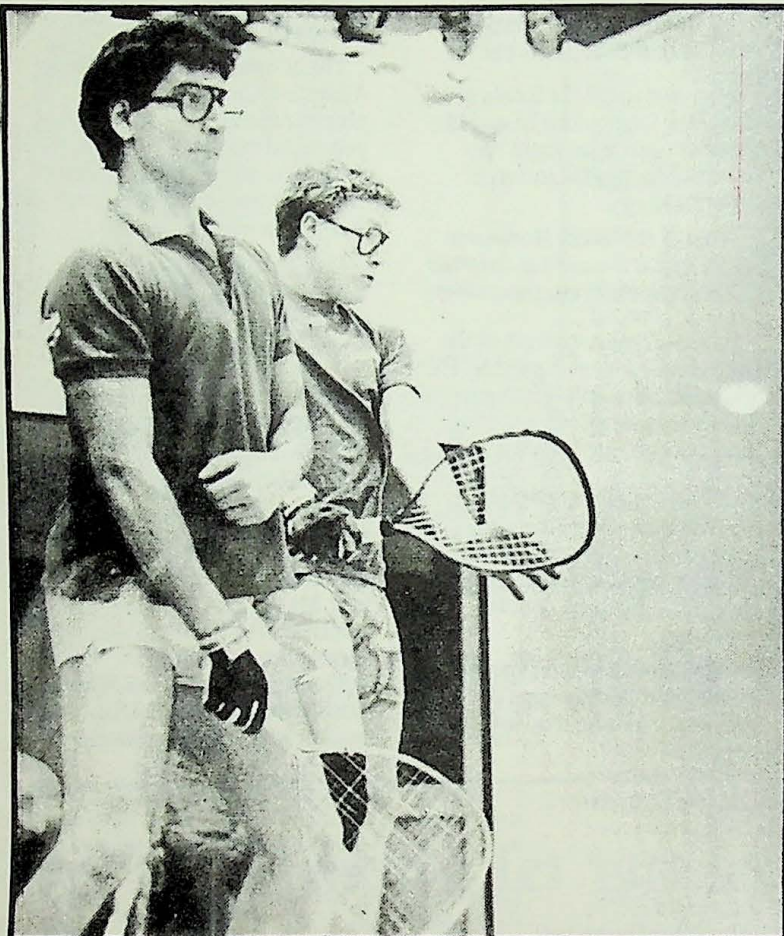


CENTER COURT



August 1989

Volume I Issue I



CLAY MORSE of Havre (right) shortens a backhand swing against **Mike George** of Great Falls in quarterfinal action at the 1989 Montana Racquetball Association singles tournament.

Kennis, Shields claim state singles titles

MISSOULA — The state was assured of a new Montana Racquetball Association men's Open singles champion in 1989 when three-time defending titlist Dan Hugelen of Missoula pulled out of the season-finale less than two days before the mid-April tournament.

Hugelen underwent arthroscopic knee surgery shortly before the three-day event which attracted 226 players to the Court House Athletic Club. Hugelen's withdrawal left the 16-man Open bracket wide open.

And a pair of teenagers battled for that championship. Helena's John Kennis edged Clay Morse of Havre in a tie-breaker, 15-13, 14-15, 11-6.

In the women's Open play, Helen Shields of Missoula knocked off Sherri Strandberg of Billings en route to her fourth consecutive title.

The field included 167 men and 59 women.

The C brackets were the largest draws. Frank McNabb topped the 37 men's players, while Janelle Morse of Havre led the way for 16 women.

Here are the state placers.

Complete match results were unavailable.

MEN

Open (16 players)

1. John Kennis (Helena), 2. Clay Morse (Havre), 3. Mike Richter (Missoula), 4. Tyler Hansas (Msla), Consolation: Lance Reithmeier (Hav).

A (26 players)

1. Dave Kuhns (Billings), 2. Rob White (Lewistown), 3. Dennis Wolff (Blgs), 4. Jeff Monaco (Great Falls), Consolation: Jim Anderson (Msla).

B (26 players)

1. Mike Holchkiss (Cut Bank), 2. Dan Burke (Msla), 3. Mike Boka (Dillon), 4. Buck Tripp (Helena), Consolation: Steve Doran (Butte).

C (37 players)

1. Frank McNabb, 2. Keith Fortmann, 3. Craig Price (Msla), 4. Kevin Fullbright, Consolation: Bob Crowe (Hav).

Senior A (15 players)

1. John Boyle (Msla), 2. Gary Peterson (Msla), 3. Dennis Wolff (Blgs), 4. Tom Thompson (Great Falls), Consolation: Dennis Humphries (Glasgow).

Senior B (11 players)

1. Ross Tate (Msla), 2. Dick Strausburg (Blgs), 3. Ray White (Lew), 4. Gordon Tripp (Hel), Consolation: Tom King (Blgs).

Senior C (16 players)

1. Dean Cors, 2. Bill Forwood, 3. Tim Hilston, 4. Larry Nicholas, Consolation: Tom Hirst (Msla).

Masters (13 players)

1. Dick Strausburg (Blgs), 2. Jim Van Meter (Hel), 3. Frank Moreni (Anaconda), 4. Denny Almquist (Msla), Consolation: Ken Colbo (Msla).

WOMEN

Open (12 players)

1. Helen Shields (Msla), 2. Sherri Strandberg (Blgs), 3. Cindy Thompson (Blgs), 4. Donna Beldring (Bozeman), Consolation: Debbie Morse (Hav).

A (8 players)

1. Lori Jurenic (Butte), 2. Linda Richter

See STATE on Page 2

MRA president reflects on '80s, welcomes '90s

BILLINGS — Welcome to the Montana Racquetball Association's tournament season for 1989-90. As the decade of the '80s draws to a close, I'd like the share a few thoughts about Montana racquetball over the last 10 years.

In the early '80s, racquetball was still a rapidly growing sport. Several new court clubs were built so that every city and most towns had a nice place to play racquetball.



Dan West

MRA
President

Three-to-four hundred participants in a tournament was not uncommon and neither were 2 a.m. matches — even with 16 courts.

The mid-80s saw racquetball peak and decline. The number of tournament players dropped drastically, and many of the clubs built primarily for racquetball became multi-use facilities.

In the later part of the 80s, the decline in racquetball participation has leveled off, but planning tournaments has become more important. With fewer people traveling out of town to tournaments, it is no

longer possible to just "have" a tournament and guarantee its success. Good local support is the most-important factor in having a successful, quality tournament.

Despite all of the changes during the decade, there are some things about Montana tournaments that have remained the same.

•The quality of competition is excellent. See West on Page 4.

Meet a MRA member



Ron Frize

Speed, serves and a deadly forehand pinch shot make Ron Frize of Miles City a formidable men's A racquetball player.

The 32-year-old salesman is right-handed and plays on a Hogan, micro ceramic optimum size racquet. He is on the court 3-5 times a week and has played the game for eight years, including six years' worth of tournaments.

His regular playing partners include John Taylor, John Brown, Don Gollehan, Tom McGuire and Cary Veis. Brown is his doubles partner.

Frize's oldest son, Dustin, also plays racquetball at the Miles Community College courts.

Frize is also involved in coaching baseball and soccer, fishing, hunting and camping.



Mary Allaman

Desire may be the best thing Mary Allaman has going for her. The 45-year-old assistant nurse plays racquetball daily at the Billings Athletic Club, plus many tournaments.

The want "to play and improve my game" is what keeps Allaman on the court. She plays regular games with doubles partner Rod Hessler, as well as Connie Boorman and Tom Butler.

An A player, who also enters Seniors, the right-hander uses a Head Radial.

Allaman started the game five years ago. She also is a regular on softball, bowling, walleyball and volleyball teams.



Rod Morse

Rod Morse knows plenty when it comes to ugly burgers and rollouts. The owner-operator of Rod's Drive In and the Sagebrush Athletic Club, the 36-year-old Havre native has the best of both worlds.

Morse treated the locals to fast food long before he and his brother, Jerry, brought racquetball to the Hi-Line eight years ago.

This past March, Morse and Daryl Ness teamed for the state men's A doubles championship.

Serving is the strength of the right-handed Morse's game. He plays on Ektelon's Toron racquet four times a week during the regular racquetball season.

Ness, Clay Morse, Lance Reithmeier, Perry Jacobson and Butch Albertson are his regular practice partners. His son, Clay, is also a doubles partner.

Watching women's beach volleyball on television is Morse's favorite way to take a break.



Debbie Morse

A lethal backhand has carried Debbie Morse of Havre to consistent places in the women's Open singles and doubles play among MRA members.

The 28-year-old Sagebrush Athletic Club manager has played racquetball for seven years and tournament ball for 6½ years. Morse, her husband, Rod, and stepson, Clay, travel to 8-10 tournaments a year.

During the summer, Debbie doesn't pick up her Finn racquet. The rest of the year, she is on the court five times a week.

The right-hander practices against Karen Jacobson, Ron Brenna, Dave Martin and Margie Morse. Jacobson and Morse are her doubles partners.

Morse's two young daughters, Mandy and Kelli, are also involved in racquetball and exercise classes.

A past recipient of the MRA's Jan Shelton sportsmanship trophy, Morse enjoys painting.

STATE from Page 1.

(Msla), 3. Denise Moerkerke, 4. Anne Shea, Consolation: Alyssa Boland (GF).

B (14 players)

1. Marge Hainline (Msla), 2. Susan Harper Whalen (Msla), 3. Diane Johnson (Butte), 4. Kim Kynett (Townsend), Consolation: Rita Hamilton (Hav).

C (16 players)

1. Janelle Morse (Hav), 2. Penny Boka (Dill), 3. Debbie Atkins (Whitefish), 4. Kelly Kukes (Boz), Consolation: Karen Goligoski.

Senior (9 players)

1. Cindy Thompson (Blgs), 2. Sharon Dusenberry-Tank (Boz), 3. Jan Shelton (GF), 4. Bonnie Talbot (GF), Consolation: Laura Bakker.

JUNIORS (7 players)

1. Wayne Townsend (Butte), 2. Larry McAfee (GF), 3. Matt Thompson (GF), 4. Alyssa Boland (GF), Consolation: Andy Clark (Ana).

Shigeo, consider this a newsletter take over

HAVRE — Big Sky State Games racquetball champions were decided not quite three weeks ago in Billings. It was the fourth year for the Games, which were a sanctioned 1989 Centennial event.

Like many of the Games' 20 sporting events, racquetball in July is definitely off-season and hot.

Racquetball in August will be hot, too. The traditional Hot August Nights play opens the 1989-90 tournament season. With the new year comes Center Court, a quarterly Montana Racquetball Association newsletter.

At present, it is a project of Dan West, the MRA president;



Rita Balock-Hamilton

Center Court
Editor

myself, the Havre Daily News Sports Editor; and Ed Schoenen of Havre's Computer, Press & Copies.

I still have the two newsletters — maybe the only — I've received in five years of MRA membership. For a sports writer, they contained some valuable information — a listing of past state champions dating back to 1969. One is dated Aug. 1986 and

the other March 1987.

Stuffed inside the newsletters are handwritten notes from interviews for a column I wrote following the 1988 state singles tournament with Open champions Helen Shields and Dan Hugelen of Missoula.

The MRA newsletters were done by Shigeo Banks. I met Banks in September of 1986 when I became a Universal Sports and Courts member in Great Falls as a Tribune sports writer.

Often, I played racquetball and talked the game with Banks. And often, he suggested I take over the newsletter. Well, Shigeo, consider this a take over, but please contribute.

Last summer I returned to Havre Daily News sports and fulltime Sagebrush Athletic Club membership. Part of the return meant more racquetball tournament time, which makes me think editing a MRA newsletter is possible.

The Center Court logo was designed by Schoenen, a southpaw who plays A singles. Schoenen's business will also print and distribute the newsletters.

Information is being coordinated through West for issues in August, November, February and March. The format remains open.

Strandemo camp should improve game

Editor's Note: This column appeared in the Nov. 23, 1988, edition of the Havre Daily News. The Sagebrush Athletic Club is interested in returning Steve Strandemo to Havre for a late-fall or early-winter camp in 1989. However, 12 campers are sought. Those interested in obtaining more information may contact Debbie Morse, Sagebrush manager, at 265-5437.



Steve Strandemo

By RITA BALOCK-HAMILTON
Daily News Sports Editor

voice was cracking by the end of the camp.

Although racquetball is Strandemo's profession, his original athletic aspirations were directed toward a professional baseball career.

He played four years as a shortstop for St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. "I played baseball for 20 years and nobody ever showed me how to do it the right way," he said. "I wanted to get good and sign (professionally), and I had a chance to sign, but it was like being in an ocean and you couldn't swim."

Strandemo took up racquetball at the age of 22 and reached the Open level within two years. "I had a chance to see some of the top players and I thought I could compete with these guys, but I didn't have the knowledge of how to play," he said.

In search of more-organized racquetball, Strandemo left Minnesota for California where a core of 15-20 players were considered the country's best. "I really didn't go out there to play pro," he said. "I went out there because I knew somewhere they had studied the game and had sound fundamentals."

Once in California, Strandemo played racquetball all the time. "I'd get up in the morning and go home exhausted at night," he said. "It was a fun job. It was pretty exciting. I saw myself improving because I had a role model to follow in the top players."

Strandemo turned professional one year later and played the racquetball circuit from 1974-1985. His peak play was during 1975 and 1977 when he finished second in the national championships.

In the early days, the pro tour included four tournaments a year. Now, there are 10 major pro stops. "That's the sad part of it," Strandemo said. "They're still playing about 10 tournaments and the money instead of a \$15,000 total purse is now \$20,000."

"I was the fourth-ranked player at the end of the first year (as a pro) and my prize earnings were \$1,700," he added. "Somebody now can make, with endorsements from companies, in a good year \$50-75,000."

Strandemo ranked sixth nationally when he quit playing professionally. "I put pressure on myself to play well," he said. "There was pressure because if you would have slipped down (in ranking) then endorsement value also goes down."

Last fall, Strandemo signed a long-term contract with Ektelon, one of the world's largest racquetball equipment manufacturers.

Faster balls and larger, lighter racquets have altered the game. "There's a change in the sport, which I'm not sure is positive," he said. "The balls are getting faster and the racquets can hit the balls very fast. The two have tied it into a speed, velocity game. It's harder for a lot of people to compete because the ball is getting so fast."

"It gets so power-orientated at the upper level, it's hard for people at a less-powerful level to relate to that," Strandemo added. "You can't tell racquet companies to slow the racquet down. Ball companies probably don't want to make the ball much slower, they'd have to remold it."

Given those tangibles, Strandemo is content to teach racquetball basics to more than 1,000 players a year all over the United States.

"I've seen so many people who have never been shown proper fundamentals and seen them so frustrated when they reach a plateau they can't get off virtually no matter how much they play," he said. "It's a plateau they can get off and elevate if somebody explains what the game is all about."

1989-90 tournaments

BILLINGS — Sixteen tournaments are being sanctioned by the Montana Racquetball Association for the 1989-90 season.

The traditional season-kickoff, the Hot August Nights event, is scheduled for Aug. 25-27 in Helena at the Crossroads Health and Fitness Center.

The same club will be the host for the state doubles play Feb. 23-25.

State singles champions will be crowned in Bozeman over the weekend of March 30-April 1.

The season is capped with the AARA Region 13 adult and junior tournament at the Billings Athletic Club on April 20-22.

Here is the list of tournaments:

AUGUST

25-27: Hot August Nights, at Crossroads Health and Fitness Center in Helena.

SEPTEMBER

29-Oct. 1: Autumn Classic, at Universal Sports and Courts in Great Falls.

OCTOBER

13-15: Fall Tournament, at Sagebrush Athletic Club in Havre.

27-29: Ghostbusters, at Universal Sports and Courts in Bozeman.

NOVEMBER

10-12: Glasgow Invitational, at Recreation Center in Glasgow.

DECEMBER

1-3: Missoula Pro-Am, at the Court House in Missoula.

JANUARY

5-7: The Racquetball, at Elks Athletic Club in Kalispell.

12-14: Broadwater Classic, at the Broadwater Athletic Club in Helena.

26-28: Billings Pro-Am, at the Billings Athletic Club in Billings.

FEBRUARY

9-11: Winter Nationals, at YMCA Family Fitness Center in Butte.

23-25: State Doubles, at Crossroads Health and Fitness Center in Helena.

MARCH

9-11: Goosetown Classic, at Goosetown Racquet and Health Club in Anaconda.

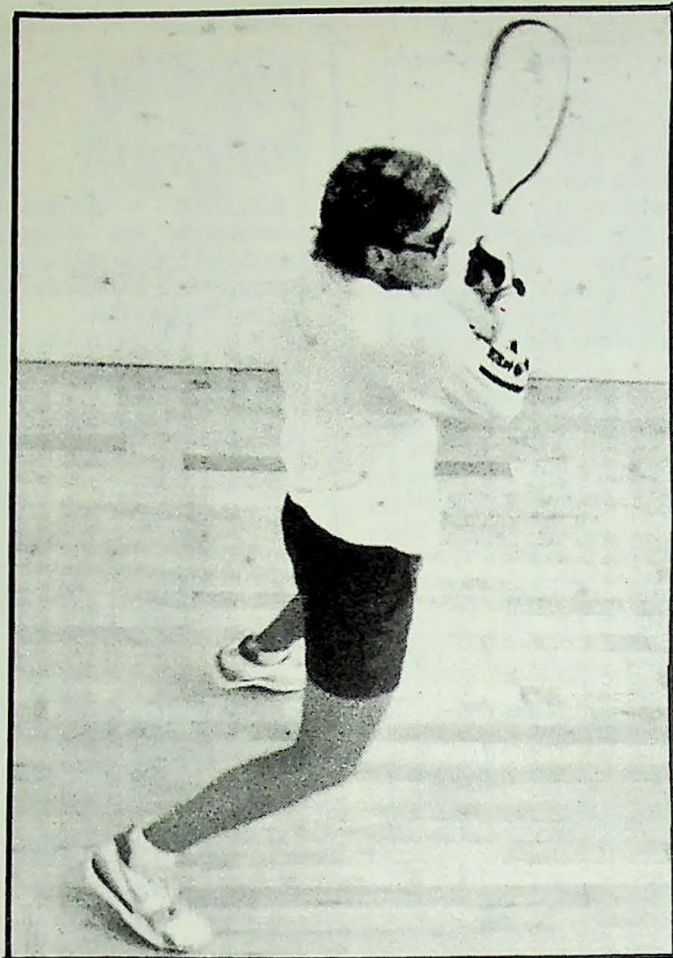
9-11: Kalispell Open, at Kalispell Athletic Club in Kalispell.

16-18: Shamrock Shootout, at Cut Bank Civic Center in Cut Bank.

30-April 1: State Singles, at Universal Sports and Courts in Bozeman.

APRIL

20-22: AARA Regional 13, at Billings Athletic Club in Billings.



The Havre Daily News/RITA BALOCK-HAMILTON

LANCE REITHMEIER of Havre reached the men's Open singles racquetball semifinals at the Big Sky State Games.



**P.O. Box 2429
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Kennis wins

BILLINGS — John Kennis of Helena and Michelle Koch of Billings won gold medals in Open singles racquetball at the annual Big Sky State Games in mid-July.

Kennis turned back Lloyd Marsh of Billings, 15-10, 15-7, in the men's final, while Koch

dumped Cindy Thompson of Billings, 15-10, 15-2, in the women's match.

Marsh teamed with Lance Reithmeier of Havre to win the Open doubles in a tie-breaker over Jim Heath and Dan West of Billings.

Here are the tournament results:

MEN SINGLES OPEN

1. John Kennis (Helena), 2. Lloyd Marsh (Billings), 3. Matt Parriman (Helena), 4. Lance Reithmeier (Havre), Consolation: Russ Noonan (Helena).

A

1. Al Lich (Blgs), 2. Bill McNeely (Blgs), 3. Ron Frize (Miles City), Consolation: Dave Kuglin (Great Falls).

B

1. Wayne Townsend (Butte), 2. Art Sandborgh (Bozeman), 3. Jerry Hovland (Boz), Consolation: Mark Anderson (GF).

C

1. Russ Rowsey (Boz), 2. Mark Anderson (MC), 3. Gary Paull (Colstrip), 4. Matt Meeks (Boz), Consolation: Jimmie Schroyer (Colstrip).

SENIOR A

1. Jim Heath (Blgs), 2. Anthony Wust (Blgs), 3. Tom Hagan (Glendive), Consolation: Jim Leischner (Baker).

SENIOR B

1. Ray White (Lewistown), 2. Dale Butterfield (Blgs), 3. Joe Colombo (Boz), 4. Jim Pickens (Blgs), Consolation: Dan

(Blgs), Consolation: Glen Rice

SENIOR C

1. Duane Delger (Blgs), 2. Curt Kunugi (MC), 3. Ken Bailey (Blgs), 4. John Tripp (Blgs).

MASTERS

1. Bob Baldwin (Boz), 2. Tim Keating (Blgs), 3. Stan Kondracki (Blgs), 4. Ken Colbo (Msl), Consolation: John Taylor (MC).

DOUBLES

OPEN

1. Lloyd Marsh (Blgs) Lance Reithmeier (Havre), 2. Jim Heath-Dan West (Blgs), 3. Kennis-Parriman (Hel), 4. Tim Hergelt-Alan Mader (Blgs), Consolation: Ron Roesti-Rob Gunderson (Butte).

A

1. Schmidt-Hagan (Glen), 2. White-White (Lew), 3. Brown-Frize (MC), 4. Strausburg-Kondracki (Blgs), Consolation: Casper-Brown (Blgs).

B

1. Greenlee-Joyce (Blgs), 2. Neutgens-Butterfield (Blgs), 3. Rowsey-Rowsey (Boz), 4. Keating-Anderson (Blgs), Consolation: Townsend-Townsend (Butte).

WOMEN SINGLES OPEN

1. Michelle Koch (Blgs), 2. Cindy Thompson (Blgs), 3. Chris Martin (Blgs), Consolation: Jan Shelton (GF).

A

1. Karen Erlenbusch (MC), 2. Tina Sandborgh (Boz), 3. Mary Allaman (Blgs).

B

1. Rita Hamilton (Havre), 2. Jan Schweitzer (Boz), 3. Gretchen Sultzer (Boz).

C

1. Kelly Kukes (Boz), 2. Vi Schurman (Hel), 3. Kelly Hoplauf (Glen), 4. Joyce Putsch (Blgs), Consolation: Debra Friesen (Hav).

SENIOR B

1. Judy Free (Blgs), 2. Rene Keating (Blgs), 3. Lynn Hopfaut (Glen), 4. Sherry Matteucci (Blgs), Consolation: Judy Kondracki (Blgs).

DOUBLES

B

1. Sandborgh-Schweitzer (Boz), 2. Kondracki (Blgs)-Hamilton (Hav), 3. Joyce Erlenbusch (MC).

WEST from Page 1.

•The sportsmanship, with a few exceptions, is outstanding.

•The comraderie is tremendous.

•And the friendships ... well, those will last a lifetime.

Have fun at the tournaments this year and good luck!

The next issue of Center Court will be published Nov. 6. The deadline for copy is Oct. 23.

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