

# 2003 King of the Courts



Wally and George in their semi-final match

**King George wins back the crown**  
*St. Albans Queens 7/26/03*

*By Streetplay.com*

George 'Lefty' Figueroa outplayed and outlasted the other top guns to take Big Blue's highest honor and be declared "King of the Courts." With just minutes of light left from a stunning summer day, George defeated the tournament's top seed and last year's champ John 'Rookie' Wright to claim his crown. It was George's second win in three years and

both the \$1,500 prize money and satisfaction in victory couldn't have been sweeter.

Fifty two players registered for this year's tournament, many knowing they had no chance, but wanting to participate in the highly respected event. Over 250 fans were treated to a number of exciting matches, most notably George's win over Shaheem Nelson, the sport's young and rising star. Shaheem, just 19 years old, seemed to have the veteran on the ropes, but couldn't put him away, making several unforced errors. His inexperience cost him dearly, as George hung on and battled back to take the match 21-18.

That win brought George to the semi-finals where he faced his next victim, Wally from Philadelphia. Wally really opened a number of people's eyes by making it that far and his game demonstrated pure heart as well as talent. Philly's handball crew has been coming up to NYC for the past few years to participate in the major tournaments, as well as hosting some big events of their own. New Yorkers take the two thousand one-wall courts found in the City's parks for granted, but Philly players have to make due with the occasional decent wall and courts of varied proportions. Whether or not Wally and the other Philly player's growing talents can overcome this significant handicap still remains to be seen.

The final match looked like it would be all Rookie after he took a 16-8 lead. However, once again, George came roaring back. Rookie lost serve at 17-15 and once George got it back, he ran it to the end. Dwight Worley president of SAHA commented "George is probably the most underrated player in sport. He's low key, doesn't talk trash and only participates in select tournaments. He's a classy guy who respects his opponents and understands how hard it is to get to that level of play."

"Besides," Dwight continues, "George knows how much we much work it takes to put this tournament together. He was very thankful to Karen, Gladys and everyone involved. It's nice to be appreciated."