

# RACQUETBALL

CHAMPIONSHIPS



## THE TEAM BEHIND THE TEAM

IN THIS ISSUE:

*National  
Doubles  
&  
HIGH  
SCHOOLS*





# NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS

FEBRUARY 7-11, 2018 - ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY - TEMPE, AZ

# NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIPS

FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 4, 2018 - MULTNOMAH ATHLETIC CLUB - PORTLAND, OR

# NATIONAL INTERCOLLEGIATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

MARCH 14-17, 2018 - UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA REC CENTER - MINNEAPOLIS, MN

# NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIPS

MAY 23-27, 2018 - CLUBSPORT PLEASANTON - PLEASANTON, CA

# NATIONAL JUNIOR OLYMPIC CHAMPIONSHIPS

JUNE 20-24, 2018 - WELLMARK YMCA - DES MOINES, IA

# UnitedHealthcare US OPEN

RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

OCTOBER 3-7, 2018 - LIFE TIME TARGET CENTER - MINNEAPOLIS, MN

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Players from Hawaii competed at the USA Racquetball National Doubles Championships presented by Penn and Tempe Tourism.

Photo By Gallemore Photography

**ON THE COVER**

Recently crowned National Doubles Champions Rocky Carson and Sudsy Monchik with the Team Behind the Team. Inset: Women's Champions Kelani Bailey and Sharon Jackson.

Photos By: Gallemore Photography

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**Submissions**

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

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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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## 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

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## NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS & TEAM QUALIFYING

All future National Championship details remain tentative until entries are published.

### U.S. NATIONAL TEAM QUALIFYING

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 adopted changes to the qualification process beginning with the 2017-2018 U.S. National Team.

While the process for qualifying for doubles on the US Team is the same, the singles selection procedure is determined by performance on a weighted scale at three selection events:

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

## National Headquarters

# 1st Quarter Update

Photo by Roby Partovich

The 2018 season is off to a galloping start with USA Racquetball already having hosted the 2018 National Doubles Championships in Tempe, Arizona, and the 2018 National High School Championships in Portland, Oregon. Highly sought-after spots on the U.S. Adult National Team were up for grabs at National Doubles for inclusion on the 2018-19 World Championship Team that will be representing the United States at the IRF World Championships in Cali, Colombia this August. Congratulations to Kelani Bailey, Sharon Jackson, Rocky Carson, and Sudy Monchik for earning those coveted spots as our 2018 National Doubles Champions.

Those in attendance at these events were treated to great matches but also an opportunity to become a member of the "Team Behind the Team" by making a donation (and receiving a special t-shirt as a thank you!) that raised money to fund our athletes in their endeavors to represent the United States in the PARC Pan American Racquetball Championships in Temuco, Chile, and the IRF World Championships. These events will require additional fundraising beyond our normal Team USA Challenge efforts. The estimated combined cost for these two competitions will be close to \$85,000. You will notice a number of opportunities throughout the year to help support our National Teams. We currently have our U.S. Team Pan American Registry online at [www.usaracquetball.com](http://www.usaracquetball.com) where you can choose to donate towards a specific item that the U.S. Team will need such as airfare, hotel accommodations, travel insurance, and meals. Each item has an associated cost, but feel free to donate either a portion of the cost or the entire amount. We appreciate any level of support you can provide our athletes!

USA Racquetball is also proud to continue supporting High School and Collegiate athletes in their higher education endeavors by providing scholarships to worthy USAR member applicants. The 2018 USA Racquetball Scholarship recipients are Dane Elkins, Kelly "Nick" Maeda, Claire Lux, and Katy Moran. Since the scholarship's inception in 1990, more than \$55,000 has been awarded to over 100 individuals pursuing their academic dreams.



## Championship Photos Now Available

Photos for the 2017 High School, Singles, and Intercollegiate Championships, as well as the Junior Olympics are now available to view and purchase from Gallemore Photography:  
<http://gallemorephotography.zenfolio.com/f147787156>

# THANK YOU! 2017 TEAM USA CHALLENGE DONORS

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Dan Whitley

# Do You Know..

## ABOUT THE USA RACQUETBALL AMBASSADOR PROGRAM?

### What is the Ambassador Program?

The goal of the program is to help grow racquetball by developing relationships between USA Racquetball and key players and influential advocates in health clubs, fitness centers, schools, and universities around the country. If you are organizing and promoting racquetball, we want to work with you. We can help direct people to your regional programs, and you can help share information about our national events and initiatives. It's a win-win relationship that helps us all promote the sport we love.

### What qualifies someone as a USA Racquetball Ambassador?

The ideal ambassador is any current USA Racquetball member who represents or promotes racquetball in his/her area.

Are you at your racquetball club several times a week...recognized as a club pro...a member of your state board...a certified racquetball instructor?

Do you:

- Organize or recruit players for leagues?
- Manage a challenge ladder for your club?
- Work at a racquetball club?
- Help run and promote tournaments?
- Organize events or shoot-outs in your area?
- Give lessons or teach classes?
- Introduce the sport to new players and teach them how to play?
- Coach a high school or college team?
- Organize or serve as an officer for your college racquetball team?
- Play both outdoor and indoor racquetball?
- Play in the US Open or any of the National Championships?
- Love giving back to the sport?

Did you answer "yes" to any of those questions? If so, you should definitely consider becoming an ambassador!

### How does the Ambassador Program work?

Qualified ambassadors already have a communication network with racquetball players in their areas. USA Racquetball will list you on our website with your contact information on your state's list. That way, when players are seeking someone to contact about racquetball programming in a particular area, they will easily be directed to you!

As an ambassador, we will share information about our programs with you. That way, you can help USA Racquetball promote our programs to the general racquetball public and that, in turn, helps us grow our e-member database. We also have quarterly contests with prizes to celebrate our ambassadors for these efforts.

### How can you become an Ambassador?

THIS IS EASY. Go to [www.usaracquetball.com](http://www.usaracquetball.com) and select the Ambassador Program as an option under PROGRAMS. There you will be asked for the following information:

- Your name, phone number, and email address
- Your city/state of residence
- Your club name and city/state
- Remember, you must be a current USA Racquetball member

Please take the time to apply to be a part of the USA Racquetball Ambassador Program. We are happy to be on the same team with you!

Together, We Are Racquetball!

# THANK YOU!

## 2017 TEAM USA CHALLENGE DONORS

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# ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE

WITH YOUR SUPPORT, WE CAN RAISE MORE THAN **\$30,000** FOR THE TEAMS!

Support the U.S. Adult and Junior National Teams with a tax-deductible contribution today. Your support is vital to the players and coaches as they prepare to represent the United States in international competition. Funds are primarily used for travel expenses, entry fees, and training.

Donations of \$100 or more, made in 2018 to the TEAM USA CHALLENGE, *will be matched* by the group of generous Team Benefactors at right, who have each pledged up to \$2,500 to support the cause. With your support, the USA Racquetball family can raise more than \$30,000 for *your* U.S. National Teams!

## TEAM USA CHALLENGE BENEFACTORS

*Usher Barnoff • Rick Betts • Cheryl Kirk • Kit Lawson •  
Michael Lippitt • Chris Poucher • Jason Thoerner*

*Under the TEAM USA CHALLENGE,  
donations will be used to support direct travel costs  
of U.S. Junior and Adult National Team Members.*

*To become a benefactor for the 2018 Team USA Challenge,  
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# Parkway West

## REPEATS AS OVERALL CHAMPION AT HIGH SCHOOL NATIONALS

By Jason Thoerner  
Photos By Gallemore Photography



The 31st Annual USA Racquetball National High School Championships presented by Penn and the Oregon Sports Authority were held in Portland, Oregon, from February 28th – March 4th. This event marked the largest National High School Championships hosted in Portland since 2008 with 347 players from 38 schools competing for top honors for their schools. The event was hosted by the beautiful Multnomah Athletic Club and Sunset Athletic Club which showed the players championship-level hospitality, going above and beyond for the players and tournament staff. This is no easy task as close to 400 players plus coaches and parents take over these facilities for up to 16 hours a day over the course of a week! USA Racquetball extends a huge “thank you” to all of the staff members and over 100 volunteers who made this a great week for all. A special “thank you” to Alice Laffey who coordinated the volunteers and the meals for the players throughout the week.

This Championship emphasizes team play, and players are slotted into divisions based upon their rankings at their schools in singles and doubles. In singles, each team can roster a player in #1 through #6 divisions, and in doubles they can roster one team in divisions #1 through #3. The event is run in Olympic format to ensure that players get to compete in at least three matches in their respective divisions. Each player starts out in the Gold section of his/her division but drops down to Red, White, or Blue based on which round was lost. Medals and team points are given out in each of these divisions so each round advanced means a lot to the team totals. It was great to see someone who earned a medal in the Red division take as much pride in that accomplishment as the player who earned a medal in the Gold division. Parents and coaches beamed with pride as players received their medals and had their pictures taken in front of the championship banner.

After over 1,000 matches were played, the Boys, Girls, and Overall Team Champions were announced. Congratulations to Parkway West High School from St. Louis, Missouri, for winning the prestigious Overall Team Championship in back-to-back years. The second place team was Sprague High School of Salem, Oregon, who trailed by 711 points at the end of competition. In the Boys Team competition, St. Louis University High School from St. Louis took home the title by 805 points over Sprague High School. The Girls Team competition came down to a mere 634 points separating eventual champion Parkway West High School over Sprague High School.

The Girls #1 Gold Singles division was highlighted by several current and former US Junior National Team members as the top seeds. Annie Roberts from Barlow High School in Oregon came in as the #1 seed and proved throughout the tournament that she deserved that spot as she moved into the semifinals easily. In the semis, Annie faced off against Megan Carver from University High School in Washington state. Annie’s pinpoint accuracy and court coverage proved too much for Megan as An-



Above: Overall Team Champions Parkway West High School  
Center: Boys Singles Action  
Below: How many high school kids can you fit in a racquetball court?  
Right: South Ridge High School having some fun for the camera

nie took her place in the Finals, 15-3, 15-7. On the other side of the draw, #2 seeded Kaitlyn Boyle from Beaverton, Oregon, met #3 seeded Nikita Chauhan from Dougherty Valley High School in California. This semifinal was the tale of two different game styles with Nikita's precision and accuracy vs. Kaitlyn's power. Each player took a dominant game to push the match to an exciting tiebreaker. In the end, Nikita had just enough to edge out Kaitlyn, 15-1, 4-15, 11-7, for a spot in the final against Annie Roberts. In the final, Annie started off strong using a very effective high lob Z to Nikita's backhand that forced her to return the serve against the very tough sidewall glass. Nikita had some difficulty seeing the ball on that side throughout the match and never seemed comfortable. Annie used this to her advantage, and with the home court crowd cheering her on, she closed out the final, 15-7, 15-9. Congratulations to Annie Roberts on her Gold medal performance and appointment to the 2018 Junior National Team!

The Boys #1 Gold Singles division also had a deep field of high level players gunning for top-seeded Sebastian Fernandez from Mader Dei Catholic High School. Sebastian got a scare in the Round of 16's from James Storgion of St. Louis University High School but pulled out the tiebreaker to move on to the quarterfinals, 13-15, 15-2, 11-4. Sebastian then defeated Brian Barberis from McKinney North High (Texas) to move into the semifinal against the #4 seeded Ricardo Diaz from Franklin High School in California. Ricardo came into the match determined to upset Sebastian, but he fell 15-9, 15-8. On the other side of the draw, #2 seed Cayden Akins from Timber Creek High School (Texas) ran into a tough competitor, John Dowell from Kirkwood High School in Missouri, who last year upset the #2 seeded player in the draw. This year it was not to be for John as Cayden survived in a close tiebreaker, 10-15, 15-3, 11-6, to move on to the semifinals. In the other quarterfinal, #6 seed Antonio Rojas from Langston Hughes Academy (California) put on a dominant performance against #3 seeded Micah Farmer (iUniversity Prep, Grapevine, Texas) to move into the semifinal, 15-0, 15-6. Antonio would not let up in the semifinals against Cayden, prevailing 15-2, 15-4. In the final it was all Sebastian as Antonio couldn't find an answer to the powerful serve-and-return game he faced. Congratulations to Sebastian Fernandez who claimed his victory 15-7, 15-1, winning the Boys #1 Gold for 2018!



Above: Annie Roberts - Girls #1 Singles Gold Medalist  
 Below: Boys #1 Singles Finals Sebastian Fernandez vs. Antonio Rojas



# 2018 NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Multnomah Athletic Club · Sunset Athletic Club · Portland, Oregon · February 28th - March 5th

## TEAM COMPETITION

### Overall

1. Parkway West HS, MO (5,372)
2. Sprague HS, OR (4,661)
3. Lindbergh HS, MO (4,161)
4. Beaverton HS, OR (2,581)
5. Kirkwood HS, MO (2,277)
6. Southridge HS, OR (1,961)
7. Lafayette HS, MO (1,890)
8. Sam Barlow HS, OR (1,606)
9. Sunset HS, OR (1,448)
10. Lincoln HS, OR (1,379)

### Boys

1. St. Louis University HS, MO (2,927)
2. Sprague HS, OR (2,122)
3. Parkway West HS, MO (2,029)
4. Lindbergh HS, MO (1,823)
5. Aspire Langston Hughes Academy, CA (1,194)
6. Kirkwood HS, MO (1,110)
7. Lafayette HS, MO (894)
8. Sunset HS, OR (800)
9. Lincoln HS, OR (645)
10. Wayzata HS, MN (586)

### Girls

1. Parkway West HS, MO (2,663)
2. Sprague HS, OR (2,029)
3. Beaverton HS, OR (1,728)
4. Lindbergh HS, MO (1,692)
5. Southridge HS, OR (1,295)
6. Sam Barlow HS, OR (1,105)
7. University HS, WA (1,079)
8. Cor Jesu Academy HS, MO (890)
9. Lafayette, HS, MO (770)
10. Kirkwood HS, MO (696)

## BOYS SINGLES

### Champion:

- #1 Sebastian Fernandez
- #2 Mark Duffie
- #3 Adam Hanson
- #4 Steven Zak
- #5 Nick Patritti
- #6 Andrew Lofgren

### Runner Up:

- Antonio Rojas
- Matthew Hayes
- Jason Sauer
- Kyle Andersen
- Jack Sobey
- Aidan Crockett

## BOYS DOUBLES

### Champion:

- #1 Antonio Rojas/Jesse Rojas
- #2 James Storgion/Steven Zak
- #3 Nick Patritti/Riley McEnergy

### Runner Up:

- Ian Bjorn/Lukas Bell
- Jason Sauer/Kyle Andersen
- Andrew Porterfield/Nick Schulze

## GIRLS SINGLES

### Champion:

- #1 Annie Roberts
- #2 Erin Slutzky
- #3 Faith Malek
- #4 Malika Tamerhoulet
- #5 Callie Hummel
- #6 Taylor Caton

### Runner Up:

- Nikita Chauhan
- Hannah Carver
- Ayisha Tamerhoulet
- Nicole Nelson
- Taylor Monismith
- Ashley Gang

## GIRLS DOUBLES

### Champion:

- #1 Erin Slutzky/Katy Moran
- #2 Callie Hummel/Faith Malek
- #3 Kristen Eads/Taylor Caton

### Runner Up:

- Hannah Carver/Megan Carver
- Aerin Song/Julia Ide
- Grace Maloney/Nicole Fritsch

## MIXED DOUBLES

### Champion:

- #1 Alice Reider/John Dowell
- #2 Erin Slutzky/Mark Duffie
- #3 Faith Malek/Jason Sauer

### Runner Up:

- Bella Bertarelli/Lukas Bell
- Ayisha Tamerhoulet/Jacob Scheuble
- Callie Hummel/Kyle Andersen

## 2018 HIGH SCHOOL ALL AMERICANS

### Boys

- Cayden Akins  
Lukas Bell  
Ian Bjorn  
Ricardo Diaz  
John Dowell  
Mark Duffie  
Johnny Greenberg  
Matthew Hayes  
Thomas Reynolds  
Antonio Rojas  
Jesse Rojas

### Girls

- Kaitlyn Boyle  
Hannah Carver  
Megan Carver  
Nikita Chauhan  
Samantha Fretwell  
Julia Ide  
Amanda Kopp  
Autumn Lewis  
Meghan Madden  
Katy Moran  
Kashish Pandey  
Annie Roberts  
Erin Slutzky



2018 High School All Americans  
Photo By Gallemore Photography



*Paola Longoria*

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Women's Senior Masters 29th Annual Championships  
January 12-14, 2018

By Cheryl Kirk

Photo By: Ric Shorrock

This largest and longest continually running event for women players in the world features a self-refereed format with plenty of court time. The round-robin format ensures play on every day of the three-day tournament. Women players competed in singles and doubles age divisions -- eight round robins, one double round robin, and three pool-play-with-playoff formats.

Sixty-seven players (ages 35-77) competed, and 39 of those entered both singles and doubles! Those individuals were promoted to "amazon status" (not the retailer) as a result. Three women played at age 77, and we LOVE that due to their youthful appearances, you would never be able to pick them out of a crowd (unless, of course, they proudly produced ID). This could happen.

Twenty-two states were represented: Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Guatemala was in the house as well!

The Tucson Racquet & Fitness Club provided the perfect setting for this competition – eleven excellent courts (two with glass back walls, all with top viewing), outstanding restaurant, full spa and workout facilities, pool, pro shop, friendly staff (led by Fitness Club Program Manager Renee Sitter)... what's not to love?

Much gratitude goes out to Tournament Directors Cindy Tilbury and Linda Moore and to WSMRA Tournament Committee members Terry Rogers, MeriJean Kelley, and Paula Sperling. Volunteers Lois Palmer, Carrie Reitmeier, Brent Johnson, Nidia Funes, and Carol Gellman helped ensure a smooth-running event.

Sun-Rise Baking Co. provided delicious pastries throughout the event. The popular silent auction was successful due to donations by E-Force, Gear-Box, Head, Pro Kennex, USA Racquetball, and generous individual donors.

Special thanks go to Doug Ganim and Ben Simons of Head/Penn Racquetball who have been very supportive of the WSMRA over the past several years. The WSMRA's gratitude also goes to sponsors Malibu Ladies Racquetball Camp, Ric Shorrock Photography, DJ Mark Mann, and the International Racquetball Tour (Malibu Branch).

WSMRA President Kendra Tutsch (Lodi, Wisconsin) offered her perspective on the WSMRA events and what they have meant to her since the beginning: "I have been involved with the Women's Senior/Masters tournament since I played in the first one way back in 1990 at my club in Madison, Wisconsin. I played an epic match with Pauline Kelly and I was hooked! I have played in all but one since then. Several years later we started the WSMRA as a way of keeping the tournament going and also promoting racquetball as a lifetime sport. It is an all-volunteer organization, and countless people work very hard to put on a first-class tournament each year, including the tournament directors, the WSMRA Board of Directors, and the players who volunteer their time during the tournament. Through this event I have made many close friendships that will last a lifetime. I am already looking forward to a very special 30th Annual event in January 2019!"

For pictures, updates and announcements, please "Like" us on Facebook -- Women's Senior/Masters Racquetball Association -- and visit our website, [www.wsmra.com](http://www.wsmra.com).

**WSMRA Board of Directors:** Kendra Tutsch (President), Jean Halahan, MeriJean Kelley, Linda Moore, Terry Rogers, Paula Sperling, Cindy Tilbury

**Advisory:** Nancy Kronenfeld, Debbie Tisinger-Moore

## 2018 WSMRA Championship Results

35+B/C, Cinnamon Untalan, AZ  
45+B/C, Georgette Blomquist, OR  
50+, Jean Halahan, NY  
55+, Janet Tyler, FL  
55+B/C, Dorette Leinemann, DE  
60+, Marsha Berry, KY  
65+, Diana Matthews, NE  
65+B/C, Judy Tavano, MA  
70+, Paula Sperling, NM  
75+, Pauline Kelly, IL  
35+ Doubles, Wendy Koop, AZ/Cinnamon Untalan, AZ  
45+ Doubles, Marie Gomar, Guatemala/Jean Halahan, NY  
55+ Doubles, Mary Keenan, CO/Marcia Richards, CO  
65+/75+ Doubles, Nancy Kronenfeld, IL/Diana Matthews, NE

Check out full results at:  
<http://www.r2sports.com/tourney/viewResults.asp?TID=21574>



Past and Present WSMRA Tournament Directors  
Photo Courtesy of Cheryl Kirk



**Marie Gomar (Guatemala) single-handedly made this 29th WSMRA Championships an international event! She offered this update on the Tracks Program in Guatemala City:**

"The children from the Tracks Program have begun their second year of racquetball in Escuela Camino de Luz with great joy, better conditions, and new opportunities. As we begin 2018, a special thank you goes to the WSMRA Board and all the participants in this event's silent auction who for a second consecutive year have donated part of the proceeds to the Tracks program and warmed our hearts in Guatemala even well beyond those sunny days in Tucson."



**Jere Luttner (Arlington, Texas) returned after several years...**

"I've been playing racquetball since the late 70's and started playing in the WSMRA Tournaments in the late 90's. I always loved the WSMRA tournaments. The competition is awesome and the camaraderie can't be beat. Over the past several years, I have not been competing due to medical issues. I've had a hip replacement, both knees replaced, and most recently in February 2017, I had a total shoulder replacement (on my dominant side). The shoulder rehabilitation was grueling, but I felt strong enough to sign up for the tournament even knowing that it was a round robin format and that I would play the entire weekend. Upon arrival, old and new players greeted me warmly, and I am very happy to say that the tournament lived up to and exceeded my expectations. I'm looking forward to returning next year."



**Venita Mitchell (San Antonio, Texas) was a first-time WSMRA competitor. What made her decide to attend?**

"I've always wanted to play, it just seemed to not fit into my schedule. I just decided to pull the trigger. I'm proud and happy to be a part of this sisterhood. I met a new friend who was my doubles partner (Ingrid Callmann, Delaware) and win or lose, we had a wonderful time! It's great to just be with women that have the same interests, women that are competitive, women that are humble, also. This is my first tournament of the year. I'm going to National Doubles, and I want to try World Seniors in Albuquerque, too. This is my year to play different tournaments!"



**Marcia Richards (Littleton, Colorado), returning after several years, offered some thoughts and a little advice:**

"I stopped playing national events over five years ago because my knee was starting to really become a problem. I'd been in a knee brace for 12 years, so it was time for me to get that taken care of. Two years ago February 10th was the anniversary of my surgery, and it changed my life. I feel like I'm 20 again, not really, but yes in a way I do, just being able to get to balls that I hadn't been able to get to in years. If you need a replacement, don't wait if you can help it -- there's no reason to. I'm enjoying life so much more now than I did over the past 10 years. Some people say, 'I quit playing because I'm too old.' For me, I keep playing because it keeps me young!"

# The Race for the 2018-2019 U.S. National Team



Champion	100 Points
Runner-Up	80 Points
Semifinalist	60 Points
Quarterfinalist	30 Points
Round of 16	10 Points
Round of 32	5 Points



## U.S. National Team Singles Qualification Standings - Men

STANDING	PLAYER	US OPEN IRT DIVISION POINTS	WEIGHTED POINTS 20%	SINGLES DIVISION		NATIONAL SINGLES DIVISION POINTS	WEIGHTED POINTS 50%	TOTAL POINTS
				AT NATIONAL DOUBLES POINTS	WEIGHTED POINTS 30%			
1	Rocky Carson	80	16	100	30			46
2	Charlie Pratt	10	2	80	24			26
3	Jake Bredenbeck	10	2	60	18			20
4	David Horn	5	1	60	18			19
T5	Robert Collins	5	1	30	9			10
T5	Adam Manilla	5	1	30	9			10

## U.S. National Team Singles Qualification Standings - Women

STANDING	PLAYER	US OPEN LPRT DIVISION POINTS	WEIGHTED POINTS 20%	SINGLES DIVISION		NATIONAL SINGLES DIVISION POINTS	WEIGHTED POINTS 50%	TOTAL POINTS
				AT NATIONAL DOUBLES POINTS	WEIGHTED POINTS 30%			
1	Rhonda Rajsich	60	12	100	30			42
2	Kelani Bailey	0	0	80	24			24
3	Sheryl Lotts	10	2	60	18			20
4	Erika Manilla	5	1	60	18			19
T5	Sara Jeys	5	1	30	9			10
T5	Janel Tisinger	5	1	30	9			10

### Remaining 2018-19 U.S. National Team Qualification Event:

U.S. Team Qualifying Division at the U.S. National Singles Championships  
 May 23-27, 2018  
 ClubSport Pleasanton  
 Pleasanton, CA

The qualification process for doubles teams continues to be based on the Team Qualifying  
 Doubles Division at National Doubles.

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# US OPEN 2018

RACQUETBALL

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23<sup>rd</sup>  
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**Entries and Ticket Sales Begin February 15**





## New Champions Crowned In Tempe, Arizona

Champions Kelani Bailey and Sharon Jackson with the "Team Behind the Team"

By Jason Thoerner  
 Photos By Gallemore Photography

The 2018 USA Racquetball National Doubles Championships presented by Penn Racquetball and Tempe Tourism took place at the beautiful Arizona State University Sun Devil Fitness Center. While most of the country was dealing with wintery weather, the action on the courts in Tempe was hot, with over 340 players from across the country vying for coveted national titles in both skill and age group categories. Over 500 matches were played over the five-day competition that sought to identify the best doubles teams in the country. In the U.S. Team Qualifying divisions, the action intensified as players competed for spots on the 2018-19 U.S. Adult Racquetball Team that will be representing the United States at the 2018 IRF World Championships in Cali, Colombia.

The Women's U.S. Team Qualifying division was packed with star power as returning 2017 National Doubles Champions Aimee Ruiz and Janel Tisinger took the #1 seed and consequently had targets on their backs. The quarterfinals saw a tough matchup right out of the gate between the #4 seeded Rhonda Rajsich/Sheryl Lotts team versus a newly formed team of Laura Fenton Kovanda/Michelle De La Rosa. Rajsich and Lotts prevailed in a close match that went to a tiebreaker, 15-11, 7-15, 11-4 to set up a semifinal matchup with Ruiz/Tisinger. On the bottom half of the draw, the #3 seeded team of Kelani Bailey and Sharon Jackson took on a newly formed team of Briana Jacquet and Sara Jeys. The experience of Bailey/Jackson was evident as they took the match 15-5, 15-9 to set up a semifinal appearance against the #2 seeded team of Erika Manilla/Jacqueline Paraiso-Larsson.

The semifinals provided fireworks from the start and left spectators on the edges of their seats to see who would make the final and earn a spot on the U.S. Adult Team. The first semifinal pitted Manilla/Paraiso-Larsson against Bailey/Jackson. This was the first match for Manilla/Paraiso-Larsson, and in the first game it showed with some communication errors. Bailey/Jackson won the first game handily 15-2. In game two, Manilla/Paraiso-Larsson switched sides and started to put it together, battling all the way to the end before losing 15-14 and sending Bailey/Jackson to the final.

The second semifinal of the day was one for the ages with the #1 seeded team of Ruiz/Tisinger taking on the #4 seeded Rajsich/Lotts. This match saw each team dominate one game apiece, 15-8. In the tiebreaker, Rajsich/Lotts built a significant lead but Ruiz/Tisinger were not going to go away without a fight. Ruiz/Tisinger clawed their way back to 8-10 before Rajsich and Lotts finally closed out the match for a spot in the finals. Both teams' shot making and retrieving had the fans on their feet applauding their efforts.

The final was set and did not disappoint. The winner would have the opportunity to represent Team USA at the IRF World Championships in Colombia this August. Four of the most athletic women in the sport faced off and showed right from the start that every point would be at a premium. Bailey/Jackson took the first game 15-10 with some excellent shot making in the last five points.

In game two, Rajsich and Lotts returned the favor by winning 15-11. The tiebreaker saw both teams go on runs, and the tension could be felt as the players put it all on the line, diving for ball after ball to keep rallies alive. Bailey/Jackson pulled away late to clinch their first National Championship title by the scores of 15-10, 11-15, 11-8. Congratulations and welcome to the 2018-19 U.S. Adult Team!

The Men's U.S. Team Qualifying division saw new partners galore and the return of former National Doubles Champion Sudsy Monchik to the stage with Rocky Carson. The 2016 National Doubles Champions, Jake Bredenbeck and Jose Diaz, reassembled to take the #1 seed as they looked to regain the title and a spot on the U.S. Adult National Team. In the quarterfinals, the surprise team of the tournament, Adam Manilla and Nick Riffel, took out #3 seeds Charlie Pratt and Jansen Allen. These youngsters have been playing together for years, and their cohesive style overwhelmed their opponents 15-9, 15-9 to give them a shot in the semifinals against Carson/Monchik.

The action did not let up as the first semifinal began with the young guns Manilla and Riffel looking like they had no idea of the racquetball royalty they were facing in Carson/Monchik. The newly paired team of Carson and Monchik seemed to be feeling their way through the first game as Manilla/Riffel flowed easily to a 15-8 win. Carson/Monchik were not about to let the youngsters take away their shot at the title. They started to put it together as a team at just the right moment. The fans witnessed flashes of the past as Sudsy demonstrated why he was one of the sport's all-time greats. His unleashing of powerful jam serves and blistering backhands left many in disbelief as Carson/Monchik pulled out game two, 15-13. Still smiling and acting like they were just playing at the local club back in Colorado, Manilla and Riffel battled the veterans to the limit with great

shot making and retrieving in the tiebreaker. Both teams were firing on all cylinders as they came down to the final stretch, but the veterans reached a little deeper to pull out the victory 11-8 for a spot in the finals.

In the second semifinal, the #1 seeded team of Bredenbeck/Diaz took on well-known opponents in the #4 seeded team of David "Bobby" Horn and current Junior 18 & Under World Champion Mauro "Daniel" Rojas. The firepower and retrieving of both these teams were exciting to watch as the first game unfolded. Horn and Rojas pulled away to take game one by a score of 15-10. As champions do, Bredenbeck and Diaz turned up their games a notch, compelling weak returns and several unforced errors from their opponents to force a tiebreaker, 15-5. This game brought the crowd to its feet several times as the raw power from both teams were on display, but what delighted even more was the unreal retrieving of ball after ball. Both teams left everything they had on the court, but Horn/Rojas pulled off the upset victory 11-8 for a spot in the final.

The final started off as exciting as the previous day's matches with Carson/Monchik battling the upset-minded Horn/Rojas point for point. A few key serves late in the game from Monchik helped them pull out the first game 15-14. Carson/Monchik seemed to smell the finish line as their confidence grew after the hard-fought first game. They jumped out to an early lead in game two, but Horn and Rojas kept battling point after point. In the end, they did not have enough to force a tiebreaker as Carson/Monchik closed out the game and match 15-8 to become the 2018 National Doubles Champions. Being a part of Team USA is nothing new for either of these players, but the joy of returning to the U.S. Team was evident on their faces afterwards.

As exciting as these divisions were in Tempe, this event is about more than just the U.S. Team Qualifying divisions. Many players traveled from as far away as Alaska to compete in the various skill and age group divisions. Exciting matches in all divisions were witnessed throughout the week as players brought their best to win one of the coveted USA Racquetball National Championship medals. Congratulations to all of you on well-played matches all week! This event also gave players a chance to socialize with other competitors from around the country at several functions throughout the week. On Friday night, the traditional Ladies' Night Out at the Graduate Hotel's Rooftop Bar helped raise money to support the U.S. Team and brought together many of the ladies for a fun night of games and prizes. On Saturday night, the annual Players' Party was hosted at the Graduate, celebrating not only a great week of competition but also the friendships that have developed over the years.

USA Racquetball has worked to provide every meal throughout the tournament. This would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors. Please make sure to support them throughout the year. A special "thank you" also goes out to the many volunteers who helped make this event a great experience for players and guests. Make plans early to join us in 2019 and bring a friend or two!



**Men's Doubles Champions Rocky Carson and Sudsy Monchik**

# 2018 NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS

Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona · February 7 - 11

## MENS

### Division

Men's Team Qualifier  
 Men's Doubles Open  
 Men's Doubles Elite  
 Men's Doubles Centurion+ Open / Elite  
 Men's Doubles A  
 Men's Doubles Centurion+ A  
 Men's Doubles B  
 Men's Doubles Centurion+ B  
 Men's Doubles C  
 Men's Doubles 24/25  
 Men's Doubles 30+ A  
 Men's Doubles 30+ B  
 Men's Doubles 30+ C  
 Men's Doubles 30+  
 Men's Doubles 35+  
 Men's Doubles 40+  
 Men's Doubles 40+ A  
 Men's Doubles 40+ B  
 Men's Doubles 45+  
 Men's Doubles 50+ A  
 Men's Doubles 50+ B/C  
 Men's Doubles 60+  
 Men's Doubles 60+ A  
 Men's Doubles 60+ B  
 Men's Doubles 65+  
 Men's Doubles 70+  
 Men's Doubles 75+  
 Men's Doubles 80+  
 Men's Doubles Mega Centurion  
 Men's Doubles Heroes Open  
 Men's Doubles Heroes A  
 Men's Doubles Heroes B

### Champion

Rocky Carson/Sudsy Monchik  
 Michael Myers/Tim Herman  
 Walter Ramos Jr./Brent Huff  
 John Amatulli/Mark Monje  
 Adam Wyatt/Shane McDougal  
 Paul Thiel/Stefan Rudolph  
 Coy Rogers/Larry Matthews  
 Dan Dryden/David Bandelier  
 Ron Marr/Tom Hills  
 Michael Myers/Tim Herman  
 Billy Garcia/Keith Sapp  
 Matthew Bond/Michael Reinhofer  
 Martin Contreras/Paul Ly  
 Anthony Herrera/Bryan Crosser  
 Israel Torres/Will Reynolds  
 Jason Richard Conway/Mark Monje  
 Paul Thiel/Stefan Rudolph  
 Daniel Parker/David Pardun  
 Jeff Stark/Keith Minor  
 Chris Hawks/Stephen Henderson  
 Daniel Parker/David Pardun  
 Dave Azuma/Mark Baron  
 Jim Diener/Ron Gottlieb  
 Alfred Muranaga/Harold Jagoda  
 Howard Walker/Mark Baron  
 Michael Stephens/Robert Gravelyn  
 Arthur Hotchkiss/James Troutt  
 Francis Florey/James Funk  
 Rick Betts/Thomas Travers  
 Glenn Martineau/Tyrone Gilmore  
 Lorenzo Glover /Mike Pepper  
 Curt Baumgarh/Jason S.

### Runner Up

David Horn/Mauro Rojas  
 Brent Walters/Bryan Crosser  
 Brian Grinstead/Gilbert Cepeda  
 Jeff Stark/Keith Minor  
 Arlan Garcia/Jose Castro  
 Ro Blackwood/Thomas Baker  
 Jim Pruett/Todd Meendering  
 Arlan Garcia/Ernie Dominguez  
 Luke Linhart/Mac Linhart  
 Fidencio Rodriguez/Jim Durham  
 James Garcia/Sandro Aponte  
 Freddie Villalon/John Ortiz  
 Unchallenged  
 Brent Walters/Jonathan Clay  
 Charlie Stalder/Erik Blood  
 Jeff Stark/Keith Minor  
 Brian Laney/Cesar Vasquez  
 Jake Ryan/Jeffrey Hill  
 Jason Richard Conway/Mark Monje  
 Richard Aal/Steve Strahler  
 Adam Rolnick/Tonni Forbes  
 Mike Lubbars/Samuel Smith  
 Donald Gunderson/Mike Stassen  
 Joe Jacubetz/Sam Anselmo  
 Shuja Yezdi/Ken Drew  
 Mike Pawka/Robert Lattanzio  
 Wayne Toyne/Wiliam Baker  
 Unchallenged  
 Chris Poucher/Mike Grisz  
 Jeffrey Rollins/Knox La Rue  
 Unchallenged  
 David Bandelier/Robert Frazier



Left: Team Alaska was well represented this year with a total of 13 players in attendance!

Photo by Cathy Law

Right: Jose Diaz spending time with juniors when he wasn't playing

Photo By Gallemore Photography

Right: Special thanks to Mike Grisz and Karen Denu for all their help behind the tournament desk

Photo By Gallemore Photography

## WOMENS

### Division

Women's Team Qualifier  
 Women's Doubles Elite  
 Women's Doubles A  
 Women's Doubles B  
 Women's Doubles C  
 Women's 30+ Elite  
 Women's 40+ Elite  
 Women's 30+ A  
 Women's 40+ A  
 Women's 50+ A  
 Women's 60+ A  
 Women's 40+ B  
 Women's Mega Centurion  
 Women's 60+ B  
 Women's 55+  
 Women's 65+  
 Women's 75+

### Champion

Kelani Bailey/Sharon Jackson  
 Laura Goo/Laura Morin  
 Cindy Gilbert/Kimberly Randolph  
 Cathy Law/Terri Marceron  
 Michelle Lekites/Jacqueline Seiffert  
 Cari Mory/Rebecca Bowman  
 Sarah Houghtailing/Susie Boulanger  
 Cindy Hoops/Stephanie Bankes  
 Arlene Swinney/Maddie Melendez  
 Brenda Lee/Cheryl Vlacilek  
 Cheryl Jones/Kerri Garcia  
 Lori Kidd/Peggy Markert  
 Marquita Molina/Mildred Gwinn  
 Anna Draudt/Cheryl Bird  
 Linda Moore/Lisa Bu  
 Cheryl Conrad/Carla Francis  
 Marquita Molina/Mildred Gwinn

### Runner Up

Sheryl Lotts/Rhonda Rajsich  
 Cari Mory/Cindy Tilbury  
 Cheryl Jones/Wendy Miller  
 Esther Lozano/Marti McCurdy  
 Claudia Marco/Loreno Chables  
 Unchallenged  
 Connie Wong/Laura Goo  
 Unchallenged  
 Donna Jones/Marsha Johnson  
 Susan Mueller/Cheryl Kirk  
 Unchallenged  
 Cathy Law/Michelle Lekites  
 Unchallenged  
 Unchallenged  
 Maddie Melendez/Sharon McNeill  
 Renee Fish/Shirley Parsons  
 Unchallenged



## MIXED

### Division

Mixed Doubles Open  
 Mixed Doubles Centurion+ Open  
 Mixed Doubles Elite  
 Mixed Doubles A  
 Mixed Doubles Centurion+ A  
 Mixed Doubles B  
 Mixed Doubles Centurion+ B  
 Mixed Doubles C/40+ C  
 Mixed Doubles Centurion+ C/D  
 Mixed Doubles 30+  
 Mixed Doubles 35+  
 Mixed Doubles 30 B+  
 Mixed Doubles 40+ A  
 Mixed Doubles 45+ A  
 Mixed Doubles 50+ Elite  
 Mixed Doubles 55+ Elite  
 Mixed Doubles 60+ Elite  
 Mixed Doubles 50+ A  
 Mixed Doubles 50+ B  
 Mixed Doubles 55+  
 Mixed Doubles 60+  
 Mixed Doubles 65+  
 Mixed Doubles 70+  
 Mixed Doubles 75+

### Champion

Kelani Bailey/Nicholas Riffel  
 Malia Bailey/Will Reynolds  
 Kelly Alderson/Walter Ramos Jr.  
 Miriam McCloskey/Ricky Villanueva  
 Richard Aal/Wendy Miller  
 Daniel Miner/Lori Kidd  
 Joe Jacobetz/Patrice Calvi  
 Chuck Thompson/Nita Thompson  
 Claudia Marco/John Ortiz  
 Aimee Ruiz/Jonathan Clay  
 Brent Walters/Debra Bryant  
 James Garcia/Nancy Green  
 Joe Belardo/Lorraine Reid  
 Michiele Stapleton/Steve Stahler  
 Debra Bryant/Eric New  
 Connie Wong/Tim Mattfeldt  
 Chris Poucher/Sharon McNeill  
 Debra Bryant/Dereck Dirks  
 Cathy Law/Christer Linden  
 Laura Fenton Kovanda/Stephen Wattz  
 Dave Azuma/Linda Moore  
 Billy Cannon/Shirley Parsons  
 Fredrick Roe/Nidia Funes  
 Marquita Molina/William Baker

### Runner Up

Jonathan Clay/Sharon Jackson  
 Knox La Rue/Sandy Rios  
 Kenneth Courtney/Vivian Schneider  
 Arlene Swinney/Brian Campbell  
 Luis George Sr./Miriam McCloskey  
 Ann Draudt/Joel Lawrence  
 Harold Jagoda/Kimberly Randolph  
 Cindy Hoops/Michael Brytowski  
 Paula Tran/Russ Rudolph  
 Unchallenged  
 Brent Huff/Rebecca Bowman  
 Burke Ivey/Lori Kidd  
 Unchallenged  
 Dereck Dirks/Peggy Markert  
 Lisa Bu/Mel West  
 Laura Natividad/Richard Dew  
 Unchallenged  
 Ron Couch/Susie Boulanger  
 David Pardun/Janet Scheffer  
 Glenn Bell/Malia Bailey  
 Sandy Rios/Rick Betts  
 Ken Drew/Renee Fish  
 David Lovinger/Mary Zordan  
 Unchallenged





## Junior Racquetball – “Fitness Forever”

### A Program Sponsored by Reaching Your Dream Foundation

By David Ellis

There is a revival of junior racquetball happening in Northern California. The Stockton Junior Program, led by Jody Nance, John Ellis, and Dave Ellis has flourished, with regular attendance in the 40's on a weekly basis. Emerging from this success, with the help of the Reaching Your Dream Foundation, the three have been working to establish junior programs in other areas throughout the Northern California region. Besides the Stockton program, programs have been established in Fairfield, Modesto, Lodi, Antioch, Fresno, Merced, and Livermore. In the works are Shingle Springs, Alameda, and Santa Rosa. John and I feel that it's the personal encounter that helps convince adults to volunteer time. There are good materials that speak of junior programs, but without a personal motivational effort, they are, with a few exceptions, just not utilized.

We regard our sport's situation as critical. Virtually all players know that many racquetball courts have been converted for a variety of other uses. This phenomenon is depressing to lifelong dedicated players. If we are going to preserve racquetball for future generations, we all need to work together to SOC (Save our Courts). Successful junior programs will bring memberships and publicity for clubs in general. This article speaks to what it takes to have an ongoing junior program.

We use a two-phase presentation. Phase 1 is directed not at juniors themselves but instead focuses on adult players and parents at a particular club. The ideas of Phase 1 are incorporated into a 45-slide motivational presentation. The focus includes: 1) the reasons for having a junior program; 2) the benefits of a junior program; and 3) the components of a successful junior program. At the end of Phase 1, all in attendance are encouraged to return after a two-week period with as many potential junior players as possible. Indeed, the purpose of Phase 1 is not specifically to motivate juniors. Rather, its purpose



is to motivate adults at the club to establish an ongoing junior program. Programs from other sports have many adult volunteers who work with juniors. Little League Baseball, Pop Warner Football, and Catholic Youth Basketball are well known examples. We want to encourage this adult participation in the promotion of junior racquetball. Sound junior programs with adult support are essential to the resurgence of our sport.

Two weeks after the Phase 1 presentation, John and I return to the club with a few Stockton juniors to present Phase 2, an on-court demonstration of a junior class. During this 90-120 minute period, different types of junior activities are presented. These include activities that range from those for beginners (some as young as 6 years old) all the way to advanced drills and strategies for experienced junior players. A lengthy catalogue of activities is given to the “Team” of adults in attendance.

I used the word “Team” in the previous paragraph with a purpose. The key to a successful program that endures is the creation of a cohesive “Team” of volunteer staff members. This team should include:

- Two or three individuals that will serve as Leaders. We call these “Point People.” One or more of these individuals prepares a plan or agenda for each of the classes.
- As many individual instructors as possible who are prepared to work with a group of 5-7 junior players. Not every instructor is going to be present for every class. It's a must to have individuals who can fill in when there are others who cannot attend.
- Individuals who will take attendance, check out loaner equipment, distribute post-practice snacks, relate to parents, and be there for young juniors who need special attention. In the Stockton program, two people handle these tasks.
- An individual who will create group email lists that will be used to communicate information to the juniors and their families and who will take care of ensuring that parents/guardians sign consent forms for liability and snap pictures as well.



## Here is an outline of Phase 1:

### Reasons to Have a Junior Program

- Racquetball friendships often last for a lifetime.
- Friendships will be made with other juniors from all over the World.
- As an individual sport, friendships will be made with players of different ages and genders.
- Our sport encourages fitness among our youth.
- It is important that we all join in the fight against obesity.
- When there are junior players that love the game, parents will tend to join the club.
- Junior Program Benefits for Instructors and Parents
- If you teach racquetball, your game will improve. "You never really learn something until you teach it."
- Smiles, laughter, and remarks by the juniors are priceless.
- The inner satisfaction that you are making a positive contribution to the welfare of children.
- New friends will be made that include other parents and volunteer staff members.
- Knowing that you will be helping to SOC – "Save our Courts."

### Elements of a Successful Junior Program

- Support from club staff and corporate.
- An employee who will regularly reserve courts at the designated times.
- Racquets and eye guards ready to loan to juniors when necessary. At the end of Phase 1, eight racquets, six eye guards, and two dozen balls are left to the leaders.
- Keeping records of attendance and other data.
- Being able to recruit participants (e.g., relatives such as children, grandchildren, club members' children and their friends, neighbors, etc.)
- Free trial period for juniors who are not club members.
- Creative instructors who prepare and are willing to take racquetball to the next generation.
- Instructors who have passed the "SafeSport" test at: <http://www.teamusa.org/usa-racquetball/instructors/safesport>.
- Instructors who possess the three P's: Preparation, Patience, and Positivity

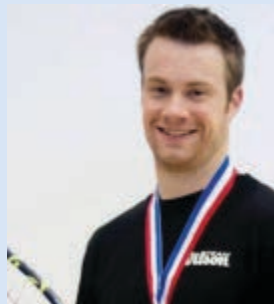
A word about the Reaching Your Dream Foundation (RYDF): RYDF is the creator and sponsor of the Fitness Forever Program. It was created to promote healthy opportunities for youth, particularly in racquetball. Please visit [www.reachingyourdreamfoundation.org](http://www.reachingyourdreamfoundation.org) for more information.

USA Racquetball and RYDF is interested in expanding these efforts to other parts of the country. If you are interested in starting a successful junior program at your club, please email John Ellis ([ellistyle@comcast.net](mailto:ellistyle@comcast.net)) and Dave Ellis ([DAVEELLIS665@comcast.net](mailto:DAVEELLIS665@comcast.net)).



# WHERE ARE THEY NOW? -- MITCH WILLIAMS

By Aimee Ruiz



**W**here Are They Now? is a column in *Racquetball* magazine that features past pros from both the men's and women's tours throughout the years. What have they been up to since they stepped away from playing professionally? What do they think of today's game and the players who are currently competing?

Let's check in with Mitch Williams, former U.S. National Team Member:

**Your last year on tour was 2011. What have you been up to since then?**

Been busy, here is a seven-year snap shot (hang on this is a pretty crazy ride):

Worked in medical sales for one year with Johnson & Johnson in Albuquerque.

Got married to Jesi Fuller 2011 in Maui, amazing wedding with a close group of friends and family.

Six months later in 2012, took a job with Ericsson in network infrastructure sales supporting Verizon in Chicago.

Moved to Seattle in 2014 to run the Northwest region (Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Hawaii) for Ericsson. Jesi and I had our first baby girl, Jadlyn.

In 2017, accepted a national headquarters role with Ericsson in Basking Ridge, New Jersey. Second baby girl (Jillian) was born 3 months after arrival.

Seven years in summary: Married, 2 girls, moved 3 times, 4 job positions.



**You are a 2x National Doubles Champion and won the National Singles Championships in 2007. Which do you prefer, singles or doubles?**

Doubles, it's a faster and more strategic game. Plus, there is an element of unpredictability and closer, more intense matches.

**You won the 2008 World Championships with Jason Thoerner and the 2010 World Championships with Ben Croft. What did you enjoy most about playing for Team USA?**

The experience. Not often do you get to represent your country in other parts of the world. It's a proud moment wearing your country's colors and winning. I cherish both titles, each uniquely different in experience and in the timing of my journey in racquetball.

**Was there one win that sticks out the most to you in your career?**

It was 2007 National Singles. Without that win, I probably would not have been playing racquetball for a living. Looking back, Chris Evon and Terri Graham provided a platform and the means that allowed me to do something that I truly loved. It wasn't a career to retire from, but there are zero regrets in the journey and time on tour. Truly thankful for their belief and support of me!

**What would you say was one of your biggest strengths on the court?**

The ability to hit the spot out of the ball from a lot of positions. This was also my biggest weakness as well.

**Rumor has it you played outdoors a few times last summer. Do you ever have the itch to come back and play?**

No itch to play seriously, but I really like the social aspect of the sport and connecting with old friends. Outdoor is a fun game, and it would be the game that I would play more frequently if time permitted.

**Your wife Jesi was a very good racquetball player in her own right.**

**Did you two ever play mixed doubles together?** We did twice, and both times we didn't do too well! It was 100% my fault -- I played poorly. It was an excuse early on to spend more time together. In the end, things worked out since we are together with a couple of crazy little ones.

**You served on USA Racquetball's Board of Directors for four years. In your opinion, what does USA Racquetball need to do to grow the sport?**

Being on the outside looking in, the growth is in outdoor. When people work 10+ hours a day and then contemplate spending weekends in a gym, it's not an appealing concept to a wide enough audience. Plus, clubs dedicating racquetball court space for two people indoors is a hard sell for the price per square foot.



I think the indoor game as we know it will continue to shrink, and if we continue to hang on to this, the sport is in trouble. From my view, the key is to have the ability for the sport to grow in a free-to-play environment (outdoors) and connecting with cities and municipalities to potentially build outdoor racquetball and handball courts in parks. Also, we figure out how to use walls of buildings in metro areas for a slower game of one wall. And obviously, there is still a larger collegiate racquetball presence that give thousands of students exposure to the sport -- how are we connecting with them?

**What would you say to someone who wants to break into that next level and begin playing the pro tour full time?** Play as it makes sense financially. This sport in its current state, with few exceptions, will not provide a living. I would recommend that kids/young adults use the connections and friendships to leverage opportunities to start a career and/or find mentors to help when pursuing education.

If you are hell-bent on pursuing the tour full time, understand that there will be a lot of highs and lows. Learn to maintain an emotional equilibrium. Quickly find your one thing that you do better than all others and maximize this as the cornerstone of your game. Continue to develop this strength and learn how to force the game and rallies to favor this. Spending 100% of your time trying to fix weaknesses to make you marginally better will not pay the same dividends.



Top Right: Ben Croft & Mitch Williams at the 2010 World Championships

Right: Mitch Williams Wilson Ad

Photo By Wilson

Above: Ben Croft, DC Williams, Mitch Williams, Jason Thoerner, and Brent Walter at Mitch's wedding in Hawaii

Center: Mitch, Jesi, Jadlyn, and Jillian

## Mitch's Highlights

- IRF World Doubles Champion (2008, 2010)
- U.S. National Doubles Champion (2007, 2010)
- U.S. National Singles Champion (2007)
- Finished 5 seasons on the IRT in the Top 8
- USA Racquetball Athlete of the Year (2008)
- Member of the U.S. National Racquetball Team for six years

## "Was It A Hinder Or Not?"

By Otto Dietrich, USA Racquetball National Rules Commissioner

**T**he 2018 part of the racquetball season has ushered in some new changes for our terrific sport.

The first major difference is that the International Racquetball Tour (IRT) has returned to the two-serve game and are playing the best two out of three games to 15, 15, and 11 with each game won by the first player to reach the requisite score.

There are some changes in the amateur (USAR) rulebook. One is that players are primarily responsible for ensuring that their eyes have the proper protection. Henceforth, players, in effect, must wear only eyewear that has met the current ASTM published standard (F-803) and, if challenged, be able to show that their eyewear was advertised as meeting the standard. *USAR no longer publishes a list of approved eyewear.* Also, the rules governing the one-serve game were eliminated from the rulebook since "U.S. Team Qualifying" is now played with two serves in conformance with current way that international competition is played.

**Now onto what players have been asking lately.**

**Roger A. wrote:** Would you please clear up two fault serve questions we have?

1. Does the receiver have the option to play a long serve?
2. Does the receiver have the option to play a short serve?

**I replied:** What a weird sport this would be if there were no boundaries defining what a "good" playable serve is (either long or short)! The answer to both of your questions is NO! Long and short serves are both fault serves immediately as soon as they meet their various definitions and are totally without any "post fault" playing option. Just how short would "too short" be for a serve to be played if there were

a choice? When would the server know whether the rally has started? A serve that is hit so high and hard that it surely is going to become long if not returned is not actually long yet by definition and thus still can be played until it does become long, i.e. touches the back wall before it touches the floor. Playing a serve like this is often a good move since it often totally surprises the server who assumes that the receiver would not return a serve that is obviously "going to become" long. If having options to play such serves that were the case, why



2018 US National Doubles Championships  
Photos By Gallemore Photography

wouldn't one also think there should be a choice to play a skip ball? There is no need to attempt to play any of those things since the rally is over as soon as short, long, or skip occurs.

**Marty L. said:** I went through the rules but still have a question. I play at a club that has a one-serve procedure. I serve the ball and it hits the second short line. Is this still a good serve or a short serve?

**I responded:** First, please look at the labels on the court diagram that is located near the front of the rulebook. There is only one short line on the court, and it is found exactly between the front and back walls of the court -- twenty feet away from each. If the served ball hits that (short) line, even just a very little bit, then the serve is short and a fault. Of course, if the served ball touches the floor in front of that line, the serve is also short. But if the ball goes beyond that line on the fly, then it is good -- provided, of course, that it does not

end up being either long or a three-wall serve. Why does your club use one serve? Just to speed up the playing time? All organizations that adopted the one-serve concept in the past have reverted to using two serves.

## DO YOU HAVE A RULES/REFEREEING QUESTION?

Be sure to email it to me at [ODietrich@usaracquetball.com](mailto:ODietrich@usaracquetball.com) 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

... I encourage you to go online where you can find, review, and/or download them at:  
[teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/How-To-Play/Rules](http://teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/How-To-Play/Rules).

**Paul M. asked:** This weekend a rule came into question about whether a player can warm up with an audio device. I have read Rule 2.5(c), but I am looking for further clarification. In my reasoning, the word “play” refers to the activity. As in other sports, racquetball “play” would be when two (or more) players are on court and playing a game or match (whether in a sanctioned competition or not). The term “warm-up” refers to practice or preparation for playing a game, match, etc. Can you help to settle this debate over the definition of “play” with regard to the rule? Is it against USAR rules to warm up while wearing or listening to an audio device?

**I answered:** It’s okay to wear audio devices for warm-up, but ask the players to stay alert for added potential hazards (such as the added ball and player on the court also warming up). Have them remove the device(s) if you see it as an unsafe situation. But “during play” in the rule means that they are not allowed while the game is in progress.

**Rick B. wondered:** We have a player who appears to anticipate a serve bouncing between the back-service line and the encroachment line and is breaking the plane before the ball bounces on the floor. Tempers have flared as many players say the rule clearly states the ball MUST hit the floor first before any player can break the plane and strike at the ball – which, in this case, is almost a safety issue for the server because he hits the serve to land about two feet away from his body in center court during doubles. So, based on the way I’ve read the rule, if the receiver anticipates a serve bouncing inside the encroachment line, he can position his body just outside of the vertical plain of the encroachment line and then cross the line to short hop the serve immediately upon the ball bouncing on the floor? If you can give me any guidance that I can pass along to our group I would be grateful.

**I told Rick:** Those players did correctly state the essential element of what Rule 3.11 requires. See the most current rulebook as a reference. I suggest settling such disputes by asking the player who questions, disagrees, or says there is a different rule to show it to you in the book! The definitive answer to your inter-

pretation is “YES” -- such action by the receiver is acceptable and perfectly legal even if the ball never bounces in the receiving zone or if the serve ends up being “long” and 10 feet high when it hits the back wall! And, indeed, the encroachment line and all the associated rules are ALL ABOUT player safety -- keeping them far enough apart at this critical point of the game.

**Karen S. emailed me saying:** Player A’s racquet hit Player B, who was standing behind Player A, on the follow through, causing significant pain. Player B stopped playing, calling a hinder (Player B would likely not have gotten the next shot either way - not sure if that is relevant). Was it a hinder or not?

**I responded:** The answer is found in Rule 3.14(a)3 that says, in part, “Contact with the racquet on the follow through normally is not considered a hinder for either player.” The reason for this ruling is that is because (1) the hitter’s shot is not affected because the shot was completed just prior to the contact and (2) in almost every instance, the person who was contacted was likely standing too close to the hitter (not giving him enough room to execute his shot) which would likely be a penalty hinder (loss of rally) anyway.

I often refer to this as the cruelest rule in racquetball because what usually happens is Player A hits Player B on the follow through, Player A stops playing out of sincere concern for Player B’s well-being. But Player B can play on (even though he’s hurting) to win that rally while Player A is assuming play has stopped. Thus, Player B wins that rally since there technically was NO hinder and therefore no reason to stop play.



## CONTINUING THE Making of a Champion



■ By Fran Davis (The Coach) • Diana McNab (Sports Psychologist) • Dan Obremski (Fitness Expert)

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.

With the USAR National Doubles Championships just having wrapped up and with doubles still and always top of mind, I thought it would be apropos to cover "The Art of Doubles Drilling."

### Drills

Drilling in doubles is especially important because you will be hitting different shots and serves more frequently in doubles than you will in singles. In singles you only have to be concerned with two players' (your and your opponents') strengths and weaknesses, whereas in doubles you must be concerned with twice the number of players. In singles you only have to hit the ball around one player, whereas in doubles you have to be concerned with the location of three other players besides yourself. Given these facts, you must hit many different shots and serves effectively to succeed. Proper drilling is a major factor in your success!

1. Partner Reaction - This is a timing drill that partners can do to sharpen their swords. Cliff (left) and Jason (right) always did this before they played. They simply stayed at the dotted line, Cliff on the left and Jason on the right, and hammered the ball back and forth at each other in order to get used to the pace. This would make their hands, feet, and brains quicker at game time.
2. Z and Jam Serve Returns - In doubles you should expect to see a lot of Z serves and jam serves. During warmup and when you drill with your doubles partner, you can hit 15-20 Z serves in a row and 15-20 jam serves in a row and have your partner return them, then switch. This gets you both comfortable with what's likely to occur in their match and the serves you are most likely going to use.
3. Wide-Angle Pass with Partner - One of the most prevalent shots in the game of doubles is the wide-angle pass. You can position your partner in several different spots near the side wall and try to hit the ball around them, practicing from different spots on the court. This can help you visualize the shots as they will occur in the match.
4. Reverse Pinch - Quick reverse pinches are used a lot at the higher levels. When an opponent misses a shot in the front of the court, the corner is likely open. Not when the ball is coming off the ball wall and/or when your opponents have time to get into position. You and your partner can drill shooting left-up pinches and passes that kick off the side wall in the front of the court and shoot a reverse pinch from these setups.



2018 National Doubles Champions Rocky Carson & Sidsy Monchik with Fran Davis  
Photo By Gallemore Photography

5. Overhead Passes - On the forehand side, you want to try and shoot as many overhead passes as you can off of short ceiling balls or off of a Z serve, creating more offense. You or your partner can hit short ceiling balls or a Z serve and then hit an overhead cross court or overhead wide angle. This shot helps solicit weak returns because your opponent wants to shoot your return, which is extremely difficult and typically leaves offensive opportunity on the next shot.

I use "The Art of Doubles Drilling" with my "Championship Team," Rocky, Paola, Jason, Jordan, Wayne, and Mitchell. Here are some of the best doubles teams who have won numerous amateur and professional national and world championship titles using the above information on doubles drilling:

Jason Mannino/Sudsy Monchik, Jason Mannino/Cliff Swain, Jason Mannino/Kane Waselenchuk

Rocky Carson/Jose Diaz, Rocky Carson/José Rojas, Rocky Carson/Alvaro Beltran, Rocky Carson/Jack Huczek

Paola Longoria/Samantha Salas, Paola Longoria/Veronica Sotomayor, Paola Longoria/Alexandra Herrera

Jordan Cooperrider/Erika Manilla, Wayne Antone/Kevin Vazquez, Mitchell Turner/Julian Singh

**Fran Davis** coaches Paola Longoria (8X #1 LPRT, 5X World Champion, 4X Pan American Champion, 8X US Open Champion), Rocky Carson (#2 IRT, 5X World Champion, 2X Pan American Champion, US Open Champion), and juniors Jordan Cooperrider (9X Junior National Champion and USA Junior National Team), Wayne Antone (4X Junior National Champion and USA Junior National Team), and Mitchell Turner (3X Junior National Championship and USA Junior National Team), Fran's other credentials include Hall of Fame 2004, Woman of the Year 2009, former US Team National Coach, and Master Professional (USAR-IP).

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- Training Schedules / Drilling Sessions
- Assist in Reaching Your Goals

## Books

- Core Principles discussed
- Advance your skills, tactics and toughness for a winning game

## Video

- Learn to vary serves / returns
- Learn the perfect strokes
- Improve shot selection/court position
- Game plans/Strategies a must

Jason Mannino  
#1 Pro Player 2003

Rocky Carson  
#1 Pro Player 2008

Paola Longoria  
8X #1 Pro Player

## Fran's Credentials

- 30+ Years Camp Experience
- 2004 Hall of Fame
- U. S. National Team Coach 1989-1996, 2002
- Coaches Rocky Carson & Paola Longoria.
- 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

## 2018 Camp Schedule:

### Weekend Camps

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Presented by   
featuring Fran Davis and Jason Mannino



## Excuses...Excuses...Excuses...

When things don't go our way, it is easy to explain why and blame it on a circumstance or another person. We have all had a lot of practice at making excuses when we were growing up. For example, I didn't complete my homework because my friend said it wasn't due, or, I was late coming home because I didn't know what time it was! The reason we came up with excuses was so we wouldn't get in trouble and because we didn't want to accept responsibility for being wrong. It is much easier to blame our shortcomings on the circumstance or misinformation. The reality is, you could have checked when your homework was due, and you should have kept up with what time it was. **NO EXCUSES!!**

How does this relate to racquetball?

I lost the match because:

- The referee made bad calls.
- A string broke on my racquet and the other racquet didn't hit the same.
- The court was slippery.
- My opponent was taking double bounces.
- My drive serve was off.

The list can go on and on and on. So instead of making excuses, let's start coming up with solutions.

"The referee was making bad calls" solution: **I called a time out, took a deep breath, refocused on my strategy, and got the serve back.**

"A string broke on my racquet" solution: **I made sure that my backup racquet was strung at the same tension so it would hit the same.**

"The court was slippery" solution: **I asked the tournament director to have someone sweep the floor.**

"My opponent was taking double bounces" solution: **I made sure to keep hustling and playing the point until the rally ended.**

"My drive serve was off" solution: **I used good lob and z serves to get the rallies going.**

There are **always** going to be situations that come up in a match that we didn't plan on happening. We have two choices: we can choose to make excuses so we don't feel bad for losing, or we can be problem solvers, i.e., we can learn to think in terms of, this is what I have to work with today! How am I going to overcome this and figure out a way to play my best? Your physical and mental preparation going into a match will directly impact your results.

You can have results or excuses, not both...

*About Toni: Toni Bevelock Delos Santos, former National Racquetball Champion, has an extensive background in sports and fitness. Toni has a unique gift of relating to athletes of all ages and skill levels. Toni partners with teams, coaches, and facilities across the nation, including Athletic Republic, Matchpoint Tennis Academy, Tony Zuniga Baseball, Winterton Racquetball, Elite Pitching Performance, Tustin Western Little League, and Orange County Nutrition Coaching. Toni is available for coaching thru FaceTime or in-office appointments. For more information on 90% Mental: <http://www.tonidelossantos.com/services/> or contact Toni at [tonimentalgame@gmail.com](mailto:tonimentalgame@gmail.com).*



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**MILITARY RACQUETBALL FEDERATION UPDATE**

The Military Racquetball Federation (MRF) has been very busy this past quarter partnering with JoAnna Reyes, our Texas MRF Liaison, on several events, fundraisers, and Racquetball Rehabilitation Clinic (RRC) demos. Escobar Park in San Antonio was the site of a recent MRF/WOR event. Twenty-five military players, family members, and friends participated in this event. A great time was had by all with shirts and goody bags adding the extra touch. JoAnna also hosted another MRF racquetball shootout in Corpus Christi in support of Military Family Appreciation Day. The military players and their guests enjoyed a day full of racquetball. What could be more rewarding than hosting an event for our service members?

Special thanks go to Life Time Fitness, Belle Isle Racquetball, Darryl Hunter, Joe Lowell, and Russell Baker for once again hosting the 24-hour racquetball, squash, paddleball, and pickleball event on Veteran's Day 2017 as a fundraiser for the MRF. These funds assist the MRF as we continue to reach out to our military, active, veterans, and wounded service members through our racquetball programs including our RRCs. Their continued support is so very much appreciated!

The MRF recently hosted RRC demos in Washington, DC; Temple, Texas; Richmond Veterans Affairs; and we are looking forward to a number more in the coming year. Following the clinics at these Veterans Affairs venues, the MRF will follow up and host eight-week clinics with assistance of the adaptive recreational therapists and volunteers.



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# THE JOHN PELHAM MEMORIAL PRO KENNEX TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS: LOCAL VALOR, HISTORIC WIN

By Tim Prigo  
Photo By Ksp photography



Charlie Pratt (red) celebrates his victory with Junior National Team Members Megan Carver, Annie Roberts, Mauro "Daniel" Rojas, Mitchell Turner, Wayne Antone, Assistant Junior Coach Robert Collins, Hannah Carver, and Hollie Scott.

At their most potent, athletics intersect with the fabric of American life and become more significant than the sum of its parts. Sport has the ability to transcend mere play and symbolize a larger spirit in the culture. The John Pelham Memorial Pro Kennex Tournament of Champions was such an event for the game of racquetball.

In early December, The Multnomah Athletic Club (MAC), in affiliation with the International Racquetball Tour and the Oregon Racquetball Association, hosted one of the most electric events in the sport with racquetball. This tournament carries the great honor of its namesake, John Pelham. Pelham was a 22-year-old Army specialist serving a tour of duty in Afghanistan when he made the ultimate sacrifice for his country in February 2014. He was a racquetball player from Beaverton, Oregon, who, just five days before his death, posted on social media, "I can't wait to play racquetball again." Following his death, John's father, Wendall Pelham, took up the spirit of activism and service that had fueled his son's life. Wendall created the non-profit Live Like John Foundation to raise awareness for Gold Star Families and to help returning veterans adjust to civilian life.

The Portland racquetball community rallied behind Wendall's energy to continue the mantle laid forth by his son; plans to hold a racquetball event in John's honor were quickly afoot. Hank Marcus,

Racquetball Director at the MAC and President of the Military Racquetball Federation, saw an opportunity to bring the event to his club. "There were so many people who helped turn this idea into a reality, and the fact that it originated at the MAC makes it particularly special for us." Not only did all the proceeds of the event go to the Foundation, but tournament participants brought lightly used athletic gear throughout the weekend to be distributed to military and youth players in a drive coined "Give Like John." Hank and Wendall were able to build the event to a full-blown Tier 1 pro stop, bringing the best players in the world to the MAC.

To understand the emotional impact that John and Wendall have had on the racquetball community, one must look at the spirit of the foundation. Wendall said this of his son, "John's priorities and who he was as a person can be summed up like this: stay true to God, and nothing is more important than family and friends. If you are to embark on any adventure, go with all your strength and never ever give up."

The event capped off the 2017 calendar of International Racquetball Tour events, marking the halfway point in the season. Portland, Oregon, long known as a stronghold for the sport, displayed its full force of support and participation at the tournament. There were over 200 participants in the various amateur draws, and the crowds swelled around each pro match, fueling the players with thunderous cheers.

The weekend culminated in the pro final on Saturday night. The match was dripping with drama as the narrative of hometown professional Charlie Pratt (#14) came to its emotional conclusion against Colombian Mario Mercado. Pratt, a Portland native, was nearly defeated in his first-round match by fellow local Dylan Reid. He went on, however, to make one of the most exciting and improbable runs in the history of the sport. After Reid, Pratt knocked off #3 Alvaro Beltran of Mexico, one of the greatest players of all time, in straight games. Next was #6 Jansen Allen, the ultra-athletic phenom from Rice, Texas, again in three games. In the semifinal, Pratt faced an even greater task against #2 Rocky Carson, one of racquetball's toughest all-time opponents. Pratt

defeated Carson in a thrilling five-game match. With the win over Carson, Pratt had proven that he could win the entire event and gave teeth to the bravado of the raucous Northwest crowd. The fierce enthusiasm of the racquetball community made its presence known in the backing of Pratt as each successive round saw larger crowds and louder chants. With his first-ever finals berth and with #1 Kane Waselenchuk out due to injury, the potential of a Pratt victory was palpable.

Before the final, Wendall Pelham addressed the packed stadium court, thanking the crowd for their support and reminding them to commit to causes larger than themselves, as John had done. Stopping periodically to collect himself, Wendall delivered a powerful speech that moved many in the crowd to tears.

Then it was time for the final. Pratt took to the court to face Mario Mercado, a rising racquetball star who was also in his first final. The start of the match felt heavy, and those in attendance seemed nervous. With every winning shot off his racquet, Pratt slowly began to both awaken and reassure his hometown crowd. For these brief moments, the hopes and fears of a community were projected onto Pratt. He carried the weight well, winning the first two games and lifting the crowd from nervous apprehension. By the third game, the cheers were deafening every time

Pratt scored a point. Down in the third game, Pratt fought his way back from 7-10, scoring a diving rollout in the process. At 11-10, Pratt found a down-the-line backhand that gave him the match victory and his first-ever Tier 1 title.

The ensuing enthusiastic eruption was a true celebration of Pratt's match win and part of a healing process. For a brief moment Pratt was alone in the court after Mercado had exited and before IRT Commissioner Andy Kulback stepped in to begin the awards ceremony. It was at this time that Pratt, who had stayed collected throughout the event, raised his arms in celebration directly under a banner photo of John Pelham hanging from the rafters.

The underlying sense of greater purpose and giving back was at the very core of this event, imbuing Pratt's dream run with greater meaning. The John Pelham Memorial Pro Kennex Tournament of Champions was as much a venue to learn about issues related to the Live Like John Foundation and to strengthen the fabric of community within the sport as it was to watch the pros. This unique and worthwhile event will seek to become an annual mainstay at the MAC and continue to build upon its already-storied successes far into the future.



Photo By Kspography

## ***THE INTERNATIONAL RACQUETBALL TOUR (IRT) 2018 RULE CHANGES***

By Kelly R. Diesel

The IRT's Board Members recently voted to approve a new tournament play format that went into effect January 1, 2018. The vote approved the motion to change the tour's current format of playing best three out of five to a new format of playing best of three with the first two games to 15 and a tiebreaker to 11.

IRT Commissioner Andy Kulback said, "This revised format will provide more entertainment for the fans and less court time for the players, which can really benefit them."

IRT CEO John Scott said this change will help align the tour with the rest of the industry as well as bring singles scoring consistent with the IRT's doubles scoring format. It also makes overall match time a bit quicker and could even result in more upsets since it is easier to win two games against a top pro than three. "If you think about it, in the entire 22-year history of the US Open Racquetball Championships, there has not been a single tiebreaker in the finals, and there have been only four or five four-game finals on the IRT tour," Scott said. "It is our goal that this change will result in faster play and even more exciting racquetball action."

Additionally, the IRT Board voted to institute line judges on an as needed basis. While instant replay will still be used as the primary option, the use of line judges will be incorporated depending upon the availability of camera angles and the physical setup of the venue.

Scott said line judges are being implemented to provide more options for the referee during play. "We want to do everything we can to get the call right. The sport is difficult to referee from any position," Scott said. "Providing line judges gives the referee more tools to get the call right."

# LPRT Concludes 2017 with 26th Annual Christmas Classic

By LPRT and Restrung Magazine  
Photos By Restrung Magazine



The Christmas Classic in Maryland has a long-running history in the racquetball-rich Maryland-Washington, DC, area. Players from the area and the Northeast are serious about the sport. They showed the LPRT a ton of support and ensured that the last pro stop of 2017 was a special one.

The Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour's year-ending event concluded seeing World #1 Paola Longoria with her 87th professional title in hand. Longoria grabbed a total of five titles this season, having gone through 2017 undefeated in professional women's racquetball. Longoria also won her fourth Pro Doubles title of the season as she teamed up with fellow Mexican Alexandra Herrera (with whom she also won in Boston a month earlier).

Frédérique Lambert (Canada) finished the year with yet another finals appearance in both singles and doubles. It wasn't easy, having battled through five-game matches in both the quarterfinals and semifinals, along with some tough matches in doubles with partner Jessica Parrilla. Lambert has, for the most part, held her #2 position throughout the season while attending Université de Montréal. The end of the season saw her slip a couple of spots, though, mainly due to events that had to be

missed in favor of her medical studies. However, both her consistency and tenacity promise that she may well regain that #2 spot in the near future.



Rhonda Rajsich (USA) strived to make it to the Maryland semifinal to secure crucial points at this event, which she had to miss last season. Despite having one of her roughest seasons both physically and personally, Rhonda managed to again battle through adversity. Rajsich ended the year #2 in the LPRT rankings.

Jessica Parrilla (Mexico) ends the year solidly with her semifinal appearance in singles and a doubles final with partner Lambert. Parrilla's gritty play on the court has made her a mainstay in the Top 5. This event shook the high end of the list, although Jessica was able to keep her #3 ranking at year's end.

## Quarterfinal Mentions

- Carla Muñoz (Chile) made another quarterfinal in Maryland. Being on the top half of the LPRT draw is particularly hard, and despite a number of big moments for Muñoz this year with appearances in the Top 8, she finds herself at #10 in the singles rankings and #7 in doubles at year's end.

- Alexandra Herrera (Mexico) finished the year strong in singles with a quarterfinal appearance that saw her go five games with Rhonda Rajsich along with a doubles victory with partner Paola Longoria. The year 2017 was a great one for Herrera as she held strong within the Top 8 in both doubles and singles.



- Cristina Amaya (Colombia) ends the year as the #8 ranked professional in singles and #5 in doubles. Amaya has managed to stay in the Top 8 despite the volatile nature of the rankings brought on by a flood of new and dedicated talent on the tour.

- Natalia Mendez (Argentina) has committed to touring full-time on the LPRT in 2017 and has become a top-notch athlete on the tour at only 20 years of age. Her performance at the Christmas Classic earned her a #7 ranking at year's end.

The Christmas Classic was an opportunity to “clinic for a cause”! Four LPRT pros volunteered their time to instruct and drill with local women players who each donated an unwrapped toy for “Toys for Tots.” A great time was had by all, and the enthusiasm was palpable. The courts were filled with serious tips together with encouragement going both ways. Thank you!

The Christmas Classic, with its appropriate name, came together to see its 26th year. It has become customary for the event to throw its full support towards the Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour. The LPRT is extremely grateful to everyone who came out to play and spend time with our women athletes. Special thanks go out to tournament director Karen Denu, Tracie Valentine, Bill Milbach, Wayne Toyne, Margo Scott, and the Maryland Washington Racquetball Association for your tireless effort and complete support.

Check out our website [www.lprtour.com](http://www.lprtour.com) to find a compelling “2017 Year in Review.” With data from Pro Racquetball Stats\* you’ll find an LPRT Top Ten statistical summary for 2017.

\*Pro Racquetball Stats is an online historical reference site and match database for professional tours and national amateur events. Todd Boss is the creator and maintainer of the site. He is a long-time racquetball player and database consultant in the Washington, DC, area.



Top: Tracie Valentine, Bill Milbach, Jessica Parrilla, Frédérique Lambert, Paola Longoria, Karen Denu, and Alexandra Herrera  
 Above: Spectators watching all the action  
 Above Left: Natalia Mendez  
 Left: Jessica Parrilla and Frédérique Lambert

# THE WORLD RACQUETBALL TOUR ROAD TO #1

By Laura McCormick



The competition is fierce on the World Racquetball Tour (WRT), and with so much talent on the tour, it's always hard to predict the outcomes of any event. That is exactly what we witnessed at the end of the 2017 WRT season in determining who would finish as Player of the Year. The Player of the Year is awarded to the player who finishes the season at #1. Former Players of the Year include Polo Gutierrez (2014) and Alex Cardona (2015, 2016). The WRT season runs annually from January 1st to December 31st with a rolling calendar ranking system. As the points change from week to week, the rankings are updated every Monday morning on the WRT website ([www.worldracquetballtour.com](http://www.worldracquetballtour.com)). The major shakeup for 2017 came in December, right at the end in the last event of the year in San Antonio, but it wasn't so clear who would be crowned king of the court.

The shake-up started with rising star Rodrigo Montoya from Chihuahua, Mexico. He was the first to significantly disrupt the rankings, and he had a bit of a rough start. In 2015, Polo Gutierrez had maintained his position at #1 for over 1-1/2 years. But in May he suffered an injury that forced him off the tour. That left the door open for other players to move up. Alex Cardona, who had been tailing Gutierrez, secured the #1 spot and held on all the way through 2016. Meanwhile, Montoya had just started playing WRT events late in 2015, but then came a meniscus tear mid-match in December. Montoya was also forced to take time to recover. He made a triumphant return to the WRT in October 2016 at the Pleasanton Open where he went all the way through to the finals, defeating #1 player Alex Cardona. Very quickly, Montoya became the new player to keep your eye on going into 2017.

Montoya won the season opener in January 2017, defeating Javier Mar in the finals of the Longhorn Open. He continued and won two more titles in 2017 at the Mt. Rainier Open in February and the Chihuahua Open in June. The young Mexican propelled himself into the #1 spot and seemed to hold on to it comfortably throughout the season. Meanwhile, David "Bobby" Horn from Stockton, California, had been a consistent player, never dropping below the Top 5 of the WRT over the last two seasons. Horn won his first title in August 2015 at the San Luis Open. Although he did not see any more titles in 2016, his persistence was paying off as he crept up the rankings to #3 and maintained a steady threat as a semifinalist or finalist. Things started to change for Horn in 2017. In May he defeated Mario Mercado in the finals of the Midwest Championship. Horn went on to win two more titles in 2017: the Grace Warrior Atlanta Open in September and the Rocky Mountain Open in November. He bounced around the rankings in the #2 or #3 spots, with a brief week at #1 in November before the rolling points system put Montoya back at the top.



Above: Francisco Troncoso, Mauricio Zelada, Gerardo Franco, Pablo Fajre, Roger Subieta, Andree Parrilla, Jake Bredenbeck, David Horn and Jose Diaz at Recreation ATL  
Photo By Laura McCormick

That brief moment at #1 suddenly made it clear that the Player of the Year would come down to the final matches of the last event of the year. Horn had brought himself to less than 300 points behind Montoya, which meant that between these two athletes, the player to advance the furthest in the event would claim the glory of Player of the Year and start 2018 in the #1 spot. It was anyone's guess who would succeed.

The WRT season has ended in San Antonio at the Alamo City Open for the last four years. This would be the final battle. Montoya and Horn were on opposite sides of the draw, which meant they could face each other in the finals. Montoya had to face the player he knocked off the throne in 2016 in the semis, Alex Cardona. Cardona defeated Montoya (15-9, 15-8) to keep pursuing his own points and reclaim his former title in San Antonio. On the other side of the draw, Horn had to battle against the dark horse of the tournament, Ernesto Ochoa. Ochoa had taken out top-seeded players Gerardo Franco in the Round of 16 and then, in his first quar-

Left: Bobby Horn  
Player of the Year  
Photo By Ramiro Gaxiola



**Erick Cuevas**  
Rookie of the Year

terfinal appearance, he eliminated Andree Parrilla to continue to his first WRT semifinal against Horn. Ochoa defeated Horn in the first game 15-14. Horn came back to win the second 15-14, which left the audience in suspense for the tiebreaker. Horn pulled away in the tiebreaker to win, 11-3. With Horn in the finals, it meant he had surpassed Montoya and would finish the season at #1. This also meant he was named the 2017 Player of the Year. Horn finished in San Antonio by defeating Cardona in a nail-biting final, 12-15, 15-8, 11-9, to earn his fifth WRT title. What a dramatic finish to the season!

Without a doubt, the biggest focus for the WRT is the players. Without them, there wouldn't be the WRT. This is why the tradition of the Player Awards began. The WRT Player Awards started in 2015 as a way to recognize players for their outstanding achievements outside of the realm of winning events. These awards include the Rookie of the Year, the Sportsmanship Award, and the Fan Favorite, and they are a unique way to unite fans and players. The fans vote online for the players who are nominated by the WRT in each category. Online voting takes place in December, and the results are announced at the last event of the year, the Alamo City Open during the first weekend of December.

The Rookie of the Year is an award is for a player who is relatively new to the tour and has a positive impact both on and off the court. The 2017 nominees included Mauro Rojas, Sebastian Fernandez, and Erick Cuevas. Cuevas was voted as the Rookie of the Year for 2017. Cuevas is from Monterrey, Mexico, and is one of the youngest players on tour at 16 years old.



**Gerardo Franco**  
Sportsman of the Year  
Photo By Timothy Baghurst

The Sportsmanship Award is perhaps one of the most cherished awards, given the WRT's focus to uphold integrity and ensure a fair playing environment for all. Nominated players must embrace the ideals of fairness, integrity, and a positive attitude. The rest is up to the fans. In 2017, the nominees were Gerardo Franco, Andree Parrilla, Christian Longoria, and Alex Cardona. Gerardo Franco received the award for being the player who best demonstrated the qualities of fair sportsmanship.

The Fan Favorite Award is the purest representation of the fans and thus has no pre-nominees. The fans spoke and awarded their favorite as Rodrigo Montoya. Montoya had an outstanding 2017 season and was recognized by his fans and peers for all his hard work, dedication, and incredible "getability."

Now that spring is here, it's the busiest half of the year for the WRT with a packed schedule. To access the full schedule, go to [www.worldracquetballtour.com](http://www.worldracquetballtour.com). Keep up with all the fast action by following, interacting with, and watching all the WRT events year 'round live and free on the WRT website or on Facebook Live (@worldballtour). Don't forget that WRT events are also featured periodically on the Olympic Channel. For details, visit the WRT website.



**Rodrigo Montoya**  
Fan Favorite of the Year  
Photo By Paola Anchondo



Above: Jake Bredenbeck & Bobby Horn discussing..strategy?  
Photo By Pedro Garcia, Jr.

# Class of 2018

## WOR Hall of Fame



### Vic Leibofsky

Photo By Belinda Dettman



**W**orld Outdoor Racquetball (WOR) is proud to announce the induction of the 2018 WOR Hall of Fame class starting with Vic Leibofsky of Hollywood, Florida. Yes, Vic has gone “Hollywood.” Vic will be the first participant in the 2018 class and he will be recognized at the 2018 Florida Beach Bash in Hollywood, FL and at the WOR Championships in Huntington Beach, CA.

Vic Leibofsky is a legendary outdoor racquetball contributor who is the only person in our sport’s history to have directed all three-major national outdoor championships. These national and bi-coastal events range from Huntington Beach, California, to Las Vegas, Nevada, to Hollywood, Florida. Vic has been instrumental in not only running them but also in helping to make them into destination events. He has worked tirelessly at converting indoor-only players into WOR competitors. For his continuing efforts and leadership of the outdoor game of racquetball, Vic was named the sport’s inaugural recipient of the Greg Sheffield Award, the highest service honor in outdoor racquetball. The inscription reads: *Presented annually to the player who exhibits honor, integrity, and true love for growing the game.* Vic Leibofsky helped create the WOR rankings and the WOR 1-wall rules. He integrated the R2 Sports platform into outdoor racquetball. Vic is truly a once-in-a-generation leader.

What has made Vic’s nomination especially meaningful for the Hall of Fame Committee is that his incredible work has largely been accomplished in the background without taking credit for his significant achievements. Vic’s unwavering commitment to promoting our sport over decades is the reason why the committee is pleased to honor him in this way.

WOR National Director Greg Lewerenz said, “Vic has created much of what the organization of WOR is and how it operates. Vic promotes increasing junior participation, respect for all divisions, and discounted entry fees for female participants to increase participation where it is lacking. Vic is more than a Hall of Famer. He is a mentor and a friend, and no one deserves this honor more than he does.”

According to WOR Founder Hank Marcus, “Contributor is not nearly a sufficient enough word to describe Vic’s involvement with Outdoor and WOR. Vic’s impact on outdoor has benefited a generation of players and will be felt for years to come.”

### Hank Marcus

Photo By Stephen Fitzsimons



**T**he second inductee into the 2018 WOR Hall of Fame class is Hank Marcus of Lake Oswego, Oregon. Hank is a legendary outdoor racquetball contributor who founded World Outdoor Racquetball with the support of Scott Winters and Ektelon. WOR has grown since its inception in California to include 17 states that have outdoor courts. Internationally, WOR now features events and junior programs in countries including Mexico, Venezuela, England, and Spain. Hank worked with the organizers to establish three major national competitions in the United States to showcase the outdoor season. The revival of the WOR Championships in Huntington Beach, California, was just the beginning.

In 2004, WOR rapidly expanded to include an epic event in Hollywood Beach, Florida, billed as the very first One Wall National Championships. That inaugural visit to the Historic Courts on Garfield St. was the foundation of the ever-popular Beach Bash run by fellow 2018 WOR Hall of Fame inductee Vic Leibofsky. It has become a must-attend event for outdoor and indoor players.

During those early years, continuity and exposure for the outdoor game were the priorities highlighted by the creation of a highly visible outdoor ball (Ektelon red Fireball), new serving rules to increase rallies, and webcasts of the WOR Championships. In 2009, Marcus partnered with longtime indoor friend Mike Coulter and 3 Wallball. This set the stage for the first-ever combined “mega event” featuring racquetball and handball together, side by side. The 3 Wallball event did the unthinkable: building courts from the ground up on the Stratosphere Hotel parking lot and bringing outdoors to the Las Vegas Strip, highlighted by ESPN 3 telecasts in conjunction with World Players of Handball. It is now the largest in outdoor, bringing each season to a grand conclusion. One wall or three, it didn’t matter to Marcus, as long as people flocked to these popular destination events and had the time of their lives.

During his tenure, Marcus also “led the charge” in founding Military Racquetball Foundation (MRF) with now-retired Naval Officer Steven Harper. Marcus still proudly serves on the board today, having earned his “stars and stripes.” With the MRF helping military players around the world through the development of Racquetball Rehabilitation Clinics, the organization continues to assist veterans and injured service members. Over the years, Marcus also helped create the World Firefighter Racquetball Association, the National Police Racquetball Association and, in another collaboration with Coulter, the Classic Pro Racquetball Tour (CPRT). All of these organizations have become part of the outdoor scene including a veteran’s wheelchair division as part of the 3 Wallball event. Marcus also pioneered racquetball’s commitment to support fibromyalgia research.

Marcus’ legendary outdoor career culminated with a defining moment in late 2017 when WOR joined USA Racquetball to bring the sport under one umbrella and to take outdoor racquetball to the next level. WOR and USAR now work closely together by cross promoting the sport, reducing insurance liability for all participants and directors, and ensuring that racquetball will be available for the next generation and beyond.

On his induction, Hank commented, “The people in outdoor are really why the sport is so special to me. Over the years, I have seen the way they have welcomed new players at parks across the country like they were welcoming them into their homes. What makes outdoor so special is not the game of racquetball itself but the people and the atmosphere they create and how they share it with other players, spectators, and families. For that, more than anything, I am honored to be inducted into the WOR Hall of Fame. It is a place that I could never have ended up without the hard work of all those who have given their time, energy, care, and love for WOR over the years.”

WOR National Director Greg Lewerenz added, “Hank Marcus’ induction into the WOR Hall of Fame is fitting due to Hank’s tireless contributions to WOR. Hank founded the organization, created the original structure, and made all of the connections and agreements with other organizations to grow and support USA Racquetball, IRT, LPRT, MRF, et al. Hank enlisted the best of the outdoor enthusiasts and volunteers to build the organization, and he coordinated and helped run all of the major and minor events from behind the scenes. Hank is a pioneer for outdoor racquetball who will always be remembered for championing the player experience. The WOR Hall of Fame now shines brighter with Hank’s inclusion in this special group.”

## Greg Solis

Photo By Stephen Fitzsimons



Our third Inductee of the 2018 WOR Hall of Fame class is Greg Solis from Chino, California. Greg is one of outdoor racquetball’s hardest hitting and most feared pro players. He is also one of the sport’s smartest, most respected, and talented players. In fact, Greg has numerous achievements such as being the second player in outdoor history to win pro doubles with three partners (Brian Hawkes achieved this feat in his career five times). Based on Greg’s dominating 33 semifinals placements including 10 that evolved into national championship titles, he is clearly one of the most decorated pro doubles players (and outdoor players) ever in racquetball history.

The committee wrote, “Greg Solis is an exceptional pro athlete whose playing credentials alone would have secured him a spot into the Hall of Fame. When you combine that drive (and drive serve) with his years of directing many major national tournaments plus his contributions and commitment to growing the sport of racquetball, Greg is clearly in a league of his own. Few great athletes have ever excelled like Greg has while also directing the WOR National Championships and the WOR Warm-Ups from 1998 to 2018.”

Greg won the Men’s Pro Doubles National Championships with three different partners: brother Andy Solis with whom Greg played from 1995-2002; Craig “Clubber” Lane during the period of 2003-2013; and Kevin Booth in 2012. Greg is also the only player in history to win Men’s Pro Doubles three consecutive years (2004-2006). Along the way, he secured seven pro men’s doubles

outdoor national titles (1998, 1999, 2004-2007, 2012), and he was a finalist three other times. Additionally, Greg earned three pro mixed doubles titles (all with Janel Tisinger) at Huntington Beach (2012, 2014, 2015), and he capped a final doubles career win with his impressive 10th major pro title, capturing the pro CPRT National doubles crown in 2017 with Patrick Allen at Huntington Beach. Greg is also one of the few players to have earned a lifetime triple crown at this tournament (in pro doubles, pro mixed doubles, and CPRT doubles).

Greg has run the WOR Warm-Ups for two decades and also directed the WOR Nationals Championships from 1998-2004 in the quest to honor the major national founders and tournament directors of WOR Championships events. Greg Lewerenz, WOR National Director, quipped, “Greg is a no doubter.”

WOR Founder Hank Marcus, said, “Greg Solis has been a fixture on the WOR Southern California professional circuit for several decades as its skilled spokesman and oftentimes a nearly unbeatable doubles player. His record speaks for itself. Having Greg join racquetball’s elite is completely appropriate and befitting of an athlete and contributor of his caliber.”



# CALENDAR of EVENTS

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

\*Denotes WOR Sanctioned Event

Date	Event	City	State	Location	Email
April 3 - April 7	Utah State Singles Championship	Murray	UT	Sports Mall	dvan810@gmail.com
April 6 - April 7	Missouri Regional & State Championships	St. Louis	MO	Vetta Racquet Sports-CONCORD	dwhitley@vettasports.com
April 6 - April 7	2nd Annual Spring Village Club Camp	Chandler	AZ	Village - Ocotillo	coachw@wintertonracquetball.com
April 5 - April 8	IRT T1 Raising Some Racquet for Kids	Cincinnati	OH	Beechmont Racquet Club	fabriziomora75@gmail.com
April 6 - April 8	Washington State Singles	Edmonds	WA	Harbor Square Athletic Club	rocco@smartracquetball.com
April 6 - April 8	*WOR AZ VII Final Battle	Glendale	AZ	Bonsall Park	azor@azoutdoorracquetball.com
April 6 - April 8	Raleigh Classic	Raleigh	NC	NC State University - Carmichael Gym	racquetballclub.ncsu@gmail.com
April 6 - April 8	Spring Shootout	York	PA	Athletic Club of York	travis@theathleticclubofyork.com
April 7 - April 8	Aggieland Classic Spring	College Station	TX	Texas A&M Student Recreation Center	jruggiero99@tamu.edu
April 7 - April 8	Titans of Turlock Shootout	Turlock	CA	In Shape Sport: Monte Vista	ellistyle@comcast.net
14-Apr	*WOR Spring Shootout	Tracy	CA	West High School	billgeo01@yahoo.com
April 12 - April 15	DPJCC 10th Annual Racquetball Tournament	Davie	FL	David Posnack Jewish Community Center	rballrick1@gmail.com
April 13 - April 15	Fran Davis Racquetball Camp	Las Vegas	NV	Las Vegas Athletic Club	fran@frandavisracquetball.com
April 13 - April 15	Rocky Mountain Regionals	Pueblo	CO	Pueblo Athletic Club	rballjoe@gmail.com
April 13 - April 15	16th Duboise Electric Racquetball Pro-Am	Ft. Smith	AK	World Class Fitness	dschwinger@arcb.com
April 13 - April 15	Soda Man Shootout #1	Las Vegas	NV	Stratosphere Hotel and Casino	rjlam@hotmail.com
April 14 - April 15	Michigan Regionals	Davison	MI	Davison Athletic Club	dschopieray@newtechnologiesinc.com
April 20 - April 21	Ochsner Fitness Center's Spring Fling Shootout	Harahan	LA	Ochsner Fitness Center	racpres99@aol.com
April 20 - April 22	CNRA S/D Championships-Qualifier	Stockton	CA	In Shape Sport - West Lane	ellistyle@comcast.net
April 20 - April 22	Oregon Regional	Gresham	OR	Cascade Athletic Club	racquetball@cascadeac.com
April 20 - April 22	Battle at The Alamo - Regionals LPRT/IRT	San Antonio	TX	Thousand Oaks Family YMCA	td@alamoracquetball.org
April 20 - April 22	Kansas Regional	Wichita	KS	YMCA Wichita Down Town	yoscooter@gmail.com
April 20 - April 22	Illinois Regional Championships	Lombard	IL	Glass Court Swim and Fitness	gpeters@thehackettgroup.com
April 20 - April 22	No Strings Attached Open	Tucson	AZ	Tucson Racquet and Fitness Club	nostrings@utmax.com
April 20 - April 22	Liberty University Jame River Open	Lynchburg	VA	Liberty University - LaHaye	racquetball@liberty.edu
April 21 - April 22	Mid-Atlantic Regional Championships	Laurel	MD	Sportfit Total Fitness Racquet Club	msfeb14th@icloud.com
22-Apr	Scarlet Knight Shootout	Piscataway	NJ	Rutgers Racquetball Club	matt@mfontanilla.com
28-Apr	Indiana State Singles Championships	West Lafayette	ID	Purdue University	ksmith@centurytube.com
April 26 - April 29	Florida IRT Regional Championships	Sarasota	FL	Sarasota Bath & Racquet Club	auchad99@hotmail.com
April 27 - April 29	Georgia Regional Singles/Doubles	Lilburn	GA	Recreation Atl	grpatournaments@earthlink.net
April 27 - April 29	New England Regionals	Peabody	MA	Latitude Sports Clubs	solomonracquetandsports@gmail.com
April 27 - April 29	2nd Annual Spokane Club Open	Spokane	WA	Spokane Club - Downtown	premieracquet@gmail.com

# CALENDAR of EVENTS



Date	Event	City	State	Location	Email
April 27 - April 29	Arizona Regional Championship	Tempe	AZ	ASU Sun Devil Fitness Complex	mskingmath13@gmail.com
April 27 - April 29	WY State Singles Championship	Casper	WY	Wyoming Athletic Club	dwhoover72@gmail.com
April 28 - April 29	RYDF Spring Fund Raiser	Livermore	CA	Livermore Valley Tennis Club	rballchick@gmail.com
May 2 - May 5	NMRA National Championships Warren	Warren	NJ	Warren Health & Racquet Club	cindy.tilbury@att.net
May 2 - May 6	World Doubles Open Championships	Denver	CO	Denver Athletic Club	hiserj@me.com
May 4 - May 6	Phoenix Racquetball Classic	Elon	NC	Elon University	racquetball@gmail.com
May 4 - May 6	Military Classic	Chesapeake	VA	Greenbriar North YMCA	m Bailey@ymcashr.org
May 5 - May 6	Team India Qualifier	Arlington Hgts	IL	Forest View Racquet Club	dralokmehta@outlook.com
May 17 - May 20	Roanoke Cement Company Open	Roanoke	VA	Kirk Family YMCA	driveserve@email.com
May 18 - May 20	WRT Georgia Open	Lilburn	GA	Recreation ATL	info@recreationatl.com
May 18 - May 20	3rd Annual Indy Open	Indianapolis	IN	Jordan YMCA	summerracquetball@gmail.com
May 18 - May 20	Nor-Cal Doubles Championships	San Jose	CA	Sjsu	charlie@shastaathleticclub.com
May 19 - May 20	Arkansas State Singles	Fort Smith	AK	World Class Fitness	dschwinger@arcb.com
June 2- June 3	Texas State Juniors Racquetball Championship	Arlington	TX	Maverick Athletic Club	leo@themav.com

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## Promoting Racquetball For Fun & Fitness

By Jim Winterton



“How do I get started at my club with racquetball instruction?”

This begs the question for potential players, “Do you want to work out, or do you want to play racquetball?” Since playing is more fun than working, racquetball should be an easy sell!

Each marketplace is different, and maybe you can put up a poster or sign to achieve results. If this works, good for you! However, many times that strategy is not effective.

Emails along with phone calls and text messages are effective ways to gain new students. The most effective way might be personal face-to-face engagement with prospective new players in the club.

Try these ideas:

-Build a big board with holes in it and have a beanbag toss. Label the holes with numbers and award free racquetball lessons or discounts from the club pro shop. The same thing can be accomplished with a spinner board type game. If the game approach is not your thing, just set up a table, stack some racquets on the table, and talk to people as they go by. These actions bring club members into the programming “funnel.”

-Build programs to accommodate all ages and levels of play. Challenge courts, flex leagues, and structured leagues have something for almost everyone. Throw in a ladder challenge program (format provided by USA Racquetball) and a few “lesson leagues” and you have a well-rounded programming schedule.

Additional programming ideas can be found in the back of the USA Racquetball Instructor’s Program Manual. Much success has been realized by starting with one or two programs and building from there.

Remember, not all programs will start out great, especially if racquetball has been neglected in the past. Never cancel an event or program if you can help it. If only two people show up, make sure they have fun. Word will get out, and more people will come!

After getting some programs up and running, you can begin offering a couple of one-day Saturday shootouts to keep people enthused about racquetball and at the same time expand your base of racquetball participants.

Be sure to get your camera and catch people having fun! Post the pictures in your racquetball area. Everyone likes to laugh, and our sport is the perfect fun and fitness activity!

It all comes down to this: Would you rather work out or play racquetball? Work...or Play? You decide!

Note: Many of you are certified USA Racquetball Instructors and have programs that have worked and are certified USA Racquetball Instructors. Please share your ideas by emailing Jim Hiser at [jhiser@usaracquetball.com](mailto:jhiser@usaracquetball.com).

By Mike Grisz, NMRA Secretary



NATIONAL MASTERS RACQUETBALL

## 2018 NMRA SPRING AND SUMMER SCHEDULE

I'm always glad the holidays are finally over so I can get back to serious racquetball. We, the NMRA Board, are now planning for our spring and summer tournaments. The spring tournament, to be held for the first time in Warren, New Jersey, will take place May 2nd through the 5th. We are hoping for many new players from the area, and I think it will give our "repeat" players an opportunity to compete against players we haven't yet met. And, the location is perfect for a side trip to New York City!

The summer tournament site will be in Highlands Ranch, Colorado (South Denver). We held the tournament there in 2015. It is a great club, and the altitude provides for a very lively ball. The tournament dates are July 25th through the 28th.

Our full efforts are going into making these tournaments a success. We have two very different locations that will offer our members great racquetball experiences. The tournament amenities will be top-notch (food, souvenirs, etc.), and we will have a banquet at each event. But the real thing, for me at least, is to compete in a round robin format and to be able to play every person in my bracket. Not only is everyone guaranteed a lot of racquetball, it also gives us a chance to get to know one another. Just about all of my racquetball friends are the ones I've met at NMRA events. I play nearly all of the national tournaments each year, and I particularly look forward to NMRA events because of the sense of community we share.

Come to one or both of the events this year! If you think of someone who might like to try a tournament such as this, bring them along or tell them about it. These events are our primary mission, our reason for being. Help us make them successful...come and play!

## New Ashaway Polyurethane Resin Technology Yields Racquetball String Designed for Power Players Who Like to Cut and Spin the Ball



Official String



Ashaway has introduced another technical innovation to its line of racquetball strings: a polyurethane (PU) based multifilament nylon string designed to add toughness and durability for players who like to really cut and spin the ball. Ashaway's first string using this technology, new MultiKill® 17, combines a high tenacity multifilament nylon sheath with a specially formulated polyurethane resin that bonds the string into a single matrix and adds durability while providing superior feel. The smooth PU surface of MultiKill 17 enhances grip, while the 17-gauge construction maximizes power.

"Like Zyex®, polyurethane resin is a relatively new kid on the block for racquetball strings," said Ashaway's Steve Crandall. "It can be formulated to offer many different properties and, when combined with other materials like high tenacity nylon multifilament fibers, it can provide strings with exceptional playing characteristics. MultiKill 17 is our first offering using this innovative material technology, and we are excited to be able to compete in this market segment."

The key difference with this new technology, Crandall explained, is the matrix design. With other multifilament nylon strings, like Ashaway's popular SuperKill® XL line, the core and sleeve or wear layer elements remain separate and retain some ability to move relative to one another. The PU resin in the new MultiKill string binds the multifilament sheath and surface into a single unitized matrix. This gives the string added strength, especially on off-center hits near the edge of the frame, while the natural adhesive properties of the polyurethane surface add grip. At the same time, the string retains its soft feel and comfortable playability.

Ashaway's MultiKill 17 strings are black in color and 1.25 mm thick. They come in 40 ft. individual packages or 360 ft. reels. Recommended string tension is up to 40 lbs.

Ashaway Racket Strings are made by Ashaway Line & Twine Mfg. Co., the only U.S. manufacturer of string for squash, tennis, racquetball, and badminton. Operated by the Crandall family since 1824, Ashaway has been making racket strings since 1949 and is responsible for several important technical innovations. Ashaway has been the Official String of USA Racquetball for more than fifteen years. Ashaway Line & Twine Mfg. Co. also makes braided products for medical and industrial applications. For more information visit [www.ashawayusa.com](http://www.ashawayusa.com). Zyex is a registered trademark of Zyex Ltd.

## US Open Trends In Stringing

### PART II



Official String



As we noted in our last column, data from our stringing booth in Minneapolis at the 2017 UnitedHealthcare US Open Racquetball Championships showed some interesting trends. To recap, we strung over 200 racquets during the five days of play. Of these, some 50% were strung with Zyex®-based multifilament strings while the majority of the other 50% were strung with two types of nylon string. Of this latter segment, some 35% were multifilament nylon and the other 15% were multi-stranded monofilament nylon.

This means that about 85% of the strings used were of multifilament construction. We talked last time about the growth in the Zyex segment of this multifilament market. This time, I'd like to focus on the other 35%: the multifilament nylon segment.

While the popularity of Zyex-based strings continues to grow, there is still a strong base of multifilament nylon string adherents, even among the world's top players. This tells us that despite nylon's chief liability -- tension loss -- it still has properties that make for an excellent racquetball string. Players like the way it feels and wears. More importantly, there are also some material innovations involving multifilament nylon that promise to make it an even better racquetball string.

These material innovations involve the use of polyurethane (PU), a polymer resin relatively new to the racquet string world. Most people are probably familiar with the term polyurethane from wood finishes, or "varnish" like Minwax® Polyurethane. But polyurethanes have been around for a long time (first formulated in 1937) and are so versatile they have been used in a very wide range of applications. Just a few of these include rigid foam insulation panels; foam seals and gaskets; wheels and tires for roller coasters, shopping carts, and skateboards; automotive suspension bushings; high performance adhesives; surface coatings and sealants; synthetic fibers; hard-plastic parts; and hoses.

When used with other materials to make racquet string, polyurethane brings toughness and its natural adhesive properties. But utilizing these benefits requires a new type of string design and construction.

More traditional nylon multifilament strings, like Ashaway's SuperKill® XL pictured, include a core of multifilament fibers bound together by a sleeve or wear layer, which adds texture and abrasion resistance to the string. In SuperKill XL, this wear layer is composed of high tenacity nylon multifilament and is tightly braided around the core. In other strings, wear layers contain different materials and can be wound or braided in different manners. But in all of these constructions, the core and wear layers remain separate and can actually move relative to one another, which adds a degree of suppleness to the string.

Polyurethane strings are different animals altogether. The polyurethane resin penetrates through the entire multifilament bundle or sheath, fusing the fibers into a single matrix. Thus, there is no distinct "core" and no separate wear layer wound onto the string -- the whole matrix acts as a single unit. This adds a great deal of durability to the string while at the same time allowing it to retain nylon's soft feel and comfortable playability.

Plus, the polyurethane itself becomes a smooth, ultra tough surface, one that resists abrasion and notching, especially on off-center hits near the edge of the frame. And while not at all "sticky" or "tacky," this surface has natural adhesive properties that help grip and spin the ball.

The result is multifilament nylon string with superior feel that is designed to add toughness, durability, and grip for players who really like to really cut and spin the ball.

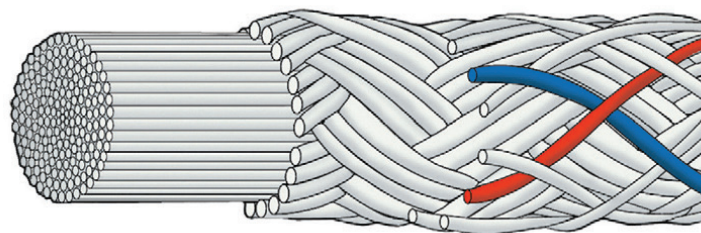
Ashaway's new MultiKill® 17 is our first foray into this new polyurethane resin string technology, and we are delighted to be able to compete in this market segment and offer players yet another innovation. No single string can suit all tastes and styles of play. At the same time, technology continues to advance and you never know when a new string will suit you better than an older one. As manufacturers, our job is to stay on top of new technologies and bring you the very best strings we can. As players, your job (in addition to having fun) is to use equipment that helps you be the best you can be!

Zyex is a registered trademark of Zyex Ltd.

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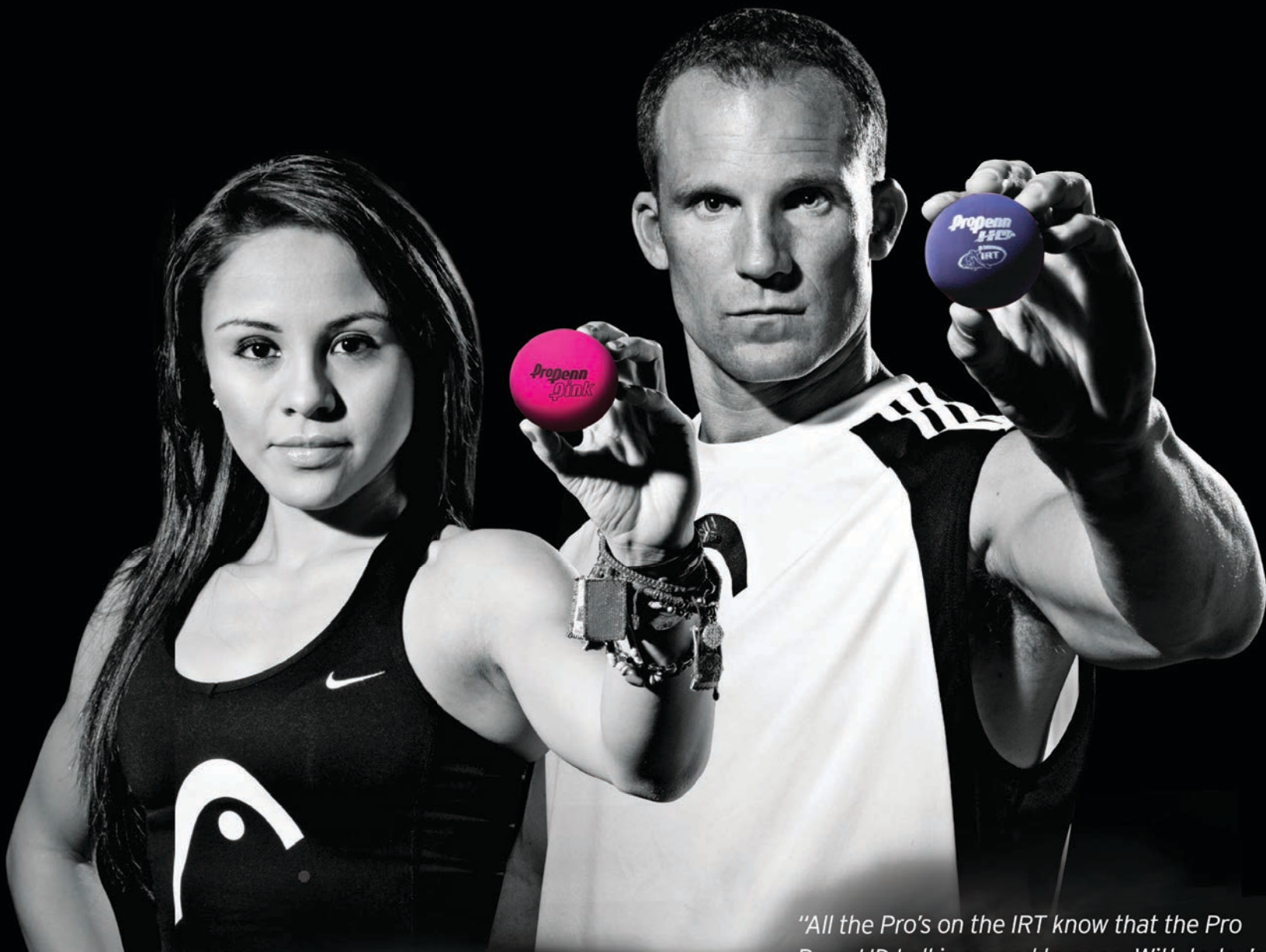
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**Rocky Carson**