

# NPA

(INDOOR / FOUR-WALL)

**National Paddleball Association**

WWW.PADDLEBALL.ORG

NPA, 7642 Kingston, Portage, Mich. 49002

NEWSLETTER / FALL 2009-2010

## Racquetball and Brum get credit for success of Paddleball Nation



**Charlie Brumfield**

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

Six years ago, a group from the West Coast -- calling itself the Paddleball Nation -- began playing in National Paddleball Association tournaments.

During that period, their players have dominated those events.

They have won half of the 48 singles division championships and 27 1/2 doubles titles out of a possible 49.

In their third season -- 2006 -- they won 9 of 9 national singles championships. In 2008, they captured 6 of 7 national singles titles.

What's the reason?

Well, it appears that a general racquetball background



for most PBallers is the primary reason, along with the guidance of Charlie Brumfield.

Brumfield -- a paddleball star in the late 1960s and early 1970s, then a racquetball star for years after that and who then returned to paddleball as the driving force behind the Paddleball Nation -- is credited with making sure it has a very representative group in tournaments.

Please see NATION, Page 2

### 2009-2010 NPA Schedule

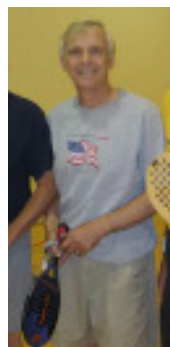
**MIDWEST FALL DOUBLES:** Midland, MI., Community Center, Nov. 6, 7, 8, 2009.

**MIDWEST SINGLES:** Adrian, Mich., YMCA, Jan. 15, 16, 17, 2010.

**MIDWEST DOUBLES:** Old IM Building, U. of M., Ann Arbor, Mich., Feb. 19, 20, 21, 2010.

**NATIONAL SINGLES:** Sorrento Valley Fitness Center, San Diego, March 26, 27, 28, 2010

**NATIONAL DOUBLES:** Forest View Racquet Club, Arlington Hgts., Ill., April 16, 17, 18, 2010.



**Kokmeyer**

**How much in love with paddleball are you?**

**Enough to have your own court built in your office building?**

**Well that's what Frank Kokmeyer did.**

**He did it for several reasons, not the least of which was trying to avoid being blocked by a train whenever he was headed for PB at the local YMCA.**

**It's quite a story.**

**For details, see Pages 4 and 5**

# NATION

Continued from Page 1

Said Mike Wisniewski, 8-time national NPA singles champion from Bay City, Mich.:

“From my perspective, the greatest influences are as follows: 1) Brumfield’s consistent cultivation of paddleball talent; 2) Many California players grew up in court sports in the midst of and influenced by professional athletes; 3) California has no season; they play year around, so 5 years experience can equal 10 years in Michigan experience. Time on the court matters.

“Just my two cents worth.”

Jamie Lawson of San Diego, who with Brumfield won the 2009 national masters doubles title, attributes much of the Nation’s success to Brumfield.

Lawson said Brumfield travels around when he hears about the possibility of a good paddleballer and recruits him or her for the Nation.

“I think the critical point ... is that Brumfield brings in new blood and young blood,” said Lawson. In my particular case, I hadn’t played paddleball for 30 years but got a paddle to improve my racquetball warm-up. Brumfield saw me playing and made me an offer I couldn’t refuse.

“I’ve been playing at 7 a.m. ever since and less than a year later, we won the masters doubles. Charlie buys people paddles so that they will have one, does exhibitions at other clubs, lures them into the court and gets them to come back.”

Lawson gave several examples of Brumfield’s influence on the success of West Coast paddleball, including a half-dozen players going to American Athletic, primarily a Mexican club.

“When we left, Charlie left a few paddles and some paddleballs with the desk so that people could play if they wanted,” Lawson said.

Andy Mitchell, of Kalamazoo, Mich. -- who has won 20 national doubles titles and 3 national singles crowns -- said:

“One thing you might consider is that we have been splitting the locations of the tournaments between the Midwest and California. When the tournaments are in California, the fields are much better attended by Nation people and they can line up their strengths respective to the talent they know.

“Also, the number of people from the Midwest vs. the number of people from the Nation is greatly affected by the location which means sheer numbers have a big impact. I do think they have had the top player or players with Gelhaus, Lerner, Entrikin, the Giant and Embry. All these people come from the top ranks of racquetball and this has a trickle-down effect.”

Mitchell said he would “be curious to see the numbers by tournament site. (Ann Arbor’s) national singles was split pretty evenly if you allow the Tennessee connection as separate from the California contingent.

“I think the high level of racquetball experience is a big factor as well. (Charlie, Eric, Trent, etc.)”

Jim Owens, of Ann Arbor, said: “Charlie Brumfield sees to it that Paddleball Nation fields a strong team in the national tournaments. He’s a great motivator, advocate and teacher.”

Owens, who has won several national PB titles, also said that “The bulk of the good players play at the same facility. The better players get to play each other often. It is not the case in Michigan.”

He added that the Nation’s base “consists of former professional and advanced-level racquetball players ... It has an age advantage over the Midwest, especially Michigan. It’s a delight to see so many young, talented players in California. Our average age in the Midwest is considerably older.”

*Editor’s Note: In his usual style of no capitals and little punctuation, Steve Keeley offers his take on the success of the Paddleball Nation:*

why do racquetballl players dominate paddleball tournaments?

remember that racquetball is the ugly daughter of paddleball. The former nat’l paddleball champs including bud muehleisen, carl loveday, charles brumfield and me transitioned in the early 70’s our first love paddles sport to the strung racquet for glory, money and travel.

fast forward three decades to the 00’s and we have a plethora of racquetballers, old faces and new, dominating paddleball tournaments.

this is primarily because the aforementioned players in recent years have seeded california courts with a focus in san diego and los angeles with paddleballs. why?

because wood is a better game than loco nylon, and because ancient legs chase rubber balls with a hole slower than ones without a hole. paddleball is intellect and intrigue.

## REMINDERS ...

Just a couple of tips from Lorri Brigham to tournament players:

“If you want to keep the tourney on time, the winner of the match must report the scores immediately to the tourney desk.

“Do not sit and discuss the match, get yourself a beer, etc. If you are too tired to move, appoint someone to do this for you.

“If you are not coming back for your next match, report this to the tourney desk. Do not assume your opponent, your friend or God will do it for you.”

Buy more balls

## West Coast tourney draws record number of paddle, racquetballers

SAN DIEGO -- Paddleball along with racquetball was featured in the Jason Mannino Tournament as a record-breaking group of players jammed the courts at Sorrento Valley Health & Fitness Center.

The tournament, held August 13-16, 2009, drew 265 entrants, "our largest tournament ever," said Jimmy Coggburn, general manager of Sorrento Valley.

"Great matches on both the racquetball and paddleball sides."

Paddleball winners in singles were:

Chris Crowther, who defeated Kirk Loveday, in the Open/A division; Matt Schulz, who topped Eddie Contreras in B; and John Flesher, who defeated Greg Swanson in C.

PB champions in doubles were:

Chris Crowther and Jason Mannino, who topped Todd Entrikin-Mike Orr in the Open/A division; Kirk Loveday-Carl Loveday, who won out over Mike Myers-Mike Burgette in B; and Conor Brumfield-Stewart Stevenson who took C division honors by defeating Dan Trubovitz and Jerry Stroup.

### GOT A PB STORY, ANECDOTE, BRIEF ACCOUNT, WHATEVER?

Do you have an item about paddleball that would be interesting to other players?

If you do, send an E-mail to LOUSUEG@AOL.COM

It doesn't have to be earth-shaking, it just has to be about our great sport.

It could be a funny incident in a tournament, a question about the rules, your opinion on the best PBaller ever, etc.

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI



Randy Wackerle, of Bay City, Mich., got me interested in making buttons. He gave me a device years ago and I don't know how many buttons I've made over the years -- for family reunions, for gags, for paddleball tournaments, etc. Well, Randy gave me one about a year ago that says it all for me (and I suspect a lot of other PBallers). This is it. And I'm sure my wife, Sue, will attest to the fact that PB is quite important to me. -- LOU GIAMPETRONI



**SUMMERTIME PB** -- Got a chance to play some paddleball on Aug. 11, 2009, with two former champions -- Grace Harrison (formerly Louwsma) on the left and Judy Shirley at right. With them is Al Storey who was our fourth. The ladies still can hit all the shots. We played at the Old IM Building at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Judy plays on a regular basis but Grace had not played "for about 20 years," she said. Not only that but it must have been near 100 degrees in the courts. Grace won 7 national women's open doubles titles -- six with Judy. Judy also won 4 with Barb Johnson. Grace and Judy each also won a national singles championship. -- LOU GIAMPETRONI

# A (PB) Place To Call His Own

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

As the paddleballers run around the court, they shoot, they retrieve, they shout and they enjoy themselves as PBallers usually do.

Only they are not playing at a YMCA, or a health club or a university.

They are running around in Frank Kokmeyer's court.

Frank Kokmeyer's court?

Yes. It's in the Kalamazoo, Mich., area and is part of his professional building, where he practices dentistry.

The story goes that Kokmeyer, 67, would get a little upset when he would be heading for the YMCA for paddleball and get stopped by a train.

"Many times I would be delayed because of a train that ran through the city during my lunch time," said Kokmeyer. "Although I was frustrated, it never dampened my enthusiasm for paddleball."

Kokmeyer started practicing dentistry in the suburban community of Parchment in 1967.

"It was a space-sharing arrangement and I rented about half of the building," he said. "After a couple of years, I found a need for more exercise and started to play paddleball a couple of times a week during my lunch break.

"I would take two hours and travel to the YMCA which was located on the other side of Kalamazoo."

Ten years later, Kokmeyer said, "It became clear that my practice needed more space, so I started drawing up plans for a new building to be built on property I owned about a quarter-mile away.

"I wanted my dental office to be beautiful and relaxing, and there was never a doubt that including a court would provide convenience, healthy exercise and enjoyment for patients, friends, staff and myself."

Kokmeyer said the lower area "also includes leasable space for another professional with enthusiasm for the game."

The court is regulation size and was built by a company that specializes in court construction, Kokmeyer said. A net can be installed for wallyball games.

Two rooms are for showers and changing and the area was built for four players to conveniently play and dress, he said.

Use of the court varies "but it has been used as intended," Kokmeyer said. "Staff members have used it and staff and church groups have played wallyball. There are a couple of groups that play racquetball.



**A group plays a game in Kokmeyer's court.**

"Players include physicians, real estate salesmen, pastors and small-business owners. I find that retirees often play because of their flexible schedules. No leagues have used the facility."

Kokmeyer said the court "has been a real asset for promotion of the dental practice since I've asked that each group of players include someone who is a patient. My goal had nothing to do with constant use. I have always been able to play based on my schedule and the travel time saved has been spent with my family."

There is no charge for using his court, Kokmeyer said, "but some of the players have helped by replacing lights or contributing to a new drinking fountain/water cooler. Some have given me restaurant gift certificates."

Kokmeyer said he plays paddleball about three times each week and one player, in his 80s, attributes his health to playing paddleball.

"I am pleased that the court provides enjoyment and healthy exercise for others and myself," he said.

"As I look back over the last 30 years, it (the court) was one of the best ideas I included in my building," he said. "I would do it again without a second thought."



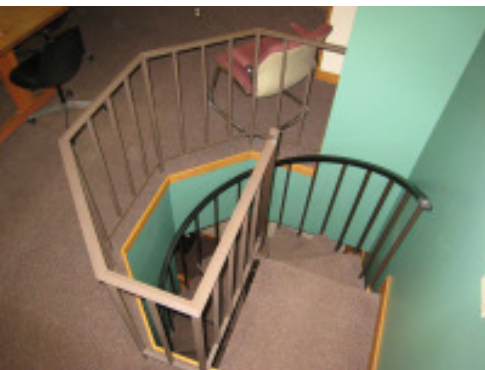
Dr. Frank Kokmeyer outside his office.



A foursome zips around Kokmeyer's court.

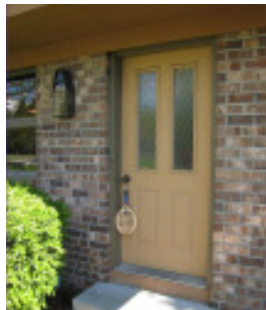


(From left) Dave Loney, Bill Sprague, Frank Kokmeyer and Steve Fleckenstein.



A slight reminder of the Old IM Building.

The "secret" entrance to the PB court.



Photos by STEVE FLECKENSTEIN



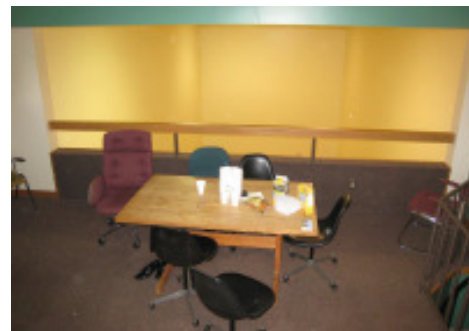
A little plug.



The locker room.



(From left) Bill Sprague, the late George Miller, Dave (The Rev) McShane and Doug (Chopper) Averitt.



Place for a little refreshment.

## Chicago-area event 'a big success'

By JIM OWENS

If you would like to spend a summer Saturday playing lots of paddleball and enjoying the weather at the same time, you should make a trip to the Chicago area next year for the Tenth Annual Outdoor Three-Wall Tournament.

There were 11 teams at this year's event held August 15 at the Park District Courts in LaGrange, Illinois, and every team played at least 12 fifteen-point games. Winning teams played slightly more and the finalists competed in 16-18 games.

The format is unique. Preliminarily, all teams play each other in a full-field round-robin consisting of one game to 15. The preliminary results determine seeding for a conventional single-elimination bracket that begins with 15-point matches and escalates to 21-point matches by the finals.

Teams are determined by level of play and are matched as evenly as possible, which means a strong "A" player will be paired with a weaker "B" player, etc.

Surprisingly, Chase Bachar, a "newby" from Wheaton, Illinois, teamed with veteran Chad Krager and struggled to a demure 10th seed from the round-robin.

In the single-elimination bracket, they steadied the ship and sailed a smooth course to claim the tournament title.

In the final match, Krager-Bachar defeated the first-seed team of Jack Tamplin and Mike Fornero of the Chicago area in straight games, 21-10, 21-9.

En route, the winners defeated Tony Sindt-Sean Nelson of the Chicago area, Mike Wisniewski, Bay City, Mich., and Keith Brown of the Chicago area and in the semifinal took a tiebreaker over Dino Hamiti-Jimmy Camasto of the Chicago area.

Many thanks to The Paddle Company for its sponsorship of various gifts and paddles for the winners and for raffle prizes.

*(Chad Krager assisted with this article.)*

## Ex-PB champion switched sports

In the 1990 NPA National Singles Tournament at the Davison (Mich.) Racquet Club, Ed Flynn won the golden masters title for players at least 55.

In the process, he defeated Al Storey of Ann Arbor, Mich., 21-10, 21-2, as Flynn won all of his round-robin matches to finish unbeaten. He lost only one game.

Storey had won six of the 10 previous national golden masters singles championships so Flynn's victory was a surprise, to say the least.

And to limit Storey to two points in the second game was no small feat.

Flynn of Flushing, Mich., has been unable to play paddleball for many years because of bum knees.

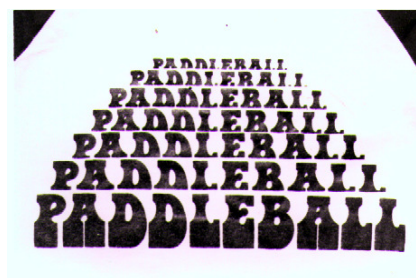
But he still can play tennis



**Ed Flynn at the Flint Tennis Club in June of this year.**

and does a lot of that at the Flint (Mich.) Tennis Club and its clay courts which are easier on the legs.

Flynn, who was 78 on Aug. 13, works part-time in insurance.



## NPA board considers PB issues

By JIM OWENS

The NPA Board of Managers' summer meeting took place August 29, 2009, at the Michigan Athletic Club in East Lansing, Mich.

The NPA is just barely at a break-even point financially. But we decided not to raise tournament fees this year. However, a few facilities are becoming too expensive, including one of our favorite places -- the MAC in East Lansing.

Rules were discussed. The board decided to delete the rule requiring players to wear either white or light colors while playing in NPA tournaments. Distracting or obstructing attire will be addressed in a set of tournament guidelines.

The proposal requiring a player to win by two points in order to win a game was defeated. The proposal requiring only one serve rather than two possible serves was defeated.

A proposal to play over a rally if a ball goes over a back wall and out of the court also was defeated.

Attending the meeting were Lou Hekhuis, Mike Wisniewski, Lorri Brigham, Skip Freysinger, Jim Richter, Andy Pappas, Lou Giampetroni and myself.

On a conference call setup were Andy Mitchell, Ron Malecki, Chad Krager and Jamie Lawson.

## Early PB pioneer Dale A. Riker dies at 87

Present-day paddleballers probably are not familiar with the name of Dale A. Riker.

But he was one of several men who created the National Paddleball Association in the early 1960s.

Riker, who was a former Flint (Mich.) District Court judge, died at 87 on July 2, 2009.

He was at a family reunion in South Austin, Texas, when he passed away.

Riker said his first contact with paddleball was in 1943 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where he was in the Army Specialized Training Program.

"It was a bastard game of handball using basically the same rules," he said. "But instead of striking a ball with your hand, which hurts, you stroked the ball with a paddle."

It was several years before the sport was fine-tuned to somewhat of a present-day version of the sport. Earl Risky, then on the staff at the U. of M., generally is credited with the creation of the game.

Riker said the NPA "was started in Ann Arbor (in 1961) when officers were elected to a board ... I was elected a director and volunteered to draft the by-laws. Also on the Board of Directors were Rod Grambeau, Bud Muehleisen, Diz Kronenberg, Bill Pire, Andy Kozar, Bob McNamara and Bill Schultz.

"Up until that time," Riker said, "there was no official ball. In the beginning, we removed the cover of tennis balls which was a long and tedious job. Then they came up with some new adhesive which was impossible to remove."

But Penn Athletics, the maker of tennis balls, started to sell rejected inner cores of tennis balls.

"They were pink in color and were known as 'pinkies,'" he said.

Riker said he wrote to Penn and asked if "they could provide a standard ball, giving them no specs other than we had used tennis rejects and needed a standard ball for the third nationals held in Flint. A Penn rep came and brought some balls which we used. So the official ball was developed in Flint."

Riker was a regular on the courts at the Flint YMCA and offered advice (usually



**Riker in a recent photo and at the Flint YMCA in the 1970s.**



unasked) to anyone who would listen on the fine points of the game. He knew a lot about it.

He competed in national tournaments, which featured both singles and doubles, throughout the country -- Madison, Wis.; Bloomington, Ind.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Fargo, N.D.; Ames, Iowa; and Eau Claire, Wis.

The fields were small in the early years of the NPA because they usually were comprised of professional men: lawyers, doctors, YMCA personnel, etc., who could afford the time and money for such endeavors.

Riker, and his wife, Evelyn, also were fervent fans of the circus -- any circus. Riker once was national president of the Circus Fans Association of America. After he retired, they moved to Sarasota Fla., where many circus people live and volunteered to work at the Ringling Museum of Art there.

He and his wife attended more than 700 circus performances during their travels across the United States, Europe and Asia.

A memorial service will be held in Sarasota in late Fall after most of the touring circuses return home.

-- LOU GIAMPETRONI

## Grambeau remembers Riker

Dale A. Riker was paddleball's "legal representative" in the early days of the National Paddleball Association, said Rod Grambeau, of Ann Arbor, Mich.

Grambeau, who served on the NPA Board of Directors with Riker in the early 1960s, said Riker worked with the Marcraft Corp. and other firms. Marcraft produced the paddles.

Riker did so in "establishing royalties for the NPA for the sale of paddles and balls and other legal work.

"Another memory I have of Dale was that he wore an eye guard, which very few players did at that time. Dale was a good friend of Earl Risky and they enjoyed many matches together, as we all did with Dale."

**Paddleballs**  
... can be ordered  
through Spectrum  
Sports, 2618 South  
St. Anthony, Jack-  
son, Mich., 49203  
or by calling Gordy  
Hatt at (517) 784-  
1861.



**Haines**

## **PADDLEBALL PROFILE**

Over the years, Steve Haines has done a lot of things for the National Paddleball Association.

He has assisted NPA officials -- especially Secretary-Treasurer Lorri Brigham -- in doing whatever had to be done. Such as carting goodies and shirts and balls -- and whatever -- into and out of tournament sites.

Haines, of Richland, Mich., also has been called on to write articles for the NPA newsletter. (He's pretty good.)

And you usually see his smiling face at just about every NPA tournament.

In other words, he's a paddleball fixture who in the list of Kalamazoo, Mich., area players with nicknames goes by the name "No Name."

Oh, and he also plays the game.

The 64-year-old Haines, who is retired, began playing PB in 1978 when "A friend assured me it would be fun ... It's a fun way to stay in shape and hone your thirst."

Asked about his PB record over the years, Haines said "I think I won seniors at the Pig Roast once."

Any suggestions on how tournaments can be improved?

"I think they're great the way they are," he said.

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