

1999 St. Albans Blue Ball Championship

St. Albans Champion

Aug 1, 1999

The St. Albans handball competition featured several Class A players, but Ray Lopez was in a class by himself. Ray swept through all opponents to decisively take this year's King of the Court's Crown.

Fans shook their heads watching the games as several handball greats went down to defeat. The talk was that Ray was in "a zone." Players watching all agreed, his serve was un-hittable.

Ray was not one of the favorites in this competition. While handball enthusiasts remembered him as a powerful player, he had not played well last year. According to Ray "I'm much more able to focus on the game this year. Last year my son was born, I was working a lot and I also gained a lot of weight, so my stamina was low. This year, I've been jogging in the morning and playing ball. I was much more prepared."

Ray was prepared to play, but no one was prepared to take on his fire. Serves went untouched and when opponents could get a piece of it, Ray then smashed killers to all sides.

The first big surprise came mid day Saturday, when, in the third round, Ray faced Rookie, the number one seed. Rookie, last year's champ, was expected by many to repeat. But Rookie was decisively beaten. Ray said "Rookie is used to playing people scared of him. Rookie and I have played before, sometimes he's won sometimes I have. I respect him as a player, but I wasn't scared of him. But I was scared of Emmitt because he beat me last year."

Ray defeated Emmitt in the finals, by a score of 25 - 13. The points came fast and Ray led from the start. Emmitt could not get his game established due to Ray's smashing serves and sideline killers.

Ray's toughest game was probably against Tyrone in the semi-finals. Tyrone didn't give Ray any latitude, fighting for every possession and contesting close calls. "Tyrone played a tough game said Ray, but I was on and no one was going to beat me today."

Congratulations Ray Lopez 1999 St. Albans Blue Ball Champion - King of the Court!