

The Racquetball Reporter

SUMMER 1994

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Huczek crowned 1994 10 & Under National Champion

by Chris Cole

Michigan's Jack Huczek, no stranger to success, recently returned from the AARA's Junior Olympic Championships with the Gold Medal in the Boys 12 and under division, after besting Jim Gooden of Houston in two quick games. It is the fifth straight time Huczek has beaten Gooden for a major Juniors title and is putting the Michiganian on a collision course with both Junior legends David Simonette and Sudsy Monchik who are tied with the most National Championships. Each won at least one National in each age bracket from 10 and under up through 18 and under.

Chatanooga, Tennessee was the site of this year's Junior Olympics, but a change of scenery did not alter the outcome of last year's event in Baltimore, Maryland. Huczek, with excellent shot-making ability (he pinches better from deep court than most A players) and drive serving, dominated his division me-

thodically without losing a game or his composure. His finals opponent was not so fortunate as Huczek broke a 4-4 tie in game one and never looked back. Gooden, a tough player in his own right, lost his composure after 4-4 and could not get his momentum going against such a formidable opponent and fell 15-6, 15-5.

Shane Wood of Massachusetts and Tammy Brockbank of Idaho were this year's winners in 18 and under and earned a spot in this year's U.S. Olympic Festival where Wood will team with U.S. Team Member John Ellis in doubles and Brockbank will play singles.

Other winners included Sadie Gross (MN, Girls 16 and under; Eric Storey (UT), Boys 16 and under; Katie Gould (MO), Girls 14 and under; Rocky Carson (CA), Boys 14 and under; Rebecca Doloff (TX), Girls 12 and under; Shane Vanderson (OH), Boys 12 and under and Crystal Winfrey (OH), Girls 10 and under.

In this Issue...

View of the President
Page 2

State Singles Results
Player Award Winners
Page 3

Olympic Festival
Page 4

Racquetball One
Page 7

B-C-D Results
Page 9

Alpena Tournament
Page 10

Cole named Junior
Team USA Head Coach
Page 11

Thoughts from Tom
Page 13

AARA competitive mem-
bership application
Page 14

View of the President

by Chris Cole

As I sit in front of my computer trying to think of all the things that I would like to say in my last official capacity as President of the Racquetball Association of Michigan, nostalgic feelings are winding their way all through my brain. Growing up in this state and playing virtually all of my career here has given me lots of opportunities to meet wonderful people in Michigan's racquetball community. The friendships I have made through this sport will not change with my move, they are indeed permanent and will

Good Luck Chris!

RAM would like to extend their best wishes to Chris and Nancy Cole as they begin life anew in Houston, Texas.

Thank you Chris for your dedication and leadership as both member and president of the RAM Board of Directors. Your presence and input will be missed.

go with me wherever I am.

As some of you know, my wife Nancy and I have moved to sunny Houston, Texas so she can go to Law School at the University of Houston. I am working at Chancellors Racquet and Fitness Club as an exciting time for Nancy and I, new challenges face both of us in and away from racquetball. While I am missing all my friends and family back in Michigan, I have already begun throwing myself at my work to bring a quality racquetball program to this facility.

When I look back on my record with the RAM Board I have some ambivalent feelings. I am happy with some of the things we are able to accomplish and implement. I am unhappy, however, that I was not able to stem the exodus of members that seem to be plaguing all state associations. If I could have stayed another 2-3 years I know I could have brought the numbers back up to where they were at the time of the Super Seven Tournaments.

Because of this sense of incompleteness, I am planning to run a couple of weekend and one-day only events in Michigan with the proceeds going to Junior Team USA, as I am now the

continued on page twelve

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W.T. Blakeslee
Ken Bonnett
Christopher Cole
Marta Rubcich
Bruce Goldhammer
Jim Easterling

**RAM 1994
Player Award Winners**

**Outstanding Male
Player**

Joel Bonnett

**Outstanding Female
Player**

Laura Patterson

**Most Improved
Male Player**

Hal Rosenberg

**Most Improved
Female Player**

Carol Hoss

**Sportsmanship
Awards**

Gordon Kelly

Linda Eldred

Outstanding Junior
Jack Huczek

Best Club
Grand Rapids MAC

**Contribution to
Michigan Racquetball**

RAM Women's
Committee

Marta Rubcich

Laura Patterson

Nancy Cole

Faye Cobb

Diana Trombley

Kathy Trotter

Julie May

1994 State Singles Champions

Men's Divisions

Open

Jai Shekhawat

A

Larry Panetta

B

Maurie Adams

C

Ken Watson

D

John Trendall

Novice

Christian Adams

25+

Jess Graves

30+

Jai Shekhawat

30B

Rick Beck

35A

Jack White

35B

Rick Davenport

40+

Stu Hastings

40B

Al Klann

45A

Doug Toth

45B

Al Mell

50A

George Stec

50B

Larry Cole

55A

Paul Becker

60+

Richard Caretti

Women's Divisions

Open

Val Springer

A

Kathy Veck

C/D

JoAnn Caleo

25/30+

Anthnita Dickerson

30B

Diane Trombley

35A

Cindy Seiders

40/45

Leslie Kishigan

Junior's Divisions

18B

Jim McGrail

8MB

Jamie Lutz

Kalicia Gentry

Cole takes bronze at 1994 U.S. Olympic Festival

The Gateway Arch city of St. Louis, Missouri hosted the 1994 United States Olympic Committee's U.S. Olympic Festival, and former Michigan resident Chris Cole saw his chances of defending his 1992 World Championship fall one round short.

Thirty-two of racquetball's best were invited to participate in this year's festival based on their finishes at both National Singles and Doubles, Intercollegiates, and Junior Nationals. Play began on July 6th and concluded on July 10th as the athletes showed their prowess to a

sold-out crowd each day. Racquetball was the first sport to sell out once Festival tickets went on sale and this was made more impressive when it became revealed that St. Louis had broken the Festival total attendance record easily.

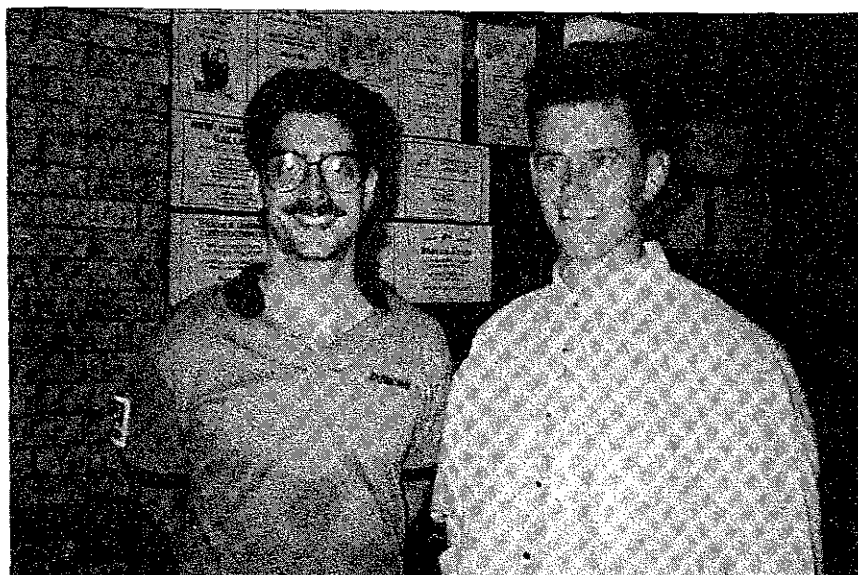
Cole's quest to earn a spot back on the U.S. National Team had begun two months earlier when he took 6th at the Houston National Singles. The Festival Gold Medalist would earn a birth on the Team and this was the defending World Champion's final opportunity. "It has been a long, pressure packed haul

since '92," said the 27 year-old, "It appears that I prepared hard for the climb to the top, but not for the stay on the summit."

The eight singles players are split into groups of four and the first three days find the groups fighting it out amongst themselves, with the top two from each group advancing to the medal rounds. Group B consisted of Brian Rankin, Jeff Evans, Scott Reiff, and newly crowned 1994 National Champion Micheal Bronfeld. Group A had Cole, Derek Robinson, Dan Fowler and 1991 National Champion Tim Sweeney.

Cole began the preliminaries with a two-game win over Fowler and faltered next against Sweeney for the first time in nearly three years. Their rivalry has become the stuff of legend and the 11-5 tie-breaker win was Sweeney's first since beating Cole at the '92 Intercollegiates. The match saw its usual spectacular play and Cole's patented comeback ability; he was down match-point in game two 14-9 and won 15-14 saving at least eight match points. Sweeney, however came out blazing in the tie-breaker with four crack aces to race to 9-0 before Cole ever scored.

Continued on page six



Above, World Champions Chris Cole (left) and Cliff Swain pose at the exhibition event held to raise money for Davison resident, Gary Davidson who is ill with leukemia. The event, held at the Davison Racquet and Fitness Club raised approximately \$1,700.00. The money is being used in Mr. Davidson's search for a bone marrow donor.

IT'S A SWEET GAME,
WHEN THE MIND IS HUSHED AND
THE BODY HUMS.



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EKTELON 

BENETON
SPORTSTECH

Cole falters at Festival; Reiff emerges Champion

continued from page 4

before Cole ever scored.

With a 1-1 match record, it was imperative that Cole win his last round against Robinson in order to advance to the Medal Rounds and for the gold. Not only did he win, but he played the best has played in nearly a year, dispatching Robinson 15-4, 15-1. This on the heels of Robinson's stunning 15-5, 15-4 opening triumph over Sweeney and his 15-3, 5-4 win over Fowler. "Derek was surely the Freight Train those first two days, but my game style has given him fits every time we have played. My first and third matches were fabulous, while my second was bad in that I played very tense and not to lose instead of being relaxed and playing to win. I hope I can break that string in the first Medal match."

Alas, it was not to be. Cole, seeded first from Group B, met the second seed from Group A, Reiff, in the first Medal Match. He played exactly like he did against Robinson up to game point, at 14-9, but following that he tightened up and revisited Sweeney match from two days earlier making many unforced errors and not putting the ball away on easy set-ups. "At 14 I hit a perfect pass

to the backhand corner and it handcuffed him. All he could do was hit it behind his back and the bloody thing went five miles to the front corner and rolled out right in front of me. That shot seemed to take the steam out of me and the match was over from then on. I just could not get back into my zone. What a terrible way to lose," Cole reflected.

The other Medal match saw best friends Robinson and Evans in the Festival's best battle, with Robinson squeaking by in one for the ages, 15-14, 14-15, 11-9. This set up a Reiff/Robinson final and Cole/Evans for the Bronze. With no pressure on him, Cole played well and won the breaker to capture his third Festival medal in four years. "It was refreshing to play for the first time since 1991 with no pressure on my back. Part of me is crushed that I won't be going to Mexico next month to defend my World Championship, but part of me is relieved that it is finally over," he said.

Robinson, despite his long first medal match, outlasted Reiff in the breaker to capture the biggest victory of his career and earn a birth on the World and Pan American Teams.

Letters ...

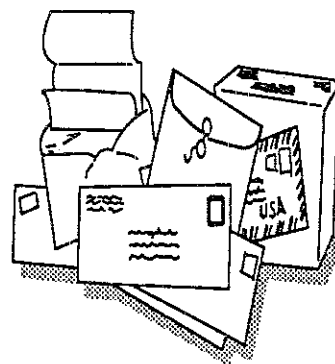
Dear RAM,

I was truly surprised and honored to have been voted recipient of the Sportsmanship Award for Male 1994. This is a high honor indeed. Especially with so many other deserving competitors in our midst.

Thank you all who kindly voted for me. My thanks to all RAM officers and Board Members/volunteers for making their personal sacrifice to ensure a viable season of racquetball in Michigan.

Gordon Kelly

Letters to the RAM
newsletter can be mailed
to:
The Racquetball Reporter
2834 Yale St.
Flint, MI 48503



Racquetball One ready for '94-95

by Ken Bonnett

The 1994-95 Racquetball One Tournament Series will consist of seven events this season beginning with the very popular Petoskey stop October 7-9th. There will be a Racquetball One event every month following the Petoskey event, with the Grand Finale being held again at the beautiful Michigan Athletic Club in East Lansing in March. A Grand Rapids City Invitational and State Championship Warm-up will once again be offered in April for all those players who wish to polish their strokes the week before the states.

Events will rotate from a round robin format to a double elimination format each month. Round robin events will be run as they have been in the past and the double elimination events will guarantee each player at least two matches, as first round losers will immediately drop to a lower division which they could still manage to win.

To reduce cost for all players, tournament shirts and souvenirs will not be included in the entry fee, but will be available for purchase at all events. At some events, hospitality will also be reduced or

eliminated, except for fruit and juice. For example, when you play at the Lansing MAC, a player can eat any time they like at the Athletic Club Restaurant. Why pay for lunch in advance if you are unable to take advantage of it because you are playing.

Round Robin events will once again have no refs, but the double elimination events will require all losers to ref. All other rules will basically remain the same

as they have in the past.

A few things will not change! All Racquetball One Events will continue to be well organized and well run! Prize money will be available in some divisions, and awards and prizes will once again be excellent.

For additional information about the 1994-95 Racquetball One Tournament Series, contact me at (616) 554-4820. Entry forms will be available September 1, 1994.

Tentative Schedule

* Oct. 7-9	National Health and Racquet Club Petoskey, MI
** Nov. 4-6	Michigan Athletic Club East Lansing, MI
* Dec. 9-11	Michigan Athletic Club Grand Rapids, MI
** Jan. 27-29	Grand Blanc Court Club Grand Blanc, MI
*** Feb. 17-19	Michigan Athletic Club Grand Rapids, MI
** March 24-26	Michigan Athletic Club East Lansing, MI
* April 21-23	Michigan Athletic Club Grand Rapids, MI

* Round Robin Format... Minimum of five matches

** Double elimination format... First round losers drop to a lower bracket

*** Senior Plus Event... Round Robin event focusing on all age brackets 30+, but there will be ability levels for the younger players too.

Play the Hall of Famer in October tournament

By Jim Easterling

On Saturday, October 22, 1994, RAM will sponsor "Play the Hall of Famer Day." This fund raising event will be held at the beautiful Michigan Athletic Club (MAC) in East Lansing from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm. The event is to raise money to update the existing Hall of Fame and to expand it to include new inductees from 1993.

The Hall of Fame project has not been updated in quite a few years and has gotten expensive with the cost of plaques and signs. The Hall of Fame which will now be housed at the Michigan Athletic Club will include a Hall of Fame sign and plaque for each inductee showing their picture and including a brief summary of their racquetball accomplishments.

The event is open to all and the MAC club will not charge any guests fees for those participating in the event. Have you ever wanted to test your best skills against some of the best in Michigan? Well here is your chance. The cost is \$20 for a half hour of court time with the player of your choice. Hall of Famers who have donated their time for this event include: Irene Ackerman-Churma, Tom Brownlee, Jim Easterling,

Larry Fox, Lynn Hahn, Donna Henry, Fred Lewerenz and Denny Wood.

So put October 22 on your calendar. If you wish to reserve your slot for a particular player ahead of time, please call me at (517) 887-0460. If you can not make it in October and wish to make a donation, please make your check out to AARA Region 9 and mail it to the Hall of Fame, 321 Village Dr., Lansing, MI 48911. All monies go totally to the refurbishing of the Hall of Fame and are tax deductible.

Current Hall of Fame Members

1984

Lynn Hahn
Fred Lewerenz

1985

Tom Brownlee
Jim Hiser

1986

Jim Easterling

1987

Stue Hastings
Bob Wilhelm

1988

Denny Wood

1993

Irene Ackerman-Churma
Larry Fox
Bill Gottlieb
Donna Henry
Gordon Kelly
Steve Keeley
Kathy Williams

B-C-D-Novice Tourney successful again

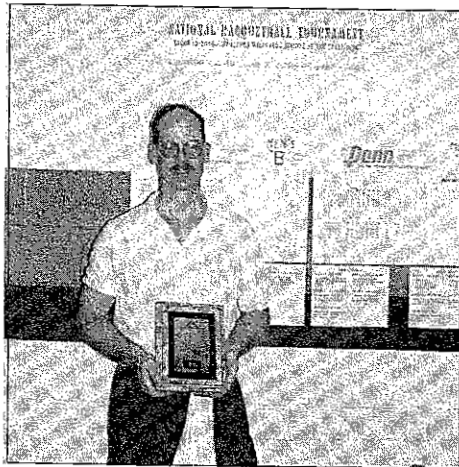
by Jim Easterling

The Brighton Athletic Club (formerly Woodland Racquet Club) played host to the B-C-D-Novice Round Robin Championships on March 19, 1994. This was a one day round robin tournament with 32 players featuring play in Men's B, C, D Novice and Women's D divisions. All players were guaranteed and played five matches and some divisions played as many as eight times. Competition was fierce and many of the games had 11-10 finishes.

This tournament was unique in that no open or A players were allowed to participate and that all players had the option of not ordering the sweatshirt and playing for a reduced fee. Brighton provided great hospitality which consisted of subs at noon along with various pasta salads and low calorie desserts. Dinner consisted of various kinds of pizza and sport drinks from Pepsi.

Sponsored by Penn Athletic Products, the B-C-D-Novice Championships featured fun for all and no refereeing responsibility for anyone. For many players, this was their first time and many were bitten by the tournament bug.

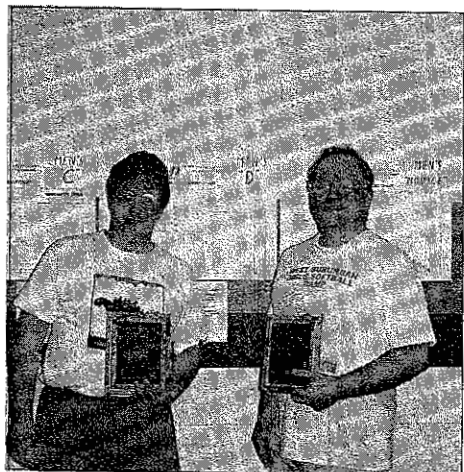
B-C-D-Novice Tournament Winners



Men's B
1st
John Veldman
2nd
Van Conway



Men's C
1st
Gary Balavitch
2nd
Steve Kolongowski



Men's D
1st
Don Cortez
2nd
David Gailbreath



Men's Novice
1st
Jeffrey Riffe
2nd
Mike Lebow



Womens' D-Novice
1st
Becky Kent
2nd
Anne Wallace

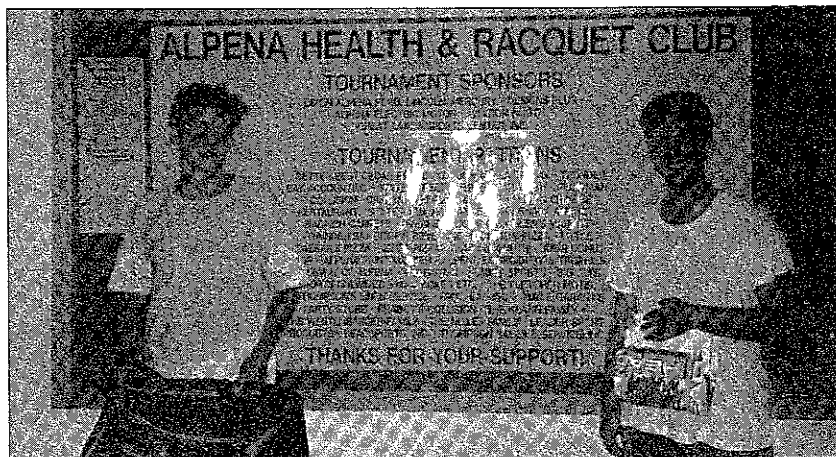


Alpena gears up for annual summer warm-up tournament

by Bruce Goldammer

Don't miss this one! August 19-21, 1994 is the fourth Annual Alpena Summer Warm-up Racquetball Tournament. Our management and staff hope your summer is going great, but not to far off the kids will be going back to school and those cooler months will be upon us once again. What a better way to start thinking about getting back into the "swing" of things and giving yourself a break from the hustle and bustle then by enjoying a leisurely fun-filled weekend up north on the sunrise side.

We call this tournament the "players" tournament because you the player, is the only thing that matters at our tournament and we will go way overboard to make sure you enjoy some great play, wonderful socializing with past and future friends, the best hospitality anywhere including our Saturday night "Pool Party" filled with dancing and entertainment. Tournament entry forms will be going out to all AARA members in Michigan and many clubs, so be on the lookout. Get your entry in early and guarantee yourself one fabulous weekend.



Above, 1993 Men's D finalsits Chris Adams (left) and Twayne Howard display their prizes.

Mark Your Calendars!

August 19-21, 1994
4th Annual Alpena Summer
Warm-up tournament

Come visit beautiful Alpena
and enjoy great competition

For information, contact
Bruce Goldammer
at (517) 354-3900

Cole named Junior Team USA Head Coach

Chris Cole has been named the new Head Coach for the AARA's Junior Olympic Racquetball Team. Cole brings to the table many years of teaching experience as he has been an instructor at the AARA's Elite Training Camp in Colorado Springs, Colorado for the past six years. His playing record at the amateur level boasts a singles World and National Championship, two gold medals from the Tournament of the Americas, two silver and one bronze medal from the Olympic Festival and numerous State and Regional Open titles.

His goal is to bring a sense of order and credibility to a program still in its infancy. "Many people do not understand that Junior Team USA has only been around for four years. The AARA is still growing with the program and I believe it is on the right track," Cole said. The first order of business was to improve the selection criteria so that more objectively was used so that those choosing the team had a fairer system to use. "The way we have changed the criteria is such that all sides can feel extremely comfortable. The coaches still have a say, the objectivity is now

there, and the kid's previous performances in the classroom and on the court are taken into account"

Forty-four juniors are chosen at the Junior Olympics from over 100 applicants to travel to the Olympic Training Center for the Junior Team's Try-out camp. There they will be taught the finer points of the game by Jim Winterton, US Adult Team Head Coach, Robin Levine, the 1994 Women's Open National Champion, Mary Lyons, the new Junior Team Assistant Coach and former National Doubles Champ and National Team member, Jim Hiser, Assistant Executive Director of the AARA and coach of Champions Cole and Jim Floyd, and Cole himself. At the end of the camp, 16 boys and girls will be selected to this year's Junior Team USA and earn the right to play for the United States at the Junior World Championships held every December at Jacksonville, Florida. Cole also is lobbying hard to send the Team to Australia next June on an ambassador tour. "We will probably have to raise between \$15,000-20,000 in order to go. I am firing to hit up as many major companies as I can to see if they are interested in sponsorship of the team, as well

as run a few fundraiser tournaments in both Michigan and Texas to help with the excess expenses. It is certainly a tall order, but I want to give these kids something that will stay with them the rest of their adult lives, and a trip to Australia would certainly fit this description."

Fortunately, many parents and juniors are interested in the Team and have suspended their negative views of how the team has been chosen in the past because of their respect for Cole and his reputation. Hiser believes Cole's name can only help the situation get better and says, "if Chris screws up, he has to answer to me not only from the AARA standpoint, but from a mentor standpoint. I guarantee he will do a better job than the previous coaches; he wants to live."

If anyone is interested in information concerning Junior Team USA or has a possible lead for sponsors, please call Jim Hiser at the AARA's national office (719) 635-5396 or Chris Cole at Chancellors Racquet and Fitness Club in Houston (713) 772-9955.



View of the President...

continued from page two

new Head Coach, and with the goal of increasing RAM membership by paying half of the AARA competitive license fee. That is right, I will pay \$10 of all player's AARA membership fee, renewal or new, leaving only \$10 left for each player to chip in for their membership. It is a program that cannot lose (provided I come up with the needed sponsor money!) in that we can raise money for the Junior Team and increase the number of RAM members at the same time.

The number of such events that I run in Michigan will depend on how the first couple are received. Junior Team USA needs about \$5,000 for Junior Worlds in Jacksonville, Florida and at least \$20,000 for a trip to Australia next June. I am planning on finding one or two major sponsors for Australia, but the more I can raise myself, the less I will have to ask for from a potential sponsor, making the success probability increase. For those wondering, I will not be keeping any money from these events for myself, consider it my way of giving back to the racquetball players in Michigan and giving some-

thing to our Junior Team after all that I have achieved and attained in this sport.

Please be on the look out for entry forms for these events, I will try and get them out as soon as I can. The formats will be regular for the two-day (must last twice) and either regular or round-robin for the one day. Entry fee will be as low as possible, probably in the \$25 range, hospitality will be at a minimum unless I get a major food sponsor and inexpensive plaques will be given away in all divisions to save money. If I can get an extra sponsor to kick in around \$500, I will split this for prize money in the Open divisions and I will give the same amount for the women as I do the men. I plan to also limit the Men's Open division to make it competitive and exciting as possible, this means that these groups will not be available for the Big Four (myself, Jimmy, Joel or Nick Rallis) to play in. There is a great number of middle Open talent in our state and I think it would be exciting and more would play knowing they all had a good chance at placing and taking home a little spending cash. This is not to punish the Four of us for our skill level, but I would

like to cultivate more of a true Men's Open division instead of provide a few players with their monthly rent payments, myself included.

The coming year will be difficult for the RAM Board, but it still has excellent people who care about the game and the people who play it in Michigan. Tom, Lou Ellen, Marta, Rick and Maureen cannot do it all by themselves and I am sick of hearing people in our state complain about this and that without ever offering solutions that will benefit all, or volunteering their own time to help promote our sport. It is one thing to run programs at clubs or tournaments for profit and entirely different to help with the AARA and RAM without seeing a dime in return. Do not get me wrong, I do indeed applaud those spending time promoting profit-making programs and tournaments because they are needed, but at the same token take a moment the next time you start criticizing the RAM Board members or RAM's programs and remember that these people do this stuff for free. For RAM to continue promoting the sport for all those who en-

continued on page thirteen

Thoughts from Tom...

by W. T. Blakeslee

I wasn't going to write an article this month for the paper, however it would be the first time that I didn't take the time to make some appropriate comments in your newsletter. In years past, in summer papers, I would challenge you with cross training ideas and thoughts like "fun with super chargers." There is really a lot of historical change in the world of racquetball that I believe is in progress and would like to comment on those changes and their impact.

Nationally, the rumor is that Executive Director, Mr. Schiller, of the USOC has resigned to take a job in professional sports. Luke

and he were strong allies and supporters of our sport. To fill this void will require lots of hard work, effort and luck to be as successful as in the past.

The role of the manufacturer is also changing. Ektelon is relocating to the East Coast and is changing their entire management team over to Prince. They were a big financial supporter of the AARA and we need the continued support. Finally Egan is rumored to be buying "E" force.

Locally, RAM rumors are unfortunately true. Chris Cole has really relocated to Texas. He will be sorely missed as one of our State's strongest racquetball supporters. His National and State influence, thoughts, ideas, dedication, hard work and effort will be greatly missed. He can not be replaced. We will struggle to fill the gap for awhile until someone steps forward to fill his shoes. For me the pain is even more difficult to endure, I have known Chris since the age he was 14 and have watched him grow, develop, and marry — he is truly a close friend.

Finally the game of racquetball is the glue that holds us together and I am convinced the game of racquetball is here to stay.

President's view continued

joy it, more people out there need to give a little back and help the Board by either joining it or volunteering time to help with certain programs. Even one day per month would greatly help the Board and cost you very little time. That's it, sermon is over.

The schedule for next year's events is beginning to take shape and I am glad to see ol' stalwarts Ken Bonnett and Jim Easterling back running their respective events. Running a series of events is no easy task, I know from experience, so please support these two gentlemen since they have given much time and effort to provide a tournament base for players in our state. If you or anyone you know would like some information about sanctioning a tournament, please contact Tom Blakeslee and he will fill you in on all the details.

In closing I would like to say a heart-felt "until we meet again" to all my racquetball compatriots back in Michigan. I have enjoyed the many years we have been able to make a difference in the game for the benefit of all Michigan players. Good luck in the future and I hope to see everyone again real soon.

RACQUETBALL ONE RAFFLE WINNER

Willie Wallace of Grand Rapids won the raffle of all raffles last April at the last Racquetball One Stop of the 1993-94 season. Willie and his wife Brenda will enjoy their cruise sometime this summer. The Wallace's should begin playing the lottery as both Willie and Brenda have been consistent winners this past season at several Racquetball One raffles. Congratulations and enjoy.

Membership includes:

- 



The Racquetball Reporter is printed expressly for the members of the Racquetball Association of Michigan