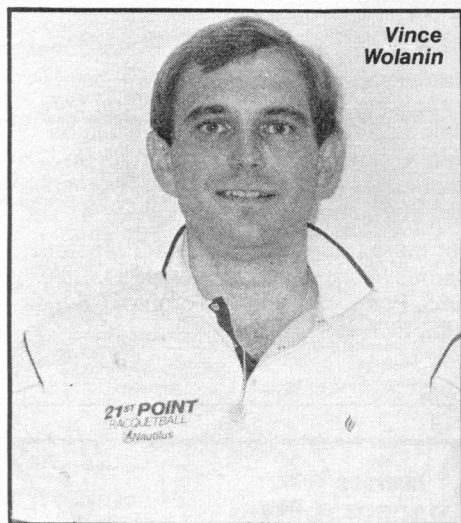


Racquetball Camps: How To Select And Prepare For Them

by Vincent Wolanin

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One of the things I am often asked is how to select a racquetball camp and what to look for in making the selection. As an organizer and director of a camp held each year in Albany, NY, I would like to explain how I organize an instructional camp. The guidelines here should help you decide which camp to go to as you understand what items are important. Then you can research thoroughly the camp you are planning to attend to see if they measure up.

I have always believed that it is necessary for our camp to have instructors who are not just good professional players, but more importantly, professional teachers with a genuine interest in helping further the racquetball games of our students. They must combine their teaching of the fine points with entertaining drills and dialogue with the students. Good players are one thing but without the other skills, you will not learn successfully at a camp.

Point 1)—When selecting a camp, don't just go to it because it has the endorsement of a top player.

If a camp you are going to doesn't publish information and background on their teaching staff, you should request

it from them. The professionally run camps list their entire staff and their backgrounds and not just their headline pros. Remember, the headline pro is only one person and he can't teach all 30 people in the camp.

Video analysis is a very important part of the camp, but the fact that a camp has video equipment doesn't mean they know how to analyze on court play.

Point 2)—Make sure the camp has a person with professional coaching experience, preferably someone who has worked with pro tour players with a trained eye for analyzing video recordation and then offering you a concise critique on your play with pointers to improve by.

When looking for instructors, I try to organize our staff so each player has a primary playing point or two that they excel in and are experts at teaching. For instance, Bruce Christensen works on the pro style serve and Charlie Garfinkel handles strategy, Jeff Leon works on drills, and I work on video analysis. If we had a staff of all good servers, the rest of your game would be neglected and you would only know how to serve.

Point 3)—Make sure the camp you go to has a staff with a variety of talented teachers who are experts in different aspects of the game.

Remember, learning at a camp is like a big puzzle. Each instructor must build each part of your racquetball puzzle in his session so when you are done, the whole puzzle goes together. That is how to build and perfect a complete racquetball game.

Our camp policy is that we want every player to go away satisfied, feeling that they have spent their money on a worthwhile project; i.e., come away with an improved racquetball game.

Point 4)—Ask if they will refund your money in full if you are not satisfied, and also if they can supply you with copies of letters of recommendation

from people who have attended their camp in the past. If they can't do these things, beware!

We attempt to integrate practice drills in all our sessions as players can go back home with the right ideas regarding how to practice by themselves.

Point 5)—Find out if the camp you are thinking about attending incorporates practice drills in its camp program so you can go back to your home club with interesting ways to practice on your own to integrate what you have learned into your game.

Conditioning, strength training, and other human performance criteria are tools for success in most sports and we include these in our racquetball camps.

Point 6)—If Olympic athletes work on human performance improvement to raise athletic performance, the racquetball camp you attend should include this also. Check it out to see if they do. If no one works on or discusses this aspect, you won't be a complete player.

Because of the quality of our teaching staff, we have been able to secure major sponsors for our camp. Ektelon is our camp sponsor and they are a valued ally, as we are able to offer special deals on equipment to camp attendees.

Point 7)—A manufacturer's sponsorship at a camp should be researched to find out if you will be getting special deals on equipment.

Last year, some players at our camp saved enough money on equipment alone to more than cover the cost of the camp. Once again, this can be a valuable asset of going to the right camp. Also a manufacturer's willingness to sponsor a camp indicates a lot of confidence in the director of the camp as well as the teaching staff.

We keep a record on a lot of our camp alumnus to see how they have improved since our camp. We also get repeaters who come back year after year to our camps.

FEATURE

Having Fun At RB Camp

by Bill Mueller

Stuck in the 20x40 box for a week? No way—not in Aspen where the outdoors are too inviting.

Point 8)—Ask the camp if they can document cases of improvement where players have raised their games one or several levels and have even gone on to become tournament champions. Ask for names and phone numbers of players you can call and talk to regarding their camp and post camp progress.

After deciding which camp to attend, it is time to prepare to go to camp. The most important thing to do in preparing for the camp you are going to attend is to make sure you get yourself in decent physical shape beforehand, as you will be spending a great deal of time on your feet listening to instruction as well as playing and if you are not in shape, you will be distracted from learning by your being physically tired out.

Also, don't come to camp in a brand new pair of shoes that you are wearing for the first time, since if you get blisters, you will be suffering for 48 hours and not learning as you should be.

The last things to do before leaving for camp are also sometimes the most forgotten; namely, *what do I bring to camp?* The following checklist should help. If you perspire a lot, bring the maximum. If not, the minimum as noted.

- 3-6 shirts • 2-4 shorts
- 1-2 pairs of racquetball shoes
- 1 pair of jogging shoes
- 1 warmup • 6-8 pairs of socks
- trainers tape (if injured)
- notebook for lectures, notes and pen or pencil
- 2-4 athletic supporters (males only)

Non-racquetball items

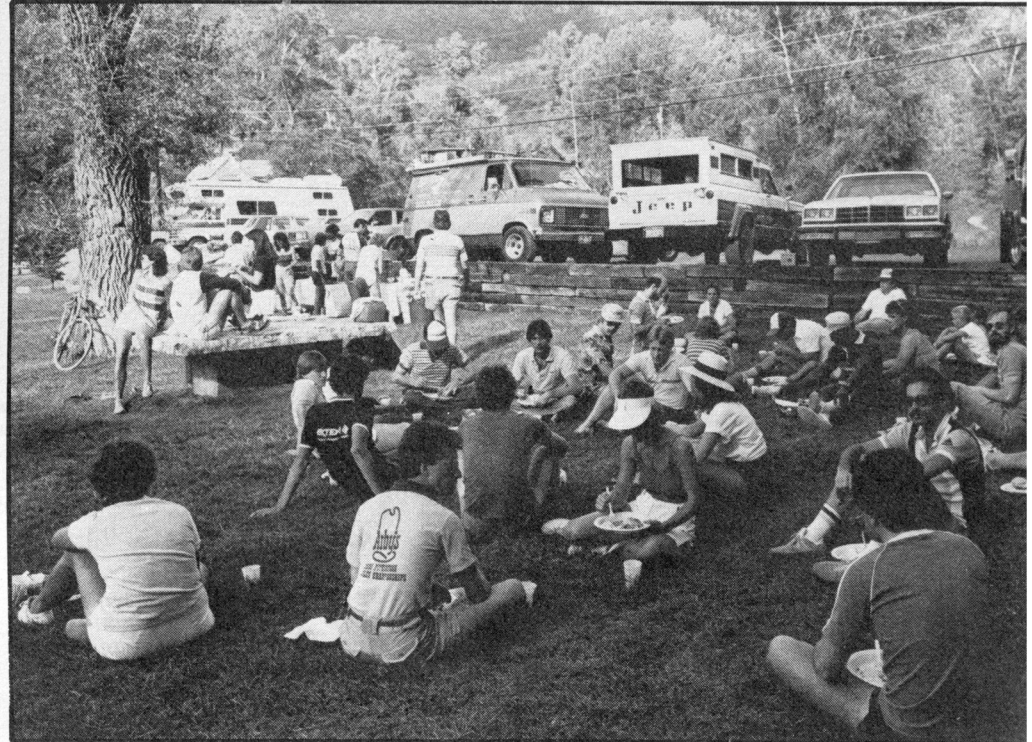
(some only apply to traveling participants)

- 1-2 casual shirts • casual shoes
- casual pants or skirts • toiletry items
- laundry bag • pajamas or robe
- reading materials • raincoat or jacket

We recommend that each participant bring \$25.00-\$35.00 for non racquetball activities and personal needs that arise. The club will provide lunch each day, but participants must purchase their beverages for lunch and during the camp.

Selection of an appropriate racquetball camp using these guidelines will prove to be an extremely valuable learning experience which will benefit your racquetball game in an invaluable way. Remember, in a short time you will be exposed to techniques which have taken years for the players who are teaching you to master. If they do their job properly, you will not waste time on mistakes which most times take longer to correct than learning the right way the first time.

Good luck and have a great time at camp! ●



Sometimes the best thing you can do for your game is to forget it. Just leave it behind for a week or so, take that vacation you've been remotely lusting after for more than a year, and keep your racquet zippered under wraps — where it can't serve to remind you that it's been four months since you last beat your boss, and never mind the fact that you only won *that* match because he happened to be recovering from the flu and a monumental hang-over at the same time.

Then again, sometimes it's best to grab your game by the throat, swing at it until your arms and legs feel like spaghetti, and then analyze it with the cool precision of an expert mechanic trying to figure out where the knocks and pings are coming from.

And if you're lucky, you can do both at the same time.

For Mike Nave and a group of friends from the Mid Valley Racquetball Club in Reseda, CA, attending racquetball camp in Aspen, CO last summer was a "super opportunity for a bunch of guys to have a lot of fun, and a great way to get away from business."

Not that the business at hand was anything other than racquetball, however. Because if a week in Aspen sounds like a travel agent's best sales rap, keep in mind that those at the Strandemo/Head Racquetball Camp weren't sweating because of a hot sun at poolside. To be sure, this vacation had more to do with gulping Gatorade than sipping pina colodas. But it wasn't exactly a few days of maximum security at San Quentin, either.

"I think it was great fun," said Perry Altshule, who also attended the Strandemo camp last summer. *"I enjoyed it. It was a helluva week, a helluva workout."*

Nave, Altshule and five others from the Mid Valley club organized last summer's "working" vacation as a way to kick back and kick some bad playing habits. As it turned out, they did plenty of both.

For the 48-year-old Nave, work on improving his game starts in a familiar place for many racquetball players: the backhand. *"I seemed destined to go to the grave with a lousy backhand and wanted to improve my court sense,"* he