

# NPA

( INDOOR / FOUR-WALL )

National Paddleball Association

WWW.PADDLEBALL.ORG

NPA, 7642 Kingston, Portage, Mich. 49002

NEWSLETTER / SPRING 2005-2006

## The new paddles: **Are they better?**

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

Paddles -- they're the guts of our game.

What type do you use?

Still hanging on to the old wooden one or do you use one of the modern marvels?

Paddles have come a long way since their origin. Who developed the first one? Who knows?

One thing we know for sure: the cost has skyrocketed in recent years.

I have a price list from the Marcraft Recreation Corp. that has wooden paddles going from \$1.25 (the Official) to the Sportsman and Ace, both (with the exclusive new "Flexi-Grip") -- at \$6.95 each.

The effective date of those prices was September 1, 1970.



Now, they cost anywhere from \$45 to nearly \$100. Although they are made of material that should last a little longer than those made of wood.

Are the modern paddles better than the wooden ones? The opinions vary.

Some say it's easier on the arm; others say you get more power.

**Please see PADDLES, Page 2**



**Have  
you  
hugged  
your  
paddle  
today?**

## NPA schedule

**NATIONAL SINGLES:**  
Sorrento Valley Racquet Club,  
San Diego, CA, March 24, 25,  
26, 2006.

**NATIONAL DOUBLES:**  
University of Michigan, Ann  
Arbor, Mich., April 21, 22, 23,



**The Midwest Doubles in East Lansing, MI, on Feb. 25, 2006, had a rarity. In this open division match, there were all Mikes in the court. They are (from left) Mike Wisniewski, Mike Madis, Mike Czabala (Wisniewski's partner) and Mike Schafer. If we just say Mike and Mike won, 21-15, 21-7, you might think we're being cute. So we'll tell you that Madis-Schafer were the winners.**

# PADDLES

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Eight-time national singles champion Mike Wisniewski makes his own paddles -- and has for several years.

"I am at the end of my journey on paddle development after four years," he said. "The paddle that I have developed most recently is perfect.

**"It has** all the right characteristics for Indoor Paddleball and MY style of play.

"All I was looking for was a paddle that would hit nice and crisp yet not hurt the arm from prolonged practice sessions due to the vibration caused by the natural frequency set up in the 5 ply hard rock maple paddles we had been using since the '70s."

Whiz said he has made more than 100 paddles. He calls his brand the Wackit-Force, "named after the guy who has inspired me and many others -- Randy Wackerle."

He said there were some small problems with the composite paddles developed by the paddle manufacturers that he wanted to eliminate.

**The core** of his paddle is 80 percent wood and 20 percent polyethylene foam. The most important feature, he said, is where, what kind and how much foam to use.

Once the core is done, it's fit into the frame and covered with epoxy-soaked carbon fiber.

"Carbon fiber is the real genius at work in my paddles," he said. "It allows for strength without a lot of weight and stiffness in a relatively skimpy, wooden frame."

Said Andy Mitchell: "I am of two opinions on the paddles."

"One, I like the idea that we have a couple if not more companies and models to buy from.

"Unfortunately, I like the old wood paddles. I like the feel of good wood, not the cheap ply junk, but the old 5-ply hard rock maple.

Mitchell added that "I like the idea of The Paddle Company and, to some extent, Laser making paddles because it brings us into the 21st Century.

"It gives us some high-tech paddles that both look and feel like we are part of the new age.

"The other side is that I don't like the new paddles because they add even more speed to the game and take out a little of the touch that old paddles forced us to use."

**Mitchell did** admit that the new paddles "have given the game a little more universal appeal and helped make it a coast-to-coast sport."

Randy Wackerle said he has been using a Whiz-made paddle for about four years.

"I tried hitting the

traditional wood recently and wonder how I ever played with it," he said. "I tried the graphite paddles but don't like them as well as the Whiz paddle."

**The Whiz** paddles "seem to have a little more 'pop' to me," said Wackerle. "I don't know about saving the arm though.

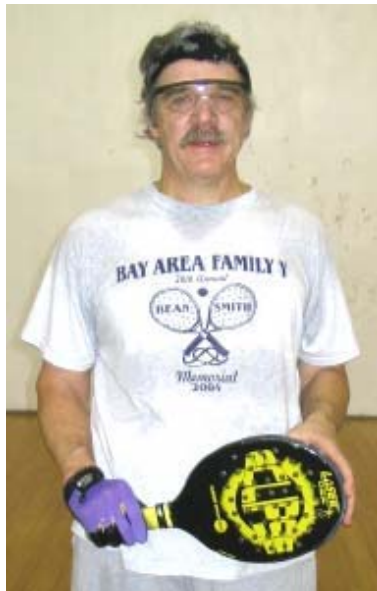
"I'm sold on the Whiz paddle," he said, "and I would never go back to the wood paddle. I would choose the graphite before wood."

Said Randy Hoyle: "I really think the new paddles are good for the game.

"First, you can get them through a supplier whenever needed via the Web page. Second is that there is more than one manufacturer.

"Competition is good for the game. Third is even though they are more expensive ... they are less expensive for the player like myself who used to break three or four paddles a year.

"They are easier on the arm and do provide some control which in the beginning I thought you had no touch like with a wooden paddle."



Jim Owens (left) is now using a modern paddle.

Owens, of Ann Arbor, Mich., has been a longtime member of the NPA Board of Managers.

He consistently had opposed the use of non-wood paddles and generally was the only board member who voted to prohibit their use.

However, Owens offers an explanation: "I said at the time that I would not continue to handicap myself if better equipment was available. It is better and easier on the arm."

# E-mail vs. Snail-mail

One way to help the NPA is for those receiving the newsletter to elect to get it by E-mail rather than a printed copy in the U.S. mail.

With the recent increase in postage and the constant increase in printing costs, the association could save a chunk of change by printing fewer newsletters.

That's how you can help us.

Besides, you will receive the newsletter up to a week earlier and most of the photos are in color.

The E-mailed version really is a cleaner, nicer one.

To select E-mail over Snail-mail, you can choose one of three options:

1. Go to the Website at [www.paddleball.org](http://www.paddleball.org) and send an E-mail to the NPA saying you want the newsletter E-mailed.

2. Call the secretary-treasurer at (888) 871-1501.

3. Fax the NPA at (279) 269-6275.

No. 1 is our preferred option because we will have a nice, readable copy of your E-mail address.

Also, when you go to the Website, go to the home page and click on the newsletter tab and follow the instructions.

While we're at it, when players sign up for tournaments through the Website, they should click on the "more info" link to find out what the entry gift is, hotels and other specific tourney-related information. -- Lorri Brigham

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## 17 teams compete in 29th Bean-Smith

**Bay City, Mich.** -- Seventeen teams from six cities participated in the 29th annual Bean-Smith Paddleball Tournament at the Bay Area Family Y on Jan. 28, 2006.

In the open division, Mike Wisniewski and Sandy DeGreif topped Randy Wackerle and Chad Krager, 18-21, 21-10, 21-15.

Dan Snedecor-Bill Lott topped Ron and Chris Malecki for the consolation title.

In the Men's A division, Rich Rahall and Brett Lewless defeated Paul Chritz-Greg Keenan, 21-14, 21-10.

In Men's B, Keith Thurlow and Gary Levandoski outlasted Joe Siniff-Lou Giampetroni, 21-14, 13-21, 21-12.

## Listen Up

"Not only do I have difficulty in encouraging most of my senior friends to read, or reread, classical literature -- I first have to tell them where the library is located."

-- *Handballer Norman E. Bullock, Lapeer, MI*

## You can help the NPA

An NPA membership helps to support the association in promoting our sport.

Most tournament players join the NPA at tournament sites, but we know there are a lot of players who no longer participate in NPA-sanctioned tourneys.

As an NPA member, you

will receive discounts on tournament entry fees, paddles, balls and logo wear.

If you still would like to support the NPA through membership, you can do so through the Website or by sending a check for \$25 to: N.P.A., 7642 Kingston Dr., Portage, MI 49002.

### RESULTS MIDWEST SINGLES TOURNEY

(January 21-22, 2006 -- Bloomingdale, ILL)

**OPEN: 1st, Mike Wisniewski; 2nd, Andy Mitchell.**

**MEN'S A: 1st, Chad Krager; 2nd, Russ Tatar; 3rd, Don Kirkconnell. Consolation: Brad Stanfield.**

**MEN'S B: 1st, Russ Tatar; 2nd, Jack Tamplin. Consolation: Chad Krager.**

**MEN'S C: 1st, Terry Kennedy; 2nd, Mark Coleman.**

**SENIORS: 1st, Doug Hartung; 2nd, John Lowman.**

**MASTERS: 1st, Andy Mitchell; 2nd, Jim Owens.**

# Great paddleball shots remembered

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

The greatest shot I ever witnessed in paddleball was struck by Steve Keeley.

I can't remember the circumstances, his opponent or much -- but it came during a tournament in the intramural building at Michigan State University.



**Keeley** It was years ago and Keeley and his foe were involved in a fierce rally. Keeley fell to the floor in the red lines area on the left side of the court, and the opponent -- sensing he had the point won -- merely drove the ball up right center.

The ball bounced behind the second red line.

Keeley got up and, realizing the ball already had hit the floor, dove toward it as it passed.

He was horizontal when he hit the ball with a backhand. Keeley crashed to the floor. The ball hit the back wall and amazingly reached the front wall in a high arc.

Keeley quickly got up and

was ready for further action in the rally.

I don't know who won the point but it was a remarkable shot.

Try it sometime -- hit the ball past you on your right, make sure it hits the floor and then try a backhand to the back wall to return it to the front wall. While you're airborne. Almost impossible.

I mentioned the shot to Keeley a couple of months ago when he was in Michigan.

He said he didn't remember it but that he had two others he was rather proud of.

"I can't remember the details but you know I don't have a thong and I use a long shoe string to wrap around my wrist," he said.

"I lost the paddle but the string still was around my wrist and the paddle was whirling around like a helicopter about three feet away.

"I swung the string and somehow I returned the ball."

The other memorable shot came against Paul Lawrence.

"During a rally, the face of my paddle broke off and I was left with just the handle," Keeley said.

He said Lawrence sort of

nonchalantly hit the ball to the front wall.

"But I returned the ball with just the handle and he stood there with his mouth open, amazed that I got it."

But then Lawrence hit another shot and Keeley could not return it.

I was the official in most of Keeley's championship matches in the 1970s when he dominated the game.

It probably was because no one else wanted to officiate.

But I can assure anyone that he was an amazing athlete who could do just about anything on the court.

There were more outstanding shots over the years.

One gentleman standing next to me during one of Keeley's matches disagreed with me when I gave Keeley hinder calls on so many shots.

But I told the man to watch and see what happened.

He later agreed, perhaps reluctantly, that Keeley was entitled to the hinder calls.

He got everything.

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## Feb. 24-26, 2006 -- Michigan Athletic Club, E. Lansing, MI

OPEN: Andy Mitchell-Don Kirkconnell def. Mike Madis-Mike Schafer, 21-20, 21-19.

MEN'S A: John Lowman-Brandon Creamer def. Scott Wittbrodt-Chad Krager, 21-9, 21-12. 3rd, Chad Schwall-Eric Williams. Consolation: Paul Chritz-Ron Malecki.

MEN'S B: Jack Barenfanger-Jim Richter def. Dave Hale-Dan Snedecor, 21-16, 21-6. 3rd, Rick Clewis-Joe Baldori. Consolation: Scott Wittbrodt-Chad Krager.

MEN'S C: Joe Baldori-Sam Baldori def. Randy Allar-Dick Brouwer. 3rd, Bret Mitea-Fin Henk.

MEN'S NOVICE: Winner -- Kyle Piechowiak-Elliott Keipert.

SENIORS: Bob Sterken-Jim Swendris def. Bill Peak-Mike Madis, 21-13, 21-12. Consolation: Steve Chilenko-Curt Ulstrum.

MASTERS: Bob Sterken-Jim Swendris def. Ron Malecki-Mike Schafer, 21-13, 21-13. 3rd, Sonny Salazar-Jim Owens. Consolation: Brian Watts-Len Baldori.

GOLDEN MASTERS: Brad Douglas-Bill Lott def. Dick Turner-Mike Tylutki, 12-21, 21-18, 21-14. 3rd, Gary Levandoski-Fred Herner. Consolation: Mike Zuchowski-Skip Freysinger.



## Wrong type of partner

Hey, whatever we can do to help.

Lorri Brigham, NPA secretary-treasurer, has set up a feature on the paddleball Web page to help anyone get a partner for a tournament.

Just plug in your name and some information where you can be reached, and you're all set.

Apparently some guy in North Carolina just saw the word "partner" and sent an E-mail to the NPA Web page.

Where it says "comments," the guy wrote:

"i have a pizza place its very big and great location but the dining is useless so i am thinking to expand and add grill and remodel the store but i dont have money to do it so i am looking for partner it is great investment."

## Kazoo a nasty town? Hard to believe

I am a collector of old books.

One I have is "Wit and Humor of the Age," published in 1885.

In a sketch entitled "Wicked Kalamazoo" by Eli Perkins, he starts out by saying: "Kalamazoo, Mich., is a very wicked town."

He tells why.

"It is the haven of private dog fights and household draw poker," he said. "All minstrel companies go there to get wrecked.

"I do not know why they should get wrecked



Playing with the big boys at the 2006 Midwest Doubles Tournament in East Lansing, MI, were Chad Schwall (left) and Eric Williams. The champion graduates of Randy Wackerle's Juniors Program in Bay City, MI, were entered in the open division of the Midwest tourney.

RESULTS MIDWEST DOUBLES TOURNAMENT  
(February 24-26, 2006, Michigan Athletic Club, E. Lansing, MI)

here, for they always have good houses.

"It must be because the poor minstrels after the show are invited into the best private Kalamazoo families for social intercourse with deacons and clergymen, and are then robbed.

"When I put up at Kalamazoo I always go to the jail. It is really the only safe place for a traveling man to go to.

"I always feel safe in the jail, for I know while I am there that the citizens of the town cannot break through and steal my jewelry."

The article was included under the heading "Wit of Exaggeration." So right there is an indication that old Eli was having some fun with the people of Kalamazoo.

They couldn't possibly have been that nasty, could they, paddleballers?

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI

## Paddleballs

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



**Allar**

## Paddleball Profile

Like a lot of paddleballers, Randy Allar has been playing the game for a long time.

He began in 1973 “for the exercise” and still is playing in tournaments.

Allar, of Kentwood, Mich., is in sales.

What does he enjoy about paddleball?

“The people,” he said. “They are a lot of fun.”

Can tournaments be improved?

“I think Lorri (Brigham) does a fantastic job,” he said.

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