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SQUASH *Life*

VOLUME 25
NUMBER 1

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Squash Life is published four times a year by Squash Ontario to give voice to and promote squash in Ontario. We invite members of the sport community to contribute articles on every aspect of squash, and welcome readers' comments on the contents of this magazine.

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VOLUNTEERS HAVE MADE US 25 YEARS YOUNG!

BY SHERRY FUNSTON

The United Nations has declared 2001 to be the Year of the Volunteer and it is perhaps serendipitous that this is also the 25th anniversary of Squash Ontario. To paraphrase Shirley Maclaine, "you can get here from there" and "there" was 1976 when squash looked very different from what it does today. In fact, squash in this province goes way back to the 19th century but, in terms of organization, we'll begin in April 1976.

Back in the old days, there were three volunteer organizations responsible for squash in Ontario - the Ontario Ladies Squash Racquets Association, the Ontario Men's Soft Ball Association and the Ontario Men's Hardball Association. Hardball? Hardball? When hardball was being played in the province, many of today's players knew squash only as something pureed and in a Gerber baby food jar. You'll still see some of those courts around but, regrettably, most have been retooled and refitted for fitness or aerobics.

Each of these associations approached the provincial government for some funding assistance (or so the story goes) and the ministry sages agreed but, only if the three organizations amalgamated into one association - one voice for squash in the province. Men/women! Hardball/soft ball? Would this work? Who would be in charge? The three principals, Frank Baillie, Susan Swift and Michael Johnston definitely needed a "Switzerland" and they found that neutrality and leadership in Ian C. Stewart. Under these four people Squash Ontario was born and they set out the road map for the association's exciting, sometimes rocky, journey to the 21st century. Ian Stewart's selection as the first president of Squash Ontario was the beginning of a wonderful legacy of men and women, volunteers all, who followed in his footsteps.

Squash boomed in the '80s with clubs and courts springing up everywhere in the province - from Windsor to Ottawa and from the Soo to Toronto's lakeshore. They

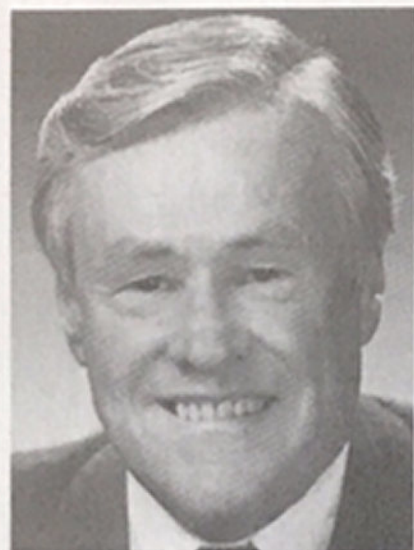
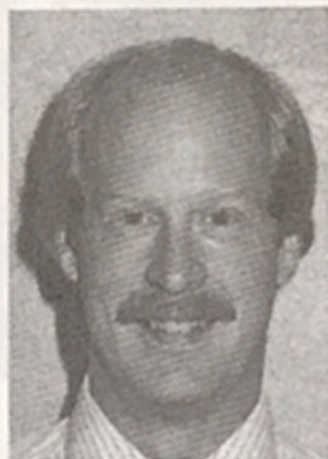
joined a fraternity of clubs with a long and distinguished pedigree, beginning with the province's oldest club, Toronto Racquet which was born in 1905. Other established clubs included the Kitchener-Waterloo Racquet Club, the Badminton & Racquet Club, the Rideau Club and the London Squash Racquets Club.

While this decade brought growth, it also brought controversy. Open squash was a hot topic twenty years ago. The old guard wished to keep the game strictly amateur but, the rest of the world was opening the game, not dis-

tinguishing between amateur and professional - a player was a player. It is hard to believe in 2001 that this issue could have been so great as to tear at the very fabric of the game but, it was. And, if that wasn't controversial enough, throw in the issue of mandatory eyeguards as this association became the first worldwide to take a proactive step in eye protection. Many others followed but, for a number of years, it was very lonely out on that proverbial limb.

Squash Ontario was fortunate to have people like Peter Frost, Rea Godbold, Bob Smart, Jon Lett, Bill Peel, Craig Hall, John Boynton and Anne Smith firmly at the helm to guide the association through these rocky shoals.

FROM L TO R: REA GODBOLD, JON LETT AND ANNE SMITH



IAN STEWART, PRESIDENT, IN 1977/78

The decade of the '90s brought its own share of turmoil, beginning with the economic slowdown which had a significant impact on the funding for amateur sport in the province and squash was no exception. Clubs were also impacted by the slowdown, seeing not so much a decrease in membership but a decrease in frequency of play. This, of course, had a residual effect on other elements of the game such as ball, racquet and shoe sales.

This was also the decade when the fitness craze began its own rapid growth and club owners immediately recognized a way in which to put those pesky hardball courts to good use. They became aerobic and weight training rooms. Some owners didn't stop there, they cast a covetous glance at soft ball courts and many of these fell under the "fitness axe."

It was not an easy time to be president of Squash Ontario and yet, as often happens in life, good people come to the fore in the most difficult situations. Alan Scott, Lauren Doig, Joe Stewart and Ann Gray brought their individual talents and skills to the presidency of the association and they were the right people at the right time.

Peter Ward, the current president of Squash Ontario has faced his own unique challenges in the new millennium. The boom of the '80s are the greying boomers of today and so the emphasis must be on bringing new, younger people into the game.

...continued on page 7



FROM L TO R: ALAN SCOTT,
LAUREN DOIG, ANN GRAY,
PETER WARD, NORMA GRAHAM
AND JIM MASON

All of the presidents of Squash Ontario have shared a number of commonalities - they had a passion for the game, they were uniquely skilled, they were great leaders, they were able to inspire other people to help and most important of all, they were volunteers. And, a not-for-profit organization rises or falls on the volunteers. Over the past 25 years there have been hundreds and hundreds of people who have volunteered their time to the game of squash. The coaching programme, acknowledged as one of the best in the world, is thanks to people like Tony Swift and Gail Pimm and the professionalism of the officiating programme is due in

large measure to people like Penny Glover, Ed Clinton, Norma Graham and Dave Tullis. The very foundation of our junior programming was laid by the inimitable Jim Mason and he inspired many, many others to take up the torch.

Nobody these days works a 40 hour week. Our lives are chocked full of responsibilities, professional and personal and so, as an administrator, I am constantly struck by the number of hours squash volunteers give to keep the game healthy and thriving. I wonder where they find the strength and

the time to give so unstintingly of their precious hours but, give they do and every squash player in the province benefits from the efforts of these extraordinary people.

While we're celebrating our twenty five years, we must also celebrate the people who have made these twenty five years so exciting, so interesting, and so successful. They have made a difference. ©

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YMG...one more time!

The YMG Classic, held in Toronto at the beautiful BCE Place, was an outstanding success. Every night sold out and the home town favourite won. So, back by popular demand, the 2001 YMG Capital Classic will run November 26-30 in BCE Place. Watch the Squash Ontario website for details. (www.squashontario.com)

congratulations to Barney Lawrence

Barney was inducted into the University of Waterloo Hall of Fame recently.

no new sports for Athens

The IOC Executive Committee has ruled out adding any new sports for the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. Ten sports, including squash, have been campaigning for inclusion in the Athens Olympics for over three years but there has recently been doubt that Athens could cope with any additions.

One of the major factors in the rejection of any new sports is the pressure put on the athlete numbers by the sports already on the Olympic programme.

The World Squash Federation has outlined advanced plans for promotional activity in the five cities bidding for the 2008 Games - Toronto, Osaka, Paris, Beijing and Istanbul.

Power stays No.2

Jonathon Power remained second in the February world squash rankings while Graham Ryding climbed four spots to No.13. Peter Nicol of Scotland held onto the No.1 ranking. Shahier Razik is ranked 42nd. In the women's rankings, Melanie Jans climbed to No. 37 from No. 42 and Margo Green jumped from 50th to 40th.

European successes

Three Ontario junior athletes enjoyed significant successes over the Christmas break. Congratulations to Robin Clarke, Shawn De Lierre and Neha Kumar, all of whom reached the quarter finals in the British Junior Open.

In the Scottish Open, the Kumars struck again with Neha winning the Under 13 Championship and Ruchika finishing second in the Under 17.

The Women's International Squash Federation announced its top 20 junior prospects - congratulations to Ruchika Kumar who is ranked sixth.

Festina smiles

Proud winners of the Ontario B Doubles and beautiful new Festina watches. From left, Michael Boehm, Richard Thomson, Tournament Chair, Barb Cooper, Festina representative, Ken Reid, Wendy Mitchell and Leslie Slater.



2001 Maccabiah Games

Going to the XVI Maccabiah Games in July 2001 will be a number of Ontario athletes. Congratulations to Greg Hutter, Jeffrey Lurie, Dan Dorsey, Elka Markus, Tiffany Foster, Marci Sier and Jessica Senior.

The Maccabian Games were first conceived in their present format in 1932 and were held in Tel Aviv, Israel, then a town of only 50,000 people. Since 1957, the Games have been staged regularly every four years in Israel, open to all Jewish athletes from around the world. By 1960 the standard of the competition had improved so vastly that the Maccabi World Union was recognized by the IOC as an international sports federation of Olympic standing.

We wish the Canadian Team and coach Rob Brooks great success.

fun...colour it bronze

Congratulations to Byron Moffitt and the Kitchener-Waterloo Racquet Club on hosting one of the most successful Squash Ontario Bronze Events to date. Twenty five beginners were introduced to the game in a fun-filled Saturday in the fall.



Of...colour it silver

It's hard to tell what is bigger - the eyes or the hardware! Congratulations to Nigel Gleeson and Club Markham on hosting a hugely successful Silver Event. He had lots of able assistance and the club facilities were outstanding.

big trophies...



...for little people

...court chatter continued on page 10

third place finishes for **Teams**

Congratulations to the Ontario Teams of Shauna Flath, Paula Jenkins and Nicole Carroll and David Sly, Scott Kempgee and Luke Fraser on their bronze medal performances at the recent Canadian Teams Championships.

The men squared off in Regina and the women weathered the winter in Whitehorse. Both teams improved on last year's performances.

Doubles on the rise by James Zug

The new millennium brought new excitement to the professional doubles tour in North America. Founded in the 1970s, the tour gained independence last year from the Professional Squash Association in order to increase marketing efforts and to keep doubles money from flowing overseas. The tour, run by the International Squash Doubles Association, has as its co-directors Toronto-based James Hewitt and Canada's Gary Waite who is head professional at the University Club in New York. Compared to last year the number of tournaments has jumped 30% to fifteen, and prize money has doubled to \$375,000. In light of increasing encroachments by softball doubles, this robust state of health in hardball doubles is quite welcome. In addition to ISDA events, the tour helped put together a very exciting Cambridge Doubles event this past November. One of the traditional stops on the tour, the six-team tournament at the Cambridge Club in Toronto had a new scheme this year. Clive Caldwell split the top three-ranked doubles teams and gave them top softball players as partners. So Waite, Bentley et al played with such international stars as Simon Parke, Rodney Eyles, Graham Ryding, Anthony Hill, Brett Martin and Jonathon Power. In a pressure-packed final, Hosey & Power overcame Hill & Mudge. It was yet another sign that hardball doubles has a bright future.

James Zug is a senior writer at Squash, the national magazine in the U.S. and writes a column on the history of squash at www.squashtalk.com

good-bye and good luck

After many years with Squash Canada, Heidi Tolgyesi (Technical Coordinator) has tendered her resignation, to seek new opportunities.

On behalf of the Executive and staff of Squash Canada, we wish Heidi well in her new endeavours (Heidi has accepted a position in the booming hi-tech industry in Ottawa). We acknowledge Heidi's lengthy contribution to the Association, and trust that we will see her around the squash scene...as a player!

junior squash camp **huge success**

Christmas...turkey, presents and squash! White Oaks hosted an extremely successful junior squash camp during the holiday break. Twenty keeners attended the two day camp which saw lots of coaching, squash and, of course, a trip to the falls.



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2001 A SQUASH OODYSSEY

BY BARRY FAGUY

Official's call

(Get it!?)

Well folks, that very important date of May 1st is fast approaching – my wife's birthday – no, just kidding about that. Actually, her birthday is on the 2nd! Okay, okay, enough with the jokes already!

May 1, 2001 is the standard implementation date of the WSF's revised rules. Their committee has been hard at work over the last two years, in concert with (and sometimes in friendly opposition to) member countries' rules committees, to come up with changes, additions, subtractions, divisions, exponents, logarithms, and of course, square roots to the rules! Hopefully, these changes will make life easier for all when it comes to enjoying the game – from both sides of the glass! What follows is a summary of the key changes, in no particular order, and with a little of my commentary thrown in at no extra charge – exclusive to readers of Squash Life Magazine! And, oh, I almost forgot 'the warning' – applying these rules is very dangerous so, do not attempt to use these rules at home – we are professionals and... oh... wrong warning... er... please don't use any of this until the end of May 2001 in Canada – after our Nationals. We don't need referees going around applying them prematurely and winding up with some kind of rules "free for all" out there.

Minimal Interference

An interesting little change, that at first I must admit I considered insignificant, is the addition of the concept of 'minimal interference', as proposed by Squash Australia. Generally, when a minor interference had occurred (mostly to view or access to the ball – virtually never the swing) and a player asked for a let instead of carrying on and playing the shot, one of the referee's options was refusing the let based on the fact that the striker did not make every effort to play the ball. All too often, however, the ref took the soft route, gave the let, and

unfortunately set the standard for the rest of the match. The ref was then pretty much stuck with having to grant lets for minor interferences from there on, even though the subsequent shots that needed retrieving may have been difficult.

A new addition, in Guideline 6 now specifically has wording demanding that no let be granted when this 'minimal interference' had no effect on the player's ability to see or get to and play the ball (in the referee's opinion of course). Deciding if the interference is 'minimal' or not is a relatively easy conclusion to arrive at, similar to de-

termining if a ball is 'out.' Declaring to a player that he/she did not make every effort is a much more personal accusation.

The words 'No Let - the interference was minimal' should now be a commonly heard part of the referee's lexicon. The decision is now specifically backed by the wording of the rules, easier to initiate as a negative decision, and henceforth, should set a more demanding tone for effort. The ultimate result over the next few years should be a significant decrease in the so called 'frivolous lets' that upset so many of those players who already

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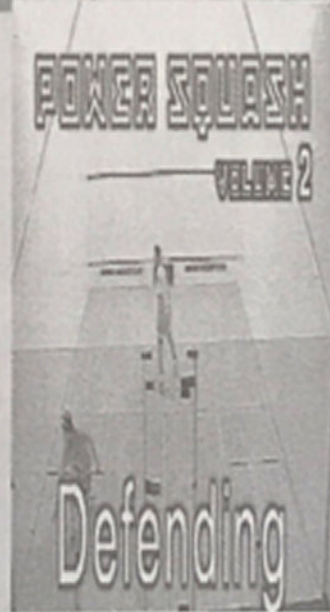
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put up with and play through minor interferences - and expect their adversary to do the same. These words 'shall not allow a let' in the first paragraph mean there is now no option for the referee. This shifts the onus onto the referee to decline the let when the interference is obviously 'minimal'. Consideration of effort is now relegated to second place. This could be fun! I like this one.

Swing Interference

I worry this one. This rule (12.8.2) says, "The referee shall award a stroke to the player if there was interference which the opponent made every effort to avoid, but the opponent's position prevented the player's reasonable swing, and the player would have been able to make a good return."

So, those of you familiar with the rules, and the associated 'Referee's Line of Thinking' (RLOT), will no doubt notice that a stroke is awarded here regardless of the fact that the opponent was making every effort to clear, and/or that only a good return was possible. Normally of course, as stated in the immediately preceding Rule 12.8.1, only a let is awarded given these circumstances, an acknowledgement that the sport is played in

relatively confined space, often with very fast people in there, swinging two-foot plus racquets at a rapidly moving ball under perpetually changing scenarios. Some interference has to be expected and a balance has to be struck in penalizing or not those interferences in order to make the game playable. In fact, we all know that players commonly play around all sorts of interference to view and interference to access to the ball.

When it comes to swing, certainly a stricter view is taken in regards to the actual amount of interference, since it is a much more sensitive movement. Because of this, we generally penalize a player who causes significant interference to the swing regardless of the clearing effort being made. One might say that we 'deem' the opponent to be 'not making every effort to clear', even if he/she was scrambling like hell, and this because this is generally so crucial an interference. Well, now we have 12.8.2, an effort to reflect the interpretation that already exists and is commonly accepted. If the referee judges that the swing has been 'prevented', then we don't have to assume 'no effort to clear' - it's then a stroke anyway. The WSF has advised us that 'prevented' should be reserved for

what the referee interprets as 'complete stoppage' of the swing, a definition that is quite reasonable and certainly allows for some interference without automatic award of a stroke in every case.

Personally, I believe that at present, there are far too many strokes being given for swing interference. All too often, the interference was (or would have been in the case of refraining from hitting) truly minor and doesn't deserve inclusion under the heading of 'prevented.' At best, many of these are lets based on cases of 'reasonable fear of injury' - where there is no (or would not have been) real interference. Strokes for these are an injustice, yet unfortunately, commonplace! If a referee starts giving strokes for the mildest interferences (or perceived interferences), then matches wind up with all kinds of interruptions because players then start looking to get their points that way - which then leads to the next step where players start to 'fish' for strokes by actually making efforts to include the opponent in the arc of the swing. The danger I see is that 'prevented' may come to mean virtually any interference. I encourage you to avoid this temptation.

So, whether player or referee, when these situations arise, follow the order set in the revised 'Referee's Line of Thinking.' Once you have concluded that there was (or would have been) actual swing interference, first ask if the opponent's effort to clear was acceptable. If not, it's a stroke simply on that basis. If the effort to clear was acceptable, then ask if the swing was 'prevented.' If so, then it's a stroke. If not, then ask the final question as to whether a winning return was prevented. If so, stroke, but this is usually a rare bird from the back of the court where most of these situations occur. Once you've reached this point, the answer would usually be 'Yes Let.'

Turning & related matters

The next significant change concerns a relatively infrequent occurrence of a striker turning and hitting the opponent with the ball. As far back as I can verify (1977), this has always resulted in the playing of a let. Now, it's stroke to the opponent, assuming that the opponent didn't jump in front of the ball deliberately, in which case it's stroke to the striker! It will be interesting to see how referees interpret 'deliberate' over the next few years. Like 'prevent' in our first item, 'deliberate' remains among the undefined list of words. Will we see opponents hitting

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a bunch of wide shots hoping to have the striker actually hit them when they simply remain in place? Will we see their casual walk to the 'T' after serving such a wide shot interpreted as a 'deliberate' movement to intercept the return?

It seems to me that it would have been a lot simpler to simply mandate the application of Rule 17 (Conduct on Court). This rule has the flexibility of using a conduct-warning for an obvious errant shot or miss-hit, all the way through conduct-stroke or conduct-game, to conduct-match for an obvious intent to injure. Of course, one can say that the referee can still apply this rule, but why have these extra provisions to cloud up the issue and add further complexity to the rules. Anyway, it'll be interesting to see over the next four years.

Again in relation to turning, the rules now clarify that the striker may also be awarded a stroke if there is interference to the swing for which the opponent failed make every effort to clear. Although infrequent, this kind of interference was generally and mistakenly lumped into the general 'let' conclusions for all things related to turning. Also, in an attempt to remain consistent, the same demands for the swing will be imposed on the opponent for situations involving 'Further Attempts' (Rule 10). Strangely however, in contrast to turning, there is no stroke provision against the striker if the opponent is hit with the ball after a further attempt (it stays a let) - unless (I really don't want to make your life difficult, you know) the further attempt is the (secondary) action of turning, in which case the striker once again loses the stroke. Whew!

Finally, a corollary that was adopted by the PSA a few years ago mandating a 'No Let' to a striker who

turns unnecessarily and stops play with an appeal has now been included into the mainstream rules of the game. The idea is to penalize unnecessary stoppage in play. The interpretation of this will be interesting since referees have a new adjective (best summarized as 'unnecessary') to use as part of their judgment process, and once again, it also has not been defined. I suspect that mandating the application of Rule 17 once again might have allowed for more flexibility. Will we see opponents hitting a bunch of wide shots hoping to force the incoming striker into turning in the hopes of seeing this decision applied in their favor? Once again, time will tell.

Injury & such

The rule on injuries has been rewritten and essentially nothing has changed in regards to the three categories of injuries - we still have self-inflicted, opponent contributed, and opponent inflicted. The main change centres around bleeding, if it occurs. Before applying the various provisions for the three categories, bleeding is dealt with first and foremost, with no time limits imposed other than the practical running of the event. In a brutal ruling however, the new rules mandate that any recurrence of bleeding results in the concession of the game in progress, or the match. The message here is to make bloody (!) sure that that wound won't bleed again! This could certainly sometimes be a heart-breaker, especially in a major event!

The treatment of the issues of illness & disability (without bleeding) also remains the same, these still being treated mercilessly with no time or consideration being allowed to the poor soul! So, if you're going to have an illness or disability, be sure to bleed along with it to get recovery time!

Finally, all the above provisions on injury and such have been compiled into a neat flowchart that is included as an appendix at the end of the new version of the rules, thereby simplifying your life should any of these unfortunate things happen to you. Minor matters - but hey, they might happen!

An addition was placed in the rule on 'Lets' (#13) that now allows a stroke award (the only one under Rule 13) if a distraction has interrupted the striker's winning return. Previously, the best a distracted striker could get with an appeal was a let, unless of course the distraction was deliberate. A new rule (#15) has been included entitled 'Duties of the Players', and it cleans up a bunch of small points. Among other things, it now forbids leaving the court without the referee's permission, forbids deliberate distraction, forbids placing any equipment or clothing within the court, and specifies methods of appeal.

Remember that 'Referee's Line of Thinking' flowchart often seen on the walls of Squash clubs? It used to be a quick four-question guide to help players sort out interference situations. It's now at nine questions, so it's hard to say if they will be reproduced as for general circulation as before, or if they'll be consulted by your everyday player when they get a look at the size of it. I guess it was felt that to properly guide a person to the correct answer, all the considerations should be stated.

Well, that's about it for the main changes that might have some effect on you as a player or referee. Remember again that you must forget what you have just learned here until the end of May 2001. If you are caught, the secretary will disavow any knowledge of your actions. This magazine will self-destruct in five seconds. ©

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MID-COURT COLLIDING AND WEATHERING THE STORM

BY MIKE WAY

Question: My opponent and I keep colliding in the mid-court area and in and out of the back corners. I find it very frustrating, and I have to work hard getting back to the T. Any advice?

Answer: There are three things to consider. First, is your length-shot tight enough? Second, are you hitting the ball back to the same corner (i.e. the one you're hitting it from) too often? And third, along with number two, are you too predictable with your shot selection?

In the first instance, ensure your deep shot gets past your opponent. Try hitting more crosscourts - wide and deep in order to hit less shots back to where you're hitting from - and the occasional boast from the back. By keeping the ball away from the corner you hit from there will be more freedom to move back to the T. If you keep hitting the same shots with monotonous regularity your opponent will be able to initiate his move off the T early and feel like he's "on you" before you've even finished your follow through!

Next, if you have the experience, try holding your drives for a split second, when time allows, before hitting them - just to keep your opponent more honest on the T.

Finally, be aware that if, for example, he's standing on your shoulder after you've hit your drive, he's sending you a message, "Hey bud, I knew you were going to hit that so, I don't need to be on the T." Use that signal to change tactics.

Question: How do I weather bad periods in a game - physical and/or mental?

Answer: With the former you've got to slow the game down. Lob high, keep wide and deep to stop the volley and grab some oxygen. You'll be able to walk to the T sometimes but, get to the T you must! Don't give in to the temptation to attack out of position. This is a challenge for you; rise to it!

Mental bad patches may be harder to counter. Mental lapses are usually due to you not accepting something,

such as a referee's decision, your opponent returning your best shots, fatigue setting in, your opponent's tactics, fair or unfair, and many other situations. This subject, of course, is huge, and I'll be writing a more comprehensive column on it at a later date.

In club squash, mental bad patches often mean hitting the tin a lot. Try this: Stop going for too many attacking shots unless it's a sitter; concentrate on your length and getting back to the T. Work your way back in with longer rallies, but don't force (over hit) the drives. Mentally accepting that the rally will be longer will also help you settle down and keep the ball out of the tin. Cue words and phrases are a must, and if you don't have any, ex-

periment with anything positive that helps keep you focussed. Breathing rituals between rallies may also help. Remember that this is squash - it's supposed to be tough, physically and often mentally. That's a fundamental truth of our sport and accepting that truth alone will help your concentration. ©

Mike Way is the squash professional at the Toronto Racquet Club, home of the National Squash Training Centre. Players training with Mike include world number 2, Jonathon Power, Graham Ryding and a host of up and coming your Canadian players.

Mike has also produced an excellent squash video series. See Squash Ontario's website at www.squashontario.com for information and prices.

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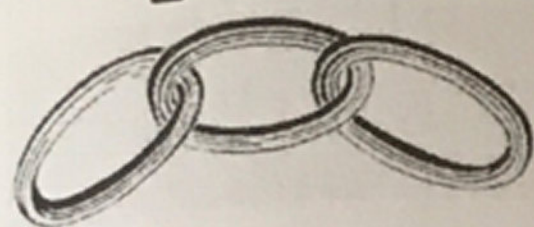
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FINDING



THE MISSING LINK

BY GEOFF SHEPPARD, MCMASTER UNIVERSITY SQUASH

The growth of squash in Ontario has always been promoted to a very small demographic group. Most junior players are the children of parents who have played the sport in their past. Squash Ontario's organizational structure largely focuses on junior and adult/senior level play. Attempts to gain exposure into the high schools has garnered few successes. Herein lies the problem. An extremely important gap has long remained unfilled. Squash Ontario and their clubs have missed identifying the most important link to squash in Ontario.

The real grassroots of the game of squash in Ontario is university and college recreational and varsity systems. This is where the largest number of people are being first introduced to the game. With the exception of some private schools, our school systems do

not promote our game.

Taking a survey of today's squash club members across Ontario will indicate a high number of players picked up the game of squash at post secondary institutions. University or college squash courts are continually booked from 7:00am to 10:00pm in the evening. This large demographic group is diving into the sport at post secondary level because their lifestyles are perfectly suited for the game. The students are gaining freedom at this time in their lives. They are accessing the sport during prime squash season and start with similar levels of expertise. The sport requires limited active wear and equipment. The students can access as many as 5-8 courts within walking distance. The workouts last 45 minutes and can fit into their flexible schedules. Best of all, it is a quick

activity to relieve the stresses of schooling and a great way to develop friendships.

Every university in Ontario has squash courts. Most college recreation facilities include them as well. Recent Ontario University Athletics varsity squash numbers indicate at least ten active players on each of the fourteen teams. At McMaster University it is estimated that at least 500 recreational members play throughout the school year.

The Ontario squash community needs to make investments into these students. Cooperation starts at many levels. Firstly, Squash Ontario needs to understand and recognize that college and university students are the seeded market of future members. This select population of newly exposed players with credentials that will likely enable high end careers must be understood. The students on average attend three years of schooling. They need to work in the off season to help attack rising schooling costs. The students are exiting these institutions with little financial security and debt. This is where our provincial organizations need to communicate with our clubs. This potential clientele will hesitate to join clubs without financial incentives. Most local sponsored club tournaments have racquet entry costs for juniors but not for post secondary students e.g. the McMaster varsity squash team was looking to put at least fifteen members in a local club graded tournament. In discussing with the professional to get a financial consideration a barrier was put up. A number of players decided not to attend. It is frustrating when we try to help the local clubs get exposure to the market and receive no support. Secondly, linking our juniors players to university competition would go a long way. It is important that all the invested time and energy of junior Ontario competitions and development doesn't go to waste. These future post secondary students are needed to play and spread their knowledge of the sport in our school

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communities. Even if the juniors are not in the top rankings, university play offers team rated competition. It is a shame when many top juniors flee to south of the border and all the efforts put forth by the Squash Ontario junior structure is given elsewhere. Junior coaches must support staying in school. Another idea is to apply more team competition for juniors. This will instill greater comradere and keep this spark in these players. Selling squash longevity is extremely important.

Thirdly, most institutions run some squash instructional programs. Communicating with the administration of these facilities by local clubs or Squash Ontario will set up magical opportunities. Traveling road shows and racquet demos adds to this appeal. The post secondary gap is finally starting to shrink. I have been writing about the university squash scene for five years and the deserved attention is finally arriving. I have been fortunate to have been involved with university squash for twelve years as a coach and player. I have witnessed the continued influx of new student players desperate to join in our game. The Ontario university league, despite funding cuts, continues to thrive. The dedicated coaches are doing their part to sell the sport. The University Team Finals banquet has been attended by 100 respected squash enthusiasts each of the last four years. I did not get my start in the sport until university. I am a believer in our system. Combining education and athletics in a team forum is a powerful sell. The missing link has been found. It is up to the clubs and Squash Ontario to connect the dots This could be a bull market.

When this article goes to print, the Ontario University Team Championship will have just been completed. Western men are a lock to continue their remarkable streak to 18 but, a likely sweep is in order as the Western women look to regain top spot. Check the results at www.oua.org. ©

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wake up call for squash 2001

In 1999, Ontario junior athletes took all eight titles at the Canadian Junior Closed Championships in Ottawa and in 2000, we took home the gold in five events. Internationally, in 1994 Canada won five titles at the U.S. Junior Open; In 1995 we won four titles and in 1996, another five. Now, fast forward to 2000 where Canada won just one title, that honour belonging to Ottawa's Robin Clarke.

An interesting transition has taken place over the last few years. Although the level of squash at the U.S. Open is much higher due to the fact that the tournament itself now draws some of the best juniors in the world, there are other serious indications that perhaps the level of Canadian junior squash is slipping.

Around 1994 the Americans realized that hardball was virtually dead and decided it was time to take on the rest of the world in soft ball. I can remember my thoughts - "give them five years and they will be on our coat tails." They had a plan - universities would lead the charge by changing their intercollegiate play from hardball to soft ball. Clubs were not far behind them in converting or building new courts. Five years ago, there were perhaps 400 soft ball courts in the U.S. Today, that number is around 750; an increase of 88%.

At the same time in Ontario and Canada, the fitness revolution was taking shape. Squash courts were being converted to spinning, aerobics, yoga and the latest pilates. All these activities are certainly beneficial to one's well being but, to me are generally for the person who cannot use their hands.

Ten years ago, almost every club in Ontario with squash courts had a squash pro or programmer on staff. Many owners made the decision to take out courts and, of course, the pros were the next to go. Many of these pros were lured to the U.S. to high paying jobs. With the U.S. efforts to grow squash, these pros found themselves in a great position - they were working in the sport they loved under similar situations they had in Ontario back in the '90s when squash was growing at a fast and furious pace.

For squash to return to its former level of participation and for Ontario to stay abreast competitively with the rest of the world, many things have to take place.

The most important piece of the puzzle is the squash pros who are currently working in Ontario. We must support each other in any way we can. We cannot be selfish or standoffish with each other. For squash to grow and get better we must share ideas whether it be coaching methods, programming information, or how to market the game in a better way.

The single most important role we have as squash pros and as players is to encourage squash at the grassroots level, whether it be adults or juniors. My focus, not surprisingly, is and will continue to be juniors. Every club owner and manager needs to ensure that the facility is encouraging junior participation and every pro should be running some kind of junior squash programme and encouraging kids to play. Juniors are our future, whether at the competitive level or the club's bottom line.

The next obvious step is to get your juniors active in matches, outside of the group lessons. Squash Ontario has an excellent infrastructure in place to help accommodate every age and level of junior. This will give your juniors the opportunity to hone their skills and to gauge their ability against kids their own age.

Squash Ontario encourages all member clubs, whether they have an existing junior programme or want to initiate one, to run a one-day fun event - a Bronze Event. With the help of our partners, McDonald's and Dunlop, we will provide you with balls, a racquet, Big Mac coupons for every participant and an excellent video - all free.

After you've whetted their appetite, it is time to take them to the next step - a Silver Event where they are entered into their own age grouping and are guaranteed three matches, a t-shirt, food and great camaraderie.

And, the final piece of the puzzle - high level competitive Gold Events, Provincial Championships and National Championships. If you take each step one by one, the final picture takes shape.

As a pro, it is very fulfilling to develop a beginner kid into a great player. One of the things that gives me the greatest satisfaction is when I run an adult tournament at the club and see four former juniors of mine playing in the Open division and others sprinkled in the A, B, and C divisions.

I leave every player in Ontario with one small challenge - introduce one adult or child to squash in the near future. I leave every pro with a greater challenge - start a grassroots junior programme at your club. If you already have, then run a Bronze event; if you've done that, then enter some of those juniors in a Silver event; and if you've done that, enter them in a Gold or Provincial event. And, if you already have, keep up the good work because a Provincial, National or U.S. title is bound to come your way.

Mark Sachvie,
Squash Ontario Vice President, Junior Development