

NPA

(INDOOR / FOUR-WALL)

National Paddleball Association

WWW.PADDLEBALL.ORG

NPA, 7642 Kingston, Portage, Mich. 49002

NEWSLETTER / SUMMER 2005-2006



Chris Crowther with the champion's trophy.

'Giant' grabs national singles championship

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

Indoor, four-wall paddleball has a new national open singles champion.

He is Chris Crowther, perhaps the tallest-ever winner, who carries the nickname "The Giant."

Crowther, 27, of Riverside, CA, topped Mike Czabala, 21-20, 21-12, on March 26 at the 2006 National Paddleball Association Singles Tournament at the Sorrento Valley Racquet Club in San Diego.

Czabala, 29, of Los Angeles, short-circuited Kelly Gelhaus's bid to become only the third player in 45 years of tournaments to win three straight national singles titles. Czabala defeated Gelhaus in a semifinal tiebreaker, 20-21, 21-8, 21-3.

Crowther, who is 6-feet-6 and weighs about 225, said:

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It was a clean sweep for California players at the 2006 National Singles Tournament.

PBallers competed in nine divisions and the West Coasters won 'em all.

The divisions: Open, Men's A, Men's B, Men's C, Men's Novice, Seniors, Masters, Golden Masters and Women's.

HOT TODDY

New sidekick helps Gelhaus win 3rd straight national doubles

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

Ann Arbor, Mich. -- Kelly Gelhaus had a different partner this time but he still won his third straight NPA national doubles championship.

Gelhaus teamed up with Todd Entrikin to easily handle Mike Wisniewski and Mike Czabala, 21-8, 21-13, on April 23, 2006, at the Old IM Building at the University of Michigan.



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Kelly Gelhaus (left) and Todd Entrikin

SINGLES

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“Overall, the tourney was a lot of fun. I thought I would be playing Kelly but I guess it was not meant to be. I played well but had to work fairly hard to win.”

Crowther, a mortgage banker, knocked off Mike Wisniewski, 21-14, 21-14, in the other semifinal. Wisniewski is an eight-time national open singles champion from Bay City, Mich.

Crowther said he had “played a little paddleball when I was growing up but focused primarily on racquetball. Charlie Brumfield got me more involved (in paddleball) when he flew me up to a tournament in Portland, Ore., which was part of the Legends tour. From there, I competed in most of the paddle events.

“Typically, I only play during the tournaments. It is hard to find someone to play or practice with. In addition, I play the racquetball tour full-time, which helps me stay on top of my paddle game.”

Crowther said that “In retrospect, the tournament went well and I look forward to defending my title next year. I think one of the coolest things about winning the Nationals was having my name on the trophy, which already has the company of all the greats from both racquetball and paddleball. It is an honor to be on the same list of all those great players.”

Czabala said he and Crowther traded points until about 9-9 in the first game of the final.

“And then Chris made a bit of a run ... (he) had a lead of 18-12 on me, and once again I went to the strategy of seeing how long I could make the game go.”

Czabala, a transplanted Michigianian, added: “I was able to take the lead at 20-19. On game point, I hit a good serve and was left with a shot to win the game, but left it up just enough for Chris to swoop in for the re-kill.

“Chris then won the next two points. On Chris’s game point, it was a long rally that left me with a shot at the red lines with Chris behind me and it missed by a half-inch.”

Czabala said the game took a “bit out of me emotionally ... but I give Chris a great deal of credit for that. He’s been in these situations so many times with the pro racquetball tour. He’s used to it. He put a lot of pressure on me. I think he only skipped less than five balls the entire match, which meant I had to earn everything.”

Crowther took an 8-2 lead in the second game but Czabala tied it at 10.

“I think I took one moment to exhale and feel like I’m back in it,” Czabala said. “And in that one moment, Chris rattled off seven straight points to take the lead, 17-10. That was pretty much the match.”

Czabala likened Crowther to “a heavyweight champion. He continues to punish you with body blows the entire match. His pass shots are deadly accurate and are hit with tremendous pace. Also with his length, it is very difficult to put the ball somewhere where he can’t reach it. Combine that with the fact he makes very few mistakes, and he is very difficult to beat.”

DOUBLES

Continued from Page 1

Gelhaus, 35, and Entrikin, 25, both of Riverside, CA, didn’t have much trouble with Wisniewski, 47, of Bay City, Mich., and Czabala, 29, of Los Angeles.

Gelhaus, who lost his chance to win a third straight national NPA singles title a month earlier, won the previous two doubles championships with Steve Lerner, also of Riverside.

Entrikin was a fantastic replacement and he sizzled throughout the match.

Gelhaus was his usual, dependable self -- despite just coming off a grueling, three-game loss in the Seniors final to Andy Mitchell and Don Kirkconnell.

Entrikin, who does power-washing of buildings and homes, got just about everything on the right side thrown at him by his opponents.

And when he wasn’t doing that, he was covering on the left, front side for Gelhaus. Wisniewski-Czabala just had great difficulty scoring because of Entrikin.

And most of the time, he was scoring. A lot. On drives and quick corner shots. The only thing he seems to lack in that department is the almost incredible soft, corner shots of Gelhaus.

“He’s the quickest player I’ve ever seen,” said Gelhaus.

Gelhaus’s wife, Sara, and Vince Carlone -- with whom Entrikin won the Men’s A title earlier in the day -- were Entrikin’s most vocal fans.

“Way to go, Toddy” and “Nice shot, Toddy” were heard throughout the match.

Wisniewski and Czabala just never seemed to get comfortable and probably hoped that the Seniors match had taken a lot out of Gelhaus.

It did but he recovered enough to carry his share of the offensive load.

Except for the start of both games when the score was close, Gelhaus-Entrikin coasted to the victory.

Afterward, Entrikin was referred to as a “great sub” for Lerner but Gelhaus said: “He’s no sub. We’re permanent.”

Entrikin said he has been playing paddleball about five years and previously played a lot of racquetball “since I was 2.”

His father, Terry, was a top-level racquetballer for a number of years.

Gelhaus surprises with strange behavior

Kelly Gelhaus was hoping to go where few went before: Winning his third straight NPA national open singles championship.

Instead he failed to accomplish that feat -- and in the process exhibited some bizarre actions in his semifinal loss to Mike Czabala.

Gelhaus nipped Czabala, 21-20, in the first game. But then he lost the second, 21-8, and dropped the tiebreaker, 21-3.

With Czabala leading 14-3 in the third game, Gelhaus made no attempt to return seven consecutive serves, catching them and tossing the ball back to Czabala. In effect, Gelhaus gave him seven free points.

Why?

"It wasn't a gift, it wasn't a gift," said Gelhaus when interviewed a month later at the National Doubles Tournament. "I was having a hard time with the serve. I was having a hard time covering the court.

"I couldn't do anything with his serve. He just took it to me."

An onlooker said Gelhaus told him afterward he was so upset that he had to stop -- but did not want to forfeit.

Asked if he was in shape for the tournament, he paused and then said "No."

"I was the heaviest I've ever been," he said. "I wasn't working out ... Swinging too many golf clubs."

In the future, he said, "I will not play in any paddleball tournament unless I'm in shape ... Not standard shape, but paddleball shape. I think I was very fortunate to win the first game. He gave me a gift and I repaid him."

In an E-mail he wrote right after the tournament, Gelhaus said:

"As far as my personal matches, I was not able to impress anyone and especially not myself. I want it clear. I have nobody to blame but myself. It was a combination of not training, not playing previous to the event for a serious amount of time, and most importantly not having my heart into the game

"I hoped that I would be able to get fired up during one of my first matches and get tough. This did not happen. I did not have any 'fire or desire.'"

Only two players -- Andy Mitchell of Kalamazoo, MI, and Steve Wilson of Flint, MI -- won three straight national open singles championships in the 45 years of tournaments.

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI



2006 National Singles Champs

Chris Crowther
Open



Greg Badger
Men's A



Bryan Oates
Men's B

Sam Choukri
Men's C



Vince Carlone
Seniors

Bob Richland
Men's Novice



Vince Carlone
Masters



Eric Campbell
Golden Masters

Brooke Schneider
Women's

2006 National Doubles Champions



Kelly Gelhaus (left) and Todd Entrikin
Open



Vince Carlone (left) and Todd Entrikin
Men's A



Bryan Oates (left) and Randal Calentine
Men's B



Sam Baldori (left) and Joe Baldori
Men's C



Andy Mitchell (left) and Don Kirkconnell
Seniors



Jim Swendris (left) and Jim Sterken
Masters



Charlie Brumfield (left) and Randy Wackerle
Golden Masters



Gary Nehring (left) and Lou Giampetroni
Platinum Masters

Lowman, Freysinger get NPA's 2006 major awards

John Lowman and Skip Freysinger are the recipients of the National Paddleball Association's major awards for 2006.

Lowman got the Earl Risky Memorial Trophy - named for the founder of the sport of paddleball -- for his contributions to the game.

Freysinger received the Sportsmanship Trophy, given annually to the person "who most represents the American ideal of good sportsmanship under extreme competitive conditions."

Lowman, of Owosso, MI, started playing paddleball in 1984 with Dick Jury and John Scheppele at Michigan State University.

Lowman, who owns a restaurant, has been a regular at tournaments and sets up drop-in sessions for paddleballers. He is set to join the NPA Board of Managers.

Freysinger probably was the happiest player at the 2006 National Doubles Tournament, where the award winners were announced. He was walking around



John Lowman



Skip Freysinger

the court area with a continual smile.

"This is so touching," said Freysinger, of Grass Lake, MI, who manages a public library and is a retired corporate trainer in an aerospace company.

"I just can't get over it. I never had something like that. It's unbelievable."

Freysinger, a former racquetballer, has been playing the game since the late 1970s and displays the qualities desired of all PBallers. -- **Lou Giampetroni**

RESULTS 2006 NATIONAL DOUBLES

April 21-23, Old IM Building, Ann Arbor, MI

OPEN: 1st, Kelly Gelhaus-Todd Entrikin; 2nd, Mike Wisniewski-Mike Czabala; 3rd, Mike Madis-Mike Schafer. Consolation: Don Kirkconnell-Andy Mitchell.

MEN'S A: 1st, Vince Carlone-Todd Entrikin; 2nd, Greg Badger-Chad Schwall; 3rd, John Lowman-Brandon Creamer. Consolation: Tiko Leyva-Rob Mendez.

MEN'S B: 1st, Brian Oates-Randal Calentine; 2nd, Paul Sylvester-Doug Hartung; 3rd, Jack Barenfanger-Jim Richter. Consolation: Joe Baldori-James Reid.

MEN'S C: 1st, Joe Baldori-Sam Baldori; 2nd, Martin Gonzalez-Diane Moore; 3rd, Skip Freysinger-Rick Mountain. Consolation: Larry Allgaier-Bill Davis.

SENIORS: 1st, Andy Mitchell-Don Kirkconnell; 2nd, Kelly Gelhaus-Vince Carlone; 3rd, Mike Madis-Phil Madis.

MASTERS: 1st, Jim Sterken-Jim Swendris; 2nd, Doug Hartung-Paul Sylvester; 3rd, Eric Campbell-David Fleetwood. Consolation: Jim Richter-Jack Barenfanger.

GOLDEN MASTERS: 1st, Charlie Brumfield-Randy Wackerle; 2nd, Jim Owens-Jim Sterken; 3rd, Dick Turner-Mike Tylutki. Consolation: Eric Campbell-Len Baldori.

PLATINUM MASTERS: 1st, Gary Nehring-Lou Giampetroni; 2nd, Paul Jones-Jeff Duncan.

Senior Olympics PB set

Paddleballers with a little mileage on their bods have an opportunity to showcase their skills at the Senior Olympics set for July 8-15, 2006, at Western Michigan University.

Age categories are: 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, 80-89, 90-99, and 100-plus.

Paddleball will be offered as men's and women's singles and doubles, and mixed doubles.

This is the third year PB has been offered. Last year, they did not have enough entrants to make it go.

Entry information can be found at www.michiganseniorolympics.com

Pig Roast set

A milestone anniversary -- the 30th -- is set for this year's Pig Roast & Human Sacrifice.

The event, a season-ending excuse for a little paddleball and a lot of partying, will be held on Saturday, June 17, 2006, in Kalamazoo, MI.

Paddleball play (grab-bag doubles format) begins at 9 a.m. at the Bronson Athletic Club, 6789 Elm Valley Drive. The partying will follow at the VFW Hall on Kilgore Road.

There will be horseshoes, bocce ball, food, drink, music and bonfire.

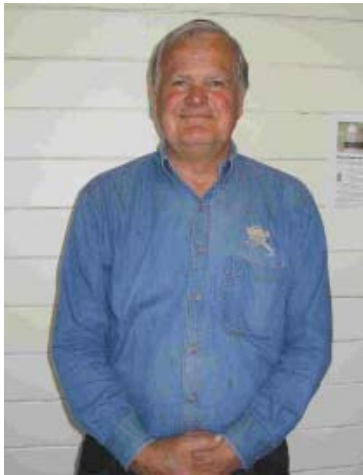
Participants are asked to provide a dish to share at the roast.

The cost is \$40 for paddleball and roast and \$15 for the roast only. Checks to the "NPA," 7642 Kingston, Portage, MI 49002. Or enter through the Web site at www.paddleball.org

2006 NATIONAL DOUBLES HIGHLIGHTS ...



Andy Mitchell assists in tending to Vince Carlone after he accidentally struck him on the head with his paddle during the Seniors final. Carlone, who was a winner in the Men's A final, lost in this one in a tiebreaker. He was not injured seriously.



Spectating was Ron Pudduck, three-time national Seniors singles champion and a long-time member of the NPA Board of Managers and promoter of some of the best tournaments ever.



Youngest "player" was Kal Lawrence, whose grandfather -- Scott Lawrence -- played in two divisions. It appears Kal -- who is 18 months old -- is offering a few tips on feet movement.



Diane Moore, ranked 6th nationally on the pro racquetball tour, played in two divisions. Moore, of Griffith, Ind., is shown with Martin Gonzales of Chicago. They reached the Men's C final but lost in a tiebreaker. She also played with Dennis Negrete in Seniors.



Judy Shirley played with Bob Hannah in Golden Masters, winning their first match but then losing to Charlie Brumfield and Randy Wackerle in the quarterfinals. She won 10 womens open national doubles titles, more than any other in that department. She also won a womens open singles crown.



There IS only one Brum

SAN DIEGO -- This trophy was presented to Charlie Brumfield, paddleball and racquetball legend and leader of the West Coast Paddleball Nation, at the 2006 National Singles Tournament in March.

It was made by Randy Wackerle, an outstanding PBaller from Bay City, Mich.

Wackerle said it started with the mass E-mails that Brumfield sends out.



Brumfield

Said Wackerle: "There was a funeral out west somewhere for an ex-racquetballer. Charlie was asked if he was going to the funeral because, someone said, 'You know, there is only ONE BRUM.'

"That's where I picked up on the ONE BRUM. The words on the (trophy) are from Charlie after he was heckled about a picture that floated around the E-mail circuit.

"Charlie was standing at a court looking down at a match with his shirt off.

"Comments were made about his physique, thus his retort on the (trophy) plate. I thought it was a great quote!!

Charlie's words to live by on the trophy:

"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, cigar in one hand, martini in the other, body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming 'Holy Sheeit, What A Ride!'"

Brumfield won NPA national open singles titles in 1969 and 1970 and national open doubles crowns in 1968 and 1969. He received the Earl Risky Memorial Trophy in 2004 for his contributions to paddleball.

His reputation was enhanced when he turned to racquetball during the sport's boom years and was ranked No. 1 nationally in that sport for a number of years in the 1970s.

Brumfield was the vociferous, clamorous, blatant, strident, boisterous voice of racquetball during that stretch and there was no doubt that he was Numero Uno. Even then, there was only ONE BRUM. -- LOU GIAMPETRONI

2006 National Singles Results

Sorrento Valley

Racquet Club, San Diego

OPEN: Chris Crowther def.

Mike Czabala, 21-20, 21-12.

Consolation: Brad Poppino.

MEN'S A: Greg Badger def.

Touki Leyva, 21-12, 21-20. 3rd, Jason Muth.

MEN'S B: Bryan Oates def.

Sam Choukri, 21-10, 21-10.

3rd, Joe Baldori. Consolation: Hal Brown.

MEN'S C: Sam Choukri def.

Sid Azar, 21-19, 21-10. 3rd,

James Hembree. Consolation:

Terry Kennedy.

MEN'S NOVICE: Bob

Richland def. Nito Leyva, 21-5,

11-21, 21-11. 3rd, Les Niss.

Consolation: Rigo Marin.

SENIORS: 1st, Vince Carlone;

2nd, Brad Poppino.

MASTERS: Vince Carlone def.

Charlie Brumfield, 21-10, 21-

10. 3rd, Andy Mitchell. Conso-

lation: Hal Brown.

GOLDEN MASTERS: Eric

Campbell def. Jim Owens, 21-

16, 21-11. 3rd, Clair Steffan.

Consolation: Greg Childs.

WOMEN'S: 1st, Brooke

Schneider; 2nd, Kristin Balogh.

Piechowiak wins

Bay City, Mich. -- Kyle

Piechowiak won the 30th High School Paddleball Tournament in March 2006.

Piechowiak, a sophomore at Bay City Central, defeated Justin Reed, 15-10, 15-9, in the final.

The new champion earlier had topped the defending champion, Chuck Baumer, in a tiebreaker in a semifinal.

Elliott Keipert finished third and Travis Paten took consolation honors.

Paddleballs

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



McLean

Paddleball Profile

Bobby McLean was asked if he has any suggestions on how tournaments can be improved.

Said McLean, of Waterford, MI: "The only way I see we could improve a tournament is having (2) Lorri's instead of (1). Great job, Lorri."

McLean, who does sealcoating, said he began playing paddleball in the late 1970s with his brother, Ken.

"He said I would like the game, and he was wrong (I love the game)."

McLean, who has won a state Men's B doubles title, was asked what he enjoys about the sport.

"The great people I have met through the years, also the competition," he said. "Also, I would like to add that I know the game quite well but there is lots more that I have to learn."

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