

Racquetball Reporter

Fourth Quarter 1999

Volume IX, Issue 4

Michigan Players Shine at National Doubles Tourney

Five Michigan players captured gold at the 32nd Annual Racquetball Championships on October 6-10, in Baltimore, Maryland

Claire Kruse of Rochester Hills and Sandy White of Warren, teamed to win their first national championship by capturing the gold in Women's 35+ A/B. Bob Gravelyn and John Coaker, both of Rockford, triumphed in the Men's 45+ A/B, to win their first national title as well. And, last but certainly not in the least, Ron Pudduck of Dexter, took the gold in the Mixed 60+ division with teammate Jo Kenyon of Florida.

Other medal winners include Duane Russell of Lansing who teamed with Marvin Shinagle of Ohio, to bring back the bronze in Men's 65+. Chris Cole (Grand Rapids) joined Sandy White in

Mixed 30+ to also capture a bronze medal.

Fourth place winners included Janet Insko of Ferndale and Kathy Trotter of Troy in Women's 45+ and Duane and Joanne Russell in the Mixed 65+ division.

Other Michigan participants include Ron Barton/Veronica Brown in Mixed 35+, Barton/Felicia Mann in Mixed A; Brown/Kathy Plourd (NY) in Women's 35+ A/B; Stacey Barbas/Paula Saad in Women's A and 35+; Pete Ruhala/Jeff Connell in Men's 35+ and 35+ A/B; and, Mann/Terry Fields in Women's A and 30+.

Please see page three for a detailed look at the gold medal winners.

Congratulations to all those who participated. See you at the State Doubles!

Get your entry in!

1999 State Doubles
Championships
set for
Total Sports Club

The 1999 Racquetball Association of Michigan State Doubles Championships will be held December 4-5 at the Total Sports Club in Mt. Clemens.

Highlighting the tournament this year, will be tough competition and fun as well as special entry pricing. If you renew or extend your USRA membership, you can enter a second event free. Also, the souvenir will be either a sweatshirt or fleece shirt (details are still being ironed out at this time).

As in the past there will be no play on Friday, and Sunday play will be kept to a minimum.

The entry form is enclosed in this issue. Come on out to play against our newly crowned national champs!

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View of the President

by *W.T. Blakeslee*

The State of Michigan was well represented at the USRA National Doubles in Baltimore with a few gold medal winners. Chris Cole has taken the time to write a very detailed report for this issue (see page three). This newsletter focuses on the upcoming RAM State Doubles Tournament set for the Total Sports Club in Mt. Clemens on December 4-5. This will be the best bargain and value of any tournament we have ever had in the RAM organization. We are trying to top last year's sweatshirt vest with something even better like maybe a fleece to wear in the winter. In addition, if you play this event and renew or sign up for a

RAM (USRA) membership you will get to play a second event FREE, that alone is a \$15 value. For all of you rocket scientists out there, by now you have figured out we will lose money running this event. We are giving back to the RAM members. Finally, I would like to comment on the USRA membership drive which ends with the millennium, please renew, we are trying to expand the membership base. That is the purpose of the FREE second event at the doubles and the "bring a friend to racquetball".

If you need something, I can be reached at racketboat@aol.com. As always, see you on the hardwood.

Michigan Racquetball Hall of Fame Nominations Are Now Being Accepted

The Michigan Racquetball Hall of Fame was developed in 1984, by the Racquetball Association of Michigan to honor those who demonstrate outstanding achievement, leadership or contribution to racquetball in the State of Michigan. The award is based upon years of consistent excellence in one or more of the following areas:

- Ability:** Through demonstration of exceptional playing skill in state, regional and/or national competition.
- Leadership:** Through generous giving of time and talent for the advancement of racquetball in Michigan by running tournaments, leagues, lessons and serving on the State Association.
- Contributions:** Through generous support, including money, facilities or products for the advancement of racquetball in Michigan.

If you know someone who qualifies (see criteria) and that you would like to nominate, send a letter including the name, address, phone number and a brief description of why you would like to see them honored to:

Hall of Fame Inductee
321 Village Dr.
Lansing, MI 48911-3760

Also state your name, address and phone number (home & work) in case we have to contact you for further information. **The deadline is November 15, 1999.** Contact Jim Easterling if you have questions at (517) 887-0459.

Racquetball Association of Michigan

RAM
Board of Directors

Tom Blakeslee
President
(810) 468-2787

Jack Huczek
Vice-President
(810) 373-5255

Sharon Huczek
Secretary
(810) 373-5255

Lou Ellen Fecher
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(810) 658-8097

Board Members
Nick Rallis
Felicia Mann
Kevin Thomas*

**Kevin Thomas is in the process of
becoming a member of the RAM
Board of Directors*

Sanctioning
Tom Blakeslee
(810) 468-2787

Junior's Committee
Sharon Huczek
(810) 373-5255

Newsletter
The Racquetball Reporter
2834 Yale St.
Flint, MI 48503

Five grab gold at 1999 National Doubles Tournament

by Chris Cole

"Revenge is a dish best served cold"

Ricardo Montalban as Khan in the classic movie, Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan

It was exactly revenge that Claire Kruse and Sandy White had in mind heading into their Women's 35+ A/B match against #1 seeds Paula McDermott and Claudia Sisti from Harrisburg, PA. Not only had McDermott/Sisti already won the Women's 45+ Gold earlier in the day, but they had also beaten Claire and Sandy last year in this very same tournament in the semi-finals. It was not a match recollection that sat well with either of them.

"They play a very slow, patient style, almost boring. Lots of ceiling balls and touch shots from deep court," recalled Sandy. Her partner agreed, "we had to stay focused the whole match because we knew they were just going to play their same style and it was up to us to beat them at their own game."

Game one went to McDermott/Sisti, but it was a fairly close one of 15-10. Game two was an absolute war as the Pennsylvania team blew out of the gate trying to make it a double Gold medal day for themselves. They were up 11-4 before Claire and Sandy righted the ship and roared back to tie the score 14-14. Facing match point, they survived two long rallies to get a chance at sending it to a breaker. Claire saved the day three straight times on the other team's second serve with fantastic retrieves of balls that very easily could have died. Her hustle led to a forehand rollout from center court by Sandy and the two were able to close out the game right after that.

The tie-breaker was never in doubt. "Sandy rolled out the first point and I knew we were going to win it," remarked Claire. True to being a team, Sandy said, "after the second game when I rolled out the first point in the tie-breaker, I knew the match was ours." The final score was irrelevant, but officially it ended at 11-4. Match and Gold Medal to Claire Kruse and Sandy White.

"My first thought after looking at Sandy, was 'I can't believe it,' then all of our Michigan friends went crazy and I knew it was true." Added her partner, "I was so tired that I was almost too drained to really get excited. It was so cool though how our friends reacted up above the court."

Indeed, Sandy had played her Mixed 30+ bronze medal match at 9:00 a.m. and then play the Women's 35+ A/B match a scant twenty minutes later. "I played nine matches in the two divisions and all but one went to tie-breaker. I was drained."

Claire, who started playing the sport late at age 28, said there were several factors motivating her this year. "Sandy and I played two divisions last year and lost in the semis in both. Because of getting so close in each, I played doubles all summer long to prepare for this tournament and worked out more than usual. I didn't want to go home without a gold medal this time around."

Claire still finds herself reliving moments from the tournament and offered this on the reaction once she returned home a Champion. "My husband bought me flowers and family members called or sent cards. It was so awesome. I didn't expect such a reaction from everyone."

Sandy, who has been playing since 1981, had similar feelings regarding their championship. "It first hit me

when we reached the airport on Sunday. Terry (Fields), Felicia (Mann), Stacey (Barbas), Paula (Saad) and Chris (Cole) were all there at the ticket counter. As Claire and me walked up to the counter, they all clapped for us right there in the airport! People started looking around and since we were wearing our medals, they also wished us congratulations!"

*Luck is not chance —
It's toil-
Fortune's expensive
smile is earned*

Emily Dickinson

Bob Gravelyn and John Coaker entered their Men's 45+ A/B final already having eclipsed their 1998 finish after their first match. "We lost first round last year," recalled Bob, "after I sprained or tore a tendon near my calf."

This time around, the #3 seeded Rockford residents were facing the #1 seeds Russ Palazzo (CT) and John Patalano (RI), after having made the final by surviving an 11-10 tie-breaker in the quarters and being down 8-2. What could top that?

"We started out slow in game one," notes John, "and got into in too late to catch them." Though they lost the first stanza, the momentum from clawing their way back to 10-15 carried over to game two. "We bolted to a 6-0 lead thanks to John's great serving, and coasted to a 15-1 win," remarked Bob. The breaker was neck and neck to 8-8 as neither team could gain much of an advantage. Palazzo and Patalano showed why they were seeded one as they took the lead briefly at 10-8 and then served four sets of serves for the

Continued on page four ➡

National Doubles continued...

match. However, Bob and John dug their spurs in and refused to die. They saved the four match points and tied it all even at 10-10. Game, match and gold medal!

Reaction back home was similar: "My family me me at the airport," John proudly exclaims, "and many of my friends have made a big deal about it." "My family was excited, while my friends were surprised that we did so well," echoed Bob. Both were especially surprised when the *Grand Rapids Press* picked up on the USRA's press release and published a story on them in the October 21 *Sports* section.

For Bob, a 25-year veteran of the game, this National Title was a fine addition to his State Doubles wins with partners Ken Bonnett, Mike Stephens and Jim Santino in various senior divisions. This title for John, who has played for 18 years in Calgary, Wisconsin and Michigan, goes with State Singles wins in Men's 40+B and 45+B back in 1999 and 1996. "I hadn't traveled out of the state to play until last year. Now, I would like to try some bigger events regularly like regionals or even national singles." Bob concurs on continuing with major events. "Tom Blakeslee has mentioned playing in the 50+ division with me in 2000 since John isn't eligible for two more years. I plan to keep at it for a while since I love playing doubles more than singles anymore."

Okay, no poetry is necessary for Michigan's other gold medallist, Ron Pudduck. You see, he has been on the receiving end of this gold medal thing before. In fact, this title is his 16th *National Singles or Doubles Championship*. He also has 8 international titles in his 18 year tournament career.

A former paddleball player who won

four championships in that sport, Ron began playing racquetball at the age of 46 and continues today at 64. "I have cut down on the number of tournaments I play in to about four per year. Time is important these days, with grandchildren and things to take care of around the house."

Well, he prepared enough to win a gold medal with teammate Jo Kenyon of Florida in the Mixed 60+ and a silver medal in Men's 60+ with Bobby Sanders. "I enjoy playing doubles more these days than I used to and it's fun to play with Jo. She's had a hip replacement and does great just to get around the court."

In the Men's 60s, Ron and partner Bobby were seeded first having won the division last year. They faced #2 seeds Paul Banales and Tom Moore, whom they jumped on immediately in last year's final winning in two straight. Turnabout is fair play — "They started out strong this year and did to us what we did to them. It was over quickly."

Besides being an avid player Ron is giving back to the sport. He is the current President of the NMRA, National Masters Racquetball Association, and when hearing him talk about the NMRA, it is clearly a labor of love.

"We have three events each year. The first one is in February and it's held in Fountain Valley, California while the second one will be hosted by RacquetPower down in Jacksonville, Florida. Our biggest one will be the International Masters Championships in July to be held at the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs."

To be eligible one has to be 45 years or older. If you are interested in finding out more information about the National Masters Racquetball Association, please feel free to give Ron a call at the NMRA hotline: (734) 426-7522.

Congratulations to all who represented Michigan so well!

Hall of Fame Criteria

The nominee must be 35 years of age or older.

Must have been a Michigan resident for at least 5 years.

Must have been involved in racquetball for at least 10 years, of which 5 years must have been in Michigan.

Nominee must be in good standing, have conducted themselves in the best interest of racquetball at the state and national level.

The nominee cannot nominate themselves.

The nominee may not be nominated more than 2 consecutive times and not more than a total of five times.

NOTE:

A present board member of the sanctioned association, a Michigan Hall of Fame member or any present state association member in good standing may nominate a candidate.

To prevent undue influence on RAM, a board member cannot be nominated until they have left the board for at least one year.

Any Michigan resident who is already on a national racquetball (USRA or NMRA) hall of fame, is automatically put on the Michigan Racquetball Hall of Fame.

Contact Jim Easterling at (517) 887-0459 if you have any questions.

Racquetball Association of Michigan

presents the

1999 RAM STATE DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS



December 4 & 5, 1999

at the

Total Sports Club

40501 Production Dr., Harrison Twp., MI



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

Fees: \$25.00 per person/\$50.00 per team/per event
Non-USRA members add \$20.00

\$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, tiebreaker to 11.*

Trophies and Awards: Trophies will be awarded to first and second place winners in divisions with draws of at least eight. Semi plaques will be awarded in full (draw of 16) divisions only. Each entrant will receive a complimentary sweatshirt or fleece shirt (to be determined).

Starting times: Play begins on Saturday, December 4, 1999. Divisions are limited to draws of 16. Call the club Friday, December 3, 1999 after 10:00 AM for starting times. NO Friday play. **Efforts will be made to reduce Sunday play.**

ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY DECEMBER 1, 1999

Name _____

Partner 1 _____

Address _____

Partner 2 _____

City _____ Zip Code _____

Club Affiliation _____

Phone (days) _____ (evenings) _____

Date of Birth _____

Sweatshirt size (circle one) M L XL XXL*

*please enclose \$2.00 for XXL

Make checks payable to RAM and mail to:

RAM STATE DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS

3152 S Henderson Rd

Davison, MI 48423

Entry Fee: _____

USRA: _____

Extra XXL: _____

Total: _____

Waiver clause: I hereby for myself, my heirs, executors, and administrators, waive and release any and all claim for damages I may have against RAM, the host club, tournament staff and their agents, for all injuries suffered by me in conjunction with my participation in this tournament

Signature _____ Date _____

guardian signature if over 18

DIVISIONS

circle correct choices/limit two events

MENS WOMENS

Open	25+	40B	60+
A	30A	45A	Mixed Open
B	30B	45B	Mixed A
C	35A	50A	Mixed B
D	35B	50B	Mixed C
	40A	55+	Mixed D

Divisions may be combined if less
than 8 teams enter a division

Alternate Division _____

JOIN THE RACQUETBALL ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN

Membership includes:

- *Membership card, USRA official rule book, travel and equipment discounts
- *USRA medical, life and liability insurance at sanctioned events
- *Four issues of the RAM newsletter, The Racquetball Reporter
- *Six issues of the USRA national publication, Racquetball Magazine
- *RAM sanctioned tournament entry forms mailed to your home
- *Eligibility to play in all sanctioned tournaments and receive state and national ranking points

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

SUPPORT THE US NATIONAL TEAM DONATIONS TAX DEDUCTIBLE

DATE _____

NAME _____

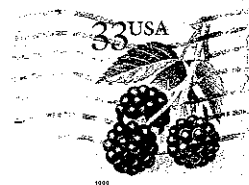
ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

DATE OF BIRTH ____/____/____ HOME PHONE _____

- _____ \$20.00 Adult competitor _____ \$15.00 Junior Competitor
_____ \$10.00 Junior Competitor (without Racquetball Magazine subscription)
_____ \$15.00 Racquetball Magazine subscription only

MAIL TO: RAM, 3152 S. HENDERSON RD., DAVISON, MI 48423



3152 S Henderson
Davison, MI 48423



RCR 11-8-99 112000
DIANNE & JIM EASTERLING
321 VILLAGE
LANSING MI 48911

EKTELON 