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National Museum of African American History and Culture

Playbill for Guys and Dolls

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few celebrity tennis players on either coast who has actually tasted legitimate combat. A first rate college player at the University of Tennessee, Cullum and his doubles partner, Bill Davis, briefly played the European circuit in the mid 1950's and even received an invitation to play doubles at Wimbledon. "We didn't play Wimbledon, and we didn't win much of anything," he says. "But we sure had a good time."

Cullum has had back problems on and off for the past couple of years and several years ago, while he was practicing volleys, a ball glanced off his racket and caught him flush in the eye. The injury left a slight vision impairment (not to mention a left eye that is a shade or two bluer than the right eye), but even with these handicaps, he is said to have the most stylish strokes on Broadway. Even John Simon would give his backhand a rave.

"I really love tennis," Cullum says. "But I can't play it for relaxation. Tennis, to me, has always been a wonderful sort of drama, like a great role, and sometimes I get so caught up in the drama of it, I try for shots not even Jimmy Connors would go for. Put me in front of a tennis audience and I'm worse. I can't help it. My instinct for playing for the crowd is greater than my instinct for winning. I guess that's why I became an actor instead of a tennis player."

We get a slightly different perspective from Jerry Orbach, a natural athlete who just might be the best pool player in show business, thinks his background as a pool shark has helped his tennis, which he took up a little more than three years ago. "My weaknesses are legion," he laments. "But I have a decent forehand, I can run, and I think I keep my cool a little better than some of the better players I meet. I'm not all that concerned with how I look when I hit the ball as look as it goes in."

Like most Broadway tennis players, Orbach regrets that his own schedule, coupled with the general inconvenience of playing tennis in Manhattan, prevents him from playing more than once a week most of the year. "But I'm not that caught up in the game," he says, "that I'm about to do what Neil Simon did: move to California simply to be able to play tennis everyday." Here, here!



Which brings us to Barbara Barrie, with whom I am in love, even though I've never seen her backhand up close. (It began with her marvelous karate scene in Company.) Barbara's is an interesting tennis case study. She played a ton of tennis as kid, growing up in Texas, junior doubles tournaments, but then she broke her femur (don't feel embarrassed, I didn't know either: it's a thigh bone) in a freak car accident and never thought to pick the game up again until five years ago mostly at the encouragement of her husband, who's been playing tennis for most of his life. "It's taken me this long," she now says, "to reach a point where I feel secure about joining any tennis foursome."

I doubt if anybody on Broadway plays as much tennis as Barbara Barrie. Her regular partners include Mary Rodgers (two hours of singles a week), and Christine Pickles. Barbara is almost "too embarrassed," she says, "to say how much I play during the summer."

"I play for blood," says Barbara Barrie. "Unless it's some problem at home with the kids or with my husband, I can put just about everything else out of my mind when I'm playing tennis. I don't have fancy outfits. I'm probably the only woman who wears sweat socks instead of peds. I love the kinetic feeling of running around. I love to work up a sweat. My favorite

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[[advertisement]]
[[image: color photo of well-dressed woman with up-do, who coyly smiles at man, with her hands clasped around his neck in a close embrace. Bespectacled man, with a possible resemblance to Christopher Reeve, is mid-laugh in suit and tie, has head against her.]]

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