



## New champ wants to spread the word about paddleball

SAN DIEGO -- You might say that Aaron Embry's victory in the 2008 National Paddleball Association open singles championship match was a home win for a guy with a mission.

Embry, 45, of San Diego won the title on March 9 at the Sorrento Valley Racquet Club, where he works as the club pro.

He topped Kevin Williams of San Diego in the final, 21-11, 21-16.

Embry is in the process of strongly promoting paddleball and racquetball for women and juniors.

His mission: He wants to be the Johnny Appleseed of paddleball -- and racquetball -- spreading the benefits and joys of the sports to the two groups he believes have been neglected over the years.

Embry, who previously was in real estate development, said he is teaching and promoting paddleball and racquetball full time at Sorrento Valley.

Embry hoists the trophy.

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## Whiz, Krager capture National Doubles title

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

Over the years, Andy Mitchell and Mike Wisniewski have had some ferocious battles on paddleball courts.

They had another one on April 20 in the 2008 NPA National Doubles open championship match at the Michigan Athletic Club in E. Lansing, Mich.

Wisniewski teamed with Chad Krager (both are from Bay City, Mich.) to top Mitchell and Don Kirkconnell, 21-12, 21-17.

Both are from Kalamazoo, Mich.

All four players appeared to be VERY ready as they zipped around with efforts that would put some younger players to shame.

In the first game, Whiz-Krager jumped off to a 5-1 lead.

And they continued to have the upper hand until Mitchell-Kirkconnell scored four straight points to cut the margin to 10-8.



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Wisniewski (left) and Krager

# SINGLES

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Embry said he began playing racquetball in 1976 and won several national titles on the Men's Professional Racquetball Tour.

He switched to paddleball in 1990 and "I was lucky enough to play with Charlie Brumfield and a lot of other great players," he said.

He played until 1994 and then laid off paddleball for about eight years.

"Then Brumfield called me one day and invited me to play paddleball again and I have been playing ever since," he said.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about the victory was that Embry "had seriously injured my knee a few years back and had to stop playing.

"Over this last year and a half, I have been working very hard to get back on the court. My goal for this tournament was to enjoy myself and not reinjure my knee."

He also said the tournament "provided me with one of the greatest moments in my sporting life. After winning the last point, I turned to the crowd and saw my father's (John) face and his proud smile. I will always remember and cherish that moment."

Williams, 45, said "The beginning of the first game was close, then he dominated the latter part and beat me pretty bad.

"The second game I loosened up a bit and I even think I led most of the way. But it was all smoke and mirrors as he eventually wore me down.

"Aaron knows my game well and he executed a nice game plan to take advantage of my conditioning ... To answer your question, did I have a chance? ... not that day."

Mike Wisniewski, 8-time national singles champion, said in an E-mail he thought Williams was going to win because of his play early in the final.

"... I was sure (Williams) was going to steamroll right over Aaron but once again as Aaron rose to the occasion (Kevin) started to make simple mistakes and never really was able to dominate -- even though it looked like he was."

Wisniewski said Embry's "level of calm, focused determination won the day! It was like watching myself in my prime at times."

**"(The tournament) provided me with one of the greatest moments in my sporting life. After winning the last point, I turned to the crowd and saw my father's (John) face and his proud smile. I will always remember and cherish that moment."**

**-- Champion Aaron Embry**

Embry earlier knocked off Wisniewski, of Bay City, Mich., 16-21, 21-18, 21-16.

"My match with Aaron was very enjoyable," Wisniewski said. "It was the first time in 11 months that I had played someone that has a skill level near or above my own in singles.

"So I really wasn't able to adapt quick enough to his game when he found a (chink) in my armor. I was playing at my best but not as good as Aaron in the stretch."

Also in an earlier match, Embry defeated Kirk Loveday, 21-16, 21-14.

**-- LOU GIAMPETRONI**

## Top-level P-ballers pass up tourney

Three top-level players -- Kelly Gelhaus, Chris Crowther and Mike Czabala -- were conspicuous by their absence at the National Singles.

Three-time national singles champion Gelhaus of Riverside, Calif., said:

"I didn't play in the singles because I have been (involved) in some other interests ... I am playing golf 3-4 days per week and I am trying to get a painting business into action.

"I only played paddleball about 10 times in the last year! I love the game but have chosen not to participate in any tournaments

for now."

Czabala, four-time national singles runner-up, said he had not played paddleball or racquetball since the 2007 National Doubles, "which is the primary reason that I did not play.

"... I reached a point about two months before the tournament that I knew I would not get back in time to be ready to play at a level I'm happy with and avoid injury.

"Trust me, I wanted to be there and hope to make a comeback next year."

Crowther, of Riverside, who won the 2006 national singles title, did not play in the 2008 tournament either.

# 2008 NPA NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONS



AARON EMBRY  
*Open*



KIRK LOVEDAY  
*Men's A*



JOE BALDORI  
*Men's B*



KEN MURRAY  
*Men's C & Men's Novice*



CHARLIE BRUMFIELD  
*Masters*



ERIC CAMPBELL  
*Golden Masters*

## 2008 NATIONAL SINGLES RESULTS

March 7, 8, 9,  
San Diego, CA

Sorrento Valley  
Fitness Center

PHOTOS BY  
SKIP FREYSINGER

**OPEN:** 1st, Aaron Embry; 2nd, Kevin Williams; 3rd, Mike Wisniewski. Consolation: Bob Pfau.

**MEN'S A:** 1st, Kirk Loveday; 2nd, Greg Badger; 3rd, Camilo Santisteban.

**MEN'S B:** 1st, Joe Baldori; 2nd, Matt Schulz; 3rd, Rob Mendez.

**MEN'S C:** 1st, Larry Murray; 2nd, Dan Turbovitz; 3rd, Brian Stevenson. Consolation: Felipe Ochoa.

**MEN'S NOVICE:** 1st, Larry Murray; 2nd, Mark Loftus; third, Amy Rothamel.

**MASTERS:** 1st, Charlie Brumfield; 2nd, Andy Mitchell; 3rd, Bob Pfau.

**GOLDEN MASTERS:** 1st, Eric Campbell; 2nd, Jim Owens; 3rd, Clair Steffan. Consolation: T.E. Johnson III.



# Krager, Joe Baldori get major awards

The 2008 recipients of the NPA's two major awards are Chad Krager and Joe Baldori.

Krager, of Bay City, Mich., received the Earl Risky Memorial Trophy for contributions to the sport of paddlball. It is named for the founder of the game.

Baldori, of E. Lansing, Mich., got the Sportsmanship Trophy that goes to the person "who most represents the American ideal of good sportsmanship under extreme competitive conditions."

Krager was instrumental in staging the 2008 Midwest Doubles Tournament in Arlington Heights, Ill. He teamed with Mike Wisniewski to win the national open doubles title this season.

Baldori has played paddleball for a number of years in various divisions and won the 2008 national Men's B singles championship in San Diego.



**CHAD KRAGER**  
**Earl Risky**  
**Memorial Trophy**



**JOE BALDORI**  
**Sportsmanship**  
**Trophy**

## NATIONAL DOUBLES

Continued from Page 1

But within minutes, Whiz-Krager had scored seven unanswered points and expanded their lead to 17-8.

Then there was a period when no points were scored by either side -- with outstanding defensive efforts by everyone.

I mean -- some of the gets were phenomenal!

Mitchell-Kirkconnell were

able to get only four more points while Whiz-Krager got four to close out the first game.

The start of the second was highlighted by a total of five serves by both sides -- with no points scored.

Finally, Mitchell-Kirkconnell took a 5-1 lead.

But again, within minutes, Whiz-Krager posted five unanswered points for a 6-5 lead.

Later it was 9-9 when Mitchell-Kirkconnell ran off seven unanswered points to take a 16-9 lead. It appeared it

would be tiebreaker time.

But Whiz-Krager got six points to narrow the margin to 16-15.

Right about then, there was a collision of three of the players and Mitchell said the point should be played over.

The opponents disagreed and it was obvious that Mitchell was very unhappy.

They continued and Mitchell-Kirkconnell got only one more point while their foes were chalking up six unanswered points for the match.

Mitchell stormed out of the court and made no bones about his dissatisfaction with the non-call.

It came when they were merely two points apart.

In earlier matches, Krager-Wisniewski defeated Brandon Creamer-Joe Baldori, 21-19, 21-14, and Jim Owens-Shahebaz Malik, 17-21, 21-19, 21-10.

Earlier, Mitchell-Kirkconnell topped Bob Pfau-Rob Mendez, 21-15, 21-18, and Bill Eaton-Mark Bollinger, 21-10, 21-15.

## Guess what time it is?

Right!!

The Pig Roast & Human Sacrifice.

Saturday, June 14, 2008,

at the Bronson Athletic Club, 6789 Elm Valley Drive, Kalamazoo, Mich.



That's for paddleball. The **PARTY** will follow at the V.F.W. Hall, 1920 E. Kilgore Service Road. Enter on the Website: [www.paddleball.org](http://www.paddleball.org)

# 2008 NPA NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONS



DENNIS NEGRETE (left) and CHAD KRAGER  
*Men's A*



NORM BRUEMMER (left) and SCOTT SCHRUM  
*Men's B*



SCOTT GLASS (left) and JARED ARNOLD  
*Men's C*



DALE JURCISIN (left) and GREG COLTON  
*Men's Novice*



DENNIS NEGRETE (left) and PAUL CHRITZ  
*Seniors*



ANDY MITCHELL (left) and ED MAHER  
*Masters*



ERIC CAMPBELL (left) and C. BRUMFIELD  
*Golden Masters*



DON TRAXLER (left) and ?????? COFFEY  
*Platinum Masters*





### NATIONAL TOURNAMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Jeremy Kirkconnell got in almost as much playing time as entrants in the National Doubles Tournament. The 7-year-old also had a chance to face off with his mom, Rose, during a lull in the action.



## 2008 National Doubles Results

April 18, 19, 20

Michigan Athletic Club

East Lansing, Michigan

**OPEN:** Mike Wisniewski-Chad Krager def. Andy Mitchell-Don Kirkconnell, 21-12, 21-17. Third was Bill Eaton-Mark Bollinger.

**MEN'S A:** Dennis Negrete-Chad Krager def. Ron Malecki-Brandon Creamer, 21-16, 21-11. Third was Shahebez Malik-Rick Clewis. Consolation: Jeff Kain-Mark Bollinger.

**MEN'S B:** Norm Bruemmer-Scott Schrum def. Ed Maher-Jeremy Wheaton, 21-17, 21-16. Third was Scott Lawrence-Andy Pappas. Consolation: Joe Baldori-Sam Baldori.

**MEN'S C:** Jared Arnold-Scott Glass def. Carl Loveday III-Kevin Wilcox, 21-20, 21-13. Consolation: Larry Allgaier-Bill Davis.

**MEN'S NOVICE:** 1st, Greg Colton-Dale Jurcisin; 2nd, Chuck Frasier-Stephen Schwitzer.

**SENIORS:** Dennis Negrete-Paul Chritz were unbeaten in a round-robin of four teams.

**MASTERS:** Andy Mitchell-Ed Maher def. Jim Swendris-Bob Sterken, 21-16, 21-9. Consolation: Bill Farmer-Scott Schrum.

**GOLDEN MASTERS:** Charlie Brumfield-Eric Campbell def. Randy Wackerle-Sandy DeGreif, 21-11, 21-7. Third was Jim Owens-Ron Malecki.

**PLATINUM MASTERS:** 1st, Don Traxler-Dave Coffey; 2nd, Al Storey-Lou Giampetroni.



Collin Rothermel takes a nap while hugging two paddles at the National Singles in San Diego. The 5-year-old, who says he loves paddleball, had a ticket for a 50-50 raffle. When Lorri Brigham asked him if he won, would he take the money or a paddle, the youngster didn't hesitate and said he would take a paddle. He didn't win but Lorri gave him two paddles anyway. Collin's mom, Amy, took third in the Novice division and his dad, Chris, played in Men's C. Charlie Brumfield sent along the photo with the caption: "... And visions of paddleball danced in his head."

# Joe Emaar dies at 75

Joe Emaar, who was a big part of paddleball for two decades and was one of the exuberant Kalamazoo, Mich., crowd, is dead at 75.

The big man with the infectious laugh and a broad smile died on March 24, 2008. He had undergone heart surgery last summer and never recovered.

He had been missed at paddleball tournaments in recent years. But for a long time when he did play in them, you knew he was there.

Joe quit playing about seven years ago after banging into a wall and injuring his left shoulder. (Oh, yes, he hustled all over the place despite his size.)

He was an outstanding athlete who served in the Army during the Korean conflict. A private service was held at Fort Custer National Cemetery with military honors.

Joe also was a top-flight baseball player who was in the Pittsburgh Pirates minor league system.

He was employed as a real estate salesman for 40 years. Joe married Shirley J. Campbell in 1963.

"Once I got into paddleball, I was hooked!" he said in an interview. "I think I started paddleball at 45 and always wished I had started earlier."

Emaar also is remembered for donating his barn for the annual Pig



## Emaar

Roast & Human Sacrifice -- the season-ending excuse for a little PB and a lot of partying.

"Our annual pig roast lasted 16 years until I decided to sell the property," Emaar said.

"The honoree of every roast having to eat an eye of the pig was a highlight of the night. The great times we had seemed to bring us all together and gave us fond memories that will last a long time."

Emaar won the national masters doubles championship in 1983 with Doug Greene and in 1985 and 1988 with Jer Fennell.

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI

# Make the switch!

Hate to keep bringing it up.

But the newsletter situation here at NPA Central is causing a few problems.

We'd like to have everyone -- that means you are -- to start getting the newsletter off the Paddleball Web Page.

It's cheaper for the organization (no printing costs and less postage). The former have gone up and postage is increasing this summer.

Besides, when you get it from the Web Page, you get some color photos. And you can get it before the mailed copies.

So think about it, those of you who have been receiving mailed copies of the newsletter.

Also, if you're not interested in having the NPA newsletter mailed to you any longer, let us know.

We'll remove your name from the mailing list and that will help us somewhat.

But what we really want you to do is get the newsletter off the Internet.

All you have to do is hit [www.paddleball.org](http://www.paddleball.org)

## Thanks a bunch

Thanks to The Paddle Company for donation of paddles to the NPA for the two national tourneys.

They were raffled off at parties at the tournaments. Eric Campbell won two and Jim Owens and Jim Richert won one each.

The firm also donated several paddle-carrying cases and water bottles.

Also a special thank-you to Pete Magar who plays out of Schoolcraft College in Livonia, Mich.

He donated 30 old paddles to the NPA for distribution to would-be players around the country.

## An apology

Hey, folks, we've been derelict over the last couple of reports in the paddleball newsletter.

Mark Smith, "Pappy" to those who know him well, does not hang out in the fair community of Eau Claire, Wis., as we've been saying.

He resides in the just-as-fair community of Wausau, Wis., where Sue Smith, Ben Smith, Malorie Diedrick, Ashley Garavet, Tommy Oliva, Phil Salamone, Wayne Stretsbury and Lee Sprengelmeyer, et al, roam the PB courts of the Woodson YMCA.

Sorry, Mr. Smith.

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



**Harris**

## **Paddleball Profile**

Ron Harris is a relative newcomer to the sport of paddleball.

Harris, a business owner from Ypsilanti, Mich., played a lot of racquetball before seeing the light.

Paddleball was “more of a challenge,” he said.

What does he enjoy about the game?

“The workout,” he responded.

His first PB tournament was the 2007 Bean-Smith in Bay City.

Harris won Men’s C in the 2008 Midwest Doubles Tournament with Eugene Rush in February.

Harris took third in Men’s C in the 2008 Midwest Singles tourney in January.

Harris, who said he had “a few racquetball tournament wins,” does not have any suggestions on improvements of PB tourneys.

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