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Racquetball courts provide conditioning as well as fun

By Pat Beecham

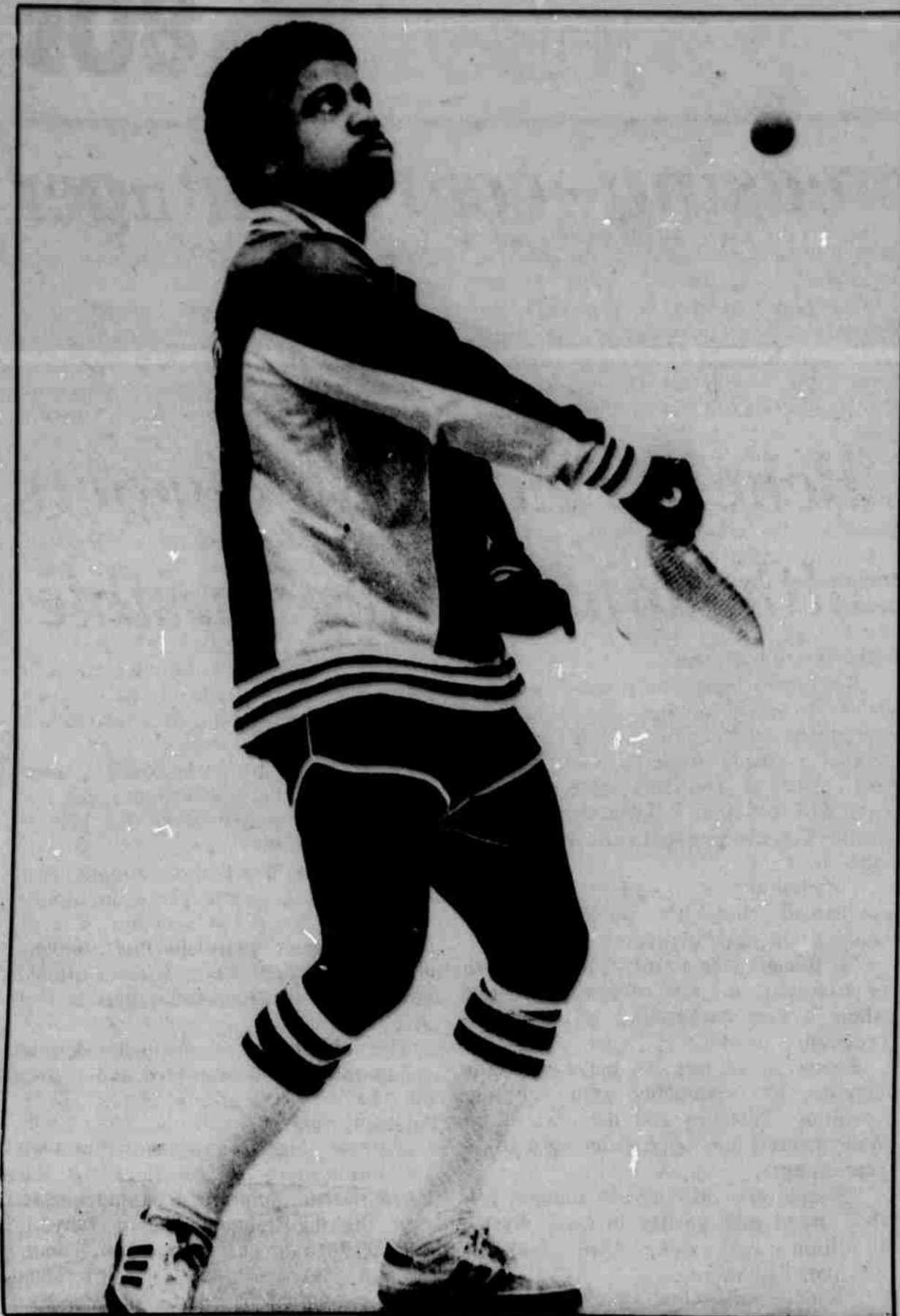


Photo by Mitch Hrdlicka
Rod Orduna takes a swipe at the ball on one of the racquetball courts at Wallbangers, 330 P St. Orduna is Wallbangers' teaching pro.

People who find themselves sitting around and getting fat and out of shape during the winter months, but detest jogging and can never find an open basketball court, may be able to find enjoyable exercise on a racquetball court.

Racquetball is enjoyed by people of all ages and all shapes. It is one of the fastest growing sports in America, and you don't have to be an expert to enjoy it. It is a popular belief among the people that work at three Lincoln racquetball courts—the YMCA, Wallbangers and Sports Courts—that racquetball is not just another passing fad.

"I believe that racquetball is definitely here to stay," said Trudy McVay, coordinator at Sports Courts. "People are more health conscious now than they every were."

Joleen Clymer, the women's physical director at the YMCA, said she also feels racquetball is a sport that will endure.

"There are a lot of people around who are interested in their health and want to stay in shape. Sure, racquetball will have its peaks and valleys, but it will survive."

Carla Hiatt, one of the top female racquetball players in the state, and a full-time employee at Wallbangers, said she thinks people play racquetball for reasons besides conditioning.

"I think that a lot of people play racquetball because of a lack of things to do in the winter," Hiatt said. "It's also a lot more enjoyable than running."

Although the racquetball frenzy is at its height during the winter, it can be played all year round. But according to Jim DeCamp, a member of Wallbangers, only the "hard core" racquetball players usually continue to play during the summer.

"Racquetball dies off about 50 percent in the summer. The people that were playing just for enjoyment during the winter go to tennis or softball during the summer."

Not only do people use racquetball as a means of keeping in shape, they also have such things as "racquetball parties," according to McVay.

"We have fraternities and sororities from the university who have racquetball parties out here. They rent the place from 6 to 12:30 at night for \$200 and can play as many games as they want to."

All three employees agreed, however, that racquetball is not dominated by the younger generation. They said most racquetball players range between the ages of 25 to 40, but people in their 60s and 70s and handicapped people also enjoy the game.

"I've seen people out here playing racquetball in wheelchairs," DeCamp commented.

For the more seasoned racquetball player who would like to compete for more than the price of a beer, Clymer said a racquetball tournament can be found around the city just about every weekend.

She said that different sponsors will put on the tournaments which are open to everyone and that the "Y," Sports Courts and Wallbangers will sponsor a city tournament starting March 28.

People who reserve a court should do so in advance if you want to play at prime time.

"We have a time between 7 and 8 a.m. when people can call in to make reservations for the courts. And by 7:07 all the good times have been filled," Clymer said.

McVay said that the situation is much the same at Sports Courts.

"Members can make court reservations seven days in advance. If they would like to play during the prime time in the evening they would have to call at least 36 hours in advance to get a court."

At Wallbangers, Hiatt said a call about three days in advance usually is needed to reserve a court.

The cost of getting started in racquetball is really inexpensive. All you have to buy is a racquet and ball. From then on the cost would depend on how often you play.

Anything goes in clothes

The proper clothes for racquetball are anything comfortable according to managers of local sporting goods stores.

Bob Rosenberger, manager of Gerry's Sport and Ski Shop, 1344 P Street, recommends gym shorts and a T-shirt.

"More important than clothes are the kind of shoes and socks you wear," Rosenberger said. "A lot of people are wearing running shoes, which are not good for this particular sport."

Rosenberger recommended either racquetball, tennis, or basketball shoes.

"These shoes give good lateral support, and can hold up under the pivoting, stopping and starting motions of the game," Rosenberger said.

"A good athletic sock, either wool, cotton, orlon or similar material, is

important," he said.

Rosenberger said that since racquetball is a strenuous sport, taken up mostly for exercise, gym shorts and a T-shirt are really all that is needed.

"Some manufacturers have been pushing glorified gym clothes, almost tennis outfits, but their sales have not made a dent," he said.

Chris Vodehnal, of Lawlor's, 1118 O Street, recommended "Fred Perry" shoes.

"These shoes have a gum sole, which works a little better on the court," she said.

In addition to good court shoes, Joleyn Stacy, manager of Stacy's Locker Room, 48th and Normal, advised eyeguards, sweatbands and gloves for the serious racquetball player.

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