

# SPORTS

## Racquetball A Smashing Success

## UNLV WRESTLING



Racquetball is surfacing as the hottest racquet sport in the country. "It's a super game," says John Zwahlen, senior buyer for Herman's World of Sporting Goods, a division of W. R. Grace & Co. "It requires less talent and dexterity than tennis does and the average person can learn it in 30 minutes." Herman's has seen a steady rise in the volume of sales of racquetball equipment over the past three years.

According to Mr. Zwahlen, until 1976 when the sales volume at Herman's soared to five times that of the previous year, most of its racquetball business was institutional, with such organizations as YWCA's for example. Today more than 50% of the business is with individual players.

The United States Racquetball Association (USRA), which runs over 1,000 tournaments a year, estimates that eight million Americans, 30-40 percent of them women, are playing the game today as against a mere 50,000 back in 1970 when the Association was founded. The USRA estimates there are nearly one thousand racquetball facilities in the U.S. today with anywhere from 10 to 55 courts each, as against next to none in 1970. Estimates for 1980 project some 14 million players and 1,700 facilities.

What is this hot new game and why has its rise been so meteoric?

Racquetball is an indoor court game played on a four-wall court 40 feet long, 20 feet wide and 20 feet high. It is played with a short-handled racquet, the length and width of which may not exceed a total of 27 inches, and a hollow pressurized ball 2 1/4 inches in diameter. The racquet is equipped with a loop which is kept securely wrapped around the wrist during play. Opponents share the same space, face the same way and keep hitting the ball back toward one wall. In fact, the court is similar to an enclosed room and the ball may be bounced off walls or the ceiling on its way back to the target wall that the players face.

The game is an offshoot of paddle ball, which was developed in the thirties at the University of Michigan and played on a handball court with a solid wooden paddle or one with small

holes bored in it. In 1949 Joe Sobek, a tennis and squash pro from Greenwich, Conn., designed a short-handled racquet that made for the faster, more powerful game that has come to be known as racquetball and that has long since surpassed paddle ball in popularity. Not only is racquetball the fastest-developing racquet game in the United States, it is also showing up on the international sports scene, primarily through the Armed Forces stationed in Japan and Western Germany. It is also making inroads in countries like the United Kingdom with a tradition of squash, which it resembles in its basic principles.

Racquetball has caught on in this sports-oriented age simply because it is easy to learn and because it can be played by almost anyone. "You don't have to be a super athlete to enjoy the game. It's a family sport," says Joe Ardito of the National Racquetball Club in Chicago. Although 35 percent of racquetball players are 18 to 34 years old, the game is a favorite also with children and senior citizens. "A person can play as hard as the body allows," adds Mr. Ardito. Besides, the initial investment for equipment is not high. At Hermans' stores racquets range from \$10 to \$60 and balls from \$2.59 to \$3.69 for a can of two.

Accessories are assuming an important role also, with eye guards considered a must because eye injuries constitute the greatest hazard of the game. Since racquetball is a fast game that works up an honest sweat ("one hour of racquetball is equivalent to three hours of tennis") many players wear terry head and wrist bands, often in colors coordinated with clothing and the racquet cover. To aid a person's grip, some wear a leather glove or one with a leather palm on the playing hand. The pace setter, of course, carries his or her racquet, balls and clothing to and from the club in a bag designed for the purpose—and not on any account to be confused with a tennis or a squash bag.

Following an impressive third place showing in the 14-team Western Independent Regionals last week at the University of Notre Dame, three UNLV wrestlers will join head coach at the NCAA finals this week at Iowa State University in Ames.

UNLV recently completed its third-ever wrestling season with an exciting 18-5 record and representing UNLV at the NCAA finals will be junior Dave Suarez at 118 pounds, and seniors Tyrone Rose at 134 pounds and Larry Buckner at 142 pounds.

For Rose and Buckner, this will be their second consecutive trip to the finals while this will be the first appearance for Suarez, who transferred to UNLV this year from Cerritos JC. Rose finished second in the regionals last week, Buckner finished third and was selected as an at-large entrant into the finals, and Suarez pinned Notre Dame's George Gedney, and decisive Indiana State's Bob Dickman (6-3), and Cal Poly, SLO (6-1), to win the 118 pound championship.

"We are extremely proud of the accomplishments of these guys, it is a great honor for them and for UNLV to go to the finals, but the season isn't over yet," commented an elated Rebel head wrestling coach Dennis Finfrock.

Finfrock, who has a three-year record at UNLV of 44-16, and the three wrestlers left for Ames, Iowa, on Sunday to begin practice for the finals which will run from Thursday through Saturday in the 14,000-seat campus arena at Iowa State.

With wrestling being such a popular sport in

Iowa, the NCAA finals have been sold out for several months and the highlights of the event will be shown on ABC Wide World of Sports later this month.

Suarez, who has set a UNLV record for most wins in a single season this year with his current 37-5-1 total, he was a prep All-America at Norwalk High School in California while being selected as his team's MVP his sophomore, junior and senior seasons.

While the NCAA championship has been his, and all three wrestler's goal, Suarez is aware of his overall future and he is a pre-dentistry major at UNLV with an above average 3.0 grade point average.

Rose, from Oakland, California, sat out the first part of this season with personal problems and although his timing is a bit off, he still has compiled a fine 23-3-0 record this season. Along with Buckner, he finished seventh in the finals last year at the University of Maryland. His two-year record at UNLV is now 67-10-1.

Buckner, who has been slowed with some minor injuries this season, has a current two-year total of 53-8, which includes a 23-2 mark for his senior season. This year, Buckner was undefeated in 19 dual matches for the Rebel wrestlers.



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