

NPA

(INDOOR / FOUR-WALL)
National Paddleball Association
WWW.PADDLEBALL.ORG

NPA, 7642 Kingston, Portage, Mich. 49002

NEWSLETTER / FALL 2011-2012

Paddleball starts new era with a new ball

By CHAD KRAGER

Got Balls?? Well, you do now! It is with great pride and joy to announce the New Official Ball of the NPA. After careful deliberation, planning and testing, the NPA has reached an agreement with Prince Sports, and they will manufacture the Ektelon Paddleball, as the Official Ball of Paddleball.

In conjunction with this agreement, the NPA has also decided to become a distributor. What does this mean? This means that Gordy Hatt of Spectrum Sports has decided to retire from ball distributorship and the NPA will now take over.

The NPA would like to take this opportunity to thank Gordy for 25-plus years of distributing the PENN ball. Also, to Dave Haehnle, who had initially helped Gordy with that task. Thank you, Gordy and Dave!!!



Krager

The NPA couldn't be more enthusiastic with this great opportunity, but there is a very serious note to be made. Ektelon could not come to terms with the NPA as sole distributor of this paddleball, unlike PENN's sole distributor agreement with Spectrum Sports.

Ektelon will be offering the paddleball to any of their accounts that are willing to resell these balls. **What does this mean?** It means a couple of things.

One, we don't have other manufacturers lined up to produce our ball for such a small market, which gave us zero leverage. Two, if you are



interested in supporting the NPA, then you must be sure to purchase the ball from the NPA directly or through NPA outlets.

How will you know if an outlet is NPA-driven? Ask the NPA or visit the NPA website for a list of NPA-driven accounts in your area. Also, you can ask any of the board members in your area. **BE PROACTIVE!!** Ask your club to call the NPA and set up a reseller's account and we will be happy to offer wholesale pricing.

Or, simply tell the NPA which club you belong to, and we'll make the call. **Why is it important to buy from the NPA?** The proceeds from this venture will help to promote and aid in the growth of our great sport. That's what Non-Profit Organizations do, and as you know, the NPA is a Non-Profit Organization!!

Your patronage is essential and most appreciated.

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NPA Schedule on Page 6

NEW BALL, Continued from Page 1

It seems daunting to think how we could possibly get every sale, but we will certainly utilize every resource. Please forward this newsletter to every paddleball contact, as word of mouth will be our most valuable asset.

Additionally, in support of the NPA, we need to come together as an organization and help one another grow this sport and be pro-actively responsible for the future successes. Again, we are not the sole distributor of this ball, so please be careful purchasing these balls and be sure your hard-earned dollars are being spent in support of the NPA.

As we move forward, it will be of the utmost importance to keep each other informed about all issues concerning this new ball, whether good or bad. For example, if you come across any unbelievable ball sale on line or if you experience quality-control issues such as ball longevity, ball breakage, etc., then the NPA needs to be notified.

The NPA will use this feedback to provide the best possible product and aid Ektelon in preserving their high standard. Remember, we will perform our due diligence, yet we rely on your help by maintaining open lines of communication.

Now, how about some Q & A about the ball?

Q: What does the ball look like?

A: It's black with a white Ektelon logo. (See picture)

Q: How does it play?

A: "I really like the ball. I think Ektelon did about as good of a job replicating the PENN ball, as could be expected," says Scott Wittbrodt, from the Bay City, MI YMCA. Sandy DeGreif of Bay City grumbled, "Not sure, I'm still skipping it."

In California, Charlie Brumfield wrote, "Finally, there is more time to set up and think, and therefore more time to choke. The game, stated simply, should be more fun to play and more fun to watch. Hope I'm right."

Ann Arbor, Michigan's Eugene Rush texted: "I think it is great. I like the tacky texture, and it maintains pop when hit after several games."

"Exciting to see a big name like Ektelon involving themselves into our sport to help us promote and move forward," texted Denny Negrete, a Chicagolander.

From the hills of Tennessee, Roberto Ferie is reportedly happy with the new ball and they are OK in his book.

Q: How much will they cost?

A: The MSRP (Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price) is expected to be set by Ektelon at \$13/sleeve (3). Of course, the NPA will have better pricing available at the website.

Q: Where do I go to purchase them?

A: You can go to the NPA website at www.paddleball.org, or e-mail Lorri Brigham sales@paddleball.org. You can purchase them at tournament sites, and many of the clubs that have Paddleballers will hopefully have an account with the NPA and provide balls for sale. Again, if you would like your club to sell, then please have them contact us or contact us with their information. Thanks!

Q: When can I place my first order?

A: Right now! We will be accepting orders on a first-come, first-serve basis, effective immediately. All orders and quantities should be filled by the week of November 14, and most likely sooner.

In conclusion, we offer a due thanks to Keith Brown, a Chicagoland friend, paddleballer & Ektelon Equipment Tester, who introduced me to Hank Marcus, a consultant for Ektelon and CEO of W.O.R (World Outdoor Racquetball).

In turn, Hank helped pave the way to Ektelon with incredulous insight and ideas to foster a relationship with Scott Winters, the VP of Court and Indoor Sports for Prince Sports, Inc. Our gratitude to all three of these gentlemen. This union is built on the concept of helping to grow our sport, and we feel Ektelon/Prince Sports is genuine in their passion for the success & longevity of our sport. Recently, our involvement in the W.O.R. Outdoor Tournament in Las Vegas was the first step in showcasing our sport to other court sport communities. Ektelon has agreed to sponsor the 2012 National Doubles and will undoubtedly be a part of many others this season.

A special thanks goes out to those who helped test balls and complete surveys during the 3 stages of prototyping the new ball.....Preston Martin, Jim Owens, Andy Mitchell, Mike Wisniewski, Denny Negrete, Earl Pratt, Randy Wackerle, Charlie Brumfield, Todd Entrikin, Ed Maher, Donny Kirkconnell, Joe Todd, Ron Malecki, Dino Hamiti, Jamie Lawson, Keith Brown & Bob Brennan. Additionally, thank you to Basil Baker, Doug Hartung and Paul Sylvester for their consultation. Finally, thanks to all who helped with this venture, and my sincerest apologies, if you were inadvertently excluded from the aforementioned lists.

That's it....Good luck and paddle on, my friends!



Gordy Hatt (left) and Dave Haehnle

Hatt, Haehnle came to NPA's rescue quarter-century ago

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

A very significant era has ended with the announcement that Ektelon will produce and provide paddleballs for the National Paddleball Association.

It was in 1986 that Gordy Hatt and Dave Haehnle established Spectrum Sports Distributors to handle distribution of the P-100 paddleballs manufactured by Penn Athletics Co.

"To the best of my knowledge, the NPA is going to be purchasing the balls from Ektelon and I think they are going to try to set up an NPA store," said Hatt of Jackson, Mich. "Jim Owens called me just to make sure I was not interested in buying balls.

"I told him I was satisfied after 25 years of handling the balls. It was a good run and I enjoyed working with people in the paddleball association."

It appeared that Penn might halt manufacture of the paddleball until Hatt and Haehnle, also of the Jackson area, entered into a contract with the company in 1986. Both had played paddleball for a number of years and competed in tournaments.

The deal was to purchase three years' supply of balls. It was to be repeated every three years.

"Our first order was almost our last," said Hatt. "250 cases (30,000 paddleballs) that were flawed with craters and seams. We personally hand-sorted the entire shipment. I believe 220 cases were returned, leaving us with approximately 30 cases. Penn scheduled another production run to replace the flawed balls."

As a result of their efforts, Hatt and Haehnle received the 2001 Earl Risky Memorial Trophy, which annually is given to the individual who contributed most to the sport.

For the last seven years, Hatt has been handling the paddleballs alone.

In 2004, "Dave decided we didn't need two people doing the job," Hatt said. "He was on the road a lot so I did it myself. We went through just under 400 dozen balls a year."

In a 2008 interview, Hatt said "I like handling the paddleballs and I don't lose money. It's a hobby more than a business. Penn is kind of doing us a favor."

Hatt said "Every paddleballer (whether he/she realizes it or not) is extremely fortunate that Penn, for whatever reason, cares about the 'little guy' -- us."

Hatt said the P-100 "is very durable and can take extreme heat or cold. You do not need to be nice to it. Just keep your P-100s away from sunlight -- the UV rays will break down the rubber compound."

Penn last season announced it was halting manufacture of paddleballs to concentrate on its core products of tennis balls and racquetballs.



Penn's P-100 paddleball is gone.



The NPA Board of Managers held a meeting on July 10, 2011, at the Wrought Iron Grill in Owosso, Mich. Members got a chance to play PB at the Michigan Athletic Club in E. Lansing before the session. Member Chad Krager found a good way to dry his gear as he left it on Mike Wisniewski's car during the meeting.

The last Turkey Shoot at the old Bay City, Mich., YMCA is set for 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 5, 2011.

Modified Grab Bag Doubles. Sign up individually. Divisions will be made accordingly.

Call Nancy Powers at (989) 895-8596 by Oct. 31.

A new stage for paddleball

(Editor's Note -- PBallers were showcased in one of three outdoor court sport tournaments held at the same time in late September in Las Vegas.)

(Jim Owens, a member of the NPA Board of Managers, was there and sent along results of the PB event, which was held with handball and racquetball tourneys. All featured three walls.)

By JIM OWENS

The paddleball results for the open in the 3 Wall Ball World Championships, I believe, need to be explained. The championship match was scheduled for Saturday night on one of the show courts, complete with live coverage on the International Racquetball Tour Network and bleacher seating for spectators.

People were gathering for what appeared to be a great opportunity to further showcase our great sport. The wind was blowing hard and clouds were coming our way.

The match-up in the final featured a team from California, Dale Valentine and Todd Entrikin, and a team from New York, Richard Miller and Robert Sostre. Valentine and Entrikin, who also competed in the proracquetball doubles division, dominated their side of the bracket.

Regrettably, I did not view their semifinal match. In speaking with Dale afterwards, he told me that Todd was so hot that he just watched as Todd killed the ball time and again. Others informed me that in fact Valentine also was solid in the match, as he had been through the tourney.

The New York team was comprised of two one-wall paddleball legends. Many of you use an Ice Man paddle. Robert Sostre is the "Ice Man." The Paddle Company and The Professional Paddle Company both offer Ice Man signature paddles.



The open finalists are (from left) Richard Miller, Andrew Price, Andy Mitchell and Todd Entrikin. Price played with Mitchell.

The A-1 Paddle Company features Richard Miller signature paddles. These two one-wall masters certainly adjusted better to this 3-wall version of paddleball than many of us of Midwestern 4-wall ball players.

Dark clouds arrived directly overhead just before the scheduled clash between these two formidable teams. Rain started to fall. The delay lasted a bit more than an hour.

The tournament was scheduled so tightly that the match was rescheduled for Sunday morning. Dale Valentine had a commitment in California for Sunday. Who would have thought there would be a rain-out in Vegas?

Sostre was competing in several different events. He decided, with regrets, if it was not going to be a true final, he had better not play paddleball Sunday either.

The rescheduled final took place Sunday morning. Todd and Richie teamed against the pick-up team of Andrew Price and Andy Mitchell. Price, the Saginaw, Mich. native and young professional racquetball competitor, had teamed

with Kevin McLaughlin to finish third in the open.

Mitchell, who holds more NPA doubles titles than anyone else, had played with Mike Wisniewski.

The coastal team of Miller and Entrikin defeated their Midwestern pick-up opponents in two games, 21-13, 21-11. Todd demonstrated a keen ability to retrieve and shoot. Richie, among other things, artfully lobbed the ball in the center of the court just short of the back line numerous times.

In Men's A, Emmett Coe of San Diego and Brian Pineda of Huntington Beach, Calif., topped Dennis Negrete and Adrian Montes de Oca, both of Illinois.

The Men's B winners were Norm Bruemmer of Kalamazoo, Mich., and Alex Bruemmer of San Diego. They defeated Roberto Vasquez Ferie of Tennessee and Hector Urquidi, of Mexico.

In Men's C, Rigo Marin and Nate Taylor, both of San Diego, won out over Mike Augustine from Pennsylvania and Brian Hampton of San Diego. Darrel Baricuatro of California and Ed Maher of Kalamazoo were third.

Vegas tourney a huge success for paddleball

By TODD ENTRIKIN

This past September 22nd through the 25th, paddleball and the NPA were invited to participate in the 3 Wall Ball Championships held in Las Vegas, Nevada. 3 Wall Ball had been a racquetball and handball tournament played outdoors.

The event took place in the parking lot across the street from the Stratosphere Hotel and Casino, where there were 10 portable courts constructed. We had 26 paddleball players who participated in two divisions and two drop-down divisions.

The tournament was a huge success for the NPA. We were able to show our great game



Entrikin

to about 500 handball, and racquetball players and countless spectators. We had court time on the racquetball side in the morning, then on the handball side at night.

In my opinion, the best part of the event happened on Saturday afternoon.

In my 17 years of playing tournaments, this has never happened -- **Rain Delay!** Yes, I said, rain delay. The tournament was stopped for about an hour but even the rain could not stop the



Mike Wisniewski sets up for a shot while Andy Mitchell (background) moves into position.

party. Myself, my wife Jami and the New York crowd had a nice dance session in the rain.

Overall this was a great way to show our sport to the masses. On behalf of the NPA, I would like to thank a few people responsible for the tournament:

First, I would like to thank **Dave Grolman**, Vice President of Hotel Operations for allowing all of us to invade the hotel and to all of his staff for the great job they did making us feel at home there for 5 days.

Hank Marcus, executive director for World Outdoor Racquetball (WOR). For those that

do not know, I called Hank and asked if we can do a demo at the tournament. His response was, "Why don't we just add you in the tournament?" The only thing I could say was 'Sure, why not.'

Steve Lerner (not the paddleball guy), commissioner of the Classic Pro Racquetball Tour (CPRT), and his staff for their help running the racquetball portion and also making sure that paddleball had a court on time.

David Charles Vincent, executive director for World Players of Handball (WPH), and the rest of his staff for also making sure we had a court on time.

Thank you to the racquetball and handball players for making us feel welcome on their respective sides.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone that came out and played and made this a highly successful tournament. Hope to see everyone back there next year and hope to see some new faces.



NPA-Approved Paddles

Earl Pratt: Pratt Classic, Pratt Air

Contact at: earl.pratt@gmail.com

Donny Kirkconnell: PKP, PKB

Contact at: dkwoodwizard@gmail.com

HillBillyPaddles.com: HillBilly Paddle

Contact at: HillyBillyPaddles.com

The Paddle Company: Bat TI Pro, A²= Dominance, Ice Man Graphic, Ice Man Kevlar Signature, Ice Man Graphic LE Signature, Anthony Fiorino Signature, The Sting, Falcon, Pro Graphite, Viper

Contact at: thepaddlecompany.com

Professional Paddle Company: Spike, Elite, Iceman

Contact at: propaddles.com

Marcraft: PT30, PT60, IT60, Pitcher, National 300

Contact: none

A-1: A-1-Kevlar, A-1 3k, A-1-C, A-1-F (Must have strap attached)

Contact at: a-1paddleball.com

George Hobbs used to be a fixture at paddleball tournaments. But he's battling some cancer problems now and has hung up his paddle.

But he still has close ties to the sport and was the honoree at the 2011 Pig Roast & Human Sacrifice that closes out the PB season.

We weren't able to get a longer article on George but we'll make up for it in the Winter NPA newsletter.

How good was he? He won nine national doubles championships in a 20-year stretch.

NPA Paddle Rule

Rule 3.1 The Paddle

- a) Made of wood or composite material
- b) Have a safety strap attached
- c) Dimensions:
 - i. Length: Maximum of 17.25 inches
 - ii. Width: Maximum of 8.5 inches
 - iii. Thickness: Maximum of 0.75 inches (handle may be thicker)
- d) Weight: Maximum of 16 ounces
- e) Must be safe: No metal rims or protrusions
- f) Must not provide an unfair advantage

Notes:

- Paddles used in NPA events shall be approved by the NPA Board of Managers based on the above criteria.
- A list of approved paddles can be viewed at www.paddleball.org
- Any paddle is subject to inspection during tournament play by representatives of the NPA Board of Managers.
- Instances of unfair advantage include but are not limited to: abnormal increase in ball speed or directional changes when struck.

Breach:

Anyone found using an unapproved paddle may be asked to cease usage until proper evaluation is made by the NPA Board of Managers. If a second violation occurs at a tournament, the player will be disqualified from all divisions.

2011-2012 SCHEDULE

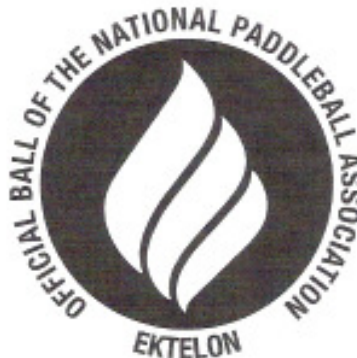
Brigham Classic (Doubles), December 2-4, 2011, Midland, MI Community Center.

Midwest Singles, Jan. 13-15, 2012, Lenawee YMCA, Adrian, Mich.

Midwest Doubles, Feb. 10-12, 2012, Forest View Racquet Club, Arlington Heights, Ill.

National Singles, March 16-18, 2012, Sorrento Valley Fitness Center, San Diego.

National Doubles, April 13-15, 2012, Michigan Athletic Club, E. Lansing, Mich.



**COMING
IN
NOVEMBER
2011**

'Air Bladder' paddle makes the game easier on the body

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

Paddleballers: Have you heard about the Air Bladder paddle that has been the topic of conversation for many months?

It was developed by Earl Pratt, a player from Bay City, Mich., who said he was "getting old" and needed a paddle that would make it easier to play the game.



A Pratt Air Paddle.

an ordinary paddle, "has an air chamber which replaces the typical foam on the inside of the conventional paddles."

Pratt, who has played in the Platinum Masters division for those at least 65, said "the paddle does meet all the rules of the NPA."

At a meeting on July 10, 2011, in Owosso, Mich., the NPA Board of Managers authorized use of the paddle on a trial basis during the 2011-2012 season.

The paddle "does not give the user an unfair advantage," said Pratt. "The adjustable air pressure allows the user to adjust the feel of the paddle. The Air Paddle reduces the vibration and impact on the arm and joints. The paddle does not increase the speed of the ball."

Pratt said a test was done using a 'state of the art' radar gun with Mike Wisniewski, many-time national singles champion, and Chad Krager, a member of the NPA board. He

"The idea came to me on the way to a swing dance," said Pratt, 67, "I wanted to develop a paddle with 'adjustability' and a good feel that was easy on the body."

Pratt said the paddle, which looks like



Pratt with one of his Air Paddles.

said Wisniewski "actually was faster using a The Paddle Company paddle."

Don Kirkconnell of the Kalamazoo, Mich., area has designed a similar paddle but Pratt said his "has a closed atmospheric chamber but it is not an adjustable chamber."

Pratt believes the advancement of his and similar paddles may help the sport.

"This new technology may open the door for other manufacturers to get involved and grow our sport," he said. "The paddle has changed from the woody to mainly composite but new development is needed to grow our sport and get the young people involved."

"The composite paddle was a good step but more innovation is needed to move

The paddle "does not give the user an unfair advantage."

-- Earl Pratt

our sport forward. The paddle innovations should improve the game of the power players, the ball-control specialists and the touch-shot masters.

"The key is not to go down the road of tennis and racquetball which only have a power game with short rallies in the top classes."

PADDLEBALL PROFILE



Berg

A future relative got Bob Berg into the great sport of paddleball a long time ago -- and he's still in it.

Berg, 56, of Kalamazoo, Mich., began in 1973 at Western Michigan University.

"My future brother-in-law, Jeff Biggers, got me started and I loved the game," he said.

What does Berg, a builder, love about the game?

"The speed, the work-out, the different styles and strategies," he said. "Most of all -- the people who play the game."

Berg won several championships in the 1990s and, with Andy Mitchell, captured the masters doubles title in the inaugural Brigham Classic in December, 2010.

Any suggestions for improving the NPA operation?

"Current players need to continue to share the game with new players," Berg said. "The tournaments are great fun but we need more players."

**NPA
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