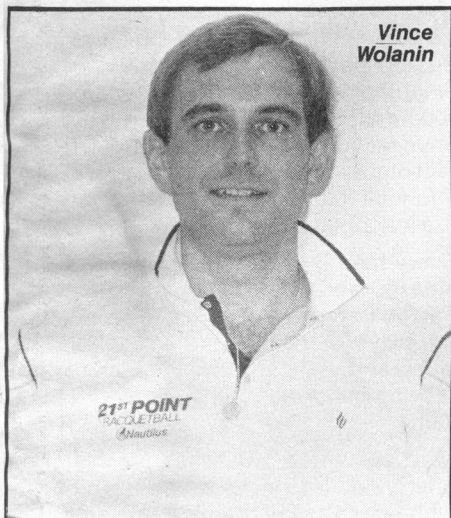


# 10 Points To Add Points Fast!

by Vincent M. Wolanin



As in any athletic endeavor, there is no shortcut to success in racquetball. However, as in any sport, effective habits can streamline the road to improvement. I've developed 10 points where improvement can be made, and if each can add but one point to your game, well, you will have jumped an entire competitive level.

### 1) Practice Doesn't Make Perfection But Perfect Practice Will

In order to improve dramatically, it will be necessary for you to spend at least an hour and a half per week in 30 minute sessions alone, practicing your stroke. Longer sessions will not yield significantly improved results unless done with a partner (see point 9).

In order to practice perfectly you should begin your program under the guidance of a competent professional racquetball instructor or coach who will help determine the practice regime best suited to your game. Your goal is to then practice perfectly what he advises and to check with him regularly to ensure that you are not perfecting poor habits.

### 2) Conditioning/Strength Training

Too many racquetball players are not in good enough physical condition to realistically improve their game. Their motor skills are being held back by any of a variety of body failings — from lung capacity to muscle strength.

Therefore, in order to be able to perform your *specific* racquetball skills to the utmost, you must be in good, *general* condition. This means a program that

combines aerobic and anaerobic (endurance and strength) training under the guidance of your coach or the fitness director at your club. Also, National Racquetball's Fitness section provides a wide variety of conditioning information that directly applies to your racquetball game each & every month.

My experience has found that leg strength is one of the most important forms of conditioning, yet often overlooked as players seek to strengthen their upper bodies laboring under the false assumption that this is where the power comes from.

Leg strength improves back strength, abdominal strength and contributes to getting to the ball, which, of course, you must be able to do before you can hit it.

### 3) Mental Conditioning With Games

Shooting pool, playing Trivial Pursuit and other mind games that keep you mentally alert and involve your other senses also help dramatically improve racquetball pursuits by developing your competitive and mental instincts to a sharper degree.

### 4) Play Better Players

Playing against better players gives you a chance to see better shots, different shots, spins, and pace while helping

you to improve your game — even if it means losing for a while.

Be realistic, however. If you're a novice player you won't want to hit with a Mike Yellen. Mike's game and shots would overwhelm you, making for a meaningless workout for you both. Try to play players a level above you — it will make for an interesting and worthwhile match.

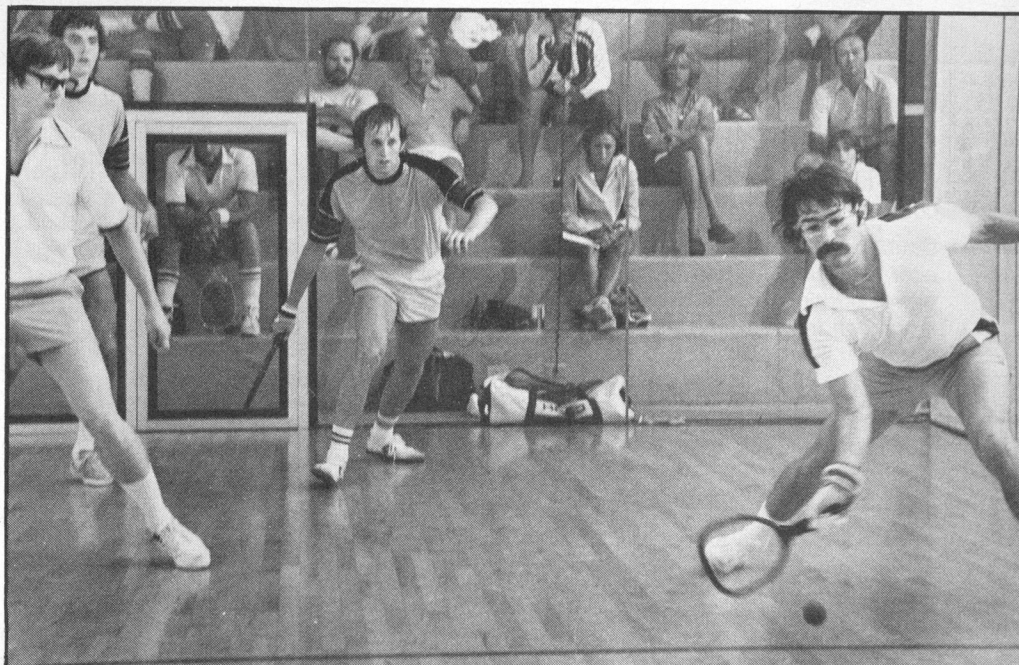
### 5) Watch Better Players

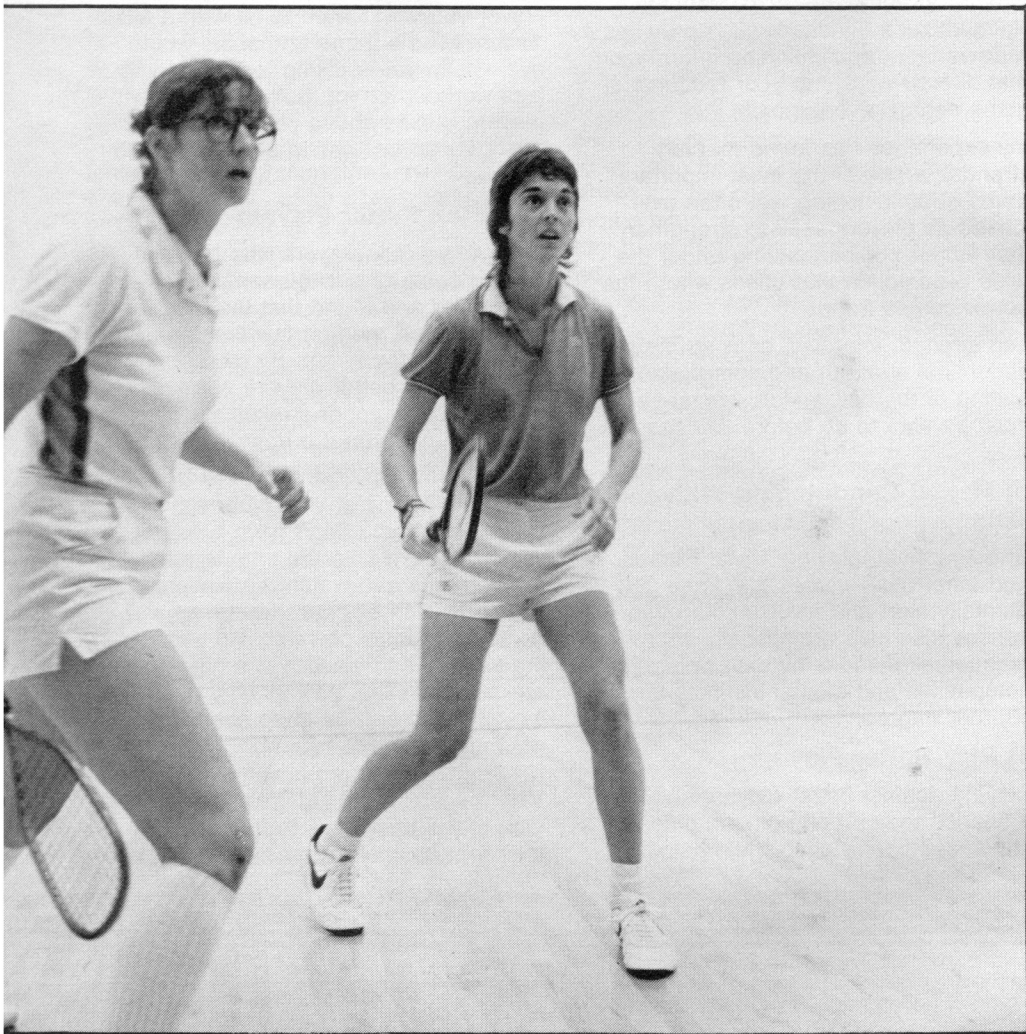
I've known club players who have attended some of our tournaments as spectators and found that their game has improved the first few times they played after the event. By merely watching the better players, their minds absorbed the proper strokes and strategies that make up the upper echelon of competitive racquetballers.

If you have pros at your club, watch them play. If you don't have pros at your club then take the time to attend tournaments and watch the players in the profession or open events, as well as open doubles players. The best of the seniors and veteran age categories are also excellent players who use strategy and finesse to compensate for not hitting the ball 140 mph.

### 6) Play Doubles

One of the best ways to improve is to take a partner of comparable ability and





play doubles against another team. Doubles forces your shot-making to be more precise because you're hitting shots against two people covering the court.

Doubles also forces you to strategically alter your game to take advantage of player positioning and because doubles is a much faster paced game than singles; you'll find the pace of singles seems like slow motion when you go back to it.

#### **7) Practice Only One Thing At A Time**

If your backhand needs work — work on your backhand, and only your backhand. Spend two to four weeks on a

particular shot or stroke and while concentrating on that one item, don't jump to other things until you've perfected the shot you started on.

After you've reached a stage of marked improvement with a particular shot, play against a player of somewhat lesser ability than yourself and hit this new, improved shot as often as possible, even in "wrong" situations. This allows your opponent to play someone better than himself while giving you the opportunity to improve a new shot during competition without the pressure to win at all costs.

#### **8) Get Videotaped**

Just as people are usually surprised at what their voice sounds like when tape recorded, you'd be amazed at what your racquetball form looks like on videotape. What your mind's eye thinks you look like is a far cry from what you really look like on the court.

Every time I watch myself on video I am amazed at how I can find something new to improve my performance. Every pro player needs to see himself hit on video and any player serious about improving his or her game should do the same.

Most clubs with a qualified teaching pro offer video lessons and analysis. If your club doesn't, there is probably one in your area that does.

#### **9) Practice With A Partner**

While it is both acceptable and recommended to spend a great deal of time practicing on the court alone, a complementary method that I highly recommend is with a partner. In order for this type of practice to be worthwhile, you and your partner must resist the temptation to start games or compete.

Therefore, you must both commit beforehand that this period will be "practice only" to improve your respective games. Don't ignore competition — it can be useful if the two of you compete in drilling.

#### **10) Don't Be Unrealistic**

While you can't expect rapid improvement overnight, within six months you should be up a half-notch, at least, and possibly higher depending on your dedication. Don't expect to win all your matches as you learn and practice new aspects of your game.

Your goal is *long term* improvement. ●

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