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Stout Captures US Open Court Tennis Title

March 6, 2010, by Rob Dinerman © 2010 SquashTalk.com, [Independent News](#); SquashTalk LLC; Photography

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ISDA (Squash Doubles) Standout is also Current World Racquets Champ

There can be little argument that **James Stout** is the best (or certainly the most versatile) all-around racquet sports athlete in the world after the events of this past weekend at the Racquet & Tennis Club in mid-town Manhattan, where the soft-spoken Bermuda native is the court tennis and racquets pro at the host club, and where on Monday evening he captured the U. S. Open Court Tennis Championship, defeating several higher seeds (including the defending champion) in the process without ever being extended to a fifth set.

Stout added this prestigious title to the World Racquets Champion standing that he has held for the past 16 months by virtue of the convincing five sets to one margin of his Challenge-Match victory in November 2008 over then-racquets champ Harry Foster (see the [squashtalk.com](#) article [on the Stout-Foster match](#)). Oh yes, did we mention that Stout earned a No. 116 PSA squash singles ranking in 2004 and that he and R&T pro-shop colleague Yasser Kamel have in recent months successfully qualified into several main draws of important stops on the ISDA pro squash doubles tour as well?

DRAMATIC TURNAROUND

The fourth-seeded Stout, ranked No. 7 in the court tennis world standings heading into the U. S. Open tourney, followed a straight-set quarterfinal win over '04 and '05 champion Tim Chisholm with a 3-6 6-2 6-5 6-4 conquest of top seed and '09 winner Camden Riviere to reach the final, where he prevailed by a 6-2 6-2 3-6 6-2 tally over third seed Bryn Sayers of England. The remarkable progress that the slender left-handed Stout has made in court tennis is compellingly pointed up by his previous encounter with Riviere, a year ago in the '09 U. S. Open in Philadelphia, when Stout could not garner more than a combined four games in the three one-sided sets.

Although, as noted, Riviere took the first set of this rematch Saturday morning, Stout seized the initiative in the second set, played perhaps his best game of the tournament at 5-all in the third to take an important two sets to one lead, and moved confidently out to 5-2 in the fourth, which he was able to close out with a solid performance in the last game that snuffed out Riviere's last-ditch rally to 4-5.

After topping the top-seeded Riviere in that semi, Stout faced an altogether different challenge in the final, where he had to deal with a contemporary whom he had never faced before and who, like Stout himself, was seeking his first-ever major court tennis championship after upsetting a higher seed (No. 2 Steve Virgona) in a four-set semifinal. The keys to this outcome were two-fold: first, Stout was much calmer at the outset of this match than his opponent, whose early-sets nerves may have played a role in the plentiful unforced errors he committed before finally settling down and playing his best tennis in the third set; and second, the visible edge in foot-speed that Stout holds over not only Sayers but every other player in the 25-man field.

This latter trait, which also played a defining role in the World Championship racquets win over Foster 16 months ago, evinced itself in the several "swing" points that cropped up in each of Stout's trio of 6-2 sets during which Sayers hit what appeared to be a winner, only to have Stout not only return it into play but do so in a manner that put Sayers on the defensive. There is no doubt that the points that the latter lost in this manner after being in a strong position to win them exacted not only a statistical but also a psychological toll. In the end, Stout (who with partner Mike Gooding lost in the semis of the doubles to eventual champs Virgona and Ben Matthews) won going away, finishing off the match with a series of sharply-hit angles (especially off his backhand, the side where Stout has made the most improvement in terms of both shot selection and execution) that skidded into the corners for clean winners.

NINETEENTH CENTURY

Unfortunately for Stout, who will be competing in the U. S. Open racquets event this weekend in Chicago, his win comes a little too late for him to be granted a spot in the four-man court tennis Eliminator competition (for which both Riviere and Virgona have been selected) that will take place in a few weeks at Tuxedo Park for the right to challenge perennial (i.e., since 1994) World Champion Rob Fahey, who missed this U. S. Open due to injuries to his leg and back, in May.

James Stout: Court Tennis and Racquets Star



James Stout at the Bermuda Squash Open 2007 photo @ SquashTalk

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But if Stout can successfully defend his World Championship Racquets title next year, given the enormous strides his court tennis game has made in a very short amount of time, he clearly has a real chance of dethroning the now 41-year-old Fahey, or whoever wins this spring, when the next court tennis World Challenge rolls around in 2012, which would make him the only player to simultaneously hold both the world court tennis and racquets titles since Peter Latham accomplished the feat in the late 1890's. It would be foolish to bet against this unassuming young southpaw, whose low-key self-presentation belies exceptional athletic and competitive skills, and who seems capable of ascending the world rankings in these various and diverse racquet sports in astonishingly swift and decisive fashion.



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