

The Mongoose Musings

2008 MARYLAND OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS – June 6-8, 2008

Overview

This latest installment of *The Mongoose Musings* highlights results of the *2008 Maryland Open Championships* tournament and selected participants, as well as summarizes interviews with four IRT pro players. The commentary ends with a poem dedicated to **Rhonda Rajsich**.

Introduction

It was a fitting end to a great season. Approximately 85 participants took part in the just concluded **2008 Maryland Open Championships** held on **June 6-8, 2008** at **Laurel Sport Fit**, Laurel, MD. This end of the season racquetball tournament hosted by **Stephen Lee** and **Danielle Emerson** under the aegis of their fledging business – Together We Stand (TWS) Sports – was a smashing success. A great time was had by all. Overall, the tournament scorecard is shown in the table below:

Category	Grade
Cost/Price	A
Facility	A
Participation	B+
Courts/Matches Scheduling	A+
Foods	B+
Players' Performance	A+
Disputes Resolution	A
Overall Atmosphere	A

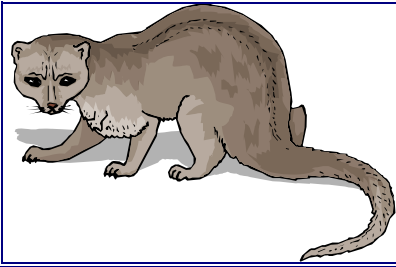
Men's Singles Pro

This division drew 21 participants. Results are summarized below:

First Round

Jamal Harris (Baltimore, MD) defeated **Jack Goldberg** (West Orange, NJ) 6, 1, 0. Jamal's backhand was blazing hot throughout the match.

Anthony Smith (San Diego, CA) retired **Stacey Young** (Arlington, VA) 6, 1, 6 using a combination of solid backhands and forehands throughout the match. Smith's precise passing shots consistently frustrated Young.



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Jose Flores (Meriden, CT) defeated **Mitch Posner** (Morris Plains, NJ) 5, 4, (4), 6. The match was much closer than it looked on the score sheet.

Jeremy Workman (Norristown, PA) defeated **Steve Simpson** (Severn, MD) 10, (13), 10, (2), 8 in the most competitive match of this early round.

Wyatt Lee (Bel Air, MD) won the match by forfeit over **Tom Keogh** (Jackson Heights, NY). Keogh was not able to show at the scheduled 8 PM match on Friday.

Interview with Shane Vanderson, IRT #5 Ranked Player

1. Who is the most fascinating racquetball player to watch?

Shane: Mitch William

2. What is your favorite hobby?

Shane: Fishing

3. How often do you play racquetball in a week?

Shane: Depends, about 5 times a week on average

4. What do you want to do when the racquetball season is over?

Shane: Relax

5. Who do you consider your toughest opponent?

Shane: All players on the IRT circuit are tough

Second Round

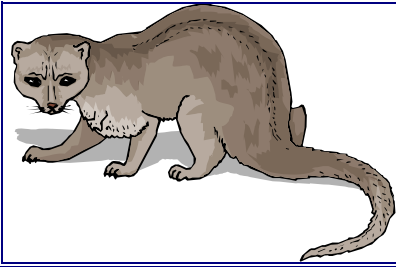
Shane Vanderson (Tampa, FL) defeated **Jamal Harris** 6, 1, 0. Jamal kept feeding Shane's deadly backhand, and Shane's backhand kept treating Jamal like a Danish pastry – spraying unbelievable splats all over the place.

Stephen Lee (Mcdonough Run, MD) defeated **Hector Del Castillo** (Silver Spring, MD) 8, 2, 5. Lee was toying with Castillo for most of the match.

Dan Fowler (Silver Spring, MD) manhandled **Jose Flores**, winning easily in three games 3, 3, 2. Fowler was surgical in putting away the ball for easy points.

Jason Sylvester (Monroe, NY) won easily over **Anthony Smith** in 3 games 2, 6, 2. Smith did not have any answer for Sylvester's lethal forehand and impressive diving gets.

The ageless **Ruben Gonzalez** (Staten Island, NY) defeated **Jeremy Workman** 6, 4, 3 without appearing to break any serious sweat.



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Mauricio Zelada (Columbia, MD) defeated the lanky **David Austin** of Cherry Hills, NJ (8), 6, 7, 7. Zelada, the two-time Maryland State Singles Champion, had to sweat for this win.

Shai Manzuri (Brooklyn, NY) defeated **Jeff Flaesch** (Elkridge, MD) 7, 1, 3. Jeff was impressive in the early going against Shai, a very fast and crafty IRT player.

Mitch Williams (Pueblo, CO) defeated **Wyatt Lee** 0, 7, 1. Using Lee as a practice target, Mitch's powerful backhand and forehand were spraying splats and bullets all over the place.

Interview with Mitch Williams, IRT #6 Ranked Player

1. Who is the most fascinating racquetball player to watch?

Mitch: Stephen Lee ☺

2. What is your favorite hobby?

Mitch: Disc golf

3. How often do you play racquetball in a week?

Mitch: 2 to 3 times a week

4. What do you want to do when the racquetball season is over?

Mitch: Chillax on the beach and drink beer

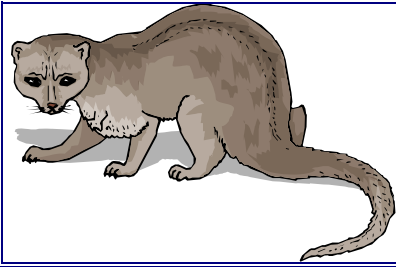
5. Who do you consider your toughest opponent?

Mitch: Anyone on the IRT circuit and myself

Quarterfinals

Shane Vanderson vs. Stephen Lee: Lee religiously avoided Shane's lethal backhand with a variety of lob serves to Shane's forehand. The strategy was effective, but not good enough. After keeping things interesting in the early going, Shane sent Lee to the showers in three games 8, 2, 5. Shane also respected Lee's lethal backhand enough to keep serving to his forehand.

Dan Fowler vs. Jason Sylvester: After losing the first game 11-2, Fowler roared back to win the second and third game 6, 6 for a 2-1 lead heading into the fourth game. The fourth game was marred by controversy – with Sylvester constantly questioning calls by referee, **Danielle Emerson**. Fowler suffered leg cramps and Sylvester eventually won the game 11-6. After receiving some messaging treatment on his cramped leg, Fowler came to the court ready for the tiebreaker duel. Before the 5th game could start, Sylvester was once again arguing with Emerson about who should have the honor inside the service box. This constant bickering on Sylvester's part seemed to be the last straw that broke the proverbial camel's back. Fowler had it. He decided to leave the court abruptly and took off his shoes – conceding the match to Sylvester.



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Ruben Gonzalez vs. Mauricio Zelada: This was the most entertaining match of the quarterfinals. It drew most of the spectators even though another entertaining match was going on the next court between Fowler and Sylvester. Ruben won the first two games 7, 5 – not the easiest wins by any stretch of the imagination. There was no quit in 17-year old Zelada who was making some of the most unbelievable diving gets and forcing Ruben to earn every point. Zelada's tenacity paid off. He won the 3rd game 11-9. The grueling match was taking a lot out of 57-year old Ruben who could only smile in genuine appreciation of the youngster's rugged efforts and say good naturedly: *"Damn the kid!"* Ruben took complete control of the 4th game with his deceptive line drive serves, moving ahead with a 9-2 comfortable lead. Zelada clawed his way to tie the game 9-9. Ruben looked very worried. The implication was rather obvious. The old man won't have anything left in the tank to contend with the kid in the 5th game. Ruben had to really dig deeper, perspire, dive, contend with long rallies, and make strategic shots before he could win 11-9 over the kid, and spell r-e-l-i-e-f. Afterward, the tired old man had to drag his feet to the showers where he earnestly offered libations to the racquetball gods for not allowing his butts handed to him by a very stubborn and talented kid!

Mitch Williams vs. Shai Manzuri: Mitch won the 1st game easily 11-1. His powerful backhand splats were too overwhelming for Shai. Momentum changed side in the 2nd game. Shai won the game 11-6 with solid forehands and kamikaze diving gets. Mitch calmed himself down and won the 3rd game 11-3. The 4th game was a nail biter. Shai took a page out of Zelada's book by playing hard and refusing to give up on any ball. Shai came back from a 6-9 deficit to tie the game 9-9. Some unforced errors and terrific backhand splats allowed Mitch to pull away with a 11-9 win to advance to the semifinals.

Interview with Ruben Gonzalez, IRT #21 Ranked Player

1. Who is the most fascinating racquetball player to watch?

Ruben: Sudsy Monchik

2. What is your favorite hobby?

Ruben: Hiking

3. How often do you play racquetball in a week?

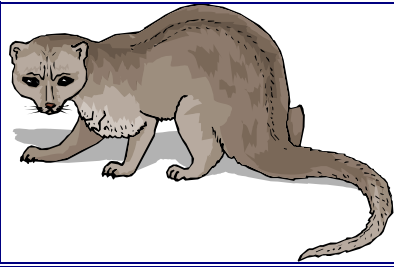
Ruben: About 4 times a week

4. What do you want to do when the racquetball season is over?

Ruben: Play outdoor racquetball

5. Who do you consider your toughest opponent?

Ruben: Myself – "If Ruben shows up, it's OK; if he doesn't, it will be tough, but I have to adjust. I don't worry about my opponent. I worry about myself."



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Semifinals

Shane Vanderson vs. Jason Sylvester: Shane was precise on both sides. His backhand could do no wrong. Eye-popping backhand splats from Shane were on display throughout the match. Shane took the match 5, 9, 7.

Mitch Williams vs. Ruben Gonzalez: Given the way Mitch was killing the ball with his unbelievable backhand splats, some folks were shocked when Ruben managed to eke out a win over Mitch. Actually, Ruben played solid against Mitch. In the end, Mitch had much more in his reserve, and he won the match 4, 5, (10), 12.

Interview with Jason Sylvester, IRT #23 Ranked Player

1. Who is the most fascinating racquetball player to watch?

Jason: Sidsy Monchik

2. What is your favorite hobby?

Jason: Video games, mostly Xbox

3. How often do you play racquetball in a week?

Jason: 5 times a week

4. What do you want to do when the racquetball season is over?

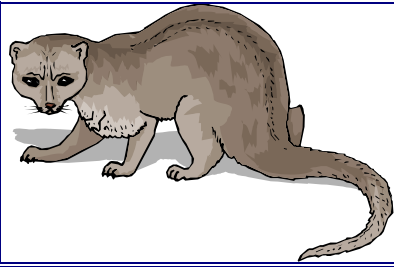
Jason: Play outdoor racquetball

5. Who do you consider your toughest opponent?

Jason: Jason Mannino

Finals

Shane Vanderson vs. Mitch Williams: Mitch defeated Shane in three straight games earlier this season to win the IRT satellite event in York, PA. This match was supposed to be a repeat of that duel. Not so. Shane didn't party hard the previous night. This time, he was not suffering from lethargic hangovers. His shots looked crisp and sharp. His footwork was efficient. Mitch took the 1st game 11-5. Shane won the next two games 10, 3. Shane was on his way to winning an easy one in the 4th game when Mitch fought hard from a 6-10 deficit to tie the game 10-10, and then winning the game 12-10. Shane ran away in the tiebreaker with a decisive 11-4 win. Both Shane and Mitch played some of the best racquetball seen in Maryland this season – exchanging bullets on both sides. Their powerful backhands were the talk of town.



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Other Tournament Winners

The following players were the other official tournament champions:

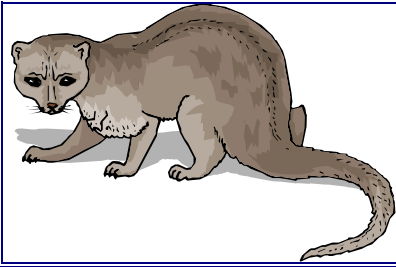
Division	# of Players/Teams	Draw Type	Winner
Men's Open Doubles	4	Round Robin	Jeff Flaesch/Wyatt Lee
Men's A Singles	13	Single Elimination	Richard Simmons
Men's B Singles	6	Single Elimination	Frank Vail
Men's C Singles	8	Round Robin	Michael Hall
Men's D Singles	3	Round Robin	Dudley Hackett
Women's Open/A Singles	7	Single Elimination	Veronica Nogales
Women's B Singles	3	Round Robin	Elizabeth Simmons
Women's C Singles	4	Round Robin	Kaitlyn Simmons
Mixed Open Doubles	12	Single Elimination	Thao Lee/Stephen Lee
Mixed A Doubles	8	Round Robin	Angela Adams/Jim Hornsby
Men's A/B Doubles	7	Single Elimination	Lance Warigon/Slemo Warigon
Men's 25/30+	3	Round Robin	David Austin
Men's 40/45	8	Single Elimination	Tom Keogh
Men's 30/35 A/B	4	Round Robin	Kyle Myers
Men's 40/45 A/B	6	Round Robin	Robert Kellaway
Men's 25+ C/D	3	Round Robin	Michael Hall
Men's 45+ C/D	3	Round Robin	Dudley Hackett
Men's Under 24 Skill	3	Round Robin	Nicholas Corredor Medina

Complete results of the **2008 Maryland Open Championships** tournament can be viewed at <http://www.r2sports.com/tourney/viewResults.asp?TID=4125>

Spotlight on Players

Bill Cooper (Ektelon): He played in only one event (Men's A Singles), and lost to **Justin Bullock**. It was good to see him back playing in a local tournament.

Derek Lynn (Wilson): He didn't have a great tournament, performance-wise, but he maintained the same positive attitude throughout. He has been working diligently on his backhand, and it's paying dividends. He will rebound.



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Danielle Emerson (ProKennex): By her own admission, she's a doer than a talker. She played exceptionally well, even though she lost in the final of the Women's Open/A division to **Veronica Nogales** in a tiebreaker.

Robert Kellaway (E-Force): He has the body and stamina of a seasoned marathoner. His height and length allowed him to make some amazing gets without diving. He's fun player to watch and play against.

Tom Keogh (Wilson): He is still fun to watch. His compact swing is a thing of beauty. He's also one of the smartest players around.

Kyle Myers (Wilson): This big dude used to be the *Doctor of Hoopology* – playing semi-pro basketball until his knees caved under him. He's now turning into a great racquetball player. He has a powerful forehand. His 6.5" frame looks quite intimidating.

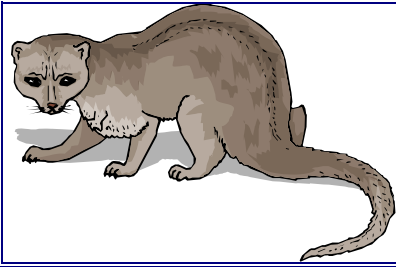
Dan Nedd (Ektelon): Dan continued to play at exceptionally high level. His wins against **Wyatt Lee** and **Hector Del Castillo** in the Men's Pro Singles consolation bracket were impressive.

Gregory Phillips (ProKennex): He's a big dude with smooth backhand, erratic forehand, and penchant for getting on people's nerves during and after matches. He seems to take losses hard because he tends to make derogatory remarks about his victorious opponents.

Mitch Posner (HEAD): The guy is always dressed in red (T-shirt, shorts, socks, shoes, and underwear). Maybe red is his power color. Maybe he thinks bad things would happen to him if he's dressed in colors other than red. Despite his eccentricities, Mitch is a hard-nosed competitor.

Elizabeth Simmons (Ektelon): Her love for the game of soccer doesn't allow her to play racquetball as much as her two competitive sisters. That didn't stop her from winning the Women's B Singles championship. She's a multi-talented athlete.

Kaitlyn Simmons (Ektelon): She is a dedicated junior racquetball player. She hates to lose. She has the killer instincts of her talented papa.



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Richard Simmons (Ektelon): His knee is gaining in strength. He's playing better and smarter. His Men's A Singles championship was quite impressive. It shows that he can still compete with the young guns.

Samantha Simmons (Ektelon): She played well, but facing talented and athletic players like **Danielle Emerson** in the Women's Open/A division was a big challenge for her. She is still maturing as a racquetball player and as an individual. She will be a force to be reckoned with in the women's Open division.

Lance "The Thunder" Warigon (E-Force): He didn't have a great tournament in Men's A Singles division. He redeemed himself in Men's A Doubles – teaming up with his dad to win the division. They defeated formidable opponents like **Justin Bullock/Michael Schaal, Dennis Misal/Kenneth Weinstein**, and **Gregory Phillips/Jose-luiz Izursa** on their way to winning the championship. His forehand splats were awesome.

Troy "The Wizard" Warigon (E-Force): He did not perform well in both Men's B Singles and Men's A/B Doubles. His injured right knee was not cooperative. He will rebound.

Slemo "The Mongoose" Warigon (E-Force): The Old Man won Men's A/B Doubles and came 2nd in Men's A 40/45 Singles with a 4-1 record. His only loss was to **Robert Kellaway** in a very tight match.

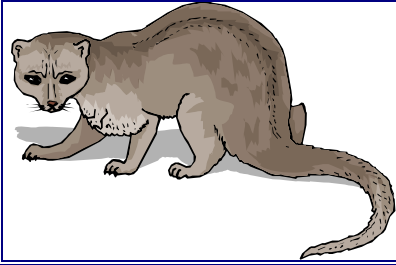
Mauricio "The Momentum" Zelada (Eketelon): In a year or two, this talented player will be making big noises in the IRT circuit. He just graduated from high school and plans to enroll in Howard Community College, Columbia, MD. He demonstrated his financial independence by purchasing Honda Civic – putting himself in position to participate in as many IRT tournaments as he can. He will make the state of Maryland exceedingly proud.

Spotlight on Stringers

Bill Milbach was the resident stringer. He restrung about 40 racquets during the tournament, and hauling home a tidy profit that he doesn't plan to disclose to the IRS revenue agents.

Future Tournaments

MWRA (www.mwraweb.com) is hosting a "Come In From the Sun" racquetball tournament on **July 12-13, 2008** to raise funds for **Rhonda Rajsich**. This tournament will be held at the Severna Park Racquetball and Fitness Club in Millersville, MD – one of the premier sport facilities in the Mid-Atlantic region. You can find more details in the attached form.



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A Parting Thought

This section dedicates the following poem to Rhonda Rajsich.

Ode to Rhonda Rajsich

By Slemo Warigon © June 2008

Behold the radiant presence of Ms. Rhonda Rajsich
 Walking serenely on the foreboding Hermosa Beach
 With nary a care in our unsettling world
 When she was unexpectedly attacked unprovoked
 In a socially and morally reprehensible mold
 By barbarians known for deeds so spineless
 And sympathetic emotions viscerally evoked
 In the racquetball world never before so helpless
 To shield callous violence from one of its own.

But worry not for the dignified young lady known
 For her humor, kindness, optimism, and quiet resolve;
 Lady Justice shall not the culprits' guilt absolve.

Rejoice O' ye people of good conscience;
 Our Creator is just; Karma is unflinching;
 All injuries shall mend; the strong hand of justice
 Shall the wrong be redressed in a manner too exacting.

Hark the melodious trumpet sound
 Heralding Her Sweetness on the rebound;
 For the uncouth attackers, too bad,
 For the teeming supporters, too glad,
 Because Rhonda Rajsich is her recognized name
 And overcoming adversity is her legendary game.

Racquetbally yours,

Slemo

Slemo Warigon