

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 this past weekend. 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.



Open Champs: Chad Krager and Randy Wackerle



B Division Champs: Mike Heinz and Jim Price



C Division Champs: Luis Romero and Kelly McKenzie