

# SPORTS

INDOOR TENNIS ATTRACTING MORE PLAYERS IN PAST TWO YEARS

## Indoor tennis on upswing

BY ADAM MALIK  
Special

Tennis is best known as a game played outdoors.

But with Old Man Winter having set up residence in York Region for the next few months, those who serve and volley find themselves rather restricted.

For those who have the dollars and time, this dilemma can be solved by going south of the border. But for those who cannot afford such a luxury yet still possess an insatiable appetite for the game, tennis can be played indoors.

Operators of indoor tennis facilities say the game is gathering momentum.

*Just wanting to do it. That is all you need to play indoor tennis.*

"(Indoor tennis) is very popular right now," said Marilyn Robello, manager of the Mayfair East Racquet and Fitness Club in Markham. "The weather is now getting cold, as well as the overall popularity of tennis is going up, which has generated a lot of interest."

"Ten years ago, popularity started to decrease and stayed down until two years ago. In this time, it has steadily gone up," said Bronna Gerry, director of tennis at Timberlane Tennis and Country Club in Aurora.

Proprietors said younger generations account for increased interest in the

sport, perhaps because of the recent exploits of young, big-name tennis stars such as Serena and Venus Williams.

However, they also note there's a loyal group of veteran players.

"We have a ton of kids here, mostly they are seven to 14 years old. After that, it goes from 35 and up," said Trevor Redvers of Blackmore Tennis Club in Richmond Hill. "But we're really missing the 18-to-34 age group because of the financial demands of indoor tennis. I think we have four people (in that age group) in total."

Ms Robello said Mayfair East has a broad age group, from three to 82.

There is little difference between indoor and outdoor tennis. Rules, skills needed and strategies remain the same.

"(Skills) can improve indoors because there is no weather to deal with. Some players say it is easier to play inside because there is no weather to worry about," Mr. Redvers said.

"There's no wind, no sun, no rain delays and no problems at all with the weather. Also no ultraviolet rays, which has become important nowadays," Ms Robello said.

"It is slightly easier to play inside. There's no rain and nothing to interfere with a game," Mr. Redvers said.

"Timberlane has carpet indoor courts, so that is a bit different, but inside you escape the natural elements of the outdoors," Ms Gerry said.

Basic skills include hand-eye co-ordination, which is important, Mr. Redvers said.

"Just wanting to do it. That

is all you need to play indoor tennis," Ms Gerry said.

Indoor tennis isn't just for the active summer player who finds it hard to go four or five months without picking up a racquet. Many newcomers kickstart their tennis experience under the roof.

"Our beginners are mostly kids, not adults. We have lots of people who play here all year long," Mr. Redvers said.

"Most people who participate in the winter are experienced," Ms Gerry added. "With our members, most golf in summer and play tennis in winter."

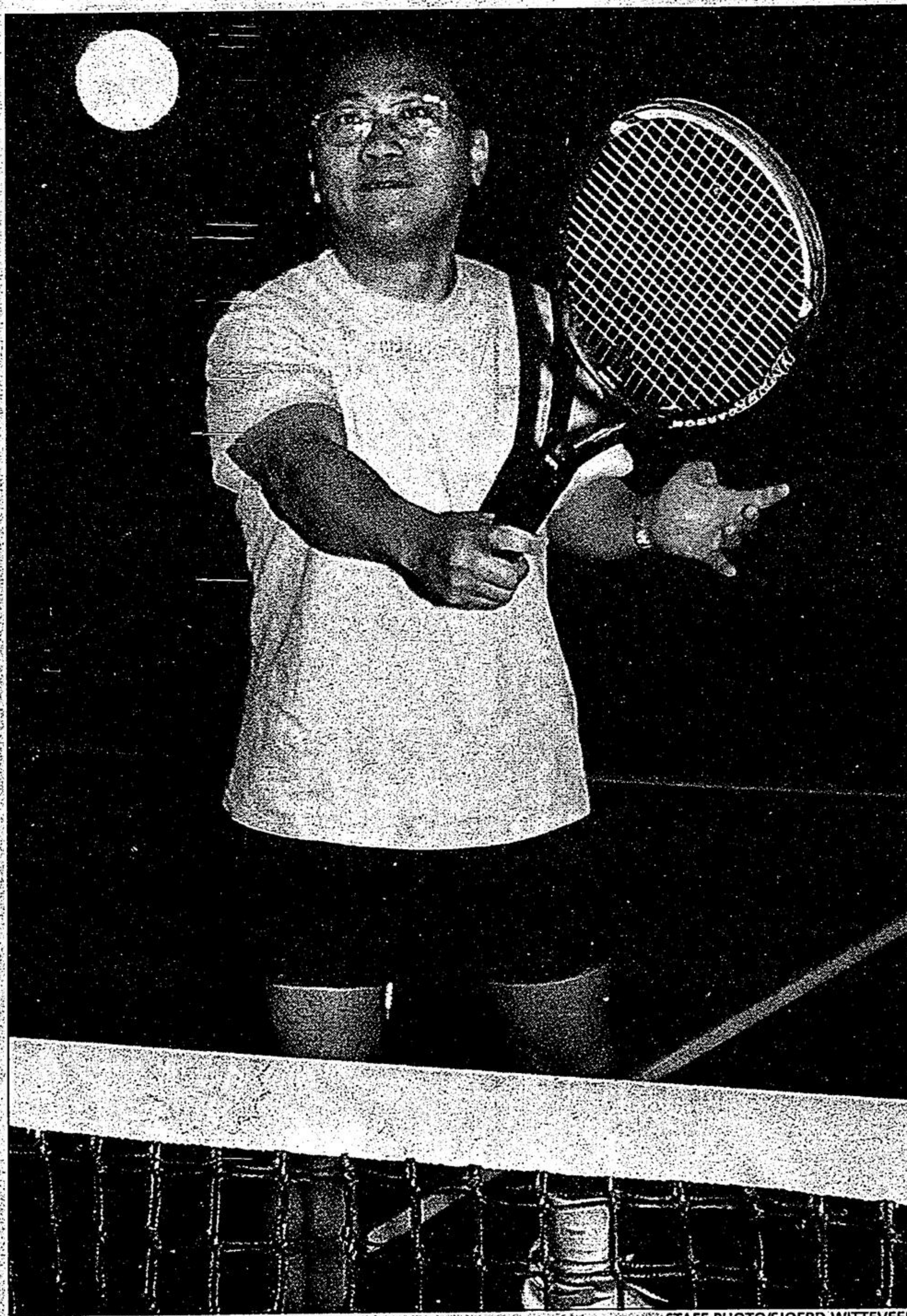
*'There's no wind, no sun, no rain delays and no problems at all with the weather. Also no ultraviolet rays, which has become important nowadays.'*

The number of times participants take to the courts depends on the place and the person.

"At Mayfair, the average person plays about two or three times a week," Ms Robello said.

"We have many people playing at many different times," Mr. Redvers said. "We have people who play once a week, mostly Sundays, we have tons of ladies playing all the time and our courts are

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STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Ricky Chee practises his backhand at the Mayfair East Racquet and Fitness Club.

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