

racquetball

Racquetball tip: Corner your foe

The analogy may be a bit unusual, but think about it for a minute. Real estate executives always target specific land areas which they believe will help them achieve monetary goals. The same can be said about racquetball, where targeting certain areas of court "real estate" has proved to be rewarding.

What court areas am I talking about? The "high yield" back corners. As a control power player, use the back corners frequently to frustrate my opponents, so there's no reason you can't "cash in" on this bonanza, too.

Think of the back corners as commercial rather than residential property. You don't want to live there. You just want to control the land.

TO ME, maintaining back-corner control means keeping control of center court, that seven-foot square behind the short line.

What you DO NOT want to do is let the ball pass through your center-court position, because it may force you to give up center court and put you, instead of your opponent, on the defensive.

Instead, create in your mind two small cubes which sit invisibly in each back corner. The cubes should be three feet high, three feet wide and three feet deep.

To control these corners, you should strive to hit your shots through these cubes. It doesn't matter how — just as long as the ball, at some point during a rally, moves in out of that cube.

Obviously, unless you're a glutton for punishment, you want to play to your opponent's weakness — either the back left or right corner (forehand or backhand).

DON'T OVERUSE the strategy, though, because you want the element of surprise on your side. Keep them guessing.

What type back-corner shots you use will invariably depend on if you're serving, your opponent's court position, your strength and quickness, the tempo and the score of the game.

Basically, down-the-line drive serves, hard and soft Z-serves and even lob serves will fulfill the purpose of putting your opponent's back to the wall.

Cross-courts, drives, passes — pretty much the whole racquetball repertoire — in turn will keep your opponent pasted to the corners while a point is in progress.

With the area so tight and the angles acute, a mixture of shots which force a up, make him shoot on the run or get boxed in a corner will prove effective.

But what happens when the roles are reversed? What happens when you're the person being painted into a corner?

THE KEY WORD in this situation is time. You want to buy yourself some. Unless you're set up or have a clean picture of your next shot (or just want to get the game over quickly), don't make any foolish attempts at kills or cross-court pinches from 38 feet away.

Go to the ceiling. Use the ceiling shot to get yourself back in position, to prolong the point and to allow you time to recover.

Other shots — the high pass, around-the-wall ball, even an occasional down-the-line drive — may prove effective, but again, a lot depends on how close that corner is and your body/ball position.

Many professional players use the back corners effectively. I use them more than most. Recently, however, I played my Ektelon teammate John Eggerman in the finals of a tournament in Michigan.

John drove his wall shots as well as I've ever seen him, putting me into the dreaded positions I've explained in this article. But I countered with ceiling shots, played a bit of a waiting game, and was finally able to defeat John to win the tournament.

Fortunately, even after a summer without too many tournaments, I retained the quickness necessary to retrieve John's shots and eventually turned them into some points for myself. I hope, with some practice, that my tips will prove just as productive for you.

Mike Yellen is a Southfield native and one of the top professional racquetball players in the country. He is a member of the Ektelon-sponsored team. His advice column will appear periodically in the Observer & Eccentric sports pages.

For serious bowlers

Spring means tournaments

Spring is in the air, and that means one thing to bowlers — tournaments. State and national tournaments will be starting shortly.

The men's national tourney is in Baltimore, while the women will be heading to St. Louis. Here in Michigan, the women's state tournament is in Lansing.

nine-pin, no-tap traveling singles tourney starts at noon tomorrow.

Walk-in entries are being accepted. Check-in time is between 10 and 11 a.m., and the \$20 entry fee covers bowling cost, prize fund and two mystery games.

They are expecting between 100 and 150 bowlers, ranging in average from 130-160. First place pays \$300, second, \$150, and third, \$100.

Out at Southfield's Plum Hollow Lanes a lot of people took to the lanes to Bowl for Breath for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. So far, they have raised about \$14,000. The tournament coordinator, Carolyn Stanecki, still is hoping for more pledge sheets to be returned.

They also were Bowling for Breath at Farmington's Country Lanes, where they've collected \$15,000. Like Stanecki, volunteer coordinator Randy Pearce is hoping that more money will come in.



bowling
Red Poulin

Also at Country Lanes, Judy Uniatowski rolled a 232 in the Westlake Mixed League, while Bernie Bunyak had a 265 in the Wednesday Night Ladies League.

And, on two different leagues, two different bowlers rolled the same score on the same night. Both Jim Zesarz in the Ever-Seven League and John Plesivec on the Monday Men's League rolled a 257.

Farmington's Bel Aire Lanes registered some good scores over the week with Mae Hoffman throwing a 235 game and Gil Wolfe knocking out a 750 series.

In the Thursday Classic League, Jerry Heilestedt put games of 218, 232 and 256 together for a 706, while Jack Bohm had games of 244, 233 and 223 for a 700.

Jim Riley had the high series in the Bill-Fox North Hill Classic League competition at Rochester's North Hill Lanes. He bowled a 678 series with a 232 high game.

Merv Epperson was close behind with a 670 series and a 237 high game, while Ed Marsh and Tom Higley each had a 653 series, and Mike Allen had a 646.

Dave Czerwinski rolled the night's high game at 279 but settled for a 623 series.

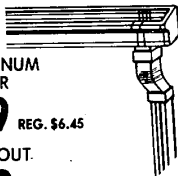
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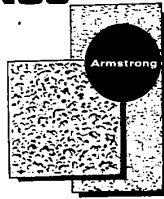
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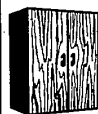
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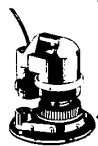
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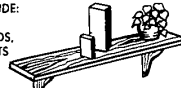
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