

# S P O R T S

## Canada's tennis hopefuls need better system to develop

By DEBORAH KIRKWOOD

For the past seven years, the Player's Challenge has supplied the average Canadian tennis enthusiast with some of the best talent this sport has to offer.

It has also become the ultimate goal, due to its international stature and high media profile, for every Canadian youngster currently swinging a racquet, as they can now dream about making their debut on their own centre court.

But, more importantly, the one-week tourney also acts as a giant magnifying glass, bringing to light and exposing the sobering reality of tennis development in this country.

To date, with the exception of Carling Bassett, who received most, if not all, of her important tutelage in the United States, Canada has failed to develop players of top international note. And, unfortunately, the current crop of hopefuls who made their Canadian debut here this week doesn't, in all reality, bode well for the future.

Wait, you might say, this assessment seems rather harsh. For on the surface things don't appear to be all that bad. Granted, the Canadians who represented us this year held their own and their sheer number (four, excluding Bassett), indicates that the overall depth is improving. Also to their credit, no one was an embarrassment as each player lost closely fought battles, but one need only examine a few simple facts to see the real picture.

First, with the exception of Jill Hetherington, who played 18th ranked Bettina Bunge, the Canadians faced, and were defeated, by players who lack substantial international stature.

A second factor to take into consideration is that, with the exception of Helen Kelesi of Edmonton, not one of the current crop of "young" hopefuls is under the age of 20.

Third, since this was our national tourney, a number of wildcard entries are given to the host nation. If these positions were not granted, the only Canadian to gain direct entry based on her international standing would have been Carling Bassett.

And finally, of the Canadians who represented us this year, only Jill Hetherington could really be trumpeted as a product of the Canadian developmental programs, as she received most of her training under current Tennis Canada executive director Don Steele.

Ironically, our newest and brightest "hope-



**CANADIAN, EH?** Carling Bassett (left) is Canada's only top calibre competitor and it may be a while until our country produces players in the league of Chris Evert-Lloyd (right), this year's Player's Challenge champion.

fuls," National Champion Jane Young and Helen Kelesi are virtually self-made athletes, receiving their coaching from outside the Tennis Canada fold.

The same situation exists on the men's side. In fact, one could argue that the situation is worse.

Given the present state of affairs, Tennis Canada has taken a major step forward in trying to rectify the problem. With the completion of the National Tennis Centre at York, Canada now has a year-round home for a concentrated effort in junior development, coaching, and administration.

Tennis Canada now has all the physical pieces in place, but a re-evaluation of the developmental aspects of their program must be undertaken. Trying to produce top international players is a long-range goal. To achieve this goal Tennis Canada should adopt a five-year plan, starting this year. In Phase I, Tennis Canada should shift its emphasis from those athletes currently on tour, and those athletes currently over the age of 18. Instead, they

should concentrate their coaching talent, money, and limited facilities on those juniors who show promise and who are currently competing in the under-14 and under-12 age categories. By focusing on the younger players for five years you will eventually have 17- to 19-year olds who have had a combination of intense coaching and top international experience. Athletes who should, if progressing properly, advance to scales never reached by any "home grown" juniors to date.

Phase II would see Tennis Canada implement some kind of general physical requirement tests, an example of which might be making sure that all male tennis players in elite developmental programs will reach a minimum height of 5'10", eliminating all those, except for rare exceptions, who don't possess the one of a number of physical tool necessary to play the game.

And finally, there is no point in trying to develop international players without a strong grassroots system of programs at the community club and recreation level. Conversely, there

is no point in having a grassroots program if talented athletes from the "wrong side of the tracks" will never get the chance to compete due to financial constraints. Therefore, Phase III would see a re-evaluation of the scouting process. Tennis Canada one day will have to realize that money can only buy a ranking so high. It might be cheaper and more successful in the long run to find and support an "athlete" rather than coaching only those bodies whose parents sport thick wallets. As Arthur Ashe and Jimmy Connors have recently stated, tennis in their country is doomed unless they can draw more athletes to their sport. Otherwise they will continue to lose international stature to those nations who do.

A tennis program of this sort is not a novel or utopic ideal. Tennis federations like those in Sweden and Czechoslovakia have implemented similar programs a few years back with great success. As well, most Olympic sports in this country run along similar lines.

There is no reason why Canada should not be able to do the same.

### Sports Briefs

by LORNE MANLY

#### FOOTBALL

•The York Yeomen Football team begins its training camp Monday, August 26. Returnees from last year's much improved squad include All Canadian nose guard Dirk Leers, five year veteran quarterback Tino Iacono, and running back sensation Terry Douglas.

Dennis Laverty is the newest addition to the Yeomen coaching staff. Laverty, a former Waterloo Warrior and presently Executive Director of the Ontario Amateur Football Association, will coach the offensive backs.

#### BASKETBALL

•At the recent Maccabiah Games (Jewish Olympics) held in Tel-Aviv, York coach Bob Bain led the Canadian basketball team to a bronze medal. The Canadians defeated Brazil 74-55 to clinch the final medal position while the U.S. and Israel took the gold and silver medals respectively.

#### HOCKEY

•Canada's under-18 hockey team, led by Yeomen hockey coach Dave Chambers, beat their U.S. counterparts in two matches held recently in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The Canadians beat the U.S. under-18 squad 7-2 and 10-5.



WE CAN HELP YOU PREPARE FOR: **OUR 47th YEAR**

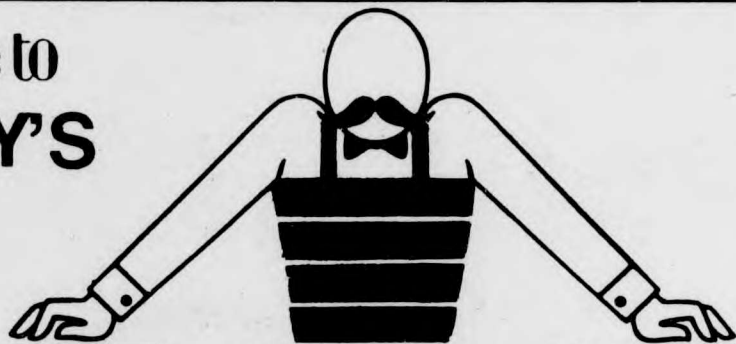
MCAT  
LSAT · GMAT  
GRE · GRE PSYCH  
GRE BIO · SAT  
DAT · VAT · OCAT  
MAT · PCAT  
NAT'L MED BDS  
NDB · NPB · NLE  
ECFMG · FLEX  
TOEFL  
VQE



The test preparation specialist since 1938  
COME VISIT OUR CENTRE  
Call Days, Eves. & Weekends  
**967-4733**  
720 Spadina Ave. Suite 410  
Toronto, Ont. M5S 2T9  
Other Centers in More Than  
100 Major U.S. Cities & Abroad

Welcome to **D'ARCY'S**

Supplied by Willett Foods Limited.



**MR. GROCER**  
University City Plaza 45 Four Winds Dr.

SAVE SAVE SAVE

**5% OFF**  
YOUR GROCERY SHOPPING  
(No Limit)

**5% COUPON**  
OFF

CASHIER WILL DEDUCT 5% FROM YOUR TOTAL FOOD BILL WHEN PRESENTED WITH THIS COUPON

**MR. GROCER**  
University City Plaza 45 Four Winds Dr.

Good till September 18, 1985

Tobacco Not Included