

JANUARY 2023 Serving Up the News Features USA Racquetball's Value to the Sport of Racquetball and its Members. Please review the prior introduction of the We Are USA Racquetball infographic below and continue on from page 2 for more information on each of the 13 points listed above!

September 2020

Dear USA Racquetball Members (and Racquetball Players Across the United States),

Periodically, you receive communication asking you to renew your membership and to donate to USAR if you're able. This is not new -- you've been seeing appeals like these for years.

We all recognize that there hasn't been a flood of money pouring into Racquetball for a very long time. Now, in 2020, in these unprecedented circumstances, will we (along with so many other organizations and businesses) be able to survive the impact of this pandemic and move forward into a brighter future?

Here are often-asked questions: Why should I be a member? Why should I donate? What value does USA Racquetball bring to the sport?

We're proud to debut in *Servin' Up the News* this WE ARE USA RACQUETBALL infographic to describe the role USAR plays in the sport of Racquetball.

You will start to see this infographic in a number of places. We take very seriously our role in serving all of you and in saving and strengthening our sport, and we hope it resonates with you as an inspiration for working together to do whatever we can to preserve this treasure in our lives.

It will take all of us to do it, and USA Racquetball accepts and embraces our sacred responsibility to lead and to inspire everyone to participate in solutions. More on this to come!

Sincerely,

The Staff, Board, and Volunteers of USA Racquetball

#1 We are the US OPEN -- the #1 event in racquetball.

Since its inception in 1995, the US OPEN—brainchild of several of the sport's leaders at the time—has grown and matured into being easily the #1 event in Racquetball. Entries for the pro and amateur divisions have traditionally been capped at 750, and this event is "the one" no one wants to miss!

Beginning in Memphis back in 1995 and migrating to Minneapolis in 2010, the US OPEN never lost momentum. Owned by USA Racquetball and expertly run by Doug Ganim, this tournament has been the meeting place for the sport's players from multiple countries as well as manufacturers, staff, volunteers, and fans from around the world. It's truly the experience of a lifetime!

#2 We are National Championships and 500+ Sanctioned Events (Indoor)

While the pandemic imposed a temporary halt to national championships as well as sanctioned local, state, and regional events across the country, Racquetball competition is trending in the right direction once again. Players are flocking to the courts, and our hope is that 2023 will mark the return to normalcy (as that might present itself to be!).

- USAR National Doubles & Singles Championships (combined in 2022 and 2023)
- USAR National High School Championships
- USAR National Intercollegiate Championships
- USAR National Junior Championships

Live streaming brings the sound of the ball hitting the front wall (and much more!) to players and fans all over the world as the best of the best emerge as new U.S. Team and U.S. Junior Team members in the Doubles, Singles, and Juniors qualifier events!

#3 We are World Outdoor Racquetball: 3 National Championships and 50+ Events

<u>World Outdoor Racquetball</u> (*WOR*) is the parallel universe to the traditional sport of racquetball played by millions in clubs throughout the country. The rules are the same, the racquets and ball are the same, but the fresh air, bright sunshine, and opportunity to play it at your local park take outdoor racquetball to another level of fun, indeed another way to enjoy this great sport.

With three National Championships per year and over 50+ events, there is always an opportunity to play an outdoor racquetball tournament!

Never tried outdoor racquetball? Take a look at our <u>court list</u> and find a park near you! And, be sure to check out the WOR Update by Todd Boss in every issue of USA Racquetball's monthly newsletter, *Serving Up the News!*

#4 We are Junior, High School, and Collegiate Players: Our Next Generation

They are truly the future of our sport: junior players competing from the ages of 6 up through 21; high school players, generally aged 13-18; and collegiate players (of any age who are enrolled in accredited institutions), and they not only have their own tournaments but also their own dedicated committees as well, populated with SMEs (subject matter experts) from across the country who are dedicated to providing training ground for future superstars.

Collegiate Committee

This committee's primary function is to promote, develop, and instruct tournament caliber collegiate players throughout the United States. The Association develops the recreational player program at the collegiate level while concentrating on developing the competitive player.

High School Committee

This committee determines policy and procedures to promote racquetball as a competitive high school sport. The committee may also assist in promoting and operating the annual National High School Championships.

Junior Committee

This committee provides support in promoting junior racquetball within state associations for all youths of high school age and below. The committee also assists in the policy development, promotion, and operation of junior national events. The committee is responsible for furthering the growth of and participation in racquetball programs for players 21 years of age and under at the local, state, regional, and national levels.

#5 We are a Pan American Sport

The Pan American Games are an international multi-sport event, an Olympic-style competition for athletes from all nations of the Americas. They are conducted every four years, always one year before the Olympic Games. The first edition of the Pan American Games was held in 1951, in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The Pan American Games is racquetball's premier experience, the most-valued pinnacle to attain for elite Racquetball athletes representing every country in North, Central, and South America.

Racquetball has been part of all but one Pan American Games since the 1995 Games in Mar del Plata, Argentina. It was most recently competed at the 2019 Pan American Games in Lima, Peru.

The XIX Pan American Games is scheduled to be held from October 20 to November 5, 2023, in Santiago, Chile. Although presented by Panam Sports, host countries also have a say in which sports are included in their PAG program, and happily, Racquetball is on the program for Santiago 2023.

Separate from the Pan American Games is the Pan American Racquetball Championships, an event held every year by the Pan American Racquetball Confederation, which under the auspices of the International Racquetball Federation (IRF) is the governing body for all continental sanctioned racquetball events in the Western hemisphere.

Even though these two events (Pan American Games and Pan American Racquetball Championships) are similarly named, the PAG is multi-sport while the PARC is racquetball only. There is, however, a connection. The results attained by countries at the Pan American Racquetball Championships (generally competed the week prior to Easter each year in various locations) are used to determine which countries—and how many athletes from each qualifying country—are invited to travel and compete at the Pan American Games. Further, the PARC results are used to seed the individual and team competitions at the PAG.

U.S. Racquetball Team results in PARC Bolivia 2022, as well as those from the 2023 PARC event, will figure in to how the United States will be represented in Santiago, October 2023.

GO TEAM USA!!

#6 We are the U.S. Adult and Junior National Teams

The U.S. Teams compete on the "World Stage" with USA on their backs! The pride these elite athletes feel to be able to represent the United States is inspiring to behold. We hope the hard work of these athletes as they vie for spots on the national teams also create pride in each and every USA Racquetball member in knowing that these teams represent all of us who love the sport.

Qualifiers are held each year for one-year positions on each of the teams. Normally, the adult season goes June through the following May, and the junior season goes July through the following June.

For the U.S. Adult Team, until the pandemic hit, there were two qualifiers for U.S. Adult Singles slots (at National Doubles and at National Singles) and one qualifier for Doubles slots at National Doubles. The top four men and women singles finishers make the team as well as the 1st and 2nd place doubles teams. Members of the U.S. Adult Team traditionally compete internationally twice a year, once at the Pan American Racquetball Championships (not to be confused with the Pan American Games), and also at the IRF World Racquetball Championships every other year, with the Pan American Games and The World Games occurring in the off years from the IRF World Championships.

In 2023, with the addition of Mixed Doubles by the International Racquetball Federation, the USA Racquetball National Doubles & Singles Championships in February 2023 (Tempe, AZ) will be the sole qualifier for Doubles positions on the U.S. Adult Team (gender and mixed). The lone Singles qualifier will take place as a standalone event in Lombard, Illinois, over Memorial Day weekend.

For the U.S. Junior Team, the pandemic has been a challenge as well. In 2020, the USAR National Junior Championships qualifier had to be canceled, and that compelled U.S. Junior Team Coach Charlie Pratt and his assistant coaches to enter into an unprecedented selection process (i.e., essays, extensive video analysis, and prior results) to name the team with the anticipated possibility of competing in Bolivia at the IRF World Junior Championships later in the year. That event had to be canceled as well, which unfortunately meant that, like the U.S. Adult Team, the 2020-21 team missed the chance to compete as did the 2021-22 team when USA Racquetball made the difficult COVID-relative decision not to send a team to IRF World Juniors in Guatemala City in December 2021.

Happily, the 2022-23 U.S. Junior Team competed in the IRF World Junior Championships in December 2022 where a delegation numbering 44 supported our 28 players in divisions ranging from 21 & Under to 10 & Under. The USA came in third overall behind Mexico and Bolivia.

#7 We are the USAR Hall of Fame and Annual Awards recognizing excellence and contribution

The **USA Racquetball Hall of Fame** recognizes and honors those athletes and contributors who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in competition or in the development, leadership, and advancement of the sport. The award is based upon an extended period of consistent excellence in one or more of the following areas:

COMPETITOR - Nominee, as an amateur or professional player, must have impacted the sport through: competitive excellence, sportsmanship, and fair play.

CONTRIBUTOR - Nominee must have made significant and noteworthy contributions, producing positive and lasting effects that have helped advance the sport on a National Level.

Nominations for the USA Racquetball Hall of Fame are due no later than September 15th of each year and may be made by any USAR member in good standing. You can find all the required information <u>HERE</u>.

Although the pandemic has affected the schedule, Hall of Fame Inductees have historically been celebrated each year at the USAR National Singles Championships with their friends and family present.

The USA Racquetball **Annual Awards** are maintained to recognize those athletes and contributors who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in competition, leadership, or sportsmanship. All awards other than the Joe Sobek Outstanding Contribution Award recognize achievements from the past twelve months. The Sobek Award may recognize achievements over an extended period of time.

All Annual Awards are presented by the USA Racquetball Board of Directors on behalf of the association's members and racquetball players across the United States. The Hall of Fame and Annual Awards Committee evaluate nominations from the membership and analyze contributions and performance based on the specific criteria outlined below. The Committee recommends award recipients to the USA Racquetball Board of Directors for presentation at each year's National Singles Championships.

- Joe Sobek Outstanding Contribution Award
- Presidential Award
- John Halverson Fair Play Award
- Peggy Steding Female Age Group Award
- Bud Muehleisen Male Age Group Award
- Female Athlete of the Year Award
- Male Athlete of the Year Award

Learn more about the USA Racquetball Annual Awards HERE.

#8 We partner across the sport – IRF, IRT, LPRT, MRF, NMRA, WSMRA

USA Racquetball is proud to partner with the International Racquetball Federation, International Racquetball Tour, Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour, Military Racquetball Federation (now MACS), National Masters Racquetball Association, and the Women's Senior/Masters Racquetball Association. Here's a bit about each partner:

International Racquetball Federation (IRF) - The International Racquetball Federation is the recognized International Governing Body for racquetball under the International Olympic Committee. The IRF is a member of SportAccord and The International World Games Association.

International Racquetball Tour (IRT) - Founded in 1990, the men's professional International Racquetball Tour (IRT) features 300 players competing in over 20 Top-Tier and more than 50 Satellite tournaments in Latin America, the United States, and Canada. Tournaments draw amateur and college entrants during the September through May season. The amateur players compete in divisions ranging from beginner to open level for both singles and doubles. Pablo Fajre leads the IRT.

Ladies Professional Racquetball Tour (LPRT) – The LPRT is the governing body of a growing membership of the highest-level professional female racquetball players in the world. The LPRT is an organization managed by Commissioner and President T. J. Baumbaugh. The LPRT is comprised of elite female athletes representing over a dozen countries including the United States, Mexico, Chile, Canada, Colombia, Guatemala, Japan, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina.

Military Racquetball Federation (MRF) - The Military Racquetball Federation (MRF), now referred to more commonly as MACS (Military Adaptive Court Sports), founded in 2008, is dedicated to promoting racquetball programs and events for service members in the USA and abroad. The volunteer-operated, 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization assists wounded warriors with their rehabilitation efforts through specialized clinics. These clinics focus on the use of racquetball as a tool to help overcome the physical and mental challenges soldiers face from combat, such as PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI), and other injuries.

National Masters Racquetball Association (NMRA) - The National Masters Racquetball Association (NMRA) is an organization of racquetball friends from across the country who first got together in 1971 in New Castle, Pennsylvania, and started inviting more friends from then on. Now associated with USA Racquetball, the NMRA aims to provide a special social, friendly, and competitive national tournament environment for players 45 years and older. NMRA believes they provide the best bang for the tournament dollar. Every player plays every day of each four-day event, and all matches are a self-refereed, round-robin format "No more one-and-done" tournaments! They sincerely care about the players having a great tournament experience and make sure they want to come back year after year.

Women's Senior/Masters Racquetball Association (WSMRA) - Founded in 1993, the WSMRA is dedicated to introducing new women to racquetball and tournament competition and promoting the sport as a lifetime activity. Its annual tournament for women aged 35 and above emphasizes fun, friends, and good sportsmanship. The organization supports breast cancer research, the USA Racquetball Collegiate Scholarship, and the LPRT Scholarship. Visit them on Facebook or at wsmra.com.

#9 We Support State Organizations and Event Directors

Did you know \$10 of every adult one-year membership is funneled back into that member's State Association?

Yes, your **membership helps support grassroots programming** in your area! Prior to COVID, the requirement was that a state hold at least one tournament each quarter and be compliant with SafeSport requirements in order to take advantage of the rebate program. Since the onset of COVID, the tournament requirement has been temporarily waived for states to receive their rebates.

USA Racquetball schedules a **State Board Member and Tournament Director Quarterly Call**, typically held the first Tuesday of each quarter, to discuss current happenings inside USA Racquetball; provide updates and insights; hear concerns; and offer tutorials on the R2Sports tournament management system (TMS). With more than 250 invitees, these calls are targeted to not only provide information but also to provide an exchange of best practices, i.e., what other states and organizations are doing. Each call is recorded so that those who cannot attend won't miss out.

USA Racquetball staff members are always available to support states and tournament directors who need assistance, updates, and new ideas. Additionally, have you ever dived into the USAR website beyond the home page? A great number of topics with corresponding information are offered up.

Throughout the pandemic, USA Racquetball offered discounts on sanctioning fees in an effort to bring tournaments come back across the country. Our staff provides tutorials on R2Sports; resources and forms for tournaments; and can even help a tournament director partner with their local sports commission and/or visitors' center to assist with discounted hotel rates, sponsorships, and volunteers.

USA Racquetball is here to serve our members and assist all event directors and state board members however we can! If you have any questions or need assistance, please reach out to Executive Director Mike Grisz at mgrisz@aol.com or Board of Directors President Stewart Solomon at president@usaracquetball.com.

#10 Strategies for Saving Courts

Strategies for Saving Courts

The below article describes USA Racquetball's available information and resources on **Strategies for Saving Courts.**

On the USA Racquetball website (<u>www.usaracquetball.com</u>), the first item in the dropdown menu is "About." That's where you'll find the section entitled Strategies for Saving Courts, or click on the link below.

https://www.teamusa.org/usa-racquetball/about/strategies-for-saving-courts

Once there, note that there are four choices in the boxes across the top of the page:

PROGRAMMING COMMUNICATION MORE INFORMATION RESOURCES

Here's a brief description of what appears in each:

COURT PROGRAMMING

https://www.teamusa.org/usa-racquetball/about/strategies-for-saving-courts/court-programming

One of the fastest and most effective ways for facilities to increase profitability is to designate a resource dedicated to optimizing court utilization. A CPC or Court Programming Coordinator works with facilities to develop programs and administer activities to promote racquetball and other court sports to new and existing members, maximize utilization of court space, and create new fitness opportunities for facility members. Preliminary analyses suggest that a CPC, providing a basic level of court programming support to a smaller facility with 4-5 indoor racquetball courts, could almost double or otherwise significantly increase court-related annual cash flow. The following documents describe this role and provide additional information that may be helpful to a CPC in accomplishing this goal.

Court Programming Coordinator
CPC Facility Model
Racquetball Benefits and Basics
Other Court Sports
Strategic Plan to Preserve Courts

COMMUNICATION

https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/Programs/Future-of-Racquetball/Sample-Communication

Sample Letter of Appreciation from Players

Sample Letter of Appreciation from State Association

Sample Petition from Facility Members to Save Courts

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.teamusa.org/usa-racquetball/about/strategies-for-saving-courts/more-information

CLUB INSIDER ARTICLES

Six articles with the overall theme of "Saving Courts Profitably" were published in *Club Insider* in 2021. These articles were authored to provide tips and ideas for collaborating with club owners and managers to keep courts creatively busy and profitable.

Greetings to Clubs and Fitness Facilities from "The Court People" March 2021

Using Courts and Court Sports Programming as a Competitive Advantage April 2021

Gratitude...Belonging...Inspiration -- Our "Third Place" May 2021

Keeping Courts Busy for Fun and Fitness June 2021

Thinking Outside and Inside of the (20x40) Box July 2021

Court Sports: It's Academic! September 2021

RESOURCES

https://www.teamusa.org/usa-racquetball/about/strategies-for-saving-courts/resources

With the advent of the pandemic, our lives were seriously affected. Racquetball was no different. Even prior to this event, we were seeing signs of impacts to our sport, particularly with decreasing court availability. Recognizing these signs, USA Racquetball chartered a small group of individuals with a wealth of experience to develop strategies and programs to keep racquetball healthy and vibrant. After all, without a court, we don't have a sport!

Mike Grisz <u>mgrisz@aol.com</u>

(Executive Director; Past President -- Texas; Treasurer -- Virginia)

Larry Haemmerle <u>unclelarry2all@yahoo.com</u> (Past President – USA Racquetball/Colorado)

Cheryl Kirk cherylkkirk@aol.com

(Past President – USA Racquetball/State President -- Illinois)

USA Racquetball is here to serve our members and assist anyone who desires information about saving courts through club programming (lessons, clinics, leagues, as well as alternative uses while not affecting playability).

#11 Technology: Communication, Membership, Rankings, and R2Sports

USA Racquetball is proud to offer the latest technology in the sport so that you, the player can keep up to date on all things racquetball, whether it's your favorite players and how they are doing in a tournament, your current doubles ranking, or following our National Teams at an upcoming event.

Communication – USA Racquetball strives to keep in close contact with its members by using various means to communicate. Email marketing, social media, and our website our different platforms that any racquetball player can go to or sign up for to receive the latest news in racquetball. For instance, our monthly newsletter *Serving Up the News* is a great way to receive your monthly dose of racquetball all wrapped up in one email!

Membership – Renewing your <u>membership</u> is as easy as 1, 2, 3! With member benefits such as the below, you want to make sure you sign up!

- Online access to Racquetball publications like our online newsletter
- Regular USA Racquetball and State Racquetball Association updates including National Team news
- Current USA Racquetball rules and online training tips
- Great discounts on United Airlines and at all IHG properties around the world
- Shopping discounts through PinchPerks
- Eligibility to compete in over 450 annual tournaments including USA Racquetball Championship events (six annually)
- Secondary accident insurance
- Right to vote in National Board elections and participate in member surveys
- Last but not least, being a USA Racquetball member (and encouraging friends and family to become members as well) supports <u>your</u> sport for this generation and the ones to come.

Rankings – Ever wonder about your ranking in your state? Or how you stand rankings-wise against your arch nemesis? Our ranking system is on our <u>website</u> and you can easily punch in your first and last name and find out your national and state rankings for both singles and doubles.

R2Sports – R2sports is racquetball tournament management system customized for USA Racquetball. Owners Ryan and Tish Rodgers designed a cutting-edge tournament management program to benefit everyone involved including tournament directors, organization directors and staff, players, fans, media, and sponsors. You can also follow your favorite racquetball player during a tournament while using the R2sports app on your phone!

#12 We manage Rules and Equipment Specifications

Dan Horner of Ankeny, Iowa, is USA Racquetball's National Rules Commissioner. As Dan stated in the article announcing his role (effective 5/24/21), he focuses on keeping the greatest sport ever invented safe to learn, fun to play, fair to compete, and exciting to watch. Send any questions or suggestions for rules changes to Dan at rulescommissioner@usaracquetball.com.

Dan has served on the National Rules Committee for several years and is now its Chairperson. With a deep knowledge and understanding of the rules of the game, he will indeed welcome questions from members and respond timely along with featuring some each month in a USAR Serving Up the News resurrection of the popular feature "What's the Call" that the former commissioner, Otto Dietrich, made popular in Racquetball magazine over many years. Look for Rules Rule! in Serving Up the News each month.

Learn more about rules and equipment specifications on the USA Racquetball website:

Rulebook Index: https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/rules/Rulebook-Index

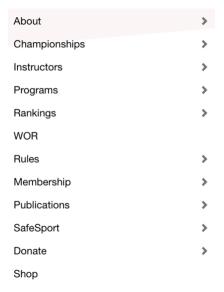
Courts & Equipment: https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Racquetball/rules/2-Courts-and-Equipment

#13 We deliver the Website, Social Media, and Publications that connect, inform, and educate.

Website -- The USA Racquetball website at <u>www.usaracquetball.com</u> is the platform from which much happens within our sport. A "carousel" at the top of the home page features current newsworthy articles and features.

Additionally, numerous articles are housed there and linked over from the mid-month publication *Serving Up the News*.

A look inside the website brings much more than most realize. The dropdown menu on the home page starts with this:



Everywhere you see a right-pointing arrow, there is additional information waiting to be discovered. To give one example, a closer look at the Rules section includes five more places to learn about various aspects of the Rules of Racquetball:

Ask the Rules Commissioner
Court Specifications
Racquetball Rules Online
Rules Printable Version
Non-Conforming Racquets

There's so much to discover about Racquetball on the USAR website. Have a seat one quiet weekend afternoon with your coffee and a brownie...and explore away!

Social Media - With more than <u>3.8 billion</u> people using social media, it allows USA Racquetball to connect with players and fans all over the world. Here are just some of the items we cover in our social media platform:

- Breaking News
- Adult/Junior National Team Players
- Live Streaming from National Events
- World Outdoor Racquetball (WOR)
- Excerpts from our monthly newsletter, Serving up the News

Follow USA Racquetball on all our social media locations, so you don't miss out on the latest news!

Facebook Instagram Twitter YouTube

<u>Publications</u> - Throughout the years, there have been numerous magazines, newspaper-type periodicals, and similar magazines that cover the sport or simply include racquetball articles.

Thanks to Jim and Dianne Easterling from the Great State of Michigan, we now have a dedicated section of the USA Racquetball website where you can view past magazines that go back as far as 1972. Jim and his lovely assistant spent 700+ hours scanning magazines and researching the many publications, discovering when they were published and by whom. Thank you, Easterlings!

Click <u>HERE</u> to learn about the history of USA Racquetball publications throughout the years and view past issues!

Note: Due to the pandemic, USA Racquetball placed *Racquetball* magazine on hold and debuted its online monthly newsletter, *Serving Up the News*, in July 2020. The newsletter to this day provides a monthly look at "what's going on" with Racquetball across the country.

We take our role very seriously in serving all of you and in saving and strengthening our sport, and we hope this infographic resonates with you as an inspiration for working *together* to do *whatever we can* to preserve this treasure in our lives.

It will take all of us to do it, and USA Racquetball accepts and embraces our sacred responsibility to lead and to inspire everyone to participate in solutions.

Please feel free to print out the infographic and socialize it anywhere and everywhere to help the Racquetball Family understand how valuable our members' support is to the future of our sport!

Sincerely,

The Staff, Board, and Volunteers of USA Racquetball

