

the sports

Racquetball rising 'round the nation

United Press International
YPSILANTI, Mich. — Imagine being trapped in an enormous, white-walled, super-heated room while invisible phantoms throw hard little black balls at you.
 That's what the novice feels like on a racquetball court.
 The black rubber ball — about half the size of a tennis ball — careers off any one of four walls or the ceiling with a loud thunk. It flies toward your face at a frightening speed as you scurry around frantically trying to defend yourself with a sawed-off tennis racquet.
 Racquetball is hot, intense and in-

uriating. But for 5.5 million Americans, it has become an enthralling experience that they put themselves through at least two or three times a week in private clubs and college gymnasiums.
 Its fans say the game — a hybrid of handball and tennis — is so exciting it will soon overtake tennis as the No. 1 racquet sport in the nation. The U.S. Racquetball Association reports the number of players is doubling every year.
 "I always look like I need a respirator when I get done playing," said Delores Gibson, 35, a housewife who had just finished an hour

on the court at Ypsilanti's Sports Illustrated Court Club in suburban Detroit.
 "But, it's great exercise — a great way to sweat off 40 pounds," she said, grinning as she pushed long strands of black, sweat-soaked hair from her forehead.
 The game is being played by:
 —Suburban housewives who park their children with free court club babysitters while they compete in leagues.
 —Retired men and women who use the clubs as a way to meet new people.
 —Students looking for a break from their studies.
 —Executives who play on courts rented by their companies.
 —Night-shift factory employees who work away their frustrations at clubs open around the clock.

Racquetball unlike tennis

Racquetball, the nation's fastest-growing racquet sport, is a haven for the frustrated tennis player.

Unlike tennis, you can't lose your ball over the fence — the game is played in a four-walled court.

You won't end up screaming in frustration because your best forehead just thudded into the net — there isn't any net.

Players hit the ball to the front wall, watch while their opponents hit the ball and then — hopefully — hit it back to the front wall again before it bounces twice on the floor.

A player scores a point when his opponent fails to return the ball to the front wall before it hits the floor twice. A player can only score while serving.

The best players use all four walls and the ceiling to return the ball to the front wall in a kind of four-dimensional pool. One

classy shot involves slamming the ball as hard as you can against the back wall so that it rockets over the head of your opponent and slams into the front wall.

The only equipment needed for the game is a racquet priced between \$10 and \$50, tennis shoes, shorts and a shirt.

Courts can be found at colleges or community centers or at private clubs, which range in price from \$200 to \$1,000 annually.

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of the devotee of tennis — a centuries-old sport which has always been identified with the well-heeled — racquetball seems like a poor relation.

Many racquetball players shun the Paris-designed fashions of the tennis world and run around the courts in old, torn gym shorts, smelly T-shirts and ragged tennis shoes while swatting away with \$15 racquets.

The Sports Illustrated Court Clubs, a nationwide chain begun in Ypsilanti in 1976, advertises itself as the "working man's country club" in order to capitalize on the anti-aristocratic image of the sport.

"It's not like snobs play it or anything," Mrs. Gibson said. "It's not a country club atmosphere, maybe that's because we're all so sweaty when we get done."

The sport came into existence in the late 1940s when a tennis pro substituted a strung racquet for the paddle in paddleball, a form of handball played with a wooden paddle. It didn't get its name until 1969

when another tennis pro dubbed it "racquetball" before the first international tournament.

Racquetball is a phenomenon of the 70s.

At the beginning of the decade, only 50,000 Americans called themselves racquetball players and there were no private clubs. This year, the number of players should pass six million and the number of clubs has climbed to 750.

The sport's 12-city pro tour this year posted \$200,000 in prize

money. When the tour began in 1974, it could only muster \$9,800 in prizes.

The key to racquetball's success appears to be the fact that anyone can learn to play within minutes.

"It's not like tennis where you have to learn the stroke," said Michigan-based racquetball pro Gil Schmitt. "Racquetball is like taking up a newspaper and swatting a fly."

Another facet of the game is luring women and the elderly onto the racquetball courts in increasing

number, Schmitt said. Racquetball is a test of strategy where strong muscles do not always determine the winner.

"An old man can walk in there (on the court) and run me around in circles if he is a real smart player," Schmitt said. "It's like playing chess on the court. It takes intelligence."

The sport's fans claim racquetball can do everything for a player — from hardening his muscles to improving his mental health.

Two University of British Colum-

bia researchers who study the sport saw it as a solution to our exercise problems.

"Racquetball's unique feature," they said, "is its ability to get one, regardless of sex, age level, to participate in an activity and experience fun and well as a worthwhile workout."

Their study showed a playing racquetball uses up 1000 calories per minute compared with 600 for cross country running.

The intense workout is the fact that racquetball is played twice as often as running than tennis players.

Chuck Leve, national chairman of the Chicago-based Racquetball Association, called the sport a cure for such problems as obesity and frustration.

"If you want physical fitness, the pressures of the game, the emotional release, the better than racquetball," he said. "What could be a better liever than blasting the ball as you can against a wall great afterwards."

"No matter what your physical fitness now, you can get more out of racquetball your present activity."

SOSU leads College Rodeo

United Press International
LAKE CHARLES, La. — With leaders in both men's and women's competition, Southeastern Oklahoma State University moved to a commanding lead in team standings with 270 points during the second go-round of the College National Finals Rodeo.

SOSU, trying to equal Casper (Wyo.) College's record four consecutive team titles, was boosted by the strong performances of Jimmy Cleveland in bareback bronc riding and Sabrina Pike in goat tying. Cleveland turned in a 75-point performance on a bareback bronc in the rodeo's second go-round. He also held the highest total with 146 points.

Pike led the second go-round goat tying competition with a time of 8.44 seconds. Her combined time of

18.59 seconds also put her at the top.

Trailing SOSU in team totals were Dawson Community College (Glendive, Montana) with 195 points, the University of Southern Colorado with 135 points and National College of Business (Rapid City, S.D.) with 120.

Team roping winners in the second go-round were Mitch Copps and Clifton Wheeler of Sam Houston State University of Texas with an 8.04-second time. Leading in a combined time of 17.18 were Dean Churchill of South Dakota State University and Dick Churchill of Chadron State College of Chadron, Nebraska.

Jeff Clubb of Sam Houston State took the second go-round steer wrestling lead with a time of 3.48 seconds. Raymond Dorenkamp of

Lamar (Colo.) Community College was the rodeo leader with 8.64 second in total time.

Walter Parke of Weber State (Ogden, Utah) was the second go-round calf roping leader at 10.04 seconds. Scott Clements of National Business led in combined time with 21.26 seconds.

Jess Knight of Howard Junior College (Big Springs, Texas) with a 70-second ride in the second go-round was the combined leader with 136 in the saddle bronc event.

A strong bull ride by Panhandle Oklahoma State University's Rod Breech moved him into the lead

with a 70-second ride in the second time in breaker. Perry of Southwestern State University (Wichita, Okla.) leads the combined time with 31.93.

Cynthia Cook posted a second time in breaker. Pam Mitchell from Houston Community College led the combined time with 7.45.

The all-around leader Tuesday's competition was Jefferys of Dawson State of SOSA.

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 DOWNTOWN BRYAN

Astros win, Rangers lose

United Press International
HOUSTON — Craig Reynolds' one-out triple in the eighth drove in Terry Puhl from first base with the winning run Wednesday night leading the Houston Astros to a 5-4 victory that completed a three-game sweep over the New York Mets.

Puhl collected his third single of the game to open the eighth inning off starter and loser Craig Swan, 7-5, after the Mets forged a 4-4 tie in the sixth when Lee Mazzilli's walk led to an unearned run.

Cesar Cedeno's two-run double gave the Astros a 2-0 lead in the first inning and Dennis Walling hit an inside-the-park home run in the fourth to tie the score 3-3. The Astros took the lead on Puhl's fifth-inning RBI single.

Joe Sambito, 4-2, earned the victory and ran his scoreless streak to 27 straight innings by hurling one-hit relief over the final two innings. Sambito has not been scored upon over his last 16 appearances.

In Anaheim, Don Baylor in a pair of third-inning extra-innings pitched his major-league best total Wednesday night leading the California Angels to a 5-4 victory over the Texas Rangers.

Baylor's two-run double starter and loser Jon Matlack after Campaneris' single gave him 59 RBI after the 70th game. Brian Downing, California's fourth-inning sixth homer of the year.

Campaneris, who tied the record with his three steal, stole second and scored what proved to be the winning run on Dan Ford's sacrifice fly. Texas' first came on Richie Zisk's base single in the fourth and chased Frost in the eighth. Putnam's two-run homer

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