

MEN'S 1-WALL PRO HANDBALL TOUR

SMALL-BALL POINTS RACE 2003

YEAR #3

The justification of any sports (whether auto racing or tennis) must initially establish a system to rank/rate their competitors based on individual performances. For decades, the handball establishment has renege its responsibilities in creating a ranking system that promote the sport and add legitimacy to tournament draws. The purpose of the "Points Race 2003" is not to glorify any individual but instead, reward those competitors who strive for excellence and in many regards have dedicated their entire lives to playing the "perfect game", handball.

2003 TOURNAMENTS

NON-MAJOR TOURNAMENTS

- YMCA Invitation March 30, 2003 - YMCAI 03
- Marty O'Malley Classic July 12-13, 2003 - MOC 03
- Bailey Park Fall Classic October 7, 2003 - BPFC 03
- H.E.S. Invitational November 9, 2003 - HESI 03

MAJOR TOURNAMENTS

- ICHA Mayor's Cup July 12-13, 2003 - MC 03
- USHA 1-Wall Nationals August 1-4, 2003 - USHAN 03

2003 POINTS SYSTEM

➤ POINTS - ACHIEVEMENT

NON-MAJOR TOURNAMENT POINTS

- Did Not Play (DNP) - 0 point
- Quarterfinalist - 10 points
- Semifinalist - 20 points
- Finalist - 30 points
- Champion - 40 points

MAJOR TOURNAMENT POINTS

- Did Not Play (DNP) - 0 point
- Quarterfinalist - 15 points
- Semifinalist - 30 points
- Finalist - 45 points
- Champion - 60 points

2003 TOURNAMENT SUMMARY – MEN'S 1-WALL PRO SINGLES (SMALL-BALL)

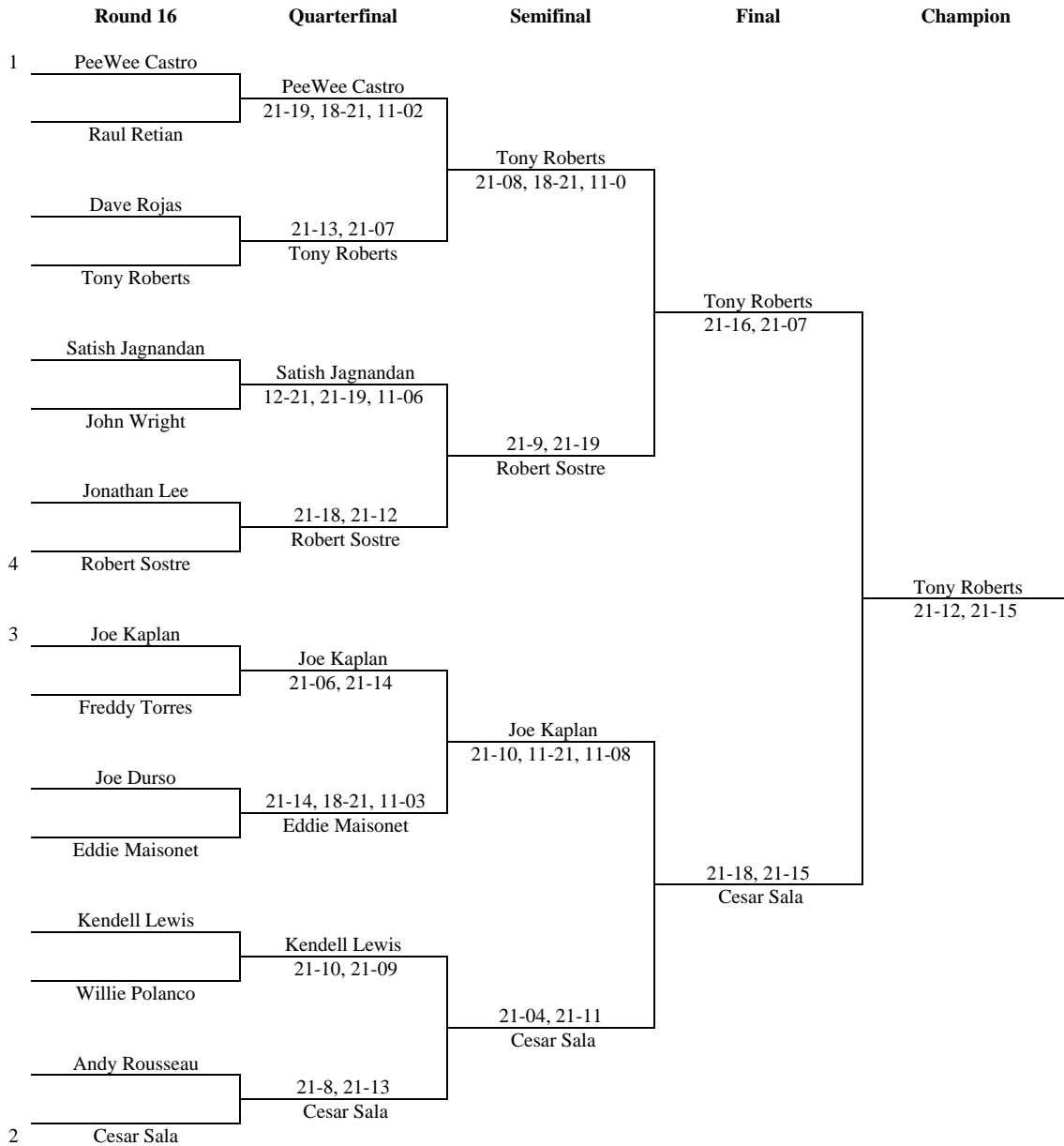
- Pro Stop #1 YMCA Invitational March 30, 2003 Sala defeats Sostre (25-21)
- Pro Stop #2 ICHA Mayor's Cup July 12-13, 2003 Sala defeats Kaplan (21-10, 12-21, 11-08)
- Pro Stop #3 Marty O'Malley Classic July 19, 2003 Jagnandan defeats Lewis (25-13)
- Pro Stop #4 USHA 1-Wall Nationals August 1-4, 2003 Roberts defeats Sala (21-11, 21-15)
- Pro Stop #5 Bailey Park Fall Classic October 7, 2003 Jagnandan defeats Sala (25-14)
- Pro Stop #6 H.E.S. Invitational November 9, 2003 Sala defeats Rousseau (25-12)

MEN'S 1-WALL PRO HANDBALL TOUR
SMALL-BALL POINTS RACE 2003

PRO STOP #4
AUGUST 1-4, 2003 - USHA ONE-WALL NATIONALS
(CONEY ISLAND, BROOKLYN)

TOURNAMENT DRAWSHEET

Rankings were based on the USHA One-Wall Ranking System



MEN'S 1-WALL PRO HANDBALL TOUR
SMALL-BALL POINTS RACE 2003

PRO STOP #4
AUGUST 1-4, 2003 - USHA ONE-WALL NATIONALS
(CONEY ISLAND, BROOKLYN)

TOURNAMENT SUMMARY
Roberts defeats Sala (21-11, 21-15)

by Ben Brettner

Two men took vastly different paths to meet in the finals that produced one of the most startling results in tournament history. Sports has a language all its own with many expressions that have found their way into ordinary use. "It's hard to win the first time, but harder to repeat". "In order to be considered great you have to beat someone great". Both of these sayings came into play as Tony Roberts began his incredible journey through the draw. His first obstacle was Dave Rojas former National doubles, World singles and current World doubles champion. In workmanlike fashion Tony won 21-12, 21-7. Current champion PeeWee Castro was extended to a tie-breaker by Raul "monster" Retian.

Pre-game consensus was that PeeWee would dispatch Tony in two straight games. When Castro won the first game 21-9, showing skills that brought him to national prominence, spectators turned their attention to other games. When word circulated that Roberts had rebounded to take game two 21-18, they wandered back for the tie-breaker. Surely the spectators opened that the younger and faster Peewee would make the necessary adjustments to keep his trek toward a second title in place. To the shock of those in attendance Tony continued to vary his serve and killed everything in sight. Castro wasn't able to score a single point as Roberts burst to an 11-0 shutout.

PeeWee's failure to repeat just makes you appreciate that much more those teams and athletes that have been able to sustain brilliance over a long period of time. Another common saying in sports is "he has great hands". In football that's used to describe a receiver who can "cradle" the ball into his hands in traffic or a shortstop who can handle any difficult ball hit at him and make it look easy. Well Tony Roberts has long held the reputation of having perhaps the "best hands" in handball. The only thing lacking, which all top singles players possess, was speed. Surely that deficiency would cost him in his semi-final match against the multi-talented and former champion Robert Sostre. Rob caught everyone off guard by opening the game by serving an ace with his left hand. That was pretty much the highlight for Sostre who fell 21-16, 21-7 much to the disbelief of the crowd.

While all the drama was in the top of the draw, Cesar Sala was methodically working his way through the bottom. Cesar has long been acknowledged as one of the top one-wallers since the late 90s. But despite a resume that includes National and World titles Sala hasn't sustained a period of dominance that will stamp him with the label of "greatness". Wins over top 4-waller Kendell Lewis and former champion Ed Maisonet, himself a victor over the legendary Joe Durso, pitted Cesar against his partner Joe Kaplan. With a 21-18, 21-15 Sala was peaking at the right time. The match featured many terrific rallies. Those who watch Sala regularly have come to expect punch shots, retrieves, and sprinting to all corners of the court.

As I watched Tony and Cesar warm up on Sunday morning, I compared Roberts's ascent to the finals to a video game player finding each level more difficult than the previous ones. A succession of champions had fallen at his hands and now lay his toughest task. Pre game butterflies gave way to periods of excellent play with long rallies often ending with a kill shot by Roberts. A 21-11 first game victory was attributed to Sala being a slow starter. In game two, Cesar took a nice lead and seemed to have matters under control. The crowd was hoping for a tie-breaker, but Tony rebounded and closed the match out 21-18 with a final winner.

While most modern athletes have an entourage tending to their every need, Roberts has a nutritionist, trainer and cheerleader all in the person of longtime girlfriend Melody Ruiz. While Cesar is left to contemplate how to mold his immense physical talents into championship form, Tony took the cheers of the crowd while a teary eyed Melody embraced him.