

FALL 2014



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NATIONAL PADDLEBALL ASSOCIATION

If you know paddleball ... And you've heard of Bay City, Michigan ... Then you know Randy Wackerle, but you probably don't know Randy Wackerle as well as I do.

March 23, 2013, was the date of the first Bay City Wackerle Championship Paddleball Tournament. It was held at the new Dow Bay Area Family YMCA on Washington Avenue.

Wackerle fittingly won the Division B championship by outlasting a determined Mark Kudwa, 21-19, in the final game of the day for Wackerle. He won it in two games. Wackerle's been playing paddleball since 1966.

I discovered Wackerle and his paddleball game in 1972 at the old Madison Avenue YMCA after returning to Bay City after a 10-year absence which included college and a tour in the Air Force.

I came to Bay City as a racquetball player. There were few racquetballers at the Madison YMCA in 1972. But...HOLY CRAP...There were paddleball players EVERYWHERE!!

There were "the old guys" -- Harry Neal, Herbie Bean, Dick Andrews, Fred Smith, Tom Haertel, Buck Watson, Stan McDonald, Marc Cormier, Danny Skrzypczak, Ed Heinz, Bob Heinz, Paul Grein, Bob Estabrook, Gary Adelman -- all prestige veteran players.

There was Wackerle's crowd -- Tom Kaeckle, Al Zawilinski, Mark Piechowiak, Mike Wisniewski, Bob Groya, Bill Yahr, Joe Todd, Denny Goddeyne, Bob Goodwin, Sandy DeGreif, Earl Pratt, Charlie Pike, Joe Noonan, Dave Mathewson, Joe Siniff, Bill Herrera, Mark VanWagner, Gary Podleski, Bob and Dave Pryzbylski, Larry Clemens, Charlie Besaw, Arnie Schmidt, Terry Wagar, Morin Doyle, Chuck Weller, Bob Ricker.

I met every one of those listed above because of Paddleball.

Every night, there were pick-up games and league play. There were tournaments all over the state on the weekend. Paddleball was "KING" in Bay City in the 1970s.

Between matches at last year's Wackerle Tournament, Wackerle told me he "was blessed" to have a paddleball tournament named after him and that he was honored. That is so like Wackerle to down-play any type of recognition thrown his way. Funny thing about that...I think it's more like paddleball is blessed to have Randy Wackerle as one of the most visible promoters and point men. And I'm not alone. Everybody had something nice to say about Wackerle at last year's tournament.

Joe Todd was on hand for it...not as a player, but in honor of Wackerle's name being on the tournament. Todd's been playing paddleball in Bay City for 35 years. "You couldn't pick a better namesake for a city tournament than Wack's," said Todd. "There's never been a better representative for paddleball than Randy." Chad Schwall has been playing PB for 25 years. He was introduced to paddleball back when he was in middle school. Wackerle, then a teacher at Bangor John Glenn, started an after-school junior paddleball league and Schwall joined...and has been playing paddleball ever since. "I felt almost an obligation to play in the tournament named after Wackerle", Schwall said.

Jane Wackerle, Randy's wife was in the crowd watch the 2013 tourney. "He deserves it," Jane said. "I played for quite a few years myself...I've enjoyed all of it -- the tournaments, the travel, the youth programs. Paddleball has been a very important part of our lives." The Wackerles were married in 1973. Randy already was a tournament player and well on his way to the paddleball career that ultimately got him inducted into the Bay City County Sports Hall of Fame. Wackerle received the Earl Risky Memorial Trophy from the National Paddleball Association in 1982 for his contributions to the sport. He also received the NPA's Sportsmanship Trophy in 1981. Bottom line -- the world is a better place because of good people like Randy Wackerle. As far as I'm concerned...they could rename Bay City after him.

(Editor's Note: This article was written by O. J. Cunningham, publisher of The Bay City Times and a former paddleball player.)

2014 BRIGHAM CLASSIC CHAMPIONS



ANDREW PRICE & CHAD KRAGER
OPEN CHAMPIONS



ROBERT STONE & JIM OWENS
MEN'S A CHAMPIONS



ALEX WESTERVELT & RICK CLEWIS
MEN'S B CHAMPIONS



CHRIS BURKE & RICK CLEWIS
MEN'S C CHAMPIONS



ANDY MITCHELL & DON KIRKCONNELL
35+/70+ COMBINED CHAMPIONS



ED MAHER & ROBERT STONE
45+/55+ B CHAMPIONS



JIM STERKEN & JIM SWENDRIS
45+/55+ CHAMPIONS



GA SC Lowcountry Tournament 2014 Participants

Savannah Outdoor Racquetball is on a mission to grow participation in outdoor racquetball, paddleball, and handball at Lake Mayer Community Park. Offered is free play and loaner equipment every Saturday at noon. The public park has a championship court with a leading edge court surface that is safer and cooler than typical cement courts. It is a one wall design with nice wide run off areas. If anyone visits Savannah Georgia they should definitely play this court. GA SC Lowcountry Tournaments are an annual one day event in June that offer divisions for all three sports. Registration on www.r2sports.com for the 2015 event is open now and spots are limited so consider to sign up now.

Our thanks to Lem O'Neal for all of the work he is doing to help promote paddleball in Savannah GA. To get more information go to: sav_outdoor_rb@comcast.net

2015 Tournament Changes

One of the top priorities for the NPA Board of Managers is to increase participation in paddleball tournaments. A few changes for this year:

For doubles events the only age division in which participants can combine their ages to meet the age requirement is 35+/70 combined. This means each person must be at least 35 years of age or have a combined age of at least 70.

We have added a "B" divisions for 45+ and 55+ divisions. There must be a minimum of 4 players/teams for the 45+ or 55+ and 45+ "B" and 55+ "B" for each division to go. If there are less than 4 teams/players the division will be combined. After the first round the losers will form the new "B" division.

We have added a link (Qualifications for Divisions under the Tournament tab) that will give you all the information you will need to decide what division is best for you to the tournament entry blanks.

In place of giving every player/team a ball at tournament check-in a ball will be placed on the court at the beginning of the tournament. This ball should be left on the court for the next participants after your match is done. If at any time the ball breaks or is unplayable it will be replaced. A new ball will be issued for every finals event.

As always, we appreciate any input you can give us that will make tournaments a better event for you. Also, we are always looking for any ideas that will increase participation in tournaments.

San Diego's Paddleball Senior Olympics

October 5 saw yet another Paddleball Senior Olympics at Sorrento Valley Racquetball, and another demonstration of how the Paddleball Senior Olympics is becoming less and less about the Sorrento Valley club with each passing year, as players from other clubs make their way to Sorrento Valley for the tournament and are fast climbing the ladder. This year, players from the San Carlos LA Fitness club took the gold in two age groups.

Senior Olympics, the ultimate forum for “geezerjock” competition, debuted at the national level in 1987 after two years of planning and organization. The first games in St. Louis, mostly track and field, drew 100,000 spectators and 2,500 competitors with Bob Hope giving the opening address. The overwhelming popularity and purposefulness of the event led to a general decentralization of activities, and Senior Olympics quickly spread to state and local competitions across the country, coordinated through the national organization. San Diego held its first Senior Olympics in 1988, where 143 senior athletes competed in nine sports. By 1990, San Diego Senior Olympics had grown to 452 competitors. The National Senior Games Association recognizes 19 sports, but each region has additional exhibition sports to include more athletes and reflect regional sporting traditions. That's where paddleball fits in. There is no national Senior Olympics competition in paddleball, but there is the pride of competing in a regional sport under the umbrella and sponsorship of a national forum.

In 1992, the San Diego Senior Games Association (SDSGA) incorporated as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit agency whose mission is to: “Encourage senior adults, aged 50 or older, to carry on vigorous lives by developing and maintaining high levels of physical activity and mental fitness through regular participation in sports, fitness, and health education activities.” This year's Games were sponsored at the national level by AARP, Humana, Hyatt, and others, with additional local support through Scripps Health, The Dr. Seuss Foundation, and numerous others, most of whom have an interest in building a healthy senior population.

Leonard Sonnenberg is the Master of Ceremonies for San Diego's Paddleball Senior Olympics, and Leonard knows a whole lot about both 501 (c) 3 organizations and senior fitness activities. Leonard is a CPA specializing in 501 (c) 3 non-profit organizations. His business, Sonnenberg & Co. CPAs, at 42 years strong, is itself almost old enough to compete in the Senior Games. Leonard's facility with non-profit organizations made him a key asset to SDSGA and the Senior Games in general. He has been the Treasurer and a Board Member for the San Diego Senior Olympics and also for the California Senior Games. He served as a commissioner for San Diego and also for Palm Desert, Orange County, Pasadena, and the 2009 National Senior Games. In 2002, he was selected to carry the torch for the Winter Olympic Games, and In 2012, Leonard was asked to take on the official role of Games Commissioner for SDSGA.



Leonard Sonnenberg presents gold and silver Senior Olympics medals. That's Charlie Brumfield in the background picking out his T-shirt after taking gold in the 65s.

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Court sports, particularly paddleball, play a special role for Leonard. In 1997, Leonard was diagnosed with lymphoma, and his prospects weren't optimistic. His doctors recommended lots of vigorous physical activity to maximize his chances. He had always enjoyed racquetball, and so he stepped up the pace of his workout in an effort to overcome. And he's still going strong. In a fairly famous moment during the 1997 Senior Olympics Racquetball tournament, Leonard's chemotherapy was running overtime and he was unable to make the start time for his match. Knowing the cause, the tournament director broke the rules and postponed the match to start when Leonard arrived...whatever time that might be. Leonard adopted this kind of flexibility as a hallmark of the tournaments he directs. It is really not about winning, but about playing. If you want to play, he'll find you a partner. If your partner gets injured, he'll find you a substitute. If two teams want to play each other as part of the competition, he'll schedule a match even if they aren't in the same age group. If you need to leave by noon, you can play early. If you can't arrive until ten o'clock, you can play late.

As paddleball gained in popularity in San Diego, Leonard added a paddle to his bag, and made paddleball a part of the Senior Games. For at least the past seven years, paddleball has been elevated to the same level as racquetball in the San Diego Games. It's safe to say that paddleball is part of the San Diego Games because of Leonard, who plays in the 70-75 year age group where his forehand is regarded as automatic.

The Senior Games are one way to embrace the fact that paddleball is played by geezerjocks. We need to grow the sport through new, young talent. But we can also acknowledge the popularity of our sport among genuine senior athletes who require and achieve a level of fitness seldom seen in senior competition.

The camaraderie of Paddleball Senior Olympics brings people out of the woodwork. Players show up from clubs where you didn't know that paddleball was played. Racquetball players who have never taken the plunge will pick up a paddle for a day and have a go at it. Players curious by their absence from the court for months or years will show up and take a swing, or at a minimum sit and enjoy the action on Court 1. Moreover, the Paddleball Senior Games live up to the SDSGA's mission of encouraging seniors to carry on vigorous physically and mentally healthy lives through fitness and participation in competitive sports. It is a tradition worth preserving. So each year in September or October, we proudly say "Let the games begin!"

The brother and sister team of John and Joy Paraiso from the San Carlos LA Fitness club. Winners of the 45 year division, a younger division allowed in the Senior Games for exhibition sports (legendary geezerjock Peter Callstrom photobombing from the service box on Court 1).





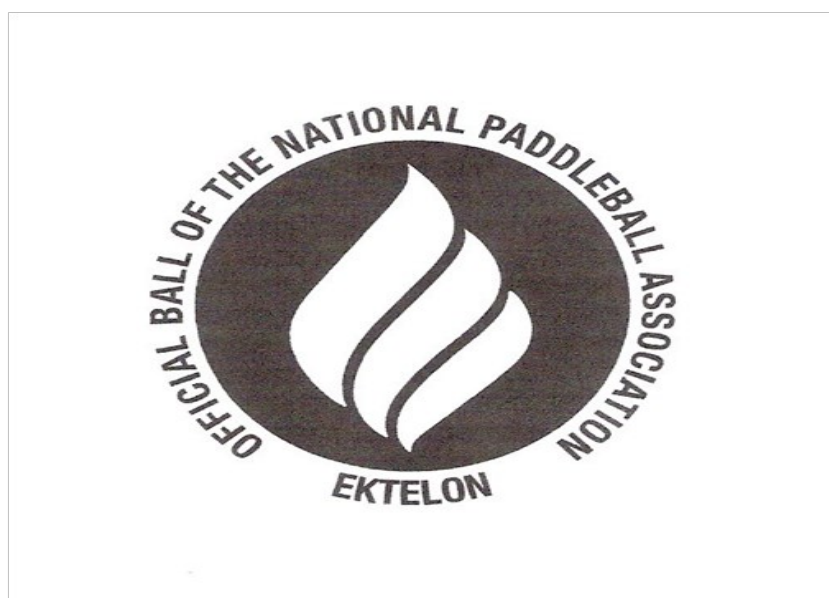
Gale Mikles was the best right side doubles player I ever saw. He was a 2-time national wrestling champ at Oklahoma before taking over the Intramural department at Michigan State. When he competed against Charlie Brumfield on the MSU intramural courts in '71 he ended up chasing Charlie around the court like a boxed chicken for blocking shots, calling him 'Rooster'. Mikles and Herb Olson on the right, were the perennial MSU doubles champs until the team of Keeley-Andy Homa dethroned tem in '68. That's Lou Giampetroin, ref and the Spirit of Paddleball, front and center. **By, Bo Keeley**

Bob McNamara

Three-time national champ Bob McNamara died this past July at age 82. Bob claimed NPA's National Doubles Championships in 1963 and 1964 with Dick McNamara and with Bernie McNamara in 1970.

Charlie Brumfield declared; "He was Mr. Paddles in '67." Dr. Budd Muehleisen noted; "What a big loss of a great person. I feel so fortunate to have known him and even more fortunate to have known him as a friend and a doubles partner. Many great memories!"

Bob McNamara was a star running back for the University of Minnesota in the 1950s and was a major benefactor for his beloved alma mater. A tribute article may be viewed via the link: <http://www.bizjournals.com/twincities/news/2014/07/21/former-gophers-star-benefactor-bob-mcnamara-dies.html>





WIZ INDUCTED INTO THE BAY CITY HALL OF FAME

NPA Hall of Famer Michael Wisniewski (The Wiz) was inducted into the Bay City Sports Hall of Fame, October 5, 2014. A very nice pre-induction article on one of paddleball's greatest champions can be viewed at http://www.mlive.com/sports/bay-city/index.ssf/2014/09/early_butt-kickings_drove_hall.html

O.J. Cunningham, the president of the Sports Hall of Fame committee, Bay City Hall of Famer, former NPA Newsletter editor, and paddleball player, introduced Wiz at the induction ceremony. O.J. noted that in his opinion, Michael Wisniewski was the greatest paddleball player of all time. The committee has listed Wiz's paddleball career highlights at <http://www.baycountysports.com/scripts/inductees.cfm?InducteeID=1819>

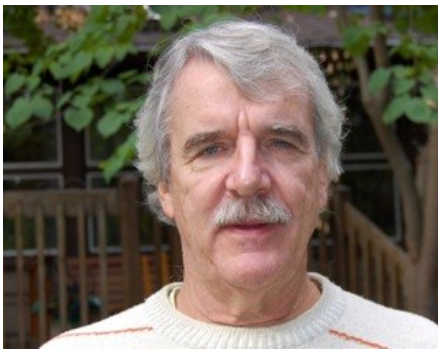
In a class acceptance speech, Wiz articulated the virtues of paddleball, encouraged young people to take advantage of lessons at the Bay City Y, and thanked family and friends who had contributed to his success.

He told of his abrupt introduction to the sport of paddleball by fellow Bay City Sports Hall of Famer Randy Wackerle, giving special thanks to Randy for having done so. The Wiz was shocked how the older Randy so easily ran him all around the court, noting he "beat my butt!"

Congratulations Wiz! You are certainly worthy of this impressive honor.

Jim Owens





THE PRESIDENT’S CORNER

It’s Not Racquetball

“Paddleball is not racquetball with a paddle and a slower ball.” I’ve heard Hall of Famer Andy Mitchell verbalized this numerous times. Brandon Creamer informed us at the recent Board of Managers meeting that some of the crossover racquetball players who played in the 2014 National Doubles Championships thought that opponents often got in their way.

Likewise, racquetball is not paddleball with a racquet and a faster ball. Crossover paddleball players do complain about aspects of racquetball.

The basics of the 2 games are similar but there are several nuanced differences. The standard singles defensive position in paddleball is in the center of the court directly behind the short line. In racquetball, it’s 2 or 3 steps back.

I was in a match with a crossover racquetball player a few years ago that became controversial. I would serve a high deep lob into the rear left corner of the court, get into the standard defensive position, and my opponent would repeatedly call hinder. When asked why, he said my position prohibited him from taking a crosscourt shot.

In a doubles match against Dennis Negrete and John Mason, the tables were turned. The strategic Negrete, who certainly knew my tendencies, instructed Mase, playing on the right side, to stand in a particular spot whenever I went for a back wall shot from the left side. Denny and Mase prevailed. A jubilant Mase, even though he was hit numerous times, was pleased with the results and declared that he was impressed that I had hit him in about the same spot each time.

A note for Rule 5.2 (Dead Ball Hinders) states: The striker cannot expect opponents to provide a particular shot other than a straight shot to the front wall.

In both cases, the defensive player was not required to provide the shooter the preferred shot. In racquetball, a hinder, possibly an unavoidable hinder, would have been called in both cases.

In paddleball, if the ball bounds from an offensive player’s paddle and hits an opponent before hitting the floor or the front wall, it is a hinder (a do-over), regardless if the ball would have made it to the front wall or not. Not the case in racquetball.

In doubles, paddleball players tend to play closer than they would in racquetball. The paddle is nearly 5 inches shorter than a racquet. The follow-through swing of a veteran player is very different in the 2 sports. It is more exaggerated and across the body in racquetball. In paddleball, the swing is shortened and tends to finish more upward, especially if another player is near. Defensive paddleball players need to get closer to the front wall than they would in racquetball.

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Typically, a paddleball match is the best two 21 point games out of 3 (11 point tiebreakers in some early rounds). Racquetball is usually played to 15. A paddleball tournament can wear out even a fit competitor, especially if he/she plays in 2 divisions.

It is rare that a tournament match has a referee in paddleball. A player may request a referee at any time but few do. Almost all tournament matches in racquetball do have referees.

When I started playing tournament paddleball, there were referees assigned to all matches. I thought it was a bad idea when the NPA adopted its current position. In retrospect, I believe the change was very good for the game. It's remarkable that there are far fewer controversies now that players work things out themselves for the most part.

Andy Mitchell believes, because of the speed of the ball, the striking tool, and the rules that the strategies of the two games are quite different. He thinks 4-wall racquetball is more of an up and back game where there is an emphasis on reaction and speed, and 4-wall paddleball is side-to-side as well as up and back with more focus on positioning and defense.

Many players play both racquetball and paddleball and make the transition seamlessly. A case in point, Brandon Creamer, who started with paddleball, is having a lot of success and fun playing racquetball currently.

Paddleball is not racquetball with a paddle. Racquetball is not paddleball with a racket.

The NPA encourages crossover racquet players to give paddleball a try, as our players have been encouraged to give racquetball a swing. Just be mindful, the two sports are not the same.

Please click the link below to read an article in the Bay City Times about the Brigham Classic tourney.

http://www.mybaycity.com/scripts/p3_v2/P3V3-0200.cfm?P3_ArticleID=9468&P3_FeedFrom=OldSystem