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Student ranked No. 5 in nation in racquetball

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

On any given day, you can find lots of racquetball players at Oakland University's Recreation and Athletics Center. Singles and doubles matches are quite common, especially during the winter months. But oftentimes you'll see one OU student on a court by himself. Sophomore business major Jack Huczek may not be engaged in a match, but make no mistake, he takes his game quite seriously.

Huczek, 19, plays racquetball professionally as a member of the **International Racquetball Tour** and is ranked No. 5 in the nation after completing his first season. The professional season consists of about 15-20 stops around the country and runs from August to May.

Before he joined the tour in 2001, Huczek was considered one of the best junior players in racquetball history. He won 12 Junior National singles titles, 10 Junior World singles titles, and two National High School singles titles. At age 17, he became the youngest player ever to qualify for the U.S. National Racquetball Team after taking third place in singles at the 2000 United States Racquetball Association National Championships. He won that tournament outright in 2001 and finished second in 2002. He also represented OU at the 2002 National Intercollegiate Racquetball Tournament and won the singles title. On the strength of Huczek's points alone, OU finished ninth among 24 men's teams at the tournament.

Huczek's next goal is to be the top-ranked player on the tour. It's a goal he believes is reachable within a year.

"In my first tournament championship in January 2002, I beat Cliff Swain, the No. 1 player, at his home court in Boston," Huczek said. "Swain is in his sixth year at No. 1 and no one has ever done that. But I'm 2-1 against him. I couldn't be in a better position because I think I'm not even in my prime yet. I'm still working on all aspects of my game and eliminating my weaknesses. I know what to anticipate for the upcoming season. It's just a matter of playing consistently and working hard."

Known as one of the most fit players on the tour, Huczek spends five to six hours per day training at OU's Recreation Center and other area clubs.

"Conditioning is one of my strengths as a player. I know I'm not going to be beaten by fatigue on the court," Huczek said. "In the mornings, I do cardio work, swim and do spinning. Sometimes I'll do some sprints or distance running. I try to vary it so I won't get burned out. Then I'll put in an hour of racquetball practice where I'll work on serves, specific shots and game scenarios. I'll come back early in the afternoon and continue doing work on foot speed and another session of drilling. In the evenings, I close with weight training. I lift pretty intensely for two hours to improve my strength and to prevent injury."

Even with all the training, academics have not taken a back seat for Huczek.

"I don't look at racquetball as a career or a full-time job. It's an opportunity to have fun and make the most out of the abilities I've been given," Huczek said. "I basically juggle my schedule depending on what classes I have. I can only take three classes in the fall and winter semesters because I travel so much."

"Right now, it's hard to feel like a college student with the amount of time I spend away from home."

Huczek usually leaves on a Thursday for a tournament, which typically end on Sundays. He then flies home either late Sunday or early Monday.

"With school, training, homework, and finding time to eat and relax, it's difficult," Huczek said. "I'm glad I'm attending Oakland University because it's close to home, they have a good business program and have great facilities. I'm taking things one semester at a time and working toward my degree, and may possibly pursue a master's."

Huczek is accustomed to maintaining a balance between academics and athletics. While a high school student at Pontiac Notre Dame Prep, then Rochester Adams, Huczek juggled his studies along with racquetball, golf, hockey, cross country and track. But of all the sports he's played, Huczek's always returned to racquetball, his first love since his mom put a racquet in his hand at age 2.

"I've played just about every sport competitively except for football and baseball," Huczek said. "But racquetball is the sport I enjoy playing the most. It's been part of my life for so long. I have a lot of confidence in it and have beaten all the ranked players ahead of me."

Huczek plans on combining a business degree with his athletic interests to pursue an entrepreneurial enterprise.

"One idea I have is to start an athletic training center for top athletes. Or maybe something else that's different and creative. But I'd like to apply my business skills while I'm actively playing," Huczek said. "As for racquetball, I'd like to play professionally as long as I can at a high level. Whether that's five or 10 years, that's unforeseen at the moment."

For a profile of Huczek and tournament listings, current rankings and results, visit the [International Racquetball Tour](#) Web site.

SUMMARY

Oakland University sophomore business major Jack Huczek plays racquetball professionally as a member of the International Racquetball Tour and is ranked No. 5 in the nation after completing his first season. Huczek's next goal is to be the top-ranked player on the tour. It's a goal he believes is reachable within a year.

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