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Interviews:
Andy Roberts
Luke St. Onge

Steroid Use & Athletes
Tour Coverage

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right: Cliff Swain,
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The Official Publication of
the International Racquetball
Tour

Cover: Andy Roberts courtesy Ektelon



A Sign of the Times

Fans lined up in Las Vegas for an opportunity to meet and get an autographed poster from the man whose name has become synonymous with winning racquetball. Now the most recognizable face in the sport, Cliff Swain can remember a time when fans of pro racquetball hardly knew

one player from another. Today, Swain's constant accessibility to the fans and his total domination of the sport have not only kept him in the public eye, but drawn considerable attention to the sport as well.

SHORT SERVES

Now *that's* international!

Guests from IRT Japan Shoko Yoshida (left) and Mika Tamura (right) traveled to Las Vegas to catch the action at the Foxwoods U.S. Pro Nationals. We managed to catch a shot of them with their favorite player, Sudsy Monchik.



Just a Fringe Benefit?

When the leaders at Penn realized that some of their employees might not be familiar with the sport of racquetball (for which they produce 76% of all balls) they immediately brought in top pro Mike Ray to provide a suitable introduction to the game. How many companies can you name that include a lesson with the #4 ranked player in the world as a fringe benefit?

When is Lorraine Galloway not Lorraine Galloway?

When she's Anita Maldonado, that's when. The identifying names got all scrambled like a cheap diner's eggs in the last issue. The WIRT's Maldonado was identified once, no, wait, twice as Lorraine Galloway (*Short Serves* and contents page).

On a related note, Doreen Fowler has not taken on the pseudonym of Darlene to anyone but our caption writers, unless of course she wants to be called Lorraine Galloway ...oh, never mind

Author Tour?

When you stop in at the newsstand to pick up the next **KILLSHOT**, take a look among the books for Woody Clouse's "Winning Racquetball". The IRT's Clouse co-authored the book with Ed Taylor for Human Kinetics Publishers. The text is informative and comprehensive, and many of your favorite photos from past years of **KILLSHOT** adorn the pages.



Who's Number One?

As we go to press Sudsy Monchik has reached the Number 1 ranking in the IRT. The tournament that lays the background for this coup de tat will be covered in our next issue. Congratulations should go to Monchik who has boldly ripped through the tour with a vengeance.

That doesn't take anything away from Cliff Swain who has owned the number one ranking for some time and has managed to dominate the toughest field of pro competitors we've ever seen. He'll be back.

That also doesn't take anything away from Mike Ray, Mr. Consistency, who's been the spoiler all season and one of the few pros who seems to have Swain's number with any regularity. His wins over Swain have allowed Monchik to gain ground in the rankings. He's not done yet.

And, that doesn't take anything away

from Andy Roberts who has hovered around the #2 spot for much of the season. Roberts is one of the strongest, most disciplined competitors on the tour. He's not done yet, either.

You get a chance to hear from Andy Roberts in this issue. Never afraid to shoot from the hip, Roberts' insights into the tour and the game are always honest, regardless of the controversy.

You'll find a couple of interviews in this issue. We thought the best way to convey what is going on with the US Open was to get input from the influential, the powerful, and sometimes the controversial, personalities that are behind the scenes of the biggest event in recent racquetball history. So you will find more interviews in issues to come with Ray Schultz, CEO of Promus Hotels (the major sponsor of the

event); Randy Stafford, designer and builder of the unique portable court facility that will be used; Doug Ganim, the force behind the U.S. Open; and other visionaries in the racquetball world.

The second interview you'll find in this issue is with American Amateur Racquetball Association Executive Director Luke St. Onge. As he describes, we are witnessing an unprecedented new spirit of cooperation within the racquetball industry, the very spirit which allowed a monumental undertaking as complex as the US Open to ever come about.

As the guiding force of the AARA, St. Onge has the inside view of what is ahead for amateur racquetball in this country. We've gotten him to address some current issues, and answer the questions that have been on everyone's mind.

--SQ

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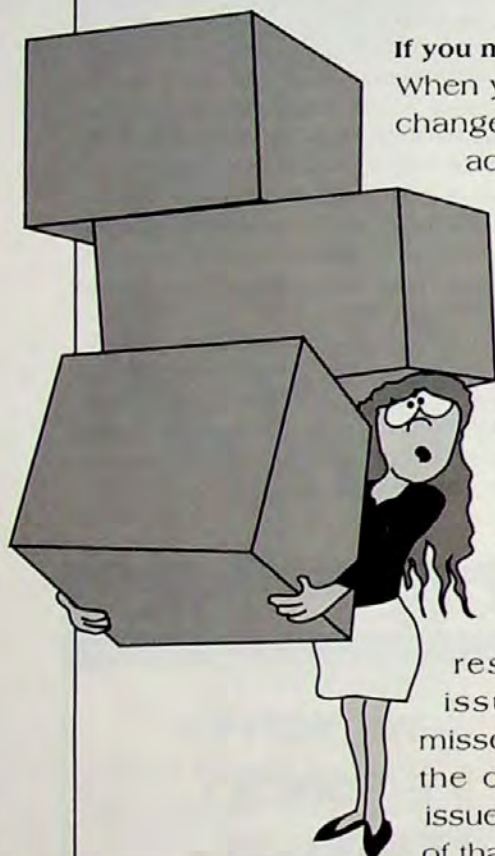
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Hey, guys, get it right!

I have been an avid tournament playing racquetball player for the past ten years. As such, I am very interested in seeing our sport grow. Usually **KILLSHOT** does a fine job of showcasing racquetball, but I was very disappointed with the issue (Winter 1996) that I just received. There were numerous errors that, to me, seem very amateurish and could and should have been seen and corrected by your editors.

Page 1 & 2 The person pictured is not Lorraine Galloway, it's Anita Maldonado.

Page 22 In the WIRT standings, Lorraine (#11) is misspelled.

Page 22 In the WIRT standings, Randi's (#15) last name is Friedman.

Page 27 The person in the picture is Doreen, not Darlene.

Page 27 In the caption for the picture, Merritt is misspelled.

Page 44 Last paragraph - I think you mean Rocky Carson, not Arson.

Page 44 Last paragraph - His name is Ryan Staten, not Stanton.

Don't get me wrong - I am thrilled that **KILLSHOT** exists for all of us racquetballheads. I just think that in order for the sport to be taken seriously on a large (Olympic?) scale, a magazine such as yours needs to be as professionally done as possible.

S. Farber
New York, New York

Ever had one of those days when you skip nearly every ball you try to shoot? Our sincere apologies to the players involved in the errors...and our thanks to Mr. Farber for the support and the feedback.

Where's Cliff?

I have been reading your magazine for more than a year now and I just do not understand your choice not to cover the

real story of racquetball, Cliff Swain. This guy has just dominated the sport for the last 5 years. However, he certainly hasn't dominated the coverage in your magazine.

Time and again I've read articles in **KILLSHOT** and have been disappointed because if Swain wins it is just treated as Ho-Hum news. Your staff seems to be much more interested in the players who don't win but might win. In fact, you have anointed Sudsy Monchick as the new king of racquetball even though the last time I checked there was still only one true king and that is Cliff Swain, hands down, without question.

If you gave Swain space in your magazine in direct proportion to his accomplishments, readers might get tired of this saturation and nobody else on the tour would get adequate coverage. On the other hand, by not giving Swain the coverage he deserves your staff is leaving many readers like myself frustrated by not giving us the story on racquetball's "ONLY" superstar. Racquetball has a superstar in Swain and failing to promote this great player will hurt the growth of the sport.

After his latest conquest in Las Vegas, it appears that Swain will once again be the Champion. Now in your next issue please don't disappoint your readers and not give the Champ his due. How about an interview with Swain on what he did this past year and not articles about what other players might have done but for Swain.

T. Norton
South Boston, Massachusetts

Anybody seen this article?

In the not too distant past, I thought I recalled reading an article on racquetball relating to other sports activities. In other words, racquetball and golf being somewhat complementary, but racquetball and tennis being just the opposite.

Do you have any clue where this might have been published -- possibly in **KILLSHOT** Magazine?

Many thanks for your assistance.
J. Taylor
Miles City, Montana

Sorry but we aren't familiar with the article in question. The only comparison story we've done was a study of the numbers of players involved in different racquet sports. That ran in the Summer '95 issue. Good luck in your search.

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36 things to Always Never Forget

By Tim
Armstrong

In addition to running a successful commercial real estate business, Tim Armstrong works to teach and promote racquetball in the Overland Park area of Kansas. Over years of teaching at all levels of the sport, he developed a list of the key concepts that he found himself covering again and again on the court with different students. When we saw his list, it stood out as one of the most useful tools we had seen. Useable, practical, and to-the-point, each concept on this list offers a significant knowledge for beginners, as well as a terrific refresher for more experienced players. With some license from Tim to shuffle the order and occasionally phrase things our way, here are the concepts that have made him such a success as a teacher, and may just take your game to the next level.

- 1 Warm up thoroughly. Stretch and repeat all of your shots until you are consistent. Be at 100% execution from the first serve of the match.
- 2 Sauna, whirlpool, or hot showers may help with your warm-up.
- 3 Vary your serve speeds. Maintain an arsenal that includes a full spectrum of drives, lobs and everything in between.

4 Never telegraph your drive serves. Hit to both sides from the same position, changing only the position of your racquet.

5 Use a lob serve to your advantage. Forcing your opponent to return a serve with a shot hit above his waist increases the likelihood of a weak return and works to your advantage.

6 Make Z serves kick off the side wall at no less than 38 feet to make things as awkward as possible for the receiver.

7 Keep your receiver from stepping in to cut off your serves by properly timing your Z's and by nicking the side wall in deep court on lobs.

8 Practice using IRT rules (one serve) will improve your first serve.

9 The best footwork on a serve is a two step motion. That is, for the right handed player, begin with feet lined up along the back of the service box, right foot in front. Take a small step with the back (left) foot, then flow into your service motion with a bigger step with your front (right) foot. Reverse for the southpaw.

10 When you've hit a serve, immediately move close to the five foot line. Use your peripheral vision to watch your receiver's racquet and stay crouched with your racquet up and ready.

11 Stay low. You are much stronger from a crouched position. Stay low like a sumo wrestler throughout every rally.

12 Keep your feet on the floor. Move using slide steps that keep the balls of your feet on or just off the floor.

13 Keep your feet moving. Even though you want your feet close to the ground, don't get caught flatfooted. Tap dance or do whatever you have to keep your feet moving throughout the rally.

14 Breathe easy. Take twice as long to inhale as to exhale. Breathe in through your nose, out through your mouth.

15 Focus. Let go of negative thoughts, dwell on the positive and make it happen, even after you've just messed up.

16 Work from center court. Prime position is in the center at about the five foot line. Always get back there and shoot from there as much as possible.

17 Pay attention to your opponent. Watch his racquet instead of staring at the front wall.

18 Give your opponent enough room to shoot, no more. If he is behind you, give him a clear down-the-line, and a clear cross. Don't take yourself out of the point by clearing too much, or hinder or risk injury by not giving enough room.

19 When you cut off a ball, either on a lob serve return or well into a rally, in most cases you can hit a better shot if you let the ball bounce immediately before you make contact.

20 Win the point as soon as possible. Hit the winner on the serve or the third shot, or on the return if your opponent is serving. Force your opponent out of position and shoot to where he isn't. Don't rally when you don't have to.

21 Exploit your opponent's weaknesses. Find his trouble spots right from the warm-up and keep the pressure on by hitting to them. Check out his backhand, it is often a good place to start.

22 Hit the pass when your opponent is in front court.

23 Hit the pinch when your opponent is behind you and close to the back wall.

24 Shoot to the corners. Hitting the ball to deep court within a foot of the side wall at only a foot or so high is almost always a safe offensive choice.

25 Never offer up a plum on a return from a tight wall shot. If the ball is too close to either wall to properly shoot it, go to the ceiling.

26 Hit every shot flat. Keep your racquet face perfectly straight and ninety degrees to the floor as you shoot.

27 Use your legs and body to generate power. Pay attention to your transfer of weight and your leg work as you hit the ball especially from a setup.

28 Maintain a proper grip. Keep it like a handshake with your wrist on top much like tennis. If you do alter it a bit from forehand to backhand shots, do it properly.

29 Play from the top half of your racquet, it assists with both power and accuracy.

30 Handle the back wall as necessary. If the shot you are returning is going to be a tight get off the back wall, you can tap the wall with your racquet to help gauge your distance, or push off the back wall for extra power.

31 Recover from your follow through. Suck your racquet back into your body. Begin bringing it up and ready as you stay crouched to move into position for your next shot.

32 Learn from your losses. In racquetball, there will be days when you lose to someone you should or usually do beat.

33 If you get a little creative with weight training, you can make your movements similar to those on the court.

34 Stretch your brains out! Research is indicating that stretching is extremely important since you are stronger without your tight muscles pulling against one another.

35 High quality cafeteria chains such as Luby's or Picadilly are great sources of high energy foods at a good price while on the run.

36 For obnoxious opponents, I find the most effective technique is a hair grab and pull to the knee.

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STERIOD use and athletes

By Richard Honaker, MD

Recently we have all been hearing a great deal about the use of steroids by athletes. Anabolic steroids are widely available on the black market, at body building gyms, fitness centers, and mail order houses, and, often, from health care professionals. These are very powerful drugs with many actions on the body. Abusers commonly take doses 100, or even 1,000 times larger than those prescribed for medical conditions. There are many serious side effects of these drugs.

Athletes claim improved athletic performance with the use of anabolic steroids, however medical studies reveal conflicting results. Anabolic steroids can increase significantly the

strength of athletes who are consistently and aggressively weight-training and who continue aggressive weight-training while maintaining a high protein, high caloric

definitely counterbalance any benefits, even for those aggressively training individuals. Also the steroids themselves may not directly build muscles. There is evidence

that the euphoria and diminished fatigue associated with steroid use results in increased duration and intensity of training. This would ultimately lead to an increase in muscle mass. Despite this increase in muscle mass, there is evidence that the muscles themselves are not as healthy as you would expect.

The most serious adverse effects of anabolic steroids are liver abnormalities. These

Miscellaneous adverse effects include water retention, closure of growth plates in the bones resulting in diminished bone growth, irritability, anxiety, headaches dizziness, nausea, rash, appetite changes, increased urine output, and accelerated male pattern baldness.

diet. However, in athletes who do not satisfy these criteria, athletic performance is not consistently improved. The adverse effects

drugs have been associated with hepatitis, which is an inflammation of the liver cells resulting in decreased function. Liver

tumors and elevated liver enzyme tests have also been seen. These can be permanent effects with disastrous consequences. The most dangerous aspect of this problem is that the damage occurs without causing symptoms until damage has progressed significantly.

Steroids are involved in the metabolism of the sexual hormones. Effects upon the glandular system of the body include alterations in plasma testosterone (the male hormone) and in the production of sperm by the testicles. In one study, plasma testosterone concentrations dropped almost 50% when steroids were taken. Gonadotropins are hormones secreted by the pituitary gland in the brain and control the production of sexual hormones. Steroids cause a decrease in these gonadotropins. These drugs therefore work not only on the sexual organs themselves, but also have an adverse effect on the pituitary gland. Well documented reductions in fertility occur in individuals taking steroids.

Steroids can also effect your blood cholesterol. A preliminary study of weight-trained athletes reported a lower HDL cholesterol (the good kind of cholesterol) in current and previous steroid users. Steroids can also elevate blood pressure and cause an increase in the serum triglycerides or fats.

Behavioral changes have also been seen in steroid users. One common effect is increased aggressive behavior. There is a state of euphoria and diminished fatigue while taking these drugs and they also result in changes in the electrical pattern of the electroencephalogram, which measures brain wave motion. Changes in sex drive and mood swings have also been reported.

Adverse effects which specifically concern women are a lower voice, increased facial hair, changes in sex drive, decreased breast size, changes in or absence of menstrual function, increased aggressiveness, acne, increased body hair, loss of scalp hair, and increased appetite.

Miscellaneous adverse effects include testicle atrophy, prediabetic conditions, decreased sperm production, water reten-

tion, closure of growth plates in the bones resulting in diminished bone growth, irritability, anxiety, headaches dizziness, nau-

There is also evidence that steroids increase the occurrence of early heart disease by elevating cholesterol and lowering the protective HDL fraction of cholesterol. Bleeding gums, stretch marks, palpitations, joint stiffness, protein in the urine, increased perspiration, blurred vision and nose bleeds are also more commonly seen in steroid users and abusers.

Steroids are a problem. With this widespread problem, we need to change our focus. During athletic training, our focus must be on athletic ability and good health. We should

depend more on inherent genetic abilities, standard training techniques and the application of proven principles of good health than on the use of anabolic steroids.

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Norm Blum's Passing Shots

Hey Sudsy

They are shouting his name in the streets of Staten Island. The Staten Island Advance is preparing a big spread on their hometown sensation. Sudsy Monchik shocked the racquetball world when he finished the 1995-96 season No. 1 in what really was his first full-time season of playing the professional circuit. When Mike Ray defeated Cliff Swain for the fourth time in seven meetings this season in San Jose just before **KILLSHOT** press time, it gave Sudsy the opportunity to capture the No. 1 ranking. Monchik edged Ray in four games to end (or interrupt) the Cliff Swain reign. Fellow New Yorker Ruben Gonzalez, who played with Sudsy when he was a mere seven years old and throughout his career, hugged Sudsy for 10 minutes as though he himself had won another national championship. In reality he was a big part of it by having sensed potential greatness and working with him during his formative years. If Swain had advanced past Ray, the final against Monchik would have been insignificant in terms of ranking. Swain, who many rank ahead of Mike Yellen and Marty Hogan as the best of all-time, is still under 30 and will be a factor for the next few years.

But Sudsy, a mere 21, didn't savor his victory too long. "I always dreamed, ever since I was a kid, of being the number one racquetball player in the world. I thought when I was ranked 10, then 8, 7, and 6, how badly I wanted it. But now that I have it, I want to stay number one a thousand more times than I wanted it. It's mine and I don't want anyone taking it."

Monchik didn't have a time table of being No. 1 and had confidence in his ability from day one in the pros. In 1994, after losing in the quarter finals of the AARA Nationals in Houston, he stunned the pro community by capturing the professional Nationals in Portland. Most labeled it a fluke, but when he played in a handful of tournaments in 1995 and won, he more than earned their respect.

"He hits the heck out of the ball," says Ray. "He does everything right. He's exciting and marketable. I was getting tired of hearing about how Cliff dominated. While he did real well, he never dominated me, so that irked me a bit. Sudsy started out real well in the pros from the get go."

Monchik said his sponsor, Head, was pleased. "They are the best company in the world. They have the number one and number two players in the world. Cliff is my toughest opponent. His desire and ability are similar to mine."

Top Five

Mike Ray's career has spanned three decades, having started as an amateur in the late seventies. He lists his five toughest opponents as: 1. Cliff Swain; 2. Mike Yellen; 3. Andy Roberts; 4. Ruben Gonzalez; 5. Ed Andrews.

Marty Hogan, who would be on most pro's lists didn't make Ray's. "Marty did most of his legendary play before I started playing him. He was winning tournaments when I was 14," says the 33-year-old Ray.

Potpourri

The reason it's so hard to put the true number of racquetball players into perspective is because of the veracity of those who fill out surveys. If you play once a month or three times a year should that be counted as a player?...Can you believe Ruben Gonzalez is looking for a sponsor? After his career-threatening basketball injury, his contract ended and wasn't renewed. No one thought the 40+ veteran would return but guess what -- he's back... Correct me if I'm wrong, but there still hasn't been an AARA National Open singles champion finish the season No. 1 in the pros. Monchik was a national AARA junior champion in several age groups but never got farther than the quarter finals in the amateurs. Andy Roberts, a former AARA champ, held the No. 1 ranking for a few tournaments and has finished the pro rankings second a few times. Cliff Swain was a USRA national champ in the years the AARA was just getting started. However, no one can argue that the AARA hasn't been a feeder for the pros. Just take one look at the results of the 1989 Junior Nationals. Sudsy won the 14 & under, defeating his neighborhood rival Jason Mannino (#7 this year). John Ellis (#5) captured the 16's and Mike Guidry

(#6) was the 18 & under champ... I can understand why the AARA Nationals has a high entry fee of \$75.00. Heck, there's hospitality for a week plus a banquet and the expenses of putting on such a tournament are high. Besides, there are more people who would like to play in it than there are available slots. It's supply and demand so perhaps the fees should go even higher. Most local tournaments don't have that luxury. Therefore, charging \$35-\$40 for one division is absurd. I'm sorry but playing in racquetball tournaments simply shouldn't cost more than tickets to Disney World. If a club charges \$40 a month to be a member, a \$10-\$15 tournament entry should be sufficient to make a tournament cost-effective. One-day tournaments are less expensive and don't take up an entire weekend. A club that does this a few times a year better maintains intensity among its racquetball players. Retaining members is what it should be about. The new Racquetball Industry Association programming support package offers some great ideas along these lines... Tennis is coming up with longer racquets that help players serve even faster? I wonder if the Fox Network will have to utilize a blue laser light for telecasts like they use on hockey.





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**Monchik &
Swain
dance to
victories as
the tour heats
up to a Disco
Inferno**

Stayin' Alive



Steve Lerner

Atlanta
Atlanta Falcons Sports Complex
VCI Challenge Cup Series #3

Cold winds ripped through Atlanta during the southern leg of the VCI Challenge Series. While the industry meetings that followed the event in conjunction with the NSGA Supershow also in Atlanta were momentous in terms of racquetball history, a group of determined IRT pros carved out their own piece of history on the court. On the famous Falcon's Complex three wall glass court, the best of the IRT served up some spectacular play with all the southern hospitality they could muster.

The much-heralded return of Ruben Gonzalez after one year off the IRT following a ruptured Achilles' Tendon proved that the tenacious veteran may indeed be the most amazing story in sports. Mid forties and well past typical retirement age for the tour and for pro athletes in general (Is this guy for real?) Gonzalez seemed to have given up nothing during the absence. While everyone's favorite dive-master came out smokin' to capture his first game back, the power of Louis Vogel was just too much.

The upset of the tournament and possibly of the season was delivered to then #5 ranked John Ellis by qualifier Brian Simpson of Indianapolis. Big Tony Jelso was able to stop Simpson's attack in the next round, but only after the impressive Hoosier managed to take a game from him as well.

Mike Ray jumped on the upset train as well by eliminating the king-of-the-courts Cliff Swain later in the semis. Not only should Ray never be underestimated, he seems to mentally prepare for Swain better than anyone in the game.

Mike Ray jumped on the upset train as well by eliminating the king-of-the-courts Cliff Swain later in the semis. Not only should Ray never be underestimated, he seems to mentally prepare for Swain better than anyone in the game.

Sudsy Monchik played Andy Roberts in the semis with all the poise of a seasoned veteran. With an arsenal that includes some of the most powerful weapons in the game, he commanded Ray in the final to capture his third event title of the season and those valuable VCI Cup points.



Darren Schenck

Pittsburgh
Racquet Club of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh Pro Am

Injuries have helped shape the season for the IRT with top players Gonzalez and Tim Doyle sidelined much of the time New Orleans' Drew Kachtik found himself on the list as well with damage to his shoulder which forced him out of the draw in Pittsburgh.

It looked like Gonzalez was in true pre injury form, taking Mannino to the tiebreaker 'til Mannino staged an unbelievable comeback at 10-3 to take the game and the match. Jelso sat Ellis down early in

Swain and Kachtik battle it out in the quarters at the Atlanta Falcons Sports Complex, for the VCI event in Atlanta.



three and Adam Karp capitalized on Mike Guidry's turned ankle to remove him from competition. Strange things seemed to be afoot at the Racquet Club of Pittsburgh.

It looked like Derek Robinson was going to pull the upset of the tournament over #1 Swain. Robinson had a 2 to 1 lead but Swain buckled down and took the next two games 11-7 then 11-3. Swain continued to play near flawless racquetball, even dispensing Ray, the only pro who seems to give him trouble on a regular basis.



Steve Lerner

The best player on the planet following his victory in the Foxwoods National Championships and took the next two games 11-7 then 11-3. Swain continued to play near flawless racquetball, even dispensing Ray, the only pro who seems to give him trouble on a regular basis.

Sudsy Monchik

11-3, 11-5, 11-6

Mike Ray

SEMIS

Ray d. Swain

5-11, 11-9, 9-11, 11-4, 11-8

Monchik d. Roberts

8-11, 11-3, 11-7, 12-10

QUARTERS

Swain d. Kachtik

11-3, 11-3, 11-6

Ray d. Jelso

11-4, 11-4, 11-7

Monchik d. Mannino

11-2, 11-7, 11-5

Roberts d. Guidry

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

SIXTEENS

Swain d. Rankin

11-6, 11-5, 11-5

Kachtik d. Vogel

11-4, 11-7, 8-11, 11-13, 11-6

Jelso d. Simpson

12-10, 11-7, 15-13, 11-3

Ray d. Clouse

6-11, 11-8, 11-9, 11-6

Monchik d. Engel

11-8, 11-6, 11-5

Mannino d. Doyle

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

Guidry d. Reiff

11-0, 9-11, 11-2, 7-11, 11-6

Roberts d. Fowler

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

Atlanta

SEMIS

Swain d. Ray
11-6, 11-2, 11-4
Roberts d. Monchik
11-2, 8-11, 11-7, 11-6

SIXTEENS

Swain d. Robinson
11-3, 9-11, 3-11, 11-7, 11-3
Mannino d. Doyle
5-11, 10-12, 12-10, 11-8, 14-12
Vogel d. Fowler
11-8, 5-11, 11-8, 11-3
Ray d. Engel
11-5, 11-5, 11-9
Monchik d. Sable
11-7, 11-5, 11-4
Karp d. Guidry
7-11, 11-2, 11-0, 11-5
Jelso d. Ellis
12-10, 11-8, 11-2
Roberts d. Rankin
12-10, 11-8, 11-2

Monchik and Roberts provided a slugfest that was almost as hot as Steel-town's mills but Roberts came out on top in four. Handy Andy then had to face Swain. The two titans have been see-sawing their meetings all season long and Roberts took the first game. Swain, as difficult to defeat as Robert Parker's other Bostonian tough guy, Spenser, took control of the match and retired Roberts. You don't need to hire a private eye to figure out Swain deserves to be where he is in terms of ranking.

Phoenix Fitness Planet Phoenix Open

Upsets became the rule as the IRT headed west to Phoenix. First Jeff Bell eliminated the hard hitting Louis Vogel in the first round. Next Woody Clouse caught fire in the sixteens to knock out Ray in a tough five-gamer. But the biggest upsets belonged to two of the fastest guns on the tour: Mannino and Guidry.

Guidry has defeated some of the biggest names in the sport, only to fall just short of capturing his first event victory. In

Cliff Swain

7-11, 11-5, 11-9, 11-3

Andy Roberts

QUARTERS

Swain d. Mannino
11-2, 11-0, 11-3
Ray d. Vogel
11-5, 11-3, 11-5
Monchik d. Karp
11-4, 11-7, 11-5
Roberts d. Jelso
11-4, 10-12, 11-8, 11-5

Pittsburgh

Phoenix, he managed to hustle and dive his way back from two games down to grab the win and a berth in the semis.

Mannino, who has fine tuned his go-for-broke style over the course of the season into a top eight pro game, captured his biggest win to date. After staying neck and neck with the #2 seed Roberts, he squeezed hard to put away the fifth game for the upset.

When the smoke had cleared in the semis, Ellis and Monchik were positioned for a rematch of the Chicago final from earlier in the season. Monchik is a man on a mission and had no



Andy Roberts came out shootin' in the final at the Racquet Club of Pittsburgh, but Cliff Swain wanted to go home with the check, and did!

John Ellis likewise came out firing against Sudsy Monchik at Fitness Planet in Phoenix but Sudsy took the next three games decisively.



Darren Schenck

Sudsy Monchik

6-11, 11-0, 11-9, 11-2

John Ellis

SEMIS

Ellis d. Guidry
11-8, 8-11, 11-5, 11-7
Monchik d. Mannino
11-3, 11-2, 11-13, 11-3

QUARTERS

Guidry d. Swain
7-11, 9-11, 11-3, 11-6, 11-8
Ellis d. Clouse
11-6, 11-3, 11-2
Monchik d. Engel
11-6, 11-9, 11-5
Mannino d. Roberts
12-10, 2-11, 11-7, 9-11, 11-9

SIXTEENS

Swain d. Embry
11-1, 11-4, 11-1
Guidry d. Jelso
11-8, 6-11, 11-5, 6-11, 11-5
Ellis d. Gonzalez
11-7, 11-1, 11-2
Clouse d. Ray
8-11, 11-2, 11-0, 7-11, 11-4
Monchik d. Mulcock
7-11, 11-6, 5-11, 11-2, 11-2
Engel d. Bell
11-8, 11-8, 11-3
Mannino d. Boscia
8-11, 13-11, 11-4, 11-3
Roberts d. Gelhaus
11-6, 12-10, 11-8

Phoenix

John Adam
Ellis / Karp

11-4, 11-0, 1-9

Jason Woody
Mannino / Clouse



New VCI Doubles
Champions, Ellis, &
Karp and a big
check from V.W.
Credit.

Stayin'
Alive

SEMIS

Jason Mannino / Woody Clouse
5-11, 11-8, 11-9, 11-3
Andy Roberts / Mike Guidry

John Ellis / Adam Karp
11-6, 11-4, 9-11, 2-11, 11-9
Cliff Swain / Tony Jelso



Courtesy Sports

Runners Up Manni-
no and Clouse

Challenge Series.

With Doyle still injured, there was no incumbent team to unseat for the VCI world title. Monchik replaced Doyle with Chicago's Tim Sweeney, for a seventh seed.

Gonzalez returned to reunite former the champions with Ray, but with little success.

After eliminating them in the first round, Robinson and O'Neil took two games from #1 seeds Roberts and Guidry. An unlikely pair, Swain and Jelso, played on one another's talents to storm into the semis.

That all important cohesiveness made formidable teams of Mannino and Clouse and Ellis and Karp. Two teams of awesome individuals, these were truly combinations that became even greater than the sums of their amazing components.

Even so, Ellis and Karp seized immediate control in the final. In one of those matches where a team can do no wrong, they hit winner after winner to stun Mannino and Clouse. In an awesome display of athletics and acrobatics, they established themselves as the best in the world and new VCI Champions.

QUARTERS

Andy Roberts / Mike Guidry
5-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-9, 11-10
Derek Robinson / Todd O'Neil

Jason Mannino / Woody Clouse
11-2, 11-7, 9-11, 11-7
Drew Kachuk / Dan Fowler

John Ellis / Adam Karp
11-4, 11-3, 11-4
Mike Engel / Brian Rankin

Cliff Swain / Tony Jelso
11-0, 11-0, 11-2
Kelly Gelhaus / Joey Paraiso

San Francisco

VCI World
Championship
Doubles

intention of allowing Ellis the kind of success he enjoyed in winning the Chicago event. Even though Ellis has gained tremendous ground this season as a pro, he only managed to take the first game from Monchik. Adding consistency to an already awesome arsenal of weapons, Monchik proved himself just as deadly to the hottest young guns as he is to seasoned veterans and posted yet another event victory in Phoenix.

San Francisco
Shoeber's Athletic Club
VCI World Doubles Championship

Most club level "C" players quickly come to the understanding that the skills and strategies for winning doubles are vastly different from those for successful singles. At the pro level, it takes players with no glaring weaknesses, players whose best weapons compliment one another, and a cohesiveness between the two. It is that third attribute, the synergy to maximize players inherent abilities, that typically makes all the difference among the elite. players of the IRT and the prestigious VCI

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Created for and with the help of the professional players of the International Racquetball Tour (IRT)

One of the Flyin' Elvises? No, Danny Fowler reaching for a shot against Cliff Swain. He eliminated Mike Ray, put Mike Guidry out of commission (center right) including a doughnut in the first game but couldn't hold out against Swain.



Steve Lerner

Sudsy Monchik and John Ellis both play with such speed it's like watching a controlled blur. Monchik took Ellis out at Las Vegas, then went head to head (or Head to Ektelon) with Andy Roberts (center left).

SEMIS

Swain d. Fowler
11-0, 11-7, 11-1
Monchik d. Roberts
11-7, 6-11, 11-8, 11-3

Cliff Swain

11-5, 11-6, 11-1

Sudsy Monchik

QUARTERS

Swain d. Mannino
11-4, 11-0, 11-2
Fowler d. Guidry
11-0, 11-7, 11-5
Monchik d. Ellis
11-4, 11-5, 11-4
Roberts d. Bronfeld
11-8, 11-7, 11-1

SIXTEENS

Swain d. Gelhaus
11-2, 11-4, 11-5
Mannino d. Gonzalez
11-7, 11-3, 5-11, 11-7
Guidry d. Engel
12-10, 11-5, 11-9
Fowler d. Ray
11-2, 10-12, 11-7, 6-11, 11-5
Monchik d. Paraiso
12-10, 11-3, 11-9
Ellis d. Karp
11-7, 13-11, 11-2
Bronfeld d. Kachtik
11-2, 11-2, 10-12, 4-11, 11-8
Roberts d. Rankin
11-0, 11-6, 11-4

Las Vegas

Las Vegas
Las Vegas Sporting House
Foxwoods Resort & Casino
IRT Pro Nationals

One glaring difference between the Foxwoods Resort and Casino's Pro Nationals and any other IRT event is the massive size of the field of players. The Las Vegas Sporting House entertained a huge qualifying segment to play into a first round of sixty four. The venue, the grandeur of the event, the national championship title, or the biggest purse of the season at thirty K may have all contributed.

Few upsets visited the early rounds, save #51 Paraiso over #19 Ceresia in a tough five game in the thirty-twos. In the following round, #42 Michael Bronfeld took out Kachtik.

Baltimore's Dan Fowler, coming in at #13 eliminated Ray in the sixteens, then crushed Guidry in the quarters. His brilliant showing at the nationals caps off a great season and a sort of breakthrough into the next level for Fowler.

The story in Las Vegas was all Swain. coming into the quarters, he had given up only 33 total points in three complete rounds of play. While much has been written about Swain's dominance during the past few seasons, in truth, he has never played better than he did at the nationals. He got the impossible, rifled the serves, and nailed the winners. While this season has seen the most improvement in more top players than any season in history; make no mistake, the man at the top is holding ground with a vengeance. Swain set a new record for the longest run (six

Slayin' Alive

rounds) without a single game loss, and the most doughnuts delivered (five) for a single event.

Monchik frustrated Roberts with a defeat in the semis in one of the most intense and physical matches of the season. While the veteran Roberts has managed to bank on unbelievable consistency to hold the number two spot most of the season, Monchik seems to be more and more confident in his semifinal meetings with the king.

Still a three man race with one ranking event left in the pro season, Monchik and Roberts are working furiously to mount one last offensive on the season title. Players like Ellis and Ray as spoilers add some spice to the mix as well. From this point, the question is: "Has Swain, the best player on the planet today, hit a zone that makes him untouchable for the rest of the season, or did he peak in Vegas leaving one opportunity to be dethroned?"

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The Official Ball of the AARA & WPRA

VCI spreadsheet

IRT

1. **Sudsy Monchik (3)**
Staten Island, New York
2. **Cliff Swain (1)**
Braintree, Massachusetts
3. **Andy Roberts (2)**
Memphis, Tennessee
4. **Mike Ray (4)**
Hilton Head, South Carolina
5. **John Ellis (7)**
Seal Beach, California
6. **Mike Guidry (5)**
Dallas, Texas
7. **Jason Mannino (11)**
San Diego, California
8. **Drew Kachtik (6)**
New Orleans, Louisiana
9. **Tony Jelso (13)**
Ventura, California
10. **Dan Fowler (15T)**
Rockville, Maryland
11. **Louis Vogel (9)**
Albuquerque, New Mexico
12. **Adam Karp (10)**
Santa Anna, California
13. **Mike Engel (15T)**
Bethesda, Maryland
14. **Brian Rankin**
St. Louis, Missouri
15. **Woody Clouse (14)**
Truckee, California
16. **Derek Robinson**
Indianapolis, Indiana

WIRT

1. **Michelle Gould (1)**
Boise, Idaho
2. **Cheryl Gudinas (2)**
Lisle, Illinois
3. **Amy Kilbane (3)**
Rocky River, Ohio
- 4T. **Marcy Lynch (9)**
Horsham, Pennsylvania
- 4T. **Anita Maldonado (5)**
New York, New York
6. **Kim Machiran (6)**
Ballwin, Missouri
7. **Molly O'Brien (10)**
Severna Park, Maryland
8. **Jackie Gibson (15T)**
El Cajon, California
9. **Dina Moreland**
Claremont, California
10. **Lynne Coburn (7)**
Baltimore, Maryland
11. **Chris Evon (4)**
San Diego, California
12. **Lorraine Galloway (11T)**
Jamaica Estates, New York
13. **Janet Myers**
Charlotte, North Carolina
14. **Doreen Fowler (8)**
Rockville, Maryland
15. **Michelle Wiragh (13)**
Laruel, Maryland
16. **Laura Fenton (14)**
Lincoln, Nebraska

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

- 1
Sudsy Monchik
- 2
Cliff Swain
- 3
Mike Ray
- 4
Jason Mannino
- 5
Louis Vogel
- 6
Adam Karp
- 7T
Woody Clouse
- 7T
Brian Rankin



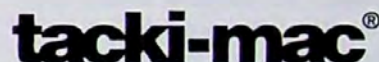
PENN glove bonus pool: Includes all IRT stops and all those players wearing the PENN glove, official glove of the IRT.

- 1
Mike Ray
- 2
Jason Mannino
- 3
Louis Vogel
- 4
Mike Engel
- 5
Brian Rankin
- 6
Ruben Gonzalez
- 7T
Darrin Schenck
- 7T
Josh Messina



tacki-mac bonus pool includes finishes from all IRT events for those players using tacki-mac, the official grip of the IRT.

- 1
Mike Ray
- 2
Jason Mannino
- 3
Louis Vogel
- 4
Adam Karp
- 5
Mike Engel
- 6
Brian Rankin
- 7
Woody Clouse
- 8
Darrin Schenck



VCI Challenge Cup Series

1.
Cliff Swain
2.
Sudsy Monchik
3.
Andy Roberts
4.
Mike Ray
5.
John Ellis
6.
Mike Guidry
- 7T.
Drew Kachtik
- 7T.
Tony Jelso
- 7T.
Jason Mannino



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A Tale of Two Cities

Gould storms Syracuse and Las Vegas as she Continues her Reign of Terror on the WIRT

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. For Michelle Gould, reigning queen of the Women's International Racquetball Tour it was the best. She captured two more cities to go along with her already impressive win list. For the remaining field it was the worst. Still no female player on the planet can play the same rac-

quetball she plays. What's more, she never loses her head, and gives the others a "Dickens" of a time trying to catch her. Literary allusions aside, the women's tour begins to draw to a close its first season as the WIRT with serious action in Syracuse and Las Vegas.

Syracuse Track & Racquet Club Spalding Pro-Am

Syracuse saw an early upset as Jackie Gibson eliminated number two seed Cheryl Gudinas in the opening round. With Gibson having played an abbreviated season, her ranking does not correspond with her tremendous ability. That being the case, she may be the most devastating early round draw on the tour. Baltimore's Lynn Coburn became her victim in the following round.

In the top of the draw, Ohio's Amy Kilbane asserted herself as a contender with a good win over veteran Marcy Lynch to face Gould in the semi. Still, Gould was unstoppable.

In the final, Gibson, Gould's former doubles partner, managed to grab the first game, but still could mount no offensive enough to weaken Gould's grip on the tour.

Las Vegas Las Vegas Sporting House Foxwoods WIRT Pro Nationals

The Foxwoods WIRT nationals was a tournament of absolute blow outs. In the first combined national championships with

Jackie Gibson and Amy Kilbane battle in Foxwoods WIRT Nationals at the Las Vegas Sporting House.



Michelle Gould

11-1, 11-7, 11-7

Cheryl Gudinas

SEMIS

Gould d. Moreland

11-1, 11-1, 11-6

Gudinas d. Gibson

11-9, 11-8, 11-7

QUARTERS

Gould d. Evon

11-0, 11-7, 11-1

Moreland d. Wiragh

11-4, 11-3, 11-7

Gibson d. Kilbane

11-3, 12-10, 11-1

Gudinas d. Tisinger

11-3, 11-2, 11-4

SIXTEENS

Gould d. Mayadas

11-0, 11-0, 11-1

Evon d. Fowler

11-2, 11-3, 11-6

Moreland d. Maldonado

11-5, 11-1, 11-1

Wiragh d. Lynch

F

Kilbane d. Powell

11-9, 11-3, 11-1

Gibson d. Macharin

11-1, 11-0, 11-9

Tisinger d. Galloway

11-8, 11-2, 11-4

Gudinas d. Friedman

11-7, 11-3, 12-10

Las Vegas

Michelle Gould

6-11, 11-5, 11-1, 11-8

Jackie Gibson

SEMIS

Gould d. Kilbane

11-8, 11-8, 11-4

Gibson d. Coburn

11-4, 11-7, 7-11, 7-11, 11-9

QUARTERS

Gould d. Macharin

11-2, 11-1, 11-1

Kilbane d. Lynch

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

Coburn d. Wiragh

11-7, 11-2, 11-8

Gibson d. O'Brien

11-7, 11-5, 11-3

Syracuse

become just that. Then, and only then, when a challenger (rookie or veteran) who has the talent truly believes she is better and launches an all out attack will we see just what the mighty Gould is made of.

WHAT MORE WINNING PLAYERS SHAKE WITH AFTER A MATCH.



The new Penn Tac Racquetball Glove ensures you'll have both a strong grip on your racquet and your opponent's hand while you're saying: "Hey, better luck next time."

The Official Glove of the IRT.

the IRT, the many spectators saw their first taste of elite women's racquetball in the form of some ruthless thrashings. In fact, only two matches in the entire tournament went more than three games. While most matches were brief, they all were intense.

California's Dina Moreland stormed right to the semis, coming in with a #12 seeding. Fellow Californian Debbie Tisinger made a run to the quarters from a #23 position. Could be a hint of things to come for these West Coast blasters.

Gudinas found revenge for the beating she had taken in Syracuse at the hands of Gibson, with a semifinal blow out. Good potential in both these pros, Gibson and Gudinas both have the goods to unseat Gould if they can build them to their potential and overcome the substantial mental edge that Gould has over the rest of the world.

In short, Gould won the nationals with ease with no serious threats. Still no matter how good she might be, somehow, somewhere there is a female version of a Sudsy Monchik or a Jason Mannino who will convince herself that she is as good, then



Michelle Wiragh and Dina Moreland. Moreland outlasted Wiragh but couldn't hold out against Gould in the semis.



Jackie Gibson put Amy Kilbane away in three straight games in Las Vegas.



Playing the tour again after a leave of absence, Chris Evon serves against Michelle Gould.



A Tale of Two Cities

Michelle Gould and Cheryl Gudinas in the final at the Foxwoods WIRT Pro Nationals in Las Vegas. Gould was relentless in her attack on the women's tour. She didn't lose a game in Las Vegas and no one could score more than seven points against her as she rolled to victory.

Las Vegas Sporting House:
A piece of history just a block off
the Vegas Strip

You would think that the beautiful Las Vegas Sporting House could be a modern racquet and health facility anywhere in the world...that is until you start reading the membership list. Some of the world's biggest names in entertainment politics and sports have called the Sporting House home for several decades. Owner Norm Jenkins explained why, "This place has a true 'club' atmosphere. The famous and the not-so-famous all coexist here, just like one big family." Jerry Lewis, Dick Smothers, Maxx Baer, Marty Allen, and Sigfreid (of Sigfreid and Roy) are just a few of the daily users. According to Jenkins, "It's a perfect mix. Everyone is treated like a V.I.P by the staff, and every member treats each other just like the guy next door. You could never duplicate this atmosphere"

That is just what got Jenkins involved in the first place. After several owners couldn't make a go of the club business, Jenkins, already a successful entrepreneur, bought the club and found the formulas to make it sound. "It had to be saved, it's a one of a kind!" A fitting home to the nationals, it is indeed just that.

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Just another benefit of playing our faster, tougher new racquetball: better black and blue trophies. Why, they look almost as pretty as the gold and silver ones.

Created for and with the help of the professional players of the International Racquetball Tour (IRT).

KILLSHOT cafe

Appetizer

What is the best way to eat during a tournament? When I eat right before a match, I feel sluggish and full. When I eat a couple of hours before, I run out of steam during play. What do the pros do?

Much of the problem has to do with blood sugar. When I eat simple carbs that "rev up" my system, there is usually an initial rush, then a crash. The more my blood sugar level rises, the greater the crash. That crash makes me feel weak and hungry during play. I can't play my best with a full stomach and food just "sloshing around" in there, so I have to remember to take in plenty of "slow burning" carbs throughout the day. This way, I can eat as early as four hours before a match or as late as one hour before, and still know that my blood sugar is not going to drastically rise and fall.

What to eat becomes more important than when to eat. Slow burning carbs that provide an even flow of nutritional energy include oatmeal and other whole grains, brown rice, etc. If it is a long and intense match, I may use sports drinks like Gatorade or Powerade to keep me going. Stay away from them too much or too early before a match since they contain simple sugars and will cause that blood sugar rise and fall. Still, studies have shown that they can improve performance when used immediately before or during intense exercise. With enough "slow burners" already in your system, the rise and crash effect from them will be minimal.

Mike Ray
IRT #4

Entree

What can I do to improve my consistency on the court?

Practice makes perfect if you practice perfectly, and in the end, that is the only path to real consistency. Still, as you practice, you will only build real consistency if you make sure you are doing these things:

Maintain a high level of enthusiasm. Play with a purpose and with passion. Without motivation, you will never be consistent.

Develop an effective pregame that warms you up both physically and mentally. Use the routine to stretch your muscles, step up your heart rate, and bring your mind and body into sync. You need your heart pumping when the match starts since it takes more out of you to get your beats per minute up than to keep them there. Ritual significantly increases confidence and signals your mind and body that you are ready to play. Evolve your warm up as you learn and play more, but start with some kind of consistent routine. Remember a weak pregame is better than none at all.

Place your focus on dominating center court. Instead of worrying about rolling every ball, think about moving to center court and hitting shots that keep you there.

Let your opponent beat himself. Hit to weak areas, or to areas where he is inclined to hit low percentage shots. Capitalize on his mistakes, keep shooting the shots that are working, and avoid letting him back in by mistakes such as skips or left-ups.

Go to the ceiling when you are in trouble. If you are lunging or off balance, you need a shot that has a high margin for error and that buys you time to regain your composure and center court.

Stay in a constant state of preparation by keeping your eyes on the ball and your racquet up. You can only be consistent if you are prepared to unleash a winner with a split second's notice.

Woody Clouse
IRT #15

Dessert

I'm having trouble increasing my power even though I'm trying to use the strength in my legs. What else could be the problem?

Several things could be getting in your way. Even though you have strong legs and swing hard, other factors could be stopping you from getting the most power to the ball.

If you are off balance, you cannot transfer power from your swing to the ball. Likewise, being too tense also causes problems.

Poor concentration may cause you to be just out of position enough to make your swing awkward. It may also cause you to mis-hit the ball and so lose power.

Make sure that you are setting up an arms length from the contact point with the ball. More or less distance robs you of power.

Your body's proper rotation is vital in transferring power from your legs. Shoulders, hips, and torso all come into play.

Check your racquet face at the point of contact. If your racquet is not flat and perpendicular to the floor, you will not only lose power on the shot, but probably skip or leave the ball up.

Basically, any violation of good mechanical fundamentals will keep the power you generate to a minimum.

Woody Clouse
IRT #15



Darrin Schenck's

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Louis Vogel

Ranking:
#11

Racquet:
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String:
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Tension:
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**Average number of racquets
strung per tournament:**
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Comments:

Vogel is one of the hardest servers on tour. He hits drive serves at almost everybody - and does it well. His frame, The Weapon, has a wide string pattern. Vogel is a stringer's dream. He hits the ball very hard, so durable string, grommets in top form, and special care in stringing are important.

Player Profile:

Louis Vogel crushes his serve and hammers balls during the rallies. His liquid smooth form allows him to do this without too much wear and tear on his arm. If Louis does not break strings during a match, he will usually have the racquet redone anyway to prevent strings from losing tension during his blasting shots.





Andy Roberts
&
Luke St. Onge
answer
questions about
their careers, the
game, and the
impact of the
United States
Open
Racquetball
Championships.

The state of the game and the outlook for the U.S. Open from one of the consistently top-ranked players of the IRT

Andy Roberts

By Marvin Quertermous
Managing Editor

Q: What do you see happening on the IRT right now?

AR: With the new guys coming up, except Sudsy, there is some unbelievable talent but they are missing some glaring things in their games. Some of these guys have not developed drive serves. If you don't have a drive serve you aren't going to be a top racquetball player — period. The key for Sudsy is to keep learning. He has tremendous athletic ability and tremendous power. If he's able to separate winning from vacationing on the weekend then he'll continue to do well.

Q: So it's a mental thing with him?

AR: He has to develop more of a winning instinct. I think he is having too much fun on the weekend with his friends. Maybe some of that will come as he gets older.

Q: Five years ago in your first interview with KILLSHOT the tour was the MPRA. Hank Marcus had come on board, it seemed like there were many things on the horizon. Where do you see the tour now?

AR: In my opinion the next two years for men's professional racquetball will be the crucial turning point. I think the sport of racquetball has invested so much in the U.S. Open in November. If the U.S. Open is a success then I think pro racquetball is off and running. If that event is not a success, then we will still be where we are now. We have to get pro racquetball out of clubs and into places we can seat 1,500 to 3,000 people. The new portable court is so important to our game.

Q: Do you think Memphis is a good location for the upcoming U.S. Open?

AR: We were looking for a club with enough square footage to host it — and the ability to raise money. This club [The Racquet Club of Memphis] raises over three

million dollars for the Kroger-St. Jude Tennis Tournament. Everything that Ganim [Doug Ganim, Director of the U.S. Open] wanted he found in this club.

Q: What does this event mean in terms of visibility for racquetball? What's your gut feeling about the U.S. Open?

AR: I just hope people will support this and look at the event as a place to come every year and get reacquainted with friends and see what is new in the industry, and to watch some amazing pro racquetball. The marketing and structure of this tournament will be very much like the U.S. Open in tennis. Manufacturers will be throwing parties every night. Bands will be playing in the village center. There will be a real festival atmosphere. This is something racquetball players aren't used to seeing.

Q: You mentioned the manufacturers, what do you see as their role?

AR: The manufacturers need to support the players. Our old ideas of the manufacturers taking the game to the next level and putting it on television is just not a reality. We need to

go to the Promus Hotel companies of the world. They, alone, will be putting the U.S. Open on television. That's what we need — the manufacturers supporting the players playing the game. We need outside businesses to see the game as a viable business opportunity to make money and move the game forward.

Q: Do you think the timing is right?

AR: We have a game now — with older and younger players — with different personalities — an entertaining game. This is



the first time since I've been playing that we are really ready for television. I don't think there is anything as exciting as racquetball for viewers to watch.

Q: Do you think the general public is ready for racquetball and ready to understand what the game is?

AR: I think so. I think the key is a good play-by-play announcer and a good color commentary person. We need someone to give insight and to be able to sell the game. I don't know who it could be but it is an ingredient we need without question.

**Well,
I'll tell you.
Ruben is just
a freak of nature
— period.
That's the only
way you
can describe
him.**

Q: In order for the U.S. Open to come about there has been cooperation between the AARA and the IRT, manufacturers and different entities historically opposed on many issues. Do you see this as legitimate cooperation or will it all crumble?

AR: I think they finally figured out that there has to be a synergy there. The game isn't big enough for everyone to do things in his own way. I think we are making history here. There is no way we can do this without each other. The U.S. Open came about with Luke [AARA Executive Director Luke St. Onge] and the AARA board of directors seeing the need to push racquetball and they realized the only way to do that was with the pros. The amateur game won't take racquetball to the next level. No one is going to turn on television to watch amateurs play. The amateurs have to endorse the pros. I think it took guts to come to that way of thinking but this is turning out to be a win-win deal.

Q: So you see that as a new way of thinking?

AR: Yeah, if you would have asked me five years ago if this cooperation was possible I would have laughed. The younger guys on the tour don't really realize how amazing this thing is. It is causing a wind of change in racquetball. In order for us to achieve greatness in sports we have to be one.

Q: Do you see the amateur game and professional game benefiting?

AR: Anything from the U.S. Open will be good. I totally support the idea of all being one in this. We are telling the world, 'Come see our game, you'll have fun!'

Q: Do you see any difference in the sport's equipment manufacturers now and five years ago?

AR: The companies now have big thinkers. They've figured out the old way of doing things won't work.

Q: The U.S. Open is one of the first big events in racquetball history that hasn't been driven by one manufacturer.

AR: Absolutely. That's what will guarantee the success of the tournament. All the companies will be equal and be able to pitch their goods to the racquetball playing public.

Q: How do you think the ESPN racquetball events televised in the recent past have been received?

AR: I think McKinnis [ESPN producer Jerry McKinnis] does a great job; the production is great, the graphics are great, just a great job. I'm not an expert but I'd like to see more coverage of the matches. It's hard to get a feel for the match. I'd like to see more play.

Q: Do you think non-racquetball players would tune in?

AR: Yeah, I do. I think they'd watch it.

Q: Tell me about the players on the tour.

AR: The guys in the top five are all excellent racquetball players, that goes without saying. What some people don't realize is they are also excellent athletes. There is a lot more to this game than good strokes. These guys also have tremendous mind games.

Q: Where do you fit in?

AR: I'm going to attack my opponent's weakness early. I feel anything I can get a racquet on — I'll kill it. No matter how good you are you have to find a weakness

in your opponent. I also shoot the ball better than most of the guys, I'm very consistent at killing the ball.

Q: How do you find a weakness in a player like Cliff Swain? What is his weakness?

AR: Backhand high in the chest area. But if you call it a weakness — he'll hit and kill those all day long. It really all comes down to a mental edge on the day you play — who's playing better.

Q: What would be your strength?

AR: My strength is my serve. I can lob or serve with power. I am one of the top five that can play either way — it doesn't make any difference. I'm going to serve, then get a weak return and kill it. That's my style.

Q: What about speed?

AR: I move faster than it appears. I'm big, so naturally I don't seem to be moving as fast as someone 5'2" tall. I also don't dive around the court like some of the other guys do. These guys are going to get mad at me for saying this but these young guys you see flying around the court — diving — I would be interested to see them in ten years. I'd like to see if they are still in the game. At 21 or 22 they are physically able to dive every other rally but there is no way they will last, their bodies just won't take all that diving.

Q: How do you explain someone like Ruben [Gonzalez]?

AR: Well, I'll tell you. Ruben is just a freak of nature — period. That's the only way you can describe him. He's pulled off one of the greatest feats of all time by coming back on tour [following an Achilles tendon injury]. He is the best structural diver in the game. If you watch films even from his early days, his body very rarely hits the ground. He'd catch himself with one hand — almost like a one-armed push-up. He is a technical diver. I didn't think he'd ever play local tournaments again, but look what he's done.

Q: What about your career, what's coming?

AR: I plan to play two more seasons and then reevaluate. I've played so many years. I've got knee problems. I hate to put any more stress on my body. I still enjoy playing. It's a year-to-year thing. I've played excellent racquetball this season. I had a couple of bad tournaments that cost me, Phoenix was a bad outing. If you look overall, though, I had three quarters and the rest was semis, finals, and wins.

The Executive Director of the AARA on cooperation and the U.S. Open Tournament

Luke St. Onge

By Marvin Quertermous
Managing Editor

Q: When did you start playing and become involved with racquetball?

LSO: 1971-72 - in that range. I met a friend who came back from Viet Nam that had played it over there - believe it or not - and we went down and played and got hooked on it at Penn State University, the courts at Penn State.

Q: How did you actually get involved in the politics?

LSO: A friend of mine named Tom Sweeney who got involved just at the very beginning and became the president of the Pennsylvania Racquetball Association. That was 1971-72, the first time the states were really formalized as entities. At that time, it was all under one organization which was the International Racquetball Association. Then it eventually split off in '73 and you had a pro group and an amateur group. The amateur group decided they were going to run the pro end of it. When the pro group saw that was going to happen, they said they were going to run the amateur end of it. So you end up with two organizations then eventually four. But that is how it happened.

Q: How did you come on board with those?

LSO: Within the Pennsylvania State Association, when Tom Sweeney left, I succeeded him as president until about 1978. I actually went on the national board in '77 and became the national director in '78.

Q: ...and the IRA became the became the AARA?

LSO: That's correct.

Q: You once told me you had been involved in rugby?

LSO: From 1959 through 1971-72 (the last part as a player-coach for Penn State). The

type of player that plays racquetball has basically the same approach to life that a rugby player does. That is...an integration of professional life with sport...loves competition...has a very healthy approach...doesn't have an elitist attitude.

Q: What have you seen since the seventies in terms of changes?

LSO: Racquetball started as a fad that caught on like wildfire and resulted in major overbuilding of facilities. There was no infrastructure for support when the fad ran out. The clubs were beginning to switch to "membership only" so it was no longer in their best interest to keep the courts full. Teachers and programmers were of less importance to the bottom line, and became such an expense that they began to disappear. The industry itself did not support the club system. That really hurt us.

Q: So, the initiative now to show profitability and long term benefits is to directly reverse what had gone on before.

LSO: Exactly. We have to address the mind set of many of the club owners who have never known racquetball as a priority.



It's the first true promotion in the sport in the past 16-17 years.

Q: How far have the numbers decreased during the past 16-17 years?

LSO: All of the numbers reported in the early 1980's, were from totally unscientific sources. The true number of total players was probably between 8 and 9 million. The 14 million or more that were reported came from only one survey conducted by the National Racquetball Club which had a vested interest in building courts. No true independent surveys were ever done.

Today, accurate surveys put us in the 7 million range.

Q: So, the current promotion is designed to...

LSO: Essentially, it is a three fold function. First, it will change attitudes within the clubs, that the industry is interested in them, that racquetball is profitable, and that we have the infrastructure to support the programs we are offering. The manufacturer's sponsored players now have a responsibility

To a great extent the business in racquetball is still being done like "the good old days" ...you get tired of hearing it because the good old days just weren't that good!

within the club to use the workbook to show how racquetball can be profitable to their bottom line. Second, it will generate a similar program within the clubs that tennis does. It will build the instructional aspect, getting programs back in the clubs. That is beginning to happen, we have reorganized the Ampro program. The RIA is not actively involved in that other than on a consulting level. And third, it is the US Open.

Q: Spinning through the workbook, it looks like you're handing someone almost a graduate course in marketing racquetball.

LSO: Exactly.

Q: For someone working in a club, is the Ampro aspect open to them?

LSO: Absolutely. Ampro is divided into three sections: coaching, programming, and instruction. It is done through its two heads, Michelle Gould, and Connie Martin. The idea is to make Ampro so strong that it becomes a sort of USPTA for racquetball.

Q: You drew some criticism in an interview

with Aaron Katz last year regarding your work with the Olympic Committee. The idea was that some other areas such as support for clubs had been neglected in favor of work toward inclusion in the Olympic Games.

LSO: I would say that that work was directly toward that end. Meeting the criteria for the USOC has made us a much better organized sport. The USOC sets extremely high standards and constantly evaluates its members. Striving and meeting those standards has made us very organized and in a good position now to reach out to clubs. In addition, the USOC has taken an active interest in our work within the sport, helps support our efforts, and even provides funding for our outreach efforts when we have met their criteria. By reaching the current level of being in the Pan Am Games, we benefit greatly from our involvement. All of that enables us to now reach out to the clubs. Everybody knew what had to be done in terms of marketing the sport, we just had to accomplish certain steps to get to where we could do it.

Q: Tell me about the US Open.

LSO: The US Open started out at a Racquet Sports Committee meeting last year, I think you were there, when Marty Hogan and Doug Ganim each emphasized the need for a major event. The sport needs exposure in the form of a major event - a major happening.

Q: The idea of the amateur organization putting together an event that highlights the pros represents some tremendous cooperation between the two groups that probably could not have happened five years ago, or maybe two or three years ago.

LSO: In our society, in order for any sport to be successful, it has to have a pro aspect. A few years ago, we were too busy putting out our own fires to have any time for any involvement with the pros. The tour certainly needed leadership which luckily it got in a big way from Hank Marcus. Hank had the foresight to see that it could be something major down the road. He brought about a cohesion within the tour. We saw the prospect too, but were not the ones to try to make it work. We need the women's group to grow the same way the IRT has. There seems to be a misconception out there that the AARA in general and I in particular are somehow "anti-pro". That has never really been the case.

Q: What else is happening here with the

US Open?

LSO: Probably one of the most exciting things is that we have a young person that has the vision, the caring, and the willingness to put this thing together for the betterment of the sport, and that's Doug (Ganim). It's a critical juncture for the sport, and I'm glad that we are in a position to support it. It signifies some fresh thinking that I think we need, probably the beginning of change for the better. To a great extent the business in racquetball is still being done like "the good old days" and you get tired of hearing it because the good old days just weren't that good.

Q: How were those days?

LSO: In 1980 at the NSGA show at McCormick Center in Chicago in February, the entire industry tried to get together then as they are succeeding to do now. We spent over an hour just trying to determine who was going to lead the group. We never even got beyond that. Someone made the suggestion that before we all leave the room, we should just close the door and toss in a

In our society, in order for any sport to be successful, it has to have a pro aspect.

grenade and start the entire industry over. That's how bad things were. Today the industry has matured and is committed to the long term. This is by far the best of times for the game.

Q: So then you are optimistic?

LSO: Absolutely, more so than at any time since I have been in it. And I think we have gotten rid of a lot of the "nay" sayers. We have people in it for the right reasons now.

Unique tournament motivates young players

Future Champs

By Connie Batchelder



At 6:30 a.m. on a recent Saturday morning, an entourage of 24 kids could be seen walking and peddling their bicycles to a lone residence in Mesa, Arizona. What could possibly motivate kids ranging in age from 8 to 14 to get up at the crack of dawn? (These are the same kids that need 30 minutes of prodding to get out of bed on school mornings.) An early morning trip to the Arizona Cardinal's football camp? Not this time. An autograph session with the Phoenix Suns basketball team? No, their

early morning motivation was the 3rd Annual Warriors Junior Racquetball Tournament held on the racquetball court of Merlin and Patti Rowley, fondly referred to as "Rowley's Court".

Kids of all ages were invited to compete in the Junior Tournament -- those who just learned the game, kids with no tournament experience, and even some "seasoned" players.

Donald and Karen Key, and Steve Benson joined the Rowleys in providing the day of intense competition, complete with all the standard tournament trimmings, and an emphasis on sportsmanship and fun. Larry McGuffin (owner of Sunn's Pizza

and Pub and an avid racquetball player himself) provided a feast of pizzas for the young combatants.

After hours of spirited competition, Nicholas Rowley emerged as the big winner. The Linford brothers, Jeff and Jason, captured first and second place, followed by Jeff Standage and Shawn Figerowa.

While kids are exposed to a variety of activities through their schools, tournaments like this one offer an excellent opportunity to expose kids to racquetball and spark their interest in a truly unique and exciting sport. Though this tournament was indeed the first one for many of the participants; hopefully, it was not the last! Many of the kids returned the following morning and after school to work on their strokes, improve their games, and just have fun.



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Beaverton Wins First Oregon High School Championships

Beaverton High School won the first ever team championship in Oregon at the **Sandy's Camera/Kodak Royal/OJRA Oregon State High School Racquetball Championships** early this spring at Court-sports Athletic Club in Eugene. Sprague High School, the Philomath/Seaside Combined team, and Dalles High School (placing second, third, and fourth respectively) put up the best fight of the ten teams involved.

Beaverton's win came in large part from the depth of its girls team. The Beaverton girls captured the first place Girls' trophy followed by Philomath/Seaside Combined. A very strong Sprague boys' team captured the Boys' trophy with ahead of Beaverton's boys.

In singles action, freshman Shane Vanderson of Tigard High School became the first ever Oregon State High School Boys Racquetball State Champion with a tough come from behind win over junior Dan Darling of the Philomath/Seaside Combined team.

U.S. Junior National Team's Erin Frost of Henley High School (Klamath Falls) continued her dominance of girls racquetball in Oregon, winning the Oregon

State High School Racquetball Girls State Champion title with a win over junior Liana Kerwood of Beaverton High School.

Beaverton High School team, left to right: Tom Veazey, Christine Lewendal, Mike Harger (coach), Liana Kerwood, Rachel Rieders, Kristi Fox, Ryan Collas, Micaela Davis, Tanner Moe.



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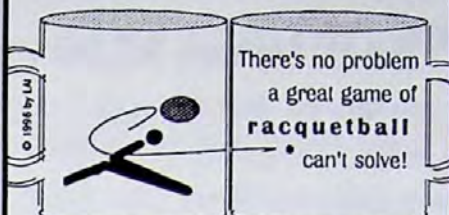
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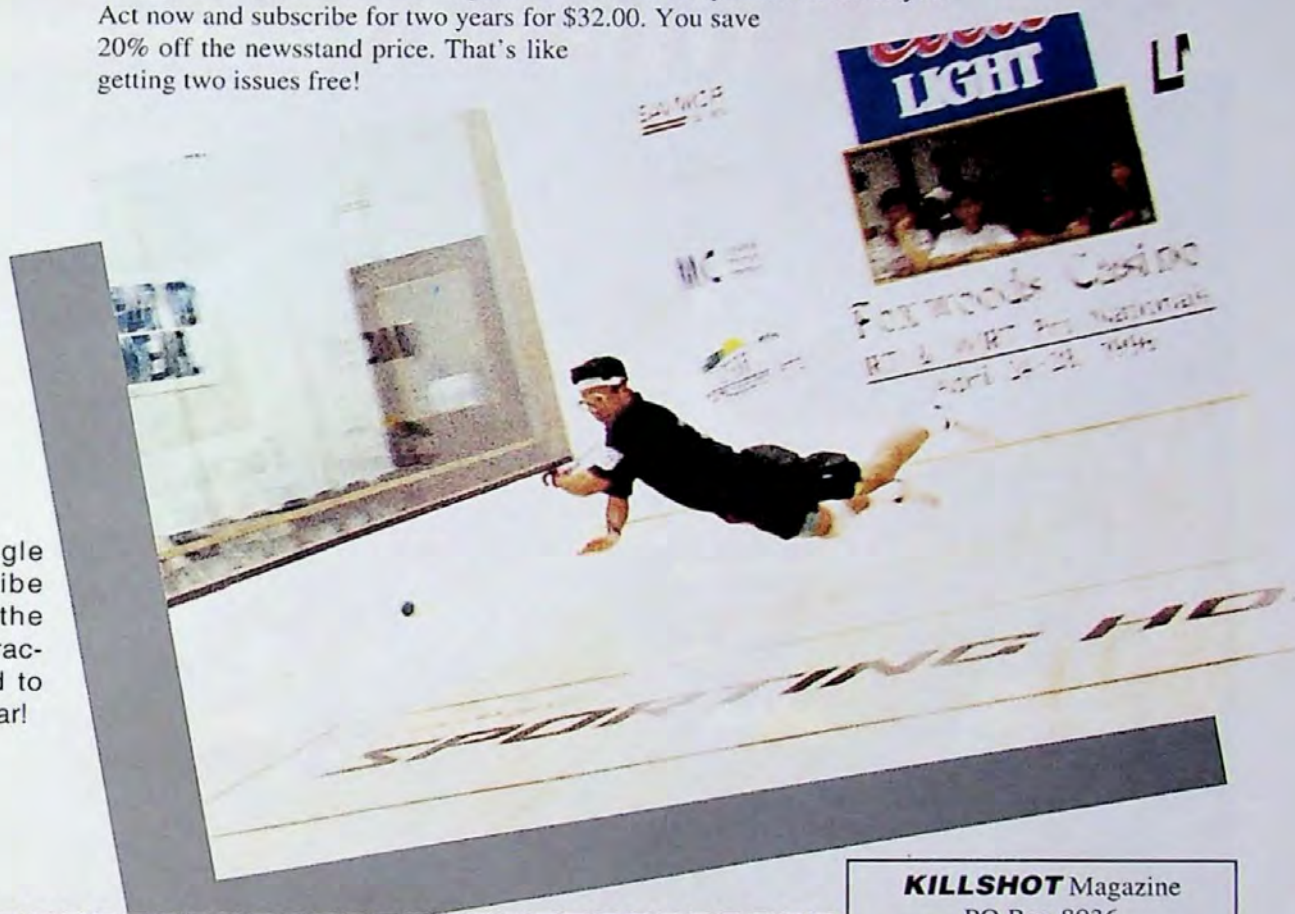
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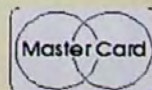
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By Aaron Katz

Outside ^aKatz-eye view Looking in

Scattershooting...

In 1989 I went to my first Junior National (Junior Olympic today) tournament in Indianapolis. While recollecting that experience it occurred to me that the following players stole the show: Mike Guidry won his second consecutive 18 and under title, John Ellis cruised to the 16 and under title and Sudsy Monchik defeated Jason Mannino in the 14 and unders on a very crowded back court. As I write, those players are currently ranked #s 5, 6, 3, and 8, respectively on the pro tour and moving up.

However, being a great junior player is not always a tell tale barometer. To the best of my knowledge, the following players never won a junior national title:

Mike Yellen, Andy Roberts, Drew Kachtik, and Mike Ray;

Cliff Swain never won the 18 and unders...So all you junior national champs out there, don't start spending your pro prize money yet.

One L May not be all that bad!

When starting law school most would-be barristers are advised to read *One L*. Scott Turow's book dealing with the agonizing first year at Harvard law. However, Eric Muller apparently didn't pay attention; he won his first singles

national or world title by defeating defending champion Shane Wood in the semifinals and Craig Rappaport of Penn University in the finals of Intercollegiate Nationals both by the scores of 11-10 in the tie-breaker.

I would be willing to bet that it was the first time two Ivy Leaguers squared off in the finals of any major racquetball championship. It could be an opportunity to showcase two great role models.

Save the Women and Children

It appears the greatest drop in participation has come with Women and juniors. Oddly enough I was reading an article the other day that the greatest growth in golf and tennis participation has been with women and more and more manufacturers are gearing their marketing efforts as such... I wonder if there is a connection?

With respect to juniors, although it would be great to develop significant programs, with all the activities out there for youth it probably is not very realistic. Efforts could better be utilized by marketing our sport at the high school and college level. Soccer, baseball, hockey, etc., have too strong an infrastructure to butt heads with.

Trend Tracking

There is a new trend in Texas that presents opportunities for entrepreneurial teaching pros. Since most clubs won't invest enough money for a pro to

base out of one club, club pros are taking their show on the road and teaching and running programs at as many as five or six clubs.

Each club's program benefits even though time with the pro is limited. The idea could spell opportunity for some aggressive teacher/programers in other parts of the country.

Watching the Pros

Mike Ray will likely finish in the top 4 this season. Although not quite as remarkable as the longevity of Hogan, Yellen, and Ruben a couple of more years in the top 8 and that will be ten years as a top 8 player for Mr. Overhead.

Jason Mannino is definitely this year's most improved player. Having had a less than auspicious rookie year last season, he has established himself as a consistent quarter finalist. His secret, a never say die attitude and a braggadocious style, has actually convinced him (and others) that he is better than he really is. He is a personification of the old Henry Ford saying "whether you believe you can or you believe you can't, you're right."

Cliff Swain's lack of dominance this last 1 1/2 years is more a product of others raising their level of play than his level dropping. When you're the man, they're all gunning for you. Next season may bring the best racquetball ever



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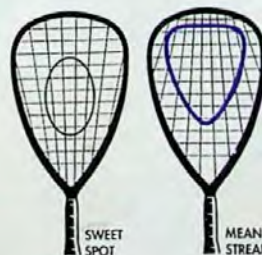
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