

RACQUETBALL



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U.S. Racquetball Association
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- UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Preview
- Staff Update: Retires & New Hires
- Circuits End Seasons
- Pan American Racquetball
- International Report
- High Tech Equipment Preview
- Competitive Calendar
- Annual Awards
- ... and much more!





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On the Cover: USAR State Directors and leadership teams met at the USOTC in May. Put names to faces at USARacquetball.com.

Cover Photo

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Racquetball Magazine welcomes submissions from our members and readers. If you have an idea for an article you may discuss your topic with the editor either by email or telephone. Contact: magazine@usra.org
All items are subject to editing.

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CORRECTION: National Doubles results in the Spring issue should have cited Mildred Gwinn and Price Thomas as the Mixed 70+ champions, and inadvertently omitted the listing of the Women's 70+ winners, Mildred Gwinn and Marquita Molina.

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MISSION STATEMENT

USA Racquetball is the National Governing Body for the sport of racquetball, recognized by the USA Olympic Committee, and is committed to excellence and service to our members. We provide the infrastructure and organization for racquetball. We also provide competitive opportunities for members and enthusiasts through our coordination of racquetball organizations, development and administration of rules and programs, sanctioning of events and development of teams for international competition.

VISION STATEMENT

To provide opportunities in the sport of racquetball for all levels of participation through:

Objectives:

- **MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT** - USAR values its members and will strive to provide the best possible member services at all levels.
- **MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT** - USAR believes that racquetball is a lifetime endeavor and the benefits of health, recreation, and competition should be available to everyone. USAR will strive to expand its membership in order to share these benefits with as many players and supporters as possible.
- **PROMOTION OF THE SPORT** - in order to sustain a strong player base USAR will promote the numerous benefits of participation through mass marketing efforts.
- **COMPETITIVE SUCCESS** - USAR strives to maintain America's position as the number one racquetball nation in the world. Success at the elite levels has a positive influence on every other facet of our sport.
- **SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS** - USAR values its relationship with sponsors and will continue to maximize benefits and exposure.



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US National Doubles



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FROM THE
Executive Director

With Appreciation

Please join me in giving Jim a pat on the back
for his long career in racquetball

There are moments in one's life that clearly identify transitions through its various stages. More often than not, these frequently occur earlier in life, such as losing one's deciduous teeth, becoming a teenager, getting a driver's license, going to college, starting a career, getting married, and having children. Of course, there are a number that often take place later in life, such as retirement and becoming a grandparent. In many ways, an organization's life is marked by similar events. The pending retirement of Dr. Jim Hiser certainly qualifies as one of these benchmark events for USA Racquetball.

On June 15, 2014, Jim celebrated his 25th anniversary as a full-time employee at USA Racquetball. With his June 30 retirement, he leaves behind many contributions to the organization and the sport.

Jim Hiser celebrated his 25th anniversary as a full-time employee at USA Racquetball this year, and retires at the end of June, having made many contributions to the organization and the sport.

Even before coming to USA Racquetball, Jim was heavily involved in the sport through his involvement in Michigan and national volunteer roles. Jim started the Michigan affiliate of what is now USA Racquetball. There, he started the Michigan Hall of Fame, directed more than 70 events, and ran a men's pro stop for seven years and a women's for five years. He would be inducted into the Michigan Racquetball Hall of Fame in 1985. At the national level, Jim volunteered as a state director and regional director for USA Racquetball and even served on the Association's Board, including two years as Vice President.

Jim came to Colorado Springs to work for USA Racquetball in 1989. Over the years, Jim served as Commissioner of both the men's and women's professional tours for three years each, the only person to have led both tours. He also directed the National Elite Training Camp for 20 years and served as the International Technical Director for 15 years, during which he oversaw the operations of more than 50 international competitions, including racquetball in four Pan American Games. During his tenure, Jim also developed the U.S. Junior National Team, the Junior Olympic format, and the point system used for High School and Intercollegiate Championships.

Ultimately, Jim went on to serve as Executive Director of USA Racquetball for 10 years from 2002-2012, at which time he assumed his current position as Program Manager. As Executive Director, Jim worked with Ryan Rodgers and Usher Barnoff to develop the R2 Sports Tour-

nament Management System and with Usher on the ranking system currently used by USA Racquetball.

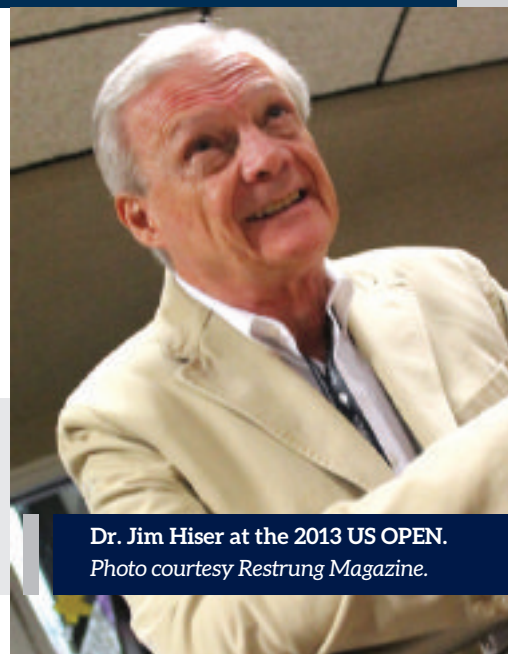
In addition to his administrative contributions to the sport, Jim is also an accomplished player, instructor and coach. He has coached two World Champions (Chris Cole and Jack

Huczek) and four other National Champions and U.S. National Team members (Lisa Ecker, Jimmy Floyd, Mike Johnson, and James Ford). Jim also instructed more than 2,000 students at National Elite Training Camps, authored numerous coaching manuals, instructional books and textbooks, assisted in the development of the AmPro teaching program, and constructed the National Referee Certification Test. More recently, Jim has authored several sections of the USA Racquetball Instructor Program curriculum centered around risk management, safety procedures, and racquetball injuries.

Jim, a Microbiologist by education and training, has also contributed greatly to the scientific study of racquetball. He has co-authored four publications focused on the physiological demands and impact of the sport.

While his daily presence in the USA Racquetball offices will be missed, I'm pleased to say that Jim will continue to be involved with USA Racquetball in various ways, including advancing the curriculum of the USA Racquetball Instructor Program. The next time you see Jim, please join me in giving him a pat on the back for his many contributions to our great sport. I'll continue to work to carry on his legacy in leading USA Racquetball forward.

—Steve Czarnecki



Dr. Jim Hiser at the 2013 US OPEN.
Photo courtesy Restrung Magazine.



Circa 1988, Jim Hiser (r) circles the USOC track with Gary Mazaroff.



FROM THE President

By Larry Haemmerle, President
USA Racquetball Board of Directors

Strategizing for Growth

Recently, we hosted a Leadership Conference with the intention of bringing together a number of people from our sport, particularly members of our State Association Boards. We were all privileged to meet at the United States Olympic Training Center. Although I have attended meetings there, as well as at the United States Olympic Committee Headquarters, it's always a profound experience to walk the same grounds that many of our finest athletes have walked.

This was the first conference of its kind in five years, and we hope to make it a much more regular part of our business plan. Those who attended received a wealth of information from subject matter experts within our sport. Of course, the meetings before and after the sessions were always very enlightening. Many of the attendees indicated that they had learned a great deal from this conference, and I know the USA Racquetball Board Members in attendance and I all learned a great deal from them as well.

One of the most important aspects of the Leadership Conference was the information we were able to gather in support of our Strategic Planning efforts. This information received at the conference - as well as on two key conference calls with industry experts - has been compiled and developed into a working document. A small task force comprised of key individuals in our sport prepared a Strategic Plan Proposal for our

May Board Meeting. This initiative is a vital step in determining the future of our association and our sport over the next three to five years.

We all recognize that a new direction is needed to ensure the future and growth of racquetball. This is especially true in light of Jim Hiser's retirement, and we will miss his knowledge of the sport and USA Racquetball. We are very excited about the high value potential of this planning process and look forward to sharing its results with the racquetball community as soon as possible.

We've made great strides in bringing stability to USA Racquetball - it's now time for us to do the same for our sport.

ELECTIONS

Recently, I was re-elected to the USA Racquetball Board of Directors. I thank all of you for your support and am honored to continue to serve. Please also join me in congratulating Peggine Tellez, currently our Treasurer, and Laurel Davis on their re-elections. I am very proud of the hard work our Board of Directors have provided, and we look forward to serving for three more years.

USA Racquetball Welcomes Bob Bodor



Bob Bodor has joined the USA Racquetball staff as Membership Services Manager. Bob brings more than 20 years of progressive experience as a collegiate football coach. He served as the Head Coach at Colorado College from 2003-2009. Most recently, he served as the interim Head Coach at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

His initial responsibilities with USA Racquetball will revolve around serving members, supporting and growing Collegiate and High School racquetball programs, and assisting with Coach Certification programs.

"We couldn't be more pleased to have Bob join the USA Racquetball Team," commented Steve Czarnecki, Executive Director of USA

Racquetball. "Bob shares our vision of reaching more racquetball players and introducing new individuals to this great sport."

"I'm excited to bring my experience in collegiate athletics and building programs to USA Racquetball," remarked Bob. "Amateur sports is a passion of mine, and helping athletes get the most from their racquetball experience is a compelling opportunity."

Bodor is a graduate of Denison University and has worked for or volunteered with a number of sports organizations, including USADA, National Wheelchair Basketball, USA Wrestling, and the Colorado Springs Sports Corporation.



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High School Champs in the City of Roses

■ By Steve Czarnecki | Photos by Jeff Oliver

The U.S. National High School Championships made its biannual pilgrimage to Portland, Oregon, for its 28th playoff, where young players made the trip to the renowned Multnomah Athletic Club in droves. Since it was last held in the City of Roses in 2012, the Championship saw a 24% increase in participation, with more than 150 high school players crossing state lines to compete.

The 338 participants competed in hotly contested singles, doubles, and mixed doubles divisions, with the Boys and Girls #1 Gold division winners earning positions on the U.S. Junior National Team. With matches running constantly for more than 12 hours a day there was always plenty of good matches on deck.

In the Girls division, defending champion Lexi York came to Portland seeking her third straight National High School Championship crown. In the final, she faced 2013 semifinalist Hollee Hungerford who, along with Lexi, calls Milwaukie, Oregon home. The first game of their playoff was a back and forth contest in which Lexi prevailed 15-13. She went on to achieve her three-peat with a much more convincing 15-2 victory in the second game. Lexi will now strive for high school singles perfection, if she's able to capture a fourth consecutive title next year.

On the Boys side, both of last year's finalists had moved on to college, opening up the opportunity for younger players. Two 2013 semifinalists, Justus Benson and Jesse Van Valkenburg, repeated their marches to the semis this year, but could advance no further. The finals came down to a pair of then-15-year olds, Wayne Antone IV of Junction City, Oregon and Daniel (aka Mauro) Rojas of the well known "209" group in Stockton, California. It turned into



Champions Mauro Rojas & Lexi York

a rematch of the Boys 14 and under semifinal from the previous U.S. Junior Olympic Championships in which Daniel prevailed in a tiebreaker.

Daniel, cousin of U.S. National Team members José and Markie Rojas, pulled away at the end of the first game in front of a packed house for a 15-7 victory. Wayne wasn't done just yet, however, and took the second game 15-12. In the third, Daniel pulled away convincingly for an 11-4 victory and claimed a spot on the U.S. Junior National Team frequented so often by his older cousins.

In all, 32 accomplished high school players were crowned as All Americans and recognized in front of their peers for their achievements.

Fittingly, at the conclusion of the Championship, Brian Ancheta was presented with the 2014 National Developmental Coach of the Year Award from USA Racquetball and the U.S. Olympic Committee for his years of service to high school racquetball in Oregon and for the positive impact he has made on so many high school students across several programs.

A special thank you goes to Hank Marcus and the Multnomah Athletic Club, as well as the local organizing committee for making the Championship possible. This type of competition simply couldn't be conducted without the support of dedicated volunteers such as Ed Boyle, Bruce Reid and Alice Laffey.

Make plans to join us for the National High School Championships when it returns to St. Louis, Missouri, in 2015.



SINGLES BOYS

#1 GOLD	#2 GOLD	#3 GOLD	#4 GOLD	#5 GOLD	#6 GOLD
1st Mauro Rojas	Alex Burbee	Kevin Schneier	Jacob Abrahamian	JT Westcott	Corban Coursey
2nd Wayne Antone IV	Ethan Slutzky	Erik Holman	William Selbie	Trevor Dannegger	Adam Maduell

SINGLES GIRLS

#1 GOLD	#2 GOLD	#3 GOLD	#4 GOLD	#5 GOLD	#6 GOLD
1st Lexi York	Molly Burchfield	Erin Bonzer	Sophie Herman	Tori Niska	Brianna Turner
2nd Hollee Hungerford	Ashley Boyle	Madison Kerzel	Elyse Duffie	Katie Garasky	Kelsey Gima

BOYS DOUBLES

#1 GOLD	#2 GOLD	#3 GOLD
1st Gavin Usher / Will Hoge	Alex Burbee / Jacob Abrahamian	Drew Bollinger / Joel Brumfield
2nd Justin Ide / Zach Collins	Chris Smith / Jamie Barrett	Gabriel McCullough / Robert Hayes

GIRLS DOUBLES

#1 GOLD	#2 GOLD	#3 GOLD
1st Ashley Boyle / Krystle Boyle	Anna Stell / Madison Kerzel	Hayden Regalado / Tori Niska
2nd Jenna Kelly / Sophie Herman	Erin Bonzer / Molly Burchfield	Hannah Rasch / Sydney Ferguson

MIXED DOUBLES

#1 GOLD	#2 GOLD	#3 GOLD
1st Justin Ide / Krystle Boyle	Ashley Boyle / Zach Collins	Hanna Kingstad / Joel Belsterling
2nd Alexander DeHart / Kristine Holman	Ethan Slutzky / Haley Dolezal	Jeremiah Wade / Jordan Heater

TEAM RESULTS

	High School	Location	Points
Overall Team			
1	Beaverton	Beaverton, OR	4,407
2	Sprague	Salem, OR	4,078
3	Southridge	Beaverton, OR	3,738
4	Parkway West	St. Louis, MO	3,661
5	Kirkwood	St. Louis, MO	2,728
6	Lincoln	Portland, OR	2,385
7	Lindbergh	St. Louis, MO	2,191
8	Sunset	Portland, OR	1,673
9	Parkway North Central	St. Louis, MO	1,008
10	Centennial	Gresham, OR	539
Boys Team			
1	St. Louis University High	St. Louis, MO	3,149
2	Beaverton	Beaverton, OR	1,645
3	Parkway West	St. Louis, MO	1,637
4	Lincoln	Portland, OR	1,599
5	Sprague	Salem, OR	1,560
6	Kirkwood	St. Louis, MO	1,235
7	Lindbergh	St. Louis, MO	1,193
8	Sunset	Portland, OR	1,045
9	Sun Prairie	Sun Prairie, WI	986
10	Southridge	Beaverton, OR	707
Girls Team			
1	Southridge	Beaverton, OR	2,597
2	Beaverton	Beaverton, OR	1,992
3	Sprague	Salem, OR	1,989
4	Cor Jesu Academy	St. Louis, MO	1,938
5	Parkway West	St. Louis, MO	1,642
6	Kirkwood	St. Louis, MO	1,174
7	Lindbergh	St. Louis, MO	813
8	Notre Dame	St. Louis, MO	644
9	Lincoln	Portland, OR	622
10	LaSalle	Milwaukie, OR	575

ALL-AMERICANS

Wayne Antone IV	Churchill
Justus Benson	Sun Prairie
Ashley Boyle	Beaverton
Krystle Boyle	Beaverton
Alex Burbee	St. Louis University High
Molly Burchfield	Southridge
Zach Collins	Beaverton
Alexander DeHart	Sprague
Haley Dolezal	Parkway West
Madeline Gauch	Parkway West
Matthew Goolsby	Grants Pass
Jordan Heater	Sprague
Mohamed Hegy	Southridge
Sophie Herman	Southridge
Will Hoge	Lincoln
Kristine Holman	Sprague
Hollie Hungerford	Grandview Christian
Justin Ide	Beaverton
Jenna Kelly	Southridge
Zack Lazenby	Parkway North Central
Mark Martin	Rolla
Thomas Riganti	St. Louis University High
Mauro Rojas	Langston Hughes
Alexi Rose	Herriman
Kevin Schneier	St. Louis University High
Pooja Sheevam	Parkway North Central
Carter Simon	Sun Prairie
Ethan Slutzky	Parkway West
Gavin Usher	Lincoln
Jesse Van Valkenburg	Riverton High
Rebecca Van Rhee	Wasatch Academy
Lexi York	LaSalle



Intercollegiate CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Steve Czarnecki | Photos by Jim Hiser



Men's Champion Jose Diaz



Women's Champion Devon Pimentelli

The 42nd Wilson National Intercollegiate Championships, presented by Penn, was held on the beautiful campus of North Carolina State University in Raleigh, marking the first time the Championships had been held east of the Mississippi River since 1995. In all, more than 203 players representing 34 colleges and universities competed.

There are few competitive environments more exciting than that of team racquetball, where you'll find some of the best players in the country along with their entire team and coaches cheering on, for example, their #6 teammate. National Intercollegiate presents a wonderful atmosphere of spirit, camaraderie, and friendship.

Neither the Men's nor the Women's singles champions from 2013 returned to defend their crowns, which allowed a cadre of skilled players to take their place in line to bid for coveted spots on the U.S. National Team.

On the Men's side, three-time finalist Nick Montalbano from Colorado State University-Pueblo rightly earned the top seed. First-time participant José Diaz of Delta College entered as the number two seed. Rounding out the top four were Adam Manilla of the University of Colorado and Joel Barshaw from Oregon State University, respectively. Just as scripted, those same top seeds played their way to the semifinals.

Both semifinals were exciting, with Montalbano defeating Barshaw in two (12, 9) and Diaz getting past Manilla in three (-12, 6, 2). The finals proved to be particularly riveting, with Diaz taking the first game after surviving more than one service advantage by Montalbano. Nick took the second game more convincingly and got off to a strong early lead in the deciding third. In the end however, José came back strong and won the tiebreaker 11-7, ending Montalbano's fourth and final attempt at a National Intercollegiate Championship victory.

Twenty women entered the fray for a spot on the U.S. National Team. As with the men, all four of the top seeds made their way to the semifinals. There, top-seeded Amanda Lindsay of Oregon State University defeated Elizabeth Simmons of the University of Arizona in a close two-game match (10, 12). In the bottom half of the draw, number three seeded Devon Pimentelli of Delta College upset Samantha Simmons of the University of Maryland-Baltimore in two games (8, 12). The Simmons sisters went on to have a thrilling sibling grudge match for third, with Samantha ultimately winning (-13, 14, 3).

In the finals, Pimentelli brought her A-game while Lindsay was not her normal self, skipping shots and leaving a good number of set-ups. Pimentelli won the gold medal in two (7, 5), joining her "209" counterpart Diaz on the U.S. National Team.

To cap off a great tournament, everyone enjoyed the awards banquet and related celebrations. Those undergrads who remain eligible look forward to returning to Arizona State University for the next edition of the National Intercollegiate Championships to be held March 24-28, 2015.



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SINGLES MEN

1st

#1 GOLD

Jose Diaz

2nd

#2 GOLD

Nick Montalbano

1st

#3 GOLD

Brad Schopieray

2nd

#4 GOLD

Sam Reid

1st

#5 GOLD

Ryan Charbonneau

2nd

#6 GOLD

Tyler Stone

1st

#7 GOLD

Micah Hoffman

2nd

#8 GOLD

Fritz Simmon

1st

#9 GOLD

Joey Pryor

2nd

#10 GOLD

Mitch Kemlage

SINGLES WOMEN

1st

#1 GOLD

Devon Pimentelli

2nd

#2 GOLD

Amanda Lindsay

1st

#3 GOLD

Karissa Beatty

2nd

#4 GOLD

Rachel Schmidt

1st

#5 GOLD

Rachel Creel

2nd

#6 GOLD

Becky Spezia

1st

#7 GOLD

Sarah Lewis

2nd

#8 GOLD

Jordan Giljum

1st

#9 GOLD

Erica Lipski

2nd

#10 GOLD

Kimberly Brendel

1st

#11 GOLD

Patricia Billette

2nd

#12 GOLD

Christina Hughes

MENS DOUBLES

1st

#1 GOLD

Brad Schopieray/Felipe Camacho

2nd

#2 GOLD

Nick Riffel/Adam Manilla

1st

#3 GOLD

Nick Montalbano/Tyler Stone

2nd

#4 GOLD

Rick Charbonneau/Ryan Charbonneau

1st

#5 GOLD

Joey Pryor/Micah Hoffman

2nd

#6 GOLD

Fritz Simmon/Mitch Kemlage

WOMENS DOUBLES

1st

#1 GOLD

Elizabeth Simmons/Lindsay Rasmussen

2nd

#2 GOLD

Amanda Lindsay/Karissa Beatty

1st

#3 GOLD

Rachel Creel/Sarah Lewis

2nd

#4 GOLD

Kamila Welling/Krista Yourstone

1st

#5 GOLD

Erica Lipski/Patricia Billette

2nd

#6 GOLD

Kimberly Brendel/Christina Hughes

TEAM RESULTS

Division 1 College/University

Points

Overall Team

1	Oregon State University	2,385.0
2	University of Missouri-Columbia	1,709.0
3	Brigham Young University	1,462.0
4	North Carolina State University	971.0
5	University of Texas	798.5
6	University of Arizona	796.0
7	Penn State University	567.5
8	University of New Mexico	524.5
9	Saint Louis University	512.0
10	Ohio State University	402.5

Men's Team

1	Colorado State University-Pueblo	1,616.0
2	Oregon State University	1,575.0
3	University of Missouri-Columbia	933.0
4	Arizona State University	842.5
5	Brigham Young University	834.0
6	University of Colorado	825.0
7	North Carolina State University	744.0
8	University of Texas	549.0
9	Utah Valley University	478.5
10	Penn State University	367.5

Women's Team

1	Oregon State University	1,310.0
2	University of Missouri-Columbia	776.0
3	Brigham Young University	628.0
4	University of Arizona	588.0
5	Canada College	280.0
6	University of Texas	249.5
7	North Carolina State University	227.0
8	University of New Mexico	202.0
9	Penn State University	200.0
10	Saint Louis University	180.5

Division 2 College/University

Points

Overall Team

1	Baldwin Wallace University	734.0
2	Rochester Institute of Tech	197.0
3	Clarkson University	123.5

Men's Team

1	Baldwin Wallace University	591.0
2	Rochester Institute of Tech	180.0
3	Clarkson University	106.5

Women's Team

1	Baldwin Wallace University	143.0
2	Rochester Institute of Tech	17.0
3	Clarkson University	17.0

ALL-AMERICANS

MEN

Joel Barshaw
Adam Blackwell
Felipe Camacho
Thomas Carter
Rick Charbonneau
Ryan Charbonneau
Erik DeMar
Jose Diaz
Juan Durazo
Ryan Gleason
Braden Hess
Micah Hoffman
Mitch Kemlage
Adam Manilla
Nick Montalbano
Joey Pryor
Sam Reid
Nicholas Riffel
Kyle Rowley
Brad Schopieray
Fritz Simmon
Tyler Stone
Daniel Ullrich
Bradley Williams

WOMEN

Karissa Beatty
Patricia Billette
Kimberly Brendel
Rachel Creel
Nicole Fraley
Jordan Giljum
Christina Hughes
Sarah Lewis
Adam Lindsay
Erica Lipski
Sara Moulton
Jennifer Pease
Devon Pimentelli
Stephanie Poutz
Lindsay Rasmussen
Rachel Schmidt
Elizabeth Simmons
Samantha Simmons
Becky Spezia
Jennifer Tovar
Catherine Tryon
Kamila Welling
Samantha Wendt
Krista Yourstone

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Donations of \$100 or more ... made in 2014 to the TEAM USA CHALLENGE ... *will be doubled* by the group of generous Team Benefactors at right, who have each pledged up to \$2,500 to support the cause. With your support, the USA Racquetball family can raise more than \$25,000 for your US National Teams!

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*Rick Betts • Steve Czarnecki • Cheryl Kirk
Mike Lippitt • 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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Lewis Drug Pro Am

ON NEW COURTS IN SIOUX FALLS

By Don Grigas

One day in late January, Rocky Carson – the number two-ranked player on the International Racquetball Tour (IRT) – spent a few hours surfing in the Pacific Ocean near his hometown of Ladera Beach, California, enjoying the balmy 80-degree weather and bright sunshine.

The next day he was on an airplane headed to the Lewis Drug Pro-Am tournament in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. “I stepped off the plane right into a blizzard, with temperatures of about 8-below. Oh, it hurt. But I wouldn’t miss the Lewis Drug Pro-Am for anything.”

Why would an elite player who competes in more than a dozen pro stops each year opt for the frigid climes of South Dakota in January when he could just as easily be riding the waves, with his main concern whether or not he applied enough sunscreen? Because, like many other professionals and amateurs, the Lewis Drug Pro-Am has become like a destination wedding

of a family member or close friend: it is a “must attend” event, and it just keeps getting better every year.

“We are proud of the tournament. We try to keep everything about it top drawer,” said Mark Griffin, CEO of Lewis Drug, whose corporate name has been attached to the event since it first began. “The only tournament that comes close is the U.S. Open. We like to think we are the gold standard. It’s what brings the pros to Sioux Falls in January.”

The Lewis Drug Pro-Am – the longest continuously running racquetball tournament in the nation, according to organizers – recently was designated a Tier 1-Plus pro stop. This year 21 professionals, including 12 of the 20 top-ranked IRT players, made the trek to Sioux Falls to compete for more than \$30,000 in prize money. “The pros also get to interact and rub elbows with the everyday players and fans, and that is important to the pros as well as to all the others,” said Troy Stallings, co-chairman of the tournament.

Crowds packed in to watch the pros at the 2013 Lewis ProAm. Photo snapped by Jason Mannino.

See the UnitedHealthcare US Open IRT Preview on page 22



Players usually return to tournaments they win, but Lewis Drug's down-home atmosphere is another reason why pros continue to brave the winter weather to spend four days in Sioux Falls. Another key factor, according to tournament insiders, is the leadership and dedication of Griffin, whose behind-the-scenes involvement has made the tournament what it is today. Mark Burd, a co-organizer of the tournament, called Griffin "the driving force behind this tournament, although he is not an out-in-front-and-center type of person. He is very humble. We have a lot of dedicated volunteers, but the fact is the Lewis Drug Pro-Am is a jewel in the middle of nowhere because of Mark and his team."

Griffin's crowning achievement is on the horizon. In June 2014, the Sioux Falls Family YMCA is scheduled to open two new racquetball courts funded by Griffin and other racquetball supporters.

Mike Gulick, President and CEO of the Sioux Falls Family YMCA, said that when the YMCA Board began developing its strategic plan a few years ago, the proposed renovation of the entire facility called for reducing the number of racquetball courts from six to two. Such a reduction could have had a significant negative impact on the tournament because the professional matches have always been staged at the YMCA. Amateur play takes place at other nearby satellite clubs. "But

Mark and Jeff Scherschligt, who sits on the YMCA Board of Directors, stepped up and asked the board to consider installing two new 'feature' courts with glass side walls using outside funds provided through volunteer efforts."

The new courts not only will provide spectators a better view of the tournament action, but the project also will aid in developing a youth program for the Sioux Falls area racquetball community. "I think the goal right now is to get kids more excited about playing the sport as our core group of racquetball players ages. Mark would like to get kids more involved and keep it going for another 50 years so the sport continues on long after we are gone," Burd said.

Griffin has long been a long-time supporter of racquetball and the YMCA where he's been a member since the 1960s. "I've played the game for 40 years and love the sport," Griffin said. Gulick commented that Griffin's love of the sport extends far outside of Sioux Falls. "Sioux Falls is lucky to have him right here."

As for Carson, he plans on returning next year regardless of weather conditions. "I haven't seen the plans for the two new courts, but I have heard about them. I am really excited. I can't wait to get back there next year and play on them."

2013 Lewis Drug ProAm Doubles Champions and sponsors (L to R): Jeff Scherschligt, Jason Mannino, Kane Waselenchuk, Mark Griffin. Photo courtesy Kim Waselenchuk.





Stronger than Ever

LONGORIA DOMINATES THE LPRT

By Jen Saunders • Photo by Roby Partovich

The LPRT is stronger than ever for a variety of reasons ... starting with dynamic new leadership.

T.J. Baumbaugh and Andy Kulback took over the women's tour (then known as the WPRO) as President and Deputy Commissioner, respectively, in the summer of 2012. The tour was in a deficit situation and the future was in question. They went about re-branding the tour with a new name and logo while they worked to develop a strong schedule with consistent stops. They were pleased to find racquetball players across the United States with strong skill sets in areas like accounting, graphic design and marketing, who were gracious and willing to step up and help the women's tour remake itself once more. T.J. and Andy's commitment to the tour and its best interests have also developed a trust with the players and in turn a buy-in from top to bottom to contribute to making the tour a success.

DEPTH - Draws continue to expand in numbers and in quality. Eight different players have made a semifinal appearance this season with two more tournaments to go (at the time of this writing). Five different players have faced Paola Longoria in the finals. The US Open had a qualifying round of 16 players. The last two stops, Tier 1 events in Miami and Reseda, were each only one player shy from adding qualifying rounds. From the early rounds, these large draws are competitive, with few of their outcomes easy to predict. Approximately one third of matches in the round of 32's and 16's in the past two events went to four or five games.

Scheduling matches to begin with the round of 32's on Friday morning also contributes to player participation, as it allows students and players with other employment to arrive at an event on Thursday afternoon or evening. This is huge since more players can now manage the time commitment to play the tour on a regular basis.

YOUTHFUL & INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE - Players from more than a dozen countries have competed in at least one LPRT stop this season. The Top 10 ranked players represent six different countries. Among them only two are over the age of 30. Much of the influx of youthful exuberance can be credited to the scholarship program that the tour implemented this season, which sprung from an idea that veteran Rhonda Rajsich brought to the table. The scholarship program is granted annually with an objective of financially assisting women players aged 18-25 who aspire to be full-time players on the LPRT. Scholarship winners receive free entry into five LPRT Tier 1 or Grand Slam events (except for the US Open), a free one-year membership to the LPRT, free lodging at the five LPRT events, and a travel stipend for each of those events. This season's winners along with the rest of the new talent have already made an impression on the Tour. They



are increasingly fearless and are keeping perennial favorites Rajsich and Longoria on their toes.

PAOLA LONGORIA - It can sometimes be viewed as bad for a sport when a single player dominates. It's boring when the outcome is largely pre-determined. We've all heard it and more. But Longoria has used her position atop the racquetball world to grow the sport, and she is simply a superstar in Mexico. She was named one of the Top 50 Most Influential Women by Forbes Mexico, and boasts mainstream sponsors like Oakley, Nike and Subaru. Longoria is, however, sharing the wealth and the spotlight. She has established two \$25,000-plus events in her home country and is working non-stop on even more events and larger purses.

At these Mexico events, the women play on an all-glass court in public parks and venues. Matches have also been televised live. The exposure is substantial, and from all accounts Longoria is just getting started. One cannot deny that what Longoria has accomplished on the court is nothing short of amazing, but what she brings to the sport of racquetball off the court may be her lasting legacy and, in the end, even more impressive.

The future is bright for the LPRT. Plans to add pro doubles to many of the tournaments are in the works. This would allow players the opportunity to play two pro divisions and add more pro matches to each stop for local organizers and fans. The process of hiring a tour referee has also begun. Now's the time to get on the bandwagon – there's room for everybody!



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- PAOLA LONGORIA

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GRAPHENE



RACQUETBALL TOURNAMENT

or Skating Rink?

by Bruce Adams, Outgoing Secretary

What started out as the Doubles-Only Racquetball Tournament ended up being a skating rink of cars in the Dallas-Fort Worth metro area, thanks to the wicked weather of winter storm Cleon. Over 80 players welcomed the 50 degree weather on Wednesday, December 4th, but by Friday there were not any noted "rollouts" of vehicles or off-court injuries by the players; we "skipped" gingerly on the three inch thick ice at the Maverick Athletic Club in Arlington, Texas; but there were many "avoidable hinders" in the parking lot and on the various interstates and other major arteries in the metropolis. Normal 20 to 30 minute commutes for the locals were taking as long as three hours. No teams were forfeited by tournament directors Howard Walker and Pat Gibson, but there were a bunch of "replays and rescheduling" as all players took the weather and adjusting times in stride.

Ten divisions produced champions and medalists in the top four positions after round robin play and playoff rounds in six divisions. There was plenty of food at the Mav; plenty of exciting play from the 40 year olds to the 70s; even some pickup singles was played to help stay warm and pass the time!

The Friday night Bar-Be-Que banquet was very well attended, quick, and there was plenty of food for all. Vicky Birkmann provided some levity with her funny giveaways associated with best dressed team, least games won, and those needing players needing pacifiers! Additionally, by the time you read this, three new directors will be elected to the Board. The candidates were Cindy Tilbury, Jim Elliott, Chris Poucher and John Winings. Thank you to those that voted and also to the new directors! Cindy, Chris and John were elected.

The next event was the National Championship in Tucson, Arizona on March 5-8, 2014. This was our third time in Tucson since 2010. The participants were down, which allowed us to release the Arizona University facility. The Tucson Racquet and Fitness Club handled the group with excellence.

The International Championship will be held at the UNC campus in Raleigh, North Carolina from July 16-19, 2014. We were there two summers ago and had a grand time. We expect the same this year and we expect to see you there! There are ample courts at UNC that it will be the only venue used by the NMRA.



The 2014 Doubles Only event is still being planned – likely Pleasanton, California. This event will be limited and is typically the first weekend in December, and only three days starting on Thursday. This venue has an adjoining hotel which makes it very, very convenient. More information can be found at the websites listed below.

Come try out one of our events – you will be hooked like many others have after their first event. The NMRA is dedicated to the mature racquetball player 45+. For more information, including our newsletter, The RacquetRacket, please visit our website at www.NMRA.info. For tournament registration and watching the scoring after matches, visit www.R2Sports.com. We also encourage our members and readers to visit the USA Racquetball website at www.usaracquetball.com. We are now on Facebook, too: search National Masters Racquetball Association for the group page - it's interactive!



The "Best Dressed" team of Carolyn Hollis & Cindy Tilbury.



MILITARY RACQUETBALL FEDERATION HOSTS CHALLENGE



Overall Team Winners/Hampton VAMC – Edwin Martinez, Bob Steele (Coach), Lorrie Briscoe, Robert Lawson, 'AJ' Albert Uzzle.

Photo courtesy Steven Harper, Bob Steele, and MRF Staff.

MRFF did it again, this time on the East Coast! The McCaughlin Fitness Center on Fort Lee Army Base and the Military Racquetball Federation (MRF) hosted its 2nd Racquetball Rehabilitation Clinic (RRC) Challenge, where nine disabled service members and wounded warriors from the Mid-Atlantic area competed in a one-day challenge.

Early in March, VA Medical Center teams from Washington DC, Hampton, Virginia, and Durham, North Carolina, came to compete with the hopes of being this year's overall team winner. These service members recently completed the eight-week RRC program where they learned the fundamentals of racquetball and now had the chance to bring their skills to compete against fellow graduates.

MRF was able to raise the awareness of what service members endure when they return home from the battlefield. This effort was possible thanks to the teamwork of Wayne Toyne of the Washington DC area and Bob Steele of Hampton Roads who were the coaches that ran the eight-week programs.

At the conclusion of competition, Ron Salon of the Durham VAMC was crowned the 2014 champion, over second place finisher Robert Lawson of the Hampton VAMC. The overall Team winner for this year's event went to the Hampton VAMC, for posting the overall highest cumulative point total.

This one-day RRC Challenge was a huge success because it brought veterans together to build camaraderie, helped them make new friendships, and gave them a new sense of confidence in themselves. One veteran even got emotional when she observed, "MRF is one of those organizations that has truly changed my life because of the dedication shown to the veterans. MRF is an organization that delivers on what it offers."

Thanks to sponsors and donors: CVRA, NCRA, RacquetWorld, E-Force, and Ektelon for their financial and product support to make these clinics possible. If you are interested in supporting the MRF and disabled service members, please find more details and contact info at www.militaryracquetball.com to learn how you might be able to assist in your local area.

WOMEN'S SENIOR/MASTERS RACQUETBALL



WSMRA: Looking to the Future

by Kendra Tutsch

With our 25th Anniversary Tournament in the books, the Women's Senior/Masters Racquetball Association is turning its attention to the next 25 years.

The Women's Senior/Masters National Racquetball Championships will return to its "Upper Midwest" roots in 2015, at the LifeTime Fitness Club in Fridley, Minnesota, next January. This great facility has 12 courts, an on-site restaurant, and many amenities – and is located just a bit north of Minneapolis. The Twin Cities has a light rail system so getting around to many locations will be easy (you can get a preview if you attend the US OPEN in October!). We'll be lining up some special events - including brand new doubles divisions - and will have full details on our website and Facebook page very soon.

In other news, the WSMRA is also pleased to announce that Wilson Racquetball will continue as our National sponsor. The WSMRA is proud to be associated with the Wilson brand and looks forward to continuing this exciting partnership with

Wilson. We are very grateful to Terri Graham and Chris Evon for their continuing support of the WSMRA!

We have several changes to the WSMRA Board to report. Nancy Kronenfeld and Debbie Tisinger-Moore have stepped down from the WSMRA Board of Directors, but will remain involved as advisory members of the board. Cindy Tilbury (former advisory member) and Paula Sperling have joined the WSMRA Board, and Tina Marchie has also joined the Board as an advisory member! Many, many thanks to Nancy and Debbie for their years of dedication to building the WSMRA and making our tournament the success that it's become. Welcome to Cindy, Paula and Tina!

Sady, our community lost a unique personality when Sharon Chandler passed away recently. She first played in the 1996 Women's Senior/Masters held in San Francisco, where she entered a very tough 45+ division of 26 players, but still finished second in her flight to make the playoffs. The next year she moved up to the 50+ division, finishing second. She then became a regular, playing nearly every year, taking silver medals three times and winning the 65+ gold in Texas in 2013. Sharon was a good sport, fun to play and always entertaining on and off the court. She'll be greatly missed, and Tina Marchie created a very nice video tribute that can be found on the Women's Senior/Masters Facebook page.



Beach Bash

Submitted by Vic Leibofsky • Photos by Belinda Dettman

The 2014 Beach Bash was bigger and better than ever. Players traveled from 18 states, Colombia, and Mexico to enjoy the gorgeous beach and boardwalk located just steps from the Historic Courts at Garfield Street on Hollywood Beach in Florida.

Daniel De La Rosa faced off against one-wall veteran Freddy Ramirez in the first-ever Beach Bash Men's Pro Singles final. This was probably the most entertaining match of the weekend, with De La Rosa holding off Ramirez in an incredibly exciting tiebreaker. This match had the entire crowd fired up, and was a great way to start the weekend!

Richie Miller and Nelson Dieda again met old friends Robert Sostre and Freddy Ramirez in the Men's Pro Doubles Finals. These four guys play one-wall doubles at a level nobody else is even close to, and they put on a great show for the crowd. It was a hard-fought battle, but in the end Richie and Nelson retained their title!

On the women's side, one-wall rookies Michelle Key and Rhonda Rajsich were able to hold off veterans Anita Maldonado and Maira Ramos to take the Women's Pro Doubles title. Although Maldonado and Ramos were crafty and understood shot selection and positioning better than their opponents, the sheer athletic ability and power of Rajsich and Key were just too much to overcome.

The Womens Pro Singles matched Claudia Andrade against Rhonda Rajsich, both one-wall rookies. Claudia was the only local to reach a pro final, and she played great to get to there. But in the end, Rhonda proved she was a force to be reckoned with on any sized court, with any number of walls.

The Beach Bash is more than a racquetball tournament. It's a great weekend!



Above L-R: Daniel DeLa Rosa leaning for a shot by Nelson Deida; Womens Pro Doubles Finalists - Maldonado, Rajsich, Key, Ramos; Mens Pro Doubles finalists - Robert "Ice Man" Sostre & Freddy Ramirez vs. Nelson Deida & Richie Miller.



WOR HALL OF FAME INDUCTS WALLACE, WETZEL & SOSTRE

It is a special honor to announce the 2014 inductees to the WOR Outdoor Hall of Fame, featuring three of the most incredible inductees in outdoor racquetball history: Barry Wallace, Bob Wetzel and Robert Sostre.

It's an extraordinary and eclectic mix of 1-wall and 3-wall champions hailing from California to New York. Barry Wallace and Bob Wetzel are two of the founding fathers of our sport who started the first state tournament in California and the first nationals before winning several of the early singles and doubles national titles. Robert Sostre of New York is the most famous 1-wall player to ever play the game amassing 28 major titles.

The honorees will be inducted "outdoor style" (in their shorts) on July 12, at the 40th Annual Wor Championships held at Marina Park, Huntington Beach, California, where play will be suspended to honor the inductees. The ceremony is free.

SAVE THE DATE: September 10-14
2014 3 WALLBALL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS
World Outdoor Racquetball, World Players of Handball, and National Paddleball Association are pleased to announce the 5th annual 3 Wallball World Championships, presented by Ektelon, in Las Vegas.

A site on world-famous Las Vegas Boulevard in front of the spectacular Stratosphere Hotel will be transformed with the construction of 10 three-wall courts to host one of the richest outdoor events in history. Returning for 2014 is the addition of 3 one-wall courts for men's, women's, and mixed doubles racquetball and handball divisions.

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GRAPHENE





GETTING READY FOR YOU

All preview material by Doug Ganim
Photos courtesy Restrung Magazine



Well, it's hard to believe it's been almost two decades, but the 19th UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championships is coming up fast, and UnitedHealthcare is back as our title sponsor in October. This means the event is going to be bigger and better than ever! This special preview is designed to give you an idea of what to expect this year, plus you'll find even more detailed event info at www.UnitedHealthcareUSOPEN.com.

Amateur matches will be played at three venues: Life Time Fitness Target Center, Life Time Fitness St. Louis Park, and Life Time Minneapolis Athletic Club. A fourth overflow club (Life Time Fitness-Fridley) may be used during the first two days. No consolation divisions will be offered due to the huge draw and lack of available court time. The top four finishers in each division will receive US OPEN medals that weigh about a pound apiece! Divisions are offered for every age and skill level in both singles and doubles. Back for 2014 is the addition of five Centurion Doubles divisions (you and your partner's ages must add up to at least 100)!

Pro Match Tickets make it easy to enjoy pro racquetball from the best courtside seat in the world ... at the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Championships. The stadium court area seats about 1,400 fans, and ticket sales are always brisk. Your best bet (and value) is to snap up a \$135 preferred ticket package that includes all sessions, as quickly as you can!

Parties, Parties, and More Parties! One of the things the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN is best known for is the evening social functions, and you can expect more of the same this year ... with evening activities that include:

Wednesday: Pro-Am Doubles for Charity

Thursday: Players Gathering at the dueling piano bar The Shout House

Friday: Racquetball Warehouse Dance Party at Huberts

Saturday: Party with the Pro's at the hot downtown club The Pourhouse

Other activities include:

- The Industry Trade Show in the Player's Hospitality Village featuring all the sport's top manufacturers
- An International Reception for all our "out of the country" guests
- An IRT Champions Clinic, the IRT/LPRT Play the Pro for St. Jude Challenge, and Ladies Night Out

New for 2014! Immediately after last year's event, the Life Time Fitness-Target Center began a full-scale, \$10 million renovation which will be just about complete in time for your arrival. Those who have attended the event since we moved to Minneapolis will be amazed at the transformation, including all new finishes, a new Life Time Café and Bar, all new upscale locker rooms, and dozens more upgrades.

No way to attend the event this year? To help make it easier to follow along from home, webmaster Steve Kowalski will transform www.UnitedHealthcareUSOPEN.com into a computer "window" to look in on tournament action. Look for live amateur division results posting, up-to-the-minute pro match results, digital photography, streaming video of select pro matches, sideline interviews with top pro's as well as play-by-play streaming of the quarters, semi's, and finals (\$ video-on-demand/pay-per-view package required—sign up at www.UnitedHealthcareUSOPEN.com).

THE PROs! As always, the focal point of the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN are the pro players and the incredible entertainment they provide as each player quests for the coveted US OPEN title. Check out the IRT, CPRT, and LPRT preview articles that follow for more info!

ATTEND THE UNITEDHEALTHCARE US OPEN AS A VIP!

A very limited number of four-person courtside luxury Gold Boxes still remain for the 2014 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN. The cost is \$2,800 and includes four Gold All-Access Credentials to the event. Single seats can be purchased for \$800 while supplies last. In addition to enjoying the pro matches from your private and comfortable courtside Gold Box, All-Access Gold Credential holders have unlimited access to the exclusive Pro/Gold Lounge throughout the event, featuring complimentary catered meals as well as fruit, snacks, desserts, and beverages during all open hours. Event sponsors, top-ranked men and women pro players, and Gold Box holders are the only VIP's permitted in the lounge.

If you are interested, please call (614) 890-6073 to check for current availability right away or visit www.UnitedHealthcareUSOPENTickets.com now to reserve your spot.

PRO AM DOUBLES FOR CHARITY

Want to treat yourself to an incredible racquetball experience while at the same time supporting world-renowned children's charities? On Wednesday evening, October 8, at the 2014 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN, 32 lucky amateurs will team up with the top stars on the IRT and LPRT for a special Pro-Am Doubles event. A \$325 donation gets you into the draw. The evening features free food and drink and an autographed racquet and photo with your pro partner. St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and JDRF will receive 100% of the proceeds.

Although this event has sold out each of the last 18 years, at the time of this writing there are still a handful of spots left. If you are interested in participating, call (800) 234-5396, ext. 0, to register, or visit www.UnitedHealthcareUSOPEN.com to download a registration form.

TIPS FOR ATTENDING THE 2014 UNITEDHEALTHCARE US OPEN

For the inside track on having a terrific time at the US OPEN, go to www.UnitedHealthcareUSOPEN.com to get the particulars on these helpful tournament tips...

- 1 ENTER EARLY
- 2 ORDER TICKETS NOW/BOOK A GOLD BOX
- 3 ENTER TWO OR THREE EVENTS
- 4 STAY AT THE HOST HOTELS AND RESERVE SOON
- 5 BRING NICE CLOTHES AND YOUR DANCING SHOES
- 6 LAST FLIGHT OUT ON SUNDAY
- 7 FLYING IN—NO RENTAL CAR NEEDED





Kane Waselenchuk

Always the highlight of the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN, the International Racquetball Tour draw will undoubtedly deliver another memorable year for fans throughout the world. More than ever, young stars and wily tour veterans will be gunning for the coveted US OPEN title. For those who like to predict the outcomes, allow me to offer some insights.

The chances of Kane Waselenchuk not winning the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN are slimmer than slim. Every time he steps foot on the portable court, his game rises to ridiculous levels. Not only does he win all his matches each year but often makes the other top players look downright amateur. Of course, an upset is always possible but highly unlikely with Kane.

Rocky Carson will have to get through both Alvaro and Kane to win the title, a tall order for sure. He usually plays well at the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN, however, he has taken some major league beatings from Kane throughout 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 and win it all.

Alvaro Beltran is always a tough out for anyone, including the top-ranked players. He has reached the Champions Circle twice in Tier 1 events, but this is really an amazingly low total for a player ranked so high for so many years. A major issue is that he will have a very tough quarterfinal match with, most likely, the young jackrabbit De La Rosa. It will take a lot of effort for Alvaro to get past this one, and I wonder how much he will have left in the tank for the weekend if he succeeds. His “ace in the hole” will be the hundreds of Central and South American fans that will be pulling for him every step of the way.

José Rojas has also improved significantly and has the big-time game to beat anyone, including Kane. In fact, he is the only person to beat Kane in a full match in the last three years. His “go for broke” game style is thrilling to watch. He is not afraid of anyone on tour and likes to bring the heat. There is no question that José is the best young player in the world and may be the heir to the IRT throne down the road. Is he ready for a career breakthrough at the 2014 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN?

Although Ben Croft has only won one IRT Tier 1 event in his career, he is extremely dangerous at the US OPEN. The reason is that his “Play the Villain” routine is really not an act. He truly hates to lose and it is obvious in the extra effort he puts forth compared to all the other players. Throw in a rowdy anti-Croft crowd and his motor shifts into 6th gear. Great racquetball and true live entertainment are guaranteed!

Without a doubt, Daniel De La Rosa is the fastest rising star on the IRT. He is the first young player to come along with the kind of racquet skills that would allow him to compete with Kane on a regular basis. His pure athleticism and willingness to “dive like Croft” after every ball makes him extremely dangerous, and I give him an extremely high chance to be in the semi’s and even the finals at this year’s US OPEN. We are watching Daniel develop into an elite force right in front of our eyes. An extremely well mannered young man, much like Rojas, the missing ingredient may be a half-cup of nastiness he may well need to beat the top guys.

Also known as “the crippler,” Chris Crowther has been a constant in the Top 8 IRT rankings and is now a legit force to win events. The hardest hitter on tour, his incredible power always gives him an edge. Nearly impossible to pass with his 6’5” stature, he proves that players of all heights can play at the elite level. Always intense on the court, look for Crowther to come out swinging no matter who he is playing.

Everyone talking about Rojas and De La Rosa as the best young pro players have really ticked Tony Carson off. He is now on tour full time and has been pulling upsets like crazy, including José! Never short on confidence, ask Tony his goal in racquetball and he will reply, “To be the #1 ranked player in the world!” Watch him play, and you will see he has the game to back it up.



Ben Croft hits the floorboards against Jose Rojas



Rocky Carson serves to Alvaro Beltran

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Marco Rojas – Another breath of fresh air on the IRT, young Marco is truly an amazing talent. He has a shot at reaching the quarters and would be a much tougher match for Kane in that round compared to recent years.

Jansen Allen – Particularly known for his right side doubles skill, 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 he plays in the Round of 16. Don't be surprised to see him pull an upset and reach the quarters.

Charlie Pratt – Back from the dead, I did not think we would ever again see Pratt at the elite level after dealing with back-to-back serious injuries. However, he has proved me wrong, including pulling upsets at recent events to shoot back up the rankings. If he is healthy, this guy can play!

José Diaz, Alex Ackermann, David Horn, and Alejandro Landa – All these young guns have been storming up the ranks and represent the new crop of top talent on tour. Every one of the them represents a Round of 16 challenge for the top-ranked guys, which is great to see. No longer do the elite players get to waltz into the quarters without having to break a sweat. In fact, I predict at least one of this group of kids will pull an upset at this year's US OPEN.

So, the men of the IRT are ready to let it fly at the 2014 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN. Get your seat early for the greatest show in sports and ENJOY!



Back for the eighth consecutive year, the Classic Pro Racquetball Tour (CPRT) will be in full force at the 2014 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN. Rather than just having four players square off for the title, we have again decided to engulf the entire Men's 40+ division into the fun. Therefore, the Men's 40+ (open to anyone 40 and over) will be a ranking event on the CPRT.

I predict that the 2014 US OPEN will feature the strongest Men's 40+ draw in the history of racquetball. It represents a bookmaker's nightmare, as there are literally ten guys who can win the tournament. Here is the line on just some of the living legends you can expect to see compete at the US OPEN:

Woody Clouse never made it to the top on the pro tour but is the most dangerous 40+ player in the world today. Woody is in incredible shape and has the most modern game-style of any CPRT player. He has won the US OPEN four times and missed last year due to a work commitment. It is unclear whether he will play this year at the time of this writing, but if he does, the smart money would always be to place a bet on Clouse!

The fittest player on the CPRT, Jimmy Lowe has the type of unorthodox game style and endless energy that gives his opponents fits. He has beaten all the top players on the CPRT and won the US OPEN in 2008, 2010, and 2013. Don't be surprised to see Jimmy in the finals again in 2014. Fitness matters!

The "greatest player of all time" Cliff Swain is now a full-time member of the CPRT, or at least he's eligible. He will certainly play in the IRT division at the US OPEN, but if he also jumps in the CPRT division, all bookmakers will have to adjust their lines. He has struggled to beat Woody Clouse and Jimmy Lowe at these events during the past, but nobody in the history of the sport rises to the occasion better than Swain.

Always a top age division player, Keith Minor has stepped up his game in recent years and is now capable of beating everyone in the draw. In fact, he made it to the

continued on page 25



4x champ Paola Longoria

The UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championships are upon us, and once again the women's pro singles competition will crown another champion. The odds-on favorite will be World No.1 Paola Longoria from Mexico who will bring her undefeated record from the last three seasons into Minneapolis and attempt to win her fifth US OPEN championship.

But standing in her way will be three former US OPEN women's singles champions - Rhonda Rajsich, Cheryl Gudinas, and Kerri Wachtel along with a strong showing of other young talent charging up the rankings.

Paola Longoria is the undisputed No.1 player in the world, as well as being the defending 2013 US OPEN champion, plus holds the 2012, 2011 and 2008 titles. She had another sensational performance during the LPRT 2013-14 tour, finishing the entire season undefeated again. She also captured the #1 year-end ranking for the fifth time, and as of this writing has not lost a match since May 2011, putting her another step closer to racquetball immortality and raising another US OPEN championship trophy.

Also in the spotlight will be four-time US OPEN champion Rhonda Rajsich (2003, 2007, 2009, 2010) who continues to amaze fans with spectacular dives and shots that are jaw dropping. Her loss to Longoria in the finals last year could be all the fuel she needs to win her fifth US OPEN Championship and reclaim her throne. The road to number one usually goes through these Grand Slam events and this athlete knows exactly what it takes to make that happen.

The women's pro tour has never seen such a meteoric rise as we are witnessing with Maria José Vargas. In just 18 months, she went from #200 in the world to #3 and has been able to give the two top-ranked players all they can handle. Many believe she is the heir to the LPRT throne and represents the biggest threat to Paola's dominance. Will this be the year she steps in to the bright Sunday finals spotlight – and out with her first US OPEN crown?



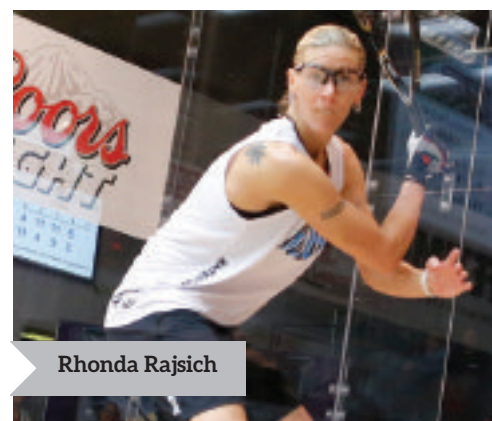
Samantha Salas Solis slid from No. 3 in the world to No. 12 after a shoulder injury sidelined her for most of the 2011-2012 season. However the last two seasons have seen her storming back up the rankings and taking the very top ranked players down to the wire on multiple occasions.

From Cali, Colombia, Cristina Amaya is one of the hottest young rising stars on the LPRT. Cristina has been able to beat all the top players except for Longoria, and even against Paola she has won games. She is starting to get the swagger of a veteran and the question is, will she shock the world and win her first US OPEN?

This Canadian talent has shot up the rankings in the last 12 months, and when Frédérique Lambert is playing well she can give anyone on tour all they can handle. To win the US OPEN will require her to play her best racquetball in at least three consecutive rounds, but if she doesn't perform, she can be taken out by unranked players.

Cheryl Gudinas has two US OPEN championships (2002, 2004) to her credit and continues to be a fan favorite at the US OPEN. She doesn't seem to be showing any signs of slowing down despite being one of the tour veterans, and she continues to bring an intensity unmatched by her opponents. Her biggest competition, besides Longoria and Rajsich, may be injuries – so a big win would boost her confidence and add to her impressive resume as one of the game's greatest female players.

When Kerri Wachtel won her only US OPEN twelve years ago (2001), she was a shining star in women's pro racquetball and had her best year on the LPRT 2007-2008 season, finishing No.3 on tour. She continues to play well each year at the US OPEN with her tenacity and incredible court coverage, but she needs to try and use all that energy as best she can to heighten her focus.



Rhonda Rajsich



Maria Paz Muñoz vs. Samantha Salas Solis

DARK HORSES TO WATCH:

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 she makes the quarters.

Da'monique Davis – Always dangerous in any round. Probably not capable of winning it all, but certainly ready to pull an upset or two.

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 others in the Dark Horse category, so don't be surprised to see her in the quarters.

Veronica Sotomayor – She has been working out with the pro's from the 209 and her game is ready to explode to the

next level. Her current ranking is actually a bit low for her talent level, so none of the top players will be thrilled to see her as an opponent in the 16's or quarters.

Adrienne Fisher-Haynes – A tour veteran with a big serve and powerful game, her go for broke game-style can be problematic for the other players if she is having an "on" day.

In summary, the LPRT has more depth and excitement 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 women are incredible athletes playing racquetball at an extremely high level. Make sure you catch as many LPRT matches as you can at this year's UnitedHealthcare US OPEN!

continued from page 23

finals of the 2012 US OPEN and has been a fixture in the National Singles and National Doubles Age Division finals. Hampered by a couple injuries in recent years, he is now fully healthy and moving better than ever on the court.

Cory Osbourne is a Canadian hotshot who came out of nowhere in 2011 to make the finals and then repeated the feat in 2013. He has a great game and is not afraid of anyone. He not only pulled multiple upsets in 2011 and again in 2013, but he beat those players soundly.

Ruben Gonzalez is a former #1 ranked player in the world, and a living legend at 62 years old. Although he gives quite a few years to many of his opponents in this draw, he always has as good a chance as most to win the title. Nobody has ever re-killed the ball better than Ruben and his never-say-die attitude often wears opponents out. He won the event in 2007 and was in the finals in 2009.

If Tim Doyle decides to play, he could possibly be the best player in the draw. Still in great shape and capable of serving everyone right off the court, his forehand is a weapon nobody will want to mess with. He won the 40+ National Doubles title this year carrying an overweight and out-of-shape Doug Ganim on his back the whole way.

Other hopeful attendees: At the time of this writing, other CPRT regulars who may enter include former top-ranked pro's Mike Ray, Bret Harnett, and Jerry Price. There is even rumor of Marty Hogan coming out of hibernation to compete this year. If one or more of these guys show up, the pool of possible winners expands.

The perennials: Perhaps the most active and sharpest players of all are the amateurs who compete in the Men's 40+ Division at all the national tournaments each year. Guys like John Amatulli, Richard Eisemann, Tom Travers, Brad McCunniff, Tim Hansen, and others are all capable of beating anyone in the draw and winning the title. For old-school fans, this division will offer yet another spectacle to enjoy at the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN!



Corey Osborne winds up against Jimmy Lowe in the CPRT final.



CONTINUING THE *Making of a Champion*

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

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

In the last issue, Spring 2014, I discussed "The Serve" in detail, which is a key element in creating your championship game because the serve sets the tone to the rally and ultimately to the match.

While at the LPRT pro stop in San Antonio in April 2014, I was coaching Paola Longoria in the finals against Rhonda Rajsich, and her serve wasn't all that effective in the first two games. Rhonda went up to a 2-0 game lead, returning serve and shooting well. Between the second and third games, the frustration was mounting for Paola, and she was getting down on herself. Paola was telling me how good Rhonda was playing and how poorly she was playing. I only had two minutes to talk with her, and I told her she needed to change her negative attitude to a positive one or she was going to lose the match. I told her to focus on what you need to do, not on what you are not doing and to be positive. We made the physical adjustments necessary on her serve and her court position on return of serve. Also, I told her to pull upon what she and Magaly, her sports psychologist, discuss. It was amazing to see the transformation Paola made to being positive rather than negative.

The human mind is duality-based, which means things show up as good or bad, positive or negative, happy or sad. We as human beings are 100% in control of the thoughts and emotions that we choose to focus on. So whatever we pay attention to and focus on grows. If you are filled with negativity...doubt and fear is what will grow in your mind. If you focus on being positive...happy and fearless is what you will create. All of this is up to you. Everyday thoughts are random, but the ones we keep thinking about become our truth.

That is exactly what Paola had to do if she wanted to win. In the first two games she was filled with negativity, and she lost

the first two games. After losing the second game, I had her re-focus on being positive, and she won the next three games and the match.

Consistent pre-serve and return-of-serve routines or rituals help you get into your game and maintain a positive attitude. Your mind and body thrive on consistency and routine.

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

1 Racquetball Skills

Hands down, consistency begins with drilling your strokes, shots, serves, return of serves, and any other technical part of the game. These skills should happen automatically because your muscles have memorized that motion from the practice and drill sessions you have done thousands of times. The ancient Romans had a saying: "Repetition is the mother of retention."

The only things you want to think about when you are playing a game are where you are on the court, where your opponent is on the court, and what the best shot is in that situation. As a result of your practice and drill sessions, this can occur more successfully, therefore maintaining your positive attitude.

2 Mental Skills

Consistent pre-serve and return-of-serve routines help you get into your game and maintain a positive attitude. Your mind and body thrive on consistency and routine.

Jason, Paola and Rocky each have their own serve routine, and they are the same all the time; they never deviate. The entire time they are thinking about nothing other than what their last few serves were, what won the rally, and if there is something their opponent is uncomfortable with at this time.

Jason, Paola, and Rocky each have their own return-of-serve routine, and they are the same all the time; they never deviate. Their objectives are to be offensive off of the serve whenever possible.

Jason, Paola, and Rocky all have very precise pre-serve and return-of-serve routines to help keep them grounded and positive ... and these are evident in their games.

3 Fitness Skills

When you design your conditioning and stretching program, make sure it includes all the sections: speed, agility, power and strength, balance, and stretching. We also recommend a program two times each week to start based upon your fitness level, allowing a two-day rest between workouts. This becomes part of your routine.

4 Nutrition Skills

You want to make sure your eating habits are second to none and that you drink lots of water. Your body and mind need this in order to allow your body to hit serve after serve with power and allow your mind to think more clearly about the ball toss to create more deception.

Jason, Paola, and Rocky all know how to enjoy themselves, but it's about making better choices and staying on their routine.

For more details on all of the concepts above, please refer to my book, "Championship Racquetball."

Hope to see you at one of my camps for live personal instruction. Or buy my video, "Building Your Racquetball Dream House," my book, "Championship Racquetball," or my App if you can't attend a camp at this time. For details go to www.FranDavisRacquetball.com.

Fran Davis coaches Paola Longoria (#1 LPRT), Rocky Carson (#2 IRT), Taylor Knoth (#1 Jr. National and World Champion), and Sharon Jackson (#1 National Intercollegiate Champion). USAR Hall of Fame 2004, Woman of the Year 2009, former U.S. Team National Coach, Master Professional Instructor (USAR-IP)

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Video

- Learn to vary serve-deception
- Learn the perfect strokes
- Improve shot selection/court position
- Game plans/Strategies a must
- Be aggressive on the return of serve
- Perfect practice makes perfect

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- Physical and Mental aspects of the game
- Lectures/Playing/Critiquing
- Video Tape Analysis / Play the Pro
- Camp Manual/ T-Shirt / Penn Racquetballs

Books

- Core Principles discussed
- Advance your skills, tactics and toughness for a winning game
- Targets Intermediate players and above

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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
5X #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 2014

July 18-20	Millersville, MD
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September TBD	San Antonio, TX
October 17-19	Nashua, NH
November 7-9	Chicago, IL

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DO YOU KNOW EXACTLY

When the Serve Begins?

■ by Otto Dietrich, USA Racquetball National Rules Commissioner

photo by Geoff Thomsen



"... receivers can stand in any formation or on either side that they want - as long as they are behind the receiving line!"

One of the more important things to know to be able to play and referee "by the rules" is exactly when the service motion begins. That special "moment in time" is addressed in several rules. For example, it must be applied when deciding where the server must be standing (per Rule 3.9(a), feet fully in the service zone); whether the drive service zone rule applies per Rule 3.9; where the non-serving partner in doubles must be per Rule 4.3 (in the service box with both feet on the floor and back to the wall); where the receiver(s) must be (fully behind the receiving line) per Rule 3.11(a); and when the receivers can no longer call a time out per Rule 3.16(a).

The "beginning of the service motion" is clearly defined in Rule 3.3 as "... any continuous movement that results in the ball being served." This very key concept must be kept in mind and properly applied for every serve that is made. I'd bet that the top pro at your club can't correctly describe when/how the service motion begins and how it applies in the various rules above. That is, unless he reads this article before you do!

Following are a few questions that came across my desk recently:

Dave asked: Let's say your opponent is about to hit the ball and is on the left side of the court. You are in front of him, but way to the far right side of the court. You have given him both the straight-in shot and the angle shot to direct the ball to the opposite rear corner. You are not even close to being in the path of his upcoming shot. But he takes a cut at the ball and the ball hits you! So, is that a replay hinder or not? Does it matter if it was a mis-hit? Even if it was tough

for him to get a racquet on the ball or that he just made a desperate shot and that's just where it went, etc.? Do the circumstances matter if you have given him tons of room?

Otto answered: First, if the player who was hit by the ball was totally out of the way of the swing and not in either of the two paths to the front wall described in Rule 3.15(a), then that definitely would not be a penalty hinder. But no matter how or where the hitter hits the ball, if the ball, on the fly, hits that other player, it might be a replay hinder or else it's a loss of the rally for the hitter. Please read Rule 3.14(a)2 which, in effect, says if there is any doubt at all whether the ball might have reached the front wall on the fly had it not hit that player, then it is a replay hinder. Only if there is no doubt that the ball would not have reached the front wall on the fly, does the hitter lose that rally. Of course, this is a judgment call. So, I always ask the players/referee to visualize this: "If that ball had magically 'passed through' the person who was hit, would the ball have reached the front wall on the fly or not?" If there is any doubt, then the rally should be replayed.

Karl asked: My partner and I were playing a mixed doubles match. During the course of play, the receiving team switched sides in the back court. When I went to serve, they stopped me and said that because they had switched sides of the court, the serving team had to also switch sides. I checked the rules after the game and nowhere in the doubles section did I find anything that stated this was true. Please let me know what is correct.



DO YOU HAVE

A RULES/REFEREEING QUESTION?

Be sure to email it to me at rules@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!

Otto answered: Whoever told them that is absolutely wrong. There is no such provision in the rule requiring such a switch. As far as the servers in doubles are concerned, the person who is serving can stand just about anywhere he wants (he must, of course, respect the drive serve rule) and serve to whomever he wants. His partner must be in one of the two service boxes on either end of the service zone - it makes no difference which one. Also, the second serve does not have to be made to the same person as the first. The receivers can stand in any formation or on either side that they want (as long as they are behind the receiving line) including in an "I" formation if they choose. They, too, can switch their court positions any time that they want to or even be "in-motion" for the serve. Again, it makes no difference which one returns the serve.

Joe asked: In a self-officiated game, if a long serve occurs, does the receiver have to call the serve as long before swinging at the ball? Alternatively, can the receiving player ignore a long serve and hit the ball after it has rebounded from the back wall and hit the floor, i.e., ignore the long serve fault and possibly score a point? Also in the case of a long serve, if the receiver swings at but does not make contact with the ball either before or after calling the serve long, is the long serve call, and therefore the fault, still valid?

Otto answered: Whether self-officiated or not, any serve that actually hits the back wall before it hits the floor is immediately long and therefore no longer playable. There is no option to play it once it becomes long. The receiver can swing at it before and until it becomes long without any penalty unless he touches the ball, in which case becomes a good serve and he either returns it to the front wall or loses the rally for failing to do that. In this case, the serve never became long, thus there is no fault.

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

<http://www.teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/How-To-Play/Rules>.



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INDUSTRY NEWS IS HIGH TECH

WHAT'S NEW IN [RB]TECH

Get ready to Power Up

Following HEAD tennis and squash performance to a new level, this season's racquetball racquets are now getting the benefit of Graphene Technology.

It's being called the wonder material of the future, with endless possibilities for industrial applications. Graphene consists of a single two-dimensional layer of carbon atoms, arranged in a hexagonal honeycomb structure which is ultra-light and ultra-thin. This incredible material also has a breaking strength 200 times greater than steel. Two scientists, Andre Geim and Konstantin Novoselov, were awarded the 2010 Nobel Prize for

Physics for successfully isolating graphene in laboratory conditions in 2004.



GRAPHENE

The European Union is set to invest 1 billion Euros over the next ten years into further development work on the material, and researchers from all over the world are working hard to make the high expectations

placed on the material become reality. Potential future applications include foldable mobile phones or touch screens, TV units which can be rolled out on the wall, lighter aircrafts, innovative batteries, or possibly the replacement of silicone in the semi-conductor industry. While the world has its eyes on Google Glass, researchers are already experimenting on graphene-metal nanowires and other materials to build a computer contact lens that will enhance the human eye.

HEAD has registered a patent for the use of graphene in tennis, squash, and racquetball racquets, and its new racquets achieve outstanding performance thanks to an innovative technology that offers tangible advantages to players of all levels. Graphene is stronger than the materials that have been used so far, which means that less material is needed to achieve the same level of stability. Adding graphene into HEAD racquets allows for more power with less effort.

The future belongs to this extraordinary material – and the company's development engineers are busily working on integrating the HEAD graphene technology into even more racquet models – since both professional and amateur players are keen to experience the benefits of this material.



HEAD

Radical 160, 170, 180

USA Racquetball and HEAD Penn Racquet Sports have announced that Penn will continue as the Official Ball of the National Governing Body – an association that has been in place for more than 33 years. In addition, Penn is also a Presenting Partner of five USA Racquetball National Championships, including the National Singles, Doubles, Intercollegiate, Junior Olympics and High School Championships.

“We are thrilled to continue our partnership with USA Racquetball” stated Ben Simons, Senior Business Manager for HEAD Penn Racquet Sports. “This is the longest running sponsorship in the sport of racquetball and is a relationship we are honored to be a part of. We continue to support USAR’s efforts to grow the sport at every level,” Simons explained.

“Over many years, Penn and USA Racquetball have become synonymous with championship racquetball,” remarked Steve Czarnecki, USA Racquetball Executive Director. “We couldn’t be more pleased to continue our long-term relationship with a great partner like HEAD Penn.”

Find quality Penn balls that fit your game at Racquetball Warehouse, the Official Online Retailer of USA Racquetball.

USA Racquetball and Ektelon have announced a multi-year partnership through which Ektelon will become the Official Racquet of the sport's National Governing Body through 2015 and serve as a Presenting Partner of the National Doubles, National Intercollegiate, and National Singles Championships.

"Our partnership with USA Racquetball comes at an ideal time for us," remarked Scott Winters, Vice President of Ektelon. "We are introducing a completely revamped racquet line from top to bottom this summer with new revolutionary technology and we couldn't think of a better partner to kick off the launch with than USA Racquetball."



Find a quality Ektelon racquet that fits your game at Racquetball Warehouse, the Official Online Retailer of USA Racquetball.



Exo-Reignite, Toron 150, Toron PRO 180

Official Racquet of USAR, Ektelon, announces the launch of a new racquet line featuring TeXtreme technology. Many sports have seen the use of TeXtreme make an immediate and dominant impact on performance, from Formula 1 Racing, Americas Cup, advanced aerospace, bicycles, extreme sports, and in addition, over 400 NHL players currently use this carbon fiber weave technology in their hockey sticks. TeXtreme is an ultra light and strong carbon fiber technology that is 20% lighter than conventional carbon fiber reinforcements and reduces weight without sacrificing strength or stiffness.

"The elements of power and control are the two single most important factors in game performance. For us to be able to embed TeXtreme's unique carbon fiber technology in four critical impact areas on five new frames is exciting. We believe it will take the game and its players to a new level." said Scott Winters, Vice President of Ektelon. "Through TeXtreme's carbon fiber material, which is 20% lighter, the racquets will provide improved strength and torsional stability which will result in maximum power, frame strength and shot accuracy."

Winters continued by saying, "Ektelon plans to launch an entire new product line, including additional racquets with advanced Carbon Kevlar material, racquetball gloves, eye-guards, sport bags and footwear. We can't wait to kick off the new season with all of these great new products hitting our warehouse in July, and it's great to have a new revolutionary technology featuring TeXtreme to lead the way."

How it works: Compared to a traditional unidirectional carbon, TeXtreme carbon tape is able to be produced much thinner. Both may be made from 15k filament, but TeXtreme technology spreads it over a wider area, resulting in a lighter weight for the same given surface area. These tapes are then taken and woven into what is known as TeXtreme fabrics.

Compared to a plain weave, everywhere you see the white space on a traditional weave carbon is resin. When the carbon fiber goes up and comes back down that's called a crimp. When it changes direction, it causes a gap to the fiber going 90 degrees the opposite direction. In order for it to be flat, that piece has to be filled with resin – it's why when you look at a traditional sheet of single layer carbon you can see light through it. When you hold TeXtreme's up to the light, there is barely any light that shines through. That's because for the same area, the same size, you have a lot less resin that is needed with TeXtreme's spread tow carbon compared to standard carbon that results in a much lighter weight. You'll have more carbon fiber per area than with a traditional weave, and keeping those fibers as straight as possible improves the strength. Because the design has shallower and fewer crimps, TeXtreme is able to build in the same directional strength with less carbon.

New TeXtreme racquet models will be available in mid-August from a retail location where Ektelon products are sold, and will include the EXO3 Toron 150 ESP (\$229), Toron Pro 170 ESP (\$229), EXO3 Toron 160 (\$219), Toron Pro 180 ESP (\$219), EXO3 Re-Ignite 180 (\$199).

Ashaway Introduces PowerKill® 17 Racquetball String with Power Filament Technology™

Ashaway Racket Strings has introduced a new string for top-level racquetball players looking for superior power and tension stability from Zyex® filaments. New PowerKill® 17, a lighter 1.25 mm version of its PowerKill Pro cousin, provides superior feel and ball control. Both feature a multifilament nylon core for optimum shear strength and durability, and a proprietary Power Filament Technology™ (PFT™) surface element of Zyex filaments that provides maximum power and tension stability. PFT string design is recommended for all types of power players and string breakers.

“Power Filament Technology represents a significant advance in string technology for racquetball that will allow chronic string breakers and all-court power players to push their game to the limit,” said Steve Crandall, Vice President of Ashaway. “PFT incorporates an entirely new surface element of Zyex filaments in the jacket of the string that increases durability and tension holding, and optimizes power.”

Zyex is a trade name for a high temperature, engineering grade polymer known as polyetheretherketone, or PEEK. PEEK materials like Zyex have several physical properties that recommend them for racquet strings, Crandall explained. Among other qualities, PEEK monofilaments and fibers are very tough and durable, and have excellent abrasion resistance. In tests measuring “thread on thread” abrasion – one of the key factors in string

fatigue – PEEK multifilaments lasted more than five times as long as “bullet proof” aramid fibers.

“Another benefit of the PFT jacket in PowerKill Pro is in generating power,” Crandall continued. “Zyex filaments are known for their excellent dynamic stiffness, their tremendous ability to stretch and snap back when hitting the ball. Woven over a multifilament nylon core, this improves the power of every shot while decreasing string bed stiffness and impact shock, a property we call ‘soft power’.”

Bright red in color, PowerKill 17 is available in 40 ft. sets and 360 ft. reels. Recommended stringing tension is up to 35 lbs., but Ashaway suggests using 10-15% less tension than normally used for traditional racquetball strings.



Wilson

Wilson recently introduced the WHIP 170 racquetball racquet, engineered with the company's exclusive new Power Hinge Technology. This design breakthrough dramatically expands the sweet spot of the WHIP 170 to maximize string bed movement for explosive power.

Top professional players Jansen Allen and Samantha Salas have extensively play-tested the new WHIP 170. “Power Hinge is the coolest technology to ever hit racquetball”, Allen said. “The power you get from the WHIP 170 is incredible.”

The WHIP 170 also features Karophite Black construction with Basalt fibers woven longitudinally throughout the frame. This proprietary Wilson process stabilizes the WHIP 170 to deliver an ultra-clean feedback and superior control.

According to Terri Graham, Wilson's Business Director for Racquetball, the WHIP 170 buzz has already started. “Players are calling every day to get their hands on the new WHIP 170. Good news travels fast in the racquetball community. We definitely believe that the WHIP 170 establishes the new standard of lightweight power and performance in our game.”



PAN AMERICAN RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

April 12-19, 2014 • Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Article & Photos by Cheryl Kirk



US Team: José Rojas, Janel Tisinger, Rhonda Rajsich, Bobby Horn

A US Team of four athletes and support staff journeyed to Bolivia to compete against those from 15 other countries in this annual event offered by the Pan American Racquetball Confederation (PARC). Countries competing were Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico, United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

The full US Delegation [pictured on pg. 37] consisted of David “Bobby” Horn (Stockton, CA), Rhonda Rajsich (Fountain Hills, AZ), José Rojas (Stockton, CA), and Janel Tisinger (Simi Valley, CA). José and

Bobby played singles and also doubles as a team, with the same for Rhonda and Janel. Accompanying the athletes were Head Coach Dave Ellis (Stockton, CA), Athletic Trainer Brent Huff (St. Charles, IL), and Team Leader Cheryl Kirk (Naperville, IL).

The team practiced on the new courts at the Complejo de Raquetbol de la Villa Olímpica Abraham Telchi on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The club was so new they were finishing the plumbing in the restrooms and putting the back walls onto the two stadium courts. It’s a different culture in South America relative to these types of things, but the job always seems to get done.

At the Opening Ceremonies, countries were announced and players marched into the court area, proudly wearing their official team attire. Young people from the area in traditional costume carried the national flags for the teams as well as signs announcing the names of the countries. The traditional program of speakers, plus the athletes’ and referees’ oaths and a local music performance, capped off the festivities.

Round robin competition commenced Saturday and went through Monday. The results would determine the seeding in the main draws. Team Trainer Brent Huff was on the job each morning and throughout each day getting the US Team players ready for their matches.

Players enjoyed the typical Bolivian lunches that were served from 11 am-3 pm each day following a short bus ride between the club and the “comedor.”

Monday’s matches concluded the round robin (seeding) portion of the event. With the results of the first three days of competition complete, the US Team entered the main draws seeded thusly:



José Rojas and fans



Rhonda was seeded #2 in Women's Singles and Janel was #14
José was seeded #5 in Men's Singles and Bobby was #9
Both doubles teams were seeded #2 in their respective divisions.

ANECDOTALLY SPEAKING

When Franco Capandegui of Argentina arrived at Court 2 to referee the Women's Doubles match on Monday between the US and the Dominican Republic, he noticed that all four players were wearing red shirts. Franco asked Janel if the US players could change to shirts of a different color so that he could tell the difference between the teams more easily. Janel replied that she and Rhonda couldn't change because they didn't have any more shirts with them. Franco then turned to Maria Cespedes on the Dominican team and asked the same question.

Those of us outside the court saw talking but couldn't hear what was being said. But whatever it was Maria said to the referee, everyone on the court broke down in laughter. We later found out that when Franco asked Maria about the shirts, her reply was, "Well, we're black and they're white, so..." Besides being a funny story for my blog, a big bravo goes to Franco that the difference in skin color didn't even occur to him!

Tuesday was a free day and tournament players took some needed down time to physically and mentally prepare for the main draws.

WEDNESDAY – BACK ON THE COURTS

Team USA logged great results overall on the first day of main draw competition. In Janel's second singles match, she fought hard but left the singles draw in the Round of 16, losing to veteran player Susana Acosta of Mexico. The rest of the US Team members captured wins in their singles and doubles matches.

The big story of the day was a startling occurrence involving Bobby Horn during his second singles match on Wednesday. After winning the first game, it was tied at 8-8 in the second when he ran back to retrieve a shot. As he took a backhand, he

slammed into the glass door and it shattered into a million (or so) pieces. Bobby didn't go down, rather staggered forward and laid face down on the right side of the court across the service box. There was some blood from multiple cuts. Trainer Brent Huff took control, assessed the situation, got Bobby to the locker room to shower off any glass, and taped him up. Bobby returned to a (different) court and won the game 15-9!

Coach Dave Ellis had just one succinct comment about Wednesday: "I'm thoroughly happy with today's efforts on the court, and I'm especially happy that Bobby is okay."

JOHN SCOTT IN THE HOUSE

John Scott of eNetLive.tv arrived red-eyed on the red-eye American flight Wednesday morning, and after recovering a bit, he was on-site setting up streaming for the semifinals and finals matches on Friday and Saturday. According to a recent IRF press release:

"Racquetball fans may now go to www.irfnetwork.com and register with an email address and a password. There will be no cost associated with the viewing of live and videotaped IRF competitive events."

Quite a few of the semifinal matches were streamed on Friday, and among those were both of the USA matches. Many who were watching were from the US (as well as Mexico and Bolivia). Interestingly, of the 769 views in the first two matches, there were 93 watching from Europe. Gary Mazaroff sat with John Scott and provided streaming commentary throughout much of the day.

U.S. CITIZENS/RESIDENTS PLAYING FOR OTHER COUNTRIES

Gustavo Farell of Texas, played for Uruguay
Shai Manzuri of Texas, played for Argentina

Played for Puerto Rico:

Mary Diaz, Florida
Jayson Jordan, Texas



Rhonda Rajsich
and Janel Tisinger

Leticia Maldonado, Illinois
Fernando Javier Rivera, Illinois
Miguel Santiago, Texas

THURSDAY – UPS AND DOWNS

Coach Dave Ellis reported, “It was a tough day today as we dropped three matches. A bright spot is José Rojas who is in the semi’s in singles and along with partner Bobby is also in the semi’s in doubles.”

FRIDAY – DOWN TO THE WIRE

José’s Friday match vs. Polo Gutierrez of Mexico got off to a rocky start with a 15-6 loss. Things were a little dicey in the second game when, at 10-13, José dug deep and came out victorious to force a tiebreaker. While Polo played a great match, it was all José in the tiebreaker, 11-5.

Men’s Doubles: José and Bobby warmed up on the stadium court, then Daniel Maggi and Shai Manzuri of Argentina took their turn. It was an SRO crowd, and they were pumped for action! After a spirited first game where the U.S. prevailed 15-7, the Argentines came out ready to change the tide and fairly quickly built a 9-0 lead. A lot of folks were already anticipating a tiebreaker, but José and Bobby had other plans. Several points, and a couple more, and it was 5-12, then some spectacular shots brought it to 11-13...to 13-13...13-14...14-14...and the USA prevailed, 15-14.

It was really so great to hear the crowd cheering for our players and, when it was over, to have people ask them for photos and autographs. The guys were gracious in victory and warmly open to the attention they received.

Note: A fun point to mention about the women’s doubles match between Ecuador and

Argentina is that one player on each side was named Maria. Their partners were Veronica and Veronique, respectively. How often do you see that??

To recap the day on Friday, Coach Dave Ellis commented, “To say that both of our wins today were exciting would surely be an understatement. José was down 1-0, managed to find z-serves to both sides that put Polo on the defensive. After winning the second, he played a very solid tiebreaker. Both matches were hard-fought exciting wins. In spite of some confusion in the doubles, our guys stayed steady, played with heart and character, and ended up winning in two games.”

FINALLY, THE FINALS!

Saturday it came down to the last four matches before the awards presentations late in the afternoon. Here were the match-ups and results:

Women’s Singles – Maria José Vargas (ARG) def. Susana Acosta (MEX)

Men’s Singles – José Rojas (USA) def. Andree Parrilla (MEX)

Women’s Doubles – Susana Acosta/Samantha Salas (MEX) def. Maria José Vargas/Veronique Guillemette (ARG)

Men’s Doubles – Daniel De La Rosa/Edson Martinez Morales (MEX) def. José Rojas/Bobby Horn (USA)

José Rojas bested promising junior player Andree Parilla, 17, in the final with scores of 15-4, 15-11. Said Coach Ellis, “It’s obvious that José defeated a great talent of the future.”

The doubles match was close in the first two games, 15-14, 12-15. In the tiebreaker, though, the Mexicans found a chink in the U.S. armor with a lob serve that forced tough returns from 39 feet. José’s left leg muscle strain didn’t help matters. Bobby and José switched sides and tried some other strategies, but it was not to be: a silver medal for the US Men’s Doubles team – not a bad week’s work!

At the awards ceremony after the final match of the event, we knew that the U.S. had earned gold (José) and silver (Bobby and José). We presumed the U.S. would place #2 in the Men’s Team standings (and did). But, what came as a very pleasant surprise was that the U.S. placed #2 in the overall team standings! Every player and match counted toward the final point total that brought the U.S. in behind Mexico but in front of Argentina and Bolivia.

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

Overall Team:

Mexico, U.S., Argentina, Bolivia

Men’s Team:

Mexico, U.S., Bolivia, Canada

Women’s Team:

Mexico, Argentina, Canada, Ecuador

Juniors:

Mexico, Bolivia, Ecuador, Costa Rica

Men’s Singles: José Rojas, U.S.; Andree Parrilla, Mexico; Polo Gutierrez, Mexico; Vincent Gagnon, Canada

Women’s Singles: Maria José Vargas, Argentina; Susana Acosta, Mexico; Samantha Salas, Mexico; Cristina Amaya, Colombia



Pre match
introductions
and souvenir
photo op!



US Delegation: Huff, Rajsich, Tisinger, Rojas, Horn, Ellis, Kirk.

Women's Doubles: Susana Acosta/Samantha Salas, Mexico; Maria José Vargas/Veronique Guillemette, Argentina; Josée Grand'Maître /Frédérique Lambert, Canada; Veronica Sotomayor/Maria Paz Muñoz, Ecuador

Men's Doubles: Daniel De La Rosa/Edson Martinez Morales, Mexico; José Rojas, David Horn, U.S., Daniel Maggi/Shai Manzuri, Argentina, Ricardo Monroy/Roland Keller, Bolivia

Full results can be viewed at www.internationalracquetball.com by clicking on the results box in the upper right hand corner of the home page.

THANK YOU!

The US Team member send their heartfelt gratitude for all the support via Facebook, Twitter, email, text messages, and telepathy, and they would like to deliver these very sincere thank-yous:

Jonathan Clay of Rollout Racquetball for being Official Apparel Sponsor for USA Racquetball

Mike Lippitt for sponsoring the team dinner

ALL INDIVIDUALS WHO MADE CONTRIBUTIONS LARGE AND SMALL... EVERY BIT HELPS!

The local organizing committee (Roberto Aracena and Guillermo Saucedo)

The tournament staff (Osvaldo Maggi, Francisco and Amanda Kurzbard, Gary Mazaroff, et al.)

The referees from countries including Argentina, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Colombia

John Scott for bringing the semifinals and finals to thousands on the new IRF Network

The many volunteers and club employees who worked tirelessly in support of this event and its players, coaches and delegates from the 16 countries in attendance

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

Q: WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO BE A PART OF THE U.S. TEAM?

"It's so much different from other tournaments, and I've always wanted to make the team since I was a junior player. It is a real honor to play for the USA."

- Bobby Horn

"It's such an honor to wear USA on our backs as we put our hearts and talents out here at these Championships. Thank you, all of you, for your support, your contributions, and your belief in us as we represent and do our best!"

- Rhonda Rajsich

"This has been an awesome experience, a real honor. I'm eager to show the world what I'm made of while representing my country and my team."

- José Rojas,
early in the event

"I feel very blessed and honored to be here representing the team. I hope I can play my best and represent my country in an honorable way."

- Janel Tisinger

"It's a privilege and an honor to make the trip with the US Team again, an opportunity to work with the best racquetball athletes in the world and help out in a sport that's my passion and my hobby as well."

- Brent Huff

"Being US Team Leader is an honor. I couldn't be prouder of Rhonda, Janel, José, and Bobby for their skill and their heart on and off the court."

- Cheryl Kirk

"I consider it a privilege to be representing USA Racquetball as National Team Coach and working with our country's athletes. This team is especially unified, as was our world championship delegation. They are enjoying a camaraderie that does not usually exist in an individual sport."

- Dave Ellis



CALENDAR of EVENTS

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

July 10-13	WOR Championships presented by Ektelon	Huntington Beach	CA	Marina Park
July 11-13	Christmas in July	Ft. Huachuca	AZ	Ft. Huachuca
July 12-13	July Triple Crown Shootout	Arlington	TX	Maverick Athletic Club
July 12-13	Georgia Games Racquetball Championships	Lilburn	GA	Recreation ATL
July 16-19	National Masters International Championships	Raleigh	NC	NC State University - Carmichael Gym
July 18-20	Fran Davis Racquetball Camp	Millersville	MD	Severna Park Racquetball And Fitness Club
July 18-20	Sunflower State Games	Topeka	KS	Downtown Topeka YMCA
July 18-20	Florida Open	Port St. Lucie	FL	Port St. Lucie Civic Center
July 18-20	PK IRT Satellite Series - Bayfront Pro-Am	Corpus Christi	TX	Del Mar College
July 24-27	All-In-One Racquetball Camp	Stockton	CA	In Shape West Lane
July 24-28	Annual Elite Racquetball Camp	Denver	CO	Denver Athletic Club
July 25-27	Rocky Mountain State Games	Colorado Springs	CO	Downtown YMCA
Aug. 1-3	VA Subway Commonwealth Games	Lynchburg	VA	Sports Racket
Aug. 2-3	Coast to Coast Battle of the Borders	San Marcos	CA	Woodland Park Middle School
Aug. 8-10	Fran Davis Racquetball Camp	Burlingame	CA	Prime Time Athletic Club
Aug. 9	2014 Soda Man 3WallBall Dbls Shootout #2	Las Vegas	NV	Stratosphere Hotel & Casino
Aug. 9	One Wall Brawl	East Brunswick	NJ	Bicentennial Park
Aug. 9-10	August Triple Crown Shootout	Arlington	TX	Maverick Athletic Club
Aug. 22-24	IRT Grace Warrior Summer Open	Lilburn	GA	Recreation ATL
Aug. 26-30	IRF World Senior Racquetball Championships	Albuquerque	NM	Midtown Sports And Wellness
Aug. 29-31	Summer Tournament	Chas	SC	St. Andrews Family Fitness
Sept. 5-7	East Bay Open	Pleasanton	CA	ClubSport Pleasanton
Sept. 11-14	3 Wallball World Championships	Las Vegas	NV	Stratosphere Hotel & Casino
Sept. 12-14	September Triple Crown Championships	Arlington	TX	Maverick Athletic Club
Sept. 12-14	PK IRT Satellite Series Bobcat Open Pro-Am	San Marcos	TX	Texas State Student Rec Center
Sept. 19-21	Treasure Coast Shootout	Port St. Lucie	FL	Port St. Lucie Civic Center
Sept. 19-21	Welcome Back Boston... 2014 Fall Classic	Boston	MA	Boston Athletic Club
Sept. 19-21	VA American Family Fall Open	Richmond	VA	American Family Fitness-Midlothian
Sept. 24-28	Spring Smash	South Jordan	UT	Marv Jensen
Sept. 26-28	MACRC 1	Lynchburg	VA	Sports Racket - Liberty University
Oct. 3-5	Countryside YMCA Charity Tournament	Lebanon	OH	Countryside YMCA
Oct. 3-5	Tucson Open	Tucson	AZ	Tucson Racquet & Fitness Club
Oct. 5-6	October Tournament	Brentwood	TN	Maryland Farms YMCA
Oct. 8-12	UnitedHealthcare US OPEN	Minneapolis	MN	Life Time Fitness - Target Center
Oct. 10-12	Adcope Fall Classic Season Kick-Off	Lewiston	ID	Adcope Athletic Club
Oct. 11-12	Ghostly Doubles	San Antonio	TX	Gold's Gym HCV

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USA Racquetball annually bestows seven awards recognizing outstanding accomplishments in our sport. Four of these are based on competitive excellence and three are recognition for contributions to the sport. Congratulations to the 2014 USA Racquetball Annual Award Recipients!

Male Athlete of the Year - [José Rojas](#) continued to show that he is among the best players in the sport, reaching the semifinals of the IRT division at the 2013 National Singles and later became the first to beat Kane Waselenchuk in a completed match in more than four years.

Female Athlete of the Year - [Rhonda Rajsich](#) continued her domination with a gold medal at the 2013 National Singles Championships while finishing third in the LPRT division at the same event. She also finished second at National Doubles with partner Kim Russell-Waselenchuk.

Bud Muehleisen Male Age Group Award - [Jimmy Lowe](#) is no stranger to this award and had another great year in age divisions at national championships. Jimmy has received this award an impressive seven times.

Peggy Steding Female Age Group Award - [Debra Tisinger-Moore](#) won this award for the sixth time, after capturing her 100th career national championship gold medal, adding a singles gold in Women's 55+ at the US OPEN and double-gold in the 45+ and 55+ Women's doubles divisions at Nationals.

Joe Sobek Outstanding Contribution Award - [Robert "Smokey" Van Schalkwyk](#) began playing racquetball while in college in 2002, and has contributed greatly to the sport over the past decade by supporting the Eastern Collegiate Racquetball Conference and introducing thousands of college students to the sport.

Presidential Award - [Bryan Crosser](#) (Iowa Racquetball Association) has served as the President of the Iowa Racquetball Association since 2012 and reinvigorated it by recruiting a team of volunteers, rebuilding the Board, and creating a functioning organization where none had existed prior.

John Halverson Fair Play Award - [Cheryl Gudinas](#) is a 21-year veteran of the U.S. National Team and is well-known as a fair and gracious competitor. At the 2013 World Games in Cali, Colombia, she overturned a ref's call to replay, and later lose, an important match point.

For more about these honorees, go to usaracquetball.com > Features > News to locate the 2014 Award Winners press release.



International Update

New Partnership for IRF

Article & Photos by Cheryl Kirk



EnetLive.tv
Where The World Comes To Watch!

IRF Network Debuts at PARC in Bolivia



The International Racquetball Federation and EnetLive.tv brought the semifinal and final matches at the Pan American Racquetball Championships in April to thousands of racquetball players around the world, courtesy of the newly established IRF Network.

More than 4,500 viewers enjoyed semifinal and final matches with commentary from John Scott and from Gary Mazaroff. Player profiles and post-match interviews enhanced the experience. This inaugural effort was resoundingly successful.

John Scott of EnetLive.tv stated, "As the broadcaster in the sport, I went to Bolivia for business purposes and to broadcast the sport I love... as a fan I was blown away. The people, the teams, the support, it was amazing. I have never been anywhere in my life where the passion of the sport played out in the crowd more than it did on the court. I still go to sleep at night hearing hundreds chanting 'Bo-Liv-ia!!'"

IRF President Osvaldo Maggi commented, "By way of this new partnership, live high-quality match viewing reaches around the globe. The electric atmosphere of international competition comes across loud and clear."

There is no cost to access live streaming. Simply go to www.irfnetwork.com and set up your login information. Additionally, the IRF Network provides video to be enjoyed at the leisure of racquetball fans. Archived video viewing is available for \$9.99/month or \$99/year.

The next IRF live streaming event will be delivered from Burlington, Ontario in Canada at the IRF World Championships, June 20-21, 2014. Mark your calendars and tune in!



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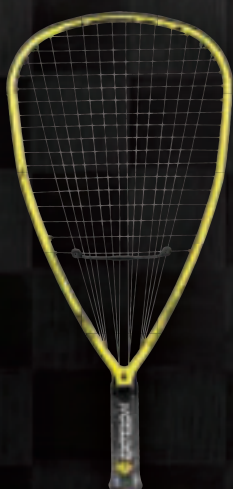
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Reduced frame twisting increases power and accuracy
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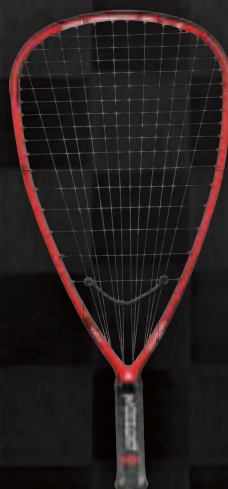
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POWER LEVEL: 4800
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BALANCE: Head Heavy



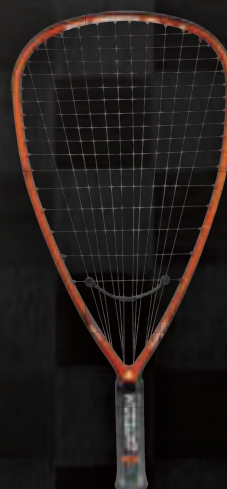
EXO³ TORON 160

POWER LEVEL: 4700
WEIGHT: 160g
BALANCE: Even



TORON PRO 170 ESP

POWER LEVEL: 4900
WEIGHT: 170g
BALANCE: Even



TORON PRO 180 ESP

POWER LEVEL: 4900
WEIGHT: 180g
BALANCE: Even



EXO³ RE-IGNITE

POWER LEVEL: 4400
WEIGHT: 180g
BALANCE: Even



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