

2001 NYC Big Blue Championship

Crowd wowed at the NYC Big Blue Tournament

NYC Parks June 9&10, 2001

The second annual NYC Big Blue Championship sponsored by the NY Department of Parks and New York's top handball associations was a smashing success. Mother Nature provided perfect June weather for the event. There were approximately 750 entries in the tournament, 40% more than last year. Competition was fierce; some of the games were legendary.



John 'Rookie' Wright repeated as Men's Open's Singles Champ

Each of the boroughs was well represented and for the first time, players from nearby handball centers (including Philadelphia) came in for the competition.

The following list shows the top 2 players from each of the categories.

Men Open Singles

- 1- John "Rookie" Wright
- 2- Emmitt Fitzpatrick

Women Open Singles

- 1- Karen McConney
- 2- Gladys Miranda

Men Open Doubles

- 1- Ray Lopez/ Shawn Conrad
- 2- Ervin Irizarry/Robert Sostre

Women Open Doubles

- 1- Gladys Miranda/Karen McConney
- 2- Taraisha Simmons/Dana Everett

Men B Singles

- 1- Joe Thompson
- 2- James Reinninger

Women B Singles

- 1- Sara Sookdeo
- 2- Mimi Skipper

Men B Doubles

- 1- Robert Ortiz/James Agnilera
- 2- Wally Amaro/Minerva Marrero

Women B Doubles

- 1- Mini Skipper/Lattis Bruce
- 2- Evette Amador/Anna Rivera

Mens C Singles

- 1- Fred Knox
- 2- James Rivera

Women C Singles

- 1- Cathy Marshall
- 2- Annie Huang

The following sites were used for this year's competitions:

- Van Cortland Park, and Orchard Beach in the Bronx,
- Lincoln Terrace and Coney Island in Brooklyn,
- Central Park in Manhattan,
- Midland Park in Staten Island
- London Plane Tree Park and Far Rockaway Park in Queens,

Sunday's finals took place at London Plane Tree Park in Queens.

Background

The Parks Department is sponsoring the Championship in conjunction with its restoration of handball facilities throughout the five boroughs.

The City has 2052 handball surfaces (constituting of the 1 wall surface and the painted court area) citywide; 406 in the Bronx, 673 in Brooklyn, 277 in Manhattan, 640 in Queens, and 56 in Staten Island. Crews from each borough are bringing the courts back into their original state through power washing, graffiti removal, and filling expansion joints and cracks. Every wall surface will be smoothed and painted with new lines and Park leaves added. During the course of the restoration approximately 1500 courts will be restored. Over 500 were restored last year.

The NYC Big Blue Tournament is a jointly sponsored event between the NYC Department of Parks and the New York Handball Association (NYHA). NYHA is a coalition of the City's largest handball organizations and includes ICHA (the Inner City Handball association), OOHA (Our Own Handball Association) and SAHA (St. Albans Handball Association).

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Double Match Shows Sport at its Best

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A tremendous doubles final was the crowning touch in this year's NYC Big Blue Championship. "I've been watching handball for 46 years and this was the best match I've ever seen," said Dwight Worley, a solid player, president of SAHA, and one of handball's top analysts. "Two of the best players in the game Ray Lopez and Robert Sostre were playing like super A's. You expect these guys to play well, but they were flawless. Their partners, Shawn and Ervin were also on their game. It was incredible."



Spectators watching the Men's Doubles Finals were treated to one of the greatest matches played

Rob and Ervin went in as 3 point favorites, since they've been a steady team for awhile. Ray and Shawn have played together, but had not yet made their major mark. They've made it now with their spectacular 21-19 victory.

Over 300 people witnessed what will be known as one of the historic games in the history of the sport. And key parts of that historic game were taped and are available over the net. Watching this action should generate a lot of new handball fans.

Consider the soon to be legendary 4 minute volley that was the highlight of the game. We pick up the action midway. Rob had been trying to go to Shawn, but Shawn was bringing everything back. Then Shawn and Ervin started going back and forth. After several rounds Shawn lobbed what seemed like a sure point over Ervin's head. Just as the spectators began clapping in appreciation of the shot and point Rob ran the ball down and with his back towards the court make a miraculous return. The crowd screamed; Ray shot back a spectacular spike, but Rob ran off the fence, from the right to left side to return the ball. Ray hit the ball to the middle, this time Rob dives and returns. Shawn lobs it to the other side, Ervin chases this one down. After several more returns Shawn finally kills it up the line with his left! The crowd roared in appreciation.