

# 'Gelhaus on wheels' grabs NPA national singles championship

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

**Ann Arbor, Mich.** -- Paddleball got its second straight first-time national singles champion when Cesar Carrillo easily outmatched eight-time NPACHAMPION Mike Wisniewski in the 2009 final.

Carrillo, 29, of Memphis, TN, topped Whiz, 21-3, 21-9, on March 15 at the Old IM Building at the University of Michigan.

First-time champion Aaron Embry of San Diego won in 2008. Another first-time champion was Chris Crowther of Riverside, Calif., in 2006.

Carrillo has been playing racquetball for a number of years and began playing paddleball about two years ago. This tournament was only his second in paddleball.

Carrillo's play was reminiscent of that of Kelly Gelhaus, a three-time national singles titlist from Riverside.

And the scores were reminiscent also of the scores in Gelhaus's first singles championship when he topped Andy Mitchell of Kalamazoo, Mich., 21-5, 21-7.

Carrillo's victory came quite easily. Like Gelhaus, he has great power and speed, and can get shots that most players cannot. He scored in a variety of ways -- straight-in kills, many pinches and -- like Gelhaus -- a maddening little dink in the left corner when he had Wisniewski off balance.

And he had Whiz, 51, of Bay City, Mich., off balance almost the entire match. Whiz could never get going. Actually, most of Whiz's best shots were for side-out.

Carrillo got off to a quick 6-0 lead in the first game. His winners came on a long left pinch, a miss by Whiz and easy passes.

Whiz's first point came on a miss by Carrillo. But then the latter ran off seven unanswered points to make it 13-1. Then the athletic Carrillo wasted little time in running off point after point while Whiz loudly berated himself for his play.

As Carrillo rolled to the first-game win, Whiz got a couple of points sandwiched in there.

The second game started a little better for Whiz -- but not much. It was 5-3 early in the game in favor of Carrillo. But then he added six more points to lead, 11-3.

Whiz got two points to trail, 11-5. But then Carrillo powered off 10 points over the remainder of the game while Whiz got only four.

After the match, Carrillo -- originally from Chihuahua, Mexico -- said racquetball requires more power "but I can be original in paddleball. I cannot get them (opponents' shots) all but I will try."

Paddleball, he said, "keeps me healthy. It's better than sitting on the couch and watching TV."

Wisniewski, who was playing in his 15th national open singles championship (there have been 48), was rather philosophical about the loss. "At least, I didn't get damaged physically," he said. "He usually had two options, sometimes three, on most shots and that makes it tough.

I hit the ball good, I felt good and I had the power. But I was always off-balance."

"He's a Gelhaus on wheels. He was hungry,"

Whiz said "I made it easy for him. He was comforted on just about everything. He sets up very well. I watch him and I think I used to be like that."

Whiz said he rarely gets an opportunity locally to face players such as Carrillo or Gelhaus. "I don't see that kind of stuff," he said.

"I don't play anybody like that. And that makes a difference."

Wisniewski had a breathtaking semifinal against Kevin McLaughlin of San Diego when the latter, who is 24, took Whiz to a tiebreaker before losing 21-19.

After the final, the other players in the open division -- who definitely were very impressed with Carrillo -- were nosing around and trying to find out who got the most points against Carrillo.

There weren't many.

Jim Owens, of Ann Arbor, a member of the NPABOARD of Managers, saw Carrillo in December of 2008 in a Hit-A-Round Exhibition in Memphis, and said this:

"If he travels to the NPANational Singles tournament, open players better beware."