Head Athletic, and others that have rallied together to make a difference in this sport. In essence, They have built a tour that is a success independent of the problems at the grass roots of the game.

Q: What do you see as the problems at the grass roots?

AK: The AARA (American Amateur Racquetball Association) certainly has to bear some of the burden. To a large extent they have dropped the ball. There has been a misguided focus on the Olympic picture, neglecting the needs at the grass roots of the game. Where are the marketing efforts toward the clubs by the amateur organization? Isn't that supposed to be the first priority of a group like that? In racquetball, the success of the sport is 100% dependent on the clubs. Since the opportunities to play outside of the club system are rare, the first

agenda should be to help solidify profitability for clubs. The involvement with the Olympic Committee moving toward Olympic status for the game has been prioritized at the expense of grass roots programming. The AARA seems to have gotten so focused on the Olympic hype that it diverted its focus from the club industry. That's just not true. From my perspective within the club industry, they are perceived very negatively. The national organizations behind aerobics, personal trainers, etc., on the other hand, are perceived very positively. These groups work consistently to promote their segments and assist with programming and promotion that spells profitability for clubs.

Q: Do the manufacturers play into this?

AK: I guess they share some burden, but in fairness, their job is to support programming, not initiate it. I think they've done that. Some have done that very consistently. Ektelon has worked hard to support

the efforts of the AARA, even when they weren't the best. They've certainly done their part. They have even reached out to the clubs directly. Head and Spalding are starting to really support racquetball's growth in a number of ways. They see potential in the sport, so they're actively supporting all of the positive programs they can. Plus you have to give a lot of credit to a company like Penn, they own the ball market, so they would never really need to invest for exposure, yet they keep putting dollars back into the sport. I think that says a lot about investing in the long term.

Q: What do you think of the direction of things discussed in February in Atlanta at the "Summit" (Politically Correct, **KILL-SHOT** #17, Winter 1995).

AK: I think the AARA is starting to see some past mistakes. The direction taken there was valid. A cooperative effort to reach out to the clubs is absolutely right on track. If this represents the direction of things to come, then great. Right now, I'm

I think you have to appreciate someone like Jim Hiser who is a very creative programmer.

skeptical, but I hope the stated function is not just rhetoric but really where they are headed.

Q: Recently someone who has been very influential in the game for years suggested to me that the amateur group should place term limits on its officers' positions to keep an influx of fresh thinking. What are your thoughts along those lines?

AK: I'm definitely not in favor of limits like that. I think there is stability in longevity, and that doesn't have to mean a loss of creativity. I think you have to appreciate someone like Jim Hiser who is a very creative programmer. I am a huge fan of Hiser and I believe he has initiated some of the most innovative teaching and training programs within the sport. I think the problems rest more with Luke's [St. Onge] preoccupation with the Olympics and his neglect in marketing the sport among the club industry, and the grass roots.

Q: Is there no way to move forward in more than one direction?

AK: Well, I think it's a very small group, and very limited in terms of resources and manpower. Ultimately, I think there's only so much they can work on at once, and until now the priorities have been questionable. There is a tremendous amount of resources that the AARA hasn't tapped into, for instance the IRT, local promoters, and state associations. They need to use their people resources outside the national office in a better way.

Q: OK, here's the question I have to ask every player I interview, which player do you like to face least on the IRT?

AK: No-brainer. Without a doubt, Swain. He dominates me with his serve. His strengths, his serve and return of serve, are my weaknesses. If I can pull him into a rally, I have a chance. I can rally with anybody...anybody. That's my only hope. He is the only player that I've never beaten. He exploits all my weaknesses. That's why playing him helps my game more than playing anybody else.

Q: What's the best advice you can give to up and coming players reading this interview?

AK: Sport specific training. Don't just train to get in better condition and expect that to improve your game. You must train in the skills that are directly necessary for racquetball. That means training on the court. Too many good players got away from that in the 1980's. Use your cross training to improve on your weaknesses, not as a primary sport in itself. Nail the fundamentals, then get ready mentally.

Q: Where are you now with your law practice?

AK: I've started an extremely limited practice, about 10 hours per week, mostly contract work, some pro bono stuff. I wanted to get started in a small way, but my focus since graduation has been on the tour.

Q: And for next season?

AK: Well, I'm definitely at a crossroad. I will probably stay tied to some degree to both [law practice and pro racquetball], but I don't know which will be my main focus next season.

Q: Will we see you in the top eight next season?

AK: That all depends on my decisions over the next few weeks. If the tour remains my focus, then I really hope you do.



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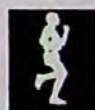
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The device helps debunk the astronomically high exaggerations players are prone to use regarding the speed of their serves. In a surprising twist, some of the control players on the tour are logging speeds respectable for any power junkie. The device is another means of adding emphasis to the company's commitment to performance and technology.

Winning Combination

Head continues to expand its efforts in racquetball. With the successful introduction of the superlight series of frames last year, and constantly increasing promotion involving the world's number one player Cliff Swain, Head has gained solid ground in reaching the grass roots of the sport. Building on one another's effort, both the racquets division and the clothing & footwear division are promoting diligently and working to solidify the racquetball market.

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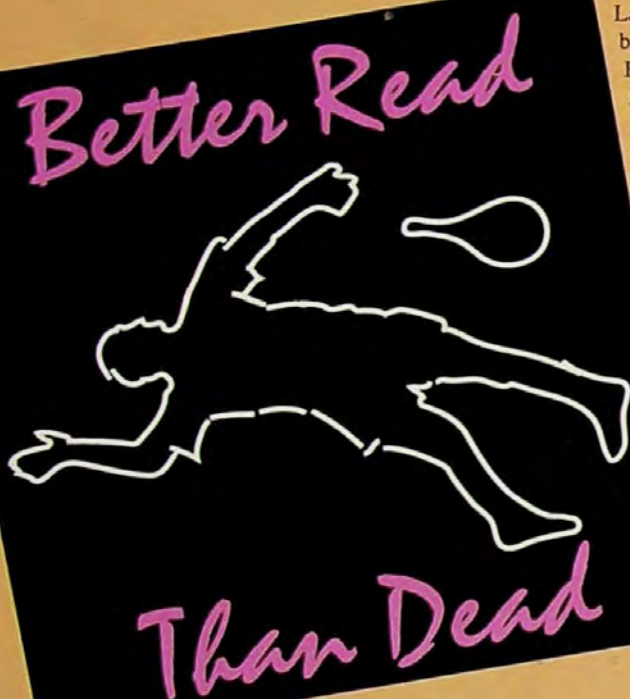
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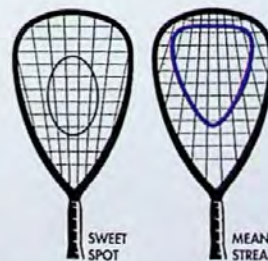
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