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**NORTHS STAR** — Virginia and Clare North both reach to return a shot en route to winning the husband/wife final of the Ann Arbor Mixed Doubles Tournament. Story, D3.

1990

## DOUBLES

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Jim and Paula Burdelski have been married 23 years. They have reached the finals in the city tournament the last five years.

"It's very simple, really. Jim is the stronger player. I just try to keep the ball in play and let him put it away," Paula said. "In terms of emotions, we both know that if we let that fall apart it can take you out of the game. We try to remind each other not to get negative. It works out. Jim is more easy to get along with. I tend to be the fiery one."

Said Jim: "The key is to be supportive. You have to realize that your partner isn't making mistakes on purpose or to aggravate you."

What about non-mixed doubles? What makes a partnership click or split? According to some of the best teams in the city, the secret is matching dissimilar playing styles, temperaments and egos.

"I can see where two similar personalities could lead to problems," said Burdelski. "If you have two strong, aggressive personalities, one or the other will have to give in to certain situations. You have to establish roles and know what you can and cannot do."

That was not a hardship for Burdelski this year. He is paired with Tom Pullen in men's 40-over doubles. For the past three years Pullen, an Ann Arbor dentist and an assistant tennis coach at Pioneer, paired with Bob Carr to win the Ann Arbor 40-over doubles title. In those three years, Carr and Pullen won eight of the nine tournaments they played in.

"We worked very well together," Pullen said. "My job was to set things up, Bob's job was to put it away."

The Carr-Pullen pairing was typical of a successful doubles team. Pullen was the aggressive, intense, hard-hitter. Carr was the laid-back, finesse player. Burdelski is similar to Carr in both style and

temperament.

"Tom Pullen is the quarterback of the team and you have to accept that," Burdelski said. "He's the key guy. He's very competitive and very intense and I enjoy playing with him. He gets my fluids going out there. Plus, he's coached state champion doubles teams at Pioneer. I respect his knowledge."

A somewhat different chemistry exists with the immensely successful doubles team of Bill Godfrey and Eric Johnson. Both are outstanding singles players. Yet, they have been able to combine talents without ego conflicts. The pair has won the Ann Arbor pro doubles league two straight years and is currently working on its second straight city title.

"Really, neither of us has had to sacrifice any part of our game," said Johnson. "Bill has an overpowering serve and he has always been very strong at the net. My serve is not as strong as a lot of players', so Bill's quickness at the net helps during my service games."

Johnson's fluid and near-flawless groundstrokes aren't exactly a detriment to the team, either, though he is reluctant to talk about it.

But as in the case of Pullen and Burdelski, there is a healthy clash of temperaments with Godfrey and Johnson.

"We're different," said Johnson. "I'm very intense in tournaments and I try to stay focused on the next point. I try to avoid all distractions. But Bill seems to find enjoyment in a lot of things. He'll go for the flamboyant, flashy shot at any given time. And if he misses, he'll have on this huge, huge grin. He doesn't take it all too serious. He keeps me from going over the edge, from being too intense. It all works together well, because I know ultimately, Bill is competitive and he wants to win."

The dynamics of doubles. Two discordant personalities, styles and abilities trying to blend together, like discordant harmony.

## There is good, bad in tennis doubles

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It can strain a marriage and sever a friendship. It can also mold two divergent personalities into a smooth-functioning, harmonious tandem.

We're talking, of course, about the intriguing dynamics of tennis doubles.

Virtually all of the faces and facets of doubles play have been on display this month during the Ann Arbor City Tennis Tournament. A couple of weeks ago there was the mixed doubles tournament, a combining of husbands and wives, dads and daughters, dudes and their dates. This week, we've seen the more serious side of doubles, men and women strategically paired in hopes of producing a power team.

"For the most part, doubles partners get along with each other, I would say," said Gordon Boettcher, a long-time area high school tennis coach and veteran of the city tournament. "Where you see the conflicts are with the married couples. They get along in their marriages, but not always on the court. I've seen husbands who are tough losers. The wife will be doing her best, but the husband will really get on her. I once heard a husband say to his wife, 'You just serve and get out of the way. Let me take all the shots.'"

Jim Burdelski, tennis coach at Huron, agrees that most of the bad partnerships occur in mixed doubles.

"Mixed doubles partners can be very destructive," he said. "They can become non-supportive of each other and blame each other for errors. That can get nasty."

But Burdelski's personal experience in mixed doubles has been anything but destructive.

"I guess not," said Paula Burdelski. "We've been playing doubles together for about 15 years and we're still married."

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