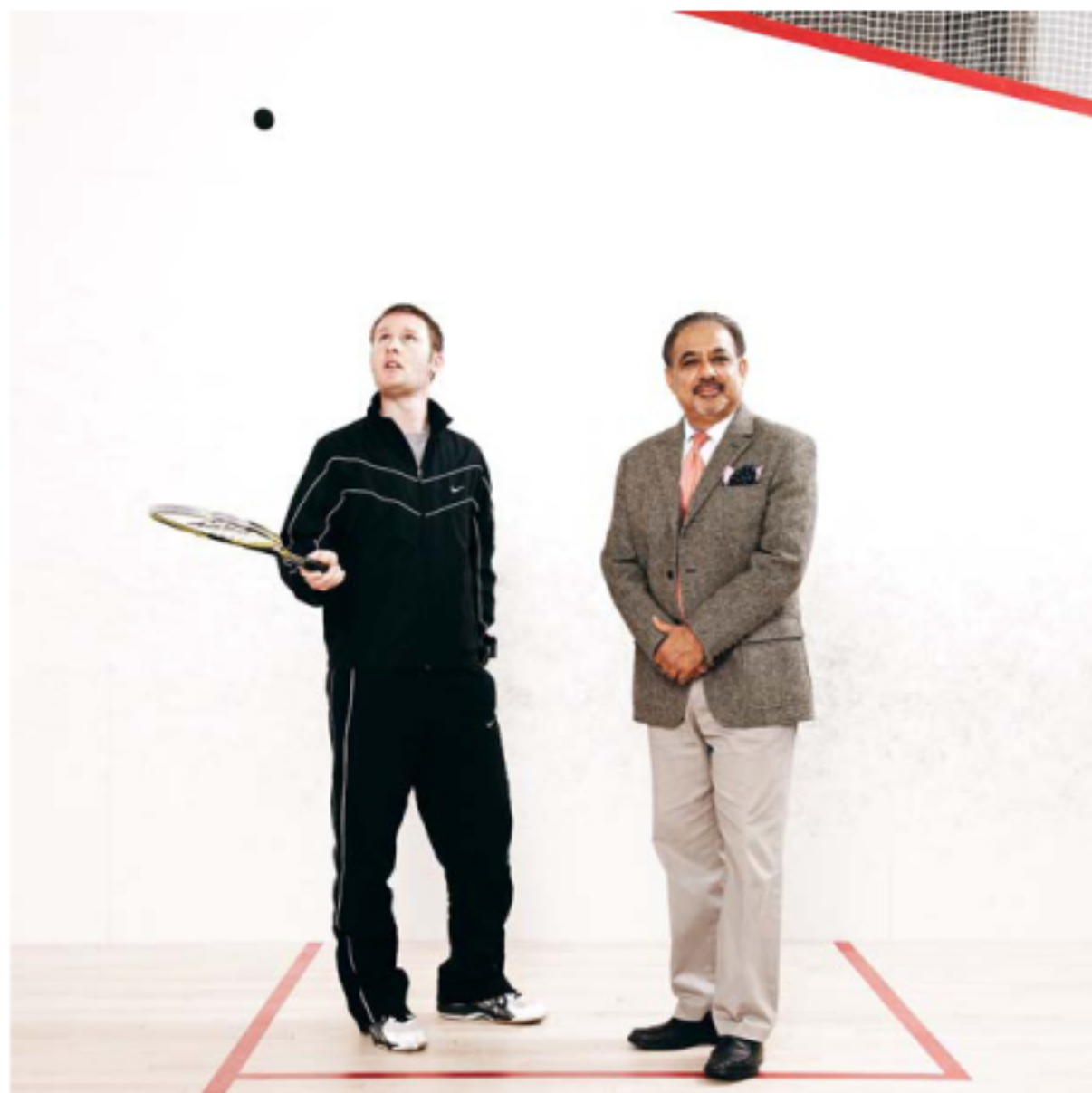


# Boston

## Racquetearing: Some of World's Best Squash Players to Visit Boston

Four members of Pakistan's national junior team will be coming to town to train and compete.

BY Rachel Slade



*From left, local squash aficionados Paul Mathieson and Mahmud Jafri. (Photo by Matt Kalinowski)*

Boston has always been a hub for squash. The city is home to some of the country's oldest clubs, liveliest leagues, and best players. And interest in the game has only been rising here in recent years: Membership at the Massachusetts Squash association has doubled since 2007, and we regularly attract major talent from around the globe to coach and play. Now Dover resident Mahmud Jafri is set to take the sport to even greater heights locally. In December, he'll be bringing four members of Pakistan's national junior team to Boston to train and compete.

Pakistan has deep roots in the sport. From 1950 to 1998, Pakistani squash players reigned supreme on the international circuit. Most famous was the legendary Jahangir Khan, who in the 1980s won 555 consecutive professional matches—the longest winning streak in squash history, and one of the longest in any sport. Since the late '90s, though, the trying political climate in Pakistan has increasingly discouraged the country's players from competing in international tournaments. While still ranked among the world's best, they haven't managed to win a single British or World Open.

But Jafri wants to change all of that. Pakistani by birth, he so loves the sport that 25 years ago he built a court in his home so his children and friends could learn to play. Now he wants to help Pakistan return to the top of the heap, and he figures he can do that by bringing young players here to train.

The plan is simple. If the Pakistanis, with their aggressive games, can beat up on the local talent, they can get seeded in tournaments in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, which, in turn, will allow them to move up in the international rankings. Only a few players would need to follow that path for Boston to be recognized as a new conduit to the top of world squash rankings. Then, it's game on. "The Pakistan Squash Federation will see how this goes," says Dover Squash coach Paul Mathieson, who will train the four players. "In the future, we can continue bringing them."