

# Grand Canyon Tourney Report 2015

Photos by Jettye Lanius, Bev Youngren, Pickleball Channel, [PickleballTournaments.com](http://PickleballTournaments.com)

The following are my recollections of the Grand Canyon State Games pickleball tournament held February 18-22 2015 in Northwest Phoenix. There were 490 players from all over the US and Canada which makes GCSG the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest pickleball tournament behind only USAPA Nationals and the Huntsman World Senior Games. Players could play up to 4 events: Age Doubles & Mixed Doubles and Skill Doubles & Mixed Doubles. Matches were played at Pueblo El Mirage RV & Golf Resort on 16 permanent courts. Four Temporary Light Stands were brought in to light 4 courts for Medal matches after dark.

The tournament directors were Bob & Jettye Lanius. Bob was an original employee of Microsoft and after retirement wrote the tournament software for [pickleballtournaments.com](http://pickleballtournaments.com) that is used by many tournaments. Bob & Jettye have been tournament directors for the ASO Nationals and GCSG for 10 straight years and worked from sunrise to after dark for the 6 days that I was there. Jettye informed me that GCSG would be the last tournament that they would run and they have a big safari trip to South Africa & Tanzania next month. Many thanks to Bob & Jettye for their contributions to the sport of pickleball!

## **Tuesday (Pre-tournament day):**

On Tuesday afternoon, the tournament had clinics from 1 to 5pm given by a Who's Who of Pickleball players including Gail Dacey, Bob Youngren, and Yoda Friedenberg.



I made it out to El Mirage in the afternoon and played a couple of games with my Men's 50+ Partner Jeff Stafford of Oceanside, CA and my Mixed 50+ Partner Roxanne Pierce who recently moved from New Mexico to Arizona. As darkness fell, I went over to the Surprise City Courts and met up with my Men's 5.0 partner, local player Ryan O'Toole. Ryan played a lot with my brother Jimmy when Jimmy lived in Arizona 3 years ago. Ryan & I got to play a few games with Jim Hackenberg who has recently started

playing again after missing all of the Fall tournaments with injuries. Great to see Jim back on the court – great player and great ambassador of the sport! Ryan & I were just about to leave when local star Gigi LeMaster arrived with Enrique Ruiz of Oregon. Ryan & I got to play 3 super fun games against the National Mixed Doubles champs.

Enrique was at his hand switching best – he only hit about 1 backhand per game! Stopped by the Brookside Sports Bar and had a beer with Chad Williams of Utah, Jamie Knoph of Colorado, Bill Ritchie from Wisconsin, & Andy Gensch from Kansas. Chad, Jamie, & I played a few games of darts with Chad prevailing with his “Triple 20” shots. Mitch & Debbie Fitzhugh from Grass Valley, Jeff McFall from the Fresno area, and I rented a house in Surprise Farms about 15 minutes from the tournament.

### **Wednesday(Men’s & Women’s Age):**

Mitch Fitzhugh & Jeff McFall played the #1 seeded 50+ Men’s Doubles team of Scott Clayson of Utah & Yoda Friedenbergh of Arizona in the 1<sup>st</sup> round. Mitch & Jeff started fast and took the 1<sup>st</sup> game 11-9 but Scott & Yoda came back strong to take the next 2 games and the match. Jeff Stafford & I played Dennis Fox & Val Goins of Las Vegas our 1<sup>st</sup> round 50+ Men’s match. The 1<sup>st</sup> game was tight but Dennis & Val finished with some strong volleying and won it 11-9. Jeff & I started hitting some better Drops and took the next 2 games 11-8,11-6. In the game to go to

Bronze, Mitch & Jeff lost a nailbiter to Dennis & Val 16-14. In the winner's bracket final, both games were tight but Scott & Yoda finished strong and beat us 11-8, 11-7. In the Bronze medal match, Jeff & I beat Dennis & Val 11-6 in the 3<sup>rd</sup>. In the Gold medal match, Jeff & I lost the 1<sup>st</sup> game 11-1 but came back to take game 2 11-8. In game 3, the score was tied 5-5 but Scott & Yoda scored the last 6 points to win the 3<sup>rd</sup> game and the Gold 11-5.



My two Mixed doubles partners, Roxanne Pierce & Rachael Kroog of Minnesota, won Women's Age Gold medals. Roxanne won the Women's 60+ with Betsy Lawson and Rachael won the Women's 55+ with Cookie Drake.

After dinner, played under the lights at the City Courts for a couple more hours.



## **Thursday (Mixed Age):**

Dee Rochel of Arizona and Jeff McFall won their 1<sup>st</sup> match in the 50+ Mixed Doubles in 2 straight games and then played Roxanne & I who had a bye. Dee & Jeff volleyed very well throughout making Roxanne & I to hit many awkward defensive shots and beat us in 2 straight games. In round 3, Dee & Jeff lost a tough 3 game match to Mike & Laura Schwarz. Mitch & Debbie won their 1<sup>st</sup> round 50+ Mixed match, giving up only 2 points in the process. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> round, Mitch & Debbie lost to Miok Lee of Washington and Troy Horton of Arizona. In their 1<sup>st</sup> loser's bracket match, Mitch & Debbie won 15-3 to advance to play Joyce Helgesen of New Mexico & Val Goins. Mitch & Debbie prevailed 15-13 in a cliffhanger. Mitch & Debbie played Dee & Jeff next. Dee & Jeff were just about error free and they led from start to finish.

Roxanne & I won our 1<sup>st</sup> loser's bracket match 15-2. We next played Laura Fenton & Dave Kovanda of Ohio. Laura is a many time National Racquetball medalist. The match was close early but Roxanne & I had a good run after the side switch and won 15-6. We won our next match against Miok Lee & Troy Horton 15-4 to set up a rematch with Dee & Jeff in the game to go to Bronze. Dee & Jeff started strong and eventually built up a 13-7 lead. Roxanne had some great defensive shots and I hit a couple of shots that would have been out but ticked off of Dee & Jeff's paddles and we got the last 8 points of the match to win 15-13 and

advance to the Bronze match against Rachael Kroog & Andy Gensch. Andy had 2 “Around the Netpole” shots the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 rallies of the match – a backhand that Roxanne nearly returned and a forehand past me for a clean winner. Roxanne & I stopped hitting wide Dinks and took the 1<sup>st</sup> game 11-5. The 2<sup>nd</sup> game was tied 8-8 but Rachael & Andy finished strong and won it 11-9 and then won game 3 11-6 so Roxanne & I got Bronze. The Gold medal match was well played with Laura & Mike Schwarz beating Rachael & Andy in 3 close games.





Brian “The Beard” Ashworth dives in 19+ Mixed

Chad William’s folks, Ruth & Ron Jacque, hosted a large group Thursday night at the Happy Trails courts, for pizza & pickleball. There was a lot of great play – including some epic Trash Talking between Chad aka “Utah” & Dave “Badger” Weinbach of Wisconsin. After the pickleball lights went out at 9pm, we went to one of the Happy Trails community rooms and played doubles alternating shot ping pong with Brian “The Beard” Ashworth & Jasey Leavitt of Montana, Chad, Andy Gensch, & Darin Hurdman of Utah. Darin was the dominant force – I was the boat anchor.



### **Friday (Women's Skill Doubles):**

I was a referee from 8am to 12:15pm. In a first for a tournament that I have attended, refs were paid \$5 a match. A few refs that did not play in the tournament had over 50 matches by the end of the tournament. I did 14 matches total and got a \$70 check on Sunday. Paying refs may be a trend – there were no urgent requests for additional refs during the tournament. Props to Lynn & Linda Laymon who announced the matches and assigned referees for 5 long days!

Played 3 hours at the City Courts on Friday night after dinner.

### **Saturday (Men's Skill Doubles):**

In the Men's 5.0 Doubles, Ryan O'Toole & I played Larry Moon & Tyler Sheffield of Utah in the 1<sup>st</sup> round. Larry & Tyler are the defending 50+ Tournament of Champions & USAPA National Men's doubles champions. Larry & Tyler were sharp from the opening rally, placing balls well to make Ryan & I hit awkward stretched out shots and won in 2 straight games 11-3, 11-4. Larry & Tyler eventually finished 4<sup>th</sup>, the highest 50+ team. Ryan & I won our 1<sup>st</sup> loser's bracket match against Al Hager of Arizona and Jack Bleiman of New Jersey 15-5. We lost our next match to local players Steve Wong & Aspen Kern 15-4. Steve and Aspen eventually beat Chris Miller & Brian "The Beard"



Ashworth in the Bronze medal match before losing to Justin Rodgers & Dave “Badger” Weinbach in the Gold Match. Justin & Badger also won the Men’s 35+ on Wednesday and did not lose a match in either bracket.



Dave “Badger” Weinbach’s great get in Men’s 5.0 doubles



In the Women's 5.0 bracket, Gigi LeMaster & Mona Burnett won a close 3 game match with Yvonne Hackenberg & Hillary Marold in the Bronze medal match. Gigi & Mona then won the 1<sup>st</sup> game of the Gold medal match against 3 time defending champs Jen Lucore & Alex Hamner. Jen & Alex recovered to win the next 2 games get their Grand Canyon 4-Peat to match their 4 straight National Women's Open titles.









Played 2 hours at the City Courts Saturday night after dinner.

### **Sunday (Mixed Skill Doubles):**

Rachael Kroog of Minnesota and played Chad Williams & Jamie Knoph of Colorado in our 1<sup>st</sup> round Mixed 5.0 match. Rachael played great right from the start and I had 2 sharp angled winners off the rubber at the end of the paddle to take the 1<sup>st</sup> game 11-0. Chad & Jamie were ahead from the start of game 2 and eventually led 10-7. Chad smashed a high volley that tipped the top of the net and went ½ inch long. On the next game point, Chad had 2 amazing diving



saves but Rachael was eventually able to put the ball away and we got the sideout and won the game and the match 12-10.

In our 2<sup>nd</sup> round match, we played Mike Gates (a former National Open Mixed champion) and Christine McGrath (who was 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Tournament of Champions Open Singles last year). The wind picked up to 15-20 mph by the start of the match, the 1<sup>st</sup> significant wind of the tournament. Both games were competitive and both teams had trouble keeping the ball in the court when playing with a tailwind but Mike & Christine won 11-7, 11-8. In our next match, Rachael & I played Justin Rodgers of Arizona and Stephanie Lane of Tennessee. Justin & Stephanie were teammates on their middle school tennis team 30 years ago. Rachael & I had a good comeback to tie the match at 12-12 but a few points later Stephanie ripped a 3<sup>rd</sup> shot forehand that I hoped was going out but it landed on the baseline and Justin & Steph won 15-12. Justin & Stephanie went on to finish 5<sup>th</sup> out of the 26 teams. Mike Gates & Christine McGrath beat Brian Ashworth & Alex Hamner in the game to go to Bronze. Gigi LeMaster & Enrique Ruiz beat Mike & Christine to get to the Gold medal match. In the Gold match, Jen Lucore & Chris Miller won the 1<sup>st</sup> game 12-10 but Gigi & Enrique took the next 2 games 11-8, 11-7 to force a game to 15 for the championship. It went to overtime in the game to 15 with Jen & Chris winning 17-15!





In the 4.5 Mixed, Mitch & Debbie Fitzhugh won 4 straight matches highlighted by a 3 game win over the 50+ Mixed champs Mike & Laura Schwarz to advance to the winner's bracket final against Jeff McFall & Sally Dobson. It was a great match with Jeff & Sally winning 11-9 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> game. The Bronze medal match was a rematch between the Fitzhugh's and the Schwarz's. It went 3 games again but this time Mike & Laura prevailed. In the Gold medal match, the Schwarz's won 2 straight games against Jeff & Sally to force the final game to 15 for the championship. After 30 hard fought points, the Schwarz's won 16-14 to win their 2<sup>nd</sup> Mixed Gold medals of the tournament. Jeff & Sally got Silver, Mitch & Debbie Bronze.







Medal count for the tournament follows below. DAP to Chris “Mills” Miller & Gigi LeMaster who were the only players to win 4 medals and Christine McGrath who won 2 Gold & 1 Bronze while 4 months pregnant!

Doug Koch aka “The Pickleball Pimp”



# Grand Canyon Medal Count:

| Player                 | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |
|------------------------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| Mills Miller           | 2    | 1      | 1      | 4     |
| Jennifer Lucore        | 2    | 1      | 0      | 3     |
| Christine McGrath      | 2    | 0      | 1      | 3     |
| Laura Schwarz          | 2    | 0      | 1      | 3     |
| Yvonne Hackenberg      | 2    | 0      | 1      | 3     |
| Justin Rodgers         | 2    | 0      | 0      | 2     |
| Dave Weinbach          | 2    | 0      | 0      | 2     |
| Larry Moon             | 2    | 0      | 0      | 2     |
| Tyler Sheffield        | 2    | 0      | 0      | 2     |
| Dennis Dacey           | 2    | 0      | 0      | 2     |
| Bob Youngren           | 2    | 0      | 0      | 2     |
| Dick Johnson           | 2    | 0      | 0      | 2     |
| Mike Schwarz           | 2    | 0      | 0      | 2     |
| Tammy Kelly            | 2    | 0      | 0      | 2     |
| Gigi LeMaster          | 1    | 3      | 0      | 4     |
| Steve Wong             | 1    | 2      | 0      | 3     |
| Enrique Ruiz           | 1    | 2      | 0      | 3     |
| Aspen Kern             | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |
| Byron Fresno           | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |
| Jay Hennies            | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |
| Christine Barksdale    | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |
| Rachael Kroog          | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |
| Susan Buerkens         | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |
| Gail Dacey             | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |
| Alice Tym              | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |
| Beverly Youngren       | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |
| Paul Hoggatt           | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |
| Scott Clayson          | 1    | 0      | 1      | 2     |
| John Grasso            | 1    | 0      | 1      | 2     |
| Cookie Drake           | 1    | 0      | 1      | 2     |
| Roxanne Pierce         | 1    | 0      | 1      | 2     |
| Betty Silver           | 1    | 0      | 1      | 2     |
| Nokki Kasuwan          | 1    | 0      | 1      | 2     |
| Hilary Marold          | 1    | 0      | 1      | 2     |
| Yoda Friedenber        | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| David Zapatka          | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Don Simmons            | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Lenny Chimino          | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Robert (Bob) Robillard | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| William Relyea         | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Brian Danielson        | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Ric Klassen            | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Dan Geenen             | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Doug Kelton            | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Steve Cole             | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Kathy Oliver           | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Greg Kelly             | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Susan Neeley           | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Eldonna Coats          | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Mike Coats             | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Jasey Leavitt          | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Joy Leising            | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Jill Lewis             | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Lori Orth              | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Betsy Lawson           | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Marylou Furaus         | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Pauline Avery          | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Kirsti Longbrake       | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Jeannine McKinna       | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| Jan Ardis              | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |

|                      |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Lisa Smith           | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Kim Deamer           | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Jamie Knoph          | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Jen's Partner Hamner | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Brian Ashworth       | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Jeff Stafford        | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Mona Burnett         | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Doug Koch            | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Rick Reed            | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Lynn Carlson         | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Pam King             | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Dalonna Cooper       | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Marsha Freso         | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Carolyn Bagley       | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Linda Hoggatt        | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Nancy Sass           | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Jane McKesson        | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Sally Dobson         | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Kyle Klein           | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Tom Morrison         | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Steve Ricke          | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Bill Pardue          | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Jim Hackenberg       | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Dave Kovanda         | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Tom Earley           | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Don Walker           | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Earl Hill            | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Jerry Grimes         | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Bruce Kimmell        | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Robert Doerschel     | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Terry Cullen         | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Chris Gallagher      | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| J.j. Stone Jr.       | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Jotham Darrin        | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Paul Hogan           | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Andy Gensch          | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Dennis Carter        | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Del Root             | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Becky Gibbs          | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Sheila Parkinson     | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Steve Smitham        | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Jj Jackson           | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Jake Jackson         | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Jeff Mcfall          | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Tracie DeJagerHale   | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Sarah Ansboury       | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Dee Rochel           | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Carolyn Stevens      | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Deb Arnold           | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Debi Glogower        | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Carol Barron         | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Donna Lovetro        | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Lynn Coulter         | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Mary Ashworth        | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Sheila Lee           | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Nancy Price          | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| MJ Shin              | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Sara Ash             | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Josh Grubbs          | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Marilyn Eves         | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| JoAnn Gaston         | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Zachary Grubbs       | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Scott Stone          | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

|                      |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Pat Kane             | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Dennis Fox           | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Valyon Goins         | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Mario Najera         | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Troy Horton          | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Steve Owens          | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Dale Allen           | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Lance Thiede         | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Don Johnson          | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Jack Cavanaugh       | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Fred Eggen           | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| John Sproehnle       | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Dwaine Abbe          | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Walter Conway        | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Bob Taylor           | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Len Stricker         | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| William Kanouse      | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Bill Eller           | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Alex Potapoff        | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Scott Johnson        | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Stephanie Lane       | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Ron Chang            | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Brian Parkes         | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Elton Weeden         | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Michael Tully        | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Virginia Henderson   | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Ronald Woodward      | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Lynn Stone           | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Steve Froese         | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Debbie Fitzhugh      | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Mitch Fitzhugh       | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Michael Gates        | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Heidi Wong           | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Trudee Klein         | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Di Shanklin          | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Denise Allen         | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Judy Graves          | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Rita Weihe           | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Rosalind Condrashoff | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Judy Nichols         | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Jackie DeMott        | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Paula Burns          | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Diana Brown          | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Missy Myers          | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Barbara Wintroub     | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |