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ON THE COVER

National Doubles Champs take center stage and qualify for the U.S. Team.

Photo: Roby Partovich

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Submissions

Racquetball Magazine welcomes submissions from our members and readers. If you have an idea for an article, you may propose it by email to: *magazine@usra.org*. All submissions are subject to editing.

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Quarterly Production Schedule

Issue	Copy DUE	Ads DUE	~ Release
Spring	JAN 1	FEB 1	MAR 30
Summer	APR 1	MAY 1	JUN 30
Fall	JUL 1	AUG 1	SEP 30
Winter	OCT 1	NOV 1	DEC 30

CORRECTION: A line was dropped from the bottom of pg.4 in the last issue. The omitted text should have read ... [Connor Laffey] ... "is also a certified referee and instructor and 4-time All American."

Brian Pineda and Charlie Pratt celebrate after winning the Classic Racquet division (using those very same wooden frames!) at National Doubles. Photo: Roby Partovich.



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USA RACQUETBALL MISSION STATEMENT

USA Racquetball, recognized by the United States Olympic Committee as the National Governing Body for the sport, is committed to our members and the growth of racquetball from recreational play to international competition.

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June 24-28, 2015 | Stockton, CA

UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Championships

October 7-11, 2015 | Minneapolis, MN

U.S. National Team Qualifiers & Process

USA Racquetball has released the 2015-16 U.S. National Team Qualification Process that will define the 2015 Pan Am Games delegation. The revised qualification process includes:

Singles Players (in order of qualification)

#1 American on the IRT and LPRT Tours

#2 American on the IRT and LPRT Tours

National Singles U.S. Team Qualifier Champions

#3 American on the IRT and LPRT Tours

National Singles U.S. Team Qualifier Runners-Up

Intercollegiate #1 Gold Singles Division Champions

Doubles Players (in order of qualification)

National Doubles U.S. Team Qualifier Champions

National Doubles U.S. Team Qualifier Runners-Up

All appointments to the 2015-16 U.S. National Team will run from June 1, 2015 through May 31, 2016. Pro Tour qualifiers are based on rankings following the last event that concludes prior to June 1. Added details can be found on USARacquetball.com.

Interested in hosting a national event? Commitment by two support groups is required: that of the host facility and a local organizing committee. One or more local agencies responsible for the promotion of sporting events (i.e. Convention & Visitors Bureau, City or State Sports Corporations, Chamber of Commerce, etc.) should also be involved for additional support. Download a bid packet at USARacquetball.com > Championships > Host a USA Racquetball Championship.



FROM THE
Executive Director

By Steve Czarnecki, Executive Director
USA Racquetball

Together

We Are Racquetball

USA Racquetball exists for the sole purpose of promoting the sport of racquetball. Viewed from a non-profit standpoint, it is the basis for all of the charitable work that drives us every day. You – our own constituents – helped to craft this very clear, updated mission statement:

USA Racquetball, recognized by the United States Olympic Committee as the National Governing Body for the sport, is committed to our members and the growth of racquetball from recreational play to international competition.

Together, we shape Racquetball ... by focusing on numerous programs, including many that offer no financial gain to USA Racquetball whatsoever. From writing and interpreting the rules, to certifying instructors and referees, managing the National and Junior National Teams, overseeing the Hall of Fame, bestowing Annual Awards and even operating a college scholarship program – everything we do is for the good of the sport and the enjoyment of its players.

Together, we organize Racquetball ... from the ability to compete in National Championships and local sanctioned events, to player rankings and even secondary accident insurance and partner discounts, there are many tangible benefits of USA Racquetball membership. But for many, knowing that membership makes you an integral part of a larger community, in a way that helps support major initiatives in the sport, is even more worthwhile.

Together, we guide Racquetball ... since our greatest strength comes from you - and the many thousands of members just like you - who also love the sport for so many great reasons. As a member-driven organization, you select the leaders who govern, strategize, and set the direction for your national governing body.

For all of these unifying reasons, we now embrace the term - **Together, We Are Racquetball** - to better define who we are as a community with tremendous growth potential.

To help recognize some of the initiatives that propel our sport into the future, I'm also excited to announce these new columns, several of which debut in this issue:

To help recognize some of the initiatives that propel our sport into the future, I'm excited to announce new columns, beginning with this issue.

- First Serve focuses on junior programming that is so critical to the sport's future
- RBU reports on collegiate activity that helps to engage players for a lifetime
- Nice Shot! shares great reader images that capture the fast, fun, fitness of our sport
- We Are Racquetball spotlights the dynamic people and personalities we all enjoy
- This Just In compiles broadcast media, print reports and articles about players, along with breaking tournament news
- Match Point features a great local club or tournament facility

I am thankful for the many ways our members and supporters help us promote racquetball each and every day, like:

- *Selecting a full membership over a limited event membership*
- *Signing up players, family and friends as FREE eMembers*
- *Playing in sanctioned events*
- *Volunteering for local, state and national racquetball organizations*
- *Showcasing the best players in the world*
- *Becoming certified referees and sharing Rules knowledge with others*
- *Introducing new players to our sport*
- *Financially contributing to the programs of USA Racquetball*

So please take on the challenge to do your part and join the entire USA Racquetball family on this journey. Together, we can make a difference in the future of our sport. Together, We Are Racquetball.

2014 DONOR RECOGNITION

If only two things are certain (death and taxes!), racquetball players enjoy a unique ability to offset both, by staying fit and healthy having fun AND reducing their tax burden through charitable giving. When you donate to USA Racquetball – and take a qualified deduction – you complete an important cycle that paves the way for continued growth in the sport you love while lowering the bottom line of your annual tax return. Win. Win.

Everyone here on the Annual Donor List “gets it” ... and we appreciate the confidence shown by the increasing numbers of those who take part. We plan to do great things with your help!



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Support the U.S. Adult and Junior National Teams with a tax-deductible contribution today. Your support is vital to the players and coaches as they prepare to represent the United States in international competition. Funds are primarily used for travel expenses, entry fees, and training.

Donations of \$100 or more ... made in 2015 to the TEAM USA CHALLENGE ... *will be doubled* by the group of generous Team Benefactors at right, who have each pledged up to \$2,500 to support the cause. With your support, the USA Racquetball family can raise more than \$30,000 for your U.S. National Teams!

TEAM USA CHALLENGE BENEFACTORS

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Cheryl Kirk & Kit Lawson

Eric & Lydia Muller • Chris Poucher

For the first time under the TEAM USA CHALLENGE, donations will be used to support direct travel costs of U.S. Junior National Team members attending the Junior World Championships!

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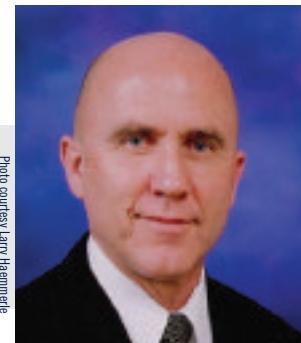


Photo courtesy Larry Haemmerle

FROM THE President

By Larry Haemmerle, President
USA Racquetball Board of Directors

TOGETHER, WE ARE RACQUETBALL

In this issue, Executive Director Steve Czarnecki shares a new term we'll be using: ***Together, We Are Racquetball***. He explained the various functions of USA Racquetball, particularly those that contribute positively to our sport. More profoundly, I feel that *Together, We Are Racquetball* emphasizes one of the more attractive aspects of our sport, the overall community. Over the decades, I've seen many players leave, only to return five to ten years later. Almost to a person, they all have indicated they most missed the camaraderie and sense of community our sport provides.

Recently, I took a trip to California to visit family. As always, I checked the USA Racquetball tournament website to see if any events were being held in the vicinity of my stay. I was very pleased to see that the Southern California State Junior Championships were scheduled nearby. My wife and I decided to swing by and visit, since we always enjoy seeing junior players in competition.

We lived in California for many years, so we were also hoping to see some familiar faces from the past. In many ways, it was as if we had never left. Debbie Tisinger-Moore and Randy Lam were on the desk (a sight we had seen at many prior tournaments), and a grinning Brett Elkins was there cheering on his kids.

We were also very happy to see Jon Dunn walking towards us with a big smile on his face. He also had his kids entered into the tournament and was enjoying the competition. As Jon and I had competed against each other in a few long-ago tournaments

(I use the term "competed" loosely; against Jon and Greg Solis in doubles, I think my partner and I only took one game off the pair), we enjoyed updating each other. I was very excited to hear that Jon was starting to play again. When I asked him about the comeback, he shared that what he missed most about not playing was all of the friends he used to see nearly every weekend.

If there is one constant in our sport, it is change. Over the decades we've been through many transitions, and I am sure that we'll face many more.

I feel it's important to embrace change and constantly evolve to meet the challenges of the future. Some change is positive and some is uncomfortable. However, I believe our close-knit community of players is one of our greatest strengths, one that must continue to flourish and grow. We

should all value our long-time partners and friends within the sport while we continue to develop new ones. That's why I agree, wholeheartedly, that ***Together, We Are Racquetball!***

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Get the Latest Racquetball
News, Notices, and Tips for
FREE as an eMember.

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GUDINAS NAMED US JUNIOR NATIONAL TEAM HEAD COACH

Following a national search, USA Racquetball recently named Cheryl Gudinas as the Head Coach of the U.S. Junior National Team. After former longtime Head Coach Kelley Beane stepped down in 2014, Gudinas had served in an interim capacity and has now been appointed to a two-year term as Head Coach.

"We are very pleased to have a proven champion like Cheryl lead our young players in international competition," remarked Larry Haemmerle, USA Racquetball President. "Cheryl has demonstrated her passion for developing top-level juniors and is well-liked and respected by both players and parents."

Gudinas, who resides in Naperville, Illinois, is a 21-year veteran of the U.S. National Team and has competed in dozens of international championships worldwide. Her many accomplishments include three World Championships singles titles and two Pan American Games singles gold medals. She is currently the second-ranked American on the LPRT, and has served as an Assistant Coach of the U.S. National Junior Team for more than 15 years.

"I am overjoyed to be selected as National Junior Team coach. I am so eager to carry on the tradition of great training camps, positive relationships with the athletes and parents, and wonderful experiences and competition at the World Championships," remarked Gudinas. "The coaches and kids will be working hard to bring the gold back to the USA. I must say also that I am very fortunate to have been guided by Coach Kelley Beane, who has been most instrumental in my career."



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"I love the Pro Penn Green ball. The fast crisp action off my racquet helped me win GOLD Medals at the 2011 Pan American Games and 2012 World Championships. No other brand compares to Penn!"

Paola Longoria

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Rocky Carson



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The Highlands Ranch Recreation Center offers a perfect atmosphere for great competition and plenty of fun. Take in special events and parties to make the most of the experience, including your chance to recognize the game's greats at the Annual Awards and Hall of Fame Induction ceremony.

The Road to Toronto

This event will help identify the Men's and Women's U.S. National Team members who may represent the United States at the 2015 Pan Am Games.

VIP Treatment

USA Racquetball Lifetime Members, National Team Members and other special guests enjoy wonderful VIP hospitality, including expedited check-in. Become a Lifetime Member today or purchase a pass to experience these first-rate benefits.

Hall of Fame Induction & Annual Awards

Experience the best evening in racquetball as Sudsy Monchik is inducted into the Hall of Fame. Annual award recipients and the legends of the sport will also be recognized and celebrated.

New! Awards/Prize Money

National Team Qualifying Divisions

1st Place - \$1,000

Commemorative Gold Coin

Qualify for U.S. National Team

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Qualify for U.S. National Team

All Divisions

1st - 4th Place - Newly Designed Medals

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Be sure to explore all that Colorado has to offer. From scenic drives, hikes in national parks, professional sports, whitewater rafting, skiing, and casino gaming to world-class restaurants and bars, Denver provides access to it all. Find more trip planning information at VisitDenver.com.

Extend your stay through May 27 at The Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs, for the special rate of \$290, by mentioning USA Racquetball.

Colorado Rockies Tickets

Take in a Colorado Rockies game at Coors Field on Tuesday, May 19, with fellow National Singles participants for a special group price.

NEW! Classic Racquet Divisions

Have some fun and go back in time with the new Classic Racquet divisions. Racquet length is limited to 18.5 inches. Break out the old duds and compete for the best dressed in the divisions. Don't have a classic racquet? Hit up your local thrift store or borrow one from the Championship desk.

USA Racquetball Membership

This National Championship is hosted

for USA Racquetball members only. All participants must be current USA Racquetball members.

Championship Qualifiers

All participants under the age of 50 must compete in a qualifier (2015 USAR Regional, National Intercollegiate Championships, and State Singles Championship using a Penn ball) or purchase a \$25 waiver.

Official Ball

Penn is the Official Ball of USA Racquetball and the ProPenn Green ball will be used in all matches.

Rules and Eyewear

USA Racquetball Official Rules will govern competition, including the mandatory use of protective eyewear tested to impact standards. It is the player's responsibility to ensure that their eyewear conforms with the standard in Rule 2.5 (a).

Eligibility

Only U.S. Citizens or individuals who have an active application for Citizenship may compete in the U.S. Team Qualifying divisions; all other divisions are open to U.S. Citizens and residents. For age division competition, players must meet the age requirement as of the first day of competition.

EARN

Referees with up-to-date certification will receive \$15 per match, others will receive \$10. Visit USARacquetball.com to learn about certification.

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EARLY BIRD BENEFITS

Players who enter by the April 24 Early Bird deadline will receive a can of Penn racquetballs and be entered in a drawing for great prizes.

Entries must be received by USA Racquetball or made online by the deadline dates. Payment is due at the time of entry. USA Racquetball reserves the right to close entries of any division at any time. U.S. Team Qualifying divisions will remain open through at least May 8. Refunds of entry and referee fees (less a \$10.00 service fee) are available for withdrawals on or prior to Friday, May 15, 2015.

Download a print application for complete details and links to more special offers, or go direct to online registration at USARacquetball.org > National Championships > National Singles.

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Room block rates include complimentary breakfast and wi-fi.

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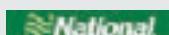
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Tour Grows in Mexico

FANBASE INCREASES SOUTH OF THE BORDER

Story by Eric Mueller

Racquetball has always been a popular sport in Mexico and boasts two of the top players on the International Racquetball Tour, #3-ranked Alvaro Beltran and #4-ranked Daniel De La Rosa. Their high-profile success underscores the IRT goal of further expanding tour presence south of the border.

"Right now we're really focused on Mexico because the entire country is so passionate about the game, and we don't really have as strong a presence in Mexico as we should," observed Adam Karp, former IRT pro and current IRT Vice President of Event Development.

Mexico, and all of South America, offers great potential for the sport, along with lots of pageantry and fan support. "Each tournament we go down there for is not just a tournament, it's an event," said #2-ranked Rocky Carson about playing in Mexico. "The media covers it very well. The event usually has opening, closing, and award ceremonies. They really cherish the time they have the pros down there."

Currently Mexico hosts tour stops in Juarez and San Luis Potosí. Neither is a Tier One tournament, but both have been expanding and have their sights set on reaching T1 status. Of the two, Juarez hopes to become the first new T1 stop on the 2015 season lineup.

Stop levels hosted by Juarez have increased from T3 in August 2013 and February 2014, to T2 last October at the Racquetball De 1RA 2014. "It's grown over the three years we've started with that event," Karp continued. "When we started three years ago there was a lot less prize money, it wasn't nearly as big of an event. We had a couple of pros compete down there and that started to generate momentum. Those tournament directors were able



Fans packed the stands for the IRT San Luis Open Nitropiso Tier 2 held October 29-November 2 in San Luis Potosí, Mexico. Submitted by Tournament Director Jesus Navarro Avalos.

to go out and build on the previous year's success and raise more money and get more sponsors. It was kind of a snowball effect."

The Racquetball De 1Ra 2014 featured top Mexicans #12-ranked Alejandro Landa, #28-ranked Polo Gutierrez and Beltran along with Americans Carson, #5-ranked José Rojas, and #7-ranked Chris Crowther. The final saw Tijuana native Beltran defeat Carson in three games after besting Gutierrez in the previous four-game semifinal.

Tournament Director Salgab Renteria said the matches were conducted with professionalism and the players gave their all. "I felt it was an unforgettable experience," he said. "For the first time in many years, top players assembled in this discipline for an event that took place in two sports venues." Renteria added that the fans were very satisfied with the event, including players and spectators who came from Chihuahua, San Luis Potosí, and Cuauhtémoc.

San Luis Potosí has held T3 tournaments the past two years. In 2013, Tournament Director Jesus Navarro Avalos' goal was to host the biggest racquetball fiesta in Mexico, and they extended invitations to a lot of players. This year the city hosted the San Luis Open Nitropiso, which is still in talks to grow the tournament into a Tier One. Even with a smaller budget, the lineup still featured local top pros De La Rosa of Chihuahua, Beltran, and Landa.

Avalos added another goal of providing an outlet to showcase and teach racquetball, as well as provide children with role models. "We didn't just do sports activities, the players came and taught the kids how to protect our planet and showed our kids that they're humans with a lot of things to give."

The IRT continues to make a mark on Mexico's racquetball landscape, evident by tournaments in Juarez and San Luis Potosí that benefit local communities while increasing the visibility of the sport and the men's pro tour.



Eric Mueller started working with the IRT after joining the 2014 United-Healthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championships Media Team, where he garnered coverage for top pros and amateurs in their hometown media while also helping to provide updates during the event. With a degree in journalism from the University of Minnesota, Mueller also brings experience in sports reporting and news writing for newspapers like the Pioneer Press in St. Paul as well as the Southwest Journal and the Downtown Journal in Minneapolis. He has also worked in marketing for the St. Paul Saints professional baseball team and for Gopher Sports Marketing at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.



SCHEDULE

April 9-11	T1 Long Beach Open Doubles	Long Beach, CA
April 30 - May 3	T1 Stockton Pro/Am	Stockton, CA
May 14-17	T1 Pro Kennex Tournament of Champions	Portland, OR

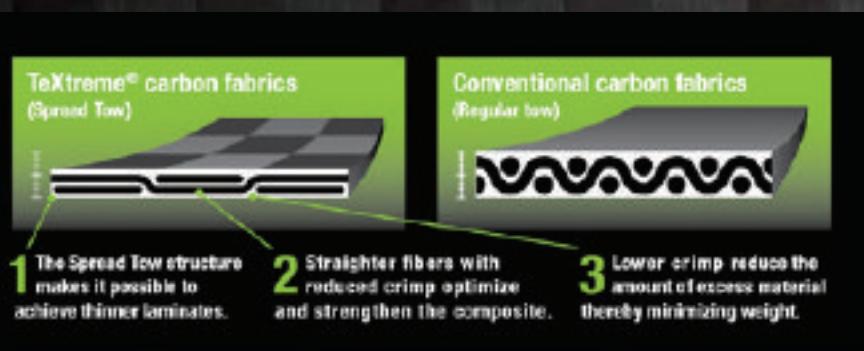
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IRT Head Referee **CHARLIE PRATT** Makes the Call

By Jen Sinclair Johnson | Photo by Restrung

After refereeing all of the Tour's major matches for the last several years, Charlie Pratt, IRT player and official referee, had his breakout pro performance in the semis of the 2014 Florida Spring Break IRT ProAm. Pratt maintains that years of dedication and consistency contributed to his success.

"It takes time to build those things up and balance them correctly," Pratt explains of his game. "It's a process. Most players will spend years on Tour without having any huge success. It's not going to happen all at once. You get out what you put in. That holds truer than anything. When you win you earn it, and when you lose you deserve it."

In Florida, Pratt upset #5 ranked Ben Croft and #3 Alvaro Beltran before #2 Rocky Carson defeated him in the following round. "I didn't get overly excited because I have beat Alvaro before and have won my share of matches. I had a good day, but my tournament wasn't over. I ended that tournament the same way I always do, by asking 'what's the next step? What do I improve upon?' It wasn't a big deal to me like some people may expect but more like somewhere I believe I can and should be. I felt more like it would have been nice to get to the finals rather than 'I am so overjoyed to have made it to the semis'."

The Portland, Oregon native started playing at age 6 and quickly found himself immersed in the sport's dynamics at his local athletic club. The hotbed atmosphere of the area no doubt helped fuel his passion, as he found himself surrounded by a thriving racquetball culture.

Perhaps one of Pratt's most foreshadowing tournaments came at age 10 when he swept his age division without dropping a game. He also refereed 30 matches that weekend. "I remember them paying \$5 a match to ref and I really wanted a pair of Oakley sunglasses, so I refereed 30 matches, plus the pro player exhibition."

When asked about what makes a good referee, Pratt notes that having good eyesight and an understanding of the level of play are two of the most important factors. "I am lucky and have always been blessed with very good vision. I have seen plenty of refs who know every rule in the book who still make terrible calls based on vision or not understanding a player's capabilities."

In addition to his own scheduled matches, his tour responsibilities can include officiating for eight hours over four quarterfinals. The hardest aspect isn't the long hours, speed of the game, or getting his view blocked. Even the grief handed out by players doesn't affect him, since he understands the level of frustration any call might cause in the heat of the moment. He's pragmatic about his view of others, in relation to himself.

"Reffing has shown me the bigger picture of being honest in the court. I know a lot of players will disagree with me because they do not care. It's their job to play and mine to ref, but for me it's important on and off the court to be honest. That is a big part of life for me: being honest with myself."

Pratt is also known to be an outspoken advocate on diet and nutrition and was at one time a strict vegetarian, possibly the only one ever ranked in the IRT Top 10. After learning more about how the production and cultivation of food creates serious economic, social, moral, and health issues here in the U.S., and although he's recently modified his diet, he still believes passionately that what one chooses to eat is a very important decision.

"I became a vegetarian as a boycott from the meat industry for reasons of cruelty and pollution. It turned into me not thinking just about how diet could help me as an athlete, but how I fit into the bigger picture of what I believed in as far as food goes." He admits his choice sometimes makes it harder to bulk up and get stronger, but that he also feels an overall sense of wellbeing.

It's not difficult to understand why Charlie Pratt is considered one of the more introspective players on Tour. His thoughtful, pensive demeanor and willingness to engage IRT fans in subjects from racquetball to farming has earned him many supporters. He chuckles when responding to views that others may have of him, "I honestly don't know what people think about me. Sometimes I think they imagine that I roadtrip across the country in a Winnebago for weeks on end. Hey! I fly like 80% of the time!"

It is true, however, that Pratt would much rather spend his time inside a tent than a hotel, and that he views tournaments as a way to explore his country. The #11-ranked pro hopes to continue to climb the ladder and play for a long time, understanding what it takes to reach the next level of play after his semifinal debut last season. "It was a growing experience for me for sure, and I am ready to continue the success."

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GRAPHENE



NEW SEASON UPSETS YEAR END SURPRISES

Story by TJ Baumbaugh & Andy Kulback
Photos by Ken Fife

Since our last update, the LPRT has marked several firsts and fifths. As featured on the cover of the Winter issue, Paola Longoria set a UnitedHealthcare US OPEN singles record with her fifth career title, by defeating first-time US OPEN finalist Maria Jose Vargas. In another US OPEN first, Pro Doubles was on the main stage, with that debut title going to the team of Paola Longoria and Veronica Sotomayor.

Just one week later, Rhonda Rajsich won the LPRT Tier 1 event in Stockton, California, after an extremely hard-fought, seesaw, five-game battle of 9,-5, 12,-5, 4. Rajsich played aggressive, error-free racquetball to upset top-ranked Longoria and break one of the longest winning streaks on record. Ironically, Rhonda had been the last person to defeat Paola, back in May 2011, at the same Stockton Pro Am, on the very same show court.

Undeniably, Paola Longoria's streak remains one for the record books. She went undefeated for three and a half years, earning 37 consecutive tour wins and 152 consecutive match wins, all while losing only 24 games total. Not only did she raise the bar of LPRT competition, but she has also increased the number of tour stops and prize monies, with three Grand Slams in Mexico the first half of this season. She also leads the league in sponsor endorsements and has increased the sport's visibility and popularity throughout Mexico.

The Paola Longoria Invitational was a red carpet event, successfully run by Paola, her family, and a full team of sponsors and staff. Twenty-seven LPRT pros from six different countries traveled to Monterrey, NL Mexico to compete for a purse totaling \$47,000. In singles, the top four seeds entered the semi-finals as expected, with #3 Rhonda Rajsich making the final after an 80-minute tiebreaker advance over #2 Maria Jose Vargas.

Surrounded by her local fans, #1 Paola Longoria did not lose a game in coming out on top of both singles and doubles brackets. In doubles action, first-time finalists Veronica Sotomayor and Maria Paz Muñoz (both of Ecuador) defeated #1 seeds Rajsich/Vargas in a semifinal tiebreaker, before losing the final to Longoria and #4 ranked Samantha Salas Solis in two games.

Ending the calendar year and closing out the first half of the season was the 23rd Annual Christmas Classic in Arlington, Virginia, where Maria Jose Vargas won her first tour title. She's been a finalist multiple times in early seasons (she was also Rookie of the Year), but this time she pulled out a 4-game final win over Rhonda Rajsich by battling back after a rough first game loss to take the next three. In her best English and with a huge smile, she took a moment to thank her coach and sponsors, then paired up with Rajsich to play the finals of the pro doubles division.

With Longoria unable to attend, even more career firsts were noted in Arlington, where scholarship winner Alexandra Herrera earned her first semifinal berth after defeating top seeds Cristina Amaya and Cheryl Gudinas along the way. Herrera also paired up with Samantha Salas Solis in pro doubles for another debut in that final, losing to Vargas/Rajsich in an 11-7 tiebreaker.

For all the latest news, schedule, scores, and photos check out LPRTour.com and our Facebook page.



2015 SCHEDULE

DATE	TOURNAMENT	LOCATION	LEVEL
April 17-19	Mile High Pro/Am	Denver, CO	Tier 1
April 24-26	Battle at the Alamo	San Antonio, TX	Tier 1
May 15-17	Ektelon LPRT Pro Nationals	Herndon, VA	Tier 1



TOP: LPRT scholarship recipient Alexandra Herrera had two "firsts" in Arlington.

BELOW: Rhonda Rajsich takes to the air for Maria Jose Vargas' shot in Minneapolis.



ASHAWAY SIGNS VARGAS

Ashaway Racket Strings has signed rising star Maria Jose Vargas to its roster of sponsored players. Since turning pro in 2012, Bolivian-born Vargas has enjoyed a meteoric rise through the Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour ranks. She was named Rookie of the Year by the LPRT in 2013 and finished the 2013-14 season ranked #3 in the world. Although terms of the agreement were not disclosed, it was noted that Vargas is a dedicated user of Ashaway's PowerKill® 17 String.

"Maria is the first real up-and-coming international star we have signed to our racquetball sponsorship roster," said Ashaway's Steve Crandall. "She's an aggressive physical player who hits the ball hard, and she will be an excellent ambassador for our PowerKill strings. She's also a national hero in Bolivia, which is a key area for growth in the rapidly expanding South American racquetball market. So it's all good, and we're very pleased to sponsor her."

For her part, Vargas has been, "a big fan of Ashaway strings for many years," and is "very excited to partner up with such a great company." She added that after switching to PowerKill 17, she has been, "able to generate more power than ever while maintaining incredible control," and also breaks fewer strings, "which makes me more confident when I play."

Vargas capped her amateur career by playing for Bolivia in the 2011 Pan American Games, earning bronze medals in women's singles and the women's team competitions, and by winning the 2012 World Junior Racquetball Championship in Girls 18-. As a professional, the Cliff Swain protégé has won the 2014 Pan American Championships in singles, and earned the silver medal in doubles competition with Véronique Guillemette. At the 2014 World Championships, Vargas was a bronze medalist, losing to #1 ranked Paola Longoria in the semifinals. Most recently, she recorded another tour win at the New Jersey Open stop.



They were promised ice fishing! (L to R: Jean Halahan, Lynn Fonseca, Stacy Cato, Cindy Tilbury, Marie Gomar, courtesy Tina Marchie)



Not So "Frozen" IN MINNESOTA

By Kendra Tutsch

For players at the 26th Annual Women's Senior Master Racquetball Championships, "visit sunny Minnesota this January" wasn't all that crazy after all! The Twin Cities event, held at Fridley Lifetime Fitness Club and Lifetime Fitness venues, enjoyed relatively warm weather and blue skies to go along with plenty of great courts and full-service amenities.

The tournament kicked off with a fun doubles Racquet for the Cure fundraiser, which raised over \$200 through player donations. Another long-time tradition is the silent auction, featuring merchandise generously provided by Wilson Racquetball, as well as items donated by other organizations and individuals. This year \$800 was raised for the USA Racquetball Collegiate scholarship program and the U.S. Racquetball Foundation as we pay it forward to help ensure the future of our sport.

Tournament Director John Wilinski and committee member Terry Rogers conducted a brief player meeting to explain rules, format, and the new competitive doubles divisions. It takes many volunteers to schedule court time, keep the scores and R2 updated, plus organize special events. In addition to the WSMRA committee of Terry Rogers, Merijean Kelley, and Paula Sperling, thanks go to players Kathy Zasucha, Nidia Funes, Pat Meyer, and Carol Gellman, who provided invaluable assistance when not on the courts.

Photographer extraordinaire Tina Marchie also set up the group photo and took pictures and videos all weekend.

One highlight of the weekend was a visit from Dr. Bud Muehleisen, well known as the "father of racquetball" and a true legend in the sport. "Dr. Bud" graciously spent time mingling with the players, giving some tips and posing

for pictures. Shannon Wright and Kathleen Klukas, from the Minneapolis-based U.S. Racquetball Foundation, also came by to watch the action and socialize.

A short banquet program on Saturday evening recognized many contributors, as well as those players who traveled the farthest: Marie Gomar from Guatemala and Renee Fish from Florida; and the largest player rosters, Minnesota with 19, and New York with 7. Mildred Gwinn and Stacy Cato received special "snowflake" awards for the puffiest coats, and dancing tunes were spun by "DJ John," revealing another of our TD's many talents!

The great party did not deter players from outstanding finals play on Sunday, and the tough weekend of competition wrapped up with 45+ Doubles and 55+ Singles as the last titles to be decided. A six-team playoff in the 45+ doubles saw #1 seeded Jean Halahan (NY)/Lynn Fonseca (GA) defeat #2 seed Cindy Tilbury (CA)/Marie Gomar (GT). Cindy then went right back on the court to split a close final match with Linda Moore (NE), then take the 55+ singles win on total points. Other debut WSMRA doubles champions decided on total points were: Cheryl Jones (MN)/Jessica Kisling (MN) over Carla Phillips (PA)/Vikki Pickard (PA) in 35+; Joleen Price (MN)/Page Kern (MN) over Judy Redding (NY)/Kathy Zasucha (NY) in 55+; and Merijean Kelley (CA)/Nidia Funes (CA) over Paula Sperling (NM)/Carol Gellman (NM) in 65+.

Singles brackets were all decided on total points. In 35 B/C Vikki Pickard (PA) defeated Jessica Kisling (MN); In 45 B/C it was Mary Softing (MN) over Robbie Mack (WI) and in 55 B/C Joanna Nache (NC) took first over Pat Meyer (NY). In 45+ Jean Halahan (NY) did not drop a game and won over Marie Gomar (GT); the same went for Kim Whalen (WI) who went undefeated in taking first over Cheryl Jones (MN). Other singles winners were Stacie Cato (NC) in 40+, Marsha Berry (KY) over Susan Schatz (MN) in 60+; Terry Rogers (NV) over Paula Sperling (NM) in 65+; and Mildred Gwinn (NC) over Marquita Molina (CA) in 70+.

The addition of doubles worked out very well, so the new divisions will definitely remain in the mix going forward, and – as always – both veterans and first-timers said they'd be definitely be back in 2016. The 27th Annual WSMRA Championships will be held January 15-17, 2016, in Arizona at the Tucson Racquet and Fitness Club. Until then, thanks again to everyone who made the tournament a success, and especially to Terri Graham and Chris Eron of Wilson Racquetball for their longtime generous support!

For more pictures, information and updates, visit wsmra.com and our Facebook page.



Group picture (Courtesy Tina Marchie)



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MORE WIN.



Racquetball RANCH

by Brad Tursky | Photos by December Rain Photography

Imade the decision to build Racquetball Ranch after a one-day shootout in St. Louis where I fell in love with outdoor racquetball. I searched all over Tennessee trying to find courts I could play on, without any luck. I decided the only choice I had to feed my new obsession was to build two courts on my seven acre horse farm.

It started out as a small-scale project, but the further I got into it, the nicer and nicer I wanted to make them. By the time we finished construction, we ended up with some of the nicest courts in the country. Add in the fact that they are located on a beautiful horse farm and it truly makes Racquetball Ranch a unique and unforgettable venue to play outdoor.

We successfully hosted two sanctioned tournaments in 2014, the first being just days after the courts were finished. Outdoor is new to Tennessee, but word is spreading and the outdoor community continues to grow. Find Racquetball Ranch on Facebook to see even more pictures, information and updates.

This Spring I plan to host the first annual WORStock Tournament, featuring a Pro stop on May 8-10, with a prize pool of around \$3,500 for the Pro and Open divisions. Players and fans will have the option to camp on the property for a truly unique experience, and the event will be limited to 12 people/teams per division.



SUMMER PREVIEW

JULY I By Geoff Osberg

The 2015 WOR Championships are fast approaching, and will take place at Marina Park in beautiful Huntington Beach, California, July 9-12. The WOR Championships is the fastest and longest running outdoor event and brings in all the top men and women, indoor and outdoor, pro and amateur players – every year. Search R2Sports to sign up, then make your plans to be at the beach for some great play and great times with everyone who enjoys the sport you love, in the sun!

AUGUST I By Darryl Hunter & Greg Lewerenz

In Downtown Detroit, Belle Isle Park is the largest island park in the U.S., spanning 985 acres, bordered by five miles of beautiful shoreline with a view of the Canadian skyline. There's a whole lot more than just great outdoor racquetball on Belle Isle, with a nature zoo for your wild side, a conservatory, an aquarium, a yacht club, a museum, and a golf course. With plenty of activities for the children, including the nation's oldest

Giant Slide, this is definitely a family weekend. All that, plus you'll experience the best outdoor racquetball on the planet – guaranteed - or the tournament directors will refund your entry fee! Tournaments are scheduled on every third weekend in the months of June and July, capped by the National Long Wall Championship in mid-August. Contact TDs Darryl Hunter & Russell Baker for more details, and sign up on R2.



L-R: Greg Solis, Ben Croft. Photo courtesy Stephen Fitzsimons.

Hall of Famer Cliff Swain said it best in his blog, "... A great thing about outdoor ball at Belle Isle is that if your buddy or spouse likes your company ... but doesn't like hanging out inside a gym all weekend like us racquetball addicts do ... they can bring a beach chair, grab a drink, sit in the sun and watch!"

SEPTEMBER I By Randy Lam

The 2015 3WallBall World Championships will return to Las Vegas for the sixth straight year, September 23-27. New things are being added to the lineup, so stay tuned to Facebook, Twitter, and 40by20.com for all the updates. R2 registration is open and ready to take your entry [TID=13348], so make your plans to be at the biggest and best vacation on the Las Vegas Strip this year.



NMRA RACKET WARRIORS

By Leon Jackson, NMRA Secretary | Photos by Bruce Adams



L-R: Patrick Gibson of Fort Worth, Texas; Cindy Tilbury and Rick Betts from Malibu, California.



Ruben Gonzalez of Hilton Head, South Carolina.

Are you a Racket Warrior, 45+ years of age, looking for more court time and socializing than you get at a traditional tournament? Then come join the National Masters Racquetball Association! The NMRA sponsors three major Championships each year: a National in March, an International in July, and a Doubles-only in December. All are full round-robin format and self-referreed, which ensures that you're never eliminated and that sportsmanship and friendship are more important than winning.

Along with the legendary Ruben Gonzalez in the Pro category, three other Racket Warriors were inducted into the NMRA Hall of Fame in 2014. The slate of new Hall of Famers included: Gonzalez (Pro Athlete), Patrick Gibson (Athlete), Cindy Tilbury (Athlete) and Rick Betts (Contributor). You can see all of

the presentations on NMRA.info, where you'll also find some delightful old pictures of our inductees and a complete list of NMRA Hall of Famers.

The 2015 NMRA National Championship recently wrapped up in Overland Park, Kansas, with over 100 entrants fielded in age divisions from 45 to 85. As always, each division was very competitive, with many matches won by a single point.

The Athletic Club of Overland Park once again provided an exceptional venue and superb daily hospitality. The Friday night banquet was outstanding, with awards, videos, photo slideshows, memorial tributes, tournament highlights, and comedic moments.

The NMRA International Championship is scheduled for mid-July in Denver, Colorado, and is shaping up to be another fantastic tournament. More detailed information is available at NationalMastersRacquetball.org and registration will open online at R2sports.com soon.

Competition at NMRA Championships is offered in singles, doubles and mixed doubles, with divisions offered in five-year increments starting with age 45+. Exceptions to those rules apply to the year-end Doubles-Only Tournament, which omits singles and begins fielding players at 40+. Play always begins on Wednesday (Thursday for doubles-only) and ends on Saturday of the scheduled event. The players

are friendly, competition is fierce, skill levels are high, and you'll play two to four matches each day. It is a lot of racquetball, and if you enjoy playing in different locales, NMRA tournaments will be a great fit for you.

Another aspect of the NMRA events is their family orientation. We welcome family members and their guests. Our daily hospitality, lunch, and Friday night banquet are legendary on the tournament circuit.

If you're thinking about entering a NMRA event for the first time, you won't be required to join the organization up front (although we hope you will!); however, you must be a member in good standing of USA Racquetball. But even if you're no longer actively playing or interested in tournament competition, think about supporting the future of masters' racquetball by joining online at nationalmastersracquetball.org/Join-NMRA.asp.

MILITARY RACQUETBALL FEDERATION



2014 MILITARY RACQUETBALL FEDERATION NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 32nd Street Navy Base hosted the 2014 MRF National Championships, with the help of expert tournament staffers Jack Hughes, Terry Rogers, and Dorcy Norton, who kept things moving. Matches were scheduled in round robin or pool play, offering plenty of competitive challenges for everyone.

Executive Director Steven Harper hosted the Saturday banquet, where certificates were presented to division winners. The MRF honored longtime participant Lam Le by presenting wife Holly Le with a plaque and renaming the Player of the Year award in his honor. This year's Lam Le Player of the Year award was presented to David Shaffer for his work in assisting the MRF with base activities, while Aaron Embry was recognized for his work with our wounded service members.

In addition to thanking our great lineup of players, special gratitude goes to MRF supporters E-Force, Ektelon, and RacquetWorld, along with tournament sponsors, SplatHead Racquetball and the National Fibromyalgia Research Association. Find a full list of winners and photos at militaryracquetball.com.

MRF TO HOST ADDITIONAL REHABILITATION CLINICS

The MRF will host Rehabilitative Racquetball Clinics from "Coast-to-Coast" on behalf of Disabled Service members and Wounded Warriors. A recent grant from the Department of Veteran Affairs now enables us to reach more injured service members nationwide and introduce them to a different form of rehabilitation.

Just recently, MRF has started rehabilitative clinics at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Washington, DC, with the help of Mr. Wayne Toyne and "Moses" Whitehurst (COL, US Army – ret); Richmond VA Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia, and assisted by Mr. Ray Williams; Sorrento Valley Racquetball Club, San Diego, California; and Windmill Park, Coconut Creek, Florida.

The VA's vision makes these clinics possible by funding stipends for instructors who teach on behalf of MRF. "This is a huge blessing because these stipends mean that we are able to provide some type of reimbursement to our instructors for their time," stated Steven Harper, Executive Director of MRF. "We're now placed at a higher standard to provide quality care in the clinics we host."

Additional instructors are being sought to help us reach our goal of impacting over 650 Disabled Veterans and Wounded Warriors nationwide in 2015. This can only happen with the support and vision of our racquetball family, so if you are interested in helping MRF with this venture, please contact us for more information.



Steven Harper and Aaron Embry, recognized for his support of RRCs in San Diego. Photo by Glenn Martineau.

2015 National Doubles Championships



Champions Rhonda Rajsich, Kim Waselenchuk, Jansen Allen and Jose Rojas.

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
SUN DEVIL RECREATION COMPLEX, TEMPE AZ

The 2015 U.S. National Doubles Championships were again hosted on the campus of Arizona State University in beautiful Tempe, Arizona, a location that receives near-perfect marks from participants. Who wouldn't love a retreat to the 75-degree weather that Tempe offers in February? In all, nearly 350 players representing more than 35 states competed in the championships.

New features this year included player hospitality on the pool deck and the unveiling of new USA Racquetball national championship medals for top finishers. In a separate debut, commemorative gold coins were also presented to the winners of the Team Qualifier divisions. Special thanks to USAR Board Member Chris Poucher for funding this new national recognition to honor our U.S. Team members.

On top of shiny new awards, this year's National Doubles offered added incentive for competitors in the National Team Qualifying divisions, who were vying for a chance to represent the U.S. at this summer's Pan American Games. This multi-sport Olympic-style competition is held once every four years and will take place in Toronto in July.

Both of the qualifying finals shaped up to contain familiar faces. On the women's side, nine-time National Doubles Champion Aimee Ruiz, along with partner Janel Tisinger, once again made it to the finals. The two-time defending champions faced well-known foes in six-time champion Kim Russell-Waselenchuk and partner Rhonda Rajsich, who had last earned the title in 2012.

Amy and Janel got off to a quick start with a 15-1 win in the first game. However the veterans did not go down without a fight, and Kim and Rhonda rallied to take the second game 15-10, then won a hard fought tiebreaker, 11-9, for the upset victory.

In the men's competition, defending champion Jose Rojas made his way back to the final - this time with new partner Jansen Allen. Also advancing was the 2014 runner-up team of Ben Croft and Thomas Fuhrmann, who found themselves in a position to avenge their previous year loss to Rojas and then-partner Rocky Carson. Here, too, Croft and Fuhrmann jumped out to a quick lead with a 15-5 win in the first game. The young team of Rojas and Allen fought back, however, with wins of 15-8 and 11-4.

Keep an eye on our U.S. National Doubles Champions as they prepare for the upcoming Pan American Games in July, and consider investing in their success through the Team USA Challenge at USARacquetball.com.



MEN'S U.S. TEAM QUALIFIER DIVISION

CHAMPIONS: JANSEN ALLEN / JOSE ROJAS

RUNNERS UP: BEN CROFT / THOMAS FUHRMANN

THIRD PLACE: JOSE DIAZ / MARCO ROJAS

DIVISION CHAMPIONS

OPEN	RICK WAGNER / ROB DE JESUS
24-	DANNY SARDINA / ZACHARY PATTERSON
25+	ANTHONY HERRERA / BRYAN CROSSER
30+	CHARLIE STALDER / DAMIAN ZAMORANO
35+	DARYLE UHRICH / RICK KOLL
40+	JEFF STARK / KEITH MINOR
45+	DOUG GANIM / TIM DOYLE
50+	RUSS BONANNO / RICHARD EISEMANN
55+	GILBERT CEPEDA / JIM DURHAM
60+	DAVE AZUMA / MARK BARON

65+ ERIC BARKEY / JON CHRIST
70+ JON WALKER / MIKE PAWKA
75+ JIM CALVIN / LEN CORTE
80+ DAVID FAUX / ROBERT RICE
CENTURION OPEN GILBERT CEPEDA / JIM DURHAM

ELITE KEN CHESHIRE / RAYMOND MAESTAS
A GIOVANNI LUCIANO / TERRY KISLING
B BRENT JOHNSON / MATT GAUTREAU
C ARTHUR MITRANO / JUAN DURAZO

CLASSIC RACQUET BRIAN PINEDA / CHARLIE PRATT

25+ A ARASH AFSHAR / DARIOUSH AFSHAR
30+ A CHRIS POUCHER / WILL COSTANZA
35+ A HERMAN DELUMA / GARY DESANTI
40+ A GIOVANNI LUCIANO / TERRY KISLING
45+ A RO BLACKWOOD / ALEX BAKER
50+ A CLINTON IMHOLTE / STEVE DUFOUR

55+ A MIKE ALDERSON / DENNIS RIGGS
60+ A ROBERT FRAZIER / TYRONE WHITE
65+ A DENNIS FARRELL / PAUL DINERMAN
CENTURION A BILL DELUCA / BILLY CANNON

30+ B JOHN PROVAN / JON RAKFIND
40+ B JAMES LAMONT / RUSS RANDOLPH
45+ B BOB ECK / JOE MASSA
50+ B JOHN FISCHLER / RICHARD AAL
60+ B RON SOUZA / STEPHEN MORGAN
65+ B DAN GREEN / KEITH VOGEL
CENTURION B RENE SAUCIER / TOM FARLEY

40+ C PETER BERGER / RUSS RANDOLPH
45+ C ADELAIDO MOLINA / RENE CORDERO
55+ C BRUCE ADAMS / LYNN STEPHENS
60+ C RICHARD HALPIN / STEVE MARKEY
CENTURION C/D RICHARD HALPIN / STEVE MARKEY



RUSS MANNINO

1947-2015

As many are already aware, there were two medical emergencies at National Doubles this year, with haunting similarities but very different outcomes. Two heart attacks struck players on adjacent courts, at the same time, on February 12.

Navy retiree and a long-time tournament director Glenn Cunningham was placed in a medically induced coma in intensive care, then subsequently revived and released to his family's care

to return home. On site, his doubles partner, Mitch Milewski, dedicated himself to helping Glenn and assisting his wife and daughter throughout the ordeal. John Scott helped perform life-saving CPR on Glenn. Glenn continues to recover back at home in Grants Pass, Oregon.

Unfortunately, Russ Mannino, of Temecula, California passed away that same day. This true pioneer had operated clubs and promoted the sport for more than 40 years – all the while watching his son Jason become a top touring pro and President of the International Racquetball Tour. More recently, Russ had shared his passion and in-depth knowledge as an on-air analyst and color commentator for the IRT Network. He had entered Men's 65+ with R.O. Carson, and the two celebrity dads were in the first round of their bracket on that Thursday.

Although we lost a real friend and champion in Russ, we know that he left us while doing something he loved, surrounded by many friends. In a special tribute at the event, Chris Evon shared her thoughts about "Remembering Russ ... Missing Russ."

We lost a great friend and racquetball icon when Russ Mannino passed away. We stand together because we loved him. We stand with his family and extended family - Fran Davis, Ruben Gonzalez, and others here tonight - to let them know they are close to our hearts.

What struck me when I came back to the club on Friday was how everyone wanted to share a story. They wanted to remember the last time they talked to Russ. They all seemed to be saying: Russ made me feel special, and I just want to talk about it.

Russ lived a racquetball life. Almost 30 years ago he owned one of the most successful clubs in New York. He coached three people who all held the title of the #1 player in the world: Ruben Gonzalez, Sudsy Monchik, and his son, Jason. He also coached Fran Davis to be a top woman pro player. He put bets on every match he played with these guys, and he could talk trash with the best of them. He made them all tough. He made them all great.

Fran captured it best when she said, "To know Russ is to love Russ!"

And Jason once told Mike Pawka, "My father is the definition of a man."

Russ became the voice of the IRT and wanted to see all levels of the sport grow - from juniors to the pros. Russ loved racquetball! But more importantly, he loved the friends he made through this sport. We miss him already.

Report compiled from staff and contributors quoted. Photo courtesy Victor Montanez III, a long-time east coast player and pro tour enthusiast, who captured Russ in one of his favorite places: the IRT broadcast booth.

WOMEN'S U.S. TEAM QUALIFIER DIVISION

CHAMPIONS: RHONDA RAJSICH / KIM RUSSELL-WASELENCHUK
RUNNERS UP: AIMEE RUIZ / JANEL TISINGER
THIRD PLACE: DANIELLE KEY / MICHELLE KEY

DIVISION CHAMPIONS

35+ FRAN TRANSFIGURACION / FRANCINE FULP
45+ SUE GOODWIN / TAMMARRIAN ROGERS
50+ CHRIS EVON / TERRI GRAHAM
55+ MARY LYONS / SUSAN PFAHLER
60+ TERRY ROGERS / WANDA COLLINS
65+ MARY LOU FURAUS / NIDIA FUNES
70+ MARQUITE MOLINA / MILDRED GWENN
CENTURION OPEN LAURA MORIN / LINDA MOORE

ELITE

A FRAN TRANSFIGURACION / MIMI MCCLOSKEY
B KERRI BROWN / SUSIE BOULANGER
C JOY WONG / MELIA BROOKS
30+ A KERRY STELLMACH / STEPHANIE BANKES
40+ A CJ HERCEG / WENDY MILLER
45+ A MELODY GORNO / THAO LE
50+ A KERRI GARCIA / NANCY GREEN
55+ A CHERYL JONES / KERRI GARCIA
45+ C KIM HOLDERNESS / NANCY BORTFELD

RESULTS – MIXED

Open AIMEE RUIZ / JANSEN ALLEN
25+ BRYAN CROSSER / JANEL TISINGER
30+ MIMI MCCLOSKEY / RICKY VILLANUEVA
35+ JONATHAN DUNN / MAE CHIN-VARON
40+ JONATHAN DUNN / MAE CHIN-VARON
45+ CINDY TILBURY / RICK BETTS
50+ LAURA FENTON KOVANDA / RICHARD EISEMANN

55+

60+
65+
70+
Centurion Open

A
B
C

30+ A
40+ A
50+ A
Centurion A

24- B
40+ B
50+ B
60+
Centurion B

RESULTS – WOMEN

CHRIS EVON / TIM HANSEN
GARY OLSON / WANDA COLLINS
DORY BOCANEGRAS / RICHARD BOCANEGRAS
FREDERICK ROE / NIDIA FUNES
GLENN BELL / MALIA BAILEY

DALE NEWMAN / MELISSA BENTLEY
PIERCE JOHNSTON / STEPHANIE BANKES
JAMES LAMONT / KIM HOLDERNESS

DALE NEWMAN / MELISSA BENTLEY
ARLENE SWINNEY / JASON CHURCHWARD
JANET SCHEFFER / RICHARD DEW
LAURA MORIN / STAN HAMPTON

PIERCE JOHNSTON / STEPHANIE BANKES
ANN DRAUDT / KEVIN SCROGGINS
MAGGIE WALDON / RON SOUZA
ELLIE HALPIN / RENE SAUCIER
MAGGIE WALDON / STEPHEN MORGAN

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

By Bob Bodor



Why is it that Texas Racquetball has enjoyed had such a strong community for so many years, and what does the future hold?

Texans are crazy about their sports and competition. With successful pro teams and some of the highest profile college athletic departments in the country, the state has plenty going on in the world of sport. Not surprisingly, it also boasts some of the top racquetball tournaments and players in the country. And while every state has its niche and serves a critical role to USA Racquetball, Texas is a state that deserves a closer look at its past and present. So I kicked off the New Year with a trip to Austin to attend the Longhorn Open and, even before the tournament began, it was easy to see what makes racquetball in Texas so special.

THE TEXAS RACQUETBALL ASSOCIATION

One of the most knowledgeable TXRA representatives is Leo Vasquez whose long-term contributions began in Amarillo as a player in 1980 and continue non-stop today both through his second term of service as TXRA Board President as well as his membership on the USA Racquetball Board of Directors. He's also well known for his social media and communications skills, serving as media support staff for both USA Racquetball and the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN. Vasquez also knows his TXRA history.

"Annie Muniz and a group of volunteers created a Board of Directors that developed a ranking system, named junior and senior teams, and were running tournaments all across the state," Leo recalls. "As the relationship between the TXRA and USA Racquetball grew, we became more supportive of national ranking programs, tournament software, membership, and tournament rebate programs to assist growth

and junior development at the state level."

Muniz served as TXRA President for almost 20 years and has been credited with much of the association's growth and success in the 1990's and early 2000's. She points to two tenets of success: "hard work and surrounding yourself with good people." She spent up to 40 weekends a year on the road and put nearly 100,000 miles on her vehicle getting to every in-state event she could, no matter the size.

Muniz recommends that "states need to re-invest in racquetball and their membership. There is no reason to have funds sitting in the bank; we don't have an electric bill to worry about five years from now." She also was instrumental in the development of the R2 software currently used nationwide to support sanctioned tournaments and their volunteer staffs. "Offering real benefits to tournament directors is critical."

Muniz also changed the culture. "My first weekend as president, we had a lawsuit brought against us. Players were constantly fighting and cussing with no respect for the sport or the negative environment such behavior brought." Making tournaments more family-friendly, with zero tolerance for inappropriate behavior, became a priority.

Today, this unique level of broad-based support is recognized nationwide and valued by USA Racquetball's Executive Director Steve Czarnecki. "The TXRA is one of the best-run state associations in the country. Its leadership and members are consistent supporters of youth and the U.S. National Teams. The TXRA's innovative programs, like assisting with the cost of USA Racquetball Instructor Certification, help promote the sport at all levels."



Julienne Arnold and Sandy Long at 2014 Texas State Doubles. Photo by Leo Vasquez.



Da'monique Davis and Brittany Click at 2015 Longhorn Open. Photo by Bob Bodor

THE PLAYERS

Beyond being home to the sport's best-known power couple - Kane and Kim Waselenchuk - the state boasts a growing roster of top names.

Richard Eisemann has been competing in Texas since 2000. One of the top players worldwide in his age division, Eisemann continues to be challenged locally. "I haven't noticed any drop in the quality through the years. Players like Jansen Allen, Alex Ackermann, and many talented international players have kept the quality very high." Allen agrees with that assessment by noting, "The high school players in Oregon and Missouri are top-notch, and there are many top quality players in Florida. From top-to-bottom, however, I would say the competition level is highest in California and Texas. Both are well represented in the skill levels at all of the national tournaments and on the pro level."

People like George Bustos, highly-ranked for many years in Texas and nationally, help keep the sport growing in San Antonio, where "we run clinics three days a week. Juniors, women, and men each get their own night."

Texas entered the largest contingent of youngsters at the 2014 Junior Olympics in Denver, and most would credit Sandy Long for this achievement. "We had about 10 players in 2010, so to get



2014 Texas Junior Contingent at USA Racquetball Junior Olympics in Denver, Colorado, June 2014. Photo with permission from Leo Vasquez.

to 30 this year was a great accomplishment." But Long has concerns about sustainability. "It takes a lot of money to get to these events. Every year is a challenge. It's really tough to get into the school districts and find people interested in developing the sport." Long has spent years traveling to events, raising funds, and engaging parents to join the challenge. "I'm trying to get the under 10's on courts rather than trying to recruit the high school students. The biggest thing USA Racquetball can do for Texas is work with clubs to lower their minimum age requirements. Once we can get 10-year-olds on the courts, the programming will follow."

Brittany Click came up through the Juniors program, continues to compete regularly at elite levels, and was a USA Racquetball Scholarship Recipient in 2014. "The amount of support is astonishing," she said, recalling how the camaraderie remained constant as she advanced. "The Texas racquetball family aided a major transition in my life: going away from home for college. No matter where you are in Texas, there will always be racquetball friends and family to support you."

A regular on the LPRT circuit, Da'monique Davis is currently ranked #1 in Texas and #10 in the world. She still values the opportunities in her home state. "The level of competition is awesome, especially for women. My open draw here (at the Longhorn) has 11 players, but I've played in other states with draws of four or five. I've been playing for 14 years and have never been to a tournament with fewer than 100 players."

THE TOURNAMENTS

State tournament directors are exceptionally proud of their reputation for hosting some of the country's best events. Whether it's a Saturday Shootout with 50 players or one of the major events featured here, TDs pride themselves in planning, execution, and most importantly, player experience. Vasquez says, "Texas runs up to 40 sanctioned events every year, each known for the high level of play as well as being very social and fun. Players know how events should be run."

There are many states that put on high-caliber tournaments with significant participation and talent. What makes Texas different is that almost all of their events are strictly amateur fields. Ryan Rodgers, Founder of R2 Sports, longtime Texas player, and former Longhorn Open Director noted, "Until recently, Tier 1 Pro stops weren't incorporated into state tournaments, so these events have been successful strictly with amateur players."

The Longhorn Open in the vibrant city of Austin debuted in the mid-90's and, after a four-year hiatus in the early 2000's, re-established itself as a Texas mainstay in 2006. Selling out weeks in advance, this prestigious event routinely draws around 330 players with a waiting list that reached an all-time high of 87 this year. Soly Kor serves a variety of roles, including director, advisor, and fundraiser to name a few, and he has an important philosophy. "We take the approach that our event is a great party that happens to have racquetball. We treat all of our participants as our guests: they all receive a welcoming smile at the door,

• Lone Star Racquetball



Jack Long and Soly Kor,
at 2015 Longhorn Open

and that continues through the duration of the event. We want to make sure all our participants enjoy their time through the weekend, even if they lose first round."

Kor and former UT teammate Jack Long are widely credited with developing the event over the past decade, aided by the central location of the campus and the city's reputation. Athletes compete at two separate facilities under the shadow of the Texas Memorial Football Stadium, each with unrivaled spectator viewing and an incredible "fish bowl" championship court that seats 500. It's only a five-minute walk between clubs (with a non-stop shuttle provided), and there are plenty of hotel accommodations within walking distance.

In addition to outstanding customer service, the Longhorn is known for its attention to detail. "We take a lot of time and consideration in scheduling our draws. The result is everyone has manageable play times, and we run on time. Every skill division is stout and offers any participant the best chance for competition. We offer fewer divisions which results in strong competitive draws. It really means something when you win." Kors' pursuit of perfection carries over to planning for the next year. "We pay attention to every little detail regarding our event, polishing every aspect. We listen to the players."

Tornado Alley in Wichita Falls bills itself as the longest-running volunteer-led tournament in the country and, at 41 years and counting, who's to argue? Tournament Director Randy Lanford has spearheaded the effort since 2009. "Tornado Alley was started by players eager to promote the sport and their city. Those early decades saw the tournament grow to almost 300 competitors. No one has attended all 41 years, but many proudly own a closet full of tournament shirts."

Today averaging 150 players, the tournament had declined a



TSU President Andrew Shafer, Cayden Akins and TSU Coach Jody Morris

decade ago but then grew rapidly once again, from 80 players to selling out the last five years. Paying strict attention to the quality of the player experience was a change from previous goals. "Each year we have pulled back on numbers and made things more player focused," said Lanford, noting that even the trophy is a standout. "Our trophy for first place winners is the icon for our tourney: the silver-plated champagne bucket. It's arguably the most expensive first-place trophy in amateur racquetball, anywhere. Treasured! And we've been giving them away for all 41 years."

Lanford's philosophy for creating such a successful tradition? "Develop leaders for future events, spotlight the uniqueness of this tourney, and build a brand. Constantly improve. Celebrate what we did well, correct where we did not excel, and promote with confidence."

As proud as Lanford is of the Tornado Alley event, it's worth noting that he still shows humility and admiration for his colleagues. "If Tornado Alley is the racquetball "story" regarding longevity, the Longhorn Open is the mega-star in terms of recent explosive growth, professionalism, and high-quality classy tournaments," he remarked. "Soly Kor directs that one, and he's a great success story."

Meanwhile, the Bobcat Open on the campus of Texas State University in San Marcos hosted the first Tier 1 IRT Stop held in Texas in the last 10 years. Jody Morris, Coach of the TSU team and Team President Andrew Shafer put on a big-time event with the top pros and the usual amateur crowd. It sold out a month in advance and was capped at 175 players by design. "We decided to limit the number of players to provide the best hospitality for the participants, and with the addition of the pros, we weren't sure how much staff would be needed. We wanted players to enjoy their first visit to our event and come back next year. With 16 courts on campus, we can host many more players, but we're learning and improving as we grow!"

Morris also promotes off-court activities as incentives. "We want to make the event a fun-filled weekend for all the players – pros and amateurs alike. We encourage the players to bring their families. We have a huge outlet mall and we're so close to Austin and San Antonio with all those cities have to offer."

The Battle at the Alamo in San Antonio, which combines



an LPRT stop with a Regional Championships competition, is another “can’t-miss event.” One of four large events hosted by the Alamo City Racquetball Association, it’s the result of great work by Mike Cantu and Lance Gilliam. “We just want to take care of our players with great service, smiles, and details,” said Cantu. “We try to spoil our clientele and put on more than a racquetball tournament. It’s an event, something to come to that isn’t just about racquetball.” ACRA has also taken the unique step of obtaining 501(c)3 status, which makes it one of the few local organizations that benefits from non-profit status.

OTHER VARIABLES

It takes committed owners and operators to help the sport succeed at the tournament level – people like Bob Sullins at the Maverick, where Leo Vasquez directs ten tournaments a year.

“We’re fortunate to have large facilities spread throughout the state that can host events as well as accommodate the recreational players,” observed Vasquez. The opening of nearly 60 LA Fitness clubs statewide has also helped new growth, while universities like Texas-Austin, Texas State, and Texas A&M boast some of the most impressive court facilities in the country, which enhances the quality of collegiate programs. Each of those campuses has fielded strong squads to the Southern Collegiate Racquetball Conference over many years.

We can’t forget former and current volunteers and tournament directors who have hosted some fine tournaments in the past or who continue to support the competitive pipeline. Keely Franks-Kennedy and her dad Mike Franks ran the LPRT Texas Open for many years, and Martin McDermott also hosted shootouts nearly every month in Dallas. In Houston, Mike Fitzsimmons and Roger Hertzberg, along with Peyton Dorsett and the Houston Racquetball Association, were ambassadors in that area. Now, Mike Magana, Jack Long, and Eddie Vann have taken over and are hosting several first-class events each

year. In fact, the National Police Racquetball Association was founded in Houston by Bill Bearden and Mike Welch. Many have helped keep the sport alive, like Sal Acosta in Waco, Jere Luttnar in Fort Worth, and Joanna Reyes in Corpus Christi.

Consider a visit to Texas, then connect with any of these outstanding volunteers and compete at one of these great events - large or small - and you’ll get a taste of the way it’s done in this part of the country.

THE FUTURE OF RACQUETBALL IN TEXAS

While much of the story of Texas racquetball is positive, there are challenges. The most common include facility closures, declining participation at smaller events, funding challenges, junior player participation and retention, keeping 20-somethings on courts, pressure from other fitness trends, an aging player population, the lack of a significant presence in Houston, and the number of female players.

Jansen Allen commented, “Texas, along with the rest of the nation, is struggling to attract more female players. If more moms were playing along with dads, you have to believe there would then be more youth playing also. The Latin American countries are currently producing a lot of good young players, and we need to shift that trend back to the U.S.” Jansen is currently the #11 ranked player in the world and highest ranked native Texan.

Much, if not all, you’ve read might seem familiar. Still, effective local leadership, along with great teamwork, often combines

to overcome challenges, no matter how daunting. Throw in the right attitude along with enthusiasm and high energy, and there’s plenty of cause for optimism.

Perhaps no state is better prepared for that fight than Texas with its large membership in USA Racquetball, very high participation rates in local and national tournaments, and a competitive spirit consistent with its history. So it’s probably not a good idea to mess with Texas, or its racquetball community, now or at any point in the future!



Ed Contreras & Babe Torres at Tornado Alley



CONTINUING THE Making of a Champion

by Fran Davis (The Coach) • Diana McNab (Sports Psychologist) • Dan Obremski (Fitness Expert)

Let's continue "Making You a Champion" using the core principles of "Building Your Racquetball Dream House" as you build your championship racquetball game one assessment at a time. This will allow you to continue to complete the "Racquetball Success Triangle" we introduced in the Winter 2010 issue of *Racquetball* magazine.

In the Winter 2015 issue, we discussed the concept of Serve Variety, a key element in creating your "championship game." I'd like to expand upon Serve Variety and discuss the Two Types of Serves.

1-Low and hard drive serves are used to generate power so your opponent has less time to react. In today's game, there are pros who can hit the ball in excess of 170 mph. For the beginners, we are looking to try and get up to 100 mph, and for the intermediate and advanced players, we are looking to try and get up to 150 mph. Imagine having the ball coming at you at those speeds! The speed of the ball in racquetball is an advantage to the server because the harder the server hits the ball, the less time the opponent has to react, and this can result in a weaker return.

Based on your level of play, there are many variations of the basic drive serve that you will want to start to develop once you have mastered it – serves such as the drive z, drive jam/ wraparound, and drive nick.

2- High and soft lob serves are used to slow down the pace of the game and keep the ball out of your opponent's hitting zone (knee high and lower). A soft, high serve puts the ball up at the receiver's chest and shoulder area, which is out of the hitting zone and much tougher to shoot from. Most racquetball players love to rip and shoot the ball, so what usually happens is that the players get frustrated and try to force balls and shoot them from their chest and shoulders, leading to weak returns and even skipped balls.

Based on your level of play, there are many variations of the basic lob serves that you would want to start to develop once you have mastered the basics...serves such as the lob z, lob nick and lob kick.

Armed with this information, let's address the four skill areas needed to help make you a more consistent player, a must in developing your championship game.

1-RACQUETBALL SKILLS

Practice the serves by first doing the Low and Hard Drive Serves within your skill level and then move onto the Soft and High Lob Serves within your skill level. Do first from all three positions (except no Z's from position 2). Do one position at a time, pick one type of serve at a time, and then perform the serve to both sides of the court (15 or 20 to the right and then 15 or 20 to the left, depending upon your level of play).

Rocky, Jason, and Paola as well as the rest of my championship team do this to make sure they keep their opponents guessing. This will pay big dividends for them to play at the top of their games.

2-MENTAL SKILLS

If you are totally prepared (hitting 100's of serves weekly), that is when all your hard work meets with perfect opportunity. This is when success happens. This can be expressed in a simple formula:

Hard Work + Opportunity = Success

Rocky, Paola, and Jason spend an enormous amount of time on creating lots of TYPES of SERVES in their service game and perfecting them. This builds their self-confidence, thus allowing them to believe in themselves. It is evident in their games.

3-FITNESS SKILLS

Core strength is the popular term for abdominal and back strength. Each abdominal muscle has an attachment to the spine, so as you break down and train your different abdominal muscles, you are creating thicker, denser, and stronger spinal attachment muscles as well. Your core consists of upper, lower, center, and oblique muscles, so your core workouts have to incorporate all of these muscle groups. Your upper body and lower body are also held together by your abdominal (core) muscles, and when you pivot, turn, sprint, and hit the ball, you are using your core strength. Everything revolves around an athlete's core strength: quickness, agility, timing, and power.

Paola, Rocky, and Jason have fitness trainers that work with them on a regular basis and focus on developing their core strength in their training routines.

4-NUTRITION SKILLS

Breakfast means "break the fast." That is what breakfast is all about, but too many people/players do not eat breakfast at all or do not eat enough breakfast, especially if they have a match in the morning. If you expect your body and mind to perform at its best, you must eat. Here is what Diana recommends for breakfast:

Breakfast of Champions consists of whole grain cereals, fruit and juice, or eggs, toast and fruit, or hot oatmeal, yogurt, and fruit. All of these good wholesome foods turn into muscle glycogen. Stay away from white flour, white sugar, chemicals, fats and preservatives. They stay in your stomach too long, which drives up your glucose index too high, which makes you feel more fatigued after you eat high fat and high sugar food choices.

Start your day off right and eat, but remember to eat the right foods: a key to your championship game.

Jason, Paola and Rocky ALL know how to enjoy themselves, but it's about making better choices. This is a way of life for them.

For more details on the concepts discussed in this article, see my book, "Championship Racquetball." Hope to see you at one of my camps for live personal instruction. Or, buy my video, "Building Your Racquetball Dream House," or my book, "Championship Racquetball," or buy my App if you can't make a camp at this time. For details go to www.FranDavisRacquetball.com.

Fran Davis coaches Paola Longoria (#1 LPRT), Rocky Carson (#2 IRT), Taylor Knoth (#1 Jr. National and World Champion, and Sharon Jackson (#1 National Intercollegiate Champion). Hall of Fame 2004, Woman of the Year 2009, former US Team National Coach, Master Professional Instructors (USAR-IP)

Championship Racquetball

Using the Core Principles of "Building Your Racquetball Dream House"

If you want to play like a champion, turn to the champions!

App

- Bring your mobile device on the court with you
- Coaching one on one with Fran & Jason
- Dynamic video/diagrams on techniques & tactics
- Top coaching worldwide

Video

- Learn to vary serve-deception
- Learn the perfect strokes
- Improve shot selection/court position
- Game plans/Strategies a must
- Be aggressive on the return of serve
- Perfect practice makes perfect -

Camps

- 13+ Hours of Instruction and Court Time
- Physical and Mental aspects of the game
- Lectures/Playing/Critiquing
- Video Tape Analysis / Play the Pro
- Camp Manual/ T-Shirt / Penn Racquetballs

Books

- Core Principles discussed
- Advance your skills, tactics and toughness for a winning game
- Targets Intermediate players and above

Taylor Knoth
Jr. World Champion

Jason Mannino
#1 Pro Player 2003

Rocky Carson
#1 Pro Player 2008

Sharon Jackson
Jr. Nat'l Champion

Paola Longoria
2X #1 Pro Player

Sudsy Monchik
6X #1 Pro Player

Fran's Credentials

- 25+ Years Camp Experience
- Woman of the Year 2009
- 2004 Hall of Fame
- U. S. National Team Coach 1989-1996, 2002
- Pan American/World Championship Coach
- USOC National Coach of the Year 1997
- Coaches Rocky Carson, Paola Longoria, Taylor Knoth, Sharon Jackson
- Coached Legends Jason Mannino and Sudsy Monchik
- USAR-IP Master Professional

Jason's Credentials

- #1 IRT Professional Player 2003
- 2X U.S. Open Champion
- IRT Most Improved Player 1998
- IRT Rookie of the Year 1996
- International Racquetball Tour President

Camp Schedule:

Weekend Camps 2015

April 10-12	Las Vegas, NV
May 1-3	Warren, NJ
June 5-7	Millersville, MD
June 19-21	San Francisco, CA
Aug/Sep -TBA	San Antonio, TX
November 6-8	Chicago, IL
TBA	Houston/Dallas, TX
TBA	Phoenix/Tucson, AZ
TBA	Los Angeles, CA

Week Long Fantasy Camps 2015

ARUBA CAMP -	
December 3-10, 2015	(Caribbean Island...Intermediate to Advanced Camp)
CANCUN CAMP - TBA	(Mexico...Intermediate to Advanced Camp)
Contact me to add a camp in	YOUR City/State.

Presented by
featuring Fran Davis and Jason Mannino

Fran Davis - A Healthy Racquet, Inc.

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HEAD

Penn

www.FranDavisRacquetball.com

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE BALL STRIKES Two Surfaces at Once?

■ by Otto Dietrich, USA Racquetball National Rules Commissioner

Learn how the ball behaves - and what to look for - to determine which surface was touched first and make a call

Whenever the ball is served, the rules say that it must touch the front wall BEFORE any other surface or else you lose the serve immediately. As the ball approaches the front wall, one of three things can happen: (1) it can hit the front wall FIRST (as it should), (2) it can hit another surface (other than the front wall) FIRST, or (3) it can hit two surfaces either AT, or nearly at, the very same time. Rulings on the first two possible occurrences are quite clear since the serving rule requires hitting the front wall first. But what about that third occurrence -- when the ball, as it sometimes will, hits both the front wall and another surface at or nearly at the very same time? Well, since the ball clearly didn't hit the front wall FIRST, it's ruled as being the same as if it hit another surface first -- an immediate loss of serve.

During the rally, of course, the floor is the only other surface at the front wall that affects the continuation of the rally. The related rule is also very simple: after being struck, the ball must reach the front wall without touching the floor to be a good shot. To do otherwise is called a skip ball! However, detecting such a skip ball during a furious rally can, at times, be difficult. Following are some things to look for in determining whether the ball indeed touched the front wall first.

On those shots, one can usually tell which surface the ball hit first by carefully observing the way the ball returns from the juncture. A skip ball will usually come away from the front wall with a distinct backspin on it. Conversely, a ball that hits the front wall first will have a topspin on it. Also, if you note the relative height of the ball's arc between its first touch of the floor coming away from the wall and its second, you will see that the arc tends to be lower on a good shot and much higher on a skip ball. This, of course, is due to the backspin or topspin that the ball has. These factors are the reasons why a skip ball is said to "pop up," while a good shot is said to "roll out."

You can test and observe these various conditions for yourself by standing about three feet or so from the front wall and throwing the ball toward the floor/front wall juncture from a low angle. You will readily see that if the ball you threw touches the floor before the front wall, there will be backspin imparted on the ball as it departs the front wall; there will be a higher arc between the first and second touch of the ball on the floor coming away from the wall; and you will also see that "pop up" effect I mentioned above. But if your throw, instead, hits the front wall first, then the ball will come back from the wall with

a topspin, have a very low arc between its first and second touch of the floor, and perhaps even "roll out" from the wall.

Now for a few questions/answers:

Bev S. asked: In tennis there is a rule about where to place the vibration dampener and how many vibration dampeners a player can have on their racquet. Does racquetball have such a rule about placement and number of vibration dampeners on a racquet?

I responded: There is no such rule/limit in racquetball nor, in my opinion, is there any need for one unless, of course, you suggest it and propose a rule change to create it. I can't imagine why someone would put it somewhere on the racquet's strings where it might interfere with the resulting shot.

Joe wondered: When announcing the score, is it better to say: "14 serving 9" or "possible game point serving 9"? I think that saying "9 serving possible game point" is totally inappropriate. And here's a similar question: Should I call "possible match point serving 10" or the actual score, i.e. "14 serving 10"? Perhaps it comes under the prerogative of the referee or the tournament director, but I think that consistency is important.

I told Joe: You are correct! Consistency IS very important. So saying "14 serving 9" is the proper way to call the score every time. One reason for NOT adding the words "possible game or match point" to the score is that it is sort of "putting down" the receiver by, in effect, saying "the guy serving is about to win this game and the guy receiving is about to lose." Both players surely know what this upcoming point potentially means. It also interrupts the usual cadence of the referee's voice, e.g. he says, "5 serving 12", "12 serving 5", "13 serving 5", and then, if he adds those extra words, his next call becomes "14 possible game and match point serving 5." That change in rhythm could mess up the server's timing of his serve since throughout the rest of the game, he has likely become accustomed to starting his motion an instant after the referee finishes saying the word "serving." The "bad" practice of adding such extra words is one to avoid. It may seem like something flowery for the referee to say at that time, but it is not needed; it detracts rather than adds to the game. While this issue is not addressed in the Rulebook, it is a definite trait of a good referee to call the score basically the same regardless if it is just another point or game or match point.



photo by Geoff Thomson

DO YOU HAVE A RULES/REFEREEING QUESTION?

Be sure to email it to me at rules@usra.org and you might find it featured in an upcoming issue of *Racquetball Magazine*. I will personally answer every question I get, no matter how simple or complex it may be!

Always Play by the Rules

... and, if you don't have a copy of them, I encourage you to go online where you can find, review, and/or download them – especially to your Smartphone – at: teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/How-To-Play/Rules.

Make plans now to attend the 2015 JUNIOR OLYMPICS in Stockton, California, June 24-28. Athletes from around the country will compete at the premier Junior tournament in the nation, where winners will earn roster spots on the 2015 Junior National Team that will compete in the IRF Junior World Championships next Fall. Make it a family vacation and combine a great experience in beautiful Northern California, offering Yosemite, Tahoe, and San Francisco all within a two-hour drive. See you in Stockton!

Compiled by Bob Bodor



SEND YOUR PHOTOS
AND NEWS ITEMS TO
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TO BE CONSIDERED
FOR A FUTURE ISSUE.

Just after press time, the **2015 National High School Championships** concluded in St. Louis, Missouri, attracting another large and talented field of roster players. Thanks to Vetta Sports Concord and the Missouri Athletic Club for hosting, with help by a great local organizing committee led by Dan Whitley. Find a late-breaking report on page 40, plus full results online at USARacquetball.com.

AROUND THE COUNTRY

Krish Thakur (CA) and Akul Ramayani (NY) competed the IRF World Junior Championships last Fall in Cali, Colombia as members of Team USA. They have continued to impress with wins that suggest



In North Port, Alabama, **Ann Hemphill** led Fitness One's Youth Challenge for kids 8-18. Fitness, conditioning, racquetball (lots!) and nutrition are highlighted. Great fun, awesome training and loads of racquetball bond kids of all ages and abilities.

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Frequent competitor and National Champion **Phil Eliana** hosted a junior clinic at the Pacific Missile Range Facility on the island of Kauai. Great work to grow the sport in Hawaii. Photo courtesy US Navy.

tremendous high school careers. Up in Washington state, Jake Birnel continues to compete and win against older and more experienced players, predicting a very bright future in the sport as one of USA's rising stars.

In January, The **20th Oregon High School State Championships** were held the Multnomah Athletic Club (MAC) in Portland, fielding 299 high school players representing 18 schools across the state. Alice Laffey, Commissioner for the Oregon High School Racquetball League, oversaw the tournament, which is one of the largest high school events of its type in the nation. Find photos and full coverage online, at USARacquetball.com > *About* > *News*.

For 10 years, **Kim Pedrie** has offered free junior clinics at the Colorado Springs YMCA, working with as many as 20 youngsters each Saturday. "Just doing my part to grow racquetball," he said, and we appreciate his dedication to the sport.

Keeping it in the family, **Josh Shea** had been watching his mom **Beth** teach, play and run tournaments since he was a baby. So it was no surprise when he started competing himself at age 8 and quickly made the national team in his first two tries in 2013 and 2014. He'll also be in Stockton, California in 2015 to try to make it three years in a row.



In New York State, good friends and doubles partners **Akul Ramayani** (currently the nation's #1 ranked 12-and-under boy) and **Josh Shea** (#2 in the 10-and-under ranks) are eager to compete in any division. Last year they swept through The Westchester Winter Open at Premier Athletic Club in Montrose, NY, winning 5 titles. This year they will partner for Men's B doubles action as well as enter adult singles divisions.

Oregon Junior player **Makenna Johnston**, Sprague High School. She earned the racquet by writing an essay about "What racquetball means to me." Photo by **Alice Laffey**



Brian Pearson and **Dan Salamone** lead the weekly Minnesota Junior Clinic. Photo courtesy Brian Pearson.

Minnesota Junior Racquetball continues to grow under the direction of many, including Brian Pearson and **Andrea Hartman** who grew up playing for Team Minnesota Junior Racquetball. Pearson's motivation comes from his own Junior experience. "We had a great program when I was growing up, so I decided to be a part of creating that again. I have been teaching up to 25 juniors for about four years, two nights a week, for LifeTime Fitness."

Pearson's efforts followed a discouraging realization. "Shortly after I returned to the sport, they tore out the courts at the YMCA where I grew up playing. It was awesome to see all my old friends there from when I was a kid, but I quickly realized that there were only a few new players and no kids, likely leading to the courts' demise." Thank you, Brian and Andrea, for your outstanding initiatives.

Texas Christian University Starts a College Team

■ Kevin Armes, TCU Racquetball President

Kevin Armes started a new collegiate club team at TCU this past Fall and has already seen it develop from a few players to a team of 12. "After several years and a couple of intramural tournaments, I decided to start a club for racquetball."

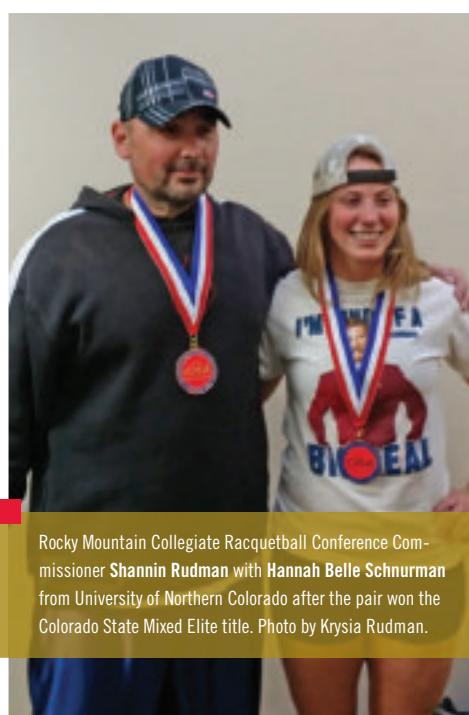
Following his father Steve into clubs at age 7, Armes was hooked by age 12. "My dad introduced me to a few players, they gave me tips on how to hold the racquet, how to swing, and played against me. I continued learning from whoever could teach me."

Armes developed several recruitment strategies, "Other than constantly trying to bring people to play or teach the basics to beginners, I have put on a few programs for interested people. I brought out top 100 nationally ranked player Chase Robison to play against a few of them and play me in the end as an exhibition match. I held a Play the Pro Night in which five top 200 players came to play. We published an article in the campus newspaper. We intend to do more promoting and getting the word out next semester."

Ty Stolp, Commissioner of the Southern Collegiate Racquetball Conference, is excited and encouraged. "The long-term vision of the SCRC is to grow in numbers so that it can be more competitive and exciting for the players. This is a positive step toward that goal, and Kevin has shown great interest in growing a team and growing the sport. I would love to see more people like Kevin taking the initiative and time to help grow racquetball."

Not only is Armes excited about bringing racquetball to the club level at TCU, he envisions how to help grow the sport around the country. "Others can do their part by playing the sport, bringing new players into the sport, and promoting it however they can. Go out and watch and play racquetball!"

Armes is eager to serve as a resource for other potential club teams that are considering joining the ranks of fully recognized college programs. "Find young players who are looking for something to invest themselves in, and bring out some good players to offer assistance. New clubs should use the resources provided by USA Racquetball, their state organizations, and other established club teams."



Rocky Mountain Collegiate Racquetball Conference Commissioner Shannin Rudman with Hannah Belle Schnurman from University of Northern Colorado after the pair won the Colorado State Mixed Elite title. Photo by Krysia Rudman.

CONFERENCE NEWS

Rocky Mountain Collegiate Racquetball Conference becomes 7th USAR recognized Conference in the Nation ... Congratulations to Shannin Rudman, newly appointed Commissioner of the RMCRC. Current members are the University of Colorado at Boulder, University of Colorado at Denver, Colorado State University at Pueblo, Colorado School of Mines, University of Denver, University of Northern Colorado, and the University of Wyoming.

The **Eastern Collegiate Racquetball Conference** held its biggest event of the year just before press time, the 2015 ECRC Regionals at Philadelphia Sports Club in Chalfont. How about this for incentivizing college teamwork? ECRC alumnus and former Conference MVP Steve Corndell was looking to hire up to 30 new engineers and

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#1 Gold Champ **Katie Neils**, University of Connecticut, with **Shane Wood**. Photo by Megan Roberts.



Duck, duck, goose ... how about these prizes awarded to the winners of the Turkey Tourney Tournament in the Midwest Collegiate Racquetball Conference earlier this season? **Tony Harper**, Ohio State (pie), **Ryan Szczepaniak**, Ohio State (turkey), **Natalie Kendrick**, **Baldwin Wallace** (pie) and **Manolo Sandoval**, **Baldwin Wallace** (turkey). Congratulations! Photo by Sam Martin.

salespeople for his company, VMTurbo. Racquetball alumni love to hire student-athletes (particularly racquetball players) skilled in time management.

Congratulations to the **Southeastern Collegiate Racquetball Conference** for adding three new Club Teams. Southern Polytechnic State University, Kennesaw State University, and Georgia Tech all have joined the Conference for 2014-2015. The Southeast continues to grow and has the potential to become one of the sport's larger intramural conferences.

Down south, the Southern Collegiate Racquetball Conference kickoff tournament saw the University of Texas earn the most points followed by Texas State. Jordan Chesak and Larissa Liska of UT-Austin won the Women's #1 Doubles defeating Katie Nieswiadomy and Sarah Rohmer of Texas A&M. On the men's side, Alex Howard and Jon Lanford of UT-Austin won the title by beating Texas State's Andrew Shafer and Eric Welch. The Men's Singles #1 Gold division had nine competitors with UT-Austin's Howard coming out on top with his defeat of Jon Lanford, also of UT-Austin. The Women's Singles #2 Gold was the largest division on the women's side with nine players competing. UT-Austin's Katie Genter earned Gold.

In the **Mid Atlantic Collegiate Racquetball Conference**, the University of North Carolina has a well-balanced Men's and Women's team and holds the top spot in the current standings with Virginia, Liberty University-Team 1, Duke, and Maryland all close behind. Four new programs joined the Conference this season; welcome to Blue Ridge Community College, Washington and Lee, James Madison, and Virginia Western Community College.

In California, the **Western Collegiate Racquetball Conference** held its first tournament of the season. Highlights include Jessica Nevins of Cal beating Fraser Brown of Stanford to win the #1 Women's Singles. Ronald Ramos of UC-Berkley defeating Andrew Meyer of Sacramento State in the Men's #1 Singles. UC Berkley Finished first, compiling 1149 points. Sac State and UC Santa Cruz finished second and third respectively. Thanks to Nuraini Abd. Zabar (Cal) for coordinating the tourney with UC Berkeley, and to Scott Cockrell and Del Villanueva for hosting this outstanding kick-off.



WCRC Meet at UC Berkley. Photo by John Bardos



STATE NEWS

ALABAMA - State Singles were contested at the Sportplex in Mobile. Board elections used R2 Software to make voting easier for players and state Hall of Fame nominations were submitted for review.

COLORADO - Eric Waser and Sean Summers won in a truly epic Men's Open doubles title, taking a narrow 15-12, 12-15, 11-10 tiebreaker over an equally strong duo of Michael Nigro and Kevin Holmes. With thanks to the Highlands Ranch Recreation Center for their excellent support, USA Racquetball is excited to bring the 2015 National Singles Championships to this outstanding venue.

FLORIDA - The International Senior Games were held in January at the Bath and Racquet Club in Sarasota, where Ron Fowler defeated the top two seeds to win the 60 Open Division, defeating Marc Burns in the Finals, 15-10 and 15-9.

INDIANA - State Doubles was held at the Omni Health and Fitness in Schererville in December. In a stout Men's A final, top seeds Dan Shuey and Frank Rivera defeated second seeds Matt Beals and Drake Deavours in a thrilling tiebreaker, 15-7, 9-15, 11-8. In the women's combined division, Andrea Schmalzried and Diana Veit won 7 of 8 games enroute to their title.

MICHIGAN - The season is in full swing with a full slate of indoor events, followed by a packed Summer schedule. A great State Singles Championships at Davison Athletic Club will feature the annual Merit Awards and Hall of Fame Banquet to honor RAM's past, present and future. Congratulations to the 2015 Michigan Racquetball Hall of Fame Inductees: Greg Hodges and Don Schopieray. Greg was an



Jim Jeffers, 2015 Minnesota Hall of Fame inductee Karen Bredenbeck, and Bill Bredenbeck. Photo by John Wiese.

continued on pg.35

Stockton, California

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DARRELL VINCENT [FARMS]

IS NUTS OVER RACQUETBALL



Sometimes it takes a real kick in the rear to motivate someone to break a habit. In 2003, Darrell Vincent lay in a Stanford University hospital bed, after suffering a third heart attack, when a young doctor smelled the cigarettes that he had smoked since he was 15. "When I came in there smelling like a cigarette, he just unloaded on me about how he was going to save my life and I was going to go back out there and start smoking again, and he was just wasting his time. He really chewed me out. I never smoked again."

Now 63, Vincent plays at Madera Athletic Club in Madera, California. He's been a MAC member for over 25 years and is understandably concerned about the future of the sport there at his own club, as well as around the country. "There are two high schools, it wouldn't take many high school and junior high kids to get involved and grow the sport."

He began playing at the age of 38, as his slow-pitch softball career was coming to an end. Friends talked him into picking up a racquet and, like most, he was instantly hooked. "I love to compete. We go out on the court to compete for nothing - no financial motivation, no great prize - just the self satisfaction of winning." Darrell only plays singles, at the A or Elite level, and often averages seven tournaments a year. He typically faces off against locals Roger Schuh and Ted Pistoremi, and all three of them competed at the 2014 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN this past Fall.

Hailing from the San Joaquin Valley region, Darrell grew up in a farm family with his parents and three siblings, in a small farming community of around 4,000 in Dos Palos, California. Row crop farmers didn't make big money. In fact they barely got by, so while the family didn't come from much, they worked hard to survive the up-and-down farmer's lifestyle. Darrell graduated from Dos Palos High School and went on to spend some time at Fresno State University before returning to the family calling. By 1978 he had set out on his own.

Darrell Vincent Farms is located in Firebaugh, California, and - after rebounding from a total loss in the early 80's - has enjoyed steady growth since the business turned profitable with the help of almonds and pistachios. "I did not see a future in row crops so I was looking to diversify, wanted to find

another crop." For Vincent to put an almond tree in the ground in 1993, after 15 years of doing things a different way, clearly indicated that he wasn't afraid of a challenge - especially considering the time it takes to see results.

"It was a big learning curve. Unlike annual crops, when you go into a long term crop like trees,



"...he just unloaded on me about how he was going to save my life and I was going to go back out there and start smoking again, and he was just wasting his time."

SERVICE LINE

outdoor specialist and a BEAST on the courts of Belle Isle. But on top of that, when he played the big indoor tournaments, he dominated there, too! Greg Hodges was the definition of "The Man." Don has been all things, to all players. He serves on the USAR Board and the national Junior committee. He's served on the RAM Board for a decade, currently as Vice President. He's run Pro tournaments and fostered the state's juniors program.



MARYLAND/WASHINGTON - Severna Park Racquetball & Fitness Club in Millersville hosted the Eastern Collegiate Racquetball Conference's fourth meet. Many MWRA members played at the February Wintergreen Tournament in Laurel, MD, which draws well among players looking for cash awards.

MINNESOTA – In January, 132 players competed at the 27th Annual Hall of Fame Tournament at the Bloomington South Lifetime Fitness. Inducted were **Karen Bredenbeck** and **JT Turner**; along with presentation of the Warren Claridge award to **Bryan Turtle**, the Legends Award to Page Kern and the Family Award to **Meadow Barth, Jordan Barth and Jason Krantz**.

OHIO - The biggest state event of the year, the 2015 ORA State Singles Championships, occurred in February at The Heights Racquetball & Fitness Club in Huber Heights. For the first time, the tournament was open to players from any state, "just for fun" doubles divisions were offered, and all were welcome to share in Ohio's celebrations.

you're thinking years out in front. You're not going to see a return for as many as seven years. Fertilizer, water, pruning, labor ... a lot of costs ... all go in for no immediate return. Not to mention the uncertainty of future prices. It holds a lot of people back. People are afraid and don't want to take the risk of seeing what's out there in the future." While he still grows alfalfa and even a small amount of wine grapes, all but 500 of the farm's 3,700 acres are now dedicated to almonds and pistachios.

Coming full circle, this enthusiast often shares the fruits (and nuts) of his labor. He's been very generous in underwriting IRT stops in Stockton and Fresno as well as supporting the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN. "I want to see our sport pick up more attention. It isn't on TV enough, so we need to get it done by getting young people on the courts. Club owners have space for spinning; we have to have a club owner who is either a racquetball enthusiast, and/or get young kids interested."

Through all of his health battles, Darrell Vincent kept playing, even when he could barely move his legs. "I pretty much played throughout. When my legs were really weak, I didn't play very effectively but I never lost the drive to play and the need to compete."

Today, health and family come first. Vincent has four children and has been married to his wife Dene' for 15 years. Almonds and pistachios pay the bills while racquetball satisfies Darrell Vincent's competitive spirit. "I like to promote racquetball, it's a great sport." Darrell Vincent is Racquetball ... Together, We are Racquetball.



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Racquetball to Compete in the Toronto 2015 Pan American Games

by Cheryl Kirk | IRF Press Officer

The Pan American Racquetball Confederation is pleased to announce that Racquetball is a Full Medal Sport in the XVII Pan American Games to be held in Toronto this July.

OVERVIEW FROM TORONTO2015.ORG

The Pan American Games are the world's third largest international multi-sport Games. They are surpassed in size and scope only by the Olympic Summer Games and the Asian Games.

The first Pan American Games were held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1951 and the inaugural Parapan American Games were held in Mexico City in 1999. Both the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games are held every four years for the athletes of the 41 Pan American Sports Organization (PASO) member nations in the year preceding the Olympic and Paralympic Summer Games.

While the Pan Am Games have been hosted in a dozen countries throughout the Americas, Canada has had the honor of hosting them twice: in 1967 and 1999, both times in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In 2015, Toronto will be the proud Host City of the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games.

PAN AMERICAN RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

VS. PAN AMERICAN GAMES

In the racquetball world, some confusion exists around two events with similar names. The Pan American Racquetball Confederation (PARC) event -- the Pan American Racquetball Championship (also "PARC") -- competes annually during the week leading into Easter. This event is key to seeding of the Pan American Games competition (description at the beginning of this article). The Team competition at the PARC event this Spring will determine how many countries/athletes will be invited to compete in the Pan American Games in July. Canada, as Host Country, will automatically be granted four spots in both the men's and women's draws.

RACQUETBALL AT THE PAN AMERICAN GAMES

Racquetball athletes (30 men and 26 women from 18 PARC National Federations) will join over 6,000 athletes competing in 49 sports in Toronto. Players, coaches, and trainers will reside in the CIBC Pan and Parapan Am Games Athletes' Village in downtown Toronto.

The Toronto 2015 website features this description of racquetball:

Played on an enclosed court with spectators watching through a glass back wall, racquetball is an aggressive, physical sport in which the athletes frequently dive, spin, jump and slide to make shots and score points. Men and women compete in singles, doubles and team competitions where agility and creativity feature prominently.

The Racquetball venue will be housed in the CIBC Pan Am Park Exhibition Centre located on downtown Toronto's waterfront. The Centre will be home to five competition venues: Racquetball, Roller Sports (Figure Skating), Squash, Team Handball, and Indoor Volleyball. Adjacent sports will be Rugby Sevens, Gymnastics, and Cycling.



The Exhibition Centre is located next to the International Press Centre and will make racquetball visible to 2,000 members of the media.

The racquetball venue will feature three portable glass-back courts plus an all-glass exhibition court. The men's and women's singles and doubles competitions are scheduled for July 19-24, followed by the team competition from July 24-26. Racquetball athletes will walk in the Closing Ceremonies on July 26.

All racquetball participants will have qualified through the PARC qualifying system and are part of their National Olympic Committee official delegation. The Pan American Games event is considered a gateway into future Olympic programs.

RACQUETBALL VIPS WEIGH IN

Rafael A. Fernández, President of PARC, commented, "Speaking on behalf of the PARC Board of Directors and our member federations, we are extremely excited about Racquetball's presence at the 2015 Toronto Pan Am Games. We know that the visible location of the racquetball venue will spark much interest with spectators, media, and racquetball fans alike. We wish all of our member federations' athletes great success as they compete for Pan Am Games seeding positions at our PARC event in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, this March."

Continued Fernández, "It's also important to note that the Toronto Organizing Committee of the Pan Am Games will designate the four courts to be used during the Games as a legacy to assist Racquetball Canada in its development efforts of our beloved sport."

Cheryl Adlard, Executive Director of Racquetball Canada, remarked, "This is an exciting time for racquetball in Canada. We were honoured to host the

XVII IRF World Racquetball Championships in June 2014, and now we are proud to be part of the Toronto 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games. It is an incredible opportunity to expose the Canadian public to international racquetball competition and to cheer on our dedicated athletes on their 'home turf'."

"It is with pride and anticipation that Racquetball Canada awaits the opportunity to host the racquetball portion of the Toronto 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games," said Jack McBride, President of Racquetball Canada. "Having just hosted the World Championships in Burlington, Ontario, we feel confident that all who attend will know that once again they will be attending a first-class event. The racquetball venue is nearing completion, featuring the all-glass court that will allow our sport maximum exposure. We look forward to seeing the best players from each country demonstrating their skills and sportsmanship on the world stage. We await you, Canada awaits you, the World awaits you!"

Information about tickets, hotels, venues, and much more is available on the Official Toronto 2015 website: www.Toronto2015.org.

Note to U.S. readers: For the U.S. Team selection criteria, go to <http://www.teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/Programs/Team-USA>.



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CALENDAR of EVENTS

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Date(s)	Event Name	City	State	Venue
April 3-4	WOR-TN Shootout at the Ranch	Jackson	TN	Racquetball Ranch
April 3-5	AZ WOR VII the Final Battle!	Glendale	AZ	Bonsall Park & Other Parks
April 4	Langley Racquetball Shootout	Langley AFB	VA	Shellbank Fitness Center
April 8-11	Utah State Singles Championships	Orem	UT	Orem Fitness Center
April 9-11	The Long Beach Open	Long Beach	CA	Belmont Athletic Club
April 10-12	USA Racquetball Regional Championship	Harmarville	PA	Fitness 1440
April 10-12	VA Liberty University James River Open	Lynchburg	VA	The Sports Racket
April 10-12	Charleston Spring Splash	Charleston	SC	St. Andrews Family Fitness
April 10-12	Fran Davis Racquetball Camp	Las Vegas	NV	ClubSport Green Valley
April 10-12	Wyoming State Singles & Doubles Championships	Casper	WY	Wyoming Athletic Club
April 11	Everett Y Annual Campaign Shootout	Everett	WA	Everett Ymca
April 11	Indiana State Racquetball Singles Championships	West Lafayette	IN	Purdue University
April 11	Spring Shootout	Sacramento	CA	Florin High School
April 15-19	USA Racquetball Regional Championship	Gresham	OR	Cascade Athletic Club
April 16-19	Mile High Pro/Am - USA Racquetball Regional	Denver	CO	Denver Athletic Club
April 16-19	USA Racquetball Regional Championship	Tampa	FL	Harbour Island Athletic Club
April 17-18	USA Racquetball Regional Championship	Laurel	MD	SportFit Total Fitness Racquet Club
April 17-19	USA Racquetball Regional Championship	St. Louis	MO	Vetta Sports
April 17-19	USA Racquetball Regional Championship	Chalfont	PA	Philadelphia Sports Club at Highpoint
April 17-19	USA Racquetball Regional Championship	Lilburn	GA	Recreation ATL
April 17-19	USA Racquetball Regional Championship	Davison	MI	Davison Athletic Club
April 17-19	Egg-Splat Tournament + IRT & CPRT Shootouts	Simi Valley	CA	Oakridge Athletic Club
April 17-19	No Strings Attached Open	Tucson	AZ	Tucson Racquet & Fitness Club
April 18	Elmwood Spring Shootout	Harahan	LA	Elmwood Fitness Center, Harahan
April 18-19	Monsters Of Manteca Shootout	Manteca	CA	In-Shape Sport: Manteca
April 24-26	Battle at the Alamo - USA Racquetball Regional	San Antonio	TX	YMCA - Thousand Oaks
April 24-26	USA Racquetball Regional Championship	Wichita	KS	YMCA - North
April 24-26	USA Racquetball Regional Championship	Lombard	IL	Glass Court Swim And Fitness
April 24-26	NC Racquetball Up for the Red	Goldsboro	NC	Goldsboro YMCA
April 24-26	Arkansas State Singles	Little Rock	AR	Little Rock Athletic Club
April 24-26	Rally in T-Town	Tacoma	WA	Sprinker Recreation Center
April 25	Reaching Your Dreams Foundation Fun-Raiser	San Ramon	CA	ClubSport San Ramon
April 25-26	USA Racquetball Regional Championship	Syosset	NY	Synergy Fitness North
April 25-26	CPRT Outdoors	Las Vegas	NV	Stratosphere Hotel & Casino
April 30 -May 3	Ektelon Battle of the Ages	Stockton	CA	In-Shape Sport: West Lane
May 1-3	Summer Ca\$h ThrowDown	Lilburn	GA	Recreation ATL
May 1-3	Fran Davis Racquetball Camp	Warren	NJ	Warren Racquet
May 1-3	WRT Midwest Championships	Minneapolis	MN	University Of Minnesota
May 2	FRA Women's Racquetball Day	Tampa	FL	Bob Sierra Ymca
May 2	Cinco De Mayo ~ Men's 1 day Shootout ~	Sarasota	FL	Sarasota YMCA
May 2-3	Battle of the Borders	San Marcos	CA	Woodland Park Middle School
May 9	Maverick May Racquetball Shootout	Arlington	TX	Maverick Athletic Club
May 14-17	Mac Pro Kennex Tournament of Champions	Portland	OR	Multnomah Athletic Club
May 15-17	Florida Open	Port St. Lucie	FL	Port St Lucie Civic Center
May 15-17	Nor-Cal Doubles Championships	Redding	CA	Shasta Athletic Club
May 15-17	Tournament of Aces	West Columbia	SC	Tri-city Leisure Center
May 16-17	WORstock Presented by Ultimate Racquetball	Jackson	TN	Racquetball Ranch
May 20-24	U.S. National Singles Championships	Denver	CO	Highlands Ranch Recreation Center
June 5-7	Florida Sunshine State Games	Sarasota	FL	Sarasota Family YMCA (Frank Berlin)
June 12-13	Rocky Mountain Senior Games	Greeley	CO	Greeley Rec. Center
June 13	WOR Beat the Heat Shootout	Sacramento	CA	Florin High School
June 13	WOR Lowcountry GA SC State Championship	Savannah	GA	Lake Mayer Community Park
June 13-14	June Triple Crown Racquetball Shootout	Arlington	TX	Maverick Athletic Club
June 19-21	Aloha Open	High Point	NC	Sportscenter Athletic Club
June 24-28	U.S. National Junior Olympic Championships	Stockton	CA	In-Shape Sport: West Lane
June 26-28	Suncoast Open	Sarasota	FL	Sarasota Bath & Racquet Club

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MONCHIK NAMED TO HALL OF FAME

In his first year of eligibility, Sudsy Monchik has been selected for the sport's highest honor and will be inducted into the USA Racquetball Hall of Fame at official ceremonies at National Singles in May.

Monchik, 40, of Staten Island, New York, qualified in the professional category, for having captured more than 40 International Racquetball Tour titles and five consecutive season-ending #1 rankings in his career. Solo, he won four UnitedHealthcare US OPEN titles and partnered with Tim Doyle to earn six pro doubles titles. Additionally, he teamed with Tim Sweeney to capture the 1994 U.S. National Doubles crown.

"Sudsy Monchik is quite simply one of the best players racquetball has ever seen," remarked Larry Haemmerle, President of USA Racquetball. "His many accomplishments on the court make him an obvious choice for the Hall of Fame."



Monchik began playing at age 7, and an unmatched junior career followed. He logged record-setting Junior National victories - in both singles and doubles - in every age division from 8 and under through 18 and under. He also captured a National High School Championship in his junior year.

Monchik competed for both the junior and adult U.S. National Teams, amassing 11 Junior World Championship titles, and earning Gold for the United States at the 1994 U.S. Olympic Festival and the 1995 Pan Am Games.

"Thank you to USA Racquetball and the Hall of Fame Committee and voters for bestowing this great honor upon me," remarked Monchik. "There are many, many individuals who contributed to my surreal career, and I look forward to thanking them and sharing my journey at the induction ceremony."

As a junior, all of Monchik's doubles titles were won with lifelong friend Jason Mannino as his partner – and Jason's father on the sidelines. Saluting Russ Mannino, his mentor in the sport who passed away at National Doubles in February, Monchik exclaimed, "This one's for you, Russ!"

Monchik was inducted to the Staten Island Sports Hall of Fame in 2009.

ABOUT THE RACQUETBALL HALL OF FAME

Founded in 1973, the USA Racquetball Hall of Fame honors the sport's greatest players and contributors. Player inductees are honored for excellence as Professional, Amateur Open, Amateur Age and/or Outdoor players. In total, 59 of the sport's greatest champions have been inducted over the 40+ year history of the Hall of Fame. Nominations are due by September 15 each year, and details are available online at USA.Racquetball.com > Programs > Hall of Fame.



THIS JUST IN:

York and Fernandez Win High Schools

Lexi York, 17, of Milwaukie, Oregon, and **Sebastian Fernandez**, 14, of San Ysidro, California, captured singles titles at the 2015 U.S. National High School Championships held at Vetta Sports-Concord and Missouri Athletic Club-West in St. Louis, Missouri.

Lexi is a senior at La Salle Catholic College Preparatory High School, a member of the Multnomah Athletic Club, and a four-time Oregon State High School Champion. With her title defense, she became the second athlete in history to capture a fourth consecutive High School title. (It's the most that any high-schooler can win, and Adrienne Fisher is the only other player, boy or girl, to accomplish this four-peat, from 2000-2003.) To close it out undefeated, York bested Erika Manilla, a junior at Regis Jesuit High School in Centennial, Colorado, in a straight-game final of 15-9, 15-10.

Sebastian Fernandez is a freshman at Mater Dei Catholic High School and won his first National High School title, in his first attempt, by defeating Luis Avila, 18, of Wilmington, California, with scores of 15-6, 15-14. Fernandez is the top-ranked 14-year old in the U.S. He is ranked in the top 100 players in California and among the top 1,000 players in the country overall. While the Championships qualify singles winners for positions on the U.S. Junior National Team, Fernandez currently competes for Mexico.

Southridge High School of Beaverton, Oregon, captured the girls team title and its first overall team championship, while the all-boys St. Louis University High School won its fifth straight boys team championship.

2015 National High School Championships

RESULTS

OVERALL TEAM COMPETITION

Champions:	Southridge HS	Beaverton, OR
Runners Up:	Sprague HS	Salem, OR
Third Place:	Beaverton HS	Beaverton, OR

BOYS TEAM COMPETITION

Champions:	St. Louis University HS	St. Louis, MO
Runners Up:	Lindbergh HS	St. Louis, MO
Third Place:	Beaverton HS	Beaverton, OR

GIRLS TEAM COMPETITION

Champions:	Southridge HS	Beaverton, OR
Runners Up:	Sprague HS	Salem, OR
Third Place:	Cor Jesu Academy	St. Louis, MO

BOYS SINGLES

<i>Champions</i>	<i>Runners-Up</i>
#1 Gold	Sebastian Fernandez
#2 Gold	Brian Kissel
#3 Gold	Brian Cross
#4 Gold	Adam Maduell
#5 Gold	Chris Schulze
#6 Gold	Daniel Byrne

GIRLS SINGLES

<i>Champions</i>	<i>Runners-Up</i>
Lexi York	Erika Manilla
Sophie Herman	Sydney Ferguson
Molly Burchfield	Jordan Heater
Anna Stell	Tori Niska
Ashley Smith	Maya Holeman
Julia Ide	Sam Coleman

BOYS DOUBLES

<i>Champions</i>	<i>Runners-Up</i>
#1 Gold	Gavin Usher/Will Hoge
#2 Gold	Joel Belsterling/Noble Smith
#3 Gold	Brian Cross/Charles Roselli

GIRLS DOUBLES

<i>Champions</i>	<i>Runners-Up</i>
Kristine Holman/Madison Kerzel	Jenna Kelly/Sophie Herman
Molly Burchfield/Tori Niska	Hanna Kingstad/Natalie Lorati
Mikayla Harvey/Anne Staten	Hannah Rasch/Maria Zak

MIXED DOUBLES

<i>Champions</i>	<i>Runners-Up</i>
#1 Gold	Justin Ide/Kaitlyn Boyle
#2 Gold	Gavin Usher/Lindsay Briglia
#3 Gold	Thomas Molina/Tori Niska





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