

AHMED ON HAT-TRICK Stars coming for challenge

KHALEEJ TIMES

Dubai

SHAIKH Ahmed Mohammed Hasher Al Maktoum will be looking to make it three-in-a-row when the fourth UAE National Squash Championship sponsored by The Khaleej Times gets under way next month.

Over 30 entries are expected for the championship which begins at the Emirates Golf Club courts on March 13 and includes two exhibition challenge matches by Jahangir Khan and Chris Dittmar, ranked two and three in the world respectively, said Lt. Col. Abdul Aziz Abdullah, president of the UAE Squash Rackets Association.

The challenge match will take place on the final night of the national championship, March 17, at 7pm at Emirates Golf Club and then the following night at Al Ain Palace Hotel, Abu Dhabi. In both challenges, the winner gets £4,000 and the loser £3,000.

For the first time the national championship will have a plate event for the losers of the first round. The winner of the main event gets a Dh20,000 diamond studded Longines watch, the runner-up a Dh10,000 watch and the third placed player Dh5,000 watch. All three also get trophies.

The plate event winner gets a watch and a trophy and so does the runner-up. The main sponsors are Longines-International Watch Company, Sana Fashions and, of course, by far the number one newspaper in the Middle East, The Khaleej Times.

The last date for entry to the national championship is March 7 and entry forms are available from Abbas Khan on Tel: 375512 and 291292 for Dubai-Sharjah area, from Iqbal Khan of Al Ain Palace Hotel on Tel: 322377 for the Abu Dhabi area and Mohammed Ali at the Gulf Air office on Tel: 654882 and 656440 for the Al Ain area.

Reigning champion Shaikh Ahmed's toughest fight is expected to come at the hands of last year's runner-up Ali Dawood. But as one keen squash observer put it "Shaikh Ahmed has been honing his court crafts so much these past few weeks that Ali probably will get blown away."



● Lt. Col. Abdul Aziz

As far as the exhibition challenge is concerned between British Open champion, Pakistani legend Jahangir and Australia's Dittmar, the UAE will be their last stop before they probably tangle again at the British Open which begins on April 10. Jahangir is looking for an unprecedented ninth British Open title.

Tickets for the challenge match at EGC are priced at Dh150 and there are only 80 seats available. Tickets will be available at Chicago Beach Hotel Sports Complex, Indian Sports Club and International Watch Company from March 10.

The challenge in Abu Dhabi is at the culmination of the Al Ain Palace Open championship from March 6 to 18 which has four events—the Al Ain Palace Open, the Division I and II championship, Division III and IV championship and the Ladies Open. Cash prizes and trophies will be awarded from the semi-finals onwards.

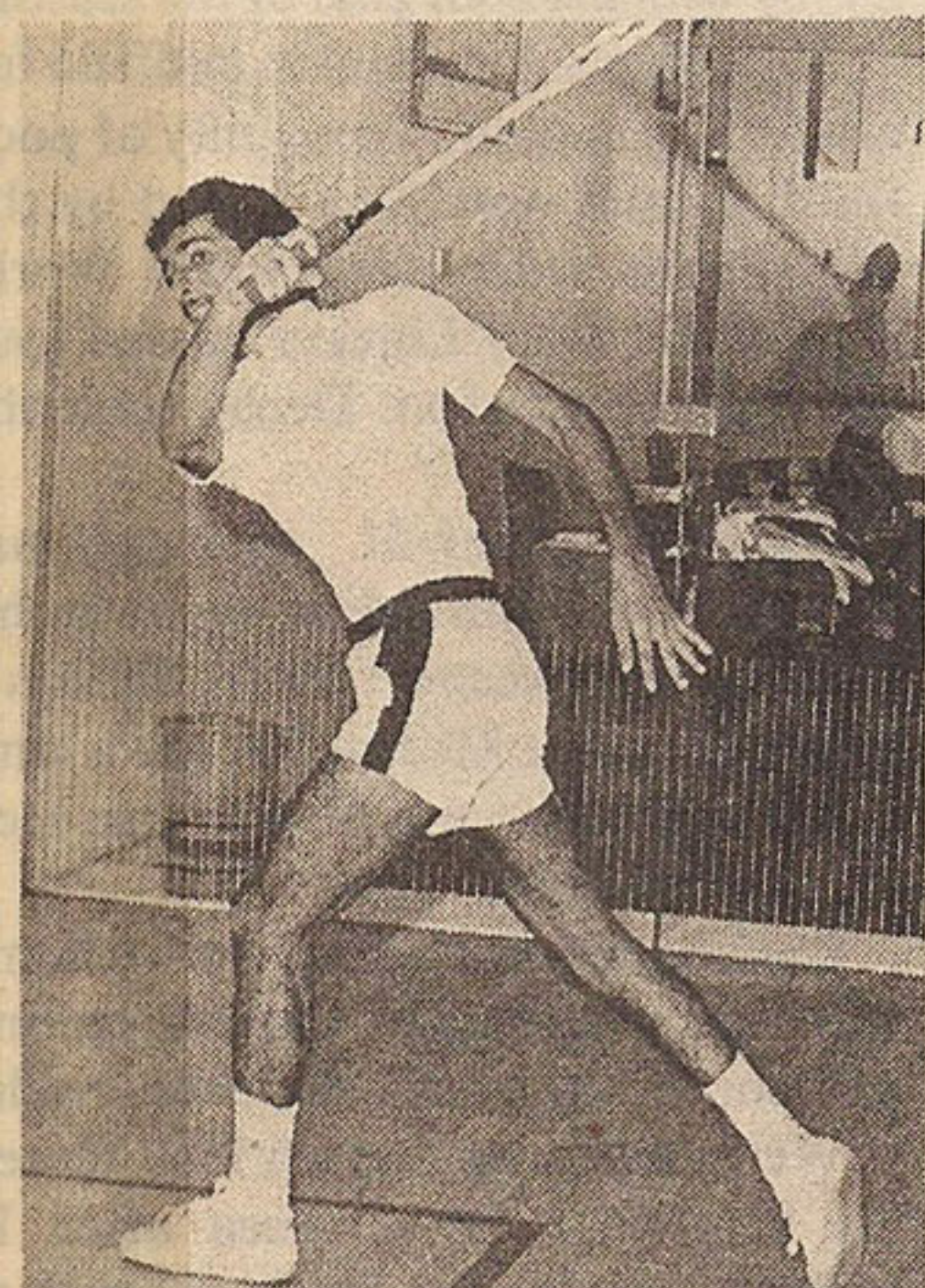
The exhibition challenge sponsored by Abu Dhabi Duty Free will take place after the final of the open and those interested in watching the squash champs can do so on a 100" screen by the poolside for Dh40 which includes a bar-b-que. The seating capacity by the poolside is 300 while 60 seats are available by the squash court.

"But that is strictly for VIPs, sponsors and special invitees," said Mohammed Iqbal of Al Ain Palace. "We don't want to make any money from the challenge match, it's purely for promotional purposes and that is why we are charging only Dh40."

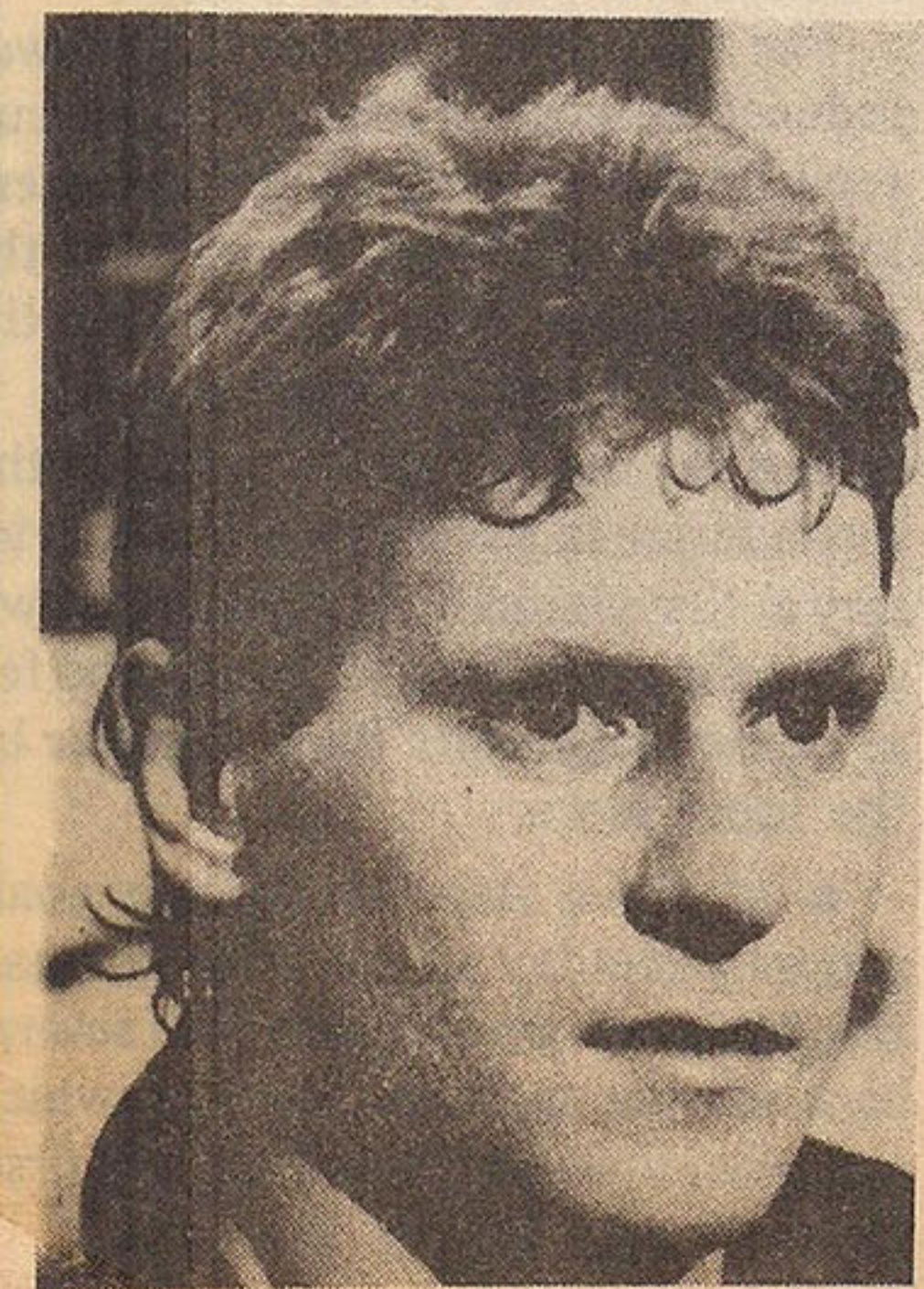
And, of course, the Al Ain Palace championship is sponsored by The Khaleej Times.



JAHANGIR



SHAIKH AHMED



DITTMAR