

To Stay in Shape, Just Add Squash

A friendly rivalry with rackets fuels regular competition between a brother and sister in Washington, D.C.

WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT?

Jen Murphy

SIBLING RIVALRY has helped Fariborz Ghadar, 69, and his sister, Margaret Ghadar, 65, grow closer—and healthier. For the past three years, the two have met regularly for squash dates in Washington, D.C. “The beauty of playing with my sister is that I can’t stand her up,” Dr. Ghadar says. “She’ll get really angry if I don’t keep my commitment.”

The siblings attended universities in Boston and played squash together in their 20s. After graduation, Ms. Ghadar went on to become a vice president at J.P. Morgan in New York City and Dr.

Ghadar entered investment banking in Washington and founded the Center for Global Business Studies at **Penn State University**. Their careers left little time for family get-togethers, let alone workouts.

“My job required a lot of travel and many fancy meals,” he says.

That led to weight gain and subsequent back pain.

Dr. Ghadar moved to Washington, where his sister is now semiretired. He commutes three hours a few times a week to teach courses at Penn State. “My sister was into spinning and would drag me to classes at Equinox, but I felt it was a lot of sweat, and no fun,” he says. “Neither of us were into running, so she suggested we pick up squash again.”

Squash is played in a fourwalled court with a small rubber ball. Once the ball is served, players take turns hitting it against the front wall. The ball may strike the side or back walls, but may only bounce once on the floor. The Ghadars hired a coach, Amir Wagih, to train them three times a week.

The sport requires nonstop bursts of speed and agility. “I burn twice as many calories playing squash than I do spinning,” Ms. Ghadar says.

“You’re constantly running, diving for the ball, twisting and lunging.” Dr. Ghadar likes that squash also requires strategy. “The game is very unpredictable, not like cycling or running,” he says.

“As you’re chasing the ball, you think how and where will I hit it.

It’s like chess on steroids.”

Both are self-described type-A personalities. After matches, the two grab coffee and catch up. “You really can’t chat on the court,” says Dr. Ghadar. “You’re just focused on breathing.”

The Workout

Dr. Ghadar is up by 4:30 a.m. to take calls from Europe or Asia. By 6 a.m. he’s at the gym in his apartment building and does 45 minutes of cardio and 30 minutes of yoga, which he says has helped manage his back pain. Monday, Friday and Sunday he and his sister train with their squash coach. They start with skill drills, like volleying against the wall. Then they take turns playing one-on-one against the coach for five- to 10-minute bouts. Dr. and Ms. Ghadar then face off for 45 minutes. The siblings are evenly matched. “She has more refinement and I’m a bit stronger,” Dr. Ghadar says.

They try to play other people throughout the week. Dr. Ghadar has occasionally faced his students. His goal is to beat his teaching assistant, who plays squash for Penn State’s club team. “She’s in her 20s and can run like crazy and hit hard,” he says. “The only way I’ll have a chance is to play smart rather than try to play strong.”

The Diet

“Breakfast is routine: lots of coffee followed by oatmeal topped with half of a banana and almond milk.” If Dr. Ghadar doesn’t have a lunch meeting, he goes to yoga and eats rice and beans with vegetables after. He allows himself to have pasta and pesto sauce for dinner on days he plays squash. “Dining out is my problem,” he says. “I don’t enjoy having a big meal, but can’t control myself. I go out largely for the social interaction, because if I keep refusing dinner with friends and colleagues, pretty soon I won’t have friends and colleagues.”

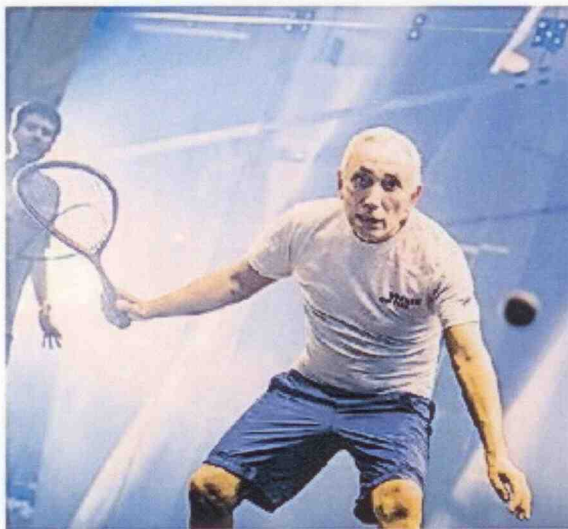
The Cost & Gear

Dr. Ghadar pays \$3,200 a year for his executive-level membership at Equinox, which includes parking and a locker. He pays \$180 an hour for his squash coach. He wears Under Armour apparel and Asics squash-specific sneakers designed with more stability

and a large pivot point on the sole for wellplanted turns. He plays with a Tecnifibre Dynergy AP 125 racket, which retails for about \$190.



Fariborz Ghadar, top left, and his sister, Margaret Ghadar, top right, meet with their squash coach, Amir Wagih, above.



APRIL GREER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL