

NPA

(INDOOR / FOUR-WALL)

National Paddleball Association

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NPA, 7642 Kingston, Portage, Mich. 49002

NEWSLETTER / SUMMER 2009-2010

'Old' Whiz still is pretty good



Mike Wisniewski
National Singles Champ

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

At an age when most athletes are hanging it up, Mike Wisniewski still is playing very good paddleball with the big boys.

Wisniewski, 52, of Bay City, Mich., won his ninth National Paddleball Association open singles title on March 28, 2010, at the Sorrento Valley Racquet & Fitness Center in San Diego.

He defeated Mike Orr of San Diego, 21-17, 21-15, in the final of the indoor, four-wall championships.

And while the final was a gem for Wisniewski, he had to make a tremendous comeback in his semifinal match to continue in the tournament.

"I had a great time," said Whiz. "I have not moved and shot that well since the '96 open finals against (Andy) Kasalo!! I am truly blessed at 52."

The victory makes him the oldest NPA national open singles champion. There have been three previous champions who were 45 when they won.

Wisniewski has posted a magnificent record over the years, appearing in 16 NPA national singles finals and winning nine. But the last seven years have not been very fruitful, Whiz having lost in the final in 2005 and 2009 and not getting there the other five years.

Wisniewski said he has spent the last seven years "looking for the right formula to withstand the 'West Coast Offense.'"

It was in 2003-04 that players from the Paddleball Nation, a group of paddleballers from the West Coast, began appearing in NPA tournaments. And winning with regularity.

"The WCO combines an

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Krager, Negrete grab National Doubles title

Chad Krager and Dennis Negrete won the 2010 National Paddleball Association national doubles championship April 18 at the Forest View Racquet Club in Arlington Hgts., Ill.

They were unbeaten in a round-robin field of five teams.

In three of their four matches, they had to win a tiebreaker.

Mike Wisniewski, the current national singles champion who played with Kevin McLaughlin, said: "Dennis shot the ball well from both sides of the court

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Champs Krager (left) and Negrete

WHIZ

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aggressive approach to the game mixed with a high level of athleticism and awesome shot-making ability that had dominated (four-wall) paddleball the last seven years," Wisniewski said.

"I have been on a mission since then to regain a National Singles title. I needed to unlearn some old methods and gain new ones to have any hopes of competing with the West Coast style of play."

Orr, 36, who won the 2009 NPA national open doubles championship with Todd Entrikin, also of San Diego, gave Wisniewski a run for his money in the final.

"In the first game, it was all serve and shoot by Orr and myself," said Wisniewski. "He has one of the smoothest backhands ever and can produce offense from anywhere in the court."

Neither player could gain a commanding lead and Wisniewski, trailing 17-16, scored five unanswered points to win the first game.

"The second game was an all-out battle of kills, pass shots and retrievals from the players," Wisniewski said. "I was thrilled to be able to make gets that I haven't made since the '90s. It was just a great day for me and I took advantage of that."

He said that with the score tied at 15 "I used a 3-wall Z-serve to score the next three points and then mixed up a few more unorthodox shots to come out on top, 21-15. WOW, what a win!"

Wisniewski had an even tougher semifinal match. Playing Kevin Williams, the 2008 open runnerup, Whiz won the first game, 21-17. Williams took the second, 21-18.

Said Wisniewski: "The third game was the thriller. After some experimentation with different shots and serves, I suddenly found myself behind, 13-1. It was time to go to work. I focused on defensive retrievals and (got) Kevin's kill shots in front court.

"Somehow I was moving to the ball better than I had in a decade. I was able to hold and finish with a miraculous 21-16 win. Charlie Brumfield later stated it was one of the best come-from-behind rallies he had ever witnessed. Now that's a compliment!"

From 1989 to 1999, Wisniewski played in 10 of 11 national singles finals and won seven of them. He also has won three NPA national open doubles championships.

In second on the all-time national championship singles win list is Steve Keeley with five.

Next year will mark the 50th season of indoor, four-wall paddleball tournaments.

DOUBLES

Continued from Page 1

and actually played 50 to 60 percent of the back-wall shots from Chad's side of the court, including taking serves from both sides.

"Chad was phenomenal in making miraculous gets from everywhere on the court, while Dennis just roamed around swatting kills from everywhere else in the court.

"A very nice combination ... they had great chemistry."

Said Negrete who has been playing PB about 10 years: "Krager on the forehand, Negrete on the backhand. But you never know what we'll throw at our opponents once the match begins.

"This is my first big-time win ... I'm just glad Chad moved to Chicago. He's done some great work here keeping people interested in paddleball considering it's a big racquetball town."

Krager, who will be 37 on June 20, is from Bay City, Mich., and Negrete, 42, is from Elk Grove Village, Ill. Krager spends a considerable amount of time in the Chicago area.

Krager is a sales manager for a merchant services provider.

He said the toughest match involved Joe Baldori and Jamie Lawson. "Joe was absolutely awesome. I have never seen him play like that before. I think he shot 95% in game one.

"We finally won in a tiebreaker."

2010 NATIONAL SINGLES RESULTS

San Diego, March 26, 27, 28

OPEN: Mike Wisniewski def. Mike Orr, 21-17, 21-15; 3rd, Kevin Williams; Consolation: Kevin McLaughlin.

MEN'S A: Kevin McLaughlin def. Joe Baldori, 21-6, 21-18; 3rd, Emmett Coe.

MEN'S B: Emmett Coe def. Jackie Paraiso, 21-14, 21-14; 3rd, Jim Durst; Consolation: Rigo Marin.

MEN'S C: Justin Ivers def. Rigo Marin, 19-21, 21-10, 21-13; 3rd, Skip Freysinger; Consolation: Brian Hampston.

MEN'S NOVICE: 1st, Olcay Boz; 2nd, Josh Rodgers.

MASTERS: Andy Mitchell def. Bob Pfau, 21-10, 21-2; 3rd, Joe Siemienowski.

GOLDEN MASTERS: Andy Mitchell def. Jim Owens, 21-11, 21-14; 3rd, Greg Swanson; Consolation: Greg Childs.

PLATINUM MASTERS: John Romine def. Jer Fennell, 21-13, 15-21, 21-8.

JUNIORS: 1st, Julio Guzman; 2nd, Alex Sacco; 3rd, Sean Blumenfeld.

2010 NPA NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONS



MIKE WISNIEWSKI
OPEN



KEVIN MCLAUGHLIN
MEN'S A



EMMETT COE
MEN'S B



JUSTIN IVERS
MEN'S C



ANDY MITCHELL
MASTERS



ANDY MITCHELL
GOLDEN MASTERS



JOHN ROMINE
PLATINUM MASTERS



OLCAY BOZ
MEN'S NOVICE

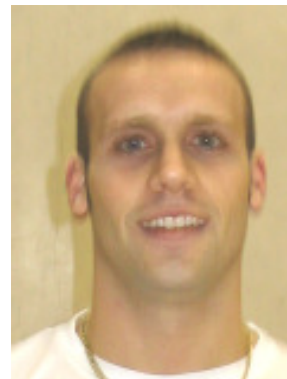


JULIO GUZMAN
JUNIORS

2010 NPA NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPS



Chad Krager (left) and Dennis Negrete
OPEN



Ron Malecki (left) and Brandon Creamer
MEN'S A



Greg Keenan (left) and Brad Stanfield
MEN'S B



Martin Gonzalez (left) and Adrian Montes
MEN'S C



Ted Wray (left) and Robert Stone
SENIORS



Bob Sterken (left) and Jim Swendris
MASTERS



Sandy DeGreif (left) and Ron Malecki
GOLDEN MASTERS



Dave Ratynski and Jackie Paraiso
MIXED DOUBLES



Photo by ANNE EX

Sonny Salazar (left) and Jim Owens

Salazar, Owens receive major NPA awards

The recipients of the National Paddleball Association's two major awards for 2010 are Sonny Salazar and Jim Owens.

Salazar received the Earl Risky Memorial Trophy, given in honor of the founder of the great game of paddleball to the person who has contributed most to the sport.

Owens was awarded the Sportsmanship Trophy, which goes annually to the person "who most represents the American ideal of good sportsmanship under extreme competitive conditions."

Salazar, 52, of Adrian, Mich., plays out of the Adrian YMCA and coordinates PB activity in that area. In most PB centers, there usually is one person who does most of the work and in Adrian, Sonny is the man.

Paddleball has been BIG in Adrian since way back in the time of John Shaw, former director of the Y. And in recent years, Salazar has been the force behind the sport. The area usually is well-represented in NPA tournaments.

Owens, of Ann Arbor, Mich., is one of the big shooters who play regularly at the One-On-One Club there. The place is a veritable Who's Who of national champions and top-level players.

Owens also won the Sportsmanship Trophy in 1985 and is the only two-time recipient of the award.

He received the Earl Risky Trophy in 1989.

Chad Krager, the 2010 National Doubles champion, said about Owens:

"He is the epitome of sportsmanship. He has never given up and fights to the end and always comes up shaking hands whether the victor or the loser."

Owens, 60, is a retired teacher who also taught two years in Botswana through the Peace Corps.

He and the late Mark Piechowiak defeated Andy Mitchell and Andy Kasalo in a national doubles semifinal in 1998 after the latter had won 15 national doubles championships in a row. -- LOU GIAMPETRONI

2010 NATIONAL DOUBLES RESULTS Arlington Heights, ILL. April 16, 17, 18

OPEN: 1st, Dennis Negrete-Chad Krager; 2nd, Andy Mitchell-Don Kirkconnell; 3rd, Mike Wisniewski-Kevin McLaughlin. Negrete-Krager were unbeaten in round-robin competition in a 5-team field.

MEN'S A: 1st, Brandon Creamer-Ron Malecki; 2nd, Chad Krager-Kevin McLaughlin; 3rd, Eugene Rush-Jim Owens.

MEN'S B: 1st, Greg Keenen-Brad Stanfield; 2nd, Joe Baldori-Sam Baldori; 3rd, Sonny Salazar-Paul Sylvester. Consolation: Nick Tomczak-Bob Brennan.

MEN'S C: 1st, Martin Gonzalez-Adrian Montes; 2nd, Len Baldori-Joy MacKenzie. Consolation: John Mason-Bob Wurtz.

SENIORS: 1st, Ted Wray-Robert Stone; 2nd, Steve Fleckenstein-Brad Ex.

MASTERS: 1st, Bob Sterken-Jim Swendris; 2nd, Ted Wray-Robert Stone.

GOLDEN MASTERS: 1st, Ron Malecki-Sandy DeGreif; 2nd, Jim Swendris-Jim Sterken.

MIXED DOUBLES: 1st, Jackie Paraiso-Dave Ratynski; 2nd, Dennis Negrete-Diane Moore.

Paddleballers, it's that time of year again: The Pig Roast and Human Sacrifice -- an excuse for a little PB and a lot of fun and food.

The 2010 fest is set for Saturday, June 5, at the Bronson Athletic Club in Kalamazoo, Mich., with the party set for later at the VFW Hall on Kilgore Road.

You can enter through the Web site at www.paddleball.org or call (269) 779-6615.

Players are asked to provide a dish to share at the roast.



It's that time again, another birthday for paddleball legend Al Storey. On June 15, he will be 89. He's been a PB fixture for many years and the NPA looks forward to his presence for many more.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, AL!

Paddleball and The People will linger long after you stop hitting the ball

(Editor's Note -- Renee Callies was a long-time PBaller from the Kalamazoo, Mich., area. She left the game about 15 years ago and still lives in Kalamazoo.)

By **RENEE CALLIES**

In February, I traveled to my parents' house outside of Portland, Oregon to help them pack.

They were selling their house and returning to Michigan after a long hiatus in the Northwest.

As my mom and I emptied closets into boxes, we came across two Pitcher paddles, still wrapped in plastic protective sleeves.

Back when Andy Kasalo and I were a couple, we'd taken those paddles out to their house with the hope that Mom would take up the sport (she's an avid tennis player) and introduce some people to it.

I don't believe the paddles ever left their plastic sleeves.

That was thirty years ago. Andy and I are no longer a couple but remain friends.

Paddles have changed from wood to graphite composites. I think we probably paid around \$25 each for those wood paddles; now they cost between \$75 and \$150.

What hasn't changed in those thirty years, though, are the people who play the sport.

I found that out when I returned to paddleball as a guest at the 2010 National Doubles in Arlington Heights, Illinois. I don't mean to say that I didn't meet new



Renee Callies

people at the tournament; rather, that the spirit -- the genuine camaraderie and support -- of the people is the same.

Much like attending a high school reunion, after some awkwardness, friendships were renewed, back stories covered, and I'm talking with people I haven't seen since the 2000 National Doubles held in Kalamazoo. The difference this time is that I am a captive audience—no running home to do a few chores. No, I am immersed in the spirit for the weekend.

And much like a high school reunion, I notice that some of us are grayer, balder, a few pounds heavier. But players are still healthy, still running after the ball, still competitive.

I'm watching men in their fifties, some near or over sixty, dive for balls—yes, dive on the floor to keep an opponent from scoring.

Twenty years ago, that dive would have been followed by a graceful leap up onto their feet. Today, it's a little slower, a little more painful to watch, but the fact is, they still do it.

And while I know some bemoan the lack of younger players .

entering the game, the fact remains that players like Andy Mitchell, Jim Owens, Mike Wisniewski and others are still competitive and they're giving their opponents twenty to thirty years. Is this possible in any other sport that requires an equal amount of physical stamina and prowess?

One of these younger players is Chad Krager, the host and head cheerleader of the Chicago-area contingent. I discovered he still claims roots in Michigan and credits his love of the sport to Randy Wackerle, whose junior program in Bay City got him started. My introduction to him came when I entered Forest View Racquet Club at 9:30 p.m. Friday night with Lorri Brigham.

"Lorri, it's been so hard," Chad exclaimed as he threw his arms around her and sighed with relief. He'd been running the tournament until Lorri could arrive and take over.

Calm, level-headed Lorri runs most of the tournaments, from tallying online entries to figuring out the schedule of play to handing out T-shirts and game balls. It's not a volunteer job many people want. She described one particular tournament a few years back where she had to put in an "all-nighter" to work out the schedule.

With people playing two and three divisions, creating a workable tournament can be tough. She said this year was the first Midwest tournament in several years that required Friday night play. Hopefully that's a sign of renewed interest and additional players.

Back when I played, women filled three divisions. Now, three women played in the tournament -- two from California and one from the Chicago area -- all racquetball players. Playing in the Mixed Doubles and the Open and B

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THE PEOPLE

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divisions, Joy MacKenzie, Jackie Paraiso and Diane Moore held their own.

Several people asked me why I don't play, why women don't play anymore. I don't know if I have a good answer. I do know that when I quit playing, my life had gotten too busy: I was back in college full time and working thirty to forty hours a week in the evenings.

I know friends started having children and paddleball was put on the back burner. Why didn't we return to the tournaments after these hiatuses? Maybe because we got too out of shape to get back in it competitively?

Maybe because we played for different reasons, for social, less-competitive reasons and now our social time was committed to playing on our home courts or to other obligations? I know for some, including me, injuries unrelated to the game make us hesitant.

But I'll also admit that watching the open matches, where long rallies include sharp passes, deep lobs and artistic shots, made me yearn to step on the court and swing a paddle. Can my body take it?

I don't know, but I do know those guys five, ten, fifteen years older would say absolutely, paddleball will keep you young. In an e-mail following the tournament, Mark Smith said to me when I asked about his aching shoulder that he is "proudly wearing the wear and tear of a lifestyle he wouldn't change."

Those Oregon paddles flew back with me in my carryon bag. I returned them to Lorri, who will distribute them to players who want to try the game but can't afford a paddle. And I know that once they try the sport, they'll be hooked.

Paddleball and the people who play it get in the blood and linger, whether you keep hitting balls against the wall or not.

PADDLEBALL PROFILE

Nathan Martin's mother told him to try paddleball, so he listened to Mom.

Martin, 44, of Ann Arbor, Mich., is "a racquetball convert."

So is his mother, Nancy, of La Jolla, Calif., who played the OTHER sport for many years before switching.

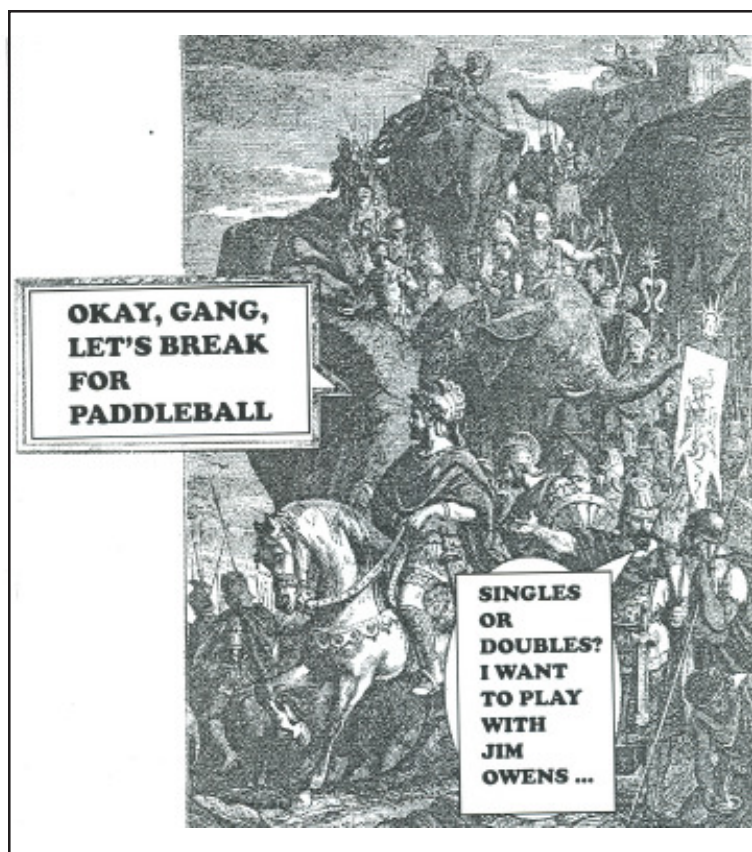
Nathan Martin, a rabbi, said he enjoys "the exercise and community" paddleball offers.

He has finished second in a Men's B



Nathan Martin

national singles tournament and has won a Men's B singles title in the Midwest Singles.



PB History

At one time, there was a collegiate paddleball tournament.

The first was on April 5-7, 1968, at the Old IM Building at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Singles and doubles were offered.

There were 16 players in singles, which was won by Paul Lawrence of the U. of M.

Two players who went on to bigger PB things were eliminated in the quarterfinals: Steve Keeley and Craig Finger.

Entry fee was \$5 and dormitory-type rooms were available at the Michigan Union for \$3.50 per day.

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

PADDLEBALL PROFILE



Hilk

It's always a plus to have the director of the local YMCA play paddleball.

That way, chances are you'll always be able to reserve a court and all things paddleball will be observed.

That's the situation at the Saginaw, Mich., YMCA where Tim Hilk is the director.

Hilk, 47, began playing PB in 1997 "when I lived in Adrian, Mich.," he said. "That's all they played at the (YMCA) courts."

He and his partner, Mike Sheeran, took a second in their division at the 2009 Bean-Smith Doubles Tournament.

Hilk said he would like to see paddleball "stories on the website."

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