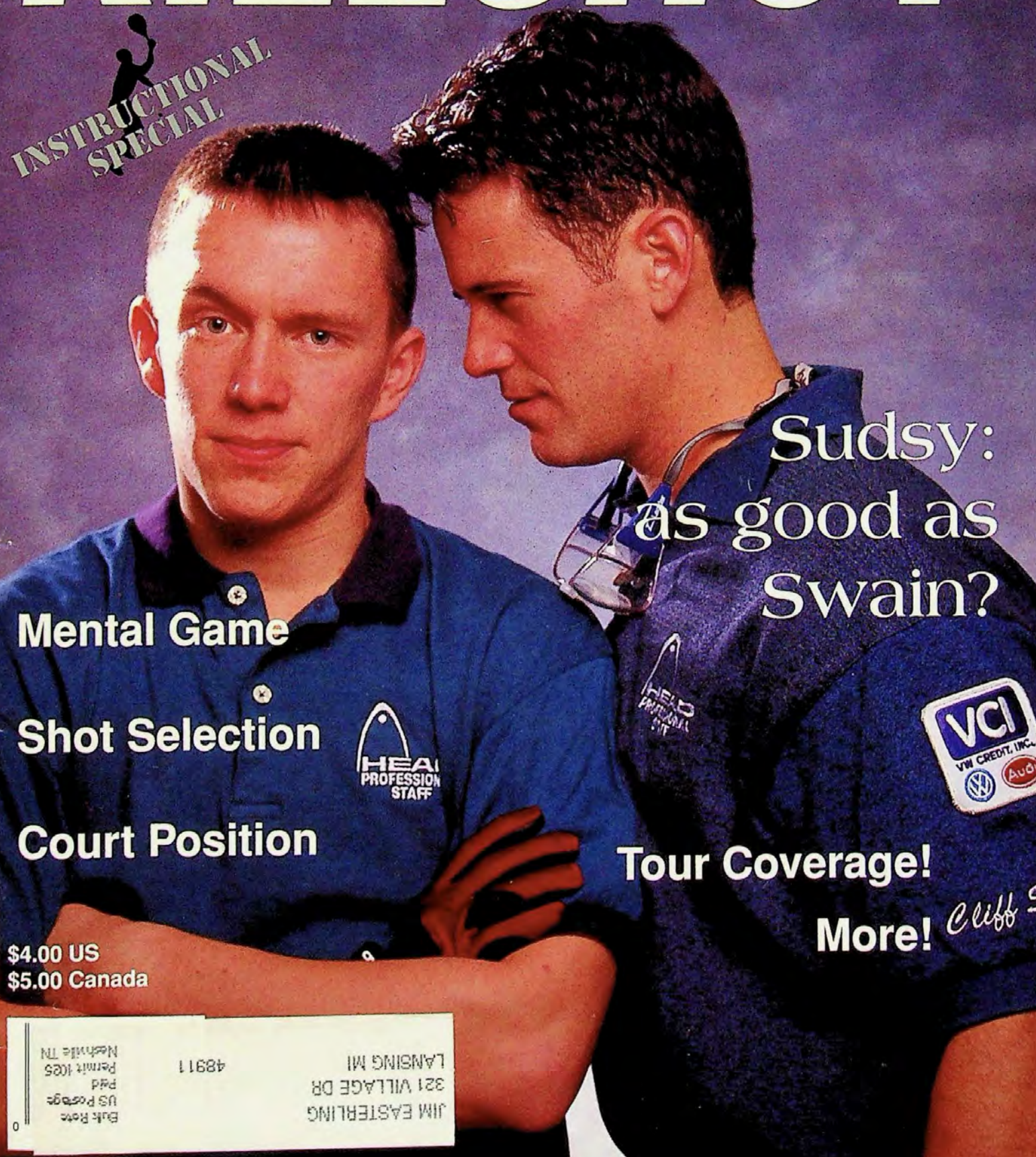


The Magazine of Professional Racquetball

# KILLSHOT

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SPECIAL



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Swain?

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# 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 tourney?]

"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



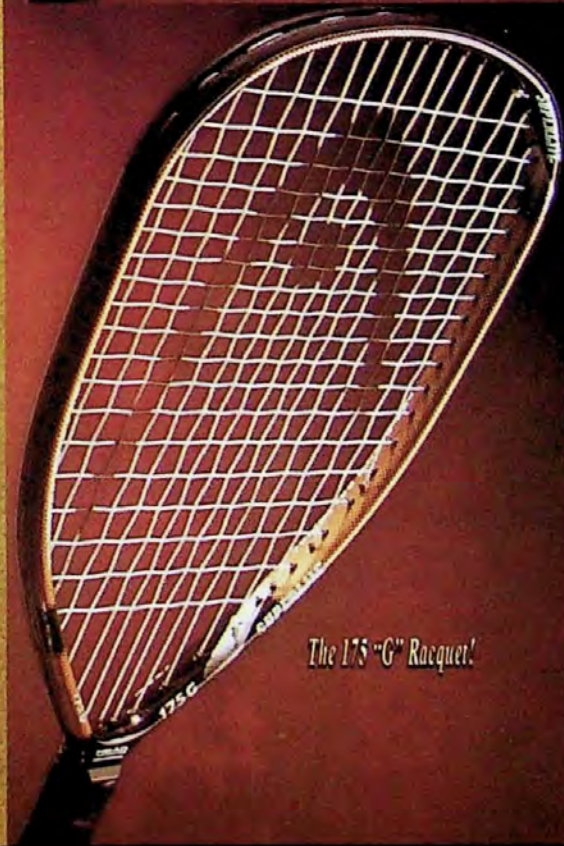
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# KILLSHOT

Instructional 1995  
Volume V, Number 4

INSTRUCTIONAL  
SPECIAL

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Egan Inoue Signature Racquet

Clockwise from top  
right: Sudsy Monchik;  
Cliff Swain; Cheryl  
Gudinas and Michelle  
Gould; Darrin  
Schenck; Egan Inoue.



The Official Publication of  
the International Racquetball  
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Cover: Sudsy Monchik and Cliff Swain photographed by Don Sidor



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## Letter-Man

Andy Roberts was recently presented a certificate and a varsity letter M declaring him an honorary member of the University of Memphis M Club for his outstanding accomplishments during his years on the Memphis racquetball team. The honor is typically reserved for varsity athletes,

not for club sports such as racquetball.

You can catch Andy's instructional on page 15 of this issue.

## Where's Normie?

There is little or no truth to the rumor that Norm Blum has been kidnapped by Aliens. But his *Passing Shots* column is, none the less, missing from the pages of this issue.

Rest assured Norm is merely taking a much needed break and will be back among the humanoids in the next issue.

In the meantime, Have a good time, Normie. (And try to stay out of trouble.)



# SHORT SERVES



## Hey, is that a hinder?!

Egan Inoue was featured recently on the cover of *INSIDE KARATE* and also appeared in the *Extreme Fighting Championships* on pay-per-view.

I guess that ought to just about end the debate on whether or not racquetball players are phenomenal athletes.

You can catch Egan in this issue of **KILLSHOT** in the signature racquet feature on page 47.

## Baby II

The baby in the last issue was Mickulas Scott Ray, son of Mike and Holly Ray. Paul Lowe had the first correct guess so he is the proud winner of a **KILLSHOT** T-shirt. We had lots of guesses, most frequently Aaron Katz' baby.

So, okay, smart guys, now try this. Same game, same rules. First correct fax to identify this little bundle gets his or her very own **KILLSHOT** T-shirt.

No entries allowed before February 1, 1996.





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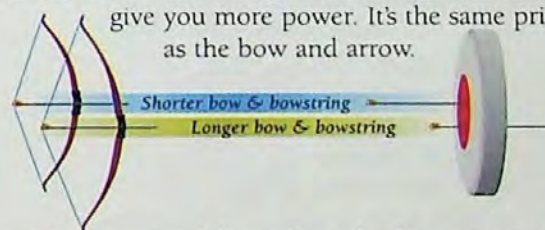
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Darrin Schenck's

# Choice of the Pros

**Featured Pro:**  
Cliff Swain

**Ranking:**  
#1

**Racquet:**  
HEAD 175G

**String:**  
HEAD T-20

**Tension:**  
27 pounds

**Average number of racquets  
strung per tournament:**  
4

**Comments:**  
Cliff is pretty much by the book.  
Everything I do for Cliff's racquets is what is recommended by HEAD.



## Player Profile:

Cliff Swain is a power player and he is taking a full swing at almost every shot. A player like Cliff will need his racquets restrung often. Because of the low tension range on the HEAD 175G, any drop in tension will be noticeable. Cliff will usually have his racquets restrung before the strings break.



Darrin Schenck's Choice of the Pros will be a regular feature in **KILLSHOT**. Darrin Schenck is the official stringer of the International Racquetball Tour and uses a Babolat stringer.



# KILLSHOT cafe

## Appetizers

**What can I do offensively to make my game more consistent?**

The basic plan of offense is a three point plan: down-the-line, cross-court, and pinch. Sure there are other winners and fancier more exciting shots, but they are the exceptions not the rule. No matter if you're a club C player or Cliff Swain, solid winning racquetball is built around these three shots. Every top pro today bases his game on these. They are the bread and butter of any winner simply because they are the most effective, period.

Any opponent you may face can only cover two of these shots. That makes your job simple, determine which one he can't cover from his court position, then hit it. With the passes (both down-the-line and cross-court) you have a good margin for error within your effectiveness range by shooting them a foot to a foot and a half high. The pinch is a rally ending shot and serves as the put away when you catch your opponent hanging too far back to cover the other two.

Gaining control of the rally requires some good choices and execution. Making the most of your opportunities requires practice to perfect the shots. Winning games means constantly thinking in terms of down-the-line, cross, and pinch.

**Drew Kachtik IRT #6**

## Entree

**Some of the pros are known for their court strategies. How do the best go about this?**

The first thing to do in mapping out a game plan is to distinguish your pregame mental work from your on-court mental game. I use this formula: pregame = effective tactics, on-court = effective execution. This means that I concentrate on which tactics will win before going on the court, but once the match starts, I concentrate entirely on the basics.

As I plan for each encounter, I size up my opponent and make a list of his strengths and weaknesses. I remember his coverage tendencies and which weapons have worked against him before. From this I determine how I will beat him and develop a clear mental image. This may mean a barrage of down-the-lines or destroying his rhythm with lobs or something else entirely. Whatever it is that I come up with, I get a clear image in my head. You might say I sort of implant the idea in my subconscious. I picture myself unleashing that weapon and winning with it.

When I step on the court, my concentration shifts 100%. On the court, I simply focus on the basics. My mental cues are things like watch the ball, pay attention, be patient, wait for the set, move my feet, use my entire body in my swing, etc. The game plan is still there from my pre game work, and I will naturally carry it out. But now is the time for concentrating on the skills that will carry me through the match. If you dwell on your tactics during your match, you will mess up the simple stuff, miss your opportunities, and end up with egg on your face. The time for strategy is before hand, game time is execution time!

**Mike Ray IRT #4**

## Today's Special?

Send in your questions to  
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Question too stupid? Don't worry, we promise not to print your name.

## Dessert

**The pros cover the court like it's no effort. When I play it seems as big as a football field. What can I do to get a handle on coverage?**

The court is essentially made up of three zones: the front zone from the front wall to the short line, the middle zone from the short line to just behind the encroachment (dotted) line, and the back zone from there to the back wall. The front zone is no man's land. At least 90% of all shots will take their second bounce behind that zone. That means if you never venture into that zone you can still cover 90% of all shots.

Your chances of winning then depend on how much time you play from the second zone while your opponent plays from the back zone. When you accomplish this, you can pinch for winners. When you find yourself in the back zone, use passing shots until you can work your way back into the middle zone. Keep your opponent in the back zone as much as possible to make his job harder and magnify his mistakes.

One more thing, as you progress in terms of skill, you will be able to shoot more effectively from the back zone. Don't let this get you into the habit of falling into that area too often.

**Drew Kachtik IRT #6**





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(Editorial Comments)

# And now a word from our sponsors

You know who they are. You see them every issue. Sometimes it's full color, sometimes black and white; sometimes a two page spread or a full page, sometimes only a fraction of a page. But they are always here. These are the companies that bring you **KILLSHOT** Magazine. More than that, these are the people who are spending marketing dollars to make the sport better.

Sure, they produce or sell a product, and what better way to get the word out about that product than to provide advertising? Yeah, they understand that. But the point is, the companies you see represented on the covers and within the pages of **KILLSHOT** each issue are the companies actually putting their money where their mouths are. They not only talk about advancing the game but they slap their hard earned dollars on the table to back up their words.

One thing they're saying to you loud and clear is "We care about you. We care so much about you that we are spending money to bring you something colorful and informative exclusively about the sport you play." Not a general sports magazine, not a racket sports magazine, but a magazine by, for, and about racquetball.

There is no way it could be done without them. Production, printing, mailing, and handling costs are so excessive that there would be no publication without the dedicated advertisers funding each issue. We don't receive any subsidies, no government grants to get the word out about the sport.

The absence of companies on the pages might tell you something, too. Of course there are other companies that care about the game. They are just a little reluctant to back up that attitude with a little pocket change.

So what? So, here's what. Check out our advertisers. Buy their products. Use their products. Recommend their products. Need a new racquet, or possibly a couple of new gloves, some string, maybe a new can of balls? Look first to the leaders in the game who are spending dollars for you. The mail order companies are here to make purchasing worry free and convenient just for you.

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By supporting those who are supporting the sport in a real way you are encouraging growth in racquetball for years to come. Before you do anything else, why don't you take just a few minutes to thumb through the issue and check out the ads.

--SQ



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# Let Me Count the Ways

INSTRUCTIONAL  
SPECIAL

A few simple lists can improve your game

By John Boudman  
The Racquet Stringer

## The 5 best things that increase power:

- 1) Head heavy racquets increase swing force.
- 2) Stiffer frames impart more power on the ball.
- 3) Larger racquet frames produce more power than smaller ones.
- 4) Decreasing string tension will increase ball velocity off the racquet face.
- 5) Racquets with lower string pattern density (fewer strings) generate more power.

## The 5 best things that increase control:

- 1) The larger sweet spots of larger frames increase shot precision.
- 2) More flexible frames are more forgiving.
- 3) Increasing string tension will greatly improve accuracy.
- 4) Thinner string (higher gauge) offers more control (through better "bite").
- 5) Racquets with higher string pattern density (more strings) yield better control.

## The 5 best things that increase string life:

- 1) Find the proper string to suit a particular game style.
- 2) Use "string eyes" (small rubber circles that decrease string wear).
- 3) Typically, thicker or heavier (lower gauge) string lasts longer.
- 4) Kevlar mains with 15L or 16 crosses make up the most durable string combination.
- 5) Multi core strings are the most durable.



## 5 things that can save your arm:

- 1) Test several frames and strings with a service-oriented professional before making a purchase.
- 2) Multifilament string or string with a soft finish may be easier on a sore arm.
- 3) The racquet grip can make an incredible difference, replace worn ones and/or try out a softer type.
- 4) Always lower string tension at the onset of arm problems.
- 5) Add or replace a vibration dampener, or try out a different type.

## 5 things you should always do:

- 1) Only trust your racquets to a knowledgeable professional. USRSA Certified Racquet Technicians are the cream of the crop - seek them out.
- 2) Restring as many times each year as you play each week.
- 3) Use the protective racquet case.
- 4) After every use, inspect your racquet for frayed strings and frame cracks.
- 5) During play, manually align strings frequently (strings should be at 90 degrees to one another).

## 5 things you should never do:

- 1) Keep your racquet in your car trunk or on the shelf beneath the rear glass.
- 2) Violate manufacturers' instructions by over-stringing or otherwise altering specifications.
- 3) Restring your racquet

without replacing a worn bumper or grommet.

- 4) Strike your opponent with your racquet after the rally if the referee is looking.
- 5) Place anything in your ear smaller than your elbow.

It is truly amazing what a difference a good stringer can make with any racquet. Certainly he cannot make a low end frame play like a top-of-the-line, but he can add something just short of magic to an average frame if he knows his stuff. There are a number of variables with which to work, and manipulating these variables in combination can yield awesome results. A bit more here, a bit less there and suddenly the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The trick is to discover the ideal combination of frame, string, and stringing technique to make the most of your skills.



John Boudman (Linda "Mrs. Racquet Stringer" Boudman - background)



# LETTERS

Hey Norm, you never called...

Though I usually appreciate feedback, I found Norm Blum's comments in the fall issue of **KILLSHOT** a little hard to take. He chastised me for not interviewing those whom I allegedly "blasted" in a recent article I wrote for *Racquetball* magazine on the growth of the IRT. Then Blum blasted me without so much as a phone call.

If he had called me, he would have found out that I had interviewed numerous people who were closely involved with the development of the IRT, including Marty Hogan, someone whom Blum said I had blasted. I talked to Hogan not once, but twice, the second time to allow him to rebut comments made by others.

Nothing went into the article unless it was verified by at least two sources. Mike Ray, Aaron Katz and Hank Marcus, all of whom are contributors to **KILLSHOT**, were very helpful in this regard.

Mr. Blum needs to understand that grabbing the reader's attention should never be done at the expense of accuracy. To borrow his phrase, that's Journalism 101.

Tom Slear

Annapolis, Maryland

Editor's note: This letter refers to an article that Mr. Slear wrote for the amateur publication about professional racquetball. Norm roughed him up a little in his *Passing Shots* column in the last issue and we thought it only fair to allow him a place to defend his honor. Norm Blum calls it as he sees it and has never been one to shy away from controversy. His column doesn't appear in this issue but he'll be back in the Winter '96 issue of **KILLSHOT**. No doubt, he will be stirring the waters again with his views of the game and its participants.

## An open letter to Steve Lerner

Dear Steve,

After having a couple of days to reflect on this past weekend's event, I would like to take the time to share some thoughts with you and the players on the tour.

I brought Bobby along with me so that he might see some positive role models to emulate. Bobby's father has a lot of problems that he has allowed Bobby to experience and this has left him a very confused nine year old. The guys did themselves and the IRT proud at this event. It is fantastic the way these men made themselves available to everyone at the tournament, but especially the children.

Bobby needed this experience more than Santa Clause at this time and it was more for him than I imagined. The kid just walks a little taller when adults take an interest in him and I can say he is walking tall this week. He is the PROUD owner of 5 personally autographed Pro Penn racquetballs. (Thanks again, Steve). These are now under lock and key with his other most prized possessions. He has an Official Tour Program autographed by the top racquetball players on the planet. His most valued gift for the weekend is the John Ellis autographed racquetball glove. We busted Bobby yesterday morning trying to take THE GLOVE to school. I work here at the club late and usually get home at 11:00 p.m. Tracy told me to look in on the little man when I got in and he was sleeping with THE GLOVE on his hand.

Bobby says that John is the coolest. Personally I'm a Mike Ray fan. We're going to try and take a road trip to either Atlanta, Memphis, or Pittsburgh. I would like to thank Cliff [Swain], Andy [Roberts], Tim [Doyle], Mike [Guidry], Drew [Kachuk], Mr. [Mike] Ray, Sudsy [Monchik], and John Ellis for this special effort. It means a bunch, guys, and the game needs this now more than ever. YOU GUYS ARE THE BEST!  
William Huseman

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# NO GUTS NO GLORY

## Taking Risks to Win

Del Villanueva

Head Coach

University of California at Berkeley

**Has your opponent  
ever set you up with a  
miss-hit ceiling ball  
that landed in mid-  
court and you, in turn,  
sent it back up to the  
ceiling, but wish you  
could have done more  
with it?**

**Read on...**

Taking risks is attempting shots and trying new strategies you've never (or rarely) used before due to a lack of confidence. You must overcome the hesitations and fears when particular situations and/or opportunities present themselves during a game. A true winner has raised his/her level of play, and continues to improve by taking risks.

### The Advantages:

1. Begin to develop a bigger arsenal of shots (more options)
2. Develop a habit (mind set) of capitalizing on offensive opportunities when given setups while improving shot making skills
3. Increase strategic options as you attempt new shots, e.g., develop a solid passing game as ball control improves

4. Develop confidence, as each new shot you try helps desensitize your anxiety and consequently makes each future attempt feel less "risky".

5. Develop a capacity for spontaneity in "taking risks", and reap from the above benefits

### Lower Level Players

It is important, especially at the beginner level, to keep the ball in play, but as your ball control improves, you must attempt to hit the ball away from your opponent and be more offensive. Eventually, you must try to do "something" with every shot (or at least be effective defensively)

At this level, most of you play too far



up! Most of the game is played in the back half of the court. If you position yourself right behind the dotted line between the two side walls, you will get to more balls, and will be in optimum position to play the left up shots. So, by relocating to this new home base (center court), you don't risk anything, but instead gain the upper hand at getting to more balls, and playing smart winning percentage racquetball. The benefits are tremendous!

## Advanced and Higher Intermediates

At these levels, you must take the offensive when given a setup. You may not get a second chance to put the ball away during a rally. That setup in deep court which you all too often send back up to the ceiling, deserves reevaluation and an offensive effort on your part instead. Smart shot selection and placement, however, should take precedence over a "flat rolling out every setup mentality".

## The Serve

Never enough can be said about the benefits of having a variety of serves. By varying the type of serve and the height, angle, speed, and direction of the ball, one is able to force weak returns and dictate the pace of the game. So, learn and practice new serves and new angles, for being bold and brave will expand your strategic arsenal and bring more wins.

## Start With Practice

Recall game situations in your mind when you felt you "could've and should've" but didn't take a certain shot. Now practice:

A. Set yourself up with a ball that lands in the area where you previously didn't attempt a particular (or logical) shot. Now attempt the shot, whether going for bottom board or passing an opponent, and try to achieve a successful end result. Remember to take a full and unimpeded swing and follow through.

B. Repeat until you feel consistent. Try this with other "uncomfortable" shots. Power is not important to start out with.

## Visualization Helps

What you'll see is what you'll do! This exercise will complement practice and reinforce confidence. Picture yourself taking a shot that has always been particularly risky or anxiety provoking for you. Watch yourself setting up high and early, looking at the ball, then taking a full swing. Repeat with shots each time seeing the ball hit its target as you continue to achieve the particular goals/results with authority.

As you continue to take risks, you boost your confidence, and the risks become more calculated. That new kill shot or pass you try today may be in your arsenal of weapons sooner than you think. So go for it.

A true winner  
has raised  
his/her level of  
play, and  
continues to  
improve by  
taking risks.

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# Getting to the Heart of the Matter

## Heart and Lung Function and Exercise

By Richard Honaker, MD

Racquetball players tend to be quite fit and this in large part is due to good heart and lung function. Cardio-respiratory health is an integral part of health promotion and racquetball provides an excellent forum for this.

The heart is a four-chambered organ which receives blood from the veins of the body to the right side of the heart. The blood passes through valves from the right atrium into the right ventricle and then the blood is pumped out into the lungs. The lungs have a rich blood vessel network which transports oxygen into the blood vessels. The blood then carries the oxygen into the left side of the heart by way of the left atrium. It then passes into the left ventricle which is the workhorses of the heart and is pumped out to the remainder of the body to other organs. The heart has an intricate electrical system governed by the sinoatrial node and A/V node in the right side of the heart. This electrical system couples the atrial and ventricular beat in a very smooth uniform pattern to move the blood in the right direction at the right pace efficiently. An enlarged heart valvular problems or damage to the heart and lungs may foul up this system.

To maximize heart function one should strive to maintain 60-80% of the maximal predicted heart rate during exercise. Your maximal predicted heart rate is obtained by subtracting your age from the

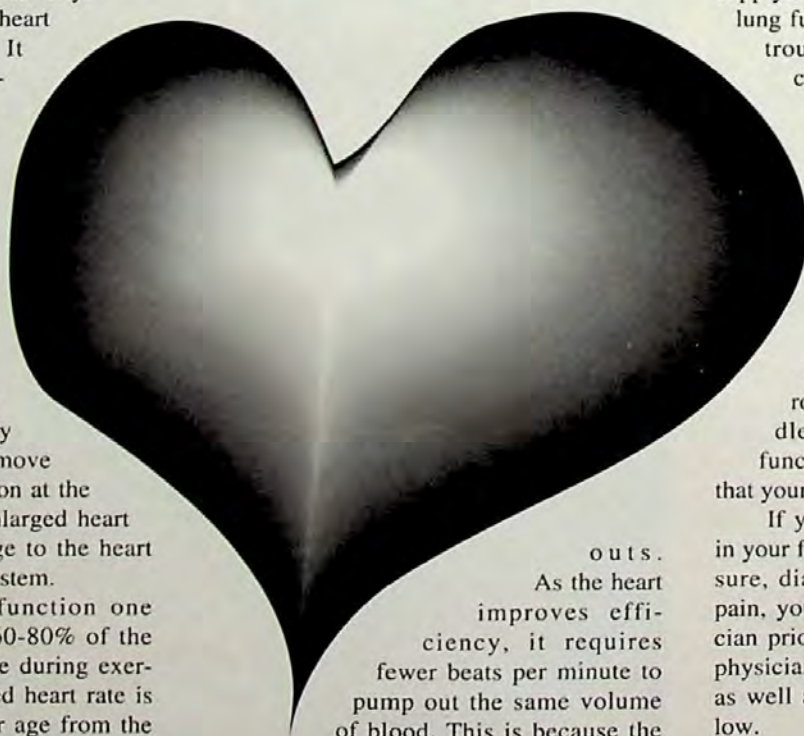
**To maximize heart function one should strive to maintain 60-80% of the maximal predicted heart rate during exercise.**

number 200. You should attain 60-80% of this number for at least 30 minutes four times per week for adequate cardiovascular work -

heart works more efficiently and results in a lower heart rate. The normal heart rate is 60-100, and in trained athletes we often see rates into the 40's. Lung function can be maximized by regular workouts and the avoidance of toxins such as cigarette smoke. Passive secondhand exposure to cigarette smoke may also cause noticeable changes in the lungs. As we strive to reduce cholesterol, reduce blood pressure, and reduce smoking, we find that disease of the coronary arteries, which feed the heart, is less severe. This, too, results in a healthy functioning heart with an adequate blood supply. Symptoms related to poor heart and lung function include shortness of breath, trouble breathing while lying down, chest pain, and shortness of breath during exertion. There are many tests to determine lung function and heart function capabilities. These are often expensive and unnecessary. The best way to follow your heart function is through your heart rate where you will notice a lower pulse rate as you improve your fitness. Lung function may be evaluated roughly by trying to blow out a candle from a distance. As your lung function improves, you should notice that your distance increases.

If you have a history of heart disease in your family or you have high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol or chest pain, you should be evaluated by a physician prior to taking up heavy workouts. A physician can give you safety information as well as an exercise prescription to follow.

outs.  
As the heart improves efficiency, it requires fewer beats per minute to pump out the same volume of blood. This is because the





# It's Good to be King

By Andy Roberts

INSTRUCTIONAL  
SPECIAL

Try living up to a nickname on the court like "King". I decided a long time ago that if that's what they were going to call me, I'd make them do it with respect. So if you're ready to take on some royal attitude, gather 'round and listen closely.

You will not gain that respect unless you can win consistently. You cannot do that without a solid (and I mean solid) grasp of fundamentals. They say I have a great all-around game, they say I have tons of weapons. I say that these things come from a rock solid command of fundamental skills that only comes from understanding the game and practicing with a constant commitment to improvement. Don't waste my time with a game that is one sided, relies too heavily on one style, or leaves obvious exposed weaknesses. But if you have consistently worked out fundamental weaknesses until they are few, I can offer you some things that will help your game.

## The Serve

Develop a practical serving style that is effective, adaptable to a variety of game situations, comfortable for you and can be made deadly consistent. You need command of all available serves, both drive serves and lob serves. Too much reliance on either type leaves you vulnerable to an opponent that can eat up your best serves. Adaptability means that when one type of serve isn't working, you can go to another or another or another with equal strength and confidence to your favorite type. Your serve can be your single greatest weapon no matter how you play and you have to be crazy not to capitalize on it.

**Hint:** To improve, you have to be willing to concentrate on your weaknesses and work twice as hard on them as on your strengths.

## The Return of Serve

Attack, baby, attack! Punish your opponent. This is the time to get aggressive. Take the offense. Nobody likes to face a strong server, but if you are not willing or able to attack his strongest point, you will never defeat him. Here is where we weed

out the "kings" from the "wanna-be's".

**Hint:** Don't ever skip your return. Those who do will always be amateurs.

## Shot Selection

Every ball doesn't have to be a rollout, but man, it sure is nice. Take the offensive, and hit your favorite shots as often as your opponent will let you. Stay simple, when all else fails, hit to where your opponent isn't. Know when to shoot to kill, and when to unleash a screaming pass.

**Hint:** The trick is to be in command, know which shot you need next, and be able to rely on 100% execution.

## Game Plan

You need a game plan for absolute destruction for everyone you play. You wouldn't go into a gunfight without a gun. For any given match, your game plan is

your gun. If your gun is jammed (i.e. your plan isn't working), you better have a back-up and the flexibility to move to it. If you go in without a plan, you deserve to lose. Too often players abandon a good plan too soon, or keep wailing away at a strategy that just isn't working.

**Hint:** Know your opponent and your game plan options going in. With multiple games to 11 or 15 and plenty of time-out opportunities, there is no excuse for clinging to a gun that doesn't shoot.

Being the king means being in charge. It means winning more than you lose. It means taking the next step after (and only after) mastering all the basic skills. It also makes you the target for which everyone else shoots.

All in all, it's good to be king.

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# POWER OVERHEAD: THE LEGACY OF THE PROS



Drew Kachtik does it. Mike Ray does it. Even Cliff Swain and Andy Roberts do it. You see it on ESPN. You see it when you watch the elite masters of the IRT. But unless you play in one of the pockets of top notch racquetball across the country, you will not see it at your home club. "It" is the power overhead. And if you encounter it in a match, you will not soon forget it.

The whole thing starts innocently enough. Somebody hits a lob serve to unsettle an anxious receiver.

The server waits in anticipation of

the lob, and rips a missile low and down-the-line with an overhead swing. No coverage, no defense, side out.

Where's the science here? First lesson in racquetball states that to shoot the ball low, you contact it low. Second lesson says that if you can't contact it low, go to the ceiling. This is the text book low percentage shot.

So how can the pros get away with it consistently? Pinpoint accuracy. This one has to be dead solid perfect every time you go for it. Mike Ray had these comments about this vicious

off a lob or half lob serve. You better be willing to invest some serious practice on this one. Anytime you shoot for low boards from the overhead without having perfected it, you're talking big time low percentage."

To master the shot, you will be working from the same stance as you would use for a ceiling ball. You will be stepping into the ball for the cut off. Your opponent shouldn't be able to tell whether you are

going for a ceiling or for low boards until it is too late. In reality,

you will probably contact the ball farther forward than for a ceiling ball return. The motion is an overhead

swing with all the power you can conjure up. The objective is a

clean pass down-the-line with two bounces before the service line. As you work out all the kinks in solo practice, pay special attention not to your follow through since it can "pull" your shot into a skip.

To defend against the overhead, take away the opportunity by perfecting your own ceiling shots to fall too close to the back wall to allow the overhead kill. On your serve, a lob that just "nicks" the side wall during its downward arc makes the overhead return awkward.

*Where's the science here?  
First lesson in racquetball states that  
to shoot the ball low, you contact it low.*

weapon. "It's a great shot, but you have to absolutely nail it. If you leave it up, you look like a chump. If you skip it, you've just given away a point on a silver platter. But if you can get it, you win the rally and do a fair amount of damage to your opponent's confidence. Nothing takes the wind out of a server's sails like seeing the receiver step up and brutalize the ball

a ceiling ball return or the receiver's stepping into position to wait for a setup, usually in deep court. Instead, the receiver steps up, cuts off



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# Three And A Half Weeks

With four pro stops in twenty five days,  
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some of the most intense play in history.

## Montreal VCI Challenge Series Nautilus Plus

As the IRT pros headed north into Canada for the Montreal pro stop, the season had yet to see Cliff Swain win an event (earlier wins going to Andy Roberts, Sudsy Monchik, and Drew Kachtik) or the sea-

son's first installment in the prestigious VCI Challenge Cup Series. The now-familiar scene at Nautilus Plus in Montreal would provide an opportunity for both.

The group of Canadian pros in the draw made for a tough first round. Syracuse, New York's Jeff Hanno got a good taste of how tough facing Canadian

second game, then come back to take command in three and four.

A good season may be in store for some up-and-comers such as ninth seed Tony Jelso. His aggressiveness and consistency seem to have stepped up a notch as he upset Drew Kachtik in a quick three in the second round. In the same category, Mike Engel and Louis Vogel commanded attention in the sixteens for a hard-fought battle that would send Engel into the quarters.

Mike Ceresia had number three seed Mike Guidry on the ropes with two wins to open their match. However the veteran Ceresia couldn't manage the knockout as Guidry started kicking in the re-kills for the comeback in five.

John Ellis dished out a different fate in the next round. Two of the fastest and most innovative players on the IRT, Ellis and Guidry battled for an incredible five that launched Ellis into the semis. Ellis had begun showing the signs of realizing some of the potential that insiders have been sus-

### Cliff Swain

11-9, 11-9, 12-10

### Andy Roberts

### SEMIS

Swain d. Ray  
12-10, 12-10, 11-4  
Roberts d. Ellis  
11-5, 11-7, 11-9

### QUARTERS

Swain d. Jelso  
11-6, 11-8, 11-6  
Ray d. Monchik  
11-8, 11-2, 15-13  
Ellis d. Guidry  
11-9, 11-3, 3-11, 8-11, 11-6  
Roberts d. Engel  
11-5, 11-7, 11-9

### SIXTEENS

Swain d. Sable  
11-1, 11-2, 11-6  
Jelso d. Kachtik  
11-8, 11-7, 11-1  
Monchik d. Greenfeld  
11-8, 11-7, 11-5  
Ray d. Green  
11-8, 11-5, 11-4  
Guidry d. Ceresia  
7-11, 10-12, 11-3, 11-7, 11-6  
Ellis d. Mannino  
11-8, 11-4, 5-11, 12-10  
Engel d. Vogel  
11-9, 8-11, 2-11, 11-5, 11-8  
Roberts d. Graham  
11-3, 11-5, 11-3

## Montreal





Right: Cliff Swain unleashes a backhand against Mike Ray at the VCI Challenge Cup event in Montreal

Below: Sudsy Monchik clears for a masterful Mike Ray forehand in Montreal

Below Left: Cliff Swain and Tony Jelso fight for position in Montreal  
Darrin Schenck



pecting for the past two seasons.

Swain and Roberts appeared crisp and confident storming through the quarters. Ray used this round to demonstrate that he is still one of the few players on the planet that can handle Sudsy Monchik.

It became clear in the final just why Swain and Roberts are the two best in the world. While Swain is rarely denied in VCI events (capturing the coveted VCI Challenge Cup for the past two seasons) Roberts may still actually be improving well into his amazing career.

#### Chicago Head Halloween Classic Woodfield Racquet Club

The Halloween tradition of the Chicago pro stop always promises a chill in the air, some of the most vocal crowds on the tour, and big surprises on the court. Host Dave Negrete usually out does himself with a few surprises off the court as well.

Most of the opening round progressed as expected, right up until that weird Chicago-Halloween thing just sort of kicked in. Chicago native Tim Sweeney had split the first two games with the master when he suddenly forgot that he wasn't supposed to beat Swain. Sweeney, who had to play the qualifiers just to get into the tournament pulled out a four game upset that is Swain's first loss this early since his initial comeback in 1992. Now this kind of

similar stunt in 1990 by playing the qualifiers then going on to win the event) but not to Swain. In fact, this early loss edged him out of the number one ranking for the first

thing happens to Sweeney, (Sweeney pulled a

time in recent memory.

Whatever Sweeney did must have had quite an effect on Vogel, as he took the opportunity in the next round to upset Tim Doyle in four as though he expected nothing else. True, Doyle's injury may just be worse than initially believed. Nonetheless, Vogel is definitely playing some inspired racquetball as evidenced by his near-suc-

# HOW TO BREAK A RADAR GUN.



Until they start posting speed limits in racquetball courts, you'll keep looking for more speed. Well, here it is. If you want less speed, play croquet.

*Created for and with the help of the professional players of the IRT.*





Steve Lerner



Above Top: John Ellis and Sudsy in the final in Chicago

Above Bottom: Tim Sweeney sets for a forehand in the upset of teh century from Chicago

Above Right: Tim Sweeneyvs. John Ellis in the quarters in Chicago

## SEMIS

Ellis d. Kachtik  
11-6, 11-7, 5-11, 12-10  
Monchik d. Roberts  
14-12, 11-3, 14-12

## John Ellis

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

## Sudsy Monchik

## QUARTERS

Ellis d. Sweeney  
11-5, 11-4, 11-2  
Kachtik d. Ray  
12-10, 6-11, 11-9, 14-12  
Monchik d. Guidry  
13-11, 16-14, 11-3  
Roberts d. Vogel  
7-11, 10-12, 11-9, 11-5, 11-2

## SIXTEENS

Sweeney d. Fowler  
2-11, 11-5, 12-10, 15-13  
Ellis d. Clouse  
11-5, 11-5, 11-4  
Kachtik d. Rankin  
11-2, 11-4, 11-8  
Ray d. Engel  
11-9, 11-6, 6-11, 11-0  
Guidry d. Ceresia  
13-11, 11-8, 11-3  
Monchik d. Karp  
11-7, 11-7, 8-11, 11-9  
Vogel d. Doyle  
2-11, 11-7, 11-6, 11-5  
Roberts d. Mannino  
11-7, 10-12, 11-4, 11-2

Chicago



cessful attack on Roberts in the following round.

It appeared that Ellis would put an end to the craziness in the quarters by sending Sweeney packing, until it became clear that Ellis intended to win this event. Some great matches would follow including Ray vs. Kachtik and Monchik vs. Guidry, until it came right down to one of the most exciting match-ups in the game, Ellis vs. Monchik.

A more-confident, more focused, and more aggressive Ellis came to play the final that day than had ever surfaced before. The best of friends off the court, these guys have no friends on the court. The rallies went all-out right from the start. Both gladiators looked strong, crisp, and hungry. They wasted no time toying with one another. Both players went right for the jugular from the first serve. When the smoke cleared, Ellis had claimed his first professional victory, and another Chicago IRT Halloween had lived up to its reputation for surprises.

#### **Milwaukee Strong Funds Pro Am West Allis Athletic Club**

Midway through the back to back 1995 Fall tournament blitz and the tension had begun to mount. An hour or so north and the rest of the IRT had learned not to say the word Chicago in Swain's presence. Incredible play by the new number one Roberts, Ellis and Monchik chiseling away at the veterans, substantial movement from players like Vogel and Jelso, and the IRT was sizzling. Fans gathering for the new Strong Funds event in Milwaukee would see the birth of a new event, as well as IRT stars pushing the intensity envelope. Keith Nygren and Ted Torcivia's West Allis Athletic Club could not have picked a more exciting time to welcome the IRT.

Vogel and Jelso matched up in the sixteens for a great five-gamer that would this time go to the underdog Jelso. Southern Californians Mannino and Karp blasted through a tough five in the same round.

The biggest upset in Milwaukee came

## **Deliverin' the Doughnuts**



Ray 11, Engel 0 Chicago 16s  
Swain 11, Schenck 0 Milwaukee 16s  
Kachtik 11, Karp 0 Boston 16s

Swain 11, Ellis 0 Milwaukee Final  
Monchik 11, Mannino 0 Boston 16s

# **BE FAST, OR BE GONE.**



In a game where serves have been clocked at over 180 mph, that rule applies equally to players and balls. Any questions?

*The Official Ball of the AARA.*





Top Left: Jason Mannino picking a plun in Milwaukee



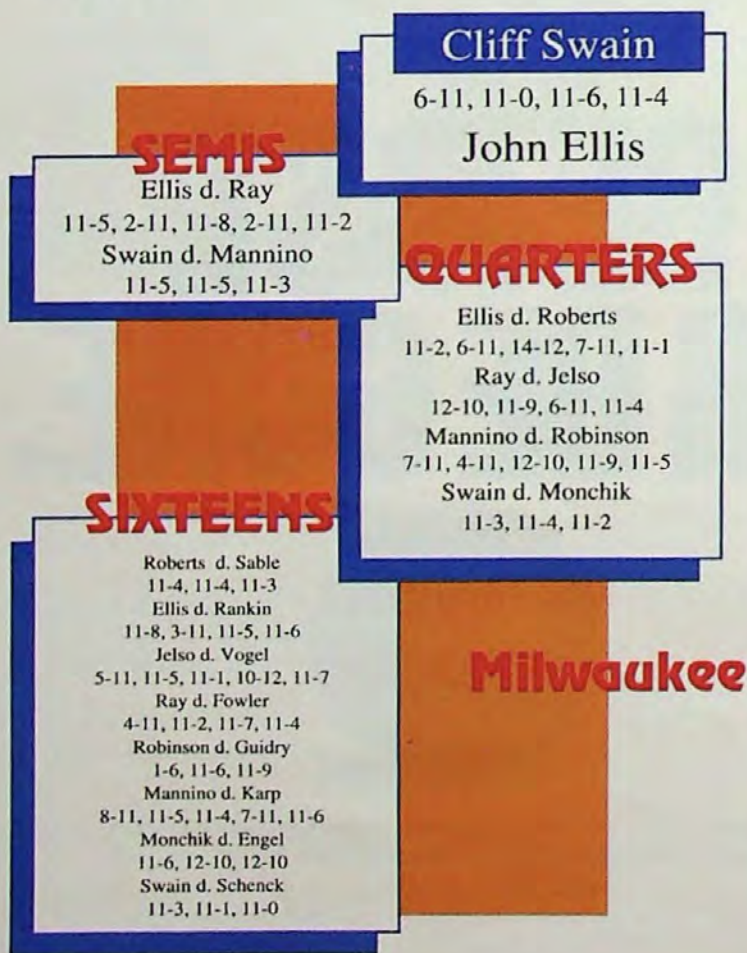
Bottom Left: Andy Roberts fires down-the-line against John Ellis in Milwaukee

in the sixteens as well as Indiana's Derek Robinson managed a big upset of number three seed Guidry. Big, strong, and deceptive on the court, Robinson never allowed Guidry into the match or into his ultra-consistent run & gun tactics.

Mannino had other plans for Robinson, however, as he managed the comeback from two down to leap right into his first semis. Mannino, the lifelong friend of Monchik served notice in Milwaukee that he belongs right in the pride with the rest of the young lions such as Monchik and Ellis.

The Swain - Ellis final brought two facts to the forefront in Milwaukee. First, the Ellis win in Chicago had been no fluke. Second, that Swain reacts very strongly to losing and simply refused to let it happen again. In fact, Swain's determination after his showing in Chicago brought out Bob the doughnut guy in the second game for Bob's first visit in a pro final since he's been the IRT doughnut guy. The win put Swain back on top, and proved that Swain still rules, even when the pressure's on.

Darrin Schenck





## Prestigious Mutual Funds Family Joins International Racquetball Tour Sponsor Team

The Strong Funds family of mutual funds started with one fund and has grown into one of the largest and most prestigious groups, managing billions nationwide. Headquartered in its own corporate park in Milwaukee, Strong Funds is responsible for the latest addition to the IRT season schedule, the Milwaukee Strong Funds Pro Am.

Richard Strong, founder and CEO of Strong Funds is a true racquetball enthusiast and veteran of the game. A study in motivation, while building a successful company, Mr. Strong has actively competed for fifteen years at the West Allis Club that is the site of the newest pro stop.



## Boston VCI Challenge Cup Series Boston Athletic Club

To say that Boston fans hold Swain in high esteem may be the understatement of the season. The final leg of this four event run, the Boston VCI event couldn't have been played in a better city for Swain. Recovering from shock and serious disorientation from playing from the bottom of the Milwaukee draw, Swain rode the crest of local support for an opportunity to solidify his newly regained number one ranking and clench his second of the prestigious VCI series.

Mannino's comeback win in the opening round set him up to face his lifelong friend and former training partner Monchik in the sixteens. Even though Monchik was able to blank him in the second game, Mannino bounced back to take the next two before Monchik turned up the heat for the win in the fifth. These two played neck and neck throughout the juniors until a severe auto accident knocked Mannino out of training for some months. His time off the

court cost Mannino some time and some ground in the rivalry with Monchik. However Mannino rarely complains since there was some question as to whether he would even be able to walk, much less play professional sports. From all recent indications, Mannino appears to be right at the breakthrough point for his pro career.

Vogel's defeat of Guidry in the quarters should dispel all doubts regarding his consistency and his commitment to the tour. Things seem to be coming together nicely as his methodical assault on the rankings continues. Two of the other quarters resulted in upsets as well with Monchik dispatching Ray in four and Kachtik eliminating Roberts in five.

The fact that Monchik took a game off Swain in the final was no surprise but the fact that it was the third game was a big surprise. Swain will usually lose only the first game if he loses at all in the late stages of a tournament. Still he managed to knock off Monchik in four. With the help of some hometown enthusiasm from the crowd, Swain gained important ground in the battle for the VCI Challenge Cup.

Below: Mike Ray's forehand is nothing short of perfection, however it only took him as far as the quarters in Boston.



Darrin Schenck

# THERE ARE NO SPEED LIMITS.



The new Pro Penn Racquetball is faster and highly visible. As for its top speed, we don't know, that all depends on how hard you can hit it.

Created for and with the help of the professional players of the IRT.



# VCI spreadsheet

## IRT

1. **Cliff Swain (1)**  
Braintree, Massachusetts
2. **Andy Roberts (2)**  
Memphis, Tennessee
3. **Sudsy Monchik (6)**  
Staten Island, New York
4. **Mike Ray (4)**  
Hilton Head, South Carolina
5. **Mike Guidry (3)**  
Dallas, Texas
6. **Drew Kachtik (5)**  
Dallas, Texas
7. **John Ellis (8)**  
Stockton, California
8. **Tim Doyle (7)**  
Buffalo, New York
9. **Louis Vogel (11)**  
Albuquerque, New Mexico
10. **Aaron Katz (9)**  
Dallas, Texas
11. **Adam Karp (13)**  
Los Angeles, California
12. **Woody Clouse (10)**  
Jacksonville, Florida
13. **Jason Mannino**  
Los Angeles, California
14. **Tony Jelso (15)**  
Los Angeles, California
15. **Mike Engel (16)**  
Baltimore, Maryland
16. **Brian Rankin (12)**  
St. Louis, Missouri

## WIRT

1. **Michelle Gould (1)**  
Boise, Idaho
2. **Cheryl Gudinas (2)**  
Lisle, Illinois
3. **Marci Drexler (4)**  
San Diego, California
4. **Robin Levine (3)**  
Sacramento, California
5. **Lynne Coburn (5)**  
Baltimore, Maryland
- 6T. **Chris Evon (6)**  
San Diego, California
- 6T. **Amy Kilbane (10)**  
Columbus, Ohio
8. **Marcy Lynch (8)**  
North Wales, Pennsylvania
9. **Kim Machiran (12)**  
Ballwin, Missouri
10. **Jackie Gibson**  
San Diego, California
- 11T. **Michelle Wiragh (11)**  
Baltimore, Maryland
- 11T. **Lorraine Galloway (15)**  
Syracuse, New York
- 11T. **Anita Maldonado**  
New York, New York
- 14T. **Molly O'Brien (9)**  
Souderton, Pennsylvania
- 14T. **Laura Fenton**  
Massachusetts
- 14T. **Tammy Brockbank**  
Idaho



## VCI Challenge Cup Series

1.  
Cliff Swain
2.  
Andy Roberts
3.  
Sudsy Monchik
4.  
Drew Kachtik
5.  
Mike Guidry
- 6T.  
Mike Ray
- 6T.  
John Ellis
8.  
Louis Vogel

## WIRT Doubles Rankings

1.  
Marci Drexler/Robin Levine
2.  
Michelle Gould/Laura Fenton
- 3T.  
Cheryl Gudinas/Kim Russell
- 3T.  
Mary Lyons/Susan Morgan-Pfahler
- 5T.  
Caryn McKinney/Robin Whitmire
- 5T.  
Malia Bailey/Marcy Lynch
- 5T.  
Amy Killbane/Diane Gronkiewicz

## American Amateur Racquetball Association

### Girls 18 and Under

1.  
Sadie Gross
- 2T.  
Shannon Feaster
- 2T.  
Rhonda Rajsich
- 4T.  
Christy Gould
- 4T.  
Vanessa Tulao
6.  
Kori Grasha
7.  
Aimee Chastain
8.  
Theresa Larsen



VW CREDIT, INC.





# Coast To Coast

The newly formed Women's International Racquetball Tour opens its season with pro stops at on each side of the continent

## Los Angeles Bala Pro Am

A season of change for the women's pro tour with the birth of the Spalding Women's International Racquetball Tour under the direction of commissioner Hank Marcus has been marked by some incredible play. However some things never change as the unstoppable Michelle Gould has already reestablished herself as the best female player on this planet.

The Bala Pro-Am held in Los Angeles kicked off the season in grand style and marked the last women's event held with all of the traditional WPRa trimmings. South-

ern California, the traditional hotbed of racquetball proved a fitting place to kick off this historic season. This season will see the switch to the green Pro Penn ball, the switch to the IRT rules, and the appearance of the now famous pro tour sponsor court markings, all over the course of the next few events. Newsworthy from the Southern California event was the return of Jackie Gibson (formerly Jackie Paraiso). A fan's favorite and top professional from previous seasons, Jackie had elected to sit out the '94 and '95 seasons, turning her attentions to her new family. Gibson stormed into L.A., marching into the finals in straight games. A former professional

national champion, Gibson still was unable to upset Gould in the final, falling in straight games to the amazing one.

Robin Leven and Marci Drexler, the number two and three players from last season were missing from the L.A. draw, but the ever-expanding field of new talent for the new WIRT included early round winners such as Vicki Aguilar, Dina Moreland, Diane Gronkiwicz, and Tammy Brockbank. Tour veteran and former WPRa president Chris Evon played brilliantly for a semi final berth, while Chicago's Cheryl Gudinas picked up where she left off last season as one of the hottest players on the tour.





## Baltimore ALLSPORT Championships

The annual site of the past few year's national championships, Baltimore's Merritt Athletic Club is certainly well known to touring pros. This young season's ALLSPORT Championships welcomed the pros to a server's paradise. Never before in women's racquetball had the serve played such a dominant roll, in terms of service winners, and forced weak returns that invited winning third shots. The next generation of women's pros have clearly adopted a more aggressive, more powerful style than their predecessors.

In the sixteens, Amy Kilbane mixed down-the-lines with well-timed crosses for her first win over Brockbank. In the closest match of the event, Anita Maldonado's unrelenting aggressiveness proved too much for Evon in a close five. Lynne Coburn ruled Lisa Calitri with her serves, as did Gudinas against Janet Myers. Loraine Galloway also relied on great serving to come back from one down to defeat Marcy Lynch. Kim Machiran presented near-perfect Z's to handle Michelle Wiragh in four. Veteran Molly O'Brien had what it takes to dispatch newcomer Moreland, and Gould quickly retired Doreen Fowler.

The semis provided a look at the two players to watch closely for big things this season: Gudinas and Coburn. Both players displayed serious improvement over past seasons including much stronger backhands, a more commanding attitude from Gudinas, and more speed from Coburn. The Gould - Kilbane match was not nearly as close.

Gudinas' only real chance in the final came from some serves in game three. Beyond that six point run, Gould simply dominated the rest of the match. Doubles action saw little threat to Gould and Gudinas save a close second game in the final that showed some promise for later days for Kilbane and Holly Gray. All in all, the two early events point to one of the best women's seasons in recent years.

**Top Right:**  
Michelle Gould  
prepares to blast a  
serve against  
Cheryl Gudinas in  
Baltimore

**Bottom Right:**  
Holly Gray Rips a  
forehand in Balti-  
more

**Below Left:**  
Jackie Gibson  
in top form in Los  
Angeles



# ANYTHING ELSE IS JUST A MITTEN.



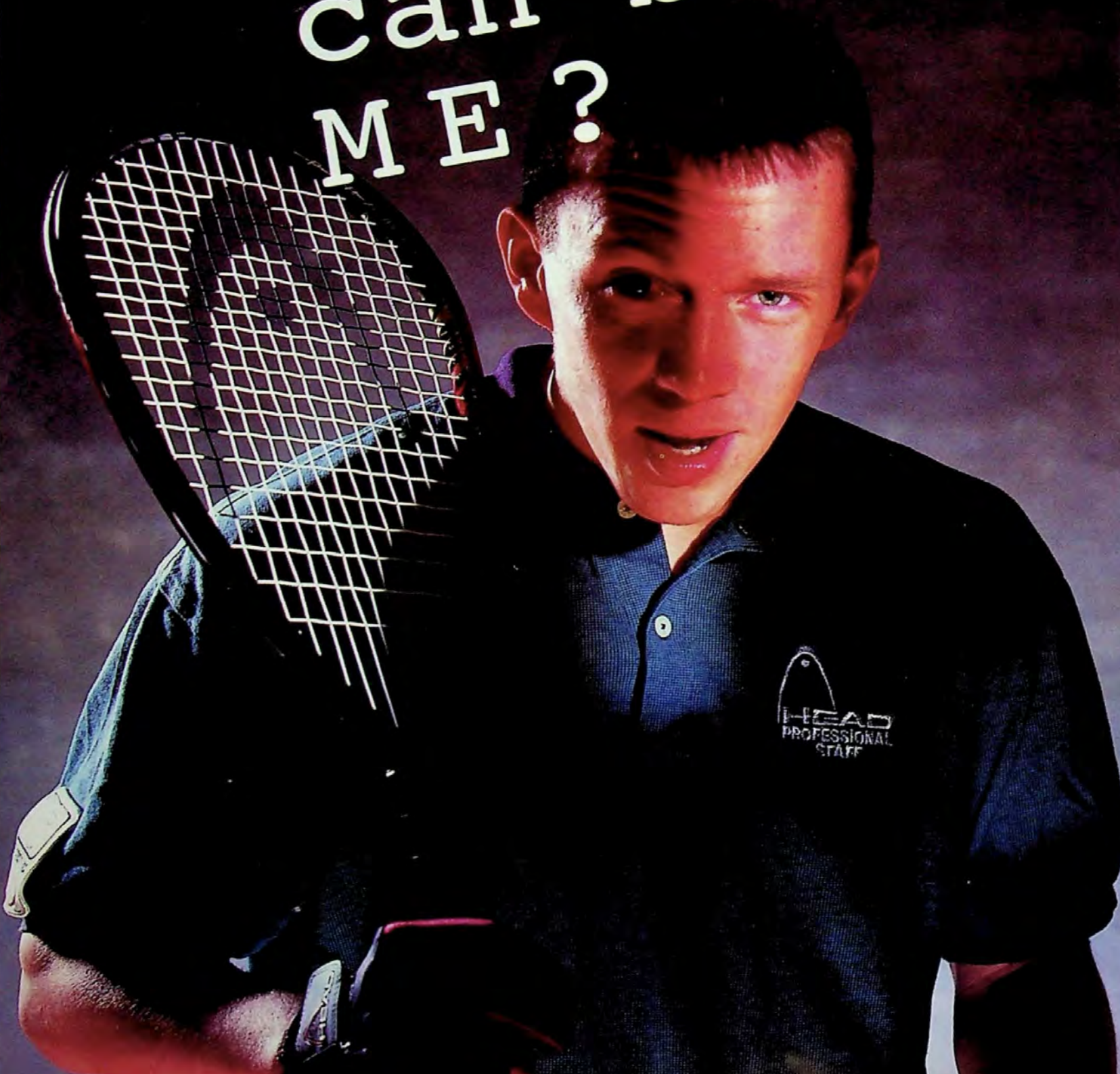
The Penn Tac Racquetball Glove has a leather grip and padding in the knuckles. It's the only recommended clothing for serious players that want to smash some balls, not build some snowmen.

*The Official Glove of the IRT*





think you  
can beat  
ME?





**S**udsy Monchik is New York — not so much in the Frank Sinatra, Great White Way sense, but rather in the darkest, cockiest, crooked cab driver, muggers on every other corner, in your face kind of way. He walks the walk and talks the talk. His confidence (or arrogance depending on whom you ask) is matched only by his amazing abilities. He is brash, bold, and, although he has surpassed his 21st year on this planet and stepped into manhood age-wise, to many he remains a brat; the only player in professional racquetball today who can give Cliff Swain a boy-next-door image. But even Monchik's most adamant detractors cannot deny his greatness and his place in the sport.

Monchik and his lanky frame, catlike quickness, monstrous serve, and overwhelming power, stormed onto the professional circuit last year after an amateur career in which he became the only player ever to win every juniors division's national title. Despite missing several stops as a pro, Monchik managed two singles tournament wins and a doubles title in his rookie run, closing out the season with an impressive number eight ranking. More importantly, however, Monchik beat the once-untouchable Swain twice — a feat that in recent years had been likened to tugging on Superman's cape. But Monchik hasn't flinched at the notion of being Swain's obvious nemesis. He has embraced it as only a New Yorker could, taking the opportunity to jump into racquetball's still limited spotlight in World Wrestling Federation fashion, playing bad guy to the sport's biggest name since Marty Hogan.

"I think there are two or three players coming up who present a challenge, with Mike Guidry, John Ellis, and, of course, Sudsy. Sudsy definitely has all of the tools. He has speed, quickness, and he's developing mental toughness," Swain said. "He's one of the few guys who can play great and can beat me when I may not play well, but am playing hard. I think I've lost three matches over the past three years when I've played really hard and they were to Andy [Roberts], [Tim] Doyle, and Sudsy."

Monchik says the likelihood of Swain taking a sabbatical from the tour, as he did a few years ago when dominating the pro tour left him feeling unfulfilled, has disappeared. "I don't want to run off Cliff," Monchik says of the man who is arguably racquetball's most dominant player ever. "But now he's not going to be driven away by the boredom (of being unchallenged). I don't want Cliff to leave, but if he leaves I want him to leave at his best, when he's at

**Sudsy Monchik refuses to build a name for himself over time. He's here and he's coming after Cliff Swain and anyone else who cares to keep him from number one.**

**But is racquetball ready for Sudsy?**

by Clay Walker

the top of his game, and when I have the upper hand. Right now, he's got to worry about me. And I'm sure when I'm his age I'll have some 21 year-old punk I'll be worried about."

When a skinny seven-year-old Monchik wandered into the swanky Staten Island, New York club where his parents ran a pro shop, few people could have seen cause for worry. But a couple of years of

knocking the ball around while Mom and Dad were at work allowed Monchik to develop enough skills to catch the eye of an up-and-coming pro from the mean streets of Spanish Harlem. Ruben Gonzalez began giving Monchik private lessons at the Courts of Appeal Racquet Club in 1983. Those lessons soon evolved into semi-competitive matches as the student rose to the teacher's level. "I began to make these little bets with Sudsy," Gon-

zalez, who at 42 is still among the game's elite players, recalls. "When I asked Sudsy if he was tired and he said yes, I'd take a dollar. So then he began saying no when I asked if he was tired and we'd keep working. After a while, it wasn't a lesson anymore. It was a matter of getting

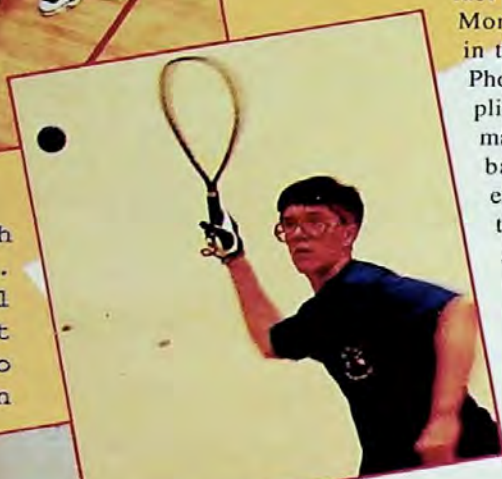


Don Sidor





Sudsy at the 1991 High School Nationals in St. Louis. Friend and rival Jason Mannino fights it out with the kid who won every age division as he progressed.



him out of this frame of mind that racquetball was easy. I'd have him hit hundreds of forehands and hundreds of backhands. I tried to help him develop consistency."

While Monchik is correct when he concludes that his game has no weaknesses that can be exploited, he still lacks the consistency of most top 10 pros. Some attribute it to inexperience and youth. Others say, privately, that Monchik lacks the heart and discipline he will need if he is ever to reach the top of his sport. Monchik himself admits that several matches lost in rounds of 16 don't set easy on his mind. "It's almost like I get bored on the court," he said.

"The kid is still young and needs a lot of work. If he practiced he'd be dangerous," Gonzalez claims. "Everybody knows this so the other guys aren't encouraging

him to practice. They don't want to deal with him, but to me, he's just this kid I've taught all these years and I want him to succeed."

As with any of today's players, Monchik's degree of success will be measured in large part by how he plays against Swain. Although Swain held a 3-2 edge

last year, Monchik's win in the finals in Phoenix exemplified why so many racquetball fans are excited about this rivalry. After falling behind a game against IRT mainstay Mike Ray and Roberts,

Monchik had pulled all of his resources, pride, and hustle out just to survive into the championship match. He then blew past Drew Kachtik in straight games, only to be rewarded by facing the world's top player who had not as much as broken a

sweat in earlier rounds, but had swept every previous opponent. That quickly changed against Monchik, however, as the rookie used powerful serves and low percentage breathtaking winners to breeze through the first game before demonstrating the nerve and guile of a seasoned veteran in maintaining his level of concentration and hustle for an 11-2, 5-11, 11-9, 10-12, 12-10 victory.

"Everybody said I beat the best at his best, so that win is the highlight of my career," Monchik said.

It was also in Phoenix that fans could see the human side of Monchik in his first-round victory over longtime friend Jason Mannino. Mannino, who was Monchik's next door neighbor growing up, found himself in most finals competing against his friend throughout their amateur careers. But, in 1992, Mannino fell victim to a serious car accident where he suffered three broken bones in his back, a broken pelvis, and a broken rib or two. The accident left

Mannino in a wheelchair before gradually rehabilitating himself onto the professional racquetball circuit.

Following their first professional match, Monchik and Mannino embraced, an unspoken gesture between two friends where their messages go beyond words. "It was just like, 'Hey, I'm glad to have you back.' You know, we're still best friends and once you're off the court, that's what it goes back to," Monchik says. But it was another accident involving another one of his friends that has had the most dramatic impact on Monchik's life. In July, 1993, Spike Sekul lost his life in a car crash. Monchik said losing his friend caused him to take stock in his gifts and strengthen his focus on racquetball which, in part, helps explain his explosive rookie season.

The tragedies with which this youngster has had to cope can lead a sympathetic observer to conclude that Monchik is a victim of youth clashing with adulthood issues at such a tender age. Before he was old enough to walk into a bar, Monchik had lost a friend and seen another's once invincible physical abilities stripped away, albeit temporarily. In addition he faced the pressures of competing in a highly competitive profession where there still seems to be too little prize money to go around when compared to other sports. But Monchik doesn't look for excuses to soften his bad boy image.

"If you worry about that (public opinion) your mind is going to be somewhere else. I mean, I want everybody to like me and I like everybody, but everybody's going to have their opinion so I can't worry about that," he says. "I guess it's confidence when you can back it up, and maybe it's cockiness when you can't back up the talk. We let our actions speak."

Still, many hesitate in wishing Monchik tremendous success out of concern for the sport. They believe attributing his cockiness to youth can only go so far. Despite recently signing a lucrative four-and-a-half year deal with Head Racquets, comparable to that of Swain's, Monchik is considered an endorsement risk. He has as much talent as any phenom the tour has ever seen, but his brashness tires quickly and even his strongest supporters worry that arrogance and immaturity will stain what promises to be an illustrious career.

"We knew what we were getting when we signed Sudsy," says Head marketing consultant Doug Ganim. "There are always risks in any agreement such as that. I think his attitude, quite frankly, is good for the sport. He is controversial at times and elec-



tric all of the time."

Gonzalez, perhaps the game's most gentlemanly, personable player, worries that the honeymoon period with fans and players may wear out before his apprentice matures. In fact, given Monchik's youth, Gonzalez does not lecture his pupil on the expectations and responsibilities that come with being a champion. He surmises that his words would fall upon deaf ears. "Talking to him wouldn't do much good at this stage. He's traveling around the country, not having to pay for any of it and has everything going for him, so he figures, why not? Why not be cocky? I don't think he's ready to be serious now and I don't think he knows what he's got," Gonzalez said. "We all start out that way because we don't have any responsibilities, but when he's older, is out on his own, and has bills to pay and a family to support, I think he'll be a lot more serious about it all then."

In the meantime, Monchik must battle boredom, resentment, and the domination of a champion that is reluctant to loosen his death grip on the sport in the person of Cliff Swain.

"Cliff is so tough because he wants to kill everybody," Monchik says. "I have the quickness and speed and hit the ball hard. I have pretty much everything, but I play some guys who should never beat me and I think that I don't have to try and I get so far behind before I started playing hard that it's too late to come back. I have to learn to play hard all of the time, but I'll tell you what I have on Cliff: Cliff is number one. I have everything to gain and nothing to lose and he has everything to lose."

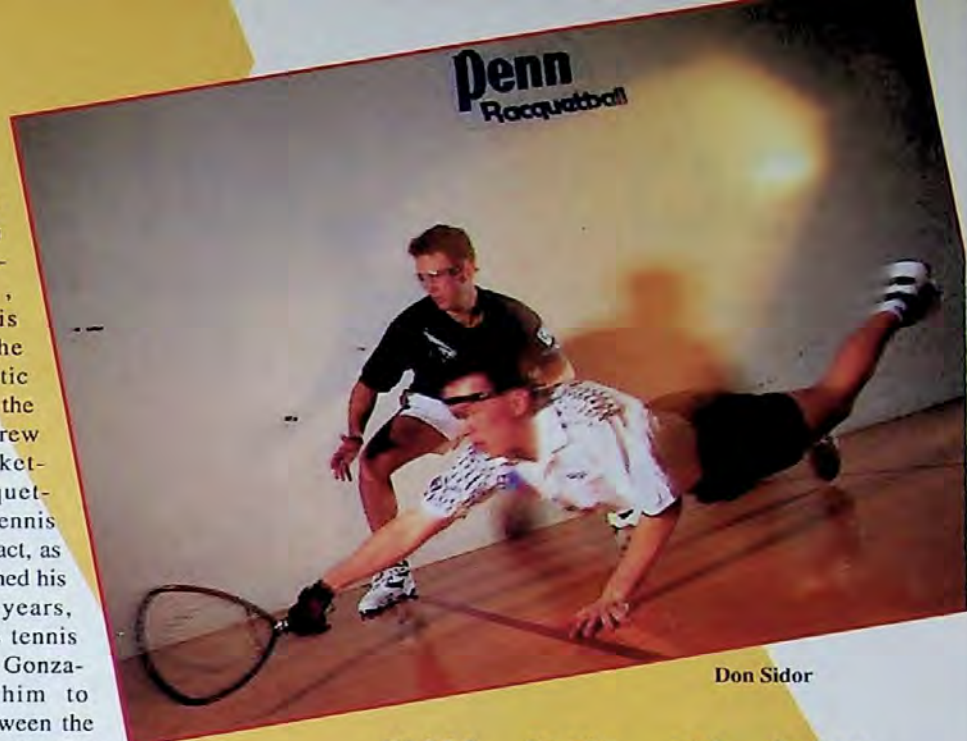
"It's definitely easier to find goals when you're number two through number 200," Swain concedes. "But I work very hard at finding goals. I think when anyone is at the top of their sport, they think about being known as one of the best of all time and that's what drives me."

Swain and Monchik have almost identical games, highlighted by power and quickness. Both also share tremendous confidence in their abilities, although Swain is slightly more soft-spoken about it. They would seem to have the potential for a friendship, but Monchik's brazen behavior goes beyond the bravado Swain and other champions find acceptable, and it is never easy becoming close to someone who possesses the same brass ring you are chasing. "I think it has been tougher to be friends (since my emergence)," Monchik said. "I don't think he'd like to admit that, but who are we kidding? This is what we do for a living."

Along with Swain and Gonzalez, Monchik is one of the most athletic players on the tour. He grew up on basketball, racquetball, and tennis courts. In fact, as he approached his teenage years, Monchik's tennis coach and Gonzalez told him to choose between the sports fearing that the amount of effort and intensity he was putting into both would soon burn out the volatile youngster. While Monchik still plays a great deal of basketball, he feels comfortable in his decision to make racquetball his sport of choice. "Racquetball requires everything. You have to have talent, quickness, power, finesse, and mental toughness," he says with a genuine enthusiasm that gives one the feeling that deep down he really respects the game. "The best thing about it is that if you're 7-2, you're going to be a great center in basketball, but it doesn't matter if you're tall, short, or whatever in racquetball. You need to be a great athlete to compete at our level."

The kid from Staten Island has a comfortable living awaiting him, but just how high can his abilities take him and just how long can he carry himself in such a care-free, arrogant manner before he loses the public's respect are questions that must be answered over time. And time is the one thing that is definitely a friend of Monchik's right now, whether or not he chooses to embrace it. In interviewing for this story, Monchik admitted he doesn't publicly compliment other players very easily, referred to himself as a "Rocket Ship" and asked if this article would be lengthier than the profile of Swain published in **KILLSHOT** last year. He traces his reputation of being arrogant as far back as when he was nine years old and just beginning to realize his tremendous talent.

"His confidence can be an advantage or it can be a disadvantage," Swain surmises. "It's good to see yourself as a future number one, but because you see yourself



Don Sidor

Cliff Swain and Sudsy Monchik represent a sizeable investment by HEAD into the future of racquetball.

as a number one doesn't mean you're going to be number one. You have to put in the work. Believing it doesn't make it happen."

Gonzalez sees Monchik's potential in terms of dominating the game in Hogan/Swain-like fashion. "He's just a little punk right now," he said. "When he's 26, I don't think anybody's going to be able to stay on the court with him. Right now, he's just playing on skill. When he develops some muscle and experience, he will definitely have what it takes to dominate."

"We feel he is the next dynasty in racquetball," says Ganim. "He may not be the next number one; there may be one or two guys to follow Swain for a couple of years, but Sudsy definitely will be number one some day and he will be a dynasty."

Ganim admits that Monchik's high opinion of himself and his willingness to verbalize it creates "a new endeavor" for Head's racquetball division. He said that Head discusses behavioral expectations with all of its athletes and it is still too early to see if any of the tutoring will sink in with Monchik. Perhaps Monchik's view of Swain goes a small way toward providing an answer.

"You have to give him credit; he's number one," Monchik sighs. "He's the best player in the world and the best player I've ever seen... besides me."



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Bailey interview, photographing racquetball, equipment of the pros, Brian Hawkes Gallery, instruction and tournament coverage. Limited number still available. **\$5.00.**

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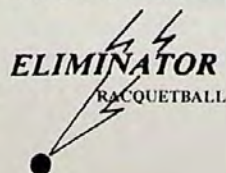
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1) Control Center Court. It is the only way to win consistently. It means knowing when to wait for a set up and when to cut a ball off. It means moving efficiently. It means winning.

2) Improve your racquet prep tendencies. Keep your racquet up and ready to swing while traveling to meet the ball.

3) Exploit your opponent's weaknesses. If he has a weak back hand, keep going to it. Make things worse by keeping him using his weaknesses in deep court.

4) Attack on the return of serve.

5) Make your serves count. Every one.

6) Shoot for a reasonable zone. If you try to flat roll every ball, you will skip yourself right out of the match.

7) Think winning. If you can see it in your head, you can do it with your body.

8) Never allow yourself to be defeated by a pass. Work on anticipation and coverage until your opponent has to hit a riskier pinch or kill to put you away.

9) Do not get lulled into a rhythm. If your rallies have a constant beat, try hitting on the half beat to throw off your opponent's timing.

10) If you get into trouble pass your way out. Passes have a higher margin for error so you will be safe even when you're "off". They give you lots of opportunities to put your opponent on the defensive.

*No matter what level you play, to improve you have to do "drop and hit" drills. You have to remember the basic mechanics. You have to cross train to handle the physical challenge. And you have to constantly remind yourself of the strategy basics like these ten. Pay attention, you never know when you will decide to give yourself a test when you have covered each one.*



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# IRT Properties Signs Exclusive Agreement For Japanese Distribution

The International Racquetball Tour and IRT Properties are pleased to announce their first international distribution agreement for IRT products. This historic agreement between IRT Properties and Moonlight Workshop of Tokyo, Japan and its Chief Director, Koichi Kitamura, establishes Moonlight Workshop as the exclusive distributor of IRT products for the country of Japan. Mr. Kitamura has

expressed his great enthusiasm and excitement to sign this agreement and intends to "spread the success of the IRT over Japan in collaboration with IRT Properties.

The agreement was initiated following meetings during the Chicago IRT event when Mr. Kitamura travelled to see the event and meet with IRT Commissioner Hank Marcus and IRT Properties President Steve Lerner. Mr. Kitamura was intro-

duced during the event as a guest of honor and was presented with several gifts including issues of **KILLSHOT**, IRT programs and videos, and a ProPenn ball autographed by event winner and finalist John Ellis and Sudsy Monchik. According to Mr. Kitamura, the autographed ProPenn ball has made him "the envy of the Japanese racquetball community".

IRT Properties is excited about this opportunity to distribute IRT products in Japan and is actively seeking distributors in other countries. IRT Properties will provide IRT product sponsorships for national team players or professionals from other countries as part of any future exclusive distribution agreements such as this one with Moonlight Workshop.



Steve Lerner (left) President of IRT Properties, Koichi Kitamura (center) Chief Director of Moonlight Workshop, and Hank Marcus (right) Commissioner of the International Racquetball Tour

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# California's Rad Athletic Signs On As The Official Eyewear Of The WIRT

The newly reorganized Women's International Racquetball Tour has just signed a tour sponsorship agreement with Rad Athletics of Woodland Hills, California. The new official eyewear of the WIRT, Rad Athletics joins Spalding and Penn on the team of official products with a line of four eyewear models.

According to Rad General Manager David Barberis, "It is the intention of Rad Athletics not only to support the Tour as a whole, but to move forward with the signing of individual players and the sponsorship of events to create a marketing program which will serve not only to promote our company, but also the sport of racquetball, and in particular its great women athletes."

Plans were also made public for the upcoming Rad Athletics Tournament of Champions to be held June 5 - 9 in Portland, Oregon for the top ranked WIRT players at the conclusion of the current season.

Great looks and serious protection mark the Rad Eyewear line. Three of the four models offered as the official eyeguard of the WIRT are shown.



## Upcoming Pro Events



### IRT

|                           |                |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| 1/31 - 2/4                | Atlanta        |
| 2/14 - 2/18               | Pittsburgh     |
| 3/13 - 3/17               | Saskatoon      |
| 3/27 - 3/31               | Phoenix        |
| 4/10 - 4/14               | Pleasanton, CA |
| (VCI World Doubles)       |                |
| 4/24 - 4/28               | Las Vegas      |
| (Pro Nationals)           |                |
| 5/1 - 5/5                 | Indianapolis   |
| 5/15 - 5/19               | Milpitas, CA   |
| (VCI Pro Worlds)          |                |
| 6/5 - 6/9                 | Portland       |
| (Tournament of Champions) |                |

### WIRT

|                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| 2/1 - 2/4                     | Houston   |
| 3/21 - 3/24                   | Syracuse  |
| 4/24 - 4/28                   | Las Vegas |
| (Pro Nationals)               |           |
| 5/2 - 5/5                     | Baltimore |
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# HAVIN' A BALL

Photos by Mike Eller

Quality equipment is vital to consistent performance. This is especially true as it applies to the object in play — a racquetball.

No company is more aware of this than Penn Racquet Sports. Penn makes more racquetballs than any other firm in the United States and currently enjoys a 78% to 80% market share worldwide. The green Pro Penn ball developed for the stress of professional play is the official ball of the International Racquetball Tour and the Women's International Racquetball Tour. The Ultra Blue racquetball is the official ball of many amateur associations across the country and around the world.

A great deal of technology goes into creating a quality racquetball that will stand

up to the hard shots of a seasoned pro as well as the flubbed shots of a beginner. The following process is a simplified version of how racquetballs are produced.

Top grades of natural and synthetic rubber are mixed with curatives, natural silicates, and pigments. The mixture is milled to a smooth consistency and fed into an extruder which forms the compound into pellets, each an exact size and weight. Each pellet will become half of a racquetball.

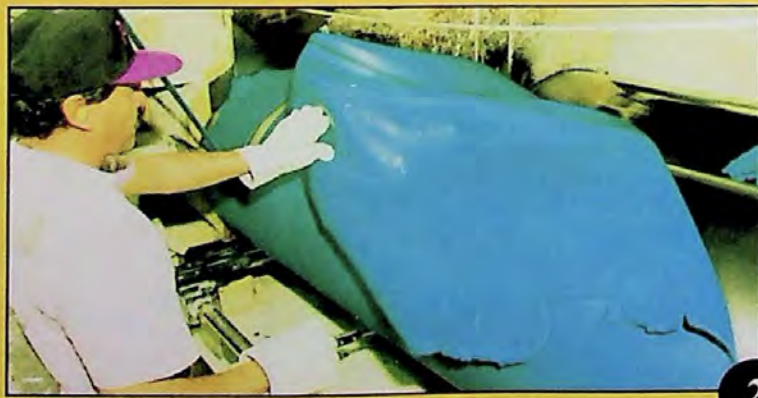
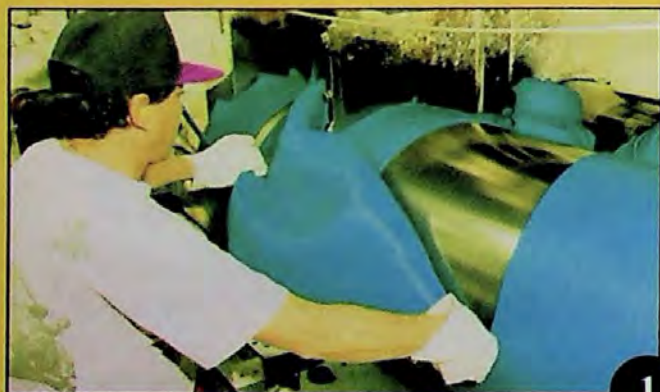
While the pellets are being formed, a natural rubber adhesive is formulated and dissolved in rubber solvent. The adhesive will be used to cement together the halves of the racquetball.

The rubber pellets are placed in preci-

sion molds for what is called the first cure process. Under pressure and heat, the pellets are formed into hemispheres, or one-half of a racquetball.

These halves are edge-buffed to fine tolerances on precision equipment. Their edges are then coated with natural rubber adhesive, and the halves are placed in another mold for the second cure process. This second cure of heat and pressure permanently fuses the halves into complete balls.

The completed racquetballs are conveyed to specialty buffing machines which abrade the surfaces of the spheres. The balls are now ready for imprinting with brand logos and for packaging. The balls are given one final visual inspection, then fed







3



4



5



6



7



8

into cans which are fusion sealed. The seal helps to preserve the balls' freshness until the can is opened and play begins.

Penn's quality control measures are in operation throughout the manufacturing process. They begin with a check of incoming raw materials. Samples of each batch of ingredients used to make balls and adhesive are tested in plant labs to ensure consistency.

Samples of component pellets, halves, and completed balls themselves, both loose and already canned, are removed from the production line every fifteen minutes and are subjected to a battery of laboratory tests. Results are recorded by electronic equipment and stored in a computer data base.

As the nation's largest ball manufacturer, Penn has and will always be a pioneer in the industry, using research and technology along with the most current equipment to bring the finest product to the consumer.

1 & 2: Rubber compound being mixed on a two-roll mill. 3 & 4: Rubber pellets ready for press forming and curing. 5: Sheets of halves to be separated and joined into balls. 6: Pro Penn racquetballs fresh from the abrasion machines. 7: The official IRT logo being applied to Pro Penn racquetballs. 8: Inspection of the balls before packaging.



By Fran Davis  
US National Team Coaching Staff

# Shots of the Game

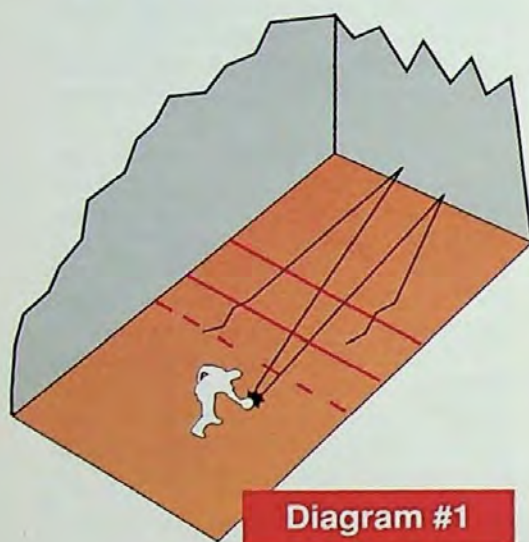


Diagram #1

## Kill pass

The ball hits the front wall 12" and lower and bounces two times before the dotted line. Contact point is shin high or lower. (see diagram 1)

## Pass

The ball hits the front wall 18" and lower and bounces two times before the back wall. Contact point is knee high and lower (see diagram 2 and 2A)

### Down the Line

Hits between you and the closest side wall and does not hit the side wall at all.

### Cross Court

Hits between you and the furthest side wall and does not hit the side wall at all.

### Wide Angle

Hits the front wall first, then the side wall on a fly, even with or slightly behind your opponent.

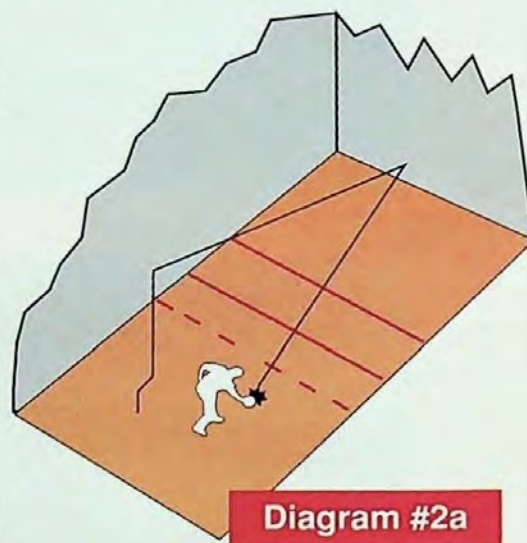


Diagram #2a

We set the groundwork in the last issue of **KILLSHOT** with the foundation of the game, the basic strokes, forehand and backhand. We are going to continue building our Racquetball Dream House by beginning construction on the frame by introducing the Shots of the Game.

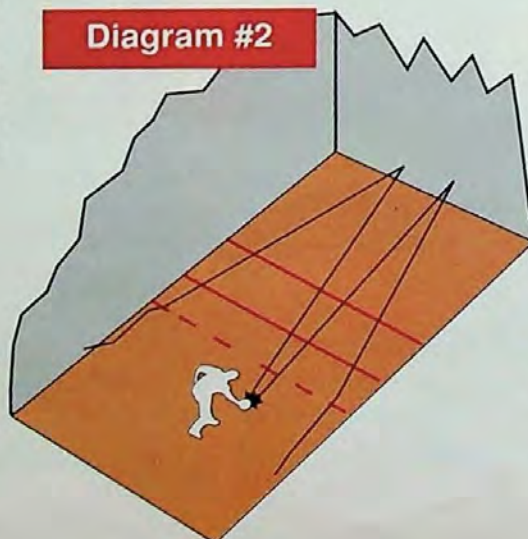
The shots of the game can be divided into two categories: the offensive shots and the defensive shots. Let's take a closer look at the definitions and the diagrams of all of these two types of shots.

## Offensive shots

### Kill

The ball hits the front wall 6" and lower and bounces two times before the short line. Contact point is ankle high or lower. (see diagram 1)

Diagram #2



### Pinch

The ball hits to the closest corner possible and hits side wall 6" and lower, then the front wall and then bounces two times before the second side wall. Contact point is ankle high and lower. Hit when you are away from the side wall. (See diagram 3)

### Reverse pinch

The ball hits to the farthest corner possible and the ball hits the side wall 6" and lower, then the front wall and then bounces two times before the second side wall. Hit when you are away from the side wall. (see diagram 3A)

### Splat

Hit when the ball is within 6" of the side wall. The ball hits side wall 6" and lower, then the front wall and bounces two times before the second side wall. (see diagram 3B)



# RACQUETBALL

Fran Davis'

## DREAM HOUSE

### The House that Fran Built

**Foundation**  
Strokes

**Frame**  
Court Position/Shot Selection

**Roof**  
Serves/Return of Serves

**Windows/Doors**  
Mental/Visualization

**Accessories**  
Nutrition/Training/Footwork

**Finishing Touches**  
Game Plans/Strategies

Diagram #3

Diagram #3a

Diagram #3b

### Cutoff

Cutoff means taking the ball out of the air before it bounces (hit in the same spot as the regular kill, kill pass, pass, pinch, reverse pinch, or splat). It catches your opponent off guard and keeps them guessing so they have less time to react, set up, and get position.

### Overhead pass, pinch, or reverse pinch

Overhead means taking the ball above your head as if you were hitting a forehand ceiling (see defensive shots), but at the last minute bringing it down. Instead of hitting at full extension above your head you make contact eye level (same motion as a tennis serve).

### Off the back wall

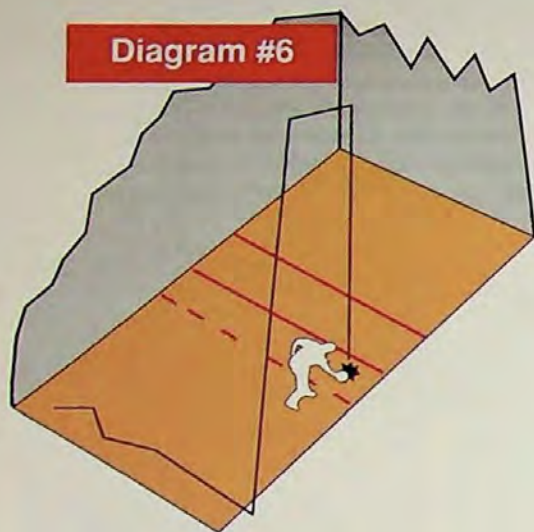
The key to this shot is to move in and out with the ball; be like a wave in the ocean moving in on the shoreline and out on the short line (do not camp out and wait for the ball to come to you). The height and speed at which the ball hits the front wall determines how far it comes off the back wall... have good eye contact so you can judge the ball better.

Diagram #4

Diagram #5



**Diagram #6**



### Defensive Shots

(shots that buy you time and/or draw your opponent out of the middle)

#### Ceiling

The ball hits the ceiling first, 3 to five feet from the front wall, bounces on its first

bounce in front of the short line and second bounce should be as close to the back wall as possible, so it is not playable off the wall. Ideally, contact point for forehand ceiling is full extension above the head and shoulder high for the backhand ceiling, unless you are off balance and out of position, then hit from anywhere. The ceiling is hit from 35 feet and back. (see diagram 4)

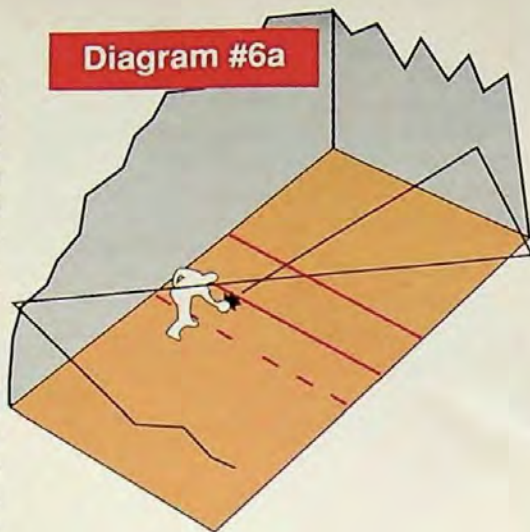
#### Around the World

The ball hits the side wall, front wall, and then the second side wall (consecutively) about 3/4 of the way up and bounces before it hits the first side wall again and dies in the corner. Hit with the same motion as a ceiling shot. Hit from 35' feet and back. (see diagram 5)

#### Z ball

The ball hits the front wall, side wall, and second side wall (consecutively) about 3/4 of the way up or higher and comes out at a 90° angle to the side wall and parallel to the back wall, generally not playable. Hit from 25 feet and up from either the right or left side of the court, generally not from the middle. see diagram 6 and 6A)

**Diagram #6a**



With these shots of the game you should be able to hold your own and then some. Good luck in your quest for becoming a player to be reckoned with... good stroke mechanics, leading to a solid foundation, as well as a player developing a wide variety of shots, leading to a solid frame. See you next issue so we can finish up on the framework of your racquetball dream house with court positioning and shot selection.

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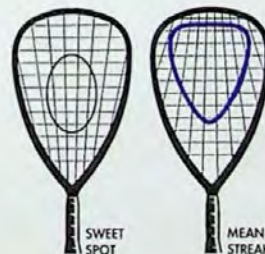
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