

Pacific Paddleball Association

The First Racquetball Mecca

by Bo Keeley

Why was Charlie Brumfield the best ever racquetball player with the slow ball and relatively the worst for a multi-national champion with the superball? Why, he could beat Kane, Swain, Sudsy, and often Hogan with the slow ball and lose to them with the fast ball! The answer is hidden in the heavy wood paddles, predecessor of racquets that these world champion gentlemen are holding.

Paddleball was the beautiful older sister of racquetball. They played daily doubles in paddles, and later racquets, for steak dinners. The battles were heated and lasted late into the night over beers.

This is the PPA, Pacific Paddleball Association, in San Diego above Charger football stadium. It was a racquetball mecca, a San Diego sports drawing card before Charger Stadium was built, for every 70's to early 80's racquetball champion. They arrived at the PPA doorstep, got trimmed one by one by these gents, and went on to use the lessons to become national champs. Over the years, Steve Keeley, Jerry Hilecher, Steve Serot, Hogan, Dave Peck... in singles racquetball at the PPA were given a tour of the court often on the heavenly donut truck by Brumfield, and then they were tactically taken apart and put back together losing to their 20-year senior Dr. Bud Muehleisen.

Brumfield is the best ever slow ball player because he started in paddles and graduated to racquetball with the best in the nation. Brumfield played the right side with Dr. Bud (left-handed despite the paddle in his right) and are probably the best doubles team ever. It is not questionable that Brumfield is the best court coverer from the right side at the time of this photo in the late 1960's. He also arguably has the best forehand, along with Dr. Bud, in the history of the game through 2012. If you don't believe it, a few months ago I heard they went on the road to teach clinics and you may see or play against them. Each hits shots under pressure in deep tournament fields as well as they did in the dungeon PPA. Each won National Paddleball and Racquetball Singles Titles, and each won them with the worst backhands relative to their forehands because of their doubles passion.

In this historic photo the player on the left with the large grin is everyone's mentor, world badminton champion, Carl Loveday. Next is Doc Chuck Hannah, the racquetball physician to all the early pros. Brumfield is in the center then Muehleisen, and an 'A' badminton and racquet player named Al Chamberlin. These are the five founding members of the single court PPA that was the midwife of racquetball. (The picture is featured below)

