



Beyond the Short Line



March 2009/April 2009

The online newsletter for the California State Racquetball Association(CSRA) members....
Get tips...latest news....fun pics....upcoming events....player advice...etc...

www.CaliforniaRacquetball.org

Welcome to the California State Racquetball Association (CSRA) newsletter, an electronic publication produced quarterly (March, June, September, and December).

Our goal is to include articles with useful and timely information for the California Racquetball community. We want to provide you with valuable information so please let us know what you would like to read about and see in your Newsletter. For instance, do you have a club you think is terrific and would like to have highlighted? Do you have helpful hints you would like to let other players know about? Do you have a question for the Pro or coach? Send your questions and suggestions to Brian Dixon at Bri@Jupe.com....Enjoy!



Dear Fellow Racquetball Enthusiasts:

In the month or so since our last email to you, the CSRA hosted the state singles championships in Fresno March 20-22. The title sponsor of this event was Racquetball Warehouse. Your board chose Fresno in the hopes of attracting players from both Nor Cal and So Cal. We brought on two very well known and competent tournament directors, John Ellis and Steve Cook. We

also hosted a complementary Awards banquet coordinated by board member Merijeane Kelley with the exceptional support of Colleen Keating and Debra Nathan. The tournament attracted 140 of California's finest players and we were proud to be sponsored by Racquetball Warehouse as well as Ektelon, E Force, Gear Box, Head and Pro Kennex. We hired RacquetballOnline.tv to tape some of the matches and much of the activities. Some of the edited footage will be on their website as well as ours in the near future. Please visit us at www.CaliforniaRacquetball.org for all of your California Racquetball information.

Besides planning state doubles, your board is focused on creating a series of one day shootouts to encourage new players to participate in tournament play in a fun and social environment. These one day shootouts will also be "Fun-Raisers" for the development and programming of CSRA Junior and Intercollegiate players. In other words, you can help us invest in the future of racquetball while also

having a great deal of fun with your friends. In addition, these tournaments will give the winners points adding up to an invitational-only California shootout championship. We hope that you find this as exciting as we do. These types of tournaments offer so many great benefits that full tournaments cannot offer.

- * A tournament environment in an 8 hour time
- * No hotel costs
- * Less expensive tournament Fees

Check www.CaliforniaRacquetball.org for continued updates on upcoming one day events. Also, let us know if your club would be interested in hosting one...

Moving on to one of my favorite state projects we have in the fire. We are looking at a complete overhaul of the state website. We are going to create a high speed site that will have great firepower to deliver advance, exciting tech orientated site on the cutting edge. More information will be forthcoming as this project moves forward.

As you might remember, through your votes in September we increased the number of board member positions from 9 to 11. This has given me the opportunity to add a new member to our team. In February I appointed Bill George, a person known to many of you as a witty and kind man with a really small dog and who truly loves Racquetball. Bill brings so many skills to the table (and the court) and has already made a huge contribution by becoming the chair of our one day shootout tournament committee. We still need one more board member and usually a board member will come to us from someone serving on the Advisory



www.CaliforniaRacquetball.org

Committee. Please consider joining our growing Advisory Committee and or contact me if you are interested in joining the board itself. My email contact is Larry@llbabbq.com and I want to hear from YOU!

I would like to share some other exciting information with you. We have created a Junior Committee to serve under the CSRA. This committee will be coordinated by Brian Dixon, another very talented and committed board member. We have added two great young men to the Advisory Committee in addition to the Junior Committee, Jeffery Weiss and Tyler Lanman. We know that they will bring a lot of enthusiasm and passion along with their youthful perspective to the Junior Committee. Please let us know if you are interested in serving on the Committee or you know someone who would. We will be adding some members from outside the Board.

With all these great projects and ideas beginning to blossom we are going to try and raise money for the state with one of our great sponsors Bad Ass BBQ. In the city of Martinez we are going to put on an all you can eat BBQ with a battle of the bands concert at the water front amphitheater. We have some high hopes that we can get at least 300 to 400 people to attend this event. We will need people to help so if you are interested in helping please contact me at Larry@llbabbq.com. The money from this event will go to helping the junior committee to begin building a California State High school program. We also are entertaining the idea of bringing a US Open level tournament to California which probably would include bringing the custom made glass court as was done the last two years in Colorado.

There is nothing but exciting Racquetball coming your way from your CSRA. I would like you all to get out and spread the fever by supporting the one day shootouts and other activities as I've briefly covered. Grab your racquet get on the court and crush that ball into a rollout.

Get the fever—Racquetball Forever
Larry Steiner - CSRA President

State Singles Championships...

The state singles championships came to Central California (Fresno) this year taking place at Sierra Sport and Racquet Club along with Centerpoint Athletic Club...Players from throughout the state attended the event held March 20-22.

John Ellis, Steve Cook and their band of tournament elves made the tournament run smoothly the whole weekend. Several CSRA Board members were on hand to help where needed. MeriJean Kelley did an excellent job organizing the terrific Saturday night banquet.

The event began Friday afternoon with play at both clubs. Matches were self ref other than Open

matches or if players requested a ref. This seemed to work out smoothly. Matches were on time for the most part.



Play

continued early Saturday ending with a great match between Stockton buddies and junior stars Jose Diaz and Marco Rojas...

From there the players moved on to the banquet. An excellent Mexican dinner with the décor to go with it was arranged by MeriJean along with Colleen Keating and Debra Nathan.

As players were eating their enchiladas etc. an awards presentation was done. First honored were the 2008 Junior Stars of the year. Seven Junior players were honored who made some significant accomplishments in 2008. Brian Dixon, CSRA Junior Director, made the presentations. Those honored included (by age): Sabrina Viscuso, Sawyer Lloyd, Devon Pimentelli, Jose Diaz, Marco Rojas, Aubrey O'Brien and Jose Rojas.



The awards proceeded with the presentation of the 2008 President's awards. Peggine Tellez (past CSRA President) made the presentations to the recipients who earned the honor by having an impact on Racquetball in 2008. See President's Awards on page 3 for a more detailed list of their accomplishments.

Play started up again Sunday with continuation of some round robins and the playoffs of pool play. The day culminated with the final of the Opens. This saw





the new rivalry of John Ellis versus Junior star Jose Rojas. It was an exciting match with the crowd divided in who they should root for...It went to a tie breaker with John pulling it out 11-9!! You can catch this match as well as some others and some interviews at www.Racquetballonline.tv.

You can check out results, pictures etc.

about this event at your website—
www.CaliforniaRacquetball.org

Stay tuned for the State Doubles coming up in the Fall...

Again a big thanks to our title sponsor Racquetball Warehouse as well as other sponsors Ektelon, Head, Gearbox, E-Force, Pro Kennex, Bad Ass BBQ, J & D Painting and Mike Lippitt Racquetball...

Presidents Awards...

The State Singles Championships began a new era of recognizing the achievements of people involved in California Racquetball. Known as the **Presidents Awards**, we were able to honor several individuals who have helped to further our sport over the course of the last year. An awards ceremony was held during the Saturday evening banquet where more than 80% of the players participating in the State Singles enjoyed a terrific Mexican feast hosted by BadAss BBQ. We presented personalized, etched glass mugs to the following awardees.

David Ellis – The soon to be retired US Team Coach. As a long time supporter and promoter of racquetball in the Stockton area and throughout the country, this dedication has allowed him to take his rightful place as the National Team Coach. He has led our team to several international competitions where we have made an excellent showing over the last 3 years. After sharing his knowledge and encouragement with his talented son, John, Dave and his wife, Pat, have also taken the time to nurture several international players. In fact Dave wasn't available to accept his award due to the fact that he was in Pennsylvania coaching the up and coming Veronica Sotomayer. John, the dutiful recipient on his father's behalf, expressed pride, appreciation, and a tear or two when accepting the well deserved recognition.

Jody Nance – She is credited with guiding one of the longest running and most successful Junior programs in California. One of the reasons for our state's recent successes at the Junior level has been due to her patient and dedicated instruction. Jody has helped to produce several of our State, National and World Champions! For these successes, we wanted to honor her accomplishments. Jody's award was accepted on her behalf by 5 of her young charges (Jose Rojas, Marco Rojas, Jose Diaz, David "Bobby" Horn and Alex Guzman) giving Jody high praise for her friendship and tutelage.

Matt Hills – Matt was present to accept his award for his diligent work keeping the CSRA Website fresh and smoothly running (www.Californiaracquetball.org). You may have heard this a few times!! The CSRA has embraced web-based communications, but its full capabilities could not be fully utilized were it not for the skills of Matt.. Between that and having a life, Matt has taken the time to be the CSRA Webmaster. He has volunteered many hours in creating a design that is user friendly and chalk full of information. For this, we are proud to pay him homage.

LCDR Steven Harper – He came to us from North Carolina via Virginia, landing in San Diego in order to complete his service in the U.S. Navy. Steven had a vision, to put on an exhibition of racquetball on an active aircraft carrier; in November, that dream was realized. Steven coordinated the All Military Racquetball Championships tournament and the building of an outdoor court aboard the USS Bonhomme Richard which hosted an exhibition of showcasing some of the best racquetball players to pick up a stick as a way to entertain and expose our sport to those on board. Based in California, as a Co-Founder of US Military Racquetball Federation, Steven has mated his love of racquetball and his desire to see this sport regain its rightful place in the military services athletic programs to bring about its revival on our bases across the country. The lieutenant will be retiring this June, which will allow him to devote even more time to racquetball. Jack Hughes gave an enthusiastic acceptance speech owing to his own involvement in the November events.

Debbie Tisinger-Moore/Randy Lam— If you have played in the Southern California area, it is likely that you have played in one of their events. These two, as a team have supported numerous racquetball associations, the NMRA, WSMRA, WPRO, IRT, USAR Regionals, Breast Cancer events in addition to CA racquetball. One of their long running events, The Tournament of Terror, has an almost cult-like following with players dressing in Halloween garb to play. Debbie, with her competitive record being a whole other achievement category, and Randy make a terrific team and have a deep and loyal following in racquetball.

Terry Ann Rogers - One of those people at racquetball events that just seems to know what needs to be done and is on hand to make things run very smoothly. She is someone who can be relied on to take care of the very important behind the scenes aspect of tournaments. Not only has she played in 4 National events, she is chairing the Ektelon National Womens Committee, which developed National programs to promote Women in racquetball. She volunteers at USAR tournaments and there has rarely been a CA state events in the last several years that Terry hasn't been a part of. Terry was on hand to accept her award and spoke of her continued pleasure at being involved in racquetball.Submitted by Peggine Tellez

Masters Report..... Mike Lippitt

The National Master Racquetball Association (NMRA) came back to CA after a three year absence from March 11-14 at the Spectrum Club in Canoga Park. The numbers were down a little from previous years, but the level of fun, play, sportsmanship and camaraderie was at an all time high. Naturally CA sent the majority of players, about half. The Friday night banquet was very nice and well attended.



The exciting upcoming news about the NMRA is their second annual doubles only tournament will be in the Bay Area from Thursday November 12 through Saturday the 14th. The location is still being negotiated. But this is very good news for us who love the NMRA and doubles. Please put those dates on your calendar and experience the fun and competition of playing in a NMRA event.

The other exciting Master's news deals with the US National Senior State Games will be held in the South Bay at various venues the week of August 8th. The racquetball will be held in Sunnyvale and on the Stanford Campus. Since this is a US event, players from across the country will be coming to play. Two of our own board members, Jack Hughes and MeriJean Kelley, will be helping to run the racquetball portion of the games.

The One-Days—Bill George

One-Day Shootouts are coming your way!

By popular demand the CSRA is resurrecting the one day events. We already have one very successful event under our belt and have two more on the schedule for the immediate future.

- May 16th at the UC Davis recreation center in Davis, CA/9am to 6pm

This one day event is a fund raiser for the International Animal Welfare Institute, which resides on the UC Davis campus, and the CSRA intercollegiate program. Hopefully by the time you receive this newsletter the R2 site will be up and ready to take your entries. The entry fee is

Calendar Upgrades:

Check out the calendar on the website..We have made some improvements...

- All sanctioned tournaments are posted in Sanctioned tournament section
- "Tentative" tournaments are now posted for scheduling etc...Limited info...
- Regional and National events now being posted..
- Local Play events (non sanctioned etc..)
- Juniors, Collegiates, Masters have their own sections
- More to come.....

only \$25 and offers B and C singles and Open, Elite, A, B doubles for both men and women. The UC Davis recreation Center has 8 beautiful courts, 4 with back and side glass! The campus also has 7 additional courts in an attached building. Wow!

We are also looking at ways of subsidizing the costs of becoming a USAR member for new players.....

-June 13th at the Big C, Concord 8AM-5PM

This will be a fundraiser for the CSRA Junior program. We are working on the divisions at this time and it will be up on R2.

These one day events are designed to provide racquetball enthusiasts, and future enthusiasts, an event completed in a single day while providing competition in a more social and FUN environment. These are an opportunity for local players to get introduced to the excitement and fun of the tournament experience and to see the skilled veteran players in action.

We are also looking at ways of subsidizing the costs of becoming a USAR member for *new players to make these events very affordable and fun!* If you know or play with club players who you think would enjoy tournament play, let them know to contact Bill George at ([billgeo01 at yahoo.com](mailto:billgeo01@yahoo.com)).

Would you like a one day event in your area in the future?

The CSRA is actively looking for clubs, universities, colleges, etc. interested in hosting a CSRA one day shootout. If you know of a venue that may be interested in hosting such an event, please contact CSRA President Larry Steiner (larry@llbabbq.com) or Bill George ([billgeo01 at yahoo dot com](mailto:billgeo01@yahoo.com)) and we will take it from there!

California Versus Texas??

Well it could happen. There has been talk on the popular online forum of who might win this battle and how best to do it. You can go to link below to check out the discussions. Let the Board know if you would be interested in a battle like this...

<http://www.meetandplay.com/forum/Default.aspx?g=posts&t=12583>

Event Spotlight - Laguna Creek, Elk Grove exhibition Mannino Vs Crowther

It was in the making for 6 months. Long time racquetball enthusiast and assistant program director Markus Bowden of Laguna Creek Racquet Club in Elk Grove, CA read somewhere on the web that Jason Mannino and Cliff Swain were soliciting exhibitions throughout the US. He emailed Jason and the ball started rolling (out).

The stage was set, complete with bleachers for 100, full PA system, player bio's with introductions, endless amounts of food and cold beer, thundering music – the works. A small bump in the road only 2 days before the event before an absolute sellout crowd - Cliff sustained an injury to his back and was unable to play. John Ellis, the only local pro that could fill in was out of town so we turned to Jason to work some magic. Jason made a few phone calls and was able to solidify Chris Crowther.

Exactly 24 hours later Crowther found himself on a plane to Sacramento and we were back on. Cliff was classy enough to still make an appearance and was asked to ref the match since, coincidentally, Gerry Price was injured over the weekend as well.

Gerry was originally suppose to ref the Mannino/Swain match. Somehow it all worked out, and nobody seemed disappointed. Jason of course entertained by his acrobatic skills and proved to everybody that he is forever young. Chris thrilled by absolutely obliterating anything that came his way. With the court mic'd it was audibly explosive. Cliff supplied a lot of comedy and seamless reffing. The trash between him and Jason was to be expected and certainly memorable. East coasters just know how to do it better.



The match went 4 games with Mannino taking the win 5, (-7), 9, 4. The majority of the 100 people on hand had never witnessed racquetball at this level and from the look on their faces they were utterly amazed.

Cliff, Jason and Chris took Q&A after the match, signed autographs and threw out tons of E-Force and Pro Kennex merchandise.

A post-event survey was done and people said they'd be willing to pay even more to see an event like this again. In my opinion, this is what racquetball needs. The IRT cannot do it alone and need much help at the grass roots level. Directors need to get involved and showcase this great sport. Be creative and use a lot of "production" to make an event memo-

orable. It gives much more effect.

Laguna Creek Racquet Club wishes to thank Cliff Swain, Jason Mannino and Chris Crowther for their professionalism and devotion to this event.

See you on the courts.

Markus Bowden

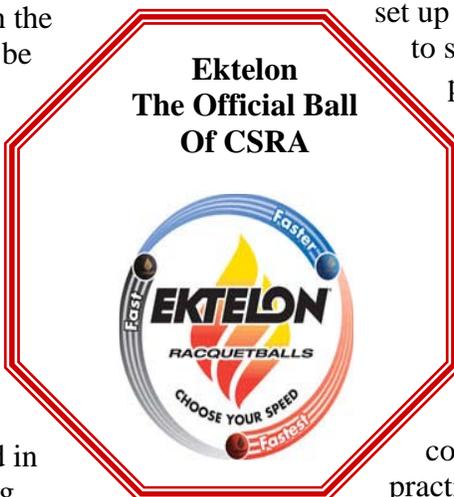


Juniors by Brian Dixon

The Junior State Championships are coming up May 2nd and 3rd at ClubSport Pleasanton. Anyone interested can get information at your website—www.CaliforniaRacquetball.org. It will be a fun event with things to do when not playing and we will have an ice cream social Saturday night. Get signed up ASAP and please pass on the information to all juniors who may be interested.

The Junior nationals will be held in Michigan this year. Hoping that California can make it three years in a row as the state champion. The event will be at the end of June.

The Junior Committee is being formed and will be moving forward in working on promoting Junior Racquetball in California. One major goal is High School programs. We are looking for some players to take initiative in establishing high school programs. States such as Missouri and Oregon will have state high school championships with over 500 participants. We are looking to start with “baby steps” but grow to a competitive level. Other goals of committee will include; establish one day events, and build more programs throughout the state. Currently the committee includes Larry Steiner and myself from the Board and Aaron Embry, Tyler Lanman and Jeffrey Weiss from the Advisory Board. We are looking to add CSRA members not on the Board to also be on this committee. I am also looking to establish a Junior Council which would consist solely of juniors with an adult advisor/director (me)...Anyone interested in participating, please contact me (Bri@Jupe.com).



Junior Tips:

- Play the Pass-Only game—have the players play a game (or more) where the only shot selection is the pass shot (down the line, cross court, wide angle) or a ceiling ball, if called for. If a pinch or a bad shot, it is as if the ball just skipped. The more they play this style, the more they see the value of the pass. Kids (and adults too) love the pinch, but unless perfect can be a set up for your opponent. This drill helps to see how you can win with the pass...Adults can do this drill too.
- Ceiling Ball rally—Two players start in back court. First hits a ceiling ball and then has to shuffle up and tap the short line. Other player returns ball with another ceiling ball and goes up and taps short line. Goal is to keep the rally going as long as possible. Good cardio. Good center court drill. Good ceiling ball practice...



A Coaches tip....

Most players, despite the kind of serve, take the same amount of time to serve the ball once they get into the service box. As a result, the receiver gets into a rhythm of returning serve based on these continuous "intervals" (or a momentum you've created for him/her)

By varying the amounts of time you take between serves, you may break the receiver's "return rhythm", get him out of focus, and keep him guessing more. The end result, weaker returns!

Remember, serving a little "earlier" or a little "later" (with occasional changeups), even by 2 or 3 seconds, could reward you quite often.

Lastly, for the obsessed "ball bouncers", sometimes bounce a little more and sometimes a little less..ENJOY!

Del Villanueva

AMPRO Advanced Instructor/Coach
Head Coach- University Of California @ Berkeley
Intercollegiate Racquetball Team
CSRA Board Member/Collegiate Liaison



California Players Take High School Nationals By Surprise

by John Ellis

February 25th thru March 1st marked the dates for the USAR High School National Championships, which hosted 351 players from over 40 high schools from across the United States. The event was held in the high school racquetball mecca of St Louis, MO at the Concord-Vetta Sports and Missouri Athletic Club and for the first time in recent history this event actually had more female than male players by the marks of 176 girls to 175 boys. This is quite an amazing stat for an event that not long ago was predominantly a boy's tournament.

Although the high schooler players from California were not represented that well in terms of number of players, the two players that did attend the event made quite a splash as first time players. Accompanied by chaperone John Ellis, Jose Diaz of Stockton and Devon Pimentelli of San Bruno made the trip to St Louis and dazzled the large crowds with their on court abilities and off court demeanor.

Devon Pimentelli out of Cappucinno High School in San Bruno, stepped up her game big time as she came into the event as the number three seed as a freshman and dismantled all comers. Devon went through the draw without losing a game or even giving up 10 points in one game. She took down the number two seeded Lily Berry with a convincing 15-3, 15-8 victory and followed it up in the finals with a win over number four seed Amanda Lindsay, 15-9, 15-7. The win served notice for all girl high schoolers that the title will run through Devon for the next three years to come. Congrats Devon, we're all very proud of you!!

On the boy's side of the #1 Singles Division, Jose Diaz came into the event with a lot to prove after just coming off of his 14 & Under World Championship win and a high school basketball season with Franklin High School out of Stockton. Jose did not disappoint as he was able to take third place as a sophomore. Jose was stopped just short of his goal in the semifinal by the defending champion and senior player, Taylor Knoth. The match was extremely entertaining as the 6'3" Knoth and 5'1" Diaz are a major contrast of styles while on the court. Knoth came out ripping drive serves as Jose put on his incredible display of diving gets and creative shots to the delight of the crowd. Jose's abilities were not enough to overcome Taylor as he went down in two games with the scores of 15-8, 15-14. Jose went on to win the third place match over senior Erick Podwill in two easy games and should return to next year's championships as the #2 seed and the odds on favorite to win the event.

Once again, the CSRA would like to recognize the dedication and talents of both Jose and Devon. They have started something that all California racquetball players need to get behind and promote. High School racquetball is by far the biggest growth area for racquetball in general and the effort to create a successful California High School program will take the work of many adult volunteers to get this going. Thanks to Jose and Devon, we have a start.



A Masters Moment.....



Ben Marshall (92) ,TX William Grillo (87) Walnut Creek, Ca



California women at the National Womens Masters tournament in Canoga Park

Collegiate News...

Newsflash.....Delta College lead by Jose Rojas finishes 2nd in Mens and 5th overall at National Collegiates, For more information go to the Collegiate section of your website...
www.CaliforniaRacquetball.org



California collegiate racquetball is continuing to grow as over 50 students participated in our Feb 2009 Winter tourney at UC Davis.

Our very special guest was [Jose Rojas](#) – he led a clinic on service philosophy, and won Men’s A. We were lucky to have another special guest, [Dave Ellis](#) – the best racquetball coach on the planet! And, [Aubrey O’Brien](#) competed very well in Men’s A, and led a women’s clinic.

“Any” full time collegiate student can participate in the WCRC tournaments – no need to have a formal team, and some schools have just one or two players. Our tournaments have different skill level divisions, so players of all skill levels are welcome - win or lose you will play at least three matches! Read more about the WCRC tourneys and get contact info at: <http://www.WCRCRacquetball.org>

John Bardos

Del Villanueva



On February 28th, players from University of Southern California (USC), Azusa Pacific University (APU), and Claremont University Consortium (CUC) met at the Claremont Colleges to represent their schools in the collegiate shootout. After a grueling day of round-robin play, with each player playing a minimum of 4 matches, Pascal Cooper (USC) beat Jeffrey Weiss (CUC) in the finals. In the consolation game, Ankit Bhargav (USC) and Joel Roberts (APU) tied for third due to the exhaustion of both players.



Thank you to ProKennex for graciously providing prizes for winners of the tournament. Also, thank you to Jeffrey Weiss and the Claremont racquetball team for hosting the tournament.....

Upcoming Events...

Mark your calendars:

Details at www.CaliforniaRacquetball.org

- April 17-19 Regionals
Spectrum Club, Canoga Park
- April 24-26 WPRO Championships
ISSC West Lane, Stockton
- May 2-3 Junior State Championships
Clubsport, Pleasanton
- May 16th UC Davis One Day Shoot out
UC Davis, Davis
- June 13th Big C shoot out—Jr fun-raiser
Big C, Concord
- June 19-21 Boylan Memorial
What a Racket, Bakersfield
- June 26-28 Spectrum Invitational
Spectrum, Canoga Park
- July 9-12 WOR Championships
Marina Park, Huntington Beach

CSRA Board of Directors

President	Larry Steiner
SoCal VP	Peggin Tellez
NorCal VP	Margaret Pederson
Treasurer	Jack Hughes
Secretary	Mike Lippitt
Juniors/Newsletter	Brian Dixon
Collegiate Liaison	Del Villanueva
Director at-large	George Tellez
Director at-large	Merijean Kelley
Director at-large	Bill George

Advisory Board:

Michael Martinez
Steve Cook
Matt Hills
Steven Harper
Aaron Embry
John Bardos
Tracey Stevens-Martin
Michael Leyva

To Be Determined:

- September—State Doubles
- More One Days...Would you like to host one?

Have a Funny Racquetball picture? Send it in...



Any good advice for fellow Players? Send it in...

Send to Brian Dixon... Bri@Jupe.com

Share the newsletter...

forward it...send friends to website...

print it and post at your club

The CSRA Website

www.CaliforniaRacquetball.org

Do you see the address above? Write this down. Memorize it. Add it to your favorites. Forward to your friends. Visit it on a regular basis for up to date news and information on what is happening with California Racquetball...

- **Check out upcoming events**
- **Access online information and entries**
- **Check out pics of your friends from different tournaments**
- **Check out up to date rankings**
- **Improve your game with tips from the experts**
- **Access the CSRA newsletter**
- **Get California club information**
- **Check out Junior news and events**
- **Read tournament results**
- **Join USAR/CSRA**
- **What is the mission of CSRA?**
- **Check what is up with California Collegiates**
- **What are the Benefits of membership?**
- **What are the Benefits of sanctioning?**

Benefits of joining the USAR/CSRA include:

- subscription to RACQUETBALL magazine (with news, tutorials, and the official rules of play)
- eligible to participate in CSRA and USAR tournaments
- official ranking in the state and national rankings
- Secondary accident insurance coverage during sanctioned events

Other membership benefits and programs:

- American professional Racquetball Organization (AMPRO)
- National instructor and referee certification programs
- Coaching development
- High school and collegiate programs
- Junior athlete development
- Scholarship programs
- U.S. National Team and Junior Team USA
- Discount of 15% at Choice hotels
- Discount on Enterprise car rentals
- Discount on United Airlines flights

Join today at USAR.org or at www.CaliforniaRacquetball.org

A Chat with Ellis...An interview in Ireland

In this edition on the Munster Racquetball View, we have an interview with former US International player, John Ellis. Hopefully we'll have someone different in each issue to give us an insight into their thinking of various aspects of the racquetball world.

Who is the most difficult opponent you've ever faced?

That would have to be Cliff Swain. My record against him is horrendous but he's to blame for that. Cliff was just a beast to go up against because he could do it all on the court and you always knew he was going to try harder than everyone else. Then add in the fact that he'll take every inch he can get out of the match in terms of calls and that equaled out to be my toughest opponent. He's the greatest of all time in my opinion although Kane will likely have that crown when it's all said and done.

Who would you consider to be the best coach that you've ever worked under?

Easily my dad, Dave Ellis. He taught me a lot of what I know about the game and did a fantastic job over the years of preparing me for every type of racquetball match. He was a very good coach to me in other sports as well and this answer would apply there.

What is the best advice you've ever received during your playing career?

Hard to say, I've had a lot of people that have put a word or two in my head!! I think the best advice has come from my dad over the years. He's really installed a thought process of respecting all of my opponents games and never taking a win for granted. He's reminded me to stay confident at all times but not overconfident. In turn that's never been a problem for me.

What advice would you offer to all the young stars of the future within our game?

Well, I think for any age my advice would be the same. Don't cheat yourself when you play racquetball by not moving quickly for balls. The whole point of racquetball is to get a great workout and the best way to do that is to never give up on getting the ball. If you're not fast, then work hard to become faster. Being quick on the court makes playing racquetball so much fun.

What is your best achievement in the game of racquetball as a player?

The two occasions that I won IRT Stops by beating Cliff and Sudsy in the semi and final. That's two of my top three ever and to take them both down in one weekend is very cool. Doing it twice means it was legit!!

What is your current position with Ektelon and what responsibilities does it involve?

I'm not sure what my title is at this time but basically I'm a consultant to Scott Winters. I administer the sponsorships for our junior players here in the US and international players in a few portions of the rest of the world. I'm also involved in managerial meetings within Ektelon.

Ektelon recently advertised that they were organising a major event to get women playing the game of racquetball. How did this work out and what is the next step in the project to get more female players playing the game?

I'm not sure what the results are for the Rally for a Reason project. I believe that largest growth area for racquetball around the world is within the high school system. By having a strong high school racquetball program in as many different cities as possible, the number of players would drastically increase. A large number of these new players would be high school age girls that are looking to stay in shape and can do so by playing a sport that is easy to get started in. Many new high school players, whether they are girls or boys, would be kids that aren't making a lot of other sports teams at their school or possibly would play racquetball just for the social environment. Whatever it takes to get kids to the courts is what is important. From there, the game will do its part to create lifelong players from new high school players. An example of this happens here in the states every year for the High School Nationals. I just returned home from the High School Nationals and that tournament actually had more girls than boys playing. There were 176 girls to 175 boys.

What is your opinion on the current levels of participation within the game around the World?

There are patches of good racquetball outside of the US in terms of participation and quality. Mexico is now a leader in the sport and Bolivia is coming on very strong. Both countries have a number of strong racquetball cities and great young players. Unfortunately Canada has dropped off from the past 20 years although their National Team is still very strong, I'm not seeing the strong level of play from their juniors. Asian racquetball is picking up significantly in Korea but dropping off heavily in Japan. Europe is the interesting region for racquetball right now as not only is the ERF hosting quality tournaments on a consistent basis but the development of the racquetball game played on the squash court is showing a lot of promise in several of the European countries. I'm very interested in playing more of this game in the very near future.

If you were given the job of CEO of world racquetball in the morning, what changes would you make or what ideas would you bring to the table to promote the game and increase participation levels on a worldwide stage?

Well, as I mentioned earlier my focus for player development would be on the high school age kids. Kids in high school are craving fun things to do and be a part of. So many kids these days do not have the ability to play a main sport at their schools and need an off campus sport like racquetball to have an activity in their lives that promotes health and wellness. If I'm CEO of RB, we're making plans to support this idea with a lot of volunteerism on behalf of the world's adult players, the industry companies and the racquetball facilities around the world.

In addition to that, I'd have to keep the same efforts up as our commissioners of the IRT and WPRO in that we need more pro stops utilizing the portable court in areas of high public traffic. More pro stops in general are great because they usually are accompanied by an open tournament and that professional feature really is a motivator for all of the amateur players. I find that after a player watches a pro stop, they're more liable to play more racquetball themselves and talk about the sport with their non playing friends. Also, outdoor racquetball is a market that I would put major emphasis on in terms of programming. It's similar to the high school concept in that young players will enjoy the outdoor game if they can only get exposed to it. The only way to expose young players is to show them the game in the one spot they have to be at, school. Racquetball assemblies, whether you're promoting indoor or outdoor, are the way that school age students will become interested in trying our great sport..... I'm rambling now!!

You've currently got some of the World's best Juniors playing out of our home club in Stockton. What are the secrets to your success? Well you'll have to come take one of our Stockton RB Camps this summer to come find out!!! No, just kidding. It's simple really, we work very hard at the game and we all motivate each other to get better through good healthy competition in practice and through training together. Jody Nance has done an awesome job of coaching the young kids and as they get to that high school age, I tend to get more involved. All of the recent Stockton juniors also have very dedicated parents in that they keep these kids at the clubs instead of out an about looking for trouble. One note, most of today's Stockton juniors line in either South or East Stockton and quite honestly very tough neighborhoods. So having parents that are dedicated to getting them into a safe environment on a nightly basis says a lot about the people they are. Its very cool to have this many great young players as I envision a day where there is 4-6 of the top 20 players in the world from Stockton. It will happen!!

Finally what are your own ambitions in the game as a player, a coach, an administrator and a leader of the Ektelon team? As a player, I want to sit back for the next three years and wait to return to a full time IRT season. My daughter is 15 months old right now but in three years from now she'll be in school and I'll have a bit more time to focus on tournament play. I'm keeping myself in shape and playing good enough now to be in the top 10 after a year on tour. Being in the top 10 is not a future goal but rather winning one more IRT Stop. If I can do that then I'll be good for the rest of my life. If I can't do that then I'll still be good!! Mind you this return to playing a full time season will come when I'm nearly 40 years old so it won't be easy. Until then I'll continue to host and play in Nor Cal tournaments that are a lot of fun. I'm not ready to be an age division player just yet.

As an administrator, I really enjoy being a part of the Ektelon Team. I will be with Ektelon for the rest of my career if they'll keep me. I'm just now beginning a new job with my local clubs, In Shape Clubs. I am the new Director of Racquetball, which encompasses nine different clubs and over 35 courts. This will be an exciting new venture for me and will also allow me to develop positions for the junior players here in Stockton. All of the main kids here are looking for me to help them carve a living out of racquetball at an early age. They all get it and know that I've made a living with this great game and they want the same.

A Great Big Thank You to our sponsors of the 2009 State Singles!!

