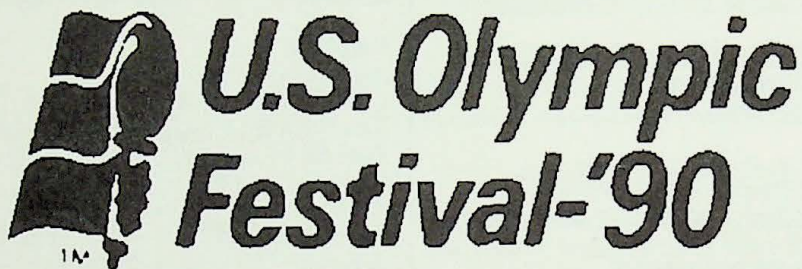


MSRA NEWS

Minnesota State Racquetball Association

Special Summer Edition



Juniors Compete at Festival

By Michael Kennedy

Heavy hitters like Tim Doyle, Egan Inoue, Michelle Gilman and Toni Bevelock may have dominated the racquetball courts at the 1990 Olympic Festival in the Twin Cities, but keep an eye on names like John Ellis, Doug Eagle, Joel Bonnett and Elkova Icenogle.

The first four may be among the top amateur racquetball players in the country, but the others are juniors who earned spots on the festival roster and are on their way to the top.

The four juniors found themselves locked in battle with Inoue, Gilman and 28 other seasoned players during the festival tournament, July 10-13 at the Highway 100 Racquet Club in Brooklyn Center.

Although the juniors lost most of their matches, the experience was worth the trip, said John Ellis, 17, from Stockton, California.

"You have to think you are going to win, but it's really tough," he said. "I went 0 for 3, but you learn a lot. The coaches are great. They really help you."

Like other juniors, Ellis has more in his life than racquetball. He has worked at a club to make some money and also plays on his high school soccer and basketball teams.

John still isn't sure how racquetball fits into his future, but wishes the game would get more coverage on television and in the media.

Many national reporters who covered the festival found themselves intrigued by the fast-paced excitement of the game. Players like Michelle Gilman were even featured in some papers like *USA Today*.

National racquetball officials say the festival helped highlight racquetball's appeal and proclaimed the tournament a success.

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"HOT" Competition

The early arriving athletes baked in 100+ degrees, but the temperatures cooled as the competition heated up. Racquetball players were relatively unaffected by the changing climate. Their housing and competition sites were air-conditioned. But that was all that was cool.

The "hottest" hand on the courts that week was Chris Cole of Davison, Michigan. In Cole's quest for the gold, he defeated Aaron Embry, CA, Todd O'Neill, VT, Intercollegiate Champion, and Tim Doyle, OH, 2-time National Singles Champion (89 & 90) in the preliminary rounds. In the semi-final match, he met Drew Kachtik, TX, who placed 3rd in the recent National Championship (losing only to Doyle in an 11-10 tie-breaker). Chris won in their tie-breaker and was headed for the Gold medal round.

In the final match, Chris lost the first game to Egan Inoue, HI in a lopsided game. But Chris came into the second game determined. In a long and close match, Chris came back to win game two. The tie-breaker was destined to be an exciting game.

Egan's powerful serve and almost flawless forehand were a tough challenge for quick Chris Cole. In one notable rally, Egan took his shot and Chris dove to save it, then Egan shot again and Chris dove again. This sequence continued for a total of seven shots and seven dives to

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Tournament Results

Star of the North State Games

The 1990 Star of the North State Games were hosted by the city of Rochester from June 15-24. The racquetball tournament was held at the Northgate Racquet Club on the north side of Rochester.

Unlike the Olympic Festival competition which qualifies players to compete in the event, the Star of the North tournament emphasizes participation. The entry fees are reasonable, \$10 for the first event. It is a great way to introduce new players to competitive racquetball.

The tournament offered events in skill (Open, A, B, C and D) and age divisions from under 10 to over 50.

MENS DIVISIONS

- Open 1. Bill Crowson, Austin
2. Dave Hait, Blaine
3. K.C. Jones, Eden Prairie
- A 1. Bob Beeman, Rochester
2. Andy Gross, Apple Valley
3. Curt Mathiowetz, Rochester
- B 1. Dennis Countryman, Stillwater
2. Doran Matson, Rochester
3. David Skinner, Rochester
- C 1. Kimber Schumann, Rochester
2. Dave Bahr, Rochester
3. David Nelson, Fergus Falls
- D 1. Kok Wong, Winona
2. Richard Carpenter, Owatonna
3. Ed Machacek, Rochester
- 25+ 1. Rich Schacht, Pine Island
2. Bryan Shirmacher, Worthington
- 30+ 1. Scott Rud, Rochester
2. K.C. Jones, Eden Prairie
- 35+ 1. Stephan Waltzer, Winona
2. Scott Litia, Rochester
- 35+B 1. David Voigt, Pine Island
2. Terry Davis, Mankato
3. Mario Capezzuto
- 40+ 1. Stephan Waltzer, Winona
2. Paul Froesehl, Winona

- 45+ 1. Leland Rients, Willmar
2. Lewis Hooser, Cold Springs

- 50+ 1. Leland Rients, Willman
2. Jim Graddy, Rochester
3. Max Fallek, Minneapolis

WOMEN'S DIVISIONS

- Open 1. Kelly Kirk, Winona
2. Terri Strakka, Brooklyn Park
- A 1. Wendy Miller, Rochester
2. Jane Peters, Burnsville
3. Sheri Simmerer, Bloomington
- B 1. Roxann Voigt, Pine Island
2. Lisa Erickson, Rochester
3. Michelle McCoy, Rochester
- C 1. Kris Thompson, Rochester
2. Trang Ngo, Rochester
3. Theresa Peters, Eyota
- 30+ 1. Kelly Kirk, Winona
2. Cindy Telstad, Winona
3. Sharon Kostohryz, Rochester

DOUBLES DIVISIONS

- M/OA 1. Crowson(Austin)/Burke (Rochstr)
2. Schacht(Pine Is)/Oeltjen (Rochstr)
3. Beeman/McCoy (Rochester)
- M/B 1. Bertz/Bahr (Rochester)
2. Donnay/Casalenuovo (Rochester)
3. Schumann(Rochr)/Peterson (Oronoco)
- W/OA 1. Olive(Kasson)/Miller (Rochester)
2. Lichty/Kostohyz (Rochester)
3. Mathiowetz/Pederson (Rochester)
- W/B 1. Erickson(Rochr)/Klingsporn (Pine Island)
2. Voigt(Pine Island)/N.A.
- MX/A 1. Burke(Rochester)/Olive (Kasson)
2. Bill Ng/Cindi Ramm
- MX/B 1. Hooser(Cold Spg)/Pietrzak (Sartel)
2. Southwick/LaFond (Mankato)

The 1991 Winter Games will be held on the Iron Range in Northern Minnesota. The 1991 Summer Games will be held in Blaine/Coon Rapids in June.

Festival Rosters:

NORTH (in Yellow)
Tim Doyle - Columbus, OH
Doug Eagle - Raleigh, NC
Lynne Coburn - Baltimore, MD
Chris Evon - Oak Park, IL
Jim Floyd - Davison, MI
& Joel Bonnett - Grand Rapids, MI
Malia Bailey - Norfolk, VA
& Jackie Paraiso, El Cajon, CA

SOUTH (in Green)
Todd O'Neil - Vermont
Egan Inoue - Honolulu, HI
Dot Fischl - Allentown, PA
Kaye Kuhfeld - Indianapolis, IN
Sergio Gonzalez - St. Petersburg, FL
& Tim Hansen - Palm Beach, FL
Cindy Baxter - Reedsville, PA
& Robin Levine - Sacramento, CA

EAST (in Blue)
Aaron Embry - Escondido, CA
Drew Kachtik - Dallas, TX
Kim Russell - Louisville, KY
Toni Bevelock - Santa Ana, CA
Doug Ganim - Cleveland, OH
& Dan Obremski - Pittsburgh, PA
Elaine Mardas Hoogh - Columbus, OH
& Robin Whitmire - Lilburn, GA

WEST (in Red)
Chris Cole - Davison, MI
John Ellis - Stockton, CA
Michelle Gilman - Ontario, OR
Elkova Icenogle - Auburn, CA
Brian Hawkes - Santa Ana, CA
& Bill Sell - Santa Ana, CA
Susan Morgan-Pfahler, Jacksonville, FL
& Mary Lyons - Jacksonville, FL



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The matches drew good crowds throughout the week. Friday's finals were a sell-out.

Heading the list of top finishers was Egan Inoue, (HI) who won the gold in the men's division, beating Chris Cole (MI). Drew Kachtik (TX) took the bronze.

On the women's side, Michelle Gilman (OR) took the gold, as expected. Toni Bevelock (CA) took the silver, and Lynne Coburn (MD) took the bronze.

Festival (continued)

every corner of the court until finally the last shot was not retrieved. Both players got a standing ovation from the sell-out crowd. In the end Egan won the gold, and Chris the silver and both earned the admiration of the fans.

The women's Gold medal match was a rematch of the National Single final. Michelle Gilman, OR, defending National Singles Champion (89 & 90) played Toni Bevelock, CA, a former National Singles Champion. Michelle, nicknamed "the terminator", won the first match 15-5, the same score as the National Championship only 6 weeks earlier.

Toni was not about to let Michelle steam-roll her again. In the second game, Toni came out shooting. Toni inched ahead early in the match, then Michelle would close the gap. At 13-10, the game seemed within Toni's reach. But Michelle had other ideas. It wasn't that Toni stalled, it was just that Michelle got even more determined. She pulled into a tie, then took the match with a 15-13 win.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

Michelle Gilman not only won every match, she lost only one game on her road to the gold. Her only loss came against Lynne Coburn, MD. Lynne won the second game of the match. Her tenacious style and the strong support from her #1 fan (her mom) gave her the well-earned win. The tie-breaker was a tight contest. Michelle had to work hard and concentrate to capture the win.

A new face and new name to the racquetball spotlight was 16-year old Elkova Icenogle from California. She won the women's 18 and under Junior Olympic Championship only 2 weeks earlier in Dallas. When asked how to pronounce her last name, she replied, "Ice-nogle, you know, like 'I snuggle,'" as she put her arms around herself as if snuggling a stuffed animal. Opponents of this shy, quiet, young girl had best be alert to the tigress that takes the court.

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Kids

by Mike Kennedy

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State Juniors' Program Gets Double Recognition

Minnesota's junior racquetball program left a lasting imprint on the 1990 Junior Olympic National Championship in more ways than one.

First, there were the flamboyant tie-dyed warm-up pants that Team Minnesota members wore during junior nationals, June 23 through the 27 in Dallas, Texas. The pants were made by Mary Hayenga, St. Cloud, and were Team Minnesota's answer to Zubaz. The pants went over well with players and fans from other states. Many asked how Team Minnesota would top tie-dyed shirts in 1989. Now they are wondering how team members will top the pants next year.

But the players didn't need the colorful pants to call attention to themselves. They captured plenty of recognition by placing third overall behind California and Florida. It was the third year in a row that the team has placed in the top three.

The success of Minnesota's junior program even caught the attention of the junior nationals committee, which chose Minneapolis as the site of the 1991 competition. MSRA board member Mike Beugen made Minnesota's proposal during the tournament. The selection comes on the heels of two other successful national racquetball tournaments held in the Twin Cities - the 1989 Ektelon National Doubles Championship last fall and the recent 1990 Olympic Festival, which included racquetball (See story page 1).

Team Minnesota coach Hart Johnson has even bigger plans ahead for the junior program. Number one on his list is raising more money.

"We do different fundraising activities each year at the state tournament, and we're thinking of expanding those efforts," Hart said.

Racquetball players will continue to be asked to support these activities at the state tourney, but may also see fundraisers at other sanctioned tournaments throughout the year.

Last season's fundraisers helped defray the traveling expenses of the 18 Team Minnesota players and their coaches.

Some parents accompanied players to root and cheer, but even those who didn't have a parent present were supported during their matches by other Team Minnesota players.

Many strong individual showings helped Team Minnesota land a third place finish. The girls were the backbone of this year's team.

Buffy Trachsel of Duluth, won both 10 and under singles and doubles. Andrea Beugen, Golden Valley, and her partner won 14 and under doubles. Jill Trachsel, Duluth, and Sadie Gross, Apple Valley, took second in 12 and under girls doubles, and Jill took fourth in singles. Amy Melville, St. Cloud, placed fourth in 18 and under singles and with her partner took second in 18 and under doubles. Brett Beugen, Golden Valley and his partner took second in 16 and under doubles.

Festival Highlights (cont'd)

Joel Bonnett, MI, boys 18 and under Champion also competed in the festival. He was partners with Jim Floyd, MI in doubles. They faced a difficult task. Joel and Jim were not an experienced team (experienced players, yes—but team, NO!) They lost their first two matches to the Florida team of Sergio Gonzalez and Tim Hansen, then to the California team of Bill Sell and Brian Hawkes. These teams were #1 & #2 in 88, then reversed the order at the 89 Festival in Oklahoma. In the last game against Hawkes and Sell, coach Larry Liles told Joel and Jim to try an "up-and-back" strategy. Almost immediately they began to play better as a team. They lost the match, but something was found—teamwork.

Their next match was against the current National Champions, Dan Obremski, PA and Doug Ganim, OH. Joel and Jim had nothing to lose, they went all out in the match. To the delight of the crowd, the young men from Michigan won. After the match there was murmuring about how the match wasn't important to Dan and Doug. The next day the teams would meet again. On Friday morning, Bonnett/Floyd played Obremski/Ganim in the first match of the day. To everyone's surprise, Joel and Jim pushed the match to a tie-breaker and came close to victory. However, the Champs prevailed and went on to win the gold.

There were many great matches from the first to the last. And throughout the competition, there were good crowds. Ironically, few of the on-lookers were the usual tournament players. Instead, there were more "club" and "recreational" players who were noticeably impressed by the level of competition.

The U.S. Olympic Festival is over. In the ebb of the celebration, we reflect on its impact, especially on our sport. It is one of the few opportunities for racquetball to be "viewed" as a highly competitive sport, along with the other olympic sports. It is seen in an arena with other skilled athletes. This competition may be more important to racquetball than some other sports, because our athletes are afforded national recognition which they do not receive otherwise.

"THANKS" RYDER

In the Olympic Festival, companies that had committed money, goods and services to the festival became Patrons. Each Patron or sponsor was given the choice of sports or events to Host. Ryder selected racquetball as "their" sport.

Ryder supported the festival by providing buses for transportation and trucks that delivered and picked up equipment for the various venues. There were other commitments for Ryder, but they were also involved in the racquetball event. At a team meeting before the competition began, Ryder representatives presented the athletes and coaches with sweatshirts and sweatpants as a special festival souvenir. Ryder provided extra hospitality on the last competition day. Ryder employees were able to attend some of the competition and were appreciative fans. They participated in the prestigious awards ceremony climaxing the tournament.

A very special "THANK YOU" to Curt Skallerup of Ryder. Curt is an avid racquetball player. We hope to see him at future MSRA events.

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