

Winning Shot

Squash, says William Douglass, is the perfect sport to help a disadvantaged kid gain some leverage. **By Danielle Beurteaux**

William Douglass first encountered the might of CitySquash in 2004, when he watched his son, then 9, play an intense match against one of the program's members at the Greenwich Future Stars Junior Tournament in Connecticut. After an hour of demanding competition, victory went to his son's CitySquash opponent, with a score of 9-7 in their fifth and final game. But although the two players were well matched on court, their backgrounds couldn't have been more different.

CitySquash is an outreach program that uses squash to broaden the athletic and educational opportunities of

in English debtor's prisons but is now seen as a sport of privilege — "requires maturity, thinking and a lot of skill," says Douglass, who began playing in his 20s.

It wasn't long before Douglass got involved with CitySquash, fundraising, hosting players at his home in Brooklyn and garnering support from his friends. "There are a lot of generous people among hedge fund managers," he says, "and a reasonable percentage of them play squash." When he finds an enthusiast, Douglass goes to work, requesting a check or some volunteer mentoring. In 2006 alone he raised \$250,000.

A year ago Douglass formalized his role with the group by becoming treasurer. He and his wife, Lynn, co-chaired the recent CitySquash Bash fundraiser, pulling in \$350,000, the highest amount ever gathered at the annual event. Now Douglass is focused on a capital campaign aimed at building a permanent home with courts and academic space. CitySquash executive director Tim Wyant has nothing but praise for Douglass's enthusiasm. "He's so passionate about our mission," says Wyant, 29, a former professional squash player. "He rolls up his sleeves and gets involved any way he can."

CitySquash, which is run out of an office above an off-campus pizza shop near Fordham, was founded in 2002, and modeled on programs in Boston and Harlem. This fall it will have 75 players in the co-ed program, ranging from fourth to tenth graders. Entry has become very competitive; the tryouts, which this year attracted 125 students, last three and a half months. Applicants are chosen based on a combination of traits: their level of motivation, athletic ability and academic success. Academics are as important as squash — homework must be finished before practice and grades must be kept up to stay in the group. Along with providing travel opportunities and a four-week summer camp, CitySquash offers tutoring, SAT preparation, mentoring and assistance with school applications.

Chris Fernandez, 14, exemplifies the group's success. This fall, as one of 15 CitySquashers attending or accepted by preparatory schools, he's off to Canterbury School in New Milford, Connecticut, on a full scholarship — a radical change for a student who says he had always assumed he would go to high school in the Bronx. "Canterbury looks like a paradise," says Fernandez, who hopes to attend Yale University one day. "I'm excited but at the same time nervous."

For more information, visit www.citysquash.org.



K2 Co-founder William Douglass helps kids play the angles — and get good grades.

inner-city children. About 90 percent of students at the organization's two partner public schools, both in the Bronx, qualify for federal free lunches. Douglass, 45, director and co-founder of K2 Advisors, a \$6 billion fund-of-hedge-funds firm in Stamford, Connecticut, was immediately impressed by the mission of CitySquash, which is based at Fordham University in an otherwise impoverished area of the Bronx. Squash — which has its origins in a game played