



## ATHLETICS

## The International Flavor of Squash

With 11 players from seven different countries, Rochester's squash team boasts student-athletes from around the world.

By Ben Shapiro '16

The racquet sport of squash—played by two or four players in a four-walled court with a small, hollow rubber ball—was invented in 1830 at a British prep school. From there, squash expanded throughout the British Empire and to the rest of the world.

Today, the sport's world rankings feature players from Egypt to Germany, Colombia to Malaysia. Rochester's current squash team also reflects the sport's global status. Here's a look at a few of their stories:

### United by a Common Sport

An upstate New York university may seem like an unusual choice for a native of Great Britain, but world travels are nothing new to Neil Cordell '15.

At 13, Cordell left England for his first international event, an under-15 tournament in Belgium. Over the next several years, he traveled throughout Europe and to places as far as California, Israel, and Qatar.

Such travel proved necessary. As one of England's best players, there were few area competitors to challenge Cordell.

He eventually transitioned from international junior tournaments to professional events. After experiencing life on the road as a squash player, the idea of continuing his career at an American university appealed to Cordell. He contacted fellow squash players who had attended Rochester. They put him in touch with head coach Martin Heath.

Heath was so enthusiastic about Cordell coming to Rochester that Cordell says he didn't look at other universities. Now in his third year as a Yellowjacket, Cordell continues his success on the court. He earned All-American honors as a freshman and sophomore, and ranked seventh nationally last year after notching 14 wins during the season.

### Opening Doors at Home and Abroad

Formerly the top-ranked junior player in his native Mexico, Mario Yanez-Tapia '16 credits squash with enabling him to see the world and meet new people. At a tournament in Canada, he met Heath.

Yanez-Tapia had not considered attending college in the U.S. He reconsidered



**WORLD COURT:** All-Americans Ryosei Kobayashi '16 (top), Mario Yanez-Tapia '16 (above), and Neil Cordell '15 have helped lead a squash team whose roster includes Yellowjackets from seven countries.

after learning about the academic and athletic opportunities. While top squash teams—including traditional powerhouses like Harvard and Trinity—actively recruited him, Rochester was the best fit.

Now Yanez-Tapia is part of the Yellowjacket team, an adjustment for him since squash is largely an individual sport. Overall, it's been a positive change. "I think it's better to train as a team," he says, noting that practicing with a tight-knit group creates extra motivation to work hard.

That practice is paying off. Yanez-Tapia is an All-American and Rochester's current top player. He amassed a record of 28–4 and earned a top 10 national ranking in his first year and a half as a Yellowjacket.

### All in the Family

More than a decade ago, the racquetball-playing father of Ryosei Kobayashi '16 wanted to familiarize his then seven-year-old son with racquet sports. Instead of racquetball, the two played a game of squash.

That was the first step in a successful athletic career for the sophomore All-American who is currently ranked 11th nationally by the College Squash Association.

Rather than seeing squash as a niche sport, "my dad thought squash had more opportunities to go higher," says Kobayashi.

Since racquetball is not a collegiate varsity sport—and high-level competitions are few and far between—Kobayashi knew he would have to work hard, something he was more than willing to do. After school, he traveled an hour by train to a squash club, where he practiced for five hours a day.

Kobayashi supplemented his training with competitions throughout Asia, in places such as Hong Kong and Malaysia. One of his most important trips came at age 17. He traveled to the U.S. for the first time to participate in a tournament at Harvard.

It was there that college squash in the States became an option. Coaches from the top squash programs in the country, including Heath, spoke with Kobayashi.

Several schools vied for the top-ranked Japanese junior, but Rochester proved the right fit. "I was interested in business, and at the same time I wanted to play squash seriously. Rochester was the best option for me."

In many ways, Kobayashi's rationale for choosing Rochester echoes his father's thinking about squash all those years ago: "I thought coming here would give me an advantage for the future." **R**

*Ben Shapiro '16 is an athletic communications assistant for the Department of Athletics and Recreation.*



**PACESETTER:** With a time of 1:14.92, Becky Galasso '15 (T5) had recorded the fastest 500-meter run in Division III as of mid-February.

### HIGHLIGHTS

## A Winter Roundup...

The **women's swimming and diving** team produced six NCAA provisional qualifying times and three school records at the UAA championships at Emory. Rochester finished sixth out of eight teams.

**Men's swimming and diving** rewrote some records as well. The Yellowjackets had six NCAA provisional qualifying results and broke five school records at UAAs. UR finished seventh out of eight teams.

**Women's basketball** produced one of its biggest wins of the season, a 76–75 decision over Washington University in the Palestra. The Bears were ranked No. 7 nationally entering the game and were tied for first place in the UAA. The win assured Rochester of a winning season (13–9 with three games left). Two freshmen combined for 42 points and 26 rebounds to lead the way.

Over a three-week stretch in mid-winter, the **men's basketball** team won five of six games to climb within one game of first place in the UAA standings. With two weeks left in the season, Rochester was the only UAA men's team to sweep both games in a UAA road trip.

In the Boston area, the **men's indoor track & field** team's distance medley relay broke a 36-year-old record running at the Boston University Valentine Invitational.

The **women's track and field** team broke four school records. Between them, the men and women had more than eight ECAC qualifying performances. Becky Galasso '15 (T5) finished 12th among collegians in the 500-meter run at Boston. Her time was the fastest in all of Division III when the meet ended.

**Squash** finished 12–5 and fifth overall at the College Squash Association championships. The Yellowjackets lost an opening match to Harvard, 5–4, but bounced back to defeat Franklin & Marshall and Yale, both of whom defeated Rochester in the regular season. The Yellowjackets defeated two top-ranked teams during the season—Harvard and Trinity—both by scores of 5–4.

### ... and a Spring Preview

The spring holds promise for a number of athletic teams. **Softball** is ranked No. 10 in a preseason poll by the National Fast-pitch Coaches Association . . . The **baseball** team is touted by D3baseball.com as a strong contender for the Liberty League title and an NCAA bid . . . **Lacrosse** has a strong cast of veterans returning from a team that was ranked highly in Division III in turnovers caused and fewest goals allowed per game . . . The **golf** team has a chance to secure its second straight NCAA bid when the Yellowjackets host the Liberty League championships at Locust Hill Country Club . . . **Rowing** will compete in the Liberty League championships as part of an ambitious spring schedule . . . **Men's and women's tennis** will each play four UAA opponents before competing in the UAA championships in Florida in late April . . . The **men's and women's outdoor track and field** teams will look to carry over success from the winter season, hosting the Alumni Invitational on April 4 and the New York State Collegiate Track Conference's multi-event championship, April 26–27. **R** —DENNIS O'DONNELL