

# THE BRONX BOAST

A Publication of CitySquash, Inc.

An Urban Youth Enrichment Program

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## PROGRAM FINISHES SUCCESSFUL YEAR, ANNOUNCES EXPANSION

### Fordham Remains Home Base; New Partnerships with Concordia College, Greenwich Academy and Westchester Squash

By John W. Harding

Bronxville, NY — Following the completion of its inaugural season, CitySquash substantially expanded the size of its program, partnering with three more area squash facilities and nearly doubling its team member enrollment. In its first year of operation the youth enrichment program held practices at Fordham University and, between its academic year program and summer camp, had a total of twenty-five students participating. By the end of the 2003-2004 season that number will be forty, an increase made possible by new partnerships with Concordia College, Greenwich Academy, and Westchester Squash.

Fordham University's Rose Hill campus in the Bronx remains CitySquash's home base. The university, which donates to CitySquash its classroom and squash facilities, is located across the street from Middle School 45, where CitySquashers go to school. Fordham hosts three CitySquash practices a week—on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays—and Fordham students serve as volunteers. In July Fordham hosted CitySquash's five-week summer camp, and they have agreed to do so again in 2004. "Fordham has been an unbelievable partner," said Dr. Sanford Schwartz, CitySquash's Founder and Chairman of the Board. "We couldn't have asked for more in terms of their appreciation of the program and willingness to accept us in our totality. We look forward to a long partnership with the university."

CitySquash's Monday and Wednesday practices now take place at Concordia College, which is located ten miles north of Middle School 45 in Bronxville, New York. Greenwich Academy, the K-12 girls school in Connecticut that has a new five-court facility and one of the strongest squash programs in the country, hosts CitySquash's Saturday practices once a month. "We are thrilled to have CitySquash as part of our Greenwich Academy family," said Karen Schmidt-Fellner, the director of squash at G.A. The partnership builds on an already strong relationship between the school and the enrichment program. G.A. hosted three CitySquash practices in the program's first season, and many of CitySquash's volunteers are students at the Greenwich school.

CitySquash's third new partner is Westchester Squash, a squash club located in Mamaroneck, New York. Operated by Richard Millman, a founding member of CitySquash's Board of Directors, Westchester Squash sets aside for CitySquash two spaces in each of its weekday afternoon junior clinics, amounting to eight free lessons a week. The club also includes a surcharge on all of its tournament entry fees and donates the collected funds to CitySquash. Millman is glad to have brought together two of his primary squash interests. "Westchester Squash is committed to the principles that CitySquash was founded on, in terms of seeking excellence in both the lives of its students generally and squash specifically. It is a pleasure to help."

In addition to enabling CitySquash to increase enrollment, these partnerships enhance the CitySquash experience for team members, exposing them to more opportunities and a wider community of people. "We're quite excited about our partnerships with Greenwich Academy, Westchester Squash and Concordia College," Dr. Schwartz said. "Thanks to their interest in helping our program we have great confidence that we'll be able to take the program to the next level."

CitySquash seems ready for the jump. In its first year, grades point averages rose and squash games improved. But just as important, as people involved with the program point out, perspectives were widened, challenges overcome, and lessons learned. For its team members, CitySquash was more than a squash and tutoring program—it was an adventure in life, dedicated to building character and teaching life lessons. "CitySquash teaches you to respect one another," wrote Jonathon Guzman, a 6th grader, in an essay for summer camp. "It helped me turn over a new leaf. It gave me the strength to always try and never give up."

"We awakened something in these kids," said Brian Mathias, CitySquash's associate director. "When the team was at its best, when we were at our best, we were together in the pursuit of a common goal." Parents and teachers also observed the positive ways in which CitySquash impacted its team members. "The children were enthusiastic and proud to belong to the program," explained Yesenia Garcia, the homeroom teacher to five CitySquashers. "They liked being linked to something prestigious—Fordham. I saw that in their attitude. I was impressed with how their self-esteem was boosted. Other kids wanted to be a part of the program. They felt distinguished among their peers."

## GRADES ON THE RISE

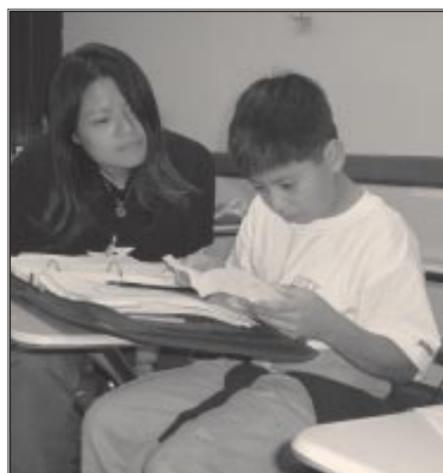
By William Zanzinger

Bronx, NY — Over the course of their first season CitySquashers saw a marked improvement, if a modest one, in their team grade point average, which increased nearly four percentage points from 78.2% to 81.7% between the first and fourth quarters. The program, which splits its weekday afternoon practices evenly between squash instruction and academic tutoring, is founded on the idea that sports, together with a structured academic environment, can be effective tools to help motivate young people to do better in school. While CitySquash's staff points out that more can be done to strengthen its academic program and that its team members' grades should continue to improve into its second season, that philosophy so far appears to be working.

Two or more times a week during the academic year season, which began in October and ended in June, CitySquashers attended 1.5 hour tutoring sessions, in which they were assisted with their homework by staff persons and volunteers, most of whom are Fordham University students. When team members finished their homework before the end of the allotted time, they were provided with additional academic exercises on which to work. The program also set in place a system of incentives whereby students were awarded for strong academic performance (an average of 85% or higher) or a substantial improvement in grade point average (an increase of 5% or more). Students with a grade below 70% were suspended from squash for one week or more.

"The academic program helped me throughout the year by making me more interested in school subjects, making me want to study more, and I really enjoyed that," explained Danel Gimenez, who finished the year with an 81% average. "I really

enjoyed all of the academic stuff we did. And the volunteers were great. They helped me a lot. When I needed help they were always there to help me." According to teachers and administrators at Middle School 45, most of its 6th grade students see their grades decline over the course of the four quarters. "We are really proud of our students' progress—they worked hard all year long—and we look forward to seeing their grades continue to improve." To bolster its academic program for the 2003-2004 year and beyond, CitySquash hired Sarah Petrie to be its director of academics. Petrie, who last year captained Brown University's women's squash team, majored in American History and has worked extensively as a tutor and counselor for youth enrichment programs.



Bogar Avila gets homework help from Diana Jong.



Participants from CitySquash, StreetSquash, SquashBusters and SquashSmarts at the Groton School for the Urban Nationals.

## 1st Urban Squash Nationals Shines Spotlight on Movement

Torres and Jackson Inaugural U13 Champions

By Haite Carroll

Groton, Massachusetts — In what has been called the first rally of a growing movement, the 1st Annual Urban Youth Squash Nationals brought together nearly one hundred squash players from the Bronx, Harlem, Roxbury, Cambridge, and West Philadelphia for a weekend remembered for its competition, camaraderie and, above all, solidarity between the four urban youth squash programs in attendance. Hosted by the Groton School the weekend of June 20-22, the tournament was by all accounts a tremendous success. Groton's new twelve-court squash facility made for an ideal venue, and all of the participants, staff members and volunteers stayed together in a dormitory on the beautiful boarding school campus an hour's drive from Boston. In addition to CitySquash, players came from StreetSquash in Harlem, SquashSmarts of Philadelphia and Boston's SquashBusters program. The only urban youth squash program that did not send a team was SquashWise of Hartford, Connecticut, which completed its season in May.

The competition was fierce, and CitySquashers rose to the occasion. The program saw three of its players advance to the semifinals in the U13 boys division. Sanel Torres, CitySquash's #1 player for most of the year, reached the finals. "This kid can play," Greg Zaff, SquashBusters founder and executive director, was heard saying in the packed gallery during the final. And play he did. StreetSquash's David Nash had beaten Sanel earlier in the season in a team match, but when they met in June Sanel had too many weapons for his athletic archrival. The first game, which Sanel eked out, had long rallies and remarkable retrieving by both players. After losing the second game, Sanel roared back and won the last two decisively, earning himself the national title. In the 3rd place playoff, CitySquash's Ary Gimenez won in three games against teammate Edgardo Gonzalez. Steven Barrerra won 5th place.

CitySquash took home their fair share of silver as well. Crystina Allen, CitySquash's oldest team member at 13, finished 5th in the U15 division. The U13 girls final saw another CitySquash-StreetSquash match-up between Tanesha Jackson of the Bronx and Brandy Robinson of Harlem. Tanesha also found herself at 1-all after two games, and it was then that she took command of the match, winning the next two games and the title. "She hustles more than just about anyone, diving for balls, banging into walls," Tim Wyant, one of her coaches, said afterward. "But what really separates her from most players her age is that she thinks a lot about strategy. She is constantly making judgments about her opponent's game and what she needs to do to win. She had even scouted Brandy in the semifinal and determined what her weakness was!" After stepping off court, Tanesha was mobbed by her teammates, who congratulated her for her victory. She had begun the tournament unseeded, and she finished it a national champion. "It was great," she commented later. "I don't know how to explain it. I played really, really well."

The competition was but one part of an experience that included music blasting van rides, pick-up basketball games, afternoon swimming, and, for the staff members at least, vain attempts to get team members asleep at a reasonable hour. "That was an experience."

remarked Wyant, who chaperoned CitySquash's hall-way. Edgardo Gonzales enjoyed the time with his teammates. "It was a fun experience to go to Massachusetts and chill with my friends, just have a great time. The best part was the ride over there in the van!" Bogar Avila was impressed by Groton. "It was a good place to have the nationals at," remarked Bogar. "It was a really nice place. The dorms were nice. The courts were nice—the whole area."

Although played in a relatively remote location and outside of the traditional squash season, word about the tournament has spread, and to much fanfare. When Greg Zaff started SquashBusters, the first program of its kind, in Boston in 1996, many questioned whether his organization could even survive. Eight years, and four sister programs later, people are now wondering how far the urban youth squash movement can progress. "These programs make a difference in people's lives daily," said Palmer Page, the new chief executive officer of the United States Squash Racquets Association. "This tournament represents all that is good about America: by giving people the chance to perform and enjoy themselves and learn to succeed." With the existing enrichment programs expanding and groups in Poughkeepsie and Chicago expected to launch programs of their own, many think next year's tournament will be better than the first.

## Briggs Cup Exceeds Expectations

By Robert Zimmerman

Rye, NY — Introducing a new model of fundraising within the squash world that has been successfully replicated, CitySquash held a fundraiser in February that was centered around a professional doubles squash tournament and that, in terms of funds raised and the quality of the event, far exceeded the expectations of both the squash public and people directly involved with its organization. Hosted jointly by the Apawamis Club, the Field Club of Greenwich and the Greenwich Country Club in partnership with CitySquash, the Briggs Cup was named in honor of Peter Briggs, a member of CitySquash's Board of Directors. A former intercollegiate squash champion at Harvard and coach of the Cornell men's squash team, Briggs grew up in Greenwich and has been the head squash and tennis professional at the Apawamis Club in Rye, New York for fifteen years.

The tournament, which was co-directed by Peer Pedersen and Steve Mandel and is scheduled to be a biannual event, had a \$130,000 player's purse, squash's largest in 2003 and more than enough to attract the game's best players for a weekend of world-class squash. All donations over and above the expenses of the tournament went to CitySquash. The Briggs Cup was CitySquash's single largest source of financial support in its first year. And not just successful for CitySquash, the Briggs Cup fundraising model has since been used by StreetSquash, CitySquash's sister program in Manhattan. "The event could not have been a bigger success," said Tim Wyant, CitySquash's executive director. "We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Peter Briggs, Peer Pedersen, Steve Mandel and all of our Briggs Cup contributors."

# Letters from Summer Camp

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An Urban Youth Enrichment Program

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## PROGRAM EDITORIAL

# A POWERFUL MODEL

Squash has long been associated with elitism, and for good reason. Invented in 1865 at England's Harrow School, the sport made its way to the United States twenty years later when a court was built at another prestigious boarding school, St. Paul's in Concord, New Hampshire. The Ivy League started intercollegiate competition in the 1920s. Of the forty colleges that have squash teams today, the most dominant have been Princeton, Yale and—you guessed it—Harvard. Most adult play has been limited to expensive private clubs where all-white rules, in terms of membership and attire, have applied.

But thanks in large part to the growth of the urban youth squash movement, all of this is beginning to change. The first squash-based enrichment program, SquashBusters, was founded in Boston in 1996. Since then similar organizations have been started in Philadelphia, Hartford and, of course, New York City. Hundreds of squash players now hail from underserved urban communities like West Philadelphia, Roxbury, Harlem and the Bronx. And those numbers will rise dramatically as the existing programs continue to expand and new programs are created in other cities. Poughkeepsie and Chicago are expected to be next.

One reason why this after-school program model has spread so quickly is that the squash community is committed to diversifying its sport. But the bigger reason is that these are simply great after-school programs and people see the powerful difference they are making in the lives of their participants. Bringing together academic tutoring and squash instruction with mentoring, cultural exploration and community service, CitySquash and its sister programs are dedicated to providing opportunities and instilling lessons in young people that will serve them well not only on the squash court and in the classroom, but in life.

And why squash exactly? This is a question we hear often. The answer is that squash is a great game and, like other sports, can be an effective tool to teach values like hard work, honesty and discipline. It is also a great way to get exercise. And as its history shows, squash has deep ties to strong educational institutions, and those ties play a vital role in the operations and philosophical missions of the enrichment programs. CitySquash is greatly fortunate to have our home base at Fordham University, and our sister organizations have similar partnerships with other places of higher learning. Our team matches are played at prep schools like Greenwich Academy, Groton, and the Brunswick School. One of the highlights from our inaugural season was a trip to New Haven in which the team received a tour of the Yale campus and then watched an exciting match between the Yale and Princeton squash teams.

If the young people in these programs live in communities marked by obstacles, they are regularly exposed to a world full of possibilities, especially educational ones. What better way to get kids thinking about college than by regularly bringing them onto prep school and university campuses? This emphasis on education is further strengthened by the fact that participants develop relationships with a group of people—the volunteers, the mentors and the staff—in whom the value of a college education is deeply ingrained. In this way, squash's elitist history is used for the least elitist of tasks—to open educational doors for children from economically disadvantaged communities. CitySquash is proud to be part of such an important movement.

To the Editor:

My favorite part of the year was when we went to Groton for Nationals. CitySquash taught me good sportsmanship, not only in squash but in other sports too. Squash has taught me to be polite when I win and polite when I lose. CitySquash helped me improve my homework, schoolwork, my spelling and reading. They helped me find my weaknesses and strengths in squash and school. The most challenging thing about CitySquash is playing the sport because the coaches teach you a shot and then you get used to it. Then they teach you another shot and you have to get used to that too.

Cristal D. Marte, 7th Grade Team Member

To the Editor:

My favorite memory from CitySquash was when Sanel was playing for 1st place in the Nationals. It is my favorite memory because when he was playing we were all cheering for him. Even if he lost we still would have celebrated because he would have gotten 2nd place. For me the most enjoyable part of this program is everything. The hardest thing about CitySquash is waking up in the morning because my brother always has to wake me up. One thing I learned in this program is to hit a boast really well and win points by using it. The most special thing is that it helped me to be a better person and to understand people a little better. It helped me to be a better person because I'm more patient with people.

Danel Gimenez, 7th Grade Team Member

To the Editor:

My favorite memory is when we went to Crotona Park to help it look brighter. We fixed the building and painted the border. The most enjoyable part of CitySquash is academics because we get to do different activities. In CitySquash I learned to cooperate with the other squash members. It helped me by learning to cooperate with a team. The effect that CitySquash has had on me is that it taught me to keep trying until you have success.

Stephanie Armstrong, 6th Grade Summer Camper

To the Editor:

My favorite memory of CitySquash was when I went to Princeton for squash camp. I got to go to Princeton because of my improvement in practice. Princeton was a fun summer camp. You had to work really hard. After I came back from Princeton I was a lot better. I could run faster, I got stronger, and better in squash. The most enjoyable part of CitySquash was when I played a lot of matches and when I did drills. I like all these things because they are exciting and very fun. An important thing that I learned from CitySquash was that it doesn't matter if you lose or if you win. What really matters is that you have fun. CitySquash has given me an opportunity to meet new people and to know new places.

Ary Gimenez, 7th Grade Team Member

To the Editor:

My favorite memory from summer camp was when I met all the CitySquashers and all the new campers. It was a great experience for me. I made many new friends, friends who share my passion for squash. The most enjoyable part of CitySquash is just playing squash itself, and learning the different types of unique strategies and techniques. Also, learning all the different types of shots that can be used to win the game is enjoyable. It's amazing how much you can learn by just playing. CitySquash has taught me discipline and educational information. It helped me to be smarter and to be more responsible. During one part of the CitySquash program I woke up late and came in late. I learned how to be more responsible and come in on time.

Katrina Intal, 6th Grade Summer Camper

To the Editor:

My favorite CitySquash memory was when we went to the Sports Club/LA. I met Chris Walker, a professional squash player, and saw him play a game against our coach. The most enjoyable part of CitySquash is when we go on field trips to play squash and have fun. CitySquash gives me responsibility by making me do my work and waking me up early.

Willie Gonzalez, 6th Grade Summer Camper

To the Editor:

My favorite CitySquash memory was at Groton when Steven and I played a trick on Jose. The most enjoyable part of CitySquash was the Urban Squash Nationals. One important thing I learned from CitySquash is how to improve on my weaknesses.

Bogar Avila, 7th Grade Team Member

To the Editor:

My favorite memory was my first match against Sanel at Nationals in Massachusetts. He was one of our best players and I tried my best. I think he deserved to win, but I never gave up, even for one point. The most enjoyable part of the program is the practices. I could see where I was and what things I needed so I could get better, in school and squash. CitySquash is not just about sports. A person could focus just on squash and could never go anywhere—maybe you could have an accident and get injured. But if you get good grades, you could be somebody, like a scientist.

Jose Alvarez, 7th Grade Team Member

To the Editor:

My favorite CitySquash memory was when I went to Groton for the Nationals and won the consolation. Learning more about the game and meeting more people are enjoyable things about CitySquash. The most challenging part of CitySquash is the academics.

Steven Barrera, 7th Grade Team Member

To the Editor:

My favorite memory is when we were at Groton for the Nationals. Brian, our coach, was playing his guitar on a rainy night, and everybody was falling asleep. The most enjoyable part of the program was getting to travel and meeting different and special people. Just having fun with my friends is one of my favorite parts. One thing I have learned is sportsmanship, to always be honest and to be respectful. Whether you win or lose, you know that it doesn't mean anything except that that person is better than you.

Maylin Colon, 7th Grade Team Member

To the Editor:

My favorite memory from CitySquash was when I first met Tate, Steven, Ary and everybody else. They changed me from a bad mood to a good mood. They all are good friends. When I got to meet them I was shy. But then we started to get to know each other. So now we all hang out. Mostly, Ary makes me laugh. I like when we are in class. We all leave with smiles on our faces. We play games that make us smile. I like CitySquash because it teaches you to respect one another. In CitySquash you always have to be polite. CitySquash has helped me turn over a new leaf. It gave me strength to always try and never give up. In squash I make mistakes. Then I make sure that I always fix them.

Jonathon Guzman, 6th Grade Summer Camper



Ary Gimenez makes a splash at Eric and Patti Fast's house.

## CITYSQUASHERS ENJOY SUMMER CAMPS

Princeton, Talbott, Universal and Westchester Give Scholarships

By Jim Jones

Bronx, NY — Four of the country's premiere squash camps provided CitySquash with nine scholarships in 2003. Ary Gimenez and Tanesha Jackson attended the Princeton University Training Center in Princeton, New Jersey in July. Bogar Avila, Steven Barrera and Danel Gimenez spent a week together in August at the Talbott Academy in Newport, Rhode Island.

Ary Gimenez, Willie Gonzalez and Prince Mensah trained at the Westchester Squash Camp, which is run by Richard Millman, a member of CitySquash's Board of Directors. Maylin Colon and Crystina Allen traveled to Philadelphia in August for a week at the Universal Squash Camp, which is operated by CitySquash's associate director, Brian Mathias.

Many had never before been to camp, and none knew quite what to expect, but all of the CitySquashers enjoyed their experiences and have expressed a desire to return next year. "I just had the best week of my life," proclaimed Ary Gimenez the night he returned from Princeton. "It was an excellent experience because I got to meet new people and new places. The most fun thing was playing with the other coaches and the most difficult thing was training. I really liked the place. I love Princeton and I had a really fun time." Reports indicate that there is disagreement among the players over which camp is the most desirable to attend. Danel Gimenez, Ary's twin brother, spent a week at Talbott Academy. "Talbott's is the best squash camp ever!" Debates are expected to continue through 2004.



CitySquashers await introductions before their first StreetSquash match.

## Executive Director Represents United States

By Will O'Conley

Newport, RI — CitySquash's executive director Tim Wyant won the U.S. men's team trials the weekend of June 27-29 in Newport, Rhode Island, earning himself a spot on the national team and the opportunity to represent his country at this year's Pan American Games and the Men's World Team Championships. Wyant, who spent two years on the professional squash tour before starting work with CitySquash in August 2002, played #3 on this year's Pan American team, which finished 5th at the competition in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in August. The World Championships, which will be in Vienna, Austria, is scheduled for October 19-25.

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, Wyant graduated from Harvard University in 2000 and has played for the United States four times previously: at the 1996 Junior Men's World Championships in Cairo, Egypt; the 2000 World University Squash Games in Pilsen, Czech Republic; the Pan American Federation Cup in Belo Horizonte, Brazil; and the 2001 Men's World Team Championships in Melbourne, Australia.



## CitySquash's Beginnings

By Dr. Sanford Schwartz

Scarsdale, NY — One of the most frequent questions that friends ask me these days is "Where did you get the idea for CitySquash?" I can vividly trace the origins of CitySquash to a cold December day in 1998. I remember standing alongside court 1 of the Harvard Murr Center, nervously waiting to watch my son Josh play in his first major junior squash tournament. Just by chance, I bumped into one of the only other parents I knew in the squash world who happened to be finishing a conversation with a young man named Greg Zaff. Five minutes later I was impressed enough with Greg's SquashBusters concept that I promised Greg that I'd be sending him a contribution before the end of the year.

There was something about the idea of helping young people from economically challenged backgrounds with racquets, balls and books that appealed to my inner core. I understand that each of us is different in terms of what makes us click. I have always believed that sports are a great way to channel energies, to stay out of trouble and learn skills that will help with navigating life. The following year when I learned that someone had set up a similar program to SquashBusters in New York City I made a half a dozen calls before I tracked down George Polsky. Five minutes after talking with George I promised to send a contribution to StreetSquash.

### Our mission: to do good

Almost two years to the day after my encounter with Greg Zaff I was sitting in a USSRA meeting where Pam Ende spoke to us about an urban enrichment program that some people in Philadelphia were launching. As had become my modus operandi, five minutes after hearing her presentation I promised to send SquashSmarts a contribution. When I wrote my annual checks to SquashBusters, StreetSquash and SquashSmarts I really felt that some good things were happening. However, there was something missing. Or stated more accurately, I felt that I should be doing more. I believed in the concept that working closely with young people over a number of years could really make a difference in their lives and more indirectly in our society.

In December 2000 I made a millennium New Year's resolution that I was going to try to launch a squash-based urban enrichment program. Nine months later, in September 2001, the program had started. At that time, we had no employees, no students, no courts, no funds and not a really good idea of our plans, but I had talked Richard Millman and three of his Westchester Squash club members—Patti Fast, Michael Luskin, and Jeff Wiegand—into joining me on the Board of Directors of this fledgling start-up organization. The one thing we had was a mission: to do good.

As I write this piece in September 2003 I am both thrilled and amazed by how the program has blossomed. Among the major pieces that fell into place was an incredible partnership with Fordham University in August 2002. The University has provided us with courts, classrooms and student volunteers while making the program feel welcome. Next we developed a fabulous relationship with the administration of Middle School 45. The school administration grasped the importance that our program could have for their students. Once we finally had courts and a school from which to recruit students, we were extremely fortunate to attract Tim Wyant, an All-American squash player at Harvard who at the time was a touring squash professional, to join the program as our executive director. I challenge anyone to spend just five minutes with Tim and not be sold on CitySquash. Lastly, we have been blessed to have a Board of Directors and a sponsorship base that have permitted the program to follow its mission. With the help of our partners, employees and supporters I am convinced that CitySquash will do more good than we can imagine.

*Dr. Sanford Schwartz is Founder of CitySquash and Chairman of its Board of Directors.*



*Ary Gimenez and Steven Barrera enjoy the snow at Fordham University.*



*After months of training, CitySquashers were ready for the 1st Annual Urban Squash Nationals. Sanel Torres and Tanesha Jackson won their divisions.*

## An Example of Success

By Tim Wyant

New York, NY — From the moment Sanel Torres stepped on court it was clear that he was blessed with athletic talent. On top of that, he was a really good kid. He worked hard, he was enthusiastic, and he was just nice to be around. One of the thirty-one sixth graders who tried out for the sixteen spots in our inaugural class last September, Sanel had all of the qualities we were looking for. But there was one catch: he had recently moved to America from the Dominican Republic and knew almost no English. We weren't sure if it would work to have him on the team. Brian Mathias, our associate director, does not speak Spanish. How would he communicate with Sanel? How would our volunteers? As I considered the situation, I sought the advice of two friends who work for urban enrichment programs similar to CitySquash. Their view: he may not be able to speak English now, but he will learn it, and he will probably get a lot out of the program.

They were right. Within weeks of joining CitySquash, Sanel's English had improved dramatically. We required that he spend a lot of time practicing the language and he made good on his commitment. Although at first he struggled in school, the work ethic he displayed at our tryout extended to his studies and he raised his grade point average twelve points over the course of the year from 77.7% first quarter to 89.6% fourth quarter.

On the squash court, we pushed him to become the best player he could be, and he excelled. He played #1 in all but one of our team matches. In his first tournament, the Bronxville Future Stars, he reached the finals of the consolation. At the Urban Squash Nationals in June, the culmination of our squash season, Sanel arrived as the #1 seed of the U13 division and left its champion.

### Students dedicated to squash and school

All of CitySquash's team members made progress in their year with the program, and I could tell similar success stories for each of them. I write about Sanel because, sadly for CitySquash, his family moved to Pennsylvania in late June and he had to withdraw from the program. We really miss him. If Sanel got a lot out of CitySquash, he gave back even more to the team, mainly in the dedication

and enthusiasm and sense of humor he brought every day to our practices, tournaments and field trips.

But I am heartened by the knowledge that CitySquash had a positive impact on his life and that he learned valuable lessons from our program that were not left behind in the Bronx. In the absence of squash, he will be a star on the baseball field or basketball court. And I am confident that he will remain focused on his schoolwork and continue to be a good and generous person. It is gratifying to know that CitySquash has played a formative role in his development.

As we look to the future and prepare to involve more children in CitySquash, Sanel's experience gives us confidence in our philosophy and our ability to make a positive difference in the lives of our team members. To fill the twelve spots available in our second class, we will invite nearly all of Middle School 45's four hundred sixth graders to our tryouts this fall.

We want to present the program to as many students as possible in an effort to attract people who, like Sanel, love to play squash, have a talent for the sport, and are hungry to work hard, not just on the court but also in the classroom. As more kids learn about CitySquash and tryouts become more competitive, the level of dedication among our team members should only increase. CitySquash's future looks promising.

*Tim Wyant is the executive director of CitySquash.*

## WHAT BRINGS ME BACK, WEEK AFTER WEEK

By Justin Muzinich

Cambridge, MA — As we passed through the turnstiles at Shea Stadium, I had to run in order to keep up with the kids. When we arrived at our generously donated luxury box, the collective adrenaline level did not subside for the next several hours. It may have partly been the sugar - not only did our hosts provide dinner, but also a continuous supply of eagerly received crackerjacks, cotton candy, and ice cream. Yet more than anything, the excitement came from the thrill of a new experience. Some had never been to a baseball game, and none had taken pictures with Mr. Met, the team's mascot who paid our box a visit after the 7th inning stretch.

I remember going to the first CitySquash practice about a year ago. The excitement was similar and again understandable - a new sport, a new team, and new friends. But in a month these would no longer be so new, and I did not expect the excitement to last. It did. What impressed me most as a volunteer was that not only on field trips, but Saturday after Saturday, the CitySquashers were thrilled to be at practice. They were being challenged to work hard in a way that

many never had been, and they were seeing the results both in school and on the squash court. Some were part of an organized team for the first time, their collective pride only growing as the year went on. And all were constantly being engaged in new ways, whether learning different squash shots or traveling to tournaments. What could have become routine in the minds of eleven year olds was instead a source of continuous excitement.

CitySquash's uncommon ability to teach valuable lessons yet create such genuine enthusiasm among team members is what kept me coming back as a volunteer. Because the kids were excited to be there, they were always open to advice, and it was tremendously fulfilling to work with such a good-natured and eager group. I cannot think of a practice at which I was not greeted by a hug and a declaration by some of the team members that they had improved so much since I was last there that they would now surely beat me in squash.

Having worked with several after-school programs before, the cherished place CitySquash holds in its participants' hearts strikes me as remarkable,

and when I am volunteering I cannot help but smile at the obvious importance the program plays in its participants' lives. I suppose I should not have been surprised when on the subway ride back from Shea Stadium, there was as much talk about squash as there was baseball. Even Mr. Met could not compete with what CitySquash meant to the kids, and for that reason I knew I would be back the following week.

### Teaching valuable lessons and maintaining enthusiasm

On May 23 CitySquash attended a New York Mets game at Shea Stadium courtesy of Thomas Vinci. Justin Muzinich, a member of the Harvard squash team from 1996-2000, is a CitySquash volunteer.

# CitySquash thanks all of the people and organizations that made our first year a success.

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CitySquashers at Yale University in February.



An Urban Youth Enrichment Program

CitySquash, Inc.  
P.O. Box 619 Fordham Station  
Bronx, New York 10458



After leading a clinic at the Sports Club/LA in July, Chris Walker offers CitySquashers advice. Walker regularly donates his time to the CitySquash.

## Nicol and Walker Put on Spectacular Show

Two of the World's Best Players Volunteer

By Frank Lee

Greenwich, CT — Enjoying an opportunity most squash players can only dream of, CitySquashers spent a Monday afternoon in March playing with two of the world's best players, Chris Walker and Peter Nicol. Walker, who lives in Greenwich, Connecticut, is a former #4 in the world and is perhaps the most accomplished squash player currently residing in the United States. Nicol, who lives in London, England and has held the #1 world ranking in each of the past six years, ranks among the best squash players in history.

The clinic, which Nicol and Walker volunteered on their own to do, took place on March 24 at Greenwich Academy, the K-12 girls school that boasts one of the nicest squash facilities in the New York City metropolitan area. The visiting professionals planned the entire two-hour session and spent time on court with each team member. Bogar Avila recalled learning a lot. "When I went on court with Chris Walker, he told us what to do, how to correct mistakes, get back to the T, get behind the ball." After technical instruction and physical exercises, the team members were treated to a one-game exhibition, which Nicol, after calling a set one tiebreaker, won in dramatic fashion, 15-14.

If the clinic was informative, the exhibition was theatrical. The mystifyingly long rallies included shots and retrievals that practically defied physics, according to those present. "They played great—not really great, the best!" said Tanesha Jackson. "They were really fancy. They did a lot of tricks." According to Tim Wyant, CitySquash's executive director, it was the opportunity of a lifetime. "Chris Walker and Peter Nicol are legends in squash. They are incredibly generous to have volunteered their time. They gave our team members an experience they will never forget, and we cannot thank them enough."

Walker and Nicol, it seems, are generous indeed. After the session in March Nicol expressed a desire to work with CitySquashers again when he next returns to New York City. "I loved their enthusiasm, not just for squash but for life," said the Englishman. Walker, for his part, has since volunteered numerous hours to the program. In July he was the guest coach during a summer camp practice at the Sports Club/LA in Manhattan's Upper East Side, and in August he began giving weekly lessons to CitySquashers. Walker, who coaches juniors Amanda and Coco Siebert of Greenwich, invites one or two CitySquashers to join 9 year-old Coco's Thursday training sessions. "I think the program is a fantastic opportunity for the kids," he said. "It is really exciting to be a part of it."



CitySquash announces expansion

Team Members See Grades Improve

Torres and Jackson Win 1st Urban Nationals

Briggs Cup a Big Success

How CitySquash Got Started