

# NPA

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

NPA, 7642 Kingston, Portage, Mich. 49002

NEWSLETTER / SPRING 2011-2012

## Women's trio was pretty spectacular

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

Over the years, there have been 25 National Paddleball Association national women's open championships played -- but there have been only 10 champions.

Of these, three players have won 18 of them. Seven other players each won one of the remaining crowns.

Now when you stop to think about it, that's quite an achievement for the trio who had more than one title. They did it from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s.

Unfortunately, there haven't been many women playing paddleball anymore and only two champions have been crowned in the last 11 seasons.

There were no women's divisions in the other years.

The triumphant trio?

Caprice Behner, Carla Teare and Terry Smith.

Caprice won nine national singles championships, Carla five and Terry four.

Caprice won in 1977, 1981, 1982, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1996.

Carla grabbed titles in 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1988.

Terry won in 1993, 1994, 1999 and 2000.

Terry came along a little later than Caprice and Carla and generally was the favorite in an

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Caprice Behner



Terry Smith (left) and Carla Teare



McLaughlin



Mitchell

## McLaughlin, Mitchell each capture three PB titles

Kevin McLaughlin and Andy Mitchell did quite well in the first two NPA tournaments of 2012.

McLaughlin, of Bloomington, IND, teamed with Mitchell, of Kalamazoo, MI, to win the open title of the Midwest Doubles in February in the Chicago area.

In the same tourney, McLaughlin and Paul Sylvester, of Kalamazoo, took the Men's A championship.

A month earlier, McLaughlin captured the open title at the Midwest Singles in Adrian, MI.

In the Midwest Doubles, Mitchell and Ed Maher, of Kalamazoo, won the Masters crown.

In the Midwest Singles, Mitchell won the Masters title.

# TRIO

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NPA tournament.

But the rivalry between Caprice and Carla was, as I described it in 1989, "super colossal, fantastic and magnificent."

They had great matches and their head-to-head series was very memorable.

And one must remember that there were other very good players in the women's divisions but Caprice, Carla and Terry were very, very good.

Caprice's titles came over a nearly 20-year period beginning in the mid-1970s while Carla's all came in the 1980s.

None of the top-level women were slouches when it came to playing the game. All three were outstanding players who utilized strategy, could hit just about every shot in the book and had power.

The women's open division was established for the 1973-1974 season and there were many players who entered annual tournaments. Women's B and C divisions also were set up as the years went by.

The other women's open champions were:

Kathy Williams (1974), Donna Valerie (1975), Pat Krise (1976), Judy Shirley (1978), Grace Louwsma (1979), Cindy Cook (2002) and Brooke Schneider (2006).



## 2012 MIDWEST DOUBLES RESULTS

Forest View Racquet Club, Arlington Heights, ILL, February 10-12

**OPEN:** Andy Mitchell, Kalamazoo, MI, and Kevin McLaughlin, Bloomington, IND, def. Dennis Negrete, Schaumburg, ILL, and Chad Krager, Bay City, MI.

**MEN'S A:** McLaughlin and Paul Sylvester, Kalamazoo, def. Brandon Creamer, E. Lansing, MI, and Ron Malecki, Midland, MI.

**MEN'S B:** Martin Gonzalez and Jose Martinez, both of Indiana, def. Ron Harris and Rick Clewis, both of Ann Arbor, MI. 3rd, Doug Hartung, Adrian, MI, and Natalie Gilbert, Saginaw, MI. Consolation: Terry Kennedy and Tony Sindt, both of Glen Ellyn, ILL.

**MEN'S C:** Harris and Clewis def. Bob Wurtz, Schaumburg, and Sindt.

**SENIORS:** Ed Maher and Don Kirkconnell, both of Kalamazoo, def. Negrete and Krager.

**MASTERS:** 1st, Andy Mitchell-Ed Maher.

**GOLDEN MASTERS:** Sandy DeGreif, Bay City, MI, and Malecki def. Jim Swendris and Jim Richter, both of Ann Arbor.

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## 2012 MIDWEST SINGLES RESULTS

Lenawee County YMCA, Adrian, MI, Jan. 14

**OPEN:** Kevin McLaughlin, Bloomington, IND, def. Don Kirkconnell, Kalamazoo, MI.

**MEN'S B:** Jeremy Wheaton, Kalamazoo, def. Jared Arnold, Kalamazoo.

**MASTERS:** Andy Mitchell, Kalamazoo, def. Robert Stone, Jackson, MI.

Jim Howland has a positive attitude when he's involved in a game of paddleball.

"I think the momentum shifts; you're never out of a game," said Howland, 55, of Redford, Mich.

"You can be down 15 points and still come back and win."

Howland, a technical writer, began playing PB in the early 1980s "to exercise."

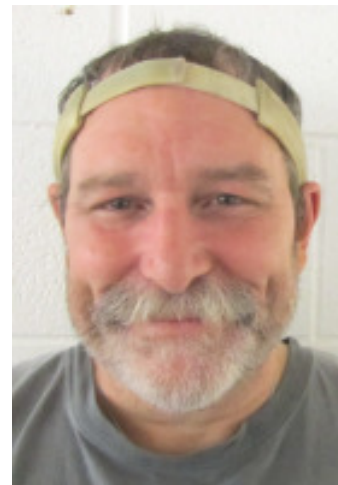
He said he has won "a couple of C championships and some B second-places."

Any ideas on how tourneys can be improved?

His response:

"Lady cheerleaders!"

## Paddleball Profile



Howland

## 2011-2012 NPA SCHEDULE

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

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

## FOR SAFETY'S SAKE

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

The paddleball rule used to say: "The safety thong must be around the wrist at all times. The paddle may not be switched from one hand to the other. Both hands on the paddle together may be used in striking the ball."

It wasn't always that way.

The time was the late 1960s and there was a big dispute between two groups in paddleball. For safety's sake, one of them suggested that a rule be established to prohibit the switching of the paddle from hand to hand during play.

That's right.

In the early days of the sport, players switched the paddle from hand to hand during competition. And there was no thong.

A letter written by a Madison, Wis., player to the NPA board of directors and dated Feb. 7, 1967, read in part:

"... An informal poll of the participants at Eau Claire, Wis., (during a recent tournament) found almost no one in favor of the restrictive rule which refuses to allow a player to 'switch' hands or play with both hands.

"The logic in favor of a rule change here is almost irrefutable. Our object should be to develop as skillful a competitive game as possible. It should require more skill to play with two hands than one and the amount of competition would be increased (men from Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin all indicated an upturn in two-handed playing).

"Name one court or racket sport that has such a restrictive rule. The safety argument is greatly overstated. No player asked in Eau Claire could remember an injury as a result of switching hands.

"All sports have some degree of risk. Perhaps a certain type of handle on the paddle could be required of the 'switch' players (if not all) but rules committee, how about taking a broad sampling of opinion and then impartially considering the rule change."

On April 15, 1967, the issue was discussed by the NPA board of directors at Green Bay, Wis. The minutes contain this paragraph:

Doug Walker, Flint, Mich., letter read. He was sorry he could not make the meeting. Suggested no switching of paddles at all for safety.

However, he felt past champion Nelson (Paul Nelson, of Madison) should get special exemption. He further hoped we would all work together for the good of the game and not just for the good of a group.

Later, the minutes say, "Bob McNamara



### Early thongs were made of leather.

(of Minneapolis) suggested paddles be manufactured with a thong. Board agreed. Rod Grambeau (Ann Arbor, Mich.) asked about doubles. Board felt thong is required at all times."

On Feb. 21, 1969, at Iowa State University, the NPA general membership at a meeting took this action:

"Bob McNamara, rules committee chairman, made a motion that we follow playing regulation 12 -- that there be absolutely no switching of hands in paddleball. It was seconded by Bill Pire ( of Eau Claire) and unanimously carried as an official rule."

Nelson, who won the first and third (1962, 1964) national singles titles, was an outstanding player who switched hands while playing.

The board used a "grandfather clause" to permit him -- and only him -- to play that way even after it adopted the thong rule.

Nelson's last national competition was in the 1973 Nationals in Eau Claire, where he played with both hands.

The current NPA rule regarding the thong is included in Rule 3.1 under EQUIPMENT and THE PADDLE and says:

"... A safety thong is attached to the handle and must be worn around the wrist during play."





## **First NPA national masters singles champ Kozar dies**

Andy Kozar, an outstanding football player who won the first NPA national masters singles championship in 1972, is dead at 79.

He died June 2, 2011, at his home in Knoxville, TN, where he starred for the University of Tennessee football team in the early 1950s.

A man of wide interests, Kozar was considered one of the nation's leading authorities on paddleball and racquetball. He published a number of works and textbooks regarding the sports and competed as well.

Kozar finished third in the national masters singles division in the 1976 tournament.

He was one of the most dominant fullbacks in Tennessee football history and a member of the Vols' 1951 national championship team.

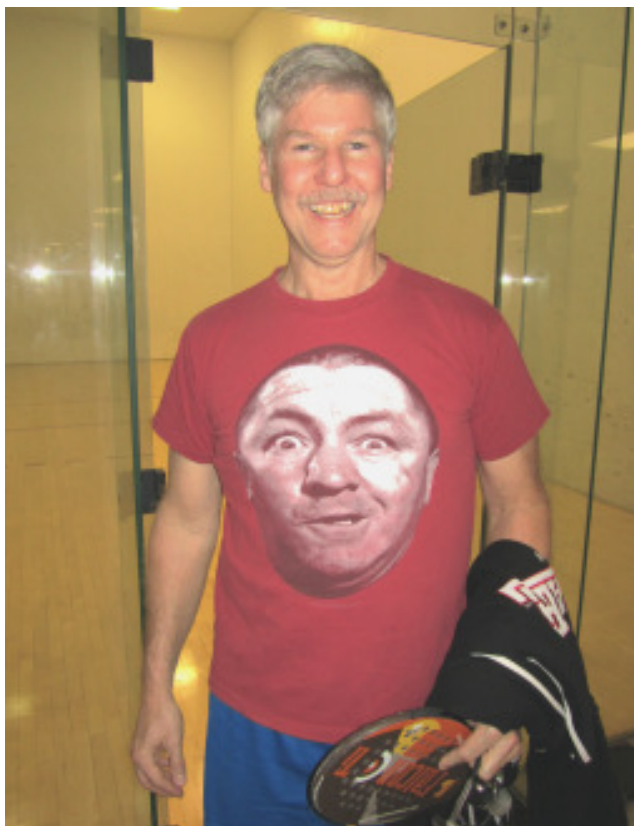
Kozar was a three-year starter at fullback for the 1950-52 Vols, averaging more than five yards a carry for a career that included 27 touchdowns and 1,837 rushing yards on 350 carries.

After receiving his master's degree and Ph.D at the University of Michigan, he returned to the University of Tennessee to become head of the Men's Physical Education Program.

In 1978, Kozar was honored as a winner of the NCAA Silver Anniversary Award presented to former athletes who have distinguished careers in other fields.



John Rice (left) and Andy Kozar came up from Knoxville, TN, for the 1988 National Doubles Tournament at the Davison (Mich.) Racquet Club.



Melvin at the 2011 Midwest Doubles Tourney.

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## **Craig Melvin dies at 57**

Craig Melvin, a longtime paddleballer and one of the many players from the Kalamazoo, Mich., area, died January 29, 2012.

Melvin, 57, had been suffering from cancer.

A travel director and sports official, Melvin was one of the many players who got into paddleball because of Andy Mitchell and Andy Kasalo.

Melvin was a member of Second Reformed Church and did volunteer work for several organizations, which included Meals On Wheels, Willing Workers at Lake Louise and the Christmas Dinner at the Blue Dolphin.

He also was a regular Red Cross blood donor.

Melvin had spent 35 years as a sports official for the Michigan High School Athletic Association in baseball, volleyball, softball and football.

# Pitcher and paddleball were a very good team

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

One of the early forces behind paddleball -- and also a very good player -- had some very interesting ideas about the sport.

Dick Pitcher, who was the director of intramural sports at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, had written a paper on the use of intramural facilities and paddleball.

In the mid-1970s when the National Paddleball Association was reorganized at Crisler Arena, Pitcher was part of a group that got the sport off to a booming start.

The tournament numbers in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s were astonishing. And Pitcher had an important role in that success by hosting tourneys at the U. of M.

Pitcher agreed to host the 1974 national paddleball championships at the U. of M.

He also hosted the 1979 National Singles Tourney at the Old IM Building, which featured the fantastic match between Steve Keeley and Marty Hogan.

In addition, the old NPA Fall Singles Tournament -- the Earl Risky - was held at the same building for many, many years.

An accomplished player, Pitcher won the national seniors doubles championships in 1977 and 1982.

He also was the recipient in 1979 of the Earl Risky Trophy, awarded annually to the person who has contributed most to the sport.

And of course a lot of people in the sport still use a Pitcher Paddle, developed by Dick and produced by Marcraft Corp.

He also produced the best book ever on rules and instruction for the game.

Pitcher jotted down some of his thoughts on paddleball and categorized them:

**Physical Workout --** It is at very least as good a workout as racquetball. Heavier paddle plus more running to the ball probably burns more calories in the same time period. Also not as



**Dick Pitcher**

many "one hit" points as in the R-ball serve.

### **Learning the Game --**

Easier to teach fundamentals due to more consistent bounce of the ball. In R-ball, the beginner often has to play balls that are bad bounces or that are bouncing shoulder to head level. Thus proper hitting stance is easier to teach and learn. The speed of ball is also a factor in teaching.

**Equipment Costs --** In terms of original outlay of \$ it is cheaper to stock paddles than racquets. This is mostly in the case of IM programs where equipment is available. Replacement costs are not great.

**Court Utilization --** It has been our experience at U-M that the greatest R-ball play has been singles. Even in competition, singles dominates. I believe this is due to the nature of the game. Courts could be more fully utilized if paddleball were offered. P-ball singles and doubles plus any additional R-ball would increase utilization. Several court clubs have experienced much greater utilization since introducing P-ball.

**History of Game --** The greatest R-ball players in the past (present) have played the game of P-ball. List -- Muehleisen, Brumfield, Keeley, Finger, Lawrence, Hogan, etc. (Many R-ball people don't know this fact!)

## **What's in a name? A lot of errors if it's like mine**

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

A post card addressed to me came from the Bay City (Mich.) Family YMCA and it concerned the entry of the late Barry Lucas and myself in the Bean-Smith Paddleball Tournament.

They didn't have any trouble with Barry's name but mine came out Gambtrowi.

The spelling reminded me of the many misspellings I got when I worked at the Flint (Mich.) Journal for 43 years.

I had a variety of assignments.

Included were sports, business, courts, police, etc.

Consequently I got a lot of mail with atrocious spellings of my last name on letters. I saved a lot of them.

Here are some of the more atrocious ones:

Peggerlia, Gin Pietroni, GM P...troni, Mr. Fau Grampetroni, Grimpatroni, Piapetroni, Giambalonie, Giapaloupee, Giampetrino, Campstroni.

Grampetrerri, Flampetroni, Grampertronie, Guam Petroni, Lo Giamtetproni, Jemptonni, Graintetraine, Grampstroni, Jan Petroni, Griempatroni.

There were more but you get the idea.

And then I received a letter from the League of Women Voters of Flint, with the correct spelling of my last name, but with a postal clerk's notation "Addressee Unknown."

At that point, I had been with The Journal for 18 years.



## Words of tournament wisdom from Mr. Keeley

*(Editor's Note: This article was written by Steve Keeley and sent in March of 2011. It concerned the National Singles Championships a day earlier in Arlington Heights, Ill. Paddleballer Joe Baldori had sent a message to Keeley about how some of the matches went, including his own.*

*(Keeley, the world traveler, titled his article: Observations on Yesterday's Chicago Paddleball Nationals from Sumatra with the Golden Masters Orangutans.)*

In a finals match involving one gamesman and X player, what becomes important is not only who hits the most kills but also who misses the most.

This differs from straight-up matches with no shenanigans and comfortable marches to 21-points.

When the shoutin's over, the player with the most kills AND most skips probably lost against a Charley Brumfield who performs well under the tactics of his own gamesmanship.

However, if the gamesman wins with a strong ref it's a high tribute. The strong ref knows the rules and decides empirically, like a machine, without engaging in dialogue.



**KEELEY**

The observation on your own match is good meat for any paddles or racket player. You, as I know from being there panting to near heart attack, can run a player over the course of a protracted passing match until he melts in a corner like the proverbial wicked warlock.

I used to do the same to others, widening the puddle if he was a jerk. However, the attrition game doesn't work against a strong killer who puts the ball away to quickly end rallies and save his breath. So, the stage becomes a matter of game styles.

Your pass game is good against a poor killer like Brumfield who dominates all other game styles, but it loses to an inferior player who's nevertheless fit and can kill. Edging to the finals, there's a lot of running killers.

You'll likely arrive at my conclusion many sweaty decades ago that to over-rely on the passing game in practice and tournaments is in the long run to stagnate in the lower divisions. Unfortunately, what you practice is what you become on the tournament court.

And, don't forget the corollary that what you don't practice is lost under tourney pressure.

If you practice passes extensively and eventually meet a fearless killer who brings pressure back to bear with put-aways, the two tired men or women soon default to old habits on their unconscious strokes, and the killer wins.

There has never been a repeated passing champion. R. P. Valenciano (RIP) won the paddleball nationals one year (1978) that I didn't play because he had such a big heart, like mini-hippy who 'missed the gravy train of life' (*Sports Illustrated*) and maybe you, he could run like Fetch the dog retrieving passes and not tire.



**VALENCIANO**

The only player he loses against is one who when a little short of breath can't put the ball away.

Thus, your practice games become a contradiction of shortening rallies with kills while losing fitness, or extending rallies and endurance with passes ... and then losing tournaments.

The solution may be my old practice strategy to kill, kill, kill and play one passing match every three days, plus in-court sprints, interval running, bicycling etc. to keep the heart big.

The greatest, and most fun, strength training drill is where the opponents agree to hit all shots above an imaginary squash tin (or put a tape line 3' off the floor across the front wall), and if the ball hits below it then the point is lost.

Rallies last up to fifty shots, and matches extend into the wee hours.

So, the strong national champions in paddles and rackets have been either cold-blooded killers or gamesmen.

The two don't mix in one body because it's hard to perform the mental gymnastics of rabble rousing the gallery, ref and opponent while concentrating on shooting the balls.

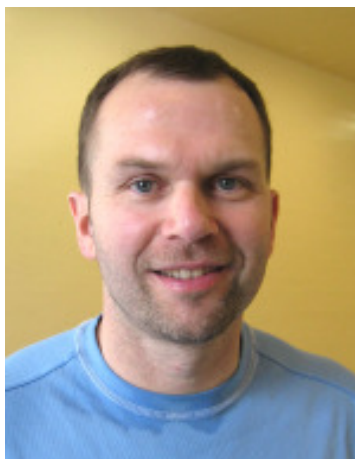
After I beat Brumfield, the greatest slow-ball racquetball player in history bar none (including Cliff Swain) for my first nat'l paddleball title, he sputtered prostrate under the Gatorade cooler with open mouth, 'You wouldn't have beaten me if I hadn't run out of breath!'



# The life and times of the NPA's secretary-treasurer



## PADDLEBALL PROFILE



**Scott Peters**

What do YOU enjoy about paddleball?  
For Scott Peters, it's "making a good shot and many new friends."

Peters, 46, of Adrian, Mich., began playing in 2006 when "friends at the local YMCA asked me to be a fourth."

Well, Peters, a laboratory supervisor, now is playing both singles and doubles.

He took 3rd in the Men's C division in the Midwest Singles last season at his local YMCA.

Any suggestions on how tournaments can be improved?

Responded Peters:

"Have more of them. This (Midwest Doubles) is my second try and I love it."