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ON THE COVER

Far from disappointed by her silver medal finish, Michelle Key was happy to photo-bomb Rhonda Rajsich during the medal presentations. This year marked a personal best for Key, who reached her first National Singles final. Photo by John Foust.

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Submissions

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2016 National Singles champions Rhonda Rajsich and Rocky Carson are hardly newcomers to the USA Racquetball winners circle. Rajsich captured her record ninth National Singles title and Carson extended his record to six. Photo by John Foust.



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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

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NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS & TEAM QUALIFYING

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

IN 2016

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IN 2017 ... LOOK FOR ...

National Doubles in February

National High Schools in March

National Intercollegiates in March/April

National Singles in May

Junior Olympics in June

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>.



FROM THE
Executive Director

By Steve Czarnecki
Executive Director
USA Racquetball

National Headquarters *Big (Staff) Changes*

With the 2016 National Junior Olympics now in the books, another USA Racquetball championship season has concluded. USA Racquetball was founded nearly 50 years ago, in large part, to conduct national championships under a common set of rules and identify the best players in the country. We are proud of this heritage and work hard to provide the best championship experience for those who compete for national titles. However, we also know that in the interest of our sport's future, and even the future of our national championships themselves, we must devote considerable time and resources toward the entry-level and recreational players that comprise racquetball's foundation.

To this end, the national office recently hired two new staff members whose focus will be on the racquetball business and its players in a very broad sense. Please join me in welcoming Renée Gundolff and Nick Irvine, who each promise to add valuable skills and capacity to the professional staff team that manages USA Racquetball day to day.

Boasting solid credentials from the USOC family, Renée Gundolff served as Membership Manager at USA Weightlifting since late 2014. There, she helped grow membership by more than 20% and was responsible for membership acquisition, renewal, communications, data management, insurance, and more for USA Weightlifting's more than 23,000 members. At USA Racquetball, she will focus primarily on membership and member services with a special emphasis on greatly expanding the number of our FREE eMembers among players who have not been active participants at sanctioned events.

Already well-known in the sport, Nick Irvine previously served as Assistant Commissioner of the International Racquetball Tour and Director and Commentator with the IRT Network. More recently, he acquired valuable industry experience in programming and health club membership, both by working in sales and management at a variety of health clubs and as owner of PlayRB.org, a racquetball programming and retail operation focused primarily on California markets. Nick's primary responsibility with USA Racquetball will be in developing a Partner Facility program through which the sport will be able to better connect with those who own and operate racquetball courts, as well as the players who use them. Nick, who has recently been coordinating Western Collegiate Racquetball Conference activities, will also work on collegiate racquetball and sponsorship development.

In a new office - with talented new staffers on board - these are exciting times for USA Racquetball. We also know that we cannot accomplish our goals alone, and we look forward to partnering with manufacturers, sponsored players, allied associations, court owners, and individual members to help share the sport's many amazing benefits with players of all levels across the country. With collective effort and devotion to the sport we all love, we will move racquetball forward. Together, We Are Racquetball!

WELCOME!

*The national office recently hired two new staff members whose focus will be on the racquetball business and its players in a very "big picture" way. We're pleased to have **Renée Gundolff** and **Nick Irvine** on board!*

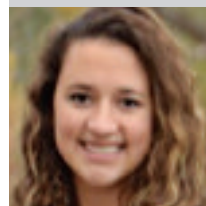


Photo by John Foust



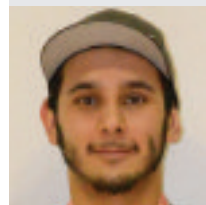
SCHOLARS NAMED

The USA Racquetball Scholarship Program has provided more than \$55,000 in support to over 100 recipients in its 25+ year history. In 2016, through the generous support of its members and the Women's Senior/Masters Racquetball Association, USA Racquetball is pleased to announce that Erika Manilla and Jose Diaz will each receive a \$1,000 scholarship award to support their undergraduate careers.



Erika, 18, of Centennial, Colorado, recently graduated from Regis Jesuit High School. A National Honor Society student, she plans to attend Northern Arizona State University in the fall and major in Biomedical Science. Erika is ranked No.19 among

women in the USA Racquetball rankings and is the reigning Junior World 16 and Under Doubles Champion (with partner Jordan Cooperrider). She has received the Blue Scholarship from NAU and plans to play racquetball for its rapidly developing NAU Lumberjacks program. "I am very thankful that USA Racquetball is able help me in this way," remarked Erika. "I'm so thankful for the opportunity and recognition."



Jose, 23, of Stockton, California, is entering his senior year at the University of the Pacific where he is a Sports Medicine major. Jose participates in the Community Involvement Program at UOP and recently joined the USA Racquetball Board of Directors as an athlete

representative. After winning the 2016 U.S. National Doubles Championship with partner Jake Bredenbeck, Jose finished the 2016-17 U.S. National Team Singles Qualifying process in second position. He is consistently top-ranked among men on the USA Racquetball rankings and will represent the United States at the IRF World Championships in July in Cali, Colombia. "Thank you to the donors to this program," noted Jose. "I hope this program that will allow me to be more financially stable and focus more on the sport will continue to expand going forward."

Congratulations to Erika and Jose! If you or someone you know would like to apply for the 2017 USA Racquetball Scholarship, please look for information later this year or visit USARacquetball.com. Donations to support the Scholarship Program are greatly appreciated and can be made through the USA Racquetball office at (719) 635-5396 or online under DONATE at USARacquetball.com.



FROM THE Outgoing President

By Larry Haemmerle

ELECTION REPORT

HIGH RESPONSE, FIRST-RATE RESULTS

It's an exciting time for our sport as we have just concluded the largest election in recent memory. There were nine candidates competing for three Board of Directors positions. It is gratifying to know that so many individuals were willing to donate their time to serve voluntarily on the Board of Directors. Concurrently, we have also completed the process to add three Athlete Representative Members to the Board of Directors.

We have already conducted an orientation session for these new Board Members. Their terms officially began at the National Singles Board Meeting. The newly installed Board Members are Jonathan Clay, Cheryl Kirk, and Dan Whitley. Jonathan is an accomplished player, the owner of WearRollout.com and is an experienced tournament director, including events for the International Racquetball Tour and the Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour. Cheryl is a past President of USA Racquetball and serves on the Illinois State Racquetball Association Board as well as the Boards of the International Racquetball Federation and Pan American Racquetball Confederation. Dan is the current President of the Missouri Racquetball Association and is heavily involved in the highly successful Missouri High School Racquetball Association. He has received recognition from both USA Racquetball and the United States Olympic Committee for his work.

Our new Athlete Representatives are Jose Diaz, Michelle Key, and Jason Thoerner. All three are accomplished players who have competed on the international stage representing Team USA and have also competed successfully on the International Racquetball Tour and the Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour. Their roles on the Board of Directors are two-fold. They not only serve as full-fledged Board Members, including committee service, but they also carry the responsibility of representing our athletes' interests.

Following internal voting at the May Board meeting, a new lineup of officers was finalized with Jason Thoerner succeeding me as President, Leo Vasquez selected as Vice-President, Cheryl Kirk as Secretary, and Dan Whitley as Treasurer.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank the outgoing Board Members for the incredible time and effort they have and continue to devote to our sport. Mike Ladge served since 2013 including service on the Scholarship, Finance, and Fundraising committees. Mike brought a solid business perspective to the Board and has been supportive in promoting the Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour. Peter McMillin served on the Board since 2009. Peter was active on the Membership, High School, Fundraising, and Election committees. Peter successfully managed the most recent election, a formidable task based on its inherent complexity due to its size and scope. Terry Rogers has served admirably since 2013. She was active on the Membership and Legislative committees as well as chairing the Election and Women's committees. Terry serves as the President of the California/Nevada Racquetball Association and is a Board Member of the U.S. Racquetball Foundation and Military Racquetball Federation. [See page 34 for photos and details]

Whenever you see any of these individuals, make certain you thank them for their contributions to our sport. There is a great deal of personal time and devotion required to serve in these volunteer capacities. I know I personally, deeply appreciate all they do for racquetball.

The top three vote recipients in the election, who filled the Board seats of those with expiring terms are, in alphabetical order, Jonathan Clay, Cheryl Kirk, and Dan Whitley.



Jonathan Clay, 33, of Middletown, New Jersey, has been playing the sport for 15 years. The #1 ranked player in the State of New Jersey is a former President of the New Jersey Racquetball Association. He owns Rollout Brand Group and Power Monkey LLC. Jonathan serves as the tournament director for both International Racquetball Tour and Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour events in the Northeast.



Cheryl Kirk, 60, of Naperville, Illinois, is a past president of USA Racquetball (2008-2012) and serves on the Executive Boards of the International Racquetball Federation, the Pan American Racquetball Confederation, and the Illinois State Racquetball Association. Retired, following a 27-year career with McDonald's Corporation in operations, training, and special projects, Kirk regularly serves as the Team Leader for the U.S. National and Junior National Teams competing in international competition. The 2015 recipient of USA Racquetball's Joe Sobek Award for outstanding contributions to the sport is also a member of its U.S. Team Committee and chairs the Legislative Committee.



Dan Whitley, 40, of Kirkwood, Missouri, serves as the President of the Missouri Racquetball Association and is Executive Director of the 500-participant Missouri High School Racquetball Association. He serves as the coach for the Cor Jesu Academy racquetball team that consists of more than 50 girls. He has received the USA Racquetball Presidential

Award and USOC Developmental Coach of the Year Award for his accomplishments with these Associations. Whitley also works as the General Manager of Vetta Concord and Vetta West, where he serves as the racquetball pro, teaches lessons, and runs summer camps. An open level player who has directed more than 200 tournaments, Whitley was introduced to the sport by his parents in second grade.



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 \$20,000 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!

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\$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

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Familiar Faces

By Steve Czamecki | Photos by John Foust

In its 49th year of naming national champions from across the country, the 2016 National Singles Championships returned to Colorful Colorado for some great competition. The Championship also marked the conclusion of the newly comprised U.S. National Team qualification process for singles players.

Coming into the Championship, Rocky Carson and Rhonda Rajsich had sizeable point leads following strong performances at the 2015 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN and the new Singles Team Qualifying division at the U.S. National Doubles Championships earlier in the year. The race for the other three singles positions on the Team were far less certain.

In the Men's Team Qualifying draw, Rocky Carson advanced to the final after a tough three-game win over Chris Crowther 13-15, 15-12, 11-7. In the finals, Carson faced off against José Díaz, who had upset two-time defending champion Jake Bredenbeck in a straight game semifinal, 15-10, 15-12. Díaz held strong in the first game of the final against Carson, losing 10-15, only to lose the second game 2-15. Carson won his sixth U.S. National Singles title convincingly and adding to his outstanding record for Men's National Singles titles.

On the women's side of the draw, seven of the top-ten ranked U.S. players were in Denver to seek positions on the National Team. Heavy favorite, Rhonda Rajsich, needed three games to get past Kelani Bailey and two to defeat long-time rival Cheryl Gudinas to reach the final. In the lower half, Michelle Key won hard-fought matches against Da'Monique Davis and Janel Tisinger to face off against Rajsich for the National Championship title. True to form, Rajsich wore down Key with a 15-7, 15-7 victory. In doing so, Rajsich won her ninth U.S. National Singles title, to set a new personal best record.

There is no better place to watch the best singles action among U.S. players than National Singles, all while having a great time and pursuing a National Championship of your own. Be on the lookout for details about the 2017 Championship and make time to join us. You'll be glad you did!





STANDINGS

At the conclusion of the Championship, the final Men's and Women's point standing for the singles qualification process for the U.S. National Team, with the top four of each gender qualifying for the Team were:

MEN

	US OPEN IRT		Singles Division				
Men	Division Points	Weighted Points (20%)	at National Doubles Points	Weighted Points (30%)	National Singles Points	Weighted Points (50%)	Total Points
Rocky Carson	60	12	100	30	100	50	92
José Diaz	10	2	60	18	80	40	60
Jake Bredenbeck	10	2	30	9	60	30	41
Chris Crowther	10	2	-	-	60	30	32
José Rojas	30	6	80	24	-	-	30
Marco Rojas	30	6	60	18	-	-	24

WOMEN

	US OPEN LRPT		Singles Division				
Women	Division Points	Points (20%)	at National Doubles Points	Weighted Points (30%)	National Singles Points	Weighted Points (50%)	Total Points
Rhonda Rajsich	80	16	100	30	100	50	96
Michelle Key	30	6	30	9	80	40	55
Cheryl Gudinas	5	1	60	18	60	30	49
Sharon Jackson	5	1	80	24	30	15	40
Janel Tisinger	-	-	-	-	60	30	30
Da'Monique Davis	10	2	30	9	30	15	26





2016 NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS

U.S. Team Qualifier Division

MEN

Champion: Rocky Carson III
Runner Up: Jose Diaz
Third Place: Did Not Play

WOMEN

Champion: Rhonda Rajsich
Runner Up: Michelle Key
Third Place: Cheryl Gudinas

MEN'S	CHAMPION	RUNNER-UP
Open	Nicholas Riffel	Mike Orr
24-	Jacob Kingsford	
25+	Derek Izzi	Andrew Clarke
30+	Mike Orr	Bryan Crosser
35+	Raymond Maestas	Mike Orr
40+	Jeff Stark	Raymond Maestas
45+	Jeff Stark	Jimmy Lowe
50+	Jimmy Lowe	Keith Minor
55+	Richard Eisemann	Mike Grisz
60+	Dave Azuma	Mark Baron
65+	Joe Lee	Jim Hiser
70+	Jon Wuerffel	Ed Krest
75+	Gordon Kelly	Kyle Smith
Heroes Open/Elite	Paul Julbes	Troy Vanbemmelen
Heroes 40+	Shannin Rudman	James Lamont
Heroes 50+	Robert Fraizer	Glenn Carlson
Elite	Hr Coe	Nick Blanchard
A	Bryan Shaw	Benjamin Hyman
B	Donnel Valdez	Nathan Jacob
C	Tommy Andraos	Shravan Eetha
D	Michael Sainz	Martin Jacob
Heroes A	Mark Maldonado	Robert Toro
Heroes B	Donnel Valdez	John Provan
25+ Elite	Eric Mathews	
30+ Elite	Keith Sapp	Jason Korn
40+ Elite	Hr Coe	Kevin Barlia
50+ Elite	Clinton Imholte	Dane Crisp
70+ Elite	James Troutt	
24- A	Tommy Andraos	Troy Thomas
25+ A	Andrew Moser	
30+ A	Josh Paul	Jon Rafkind
40+ A	Everett Brunelle	Michael Kaplan
50+ A	Alan Lawson	Everett Brunelle
60+ A	Robert Fraizer	Frank Senger
70+ A	Dan Davis	
24- B	David Risley	
25+ B	Karan Goyal	Frank Senger
30+ B	Nathan Jacob	Scott Walker
40+ B	Donnel Valdez	Deven Naik
50+ B	John Shurbet	Steve Cox
60+ B	Roy San Miguel	Michael Stephens
70+ B	Bruce Hollander	
24- C	Kan Tagami	Baroun Abdullah
25+ C	Dan Horner	Nick Morgan
30+ C	Hrshikesh Sane	Andrew Blasquez
40+ C	Phil Zavala	John Wilson
50+ C	Andy Atencio	Martin Jacob
60+ C	Douglas Harrison	Bruce Hollander
70+ C	Pablo Reyes	John Conn

WOMEN'S	CHAMPION	RUNNER-UP		
Open	Linda Tyler	Erika Manilla	30+ A	Heather Hojat
40+	T.J. Baumbaugh		40+ A	Nancy Davis
45+	Linda Reeves		50+ A	Kathy Stellema
50+	Laura Brandt	Cindy Tilbury	60+ A	Cheryl Kirk
55+	Janelle Williams	Janet Tyler	70+ A	Marquita Molina
65+	Shirley Parsons	Cheryl Conrad	24- B	Marina Zhelavskaya
70+	Mildred Gwinn		50+ B	Betty Mota
75+	Mildred Gwinn	Marquita Molina	60+ B	Lucy Jirik
Elite	Jazmin Trevino	Chantel Anderson	JUNIORS	
A	Jenny Cole	Madeline Gauch	Boys 18-	Benjamin Hyman
B	Betty Mota	Kathy Stellema	Boys 12-	Nathan Geiger
C	Taryn Boomgaard	Marina Zhelavskaya	Girls 18-	Lily Caldwell
WOMEN'S	CHAMPION	RUNNER-UP		
30+ Elite	Michelle Dockter			
40+ Elite	Jenny Cole	Amy Holloway		

DOUBLES

DOUBLES	CHAMPION	RUNNER-UP
Men's Open	Keith Sapp/Michael Nigro	James Leone/Kelly North
Men's Elite	CJ Sanders/Nick Blanchard	Raymond Maestas/Ronald Maestas
Men's A	Alan Lawson/Matthew Dockter	Adam Wyatt/Jason Kennedy
Men's B	Brian Laney/John Provan	Eric Crowley/Hermann Li
Men's C	Mike Hurdle/Phil Zavala	Andrew Blasquez/John Wilson
Men's Centurian Open		
Men's Centurian A	Mark Sikorski/Steve Strahler	Daniel Kreuzer/ Durrell McAdoo
Men's Centurian B/C	Moshe Mann/Steve Disalvo	Ed Mooney/John Shurbet
Women's Elite	Linda Reeves/Lena Newlin	Tana Blass/Terry Rogers
Mixed Open	Kelani Bailey/Nicholas Riffel	Bruan Crosser/Janel Tisinger
Mixed Elite	Alan Lawson/Jazmin Trevino	Chantel Anderson/Jason Korn
Mixed A	J.D. Yager/Tana Blass	Cheryl Kirk/Geoffrey Peters
Mixed B/C	James Troutt/Cheryl Conrad	



Photos by John Foust



Photos by John Foust



Marco Rojas and Carla Muñoz **WIN INTERCOLLEGIATES**

*Marco Rojas and Carla Muñoz Take Singles Titles at the
2016 U.S. National Intercollegiate Racquetball Championships*

Story & Photos by Steve Czarniecki

Marco Rojas of Stockton, Calif., of the University of the Pacific, and Carla Muñoz of Livermore, Calif., of Las Positas College, claimed singles titles at the 2016 U.S. National Intercollegiate Championships, while Oregon State won its ninth consecutive overall team championship.

Rojas, 22, currently ranked No.7 on the International Racquetball Tour rankings, was the top men's seed after finishing as the runner-up in 2015. Reaching the finals with relative ease, Rojas defeated Stockton neighbor David Horn, of California State University-Hayward, in a hard-fought three-game final 15-5, 14-15, 11-9. For the win, Rojas earned a spot on the 2016-17 U.S. National Team.

Rojas, along with his fellow University of the Pacific student Jose Diaz, 22 of Stockton, Calif., took the Men's Doubles title and vaulted the school to a third place Men's Team finish as the only two players on the team's roster. Earlier this year, Diaz earned a position on the U.S. National Team by winning the National Doubles Championships with partner Jake Bredenbeck.

Muñoz, 24, ranked No.12 on the Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour and a member of the Chilean National Team, defeated defending champion Kelani Bailey, 22, of Shenandoah University in a close final 15-11, 13-15, 11-5. Bailey, as the top finishing U.S. citizen in the draw, again earned a spot on the 2016-17 U.S. National Team.

In Women's Doubles, Oregon State University students Erica Lipski and Lexi York captured a gold medal to aid in securing a ninth consecutive Overall Team championship.

Now in its 44th year, the U.S. National Intercollegiate Championships identifies the best players at U.S. colleges and universities, and men's and women's singles champions earn positions on the U.S. National Team. A Conference Cup competition also names a Collegiate Racquetball Conference champion.

SINGLES DIVISION CHAMPIONS

Men	
#1 Player	Marco Rojas, University of the Pacific
#2 Player	Jose Diaz, University of the Pacific
#3 Player	Kyle Ulliman, Baldwin Wallace University
#4 Player	Jeremy McGlothlin, Colorado State University-Pueblo
#5 Player	Ethan Slutzky, Baldwin Wallace University
#6 Player	Ryan Chin, Oregon State University

Women	
	Carla Muñoz, Las Positas College
	Erica Lipski, Oregon State University
	Kaylie Bartholomew, Brigham Young University
	Kalie Moloney, University of Missouri
	Madison Myers, University of Missouri
	Jessica Smith, Brigham Young University

DOUBLES DIVISION CHAMPIONS

Men	
#1 Team	Jose Diaz/Marco Rojas, University of the Pacific
#2 Team	Aaron Booker/Erik Garcia, Colorado State University-Pueblo
#3 Team	Daniel Herrera/Jonathon Levin, Baldwin Wallace University

Women	
	Erica Lipski/Lexi York, Oregon State University
	Madison Myers/Christina Hughes, University of Missouri
	Brittany Caldwell/Jessica Smith, Brigham Young University

TEAM COMPETITION DIVISION I

Overall

1. Oregon State University (1,995.5 points)
2. Baldwin Wallace University (1,915.0)
3. University of Missouri (1,912.0)

Men's

1. Baldwin Wallace University (1,610.0)
2. Colorado State University-Pueblo (1,341.5)
3. University Of The Pacific (1,020.0)

Women's

1. University of Missouri (1,055.0)
2. Oregon State University (990.5)
3. Brigham Young University (957.0)

DIVISION II

Overall

1. Renssalaer Polytechnic Institute (132.0)

Men's

1. Rochester Institute of Technology (267.0)
2. Clarkson University (166.0)
3. Nichols College (162.0)

Women's

1. Baldwin Wallace University (305.0)
2. Renssalaer Polytechnic Institute (25.0)



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31st Annual SHAMROCK SHOOTOUT

GLASS COURT SHINES

Story & Photos courtesy IRT

Jake Bredenbeck of The Reaching Your Dream Foundation shoots a forehand in his match against an airborne Daniel De La Rosa as Glass Court spectators look on. Photo by Juan Martinez

In honor of St. Patrick's Day, The Glass Court Swim & Fitness Club in Lombard, IL hosted the 31st Annual Shamrock Shootout featuring a Tier 1 IRT Pro Stop in addition to over \$5,000 in prize money for amateur events. The weekend featured over 175 competitors, green beer, a DJ, and access to all of the pro matches for all amateur players. This was the second year in a row that generous local sponsors stepped up to ensure that Chicago could host a Tier 1 event at The Glass Court.

Glass Court Swim and Fitness boasts eight courts including the namesake three-glass walled showcase court with a VIP hospitality room stretching along one side and additional viewing along the other and back. Fans and players also gathered at the tournament's hospitality central: the club bar and restaurant where player meals were served and the IRT Network streamed live all weekend.



On the pro side of the draw, the IRT's top-ranked Kane Waselenchuk repeated as champion with a 11-2, 11-4, 11-2 victory over #5-ranked Daniel De La Rosa in a rematch of the 2015 UnitedHealthcare US Open Finals. Waselenchuk beat Alejandro Herrera, Markie Rojas and Alvaro Beltran in the road to the finals for his eighth tournament win this season. De La Rosa outlasted Jose Rojas in four games and defeated Mauricio Zelada and Jake Bredenbeck, both Reaching Your Dream Foundation (RYDF) players on his side of the bracket.

Fellow RYDF Athletes Robert Collins, Sebastian Franco and Mario Mercado, also joined Zelada and Bredenbeck in this 31st annual Chicagoland area tournament. Bredenbeck started Friday's Round of 16s with a huge five game upset of #2-ranked Rocky Carson and went on to beat Jansen Allen to setup his semifinal with De La Rosa.

The pros also participated in a Juniors Clinic on Saturday morning at 9 a.m. where 21 juniors heard from Franco, Allen, Markie and Jose Rojas, and Carson, while having a chance to win some prizes and take home a few autographs, pictures, and gear.

On the amateur side of the draws, Felipe Camacho defeated Franco, and Cheryl Gudinas defeated Sheryl Lotts to take home \$1,000 each in the Men's and Women's Open divisions, while Jorge Ortiz/Oscar Madrigal and Kelley Gremley/Lotts received cash prizes in the Men's and Women's Open Doubles and Masiel Rivera/Mauricio Zelada did likewise in the Mixed Open Doubles. In all, trophies were awarded to 25 division winners by the conclusion of play late on Sunday afternoon.

The Glass Court team would like to thank IRT President Jason Mannino, Illinois State Racquetball President Laurel Davis, Operations Director Cheryl Kirk, and the entire volunteer team that came together for a very long weekend to make this event a success for everyone.



31st Annual Shamrock Shootout Champion Kane Waselenchuk addressed the crowd during his interview with John Scott of The IRT Network as Glass Court President Joe DeArmas and Shamrock Shootout Tournament Director Geoff Peters look on. Photo by Juan Martinez



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IN THE SERVICE OF OTHERS:

THE JOHN PELHAM STORY

By Tim Prigo

In racquetball clubs around the country, bags and racquets are propped along back wall glass. Doubles partners meet on the backcourt to warm-up; on court enemies trade stories in the hallway and become off-court friends. The club pro is finishing up his junior clinic and the early crowd is already bending elbows watching the open players on Court 1. The stretchy pop of the ball can be faintly heard interjecting between the voices of camaraderie that fill the sweat-soaked air. Some came here to escape from the day's worries while others came just for a workout. The runners and the weightlifters stream through the front door, followed by the cycling class but the

racquetball contingent takes longer to leave. Some came to talk, some came to play, and some came to do both. Racquetball players have a way of transforming even the most barren environments into a social hub.

The reality, for many of us, is that our worst day of racquetball is still a good day and that our racquetball community exists somewhere between friendship and family. John Pelham will never know these subtle truths again. On February 7, 2014 he wrote on his Facebook page, "I can't wait to play racquetball again." On February 12, just five days later, Army Specialist John Alexander

Pelham passed away due to wounds he sustained from small-arms gunfire in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in the Kapisa Province of Afghanistan. He was 22 years old.

Racquetball: Help for PTSD?

This story is not only about John but also about Wendall Pelham who, at 57, has entered into the unexpected second act of his life. While others around him begin to think about retirement he is embarking on a new journey. With the passing of his son, Wendall has become an activist and advocate for military families who have lost loved ones and also for veterans returning to civilian life. "After John's death there were only two options in my mind, curl up in the fetal position or spring into action. My son would have wanted the latter." Though sorrow must be an everyday contention for the Pelham family, you will never hear Wendall utter a hateful or partisan word. He instead chooses to spend his time talking to veterans groups and participating in memorial events. "I would have never guessed that I would be speaking in front of hundreds of people and be researching ways to help treat PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder)." Wendall has the ability to relate to many of these wounded warriors and their families. The armed services have taken note of his talents and are actively using his talents to help them.

This feature was previously published online by IRT and can be viewed in full at: www.irt-tour.com/in-the-service-of-others-the-john-pelham-story/

About the Author: Tim Prigo is a lifelong racquetball enthusiast who competed in his first tournament at ten years old in Claremont, California, where he grew up. Since then, Tim has played in many IRT events, ranking among the top 40 at his best. He earned a B.A. in English Literature and Philosophy from Franklin Pierce University in 2009, where he spent many years abroad, traveling, and studying. In addition to regularly contributing stories and match recaps for the IRT, Tim is an aspiring poet and sports journalist. He also is the club pro at Lloyd Athletic in Portland, Oregon, where he now resides.



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2016 NEW YEAR KICKS OFF

With Full Spring Schedule

By T. J. Baumbaugh

Our first stop this year was a fundraiser for the Autism Society of Greater Cincinnati at the Mercedes-Benz of Cincinnati Pro-Am. It was a return tour engagement for the LPRT, but this battle took place in a new venue, The Beechmont Racquet Club. Tournament Director and LPRT Deputy Commissioner Andy Kulback noted: "This was our 11th year as a women's pro event and our 5th year as a Tier 1. The players put on a great show here and do a great job of interacting with fans and sponsors, which makes this a very special weekend for everyone."

The early singles rounds were marked with upsets; #17 Gaby Martinez defeated #16 Masiel Rivera, #21 Sharon Jackson defeated #12 Sheryl Lotts, #18 Adriana Riveros defeated #15 Maria Renee Rodriguez and #20 Lucia Gonzalez defeated #13 Adrienne Haynes. Riveros later defeated #10 Jessica Parilla to advance to her first pro semi final. After winning their semi-final matches in 4 games each, Paola Longoria and Rhonda Rajsich met in the final with Longoria victorious in straight games. In pro doubles action, the top seeded team of Paola Longoria and Samantha Salas defeated repeat contenders Frederique Lambert and Michelle Key.

The Annual Winter Classic in Overland Park, Kansas was next up on the schedule, where tournament director Mike Wedel hosts a great event every year, featuring a friendly tournament staff and his lovely wife Debbie, who just add to the appeal. The rare 70 degree February weather didn't hurt either. Mike recapped:

"The 2016 Winter Classic presented by NextPage was a huge success. Thanks to the support of our racquetball community, we had the largest turnout of our 11 year history. Very special thanks go to our sponsors who made the event possible: NextPage (Gina Danner), Root Laboratory (Randy Root), Edward Jones (Leann Smith), Bud Creekbaum, Results Chiropractic (Dr. Drew Barnabei), and The Kansas Racquetball Association.



Frederique Lambert and Paola Longoria in Cincinnati, photo by Christina Fox



Jessica Parilla in Cincinnati, photo by Christina Fox

Awards Presentation in Kansas - Andy Kulback, Gina Danner, Frederique Lambert, Mike Wedel, Paola Longoria, Randy Root, Debbie Wedel, photo by T. J. Baumbaugh





Paola Longoria

PAOLA LONGORIA
#1 RANKED PLAYER
IN THE WORLD



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Masiel Rivera in Kansas,
photo by T. J. Baumbaugh



Paola Longoria and her Coach Fran Davis, Frederique Lambert,
photo by T. J. Baumbaugh

Masiel Rivera and Susy Acosta compete
at NJO, photo by T. J. Baumbaugh



We hosted our first ever sponsor doubles and everyone had a great time. Sponsors paired up with top pros to battle for winner bragging rights. The Courtside Café/Bar, which showcases two of the club's glass back-wall courts, was a perfect setting that served plenty of food and drink for the shoot out.

We played almost 300 matches in all divisions over the three-day tournament. The Kansas Racquetball Association sponsored all junior and first time players by paying all of their entry fees, and we had a good turnout of both. On Saturday night at the Party with the Pros, the KRA hosted a live auction where we were able to raise \$800 from donated items like new racquets and racquetball bags, most of which were donated by Bud Creekbaum and Rosco Halsey. The donations will help to continue the KRA's sponsorship of junior and first time player entry fees.

The club was full of LPRT fans and none were disappointed by the play of these great competitors. A huge thank you goes to Gina Danner for bringing the LPRT to Overland Park, Kansas again. Gina is such a big supporter and advocate for racquetball of all levels. She serves on the board for Kansas Racquetball and is always ready to help, even at the tournament desk."

Paola Longoria efficiently worked her way through the draw without dropping a single game. Again. Frederique Lambert also reached the final, after playing an incredible semi-final match against Rhonda Rajsich, but just couldn't get into any rhythm against the all-business Longoria.

In doubles action, the absence of a few players changed the look of the draw, but not the great match ups. With Longoria taking a rest from doubles, and big hitters like Key and Salas not in attendance, the door was open for a few more teams to step up. Frederique Lambert and Sofia Rascon came out on top.

The New Jersey Open in March was full of action both on and off

the court. In the singles draw there were 6, 5-game matches and 4, 4-game matches including both semis and the final. The tournament staff, a.k.a. the Rollout Team, was amazing. They did their best to make sure every person in the building had a good time, including the introduction of the official "Onesie" worn by the staff and Rollout players on Friday. Yes, the onesie is a full body pajama ... and you can find pictures on our Facebook page.

Paola Longoria came out on top of the NJO dropping just a single game each to Frederique Lambert and Rhonda Rajsich. The honorable mention singles match for the weekend went to the round of 16 battle between #7 seeded Jessica Parilla and #10 seed Sheryl Lotts. After 2 hours, Parilla got the win with an 11-9 victory in game 5.

Most notable in the doubles draw was the #7 seeded team made up of #2 LPRT player Maria Jose Vargas and local favorite Aimee Ruiz.....who also happens to be half of the 2016 US National Doubles Championships' Team. Vargas/Ruiz upset the #2 seed team of Rajsich/Lotts in the quarter finals but eventually lost the final 11-4 in the tie-breaker to #1 seed Longoria/Lambert.



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INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

PAN AMERICAN RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

by Cheryl Kirk | US TEAM LEADER

Pan American Racquetball Championships
by Cheryl Kirk, US Team Leader

An eight-member US Team Delegation traveled to San Luis Potosí, Mexico to compete in the Pan American Racquetball Confederation event, which is traditionally held the week going into Easter each year. Jake Bredenbeck and David “Bobby” Horn competed in both singles and doubles, while Michelle Key and Cheryl Gudinas each played singles with Kelani Bailey teaming up with Key for doubles. The staff for this trip consisted of Head Coach Dave Ellis, Team Trainer Brent Huff, and Team Leader Cheryl Kirk.

The US Delegation members weren’t alone in Mexico and Luke St. Onge, Secretary General of both the IRF and PARC, worked non-stop behind the scenes to ensure that all would go well. Sudsy Monchik and Tom Travers coached Ecuador and Guatemala, respectively. Gary Mazaroff, Bronc Hughes, Gustavo Farrell, and

Tim Baghurst were part of the referee staff providing excellent service to the players. Tim did double duty, capturing photos of the action in his “spare time,” and you can check out his work on the IRF Facebook page. Additionally, Aaron Booker of South Caro-

lina, (attending school in Pueblo, Colorado) played for Puerto Rico and returned to the States just in time to compete in the USAR Intercollegiate Championships the following weekend in Arizona.

We were all impressed with the La Loma Centro Deportivo, which is truly a sports center, not just a club. This beautiful facility features an Olympic-sized pool, basketball gym, many tennis courts, huge weight room and tons of machines, running track, soccer field, eight racquetball courts, four squash courts, booth vendors and shops, a restaurant, and much more. When you couple all that with only a five-minute walk from a hotel situated right on the grounds, I have seldom experienced a better international venue.

Twelve countries sent players, delegates, and coaches: Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the United States. At the coaches’ meeting, a number of topics were covered, including format and schedule, rules for the event, appeals committee, and round robin draws.

Prepping for Opening Ceremonies, delegations socialized and snapped group photos as they queued up in their team uniforms and paraded into the club as each of their countries’ names were announced. Several speakers shared welcome remarks, including Osvaldo Maggi (IRF President), Tim Doyle (E-Force), Fito Baca (Mexican Federation President), as well as several sports



Monchik, St. Onge and Ellis



US Team Delegation: Ellis, Horn, Gudinas, Bredenbeck, Bailey, Key, Huff, Kirk.



Dancers at Opening Ceremonies



Laura McCormick interviewing
Kelani Bailey and Michelle Key.

THANK YOUS

The US Team Delegation wishes to express our gratitude to those who helped make this event successful and memorable: Greg and Julia Hayenga of Personal Touch Travel (Minneapolis) for booking US Team travel and always being there when needed; Jonathan Clay of Rollout Racquetball for being Official Apparel Sponsor for USA Racquetball and the US Team; Pablo Fajre, Laura McCormick, Gary Mazaroff, Gustavo Farell, and Tim Baghurst who participated in providing the live streaming experience for fans around the world; the tournament staff (Osvaldo Maggi, Francisco Kurzbard, Amanda Kurzbard, Walter Capandegui, Mauro Grandio, Pablo Berriel); the referees who came in from several countries to provide service to the players; the many volunteers who worked tirelessly in support of this event and its players, coaches, and delegates from the 12 countries in attendance; Leo Vasquez who posted the blogs and photos on the USA Racquetball website and Steve Czarnecki who posted on Facebook; and all the individuals who have made contributions large and small ... every bit counts! Last but not least, the US Team members send their heartfelt gratitude for the support of family, friends, and fans via email and social media.

INTERNATIONAL UNIFORM TRIVIA

Did you know...that all players who compete must have the name of their country on the back of their shirts? Also, doubles partners must match exactly when they play (both tops and bottoms). Shoelaces exempt ...

MOMS:

One of the many fun things to do at these events, via the wonders of technology, is text real-time with family members back home who want to hear how their babies (er, players) are doing. In San Luis Potosí, I had the pleasure of updating Karen Bredenbeck, Malia Bailey, and Karen Key as the matches unfolded. We all gnawed off our nails together.

dignitaries. Jessica Parrilla (Mexico) took the Athletes' Oath, and Gustavo Farell (US/Uruguay) pledged the Referees' Oath. Native dancers entertained the athletes, coaches, and delegates as the ceremonies drew to a close.

The format of this event was three days of round robin competition (Saturday-Monday) that determined the seeding of the main draw that took place Wednesday-Saturday of next week after the off-day on Tuesday.

The free day was punctuated with beautiful warm weather, and the delegation spent their time by the pool, taking naps, training, playing paddle tennis, watching FIFA, running various errands (grocery store, laundry, shopping at the mall), watching "The Blacklist", and visiting with local friends.

Dave Ellis and Cheryl Kirk attended the PARC General Assembly meeting on Tuesday evening, representing the USA alongside delegates from the other 11 attending countries. Elections were held, and the following individuals were elected for four-year terms: President: Marcelo Gomez, Costa Rica; Executive Vice President: Osvaldo Maggi, Argentina; Secretary: Cheryl Kirk, USA; North America VP: Jack McBride, Canada; Central America VP: Gerardo Fajardo, Honduras; South America VP: Juan Manuel Gutierrez, Colombia; Women's Development: Marie Gomar, Guatemala; Athlete Representative: Daniel De La Rosa, Mexico.

So what else happens at a General Assembly meeting? Approval of minutes, event schedule, financial and various other reports, and a rules change discussion in anticipation of voting in July at the IRF World Congress.

Wednesday through Saturday, the main single elimination draws were played out, followed by the Awards Ceremony and Closing Banquet on Saturday evening. See the full draws at www.amafraweb.com.ar/parc2016/resultados/

The Team USA Challenge on www.usaracquetball.com provides the opportunity for racquetball players to support the US Teams (adult and junior) with their participation at international competitions.

The US Team's next international competition will be the IRF World Championships in Cali, Colombia. Daily blogs, website and Facebook posts, and live streaming will keep racquetball fans on the edge of their seats, July 16-23.

US TEAM RESULTS

Men's Singles – Jake Bredenbeck – Silver
Men's Doubles – Jake Bredenbeck and Bobby Horn – Bronze
Women's Doubles – Michelle Key and Kelani Bailey – Silver
US Men's Team – Silver
US Women's Team – Bronze
US Overall Team – Silver

INTERNATIONAL RESULTS

Gold; Silver; Bronze/Bronze (in PARC and IRF events, both semifinals places receive bronze medals)

Men's Singles: Daniel De La Rosa (Mexico); Jake Bredenbeck (USA); Francisco Javier Mar Garcia (Mexico), Fernando Rios (Ecuador)

Women's Singles: Paola Longoria (Mexico); Frédérique Lambert (Canada); Jenny Daza (Bolivia), Ana Gabriela Martinez (Guatemala)

Men's Doubles: Javier Moreno/Alejandro Landa (Mexico); Fernando Rios/Jose Daniel Ugalde (Ecuador); Tim Landeryou/Pedro Castro (Canada), Jake Bredenbeck/David Horn (USA)

Women's Doubles: Paola Longoria/Samantha Salas (Mexico); Michelle Key/Kelani Bailey (USA); Veronica Sotomayor/Maria Paz Muñoz (Ecuador), Frédérique Lambert/Jen Saunders (Canada)

Men's Team: Mexico; USA; Ecuador, Canada

Women's Team: Mexico; Canada; USA, Bolivia

Overall Team (Combined): Mexico; USA; Canada, Ecuador



21ST ANNIVERSARY PREVIEW

By Doug Ganim |
All section photography by
Roby Partovich & Freddy Ramirez

Photo by Roby Partovich

Well, it's hard to believe it has been 21 years, but the 2016 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championships is coming up fast! And with UnitedHealthcare back as our Title Sponsor, the event is going to be high-end and bigger than ever! This special Preview will give you an idea of what to expect at this year's tourney.

Amateur Draws: The amateur matches will be played at three primary venues: Life Time Fitness Target Center, Life Time Fitness Moore Lake, and Life Time Minneapolis Athletic Club with a fourth overflow club (Life Time Fitness-St. Louis Park) scheduled for use during the first two days if needed. Due to the anticipated draw and limited court time, there are no consolation divisions (except in Heroes divisions), and the top four finishers in each division will receive oversized US OPEN medals that weigh about 1 lb. each! The fields are always excellent, since we draw competitors from all over the world and every age and skill level is offered in both singles and doubles. Back for 2016 is the addition of five Centurion Doubles divisions (you and your partner's ages must add up to at least 100!)

Pro Match Tickets: There's no better place in the world to watch pro racquetball than at the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN. First of all, every top IRT and LPRT touring pro in the world will be in Minneapolis. For the rabid fan, this means you'll see all your favorites face off in incredible matches right from the round of 32. Second, all pro match courts are professionally wired for sound so spectators can hear every grunt, groan, and mutter of every match, and the ball sounds like a ballistic missile. Third, all the feature pro matches take place on the made-for-TV portable stadium court, engineered with four walls of crystal clear Lucite acrylic that is optically correct and beautiful to behold. This seamless visual experience makes you feel like you're right in the court with the players. The stadium seats about 1,400 fans, and ticket sales are always brisk. Your best bet is to purchase a Preferred Ticket Pack-

age that includes all sessions and is by far the best value (\$139). For those who want the full VIP treatment, consider purchasing a courtside Gold Box (see sidebar for details).

Parties, Parties, and More Parties! One of the things the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN is best known for is the evening social functions. Players and guests can expect more of the same this year, starting with the "free admission" Pro-Am Doubles for Charity on Wednesday evening, the fun "Late Night Players Gathering" at the Marriott City Center Lobby Bar on Thursday, the NMRA Dance Party on Friday evening at Huberts and the largest bash of the year -- the Saturday evening PARTY WITH THE PROS -- at the hot downtown club THE POURHOUSE Weekend parties are for 21 and over only, and other activities include a special Thursday evening IRF Internationals Reception for our "out of the country" guests, and a week-long Industry Trade Show in the Player's Hospitality Village featuring all the top manufacturers displaying the latest and greatest gear available in the sport.

Back for 2016! The main host facility and nerve center for the US OPEN is Life Time Fitness-Target Center, which recently completed an amazing \$17 million renovation featuring all new 5-star locker rooms, new restaurant and bar, new 4-star spa/salon, new swimming pool, and complete high-end face lift to all other areas of the club -- making it one of the finest athletic clubs in the entire world! The venue will again feature an 8,000 square ft. carpeted US OPEN Players Village complete with the Industry Trade Show, Silent Auction for Children's Charities, bar/concessions, US OPEN souvenir sales, and a stage with live entertainment. Players will also receive a limited edition 21st Anniversary embroidered hat, in addition to their micro-fiber tournament shirt, souvenir program, and registration package. Once again, the US OPEN is officially



recognized by the International Racquetball Federation (IRF), with all players receiving IRF world ranking points for each match won. Lastly, to honor our brave service members, we'll feature singles Heroes Divisions for both men and women who are current or former military, police, fire and EMT professionals.

Can't play? If there's no way you can compete this year, consider coming in just for the weekend to cheer from the sidelines. Arrive on Friday and you can catch the pro singles quarterfinals in the afternoon and the pro doubles semifinals that evening, followed by the NMRA Dance Party upstairs at Huberts. Then the pro singles semifinals and pro doubles finals are on Saturday, the Grand Gala Party with the Pros is Saturday evening, and the pro singles finals are on Sunday. Just those three days will offer plenty of excitement, so buy your tickets NOW and book your hotel!

No way to attend the event this year? If you absolutely can't make it this year, even just for the weekend, the last resort will be to follow the action from home on UnitedHealthcareUSOPEN.com. The site transforms into a live window on the tournament action by offering live amateur division results, up-to-the-minute pro match results, digital photography, streaming video of select pro matches via the IRTNetwork, and web-radio voice interviews with top pros, as well as play-by-play voice streaming of the quarters, semi's, and finals (pay per view package required; sign up at www.UnitedHealthcareUSOPEN.com). Special thanks to webmaster Steve Kowalski for spearheading this ambitious project, year after year!

THE PROS! As always, marquee action is focused on the pro athletes and the incredible entertainment they provide in seeking the coveted US OPEN crown. Anyone on tour will tell you that the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN is the one title everyone wants to win, so every match yields 120% effort by challengers. Exhilarating Pro Doubles divisions are back, since nothing in all of sports compares to its high-flying, fast-paced action. It was the talk of the tournament in 2014 and 2015, with many thrilling "down to the wire" matches. Don't miss the return of pro doubles at the US OPEN this year, and check out the IRT and LPRT preview articles in this special Racquetball Magazine UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Preview Section for more info!

TIPS FOR ATTENDING

Tip #1: ENTER EARLY! The event is expected to completely sell out this year. We cap the draw at 760 players and start turning people away, so don't get shut out! Enter online today at www.UnitedHealthcareUSOPEN.com.

Tip #2: ORDER TICKETS NOW! You must have a ticket to view any of the pro matches, and although the Stadium Court seats over 1,400, the event is always a sell-out from the quarterfinals on. No-shows might free up some session tickets at the door, but it's risky to wait. By far, the best deal is to purchase a Preferred Ticket Package (\$139) for unlimited viewing for ALL pro matches for the entire week. This guarantees you a back wall bleacher seat, but, remember, ticket packages are sold ONLY in advance!

Tip #3: ENTER TWO OR THREE EVENTS. The court time demands of the large draw don't permit us to offer consolation divisions, so we strongly recommend that you enter two divisions to be guaranteed at least two matches. Although entries are limited to only two divisions, there are a couple of exceptions. If you would like to play "up" into the Men's or Women's Pro draw (perhaps just for the experience), you can still play in two amateur divisions, for a total of three events – OR – if at least one of your divisions is doubles, you can play any third event. In these instances only, a third event is permitted.

Tip #4: STAY AT THE HOST HOTELS. With the event in a downtown setting, area hotels are quite expensive. Check the entry form for the list of host hotels, since we've negotiated some great deals with Marriott City Center, Hampton Inn & Suites, and the Hyatt Place to block a large number of rooms for our group. These hotels are walking distance to the Life Time Fitness Target Center and will fill up VERY fast, so call to book your room immediately. A fourth option, the SpringHill Suites, is the only host hotel with free overnight parking and is walking distance to the Life Time Fitness St. Louis Park club, which is often used as an overflow host club on Wednesday and Thursday.

Tip #5: BRING NICE CLOTHES AND YOUR DANCING SHOES! One of the really fun parts of attending the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN is experiencing the many evening social activities, especially the Grand Gala Party with the Pro's. Racquetball or casual attire is not allowed at this bash, so "dress to impress" is the rule!

Tip #6: LAST FLIGHT OUT ON SUNDAY. Make sure you book the very latest flight to head home on Sunday, since the Men's Pro final is the last match of the tournament and you won't want to miss it! A packed house, booming music, laser light intros, and broadcast-quality production make this an experience like none other in the sport. The match usually ends around 2:30 pm, so any evening flight will do. Can't get a late flight out? Consider going home Monday morning. It'll be worth it!

Tip #7: NO RENTAL CAR NEEDED! From the Minneapolis airport you can take the city's clean light rail directly into downtown and right to The Target Center (only 22 minutes) for only \$1.75! Two of the three clubs are downtown (including the main club where all the pro matches are played) and so are the three host hotels. All downtown hotels and clubs are walking distance apart. For the Life Time Fitness Moore Lake Club, a free shuttle will run every 20 minutes from The Target Center (club is only 17 minutes away). If you're driving in, you'll need to pay for downtown parking each day, but the Hyatt Place offers a rate of just \$18 per day, or try the SpringHill Suites in St. Louis Park for free parking.

Tip #8: Consider buying a Gold Box seat for the week (\$800) and treat yourself to the ultimate US OPEN experience. Rubbing elbows with all the top pro's in the PRO/Gold Lounge, plus having the best view and most comfortable seat in the house for all the matches is worth the price alone. Throw in the all-you-can-eat food and drink for the week, and it becomes a no-brainer! Visit www.UnitedHealthcareUSOPENTickets.com to reserve your spot today. Seats are very limited, so book yours now before they are all gone!

Keep these tips in mind when making plans to attend the 2016 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN and you will have the inside track for having a terrific time. See you in Minneapolis!



2016 UnitedHealthcare

US OPEN IRT PREVIEW

By Doug Ganim

Photo by Freddy Ramirez / ReStrung



Always the highlight of the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN, the IRT draw in both singles and doubles will undoubtedly deliver another memorable year for racquetball fans throughout the world. More than ever, young stars and wily tour veterans will be gunning for the coveted US OPEN title.

Kane Waselenchuk (1:3 odds) – The chances of upsetting this 11-time champion at the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN are slimmer than slim. Every time this legendary southpaw steps foot on the portable court, his game rises to ridiculous heights – literally and figuratively! Not only does he win all his matches each year, but he often makes the other top players look completely outmatched. Of course, any upset is always possible, but highly unlikely with Kane. If you want to experience an incredible exhibition of racquetball, played at a level never before seen, pull up a seat for any of Kane’s matches and enjoy the show. What he does on a racquetball court is truly incredible!

José Rojas (9:1 odds) – José’s game has picked up in recent years, and he has shown signs of making a run for the top ranking spot. He not only claimed a victory over Rocky Carson in the past year, but he did so quite convincingly. In addition, he’s the only person to defeat Kane in a full match in the last five years. His “go for broke” game style is thrilling, he’s not afraid of anyone on tour and he likes to bring the heat. There’s no question that José is still one of the best young players in the world, but time is starting to run out for him to make a serious run for the top. Is he ready for a career breakthrough in Minneapolis? A long-awaited Grand Slam title could be the turning point for him and his many fans.

Rocky Carson (5:1 odds) – Rocky Carson will have to get through both De La Rosa (who beat him at the 2015 US OPEN), or Beltran and Kane to win the title, which is a tall order for sure. He usually plays well at the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN; however, he has taken some major league beatings from Kane over the past few years and the scar tissue on his brain is at epic levels. He has a strong chance to reach the finals, but it would take a Herculean effort for him to upset Kane to take the win.



Alvaro Beltran (10:1 odds) – Beltran is always a tough out for anyone, including the top-ranked players. He’s reached the Champion’s Circle twice in Tier 1 events, but that’s really an amazingly low total for a player who’s been ranked so high for so many years. During the past year Beltran renewed a commitment to improve his fitness, and the results have borne fruit on the court. However, it will take a lot of effort for Alvaro to win the title, and I wonder how much he’ll have left in the tank for the weekend if he advances, especially since he will be playing pro doubles as well. His “ace in the hole” will be the hundreds of Central and South American fans pulling for him every step of the way. Listen for the “Vamos Beltran!” chants and a Davis Cup-like atmosphere every time he takes to the court.

Daniel De La Rosa (8:1 odds) – Without a doubt, De La Rosa is the fast rising star on the IRT, capturing his first tour stop title two seasons ago. He is the first young player to display the type of racquet skills that would allow him to compete with Kane on a regular basis. His pure athleticism and willingness to “dive like Croft” for every ball makes him extremely dangerous, and I give him a strong chance to repeat his 2015 performance and make

finals at this year's US OPEN. An extremely well-mannered young man, much like Rojas, the missing ingredient may be a half-cup of nastiness. To beat the very top guys, you have to make them feel uncomfortable and often that means showing some toughness at critical times and never backing down. We've been watching Daniel develop into an elite force right in front of our eyes and his next step will be to "throw down the gloves" and brawl for the US OPEN title.

Jake Bredenbeck (20:1 odds) – Jake is the most exciting young player to come along in years. "The Bear", as I call him, is absolutely fearless and possesses a natural nasty streak that is needed to pull upsets on the biggest stage. He has recently made the commitment to play on the IRT full time and has beaten the likes of Rocky Carson and other top 10 ranked pros. He is the hardest hitter on tour with his extreme pace giving everyone but Kane problems. It is just a matter of time before he breaks through and finds himself in the finals of the US OPEN.

Jose Diaz/Marco Rojas (odds 20:1) – Everyone talking about Jose Rojas and Daniel De La Rosa as the next generation of top-ranked pro players is missing the boat on these two young stars. Both these players have crazy mad skills on the court and are capable of breakthrough wins at any time. Both are extremely nice young men, but it is time for them to get a little "mean" on the court to knock off the top-ranked players on tour. Pro racquetball is a tough business, and the portable court at the US OPEN is like the UFC's Octagon cage. Enter at your own risk and don't expect to win unless you are fearless. I predict at least one of these two players will have an upset match victory at this year's US OPEN.

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

Jansen Allen – Even though he's better known for his right side doubles prowess, don't discount Jansen as a singles player. He can flat roll the ball on the both sides of the court and will be a handful for anyone in the round of 16. In fact, he has quietly risen up into the top 8 rankings on tour. Getting away from having to play Kane in the quarters would be a huge help, but that will depend on his ranking position just prior to the US OPEN.

Alex Cardona/Bobby Horn – Alex and Bobby have been making names for themselves on the WRT with regular top finishes in those events. They have the skills to beat nearly anyone in the world, but just showing up at the US OPEN once a year to face the world's best is not the ideal strategy. Both these players need to follow Jake Bredenbeck's lead and play on the IRT full time, pay their dues, and learn what it takes to make it to the top. Both have the skills needed on the court and will be tough matches for anyone they play in the early rounds.

IRT Pro Doubles – It's difficult to write an accurate preview for this division as we often don't know who will team up until a week or two prior to the tourney. However, there are a few teams I expect to see for sure. Last year's champs, Waselenchuk and Croft, are expected to defend their title. Kane-and-anybody would be an odds-on favorite, especially after last year's amazing KANE performance. The fact that Croft is one of the best right-side players is even more reason for odds-makers to pick this team.

However, the 2014 runner-up team of Carson and Beltran will likely play together again too, and the duo defeated Kane/Ben in the finals of the pro doubles division at the Lewis Drug Pro-Am in

early 2015 and will be out for revenge at this year's US OPEN. Last year's finalists, Jake Bredenbeck and Jose Diaz, have developed into an incredible team and have a great chance to vie for the title again this year. Lastly, the incredible teamwork of former US National Doubles champs Tony Carson and Jansen Allen is always fun to watch and they possess the weapons to win the whole thing. Add in all the other young talent on tour in various pairings and we have the makings of another thrilling IRT Pro Doubles showdown at the 2016 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN.

In closing, the men of the IRT are ready to let it fly at the 2016 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN. Get your seat early for the greatest show in sports and ENJOY!



Want to up your off-court game in Minneapolis? If you act quickly, you can still secure VIP seats to view the pro matches from a private and comfortable courtside Gold Box, plus enjoy All-Access Gold Credentials for the entire weekend.

A very limited number of four-person courtside luxury Gold Boxes still remain for this year's UnitedHealthcare US OPEN, for a package cost of \$2,800, which includes four Gold All-Access Credentials to the event. In addition to exclusive Gold Box viewing, All-Access Gold Credential holders have unlimited access to the exclusive Pro/Gold Lounge throughout the event, featuring complimentary catering (continental breakfast, lunch, and dinner), all-day fruit and snacks, desserts and beverages (beer, soda, juices, water, champagne, and wine) during all hours.

VIP lounge access is limited to event sponsors, top-ranked men and women pro players, and Gold Box holders like you (!), and single seats can also be purchased for \$800 while supplies last. Treat yourself to the ultimate racquetball experience and reserve your Gold Box package or single All-Access credential today!

Interested? Please call (614) 890-6073 to check for current availability right away or visit www.UnitedHealthcareUSOPENTickets.com now to reserve your spot.

Pictured: Tim Hansen and family enjoy their courtside box between games. Hansen won both his divisions in 2015 (M55+ singles & Men's Open Doubles), while up-and-coming son Timmy earned a silver medal in Mixed C Doubles.



2016 UnitedHealthcare

US OPEN LPRT PREVIEW

By Doug Ganim

The UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championships will crown its 2016 set of champions in the Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour pro singles and doubles competition this Fall. The odds-on favorite in singles will be World No.1 Paola Longoria from Mexico who will attempt to win her seventh US OPEN title.

It's hard to believe that Longoria could actually get better, but that's exactly what has happened in the last year. She not only wins every match she plays, but nearly every game is an absolute beat-down. Much like her counterpart Waselenchuk, her chances of NOT winning the US OPEN are extremely slim.

Paola Longoria (1:3 odds) – The No.1 player in the world is also the defending 2015 US OPEN champion, as well as the 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011 and 2008 winner. She had another sensational performance during the LPRT's current tour season, finishing at the top by a very wide margin. She also captured the top year-end ranking for the seventh time. Unless someone has elevated their game during the off-season, look for Paola to take another step toward racquetball immortality and hoist another US OPEN championship trophy. La Princesa no le será negado otro triunfo.

Maria Jose Vargas (5:1 odds) – The women's pro tour has never seen such a meteoric rise as that of Maria Vargas. In just 28 months she went from No.200 in the world to No.2 and was able to knock off top-ranked Rhonda Rajsich with some regularity. However, during the past year her commitment to playing pro racquetball has not been at 100%, so her results have slipped just a bit. Many believe she could be the heir to the LPRT throne and represents the biggest threat to Paola's dominance. However, the road to #1 runs through the US OPEN, so the question is, will 2016 be the year Maria steps in to the bright spotlight on Sunday with her first US OPEN crown? She has yet to solve the Longoria puzzle, usually losing in straight games when they meet. Another issue is, she has to get through Rajsich first. Win or lose, fans will want to get good seats to watch one of the most exciting female players to come along in decades.

Rhonda Rajsich (4:1 odds) – Also in the spotlight will be four-time US OPEN champion Rhonda Rajsich (2003, 2007, 2009, 2010). A former world No.1 player, Rajsich continues to amaze fans with spectacular dives and jaw-dropping shots. As of the time of this writing, Rajsich has regained the No.2 ranking position with consistent strong results during the past year. One of the older players on tour, Rhonda will have to beat both Vargas and Longoria to win the title, a feat that may be too tall a task. She is in amazing shape, which does give her a reasonable shot. It will be fun to watch this crowd favorite give it her all.

Samantha Salas Solis (7:1 odds) – Samantha slid from No.3 in the world to No. 12 after a shoulder injury sidelined her for most of

the 2011-2012 season. However, the last three seasons saw her storming back up the rankings and as of this writing she's back in the top five. Always a fierce competitor, nobody on tour hates to lose more than Samantha, so expect her to leave it all on the court every time she plays.



Photo by Freddy Ramirez / ReStrung



2015 semifinal: Sotomayor takes a backhand against Longoria. Photo by Freddy Ramirez / ReStrung

2015 semifinal: Rajsich dives for a shot against Vargas. Photo by Roby Partovich

Sofia Rascon (13:1) – At the time of this writing, Sofia has ascended to a career high LPRT ranking of No.6 which represents the biggest move upwards of any player in the last 18 months. Her game is for real and she will surely be battling a top player in the quarters with an excellent shot at making the semifinal round.

Frédérique Lambert (10:1) – This Canadian talent has shot up the rankings in the last 24 months and is now known as “The Lion Slayer.” Currently ranked No.4 in the world, she is the only player other than Rajsich to beat Longoria in the last five years. When she is playing well, she can give anyone on tour all they can handle. Frédérique is certainly a long-shot favorite to win it all!

Michelle Key (15:1) – Michelle is an incredible young talent with power to burn. Coached by boyfriend Daniel De La Rosa, her game has skyrocketed during the past year. At the time of this writing, she is at a career-high ranking of No.7 in the world, and I predict she will be in the top four very soon.

Veronica Sotomayor (20:1) – Veronica does not play on the LPRT full time, but if she did she would be ranked in the top 5. Coached by the legendary Sudsy Monchik, she has developed in to a lethal shooter who can take any player on tour down to the wire. With an artificially low ranking, it will be interesting to see which top player she draws in an early round. Someone is going to have bad luck and have to square off against Veronica early.

DARK HORSES YOU WILL WANT TO KEEP AN EYE ON:

Aubrey Kirch – Perhaps one of the most talented players on tour from a racquet skills standpoint, Aubrey will be an extremely tough match for one of the top players if finds herself in this year’s draw and makes the quarters.

Jessica Parilla – Currently ranked No.8 in the world, Jessica has proven she is ready for the big time. Look for her to have an excellent chance to reach the quarterfinals at this year’s US OPEN.

Susana Acosta-Mendoza – Another top player from Mexico, Susy has recently shown a resurgence in her game. She has more experience than all of the other Dark Horse players, so don’t be surprised to see her in the quarters.

LPRT Pro Doubles – It’s nearly impossible to predict the doubles teams and lineups in advance, so it’s extremely difficult to preview this division. The million dollar question is, “Who will Longoria play with?” Regardless of the answer, it’s tough to bet against Longoria to win the doubles crown again. With that being said, nothing is more unpredictable than doubles. Teams get hot, momentum plays a huge role, and the format of two games to 15 and tiebreaker to 11 lends itself to more upsets rather than less. In 2014, the LPRT Doubles final was one of the best women’s matches to watch in the history of the US OPEN. I look for more fireworks this year!

In closing, the LPRT has more depth and is more exciting than at any time in the last 20 years. It is truly an international affair with six different countries represented in the top 8 rankings at the time of this writing. These incredible athletes are not only strong and graceful, but they showcase racquetball at an extremely high level of performance and skill. Make sure you catch as many LPRT matches as you can at the 2016 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN!



PRO-AM DOUBLES FOR CHARITY



Want to treat yourself to an incredible racquetball experience while supporting world-renowned children’s charities at the same time? On Wednesday evening, 32 lucky amateurs will team up with the top stars on the IRT and LPRT to kick off the event with a special Pro-Am Doubles fundraiser. A \$325 donation gets you into the draw until 32 commitments are received, and all of the proceeds will be donated to St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and JDRF.

The evening features free food and drink, plus an autographed racquet and a complimentary photo with your pro partner and - although this event has sold out each of the last 20 years - at the time of this writing there are still a handful of spots left. Call (800) 234-5396 ext. 0 to claim your spot, or visit www.UnitedHealthcareUSOPEN.com to download a registration form.

Pictured [L-R] 2015 Benefit Doubles finalists squared off for charity and a great time: Alex Landa, Shari Coplen, Trevor Webb, and Frederique Lambert. Photo by ReStrung.

CONTINUING THE Making of a Champion



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

Let's continue "Making You a Champion" using the core principles of "Building Your Racquetball Dream House" as you build your championship game one assessment at a time. This will allow you to complete the "Racquetball Success Triangle" first introduced in the Winter 2010 issue of Racquetball magazine.

In the Spring 2016 issue, I discussed the first shot for the return of serve, the defensive "Ceiling Ball." This is one of two shots that move the server out of center court and into the most difficult position to score - backcourt.

We'll now discuss the second shot for the return of serve, the offensive "Pass Shot." By moving the server out of center court and into the very back of the court, this puts him furthest from the target. The reason for the Pass Shot is that it hits approximately 18" or lower on the front wall and bounces twice before the back wall.

***DO NOT THINK KILL BECAUSE OF THESE TWO REASONS:**

1- The 30 percent rule ... "30 percent of all balls can be killed (hits approximately 6" or lower on the front wall and bounces twice before the short line) from the dotted line, and the farther back in the court you shoot the ball from, the less likely you will be able to effectively kill the ball. Your percentages go down drastically.

2- When you are returning serve, your objective is to move your opponent to the deepest part of the court so you can regain center court position; your objective is not to score a point.

***THINK PASS, PASS, PASS, get the server out of the middle, and put her in the back of the court.*

With this information, let's address the skill areas needed to help make you a more consistent player, a must in developing your championship game.

1-RACQUETBALL SKILLS

The Pass Shot is the #1 offensive shot in the game of racquetball. Having confidence in this shot is absolutely necessary to be a solid returner of serves. The PASS SHOT hits approximately 18" or lower on the front wall and bounces twice before the back wall. Contact point is approximately knee high or lower based on how hard you hit it off of the lead foot.

**The harder you hit it, the slightly lower on the front wall it can hit (maybe 17" or 16" or 15" or find that magic height that will work to make the ball hit the back wall on two bounces.)*

**The softer you hit, the reverse is true, so you would need to hit it closer to the 18" (maybe even slightly higher, but find that magic height that will work to make the ball hit the back wall on two bounces). The PASS, not the KILL, is the #1 offensive shot in the game, because it has the highest percentage of hitting 18" rather than 6" on the front wall. This allows more room for error. Think about it. If you miss the pass low it can become a pass-kill or a kill, but if you miss the kill low it becomes a skip (a big, fat no-no!). This is the very reason why the pass shot is the #1 choice of the Pros on the Return of Serve if they have an offensive set-up resulting from a poor serve.*

2-MENTAL SKILLS

Return of Serve Policy...Should you go for the Ceiling or the Pass?

Your return of serve will depend on the type and quality of your opponents' service game. We'll go through all the serves below to learn the different scenarios relative to when you should go for the ceiling shot (defensive) or the pass shot (offensive). Let's examine the returns:

DRIVE SERVES

1. Standard drive serve

**Good serve:* Cross over and lunge toward the front wall or side wall (not the back

wall), and go up to the ceiling.

**Bad serve:* If the serve hits the side wall or comes off the back wall for a setup, go for the pass.

2. Drive z serve

**Good serve:* Hit the ball before it hits the second side wall, and go up to the ceiling.

**Bad serve:* If the serve comes off the side wall short, around 25 to 30 feet instead of 35 feet from the front wall, let it hit the side wall, and then shoot the pass. If the serve comes off the back wall, hit the pass.

3. Drive jam serve

**Good serve:* The ball is coming right at your body, so go up to the ceiling.

**Bad serve:* The ball comes across your body for a setup, so shoot the pass.

4. Drive wrap serve

**Good serve:* Turn with it as you follow the ball, and go up to the ceiling.

**Bad serve:* Move with the ball, and shoot the pass.

5. Drive nick serve

**Good serve:* Cross over and lunge forward, then pop the ball to the ceiling.

**Bad serve:* The ball comes across your body and is high, creating a setup, so shoot the pass.

LOB SERVES

1. Standard lob serve

**Good serve:* Try to hit it before it goes into the back corner or hits the side wall deep, and go to the ceiling.

**Bad serve:* If the ball comes off the side wall shallow or the back wall, shoot the pass. If it comes long, beyond the dotted line on the fly, cut it off and shoot the pass. If it hits on or near the dotted line, attack and hit an overhead pass (only on the forehand side) or a short hop or mid hop.

2. High and half lob nick serves

**Good serve:* After the ball hits the side wall between knee and waist, go up to the ceiling.

**Bad serve:* If the ball comes off the side wall shallow or back wall, shoot the pass.

3. Half lob kick serve

**Good serve:* Before the ball hits the side wall, move up and hit the ball to the ceiling.

**Bad serve:* If the ball comes off the side wall shallow as a setup or back wall, shoot the pass.

4. Three-quarter Z serve

**Good serve:* Hit the ball before it hits the second side wall, and go up for a ceiling or a more aggressive overhead pass (only on forehand side).

**Bad serve:* If the ball comes off the side wall shallow or the back wall, shoot the pass.

3-FITNESS SKILLS

Balance

Balance means an athlete has control of all body parts at the same time regardless of what is actually going on. Balanced athletes know how to lower their center of gravity so they have the fastest eye-hand and eye-foot coordination possible. A

balanced athlete can move quickly in all directions, knowing where his upper body and lower body are at all times. Balance is trainable, and all elite athletes spend a considerable amount of time on this area of fitness. A balanced athlete can recover from almost anything, and an imbalanced athlete crashes and burns.

In racquetball, balance can be defined as the ability to perform at any rate of speed or move into any position with total control of your body and great posture. In other words, it is the ability to maintain bodily equilibrium, which comes from strengthening the core body parts. Balance is one of the ingredients of conditioning that many racquetball players overlook, but it is a key factor that allows you to perform the mechanics involved on the forehand and backhand side with total confidence. With this level of confidence your returns of serves become more consistent, accurate, and powerful, which puts pressure on your opponent.

Nostril Breathing

Nostril breathing gets you from your critical brain to your visual Brain. So all visualizing is done while nostril breathing. Inhale for four deep counts...pause for six counts ... and exhale for eight counts! That's it...the exhalation is twice as long as the inhalation! When you get uptight on the court try a nostril breath...4-6-8...relax.

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

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Taylor Knoth
Jr. World Champion

Sharon Jackson
Jr. Nat'l Champion

Jason Mannino
#1 Pro Player 2003

Rocky Carson
#1 Pro Player 2008

Paola Longoria

2X #1 Pro Player

Sudsy Monchik
6X #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

Camp Schedule:

Weekend Camps 2016/2017

June 3-5	San Francisco, CA
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Oct 21-23	Portland, OR
Nov 4-6	Chicago, IL
TBA	Atlanta, GA
TBA	Florida
TBA	Seattle, WA
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TBA	Denver, CO
TBA	St. Louis, MO

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Contact me to add a camp in YOUR City/State.

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SKIP PHYSICS

"WHEN A STRUCK BALL REACHES THE JUNCTURE OF TWO ANGLED SURFACES, ONE OF THREE THINGS HAPPEN ..."

by Otto Dietrich, USA Racquetball National Rules Commissioner

Players sometimes describe a shot and ask me whether it skipped or not. My standard answer is that, without having actually seen the shot, it's impossible to say for sure. But I do relate some of the general "physics" involved when a ball is travelling along a horizontal surface (the floor) and meets a vertical surface (the front wall).

First, let's assume that a ball has been hit straight at the front wall. The first basic law is that a ball travelling along a horizontal surface (such as the floor) will gain rotational speed in the same direction that it is travelling when it first touches that surface.

So, if that ball does not touch the floor before it reaches the front wall (i.e. a good shot), then after it rebounds, the first horizontal surface that it touches will be the floor (on its way "back from") and that touch causes the ball to gain rotational speed in the direction toward the person who hit it. This added speed is what is commonly described under some conditions as the shot/ball "rolling out" i.e. gaining speed/topspin toward the back wall.

Conversely, if the ball touches the floor before it reaches the front wall (i.e. a "skip ball") then the ball will begin spinning very rapidly toward the front wall instead. That direction of spin will usually cause the ball to ever so slightly "climb the front wall" and that same direction of spin will be on the ball as it rebounds from the front wall back to the hitting area. This reverse spin is also what causes the ball to sometimes "pop up" as it departs when it skips at the front wall. When the ball once again touches that horizontal surface (floor) again (after rebounding from the front wall), the direction of spin that it tries to "pick up" is now in opposition to the reverse spin that it already has. So this touch of the floor now tends to slow down/offset the ball's rotation. That causes the ball

to have a relatively (as compared to a rollout) higher arc between its first and second touch of the floor. Sometimes the "backspin" imparted is so strong that the ball never even reaches the back wall.

Here's a simple way to visually prove/observe this particular rule of physics for yourself. Stand about ten feet away from a horizontal wall and throw a ball toward the wall from a rather low level. You will soon see the stark difference in the ball's actions that I described above when (1) the ball hits the floor before the front wall as compared to when (2) the ball hits the front wall and then the floor. These are the same basic reactions that happen when the ball is struck by a racquetball racquet. Using Ektelon's new Revolution racquetball (half red/half blue) makes this test effect even more apparent.

When a struck ball reaches the juncture of two angled surfaces (like the floor and the front wall), one of three things happen. The ball will hit (1) the vertical surface first, (2) the horizontal surface first, or else (3) both surfaces at the very same time (or so close it can't be determined). At most of these junctures, the surface it hits first is a very important determinate of whether the shot is called good or bad. We know that a shot to the front wall is good if it hits the vertical surface (front wall) first and bad if it hits the horizontal surface (floor) first. However, what's the call when it hits both at the same time? There is no obvious basis for declaring such a shot is either good or bad. So, probably since the beginning of this game, such shots landing in the "crotch" have been ruled as "bad" (same as the ball having touched the floor first). I guess it could be said that the reason for that call is that it did not hit the front wall first, but rather it hit two surfaces at the same time.

This same logic also applies when a served ball lands in a crotch at the back

wall or either side wall. Thus those serves are also ruled as if they had hit the horizontal surface (floor) first and thus are considered good and not either a long or three-wall serve.

Let's conclude by talking about the calls involving the remaining front wall crotches at either side wall and ceiling. They come into effect only during the serve. It can be simply said that if the served ball hits any of those crotches directly, then just like skipping the serve, that is a type of "out serve" -- i.e. an immediate loss of the serve.

Now for some questions and answers:

Brady K. said: Ball comes off the back wall for offensive (Player A) to take a shot. Ball hits defensive Player (B). Player B claims it came off the door frame causing a court hinder and that is why the ball hit him. Is the defensive player entitled to this call?

I responded: While that's not really addressed in the rulebook, I'd say that if the ball had rebounded normally and thus would NOT have hit Player B, then I'd declare that occurrence you described to be a court hinder and have the rally replayed. That is the fairest thing to do.

Andrea R. emailed me this: In doubles, my partner and I went for the ball. The opponent was in front and my partner was behind him. As he (my partner) called hinder, the ball passed him and I took the shot. Because I took the shot, is the ball still considered live or because he called hinder, is the point is replayed?

I emailed her back saying: Here are the two rules that generally apply to those situations: (1) Rule 4.5(b) that says that both players are entitled to try for the

DO YOU HAVE A RULES/REFEREEING QUESTION?

Be sure to email it to me at ODietrich@usra.org 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.

ball. Since that is the case, then either one can be hindered (Rules 3.14 and 3.15) on any shot from their opponents. Of course, that concept can be stretched to the point of ridiculousness, but to be hindered, remember that the player must have been considered able to have gotten to the ball had the “hinder” not occurred. (2) Rule 3.13(b) that says that the call of “hinder” stops everything that occurs thereafter. That includes things such as being hit by the ball or someone actually hitting the ball.

Since your partner called “hinder” before you hit the ball, then your shot, in effect, “didn’t happen” and the rally should be replayed unless, of course, the hinder could be deemed a Penalty Hinder per Rule 3.15.

Marion D. wrote: A ball, during a rally, hits the floor then bounces out of the court (in back) -- replay or point (the receiver hit it out).

I advised Marion: It’s a replay (court) hinder as long as the ball last hits the floor just before it goes out-of-play. See Rule 3.14(a)1. Otherwise it’s a loss of rally.

Robert S. wondered: I need clarification on the one swing rule. We are playing doubles and my partner charges a return and swings

at the ball and misses. Can I back him up and hit the ball before the second bounce to keep it in-play? I am referring to Rule 6.1 Basic Return Rule on Page 18 of the Rulebook.

I replied: The only time when more than “one swing” at the ball is prohibited is during the service motion and it is not called that. That rule provides, instead, that during the serve, once the racquet’s motion toward the ball begins, it must be continuous or else a balk or fake serve is the call and that is one type of out serve. See Rule 3.10(d). During a rally, the ball remains in play and thus a player and his partner can swing at it as many times as they need until the ball touches the floor a second time. Please note that all of Rule 6 applies only to the multi-bounce game that is usually played only by those who are aged 8 and under. You aren’t really that young are you? Because they are allowed to let the ball bounce many times before hitting it, it was deemed best to allow those players only one swing at it. But, of course, if they were playing doubles (hardly ever done for obvious reasons; I’ve never heard of it) then one’s partner would likely be allowed to take only one swing at the ball, too.

IN MEMORIAM



Tennessee ... 1996 USA Racquetball Hall of Fame Inductee **Johnny Hennen**, of Chattanooga, Tennessee died on March 16, 2016 in a hometown hospital surrounded by family and friends after battling a long illness. Probably one of the best liked and respected athletes to ever play the game, he was legendary for a non-stop, aggressive style and was best known for his doubles prowess, where he earned six national doubles titles, five of them paired with fellow Hall of Famer Ed Remen. Johnny matched this record with six national singles titles, becoming one of a rare group of athletes to earn dual titles in any given year — doing so four times, in 1983, 1988, 1992 and 1993. After a difficult recovery from a life-threatening illness, Hennen and Remen paired up again in 1998 to win yet another national doubles crown -- exactly ten years after winning their first as a team.

www.timesfreepress.com/obits/2016/mar/21/johnny-hennen/75422/

www.timesfreepress.com/news/life/entertainment/story/2016/mar/17/restaurateur-johnny-hennen-dies-after-battling-illness/355790/



Michigan ... 1984 Hall of Fame Inductee **Dr. Frederick Karl Lewerenz** of West Bloomfield, passed away suddenly at the age of 74 on March 19, 2016. As a player, Dr. Lewerenz accumulated one of the most impressive lists of tournament victories of any player in the state. He won 140 tournaments, including ten Michigan state titles and six regional titles. He was a participant in the USRA national professional tour from 1975 to 1976, and was also the principal organizer of the Michigan Super Seven Series, the largest amateur series in the United States. Fred received the Michigan “Man of the Year” award in 1982 and the “Outstanding Contribution” award in 1983. He sponsored numerous amateur players and was the business manager and agent for five time national champion, Mike Yellen, and world champion, Egan Inoue.

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#1 PAOLA LONGORIA

ENCOURAGES A YOUNG PLAYER IN THE U.S.

An 8-year-old beginner, Montserrat Torres, has just joined Junior Team Illinois. When her mom and dad, Claudia and Jairo Torres, mentioned that Montserrat is a huge fan of Paola Longoria, #1 woman player in the world, it sparked an idea.

Montserrat recorded a short video to send to Paola. The video was delivered to Paola, and she recorded a charming message back to Montserrat, who watched it in early April along with her coaches and parents. Mission accomplished!

- Reported by Cheryl Kirk, during the Pan American Racquetball Championships [covered on page 20-21].





kids ON COURTS

A RACQUETBALL REVOLUTION

A national grass roots organization of passionate volunteers committed to dramatically improving the opportunities for juniors to play racquetball in the USA.



A RACQUETBALL REVOLUTION

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REVOLUTION



Kathleen Klukas: kathleen@usracquetballfoundation.org

THANKS TO OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS

Individuals whose Board terms are expiring include Mike Ladge, Peter McMillin and Terry Rogers. USA Racquetball expresses its sincere gratitude for the time and energy these volunteers have devoted to the governance of the Association over the years.



Mike Ladge (*Los Angeles, California*), joined the Board in 2013 and assisted in a number of capacities, including serving on the Scholarship, Finance and Fundraising Committees.

Peter McMillin (*Golden, Colorado*), who was term-limited, served two terms on the Board beginning

in 2009. He contributed to the Membership, High School, Fundraising and Election Committees, including managing this most recent election.



Terry Rogers (*Las Vegas, Nevada*) joined the Board in 2013. She has served on the Election, Legislative, Membership and Women's Committees. She continues to serve the sport as the President of the California/Nevada Racquetball Association, and as a Board member of the Military Racquetball Federation as well as the U.S. Racquetball Foundation.



FUN-RAISER FOR CNRA JUNIORS. Thanks to a special assist from Hall of Fame player, Tournament Director and Coach Debbie Tisinger Moore, Brian Dixon and several outgoing California juniors, the Southern California junior group collaborated on a 50/50 fundraiser raffle. Pictured is Nevada Resident and winner Amir Shahin who won half the proceeds of the \$125.00 that was collected in just a few short hours. The juniors who set up the program were CNRA Junior Board Members Jared Anwar and Dane Elkins, co-president of the Palisades Charter High School Racquetball team and Cody and Madison Elkins who made the incredible sales roll-out. Thanks to all of the generous players for their incredible support of Junior Racquetball. Photo courtesy Brett A. Elkins.

[STATENews]

CALIFORNIA ... Brett Elkins shared that the local Palisadian Post reported that: "Juniors Dane Elkins and Atossa Rejaei and sophomore Jared Anwar led Palisades High to 11th place in team competition at the National High School Racquetball Championships last weekend in Portland." The coverage included photos of the happy winners.

<https://www.palipost.com/56181-2/>

FLORIDA ... When she's not on the court, Dr. Laura Brandt is consumed by Florida wildlife – in a good way. Despite the recent viral video of a massive gator touring a golf course, Laura was quoted on NPR's "All Things Considered" earlier in the year as observing, "We've seen some alligators in some years that have been basically skin and bones." Laura is a wildlife biologist at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in south Florida, and is part of a 15-member team of researchers working on a \$17 billion Everglades project that spans a region twice the size of New Jersey, and comprises the world's largest environmental restoration effort.



When she takes a break, it's for some racquetball. She's ranked #2 in Florida women's open singles, and routinely travels to compete. She won the Women's 50+ division at both the UnitedHealthcare US Open in Minneapolis last year, and the recent USA Racquetball National Singles in Denver.

www.npr.org/2016/02/19/466571698/honey-who-shrank-the-alligators



NEW MEXICO ... The World Senior Racquetball Championships are celebrating 32 years in Albuquerque – and you're invited to come early and stay late to take part in this prestigious International event. You'll want to take time to visit the historic sites of the Great Southwest ... before, during and after scheduled play from Tuesday, August 30 to Saturday, September 3.

This will be the first year that the University of New Mexico Johnson Center courts will be used to complement the main Midtown Sports & Wellness venue and its sister club, Downtown Sports & Wellness. Singles, Doubles, and Mixed Doubles events fill the lineup, beginning with Men's Singles and Mixed Doubles on Tuesday and the remaining divisions starting on Wednesday. Round robin formats are used in all divisions (35+ to 90+) so be prepared for plenty of World Class Racquetball!

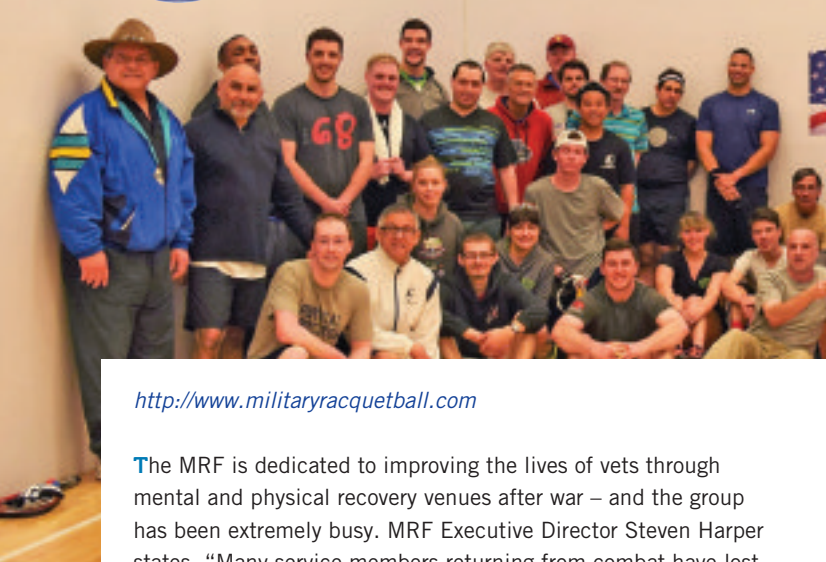
Enter one, two, or even three events, then celebrate with an awards banquet ceremony after marathon play concludes on Saturday. Bid in exciting silent and live auctions that have raised over \$400,000 for the IRF Development Fund since 1989. Make your plans early and register by August 10 at internationalracquetball.com. Questions or concerns? Contact Tournament Director Gary Mazaroff, gmampro@gmail.com, (505) 321-1110.

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NEWS?**

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TO MAGAZINE@USRA.ORG TO BE
CONSIDERED FOR A FUTURE ISSUE.



NEWS FROM THE MILITARY RACQUETBALL FEDERATION (MRF)



<http://www.militaryracquetball.com>

The MRF is dedicated to improving the lives of vets through mental and physical recovery venues after war – and the group has been extremely busy. MRF Executive Director Steven Harper states, “Many service members returning from combat have lost limbs or are wheelchair bound for life. The good news is we can help them make progress. Teaching them to be active again is powerful medicine!”

PORTLAND OR: The Multnomah County Athletic Club Recently hosted a special racquetball event in honor of fallen veteran John Pelham [see page 14]. The MRF was named as one of the charities and they offered/hosted a special wheelchair division. Thanks to Wendell Pelham and all the volunteers for organizing this great event and also to all those who participated.

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE: Retired Lt. Commander Steven Harper and Rabbit Rogers held a racquetball clinic at Robins Air Force giving participants an opportunity to learn how to play. Here are some of the comments we received: “It gives me something to do while I’m going to school and I really like it. So I really hope the program continues.” “Rolling and moving feels good here. I’ve seen it a million times and now I am a product of it”

TEMPE, AZ: Seven veterans from the Prescott and Phoenix VA traveled to ASU to participate in a singles and doubles racquetball shootout in conjunction with the USAR National Doubles. Having completed their 8 week Racquetball Rehabilitation Clinic with volunteers Jerry Northwood and Ray Bierner these players were treated to this great experience. Following the competition the players were surprised by a special visit from Rocky Carson. Most also remained in the building to watch the finals as they truly love racquetball!! The MRF is making a difference in the lives of our veterans.

ST. LOUIS, MO: MRF partnered with the St. Louis VA Medical Center Recreational Therapists and Scott AFB to host another two-day adaptive racquetball rehabilitation clinic in celebration of Veterans’ Day at the James Fitness Center at Scott AFB. We were surprised to see Col. Laura Lenderman, 375th Air Mobility Wing commander and the Vice Wing commander, Col. Green attend to show their support. The veterans saw first hand how this sport really can help them in their overall rehabilitation and stay active in “Life”.



Supporters gather in Oregon to remember John Pelham. Photo courtesy MRF.



In Tempe (L-R): Jerry Northwood (coach), Terry Rogers (MRF), Matthew (Bandit) McDonald, Jeremy Kinkead, Dave Beltran, Cory Sanders (VA Rec Therapist), Richard Alcaraz, Ray Bierner (coach), Edward Wagner, Mark Contreras, Charlie Labuz (Asst. coach), William Holder (wheelchair). Photo by Roby Partovich.



MRF Booth (L-R): Peggie Tellez, Terry Rogers. Photo by Cheryl Kirk



BEACH BASH

By Vic Leibofsky | Photo by Joe Hall

The 10th Annual New York Life Insurance Beach Bash presented by Splathead was a huge success for the hundreds of players and fans that came from around the country to enjoy the gorgeous scene at the Historic Courts on Garfield Street in Hollywood, Florida. Even if you've never played one-wall racquetball, the Beach Bash Experience is something all players should put on their bucket list! Just ask Rocky Carson, who made his first Beach Bash appearance in 2016, and I'm sure it won't be his last!

There were many standout performances. Here's just a sampling from the pro divisions noting the players with two or more first place finishes ...

Aimee Ruiz led the pack with three first place doubles finishes, in Women's Pro Doubles with Janel Tisinger, Womens 40+ doubles with Lisa Sostre, and Mixed Pro with Robert Sostre.



Richard Miller also had a standout performance with a pair of first place finishes. Richie reclaimed the Men's Pro Doubles title with Nelson Deida, and also successfully defended his CPRT Doubles title with partner Rick Koll.

Robert Sostre was in the finals of all three divisions he played in and brought home

first place medals for two of them: Mixed Pro with Aimee Ruiz, and Men's Pro Singles in a great final against partner Alfredo Benjamin Ramirez.

Janel Tisinger was outstanding in her first try at one-wall, winning the Women's Pro Singles title, and the Women's Pro Doubles title with partner Aimee Roehler Ruiz.

VEGAS BABY!

SEVENTH ANNUAL 3 WALLBALL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Submitted by Hank Marcus | Photo by Mike Augustin

The Stratosphere Casino, Hotel & Tower joins World Outdoor Racquetball, World Players of Handball and the National Paddleball Association to bring the richest tournament in outdoor racquet sports back to the Las Vegas Strip on September 21–25, 2016.

Returning on its traditional late September weekend, the event will take advantage of the great fall weather with highs forecast in the low 90's and lows in the mid 60's. With over 500 players expected and over a thousand matches to be played, the players and fans will enjoy the great weather, great special events, exciting play, and, of course, all the day and night life of Las Vegas. ESPN will also return for the 2016 event after successful broadcast of the 2015 event when over 400,000 viewers watched over 11 million minutes of action on ESPN3 and the WatchESPN app. Watch for more information and event details on 3wallball.com.

WOR is the parallel universe to the traditional sport of racquetball played by millions in clubs throughout the country. The rules are the same, the racquets and ball are similar but the attitude and action take this variation of the sport to a whole new level in the fresh air and bright sunshine. For more information, please visit: www.worldoutdoorracquetball.net

3 Wall Ball, LLC, a Las Vegas business, will address the need for portable, temporary or permanent, and affordable outdoor courts for cities, park districts, clubs and individuals. 3 Wall Ball will be supported in this event by Stratosphere Casino, Hotel & Tower, World Outdoor Racquetball, World Players of Handball, and the National Paddleball Association. 3 Wall Ball is the official court of World Outdoor Racquetball. Visit 3WallBall.com for more information.



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CALENDAR of EVENTS

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

Dates	City	State	Location	Event	Email
July 14-16	Lynchburg	VA	Liberty University - LaHaye	Virginia Commonwealth Games	vadriveserve@gmail.com
July 15-16	Scottsdale	AZ	Lifetime Fitness	Racquetball Training Center with Coach Winterton	coachrball@gmail.com
July 15-16	Topeka	KS	Downtown Topeka YMCA	Kansas Sunflower State Games	lisacarlton55@gmail.com
July 15-16	Port St. Lucie	FL	Port St. Lucie Civic Center	Florida Open	auchad99@hotmail.com
July 16	Detroit	MI	Belle Isle Park	Belle Isle Summer Classics	russell@belleisleracquetball.com
July 16	Shoreline	WA	Ridgecrest Park	Shoreline Outdoor #1	neallheggen@gmail.com
July 16	Ellicott City	MD	Centennial Park (North Area)	King of the Park	billracquetball@gmail.com
July 16-17	San Antonio	TX	Thousand Oaks Family YMCA	Hot Tamale	mike@alamoracquetball.org
July 22-24	Colorado Springs	CO	YMCA Downtown Colorado Springs	Rocky Mountain State Games	eddiemeredit@earthlink.net
July 23	Orlando	FL	University of Central Florida	UCF Beat the Heat Doubles	ucfrball@gmail.com
July 23	Corpus Christi	TX	Corpus Christi Athletic Club	CCAC Shooters Invitations I Shootout	jreyes@prokennexusa.com
July 28-31	Lombard	IL	Glass Court Swim & Fitness	Summerfest	dhhall@aol.com
July 28-Aug 1	Centennial	CO	Life Time Fitness	Elite Racquetball Camp	dennis@drdracquetball.com
July 29-31	Mobile	AL	University Of South Alabama Rec Center	University of South Alabama Summer Tournament	jason.utesch@williams.com
July 30	Saint Clair Shores	MI	Saint Clair Shores Outdoor Courts	12th Annual "Can You Stand the Heat"	racketboat1@aol.com
July 30-31	San Marcos	CA	Woodland Park Middle School	Coast to Coast Battle of the Borders	robby@wwrba.com
July 30-31	Fairfield	CA	In-Shape Sport: Holiday	Fairfield ALOHA Shootout	ellistyle@comcast.net
August 5-7	Las Vegas	NV	Stratosphere Hotel & Casino	Soda Man 3WB Shootout at the Stratosphere	rjlam@hotmail.com
August 5-7	Port Richey	FL	Richey Racquet Club	12th Annual Summer Shot Fest	yvonneb@buffington.com
August 5-7	Chicago	IL	Rainbow Beach	Windy City 3 Wall Brawl	joejfl7@aol.com
August 6	Scherrerville	IN	Omni 41	Rally In The Region	summerracquetball@gmail.com
August 6	Chehalis	WA	WF West Chehalis High School	Chehalis Outdoor #2	neallheggen@gmail.com
August 11-14	Lilburn	GA	Recreation ATL	LPRT Atlanta Singles and Doubles Championships	info@recreationatl.com
August 12-14	Reseda	CA	360 Health Club	Summer Scorcher	rjlam@hotmail.com
August 13	Warren	MI	Warren Racquet Club	Michigan Senior Olympics	ccvanhooose@comcast.net
August 13-14	Arlington	TX	Maverick Athletic Club	August Triple Crown Racquetball Shootout	leo@themav.com
August 13-14	Elk Grove	CA	Laguna Creek Racquet Club	First Annual VFW Shootout	elkgroverb@gmail.com
August 18-21	Fridley	MN	Lifetime Fitness - Moore Lake	Junior Elite Camp	coachrball@gmail.com
August 18-21	Colorado Springs	CO	U.S. Olympic Training Center	USA Racquetball Leadership Conference	peggine@usra.org
August 19-21	Detroit	MI	Belle Isle Park	WOR Belle Isle Long Wall National Championships	russell@belleisleracquetball.com
August 27	Harahan	LA	Elmwood Fitness Center	Summer Jam Doubles Shootout	racpres99@aol.com
August 27	Des Peres	MO	Missouri Athletic Club	Robert Berry	bobandjuneberry@gmail.com
August 27	Shoreline	WA	Ridgecrest Park	Shoreline Outdoor #2	neallheggen@gmail.com
August 30-Sept 3	Albuquerque	NM	Midtown Sports And Wellness	IRF World Senior Championships	gmampro@gmail.com
September 9-11	Greenville	SC	Sportsclub Greenville	Sweet Caroline Open LPRT	scrball@hotmail.com
September 9-11	Claremont	CA	Claremont Club	Fran Davis Racquetball Camp	camps@frandavisracquetball.com
September 9-11	Easton	PA	Northwood Racquet Club	Annual Free USAR Membership Tournament	ben.sylvester777@gmail.com

September 10	Friday Harbor	WA	San Juan Fitness Club	Rusty Pollock Memorial Tournament	nheggen@yahoo.com
September 10-11	Arlington	TX	Maverick Athletic Club	September Triple Crown Championships	leo@themav.com
September 15-18	Lilburn	GA	Recreation ATL	WRT Atlanta Open Singles and Doubles Championships	info@recreationatl.com
September 16-18	San Antonio	TX	Thousand Oaks Family YMCA	Fran Davis Racquetball Camp	camps@frandavisracquetball.com
September 16-18	Charlotte	NC	YMCA - Dowd	NC Fall Classic Racquetball Championships	ericnew35@gmail.com
September 17	Kent	WA	Kent Commons	Renew-It Doubles	neallheggen@gmail.com
September 21-25	Las Vegas	NV	Stratosphere Hotel & Casino	3WallBall World Championships	rjlam@hotmail.com
September 23-25	Sarasota	FL	Sarasota Family YMCA (Frank Berlin Branch)	Suncoast Open	auchad99@hotmail.com
September 23-25	Pittsburgh	PA	Fitness 1440	Annual Free USAR Membership Tournament	ben.sylvester777@gmail.com
September 24-25	West Lafayette	IN	Purdue University	Indiana Singles & Doubles Championships	ksmith@centurytube.com
October 5-8	St. George	UT	St. George Rec Center	Huntsman World Senior Games	rbjohn175@gmail.com
October 5-9	Minneapolis	MN	Life Time Fitness - Target Center	UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championship	ganim@mac.com

USA Racquetball announced its 2016 Annual Award winners at National Singles, recognizing individuals who have achieved great success both on and off the court.

ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

Male Athlete of the Year – Rocky Carson, 36, of Ladera Ranch, California accepted this award for a record sixth time after earning a Gold Medal in the 2015 Pan Am Games, where he became the first man to come out on top in two Pan Am Games, plus earning multiple national accolades over the past year.

Female Athlete of the Year – Rhonda Rajsich, 37, of Phoenix, Arizona, was also a repeat honoree in accepting this award for the eighth time. Rajsich won the 2015 U.S. National Singles Championships and earned a bronze medal at last year's Pan Am Games in Canada.

Bud Muehleisen Male Age Group Award – Mark Baron, 63, of Herndon, Va., earned this award for the first time, after an outstanding year, capturing the Men's 60+ title at the 2015 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN and winning the Men's 55+ Doubles at the US OPEN, the 2016 U.S. National Doubles Championships, and the 2016 NMRA National Championships.

Peggy Steding Female Age Group Award – Cindy Tilbury, 57, of Malibu, California, was recognized back-to-back in this category, following another stellar year of performances in a broad cross-section of national events, including a Gold Medal in the 55+ division at last year's U.S. National Singles Championships.

Special Recognitions

The John Halverson Fair Play Award went to David Horn, 26, who is well known for his demeanor and fair play both on and off of the court. A two-time member of the U.S. National Team, Horn consistently demonstrates fair play, even in tightly contested top-level matches, and is often observed thanking his opponents, referees, line judges and his opponents' coaches.



Awardees in attendance L-R: Tilbury, Huff, Carson, Rajsich, Baron and Frazier. Photo by John Foust.

Dual honorees were named for the Joe Sobek Outstanding Contribution Award

this year: Brent Huff and Jody Nance. Huff has volunteered as Trainer for the U.S. National Team since 2012, tirelessly supporting the Team through treatments, taping, therapeutic massage and consultation on diet, fitness and readiness to play. Nance has also volunteered as a Trainer and Coach for the U.S. Junior National Team since 2013, attending Team Training Camps and Junior World Championships over the past three years and also spending a great deal of time away from work and family in the process.

Presidential Award – Bob Frazier has served on the Alabama Racquetball Association Board for 13 years, (nine as President), leading efforts to support junior players, as well as running state championships, increasing sanctioned tournaments, mentoring new event directors, regularly contributing to state association conference calls, and attending national Leadership Conferences.

More online at: <http://www.teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/Features/2016/April/25/2016-Annual-Award-Winners>

RICK SCHACHT: WINNER OF THE BIGGEST CONTEST

By Sharon Brezina

Nowadays Rick Schacht celebrates a special birthday on October 3 – with good reason. On his birthday, in 2013, he was competing at the US Open and died on the court. Luckily, he was fortunate enough to rejoin the living.

In 2013, Rick thought he had it all. Life was good. A wonderful family and good friends, and he loved racquetball – all of it, from being on the court, to the lights, noise, competition, winning, and watching guys blow up.

A life-time racquetball player, in 2013, Rick was inducted into the Minnesota Racquetball Hall of Fame in January, played several tournaments including the NMRA International Championship in July where he picked up two silver medals. Preparation for the US Open in October was coming along nicely over the summer and he thought he was ready to go. He was in good condition and ready to give the big tournament his all.

“I thought I was training for a racquetball competition, but little did I know I was training to survive a widow-maker heart attack.” Rick says.

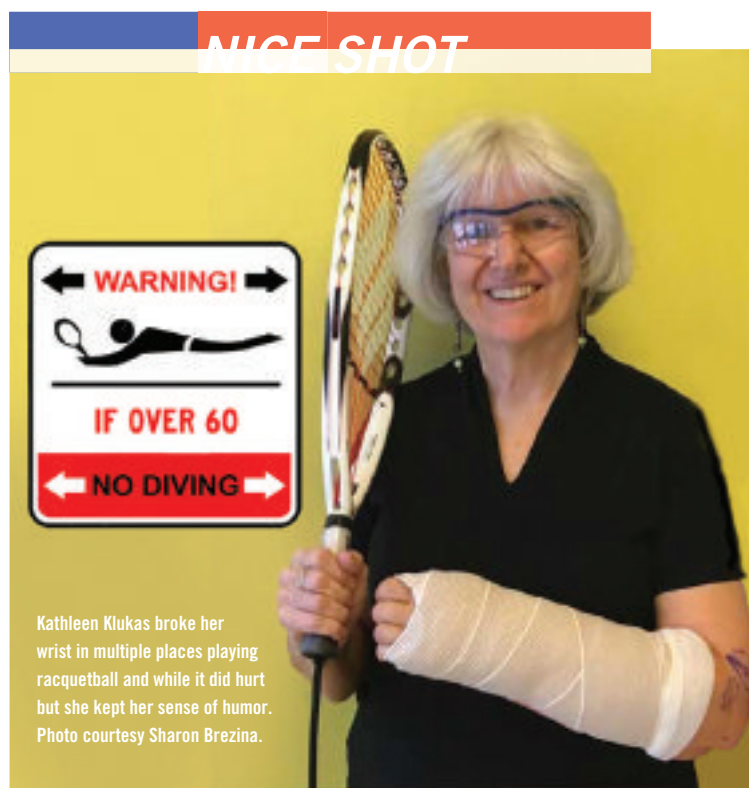
That day, “I was berating myself because I just couldn’t seem to focus,” he recalls. “I remember being in the service box and feeling lightheaded. I said to myself, ‘Good grief, you let yourself get out of shape, and now you’re going to faint.’”

Soon after that thought, he went into cardiac arrest. He was lucky on several counts – his fitness level because of playing competitive racquetball regularly, going into cardiac arrest in the company of others who acted quickly with CPR and used an AED that was onsite. It wasn’t easy to bring him back. It took 10 full minutes of CPR and being shocked three times with the AED. At 10 minutes, the final attempt using the AED restarted his heart. He was taken to HCMC hospital, the nearest trauma center and had a stent implanted within 39 minutes. He recovered quickly, returning home within 72 hours.

Very few people who have no heartbeat for 10 minutes survive, let alone recover without brain damage or other complications. Rick is one of the lucky ones and he credits racquetball for the fitness advantage it gave him in overcoming his medical crisis.

Since that life-changing day at the US Open, Rick speaks to groups about his experience. He talks about how quickly things can happen, how long 10 minutes can feel to those trying to save a life and, how grateful he is for his racquetball friends, EMTs and doctors who helped him win the biggest contest – the kind of heart attack that so few survive – so he can be still here to enjoy his friends and be with his family.

“Never give up. Get out there celebrating your life because you never know how long you have. Me, I’ll be spending my time with my family, friends and of course playing racquetball.” Rick says.



Kathleen Klukas broke her wrist in multiple places playing racquetball and while it did hurt but she kept her sense of humor. Photo courtesy Sharon Brezina.

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Paola Longoria

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Rocky Carson