



Squash News

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PERSPEX

WORLD MASTERS

SQUASH - a new PERSPEXITIVE

MONDAY 1 November 1982 will be recorded as a landmark in the history of squash. It signalled a milestone in the development of spectator squash which began at the end of the second world war with the Bruce Court at the Lansdowne Club, travelled via the glass back wall assembled at Abbeydale Squash Club in 1971, and beyond the building of a demountable glass back wall court in theatrical environments.

At 6.36 p.m., Hiddy Jahan struck the first competitive ball on a completely transparent ball on which afforded viewing from all four sides. The Championship was the World Masters; the venue the refurbished Granby Halls in Leicester. For the event to take place in such a manner obviously required the marriage of a number of elements in the preceding months. In an amazingly short period of time the court was developed by Campbell, Reith and Partners in conjunction with ICI 'Perspex'. It was ICI who provided the acrylic sheet which was used in the court and then extended their initiative in promoting Perspex by agreeing to sponsor the World Masters to be played on the Safe-Screen (perspex) court.

The World Masters is an established format which features the best players of each of the top squash playing nations. However, whilst a star-studded field was assembled, led by Jahangir Khan, the playing was overshadowed by the staging. The visual impact of the court enclosed by the seating, undeniably gave a little of the atmosphere of a bear pit. Inevitably, the press christened the court a 'fishbowl' and this will probably remain a working description of it. However, it certainly generated more spectator appeal than the average aquarium!

From the time the first ball was struck, the crowd atmosphere was similar, and at times even better, than tends to be found in a club gallery. Attendances were good throughout, despite the enforced late announcement of sponsorship

and the proximity in both time and location of the World Open. The most encouraging aspect was that spectators coming in the early part of the week were spontaneously buying tickets for later rounds. The need for squash to be a genuine entertainment when staged in this manner rather than a novelty is essential to the development of spectator squash, and indications were that this genuinely was the case.

The court, developed by Campbell Reith and Partners and constructed from ICI's acrylic sheet 'Perspex', had an integral pattern of dots imposed upon the walls. This gave the desired 'net curtain' effect which meant that while the players were playing against comparatively opaque walls, spectators were able to view into the court with absolute clarity. The quality of viewing was enhanced by having the court brightly lit internally with minimum outside lighting. Viewing through the front wall was a revelation, although there was a large number of advocates for the side wall position. (Cont. on p. 4)

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