

NPA

(INDOOR / FOUR-WALL)

National Paddleball Association

WWW.PADDLEBALL.ORG

NPA, 7642 Kingston, Portage, Mich. 49002

NEWSLETTER / FALL 2007-2008

Where have all the ladies gone?

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

One of my major laments about the great sport of paddleball is the declining number of women entries in tournaments.

** Caprice Behner, Judy Shirley, Grace Louwsma, Annalee Volpi, Betsy Raymond, Pat Stewart, Susan Fox, Susan Kornfield, Bonnie Cheney, Teri L. Davis, Gloria Larrieu, JoAnn Prunty, Linda Minckler.

** Pat Whale, Margaret Mudrovich, Wanda Williams, Claudine Farrand, Barb Paup, Shelee Almquist, Donna Witten, Roxina Block, Marlynn Doty, B. J. Kronemeyer, Carole Ward, Nancy Swendris, Louise Blazoff, Sally Howe, Wendy Warren, Judy Smutek, Betty Kronemeyer, Sharon Brown, Christina Cramton, Thelma Menifee, Cheryl Arnold.

Who are they?

Former women paddleballers entered in the 1978 National Singles Tournament at the Ann Arbor (Mich.) Court Club.

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THE BEST -- The top women players have been Carla Teare (left) and Caprice Behner (above). Carla won 5 national singles and 8 national doubles championships; Caprice 9 national singles and 2 national doubles titles.

NPA managers take steps to improve PB operation

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

E. Lansing, Mich. -- The National Paddleball Association Board of Managers had a large agenda at its August meeting -- designed to improve its operation.

Of course, funding is always a concern. The board decided to pursue "corporate and individual funding. We will create a donation page

for the website.

"This area needs to be pursued aggressively as most items on the agenda seemed to come back to this."

In addition, board members were encouraged to pursue any contacts they may have.

**NPA Tournament
Schedule -- See Page 2**

Board members pointed out there is a need to encourage more local tournaments and to publicize them. The hope is to regularly schedule one-day regional events to encourage players to enter NPA-sponsored tournaments.

The board approved a proposal to set up an NPA
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NOTICE

The NPA season will start a little earlier this year.

Ordinarily, it has been starting sometime in December.

But many players over the years have said they are too busy with holiday commitments that month.

So the first tournament set for the 2007-2008 season is the Fall Doubles, scheduled for November 9, 10 and 11, 2007, at the Midland (Mich.) Community Center.

Mark it down on your calendar!

NPA 2007-08 SCHEDULE

FALL DOUBLES: November 9, 10, 11, 2007, Midland (Mich.) Community Center.

MIDWEST SINGLES: January 19, 20, 2008, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.

MIDWEST DOUBLES: To be announced.

NATIONAL SINGLES: March 7, 8, 9, 2008, Sorrento Valley Racquet Club, San Diego, CA

NATIONAL DOUBLES: To be announced.

LADIES

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There were 198 entries and 34 were women.

Those in the first paragraph were open division players; those in the other were novice players.

There were other women players, too. This is just an example to indicate the fall-off of women competitors in paddleball.

The division was established in 1974 and it thrived for several years, although there was no national tournament division in 1980. For a while, there were women divisions in other tourneys.

But there was no such national tournament division in 1995, 1997, 1998 and 2001. And there was no women's division for the fifth straight year in 2007.

The few women players now are forced to enter Men's C in tournaments because there are not enough to make up a division.

There are obvious reasons for the drop-off -- parenthood, growing children, injuries, other responsibilities.

It just goes to show that nothing lasts forever.

BUY BALLS!

The game needs them!!

IMPROVE

Continued from Page 1

Store on the website, offering wearing apparel, paddles and balls. A voucher system would be set up so players could spend at the NPA Store.

The biggest obstacle would be the cost of carrying an inventory and getting items to players.

"We will continue with the same format at this time," said Lorri Brigham, NPA secretary-treasurer. "If we can get the NPA Store going, we may pursue alternatives."

She said the Store will be opened this fall with some limited items as a test run.

Board members also considered items regarding: Tournament hospitality, rules and tournament information, establishment of exhibitions in Michigan and the Midwest, holding national events in more upscale clubs and when players are required to move up a division.

The meeting at the Michigan Athletic Club also was attended by Andy Mitchell, Jim Owens, Mike Wisniewski, Jim Richter, Andy Pappas, Jer Fennell and Lou Giampetroni.

Charlie Brumfield of San Diego participated through a conference call.

Hey, folks, just a little reminder that the NPA newsletter is published four times a season.

It is available on the Web page at www.paddleball.org and also is mailed to players. We prefer that most everyone go to the Web page for two reasons: Mailing hard copies is expensive and many of the photos on line are in color.

There are no specific publishing dates for the newsletter so you'll have to go to the Web page to see if it's there.



Steve Fleckenstein asks for quiet as he gulps down the pig's eyeball at the Pig Roast while his wife, Pink, howls.

'Flecker' is man of the hour as PBallers celebrate

By LORRI BRIGHAM

The 31st annual Pig Roast & Human Sacrifice was held on Saturday, June 16th, at the fabulous Bronson Athletic Club in Kalamazoo, Mich.

If you have never attended a Pig Roast tourney, it is a fun event -- half (Okay, 1/4)



tournament and the rest a big old party. The format is a grab-bag doubles. You sign up for one of two divisions (Open or B) and get matched on site with your partner. The format is round-robin.

For the B division, it was a straight round-robin. For the Open, teams were divided into 4 pools of four teams each. The players played everyone in their pool to 15.

The winners and second, third and fourth then were matched against their same-place finishers from each pool and went at it again. The winners of those pools played off in a round-robin for the championship. A lot of intense play in a very short amount of time!

The honoree this time was Steve "Flecker" Fleckenstein.

Steve is a long-time player from Kalamazoo. You may not know him as he does not go to a lot of out-of-town tourneys, but he is a fixture here in Kalamazoo.

Steve is one of those great down-to-

earth guys (as demonstrated by his willingness, maybe eagerness, to eat the pig's eyeball at the roast -- a very odd, but ingrained tradition at this event.)

One of his many hobbies is that of being quite an accomplished magician -- which he was actually sober enough to demonstrate.

Steve was matched up with Andy "Dogmeat" Mitchell for the tourney ... Hey, we do the draw in front of everyone! Even Steve with all of his magic skills could not have made that happen. Though it was strange that they were the last two names pulled out of the hat. (Maybe he's better than I think he is.)

Other teams in Open were: Chad Krager/Sonny Salazar, Kevin McLaughlin/Len Baldori, Rick Clewis/Doug Hartung. Mitchell and Fleckenstein pulled it out.

It was a great event that had almost everyone hanging around to the bitter end ... even though it was a beautiful day and there was free beer in the parking lot!

One of the highlights was Kim Poli and Mark Smith driving in from Eau Claire, Wis., just for the party. They drove like madmen to get there at 8 o'clock for a few beers and a lot of laughs.

As always, it was a great event made so by the awesome people who play paddleball ... both now and in the past. Proving once again that the Pig Roast is just a reason for a great big paddleball family reunion!

ATTENZIONE!!

Need some help, folks.

I'm trying to locate early NPA champions or get some information about them.

The first national singles champion was Paul Nelson of Madison, Wis.

The second was Bill Schultz, also of Madison.

Nelson won two of the first three championships and Schultz won one, topping Nelson.

Schultz played in the first five national singles finals.

Anyone who reads this and who has knowledge of Nelson or Schultz, please write me at lousueg@aol.com or call 1-(810)-743-6274.

We've had 46 national singles winners and I've got the information on most them. I lack only a few of the early ones.

Hey, maybe a paddleballer might get this plea to Nelson and Schultz themselves.

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI



OOPS!!

Hey, folks, if you go back and look closely at the 2006 National Doubles gift to entrants, a few of you will notice a gigantic boo-boo. The collared shirt logo indicates the tournament was at "U of M -- Lansing, Michigan." I didn't notice it until August of this year. I had bought a shirt (which had the Lansing reference)

and received one (which correctly had Ann Arbor) for entering the tourney. Lorri Brigham, NPA secretary-treasurer, said the printer noticed the mistake after printing about a dozen. She said the "dirty dozen" were sold at a discount so the printer could get the cost of the shirt back.

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI

Ex-NPA juniors champion playing with the big boys

Kevin McLaughlin has had a varied career as a paddleballer.

McLaughlin, 23, formerly of Kalamazoo, Mich., probably was among the best juniors players in NPA history.

And now, as he returns to San Diego where he graduated from Point Loma Nazarene University, he's playing PB again.

"I was out there for the past two years about, but I didn't get hooked up with the guys (PBallers) out there until this past year," McLaughlin said.

"I initially got Charlie Brumfield's number and he invited me out to Sorrento Valley Racquetball and Fitness Center to meet the guys and start playing there.

"There is a great group and some really talented players and I was able to see a lot of improvements in my game after playing with them over the past year."

He returned to Michigan for a time but then returned to San Diego where he found a job.

Kevin had a pretty good introduction to paddleball through his father, Dan, an outstanding PBaller and several-times champion.

"I started playing paddleball at about 10 or 11," Kevin said. "My dad got me into the sport and taught me how to play the game ... We had a lot of friendly father-son competition and he gave me a good benchmark to shoot for."

Dan McLaughlin is the only player to win NPA national open, seniors and masters singles championships.

Kevin said he remembers winning quite often in the juniors divisions but didn't play competitively over the past two years.

"I guess I was too distracted with golf, school and girls," he said. "O.K., maybe just golf and girls, ha-ha.

"When I was playing in tournaments as a junior, I always looked up to guys like Meat (Andy Mitchell) and (Mike) Wisniewski and Sonny Salazar and Mike Czabala."

Kevin said he hopes "that some day I'll be able to be remembered the way that they are now. I thank God for the talents that He has given to me."

Kevin played in two divisions in the 2007 National Doubles in Riverside, Calif. He and his partner, Jimmy Cogburn, finished second in Men's B. In Men's A, Kevin and Steve Trent took consolation honors. -- LOU GIAMPETRONI



Kevin as a national junior singles champion in 1997.



A 2006 photo of Kevin.



Poli's home-made pedicab.

Injured Poli still pedaling

When we last left paddleballer Kim Poli, he was "pedicabing" fans to Green Bay Packers football games and to a recent Super Bowl in New Orleans.

An E-mail to Poli of Green Bay, Wis., inquired as to whether he was still pedicabing.

"Yes, I am still cabbng and, as a matter of fact, I now have my own cab," he wrote. "I built the back end and attached it to my old mountain bike.

"Sounds funky and my cabbng buddies had a hard time visualing what I was up to during the project but it turned out very well."

But his PB playing has suffered because of a leg injury.

"Went to Wausau (Wis.) to play in June and injured my Achilles tendon, wouldn't ya know," he wrote. "I can just about walk without limping this week (in September) and resumed my walk at lunch routine yesterday.

"Last time I did this, it took 9 months to get back on the court and it wasn't hurt as bad. So I don't know if I'll be able to play this next year or not. Maybe I'll come to a tournament and have a beer!!

"I still cabbng the last 3 Packer games though. Not 100% but didn't do any damage either." -- LOU GIAMPETRONI

PBaller gets double-whammyed

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

Spike Pearson was one outstanding paddleballer. Pearson, 64, of Grand Blanc, Mich., was outstanding in anything he tried.

He was a three-sport star at the old St. Michael's High School in Flint, Mich., and he always had visions of attending Notre Dame, his favorite. But for a variety of reasons, he never did.

He could hit the paddleball as hard as Steve Wilson, Flint's four-time national singles champion, but not as often. Spike would pick his spots to hit it hard. Wilson hit it hard on every shot.



Pearson

But the one thing that stands out in my mind about Spike Pearson is that he is the only person I know who tore BOTH Achilles tendons. Can you imagine?

Just the thought of it makes me cringe.

The first time was during a pickup basketball game, when the left Achilles went. He was also playing paddleball at that time and the gang at the Flint YMCA hated to lose a player. He was very good.

Back then, you had to wear a full-length cast on your leg up to your crotch for ... forever, it seemed. It made the leg very immobile but it also was very clumsy.

Well, it seemed as if he was recovering forever. Finally, it came time to take off the cast. Ta-da! He was so happy.

After a lengthy period of recovery, he slowly began hitting the paddleball by himself. Getting ready to return to the sessions with the Flint Y players. And he was almost ready.

I was watching him play a singles game in the mid-1980s against the late Tom Ballantyne one afternoon. Spike had a huge lead when Tom hit a routine shot that bounced to the middle of the court. Spike strode forward and underhanded a shot to the front wall.

And he crashed to the floor!

"Oh, no, not again," he said, as he lay in pain.

Yep, he had torn the other (right) Achilles tendon.

Well, that did it for Pearson and his paddleball-playing days. Another full-length cast for a long, long time. And he never did play PB again.

In an E-mail, Pearson wrote: "Clearly, I must be an oddity! Having ruptured both Achilles tendons as I have is pretty rare but certainly nothing to be proud of."

The first time was in 1978 during a basketball game when he took a jump shot and "upon landing, the tendon exploded like a shotgun. I crumpled to the ground, my left foot almost acting independently of my left leg. I spent six months in a full leg cast.



Pearson in his playing days, circa 1975.

"Following that lengthy ordeal, a stretching rehabilitation was prescribed. The tendon, now somewhat reattached and surrounded by scar tissue, had to be stretched so I'd be able to walk normal."

Pearson said his doctor "implored me to forego the kids games. And I did for a few years. I played some basketball again" but stopped a short time later.

"When you're an athlete all your life, as I was, you miss the competition, for sure," Pearson said. "I'd played paddleball at the Flint YMCA for years. I competed in different tournaments at our own Y and other paddleball venues ... Talk about great fun and a physically draining experience. Man, I'll never forget it."

In 1984, he decided to return to paddleball, saying "Yes, I was ready, both in mind and body."

But it was not to be. When he fell, he also "destroyed my left thumb due to the violent fall." Pearson closed by saying: "Same healing and rehab time as earlier. I haven't played paddleball since but I'd like to."

Pearson, a managing broker at Bruce G. Pollack & Associates Realtors, contents himself with watching others play "the kids games" although he occasionally plays a little baseball -- very carefully.

Editor's Note: We periodically will recognize persons who have contributed much to the success of the National Paddleball Association over the years.



ED MATUSKO



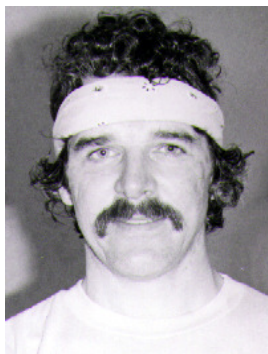
CAROL PERRIN, BOB HEITJAN



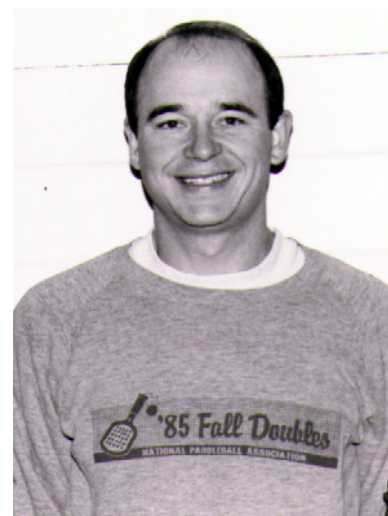
C. GENE McELROY



ANDY KASALO



JIM OWENS



JOHN SCHEPPELE



LORRI BRIGHAM (LEFT), RENE CALLIES (CENTER) AND GAIL POTGIESSER

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Freysinger

Paddleball Profile

“I enjoy the competition, the exercise and the good shot when I make one.”

Skip Freysinger, who made that statement in response to why he plays paddleball, could speak for a lot of us.

Freysinger, of Grass Lake, Mich., is a former racquetballer who was swayed to PB in the late 1970s by Tom Murray, a Jackson-area player.

A librarian, Freysinger won Men’s C at Midland in 2006 and finished 4th in the 2005 national doubles.

He also has several seconds and thirds in singles and doubles from 2000 to 2006.

Can tourneys be improved?

“Lorri (Brigham) does a superb job,” he said. “I don’t know what would make it better.”

Freysinger received the 2006 NPA Sports-
manship Trophy.

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