

RACQUETBALL

ERIKA MANILLA



IRF JUNIOR WORLD
CHAMPION

CHAMPIONS
ALL AROUND

U.S. Racquetball Association
2812 W. Colorado Avenue, Suite 200
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NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS

FEBRUARY 8-12, 2017 - ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY - TEMPE, AZ

NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIPS

MARCH 1-5, 2017 - VETTA SPORTS - ST. LOUIS, MO

NATIONAL INTERCOLLEGIATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

MARCH 29-APRIL 1, 2017 - LOS CAB SPORTS CLUB - ORANGE COUNTY, CA

NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIPS

MAY 24-28, 2017 - ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY - TEMPE, AZ

NATIONAL JUNIOR OLYMPIC CHAMPIONSHIPS

JUNE 21-25, 2017 - IN-SHAPE SPORTS CLUB - STOCKTON, CA

UnitedHealthcare US OPEN

RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

OCTOBER 4-8, 2017 - LIFE TIME FITNESS - MINNEAPOLIS, MN

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Samantha Salas Solis takes on Frédérique Lambert in the semifinals of the Women's Pro Singles at the 2016 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN. Photo By Restrung Magazine.

ON THE COVER

The Winter 2016 cover showcases our 2016 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Champions, Paola Longoria & Kane Waselenchuk. Photo By Restrung Magazine. Insert: Erika Manilla, Gold Medalist at the recent IRF Junior World Championships. Photo By Nancy Manilla.

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Submissions

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

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CONTENTS

3	<i>From the Executive Director</i>	26	<i>2016 Unitedhealthcare US Open</i>
4	<i>From the President</i>	28	<i>Ashaway Renews Sponsorship With Cliff Swain</i>
6	<i>IRF Junior World Championships</i>	30	<i>What's the Call?</i>
10	<i>IRF World Senior Racquetball Championships</i>	34	<i>Where Are They Now?</i>
12	<i>International Racquetball Tour (IRT)</i>	36	<i>US Team Standings</i>
14	<i>Military Racquetball Federation (MRF)</i>	38	<i>World Outdoor Racquetball (WOR)</i>
16	<i>Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour (LPRT)</i>	40	<i>Calendar of Events</i>
20	<i>2016 Unitedhealthcare US OPEN</i>	44	<i>You're Never Too Old for Racquetball</i>



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.

USA RACQUETBALL CORE VALUES

Communication • Customer Service • Dedication • Excellence • Integrity



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**NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
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U.S. National Doubles



U.S. National Intercollegiate



U.S. Junior Olympic



U.S. National High School



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NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS & TEAM QUALIFYING

All future national championship details remain tentative until entries are published.

2017 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP DATES

National Doubles: February 8-12, 2017

High Schools: March 1-5, 2017

National Intercollegiates: March 29-April 1, 2017

National Singles: May 24-28, 2017

Junior Olympics: June 21-25, 2017

U.S. NATIONAL TEAM QUALIFYING

In an effort to help ensure that the top American racquetball players have an equal and fair opportunity to qualify for the U.S. National Team, USA Racquetball adopted changes to the qualification process beginning with the 2016-17 U.S. National Team.

While the process for qualifying for the Team as a doubles team is generally the same, the singles selection procedure will be determined by performance at three selection events, including:

- UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Pro Division
- U.S. Team Singles Qualifying Division at USA Racquetball National Doubles Championships
- U.S. Team Qualifying Division at USA Racquetball National Singles Championships

To learn more and for complete details, including the process to qualify for Elite Athlete Health Insurance, please visit <http://www.teamusa.org/usa-racquetball/programs/team-usa>.

U.S. NATIONAL TEAM QUALIFYING RULE CHANGE EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 1, 2016:

ALL U.S. TEAM QUALIFYING DIVISIONS WILL BE USING THE NEW TWO SERVE RULE THAT WAS RECENTLY ADOPTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL RACQUETBALL FEDERATION (IRF).



FROM THE
Executive Director

By Jason Thoerner
Executive Director
USA Racquetball

National Headquarters

2017 Changes Ahead

As 2016 draws to a close, USA Racquetball has seen its share of changes this year including three new staff hires to enhance the programs that grow our sport. We have new leadership on the USA Racquetball Board of Directors as I have transitioned from president to executive director and Dan Whitley has taken the helm as president. We both bring a deep understanding of what it takes to racquetball on local, state, and national levels with years of hands-on experience.

However, we both know that it takes a lot of people to change the direction of a sport and to realize growth. I want to thank all of our members, volunteers, state directors, tournament directors, and staff members. Without all of you, USA Racquetball would not be where it is today: on solid financial ground and ready to grow in 2017!

To achieve this, we must bring our sport together for a common cause. This means every staff member, board member, manufacturer, state director, tournament director, and you, the member, has to get involved in reaching out to new people who have never experienced our game or who play on a very limited basis. We need these folks to understand why it is so important to become a part of the USA Racquetball family as either a free e-member or a full member.

You will see a concentrated effort in 2017 to register as many Ambassadors across this country as possible with a goal of at least one in every facility that has a racquetball court. These Ambassadors will be the key to growing racquetball at the grassroots level. If you want to get involved in growing the sport, it starts at the local level and becoming an Ambassador is a great place to start! Our Ambassadors will receive assistance and marketing materials on how to start free challenge ladders, USAR sanctioned leagues, Racquetball 101 clinics for new players, shootouts, and tournaments. You could start with just one of these offerings or incorporate as many as you like throughout the year.

One important thing I would like each of you to know is that our staff is here to help you! Even though we are a small team, it is our mission to provide the best customer service in sport. If you have a question, concern, or suggestion, we are here not only to listen but also help provide a solution to your issue.

Lastly, we could not support our programs such as the Adult and Junior U.S. Teams, Collegiate Scholarships, and High School outreach without generous donations from our members each year. It is something we are truly thankful for, and we recognize that without these tax-deductible donations, we would not be able to provide these programs. I would personally like to thank each of you who have donated in 2016.

JOIN A COMMITTEE

Committees are a great way to give back to the sport and stay involved. Below are some of the committees USA Racquetball has to offer.

See a committee that interests you? Please send an e-mail of interest to Vice President Leo Vasquez at leorvasquez@gmail.com.

Collegiate Committee

1. Rob Van Schalkwyk (Chairperson)
2. Kristen Bellows
3. Don Schopieray
4. Lynn Stephens

Election Committee

1. Peter McMillin (Chairperson)
2. Laurel Davis
3. Aimee Ruiz
4. Don Schopieray
5. Leo Vasquez

Ethics/HR Committee (Personnel)

1. Dan Whitley (Chairperson)
2. Laurel Davis
3. Cheryl Kirk
4. Aimee Ruiz
5. Leo Vasquez

Finance/Accounting Committee

1. Laurel Davis (Chairperson)
2. Paul Beffa
3. Thurman Brooks
4. Jose Diaz
5. Mike Grisz
6. Larry Haemmerle
7. Mike Wedel

Hall of Fame/Awards Committee

1. Jim Hiser (Chairperson)
2. Jim Easterling
3. Cheryl Gudinas
4. Jerry Hilecher
5. Jack Hughes
6. Geoff Peters
7. Randy Stafford
8. Frank Taddonio
9. Doug Toth

*Note: President Dan Whitley and Executive Director Jason Thoerner participate on all committees.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Dan Whitley

THE FUTURE

HOW YOU CAN HELP

This past October I was honored to have been selected by my peers on the USA Racquetball Board of Directors to serve as president. I am so appreciative of the trust they have placed in me, and I'm excited to give back to racquetball by continuing to work with the staff and board along with our members and partners. When everyone in racquetball works together, the possibilities are endless.

In my home state of Missouri, we recently hosted a USA Racquetball sanctioned event that had 400+ high school players and featured a Tier 1 IRT Pro Singles Event. It was neat to be able to give the kids the opportunity to see the top players in racquetball as part of their high school tournament. This unique format wouldn't have been possible without the support of schools, parents, coaches, players, tournament desk staff, club/facility support, sponsors, event directors, and the St. Louis Racquetball community. Hundreds of people contributed to making the weekend possible. None of this could have happened without enthusiastic and passionate volunteers.

This past autumn, I attended the US OPEN for the first time in several years. I was blown away, once again, by the energy, camaraderie, and competition. It was so cool to see people brought together from all over the world with racquetball as their common interest. Witnessing the high level of organization used to coordinate the event is additionally impressive. The US OPEN always appears seamless in its execution. It's amazing to observe how Doug Ganim and his crew oversee the intricate details of this one-of-a-kind grand slam tournament. The US OPEN is also an event that is only possible due to outstanding volunteers and sponsors.

Both examples I just shared demonstrate events that grow the game and retain players. Both were made possible by volunteers. There are racquetball programs, tournaments, and events of all sizes offered all over the country for juniors, adults, pros, amateurs, beginners, indoor players, and outdoor players. Every region possesses its own strengths and expertise. We can all share and work together to continue to grow racquetball and retain players. Volunteers are the lightning rod that kick-start so many of these great offerings.

In 2015 I was seeking a new way to become more involved in racquetball. That's when I applied to be considered for the board of directors. It has been a rewarding experience. Volunteerism in racquetball is fun and fulfilling; that's why so many of us do it! There are so many ways to contribute your time to our sport.

- Join one of our many committees.
- Apply for your state board.
- Become involved in the USA Racquetball Instructor Program.
- Volunteer at a local tournament.
- Offer support at a national event.
- Enroll in our new Ambassador Program.
- Sign up your club for our new Facility Partner Program.

All of these activities help grow the game and retain racquetball players. Please consider finding a way to give back and donate your time to our great sport!

JOIN A COMMITTEE



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See a committee that interests you? Please send an e-mail of interest to Vice President Leo Vasquez at leorvasquez@gmail.com.

Junior Committee

1. Don Schopieray (Chairperson)
2. Jeff Elder
3. Cheryl Gudinas
4. Victor Manilla
5. Jody Nance
6. Bruce Reid

Legislative Committee

1. Cheryl Kirk (Chairperson)
2. Michelle De La Rosa
3. Larry Haemmerle
4. Terry Rogers
5. Leo Vasquez

Membership Committee

1. Scott Fish (Chairperson)
2. Jonathan Clay
3. Jose Diaz
4. Peter McMillin
5. Chris Poucher
6. Terry Rogers
7. Leo Vasquez
8. Mike Wedel

Referee Certification

1. Debbie Bryant (Co-Chairperson)
2. Lynn Stephens (Co-Chairperson)
3. Johnny Boyd
4. Michelle De La Rosa
5. Otto Dietrich
6. Larry Haemmerle
7. Eric New

Women's Committee

1. Terry Rogers (Chairperson)
2. Debbie Bryant
3. Michelle De La Rosa
4. Lorraine Galloway
5. Cheryl Kirk
6. Peggine Tellez
7. Janice Vosika

*Note: President Dan Whitley and Executive Director Jason Thoerner participate on all committees.



ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE

WITH YOUR SUPPORT, WE CAN RAISE MORE THAN **\$25,000** FOR THE TEAMS!

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 2016 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 \$25,000 for *your* U.S. National Teams!

TEAM USA CHALLENGE BENEFACTORS

*Usher Barnoff • Rick Betts • Steve & Rosanna Czarnecki
Cheryl Kirk & Kit Lawson • 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!

DONOR LEVELS & GIFTS



\$100 or more will receive an official USA Racquetball Bag Tag and a **Team USA T-shirt.**



\$250 or more will receive a Bag Tag and a **Team USA Uniform Jersey.**



\$500 or more will receive a Bag Tag and a **Team USA Jacket.**



\$1,000 or more will receive an exclusive **Team USA Warm Up.**

All donors will be recognized in USA Racquetball Communications

● **DONATE TODAY at USARacquetball.com**



XVIII IRF World Junior Racquetball Championships

By Cheryl Kirk

San Luis Potosí, Mexico
November 10-20, 2016

U.S. Junior Team players, staff, and cheerleaders numbering 72 (26 players, 6 staff members, and 40 parents/siblings/friends) in the delegation, traveled to San Luis Potosí, Mexico, to compete alongside 12 other countries in the IRF World Junior Racquetball Championships. The U.S. Team consisted of:

WORLD CUP (15)

Boys Singles

18 & Under -- Wayne Antone (OR), Kevin Vazquez (FL)
16 & Under -- Dane Elkins (CA), Mitchell Turner (OR)
14 & Under -- Antonio Rojas (CA), Sahil Thakur (CA)

Boys Doubles

18 & Under -- Jake Birnel (WA)/Mauro (Daniel) Rojas (CA)
16 & Under -- Ricardo Diaz (CA)/Dane Elkins (CA)
14 & Under -- Antonio Rojas (CA)/Sahil Thakur (CA)

Girls Singles

18 & Under -- Jordan Cooperrider (FL), Erika Manilla (CO)
16 & Under -- Ingrid Robledo (CA), Briana Jacquet (AZ)
14 & Under -- Nikita Chauhan (CA), Elena Dent (FL)

Girls Doubles

18 & Under -- Jordan Cooperrider (FL)/Erika Manilla (CO)
16 & Under -- Briana Jacquet (AZ)/Ingrid Robledo (CA)
14 & Under -- Nikita Chauhan (CA)/Elena Dent (FL)

ESPRIT (11)

Boys Singles

12 & Under -- Krish Thakur (CA), Vedant Chauhan (CA), Josh Shea (NY)
10 & Under -- Nikhil Prasad (CA), Benjamin Horner (IA), Gatlin Sutherland (MT), Brandon Ausucua (TX)

Boys Doubles

12 & Under -- Vedant Chauhan (CA)/Josh Shea (NY)
10 & Under -- Nikhil Prasad (CA)/Gatlin Sutherland (MT); Benjamin Horner (IA)/Brandon Ausucua (TX)

Girls Singles

12 & Under -- Heather Mahoney (CA), Julia Stein (PA)
10 & Under -- Kareena Mathew (OR), Ava Kaiser (MN)

Girls Doubles

12 & Under -- Heather Mahoney (CA)/Julia Stein (PA)
10 & Under -- Ava Kaiser (MN)/Kareena Mathew (OR)

STAFF

Cheryl Gudinas (IL) – Head Coach
Jennifer Meyer (CO) – Assistant Coach (Esprit)
Jody Nance (CA) – Trainer/Assistant Coach
Nick Montalbano (NY) – Assistant Coach
Kelani Bailey (VA) – Assistant Coach
Cheryl Kirk (IL) – Team Leader



Team USA
Photo By Cheryl Kirk



Gatlin Sutherland, Ricky Diaz, Nikhil Prasad, Vedant Chauhan, and Benjamin Horner taking in a little foosball action in before Opening Ceremonies.

Photo By Juan José Ausucua



Team USA Staff: Nick Montalbano, Jen Meyer, Cheryl Kirk, Cheryl Gudinas, and Jody Nance. Missing from Photo: Kelani Bailey.

Photo Courtesy of Cheryl Kirk

Cheerleaders

The 26 U.S. Junior Team players brought along plenty of support! Besides the coaching staff of six, 40 family members and friends were in the stands all week cheering enthusiastically for their young competitors. Joining us in San Luis Potosí were Tony Antone, Juan José Ausucua, Sandra Boté, Don Birnel, Kirti Chauhan, Anuj Chauhan, Sue Cooperrider, Eric Dent, Amy Dent, Julia Dent, Carolina Diaz, Jose Diaz, Sr., Bruce Elkins, Samantha Garcia, Felix Hernandez, Dan Horner, Eric Jacquet, Richard Kaiser, Michael Kidder, Jr., Rhonda Kimler, John Mahoney, Melodese Mahoney, Hadley Mahoney, Nancy Manilla, Victor Manilla, Prem Mathew, Pendem Prasad, Gerardo Robledo, Mauro Rojas, Beth Shea, David Shea, Alanna Shea, Adam Stein, Scott Sutherland, Rajesh Thakur, Frances Turner, Michael Vazquez, Yina Vazquez, John Michael Vazquez, and Imelda Zepeda. Thanks to each of you for your enthusiastic presence for Team USA!

La Loma -- World Class

La Loma Centro Deportivo boasts eight racquetball courts, all glass backs, including two stadium courts with an additional glass side wall each. It's a beautiful facility, also featuring two swimming pools (indoor and outdoor), many tennis courts, incredible weight and cardio rooms, gymnasium, shops and kiosks, restaurant, smoothie bar, and locker rooms that featured individual saunas, hot tubs, and salon services.

Everyone had a chance to practice on the courts with Thursday and Friday arrivals. Parents made some runs to WalMart and Sam's Club, and Coaches Cheryl and Nick as well as Team Leader Cheryl attended the Coaches' meeting where the rules of the event were communicated and the draws were distributed.

Opening Ceremonies

Players numbering 182 from thirteen countries participated in World Juniors: Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Korea, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the USA.

Countries began lining up at 5:45 pm for their entrance into the Opening Ceremonies. After the Parade of Nations when the delegations were introduced and took their Olympic-style lap of honor, a short program was followed by two dancers who performed with fire -- fire sticks, fiery hula hoops, etc. Those dancers were really good! Somehow, when the element of danger is involved, it's more fun, especially for the kids who were the most engaged of any junior audience I've witnessed at an opening ceremonies in recent years. They loved it!

Tournament Format

The formats for most of the divisions were round robin pools Sunday through Tuesday to determine seeding in main draws beginning Wednesday. However, due to the number of entries, some divisions were the exception and played their original draw through to Saturday: Boys 12 Singles (Olympic format); Boys 10 Singles (Olympic format) Girls 18 Doubles, Girls 16 Doubles, Girls 12 Doubles, and Girls 10 Doubles (all double round robins).

Americans at World Juniors -- Not Just the US Delegation!

In addition to those from other countries, thanks go to the following individuals who traveled from the U.S. to perform various services such as event management, refereeing, live color commentary, streaming, social media coverage, and rules clarification/administration. Our gratitude goes to Luke St. Onge, Gary Mazaroff, Marco Hidalgo, Tim Baghurst, Gustavo Farell, and Dean

RESULTS

U.S. INDIVIDUAL RESULTS

ESPRIT CUP

G10S -- Kareena Mathew -- Silver
B10S -- Benjamin Horner -- Bronze
B10S -- Nikhil Prasad - Bronze
B10S RED -- Gatlin Sutherland -- Bronze
B10S WHITE -- Brandon Ausucua -- Bronze
G10D -- Ava Kaiser/Kareena Mathew -- Bronze
B10D -- Nikhil Prasad/Gatlin Sutherland -- Bronze
G12S -- Julia Stein -- Bronze
B12S -- Vedant Chauhan -- Bronze
B12S BLUE -- Josh Shea -- Bronze
G12D -- Heather Mahoney/Julia Stein -- Bronze
B12D -- Vedant Chauhan/Josh Shea -- Silver

WORLD CUP

G16D -- Briana Jacquet/Ingrid Robledo -- Silver
G18S -- Erika Manilla -- Gold
G18S -- Jordan Cooperrider -- Bronze
B18S -- Wayne Antone -- Bronze
G18D -- Erika Manilla/Jordan Cooperrider -- Silver
B18D -- Jake Birnel/Daniel Rojas -- Silver

OVERALL RESULTS

U.S. World Cup Team 3rd (Mexico/Bolivia/USA)
U.S. Boys WC Team 3rd (Mexico/Bolivia/USA)
U.S. Girls WC Team 2nd (Mexico/USA/Bolivia)

U.S. Esprit Team 3rd (Mexico/Bolivia/USA)
U.S. Boys Esprit Team 3rd (Mexico/Bolivia/USA)
U.S. Girls Esprit Team 3rd (Mexico/Bolivia/USA)

Schear for their dedication to the IRF and to racquetball. Sudsy Monchik and Tom Travers were on hand as well, respectively coaching the Ecuadoran and Guatemalan teams.

Care and Feeding of Racquetball Players

It is a tradition of the US Junior Team that evening meals are arranged for the older players (18-, 16-, 14-) so they can eat with their fellow teammates, talk about the day, and hear from the coaches. We do this for the World Cup group since they usually have later matches while parents of the younger Esprit players (12-, 10-) usually like to have them eat and be in bed earlier.

Through the generosity of parents, a couple of state associations, and others, the meals continued through the end of the week. Many thanks to the following families and organizations for donating and coordinating the meals: Antone, Birnel, Cooperrider, Diaz, Elkins, Robledo, Rojas, Thakur, Turner, Vazquez, Manilla (American Motors), and Chauhan (Nyaara Handblock Prints), as well as the Oregon Junior Racquetball Association, the Illinois State Racquetball Association, Lola and Ray Markus, and the Reaching Your Dream Foundation (Mike Lippitt). Over the past several years, Nancy Manilla has done a stellar job finding donations and coordinating meals amongst the team parents.

Very special thanks also go to Eric and Briana Jacquet and the Dent family. Eric Jacquet could be seen at the club wheeling around a big bag of snacks they brought from home and continued to replenish, and the Dents were extremely gracious in allowing the team to use the living area of their room to hold team meetings.

THANK YOU

The US Junior Team Delegation wishes to deliver our gratitude to those who made this event so truly memorable:

All the individuals who made contributions large and small...every bit counts! The Team USA Challenge on www.usaracquetball.com provides the opportunity for racquetball players to support the US Teams with their participation at international competitions.

USAR Official Apparel Sponsor Rollout Racquetball (Jonathan and Carolyn Clay). The Team looked fantastic!

The Local Organizing Committee, headed by Rafael Lebrija and Fabian Parrilla, for putting on this great event. The work behind the scenes to pull off a tournament of this magnitude is extensive.

The tournament staff (Francisco Kurzbard, Amanda Barletta de Kurzbard, Mauro Grandio, Pablo Berriel, and Maria De Los Angeles Sarria).

The referees, headed up by Carlos Cuadri (Argentina), who came in from several countries to provide a quality experience for the players, including the happy gift that no player had to ref the next match!

Pablo Fajre and Laura McCormick for bringing quarterfinals, semifinals and finals action to viewers via live streaming, and Gary Mazaroff and Tim Baghurst for providing entertaining commentary.

The staff of the Ankara Hotel & Suites who were friendly, efficient, and responsive to all requests.

The management and staff of La Loma Centro Deportivo for providing a first-class facility for this World Juniors competition.

The friendly citizens of San Luis Potosí who were quick with a smile. We felt welcome and cared for the entire time.

The parents and cheerleaders who were there for every match, living every point as if they were out there playing themselves and pitching in to provide/arrange meals and snacks.

Last but not least, Leo Vasquez who stopped whatever else he might have been doing as soon as a blog and photos were ready for posting!

Junior Team USA played their hearts out for themselves, their team, their families and friends, their sport, and their country. Great job, so proud of every one of you!

For a complete look at the draw sheets from World Juniors, please visit: <http://www.internationalracquetball.com/junior-world-championships.html>

To live vicariously with the team after the fact, view the Daily Blogs at: <http://www.teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/Features/2016/November/12/2016-World-Junior-Racquetball-Championship-Blogs>

Awards Ceremonies

From the wave at the beginning to non-stop photo ops at the end, these Awards Ceremonies were among the most smooth and efficient in recent memory. A good time was had by all as the clinking of medals grew louder by the minute.

China Racquetball Federation

Representing the China Racquetball Federation, Ms. Li Fu, President of the Federation, with her interpreter/son, traveled a grueling 46 hours to reach San Luis Potosí. The purpose of the visit was to observe this racquetball event in action and to sign an agreement with the IRF and the Asia Racquetball Federation to bring the Adult IRF World Championships to China in 2018. Mission accomplished, and Ms. Fu delivered comments at the awards presentations and enjoyed bestowing medals during the ceremony as well.

Coach Jen Meyer Summarized

"Wow! We started this journey in June at Junior Nationals and held training camp at the Olympic Training Center in August. The kids have all sacrificed for a common goal of being a World Champion. At the beginning it always seems like we have a long road ahead, and then all of a sudden we are sitting at the closing ceremonies of the World Championships. Throughout the tournament, the players did an incredible job of putting everything they had into their game and more importantly being class acts on and off the court. We had many hard-fought matches this week that saw the athletes reaching deep and giving their all. A big congratulations to Erika Manilla on taking home the Girls 18- singles world title! Many Team USA athletes medaled and helped us earn 3rd place overall in both World Cup and Esprit divisions this year! It has been amazing to watch the kids reach for their goals, create memories, and make friends from all over the world!"



Ava Kaiser with some new friends she made during the tournament.
Photo By Cheryl Kirk



EXTREME PASSION

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INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

Many New Attendees at IRF World Senior Racquetball Championships

Photos & Article By Timothy Baghurst

On August 30th, almost 200 racquetball players from the ages of 35 to 90+ once again descended on Albuquerque for the World Senior Championships. Perhaps descended isn't the correct word since the city sits at 5,300 feet above sea level. In its 32nd consecutive year, players came from around the world to represent 15 countries across North and South America, Africa, Europe, and Asia. Not surprisingly, most representation came from the United States, but Mexico and Bolivia also brought strong teams.

The World Seniors is a tournament dedicated to those of us who are not professional athletes. We have work, we have families, and we enjoy sharing our most recent injuries. For five days (and sometimes nights) players battle across age divisions in singles, doubles, and mixed doubles. A special mention must go to the nine brave (or crazy) men and women entered all three divisions! The tournament is known for its hospitality and fair play, but perhaps it's best recognized for Executive Director Gary Mazaroff's penchant for a grueling schedule.

Most divisions are comprised of a round robin format, or round robin pool play leading to a playoff, and the point system requires players to complete 3 games to 11. Points are totaled, and players gain bonus points for games won and for winning the match. Therefore, medals are often decided during the very last round, and early success or failure could be costly. For example, after 15 games local Jim Dawson claimed bronze in the men's 40+ division by a mere 2 points over Bolivian Daniel Liendo! Those who did play in three divisions potentially played upwards of 60 games.

There were many outstanding performances during the week but here are a few that deserve mention: Hector Urguidi Enriquez (Mexico) in 35+, Victor Lopez (Mexico) in 50+, and Stephen Wattz (United States) in 60+ all won their men's singles divisions without losing a game. Perhaps the match of

the tournament was between Richard Eisemann (United States) and Mike Grisz (United States) in the 55+ singles, where Eisemann dramatically claimed gold over Grisz by winning 11-10 in the third. Newcomer Veronica Nogales (Bolivia) was in fine form claiming the women's 35+ singles title without a lost game. She also took the 35+ mixed doubles title with Miguel Nunez (Bolivia) in a similar fashion. Longtime attendees Marie Gomar (Guatemala) and Cindy Tilbury (United States) also claimed singles gold without a game lost in 50+ and 55+, respectively.

Some divisions are combined and provide players the opportunity to take home a combined medal. Perhaps the most competitive combined division was that of the 35+/40+/45+ men's doubles. The title was decided when the 35+ pairing of Timothy Baghurst (England) and Allan Hernandez (Mexico) won 2-1 in a closely contested matchup against the 40+ Bolivian duo of Oscar Justiniano and Miguel Nunez. Mike Grisz gained some parity on Richard Eisemann by claiming gold in the 55+ doubles. Although a round robin format means anything can happen, Grisz won the gold medal in a come-from-behind 10-11, 11-10, 11-8 win with his partner Mark Baron (United States). Americans Stephanie Bird and Tina Bragdon were the dominant women's doubles team at the event.

Special mention must go to Americans Lola Markus, Robert Castillo, William Matotan, Lake Westphal, and Ralph Waddington, who all competed in the 85+ or 90+ categories. Their participation serves as a reminder that racquet sports in any form can indeed be lifelong.

No qualifiers are necessary to participate in the World

Senior Championships, held annually in Albuquerque and are open to all players beginning at age 35. The tournament is known for its competitiveness juxtaposed with an atmosphere of camaraderie and fair play. If you love playing matches – seriously, you'll be playing a lot of matches – and having a good time, why not add it to your calendar for next year?

More information can be found at www.internationalracquetball.com or <https://www.facebook.com/internationalracquetball>



Top: Lola Markus and Mildred Gwinn
Bottom: Ralph Waddington and Lake Westphal





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Williams's Racquetball Passion Fuels Atlanta IRT Pro Stop

It takes a special brand of person with a unique, singular character to do what Donald Williams does.

Williams, 40, is a primary reason the men's professional International Racquetball Tour (IRT) is back in Atlanta.

"Not many people can do what he does for the sport of racquetball and other people," said Chad Bailey, tournament director for the Galaxy Custom Printing IRT Pro/Am, a Tier 1 event that took place November 3-6 in Lilburn, Georgia. "The sport really needs more like him."

Two companies owned by Williams – Galaxy Custom Printing and Williams Accounting & Consulting – are Gold Sponsors for the upcoming tournament. Last year, with the help of Williams, the tournament was elevated to an IRT Tier 1 event, with Williams the main sponsor.

In previous years the club played host to an assortment of Tier 2-5 events as well as key amateur events like state and regional championships and the Georgia Games every July. Now it is a pro stop that Williams believes will be a regular Tier 1 event for many years to come.

"Last year put us on solid footing, and I expect it to continue as a key pro stop on the Tour," said Williams, an amateur entered in Men's 40+ Doubles.



Galaxy Custom Printing and Williams Accounting & Consulting CEO Donald Williams with 2016 Galaxy Custom Printing IRT Pro/Am Doubles Champions Charlie Pratt and Jansen Allen
Photo Courtesy of Donald Williams

Like other players, Williams regularly competes on court, practices, and enters tournaments. But he also takes it a step further than most, Bailey said. "He is a successful local business owner who sticks his profits right back into racquetball. Plus, he is just a great guy with a hilarious sense of humor. The sport needs more like Donald Williams."

Although he enjoys playing the sport he discovered several years back, Williams said he also enjoys watching top shelf racquetball and being immersed in the culture of professional racquetball. "Last year was so much fun watching the matches, but this year I can't wait to watch Kane Waselenchuk play in person. He is an amazing player. Last year he was a late scratch and I, like many others, cannot wait to see him perform."

Most players have traditional goals of winning trophies and hitting late-match winning kill shots. Williams has similar goals with one addition: "My goal is to see this event grow and become a cornerstone on the IRT schedule. I think we have it strategically positioned at the right time of the year." Williams said he developed a passion for racquetball several years ago while visiting a health club that had racquetball courts. "It looked like a lot of fun, so one day I picked up a racquet, got on the court, and began to play. I was hooked. I just love playing," Williams said. "I was never big into sports growing up, but with racquetball I just can't get enough."

Don Grigas has retired from active playing and now writes for the IRT as well as working on other freelance assignments.



ABOUT DONALD WILLIAMS

Age: 40

Zodiac Sign: Libra

Education: MA with concentration in history; BA from Southern University

Family: Two brothers, two sisters

Residency: Atlanta, raised in New Orleans

Business: Owner of Galaxy Custom Printing and Williams Accounting & Consulting

Favorite "Crunch Time" serve: Z-serve

Singles skill level: B

Nickname: Disco ("My father was a disc jockey and they called him Disco. I picked up the nickname from him.")

Hobbies: Racquetball and cooking, especially Italian cuisine ("Italian food, especially pasta with a good meat sauce, makes me happy!")

Favorite Atlanta restaurant: Atlanta Fish Market in Buckhead

IRT RANKINGS - AS OF DECEMBER 17, 2016

RANKING	PLAYER	POINTS
1	Kane Waselenchuk, Austin, TX	4062.00
2	Rocky Carson, Ladero Ranch, CA	3042.40
3	Daniel De La Rosa, Gilbert, AZ	2651.73
4	Alvaro Beltran, Tijuana BC MEX	2078.00
5	José Rojas, Stockton, CA	2036.67
6	Jansen Allen, Rice, TX	1576.00
7	Marco Rojas, Stockton, CA	1572.00
8	Sebastian Franco, Cali, COL	1424.80
9	Jake Bredenbeck, Marine, MN	1255.80
10	Felipe Camacho, Pueblo, CO	1218.00
11	Mario Mercado, Cali, Valle COL	1174.80
12	Robert Collins, Stockton, CA	892.80
13	Charlie Pratt, Portland, OR	842.80
14	Andree Parrilla, SLP, SL MEX	778.00
15	Alejandro Landa, El Paso, TX	684.00
16	Scott McClellan, Austin, TX	670.13

COMING IN 2017



Pictured: Bob Kulscar, IRT President Jason Mannino, Galaxy Custom Printing CEO Donald Williams, tournament Director Chad Bailey and Rob Lyons at the 2015 Galaxy Custom Printing IRT ProAm in Atlanta, Georgia
Photo By Chad Bailey



Top and Middle Photo By Steven Harper



By Terry Rogers

The Military Racquetball Federation has been busy and remains committed to promoting racquetball to active service members, veterans, and our disabled service members.

MRF SHOOTOUT OBSERVES 9/11: The MRF commemorated 9/11 by hosting another successful racquetball shootout at Joint Base Myer - Henderson Hall in Arlington, Virginia, to honor wounded Armed Service members, retired, and active military, as well as remember victims of 9/11. Forty-five players enjoyed a day of matches and great camaraderie. A special tribute on Sunday morning (September 11, 2016) was made at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery where a special wreath was donated by ASAP Floristry at Fort Myers Exchange and presented by COL Conrado Morgan, US Army (Retired); LCDR Steven Harper, US Navy (Retired); and MSgt Jeff Elder, US Air Force (Retired).

None of this would have been possible if it were not for the help and volunteer time of Tracie Valentine and her daughter; Margo and Stan Scott and their daughter; and also the Fort Myer Fitness Center staff (Ms. Lydia Mease and Mr. Lavon) and Brian Meers of Fort Myers for the donated breakfast and lunch. Also, thank you to Jeff Jenkins for the tournament shirts!

MRF PROAM DOUBLES A HUGE SUCCESS AT 3WB CHAMPIONSHIPS: Eight very generous amateur contributors and pros kicked off the 3 WallBall Championships with a fun-filled round robin ProAm Doubles event. The money raised will go to sustain the MRF's Racquetball Rehabilitation Programs across the country. The MRF thanks those who supported this event -- It was our most successful ever!

MRF HOSTS VETERAN'S WHEELCHAIR DIVISION AT THE 3WB CHAMPIONSHIPS: The MRF hosted an up/down wheelchair division for veterans showcasing their Racquetball Rehabilitation Program efforts. Five participants joined us from OR, FL, TX, GA, and NC and a great time was had by all. For most, this was their first attempt at playing outdoor racquetball and the improvement each day was unbelievable. The smiles on their faces said it all. All are ready to go back to their respective states and recruit more players for local play and to return next year! They are proof that anything is possible. A special thanks to Mike Coulter and everyone associated with this event for allowing us to be a part of this great championship.



MRF ProAm Doubles: Front Row: Bryan Dornon, Joann Dickson Second row: Maria Pachuca, Kris Kaskawal, Janel Tisinger, Scott Davis, Bree Paganetto, Joyce Norris, Daniel De La Rosa, Kim Randolph, Howard Chennault Back Row: Steven Harper, Bret Harnett, Craig Lane. Rhonda Rajsich, Michelle De La Rosa, Maddie Melendez, Brian Pineda, Jared Compos | Photo By Terry Rogers

<http://www.militaryracquetball.com>

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2016-2017 Mid Season Review

By T. J. Baumbaugh

unique and fantastic event in the heart of the southeast. Thursday evening, the players were invited to the Swain Family Vineyards for a very special evening and fundraiser to benefit ovarian cancer research. The evening, and the entire weekend, raised funds for a good cause while spotlighting female racquetball players and women's health.

Tournament organizer Lynette Froelich commented "The Ladies Pro Racquetball Tour event was the draw for an event to celebrate women's health and address women's health concerns. With the help of ObHospitalist Group, we addressed the silent killer, Ovarian Cancer. Our mission was to combine the racquetball event with a focus on women's health, one that educated participants about Ovarian Cancer, increasing their awareness to prevention, and finally, to raise money for research. We were very successful by raising \$35,000, money which was then directed to MiraKind." Mirakind is a non-profit focused on women's cancer prevention. MiraKind runs patient centric studies to help find the best paths to prevention. MiraKind offers testing for a new type of inherited marker, called the KRAS-variant, which is found in up to 25% of women diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer.

Longoria and Lambert faced off again in the "Sweet" final, Lambert taking a game but Longoria prevailing in the fourth. Herrera and Muñoz made the singles semifinals. In doubles action, Longoria paired with talented Bolivian player Adriana Riveros (Solis was unable to attend the event) to win the title. They defeated the challenging duo of Lambert and Herrera in the final.



The LPRT kicked off the 2016-2017 Season with two new tour stops and another Grand Slam in San Luis Potosí, Mexico. Paola Longoria (#1) was notably absent for the first event while she was in Rio de Janeiro working as a TV personality interviewing a variety of Olympic athletes for a Mexican television station. This opened the door for first time Tier 1 winner, Frédérique Lambert.

Atlanta, Georgia, and the Recreation ATL club hosted the season opener. Winner Lambert faced off against first-time finalist and up-and-coming young player Alexandra Herrera from Guadalajara, Mexico. A notable upset for this event was the quarterfinal match where Carla Muñoz defeated #1 seeded Rhonda Rajsich to mark Muñoz' first semifinal trip. Thanks to Jason Chan for bringing the LPRT to Atlanta.

Next up, the superstar of Mexico hosted one of her namesake events, "The Paola Longoria Experience" in San Luis Potosí. Longoria glided through this tough draw without dropping a single game. She faced Lambert in the final. Honorable mention goes to the two semi-finalists, Michelle Key (now De La Rosa) and Jessica Parrilla, who upset top seeds to advance. The doubles title went to Paola Longoria and Samantha Salas Solis, but the final match put a spotlight on rising young stars Ana Gabriela Martinez and Monserrat Mejia who lost to the powerhouse team in a tiebreaker.

Greenville, South Carolina, was the second new site of the season. The Sweet Caroline Open, sponsored by Ob Hospitalist Group, and hosted by Lynette Froehlich and Jerry ("J.") Josey Jr., was a

Top: Carla Muñoz, Alexandra Herrera, Paola Longoria, Jordan Cooperrider, and Kelly Gremley at the Sweet Caroline Open. Photo By Cristiana Desouza
Middle: Frédérique Lambert defeats Alexandra Herrera to win her first Tier 1 event title at the inaugural of the season. Photo By T.J. Baumbaugh
Bottom: Information regarding the South Carolina Ovarian Cancer Foundation
Photo By Cristiana Desouza





Paola Longoria

PAOLA LONGORIA
#1 RANKED PLAYER
IN THE WORLD



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LIFE ON THE BUS



By T. J. Baumbaugh

Photo By Rafael Filippini

Pictured Cristina Amaya & Maria Paz Muñoz (Pazita)

If you haven't seen the Gearbox bus in a tournament parking lot or even traveling down the interstate, you must not get out much. The bus is big. Really big. It's hard to miss. I took some time to talk with two of the LPRT players who get to travel this way a lot, to find out just what Gearbox bus travel is all about.

At the time this article was written, Cristina Amaya was ranked #8 on the LPRT. Maria Paz Muñoz ("Pazita") is currently unranked following a back injury that left her sidelined for a while. She still traveled on the bus to attend the 2016 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN.

That is a very large bus! How many people can sleep on it?

Pazita: I think that we can sleep from 8 to 12 people. We have beds and also a lot of space on the floor for blankets and sleeping bags.

Does it ever feel crowded?

Cristina: You just get used to the small space. I've never had a problem with that. Most of the time we are traveling, so we are sitting down, and most of our stuff is in the compartments below the bus.

Pazita: We have rules on the bus, too, so that we have plenty of space, for instance, we can't have our bags inside the bus, and we have to clean and wash everything right after using it.

What is the largest number of people you've traveled with?

Cristina: Once we had 15 but only for the day. We went from Matamoros, Mexico, to Monterrey, Mexico. On a long trip I think there were eight of us for a week.

How do you prepare for a tournament when you are traveling?

Cristina: We stop at fitness clubs almost every day, sometimes two or three times in the same day. So we play and train during that time, and it's good because we get to play with a lot of different people.

Is it difficult to stay on a nutrition plan? Do you eat out all the time?

Cristina: Yes!! You try to cook as much as you can, but sometimes when the bus is moving it's hard to do that. Sometimes we are so busy that we spend so many hours without eating. By the time we get to the bus we are too hungry to cook, so we just eat out. But we always try to buy healthy food, and when we cook, we make good food.

Have either of you ever driven the bus?

Cristina: Just once, but it was in an empty parking lot, haha!

Pazita: I've never driven the bus! It is so difficult because it is so large and has the trailer, too.

Do you have any funny stories to tell?

Cristina: Every trip we have tons of funny stories. Once we were going from San Diego to Stockton, and in the middle of the highway the door opened between Pazita and me. We had to close it, and she was holding me while I was holding the door because it didn't want to lock! Finally, the door locked, but we were laughing so hard that day!

Pazita: I have a lot of funny stories. I mean, we are all Gearbox players who at least once in our lives have traveled on the bus, so we become family. As a Latin person, I am surprised at the experiences we have -- things that we would never see in Latin America. For example, sleeping in a big super market called Walmart to be safe the whole night, or arriving in a little town that was so scary it looked like the old town on the worst horror movie. Or simple things, like seeing beautiful houses decorated for Halloween, things that we Latin people only watch on TV or movies. I'll never forget those experiences.

Do a lot of people ask what the bus is for? And about Gearbox?

Cristina: All the time! We get the question, "Hey, so what is Gearbox?" I lost count of how many times people have asked that. A couple of times people asked if we are a band!

Pazita: A lot of people ask, "What is that brand on the bus?" Sometimes they think we are a band or that we fix trucks! But then we tell them about racquetball and they are really interested. Sometimes people get so excited because they play racquetball and use Gearbox, so they take pictures with us.

What do you enjoy the most about traveling on the bus?

Cristina: All the places you get to see, the sunsets, and how the landscape changes every place you go. You get to see the difference between states, or how the weather changes if you go from south to north. And all the things you learn from these experiences, I think that's my favorite part!

Pazita: For me, the best thing is that we are from different countries and we share our cultures and daily living. I am so thankful to Rafa and Joel from Gearbox. They are always helping us and creating these opportunities to play racquetball.



Sweet Caroline Tournament Director Lynette Froehlich and Paola Longoria
Photo By Cristiana Desouza

LPRT RANKINGS AS OF DECEMBER 17, 2016

Rank	Name - Hometown	Total Points
1	Paola Longoria, Monterrey, Mexico	3060.00
2	Frédérique Lambert, Montréal, Canada	1857.50
3	Jessica Parrilla, San Luis Potosí, Mexico	1090.50
4	Rhonda Rajsich, Phoenix, Arizona	1043.00
5	Alexandra Herrera, Guadalajara, Mexico	870.25
6	Samantha Salas, Monterrey, Mexico	681.00
7	Cristina Amaya, Cali, Colombia	655.00
8	Suzy Acosta-Mendoza, Chihuahua, Mexico	541.00
9	Carla Muñoz, Santiago, Chile	532.50
10	Adriana Riveros, Argentina	431.59
11	Adrienne Fisher Haynes, Memphis, Tennessee	425.75
12	Maria Jose Vargas, Buenos Aires, Argentina	294.00
13	Montserrat Mejia, Monterrey, Mexico	280.00
14	Michelle Key, Gilbert, Arizona	224.50
15	Ceci Pratt, Portland, Oregon	223.00
16	Sofia Rascon, Rosarito, Mexico	216.50



Event Schedule

DATES	TOURNAMENT NAME	LOCATION	TIER
January 27-29, 2017	Mercedes-Benz of Cincinnati Pro Am	Cincinnati, OH	Tier 1
February 17-19, 2017	Winter Classic	Overland Park, KS	Tier 1
March 3-5, 2017	New Jersey Open	Warren, NJ	Tier 1
March 31-April 2, 2017	WOR - AZ WOR VII	Glendale, AZ	Outdoor Satellite
April 21-23, 2017	Battle at the Alamo	San Antonio, TX	Tier 1
June 2-4, 2017	TBD	Merida, Yucutan	Grand Slam



Men's Pro Doubles Champions Marco & José Rojas along with their father Miguel.

HISTORY BEING MADE AT THE UNITED HEALTHCARE US OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Jeff Oliver
Photos By Restrung Magazine & Roby Partovich

If you weren't among the 725 players who gathered in Minneapolis in October for the BIGGEST racquetball tournament of the year, you missed quite the party! We'll fill you in on what happened in a moment, but let's mark your calendar now so you'll join us next year. The 2017 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championships will take place October 4-8, again in wonderful Minneapolis, Minnesota. Get out the permanent marker and ink those dates down!



The 2016 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championships was the 21st edition of racquetball's largest and most prestigious tournament in the world. And like any proper 21st celebration, the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN put on a party to remember!

The UnitedHealthcare US OPEN is racquetball's original Grand Slam event and with cash prizes totaling more than \$65,000, it boasts the largest total prize purse in the sport. One of the most exciting aspects of the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championships is the all-Lucite portable racquetball court set up in a stadium-seating configuration that allows viewing through all four walls for more than 1,200 spectators. From the early rounds through the finals, all the top professional players in the world play on the stadium court after being introduced to the raucous crowd with booming music, a laser light show, and spotlights.

In addition to the marquee International Racquetball Tour (IRT – Men) and Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour (LPRT – Women) divisions in both singles and doubles, the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN offers more than 80 USA Racquetball (USAR) sanctioned singles and doubles divisions separated by age and skill for amateur players.

While the competition and excitement on the court is the best the sport of racquetball will see all year, there is a lot of fun had off the court as well. The main location and nerve center is in downtown Minneapolis at the fabulous LIFE TIME FITNESS Target Center, the same building in which the NBA's Minnesota Timberwolves play. All pro matches and many of the amateur matches take place at this eight-court facility located in the center of the exciting Entertainment District in Minneapolis. Restaurants, nightclubs, hotels, and world class shopping are all located within steps of the Target Center.

Since this event is the largest racquetball tournament of the season, more than just one club is needed. Three more beautiful LIFE TIME FITNESS clubs in the Minneapolis area are used to provide enough courts for the 1,200+ matches played throughout the week. The US OPEN provides a free shuttle between all the clubs, so getting to your matches is quick and easy. Minneapolis also offers one of the best public transit systems in the country that includes a light rail train connecting the airport with downtown. The cost for this 25-minute ride is less than \$3.00! No need for a rental car at the US OPEN. For nearly the cost of a latte, you can get around town all week!

During the week the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN was in town, the Twin Cities hosted the WNBA Finals between the Minnesota Lynx and Los Angeles Sparks; the new football stadium in downtown hosted two Minnesota Vikings games; and the Target Center was home to Cirque Du Soleil and the 'Fab Five' American Gymnastics Team for an exhibition. All those events took place within a lob serve of the stadium court. There is always something going on in Minneapolis, so while you're on the courts all week, your family can come to town and enjoy themselves as well!

The 2016 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championships continued an exciting new era for the now 21-year-old event. For the fourth year, racquetball's largest tournament partnered with one of the nation's largest health and well-being companies and brought the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN to even greater heights. Many UnitedHealthcare executives were in attendance throughout the week and on Thursday the stands were filled with more than 500 UnitedHealthcare employees who came out with their families to check out the world's fastest sport! On Sunday during the Awards Ceremony, UnitedHealthcare's Chief Marketing Officer Andrew Mackenzie announced a renewed sponsorship of the US OPEN for years to come.

Other major co-sponsors of the event included Cardinal Health, Dick's Sporting Goods, LIFE TIME FITNESS, Sports Minneapolis, ACE, and Lewis Drug.

KANE ORDERS UP A DOZEN

Kane Waselenchuk's continued dominance of the IRT and the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN is simply ... well, we're not sure if there is a word in the dictionary to describe it. Kane's route to his 12th US OPEN Title included three-game sweeps in all his matches and an average number of points scored against per game at UNDER THREE! Of the 21 US OPENs played, he has won more than half of them. Of the 15 US OPENs Kane has played in, he didn't win on just three occasions (that is an 80% CHAMPIONSHIP WINNING PERCENTAGE, folks!). Waselenchuk (Edmonton, Canada / Austin, Texas) has won the last nine US OPEN titles, which means the last men's player to win racquetball's most prestigious event was before the entire Obama Administration!



Rocky Carson in Round of 16 action against Andres Acuña of Costa Rica.

While Kane took the spotlight in Minneapolis again this year, he didn't steal the entire show. José Rojas (Stockton, California) broke through to reach his second career US OPEN Semifinal (last in 2011) before running into Waselenchuk on the top half of the draw. During the off-season, thoughts of a possible retirement swirled around in Rojas' head. But with a new sponsor and a renewed energy for the sport that is his passion, José looked as good as he ever has. With two IRT wins under his belt and a ranking high of #3, Rojas will be reaching for new heights during this newly resurrected phase of his career.

Local Minnesota favorite Jake Bredenbeck (Marine, Minnesota) was the lowest seeded player at #11 to reach the quarterfinal round. There he met Daniel De La Rosa (Chihuahua, Mexico / Phoenix, Arizona) in a match that had a five-game tiebreaker written all over it. After winning the first game, Jake dropped the next two. In the third game, Bredenbeck's comeback was on before a dive injured his right shoulder, forcing him to forfeit the match.

LONGORIA SIMPLY SAILS TO US OPEN TITLE No. 7

Paola Longoria's current level of play is looking for that new word in the dictionary just like Kane! Longoria's (San Luis Potosí, Mexico) path to her SEVENTH UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Title included five three-game match sweeps. The average number of points scored against Paola each game was just barely over TWO! The 2016 US OPEN Championship was Paola's 74th professional victory of her career and 18th in a row on the LPRT. Longoria has played in 14 US OPENs, winning half of the time she has been in the draw. She has won the US OPEN Title for the last six years in a row.

For the first time in US OPEN history, there were no Americans in the semifinals. Matching up against Paola in the top half of the draw was fellow countrywoman Jessica Parrilla (San Luis Potosí, Mexico). In the bottom half Canada's Frédérique Lambert (Montreal, Canada) came in as the #2 seed and faced the third Mexican-born player in the semifinals in Samantha Salas Solis (Escobedo, Mexico).

Parrilla was only able to score five total points against Longoria, but she left Minneapolis smiling since her semifinal appearance was a career best at the US OPEN. In the other semifinal, Samantha and Frédérique battled in the first game with Salas Solis edging it out 12-10. Lambert took the second game, but then Salas Solis took control, closing out the match by winning the next two games.

In the Championship final, the match-up pitted Mexico's most decorated female doubles team against each other. Together, Paola and Samantha have won several international events, including the recent 2015 Pan American Games in Toronto and 2016 Pan American Championships in San Luis Potosí. On the court in a singles match though, Paola has no friends and cruised to an 11-3, 11-7, 11-3 sweep to win her seventh US OPEN Championship.

PRO DOUBLES

The aforementioned doubles duo of Paola Longoria and Samantha Salas Solis blasted their way through the draw to win their second UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Women's Doubles title together. The Mexican pair also won the 2015 US OPEN Professional Doubles Championship. Paola won the inaugural US OPEN Doubles Title in 2014 when Samantha was out injured.

The feel-good story of the fabulous week in Minneapolis was the Rojas brothers' outstanding play in the US OPEN Men's Professional Doubles draw. After needing an 11-9 tiebreaker win to get out of the first round, José Rojas and Marco Rojas (Stockton, California) faced the two-time defending champions, Ben Croft (San Luis Obispo, CA) and Kane Waselechuk, in the semifinals. Ben sat out the first part of the IRT season still recovering from a shoulder injury, but he felt healthy enough to try for his and Kane's third US OPEN Doubles Title.

A very big advantage for the Rojas brothers, though, was their ability to train and practice together back home in the '209'. Ben and Kane won the first game 15-12 and looked on their way to the Finals before José and Marco stormed back from a 2-7 deficit to win game two and even the match. In the tiebreaker, the two teams traded serves to a 4-4 tie. Then the Rojas' took the service box and exploded for four points to take a commanding lead at 8-4 that the defending champs just couldn't recover from. In the Men's Doubles Final, José and Marco defeated Daniel De La Rosa and Edson Martinez (San Luis Potosí, Mexico) 15-10, 15-5.

THE AMATEURS CAME TO PLAY, TOO!

The UnitedHealthcare US OPEN is about much more than just the top professional players. More than 600 amateur players from around the United States – and 14 countries! – played in the more-than-80 amateur skill and age divisions.



From Left to Right: US Open Under the Lights!; Men's Pro Doubles finals featuring Marco Rojas, Edson Martinez, Daniel De La Rosa, and José Rojas; Women's Pro Doubles finals featuring Samantha Salas Solis, Frédérique Lambert, Veronica Sotomayor, and Paola Longoria

Winners from the top Open Skill Divisions:

Men's Open Singles: Mario Mercado (Colombia)

Women's Open Singles: Cristina Amaya (Colombia)

Men's Open Doubles: Marquis Miller (Georgia) & Maurice Miller (Georgia)

Women's Open Doubles: Sofia Pineda (Mexico) & Valeria Hernandez (Mexico)

Mixed Open Doubles: Ana Gabriela Martinez (Guatemala) & Jaime Martell (Mexico)

For full results from all the divisions, please visit www.unitedhealthcareuso-pen.com

RACQUETBALL AFTER DARK

Of course, the reason everyone came to Minneapolis was for the smashing of racquetballs, but just as fun as playing against the world's best players is all the off-the-court fun the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN provides. Downtown Minneapolis is full of top quality restaurants, nightclubs, and other entertainment options that were filled with racquetball players all week long! Huberts Sports Bar & Grill inside the Target Center is always a favorite spot to grab a bite to eat or get a cold one. Huberts hosted the Players Party on Friday evening while the Northern Shores Grille & Bar at the Marriott hosted the Players Gathering on Thursday. The new City Works restaurant and bar just one block from the Target Center offers 90 local and domestic craft beers on tap! Seven, Hell's Kitchen, Murray's, Rare, and many more local restaurants are favorites of tournament goers.

PROFESSIONAL TOUR CHAMPIONS

IRT MEN

2016 Kane Waselenchuk (Texas)
2015 Kane Waselenchuk (Texas)
2014 Kane Waselenchuk (Texas)
2013 Kane Waselenchuk (Texas)
2012 Kane Waselenchuk (Texas)
2011 Kane Waselenchuk (Texas)
2010 Kane Waselenchuk (Texas)
2009 Kane Waselenchuk (Texas)
2008 Kane Waselenchuk (Texas)
2007 Rocky Carson (Calif.)
2006 Jason Mannino (Calif.)
2005 Kane Waselenchuk (Can.)
2004 Kane Waselenchuk (Can.)
2003 Kane Waselenchuk (Can.)
2002 Sudsy Monchik (N.Y.)
2001 Cliff Swain (Mass.)
2000 Sudsy Monchik (N.Y.)
1999 Jason Mannino (Calif.)
1998 Sudsy Monchik (N.Y.)
1997 Cliff Swain (Mass.)
1996 Sudsy Monchik (N.Y.)

LPRT WOMEN

Paola Longoria (Mex.)
Paola Longoria (Mex.)
Paola Longoria (Mex.)
Paola Longoria (Mex.)
Paola Longoria (Mex.)
Paola Longoria (Mex.)
Rhonda Rajsich (Calif.)
Rhonda Rajsich (Calif.)
Paola Longoria (Mex.)
Rhonda Rajsich (Ariz.)
Christie Van Hees (Can.)
Christie Van Hees (Can.)
Cheryl Gudinas (Ill.)
Rhonda Rajsich (Ariz.)
Cheryl Gudinas (Ill.)
Kerri Wachtel (Ohio)
Christie Van Hees (Canada)
Jackie Paraiso (Calif.)
Jackie Paraiso (Calif.)
Michelle Gould (Idaho)
Michelle Gould (Idaho)

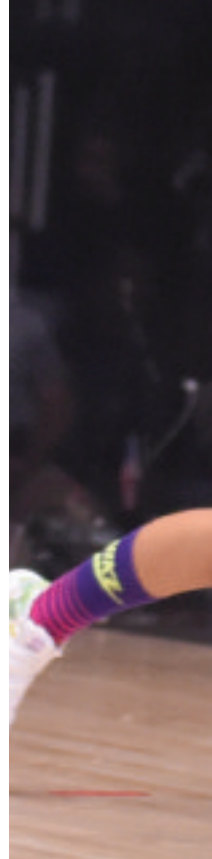
IRT Men's Pro Doubles

2016 Jose Rojas (Calif.) / Marco Rojas (Calif.)
2015 Ben Croft (Calif.) / Kane Waselenchuk (Texas)
2014 Ben Croft (Calif.) / Kane Waselenchuk (Texas)

LPRT Women's Pro Doubles

2016 Paola Longoria (Mexico) / Samantha Salas (Mexico)
2015 Paola Longoria (Mexico) / Samantha Salas (Mexico)
2014 Paola Longoria (Mexico) / Veronica Sotomayor (Ecuador)





On Saturday, racquetball's biggest bash of the year went down at the Downtown Minneapolis hotspot, The Pourhouse. Racquetball's top players in the world hit the dance floor with all their fans for a party that went into the early hours of the morning.

RACQUETBALLERS GIVING BACK

For the entire history of the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN, players and fans have helped support children's charities through playing in the Pro-Am Doubles Event, winning items at the Silent Auction, donating their \$5 referee fees back, or making other contributions.

This year the Silent Auction raised more than \$15,000! Add in the donations from the Pro-Am Doubles event and returned referee fees, and nearly \$25,000 is going to support St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, and Rapha House.

In the history of the US OPEN, more than \$430,000 has been raised for charity! Special thanks to Sal & Dee Perconti for taking the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Silent Auction to a new level again this year.

JOIN US NEXT YEAR

Start making plans now to join us for the 2017 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championships, back in Minneapolis, October 4-8, 2017. Come see the best players in the world and compete for yourself on racquetball's grandest stage!



Top: Felicia Green and Kanesha Madison assisting at the Silent Auction table. **Insert:** Sal and Dee Perconti

Middle: Donna Jones and Marsha Johnson (Georgia) having some laughs with juniors Heather Mahoney (California) and Julia Stein (Pennsylvania) after their match

Bottom: Garrett and Linda Tyler (Utah) with Mike Orr and Rocio Yepiz (California)





725

Total Players

**MATCHES
PLAYED**
2,014

175

FIRST TIME
PLAYERS



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AN IMPACT**



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\$8 MILLION
IN MINNEAPOLIS



5,831 Miles
JAPAN

5 Players Flew From Japan

**Heather
Mahoney**
12 Years Old



**Bob
Sullins**
82 Years Young



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THE IRT NETWORK & FACEBOOK LIVE**



KANE WASELENCHUK

12th US OPEN TITLE

PAOLA LONGORIA

7th US OPEN TITLE



VISIT
USA RACQUETBALL.COM
FOR EVENT RESULTS
USA Racquetball
Scott Fish

Top: Jessica Parrilla (Mexico)

Middle: Pro Singles Awards

Bottom: Heather Hojat and Gary Durbin (Texas)



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Darrell Vincent Farms
Waselenchuk Family
Taka Yamashita
Stacey Young

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RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS



ASHAWAY RENEWS SPONSORSHIP WITH CLIFF SWAIN

By Steve Crandall
Vice President, Sales & Marketing
Ashaway Racket Strings

Ashaway Racket Strings has renewed its sponsorship agreement with racquetball great, leading coach, and racquet manufacturer Cliff Swain, according to Ashaway Vice President Steve Crandall. The Hall of Famer, who currently coaches Maria Jose Vargas, José Rojas, and Coby Iwaasa, among others, strings his increasingly popular Cliff Swain brand racquets with Ashaway PowerKill® 17. Swain has just signed an exclusive online sales and distribution agreement with Lawler Sports.

"We could not ask for a better ambassador for our racquetball strings," said Crandall, "or better marketing partners than Cliff Swain racquets and Lawler Sports. We're very pleased to see these two legends of the sport working together, and we are sure that this new Ashaway/Swain/Lawler relationship will be 'win-win-win!'"

After the most winning career in racquetball history, Cliff retired from the IRT after the 2006-07 season but has stayed active in doubles and outdoor racquetball. In addition to his professional coaching work, Cliff continues to play WRT events and is also very active with youth leagues, teaching lessons, and hosting clinics. Cliff introduced his own Cliff Swain Signature Series racquet in 2014. It features compressed graphite construction, displacement channels to improve in-plane stiffness, and a large 107-square-inch string bed that maximizes string deflection and increases the sweet spot by 20%.

"The racquet business has been growing at a very healthy, steady pace," said Cliff, "and I think the timing is perfect now to have an online store help with sales. I've known Rex Lawler and Ian Titus at Lawler Sports for a very long time, and it's a great fit. I know the three of us -- Ashaway, Lawler and I -- are going to work really well together."

Founded more than 25 years ago by legendary stringing technician Rex Lawler, Lawler Sports is a major online and mail order racquetball products company. Located in Terre Haute, Indiana, Lawler Sports offers a huge online catalog of racquetball, pickleball, tennis, squash, and badminton equipment. The company was recently acquired by long-time stringer Ian Titus. Ian has been with Lawler for seven years, and when Rex decided to semi-retire, Ian decided to forgo law school to take over the business. "It's probably one of my better decisions," he said.

A long-time fan of Cliff Swain, Ian is excited to begin marketing the Cliff Swain Signature Series. "Cliff's racquet is really top notch," he said. "It's engineered by the best designers and is one of the best racquets on the market. I'm a racquet tech junkie, and I'm excited because I know this is a great frame."

He continued, "But the big thing for me is that Cliff gives so much back to the sport. I believe Cliff going out and doing his clinics is really good for the sport, especially with his history and still being a top player. I wish other people would do that. So I want to support him any way I can. If more people were like Cliff, racquetball would be even more popular!"

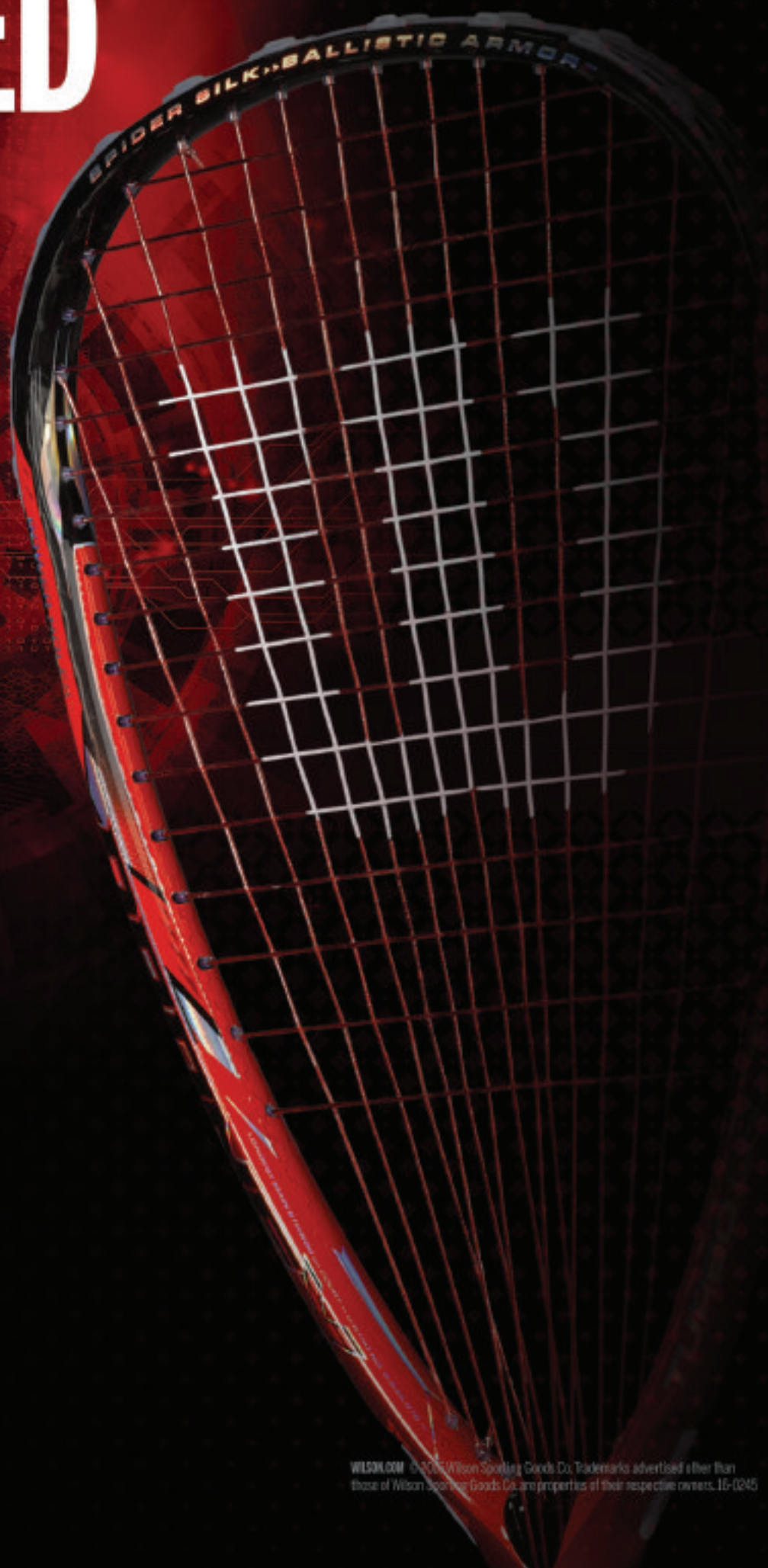
Ashaway Racket Strings are made by Ashaway Line & Twine Mfg. Co., the only U.S. manufacturer of string for squash, tennis, racquetball, and badminton. Operated by the Crandall family since 1824, Ashaway has been making racquet strings since 1949 and is responsible for several important technical innovations. Ashaway has been the Official String of USA Racquetball for more than ten years and is also the Official String of the Professional Tennis Registry. Ashaway Line & Twine Mfg. Co. also makes braided products for medical and industrial applications. For more information, visit www.ashawayusa.com.



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...OVERHEAD SERVES ARE PERFECTLY LEGAL AS LONG AS...

by Otto Dietrich, USA Racquetball National Rules Commissioner

It seems many players don't realize that at the back of the rulebook there a set of suggested rules of the game governing play when there is no referee. Probably more matches are played like that than are played WITH a referee, so knowing this I thought I would point out this fact.

This particular issue was brought by a recent question:

Mike G. asked: My buddies and I were debating whose job it is to call the serve good or bad. My impression was that it is the receiver's duty to judge short serves. Is there a difference if we're playing doubles?

I answered: The section in the rulebook on self-refeing does suggest that the receiver should be the one who calls short serves. Of course, the server can also disagree and, after the rally, of course, argue that the serve was either short or good. Some differences of opinion are bound to happen. I suggest just working it out when they do. In singles, the server is usually not in a very good position to judge the close "short or not" call on his own drive serve due to nature of how that serve is executed. That's why we say that the receiver should be the one to make that call. But in doubles, I will readily admit that the non-serving partner is probably in the very best position of all on the court to see whether the serve "was short or not" – due to the fact that he isn't moving at that instant and probably couldn't be in a better viewing position either in terms of closeness, viewing angle, or minimal distraction at that moment. So, in doubles, you might want to also involve that player

in making that call. It's really up to those of you playing the match.

Aaron Z noted: I am reading a lot of conflicting information on the Internet about overhead serves. I did not see anything in the USA Racquetball rules against it.

the proper serving rules.)

Kerry L. emailed this to Peggie at the National Office who forwarded it to me: I have been playing racquetball for about 45 years, and I am now the racquetball instructor at a gym in Garden Ridge,



Daniel Rojas in the Men's Pro Singles at the 2016 Unitedhealthcare US Open.
Photo By Restrung Magazine

Is it a legal serve?

I explained to Aaron: Yes, overhead serves are perfectly legal as long as you also fully comply with all the provisions of Rules 3.1 through 3.10. Also, if you would, please send me any links to where you see the conflicting information you mentioned. (I sent both Aaron and the person who posted the incorrect information a copy of the current rulebook to clarify

Texas, a suburb of San Antonio. Let's say that a player hits a serve that is either short or long, so he is now on his second serve. He then hits another serve that is good. The rally starts, but then during the rally there is a hinder, so that the point is played over. Is it still the second serve for that server, or does it go back to being the first serve?

DO YOU HAVE A RULES/REFEREEING QUESTION?

Be sure to email it to me at ODietrich@usaracquetball.com 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.

I told Kerry: Once a rally has started, i.e., when the serve has been returned and strikes the front wall (per Rule 3.13), any replay of a rally requires that the next rally begin with a first serve. It totally wipes out any prior fault serves. By the way, this specific concept is enshrined in Rule 3.14(b).

Georgia G. simply asked: Can you describe the difference between an “intentional” and an “unintentional” carry?

I initially responded: Sure, I can describe the difference -- it's kind of like striking a nail with a hammer, but accidentally hitting your thumb versus grabbing a

hammer and hitting your thumb on purpose. Not satisfied at all with my admittedly way-too-sarcastic response, she replied that no, that wasn't good enough! After thinking on her issue a great deal, I challenged her “to contribute” and make her mark on the sport by developing the definitions for us to put in the rulebook. I received no immediate answer, but I followed up many more months after that, and Georgia admitted that she, too, could just not develop one. So where does that leave us? Perhaps one of you out there in the greater world of racquetball can come up with a good definition for each. If so, please send them to me right away!

IN REMEMBRANCE



Sadie Gross
1977 - 2016



Grant "Spoony" Morrill
1937 - 2016



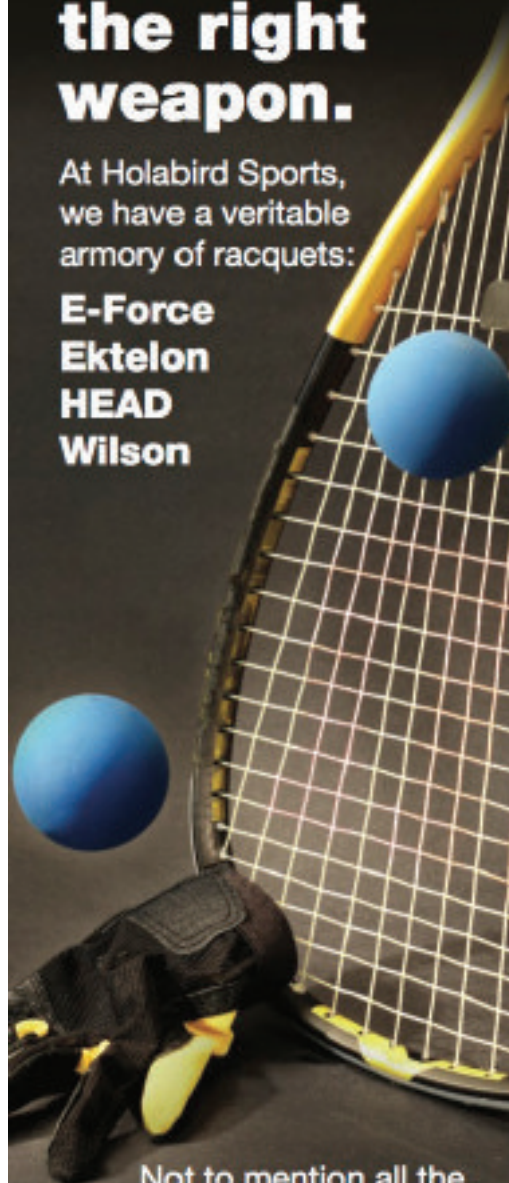
Dennis "Pops" Rajsich
1948 - 2016

Photo By Roby Partovich

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CONTINUING THE Making of a Champion



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

Okay, 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.

In the Fall 2016 issue, I discussed the "Higher-Level Ceiling Ball," another defensive shot. This shot moves the server out of center court and puts him in the most difficult position to score: the back of the court.

In this issue I am going to discuss the "Z Ball," a third defensive shot that is used at the higher levels. When you get into advanced levels of play, you need to have another defensive shot, in addition to ceiling balls, to hit when you are off balance and out of position, especially in the front half of the court. Your goal is to move your opponent out of the middle and put him in the most difficult position to score from, the last 3-5 feet of the court, while you regain center court position.

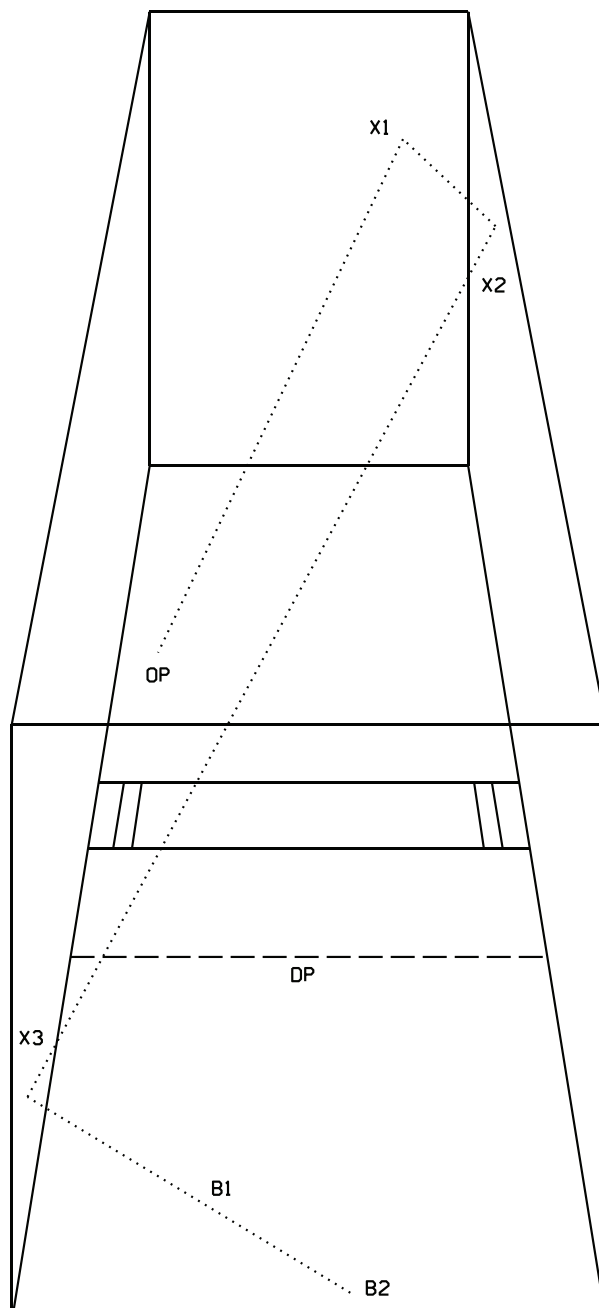
The Z shot makes the letter Z. It hits the front wall approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of the way up, then the first side wall and the second side wall on a fly and comes out parallel to the back wall. The higher and harder you hit the ball, the deeper it goes in the court. Due to hitting three walls consecutively, it creates natural spin on the ball, making it very difficult for your opponent to retrieve.

1- From where in the court do you want to hit the ball?

You want to hit the ball from in front of the dotted line, preferably from one extreme side of the court or the other (not in the middle) because you do not have the correct angle from the middle to hit all three walls.

2- What is your contact point?

a. You want to hit the ball off your lead foot, approximately by the little toe.



X1 - Front Wall
X2 - 1st Side Wall
X3 - 2nd Side Wall

DP - Defensive Player
OP - Offensive player
B1 - 1st Bounce
B2 - 2nd Bounce

b. The racquet head is facing the front wall and aimed at the corner. You're tilting the racquet up slightly so as to hit the front wall first about two-thirds to three-quarters of the way up the wall.

c. The ball should hit the front wall within approximately 2-4 feet of the first side wall, depending on how hard it is hit.

d. The ball then travels to the second side wall and hits it on a fly near the back wall and comes out relatively parallel to the back wall, making it almost impossible to return or return well.

You don't want to give away easy points by skipping or leaving the ball up, so try to incorporate the Z shot into your game. At the advanced level, it is a very powerful tool. The natural spin created by the pace and trajectory of the ball makes it more difficult to return vs. a regular ceiling shot.

For more details on the Z Ball and drills to practice the shot, see my book, "Championship Racquetball".

Fran Davis coaches Paola Longoria (6X #1 LPRT, 5X World Champion, 4X Pan American Champion, 7X US Open Champion), Rocky Carson (#2 IRT, 5X World Champion, 2X Pan American Champion, US Open Champion), and junior sensations Jordan Cooperrider (Junior National Champion & USA Junior National Team), Wayne Antone (Junior National Champion & USA Junior National Team), and Mitchell Turner (Junior National Champion & USA Junior National Team). Fran's additional credentials include USAR Hall of Fame 2004, Woman of the Year 2009, former U.S. National Team Coach, and Master Professional (USAR-IP).



Call for Nominations for USA Racquetball's 2016 Annual Awards:

Joe Sobek Outstanding Contribution Award

John Halverson Fair Play Award

All nominations should be sent to: jhiser@usaracquetball.com by March 15th. Criteria for awards can be found at: <http://www.teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/Programs/Annual-Awards/Award-Nominations>

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Rocky Carson
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Paola Longoria
2X #1 Pro Player

Sudsy Monchik
#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

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Mar 31-Apr 2	Las Vegas, NV
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TBA	Houston/Dallas, TX
TBA	Denver, CO
TBA	St. Louis, MO
TBA	New England

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW? -- MICHELLE GOULD

By Aimee Ruiz



Where Are They Now? A new column here in *Racquetball* magazine will feature past pros from both the men's and women's tours throughout the years. We'll interview them and see what they have been up to since they stepped away from playing professionally. We'll also see what they think of today's game and the players who are currently competing.

Our first interview is with former champion Michelle Gould. Michelle finished #1 on the Women's Tour for seven seasons and possesses a list of accomplishments with which very few can compete!

Your last year on tour was the 1997-98 season when you finished the year ranked #1 for the 7th time. What have you been up to since then?

When I retired from the game I worked at 24 Hour Fitness for a couple of years as their Corporate Programming Director. I found that I needed to look for a job with better benefits and advancement opportunities so I applied to the United States Postal Service in a management position. I have been with them for the past 16 years and am currently a Level 22 Manager in Boise, Idaho. I love my job and find that I get tremendous satisfaction leading a large team in our mission to become self-directed leaders of the organization with a united desire to serve the public and provide the best service to our customers every day.

Can you tell us a bit about your children? How old are they? Are they into any sports?

I have two children. Ryan is 16 years old and a straight A student with incredible sport skills. He enjoys playing a variety of sports: tennis, racquetball, taekwondo, golf, mountain biking, and skiing. His passion is mountain biking, and he has been competing on a few circuits and doing remarkable. Courtney is 13 years old and a straight A student. She enjoys a variety of sports as well: tennis, racquetball, taekwondo, gymnastics, cheerleading, skiing, and golf. I am incredibly proud of my children. They are both intelligent, kind, giving, athletic, and have faith beyond belief to get through anything that comes their way.



What do your children think about the fact that their mom was the #1 women's player in the world in racquetball seven times?

We don't really discuss what I did in racquetball that much. They know what I have done and have googled me enough to realize my accomplishments were great, but I am just Mom to them. We love each other and support each other in everything we do.

Who was a player that you looked up to when making your start on the tour, and why?

I looked up to Chris Evert Lloyd when I was growing up. She had tremendous determination and spirit yet was always kind to others. She trained incredibly hard and still remained grounded to enjoy the most important things in life.

Do you watch any of the current women's pros play, and what do you find different about the game now than when you played?

I haven't watched any women's pro matches until recently. I think it is great that so many countries are still enjoying the game. The draws are smaller and not as many events, but it is exciting to see the pro tour still going strong. I miss seeing all of the great people that play this game, and I am hopeful to see them again soon. Their passion and desire to help others is fantastic.

Is there anyone in today's game you are most impressed with or who has a similar game style to yours?

Kane is very impressive. He is very driven to be the best at what he does. His achievements are many, and his precise shot-making ability and passion make him a special athlete in the sport.

You have been all over the world playing for Team USA in international competitions. What were your fondest memories representing Team USA, your favorite countries to visit and why?

I have so many fantastic memories playing all over the world. The people are what made the events so special and something I will cherish forever. I have been to 47 different countries playing this amazing game, and the experiences I had affected me deeply in so many ways. Bolivia, Mexico, Korea, Argentina, Japan, Venezuela, Guam, Australia, Chile, Spain, Germany...way too many to list. Standing at the top of the podium after a World Championship event holding the trophy up high with my fellow teammates was my favorite because each of us knew we left everything we had on



Michelle's children, Courtney & Ryan
Photos By Michelle Gould

the court and, collectively, we were able to bring home the gold medal to the United States with a sense of pride, determination, and spirit that every one of us felt to the core.

Your racquetball career is one of the most impressive ever. What was one of your accomplishments that meant the most to you?

When I competed in the Pan American Games in Buenos Aires and won the Gold Medal, it was a tremendous accomplishment for me. I was very ill at the event. I had a 102+ degree temperature and would stay in bed most of the time. Coach Winterton would wake me up to get ready for my match and take me to the event.

I would play my match and get wrapped in cold towels to try and reduce my temperature and go back to bed until they woke me up again. I don't remember a single match I played at the event, but I do remember being on the podium and having them place the gold medal around my neck. I was very proud that I was able to get through that event to accomplish something that meant so much to me when I wasn't sure I could do it.

Have you ever thought about coaching?

I think about coaching all of the time. I love sports, and I love racquetball, and I enjoy helping others achieve their dreams.

Helping others be successful brings me tremendous joy, and I take a very calculated approach to achieving those results.

I noticed on social media (Facebook) that you have returned to the courts and have been hitting. Do you foresee a return to competitive racquetball?

I have started hitting again, and I have been considering a return to the game. You will have to stay posted to find out. I had lost touch with a lot of people over the last 15 years, and I am just starting to renew those friendships. The outpouring of love and support I have received has been fantastic and exactly what I needed, so I must say thank you.

What would you say to someone who wants to break into that next level and begin playing the pro tour full time? Any words of wisdom?

There are so many things I would want them to know. Take a three-tiered approach to training: 1. Overall fitness (speed, flexibility, strength training, cardio); 2. Skills training by practicing the way you play. If you are practicing drop and hit skills, then stop it. The ball doesn't come at you that way when you play this game so stop practicing your skills that way if you want to improve (drills, new skills, practice games, etc.); and the most important, 3. Mental training (of course, that one is my little secret). I consider myself one of the most mentally tough athletes who ever played the game because I put as much effort into my mental training as I did in my physical and skills training. Lastly, keep in mind that the journey is more important than the destination, so don't focus on outcomes; focus on the work along your journey and the outcomes take care of themselves.



Michelle's Accomplishments:

196 Competition Titles & Awards

- 39 U.S. National Titles
- 58 International Titles
- 55 Professional Titles
- 26 National & International Awards including:
 - 9 USRA (United States Racquetball Association) Athlete of the Year Awards
 - Inducted into USA Racquetball Hall of Fame in 2012
 - 4x Finalist WSF (Women's Sports Foundation) Sportswoman of the Year
 - 6x Nominee AAU (Amateur Athletic Union)
 - Inaugural inductee in the IRF (International Racquetball Federation) Hall of Fame
 - James E. Sullivan Memorial Award

The Race for the 2017-18 U.S. National Team

The first qualification event for the 2017-18 U.S. National Team is in the record books with the conclusion of the 2016 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN. Team Qualification points were awarded, based on finishing position as follows:



Champion	100 Points
Runner-Up	80 Points
Semifinalist	60 Points
Quarterfinalist	30 Points
Round of 16	10 Points
Round of 32	5 Points



The UnitedHealthcare US OPEN comprises 20 percent of the Team Qualification process, with a Team Qualifying Singles Division held at National Doubles contributing 30 percent and the National Singles Team Qualifying Division comprising the remaining 50 percent.

The top four point recipients for both Men and Women receive invitations to join Team USA.

Current U.S. National Team Singles Qualification Standings – Top 5 Men

STANDING	PLAYER	US OPEN IRT DIVISION POINTS	WEIGHTED POINTS 20%	TOTAL POINTS
1	Rocky Carson	80	16	16
2	José Rojas	60	12	12
T3	Marco Rojas	30	6	6
T3	Jake Bredenbeck	30	6	6
T5	David Horn	10	2	2
T5	Jose Diaz	10	2	2

Current U.S. National Team Singles Qualification Standings – Women

STANDING	PLAYER	US OPEN LPRT DIVISION POINTS	WEIGHTED POINTS 20%	TOTAL POINTS
1	Rhonda Rajsich	30	6	6
T2	Jordan Cooperrider	10	2	2
T2	Michelle De La Rosa	10	2	2
T2	Sheryl Lotts	10	2	2
T2	Cecilia Pratt	10	2	2
T3	Laura Brandt	5	1	1
T3	Da'monique Davis	5	1	1
T3	Adrienne Haynes	5	1	1
T3	Sharon Jackson	5	1	1
T3	Erika Manilla	5	1	1
T3	Hollie Scott	5	1	1
T3	Janel Tisinger	5	1	1

The qualification process for doubles teams continues to be based on the Team Qualifying Doubles Division at National Doubles.

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Las Vegas 3 Wallball Event Sets Records

The 7th Annual 3 Wallball World Championships had another record-setting year in Las Vegas, September 21-25, at the Stratosphere Hotel & Casino. With nearly 700 participants and over 1,000 matches, the event featured more courts and additional divisions to set a new standard for outdoor tournaments in racquetball, handball, and paddleball. With the growth of 1-wall play, a new four-court section was added to the 1-wall ESPN court. Combined with the twelve 3-wall courts, the venue enjoyed non-stop activity from early morning to late into the night. ESPN3 was again the broadcast partner with matches from all three sports broadcast on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Off the court, the story was certainly the weather, with the most comfortable temperatures in the history of the event all week but also a couple of tough days with strong wind gusts. The winds never slowed down play but created havoc for the sponsor, vendor, and spectator tents.

On the court, the event began with special events for both organizations that benefit from the generosity of the event and its players. The Boy Scouts kids' clinic was a great success with pro racquetball, handball, and paddleball players working with a large group of kids on the courts, and the Military Racquetball Federation Pro-Am was once again "sold out." Winners of the Pro-Am were Jared Campos who was paired with California pro Scott Davis, but the real winners were the Wounded Warriors that benefit from the MRF's Racquetball Rehabilitation Clinics.

As always, there was great competition and a share of upsets through the range of pro and amateur divisions. On the pro side, the big winner was Robert Sostre who teamed with three different partners to win three divisions: David Horn in Pro Doubles, Gabriel Medina in CPRT Doubles, and Freddy Ramirez in 1-Wall Pro Doubles. Janel Tisinger took both women's divisions, winning Pro



Rear: Karen Mack, ESPN and Steven Harper, MRF
Front: David Villarreal and Bryan Dornon, participants in a new MRF Division: Up/Down
Photo By Belinda Dettman

Singles and teaming with Aimee Ruiz in the Pro Doubles. Ruiz also earned a second title in 1-Wall Pro Mixed Doubles with Joe Young. The Men's Pro Singles was won by Rocky Carson, while Michelle Key (now De La Rosa) and Daniel De La Rosa took the honors in the Mixed Pro Doubles.

On the amateur side, some of the multi-division winners included: Roy Hernandez who took home three titles with wins in the Men's Open Singles, Mixed Open Doubles with Carrie Hoeft, and Men's 1-Wall Open Doubles with Alejandro Barcelo. Among the two-event winners were Richard Miller and Ben Goldenberg who partnered in Men's Open Doubles and 75+ Combined Doubles plus Steven Harper who won both Military, Police & Fire divisions, partnering with Carl Diaz for the Doubles after winning the Singles. On the women's side, Luanne Bryant earned Women's A Singles and Doubles titles with Heather Hojat while Kris Kaskawal won a 3-Wall Doubles with Tracy Untalan (40+) and a 1-Wall Doubles with Celeste Paf-



3 Wallball Gold Cup Amateur Winners Roy Hernandez & Rocio Yepiz
Photo By Randy Lam



ford (Open). Junior Divisions were won by Isaac Hernandez (14 & Under) and Zachary Rodgers (12 & Under). The champions of the up/down Wheelchair division were Bryan and Jason Dornon.

The event also was the finale of the season-long 3 Wallball Gold Cup which crowned men's and women's champions for both pros and amateurs: Janel Tisinger (Women's Pro), Rick Koll (Men's Pro), Rocio Yepiz (Women's Amateur), and Roy Hernandez (Men's Amateur).

On behalf of the owners and staff of the 3 Wallball World Championships, we would like to recognize the sponsors who made the event possible, including presenting sponsor Pro Kennex, Ahern, Netcentric Enterprise Solutions (NES), Soda Man Vending, Anthony's Glass & Mirror, Melissa's, Liquid Nitro, Gearbox and Head/Penn plus, of course, the host Stratosphere Hotel & Casino and our broadcast partner ESPN. Please support these sponsors when you have the opportunity -- without them, the event would not have been possible.

Also, we thank all of the organizations that join together in co-operation to put on this great event: World Outdoor Racquetball, World Players of Handball, National Paddleball Association, International Racquetball Tour, Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour, USA Racquetball, and Military Racquetball Federation.

Thank you to the players and fans for coming to Las Vegas and making the 2016 3 Wallball World Championships presented by Pro Kennex the great success that it was!

Be sure to place September 20-24, 2017, on your calendar now for the 8th Annual 3 Wallball World Championships! See you again in Las Vegas!



Top: Michael Medina, Justin Cooklin, and Seran Ramkissoon with Vegas Showgirls
Middle: 3 Wallball Gold Cup Pro Winners Janel Tisinger and Rick Koll
Bottom: Sunrise from the top of the Stratosphere
Photos By Belinda Dettman



Above: Robert Sostre, Winner, Men's Pro Doubles, Men's CPRT Doubles, and Men's Pro 1 Wall Doubles
Left: Signage from the 3WallBall Event
Photos By Dave Vincent





CALENDAR of EVENTS

For the latest in USA Racquetball Sanctioned Events visit USARacquetball.com

Date	Event	City	State	Location	Email
Jan. 5-8	Coast to Coast California Open	Reseda	CA	360 Health Club	rjlam@hotmail.com
Jan. 6-8	Pennsylvania State Doubles Championship	York	PA	Athletic Club of York	pastatedoubles@pa-racquetball.com
Jan. 6-8	Georgia State Doubles Championship	Atlanta	GA	Emory University	grpatournaments@earthlink.net
Jan. 6-8	Infusion Solutions Winter Shootout	Bellingham	WA	Bellingham Athletic Club	scottjessie@outlook.com
Jan. 6-8	Laguna Creek Racquet Club Winter Shootout Benefitting RYDF	Elk Grove	CA	Laguna Creek Racquet Club	brenthoskins84@gmail.com
Jan. 7-8	AZ WOR IV Battle Clash of Chavez	Laveen	AZ	Cesar Chavez Park	azor@azoutdoorracquetball.com
Jan. 7-8	WOR Holiday Park Shootout	Ft. Lauderdale	FL	Holiday Park	jeffery.wright@sunbeltrentals.com
Jan. 7-8	Winter Freeze	Huber Heights	OH	The Heights Racquet & Fitness	mfabriziomora75@gmail.com
Jan. 13-14	MO Racquetball Blizzard	St. Louis	MO	Vetta Racquet Sports - Concord	dwhitley@vettasports.com
Jan. 13-14	ND Winter Classic	Bismark	ND	Capital Racquet & Fitness Center	khanenberg@bisparks.org
Jan. 12-15	Sunset Winter Blast Junior Tournament	Portland	OR	Sunset Athletic Club	paul@maduellassociates.com
Jan. 13-15	28th Annual WSMRA National Championships	Lombard	IL	Glass Courts Swim & Fitness	cherylkkirk@gmail.com
Jan. 13-15	New Jersey Open	Warren	NJ	The Racquet Club at Warren	jonathan@wearrollout.com
Jan. 13-15	Longhorn Open	Austin	TX	University of Texas: Gregory Gym	utlonghornopen@gmail.com
Jan. 13-15	Adcope Winter Classic	Lewiston	ID	Adcope Athletic Club	premierracquet@gmail.com
Jan. 13-15	Minnesota Hall of Fame Tournament	Minneapolis	MN	University of Minnesota: Rec Center	
Jan. 14-15	Birmingham Racquetball Championships	Birmingham	AL	University of Alabama in Birmingham	mokukoyi@dcseeng.com
Jan. 14-15	B.L.Z.Z.A.R.D B.A.S.H.	Centennial	CO	Goodson Rec Center	bruceb@ssprd.org
Jan. 14-15	Cowbell Shootout	Lodi	CA	Twin Arbors Athletic Club	ellistyle@comcast.net
Jan. 21	Missouri High School Racquetball League Doubles Tournament	St. Louis	MO	Vetta Racquet Sports - Concord	dwhitley@vettasports.com
Jan. 19-22	Lewis Drug Pro/Am & South Dakota State Singles Championship	Sioux Falls	SD	Sioux Falls Family YMCA	lewisproam.director@gmail.com
Jan. 21	University of West Florida Team Fundraiser	Pensacola	FL	University of West Florida	jerrywickliffe@gmail.com
Jan. 20-22	Fran Davis Racquetball Camp	Atlanta	GA	Recreation Atl	camps@frandavisracquetball.com
Jan. 20-22	Grand Canyon State Games Winter Racquetball Tournament	Tempe	AZ	Arizona State University	dprattski@cox.net
Jan. 20-22	NC Courts Plus Racquetball Charity Challenge	Jacksonville	NC	Courts Plus of Jacksonville	coachjan@suddenlinkmail.com
Jan. 27-28	13th Annual Downtown Showdown Racquetball Tournament	Omaha	NE	Downtown YMCA	wziegmann@yahoo.com
Jan. 27-28	Winterton Racquetball Scottsdale Racquetball Camp	Scottsdale	AZ	Lifetime Fitness	coachrball@gmail.com
Jan. 27-28	18th Annual Racquet for The Cure	Highlands Ranch	CO	Highlands Ranch Rec Center	iamacoach@msn.com
Jan. 28	Winter Blast 1-Day Doubles Shootout	Sarasota	FL	Sarasota Family YMCA - Frank Berlin	auchad99@hotmail.com
Jan. 28	ASU Doubles Shootout	Tempe	AZ	Arizona State University	coachrball@gmail.com
Jan. 28	Delaware State Doubles	Wilmington	DE	Kirkwood Fitness & Racquetball	delaware.racquetball@gmail.com
Jan. 26-29	West Coast Championships	Concord	CA	Big C Athletic Club	pablo@worldracquetballtour.com

CALENDAR of EVENTS



Date	Event	City	State	Location	Email
Jan. 26-29	Beaver Classic	Corvallis	OR	Timberhill Athletic Club	durbin_rob@comcast.net
Jan. 27-29	Eastern Collegiate Racquetball Conference - Meet #4	Albany	NY	Court Club	vanschalkwykr@hotmail.com
Jan. 27-29	Fran Davis Racquetball Camp	Edmonds	WA	Harbor Square	camps@frandavisracquetball.com
Jan. 27-29	Georgia Regional Doubles Championships	Lilburn	GA	Recreation Atl	grpatournaments@earthlink.net
Jan. 27-29	Wintergreen	Laurel	MD	SportFit Total Fitness	billracquetball@gmail.com
Jan. 27-29	Boston Athletic Club	Boston	MA	Boston New Years Open	solomonracquetandsports@gmail.com
Jan. 27-29	Maverick Metroplex Racquetball Championships	Arlington	TX	Maverick Athletic Club	leo@themav.com

REGIONAL EVENTS

March 23-26, Ohio – The Heights Racquet & Fitness

April 7-9, Kansas – YMCA Downtown Wichita

April 7-9, Maryland – Sport Fit Laurel

April 7-9, Michigan – Davison Athletic Club

April 7-9, Missouri – Vetta Sports Concord

April 7-9, Oregon – Cascade Athletic Club

April 7-9, New Hampshire – Salem Athletic Club

April 14-16, Georgia – Recreation Atlanta

April 21-23, Illinois – Glass Court

April 21-23, Texas – Thousand Oaks Family YMCA

April 21-23, Pennsylvania – Fitness 1440

April 27-29, Florida – Sarasota YMCA

April 27-29, New York – Clubfit - Briarcliff

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BIG CHANGE IN MARCH VENUE DATES NATIONAL MASTERS RACQUETBALL ASSOCIATION

By Patrick Gibson

Our Portland, Oregon, event in July was another great four days of racquetball and camaraderie, with more than 30 first-time players participating and \$1,500 raised for Beaverton area high school racquetball teams. We were also excited about our Atlanta doubles-only tourney in early December where 76 players competed from 19 states and the District of Columbia.

The Maverick Athletic Club in Arlington, Texas, has agreed to host our devoted group of round-robin enthusiasts in March 2017. We were all able to work around the Texas State Singles tourney and finalize the details. **We are going back to Dallas!**

Please update your calendars to reserve **March 22-25, 2017**, for the Dallas NMRA tournament. One very small concession we had to make at this club was to hold the banquet (BBQ, actually!) on Thursday evening, March 23rd.

We love being able to be in the middle of the United States and hope to pick up a few East Coasters! Tell all of your racquetball friends to sign up today at www.r2sports.com/tourney/home.asp?TID=18874.

Full details are listed in the entry form and flyer on our website: <http://www.nationalmastersracquetball.org/articles.asp?articleID=31822>.

Top: Joanna and John Lombardis (Lynchburg, Virginia) won the bronze medal in the Mixed 50+ Doubles in Portland. They had so much trouble arriving due to weather in Seattle that they drove from Seattle to Portland!

Bottom: Brothers Mark and Randy Moore waited until they were both 45 to play their first NMRA tournament, and they went home with the gold medal in the Men's 45+ Doubles!

Photos By Cindy Tilbury.



ASHAWAY RACKET STRINGS TO CONTINUE AS USA RACQUETBALL'S OFFICIAL STRING



Official String



Ashaway Racket Strings announced today that it has once again been named the Official String of USA Racquetball (USAR). Ashaway indicated its plans to continue its multifaceted programs to support and promote the sport of racquetball. Ashaway has been the Official String of USA Racquetball since 2004.

"As the only U.S. manufacturer of racquet strings, we are proud to continue our long-standing relationship with USA Racquetball," said Steven Crandall, Vice President of Ashaway Racket Strings. "Over the years, USA Racquetball has done an exceptional job of organizing and showcasing the best that racquetball has to offer, and it is natural that Ashaway should continue to do its part in raising the visibility of this exciting sport."

"We are excited to continue our partnership with Ashaway as the Official String of USA Racquetball," said Jason Thoerner, USA Racquetball's Executive Director. "Ashaway not only has a long and proud tradition of producing quality strings, but they have also done much to support and promote racquetball. They have sponsored amateur and professional racquetball players of all ages and skill levels, including legendary American players like Cliff Swain, Jacqueline Paraiso, and Jack Huczek."

Ashaway has offered specialized racquetball strings for more than 30 years. The only United States manufacturer of racquet strings, Ashaway offers a full line of racquetball strings, including its popular nylon-based SuperKill® family, as well as its most recent Zyex®-based UltraKill® and PowerKill® families which allow players to choose the precise combination of power, durability and feel that is right for their game. Available in 16, 17, and 18 gauge thicknesses, UltraKill and PowerKill strings are constructed using high-tech Zyex polymer filaments in either the core or wear layer and are engineered to provide specific performance characteristics while maintaining tension for longer string life.

More Than Just a Scare
By Venita Mitchell
5th Annual Ghostly Doubles
San Antonio, Texas
October 29, 2016

All was going well at this one-day event at Gold's Gym HCV in San Antonio when one of the players collapsed. Unconscious and seemingly lifeless on the gym floor, a fellow player administered CPR and used the AED machine for over 10 minutes until paramedics arrived and took over.



Everything changed instantly: players no longer cared about racquetball but about human life. The entire gym shut down and prayers were audible throughout the facility. It was the scariest event ever to occur in my life.

There was a miracle! When I called back to the gym from the emergency room with the news that our player was not only alive but awake, it was reported that there were more than 100 players and club members crying tears of joy. The tournament continued that afternoon, and players who were there have said that after that day, their lives will never be the same. Though they love racquetball, there is nothing more important than human life.

Maryland/Washington Racquetball Association at the Maryland Senior Olympics
By Mary Helen Sprecher

Maryland/Washington Racquetball Association supported the racquetball competition of the Maryland Senior Olympics, held in September at Severna Park Racquetball & Fitness. This was a qualifying year for National Senior Games, to be held in 2017 in Birmingham, Alabama. Players could medal in age groups in men's and women's singles, men's and women's doubles, and mixed doubles. Maryland's players will be bringing their game to Alabama, and they'll be looking for other state representatives as well!



Left: Margo Scott, Mary Helen Sprecher, and Marian Sullivan
 Right: Earl and Teresa Daniels



RACQUETBALL NUPTUALS

Congratulations to Tammy and Michael Deblock on their racquetball themed wedding earlier this year at Brandywine Falls in Ohio. Tammy and Michael met while playing racquetball in college and are doubles partners.



Congratulations to IRT #3 Daniel De La Rosa and U.S. National Team Member Michelle Key who were married on September 28, 2016, in a very intimate wedding surrounded by family and friends and their dog, Grace. Daniel and Michelle have announced via social media that they are expecting their first child, a baby girl, in April 2017!

YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD FOR RACQUETBALL

By Leo R. Vasquez

Whoever said, "You're too old for that!" obviously hasn't met these guys. Don't tell that to Frank, Randy, John, and Bob. USA Racquetball posted a story on our Facebook page and asked our followers to share the names of anyone they knew who played racquetball and could be part of this "never too old crowd." We tracked them down, and following is some interesting background about them and how they started playing. (Advice: Don't call these guys old, they can probably still beat you and maybe even a few other guys at your club!)

Randolph "Randy" Marks

Born: Manhattan, New York
Resides: Poughkeepsie, New York
Birthdate: 08/1/1938
Favorite Shot: Left or right side corners.

Randy Marks plays racquetball at Gold's Gym in Poughkeepsie. He first started playing back in the early 90's. While working on a project, a friend invited him to go to the club on their lunch hour. He asked, "What is racquetball?" Randy now plays every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. He recently won his age group at the New Jersey Senior Olympics and also won his age group in New Jersey State Singles. Gillian Cobb, his racquetball daughter, submitted this information and says he helped her game immensely when she first started playing.



John C Orr

Born: Long Island City, New York
Resides: Huntington Long Island, NY
Birthdate: 4/16/1935
Favorite shot: Left corner kill shot.

John Orr plays racquetball every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings at the World Gym in Bay Shore, NY. He plays with a group of retired friends from an organization called the RATS. John first started playing when he was 45 years old with a friend. He liked it so much he started taking lessons from Tommy Montalbano and began to quickly improve. He said he still likes the competition and that he can still run around better than most 60 year olds. Sandy Flandina submitted John's story and said John was the best player he had ever played.



Robert "Bob" Sullins

Born: Terrell, Texas
Resides: Arlington, Texas
Birthdate: 11/25/1933
Favorite shot: Right corner pinch from the left side.

Bob Sullins liked racquetball so much that he decided to build his own club in Arlington, TX. The Maverick Athletic Club first started in 1980 as an 8 court facility and then soon after became a 10 court facility. Bob plays several times per week with his longtime friends and club members in the late afternoons as well as tournaments. Bob said he enjoys the companionship and friendships he has made over the years. He has owned the Maverick for nearly 37 years and it has become one of the most well-known racquetball clubs in the country and biggest supporters of the sport in Texas. Bob's story was submitted by Leo R. Vasquez who is the Program Director at the Maverick.



Frank Trask

Born: Hartford, Connecticut
Resides: Ocala, Florida
Birthdate: Nov. 4, 1930
Favorite Shot: Lob serve

Frank Trask plays mostly at On Top of the World Communities racquetball courts, a beautiful 55+ gated community in Ocala, FL. "I picked up the game in 1982 in Kennebunk, ME, playing with a real estate agent," said Trask. He generally plays about three to four times per week and loves the health benefits it has given him. Trask was also inducted into the Maine Racquetball Hall of Fame in 2003. His submission was posted by his daughter Jule Tee on our Facebook page.



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Paola Longoria



"All the Pro's on the IRT know that the Pro Penn HD ball is second to none. With today's lightweight racquets this is the only ball to play with. Its lightweight design and softer feel offers players of all levels the most comfortable experience on the court, even with shots exploding over 180 mph!"

Rocky Carson