

sports

By Paul Arnett

Tennis...everyone?

My Sunday morning wake-up call sounded all too soon.

It had been a wild weekend in Lubbock, full of wining, dining and women. So after a moment's reflection upon my Saturday night accomplishments, I assaulted my alarm clock, turned my electric blanket up a notch and prepared for another five-hour visit with the sandman.

Or so I thought. "Get out of that bed and let's go play some tennis," my roommate shouted from the living room. "You're going to snore off a perfect day."

A perfect day, I thought to myself. That means every guy and his dog will be out there trying to find a court.

"You think we can find a court?" I asked my roommate, hoping he would say no.

"Sure, if you'll hurry up and get ready."

"Hurry up and get ready," I said to myself in disgust. "Hurry back to the land...good time."

But after five minutes of frustrated lyrics and shattered sleep, I remembered the commercial where the guy molds into his chair because of lack of exercise. Visions of a carded marshmallow danced in my head, so I said goodbye to the bed and went playing instead.

We drove to the tennis land of Texas A&M in time to witness some 100 people fighting each other for a court. Driving past the battle field, I remembered when finding a place to play tennis was as easy as finding a Baptist in Texas.

"Why the hell are all these people here?" I asked Jamie angrily, looking at all those weekend hackers trying to hit the ball.

"Yeah," he replied. "Look at those idiots over on that court. It takes me mad seeing those clowns playing ping-pong on tennis courts."

After a ten-minute stay at Aggieville, we decided to try the Bee Creek courts. There were a lot of people buzzing around the tennis area — fortunately two of them were students.

We harassed them into submission and they soon left the court — imagine letting the gallery get the best of you. We walked onto the surface preparing ourselves for the big match when two guys decided to us a visit.

"We've been here longer than you guys," a portly fellow said. "Me and my buddy have been waiting here three years for this court."

I looked at Jamie, he looked at

me. We shrugged our shoulders and said they could have the court. Back on the road again, we told them off.

"Man, I hate rich people," Jamie said. "Did you see the kind of car he was driving, it was a '78 Firebird. I wouldn't have minded giving up the court if he had been driving a VW. But those rich guys are arrogant. They think they own the world."

"Yeah, I know what you mean," I replied. "You think that's bad, try washing your clothes around here. It's hard enough to get a tennis court, but these people will cut your throat for a washing machine."

Our next and last stop on the tennis tour was A&M Consolidated. There, to our surprise, we found two courts open. We wondered how this could be, and in five minutes we found out.

Two courts down from us a man and his daughter were dinking the ball back and forth. Most of their shots were wandering over to the next court, where two guys were trying to play. But that wasn't the half of it.

The dynamic duo held a running conversation that you could have heard in Bryan. Every time Jamie and I tried to concentrate, shouts of how great the other was playing boomed into our court.

"Great shot, honey!" the man yelled to his daughter. "But don't think I'm going to let you win. I'll let loose my Jimmy Connors' shot and kill you. Ha, ha, ha!"

Well, this went on for an hour. Instead of a quiet tennis-like atmosphere, the courts sounded like a Barnum and Bailey circus. If that wasn't bad enough, right next to us some 10-year-olds decided today was the day they would take up the game.

It was like trying to serve out of a foxhole, with little yellow missiles threatening our very lives.

"Good show, Paul," Jamie would say. "You managed to sneak one over. Too bad I mixed it up with these other three whipping through here."

We had to stop every other volley to sort laundry.

"OK, the bald ball belongs to the jerks three courts down, the two orange ones are the carnival barker's... who the hell's playing with this racket ball! We'll keep this new one, we deserve it."

On one occasion Jamie tossed out Dunlop up in the air to serve, lost it in the sun, and wound up catching a Wilson from the court next door.

"I can't believe it," Jamie said. "Everyone south of Hearne has de-

ecided to play tennis. It's like a circus out here."

It was a lackluster first set. But our hopes were raised when the carnival barker two courts down cut loose with this sentence.

"Honey, your old man is getting tired. I'm afraid it's time to go home."

"Oh you're nothing but a Crunchy Granola bar, daddy," his daughter said. "Let's play two more games."

Damn, I thought to myself. Just when it looked like the barker was going home, his daughter talks him into staying. But what came next was a real heartbreaker.

"I think I'm getting my second wind," the mouth said. "Let's play some more."

Double fault for me when that sentence hit the airways.

"I can't, daddy," she said. "I have a test tomorrow."

With that the dynamic duo went home. But the damage had been done.

"Let's go home and watch tennis on TV," Jamie said. "The hackers have taken over the tennis world."

We packed our gear and headed to the house. Our conversation was sparse on the return trip. It had been a long afternoon.

"You know who said 'tennis, anyone?'" I asked my reflection in the window.

"No, who?" Jamie replied. "Humphrey Bogart," I answered.

"Well after today, I'll never play it again, Sam," Jamie joked.

"Neither shall I."

Back at the homestead I looked at my racket for the last time before placing it back upon the shelf, and in my best Bogie imitation said, "Here's looking at you, kid."

I silently shut the closet door, went into the living room, turned on the TV and settled back. On the tube was the "you're going to mold into your chair" commercial.

I got up and changed channels.

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7:10-9:45

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7:15-9:35

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7:30-9:40

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