

NYC 2002 Big Blue Championship

NYC Big Blue Tournament Continues to Grow *NYC Parks June 15,16 2002*

In a dramatic comeback, Robert Sostre emerged with a hard fought 21-20 win over "Lefty" George Figueroa to take the Men's Open Singles Big Blue Championship. On the other side of the court, Veronica Figueroa was able to hold on and take the Women's Open Singles prize with a 21-14 win over Gladys Miranda.



In only its third year, the NYC Parks Department Big Blue Championship has become the largest one-wall handball event. Preliminary rounds were held in eight parks located throughout NYC's five boroughs, with over 750 people registered and a total of 1200 entries (many players participate in both single and double competitions). The event draws players from all the major NYC courts as well as contingents from emerging one-wall centers such as Philadelphia

Heavy rain showers interrupted play and forced rain dates for several categories.

Coordination and responsibility is shared among the City's main handball associations who work with the Parks Department on publicizing the event. Paul Williams, current chairman of the NY Handball Alliance, is one of the coordinators of the event. Williams and the players held out hopes that games would be finished on Sunday as planned but after the day's third thundershower, competition had to be postponed for many of the categories until the rain date on June 29th or 30th.

Background

The Parks Department is sponsoring the Championship in conjunction with its restoration of handball facilities throughout the five boroughs. Preliminary locations included parks in all five boroughs:

- Bronx - Van Cortland Park and Orchard Beach
- Brooklyn - Coney Island and Lincoln Terrace
- Queens - Far Rockaway & London Planetree
- Staten Island - Midland Beach
- Manhattan - Central Park

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 (the green maple leaf which is the parks Department's logo) added. During the course of the restoration approximately 1500 courts will be restored. More than half of the courts have already been restored.

The NYC Big Blue Tournament is a jointly sponsored event between the NYC Department of Parks and the New York Handball Alliance (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). The USHA (United States Handball Association) One-Wall Committee is also a member of NYHA. In addition the USHA is a co-sponsor of the NYC Big Blue event.