

Consumer guide *Now*

Tennis, anyone? Yes, everyone!

IT USED TO BE, in virtually every movie from a John Garfield psychological drama to a Katie Hepburn bedroom comedy, that a scrubbed-faced Dartmouth-type would bounce into the room at some point, a sweater loosely knotted about his neck, and ask: "Tennis, anyone?"

That scene isn't all that funny anymore. Because now it's: "Tennis! Everyone!"

The fastest growing participant sport in America, which likewise has sparked wide spectator interest with World Team Tennis League play, has brought about the rise of something else uniquely American: The private racquet club.

The emergence of the spiffy, fashionable, immaculate, just-short-of-palatial, membership-only tennis clubs is a recent phenomenon, but Denver is keeping up with the swing of things and now boasts no fewer than seven such clubs — with more on the drawing boards.

That emergence is laid, in part and interestingly so, at the feet of the area's school systems.

IT'S NO LONGER CONSIDERED necessary that a boy play football or baseball to develop the tough characteristics attributed to manhood.

Tennis, and one can remember how THAT was viewed in light of those old movie scenes, and golf are now perfectly acceptable sports for youngsters, thank you.

"A lot of public programs — in the schools, in the Parks and Recreation Department summer projects — have created a real interest in children for tennis," says the Centre Court Racquet Club's Rob Johnson.

"The children, in turn, have interested the adults in what they are learning," he adds. "The sport just doesn't have the snobbish, elite image it once had."

It isn't the first known case in history in which parents have been taught something by their kids.

But the kids, and now the parents, demand something more than the available (meaning free) courts provided by the various municipalities in the Denver metro area.

Despite the fact there are more than 600 lighted and unlighted outdoor courts for play at 183 different sites in the metro counties of Denver, Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Jefferson, Douglas and Gilpin, it ill behooves many tennis buffs to arise at 5:30 a.m. on a slumbering Saturday or Sunday to enable them to be on a court, in which grass may be growing from cracks, by 6 a.m.



Typical of the new indoor and outdoor tennis complexes, complete with pool, is the most

For that reason, clubs like Centre Court and HeatherRidge, Colorado Racket Club, Tennis World and Meadow Creek have sprung up, motivated principally by the burgeoning tennis populations in the outlying areas they serve.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER motivation, too. It is more commonly known as the profit motive.

Because the clubs, offering nearly every creature comfort, were not founded as non-profit organizations. They charge for services.

Many of the private racquet clubs have been constructed in conjunction with housing — apartment, condominium and townhouse — projects.

Unlike country clubs, membership to racquet clubs is not restricted, in these instances, to those who live in the complementary housing, but is open to all. Depending upon the club, prices can range from \$300 or less to \$1,500.

The charge is partly predicated on the investment in the clubs by the builders. The private racquet clubs range in initial investment in Denver from about \$350,000 to upwards of \$2 million.

Perhaps typical of the pay-to-play clubs is the new HeatherRidge Racquet Club in far southeast Denver, at Interstate 225 and Iliff Avenue.

It is typical in several respects. First, it has five indoor and 10 outdoor courts, which is more or less an average; it is open from 7 a.m. until 11 p.m. (some maintain hours until midnight); it has a top-rate pro, in this case Dr. Irwin Hoffman; it is open year-round; it has a huge swimming pool which club members may use; but most typical of all, the place is booked solid.