

National Racquetball

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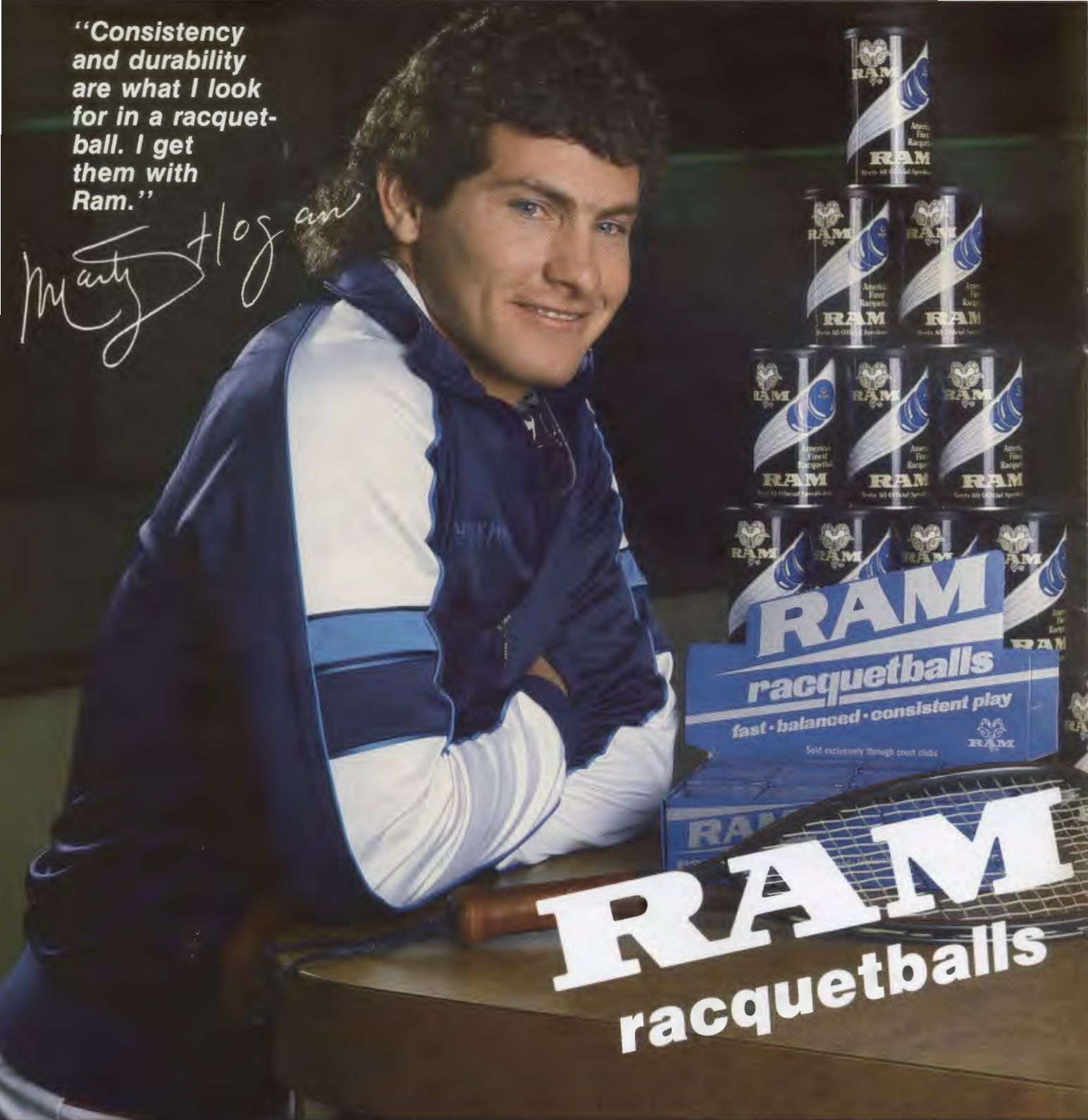
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OFF THE WALL

By Joe Massarelli



Visibility, Credibility — Our Goal

My initiation to racquetball began some years ago in Northbrook, IL when I was working with a major water treatment firm located in that same Chicago suburb. That was in the early seventies, and the sport has certainly changed since then.

During the past month, senior editor Chuck Leve and I have been involved in racquetball, but at another level. We have been making the rounds of the various industry trade shows serving the racquet sports industry. The exhibitors at these shows represent those manufacturers and suppliers who bring us the products and services we use in our sport.

More importantly, it's these same people who have their fingers on the pulse of the sport and where it's going — or not going — as the case may be. The Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA), the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) and the International Racquet Sports Association (IRSA) not only offer exposition space where racquetball suppliers display their wares, these associations also offer excellent forums for communicating the issues and problems that face racquet sports today. Chuck and I thus had the advantage of viewing our sport from "the other end of the court" so to speak.

From this vantage point we observed some good and some bad news.

Court owners are placing more

emphasis on diversification. Simply stated, this means in many instances that courts are converted to other revenue producing activities. Aerobics, wallyball and other exercise-oriented activities are just a few that vie for racquetball time. Why? Because club owners must derive income from several profit centers just to remain in business. There is also growing concern that racquetball is flat — that it has lost some of its appeal. This "appeal" is measured in equipment sales at the supplier club level.

Or maybe there is cause for alarm at the "grass roots" level where we're supposed to be planting the seeds for future amateur and pro candidates. According to those participating in the conferences at these conventions, most racquetball industry sources feel that there are no meaningful grass roots programs being developed.

Our own surveys indicate quite a different story. That's the good news.

We estimate that there are about seven million active players in the U.S. and Canada. In this total are the pros, who represent a miniscule segment. The amateur, the hard-core recreational player and the corporate executive, who participate actively, are the real "core" players who truly reflect the racquetball sport. It's these same players who read this magazine from cover to cover. It's these same buyers

who spend several million dollars on products or services each year that keep the business end of our sport healthy. Most important, it's these same players who have made racquetball one of the largest participation sports to come along in years.

And, it is a *sport* in every sense of the word. A case in point — the International Olympic Committee's executive board has recently given official recognition to the International Amateur Racquetball Federation and the sport of racquetball for inclusion in future Olympic Games.

Yet, we have a dilemma. We are probably the most invisible participation sport in the world. And, we have not figured out why!

Is it lack of developing grass roots programs that bring juniors and pre-collegiate players to our ranks? Is it the fact that we can play only through clubs and YMCAs, many of which are reducing racquetball promotion rather than increasing it?

And, speaking of promotion, what is being done to market and promote the sport at the professional level as a spectator sport?

You get the point. We have much work to do and a specific mission to accomplish. This magazine will be the catalyst for making more "good news" happen in and for our sport. So keep your eyes glued to each and every issue for such developments.. □

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If you would like to write a letter to the Editor, please send your comments to: Letters to the Editor, National Racquetball, P. O. Drawer 6126, Clearwater, FL 33518-6126. All letters become property of this magazine. We reserve the right to edit for clarity or space considerations. Letters will not be returned.

Eye Protection

Again National Racquetball has taken the initiative in promoting eye protection in racquet sports. An increasing number of professionals are realizing the danger of a racquetball at a 140 miles per hour.

The certification council is an active entity and we are meeting in New York in February to finalize the by-laws of this council.

Neither Dr. Vinger in the United States or the Eye Surgeons of Canada have reported an injury whilst wearing a polycarbonate eye protector with a polycarbonate lense in front of the eye.

We still have many injuries reported every year with the open eye guard and no matter how an open eye guard is designed it is apparent that a racquetball may easily penetrate the opening. Although the open eye guards are inexpensive every eye guard on the market which does not have a lens in front of it has been associated with some ocular injury.

National Racquetball, again, has taken the lead in promoting eye protection. Dr. Vinger and I anticipate that in the next few months certified eye guards for eye protection in racquet sports, particularly racquetball, will be available with some assurance that our racquetball players will be protected while playing this exciting and dynamic game.

Michael Easterbrook, M.D.
Chairman, Task Force
Canadian Standard Assoc. on
Eye Protection in Racquet Sports

Dr. Easterbrook's comments are music to our ears . . . or should we say eyes! Our posture hasn't changed. Eye guards should be compulsory in tournament play. Further, clubs may want to check with their insurance carriers just to see what might happen to their rates if they decided to make players wear such protection. Frankly, we're not in a position to judge the effectiveness of one type over another, but we agree that open eye guards are unsafe. We'll leave final judgments to independent testing labs. — Ed.

Instructional Index

I very much look forward to receiving my National Racquetball every month and read it faithfully from cover to cover. I especially enjoy the instructional portion and attribute my present level of play (advanced) to the excellent articles. I am also proud of the fact that my collection of National Racquetball stems back some six years.

During the last six years I am certain that there must be hundreds of articles dedicated to instruction. Hence, may I offer a suggestion for your consideration. How about adding a supplementary (for us collectors) to your regular issue consisting of an index on where and in what issues we could find specific instructionals. For example:

Ceiling Balls . . . "10 Shots To Combat The Ceiling Ball" . . . Jan. 1984, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 20-23.

Serve, Return of . . . "Serve Return Strategy" . . . May 1982, Vol. 11, No. 5, pp. 28-31, etc.

Thank you and keep-up the good work.

Jim Ursan
Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan
Canada

Jim's suggestion has been brought up in the past by others. Our production people are looking into preparing such a bibliography. — Ed.

TV Tournaments

I had just finished reading February's article, "A Spectator Sport" by Drew Stoddard in his Side Out Column. I've also enclosed a couple of newspaper clippings for your information. I love the game of racquetball, and I would definitely want to see it on TV or go see (a tournament). I also would like to see the pros get higher salaries. We have the people to do it and the money, too. Between seven to nine million people play racquetball. Racquetball is played in 44 countries.

To my best knowledge we need to promote the sport in a different way,

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since promoting is less money than advertising.

Here is my idea. If you can set up the portable glass courts into let's say the ARCO Arena in Sacramento and make this a special event (a benefit to Jerry's kid's or finding a cure for AIDS). Then have professionals, amateurs, TV stars like Michael J. Fox, Don Johnson, Heather Locklear and so on compete with each other.

In my home town of Sacramento, they have the Pro Am Celebrity Golf Tournament and it always goes over big (a benefit swing of cancer). This way everybody wins and has fun. Especially the sport of racquetball being recognized on TV or being played in a coliseum.

Please give me some feedback on what you think, or what I can do to help out.

Todd D. Smith
Sacramento, CA

We agree, Todd, the spectator possibilities and the promotional opportunities from televised tournaments are exciting. And yes, the pros deserve to be elevated in prestige, visibility and salary commensurate with other professional sports.

This magazine will be handling pro stops this coming year at strategic locations throughout the country. Our goal is to accomplish exactly what you suggested. — Ed.

Player Surveys

I'd like to know which factors are more important in winning racquetball tournaments (amateur — not professional). Would you consider doing a survey that would identify players who are consistently high finishers and determine if there are links to such elements as length of time playing, frequency of playing, taking lessons, physical conditioning, ladder playing, and attending a racquetball camp.

While we enjoy reading about the pros, the majority of your readers are amateurs and would like to get information on what makes a player successful in club tournaments.

Bill Lanius
McLean, VA

We have some surveys planned for later on this year, so keep watching the pages of future issues. Much of the information you seek will emerge from such efforts.

We know that most of our readers are serious amateur players or intense

recreational players, but frankly we must look to the pros for those winning combinations. Thus, we start in this issue with an instructional series by Steve Strandemo. We hope you enjoy and learn from it. — Ed.

Cut-Throat Variation

My partner didn't show for today's doubles racquetball match. We were all disappointed, three on the court cut-throat style isn't too much fun.

With sudden inspiration and with necessity being the mother of invention, we decided to play cut-throat a bit differently. What did we have to lose? Anything was better than the game that rotates one player after every losing serve.

We thought it would be more fun to play one person against two persons and rotate every game. And, it was! The doubles team stayed partners until an entire game to 21 ended. When the doubles team served, they rotated the serve until they lost the point, then the singles player would serve until she lost the point. The doubles partner not serving would stand in the box as in a regular doubles match when her team was serving.

We played several matches, it was great. We rotated the single player every game so each of us got to be the singles player. We came off the court with red faces, gasping for breath after an hour that was as much fun as singles, more fun than doubles and definitely better than cut-throat.

Now, if someone doesn't show, no one will be disappointed. As a matter of fact, it will be more fun.

Frances Maxon
Independence YMCA

'Your Own Way'

I have read the article "Do It Your Own Way" by Brad Kruger, with Carl Loveday, and must take exception to much of what is said.

First, the article applies overly general criticism to racquetball teaching professionals. While it is true that there are some instructors who are not at all professional, there are still a large number of pros who ply their trade in a worthy manner and deserve every penny of the \$10-\$20 an hour that they charge for private lessons.

The comments concerning players seeking advice from better players, versus taking lessons from the local pro, indicate that different sets of standards are being applied to the two groups. To the local pro Mr. Loveday applies the standard of what a professional coach should be, and to the "better player" he applies much of the standard of what the local pro should

be. Then he gives the implication that if your local pro does not fulfill this false standard, then you should forget lessons and turn to the better player for help. Even still, he says that the average player does not need a coach of the caliber of which he speaks.

At each point someone is being given an excessive burden to bear. The local pro cannot be a professional coach and still be a local pro. The better player has neither the time nor the desire to be a local pro. And the average player should not be forced to languish in mediocrity that comes from excessive reliance on self instruction.

Beyond this I question the lines of reasoning in the article. Using Mr. Loveday's logic, let's do a comparison check on the "pro" versus the "better player" and see what we get.

If it is true that the pro has had no formal training, it is just as likely that the better player has not had any either. Therefore the advice of the better player is likely to be just as detrimental as that of the pro, if you follow Mr. Loveday's logic to its conclusion.

Also, there is the idea expressed that the teaching pro treats only the symptoms of problems and (he) is not interested in long term results. However true this might be, what is the motivation for the "better player" to be anymore concerned? At least the local pro has the motivation of maintaining a good reputation by helping a player progress in his game. But what of the better player?

Where the article speaks of "misinformation" and "overabundance of differing advice" I raise this question. Where is one most likely to pick up misinformation and differing advice? From one or two local pros or from the many better players that one is bound to consult by following the advice of the article?

At all times, a player should be seeking sound, quality advice to help him in his game. Yet, by following the logic of the article to its end, detrimental advice must be OK, as long as you don't pay for it.

My concern here is to make sure that players take a good look at who their local pro is, and what that person has to offer, before they move on to self instruction.

As for the advice to take a lesson from Mr. Loveday, I don't know. With lessons running \$100 a pop, even self instruction begins to sound good.

C. Wayne Barrow
Instructor
NCAARA Club Management Rep
Greenville, NC

FIRST SERVE

By Chuck Leve



A Good Man Leaves The Tour

The last time I saw Drew Stoddard was back in January at a meeting in Sacramento, California, a gathering that brought together a lot of the so-called influential people and organizations in racquetball. Drew, as commissioner of the Racquetball Manufacturers Association (RMA) pro tour, was a key person in that meeting.

Afterwards he and I had a bite to eat and we began to discuss the various aims, goals and dreams of what we might do if we had the free rein (and pocketbook) to set into motion some of the programs we felt would stimulate the growth of our sport. It was an extremely interesting hour.

What struck me most about Drew was his dedication to racquetball, a dedication that has led him from player to photographer to magazine editor, publisher, tour director, author and on and on and on. This is one guy, I thought, who really cares about the well-being of the sport.

And that's why I was so surprised to hear that he had left the RMA (see accompanying article, page 44). Not a month after our meeting in Sacramento it was announced that Drew was leaving the tour, going to work for Ed Martin (owner of the Sacramento club, former AARA board member and coach of the U.S. National Team).

Drew will be running one of Ed's clubs in the northern California area while pursuing his masters degree at a local college. I'm afraid it's a case of disillusionment setting in. Or at least Drew's realization that it might take a great deal longer to achieve the high goals he set for himself and the tour.

And yet Drew Stoddard did a great job and his shoes will be difficult to fill. While I have no doubt his suc-

cessor can ably replace him, I think it is only fair to re-walk Drew's steps to truly pay homage to somebody who put the sport ahead of his own personal interests.

What Drew was paid to run the tour is no secret. And while I won't embarrass him or his employers by stating the amount, let me just report that the winner of the season's biggest tournament will take home more than Drew was paid to run the entire tour, creating the opportunity to reap the rewards for whoever that player is.

When you add constant travel to low pay, add in a few mountains of disrespect and cry-babyism from some of the pros, along with shattered dreams like the portable glass court, well, you have the ingredients for somebody to take this job and shove it.

When Drew Stoddard hired on with the RMA to organize, fund and implement the tour, the professional game couldn't have been in worse shape. The game was coming off a miserable year in which there were few events, this being the aftermath of the fateful two-year Catalina closed series of events. Besides that, there was total misunderstanding and confusion about professional and amateur definitions, as well as club closings in eye-popping numbers.

Charged with organizing and finding sponsors for the RMA proved to be too big a job for one man who also had to be on site for each event, pull the pros together to create a standard set of conduct guidelines, take the match photos and write articles.

So Drew did the practical and logical thing — he passed the burden of the prize money onto the clubs, which raised anywhere from \$12,000 to

\$20,000 each locally. Drew could then concentrate on establishing a solid series of events, i.e., a real-life tour that he could take in year two to potential sponsors.

Year two, our current year soon to conclude, did not attract any significant investment from outside the sport. Despite this, the season held a record amount of prize money, again raised locally, and the players had an event about every three weeks to look forward to.

Unfortunately, the pros still have to reach the semi-finals to win more money than their expenses (this means a youngster has to unseat Hogan, Yellen, Gregg Peck or Harnett to make money), but at least there is something to play for.

To be honest, I thought Drew was doing a great job. Since the RMA has yet to receive the support of a majority of racquetball manufacturers, Stoddard was unable to approach sponsors as the spokesman of a unified sport. Whether he spent "enough time" knocking on doors isn't really important.

What is important is that he was an active, visible and able administrator who built something out of nothing because he believed it was important for the pro game to continue.

And you know that there are plenty of people in racquetball who could not care less about the pros, people who believe that racquetball will always be "just" a participant sport with no pro tour of any great extent.

Drew Stoddard didn't believe that. I don't either. I just regret that it won't be Drew who leads us to the promised land. Too bad. He's a good man. □

The Strategic Game

The First In A Series of 12 Instructional Excerpts From A Master Of The Game

by Steve Strandemo
with Bill Bruns

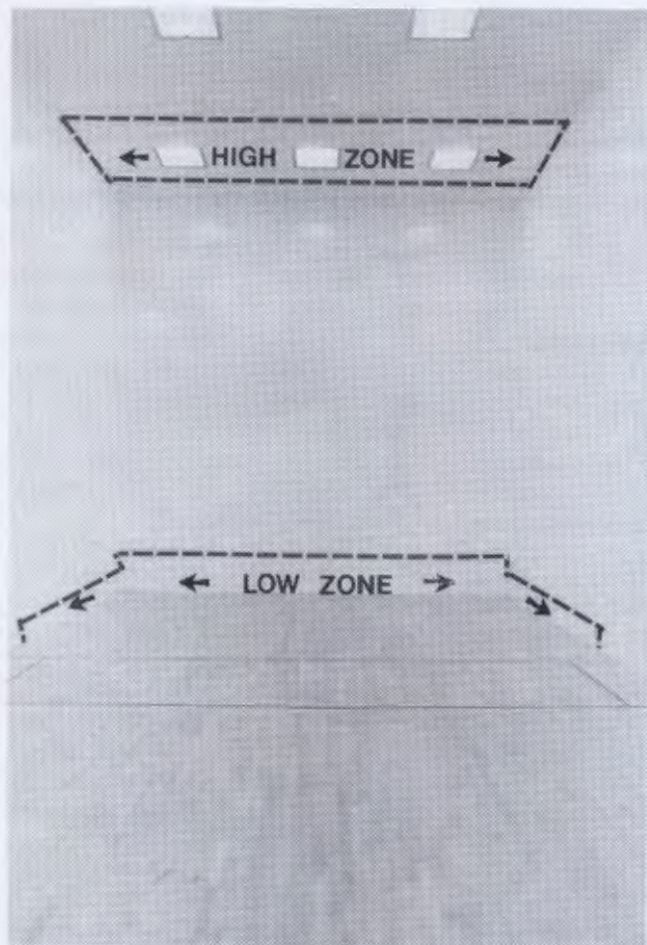
After retiring from professional competition in 1984, Steve has dedicated himself full time to the development of his instructional programs. For the past 12 years, Steve has directed the most comprehensive instructional camp programs available for the avid player, aspiring professional and club instructor. He offers both winter and summer camp programs as well as extensive club clinics throughout the country.

*In addition to his instructional programs, Steve has also compiled and published three instruction books on racquetball. The most recent to be released from Simon & Schuster, **Strategic Racquetball**, shows the same signs of success that his previous books, **The Racquetball Book** and **Advanced Racquetball**, showed. Steve has been under contract with Head Racquet Sports, Inc. for the past*

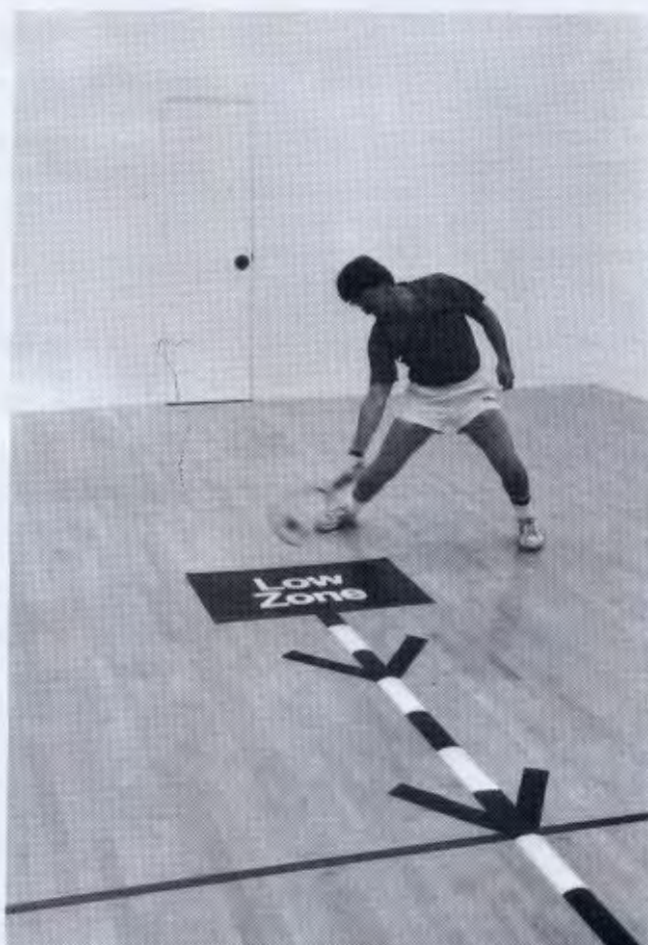
nine years in the capacity of spokesperson and field coordinator.

This is the first in a series of 12 excerpts from Steve Strandemo's latest book **Strategic Racquetball** (1985 Pocket Books, a division of Simon and Schuster, Inc.) Steve's first two books, **The Racquetball Book** and **Advanced Racquetball**, concentrate on the fundamentals needed to build a successful all-around game. **Strategic Racquetball** expands on this foundation with refinements, subtleties, and in-depth advice that will help make you a savvy competitor on the challenge court at your club, in league competition, at local tournaments or simply while enjoying an ongoing rivalry with your racquetball partner.

As I travel around the country conducting clinics and teaching at my various camps, I find that virtually all players are held back by a lack of knowledge or a reliance on misinformation in one particular area or another. Some club players are frustrated because they have reached a playing plateau and they can't seem to bust through to the next



These are the target areas you should be aiming for on your offensive (low) and defensive (high) shots.



This offensive player is cutting the ball off in center-court, ripping low, and trying to score.

Photos by Jack Miller

level; they don't understand *why* they have a limiting style of play. Others assume that they have a correct and complete grasp of the game, and that a few simple adjustments will solve their current problems and make them much better players, while in reality they have stroking technique errors, some severe flaws in their shot-making strategy, and subtle mispositions in court coverage that keep them from maxing their potential.

Everything I teach is based upon my own playing experience and confirmed by my ongoing evaluation of top amateur and pro players in slow-motion videotape action. I've actually watched many five-hit rallies 40 to 50 times so I can totally understand what happens — and why it is happening — from shot to shot. Thus, my approach is a composite of all the methods that continually win racquetball matches, day in and day out, year after year. The type of racquetball game I want you to understand and *strive* to emulate has been distilled from years of collective experience and stripped of common misconceptions.

You may be thinking, "Steve's talking about serve-and-shoot racquetball and I don't have the power or the strokes or the inclination to play like that." That's not the case, though. I'll agree, the pros are flashy and power oriented,

"Everything I teach is based upon my own playing experience and confirmed by my ongoing evaluation of top amateur and pro players in slow-motion videotape action. I've actually watched many five-hit rallies 40 to 50 times so I can totally understand what happens — and why it is happening — from shot to shot. Thus, my approach is a composite of all the methods that continually win racquetball matches, day in and day out, year after year."
— Steve Strandemo

but don't be misled; when the game they are playing is slowed down on video and analyzed, several myths are dispelled and consistent patterns of play become clear and understandable — logical enough for any player to follow.

If you fail to accept my major themes then your thinking process is going to be bucking the racquetball system. You may win a lot of matches as a result of your specific skills and athletic talents, but eventually you will come up against players who will exploit you unmercifully, and you will never reach your potential.

Many players, seem to accept the plateau they're on, either unwilling to spend time practicing and improving, or unaware of just how much they could improve if they had a better understanding of the game — if they simply knew how all the bits and pieces come together and blend into a logical system. This is true at every level of the game. Or, they've resigned themselves to a belief that there's not a whole lot more they can learn about racquetball. It's as if they think that everyone has his or her own special way of playing and there is no standard to follow — but there is a standard, accepted way.

One of my basic goals is to help you develop an adjustable, diversified game that you can rely on in a competitive environment. Building this balanced game starts with an understanding that racquetball is logically broken down into two patterns: offensive (what I call "low zone") and defensive (or "high zone"). Solid racquetball players continually flow back and forth between these two areas in rallies, games, and matches. They have the shots to play the game low and hard as well as high and soft. They can

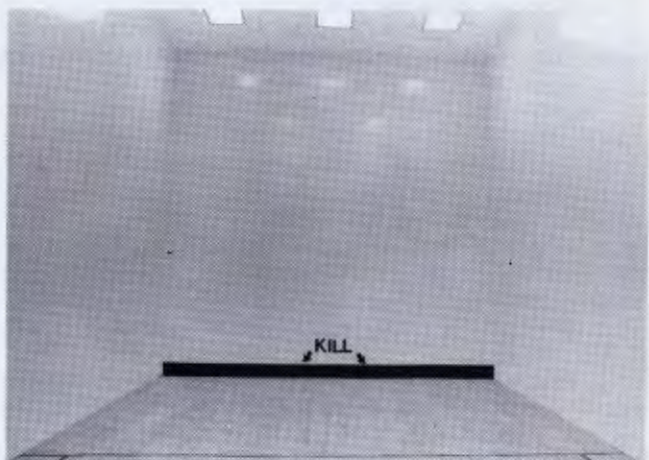


Here the receiver is flicking the ball to the ceiling off a near ace serve.

rip the ball, but can also feather it up to the ceiling with good control. They can cut the ball off in center-court when it's appropriate, or pop what appears to be a low-drive ace accurately back to the ceiling.

Only by having the ability to go low *and* high can you effectively cope with a variety of opponents. Yet, sad to say, most racquetball players have just one particular playing style. They have a favorite way of playing and they rarely deviate from certain predictable patterns. For example, a player may have an excellent low-drive serve and effective hard "Z's", but has never hit a high-lob "Z" serve in his life. Or, his shot selection is severely limited; he drives everything cross-court (only occasionally going down the line) and fails to pinch many balls. This allows his opponents to lay back safely in a deeper coverage position, which in turn makes it more difficult for this player to execute effective passing shots. This prevalence of a one-dimensional game, where player X has just one system and sticks with it whatever may come, is an important reason why I feel tournament competition is a rewarding way to broaden your playing style.

A tournament forces you to play a cross-section of opponents with different strengths, weaknesses, and playing styles (providing, of course, that you survive the first round). You cannot dictate the type of opponent you play, and you must adjust in two key ways: first, by hitting shots you may not normally use under pressure, and second, by covering shots you may rarely see among your regular playing partners. Putting your game on the line like this is a challenging learning experience that forces you to come to



You can only hit the front wall this high if you hope to kill the ball, so be realistic: You don't have to kill every ball to be a good player.

The Strategic Game

grips with your strengths and weaknesses, and makes clear the areas where you need improvement.

I once worked with two strong B players from Florida who had never hit a high-lob "Z" serve, or even returned one. They had played in a tight circle of friends back home



The black area indicates "leftup" offensive shots that are not skipped or killed and that angle back into the action zone as hittable shots. As a defender, you should play off these shots.

and none of them had this serve in their repertoire. Had one of these two men entered a tournament in their home city, he would have been quite vulnerable to a well-rounded competitor.

I also encourage you to use videotaping as an unequalled method to study your game and to really understand how racquetball is played. I've used videotape analysis to improve my own game since the mid-1970s, and now it's an integral part of my instruction method. Playing the game at the pro level has been extremely important, but I wouldn't feel comfortable about analyzing racquetball and writing books about the sport if I hadn't spent years studying videotapes of the pros as well as club players.

I realize that only by studying videotape — watching one shot and one rally over and over again — could I fully understand the game. You can see the general plan by watching in person, but the action simply goes too fast to analyze accurately with the naked eye. Slow-motion videotape analysis is a necessity to isolate and study the important subtleties of your game.

Your ego may get knocked back a little as you see your shortcomings on video, but if you're objective about the evidence, this experience can help you make real progress.

Perhaps the greatest value of videotaping is that it gives you an overview of the game in its entirety that you can never get while on the court, or while watching from the gallery. These insights are especially vital for enhancing your understanding of positioning and strategy. For example, using slow-motion replays, you can see the exact moment when you were caught out of position, and why your opponent had an open alley to hit his winning pass. Video shows you the logistics of ceiling-ball rallies and can help you study the relative effectiveness of your relocation after serving. In fact, you can watch a four-hit rally 10 or 15 times as you analyze first your serving motion, then the returner, then the movement of both players — body position, anticipation, shot selection, and execution — and finally, coverage.

If you feel your game is in a rut and you can't understand why you're not improving, it could be that you're simply thinking and hitting the same predictable way, without adding the offensive shots you may need, or employing a more offensive shot selection. We all know that racquetball improvement comes slowly, in fitful break-

throughs and gradual osmosis, but you can certainly hasten the process by studying your game with the help of this book and then applying your new information in well-focused practice sessions and matches at your club.

A Shot-Making Philosophy

After working with a cross-section of players from all over the country the past ten years, I would venture that your overall playing style fits into one of these three categories:

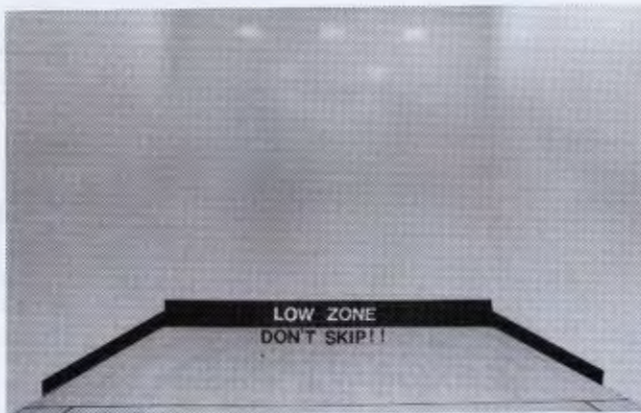
1. You are too defensive, passing up numerous potential scoring opportunities because you think you should shoot the ball only when the conditions are perfect.

2. You are overly precise, thinking that you must aim for the bottom boards on practically every shot, even though this results in countless skips.

3. You have a reasonable understanding of the game and a melting pot of skills — accurate serves, kill-shot potential, and coverage ability — but inconsistency and key flaws keep you from making a breakthrough to the next higher playing level.

First, it's a fallacy to think you have to kill every ball consistently to be a successful racquetball player. You need to hit with enough power to end points off a good setup, and you should go for a kill shot when the shot is there, but kill shots seldom occur at the frequency you might hope and imagine. While this is certainly an offensive game, meant to be played aggressively, it is not a "total kill shot" game — even at the pro level. The pros dazzle the eye with their speed, their kill-shot attempts, their gets, and a goodly number of rollouts, but the ball is left up much more than you think (a "leftup" shot is hit high enough into the front wall to allow for a return by the opponent).

Instead of thinking "perfect kill" on every shot, strive to hit as low into your "low zone" as possible — without skipping the ball. The "low zone" along the front wall and side walls is your effective offensive target area for kill attempts, passes, and pinches. When you hit your low-zone area but fail to put the ball away, it will still bounce twice



When you are hitting offensively, think "low zone." Any shot hit into the black area will either be a kill or take two bounces before the back wall. You'll put incredible pressure on your opponent when you keep your shots in this area.

before reaching the back wall. This forces your opponent to cover the shot — knowing that he will lose the rally if it gets by him.

To find your low-zone range, drive a number of balls into the front wall from about 30 feet away, and have a friend mark where the ball hits (with colored stickers, for example), but only on shots that bounce twice before reaching the back wall. This determines the top of your front-wall target area — no higher than about 24 inches for most club players. The side wall area will be about 12 inches (or lower) for pinch shots, since you want the ball to die before the front service line or the opposite side wall.

Knowing your actual low-zone target areas should actually free you to be *more* offensive in your thinking, as reflected by comments from my summer campers. Said one woman, with obvious relief, "I now realize that my front-wall target is two feet high, and not two inches."

When you're shooting, go for the kill — but if you miss, "error up" on the front wall and avoid the skip as often as possible. Many aspiring young players are convinced they must pound the ball hard and hit rollouts at every opportunity — "just like the pros" — but they continually skip the ball in, handing their opponents one gift after another.

I remember playing an eighteen-year-old hotshot who had just entered the pros. He shot everything when we played and skipped with such a frequency he practically handed me the match. But about four years later I saw this same player against a younger upstart, and he was now shooting the aggressive *percentage* shots. It's amazing what a few decisive whippings and some years of experience will do to a player's shot selection.

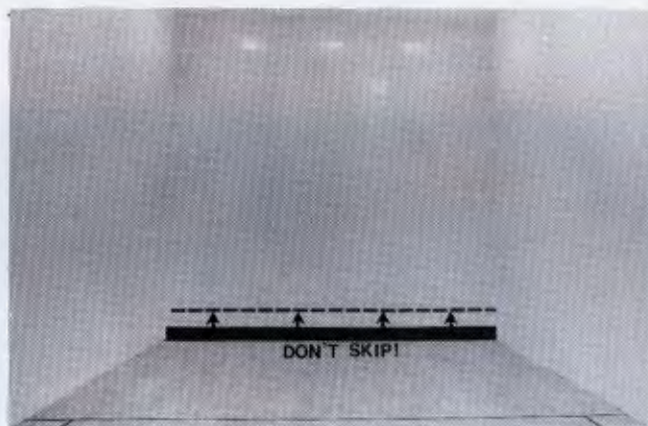
So this should be your thinking process and a reasonable goal: aim as low as you can, but be satisfied with any shot inside your low-zone area, and happy when you pick up the kill.

Plenty of balls are put down, but what counts is your ability to capitalize on your opponent's leftup shots. Study videotapes of any tournament match in the country — at any level — and you'll be convinced that hitting too high on the front wall is inevitable for every player.

Knowing that leftup shots are inevitable — for both you and your opponent — is another factor that should help you become more aggressive in your shot selection. Instead of thinking, "If I can't kill it, I shouldn't shoot it," just hit the ball hard but safely into your low-zone area so that your opponent must hit again if you don't kill it. At least

give him the option of making a mistake, for he'll miscue more times than you thought possible.

I once worked with an open player who was frustrated by the fact that as hard as he hit the ball, he had trouble scoring points. When I talked to him about this he admitted, "I'm afraid to leave the shot up because I think my opponent is going to put the ball away. So I aim for the flat-out kill every time I shoot, and if I'm not confident about that, I go to the ceiling." After he studied videotape, however, he realized that his typical opponent failed to re-kill most of his leftup shots. Therefore he didn't have



Aim for the black area but realize you can miss up to the dotted line (which is the top of your low zone) and still keep the ball off the back wall.

to hit the ball as low as possible in order to be effective within a low-zone type of rally.

My shot-making rule of thumb is: if you think you can hit your low-zone area (i.e., keep the ball off the back wall), go for the offensive shot. Otherwise, go to the ceiling but be looking for the first low-zone opportunity.

By giving priority to this shot-making approach, rather than relying on defensive skills and an opponent's skips, you take more control of your destiny on the court.

Making the Transition to a Low-Zone Game

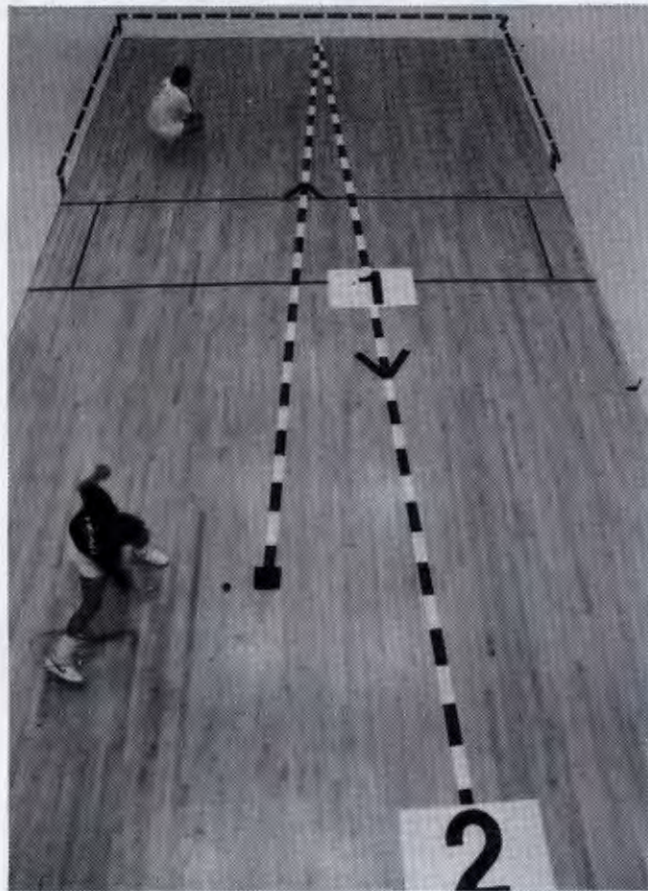
Now that I've highlighted the reasons why I feel a low-zone philosophy makes sense in today's game, the challenge is to make the necessary adjustments in your style of play.

If, for example, your goal is to open up and play the game more offensively, you must be able to shoot the ball when the chance arises, and you must acquire an aggressive attitude. If you can hit a particular shot into your low zone, but your mind is not thinking offensively, then your body is not going to respond in time. But once you can train your mind to be offensive whenever there's an opportunity, I guarantee that your body will reach automatically.

At first, you may have to exaggerate your offensive philosophy as you play in order to break ingrained defensive patterns and reactions. Work on your low-zone shots as you make this transition and force yourself to hit these shots at every reasonable opportunity when you play your practice matches — even if it means losing games you might normally win.

Actually when you open up your shot-making philosophy and vow to be more aggressive when you go into a match, you can sometimes upgrade your game immediately. Your greater emphasis on going low zone and the immediate pressure this applies to your opponent's defensive skills can often turn a stagnant game into a progressive one.

If you're interested in ordering an autographed copy of *Strategic Racquetball* please write to Strategic Racquetball, Inc. Box 591, Coronado, CA 92118.



This two-person drill will help you find the top of your low zone. It's critically important that every player find his or her own low-zone height. (Please note that the numbers here indicate where the ball will bounce.)

The Psychology Of Competition

PART THREE: Restructuring Your Thought Patterns



by Dr. Jerry May and
Drew Stoddard

Athletics is the process of programming the mind by feeding it with enough information about a particular skill so that it can direct the body to recreate that skill at a later time. If the programming is done well, the mind is capable of executing a given task with a degree of precision and timing that is almost beyond comprehension. Few of us have not at some time marveled at the elegant passing shot of a tennis champion, or the perfect trajectory of a quarterback's 50-yard pass as it flies to within inches of its intended target.

Given its awesome capacity, it is ironic that perhaps the most difficult skill for the human mind to acquire is the ability to control itself. For the athlete who aspires to excellence, teaching the mind to perform efficiently and predictably under the stress of competition is the greatest challenge of all.

Few areas in our lives are not affected in some way by stress. In this series of articles we have explored the affects of stress on athletic performance, and have identified three specific principles:

One

The mind's ability to recreate a learned skill is altered, for better or worse, by the presence of stress. Executing a skill in the relaxed atmosphere of practice is quite different from executing the same skill under the stress of competition.

Two

When it is confronted with stress, the mind becomes aroused, and there is a direct relationship between the level of arousal and performance. The level of performance increases with arousal until it reaches a point of maximum efficiency. Beyond that point, any further increase in the aroused state will cause performance to deteriorate.

Three

Just as you can train your body to execute a particular skill, you can condition your mind to perform well under stress. Top competitors are not

always the most physically gifted, but they excel because they have learned to control their own state of arousal.

There are two primary ways to train the mind to cope with stress. The first is by learning to "override" the mind's natural responses to stress through a technique called *relaxation training*. This is a process of teaching the mind to relax on command, and it was detailed in Part II (March 1986) of this series.

Relaxation training has been used with great success by a number of world class competitors. It works because it gives the athlete a reliable method for controlling the *symptoms* of the brain's built-in response to stress.

The second method separates at a much deeper level, by effectively retraining the mind to more accurately interpret which circumstances are truly threatening, and which are

That defense mechanism is vital; that you are reading this is evidence that yours is working correctly.

However, unless it is trained to do otherwise, the mind can often misinterpret the signals it receives and summon this extreme life-preserving response when in fact no real threat exist. This is what causes the breakdown in performance many athletes experience in stressful competition. Why does the mind become so confused?

Cognitive Restructuring

In fact, we tend to cause this confusion ourselves when we skew our priorities by attaching too much importance to a single performance. Every athlete wants to win. But when the desire to excel becomes an immediate obsession instead of a long range goal, we sometimes begin to view competition in a potentially destructive way.

"Whatever else you may ask it to do on a daily basis, your mind's highest priority at all times is to keep you alive. If you don't believe that, the next time you're really hungry go stand in front of a speeding car and see how fast you forget about that Big Mac. Whenever the brain is confronted with what it perceives to be a serious threat, all other processes are shut down and the survival instinct takes complete control."

not. This is done through a process called *cognitive restructuring*, which is just a fancy name to describe the restructuring of one's own thought patterns.

To understand this, let's go back for a moment and explore why the mind reacts as it does to stress. We often think of the brain as a kind of reservoir which is empty at birth, and which we then slowly fill with information as we go through life. This is partially true, but in fact our brains come from the factory with some information already built-in. Each of us deals with our own instincts every day: we eat, we breathe, we dress to keep ourselves warm, and we seek the companionship of others, all with very little conscious motivation.

Whatever else you may ask it to do on a daily basis, your mind's highest priority at all times is to keep you alive. If you don't believe that, the next time you're really hungry go stand in front of a speeding car and see how fast you forget about that Big Mac. Whenever the brain is confronted with what it perceives to be a serious threat, all other processes are shut down and the survival instinct takes complete control. We described this in Part II as the "fight-or-flight" response.

There is a big difference between saying to yourself "I play racquetball well", and "I am a good racquetball player." Regardless of whether either is accurate, the first refers to something you do, the second to what you are. The distinction may be difficult to grasp, but it is a vital principle for every athlete to understand.

Each of us has in our own mind a certain image of who we are. Psychologically, we refer to this in various ways: self-worth, self-image, ego, etc. A mentally healthy individual is one whose self-image is fundamentally strong enough to withstand the wear-and-tear of periodic failure. But when we begin to confuse who we are with what we do, and depend too heavily on immediate success to bolster our sense of self-worth, we put our ego on the line every time we attempt to accomplish anything that involves the slightest amount of risk.

Remember this! To the mind, the destruction of one's self-image is very nearly the psychological equivalent of physical death. When your ego is on the line, the possibility of failure becomes a serious threat, and your mind mobilizes its defenses to protect you just as it would if you found yourself in the path of a speeding car.

This may sound like some vague

psychological theory, but it is a principle that is easily observable among athletes. Some seem destined to forever ride a roller coaster of chance, gaining confidence with victory then losing it with defeat, never able to make any real progress. But champions are different. Their confidence comes from within and they continually improve despite periodic failure.

A classic example of this occurred on the final day of competition in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, when diver Greg Louganis found himself in a situation of unimaginable stress. He was the final diver in the final event, and he knew that a near perfect dive would win a gold medal for his team, and give the United States the record for the most medals ever won in Olympic competition. Before 50 million television viewers, Louganis scaled the high platform and executed a perfect "10."

Following the dive, reporters asked him what was going through his mind as he climbed the tower. Some thought he was joking when he answered, "I was nervous but I said to myself, 'Greg, no matter what happens, your mother still loves you'." Those who chuckled missed a rare and profound insight into the mind of a great champion.

Why was Louganis thinking about his mother at such an important moment? Because he knew he couldn't dive with the weight of the world on his shoulders. So he summoned an inner source of strength, and reminded himself of who he was: not a diver, not an athlete, but a human being who was worthy of another's love. He separated himself from the act, knew he could survive a failure, and thereby freed his mind of its protective responsibility and allowed it to perform with relaxed perfection.

That is what is meant by *cognitive restructuring* — the willful alteration of thought patterns to free the mind to do as it has been programmed.

If you have difficulty playing up to your potential in tournament competition, it's a sure sign that your mind is battling against stress. Trying harder won't solve the problem. Practicing more won't solve the problem. You must determine why you feel threatened and then eliminate the threat. You cannot fool yourself. If the threat is there, your mind will mobilize itself to protect you. Everything else — including your performance — will become secondary.

Goals And Incentives

The Greg Louganis' example demonstrates the use of cognitive restructuring at the moment of greatest stress in competition. But in fact this technique must be practiced on a daily basis to be used effectively. Many

athletes get themselves into trouble because of thought patterns they develop during their months and years of training, patterns which then become impossible to alter when the stress is encountered.

Cognitive restructuring has to begin with an examination of goals. It is crucial to understand why we become involved in sports, because unrealistic goals can become self-defeating.

We often refer to three types of goals: long-term, intermediate, and short-term. For a racquetball player, a long-term goal might be as lofty as aspiring to become national champion. An intermediate goal might involve achieving a certain level of performance during a single season, or in an important tournament.

Short-term goals deal with specific physical and psychological training programs, such as daily practice of a particular skill or detached analysis of one's ongoing progress. Athletic performance is improved by concentrating on fundamentals, and therefore short-term goals are where we should focus most of our attention. Again, there is a sound psychological reason for this.

It is not unusual, or undesirable, to aspire to great things. But long-term and intermediate goals serve the purpose of keeping thoughts in perspective. When we dwell on them at length, particularly if they are far-reaching, we impede our own progress by constantly beating ourselves down.

In order to constantly grow and progress, the mind demands regular positive rewards. The satisfaction of achieving a short-range goal, or the feeling of a job well-done, reinforce the self-image and have the effect of motivating the mind to re-experience the positive sensation. That is the key to continual progress.

But if goals are set too high, or if we focus on long-range and intermediate goals at length, we constantly feel upset and negative. Reinforcing ourselves in a negative way is called punishment. And to the mind, punishment becomes stress; it is a threat.

It has long been known that punishment suppresses or reduces the frequency of a given behavioral pattern. For the athlete, too much negative reinforcement or punishment can have very serious effects: decreased self-esteem, increased self-doubt, and a decrease in emotional stability. Inner strength comes from a positive self-image; programming the mind in a negative way is a guaranteed formula for failure.

What is it that makes us work so hard and so long to become proficient in a sport? What are the incentives that make the sacrifice worthwhile? Of course they vary with different people. And each of us must identify what our

own particular incentives are.

Again, long-range and intermediate goals provide much of the drive to excel. But, as incentives, these are often difficult to reach and therefore the positive rewards are seldom, if ever, experienced. To avoid the punishing routine that can result from athletic training and competition, it is vital that we have incentives which provide frequent positive rewards.

Most world-class athletes depend heavily on internal as well as external rewards. External incentives like recognition and financial success are important, but by themselves they are not good motivators. We must have internal incentives which provide more immediate rewards: self satisfaction, enjoyment, companionship, the pleasure of physical exertion, etc.

It is rare that top athletes go all out simply to "be number one," or only to "win." They tend to take a much

simple. In fact, to a large degree the entire science of human psychology is based on this single principle.

What can be stated simply is that a strong self-image is almost always the product of a balanced life — one in which positive rewards are regularly received from many different directions such as relationships, family life, religious beliefs, personal discipline, career accomplishments, etc. A balanced life provides the resilience of a broad-based "support system," so that failure in a single area does not significantly threaten one's overall well-being.

The danger for the athlete lies in attaching too much importance to the area of short-term performance. When everything you are is put on the line every time you play, the burden becomes too great for the mind to bear. The fear of failure takes control, and the failures themselves slowly

"It has long been known that punishment suppresses or reduces the frequency of a given behavioral pattern. For the athlete, too much negative reinforcement or punishment can have very serious effects: decreased self-esteem, increased self-doubt, and a decrease in emotional stability. Inner strength comes from a positive self-image; programming the mind in a negative way is a guaranteed formula for failure."

shorter view. "Today, I just want to play the best I can." It may sound trite, but it's true, the consistent achiever is one who understands himself, receives periodic satisfaction from within, and who has a strong self-image.

Balance

Most of us love to watch top athletes perform because we are so awed by their physical skills. But if you ask 100 people what quality they most admire in their favorite competitor, the most common answer is likely to be "confidence." Great champions seem to draw from an endless well of inner-strength. They possess a self-image which seems to be unshakable.

Throughout this series of articles we have referred often to the self-image: it is the single most important element in the formula for athletic success. For that matter, the same could be said for most areas of our daily lives. Self-confidence is the prime catalyst for success, because personal growth comes from a constructive reaction to failure, and a strong self-image is what allows us to view failure in a realistic way.

It would be nice, at this point, to insert a short explanation of how one develops a strong self-image. Unfortunately, it's not quite that

grind you down until your self-confidence has disappeared.

Stated simply, no matter how hard you may work at it, you cannot depend on athletic success alone to create self-confidence. It doesn't work. Why? Because no matter how skilled you are, at times you are going to fail.

We often think of a great athlete as one who always wins, but in fact that is hardly ever the case. Consider this: a professional racquetball player who is ranked in the top 16 in the world, loses, on average, half of all the tournament matches he plays. If that player depended on victories to build self-confidence, it would never come. Every step forward would be negated by a corresponding step backward.

That is why Greg Louganis was thinking about his mother. At the critical moment he put everything in perspective, and concluded that when the dive was over, whether he succeeded or failed, his support system and his self-image would remain intact. A balanced life gave him the confidence he needed to succeed.

Mental Imaging

It has long been known that the mind does not differentiate between real experiences and those that are imagined. *Mental imaging* is a tech-

nique of producing images in the mind which duplicate as nearly as possible the sensations that would be experienced during a perfect physical performance. Since the mind will record the image as though it actually took place, and since it is much easier to imagine a perfect effort than actually experience one, this technique can be highly effective in athletic preparation.

Frequently video tape of a good role model or even tape of yourself performing can act as a good stimulus for producing positive mental images. Indeed, a number of commercial products have been marketed recently which use top athletes as models. While these can be useful, they are not necessary to successfully utilize the technique.

One of the advantages of mental imaging is that it can be used to reduce stress levels in competition. When this mental rehearsal is done in a relaxed atmosphere, or ideally in conjunction with the relaxation exercises described in Part II, the mind can learn to associate the relaxed state with the actual event.

In a widely publicized experiment a few years ago, the free-throw percentage of a particular basketball team was improved over 30% through mental imaging. For a portion of each practice session over a period of months, the players were instructed to lie quietly and visualize, as accurately as possible, standing at the free-throw line shooting perfect shot after perfect shot.

This process is particularly well-suited to sports such as racquetball, which are individual by nature, and which tend to rely on a relative few specific skills.

For example, you might wish to utilize mental imaging to improve an ineffective backhand. To do this you would visualize yourself on the court, either alone or in a match, repeatedly executing flawless backhands — graceful, coordinated, powerful, accurate. You must attempt to "feel" the experience as much as possible, not just see it. Use as many of the senses as possible — sight, touch, hearing, and smell, if such conditions exist. The more real the visualization, the more impact it will have on your mind.

An obvious advantage to this type of mental training is that you can change the playing conditions as you see fit. If you find tournament competition particularly difficult, try to imagine the exact conditions, etc.

Some people find that writing out the details of the activity to be rehearsed is helpful in the early stages of mental rehearsal. Some also find that initially it is easier to imagine themselves watching as a spectator.

Ultimately, however, you want to be able to actually feel yourself going through the motions.

Stop-Thinking Technique

No matter how much effort you may put into keeping your thoughts constructive and positive, there will be times, both during training and prior to competition, when negative feelings seem impossible to control. These can be particularly troublesome when you are fatigued or awaiting an important event, and consequently can interrupt sleep or concentration when they are needed most.

As we have discussed, persistent

negative and worrisome thoughts can cause a serious deterioration in performance level. However, they often seem uncontrollable because they repeat in a vicious cycle: you try to consciously put the thought out of your mind, which makes the thought resurface and you have to start again.

There is a very straightforward procedure for eliminating unwanted thoughts. This procedure can be very effective, but it should not be used to eliminate worry when an important problem needs to be solved. If a legitimate problem exists, it is usually preferable to work it through rather than

(continued on page 23)

ISN'T IT TIME YOU GOT SERIOUS?

TOO MANY TIMES
TOO MANY MATCHES
TOO MANY LOSSES



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**STRANDEMO
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In Tempe Tourney

Harnett Steals Thunder In Tempe

The 1986 Arizona / Head Pro-Am Was An All-Out Scramble for Number One

by Drew Stoddard

Playing the annual pro stop in Tempe, AZ has become something of a solemn tradition in men's professional racquetball. For as far back as most of them can remember, the men have made their yearly journey to the Arizona Athletic Club just outside Phoenix to do battle on Court 1, the AAC's legendary three-wall-glass exhibition court that may be the most magical spot in all of racquetball.

But the 1986 Arizona/Head Pro-Am was billed as something special: an all-out scramble for the world's number-one ranking, something which doesn't go up for grabs very often. Marty Hogan, Gregg Peck, and Mike Yellen came in ranked one-two-three, but for the first time in years they were all so close in point standings that any one of them would have taken over the top spot with a victory.

Hogan is always a favorite in

Tempe. Prior to this season he had never lost a match on Court 1. Many bets were on Peck who seemed ready to make the big move after winning the two previous stops in Dallas and Sacramento. And Yellen, of course, is gunning for his fourth consecutive national championship. Whichever of the three won, from the opening serve, the Arizona event had the unmistakable air of a landmark tournament.

But someone forgot to give a copy of the script to Bret Harnett. While the big three fretted about each other, they forgot to look over their shoulder at the fourth man. After struggling for three rounds, the young left-hander from Las Vegas caught fire and literally exploded past Gregg Peck in the semifinals and Mike Yellen in the finals to win his second ranking tournament of the 1985-86 RMA season.

His path to the winners circle — for the fifth time in his career — was vintage Harnett. Two times in the early rounds he was written off for dead. In the round-of-32 Bret found himself down two games to one, and behind 9-3 in the fourth game against always tough Jack Newman of Chicago. After saving that match by scoring 19 points to Newman's three (10-11, 11-4, 9-11, 11-9, 11-3), and ousting John Eggerman in the 16s (8-11, 11-6, 11-8, 11-5), Harnett was on the ropes again in his quarterfinal battle with 11th ranked Mike Ray of Georgia.

Ray, who has been surprisingly strong this season, notched the second and third games, and very nearly put the lid on Harnett's standard late-match comeback in the fourth. But Bret successfully stretched the match into the tie-breaker, where he is nearly

Harnett sets up with his vaunted backhand in the finals . . . And buries the kill into the front wall as Yellen is unable to do more than watch it roll out.

Photos by Drew Stoddard



always unbeatable, and escaped by a dangerously narrow margin (11-6, 5-11, 7-11, 11-8, 11-9).

Ray's third quarterfinal finish of the season was enough to move him past Scott Oliver in the rankings and into the top 10 for the first time in his career.

While Harnett was scratching and clawing his way into the semifinals, two of the big three were gliding along with an ease that was almost embarrassing. Hogan put in his practice rounds with Dave Johnson, Mike Griffith and Steve Lerner. Only Griffith was able to take a single game. Yellen breezed by Dolwain Green, David Gross and Andy Gross without losing any games.

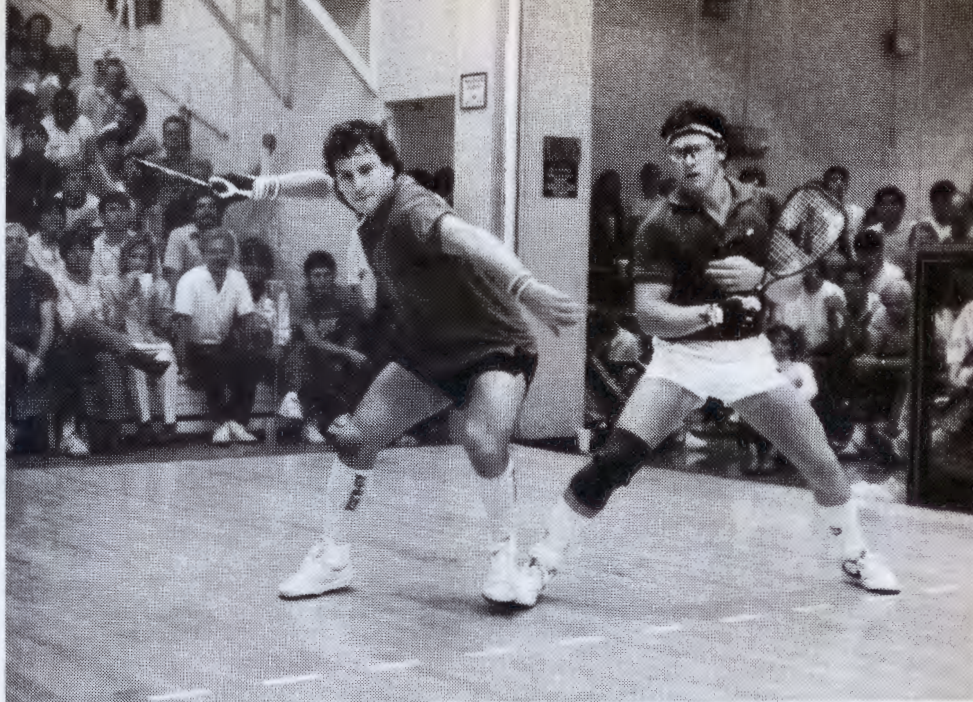
But the player who commanded much of the attention during the opening rounds was Gregg Peck. The savvy Arizona racquetball fans came in droves to see the 21-year-old Texan who presumably was about to dethrone the great Hogan.

For Peck, however, everything went sour in one sickening moment. After winning his first two games against Rich Wagner in the round-of-32, Peck caught his foot in the back-wall crotch early in the third game, severely pulling the tendons across the top of his foot and around his ankle. In obvious pain he stopped the match to ice the injury for the maximum 15 minutes allowed, and then to everyone's surprise resumed play while his ankle continued to swell.

Wagner, of course, has been around long enough to know the worth of pity, and he ran Peck as hard as he could, taking the next two games. But Peck was determined. Injury or no, he was not about to see his hard-fought ranking go up in smoke with a first round loss. Gregg saved the match in the tie-breaker (11-2, 11-3, 3-11, 7-7-11, 11-6) and went back to his hotel to try to recuperate in a few hours before his second round match.

By match time Peck's entire foot was swollen and badly discolored. His plan was to start the match against Bill Sell to see how much pressure the foot could withstand, and then forfeit if the effort seemed hopeless. Surprisingly, the pain was tolerable, and Peck lasted through five games to eliminate Sell (11-6, 9-11, 11-7, 4-11, 11-1).

Fortunately for Peck, his quarterfinal match with Scott Oliver was scheduled for late the following evening. With a full day's rest and a new pair of somewhat unattractive high-top shoes, Peck's movement appeared to be nearly normal, and he outlasted the 8th seeded Oliver (11-5, 11-7, 9-11, 8-11, 11-4). He might not have been so lucky had Oliver not been playing for his first time on Court 1.



Yellen readies a forehand drive against Hogan in the semifinals. Despite stepping on Marty's foot, Mike hit a winner.

Playing racquetball on three walls of completely clear glass takes some adjustment, and Oliver simply could not get himself into the match until it was too late.

Considering the extent of his injury, it was remarkable that Peck got himself to the semifinals, and his finish there saved his No. 2 ranking. But against Harnett on Saturday afternoon he was no competition.

Assuming he gets there, Harnett is always in top form by the final two

rounds. Aided this time by an opponent who was clearly not 100 percent, Bret had little trouble eliminating Peck (11-8, 11-6, 11-3). It was a deceiving match for those who watched. With Gregg not quite up to speed, it was difficult to tell just how well Bret was playing. The following afternoon he made it clear that Peck's ankle probably had nothing to do with the margin of Bret's victory.

Squaring off in the other semifinal were Hogan and Yellen, a matchup which one would normally expect to see in the finals. Theirs is perhaps the most closely contested rivalry in the history of the pro game, so those who came to the match expecting to see a vintage Hogan/Yellen five-gamer were a bit shocked.

Yellen's game depends heavily on pinpoint passing shots, and against Hogan on Court 1 in the past those shots haven't been effective. But this time they were perfect, and Hogan found himself locked in back court straining desperately to see them coming off the side glass walls.

The games were close, but Yellen won in three straight (11-8, 11-10, 11-10). It was the second consecutive time Yellen had dominated Hogan (he won their Omaha final (11-0, 9-11, 11-10, 11-0), and it was the first time since 1982 that either had beaten the other in straight games. Also, it was the first time in six tournaments that Hogan had lost on a court where he was once viewed as invincible.

Despite Yellen's convincing win over Hogan, history has shown that the exhibition court at AAC clearly favors power players. The harder the



A serious Hogan contemplates his imminent first loss at the AAC.

ball is hit into or along the side glass walls, the harder it is to dig out. Harnett has one of the purest power games in pro racquetball, and he proved it with his first victory over defending champion Yellen in nearly four years.

Harnett played brilliantly, stopping every charge Yellen tried to mount, and firing constantly from both sides directly into the two front corners. He seemed to have little trouble picking Yellen's passes out of the glass, and cut them off quickly, either returning them into the corners or sending them screaming down the side walls into deep court. With his father and mother watching from the back wall, Bret swept by Yellen in straight games (11-9, 11-9, 11-5).

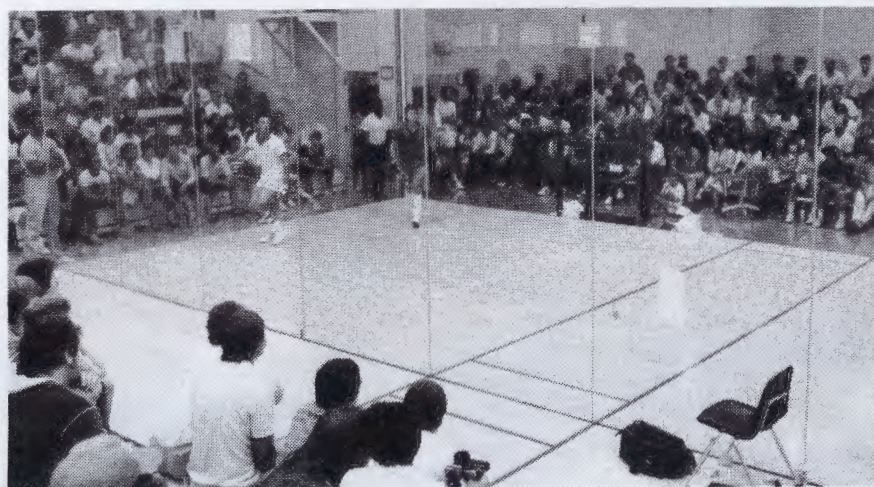
Harnett was understandably pleased with his second win of the season. But the quote of the day came from Yellen, who said with a smile after the match, "I thought I took out the big gun last night."

Bret's victory in Arizona left the rankings virtually intact. Hogan, Peck and Yellen are still locked at one-two-three. But now Harnett has closed his gap considerably at number four, and he's close enough to threaten the top three. So if the men's tour is going to see an important power shift, it will have to wait until the next stop. One thing is certain: the big guns will be looking over their shoulders, keeping a watchful eye on that dangerous fourth man.

The 1986 Arizona/Head Pro-Am was the seventh of 14 ranking stops on the 1985-86 RMA Pro Racquetball Tour. The tournament organizer and director was professional player Jack Nolan. The tournament was sponsored in part by Head Racquet Sports and Penn Racquetball. □



Harnett retrieves a center court shot with an unusual between the legs return.



The famed championship Court 1 at the Arizona Athletic Club, site out countless national championships complete with memorable matches.

1986 ARIZONA HEAD PRO-AM — TEMPE, ARIZONA — JANUARY 15-19, 1986

QUALIFYING ROUNDS:

B.Tibbles d. C.Ballard; G.Caby d. B.Austin; D.Bennett d. A.Abdin; T.Anthony d. R.Lemmert; D.Green d. Tibbles; L.Gilliam d. Caby; R.Harripersad d. Enson Inoue; B.Cocoran d. M.Plotkin; M.Griffith d. B.Laughter; J.Nolan d. T.Boscia; R.Navarro d. Bennett; M.Romo d. J.Evans; M.Ceresia d. T.Neil; D.Negrete d. J.Walker; E.Terry d. P.Bigelow; S.Graham d. B.Raby; B.Rodriguez d. J.Negrete; D.Johnson d. Anthony.

ROUND OF 32:

M.Hogan d. D.Johnson; 7,5,4
M.Griffith d. E.Andrews; 6,8,9
S.Lerner d. J.Cascio; 7,(9),6,4
D.Peck d. E.Terry; 8,5,0
A.Gross d. C.Swain; 7,(7),9,(7),9
D.Cohen d. M.Ceresia; 2,3,5
D.Gross d. E.Inoue; (10),3,3,(4),1
M.Yellen d. D.Green; 3,9,6
B.Harnett d. J.Newman; (10),4,(9),9,3
J.Egerman d. J.Nolan; (6),7,3,6
M.Ray d. D.Obrenski; 4,(10),9,5
R.Navarro d. G.Price; 7,9,(6),10

R.Gonzalez d. R.Harripersad; 2,9,(3),7
S.Oliver d. M.Levine; 3,(4),9,8
B.Sell d. C.Brysmen; 1,(5),(2),4,8
G.Peck d. R.Wagner; 2,3,(3),(7),6

ROUND OF 16:

Hogan d. Griffith; 9,8,(10),3
Lerner d. D.Peck; 6,(0),(9),4,9
A.Gross d. Cohen; sna
Yellen d. D.Gross; 10,7,6
Harnett d. Egerman; (8),6,8,5
Ray d. Navarro; 7,5,9
Oliver d. Gonzalez; (9),2,(2),8,8
G.Peck d. Sell; 6,(9),7,(4),1

QUARTERFINALS:

Hogan d. Lerner; 5,8,6
Yellen d. A.Gross; 0,3,7
Harnett d. Ray; 6,(5),(7),8,9
G.Peck d. Oliver; 5,7,(9),(8),4

SEMIFINALS:

Yellen d. Hogan; 8,10,10
Harnett d. G.Peck; 8,6,3

FINALS:

Harnett d. Yellen; 9,9,5

Jim Leatherman: A True Champion

The 'Inconvenience' of a Wheelchair Hasn't Stopped This Competitor From Using the Power of Positive Thinking

He sits in a wheelchair anxiously awaiting his cagey opponent's next move.

A wrist snaps, a racquet slices the air and, in an instant, the rubber sphere ricochets off the front wall.

Jim Leatherman instinctively lurches his wheelchair forward in an attempt to reach the spinning blue ball. As he desperately stretches forward — straining to return the forceful shot — the wheelchair overturns, slamming the legless athlete to the hardwood floor.

After a reflective pause, the 25-year-old competitor nods to his opponent. He then uses his muscular arms to effortlessly hoist his torso back into the battered chair.

He is again ready to do battle. It is a scene often repeated in Leatherman's life.

Leatherman is part of a growing cadre of disabled athletes who are playing racquetball, despite the fact that it is a sport which requires dexterity, agility and lightning-quick reflexes.

"If I do not fall out of the chair at least once during a match, then I'm not hustling," Leatherman explains.

This same relentless spirit enabled Leatherman to press on when his life — and literally his body — was in shambles.

He was struck by a train as a six-year-old and lost his legs. After corrective surgery and a lengthy recovery, Leatherman began playing sand-lot baseball with "the guys in the neighborhood."

"My mother, one of the first women to work on an assembly line at General Motors, fortunately was not the type of person who would let me sit around and feel sorry for myself. I had to go on living," he said.

"Because of my disability, my friends made me catch. After the ball got stuck in the catcher's mask, I said, enough. So, I started pitching instead," Leatherman said.

"Sports was my way out. It helped me relate to others — to find myself again.

"Had the accident not occurred, I probably would have become a jock," said Leatherman, who works in Baltimore, MD as a counselor for the



Jim Leatherman, doing his thing

disabled with the Social Security Administration.

When not at work administering to the needs of 1,500 fellow disabled employees, the well-rounded counselor usually spends the time with his supportive girlfriend, Nancy, or participates in athletic endeavors.

He is a proficient basketball player and has tried a variety of sports. However, he particularly enjoys racquetball as a year-round sport because the rules for able-bodied and disabled players are virtually the same. There are few compromises, with the only

significant difference being that wheelchair players are allowed two bounces.

"I started playing against able-bodied players because there were no disabled players in my area. This has really helped me. When I'm at the top of my game, I can play with one bounce, instead of two, and still win," Leatherman said.

He recently captured an unprecedented fourth national title in the wheelchair open division at the Lite U.S. Singles Racquetball Championships against John Foust of Denver,

(continued on page 41)

Variety Of Opponents?

That's The Spice Of Life On The Court, But Playing The Same Person Helps, Too.

by Charlie Garfinkle

Most of us have always been told to practice against a wide variety of opponents. The theory is that different opponents will give us many different serves, shots and strategies to deal with, thus forcing us to develop a well-rounded game. And, we're always told to include at least one left-hander in our group of opponents.

Although I agree with this "variety of opponents" theory to some extent, I feel that many benefits can also be derived from playing against the *same* opponents week after week. This is especially true if you also play in leagues or even an occasional tournament.

Playing continually against opponents who have a certain serve or shot that causes you trouble will help you to eventually master those serves or shots. I also feel that you should play mostly against opponents who are mentally tough and hard competitors. These types of players will demand of you the same intensity on each and every point that they themselves give.

As a result, you won't be able to let up for a minute. If the match is close and you win, you'll have an extra

sense of satisfaction knowing you've defeated a player who never gives up.

If you're an intermediate player, playing the same three or four opponents week after week can dramatically improve your game. Although it's true that your opponent knows most of the serves and shots you use, you can turn it into your advantage by attempting to change a few strategies or strokes. At precisely the time your opponent "knows" you'll hit a certain shot — that's when you cross him up, whereas a player not familiar with your shots will be ready for anything.

Let's assume, for instance, that you always feel frustrated against Player A. Although you feel that you've got a good drive serve, Player A seems to return your best serves time after time. Those aces and near-aces you read about never seem to happen against this guy. How come?

If you're like most of us, you're either standing in the middle of the service box or slightly to the right on practically every drive serve. And, you're probably following the power player principle of serving two drives to the left, with an occasional drive down the right.

The problem is that because you're always standing in the same area to serve, Player A instinctively knows to which side the serve is coming. Therefore, unless you hit a crack on the side wall, he'll have a relatively easy time returning your drive serves.

The solution is simple. Serve drives and occasional Z's from different areas in the service box. By doing this, Player A will never be quite as sure of where your serve is headed.

An excellent serve to use for variety is a forehand Z, hit at an acute angle (Diagram 1). Stand one to two feet from the right side wall, and with perhaps a little glance to the deep left corner, it will appear as if you're going to hit a hard drive to your opponent's backhand. Instead, hit a hard Z to his forehand, aiming for a spot on the front wall two to three feet to the left of center, three to four feet high.

After hitting the front wall, the ball will then hit the left side wall about three to four feet from the short line

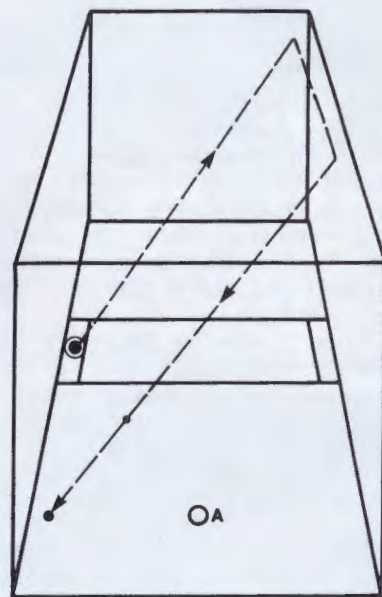


Diagram 2. The backhand high Z serve is a tough second serve that could catch your opponent unprepared.

and carry over that line, five to six feet from the left side wall. It will be traveling at great speed and away from your surprised opponent. Adding this serve, in addition to changing your position in the service zone on your drive serves, will prove to be an immense help against Player A.

Now that you've had some success with your first serve against Player A, it's time to end the frustration caused by his effective returns of your second serve. Even though you've been mixing up your serves with a high or medium lob, your problem has been that Player A is able to return virtually every serve to the ceiling. Unfortunately, his ceiling game is better than yours.

In this situation, I'd switch to a high Z serve to his backhand, using a *backhand* stroke (Diagram 2). The angle of this serve will produce the same effect as if a left-hander used a forehand Z serve from this position. And you know how much we all hate returning a left-hander's serve!

To hit this serve correctly, stand one to two feet from the left side wall. Using the backhand stroke, you should

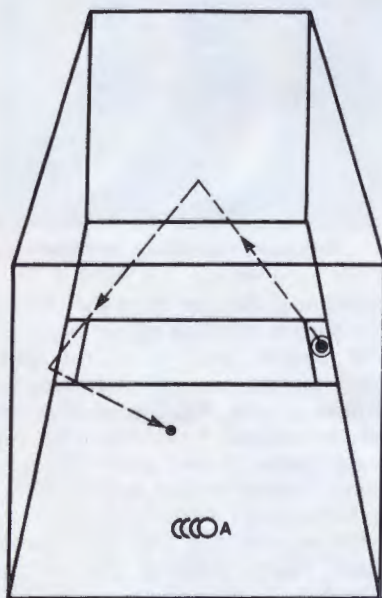


Diagram 1. The forehand Z serve at an acute angle is a good serve to bring variety to a stale arsenal.

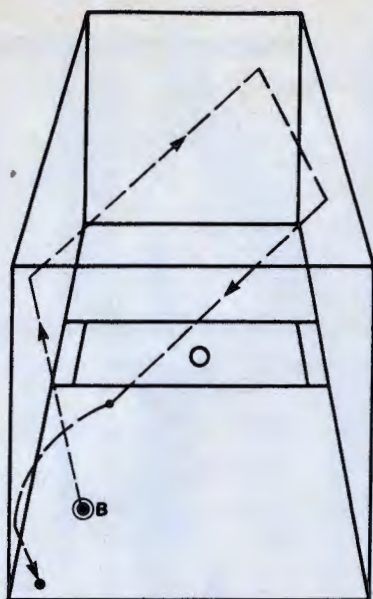


Diagram 3. Your opponent's around-the-wall ball drives you crazy.

hit the serve three to four feet high on the front wall, one to two feet from the right side wall. The ball will then hit the right side wall, bounce over the short line, and continue to the deep left corner.

Although Player A will still be able to return some of these serves to the ceiling, it will be more difficult than returning the lob or drive. The lob gives him time to calculate; the drive eliminates his need for power. Because Player A will have to hit across his body due to the angle of the Z, his ceiling ball will often fall short and some may miss the ceiling altogether, causing the ball to carry all the way to the back wall. In either situation you'll end up with a set up.

Another of your regular opponents, Player B, provides you with a great workout. However, he often uses a shot that completely befuddles you. Instead of hitting a backhand ceiling ball, he hits the ball into the left side wall near the short line. The ball then carries to the front wall, hitting near the right side wall, moving across the short line where it bounces and continues its path to the deep left corner.

Time after time you find yourself pinned in the deep left corner, returning a feeble backhand that Player B readily pounces on. You have just fought — (and lost) — a battle with an around-the-wall ball (Diagram 3).

The around-the-wall ball is generally regarded as losing its effectiveness as the skill levels increase, for example, it's a great shot against beginners, a decent shot against intermediates, not recommended against advanced, and disaster against open or pro players. That's because the guaranteed antidote to the around-the-wall

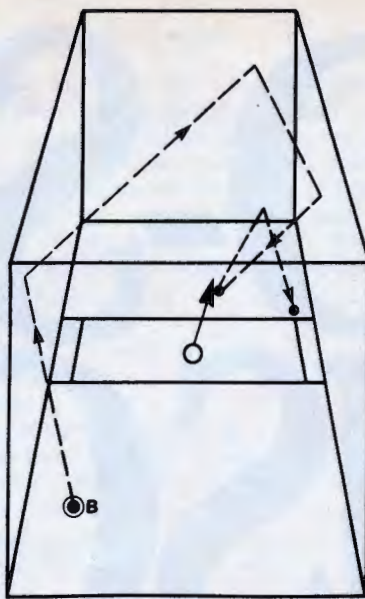


Diagram 4. The fly kill is the answer to the around-the-wall ball.

ball is a fly (volley) kill or pass, a tough shot to master.

When faced with the around-the-wall ball, don't let it bounce after it hits the right side wall. Instead, move up to the short line and as the ball approaches you, hit a hard forehand volley (hitting the ball out of the air) and drive it straight down the forehand side as low and as hard as you can (Diagram 4).

Because the around-the-wall ball is hit from deep court with the expectation that it will be returned from deep court, Player B will be stationed behind you on the left side of the court. His chances of returning your fly shot are non-existent.

At one time or another we all run up against a player who seemingly returns every shot. This is especially frustrating for an intermediate who doesn't quite have the necessary kill shot consistency to do away with the "retriever."

Of course, the retriever realizes this. Therefore, he's practically begging you to shoot. When you do, and your shot stays slightly up, the retriever quickly ends the rally by re-killing up front.

Instead of shooting, you have to pass the retriever who we will call Player C. An excellent time to do so is when you and Player C are both stationed in or near the service zone and you've got a forehand shot. Player C assumes that you'll try a right corner kill or drive down the right wall. Don't!

Instead, hit a hard, crosscourt V-pass (Diagram 5). The shot should hit the front wall one to two feet to the left of center, three to four feet high. The ball should then hit the left side wall, directly behind Player C and

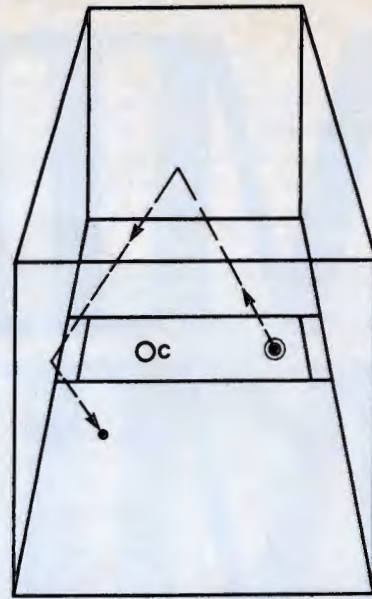


Diagram 5. The V-pass will keep the retriever in deep court and away from your kill shots.

carom toward deep center court. It's always fun to see Player C frantically change directions and race off toward the ball wall trying to track down the V-pass. A few well placed shots like this will help keep him off balance.

Now that you've added six or seven points against these practice opponents, you've still got to deal with your fourth nemesis — The Dreaded Lefty!

Because Player D is left-handed, you have visions of unbelievable ace serves, flat rollouts and wierd bounces — all good for him and bad for you. That is the primary problem most players have against a "southpaw" — they are mentally defeated before they step onto the court.

The key is to play your game. Take the same shots that score points for you, whether you're playing a lefty or a righty. Because a left-hander assumes you will attempt to hit every shot to his backhand — don't.

An ideal situation to accomplish this occurs where Player D is near the service line on the right side and you've got a shot off the back wall in the deep left corner (Diagram 6 on page 41) Player D hangs around the right wall anticipating your back hand crosscourt shot.

Be smart! Hit a hard, down-the-left-wall backhand. Player D will be so shocked he won't even move. And even if he did, he still couldn't get to the shot to return it.

Playing the same players in practice can, and will, improve your game. You'll find that you'll have to serve, return serve, and shoot more accurately. But you will also be forced to develop new shots and strategies to

(continued on page 41)

MID-SIZE MUSCLE.

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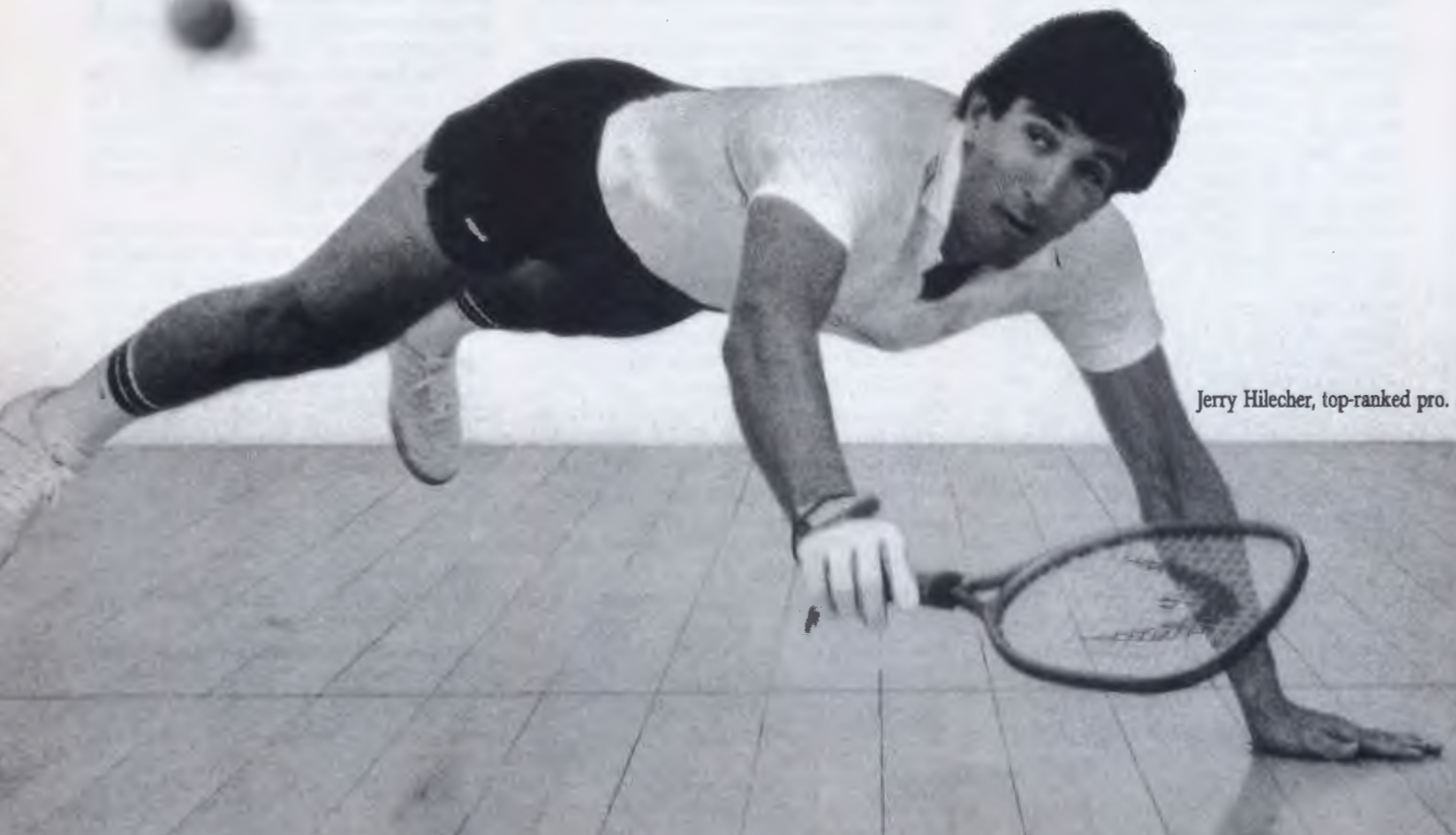
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(continued from page 13)

simply eliminate the concern it causes.

There are, however, specific times when problem solving is not appropriate, such as when trying to fall asleep or in the moments just prior to competition. At these times, it is best to use a "stop-thinking" technique. When the cycle of worry begins, follow three simple steps:

One

Say to yourself, or softly out loud, "Stop!"

Two

Immediately produce a very positive and calming image in your mind. An example would be to imagine yourself lying on a beach, feeling the warm sun, smelling the fresh air, experiencing a state of complete relaxation.

Three

Go do something else for just a few moments, if possible.

This technique may sound silly, but in fact it works quite efficiently. Worry actually requires strict concentration. And saying "stop!" has about the same effect on a recurrent thought process as a ringing telephone has at a moment of great passion.

Once the cycle of worry has been halted, the calming image acts as a positive reward, increasing the chance that the cycle will not repeat. Then, turning your attention to something else for a moment helps break the overall pattern.

The *Stop-Thinking* technique is a process of mental conditioning. It must be practiced each time the negative thought pattern begins so that the pattern itself is conditioned out.

Part of what makes this technique so effective is that it works on three levels: a thinking level, an emotional level, and a behavioral level. The first two steps are the most important. There will be times when turning your attention to something else is impossible because the situation will not allow it. But the first two steps, saying "stop" and the positive image, can be done in the mind.

It is extremely important that the second step follow the "stop" immediately. Also, it is helpful to have four or five predefined positive, calming images. These should be practiced through visual imagery so that they can be recalled immediately when needed.

In his series of articles we have discussed many techniques for training the mind for the rigors of athletic competition. There are, no doubt, other principles and techniques that are effective as well.

It is easy to become so entrenched in the routine of skill-oriented training that we fail to recognize that physical

preparation is only half of the formula for athletic success. As a general rule, the untrained mind does not respond in a predictable way under the stress of formal competition. And it makes little sense to spend countless hours honing our physical skills, if we are unable to summon those skills when we need them most.



The "Stop-Thinking" technique is a process of mental conditioning. It must be practiced each time the negative thought pattern begins so that the pattern itself is conditioned out. Part of what makes this technique so effective is that it works on three levels: a thinking level, an emotional level, and a behavioral level.

The human mind is a source of immense power. And that power can be manifested in either a positive or negative or negative way. The challenge for the athlete is to learn to tap that power by training the mind as well as the body. In both areas, failing to train is truly training to fail.

(This is the last of a three-part series.)

Dr. Jerry May, Ph.D., is a Clinical Psychologist for the United States Ski Team. He is Co-chairman of the U.S. Olympic Sports Psychology Advisory Panel, and is Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Nevada School of Medicine, in Reno, Nevada.

Drew Stoddard is the Commissioner for the RMA men's pro tour and an editor for National Racquetball Magazine.

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The DP Freshold Racquet Grip contours to any racquet shape without slippage or movement during play. Freshold Grips are available in red, black, brown and light blue. DP Headbands and Wristbands are designed for moisture absorbency and long life. Quality elastic contraction provides comfort and fit. Machine washable. Each package contains two wristbands and one headband. For more information, contact: Diversified Products, Opelika, Alabama.



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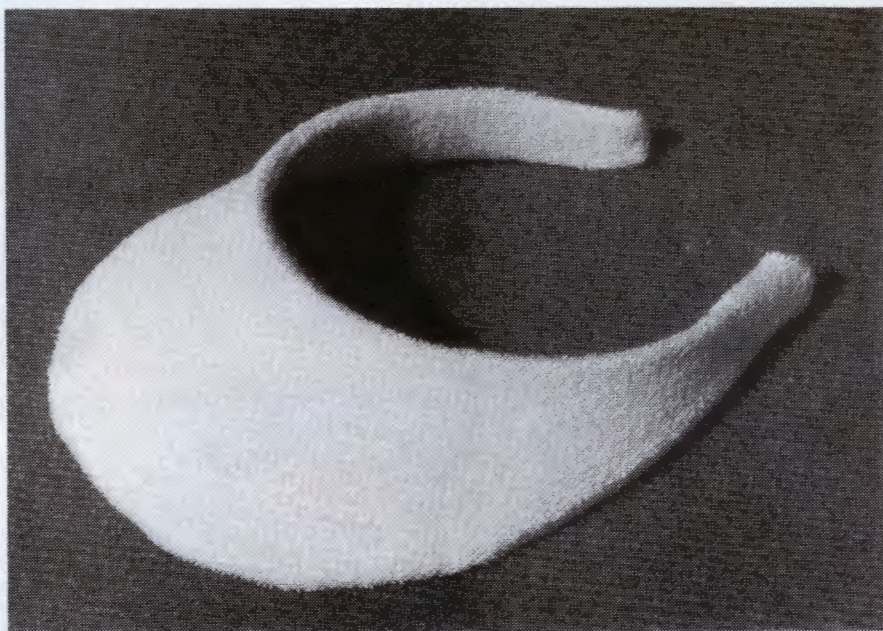
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For more information on Terry Slip-on Visors, call Cushees at 800/327-5012 or 305/368-3660 in Florida, or write the Cushees, 2520 N.W. Second Avenue, Boca Raton, Florida 33431. □



Ektelon Publishes 'Total Racquetball'

The 1986 edition of Ektelon's "Total Racquetball", a free, full-color, 64-page guide to the sport of racquetball, is now available at sporting goods dealers and court facilities, nationwide.

In addition to a full-color presentation of the entire Ektelon product

line, Total Racquetball provides a variety of instructional tips on racquetball. Among those authoring tips articles are the top professionals of Team Ektelon, cover subject Mike Yellen (1983, 1984, 1985 men's national racquetball champion) and Lynn Adams (1982, 1983, 1985 women's national racquetball champion).

The booklet also features a complete set of the current rules of racquetball and an article on Ektelon's MACRO series of oversize racquetball racquets.

Copies of the 1986 Total Racquetball booklet are available at no charge by writing to Ektelon, 8929 Aero Drive, San Diego, CA 92123. □

with an optional stack of 110 pounds. The two inch tubular steel design provides the required structural strength, and nickel chrome plating offers cosmetic enhancement. Includes lan-



Paramount Improves Abdominal Machine

Continuing its tradition of quality, Paramount Fitness now introduces its Abdominal Machine. Addressing one of today's most common fitness needs, the unit offers ease of movement and develops and conditions the abdominal muscles. Isolating and concentrating on the abdominals, it offers a great alternative to conventional sit-ups. This new design has better hand placement and has an adjustable seat for users of different heights. The standard weight stack is 85 pounds,

yard so selector pins cannot be lost or misplaced. The Abdominal Machine fits into a 42" by 54" space and the shipping weight is 290 pounds.

For further information, contact: the Sales Department, Paramount Fitness Equipment Corp., 6450 E. Bancini Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90040 (213) 721-2121. □



The All-American Bad Back Quiz

by Jacque Cooper

Most people take a good back for granted. Especially those people who exercise. They assume that they are strengthening their backs simply by participating in an activity, like racquetball, that involves the main muscles of both the upper and lower body.

In fact, people don't consciously think about their back until it starts to hurt. Then they aggressively try to stop the pain and learn about how they again can build a healthy strong back.

If you currently have low back pain or if you would like to find out about back problems by not developing them yourself, then take this short . .

are used regularly could cause back problems? (a) chairs, (b) beds, (c) shoes (d) all of these items

Answers

1) True. A governments survey showed that the number one reason people went to a doctor with a specific complaint was for a problem with their back. Complaints due to a bad back outweighed complaints due to sore throats, colds or the flu! In fact, back problems are the second leading cause for people missing work, with colds and flu being number one.

Avoid a Bad Back Quiz

- 1) People go to the doctor more often for back problems than for any other reason. True or false?
- 2) Approximately how many people in the U.S. are plagued by back problems? (a) 10,000; (b) 100,000; (c) 1 million; (d) 75 million
- 3) What are the average American's chances of developing back problems? (a) 1 in 100; (b) 1 in 10; (c) 1 in 4; (d) 1 in 2
- 4) Which of these groups of people would be a candidate for back problems? (a) men, (b) women; (c) children; (d) all of these
- 5) In which career are you more apt to develop back problems? (a) secretary, (b) postman; (c) lawyer; (d) accountant
- 6) Which of the following often cause back problems? (a) stress; (b) inadequate exercise, (c) poor posture; (d) excess body fat; (e) sitting; (f) improper lifting
- 7) You only have back problems if your back hurts. True or false?
- 8) You really don't have a back problem if your back bothers you only occasionally. True or false?
- 9) A healthy back is supported or aligned properly by which of the following muscles when they are strong and flexible? (a) abdominal; (b) spinal muscles; (c) hip flexors; (d) hamstrings
- 10) The wrong kinds of exercise can cause back problems. True or false?
- 11) Not doing the right type of strengthening or flexibility exercises can cause back problems. True or false?
- 12) Which of the following items that

Oh, my aching back!



2) (d). In the U.S. alone, 75 million people suffer from back problems. Insurance companies report that 28 million people seek medical treatment each year. They claim that more claims are submitted per year for bad backs than for any other cause! This does not include all the people who do not see a doctor for a stiff, painful or immobile back.

3) (c). Most doctor's surveyed believed that 25 percent (or one in four) people in the average American population would develop back prob-

lems at some time in their life. Some other experts believe that the chances of developing a bad back are as high as 33 percent.

4) (d). Both males and females are equally likely to develop back problems. Even children are candidates for a bad back. Doctors are reporting a high incidence of problems in children as young as 11 and 12 years old.

5) (a), (c) and (d). People who work in a job where they sit most of the day are at higher risk of developing back problems than those in careers involving a lot of walking, like postmen. Long periods of sitting can result in back problems because the muscles of the legs become inflexible, causing strain on the lower back. Poor chair design also can cause lower back pain.

6) (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e). All of these conditions can cause bad backs. Learning how to avoid muscle tension cause by stress, inadequate exercise, poor posture, too much body fat, poor sitting posture and incorrect lifting can prevent many back problems.

7) False. You may have an existing back problem and not be experiencing any pain in your back. You may experience pain in other parts of your body such as the knees, calves or ankles instead of where the pain originated. Or the pain has not yet appeared and may show up at a later date.

8) False. A slight problem now can result in a big problem later. And that may require extensive medical treatment even surgery instead of being corrected by making easier changes such as adjustments in your posture, exercise habits, weight, etc.

9) (a), (b), (c) and (d). All these muscles support and keep the back in proper alignment if they are strong and flexible. Inflexible and/or weak abdominal, leg, hip and back muscles can be the sole cause of lower back problems. Simple exercises done properly on a consistant basis may prevent costly and painful treatment that could keep you off your feet and out of work for weeks or even months.

10) True. Simple common exercises like toe touches, leg lifts or certain sit-ups can cause debilitating lower back injuries. Learning which exercises you should not do to prevent possible injury and which exercises you should do to build a healthy strong back could "make or break you", as the old saying goes.

(continued on page 41)

What's Causing Your Headache?

It May Be Tension Or It May be Something Worse

by Jeri Watlington

It starts slowly, almost imperceptibly, then the pain grows and there's no doubt about it — you've got a headache. Maybe you take some pain reliever, or just ignore it in hopes that it'll go away. If your headaches become somewhat frequent, however — starting to interfere with all aspects of your life, including your racquetball game — they may start to worry you. Are your headaches caused by simple tension, or possibly something more serious?

Headaches have numerous causes, according to experts. They are often prompted by stress; such seemingly unlikely factors as jaw joint problems can also be to blame. In addition, vision difficulties can cause headaches. As you'll see later, racquetball players — along with other sports participants — have special vision needs that should be met.

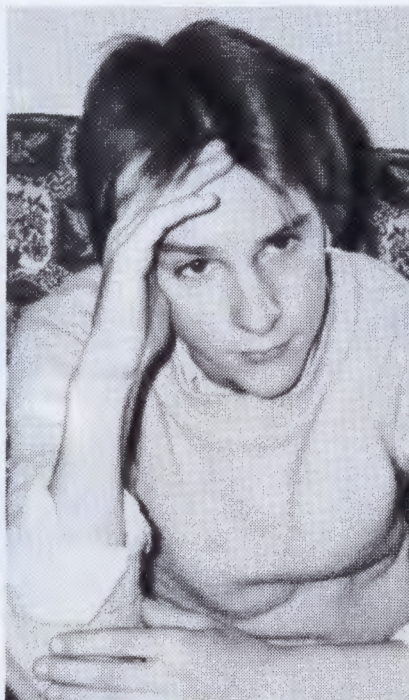
Are you concerned by your headaches? Do you think they might stem from a serious cause, and would you like to eliminate their negative effect upon your lifestyle and racquetball game? It's difficult to include *everything* that's known about headaches in just one article, but a wide range of information is available from various sources.

Headaches: The Background

A discussion of various types of headaches is offered by Clinical Director Dale M. Patterson, M.S., C.A.C.B., of the Lawrenceville Biofeedback & Stress Management Center, Lawrenceville, NJ. There are two major general types of headaches, which are as follows, according to Patterson:

(1) Vascular — Associated with blood flow, this type of headache usually (but not always) occurs on one side of the head. Following a series of physiochemical events, it stems from an overengorging of blood vessels in the brain, which causes a piercing, throbbing pain. "Every time the heart beats, it's like a knife has been forced into the brain," he explains.

(2) Muscle Contraction — Commonly described as "tension headaches", this version involves a tightening of muscles in the scalp, head, cheeks, jaw and neck. It is characterized by a "constant, dull ache", and "very often feels like a tight band around the head," Patterson remarks. Of these types, he has noted



that the vascular headache is most likely to be "inherited", that is, where a genetic factor may predispose an individual for this type of headache. Muscle contraction headaches are most often influenced by a chronic maladaptive behavior pattern or habit, according to Patterson.

What Brings Them On?

Some precipitating factors of headaches are also discussed by Patterson and other experts:

Tension — Have you been getting too "worked up" over your racquetball games? Be careful. Your head is particularly vulnerable to tension's effects, Patterson says, because muscle tension usually originates in the body's upper portion. The sides of the neck (sterno-mastoid muscles), upper part of the shoulders (upper trapezius muscles), and the back of the neck (cervical muscles) are most vulnerable. This type of stress reaction may occur when a person "overreacts to stress, overreacts to life," he explains. "You can learn that behavior as a child."

"Whatever affects the mind, affects the body," says Dr. Pierre C. Haber, director of the Psychology Society, New York City. This is particularly true for headaches, he continues, since they occur in the body's most sensitive area — the brain, head, eyes, etc.

Allergies — Hidden or not hidden,

allergies can cause either vascular or muscle tension headaches, depending upon where you're most vulnerable, where your "Achilles heel" is, Patterson has found. This type of problem can be treated by behavioral medicine, the application of behavioral principles to medical problems, he continues. This treatment, according to Patterson, is an attempt to strengthen the body's immunological system.

Vision Difficulties — "There are many types of headaches and many causes," explains Joel Zaba, M.A., O.D., Norfolk, VA, American Optometric Association (AOA) Communications Division Executive Committee chairman. "Since some headaches, such as migraines, have symptoms that affect the eyes and/or vision temporarily, people often think the eyes are the cause, when in fact they are not.

"Vision problems that can cause headaches include farsightedness, presbyopia, astigmatism and eye teaming difficulties," Dr. Zaba continues. "Sometimes, the wrong eyeglass or contact lens prescription can also cause headaches.

"If the cause of headaches is a vision problem, the prescribing of the proper corrective lenses will solve the problem," says Dr. Zaba. "Eye teaming difficulties, however, are usually treated with vision therapy."

"Americans are into sports in a big way yet approximately one out of four are on the courts, courses, fields, bowling lanes and skating rinks, as well as in swimming pools, with vision that is not up to par," says the Sports And Vision News Backgrounder, American Optometric Association, St. Louis, Missouri.

Sports performance clues to vision needs include "playing worse rather than better even after much practice; frequently missing easy plays; squinting; inconsistent performance from game to game; difficulty playing under lights indoors or outdoors," the Backgrounder explains.

"Doctors of optometry, however, point out that a person's sports performance does not always give clues to a vision problem or to the need to hone vision skills," this publication says. "Many professional athletes and U.S. Olympic contenders are examples of persons who are performing well above average but who could do better with sharper vision skills.

"For this reason, doctors of optometry recommended that professional athletes, young people aiming for the Olympics or a career in sports and anyone who enjoys playing his or her best have a thorough optometric examination regularly, with an emphasis on sports vision skills," remarks the Background. "Regularly means once a year for those age 5 through 25 and for those over 35. Once every two years may be sufficient for those between 25 and 35, although some persons may need care more often."

TMJ Disorders

If you suffer severe headaches that sometimes extend behind the eye, to the temple, or down the back of your neck, your pain may stem from a problem with your temporomandibular joint (TMJ) — also known as the jaw joint. TMJ headaches can last hours or days, according to Princeton, NJ area dentist David A. Nitchman, DMD, PA, who specializes in treating TMJ disorders. These headaches may also be accompanied by a sensation of "bubbling", "ringing", "fullness" or "wetness" in the ear — which can also occur independently of such a headache. It's important to note that headaches are not the only possible TMJ symptom. Shoulder, back or arm pain accompanied by facial pain may also result: a "crack" ("pop", "snap" or "click") of the jaw joint can also occur.

What causes TMJ problems? Causes vary and many symptoms are possible, Dr. Nitchman explains; he also observes that TMJ problems seem to be increasing in today's stressful, fast-paced world. This seems to be another area where getting too aggravated over your current racquetball play might only hurt you in the end. However, Dr. Nitchman notes that efforts to establish a particular "TMJ Personality" have failed. *Anyone* can suffer from this disease.

Diagnosis of TMJ problems can sometimes be difficult, according to Dr. Nitchman, because this disorder's symptoms can be caused by other medical problems, as well. Because they don't understand the true cause of their distress, TMJ patients may visit various specialists before ever consulting a dentist. If you even suspect that you *might* have a TMJ problem, Dr. Nitchman urges that you visit a dentist; make sure, though, that the dentist you select has some experience and specialization in the diagnosis and treatment of TMJ problems. Such a dentist can also provide more information than space in this article allows.

Taking Charge Of Your Headaches

The following is excerpted from "Start Taking Charge", an Aetna Life

Insurance Company publication developed by The Bob Hope International Heart Research Institute, Seattle, WA, for Aetna Life & Casualty:

"When headaches are not accompanied by any other symptoms, they're almost always caused by tension and muscle spasms in the neck, scalp and jaw.

"Most 'migraine' headaches also are caused by tension. Very often migraines are preceded by visual disturbances (seeing stars, light flashes, or auras) and are accompanied by nausea and vomiting.

"If the headache is not accompanied by paralysis or a personality change, it is extremely unlikely that the periodic headache is caused by a brain tumor. Although headaches associated with tumors do become more severe and more frequent over time, it is usually some other symptom that makes a physician suspect that a tumor is involved.

Taking Care Of Yourself

"Aspirin (or an aspirin substitute, such as Tylenol) is still the medicine of choice when it comes to tension headaches. (Taken with food or milk, aspirin shouldn't cause stomach irritation.)

"Massage, heat applied to the back of the neck, a short nap or rest, a cold washcloth placed on the forehead, or a warm shower also can help. If you have a cold, a nasal decongestant can relieve both the congestion and the headache.

"Many migraine-sufferers have found relief from biofeedback training; some are helped by prescription medicines.

When To Call Your Doctor

— If the headache is associated with fever and a stiff neck.

— If the headache for the first time is associated with visual difficulties.

— If the headache is associated with a head injury.

— If the headache lasts more than a few days.

— If the headache is worse in the morning."

Copies of "Start Taking Charge" are available for \$6.95, check or money order, by writing: "Start Taking Charge"/Aetna Life & Casualty/P.O. Box 104/Hartford, CT 06101.

Taking The Next Step

Hopefully, you now know more about what causes your headaches than you did before reading this article. Since you have all this new-found information, maybe you can use it to your advantage. The next time that slow, imperceptible pain starts in your head, you'll know just how to handle it — so you'll be back to normal life, including the racquetball court, as soon as possible. □

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Stuck in a Racquetball Rut?

If You Aren't An 'Instant' Success In This Sport, Perhaps You Need to Visit A Training Camp

by Steve Strandemo

As I travel around the country playing and teaching I see an awful lot of players stuck in a racquetball rut.

They might be superbly athletic and have great hand-eye coordination, which is why they have got as far as they have. But having taken their God-given abilities to the limit, their games level off and racquetball becomes an exercise in frustration. If the frustrated player only knew how much room for improvement there still is in his game he would never dream of trading in his racquets for a set of golf clubs.

However, try as he might, such a player is never going to advance his game without taking a serious look at the basics.

The tendency to want to run before you can walk is particularly common in racquetball because, unfortunately for the game, between 1975 and 1978 racquetball developed a reputation as an "instant" sport.

And I know that there are some players who can't take the thought of going back to school. They suffer from the "if I can't do it on my own, then it's not worth doing at all" syndrome. These are the Doubting Thomases who think that going to camp is an admission of failure, or will be boring, or simply a waste of time.

There are actually so many subtleties, so many things to juggle in racquetball, very few players pick it all up correctly without some expert instruction. Take form, for instance.

Do you have the right pressure and the correct grip on the handle? Is the angle of your wrist just right? How about the way you snap your wrist on ball contact, or the degree of elbow extension? How much body are you using in the swing on offensive shots? I could go on, but you get the picture.

The same is true for strategy. You may have a good overall concept of the game, but have you thought about how to read your opponent's swing, how to select the best shot, how to reposition, and how to mask your own intentions on court?



Strandemo goes through the forehand movements as eager learners pay close attention.

I know all about going back to basics. I was one of those guys knocking myself out on court wondering why the heck I wasn't getting any better after having made what I thought was such a great start in the game.

My teaching method evolved from the problems I had as an amateur and professional player. I had reached a plateau in my game, and although I didn't realize it, I was balancing my game on some precarious foundations. However, before my career could



Use of videotaping, one of Strandemo's pioneering programs, has become an indispensable teaching tool.

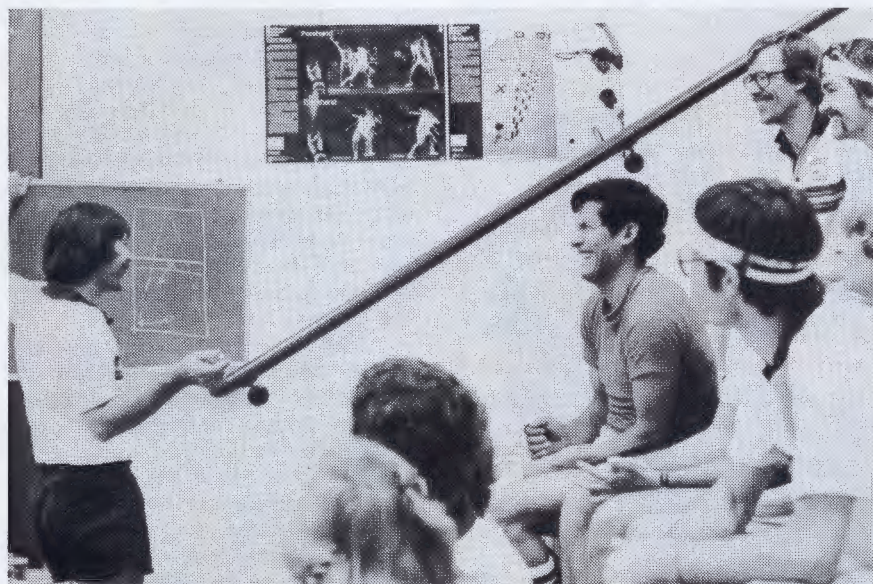
come tumbling down around my ears, I went back to square one and rebuilt my whole game. I was soon able to work my way up through the amateur ranks and compete on a professional level.

In my experience everyone can improve his game by at least a level. A good starting point is at a racquetball camp, which is an especially efficient

Filming from the front or back of the court can provide some great perspectives from which to analyze strokes and strategies.

In addition to strategy and positioning, video can help teach racquetball skills in virtually every area of the game, from low drive serves to cross-over steps, to relocation on court to lob serve motions.

Photos by Jack Miller



A chalkboard and a little wit help relax students.

and enjoyable way of learning. I recommend camps for several reasons.

Apart from the camaraderie and friendly competition which makes a week of racquetball camp a lot of fun and a great way to spend a vacation, it can be confidence-building to know that you're not alone with your racquetball problems. You can learn faster by watching and learning from each other, and in my experience, working in a group usually seems to make learning more stimulating and gives everyone a chance to strut his stuff against players with different racquetball styles.

Secondly, instruction is intensive and uninterrupted. This really gives you a chance to assimilate the correct basics of play into your game, and provides an overview of the game that serves as a framework for future development.

Third, I use videotape, which I consider an indispensable teaching tool. Through video feedback, players quickly get a clear picture of their shortcomings and are able to see how far they have advanced by the end of the week.

Video also facilitates objective evaluation by both players and instructors because it provides visible proof of what's really happening on court. It closes the gap between instructor and student, giving them time to sit down and analyze the game together in a relaxed fashion.

The other advantages of video are almost too numerous to mention. Because we let our students take their tapes home with them, video goes on working long after camp is over. Their tape serves as a mini refresher course just in case old habits begin to creep back into their games. I also show professional players on tape as an example and inspiration.

Of course, if you've already mastered all the aspects of the game that I've mentioned here, then racquetball camp may not be for you. But if you suspect there's room for improvement let your imagination run free; lack of it is the only thing that will keep you down.

For more from Steve Strandemo, see article on page 6.

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Basketball — An Alternate Exercise for Racquetball Fans

by Dave Payne

Most racquetballers have a favorite conditioning activity. Some prefer weight training, others running. Still others shun all off-court activity and are simply content to "play a lot". The serious racquetballer, one who is motivated toward tournament competition and maximum development of his or her skills is always looking for that certain, special edge — that new strategy, approach or shot which will give them a jump on the competition.

Nothing, of course, can substitute for diligent, concerted and concentrated practice, but proper conditioning can also provide that make-a-difference edge when needed. Over and above improving the technical aspects of the game itself, conditioning can make or break that critical game or match, and lead to a championship.

We have been told over and over again how great running is to get you in good condition. How great it is for us, but how hard it is for some of us to keep serious about it. Both kinds of running (or jogging) long-distance or sprinting, can obviously improve cardiovascular endurance. They can help toward faster recovery from oxygen deficiency and provide the energy for quick bursts needed to cover the court.

But many of us, particularly members of the "Over the Hill Gang", detest running. The loneliness of the long distance runner out there, far from the madding crowd, is the pits (with apologies to Alan Sillitoe and Thomas Hardy). Is there an alternative to running that could provide the desired conditioning yet be more enjoyable?

Yes! I would propose, especially for the 35+ player, a game or two of basketball each week! It has many elements that can help your game.

Sports physiologists agree to the similarity in basketball and racquetball regarding the enhancement of the anaerobic conditioning needed for the quick bursts of energy so necessary

"The President's Council on Physical Fitness asked a panel of seven experts to judge the benefits of various sports with regard to such physical fitness factors as cardiovascular endurance (stamina), muscular endurance, muscular strength, flexibility and balance. Basketball had an overall performance rating of 76 percent. Racquetball was at 81 percent and jogging received a score of 80 percent."

in both sports. You get a fair amount of aerobic conditioning with basketball also, but obviously not as much as with straight flat-out running where the major contribution is to endurance and the development of stamina.

Dr. Harry Duvall, research physiologist in the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation at the University of Georgia, has suggested that if you want to increase the aerobic benefits of basketball, play the game without offensive rebounds. Run and gun will get it done! If you really want a workout try it that way!

Obviously the running involved in basketball is great, and in fact may be as much as four miles in a typical 40-minute game. It probably would be more than four miles when the "shirts" square off against the "skins". Those games can go on forever.

The type of game would obviously make a difference in the conditioning benefits as would the position you were playing. Guards could run more or less than forwards, depending upon the style of defense and offense. Was the score 34 to 32 or

117 to 91? The answer to that question might tell you more about running than how long you were on the court. It might also tell you how long you have been away from organized basketball, far from those cheerleaders and cheering fans.

With basketball there is also pay-off in terms of wrist strength and upper body strength development, foot movement and quickness, and visual coordination. As a matter of fact if you compare and contrast the specific conditioning benefits of basketball and racquetball (and handball and squash) they come out very close in comparison with jogging, too.

The President's Council also scored these sports on the following sense-experts to judge the benefits of various sports with regard to such physical fitness factors as cardiovascular endurance (stamina), muscular endurance, muscular strength, flexibility and balance. Basketball had an overall performance rating of 76 percent. Racquetball was at 81 percent and jogging received a score of 80 percent.

Not to be overlooked are the "general sense of well being and improved life-style benefits" that can result from basketball. Weight control, muscle definition and improved digestion and sleep can accrue to the serious racquetballer who plays basketball on a regular basis.

The President's Council also scored these sports on these sense-of-well-being dimensions with jogging getting a 76 percent, basketball a 70 percent and racquetball a 65 percent. From a physiological standpoint the similarities of the exercise modes are considerable. And basketball is fun. It reduces physical and mental tension and stress and therefore is a hell of a lot cheaper than psychotherapy.

What do basketball coaches say? Hugh Durham, Coach of the University of Georgia Bulldogs, and an Open, Senior and Masters racquetball champion in his own right, recom-

mends racquetball to the players as a general conditioning activity. "I feel that the chief benefit of basketball for racquetball is with regard to foot movement and hand-eye coordination. Basketball is a game of "quicks" and any activity that can help should be used."

In his book *Practical Modern Basketball*, Coach John Wooden, the Wizard of Westwood and mentor of so many UCLA national championship teams, has noted that quickness and speed are of prime importance in basketball.

"I consider quickness to be the most important single physical attribute of any athlete," he said.

This observation would probably be shared by many racquetball teaching professionals. In addition to quickness, such characteristics as determination, courage, self-control, concentration, alertness, enthusiasm and

ing and racquetball. Whether you're kicking a football or hitting a racquetball you have to have confidence and be able to concentrate if you want to be successful. You have to expect that you will make it and you have to convince yourself that you can do it.

Many professional athletes, once they finish their playing careers, tend to either give up competitive sports or at least turn to less demanding activities such as golf. But if an athlete is interested in maintaining a competitive edge, racquetball is one sport which will keep him or her "physically honest", i.e., it is a sport which

requires the participant to often go to their limits in order to succeed.

Al Ferrari, former professional basketball standout with the old St. Louis Hawks more than 25 years ago, for example, is still a tournament competitive racquetball player.

So the bottom line is if you are looking for an alternative to running, with approximately similar conditioning characteristics, take a shot at basketball. It could turn out to be your game. There is more in common between basketball and racquetball than the shape of the object which is the center of the game. □

"So the bottom line is if you are looking for an alternative to running, with approximately similar conditioning characteristics, take a shot at basketball."

desire could be added to a list of traits common to successful competitors in racquetball and basketball.

Pete Newell, one of the best teachers of basketball coaches, always emphasizes in his clinics how basketball places very high demands on "quickness and physical reflexes, strong muscular leg support and an abundance of stamina". These are also the physical demands of racquetball.

Research psychologists talk about "transfer of training" where the learning of one skill helps with the development of another. There are a lot of trade-offs between racquetball and basketball. Each sport helps the other.

Coaches from sports other than basketball also support the use of racquetball as a conditioner. Joe Gibbs, coach of the Washington Redskins, has been quoted as saying that there is no better off-season conditioner because of he sharpening of hand-eye coordination skills as well as the practicing of lateral movements.

"Racquetball is so much better than running," he said.

Another footballer, Dallas place-kicker Rafael Septien draws a parallel in the performance demands of kick-

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Union Station, one of St. Louis' historic landmarks, is now much more than a train station.

Racquetball Abounds In St. Louis...



"The St. Louis Renaissance" is the title of a brochure distributed by that city's visitor's bureau. And the self-proclaimed "Gateway to the West" is undergoing a dramatic renovation that combines the best of the past with present-day development. But, based upon a recent visit, I prefer to refer to "surprising" St. Louis — an evaluation I feel confident will be seconded by most people who visit there for pleasure or business.

The best known symbol of the city — which greets the traveler arriving by any form of transportation — is the Gateway Arch. This glimmering 630-foot high structure, the nation's tallest man-made monument, recently celebrated its 20th birthday. It provides a good introduction to the city, and its role in American history.

At the base of the arch is the free Museum of Westward Expansion, with Indian tepees and other frontier mementoes, and a theater showing films (50 cents each) on the movement west and construction of the arch. The five-minute ride to the top (\$1.50; children 3-12, 50 cents) provides a breathtaking view of the Mississippi River, the city and surrounding countryside. Don't be alarmed if, on windy days, you feel the floor sway as much as 18 inches.

Other less-well-known attractions

by Victor Block

also provide pleasant surprises for the pleasure or business visitor. Among exhibits at the Missouri Botanical Garden, oldest in the U.S. (1859) are English and Japanese gardens and a geodesic dome Climatron housing tropical plant life. This 79-acre wonderland is a bargain at \$1 (12 and under, free). One outstanding no-cost attraction is the St. Louis Zoo, an innovator in housing animals in natural settings. The large stalking ground for lions and tigers, landscaped yards and pools for crocodiles and 3½ acre children's zoo of young animals appeal to all ages.

St. Louis is comprised of a number of interesting neighborhoods — some providing testament to the approximately 50 ethnic groups that make up its population. Laclede's Landing on the waterfront is named for the French fur trader who established an outpost there in the 1760s. An office complex by day, after dark the cobblestone streets, brick sidewalks, restaurants and nightclubs attract pleasure-seekers. Many outstanding Italian restaurants are located on "the hill," a center for that nationality.

The Central West End is a kind of Mississippi Greenwich Village, with boutiques, art stores and cafes for people watching (weather permitting) from outdoor tables. Forest Park, which includes the zoo, was site of the 1904 World's Fair. Soulard is characterized by bars, restaurants and a Saturday morning farmer's market.

At the waterfront along the Mississippi River, there's a pleasant choice of boats on which to ride, dine, shop or enjoy a variety of entertainment. Scheduled to open soon is the Admiral Entertainment Center — the renovated 4,000-passenger SS *Admiral* excursion boat, with theaters, lounges, shops and restaurants.

Union Station

My favorite attraction turned out to be the refurbished old train station, and a hotel that has been merged into it. Castle-like Union Station, built in 1894, once was among the busiest in the country. After falling into disuse and being abandoned, it reopened last August — after a \$135 million renovation — as a hotel and shopping complex.

The Grand Hall of this national historic landmark, once the waiting room, has been meticulously restored to its former grandeur, with elaborate gilt, marble and stained glass ornamentation. Crowds still jam the 11-acre

train area — the largest single-span shed in the world — but today, they're browsing at specialty shops and food stalls, or dining at restaurants. There's even a one-acre man-made lake, complete with mini-boats, and a Biergarten with seasonal "oompah-band" and other entertainment.

Nestled beneath the train shed is a 550-room Omni International Hotel, overlooking ponds and gardens. With double room rates beginning at \$80, this combination of history and modern accommodations is available for what a much less interesting place to stay would cost. The toll-free reservations number is (800) THE-OMNI.

Racquetball Facilities

The Omni International — like the Clarion, Holiday Inn and Sheraton Hotels — has an arrangement for guests to use the racquetball and other facilities of the Downtown Y Fitness Center at 1528 Locust St. Included are six racquetball courts, Universal and Olympic weights, and indoor pool and running track. Non-members may play racquetball (other than peak times: 11-1 p.m. and 4-7 p.m.) and make use of weight and exercise facilities for \$3.50 (for guests of participating hotels) or \$5. There's an extra charge for use of the whirlpool, sauna and steam room. For additional information, call (314) 436-4100.

There are four racquetball courts at the in-town Southside YMCA, 2232 South Grand Blvd., (314) 865-3500. Or call (314) 436-1177 for information about several suburban Y locations that have racquetball courts.

Eight courts (two glass wall) are available at the Columbia Racquetball/Handball Club, 5257 Southwest Ave., (314) 771-0100. Other facilities include an exercise room, whirlpool and sauna. The charge is \$3 per person guest fee plus \$7.50-\$10 an hour court time. Rental racquets are available. The club is about a 20-minute drive



from the city center.

Further away is the Manchester Racquetball & Fitness Center, 200 Enchanted Pkwy., (314) 391-6363. It has seven racquetball courts, one with a glass wall, Nautilus and free weights, rowing machine, exercycles, whirlpool and sauna. Visitors pay \$12 an hour for court time, \$8 a visit to use the other facilities. There's a reciprocal arrangement with the Hazelwood Racquetball and Fitness Center, 8701 Dunn Rd. in Hazelwood, (314) 921-6363.

The Jewish Community Center —

with 15 indoor and six outdoor racquetball courts — also has a reciprocal policy, for JCC members throughout the country. It's at 2 Millstone Campus Drive, (314) 432-5700. Eyeguards are required.

In the Suburbs

Those visiting in the suburbs can play at two non-membership clubs, which charge \$8-\$10 an hour for court time. These are the West James Courts at 1330 Harvestowne Industrial Drive in St. Charles, (314) 441-0006, and at 1166 Pershall Rd. in Bellefontaine Neighbors, (314) 869-0700.

Racquetball courts being about the same everywhere, you'll know what to expect if you play during a visit to St. Louis. But you may well be surprised — and pleasantly so — by the sight-seeing and attractions of the city. I was!

For further information, call the St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission at (800) 325-7962. □



Cat on a Hot Cement Court

Summertime, and the Players Are Broiling On South Florida's Outdoor Courts

by Lou Kaplan

One of the greatest things that ever happened to me here in Florida, fun-wise and exercise-wise, was being able to play racquetball on outdoor courts, of which there are plenty of (ungrammatically speaking-wise).

Here in condoland, some unitonas (translation: unit owners) are fortunate. They happen to live in a condo development with outdoor courts. One of these is Las Verdes, in Delray Beach, where I play.

There is a problem down here, though. You have to learn how to deal with the summer heat (pronounced: whew!). The year 1985 will long be remembered as the year of the great heat wave. And while it's bad enough worrying about 100 degree days, now the dopey meteorologists (aka: idiots) have come up with a new one — the "heat index."

The heat index is Florida's answer to the northern winter "wind chill factor" — one of the very reasons I left the north. When you're freezing your you-know-what off, who wants to know that it's really 50 degrees colder than it is?

By the same token, we who suffer through summer heat in South Florida, truly don't care to know that 100 degrees is really 115 degrees. I wish some meteorologist would step in front of my forehand drive.

The other morning I started out to play racquetball. My wife looked at me from her favorite morning position — comfortably reclining in bed — and announced, "Whatya nuts?! You think you're a 25-year-old kid or something?"

I laughed. She wasn't about to tell me what to do, implying that I was too old to be able to withstand the morning heat. I've got a "hot" racquetball game ahead of me.

Boy, did I. I walked out of the house and staggered as I was hit by the blast of hot air. I walked to the car and promptly burned my fingers on the metal door handle (good thing I used my left hand). Once inside, I cautiously touched the steering wheel, managed to get the radio on and heard, "... the temperature is now 95 degrees."

And it was only 8:30 a.m.!

I said to myself, "Myself, you are one yutz if you play this morning." I



Author/player Lou Kaplan readies a forehand.

went back into the house.

"Too hot," I grumbled.

"I told ya, wise guy," said you-know-who.

That's one way to beat the 100 degree day — don't play. There are



Everybody's favorite partner, W.E. Barbara.

other ways, like playing at 6 a.m. At condo courts, however, you can't do this unless you're prepared to take on the unitonas who claim they can hear the ball smacking against the walls. Sadly, he reports, playing prior to nine is one of the no-nos at condoland.

Anyhow it's not worth the risk. If you're caught playing racquetball before nine, the crime is punishable by deprivation of the right to talk about your diseases and doctors. This would, of course, leave all of us virtually speechless. Anyway, who wants to get up at six?

If you start at nine and play till 10:30, with a dunk in the pool every 15 minutes, it's not so bad. It's especially exhilarating if you happen to be playing with "W.E." Barbara, a much-preferred partner. You do more swimming than playing racquetball in this case.

The problem with stopping the game for a splash is the same as stopping to hunt for an errant ball. When you come back to the court to start up again, no one seems to remember, "Who's serving? What's the score? What game is it?"

We've tried lots of other tactics to beat the heat. One is playing in the rain, which is cooling, for sure, albeit a little dangerous. We don't worry too much about slipping, though — we don't run that fast.

Another way to be cool, man, is to play on a windy day. Trouble is, if there's a head wind of 10 mph, some of our hard hitters best shots won't ever reach the front wall. Like Sonny, our biggest hitter (3 mph) once said, "I wish someone would yell 'ouch' when hit by one of my balls."

One guy did yell "ouch" once, and we never had the heart to tell Sonny that the guy had been stung by a bee.

There is a dangerous way to stay cool and that's to play on the opposing team and in front of Carl, who is a bonafide hard hitter (90 mph — no kidding). When Carl's balls go whistling by, they create a hurricane, going and coming. The danger here is getting hit by one of these hurricane shots. I think it's better being his partner.

Despite the heat, we continue to play mornings — no sweat. I don't mean that. Plenty of sweat — but no sweat, if you get my drift, drift-wise.

EXTRA

Important industry news that you should know about in the world of racquetball.

DP Nationals Under Way

Site selection for the 1986 DP National Racquetball Championships has been completed. The tournament will be hosted by the Charlie Fitness Club and Hotel in Arlington, Texas, from June 12-17. The \$50,000+ purse will be divided between the men's and women's tours at this, the final event of the season. In addition, approximately 700 amateurs will compete in 25 divisions for \$50,000 in DP fitness products and other prizes including DP Bodytone machines and exercise bicycles.

The Charlie Fitness Club and Hotel is located due south of the DFW airport midway between Dallas and Fort Worth. The facility houses a 192-room hotel, restaurant, night club and health club. Shuttle service to and from the

entry fee entitles him/her to general admission to the pro matches. Players may upgrade their status to a reserved seat for a nominal fee. Non-players may also purchase reserved seats for \$30 each.

For official information on the tournament call 918/493-3331.

Egerman Signs With Head Again

Four-time national champion, John Egerman, stunned the racquetball world when, at the age of sixteen, the unknown youngster from Boise, Idaho, won both the National Junior Championship and the National Men's Open Singles Championship, becoming the first player in history to hold both titles simultaneously.

Since that time he has firmly established himself as one of the ten best racquetball players in the world, being ranked as high as seventh during the 1980-81 pro season. His long list of tournament titles includes two prestigious pro-stop victories in Portland and Anchorage. John plays under contract for Head Racquet Sports and will be using Head's new Midsize Spectrum on the Pro Tour this year.

John has proved to be one of the most popular players on the tour, both because of his personality and his creative playing style. Along with his great speed and diving ability, he has the unusual talent of being able to instantly shift his playing style from that of fine control to massive power. He is highly respected by both players and spectators for his honesty and exemplary on-court behavior, and he was, in fact, named by his peers as the National NRC Pro Sportsman of the year for 1980-81.

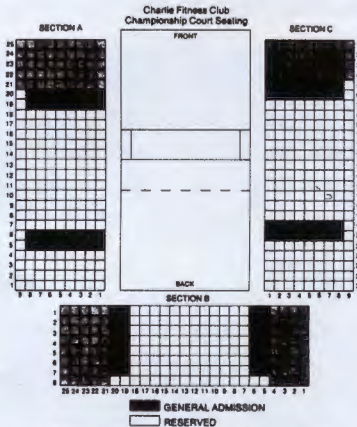
In addition to his playing abilities, John Egerman is developing a reputation for being one of the game's best teachers. His well rounded personality, combined with his knowledge of racquetball and athletic training in general, make him one of the most sought-after racquetball instructors in the country.



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airport is available for all participants. Special tournament hotel rates are \$45 a night for single or double occupancy, and players are strongly advised to make reservations immediately because the club expects a sellout. Reservations can be made by calling toll free 800/351-4200.

American Airlines has made discount fares available to anyone traveling to DFW for the tournament. Tickets purchased at least 30 days in advance will receive a 40% discount, and a 35% discount for tickets purchased at least seven days in advance. Call 800/433-1790 and mention Star #S-51012 for fare information.

Pro qualifying begins Thursday, June 12, and play continues through Tuesday, June 17. Amateur play begins Thursday evening and concludes Sunday evening. Each player's

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OFF COURT FITNESS

By Jean Sauser



Taking the Fun Out of Fitness

Fun is a great motivator. Think about it. Ask yourself why you do the things you do and you'll probably come to the conclusion that you do most things because you like to do them. Love and money aside, fun, or the promise of it, is a major reason why those of us residing in the free world do most of the things we do.

Fun accounts for a major portion of the racquetball and fitness boom. I never heard anyone say, "I'm taking up racquetball because it's such a drag."

In fact, it wasn't until exercise classes were run to contemporary music and to a certain fashionable look, that people thought of them as something besides an activity for the U.S. Marines! When being fit became fun, it became part of our lives.

Look at what happens when something stops being fun. People quit. They instinctively go looking for their fun someplace else. It's no wonder that we've migrated from hula hoops in the 50's to windsurfing in the 80's.

I learned a good lesson about fun and fitness the day I hired my first fitness instructor. He was smart (holding a masters in P.E.), and good looking (I knew my female members would love him), but he had a terminal case of seriousness. The latter I chose to ignore in light of the fact that he'd just graduated college and had agreed to work for my club for slightly above minimum wage.

Within a week of hiring him though, I knew I had trouble on my hands. The price was right, but the attitude was wrong. He was taking the fun out of fitness, something I knew would not mesh with our club philosophy.

Our club was a fun place to be. It centered on racquetball activities, aerobic exercise classes, weight training, and a bar/lounge for reward. Yet, during week one, I overheard my new "find" telling a member, "racquetball is useless exercise. It's not aerobic."

That statement alone shot my blood pressure sky high, but what followed almost gave me a stroke.

"Don't play racquetball," he continued telling his pupil, "just come to my classes and you'll get fit."

"But I joined this club to play racquetball," the member protested.

"Good for you buddy," I thought at the same time as I pictured myself firing my new instructor in the next five minutes. Instead, I interrupted their conversation and asked my young fitness genius to see me in my office immediately.

"What's wrong?" he asked as I closed the office door.

"What's wrong!" I asked incredulously. "You're telling my members not to use 90 percent of the facility, that's what's wrong. Where do you get off telling people racquetball is not exercise?"

"Well," he stammered, "you know it's not aerobic . . ."

"I know that," I interrupted, "but there is no way you are going to convince me that it isn't good exercise."

"Studies have shown," he began cautiously, sensing his job might be on the line.

"I know those studies," I countered once again, "and I am going to tell you something. Number one, racquetball has not been studied enough to really be given a fair shake in the world of fitness. Number two, the fact that it is fun as well as more exercise than

playing checkers means we are keeping it a permanent fixture as a fitness activity at this club."

"Okay, I understand and I'm sorry," he said sheepishly. "I just didn't know that you were so serious about racquetball."

"And I didn't know you were so serious, period," I added. "Lighten up, would you? Play some racquetball sometime. Have some fun. I think you'll give it a higher rating on your fitness scale once you've tried it."

Like all good employees concerned with keeping their jobs, he did try racquetball a few weeks later. I really couldn't tell if he was telling me the truth when he said that he liked it and that he had now developed a new philosophy.

"I think I'll start training people to play better racquetball now that I understand the sport better," he informed me.

"Now you're on the right track," I encouraged him.

I'd like to say that this is the end of the story, but it's not.

The end of the story is that my fitness instructor really had a case of terminal seriousness after all. Six months into the job, he informed me that he was giving notice because he had become accepted onto our local police force.

"Just don't get those criminals fit," I kidded him upon telling him I thought he was making a good career choice.

"Don't worry," he told me. "You know I'll see to it that they won't have any fun."

The moral of the story? He who laughs last has no career in fitness. □

Bad Back Quiz

(continued from page 29)

11) True. Simply exercising, like playing racquetball, does not mean you are strengthening your back. Not doing added flexibility exercises as stretching the muscles of the legs and back before and after exercise or strengthening exercises for the stomach and back muscles could result in unnecessary and unintended lower back injury.

12) (d). Chairs and beds that offer inadequate support for the lower back can result in years of nagging back problems. Possible problems can be avoided by learning which bed or chair is right for your specific body dimensions. Ladies high heel shoes or worn down shoes can cause injury to the lower back. Learning shoe selection also can prevent bad backs. ☐

Leatherman

(continued from page 19)

15-9, 15-7.

Competing in the wheelchair division were nine men and one woman, Stacie Norman of Spring, Texas.

Leatherman is proud that he and his fellow wheelchair athletes competed at the same national tournament as the nation's best amateur able-

bodied players.

"The biggest misconception about racquet sports is that speed is everything. It helps of course, but strategy is a great equalizer. Proper positioning is essential.

"For this reason, a disabled person can learn the game and compete very well despite wheelchair confinement," Leatherman said.

He sees athletic competition as a means of breaking down barriers between able-bodied and handicapped persons. To this end, Leatherman has organized the National Wheelchair Racquetball Association, now affiliated with the American Amateur Racquetball Association (AARA).

The fledgling organization has an uphill climb to gain recognition and acceptance. There are even still some racquetball facilities that do not permit handicapped competition out of a unsubstantiated fear of court damage.

Nevertheless, Leatherman, who describes his physical drawbacks as an "inconvenience," is a firm believer in the power of positive thinking.

"I just don't want people to say: There goes Jim, one of the best wheelchair racquetball players in the country.

"Simply . . . there goes Jim, one of America's best racquetball players."

Variety

(continued from page 21)

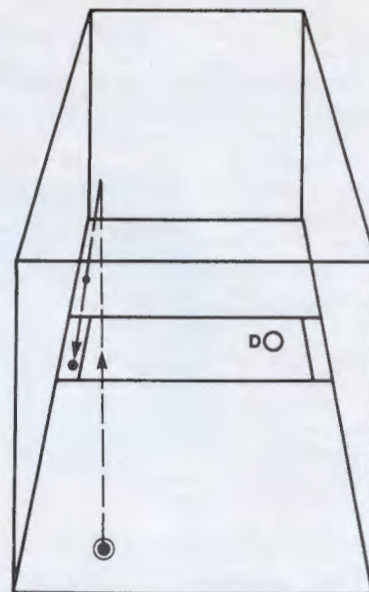


Diagram 6. Be smart against those lefties — take the open shot and hit a winner!

constantly gain the upper hand.

And when you do play in tournaments or league competition you will be the player causing frustration because you're the one with the well-rounded game. ☐

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vision, no matter the playing conditions.

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

1985-86 RMA MEN'S PRO RACQUETBALL TOUR

MASTER SEASON SCHEDULE

Aug. 29-Sept. 2, 1985
\$15,000 Open
West Lane Racquet Club
Stockton, CA
Winner: Marty Hogan

Sept. 18-22, 1985
\$15,000 Open
Davison Racquet Club
Davison, MI
Winner: Brett Harnett

Oct. 2-6, 1985
\$15,000 Open
Crystal Rac. & Health Club
Crystal City Arlington, VA
Winner: Marty Hogan

Oct. 16-20, 1985
\$15,000 Open
D'Lites Pro Rac. Classic
Park Avenue Health Club
Omaha, NE
Winner: Mike Yellen

Nov. 5-10, 1985
\$15,000 Open
MPact Texas Challenge
International Athletic Club
Dallas, TX
Winner: Gregg Peck

Dec. 11-15, 1985
\$15,000 Open
Gold River Winter Classic
Gold River Racquet Club
Rancho Cordova, CA
Winner: Gregg Peck

Jan. 15-19, 1986
\$15,000 Open
Arizona Athletic Club
Tempe, AZ
Winner: Brett Harnett

Feb. 12-16, 1986
\$15,000 Open
Tulsa Aerobics & Rac. Club
Tulsa, OK

Feb. 26-March 2, 1986
\$15,000 Open
Griffith Park Athletic Club
Beaverton, OR

April 16-20, 1986
\$19,200 Open
Merritt Rac. and Fitness Cen.
Security
Baltimore, MD
RAMB — Dave Pivec
301-532-2250

April 30-May 4, 1986
\$22,800 Open
Ektelon National Champ.
The Sports Gallery
2560 East Katella Avenue
Anaheim, CA 92806

May 14-18, 1986
\$15,000 Open
Boulder/Flatiron Pro Am
Flatiron Athletic Club
505 Thunderbird Road
Boulder, CO
Danny Rodriguez
303-499-6590

June 10-15, 1986
\$33,000 Open
DP National Championships
Site To Be Announced

**FOR RMA TOUR
INFORMATION**
Jim Hiser, Commissioner
313-653-9602

WPRA 1985-86 SEASON SCHEDULE

March 7-9
\$10,000 Open
PAC West Athletic Club
Tacoma, WA
Bruce Hartley

Late March/Early April
\$11,000 Open (singles and
doubles)
Kaepa Classic
Atlanta Health & Rac. Club
1775 Water Place
Atlanta, GA 30339
Caryn McKinney
404-636-7575

May 1-4
\$18,500 Open
Ektelon National Champ.
The Sports Gallery
Anaheim, CA

May 29-June 1
\$25,000 Open (singles and
doubles)
WPRA National Champ.
Riverbend Athletic Club
2201 East Loop 820 North
Fort Worth, TX 76118

June
DP National Championships
Site To Be Announced

**FOR WPRA
INFORMATION**
Caryn McKinney, President
714-641-7452

AARA NATIONAL EVENTS

April 11-13, 1986
Intercollegiate Champ.
Playoff Athletic Club
2191 Post Road
Warwick, RI 02886
Contact: 401-738-0833

May 21-26
National Singles Champ.
(Qualifying required)
Downtown YMCA
Houston, TX
Contact: AARA
303-635-5396

June 28-July 2
National Juniors Champ.
(Qualifying required)
Chicago, IL
Contact: AARA
303-635-5396

July TBA
World Games
(Qualifying required)
Site To Be Announced
Contact: AARA
303-635-5396

July-August TBA
AARA Elite Training Camp
(Qualifying required)
Colorado Springs, CO
Contact: AARA
303-635-5396

October 23-26
National Doubles Champ.
Racquet Power
3390 Kori Road
Mandarin, FL 32217
Tom Collins
904-268-8888

RANKINGS

The sources for these national rankings are as follows: Men's-Official RMA Pro Racquetball Tour rankings; Women's-Official WPR A Tour rankings; Amateur-Official AARA national rankings.

RMA PRO RACQUETBALL TOUR OFFICIAL PROFESSIONAL RANKINGS JANUARY 20, 1986

Ranking Player	Points
1 M. Hogan . . .	390.17
2 G. Peck . . .	380.22
3 M. Yellen . . .	372.11
4 B. Harnett . . .	320.18
5 J. Hilecher . . .	239.91
6 R. Gonzalez . . .	229.24
7 C. Swain . . .	215.24
8 G. Price . . .	210.39
9 D. Peck . . .	187.67
10 M. Ray . . .	186.01
11 S. Oliver . . .	175.17
12 D. Cohen . . .	154.24
13 J. Cascio . . .	150.93
14 D. Gross . . .	134.85
15 E. Andrews . . .	134.01
16 J. Egerman . . .	126.59
17 C. Brysman . . .	117.05
18 A. Gross . . .	102.99
19 S. Lerner . . .	100.90
20 D. Obremski . . .	85.01
21 B. Sell . . .	79.43
22 J. Newman . . .	78.65
23 R. Navarro . . .	64.18
24 M. Levine . . .	61.29
25 R. Wagner . . .	60.96
26 E. Inoue . . .	60.04
27 M. Griffith . . .	57.81
28 D. Green . . .	48.83
29 D. Johnson . . .	43.66
30 J. Nolan . . .	42.00
31 A. Roberts . . .	33.48
32 S. Moskwa . . .	30.51
33 D. Ganim . . .	28.16
34 E. Terry . . .	27.13
35 R. Harrippersad . . .	23.97
36 B. Hawkes . . .	21.69
37 D. Negrete . . .	20.29
38 B. Wilhelm . . .	20.23
39 M. Plotkin . . .	16.08
40 M. Ceresia . . .	15.90
41 B. Koltun . . .	14.42
41 T S. Clark . . .	14.42
43 W. Snead . . .	10.82
44 J. Plazak . . .	10.18
45 W. Clouse . . .	9.96
46 E. Remen . . .	9.05
47 B. Williams . . .	7.68
47 T L. Meyers . . .	7.68
49 J. Sacco . . .	7.11
50 C. Cole . . .	6.74
50 T J. Grosshans . . .	6.74

WPR A RANKINGS JANUARY 15, 1986

Ranking Player	Points
1 L. Adams . . .	200.00
2 V. Panzeri . . .	116.66
3 C. McKinney . . .	116.25
4 T. Gilreath . . .	100.00
5 M. Drexler . . .	95.00
6 L. Martino . . .	75.00
7 L. Alvarado . . .	63.75
8 F. Davis . . .	47.50

9 B. Stoll . . .	45.00
10 J. Marriott . . .	41.66
11 J. Harding . . .	36.25
12 J. Jackson . . .	35.00
13 M. Greer . . .	28.33
14 C. Baxter . . .	25.00
14 T M. Lynch . . .	25.00
14 T L. Porter . . .	25.00
17 C. Evon . . .	23.33
17 T S. Robson . . .	23.33
19 M. McDonald . . .	20.00
19 T M. O'Brien . . .	20.00
19 T L. Wojcik . . .	20.00
22 B. Bell . . .	16.66
23 C. Nichols . . .	13.33
23 T M. P. Sklenka . . .	13.33
25 T. Bevelock . . .	10.00
25 T D. Fischl . . .	10.00
25 T N. Higgins . . .	10.00
25 T T. Latham . . .	10.00
25 T P. Laursen . . .	10.00
25 T M. Mook . . .	10.00
25 T V. Paese . . .	10.00
25 T J. Paraiso . . .	10.00
25 T H. Stupp . . .	10.00
34 D. Reyes . . .	6.66

AARA/ARHS NATIONAL RANKING (28) WOMEN'S OPEN FEBRUARY 20, 1986

Ranking Player	State
1 Cindy Baxter . . .	PA
2 Terry Latham . . .	TX
3 Chris Evon . . .	IL
4 Crystal Fried . . .	CA
5 Nan Higgins . . .	NH
6 Mary Dee . . .	NH
7 Mona Mook . . .	CA
8 Cindy Doyle . . .	NY
9 Trina Rasmussen . . .	CA
10 Kaye Kuhfeld . . .	IN
11 Sandy Robson . . .	IL
12 Linda Diamond . . .	FL
13 Cathy Nichols . . .	CD
14 Tracy Eagleson . . .	CA
15 M. Kamahoa . . .	VA
16 Jan Curtis . . .	FL
17 Fran Davis . . .	NJ
18 Dot Fischel . . .	PA
19 Terry Singletary . . .	OK
20 Joetta Hastings . . .	MI
21 Debbie Mackell . . .	IN
22 Cindy Overstake . . .	OK
23 Joanie Quinlan . . .	MA
24 Diana Almeida . . .	CO
25 Michelle Gilman . . .	OR
26 Diane Bullard . . .	FL
27 Marci Drexler . . .	CA
28 Linda Porter . . .	TX
29 Claudia McCarthy . . .	FL
30 Lynn Price . . .	IN
31 Kelly Cremeans . . .	IN
32 Mary Lyons . . .	FL
33 Toni Dever . . .	UT
34 Joan Azeka . . .	IL
35 Toni Benelock . . .	TN
36 S. Bullington . . .	NC
37 Laura Fenton . . .	NE

38 Kim Tiedeman . . .	WA
39 Leigh Anne Coutu . . .	DE
40 Kathy Gluvna . . .	TN
41 Colleen Shields . . .	IL
42 Barbara Simmons . . .	FL
43 Terri Graham . . .	ME
44 Dena Pritchett . . .	TN
45 Martha Adams . . .	GA
46 Anne Calderone . . .	NY
47 Kim Despain . . .	UT
48 Diane Fields . . .	IL
49 Dot Fischl . . .	PA
50 Janet Kelleher . . .	NH
51 Mary Pat Sklenka . . .	TX

AARA/ARHS NATIONAL RANKING (1) MEN'S OPEN FEBRUARY 20, 1986

Ranking Player	State
1 Ed Andrews . . .	CA
2 Andy Roberts . . .	TN
3 Fred Calabrese . . .	MA
4 Aaron Katz . . .	TX
5 Tim Hansen . . .	FL
6 Charlie Nichols . . .	FL
7 Dan Obremski . . .	PA
8 Joey Cline . . .	NJ
9 Jim Hamilton . . .	IN
10 Scott St. Onge . . .	MA
11 Dave Negrete . . .	IL
12 Tom Montalbano . . .	NY
13 Sergio Gonzalez . . .	FL
14 Mark Morrison . . .	FL
15 Oscar Gonzalez . . .	FL
16 Mike Spugnardi . . .	ME
17 Doug Ganim . . .	OH
18 Scott Reid . . .	TN
19 Roger Harrippersad . . .	CA
20 Stu Hastings . . .	MI
21 Jim Jeffers . . .	IL
22 Todd O'Neil . . .	VT
23 Dennis Aceto . . .	MA
24 Rodger Lindwall . . .	CO
25 Mike Ceresia . . .	CD
26 Fielding Snow . . .	WA
27 Don Kelly . . .	CO
28 Todd Thielen . . .	SD
29 Mark Hegg . . .	CO
30 Paul Marino . . .	CA
31 Sean Moskwa . . .	IL
32 Mitch Campbell . . .	FL
33 Steve Deaton . . .	AK
34 Skip Merrill . . .	TX
35 Chuck Teets . . .	MI
36 Ed Gartner . . .	SC
37 Jim Owen . . .	NM
38 Dave Watson . . .	OK
39 Vinnie Ganley . . .	FL
40 Tom Riley . . .	MA
41 Jack Nolan . . .	AZ
42 Garr Thompson . . .	NY
43 Lloyd Marsh . . .	MT
44 Todd Stead . . .	MN
45 Mike Levine . . .	NY
46 Mike Lowe . . .	CA
47 Steve Moody . . .	CA
48 John Negrete . . .	IL
49 Steve Rubin . . .	NY
50 Hugh Klein . . .	PA
51 Jack Ecktmann . . .	IN

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SIDE OUT

By Drew Stoddard



A Farewell to My Friends

I can remember like it was yesterday — the moment when I was offered the job of Commissioner of the men's pro tour. It was at a meeting on a balmy December afternoon in Miami. At the time I was a magazine editor, and I had traveled there to meet with the RMA Board of Directors to discuss the problems that existed then with the men's tour.

What I remember most was leaving the meeting and walking to a deserted beach near the Convention Center where we met. I sat down on the sand and thought about what had just happened, and a feeling came over me that I will never forget.

Yes, I know, it really wasn't that big a deal. In the grand scheme of things pro racquetball is insignificant. But racquetball had been my world for 15 years, and the pro players were the only real heroes I ever had. My closest friend was a pro, and I had felt with him the cruel pain of being told he was no longer wanted. And over the years I had developed some strong opinions about how the pro tour should be run.

Now, the RMA offered to let me put together a new pro tour. They wanted me to work closely with the players to begin rebuilding the pro game from the ground up. And for this they offered to pay me money.

As I sat there on the beach, I remember wondering how many people in this life ever get the chance to feel what it's like to get the one thing they want more than any other.

Early this year, I made the decision not to continue as Commissioner when my contract expired on February 1. That was the hardest decision I have ever made.

I have known since I made that decision that there would be a lot of speculation about why I would quit a

job I wanted so much, and obviously enjoyed, after only one year. I would like to give you a perfectly sensible explanation, but I can't. What I can tell you is that my reasons for leaving the pro tour are personal ones. They have little, if anything, to do with racquetball. In fact, I leave the Commissioner's job with only pleasant memories.

For those of you who follow professional racquetball, I want to assure you that my leaving will have little effect on the men's tour. The man who has been selected as the new Commissioner is Jim Hiser of Davison, Michigan. Jim is well known in both amateur and professional circles, and he is a highly talented and respected man. He has experience in every area of organizing and staging professional tournaments, and in fact runs his own annual pro stop in Davison. To tell the truth, Jim's probably better suited.

Before I disappear from the scene completely, I hope you'll forgive me if I use this space to express some feelings to a few people who are important to me.

There has been a strong rejuvenation in professional racquetball over the last couple of years, and the group responsible for starting it all is the Racquetball Manufacturers Association. I know that to many of you the RMA seems like some powerful, mysterious group that operates constantly in the background. I've even heard some suggest that it doesn't even really exist.

But it has been my pleasure to watch the RMA evolve, and to work for it for the past year. I can assure you it is very real, and its single-minded goal is to help this sport grow and develop. As Commissioner I received total support from the RMA board members, even when they dis-

agreed with what I was doing. I owe each of them my heartfelt thanks for the opportunity, the confidence, and the support they gave so freely. They have all earned my deepest respect.

If the RMA started the ball rolling, those who picked it up and ran with it were the 14 RMA tournament directors. There is no way I can describe to you how much work these people do. But they are the fuel that makes the pro tour run. For many of them, running a ranking pro stop is simply a labor of love, and we owe them a great deal. I have said this before, but it bears repeating. Someday, when the history of pro racquetball is written, the independent tournament directors who made the RMA tour possible will be rightfully remembered as the founding fathers.

The hardest part about leaving the Commissioner's job is that I will no longer be able to spend time with the players. For over three years, ending with the Arizona stop in January, I attended every ranking tournament that was played. The pro players have become my closest friends.

I can tell you now, without qualification, that the players are as fine a group of men as I have ever worked with. They accepted me, they supported me, and most of all they honored me with their friendship. To them I want to say thank you; I will never forget, and I will miss you all very much.

Finally, thanks to all of you who have taken the time to read this for your support and encouragement. Your input, both in personal conversation and in letters, has made this last few years a pleasure for me. You have made me feel that what we were all doing on the pro tour was worthwhile. For that, I will ever be grateful. □

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