

The First Racquetball Nationals Final

by Bo Keeley

This picture was taken just before the final match started between Brumfield (20yrs.) & Dr. Bud (37yrs.) at the 1st Open Racquetball Singles Championships in St. Louis at the JCC. Note that Brumfield is using the Joe Sobek 'Wooden Clunker' and Dr. Bud used the Dayton Steele Racket which was double strung with wire strings. That day, the ball was so dead that a ceiling ball was impossible to execute. Hence the rallies were lengthy and the games were best of 3 to 21 points. Each player sands about 6 feet even and brought multiple racquet accolades going into the racquetball finals. Dr. Bud held the championship in paddleball, badminton, and tennis, while Brumfield won them in paddleball and outdoor pink ball handball. Muehleisen captured this final but Brumfield, 17 years his junior, went on to dominate with three national singles titles through the 70's. The St. Louis JCC court in this picture is a cornerstone in history as it is the breeding ground of the St. Louis power hitters Marty Hogan, Steve Serot, Jerry Hilecher, Jerry Zuckerman, Doug Cohn, Ben Colton, and others who took over after Mule and Brum left the sport. This particular court is of further historical significance as it was converted into a storage closet and library after the racquetball boom played out in the 90's. Look at all those racquet scuff marks and paint chips on the walls! Then in 2003 the Legends Pro Racquetball Tour paid to refurbish the court to hold their season's Legends Finale, the biggest event in their history. The players in that tournament included most of the forenamed only a step slower and longer in the tooth, making for sensational competition. And so racquetball came full circle to the St. Louis JCC court.

(Photo courtesy of Dr. Bud Muehleisen)

