

# NPA

(INDOOR / FOUR-WALL)

National Paddleball Association

WWW.PADDLEBALL.ORG

NPA, 7642 Kingston, Portage, Mich. 49002

NEWSLETTER / FALL 2010-2011

## Golden season on the horizon for paddleball

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

The 2010-2011 season will be the National Paddleball Association's 50th, the golden milestone.

In the early days, the national tournaments featured both singles and doubles on the same weekend. It was that way until 1976, when huge numbers precluded staging both events together.

The number of entries was astonishing -- more than 300 entrants for a doubles tournament and more than 150 for a singles event. Not always, but the other totals weren't far behind.

That's the way it was -- for a very long time, from the mid-1970s to the early 2000s. And the tournaments were always held on a three-day weekend. Amazing!!

In the early days, tournaments were held over four days -- beginning on Thursday.

The early tournament numbers were quite small. That's because the players were professional persons -- doctors, lawyers, etc. -- or staff members from YMCAs. People who could afford the travel expenses and the time.

The NPA season now begins late in the year and usually ends with the National Doubles in April the following year.

However, the first three Nationals and one other were held at the end of the year. But in keeping with the pattern set later, each is now listed as an overlapping season.

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LORRI

LAUDED  
Page 7



Kevin McLaughlin as a junior in 1997 and in 2009.

## Ex-junior making some big moves in the game

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

Unfortunately for indoor, four-wall paddleball, the National Paddleball Association's junior programs are no more.

But one former junior player -- Kevin McLaughlin -- is following through on the promise he showed in the early years.

McLaughlin is one of the few juniors who continued on in the sport and now has a few titles under his belt.

McLaughlin, 26, of Bloomington, IN, won the NPA's national A singles championships the last two seasons. He also plays with the big boys.

In the open division at the 2009 national singles

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Former paddleballer

Ray Bayer (right) dies  
in a car crash in Turkey.

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# GOLDEN

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For example, the first Nationals were played in December, 1961, in Madison, Wis. But the winners in the NPA champions list are for the 1961-62 season.

The first two tourneys were held in Madison.

The site with the most tourneys is the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where the sport reputedly was invented by the late Earl Risky in 1930. The U. of M. has hosted 11 national singles events and five national doubles tourneys.

Second in national singles is Michigan State University in E. Lansing with seven, along with four national doubles.

Eau Claire, Wis., staged five national doubles events and two national singles.

Some of the other cities that have hosted either national singles or national doubles tournaments are:

Bloomington, Ind.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Ames, Iowa; Fargo, N.D.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Riverside, Calif.; Bloomington, Ill.; San Diego; and Arlington Hgts., Ill.

After the NPA was reorganized under the direction of the late Tom Ballantyne of Flint, Mich., in 1974, most of the tournaments were held in Michigan.

While Ann Arbor and East Lansing were the sites for most of the events, Midland hosted eight, Flint six, Davison five and others one, two or three over the years.

With the rebirth of paddleball on the West Coast in 2003, there have been six national tournaments there -- four in San Diego and two in Riverside, Calif.

Two Madison players -- Paul Nelson and Bill Schultz -- played in the first national singles championship match and Nelson won. The next season, Schultz defeated Nelson in the national final. The next season, Nelson topped Schultz in the championship match.

Thus, Nelson and Schultz played in the first three national singles finals. But wait, there's more.

Schultz also made it to the national singles final in the next two seasons. He lost to Moby Benedict and Dr. Bud Muehleisen. So Bill Schultz played in the first FIVE national singles championship matches, winning only once.

Nelson also was involved in an unusual decision in the early days of paddleball. At the outset of the sport, there were no thongs on paddles. No thongs!!!

Eventually, NPA officials realized the danger involved and took action in the early 1970s to require thongs for all paddles.

However, it was decided that Nelson, who switched the paddle from hand to hand, should be permitted to play that way until he quit the game -- a sort of grandfather clause for his benefit. No one else was allowed to play that way.

So there have been a lot of matches played and a lot of P-100s bounced around courts throughout the country during the first 49 NPA seasons.

I'm looking forward to No. 50.

## Important changes ...

*(Editor's Note: This article was written by Lorri Brigham, NPA secretary-treasurer.)*

**Players – We would like to inform you of some important changes that were voted on at the last NPA Board of Managers meeting.**

**-- We have raised the entry fees for tournaments and have changed the payment structure: The deadline for tournament entries is the FRIDAY BEFORE the tournament date. All those entering by the deadline will be charged \$35 per player (a \$10 discount). From the deadline to five days before the tourney, you may still enter the tourney but will lose the discount -- the fee becomes \$45 per player. AT FIVE DAYS BEFORE THE TOURNAMENT DATE, ENTRIES WILL NO LONGER BE ACCEPTED. If you plan to play, but have an obstacle keeping you from signing up, you may contact Lorri Brigham to ask that a spot be held for you. The player must do this by the Sunday before the tourney, the entry fee will be \$45 per player. Lorri will communicate with the player if a spot can be held and the date/time the commitment must be made by. If a player enters the tourney then withdraws with less than 5 days notice, there is a \$10 per player penalty. Please understand all of this is being done in an effort to make tournaments run more smoothly. When players enter two to three days before the tourney, logo wear is over- or under-ordered, scheduling errors occur, and a snowball effect of bad things happen. Please help your sport thrive by embracing this new format.**

**-- All age divisions will play under a new format. Instead of offering a consolation division, we will change the format to that of a "roll down." All losers from the 1<sup>st</sup> round will form a new division (i.e., Golden Masters "B"). We feel this will add more spirited competition for these divisions.**

# Ex-paddleballer Ray Bayer dies in traffic crash

Ex-paddleballer Ray Bayer had a lot going for him when he decided in 1988 to give it all up and go to India to study Breath and Open Counseling and eventually to teach what mystics had been saying for years.

Bayer, 65, a top-level open PB player in the 1970s -- who had found his niche in life -- was injured fatally June 1, 2010, in a traffic accident in Istanbul, Turkey.

A graduate of Michigan State University, Bayer had gotten into counseling

programs by reading a book given to him by Steve Keeley.

In a 2004 E-mail interview, Bayer said the book "was in the form of spontaneous talks given by Osho, an Enlightened Mystic in India. I had never heard of him before.

"It was one of those experiences

where someone put into simple words what I've felt on a very deep level but could never fully put together on my own."

From his days at MSU, Bayer said, "I'd always been in touch with the 'Human Potential' movement that was an outgrowth of the '60s.

"And this guy was light years ahead of anything I had read or experienced up to now."

So Bayer, then with Pro Kennex in San Diego and one of many paddleballers who headed to California and switched to racquetball, went to Pune in India in 1988. Over the next several years, he split his time between San Diego and India.

During that time, he led groups and gave sessions in Pune. Eventually, he moved throughout the Mid-East conducting sessions.

"My life had turned into a blessing beyond words," Bayer said. "I share what I know about the Breath and Meditation techniques and so much comes back to me."



**Ray Bayer**



**A 1970s photo of Ray Bayer (center), with Dan McLaughlin (left) and Steve Keeley.**

Rich Bayer, Ray's brother, said Ray "had one of the fullest, richest, funnest lives of anyone on Earth. He loved every minute and mostly everyone who was with him in those minutes.

"He didn't possess much in terms of material goods; he could carry almost everything he owned with him on his annual road trips when he would travel the world teaching people to meditate and have full, rich, fun lives themselves."

Ray Bayer was born in Mt. Clemens, Mich. He served in the Marines for four years, including a stint in Viet Nam.

He got a degree in psychology from MSU.

A celebration of his life with friends and

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Ray Bayer "had one of the fullest, richest, funnest lives of anyone on Earth. He loved every minute and mostly everyone who was with him in those minutes."

**-- Rich Bayer, Ray's brother**

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family was held Aug. 21, 2010, in Ypsilanti, Mich.

Despite his travels, Ray Bayer -- who received the National Paddleball Association's Sportsmanship Trophy in 1974 -- still loved paddleball.

In 2004, he said, "I really miss PB ... I keep my paddles with me in Pune and I still have two balls which I cherish ... There is an outdoor wall for the tennis players to warm up on but I had them paint some lines on the cement and whenever I can I teach someone there a bit and we can play.

"So, tell the guys; if ever in Pune, India, look me up and we can play a little one-wall with the black ball against a black wall ... It's a real Meditation." -- LOU GIAMPETRONI

# KEELEY ON HOGAN ...

(Editor's Note: Joe Baldori, a paddleballer who works in Washington, D.C., sent an E-mail to Steve Keeley on May 6, 2010, and in passing asked: "did you ever beat hogan in pball or rball?" This was Keeley's response, with his usual style of no capital letters and little punctuation.)

since u ask, the hogan vs. keeley controversy goes way back. i beat marty w/ a paddle against his racket plus a 10-point spot when he was young, about 18, to entice him from strings to wood.

i beat him every time we played paddleball in practice or tournaments, that i recall, except one nation-als finals in ann arbor that i threw after for the good of the sport. he won the title, & w/ the notoriety fired up the first money pball tourneys.

in racquetball i beat him in the many practices and tournaments for the first couple years until he got professional feet and the green tournament ball changed from slow to fast. it was like going from softball to hardball on the same diamond.

he started beating everyone in sight including me -- maybe four times in tournaments -- and the peak match of my career (zero mental errors & 2 physical errors in three games) was against marty on the front wall glass of the denver courthouse that i lost by a point in the tiebreaker.

the last rball tournament we played was w/ the slower blue ball in long beach where I beat him, altho he was weary having spent the day surfing.

the single pivotal moment in rball history defined by books & mags was when marty beat the goliaths in burlington, vt., including me, screamed, 'get my mom on the phone!' and deservedly went on to become not only the third best rballer of all time (cliff swain first, brumfield second w/ cheating) but the sport's most influential.

no one holds a candle to hogan for furthering rball, and i lived w/ them all -- muelleisen, brumfield, hogan, niederhoffer, or buddied w/ the new champ generation of serot, hilecher, yellen, swain, sudsy, & other rball legends.

note that no one will ever convince me that vic niederhoffer, who dabbled in paddles & racquets while winning world squash championships, was not the best all-around racket player of the 1970-1990 era, including everyone aforesaid when paddles & racquets were most



Marty Hogan (left) and Steve Keeley before their 1979 NPA national singles championship match at the Old IM Building in Ann Arbor, Mich.

golden. case in point, vic trounced both marty & me in a 1995 2-day all-racquets contest in ct. w/ one game leg.

the curious thing about hogan is that his games -- paddles, racquets & squash -- got measurably stronger w/ age; he would have easily beaten himself at age 35 vs. 25 because he had learned to anticipate shots, earned fast feet, and thought strategy.

however, no one will dispute that after he won the burlington tournament (where I threw the match to him for the same previous reason in paddleball) he became the single most influential champion in racquet-ball: the sport changed from slow thinking to fast reaction, top players were squat instead of stringy, serves were drive, drive, and most significantly every top player since hogan owes him their backhands.

if there were a patent on that backhand, he'd be rich, maybe buy another bull to wrestle. marty was the best all-around athlete to ever pick up a paddle or racquet, but not the best player. the lesson from this disclosure is that sport at the professional level transcends to an art.

someone should ask marty hogan, the singles champion I most admire as a person for not cussing much, not drinking or using drugs when they were replete, loving his family, and being kind when he was on top.

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<b>N. P. A.</b>	<b>BRIGHAM CLASSIC (Doubles)</b> --Dec. 4-5, 2010, Delta College, 1961 Delta Rd., University Center, southwest of Bay City, Mich.	<b>MIDWEST DOUBLES</b> -- Feb. 11-13, 2011, Michigan Athletic Club, E. Lansing, MI.
<b>2010-2011</b>	<b>MIDWEST SINGLES</b> -- Jan. 21-23, 2011, Bronson Athletic Club, Kalamazoo, Mich.	<b>NATIONAL SINGLES</b> -- March 18-20, 2011, Forest View Racquet Club, Arlington Heights, Illinois.
<b>SCHEDULE</b>	<b>WESTERN REGIONALS</b> -- Feb. 5, 2011, Sorrento Valley Fitness Center, San Diego, CA.	<b>NATIONAL DOUBLES</b> -- April 15-17, 2011, Sorrento Valley Fitness Center, San Diego.



Kevin displays his awards after a junior victory while a proud father, Dan McLaughlin, also enjoys the moment.

## EX-JUNIOR

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he took many-time champion Mike Wisniewski to a tiebreaker in a semifinal, losing 21-19 in the crucial game. He then went on to take third place.

In the open division in the 2010 national singles, he took consolation honors.

“As a junior, I won all of the singles titles that there were to win at the time, including the state and national singles,” Kevin said.

He also won the Midwest Open Doubles last season with Andrew Price. There are other titles.

So it’s fairly obvious that if he stays in the sport, McLaughlin will be doing even better things.

He probably gets the winning attitude from his father, Dan McLaughlin. The latter is one of only two players in NPA history to win national open, seniors and masters singles championships. The other is Andy Mitchell.

That’s quite an achievement.

“My dad got me into the sport at around age 10 and taught me how to play the game,” said Kevin. “He is the one most responsible for the successes that I have had in the sport so far.”

Kevin said he and his father “had a lot of friendly father-son competition and he gave me a good benchmark to shoot for.”

Kevin won the national juniors singles title in 1996 and again in 1998. He also was awarded the Dmitri Remsberg Trophy in 1996.

He is in his second year of law school at Indiana University. He is a graduate of Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego. Kevin spent a few years in California and had an opportunity to play with some very good paddleballers there.

“I will say that the time I spent playing paddleball in San Diego while I lived there is what I credit the most for my success in recent years,” he said.

“Someone put me in touch with Charlie Brumfield and he was great at bringing me in and getting me games with good players right away.

“The level of play out there is consistently high and I think being able to get so much quality playing time in with really good players is what got me there.”

### KEVIN ON THE NPA ...

“I’m really happy with the NPA in general. Lorri (Brigham) always does a great job and whenever the tournaments are out in San Diego Jimmy Cogburn always does a ton of work to make tournaments come off as smoothly as they do.

“I think it’s pretty cool that we can still put on these events and have food and T-shirts and prizes and still keep the cost pretty low.

“The only thing I’d like to see more is having more people make the effort to travel for tournaments. I understand that travel can be expensive to San Diego from Michigan or vice versa, but even for local tournaments as well the turnout isn’t super high.

“I think with a sport that’s pretty small and localized by most standards that it would be nice to see people who don’t think tournaments are their thing still come out and have fun with it and be a little more intentional about supporting the sport.

“VIVA PADDLEBALL!”

### KEVIN ON PADDLEBALL ...

“There’s a number of things I like about the sport, but I think the main thing that keeps me coming back is how much fun I have playing.

“Part of that comes from the sport itself and I think part of it comes from the atmosphere and the group of guys that play.

“But beyond just having a good time, I also like the competition side of it. I think the tournaments are easily one of my favorite parts because you get to see how you stack up to people that you don’t get the chance to play with week in and week out ...

“... and then go buy each other a beer and have a great time hanging out with the rest of the paddleball community.”

### KEVIN’S BEST PB MEMORY ...

“Probably winning the national singles for the first time as a junior in Flint, MI. The guy I was playing had to have been at least a foot taller than me and was supposed to be this really good up and coming junior.

“He was treating it like his victory was just a formality, but once we started it turned into a battle and I just wanted it more.”

# A DVD featuring Brum and the Paddleball Nation

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

One of the best-ever video productions of paddleball was put together in 2004 by Tim Gerard, a onetime PBaller from Bay City, Mich.

I watched it again recently and it's a marvelous collection of interviews, videos, still photos and what have you about the great game.

It was at the 2004 National Singles tournament at the One-On-One Club in Ann Arbor, Mich. It marked the first time that players from the Paddleball Nation, formed on the West Coast, played in an NPA national tournament.

It's worth repeating some of the gems Gerard put on the DVD.

The most entertaining interview was that of Charlie Brumfield, a national paddleball champion in 1969 and 1970 who later became the No. 1 racquetballer in the country. It was Brumfield who was one of the key figures in the Paddleball Nation's return to paddleball.

Brumfield, who played in the first decade of the NPA's operation, was asked by Mike Wisniewski who he believed were the best players in PB.

"In regard to the historical players in



Muehleisen in 1969

paddleball, there are several that I consider great at their prime, at their absolute prime," Brumfield said. "Overall, when you rate someone's career, you have to do it if it's a close call regarding the qualities of their play in their prime based on their longevity because the record speaks louder than anything else.

"However, what I'm going to speak to now is only with respect to the player during a particular year in their career. And great players, I would say that I would rank (Bud) Muehleisen, (Paul) Lawrence, myself, (Steve) Keeley and (Marty) Hogan as great players on the list, not counting the present crop."

Brumfield said "I have not seen Mr. (Steve) Wilson and a couple of other players on the historical list. Of that group, I would say that Muehleisen was the best player.

"And I base that on factors based upon the ball at that time. The ball was firmer but slower and so the feel and control of the court were much more important than they are in modern-day paddleball.

"Muehleisen controlled the court and he never fatigued. The nature of his game required the other player to do three times as much work. So basically, that's a huge advantage to have.

"So match in and match out, if I had to bid on a match or do a spread on a match, of all those great players, I would pick Muehleisen, with a slight edge."

Brumfield added: "Not everyone agrees with me though and certainly the other four people have their independent views."

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## BRUMFIELD ON LOSING WEIGHT:

In the 1968 Nationals in Minneapolis, Minn., he beat the defending champion, Paul Lawrence, in three games. "By that time, I had gone from 180, which is what I weighed when I got to the tournament, and when I finished, I weighed 149, at the end of the tournament."

## BRUMFIELD ON STEVE KEELEY:

"An advantage Keeley had over us was, I would say he was only a moderately good doubles player and very rarely was he in the tournament very long in doubles.

(ED. NOTE: At that time, both the national singles and doubles tournaments were held on the same weekend.)

"Muehleisen and I were the premier doubles players of the sport.

"So we had a big disadvantage to the other singles players because we were on the court and they were resting up for singles.

"Keeley won the title in Flint in 1971 but I thought the win

was slightly diminished (for a couple of reasons). I did not think he was a great player at that time. From that point, he became a great player.

"Do I think Keeley was great when (Marty) Hogan beat him? (Hogan beat Keeley in three games in the 1979 NPA national open singles final.)

"No, I don't. He had a number of personal problems and various other things happening in his life. And his emphasis on the sport was not the same. His knees were giving him problems. But he still was a good player; a damn good player."



Tim Gerard's DVD

# Tourney renamed in honor of Lorri

The M.V.P. of the N.P.A has been recognized by her peers for her work over many years in paddleball.



**Lorri Brigham**

The NPA Board of Managers at its August 2010 meeting named the first tournament of the 2010-2011 season the "Brigham Classic," after Lorri Brigham, longtime secretary-treasurer of the NPA.

For years, the tournament was referred to as the Fall Doubles and kicked off the NPA's season which ends after the National Doubles in April.

Board members were unanimous in their action to rename the tournament, pointing out that Lorri is paddleball's key operative and works to keep the wheels running smoothly.

Henceforth, the first tourney will be called the "Brigham Classic."

The first is scheduled for December 4-5, 2010, at Delta College, University Center, near Bay City, Mich.

Lorri is the organizer of all the NPA tournaments -- and that says it all.

She has been there -- it seems -- forever. Putting everything together and making sure the tourneys are class operations.

Lorri is the only person who twice has won the NPA's prestigious Risky Trophy, awarded annually to the person who has contributed the most to paddleball. She won it in 1986 and in 2005.

As every paddleballer says:

"We can't do it without Lorri Brigham."

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI



Paddleballers Randy Wackerle (left) and Scott Carmona get involved in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new YMCA in Bay City, Mich., on May 26, 2010. The old Y has been the scene of many, many PB tournaments over the years and served as the base for Wackerle's junior program. Completion of the new Y is projected for the summer of 2011.

## Ruble is Pig-Roasted

Ted Ruble, a Kalamazoo, Mich., PBaller for more than 25 years, was the honoree at the 2010 Pig Roast -- the 34th such event.

An article and photos of the roast will be in the next issue of the NPA newsletter.



**Ruble**

## Ex-PB champ wins golf title

Casey Baker, a former junior paddleball champion, won the prestigious Golf Association of Michigan championship Aug. 17, 2010.

Baker, of Ann Arbor, Mich., topped Willie Mack III, of Flint, Mich., by one stroke after shooting 65 in the final round at Flint Golf Club.

He won the 1988 NPA 12-and-under singles title.



**Grambeau**  
*A 1970s photo*



## U-M recognizes PB champion Rod Grambeau

Rod Grambeau, a many-times paddleball champion, was honored on his 90th birthday Sept. 2, 2010, by the University of Michigan School of Kinesiology, where Grambeau was a long-time member.

Grambeau and the late Steve Galetti won six national masters championships between 1971 and 1980. They were almost unbeatable.

Grambeau wrote a book on paddleball in the early days of the sport and served on the NPA's board of directors.

**Paddleballs**

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



**Cavanaugh**

**PADDLEBALL PROFILE**

Gerry Cavanaugh got a relatively late start in paddleball but as most PBallers learn “It’s never too late.”

Cavanaugh, 66, of Northville, Mich., is part of a group of avid players at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, Mich.

Cavanaugh, who is retired, was a professor at Schoolcraft for 35 years and said he didn’t start playing PB until 1980.

What does he enjoy about the game?

“Good people,” he said. “It’s fun. I like the group of guys that play. Good workouts.”

He said he hasn’t won anything but still is hoping.

Any suggestions on how tournaments can be improved?

“Let’s enforce the no-dark clothing rule,” he said.

**NPA**

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