

The Mongoose Musings

2009 NY State Singles Championships – March 13-15, 2009

Talent and Toughness on Display

COLONIE, New York – 17-year-old **Bradley Kirch** came to play. His talent was never in doubt. For all his innate talent, his mental toughness was often questioned by casual observers. **The 2009 NY State Singles Championships** event at the Court Club – an excellent fitness facility with 11 racquetball courts – offered perhaps the grandest stage of all for Bradley to prove his toughness. The event attracted 152 participants from 12 different states in the United States. The tournament name was a misnomer because it featured both singles and doubles divisions.

Men's Open Singles

The division featured 21 entrants with many exciting matches. It's hard to do justice to all magnificent matches played in so few words.

Second Round: Mauricio Zelada vs. Lance Warigon

– Mauricio was a last minute addition to the bracket. He came to watch, not to play. But the tournament director, **Pat Bernardo**, would not have any of it. He promptly conscripted Mauricio to play. Armed with the Ektelon racquets and shoes loaned by Pat, Mauricio proceeded to annihilate his friend, Lance, in two straight games 15-0 and 15-10. With the decisive victory, Mauricio earned the right to duel Bradley Kirch in the quarterfinals.

Quarterfinals: Bradley Kirch vs. Mauricio Zelada –

This was probably the much anticipated duel between two immensely talented junior players that Pat Bernardo had cleverly schemed all along. It got fans real excited. 18-year-old Mauricio was a perfect opponent to test Bradley's toughness. The first game showcased two effortlessly nimble players diving all over the place for amazing gets and using the angles for "wow, did you see that" splat shots. Mauricio dictated the pace of the game with a comfortable lead.

Trailing 11-14 in the first game, Bradley had to dig deep into his inner reserves of fighting spirit. A long rally ensued, with Mauricio having numerous opportunities to

put Bradley away. Somehow, Bradley incredulously kept the ball in play until he ended the rally with a fluid forehand splat, and jubilantly shouted: "That's tough!"

That's toughness, indeed. Bradley showed that he was plenty tough after that long rally. There was no quit in him. Determination burned deep in his eyes and within the deepest recesses of his soul. Leading the 14-12, Mauricio hit a solid crack that appeared to be a game winner, but Bradley argued strenuously. The referee changed the call, and called a replay. That was all Bradley needed, as he mounted a furious comeback and won the game 15-14. Bradley tamed a tired and dispirited Mauricio in the 2nd game with a decisive 15-7 win.

Semifinals: Dan Llacera vs. Garin Meguerditchian –

Garin defeated Robert Van Schalkwyk 9,(14),2 in first round, Timothy Kirch 13,8 in second round, and Tom Keogh 14,(10),4 in the quarterfinals. Those grueling matches did not leave enough in his tank. Thus, Dan made short work of him, winning the match in two straight games, 15-0 and 15-4.

Semifinals: Bradley Kirch vs. Anthony Defusto –

Those two lean and mean E-Force sponsored players hit the ball with unmatched power. The walls vibrated thunderously each time they unloaded their patented fluid forehands. Bradley controlled the center court with superb passing shots and won the 1st game 15-2. Anthony made the necessary adjustments, and won the 2nd game 15-6 with solid forehands and backhands. Unforced errors handcuffed Anthony in the 3rd game, allowing Bradley to win 11-5. Bradley's victory over the battle-hardened veteran, Anthony, once again proved his toughness.

Semifinals: Bradley Kirch vs. Dan Llacera –

Dan had not played a lot of tournaments, and his number one seeding raised eyebrows among some skeptical participants. Using the angles and center court to his advantage, Dan proceeded to win the 1st game 15-13. The win momentarily set aside all doubts about Dan's ability to play at a high level with intensity. It was Bradley's turn to overcome adversity and prove his toughness to a larger audience on a bigger stage. No problemo! Bradley came out of the intermission firing all cylinders, and won the

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the 2nd game 15-11. There were numerous disputed calls in the game that frustrated Dan more than Bradley.

Dan's conditioning was suspect in the tiebreaker. Like a hungry bulldog, Bradley smelt blood and proceeded to pounce relentlessly on fatigued Dan, winning the game 11-7 and the Open championship for what seemed like the longest amount of time! Congratulations, Bradley, for showing us that it's not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog that counted!!



Bradley Kirch of Syracuse, NY
Men's Open Singles Champion

Women's Open Singles

The division had only four entrants. Matches were played in a round robin format. **Aimee Ruiz** had so severely decimated the opposition with lopsided victories that one could not help but feel for her hapless victims and marvel at her laser-like concentration during each match. Aimee defeated: **Jennifer Lynch** 15-1, 15-1; **Carolyn Becker** 15-1, 15-3; and **Christina Vandling** 15-1, 15-0.

Too often, talented players play down to the level of their competition. However, Aimee's unwavering dominance

over her opponents offered a valuable lesson on playing consistently at a high level without settling for mediocrity. Aimee was truly a joy to watch by all and sundry. Congratulations, Aimee, for showing us how to play the sport of racquetball with high intensity, passion, and confidence!



Aimee Ruiz of Stirling, NJ
Women's Open Singles Champion
Photo Credit: Rollout Racquetball

Men's Elite Doubles

With only seven teams, this division featured some of the most entertaining matches of the tournament.

Semifinals: Bryan Crosser/Scott Winters vs. Aimee Ruiz/Garin Meguerditchian – This was arguably the most entertaining match of the tournament. Scott was quite lethal upfront, consistently rolling out all weak returns. Bryan was busy blasting both wild and solid shots from all over the place. Garin was his usual talkative self, with ferocious backhands and forehands to back up his trash talking. Aimee was quite surgical in putting away most of the balls that came her way with effective soft touches and splat shots.

Aimee and Garin convincingly won the 1st game 15-6. The 2nd game was very tight from start to the finish due

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largely to the commendable adjustments made by Bryan and Scott. With the score tied at 14-14, Garin unloaded a wild forehand that screamed off the back wall, and Scott accelerated upfront to put it away in the right corner of the front wall with authority to eke out a scrappy 15-14 win for his team.

The tiebreaker of this exciting match was also incredibly tight. There were multiple lead changes and ties throughout the game, with both teams giving maximum efforts on every ball. Tied at 10-10, Aimee was as cool as a cucumber when she retrieved an erratic forehand shot from Bryan and rolled out a beautiful backhand pinch shot to help her team win 11-10 and advance to the finals. What a thrilling match!

Finals: Bradley Kirch/Timothy Kirch vs. Aimee Ruiz/Garin Meguerditchian – Timothy was playing on the backhand side, with Bradley on the forehand side. Aimee and Garin started the match by serving exclusively to Timothy. The initial game strategy worked for a while when Timothy's backhand skips and weak returns resulted in easy points for the opposition. Bradley was not the least bit worried. He knew his papa was a very proud competitor, and would start playing better after he made the necessary adjustments. True enough, Timothy settled into groove and started cooking hot backhand winners with narrow angle passes and splat shots. Dad and son won the first game 15-10.

After their initial game strategy backfired, Aimee and Garin faced a major dilemma in the second game. For them, serving to Papa Timothy with the hot backhand or Kid Bradley with the boom-boom forehand was like choosing between a rock and a hard place. Eventually, they decided to gamble by serving alternately to either player. The gamble did not pay off as Timothy and Bradley trounced the opposition for a 15-5 second game win, and the championship crown.

Other Notable Winners

The tournament produced the following winners:

- Men's A Singles – Eric Voscopoulos
- Men's B Singles – Nelson Roman
- Men's C Singles – Ken Eng
- Men's D Singles – Bill Gau

- Women's A Singles – Elizabeth Levine
- Women's B Singles – Rachel Weiss
- Women's C Singles – Barbara Fischetti
- Women's D Singles – Tina Ricci
- Men's Age 24 Under – John Behm
- Men's Age 40+ – Timothy Kirch
- Men's Age 45+ – Tom Mastrodonato
- Men's Age 50+ – Reinhart Zimmermann
- Men's Age 55+ – Mark Daigle
- Men's Age 70+ – David Jordan
- Men's A Doubles – Kevin McBunch/Mike Hurling
- Men's B Doubles – Michael Redmon/Eric Dirolf

FUTURE TOURNAMENTS

2009 MWRA Doubles Championships, May 16-17, 2009, at the Severna Park Racquetball & Fitness Club, Millersville, MD. This tournament is open to players from other states.

2009 Maryland Championships – an IRT Tier 4 Event, June 5-7, 2009, at the Laurel Sport Fit Club, Laurel, MD.

2009 NC Aloha Open, June 19-21, 2009, at the Winston Salem Athletic Club, Winston Salem, NC. The event is limited to first 130 players, and offers \$500 cash prizes in the men's and women's Open divisions.

Check <http://www.r2sports.com/> for details.

Spotlight on Players

Benia Dean – Started playing racquetball competitively this year, and made tremendous improvements in her game. She'll soon be a force to be reckoned with in women's A and Open divisions.

Marc Manley – Played courageously against **Lance Warigon** in the Men's Open Consolation event late Saturday night, and helped produce one of the most thrilling matches of the day. He threw his body around with reckless abandon to make some unbelievable diving gets. Lance won the match 9, (13), 9, but Marc proved that he could bark and bite with the best of them!

Frankie Vasquez – A fierce competitor with one of the coolest backhands in the business!

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Matthew Saleh – After downing several cups of beers, he appeared quite inebriated before his match against 13-year-old **Troy Warigon** in the first round of Men's A Singles, but played as sober as The Pope! The Beer Man lost in tiebreaker to Troy, and exhibited an exemplary sportsmanship after the match.

The Tournament Ratings

Pat Bernardo and his dedicated staff members deserve a huge pat on the back (no pun intended) for hosting such a splendid tournament. The facility with 11 racquetball courts was conducive to quality interactions between participants, fans, and staff members. Adults enjoyed free beer. **Bryan Crosser** orchestrated some fun games that lasted through the wee hours of Saturday night. All in all, a great time was had by all!



The Court Club, Colonie, NY

The beautiful embroidered navy fleeces distributed to all registered participants were absolutely the best in the business. Some participants personalized the fleeces with their names and preferred logos.

The Mongoose's overall ratings for the tournament are reflected in the table below.

Category	Grade
Cost/Price	A+
Prizes/Trophies	A+
Shirts/Sweatshirts	A+
Facility	A+
Participation	A+
Matches Scheduling	A+
Foods/Hospitality	A+
Players' Performance	A+
Disputes Resolution	A+
Overall Atmosphere	A+

A Parting Thought

"Never give up, never give in, and when the upper hand is ours, may we have the ability to handle the win with the dignity that we absorbed the loss." – Doug Williams, Former Washington Redskins Quarterback

Until next time, don't overhit for show when a soft kiss of the death can do the trick in bagging the dough!

Racquetbally yours,

Slemo

Slemo Warigon
The Mongoose Domain

About the Author



Slemo Warigon has dual BS degrees in *Accounting and Computer Information Systems*, and an MBA in *General Business and Systems Management*. He completed the coursework for Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program with specialty in *Information Technology Management*. He holds multiple professional designations, including CIA, CISA, and CICA. He is a widely recognized forensic auditing expert with extensive experience in leading performance, financial, IT, business process, and investigative audits. He was the *Director of Information Technology Services*, and *Director of Audit and Management Advisory Services* at Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C. Slemo has written extensively on audit and information systems security, and his work has appeared in numerous professional publications. *The Institute of Internal Auditor* presented him the *1999 Outstanding Contributor Award* for his published article, "Data Warehouse Control and Security." His hobbies include golf, squash, and soccer.