

NPA

(INDOOR / FOUR-WALL)

National Paddleball Association

WWW.PADDLEBALL.ORG

NPA, 7642 Kingston, Portage, Mich. 49002

NEWSLETTER / SUMMER 2006-2007

Gelhaus, Entrikin repeat as national doubles champions

RIVERSIDE, CALIF. -- Kelly Gelhaus and Todd Entrikin successfully defended their National Paddleball Association national doubles championship at the Tournament House here on April 22, 2007.

Gelhaus and Entrikin -- both of Riverside -- topped Chris Crowther and Mike Czabala, 21-12, 21-14. Crowther is from Riverside and Czabala is from Ventura, Calif.

Gelhaus and Entrikin defeated Mike Wisniewski, of Bay City, Mich., and Czabala



Entrikin (left) and Gelhaus celebrate in the 2006 final.

It was the fourth straight national doubles title for Gelhaus, who also has won three of the last four national singles crowns.

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Kelly Gelhaus

Moving up the PB ladder

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

It's time to start talking about Kelly Gelhaus in the same breath as the top-ranked paddleballers who dominated the sport.

Gelhaus, 36, of Riverside, Calif., has won three of the last four national singles championships and the last four national doubles titles.

Few in the history of the sport have had a better stretch of exceptional performances.

One of the beauties of sports is that one can argue forever about the relative greatness of various stars from differ-

ent eras and how they would fare against each other.

Where do you start? How do you start? In paddleball?

Numbers help determine something.

Mike Wisniewski has won eight NPA national singles championships, three more than Steve Keeley, who has one more than Steve Wilson.

And the singles championship generally is considered the premier event of the sport.

Although the national doubles champions are no slouches.

If you talk with a dozen knowledgeable PB aficionados, you

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DOUBLES

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That's seven of the last eight national singles and doubles championships. A rare achievement, indeed.

"I had a game plan that we were able to execute," said Gelhaus. "We played the ball deep and did not let Crowther's power take over and we tried to keep Mike from making so many great gets up front."

Crowther, who is called The Giant, is the 2006 national singles champion and checks in at 6-foot-6 and weighs about 225.

Gelhaus said Entrikin "kept a very level head and played a very smart match. Everyone knows who the fastest guy in the court is, and that is Todd ... (and) Todd can shoot his forehand better than anyone I have seen in paddleball."

Crowther "played a great game," said Gelhaus, "but I think he played a little too much racquetball and the ball is too hard to kill on a consistent basis from the back of the court. I played most of my return of serves right back to him."

Gelhaus said Czabala is "great up front. However, he is not capable of making the same offensive shots from mid- and back court."

Wisniewski, the eight-time national singles champion, said "Todd made some miraculous saves, as did Czabala; but in the end it was Kelly who drove the ball home time after time and kept Mike and Chris off balance."

Czabala said "It was one of the harder-fought matches that I've played in, with outstanding gets and rallies on pretty much every point.

"It was one of those matches that, even though I lost, I felt like 'Wow, that was some good paddleball.'

"It was actually a very clean game with no easy points and very few unforced errors ... I think everyone was spent and felt like they had been through a battle at the end of the match."

In earlier matches, Gelhaus-Entrikin defeated Bob Pfau-Bryan Oates and Greg Badger-Kirk Loveday.

Crowther-Czabala topped Wisniewski-Chad Krager and Vince Carlone-Bryce Cooper in earlier matches. -- LOU GIAMPETRONI

LADDER

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just might get close to a dozen different assessments on "the best."

Keeley and Wilson played more matches in their quest for titles because there were more participants in open competition, although many were unskilled or novice-type players.

Keeley won seven national titles in a seven-year period and Wilson five in a five-year period.

Some might argue that there were more good open players when they participated. There were.

The open division has dwindled from dozens years ago to a handful. But that's not the fault of the current players. You enter and you play what's there.

The early decade of tournament paddleball -- from 1962 to 1971 -- featured some of the best players ever but there was little fanfare for them.

The tournaments were small and were made up of professional men -- doctors and lawyers -- and YMCA officials who could afford the time to travel throughout the country. Many of the better players took advantage of the booming start of racquetball in the mid-1970s and headed for California.

They became associated with Wilson, Spaulding, Ektelon and other sports companies and made a few bucks.

A pro racquetball tour was started and many ex-paddleballers became very successful.

So many of the best paddleballers were gone, to toil in the other court sport.

But the NPA continued to thrive. Ironically, through the establishment of various lesser divisions, tournament participation increased by leaps and bounds.

The NPA tourney numbers have continued to dip in recent years, despite the rebirth of PB in California four years ago.

Now for more numbers, just singles:

Wisniewski has played in 14 of the 46 national singles finals, winning 8 and losing 6. That's 30 percent worth of the finals. He deserves a nod for sheer staying power: he got his first in 1989, the last in 2003.

Andy Mitchell has played in 9 singles finals, winning 3 in a row, and losing 6 (not in a row).

Keeley won 5 out of 6; Wilson 4 out of 5; Gelhaus 3 out of 3; Dan McLaughlin 2 out of 4; the late Mark Kozub also 2 out of 4; Dick Jury 1 out of 5; Marty Hogan 2 out of 2; Bud Muehleisen 2 out of 4; Charlie Brumfield 2 out of 3; Paul Nelson 2 out of 3.

So arguments can be made. But there is no doubt that Gelhaus belongs in the paddleball pantheon.

Keeley's best-ever list

Seven years ago, Steve Keeley was asked to rank paddleballers he played and knew since he was active in both PB and racquetball for a number of years.

He responded with an extensive report that included capsules of the players.

"i am ready to defend my title as best-ever ranker of our sport," he wrote ... "now, let the echo of balls bouncing be the drumroll for the best champions ever:"

And, as is his wont in literary matters where he uses no capital letters and ignores most writing rules, he listed them in reverse order:

"6th place, craig finger; 5th place, marty hogan; 4th place, gale mikles; 3rd place, bud muelleisen; 2nd, charlie brumfield; 1st (tie), paul lawrence, vic neiderhoffer, steve keeley."

He then described each.

"**craig finger** gave everyone fits except me. everyone grumbled about playing against the little lobber but i yawned my way through the matches as a matter of contrasting styles."

"**marty hogan** is the most under-rated athlete and over-rated racquet player to take paddle in hand. i know him on the court better than anyone."

"**gale mikles** you may remember only from doubles, and i am one of the few he ever played singles against. his incomparable forehand & nat'l wrestling winner mentality make him a sold fourth."

"**bud muelleisen** & i were housemates in the early 70s when wood gave miraculous birth to plastic rackets. mule is one of the top all-around racket (including tennis, badminton, pingpong and what have you) talents of the century."

"**charlie brumfield** is, tho the best racquetball player ever, only second best in the history of paddles. don't let him talk his way up the rank. and i watched him play paddles a few months ago, unable still to hit a backhand, which is a compliment to the rest of his game."

"**paul lawrence** used to be the subject of my dreams, then nightmares. he is the only player i ever worried about losing to. early on i emulated one of his methods and later, before one tournament dreamed bout him standing in the center of the court one-step from the back wall, one-step from the front, one hand touching the left side wall and paddle on the right, and head scraping the ceiling."

"**vic neiderhoffer** is the least known on the list and the most deserving of attention ... he had finger's lob, muelleisen's forehand, brumfield's initial step, and lawrence's savvy. once i wrote that the first player to develop the r.a.w. ball (run-along-wall) down the left line would be the all-time nat'l champ. he did this more than anyone."

"**steven keeley** ... what's there left to say? i looked slower than anyone on the court, had a passable forehand, a solid backhand from writing, was a dissector from veterinary med., hard worker from idaho, and one mental step ahead of the rest. still, i cannot place myself above the others."

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI



At the Midwest Doubles Tournament in Midland, Mich., in February, Lorri Brigham received a plaque made for her by Randy Wackerle. It has the NPA letters on it and two words: "Thanks" and "Lorri." She is the NPA's secretary-treasurer and does most of the work for the organization.



Guess what time it is?

It's not Howdy Doody time but Pig Roast & Human Sacrifice time.

It's a great excuse for some fun to close out the paddleball season as the Kalamazoo, Mich., players host the annual event.

This year's festival is set for Saturday, June 16. The tourney begins at 9 a.m. at the Bronson Athletic Club and should run until about 3 p.m.

The Pig Roast follows immediately at the VFW Hall on Kilgore Access Road. The cost is \$40 and includes the tourney and roast.

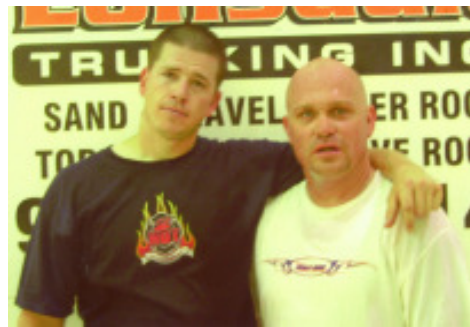
Cost for guests is \$15.

You can enter through the Web site or by replying to an E-mail announcing the event.

2007 NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONS



Bryce Cooper (left) and Dale Valentine
Men's A



Bryce Cooper (left) and Dave Lonsdale
Men's B



Eric Connolly (left) and Mike Lerner
Men's C



Evan Ferguson (left) and Brian Stevenson
Men's Novice



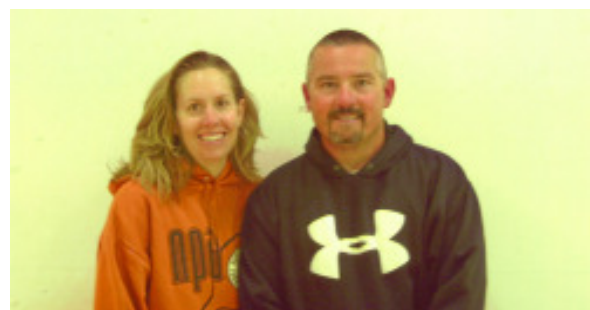
Kelly Gelhaus (left) and Vince Carlone
Seniors



Vince Carlone (left) and Mike Wisniewski
Masters



Randy Wackerle (left) and Sandy DeGreif
Golden Masters



Laurie Nicholson and Dave Nicholson
Mixed Doubles

Major awards to Keeley, Piechowiak



McLaughlin

Ex-junior champ plays well in two divisions

A former NPA junior champion fared quite well in the National Doubles Tournament in Riverside, CA.

Kevin McLaughlin, formerly of Kalamazoo, MI -- who won junior championships in the mid-1990s -- placed second in Men's B.

McLaughlin and his partner, Jimmy Cogburn, lost to Bryce Cooper-Dave Lonsdale in the final.

McLaughlin and Cogburn are from San Diego.

McLaughlin also played in the Men's A division with Steve Trent and they took consolation honors.

Kevin, the son of many-time NPA champion Dan McLaughlin, received the 1996 Dmitri Remsberg Trophy.

It is awarded by the NPA in memory of Dmitri to a young player who exhibits both skills and sportsmanship in the sport of four-wall paddleball.

The recipients of the National Paddleball Association's two major awards for 2007 are familiar names -- Steve Keeley and Mark Piechowiak.

Keeley, the seven-time national champion who dominated the game in the 1970s, got the Earl Risky Memorial Trophy for contributions to the sport.

Piechowiak's name will go on the Sportsmanship Trophy.

Some may wonder about the selection of Keeley but despite the fact that he has not played regularly in tournaments in recent years, he still keeps his paddle handy.

He has traveled throughout the country promoting PB and playing in exhibitions at various venues. The Michigan State University veterinary grad made his paddleball reputation in the 1970s and almost was unbeatable.

He won five national singles titles and two national doubles crowns and has been involved with PB -- on and off -- for more than 35 years.

Keeley went west with other paddleballers and established himself as a top-ranked racquetballer in the mid-1970s.

Then, four years ago, he was part of the Paddleball Nation -- a group of ex- and current paddleballers -- who resuscitated the sport in the West.

"The Complete Book of Racquetball," by Keeley and published in 1976, included this interesting comment:

"For most people, the sports of paddleball and racquetball are only the toy departments of their lives.

"However, for me the games were and still are the entire warehouse of my existence."

Piechowiak, who died at 47 on June 29, 2003, pulled off a



Keeley



Piechowiak

rare double victory in 1995 when he won the national open and seniors singles titles.

He also won national seniors doubles crowns in 1994 and 1995.

Piechowiak was dubbed "the club fighter." He didn't have the skills of some of the top-ranked players but he displayed a determination that made him a tough foe.

He was quiet, well-mannered and modest -- and a sportsman on the court. Most of his family members were not aware of his success in paddleball. He just never boasted about it.



These players are (from left) Sue Smith, Ben Smith, Malorie Diedrick and Ashley Garavet.



From left (standing) are Tommy Oliva, Phil Salamone and Wayne Stretsbury. Kneeling is Lee Sprengelmeyer.

Wausau PB is alive and growing

Wausau, Wis. -- They're still playing paddleball here -- the second-busiest PB center in the Badger State behind Eau Claire, which has hosted six national championship tournaments over the years.

"P'Ball is alive and growing here in Wausau," wrote Mark Smith in response to an inquiry about the game. He said about 30 men and about a dozen women are active in paddleball activity at the Woodson YMCA.

The players can be found at various times of the day. "We have not had a formal tournament in years," said Smith. He added that "We are now working on a web site ... stay tuned."

Paddleball and farming

Paul Bantle was asked at the 2007 National Singles Tournament in mid-March if an article could be written in the NPA newsletter on him regarding paddleball and his occupation: Organic Farming.

Sure, he said, but six weeks passed before he responded with an E-mail.

"Sorry it's taken so long to respond," he began. "But our growing season busted loose and I've had little free time. Today, it is raining so I'm catching up on indoor matters."

Bantle, of Ann Arbor, Mich., started playing PB "when I was in college in the mid-70s at the Old IM Building at the U. of M. Used to go down with a paddle and racquet and get onto whichever challenge court I could access first."

He played until the mid-1980s when "I hung up the paddle and got into farming on an organic vegetable truck farm out near Brooklyn, Mich. We brought the produce to the Ann Arbor farmers market twice a week



Bantle

through the growing season.

"So I went about my merry business for nearly 20 years and finally decided I needed to get more aerobic exercise."

Bantle, 52, went back to the Old IM Building for a game and later got a lesson from Jim Owens.

"I'm very grateful as I've been playing since when time permits and have met a lot of great folks in the last couple of years through the game," Bantle said.

As for farming, Bantle said, "That became my passion as a way of life. My wife, Anni, and I manage a Community Supported Farm near Chelsea. We've been doing it for 16 years and it is still thriving. There are about 5,000 of these types of farms in America now."

Bantle said families commit to purchase the produce for an entire growing season "and virtually everything we grow goes right to them so there is no additional marketing needed. We serve about 180 families and they come directly to the farm to pick up their fruit and vegetables, so the children get to experience a farm environment.

"As for paddleball, it's exercise, good fun and good people. Thanks so much to the people behind the scenes that make the effort to keep the sport alive."

New partner, same result for Wackerle

RIVERSIDE, CA -- They won the NPA national golden masters championship last year but got new partners this time around.

Randy Wackerle and Charlie Brumfield grabbed the title for players at least 55 in 2006 but had different partners in 2007.

Wackerle and Sandy DeGreif, both of Bay City, Mich., topped Brumfield and Eric Campbell, both of San Diego, 21-11, 21-14,

Wackerle-DeGreif was the only non-California team to win one of the nine division titles, although Mike Wisniewski of Bay City teamed with Vince Carlone of Riverside to capture the masters crown for players at least 45.

Wackerle-DeGreif jumped to a 14-3 lead in the first game, said Wisniewski.

"It looked like Brum and Eric were going to try and play most balls to Sandy but he just kept on shooting the ball to the right and left front corner," he added.

"**Sandy's kills** were almost perfect; it may have surprised the California team to see so many so soon in the match."

Later, Wisniewski said, Brum-Eric "tried to attack the Wack but he answered with a flurry of unpredictable fly kills to the left front corner, mixed with diving lob saves that seemed to confuse Eric and Brum as to who should go and get the ball.

"With Wack and Sandy both connecting, it was only a matter of time. It was an exciting match with a lot

of action. I cannot remember a finals in golden masters this athletic and aggressive."

Wackerle said he later got an E-mail from Brumfield, congratulating him on the victory.

"But the last sentence said 'As for Campbell and me, we won't take this shit and have commenced a program of remediation this date,'" Wackerle said.

2007 NATIONAL DOUBLES RESULTS

(April 20-22, 2007, Riverside, CA)

OPEN: Kelly Gelhaus-Todd Entrikin def. Mike Czabala-Chris Crowther, 21-12, 21-14.

MEN'S A: Bryce Cooper-Dale Valentine def. Greg Badger-Kirk Loveday; 3rd, John Lowman-Ron Malecki. Consolation: Steve Trent-Kevin McLaughlin.

MEN'S B: Bryce Cooper-Dave Lonsdale def. Jimmy Cogburn-Kevin McLaughlin; 3rd, Julian Solorzano-Mark Dooley. Consolation: Mike Rawley-Dennis Bauer.

MEN'S C: Mike Lerner-Eric Connolly def. Julian Solorzano-Mark Dooley; 3rd, Dave Ratynski-Rengan Rajendran. Consolation: H. Eugene Rush-Skip Freysinger.

MEN'S NOVICE: Brian Stevenson-Evan Ferguson def. Carl Loveday-Connor Brumfield.

SENIORS: Vince Carlone-Kelly Gelhaus def. Don Kirkconnell-Joel Kloosterman.

MASTERS: Vince Carlone-Mike Wisniewski def. Jim Sterken-Jim Richter.

GOLDEN MASTERS: Randy Wackerle-Sandy DeGreif def. Charlie Brumfield-Eric Campbell.

MIXED DOUBLES: Laurie Nicholson-David Nicholson def. Bob Pfau-Carol Dixon.

Team Paddleball closes out first season on a positive note

(Editor's Note: Something new was added to paddleball this season -- Team Paddleball.

(And several players made a point of competing against others from other areas.

(This report on the first such effort was written by Jim Owens, the spokesman for the program.)

On March 25, 2007, the first Team Paddleball tournament was held in East Lansing at the M.A.C.

There were a number of close and entertaining matches. Everyone who participated seemed to have a good time.

Bay City was the winner with 9 points, followed by Ann Arbor with 8 points, Midland/Lansing with

7 points, Adrian/Jackson with 4 points, and Flint/Schoolcraft/Waterford with 1 point.

Bay City was undefeated in the regular season, winning all five of its matches. Ann Arbor's record was 4-1, Kalamazoo 3-2. The other three teams had 1-4 marks.

I think Team Paddleball's first season was a success. It certainly afforded teams and singles players an opportunity to play rivals outside of their local areas.

There were also some different teams that were put together in order to field the required teams for a given match.

I suspect Team Paddleball may even be partially responsible for getting Randy Hoyle, a former open level player and paddleball promoter

from Midland, out of paddleball retirement. It was certainly nice to see Randy competing again.

Mid-summer I would like to convene a meeting to discuss the future of Team Paddleball.

We need to officially decide if we should have a second season. If so, we need to recognize strengths and weaknesses of season 1 and make improvements.

If you have any suggestions, please use the link for Team Paddleball on the NPA Web page, www.paddleball.org, or tell me in person.

If you are interested in developing a team league in your region, or if you wish to start a league for a particular category of play, please contact me.

Paddleballs
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through Spectrum
Sports, 2618 South
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son, Mich., 49203
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Hatt at (517) 784-
1861.



Chilenko

Paddleball Profile

Steve Chilenko started with paddleball but then switched to racquetball.

But he fortunately saw the light and returned to THE court sport.

Chilenko, of White Lake, MI, played PB in college in the early 1970s. But he then played racquetball for a while before picking up a paddle again in the mid-1980s.

He owns a retail vacuum store.

Chilenko said he enjoys “the exercise, the competition and the friendships” of the sport.

He has had two firsts, one in state singles and one in national singles.

Any suggestions on tournament improvement?

“None,” he said. “Great job done on how they are run.”

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