

Racquetball Reporter

quarterly publication of the Racquetball Association of Michigan

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Racquetball Association of Michigan

MICHIGAN CROWNS TWO NATIONAL CHAMPIONS IN HOUSTON

- Twayne M. Howard

Nationals. "The Road to the Finals". Houston, Texas. Every year, this Memorial Day tradition calls the best racquetball players from across the US to play for the title of National Champion. This year nearly 600 players signed on to face the challenge including fifteen members of Team Michigan. When all was said and done, the members earned eight medals, and Michigan welcomed two new National Champions to its storied history.

Making a return trip, back by popular demand, **Paula Saad** returned to Houston for the first time in roughly a decade to test her game against some of the best. After surviving an 11-10 tiebreaker scare in the first round of the Women's 35+A division, Paula posted a solid 15-7, 15-5 victory in the semis. This set up a tough final against an athletic opponent, who might have been a few years younger. In the Final, her challenger put up a great fight, but Paula and her crack coaching staff put together a game plan that could not fail. In the end, Paula's shot-making was too much and she claimed her first National Championship.

Jack Huczek. The name is enough to inspire fear in his opponents, and a certain feeling that, "Well, I didn't want to win this one, anyway". Jack had a spectacular year dating back to a Pan Am Gold playing for TEAM USA last summer. He won several pro stops and held the #1 position for several months until the very

last match of the season. Next on his agenda was to regain the title of National Champion. As the second seed, Jack cruised into the Finals to once again face Rocky Carson. This tournament has seen this match up several times in recent years, each an epic battle. This time was not any different. After a grueling two and a half hours, Jack emerged victorious and earned his second Men's Open National Championship.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2004 NATIONAL CHAMPIONS!!!

In other action at Houston. . . .

One of the most improved ladies in Michigan in the past few seasons has been **Karen Green**. Karen came to Houston looking to add Singles Gold to her Doubles National Championship. In the Women's 45+A division, Karen survived two tiebreakers to advance to the Finals. Karen fell just short as she couldn't drag this one to the third game. Karen earned a Silver medal in this division and a Bronze in the Women's 40+A division to become Michigan's only double-medalist. Congratulations to Karen for a great finish to a great season.

Last season **Tim Couch** was playing in the C division back home. This season he pounded his way to several tournament wins in the Men's B including a State Championship. He brought his power and

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THOUGHTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Don't look now, but another racquetball season is just around the corner and I have a feeling it will be the best season in years. How do I know this? Easy. With all due respect to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "Let me count the ways".

Juniors programs all over the state continue to help the sport grow by teaching a whole new generation of players the game we all love. Dale Brown, Karen Green, Lewis Forrest, Jack White, Jeff Connell, Diana Courtney, Dan Verbeck and the countless others that assist do a great job bringing kids to our sport. We should do everything we can to support the Juniors so that we all have somebody to play in twenty years. Fully integrating the juniors into tournaments, right down to 9:00 am start times, has been thrilling to watch over the last few years.

At press time, we have a fifteen sanctioned tournaments scheduled this season including two Ladies-Only tournaments. Stephanie Winfrey's inaugural event brought out 19 Ladies and several new members. I can't wait to watch this program continue to grow.

In August, Felicia Mann hosted Michigan's first World Outdoor Racquetball event at Belle Isle. Anyone who has had the opportunity to play 3-wall knows how much fun it is and W.O.R. hopes to take it to a whole new level.

The West Michigan Open Pro Am is bringing Professional Racquetball to Michigan for the first time in a decade. Our own Jack Huczek has agreed to play and will take on all challengers in this IRT sanctioned event.

Beginning this season, USA Racquetball will have a completely new ranking system. The system is based not on points, but on actual head-to-head competition. If one player beats another, the winner gets ranked higher. Over the next year or so, enough results will be entered to generate a more reliable ranking source. It will help directors with seeding, and should help prevent misclassification of players at tournaments. This is a big benefit to everyone!

Reigning National Champion Jack Huczek spent much of the last season ranked #1 before ending up at #2. This season will see Jack make a run at the top spot. I, for one, wouldn't bet against him.

State Doubles will be held at Total Sports in Mt. Clemens. Saturday evening, there will be another meeting open to all members where we will discuss racquetball in Michigan followed by an auction to support juniors programs.

At State Singles we will enhance the Hall of Fame Banquet by adding a special program to celebrate players throughout the state on Saturday evening. We'll give you more details later, but suffice it to say, this will be a very special evening, not to be missed.

The Newsletter has undergone a significant overhaul as we try to bring you the most useful information in a far more pleasing package. Dianne Easterling our editor, Mike Easthope our printer and Jack White the Newsletter coordinator and Felicia Mann as past President have worked very hard to

(cont. on page 7)

NEW MEMBER TO THE RAM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The RAM Board of Directors welcomes its newest member at the June board meeting. Joining the RAM Board for the upcoming 2004-05 season is **Ron Barton**. Also the RAM Board of Directors elected new officers for the 2004-05 season -- Twayne Howard, President; Jack Huczek, Vice President; Sharon Huczek, Secretary and Tom Blakeslee, Treasurer. Any questions or concerns regarding racquetball in Michigan can be directed to the officers or any RAM Board member.



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MICHIGAN CROWNS NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

(cont. from page 1)

shot-making to Houston with sights sets high. But this isn't just another tournament as we try to tell ourselves. Tim succumbed to early jitters in the Men's B, but rallied for a Silver in the Men's 40+B division.

The next two players are two of my heroes. They show incredible perseverance, heart, and determination, while still being two of the great gentlemen on the courts.

Duane R. Russell looked to add to his National Championships in the Men's 75+ division. For the second consecutive year, Mr. Russell fell in the Finals. Mr. Russell put up a great fight, and hustled more than most players half his age, but just couldn't quite close out the games losing 15-14, 15-12 in a heart-breaking Final. Most would hang their heads, Mr. Russell proudly wore

his Silver medal the rest of the weekend and kept up the great demeanor for which he is so well known to all players and spectators alike.

Charles Kaiser was looking for his first National Championship while competing in the Men's 70+ division. This was a brutally difficult twelve-man division, where the athleticism was almost as impressive as the camaraderie. A tough loss in the semis put Mr. Kaiser up against top seeded Don Alt, who was upset in his semi. Mr. Kaiser made it difficult, but in the end could not hold off the former National Champion. Mr. Kaiser added a fourth place medal to his trophy case.

Also medaling was **Twayne M. Howard**. The 2003 National Champion in the 25+C/D division came into the 2004 tournament fighting back problems, but still holding high hopes. It was not to be as

Twayne went a disappointing 1 win and 6 losses (including three tiebreakers) on the week. The one win was a revenge win and enough to make it to the medal round of the 30+B division. Twayne salvaged the fourth place medal and vowed to do better next year.

Also competing from Michigan were Michael Anderson, Anthnita Dickerson, Lewis Forrest, Pete Harvey, Sharon Huczek, and Andrew Nierman. Unable to make the trip this year due to injuries were Tom Blakeslee and Melody Gorno.

Ask anyone who has been to this tournament and they will tell you how much fun it is. Even if you're not having fun on the courts, there's plenty of fun to be had elsewhere. I hope to see everyone next year.

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JUNIOR'S CORNER . . .

- Karen Green

Congratulations to **Brad Schopieray** and **Dan Poindexter**. These two junior players were Michigan's only two participants at the Junior Nationals in Wisconsin this past June. They both won two medals. Brad and Dan played together and won the Gold Medal in the Red Division in doubles. Brad also won a Gold Medal in the Red Division in singles and Dan won the Silver Medal in the Red Division singles. (They ended up playing each other in the finals of this division.) Nice going guys!!! Keep up the great work!!!

The following document represents the hard work of many people over the summer to foster the development of Team Michigan Junior Racquetball. We will be implementing the levels outlined in the document beginning with the 2004-05 competitive season. Your club Racquetball Director will be able to evaluate junior players throughout the season. Our goal is to raise the skill level and awareness of the rules of the game among our junior players, as well as to increase the total number of junior players in Michigan. Whenever junior players go to a tournament, they will notice other players who have earned the T-shirts representing the higher achievement levels. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Karen Green at 248-663-0175.

Good luck to all of our Juniors this season. We hope to see more participation in local and national events

QUALIFICATIONS FOR TEAM MICHIGAN JUNIOR RACQUETBALL

Team Michigan Junior Racquetball consists of four levels-White, Red, Blue and Gold. To qualify as a member of Team Michigan, all junior participants must demonstrate excellent sportsmanship both on and off the court. In addition, junior players must pass the requirements outlined below. To qualify for a higher level, players must demonstrate the skills and knowledge listed below to their racquetball director. Players may test throughout the year, with the first test

in each division at no charge. If a player does not pass into the next level after the first test, he or she may test again for a charge of \$10.00, with a maximum of testing two times per year for any one level. Once a player moves to the next level, he or she will be given a free shirt that will match the color of the achieved level. Players do not have to test for each level in succession, however it is recommended for most junior players to follow this progression. It is understood, however, that players testing for higher divisions will be able to demonstrate any and all skills and knowledge listed under lower divisions.

White Level

Players must either participate in the State Singles Tournament to qualify or they must demonstrate the following skills and knowledge:

1. Hit five forehand shots off the front wall.
2. Hit five backhand shots off the front wall.
3. Hit three out of five serves.
4. Be able to explain the following: skip ball, fault serve types, hinders, side outs and scoring format.

Red Level

1. Hit five out of ten forehand shots down the line.
2. Hit five out of ten forehand shots crosscourt.
3. Hit five out of ten backhand shots down the line.
4. Hit five out of ten backhand shots crosscourt.
5. Hit three different types of serves (i.e. drive, z and lob). Five out ten attempts to pass. Some serves may be repeated.

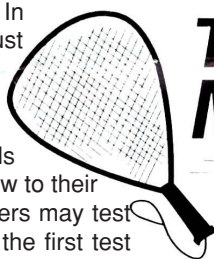
Blue Level

1. Hit seven out of ten forehand shots down the line.
2. Hit seven out of ten forehand shots crosscourt.
3. Hit seven out of ten backhand shots down the line.
4. Hit seven out of ten backhand shots crosscourt.
5. Hit seven out of ten serves to the right side of the court using at least three different types of serves.
6. Hit seven out of ten serves to the left side of the court using at least three different types of serves.
7. Racquetball director will hit a set up to the junior player whereby the ball will come off the back wall and the junior player must return the ball to the front wall (five out of ten attempts using either forehand or backhand).
8. Racquetball director will hit a blast shot (one that hits the front wall and travels to the back wall without bouncing) and the junior player must return the ball to the front wall (five out of ten attempts using either forehand or backhand.)
9. Hit two consecutive ceiling balls to the forehand side (four attempts).
10. Hit two consecutive ceiling balls to the backhand side (five attempts).
11. Hit three out of ten forehand pinch shots.
12. Explain or describe a situation where a replay would occur.
13. Explain or describe the encroachment line.
14. Explain or describe a screen serve.

Gold Level

The gold division is the highest level that a junior player may achieve. It is understood that at this level, racquetball directors may ask the junior player to demonstrate some of the skills listed in other levels. The purpose of this suggestion is to insure that before awarding a gold level to a player, that he or she will be proficient in every aspect of the prior levels.

All gold level players must pass the referee certification test before even attempting
(cont. page 7)



**TEAM
MICHIGAN
JUNIOR RACQUETBALL**

2004-2005 RAM TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

July 24	Juniors Singles and Doubles Total Sports, Mt. Clemens
Aug 20-21	Belle Isle Three Wall Singles & Doubles Belle Isle
Sept 11	Ladies Only Doubles Genesys Athletic Club, Grand Blanc
Sept 17-19	Riverview Fall Brawl Racquetball Riverview Athletic Club, Grand Rapids
Sept 24-26	West Michigan Open Pro-Am Michigan Athletic Club, Grand Rapids
Oct 8-10	2nd Annual Southwest Michigan Racquetball Shootout Bronson Athletic Club, Kalamazoo
Oct 22-24	Spartan Splat Michigan Athletic Club, East Lansing
Oct 29-31	Halloween Spooktacular Players Athletic Club, Warren
Dec 3-5	STATE DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS Total Sports, Mt. Clemens
Jan 21-23	Motor City Rollout Courtland Athletic Club, Utica
Feb 11-13	Total Sports Challenge Total Sports, Mt. Clemens
Feb 18-20	Capital City Challenge Michigan Athletic Club, East Lansing
March 4-5	March Madness Players Athletic Club, Warren
March 11-13	Ladies Only Singles and Doubles Genesis Athletic Club, Grand Blanc
March 18-20	MAC Open Michigan Athletic Club, Grand Rapids
April 8-10	STATE SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP Coliseum II Racquet Club, Taylor

The RAM web site is back!!!!
Please change your bookmarks to
www.michiganracquetball.net

NOMINATION FOR THE MICHIGAN RACQUETBALL HALL OF FAME

The Michigan Racquetball Hall of Fame developed in 1984, by the Racquetball Association of Michigan honors those recipients who demonstrate outstanding achievement, leadership or contribution to the sport of racquetball in the state of Michigan. The award is based upon **YEARS OF CONSISTENT EXCELLENCE** in one or more of the following areas:

ABILITY	Through demonstration of exceptional playing skill in state, regional and/or national tournament competition.
LEADERSHIP	Through generous giving of time and talent for the advancement of racquetball in the State of Michigan by running tournaments, conducting leagues, lessons, serving on the state racquetball association board or other racquetball activities.
CONTRIBUTION	Through generous support, including money, facilities or products, for the advancement of racquetball in the State of Michigan.

If you know someone who qualifies (see the Hall of Fame Criteria on RAM's home page at michiganracquetball.net) that you would like to see in the Hall of Fame, please submit a letter with their full name, address, phone number (including area code) and a brief description of why you think that person deserves to be in the Hall of Fame to:
Hall of Fame Inductee, 321 Village Drive, Lansing, MI 48911-3760

Also, include your name, address and phone number (both day and evening) in case we have to contact you for additional information. The **DEADLINE** for nominations for the Hall of Fame for the 2004-05 year is **OCTOBER 21, 2004**.

If you have further questions on the Hall of Fame process, contact Jim Easterling at (517) 887-0459.

EAST LANSING MAC RACQUETBALL GOES OUTDOORS

- Helen Lang

The East Lansing MAC continues to grow the game of racquetball with the addition of a DOUBLES 3-WALL Outdoor Racquetball League. The eight week league consists of round robin league play with a single elimination playoff. All levels of play have been included in one league by adding a handicap system to equalize every team's ability to complete. It has been an extremely fun addition to the MAC's already robust racquetball program with over 100 members in their leagues.

**WATCH OUT BELLE ISLE, THE MAC ATTACK IS
COMING!!!**



Racquetball Association of Michigan

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ADVERTISING RATES FOR THE RAQUETBALL REPORTER FOR 2004-05

The Racquetball Reporter is published quarterly throughout the year - August, November, February, and May. Items to be included in the Racquetball Reporter for the 2004-05 year must be submitted by the following dates:

August 3, 2004 January 5, 2005
October 4, 2004 April 4, 2005

Advertisement material is subject to approval by the RAM Board of Directors. The prices for advertisement material are:

\$400 - Full page ad to run in all four issues (7" x 9.5")

\$250 - Half page ad to run in all four issues (7" x 4.75")
\$150 - Quarter page ad to run in all four issues (3.5" x 4.75")
\$100 - Club listing for all four issues (3" x 2")

All advertisements must be submitted in camera ready format in the appropriate size. E-mailed graphics can be accepted in either a .TIFF or .JPG format. All advertisements will be in black and white for all issues, except the April issue which will be in full color. Payment must accompany submission of all advertisement material. Information may be mailed to The Racquetball Reporter, 321 Village Dr., Lansing, MI 48911 or sent electronically to djeasterling@earthlink.net.

JUNIOR QUALIFICATIONS

(Cont from page 4)

any skills tests. All gold level players must mentor another junior player and have this process verified by the player, his or her parents and or their racquetball director.

1. Hit five out of ten forehand pinch shots.
2. Hit three out of ten backhand pinch shots.
3. Hit two out of ten forehand reverse pinch shots.
4. Hit two out of ten backhand reverse pinch shots.
5. Hit five out of ten lob serves to the forehand side that do not come off the backwall.
6. Hit five out of ten lob serves to the backhand side that do not come off the backwall.
7. Racquetball director will hit a forehand or backhand ceiling ball and the junior player will execute an offensive shot from that ceiling ball (five out of ten attempts each).
8. Hit three out of five drive Z serves to the forehand.
9. Hit three out of five drive Z serves to the backhand.
10. Hit three out of five lob Z serves to the forehand.
11. Hit three out of five lob Z serves to the backhand.

Players must also choose one of the following shots and execute two out of six attempts:

1. A Z shot.
2. A splat.
3. An around-the-world ball that doesn't come off the back wall.

4. A shot between the legs (from a set up either by the player or the director).
5. A behind the back shot (from a set up either by the player or the director.)
6. An overhead pinch, reverse pinch or kill shot.

Extra copies of the qualifications may be obtained by contacting Karen Green at the phone number listed on page 4.

PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

(cont. from page 2)

bring you this tremendous Newsletter, while still managing to keep costs down.

Nationally, there were more players last year for the first time in years. This reflects the efforts of small and large groups all over the United States helping to grow the game and speaks well for the sport's future. USA Racquetball is making considerable efforts to better get its house in order and will considerably ramp up programming in the next few years.

After several weeks "gone walkabout", the website has returned at a new and improved address. It can be found at www.michiganracquetball.net along with an "explanation" of its "vacation". Under the guidance of our webmaster Randy Pagels who helped bring the site back home, you can continue to expect bigger and better things.

Finally, and maybe most importantly, the Racquetball Association of Michigan Board is the most active board we've had in years. Ron Barton was added as our eleventh member and several more are

considering joining. As the newly elected President I am thrilled to have been given the responsibility of leading this tremendous group of people over the next year. We have so many exciting ideas that I want to see to fruition. My goals are simple: inclusion, expansion and communication. We all know players that should be encouraged to participate more fully in racquetball. If they are local players, encourage them to play in a league. If they are league players, invite them to a tournament. If they play local tournaments, get them to travel to a tournament, or play a State Championship. Once there, they will enjoy it as much as the rest of us have. This will help the membership grow, and help us fulfill the goals we have as an Association. My final goal is to better communicate the actions of the Board to members. I fear that too many members don't know what we do. This must change for us to be a viable organization fully accountable to the members.

I can't stress this enough, this is your Board and your Association. We exist to serve you. If you have any feedback, any questions, any comments please don't hesitate to share them with any of us. We are dedicated to making Racquetball in Michigan better. Board meetings are open to everyone and you are welcome to attend. The next meeting is September 16, 6:30 pm, at Franklin Athletic Club.

I wish you all a great season! See you on the courts! PPKW.

Twayne M. Howard
President



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