

FROM THE GALLERY



Ian McKenzie provides a personal view of events on and off court

FLAGGED UP

Amanda Sobhy was showing me her new sponsored Harrow signature racket in Qatar. I had seen it in operation and it had no inhibitions at going for the nick off serve or playing an unplayable



boast. I thought it may suit my game!

Nice to have your own racket and to help with the design of it. She told me it took her ages to decide on the colours. Finally she settled on blue and yellow "because I like them", she explained, and the racket went into production.

Then she added: "I didn't know they were the official colours of the Ukraine."

Ah well Amanda, those colours on the Ukrainian flag represent the golden fields of grain under a clear blue sky, appropriate for a country known as the 'bread basket' of Europe. A bit like the prairies. The stuff you learn reading *Squash Player!*

EXCLUSIVE SHOES

Having sorted out my new racket, I was looking for new pair of shoes – some that would get me to the front of the court quickly.

I asked for advice from my old mate, Nicol David, as we reminisced about the time I needed resuscitation after she (aged around 16) trounced me in Penang.

She showed me her new shoes, the Asics Nicol David Squash Gel Blade. Nice to have a shoe named after you!

"They'll do for me," I said. Slight problem – they were exclusive.

"Ok, not to worry – I'm sure they're worth the price," I replied.

"No, Ian," said David. "They're customised just for me."

"Ah, you mean I can't buy them?" "Yes."

Where there's a will there's a way, though. David has promised me an old pair, so there may be two players using them – exclusively!

NEW BALLS PLEASE

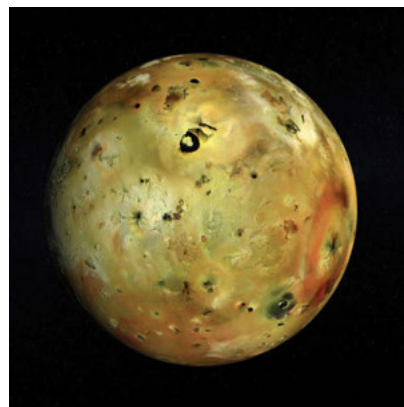
Racket and shoes sorted, now for the ball.

I was quietly minding my own business watching a medium-brow TV programme hosted by Professor Brian Cox called *Star Gazing Live* when he revealed that Io, one of Jupiter's moons, is hotter than anywhere else in our solar system bar the sun. How does the professor explain the physics of this celestial wonder? It is like a squash ball! I sat up, wow – a little main-stream media recognition for our sport.

Evidently the phenomenal gravitational forces that distort this moon, which is even older than Nick Matthew, is like stretching a squash ball. It gets hot!

I digress, but isn't that one of the unique things about our sport? Having to warm the ball up.

I know this is turning into an equipment column, but that's another problem solved and it may suit my game.



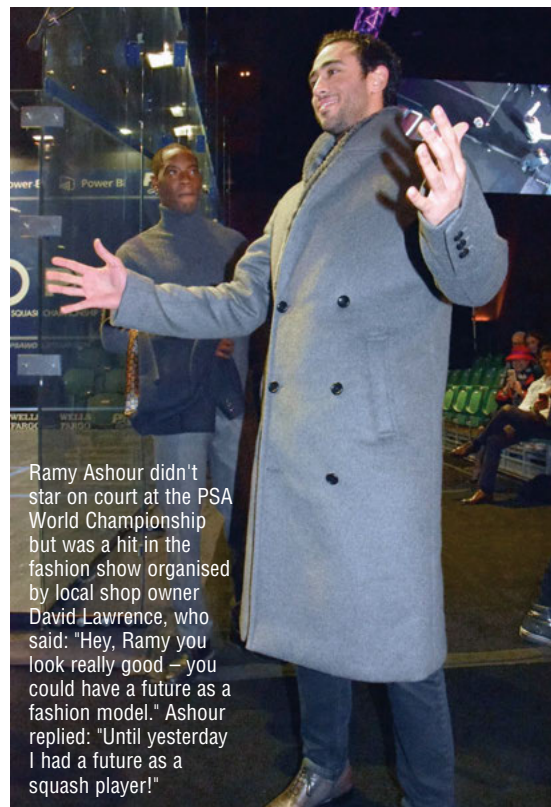
Look out for my new, self-warming ball on the market – the Io!

PRESIDENTIAL RACKET

Chinese President Xi Jinping recently visited the UK to search for new materials for his country's squash racket industry.

British officials raced him off to the University of Manchester, where two British scientists discovered graphene – a single atom thick and 200 times stronger than steel.

The President agrees with me that this will be suitable for squash rackets. Watch this space. We have a joint marketing venture for a new racket - the Xi!



Ramy Ashour didn't star on court at the PSA World Championship but was a hit in the fashion show organised by local shop owner David Lawrence, who said: "Hey, Ramy you look really good – you could have a future as a fashion model." Ashour replied: "Until yesterday I had a future as a squash player!"

SPLIT IDENTITY



My buddies at ESR were feeling like a change, so England Squash & Racketball became England Squash.

Mmmm... I wonder if they considered going full circle to become the SRA (Squash & Racketball Association)? Maybe not.

Anyway, what is needed with a new name? A new logo of course. The racket and ball logo adopted by England Squash seems quite appropriate. As we say in *Squash Player* marketing speak for racket and ball, it's the Xilo logo!

GAME-CHANGER

Ticket sales at the PSA Men's World Championship appeared to be robust, even though prices were sky high, my US mate, Jay Prince, tells me.

Back-wall tickets went for \$500-600 each for the quarters, semis and finals, while a three-day ticket for the 'finals' hit \$1,200, but buyers showed up in solid numbers, with nearly 400 boisterous fans in attendance each of the three days.

The ticket sales figures would dwarf the entire ticket budget of the U.S. Open played just three weeks earlier.

Could this be a game-changer with respect to ticket prices charged by other championships? Or perhaps it's a policy for World Championships – exclusively!