



THE MAD MINUTE

with **PAUL MAPLEY**

Tennis coach



Paul Mapley, 37, has introduced to Melbourne a variation of tennis that is played on the beach.

Q. How can tennis be played on a beach?

A. Beach tennis is strictly an aerial game, so it is all played with volleys. The game is basically a hybrid of tennis, squash, beach volleyball and even badminton. It is a real mixture, but its tennis attributes are greater than anything else.

Q. How did you come across beach tennis?

A. I am a teaching professional at the Southport Health Club and I was looking for a new challenge, for a new field of inspiration to move ahead. I thought about the possibility of playing tennis on the beach and came across this and thought, "Gee, why don't we do this?"

Q. Was there anything else that attracted you to the game?

A. Definitely. The fact that it allows all comers to play is good and because it has rules and a governing body, I thought it was a good opportunity to kick off something that is easy to play.

Q. Is it a sport that will run along beach volleyball's sex-sells theory? Are any of the players sporting Maria Sharapova-type outfits?

A. I think you can wear whatever you like. It is an individual sport and if you want to get out there and show off your best attributes you can, but it can go either way.

Q. How much does it differ from tennis?

A. Aside from the aerial aspect, the scoring system is the same as tennis. Then you bring in the net, which is higher than a normal net so it is not a wham-bam thing, it is played more with finesse and skill. You only have one-serve, so it is a no-fault system. You can always get a fair idea on how long a game will go for because there is no advantage system in the points scoring. Once it gets to deuce, the next point wins.

Q. How hard a sport is it to pick up?

A. Even if you are an absolute hack with other racquet sports, I guarantee that within half an hour you will start to show improvement, which is good enough for most people to want to have another go.

Q. There are a number of sports around where people can get their fix in 40 minutes or so. Is this a sport for the time conscious?

A. It is. The advantage points system means matches can be over reasonably quickly. What we are hoping for by next summer is to have a structured fixture on the beach where kids can play after school and then the adults at night. The walk-up-and-play part is a beauty of the sport and the fact that the rules are simple is a huge benefit because most people at some stage have been influenced by tennis, volleyball or squash. This means we only have to give a couple of brief explanations and point them in the direction of the court.

Q. Where and when can people play?

A. At the moment we are demonstrating in Melbourne at Kerferd Rd, between the Sandbar Cafe and Portobello Cafe. We are there most Sundays, commencing play at 10am and playing for about three hours. We might also pop up at some other places so interested people should check out our website at www.beachtennis.com.au to check out where.

Q. What about equipment?

A. We are trying to leverage a little bit of the snowboard, surfboard thing, so we have three raquets called the Surfer, the Grommet for junior players, and the Sword for intermediate players. The raquets are made of fibreglass and graphite but have no strings. It's a solid face and you can put your own designs on the face. They cost about \$70 each. The balls are low compression balls and cost \$10 for a can of four.

— with **COURTNEY WALSH**