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International Racquetball Tour Supports Wheelchair Racquetball

It's fast, it's furious, it's hard-hitting full court excitement at it's finest. No, it's not the NCAA basketball tournament. It's Wheelchair Racquetball and it's gaining momentum internationally.

One of the latest and one of the most positive developments in the sport is the recent announcement by International Racquetball Tour commissioner Hank Marcus of the cooperation between the men's professional tour and Wheelchair Racquetball. The agreement allows for the support and assistance of the IRT with the international development of Wheelchair Racquetball.

The IRT evolved from the Men's Professional Racquetball Association which was formed in 1989 with Marcus as commissioner. At that time the tour was made up of only four competitive events. An aggressive marketing campaign combined with enhancements to make the professional game more exciting to spectators have resulted in a continuously escalating schedule. The tour currently consists of twenty-two major events and an additional eighteen satellite competitions throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

VW Credit, Inc., the predominant corporate sponsor of the IRT, has provided support that has enabled the tour to strengthen its position in the sports world over the past few years. Currently professional racquetball is available to a broader audience, especially through television coverage on Prime Network and ESPN.

With the overwhelming and enthusiastic endorsement from the players of the IRT, Wheelchair Racquetball can now benefit from the IRT's increased exposure and expanded coverage. "This is something we should have been doing long before now," says Marcus.

The program that the IRT has proposed will see the tour make a donation in the name of the "Player of the Tournament" at each tour event. Marcus adds that "in addition we will assist the Wheelchair group in whatever way possible through our present corporate sponsors."

David Hinton, Chairperson of the Committee for Athletes with Disabilities of the International Racquetball Federation says, "This support will greatly assist in our efforts to bring not just Wheelchair Racquetball but the entire sport to a higher visibility and participation level. With Wheelchair Racquetball as a demonstration sport in the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Games and the support of the IRT, we feel we now have the opportunities to truly promote our Wheelchair athletes."

Wheelchair Racquetball is affiliated with the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), International Racquetball Federation (IRF), and the International Stoke Mandeville Wheelchair Sports Federation (ISMWSF).

This latest development is another example of two organizations co-operatively striving to do the best that they can for their own athletes as well as for the overall benefit of racquetball in the United States and the world.



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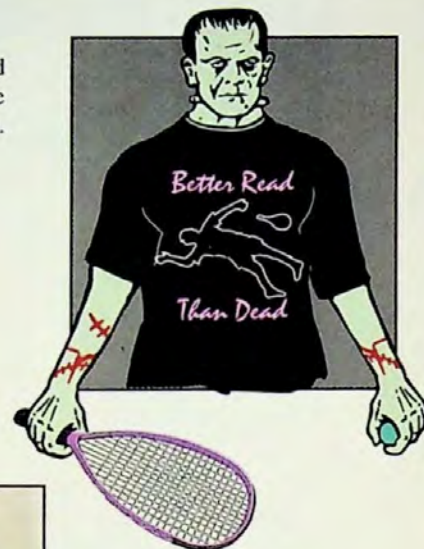
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Oh No! It's Alive! See what kind of composite creature roams the earth in this frightening feature. **Page 42 Monster**



Aaron Katz picks his all time top ten list of professional racquetball players. Hogan? Swain? Yellen? **Page 28 The Greatest**



More Thrills, more chills, more edge-of-your-seat action as Mark Henry covers the latest in IRT tournaments. Andy Roberts comes on strong to take three of the last five. **Page 17 Mr. Roberts Neighborhood**



The Official Publication of
the International Racquetball
Tour

SPEED KILLS.



There are two ways to play racquetball. Fast and way too fast.
We recommend you play the latter way. Or die trying.

SHORT SERVES

Racquetball Around Ohio Wins Penn Award

The Ohio Racquetball association was named winner of the "Newsletter of the Year Contest" sponsored by Penn Racquet Sports. The contest is held to encourage state associations to increase the frequency of their publications and to make overall design and content improvements.

Racquetball Around Ohio, the Ohio Racquetball Association publication was deemed to be "head and shoulders above the rest," according to Penn's national promotions manager, Amy Wishingrad. The publications were evaluated on the basis of design, content, and overall appeal to racquetball players.

The publication will receive additional advertising from Penn as a result of winning the award. Doug Ganim is president of the ORA and Steve Lerner is editor of the publication.

Book 'em, Woody

Woody Clouse, tour veteran currently ranked number ten on the IRT has teamed-up with Appalachian State University's Dr. Ed Turner to produce the ultimate instructional book for racquetball.

Published by Human Kinetics Publishers, the new book, *Skills*

and *Strategies for Winning Racquetball*, is scheduled to be released in the fall of this year. The book is designed for use by players at all levels.

Here's Looking at You, Kid

Do not adjust your set and don't run out to get your eyes checked. This is for real. Former Atlanta Falcon D. Wayne Hoffman of Bowling Green, Kentucky prepares to let fly one of his patented sumo-samurai serves in a match against Denver Parman of Paducah.

Resembling a cross between a martial arts kata and a serial killer's ritual this unorthodox method of putting the ball into play certainly got the attention of the crowd. Here's the drill: square-up and face your opponent, bounce the ball, stretch down and place the ball on the line, then turn and fire. Look for it at your next instructional camp.



Sure 'n Begora

Multi-time champion intercollegiate blaster Tim Sweeney brings a bit o' th' blarney on the court with him these days with some skin tint in the form of



a leprechaun. Obviously cashing-in on some of the luck of the Irish, Sweenys seems to be hitting the ball as hard as ever.

Try an' catch me lucky charms?

Norm Blum's Passing Shots

Hello, Hello

The air really must be thin at the AARA headquarters in Colorado. That's the only viable explanation for its cover story featuring **Sudsy Monchik** and **Marty Hogan**. The thrust of the article was how Marty Hogan was passing the racquetball superstar torch from himself to Sudsy. Let's face facts; Marty's torch was extinguished in 1985. **Mike Yellen** was ranked No. 1 for five straight years while Hogan was still living off of his press clippings from the past. And nothing against Sudsy, but the current racquetball superstar is a fellow named **Cliff Swain**. Swain is dominating the sport even more than Hogan did. To ignore Swain's reign is a travesty. Not even 30 years old, Swain can theoretically continue his mastery of the sport for at least another five years. Sudsy did win the pro nationals last June, but a Swain loss in a tournament is still considered a rarity. The AARA, as promoters of the sport, should seek out Swain and utilize him as a spokesperson for the sport. It's time to promote the sport's current superstar instead of someone who might one day take over that spot.

Industry Togetherness

At the recent Super Show in Atlanta, the top people within the racquetball industry had a meeting of the minds and discussed what has to be done to revive racquetball. No one asked me, but I have a few suggestions. My qualifications? I'm opinionated and have played a few years. Heck, I just turned 40 so officially I've been around the block. Most clubs have limited manpower so one has to implement some good ideas.

Forget the emphasis on junior racquetball. Between soccer, basketball, and baseball, there is simply too much competition for juniors. If a parent wants to volunteer his or her time, let him (or her) go at it. Clubs should offer six month memberships at a nominal fee to college graduates. Once one is off the college campus it's not easy to find a pickup basketball game or football contest. Once the students start playing racquetball they'll be hooked. Be sure there are plenty of leagues and have an active ladder so they can have some regular opponents. Tap the 35+ market. By that age they are fairly established in their careers and might have let their waistlines get the best of them. Have an individual run the leagues. The AARA has the expertise to tell club owners how to run leagues and tournaments. Lots of clubs get greedy and see the big dollar signs. Don't get greedy. Tournaments encourage players to participate more during the weeks prior to the event. I'll never forget seeing a fellow entering the 30+ division in his first tournament. He paid his \$35 and with his wife and two kids watching, was finished playing in 10 minutes. He faced an open player and after that humiliating experience gave up the sport. If the tournament had been set up so that he could have played several matches, he could still be playing today. I could go on, and on, but those are a few suggestions.

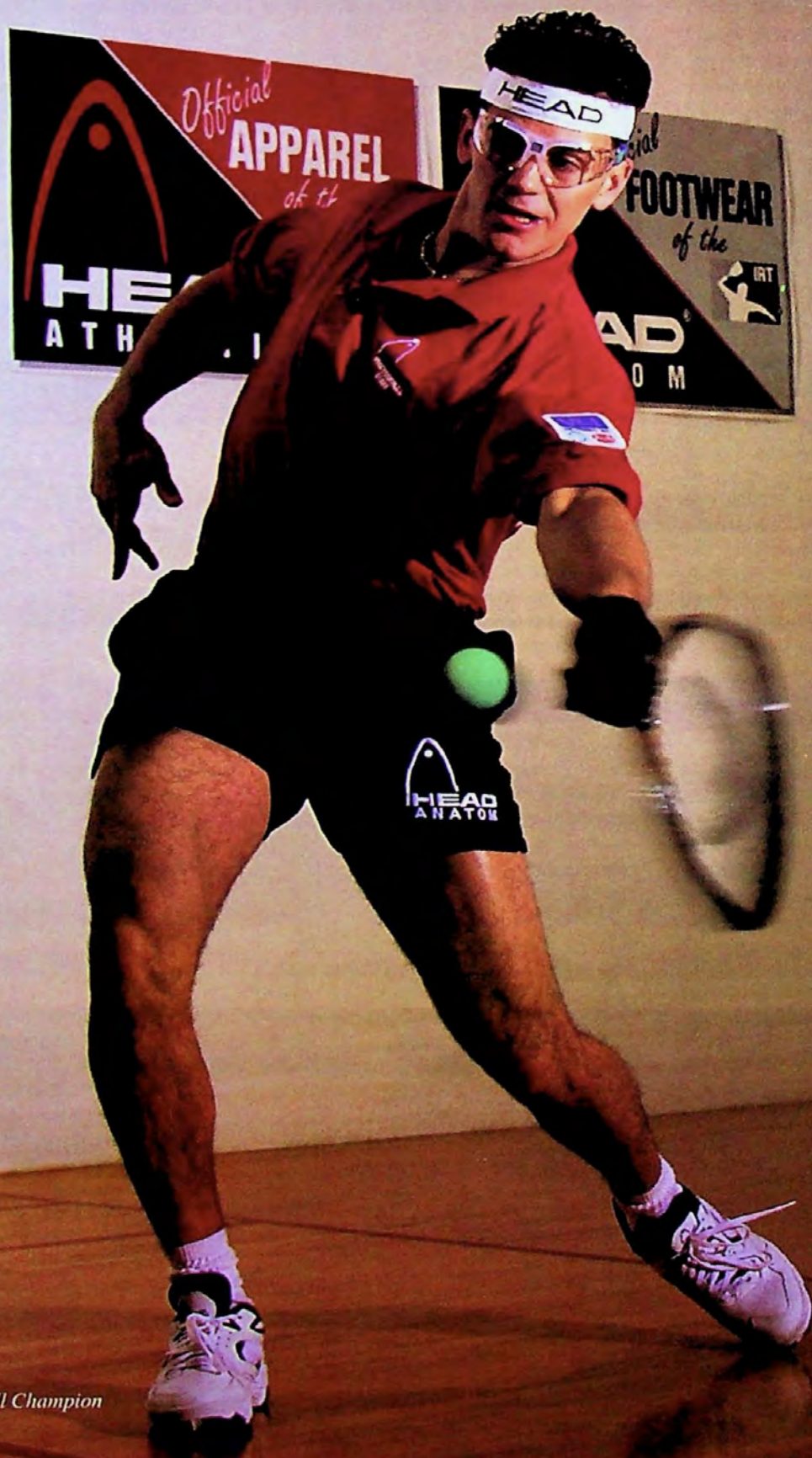
Potpourri

Pro racquetball is taking the cue from tennis. At the start of the third game, new balls are being issued. "At any level of racquetball, especially the pros, the ball is hit so hard, that like tennis, it is important to change balls to get maximum quality and bounce," says top-ranked **Cliff Swain**. Will **Ruben Gonzalez** still be in the top 10 when he turns 50?... *Sports Illustrated* had yet another racquetball



story. The March issue featured the auto accident saga of **Jason Mannino**. Mannino, if you recall, was a top junior player and some physicians weren't sure if he would walk without a limp, much less play competitive racquetball. He won the World Junior Games in Jacksonville last December and is quite confident that he'll become a factor in the pro game... Network Marketing's **Doug Smith** received a nice plug. His grip, The Python, could be seen in the *Sports Illustrated* article... Only two native Floridians have been a factor on the men's pro tour — **Brian Rankin** and **Scott Reiff**. That's amazing considering Florida is No. 2 behind California in racquetball participation.

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"I won 13 of 19 International Racquetball Stops in the 1993-94 season which was a record," says Cliff. "It was a good thing, because I can't sleep when I lose. I can't bear to call home and tell my folks and my girlfriend the news. The truth is, I can't enjoy anything until I win again."

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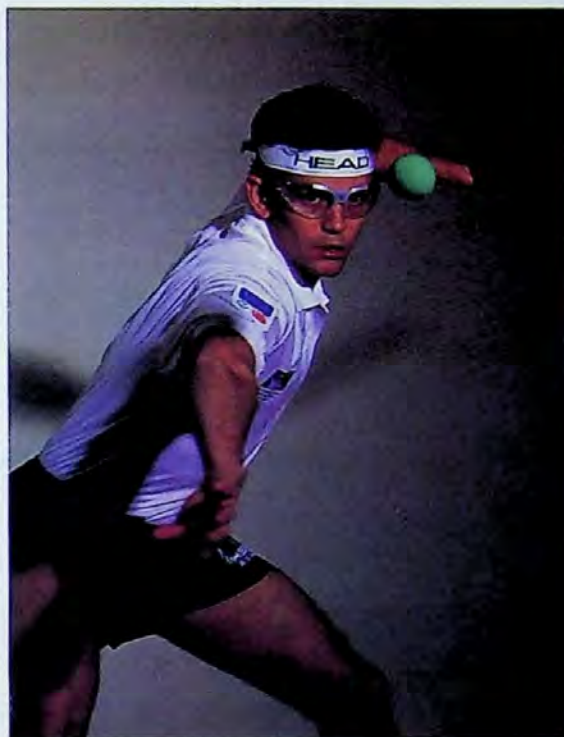
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Fire in the mountain, run boys run, the devil's in the house with the risin' sun...

Who is the best there is?

We're obsessed with it aren't we? Always trying to select the finest of the finest, always searching for that superhuman superstar who can dominate life. It can be ballplayers, actors, or models. What is it in our makeup that creates the need to put someone on that pedestal and then compare every other person to that choice? Why are we obsessed with that number one we have chosen to the exclusion of all others?

Muhammad Ali made a career and received a string of sports column inches on his announcements and insistence that he was the greatest. The whole theme that runs through Bernard Malamud's *The Natural* is whether Roy Hobbs is the best baseball player that's ever been (And how you feel about that probably has more to do with whether you read the book or saw the movie than your opinion on the importance of picking the best.) I've even heard that the devil went down to Georgia to find out who was the best fiddle player ever.

Okay, so maybe I'm a little cynical.

Maybe it's not as bad as I imagine. Tell me then who was the runner up to Miss America? What team finished third in the NCAA tournament last year? Who is the third highest home run hitter in major league history? What were the four movies nominated for best picture besides the winner at last year's academy awards? See, I'm only a little deluded and possibly just a tiny bit disturbed.

I'm not trying to suggest that I'm above that way of thinking, either. I've been known to play that game where you try to think of the best spinach salad, or the best kiss, or the best stairway you ever climbed. And, I suppose, when it comes right down to it there is no harm in trying to figure out who or what the number one of all time might be.

It might be one of those things that's so ingrained in our culture we can't get past it. It might also be something we need. Granted we tend to carry it to the extreme. Take for instance the stock market going up

because Michael Jordan is rumored to be quitting baseball to go back to playing basketball. All right, I can't help it...is Jordan the best or was it Dr. J, or maybe it was Magic Johnson or even Larry Bird...

Anyway, maybe those of us way down at the bottom of life's glamour heap, those of us who will never be a world class anything need to live vicariously through the accomplishments and perceived assets of others. And, maybe the way to do it best is to have someone at the top to emulate; someone who is so good that he or she tends to transcend all the mundane trials and tribulations that we seem to have to deal with in our daily lives.

In short, I guess we all need heroes. And I suppose it's only natural to try to determine the best of the best and the greatest of the greatest.

Now, let's see, about that category of best 40 year old bald editor with an unpronounceable last name....

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DOUBLES DOUBTER

Choosing the Perfect Doubles Partner for You

Eric Muller & John Ellis

Because racquetball is an individual sport, players often forget the team concept when it comes to doubles. However, talk to any successful doubles team, and they will talk about synergy. No, they might not actually use the word "synergy" but they are referring to a feeling of positive energy between them when they play their best. Great doubles teams are not necessarily made up of the best singles players, but rather, two people who are able to bring out each other's strengths and have a great time playing together.

So, how do you go about finding the right partner? We recommend finding someone with whose game you are familiar. Good choices are people that you may have played against several times in leagues or tournaments, and have had intense but fair matches. Choosing someone with whose game you are familiar accomplishes several goals. First, you will know if you enjoy being on the court with him (playing with someone that you like and respect is far better than joining forces with a great

player that you detest!). Second, you will have already established some familiarity (while familiarity may often breed contempt, on the doubles court, it is essential to know your partner's tendencies in timing and shot selection). Third, it will enhance your confidence in the team (a critical ingredient between doubles teams). You have to feel confident in your partner's ability to do his job on the court. A 10-10 tiebreaker is a poor time to break into the "I" formation because you fear your partner is going to skip the ball.

Okay, so you have found a partner that you know relatively well. The next question is whether or not the two of you can communicate effectively. Is your partner positive and encouraging ("Nice serve. Way to hustle. Keep bringing that Z-serve.")? Do you even want a partner that constantly showers you with praise, or would it be better to find someone who isn't afraid to get in your face when you are not carrying your load? In either case, you and your partner should not take offense to constructive criticism or strategy suggestions ("Move your feet. That lob isn't working, try a jam serve. Hit more wide angles."). A doubles team should be comfortable enough to pull no punches when giving advice, especially if it is critical to the match. What makes a great team is when each partner know what pushes the other's buttons in the right way. Experiment and know when to be encouraging and when to be a little more harsh in order to get your partner to play his or her best. Most successful teams have a "quarterback", the person who calls for shots ("mine", "yours") and is more vocal about strategy ("Hit the ball at Wanda's feet."). Great teams usually have a quarterback but are able to change



roles when necessary.

Now that you have found your partner, try to play with other partners as little as possible. The more exclusive you are with your partner, the more you will begin to think alike on the court. We have been playing doubles together for so long that our movements are completely coordinated on the court. In a sense, we become one player. That's what makes playing doubles one of the best parts of racquetball.



Eric Muller and John Ellis began playing doubles together at the Junior Olympics when they were fourteen years old. Since then, they have won three age division national titles. In 1991, they became the youngest team ever to win the Men's Open National Doubles Championships. After repeating their win in 1993, they were the World Doubles Champions in 1994.

Improving Your Doubles Game

1. Hit Wide Angles

The wide angle is the best shot in doubles. It is easy to hit, forces your opponents into back court, and allows you to assume center court position.

2. Concentrate on Coverage

Get everything! The key to doubles is keeping the ball in play. With proper court positioning, you and your partner can return nearly any ball, even those that would be kill shots in singles. The point is to put the pressure on the other team to hit perfect roll-outs to beat you.

3. No Skips

As the court is easier to cover in doubles and hitting a kill shot is extremely difficult against a good team, skip balls are your worst enemy. Don't put pressure on yourself to hit perfect shots and risk skipping the ball. Rather, assume that your opponents will get everything you hit and force you to go for wide angles and better positioning. Make your opponents work hard to beat you, don't give them any freebies.

4. Hit Jam Serves and Z-Serves

These are high percentage (easy to hit) serves and cause your opponents to force a shot on a ball that is moving into their bodies, off of the wall. This is awkward, especially in doubles where they do not have as much room to set up. In addition, a jam serve can often cause your opponents to hit a shot "inside-out" (the player on the right side may have to hit a backhand or the player on the left side may have to hit a forehand).

5. Play a Combination Front/Back and Side/Side Coverage

The idea is to cover the court and cover your partner's backside. If your partner is retrieving a front court pinch on the left side, you should drop back and slide to the right. If you move back to cover a wide angle pass to the left side, your partner needs to move forward to the right. Get the idea?

6. Avoid the Deep Court Splat

Because the court is easy to cover, splatting from deep court usually gives your opponents an easy rekill in front court.

7. Work for Rekills in Front Court

Try to set the point up by hitting hard wide angles, wait for your opponents to shoot the ball from deep court, and then go for the rekill. It is much easier to end the point when your opponents are behind you.

8. Develop the Reverse Pinch

This is a great doubles shot because it can end the rally quickly and catch your opponents out of position. It should only be hit when you are in front court and your opponents are behind you. When hit properly, your opponents will be too far back or on the wrong side of the court to cover the reverse. However, practice this shot before you try it in competition, as it is somewhat of an advanced shot.

9. Communicate With Your Partner

Unlike singles (where you might get called for a technical) doubles should be a vocal game. You and your partner should constantly be communicating both during the point ("Yours! Mine! Cover the pinch!") and between points ("Nice shot. Keep it out. Let's get this serve out in one. Did you see that lady with the big, beautiful teeth watching us?") The more you communicate, the more in sync you will become.

10. Find A Really Good Doubles Partner



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eating

& athletic performance

Richard Honaker M.D.

The interval between eating and exercise may play an important role in one's performance. Vigorous exercise before a meal will raise your metabolic rate and thereby burn more calories. This elevated metabolic rate may last for as long as 24 hours. Exercise also would deplete the storage form of glucose (sugar), known as glycogen. This means that further glucose which is taken in during the meal can be stored as glycogen and not as fats. Also, the outpouring of adrenaline, growth hormone, and cortisol which exercise causes may reduce hunger.

Vigorous and intense exercise shortly after a meal may cause problems related to shunting of blood away from the digestive tract towards the muscles working during exercise. The subsequent delay in digestion is harmful to the body's processes. This is not to say that a pre-exercise meal is wrong. In fact, fasting for long periods prior to exercise may reduce the glycogen stores to a point that prolonged competition can be impaired as nutrients are running low. One should ideally eat at least two and one-half to three hours prior to exercise to allow time for the stomach to empty into the intestines, and for the digestive process to be well under way.

Excessively large amounts of sugars and carbohydrates should not be taken in during the pre-exercise meal. Approximately one to four grams of carbohydrate per kilogram of body weight should be taken one to four hours prior to prolonged exercise. The closer the meal is to exercise, the lower the carbohydrate intake should be. One gram per kilogram is appropriate with-

in an hour of exercise, but four grams per kilogram is safe if eaten four hours prior to vigorous exercise.

Best foods for pre-exercise meals are easily digestible and not heavy on fat or calories. Yogurt without fat, milk (1%), fruit, crackers, breads, and small amounts of meat without high fat contents are good ideas. High carbohydrate beverages include GatorLode, Exceed High Carbohydrate Source, and Carboplex. These drinks should not be used during exercise, however, as their carbohydrate content is very high.

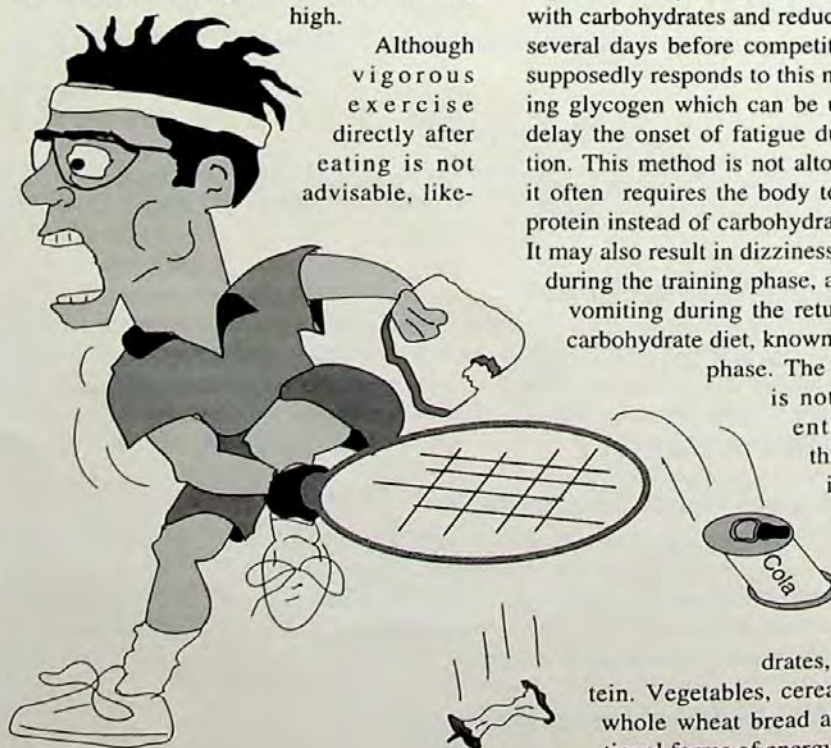
Although vigorous exercise directly after eating is not advisable, like-

wise sedentary life-style directly after eating is also inadvisable. Post meal walking aids digestion and burns excess calories.

Carbohydrates loading diets have been popular recently. These diets aim to increase muscle glycogen levels in order to supply energy during prolonged exertion. Exhaustion following prolonged activity may result from a depletion of glycogen (stored sugar). In carbohydrate loading, the idea is to reduce the glycogen in muscles with a low carbohydrate diet for several days and heavy workouts. One then "loads" with carbohydrates and reduces exercise for several days before competition. The body supposedly responds to this method by storing glycogen which can be used as fuel to delay the onset of fatigue during competition. This method is not altogether safe, as it often requires the body to depend upon protein instead of carbohydrates for energy. It may also result in dizziness and weakness during the training phase, and nausea and vomiting during the return to the high carbohydrate diet, known as the loading phase. The best approach

is not to be overly enthusiastic on this type of dieting. Eat a balanced diet with the appropriate amounts of carbohydrates, fats, and pro-

tein. Vegetables, cereals, pastas and whole wheat bread are good nutritional forms of energy.



L ETTERS

M--I--C--K--E--Y

Hi Q&Q

KILLSHOT IV/4 arrived today and I see that on p. 9 - Edit. com. there's a Marty Bleckman from N.Y. who "Keeps us on our toes". **OUCH!** Do you mean *moi*? Interestingly enuf, when I got the 1994 "Handball Hall of Fame Bob Kendler Award" on Memorial Day part of my accolade was that I... "see that at **HANDBALL** mag (they) dot all the 'i's' and cross all the 't's'..." But they got my name right. However, I now supplement the list of the many orthographical variations of M.B. (-Presently I'm updating the one-wall handball records back to Day One-)

Ready? ON YOUR TOES, MEN!

Regards,

Mickey Bleckman

Rockville Center NY

ps. Did U NO that Aaron Katz' father Morty is a CHAMPION Handball player? Look it up!

It's always nice to get a letter from Malcolm Bleichmun. Actually, we are truly sorry for corrupting your name, Mickey (Believe it or not I've had Quertermous messed up on occasion, so I can sympathize with you.). I have even been told my name is hard to look at. At any rate, even though we mangled your moniker the spirit of what I said still goes. We do enjoy hearing from you and being kept on our toes by someone from the world of handball. Thanks, Mickey.

Got that on tape?

I just wanted you to know that I enjoy the magazine very much. I am glad to be on your mailing list. I realize this isn't your responsibility, but if possible, do you know of any way that I could buy some copies of any of the more recent taped videos of the pro tour. Prime ticket only shows them about once a year, and I would like to get some actual tournament play. I would appreciate any help you could offer.

R. Rubick

Ontario, California

I don't know of any available at this time. It's a good idea, though.

This game has been cancelled...

I wanted to let you know exactly why I wasn't renewing my **KILLSHOT** subscription. It has absolutely nothing to do with the quality of your magazine. Quite the contrary, I was MORE than pleased with your magazine... It's well written, informative and of extremely high quality. I am not renewing my subscription because, after nearly 20 years, I've lost interest in racquetball. No...what I'm truly tired of is joining leagues and having opponents fail to show up for their matches and not giving anyone the courtesy of a telephone call.

This lack of commitment is a recent phenomenon...and definitely more predominately male. I tried calling my opponents the day of the matches and confirming date and time. I spoke with the league director regarding this problem...concrete, worthwhile suggestions...all to no avail. After over 3 years of switching leagues, appearing for "no show" matches... I quit the club and racquetball.

There is NEVER a reason that somebody can't pick up a telephone and cancel a game. The clubs and their directors MUST have a firm policy against league members who consistently sign up for leagues and fail to show up or continuously cancel all their games. I wonder how many other people have had the same experiences and given up the game out of pure frustration? For the exercise, I recently joined a local park district league. The attendance is much better but the level of competition is extremely poor. Because it's not a club, there's a lack of camaraderie. My heart is not in the game anymore so your magazine is of little interest.

Good luck in the future---you have a great product.

D. T. Finnegan
Chicago, Illinois

About those subscription deadlines...

Please accept this after the deadline --I misplaced this & found it today. Larry loves this magazine & will "killshot" me if his subscription is stopped.

M. Reilly

South Lake Tahoe, California

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Warming Up is hard to do (down- do-be-do- down- down)

By Mark Henry

Lynn Adams

In her instructional publication, *Racquetball Today* (co-authored with Erwin Goldbloom), six-time women's professional national champion, Lynn Adams names six muscles or muscle groups on which to concentrate during pre-match by stretching slowly and holding stretched for 20 - 30 seconds:

- hamstrings (back of the thigh)
- quadriceps (front of thigh)
- calf muscles and Achilles tendons (lower leg)
- trunk muscles
- triceps (backs of upper arms)
- shoulders



In working with some of the most amazing athletes in the world, I began to realize that every single one of them was subject to the same anxieties, insecurities and other performance-inhibiting factors that I face in every big match. While pro athletes enjoy attributes such as talent, dedication, and resiliency, the successful ones have also mastered the techniques necessary to maximize their strengths. Whether it is the ability to snap out of a slump, to "kick in" something extra to win a tough match, or simply to be able to perform consistently in the face of tension or insecurity, the IRT pros and other professional athletes with whom I have had the privilege to work each keep a personal bag of tricks to reach peak performance.

This started my thinking about all the players that I had faced over the years that could command as much confidence in a crucial match as in a casual game. In fact, I think all of us have seen instances when a player defeats a superior player because the inferior player produces the most from his skills, while the "better" player plays down a couple of levels in a reaction to nerves, distraction, etc. In this light, I became interested in what the best players in the game do to consistently play at their best. After questioning all the top IRT pros (and dozens of other world-class

athletes) I came away with an unusual bag of tricks that entailed everything from tried-and-true axioms to ideas drawn from

separate perceptions in each players' own history, to highly specialized and unusual private rituals that stop somewhere just short of sacrificing



#3 Ranked Pro Tim Doyle warming up

live chickens.

Discarding the more obscure habits I encountered, (and the chicken thing), I began putting together a composite of the recurring ideas for preparing to play to the very best of one's ability. I came up with 7 major areas that seem important to almost everyone with whom I spoke, as well as a sort of "catch-all" eighth category to include the best of the quick tips.

Loosening up

Loosening up means shaking off the tension that inhibits performance by altering movement and interrupting a harmonious mind-body connection. Posture and movement indicate the effects of daily tensions and pre-performance stress. A player's dangling his limbs or rolling his head in a circular motion are observable efforts toward "getting loose". A very common technique among the top players is voluntarily contracting the muscles in a specific area of the body then releasing after holding for a few seconds. The player then repeats the technique with other areas until the entire body feels more relaxed, more responsive, and free of tension.

Stretching

Racquetball is a very dynamic sport that requires tremendous plyometric (instant muscle firing) abilities. The bottom line is that if you do not stretch before making these plyometric demands, your body cannot respond properly. Aside from what we all know (and often wish to ignore) about the necessity of stretching to prevent injury, stretching before playing contributes an observable and measurable increase in any player's abilities in rallying, shooting, getting, etc. Stretching of each body part should be done slowly and held for 20 - 30 seconds.

Breathing

Since there is a direct connection between breathing and anxiety, it is one of the most important indicators of the ability to perform. The quick shallow breathing that signifies tension can greatly inhibit performance as well as athletic endurance. Most all the top competitors reported paying special attention to relaxed, deep breathing prior to a match. Many reported counting their breaths, establishing a particular rhythm, or simply breathing deep and easy while concentrating on the words "easy" or "relax".

Mental Preparation

Recurring ideas for mental preparation included everything from positive self programming to visual imagery. Two components seem necessary: 1) establishing confidence that empowers the best possible execution and a formidable presence on the court and 2) some form of mentally playing through an ideal match to "get in the groove" of the thought processes that occur in a well played match (see *Imagine That, KILLSHOT* #15 - 1994 Instructional Special). Much of this has to do with an idea that is often overlooked that peak performance is not only physical but a mental-physical connection.

Warm-up

The pros' physical warm-up is vigorous to say the least. While they may start slowly to warm up gradually, at the pro level, players escalate to a serious pace that demands from them physically much as will the upcoming match. The idea is to get the blood pumping, get the sweat flowing, and to get the muscles warm. Most players prefer on-court warm-ups, but many rely on

stationary bikes or stair climbers to really heat things up. On-court shuffle drills seem to be another favorite. Obviously, the intensity of your optimum warm-up varies directly with your own physical condition.

Rehearsal

Shadow boxing, martial arts kata, or going through a swing motion are all forms of rehearsal that enhance peak performance. Visualization plays a huge role in establishing good form, but actually repeating movement with perfect form at varying speeds is far more powerful. In fact, "going through the motions" cues the body, establishes a clear mental image and yields a significant improvement in performance.

Concentration

One of the key factors separating professional athletes from the rest of us is a heightened ability to focus on performance. Many players are gifted with amazing abilities, but are unable to block out distractions that inhibit the total concentration necessary to perform at 100%. Every player shared some form of ritual to begin this concentration prior to beginning a match. Many simply concentrated on the ball, or a "blank slate". Others described mental

cues that they use throughout the course of a match to regain focus. Marty Hogan was a prime example with his exclamation of "play ball!" to himself whenever his focus seemed to be drifting. Use of the command verbally during a match and mentally before hand enabled him a focus and awareness the likes of which we have rarely seen in the sport.

The other ideas prior to playing to establish peak performance included: checking equipment, getting adequate rest, avoiding "heavy" meals or long gaps between meals (see *Eating & Athletic Performance* pg. 12 this issue), maintaining adequate hydration prior to a match, avoiding watching or refereeing too many other matches prior to playing, and avoiding "talking too much racquetball" prior to playing.

Fran Davis

Former women's tour professional and current US national amateur team assistant coach Fran Davis describes a fairly rigid and ritualized approach to pre-match warm-up:

I always get to the club about an hour and a half before a big match. I head straight for the locker room and avoid contact with others as much as possible. First I stretch to start preparing my body and signal my mind that it's time to get down to business. Next I want to get my heart rate up and break a light sweat by stair climbing or stationary biking for fifteen to twenty minutes. I try to find the zone where I'm starting to warm up but not to wear out. Next I seek out an empty court to hit some shots. I begin to hit at about 50% velocity while paying attention to my body movement and footwork throughout my swing. I gradually increase to 60%, then 70% and so on up to about 90%. I know that if a tournament is going on, I will probably have to jump to a new court several times to hit as many shots as I want, since the same one will rarely be open that long.

When I feel properly warm and loose, I will change to a fresh shirt and begin to concentrate on my mental preparation. I put on the headphones to help shut out the chaos around me and to signify to others not to approach me while I focus. It's very important for me to stay alone at this point. I always use music that is upbeat, but have to be careful not to get too keyed up for a match. I usually do some more stretching so that I don't get stiff while I work on focus. I want to do some mental rehearsal for rallies, to reach a point where I feel confident, and crisp, and my focus is solid.



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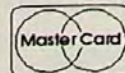
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Mister Roberts' Neighborhood

It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood for Andy Roberts as he closes the gap to number 1 Cliff Swain

By Mark Henry

Denver
Coca-Cola Pro Am

• Swain Picks up where he left off • Bronfeld - Harripersad, Ellis - Boscia stir up

some first round excitement • Ray stands firm with Monchik, then guts it out against Roberts • Katz pulls the upset in three over Doyle • Players come prepared this year for altitude as a factor • Mary Ann Alonzi

and Co. at the Lakewood Athletic Club continue a fine tradition with this second year event •

The thin air in the mile high city didn't

SEMIS	
Swain d. Guidry 11-5, 11-5, 11-9	Cliff Swain 11-3, 11-8, 11-9
Ray d. Katz 11-6, 4-11, 11-8, 11-5	Mike Ray
QUARTERS	
Swain d. Ellis 11-6, 5-11, 11-5, 10-12, 11-4	
Guidry d. Kachtik 11-8, 11-3, 8-11, 11-6	
Ray d. Roberts 11-4, 10-12, 3-11, 11-8, 11-8	
13-11, 11-9, 11-9	
SIXTEENS	
Swain d. Muller 11-2, 11-5, 11-1	
Ellis d. Clouse 11-5, 11-1, 11-2	
Kachtik d. Gelhaus 11-6, 11-9, 6-11, 11-7	
Guidry d. Vogel 11-6, 11-9, 11-4	
Roberts d. Bromfeld 11-5, 9-11, 11-4, 11-7	
Ray d. Monchik 11-2, 12-10, 11-6	
Katz d. Gonzalez 11-7, 11-7, 12-10	
Doyle d. Karp 11-0, 11-6, 5-11, 11-2	
Denver	

SEMIS	
Guidry d. Kachtik 6-11, 11-2, 6-11, 11-2, 11-8	Andy Roberts 11-4, 4-11, 11-8, 8-11, 11-6
Roberts d. Ellis 9-11, 11-9, 6-11, 11-9, 11-7	Mike Guidry
QUARTERS	
Kachtik d. Swain 11-9, 6-11, 11-6, 8-11, 11-6	
Guidry d. Ray 11-3, 12-14, 11-2, 11-9	
Roberts d. Vogel 11-4, 11-4, 11-4	
Ellis d. Greenfeld 11-5, 5-11, 11-7, 11-4	
SIXTEENS	
Swain d. Ceresia 11-6, 11-6, 11-5	
Kachtik d. Clouse 11-9, 11-9, 5-11, 11-8	
Ray d. Karp 11-5, 11-5, 11-7	
Guidry d. Rankin 11-9, 11-8, 11-9	
Roberts d. Harripersad 11-7, 11-8, 11-5	
Vogel d. Gonzalez 7-11, 11-2, 11-7, 11-1	
Ellis d. Monchik 10-12, 12-10, 6-11, 11-5, 11-4	
Greenfeld d. Doyle 12-10, 4-11, 11-6, 7-11, 11-4	
Dallas	



Roberts and Guidry at the Shop 'n Save Pro Am in Pittsburgh.



seem to lower the performances of the players who made the trek to compete in the Coca-Cola Pro Am. Lots of upsets and near upsets kept action tense as Colorado fans witnessed a near defeat by Colorado State champ Tony Boscia against John Ellis. Ellis managed to hang tough, though, and by the time the dust had settled in the tie breaker he was on top. Michael Bronfeld, Amateur Nationals champion knocked out Roger Harripersad in a five game battle and Dan Fowler was eliminated by Kelly Gelhaus.

Cliff Swain sailed through the tournament with his only problem being in the form of Ellis who took two games from Swain and forced him into a rare tie breaker.

Texans Drew Kachtik and Mike

Guidry battled it out in the quarters. These guys are more familiar with each other's style than any others on the tour so it's always a treat to see them compete. The third amigo, Aaron Katz continuing with his super season, played well into the semis before being knocked out by a fired-up Mike Ray.

Dallas VCI Challenge Cup Series

• *Kachtik acts as spoiler • First round true to form, good matches from Harripersad - Robinson, and Greenfeld - O'Neil • Vogel smokes past Gonzalez in the sixteens • Can't get much closer than Ellis - Monchik • Greenfeld surprises Doyle •*

Roberts faces great matches with Ellis, then Guidry for his first win this season • After three quarters already this season, Katz sits this one out to team with VCI and the beautiful Landmark club as Tournament host •

It's always an exciting showdown when the pros storm the home turf of the Best of Texas. This year's VCI Challenge Cup Series event proved to be no exception as high noon bore down on the beautiful Landmark Club in Dallas.

Mike Guidry at the Racquet Club of Memphis



		Andy Roberts	
		11-1, 11-1, 11-8	
		Mike Ray	
		11-1, 11-1, 11-8	
SEMIS		QUARTERS	
Ray d. Guidry		Ray d. Swain	
11-4, 11-8, 11-8		7-11, 11-7, 11-3, 3-11, 11-2	
Roberts d. Doyle		Guidry d. Katz	
7-11, 11-6, 11-0, 11-6		8-11, 11-2, 11-3, 11-4	
		Roberts d. Rankin	
		11-7, 11-9, 9-11, 11-1	
		Doyle d. Kachtik	
		11-7, 8-11, 4-11, 11-6, 11-8	
SIXTEENS		Memphis	
Swain d. Gelhaus			
11-1, 11-6, 13-11			
Ray d. Clouse			
11-2, 11-0, 12-10			
Katz d. Ceresia			
14-12, 11-2, 11-4			
Guidry d. O'Neil			
11-9, 3-11, 11-4, 11-0			
Roberts d. Muller			
11-1, 11-2, 11-5			
Rankin d. Gonzalez			
7-11, 11-5, 12-10, 11-4			
Kachtik d. Vogel			
11-8, 11-7, 11-9			
Doyle d. Engle			
11-8, 11-2, 11-2			

Two of Texas' best shooters fought it out in the semis in an intense five game struggle that pitted the speedy Mike Guidry against an always fearsome Drew Kachtik. When the smoke cleared, Guidry was the quick and Kachtik the dead.

To get to that showdown Kachtik had to survive a five game scramble with the Dominator Swain and a close four game battle against Woody Clouse. Guidry had to out maneuver the control-Meister Ray to win his spot in the semis.

The final pitted Roberts against Guidry in a five-game melee that see-sawed back and forth until Roberts could pull it out in the tie breaker. Roberts is playing like a man on fire at this point in the season and his injury this summer seems to be completely out of influence. He had to slip by Ellis to win his spot in the final in a match that saw him come back from a two-games-to-one deficit to advance.

Conspicuous by his absence in the tourney at least into the quarters was another Texan, Aaron Katz. His duties as tournament director at this VCI stop prevented him from taking part in the fracas.

Memphis Hampton Inn Pro Classic

• Roberts' first event victory in hometown since 1991 • Katz re-asserts himself as one of the best of Texas • Rankin seizes the upset from Gonzalez • Manino beating the odds just to walk, grabs a game from Kachtik • Ray shocks crowd with Swain upset • Tempers flair between Doyle & Kachtik • Marty Austin, Quinn Roberts, Hampton Inns, and the crew from the incredible Racquet Club of Memphis outdo themselves in both excitement and hospitality •

After a long dry spell in his hometown, Roberts managed to shut down the jinx and take the Hampton Inn Pro Classic at the Racquet Club of Memphis. He pounded Ray in the final in three games after stopping slugger Tim Doyle.

Ray had already dispensed the almost unstoppable Swain in a five game match that was reminiscent of the Ray of a couple of seasons past. He then had to slide past Guidry to earn his berth in the final match and managed to do that without much ceremony.

Ruben Gonzalez, the game's elder statesman has been struggling of late and was knocked out early by Brian Rankin who saw action at both collegiate racquetball powerhouses Memphis State and



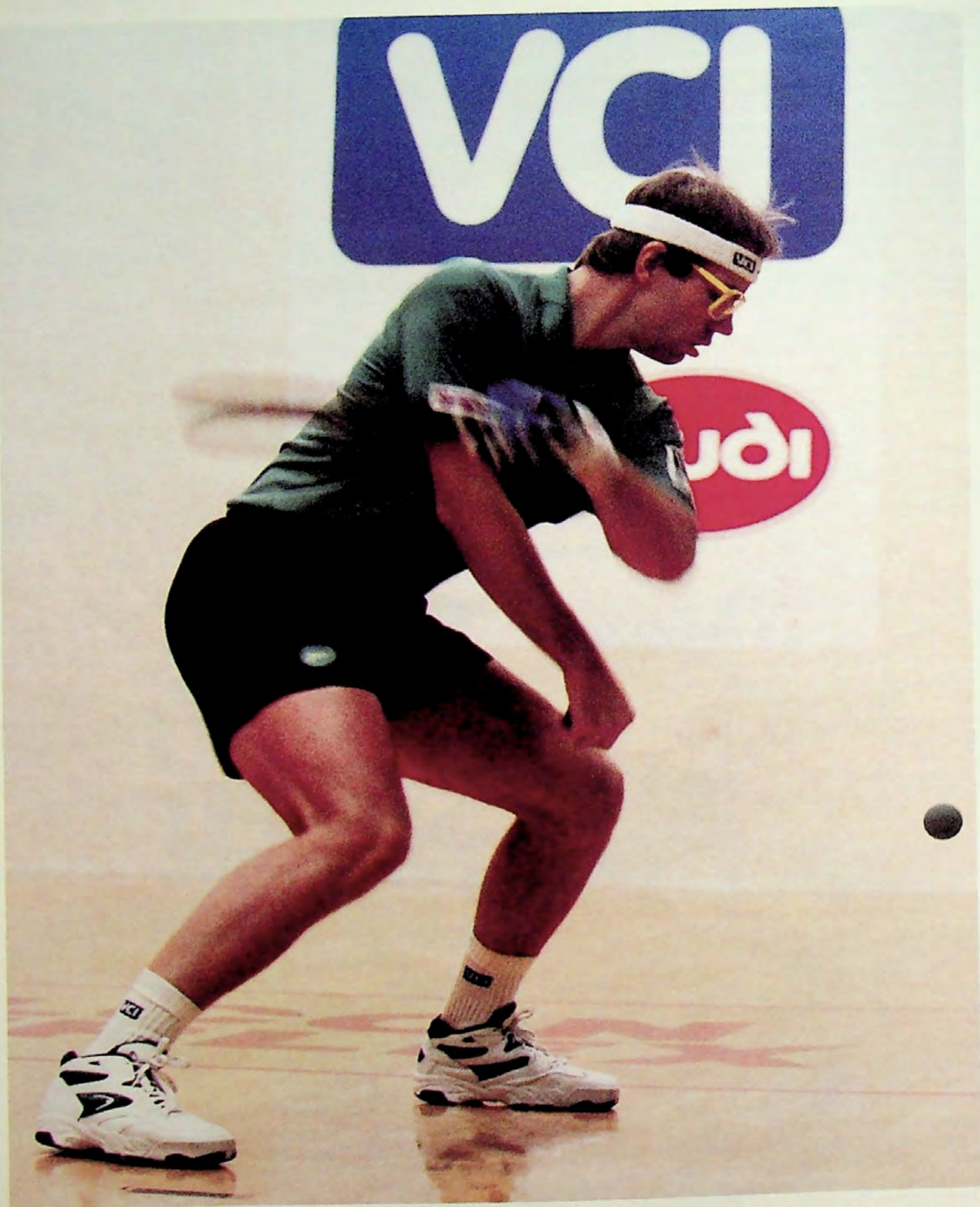
John Ellis and Andy Roberts battle it out at the Landmark Club in Dallas.

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Cliff Swain

11-3, 11-5, 11-6

Sudsy Monchik

SEMIS

Swain d. Ray

11-2, 11-3, 11-8

Monchik d. Roberts

11-2, 11-9, 7-11, 11-9

QUARTERS

Swain d. Katz

11-4, 11-7, 11-2

Ray d. Karp

11-8, 11-7, 11-8

Monchik d. Gelhaus

2-11, 11-8, 11-6, 11-2

Roberts d. Clouse

11-5, 14-12, 11-7

SIXTEENS

Swain d. Muller

11-3, 11-1, 11-0

Katz d. Gonzalez

11-3, 11-9, 11-9

Ray d. Hamilton

11-7, 11-7, 11-7

Karp d. Guidry

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

Gelhaus d. Manino

7-11, 11-6, 11-6, 11-2

Monchik d. Kachtik

11-1, 11-7, 8-11, 14-12

Clouse d. Ellis

F

Roberts d. O'Neil

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

Atlanta

Southwest Missouri State.

Atlanta

VCI Challenge Cup Series

• Another Swain clean sweep - 32's to victory in the final without a single game loss • Kachtik denied vengeance from last year's nationals • Ellis can't answer the bell for the sixteens • Hamilton: no trouble from Vogel's bullets • Karp shows signs of greatness • Alan Turem and Co. at the Atlanta Falcon's Sports Complex team with VCI for another great event and raise serious dollars for Georgia Council on Child Abuse •

Swain marches to the sea. After two tournament defeats in Memphis and Dallas Swain regained his earlier tourney form. He routed the tour in Atlanta, going the entire weekend without dropping a game to the likes of Monchik, Ray, Katz, and Muller. Chalking up decisive victories in every

Opposite: Mike Ray seems to be getting back on track, playing through the semis in both Memphis and Denver.

VCI
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With similar game styles Swain and Monchik always provide plenty of action and crowd-pleasing moves in every match-up.

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The Official Glove of the IRT



Swain still holds a commanding lead on the number one ranking but Andy Roberts has closed the gap somewhat with three wins in the last five stops.

Andy Roberts

11-8, 11-4, 11-9

Mike Guidry

SEMIS

Guidry d. Swain
9-11, 11-8, 11-5, 11-3
Roberts d. Doyle
11-5, 11-0, 11-6

QUARTERS

Swain d. Kachtik
11-6, 11-9, 11-1
Guidry d. Gonzalez
1-11, 11-7, 11-4, 8-11, 11-8
Doyle d. Katz
8-11, 8-11, 11-9, 11-9, 11-7
Roberts d. Ray
12-14, 11-7, 11-5, 11-8

SIXTEENS

Swain d. Engle
11-3, 11-5, 11-8
Kachtik d. Monchik
12-10, 8-11, 11-8, 4-11, 11-7
Gonzalez d. Fowler
13-11, 11-4, 7-11, 8-10F
Guidry d. Obremski
13-11, 11-1, 14-12
Doyle d. Muller
11-5, 6-11, 11-8, 8-11, 11-6
Katz d. Rankin
12-10, 11-2, 11-4
Ray d. Clouse
11-7, 8-11, 11-6, 12-10
Roberts d. Robinson
11-2, 11-7, 8-11, 10-12, 11-1

Pittsburgh

match he once again became the untouchable player that's been dominating the tour.

Roberts, coming off two pivotal victories that tightened the gap between first and second spot in the rankings couldn't get past Monchik in the quarters. The Atlanta VCI Challenge Cup Series event, held at the Falcon's Sports Complex is always an industry spectacle. Held during the sporting goods Super Show the tournament is always attended by the game's movers and shakers who are usually treated to a brand of fine-honed competition.

Monchik showed some endurance with a win over Kachtik in the 16's then successfully getting rid of Roberts in the semis. He didn't have enough, however to stop Swain.

Pittsburgh Shop 'n Save Pro Am

• Roberts: capitalizing on every opportunity with three wins in the last four events • Obremski in a now rare IRT appearance • Muller plucks two off Doyle • Robinson bat-

Deliverin' the Doughnuts



Doyle 11, Karp 0 Denver 16s
Roberts 11, Doyle 0 Memphis Semis
Ray 11, Clouse 0 Memphis 16s

Guidry 11, O'Neil 0 Memphis 16s
Swain 11, Muller 0 Atlanta 16s
Roberts 11, Doyle 0, Pittsburgh Semis



ters Roberts before dropping • Doyle: a comeback from two down for the win over Katz • Guidry and Gonzalez match-up as the two most offensively-capable divers in the sport • John Puushak, Suzy Klingensmith and staff from the huge Racquet Club of Pittsburgh heat up another cold Pennsylvania February with the Shop N Save Pro Am

The Shop n' Save Pro Am is always a tournament full of heavy competition and this year was no exception with several matches going into tie breakers.

With the sweet taste of victory from Memphis and Dallas still in his mouth, Roberts flew into the city of steel with a mission. Swain, still high from his recent Super Show win in Atlanta, was brought down to earth again by one of the Best of Texas. This time Guidry managed to hold off Swain in a four game duel that saw Guidry drop the first game then take charge and win the next three decisively.

Roberts had to play through Ray and Doyle to earn his spot in the final but perhaps his toughest match came early against a fired-up Derek Robinson. Never to be counted out, Robinson lost the first two games to Roberts then came back in a fireball taking the next two. Roberts proved to have the edge in stamina, though, and held Robinson to only one point in the tie breaker.

Kachtik and Monchik battled through a rough five-gamer that left Kachtik standing after the skirmish. It took its toll on him in the next match as he dropped three to Swain.

Doyle played tough but both Muller and Katz took him to tie breakers. Doyle

showed what he was made of against Katz, down two games to none then coming back strong to take the next three.

Home boy Dan Obremski looking for an opportunity to shine played strong against Jason Manino but couldn't hold on to outlast Guidry. Guidry was on the roll that took him all the way into the final, but Roberts finished him in three for the win.



Chills, spills, thrills, and plenty of excitement. Monchik with a diving get against Roberts at the Falcon Complex in Atlanta, above left. In the same match, above, Monchik clears for a powerful patented Roberts' forehand.

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VCI Spreadsheet

IRT

1. Cliff Swain (1)
Braintree, Massachusetts
2. Andy Roberts (3)
Memphis, Tennessee
3. Tim Doyle (2)
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 (10)
Dallas, Texas
8. Ruben Gonzalez (7)
Staten Island, New York
9. John Ellis (9)
Stockton, California
10. Woody Clouse (9)
Jacksonville, Florida
11. Sudsy Monchik (11)
Staten Island, New York
12. Louis Vogel (13)
Taos, New Mexico
13. Dan Fowler (12)
Silver Springs, Maryland
14. Brian Rankin (16)
St. Louis, Missouri
15. Adam Karp (15)
Los Angeles, California
16. Kelly Gelhaus
Riverside, California

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 (7T)
Lincoln, Nebraska
- 8T. Chris Evon (7T)
San Diego, California
- 8T. Molly O'Brien (7T)
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

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

American Amateur Racquetball Association

Open

1. Michael Bronfeld, California
 2. Jimmy Lowe, Kentucky
 3. Doug Ganim, Ohio
 4. Rich Baer, New York
 5. Dan Fowler, Maryland
-
1. Lorraine Galloway, New York
 2. Robin Levine, California
 3. Cheryl Gudinas, Illinois
 4. Kerri Stoffregen, Ohio
 5. Karen Sobotta, Washington

Racquetball Canada

1. Sherman Greenfeld
 2. Simon Roy
 3. Mike Ceresia
 4. Haydn Jones
 5. Doug McQuarrie
-
1. Carol McFetridge
 2. Sue McTaggart
 3. Josee Grandmaire
 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



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Oh yeah?



Marty Hogan in his prime.



Jerry Hilecher, from player to coach



Charlie Brumfield, as he dominated the first pro players

Most of the controversy over who is the greatest comes down to the criteria used to evaluate greatness. The first famous players in the game were players like Bud Muelhisen and Bill Schmidke. The next "generation" of players became the first "pros" such as Charlie Brumfield, Steve Serot, Steve Keeley, and Steve Strandemo, although it probably was not until Marty Hogan came along that they had anything like celebrity status.

Hogan's incumbency introduced more professionalism, more media attention, and more public interest, as well as an industry-wide obsession with power that would forever separate the old masters from the new breed. Mike Yellen was riding the crest of the wave when the oversize frames became the norm, an innovation that would again alter the abilities necessary to dominate the tour. With the sluggers coming into prominence, we began to see the emergence of today's stars.

The Aaron Katz' article on the following pages, while admittedly by the author shows some bias to those players in more recent memory and at the most evolved point of the game, does employ some sound insight in its evaluations. Still, there was clearly so much amazing talent in earlier days that we felt the need to hear from some insiders who saw some of this amazing piece of history first-hand. Is the greatest the best natural athlete, the biggest innovator, the most accomplished, the most recognized, or the most feared?

The first thing we came to in putting together this piece is that today, Cliff Swain has the goods. He has overwhelmingly earned the right to stand among the likes of Hogan, Yellen, and Brumfield. But I think it's almost an insult to Cliff to write the book on him so soon, before he has ever become as good as we think he will eventually be. To watch Swain today is to see greatness as we have rarely seen it in our young sport.

"When you look at the greats over the short history of our sport, I think you have to recognize that we're talking about three to four distinctly different games that I'm not sure can be realistically compared to one another. As a result, I think you can look at who dominated, and break it down to the Brumfield Era, the Hogan Era, the Yellen Era, and now the Swain Era."

- Hank Marcus

"I can't describe the level of intensity of the players in the Brumfield days. Winning meant winning at all costs. We would drill and train for literally ten to twelve hours a day, seven days a week. These guys would do ten mile runs almost every day. Maybe we didn't have the body builder pros that we would later see in the '80's and '90's, but the players were in phenomenal shape. They could regularly go three hour matches. Most of today's players would be standing around with their tongues hanging out after only a few of the marathon rallies we used to have. Those guys were so intense, I've seen Brumfield lose in a pro stop, but stay on the court afterward for hours and hours perfecting the shot that cost him the match."

- Marty Hogan

"Brumfield would come to every tournament with all these new techniques that he had just invented and perfected, so he stayed ahead of everyone else and there was no way to prepare for what he might do."

- Hank Marcus

"It's very difficult to compare the best players from each time period and select the greatest player of all time. I feel you have to look at the different players and the type of racquets used in each era to single out the great players.

Charlie Brumfield established the ultimate standard of how to play fundamentally correct in the 1970's. He employed smart serving, receiving, great shot selection, and sound center court and back court play. He mastered the physical and mental parts of the game and dominated all the players into the late 1970's. It should be noted that his game was control oriented.

Marty Hogan was the next dominating player on the tour. He was the first great player to combine both power and control. He was also the first truly athletically gifted athlete to play the game. He elevated the standard of power racquetball to the highest level. He was the star who put racquetball on the map, and set the standard for which all current power players aspire.

Mike Yellen was an equally great player to Brumfield and Hogan. Mike performed efficiently and powerfully on the court. His style was so smooth and effortless, but without the flair of Hogan and Brumfield. Unfortunately, because his game lacked the flair, his true greatness was overlooked by many racquetball observers. He was a near equal to Hogan and he went head to head with Marty over and over again. He was truly a great player. The fourth player I would put in this category of greatness is Cliff Swain. He has dominated the tour with a power game, great serving, and a true competitor's mentality. The book is still open on cliff, but he is making great strides to becoming one of the few great players of all time."

- Steve Strandemo



Steve Strandemo still the sport's ultimate guru



The always intense Dave Peck

"You cannot accurately compare the early pro days with today. It's so hard to size up such vastly different styles. Making bigger racquets changed the game forever. You have to give credit to Hogan who, at age 16, dominated the tour, changed the face of the pro game, and really is responsible for giving players any real professional status. But then there are so many other great great players, guys like Ruben Gonzalez - what can you say about somebody who has done what he has done?"

- Charlie Drake



Mike Yellen, returning to #1 before retiring

"It took something different to dominate in the '70's than it does today. The best at any sport are the ones that can accurately size up what it will take to win under given circumstances, then perfect the skills to accomplish it. Brumfield and Hogan could do that. But I have to tell you, racquetball today is at its highest level."

- Mike Yellen

"I think Charlie Brumfield has made the greatest overall contribution to the sport as a player. I can't objectively pass judgement on myself along these lines, so I have to totally throw out anything that I have done or think I've done. Second to Brumfield's accomplishments, I think there is an outstanding group of players like Steve Strandemo, Bill Schmidke, Steve Serot, Steve Keeley, Mike Yellen, Bret Harnett, Cliff Swain, and Dave Peck that have to be right up there. Beyond that elite group, I think there are tremendous players like Craig McCoy, Perry Hilecher, Ruben Gonzalez, and lots more that have definitely showed some greatness."

Marty Hogan



Cliff Swain, legend in progress

THE GREATEST

Aaron Katz

Who is the greatest? Is it Michael Jordan, Bill Russell, George Mikan or Oscar Robertson? Is it Joe Dimaggio, Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, or Barry Bonds - what about Ivan Lendl, Rod Laver, or Jimmy Connors? Many a beer has been sold over questions like these. Cutting across generational lines, new technology, and the changes in style that a sport naturally incurs over the decades, identifying the greatest turns out to be a thankless and time consuming challenge. I intend to cut through all of the vagaries of this analysis and give you my opinion of the greatest (or ten greatest) of all time.

Having been an avid fan of professional racquetball since 1982, and a touring pro since 1988 I must admit I missed several of the prime years of some of the players I will be evaluating. However, I tried to compensate for this by doing some good old fashioned muckraking and researching.

The idea for this article originated in November, 1994 when IRT Commissioner Hank Marcus, IRT Satellite Tour director Eric Muller, and several touring pros joined me in a discussion of how today's pro players would match up with the pros of yesterday. After a couple of hours of well versed arguing, I decided I needed to settle the dispute.

More than I imagined, it was a difficult task. If you were able to beam the top ten of all time to the present and play them off against each other, Cliff Swain and the top players of today's game would win in a landslide. However much of this has to do with the great increase in technology of racquets that has led to shot-making and power never before seen in the sport. So, it became necessary to bring in other criteria, including: national championships won, tournaments won, how the player fared with his rival in his prime, longevity, consistency, and finally, the impact the player had on the future of the sport. It became easy to defend the top four as the top four, and almost as easy to defend the following six as the next in line. Difficulties arose in defending the order of the top four, then in

the order of the following six. All my research and debate has left me with the following roster and defenses. I will concede some bias toward more recent players, having far more often seen and competed against them.

1. Cliff Swain

The lanky southpaw from Braintree, Massachusetts has all but sewed up his fourth National Championship. Cliff Swain's career began in 1985 when, in Tulsa Oklahoma, he won the ninth tournament he'd ever played. To prove it was no fluke, he made a statement by winning Ektelon Nationals with victories over Marty Hogan, Mike Yellen, and Gregg Peck (then the #1, #2, and #3 on the tour). While Swain's rise to the top was slower than many thought it should have been, he finally captured the #1 ranking in 1989. At that point, he looked to secure a long term contract with a major racquetball manufacturer. When the deal Swain expected was not there, his observation of the woeful state of professional racquetball and a chance meeting with Boris Becker prompt-

ed him to take a run at professional tennis.

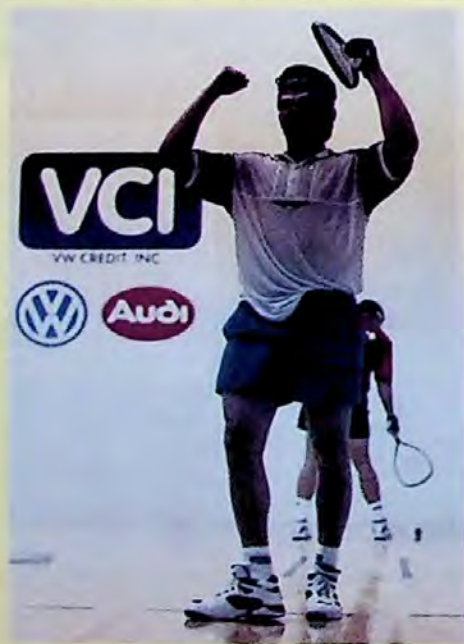
Although Swain accomplished little within tennis circles, it seems clear today that his two year hiatus set the groundwork for him to develop the mental toughness and discipline to dominate the men's professional tour. His return was not met with great success, several early round losses and some uninspired performances had many questioning whether Swain would return to his previous form. His fourteen victories in nineteen tournaments last season dispelled all doubts.

Several factors go into Swain's receiving the nod as the greatest player ever. To go with his four National Titles he has won more than 40 tournaments, second only to Hogan's 60+. Since his rookie year, Swain has always been in the top five. In addition, nobody ever dominated Swain. In his early years when concentration lapses resulted in several early round losses, his record against Hogan and Yellen was always formidable. In fact, several blowouts of Hogan late in Marty's career seemed to break the indomitable spirit of racquetball's greatest legend.

Today, Swain absolutely dominates his nearest competitors. Try this for a statistic: in the last 1 1/2 years, Swain has lost five total matches to Andy Roberts, Tim Doyle, Mike Guidry, and Drew Kachtik, the #2-#5 players on the tour (0 to Roberts, 2 to Doyle, 2 to Kachtik, and 1 to Guidry). Although difficult to measure, I anticipate Swain's changing the style of professional racquetball. Already clones such as John Ellis and Sudsy Monchik have wreaked havoc with the Swain style of no-holds-barred, "smashmouth" racquetball.

2. Mike Yellen

This was the toughest and most controversial of my top picks. Mike Yellen never dominated the way Hogan and Swain did. He won approximately 25 tournaments in a career that spanned over 13 years. However, Yellen has several other factors in his favor, including being the only player to ever win five consecutive National





titles. His analytical approach always left him ahead of the competition at season's end. And, although others won more tournaments throughout the season in a couple of Yellen's national championship years, he still ended up on top. Nobody will remember that the 1993 Bulls and 1992 Cowboys did not have the best record in the regular season, only that as did Yellen, they emerged as the best at season's end.

Another factor in Yellen's favor was that he defeated Hogan for all five national titles when Hogan was still in his prime at ages 24-28. The final accolade securing Yellen's position as #2 was the fact that in the twilight of his career when everyone had already counted him out, Yellen proved he could adapt to the new "second generation" power style of play by reaching the #1 ranking before retiring in 1992.

Yellen impacted the sport from a strategy and mental aspect as much as any other player, and although his control style is not utilized by many of the up and coming players, Yellen's use of the angles and game planning will be around forever.

3. Marty Hogan

The Cassius Clay and Babe Ruth of racquetball, Marty Hogan is unquestionably the most dynamic and exciting personality ever to play the game. Hogan's athletic ability was second to none, and his marketing flair and braggadocious style still make him the most recognizable player in the sport.

Hogan's record for longevity is second to none. From 1976-1991 he was a top 3 player and legitimate contender for the

national title. Even today, nobody has ever dominated as Hogan did in the late 1970's. However, after Dave Peck defeated Hogan for the national title in 1982, he would never again finish the season as #1 (excluding 1989 when the season was cancelled and only four events were played). Hogan out-pointed everyone else without advancing to a final, going to the semi's four times). That leaves Hogan with four National Titles and 60+ victories, a remarkable record by any standard, but his inability to defeat Yellen from 1983-87 caused him to lose the nod for #2. Whether he lacked motivation because of his tremendous financial success, or simply burned out, Hogan was unable to unseat Yellen.

Regardless, Hogan's impact on the sport is second to none. He revolutionized the power game and set the stage for generations to come to approach the game as a professional athlete. His ability to control a crowd like a conductor will always be



remembered by anyone fortunate enough to have seen him play.

4. Charlie Brumfield

I must confess, I never had an opportunity to see Charlie Brumfield play in person, as he had all but retired by the time I started. However I have heard of his legends and lore. Brumfield dominated the professional game for several seasons when the tour consisted of mostly converted paddle ball players. Brumfield should be remembered as a great champion and certainly an innovator when the sport was young, but where to put him on this list is



more of a guess on my part.

Brumfield's impact on the pro game lies most in his being the first to study the way the game was played and seek out the percentages. He represented the last generation of players that picked up racquetball as adults. Due to the changes in equipment and training techniques, the style of play has totally changed. An interesting test of his abilities would have been to have seen if he could have adapted to the tremendous changes that swept the sport in the years following his domination.

5. Dave Peck

Dave Peck's career was volatile, exciting, unique, and probably the greatest roller coaster ride ever. From 1978 to 1983 he had an unexpected rise to the top. An ex-football player from El Paso, who didn't pick up a racquet until the age of 19, Peck took the tour by storm. After being named "Rookie of the Year", Peck began his ascent, which culminated as the 1982 national champion. While competing to defend his title in 1983, a freak injury against Yellen in the Nationals resulted in a compartment syndrome which would prevent Dave from ever returning to his former level. Several tough seasons following the injury were marked by regrettable temper tantrums and fewer wins. Several lean years following his injury, and an inability to adapt to the power of players like Swain and Inoue dropped Peck a couple of notches below his nearest competitors.

Peck's impact on the sport is unquestioned. His power/control style revolutionized the stroke mechanics that are used by



Swain and several of the other top pros. He was the one who established the backhand grip rotation that is widely accepted among instructors and players of all skill levels. In addition, Peck's personality and tie-ins with Life Cycle, Nautilus, and Cybervision added much needed credibility to a fledgling professional sport.

6. Ruben Gonzalez

Ruben Gonzalez is still amazing spectators today with his unique skills and desire at the age of 43. Although he spent the majority of his career mired in the #5-#8 range, playing second fiddle to the likes of Hogan, Yellen, Peck, and Harnett, Gon-



zalez is a testament to courage and desire. He reached the pinnacle of the sport in 1988 by winning the national championship at the age of 36. Gonzalez gains points for longevity as he has never dropped out of the top eight since he burst on the scene as an unknown amateur to advance to the finals of the 1980 Ektelon Nationals before losing to Yellen.

Although his record against his rivals pales in comparison to others on this list, Gonzalez has been an inspiration to young and old alike and his impact on the sport will last for generations to come.

7. Andy Roberts

Few players have had such a distinguished career as Andy Roberts'. He methodically moved his way up the ranks with what was arguably the most successful



amateur career ever. After turning pro in 1989, he applied the same discipline and drive that catapulted him to the top of the amateur game. Roberts has finished #2 or #3 on the tour for five consecutive years and has never dropped out of the top 4. Having recovered from an off season knee surgery, Roberts is well on his way to another stellar season.

Although he has been dominated by Swain for the past few seasons, he has certainly controlled his rivalries with Doyle, Kachtik, Ray, and the rest of the IRT. A rare accomplishment, Roberts was able to dominate Hogan and Yellen during much of their last couple of seasons.

If he is unable to surpass Swain over the next couple of years he might be con-

sidered the Ernie Banks of Racquetball, the greatest player never to win "the big one". Roberts' impact on the sport is difficult to measure, his low key personality combined with his unusually large frame for a racquetball player has caused him to adopt a style with which few of today's younger players seem comfortable. However, this should not take away from Andy's 15+ tournament victories and a commitment to becoming possibly the best round player in professional racquetball today.

8. Mike Ray

One of the last remnants of the control style game, Mike Ray's stay in the top 8 has definitely crossed over generations. His career is highlighted by his National Championship year in 1991. However, Ray's ranking has varied, dropping as low as #13 in 1987 and often ranging between the #5-#8 spot. Mike has proved to be a remarkably resilient player over the years, learning to adjust to different styles and always managing to find himself among the elite of the sport.

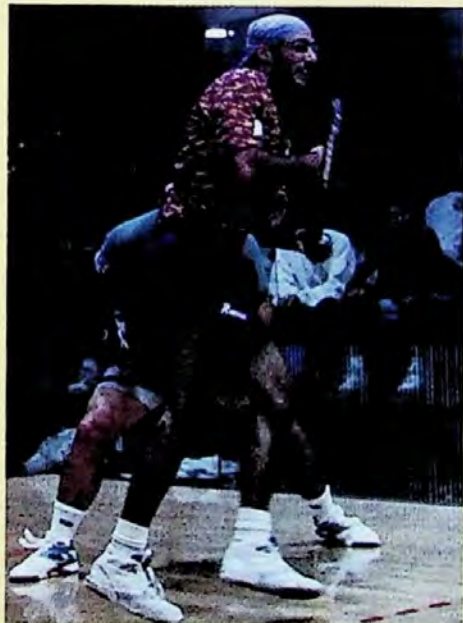
One of the most likeable players in the history of the game, his demeanor both on and off the court has made Mike one of the true assets of the pro tour. Although his style of play has all but gone the way of the T-Rex, Ray's imprint on the game is indelibly stamped via his guidance as an executive IRT board member throughout the recent boom years of the tour. Ray has come to the head of the pack as a leader and executive, bringing the vision and dedication to business that he brings to the court.



9. Bret Harnett

Bret Harnett definitely had one of the most storied careers in the history of the game. An enigma to his peers, he arguably dominated the game in the late 80's but failed to ever win a national title. Two consecutive years he missed finishing #1 by one match, thwarted once by Yellen in Burnsville, Minnesota, and then, the following year, by Hogan in Seattle. Harnett won more tournaments over that period than anyone else but failed to win the big ones.

A series of ill fated comebacks and frustrating losses over the last several seasons has tarnished an otherwise great career. Harnett will always be remembered as one of the greatest pure athletes to ever play the sport as well as the consummate gentleman on the court. His go-for-broke style of play (although at times his Achilles heel) has made him one of the most spectacular players to watch.



Harnett's impact on the sport would seem to be minimal as his phenomenal athletic ability afforded him the opportunity to play a style that few would be able to emulate.

10. Drew Kachtik

Drew Kachtik rounds out the list of top ten. Kachtik has had a perplexing career. He burst on the scene winning two events and getting as high as #2 before a season-ending injury caused him to miss nationals and finish #5 in his rookie year. Kachtik, not armed with the weapons that several other of the top players had, rode



his steely determination and gritty style of play to finish #1 in only his second year on the tour. Swain's return to the pro game combined with Kachtik's stagnation has prevented him from challenging for a national championship the last couple of

seasons. Still, Kachtik is one of the most consistent players in the game, losing only twice in the last two years before the quarterfinals.

Kachtik has been on the short end of the stick in his rivalries with Swain, Roberts, and Doyle, which does not bode well for his place in racquetball history. However, he seems to have carved out a niche for himself with his "lunch pail" never-say-die approach to the game.

Players on the bubble are Gregg Peck, Tim Doyle, Ed Andrews and Jerry Hilecher. An additional factor that was not brought into consideration was the fact that several of the players who played during the Catalina Tour in the early eighties were essentially protected from much of the great young talent, they participated in a tour that was closed to the top 12 players and only 4 regional qualifiers. How far this set back the men's pro game is difficult to measure but kudos go to Hank Marcus for revitalizing a tour that was on the verge of extinction after the politics of the mid to late 1980's.

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INTERNATIONAL RACQUETBALL TOUR

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ESPN & IRT Agree to Four Event Package

The International Racquetball Tour has announced an agreement with ESPN & ESPN II to televise four events featuring the best racquetball players in the world.

The one-hour shows will be produced by JM Productions and the IRT who have teamed up to produce the two previous ESPN telecasts in 1993 and 1994. The events will be taped in

May for airing this fall at the beginning of the racquetball season. The shows will be seen on ESPN and ESPN II and will run once a week over a month period to create continuity and growing interest. This agreement will produce the most credible and broadly seen exposure for racquetball in the history of the sport

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Baltimore, Maryland
Denver, Colorado
Atlanta, Georgia

VCI

Target Tel, Inc. Introduces The Official Phone Card of the International Racquetball Tour

TargetTel Inc. has just announced the newest addition to their line of collectible phone cards -- The Official Phone Card of the International Racquetball Tour. Proceeds from this card will go towards Fibromyalgia Research and the Tour.

This card, available April 1, allows the IRT card collector to receive 30 minutes of phone time for \$10 that can be used anywhere in the continental US. The card is automatically renewable and rechargeable at the rate of 33 cents per minute.

The Official Phone Card of the International Racquetball Tour will be a sought after item. The IRT Phonocard can be used from any touch-tone phone in the continental US, public or private, without the use of coins or other cards. This is the first of a limited edition of only 2,000 cards, its value is expected to increase substantially in the years to come.

VCI/IRT Raise \$6,000 for the Georgia Council on Child Abuse

Through the continuing efforts of Atlanta tournament director Alan Turem in conjunction with VCI over \$6,000 was raised at the 1995 VCI-ProAm for the Georgia Council on Child Abuse. Turem and VCI Region Manager Frank Petru presented the donation at a banquet held at the event. In addition the IRT donated an additional \$500 to help a great cause.

IRT Goes Online

The information superhighway just got a new vehicle speeding down its winding course. The IRT has recently signed an agreement to place tournament results, player profiles, pro tips, and product updates on the Internet.

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

- 1 Tim Doyle
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- 3 Woody Clouse
- 4 Brian Rankin
- 5 Louis Vogel
- 6 Dan Fowler
- 7 Todd O'Neil
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POLITICALLY CORRECT

By Marvin Quertermous
Managing Editor

In the 1970's we couldn't build racquetball courts fast enough. In the days of Jimmy Carter, "The Love Boat", and disco, we all played racquetball. We played so much racquetball, in fact, that we would pay by the hour to play, and consider ourselves extremely lucky if we didn't get "bumped" off the court at the end of that hour. But racquetball did not sustain the changes brought on by 1980's. Clubs branched out to embrace new trends such as weight machines, aerobics classes, and stair climbers. In most markets during the 1980's, racquetball, the sport that launched the club industry, began losing serious ground in the ongoing battle for profitable use of floor space. Those beautiful courts could easily hold more stationary bikes and tanning beds than you could shake a CBK at.

Having significant status as the only game in town, few foresaw the approaching need to maintain profitability in the growing fitness market. As a result, shortsightedness nearly killed the sport. Organizations came and went, leaving enough initials flying around to make your head spin. The pro tour closed its doors to new players and went on the road in what was perceived by many as a display of elitist snobbery. Television production standards of the time left the impression that the racquetball's fast pace made it unsuitable for TV. Publications vanished without notice. Racquet prices went right through the roof. In short, a thriving industry copped an attitude and totally forgot about the need for customer service and long term thinking. We became a discontented lot and local tournaments became the stages for our temper tantrums.

But the industry was only partly to blame. Egos and resentments at the club level ran unchecked. A nation of C players adopted a routine method of conduct toward opponents and referees that would make John McEnroe blush. We made court reservations and never showed. In a massive quest to get something for nothing, we bypassed established retailers that did deliver good customer service in favor of renegade entrepreneurs that would sell equipment out of their bags at embarrassing prices. We returned broken frames as "defective" after cracking them over court-side benches. Our discontent became such a chip on our shoulder that we rationalized the idea that the sport and every manufacturer owed us something and we as players acted as irresponsibly as the industry we blamed.

All of these combined to produce a mass exodus from the game. The numbers dropped, the bottom line on racquetball sagged, and clubs took away our courts. Then, as the picture began looking really bleak, something happened. Realizing the benefits of the sport itself, and that its unique appeal made racquetball a terrific product, a handful of visionaries saw the need to reverse the negatives, instigate some long-term thinking, and utilize the media and the industry to re-establish the profitability that would bring the programming back to the clubs, and the players back to the courts.

Today, we're fighting back for racquetball. What's more, we're not just fighting, we're cooperating. In fact, the industry is rallying together. Competing entities are looking past market share to build a bigger

market to share. The biggest indicator of the new spirit of cooperation was the recent "Racquetball Summit" held at the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association Super-show in Atlanta. Annual meeting ground for many leading industry manufacturers and the Racquet Sports Committee, this year's show saw everyone with a stake in the future of the game gather in one small room for the first time in history. The roster read like a who's who of racquetball, professional and amateur, new school and old, ranging from the enthusiastic to the skeptical, but all committed to a goal of building the game that is well within sight. For the first time, in fact, the goal is so much within sight that everyone in the room has ventured major dollars toward its realization. Picture, if you will, unlikely allies in direct competition with one another engaged in a very calm and courteous discussion of the big picture. Directors of the IRT, the AARA, the newly formed USPRO teaching organization, and The Racquet Sports Committee, top brass from each company involved in industry manufacturing, media, retailers, and many others notorious for cut-throat competition sustained the entire afternoon without the slightest bloodshed. It could only happen in 1995.

What the discussion yielded was the need to work through clubs to build participation. With a commitment for assistance from John McCarthy of the IHRSA association of clubs, the task ahead would be to utilize different avenues all aimed at filling our nation's courts with players. While this may sound obvious, it is the first time that this has been collectively espoused as the primary agenda by a group that has the

means to make it happen. Organization, communication, responsibility, and accountability all would come into play. Luke St. Onge, executive director for the American Amateur Racquetball Association chaired this edition of racquetball's version of the harmonic convergence and jumped directly into the fire by volunteering as a catalyst between the manufacturers. In fact, a "task force" was formed to initially include top guns from Ashaway, Ektelon, Head, Leader, Penn, Pro Kennex, Power Footwear, Spalding, and Wilson, and would be open to any other industry manufacturers for the purpose of building support for the club market. This support should take the form of assistance for clubs in building successful racquetball programming, providing forum for communication in both directions, and extending visibility for the sport.

In terms of visibility, the pro tour is off and running. According to International Racquetball Tour commissioner Hank Marcus, "With the tour's alliances with **KILLSHOT** Magazine in 1991 and with ESPN in 1993, we've brought racquetball back to the general public for the first time since the early 1980's. Would-be players' ability turn on racquetball on television and pick up racquetball on the newsstands will

branch out even farther in a few weeks with pro tour information and instruction available on the Internet. While the new task force is the next necessary step and I have extended the support of the pro tour, the IRT and its allies V.W. Credit, Head Athletic, Spalding, and Penn have gone out on the limb financially for some years now to actively reach out to the public. Only now are we beginning to see the benefits for those efforts. The tour's commitment to the clubs has begun with this year's successful implementation of the IRT Satellite tour, which brings top pros to areas that may not have had the benefit in the past to see live pro racquetball."

Spalding's Jeff Miller summed it up, "Spalding took the plunge a few years ago with racquetball, and will be right there with it tomorrow." Penn's Amy Wishingrad expressed a similar sentiment. Head featured its racquetball headliner Cliff Swain and some of the very best of the IRT in a live presentation and on the big screen throughout the entire show (the largest sporting goods show in the world).

Rob Ahrendorf, director of marketing for Ektelon has whole heartedly picked up the torch for solidifying the sport. In no uncertain terms, he expressed a commit-

ment to the growth of the sport in a candid conversation on the day following the racquetball summit. Ahrendorf reiterated the need for unity and communication in the process and has kept fax machines buzzing ever since with up-to-date-ideas. These ideas included survey results that seemed to echo findings of **KILLSHOT** in respects that racquetball's greatest asset was its value for fitness, and that cost was not a factor limiting its popularity.

And just what is that popularity? In the spring of 1993, Sportstyle industry publication quoted American Sports Analysis findings of total players nationwide of 9.3 million and holding, with 2.4 million and growing among those playing frequently (25 or more times per year). A recent issue of *Tennis Buyers Guide* heralded racquetball as a profitable merchandising niche during the tennis industry's dry seasons.

What does all this mean for the player? If this group can work cooperatively, anything can happen. It is only a start, but a very important one. The most comforting aspect of which is the amount of dollars that each participant in Atlanta has riding on success in building the sport. For the racquetball enthusiast, this can only be good news.

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Zen and the Art of Shot Selection

Woody Clouse

A great deal of material is available today regarding shot selection. We could easily invest hours debating the merits of setting -up vs. cutting-off in a given scenario. The outcome would certainly reinforce the idea that variables such as your opponent's position, his ability, and his coverage tendencies should all influence your choices. Last year, Jack Newman reminded us that where we take the ball out of the air (its height at impact) should further limit our intelligent options (America's Most Wanted Instructional, **KILLSHOT** #12, Winter 1994).

While all these specifics are very important, I often think back to one of my earliest coaches who liked to cut through to the simplest components of any endeavor. All of his shot selection wisdom could be summed up in two simple "Zen-like" rules:

A) Hit a pass when your opponent is in front of you (he considered ceiling balls passes, as many of the early players did at the transformation from paddleball to racquetball)

B) Hit a pinch when your opponent is behind you.

And all of his intentions with these rules came from two simple ideas:

A) Killshots present themselves often enough, no need to risk skips and plums by constantly shooting for the low boards

B) The goal is to control center court, if you do, you will win

Now I admit that when there is time to analyze and practice, the intricacies make things much more complicated. But in the heat of a rally, it's pretty hard to beat that simplistic approach. I have to admit that I have never beaten myself using his simple techniques.

Dominating center court should always be your first priority with your shot selection. If you forget this and force badly-timed kills, you will often beat yourself and give your opponents plenty of skips and

left-up balls. With this in mind, you will noticeably reduce the pressure on your own back, while turning up the heat on your opponent. In controlling the center, you have a much greater margin for error, while your opponent must hit out of position, hit on the run, or find himself unable to return the shot. Ideally, your opponent must constantly play catch-up during a rally, or dig balls from the corners, both of which are the result of well timed passes.

If you find yourself in front, consider the pinch. Never ever hit the pinch without complete confidence that it will end the rally. There are only three possible results from an offensive shot attempt:

1) the shot will be left up

2) the shot will skip

3) the shot will end the rally

A skip is your worst enemy, but a left-up ball is far worse on a pinch than on a pass. A left-up pass will still allow you center court control, while a left-up pinch forces you out (and your opponent into) center court.

All those years ago, I wondered why we never worked on rollouts. Now with sixteen years more experience, I understand. In a game where so much has changed, much has stayed the same. When you have tried everything that is high tech and radical, maybe it's time to inject a little "old school" into your game.

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news from the hood

Playing Here in Allentown

A snowy weekend in Allentown, Pennsylvania didn't stop 104 racquetball players from converging on the Allentown Racquet Club for the 1995 Icicle Open.

Results:

M Open: Glenn Leib, John Barrett	M Open Dou: Mike Schadler/Joe Minninger
M A: Mike Treacy	M A Dou: Eric Gianelle/Curtis Schwartz
M B: Mike Treacy	M B Dou: Danny Douglass/Mike Rawlings
M C: Danny Douglass	W A Dou: Fran Baker, Deanann Hinkin
M Nov: Mark Longenback	Mixed Open Dou: Aimee Roehler/Ron Disora
M 30/35: Glenn Leib	Mixed A Dou: Jim Wright/Chris Fulmer
M 40: Frank Pomarico	
M 45: Ron Disora	
M 50: Len Wilson	
M 55: Don Davies	
Women: Nancy Davis	

WRA 3rd Annual North Park Open

The 3rd annual North Park open was held in early January at the North Park Racquet and Athletic Club in North Park, Washington.

Results:

Men Open
Dan Hardan (Edmonds)
Shane Dodge (Idaho)

Men A
Mick Cannon (Spokane)
Justin Campbell (Spokane)

Men B
Lupe Aguirre (Kennewick)
Lyle Theurer (Elk)

Men C
Clay Gatens (Spokane)
Jon Keogh (Burien)

Men 35+ Open/A
John Lockridge (Spokane)
Jim Peters (Idaho)

Men 35+B/C
Rob Thornton (Richland)
Dave Lemmons (Bothell)

Men 45+
Bob Stoyko (Spokane)
Mick Cannon (Spokane)

Men Open/A Doubles
Dean Sowards (Mead)
Bill Sutherland (Spokane)

Erin Brannigan (Idaho)
Bobby Dunn (Idaho)

Men B/C Doubles
Bob Mackie (Spokane)
Dave Robinson (Spokane)

David Clutinger (Spokane)
Clay Gatens (Spokane)

Mixed Advanced Doubles
Andrew Lewis (Kennewick)
Karin Sobotta (Kennewick)

Dianne Pratt (Renton)
Rob Lybbert (Yakima)

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Photo by John Foust

Prestige Sportswear by Ruben Gonzalez

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In the 15 years since the formation of the WPRA Tour, Lynn Adams and Michelle (Gilman) Gould have split eleven national championships. In fact, only two other players, Heather McKay with three and Caryn McKinney with one have ever won a WPRA national title. While female players such as Peggy Steading and Shannon Wright showed greatness in the earlier "pre-professional" days, these four represent a very elite club indeed. As with the men's pros, the argument could be made regarding the best ever in favor of either

of the two most dominant players



Heather McKay

depending on the criteria used to analyze. In the end, Adams faced a seemingly endless string of adversities to dominate right through the games major changes, while the jury is still out on an invincible Michelle Gould who from all indications may dominate the game for the rest of life as we know it.



Lynn Adams

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Michelle Gould



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Appetizers

I've gotten better at making gets off the back wall, is there anything I can do now to make more offensive shots out of these gets?

When you are making gets off the back wall, it's easy to try to take the shot from in front of the ball and simply reaching behind it. Instead, practice positioning your body behind the ball more like you would on a good set up so that you are moving your weight forward as you hit the ball. From this, you should gain both control and power. You will be allowing your body to assist with the work instead of "muscling" it with your arm. The position may be tricky to reach at first, but when you get used to it, it will feel much more natural.

Drew Kachtik, IRT #5

Today's Special?

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Entrees

As I get better at controlling center court, I'm finding myself in front of my opponent more often, and in good position for the pinch. I know that it's a good choice, but I am having trouble adjusting my swing to hit it effectively. What should I do?

Use the same swing motion that you would for other shots, just try to contact the ball deeper in your hitting zone. When you have found a natural and effective swing, you don't want to change it any more than you have to. Besides, a special swing for the pinch would telegraph your shot choice every time. By taking the ball deeper in your zone, your swing will easily create the necessary force and direction for the proper pinch. Remember the correct pinch hits low, side wall then front wall.

Mike Guidry, IRT #4

How can I improve my anticipation in so that I can start covering ground before my opponent begins his swing?

You can't. You may have some good guesses based on his habits and his stance, but that's all they are - guesses. Don't confuse guessing with anticipation. You are almost always much better off working for good center court position right up until your opponent actually swings. Only from his movement during his actual swing can you realistically begin to anticipate the resulting path of the ball.

First work on the tools necessary for effectively holding center court like efficient jockeying for position, proper clearing for his shots, and accurate shooting. You can almost never go wrong working for the center. Next try some speed drills to make better gets and set ups once you do learn where he is going with the ball. Then ask me what you can learn from his swing about where he is hitting.

Aaron Katz, IRT #8

What can I do when I'm playing someone with powerful service returns? My drive serves don't seem to shake him. My lob serves help, but when he cuts them off, he just Tee's off on them. Any suggestions?

Your drives are probably just what he wants. With your lobs, if he has plenty of time to set up, it may be even better for him. You want to turn that set-up time into mess-up time by increasing his anxiety and frustration.

Lobs timed in such a way to throw off his usual timing will help. That is, keep mixing up the pace of the lobs and the height of their arc. Keep the ball right on the side wall to make it even tougher. Go to his backhand for an added edge. Go deep to make him have to work harder for the good shot and keep you in center court.

Finally, one of the best ways to keep him back and off his timing is to just nick the side wall with your lob serve. Properly executed, the ball just sort of brushes against or "nicks" the side wall as it travels back on its path to the first bounce. With the ball hanging close to the wall and gently contacting it, you have greatly reduced his chances of effectively cutting it off. This alone will be frustrating for someone trying to rush in and blast.

You want your ball to nick the side wall higher the farther forward it hits, then progressively lower for deeper in the court. Ideally, always go for the low deep ones for best effect and maximum frustration for the big shooters.

Your serve kicking too far off the side wall, or coming way out off the back wall will nullify any effects you may have intended. Otherwise, this one just in the "nick" of time should back off the most aggressive receiver and prevent his heroic cut off attempts.

Mike Ray, IRT #6



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Taking Care of Business

Industry news and announcements

Your Show of Shows

If you play racquetball, by now you have probably heard of the Supershow. What is it? Where did it come from? What does it all mean? The Supershow is held in Atlanta each year in early February and is the largest trade show for sporting goods of all kinds in the world. The event began in 1986 with 700 exhibitors, 55,000 attendees, and 200 members of the press. The 1995 show featured more than 2,800 exhibitors, more than 110,000 attendees, and 900 members of the press. Owned and operated by the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, the Supershow has become the gathering grounds for the racquetball industry for commerce and politics. For the player, it marks the unveiling of new ideas and

new goodies. This year's show presented and exceptionally rich collection of attitudes and technology.

HEAD-liners

The top IRT pros including #1 Cliff Swain were a huge hit at the Sporting Goods Super Show in Atlanta bringing racquetball more exposure than it has ever received.

Thirty of the pros made an appearance at the HEAD Athletic booth followed by an autograph session. HEAD Athletic is the official Sportswear and Footwear of the IRT.

An Assault for Every Game Style!

Spalding has outdone themselves with the expansion of the successful Assault line into four unique frames comprising the new Assault series. The Official Racquet of the International Racquetball Tour now appears with dazzling graphics and among the four present a selection of features designed to suit a very diverse array of players. Early reports are a big thumbs up from the tour and most everyone else lucky enough to get their hands on early models. Spalding's Jeff Miller explained, "Spalding's prominence as the official racquet of the IRT has become a tremendous success for both the company and the tour. The new series just presents something better for every type of player."

Green with Envy

Penn Racquet Sports continues to tighten its bonds with the IRT with invitations for the pros to spend some time at Penn's Phoenix based headquarters in April. Penn also unveiled a huge inflatable Pro Penn Ball Can at the Shop N Save Pro Am in Pittsburgh. It seems the green balls are fast becoming everybody's ball of choice.

Soak it Up

Forten string company of Poway California has added some great stuff to its exceptional list of strings and accessories including some new grip designs featuring a

raised ridge for better grip traction. Forten's Bill Bishop also presented one of the best new goodies unveiled at the Supershow in a reasonably-priced super absorbent device called the Sportsorb. Immediately dubbed by racquetball players as the "dive towel", it can absorb more perspiration from players' bodies and the court floor than a sponge the size of a Volkswagen (or thereabouts). What's more, the thing slips conveniently in shorts' pockets and when chilled slightly prior to playing provides a welcomed cooling towel.

Numbers Crunch

With all eyes still on Ektelon after the big move to Princeton, New Jersey, the company with the biggest share of the racquetball pie has leaped into wholeheartedly into the movement to promote the sport on all levels. Stressing communication among all groups with a vested interest in the sport, Ektelon initiated a survey of players, sales reps, and dealers to learn more about the state of the game. Among the findings were the recommendation by 61% of respondents to institute school programs to build interest among young people, and responses regarding players' losing interest in the game as 35%-other sports interests, 23%-lack of time, and 20%-lack of partners. Ektelon Director of marketing Rob Ahrensford expressed particular emphasis on the finding that the number one appealing aspect of racquetball is its health benefit.

Grass Roots

Amidst an array of high tech paraphernalia and lab coats at the Supershow, the San Diego based Pro Kennex presented its new Kinetic Technology along with plans to venture farther into grass-roots programming.

New Kid on the Block

Gemini Racquetball has announced its debut in the high end racquet arena. Ron Halloran, president of the Richmond, Virginia based company described Gemini as a special racquet for the accomplished player, customized individually to that player's standards. At a quick first look, the frame made a good impression.

Take a Bite Out of Racquetball

Ashaway Tine and Twine has announced the introduction of an new high-powered multifiber racquetball string called Powerkill Pro. The Rhode Island based Ashaway promises great durability and exceptional "bite".

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Long Island Open

The 18th annual Long Island Open, sponsored by LITE Beer from Miller and PENN continued to be one of the premier events in the country, with 750 entries from 13 states. This years LI Open held at the Sportset Clubs in Syosset and Rockville Centre was sanctioned by the International Racquetball Tour as a satellite event. The men's open was won by Rich Baer who outlasted Dave Cardillo in an exciting five game match. Laura Fenton won her second women's open title in as many attempts, this year over Roz Olson.



Dave Cardillo, Rich Baer

Results:

M Open: Rich Baer, Dave Cardillo, Danny DeLlacera
 M 25+: John Rodriguez, David Barnes, Brian Kleiman
 M 30+: Bob Haab, Bill Serafin, Dave Dikman
 M 30+ Int.: Louis Bates, Stuart Kitain, Bob Cutler
 M 35+ John Peterson, Steve Schwarz, Walter Schramm
 M 40+: Jim Young, Tom Jaklitsch, Steve King
 M 40+ Int.: Paul Miller, John Laforce, Peter Allen
 M 45+ : Frank Ciociola, Mark Daigle, Harold O'Neil
 M 50+: John Mootz, Les Barbanell, Ron Halloran
 M 55+: Ron Johnson, Charlie Garfinkel, Luis Alvarez
 M 60+: Louis Berson, Emil Kuenzler, Mar-

tin Silverstein
 M A: Roland Pedrazza
 M AA: Todd Felicia
 M B: Russ Bonnano
 M Beg.: Jack Warren
 M C: Scott Makosiej
 M CC+: Ed Henry
 M Nov.: Feroz Ali

W Open: Laura Fenton, Roz Olson, Randy Friedman
 W 30+: Anita MFaldonado
 W AA: B.J. Ehrgott
 W A: Marcia Hartz
 W B: Debbie Fiordilino
 W C: Mary Flynn
 W CC: Ana Blumenau
 W Nov: Kristin Cheng

M 18-: Stewart Jaz
 M 16-: Ben Williams
 M 14-: Justin Carey
 M 12-: Scott Fisher
 M 10-: Gregory Freedman

Parkland Medical Tourney Raises \$30,000 for Prenatal Care

Manchester, New Hampshire was host to the International Racquetball Tour's Satellite Series this past January. 330 racquetball players converged on the IKKA in Manchester for the Parkland Medical Center's Parkland Open. The event, sponsored by Parkland Medical Center and Matthew Thornton Health Plan, raised over \$30,000 to benefit Greater Derry Prenatal Services, Inc., a non-profit organization that provides complete prenatal health care and educational services to low-income women.

Results:

M Open: Jacques Demers, George Delaney
 W Open: Laura Fenton, Janet Grimaldi

Men A: Darin Bryce, Dan Lavasseur
 Women A: Gail Guy, Dana Harvey

Men B: Doug Forbes, Al Thibault
 Women B: Ali Corvino, Dana Harvey

Men C: Doug Forbes, Tim O'Neil
 Women C: Vicky Branch, Kathy Kirmes

Men D: Rod Greenwood, Robert Baldwin
 Women D: Louise Dufresne, Margaret Donovan

Men N: Brian Hathaway, Bill Keating
 Women N: Barbara Gradley, Darlene Skladony

Men 25+: Jere Spugnardi, Bill Higton
 Men 30+: Dave Cardillo, Sylvain Robillard
 Men 35+: Richard Berube, Richard Larivee
 Men 40+: John Varrill, Claude Paul
 Men 45+: Claude Paul, Ray DeJesus

Doubles

Men Open: Demers/Green
 Women Open: Smith/Mahaney
 Mixed Open: Lukeman/Fenton

Men A: Brewster/Campagna
 Women A: Dyer/Hamilton

Men B/C: Boucher/Cassevant
 Mixed B/C: Pike/Liebel

Roberts over Ray in Mid-America Invitational

Paducah Kentucky, home of **KILLSHOT** Magazine, added its traditional Mid America Invitational to the list of events for the inaugural season for the IRT Satellite Tour.

Western Baptist Hospital, corporate sponsor for the Mid America again hosted the late winter slugfest that has featured appearances by many of the past and current touring pros. Turning up this year at the hospital's Nautilus Racquet & Swim Club Facility were the likes of #2 ranked Andy Roberts, # 6 ranked Mike Ray, long-time intercollegiate king Tim Sweeney, Canada's #2 ranked Simon Roy, SMSU's Alan Engle, and the entire University of Memphis team.



Tim Sweeney serves to Andy Yambrick in pro division action.

Results:

Pro Division
Andy Roberts
Mike Ray

Men A
Hector Bernal
Dodd Gingenbach

Men B
Jeff Arnett
James Simmons

Men C
Rich Rollins
Phil Singer

Men D
Mike Austin
Norman Spain

Men 35+ A
Donnie Wood
Larry Liles

Men 35+B/C
Tom Pappas
Wayne Hoffman

Women B
Deb Tarbox
Toni Belote



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