

## LESSON LEARNED – GOOD SLEEP EARNED

By the end of the weekend, my first experience playing in an adult amateur squash tournament was a mixed bag. It was Sunday evening, and I was lying on the kitchen floor of my apartment, the long phone cord uncoiled all the way so I could make a couple of calls that I needed to catch up on. I was too tired to do anything but lie down. I made the phone calls supine.

That weekend, I had, in less than 48 hours, played six matches of D level hardball squash. If “hardball” doesn’t date me as an old fogie, the fact that there were two full 32 person draws of D players is telling: In the late 1980’s, local amateur tournaments up and down the east coast from Boston to Washington all attracted full draws throughout the flights, on both the men’s and women’s sides. And in this case, the tournament had two full draws at the very lowest rung of the squash pecking order which I inhabited.

But even if I progressed all the way to the finals in a 32 person draw, that was only 5 matches, so how come I packed in one more than that? Well, after I had lost my first match, the powers that be combined both losing sides of the D draws to assemble another 32 person draw for the consolations. And I made it to the finals of that consolation draw. I was totally exhausted. While I was single with no kids in those days, and was playing a lot of league and club squash matches, I was a full bore rookie when it came to competing in and playing multiple matches in a weekend. I did not know what to expect, I did not know the rules, I did not know how to prepare. Really, I didn’t know much at all about anything.

Somehow, in spite of it all, I survived my six matches. But I couldn’t rise off of my kitchen floor, and had to call over my roommate to take the phone from my hand to replace it in the cradle when I finished the calls. I was totally spent.

At that moment, I told myself that I would never, ever lose a match due to lack of preparation or lack of fitness. When I played club matches after that, I would throw in an extra game with a fresh player to make sure I could last five games. I made sure I got plenty of sleep the night before. In between matches, I would nap in a quiet spot off to the side at the squash club as much as possible. I tried to control the variables I could control so when the tournament ran late, or I encountered an unpleasant opponent, or the courts were crazy hot, it would not bother me so much.

The funny thing is, I was never called on to play six matches in a weekend ever again, so I’m not really sure that the preparation I committed to was anything but overkill. My time probably would have been better spent learning how to hit the ball a bit better, or

maybe even going out for a beer. Oh well, the lesson of preparation has served me reasonably well throughout my professional life , and just remembering how sore I was and how tired while I lay on the floor 35 some years ago is a reminder of my life long past. It was all I could do to crawl into bed for the best night of sleep in my life.