

NPA

(INDOOR / FOUR-WALL)

National Paddleball Association

WWW.PADDLEBALL.ORG

NPA, 7642 Kingston, Portage, Mich. 49002

NEWSLETTER / SPRING 2009-2010



THE PADDLE COMPANY has designed a paddle to recognize the fantastic achievement of Andy Mitchell (left) and Andy Kasalo for winning 20 NPA national doubles championships. See Pages 2 and 3.

The NPA's first national Platinum Singles champion is a writer, too. See Page 6.



PB reaches the four-score mark

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

Hey, paddleballers: it's been nearly 80 years since the GREAT GAME was born in the cavern-like courts of the Old IM Building at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

The late Earl Risky gets credit for starting the sport in 1930 after several attempts at getting a ball that would bounce.

Risky was a member of the physical education department (later director of the intramural program). An idea flashed in his mind as he watched the tennis players practice in the handball courts during the winter months.

An avid paddle tennis player, Risky experimented with a paddle tennis paddle and a sponge rubber ball. He then switched to a tennis ball, since the other proved too heavy. It wasn't long until he decided the tennis ball was

not practical because of the weight and it was difficult to see against the light-colored walls of the courts.

Risky's ingenuity overcame the problem as he soaked a tennis ball in gasoline and found the felt cover could be removed easily. The skinned tennis ball was lighter and red and was much easier to follow in play.

The dark gray ball used later was developed by the Pennsylvania Rubber Co. and adopted by the National Paddleball Association as the official ball.

The game's rules were adapted by Risky from handball guidelines.

Interest in four-wall paddleball grew and during World War II, thousands were introduced to the game as part of their Army training. After the war, the men took the sport to their hometowns

See PB, Page 2

2009-2010

NPA Schedule

NATIONAL SINGLES:
Sorrento Valley Fitness Center,
San Diego, March 26, 27, 28,
2010

NATIONAL DOUBLES:
Forest View Racquet Club,
Arlington Hgts., Ill., April 16,
17, 18, 2010.

Junior players highlight the Western Regional in San Diego. Details, Page 4.



Words of Wisdom ...
Courtesy of Randy Wackerle

The tables are turned ...

Scott Lawrence, an avid paddleball player, has had a bad right hip for years.

Lawrence, of Grand Blanc, Mich., finally had to stop playing singles and concentrate on doubles.

Eventually, he decided to have the hip repaired. It was done Feb. 12, 2010, in Genesys Hospital in Grand Blanc.

After the surgery, he said he felt exceptionally well and showed visitors how he could move easily so quickly.

The irony is that Lawrence for years has been involved in the assistance of such surgeries (along with knee work).

He is employed by DePuy Orthopaedics and works with physicians in the preparation of the knee and hip items for patients. Lawrence scrubs up and is in the operating room.

If a particular item is too large or too small, he gets a different size from his case and the physician tries it.

So Lawrence finally quit beating around the bush and had someone else helping him get his hip done.

He joins a number of paddleballers who have not let such surgeries slow down their game.

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI



Lawrence gives a thumb up after surgery.



MEMORABLE -- Andy Mitchell poses in front of the National Paddleball Association Hall of Fame at the University of Michigan on February 20, 2010, when this paddle was placed inside. It was developed by The Paddle Company in honor of the careers of Mitchell and Andy Kasalo, who won 20 NPA national open doubles titles. Mitchell was participating in the 2010 Midwest Doubles Tournament at the Old IM Building. More details on Page 3.

PB

Continued from Page 1

in the U.S. and Canada.

Riskey developed the first paddle and made and sold them before they were manufactured commercially. He came up with the idea of the safety thong on the handle. He and others formed the NPA in 1952 and was its first president.

Under Risky, the paddle, ball and rules were standardized. He organized and supervised and played in numerous national paddleball tournaments. Later, he co-authored a book on Beginning Paddleball and developed illustrated charts for the game.

Over the years, he taught thousands of students and others the sport. Even into his 70s, Risky was playing paddleball.

In May 1975, he was honored by the Michigan Amateur Sports Hall of Fame for his contributions to the sport. He died on January 19, 1976, at the age of 77.

It was shortly afterward that the NPA Board of Managers established a trophy in his name to be awarded annually to the person who has contributed most to the sport of paddleball.

2010 Midwest Singles

Adrian, MI, YMCA

Jan. 15, 16, 17.

OPEN: 1st, Chad Krager;
2nd, Don Kirkconnell.

MEN'S A: 1st, Kevin
McLaughlin; 2nd, (tie)
Don Kirkconnell / Jeremy
Wheaton.

MEN'S B: 1st, Jeremy
Wheaton; 2nd, Sonny
Salazar; 3rd, Mark
Young.

MEN'S C: 1st, Jared
Arnold; 2nd, Skip
Freysinger. Consolation:
Scott Peters.

MASTERS: 1st, Doug
Hartung; 2nd, Rick
Clewis.

GOLDEN MASTERS:
1st, Andy Mitchell; 2nd,
Dan McLaughlin; 3rd,
Jim Owens. Consolation:
Jim Sterken.



2009 FALL DOUBLES

Midland, MI Community
Center, Nov. 7-8

OPEN: Andy Mitchell-
Don Kirkconnell
def. Brandon Creamer-
Ron Malecki. Third: Chad
Krager-Jeremy Wheaton.

MEN'S A: Chad Krager-
Brandon Creamer
def. Scott Lawrence-Bob
Sterken.

MEN'S B: Greg Keenan-
Jack Barenfanger def.
Rick Clewis-Skip
Freysinger.

MEN'S C: Don Traxler-
Dave Coffey def.
Jim Price-Rick
Kogelman.

MASTERS: Andy
Mitchell-Ed Maher def.
Randy Hoyle-Ron
Malecki.



The Dominant Andys

Indoor, four-wall's best paddleball team ever -- Andy Mitchell and Andy Kasalo -- has been recognized by THE PADDLE COMPANY, which is producing a paddle in their honor. It is made of Titanium Composite and carries the large message "A2 = DOMINANCE."

Their names are on the paddle along with the notation "20 Years," which signifies their 20 NPA national doubles championships.

Mitchell said the A2 is doubly appropriate because it refers to the two Andys and it also is a sort of shorthand for Ann Arbor, considered the birthplace of paddleball.

The word "dominance" says it all about the Andys and their control of the premier division -- open -- for more than two decades.

They won their first national doubles championship in 1981 and their last in 2003. In between, they won 15 in a row beginning in 1983 and continuing through 1997.

They have played in 23 national doubles finals, nearly half of the 48 that have been staged. Two of their three losses came early in their career.

That's real Dominance with a capital D!!

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI



Western Regional highlights juniors

SAN DIEGO -- The Western Regional Paddleball Championships were held Feb. 6, 2010, at the Sorrento Valley Racquetball & Fitness Center here.

Jimmy Coggburn, general manager of the center, said: "Everything went really well. We had about 42 people play. With it being a round-robin style, it promoted youth and durability maybe better than skill for a one-game match. So results might be slightly skewed."

In Open, Aaron Embry defeated Kevin Williams, 21-12. In A, John Fleisher defeated Jamie Lawson, 21-18.

"This is where young age came into play," said Coggburn. "He (Fleisher) is an up and comer though. He will be a tough B player in the Nationals. I am currently playing him a lot and he beats me one out of very 4 games or so."

In B, Larry Murray defeated Peter Klee. Klee beat Murray in the flight round but in the finals (they both had most total points), Klee was just too tired, Coggburn said.

In C/Novice, Nate Taylor topped Damon Afualo, 21-17. In 50 and over, Bob Richland defeated Joe Ski, 21-11. In Juniors, Conor Hoffman won out over Danielle Paraiso, 21-13.

Lawson said: "To my mind, the newsworthy item comes from the Juniors. We worked to recruit a good junior draw to bring new players in. We got about a dozen players ranging in age from 9 to 18. We broke them down for purpose of awards ... but they played across the different age groups to gain experience."

Lawson added that "To be sure, the best junior player in the tournament didn't play in the Juniors division at all. That was Emmett Coe, 18, who played in the open division. Aaron Embry won the open division, dominating everyone. He barely broke a sweat. He's been working hard and will be tough next month in (the National) Singles."

Embry is the 2008 NPA national singles champion.



**"O.K., O.K., YOU
play the left side and
I'll play the right."**



HER OWN GAME -- Sophia Remmo was not caught up in all the paddleball games at the 2010 Bean-Smith Tournament at the Bay Area Family Y in Bay City, Mich. Sophia, a second-grader at Verellen School in Essexville, Mich., devoted all of her attention to her Nintendo DS for much of the tourney which was played on Feb. 6.

18 PB teams compete in Bean-Smith Tourney

By RANDY WACKERLE

The Bay Area Family Y hosted the 33rd annual Bean-Smith Paddleball Tournament on Feb. 6, 2010, from the four courts in Bay City.

Eighteen teams found close competition in three divisions.

In the Open Division, By City's Scott Wittbrodt and Greg Keenan edged by the others with a 3-1 round-robin record to win the title.

In the B Division, the team of Steve Roe and Sean Herrera from Bay City shot their way to a 3-0 record to claim the first-place hardware.

Ted Jevicks and Judy Pretzer completed the Bay City sweep by winning the C Division over Jim Price and Rick Kogleman, 21-16, 21-9, in the final match.

Saginaw's Natalie Gilbert and Tim Hilk won the C Consolation plaque.

Special thanks to The Bay Area Runners Club for sponsoring the shirts and Bell Bar for their contributions.



And now, a word or two about the Pig Roast & PB



Don Kirkconnell

(Editor's Note: This is something new ... For the first time in the history of the Pig Roast & Human Sacrifice, the HONOREE is writing an article about the event. The 2009 chosen one was Don Kirkconnell, of Lawton, Mich., near Kalamazoo. Don did the honors for the NPA newsletter staff.)

As the 2009 Pig Roast honoree, I find myself reflecting on the traditions of the sport and the benefits I've gained from being affiliated with a group of quality people.

(People) whose integrity of character carry over into their professional lives as well as their friendships and affiliation with the entire paddleball community, which has grown and evolved much the same as an actual extended family.

This one just happens to cover the entire United States.

The annual Pig Roast, which started out as just a reason to have a party, has become a much-anticipated and counted-on tradition local to Kalamazoo.

Both new and seasoned veterans come to battle it out for the well-sought-after "Pig Iron" trophy and to partake in the post-tournament festivities.

Like watching the year's honoree feast on the traditional delicacy of the roasted eye of pig or what I like to now think of as a pork-filled jelly doughnut for those who have yet to experience the honor.

The event attracts tournament players, occasional players and players of years past that treat it much like an annual family reunion, coming together to enjoy an array of food and beverages and maybe a friendly yet competitive game of horseshoes.

It's an opportunity to get acquainted with players and their families on a more personal level and it's here that you realize the extent of the support and camaraderie of our growing paddleball family.

Pictures are passed around of past year's events, stories are shared of fun times together outside of the sport such as shared golf vacations or Harley excursions or just hearing how someone in the group went to visit a fellow player no longer in the area.

These longtime ties, some 30-plus years in the making, are made up of a broad spectrum of people with a wide range of professions and backgrounds that may not have otherwise come together.

Yet year after year, they share their love of the game and their determination to keep the sport alive and thriving.

It's also become a time to acknowledge and pay our respects to those who have gone before us, that have passed on or that have had an impact on the sport as we now know it, many of whom have earned their names on the prestigious Earl Risky Trophy for that reason.

One person who helped start the tradition of the Pig Roast ... and well-known for his contributions to the sport is Andy Mitchell, who I personally give credit for the continued improvements to my own game.

Over the years, he's been willing to share the "secrets of his success," has been supportive and patient -- sometimes with full bridle, bit and saddle as he's carried me through a game while trying to teach me the game's intricacies.

He has truly helped me and many others refine their game and will freely help guide people into their potential. It's this kind of camaraderie and support amongst the longtime players that attracts new people to the sport as well as keeps seasoned people playing, even well into their 70s.

In the paddleball community, the friendships go further than just between players.

My paddleball family has embraced my real family as well.

They've watched my kids grow up, celebrated birthdays, toasted to anniversaries and would be there for anything, if needed.

I'm thankful my dad introduced me to the sport 32 years ago and I'm proud to share it with my family and pass it along to my own kids.

This is a sport that grows as you grow and once it becomes a part of your life, it usually stays a part of your life.

It keeps you young at heart and your heart young and I'm grateful to all those who put in the time and effort coordinating the events and ensuring the continuation of the sport that I love!

Author, author!!

(Editor's Note: This article was written by Jim Owens, of Ann Arbor, Mich., a member of the NPA's Board of Managers and longtime PB player.)

The NPA's first National Platinum Singles champion, Jeff Duncan, released a book last fall. **Low Crimes and Misdemeanors** portrays a young Jeff Duncan. What a turn-around.

It is hard to imagine the self-described troublemaker becoming a respected college professor and upstanding member of society. He has been an English professor at Eastern Michigan University since 1971.

Duncan played several sports as a youngster. He tried handball in graduate school, converted to racquetball, then to paddleball. Jeff, an avid paddleball player, currently plays two or three times a week in Ann Arbor and occasionally enters NPA tournaments.



Duncan

I sat down in my living room with Jeff, who won his title in 2005 for players at least 65.

Owens: Tell me about **Low Crimes and Misdemeanors**. Why did you decide to write it?

Duncan: My kids asked me for years to write down my stories. They'd hear a lot of them. But there were a lot they didn't hear and I didn't want them to hear until they had passed an age beyond impressionability.

I worked on it on and off for a long time. There were an enormous number of episodes and I did not have a theme. You have to have a theme. It took me a long time.

Finally, one of my daughters and my wife looked at it and said: the good stuff was when you were with your buddies. That's the really good stuff. So, I thought about that. When I was with my buddies, we were up to no good. No good was up to us. So let's do that. Let's focus on that.

After I decided that, the title came. They don't qualify for high crimes. We weren't in that category. I knew guys who were. We drew a line. How much can we get away with? And even then, sometimes we were pushing it.

Owens: Where did you grow up? What have you heard from there?

Duncan: Tulsa, Oklahoma. Through the years, a number of friends from back home said you oughta write a book about this. I was born there

and lived there until one or two days after I graduated from high school. Then I headed to California.

I am going to go down to Tulsa and do a reading and a book selling in early February. So I'm going to E-mail loads of my classmates. I went to a very large high school, almost 800 in the graduating class. It was huge.

Owens: The book consisted of a number of stories about you and your buddies in Tulsa.

Duncan: Little anecdotes. Started when I was four years old.

Owens: Sometimes yourself, and sometimes with your friends.

Duncan: Like-minded souls.

Owens: Misbehavior.

Duncan: Yes, right. I had one episode of very correct behavior and almost went nuts. I couldn't deal with that.

Owens: But you had a conscience through all of the misdeeds.

Duncan: Yeah. I think overall I was pretty honest. Every kid lies, but when I really did something wrong and got called on it, I'd say: "Yup, I did it." Maybe with a trace of pride. At least sometimes.

Owens: I know you have written plays. Mostly children's plays?

Duncan: Yeah, the majority are children's plays. At Eastern, I've done some that were family, full-length musicals. I didn't write the music. But I wrote the lyrics.

Wrote a libretto for an opera. That was interesting. The guy I worked with was at Wild Swan, the children's theater. He called me up and said do you want to do a libretto. Sure, I said, what's a libretto. He said it is for an opera. Words, right? He said yes. I'm not a big opera buff, but I had a blast. It was based on a story by Gogol.

Owens: How many plays have you written?

Duncan: I think, around thirty.

Owens: Is this your first book?

Duncan: No. I have had academic books. I published a book on Emerson. Two writing textbooks some years ago. But this is the first one that's not at all academic. I worked very hard to make sure it was not academic. Get all of that vocabulary out. Need to get that kid's Oklahoma voice.

Jeff Duncan's book, **Low Crimes and Misdemeanors**, -- intended for adult readers -- is available at Nicola's in Ann Arbor, or on Amazon.com



REAL VETERANS -- Carrying the paddleball banner for many, many years is this group in the Platinum Masters division for players at least 65 in the 2010 Midwest Doubles Tournament February 19, 20, 21, at the Old IM Building at the University of Michigan. It was the largest-ever Platinum field in an NPA tourney. They range in age up to 88 (Storey). In the photo at left are (standing, from left) Al Storey, Larry Millen, Walt Carrara, Tom Cecchini, Gerry Cavanaugh, Lou Giampetroni, (kneeling from left) Don Traxler and Leon Sirrine. In the photo at right are (from left) Earl Pratt, Jer Fennell, Tom Porter and Jeff Duncan. Pratt and Fennell won the championship over Traxler and Sirrine.

2010 MIDWEST DOUBLES

Feb. 19, 20, 21, Old IM Building
U. of M., Ann Arbor, Mich.

OPEN: Kevin McLaughlin-Andrew Price def. Chad Krager-Dennis Negrete, 21-8, 21-14.

MEN'S A: Chad Krager-Dennis Negrete def. Brandon Creamer- Ron Malecki.

MEN'S B: Jack Baranfanger-Greg Keenan def. Sonny Salazar-Ted Wray, 21-18, 19-21, 21-12. Third: Joe Baldori-Sam Baldori.

MEN'S C: Rick Mountain-Scott Peters def. Todd Krager-John Tomczak, 21-15, 21-15. Third: Skip Freysinger-Bret Mitea. Consolation: Ron Cunningham-Jim Schorr.

MASTERS: Andy Mitchell-Mike Wisniewski def. Doug Hartung-Sonny Salazar, 21-8, 21-14.

GOLDEN MASTERS: Ron Malecki-Paul Chritz def. Jim Owens-Jack Baranfanger, 21-7, 21-14.

PLATINUM MASTERS: Jer Fennell-Earl Pratt def. Don Traxler-Leon Sirrine, 21-8, 21-6.

MIXED: Judy Shirley-Bob Hannah def. Chad Krager-Natalie Gilbert.

Addendum to the Mike Czabala piece in the NPA Winter newsletter:

"My future? Well, I definitely want to keep playing because I love the game. The problem is that I don't have anybody to play near where I live. (Camarillo, Calif.)

"I do play some racquetball to keep my footwork and everything up to speed, but I typically only end up hitting the paddleball by myself afterwards."

Paddleball moments?

-- "Beating the Andys in my second match ever in open at the Fall Doubles in Kalamazoo. I was only 17 and playing with (Randy) Hoyle. It was the

only time I'd have a winning record against them and might have been the only time anyone did!

-- "Winning the B Nationals with my dad (Frank) in Eau Claire.

-- "Every single match against the Andys. Going toe to toe with Kasalo was a blast. We play exactly the same style of game and the battling for position brought both of us practically up to the front wall. I think I remember a few dives over the top of each other, too!

-- "But mostly just all of the great people who play the game who I can call friends."

Czabala won the Sportsmanship Trophy in 2000.

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



PADDLEBALL PROFILE

Mike Sheeran's paddleball career is a tale of two cities.

Sheeran, 55, of Saginaw, Mich., began playing PB at the Flint, Mich. YMCA.

"I started playing in the 1970s," he said. "My brother, Nick, got me started."

He now works for Consumers Energy and is part of a growing group of PBallers at the Saginaw YMCA.

What does he enjoy about the game?

"The competition, the strategy and the friends you meet," he said.

In the early 1980s, Sheeran said, he won a novice singles title at an Ironman Tournament at Midland, Mich.



Sheeran

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