

# RACQUETBALL



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**GRAND SLAM SCOREBOARD**  
**GANIM CELEBRATES #20**  
**WASELENCHUK TAKES #11**  
**LONGORIA CAPTURES #6**



# 2015

## NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS

PRESENTED BY

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### FEBRUARY 10 - 14, 2016

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY – Tempe, Arizona

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#### ON THE COVER

Doug Ganim and Kane Waselenchuk are two of the most celebrated names in US OPEN history: Ganim for founding the event 20 years ago (directing it ever since), and Waselenchuk for capturing over half of its crowns, with 11 total. At the landmark 2015 celebration, Doug is rightfully weary on the final day of the marathon event, while Kane is thrilled with yet another win.

Photographer: Roby Partovich

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Racquetball Magazine welcomes submissions from our members and readers. If you have an idea for an article, propose it by email to: [magazine@usra.org](mailto:magazine@usra.org). All submissions are subject to editing.

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Colorado Springs, CO 80904  
(719) 635-5396 | [USARacquetball.com](http://USARacquetball.com)

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#### Quarterly Production Schedule

Issue	Copy DUE	Ads DUE	~ Release
Spring	JAN 1	FEB 1	MAR 30
Summer	APR 1	MAY 1	JUN 30
Fall	JUL 1	AUG 1	SEP 30
Winter	OCT 1	NOV 1	DEC 30

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Paola Longoria was right at home at the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN award table in Minneapolis, as she happily prepared to accept her sixth championship title. It was a long week of hard work on her part, and the record-setting accomplishment sets her on a path (like Waselenchuk's) that will be difficult for anyone to follow. Photo by ReStrung Magazine.



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## USA RACQUETBALL MISSION STATEMENT

*USA Racquetball, recognized by the United States Olympic Committee as the National Governing Body for the sport, is committed to our members and the growth of racquetball from recreational play to international competition.*

## USA RACQUETBALL CORE VALUES

*Communication • Customer Service • Dedication • Excellence • Integrity*



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**USA RACQUETBALL**



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UnitedHealthcare® US OPEN



U.S. National Singles



U.S. National Doubles



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U.S. Junior Olympics



U.S. National High Schools



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Official Racquet	Ektelon
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Official On-Line Retailer	Racquetball Warehouse
Official Screen Printer	Power Monkey
Official String	Ashaway

### APPROVED BALLS:

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## NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS & TEAM QUALIFYING

All future national events details remain tentative until entries are published and registration opens.

### IN 2016

National Doubles - February 10-14

Tempe, AZ | Arizona State University

National High Schools - February 24-28

Portland, OR | Multnomah Athletic Club

National Intercollegiates - March 30 - April 2

Tempe, AZ | Arizona State University

National Singles - May 25-29

Denver, CO | Highlands Ranch Recreation Center

Junior Olympics - June 22-26

Minneapolis, MN | Life Time Fitness / Fridley

### New U.S. National Team Qualification Process

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

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

- 2015 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Pro Division
- 2016 U.S. Team Singles Qualifying Division at USA Racquetball National Doubles Championships
- 2016 U.S. Team Qualifying Division at USA Racquetball National Singles Championships

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





FROM THE  
Executive Director

By Steve Czarnecki  
Executive Director  
USA Racquetball

## For growth & strength *We Thank YOU*

**T**hank You! USA Racquetball is an association of individual members. Over the last year, the number of full members increased by more than 10% and we strive every day to serve the interests of those who comprise the infrastructure of USA Racquetball. The support provided by these members allows us to invest in the many programs that our staff and volunteers carry out each day with pride. In addition, approximately 20% of membership revenue is made available to state associations to re-invest in local programs and development across the country.

We hope our members feel great about making it possible for USA Racquetball and state associations to serve our respective missions. Of course, there are many benefits to membership that go far beyond the reward of knowing that we are directly supporting the sport we love.

The most universally-used member benefit is the ability to compete in the more than 450 sanctioned tournaments hosted every year. To date in 2015, more than 12,000 people have participated in these events, and many of them have competed many times over. While taking part in these events, players are covered by USA Racquetball's secondary accident insurance that can provide important protection for players who might become injured while competing.

One of the most appreciated benefits of membership is the opportunity to develop a verifiable match record and ranking position. USA Racquetball singles rankings are based on skill as determined by head-to-head matches against opponents and can be sorted by geography and age to help players determine where they stand in the overall competitive landscape. These rankings have become pivotal in determining skill level and division placement for competitors (both at local and national tournaments), by assuring fair and consistent assessments for all players. Thank you to Usher Barnoff for his work in developing and managing the ranking system.

### In addition to Membership, USAR Programs include:

*National Championships  
Player Rankings  
Hall of Fame  
Rules of Racquetball  
Scholarship Program  
National Team  
Junior National Team  
Referee Certification  
Instructor Certification  
Event Sanctioning  
Annual Awards  
College Racquetball*

We're shaped by many individual voices and opinions, but one of the most under-utilized benefits of membership is the ability to run for a seat (and vote for your representatives) on the USA Racquetball Board of Directors. The Board is primarily responsible for the important task of setting the vision and strategic direction of the organization. When you receive your member invitation to a complete a ballot, be sure to make your voice heard by taking the opportunity to vote in annual Board elections.

Among the most important responsibilities of USA Racquetball is the administration of the rules of the sport. The rules provide the parameters of racquetball and define what the sport is at its very core. Rules allow for consistency and

fair play. As a member, you can propose rules changes and provide input for modifications under consideration. Additionally, National Rules Commissioner Otto Dietrich is always available to assist members with their rules questions.

Of course, there are other great benefits to membership, including savings with travel partners like Alamo, National, and Enterprise rental cars, as well as Hilton's portfolio of 12 hotel brands. Members can also take advantage of tuition discounts with DeVry University and Northeastern University.

So, at the end of another very successful year, we'd like to offer a big thank you to all USA Racquetball Members. We are here for you and Together, We Are Racquetball!

## LATE BREAKING! JUNIOR TEAM USA COACHES REPORT

**T**hanks to Team Leader Cheryl Kirk, who was quick to file her coverage of the IRF World Junior Championships on her return from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (just before press time!), we wanted to preview the coaches take on this year's Junior Team USA performance right up front.

"I'm proud of the team. A gold and three silvers [World Cup] is an improvement over last year. We closed the gap between Bolivia and us. It's all positive and we are overjoyed with the improvement of the team since last year and camp."

— Head Coach Cheryl Gudinas

"I have been so impressed by the development of the entire junior team throughout the course of this week. They absolutely played their hearts out every single match. No matter what the score, they played with intensity and focus. So proud of our boys and girls."

— Assistant Coach Jeff Conine

[Retired, two-time MLB World Series champ, who returned to his own junior racquetball roots as an assistant coach this year.]

"First off, congratulations to Akul and Heather for winning gold in 12 and 10 divisions respectively! Both played amazing and had incredible mental games on their way to earning World titles! This week went by incredibly fast and throughout the tournament the kiddos grew as athletes on and off the court. USA Racquetball can be so proud of the representation of Junior Team USA in the Dominican Republic. I feel so fortunate to be a part of such an amazing group of people. We are already planning training camp and looking forward to next year. Thank you to everyone for all of the messages and support from home!"

— Assistant Coach Jen Meyer

### CHAMPIONSHIP MEDAL COUNT

**Gold (3)** — Jordan Cooperrider and Erika Manilla (Girls 16 Doubles), Akul Ramayani (Boys 12 Singles), Heather Mahoney (Girls 10 Singles).

**Silver (4)** — Sam Bredenbeck/Jake Birnel (Boys 18 Doubles); Jordan Cooperrider (Girls 16 Singles); Wayne Antone/Kevin Vazquez (Boys 16 Doubles), Vedant Chauhan (Boys 10 Singles).

**Bronze (5)** — Daniel Rojas (Boys 18 Singles), Lexi York (Girls 18 Singles), Mitchell Turner/Julian Singh (Boys 14 Doubles), Heather Mahoney/Julia Stein (Girls 12 Doubles), Vedant Chauhan/Josh Shea (Boys 10 Doubles)

**Staff:** Cheryl Gudinas (IL) — Head Coach, Jeff Conine (FL) — Assistant Coach, Jennifer Meyer (CO) — Assistant Coach (Esprit), Jody Nance (CA) — Trainer/Assistant Coach, Cheryl Kirk (IL) — Team Leader



FROM THE  
President

By Larry Haemmerle  
President, USA Racquetball Board of Directors

## GRASSROOTS PROMOTION AT THE STATE LEVEL

In his column, USA Racquetball Executive Director Steve Czarnecki discussed the benefits of membership. One of those benefits is the distribution of rebate funds to state associations, which can represent up to 20% of fees paid for USA Racquetball membership. Over the past few years, more than \$138,000 has been invested in state associations through the rebate process.

This supplemental funding was created to provide financial assistance toward achieving our grassroots goals of improving and growing our sport. Many states have used these funds for innovative purposes unique to their own needs. Some have improved their tournament equipment, upgraded hospitality, or provided prizes to be raffled off to fund other grassroots efforts. Other states have funded first-time memberships for junior, high school, and collegiate players, provided travel assistance or entry fees for these participants to attend National championships, purchased apparel for these young representatives of our sport, and developed junior programs by purchasing needed equipment or court time to recruit young people to our game.

However it is used, this is money that, through your memberships, you have provided to your state association. I encourage everyone to ask their state leadership how this money is being invested in promoting racquetball. I know that some of these organizations will proudly describe their efforts. Other states have increased their treasuries and are searching for methods to grow their sport utilizing these funds. Regardless, we all have a vested interest in ensuring that our sport grows and prospers by investing in our future. If your state organization has difficulty deciding the best use of these funds that have been made available, encourage them to contact the USA Racquetball staff. I am confident that they will be able to share some creative ideas to grow the sport and perhaps connect them with other state associations that can share their best practices.

Again, this is money that you have invested in growing our sport. I urge you to get involved in maximizing efforts to promote the future of racquetball for many years to come.

## US TEAM SCOREBOARD

Preliminary US Team singles standings were released after the first qualification event of the new season applied a new procedure for earning points toward team appointments. Finishes at the US OPEN comprise 20% of the new formula, a team qualifying singles division held at National Doubles contributes 30%, and the National Singles team qualifying division comprises the remaining 50%. Once all qualifiers have been fielded, the top four male and female point recipients will receive invitations to join Team USA that will compete at the 2016 IRF World Championships.

The qualification process for doubles teams continues to be based on the Team Qualifying Doubles Division at National Doubles. View full details at [USARacquetball.com](http://USARacquetball.com), under [www.teamusa.org/usa-racquetball/programs/team-usa](http://www.teamusa.org/usa-racquetball/programs/team-usa)



### Following US OPEN Team Qualification Singles Standings

#### United States Men

1. Rocky Carson
2. Jansen Allen
2. Anthony Herrera
2. José Rojas
2. Marco Rojas
6. Jake Bredenbeck
6. Ben Croft
6. Chris Crowther
6. José Diaz

#### 6. David Horn

11. Thomas Carter
11. Robert Collins
11. Thomas Fuhrmann
11. Matthew Majxner
11. Charlie Pratt

#### United States Women

1. Rhonda Rajsich
2. Michelle Key

#### 3. Da'monique Davis

3. Sheryl Lotts
5. T.J. Baumbaugh
5. Laura Brandt
5. Cheryl Gudinas
5. Adrienne Haynes
5. Sharon Jackson
5. Erika Manilla
5. Linda Tyler

## PETITION FOR BOARD BALLOT

Any current member of USA Racquetball in good standing who is a US citizen over the age of 18 may run for the Board of Directors by completing an official Board Petition bearing the signatures of 125 current USA Racquetball members over the age of 18 who request that the individual be added to the slate of Board candidates.

Petitioners must request and obtain official forms from the USA Racquetball national office or download a PDF by navigating to [USARacquetball.com](http://USARacquetball.com) > About > Leadership > Board of Directors (direct: [www.teamusa.org/usa-racquetball/leadership/board-of-directors](http://www.teamusa.org/usa-racquetball/leadership/board-of-directors)) The form itself may be duplicated but not recreated or altered.

Petitioners and anyone authorized to act on their agent may circulate the Official Ballot Petition Form provided the candidate photo and statement are attached for potential signers to review. The statement shall consist of 200 words or less answering "Why I want to serve on the USA Racquetball Board of Directors."

After the requisite 125 or more signatures have been collected, they should be reviewed for legibility of both the printed and signed name, and any needed corrective action should be taken before the submission deadline. The petitioner is responsible for personally reviewing and submitting all Official Ballot Petition forms to the USA Racquetball National office, no later than February 20.

#### Board Member Criteria

Potential appointees should possess a strong work ethic, excellent communication skills (both verbal and written), passion for the sport, and the time to be very involved, well beyond two face-to-face meetings and regularly scheduled conference calls throughout the year (e.g. committee work). Expect to be directly involved in fundraising activities. High value is placed on specific experience in marketing, public relations, fundraising, and technology.



PRESENTING SPONSOR OF USA RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS



# NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS

FEBRUARY 10 - 14, 2016 - TEMPE, AZ

# NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIPS

FEBRUARY 24 - 28, 2016 - PORTLAND, OR

# NATIONAL INTERCOLLEGIATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

MARCH 30 - APRIL 2, 2016 - TEMPE, AZ

# NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIPS

MAY 25 - 29, 2016 - DENVER, CO

# NATIONAL JUNIOR OLYMPIC CHAMPIONSHIPS

JUNE 22- 26, 2016 - MINNEAPOLIS, MN



UnitedHealthcare

# US OPEN

OCTOBER 5 - 9, 2016 - MINNEAPOLIS, MN



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# US OPEN 2015

RACQUETBALL

Minneapolis,

20<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY



## GRAND SCALE GRAND SLAM TURNS 20

By Jeff Oliver  
Photos by ReStrung

**W**here were you in the fall of 1996? Twenty years ago, the inaugural US OPEN Racquetball Championship was just setting a standard as the sport's original grand slam in its Tennessee birthplace. This year the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championships marked the 20th anniversary in Minnesota, celebrating the largest and most prestigious Pro-Am tournament on every circuit's annual event calendar.

Over two decades the US OPEN has brought together the top professional and amateur players, along with eager spectators, enthusiasts, and industry leaders, for a week of great on-court action and off-court socializing. To celebrate the milestone, the 2015 UnitedHealthcare US OPEN took extra steps to make it the best tournament ever! After the bright lights went down on the portable stadium court each night, sponsored parties kept the action going into the wee hours of the morning.

This year the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN offered an expanded 8,000 square foot Player's Village for relaxing and catching up with far-flung friends between matches. The Village featured an industry trade show, a silent auction benefiting children's charities, concessions, souvenir sales, and live entertainment throughout the event.

In its sixth year in the host city of Minneapolis, the event is now deeply-rooted in the Twin Cities area. More than 750 players from 15 different countries descended on four Life Time Fitness venues in Minnesota's most populous city for five days of racquetball fun, on and off the court.

With cash prizes totaling more than \$58,000, the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN boasts the largest total prize purse in the sport. One of the most exciting aspects is the "made-for-TV" portable court, centered in a stadium seating configuration that





allows viewing through all four walls for more than 1,200 spectators. From the early rounds through the finals, all the top professional players in the world make their way to center stage after being introduced to enthusiastic crowds with booming music, a laser light show and spotlights.

In addition to the marquee men's International Racquetball Tour (IRT) and Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour (LPRT) divisions in both singles and doubles, the championship offers more than 80 USA Racquetball (USAR) sanctioned singles and doubles divisions separated by age and skill.

For the third consecutive year, the sport's largest tournament partnered with one of the nation's largest health and wellness companies to bring the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN to even greater heights. Throughout the week, many UnitedHealthcare executives were in attendance, and on Thursday, more than 500 UnitedHealthcare employees and their families filled the stands to check out the world's fastest sport. Other major co-sponsors of the event included CardinalHealth, Dick's Sporting Goods, Life Time Fitness, Sports Minneapolis, ACE, Coors Light, and Lewis Drug.

In the heart of downtown Minneapolis, the fabulous Life Time Fitness Target Center (also home to the Minnesota Timberwolves), was the main location and nerve center. All pro matches and many of the amateur matches took place at this newly-renovated eight court facility, located in the center of the exciting Entertainment District, among restaurants, nightclubs, hotels, and world class shopping. In the same week, the Twin Cities hosted the final Minnesota Twins game of the season, preseason NBA games featuring the young and upcoming Minnesota Timberwolves, and the first two games to the WNBA Finals between the Minnesota Lynx and Indiana Fever ... all taking place within a lob serve's distance to the Stadium Court. Only a short light rail ride away, the Twin Cities hosted a Madonna concert, the opening to the NHL season for the Minnesota Wild, and much, much more!

#### Kane Turns It Up To Eleven

Twenty Men's Professional UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Champions have been crowned, and Kane Waselenchuk (Canada) now owns more than half of those titles. After 73 players battled it out in the qualifier round, the main draw of 32 held mostly true to form. A rare quirk in the International Racquetball Tour's 12-month rolling rankings system actually positioned Rocky Carson (California) as the top seed, marking the first time since 2008 that Kane wasn't sitting at the top of the bracket at the outset.



The only Top-8 seed not to make the quarterfinals was Ben Croft (California) due to an aggravation of his nagging shoulder injury. Kane cruised through the bottom of the draw with straight games over IRT No.7 Jansen Allen (Texas) and IRT No.3 and 2014 Open finalist Alvaro Beltran (Mexico).

In the top half of the draw, Carson and Daniel De La Rosa (Mexico) easily won their quarterfinal matches to set up a semifinal between them that would become one for the ages. The two players split the first four games of a match that would eventually last more than three hours. That effort took a physical toll on De La Rosa, giving the favored odds to Carson, but the young player from Mexico jumped out to a 4-0 lead in game five. At 8-3, Daniel was close to earning his first US OPEN final appearance, but Rocky stormed back with a scoring spurt to take the lead at 10-8. De La Rosa fought off several match points and was able to enter the server's box with the game knotted at 10-10. After many dives and a couple of close calls, De La Rosa was able to close out the game and match. Almost immediately after leaving the court, Daniel collapsed on the floor from exhaustion and dehydration.

The next day, the mentally and physically exhausted De La Rosa was simply no match for defending champ Waselenchuk. Many have tapped Daniel as the next young player with the potential to topple King Kane, but it wasn't going to happen this year. Kane won in three straight games, didn't drop a game all tournament and went home to Austin with title #11 and the



## ALL-TIME PROFESSIONAL TOUR CHAMPIONS

### MEN'S SINGLES

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

### WOMEN'S SINGLES

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

### MEN'S DOUBLES

2015	Ben Croft / Kane Waselenchuk
2014	Ben Croft / Kane Waselenchuk

### WOMEN'S DOUBLES

Paola Longoria / Veronica Sotomayor
Paola Longoria / Veronica Sotomayor

See full results over the first two decades in the Fall edition of RACQUETBALL

undisputed claim of being the greatest champion of the US OPEN era.

### Longoria Wins Fifth Consecutive Title & Sixth Overall

The names in the women's professional final were also very familiar to fans. The last time a name other than Paola Longoria (Mexico) or Rhonda Rajsich (Arizona) was etched into the US OPEN trophy was 2006. During the last eight years Longoria has picked up five US OPEN Titles while Rajsich has won three. So it was only fitting for the 20th anniversary championship final to feature a rematch between the two most decorated ladies in the tournament's history.

In the top half of the draw, Paola made quick work of her first three opponents to reach the semifinals against the No.12 seed Veronica Sotomayor (Ecuador). Earlier, Veronica had knocked out the LPRT No.5 and No.4 ranked players to earn the match-up against the top player in the world. Sotomayor took the first game over Paola 12-10, then battled hard in the second game to score seven points before Longoria stepped up

with a pair of 11-3 games to close out the match.

Rhonda was tested early in the week, dropping her first game of the tournament to Japan's Maiko Sato. Rajsich then dropped another game in the Round of 16 to Ohio's Sheryl Lotts. After a three game sweep against No.6 Samantha Salas in the quarterfinals, Rhonda looked forward to another matchup with No.2 Maria Vargas. A Maria and Rhonda semifinal was a rematch from a year earlier, but Rajsich flipped the script to earn a spot in the US OPEN finals for an 11th time.

In the championship final, Paola jumped out to a speedy 9-4 lead enroute to an 11-7 game one win. In game two Longoria continued to dominate by scoring nine points before Rajsich could get on the board. Rhonda built up a lead in game three and held on after many back and forth rallies to force a fourth game. Rajsich looked as if she was on the way to a fifth and deciding game after taking a 7-3 lead, but after a timeout called by Longoria, the game tightened up. Paola stepped in to serve for championship point at 10-8 and Rhonda skipped the return to gift the title.

### Pros Get Double-licious At The Target Center

For the second year, the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN featured doubles divisions for the top male and female players in the world. On the women's side, Mexico's Paola Longoria and Samantha Salas proved yet again why they are the world's most powerful duo in winning the title over the young Mexican team of Alexandra Herrera (age 20) and Monserrat Mejia (age 15).

In the Men's pro doubles, the most telling storyline of the week developed. Last year Kane Waselenchuk and Ben Croft had teamed up to win the inaugural title, and they were overwhelmingly favored to repeat. However, an injury to Croft in an earlier singles match brought up serious doubts. As the best player in the world, Kane was able to step up and single-handedly hold off early-round challengers.

In the final, Ben and Kane faced off against California's Jose Diaz and Minnesota's own Jake Bredenbeck. Both Jose and Jake were members of the U.S. National Team that competed in the 2015 Pan American Championships, so their chemistry was expected to give Kane and his one-armed partner a run for their money. But like most times that any doubt is leveled toward Kane, he proves

his dominance yet again. He (and Ben) gave the youngsters a donut in the first game and cruised in the second to defend their doubles title.

### The Amateurs Came To Play Too!

The UnitedHealthcare US OPEN is about much more than just the top pro players. More than 600 amateur players came from around the globe to compete in over 80 amateur skill and age divisions.

### Winners from the top Open Skill Divisions:

**Men's Open Singles:** Adam Manilla (Colorado)

**Women's Open Singles:** Gabriela Martinez (Guatemala)

**Men's Open Doubles:** Kevin List (Florida) & Tim Hansen (Florida)

**Women's Open Doubles:** Aisling Hickey (Ireland) & Danna Ryder (Ireland)

**Mixed Open Doubles:** Alexandra Herrera (Mexico) & Luis Avila (California)

For full results from all the divisions, please visit [www.unitedhealthcareusopen.com](http://www.unitedhealthcareusopen.com)

### Racquetball After Dark

Aside from the smashing of racquetballs and excitement of playing against the world's best players is all the off-court fun at the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN. Players filled downtown Minneapolis' top quality restaurants, night clubs, and other entertainment options all week long! Conveniently located at the entrance to the Target Center, Huberts served as the event's official restaurant and bar, and hosted the National Masters Racquetball Association's Player's Dance Party on Friday night. On Saturday, top players hit the dance floor with all their fans at the popular downtown hotspot, The Pourhouse, for the biggest racquetball bash of the year.

### Giving Back

For the entire history of the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN, players and fans have helped support Children's Charities through benefit play in the Pro-Am Doubles fundraiser, winning items at the Silent Auction, donating their referee fees back, or making other contributions.

Special thanks go to Sal & Dee Perconti for taking the Silent Auction to a new level that raised more than \$25,000 outright! Combined with the donations from the Pro-Am Doubles and gifted referee fees, nearly \$31,000 was generated to support St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, and Rapha House. In its 20-year history, the US OPEN has raised \$401,671 for charity.



# Flashbacks and Reflections over 20 ... ... make that 25(!) ... Years

By Doug Ganim | Photos by Jim Hiser / USA Racquetball Archive



**A**s I began to think about writing this article for the event program, my mind raced with flashbacks from the last 25 years. You see, even though we just celebrated the 20th anniversary of the US OPEN, this Grand Slam has really consumed the last 25 years of my life. Very few people know the real story of how this event came to be the world's largest and most prestigious racquetball extravaganza – as you see it today – and of all the critical people who played a significant role in its early development.

## How it all Started

I was still in college when I started running racquetball tournaments in the early 80's, under the tutelage of Jim Hiser, and I built a series of 16 events known as the Coors Light Racquetball Series. For more than 20 years it was the largest and most successful series of its type in the country.

By the early 90's, I had become an elite level amateur player and a member of the U.S. National Team. My peers voted me as their athlete representative to serve on the USA Racquetball (then USRA) Board of Directors and on the USOC's Athlete's Advisory Council. In those early years of attending Board meetings, there were countless discussions about how to grow the sport. Naturally, my thoughts always migrated towards creating huge Grand Slam style events to showcase racquetball. My vision incorporated high-level corporate sponsorship, a national TV broadcast, major media coverage, and bringing together ALL the pro and amateur organizations in a big way.

Early on I shared the idea with close friend and mentor, Jim Hiser, who probably thought I was a bit crazy (especially when we started to pencil up a budget to pull off such an extravaganza!). Not only would it take over \$500,000 but we would need another \$150,000 to engineer and build a made-for-TV portable

stadium court. No such court existed at the time, and today there are more than 15 portable courts world-wide! Despite the seemingly ridiculous amount

of money needed, Jim always remained supportive and helped to brainstorm hundreds of ways to move the idea closer to becoming a reality.

Fact-finding with other sports was my next step, so I took a camera and a notepad and headed to the 1992 US OPEN of tennis, the US OPEN of golf, and the Ryder Cup. I returned with pages and pages of notes with ideas for a future US OPEN Racquetball Championship.

Things really started to heat up in 1993 when I shared the entire concept with Luke St. Onge, then Executive Director of the USRA and a visionary in the sport. He'd always been a big thinker and immediately loved the idea.

From the start, I felt strongly that the US OPEN should be wholly-owned by the USRA as an annual shining star in its efforts to promote and bring the sport together. I also believed that the event would someday turn a profit that would help fund many of the USRA's other programs. After some sincere urging (and downright begging, if I remember correctly) by St. Onge, I agreed to be hired to run the event, and committed that the USRA would not lose more than \$80,000 before I could get it to break even.

In 1994 the Board of Directors approved the plan, with Luke's strong endorsement, and I resigned from the Board to contract as the management vendor for the event. From that point on, the US OPEN consumed a good portion of every day of my life.

## Where it all Started

Now we had to find a host city and facilities, so Jim Hiser and I considered over a dozen locations before narrowing the choice to either Minneapolis or Kansas City. Then, just a week or two before we were ready to pick between them, I got a call from Mac Winker, owner of The Racquet Club of Memphis. He'd heard about our plans for a Grand Slam from Memphis resident and top touring pro Andy Roberts. Mac explained that The Racquet Club was the perfect main host club, noting that it had hosted a major ATP tennis event for more than 20 years.



Then and now:  
Circa 2015 photo by Roby Partovich





Right out of the gate, Randy Stafford was on hand to christen the court at its ribbon-cutting. Ray Schultz and Mac Winkler presented the awards, and the event's first champions - Michelle Gould and Sudsy Monchik - hoisted the brand new trophy. Archive photography.



We hopped on planes the following week to meet up in Memphis, where Mac was ready with a full tour of his amazing club, plus he'd already lined up The University of Memphis and Wimbledon Sportsplex as ready-and-willing auxiliary venues. After seeing the large open spaces we'd have to work with (thanks to an indoor tennis court footprint), plus the overall country club look and feel of the facility, we were convinced. What a great spot for the US OPEN – and what a huge turning point that decision proved to be! Little did we know then how the moon and the stars would line up for us in Memphis.

### The Portable Court

The next critical task was to figure out how to get a true, made-for-TV portable stadium racquetball court. Without this crucial element, the US OPEN would have been just another tournament. At the time, pro squash had successfully developed several portable courts for use around the world; however, those courts didn't need a ceiling, so they were far less expensive to engineer and build. After added research, I was shocked to realize that my initial budget of \$150,000 wasn't even close. Figures were coming in closer to \$250,000, and I was staying up at night thinking that this issue was going to bring down the whole project.

Just then two angels popped up, from all places ... Memphis! Randy Stafford and Mike Mattingly, owners of the largest racquetball court construction company in the world, were based there. I knew of Randy as a top ranked player, but he'd been absent from national competition for many years at this point, so our first meeting was bit nerve wracking. Mike really had no strong connection with the sport, but his background in construction balanced Randy's skills in sales and marketing.

Meeting one-on-one with Randy first, I explained the entire concept and how a portable court would ultimately become the centerpiece of the US OPEN. Randy's eyes lit up as I worked my way through the presentation and when I was done he looked at me and said "I'm going to help you with this. I don't know how we're going to do it, but I'm going to help you get this done!" Randy then went to get his partner on board.

In my next meeting with them both, they informed me that they were going to take on the portable court project as a "gift" to both the USRA and the sport. They offered to build the court for FREE, and I would only have to pay for materials and any third party construction labor. Further, they would go back to all their major vendors and request all construction materials be either donated or significantly discounted.

So the daunting bottom line became, ultimately, just \$85,000! For nine months we ran a national fundraising campaign asking all USRA members for donations to offset the cost of building the court. Individuals and manufacturers donated between \$25 and \$2,000 to raise every penny we needed!

Several years ago, through the generosity of Leo and Sue Klimaitis and the Pat Taylor family, we were gifted an all-new replacement portable court that has taken the US OPEN to a whole new level. This is the incredible court we use today, thanks to then-and-now construction care and handling, supervised by Eddie Meredith.

### The Sponsor

With the ideal city, the perfect facility, and an amazing portable court under construction, the next challenge was to find a Title Sponsor. I had to keep my promise to USRA that they would not lose more than \$80,000 but, at the time, I had absolutely no idea how I was going to raise all the money we needed. Of course entry fees and pro match ticket sales would play a major role, and I'd also asked all the major racquetball manufacturers to buy trade show booths, which they did. I'd had some early luck landing a few small financial sponsors and various "trade outs" to help keep costs under control, but I was still coming up over \$200,000 short.

Once again, Memphis saved the day! As it turned out, one of the largest hotel chains in the world, the Promus Hotel Corporation, was based there, with ownership stake in many major brands like Holiday Inn and Hampton Inn. The CEO was Ray Schultz, an avid racquetball player and fan, who had also been a long-time sponsor of the local Hampton Inn Pro-Am. When I first went to visit Ray, it wasn't to sell him on sponsorship. I went to request that he change his tour date from Fall to Spring to keep the two Memphis stops further apart.

After I shared the vision for the US OPEN and asked if he would consider re-scheduling, he replied "No. I am not going to move my date. I'm going to cancel my tournament and I am going to take yours. How much is that going to cost me?" I about fell out of my chair! Two weeks later we had a three-year title contract signed for the Promus Hotel Corporation US OPEN Racquetball Championships.

### The Staff

The next piece of the puzzle was to build a rock-star staff to run this incredible event, starting with a Local Organizing Committee. I asked my friend Andy Roberts for advice on who might be able to Chair such a group and he introduced me to Kay and Tom McCarthy. They signed on right away, held meetings in their home every month, and attracted all the other local talent we needed to get the event off the ground. To this day, Kay and Tom are still key members of the US OPEN Staff and travel to Minneapolis each year to play significant roles.





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At the award ceremonies, Doug takes a moment to thank UnitedHealthcare Chief Marketing Officer Andrew Mackenzie. Photo by ReStrung.

Equally important was the National Staff I had to put together. Jim Hiser was, and still is, my right hand guy and has helped assemble the key people we have always needed. There are way too many to list after 20 years but a few major names that were critical to starting the first event included Margo Daniels, Ed Willis, and Annie Muniz. These folks put in some INSANE hours, especially during the formative years when we did not realize how much staff we really needed. In her role as USRA Associate Executive Director of Communications and Editor of RACQUETBALL Magazine, Linda Mojer also played a key part in establishing many of the media and public relations support procedures that brought critical visibility and exposure to the project, then and now. As already mentioned, hundreds more played significant roles over the years and many are still on the staff today!

### The Pros

My vision from day one of the US OPEN was that the men and women pros would be the centerpiece of the event and provide the majority of the entertainment and excitement. To this day, the very short list of US OPEN Pro Champions remains the most exclusive racquetball club in the world with just 5 men and 7 women winning all the singles titles over 19 years.

In the early years it was the Swain-and-Monchik show that drove the event. When these two would reach the finals, the phones would ring off the hook with people wanting to buy tickets. We were so desperate for revenue that I would sell more tickets than I had seats. People would sit on others' laps or on the floor, and every nook and cranny of the stadium was filled with fans. I remember looking at the scene and feeling like all the work was worth it!

Today the tour athletes are still the stars of the show. With superstar headliners like Kane Waselenchuk and Paola Longoria, pro racquetball is in good hands. Adding Pro Doubles last year has already proven to be a fan favorite.

### Minneapolis

After 14 years it became clear that we had outgrown Memphis. We had added more clubs to keep up with the volume of matches we were running, but there still weren't enough courts. It was not uncommon to have matches going on until 3:00 am and then back on deck at 8:00 am the next morning. In addition, Mac Winker had sold The Racquet Club to a California investor group and the new owners were not quite as easy to deal with as Mac had been. Lastly, two key auxiliary clubs were in need of major remodels, which didn't seem likely anytime soon.

Given all these factors, I decided it was time to move to a new market that would position us for continued growth. We conducted another national search and narrowed our options to Dallas, Kansas City, and Minneapolis. Although Kansas City seemed to be our frontrunner, Danielle Maur and John Wilinski from Life Time Fitness led the charge for Minneapolis. They traveled to the final Memphis event in 2009 and made it clear that they wanted the US OPEN and were willing to do whatever it took to attract this Grand Slam event.

In what felt like déjà vu all over again, Jim Hiser and I headed out for a site tour. We were already familiar with the market, since many national championships had been played in Minneapolis over the past 30 years – but neither of us had ever seen the downtown Target Center. When we first stepped foot in the club, both our jaws hit the floor. Right there in the heart of the entertainment district was a huge underground health club with 8 racquetball courts and a massive gym for our stadium. Right outside the door were hotels, restaurants, shopping, and everything else a player might need to enjoy a week in the City. I remember looking at Jim and saying, "This would be like running a tournament in Times Square in New York City!"

We added a quick tour of Life Time's amazing collection of suburban clubs in the area which would be available for use as auxiliary venues, and we were instantly sold on Minneapolis as the perfect location for the US OPEN.

Once the deal was inked, everything else seemed to come together easily. The Minnesota Racquetball Association, led by Aaron Granberg at the time, welcomed us with open

arms and provided the critical nucleus of a new Local Organizing Committee. Although we didn't have a title sponsor our first year, we did land UnitedHealthcare in 2011, and they've been with us ever since. Major co-sponsors were also signed, assuring that funding is in place to run a truly first-class event. Everything about Minneapolis is absolutely perfect for the US OPEN, and an ongoing commitment by Life Time Fitness to provide best-in-class facilities is unparalleled, as evidenced by the recent \$17 million renovation of their Target Center club.

### The Future

The UnitedHealthcare US OPEN is now setting new records for players and pro match ticket sales each year. With the explosion of racquetball in Central and South America, we are starting to see significant increases in global participation. In fact, the International Racquetball Federation recently sanctioned the US OPEN as part of their calendar of major events. Our partnership with the TENNIS CHANNEL showcases the US OPEN over the holidays with three two-hour shows in prime time.

I recently extended my contract commitment to the USA Racquetball Board of Directors, agreeing to manage the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN for another five years. This will likely be my last stint as Director, with retirement looming for my wife and me. Therefore, if you think that this year's anniversary is a big deal, just wait until 2020! Since that will probably be my last Gala, ask anyone who knows me how much I love to throw a party. The 25th Anniversary will be a retirement bash nobody will ever forget!



From the start, the US OPEN has offered a Pro-Am Benefit Doubles Fundraiser to support children's charities. This year's winners were 17-year-old Trevor Webb from Ontario, Canada, with top IRT Pro Alex Landa from El Paso, Texas, who defeated No. 4 ranked LPRT player Frederique Lambert of Montreal, Canada and Shari Coplen from St. Louis, Missouri, in that final.



# Satellite Tour Goes BIG IN TEXAS

TOP NAMES BRING SUCCESS  
TO THE LONE STAR STATE

By Eric Mueller | Photos courtesy IRT

**W**hen former International Racquetball Tour regular Adam Karp joined the IRT Team as Vice President of Event Development in 2011, one of his first orders of business was to get some events into Texas and start building towards a Tier 1. "It's one of the biggest states in the nation and one of the biggest states for racquetball," Karp said. "It was kind of a shame that we really didn't have a presence there for pro racquetball."



Before last fall, the Lone Star state had seen a lull in top-tier pro action that had spanned over a decade, but with 10-time season ending #1-ranked

player Kane Waselenchuk now calling Texas home, it made sense to try and reverse that trend. "Being the #1 player, I felt a bit of responsibility that there wasn't a tournament in Texas," Waselenchuk said of being an IRT representative and bringing an event to his state.

The long drought ended when the Krowning Moment Pro Invitational and The Bobcat Open brought the top 8 pros to San Marcos in September of 2014. Kane's namesake event celebrated its second season at Texas State University in October and marked the third Tier 1 hosted in the state since 2014. Waselenchuk's own KM brand hosted its second tournament in Edinburg at the University of Texas-Pan American in April.

So how does a state with no pro tour presence make a turnaround of epic proportions to currently host multiple satellites and two marquee stops? You start from something small, build momentum for growth, and get passionate people to lead and host tournaments.

JoAnna Reyes, the National Director of Player Operations at Pro Kennex, was one of those passionate people who started directing tournaments in 2007. "She was one of the first people that I spoke with to kind of get this going back in 2011," Karp said. "She was on board with the same kind of vision that I had."

Reyes started working for Pro Kennex in 2011 and was encouraged by Mike Martinez, President of Pro Kennex USA, to bring the pros back to Texas. She started with Tier 4 and Tier 5 stops in Corpus Christi, originally titled The Kane Train Series of Texas presented



Crowds packed the stands for the inaugural Krowning Moment Pro Invitational and The Bobcat Open held at Texas State University in San Marcos, TX in September 2014.

by Pro Kennex, and now called the PK Tour IRT Satellite Series. Her goal was to attract top Texas talent (like Eddie Sada from Weslaco and Patric Mascorro of Fulshear), by offering more opportunities to make a living from racquetball.

Both initial satellites in 2011 featured top IRT professionals like Rocky Carson, Ben Croft, and Charlie Pratt along with Daniel De La Rosa who has been a regular at her tournaments. "We've always had the support of Daniel De La Rosa," Reyes said of the rising star's involvement in the satellites at Corpus Christi. "He's instrumental in the success of these satellites because he didn't care if it was a Tier 5, whatever it was, he was here. He's the one who [drew attention to the tournament] with his great personality and athletic ability. Fans just love to watch him play and visit with him."

Reyes has used her connections to develop other tournaments, and approached her Pro Kennex colleague, Jody Morris, to add The Bobcat Open to the PK Tour IRT Satellite Series in 2012.



ProKennex National Director of Player Operations JoAnna Reyes. Photo courtesy ProKennex



2015 Krowning Moment Pro Invitational Internacional Champion Kane Waselenchuk (center) after the final with Tournament Director JoAnna Reyes (third from right) and Jody Morris (second from right) of Pro Kennex along with Coach Jim Winterton (left of Waselenchuk), wife Kim Russell-Waselenchuk (right of Kane) and tournament staff members in Edinburg, at the University of Texas–Pan American in May.



Adam Karp has multiple U.S. national racquetball titles in singles and doubles, two world doubles titles, and is a Pan-American Singles Champion. Before joining the IRT team as the VP of Event Development, Adam started Flying Fish Resources, an Information Technology Staffing firm that services customers in both the public and private sectors throughout California. Photo from LinkedIn profile.

"I lean on her a lot, especially as we've grown this from a [Tier] 5 to a 4 to a 1," Morris said. "I look forward to the future and doing it as long as we can do it and be productive and give back to the sport."

From past years of assisting and supporting their tournaments, Reyes used her relationships at the University of Texas–Pan American to bring in a second Tier 1, the Krowning Moment Pro Invitational Internacional. "I saw that as a perfect opportunity because there were a lot of players that we have across the border [in

Mexico]," she said of bringing the pros to South Texas. "The border is only 20 minutes from that university, so that would truly make it an international event."

At both stops, Reyes has made it a priority to have the juniors play on the courts next to the pros. "Having those juniors be able to see Kane in their home state and say 'Wow that's Kane, I can now relate to Kane. If he can do it, I can do it,'" is what inspires JoAnna's work. "One of my goals is to have the juniors involved with the pros so that they can see that they can live up to their potential and possibly earn

a living at it." She's also been involved with building junior divisions at The Longhorn Open, another IRT Satellite and the state's largest annual event.

Waselenchuk plus Reyes makes for a winning combination that can hopefully sustain the resurgence in Texas for many years to come. "So between Kane there, the #1 player in the world, and JoAnna Reyes kind of going out and actually getting all the work done," Karp said. "Those are the two biggest factors in why we've had some growth in the Texas area for sure."



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2015-16

# SEASON OPENERS

## *Athletes Start Fresh in Colombia*

By T. J. Baumbaugh

Another season is rolling right along, after opening in Cali, Colombia, where Tournament Director Juan Manual Gutierrez (“Gutty”) and the Colombian Racquetball Federation did an outstanding job. The season opener was held at the location of the 2013 World Games, where the “indoor” courts were housed in an “outdoor” pavilion.

Even though the LPRT divisions were a little low on participants, there were plenty of exciting matches, since all of the world’s best players made their way to this beautiful South American country. Top-ranked Paola Longoria clinched her first titles of the season, with a singles win over No.2 Maria Jose Vargas, followed by a doubles victory with partner Samantha Salas Solis, over challengers Michelle Key and Frederique Lambert.

Players were housed in charming villas in the downtown area and spent their off-court hours shopping and checking out the local restaurants and coffee shops. Many made repeated trips to the “Crepes and Waffles” which became a local favorite over the course of the Cali play-cation.

Following the hot-weather Colombia event, some tour players traveled to even hotter Las Vegas for the 3WallBall Championships. This exciting outdoor event was covered by ESPN3 and was well promoted under the direction of Mike Coulter, Hank Marcus, and Vic Leibofsky.

If there was any doubt of Paola Longoria’s dominance of the sport, she made sure not to leave any unanswered questions about outdoor. In her first outdoor event in five years, she was seeded No.10 and had to work her way through the draw to face and upset No.1 seeded Janel Tisinger in the singles final. In doubles action, accomplished outdoor player Michelle Key paired up with Longoria to overcome the talented team of Aimee Ruiz and Janel Tisinger. The pro doubles win and semifinal finish in singles also earned Michelle Key the coveted Hemborg Cup Championships.

After Vegas, players headed back indoors to get ready for the 20th Anniversary US Open in Minneapolis.



Photo by Michelle Key



L-R: Frederique Lambert, Hil Gamar, Susy Acosta Mendoza, Samantha Salas, Sofia Racson. Photo: TJ Baumbaugh.





L-R: Sofia Rascon, Frederique Lambert, Michelle Key, Paola Longoria, Samantha Salas. Photo TJ Baumbaugh

## TAKING THE LONGER VIEW

In the Fall issue, we shared what some of our scholarship players had to say about their experiences playing on tour for their first (and sometimes second) season. We followed up by asking for reflections from tour veterans, whose perspectives are based on a slightly more extended point of view.

### ■ How has the Tour changed from the time you started competing?

**ADRIENNE FISHER HAYNES** – The Tour is a lot younger and a lot more diverse than when I started. I was 15 when I started playing full time, and I was by far the youngest full-time player for a long time. There are also a lot more countries represented at each tournament, and not just at the US Open.

**CHERYL GUDINAS** – The Tour used to be all in the States and Canada. Now we are seeing draws with mostly international players, which is very different from my first year in 1990. The competition was very strong in the 90s and is strong now. We had a few years in the late 90s, in the Michelle Gould era, where we only had 4-5 stops but that's changed again. The tour is busy again and has been for some time.

**SUSY ACOSTA MENDOZA** - The biggest change for me is that now I'm being interviewed as a veteran, time flies! Besides that, I am proud that the Tour is moving forward. It's even more competitive, there are a lot of very talented young players. When I started the Tour I was one of the few international players (along with the Canadians), and sometimes the only player from south of the border. That really helped with my English, since I had no choice other than to speak (or try to speak) English with the other girls.

**RHONDA RAJSICH** – Mainly the Tour has changed in frequency and quality of stops, as well as the make-up of the player body. There are many more international players now, and that is a great thing, because the sport is growing in popularity and support in so many other countries. The stability of the Tour is also reflected in the number and quality of stops we now have throughout the season, as well as the diversity of the locations of the events now too. As always, growth in prize money is also a great sign of evolution!

### ■ How have the players changed?

**HAYNES** – The players now are a lot more involved with each other and almost everyone gets along with everyone ...before, there seemed to be a bunch of small cliques, and it was very obvious who didn't like whom. Now, everyone talks to - and has a great time with - everyone. It's fantastic and so much fun!

**GUDINAS** – The players attack more, they're less conservative. Sometimes that's a positive. Sometimes it might not be. But aggressiveness keeps the heat on for sure. If you're smart, you can combat it if they're too aggressive. But a player that combines intelligence with assertiveness, like Paola Longoria does, is brutal to play.

**ACOSTA** - Because of the level of play, I see a lot of physical changes. Everybody is more fit than the majority of players in past years. Not that they weren't in good shape, but I see more muscles now. Just like in basketball, the sport evolved and the players became much stronger.

**RAJSICH** – The player body is much more diversified now, and the best part is

that the level of ability and competition has gotten much deeper. Matches in the 16's and quarters now are just as thrilling and competitive as the semis and finals. There aren't really any more "walk-over" matchups; nearly everyone is capable of making it to the next round.

### ■ How has your game evolved from your Rookie season?

**HAYNES** – When I started playing on tour, we were doing the ping pong scoring, which I hated, but it helped improve my return of serve very quickly. I've also gotten a lot smarter with my shots. In juniors and at local tournaments, I was very successful with just hitting the ball as hard as possible, but once I started playing at the higher level I had to learn how to strategize and play a smarter game. Thanks, Dan Fowler!!

**GUDINAS** – I used to put too much mental energy into early matches. Ruben Gonzalez told me once that I needed to pace myself emotionally. I did, and that's when I started my streak of championships. I'm smarter now. Even now I'm still learning, and playing more intelligently is allowing me to remain competitive.

**ACOSTA** - I train differently now, to try to keep up with all the youngsters.

**RAJSICH** – Hopefully it's become more consistent at a higher level, although I don't think my general goals or abilities have changed much. My execution and the way that I train to accomplish those things now have definitely evolved.

### ■ Is there anything you wish you could tell your Rookie self?

**HAYNES** – I would tell myself to not be afraid to speak up and give my opinion when changes were happening that I didn't understand or agree with. Since I was so much younger than almost everyone else (when I started), I felt like my opinion wasn't as valid as the more veteran players. Clearly I got over that.

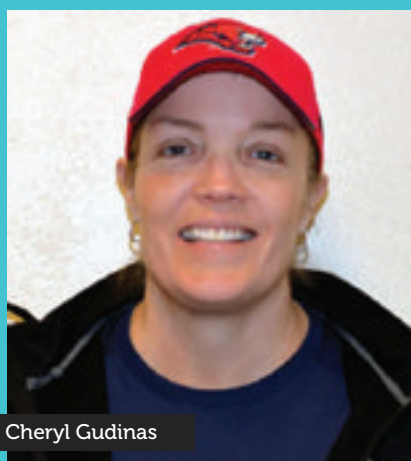
**GUDINAS** – I would love to go back and start this process again. I miss the training and everything I went through to get to #1. There's nothing I wish I'd done differently, except maybe practicing a straight-in drive serve more. Other than that, I'm certain I couldn't have been surrounded by better people, better personal coaches, or a better support team. I've appreciated every moment.



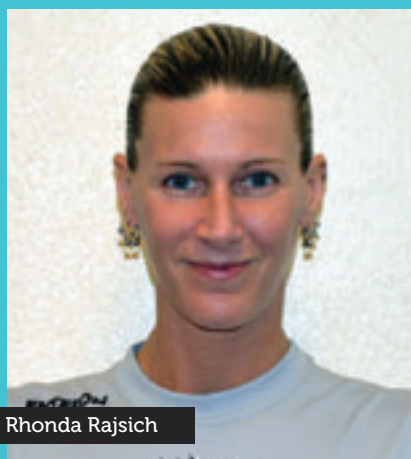
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**ACOSTA** - I think I would tell rookie Sue to believe more in herself and to respect a little less the big names. Before I played my first pro stop, I already knew all the top players on Tour at the time, I was a big fan. I still am, but you need to be able to let go of that when you're on the court.

**RAJSICH** - I wish I could tell my Rookie self about all of the fun, growth, inspiration, friendships, and once-in-a-lifetime opportunities I would be blessed with by simply following my dreams and putting forth the effort to continue to improve.

■ **What advice do you have for junior players who aspire to play on the Tour?**

**HAYNES** - Do it!! There is quite literally nothing to lose ... no one is expecting you to do well, and you can learn so much just by competing at that level. Play in as many LPRT events as you can, and pick one thing from each tournament to improve on for the next tournament.

**GUDINAS** - Realize that being a champion in anything is more than playing your sport. It's about being the fittest physically and mentally, and being respectful and classy both on and off the court. Champions aren't necessarily the athletes with the most titles.

**ACOSTA** - If you are really passionate about the sport, go for it! I know it's hard, it's expensive, and it's time consuming. But it is, or it has been for me at least, fascinating. We all hope that one day the big money will be there, however nobody is in it for the big bucks. We're in it for the competition and the cool things that go along with it: friends, traveling, and maybe the possibility of making a little dough.

**RAJSICH** - Always have fun and continue to do the work. If it's not fun, then you're not doing it for the right reasons. You can have all of the information and coaching, all the talent, and all the support in the world, but if you don't believe in yourself enough to put the hours of effort into developing into the player you want to be, then you simply won't achieve it.

■ **Do you have a favorite event?**

**HAYNES** - Right now, with a baby and a new job, I'm just happy to be able to still be playing and competing...I love playing racquetball and all events that I can play in are my favorite!

**GUDINAS** - I used to hate the U.S. OPEN because it took me a while to win it. The portable court was perplexing at the time. When I finally won it in '02 and '04, it mysteriously became my

favorite event! In terms of excitement, I think it's the biggest and best. However, some of my past favorite venues include: all events in the DC area, the Merritt Club events, Pro Nationals in Vegas, Seattle, the old Tournament of Champions Rose Festival in Portland, and Stockton.

**ACOSTA** - I like all events, each has its own charm. I like the events in Mexico a lot because of all the press and media. It is big deal when the ladies come to play. It helps a lot that the number one player is Mexican because now racquetball is very well known here.

**RAJSICH** - I like many different events for different reasons. It's too hard to pick just one.

■ **If you had one wish for the future of racquetball, what would it be?**

**HAYNES** - Obviously, getting racquetball into the Olympics would be amazing. In the meantime, what I would wish is for racquetball to be super popular again. My parents met at a racquetball club because it was such a social gathering place...they used to run a racquetball club that had a lot of social activities centered around racquetball (and these were racquetball clubs, not fitness facilities that had racquetball courts). Ideally, more people would be playing, more people would be getting their kids into it, and with the international element maybe then the Olympics would be more realistic.

**GUDINAS** - That more kids in the States would have access to courts and learn to love the game. And that LA Fitness, which is seemingly taking over the health club industry, would open up to the idea of promoting the game for kids and adults.

**ACOSTA** - I would love for it to be an Olympic sport.

**RAJSICH** - Two things: 1) to become an Olympic sport and 2) for the world to see how great this game truly is. It requires everything athletically, mentally, and intelligently. When I see other sports on TV, I have a rich appreciation for what it takes to compete and achieve at that level. I have a deep ache for the rest of the world to see our sport's athletes' abilities. I am truly grateful and blessed for the opportunities that this game, this sport, this community, this huge racquetball family has allowed me to be a part of. I love my job. Every single day, I have the joys of training, competing, developing, improving, inspiration, and genuine love for what I do to look forward to. Thank you to everyone who has carved the path and contributed to the growth of this great game!



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**Rocky Carson**



# BOTH ENDS OF THE SPECTRUM

*World Juniors And World Seniors Showcase Young And Old*

by Cheryl Kirk | IRF Press Officer

## XXVII IRF JUNIOR WORLD RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS



The International Racquetball Federation welcomed 184 juniors for competition in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in mid-November, for the annual Junior World Championships. This year 15 teams from North, Central, and South America, Europe, and Asia were on hand, representing Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Ireland, Korea, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the United States.

The event featured seven full days of competition in three main categories: World Cup (18-, 16-, and 14-), Esprit Cup (12- and 10-), and Challenger Cup (divisions for players who did not qualify for their national teams). Boys and girls competed in singles and doubles, first playing off in a three-day seeding round robin format, followed by four days of medal rounds.

### Opening Ceremonies

With attendance anticipated to be over 400, the opening ceremonies were held inside at the Hotel Barceló, which turned out to be a very good decision since the skies opened up that afternoon. Country delegations were introduced and took their Olympic-style lap of honor in the Parade of Nations, followed by a short program featuring an appetizer buffet and entertainment by a Dominican band and colorful dancers.

### The Venue

Competition began on Sunday at Pabellón de Racquetball at Centro Olímpico Juan Pablo Duarte. The club is located in a metropolitan area with an elevated walkway that crosses over very busy streets almost all of the way to the club. The club features eight glass backwall courts, plus two stadium courts with an additional glass sidewall each. The club is covered and open air, but the courts are air-conditioned.

### Medals Ceremony

After the last finals match concluded on Saturday, the LOC and delegates were on hand to assist with awarding medals. One of the stadium courts was packed with presentation stands, medal tables, camera tripods, and lots of well-wishers. The courtside bleachers were also crowded, and while it was a bit warm, enthusiasm ran high as each player who had earned a medal enjoyed a moment in the limelight.

### With Gratitude

The amount of behind-the-scenes effort it takes to pull off an event of this magnitude is extensive and the IRF is grateful for the dedicated Local Organizing Committee, headed by Rafael Fernández. We also thank Belkys Fernández and Rafa, Jr. for their hospitality at the club, where staff kept the entire facility spotless throughout the competition.

Special recognition goes to tournament directors Osvaldo Maggi, Francisco Kurzbard, Amanda Barletta de Kurzbard, Mauro Grandio, Pablo Berriel, and Walter Capandegui, who managed the control desks for seven straight days of competition.

Tim Baghurst, Gary Mazaroff, and Gustavo Farrell also provided color commentary for eN-etLive's Rick Glazebrook, who was producing the livestream.







#### Referees Rock

The IRF works hard to provide a great experience for the Junior players, and this includes assuring that they rarely, if ever, have to referee after losing a match. Officials traveled from 10 countries, and Directors Carlos Abel Cuadri (Argentina) and Gary Mazaroff (USA) supervised a crew of officials that included: Oscar Alfredo Coppolecchia (Argentina), Martha Madeliene Jarrin Anton (Ecuador), José Ricardo Mazariegos Urtado (Colombia), Pedro Pablo Lluveres Dickson (Dominican Republic), Bronc Hughes (USA), Fabian Torres (Colombia), Cesar Gustavo Farell Poussin (Uruguay), Luis Perez (Dominican Republic), Ernesto Aaron Palomino Gonzalez (México), Tim Baghurst (England), Miguel Santiago Cruz (Puerto Rico), Ramón De León (Dominican Republic), Dean Schear (USA), Ruben Ignacio Raitarski (Argentina), Eduardo Tamez Carrillo (México), Roland Keller Vargas (Bolivia), Edgar Antonio Alma (Dominican Republic), and Ricardo Gonzalez aka Tucky Kravitz (México).

#### XXVII IRF JUNIOR WORLD RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS STANDINGS BY COUNTRY

##### WORLD CUP (18-, 16-, 14-)

**Girls:** Mexico, Bolivia, USA, Dominican Republic, Canada, Guatemala

**Boys:** Mexico, Bolivia, USA, Costa Rica, Canada, Ecuador

**Overall:** Mexico, Bolivia, USA, Costa Rica, Canada, Ecuador

##### ESPRIT (12-, 10-)

**Girls:** Mexico, USA, Bolivia, Guatemala, Costa Rica

**Boys:** Mexico, USA, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Ireland

**Overall:** Mexico, USA, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala

*To view the full results, visit:*

[internationalracquetball.com/live-events.html](http://internationalracquetball.com/live-events.html)



by Cheryl Kirk

**T**he US Junior Team Delegation to this event included twenty-seven players, five staff members, and 34 parents, siblings, and friends. That made for plenty of enthusiastic cheering in the stands from: George Andraos, Annette Antone, Jeff Benson, Don Birnel, Kirti Chauhan, Anuj Chauhan, Daryl Cooperrider, Amy D'Ambrogia, Eric & Amy Dent, Andrea Hartman, Felix Hernandez, Eric Jacquet, John, Melodese & Hadley Mahoney, Nancy & Victor Manilla, Stacy & Shawn O'Neal, Atul Ramayani, Mauro Rojas, Robert "Mr. Bob" Santoro, Beth, David &

Alanna Shea, Jennifer Singh, Adam Stein, Frances Turner, Michael & Yina Vazquez, Gary & Kathleen Wargo, and Melissa York. The US Junior Team worked hard and placed third overall in the World Cup and second overall in the Esprit Cup.

#### Sportsmanship Alive And Well

At match point in a 14 Singles match, Antonio (also known as Tatoe) Rojas discovered that the ball had broken in the final rally. Neither the referee nor his opponent noticed, and the referee was walking away to turn in the scores. Tatoe,

## US World Cup Juniors PLACE THIRD

at IRF World Junior Championships

ball in hand, went after the ref and said, "The ball is broken." The match continued, and Tatoe did win – a proud moment for the U.S.

#### Meal Donations

It's traditional for the World Cup Team to eat dinner together before or after their nightly team meetings during competition, often sponsored by those parents on hand. With thanks to Nancy Manilla for coordinating that effort, the following benefactors stepped up to host the team each night: Jacquet / Dent / Wargo families; Legacy Real Estate and Associates (Jennifer Singh); Illinois State Racquetball Association and Don Birnel; Oregon Parents – Antone / York / Turner; Manilla / Cooperrider / Rojas families; US Racquetball Foundation (Bredenbeck) and Chauhan family; and Jeff Conine.

#### Also on Hand

At the USOTC Junior Team Training Camp held earlier in the summer, Sean Swarner, a motivational speaker, author, and founder of the non-profit organization, The CancerClimber Association,





inspired our junior athletes with stories of his challenges and accomplishments against all odds. Sean is a friend of Assistant Coach Jeff Conine and decided to take his involvement one step further and flew to the Dominican Republic both to visit his dad who lives there and at the same time support the US Junior Team at Worlds. *Sean and Jeff are pictured below right.*

Sean's book, *Keep Climbing: How I Beat Cancer and Reached the Top of the World*, is available on his website, [seanswarner.com](http://seanswarner.com), and on Amazon as well.

#### Thank You's

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

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

USAR Official Apparel Sponsor Rollout Racquetball (Jonathan Clay) and American Motors (Victor and Nancy Manilla) for their generous support.

Leo Vasquez who stopped whatever else he might have been doing as soon as a blog and photos were ready for posting.

Great Job, Junior Team USA!! Your country, your sport, your family, and your friends are so proud of you!

To view draw sheets and overall results, visit this web address: [internationalracquetball.com/live-events.html](http://internationalracquetball.com/live-events.html)

## US JUNIOR TEAM ROSTERS

### World Cup

**Boys 18 Singles:** Sam Bredenbeck (MN) and Daniel Rojas (CA)

**Boys 18 Doubles:** Sam Bredenbeck/Jake Birnel (WA)

**Boys 16 Singles:** Daniel Rojas and Justus Benson (WI)

**Boys 16 Doubles:** Wayne Antone (OR)/Kevin Vazquez (FL)

**Boys 14 Singles:** Akul Ramayani (NY) and Antonio Rojas (CA)

**Boys 14 Doubles:** Mitchell Turner (OR)/Julian Singh (CA)

**Girls 18 Singles:** Lexi York (OR) and Brittany Click (TX)

**Girls 18 Doubles:** Lexi York/Hollie Scott (WA)

**Girls 16 Singles:** Erika Manilla (CO) and Jordan Cooperrider (FL)

**Girls 16 Doubles:** Erika Manilla/Jordan Cooperrider

**Girls 14 Singles:** Briana Jacquet (AZ) and Nikita Chauhan (CA)

**Girls 14 Doubles:** Elena Dent (NC)/Graciana Wargo (FL)

### Esprit Cup

**Boys 12 Singles:** Antonio Rojas (CA), Akul Ramayani (NY), Tommy Andraos (CA) and James D'Ambrogia (CA)

**Boys 12 Doubles:** Tommy Andraos/James D'Ambrogia

**Boys 10 Singles:** Vedant Chauhan (CA) and Josh Shea (NY)

**Boys 10 Doubles:** Vedant Chauhan/Josh Shea

**Girls 12 Singles:** Julia Stein (PA)

**Girls 12 Doubles:** Heather Mahoney (CA)/Julia Stein

**Girls 10 Singles:** Heather Mahoney, Sage Hartman (MN), and Raina Hartman (MN)

**Girls 10 Doubles:** Raina Hartman/Sage Hartman







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**Kathleen Klukas** Executive Director, US Racquetball Foundation



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# 2015 IRF WORLD SENIOR

## RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Article & Photos by Cheryl Kirk  
IRF Press Officer

Dr. Bob Castillo and Lake Westphal



Since 1985, the World Senior Racquetball Championships, a self-officiated tournament loaded with competition and camaraderie, has called Albuquerque its home. This year, the popular late summer singles/mixed doubles event added men's and women's doubles divisions to offer something for everyone! A smooth arrival at Albuquerque International Sunport is the first step to an experience that calls players back year after year.

IRF Secretary General Luke St. Onge said, "The WSRC is one of the longest-running racquetball events in the world. It continues to be the major fundraiser for the IRF, raising well over \$400,000 since 1984 for the development of racquetball worldwide. It's highly competitive - a true World Championship - and at the same time very social. It allows athletes of all ages to compete on the World Stage, from 35+ to 90+. If you haven't participated, you're missing one of the marquee events in the sport." (Late breaking news: in October the WSRC announced a \$10,000 donation to the IRF from the 2015 event.)



Teams Bolivia and Mexico

WSRC Executive Director Gary Mazaroff added, "The WSRC began in 1985 from an idea spearheaded by Ralph Waddington and John Koller. I was asked to operate the event that year (and every year since), and I was appointed Executive Director in 1989 when the IRF became part of the equation. That first year we had 90 players with 10 women; in 1991 we maxed out with 403 players and 104 women. That year there were sixty players (6 flights of 10) in Men's 45+ Singles! The reality now is that we no longer have the infrastructure we once did, and the demographics have changed which preclude such a large event. This year we hosted over 150 players from 13 countries and 18 U.S. States, and we are thrilled."

Mazaroff continued, "We have always enjoyed international participation, mainly from Mexico, Canada, and Costa Rica in the earlier days. Over the years, though, we have welcomed players from five continents and 40 countries. I believe the reasons for such positive international participation is our city and the ambience of the event, and senior players have an opportunity to shine for their federations, for their countries, and among their peers."

One would be hard-pressed to think of ways it could get any better than offering a world class silent auction, door prizes, shuttle service, breakfast and lunch each day, final night banquet and awards program, plus great medals. You also get a work-of-art event book with everything you need from rosters, contact information, maps and rules, to last year's results and historic recordbook.

The event format is either round robin or pool play: three games to 11 plus extra points for game and match wins. (Note: Okay, I thought of something additional that could be done: assign someone to remind "some of us" that playing three divisions is ... intense. But there's an incredible sense of pride in arriving upright, unaided, at the banquet after playing 19 matches/57 games in four days!)

Everyone looks forward to the Saturday night banquet and awards presentations, where medals are bestowed and racquetball paparazzi come out of the woodwork to capture special memories. In addition to all the division winners, congratulations go to Ray Bierner of Arizona, who received the Al Wetherill Sportsmanship Award.



Over many years, the WSRC Council has handled the myriad details of planning an outstanding event, led this year by: Paula Sperling, President; Joe Gellman, Vice President; Carol Gellman, Secretary; Sandy Schauer, Treasurer; Gary Mazaroff, Executive Director; and Council Members Jane Bentley, Felicia A. Duran, Luke St. Onge, and Edwina Waddington.

Council President Paula Sperling shared, "The Council holds its first meeting for the next tournament the day after completion of the current tournament and works year 'round to make each event even better than the last. Most of us have been on the Council for many years, and each of us has various tasks to perform all year long. Edwina Waddington is the longest-tenured member of the Council, having helped her husband Ralph, one of the founders of the tournament, with the hospitality from the beginning, and she has done that for every tournament since. Everyone does a fantastic job, and, as president, I know that the tournament will run efficiently no matter what challenges may arise."

So it's not too early to save the date ... mark your calendar for August 30-September 3, 2016 ... and we'll see you in Albuquerque!

For complete results, go to: [www.r2sports.com/tourney/viewResults.asp?TID=13410](http://www.r2sports.com/tourney/viewResults.asp?TID=13410)

Lola Markus and Ralph Waddington – 1st place, Mixed 80+



L-R: Tucker Green, Ralph Waddington, Dr. Arturo Macias, Lake Westphal – Men's 70+ and 85+ Doubles



Women's 50's & 55's Doubles L-R: Wanda Collins, Debra Bryant, Anita King, Patty Willyard, Yvonne Grinnell, Cheryl Kirk, Sandy Rios, Vicky Birkmann

## WRSC GOLD MEDALISTS

### Men's Singles

Men's 35+/40+ -- Allan Hernandez (Mexico)  
 Men's 45+ -- Gonzalo Amaya (Bolivia)  
 Men's 50+ -- Clinton Imholte (AZ)  
 Men's 55+ -- Mike Grisz (TX)  
 Men's 60+ -- Frank Taddonio (AZ)  
 Men's 65+ -- Salvatore Perconti (FL)  
 Men's 70+ -- Terry Albright (MO)  
 Men's 75+ -- Jim Calvin (AZ)  
 Men's 80+ -- Jerry Holly (CA)  
 Men's 85+ -- Ralph Waddington (NM)  
 Men's 90+ -- Lake Westphal (AZ)

### Men's Doubles

Men's 35+ -- Timothy Baghurst (OK)/Alok Mehta (India)  
 Men's 40+ -- Claudio Lopez (Mexico)/Victor Lopez (AZ)  
 Men's 45+ -- Scott Long (NM)/Dean Schear (CO)  
 Men's 50+ -- Myron Hicks (AZ)/Jerry Hines (AZ)  
 Men's 55+ -- Dane Crisp (TX)/Rick Williams (TX)  
 Men's 60+ -- Chris Poucher (GA)/Howard Walker (TX)  
 Men's 65+ -- Salvatore Perconti (FL)/David Wolfson (GA)  
 Men's 70+ -- Joe Gellman (NM)/Luke St. Onge (CO)  
 Men's 75+ -- Jerry Holly (CA)/Paul Wehmeyer (NJ)  
 Men's 85+ -- Ralph Waddington (NM)/Lake Westphal (AZ)

### Women's Singles

Women's 35+ -- Brenda Granados (Mexico)  
 Women's 45+ -- CJ Herceg (CA)  
 Women's 50+ -- Patty Willyard (TX)  
 Women's 55+ -- Sandy Rios (TX)  
 Women's 60+ -- Wanda Collins (WA)  
 Women's 65+ -- Shirley Parsons (CO)  
 Women's 70+ -- Mildred Gwinn (NC)  
 Women's 75+ -- Marquita Molina (CA)

### Women's Doubles

Women's 40+ -- CJ Herceg (CA)/Debra Tisinger-Moore (CA)  
 Women's 45+ -- Marie Gomar(Guatemala)/Cindy Tilbury (CA)  
 Women's 50+ -- Anita King (TX)/Patty Willyard (TX)  
 Women's 55+ -- Vicky Birkmann (CA)/Sandy Rios (TX)  
 Women's 60+ -- Kay McCarthy (TN)/Joanna Pomodoro (MA)  
 Women's 65+ -- Shirley Parsons (CO)/Patricia Thieman (NM)  
 Women's 70+ -- Nidia Funes (CA)/Lola Markus (IL)  
 Women's 75+ -- Mildred Gwinn (NC)/Marquita Molina (CA)

### Mixed Doubles

Mixed 35+ -- Diane Iaforano (NM)/Raaj Mohan (India)  
 Mixed 40+ -- Tina Bragdon (CO)/Alok Mehta (India)  
 Mixed 45+ -- Alba Gamarra (Bolivia)/Gonzalo Amaya (Bolivia)  
 Mixed 50+ -- Susie Boulanger (AZ)/Jerry Hines (AZ)  
 Mixed 55+ -- Vicky Birkmann (CA)/Stephen Wattz (CA)  
 Mixed 60+ -- Kay McCarthy (TN)/Frank Taddonio (AZ)  
 Mixed 65+ -- Paula Sperling (NM)/Luke St. Onge (CO)  
 Mixed 70+ -- Nidia Funes (CA)/Fredrick Roe (CA)  
 Mixed 75+ -- Marquita Molina (CA)/William Baker (CA)  
 Mixed 80+ -- Lola Markus (IL)/Ralph Waddington (NM)



## 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 complete the "Racquetball Success Triangle" we introduced in the Winter 2010 issue of *Racquetball Magazine*.

In this issue I am going to discuss improving shot selection by using a simple "Shot Selection Chart" I developed. This will help take the mystery out of what shot to hit when so you can make smart choices.

Shot selection is defined as taking the right shot at the right time and making your opponent run the farthest distance to get to the ball. It is the offensive player's (the one hitting the ball) choice of shots based on himself, the ball, the opponent, and the score. When many of us get into the heat of the battle, we don't think about our shots -- we just bang away and play what we call survival racquetball. You may be guilty of hitting the shot you like or that you feel comfortable with rather than the most effective shot that will win the point or put your opponent on the defense. By taking the right shot at the right time and hitting the most effective shot in a given situation, you are playing the percentages. No matter what level of player you are -- pro, advanced, or intermediate --

playing the percentages (i.e., playing the odds) is a philosophy we teach, preach, and live by. This core philosophy will help you reach your goal of moving from the intermediate to advanced level of play and develop your "championship game."

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

### 1-RACQUETBALL SKILLS

Shot Selection Chart (Core) - see below

### 2-MENTAL SKILLS

Stay Focused and Concentrate -- keep all your attention on the task at hand: the game. If your mind wanders and you start thinking of everything but what you are doing, this is a sign you have lost your concentration. The flow of points will start to drift in your opponent's direction, and it is hard to get your momentum back. It is easier to keep and maintain your concentration than to let it slip and try to reel it back in. To help you stay focused, pay attention to these simple things: the ball, your opponent, whether you are in center court, how aggressive you are being, and whether you are playing your game. Also, this is a great time for a time-out to get refocused.

## SHOT SELECTION CHART

YOUR POSITION OPPONENT POSITION	FRONT COURT	CENTER COURT	BACK COURT
FRONT COURT	Pass, ceiling or Z shot <b>Do not kill.</b>	Down the line pass, cross-court pass, wide-angle pass, ceiling shot or Z shot. <b>Do not kill.</b>	Down the line pass, cross-court pass or ceiling shot. <b>Do not kill.</b>
CENTER COURT	Kill, pinch kill, reverse pinch, down the line pass-kill	Pinch kill, down the line pass, and wide-angle pass, ceiling shot or Z- shot.	Down the line pass, cross-court pass or ceiling shot.
BACK COURT	Kill, pinch kill, reverse pinch, down the line pass-kill. <b>Do not pass.</b>	Kill, pinch kill, reverse pinch, down the line pass-kill. <b>Do not pass.</b>	Down the line pass-kill, cross-court pass kill, splat if close to sidewall <b>Do not pass.</b>



### 3-FITNESS SKILLS

"Speed" can be defined as getting from point A to point B as quickly as possible. Almost every athlete involved in a sport that requires running would love to move faster and more efficiently. Speed in racquetball is imperative but unique because of the nature of the court itself. You must negotiate a 20 by 40 foot room while watching your opponent, the ball, and the wall.

*The techniques and skills of racquetball require five different speed motions:*

1. Starting speed helps you attain the highest rate of speed as quickly as possible so you can get into good center-court position or improve your return of serve.
2. Foot speed is needed to negotiate balls that are hit at different angles and come off the wall at different angles, speeds, and trajectories.
3. Hip speed (or rotation) is often necessary to turn and run as well as to generate more power.
4. Backpedal speed is needed to relocate into good center-court position after the serve, or move back to the back court from center court to hit a ceiling ball, or move back from the front court to center court after you retrieve a great pinch or kill shot.

5. Change of direction speed is an often-overlooked element of movement skills, but it is the most important in racquetball. There are four types of change of direction speed that we'll work on: side-to-side, forward and backward, turning and running, and jumping.

Paola, Rocky, and Jason have fitness trainers that focus on developing their speed in their training routines.

### 4-NUTRITION SKILLS

#### Match Tips:

1. Don't eat within an hour of your match since you want your stomach almost on empty and all of the glycogen in your muscles. A full stomach slows down reaction time.
2. Don't eat too much since your empty stomach is the size of your fist -- a snack is one fistful. Perfect snacks are trail mixes, granola bars, power bars, a piece of fruit for fiber, vegetables, yogurt, bran muffins, half a sandwich. Always have your own special food at the tournament -- you never know what the club has as food choices.

Jason, Paola, and Rocky know how to enjoy themselves, but it's about these simple match tips that they pay attention to, as that is a how they perform at their best.

# Championship Racquetball

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Fax: 206-260-7909

Taylor Knott  
Jr. World Champion

Sharon Jackson  
Jr. Nat'l Champion

Jason Mannino  
#1 Pro Player 2003

Rocky Carson  
#1 Pro Player 2008

Paola Langoria  
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 Langoria, Taylor Knott, Sharon Jackson
- Coached Legends Jason Mannino and Sudsy Monchik
- USAR-IP Master Professional

#### Jason's Credentials

- #1 IRT Professional Player 2003
- 2X U.S. Open Champion
- IRT Most Improved Player 1998
- IRT Rookie of the Year 1996
- International Racquetball Tour President

#### Camp Schedule:

##### Weekend Camps 2016

January 15-17	Sarasota, FL
February 5-7	Seattle, WA
March 11-13	Findlay, OH
April 1-3	Las Vegas, NV
April 29-May 1	Warren, NJ
June 3-5	San Francisco, CA
TBA	Atlanta, GA
TBA	Houston/Dallas, TX
TBA	Phoenix/Tucson, AZ
TBA	Los Angeles, CA
TBA	Denver, CO
TBA	St. Louis, MO

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# SERVE GOES OUT OF COURT BEFORE BOUNCING? "AN AUTOMATIC OUT SERVE" IS CALLED

photo by Geoff Thomsen



by Otto Dietrich, USA Racquetball National Rules Commissioner

**B**y now, you may be aware that there are some new racquets on the market that do not conform to USA Racquetball's current rules regarding a limitation on racquet length, i.e. 22 inches. You can find the rules and view a list of those non-conforming racquets at this location: <http://www.teamusa.org/usa-racquetball/how-to-play/rules>. Since the rules call for some rather severe penalties for playing with a non-conforming racquet at a sanctioned event, please make sure that your racquet(s) conform to avoid any such problems when you play your next USAR sanctioned event. All tournament directors, desk staff, and referees at such events should know that they are empowered to enforce the racquet length rules to ensure fairness for all participants.

*Here are several questions I've answered during recent weeks.*

**Duane H. wrote:** On the first serve, the server hits the ball high off the front wall and the ball travels up, back, and into the viewing area behind the court. Is this considered a "Fault" or a "Side Out"?

**I answered:** Per Rule 3.10(h), if on any serve, the ball goes out-of-court without having touched the floor before it does, that is an automatic out serve.

**Mike D. wondered:** On a serve, if the ball after hitting the front wall touches a side wall, is the receiving player able to cross the receiving line before the ball hits the floor or crosses the line in the air?

**I told Mike:** The receiver (and his partner in doubles) must always remain completely behind the receiving line (i.e. not break the imaginary plane from that line to the ceiling) from the moment the server begins his service motion until the ball does one of two things: either (1) touches the floor in the Receiving Zone or else (2) breaks the plane of the Receiving Line itself. It makes no difference whether the ball touches a side wall first. This is addressed in Rule 3.11(a) found in our current rulebook.

**Troy M. asked:** During rally play in singles, if a ball is hit hard enough that it bounces off the front wall, flies all the way to the back wall without touching the ground, then bounces only once before hitting the front wall again, can the player then play the ball off of the front wall? Technically the ball has hit the front wall twice by this point without the opposing player striking the ball.

**I responded:** Actually, in either singles or doubles, if the guy who was trying to hit the ball doesn't hit that ball before its second bounce on the floor -- regardless of how many walls the ball may hit before then (in this case, including the front wall once again) -- then his opponent wins the rally. That exact issue was introduced to me when I attended my very first real sanctioned tournament back in 1973 and pressurized balls were used for the first time. The balls were flying everywhere. It peaked my curiosity about the rules and eventually led to my being appointed to the National Rules Committee and then to the post of National Rules Commissioner. You will find in Rule 3.13(e) the above concept/ruling that I put in the Rulebook several years ago after receiving many emails about the issue.

**Timothy H. emailed me this:** My understanding is that I own the court until the very moment my partner hits the ball, and I am not required to relinquish my spot on the court until after my partner has hit the ball. Am I correct?

**I told Timothy:** Not exactly. In doubles, both players do have the right to try to hit the ball. But as soon as it is clear which of them is going to hit the ball, then his partner must not interfere at all with the other team moving to where they want to be.

**Damian Z. asked:** For some reason I thought the loss of equipment rule was changed so that the dropped equipment must actually interfere with the rally. Does that sound familiar?

**I responded:** It was the former rule that said that it was a penalty (avoidable back then) hinder only if the lost equipment interfered with play. Some years ago, it was deemed that it was problematic to expect a referee to be able to stop the on-court action just before it became dangerous or injurious. So, we changed the rule to require that the player keep everything attached that he takes onto the court. Should it become dislodged during play, then it is an immediate penalty hinder but with certain exceptions that are described in the rule itself, Rule 3.15(i). This revised rule is much safer and also discourages players from taking extraneous things, like hats, etc. onto the court.

## DO YOU HAVE A RULES/REFEREING QUESTION?

Be sure to email it to me at [rules@usra.org](mailto: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!

## Always Play by the Rules

... and, if you don't have a copy of them, I encourage you to go online where you can find, review, and/or download them -- especially to your Smartphone -- at: [teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/How-To-Play/Rules](http://teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/How-To-Play/Rules).





## Zyex® String Designs and You

By Steve Crandall | VP Sales & Marketing, Ashaway Racket Strings

In this and the next column, I'd like to connect the dots between the two major raw materials used in racquetball strings—nylon and Zyex®—and the performance of the string designs that result. Think of it as a kind of 'what can you do for me?' overview of the pluses and minuses of the materials, the ways we are able to use them, and what they may (or may not) do for you when you put them in your racquet. We'll start with Zyex.

Zyex is the trade name for a high temperature, engineering grade polymer known as polyetheretherketone, polyketone or just PEEK. Polyketone materials like Zyex have several physical properties of interest to manufacturers. PEEK monofilaments and fibers are very tough and durable, and have excellent abrasion resistance. In tests measuring "thread on thread" abrasion conducted at room temperature, PEEK multifilaments outlasted aramid fibers by a factor of approximately 5.5. PEEK also has very low moisture uptake at 0.1%, which means you don't need to worry about carrying your racquets around in thunderstorms!

Polyketones are used in a growing range of industrial applications from electrical insulation for aerospace, automotive and nuclear installation wiring to precision filters for fuel or clean air systems. One of the most interesting applications for Zyex — other than racquet strings, of course — is strings for violins, guitars, and other musical instruments. Zyex provides a subtle but appreciably fuller tone than other synthetic string materials such as nylon. It also stays in tune much longer. So when users of Ashaway's UltraKill® strings say they love the sound their Zyex strings make, they have good reason.

The property that makes Zyex so good for racquet strings is its low dynamic stiffness, which allows them to stretch and recover more completely than other synthetic materials. This generates power with low impact shock (soft power). Zyex can also be made to have exceptionally low creep under continuous tension, allowing racquet strings to maintain tension and playability longer.

We've experimented with Zyex in a number of different ways in designing racquet strings for racquetball, squash, tennis, and badminton. Some work well in some sports but not in others, some do work well in all, and others, well, not so much anywhere—but we don't sell those!

Zyex monofilaments, for example, work very well in tennis, generating exceptional power and spin without the bone-jarring shock of poly or copoly monofilament. They do not have the durability to work well in

racquetball, however, even though racquetball balls are lighter than tennis balls (approximately 40 oz. to 58 oz.). There are many more off-center hits in racquetball and the monofilament strings we tried simply didn't have enough sheer strength. Zyex monofilaments were also too lively with the lighter racquetballs (and squash balls), causing a loss of control.

A core combination that works very well with squash strings is one we dubbed "multi-stranded monofilament." This core uses several smaller Zyex monofilaments twisted together and wrapped in a woven jacket. But again—mainly because of the new 'power racquet' designs and off-the-wall stringing patterns in racquetball—this core combination doesn't work with our sport.

But there are two combinations that do work very well in racquetball strings. One is the standard multifilament construction used in our UltraKill family of strings. Multifilament construction adds sheer strength to the core (which makes stringing much easier) and reduces the liveliness of the strings just enough to provide optimum power and control. The 17 gauge version provides superior power and durability, while the 18 gauge version provides a bit more feel. Both offer exceptional tension retention.

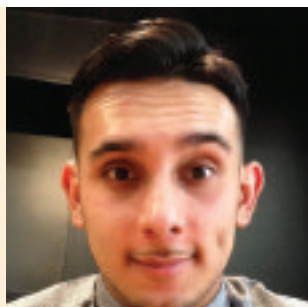
The final—and most recent—way we have experimented with Zyex fibers is in the jacket or wear layer. Jackets are designed to hold core packages together, increase abrasion resistance, and sometimes add surface texture to increase bite on the ball. However, when we tried weaving Zyex fibers into jacket constructions, we found they enhanced performance characteristics as well.

So good was this new construction, in fact, that we trademarked it as PFT™ (Power Filament Technology) and built our new PowerKill® family around it. The PFT jackets on the multifilament nylon core of PowerKill strings add power (soft power), improve tension holding, and increase string durability. What you get, in effect, is a nylon-based string with superpower, i.e., Zyex power.

We continue to experiment with Zyex and hope to offer even more performance options in the future. But for now, there are two Zyex choices for racquetball. If you like the feel of nylon, but would like more power and better tension holding, try a PowerKill string. If you like the power and feel of unbridled Zyex, go with an UltraKill model.

Zyex is a registered trademark of Zyex Ltd.

We continue to experiment with Zyex and hope to offer even more performance options in the future. But for now, there are two Zyex choices for racquetball. If you like the feel of nylon, but would like more power and better tension holding, try a PowerKill string. If you like the power and feel of unbridled Zyex, go with an UltraKill model.



{JOSE DIAZ}



{LUIS AVILA}



{AMIR JABBARI}

**CNRA ANNOUNCES 2015 JACK HUGHES EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARD RECIPIENTS**

It's with great pride and pleasure that the California / Nevada Racquetball Association is able to award three \$500 scholarships to be paid directly to each recipients' school. This year's awardees are all Californians: Jose Diaz of Stockton, majoring in Sport Medicine at the University of the Pacific, Luis Avila of Wilmington, freshman at El Camino College, and Amir Jabbari of San Ramon, majoring in Computer Engineering at San Jose State University. We look forward to great things from these young men both on and off the courts.

**TEXAN BATTLES THE ODDS**

Although he hasn't written or published anything before, this Texas player wanted to share some of the major life changes he's gone through over the past few years, and thank all the racquetball friends and family that have been at his side in tough times.

My name is Tarek Rayan, from Fort Worth, Texas, and I have played racquetball for about 15 years now - not counting the three years of working on my Engineering Masters degree when I didn't have time to play, or even say the word, racquetball.

In April of 2012 I was diagnosed with a type of brain cancer called Anaplastic Astrocytoma, in stage 3. I had surgery and radiation treatments, and a few weeks later I jumped back on the court and was back to playing normal. This isn't normal in any way but if you knew me, you'd understand that I don't listen to the norm. In January 2013, six months later, I was back to tournaments. Now, most racquetball players improve and get better with time. I don't, but I'm able to "improve" my game consistency by skipping the ball a lot. Oops! Ok, back to the original story.

Just last spring I had a massive grand mal seizure and woke up in the hospital emergency room, where I found out I have a stage 4 brain cancer called Glioblastoma, which is guaranteed fatal in less than a year. I just turned 36, but anyone who has gone through cancer or has had a family member go through cancer, it's much harder for the family, and especially for parents.

So back in April 2015 my racquetball friends in this picture took me out for a very nice lunch, and I always say all kinds of things to them, but this is my way of saying I love them like family. If I had time to put down all of their names, to thank every one of them, I would fill this magazine. We have some excellent people that live in Texas.

Oscar Guterrez and G-Money (Brad Giezentanner) were two that continued to check on me and that's why I'm very thankful to have such good racquetball friends. The real friends know what I truly mean. There's a different word I call them, that starts with "Gay" for great friends. If they read this they'll understand.

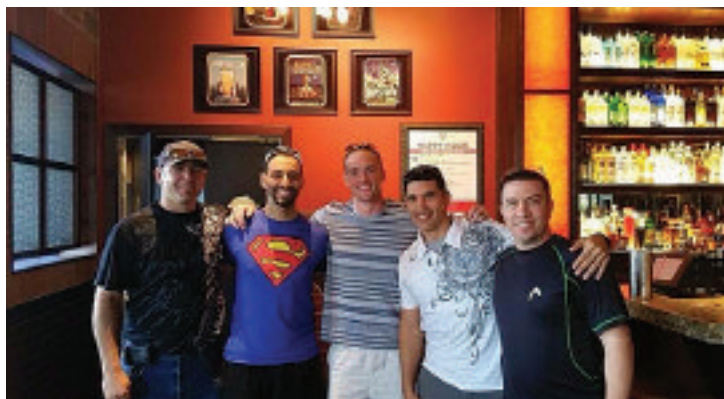
Another sweet lady that helped me a lot was Cindy Ackerman, and I could not be more thankful for meeting her five years ago at the best tournament in the state: the Texas Open held in Austin every January.

In June I had another surgery that removed a good part of the brain, and I just finished the radiation and chemotherapy in September!

So the main thing I would like to close with is always being thankful for everything. I always remind myself that I have had an excellent life. We take so many things for granted. We have nice racquetball equipment, nice cars, nice houses, and time to play racquetball.

Please go and help someone who needs it. For example I volunteer at a doctor's place and feed the poor. Do something to help kids or adults and be thankful! – Sincerely and with love, Tarek

*P.S. Currently, my rank for pro racquetball is #1 on my street, where I live in Fort Worth, Texas. No one on my street can come close.*



L-R: Oscar Gutierrez, Tarek Rayan, Taylor Brown, Wil Mercado, "G Money" Brad Giezentanner.

*Author's personal photos.*



# RESPECTING THE SPORT

by Tim Baghurst

**T**he name Scott Jurek became famous in 2015 when he broke the Appalachian Trail record by completing its 2,189 miles in 46 days and 8 hours. At the culmination of his success, he was cited for violating Baxter State Park rules by consuming alcohol in the park, hiking with a group larger than 12 people, and littering. Although Jurek is protesting the citations, it is disappointing that his great triumph has been overshadowed by both commercialism and an apparent disregard for trail/park etiquette and rules. Some might say that he disrespected his achievement and the trail by his actions.

Respect for self and others is an important personal attribute, but respect for something inanimate, like a trail or even a sport, is less considered. However, it should be. Respect for racquetball as a sport is perhaps forgotten amongst the opportunities for personal glory, status, and prize money, where sometimes players, coaches, and fans place themselves above respecting the game. Such evidence is manifested in a variety of ways, and examples such as sandbagging in a division, not wearing eyewear during practice/warmups, arguing with referees, failing to call a point against oneself, walking forward knowing the point was not won, deliberately delaying the game to gain an advantage, and halfhearted congratulations after a defeat are just some of the examples that are routinely observed. These all, in some way, disrespect the game we all love.

Albert Bandura was a psychologist famous for developing Social Learning Theory. In Social Learning theory, Bandura suggested that we learn through a variety of ways, one of which includes the observations of others. Therefore, if a child is watching a skill or behavior of a sports person, that child will learn and attempt to emulate it. For example, Colombian goalkeeper Rene Higuita astounded the soccer world with his scorpion kick against England in 1995. For some time afterwards, children in England were hospitalized with a variety of injuries associated with attempting the kick.

A second portion of Social Learning Theory suggests that we not only learn from observing a behavior but also learn from observing the consequence (or lack thereof) of a behavior. For example, if a child is watching a racquetball player harass a referee, and there is no consequence, that child is taught that this is an acceptable norm in the sport. It becomes likely that this child will soon be replicating this same behavior. It is the responsibility of both the player not to argue with the referee and the referee to provide consequences for this behavior. Both, it could be argued, disrespect the sport: one by action and one by inaction. The observer sees both.

Respecting the sport above oneself is difficult, but it is necessary to recognize that the sport is bigger than the individual. The same examples of disrespecting the sport provide an opportunity to respect it: don't walk forward knowing you skipped it; call two bounces on yourself; don't ask for a towel when you don't need one; and accept the decisions of referees, recognizing that they are

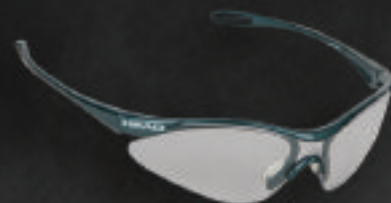
human and might make mistakes. Losing a tough match makes it difficult to genuinely congratulate your opponent and wish them the best. It is even harder when you may not like your opponent. But the sport is bigger than you.

Whether you are a player, coach, fan, referee, or someone else involved in racquetball, your actions, whether good or bad, reflect on the sport. Next time you coach someone, step on a court, spectate, or even referee, think about what you say and do and question whether it respects or disrespects the sport you love.

*Tim Baghurst is an associate professor and coordinator of the physical education and coaching science program at Oklahoma State University. He serves in a variety of roles for the International Racquetball Federation. Photo courtesy Cheryl Kirk.*



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**WOMEN'S SENIOR/MASTERS: EVERYONE HAS A STORY***By Kendra Tutsch | Photos by Tina Marchie / Courtesy WSMRA***Mildred Gwinn**

I'm amazed to realize that we are more than halfway through our third decade of the Annual Women's Senior/Masters Racquetball Championships! This year in Tucson, we'll wrap up 27 years since the first WSMRA tournament, and it's still going strong. Many return year after year, while new players give it a try and are hooked! Reflecting on the many great players I've seen and friends I've made over the years, I asked a few of them to share their stories.

Many of our long-time players have overcome adverse life events to compete each year, and Mildred Gwinn (NC) tops that list. "I started when my husband Bill went back to college and started playing there. He introduced me to the sport and I have been playing since the mid 1970s. When he joined the YMCA and began playing there (in 1976), I had to bring a lawsuit against the Y to allow women members so I could play there, too." That's dedication to racquetball!

Over the years Mildred has overcome major surgeries, chemo and radiation but says "through it all I always said I must be positive and the goal was to come back better as a racquetball player than I was before, and it has worked." Mildred takes part in all the major National tournaments and has played the Senior/Masters nearly every year since her first in 1992, when it was held at the Charlotte Y (poetic justice!). She was inducted into the North Carolina Racquetball Hall of Fame, has won the USA Racquetball Peggy Steding Award, and boasts over 80 first place trophies.

"I like the fact that [WSMRA] attracts a large number of women players and we have good matches and good camaraderie. Also I like that it moves around and we get to see different parts of the country. When I was working, it was a shorter time frame to be off work and that was good."

It's not unusual to do some touring with other players before or after the Women's Senior/Masters, and Mildred has even traveled to Europe with friends she made on the court. "Racquetball people are a family, and we do things together outside of the sport."

Wisconsin's Linda Covault had been playing racquetball for a few years when she heard there would be a nearby tournament for women in Madison, in the spring of 1990. "I just had to go and see what it was all about. That was 26 years ago. Now I keep playing in the tournaments whenever I can because there's no excuse if I lose, since I'm playing women in my own age division."

She adds, "I really enjoy meeting and talking with women who come to these events from all over the country and are just as excited about playing racquetball as I am. It's great competition and everyone has fun." This really sums it up! "Now, since Doubles was added to the Women's Senior Master's tournament, and I'm more of a doubles player now, that was great."

*[Editor's Note: We'll share more of Kendra's backgrounders in future issues, as space allows.]*

**Linda Covault****HAVE NEWS?**

SEND YOUR PHOTOS AND NEWS ITEMS TO [MAGAZINE@USRA.ORG](mailto:MAGAZINE@USRA.ORG) TO BE CONSIDERED FOR A FUTURE ISSUE.

**SHOW ME THE MEDALS!***By Cindy Tilbury, NMRA President*

I have always thought the NMRA has the best medals in sports—medals that any athlete would be proud to display. Competing over the years, we've all earned a plaque, a trophy, a medal, or the occasional useful gift like a mug or desk set. It can all take up a considerable amount of space, so we asked our NMRA members to send in photos of their trophy rooms. We'll share some of the best photos we receive, and start with a pair of shadow boxes that flank 2014 Hall of Fame plaques that were awarded to Rick Betts and myself and hang in our home. Send me yours at [cindy.tilbury@att.net](mailto:cindy.tilbury@att.net).





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# WOR AT THE LAS VEGAS STRATOSPHERE

Article by Vic Leibofsky | Photos by Julian Gomez

**T**he 2015 3WallBall World Championships in Las Vegas, presented by Pro Kennex, has truly become a far-reaching international event, attracting players from 24 states across the U.S., and international players from Australia, England, Ireland, Mexico, Canada, Chile, Colombia, and Bolivia.

As the final stop of the Hemborg Ford 3WallBall Cup Series, there was a lot on the line for fans and players who were pumped up for the expansive live coverage on ESPN3. The temperature was hot, the play was even hotter, and the weekend was a rousing success for Paola Longoria, Daniel De La Rosa, and Michelle Key who each brought home a pair of titles.

The Men's Pro singles final was a battle between IRT stars Rocky Carson and Daniel De La Rosa. Rocky is always the guy to beat outdoors, but this year Daniel would not be denied. He played lights out all weekend and relied on his aggressive serves and lightning speed to get past the Rock in an amazing final match.

In Women's Pro singles, Janel Tisinger gave future hall of famer Paola Longoria all she could handle, losing a very tough tiebreak-

er. Janel played with heart and used her outdoor experience to make it a battle, but in the end Paola made the necessary adjustments and wore Janel down to win the title. Congratulations to both of these amazing athletes!

But outdoors, the buzz is all about doubles! Rocky Carson and Jesus Ustaroz took out two of Florida's best, Chris McDonald and Mike Harmon, in an exciting and close match. This match was super close, and it could have gone either way. As always, Chris was insanely aggressive, and time and again he made the impossible shot. Mike lived up to his new nickname, coined on the broadcast, of "Tasmanian Devil"! Mike was everywhere, and was the breakout player of the event. But in the end, Rocky was relentless and Jesus was the perfect partner. This was their second big event playing together, and it looks like Rocky and Jesus could be the team to beat for years to come.

Paola Longoria and Michelle Key took down Janel Tisinger and Aimee Ruiz in the Women's Pro Doubles Final that was no less exciting. Aimee is one of the best doubles players of all time, and Janel has been the hottest outdoor player for the past few years. That said, Michelle has been a force in outdoor doubles for years, and partnering with Paola made them an unstoppable force as they took home the hard fought win.

In doubles, they were among winners in Mixed Pro: Michelle Key/ Daniel De La Rosa over Rhonda Rajsich/Rick Koll; CPRT: Dave Genevay/ Rick Koll over Craig Lane/Greg Solis; Men's One Wall: Robert Sostre/ Freddy Ramirez over Steven Acevedo/Ben Goldenberg; and Mixed One Wall: Jasmine Suarez/Steven Acevedo over Aimee Ruiz/Joe Young. Catch the replay at [www.race4eight.com](http://www.race4eight.com)

◆ First time titles in outdoor for Paola Longoria and Daniel De La Rosa







## MILITARY RACQUETBALL FEDERATION Debuts Veterans Wheelchair Division

MRF photos by Belinda Dettman

**T**he 3WallBall Championship supports the Military Racquetball Federation (MRF) and has welcomed veterans to participate over the past five years. This year 3WallBall graciously invited the MRF to bring in ten wheelchair veterans to compete in a demonstration division called Up-Down doubles, with a wheelchair player paired with an able-bodied player to compete against another like team.

The MRF portion kicked off with the Pro Am Charity Doubles on Wednesday evening to benefit the Racquetball Rehabilitation Clinics. Hats off to Rhonda Rajsich, Michelle Key, Janel Tisinger, and Daniel De La Rosa, who teamed up with David Grolman, Geoff Holmes, Steven Harper, and Bree Paganetto for the fundraiser.

On Thursday and Friday, wheelchair vets from Colorado, New Jersey, Nevada, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Texas, paired up for round robin matches with their partners and began to draw crowds of spectators. Amateurs and pros alike stopped to watch these amazing players, who inspired everyone with their speed and skill and testified to the good work being done by the MRF. The final



Saturday evening program featured the Nellis Color Guard, Susie Trumps on the trumpet, the vets, and all first responders and active and retired military, along with a few closing remarks from MRF Co-Founder Steven Harper.

ESPN3 was also on site to capture some of the wheelchair play, interview our players, and broadcast the ceremony. A special thank you goes out to Mike Coulter and 3WallBall for their ongoing support.



### WOR OUTDOOR HALL OF FAME

Each year at the WOR Championships, a highlight is the induction ceremony for the Hall of Fame, honoring the greatest players in the sports history. This year's inductees were Freddy Ramirez and Dr. Bud Muehleisen. The entire HOF group posed together L-R: Charlie Brumfield, Barry Wallace, Bob Wetzel, Freddy Ramirez, Brian Hawkes, Bud Muehleisen, Greg McDonald, Martha McDonald and Robert Sostre. Photo provided by Hank Marcus.





# PRESERVING HISTORY

*In honor of the 20th anniversary of the UnitedHealthcare US OPEN Racquetball Championships, Randy packed up a sizeable portion of the Racquetball Museum's physical items and transported them to Minneapolis to share the history of the sport.*

By Sharon Brezina, United States Racquetball Foundation | 2015 photos by John Wiese

If you've ever met Randy Stafford, you know of his love for racquetball and his joy in telling the colorful stories of the sport and its many personalities. And, there are many, many stories.

Known throughout our community as "The Historian," Randy is curator of the Racquetball Museum. The museum is an extensive collection of all things racquetball, from balls and racquets to clothing and accessories - plus print media archives containing books, photographs, and the colorful and informative magazines which were extremely popular back in the day. Art Shay's incredible black and white photographs from the early days of professional tour competition are among of the highlights of the collection. The Racquetball Museum was brought online a few years ago so that it could be accessible to everyone with an interest in, or curiosity about, how the sport developed over the decades.

As a Memphis native and talented young player on the pro tour, Randy found his true life-long passion. So much so, he felt like if he did not try to preserve its history, it might never be done properly. "Racquetball has such a great and colorful history, I feel it's imperative to preserve as much as we can for all for generations of players to enjoy." Randy says.



Most of the items in the museum are from Randy's personal collection of which he says, "You know, I never really collected anything, it's more like I just never threw anything away."

He has already preserved an incredible amount of material, and is always looking for more. If you have an unusual item to share, he'd love for you to send him a photo and the story. You can find him on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/theracquetballmuseum> or visit the Racquetball Museum at: [usracquetballfoundation.org](http://usracquetballfoundation.org).

For Randy, racquetball is more than a passion, it became his vocation. He and his long-running business, The Court Company, have built courts across the nation, including the first competition portable glass court that was donated to USA Racquetball and which greatly enhanced the success of the US OPEN. He is a true ambassador of the sport and great friend of USA Racquetball.

His contributions to the sport earned him induction into the Racquetball Hall of Fame in 2013. For instance, at the age of 20, Randy literally wrote the (second) book on the sport: "Racquetball: The Sport for Everyone" and even today, Randy holds the responsibility of "official tester" of all new racquetballs introduced to the market.

Randy found his passion for racquetball as a teenager and has participated and contributed to the sport ever since. He started playing competitively in college, went on to win a collegiate championship, then play on the pro tour, start the first state championship in Tennessee, and founded the Intercollegiate Racquetball Association.

After four years on tour, he founded the Court Company with Mike Mattingly in 1976, to design and build racquetball and squash courts worldwide. Together, the two ran the Court Company until Randy retired earlier this year after 42 years.



In 1996, Stafford had set up the first US OPEN Racquetball Museum booth in Memphis. Photo courtesy Jim Hiser.

During his tenure at the Court Company, the company built and donated the first portable court to USA Racquetball in 1996. It was this court that made the first US OPEN possible twenty years ago, and he continues to view this as one of his most important contributions to the sport.

Randy considers his other greatest contribution to the sport as the four years he spent as President of USA Racquetball from 2004-2008. During his presidency he brought stability to the organization, guiding it out of perilous debt into relative financial security.

In 2010 Randy Stafford joined Shannon Wright in reorganizing the United States Racquetball Foundation (USRF), with a renewed mission to ensure the future of racquetball. With his participation at USRF, he hopes to see an endowment fund built that will be used to promote the sport, underwrite capital projects, and produce marketing to get people back on the courts.

"I believe the contraction of our sport has turned around and that there are now many opportunities to rebuild our sport of racquetball. Now is the time to build new programs designed to bring in more juniors and new players. Everyone involved in racquetball needs to bring in a few friends to the court and introduce them to the game. Starting one by one we can rebuild our numbers on the courts," Randy says.

## RANDY STAFFORD: TIMELINE

- 1968** – Started playing
- 1972** – Won National Collegiate Doubles
- 1973** – Won National Collegiate Singles
- 1973 -1977** Pro Tour, where he won numerous state and regional invitational tournaments
- 1975** – At age 21, authored the second book written about racquetball: "Racquetball: The Sport for Everyone"
- 1976** – Founded the Court Company
- 1996** – Built and donated the portable court that made the US OPEN in Memphis possible
- 2004 – 2008** President of USA Racquetball
- 2010** – Joined the Board of Directors of the United States Racquetball Foundation
- 2013** – Inducted into the Racquetball Hall of Fame





# CALENDAR of EVENTS

For the latest in USA Racquetball Sanctioned Events visit [USARacquetball.com](http://USARacquetball.com)

Date(s)	Event Name	City	State	Venue
Jan. 7-10	Coast to Coast California Open	Simi Valley	CA	Oakridge Athletic Club
Jan. 8-10	Spokane Winter Classic	Spokane Valley	WA	The Fitness Center
Jan. 8-10	PA State Doubles Championships	York	PA	York Athletic Club
Jan. 8-10	South Carolina State Doubles Championships	Greenville	SC	SportsClub Greenville
Jan. 8-10	Boston New Year's Open	Boston	MA	Boston Athletic Club
Jan. 8-10	VA State Doubles Championships	Herndon	VA	World Gate Sport & Health
Jan. 8-10	Sunset Winter Blast Junior Tournament	Portland	OR	Sunset Athletic Club
Jan. 9	Winter Freeze	Huber Heights	OH	The Heights Racquet & Fitness Club
Jan. 9-10	Ektelon Holiday Park Shootout	Fort Lauderdale	FL	Holiday Park
Jan. 9-10	AZ WOR IV Battle Clash of Chavez	Laveen	AZ	Cesar Chavez Park
Jan. 9-10	Blizzard Bash	Centennial	CO	Goodson Rec Center
Jan. 9-10	Vacaville Cowbell Shootout	Vacaville	CA	In-Shape Sport: Vacaville
Jan. 14-17	New York City Open IRT Tier 1 Pro Am	Syosset	NY	Synergy
Jan. 15-16	MO Racquetball Blizzard - IRT Series Stop	St. Louis	MO	Vetta Sports-Concord
Jan. 15-16	ND Winter Classic	Bismarck	ND	Capital Racquet & Fitness Center
Jan. 15-17	WSMRA National Championship	Tucson	AZ	Tucson Racquet & Fitness Club
Jan. 15-17	MN Hall of Fame	Bloomington	MN	Life Time Fitness - 98th St.
Jan. 15-17	Fran Davis Camp	Sarasota	FL	Sarasota Family YMCA (Frank Berlin)
Jan. 15-17	Longhorn Open	Austin	TX	Gregory Gym
Jan. 15-17	Lorin Markow	Lewiston	ID	Adcope Athletic Club
Jan. 15-17	Build the Arc Championships	Jacksonville	NC	Courts Plus of Jacksonville
Jan. 16	MERC #3	Youngstown	OH	Youngstown State Racket Ball Club
Jan. 16	DAC Invitational	Detroit	MI	Detroit Athletic Club
Jan. 16	Delaware State Doubles	Wilmington	DE	Kirkwood Fitness & Racquetball Club
Jan. 21-24	Beaver Classic	Corvallis	OR	Timberhill Athletic Club
Jan. 21-24	Lewis Pro-Am and State Amateur Championship	Sioux Falls	SD	Sioux Falls Family YMCA
Jan. 22-24	VA - American Door & Glass Classic	Roanoke	VA	Carilion Wellness Roanoke
Jan. 23	Missouri High School League Doubles Tournament	St. Louis	MO	Vetta Sports-Concord
Jan. 23	Garden State Open	Piscataway	NJ	Rutgers The State University
Jan. 23	CNRA Junior State Championships-Northern	Stockton	CA	In-Shape Sport: West Lane
Jan. 23	Steel City Open	Harmarville	PA	Fitness 1440
Jan. 29-31	Maverick Metroplex Racquetball Championships	Arlington	TX	Maverick Athletic Club
Jan. 29-31	Mercedes-Benz of Cincinnati Pro Am	Cincinnati	OH	Beechmont Racquet Club
Jan. 29-31	Mid-Atlantic Collegiate Conference Tournament #4	Chapel Hill	NC	UNC Chapel Hill
Jan. 29-31	GA Regional Doubles	Lilburn	GA	Recreation ATL
Jan. 30	CNRA Junior State Championships	Simi Valley	CA	Oakridge Athletic Club
Jan. 30	CNRA Junior State Championships-Southern	Aliso Viejo	CA	Renaissance ClubSport
Feb. 5-7	UCF Winter Multi-Day Classic	Orlando	FL	UCF Racquetball
Feb. 5-7	MO Pinchshot.com Midwest Championships	St. Louis	MO	Vetta Sports-Concord
Feb. 5-7	Eastern Collegiate Racquetball Conference - Meet #4	State College	PA	I M Building- Penn State Main
Feb. 5-7	Fran Davis Racquetball Camp	Edmonds	WA	Harbor Square
Feb. 5-7	2016 Wintergreen	Laurel	MD	SportFit Total Fitness Racquet Club
Feb. 6	Lifetime Fitness - Spring Shootout	Fridley	MN	Life Time Fitness Moore Lake
Feb. 6	Superbowl Saturday Shootout	Sarasota	FL	Sarasota Family YMCA (Frank Berlin)
Feb. 6	MERC # 4	Berea	OH	Baldwin Wallace University
Feb. 6-18	AZ WOR V Battle D-Day at Deer Valley	Glendale	AZ	Deer Valley High School
Feb. 6	Stockton Super Bowl Shootout	Stockton	CA	In-Shape Sport: West Lane
Feb. 9	USA Racquetball - Instructor Program Clinic	Tempe	AZ	Arizona State University
<b>Feb. 10 -14</b>	<b>USA Racquetball National Doubles Championships</b>	<b>Tempe</b>	<b>AZ</b>	<b>Arizona State University</b>
Feb. 12 -14	The Show in the Snow	Warwick	RI	Healthtrax Fitness
Feb. 13	MO High School and Middle School Championships	St. Louis	MO	Vetta Sports-Concord
Feb. 13-20	Superbeaux! Shootout	Harahan	LA	Elmwood Fitness Center, Harahan
Feb. 17-21	Jerry Bower Memorial	Salem	OR	Courthouse Athletic Club North
Feb. 18-21	WRT Mt Rainier Open	Seattle	WA	Washington Athletic Club



Date(s)	Event Name	City	State	Venue
Feb. 19 -21	VA - 23rd Annual Winter Classic	Richmond	VA	American Family Fitness-Midlothian
Feb. 20	MO High School League Boys Team Championships	St. Louis	MO	Vetta Sports-Concord
Feb. 20	MERC Regional Championship	Columbus	OH	Ohio State University
Feb. 20-21	Motor City Rollout	Mt. Clemens	MI	Total Sports
Feb. 20-23	Mardi Gras Shootout	Merced	CA	In-Shape MercedIn
Feb. 21	MO High School League Girls Team Championships	St. Louis	MO	Vetta Sports-Concord
<b>Feb. 24-28</b>	<b>USA Racquetball High School Championships</b>	<b>Portland</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>Multnomah Athletic Club</b>
Feb. 26-28	St. Cloud - Spring Shootout	St. Cloud	MN	The Club - Total Fitness and Racquetball
Feb. 26-28	Northeast Collegiate Regional Championships	Chalfont	PA	Philadelphia Sports Club at Highpoint
Feb. 26-28	Apex Open	Arvada	CO	Apex Racquetball and Fitness Center
Feb. 26-28	NC Atlantic Coast Championships	Wilmington	NC	Wilmington Athletic Club
Feb. 26-28	42nd Annual Tornado Alley Racquetball Classic	Wichita Falls	TX	Bartley Branch YMCA
Feb. 27	IRT Singles One-Day Cash Shootout	Lilburn Georgia	GA	Recreation Atl
Feb. 27-28	Meijer State Games of Michigan Winter Games	Grand Rapids	MI	Riverview Athletic Club
Mar. 3-6	Krowning Moment Pro Invitational Internacional	Edinburg	TX	University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley
Mar. 4 -6	Florida State Singles	Sarasota	FL	Sarasota Family YMCA (Frank Berlin)
Mar. 4 -6	LPRT New Jersey Open-Presented by WearRollout.com	Warren	NJ	The Racquet Club at Warren
Mar. 4 -6	Warhawk Open	Monroe	LA	Univ. of LA at Monroe Activity Center
Mar. 5-6	AZ WOR VI Battle Target Tolleson	Tolleson	AZ	Tolleson High School
Mar. 9-12	NMRA National Championship St. Louis	St. Louis	MO	Vetta Sports-Concord
Mar. 11-13	MN State Singles Championships	Fridley	MN	Life Time Fitness Moore Lake
Mar. 11-13	Fran Davis Camp	Findlay	OH	Findlay YMCA
Mar. 11-13	Capital Challenge	East Lansing	MI	Michigan Athletic Club
Mar. 11-13	Georgia State Singles Championships	Atlanta	GA	Emory University
Mar. 16-20	Oregon State Championships	Portland	OR	USA Racquetball Association
Mar. 17-20	New York Life Ins Beach Bash, presented by Splathead	Hollywood	FL	Garfield Street Courts
<b>Mar. 29-Apr. 2</b>	<b>USA Racquetball Intercollegiate Championships</b>	<b>Tempe</b>	<b>AZ</b>	<b>ASU Student Recreation Complex</b>
Mar. 31-Apr. 3	8th Annual Raising Some Racquet for Kids	Huber Heights	OH	The Heights Racquet & Fitness Club

## 2015 USA RACQUETBALL REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

City Dates	Venue	Director	Email
Missouri	St. Louis	April 8-10	Vetta Sports Concord
New York	Hicksville	April 9-10	World Gym
Oregon	Gresham	April 13-17	Cascade Athletic Club
Colorado	Colorado Springs	April 15-17	Downtown YMCA
Georgia	Alpharetta	April 15-17	Emory University
Illinois	Lombard	April 15-17	Glass Court
Maryland	Columbia	April 15-17	Sport Fit Laurel
Pennsylvania	Murrysville	April 15-17	Fitness 1440
Kansas	Wichita	April 22-24	YMCA Downtown Witchita
Michigan	Harrison Township	April 23-24	Davison Athletic Club
Texas	Selma	April 22-24	Thousand Oaks Family YMCA
Florida	Bradenton	April 28-May 1	Sarasota YMCA

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## HEAD PENN RACQUET SPORTS EXTENDS WITH USA RACQUETBALL

**U**SA Racquetball and HEAD Penn Racquet Sports have announced that Penn has exercised its option to extend its tenure as the Official Ball of the National Governing Body. Penn has been the Official Ball of the Association for more than 35 years, providing support that helps USA Racquetball conduct a wide variety of programs.

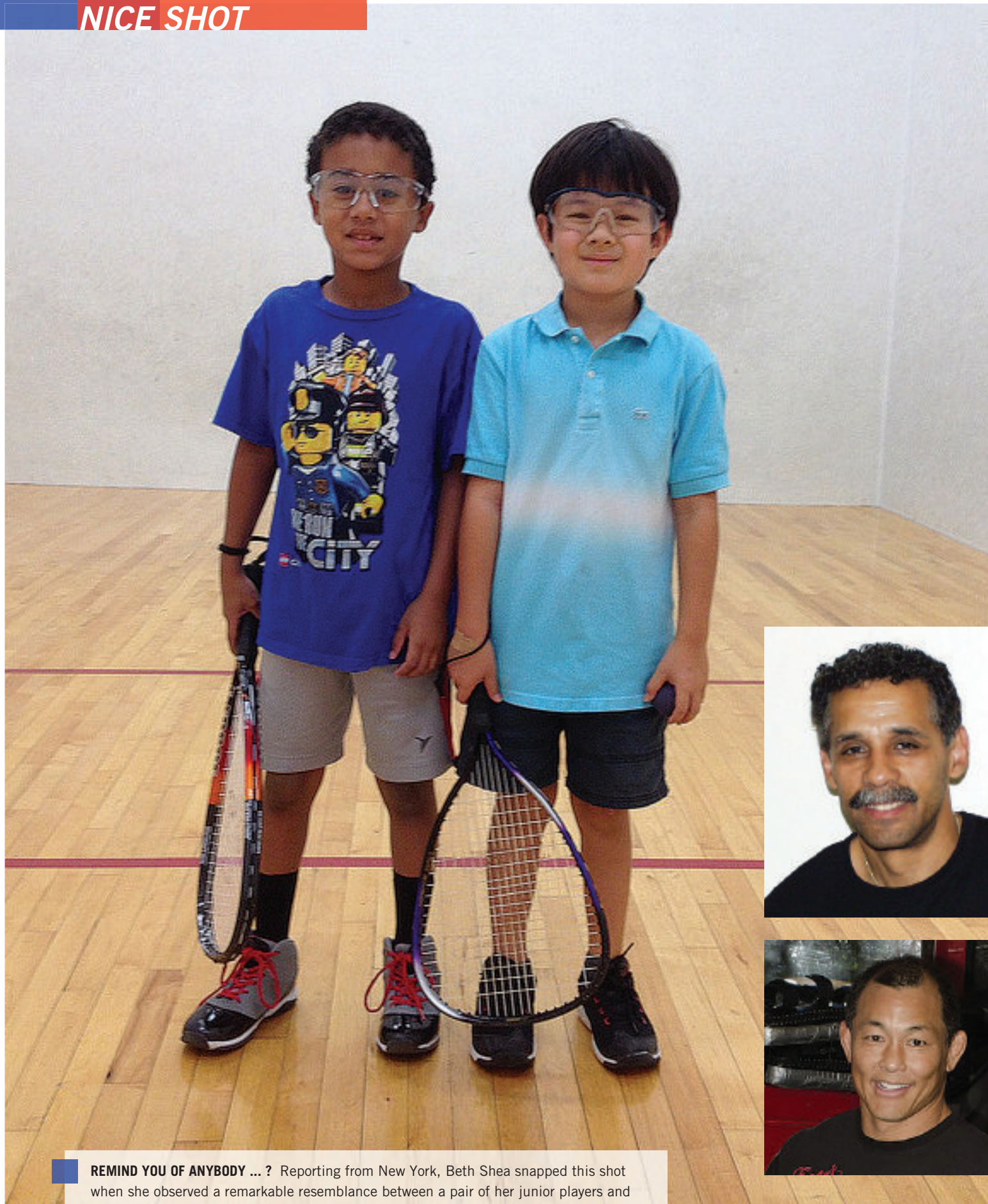
"We are thrilled to continue our partnership with USA Racquetball" stated Ben Simons, Senior Business Manager for HEAD Penn Racquet Sports. "This is the longest running sponsorship in the sport of racquetball and is a relationship we are honored to be a part of. We find strong value in our affiliation with USA Racquetball and are proud 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."

In addition to serving as the Official Ball of USA Racquetball, Penn is also serving as a Presenting Partner of five USA Racquetball National Championships, including the National Singles, Doubles, Intercollegiate, Junior Olympics and High School Championships.

Learn more about the USA Racquetball National Championships presented by Penn at [USARacquetball.com](http://USARacquetball.com).



**REMINDE YOU OF ANYBODY ... ?** Reporting from New York, Beth Shea snapped this shot when she observed a remarkable resemblance between a pair of her junior players and some vintage top pros. Chris DeSouza looks like a mini Ruben Gonzalez and Palmer Wentworth favors a young Egan Inoue. Deja Vu ... don't you think?



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