



FROM THE EDITOR

Ian McKenzie

POINTS OF VIEW

THE WORLD'S NO.1 RACKET SPORTS PLAYER

Does squash have in Ramy Ashour the world's greatest male racket sports player? Quite probably.

It may seem a little imprudent to make such a boast when the profile of the sport is considerably lower than that of tennis and when it is not yet an Olympic sport - unlike tennis, badminton and table tennis. However, Ashour is unbeaten in major competition for over a year and in squash there is fantastic competition out there.

Let's just look at the former world no.1s battling it out for the top ranking: Greg Gaultier (now ranked 2), James Willstrop (3), Nick Matthew (4), Karim Darwish (5) and Amr Shabana (8). It is no easy ride and Ashour is well aware of that.

Ashour is acknowledged as a genius with the racket. It is nice to have talent and he has it in abundance, but it is not something he can just turn on without practice and application.

Ashour also has the X factor. His game is unashamedly attacking and completely different to his rivals'. He is quick to the ball, quick at reading the play and at intercepting, while his fast hands play brilliant shots, all with deception. So, unbeaten, a genius, deceptive and getting better – not bad arguments to start with for our racket sports no.1.

How do the leading players in the other racket sports match up? Tennis has its greats, with Novak Djokovic ahead of

Andy Murray, David Ferrer, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer at present, but he is not unbeaten. Nor is badminton's Lee Chong Wei from Malaysia, nor China's Ma Long in table tennis.

Squash has got a lot going for it, including arguably the best racket sports player on the planet. Roll on the Olympics.

NOUR EL SHERBINI'S RECORD

Nour El Sherbini's third world junior title has set a record. The championship, first played for in 1981 and won by England's Lisa Opie, was only held every two years until 2009, when El Sherbini claimed her first title. Previously, just two players had won the championship more than once – Nicol David and Raneem El Weleily, who had collected two each. El Sherbini is still just 17 and will be eligible to play again in 2014, so could break her own record.

ENGLAND'S TITLE, EGYPT'S TIDE

Egypt were able to lay claim to a unique record until June, when they held all the world team titles – an honour no other country had previously achieved. That all changed, though, when England were crowned men's champions in Mulhouse. Good on them! However, was it a last brave hurrah before all the team trophies are swept up again by the Egyptian flood tide?

In January, following the British Junior Open, I wrote on the dominance of Egyptian junior players there. Is this an indication of future senior success? In squash there is massive evidence to show that the best juniors go on to be the best seniors. There is very little evidence of late developers and none for champions who were not top juniors.

All eyes then are on Egypt. In Poland they completed a world junior treble – the men's and women's individual titles, and the women's team championship – and the individual finals were all-Egyptian affairs. These are the world's future senior champions.



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