

US OPEN WRITEUP:

Had a fun week at the US Open in Naples, FL! Tournament Facts:

>2000 players (largest ever)

50 courts

47 states & 17 countries represented (farthest over 8,000 miles away from India)

oldest player 86, youngest player 11

\$42,500 in Prizemoney

Doug-centric Summary:

I flew on Friday April 20th on a free flight on American (thank you AA Advantage MasterCard!!). I changed planes in Dallas. The connecting flight from Dallas to Ft. Myers had SoCal Picklers Jennifer & Steve Dawson, Cammy & Darin MacGregor, & Barb Wintroup. Cammy & Jen went on to win 2 checks each:

Cammy beat Jen in the Senior Women's Pro Singles Final & Jen (with GiGi LeMaster) beat Cammy (with Laura Fenton-Kovanda) in the Senior Women's Pro Doubles final. The total SoCal medal count was 50 - watch out when they have USAPA National's in their own backyard of Indian Wells in November. The 1st person I saw when the plane arrived in Ft Myers was Dee Davison of Phoenix & we exchanged a 12ft+ #TeamSelkirk hug. BarbW & I talked & found out we were staying a couple blocks apart in Old Naples so we shared a ride. I checked into the Trianon Hotel using my Hotels.com rewards free night (thank you Captain Obvious!!). I arrived just in time to walk a mile to the beach & see a pretty sunset. There was a Red Tide Algae breakout so many people at the beach were coughing & 2 little girls were having great fun running around with dead fish that had washed ashore.

On Saturday, I went to the courts for practice. I was hoping to get some singles games in before the Senior Pro Singles on Sunday but with many people hanging paddles waiting for courts it wasn't possible. I did get to play a few Mixed games with Dee against Diane Ahern & Scott Lennon and LisaM & SeymourR. My parents made the 4 hour drive from their place on the East coast of Florida & I met up with them Saturday afternoon. We moved into a 2 bedroom condo right on 5th Ave in Old Naples. It was very centrally located - we could walk to about 100 restaurants. We ate at a Boston themed Pub on the 1st floor of our Building (very convenient!!) & walked to a local cupcake shop on Saturday to celebrate my Mom's 77th Birthday.

I played in 5 events in 6 days. The courts were Hard Tru which is a bit softer & smoother than the hardcourts I have played on elsewhere. The Dura 40 balls do not get chewed up as fast on Hard Tru & I suspect shoes last longer also. Didn't see any balls crack during the tournament - there were a few wobblers though. We had refs for all the Pro matches - most of the non-Pro matches did not. There was 1 group of courts (9?) with temporary nets - the rest of the courts had permanent nets. Weather conditions were challenging with highs in the 80s with high humidity & winds usually blowing 10-15mpg, mostly crosscourt and often changing direction during a match. My parents were my biggest fans, watching all of my matches except a couple of early morning ones.

On Sunday, I played in Senior Men's Pro Singles. I played MikeB from Kalamazoo, MI, a 1st year senior player, in the 1st round. Match was tight throughout & Mike lead 9-8 in both games but I managed to win 11-9 11-9. I next played local Brian Staub who won the 2016 National's 55+ Singles & is a former National's Open Doubles Gold Medalist. Brian did his best Picasso impression, painting the lines with both backhand & forehand passes to take the 1st game 11-3. In the 2nd game, I tried to approach the net up the middle to take away some angles and managed to get Brian's 3rd shot passes back with outstretched volleys only to have him pass me with 5th shot winners & he built a 10-3 lead. I used my last timeout & then hit a few good passes & some volley winners to narrow the score to 10-8 before Brian hit 1 last clean winner pass by me to win 11-8. Brian went on to the final, losing to Scott Moore (won \$1000) and getting the Silver (& \$500). My 1st loser's bracket match was against Jimmy Lowe of Honolulu (I wasn't counting on the wind & humidity bothering him). Jimmy is very quick and has a long reach. He got to the side change with an 8-7 lead then ran off 3 straight points to lead 11-7. I called my final timeout then rallied to win 15-12. Next I played Scott Burr from Palm Desert, CA. I started strong & hit several crosscourt backhand passes & volley winners to take an 8-4 lead at the side change. Scott got an immediate sideout & then hit 3 straight winners to close it to 8-7. I called a timeout but couldn't slow Scott down and he won 15-9. Scott went on to win the Bronze medal & \$250. I finished 7th out of 17. I watched 2 great Singles matches after I was eliminated. Clare Grabher, a past & future Mixed Doubles partner of mine from New Hampshire and Vero Beach, FL played Lisa Naumu a SoCal player in the Senior Pro Women's Bronze match. The wind was really blowing during the match but the 2 ladies had many long well-played rallies despite it. Lisa won a tight 1st game, then Clare won the 2nd and 3rd games to win the Bronze medal and \$250. I also watched the Men's Open Pro Singles Gold medal match between Ty McGuffin of Idaho & Team Selkirk and local favorite Kyle Yates of Ft Myers and Team Paddletek on the Zing Zang Championship Court. Zing Zang is a

large tent structure that provides shade & holds about 1,000 people including some private boxes, an elevated VIP lounge with drinks/snacks and bleachers circling the court. A large sound systems plays music before the match and during breaks in the action. It is a cool atmosphere, everyone is close to the action. Ty won the 1st game. The 2nd game was tight for awhile but Kyle rode the cheers of his supporters to even the match. Ty took control early in game 3 and finished strong to win the Gold medal and \$1,750(which was matched by Selkirk for a total of \$3,500), Kyle got \$750(which was matched by Paddletek for a total of \$1,500).

Monday I played in the Men's 55+ Doubles with Michael Smith from Stockton, CA aka DrMike. We started strong & won our 1st 2 matches in straight games. Our next match was against Scott Lennan from Seattle & Steve Cole of Las Vegas, one of the top seeds. We won a tight 1st game 11-8 but Steve & Scott found an extra gear & took the next 2 games & the match. Steve & Scott eventually won the Bronze medal. DrMike & I won our 1st 2 loser's bracket matches to advance to the "Match to go to Bronze" against Bill Muno & Ken Lehman of Colorado. DrMike & I started strong & led at the side change 8-2. We stretched the lead to 10-2 but the Bill & Ken stopped missing. We lead 11-5, 13-8, & 14-10 before losing 16-14 - OUCH!!! DrMike & I finished 5th out of 28. Andrea Mayorga & Robin Haney finished 4th in the Women's 65+ Doubles finishing behind three 5.0/5.0 teams.

On Tuesday I played in the Mixed 55+ with Cherie Chao from Denver. We won our 1st match in straight games than had a tight one against David & Mary from Chicago. On matchpoint I got into an 8 shot reflex volley exchange with Mary - I decided that she was never going to miss so I changed it up & hit David in the left shoulder with the next volley to end the match. Next up was DrMike & Rachael Kroog from MN. Cherie was on the top of her game, returning deep, playing great defense, & angling overheads into the side fence. With us serving at 10-9, Rachael hit a crosscourt backhand dink that landed on the sideline forcing me to hit a back the net shot back that I lucked out as it skimmed the net to win the 1st game. The 2nd game was also close. Cherie hit some nasty high serves the the wind blew to DrMike & Rachael's backhands close to the back fence. I had 1 lob rundown squash shot that had so much spin on it that it hit DrMike's paddle & went sideways & we won the 2nd game 11-8 to advance to the Winner's bracket Semi's against Joe Nguyen of Houston & Yvonne Ting of MA. A win would put us in the Gold Medal match. We started slow & fell behind 5-0 then went on a 9-2 run to take a 9-7 lead. Joe & Yvonne raised their game & came back to win the game 11-9. They continued their fine play in 2nd game & won it easily to advance to the finals where they lost to Scott Moore/Lisa Naumu to win Silver medals. Cherie & I had to wait over 3 hours to play our next match between a 2 1/2 hour rain delay & waiting for the loser's bracket to catch up to us. We played Mike Gates & Jill Prolman of San Diego. Mike won the Open Mixed Gold at National's a few years ago with LubaZ. Jill is a very strong tennis player relatively new to pickleball with great strokes including a 2-handed backhand and won a Silver medal in the Women's 45+ Doubles the day before. Mike & Jill led from the start, with Mike seeming to hold the ball on his paddle until we committed to 1 side & then hitting a winner on the other & Jill getting everything back. Cherie sparked us to a 2nd half comeback & we served at 13-14-2 but could tie it up and 3 sideouts later Mike & Jill won the match 15-13. Mike & Jill went on to win the Bronze medal. Cheri & I finished 5th out of 41 teams.

On Wednesday, DrMike & I played the Senior Men's Pro Doubles. Our 1st round match was against Bill Muno & Augie Augsburg of AZ. 1st game was tight. Bill's dinks and drops were working well and Augie's unpredictable attacks caught us by surprise. We had 2 game points but couldn't convert and Bill & Augie won 13-11(the 3rd game in a row over 2 tournaments that I had a game point and lost an overtime game to Bill!). DrMike upped his play in game 2, hitting winners on the reflex volley duels and steady play on his Drops & Dinks and we won 11-9. DrMike played better still in game 3(I kept on waiting for Bill & Augie to give up hitting to DrMike and target all the balls at me but was glad they still hit him many balls) and we took the match 11-4. Our next match was against a top seeded team of Steve Dawson of San Diego and Dave Fleming of Dallas. Steve won 2 Pro Golds at the US Open last year(the Dawson family owns Bobby Riggs Racquet & Paddle Club in Encinitas). 1st time I had played Dave who is a strong tennis player with great strokes including a 2-handed background. We had a lot of great rallies but Steve & Dave won most of them and the match 11-7, 11-5. We won our 1st 2 loser's bracket matches 15-10 & 15-11. We played Mike Gates & Del Kauss next. DrMike & I started slow and trailed 10-0 before mounting a token comeback & getting knocked out 15-7.

On Thursday, I had the day off. My parents & I went to Marco Island which is about 30 minutes south of the courts. Marco Island has pretty, clear, blue water and many high end vacation homes. My parents went there 25 years ago on their 25 ft cabin cruiser boat, traveling across from the East Coast of Florida via Lake Okeechobee. We had lunch at the Snook Inn on the water and I had a Grouper sandwich which was probably the best fish sandwich I have ever had.

On Friday, Cherie and I played the Senior Mixed Pro Doubles. Our 1st round match was against Clare Grabher (playing Cherie for the 3rd time of the week) and Michael Stewart of Vero Beach, FL. Clare & Michael started fast and won the 1st game easily. Cherie & I got moving and played our best pickleball of the tournament to win the 2nd & 3rd games and the match. Next up for us was the defending USAPA National's Senior Mixed team of Kris Anderson & Kevin Booth of Orange County, CA who had a 1st round bye. I was fortunate to play 8 Rec games with Kris 3 years ago in Tustin. She played great then and we beat several Men's 5.0 teams together. Kevin is a very strong player also: quick, accurate, & consistent. Kris & Kevin started fast and steamrolled us 11-2, 11-2 - Kris attacked every ball we hit even a little bit up and Kevin ended the match with a perfect 3rd Shot Topspin Lob that I chased but couldn't get a paddle on. Our next match was against DrMike & Rachael. They both played very well and led throughout to avenge their loss to Cherie & I on Tuesday. DrMike & Rachael had a great day also beating the strong team of Mike Gates & Laura Fenton-Kovanda.

Congrats to Robin Haney of Lincoln Hills who won a Silver Medal in the 65+ 4.5 Mixed Doubles on Friday afternoon with partner Herb Siegers of Bakersfield!

There were 2 Triple Crown winners at the US Open: Simone Jardim won the Women's Pro Singles, Women's Pro Doubles, and Mixed Pro Singles. Scott Moore won the Senior Men's Pro Singles, Senior Men's Pro Doubles, & Senior Mixed Pro Doubles. Simone also won the Triple Crown last year. Scott also won both the 55+ Men's Doubles & 55+ Mixed Doubles events for 5 Gold Medals this year. They both got a \$1,000 bonus which likely was matched by their paddle companies (some paddle manufacturers match any Prize money won by their sponsored players in Grand Slam events like the US Open). With the US Open format, both Simone & Scott had to go undefeated in all their matches to win the Triple Crown - a loss dropped you into the loser's bracket without wraparound so a Bronze was the highest place possible. Simone lost 2 games total in 3 events, Scott lost 3 games total in 5 events.