

The Magazine of Professional Racquetball

KILLSHOT

Fall 1995

Ray



Doyle



Swain



Grading the Pros

Ankle Sprains
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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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Clockwise from top right: John Ellis;
Louis Vogel; Tony Jelso and friends;
Aaron Katz; Cliff Swain, Mike
Guidry, Tim Doyle; Mike Engle



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Tour

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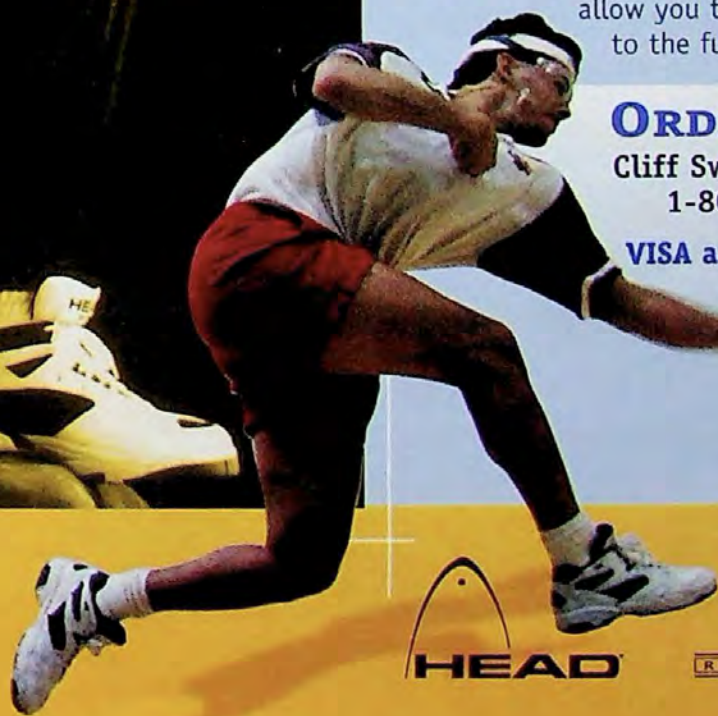
Let Cliff share with you his secrets to smart Court Strategy and Positioning as well as the Mental part of the game where you will certainly gain THE WINNING EDGE! As a **Four-Time World Champion** Cliff will show you the Drills and Conditioning it will take to elevate your game to the highest possible level.

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SHORT SERVES

Who's the Baby?

This new bundle of joy belongs to one of the players on one of the professional tours. We think the resemblance is a give-away (maybe its because we know who it is). But just to make things interesting here's what we're going to do: We are going to give a **KILLSHOT** *Better Read than Dead* T-Shirt to the first person who correctly identifies this boy child. Just FAX in your guess to (502) 441-7724, after midnight, November 30, 1995. The first correct response gets the shirt and our undying admiration as an astute observer.

Players from either pro tour or their families aren't eligible for this fabulous prize. All responses must be sent by FAX. Void where prohibited by law.

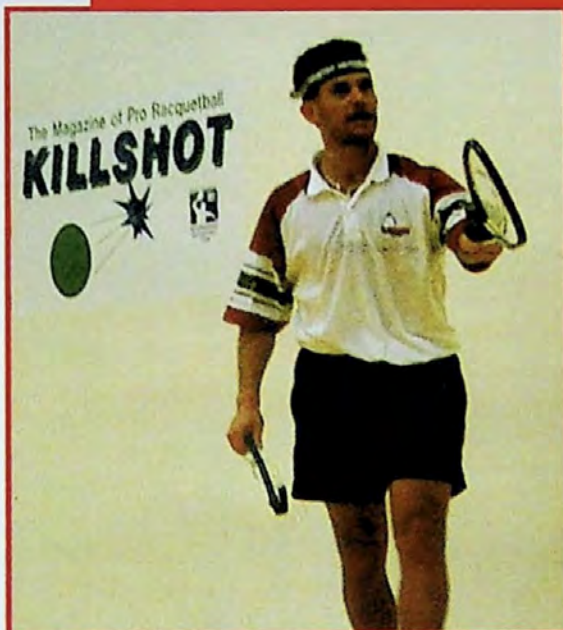
Oh yeah, almost forgot. The lobster in the photo could be taken as a clue.



Pump up

IRT young lions Kelly Gelhaus (red shirt) and Tony Jelso (green shirt) found some time for some hoop (and some clowning) with some new friends. The up and coming players from the Little Rock Athletic Club got Jelso and Gelhaus to play a little round-ball between matches in one of the ESPN tournaments.

Come on, guys, don't you think there is just a little bit of a height advantage?



Contempt of Court?

OK, let's see, the pros have no appeals, no linesmen, and the official's call is final. The days of excessive appeals, whining, and temper tantrums all seem like only a bad dream of a forgotten time. The result is more focus on play and less on arguing. In fact, arguing by the pros is simply no longer tolerated. Dealing with the official is a practice in patience. Getting one's point across now requires significant diplomacy and a pretty solid sense of humor. Two of most tactful (not to mention most entertaining) veterans of the creative lobbying technique are Cliff Swain and Mike Ray, captured here in a rare moment of gentle persuasion from the recent Stockton pro stop.

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

"Nice Serve Cliff!"
[Wow!]

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

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

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

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

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

"Nice Serve Cliff."
[Guess again!]

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

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

"Nice Serve Cliff."
[This Sucks!]

"Nice Serve Cliff."
[I suck!]

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

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

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

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

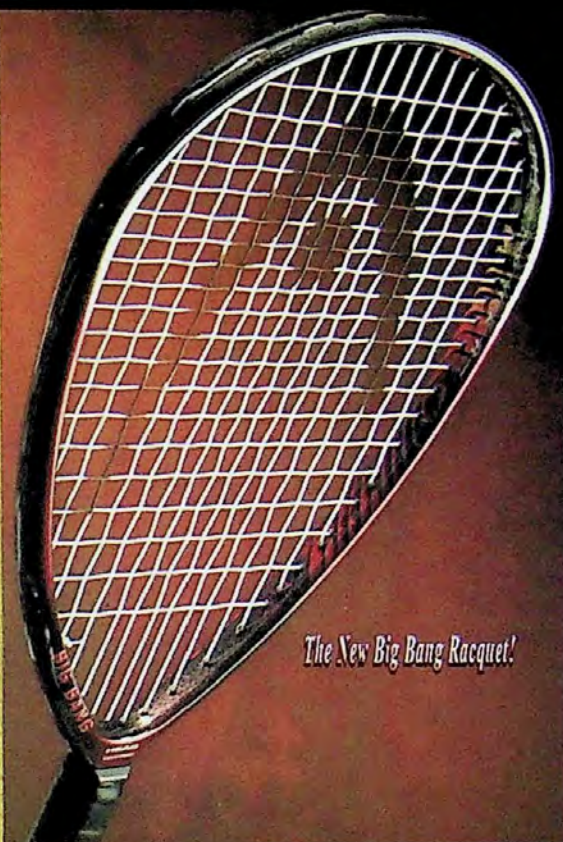


CLIFF SWAIN

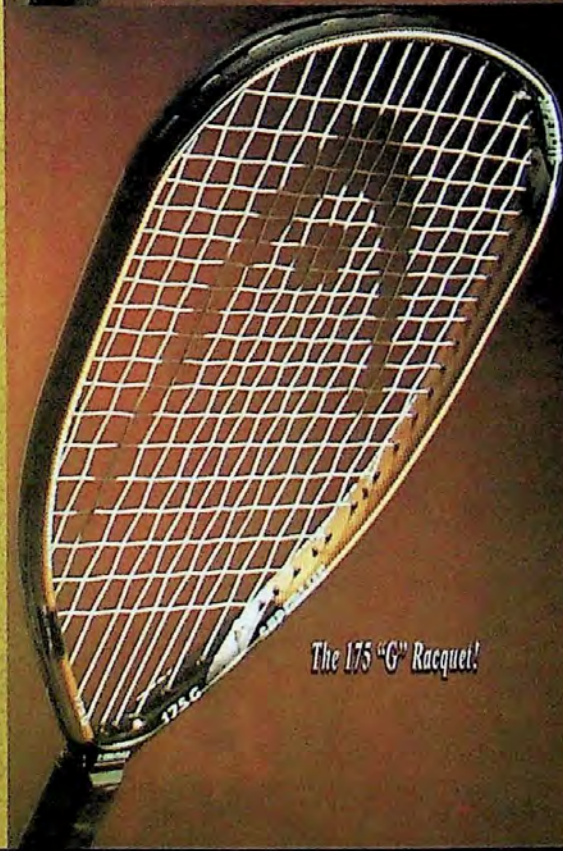
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Girls, Girls, Girls

Has a nice ring to it doesn't it? I guess technically it should be Women, Women, Women, but it was just too difficult to pass up the opportunity to use Girls, Girls, Girls in a headline.

So what's all the fuss about, anyway? Well it seems that IRT Commissioner Hank Marcus (I've always wanted to ask him if he had that neat bat symbol to shine at the night sky) will now be Commissioner of the women's professional tour as well. The reorganized pro tour will be called the WIRT (Women's International Racquetball Tour).

The women's tour has had a steady decrease in pro stops the last few years and was in desperate need of an energetic boost. Marcus is just what the doctor ordered. During his watch the IRT has grown from a six-stop Men's Professional Racquetball

Association to an International Racquetball Tour with over 23 scheduled events, including tournaments in Chile, France, and Japan; Rule changes have been implemented that make the game more exciting and dramatic; Tour sponsorships have blossomed in what even industry manufacturers had considered barren territory; Corporate sponsorships have taken hold in the form of the VCI Challenge Cup Series; Players were made to decide whether they were going to play as professionals or as amateurs; An entertaining package of ESPN broadcasts have proved that high quality coverage of professional racquetball is not only possible but has an anxious, enthusiastic audience; A satellite tour of events has been created that boasts over 50 events across the country; a pro ball has been developed and is selling across the country

at a phenomenal rate; The official product list is growing like a weight lifter on steroids.

Already the WIRT is showing signs of positive growth. A corporate sponsor is interested in underwriting the tour. More stops are being scheduled. The whole atmosphere and attitude has suddenly taken on a positive turn.

Why is Marcus so valuable? For one thing he has staying power in a spot that has traditionally been a temporary position. He has proven to be a capable negotiator, and a credible voice in a sport that has a history of lacking credible, believable spokespersons.

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Passing Shots

Fighting Back

It started slowly. First it was wallyball. They took away a court or two during prime time and eight people would play this form of volleyball on the courts. Then it was aerobic. Except this time the court was lost for good. Carpet was installed on the floor and mirrors placed where the side walls used to be. Next came the weight machines and all the cardiovascular equipment with the bells and whistles. Suddenly the ten courts became seven and this trend continued all over the nation.

At the time racquetball manufacturers were busy building those racquets with space age materials. Players were purchasing those \$150-\$200 racquets without hesitation. While the number of players had decreased, sales were up because the hard core players were spending more money. But things have changed over the last couple of years. A person buys a \$200 racquet and he or she hesitates before buying next year's model.

And with the courts being replaced by non-racquet related activities, the manufacturers began feeling the pinch.

Today they are putting their resources together and trying to educate the club owner. In essence the manufacturers are ready to lobby the club owners. Getting the manufacturers together in one room is one thing and getting them to agree on a course of action is another thing. Here is how Commissioner Norm For A Day sees it. First off, this is a tough task. It is a tough task to get competitors to fraternize much less agree on the same course of action. That is why it's tough for the UN to wage a war -- there are too many generals. Therefore it is imperative that there is one common goal. The task is how to stop club owners from converting courts. If one uses logic it's really not too difficult. Racquetball players are undoubtedly your most loyal patrons. The retention rate of a racquetball player is high. Why? Because the racquetball player has fun when he or she works out. Generally, those who work out on weights or do the treadmills get tired of the routine after a few weeks and their New Year's resolution fades away by March. Thus, the club owner has to spend more advertising dollars to replace that member. The club owner has to see how racquetball makes money. When a club has a successful Thursday night league with 100 or more people in attendance, the beer is pouring at the lounge. The club owner needs to see this and have it drummed into his head that racquet-

ball players are making him money. He has to see examples of tournaments becoming cash cows. The club owner also has to be taught the how to's of running tournaments and leagues. Osmosis has been the way of the past. The manufacturers are planning to put together a video and combine that with the efforts of the AARA's club program, hopefully we will see conversion of the aerobic rooms back to their original space.

Potpourri

I was really shocked to see all the letters to the editor in the AARA's magazine in reference to the ad placed by Ektelon. The company used a condom in its ad and asked readers "Do you play safe?" There were about 20 letters. Quite frankly I didn't know there were that many readers...I complimented Luke St. Onge in my last column and he sent me a nice letter. I assumed it was nice because I couldn't read his handwriting. But their last issue depicted why the magazine will always be associated with "amateurism". Tom Slear's article on the pro tour was about as one-sided as they come. It blasted Marty Hogan, John Delaney, and made Tom Cavallaro as the knight on the white horse who tried to revive the men's tour in the 1980's but was shunned by the establishment. Journalism 101 teaches you to attempt to interview those that are being blasted. It is called fair

play...The women, finally tired of those six-stop pro seasons, are letting men's pro honcho Hank Marcus give it a shot. We will find out shortly if they are coachable. It is tough to let go of the control, but when the money was so measly the past few years, it made the decision a bit easier...ESPN II which airs the men's pro tour is great for the West coast. It comes on at 10 pm. For those on the East coast the three hour time difference means it's time to set those VCR timers...You gotta love that Penn ad--If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the court.



LETTERS

Video

I have been reading one of your articles written by Aaron Katz, called "Being The Best You Can Be." Part of the article refers to Fundamentals. In particular, Stroke Mechanics.

Where can a beginner find books, video tapes, articles on the basic stroke mechanics? I need a good source of understanding the basic stroke mechanics and how to develop additional strokes, such as the splat, pinch, and pass shots with which to develop a practice routine.

Any advice you can give would be greatly appreciated.
S. Cray

This issue contains ads from a couple of sources for video instruction. Also check out the update on videos in TCB page 42-43.

Grass Roots

In this spring's edition of **KILL-SHOT** Magazine, Aaron Katz stated that "The AARA certainly has to bear some of the burden" for the problems of "grass roots" racquetball. He maintains that the AARA incorrectly focuses on the "Olympic picture" to provide opportunities for advanced players. The fantastic job the AARA does with its adult and junior national teams spreads racquetball throughout the planet! Also, the "Olympic picture" will expand the perception of racquetball to the general public and media as it has done for other sports.

I believe that changes at the "grass roots" should and must come from those of us who play the game, compete in tournaments and now have children old enough to play. If ten percent of today's players took their children to compete in tournaments, organized junior playdays, etc., the debate over responsibility for growth in racquetball would become a mute point.

Each individual player needs to take the time to introduce this game to their children. I realize that kids today have a variety of sports opportunities. This is not a

situation, however, where children need to choose between commitments. Introduce your child. Fit it into his/her life and yours. They will then have background in a sport that they can pursue for the rest of their adult lives. Racquetball will grow when parents take the time to introduce their children to this great sport!

H. Brannigan
Sagle, Idaho

In praise of Engel

As you know, I am the Director of the Spalding/IRT Super Series based in New Jersey. I am very fortunate to meet and know so many of the best people involved in the sport of racquetball, from players of all levels to manufacturers and promoters.

Recently, at the Spalding/IRT Warren Open, I had the privilege of meeting an outstanding player out of Bethesda, Maryland, Mike Engel. While it was a great pleasure to watch a player of Mike's caliber and sportsmanship, it was what happened after the event that earned Mike my deep respect.

After playing throughout the entire event and reaching the finals of both singles and doubles, and while the club emptied and the tournament staff was shutting down, Mike was found on a court with two juniors who had participated in the event, giving them tips, pointers, and instruction for more than an hour!

We can all learn an important lesson from Mike's actions. It is what this sport so desperately needs! If we all take just a few minutes to help a beginner or encourage an intermediate player to jump to the next level, there is no way the sport of racquetball will ever fade!

Lisa Gaertner
New Jersey Court Sports

Goof Proof?

In the Summer issue two photos on pages 18 and 22 were taken by Shane Reeves of the Multnomah Athletic Club in Portland, Oregon. The credit line was omitted. Also in the list of pro rankings on page 25 Hank Minardo's name was misspelled.

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Stroke Mechanics



Forehand & Backhand

By Fran Davis
US National Team Coaching Staff

Stroke mechanics, court position, shot selection, shots of the game, and serves are all components of the physical part of racquetball. In teaching I like to use the concept of building your game as if you were building your dream house. It is a step by step process in which one step is dependent on the previous one and you begin building from the ground up. The end result is that your game is structurally sound.

Strokes are the foundation on which you will build your racquetball dream house and you want to be able to count on your strokes. Without effective consistent strokes your game could be erratic and you will be unable to reach your true potential.

The basic strokes, backhand and forehand, can be broken down into three distinct phases. Phase One is grip and preparation. Phase Two is the actual stroke.

Phase Three is the follow through. The forehand and backhand are similar in many ways but three major differences in the strokes should be emphasized. The grip, the step, and the upper body rotation will each be different in the backhand and the forehand.

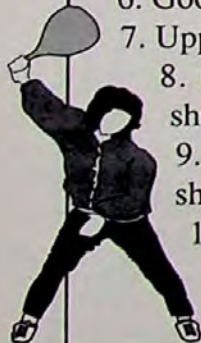
The Grip

In most situations you real-



Forehand Grip and Preparation

1. Grip: shake hands with racquet. "V" on top part of racquet & no part of hand or finger off the racquet.
2. Open stance
3. Square to side wall
4. Feet a little wider than shoulder width apart
5. Knees flexed & relaxed
6. Good power base
7. Upper body erect and shoulders level
8. Racquet up -- elbow in line with shoulder or higher
9. Upper body slightly rotated (hitting shoulder points to back corner)
10. Weight evenly distributed
11. Eyes on ball



Backhand Grip and Preparation

1. Grip: from the forehand grip turn your hand 1/8" toward the backwall
2. Closed stance
3. Square to side wall
4. Feet a little wider than shoulder width apart
5. Knees flexed & relaxed
6. Good power base
7. Upper body erect and shoulders level
8. Racquet up -- racquet at least as high as shoulder or higher
9. Upper body rotated (hitting shoulder points to side wall & back faces front wall)
10. Weight evenly distributed
11. Eyes on ball

Forehand Stroke

1. Step toward front wall -- weight transfer
2. Leg & hip rotation
3. Back leg bends at 90°, back foot rotates on ball on foot
4. Upper body moves -- lats, shoulders, elbow, racquet
5. Swing: flat & level
6. Hitting arm: full extension from body to maximize power (elbow away from body)
7. Contact point: big toe, inner thigh, below knee of lead foot
8. Wrist cocked back, then snap through
9. Non-hitting arm begins to pull through, used for balance



Backhand Stroke

1. Step at a 45° angle toward front corner
2. Leg & hip rotation
3. Back leg bends at 90°, back foot rotates on ball on foot
4. Upper body moves -- lats, shoulders, elbow, racquet
5. Swing: flat & level
6. Hitting arm: full extension from body to maximize power (elbow away from body)
7. Contact point: big toe, inner thigh, below knee of lead foot
8. Wrist cocked back, then snap through
9. Non-hitting arm follows hitting arm, used for balance



ly want to change your grip from the forehand to the backhand grip so the racquet head is flat and level on contact.

The Step

You really want to step at a 45-degree angle on the backhand rather than straight ahead as with the forehand because your hitting arm is now on the front side of your body for the backhand, unlike on the backside of your body for the forehand. As you step, your hips begin to immediately open and if you step straight ahead they will open too early and your hitting zone will be too far out in front of you. In this situation most of your balls would be pulled cross-court more than 90% of the time. Step at a 45-degree angle to prevent this from happening and your hitting zone will be back to your big toe/inner thigh.

The Upper Body Rotation

The upper body rotation on the backhand is extreme because, once again, your hitting arm is on the front side of your body. The shoulder of your hitting arm should be pointing toward the side wall and your back should be toward the front wall. You coil and then uncoil for maximum power.

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These fundamental techniques for the forehand and backhand strokes will add more control, power, accuracy, and consistency to your stroke.



The illustrations were computer generated from actual photographs, taken at different angles. This makes accurate representation of the proper footwork difficult. Remember, for example, when hitting a forehand, the front foot should point to the front corner through the swing, not the side or front wall.

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Photo by John Foust

Backhand Follow Through

1. Weight back to even
2. Toe of front foot is perpendicular to side wall & toe of back foot points toward front corner, on ball of foot
3. Belly button & shoulders face front corner to front wall
4. Shoulder level, upper body erect
5. Racquet moves across body at least 180° from point of contact & head of racquet points to backwall after wrist snap
6. Non-hitting arm: comes completely around to front of body
7. Hold pose, totally balanced



Forehand Follow Through

1. Weight back to even
2. Toe of front foot points towards corner, toe of back foot points toward front wall, on ball of foot
3. Belly button & shoulder open & faces front wall
4. Shoulder level, upper body erect
5. Racquet moves across body at least 180° from point of contact & head of racquet points to backwall after wrist snap
6. Non-hitting arm: out of way & rotates completely around
7. Hold pose, totally balanced



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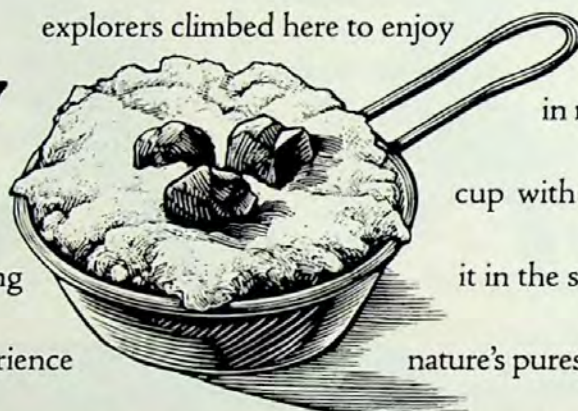
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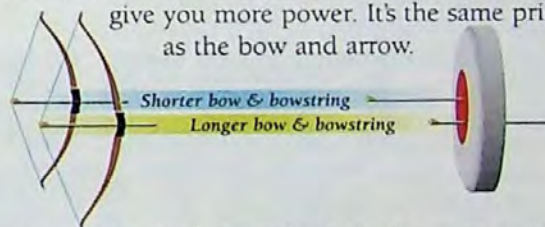
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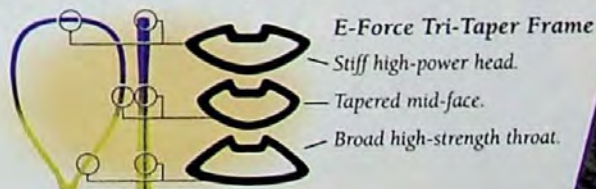


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All Aboard!

Early Season Wins for Roberts, Monchik, and Kachtik could mean there's a Swain off the track.

Photos By Darrin Schenk

New Orleans Elmwood Summer Cooler Elmwood Fitness Center

When the IRT pros converged upon the Elmwood Fitness Center for the traditional season opener, no evidence remained of the three feet of standing water that had invaded the club as a result of the series of tropical storms in the Gulf. Even with clear skies and plenty of sunshine, storms were still raging on the court. New Orleans is always a tough draw because of tremendous local talent, as well as its ability to draw from Memphis, Florida, and Texas. Only Mark Bloom was able to do any damage to the regular touring pros as he took advantage of #3 seed Tim Doyle's back injury from Little Rock to take a game from the blaster. Most of the rest of the opening round went down in three except some squeakers between San Diego's Jason Mannino and Dallas' Todd O'Neil. Tony Jelso looked good in a four-gamer that eliminated Baltimore's scrappy Mike Engel.

In the round of sixteen, master controller Aaron Katz dropped in for one of the events on his now abbreviated tour schedule to frustrate Woody Clouse just as he had for most of the previous season. Deja vu for Clouse who needs vitally to get a handle on Katz while he's still on the tour to break a very disheartening pattern.

Florida's Scott Reiff, always fairly successful at Elmwood, found some breaks as California's Kelly Gelhaus bowed out at the last minute from the first round with an injury forfeit. Fresh and strong, He was able to fully capitalize on Doyle's injury to knock him out in four in the quarters. With near misses against big Mike Ray at this event for two seasons previous,

Reiff was able to break the pattern for a comeback from two down for an upset in five to launch him into the first semi of his pro career. Looking strong against former Memphis neighbor Andy Roberts for the first game win in the semis, even his missiles couldn't stay low enough to keep Roberts from getting them for wins in the following three straight.

Rivals and friends Mike Guidry and Drew Kachtik, seeded four and five respectively, battled for a grueling five that was as close as a match can possibly be. With

Andy Roberts

5-11, 14-12, 11-8, 11-8

Cliff Swain

SEMIS

Swain d. Guidry

11-8, 11-9, 11-8

Roberts d. Reiff

8-11, 11-5, 1-8, 11-4

QUARTERS

Swain d. Ellis

11-5, 11-9, 11-8

Guidry d. Kachtik

12-10, 9-11, 11-9, 1-11, 11-7

Reiff d. Ray

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

Roberts d. Katz

11-7, 11-0, 11-5

SIXTEENS

Swain d. Jelso

12-10, 11-5, 11-0

Ellis d. Monchik

11-5, 11-5, 11-8

Kachtik d. Karp

11-0, 11-7, 11-7

Guidry d. Muller

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

Reiff d. Doyle

1-1, 11-7, 0-11, 11-8

Ray d. Vogel

11-1, 11-6, 11-4

Katz d. Clouse

11-4, 8-11, 2-11, 11-4, 11-6

Roberts d. Mannino

11-6, 11-6, 11-4

New Orleans





Studies in concentration
Far Left: Scott Reiff in New Orleans
Near Left: Drew Kachtik in Arlington
Right: Mike Ray in Stockton



Opposite Page: Andy Roberts and Cliff Swain in the New Orleans Final

court coverage as much esp as anything else, this battle boasted more of its share of marathon rallies and incredible shots.

In the final, Roberts fell victim to Swain's 13 game undefeated streak before gaining control with some good combinations using angles for the setup and passes for the finishing blow. Roberts held on for the next three and began ripping more than his share of devastating kills.

All in all it was a great way to kick off the new season with tourney director Vicki Garrett's usual flair. Swain and Roberts picked up where they left off as clearly the two best players in the world. And the battle still rages over the best flavor of Elmwood's famous New Orleans Smoothies.

Stockton Coors Light Pro Am Westlane Athletic Club

The Stockton event is one of the longest running traditions on the IRT. This tournament has witnessed the greats that have come and gone long enough to be called an institution in a sport that is really still in its infancy. This city's greatest gift to racquetball, John Ellis, was only a small child when the pros started their annual pilgrimage to Stockton. In the midst of all this history and tradition, Sudsy Monchik, racquetball nouveau at its most extreme, took another bite out of the pro tour.

While none of the tough California qualifiers managed an upset in the opening round, there were enough surprises in the following rounds to keep things interesting. Jelso fought back from a first game loss to eliminate a still suffering Doyle in the second round. Karp handled Ellis pretty easily in three straight, while Louis Vogel handed the same fate to Kachtik in the same round. The big surprise came in the quarters with Ray dispatching Swain in four. In fact, Ray showed the form that brought him a national championship just a few years ago.

Monchik played Ray to perfection in the semis, attacking with a blitz that never allowed Ray into the match. On his game, the veteran Ray can rally with anybody, but there's no defense for a flat roll. In the bottom half of the draw, Guidry took Roberts to the limit in five that could have gone either way. Because he makes it look so easy, sometimes it's difficult to remember just how incredibly good Roberts is. Few players in the world can do this kind of damage to Roberts when his game is on. Guidry played brilliantly for the near miss.

In the final, Monchik managed the near-impossible upsetting Roberts in three straight. Either Monchik really believes his

own hype enough to play with this kind of confidence, or he may just be as good as he says. Either way, he stormed into Roberts with enough passion and guts to narrowly win the first two at 12 - 10, then command the third for the win. With Roberts proven ability to pull out a match from two down he might have been able to mount an offense if he had taken either of the first two games. Bottom line, Monchik needed every point and he got them. And Rob Ferrins and crew at Westlane in Stockton became first hand observers to what may be the next phase for racquetball.

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The Official Ball of the AARA.



Left: Cliff Swain and Mike Ray in Stockton, the first of two Ray / Swain upsets.

Below: Kachtik and Guidry battle it out in Arlington



Arlington Crystal City Pro Am Skyline Club at Crystal Gateway

In its second season back on the IRT, the Arlington event enjoys a unique perspective on the tour. Positioned as the third event of the season, the pros have already begun to sift down into place for the new season by the time they reach Virginia. Still it is early enough that anything can happen. Clearly Swain and Roberts ruled the IRT with Monchik making big strides through the rankings. Also unique to Arlington is the Saturday evening final that created an entirely different feel for the event. (standard format for pro stops: qualifiers on Wednesday night, 32's and 16's on Thursday, quarters on Friday evening, semis on Saturday evening, and a Sunday afternoon final.)

Good action early on included a tremendous battle between Baltimore's Engel and recently-turned-hoosier Derek Robinson, and another in the same round between Gelhaus and Ohio's David Hamilton. Mannino asserted himself as a second round regular with a good win in four over

Sudsy Monchik

12-10, 12-10, 11-4

Andy Roberts

SEMIS

Monchik d. Ray

11-1, 11-9, 11-4

Roberts d. Guidry

11-8, 7-11, 11-9, 10-12, 11-4

QUARTERS

Ray d. Swain

11-6, 12-10, 0-11, 11-4

Monchik d. Jelso

11-5, 11-6, 5-11, 11-2

Guidry d. Karp

8-11, 11-7, 11-5, 12-10

Roberts d. Vogel

11-7, 11-4, 11-5

SIXTEENS

Swain d. Mannino

11-5, 11-1, 11-5

Ray d. Clouse

11-4, 7-11, 11-1, 13-11

Monchik d. Gelhaus

11-4, 11-2, 5-11, 13-11

Jelso d. Doyle

9-11, 11-5, 14-12, 11-9

Guidry d. Fowler

11-6, 11-8, 12-10

Karp d. Ellis

11-9, 11-4, 11-3

Vogel d. Kachtik

11-8, 11-7, 12-10

Roberts d. Engle

12-10, 11-7, 11-3

Stockton

Drew Kachtik

15-13, 11-9, 11-7

Mike Ray

SEMIS

Ray d. Swain

8-11, 11-9, 11-8, 10-12, 11-8

Kachtik d. Karp

11-2, 11-1, 11-8

QUARTERS

Swain d. Ellis

11-1, 11-6, 11-5

Ray d. Fowler

11-3, 15-13, 11-5

Kachtik d. Guidry

11-5, 11-7, 2-11, 4-11, 11-4

Karp d. Roberts

11-2, 11-8, 6-11, 4-11, 11-9

SIXTEENS

Swain d. Mannino

11-3, 11-2, 11-5

Ellis d. Rankin

11-3, 11-4, 11-4

Fowler d. Vogel

11-6, 4-11, 12-10, 11-4

Ray d. Jelso

11-6, 11-7, 4-11, 11-5

Guidry d. Engle

11-8, 11-6, 11-4

Kachtik d. Gelhaus

11-5, 11-8, 12-10

Karp d. Monchik

11-4, 12-10, 4-11, 5-11, 11-2

Roberts d. Messina

11-7, 11-7, 11-4

Arlington

Deliverin' the Doughnuts



Swain 11, Jelso 0 New Orleans 16s
Kachtik 11, Karp 0 New Orleans 16s
Roberts 11, Katz 0 New Orleans Quarters

Doyle 11, Reiff 0 New Orleans 16s
Swain 11, Ray 0 Stockton Quarters

Reiff in the thirty-twos as well.

In the sixteens, Jelso managed to take a game off his doubles partner Ray. A little shake up occurred in the seedings as Doyle's back problems worsened enough to keep him out of Arlington. Left facing a nightmare draw in the bottom bracket consisting of Monchik, Roberts, and Kachtik respectively, Karp might easily have just packed up and flown home to Los Angeles. Luckily he didn't. In the best match of his young career, Karp fought savagely for an upset over Monchik in the second round.

Miraculously enough, Karp repeated the feat with an equally amazing upset of Roberts in the quarters. Karp's talents have brought him recognition as a potential star, and his efforts in Virginia certainly shined of star quality.

Kachtik refused to take the back seat to Guidry in the quarters, playing better ball than he has in two years. He also managed to stop Karp from storming right into the finals, ousting him from his first pro semi.

Ray eliminated Swain just as he had in Stockton. Bonus points for Ray for two in a row. Renewed focus, new vigor, and some big things may just be on Ray's horizon.

Not on that horizon, however, was a win in Arlington. Kachtik outlasted Ray for the 15-13 win in the first game, to take better control of the next two for the win and his first event victory since the '93-'94 season. Kachtik is back. Ray is back. Blair Deseo and team at the Skyline Club are back. It all seems kind of fitting, doesn't it?

Top Right: Monchik dominating in Stockton

Bottom Right: Adam Karp on a roll in Arlington



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LITTLE ROCK SERIES



Mike Guidry

Mike Ray

SEMIS

Ray d. Doyle

Guidry d. Kachtik

QUARTERS

Doyle d. Vogel

Ray d. Katz

Kachtik d. Ellis

Guidry d. Engle

Little Rock II

Aaron Katz

Jason Mannino

SEMIS

Mannino d. Ellis

Katz d. Gelhaus

QUARTERS

Mannino d. Doyle

Ellis d. Vogel

Katz d. Engle

Gelhaus d. Kachtik

Little Rock III





Wondering what happened at the remaining three events from the Little Rock Athletic Club Series that were officially a part of last season but are currently airing on ESPN and ESPN II?

Here they are. Catch the televised action for all the details. Check local listings since the entire series should air several times on each network between October 1995 and January 1996.

Little Rock IV

Cliff Swain

Mike Guidry

SEMIS

Swain d. Kachtik

Guidry d. Roberts

QUARTERS

Swain d. Mannino

Kachtik d. Ray

Guidry d. Katz

Roberts d. Ellis

Photos, clockwise from bottom left: Mike Ray, Kelly Gelhaus, Mike Engel, Jason Mannino, Louis Vogel, John Ellis, Aaron Katz, Mike Guidry, Tim Doyle



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

VCI spreadsheet

IRT

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

WIRT

1. **Michelle Gould (1)**
Boise, Idaho
2. **Cheryl Gudinas (4)**
Lisle, Illinois
3. **Robin Levine (2)**
Sacramento, California
4. **Marci Drexler (3)**
San Diego, California
5. **Lynne Coburn (5)**
Baltimore, Maryland
6. **Chris Evon (8T)**
San Diego, California
7. **Laura Fenton (7)**
Lincoln, Nebraska
8. **Marcy Lynch**
North Wales, Pennsylvania
9. **Molly O'Brien (8T)**
Souderton, Pennsylvania
10. **Amy Kilbane**
Columbus, Ohio
11. **Michelle Wiragh (12)**
Baltimore, Maryland
12. **Kim Machiran (13T)**
Ballwin, Missouri
13. **Anita Maldonado**
14. **Roz Olson (11)**
New Paltz, New York
15. **Lorraine Galloway**
Syracuse, New York
16. **Janet Myers (13T)**
Charlotte, North Carolina

IRT Doubles Rankings

1.
Tim Doyle/Sudsy Monchik
2.
Mike Ray/Tony Jelso
- 3T.
Cliff Swain/Tim Sweeney
- 3T.
Kelly Gelhaus/Joey Paraiso
- 5T.
Drew Kachtik/Mike Guidry
- 5T.
John Ellis/Eric Muller
- 5T.
Brian Hawkes/Gerry Price
- 5T.
Todd O'Neil/Michael Bronfeld

WIRT Doubles Rankings

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

American Amateur Racquetball Association

- 75+
1.
Earl Acuff
 2.
Allen Shepherd
 3.
Luzell Wilde
 4.
Charles Russell
 5.
Andy Trozzi
 6.
George Spear
 7.
Cam Snowberger
 8.
Charles Estram



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VCI Challenge Cup Series

No events played yet this season



Grading the pros.

By Aaron Katz
& Eric Muller

I will not chew gum on the court.
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Cliff Swain: A

Swain finds himself in a "catch-22" situation. On one hand, he did not entirely dominate last season like he did in 1993-94. On the other hand, it is difficult to find fault with his performance. Out of 11 finals reached, Cliff won 9 events. When he did lose, his opponents usually had to put in their season's best performances (i.e. Ray in Memphis; Kachik in Dallas). Cliff continues to set the standard for excellence on the tour. A consummate professional, Cliff gives 100% to each rally of every point and

leads a life-style conducive to staying in pole position on the IRT. In three years, Cliff has not lost before the quarter finals and unlike many other top pros, is rarely in position to do so. While Hogan and Yellen seemed to grow complacent and burned out after several years at the top, Swain feeds on the number one ranking like a vampire feeds on blood. He seems to find the thought of losing to anyone on the planet so overwhelmingly demeaning that he becomes more animated with each match victory.

While his dominance can continue to be called commanding, he showed glimpses of wavering in 1995. Strong challenges from Roberts and Monchik (the only players who can consistently handle his serve) in the second half of the season should find Cliff training with renewed vigor. Can he continue to win playing his game against hose on his heels? Look for Swain to continue to improve his already lethal game and find new ways to defend his turf in 1996. We fully expect him to finish at the top once again. It's good to be king.

Andy Roberts: A+

What could have been a swan song

season turned into breakthrough year for Roberts. Although Roberts has been in the #2 or #3 position for several seasons, he is now in a position where he may shed the "best of the rest" label. Since returning from a knee injury, Andy has revitalized his game, and with it, his confidence. His domination of Guidry and Ellis last season demonstrates that he has adapted his game to be able to compete with younger, faster players.

After defeating Swain for the first time in over two years, Roberts finally seems ready to make a serious run at ending "the Swain era". As all of Andy's four tourna-





ment wins and important victories over Swain and Monchik came in the second half of the season, a legitimate argument can be made that he was the number one player since December. As Roberts' success unquestionably stems from his commitment to becoming the best rounded and most diversified player on tour, look for him to further refine his game this summer and come to the 1995-96 season with his game face.

Tim Doyle: C+

Doyle had a quick start last season. Off season speed training and mental poise pulled Doyle through some very tough matches early in the season. After five tournaments with two wins, two finals, and one quarter, Doyle was tied with Swain for number one and seemed determined to make a run for the title. However, a quarter final loss to Ray in Chicago may have burst Tim's bubble. As Swain became stronger in the middle part of the season, Doyle became less and less consistent. The second half of the season saw Doyle seriously challenged and/or defeated by several lower ranked players in the early rounds; several blowouts by Roberts; and several questions about his ability to challenge for the brass ring. Paradoxically, Doyle was plagued by sponsor problems early in the season, yet played worse after he resolved his endorsement situation.

It is difficult to understand why Doyle's season went from the "who's hot" list to the "who's not". Perhaps sponsorship negotiations diverted his focus, or perhaps Doyle's mid-season move back to Buffalo to deal with some personal issues holds the blame. Whatever the case, his

second half was tremendously disappointing.

We are hard pressed to predict a strong showing this season. Doyle won two events last season based on a solid game and heart. Unlike Swain, Roberts, and Monchik, he cannot crush his opponents round after round, and he is the only top four player who has a tendency to "tank" matches. Unless Tim has made some changes in the off season and puts consistency and effort at the top of his priority list, he will fall back to the 5-7 range.

Mike Guidry: B

Guidry settled into a very solid and comfortable #4 spot on the tour. Guidry's approach to the tour is very professional; he trains hard, gives a great effort on the court, and seeks outside sponsors. More often than not, Guidry found himself in the semifinals. The most impressive statistics for Guidry last year were his repeated wins

over Kachtik, many of them one-sided beatings.

While Guidry may have proven that he is among the upper crust of racquetball's elite, he still finds himself many steps away from walking with giants Swain and Roberts. His one victory over Swain proved to be an aberration and he was "0-fer" against Roberts. With a 2-2 record against Ray, Guidry had very few good wins against top 8 players. Though no fault of



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his own, Guidry usually was the beneficiary of good draws as he rarely was pushed in the early rounds. Despite two finals appearances, Guidry has yet to win a pro stop.

Next season, look for more of the same from Guidry. He will train hard and be ready for each match. However, Guidry has built the foundation of his game around fitness and quickness and shows a reluctance to develop the necessary firepower to challenge for the #1 ranking. This is an all too common already amongst racquetball's elite — the tendency to continually develop one's strengths at the expense of one's weaknesses. Guidry may be fitter, stronger, and faster than he was two years ago, but he was already fit, strong, and fast. Unless Guidry works on his weaknesses (like Swain has done in the past and Roberts continues to do) he may never reach the top, especially with strong, young talent on his heels. Hopefully he is not complacent with his role on the tour, and instead will stake his claim.

Drew Kachtik: C+

Kachtik had a season very similar to 1993-94. However, in a year which was often marred by a lack of effort, questionable motivation, suspect training, and an overlay of mediocrity, Kachtik failed to reach a final for the first time in his career. To his credit, Kachtik only lost once before the quarters (to Monchik in Atlanta) and he conducted himself on and off the court as a gentleman. However, Kachtik had even fewer wins over the top 8 than did Guidry.

If Kachtik has another season similar to the past two, perhaps criticism of his

efforts will be less severe. The public expectations for his performance are on a gradual decline. Unfortunately, Kachtik may be buying into those lower expectations.

When Kachtik shows a flicker of his former greatness, such as his grueling five game victory over Swain in Dallas, he demonstrates that he has the talent and heart to take another shot at the title. Maybe Kachtik's season end discovery of a drive serve, which has evaded him for several years, will spark a more offensive more motivated and hungrier competitor. We hope the remainder of his career will not be defined by only an occasional glimpse of the fire that made him number one.

Mike Ray: A-/B+

An affirming year for this popular tour



veteran. Ray came back from a hard 1993-94 season to prove to himself and the racquetball world that he can still win with his game style. Ray added a few new wrinkles to his arsenal, such as a drive serve (which has stymied him since the advent of the one serve rule). He also continues to work on making his backhand stroke more offensive. Most of all, Ray went back to playing within himself and doing what works for him. Ray had several solid wins and competitive losses against Swain, Roberts, Doyle, Guidry, and he was responsible for Monchik's first half blues.

This season look for another solid showing from Ray. He will be hard pressed to move out of the #5-#8 range, however, we expect him to

continue to be a spoiler for the top players, and he may be the reason why Monchik won't reach #1 quite yet.

Aaron Katz: A-

(Katz did not participate in this evaluation)

The A-Train made a lot of progress this past season. Katz graduated from law school and was able to finally commit to the IRT full time. The commitment paid off as Katz went from being the best club A player on the tour, to one of the most consistent. A regular quarter finalist, Katz bested the rest of "round of 16" guys and enjoyed repeated victories over Gonzalez.

Although this might be Katz's final season it is doubtful that he would be able to compete for the top spot. While he defeated nearly every player in the top 8, he was seldom competitive with Swain or Roberts. While Katz's game is complete, he does not possess the firepower to match up with the top 2-3 on a consistent basis. However, he most likely exorcised his personal poltergeists with a very solid and much improved season.

Sudsy Monchik: B+

Feast — Monchik teased us with glimpses of his overwhelming inevitability. Big time game talent and moxie make Monchik the most exciting player in racquetball, bar none. Breakthrough and multiple wins over Swain and Roberts demonstrated Monchik's ability to generate enough offense to beat anyone at any time. Monchik "lit it up" to the delight of rac-



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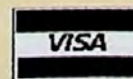
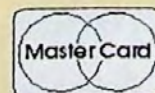
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racquetball fans in the second half of the season, creating a buzz of excitement that has not been seen in many years.

Famine — While Monchik showed the signs of "coming of age" that will inevitably make him one of the highest paid players in the game, his sometimes erratic behavior raises questions about his stability and consistency down the road. During the first half and the very end of last season, Monchik showed his vulnerability. He still lacked the day-in, day-out consistency of Swain and Roberts.

This year is a big challenge year for Monchik. No longer is he potential waiting to happen. He must rise to the occasion each match and take nothing for granted. We predict that he will become more adept at staying focused, and as a result, skyrocket in the rankings. He will challenge for the top spot but fall short in the end due to some unpredicted losses to players like Ray and Kachtik. Of course, with Monchik you never know. We do know that the honeymoon is over...



John Ellis: C-

The past season was a hugely disappointing year for Ellis. Clearly, he has big time talent. Based on his youth, fitness, and well-rounded, lethal game style, Ellis should have established himself as a top 4 player. However, after three full seasons on the IRT, Ellis has shown wide swings in consistency and motivation. Some discouraging numbers on Ellis' tally sheet tell the tale; he went past the quarter finals only once this season and did not beat any top four players. He had few good wins this season and is still looking for his first professional victories over Swain, Roberts, or Doyle.

The jury is out on Ellis for this season. Ellis' move to Columbus, Ohio and his choice to forego amateur status might be efforts to get refocused on what can be a very promising career. If Ellis puts his priorities in order and leads the life-style of a top athlete, he could very well find himself winning his first pro event and breaking into the top four in 1995-96.

An interesting question is whether the emergence of Monchik, a close friend of Ellis, has had a negative effect on his esteem. Ellis is on a gradual improvement track that most successful pro players (i.e. Roberts, Ray, Gonzalez, and Guidry) must follow. Ellis was moving along steadily until the middle part of last season. His recent lapse seems to coincide with Monchik's recent surge (an aberration in the relatively short annals of racquetball history). Ellis has the talent to be the best in the world one day. However, the question is whether or not he still believes it.

Woody Clouse: C-

The one highlight in Clouse's season was an impressive semifinal appearance in Riverside where he defeated both Ellis and Swain. However, a year which started off promising quickly became disappointing. Clouse went past the round of 16 only twice and once by virtue of a forfeit. Changing priorities may soon find Clouse retiring from the IRT. If not, Clouse must take measures to move his game to the next level. While he constantly appears to be on the verge of a breakthrough, Clouse must step up before his career begins

to disconcertingly parallel Bill Murray's life in the movie *Groundhog Day*.

Players to Watch

Adam Karp — The IRT is still waiting for this young star to commit to the tour full time. Several strong showings last season point to a bright career for the "Eliminator".

Dan Fowler — Strong and agile, Fowler has a complete game that can go stroke to stroke with anyone on the IRT. Unfortunately, the shmata that Fowler dons on his head seems to be restricting his mental game. If Fowler can get his head gear in place, expect big things from this newly-wed.



Come Run with the Bulls

Where are Michael Bronfeld, Sherman Greenfield, and Tim Sweeney?

These kings of the amateur game have either met with some success on the IRT or would reasonably expect to be successful. Yet, despite their physical talents, mental strengths, and vast experience, they are curiously absent from all but a handful of pro events. Are these players suffering from the "big fish in a little pond" syndrome, or is there some other inexplicable reason delaying their entry to the IRT? Mike, Sherm, and Sween, the IRT is calling you out.

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WIRT?

An Exciting New Partnership in the World of Pro Racquetball

The exciting rumor that's been buzzing around the racquetball world is true. The International Racquetball Tour has announced the creation of a partnership with the Women's International Racquetball Tour (WIRT). Formerly the Women's Professional Racquetball Association, the reorganized tour will be under the direction of IRT Commissioner Hank Marcus.

With Marcus as Executive Director, the WIRT will join with the men's professional tour, consolidating the uppermost level of the sport and the finest athletes in racquetball. The Women's International Racquetball Tour will share the same ultimate goals of the International Racquetball Tour, foremost being the advancement of the sport of racquetball led by a strong professional organization.

Beginning immediately, the Women's International Racquetball Tour will compete under the same rules as the International Racquetball Tour and will use the same ProPenn ball which was developed by Penn Racquet Sports for the professional tour. The Women's International Racquetball Tour will also be supported by the marketing efforts of IRT Properties, the company recently launched to promote professional racquetball and the sport in general by securing agreements with companies to use the IRT (and now the WIRT) name and logo on licensed products. Steve Lerner of IRT Properties believes that "this partnership will lead to new opportunities for sponsorship and commercial opportunities for both men and women players, as well as the tours themselves."

Former Women's Professional Racquetball Association president, Marcy Lynch feels "the consolidation with the IRT will add strength to the women's tour and provide opportunities offered by a unified pro level."

Marcus says, "The players and spon-

sors of the International Racquetball Tour welcome this partnership as a great step forward for the sport and welcome the chance to build a professional level that will be enriched by the strengths of each tour."

Top women's player Michelle Gould shares the enthusiasm of the tour's leadership and "looks forward to competing side-by-side with the men at the events which will showcase the entire professional level,

like the Pro Nationals in Las Vegas."

Andy Roberts of the men's tour sums it up with "this is a great opportunity for both the men and women to bring their collective energy and efforts together to lead the sport to new and higher levels of fan enthusiasm."

The WIRT has eight events scheduled for 1995-96 and will join the IRT for events which will bring the finest female and male athletes in racquetball together.



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Grip: Tacki Mac

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IRT Properties, Inc. Formed as Marketing Arm of IRT

The International Racquetball Tour, in partnership with Complete Creative Sports Marketing has announced the agreement to form IRT Properties, Inc.

IRT Properties, Inc. will be the marketing arm of the International Racquetball Tour, responsible for the authorized use of the International Racquetball Tour's name, logo, and inherent rights. According to Steve Lerner of Complete Creative, "IRT Properties, Inc. will function in like manner to NFL Properties or NBA Properties, etc. in the licensing of products which will carry the IRT endorsement or logo both within the racquetball industry and outside of the sport for commercial use."

IRT Properties, Inc. will aggressively move forward to promote professional racquetball and the sport in general by securing agreements with companies to use the IRT name and logo on licensed products. IRT Properties, Inc. will also be responsible for protecting the use of the IRT name and logo against unauthorized commercial use.

Video Tapes of Tour Events

Video tapes of some men's professional tour events have been made available by the IRT. The tapes selling for \$29.95 each including shipping contain previously televised matches. Some include commentary by professional players. The tapes may be purchased by calling the IRT at (503) 639-3410.

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- 7 Brian Rankin
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- 2 VCI Challenge Cup Series: Los Angeles, 1992. Cliff Swain battles Tim Sweeney in a 5 game match with commentary by Mike Ray.
3. VCI Challenge Cup Series: Baltimore, 1992. Mike Ray and Andy Roberts fight it out with commentary by Mike Yellen.
4. VCI Challenge Cup Series: Dallas, 1992. Hometown hero Drew Kachtik literally fights it out with Andy Roberts
5. VCI Challenge Cup Series: New Jersey, 1992. The last pro win of Marty Hogan's career as he beats Tim Doyle.
6. VCI Challenge Cup Series: Atlanta, 1993. Cliff Swain at his most dominating in the finals with Drew Kachtik and commentary by Mike Ray
7. VCI Challenge Cup Series: Portland, 1991. Dan Obremski's first pro win with a tremendous 5 game win over Ruben Gonzalez
8. IRT Tournament of Champions: Portland, 1993. Gonzalez over 40-years-old defeats Jack Newman
9. IRT Pro Nationals: Seattle, 1992. Mike Yellen and Mike Ray hook up in a control player's dream match. No commentary
10. IRT Pro Nationals: Seattle, 1993. Quarterfinals 1 & 2 featuring Gonzalez vs Kachtik and Doyle vs Roberts
11. IRT Pro Nationals: Seattle, 1993. Quarterfinals 3 & 4 featuring Newman vs Ray and Dave Johnson vs Swain. No commentary
12. IRT Pro Nationals: Seattle, 1993. Roberts vs Swain for 5 games including one of the best comebacks in the history of the sport. No commentary
13. Shop & Save Pro Stop: Pittsburgh, 1993. Ruben Gonzalez battles Dave Johnson where you will see some of the best diving ever. Commentary by Dan Obremski
14. Hampton Inn Pro Stop: Memphis, 1995. Roberts has the home crowd advantage as he battles a hot Mike Ray.
15. Hampton Inn Pro Stop: Memphis, 1991. Roberts vs Obremski with both going for their first pro win
16. The Rose Festival Pro Challenge: Portland, 1988. Hogan and Yellen in their 3 year challenge series in the prime of their careers.
17. MCI Pro Stop: Portland, 1988. Both semis featuring upsets of Marty Hogan by Gerry Price and Ed Andrews by Ruben Gonzalez. Commentary by Dan Obremski
18. Boise Pro-Am: Boise, 1990. Swain vs Johnson
19. Head Doubles Pro-Am: Denver, 1988. Ray/Newman beating Bobby Rodriguez and Jack Nolan

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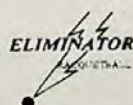
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Education

Student: 4%
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Income

Under \$10,000: 9%
\$11,000 - 20,000: 1%
\$21,000 - 35,000: 15%
\$36,000 - 50,000: 22%
\$51,000 - 100,000: 35%
Over \$100,000: 9%
No Response: 9%

Regularity of Racquetball Play

Less than once per month: 2%
Weekly: 8%

Twice weekly: 25%
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Place to play Racquetball

Private club: 67%
YMCA: 13%
JCC: 1%
In home: 1%
School: 7%
Military: 5%
Community Rec. Center: 3%
Outside park: 1%
Other: 2%

Competitive level

Exercise: 10%
League/tournaments: 44%
Recreational/Social: 23%
Advanced Competition: 23%

Style of Play

Power: 29%
Control: 39%
Both: 27%
No response: 5%

Equipment purchases

Club Pro shop: 12%
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Running: 11%
Walking: 11%
Other: 11%

Other Sports participation

Golf: 29%
Basketball: 14%
Tennis: 21%
Soccer: 4%
Squash: 7%
Softball: 9%
Volleyball: 7%
Other: 6%

Instructional Camps

Attended: 38%
Never attended: 62%

Taken lessons from club pro

Yes: 43%
No: 54%

Belong to racquetball organization:

Yes: 61%
No: 39%

How Hot is it?

Hotter than hell Summer Series

This summer series was a three tournament series with events in May, June that culminated with the IRT Satellite at Fitness Planet in Tempe, Arizona, in August.

Kelly Gelhaus, currently ranked #16 on the IRT played the series as did Josh Messina who finished last season with IRT ranking #24.

As expected, Gelhaus and Messina advanced through the draw relatively unscathed, although Gelhaus had a close call with local player Greg McBride in their quarterfinal match. McBride served three times at match point, but the combination of some serious leg cramps and Gelhaus' wealth of experience was too much. He was unable to close him out and Gelhaus prevailed in the fifth game, 11-10. Gelhaus played a much more solid match in the semi-finals against occasional IRT event player Darin Decesare, winning in three straight.

Josh Messina was on cruise control through his half of the draw until meeting Jeff Bell in the semi-finals. A sharp-shooting Bell and a minor injury to Messina proved to be too much to overcome, as Messina fell in three games.

The final pitted local favorite Bell against a crafty touring pro in Gelhaus. The Phoenix crowd was ready for the showdown. Gelhaus jumped out to a two game lead, but Bell fought back and won the third. In the fourth game it was all Gelhaus as he soared past a fatiguing opponent. The Fitness Planet crowd appreciated the high level of play and the great sportsmanship both players displayed.

The sponsors for the series included: Fun n' Fitness, Kraft, Smitty's, E-FORCE, Penn, Fitness Planet, the Pointe Hilton Resorts, and Honeybear's Restaurant



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Appetizers

What can I do to get better at cutting off shots on the fly?

In general, you may need to shorten your swing for the fly cut-offs, using a slightly shorter back-swing and follow through. Take the shot low so you can lower your center of gravity by bending your knees to use your body rotation for power. Taking the shot on the fly should shake up your opponent and take him off his timing, interrupting the natural rhythm of the rally. Don't sabotage your advantage from this by telegraphing your shot. When you attack on the fly, make it an offensive attempt.

Aaron Katz
IRT # 9

Is there anything I can do to improve my front court rallies?

Reaction time, footwork, and swing mechanics all effect the faster front court game. Reaction abilities are just naturally better with some players, but can always improve with practice. Swing mechanics are always tougher using the semi-open cutoff stance. Footwork may require some professional fine tuning, but will probably make the biggest difference in your effectiveness.

Tim Doyle
IRT # 7

Entree

I know the passing shot is the best offensive shot for lots of reasons. I also know that it is almost worthless if it kicks off the side wall. My problem is, every time I go for the cross court pass, my shot comes off the side wall as a plum. What can I do?

The trick with the cross court is to get your shot to come off the side wall behind your opponent. Therefore, it becomes a better weapon the further into front court your opponent is. This works for two reasons: first, any pass works better the further up your opponent is, secondly, your cross can go much wider and thus come off the side much sooner but still be behind him if he is way up.

In fact, if he is a front court "boxer" with good reactions, a good wide angle cross that comes off the side behind him may do more damage than a cross that shoots straight back without hitting the side wall but is more within his reach for the quick cutoff. Also remember, a ball that comes back up off the back wall is just as bad as one that comes off the side, so a deep court "kick-out" may not be all bad.

If you're playing someone who likes to cover fairly deep, the cross or any pass becomes less effective. For these players, work your way up and go for the pinch instead.

Personally, I like to exploit a weak backhand with cross courts.

Remember, it's a good idea to shoot your cross courts good and low so that you may get the benefit of some "cracking" off the side wall. You can't count on these, but if you are lucky enough to get one, it should win the rally and significantly take the wind out of your opponent's sails at the same time.

Woody Clouse
IRT # 10

Dessert

When I first started playing, I learned two defensive shots: the ceiling shot, and the around-the-wall-ball. I see the pros hitting ceilings, but only rarely see an around-the-wall. Why is this?

First, the ceiling ball is a better shot. It has more uses in a rally, it can be used from anywhere on the court, and it always allows you center court position. It has a much smaller margin for error. Secondly, the around-the-wall-ball is far too easy for today's pros to simply step up to kill. It no longer holds any confusion factor for players at this level, and can actually result in worse court position than you started with if you have to surrender center court to clear for your opponent's movement for his shot.

Mike Ray
IRT # 4

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Taking Care of Business

Industry news and announcements

Headstart

It's official, after months of rumors, Head Sports has finally signed tour prodigy Sudsy Monchik. The hottest young player on the tour, Monchik is extremely talented and quite colorful. Having drawn comparisons to both Cliff Swain and Marty Hogan and having picked up several IRT tournament wins after only one full year on the tour, Monchik has become the buzz of racquetball circles. Monchik's style mirrors Swain's on the court, while his attitude and self-promotion are more reminiscent of Hogan's Barnumesque routine. Monchik's adoption of the new Pyramid racquet technology means Head's two frame lines will be in the hands of the world's two most visible players.

As another part of its aggressive movement in the racquetball market, Head sports has taken over as corporate sponsor for the highly successful tournament series formerly known as the Coors Light Series. Based in Ohio, the ten-year-old series has been recognized as one of the best organized and most attended in racquetball. Ian Arthur, Head's director of marketing, was quoted in Racquetball Around Ohio as saying, "The 1995-96 Head Racquetball Tour will represent all the great qualities of the historic Coors Light Series plus new and fresh ideas that we will bring to the picture." 15 events including state singles and state doubles.

Satellites & Cyberspace

Spalding seems to be breaking new ground daily within racquetball and has announced two more endeavors in a seemingly endless list of innovations for the racquetball enthusiast. First, the official racquet manufacturer of the IRT has taken on the roll of title sponsor for the amazingly successful IRT satellite series, extending its support of the pros to the ranks of competitive amateurs. The series itself has been extremely well received nationwide, and will now benefit from the support that

Spalding has given the pro tour for some time now.

Secondly, Spalding has teamed with cyberworld insider Glen Carlson to provide a staggering amount of information and technical advice via the Internet. Among other options on the net, you can discuss specific play questions with top Spalding pros such as Eric Muller in a "leave question - get answer" format, and obtain technical information from Brian Feeney, Spalding's senior racquet engineer. A description of the intricacies of the "mean streak" reverse sunburst string pattern has been one of the hottest topics so far. Upcoming features are too numerous to mention. To call on the experts, look to: <http://emporium.turnpike.net/~cyberguy/spalding.html>

Can't get enough Pro Penn.

Designed initially for use by pro players, the now familiar green Pro Penn ball has been adopted for use by all competitive players in Ohio's Head Racquetball Tour (formerly the Coors Light Series). Tournament director Doug Ganim cited the demand for a superior ball for the prestigious series as the reason for the move to the speed, liveliness, and durability of the green ball.

Penn Racquet Sports' senior product manager Jay Simmons has worked extensively with the top IRT pros in the development of the racquetball glove that will share

the Pro Penn name with the much sought-after balls. The official glove of the IRT, the Pro Penn reflects the influence of IRT commissioner Hank Marcus, as well as players Cliff Swain, Tim Doyle, and Mike Guidry, among others.

Who's the Boss?

In a recent issue of the United States Racquet Stringers Association's Stringer's Assistant magazine (October 1995), Forten's Boss 17 gauge racquetball string came away with big thumbs up from players involved in a special controlled playtest of the hot string. According to the USRSA, "Overall, Boss 17 impressed the majority of our playtesters, both in playability and durability". The 17 gauge solid core synthetic gut answers demands for more 17 gauge strings by serious players. Additional comments from the testers touted the string's vibration dampening characteristics, its ability to hold tension with only "slight" or "normal" notching, and its importance as a "step up" string for improving players. California based Forten is one of the handful of string companies that have targeted the specific demands of racquetball and racquetball enthusiasts in product development.

"Fran"-tic for instruction

Fran Davis, US team coach, former women's champion, and master clinician has implemented a call in system to answer players' constant demand for racquetball instruction. The new line (1-900-772-8874 Ext. 11) will give immediate answers to questions regarding the physical, mental, and nutritional aspects of the game. It is a unique opportunity to have access to the knowledge base of such a widely known instructor. As a 900 line, it is a paid call (\$2.25 per minute, average call is 4 minutes or \$9) so all the usual stuff applies such as availability to adults over 18 only and a touch tone phone is a necessity.

Use the force

E Force's new "Long String" technology in the Havoc and Chaos racquets has caused quite a stir in racquetball. The company, originally founded by former world champion Egan Inoue, has been moved to California by its third ownership group, headed by Ron Grimes. Grimes (formerly with Ektelon in the 70's and early 80's) has placed an emphasis on cutting edge technology and truth in advertising. At the heart of his organization are Todd Coburn and Ray Mortvedt who reportedly have been responsible for development of some of



racquetball's most popular frames including the 250G, the CBK, the Toron, and the RTS Mirada and RTS Strobe.

The management team combines something like 400 total years of racquetball experience and has welcomed back the influence and sponsorship of Inoue. Other top players signed on so far include blasters Tim Doyle and Adam Karp, IRT pro and media consultant Darrin Schenk and women's pros Marci Drexler, Kersten Hallander, and Roz Olsen.

Serves, Lobs and Video Tape

To answer the ever increasing demand for video tape instruction, The world's number one player Cliff Swain has introduced *The Winning Edge*. Produced by the same people that bring us the ESPN telecasts, the program is a first rate representation of the master at his best! Visually stunning and stuffed full of important information, this video serves up Swain's unique character and insight as never before.

After tremendous initial response to its first taped tournament offering, the IRT has now made more than two dozen matches played over the past six years available to the public on video. These are classic, unforgettable matchups that are a must-see



If the glove doesn't fit you must acquit? Oh, yeah, that's another famous glove. This one is a winner. Jay Simmons of Penn shows touring pros Cliff Swain, Mike Guidry, Tim Doyle, and Commissioner Hank Marcus the new official glove of the IRT.

for the true enthusiast. Some of these are the only publicly available video records of the amazing abilities of some now-retired greats.

The *Mastery of Racquetball* system remains one of the hottest selling packages, combining workbook, video instruction, and learning cards. The system comes from Lawrence Adams Inc. of Hudson Ohio and features everybody's favorite Tom Travers with a little help from Cliff Swain.

The 17's the thing.

With the increasing demand for 17 gauge racquetball string, Ashaway has

launched the new Superkill 17. Promising greater resiliency and livelier play than 15 or 16 gauge strings, the new Superkill 17 boasts a multi stranded monofilament core and an abrasion resistant wear layer.

Where the Hex is it?

Trouble finding Hex string? It seems Adtek Sports has reclaimed distribution of the unique string from a former distributing company, Hex Sports of Cleveland Ohio. The string (with a hexagonal cross section) has now become available to both new and existing accounts directly from Adtek home offices in Granbury Texas.

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- Membership Card



DICTATING PLAY

By Larry Heflin
USTA Pro 1

It seems like the last few years the "Buzz" around racquetball circles has centered on "dictating play." Watching the professionals and top collegians play, it is obvious that they have a good understanding of what it means to dictate play. This is not always true about players at the lower levels. As teaching professionals we have an obligation to our students to teach not only fundamentals but to address this issue as well.

What does it mean to "dictate play"? In its purest sense, it simply means to be the one in control. In dictating play your goal is to, in as many ways as possible, make your opponent play your game, not his. It is nearly impossible to control every point and game in a racquetball match. This makes it important to take every point, one at a time, and try to take as much control as possible, as early as possible.

A question I am asked all the time is: I understand what it means to dictate play, but specifically what shots do I use to dictate play? I answer this question by discussing several instances where play can be effectively dictated. First, recognize that the earlier you take charge of a point the better. Since you will begin each point from one of two positions, serving or returning serve, you must have some clear goals in mind for your openings in either position.

As the server, you can dictate play by using a good mixture of speed and placement to keep the receiver from getting grooved on his return. Serving to your

opponent's weakness will also get you weaker returns and therefore give you control of the point. You are dictating with your serve if you are serving aces, service winners, or getting weak returns with which you can go for the kill or pass. As a server, you want to get a high percentage of first serves in play. If your percentage is low, you are

charge of the points on your serve. Nothing is more important than keeping the serve. It is the only shot in racquetball that affords your opponent absolutely no control, so make it a weapon!

Returning serve, your goal is to hit an aggressive, well placed shot that makes your opponent move to get the ball. By putting him on the move he will not have an easy opportunity to take control of the point.

Take into account the many factors that affect your choice for return of serve. Whether it is a first or second serve, the style of play your opponent uses, and your own strongest returns all influence your choice.

Consider these when choosing return strategy. For example, if you are playing an opponent that uses strong drive serves, you might want to use a few more ceiling ball returns. This type of

player wants to control the game with his powerful serve. He hopes to get a winner or weak return, thus allowing him to put the point away early. He likes to play short points on his serve. By using the ceiling ball you will cause him to have to play longer points, thus you are taking him out of his comfort zone. This is what dictating play is about. If you are playing an opponent that uses a lot of lob serves it would be wise to use passing shot returns. The lob server is hoping that you will get impatient and go for the kill every time. He is betting that you will skip the shot or hang it up



giving your opponent too many second serves and thus, too many chances to take

high more often than you will make the kill. If you mix up the down-the-line and cross-court pass you will put him in more defensive situations. Obviously the more you put your opponent on the defensive the more you can take the offensive position and thus control the point. Basically, if you are facing a second serve you should step in and take the ball early with the intention of winning the point outright with the kill or pass or at least putting your opponent in a defensive position. It is hard to go wrong with your return game if you live by the philosophy: first serve - make them play, second serve - make them PAY!

Obviously, the concept of dictating play is to try to control the point from the start; however, neither you nor your opponent will always be able to do this. This brings up the concept of dictating in rally situations. Think of rallies as a chess match. By this I mean, both you and your opponent are jockeying for position on the court while always looking for the opening that will allow you to attack. Your goal should be to keep the ball deep in the back corners or use pinch shot angles to make your opponent move. This will generally yield a mistake or a weak ball with which

you can take charge of the point. It is important for players to be patient and wait for a good opportunity to take charge of a point. Impatience often causes an unforced error. Opportunities to take control will arise. You want to be alert to anticipate your earliest chance. If you put yourself in this frame of mind you will be able to ACT on your opportunities rather than REACT to them. Many times this is the difference between winning and losing the point. Remember, ACT don't REACT.

If you have worked on your game, and have advanced to a stage where you are able to successfully vary your style of play, then you can use different strategies as a method of dictating play. An example of using strategy to dictate play could be continually picking on one particular weakness of your opponent, thus keeping your opponent from dictating with his strengths. Conversely, tennis great Bill Tilden liked to go to his opponent's strength in order to try to break it down. If he could accomplish this, he knew he was truly dominating the match. Most players have certain areas of their games with which they are comfortable. If you can recognize these "comfort areas", you can usually find a countering

strategy. For example, if your opponent is very comfortable with low hard drives it might be wise to try some "z's" or lobs to take him out of his game. I have always taught that the greatest weapon a racquetball player possesses is his brain. If you use this tool, you can usually come up with a strategical plan that will help you control the match.

One final way of dictating play is tempo. This refers to the pace at which a match is progressing. Most players have a pace of play at which they feel comfortable. It is sometimes a good idea to slow down or speed up your play to disrupt their rhythm. Momentum is a huge factor in racquetball and learning when to use your time-outs will certainly help you be in control of a match. You must be most careful not to do this to the detriment of your own game and to keep within the time constraints allowed by the rules.

Dictating play is not a new idea. However, with the advent of the modern power game, it has become increasingly more important. I believe all racquetball players can benefit from taking a good introspective look at this part of their game.



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One of the most common sports injuries and what to do about it

SPRAINS

By Richard Honaker, MD

Ankle sprains are common injuries which we have all experienced. Some people seem to be more prone to these injuries.

The ankle joint is made of the inside bony prominence of the tibia and the out-

side bony prominence of the fibula. The deltoid ligament is on the inside of the ankle below the bone and on the outside of the ankle three ligaments tie the bony prominence to the foot. The most important of these is the front ligament, the anterior talofibular ligament. The most common

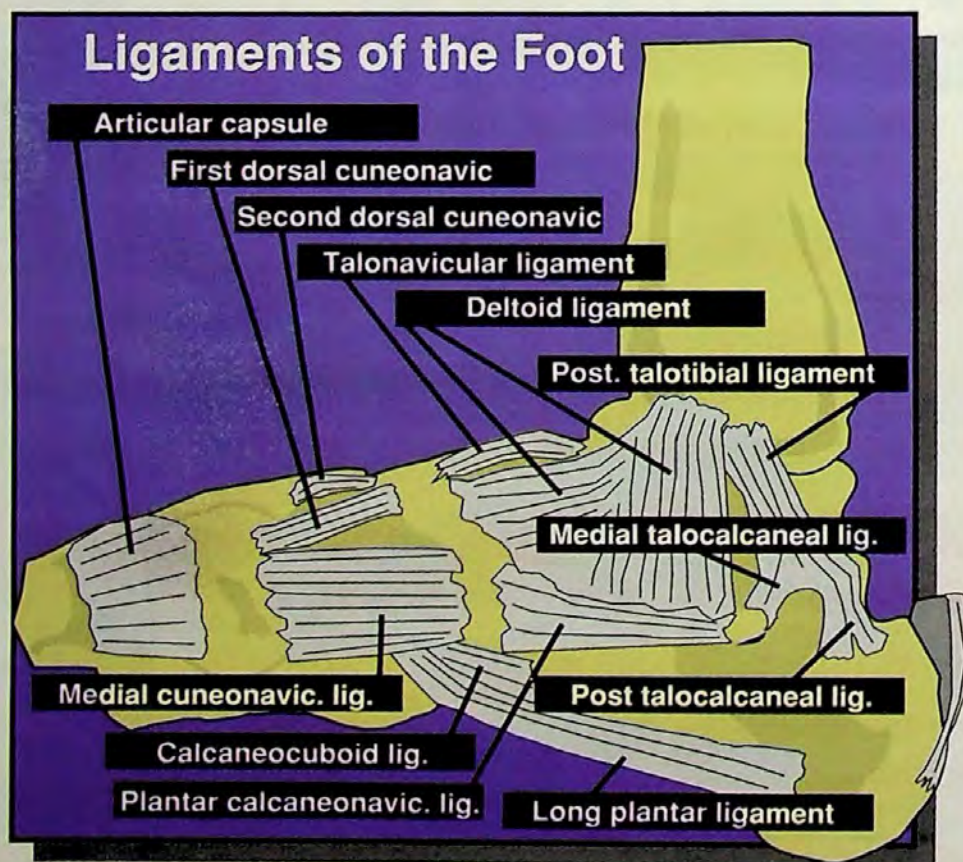
type of injury to the ankle occurs with inversion where the foot turns inward during activity. This results in stretching and tearing of the ligaments on the outside (lateral side) of the ankle. Contributing factors include prior injuries, poor footwear, uneven surfaces and being overweight. Sprains to the inside ligament are much more uncommon and usually indicate a more severe type of injury.

Ankle sprains are classified by degree. The first degree sprain is the most common and minor. The ligaments are stretched but

After an ankle sprain, the ankle should be immediately elevated above the heart and a compression dressing with an Ace bandage should be applied.

not torn and there is rarely any bruising, and only minor swelling. This usually results in only one or two weeks of lost time from sports. A second degree sprain results from a partially torn ligament and is associated with much more swelling and bruising. This may require one month to six weeks to heal. The third degree sprain requires eight to twelve months to heal and may involve complete rupture of the ligament. This may require surgery.

After an ankle sprain, the ankle should



be immediately elevated above the heart and a compression dressing with an Ace bandage should be applied. Ice should be applied, and ice massage seems to be very effective. This is accomplished by freezing water in small Dixie cups and tearing away one end of the Dixie cup to apply the ice like a roll-on deodorant. The ice massage should be applied for 30 to 60 minutes at a time, three to five times a day.

After the initial 36 hours of ice, a 24-hour period of no topical treatment should occur followed by the use of heat to speed healing. One should insulate the skin from the ice with plastic wrap or a towel. When wrapping your ankle with an Ace bandage, wrap from the toe up to "milk" fluid out of the ankle, and wrap from the outside of the ankle inward. In more severe sprains, a plaster immobilizing splint or cast may be necessary as well as anti-inflammatory medications.

During the first week of an ankle injury, you may walk on the ankle if it is not uncomfortable and if it is a grade I

sprain. Crutches should be used for greater than grade I sprains or for more than mild discomfort. In general, no weight bearing should occur in a grade II ankle sprain for two to three days. Then partial weight bear-

**The third degree
sprain requires eight to
twelve months to heal
and may involve
complete rupture of the
ligament. This may
require surgery.**

ing should gradually progress. Once discomfort is mild, the crutches may be discarded. Stiffness may occur and may be reduced by range of motion exercises. The best exercise is to draw 50 large circles in

the air with your great toe four times per day. Range of motion exercises will increase your flexibility and may be accomplished by drawing the alphabet in the air with your great toe.

Before you return to full activity, your ankle must be strong. To test whether you are ready to go back to activity, you should stand on the toes of the injured ankle for 20 seconds and hop 10 times. When you can do this without significant pain, you are ready to exercise. Initially exercise by jogging in a straight line and later you may progress to running in large figures-of-eight. After this, you may progress to running a zigzag pattern with a return to full sports activity when zigzagging can be done without discomfort.

If your ankle is excessively swollen and bruised, you should be seen by your physician. We do not draw fluid off ankles, however, we often will put them in braces, splints, or casts to improve healing and result in a rapid return to sports.

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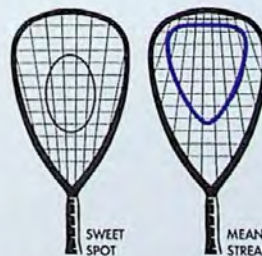
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