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PRESIDENTS LETTER FROM PAUL KRUEGER

For those of you who don't know me, I'm Paul Krueger, the new president of the Wisconsin Racquetball Association (WRA). Before I introduce myself, I wanted to thank outgoing president Tom Griffith for his years of service on the WRA board and willingness to help me through the transition. Tom recently resigned to spend more time with his family, but will continue on with the board and has assured me that I will be able to call on his expertise in the coming years if need be. Bill Schultz, who has been synonymous with Wisconsin racquetball for several decades, has taken over as the vice president.

I'm thrilled and honored to be the current president. I started playing way back in the 1970s at what is now the Highlander Elite Racquet Club. In the mid 80s I was part of the racquetball explosion at the now defunct Brookfield Racquetball Club (BRC). I played at the Wisconsin Athletic Club in West Allis for a couple of years in the late 80s – and after taking almost a decade off – found racquetball again at the Prairie Athletic Club (PAC) in Sun Prairie when I moved to the Madison area.

I taught racquetball back at the BRC and have been doing the same at PAC since returning to the game. I took over as the racquetball coordinator about nine years ago.

Growing up, I was fortunate enough to learn the game from my dad, Wayne Krueger, and several outstanding instructors like Joe and Jim Wirkus, and Pat Schmidt. Along the way I learned a lot about racquetball and learned to love the game. I'm sure many of you love the game as well and want to see it grow.

As the president, I am hoping to make progress in many areas, such as:

YOUTH RACQUETBALL

Many players have kids or even grandkids starting to play racquetball now. The generation of players who made racquetball one of the fastest growing sports in the 1980s won't be around forever (though we hope to stick around awhile). That being the case, it is vitally important to get today's youth involved in racquetball. With your help, I hope to make Wisconsin's junior racquetball program a strong one.

INCREASE TOURNAMENT PARTICIPATION

Lessons, leagues, challenge courts and other events are great for racquetball, but tournaments are very fun bonding experiences. There are few better times than packed tournament weekends; going with friends and meeting new ones.

IMPROVE SPORTSMANSHIP

We currently have annual sportsmanship awards in the honor of Jerry Stoltman and Lou Bradley, who both did a lot for racquetball in the state of Wisconsin. While Jerry and Lou would be proud most of the time, too often players berate opponents or referees. If we want the next generation of players to be good sports on and off the court, we need to set the example.

As I take the reins and realize the relationship between the WRA and the USRA, my goal is to do what it takes to bring racquetball back to prominence. The USRA is struggling a bit right now – and although we are supportive of keeping the national organization afloat – the WRA feels that they have made some poor decisions in terms of membership. These are tough times, not only here in Wisconsin but across the country. In an effort to stay solvent and increase capital, the United States Racquetball Association (USRA) recently raised annual membership fees to \$50 (up from \$35). While we are still supportive of the USRA, we are considering breaking off from the USRA in an effort to bring more of a grass roots campaign to grow racquetball. In order to grow the sport and treat core players respectfully, this is something we are considering. State tournaments would not be a part of the national ranking system anymore, but state tournament fees will be more affordable for casual players. If you have an opinion, please give me your thoughts on the WRA's relationship with US Racquetball.

We are happy to report that the WRA is actually relatively strong and the goal is to make it bigger, stronger and more prominent in the coming years. I'm asking that you keep the faith in the sport you love and support us as we move forward. We will look out for your interests the best we can and be an association of the people.

Again, I'm very excited to be the new president. I encourage you to contact me at p.krueger@prairieathletic.com or at the PAC (608-837-4646) if you have thoughts, suggestions, comments or concerns about the WRA.

LUZAR ENTERING WRA HALL-OF-FAME

Jim Luzar will become the 14th member of the WRA Hall-of-Fame and be inducted on Saturday, March 7th at the WRA State Singles Tournament at the Wisconsin Athletic Club - West Allis.

Jim is from Brookfield and has been a fixture on the state, regional and national scene since winning the Men's 30+ Open at the 1984 State Tournament. He has won numerous state and regional championships since 1984. Jim has also been a top competitor in the Men's Open Division, which he's played in at many State Tournaments.

On a national level, Jim has been ranked as high as #1 in a couple of age group open divisions. In 1998 and 2000 he won the 45+ Division at the World Seniors in Albuquerque, NM. At the US Racquetball Nationals he has placed second twice, along with a 3rd place in the 45 and 50+ Open Divisions. One of those 2nd place finishes came at the hands of top pro Reuben Gonzales. Jim also won the 50+ at the 2001 NMRA International Championships and place 2nd and 3rd in two more NMRA tournaments.

We want to congratulate Jim on an outstanding racquetball career. He continues to play and is always a force on the court.

Treasurers Report

QUARTERLY BALANCE
AS OF 12/21/08
\$4,650.00

BEATTY WINS TWICE AT US OPEN

Trish Beatty, Pewaukee, team with Chris Evon, Wheeling, IL, to win the Women's Open Doubles at the US Open Championships in Memphis, October 22-26, 2008. She teamed with Scott Kraemer, Oconomowoc, to win the round robin in the 30+ Mixed Doubles.



Kraemer also played in the Men's 45+ where Carl Evers, New Berlin, made it to the quarterfinals. Matt Stamborski, Muskego, played in the Pro and Open Divisions. Congratulations to our Wisconsin players.

20TH ANNUAL WOMEN'S SENIOR/MASTERS RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

One hundred women from all parts of the USA, from New York to Hawaii, competed in the 20th Annual Women's Senior/Masters Racquetball Championships, held recently in the Los Angeles area. Weather in the 80's greeted the arriving players, a welcome change from 15 below zero in Wisconsin!

This event was started by Ivan Bruner in 1990 as a way to get more women involved in top quality National age group competition. It was held the first two years at Supreme Court in Madison, and has been held in 13 different states in the last 20 years. This year's 20th annual tournament was held at The Spectrum Club in Canoga Park, site of many regional and National tournaments. A "fun doubles" breast cancer fund-raiser event on Thursday allowed everyone to check out the courts and meet old friends. Round-robin competition in age groups ran from Friday to Sunday afternoon.

Four women from Wisconsin were at the 20th annual event: Reta Harring and Lyndon (Lynn) Clemens from Harbor Athletic Club in Madison; Linda Covault from Wisconsin Athletic Club-Waukesha, and Kendra Tutsch from Supreme Court in Madison. Of interest, Linda and Kendra were at the very first Women's Senior/Masters back in 1990, while Lynn was attending her first one this year! Reta Harring took home gold in the 80+ division.

You are never out of this tournament, as it offers round-robin competition for all age groups 35 and over, at both the Open/A and B/C levels. Everyone usually is guaranteed five and usually more matches. Next year the tournament will be held mid-January in Gaithersburg, Maryland at the Lakeforest Sport and Health Club. Gaithersburg is in the Washington, DC/Baltimore area, with many attractions nearby. For more information visit the Women's Senior/Masters Racquetball Association (WSMRA) web site www.wsmra.com or just Google WSMRA. Or contact Kendra at kdtutsch@wisc.edu to get on the mailing list. Plan to come next year!



TEAM WISCONSIN (L to R): Linda Covault, Kendra Tutsch, Reta Harring, Lynn Clemens.

THIRD ANNUAL RACQUET FOR THE CURE

The Wisconsin Athletic Club in West Allis hosted the third annual Racquet for the Cure tournament on October 4th. This year the main title sponsor was Tres Locos Mexican Restaurant. Tres Locos provided not only the dinner for the players and volunteers but a monetary donation as well. Thanks to Tres Locos and all of the many sponsors for making this event a huge success. All of the proceeds go to the Milwaukee Affiliate of the Susan G Komen for the Cure for breast cancer. The total raised for this year is \$18,154. This makes the grand total for the three years over \$43,000!!! This could not be accomplished unless we had a fantastic community of sponsors, players, friends and donors. Thank you for your generosity.

To kick off the event Ben Blint, a personal trainer at the WAC-Waukesha location, rode a stationary bike for 12 hours. Ben called it "The Iron Butt for Cancer", and helped raise over \$3000 for breast cancer. Way to go, Ben! For the week leading up to the tournament, there were over 100 donated items in the silent auction on display at the WAC-West Allis. On Friday there was a fun "Meet and Greet" doubles for men and women with a 50/50 raffle that night. Saturday there were 66 women players who participated in a round robin racquetball tournament with all levels of play, singles and doubles. Players from Wisconsin and Illinois joined the fun. Throughout the day, players and guests supported the cause by purchasing tickets for a chance to win numerous donated raffle items. At the end of the day the silent auction and raffle items were given out to the winners and prizes for first place at the tournament were awarded. Afterwards a local DJ donated her time to play music for the dance that evening. What a great time for a great cause! Thank you Wisconsin Athletic Club management and employees for donating your time to this event.



(L to R): **Penny Kroenig, Linda Covault, Kathi Hartl, Sally Sheperson** (Komen Milwaukee Affiliate Executive Director) **Holly Szablewski, Deb Evers, Anna Byers, Kathi Roskopf** and **Lori Hill**.



(L to R): **Lori Hill, Lynn Taylor, Linda Covault** and **Holly Szablewski**.



(L to R): **Lori Wollenberg, Kathi Roskopf, Tracy Burke** and **Anna Byers**.

THIRD ANNUAL RACQUET FOR THE CURE (continued)

A gracious thank you goes to everyone for their contributions towards this very worthy cause. The success of the Racquet for the Cure lies in the heart of all of those people and their willingness to make a difference. There is no stopping until there is a cure. We need your help again next year for the Fourth Annual Racquet for the Cure on October 3, 2009. For more information contact Linda Covault at ljcovault@wi.rr.com. Hope to see you there!

The following are the 2008 Racquet for the Cure sponsors. Please thank them with your support by honoring them with your patronage.

TRES LOCOS MEXICAN
RESTAURANT—Title Sponsor

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West Allis Animal Hospital
—Court Sponsor

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Genesis Jewelry & Art Gallery
Grasshopper Graphics
Jimmy John's
Melster Pro Shop
Naegele Awning Co
National Sign & Design
Piranha Promotions
Promolux
Wilson
Wisconsin Athletic Club



(L to R): *Kjerstin Snow, Mary Noel and Darlene Donovan.*



(L to R): *Allyn Tiisler and Lynn Taylor.*

STRING & THINGS

By Brad Melster

I have been playing racquetball for over 25 years; I have been stringing racquets for almost 10 years, as well as being a Pro Shop owner and dealer for all the current racquet brands for about 20 years. Racquetball has been and continues to be a part my family's lifestyle and livelihood.

Over the years my stringing business has allowed me to established strong relationships with most of the racquet manufacturers and a number of Pros and high level amateur players. I have also worked closely with racquetball company technical staff and top players to learn more about string types and tensions under real playing conditions. I have had the opportunity to test prototype frames and strings, which has given me a better understanding of both, which has helped while stringing and talking equipment with players.

Stringing should be as important a part of your game as your racquet frame, shoes, eyewear and gloves. However, strings actually have a far bigger effect on your game than any other piece of equipment, except your frame. Having said that, you probably understand your strings and their importance less than any of these other pieces of equipment. Strings can be the hardest thing to understand and will require time, patience and some cost to get what you want. I'll try to give you some useful information so you can more easily make an informed choice when you restring your racquet.

First let's look at several common questions I get on a regular basis.

How often should I string my racquet? You should string your racquet at least as many times per year as you play per week. Because your strings aren't broken doesn't mean they shouldn't be replaced. Many players can feel a decline in the "play" and choose to restring regularly whether the strings are broken or not.

My strings are moving around, do they need to be replaced? Not necessarily. Strings will naturally move around, some strings more so than others. Generally speaking, you should be more worried about the loss of tension that may have occurred rather than the amount of string movement.

What tension should I string my racquet at? This is very important and unfortunately difficult to answer. Two basic and often misunderstood facts that will at least get you started in the right tension direction – within certain limits, tighter strings give more control and looser strings give more

power. Only through trying different tensions (and different types of string) will you know exactly but even a small increase or decrease in tension will change what you feel or how the string performs.

What string should I be using? This is again another question that just doesn't have a quick or easy answer. Unfortunately this and the tension question are related and can really only be answered correctly by trying different strings and different tensions. It takes a fair amount of trial and error to fine tune the strings to the exact playability you are looking for. Another consideration here is your tendency to break strings or not.

I just bought the racquet -or- I just had my racquet restrung and the strings broke, are they under warranty? The quick answer is no warranty. On my string jobs I may reconsider if after evaluation I see some mistake I may have made could have contributed to the breakage but a factory string job will not be under warranty. Briefly, most string breakage I see is the result of one of four things - 1) a miss hit seen most often as a string break at the top of the frame 2) a hard wall rub shot resulting in a compressed bumper guard and/or a worn out bumper causing the string to make direct contact with the wall 3) broken in the sweet spot through normal wear or notching 4) a worn out bumper / grommet set that is allowing the string to rub on the frame and cut the string.

All racquetball manufacturers currently sell their frames strung regardless of sale price. This is opposite of how manufacturers sell their high end tennis frames. Almost all high end tennis frames come unstrung.

String breakage frequency varies dramatically. Over the years there seems to have been some frames and string types that are more prone to breakage than others. It also seems that some players rarely if ever break strings while some players may have to restring several times per month.

Both factory strings and restringing racquets share the same potential problems.

How long the strings have been in the racquet?
Where is the tension now?
What type of string is in the racquet?

All three of these factors make a very big difference in the performance of your racquet. So let's take a look at each one of these factors and how they are connected to your play.

String tension changes for some time after the frame has been strung. Depending on the type of string and its age there can be a loss of up to 5-8 pounds of tension, and in some cases more. This drop in tension will stop, normally within a few days, but could still lose a few more pounds before finally stabilizing. The strings can be adversely affected by weather. Leaving your frames in the car in the cold of winter or the heat of summer can affect the strings. As the strings change with age, there will always be a loss of tension and the strings can become hard or may feel "dead". The best idea is not to leave your bag in the car all day if at all possible.

The type of string in your racquet will vary by manufacturer and stringer. All manufacturers offer at least one type of factory "racquetball" string. Several of the manufacturers offer several types of string. There a wide variety of strings available from manufacturers that do not make frames. Most stringers stock a variety of strings. I personally stock factory string from all four of the big frame makers, E-Force, Ektelon, Head & Wilson, along with string from specialty manufacturers Ashaway and Klipper.

The very basic explanation of string types available is this – gauge and construction. Each gauge and construction type has positives and negatives. It is virtually impossible to find one string that fits all the needs of a player. In other words, there is always a trade off with every string. The choice most often comes down to personal preference

There is some debate about racquetball string versus "tennis" string. All string is for the most part constructed the same way. Much of the difference may be explained by the huge difference in tensions used in tennis versus racquetball (60+ pounds for tennis, 30+ pounds for racquetball). Some string that is considered "tennis" string works very well in racquetball while some does not. Through play trials I have found several "tennis" strings that give excellent results in racquetball.

We currently see four string gauges being used in racquetball – 15L, 16, 17 and 18 gauge.

The 18 gauge is the thinnest and the 15L is the thickest.

Players that break strings regularly will typically stay with 15L or 16 gauge string. For those less likely to break strings, 17g is a good option. My experience is that 18g string is unlikely to be a good choice for most players unless frequent stringing is acceptable.

STRING & THINGS (continued)*By Brad Melster*

The most common string currently being used is 17g. This has been the factory choice for most high end frames for several years now. Like tension, string gauge has an affect on power and control. The 17g offers a slight increase in power due to the flexibility of 17g versus the thicker 15L and 16.

While there isn't a big increase in power, 17g does require a look at your string tensions if you are switching from thicker string. You may need to lower the tension slightly to not overstretch the softer 17g string compared to your previous tension preference. Taking the same string type in the same frame, a 17g string at the same tension as a 16g string will feel tighter as the softer 17g stretches more and is thus "tighter" than the 16g at the same tension.

When dealing with your string tension you also need to remember to factor in the type of machine your racquet is being strung on. There are three different types of stringing machines currently being used – drop weight, lockout and constant pull. The most common are the drop weight (most table tops) and lockout (Neos style). The constant pull is normally very expensive, usually electric or air operated and most often found in tennis shops. Each machine needs to have their tension settings increased or decreased slightly in order to get the tension you want when your string job is completed.

If you are experiencing arm pain ("tennis elbow") you may want to consider a change your string tension. It may help to loosen the strings. You may also want to try a string dampener or even a rubber band laced into the strings at the throat. But always remember that change in tension will also change the playability or feel of the racquet.

So what tension should you string your racquet at? All manufacturers have a suggested tension range for each frame. First, you will need to decide if you want control or power, then you can start your search for the best tension. Typically if players have no starting point, I start them at the high end of the factory suggested range and start working up or down from there. Remember to only make changes in small steps – no more than 2 pounds at a time.

Don't forget to factor in the string gauge and type of stringer being used.

There are many different methods of string construction. For the most part it is as difficult to see the difference visually as it can be to feel the difference when you play. But the basic string construction currently seen in racquetball is an inner core with an outer wrapping. These inner cores can be either monofilament or multifilament. The outer wrap is normally made of a number of different layers and often several different types of material. Just like finding the right tension, you may need to experiment with several string types in order to find the exact "feel" you are looking for.

Here is one more detail to keep in mind when you are thinking about stringing your racquet. All racquet manufactures recommend that you change your bumper guard / grommet set regularly. In fact, several manufacturers suggest that this be done every time you string your racquet.

I suggest that you carefully examine your bumper / grommet set before each stringing. If you see any string holes that are damaged enough that the string will rub on the frame, it must be replaced. The other factor to consider is the depth of the channel in the bumper where the strings run on the outside of the top of the frame. If the strings are above the depth of the channel, any contact with the wall will cause string breakage or damage.

If for some reason you need a replacement bumper / grommet set and one is not available, ask your stringer to use tubes for damaged grommet holes or head tape for shallow string grooves in the bumper at the head of the frame. This should be considered only a short term fix.

The bumper guard is important for protecting the actual racquet frame. I see many racquets with worn out bumpers where the frame is continually making direct contact with the wall. This can weaken the frame and shorten the life of the racquet. I have also seen worn or broken bumpers where the grooves are damaged enough to actually allow the string to cut into the frame causing permanent frame damage.

Let me add a comment regarding racquet damage. As a dealer, I send back broken frames for warranty replacement. The warranty policy is slightly different with each manufacturer, but none offer a warranty longer than two years. Several brands count the time based on model years while several base it on purchase date. It may be useful to save your sales receipt.

We all need to be more careful with our racquets. Most top players don't break racquets. However, if a top player breaks a racquet or strings, they typically know they made a mistake. It is rare for a broken racquet to be caused by a material or manufacturing defect, but it does happen very occasionally. We all know most broken racquets are a result of abuse or errors in judgment. All racquet manufacturers have been extremely generous in covering broken frames. At some point this may change.

Finally, don't forget to replace your grips and wrist lacers too. A worn grip can cause control issues and an old wrist lacer can be uncomfortable and potential breakable. There are a wide variety of grips and they are all different. Unlike strings, grips tend to be more of a personal preference than a real performance issue but it still can affect your play.

One final thing you must consider regarding your racquets and equipment. While price is always an important consideration, I suggest you purchases locally. Remember your local dealer can provide demos, warranty return service and help you with technical questions. There are also many Pro Shops that provide stringing and other racquetball related services. There is a lot of time and effort involved in servicing, fine tuning and maintaining your racquets and equipment. Considering all the services provided (many at no charge), whenever possible your local Pro Shop, Club, Dealer or Stringer should always be the first place you go for all your racquetball needs.

If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me via e-mail at bradmelster@wi.rr.com

BENSON WINS BRONZE AT JUNIOR WORLDS

Justus Benson, of Sun Prairie, won a bronze medal for his third place finish in the 10 & Under Mixed Doubles at the 2008 Junior World Racquetball Championships in Tempe, Arizona December 15-20. Benson and his partner, Mary Zeng of West Hartford, Connecticut are also the reigning U.S. champs. Benson also medaled for this third place finish in the 10 & Under Singles Red Division. More than 270 juniors from 16 countries participated.

GREEN BAY JUNIORS AT WESTERN RACQUET AND FITNESS

For the past seven years Western Racquet and Fitness in Green Bay has been producing top junior racquetball players. We can thank Steve Salamone for helping to keep this sport alive in the Green Bay area. With the help of his two sons, Dan and Joey, they offer a Saturday morning junior clinic from about October through April. Anywhere from eight to fifteen juniors show up regularly to participate in drills and open play. Their hard work has produced six state champions and many runner-ups. Their most recent state champions include Joey Salamone '08 18U champion and '07 16U champion, Max Dalebroux '08 14U champion and '07 12U champion, and Nick Richardson the '07 10U Champion.

If you're in the Green Bay area some winter Saturday morning stop in Western Racquet and Fitness and practice and play with some of the top juniors in the state.

UPCOMING JUNIOR EVENTS

Mark your calendars. Two very fun tournaments are right around the corner – State Juniors and Junior Olympic Championships.

STATE JUNIORS IS MARCH 28TH AT THE PRAIRIE ATHLETIC CLUB IN SUN PRAIRIE. It is a one-day event that is nothing but racquetball. It is your chance to become a State Champ. Contact Paul Krueger at (608) 837-4646 for more information. Parents – this a very fun and affordable event for your kids.

US Junior Olympic Championships are in East Lansing, Michigan this year. The dates are June 24-28. Last year, in Concord, California, Wisconsin was represented by seven athletes – this year we'd like to have at least 10 players represent our state. Parents – the positives are:

- 1) Every player will be guaranteed at least three matches per event;
- 2) It is a great opportunity for your child to make great friends from across the country; and,
- 3) It is an easy drive from Wisconsin – no need to fly.

Contact Jeff Benson at (608) 834-9436 for more information.

WRA TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

2008-2009 Tournament Schedule

March 6-7

STATE SINGLES; WAC - West Allis

March 14

ST. PATRICK'S DAY; WAC-Waukesha

March 20-21

WAMBO; Supreme, Madison

March 28

STATE JUNIORS; PAC, Sun Prairie

2009-2010 Tournament Schedule

August (TBD)

PRAIRIE SUMMER OPEN

October (TBD)

LOU BRADLEY MEMORIAL

October 3

4TH ANNUAL RACQUET FOR THE CURE, WAC-West Allis

November 13-15

STATE DOUBLES; WAC-West Allis

December (TBD)

CANDY CANE; WAC-West Allis

January (TBD)

WINTER CLASSIC; Southridge

February (TBD)

PRESIDENT'S DAY; WAC-Waukesha

March 5-7

STATE SINGLES; WAC-West Allis

March (TBD)

ST. PATRICK'S; WAC-Waukesha

March (TBD)

WAMBO; Supreme, Madison

March/April (TBD)

STATE JUNIORS

SUBMIT YOUR RACQUETBALL NEWS!

WRA

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We hope you enjoy the newsletter and encourage you to contact us regarding any information you'd like to see in the newsletter. We are always looking for interesting articles, so if you have an idea for an article and would like to write about it, let us know.

