Racquetball Reporter

Fourth Quarter 2000 (Nov.)

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Total Sports Club Welcomes State Doubles Championships

Total Sports Club in Mt Clemens, will play host to the 2000 Raquetball Association of Michigan State Doubles Championships December 2-3, 2000

The \$25 per person/\$50 per team entry fee will guarantee great play and hospitality. A second event can be entered for \$15. If you renew your USRA membership, your second event is free!

Trophies will be awarded to first and second place winners in draws of at least eight. Each entrant will receive a tournament souvenir.

Play begins on Saturday, Dec 2. In divisions of draws of 16, play may begin Friday night.

The entry form is enclosed in this issue. See you there!

Michigan Players Travel to National Doubles Tourney

Expectations were high as several teams from Michigan headed to Baltimore for the 2000 version of the USRA's National Doubles Champion-With three golds and ships several silvers/bronzes in '99. there was every indication that the same medalling teams from our state would do well again this time around Unfortunately, past performance was no indication that success was a sure thing.

Claire Kruse and Sandy White, Gold medalists last year in Women's 35+ A/B, were forced to play in 25+ A/B because of that win, yet continued their medal ways by capturing the Silver They fell to Virginians Kelly Goddard and Karen Widger in the finals 15-11, 15-9 Goddard and Widger also won the Silver in Women's 35+ A/B so they were indeed a talented team. Said Cruse, "Karen

and Kelly WON this division. We played well, but made more mistakes than they did."

This marked the third consecutive year that Kruse and White have medaled at National Doubles. They took two Bronzes in '98, a Gold in '99 and this year's Silver in a variety of divisions. Couple that with the '99 Women's Open State Title and it's hard to understand why anyone would take this dynamic duo lightly. Kruse added, "not many people realize we've medaled in three straight years. It's great each year, but to do three consecutive years is significant."

Felicia Mann and Terry Fields lost to Goddard and Widger in two different divisions, Women's A and 25+ A/B, falling in frustrating tie-breakers According to Mann, "they were just more consistent than we

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View of the President

by W.T. Blakeslee

The purpose of the newsletter is to get you to play in the State Doubles at Total Sports December 2 & 3. Just like last year, renew your membership at that tournament and you can play the second event for free!! Last vear almost half of the tournament players took advantage of this GREAT DEAL. It is a great deal, please do it again and help our membership list grow!!! We are also trying to get a GREAT tournament souvenir. Remember the fleece sweater vest last year, this year I am working on something just as nice! The entry form for the tournament is on page nine. You can also enter by addressing our web site michiganracquetball.org. Kevin Thomas has done wonderful job with the web site. For this tournament you can enter and find out your starting time online (hopefully). Remember

we will do everything possible to limit Friday play to disadvantage as few players as possible

Some good tournaments have already been completed as I write this article including the West Michigan Open and Players doubles tournament. Both of these tournaments had draws of almost one hundred players. At Players it was a very convenient one day Happy Halloween tourney for doubles only and quite a success. Don't forget the upcoming tournament at Maple November 11 & 12. It is the first time we have been at Maple in quite some time.

The good news with all these early tournaments is our membership is UP! We will be over the 400 mark for the first time in quite a while please help us sustain it Welcome Kevin Thomas to the board and very soon to the board will be Twayne Howard.

Check It Out!
Michigan Racquetball Online...

www.michiganracquetball.org



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Newsletter
The Racquetball Reporter
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Michigan Players Enjoy National Event

Continued on from page one

were In big points, we rushed some shots and missed the while they were aggressive without making as many mistakes as us."

Mann played three divisions and Fields two, but that was not a factor "Our stamina was fine," continued Mann, "and two tie-breakers show how closely we were matched as teams If we play them again next year and handle their serves better, the outcome might be totally different."

RAM
State Doubles
Championships

Dec. 2-3, 2000

Total Sports Club
Mt. Clemens

See Entry Form Page 9



This Bronze for Mann and Fields follow up a Silver in the same division back in '98. They had hoped to win it all and improve on that '98 finish, but Goddard and Widger just would not allow that.

The only other medalist from Michigan was Chris Cole who captured a Bronze in Mixed Open with Michelle Lucas from Virginia. The #4 seeds met up in the semis against #1 seeded Drew Kachtik from Texas and Jackie Paraiso (#1 ranked women's professional) of San Diego.

The score stayed close through the first game as Lucas matched Paraiso on the right side shot for shot until 9-9 "At that point," interjects Cole, "I made several mistakes, both skipping and leaving set-ups high You can't do that against Drew and Jackie Michelle played her tail off and I was the weakest player on the court the rest of the way from pressing too hard."

For Cole, this was his second year in a row winning a Bronze. He teamed with Sandy White in Mixed 25+ last year, but they lost in the quarters this time out in Mixed 30+ to the eventual Silver medal winning team of Steve Levy and Doreen Fowler from Oklahoma and Maryland, respectively "It was tough going against them as Doreen is ranked #8 on the women's tour and Sandy had to work hard just to play even with her. I outplayed Steve in the first game,

but not in the next two and that was the difference."

Several other Michigan players journeyed to Baltimore for the fun and racquetball atmosphere only a National event can offer: Ron Barton/Edwin Moore in Men's A; John Coaker/Bob Gravelyn in Men's 45+; Tom Blakeslee/Gravelyn in Men's 50+; Stacy Barbas/Claire Kruse in Women's A: Veronica Brown/Barbas in Women's 25+ A/B; Kathy Trotter/Janet Insko in Women's 40+ and 45+; Coaker/Kruse in Mixed 40+: Felicia Mann/Barton in Mixed A: and Brown/Moore in Mixed

Another Michigan resident just moved back to our Wolverine state after a couple of years down in sunny Arizona and competed in Baltimore. Fanfavorite Jimmy Floyd teamed with Arizonian Jeff Bell in Men's Open and Men's 30+ Many players remarked how great it was to see Floyd back in action, especially now that he and his wife Nikki are back in Canton Losing in the quarters in each division, the business career-minded Floyd still displayed the diving and retrieving ability he is renowned for. It will be great for tournaments in Michigan to have the theatrical Floyd back in the fold. Welcome back, Jimmy!

West Michigan Open Tourney Draws Many

By Twayne M. Howard

Michigan's first major tournament of the year took place October 20-22, 2000 at the Michigan Athletic Club in Grand Rapids The West Michigan Open saw nearly 100 competitors vying for the title of Champion in 18 divisions in what has already bome a premier event on the Michigan racquetball tournament circuit

Play started Friday evening as the MAC welcomed players from all over the state Participants received a high-quality embroidered golf shirt and entry into a drawing for over \$1000 in door prizes Prizes included two certificates for a two night stay at Comfort Inn, a beem box from Philips, racquetball lessons donated by Mike Anderson, Chris Cole, Jim Hamilton, massage therapy sessions donated by A Balanced Life, racquetball gear donated by Ektelon, racquet stringing donated by myself and many others.

A tough Men's Open Division got a lot tougher when Chris Cole added to the draw Suddenly things got a lot more serious. Shannon Kohl and Mike Anderson came back from a long summer off to advance into the Semi-Finals These sparring partners shook off the rust and put on quite a show for the large crowd In the end, Shannon was able to get to just a few more balls and close the match in two games On the other side of the draw Chris Cole had little trouble advancing through his Semi-Final match against Glenn Williams. As always, Glenn put up a good fight, and got some good things on video tape, but unfortunately, he was no match for the former World Champion That trend continued into the Finals as Chris easily defeated Shannon. Shannon was clearly nervous in his first match against Chris, but this was valuable experience for the Hope College Freshman

The Women's Open Division featured great round robin play Every match was close, and these ladies continued their usual exceptional play In the end, Laura Patterson edged out Paula Saad and Stephanie Cobb for the Championship

Jeff Connell won the Men's A Division Championship. John Gervasi and Attica Mitchell faced off in the first Semi-Final. Attica had an off day and John was able to capitalize. On the other side of the draw, Jeff defeated Ron Barton for the right to face John in the Finals. The Championship was as close as can be as Jeff edged John out in the end

The Women's B Division was also hotly contested in round robin fashion. Beth Feiertag had an unfortunate run-in with Wendy Ford's racquet. Fortunately, Beth had earned enough points to win the Championship. She beat out Madhu Sahaney who was a late addition to this division

The biggest and one of the most competitive draws of the tournament was the Men's B Division When it was finished, Mark Berishaj was the only man left standing literally Mike Sobczyk looked in mid-season form as he advanced past Tim Theisen in the Semi-Finals The ageless wonder, Art Murphy, continued to amaze, confuse and defeat competitors in every one of the nine or ten divi-

sions he competed in He met his match in the Semi-Finals in Mark Art showed signs of finally tiring and Mark advanced in two games. The hotly contested Finals saw each player have ups and downs. Unfortunately, the last down was Mike's as he suffered an apparent knee injury and was forced out at 7-6 in the tiebreaker Mike promised he'd be back in two months and I certainly don't want to face him when he is Congratulations to Mark and speedy recovery to Mike.

The Men's C Division went a little better for Mike Bowden Mike advanced into the Finals after defeating Paul Kaiser in the Semi-Finals. The other Semi-Final featured Corey Sobczyk and Chris Goudie Chris and his brother Scott made their return to tournament competition after a decade away and believe me, it won't take long for them to advance to the top ranks. This weekend though, Corey had enough to hold on and win in three tough games. Unfortunately for Corey, the cold he was fighting all weekend caught up with him in the Finals as Mike took home the title and the hardware.

Every player in the Men's D Division deserves a quick mention First is tournament sponsor, Terry Nicholas without whom this would have been a lot more difficult. Two ladies, Wendy Ford, and Beth Feiertag took up the challenge and played tough against the men. Dean Horiski the Fitness Director at the Madison Athletic Club played. Isn't it great to see someone in his posi-

Continued on next page

tion come out and support our sport? Joe Czyzk used the West Michigan Open as his first tournament ever Hopefully, it's the first of many And, of course, everyone was thrilled to have Neil Young in I never knew "The Godfather of Grunge" could play that well. In the end, Dean defeated Neil, and then Wendy in two tough tiebreaker matches to win the Championship.

Scott Goudie made good his return to the tournament circuit by winning the Men's 20+ C/D Championship After defeating Paul Kaiser in the Semi-Finals, the big shooter from Muskegon got by Dan Whiston in the Finals Dan took out Rob Prevost in the other Semi-Final

Dean Horiski won the Men's 20+C/D Consolation Division on the merit of two forfeits. (Hey... take it how you can get it)

The Men's 25+ Open Division was clearly one of the most competitive divisions in the tournament. Craig Dennings, who has yet to get a break in West Michigan Open seeding, had to face Chuck White in the Semi-Finals Craig is still looking for that break as he lost in three. Last year's Champion Gordon Gallagher defeated Ron Barton in the second Semi-Final The Final was a war and could not have been any closer At 10-10 in the tiebreaker, Chuck sent a serve into the forehand corner. As he lunged to retrieve it, Gordon's front leg hit a wet spot and he went down very awkwardly. His return was an easy set up for Chuck who killed it ending the match. After several minutes, Gordon exited the court and appeared to have no longterm injury. We'll hope not wand look for Gordon next time

The first Semi-Final in the Men's 25+ A/B Division saw Joe Simmons easily dispense with Mike Sobzevk in a re-match of an earlier B Division match Andre Roy required a tough, three-game marathon to get past Jason Gorski in the second Semi-Final continues his trend of needing a tiebreaker in nearly every match he plays. Sounds like too much work for me. Andre stayed true to form by defeating Joe in the Finals tiebreaker.

Tom Ford defeated Hal Rosenberg in the Semi-Finals of the Men's 35+A/B Division Tom had to win just to keep pace with his better half Wendy who was tearing her way through two divisions Hal made a return to tournament play after a long layoff. We'll hope he can make it out to more tournaments in the future as he showed that he hasn't lost a thing The top half of the draw featured George Goudie beating fellow lakeshore resident Jeff Tloczynski the Semi-Final. George then went on to claim the Championship by defeating Tom in three tough games

As always, some of the best racquetball at any tournament takes place in the 45+ Open Division These veterans can still cover the court, and they know better than most what to do with the ball when they get to it. In the first Semi-Final, Bob Gravelyn took three games to get by Tom Brownlee The scores were 15-13. 13-15, 11-9 not too much breathing room there. Lewis Forrest had a slightly easier time with David Lund. Lewis has seldom looked better in defeating Bob in another tiebreaker Championship.

The Men's 45+ A/B Division also featured great play by many crafty veterans David Lund defeated the irrepressible Art Mur-

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Juniors a Priority at West Michigan Event

A goal of this tournament has always been to grow racquetball at the junior ranks. Saturday morning, fourteen of Michigan's best juniors took to the courts of Orchard Hills Athletic Club and the MAC to battle it out in two divisions

The Junior A Division went to reigning Mens D State Champion JD Brown as he defeated Alex

Brian Stafford made the long trip from Brighton to win the Junior A Championship over Nick Tloczynski from Muskegon

Most of these juniors participate in a Juniors Clinic that is held at Orchard Hills every Sunday from 4:00 to 6:00. If you, or someone you know is interested in participating, helping, supporting, or in some way getting involved, please contact Dale Brown at (616) 957-6468.

This is the future of our sport, and we think the future looks bright.

Throughout the weekend, raffle tickets were sold to benefit the local juniors programs. Nearly \$2,000 worth of E-Force equipment was raffled off including several racquets, gloves, bags, and shirts Over \$450 was raised for this worthy cause. With the quality of players coming from this program, we have a good idea of where the next generation of racquetball players is coming from

Thanks to everyone who supported the raffle

West Michigan Tourney Successful

Continued from page five

phy in one Semi-Final 15-14, 15-14. As always, Art put up a huge fight. The other Semi-Final went to George Goudie who defeated Pete Harvey on the way to the Finals. George defeated David Lund and claimed his Second of the Tournament.

Ed Stafford made the trip from Brighton with his son who played in the Juniors Division. Ed defeated Joe Czyzk in the first semi-Finals of the Men's 55+ C/D Division. Roger Kamps defeated 78 year old Walt Gutowski in the second Semi-Final. Ed defeated Roger in the Final making it the second Championship for the Stafford boys.

Saturday evening, the courts cleared up and 18 doubles team took to the action Felicia Mann and Stacey Barbas won the Women's Open Doubles Championship by narrowly defeating the second Place team of Laura Paterson and Stephanie Cobb as well as Phyllis Westveer and Maureen Price. It's great to see this many women's teams participating, and we'll look forward to more next year

In the Men's Open Doubles Division, Mike Anderson and Chris Cole cased through the competition They defeated Hal Rosenberg and Chuck White in the Semi-Finals and Bob Gravelyn and John Coaker in the Finals Bob and John had defeated Steve Jazwicz and Rick Vrosh in the Semi-Finals I must say, if you've never seen a high-caliber doubles match in action, you've missed a lot Don't pass up the next opportunity!

The Mixed Doubles Division

went to Paula Saad and Jeff Connell This experienced team looked ready for State Doubles in defeating the teams of Felicia Mann and Ron Barton, who took Second Place, and Attica Mitchell and Phyllis Westveer

The Men's B/C Doubles saw Scott and Chris Goudie tear through the draw defeating Tony Connell and Twayne Howard in the Finals after defeating Norman Borden and Daryl Lewis in the Semi-Finals Tony and Twayne had to get past Dan Whiston and Roger Kamps in their Semi-Finals The Goudie's showed how strong the genetics are by adding another Championship to the Goudie Clan haul. Tony got to take home two E-Force racquets from the Raffle

For the second straight tournament, the biggest winner was racquetball itself. Tournament Directors Dale Brown, Dean Cline, John Coaker, Twayne Howard, and Paula Spagnuolo with the assistance of Lucy Levy put on a first-class tournament We would like to thank sponsors The Nicholas Plastics Group, E-Force, Ad Design, Perrigo Printing, Comfort Inn, Philips, Mike Anderson, Chris Cole, Jim Hamilton, Twayne Howard, A Balanced Life, Penn, Ektelon, The Michigan Athletic Club and Orchard Hills Athletic Club for their generous support We offer extra special thanks to Natalie K Howard for helping out when we needed her most.

West Michigan Tourney Welcomes New RAM Members

The West Michigan Open welcomed 28 members to the USRA.

Over the past seven months, the tournament has been successful in signing-up 45 players.

This has been a tremendous help to Michigan racquetball. For the first time in years, the RAM membership is over 400!

Thanks to the sponsors of the West Michigan Open and for all of their work to increase the RAM membership!

USRA Takes Control of Ladies Pro Tour

In a groundbreaking move, the United States Racquetball Association has formally announced that it will be taking over the reigns of the women'sprofessional racquetball tour from the former WIRT

Jim Hiser, Assistant Executive Director for the USRA, will be at the helm of the new Ladies Professional Racquetball Association and work with former WIRT Director Ed Willis in running the new organization

What is behind the USRA's decision to run the women'spro tour, even though it is an amateur organization? The answer is simple according to Hiser, the former Michiganian: "We don't have any young girls playing our sport. If we don't start developing a feeder system and a way to keep them going, we won't have young women to keep our Adult National Team strong."

This year's US Team roster at the World Championships bears the age factor out. Both singles players, Jackie Paraiso and Cheryl Gudinas, along with doubles team Kim Russell and Kersten Hallander are all over 30. Additionally, alternate Laura Fenton is over 35. Clearly, the US needs to develop more quality women or they will be in trouble for years to come on an international level.

"The handwriting has been on the wall for several years," notes former Junior National Team Head Coach, Chris Cole "Canada showed up at the Adult Worlds two months ago with a 25 and 23 year old, along with three junior girls under 20 Mexico sends more young girls to the Junior Worlds than the US and Canada combined The USRA needed to do something and this is a first and necessary step."

First and foremost, the USRA had to solidify tournaments to host stops. In the last couple of years, the women's tour has struggled to have 4-5 tournaments a season and that includes the US Open and Tournament of Champions that were run in conjunction with the In order to guarantee stops, the USRA Board of Directors has approved funding to make sure prize money will be available and the planned tournaments will come to pass. USRA Executive Director Luke St. Onge was quick to point out that no funds earmarked for amateur programs are being pulled to augment the LPRA. "The Executive Committee of the USRA Board of Directors (Jim Garner, Otto Dietrich, Chris Cole, Shelley Ogden and Annie Muniz) was shown that the LPRA budget was viable without tapping any funds that would normally go to amateur programs.

Raising new revenue and gathering more sponsors is how

we got it done."

In past years, tournaments had to raise all the prize money themselves and lose the pro division entry fees to the WIRT. Since the USRA is not trying to make money from this endeavor, tournaments only have to kick in half the normal prize money (the USRA will match that amount) and then that amount is cut even more because the USRA is allowing tournaments to keep all pro entry fees In short, it used to cost approximately \$8-\$10,000 to run a women's pro stop. Now, it could be less than \$3,000.

With this financial incentive, tournament directors have been lining up to get their own LPRA events. The following dates below have been confirmed and the USRA has a signed contract with each so the event won't be cancelled at the last moment, as often happened in the past

Sparking more interest and excitement beyond the usual tournament matches, Hiser and the LPRA players have agreed on some radical and intriguing rules changes for the inaugural season.

"We tried to view other sports and see why they are more fanfriendly and exciting. Then we looked at our sport and saw where some changes could be made to generate interest, even amongst players/fans who have been in the game for many

Continued on page eight

Positive Changes Highlight Ladies Pro Tour

years "

The most noticeable change is the serve. While it still stays at one serve, servers rotate five and five just like in ping-pong with a point being awarded for winning a rally regardless of who serves. "This will make every rally vitally important," Hiser continued, his eyes twinkling "The server won't be able to take huge chances because it costs them a point; and since the server changes automatically every five serves, one person won't be able to dominate an entire game. Games will be closer and that translates into greater excitement"

Additionally, games will be played to 21 points while scoring every rally and a match is best three out of five games to win. A player must win by two points each game just as on the men's pro tour. It will take some getting used to, but with players like #1 Jackie Paraiso and #2 Cheryl Gudinas behind it, change might be good or at least passable

"We need something, that's for sure," says the alwayssmiling Paraiso. "It will affect Cheryl and myself most since we are the top two players, but if I'm willing to give it a try, everyone else should too"

Echoes Gudinas, "as long as we can see how it goes this year and make changes next year if the players agree, then this can possibly work out for every-one."

Hiser went on to explain that the USRA plans to run the LPRA for three years and then hopefully get out of it totally and let Willis and the LPRA run on its own. "We are into amateur racquetball and don't want to get involved with the progame on a permanent basis. By then, if the LPRA is not a viable entity on its own, so be it. At least the USRA gave it a try and it just didn't make it. I think it will make it, however, and surprise everyone in the game."

Several factors support Hiser's optimism; from the state of heightened awareness for women's sports (the US women's soccer team, Marion Jones, title IX, the WNBA, etc) to the media/marketing departments that the USRA can wield to even full coverage in the only industry magazine (the USRA's RACQUETBALL MAGAZINE) available to players, the LPRA has distinct advantages

"The USRA Board is fully behind this project," states Cole, "and with strong leaders like Jim Hiser and Ed Willis to guide the world's greatest female athletes in Paraiso, Gudinas, Van Hees, Hallander, et all, the tour itself should be a resounding success."

To learn more about at www.ladiesproracquetball.com.

2000-2001 LPRA TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

October 19-21* Albuquerque, NM

November 3-5 Colorado Springs, CO

November 15-19 US OPEN, Memphis TN

> December 7-9* Denver, CO

January 19-21 Rosarito Beach, Mexico

> February 16-18 Arlington, VA

March 22-24* Chicago, IL

April 27-29 Syracuse, NY

May 2-5 PRO NATIONALS Las Vegas NV

> June 1-3 Portland, OR

* - LPRA event held in conjunction with men's IRT stops will begin on Thursday and end with finals on Saturday in between men's semi-final matches With the exception of the Hilton US Open in Memphis that will be scheduled for Friday-Sunday play.

Racquetball Association of Michigan

presents the

2000 RAM STATE DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS



December 2 & 3, 2000

at the

Total Sports Club

40501 Production Dr., Harrison Twp., MI



Directors: Tom Blakeslee (810) 468-2787 and Lou Ellen Fecher (810) 658-8097

Phone: (810) 463-2000

Fees: \$25.00 per person/\$50.00 per team/per event

Non-USRA members add \$20.00 (Play is limited to 2 events)

\$15.00 per person/second event

FREE SECOND EVENT IF YOU RENEW

YOUR USRA MEMBERSHIP!

USRA Sanctioned: Yearly USRA membership required. USRA Rules will prevail. Two games to 15, tie-breaker to 11.

Trophies and Awards: Trophies will be awarded to first and second place winners in divisions with draws of at least eight. Each entrant will receive a complimentary tournament souvenir.

Starting times: Play begins on Saturday, December 2, 2000. Divisions are limited to draws of 16 (in divisions of 16, some Friday play may be necessary). Call the club Thursday, December 1, 2000 after 7:00 PM for starting times or check the website. Efforts will be made to reduce Friday and Sunday play.

Tournament Ball: PENN ULTRA BLUE

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on			
			
ail to: Entry Fee: MPIONSHIPS USRA: MENS MOMENS			
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Membership includes:

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*Six issues of the USRA national publication, Racquetball Magazine

*RAM sanctioned tournament entry forms mailed to your home

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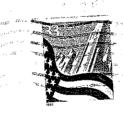
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