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The U.S. National Handball Center

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How to win in O.T.

'THE FINALS'

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NATIONALS COVERAGE

- Juniors
- Collegiates
- 3-Wall Masters Doubles
- 4-Wall Masters Doubles

DYNASTY'S DUO

Clodagh Munroe and Ray Ure lead MSU-Mankato to Collegiate Nationals title No. 4





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INSIDE HANDBALL

Volume 74, No. 1

Our mission: To organize, promote and spread the joy of The Perfect Game



At Press Time, from Matt Krueger

Welcome to the first “new and improved,” redesigned issue of *Handball* magazine! We hope you’ll enjoy it even more than previous editions – but in any case, we’d love to receive your comments and questions. Simply email them to editor@ushandball.org. We’ll publish as many as we have room for – after we email and call you to confirm your identity. No anonymous emails will be published.

In addition to some new colors, layouts and an easier-to-read typeface (“Georgia Pro” instead of “Times New Roman”), this issue restores into print a couple other features you otherwise might have only found online: “The Ref’s Corner” Q&A on handball rules and obituaries of recently departed men and women who loved handball. Again, please email editor@ushandball.org to submit rules questions or obituaries, which we’ll confirm with an email and call.

Why update *Handball* magazine now? Well, the USHA has published *Handball* since 1951, making it the fourth-oldest sports periodical in the United States, and no one here can remember the last time the magazine was redesigned. We just haven’t had the time and expertise to do so. Since COVID and the retirement of Vern Roberts from the USHA, we’ve needed to prioritize the revival and growth of national tournaments, which has resulted in sporadic publication of *Handball*.

This issue, however, marks a new beginning and renewed

commitment to *Handball*. One of our USHA contributors, Michael Dorsher, Ph.D., has stepped forward to become the new editor-in-chief of *Handball*. Mike started playing handball “just” 10 years ago, but he has a couple of medals to show for it – along with surgeries on both rotator cuffs. Beyond that, Mike has more than 25 years of award-winning writing and editing experience – at *The Washington Post*, newspapers across the Upper Midwest and UPI – and he was a journalism professor for 20 years. He is committed to publishing spring, summer, fall and winter issues of *Handball* each year!

Plus, Mike brought us Mary Brozic, the Minneapolis graphics designer who redesigned this issue. “Mary B.” has never played handball, but she knows that reading about it shouldn’t be as challenging as playing it.



As for the contents of this issue, in addition to all of our great tournament coverage, you’ll want to read USHA President Denis Hogan’s preview on the United States National Handball Center in St. Louis – along with Mark Penick’s “A Closer Look” on Rodney Fink, and by extension, his son, David, who has won five Senior Race for Eight pro Players Championships.

We hope you find this redesigned issue of *Handball* engaging, and as always, we look forward to seeing you on the courts!



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ON THE COVER: Collegiate Open Singles champions Clodagh Munroe and Ray Ure. *Photo by Michelle Hargrave*

Coming to The Perfect Game, the perfect place!

Meet me in St. Louis, at the United States National Handball Center

Just last year, in January 2024, the USHA Board gathered in Tucson for its Winter Meeting.

For several years, our focus had been on navigating the aftermath of the COVID shutdown – rebuilding our membership, restoring tournaments and revitalizing our handball community. By 2024,



USHA PRESIDENT DENIS HOGAN

things were looking up, and we were optimistic about returning to a more stable schedule of operations.

During routine reports, Nate Frank, then chair of the Collegiate Committee, gave a presentation that grabbed our attention. He had surveyed potential sites for the Collegiate Nationals tournament, and the results were sobering. Only five or six venues could host 20-30 teams and 225+ players – including some sites barely adequate.

For years, we had known the reality: Fewer universities were willing or able to host our collegiate championships. Once upon a time, we had our pick of public and private university facilities. Now many schools demand higher rental fees or have repurposed their courts altogether. And unless a university club could officially reserve the courts, renting a facility for a weekend could cost tens of thousands of dollars, which is simply unsustainable for us.

As we discussed solutions, Executive Director Matt Krueger reminded us that this challenge isn't limited to the Collegiate Nationals. The same problem is affecting our other national tournaments. The USHA had already considered splitting the Four-Wall Nationals into separate singles and doubles events – not only to reduce the need for large venues with 10+ courts but also to ease scheduling demands on players and families. The writing was on the wall: fewer venues, higher costs and an increasing burden on our staff to find, evaluate and secure locations.

The situation demanded our full attention.

A club in crisis, an opportunity in disguise

That same month, the Hinder Club in St. Louis received devastating news: They were losing their lease.

For the second time in less than 50 years, they were being forced from their home. This was a club that had

recently completed a successful capital campaign, built a thriving membership and created one of the best handball facilities in the country. Now they faced an uncertain future.

Unfortunately, their story is all too familiar. Many handball communities have faced similar struggles, as courts continue to disappear, weakening our clubs and our sport.

But instead of folding, the Hinder Club fought back. Its members found a former racquetball club – converted into a gymnastics facility – that still retained much of its original structure, including some flooring. Partnering with the Missouri State Handball Association, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, they acquired the building and property.

Their plan was ambitious: First, restore a few courts to playable condition; then, over 5-10 years, fully rebuild the facility to its original 10-court capacity through a grassroots, self-funded effort.

A bold proposal

Fast forward to May 2024:

At the USHA Summer Board Meeting in Los Angeles, members from St. Louis presented their vision. Their resilience and determination were inspiring. They weren't just trying to rebuild – they were setting out to create something bigger.

Then they made an ambitious proposal: What if the USHA partnered with them to create a world-class handball center?

If we joined forces, we could accelerate the project – potentially saving a decade of work. This would provide the USHA with a dedicated, national-quality venue, ensuring a home for our sport. It would be a game-changer: a facility designed to host our biggest events, develop top-tier players and showcase handball at its highest level.



The showcase interior planned for the Handball Center.



The Handball Center's accessibility in St. Louis is outstanding.

For years, the USHA had considered investing in a national facility, but the timing and opportunities had never been quite right. In the past, there were plenty of quality venues, so the need wasn't urgent. But as I've outlined, the landscape had changed dramatically.

The USHA Board took the proposal seriously. After months of discussions and negotiations, we finalized the partnership this January. The U.S. National Handball Center was born.

Our new home

Today, the center already has four completed courts – two brand-new and two renovated using materials from the old Hinder Club. Within the next couple of months, two more courts will be finished.

Once complete, the facility will be a nine-court state-of-the-art handball center, featuring:

- A Grand Show Court with two glass side walls and premium viewing
- A Show Court with one glass wall and upstairs viewing
- Seven more regulation courts with upstairs viewing

Beyond tournaments, this facility will be a hub for handball development. It will host clinics, junior programs and training opportunities for players of all levels – including those with pro ambitions.

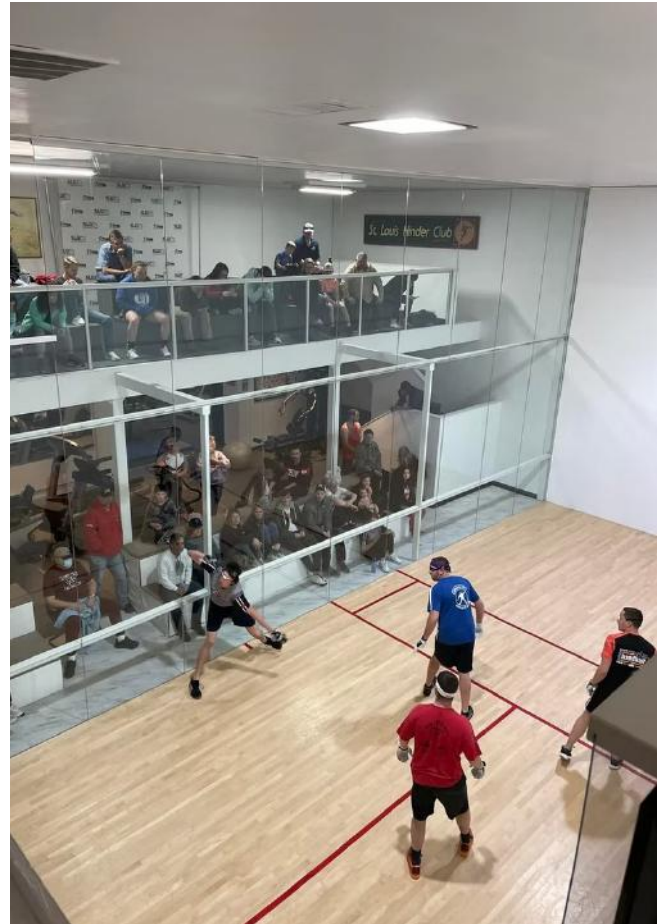
Strategically located in St. Louis, it is just 14 minutes from Lambert International Airport and



ALL HANDS ON DECK: The renovation work is well underway.

3 minutes off Interstate 270, plus the Hinder Club already has a strong local membership base.

In addition to having a club exclusively for handball, whenever a volunteer club isn't available to host a Nationals tournament, the Handball Center will fill the gap.



SHOW COURT SHOWDOWN: With viewing galleries in back and on both sides, this is a great facility for fans and players!

Be a part of handball history

To complete this vision, we will be launching a national fundraising campaign. We need your support.

There will be opportunities for everyone to contribute – whether large or small, at tinyurl.com/HB-donate.

In the Navy, there's a tradition: The first crew of a new ship are called "Plankowners," forever tied to that vessel.

We want every one of you to be part of this legacy. Years from now, you should be able to say:

"I made that happen. I helped build the U.S. National Handball Center."

This is a turning point for our sport. Spread the word: We finally have a home.

Welcome to the U.S. National Handball Center!

Collegiate Nationals attract 200+ players!

By Sam Esser

PORTLAND, Ore. – The 2025 Collegiate Nationals returned to the Multnomah Club in Portland for the first time since 2015. Returning to the Pacific Northwest 10 years later was a welcome trip for many of the coaches who really enjoy the area. The players quickly learned to love it, too, and were in awe over how nice the club is. Multnomah is the largest private athletic club in the United States, and it is connected to the stadium of Major League Soccer's Portland Timbers.

Around 220 players competed in the tournament this year, with players representing 25+ different universities from the U.S., Ireland and Canada. The team spirit and camaraderie were as high as ever, and players cheered on their teammates loudly from 8:00 in the morning to 10:00 at night for almost five days straight! With the draw as big as it was, games were played to 15, 15 and 11 until the finals, where the 21, 21, 11 format returned.

Bracket Ace continued to enhance the tournament for the players as they could continuously check the team scoring totals to see who was in the lead. It also gave players the capability to see live scores on each court just by checking the app. The Multnomah is a big club, and the courts are spread out, so this was a great feature.

At the banquet Saturday night, Martin Mulkerrins was honored with the 2024 Coach of the Year Award. Mulkerrins took six players to his first Collegiate Nationals in Tucson in 2023 and now has grown the program at

Texas A&M to one of the largest in the country, bringing 25+ players to the tournament the past two years.

Many players were honored with scholarships at the banquet, with over \$30,000 being awarded:

The Mardak Scholarship is awarded to students who have become USHA-Certified Handball Instructors and are teaching the game to new players. This year's recipients were Matt Avendano, Caitlin Behne and Amesely Davis of Texas A&M; Belisa Camacho of the University of Arizona; Evan Downing of Pacific University; Sam Hall and Luke Jordan of Missouri State University; Aoife Holden and Diarmuid Mulkerrins of Angelo State University; Levy Osen of Colorado School of Mines; and David Ceagelske, Bryan Trejo, Ray Ure and Lucas Wells of Minnesota State University, Mankato.

The Team Aware Scholarship was established in Memory of Chatten Hayes, who passed away from cancer. Chatten was passionate about everything she chose to partake in, especially handball. The Team Aware Scholarship is awarded to a collegiate handball student-athlete who has been affected by cancer. This year, Rosalyn Azar of Texas A&M was awarded the scholarship by Pacific University handball assistant coach David Steinberg, who was married to Chatten.

The David Chapman Memorial Scholarship is awarded to a full-time collegiate handball player who is attending school in California or Missouri, where Chapman grew up playing. The goal is to award a player who has good academic records and demonstrates financial need. This year's recipient was Sam Hall, who is president of the Missouri State Handball team.

Thank you to the Alten Fund for sponsoring the tournament and making it as great as it was. A special thanks to Ben Van Arsdale and Jeff Wall for volunteering their time to make this tournament successful on Bracket Ace. The app lets referees keep score on their phone and lets everyone else see live scores of each court in the building, and so much more. Schedule your next tournament at [BracketAce.com](https://www.bracketace.com)

If you have never been to a Collegiate Nationals before, you should make your plans to visit Springfield, MO, next year to see what it is all about. The sportsmanship, passion and team spirit is unlike any other tournament you have ever attended.



THE CROWD goes wild, with players, coaches and parents all cheering at Nationals.

Collegiate Nationals award winners on parade



MARDAK SCHOLARSHIP winners taught handball on their campus and competed.



ABOVE: Masters champ David Steinberg presents the cancer Team Aware Scholarship to Texas A&M's Rosalyn Azar in memory of Steinberg's late wife, Chatten Hayes.



The women's All-America and All-Tournament players display their medals.



The men's All-America and All-Tournament winners celebrate off the courts.



BELOW: Sam Hall, the student president of the Missouri State Handball team, accepts the David Chapman Memorial Scholarship from USHA Executive Director Matt Krueger.

Minnesota State Mankato sweeps, 4-peats

The Minnesota State Mankato Mavericks continued their dominance at the Collegiate Nationals and won their fourth Combined Team Open title in a row! They also won the Men's and Women's Open Team titles. Coach Mike Wells and his assistant coaches have built a powerhouse program that is led by junior players mixed in with players who picked up the game in college and learned it quickly.

After being right on the cusp of winning for many years, Minnesota State Mankato broke through and won the team title in 2022 and hasn't looked back since, dominating in 2023, 2024 and now 2025. MSU-Mankato will have a good chance of keeping the success going in 2026 as many key contributors to the team will be returning. Congrats to the Mavericks!

- Combined Open champion:** MSU-Mankato
- Combined Open runner-up:** Missouri State U.
- Men's Open champion:** MSU-Mankato
- Men's Open runner-up:** Texas A&M
- Women's Open champion:** MSU-Mankato
- Women's Open runner-up:** Lake Forest College
- Combined A champion:** Texas A&M University
- Combined A runner-up:** Pacific University
- Men's A champion:** Stony Brook College
- Men's A runner-up:** Pacific University
- Women's A champion:** Pacific University
- Women's A runner-up:** Texas A&M University

All-America players

John Bike, Minnesota State Mankato graduate student in elementary teaching

Handball history (according to Coach Mike Wells): John played as a youth, took some time off during high school and undergraduation education. He is now back participating on the pro tour. His dad, uncle and grandfather were world-class players.

Why he likes the sport: You can see John's passion for handball when he is instructing/coaching beginning players. He is also committed to improving. It was a privilege to coach him.

Post-graduation plans: Teach elementary school.

Ivan Burgos Santillan, Pima Community College junior in accounting

Handball history (how/when they learned to play): My father, Fernando Burgos, taught me how to play in 2011 after he started playing with the local guys.

Why he likes the sport: I like all the friends I've met over the years and the adrenaline of competition.

Post-graduation plans: I hope to work a job that allows me to see through the rest of my handball career.

Hannah Grace, Minnesota State Mankato freshman in dental hygiene

Handball history: Hannah is from Tipperary, Ireland. She comes from a handball family and learned to play from her father and brother.

Why she likes the sport: Hannah is very coachable and works to improve her physicality and the mental aspects of handball. She has embraced her college experience in her first year!

Post-graduation plans: To be determined.

Luis Mendez, Minnesota State Mankato senior in construction management

Handball history: Learned to play in James Coronado's juniors program in California. He approached coach John Stoffel about collegiate handball at a Junior Nationals tournament.

Why he likes the sport: He enjoys competition and understands how handball was a vehicle for him to get an education and a career.

Post-graduation plans: Luis has a job as a project manager in Mankato. He bought a home in Mankato and plans to stay involved in handball.

Clodagh Munroe, MSU-Mankato junior in health and physical education

Handball history: Began playing in Carrickmore, Northern Ireland, and was a highly decorated junior player there.

Why she likes the sport: Clodagh is ultra-competitive while being laid back. Is that possible for most? No, but Clodagh pulls it off flawlessly, Coach Wells says.

Post-graduation plans: Teaching.

21st Century Collegiate Nationals Combined Champions

2025	MSU-Mankato
2024	MSU-Mankato
2023	
2022	
2021	(COVID)
2020	Missouri State
2019	
2018	
2017	
2016	Lake Forest College
2015	
2014	
2013	
2012	
2011	
2010	
2009	
2008	Mo. State
2007	LFC
2006	Mo. State
2005	LFC
2004	Mo. State
2003	Lake Forest College
2002	Lake Forest College
2001	Lake Forest College

Jorge Pimentel, Pima Community College junior in business administration

Handball history: I started playing handball when I was 8 years old in Tucson, Arizona, through the Fred Lewis Foundation.

Why he likes the sport: There are so many things that have pushed me to keep playing and enjoying handball. There is nothing like the intensity and grittiness of a match, working for every single rally. The lifelong friendships and opportunities from the community are also irreplaceable.

Post-graduation plans: After graduation, I plan to continue playing and hope to start teaching handball in order to give other at-risk youth like me a chance to fall in love with the sport and community the way that I have.

Bryan Trejo, Minnesota State Mankato sophomore in construction management

Handball history: Bryan began playing in California as a youth and was encouraged to continue his handball career at MSU-Mankato by Luis Mendez.

Why he likes the sport: Bryan is a competitor and hard worker. It is not uncommon to find Bryan at the campus courts, working on his game. His commitment showed in his performance at this year's tournament.

Post-graduation plans: Get a job as a project manager for a construction company.

Ray Ure, Minnesota State Mankato senior in health and physical education

Handball history: Ray learned to play in Don Quinlan's historic Lattof YMCA handball program. Ray was one of the most decorated U.S. junior players of all time.

Why he likes the sport: Ray has progressed to a No. 3 ranking on the WPH pro tour, even while competing on the MSU-Mankato track and cross-country teams. Ray enjoys the process of improving all aspects of his game. I am proud he was able to accomplish his goal of winning the Collegiate Nationals Open Singles title this year.

Post-graduation plans: Teaching or grad school.

All-Tournament players

Cuilleann Bourke, Trinity College Dublin graduate in deaf studies

Handball history: I started when I was 8 or 9. My neighbor brought me down to the local handball alley, and I haven't stopped since!

Why she likes the sport: I love it because you get the chance to travel to all these different countries and see amazing cities. I also love the people you meet on the way!

Post-graduation plans: To become an Irish Sign Language tutor and teach signing to kids in school and in family centers.

Amy Brennan, Dublin College second year in biology

Handball history: I went to watch my brother play when I was 7 and got asked to join and have loved it ever since.

Why she likes the sport: You meet so many people and make friends from all over.

Post-graduation plans: To play in pro stops during my summers off.

Noelle Dowling, Trinity College Dublin second year in clinical speech and language studies

Handball history: Aged 9, going down with my dad and brothers to our local handball alley, which is a 60 x 30 footer.

Why she likes the sport: It has such a great social atmosphere, where everybody of any level, age or gender can come and make new friends and be welcomed.

Post-graduation plans: I plan to become a speech and language therapist but am not sure as of now what area of therapy I want to work in and what cohort of people I wish to work with.

“There is nothing like the intensity and grittiness of a match, working for every single rally.” – Jorge Pimentel

Kyle Jordan, SETU Waterford second year

Handball history: My cousins played handball, and my uncle brought me to the alley one day to try it out, and I kept playing since then.

Why they like the sport: I like handball because it's a sport where you rely on yourself to play well rather than relying on your team to perform.

Post-graduation plans: Travel out to the States more often and participate in pro stops and U.S. nationals.

Leah Minogue, University of Limerick third year in risk management and insurance

Handball history: I started playing at age 9 in our local club as my older siblings were playing at the time.

Why she likes the sport: I really enjoy the social aspect of it, especially at the collegiate tournaments, getting to travel and compete over in the U.S., too, is a great opportunity that I really enjoy.

Post-graduation plans: Not too sure yet but considering doing a master's degree.

Munroe defends Women's Open Singles title

By Mike Wells

Minnesota State Mankato junior Clodagh Munroe set out to repeat as the Women's Open Singles champion and faced TCD's Cuileann Bourke in the final match. Bourke came in as the No. 6 seed and advanced to the final by upsetting LFC's No. 3 Jodie Keeling in the quarters and DCU's No. 2 Amy Brennan in a tight semifinal.

Munroe defeated TCD's Noelle Dowling and UL's Leah Minogue, the only one to score double digits on her.

The championship match was anticlimactic as Munroe used a Z-serve into the difficult-to-play left side wall glass of the show court. She also used an excellent mix of V-passes to keep Bourke off balance and in the back court. When allowed, Bourke proved to be a very dangerous front-court player. Munroe just would not let her into this match and won 21-3, 21-9.

Munroe is a much better athlete than given credit for and possesses a rare combination of being laid back yet ultra-competitive. She becomes the 13th women to win multiple Collegiate Nationals Open Singles titles. Most of them went on to have great success on the pro tour, and Munroe is already ranked No. 3 among WPH women!

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Emma Kinane (LFC) d. Una Brophy (UL) 8, 3; Clodagh Munroe



CLODAGH MUNROE, hitting a kill against Cuileann Bourke, repeated her Open Singles title and slammed the Doubles, too.

(MSUM) d. Rachel Haas (PU) 2, 4; Amy Brennan (DCU) d. Audrey Peters (LFC) 3, 3; Jodie Keeling (LFC) d. Izzy Klicker (MSUM) 5, 9; Noelle Dowling (TCD) d. Emer Barron (UL) (7), 5, 8; Cuileann Bourke (TCD) d. Siobhán Treacy (UL) 10, 13; Leah Minogue (UL) d. Aoife Brophy (ATU) 5, 0; Hannah Grace (MSUM) d. Amber Nolan (UL) 9, 19.

Quarters: Munroe d. Dowling 4, 7; Minogue d. Kinane 7, 9; Brennan d. Grace 11, 8; Bourke d. Keeling 5, 15.

Semis: Munroe d. Minogue 10, 16; Bourke d. Brennan 19, 13.

Final: Munroe d. Bourke 3, 9.

Like her mother before, Davis is as good as gold

By Martin Mulkerrins

Amesley Davis of Texas A&M and Sarah Walsh of the University of Limerick contested the Women's A Singles championship. The division was stacked with quality, and both Davis and Walsh had amazing wins en route to the final.

Davis defeated Joanna Gato of Angelo State University in the round of 16 and then had two tiebreaker wins against Sophia Della Croce (University of Arizona) and Aine Duggan (University of Limerick) to reach the final.

Similarly, Walsh defeated a Texan in the round of 16 before two tiebreaker wins of her own, in the quarterfinal against Maddie Charbonneau (Minnesota State Mankato) and in the semifinal against Ashleigh Sharkey



AMESLEY DAVIS beat Sarah Walsh to win the A Singles title.

(Missouri State University).

In the final, Davis put in a very strong performance, playing very consistently and keeping constant pressure on Walsh. Davis took game one 21-8 and continued with another dominant performance in game two, 21-2. Davis, like her mother, now has a National singles championship, and both achieved All-America status.

"Amesley deserved this title for the work she has put in over the past three seasons," Coach Mulkerrins said. "Amesley is a real competitor and has been running marathons over the past year or so, which makes her a really formidable opponent."

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Amesley Davis (TAMU) d. Joanna Pauline Gato (ANSU) 2, 4; Áine Duggan (UL) d. Kinzi Jo Leon (ANSU) 5, 5; Sarah Walsh (UL) d. Sasha Hospital (UT) 10, 6; Kate Holtmeier (MSUM) d. Korynne Reiningger (UT) 6, (12), 7; Sophia Della Croce (UA) d. Lana Murphree (UT) 4, 5; Jp Sammis (UT) d. Racelyn Mathis (MOST) 13, 0; Maddie Charbonneau (MSUM) d. Marisol Maldonado (ASU) 6, 12; Ashleigh Sharkey (MOST) d. Taigan Rivers (ANSU) (6), 8, 10.

Quarters: Sharkey d. Holtmeier 9, (9), 5; Duggan d. Sammis 11, 3; Davis d. Della Croce (11), 7, 0; Walsh d. Charbonneau 9, (6), 9.

Semis: Davis d. Duggan 6, (13), 3; Walsh d. Sharkey 7, (14), 7.

Final: Davis d. Walsh 8, 2.

Ure caps college career with Open triumph



John Bike's lefthanded serves earned him a lead in game two, but Ray Ure, receiving, recovered to win the Open title.

By Mike Wells

The Men's Open Singles division was an all-America final for the first time since 2018. Teammates from Minnesota State Mankato, Ray Ure and John Bike, faced off in the championship match. Both played well throughout the tournament, holding opponents to single digits in all games except one. Bike defeated teammate Bryan Trejo

in the semifinal, and Ure served an unprecedented 21 aces in his match against Ireland's collegiate champion, Kyle Jordan, in his semifinal match.

It can be difficult to play a teammate, and Ure and Bike train together often. Ure played well in taking the first game 21-11. With Bike leading 12-5 in game two, Ure stepped up his play and tied the game at 14. It was back and forth to 18-all, and then Ure pulled out a 21-18 win for his first collegiate singles championship.

MSU-Mankato coaches are hands-off when teammates are playing each other, and it is tough to be elated for one player and disappointed for the other. Both of these players should be proud of their play in this tournament and throughout their collegiate careers!

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Ivan Burgos (PCC) d. Darragh Ducey (UL) 6, 3; Ray Ure (MSUM) d. Cathal Mckenna (UL) 1, 0; Bryan Trejo (MSUM) d. Eoghan McGinnity (TUD) 12, 19; John Bike (MSUM) d. Sean Barron (UCD) 2, 2; Cormac Finn (DCU) d. Conor Holden (UL) (13), 2, 2; Kyle Jordan (SETU) d. Luis Mendez (MSUM) 0, 12; Eoin Brennan (SETU) d. Sean Coughlan (UL) 10, 11; Rory Grace (UL) d. Jorge Pimentel (PCC) 16, 9.

Quarters: Bike d. Finn 9, 9; Trejo d. Burgos (19), 8, 0; Ure d. Brennan 11, 4; Jordan d. Grace 20, 9.

Semis: Bike d. Trejo 6, 16; Ure d. Jordan 7, 3.

Final: Ure d. Bike 11, 18.

Horan eeks out a tight win over Hayes in A1 final

By Paddy Murphy

The Men's A1 final was an exciting all-Irish freshmen affair contested by University College Dublin and Coolgreany (Wexford) handball club's Conor Horan and the University of Limerick's John Hayes.

Horan beat Trevor Austin (TAMU) 15-9, 15-5 and David Ceaglske (MSUM) 15-8, 15-4 in his quarter- and semifinal matches.

Starting the Men's A1 final, Hayes was more aggressive offensively, but it was a tight game throughout. With both players struggling to make aces on their serves, this game became a war of attrition, where Hayes cracked three red 21 balls with his bomb-like left arm.

Considering the sheer power of Hayes alone, Horan's A1 final win was even more impressive. In a final where both players were physically exhausted, it looked like Horan hadn't played a game all week. Horan covered every last inch of the court and earned his Men's A1 title with a performance reminiscent of a young Adam Walsh, a past Men's Open Doubles collegiate champion who studied at MTU.

Final score: Horan defeated Hayes 21-19, 21-20.

Special mention to Irish referee Darragh Ducey, who volunteered to officiate an extremely sporting handball game.

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Conor Horan (UCD) d. Tyler Lorbeski (MSUM) 0, 6; David Ceaglske (MSUM) d. Austin Colwell (ANSU) 3, 6; Trevor Austin (TAMU) d. Cian O'Donnell (UL) 13, 5; Zach Dybal (LFC) d. David Considine (UL) (3), 9, 10; Trey Safford (MOST) d. Joseph Lallier (MSUM) 4, 3; John Hayes (UL) d. Brendan McCarthy (TAMU) 10, 0; Anthony Macias (MSUM) d. Evan Downing (PU) 6, 11; Noel Aguilar (UT) d. Eoin Hegarty (UL) (14), 7, 4.

Quarters: Ceaglske d. Dybal 11, 14; Horan d. Austin 9, 5; Hayes d. Macias 1, 12; Safford d. Aguilar 13, 10.

Semis: Horan d. Ceaglske 8, 4; Hayes d. Safford 12, 8.

Final: Horan d. Hayes 19, 20.



ALL IRISH: The A1 champion Conor Horan outlasted runner-up John Hayes.

Reels reels off wins for B Singles championship

By Karissa Komo

Pacific University's Sarah Reels defeated Brynley Brotherton of Missouri State 21-19, 21-13 in the Women's B division final.

Reels' confidence and grit showed in the championship match. She struggled with serving consistently until the second half of each game. Once she was able to keep her serve down, she was able to control the rally and turn the tides to her favor.

In the first game against Brotherton, they both struggled to return serves. Reels took a time-out after a handful of aces by Brotherton. After some coaching, Reels immediately started returning Brotherton's serves.

After championship point, you could see the immense joy that came across Reels' face and then tears of happiness. As a coach, this is the outcome you can always hope for, and it's always so fulfilling to see their hard work finally pay off.

Reels has improved immensely since her last collegiate tournament, which was also her first. It has been incredible to watch her learn and grow in this sport. Her determination was what set her apart, and it has truly been an honor to coach her these past two years.

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Kimberly Hostetter (ANSU) d. Jordyn Moullet-Dozier (PU) 7, 8; Elaina Schoene (MOST) d. Briana Pena (PRST) 4, 4; Miley Ashby (LFC) 12, 5; Emma Considine (UL) d. Satoe Tohi (LFC) 14, 7; Brynley Brotherton (MOST) d. Jillian Young (USU) (5), 7, 3; Chloe Davidson (ANSU) d. Arielle Augustyn (LFC) (9), 14, 9; Jasmine Quach (SBU) d. Kayle Rollenhagen (MSUM) 4, 9; Sarah Reels (PU) d. Erin Bland (MOST) 9, 7.

Quarters: Reels d. Quach 6, 6; Hostetter d. Pena 6, 5; Davidson d. Schoene (3), 14, 2; Brotherton d. Considine 3, (8), 7.

Semis: Reels d. Davidson 1, 9; Brotherton d. Hostetter 7, (14), 4.

Final: Reels d. Brotherton 19, 13.



Women's B Singles titlist Sarah Reels, with silver medalist Brynley Brotherton.

Salisbury beats Bates in tiebreaker to be C champ

By Aoife Holden

The Women's C Singles final was a battle of Texas, pitting Angelo State's Kelly Salisbury against Texas A&M's Emma Allen Bates. It was competitive to the end, with Salisbury taking the title in a tight tiebreaker.

Salisbury got off to a great start and won game one 21-8. With a 19-12 lead in game two, it looked like Salisbury would take the title in two games, but Bates won the game's last nine points. Salisbury, however, played some smart handball in the tiebreaker, keeping her composure throughout, and took the title with an 11-8 win!

Both her coaches, Aoife Holden and Diarmuid Mulherrins, were extremely proud of Salisbury, who also won the spirit of handball award, given for sportsmanship and capturing what our game is all about. That, paired with her championship in her final Collegiate Nationals, made for an incredible weekend.

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Emma Allen Bates (TAMU) d. Emma Wolff (MSUM) 6, 2; Abby Strong (MSUM) d. Maile Oshita (PU) 12, 3; Kelly Salisbury (ANSU) d. Ryan Santoni (MOST) 4, 4; Joan Enaboifo (ANSU) d. Madi Silver (UT) 2, 13.

Quarters: Bates d. Cannon 1, 8; Salisbury d. Azar 5, 4; Molly Lund (MSUM) d. Enaboifo 12, 8; Strong d. Mills 1, (9), 2.



Runner-up Emma Allen Bates and gold medalist Kelly Salisbury.

Semis: Salisbury d. Lund 0, 4; Bates d. Strong 4, 4.

Final: Salisbury d. Bates 8, (19), 6.

Fuselier erases early deficits to win A2 final

By Martin Mul Kerrins

The Men's A2 final between Nicholas Kerins of MSU-Mankato and Ashley Fuselier of Texas A&M was a huge battle, especially in game one, which took almost 50 minutes to play. The early stages of the match had countless long, exhausting rallies, and both players struggled to find a weakness in their opponent and make points when serving. Despite this, Kerins started brightly with a 4-1 lead before Fuselier adapted and worked his way into the game to take an 8-6 lead after over 20 minutes of play. From there, Fuselier gained momentum and reeled off several points to lead 15-8. Kerins then went on a run of his own to narrow the lead to 17-16. But Fuselier found a way to stop the comeback and see out game one 21-16.

In game two, Kerins started well again, taking a 5-2



Runner-up Nicholas Kerins and A2 winner Ashley Fuselier.

lead. Fuselier dug in and kept within striking distance before being able to pull away in the second half of game two to win 21-13.

"Ashley has trained very hard over the past season, and his dedication paid off," according to his coach, Martin Mul Kerrins. "His athletic ability, in particular his conditioning, is a key feature of his game and was an important factor in his success at the Nationals. He played six rounds of singles against top-quality opponents and still had the energy needed to win the final. He was easy to work with, as he was always calm at time-outs and receptive to the coaching he was getting throughout the tournament."

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Felipe Davila (ANSU) d. Sam Hall (MOST) 0, 5; Nicholas Kerins (MSUM) d. Nick Wilson (MOST) (9), 8, 5; Mikey Kirwan (DCU) d. Robert McMahon (UCD) 14, 4; Levi Osen (CSM) d. Hayden Hopkins (MOST) 11, (6), 2; Luke Jordan (MOST) d. Waldo Garcia (SJSU) 12, 13; Ashley Fuselier (TAMU) d. Israel Lopez Jr. (ANSU) 4, 8; Taison Chen (SBU) d. Sam Wilson (MOST) 5, (7), 6; William Henry (TAMU) d. Kel Shanley (DPU) 11, (12), 3.

Quarters: Davila d. Kirwan 11, 4; Chen d. Henry 2, 9; Kerins d. Osen 3, 9; Fuselier d. Jordan 7, 10.

Semis: Fuselier d. Chen 7, 10; Kerins d. Davila 14, 9.

Final: Fuselier d. Kerins 16, 13.

Munguia collects UW-Milwaukee's first title, in B1

By Ben Van Arsdale

UW-Milwaukee's Jose Munguia had a difficult start to his third Collegiate Nationals. He had the tough draw of playing the two best players in his first two seeding round divisions, both resulting in losses.

His rough play continued in the first game of his first match in the B1 knockout round, losing it 15-8 to Dylan Whitley of ANSU. However, in between games he vowed to get a win and came out scorching hot in the second game, pounding the ball with purpose, resulting in numerous flat kills and aces to win 15-4. The momentum and power carried into the tiebreaker, barely even giving Whitley the chance to serve with a quick 11-1 victory.

Munguia then cruised through to the final, where he battled Pima Community College's Andres Maldonado. The latter came out hot with left drive serves and kills on any set-up, but Munguia pulled out the first game 21-18. The second game was the opposite, with Munguia forcing Maldonado into mistakes with great retrievals and deep passes to take a commanding lead of 19-9.

It seemed like Munguia would close out the victory, but Maldonado hit several big serves, great kills and

well-timed passes to tie it up at 20-20. It was too little, though, as Munguia was able to stop the momentum and win match point for UWM's first singles National title.

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Ruben Nava (UWM) d. Cole Peterson (MSUM) 8, 9; Jose Munguia (UWM) d. Dylan Whitley (ANSU) (8), 4, 1; Andres Maldonado (PCC) d. Andy Shen (UT) 12, 11; Antonio Rivera (PCC) d. Eli Birdsong (MOST) 1, 7; Miguel Sandoval (UA) d. Jacob Mitchell (ANSU) 5, (9), 1; Matt Avendaño (TAMU) d. Dennis Yu (SBU) (10), 9, 6; Reigen Komagata (PU) d. Alexandro Snyder (TAMU) 10, (11), 5; Reilly Yost (RRCC) d. Matthew Love (TAMU) (10), 12, 8.

Quarters: Avendaño d. Rivera 4, 9; Munguia d. Komagata 8, 8; Yost d. Nava (8), 8, 10; Maldonado d. Sandoval (11), 14, 6.

Semis: Munguia d. Yost 5, 13; Maldonado d. Avendaño (1), 14, 7.

Final: Munguia d. Maldonado 18, 20.



Runner-up Andres Maldonado and B1 winner Jose Munguia.

Happy homecoming: Menezes wins C2 title

By Nate Frank

Alyssia Menezes of the University of Texas defeated Jess Ratermann of Missouri State in two games in the Women's Singles C2 final.

Menezes and her Texas coaches knew she was going to face a strong serve from Ratermann, who had previously beaten Menezes with several aces. But in game one, it was Menezes who served well and easily won 21-4.

The second game was a different story, with both players going on scoring streaks and racking up points. The match seemed destined for a tiebreaker when Ratermann took a late lead, but Menezes stormed back. Her crucial return at 19 got her back into the server's box, where she was able to run off the last few points and secure the match. Both women displayed incredible sportsmanship in the match, showing appreciation for each other on nice shots.

The win was special for Menezes, who is originally from Portland, so she had her boyfriend and parents watching her play throughout the tournament. She played seven matches throughout the tournament, and her level of play improved substantially from Wednesday to Sunday.

Menezes is a team officer for UT Handball and is in charge of its social media. She's a sophomore honors student in business and business analytics. It's always special as a coach when you can see things click for a player in real time. Menezes improved so much as a player throughout the tournament, and her coaches couldn't be prouder of how far she has come!



C2 winner Alyssia Menezes and runner-up Jess Ratermann.

RESULTS:

Quarters: Maya Maes-Johnson (CSM) d. Kyla Casares (ANSU) 0, 2; Mireya Ibañez (UA) d. Emma Brower (MOST) 9, 0; Alyssia Menezes (UT) d. Kelly Brennan (MOST) 11, 8; Jess Ratermann (MOST) d. Sofi Mishima (PU) 0, 9.

Semis: Ratermann d. Maes-Johnson 2, 0; Menezes d. Ibañez 3, 14.

Final: Menezes d. Ratermann 4, 19.

Will and Grace help Munroe slam in Open Doubles

By Mike Wells

The Women's Open Doubles championship featured Minnesota State Mankato junior Clodagh Munroe and freshman Hannah Grace taking on TCD's Noelle Dowling and Cuileann Bourke, who had dethroned last year's doubles champions in the semifinals.

The final was the last match of the tournament, so most of the Mavericks cheering section had left for the airport before the second game began. Scores were watched closely on the light rail by using Bracket Ace, and there were many updates from coach John Stoffel, who stayed behind to escort the remaining players to the airport. The Mavericks won game one 21-15. Grace's steady play on the right side was a perfect complement to Munroe's power on the left. They kept the TCD pair mostly retrieving, and they put the ball down when they got opportunities. The Mavericks were able to complete the slam for Munroe with a two-game victory!



Runners-up Cuileann Bourke and Noelle Dowling didn't upset Hannah Grace and Clodagh Munroe.

Both Mavericks have been preparing for this all season. They won the Minnesota state men's A doubles title this past fall. They have enrolled in Ciana Ni Churraoin's online workout program to get stronger and participated in sports psychology activities. The coaching staff will lay out a plan for them in evaluations in the next few weeks, but there's no denying they did a great job!

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Amesley Davis/Katherine Mills (TAMU) d. Emma Considine/Aine Duggan (UL) 9, 11; Sarah Walsh/Siobhán Treacy (UL) d. Izzy Klicker/Maddie Charbonneau (MSUM) 9, 4.

Quarters: Audrey Peters/Emma Kinane (LFC) d. Walsh/Treacy 6, 0; Una Brophy/Emer Barron (UL) d. Miley Ashby/Jodie Keeling (LFC) (11), 5, 8; Clodagh Munroe/Hannah Grace (MSUM) d. Davis/Mills 1, 7; Cuileann Bourke/Noelle Dowling (TCD) d. Leah Minogue/Amber Nolan (UL) 9, 13.

Semis: Munroe/Grace d. Brophy/Barron 14, 8; Bourke/Dowling d. Peters/Kinane (6), 2, 8.

Final: Munroe/Grace d. Bourke/Dowling 15, 12.

Lieng adapts to small ball and takes B2 title

In the Men's B2 final, Jason Lieng, who was the sole representative from Western Governors University, defeated Shiva Selvaraju Nandhakumar from Texas A&M.

Lieng wasn't sure what the A&M coaches told Selvaraju Nandhakumar, but the serves to his left were working really well, which worried him, because he had injured his left hand in the quarterfinals the day before.

Lieng said what worked for him in the final was just applying pressure with the serve. When Selvaraju Nandhakumar got comfortable with one serve, he would switch it up by doing a different serve or modifying the trajectory. That earned Lieng points and easy set-ups that he used to win 21-10, 21-6. Lieng was nearly bounced in the first round of the division but just outlasted Minnesota State Mankato's Lucas Wells in a tiebreaker.

Lieng grew up playing big ball but has recently converted to four-wall small ball and is really enjoying it, he said. He loved playing in his first Collegiate Nationals, saying it lived up to the hype of all the stories he'd heard.

Lieng gave a shout-out to all the players who are the sole representative of their school; it's tough to play when your opponents have a big crowd behind them and you

have no one to root for you.

RESULTS:

Round of 16:

Hogan Nieman (MOST) d. Daxton Garner (CSM) 1, 11; Jonathan Brown (TAMU) d. Trevor Willis (USU) 13, 8; Shiva Selvaraju Nandhakumar (TAMU) d. Nathan Slater (USU) 5, 11; Justin Chong (SBU) d. Justin Gentry (USU) 6, 8; Breyden Walker (MOST) d. Bryson Petersen (USU) 8, 4; Gabe Emerson (PU) d. Zane Coyle (MSUM) 6, 4; Jason Lieng (WGU) d. Lucas Wells (MSUM) 5, (10), 4; Wenbin Li (SBU) d. Max Johnson (CSM) 3, 14.

Quarters: Selvaraju Nandhakumar d. Nieman 9, 5; Emerson d. Walker 9, 9; Lieng d. Chong 9, 5; Li d. Brown 6, 10.

Semis: Lieng d. Li 13, 4; Selvaraju Nandhakumar d. Emerson 11, 8.

Final: Lieng d. Selvaraju Nandhakumar 10, 6.



Shiva Selvaraju Nandhakumar was happy to make the B2 final against winner Jason Lieng.

Teierle takes B3 Men's Singles title back to Canada

Mason Teierle was the lone player representing a Canadian school (Northern Alberta Institute of Technology) at the 2025 Collegiate Nationals and looked motivated to bring gold north of the border.

He did just that when he defeated Angelo State's Cade Whitley in the finals of the B3 division 21-8, 21-2. It was the best Teierle looked all week as he controlled play from start to finish.

Teierle had to fight and claw to win his opening round matches in tiebreakers. In the round of 16, Teierle dropped game one to Angelo State's Luis Segovia before battling back to win in a tiebreaker. In his quarterfinal, Teierle again dropped the first game to Ivan Healy from Pima Community College before winning another tiebreaker. In the semifinals and final, though, Teierle didn't allow double digits in any game.

It was a successful first Collegiate for Teierle, who impressed everyone with his play. He brought gold back to Canada, and we'll hope to see him back next year with more Canadian players!

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Seth Campbell (BYU) d. Ivan Yim (SBU) (14), 9, 4; Fatin Ishteaque (SBU) d. Wyatt Erickson (TAMU) inj, inj; Jake McLemore (TAMU)

d. Wallace Michels (MSUM) 14, 4; Mason Teierle (NAIT) d. Luis Segovia (ANSU) (13), 0, 2; Luca Zenati-Parsons (LFC) d. Si Holmes (TAMU) 0, 5; McTzviel Oyerinde (UT) d. Seth Gentry (USU) 10, (2), 5; Cade Whitley (ANSU) d. Alex Rodriguez (UT) 9, 12; Ivan Healy (PCC) d. Thomas Ball (TAMU) 6, 6.

Quarters:

Campbell d. Zenati-Parsons 10, (13), 1; Ishteaque d. Oyerinde 6, 10; Whitley d. McLemore 11, 13; Teierle d. Healy (11), 5, 0.

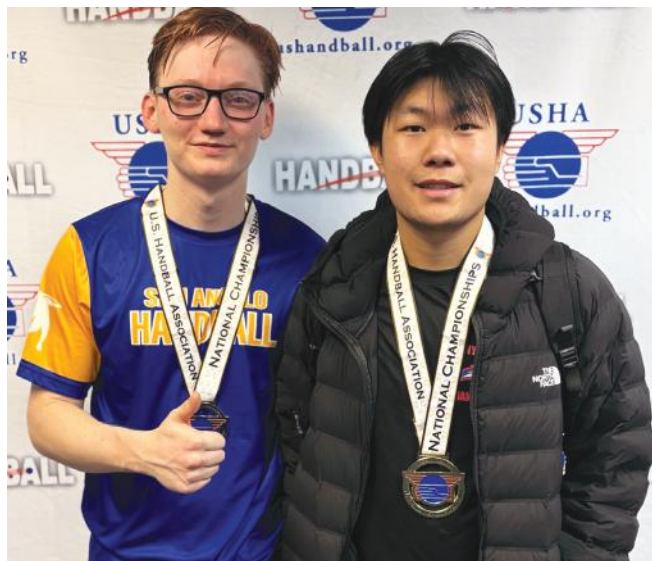
Semis: Whitley d. Campbell 9, 14. (Inj. forfeit); Teierle d. Ishteaque 3, 3.

Final: Teierle d. Whitley 8, 2.



Mason Teierle defeated Cade Whitley and two others to win the B3 bracket title.

Cheung rallies in tiebreakers to take C1 title



Runner-up Logan Leto and C1 winner Jonathan Cheung.

Jonathan Cheung from Stony Brook University fought back to win the C1 title against Angelo State's Logan Leto in an exciting match.

Game one went down to the wire, and it was Leto who hit a few more clutch shots to eek it out 21-19. Cheung,

though, was just beginning to get into a rhythm and started the second game hot en route to winning 21-9. The tiebreaker was more of the same, as Cheung cruised 11-3 to win the title. Each of these players survived a tiebreaker earlier in the bracket to earn a spot in the finals but were dominant in their semifinals.

Cheung is part of a large group of Stony Brook players who had success at the tournament. Many of the Stony Brook players have a one-wall background but are new to the four-wall game. Still, their one-wall style makes it difficult for their opponents to adjust and leads to a lot of success on the court.

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Ryan Johnson (FRCC) d. Jevin Lim (PU) (7), 11, 5; Will Jost (ANSU) d. Ganesh Jagannath (TAMU) 12, 14; Jonathan Cheung (SBU) d. Luke Vinar (MSUM) 5, 14; Joshua Gruba (CSM) d. Luke Parsons (TAMU) 13, (14), 3; Gavin Butkowski (MSUM) d. Robbie Howell (UT) 13, 14; Precious Ojeh (UT) d. Alan Baker (USU) (2), 10, 10; Ethan Bontrager (CSM) d. Julian Rivera (ASU) 9, 7; Logan Leto (ANSU) d. Santiago Del Rio Rios (PU) (7), 12, 8.

Quarters: Jost d. Ojeh 0, 11; Leto d. Bontrager 6, 14; Johnson d. Butkowski (11), 3, 5; Cheung d. Gruba 5, (14), 6.

Semis: Leto d. Jost 5, 7; Cheung d. Johnson 11, 8.

Final: Cheung d. Leto (19), 9, 3.

Parsons wins the battle of BYU to be the C2 champ

By Gus Hart

The Men's C2 final was an all-Brigham Young University affair, as teammates Tyler Parsons and Ben Lonsdale squared off.

Both players perfected a high lob serve that would hit the left wall and run along the back wall. They used it on each other, with both finding it hard to return. While at the tournament, both players really improved dramatically at playing balls off the back wall. In the final, the rallies that didn't fail to get started because of an ace lob serve went way longer than they normally do with these two players. They both had amazing picks. In the end, Parsons prevailed 15-7, 15-7.

Several of the BYU students are in demanding majors, and they are preparing for graduate/medical school. It was a sacrifice for them to come, missing three days of school and lots of study time. But they came, they played hard, they focused on the present, they were gracious on and off the court and they thoroughly embraced the experience. It was a privilege to mentor them.

RESULTS:

Round of 16: David Jensen (UWM) d. CJ Tamayose (PU) 3, 14; Eben Lonsdale (BYU) d. Tristan Ge (SBU) 9, 10; Cody Burkholder (CSM) d. Ethan Armstrong



Ben Lonsdale with BYU teammate and C2 winner Tyler Parsons.

(MOST) (6), 8, 10; Darby Dermanoski (UT) d. Greg McDonald (PU) 6, 10; Adarsh Vadlapatla (TAMU) d. Terrence Ho (SBU) (5), 12, 7; Marcus Donovan (CSM) d. Solomon Polk (ANSU) 5, 12; Tyler Parsons (BYU) d. Jake Emold (LFC) 8, 0; Grant Peter (TAMU) d. Matthew Lanning (UT) 6, 7.

Quarters: Parsons d. Peter 6, 1; Jensen d. Donovan 8, 8; Dermanoski d. Vadlapatla 13, 5; Lonsdale d. Burkholder 10, (6), 5.

Semis: Parsons d. Dermanoski 5, 1; Lonsdale d. Jensen 10, 8.

Final: Parsons d. Lonsdale 7, 7.

Tsang's 1-wall skill earns him C3 4-wall title



Runner-up Ryan Valenzuela congratulates C3 champ Jalen Tsang.

Jalen Tsang of Stony Brook became the winner of the Men's C3 bracket when he defeated the University of Arizona's Ryan Valenzuela in the finals 21-15, 21-7.

Tsang, like many Stony Brook players, had great success in his division using his one-wall style and dominating the front court. Valenzuela learned the game this year at the University of Arizona and steadily improved leading up to the tournament. He was coming off back-to-back 11-10 tiebreaker wins to earn his spot in the final, but he just couldn't figure out Tsang.

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Keegan Kirlin (TAMU) d. Luke Knight (UT) 8, 12; Nathan Dindinger (TAMU) d. John Biggs (CSM) 11, 8; Ethan Hlawaty (PU) d. Salim Al Kharsa (TAMU) 12, (5), 1; Lionangel Soto (UT) d. Christian Flores (PU) 4, 2.

Quarters: Soto d. Folsom (8), 14, 6; Kirlin d. Zheng 6, 13; Jalen Tsang (SBU) d. Hlawaty 5, 1; Ryan Valenzuela (UA) d. Dindinger 13, (8), 10.

Semis: Tsang d. Soto 4, 9; Valenzuela d. Kirlin 12, (12), 1.

Final: Tsang d. Valenzuela 15, 7.

Amaro Hernandez rallies to win C4 in a tiebreaker

Pacific University's Elvis Amaro Hernandez overcame an 18-21 first-game loss in the Men's C4 final and rebounded to defeat Ayush Sharma of Lake Forest College 21-10 in game two and 11-6 in the tiebreaker.

Each player had a serve that was difficult to return, but Amaro Hernandez was able to adjust to the serve from Sharma to gain back control of the serve. Amaro Hernandez moved to the left back corner to receive the serves, and it placed him in the perfect spot.

Both players fought until the end with multiple side outs in the tiebreaker. This was the first and last collegiate tournament for Amaro Hernandez, who joined the handball team just weeks earlier. He was extremely receptive to coaching and immediately applied it to his game, which improved throughout the tournament.

RESULTS:

Quarters: Elvis Amaro Hernandez (PU) d. Kannan Tse (UT) 2, 9.

Semis: Amaro Hernandez d. Gota Akagiri (LFC) 11, 4; Ayush Sharma (LFC) d. Chinonso Obiefule (UT) (9), 5, 7.

Final: Amaro Hernandez d. Sharma (18), 10, 6.



Winner Elvis Amaro Hernandez, Ayush Sharma.



Great get!

AMY BRENNAN dives to dig out a kill attempt by Cuileann Bourke during their semifinal match in the Women's Open Singles division. Bourke won 21-19, 21-13 but lost in the final to Clodagh Munroe.

Action photos by Eilish Owens

Burgos, Pimentel rally to win Open Doubles

The Men's Open Doubles was a highly anticipated finals match between No. 1 seeded Ivan Burgos and Jorge Pimentel from Pima Community College and No. 2 seeded Ray Ure and Luis Mendez from MSU-Mankato.

Neither team lost a match en route to the final. Burgos was coming off a disappointing singles finish at the tournament but looked motivated as ever in the doubles, flying all around the court to make incredible retrieves and kill shots. This allowed him and Pimentel to take game one 21-14.

Ure and Mendez came out strong in game two. Ure was fresh off winning the Open Singles title but showed he still had plenty of energy left. He and Mendez pulled away late to win 21-12 and force a tiebreaker.

The tiebreaker featured more amazing handball, including one of the best rallies that you'll ever see (watch it here: tinyurl.com/best-rally). Both teams left it all on the court, but Burgos and Pimentel were too hot and found some clutch shots, including two ace serves down the right from Pimentel to win the match 11-4.

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Sean Barron/Conor Horan (UCD) d. Eoin Hegarty/Cian O'Donnell (UL) 2, 4; John Hayes/David Considine (UL) d. Cormac Finn/Mikey Kirwan (DCU) (13), 2, 2; Rory Grace/Sean Coughlan (UL) d. David Ceaglske/



Champs Pimentel and Burgos, runners-up Mendez and Ure.

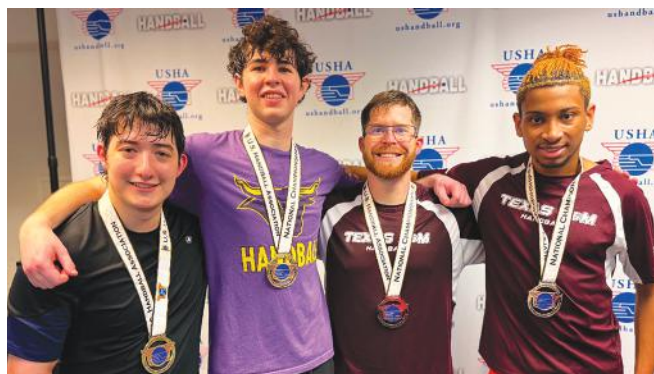
Anthony Macias (MSUM) 2, 0; Cathal McKenna/Conor Holden (UL) d. Trey Safford/Sam Wilson (MOST) 7, 9.

Quarters: Ray Ure/Luis Mendez (MSUM) d. McKenna/Holden 2, 4; Jorge Pimentel/Ivan Burgos (PCC) d. Barron/Horan 4, 5; Grace/Coughlan d. Brennan/Jordan 2, 0; Bryan Trejo/John Bike (MSUM) d. Hayes/Considine 11, 12.

Semis: Pimentel/Burgos d. Trejo/Bike 7, 7; Ure/Mendez d. Grace/Coughlan 13, 6.

Final: Pimentel/Burgos d. Ure/Mendez 14, (12), 4.

Kerins and Lallier win A Doubles title in a tiebreaker



Winners Joseph Lallier and Nick Kerins won game two and the tiebreaker to overtake Trevor Austin and William Henry.

By Mike Wells

The A Doubles final featured Minnesota State Mankato's Joseph Lallier and Nick Kerins taking on Texas A&M's Trevor Austin and William Henry. The Aggies survived multiple tiebreakers to make the championship match, and then they took game one 21-18.

With a multitude of injuries to the Minnesota State Mankato men's team, the doubles partners have been in flux for the entire season. Lallier, a senior, and Kerins, a

junior, were a late pairing that fit together perfectly.

The combination of Lallier's front court play and Kerin's smooth left hand made it difficult for the Texas A&M team to score points.

After some consultation with coaches Carina Pace and Adrian Anderson, the Mavericks changed their strategy and were able to come away with a 21-10 second-game win and an 11-5 tiebreaker victory. The long match meant that Austin and Henry had minimal time to catch their flight home! A text from Coach Mulkerrins assured everyone they made their flight.

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Austin Colwell/Israel Lopez Jr. (ANSU) d. Levi Osen/Max Johnson (CSM) 5, 11; Evan Downing/Reigen Komagata (PU) d. Nick Wilson/Luke Jordan (MOST) (14), 14, 0; Felipe Davila/Dylan Whitley (ANSU) d. Matt Avendaño/Matthew Love (TAMU) 8, 12; Andres Maldonado/Antonio Rivera (PCC) d. Sam Hall/Hayden Hopkins (MOST) 3, (9), 9.

Quarters: Colwell/Lopez Jr. d. McCarthy/Fuselier 4, 11; Joseph Lallier/Nick Kerins (MSUM) d. Maldonado/Rivera (11), 5, 2; Trevor Austin/William Henry IV (TAMU) d. Downing/Komagata (7), 5, 0; Noel Aguilar/Alex Rodriguez (UT) d. Davila/Whitley 13, 7.

Semis: Lallier/Kerins d. Aguilar/Rodriguez 3, 6; Austin/Henry d. Colwell/Lopez Jr. 9, (11), 9.

Final: Lallier/Kerins d. Austin/Henry (18), 10, 5.

First-time partners Rivers, Leon win B title

By Aoife Holden

In the Women's B Doubles final, Taigan Rivers and Kinzi Jo Leon of Angelo State came up against Racelyn Mathis and Ashleigh Sharkey of Missouri State.

This was a very exciting match from the start, with both teams matching up closely throughout the two games. The women from Angelo State played very smart handball, using a combination of roof and kill shots to end the rallies. Both teams engaged in very long rallies, with all players retrieving tough shots. The match definitely kept the spectators engaged, but Leon and Rivers took both games, 21-16, 21-17.

This was their first Collegiate Nationals playing as a doubles pair, so it was an incredible victory to take the Women's B title. They have trained very hard all year, and both coaches were proud of their achievement.

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Erin Bland/Elaina Schoene (MOST) d. Arielle Augustyn/Satoo Tohi (LFC) 11, 1.

Quarters: Jordyn Moullet-Dozier/Rachel Haas (PU) d. Bland/Schoene 7, 2; Racelyn Mathis/Ashleigh Sharkey (MOST) d. Kate Holtmeier/Molly Lund (MSUM) 4, 3; Kinzi Jo Leon/Taigan Rivers (ANSU) d. Korynne Reininger/Madi Silver (UT) 4, 0; Sophia Della Croce/Mireya Ibañez (UA) d. Chloe Davidson/



From left, champs Taigan Rivers and Kinzi Jo Leon, who won two tight games against Racelyn Mathis and Ashleigh Sharkey.

Joanna Gato (ANSU) 9, 11.

Semis: Mathis/Sharkey d. Della Croce/Ibañez 5, (8), 5; Leon/Rivers d. Moullet-Dozier/Haas 6, 8.

Final: Leon/Rivers d. Mathis/Sharkey 16, 17.

Double trouble: Twins pair to take C championship



K-GALS: Runners-up Kayle Rollenhagen and Katie Heller congratulate victorious twins Kimberly Hostetter and Kelly Salisbury.

By Aoife Holden

In the Women's C Doubles, Angelo State's Kimberly Hostetter and Kelly Salisbury took on Minnesota State Mankato's Katie Heller and Kayle Rollenhagen.

The Angelo State twin sisters played brilliantly and secured the victory 21-14, 21-7. Hostetter and Salisbury kept their focus and composure throughout both games, as was evident in their play. Both women hit some great shots and showed their experience. The twins had great chemistry on the court and always seemed to know whose shot it was.

This is Salisbury's second and last Nationals as she is graduating. This is Hostetter's third Nationals. Everyone in ASU Handball is extremely proud of the achievements of the hard-working twins.

RESULTS:

Quarters: Kelly Salisbury/Kimberly Hostetter (ANSU) d. Abby Strong/Emma Wolff (MSUM) 4, 9; Jillian Young/Cambria Cannon (USU) d. Ryan Santoni/Emma Brower (MOST) 0, 2; Kayle Rollenhagen/Katie Heller (MSUM) d. Joan Enaboifo/Kyla Casares (ANSU) 2, (14), 0; Rosalyn Azar/Emma Allen Bates (TAMU) d. Jess Ratermann/Brynley Brotherton (MOST) 12, (10), 7.

Semis: Salisbury/Hostetter d. Young/Cannon (9), 6, 2; Rollenhagen/Heller d. Azar/Bates 10, 12.

Final: Salisbury/Hostetter d. Rollenhagen/Heller 14, 7.

Yim and Li win an all-Stony Brook B classic



Champs Ivan Yim, Wenbin Li with Dennis Yu and Fatin Ishteaque.

The Stony Brook pairing of Ivan Yim and Wenbin Li won the Men's B Doubles title by defeating their teammates from Stony Brook, Dennis Yu and Fatin Ishteaque.

Being from the same school, these players knew each other's game well, and it was a surprise to nobody that the match went to a tiebreaker, even though Yu and Ishteaque won game one 21-1.

The second game was much closer, but Yim and Li prevailed 21-17 to force a tiebreaker. With this being the last day and last match of the tournament for everyone, it came down to who had more left to give. Yim and Li had slightly more as they won 11-5 and took home the title.

The Collegiate Nationals is seeded and then reseeded during the tournament after the first couple days of plays to avoid same-school matchups, but when both teams make the final, nothing can be done to avoid it.

RESULTS:

Round of 16: Luke Vinar/Cole Peterson (MSUM) d. Bryson Petersen/Alan Baker (USU) 8, 1; Justin Chong/Taison Chen (SBU) d. Si Holmes/Shiva Selvaraju Nandhakumar (TAMU) 4, 3; David Jensen/Ruben Nava (UWM) d. Zane Coyle/Lucas Wells (MSUM) 14, (7), (injury); Jacob Mitchell/Luis Segovia (ANSU) d. Alexandro Snyder/Wyatt Erickson (TAMU) 10, 10; Ivan Yim/Wenbin Li (SBU) d. Trevor Willis/Nathan Slater (USU) (12), 10, 4; Dennis Yu/Fatin Ishteaque (SBU) d. Daxton Garner/Ethan Bontrager (CSM) 5, 1; Justin Gentry/Seth Gentry (USU) d. Andy Shen/Robbie Howell (UT) 6, 5; Jonathan Brown/Jake McLemore (TAMU) d. Eli Birdsong/Hogan Nieman (MOST) (14), 9, 3.

Quarters: Chong/Chen d. Vinar/Peterson 12, 4; Yu/Ishteaque d. Gentry/Gentry 9, 5; Mitchell/Segovia d. Jensen/Nava 10, 7; Yim/Li d. Brown/McLemore 2, 10.

Semis: Yim/Li d. Chong/Chen 13, 8; Yu/Ishteaque d. Mitchell/Segovia 4, 5.

Final: Yim/Li d. Yu/Ishteaque (1), 17, 5.

Lake Forest C Doubles team rallies from 10-20 in final

By Chris Roberts

Lake Forest College's Luca Zenati-Parsons and Jake Emold paired to win a doubles tournament before winning one in singles, which bodes well for their future in handball. It takes court savvy to play doubles, and both have the athleticism to elevate their game further.

Zenati-Parsons controlled volleys for the LFC pair from the left side and showed his progress in a few months, while Emold met the challenge of returning most of the serves after only a few weeks on the court. Parsons came to handball after replying to the Fall Forester Fair Day and had been previously interested in the Rugby Club. He was excited to learn about the handball history, which runs parallel to that of Ireland, in his native Wales.

The final in the C division pitted them against a lefty-righty combination from Pacific University, Santiago Del Rio Rios and Gabe Emerson. For beginners, playing a left-handed player is novel, and this match provided further novelty, as there is no off-hand corner to serve. Emold used a Z-serve to the right, and Zenati-Parsons mixed up two-wall and drive serves to both sides. The match looked to be going tiebreaker after LFC won game one and PU built a 20-10 advantage in game two. Team LFC, however, was able to chip away for a thrilling 21-20

second game win.

They bring a level of competitiveness and desire that proves they can meet the challenge!

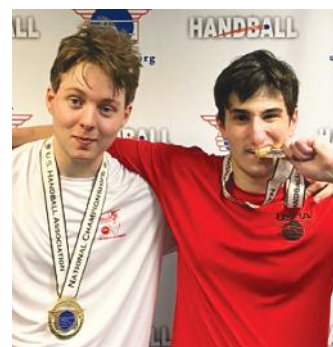
RESULTS:

Round of 16: Luca Zenati-Parsons/Jake Emold (LFC) d. Christian Flores/CJ Tamayose (PU) 3, 0; Gavin Butkowski/Wallace Michels (MSUM) d. Grant Peter/Nathan Dindinger (TAMU) 7, 3; Solomon Polk/Logan Leto (ANSU) d. Ganesh Jagannath/Salim Al Kharsa (TAMU) 6, 1; Luke Parsons/Thomas Ball (TAMU) d. Chinonso Obiefule/Matthew Lanning (UT) 1, 1; Will Jost/Cade Whitley (ANSU) d. Tristan Ge/Jackson Zheng (SBU) 5, 1; Santiago Del Rio Rios/Gabriel Emerson (PU) d. Gota Akagiri/Ayush Sharma (LFC) 2, 0; Precious Ojeh/Angel Soto (UT) d. Keegan Kirlin/Adarsh Vadlapatla (TAMU) 14, (6), 5; Tyler Parsons/Seth Campbell (BYU) d. Jonathan Cheung/Jalen Tsang (SBU) 14, (12), 10.

Quarters: Del Rio Rios/Emerson d. Polk/Leto 6, 5; Zenati-Parsons/Emold d. Parsons/Ball 10, (12), 3; Jost/Whitley d. Butkowski/Michels 13, 4; Parsons/Campbell d. Ojeh/Soto 5, 3.

Semis: Del Rio Rios/Emerson d. Parsons/Campbell (4), 8, 0; Zenati-Parsons/Emold d. Jost/Whitley (12), 12, 10.

Final: Zenati-Parsons/Emold d. Del Rio Rios/Emerson 14, 20.



Luca Zenati-Parsons, Jake Emold.



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CHALLENGES

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The Collegiate National Championships ignite unmatched excitement and passion, while college campuses remain the driving force behind handball's growth.

JUNIOR HANDBALL: INSPIRATION & DEDICATION



Winners from the Handball Skills Competition at the National Junior Four-Wall Championships.

The building of the Collegiates new dynasty

How the Mavericks came from nowhere to being four-peat champs

By Michael Dorsher, Ph.D.

MANKATO, Minn. – How did a quiet, decidedly non-ivy, midsize public university of 15,000 students in an isolated river town of 45,000 folks become the center of the collegiate handball universe?

The answer: It takes a village – and lucky charms, atop pyramids.

In other words, no one coach could do it by himself; the coaches charmed some top juniors, not only in Ireland but from across diverse parts of North America; and the star players felt lucky to get scholarships to a university with practical degrees and welcoming teammates who challenged them.

Hannah Grace, a lanky freshman from Tipperary, Ireland, who has the shy smile to go with her dental hygiene major, says her strongest impression in Mankato so far was not the 20-below cold or intense competition. It was the reception she got last fall at their first Wednesday night team practice, even before the coaches arrived.

“It was just 20 of us here for the first meeting, and every one of them came over, said ‘Hi’ and introduced themselves,” she recalls. “What surprised me the most about this place was just how much of a team our team is.”

That’s by design, says Minnesota State University, Mankato head coach Michael Wells, Ph.D. “How do you get on the handball team? Gotta love handball. Got to be a nice person. That’s it.”

Yes, Wells went to Ireland to recruit alumni Ciana Ní Churraoin, the current Women’s World Champion, and Shane Dunne, the 2023 Collegiate Singles champ and 2023-2024 Collegiate Doubles champ with Irish teammate Mark Doyle (out this year with a right shoulder injury). Doyle helped recruit Clodagh Munroe, who has won the Collegiate Women’s championship the past two years and is the third-ranked woman on the WPH pro tour. And Munroe, in turn, recruited Grace, who partnered with her to win the Open Doubles championship at this year’s Collegiates as a freshman.

One key: Coaches who can do *and* teach

But Wells also crisscrossed this continent to recruit Californians such as John Bike Jr., Bryan Trejo and Luis Mendez; Canadian Michael Gaulton; and suburban Chicagoans such as Izzy Klicker, the two-time 19-under women’s titlist at the Junior Four-Wall Nationals, and Ray Ure, this year’s Collegiates Open champion and



THE MAV 4: Head Coach Michael Wells and assistant coaches John Stoffel, Adrian Anderson and Carina Pace.

current No. 3-ranked WPH pro.

Wells recruits talented juniors, he says, “because if you want to be the best player in the world, you can’t start when you’re 25 or 22. You got to start when you’re a kid.”

But none of the talented recruits came to Mankato a fully formed champ. All had holes in their game that they couldn’t plug until they played for hours each week – sometimes at 5:30 a.m. – against Wells or assistant coaches John Stoffel, Adrian Anderson and Carina Pace, all of whom are equally unpaid and entirely devoted.

“If you develop someone’s off hand or the things that they don’t do very well, that’s the key,” Wells says. “Even these skilled players, everybody has these holes in their game. A lot of them have a hard time with the left hand, shoulder height. But once you close all the holes, then things really get exciting for those players.”

Stoffel played against Munroe nearly every week last year, challenging her serve, exploiting her left hand and using his greater strength to run her around the court and win every time.

Then they played for real last October in the class-A Singles of the Minnesota State Tournament. Munroe, the only woman in the bracket, came from behind in each game to beat coach Stoffel 21-20, 21-20.

“I don’t suppose he liked that too much,” says Munroe, who went on to take the A Singles title and slam for the A Doubles Minnesota championship with Grace, defeating all-male teams with three times their years of experience.

Stoffel cringed at the memory, recalling that he twice skipped in attempted kill shots at 20-20 – but he protested Munroe’s interpretation of his post-match feelings.

“I was very proud of her,” he says. “I thought she played good enough to win. I said, ‘Couldn’t you at least let me get to the tiebreaker and then smoked me?’”

Stoffel and Wells mark it as a milestone each time they lose to one of their players. “The teachers should be striving to have the students beat them,” says Stoffel, dubbed “The Swing Coach” by Wells. “It’s rewarding. We’re no slouches, either, so if they’re beating us, that’s a pretty good sign that they’re doing well.”

Not just sparring partners, they’re teammates

The coaches don’t just pick on the female players. When they could no longer beat Ure or Doyle, they found other ways to challenge them in practice. “We’re willing to work with you, but we can’t put the work in for you,” Wells says. “We are blessed on this campus, because no matter how good you are, there’s somebody here that can beat you, and that includes Ray and Mark. I’ll just make up enough rules until I can beat him. We do some crazy play: three on one. We say you can only kill the ball with the left hand. If you’re the better player, you just have some handicaps sometimes to work on those parts of your game that

need improvement.”

Most of the Maverick players – those who did not play handball until they got to Mankato – are not only sparring partners for the likes of Ure, Doyle, Bike, Munroe, Grace and Klicker; they help teach handball classes, and they undergird the Mavs’ pyramid by winning points in the lower brackets of the Collegiate Nationals tournament. Mankato brought 30 players to this year’s national tournament, and 26 of them were able to compete in preliminary brackets, with the top six men and top six women scoring team points.

For some of those supporting players, Wells says, handball is the magnet that keeps them in school, yielding the physical vitality, mental discipline and social support to earn a degree and launch a career.

“Some of these kids have confided that they wouldn’t have gone to college, so if handball hooks you or keeps you in school, it’s done its job,” Wells says. “Everybody wants to win, but what really makes us happy is when you graduate.”

Pace, now in her fourth year as an assistant coach, was one of those students who not only survived but thrived because of handball. She didn’t start playing until she was a sophomore, but by the time she was a senior, Wells paired her with Ní Churraoin, and they won the Open Doubles national championship.

They won through outstanding collaboration and



REPEAT CHAMP: Clodagh Munroe prepares to convert a back-wall setup against Ashleigh Sharkey in the Mav Open this January. Munroe not only won the women’s title in Mankato, she led the Mavericks to the Women’s Team title in the Collegiate Nationals by defending her Open Singles title and slamming the Open Doubles championship with Hannah Grace. **Photo by Michelle Hargrave**

communication – even though they couldn’t understand a word each other was saying at first.

“The first time that I met Ciana, I couldn’t understand her,” recalls Pace, a Latina. “I stared at her and stared at her, and I’m, like, she’s saying words in English to me, but her accent was so thick, it was kind of crazy.”

Within a week, though, they were sharing meals and sayings, translating each other’s English to teammates – and winning rallies. They also supported each other academically, with Pace earning a degree in human resources and now working in banking, while Ní Churraoin cemented the unique connection between the handball team and the sports psychology department.

“Everybody wants to win, but what really makes us happy is when you graduate.”

– Mike Wells

Ní Churraoin not only used her sports psychology degree to psych herself up for Collegiate and World championships, she opened a practice in it in Ireland.

Sports psychology is just another example of the specialized programs available at Minnesota State Mankato but not at the liberal arts campuses that dominated handball in the 20th century.

“Larger schools have a pretty good advantage,” Lake Forest College assistant coach Christopher Roberts says. “It’s a numbers game. They’re offering the classes, and they have high school athletes who are looking for a challenge if they don’t make the baseball team or the football team. We have half the kids in school playing sports; there aren’t that many athletes left over.”

Still, attracting players to a leafy, handball-storied campus just outside Chicago has some advantages over Wells recruiting them to an oft-freezing nonmetro area known historically as the site of the largest mass execution in the United States, where President Lincoln sentenced [38 Native Americans to be simultaneously hanged](https://www.tinyurl.com/mankato-hangings) (tinyurl.com/mankato-hangings) in 1862.

At times, the Mankato coaches celebrate the cold, showing their Irish recruits the wonders of ice fishing from within a heated shack on a frozen lake. At other times, they are in denial. “It’s 73 inside our handball courts all year round,” Stoffel proclaims, but he reminds players who traverse campus in winter to run their hands under warm water and stretch before practice.

Meager beginnings blossom into a strong base

MSU-Mankato’s handball dynasty was not built in just the past four championship years. It began 20 years ago, when Wells and Stoffel started teaching the game to boys at the Mankato YMCA. In 2005, Stoffel’s son Tyler won the Boys 9- title at the Junior Nationals in Tempe, Arizona.

That’s when it occurred that he would need a place to play collegiate handball, and why shouldn’t it be his hometown Mankato campus, decided Stoffel, who was a varsity wrestler there and always kept a handball in his locker for training purposes. Fortunately, it was his former wrestling coach, Gary Rushing, also a handball player, who was the phys. ed. dean when Stoffel and Wells went to him for funding to start a handball club.

Tyler Stoffel starred on those first MSU-Mankato teams and led them to respectability. They never quite overtook Martin Mulkerrins or Daniel Cordova and his Lake Forest teams in the Collegiate Nationals, but Stoffel went on to become the A Singles USHA Nationals champion in 2015 (shown the way in 2014 by Wells winning the 45+ Singles Nationals title and 45+ Doubles Nationals title with Christopher Roberts, the Lake Forest assistant coach).

For several years after that, Wells and John Stoffel focused on the college program, getting four beautiful courts rebuilt and recruiting far and wide. But for the past 3-4 years, they’ve renewed their efforts to build a juniors feeder program, by offering free handball lessons at Mankato Youth Place to diverse groups of kids and at the YWCA to girls from Somalia immigrant families.

“We want to have these kids see themselves on campus,” says Wells, a computer science professor. “And if handball is what gets you to higher education, then heck yeah, it’s handball.”

What happens after the founders leave?

While keeping one eye on the future of Mankato handball and enjoying his teams’ growing string of championships, Wells has also begun “succession planning,” he says. “I think one of the hardest things to do is sustain excellence for a long period of time. What I’d like to see us do is ‘keep on keeping on.’

“But when I retire or die or whatever, I don’t want it to stop,” Wells says. “I would like it to be a legacy, to keep going,” to rival the records of earlier Collegiate Nationals powerhouses, Lake Forest College and Missouri State University.

Then he looks around at the Mavericks’ courts, full of purple-shirted recruits blasting handballs with cybernetic precision, fine-tuned by a retinue of assistant coaches, and Wells issues a promise that is half-hope, half-warning: “We’ll see.”

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The anatomy of a comeback; the ascension of a champion

By Michael Dorsher, Ph.D.

Down 5-12 in the second game of the Collegiate Nationals Open Singles final, Ray Ure shows no signs of panic.

The loyal opposition, MSU-Mankato teammate John “JAB” Bike, had built his lead with a string of long kill shots down the right side and a couple of service aces down the left. He looks hopeful of reversing a 21-11 first-game loss, powering into a tiebreaker and breaking through for his first Collegiate Nationals championship.

Bike blasts a drive at Ure’s feet, and Ure barely half-volleys it back to the front wall: a setup for Bike to hit a pass with his dominant left hand and stretch his lead to a commanding 13-5. But Bike goes for the kill – and skips it in. (See it here: tinyurl.com/Ure-comeback)

Ure raises his eyebrows in relief, folds his 6-foot-1, 160-pound “lean-not-lanky” body into a full squat in the service box – and unleashes an ace to Bike’s left and then an ace to his right. He almost serves a third ace to Bike’s right, but the referee calls it short and Ure loses his appeal; then he overhits a Z serve, and it catches the right sidewall for a double-fault. Still, the comeback is on.

Bike serves an ace of his own down the right wall, but then Ure smashes three right-side kills to pull within 9-13. Bike jumps over one of Ure’s drives and comes down just in time to put away a left-corner kill and take a 14-10 lead.

Undaunted, Ure responds with rally winners on a left pass, a right kill, a right pass, a left pass and a 39-foot righthanded kill into the left corner to pull even at 14-14. And he doesn’t stop there. With gliding footwork and shots that start with his knees and knuckles scraping the floor, he scores on a left pass, a right pass and another left pass to lead 17-14.

Bike calls a timeout, and as always, Ure stays on the court the full minute, hopping and hitting practice kill shots. Ure never calls timeouts. He sometimes sweats through shirts and gloves, but he never tires on a handball court, because this is simply an indoor alternative workout for him. Ure spends most of the year running for the MSU-Mankato cross-country or track teams: the 800-meter race, steeple chase and 5-K distance run. He runs 60-70 miles a week around the cornfields outside Mankato, he says, adding that he doesn’t understand why more U.S. handball players don’t train off the court.



EYES ON THE PRIZE: Ray Ure won the Open Singles title at the Collegiate Nationals, ranked No. 3 on the WPH pro tour and is shooting for No. 1. *Photo by Michelle Hargrave*

Bike, who might not look like he chases steeples or anything else besides a handball, nonetheless has the pedigree of his USHA-champion father and grandfather, and he mounts a comeback of his own. He scores with a right-side kill, two left-side kills and a right-wall ace to regain the lead 18-17.

Ure ties it with a left pass; then it looks like Bike will regain the serve on a left-corner kill, but Ure claims the ball grazed his thigh on the way in. “I have no way of telling that,” the ref says from above, but when Bike doesn’t object, the ref calls for a replay.

“Losses are way better learning experiences than winning will ever be. I find my biggest improvements happening right after a hard loss or even a close win.” – Ray Ure

Ure subsequently scores on two left passes that Bike can’t dig out of the back-right corner. Now at 20-18, Ure is on the precipice of avoiding a tiebreaker where anything can happen (as he finds out a couple hours later, when he and Luis Mendez pull into overtime of the Open Doubles championship, give up their right to the first serve and eventually lose, 11-4, to Pima Community College’s Jorge Pimentel and Ivan Burgos, Ure’s frequent doubles partner on the pro tour). (See it at: tinyurl.com/Ure-doubles)

More important, Ure can now lock up college handball’s top prize, the Open Singles championship,

before he graduates in May and takes a year off to focus on the WPH Race for Eight pro tour. He crouches again in the box, uncoils a right-side serve that hops to the left. Caught off-guard, Bike tries to back into the corner and return it with his dominant left hand – but he shanks it short of the left-front corner.

Ure exhales, goes to his Mankato teammate, slaps hands, hugs and pats him on the back three times. There is no celebratory yelp, certainly no schadenfreude.

Ure has already met his goal of breaking into the top three of the WPH pro rankings, trailing only Martin Mulherrins and Luis Cordova after narrowly losing to the latter in the semifinals of February’s Red Death tour stop in Montana.

“I’ve lost to some of them so many times now I’m kind of sick of it,” Ure said in an interview at the Maverick Open in January. “But it’s good – it’s good to lose; it keeps you wanting more, and honestly, losses are way better learning experiences than winning will ever be. I find my biggest improvements happening right after a hard loss or even a close win.”

Commenting during his play in Montana, WPH/ESPN commentators David Vincent and Dave Fink agreed that Ure is “a future No. 1, no doubt about it.” That’s Ure’s next objective but not his ultimate goal, he said back in Mankato.

“What’s more important to me in many ways is to grow the sport,” says Ure, who played juniors near his hometown of Des Plaines, Ill., and is about to finish an elementary education degree at MSU-Mankato. “I want to have a youth program in the future – with my PE background, be able to get it more into the schools somehow.”

And if Ure applies the same kind of determination he showed in his comeback victory over Bike, the future of juniors handball is bright.

Handball Rulebook



The Ref’s Corner

Q1: Ray Ure, during his semifinal match in the WPH R48 at Los Angeles, lined up to receive serve behind the dashed line but then saw that Luis Cordova was hitting him a short underhand serve against the left wall – so Ure quickly stepped up

and hit a fly pass to the right for a winner. His left hand contacted the ball just behind the short line, but then he stepped over it on his follow through. Should Ure get a side-out on his passing shot return – or should Cordova get a point because Ure stepped across the short line?

Q2: Which one of these scenarios results in an out serve, not just a fault serve?
A. Consecutive screen serves
B. When the server swings and misses the ball completely
C. A server bounces the ball outside of the service zone right before striking it
D. A serve that hits the front-wall first then the ceiling before bouncing

Answers on page 30

These FINKs will beat you

By Marc Penick

Rodney Fink has served in a variety of roles during his handball career: player, coach, USHA director, tournament director, contributor and adviser. A lifelong Pittsburgher, he earned his business and law degrees from Duquesne University, where he serves on the Board of Directors. Rodney also serves on the National Council for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. For the past 30 years, Rodney has served as co-founder and managing director of a family investment office. Rodney has two grown children (David and Julie) with his former wife (De-De) and three grandchildren (Henry, 12; Judah, 14; and Ari, 16). Julie currently serves as regional director for StandWithUs, an international organization fighting antisemitism. Rodney's fiancée, Marie George, has been his constant companion at tournaments for the past 17 years. He has been inducted into the Jewish Sports Hall of Fame of Western Pennsylvania (2008) and is the recipient of Pittsburgh handball's Lifetime Achievement Award (2017) and the USHA's Carl Porter Award (2023). His son, David, is a well-known professional handball player, instructor, broadcaster and the development director for the World Players of Handball.

We met with Rodney and asked him about family, his thoughts on handball and his experiences from 54 years of participation in the sport:

Q: How did you get started playing and where?

Sept. 4, 1970, my friend Paul Burroughs invited me to play handball. It was an immediate religious experience. I was so distraught over losing that I

challenged Paul to box in the court (I always carried gloves.) I had one rule: Pull punches to the face. He broke the rule, my head hit the wall, and down I went. Paul continues to brag about his knockout win to this day. That 9/4/70 was a defining moment in my life, right up there with becoming a father, passing the bar exam and avoiding the Vietnam draft (by joining the U.S. Army Reserves). I became a member of a community of like-minded rugged individualists who commit much of their life to mastering our perfect game. Members of our "church" are at a loss as to why the world does not join us. Alas, it becomes clear: Handball presents a challenge very few can meet. We are an arrogant bunch who can only sneer when we hear, "I used to play racquetball" or "Is that like pickleball?" On hospital admission forms, I put "handball" as my religion, with Vern Roberts as my emergency contact. My only question to my surgeons after bilateral knee replacement and five rotator cuff repairs: When can I play again?

On that fateful date, 9/4/70, I came down with my first case of HDD (Handball Delusional Disorder). We all suffer from this malady at some time in our career – only to be cured (temporarily) by a savage beatdown. Like other religions, the foundation of handball is hope – the promise of a brighter future.

Q: Whom did you look up to, as a younger player?

Vern Roberts was the smoothest player I ever saw. However, at the 1981 Nationals banquet in Chicago, I became star-struck and dumped my Pittsburgh friends cold to sit with Hall of Famer Rosemary Bellini. My friend Mark Abranovic is still bitter to this day.

My only question to my surgeons after bilateral knee replacement and five rotator cuff repairs: When can I play again? –Rodney Fink

Rodney Fink was competitive; son David has taken it to a whole new level.



RODNEY FINK celebrated after winning a 2023 National Championship with Greg Raya in the 75+ Doubles bracket.

Q: Who coached you when you were a younger player?

I learned handball at age 22 (never too late, but I regret not finding my passion about 15 years earlier). The self-proclaimed “legends” at the Pittsburgh JCC were my “coaches.” I also attended Steamboat Springs Handball Academy in 1976. Fred Lewis, Vern Roberts and Bo Blinski were our instructors.

Q: How many handball tournaments have you entered over your career?

Nearly 200.

Q: Any USHA titles?

I learned early on about the secrets to doubles: Pick the right partner and get out of the way. I carried Merv Deckert to a Golden Masters National title in 2010. More recently, Greg Raya and I won the 75+ USHA Four-Wall Nationals in Minneapolis in 2023. Only eight more national titles to go for my grand masters!

Q: Name some of your favorite double partners.

I have jelled with Pittsburghers Bob Nell, Mark Abranovic and Rosemary Bellini. Rosemary carried me to a doubles win at the Pittsburgh Open in 1982. And, of course, I enjoyed teaming with Merv and with Greg – Hall of Fame-worthy players. Also, David Chapman and I won the Hood River Pro-Am (circa 1998).

Q: There is a WPH Rodney Fink Classic tournament in Pittsburgh. You won the doubles event five times with different pros as your partner?

Yes, using the same formula as with Merv and Greg.

Q: Who were your biggest rivals over your career?

Bob Nell, Mark Abranovic, Ralph Penale, Rick Abrams, Tom Cornelius – all of them accomplished Open players. I should mention that I was so upset over an 11-10 loss to Ralph that I drove four hours to his Niagara Falls YMCA home court for revenge.

Q: What’s your favorite serve when you want to score a point?

I developed two serves that have caught on: One is the underhand crosscourt lob. It works great on novices I am breaking in. The other is the Pittsburgh dominator: Stand on the right and hit a hard two-wall pass serve to the left. It’s very amusing to see old men try to catch up with it! I am proud to see that the R48 pros have integrated these serves into their arsenals. I also have a copyright registration pending: The Loser’s List of Excuses! The list is at 77 and growing with each new handball generation. A small sample includes: I never played so bad in my life; I stink; my partner stinks; I would have beat you 10 years ago; my wife and mistress

were in the gallery – on and on. There is one reason that losers never use: You are better than me! However, you are never a loser if you have given your best effort, played in accordance with the rules and are determined to improve.

Q: Tell us who the greatest handball players are in your view.

No surprises: Paul Brady, David Chapman, Naty Sr. and Vern Roberts. Like today's pros, handball has always required full-time commitment. Killian Carroll has already established a Hall of Fame resume.

Q: You have met many of the current professional handball players. What do you think about the earlier era players versus the current era?

The four legends of our sport could compete with today's Top-8 R48 pros. Note that Pete Rose was asked how he would do batting against today's pitchers. He said, "I would hit .230 – but I'm 80 years old."

Q: What other sports or hobbies do you like?

Handball and training for handball are it.

Q: You have been a handball supporter for years. What are your thoughts about the USHA?

Love it! I was privileged to serve on the USHA Board of Directors for many years. The board members have been dedicated and committed to growing The Perfect Game, indoors and out. The national tournaments are the highlight of the year for every serious handballer, young and old. For me, Vern Roberts has always been the face of the USHA, and he is a wonderful friend. Matt Krueger and Sam Esser promise to continue his legacy. Collaboration among the USHA, WPH, GAA and the various handball hotbeds throughout the U.S., Ireland, Canada and Mexico are key to the success of our sport.

Q: And the WPH?

The WPH has brought handball LIVE to our living rooms. The WPH showcases the world's finest athletes, with cutting edge filming and announcing. Such exposure and the establishment of a professional tour gives our young players a goal to work toward. Fred Banfield, Dave Vincent and David Fink have injected excitement and professionalism to our game. KEEP IT

UP! Our WPH professional players are phenomenal ambassadors for our sport and consistently exhibit the highest level of sportsmanship.

Q: Let's talk about David. He is an accomplished tennis player, correct?

In May 2024, at age 46, David reached the United States Tennis Association (USTA) National Open Singles ranking of #10 (#1 in the Southwest).

Q: Did you get him started playing handball?

David is a handball legacy, as are many of the top players. We teach our children what we know. My passion was handball, so it was our thing since he won his first tournament – at his 3rd-birthday party.

Q: Did David accept your coaching?

I taught David how to address the five situations of handball, and he took it from there. I have stressed the seven words to victory: Never give up; never, ever give up.

Q: The five situations of handball?

The serve, the return of serve, offense, defense and what to do when your opponent is hitting the ball. I still warm up using the three-wall returns I learned from Vern Roberts, which is why no one will warm up with me. As a sign of their great disrespect, I am often asked why I never use those shots in an actual game. This also might be why eye guards are mandatory during tournament warmups.

Q: In a WPH bio, David credits your love for handball from the time he was born, taking him to tournaments and teaching him the game from the time he could walk. Were you David's primary handball coach?

Yes, but the entire Pittsburgh JCC handball community worked with David to establish a handball record that can never be broken: David won a USHA National Championship (11 & under) without ever winning a game at his home court. And the patience and sage advice from Mark Abranovic, Rick Abrams, Mike Kain and Steve Mele was invaluable in David's development.

Q: In the same bio, David said his favorite athletes

David is a handball legacy, as are many of the top players. We teach our children what we know. My passion was handball, so it was our thing. –Rodney Fink



THE BE(A)ST: David Fink lost this match to Paul Brady but has won the Senior Race for Eight pro Players Championship the past five years and last December became the oldest player, at age 47, to win an R48 pro event. *Photo by Keith Thode*

were Pete Sampras and Roger Federer. Why is that?

Two reasons: Sampras and Federer are reserved and confident champions, and David loves tennis. David seeks to harness his fiery personality on the court to match Pete and Roger.

Q: How did you feel when you watched David play as pro?

I was politely asked to leave the gallery on many occasions. The easiest thing is sports is to play. Next hardest is to coach. The most difficult is to watch your children play.

Q: David said in a speech that you continue to inspire him to play. He is still a ranked handball pro (#5) at age 47. How does he accomplish that?

David's greatest skill is his fitness and work ethic. He works very hard to remain fit for handball and for tennis. David recently played a match against a young upcoming pro at the WPH event in Salt Lake City. The young player used all of his time-outs and glove changes. David never called a time-out and didn't even

leave the court. The Finks don't put much value on a desire to win — the desire to train is everything.

Q: How do you feel about David's extraordinary skills?

David also has impressive credentials in golf and basement/holiday table tennis and billiard tournaments. I am very proud of David and what he is accomplishing. Sometimes I wish he enjoyed it more; however, these are professional athletes. It is a business for them. There is a lot of pressure to perform. Calling handball a game doesn't begin to do it justice. It is a calling, a lifelong commitment and a way of life. I always carry a "Don't Kill Myself" book to tournaments. Someone is going to need it. My office has an open deck on the 24th floor – someone is going to need to be talked off the ledge after a heartbreaking loss. (So far, so good). I would estimate that less than 10% of the handball players have the tools (speed, strength, endurance) to achieve Open level status. Note that less than 3% of high school baseball, basketball and football players go on to compete in the NCAA Division I. Only a very select few ever qualify at the professional level.

Laymen cannot begin to appreciate the skill level and commitment of our R48 pros. And they do it for the love of a sport that can be heartbreaking and incredibly rewarding at the same time.

Q: David was inducted into the Jewish Sports HOF (W. PA) in 2000 and PA Sports HOF (Western District) in 2023. He gave a humorous and poignant talk about your training with him as a youngster at Club One. He would watch you play a 2 ½ hour war with your friend Rick Abrams and then play a 6-year-old David. He said for years you would not let him score a point. Were you perhaps being a little hard on David?

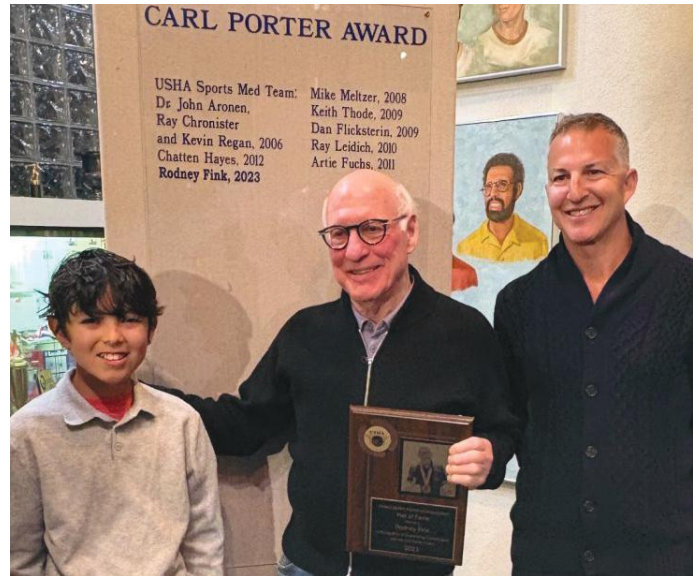
He may have scored, but I never let him score. My goal has always been that he find joy in playing our wonderful game, win or lose. (More joy in winning, of course.) David takes losses extremely hard, but he has the resiliency to bounce back more determined than ever. His matches are always a learning experience, so he can improve for the next battle.

Q: And David returned the favor by beating you for the first time when he was 15?

I claim it was 15, but he insists that it was the day before he turned 15. After that, we split games for about three months; then it was all over.

Q: David was away from handball for a number of years after his juniors career, correct?

After winning every Junior Nationals title, David first qualified for the USHA Pro Tour in 1995 at age 17. His peers from those days are long retired (or worse). In 1998, David amputated a finger in a freak racquetball accident and then retired for 10 years during his 20s. At age 30, David made his handball comeback following a promotional cross-country bike trip with DV and his close friend, Emmett Peixoto. At age 39, David became the oldest athlete to achieve a No. 1 professional ranking in any sport for the first time. It is noteworthy that points earned in a R48 fifth-place playoff win were instrumental in the No. 1 ranking. He is the only player



THREE GENERATIONS: Grandson Henry joins Rodney Fink and David Fink at the Handball Hall of Fame for Rodney's Porter Award.

to maintain a WPH Top-8 ranking every year since the inception of the R48 Tour (2011) and has the most career match victories (including playoffs).

Q: It sounds like he has accomplished a lot during his career.

He has a deserved reputation for tenacity and fair play. David is on the front line, doing his best to promote and showcase The Perfect Game as a professional player, ESPN announcer and WPH director. His most important accomplishment, however, is as a devoted husband and proud father.

Taking in Rodney's handball stories is enjoyable. He has a great level of knowledge and commitment to handball, even referring to it as his own religion. His son David is a skilled and talented handball player, writer and broadcaster. Rodney is a handball dad with much to be proud of. He also has a humorous side and finds much to laugh about over the 50+ years of his involvement in the game. We look forward to seeing him around the tournaments well into the future.

Handball Rulebook



The Ref's Corner

Answers from page 25

A1: Ure won the rally and got the side-out, because he hit his passing shot from just behind the short line; it didn't

matter that his momentum carried him over – after all, this ain't a pickleball "kitchen" line! See Rule 4.4.B: Fly Return.

A2: The correct answer is: "B. When the server swings and misses the ball completely." All of the other answers result in a fault but not a side-out. Rule 4.3.D.1 says, "D. Out serves. Any of the following results in an out: 1) Missed serve. Any attempt to hit the ball that results in a total miss or in the ball touching any part of the server's body other than the hitting hand."

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Years in parentheses after USHA officials' names indicate when their terms expire.

Sanction your tournament with the USHA and receive:

Your tournament listed on www.ushandball.org and distributed throughout USHA's social media outlets



Court Shorts

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- Free calendar listing in Handball magazine (before publishing deadline).
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- Authorization to use official USHA logo on entry form and souvenir.
- A commission on any adult USHA membership (\$55).
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Sanctioning criteria:

- Fill out sanctioning agreement to USHA and email entry form to USHA for inclusion at www.ushandball.org.
- Enforce USHA rules, including mandatory eye protection and use of official 21 Red/21 White Label handballs or approved ONE/55 handballs.
- Provide registration list and results to USHA after the tournament.
- Consider what the USHA does, reduce entry for juniors and college students by at least half.

Sanctioning forms are available at www.ushandball.org
For more information, call 520-795-0434 to speak with Sam Esser or email handball@ushandball.org

Upcoming major USHA events

May 22-26: 74th National Four-Wall Championships
Missouri State University, Springfield, Mo.

June 20-22: 17th Wallball National Championships
Brooklyn, N.Y.

July 11-13: 2025 National Junior 3-Wall Championships
E. Boulder Rec Center, E. Boulder, Colo.

July 31-Aug. 3: 64th USHA One-Wall National Championships
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Aug. 28-Sept.1: 74th National Three-Wall Championships,
George D. Miller Handball Courts, Maumee, Ohio

Dec. 27-30: 69th National Junior 3-Wall Championships
Tucson Racquet Club, Tucson, Ariz.

Working **OVERTIME**

Tiebreakers can be the domain of your dominance. Here's how:

By Michael Dorsher, Ph.D.

Tiebreakers: How do you transform them from trials of fast-fading hopes to confident times of triumph?

That's essentially the question I put to nearly a dozen pros, coaches and collegiate players after I recently won one game off each of two stout singles opponents – only to lose both tiebreakers 11-1.

The experts' answers boil down to this: Have more confidence, composure and energy – with a modicum of strategy.

Your preparation for the tiebreaker should start even before you finish playing game two, says Sam Esser, the No. 8-ranked player on the WPH pro tour and the USHA's director of development. Ideally, you've turned the tide from game one and built momentum by winning game two, either by getting hot yourself or exploiting a new-found weakness in your opponent.

But if you had won game one and are losing game two, you still need to finish it out with your confidence and energy intact. If you've fallen behind by more than 10 points late in game two, it might be the best strategy to tank the rest of that game, chalk it up to bad luck and preserve your energy for the tiebreaker. After all, it's theoretically easier to win 32 points in a match (21 in the first game and 11 in the tiebreaker) than to win 42 over the first two games.

“Stay aggressive. ... Rather than playing not to lose, play to win.”

– Andy Nett

“I don't think that's the worst idea in the world,” Esser says, “but I think it's better still to close out game two as hard as you can, gain confidence and try to score enough total points to get first serve in the tiebreaker. Otherwise, you can lose a lot of momentum and give your opponent confidence.”



TIEBREAKER FLY-BY: Ivan Burgos dives to make a back wall-to-front wall save in a Collegiate Nationals tiebreaker this year. Watch it at tinyurl.com/best-rally

Once game two ends, it's best to use the full time-out to regain energy and mentally prepare for the tiebreaker. Do not treat it like “a new game” and play differently; rather, aim to make it an extension of the game you won, says Ryan Pesch, a Minnesotan who challenged on the pro tour. You've already beaten this opponent once; now you need to remember and repeat how you did that – then perhaps also consider how to avoid your failures from the game you lost.

To gain confidence and composure, Esser says he will sometimes try to forget about his opponent and instead imagine that he's about to play with a friendly “sparring partner,” someone he usually beats.

Psych! Make your opponents uncomfortable

Once the tiebreaker begins, “stay aggressive,” recommends Andy Nett, the new Minnesota Handball Hall of Famer who won a World Open Doubles title with Luis Moreno in 2012 and ranked as high as No. 7 on the pro tour. “Don't hit defensive shots that you'd shoot before. Rather than playing not to lose, play to win.”

The top players on the women's pro tour are no less aggressive in tiebreakers, says No. 3-ranked Clodagh Munroe, who successfully defended her Open Singles championship at the Collegiate Nationals this year. “I go out firing and try to get as many points as possible to start with. I want to play with a lot of energy.”

Two of Munroe's mentors, Minnesota State University, Mankato assistant coaches John Stoffel and Adrian Anderson, say it's essential that their players

have winning attitudes in tiebreakers. “No bad body language,” Stoffel says.

“No outbursts,” Anderson adds. “You have to know when to pump up and when to ramp down.”

If you have a hand error or some other mistake, you can’t take time in a tiebreaker to dwell on it, Stoffel says. “You have to say, ‘Next point. Get past it. Reset.’ Make sure one bad thing doesn’t turn into three bad things.”

If you do fall behind in a tiebreaker, don’t hesitate to call a time-out, the coaches agree. “You lose two points in a row – not three – call a time-out,” Anderson says.

A tiebreaker time-out is a great time to consult with a coach – or any other friendly onlooker. Sometimes they can be more objective in telling you which shots or serves seem to be working best, Pesch says. “You have to make your opponent uncomfortable. Find the right serve that is statistically leading to more winning points, not just one or two aces. Sometimes that’s a lob serve.”

In a tight tiebreaker, with both players closing in on 11 points, having now played more than 50 points in the match, the winner/survivor is usually the fittest. Their victory was ordained long before this match even began.

“Many handball players are skilled,” says Ray Ure, who is a star middle-distance runner at MSU-Mankato in addition to leading the Mavericks to the Collegiate National team title this year with his Open Singles championship, “but not many have the same kind of off-court training or cross-training as in other sports.”

Esser agrees that the fittest player often wins the tiebreaker, and he points to Ure as Exhibit A. “He has gotten me in the tiebreaker the last two times I’ve played him,” Esser says of Ure, who is already No. 3 on the pro tour. “I don’t think he ever gets tired.”

Leading or trailing, you can’t ever let up in O.T.

But even if the tiebreaker score is not tight, neither player should let down, because even an underdog can score 11 points quickly – especially a doubles team that still has two serves.

“I’ve been in tiebreakers up 10-1 and lost, and I’ve been down 10-1 and won,” Nett says. “It’s not over until you get those 11 points.”

The player with a big lead in a tiebreaker still has to match the energy of the opponent, who



THE SILENT ASSASSIN:
Minnesota’s Andy Nett.

has nothing more to lose and might now play better than any time earlier in the match, Esser says. “The tiebreaker isn’t going to win itself.”

Finally, in doubles tiebreakers, there’s one strategic gambit that is controversial: deferring the first serve to the other team, even if you and your partner scored more total points in the first two games. Why do that? Because the team that serves first only gets one server, and the team that serves second gets two. Theoretically, if you hold the first server to one point or none, the second serving team has the advantage.

Esser says that he and Shorty Ruiz deferred the first serve in tiebreakers several times and went on to win – as have Ure and his pro doubles partner Ivan Burgos. But in the Open Doubles final of the Collegiate Nationals, when Ure and Burgos were on opposing teams, the strategy failed (watch it here: tinyurl.com/open-doubles).

There’s one sure way to never lose a tiebreaker

Ure and MSU-Mankato teammate Luis Mendez deferred the tiebreaker opening serve to Burgos, who won the first two points with his partner, Jorge Pimentel. They held Ure and Mendez to just one point on their opening serves and went on to upset them 11-4 in a tightly contested tiebreaker that included an amazing 33-shot rally that ended in a re-play (watch it here: tinyurl.com/best-rally)

One reason the Mavericks’ first-serve strategy might have failed is that they neglected to switch the order for their own first serves. Mendez served first in all three games of the finals, giving a bit of a break to Ure, who was playing the left side and taking most of the shots each rally.

But in tiebreakers, the team’s strongest server – Ure in this case – should always serve first, Esser says, noting he has always given way to Ruiz serving first in their tiebreakers. Also, they only defer the serve in tiebreakers if they’ve been able to keep the other team’s best server from getting multiple aces or serve set-ups in the first two games.

Nett says he would never give up the opportunity to serve first; after all, his right-side aces were a big part of what earned him the nickname “the silent assassin.”

“Rightly so,” says Esser, who still remembers that when he was a young pro, Nett aced him eight times in a row – even though Esser called time-out, twice.

Ure, who dealt 21 aces and service winners in his two-game Singles semifinal of the Collegiate Nationals, might regret deferring his serve in the Doubles final, but he says there’s still a better way to avoid losing any tiebreakers: “All you have to do is win the first two games of every match.”

Sunny Florida hosts 3-Wall Masters Doubles

By Matt Krueger

PALM CITY, Fla. – The 2025 Justin Wilson Memorial and USHA Masters Three-Wall Doubles tournament delivered a thrilling weekend of handball action, featuring a dynamic mix of seasoned veterans and rising stars competing for national glory. After a three-year run in Tucson, Arizona, the tournament made a strategic move to Florida's east coast, aiming to capitalize on the region's beautiful spring weather and burgeoning handball community. The response was overwhelming –



Noah Yannie plays “The Star-Spangled Banner” on trumpet to honor the late Justin Wilson during a break in the tournament.

nearly 70 players entered, proving that Florida was more than ready to embrace a major national event.

Off the courts, the weekend's energy carried over to a lively Saturday night celebration at Duffy's Sports Bar, where players and their families gathered to share stories, laughs and camaraderie. Organizers expressed heartfelt thanks to all participants, with special appreciation for Florida's strong showing. The success of the event has already paved the way for its return next year: March 20-22, 2026!

One of the weekend's most powerful moments came Saturday morning, when USHA ambassador and player Noah Yannie honored LCpl. Justin Wilson with a stirring trumpet performance of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” As the final notes echoed through the air, play paused – not only on the handball courts but on the nearby pickleball courts as well – in a shared tribute to Wilson's ultimate sacrifice. The park and the spring tournament both bear his name, serving as a lasting tribute to his memory.

A heartfelt thank-you goes to Bob Dyke, Cabell McVeigh, Bob Miller, Greg Burns, Gary Eisenbooth and the incredible volunteers whose hard work made the event possible. Additional gratitude goes to our generous tournament sponsors: Tim Murray, Karl Lady, Bob Snyder and Team Zamba!

Herrera re-emerges to win 35+ title with Mattioni

Alaska's Alfredo Herrera – once a standout junior and Pacific University ace – never imagined he'd be battling for a Masters title. “As a junior player, those divisions felt a lifetime away,” Herrera reflected. “Now it's awesome to have the experience to compete again.”

Teaming up with Florida powerhouse Nick Mattioni, one of the hardest hitters in the state, Herrera completed a duo capable of matching up against the nation's elite. They were put to the ultimate test in the final against Chicago's clutch team of Adam and Dane Szatkowski.

But this time, after dropping the first game, it was Mattioni and Herrera who stormed back, sealing the match in a dramatic tiebreaker, 10-21, 21-13, 11-8. A diving get by Herrera late in the match silenced any doubts whether they belonged at the top of the podium.

Every round of the 35+ division delivered drama. In the semis, the Szatkowski brothers had to survive a battle against Florida's Kyle Greenhalgh and Brett Arsenault, finally grinding out a win in three tight games. Likewise, Mattioni and Herrera were locked in a war with Maryland's Dan and Adam Zimet. The Zimets took the first game by a razor-thin margin, but

the Florida tandem came back to dominate the final two.

RESULTS:

Quarters: Kyle Greenhalgh/Brett Arsenault (FL) d. Stas Hammond/Mike Dorneker (CO/IL) 5, 7.

Semis: Adam Szatkowski/Dane Szatkowski (IL) d. Greenhalgh/Arsenault (14), 19, 8; Nick Mattioni/Alfredo Herrera (FL) d. Adam Zimet/Dan Zimet (MD) (20), 8, 3.

Final: Mattioni/Herrera d. Szatkowski/Szatkowski (10), 13, 8.

Consolation champs: Hammond/Dorneker.



Champs Nick Mattioni and Alfredo Herrera with ref Mike Angley and 35+ runners-up Adam Szatkowski and Dane Szatkowski.

After 13 years, Szatkowskis win a 2nd USHA title

For years, Dane and Adam Szatkowski have been fixtures in elite doubles play – tough, tactical and always in the hunt. But outside of their memorable Open Doubles title at the 2012 Three-Wall Nationals in Maumee, Ohio, a national championship together had eluded them. That dry spell looked like it might continue after a stinging loss in the 35+ final just hours earlier.

Then came the rebound. Shaking off the earlier defeat, the Szatkowskis stormed into the 45+ final with renewed purpose and left with hardware – capturing their first age-division national title by defeating Nick Mattioni and Adam Zimet in straight games, 21-19, 21-14.

Adam's devastating serve put Mattioni and Zimet on their heels from the outset. Meanwhile, Dane was everywhere – changing the pace, threading sharp-angle kills and executing off-balance shots with surgical precision. After their loss in the 35+ final, the brothers flipped the script in the Veteran Masters final. Experience and execution won out as the Szatkowskis won their first Masters title.

To reach the final, the Szatkowskis turned away Florida's Eddie Perez and Mervyn Bruno in the semifinals, 21-9, 21-15. On the other side, Zimet and Mattioni battled through a rollercoaster semifinal against New York's Joe



First-time Masters champs Dane and Adam Szatkowski outlasted 45+ division runners-up Nick Mattioni and Adam Zimet.

Kaplan and Jai Rago, eking out a 21-20, 13-21, 11-4 win.

RESULTS:

Quarters: Eddie Perez/Mervyn Bruno (FL) d. Vince Wingerter/Dorian Cumberbatch (FL) 3, 11.

Semis: Adam Szatkowski/Dane Szatkowski (IL) d. Perez/Bruno 9, 15; Adam Zimet/Nick Mattioni (MD/FL) d. Joseph Kaplan/Jai Rago (NY) 20, (13), 4.

Final: Szatkowski/Szatkowski d. Zimet/Mattioni 19, 14.

Rago, Kaplan power their way to 50+ championship



The 50+ gold medalists Jai Rago and Joe Kaplan with runners-up Juan Pichardo and James O'Rourke.

When it comes to versatility, few in the tournament field could match the New York duo of Joe Kaplan and Jai Rago. With national titles already earned across various formats, the seasoned pair added another accolade to their collection by sweeping the 50+ Golden Masters round robin with precision and power.

Kaplan and Rago left no doubt about who ruled the

division, capping their unbeaten run with a commanding 21-8, 21-7 victory over South Florida's James O'Rourke and Juan Pichardo. Arguably one of the fittest teams in the tournament, Kaplan and Rago play the angles better than most while seemingly always setting themselves up for the best shots in the right positions; their relentless pace made them the clear standout team of the division.

While O'Rourke and Pichardo took home the silver, their path wasn't without obstacles. The division's grittiest battles came courtesy of Florida's Rob Humphreys and Mike Rothstein, who refused to concede any match. Their tiebreaker showdowns against both O'Rourke/Pichardo and Roque Florez and Larry Defauw were among the most intense of the weekend, and despite falling to the eventual champs, they pushed hard, especially in a 21-15 second game against Kaplan and Rago.

RESULTS:

First: Joseph Kaplan/Jai Rago (NY) d. James O'Rourke/Juan Pichardo (FL) 8, 7; Rob Humphreys/Mike Rothstein (FL) 1, 15; Roque Florez/Larry Defauw (FL/MD) 1, 2.

Second: O'Rourke/Pichardo d. Humphreys/Rothstein (16), 16, 3; d. Florez/Defauw 10, 13.

Third: Humphreys/Rothstein d. Florez/Defauw (19), 15, 0.

Final: Canales/Renteria d. Esser/Pfannenstiel 8, 5.

Estevez steps in to help Dan Zimet win 55+ title

When Dan Zimet found himself without a partner after longtime 55+ teammate Alan Frank withdrew, the odds seemed stacked against him in the Veteran Golden Masters. But in stepped Ray Estevez of Delaware – a 70+ eligible player whose smooth, steady play defies his age.

Together, the East Coast duo steamrolled the field. In the final, they dismantled Florida's top team of Greg Burns and Harry Cohen, 21-9, 21-4.

Zimet and Estevez didn't just win, they dominated. In two rounds of play, they didn't allow a single opponent to reach double digits. Their semifinal saw them cruise past Richard Panchookian and Antonio Gonzalez, a late-formed Florida pair who had earlier taken down Steve Birrell and Richard Ricardo in the opening round. Gonzalez, eligible for 65+ play, returned to competition after a long layoff and looked in top form with a solid partner in Panchookian.

On the other side of the bracket, Cohen and Burns had looked just as strong, brushing aside Bob Miller and Cabell McVeigh in straight games. But in the final, they ran into a buzzsaw in Zimet and Estevez, who were locked in from start to finish.

Zimet struck gold with the late change in partnership,



Last-minute partners Dan Zimet and Ray Estevez took the 55+ title over runners-up Harry Cohen and Greg Burns.

and for Estevez, it was just another chapter in a career that keeps proving age is only a number.

RESULTS:

Quarters: Richard Panchookian/Antonio Gonzalez (FL) d. Steve Birrell/Richard Ricardo (MT/GA) 2, 12.

Semis: Dan Zimet/Ray Estevez (MD/DE) d. Panchookian/Gonzalez 5, 6; Harry Cohen/Greg Burns (FL) d. Bob Miller/Cabell McVeigh (FL) 8, 9.

Final: Zimet/Estevez d. Cohen/Burns 9, 4.

YouTubers Wyrsch and Johnson take 60+ gold IRL

David Wyrsch, a former Bay Area standout and now Florida resident, made a triumphant return to the national stage with a victory in the 60+ division – nearly four decades after his last national title. Wyrsch partnered with fellow Florida transplant Steve Johnson to outlast the formidable team of Ray Estevez and James O'Rourke in a grueling final, 16-21, 21-19, 11-3.



Steve Johnson, left, and David Wyrsch, shirtless, made successful comebacks against Ray Estevez and James O'Rourke, right.

Wyrsch's thunderous serves proved to be the X-factor throughout the match. He and Johnson flipped the momentum after dropping the first game to steal a second-game win and cruise through the tiebreaker.

For Wyrsch, the title adds to an eclectic resume that includes Collegiate Open and 19-under four-wall crowns – plus a raft of irreverent YouTube handball videos (tinyurl.com/DaveWyrsch) – but this marks his first championship in the age-division realm of three-wall. It's Johnson's second national title, paired with a 45+ four-wall doubles crown in 2016.

Team Estevez/O'Rourke looked poised to take the title early, but Wyrsch's serves began to hop and dive with more bite in game two, eventually shifting momentum. Johnson's poised finishing and excellent positioning proved clutch, especially in the critical final points that forced the tiebreaker.

RESULTS:

Quarters: Harry Cohen/Greg Burns (FL) d. Bob Miller/Cabell McVeigh (FL) 18, 16.

Semis: Steve Johnson/David Wyrsch (FL) d. Cohen/Burns 9, 6; Ray Estevez/James O'Rourke (DE/FL) d. Dan Vera/Mike Angley (FL/NY) 18, 8.

Final: Johnson/Wyrsch d. Estevez/O'Rourke (16), 19, 3.

Final: Canales/Renteria d. Esser/Pfannenstiel 8, 5.

DeVito blasts Dohman into 65+ winner's circle

Regular 65+ contenders such as Dave Dohman and Phil Kirk have often found themselves battling in the final, either side-by-side or across the net. But this year, the dynamic shifted when Jimmy DeVito made his return to national three-wall play, pairing with Dohman for a powerhouse team. The duo steamrolled through the final, dispatching Dan Vera and Mike Angley, 21-12, 21-7. Dohman credited his partner's explosive presence on the court: "It's all about power on these courts, and Jimmy has power," he said.

The Florida-based team of Vera and Angley had entered the final after a massive semifinal upset of Phil Kirk and Bob Bardeau, Ohio's top pairing as 2024 Three-Wall finalists and 65+ Three-Wall Masters Champions in 2022. But their momentum didn't carry over.

"You try not to be disappointed," Vera said, "but you cannot give any points to guys like that in a final."

Three-wall handball in Florida adds an extra layer of strategy: no ceilings, which opens the game to deep, high-arcing returns that push defenders well beyond the standard 40-foot mark. But none of that mattered in this final – pure power was the name of the game, and DeVito and Dohman delivered it in spades.

Still, Vera and Angley's gritty performance and upset



Champs Jimmy DeVito and Dave Dohman celebrate with ref Tony Gonzalez and runners-up Dan Vera and Mike Angley.

win in the semis signaled that they'll be contenders for years to come.

RESULTS:

Quarters: Dan Vera/Mike Angley (FL/NY) d. Rob Birrell/Jim Hobbs (GA/TN) 0, 1; Gary Eisenbooth/Robert Dyke (CA/FL) d. David Santos/Eswin Stead (CA/FL) 0, 5.

Semis: Vera/Angley d. Phil Kirk/Bob Bardeau (OH) 9, 12; Jimmy DeVito/Dave Dohman (IL/IN) d. Eisenbooth/Dyke 12, 8.

Final: DeVito/Dohman d. Vera/Angley 12, 7.

Eisenbooth and Dyke do it again, taking 70+ title

The 70+ Diamond Masters division has long been the domain of Bob Dyke and Gary Eisenbooth, and 2025 proved no different. The decorated duo outlasted a large field with experience, poise and power. They remain the gold standard in their age group.

In the final, St. Louis' Steve Campbell and Bob Roman put up a solid fight early, but the champions found another gear, closing out the match 21-15, 21-2.

Dyke, who earned his Grand Masters sweater last



CHEERS: Repeat champs Gary Eisenbooth and Bob Dyke celebrated with runners-up Steve Campbell and Bob Roman.

year, showed no signs of slowing down, and Eisenbooth remained sharp and steady throughout. Their toughest test came in the semifinals, where they faced a rejuvenated Tim Murray and Bob Lohmueller.

Campbell and Roman had been close for years, and their strong run through the draw, including a composed two-game win over Terry McGuire and Bill Moritz, suggested this might be their moment. They had their sights set on a semifinal battle with Merv Deckert and Tom Blaikie, a former pro tour qualifier, but a knee injury forced Blaikie to withdraw after the quarterfinals.

RESULTS:

Preliminary round: David Scmelz/Lee Cocuzza (FL) d. Steve Birrell/Rob Birrell (MT/GA) 13, 10.

Quarters: Robert Dyke/Gary Eisenbooth (FL/CA) d. Scmelz/Cocuzza 5, 5; Tim Murray/Bob Lohmueller (FL/KY) d. Dan Ho/Chris Diminico (MD/MA) 7, 8; Merv Deckert/Tom Blaikie (MB/FL) d. Wesley Humphreys/Edwin Stead (FL) 4, 3; Steve Campbell/Bob Roman (FL/MO) d. Terry McGuire/Bill Moritz (CA/IL) 12, 18.

Semis: Dyke/Eisenbooth d. Murray/Lohmueller 7, 7; Campbell/Roman d. Deckert/Blaikie, inj. def.

Final: Dyke/Eisenbooth d. Campbell/Roman 15, 2.

Consolation champs: Ho/Diminico.

Deckert, Miller win 2 breakers on way to 75+ title

Canadian handball legend Merv Deckert added another trophy in his storied career, teaming up with new partner Bob Miller of Florida to capture the Veteran Diamond Masters (75+) title. The newly formed duo clicked quickly, navigating the round-robin bracket with veteran savvy and a steady hand under pressure.

Deckert and Miller opened with a gritty win over Larry Dohman and Artie Diamant (IL/NY), rallying after a narrow first-game loss to dominate the next two, 20-21, 21-10, 11-5. They followed up with a decisive victory over Dan Ho and Chris Diminico (MD/MA), edging a tight first game, stumbling in the second, then roaring back to clinch the match, 21-17, 16-21, 11-1.

Ho and Diminico earned runner-up honors with a two-game win over Dohman and Diamant, 21-11, 21-9.

Despite being newcomers as a pair, Deckert and Miller's synergy on the court was undeniable. With sharp shot selection and unshakable composure, Deckert and Miller proved that elite handball doesn't age – it just gets smarter.

RESULTS:

First place: Bob Miller/Merv Deckert (FL/MB) d. Larry Dohman/Artie Diamant (IL/NY) (20), 10, 5; d. Dan Ho/Chris Diminico (MD/MA) 17, (16), 1

Second: Ho/Diminico d. Dohman/Diamant 11, 9



Florida's Bob Miller teamed with Canada's Merv Deckert for the first time and helped each other win the 75+ championship.

Lady is a champ in 80+ division, with Dale Ziegler

Karl Lady and Dale Ziegler proved that championship form never fades, capturing the 80+ Platinum Masters title with poise, power and polished play. The new partners each claimed their second national title, combining decades of experience to dominate the division and leave no doubt they belong among handball's elite.



SHAKE ON IT: Dale Ziegler congratulates his partner Karl Lady, while runners-up Denny Fehr and Dennis Uffer follow suit.

Facing off against Dennis Uffer and Denny Fehr in a two-team, multi-round robin, the four decorated octogenarians delivered a display worthy of their reputations. In the opening match, Lady and Ziegler edged out a tight first game before unleashing a clinic in the second, taking the match 21-20, 21-3. Their strategic court movement and perfectly placed shots made quick work of their skilled opponents.

Uffer and Fehr, both respected veterans with national and international hardware of their own – Uffer notably boasting multiple national and world titles – battled back in the second round. They opened with an emphatic 21-5 win, but Lady and Ziegler regrouped with championship focus, storming back to take the next two games 21-6, 11-8 and seal their title.

Lady and Ziegler's victory wasn't just about winning titles; it was a celebration of the enduring excellence that defines the Platinum Masters. In a sport where heart and hustle never age, they continue to set the standard.

RESULTS:

First round: Karl Lady/Dale Ziegler (VA/FL) d. Dennis Uffer/Denny Fehr (FL) 20, 3.

Second round: Lady/Ziegler d. Uffer/Fehr (5), 6, 8.

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Tiebreakers abound in 70+ Masters Doubles

By Sam Esser

HOUSTON – Once again, the 70+ division proved to be the most competitive of the 2025 Masters Doubles, with tiebreakers needed to decide both semifinals and the final.

Tomas Martinez and Bob Lohmueller won game one of the finals 21-12, but Texans Frank Swehosky and Scott Spann rebounded to win game two even bigger, 21-4.

Spann and Swehosky did not start as fast in the tiebreaker but made a late run and were serving at 8-10. A perfectly placed ceiling ball down the left from Lohmueller put his team back in the box. On the ensuing rally, Lohmueller again hit the ceiling with precision, but this time on the right side, giving his team the victory.

Martinez and Lohmueller also had to pull out a clutch tiebreaker win in their semifinals over the Oregon-based team of David Steinberg and Craig Trull. Meanwhile, Spann and Swehosky also needed a tiebreaker to come from behind and win their semifinal against the California team of Daniel Brennan and Matthew DeWeese.

RESULTS:

First Round: Frank Swehosky/Scott Spann (TX) d. Jesse Valera/Tim Sterrett



Winners Bob Lohmueller and Tomas Martinez outlasted runners-up Frank Swehosky and Scott Spann in the 70+ Doubles.

(IL) 9, 13; Craig Trull/David Steinberg (OR) d. Andy Hollan/Jack Browder (TX) 3, 4

Semifinals: Swehosky/Spann d. Daniel Brennan/Matthew DeWeese (CA) (16), 12, 5; Tomas Martinez/Bob Lohmueller (CA/KY) d. Trull/Steinberg 9, (14), 6.

Final: Martinez/Lohmueller d. Swehosky/Spann 12, (4), 8.

New kids on the block bull their way to 35+ title



Arthur Sayed and Victor Lopierre, left, won their first Masters Nationals tournament, defeating Jai Ragoo and Joe Kaplan.

Victor Lopierre and Arthur Sayed are newly aged into the Masters division, and they were excited to compete for their first national title at that level. Both based out of New York, Lopierre and Sayed are terrific handball players across all disciplines of the sport: four-wall, three-wall and one-wall.

Awaiting them in the finals were more-seasoned New Yorkers, Joe Kaplan and Jai Ragoo, who wanted to play two divisions and see if they could compete down an age level.

Lopierre and Sayed used their youth to their advantage, though, in the final. Sayed is one of the quickest players in handball and forces opponents to hit perfect kill shots if they want to end a rally. Lopierre is a powerful left-side player who can end the rally from anywhere on the court with his ability to shoot the ball. That combination was too much for Kaplan and Ragoo, who fell to their younger opponents 21-13, 21-14.

Lopierre and Sayed were even more dominant in their semifinal, taking down the Texas duo of Anthony Cevallos and Steven Mendoza in two quick games. Kaplan and Ragoo had a nice semifinal victory over the New Mexico-based team of Andrew Martinez and Ryan McGuire.

Lopierre and Sayed had a successful first tournament in the Masters and have plans to continue to compete for more titles in the future.

RESULTS:

First Round: Anthony Cevallos/Steven Mendoza (TX) d. Adam Niven Shumaker/Christopher Perez (TX) (19), 6, 5; Andrew Martinez/Ryan McGuire (NM) d. Steve Pittman/Homer Quintana (TX) 1, 0.

Semifinals: Victor Lopierre/Arthur Sayed (NY) d. Cevallos/Mendoza 3, 5; Joseph Kaplan/Jai Ragoo (NY) d. Martinez/McGuire 11, 9.

Final: Lopierre/Sayed d. Kaplan/Ragoo 13, 14.

Kaplan, Ragoo win where they belong, in 45+

After falling short in the 35+ final earlier in the day, Joe Kaplan and Jai Ragoo made sure they left with one gold medal by winning the 45+ final over Leo Canales and John Henning.

It was far from easy for Kaplan and Ragoo. Canales and Henning have played a lot of doubles together in the past few years and have great chemistry on the court, much like Kaplan and Ragoo, who recently won a national three-wall doubles title together.

The first game, Kaplan and Ragoo cruised to a 21-10 victory. In the second game, Canales and Henning scrapped their way to a 21-19 win to force a tiebreaker.

Kaplan and Ragoo started fast in the tiebreaker and built an early lead. Canales and Henning worked their way back to a 6-7 deficit before a back-wall error put Kaplan and Ragoo back in the box. A fly kill from Kaplan, a right-corner kill by Ragoo and a ceiling error from their opponents had Ragoo serving for match point. On the ensuing rally, Canales earned a back-wall setup, but he skipped it in just before the front wall, giving Kaplan and Ragoo the championship.

Both of these teams were dominant in their other two matches, and the final could have gone either way, but Kaplan and Ragoo made a few more clutch shots.



From left, runners-up John Henning and Leo Canales congratulate 45+ division champions Joe Kaplan and Jai Ragoo.

RESULTS:

First Round: Jai Ragoo/Joseph Kaplan (NY) d. Adam Niven Shumaker/Andy Hollan (TX) 1, 5; d. Patrick Myers/Jeff Wall (MI/TX) 10, 7; d. John Henning/Juan Canales (AZ/TX) 10, (19), 6.

Second: Henning/Canales d. Myers/Wall 11, 13; d. Shumaker/Hollan 2, 2.

Third: Shumaker/Hollan d. Myers/Wall WBF – injury.

Canales teams with Renteria to win 60+ division



Leo Canales and Lorenzo Renteria won in 60+; Paul Pfannenstiel, right, took silver with Jake Esser, not pictured.

Prior to falling short in the 45+ final, Leo Canales had already secured one gold medal by teaming with Lorenzo Renteria in the 60+ final.

Canales and Renteria took down former national champions Jake Esser and Paul Pfannenstiel in the finals in two games. Canales played the left side and took the majority of the shots, while Renteria played the right and kept rallies alive.

Canales is a tremendous player for his age and is just years removed from qualifying on the pro tour. Esser and Pfannenstiel had a clear plan to hit everything at Renteria in the final and avoid Canales. It was a good plan, but Renteria was solid and did a great job at returning serves and letting Canales control the rallies.

Neither team was challenged in their semifinal, as they both rolled their opponents in one-sided matches.

Canales continues to defy his age with his play, and when you put him with a steady partner such as Renteria, he is going to be tough to beat.

RESULTS:

First Round: Art Benitez/Rob Jacobs (TX) d. Greg Stansbury/Hector Garcia (NV/TX) 13, 9.

Semifinals: Juan Canales/Lorenzo Renteria (TX/CH) d. Benitez/Jacobs 3, 8; Jake Esser/Paul Pfannenstiel (KS/MO) d. Tomas Martinez/William Cervantes (CA/NM) 0, 6.

Final: Canales/Renteria d. Esser/Pfannenstiel 8, 5.

Deckert, Campbell take 75+ title in tiebreaker

Ed Campbell and Merv Deckert have been on quite the run lately and are fresh off a World Doubles title in Ireland. They continued their streak by winning the 75+ division in Houston.

Campbell and Deckert defeated Rob Nichols and Mike Lockhart in the final in a great match. Despite being the underdog, Nichols and Lockhart shocked Campbell and Deckert in game one with a 21-16 win. Lockhart is a lefty who can crush the ball with his dominant hand. Nichols is crafty up front and hits smart shots from the right side.

Still, Campbell and Deckert are a tough team to beat, with numerous national titles between the two of them. They found their groove in game two to win 21-15, then prevailed 11-4 in the tiebreaker. It's hard to find a weakness with either player, and they rarely beat themselves, making them a tough team to beat.

Both teams had impressive semifinal wins, with Campbell and Deckert taking down the Texas duo of Peter Anderson and Jim Leboeuf, while Nichols and Lockhart defeated Jim Ward and Terry Nett.



BUDDY-UP: Ed Campbell and Merv Deckert, center, won the 75+ title over Rob Nichols, left, and Mike Lockhart, right.

RESULTS:

First Round: Peter Anderson/Jim Leboeuf (TX) d. Dave Parsons/Tom McMahon (TX/CA) 1, 2.

Semifinals: Edward Campbell/Merv Deckert (CA/MB) d. Anderson/Leboeuf 10, 6; Mike Lockhart/Rob Nichols (AZ/CA) d. James Ward/Terry Nett (MO/CO) 13, 7.

Final: Campbell/Deckert d. Lockhart/Nichols (16), 15, 4.

Smith, Graham win all their games in 80+ division



From left, runners-up Wayne Neumann and David Lippman congratulate 80+ champions Jim Smith and Rick Graham.

Four strong teams entered the 80+ division in Houston, continuing to prove that handball is a lifelong sport. Many of octogenarians will tell you they are still working on getting better!

It was Jim Smith and Rick Graham who took home the title, dominating each team in the round robin format.

Their first match of the tournament was against local player Sandy Gaitz and Jerry White from Colorado. Gaitz and White had not played together before and could not get in a rhythm against Smith and Graham.

Next up was another Texas/Colorado pairing, with local player Wayne Neumann teaming up with Denver-based David Lippman. Smith and Graham were again too strong and powered their way past them.

The last match for Smith and Graham was against tournament director Ron Cole and his partner from Minnesota, Gary Rohrer. Smith and Graham knew if they won this match, the title was clinched. They left no doubt, winning 21-2, 21-3.

Neumann and Lippman took second place in the division by defeating the other two teams.

RESULTS:

First: Jim Smith/Rick Graham (CA/MI) d. Sandy Gaitz/Jerry White (TX/CO) 0, 5; d. David Lippman/Wayne Neumann (CO/TX) 9, 3; d. Gary Rohrer/Ron Cole (MN/TX) 2, 3.

Second: Lippman/Neumann d. Rohrer/Cole 13, 16; d. Gaitz/White.

The Houston Handball Club put on a first-class tournament for the competitors. The Downtown Tellepsen Family YMCA has some of the best courts in the country and is located in the heart of Houston. The tournament hotel is within walking distance to the courts and many other attractions and restaurants in Houston.

Longtime handball ambassador Jim Cosentino came by the courts Friday evening to cheer on his buddy Peter Anderson and his fellow KC Handball players Jake Esser and Paul Pfannenstiel.

The highlight of the weekend was the Masters Cocktail Hour, sponsored by the Houston Handball Club. Players were treated to free drinks and appetizers while catching up with handball friends. Community is one of the many things that make this sport special. While players battle on the court, they also have great friendships off it.

The future: juniors and a U.S. Handball Center

By Sam Esser

ST. LOUIS – The brand-new St. Louis Hinder Club was the site for the 2024 Junior Four-Wall Nationals, and the year-end tournament was a great way to kick off the club. Hinder Club members spent the weeks prior to the tournament preparing the future National Handball Center for incoming juniors from four countries: the United States, Canada, Ireland and Mexico.

Some even spent part of their Christmas Day there to complete the painting of the service lines. When all was said and done, the four courts needed for the tournament were completed and ready to go, and the club was nearly unrecognizable from the kids gymnastic center it was just several months earlier. The junior players certainly appreciated the work of the Hinder Club members, and they loved checking out the facility.

Outside of the play on the court, there were several things for the juniors to participate in that allowed them to improve their game and have fun. With four top pro players at the tournament, it allowed the juniors to split into small groups and get personalized training from Luis Cordova, Sam Esser, Ivan Burgos and Abraham Montijo. The pro players could focus their clinics on what the juniors in front of them needed to work on.

The juniors were able to participate in a skills challenge, where they would go through an obstacle course that ended with trying to hit the ball in small taped squares on the wall that were worth more points the smaller they got. The famous “short court” tournament was also held, with juniors competing against each other and the pro players.

The banquet included lots of prizes and three awards:

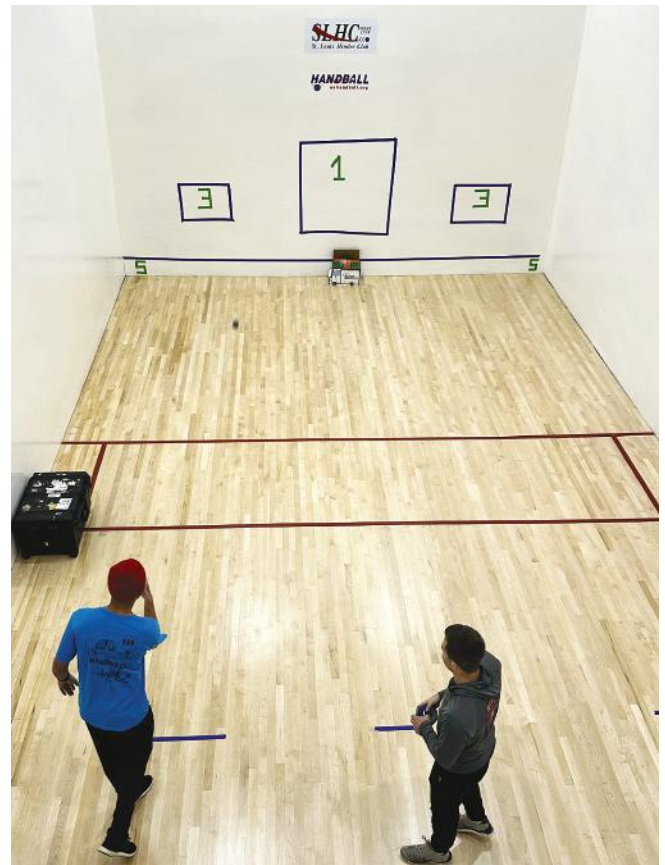
The Kate Conlon/Kurt Johansson Most Improved Award went to Azriel Gomez. This was Gomez’s second Junior Four-Wall National Tournament. The 13-year-old scored few points while losing in the first round of the 2023 tournament, but in 2024, Gomez’s hard work paid off and he made a run to the finals of the 13-under bracket before losing to Ireland’s Eolann Kelly.

The Tom Lynch Newcomer Award went to Eolann Kelly. He is the is the current 13- world champion, but he wasn’t content with just that. He and his parents made the trip across the pond so he could add the 13- USHA title to his record, dominating his competition.

The Vince Gabriele Jr. Sportsmanship Award went to Reilly Yost, who hails from Colorado and was playing in his final Junior National Tournament. Yost is one of the nicest guys you’ll ever meet, on and off the court. On the court, you will see him complimenting his opponents on their shots, playing by the rules and showing the joy he has while playing the game. Off the

court, he is always volunteering to help out wherever he can, making him the easy choice.

USHA President Denis Hogan concluded the banquet by thanking the St. Louis Hinder Club members for hosting us and encouraging these junior players to keep on playing and improving their game.



Pros Abe Montijo and Sam Esser prepare the skills challenge.

Klicker plows through field while defending her 19- title

Izzy Klicker was competing in her final Junior Nationals at the 2024 tournament, and she was looking to defend her title in the 19-under division. Klicker is a decorated player out of Illinois, where she learned the game from legendary Juniors Coach Don Quinlan. She is on the handball team at Minnesota State University, Mankato, where she has already become an All-American.

Klicker was too tough for her competition at the juniors, as she easily defeated the three others in her division. Her experience was on full display, and the other competitors were in awe of how great of a player she is. Elaina Schoene placed second in the division by defeating Erin Bland and Olivia Briand. Schoene is a

freshman at Missouri State who just learned the game this year. She has a volleyball background and is very strong with shots above the shoulder.

RESULTS:

First: Izzy Klicker (IL) d. Olivia Briand (CAN) 1, 1; d. Erin Bland (MO) 0, 1; d. Elaina Schoene (MO) d. 1, 2.

Second: Schoene d. Bland 16, 9; d. Briand 19, 11.

Third: Bland d. Briand 9, 11.



As women's 19-under champ, Izzy Klicker got to be one of the few to win her last-ever Junior Nationals match.

Gutierrez, 16, upsets Brule to become new 19- champ

Eliseo Gutierrez, while just 16, won the 19- title at the 2024 Junior Four-Wall Nationals. Gutierrez has been a rising star in the sport for some time and has wowed many players. Gutierrez resides in Colorado and has learned the game from his big brother Jon, who was also a great juniors player. Eliseo has had much success in other age divisions, but winning the 19- division was his most impressive accomplishment yet.

Gutierrez defeated fellow junior star Ayden Brule in the final in what was the most anticipated match of the tournament. Brule, from Tucson, has as many junior titles as almost anybody and had recently earned points on the WPH tour, making him the youngest ranked pro in the game. He was also looking for his first 19- four-wall junior singles title.

Their final did not disappoint. The players took turns crushing the ball at one another and impressing the crowd with their shot making ability. Each player is very aggressive and isn't shy about going for the bottom board from anywhere on the court.

On this day, Gutierrez had his kill shot going a little more than Brule did. Thanks to a few clutch kills and one

too many errors from Brule, Gutierrez won 21-11, 21-17 and made himself the junior to beat going forward.

Neither Gutierrez nor Brule was challenged much in their opening rounds. Both are going to be stars in the sport for a long, long time to come.

RESULTS:

Pool 1 First: Ayden Brule (AZ) d. Nick Wilson (MO) 11, 2; d. Reilly Yost (CO) 0, 2.

Second: Wilson d. Yost 12, 12.

Pool 2 First: Eliseo Gutierrez (CO) d. Rene Sosa (AZ) 0, 5; d. Antonio Rivera (AZ) 3, 4.

Second: Rivera d. Sosa 13, 11.

Final: Gutierrez d. Brule 11, 17.



Runner-up Ayden Brule and 19-under champ Eliseo Gutierrez got their medals from USHA President Denis Hogan.

Mendez plays up in the 17- division and just has a Day

After easily winning the 13- last year, Anthony Mendez decided he was ready to up his game to the 17- division this year. The Kansas City native has been rapidly improving and felt he was ready for tougher competition.

He was correct. Mendez defeated Leo Day of Calgary, Alberta, in the final in an incredible and well-played match. Day won the 15- division last year and is a smooth player with good hands.

Day and Mendez were about as even as opponents as can be. The two split the first two games and each of them was close. The tiebreaker was no different, but Mendez had a few more shots than Day did and squeaked it out 11-8 to become the champion. Colorado's Jahaziel Montes Hernandez defeated his fellow Coloradan friend Izaiah Orona to claim third place in the division.

RESULTS:

First: Anthony Mendez (MO) d. Izaiah Orona (CO) 0, 0; d. Jahaziel Montes Hernandez (CO) 0, 4; d. Leo Day (CAN) (15), 18, 8.

Second: Day d. Montes Hernandez 3, 2; d. Orona 1, 0.

Third: Montes Hernandez d. Orona 20, 9.



Champ Anthony Mendez and runner-up Jahaziel Montes Hernandez celebrated with USHA President Denis Hogan.

World champ Kelly comes from Ireland to win 13- title

Eolann Kelly was not long off his 13- Worlds four-wall title in Ireland when he made the trip to the United States to try and do the same. It was Kelly's first time competing in the States, and he was the talk of the tournament.

He had no issue winning his division and allowed no more than a few points in each of his games. Kelly has two strong hands and always seems to be in position to return the ball. His powerful serve earns him a set-up nearly every time. It was a treat to watch him play, and he certainly motivated the U.S. juniors to step up their game.

Azriel Gomez claimed second place in the division by winning in straight games over Luis Cordova III and Ariel Flores, both of Juarez, Mexico. Gomez won the most-improved player award at the tournament after not winning a match the year before.

RESULTS:

First: Eolan Kelly (IRE) d. Ariel Flores (MEX) 2, 1; d. Luis Cordova III (MEX) 0, 2; d. Azriel Gomez (AZ) 1, 2.

Second: Gomez d. Cordova III 13, 13; d. Gomez d. Flores.

Third: Cordova III d. Flores 10, (12), 8.



Runner-up Azriel Gomez and 13-under Nationals and World champ Eolaan Kelly with USHA President Denis Hogan.

Feiner defies inexperience, injury to take the 11- division

The youngest division in this tournament was the 11-, but these juniors could still really play and had some of the most-watched games. Local junior Jack Feiner was playing in his first-ever tournament. Feiner had some experience from playing in the St. Louis Handball League but had not played in a while due to an injury and competing soccer games. He seemed to improve in each match that he played.

He swept the other three juniors in his division. Feiner has tremendous eye-hand coordination and never seemed to make an error. He took out Juarez-based Luan Cordova, Tucson's Liam Schnaar and soccer teammate Roman Knapp. Schnaar took second place in the division by defeating Cordova and Knapp.

RESULTS:

First: Jack Feiner (MO) d. Luan Cordova (MEX) 7, 11; d. Liam Schnaar (AZ) 7, 11; d. Roman Knapp (MO) 3, 0.

Second: Schnaar d. Knapp 7, 4; d. Cordova 7, 4.

Third: Cordova d. Knapp 14, 1.



Runner-up Liam Schnaar, Hogan and 11- champ Jack Feiner.

Gutierrez and Brule team up to take the 19- Doubles title

Shortly after their Singles final concluded, Eli Gutierrez and Ayden Brule were right back on the court, competing for the 19- Doubles title. Gutierrez and Brule are competitors on the court and friends off it. They enjoy playing doubles together and have had success, including an 11-10 tiebreaker victory at the Junior Three-Wall Nationals over the summer.

At the Four-Wall Juniors, they were clearly the two best players in the tournament and an overpowering force for any doubles team that was going to take them on. Leo Day and Eolann Kelly did their best in the final against them but could only muster nine points in game one before being shut out in game two.

Day and Kelly did have an impressive semifinal win over the Tucson pair of Antonio Rivera and Rene Sosa in two competitive games. In Gutierrez and Brule's semifinal, they cruised past Nick Wilson and Reilly Yost.

Gutierrez and Brule will be the team to beat next year, because both have at least a year of juniors remaining.

RESULTS:

First Round: Reilly Yost/Nick Wilson (CO/MO) d. Jahaziel Montes Hernandez/Izaiah Orona (CO) 2, 2.

Semis: Ayden Brule/Eliseo Gutierrez (AZ/CO) d. Yost/Wilson 2, 5; Leo Day/Eolann Kelly (CAN/IRE) d. Rene Sosa/Antonio Rivera (CO) 13, 18.

Final: Brule/Gutierrez d. Day/Kelly 9, 0.



The 19- Doubles champs Ayden Brule and Eli Gutierrez, with the USHA's Denis Hogan and runners-up Eolann Kelly and Leo Day.

In Big Ball 19-, Brule beats buddy Gutierrez in the final

After losing the small ball final, Ayden Brule was able to get his revenge on Eliseo Gutierrez in the Big Ball 19- division. Brule looked very comfortable with the big ball and ran Gutierrez all around the court. He held

him to just eight points in game one before closing out a competitive game two 21-15. Anthony Mendez also had a nice showing in the division. He was playing up an age level and pushed eventual champ Brule in two close games.

RESULTS:

First Round: Ayden Brule (AZ) d. Jahaziel Montes Hernandez (CO) 0, 0; Anthony Mendez (MO) d. Izaiah Orono (CO) 6, 8; Antonio Rivera (AZ) d. Riley Yost (CO) 17, 11; Eliseo Gutierrez (CO) d. Rene Sosa (AZ) 0, 7.

Semis: Brule d. Mendez 17, 13; Gutierrez d. Rivera 5, 8.

Final: Brule d. Gutierrez 8, 15.

Like father, like son: Luis Cordova III wins 15- Big Ball

Luis Cordova III had an impressive run through the 15- Big Ball division, surviving several close games to win. After beating Liam Schnaar in two quick games in the quarterfinals, Cordova won two tight games against Charlie Dirnbeck 21-17, 21-20. In the final, Cordova dropped game one to No. 1 seed Azriel Gomez 21-5 but rebounded to win game two 21-12 and the tiebreaker 11-9 in one of the best matches of the tournament!

RESULTS:

First Round: Henry Dirnbeck (MO) d. Ariel Flores (MEX) 4, 15; Luis Cordova III (MWX) d. Liam Schnaar (AZ) 7, 4; Charlie Dirnbeck (MO) d. Luan Cordova (MWX) 0, 11.

Semis: Azriel Gomez (AZ) d. Dirnbeck 10, 7; Cordova III d. Dirnbeck 17, 20.

Final: Cordova III d. Gomez (5), 12, 9.



PROUD PAPA: Pro champ Lucho Cordova and his son, Luis Cordova III.

Mendez, Flores win 15- Doubles

The new pairing of Ariel Flores and Anthony Mendez cruised won the 15- Big Ball Doubles division, with Mendez handling most shots and Flores picking up balls in the front court. Tucson friends Azriel Gomez and Liam Schnaar placed second, while St. Louis brothers Henry and Charlie Dirnbeck took third by beating another set of siblings, Luis and Luan Cordova.

RESULTS:

First: Anthony Mendez/Ariel Flores (MO/MEX) d. Luis Cordova/Luan Cordova (MEX) 5, 6; d. Henry Dirnbeck/Charlie Dirnbeck (MO) 2, 15; d. Azriel Gomez/Liam Schnaar (AZ) 7, 17. **Second:** Gomez/Schnaar d. Dirnbeck/Dirnbeck (15), 6, 6; d. Cordova/Cordova 8, 7. **Third:** Dirnbeck/Dirnbeck d. Cordova/Cordova 8, 9.

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2025 USHA Winter Board Meeting Highlights

Building Momentum for a Bright Future



A full quorum: Fifteen board members attended the 2025 Winter Meeting in-person with At-Large Member Alethia Mendez-Caba attending virtually via Zoom.

January 25–26, 2025 | Tucson, Arizona

The United States Handball Association's Board of Directors gathered for its Winter Meeting with a clear focus on strategy, governance, and momentum-building efforts for 2025. The two-day meeting, held at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Tucson, covered everything from rule updates and tournament planning to personnel evaluations and long-term committee reform.

Board members present in-person were: President Hogan, Vice President Vale, Secretary Sove, Treasurer Birrell, Ben Van Arsdale, Rich Curtner, Rob Nichols, LeaAnn Martin, Frank Holquin, Max Langmack, Daniel Navarro, Jim Wohl, Kimberley Duval, and Greg Burns. Present virtually was Alethia Mendez-Caba. Carl Porter was absent at this time and his proxy vote was given to Martin. Also present were Executive Director Matt Krueger with Development Director Sam Esser. A full quorum was present.

Welcoming New Voices and Setting the Tone

President Denis Hogan opened the meeting by welcoming returning board members and newly elected representatives Kimberley Duval and Greg Burns. A quorum was confirmed with both in-person and virtual attendees. Board Secretary Tom Sove recorded proceedings, and the meeting was underway with a unanimous approval of the Summer 2024 board meeting minutes.

Financials and Budget Approval

Treasurer Steve Birrell presented the 2025 financial overview, breaking down income and expense variances across accounts and highlighting the challenges of balancing the new year's budget. Adjustments were made to the operating and promotional budgets, including discussion on Endowed Legacy Fund (ELF) contributions. The final budget, with recommended changes, was approved unanimously on Sunday.

Events & National Handball Center

A consistent theme throughout the meeting was the need for strong venues for national tournaments. The U.S. National Handball Center (USNHC) in St. Louis was praised as a key opportunity to fill that gap. To support branding and visibility, the Board reviewed and approved a new logo for the Center, with plans for use on decals, merchandise, and signage.

Game Committee: Rules, Protocols & Events

- The Game Committee reported a minor language change to Rule 4.8.B (“Blocking”), adding the word “directly” for clarity. A broader effort to improve rules regarding “holding still,” hinder serves across codes, and rally stoppage education is underway.
- The Transgender Participation Protocol sparked significant discussion. The Board reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining a formal protocol and returned a proposed revision for further refinement, following national guidelines and executive orders. No changes will be enacted until a new version is approved.
- Board members also discussed moving the 4-Wall Junior Nationals from its traditional post-Christmas slot to mid-August, citing challenges with family travel, illness, and costs. A survey will be conducted among the junior handball community to inform the decision.

World Championships in NYC

The USHA approved a motion to host the 2026 World 1-Wall Championships in New York City, spearheaded by Paul Williams and the Inner City Handball Association (ICHA). The ICHA has already begun local fundraising and secured a mid-September event date. The 4-Wall World Championships are slated for 2027, marking the start of a new alternating annual global tournament cycle

Committees Driving Development

- The Hall of Fame slate for 2025 was ratified without opposition.
- The Collegiate Committee, chaired by Mike Wells, continues to build a pipeline from junior programs to college handball. A dedicated website tab will promote collegiate opportunities.
- First Ace’s Bill Bohr Grant program approved funding for 20 youth and collegiate initiatives.
- The Technical Committee praised the Bracket Ace system used at the Collegiate Nationals for streamlining draw management.

Organizational Reform:

Resolution & Procedure Overhaul

The Board adopted nine major proposals to streamline and professionalize USHA operations:

- Committees will publish clear responsibilities online.
- Board members must serve on at least two committees.
- Succession planning and mentorship are now required.
- The Board will meet quarterly (three Zoom, one in-person).
- Confidentiality agreements are expanded to include committee members.
- A formal process for vetting committee appointments was established.
- Committee chairs will be elected annually.
- Reporting procedures will be standardized and archived.
- A new Budget Committee was formed to oversee financial performance.

Personnel & Leadership Continuity

A closed-session review of USHA staff resulted in positive performance evaluations and approved salary and bonus increases. Matt Krueger and Sam Esser were commended for their contributions and ongoing leadership.

In the final business session, the Board re-elected its officers by acclamation and filled Executive Committee seats with Martin, Mendez-Caba, and Langmack. Members were also asked to review and update their committee assignments.

Looking Ahead

To close the meeting, each board member shared individual goals for 2025, setting a tone of unity and forward momentum. From expanding junior outreach to international engagement, the message was clear: the U.S. Handball Association is evolving—and handball’s future looks bright.

Board Highlights based on minutes submitted by Tom Sove, USHA Secretary on February 5, 2025.



Bay-area tournament draws 75 handballers

By Mike Linnik, Sean Haley and Jose Neri

The Tri-Valley Handball Club held its 37th annual Fred Bancalari Super Bowl Tournament over the big game's weekend, Feb. 8-9, at the Bay Club in Pleasanton, CA.

Fred Bancalari was remembered as a handballer who climbed mountains, from the top of Mount Whitney to the base camp of Mount Everest. He was a qualified white water river guide and ran many rivers, lastly a 180-mile stretch of the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. Fred was inducted into the NorCal Hall of Fame in 2001.

Thanks to our sponsors: DGDG: Del Grand Dealer Group and the Tri-Valley Handball Club. Thanks to the tourney director and volunteers Bobby Horn, Terry Britt, Sean Haley, Martin Arredondo and Barry Kobatz, plus the Tri-Valley Association members.

Seventy-five (!) players were greeted with sunshine, which meant the courts could be kept drier this year. San Jose had 20 players, San Francisco had 16 (excellent!) and Stockton had seven. So game on!

Lots of players going both ways, playing singles and doubles. There were a

lot of sore bodies at day's end, but the benefit of enjoying a Super Bowl party without calorie worries was priceless.

Frank Vasquez's Texas BBQ did their usual stellar job. Tony and the crew are masters at pulled pork and sauced chicken. Frank's bottled BBQ sauce was the perfect pairing. Bon appetit!

It was good to see:

Glenn Mendell, who ran the Super Bowl Tourney for years; Geoff Smythe, former USHA National 60+B national champion; Larry Aguiar Sr., NorCal Hall of Famer 2002; the great Gary Stedman, NorCal Hall of Famer 2017 and back on the tournament circuit playing with doubles great Frank Vasquez; "Chico" Aguiar and the Aguiar nephews; and, of course, John Bancalari, son of the great Fred Bancalari, NorCal HoFer 2001; plus John's brother Brian, who made players think twice that maybe father Fred was in the house!

Saturday's action

The takeaway from watching Saturday's matches? Savage. Nobody holding back, guns blazing, every point hotly contested. No dustups, guys and gals just happy to be on the court.

First, shout out to the South End Rowing Club and Dolphin Club! Lots of new players, men and women, showing off their progress as they advance from newbie to novice to "look at that rally!" Thanks to Eoin Lehane, Juan Carlos Ocampo, Dolphin Handball Commissioner Brendan Monaghan and SERC's Andres Acosta.

Open Doubles

Pro Qualifier hopeful Rene Lopez teamed up with rising star Jake Cosgrove to challenge San Jose's Salvadore "Chava" Oscalon and Joel Vasquez. Rene Lopez looks confident, and moves like a puma on the court – he also has a very quick stroke through the ball. Jake is coming on strong, and these matches, against seasoned tournament players, is exactly what he needs to begin challenging in Pro Qualifier events. Chava and Joel won, in a



Chad Packin packs up for a lefty return in the Open Doubles final with his partner, Javier Badillo, right, vs. Chava Oscalon and Joel Vasquez.

tiebreaker 16-21, 21-18, 11-6.

40+ Singles

One semifinal featured Mike McDonald vs. Nick Smith. Brutal. Mike is a former pro who has been racking up the titles in his quest for Grand Masters status. Nick Smith, a relatively new player on the scene, grabbed everyone's attention. Nick is simple put a tremendous athlete. Playing Mike was going to be a good test. In the first game, Nick passed the exam, with deep reverse serves to Mike's left. Nick had a nice lead, Mike fought back, there were more than a couple tries to get the last point, but finally Nick broke through with a hard pass shot. But the knowledgeable crowd looked at each other and said, "It's going 'breaker." It did. Mike won the tiebreaker 11-6. Great play by Concord's Nick Smith to take it that far.

The other semi saw No. 2-seeded Sean Haley against San Jose's Mario Romero; that went tiebreaker, too. Sean is a tournament veteran and wins Opens, so this was a good win for the former Big Baller Mario. This is the beauty of players "crossing over" to go from Big Ball to small and vice versa. Sean made a nice comeback in the second game to send it to the breaker. In the end, a big win for Mario Romero 21-9, 11-21, 11-1.

Women's Singles

Great to see Dolphin Club President Diane Walton don the gloves and challenge No. 1 seed Brenna Gilmore. Diane was properly coached, as she hit high lob serves deep into the left corner ... she scored! So she managed a decent score, and looked quite happy to battle on the handball court!



Brenna Gilmore and Diane Walton.

70+ Doubles

Two-time Hall of Famer Tom Fitzwater (in both SoCal and NorCal HoF's) has a simple strategy: "Get a good partner." Introduce Les Halberg, who dominated senior doubles down in SoCal, and now is repeating that in NorCal. Even Tom Capen, USHA National 70+B champion, with Geoff Smythe, another champion, could find no way to crack Les and Tom's confidence. Les and Tom take the 70+. Let's challenge these guys in the St Paddy's and Cinco De Mayo tourneys.

Sunday's action

Women's Singles

This event was "all San Francisco," with Gilmore squaring off with No. 3 seed Margot McGrath. Brenna has good eye-hand coordination, a long reach and very good power. Margot also moves, dances and floats around the court, keeping a lot of balls in play. Brenna is just too good and too well-coached, so she took the games 21-10, 21-7. Great to see the energy and camaraderie of the women as they work hard to improve.

Open Doubles

Four of our fittest, fastest, most powerful NorCal players proceeded to battle. They must have been sore

from the early morning matches. Yet they leaned into every shot for over an hour. San Jose's Joel Vasquez, Salvadore "Chava" Oscalon (now from Hollister) vs. Chad Packin and the hard-hitting Javier Badillo. No lob serves here. Lots of power serves, with reverse, down the left side. Chad had a nice groove going, with a pinch of reverse that went into the wall; it handcuffed Chava several times. But Chava has his own power serve down the left, and returns would get drove into a left-corner kill. Joel is the "dive master," extending many rallies. Javier stands alone as his bazooka passes and kills, with both hands, stunned his opponents.

More than anything, Chava had the eye of the tiger, ignoring the pain of a sprained left finger and looking to end, or extend, every rally. Add the nimbleness of Joel Vasquez and the San Jose team was able to push the games to match point.

We did notice: no time-outs called, no towel-the-floor breaks. It was just fast-paced, suck-it-up, 100% offense. Good win, in a tiebreak, for Chava and Joel. Nice that Chava brought several of the Gilroy teens who normally play three-wall Big Ball, to see the four-wall action. Joel also had his son Moises watching dad battle.

Men's 40+ Singles

Perennial national champion and NorCal Hall-of-Famer (2021) Mike McDonald stepped onto the court with San Jose's Mario Romero. Who? Mario is a top Big Baller who has been picking up the four-wall game for the last couple of years, and he has picked it up fast. The players at the San Jose YMCA get mauled on a regular basis by Mario (a nice guy), but who knows about this matchup? Mario brought his lovely wife and daughter, stepped on the court and began to pound the ball: left hand, right hand, hard and fast. Mike sent Mario from stem to stern, and Mario easily accommodated the shots. Mario is strong, tough, fast and has a great reach. But add the Big Ball shots? Dump down the left, dump down the right, cut off, cut off, cut off. Mario set the pace and pitched his tent at the serving line, jumping on any and every ball that Mike tried to zip past him.

Mike was giving up close to two decades on the youthful Mario. Mike also had grueling matches against the fit Adan Diaz and the incredibly athletic Nick Smith of Concord.

In fact, Nick won the first game off Mike, and forced a tiebreaker, but Mike got the victory 14-21, 21-13, 11-6. Facing Adan, Nick and Mario in about 24 hours was a tall order for anyone. Mike lives for those challenges, and he (we hope) has plans to play in the USHA Nationals in Missouri May 22-26, 2025. But Mario Romero is our 40+ champion, outlasting Mike 21-9, 21-10. Welcome to four-wall handball, and we hope to see *this* San Josean in Missouri, too. Congrats!

Men's 40+ Doubles

In the semis, Sean Haley/Adan Diaz against Carlos Ocampo/Jason Whitney was a hard-fought battle. Carlos and Whitney built a big lead in the second game, but hard passes on the serve returns by Adan and accurate kill shots by Haley earned the win.

Final: A strategic game plan by Aguiar and percentage handball made it a great match. Solid play on the right side by Adan made the difference in a game that was much closer than the score. No. 1 seed Adan Diaz/Sean Haley defeated No. 7 seed Lawrence Aguiar/Patrick Aguiar in the finals, despite the fact that Adan pulled a minor hamstring about five points into match. Sean got hot and was killing a lot of shots given to him.

Sean and Adan got a tough win in a tough division. Now, welcome to the Open(!?)

Men's 70+ Singles

National 70+B champion Tom Capen, fresh from captaining his crab boat in Bodega Bay, climbed onto the courts to battle two longtime veterans, Bob Carel and Isaac Burns. Both men have run down balls for decades, so good luck. But Tom looked especially fit and fast, and he was cranking the ball around walls and into corners with the power of his bazooka right. Tom Capen defeated Robert Carel 21-4, 21-6 and Isaac Burns 21-10, 21-8. Good job; inspiring to see this level of play in the Diamond division.

Men's 50/60+ Doubles

Jim Silla/Tom McGrath proved once again why they are *the* top 60+ Doubles team in the country. They took on a very strong team of Ray Graham/Dan Cosgrove and got a convincing 21-8, 21-12 win. Then they turned their attention to the "young-ish" Antonio Olvera/Jaimie



Tom McGrath and Jim Silla won the 50/60+ Doubles.

Fabian (who upset the current World silver medalists Gary Sternberg/Terry Britt in a tiebreaker 5-21, 21-7, 11-6).

Once again, Silla had a vicious reverse down the right or a laser "Z" to the right. Not to be outdone, partner McGrath came out with his lefthanded reverse down the right as well. Jim dives with the best, and McGrath enjoys covering the court, until he gets his favorite set-up – a scotch kill into the right corner. Jim/Tom brought their "A" game on Sunday, defeating Antonio/Jaimie 21-7, 21-10. Good job; we'll be watching this San Francisco Dream Team at St Paddy's and Cinco De Mayo – and in the Nationals this May 22-26.

Men's 60+ Singles

World champion Terry Britt got challenged by the hook artist Jerry Alcantar in the semis. Jerry played well, but the Bay Club has Terry's home courts, and he knows every bounce and board in the place. Terry won 21-12, 21-16.

Terry went on to face San Josean Ron "Junkyard Dog" Strausbaugh for bragging rights in the 60+. Ron came out strong and determined, diving and hustling to make points. But as the match proceeded, Terry began to relax and let the power flow, a bad sign for the opponent. Terry can reach kill shots by sliding on his knee pads, he has a truly wicked reverse, his back-wall shots are pure money, but the biggest thing are his accurate fist pass shots. They were brutal, forcing Ron to back off time and again. Ron will fight to the very last point, but the brutal pass shots took their toll, as Terry cruised to a 21-12, 21-4 victory. Another solid tournament performance for "The Badger."

Men's B/C Doubles

The final yielded a "Neri Reunion" with No. 1 seed Alex Neri (son)/Jose Neri (father) battling No. 2 seed Dominic Neri/Oscar Cortez (Alex's uncle!). The experience and power of Dominic/Oscar carried them to a strong 21-8, 21-10 win. Go, San Jose handball!

Men's A Singles

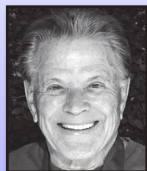
In the semis, a battle royale erupted between two San Jose YMCA players, Miguel Negrete and No. 1 seed Mauricio Jimenez. Miguel has power to burn; Mauricio can run down a roadrunner. So naturally both players, in both games, had game point. But it was Miguel who persevered 21-20, 21-20.

In the final, Miguel played Big Ball pro Angel Hernandez. Both played close, and there was a bit of fireworks, but it was Miguel's confidence in his shots that carried the day, winning 21-7, 21-2. Maybe Miguel can now go to Stockton and challenge Angel at the Big Ball game?! Good job, Miguel.



Founders Club

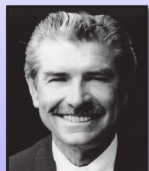
(\$10,000 or More)



Kevan DelGrande
Los Gatos, ('98)



Rod Fink
Pittsburgh, ('94)



"Kelly" Kelly
Newport Beach, ('84)



Eike Consulting
San Jose, CA ('23)



Alten Handball Foundation
Portland, ('23)



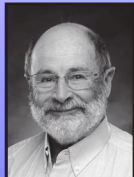
Steve Lippman
Portland, ('94)



Keith Mardak
Milwaukee, ('94)



In Memory of Andy Wills
Tucson, ('21)



Fred Banfield
Tucson ('04)



Bob DeVleming
Clarkston, WA ('19)

Legends Club

(\$5,000 or More)

Legends Club Members
photo not available:

Oscar Fitzgerald

Alexandria, VA ('04)

John Cammett

Annapolis, MD ('12)



Mike Driscoll
Dallas ('91)



Ron Emberg
In Memory of ('84)



Jay Maxwell
Portland, OR ('04)



Joel Tauber
Southfield, MI ('89)

Platinum Club

(\$2,500 or More)

Platinum Club Members
photos not available:

David Knapp

Anchorage, AK ('24)

Dr. Scott Landis

Sewanee, TN ('15)



Bob & Sue Delaney
Tucson, AZ ('95)



Jay Dennis
Wailuku, HI ('16)



Ted Gewertz
New York ('84)



Jim Barriere
Montreal ('03)



Yvonne Banuet-Alvers
San Francisco, CA ('19)



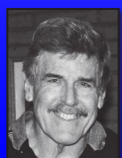
Steve Birrell
Bozeman, MT ('04)



Tom Gilbert
In Memory of ('15)



Gary Maushardt
Santa Cruz, CA ('18)



Tim Murray
Miami ('10)



Terry Nett
Bellvue, CO ('20)



Carl Porter
Tucson ('84)



Fred Ryan
Venice, CA ('15)



Harlan Timboe
In Memory of ('10)

Diamond Club

(\$1,500 or More)



Wayne Baker
Paulden, AZ ('10)



Roy Berlin
Winnetka, IL ('19)



Doug Clark
Tucson, AZ ('22)



Tag Coolidge
Ft. Worth, TX ('05)



Chatten Hayes & David Steinberg
Portland, OR ('88)



Bob Hickman
Denver ('84)



Mike Merman
In Memory Of ('23)



Matt Osburn
Toledo, OH ('18)



Pat McLaughlin
In Memory Of ('24)



Jim Prendergast
Saco, ME ('01)



Raimondo Boys
Columbus, NE



Rainey Rissman
Lake Worth, FL ('18)

Diamond Club Members
photos not available:

Wayne Neumann
Houston, TX ('20)



*Contributor Club Donations are made annually by contributor.

Grand Club (\$1,000 or More)



Tony Barone
Delray Bch, FL ('93)



John Blair
Germantown, TN ('06)



Lew Buckingham
Greencastle, PA ('15)



Dick Conner
Rockford, IL ('99)



Gary Cruz
Newport Beach ('16)



Rich Curtner
Anchorage, AK ('21)



Phillip Fairchild
Luling, LA ('19)



Michael Graven
St. Louis, MO ('19)



Robert Harrell
Menlo Park ('22)



Murzy Jhabvala
Clarksville, MD ('10)



Joe Lenhardt
Los Gatos, CA ('21)



Maurice Manning
Toledo, OH ('02)



Dr. Leo McCarthy
Indianapolis, IN ('21)



Rob Nichols
Lake Elsinore, CA ('20)



Sandesh Sadalge
Tacoma, WA ('13)



Lenny Tieman
Pembroke Pines, FL ('16)



Jared Vale
Floral Park, NY ('16)



Joe Vercillo
In Memory Of ('22)



Lance Wachholz
Norcross, GA ('14)



Rod Watterson
Hampton, NH ('12)



Russ Whitten
Tucson ('21)



William Myers
In Memory Of ('24)

Photos Not Available:

Anonymous
California ('01)

Sam Baldridge
Whitefish, MT ('07)

Howard Bernstein
Huntley, IL ('19)

Mike Dau
Lake Forest, IL ('20)

Matthew May
Forsyth, IL ('10)

David Nichols
Tucson, AZ ('10)

Scott Schumacher
Lafayette, LA ('07)

Tim Zender
Fishers, IN ('20)

Clark Adams
San Antonio, TX ('20)

Bob Bardwell
Downington, PA ('24)

Kenneth Blake
Brea, CA ('09)

Peyton Humphrey
Charlottesville, VA ('20)

Michigan Handball Association

Charles Parsons
College Park, MD ('23)

John Warren
Sacramento, CA ('21)

Don Ardito
Libertyville, IL ('24)

Thomas Behan
Peoria, AZ ('24)

Lou Brown
Alexandria, VA ('24)

Bart Kounovsky
Steamboat Springs, CO ('22)

David Mosely
Denver, CO ('24)

Col. George Schad
Muncie, IN ('01)

Wafe Risner
In Memory Of ('20)

Presidents Club Executive Committee:



Ron Emberg



LeaAnn Martin



Bob Hickman



Joe McDonald



Carl Porter

Presidents Club Members:

John Blair	Herb Paaren
Ron Emberg	Carl Porter
Bob Hickman	Fred Lewis
Denis Hogan	Abraham Montijo
Matthew Krueger	Sandesh Sadalge
Joe McDonald	Sheldon Silberman
Vern Roberts	Richard Stevens
Bob Delaney	Jared Vale
Steve Lippman	Ira Goldberg
Jay Maxwell	"Kelly" Kelly
LeaAnn Martin	

Presidents Club

The Presidents Club was established to achieve the following major goals:

- Support youth and help integrate them into the adult handball community.
- Improve and enhance handball's image and the USHA's presence.

The Presidents Club members vote on various projects to support.

Members of the Presidents Club make a minimum contribution of \$1,000 annually to the fund.



Gold Club (\$500 or More)

Ace Disposal

Salt Lake City, UT ('23)

Al Allstadt

Apple Valley, MN ('12)

Art Benitez

Tucson, AZ ('20)

Michael Biddinger

Oklahoma City, OK ('17)

Kenneth Blake

Brea, CA ('09)

Jack Browder

Houston, TX ('09)

Roy Bukstein

Hillsborough, CA ('24)

Harry Calvino

Ft. Collins, CO ('10)

Tim Cohen

Elk Grove Village, IL ('18)

Jim Colbourne

Placitas, NM ('03)

Dave Delaney

Portland, OR ('12)

Jim Delanis

Nashville, TN ('19)

Leonard De Martino

New York, NY ('20)

Fred Eckertson

Kansas City, MO ('21)

Michael Ferber

Port Jefferson Station, NY (04)

Kevin Fogarty

Normal, IL ('09)

Tom Fitzwater

Cupertino, CA ('14)

Steve George

Chesterfield, MO ('24)

Lucky Gibbs

Richmond, VA ('86)

Adam Gittlitz

Jamaica, NY ('09)

Ira Goldberg

Beverly Hills ('86)

John Goranson

Tucson, AZ ('16)

Rick Herrera

Thousand Oaks, CA ('23)

Gene Hubbuch

Signal Mountain, TN ('04)

Bo Kennelly

Pasadena, CA ('20)

Fred Koontz

Tulsa, OK ('09)

Danny Levey

Minneapolis, MN ('17)

Jim Lewis

Lake Quivira, KS ('22)

Thomas Lynch

Lake Hopatcong, NJ ('87)

Joe Manone

Menomonee Falls, WI ('14)

Mike and Jen Meltzer

New City, NY ('89)

Joel Rabin

Miami, FL ('23)

Don Raffaelli

Greendale, WI ('15)

Robert McConnell

Vandalia, OH ('03)

Joe McCue

Verona, VA ('14)

Mem. of Tom Natale Sr.

Tucson, AZ ('22)

Carl Porter III

Tucson, AZ ('99)

Paul Podrid

Palo Alto, CA ('09)

Mem. of Hector Quiroz

(Tucson, AZ ('22)

Carlyn Rodahl

Farmington, NM ('17)

John & Carol Ross

Tucson, AZ ('03)

Don Raffaelli

Greendale, WI ('15)

Marc Seigle

West Roxbury, MA ('16)

Steve Sheldon

Olympia, WA ('15)

Rick Steinberg

Brookfield, WI ('24)

Sam Storthz

Little Rock, AR ('24)

San Jose Handball Club

San Jose, CA ('24)

Robert O. Tyler

Great Falls, VA ('19)

Bob Timberlake

St. Petersburg, FL ('12)

John Wicklund

Colorado Springs, CO ('20)

Dan Wilberding

Stuart, FL ('21)

Mike & Ed Zahorik

La Grange Park, IL ('06)

Silver Club (\$250 or More)

Leonard Aconsky

New York, NY ('19)

Bob Bardeau

Loveland, OH ('22)

David Barnett

San Diego, CA ('92)

Allan Byam

Bradford, NH ('24)

Henry & Dennis Berger

Claremont, CA ('86)

Gene Bernardini

San Jose, CA ('24)

Gary Bernhard

Austin, TX ('03)

Doug Blausier

Kansas City, KS ('24)

Donald Brodie

Jenks, OK ('86)

Greg Burns

FT. Lauderdale, FL ('24)

Leo Carrillo

Tucson, AZ ('15)

Robert Chavez

San Jose, CA ('20)

Robert Chicotsky

(Fort Worth, TX ('17)

Tim Clemons

Kansas City, MO ('24)

Jim Craig

Franklin, TN ('13)

Charles Davis

Altadena, CA ('20)

James Delanis

Nashville, TN ('20)

Leonard De Martino

New York, NY ('20)

Jack Digiovanni

Macomb, MI ('23)

Joe Driscoll

Seaside, CA ('12)

Paul Flasch

Tucson, AZ ('12)

Pat Francomano

Colorado Springs, CO ('24)

Steve Frederick

Chicago, IL ('20)

Del Guerrini

Lewiston, PA ('23)

Bob Henry

Tucson, AZ ('23)

Mem. of Vic Hershkowitz

Davie, FL ('16)

Bill Hickey

Saint Paul, MN ('09)

John Hull

Palmdale, CA ('23)

Weston Johnson

Littleton, CO ('14)

Dave Kelly

Bothell, WA ('99)

Michael Kelly

Brisbane, CA ('20)

Joel Levy

Cantonment, FL ('24)

John Libby Sr.

Hermosa Beach, CA ('15)

Bob Lohmueller

Ludlow, KY ('09)

Lance Lowy

College Station, TX ('24)

Duncan MacDonell

Tucson, AZ ('84)

Denny Malmgren

Aurora, IL ('24)

Daniel Melber

Seattle, WA ('24)

Kevin & Pat McGivern

Washington, MI ('08)

Michael Miller

Hillsboro, OR ('09)

Chris Monsour

St. Clair Shores, MI ('16)

David Morris

Port Ludlow, WA ('24)

John O'Shaughnessy

Maryland Heights, MO ('24)

Paul Pfannenstiel

Kansas City, MO ('20)

Charles Reeve

Houston, TX ('20)

Kris Schaumann

Apple Valley, MN ('24)

Nathan Segall

Atlanta, GA ('15)

Guy Senese

Tucson, AZ ('17)

Michael Sherburne

Coppell, TX ('20)

Ken Starcher

Bellingham, WA ('13)

C.W. Stewart

Cullowhee, NC ('16)

Robert Tyler

Great Falls, VA ('08)

Albert Wehrly

Sacramento, CA ('02)

Greg Welburn

Huntington Beach, CA ('21)

Ralph Weil

Cincinnati, OH ('86)

Dr. David Wells

Fargo, ND ('04)

Richard Wheelock

Ventura, CA ('09)

Jim Wall

Chicago, IL ('24)

George Van Vranken

Redwood City, CA ('24)

Lawrence White

Missoula, MT ('09)

Century Club

(\$100 or More)

ALABAMA	Jim Smith ('24)	Jim Cosentino ('21)	NEVADA	Craig Hubler ('10)
Quentin Brown, Jr. ('19)	Jeff Solinas ('16)	Pat Kelly ('24)	Mike Gardner ('24)	PENNSYLVANIA
ALASKA	Tom Sove ('03)	Francis O'Donnell ('15)	TK Morris ('24)	Joe Anistranski ('15)
Rich Curtner ('18)	Tom Sparrow ('17)	Lou Serrone ('20)	NEW HAMPSHIRE	Glenn Cunningham ('23)
ARIZONA	Gary Sternberg ('24)	KENTUCKY	Michael Farren ('15)	Robert Long ('24)
Art Brooks ('24)	Robert Therrien ('08)	Dennis Doherty ('88)	NEW JERSEY	Frank McKnight ('10)
Joe DeGroot ('24)	Tom Urquhart ('01)	Charles Fassler ('10)	Dan Flickstein ('02)	Mark Occhipinti ('24)
Brent Gowens ('24)	Larry Waldrop ('23)	LOUISIANA	Michael Giamo ('02)	Mike Petroskie ('10)
Ken Hartnett ('09)	Stephen Weiner ('14)	Bob Caluda ('11)	Bill Myers ('94)	Kirk Rys ('18)
Stephen Jenkins ('22)	COLORADO	Michael Diecidue ('17)	Keith Pokorny ('11)	Glenn Stech ('23)
Tom Natale ('16)	Charles Banfe ('20)	Bryan Vieages ('21)	Ken Schaefer ('09)	TENNESSEE
Kam Nasser ('24)	Lary Lippert ('24)	MASSACHUSETTS	E.W. Woerner ('90)	Mark Camblin ('09)
Kevin O'Connor ('24)	James Pierce ('20)	Bill Kennedy ('84)	NEW MEXICO	R. Lee Glenn ('88)
Daniel Tarico ('24)	Dan Price ('23)	MASSACHUSETTS	David Coulie ('86)	Shawn Massey ('09)
Marc Weininger ('24)	Tommy Raye ('14)	Scott Goffstein ('24)	Joe Cohen ('15)	Joel O'Connor ('18)
ARKANSAS	Jerry White ('17)	Gerard Lozeau ('24)	Santa Fe Handball Association ('15)	TEXAS
Malcolm Duke ('11)	FLORIDA	Thomas Monsour ('23)	Clifford Dahm ('20)	Bob Ascott ('23)
Richard Bochte ('16)	Stuart Cohn ('15)	Paul Tavilla ('23)	Richard Gilliam ('23)	Terry Bowman ('13)
CALIFORNIA	Daytona/Ormond HB ('02)	MARYLAND	NEW YORK	Ron Cole ('20)
David Ackerman ('20)	Michael "Krell" Horvath ('02)	Grover Booker ('21)	Mickey Altman ('10)	Ed De La Cruz ('18)
Dave Balestrieri ('14)	Milt Klompus ('24)	Bruce Cohen ('24)	Kenneth Davidoff ('04)	Ken Dulany ('02)
Rob Bronson ('24)	Jack Leson ('24)	MICHIGAN	George DeGonzague ('22)	James High ('97)
Isaac Burns ('24)	Mem. of Chuck Mesloh ('19)	Vic Battani ('23)	Ron Eaton ('13)	Donald Johnson ('24)
Ed Campbell ('22)	Bob Miller ('24)	Dale Chimenti ('20)	Thomas Hopkins ('24)	Joe H. Joiner ('84)
Tom Carey ('23)	Leonard Nebehay ('20)	David Dressel ('20)	John Latham ('24)	William Kanik ('24)
Mitch Covington ('20)	Jennifer Schmitt ('15)	Steve Howard ('24)	Gerard Pagello ('21)	Ben Marguglio ('24)
Alex Dierkhising ('24)	Robert Schneider ('24)	Glorian Hummel ('15)	Kenneth Schaefer ('09)	Richard McGirk ('21)
Norm Dunne ('24)	GEORGIA	Joseph Klocka ('03)	NORTH CAROLINA	Wayne Peterson ('23)
Michael Dunne Sr. ('20)	Anthony Costrini ('17)	Andris Lacis ('24)	Joe McGee ('19)	Michael Sherburne ('15)
Hal Faresh ('24)	Mac Cushing ('01)	Larry Krueger ('04)	Bruce Mock ('24)	Peter Stern ('24)
Oscar Garcia ('24)	Lemuel O'Neal ('23)	Bruce Oakley ('23)	Mt. Classic Tourney ('16)	Frank Swehosky ('22)
Claude Gordon ('20)	Kurt Rosenberger ('17)	Tim Newhouse ('90)	NORTH DAKOTA	Clyde Von Rosenberg ('24)
Robert Hackl ('05)	Carl Warren ('10)	Craig Walworth ('24)	Dr. David Wells ('04)	UTAH
Stephanie Hathaway ('19)	IDAHO	MINNESOTA	Joe Sowokinos ('03)	Louis Sanone ('24)
Roy Harvey ('20)	Francis Breining ('24)	James Grotta ('20)	OHIO	VERMONT
Leo Havener ('24)	ILLINOIS	Joe Hagen ('24)	Richard Delanis ('18)	Bob Cain ('23)
Stan Hoffman ('24)	James Conlon ('24)	Dr. Scott Hannon ('24)	Mario Dolcato ('24)	Doug Hinshaw ('24)
David Hortwitt ('24)	Michael Demstrom ('24)	Michael Kloos ('21)	Lee Drew ('21)	VIRGINIA
Marty Itzkowitz ('24)	Bob Dillard ('24)	Michael McQuillan ('24)	John Friedrich ('10)	Wayne Beers ('14)
Mark Koscielak ('13)	Ed Foley ('23)	Jim Noren ('23)	Kent Fusselman ('20)	Peter Keefe ('24)
Michael Lamport ('24)	Ed Glavin ('12)	John Stout ('24)	John Giua ('24)	Karl Lady ('16)
Mike Linnik ('03)	Tom Hynes ('16)	James Tamagni ('23)	Rich Goosmann ('23)	Les Irby ('24)
Everett Leon-Guerrero ('15)	Mem. of Derrrell Jones (21)	Greg Taylor ('21)	Kenneth Katafias ('20)	WASHINGTON
Octavio Martinez ('24)	Mem. of John Valentine ('23)	Greg Thibodeau ('22)	Erin Lanman ('24)	David Kelly ('20)
Tom Martinez ('12)	Peter Kempfer ('24)	Jim Turk ('24)	David Messmer ('24)	Ben Hittle ('23)
Brendan McDevitt ('24)	Mem. of Mac Pogue ('23)	Steven Youngstrom ('24)	Robert Rex ('24)	Gil Mendoza ('24)
Julio Monge ('24)	Mem. of Bill Gardner ('23)	MISSOURI	Will Straw ('23)	Tom Polzin ('20)
Terry O'Reilly ('24)	Denny Malmgren ('24)	Bill Suntrup ('03)	Joe Thomas ('24)	Steve Sand ('20)
Allan Ottens ('03)	William Maxey ('20)	MONTANA	Peter Walsh ('19)	WISCONSIN
Jesus Pasos ('23)	Peter O'Brien ('24)	Jeff Armstrong ('23)	OKLAHOMA	Russell Forbes ('23)
Ralph Perry ('24)	Des Paden ('21)	Mike Hitchcock ('24)	W.R. Cubbage ('13)	Bill Paulin ('24)
Gary Pezzi ('23)	Chris Roberts ('04)	Nicholas White ('13)	Mike Chieppo ('24)	Scott Richter ('24)
Lane Rider ('10)	David Rosenberger ('20)	NEBRASKA	OREGON	WYOMING
Rich Robitaille ('24)	Steve Samuels ('24)	Andrew Cockle ('22)	Rick Brissenden ('23)	Jay Stender ('24)
Bill Shebesta ('24)	KANSAS	Robert Dawson ('11)	Bob Evenson ('23)	
Douglas Scranton ('24)	Mem. of Stepehen Barnhart ('21)	Robert Owen ('24)	Mem. of Chatten Hayes ('20)	

Thank you for Supporting First Ace!
Help us Share the Joy of Handball by Joining a Contributor Club!

Support Handball's Development and join a USHA Contributor Club by donating to First Ace or contribute to the USHA Fund of your choice! Contributors maintain their club membership by contributing annually to the USHA. The year after each name indicates the length of time a contributor has donated. To join, call (520)795-0434 to speak with Development Director **Sam Esser**.

All Contributions are Tax Deductible. The United States Handball Association is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

Handball extends healthy lives, unites us all

Editor's Note: *Finally, we all die, but these obituary excerpts from the past year show that handball players live longer, more-fulfilled lives than most. If you've loved playing handball, at any level, please let your family know to submit your obituary to this magazine, at editor@ushandball.org, along with a photo. After verifying your obituary with a return phone call, we'll print an excerpt of it in these pages – and run the full obituary online at ushandball.org/in-memoriam*

Thomas Hardy

April 2025

Thomas (Tom) Hardy, who once scored five touchdowns in a high school football game, lovingly practiced law for 54 years and even more lovingly helped raised fourth daughters, passed on April 5, 2025, in Michigan. He was nearly 88.



With the arrival of Tom's four daughters, Lisa, Lanie, Leslie and Liz, life became more interesting dealing with sibling throw-downs, boyfriends, break-ups and late night parties. "All I ask is that you give me ignorance," he cautioned emphatically. Handball courts at Belle Isle and at the Detroit Athletic Club gave him a break from the drama. There are far too many amazing, sun-bronzed handballers for us to name, but sessions in the Steam Room and the Tap Room often included Bill Bonanni, Ben Paolucci, Jesse Cardellio, Pete Hanley and Carl Rashid. Tom's unique sense of humor was one of his finest attributes.

While Tom didn't vacation nearly enough, family trips were intentionally a bit offbeat. For instance, P-Town (Provincetown, Massachusetts) Drag Shows, hazardous bike trails, clam strips by the sea, Carnival Weekend, Bear Week, followed by the greatest meals in NYC on the way home, plus excursions to Broadway, Greenwich Village, neighborhood handball lots and Central Park.

Brian Wessel

February 2025



Brian Wessel of Lino Lakes, Minnesota, died on Feb. 21, 2025, in Green Valley, Arizona, in the company of his wife and sons. He was predeceased by his parents and his eldest son Kemper. Born to Ruth and Hans Wessel in Minneapolis, Brian graduated from Breck School and the University of Minnesota College of Architecture. His grandfather

and father, who immigrated from Sweden, began four generations of architects. He was 88.

Brian often wore a trademark towel draped around his neck, after launching ace serves as a nationally ranked handball player well into his 80s and was the most caring, understanding, playful and loving father to his sons, who revere and celebrate him every minute, every day.

Dorothy Overeem

February 2025

Dottie Overeem, who led the banquet cooking and hosted Florida handball tournaments for over 40 years with her husband Pete Overeem, died on Feb. 17, 2025. She was 87.

The rest of this excerpt comes from an interview that the USHA's Marc Penick did with the Overeems in 2021:



The couple lived in Port Orange, a few miles south of Daytona Beach. On Memorial Day Weekend 2019, the Overeems hosted the 43rd Florida State Three-Wall Tournament at Nova Community Park in Ormond Beach.

They were there for the first event 44 years ago and have always played a big part in its creation. Pete and Dottie met while attending Mainland High School in Daytona Beach. After school, Pete enlisted in the U.S. Army. Shortly after he completed his term, they were married in 1959 and have been for 66 years. They have a son, Pete, with whom they enjoy staying in touch.

The father worked many years for General Electric in a large factory in Daytona Beach, first as a draftsman and later as the plant planner. Dottie worked in her own beauty shop and at the local YMCA.

We could not do the tournaments each year without Dottie, Pete said. For years, she has done all the cooking for the banquet, and we would host everyone out at our five-acre ranch to eat home-cooked food. She also kept the tournament records, set up the draws and seeded the entries with help from a few friends.

"For the banquets, everything we serve is made right in our kitchen," Dottie said. "We serve outdoors and often have 100-plus guests. Our son, Pete, helps us set everything up. Our friends Mike and Carol Yovanovich and our neighbors Ramon and Evelyn Aprize help with the food prep and cooking."

The efforts of the Overeems have helped Florida stand out as a destination for handball as well as for vacation.

As for everyone here, read the full obituary at ushandball.org/in-memoriam

Thomas Hussey**December 2024**

Our skipper, our handyman, our beloved father and grandfather has crossed the bar. Thomas Raymond Hussey passed away Dec. 15, 2024, at home in Oregon with family. He was 77.

Tom played rugby on the aptly named Portland Pigs club in the early '70s and took up handball at the MAC. Tom coached his kids' Vista soccer teams, spent summers crossing the Columbia River bar to fish for the wily salmon and winters and springs digging razor clam on the Long Beach peninsula.

After retiring, Tom and his wife Diane continued to travel safari in Africa, sailing in the Caribbean and the San Juans, plus cruises in Europe. With two buddies, Tom sailed around Vancouver Island, and at the MAC, he played handball and maybe had a red beer after.

Jack McFarland**November 2024**

Jack McFarland, a beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather who had a long police career in his native Tulsa, Oklahoma, and competed in international Police Olympics, passed away peacefully on Nov. 27, 2024. He was 93.



A man of many passions, Jack was an avid sports enthusiast. He excelled in javelin, shot put and handball, competing in police and fire games and the Police Olympics, both in the U.S. and abroad. He represented his country in events in Spain, Australia, Canada, and Ireland, where he became well-loved by his fellow athletes from all over the world, including Ireland, Sweden, and Germany. Jack's love for competition was matched only by his commitment to helping others and making a difference in his community.

Frank Cikan**November 2024**

Our beloved Frank passed away peacefully at home on Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2024, surrounded by love from family and friends after a short but valiantly fought battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 76.

Frank was a very special soul: beautiful, kind, generous, thoughtful, playful, wise, brilliant and humble. Those who knew him think immediately

of his smile and laughter and warmth. His silly jokes, playing sports and long talks with grandchildren will linger forever in their memories. Frank was also an accomplished, nationally recognized competitive handball player. He is a man who will be dearly missed and fondly remembered by everyone who ever knew him.

Pat McLaughlin**September 2024**

Patrick Thomas McLaughlin passed away peacefully on Monday, Sept. 23, 2024, in his apartment in West Burlington, Iowa. He was 92.

One of Pat's passions in life was handball, which was the catalyst for him opening a racquet club in West Burlington. Pat would spend the 1970s and 1980s running handball leagues and tournaments. Family vacations would often be in conjunction with the Junior Nationals handball tournaments that all three of his sons would compete in. Pat played handball competitively until he was about 84. When he was 80, he finished second in the Nationals 80+ Doubles division.

Bill Myers**September 2024**

William Austin Myers, of Cape May Point, New Jersey, and Fort Myers, Florida, a successful businessman and community board member who was active in civil rights, passed away peacefully on Sept. 8, 2024, in the beloved home he built in Cape May Point. He was 94.



Bill often reminisced about his high school football career, cut short by an injury as the only sophomore to make the team. However, he continued to excel in sports, playing singles tennis and handball into his 80s, and even achieving national ranking in handball.

Michael Dunne**August 2024**

Michael Francis Dunne, a native San Franciscan who both sold insurance and played handball exceedingly well, passed away peacefully at home in San Francisco, with his devoted and loving wife of 14 years, Julianne Hunt, by his side, on Monday, Aug. 19, 2024. He was 87.

A great right-side doubles partner, he won over 10 national titles, placing him in the Grand Masters division of the U.S. Handball Association Hall of Fame.

Charlie Malone

Dr. Charles Frederick Malone, who taught for 45 years and authored three books and 25+ professional articles, passed away peacefully with his family by his side on Aug. 14, 2024, in Tempe, Arizona. He was 97.

Charles had a lifelong interest in athletics. He played small-college basketball and tennis. He became acquainted with handball at the age of 14 and played it for 80+ years. After retirement, Charles began to play tournament handball, winning two national age group singles and one national doubles. In 2009, he and his partner won the world age group doubles championship held in Portland, Oregon.

August 2024



Rudy Stadlberger



Rudy Stadlberger, a San Francisco native who co-founded Atlas Screw Machine Products in 1956 with John Boitano and then passed the ongoing business to their sons, John Stadlberger and Mike Boitano, died on June 25, 2024. He was 100.

There were two things Rudy loved more than anything: Mary, his wife of 61 years, and handball. His handball career spanned decades, earning him 13 national titles, often playing both singles and doubles in the same tournament. He found his handball family at the South End Rowing Club, eventually serving as club president. For his efforts, he was inducted into the Northern California Handball Hall of Fame as both a player and contributor to the sport.

June 2024

Mike Baggetta



Southern California's Mike Baggetta, a man with many hobbies and an extended family who kept him busy after he died on a handball court – and was revived – passed away on March 23, 2024. He was 90.

Mike played in many national handball tournaments and most local leagues, social and tournament. Some may recall that

March 2024

at a Simple Green U.S. Open of Handball, Mike died on the court, but he was resuscitated by a group of LAFD firemen who were playing on the next court. Not only did Mike survive but he was back on the court with his regular Monday morning doubles match a month later.

Mike played at Golden West College, South Coast Athletic Club and Los Caballeros. He gave back to the game, serving on the SoCal Handball Association Board of Directors and was its president for five years.

Robert Leve



Robert Alan Leve, a former trader at the Chicago Board Options Exchange, a stockbroker at E.F. Hutton and Merrill Lynch and an investment specialist at Vanguard and for the State of Israel, passed away peacefully on Feb. 15, 2024, at his home in San Tan Valley, Arizona. He was 73.

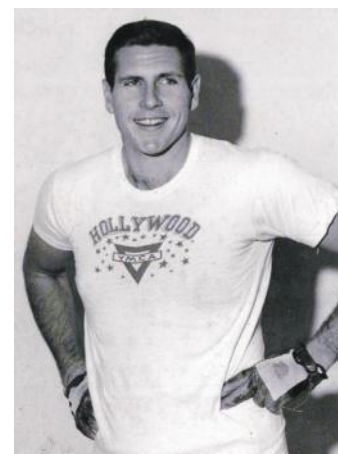
Bob, who also played tennis and golf in retirement, was a member of the University of Miami handball team that dethroned the University of Texas at the Collegiate Nationals in 1969. He was a son of Handball Hall of Fame contributor Mort Leve.

February 2024

John Bart

John Bart, a devoted Beach Boys fan who coached the girls basketball team at Sabino High to the 1990 Arizona state championship and was inducted into the Sabino Sports Hall of Fame, passed away peacefully on Feb. 13, 2024, in Tucson, Arizona. He was 83.

A lifelong sportsman, John had taken up handball prior to graduating from the University of Arizona and moving to Southern California to teach middle school. In the ultra-competitive environment of Southern California, he reached a national ranking of 17th. He won numerous handball championships and was inducted into the Southern California Handball Hall of Fame in 1998. John Bart's handball collection is on display at the Handball Hall of Fame in Tucson.



As for everyone here, read the full obituary at ushandball.org/in-memoriam



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Try them today!

What separates Elite Gloves from the rest?

Made by a new manufacturer, this deerskin is soft and supple, so they will not only feel great once you put them on, they will be durable for matches and react well to moisture (this means that even if it gets wet, it won't dry stiff like other leathers).
Gloves are generously sized, if you're in between sizes, consider going down instead of up.

Colors: Camo Blue, Camo Grey, Black, Green, Red, Navy, and Neon!
(White and Black available with finger padding.)

USHA Members: \$20
Nonmembers: \$25

Sizes: Youth Sizes, X-Small, Small, Medium, Large, X-Large

Available in padded or unpadded.

Available in "Tab" style too!

INCLUDING OUR FLAG GLOVES!

Available in USA, Canada, Ireland, Mexico and Puerto Rico! Wear the 2.0 gloves while representing your favorite country!

Available in one of the country's primary flag colors or white!

USHA Members: \$24
Nonmembers: \$30





OFFICIAL USHA MERCHANDISE

HANDBALLS

EACH BALL BELOW IS APPROVED FOR ALL USHA-SANCTIONED EVENTS. IT'S IMPORTANT HANDBALL PLAYERS HAVE OPTIONS, AND WE ARE CONFIDENT YOU'LL ENJOY PLAYING WITH ANY OF THE HANDBALLS OFFERED

THE 55 HANDBALL

Weighing in at 55 grams (compared to the 61 grams spec weight of ONE and Red 21 handballs), the 55 Handball sets a new standard in versatility, catering to players of all levels and ages. Whether you're a seasoned pro or stepping onto the court for the first time, the 55 Handball is your ultimate companion. The 55 is easy on the hands and body and continues to stay live after many games! Try it yourself and see what it's all about!

The **55 HANDBALL** is a Premium Handball that offers comfort and performance to handballers. It's easier on the hand and body, without losing your "feel" of the ball when striking it.



- Lively
- Long-lasting
- Consistent from ball-to-ball

MEMBERS:
\$9.20/CAN

QUANTITY DISCOUNT
10 CANS - \$86
24 CANS - \$201
60 CANS (CASE) - \$492
NONMEMBERS:
PRICE: \$11.50/CAN

THE ONE BALL

The **ONE** is a Premium Handball that is the official Handball for our One-Wall Nationals. It delivers peak performance that handball players demand:



- Lively
- Long-lasting
- Consistent

MEMBERS:
\$9.20/CAN

QUANTITY DISCOUNT
10 CANS - \$86
24 CANS - \$201
60 CANS (CASE) - \$492
NONMEMBERS:
PRICE: \$11.50/CAN

THE 21 BALL

The **RED 21** and **WHITE 21** are great handballs that are approved for all US Handball sanctioned events. The Red21 is used on the pro tour and our four-wall nationals. The white 21 is a terrific option that is softer and lighter that



MEMBERS:
\$9.20/CAN

QUANTITY DISCOUNT
10 CANS - \$86
24 CANS - \$201
60 CANS (CASE) - \$492
NONMEMBERS:
PRICE: \$11.50/CAN

PLEASE SPECIFY
Red or White
21 Handballs



OFFICIAL USHA MERCHANDISE

"HANDBALL ALL DAY" STRIPED SHIRT



Colors: Red and Blue

Sizes: SMALL-XXL

USHA Members: \$32

Nonmembers: \$40

Product DNA:

- 3.8-ounce, 100% polyester jersey
- 3.8-ounce, 100% polyester interlock panels
- Terrific, breathability/moisture-wicking

**FIND
MORE
ITEMS**

at ushandball.org!



This stylish shirt is perfect to play "The Perfect Game" in, and look good while doing it! The shirt is meant for intense athletic activity!

Handball Hoodie (best seller)



Sizes: SMALL-XXL

**Colors:
Black, Maroon,
Royal Frost, White**

USHA Members: \$40

Nonmembers: \$50

This soft fleece Handball Hoodie is extremely soft and comfortable! A great way to represent our great game of Handball in the winter months.

We now have an all new black color!

Product DNA:

- 8.3 ounce, 65/35 ring spun cotton/ polyester
- Jersey-lined, two-piece hood



OFFICIAL USHA MERCHANDISE

"ELITE SPORT" LONG SLEEVE SHIRT



Handball is not an easy sport and it takes an "elite" person to play and stick with it. This long sleeve shirt is half cotton and half polyester and is extremely comfortable. It's perfect for repping our sport at all times.

Product DNA:

5.4-ounce, 50/50 cotton/poly jersey
47/53 cotton/poly (Oxford)
Double-needle coverstitching on front neck
Shoulder-to-shoulder taping

Colors: Red, Grey-blue, Green

Sizes: SMALL-XXL

USHA Members: \$24

Nonmembers: \$30

Handball-ALL Tee's



Colors: Blue, Red, Black, White and Pink!

Product DNA:

- 3.8-ounce polyester

Handball shirts are back by popular demand with all new colors! This Dri-Fit shirt is perfect to play in or to comfortably wear while representing your favorite sport!

Sizes: SMALL-XXL

USHA Members:

\$20

Nonmembers: \$25



OFFICIAL USHA MERCHANDISE

HANDBALL "ROLL 'EM OUT" SHIRT



There is no better shot in Handball than a perfect rollout! That's why you need the Roll 'Em Out Handball Shirt as part of your on the court apparel. This Polyester Moisture-Wicking shirt is great to play in, as it absorbs your sweat and keeps you comfortable throughout your workout.

Colors: Blue, Black, White, Red, Silver

Sizes: SMALL-XXL

**USHA Members: \$20
Nonmembers: \$25**

VARSITY ULTIMATE PRO GYM BAG

HANDBALL DRAWSTRING BAG



The Varsity Ultimate Pro Gym Bag fits the gear you need AND MORE with several pockets and compartments to keep things organized. Made with tough ripstop 600D Cordura, this bag handles moisture and will survive those trips to the gym or courts.

Size: 15" x 29" x 13" **USHA Members: 40
Nonmembers: \$50**

**USHA Members: \$12
Nonmembers: \$15**

The Drawstring bag is perfect for a quick trip to the handball courts or your other athletic activities!

Product DNA:

- 100% nylon, 210-denier nylon with PVC coating
- * Hemmed top with drawcord closure
- Bottom corner grommets for reinforcement
- Reinforced seams for durability
- 14.5"W x 16.5"H

Phone Orders Call: 1-520-795-0434

Order Online: ushandball.org



OFFICIAL USHA (BRAND NEW!) MERCHANDISE

HANDBALL "SHIELD" TEE



The USHA Shield Tee features a traditional USHA logo on the front, and our brand new "shield design" on the back. Available in SIX different colors, including many new pastel options. The shirt is a comfortable cotton texture that you can wear anytime.

USHA Members: \$20

Nonmembers: \$25

Colors: **Navy, Salmon, Lavender, Black, Peach, and Sage Green.**

Sizes: **SMALL-XXL**

THE "RINGER" TEE



The "Ringer Tee" has a throwback look with a contrasting color on the collar and sleeves. This casual shirt is 100% cotton and extra soft. It's the perfect shirt to easily show off the perfect game.

USHA Members: \$20

Nonmembers: \$25

Colors: **White with Navy, Red with Black, White with Red**

Sizes: **SMALL-XXL**

Phone Orders Call: 1-520-795-0434

Order Online: ushandball.org

EVERYONE IS CHASING GAME POINT. **GO GET IT.**



**Start strong with the ball that delivers every time:
Official 21 Handballs.**

Play like it counts. Choose the Official 21.

Each can is individually sealed and backed by a quality guarantee, so you're always ready for elite play.

Official 21 Handballs are the trusted choice of champions—used at the USHA National Four-Wall Championships, the WPH R48Pro Tour, and in sanctioned tournaments across the country.



**Available through the USHA Web Store at www.ushandball.org.
Order by phone (520) 795-0434, or contact your local USHA Distributor.**