

# Racquetball Today



Lynn Adams

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# Preface

This text is intended to assist players—beginning, intermediate and advanced—who are interested in becoming complete racquetball players. While most people can play racquetball after a few instructional sessions, to be able to play well, a person should become a student of the game, continually learning and improving in all areas.

*Racquetball Today* provides the necessary learning tools for the beginning player. The text then progresses to build strategies and drills for the intermediate and advanced players. The varied aspects of the game—necessary shots, correct footwork, body positioning, winning strategies, mental preparedness and physical conditioning—are all discussed. Skills are explained completely and are reinforced by a series of photographs and illustrations which isolate the various parts of each shot. The chapters contain checklists to help the player retain vital information. Now, all the player has to add is practice.

The correct technique is the most important element in playing consistent racquetball. While there may be different opinions regarding the execution of certain skills, the authors have attempted to present methods developed by the top players in the world. The explanation of methods is fully supported by the illustration program for the text.

Emphasis in *Racquetball Today* has been placed on providing the player with the versatility to become a complete racquetball player. Comprehensive chapters cover all the important aspects of the game which include service returns, backwall play, mental approach, the three-wall game, and drills. Also included are chapters on physical fitness and weight training, providing instruction specific to the sport.

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Now, learn—play—and enjoy the game of racquetball!

## **The Series Editor for West's Physical Activities Series**

The Series Editor for West's Physical Activities Series is Dr. Bob O'Connor, Los Angeles Pierce College. Dr. O'Connor received his B.S. and M.S. degrees in physical education from UCLA and his doctorate from U.S.C. His 30-year teaching experience includes instruction in physical education courses of tennis, weight training, volleyball, badminton, swimming and various team sports, as well as classes in teaching methods. He brings to the Series a wide range of college coaching experience in areas of swimming, tennis, water polo, and football. Internationally, Dr. O'Connor has been an advisor to several Olympic programs in weight training and swimming. He was among the first to popularize strength training for all athletic events. Dr. O'Connor has written extensively in the fields of physical education and health and is a dedicated advocate of PHYSICAL EDUCATION TODAY.

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# Introduction to the Game

Racquetball is an exciting game that gives players an opportunity to have fun from the very first day. It becomes more and more enjoyable as the player's skill increases through the intermediate level into the advanced and tournament levels.

A good racquetball session will provide a person with an effective cardiovascular workout, which is healthy for the body. The competitive nature of the game, the physical demands, and the hitting action also make racquetball a stress reducer, adding extensive mental, social, and emotional benefits as well.

Step on a court and with a few minutes of basic instruction, one can be ready to play. The basic playing rules are simple: players alternate hitting the ball to the front wall before it hits the floor a second time, and only the server can score. Easy enough?

The game can be played indoors (4-wall) or outdoors (usually 3-wall), by people of any age, even the physically handicapped. It is certainly a game for all seasons.

## History

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Racquetball evolved from handball, a 4-wall, indoor court game, and other racquet games such as tennis and badminton. There are some similarities with squash, which is also played in an enclosed court with racquets. However, the national popularity of racquetball has far outdistanced these earlier counterparts.

Court games have been with us for many centuries. They were common in various cultures throughout the world. Racquets were introduced a few centuries ago, when tennis began to make inroads among the French aristocracy.

The game of handball was brought to the United States from Ireland in the nineteenth century, an adaptation of an earlier British game called fives. It evolved into a game called paddleball, which was played with wooden paddles on handball courts. In the 1940s, the paddles gave way to short racquets strung like tennis racquets, called paddle-rackets.

It was not until 1969, in St. Louis, Missouri, that the name of the game was changed to *racquetball* and the International Racquetball Association was formed. At that time Robert Kendler, the founder and former president of the United States Handball Association, became the president of the International Racquetball Association (IRA).

Since racquetball rules required the use of handball courts, a conflict arose over who had priority for their use. The YMCA, private handball clubs, and some schools banned racquetball players from their handball facilities. This necessitated the development of new facilities, usually private, for the rapidly growing number of racquetball players.



In 1973, Kendler resigned his post with IRA and started the National Racquetball Club (NRC). This group sponsored the first professional racquetball tour, as well as the United States Racquetball Association (USRA) for amateur players. In late 1979, professional women players formed the Women's Professional Racquetball Association (WPRA) to promote the progress of women in the sport. The WPRA held the first women-only event in January 1980, in Rockville, New York. The men's and women's tours have been separate entities from that time.

Racquetball has made an impact on society, providing a new avenue for individuals to participate in a rewarding activity and to improve physical conditioning. It also is having an effect upon the marketplace.

## Equipment

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The shape of equipment changed rapidly from the first crude racquets. The material has become lighter, stronger, and more colorful, and the stringing has become tighter to provide added power. The balls have become livelier and the clothes flashier. Racquetball has arrived on the fitness scene and is making a dent in the multi-million dollar sportswear and fitness club industries.

## Summary

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1. Racquetball gives players an opportunity to have fun from the first day.
2. The game went through many changes while evolving into its modern look.
3. The game has financially affected society by shaping health clubs, advancing the technology of game-related equipment, and updating the design of game-related sportswear.

# Table of Contents

	<b>Preface</b>	xi
	<b>Introduction to the Game</b>	xv
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Equipment</b>	1
	Selecting a Racquet 2	
	String Tension 3	
	Protective Eyewear 4	
	Other Equipment 4	
	Shoes 5	
	Balls 5	
	Checklist for Equipment Selection 6	
	Summary 6	
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Let's Play</b>	7
	The Rules 8	
	The Singles Game 8	
	The Service 8	
	<i>Illegal Serves</i> 8	
	Checklist for Illegal Serves 10	
	<i>Legal Serves</i> 10	
	<i>Return of Serve</i> 10	
	Checklist for Legal Serves 11	
	Scoring 11	
	Checklist for Scoring 11	
	Hinders 12	
	Checklist for Hinders 13	
	Safety Tips 13	
	Checklist of Safety Tips 14	
	Doubles Play 14	
	<i>Rule Differences for Doubles</i> 14	
	Checklist for Doubles Rule Differences 15	
	Nonofficial Types of Games 15	
	<i>Cutthroat</i> 15	
	<i>No Bounce</i> 17	
	<i>Two Bounce</i> 17	
	<i>Backhand Only</i> 17	
	<i>Ping-Pong Racquetball</i> 17	
	<i>Both Score Racquetball</i> 17	
	Checklist for Nonofficial Games 18	
	Warming Up Before Play 18	
	Summary 18	

<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>The Forehand</b>	<b>21</b>
	The Forehand Grip 22	
	Checklist for the Forehand Grip 24	
	The Racquet-Ready Position 24	
	The Forehand Backswing 25	
	Checklist for the Forehand Backswing 26	
	The Swing 27	
	Checklist for the Forehand Swing 28	
	Point of Contact 28	
	Follow Through 29	
	Checklist for Forehand Follow Through 30	
	Non-hitting Arm 30	
	Using the Lower Body 31	
	Checklist for Using the Lower Body 32	
	Eye Focus 32	
	Forehand Advice 33	
	Common Forehand Errors 33	
	Checklist for the Forehand 35	
	Summary 36	
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>The Backhand</b>	<b>37</b>
	The Backhand Grip 38	
	Checklist for the Backhand Grip 39	
	Racquet-Ready Position 39	
	The Backhand Backswing 39	
	Checklist for the Backhand Backswing 40	
	The Swing 40	
	Checklist for the Backhand Swing 41	
	The Point of Contact 41	
	Checklist for the Point of Contact 42	
	Follow Through 42	
	Checklist for Backhand Follow Through 42	
	Non-hitting Arm 43	
	Using the Lower Body 44	
	Checklist for Using the Lower Body 44	
	Common Errors in the Backhand 45	
	Checklist for the Backhand 48	
	Summary 48	
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Court Coverage and Doubles Play</b>	<b>49</b>
	The Ready Position 50	
	Checklist for the Ready Position 50	
	Court Coverage 50	
	Checklist for Court Coverage 52	
	Concentration and Anticipation 52	
	Center Court Position 52	
	Checklist for Center Court Position 56	
	Doubles Play 56	
	Styles of Doubles Play 57	
	<i>I</i> formation 57	

<i>Side-By-Side</i>	57
<i>Staggered Side-By-Side</i>	58
Serving in Doubles	59
<i>Right Side Player</i>	59
<i>Left Side Player</i>	59
<i>Playing a "Lefty/Righty" Team</i>	59
Checklist for Rules of Doubles Play	60
Checklist for Doubles Tips	61
Summary	61

**Chapter 6****Defensive Shots****63**

Ceiling Ball	64
<i>Target Point</i>	64
<i>Forehand Ceiling Ball</i>	65
<i>Backhand Ceiling Ball</i>	65
<i>Use of Ceiling Balls</i>	66
Checklist for Ceiling Balls	68
Around-the-Wall Ball	68
<i>Use of the Around-the-Wall Ball</i>	69
Checklist for the Around-the-Wall Ball	69
The "Z" Ball	70
<i>Use of the "Z" Ball</i>	70
Checklist for the "Z" Ball	71
Back Wall to Front Wall Shot	71
Checklist for Back Wall to Front Wall Shot	72
Checklist for Defensive Shots	73
Summary	73

**Chapter 7****Offensive Shots****75**

The Kill Shot	76
<i>Scoring Zone</i>	76
<i>Use of the Kill Shot</i>	77
Checklist for the Kill Shot	77
The Pinch Shot	78
<i>Use of the Pinch Shot</i>	79
Checklist for the Pinch Shot	80
The Pass Shot	80
<i>Down-the-Line Pass</i>	82
<i>Cross-Court Pass</i>	82
<i>"V" Pass</i>	82
<i>Use of the Pass Shot</i>	82
Checklist for the Pass Shot	83
The Overhead Shot	83
<i>Overhead Drive</i>	83
<i>Use of the Overhead Drive</i>	85
<i>Overhead Kill Shot</i>	85
<i>Use of the Overhead Kill Shot</i>	85
Checklist for the Overhead Shot	85
The Jam Shot	86
<i>Use of the Jam Shot</i>	86
Checklist for the Jam Shot	87
Summary	87

<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Backwall Play</b>	<b>89</b>
	Backwall Technique 90	
	<i>Footwork</i> 90	
	<i>The Stroke</i> 91	
	<i>The Key</i> 91	
	Checklist for Backwall Technique 94	
	Distance-judging Techniques 94	
	Checklist for Distance-judging Techniques 95	
	Summary 95	
<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>The Service Game</b>	<b>97</b>
	The Drive Serve 98	
	Checklist for the Drive Serve 99	
	The "Z" Serve 99	
	Checklist for the "Z" Serve 100	
	The Lob Serve 100	
	Checklist for the Lob Serve 102	
	The Jam Serve 102	
	Checklist for the Jam Serve 103	
	The Theory of Deceptive Serving 103	
	Checklist for Deceptive Serving 104	
	Summary 105	
<b>Chapter 10</b>	<b>Service Returns</b>	<b>107</b>
	The Ceiling Ball Return 108	
	The Pass Shot Return 108	
	Return Selection 108	
	Receiving Position 110	
	Ready Position 111	
	Footwork 111	
	The Mental Aspect of Service Return 113	
	Checklist for Service Returns 115	
	Summary 115	
<b>Chapter 11</b>	<b>Developing a Winning Strategy</b>	<b>117</b>
	Analyzing an Opponent 118	
	Checklist for Analyzing an Opponent 119	
	Strategy Against Different Types of Players 119	
	<i>The Rabbit</i> 119	
	Checklist for the Rabbit 119	
	<i>The Giraffe</i> 120	
	Checklist for the Giraffe 120	
	<i>The Slug</i> 120	
	Checklist for the Slug 120	
	<i>The Peacock or Poser</i> 120	
	Checklist for the Peacock or Poser 121	
	<i>The Police Dog</i> 121	
	Checklist for the Police Dog 121	
	<i>The Saint Bernard</i> 121	
	Checklist for the Saint Bernard 122	

Developing an All-Around Game	122
Summary	122

<b>Chapter 12</b>	<b>The Three-Wall Game</b>	<b>123</b>
-------------------	----------------------------	------------

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Rule Differences	124
Checklist for Rule Differences	125
Three-Wall Strokes	126
<i>Sidearm and Overhead Strokes</i>	126
Three-Wall Serves	126
Checklist for Three-Wall Serves	129
Receiving the Serve	129
Checklist for Receiving Serves	130
The Rally	130
Checklist for the Rally	131
Summary	132

<b>Chapter 13</b>	<b>Drills</b>	<b>133</b>
-------------------	---------------	------------

---

Introduction	134
Tape Drill	134
Checklist for Analyzing the Swing	135
Drop and Hit Drill	135
Checklist for the Drop and Hit Drill	136
Footwork Drills	137
<i>Step-Together-Step Drills</i>	137
<i>Star Drill</i>	138
<i>Change Direction Drill</i>	138
Moving Ball Drills	139
<i>Side Wall Drill</i>	139
<i>Front Wall Drill</i>	139
Back Wall Drills	140
<i>Barehand Drill</i>	140
<i>Toss and Hit Drill</i>	141
<i>Simulated Game Drill</i>	141
<i>Ceiling Back Wall Drill</i>	141
Ceiling Ball Drills	141
<i>Solo Drill</i>	141
<i>Partner Drills</i>	142
Service Drills	142
<i>Serving Drills</i>	142
<i>Serve and Return Drill</i>	143
<i>Service Return Drill</i>	143
Summary	143

<b>Chapter 14</b>	<b>The Mental Side of Becoming a Better Player</b>	<b>145</b>
-------------------	--	------------

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Mental Practice	146
Checklist for Mental Imagery	149
Relaxation	150
Checklist for Learning to Relax	150
Concentration	150
Checklist for Concentration	151
Goal Setting	151
Summary	151

<b>Chapter 15</b>	<b>Fitness for Racquetball</b>	<b>153</b>
	Overload Principle 154	
	Aerobic Training 155	
	Checklist for Benefits of an Aerobic Training Effect 156	
	Target Pulse Zone 156	
	Anaerobic Exercise 156	
	Checklist for Comparing Aerobics and Anaerobics 157	
	Anaerobic Training 157	
	Summary 158	
<b>Chapter 16</b>	<b>Strength and Flexibility for Racquetball</b>	<b>159</b>
	The General Strength Program 160	
	The Specific Program for Racquetball 163	
	<i>Upper Shoulders</i> 163	
	<i>Abdominals</i> 166	
	Checklist for Abdominal Exercises 168	
	<i>Lower Back</i> 168	
	<i>Hip Flexors</i> 169	
	<i>Wrist Flexion (Front of Forearms)</i> 170	
	<i>Wrist Flexion (Back of Forearms)</i> 170	
	<i>Hip Abduction</i> 171	
	<i>Hip Adduction</i> 172	
	Flexibility Exercises 173	
	<i>Flexibility Warm Up</i> 174	
	Checklist for Workout Progression 179	
	Summary 179	
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>AARA Complete Official Rules</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>Racquetball Associations</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>Manufacturers of Racquetball Equipment</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>Glossary</b>		<b>213</b>
<b>Index</b>		<b>223</b>

# CHAPTER 1

## Equipment



### Outline

Selecting a Racquet  
String Tension  
Protective Eyewear  
Other Equipment

Shoes  
Balls  
Checklist for Equipment Selection  
Summary



The good news is that the cost of racquetball gear is relatively low when compared to other recreational sports gear. All one really needs to play is a racquet, a ball, protective eyewear, shorts, a T-shirt, socks and a pair of tennis or other court shoes. No special uniform or dress is required. All the equipment needed can fit into a small athletic bag.

After playing the game for a while, many people are bitten by the "racquetball bug" and want to purchase equipment specifically designed for each individual's type of game or personality.

## Selecting a Racquet

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The first concern of the player is obtaining a racquet. Racquets can range in price from \$10 to \$250, but it is not necessary to purchase an expensive model when beginning to learn the game. Wait until you develop a definite style of play before deciding what type racquet will best suit your game.

Manufacturers have matched the increased popularity of racquetball (and the fitness craze in general) with space-age technology. The trend in racquets has moved away from the early wood-frame racquets (now obsolete and banned on many courts), to lighter-weight aluminum, fiberglass, and graphite and boron composites.

Generally speaking, aluminum and fiberglass racquets are more flexible and emphasize control, while composite racquets, which are lighter than aluminum and fiberglass, are stiffer and more power-oriented.

Racquets may not be over 21 inches in length and must have a thong which attaches to the player's wrist. This thong, when slipped over the wrist, prevents the racquet from accidentally slipping and injuring another player. If someone tries to play without wearing the thong, it is the prerogative of the other player *not* to play.

Realizing individual preferences, racquets are made in different sizes, degrees of flexibility, head shapes and sizes, string patterns, colors and grip sizes. When selecting a racquet, one of the most important factors is grip size.

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Proper grip for  
racquet selection

