

NPA

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National Paddleball Association

WWW.PADDLEBALL.ORG

NPA, 7642 Kingston, Portage, Mich. 49002

NEWSLETTER / FALL 2008-2009

Paddleball: Is it aging?

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

Will the NPA national open singles champion be in his mid-50s a decade from now?

That's the contention of an ex-paddleballer who, along with others, commented during the summer of 2008 on the state of the sport.

The NPA Board of Managers met in August to consider the possibility of establishing additional divisions that would allow for skills to be considered.

Randy Floyd sent along this E-mail:

"I'm 52 years old. I haven't played paddleball in almost 3 years, but I attended some of the 08 national singles this year at Sorrento Valley in San Diego. I came away completely disappointed. You have to do something with the state of the game. You have to clean it up."

He went on to complain about the hinder rules not being applied or being

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NPA 2008-2009 SCHEDULE

FALL DOUBLES: Nov. 21, 22, 23, 2008, Forest View Racquet Club, Arlington Heights, ILL, a northwest suburb of Chicago.

MIDWEST SINGLES: Jan. 16, 17, 18, 2009, Jackson, MI, YMCA.

MIDWEST DOUBLES: Dates and site to be announced.

NATIONAL SINGLES: In March 2009, specific dates to be announced later; the Old IM Building, U. of M., Ann Arbor, MI

NATIONAL DOUBLES: April 24, 25, 26, 2009, at Sorrento Valley Racquet & Fitness Center, San Diego, CA



Brumfield displays one of his gifts.

Brum now a sexagenarian

By LORRI BRIGHAM

Charlie Brumfield celebrated his 60th birthday on June 8, 2008, with a great surprise bash thrown by John Brumfield, Amy Rothermel and Jimmy Coggburn at the Sorrento Valley Club in San Diego.

A large group showed up to play paddles and honor one of our greatest players and promoters of the sport.

"The party was extreme pleasure," said Brumfield who has won numerous PB championships in the late 1960s and early 1970s and more recently in the 2000s.

Coggburn said about 75 people attended.

"It went very well," he said. "Charlie found out about the party but was surprised with how many people were there."

Amy Rothermel was coordinator of the party.

"She (just like all of us) got the 'itch' to start playing paddles because of Charlie's very persistent ways!" Coggburn said.

The Michigan contingent sent Charlie two presents. One was a paddle (designed by Andy Mitchell) to help Charlie with his game now that he is getting up there in age.

It's a combination cane/paddle. The cane can give him extra reach when the legs just won't go. And as it is clearly marked as a cane for the blind,

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ignored, and the fact that the exceptionally-skilled players are taking over the age divisions also.

Floyd continued his E-mail:

“You can sit back and do nothing. Which is, I’m sure, just what you’re going to do. But if the best players in the world are playing both Masters and Open divisions at the same time, you don’t have a sport. You are basically Horseshoes.

“There is something seriously wrong with any game where the best players are not between 20 and 35 years old.

“Especially a game as demanding as this one. Without change, you might actually get 35 entries into next year’s Nationals. Congratulations.

“Without change, you are about 10 years away from your Open Singles champion being 55 years old. At that point, you are ‘Lawn Bowling.’ Sorry to bore you.”

Paddleballer Jared Arnold has suggested this set-up:

“Change the divisions to ‘marry’ age groups and skill levels rather than trying to do each separately as we do now. For instance:

“Establish divisions for OPEN A, OPEN B, SENIORS A, SENIORS B, MASTERS A, MASTERS B, GOLDEN MASTERS A, GOLDEN MASTERS B, PLATINUM MASTERS A, PLATINUM MASTERS B, NOVICE.

“Rationale would be as follows: a) maintain the open division for a true overall champion
b) maintain the novice division for true new-bies
c) have most other players play against their own age (speed) group
d) recognize skill level differences within age groups by having A and B divisions

“Current age divisions are dominated by past open champions, forcing others in those age groups into B and C divisions or discouraging them from entering the tournaments at all.”

Arnold added that “As our membership continues to age, participation in tournaments might increase if more (aging) players anticipate being able to be competitive.”

Paddleballer Brandon Creamer said:

“Although that is a nice idea, we barely have enough players to fill divisions now. Doing that would just spread things even thinner.”

David Fleetwood of Cordova, Tenn., said:

“This ain’t a bad idea. This simply is what racquetball did in the early days. This allows players of all levels to participate and be competitive. As they improve they continue to move up.

“More work as a tournament director but it opens doors to players that would like to compete but don’t want their head handed to them by the Wiz (8-time national open champion Mike Wisniewski) simply because they are the same age.”

Champs’ age report

In the last 20 years, only two national open singles champions were in their twenties when they won.

Bob Groya of Bay City, Mich., won in 1997 at age 28 and Chris Crowther of Riverside, Calif., won in 2006 when he was 27.

In the last two decades, 11 champions were in their 30s and seven were in their 40s.

Kelly Gelhaus won his first of three national open singles crowns in 2004 when he was 33.

Mike Wisniewski of Bay City was 31 in 1989 when he won the first of his eight national open singles titles.

In the early years of NPA championship tournaments, beginning in 1962, most of the champions were in their 20s.

Bill Ray still plays the game

Received a note from Bill Ray, who years ago played with the Dearborn, Mich., paddleballers.

Ray, who lives in Maryland, says he still plays the game -- and enjoys it.

“We have about eight guys show up on a good day,” he said. “Most are from Columbia, Md., and played tournament racquetball.

“One drives from Virginia once a week. Columbia is halfway between Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

“We would welcome any paddleballers visiting this area to contact us and bring your shoes. We have the rest of the equipment.

“My phone number is (410) 997-1738. All the guys read each newsletter that you send, so I took up a small collection to cover some of the cost.

“We hope to come to a doubles tournament in Michigan in the not-so-distant future.

“My best to you and all the paddleball players that I’ve met over the years.”

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI

GOT BALLS?



Honoree Dan McLaughlin (left) and Carl Loveday eat eyes of the pig as Andy Kasalo applauds.

Guess what? Everyone had a good time at Pig Roast

By LORRI BRIGHAM

The 32nd annual Pig Roast & Human Sacrifice was held in Kalamazoo, Mich., on June 14, 2008.

This year's honoree was long-time player and multiple national NPA titleholder Dan McLaughlin of Kalamazoo.

His wife Kathy (who was instrumental in making his T-shirt and getting Danny to play) and son Kevin were both there for all the festivities.

There were 40 players for the tourney at the Bronson Athletic Center, this year drawing from as far away as California with Carl Loveday making the trip from San Diego.

As always, the format was grab-bag doubles. Andy Kasalo made his first tourney appearance in several years. Unfortunately, it was very short-lived as he pulled a hamstring in his first game.

There were four pools of five teams, with every team playing everyone in their pool one game to 21 points. The winning teams from each pool played in semifinals with the match-up of:

Andy Mitchell/Kevin McLaughlin winning over Mike Mair/Ed Maher, and Jim Owens/Don Kirkconnell topping Chad Krager/Scott Glass.

As we like to keep the tourney fun and competitive for the finals, Mitchell bowed out and let the father-son team of Dan and Kevin McLaughlin take on Owens/Kirkconnell, with the title (and Pig Iron) going to Danny and Kevin.

The party at the VFW was, as always, tons of fun. The horseshoe playing gets more competitive every year. The eating of the pig's eye by the honoree took on a special aspect this year as we had Dan McLaughlin as our honoree and Charlie Brumfield as our honorary honoree.

As we made a toast to both, Charlie's words from his birthday party rang in our ears: "At least I won't have to eat the pig's eye." Well, maybe he didn't. But as long as we had Carl Loveday there representing California, we thought maybe he should! Carl didn't hesitate. In fact, he may have even enjoyed it.

The Woody Cup (which is given every year to acknowledge the person who most represents the spirit, camaraderie and good times of paddleball was given to Anne Ex.

Brad's wife is always there for every local and a lot of the state and national events. She definitely is everything the Woody Cup denotes.

All in all, another great Pig Roast & Human Sacrifice.

BRUM

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his opponents should act with the respect that he deserves when he calls a skip or a hinder.

As Charlie's birthday was shortly before the Pig Roast in Kalamazoo, Mich., it was voted to make Charlie the first-ever honorary honoree for the roast and he was given a T-shirt to note that.

Charlie's comment on the shirt was: "I don't even have to eat the pig's eye."

Little did he know that Carl Loveday would have to pay for that comment.



Brumfield displays Pig Roast T-shirt

Memo to PBallers: Listen Up!

(Editor's Note: This article was written during the summer of 2008, before the annual meeting of the NPA Board of Managers.)

One of the best things about paddleball is that we can play a tournament without a referee.

We play an honest, upfront game. If there is a doubt, we play it over. This is good, until it erodes the parameters of what defines our game.

We have a basic set of rules for tournament play. However, we tend to play a tournament the way we play a pick-up game. To the extent that it keeps theatrics to a minimum, it's great. When it delays the tournament or impacts the outcome of a match, that is bad.

We consistently have players disregard rules ... from timeouts, to foot faults, to service (to name only a few). This is almost always done from a lack of knowledge.

We need to redefine the way tournament paddleball is played. You can't have rules if they mean nothing. I ask all of you to read the rules.

They are available online or you can request that a copy be mailed to you. Review them. Question them. Ask for an interpretation of them.

Most of all, give us your feedback. We will review all of the rules at the summer board meeting and use your feedback as a guide.

Additionally, we would like to encourage you to use the "Paddleball Forum" section of the website to post questions or make suggestions about rules. This is a great avenue to open discussions, encourage knowledge and initiate change for rules (or any area of paddleball).

Thanks for your help and participation in making tournaments, and paddleball, even better.

--LORRI BRIGHAM, NPA secretary-treasurer



You have to be kidding!!

Played against Bob Hannah of Ann Arbor, Mich., at the Old IM Building at the University of Michigan in July. This was the "glove" he wore. Should we chip in and buy him a new one? That's Bob (right) who plays a pretty good game with it.

-- Lou Giampetroni



Paddleball Profile

Bedros (Pete) Magar switched from racquetball to paddleball in 1983 and "I liked it so much, I'm still playing, sick or healthy."

Magar, of Northville, Mich., who is a machine technician at Ford of Canada, said:

"I like people. I like making friends. There are so many good people. This (playing paddleball) is the best way to keep in touch."



Magar

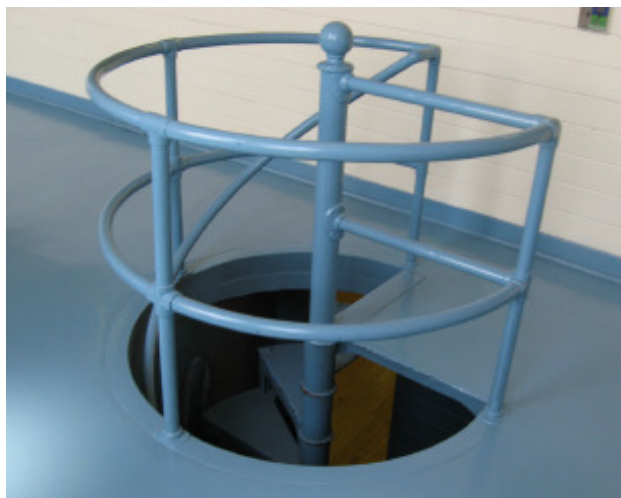
He said he has won some "consolation state doubles" titles.

Magar plays out of Schoolcraft College in Livonia, Mich.

This year, he donated about 30 paddles to the NPA for use in starting the sport elsewhere.

Any suggestions on how tournaments can be improved?

"So far, everything is very good," Magar said. "Keep up the good job."



The Old IM Building courts: Love ‘em or leave ‘em

(Editor’s Note: These comments were by Andy Mitchell, who has won three national NPA open singles titles and with Andy Kasalo captured 20 open doubles championships. Mitchell offered his take on the Old IM Building courts in Ann Arbor, Mich., in a special pamphlet on the place in 2005.)

There are a lot of great memories about the Old IM Building and its courts (or the dungeons). I saw Hogan beat Keeley in one of the best matches ever and I am sure we -- Junior (partner Andy Kasalo) and I -- must have won there at some time!

But for me and us, it was a huge battle ground for an intense rivalry between us from Kalamazoo and anyone from AA.

Of all my memories, there was one match that typified (to me) what it was like to play there! We were playing an Ann Arbor team in the finals. As usual, it was a very intense, heated match with no quarter given, taken or wanted!!

Every point was a war and every point contested from the skips and double bounces to the numerous court hinders. (Problems) were unique to the IM building because only here did you have to go down a narrow spiral staircase and crawl through a 3-foot door that never closed right ... It always felt like we were gladiators going into the ring!

Then there were the air vents about knee high on the back wall that were beaten and dented AND stuck out from the wall.

(Our Ann Arbor foes) knew where every dead board was, and how to hit into the giant expansion cracks along the edges.

If this was not enough advantage, they also knew how to hit around and under the caged lights on the ceilings. We lost a very close match (I think in a tiebreaker).

... Still, I have a lot of memories of these courts and all the history and nostalgia that is part of those dungeons at the old IM of AA.”

Platinum player Michael Fearer shows off his Super shirt at the 2008 National Doubles in E. Lansing, Mich.



From out of Pball’s past

HAVE YOU HEARD? YOU'RE MATCHED AGAINST CAPRICE BEHNER IN THE FIRST ROUND ...



Would you run 50 miles on your 50th birthday?

Paddleballers who have played against Don Traxler over the years have learned a very important lesson: You cannot run Don Traxler out of gas.

You better score your points and hope he doesn't out-perform you in that department.

Traxler, who was 72 on June 8, 2008, has been a runner also. A serious runner.



Traxler

45 pounds.

"So in early 1964, I decided I had to lose some weight and chose P-ball and dieting as the vehicles to achieve my goal," he wrote in an E-mail.

"My first match was against a runner, who proceeded to run me into the ground. I spent all the time between points gasping for air against the back wall."

But as the years passed, Traxler got better and eventually teamed up with Larry Piper to win just about all the Midland PB tournaments for about 20 years "until the early 2000s when (Piper's) physical problems overcame his determination."

He said Piper taught him a few lessons.

"I started running because I got tired of Larry running me around the court until I dropped," he said. "Running then became an obsession. I started training for marathons running 80-90 miles a week and managed to run-finish six or seven, with a best time of around 3:15 in Detroit."

All of this led to Traxler running 50 miles on his 50th birthday in 1986.

Traxler has won 11 NPA national singles titles in three divisions – the first in 1982 and the latest in 2007. He also won a national golden masters doubles crown and a platinum masters doubles title.



Traxler after a PB triumph.

"It's hard to believe that was over 20 years ago," he said. "I seldom actually run now, but do elliptical-stairmaster machines mostly."

He said he also plays golf, does some weight-training, a little basketball and some bike riding.

"In other words, I have no life except sports," he said.

Over the years, he has been instrumental in staging and working on paddleball tournaments in Midland. For those efforts, he was named the 2003 recipient of the Earl Risky Memorial Trophy for contributions to the sport.

He probably has played in as many tournaments as anyone in the game and continues to do so.

Traxler has won six NPA national masters (at least 45) singles titles, four national golden masters (at least 55) singles crowns and one platinum masters singles (at least 65).

The first came in 1982, the last in 2007.

He also won a national golden masters doubles crown with Piper in 2001 and the 2008 national platinum masters doubles title with Dave Coffey.

Not bad for a guy who was concerned early on about being overweight.

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI

A wealth of talent roamed the GB courts

When I last talked with Steve Wilson about the destruction of the Grand Blanc (Mich.) Court Club by fire in December 2007, he happened to mention a memorable paddleball tournament there.

“Yes, I remember there were 16 open players in the tournament,” he said. “It was great.”

It was great because Wilson won it.

It was the Grand Blanc Invitational sponsored by the Flint (Mich.) Paddleball Club in 1982.

In the field were Wilson who was the defending 1981 NPA national singles champion; Dick Jury; Dan McLaughlin; R.P. Valenciano; Randy Wackerle; Randy Hoyle; Greg Grambeau; Andy Mitchell; Kevin McCully; Mark Kozub; Greg Novack; John Scheppele; Jim Sterken; Max Calhoun; Craig Malkowski; and Gary Croskey.

Between them, they held umpteen

national and state paddleball championships.

All were at the top of their game. Some large tournaments at that time did not have such an illustrious group of top-level players.

They were broken up into four four-man groups.

Each player faced the other three in his group in a round-robin competition of one 31-point game.

Wilson, McLaughlin, Mitchell and McCully were unbeaten in their groups.

In the championship semifinals, Wilson topped McLaughlin in two games, 21-16, 21-8, and Mitchell edged McCully, 21-15, 17-21, 11-10.

Then Wilson defeated Mitchell in the final, 21-11, 21-10.

The smallest margin in the round-robin was Wackerle's win over Malkowski, 31-30.

The biggest was 31-7 which Novack tallied to beat Kozub and Scheppele.

Wilson went on to win the NPA national singles crown in 1983, 1984 and 1985. He and Mitchell are the only players in NPA history to win three straight national singles championships.

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI



Wilson

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

They are titled Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer and are available between November and June -- the duration of a season. It is available on the Web page at www.paddleball.org and also is mailed.

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.

No-end match revives some old memories

An article in the 2007-08 NPA Spring newsletter brought back some old memories for Larry Gordon.

Gordon, former owner of the Grand Blanc (Mich.) Court Club, reminisced about the article that described the PB match without an end between Steve Wilson and the late R. P. Valenciano.

It was in 1988 at the club, which was destroyed by fire in December 2007.

It never got finished because both players began nailing each other with the ball -- intentionally -- in the second game after words between the pair following the first game.

Valenciano won the first game and Wilson the second and then they agreed not to play the

tiebreaker because their friendship was at risk.

“I was the referee,” Gordon said, “... and can tell you Val took the first liberty, shooting a low hard one into Steve's backside and some words were then exchanged.

“Thereafter Steve took the second liberty, shooting a low hard one into Val's backside and some more words were exchanged, and so on and so on.

“All the time, the match is getting out of hand as I tried calling hinder after hinder and avoidable hinder after avoidable hinder with NO results.

“Suddenly Val raised his paddle and almost together they announced ‘I quit.’

“Two of the greatest paddleball players of all time had just realized that their friendship was way more important than the match.

“Each of them came up to me later and apologized for their actions and the particularly hard spot they had put me in.

“I am thrilled to have been a part of it.”

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



Petricca

Paddleball Profile

If you move to the Midland, Mich., area, it's a given that you will run into Don Traxler and paddleball.

That's what happened to Ed Petricca when he moved to Midland 37 years ago.

He went from Lincoln Park and met Traxler and others who introduced him to the sport.

What does Petricca enjoy about the game?

"The friendships and good people who are involved with the game," he said.

"The great exercise is a bonus (along with) the challenge to improve yourself and your game."

Petricca, a commercial printer, has won national and state Men's C doubles championships and was second in a Men's B tourney.

Any suggestions on improving tournaments?

"I have always been pleased with the tournaments," he said. "Keep up the good work."

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