

## 2015 Four Singles Finals Summary

Sorry for the delay in updating the results this past weekend. I hate it when work gets in the way of handball.

We had a spectacular end to the indoor season and the results by Division are as follows-

### Open Division

The open started with a semi-finals match between Pete Dembeck and Tyler Stevens. Tyler won in two games 12, 13. Pete battled hard but had a tough time adjusting to the power and speed of Tyler's game.

In the finals, we had an incredible match with Jim Karner beating Tyler Stevens 11 to 10 in a tie breaker. Both of these guys have been playing national tournaments since they were teenagers and it showed. Jim elevated his game and was able to adjust to the faster pace that Tyler brought.

Game 1 was all Tyler early as he jumped to a 7 to 1 lead. Once Jim got warmed up the game got closer but Tyler finished him off to win 21-19.

In game 2, it was back and forth until mid- way when Jim surged to a 17 to 11 lead. Tyler, needing to be back in Toledo to work or deciding to conserve energy, strategically decided to get aced out and go for the tie breaker.

As we all know, anything can happen in a tie breaker. It was great battle with the ball absolutely flying around the court. Both players took their offense chances from all over the court. Tyler's left hand kill from the back left corner was deadly all match. However, he found the floor a few times when Jim served him some softies in the left corner. The soft serves were such a change of pace that both players seem to score a point or two when they used these change ups. Late in the tie break Tyler took a 10 to 8 lead and was serving for the match. A tough serve forced a big set up front left and it looked like it was all over. However, Tyler went for the roll out winner and skipped it in for a side out. Jim regained the box and got the 3 points he needed to win the match including a serve he caught just right that hopped about a foot the left.

It was a pleasure to watch and some of the highest level of handball our tournament has seen in a long time.

### 65s Division:

The second best match of the tournament was in the 65s with Jim Lowe and Rick Graham. These two are like Michigan vs. Ohio State as it seems like they face off in the last match of the season every year. However, the one big difference is they like each other off the court.

This year Jim was able to edge Rick 11 to 10 in a tie break. It was a back and forth battle. Both guys had chances to serve out the match but the other guy took aggressive shots to force the side out.

A special thanks to our MHA president Dale (who I am now calling DC since I always spell his last name wrong) who was the referee in the match. DC had to make some tough calls when there was contact on one play and a potential avoidable on another. I thought he got the calls right and it did add some drama to a great match.

#### 60s Division:

In this division we had a classic Sampras vs. Agassi type match up with Steve Fase being the serve and shoot player and Bobby Straetmans preferring the baseline volley game.

Steve jumped on Bobby winning game one easily 21 to 4. Bobby is a notorious slow starter so game one was not going to be a predictor of game two. Sure enough – Bobby got rolling in game 2 and had a 14 to 7 lead. It was looking like tie break all away but Steve managed get in the box get 3 quick ones making it 14 to 11. It seemed to give him a surge of energy and he quickly got a side out and another three points to tie it up.

Steve smelled the finish line and used some nice controlled back wall kills from the back left corner to the front right corner catching the side wall first and dying. Those kills and passes kept him rolling to win game 2 - 21 to 15 and capture the title.

#### 50s Division

Bob Balch faced Ted Grammatico in the finals. Bob normally plays doubles so he really dug deep to make a great run in the singles. However, Ted is fast player who covers all the court. I did not see much of the match since I was refereeing another match. However, I did catch Bob between games completely out of breath and shaking his head. That tells me Ted used his speed to dig things up and force longer rallies. Congratulations to Ted for his first State Title.

#### A Division

Ryan Inman and Matt Pingel faced off in the A Division Finals. Both are up and coming players. Matt played for Carl Valentino at Michigan State. Ryan plays out of Total Sports.

Matt's fundamentals paid off as he waited for his set ups and used the pass off the back wall to score easily. To get to the finals, Ryan did what all up and coming players must do – pester the better players to play them. It paid off as Ryan made huge strides this winter.

Congratulations Matt and welcome to the Open Division 😊

### Wrap Up

We are starting a new tradition this year. In place of plaques or trophies – the winners and runner up will receive a custom t-shirt with their name on it. Like the Tour de France, we expect the state champ jersey to earn great respect and eventually earn free drinks across the state of Michigan. Ok – maybe not that but it will make the other players jealous.

Thanks to all who played. We had great participation this year. I look forward to seeing all of you on the 3 wall courts.