

# MAN OF MANY SPORTS

*The Army's new squash champion is a Gunner officer who excels at any kind of ball game—and throws the discus for good measure*

*Pictures: SOLDIER Cameraman F. TOMPSETT*

**T**HE Army's new squash racquets champion, Lieutenant Michael John Perkins of 4 Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery, is a young man with what the experts call a "ball eye."

Tennis, cricket, rugby, soccer, hockey, badminton, golf, fives, and, of course, squash—there is hardly a sport which he does not play rather better than the average man. At several of them he is outstanding.

At 22 he recently won the Army's Squash Racquets championship by beating Second-Lieutenant C. M. Wilmot, Royal Sussex Regiment, in three straight games. He lost only one game in the tournament, when he dropped points to Major N. W. Nicholson, of 34 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, runner-up in the Army championship in 1951. The 1952 champion, Lieutenant I. C. Salles de la Terriere, of 11th Hussars, is now serving with his regiment in Malaya and was unable to defend his title.

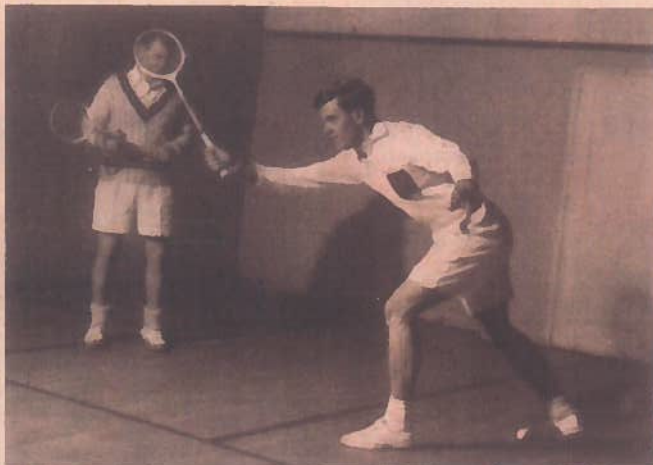
Lieutenant Perkins began to play squash at school at the age of 10. His instructor was the mathematics master, Mr. H. E. Hayman, a fine player himself and today secretary-president of the Squash Racquets Association of Great Britain. By the time young Perkins went to Charterhouse he was already an accomplished performer and in 1947 reached the

*Right: If the photographer had tried to take an action shot with the other man's head framed in the racket he couldn't have done it.*

*Squash can be one of the most strenuous of indoor games. Here Lieutenant Perkins jumps for it.*



**Winner's smile:** Lieutenant Michael Perkins, the Army's squash champion, now serving with the Royal Horse Artillery in Rhine Army.



semi-finals of the Public Schools championships.

Called up for National Service in 1949, he found little time for squash while serving as a Gunner with 64 and 67 Regiments, Royal Artillery, but after passing through the Mons Officer Cadet School in 1950 he was invited to join the Royal Artillery squash team. That was the year he was narrowly beaten in the final of the British Junior Squash championships and reached the last 16 in the senior event.

He first entered for the Army championships in 1951 when he reached the quarter-finals. The following year he was knocked out in the same round by the then champion, Lieutenant de la Terriere. He was also beaten by the same opponent in the final of the Rhine Army squash championship in 1952.

Lieutenant Perkins is Rhine Army's hockey centre-forward. He led his regiment to victory in last year's Rhine Army hockey tournament. Last year he reached the semi-final of the doubles in Rhine Army's tennis championship. He is regimental discus-throwing champion and in 1953 was third in 7th Armoured Division's individual athletics championships with a throw of 108 feet. He plays cricket, soccer and rugby for his regiment. But he prefers squash to any other game. It exercises every muscle in the body, improves stamina and is mentally refreshing, too, he says.

## ROLLING OUT THE RICE IN HONG KONG

**F**LOODS, earthquakes, hurricanes, fires . . . in the wake of them you usually find the British soldier making himself useful.

In Hong Kong the Army has been giving unstinted help in a big relief operation rendered necessary by the great fire which swept one of the most densely populated squatter areas on Christmas Day, leaving 60,000 Chinese homeless.

Squatters—mostly refugees from behind the Bamboo Curtain—are one of the Colony's most worrying problems. They live in such extreme congestion that effective fire-fighting is heavily hampered.

Within 48 hours of the fire, Hong Kong and Kowloon Garrison (under Brigadier R. D. Bolton) had its emergency plan in full operation. It undertook to issue 30,000 pounds of cooked rice to the victims daily—for an indefinite period.

Four main cooking centres were set up. Each day two officers and 60 men from two Gunner regiments—25 Field and 72 Light Anti-Aircraft—were detailed to control food queues and distribute the rice. From ration surpluses the Army also provided a considerable quantity of herring and biscuit, which in Chinese eyes rate as a delicacy.

The Royal Engineers had a big contribution to make. They set to work with their bulldozers amid the scorched ruins of two villages, shifting mounds of wreckage and levelling stumps of wall so that a flat area could be prepared for rebuilding.

Other Army bulldozers began to scour away two hills in order to provide filling material where it was needed.

The major responsibility for relief lay with the Colonial Government, but the big part played by the Army was fully recognised and there was smooth liaison on both sides.

It was Hong Kong's worst squatter area fire to date, and the problem of resettlement is a very difficult one. Even if the entire ruined area, once levelled, is used for rehousing, little more than half those displaced by the fire will be accommodated.



# SQUASH-THAT CLASS BARRIER!



Featured this month in the second of the new **SOLDIER** series about Army sport is squash, a game that suffers from its own snob appeal

All the speed and action of a rally on the squash court is portrayed in this picture taken at the only championship final ever won by an other rank. Near the camera is Gunner Hicks returning a shot to runner-up Major M J D Tingey.

**T**HAT familiar "zonk" loved by enthusiasts echoed in triplicate as the squash ball sped round three walls of the court. With the incredible reflex action the game demands, a player darted forward to slam the ball back. This was the climax of the Army Squash Rackets Championship, the third set of the five-set final.

With the top seed, Captain M G P Chignell, of The Royal Hampshire Regiment, and Captain C M Wilmot, of The Royal Sussex Regiment, level at set-all, the third was clearly the vital set. Both players sensed this and pulled

out all the stops in a series of exhausting rallies. Though the top seed fought like the tiger on his regimental crest, Captain Wilmot clinched the set and soon took the fourth set and the match at 9-3, 5-9, 9-7, 9-5.

It was a fine match to watch, as full of life as the game itself. Yet this fast and exhilarating sport—the most concentrated form of exercise in existence—is struggling to maintain its appeal to the Army. Only 26 players entered for this season's Army championships at London's Naval and Military Club. For the equivalent competition in the Royal Air Force there were 46 entries. At the subsequent inter-Services championships the Army was surprisingly beaten by both the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy.

This is just not good enough for the Service that has introduced the game all over the world and dominated it for many years, winning the inter-Services competition 20 times since 1929. What is happening to this Army sport?

The fact is, squash is suffering from its own snob appeal. Because squash is taught largely in public schools it is officer-dominated in the Army. And the situation is worsened on the other ranks' side by a combination of inverted snobbery, social reticence and ignorance of the game. Another reason this great game has remained so exclusive is its unique problems of staging. Four walls are needed in play, with only the rear wall, lower than the others, allowing space for a small balcony of spectators. Few non-players ever see a game, which is a pity as a top class match has all the thrills of a Wimbledon final.

But all is not lost. The Army Squash Rackets Association is on the warpath, with secretary Major Tony Naylor, Royal Army Education Corps, leading the assault on the class barrier. It is time, he says, that the prejudices against squash were swept away, time the rank and file marched in and tackled the former public schoolboys at their own game. But the challengers will need to be fit and have a quick eye for a ball.

"Men who have played at school obviously have an advantage," says

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