

NPA

(INDOOR / FOUR-WALL)

National Paddleball Association

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NPA, 7642 Kingston, Portage, Mich. 49002

NEWSLETTER / SPRING 2006-2007

Gelhaus snags another crown

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

E. Lansing, Mich. -- If Kelly Gelhaus really concentrated on paddleball, he might well nigh be unbeatable.

Gelhaus, 36, of Riverside, Calif., won his third National Paddleball Association national singles title in four years Sunday, March 18, 2007, at the Michigan Athletic Club here.

And he did it in very convincing fashion, thrashing Mike Czabala, 30, of Ventura, Calif., 21-7, 21-11.

The only match Gelhaus has lost in those four years was in a tiebreaker in a national singles semifinal last year to Czabala. He admitted then that he had not practiced much before the tournament and was not in the best of shape.

And as a matter of fact, he doesn't work as hard at his game as do other paddleballers. Many top-level players generally concentrate much of their time on playing and

See GELHAUS, Page 2



Mike Czabala (left) and Kelly Gelhaus before the National Singles final match.



Paddleballer Ron Glosser reenacted at the National Singles his recent death experience on a court. Details, Page 2.

NPA juniors program ends after 30 years

Details, Page 5

**NATIONAL DOUBLES:
April 20, 21, 22, 2007,
Tournament House,
Riverside, Calif.**

GELHAUS

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practicing almost year-round.

Gelhaus has other interests and with his wife, Sara, purchases fixer-upper homes, refurbishes and then rents them. So he doesn't have a paddle in his hand all the time.

If he concentrated on paddleball the way some other players do, he might well nigh be unbeatable.

But he did say after Sunday's match that he had worked out in preparation for this tournament.

"As a matter of fact, I was playing better before the tournament," he said. "And Mike was off his game."

It probably wouldn't have mattered even if he was on it.

Gelhaus, who also has won the last three NPA national doubles titles, Sunday displayed some of the tremendous skills he showed for the first time when he won his first national singles championship in 2004.

Gelhaus took a 4-0 lead in the first game and then expanded it to 12-2, 18-3, before closing out the first game with a patented, soft backhand into the left side of the front wall.

The second game was much the same, with Gelhaus taking leads of 7-3 and 12-4 before Czabala had his best showing of the match, outscoring Gelhaus 4-2 to cut it to 14-8.

But then Gelhaus turned it up again, taking a 15-10 lead before closing out the match with his usual array of spectacular shots and power drives.

There was no question that Czabala was not playing well. But Gelhaus does that to you.

"I had a lot of my favorite shots, and I missed most of them," said Czabala. "You work for those opportunities and I didn't take advantage of them."

So that's six wins out of the last seven national singles and doubles championships for Gelhaus. Not a bad percentage. Think about it and you come up with: "That's amazing."

After winning Sunday, someone said to Gelhaus that "three out of four (singles titles) ain't bad."

Gelhaus responded by saying: "Yeh, just a little glitch last year."

Gelhaus defeated Brandon Creamer, 21-9, 21-11, in a quarterfinal match and 8-time national singles champion Mike Wisniewski, 21-16, 21-16, in a semifinal.

Czabala topped Kirk Loveday, 21-12, 21-7, in the quarterfinals and Greg Badger, 21-6, 21-9, in the semis.



Glosser sort of sat/fell before lying down. Next thing he knew he was in a hospital.

Glosser lives to tell the tale

Ron Glosser was asked at the National Singles Tournament if "he had had a major physical problem recently."

Glosser, 54, of E. Lansing, took the questioner along the line-up of courts at the Michigan Athletic Club to one of two squash courts.

They went inside and Glosser went to the left rear corner, pointed to the floor and said:

"Right here, right here is where I died!"

He was playing squash on Nov. 24, 2006, the day after Thanksgiving.

Then he explained later in an E-mail:

"Here are the facts of my story as I recall them and as told to me ipso the facto.

"I went to the MAC to play squash at 4 p.m., then woke up in the hospital at 2 a.m. Saturday.

"What am I doing here, all wired up? was my first thought. So I call home and my wife tells me I had a heart attack. Wow! There's more, she said. What?

"You now have three stents around your heart. Wow! There's more, she said. What? They're going to put two more in. When? Today. Wow!"

Glosser remembers: "Apparently, after a long rally, I went back to return serve, sort of sat/fell down, laid back, and my heart stopped.

"From what I've been told, it stopped from two to five minutes. Luckily, I was at the best, most popular club in the area.

"An EMT (can you believe it, an EMT) was working out, saw my dilemma and stepped in to help. Then a cardiologist (can you believe it, a cardiologist) who just happened to be in the building and heard the call came by and whacked my sternum so hard I think he cracked it.

"By now, other people had shown up with the paddles. The electric paddles (De fibs). They jump-started me and away to the hospital.

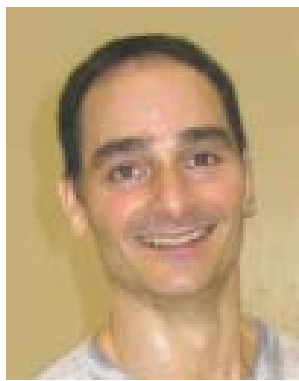
"One week later, I was back on the court. Playing. Hard. And that is my story."

By the way, Glosser won the Men's B national championship in a tiebreaker. -- LOU GIAMPETRONI

2007 National Singles Champions



KELLY GELHAUS
Open



PETE RUHALA
Men's A



RON GLOSSER
Men's B



LEN BALDORI
Men's C



MIKE WISNIEWSKI
Seniors



PETE RUHALA
Masters



ERIC CAMPBELL
Golden Masters



DON TRAXLER
Platinum Masters

MIDWEST SINGLES RESULTS

(Jackson, MI, YMCA)

OPEN: 1st, Mike Wisniewski; 2nd, Andy Mitchell; 3rd, Robert Stone. Consolation: Don Kirkconnell.

MEN'S A: 1st, Don Kirkconnell; 2nd, Robert Stone.

MEN'S B: 1st, Rick Clewis; 2nd, Ted Wray.

MEN'S C: 1st, Len Baldori; 2nd, Skip Freysinger; 3rd, Jim Howland. Consolation: Christine Todd.

MASTERS: 1st, Doug Hartung; 2nd, Sonny Salazar.

GOLDEN MASTERS: 1st, Jer Fennell; 2nd, Earl Pratt.



Recognize these two guys? They are among paddleball's best but for various reasons they have not been able to play in tournaments in about five years. They are Dan McLaughlin (left) and Randy Hoyle. They played in the Midwest Doubles in mid-February 2007 at Midland. McLaughlin is the only player to win national open, seniors and masters singles championships.

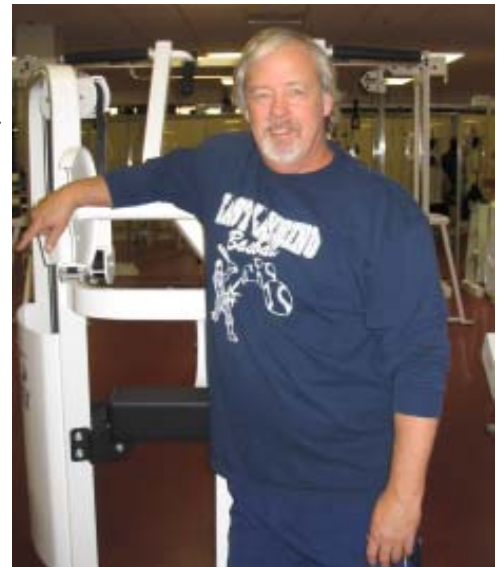
2007 NATIONAL SINGLES HIGHLIGHTS



Pete Ruhala (left) chats with Charlie Brumfield after Ruhala topped Brumfield in the Masters final. Ruhala, generally a squash player, also won the Men's A championship through injury forfeit when his opponent, Kirk Loveday, hurt his back in an earlier match. Ruhala, 45, of E. Lansing, impressed a lot of people with his speed and shots. He had played paddleball in the mid-1980s but went to racquetball and got proficient in that sport. He said he played PB only about a half-dozen times before the tourney.



Among spectators was Gary Croskey, (right) of E. Lansing, a former top-level open player and an active supporter of the NPA.



It was the first tournament in 30 years (above) for Doug Jones, of Allendale, Mich. He was a regular tourney fixture early on as an open player.



In the early years when the NPA was reorganized, Jim Easterling (above) served on the Board of Managers. He then went to racquetball and became a fixture in that operation. He was among visitors to the tournament.



Many of the California players sported a T-shirt that extolled the "rock star" celebrity of Brumfield. If you can't figure it out, it's a rocking chair and a paddle.

NPA juniors program ends after 30 years

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

The National Paddleball Association owes most of its success over the years to volunteers.

There have been many players and backers who have done yeoman work for the organization.

And few have done as much as Randy Wackerle, whose juniors program produced some of the sport's best players.

But like all good things, the NPA's most successful juniors program has come to an end after 30 years.

A challenge by a couple of junior high school students to their instructor 30 years ago led to the foundation of the program.

It was through Wackerle's efforts, almost solely, that many young people were exposed to the glories of the game.

Wackerle, of Bay City, Mich., was a math and drafting instructor for 7th- and 8th-graders at Bangor Junior High there when he started the program and later expanded it to all of the high schools.

"I had been playing paddleball for a long time and a couple of my students challenged me to a game," said Wackerle.

"I thought it would be fun and took them down to the YMCA just to show them the game. Well, they had so much fun it turned into a tournament and it's been going strong ever since.

"The high school program came to a close this year after 30 years," said Wackerle, who has retired. "I have been working evenings and Saturdays with driver education ...

"It started out with one school involved, my school that I taught at, then moved to all area high schools eventually.

"It was fun, lot of time, but after the Bean-Smith tourney (Jan. 27, 2007) and watching former students light up the court, it has all been worth it to me. Life is good."

The former students are Chad Krager, Eric Williams and Chad Schwall. And they did indeed light up the court in the open division where Williams and Schwall reached the final.

But they lost in the championship match to Mike Wisniewski and Earl Pratt.

It all started in 1977, Wackerle said, when a student named Blair Wieland "challenged me to a game of paddleball. I told him a 100-dollar bill would be in his hand if he could score a point on me.

"Once the word spread around school, I had



Wackerle with a promotional paddle he made years ago.

kids standing in line to sign up for this new sport. It was new to them ... The most students to ever sign up was 84 one winter with nobody collecting the 100 bucks."

The program was run like a bowling league as the students went head to head and earned points.

Trophies were given to the students and Wackerle never purchased one. He recycled trophies which other players had won by taking off the nameplates and having new plates made for the students.

Wackerle figures he has exposed more than 1,000 students to PB although only a few have entered tournament level play past their high school careers.

The best players ever to come out of the program are Bob Groya, Mike Czabala and Schwall -- all of them NPA champions.

In the later years, Wackerle said "I still (got) in the court with the kids and banged it around, but I didn't offer the 100-dollar deal anymore."

Randy Wackerle did all types of things to make sure his juniors program was successful.

Transportation was always a problem for the young players. Many times, Wackerle arranged to take some of the players to tournaments.

Many people recall the National Singles event in Ypsilant, Mich., in 1983 when Wackerle drove a van full of juniors to compete.

They stormed the building, scurried around and questioned anyone around about who they played and when they played. There was electricity in the entire group.

"It was one of my worst weekends in competition because it was such a distraction," said Wackerle. "But I enjoyed it. Those players still talk about that weekend."



Chad Krager (left), Randy Wackerle, Eric Williams and Chad Schwall before their semifinal match.

Wackerle instructed them well

BAY CITY, Mich. -- Teacher, students, foes.

There was a little bit of each at the 30th Bean-Smith Paddleball Tournament at the Bay Family Y on Jan. 27, 2007.

Randy Wackerle has taught and conducted a juniors program here for 30 years, in conjunction with the Bay City schools.

Three of the best players ever to come out of the program were involved in a match with Wackerle in the tourney.

They are Chad Krager, who was Wackerle's partner, and Eric Williams and Chad Schwall, their opponents in a semifinal of the open division.

Williams and Schwall won, 21-18, 21-17, despite the fact that Wackerle-Krager had a 14-4 lead in the first game.



Wisniewski does a little house-keeping before the final.

That put them in the final against Mike Wisniewski and Earl Pratt.

But Whiz and Pratt were too much for them and they lost, 21-16, 21-17.

Wackerle observed that Mike "seemed to be on a mission. He pretty much had Earl cover a little circle near the red lines and Whiz covered the rest of the court.

"Good shooting on both sides but the Whiz had too many rollouts."

In the A division, Rich Rahall and Bret Lewless took the title and Don Traxler-Dave Coffey captured the B division crown.

Results 2007 National Singles

OPEN: Kelly Gelhaus def. Mike Czabala, 21-7, 21-11. Greg Badger was third. Consolation: Robert Stone.

MEN'S A: Pete Ruhala def. Kirk Loveday, injury forfeit. Robert Stone was third.

MEN'S B: 1st, Ron Glosser; 2nd, Joe Baldori; 3rd, Ted Wray.

MEN'S C: 1st, Len Baldori; 2nd, Sam Baldori; 3rd, Skip Freysinger. Consolation: John Gardner.

SENIORS: 1st, Mike Wisniewski; 2nd, Vince Carlone. In round-robin competition.

MASTERS: 1st, Pete Ruhala; 2nd, Charlie Brumfield. Consolation: Vince Carlone.

GOLDEN MASTERS: 1st, Eric Campbell; 2nd, Jim Owens. Consolation: Skip Freysinger.

PLATINUM MASTERS: Don Traxler def. Mark Hector, 21-12, 14-21, 21-4. Traxler was unbeaten in three round-robin competition matches.

MIDWEST DOUBLES

(Midland, MI, Community Center)

OPEN: 1st, Mike Wisniewski-Chad Krager; 2nd, Andy Mitchell-Don Kirkconnell.

MEN'S A: 1st, Chad Krager-Don Kirkconnell; 2nd, Brandon Creamer-John Lowman; 3rd, Ron Malecki-Mike Shafer. Consolation: Jim Swendris-Jack Barenfanger.

MEN'S B: 1st, Paul Sylvester-Doug Hartung; 2nd Rick Clewis-Skip Freysinger; 3rd, Greg Keenan-Richard Rahall. Consolation: Jim Howland-Scott Wittbrodt.

MEN'S C: 1st, Don Traxler-Dave Coffey; 2nd, Chris Malecki-Ivar Krauklis; 3rd, Todd Carr-Gary Levandoski. Consolation: Jim Howland-Skip Freysinger.

MASTERS: 1st, Mike Wisniewski-Paul Chritz; 2nd, Randy Hoyle-Andy Mitchell; 3rd, Dan McLaughlin-Ed Maher. Consolation: Ted Wray-Robert Stone.

GOLDEN MASTERS: 1st, Randy Wackerle-Sandy DeGreif; 2nd, Brad Ex-Bill Farmer; 3rd, Jim Owens-Jim Sterken. Consolation: Fred Herner-Leon Serrine.

PLATINUM MASTERS: 1st, Don Traxler-Ed Petricca; 2nd, Larry Millen-Bill Taylor.

PBallers' home displayed on TV

A couple of paddleballers have been showing off their home on HGTV.

Marj Bolgos and Fin Henk, of Ann Arbor, Mich., who were married on a PB court, had a segment on the show in March of 2006. It was repeated in January of this year and probably will be shown again throughout the year.

Bolgos and Henk were married on the glass court at the One-On-One Athletic Club in Ann Arbor on Dec. 14, 2003. Paddleballer Jim Owens was the best man.

Bolgos said HGTV contacted the mayor, John Hieftje, to let him know the company would be filming in Ann Arbor, saying they wanted to do a segment on the city's healthy life style.

The mayor, who married the couple, is a personal friend and recommended that they be interviewed.



Marj Bolgos and Fin Henk

"When the HGTV producer called from California, I thought it was some sort of new scam since I never watch TV and had never seen the show," said Bolgos. "He left numerous messages on my cell and home phone."

She did not return any of their calls for about a month before the mayor's assistant called and said Bolgos should respond to the calls.

"I remember telling her, 'It's just some sort of scam,'" Bolgos said.

She finally called the producer and she was interviewed on the phone and asked about her husband and their home.

"They decided we would be a good fit for the show and set a date to come to Ann Arbor," she said.

The HGTV production crew "met us at One-On-One and taped us playing paddleball," Bolgos said. "Then they followed us home and filmed there. They were with us about five hours" but it was condensed into a two-minute segment on the show.

She added that "It was a lot of fun seeing how the crew worked and to be a part of the program."

Marj interviews Owens on radio

Marj Bolgos has a monthly local radio talk show called Ann Arbor Life Style on WLBY 1290AM.

In December 2006, she interviewed Jim Owens, a member of the National Paddleball Association Board of Managers.

"He was my guest for the hour and we talked about the history of paddleball, where it's played, and a number of other paddleball-related topics," she said.

"Jim was a great guest and I think the interview was very informative. The show has already aired but I plan to make it available on my website in the near future."

Activity update on Caprice

We neglected -- in the last issue -- to let the avid readers of the NPA newsletter know what Caprice Behner has been doing since she was sidelined by a severe knee injury in 2000.

She spends her winters on a little island called Bonaire near Venezuela.

"... I quit teaching and ... took off," she said.

Caprice said "It's an adventure living here ... The wildlife is amazing with the iguanas, parrots ... hummingbirds, donkeys.

"It's a desert island so it's a nice, dry climate ... We never seem to have a quiet moment as windsurfers from all over the world come here.

"... So you meet a lot of interesting people, just like the paddleballers."

During the summer, she is in Glen Arbor, Mich., she said, but "I end up going home to New Buffalo a lot as my folks are needing some extra help now."

Caprice won nine open NPA championships in singles and two in doubles.

Paddleballs

... can be ordered through Spectrum Sports, 2618 South St. Anthony, Jackson, Mich., 49203 or by calling Gordy Hatt at (517) 784-1861.



Herner

Paddleball Profile

Fred Herner has a good idea on how tournaments can be improved.

Herner, of Rhodes, Mich., says:

“We have to integrate the novice player at our home court with the seasoned players.”

Which is very true.

Many players tell of the difficulty of “breaking into” a veteran group in most areas, which can be very discouraging.

Herner, a technician at the nitrogen plant for Dow Chemical, began playing PB in “about 1978 when Gene Harris took me under his wing.”

What does Herner enjoy about paddleball?

“Great people, good sportsmanship,” he replied.

Herner finished second in Men’s B in a doubles tournament in Eau Claire, Wis.

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