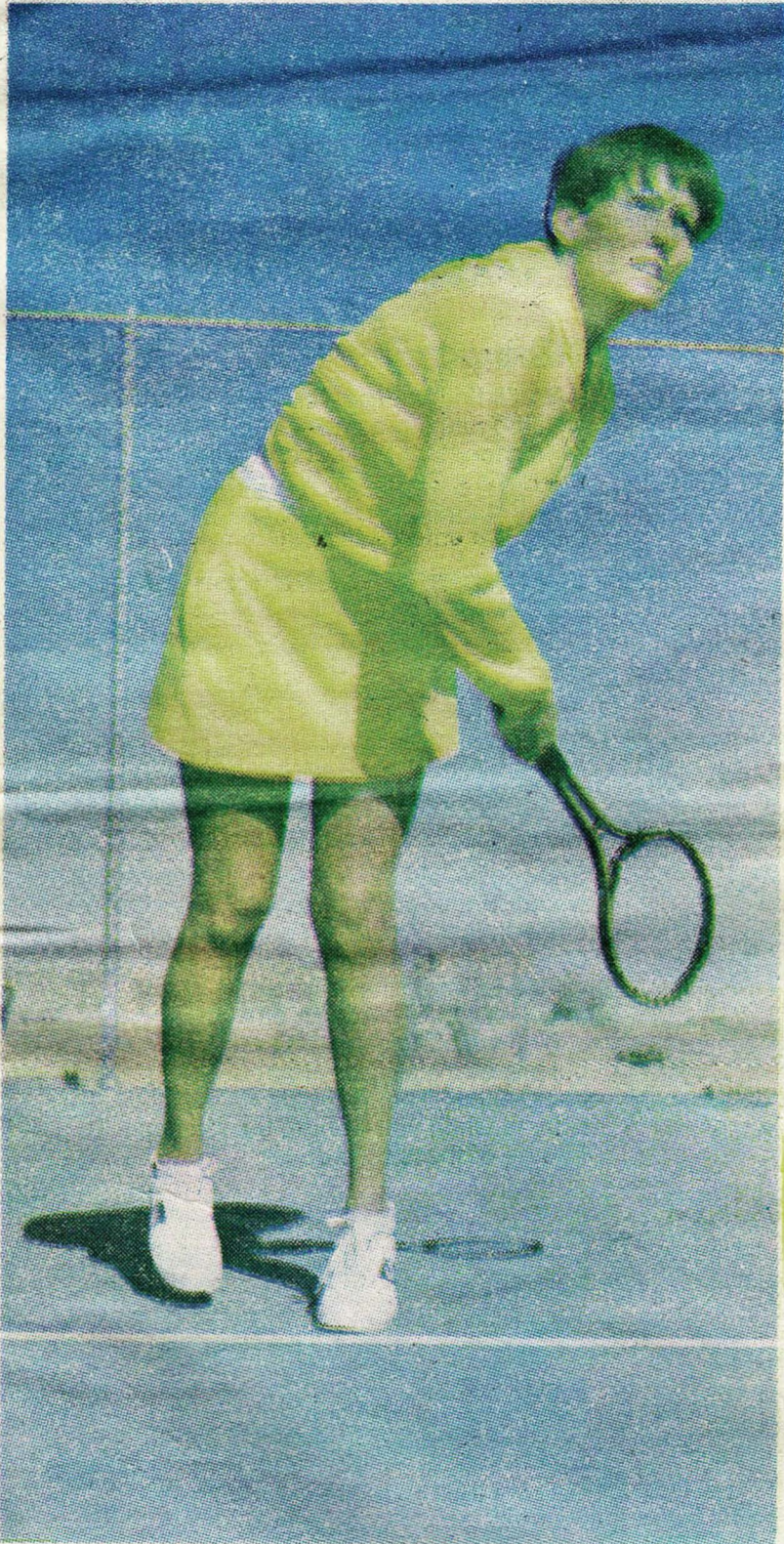


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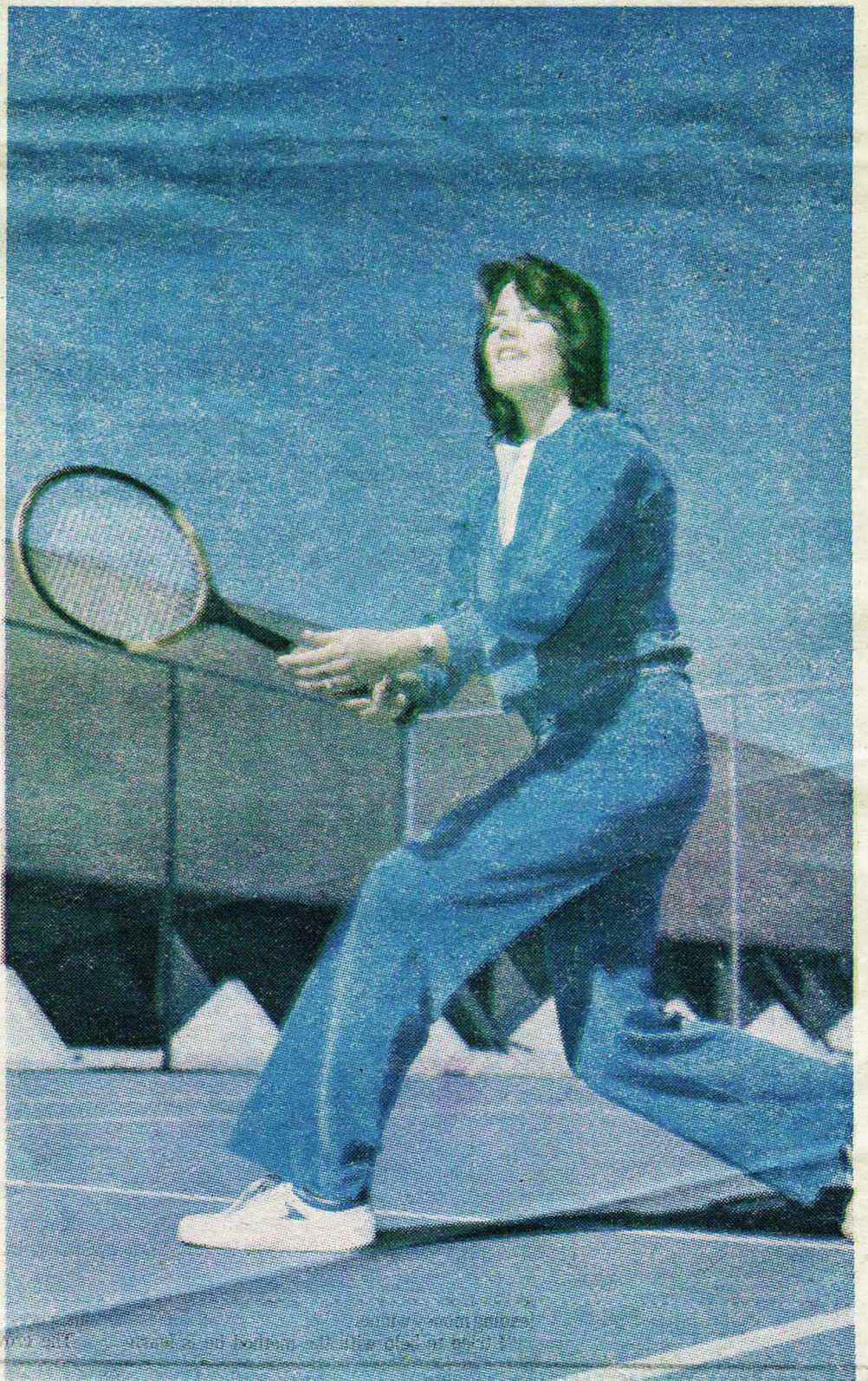


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Tennis boom goes on — inside and out

By FRED MORROW
News Staff

THAT THING CALLED the tennis boom began sometime in the late 1960s. It began for Judi Stromberg two years ago. She has been making up for the late start.

Mrs. Stromberg says that first trip to the court was "a lark." So much for the lark. The lady is now playing 12 hours a week.

"Some days I'm out there by 7 o'clock," says Mrs. Stromberg. She speaks of 7 o'clock in the morning. Mrs. Stromberg says fun knows no time limit.

Not only is it "great, and I love the exercise, and I love the camaraderie," but it has cut down on Mrs. Stromberg's doctor bills.

"No question that I feel 100 times better since I started playing," she says. "My legs have never felt better. I'm using muscles I never knew I had and I haven't had a physical problem in two years. And my mental outlook is better, too."

A HOUSEWIFE, A church worker and the mother of four, Mrs. Stromberg is too sensitive to let her family suffer in her tennis absence. She brought them with her. The children took to the game so well they are now winning trophies. Husband, Jim, tries hard.

"Oh, sure, I can beat him," says Mrs. Stromberg, as Mr. Stromberg pretends to faint.

Well, golly, folks, there is no intent here to storm you by surprise, but the Strombergs are not the only ones playing tennis in Denver these days. Apparently, all sizes and shapes are doing it. Outdoors and indoors.

The boom is still on, perhaps because the snow isn't. No one knows for sure but, whatever the reasons, it is happening. And for some heavy irony, word trickles down that the biggest activity this winter in those skiing dens of Vail and Aspen has been tennis.

THERE ARE 20 OUTDOOR courts at Gates Tennis Center at 100 South Adams. The tennis pro, Bill Oakes, shakes his head and says, "if this keeps up we're going to have as many people the next few weeks as we had last fall."

As of yet, no one has admitted to fanning out over the city and conducting an acutal count of tennis players at a particular time, but . . . get in a car and cruise such parks as Washington, Congress and City and you are going to witness squirrels and birds and tennis players.

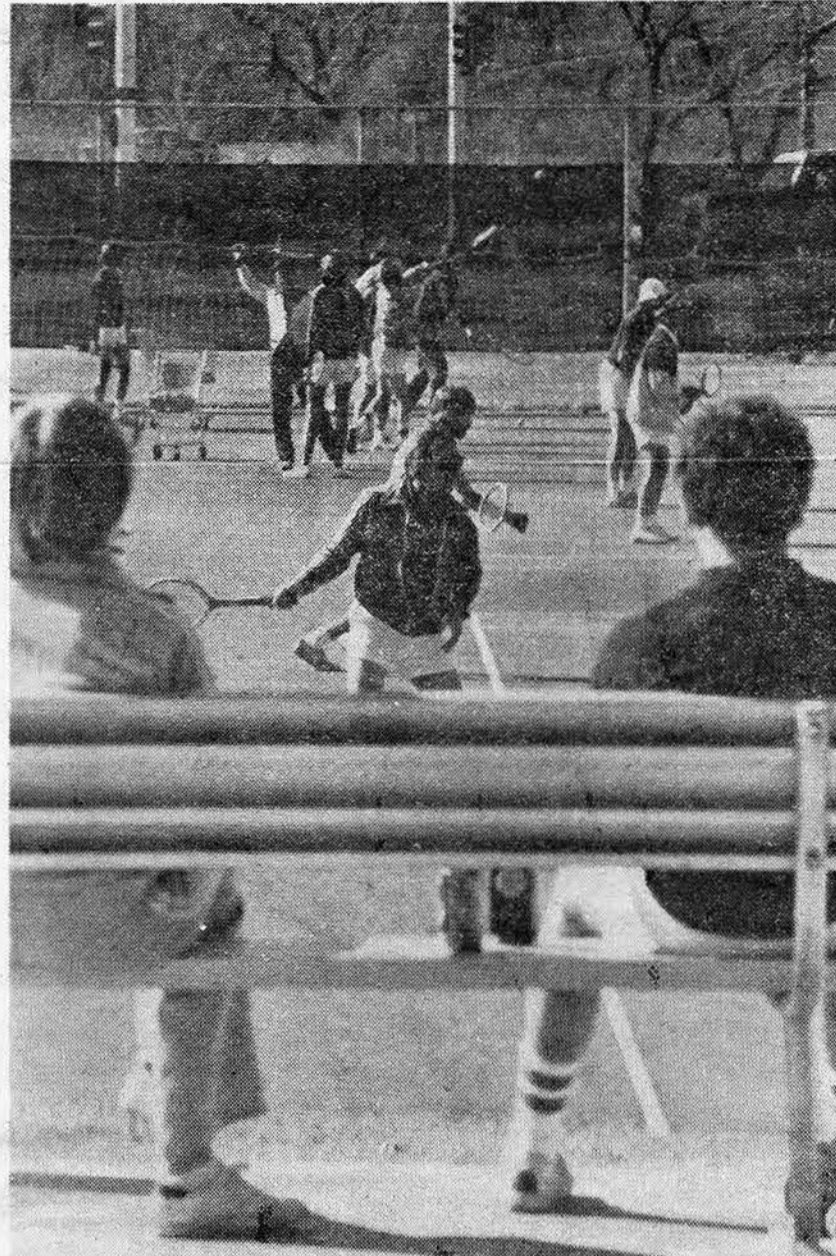
"We've had the best winter season in our history," says Jim Jacksina, who manages the tennis department for the Gart Brothers store at 1000 Broadway. "I think the proliferation of indoor tennis courts and the lack of snow is the reason. There is also more tennis awareness."

LARRY HULL, THE TENNIS equipment buyer for Dave Cook's sporting goods stores, says about the same thing. Yes, tennis sales are up. "Mainly, I attribute it to the availability of sunshine," says Hull.

Indoor tennis courts have been known to go bankrupt here. It won't happen this winter. Tennis World, on South Monaco, is just like the good old Army. You've got to stand in line.

At Montbello Sporting House at 4780 Oakland the initiation fee is \$50 and the monthly fee is \$25 for a single and \$35 for a family. The other indoor clubs are in that price range. The tennis players don't seem to mind.

"We are selling only 100 memberships," says Montbello pro, Bob Schmokel. "That gives us 50 players per court, which somewhat assures you of getting to play. Some tennis centers are on the



The courts at Gates Tennis Center have stayed crowded this winter.

NEWS PHOTO BY JOHN GORDON

average of 120 players per court, and you can call a week in advance and not get a court."

LAST YEAR, MONTBELLO had 30 tennis members. This year it is at 90 and is a certainty to reach 100.

"A lot of it is because of reorganization and active recruiting," says Schmokel. "This club had about gone broke. But I think it is also because tennis has continued to grow in Denver. And, sure, the weather has helped."

One theory regarding the increase of tennis players, is that they are frustrated skiers. People who like to ski are active sorts. When the snow turned its back on them, they turned to other pursuits, like tennis.

Schmokel will buy that. He says that until the drought leaves, tennis will keep climbing.

"I also teach at the YMCA and I know that the number of players there is up 15 per cent," says Schmokel. "Last year was the biggest ever there."

RAOUL TAYON, DENVER'S recreation director, says no doubt about it. There are more tennis players in town than ever before.

"The people I talk to across the country think tennis has peaked or is about to," says Tayon. "But it will never settle back to the numbers it was before the growth began. Especially not in areas, like Denver, that have a suitable climate."

Some far-reaching thinkers did a study back in the 1950s, long before the game began its move away from the country club set and to the general public. From that study, a statistic formula was reached. It said that there should be one tennis court for each 2,000 population.

"To suit that statistic we would have to go up to four or five hundred courts," says Tayon.

THAT WILL NOT HAPPEN. There are 130 public courts in the city. In 1968, there were 90. No one can be certain whether that's too many, too few or just right.

"We have put courts in every reasonable direction and we have tried to put them in areas where we think there is a density of tennis population," says Tayon. "I'd like to have a court next to my house and my friends would like to have courts next to their houses. But there's an obvious con-

cern for taxpayers.

"It's been long since agreed that no responsible municipality can let itself be driven to panic."

For the moment, the increase is certainly not in the panic stages. But let Judi Stromberg walk out one fine day at 7 a.m. and not be able to find a court available.

If that comes to pass, then it will be time for all of us to head for the hills. Snow or no snow.

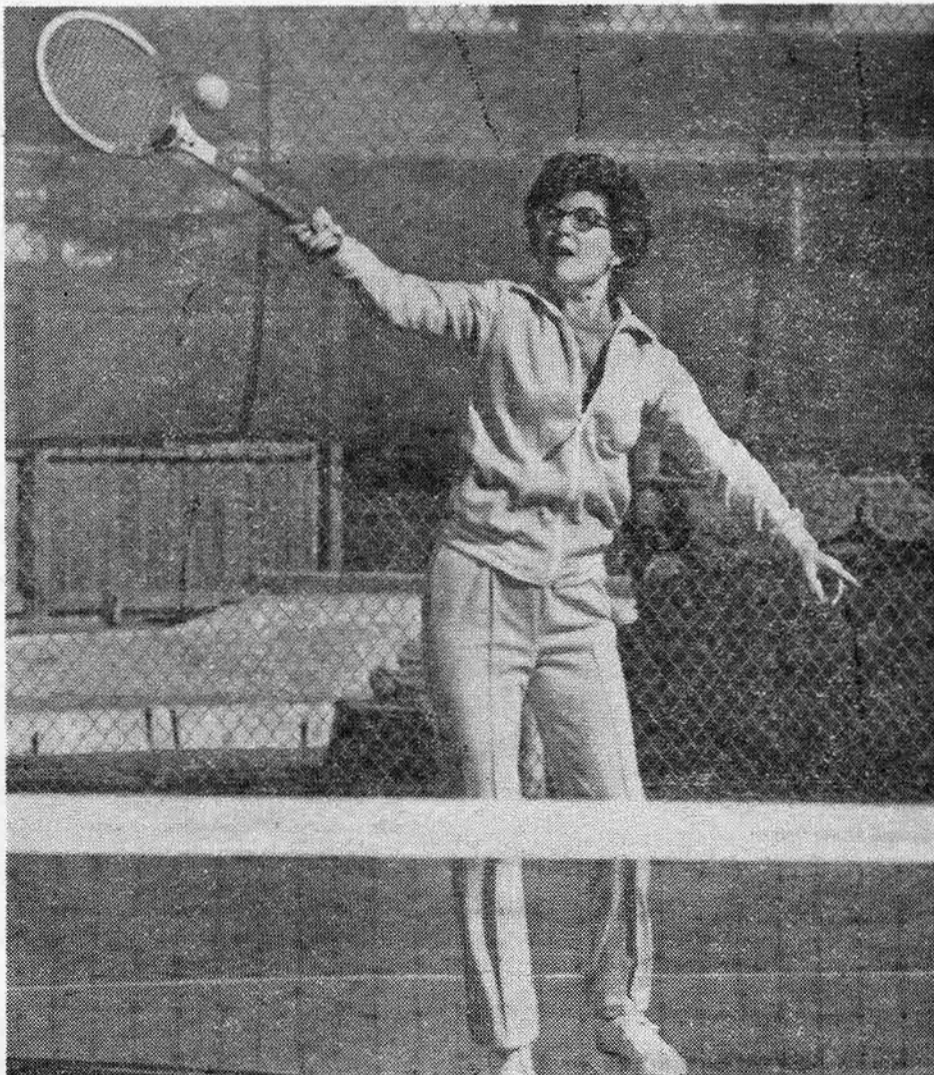


NEWS PHOTO BY DAVID L. CORNWELL

Bob Schmokel, the tennis pro at Montbello Sporting House.

Our cover . . .

Jackie Hoffman, left, and her daughter, Kelly Bierenkoven, play a lot of tennis at the Heatheridge Racquet Club. Howard Brock photographed them wearing colorful clothes from the pro shop: a yellow hooded sweatshirt top and shirt and jade velour warmup outfit, both from Ultra Sport.



NEWS PHOTO BY JOHN GORDON

Judi Stromberg moves forward for a forehand smash.

Color paces tennis togs



Color, not just as trim and not just in the traditional hues, is one of the big words in tennis fashion.

In addition to the navy and red that have highlighted tennis togs for some time, there are pastels as well as great brights and rich earth tones.

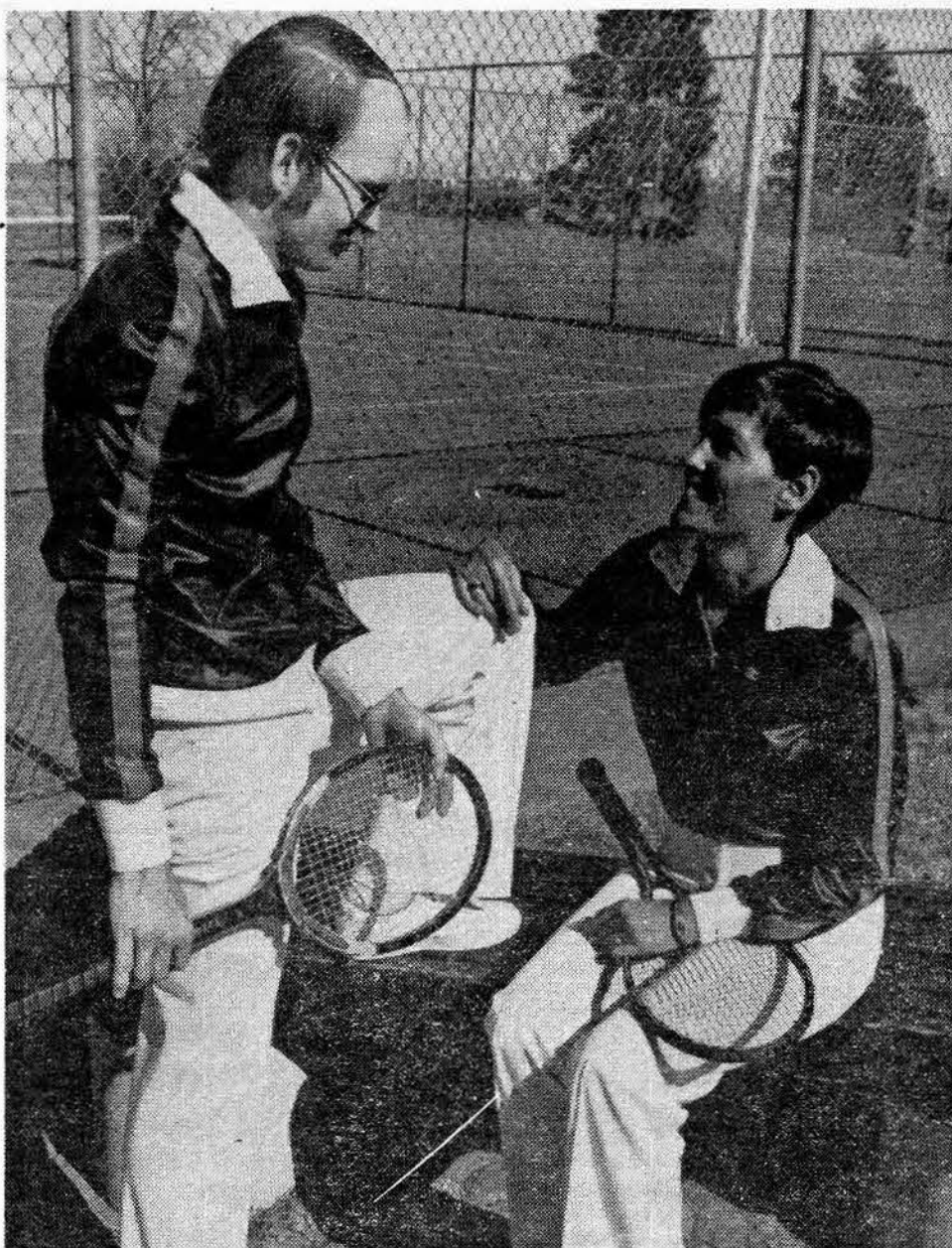
Fabrics are exciting and include terrycloth, cotton and polyester sweatshirt material and silky "wet looks." Of course, there is always the classic cotton and knits continue to be very popular.

Another fashion feature is the wide variety of shapes and styles. Don't be surprised to see hoods with those many jackets, halter tops, layering and drawstring waists on just about anything. Track shorts have become acceptable court apparel.

While most manufacturers stick with tennis wear that looks the part, a few designers have gone wild creating some very high fashion looks. Ted Tining, official designer for the Virginia Slims Tennis Circuit, for example, has chosen to emphasize the peasant look, with lapis blue being his predominate color.

Tining has combined pique and linen, used Indian paisley, highlighted with silver and gold lurex lame and dropped a sequin here and there, on occasion. Needless to say, Tining believes that "fashion today has no rigid guidelines."

An Indian paisley brocade tunic, at left, highlights ones of Tining's creations for the courts. It is a lapis blue design on gold lurex. It's not your normal tennis tog.



NEWS PHOTO BY HOWARD BROCK

From Oleg Cassini (and the Heatheridge Racquet Club) comes this silky wet-look warmup style for men and women. The

navy jackets have rust stripes and cream collars and cuffs which match the cream pants.

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