

The Daily Racquet

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THE FINALS ARE ON



In Play Today...

Sunday, November 20

Amateur Matches

U of M/Wellworx/Ridgeway
7:00 am - 2 pm

Women's Finals

Ticket Session #8
The Racquet Club
Not before Noon

Men's Finals

Ticket Session #8
The Racquet Club
Not before 1 p.m.

Pro Awards Presentation

The Racquet Club
Following Men's Final

THANK YOU!

On behalf of the Choice Hotels US OPEN Staff, I would like to sincerely thank you for joining us in Memphis for the 10th Anniversary of our sport's original "grand slam" event.

The US OPEN represents everything that is great about racquetball. And I am truly honored to play a small part in this event's success.

Safe travels home, and we hope to see you all next year!

- Doug Ganim



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Waselenchuk defeats Carson in a five-game battle Saturday.
Photo by Mike Boatman

"Since this tournament started, every match has looked like a final," Event Director Doug Ganim said on the microphone after Kane Waselenchuk defeated Rocky Carson in the last semifinal of the day. He couldn't have said it better as both IRT matches Saturday went five games thrilling those in attendance.

The first IRT semifinal was No.2 Jack Huczek versus No.3 Cliff Swain in a rematch of last year's semifinal - a five-gamer that Swain won. Huczek quickly took a two game lead on Swain, which included a doughnut in the first. Many began to wonder if Swain's gutsy performance Friday night to defeat Alvaro Beltran in five games had taken its toll.

That was when something seemed to change in Swain's demeanor and after winning the third game, 11-4, Swain smelled blood and began to start his comeback in earnest. He went on to narrowly win the fourth game, 11-9, then controlled the fifth, 11-3, to move into his record seventh US OPEN final.

"Someone asked me how I keep doing this and I just said, "How could I not?" Swain said. "I love coming here

Van Hees, Rajsich Showdown at High Noon



Brian Pointelin -- The matchup today between No.1 Christie Van Hees and No.3 Rhonda Rajsich could be one of the most exciting matches in the history of the US

OPEN women's professional draw. Just take a look at some facts about the players.

- Neither player has dropped a game this week.
- Each player has given up double digits only once.
- Van Hees has allowed 39 points while Rajsich has given up 55 points.
- Van Hees took over the No. 1 spot on the tour at the end of the 2004-05 season.
- Rajsich finished at No. 3 for the third time since 2000.

Both players have enjoyed major success here at the US OPEN. Van Hees is tied with Jackie Rice; reaching the finals five times in eight appearances. Rajsich has reached the finals four times in the last six years. Van Hees might have been the leader in this category if it weren't for a slightly dislocated shoulder injury suffered during a fall while playing the 2004 US OPEN semifinal against Rajsich.

With Rajsich seemingly getting better and stronger as the tournament goes on, the finals should be amazing. Many people have quipped that Rajsich is inconsistent, but this could be her time to shine as she and Van Hees are both

to play for you. I love playing on this court and in front of these fans."

The final match of the evening featured No.1 Kane Waselenchuk, who hadn't lost a game in two years at the US OPEN, versus No.5 Rocky Carson. Carson made evident from the beginning that Waselenchuk would be in for a battle as he took the first game, 11-6. Waselenchuk then stepped it up, taking the next two games and putting Carson on the ropes.

Carson showed signs of hope by taking the fourth, 11-5, but then Waselenchuk seemingly squashed them having match point at 10-4. Carson, however, continued to battle and, after stringing together a few points, had the crowd raising the rafters with chants of "Rocky! Rocky!" Just after tying the score at 10-10, Carson had his hopes dashed as Waselenchuk showed why he is the reigning two-time US OPEN Champion and closed out the match, 12-10.

"As much as I would like to win in three games, a win like this is more fulfilling," Waselenchuk said. "To be a true champion you have to beat your opponents when they are playing their best and Rocky was playing some incredible ball out there today."

Despite being decided in straight games, both of the women's matches also provided the crowd with some entertaining racquetball. The day started out with Rhonda Rajsich defeating Laura Fenton by the scores of 11-5, 11-9, 11-5. Rajsich used her drive serves and some unbelievable diving gets to roll past Fenton in the semifinals.

The second match in the women's draw had a lot of potential between Christie Van Hees and Kristen Walsh. Van Hees jumped out to a 5-0 lead in Game 1 utilizing a drive serve and taking advantage of mid-court set-ups, eventually winning the game 12-10. It was all Van Hees from that point on as Walsh could never get setup to shoot, and when she did, she was having trouble putting the ball where she wanted. Game 2 was over before it started with Van Hees ripping balls at every angle, winning 11-2 and Game 3 was a continuation with the score ending at 11-5 resulting in another US OPEN final for Van Hees.

looking to add their names to the list of two-time champions (Michelle Gould, Jackie Rice, and Cheryl Gudinas). Van Hees, on the other hand, took a hiatus during her rise to the top of the sport just a few years ago. Now that she is back, not many are arguing the reasons why she finished on top last season.

"I feel better now," Van Hees said. "When I came back two years ago and lost to Rhonda in the finals, it was my second tournament. Not to take anything away from Rhonda because she is a great player and I have a lot of respect for her, but I have two more years of experience under my belt now."

Look at the great qualities these players will lay on the line for all of the fans this afternoon. If you like diving gets and unpredictable shot selection, you might be a Rajsich fan. If you are partial to the controlled yet aggressive high percentage game style, you might be a Van Hees fan. Either way, you have to love where the future of the WPRO and Commissioner Dave Watson are headed. Best of all, these two have a mutual respect and fondness for each other and are phenomenal athletes.

So having said all that and giving you the facts, it is now time for the highly-anticipated prediction. Both players are going to dazzle you with their execution of shots, and I am pretty sure you will even see a few dives sprinkled in there somewhere. The pick du jour is Rajsich in five games, but not without a fight from Van Hees and a ton of excitement.

Enjoy the match and please travel safely.



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Shooting for Three

Waselenchuk, Swain Look for Third Titles



What can we say, yesterday's semifinal match between No. 3 Cliff Swain and No. 2 Jack

Huczek was unbelievable. Two and a half hours of pure, raw intensity. The match started out with a dominating performance by Huczek, and with Swain on his heels making many unforced errors. Huczek came out with his great rally playing ability and capitalized on all of Swain's mistakes winning the first game 11-0. Huczek kept up the intensity as he continued some stellar play, winning the second 11-4. Then the tide turned and Huczek began with some unforced errors and Swain took advantage. Swain found that extra something and forged ahead to win the third 11-4. Game four was a pivotal game and would prove costly for Huczek. After coming back and regrouping, Huczek took a commanding lead only to see Swain fight and claw

his way back in and eventually take game four 11-9. It was all Swain in the fifth as the serve heated up and he advanced to his second-straight US OPEN final. A very gutsy performance by who some might call the greatest to ever play the game.

The second men's pro match was a mirror image of the first. Rocky Carson definitely came out to play, and it showed in the first game when he handed Waselenchuk his first losing game in two years on the US OPEN stage. Carson did not miss in this game winning it 11-6. Waselenchuk would regroup and come out firing from everywhere on the court keeping Carson in the backcourt for the next two games winning 11-6, 11-3. Carson would then find his serve in the fourth and coupled with some rare errors by Waselenchuk would force a game five, by winning the game 11-6. Falling behind early, Carson made it look like game five would be over quick as Waselenchuk took a 10-5 lead. Out of nowhere, Carson dug deep inside and fought back one point at a time. Before anyone knew, it was all even at

10, at that point Waselenchuk had five chances to take the game and the match. The crowd began chanting "Rocky, Rocky" which definitely gave Carson some extra incentive to try and steal this one from out from underneath Waselenchuk. True champions find some way to hit that winning shot when they need it most and that is what happened as Waselenchuk sealed his place in racquetball history advancing to his third straight US OPEN final and a possible three-peat.

Fans in the stands were able to witness some of the most incredible racquetball that has ever been played, in the last three days. As the stands cleared after the second match you could hear people saying, "Awesome, totally awesome," or "that was unbelievable." It seemed that all of the big matches lived up to their billing. How much more can we expect in Sunday's final that we have not already seen? You can bet that both Waselenchuk and Swain will have enough left in the tank and be ready to give you their best efforts today.

Match Stats

Compiled by Leo Vasquez - Amber Bryant - Jere Jackson

Game	SEMIFINALS #1 Cliff					Game	SEMIFINALS #2 Kane				
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Score	0	5	11	11	11	Score	6	11	11	5	12
Aces	0	1	2	1	2	Aces	0	1	3	0	0
Faults	1	2	1	1	0	Faults	0	2	0	1	1
Skips	4	3	1	3	4	Skips	10	5	4	10	4
Killshot Winners	2	2	9	13	9	Killshot Winners	4	6	12	6	11
Passing Winners	0	3	5	4	2	Passing Winners	4	3	3	5	3
Dives	4	3	2	6	2	Dives	8	3	7	10	7

Game	SEMIFINALS #1 Jack					Game	SEMIFINALS #2 Rocky				
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Score	11	11	4	9	3	Score	11	6	3	11	10
Aces	0	0	0	0	0	Aces	0	0	0	0	1
Faults	0	0	0	0	0	Faults	1	0	2	0	2
Skips	0	3	3	2	4	Skips	2	4	7	2	9
Killshot Winners	5	6	4	5	1	Killshot Winners	7	2	4	6	10
Passing Winners	4	8	1	3	3	Passing Winners	7	5	4	3	3
Dives	6	6	6	13	6	Dives	5	7	2	10	7

Who Will Win? You decide!

We polled a random selection of fans as they were exiting the stadiums, "Who will win, and in how many games?" And this is what you said.

Overall
Waselenchuk 61%
Swain 39%

By-game Predictions
Waselenchuk in 4 34%
Swain in 5 20%
Waselenchuk in 5 18%
Swain in 4 16%
Waselenchuk in 3 9%
Swain in 3 3%

Overall
Van Hees 56%
Rajsich 44%

By-game Predictions
Van Hees in 4 29%
Rajsich in 5 21%
Rajsich in 4 20%
Van Hees in 5 18%
Van Hees in 3 9%
Rajsich in 3 3%

Annual Silent Auction Helps Surpass \$130,000 in Donations to St. Jude

The St. Jude Children's Research Hospital annual silent auction fundraiser helped surpass the US OPEN total of \$130,000 that will be donated to St. Jude in the past 10 years.

The Ruben Gonzalez original painting was acquired for \$700 and several bidders were in on that action. Additional big auction items were the cameras from Nikon, sports equipment. The auction proceeds, which succeeded \$5,000, and set a new event record, have also surpassed a national goal of 10 year's with contributions made to the hospital.

Our special thanks to the auction donors and contributors. We hope you have all enjoyed a great week in Memphis - whether on the court or in the stands. We greatly appreciate you sharing in the efforts we feel are important to the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

We would also like to thank the many friends of racquetball that have made donations to this annual fundraiser. Through this effort, a bigger step has been taken for the children at St. Jude Children's Hospital.



Back In The Day... Monchik Dominates First US OPEN

In the inaugural US OPEN Racquetball Championships, New York's top-seeded Sudsy Monchik only dropped two games in cruising through his path to the tournament final. There, he met Memphis' hometown favorite Andy Roberts, the event's No. 3 seed. Monchik opened the match with a 10-1 lead in the game one, which included eight aces. He finished the match in three straight games 11-8, 11-9, 11-3.

"Suds served really well this afternoon," Roberts said after the match. "I couldn't get any rhythm in the match. In the rallies, I felt like I was winning most of them, the problem was that there were no rallies."



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