

# FROM THE GALLERY



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

## UNLIKELY PAIRING

There I was on the 26th floor of the Movenpick Hotel in a beautiful swimming pool overlooking the Doha skyline, practising my floating, and in walks Mrs Elshorbagy.

We had a little chat and she told me Jonah Barrington (Mohamed's mentor at Millfield School) had gone to see Mohamed play a PSL match in Exeter and advised him that it was time he started winning tournaments. On cue he wins the Qatar Classic and Sky International.

A formidable and unlikely pairing, Mrs Elshorbagy and Jonah! Any advice for me Jonah?

## WHAT'S THE SCORE?

The rulemakers have done their four-yearly job and updated the rules. It involved a major rewrite, some simplification and corrected one of the anomalies from the 2009 fracas, when the WSF management committee wanted to abolish all but PARS to 11.

However, PARS to 15 stayed eventually, as I suggested, but only with setting of to one or three, whereas PARS to 11 used 'win by two'. Now these two versions have been brought into line with 'win by two' as the uniform principle.

Traditional (or hiho) scoring maintains the principle of set one (although I suggest this interesting little anachronism could also be dropped) and set two.

In the old days rule changes were bought in on May Day (May 1), but now with the AGM taking place in November, the key date is January 1.

If you play PARS to 15 and use setting, you need to change 'officially' in the New Year. If you have changed already, you have been playing with an unofficial scoring system – and the results can't count, obviously!

## DROPPED IN IT

In the rules rewrite two very minor regulations have been given their own sections and numbers – namely

'Distraction' and 'Dropped Object' – but why do we need separate rules for these, I argued on the beach in Qatar. "I've never seen a dropped object decision in all my career. It's ridiculous," I said.

The very next day I was made to eat my words when Borja Golan went on court in the semi-finals against Nick Matthew looking, well, like a Commando, which suited his game. He was wearing long compression tights, ankle braces, bicycle shorts, wristband, headband and fluorescent kinesiology tape over his body.

A bit of Golan's tape came off, Matthew stopped, Golan looked at it in amazement, paused, eventually picked it up and offered it to Matthew, who was having none of it. The referee docked Golan a point and on they went.

It's the new Rule 13 by the way. Bad luck rule I suppose!

## VOICE OF SQUASH

I think it's a brilliant idea to have a competition to be the 'Voice of Squash', although I'm not too sure what the ordinary player's response will be.

The idea is to submit an audio clip to the PSA, with the winner joining Joey Barrington in the SquashTV commentators' booth. However, I wonder what Barrington thinks of the idea, now that he has been overlooked for the Commonwealth Games job – vulnerable I suspect.

I've been told there has been a bit of a rush to enter, with Rob Edwards, Alan Thatcher, Martin Bronstein and Sue Rose already laying down their audio markers.

I'd enter, but my dyslexia is playing up and I'm a bit horse this month.

## SQUASH 101

The glass court in Manchester looked immaculate – less 'busy' than usual, with the lighting perched unobtrusively on the side walls. The next 'new thing' I am told (as it's all gone a bit quiet on the glass-floor front) is a door in the side wall, which will clear the back wall even further.

I am a bit dubious, though, and would prefer a trapdoor, with the lever controlled by the referee. With any particularly irritating behaviour by players, the referee would pull the lever and the player would disappear – in the fashion of the TV programme 'Room 101'.

We would need a referee's call of course and I propose '101'. So we could have the following conversation – Player: "Let please." Referee: "101." Bosh!

## PERFECT PREDICTION

Back in 1996 Qatar Classic tournament director Alaaeldeen Allouba, a reasonable player himself, suggested I have a chat with a young player he thought would be a future world champion.

That teenager was Amr Shabana, who wasn't an obvious pick for a future world champion then and didn't win a world junior or British Junior Open title.

The 17-year-old was pleasant, engaging and didn't lack for confidence. He told me he could play in any style and ran off a list of top players, like Qamar Zaman and Tristan Nancarrow that he could emulate but whom he had never seen play. "I watch the videos and copy their style," he said.

That didn't serve him badly. Four world titles later, Shabana is recognised as one of the greats. Squash Player photographer Steve Line captured the teenage Shabana at the time of the prediction and again this year aged 34.

Alaaeldeen, you can certainly pick 'em!



Above: Amr Shabana with Alaaeldeen Allouba at the time of his prediction in 1996



Above: Amr Shabana with Alaaeldeen Allouba at the 2013 Qatar Classic

