



NPA NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL PADDLEBALL ASSOCIATION

Our beloved Godfather of Paddleball, Lou Giampetroni, passed away on June 19th. See Page 5 of the newsletter for some of our favorite pictures

2017 NPA National Doubles Championships

The team of Coe and Entrikin solidify their standing as the top four wall paddleball team in the country in impressive fashion at National Doubles in Riverside, CA, March 12th. Emmett Coe of the San Diego area and Todd Entrikin of the Riverside area defeated fellow Californians Chris Crowther of Carlsbad and Mike Czabala of Camrillo in the Pro/Open final in two games: 21-16, 21-12. Coe and Entrikin split the \$600 first place prize. Crowther and Czabala split \$400 for 2nd place.

The champs as a team have now won four consecutive National Open Doubles Championships. It was the fifth consecutive for Entrikin, having won in 2013 with his paddleball mentor Kelly Gilhaus.

The crowd was thoroughly captivated and impressed by the high level of play in the final. There were numerous tremendous gets and shots peppered throughout the match. Peter Callstrom graciously posted the Pro/Open final on you tube along with some other matches:

By several measures, the tournament was a big success, thanks in large part to the National Paddleball Association's tournament partner Gearbox Sports. Gearbox's paddleball director Aaron Embry maintained his top promoter status, spending hours making sure we had what we needed to make the tournament a success; urging players to enter by phone, email, text, and face-to-face, providing game balls, raising money, actively involved in setting the tournament up, helping with the tournament desk, and awarding gift certificates to players.

Gearbox is the official ball and paddle of the NPA.

National Doubles was the largest paddleball tournament we've had in a while, 89 players including 11 juniors. It was a high-energy event to say the least; there were many exciting matches, good food, and appreciative players and fans.

Todd Entrikin, really made sure National Doubles was a huge success. Not only did he play in two divisions, winning his 5th consecutive Pro/Open National Doubles title, he did a tremendous job as the tournament director. Todd helped raise sponsorship funds, showed up at 4 a.m. every morning to make sure everything was set up and then made sure the event ran smoothly. Local favorite and current 45+ National Paddleball Doubles Champion Dale Valentine really stepped up, providing a lot of quality help with the on-site running of the tournament.

The tournament would not have been nearly as successful if it were not for generous contributions from Sonnenberg & Company CPA, Simenienowski & Associates, Liquid Nitro, and Alberto's Mexican Food. Thank you sponsors!

It was a great to see so many kids having such a great time. They were all smiles and energy. Thank you, Jackie Paraiso-Larsson for running the Junior's division. It was a highlight of the tournament!

A collection of professional grade photos by Roby Partovich and a link to completed R2 brackets can be accessed at <http://npa.paddleball.org/national-doubles-championship>

Jim Owens

NPA President

2017 National Doubles Results

Pro/Open

1st Emmett Coe (San Diego, CA) / Todd Entrikin (Perris, CA) 21-16 21-12

2nd Chris Crowther (Carlsbad, CA) / Mike Czabala (Camarillo, CA)

AA

1st Bobby Friedman (Aliso Viejo, CA) / Luis Avila (Wilmington, CA) Forfeit (Photo not available)

A

1st David Taub (Temecula, CA) / Mike Myers (Menifee, CA) 21-6 21-6

2nd Marty Breed (Riverside, CA) / Mike Ratnour (CA)

Consolation Pio Morterzo (Fullerton, CA) / Victor Rodriguez (CA) Forfeit

B

1st Mark Hasenstab (San Diego, CA) / Michael Alcorn (Oceanside, CA) 21-7 21-10

2nd David Taub (Temecula, CA) / Eddie Levine (Murrieta, CA)

Consolation Alex Crescencio / Tom Quiroz (Anaheim, CA)

C

1st Paul Lorenz (San Diego, CA) / Saiid Noroozi (San Diego, CA) 21-19 21-15

2nd Ricardo Callado (Chula, CA) / Matt Stanford (CA)

3rd TBA

70+ Combined

1st Emmett Coe (San Diego, CA) / Tony Jelso (Temecula, CA) 21-10 21-8

2nd Mike Czabala (Camarillo, CA) / Todd Entrikin (Riverside, CA)

Consolation James Owens (Ann Arbor, MI) / Andrew Price (Chicago, IL) Forfeit

45+

1st Dale Valentine (Riverside, CA) / Vince Carlone (Riverside, CA) 21-9 21-10

2nd Carlos Mercado (Corona, CA) / Victor Rodriguez (CA)

55+

1st Steven Mitchell (Riverside, CA) / Mike Ratnour (CA)

2nd Leonard Sonnenberg (San Diego, CA) / Randy Slager (Germantown, TN)

Mixed B

1st Guy Pittman (Riverside, CA) / Roxanne Rehling (San Diego, CA) Forfeit

2nd Lan Florence (San Diego, CA) / Carlos Mercado (Corona, CA)

Mixed C

1st Adrianna Moncada (Riverside, CA) / Randy Jones (Riverside, CA) Forfeit

2nd Pio Mortero (Fullerton, CA) / Vickie Garner (Poway, CA)

Junior's

Girls 6 and Under

1st Kylie Carbajal

Girls 8 and Under

1st Raelynne Larson

Boys 8 and Under

1st Chase Entrikin,

Girls 10 and Under

1st Victoria Rodriguez

2nd Aiden Carbajal,

Boys 12 and Under

3rd Ved Kartick

1st Advait Kartik

Boys 10 and Under

1st Matthew MacKenzie

Boys 14 and Under

1st Hugo Rodriguez



Pro/Open 1st Emmett Coe (San Diego, CA)
Todd Entrikin (Perris, CA)



A 1st David Taub (Temecula, CA)
Mike Myers (Menifee, CA)



B 1st Mark Hasentaub (San Diego, CA)
Mike Alcorn (Oceanside, CA)



C1 1st Paul Lorenz (San Diego, CA)
Said Noroozi (San Diego, CA)



70+ Combined 1st Emmett Coe (San Diego, CA)
Tony Jelso (Temecula, CA)



45+ 1st Dale Valentine (Riverside, CA)
Vince Carlone (Riverside, CA)

2017 NATIONAL DOUBLES WINNERS



55+ 1st Steven Mitchell(Riverside CA)
Mike Ratnour (CA)



Mixed C 1st Randy Jones (Riverside CA)
Adrianna Moncada (Riverside CA)

2017 NATIONAL DOUBLES WINNERS



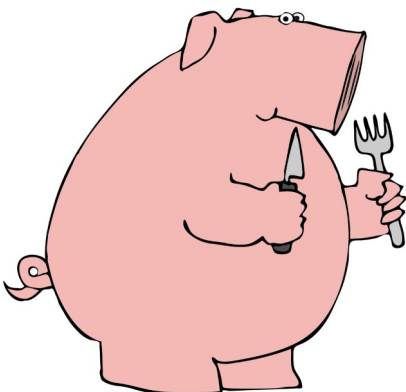
Mixed B 1st Guy Pittman (Riverside CA)
Roxanne Rehling (San Diego CA)

THE NPA BOARD OF MANAGERS WILL BE MEETING THIS SUMMER TO PLAN FOR THE 2017-2018 SEASON.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS, QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTIONS WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU.

PLEASE SUBMIT THESE TO: LBRIGHAM@YAHOO.COM BEFORE JULY 15, 2017

YOUR INPUT IS APPRECIATED. THIS SPORT CAN NOT GROW WITHOUT YOU, THE PLAYER!



**PIG ROAST AND HUMAN SACRIFICE
GRAB-BAG DOUBLES TOURNEY**

COMING IN AUGUST 2017

**PADDLEBALL TOURNEY, PIG ROAST,
AND FUN & GAMES ALL IN ONE DAY**

Lou, you will be greatly missed. Your place in paddleball will never be forgotten.





Don Traxler

Inducted 2017



Don Traxler was inducted into the Hall of Fame, April 22, 2017

in East Lansing, Michigan

Don has played competitively in at least one NPA tournament each year for the past 50 years.

He has been a tireless promoter of paddleball introducing many new players to the game. Don has also served as director for local tournaments as well as past NPA tournaments.

Don was the recipient of the Sportsmanship Award in 1984 and the Earl Risky award in 2003. He was inducted into the Midland County Sports Hall of Fame in 1993.

National Titles

Masters Singles: 1980, 1982. 1983, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988

Golden Masters Singles: 1992, 1994, 2000

Platinum Singles 2007

Golden Masters Doubles 2001 (with Larry Piper)

Men's "C" Doubles 2012 (with Harris)

Grace Harrison

Inducted 2017



Grace Harrison was inducted into the Hall of Fame, April 22, 2017
in East Lansing, Michigan

Grace dominated in women's paddleball from 1976 to 1984, winning eight National Women's Open titles. She was commonly viewed as a fierce competitor with a tremendous back-hand.

Fellow competitor and Hall of Famer Caprice Behner noted in regard to Grace: "A great player and inspiration to us all. She demonstrated wonderful sportsmanship winning or losing and she won plenty." Grace was the recipient of the Sportsmanship award in 1978.

National Titles

Women's Open Singles 1979

Women's Open Doubles: 1976 (with Elyse Jacob)

1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1983 & 1984 (with Judy Shirley)

Dan McLaughlin

Inducted 2017



Dan McLaughlin pictured with his son Kevin at Kevin's wedding. Dan was inducted into the Hall of Fame, April 22, 2017 in East Lansing, Michigan.

Dan has always been a great ambassador for the game. His career began in college leading to a long career of over 35 years of National titles.

A listing of his National title follows:

Open Singles: 1972, 1975

Seniors Singles 1984, 1987

Masters Singles 1997

Golden Masters Singles 1996, 2009

Seniors Doubles 1984 & 1985 (with George Hobbs)

Masters Doubles 1994 (with George Hobbs)

Golden Doubles 2009 (with Andy Mitchell)

2017 National Singles/Grab Bag Doubles

Gearbox sponsored player Emmett Coe of San Diego, California won his first National Paddleball Singles title in East Lansing Michigan April 21 - 23, 2017. He proved to be a dominant force – not only did he win the event, he didn't lose a game in either Open Singles or Wood-Only Grab-Bag Doubles Division.

Emmett's opponents only reached double digits twice. Open Singles Semifinalist Kevin McLaughlin of Grand Rapids, Michigan made it to fifteen in the second game and Brandon Creamer of East Lansing, Michigan scored twelve in the second game of the Open Singles Final.

In the premier of the Wood Only Grab Bag Division, players brought out a variety of paddles from the past. 72-hole Pitcher Paddles were the most popular. Chad Krager of Bay City, Michigan sported a unique paddle his dad made in 1965. In contrast, Emmett show-cased a new Californian "Paddle-Dave" wood paddle.

I randomly drew pieces of paper out of a bag with players' names printed on them for each of the grab bag divisions to determine teams. Emmett drew his eventual Open Division semifinalist opponent Kevin McLaughlin. This division winning team easily defeated a team with considerably more experience with wood paddles in the final, Hall of Famer Andy Mitchell of Kalamazoo, Michigan and Chad Krager 21-6 21-3.

Gearbox Sports Paddleball Director Aaron Embry came to Michigan from San Diego a few days early with the tournament's dominant force to promote paddleball and Gearbox's complete line of paddleball equipment, including the new line of classic paddles: The Classic 275, The Classic 300, and The Classic 325. The name classic refers to their shape verses the unique tear-dropped shape of Gearbox's previous paddle offerings. Aaron and Emmett visited the Dow Bay Area Family YMCA in Bay City, Lifetime Fitness in Troy, and Franklin Athletic Club in Southfield.

Gearbox is the official ball and paddle of the NPA. Gearbox balls are on sale at the NPA Web Store: Others Gearbox product are available at the Gearbox Sports website:

In no small part because of Greg Lewerenz, The Franklin Athletic Club provided many new tournament players, who have apparently developed a passion for the game and adapted quickly from sister sport racquetball. Many of these players were introduced to paddleball at a Gearbox Paddleball Demo Night a little over a year ago at the Franklin Club. They are eager to play paddleball both indoor and outdoor. Two claimed National Singles Titles: Lois Romero in the B Division and Howie Webb in C. Greg Lewerenz and Ian Brooks prevailed in the Open Grab Bag Division.

The NPA is receptive to trying new offerings based on players' requests. The idea of the Wood Only Grab Bag Doubles was suggested by Andy Mitchell in a discussion after the 2017 Brigham Classic.

A second division premiered at this tournament was The Vintage Division. It resulted from a discussion I had with Tom Mudd at the Bean Smith Doubles tournament in Bay City. It featured rotational doubles for players of at least 65 years of age in which participates had different partners each round, individual scores were recorded each round, and the player with the highest total won. Joe Siniff of Bay City, Michigan prevailed.

At the awards ceremony Saturday evening, Grace Harrison, Don Traxler, and Dan McLaughlin were inducted into the Hall of Fame, and Aaron Embry was recognized for his many contributions to the sport of paddleball, receiving the annual Earl Risky award.

In addition to receiving a classy black on grey championship sweatshirt and a medal, each divisional winner received a \$25 Gearbox Gift Certificate. Gearbox also donated one of their new paddles, a quality gym bag, and a pair of eye guards for the 50/50 drawing at the award ceremony. Gearbox is really promoting our sport.

A summary of results follow.

Jim Owens

President of the NPA

2017 National Single/Grab Bag Doubles Results

National Singles Champions

OPEN DIVISION

- 1st Emmet Coe (San Diego, CA)
- 2nd Brandon Creamer (East Lansing, MI)
- 3rd Kevin McLaughlin (Grand Rapids, MI)

A DIVISION

- 1st Adam Koehler (Bay City, MI)
- 2nd Sam Baldori (East Lansing, MI)
- 3rd Greg Lewerenz (Farmington Hills, MI)

B DIVISION

- 1st Luis Romero (Detroit Area, MI)
- 2nd Mike Brennan (Clinton Twp., MI)

C DIVISION

- 1st Howie Webb (Detroit, MI)
- 2nd Mike Heinz (Benton Harbor, MI)

45+ DIVISION

- 1st Michael Wisniewski (Bay City, MI)
- 2nd Andy Mitchell (Portage, MI)

VINTAGE

- 1st Joe Siniff (Bay City, MI)

Grab Bag Doubles Champions

OPEN/ A DIVISION

- 1st Greg Lewrenz (Farmington Hills, MI) and Ian Brooks (Detroit Area, MI)
- 2nd Adam Koehler (Bay City, MI) and Pete Magar (Northville, MI)

B DIVISION

- 1st Mitch Larson (Saginaw, MI) and Jim Howland (Redford, MI)
- 2nd Pete Magar (Northville, MI) and Cyrus Chinoy (Detroit Area, MI)

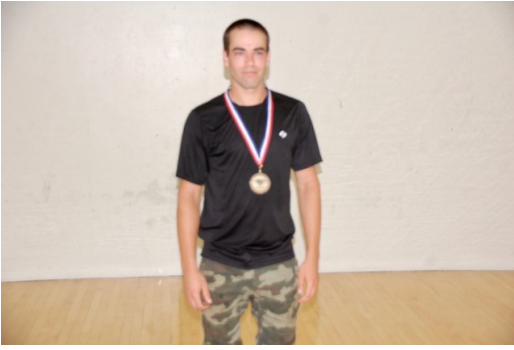
C DIVISION

- 1st Jim Price (Freeland, MI) and Mike Stetz (East Lansing, MI)
- 2nd Gerald Gaylord (Webster, NY) and Jody Henning (Saginaw, MI)

The Wood Only

- 1st Emmett Coe (San Diego, CA) and Kevin McLaughlin (Grand Rapids, MI)





OPEN DIVISION : 1st Emmett Coe



A DIVISION: 1st Adam Koehler (Bay City, MI)



B DIVISION: 1st Luis Romero (Detroit MI)



C DIVISION: 1st Howie Webb (Detroit MI)



45+ DIVISION: 1st Mike Wisniewski (Bay City MI)



VINTAGE: 1st Joe Siniff(Bay City MI)

NATIONAL SINGLES



OPEN / A DIVISION

1st Greg Lewrenz (Farmington Hills, MI) and Ian Brooks (Detroit Area, MI)



B DIVISION

1st Mitch Larson (Saginaw, MI) and Jim Howland (Redford, MI)



C DIVISION

1st Jim Price (Freeland, MI) and Mike Stetz (East Lansing, MI)



WOOD ONLY

1st Emmett Coe (San Diego, CA) and Kevin McLaughlin (Grand Rapids, MI)

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Made by Lance Krager, Sr

Paddles have certainly changed over the years. It wasn't that long ago that all players used wood paddles, like the players in the Wood Only Grab Bag Doubles Division at the 2017 National Singles/Grab Bag Doubles did. Composite paddles started appearing in pickleball tournament the 1990s. The majority of players made the transition from wood to composite about fifteen years ago.

In Wood Only division this year, Chad Krager played with a unique paddle, a meaningful keepsake; a paddle made by Lance Krager Sr, Chad's father in 1965. Lance, Sr was a 25-year old employed at Dow Corning in Midland and some fellow workers invited him to play pickleball. Chad's father viewed the paddles he had played with in high school as junk, so he drew the outline of two paddles, freehand, close to the dimensions of his old paddles onto true half-inch 5-ply wood, cut them out with a band saw, and drilled out 20 holes in each paddle. Fifty-two years later, Lance's paddle resurfaced at the 2017 National Singles/Grab Bag Doubles in his son's hand.

Jim Owens

NPA President

YOU CAN PURCHASE PICKLEBALLS AT THE NPA WEBSITE: WWW.PICKLEBALL.ORG

IN THE ANN ARBOR MI AREA THEY CAN BE PURCHASED FROM JIM OWENS—IN THE BAY CITY MI AREA FROM JIM PRICE - IN THE KALAMAZOO AREA FROM LORRI BRIGHAM

Jim Owens asked Hall of Famer Mike Wisniewski a pair of questions about paddles. The questions and answers follow. My first composite paddle was made by the Wiz.

Have composite paddles changed paddleball?

Wiz: Yes, they most certainly have. I will try and answer with myth VS fact.

Myth: Composites have allowed players to hit the ball harder....As proved over and over again with Earl Pratts radar gun, a 13 to 14 once woody can accelerate the ball to approximately 80 to 88 mph. The maximum speed recorded with a composite was 90 hit with a Gearbox paddle recently. The ball is a bigger factor in ball speed and there seems to be a terminal velocity of the ball and its construction.

Fact: Composite paddles have allowed a larger shot selection than the woodys....This is the big change as the game of paddleball looks and feels much different due to the players ability to reach out while off balance and still make offensive shots repeatedly,,,This is what I noticed right from the get go, players with lesser abilities overnight were able to hit balls back to the front wall that the day before they couldn't, and their ability to hit a kill shot improved immensely so that players have become much more offensive. This is not a game changer in my opinion. It's a change in players' approach to how the game is played. Composite paddles allow one's creativity to come out.

Fact: Woodys have an adverse effect on tendons in arm, due to the ability of wood to transmit frequency, sound, vibration (This is why wood is used in quality sound system speakers). They can aggravate the tendons in your arm and everyone I know from the old days including yours truly battled arm issues. It was common place to take a day or two off to rest the arm and my practice sessions were limited to 30 or 40 minutes....The Composites quietly made this go away making the game more enjoyable.

Would you prefer for paddleball be a wood only game?

Wiz: Well let's see,

Would I like to be driving a model T or a new modern car?

Would I prefer to play baseball with a sawdust filled ball or a new modern ball?

Would I prefer to play golf with wooden clubs or carbon clubs?

Would I prefer to play tennis with my old Bjor Borg woody or my new Graphite?

I Guess the answer is **no**...

I believe all things must evolve to survive and while I do maintain a selection of beautiful wood paddles from yesteryear and would like to play in special nostalgic events using wood, I think the changes due to increasing players' ability to be more creative at the sport of Paddleball have made the game more appealing to those who we need to keep the sport alive: The younger generation.

Hope my synopsis helps .



THE NPA WANTS TO KNOW WHERE YOU PLAY

We want to expand the “Looking For A Place To Play” section on the web. To get your club included please send the following info to: jmowens2@gmail.com

- The name, address and phone number of the club you play at
- Any drop-ins or scheduled times for regular paddleball play
- A contact person in the area (if possible)

Wackerle & Krager Break Another Record at Bean-Smith Paddleball Tourney.

The Dow Bay Area Family Y hosted the 40th Annual Bean-Smith Paddleball Doubles tournament, April 8th. The tourney was named after beloved local YMCA handball and paddleball enthusiasts Herb Bean & Fred Smith. The 2017 edition fielded the entries of 24 players (12 teams) from Bay City, Saginaw, Ann Arbor, Lansing, Detroit and Benton Harbor.

In the Open division, the 6-time defending Open Champs Randy Wackerle & Chad Krager of Bay City eclipsed a 14 year old record of six consecutive wins to capture their 7th consecutive Bean Smith Trophy. The previous record was set by Bay City Hall of Famer Mike Wisniewski with four different partners over that record setting sweep culminating in 2003.

Wackerle & Krager defeated the hard-hitting duo of Brandon Creamer (Lansing) and Greg Keenan (Bay City) 21-15, 17-21, 21-18 in a dynamic 3-game finals match. The win marks Wackerle's eleventh and Krager's seventh Bean title. Krager was a student of Wackerle's at Bangor Junior High in 1986 where he was introduced to paddleball in Wackerle's junior paddleball program at the Y West Campus. Krager never played much after the junior high program taking a relative 15-20 year sabbatical from competitive play, but rekindled his passion in 2006 after moving to Chicago and meeting up with an acquaintance of Mike Wisniewski's from the National Paddleball Association. Since 2006, the teacher/student duo teamed up for 9 Bean Smith Tournaments in total and hope their good fortunes will continue.

The "B" Division saw (Bay City Native) Mike Heinz of Benton Harbor & Jim Price of Saginaw defeat Saginaw's team of Karl Briggs & Mitch Larson in a close final 21-17, 21-18. On the national scene, Karl Briggs was nominated for the 2017 National Paddleball Sportsmanship Award and won with a unanimous vote by the NPA Board of Directors. Karl was presented this award during the lunch intermission as both his personal and paddleball families were there to witness this wonderful achievement and moment. Karl has also given his time and support in helping to promote the game of paddleball in the tri-city area for many years. Congrats Karl!!

In the "C" Division, Detroit's Kelly McKenzie and Luis Romero out-shot the team of Lance Krager (Bay City) and Paul Fehrman (Saginaw) 21-18, 21-16 in the championship match.

Photos on next page



Open Champs: Chad Krager and Randy Wackerle



B Division Champs: Mike Heinz and Jim Price



C Division Champs: Luis Romero and Kelly McKenzie

Big Shorts

In 1976, the Flint (Mich.) Paddleball Club hosted the National Paddleball Championships (at that time, both Singles and Doubles) at the Flint YMCA. One of the members of our crack tournament committee was assigned to obtain shorts for all entrants. Somehow, he got a box full of very big shorts -- (40-42, X-large). Now that's big. And wide.

It was too late to do anything about it so we gave out the shorts to those who would take them. There were nearly two-dozen who didn't and there are 23 pair of them still storied basement.

But I recall Steve Keeley, then playing out of San Diego, getting a first-round bye and showing up Saturday morning. I handed him a pair of the shorts and apologized for their hugeness. But he said it was O.K. Later, during his match, I saw that he was wearing the shorts -- with a large part of them folded over in front and held together with a large safety pin.

I thought that was classy. Here was the premier paddleball player -- and a top-ranked racquetballer at that time -- not only not making a fuss about it. But he wore the shorts.

Of course, now that I think about it, the large shorts might have fit right into Steve's ensembles. He had a habit of wearing different gym shoes on each foot, glasses without lenses and T-shirts that carried colorful messages.

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI



Karl Briggs Named Sportsman of the Year.

The NPA Sportsmanship Award is presented annually to the paddleball player that most represents the American ideal of good sportsmanship under extreme competitive conditions.

Karl Briggs is the personification of what this award represents. As many of us know, Karl is a life-time athlete of the highest caliber. Karl's athletic abilities carried him to a Michigan State High School Wrestling Championship in the early 70's while attending Bay City Western High School. He then moved on to the University of Michigan's wrestling program posting an impressive record while serving as the team captain. Karl worked as the Saginaw Valley State University wrestling coach for a while before moving to handball, then on to Paddleball about 10 years ago. He has been a fixture at most of the Tri Cities' (Bay City, Midland, and Saginaw, Michigan) paddleball events for many years and has competed at National Singles and Doubles Tournaments in the recent past.



Karl has been instrumental in organizing and supporting the Saginaw Doubles Paddleball tournament, now going on its 9th year. He has recruited and encouraged many from the Saginaw YMCA to give paddleball a try. Paddleball is now played at least 3x a week at the Y and he is the driving force behind the "SPA" (Saginaw Paddleball Association). His sharp wit and sense of humor has spawned many "ranting" emails and texts full of bravado and faux trash talk that keeps the rest of us on our toes and encourages us to get back on the court week after week.

What sets Karl apart from most of his paddleball peers, is not his impressive achievements throughout the years, but how he carries himself on and off the court. Whether he wins or loses you can count on Karl to be generous, genuine and gracious. It doesn't matter if you are playing with him or against him, he always has an encouraging word for well executed shots and good hustle. He is an excellent partner, you can count on him to give 110%, he has a "never give up" attitude and makes everyone he plays with a better player.

Karl always has fun while being competitive when he plays paddleball and after all- isn't that why we play?

Jim Price

NPA Board of Manager

Aaron Embry awarded the 2017 Earl Risky

Once a year, the NPA Board of Managers chooses a person who has made significant contributions to the sport of paddleball and awards that person with the large Earl Risky Trophy for the year and an engraved plaque that the honoree gets to keep. Earl Risky was the founder of the style of paddleball that is played in National Paddleball Association events.

In 1930, Risky debuted the sport at the year-old Intramural Sports Building at the University of Michigan on the handball courts. There were 14 hard-wood courts; the floors, walls, and ceilings were all made of hard-wood. Risky made paddles out of wood, removed the fuzz from tennis balls, adapted the rules of handball, and recruited players.

As I noted at the award ceremony, Aaron Embry was the obvious choice. If you are familiar with current NPA paddleball activities, you know what I mean.

First, there is the Gearbox connection. Aaron is the Paddleball Director of Gearbox Sports. He is the one who enthusiastically pursued the partnership with Gearbox and the NPA. **Gearbox is now the official ball and paddle of the NPA!**

As for the Gearbox ball and paddle, Aaron initiated and spearheaded the production of both. They reflect his persistent attention to detail. The ball was developed specifically to meet the unique requirements of the NPA. It has served as the official ball for almost a year and has proven to be extremely consistent and durable.

There are now six models of Gearbox paddles, two distinctive types. The first group of three was clearly designed to attract racquetball players, light weight and shaped like a racquet: the GB275, the GB300, and the GB325. The second group was designed to look like traditional paddles with flare while maintaining the high quality and weight of the first group: Classic 275, Classic 300, and Classic 325. All of the Gearbox paddles have significant pop and just look “cool.” Collectively, they are very high quality and popular paddles.

Aaron, who was on the pro racquetball tour for several years, has been an exceptionally good and fair paddleball player. He was the NPA Open Singles National Champion in 2008 and was awarded the Sportsmanship Trophy in 2015.

Aaron is also an extremely good teacher of the game. I have listened to unsolicited testimonials from Aaron’s students, all noting high praise for their instructor. I have personally witnessed Aaron in action instructing young people in clinics before the start of the 3WallBall World Championship each of the last two years. Of the three sports clinics: racquetball, handball, and paddleball; paddleball is clearly the most popular. Aaron knows how to positively engage the students, maintain their interest, and meaningfully instruct them in the proper techniques of the game.

I have often referred to Aaron as the current top promoter of paddleball. Beyond promotion of Gearbox products, he has been actively involved in the management of several NPA tournaments in last few years.

Our Earl Risky recipient spends hours making sure we have what we need to make our tournaments successes. He persistently urges players to enter tournaments by phone, email, text, and face-to-face. He raises significant amounts of money from generous sponsors for prize money and miscellaneous tournament expenses. He is actively involved in setting up tournaments and helping out on site.

Aaron has certainly earned this year's Earl Risky Award. He is the obvious choice!

Jim Owens





PRESIDENT’S CORNER

From Wood to Composite

I have been playing paddleball since 1968. When I first started playing that year at Eastern Michigan University, I used whatever they had to lend in the cage of the locker room. There was an assortment of well-used wood paddles, but they were free for daily use, if I remember correctly.

After becoming hooked on the sport, I decided to get a paddle of my own. I remember going to a sports store on Main Street in Ann Arbor. There were a few choices. One choice piqued my interest; it was a paddle, or so the salesman and I called it a “paddle,” with a wood frame with strings. The salesman noted that the store had just received a shipment of this new product. He and I agreed that I would probably have an advantage over players using standard paddles. I bought it.

There was considerable discussion when I showed up at the gym with my new “paddle,” which persisted and intensified throughout our set of matches that day. No contest! I had no problem beating all the players in the group. This new “paddle” had transformed my game. The only problem, the guys all agreed: it was not fair. I agreed; my new “paddle” unquestionably gave me an unfair advantage. In fact, my new “paddle” was not a paddle, it was obviously a racquet. None of us had ever seen such a racquet before.

I returned my new “paddle” to the sports store and explained to the salesman that no one would play with me. He agreed to let me exchange it for a real paddle. I ended up with a Marcraft rectangular shaped paddle, a very solid and comparatively a very heavy paddle. A club by today’s standards.

My first NPA tournament was the 1979 State of Michigan Championships, by that time, my paddle of choice was a Marcraft National 300. Notably lighter than my first paddle and a different shape, teardrop. I really liked it. The problem with the National 300 was that almost every time I hit the wall the paddle would break where the handle and face attached. That happened too often.

After learning of the weekly Sunday gathering of paddleball players in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan Intramural Sports Building at the 1979 State Championship, I began making it part of my regular schedule. Initially, Marcraft paddles were clearly the most popular. The PT 60 was probably the most popular, what is now considered, a classic oval shaped paddle. Eventually, the IT 60 and Pitcher Paddles started to out-number the PT 60. The IT 60 was Marcraft’s lighter version of the PT 60.

Pitcher Paddles were different. The 72-hole model was lighter than the PT 60 or IT 60 with ½ inch holes instead of 3/8, less wind resistant we thought. Dick Pitcher was an avid Ann Arbor paddleball player, paddleball instructor, occasional tournament director, promoter, and significant NPA Board of Manager member. Dick would buy blank paddles from Marcraft, drill them out to his specification, and put a nice clear finish on them.

There were two initial Pitcher Paddles. The lighter model had 72 holes and was clearly the most popular and the heavier one had 50 holes, my next paddle of choice. Eventually, Dick contracted with Marcraft to produce the 72-hole paddle. For a few years, Dick continued to make 50-holes paddles for me. Eventually, I started getting blanks from Dick or PT 30s from Marcraft and drilled them out myself.

Ten to fifteen years ago, as composite paddles gained in popularity, there were a number of players who thought we needed to tighten the rules on what kind of paddles should be allowed in NPA events. Some players suggested that we make NPA paddle a wood only game, like major league baseball.

I gave voice to this group at board meetings. These concerned players, myself included, thought composite paddles unchecked would dramatically change the game. I was particularly concerned with the possibility of making paddles much lighter and longer, similar to what happened in tennis.

At one particular board meeting, I cannot pinpoint the year, we rewrote the rules on acceptable paddles. I put forth a motion, which I knew did not have a chance of passing, that we make NPA paddleball a wood only game. The motion was quickly voted down, but we did set tighter restrictions on weight and length. Soon afterwards, I bought my first composite paddle; to do otherwise would clearly put me at a disadvantage.

You rarely see a wood paddle anymore. That is until we created a Wood Only Division at the 2017 National Singles/Grab Bag Double Tournament this past April.

Is there more wood in our future?

Jim Owens

The current rules on paddles:

RULE 3.1 THE PADDLE

To be made of wood or composite material

Must have a safety strap attached

Dimensions:

Length – Maximum of 17.25 inches

Width – Maximum of 8.5 inches

Thickness – Maximum of 0.75 inches (handle may be thicker)

Weight – Maximum of 16 ounces

Must be safe: no metal rims or protrusions

Must not provide an unfair advantage

Notes:

-The NPA Board of Managers based on the above criteria shall approve paddles used in NPA events.

-A list of approved paddles can be viewed at www.paddleball.org

-Any paddle is subject to inspection during tournament play by a representative of the NPA Board of Managers

-Instances of unfair advantage may include, but not be limited to: abnormal increase in speed or directional changes when struck.

Breach: Anyone found using an unapproved paddle may be asked to cease usage until the NPA Board of Managers makes proper evaluation. If a second violation occurs at a tournament, the player will be disqualified from all divisions.