

Platform Tennis News



Passport Scotch presents the latest news from the world of platform tennis

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HACKENBERG-HILTON AND BAIRD-MAIER WIN 1980 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

In a festive carnival atmosphere, the largest crowd in APTA history, ignoring wretched weather on one day, turned this year's Nationals into a classic event. Sponsored for the second year by Passport Scotch, the Nationals were held for the first time in New Jersey. The primary site was the Montclair Golf Club.

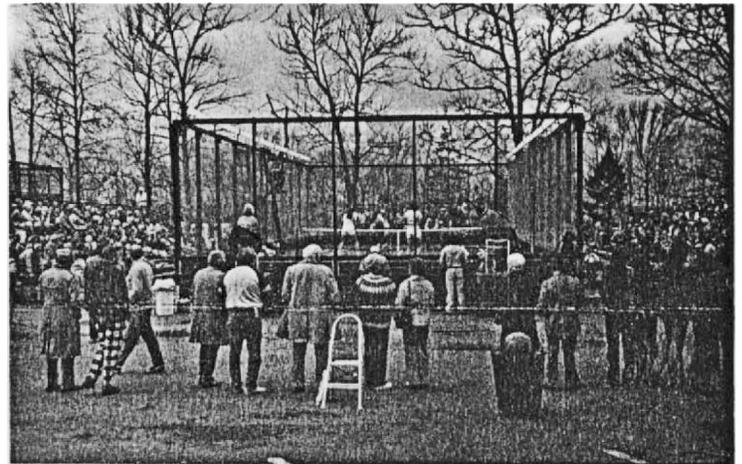
In the women's final, the top-seeded pair of Yvonne Hackenberg and Hilary Hilton steadied and strengthened their game to turn back the #2 seeds, Linda Wolf and Robin Rich, 3-6, 6-3, 6-3. Following that match, Steve Baird and Rich Maier, seeded second, upset the #1 pair, Herb FitzGibbon and Hank Irvine, the 1977 and 1978 champions. The score: 6-1, 3-6, 7-6, 6-7, 6-3.

Passport Scotch put up prize money of \$10,000 apiece for both men and women. J. Geoffrey Gollin, product manager for Passport, was on hand to present the checks to each of the winning teams. Among the spectators: Martin L. Bart, president of Calvert Distillers; Judson Morris, executive vice president of Calvert; David Newman, director of marketing, and their families. Passport Scotch, a Calvert brand, has sponsored platform tennis activities for the past three years.

In spite of persistent rain Saturday, some 300 showed up at the Montclair Golf Club for the men's quarterfinals. Then on Sunday, between 1200-1500 crowded the bleachers around the specially installed center court and the area by the striped food-and-beverage tent.

They had come from as far away as Minnesota, Michigan, Maine and Virginia to watch. Stars from the APTA regions and two European teams were among the players.

Even though the chill intensified through a gray afternoon, hardly a spectator left before the dramatic men's final ended.



In the Women's Draw

A coterie of 48 teams set up camp March 26 at the Short Hills Club. It had been "one of the better seasons," to Buffy Briggs, women's tournament chairman. Generally, the first eight seeds at the Nationals finished in the top eight all year. No one was startled at seeing Hilton-Hackenberg as #1; in their first year together, they'd won every tournament they'd played.

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As play progressed, only one twosome rippled the water. Muffin Slonaker and Mac Polestak, seeded #8, put out the #4 seeds, B.J. DeBree and Ann Daunic, 7-6, 2-6, 6-4. That match included perhaps the world's longest game. Serving for the win at 5-4, Slonaker made her first toss at 11:45. Forty-five minutes later, she and Polestak had won that crucial game -- and not one service fault!

For the semis, the women lined up this way: Slonaker-Polestak were to take on the top seeds, Hilton-Hackenberg, while Kit Knight and Mimi Raney, #3, were matched against the second seeds, Linda Wolf and Robin Rich. Forty-three minutes later, Hilton-Hackenberg had qualified for the finals with a 6-4, 6-2 win. Fifteen minutes after that, Wolf and Rich emerged with a 4-6, 6-0, 6-2 victory.

In the Men's Play

The 64 teams began playing at and around Montclair Golf Club on Friday. The weather held up that day, but it poured on Saturday. Come Sunday morning, the four top seeds had held. FitzGibbon-Irvine were up against #3 Gregg Brents and Greg Moore, a new combination this season. Then the #2 team of Baird-Maier, also a first-year pairing, took off against John Mangan and John Adams, seeded #4. Both semis were straight-set victories and over in 90 minutes; FitzGibbon and Irvine winning 6-3, 7-5, 6-3, and Baird-Maier 7-5, 6-2, 6-0.

The Finals

Shortly after noon on Sunday, the women finalists were ready. The Hilton-Hackenberg duo began the match noticeably tight. Their tense returns flew a lot of balls out of court and Wolf-Rich raced to a 6-3 first set.



Passport Scotch's Jeff Gollin with runners-up Linda Wolf (left) and Robin Rich, and winners Hilary Hilton and Yvonne Hackenberg.

As the second set began, Hilton-Hackenberg ran up a 3-1 lead. Then Hilton dropped serve at love, and Rich's backhand cross-court drop volley made it 3-3. Digging in, the #1 seeds fired up their poaching and service returns to take the second set, 6-2. Early in the final set, Rich dropped her serve at love, and the momentum swung. Hilton-Hackenberg now had their act together. They jumped to a 5-2 lead and finally won the match, 3-6, 6-3, 6-3.

The men's final, nearly three hours long, will be well-remembered. Typical of the play: at least seven times, Hank Irvine coolly retrieved at center court a ball ricocheting crazily around his partner in the backhand corner. Baird-Maier quickly captured the first set, 6-1. But FitzGibbon-Irvine rallied to win the second, 6-3. The third set produced a pattern: Baird-Maier, steady, lightning quick, solid; FitzGibbon, slashing every overhead; Irvine, effortlessly tossing up lobs, waiting to lash a drive. Midway, four straight games went against the server. Play steadied, and climaxed in a tiebreaker. Boosted by two fine service returns from Maier, the Baird-Maier team took it, 7-2, and the third set.

As the fourth set opened, the air began to cool and in the first game, FitzGibbon knelt suddenly with leg cramps. Then, said Steve Baird later, he and Rich Maier began "thinking too much about Herbie instead of playing our game." Games went back and forth. At game #11, Irvine held serve while covering for FitzGibbon who was barely able to stand as cramps persisted. Baird-Maier held their serve and the set went into a tiebreaker. FitzGibbon put on his warm-up pants and he and Irvine won the 7-2 tiebreak.





Jeff Gollin presents winning check to Steve Baird (left) and Rich Maier. Runners-up were Herb FitzGibbon and Hank Irvine.

The last set began with a barrage of hard drives and solid, deep volleys. Baird-Maier inched ahead, and in the sixth game they broke Irvine's serve with forced errors. Then came the pivotal game -- in little more than a minute, FitzGibbon and Irvine made four errors. The score was 5-2 for Baird and Maier, then 5-3 as their opponents beat back several match points. FitzGibbon was still hobbled by cramps as Maier started serving in the ninth game. Three forced errors took the score to 40-0. There, Hank Irvine stepped into a drive and hammered it long. And in their first season as partners, Steve Baird and Rich Maier had wrapped up the Men's National Championship by making themselves focus on playing their own game.

*** PASSPORT SCOTCH STANDINGS ***

The following team standings are based on total points as of April 1, 1980. The Official APTA National Rankings will be published in the September issue of PLATFORM TENNIS.

MEN'S STANDINGS:

1. Herb FitzGibbon-Hank Irvine
2. Steve Baird-Rich Maier
3. Gregg Brents-Greg Moore
4. John Adams-John Mangan
5. Peter Kinney-Mike Wachob
6. Doug Barrow-Bob Kulig
7. Bill Griffin-Tom Smith
8. Phil Crane-Lanny Openshaw
9. Mark Allen-Steve Nycum
10. Bob Coffin-Ted Hoskinson

WOMEN'S STANDINGS:

1. Hilary Hilton
Yvonne Hackenberg
2. Kit Knight-Mimi Raney
3. Gail Callaway
Robin Rich
4. Ann Daunic-B.J. DeBree
5. Shirley Babington
Allison McCance
6. Wendy Chase-Fay Gambee
7. Pat Lurie-Nadine Netter
8. Mac Polestak
Muffin Slonaker
9. Karen Brossard
Judy Macy
10. Nancy Dickson
Margot Heyd

*** REGIONAL STANDINGS ***

REGION I:

1. Figlar-Smith, R.
2. Kleinert-Lerch
3. Butterfield-Parton
4. Egan-Nycum, Scott
Flanagan-Norris
5. Knauer-Richter
6. Cochrane-Dyer
7. Houlihan-Johnstone
King-Pierce
McCready-Scudder

REGION II:

1. Hoehn-Hornidge
2. Read-Weiss
3. Jennings-White, M.
4. Myer-Wall
5. Dixon-McKinley
6. Lockwood-McCance
7. Stephenson-Worthen
8. Gibbs-Rowe, P.
9. Sears-White, E.
10. Crowley-Curtin

REGION III:

1. Eikenberry-Orme
2. Neff-Neff
3. Hoskinson-Stifel
4. Hayes, B.-Hayes, J.
5. Davison-Morrow
6. Fulton-Lankenau
7. Morris-Prince
8. Atherton-Hall

REGION IV:

1. DeWindt-McLaughlin
2. Reynolds-Peckscamp
3. Driftmyer-Oswald
4. Haverland-Humphrey
5. McNitt-McNitt
6. Brinkman-Bunis
7. Lowell-McNitt, P.
8. Bothell-King
9. Cuneo-Wiltman
10. Brown-Hackenberg

REGION V:

1. Farr-McComas
2. Stever-Warde
3. Lynch, Chad-Smith, R.
4. Holderness-Horvath
5. Hayes, E.-Hall, S.
6. Bishop-Hodsdon
7. Nostrand-Owen
8. Adams-Lynch, Chas.
9. Houston-Mitha
10. Brown-Fiske

ATTENTION - SENIOR MEN !

The Birmingham, Michigan area clubs will host the 1980-'81 National Senior and Senior Vet championships on March 13,14,15.

Buffet dinners on Thursday and Friday are on the agenda to welcome players and wives, and a gala dinner dance is planned for Saturday. Mark your calendar now!

Note: See Jerry Manhold' column on the following page for this year's Senior results.



THE SENIOR SCENE by Jerry Manhold

Honor Roll of National Senior Champions-1980

- 45s: John Brownlow (Cleveland) and Jack Packard (Chevy Chase)
50s: St. John Bain and Bill Schneebeck (Cincinnati) - repeat winners
55s: Chuck Baird (Toronto) and Tad Bowen (Connecticut)
60s: Lyman Andrus and Jerry Manhold (New Jersey) - repeat winners

NATIONAL SENIORS REPORT:

The four-year-old National 45s were again held in Region IV in Pittsburgh March 1-2 with Ted Hoopes in charge. The draw was a disappointing 26 teams and only 3 eastern teams, but the play was spirited and the accommodations first-rate. Seeding was perfect; the # 1, 2, 3, and 4 seeds were semifinalists. APTA tournament commissioner Jack Packard and partner John Brownlow are the new champions over perennial Senior champions Chuck Baird and Roger Lankenau in 3 straight sets: 7-5, 6-1, 6-2.

Dave Jennings and his Fighting Creek Club in Redding, Ct. were hosts to the National 50s on March 8-9. The draw was 36 teams with excellent representation from all of the regions. Top-seeded St. John Bain and big Bill Schneebeck of Cincinnati repeated over last year's finalists, Bob Brown and George Reynolds of Scarsdale: 6-2, 6-4.

The National 55s (new tournament, second year) were hosted by Bob Callaway at his facility, the Norwalk P.T. Center in Norwalk, Ct. on March 15-16. Eighteen teams came, including one from Florida. Defending champion Chuck Baird teamed with a new partner, Tad Bowen, to defeat the 60s champions, Lem Andrus and Jerry Manhold in 2 straight sets.

REGIONAL SENIORS:

Region IV continued to grow in tournaments for Seniors with the Toledo 45s held February 9-10 with Allan Brogan as chairman. It drew 16 teams and was seeded right, with # 1 seeds Bill McVay and Paul Rankin of Pittsburgh winning in 4 tough sets over the unseeded team of Marv Rorick and Al Rava. This was the fifth tournament for men 45 & Over held in Region IV.

(continued above)

Regional Seniors (cont.)

New Jersey (Region I) held its Seventh Annual (closed) 50s at Orange Lawn Tennis Club on February 23-24 with Bob Flanagan and Jerry Manhold at the helm. There were 26 entries. Former National Men's champion Jim Gordon (1959) teamed with 6'7" Sandy Hawley of Seabright Tennis Club to squeeze past defending champion Andy Robinson and new partner Hank Clifford of Morristown Field Club in 3 long sets.

Chairman Jim Murray of Chevy Chase, Md. (Region III) held his annual Mid-Atlantic 50s on February 23-24 with 16 teams. Defending champions MacDonald Symington and Don Hyde from Philadelphia did not lose a set in winning over # 4 seeds Bob Price and chairman Murray.

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Senior men are asked and encouraged to write to Jerry Manhold with ideas for Senior events. He guarantees attention and a prompt response from 50 Main Street, Madison, N.J. 07940. Tel. 201-377-0758.

* HAVE PADDLE - WILL TRAVEL *

To kick off the 1980-'81 season, fifteen couples will be combining platform tennis with a sightseeing tour in Europe. This event, likely to be set for October, will be sponsored by Bellfires, the European licensee for R.J. Reilly Company. The players will be on the road eleven days, wheeling around Europe on a luxury bus.

Starting in Paris, the couples will play platform tennis indoors and tour the sights. Then the bus will take them to the Mediterranean coast, near Perpignan, where two courts have been built. Then on to Switzerland to compete on the highest courts in Europe (with a little skiing on the side), and to visit Basel which has courts in town. The excursion will then swing north to Reims, the Verdun battlefield, and the champagne cellars. After a farewell dinner, the group will embark for Paris and home.

Tour director Robert Tulp of Bellfire's Pinpoint Publicity subsidiary announces that the group will be comprised of exactly fifteen couples. As for talent level, he's looking for "the average club player, not the winners of the Nationals." The cost: \$1500 per person with air fare extra. Tulp plans a mailing on the excursion next month.

