

Nor-Cal News Views

Northern California Horseshoe Pitchers Association website address is: <http://www.nchpa.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/568662210169482/>

1st VP Report

The historic 100th California State Horseshoe Pitching Championship is in the books, and it was a good one! We had hot Stockton weather (not nearly as hot as two years ago), we ran a little behind on the pitching schedule, and we never found time to do an Opening Ceremony, but we had a very competitive, enjoyable State Tournament with some very worthy State Champions crowned!

The days leading up to the big event were hectic, even tortured! With minimum manpower to prepare the clay and the courts it was an uphill battle to begin with, but an error by the City Landscaping Crew led to a near disaster. Thanks to the effort of Jeff Vieira, Dave Lane, Joe Summers, and Rick Bermingham, the courts had been weeded, flooded, and turned, and although the clay was a little on the wet side, it looked like the courts would be in good condition for the tournament. The City Crew ignored our multiple requests for no watering in the week leading up to the event, and on Wednesday night they absolutely deluged the court with water! When we went out to do start our final preparation on Thursday, we found all the courts and platforms completely under water. The thought crossed my mind that we might have to cancel the tournament! It looked like we could have a fishing derby, but not a horseshoe tournament. I called the City to let them know how pleased I was, then Gail and Joe were contacted with the grim news. Joe left work early and headed for Louis Park with his Blow Torch! The City, always behind us in holding the State Tournament, dispatched a crew with bilge pumps, extension cords, and shop-vacs. The Park and Rec Director was even out there manning a shop-vac! Joe and Jeff shoveled and stacked clay, vacuumed standing water, and blow torched for hours, and with help from Thursday and Friday's 100 degree temperatures the clay was dried, and

was actually in good condition for the weekend. Nothing short of a minor miracle!

The Tournament Shirts and the Tournament Trophies and Plaques were great this year. The shirt logo with the "100th anniversary" done using horseshoes was a nice touch, and the "piano wood" black on the plaques was beautiful. Thanks to Southern Charter's Danny Kyle for handling the shirts and awards when our normal trophy people were unable to do the work this year. Danny came through big time for us!

Marty Montez of the Madera Club is the new California State Men's Champion! After a six year stay with Marcus Santillana in Southern California the Title is back in Norcal! Marty went undefeated, with it all coming down to the final game with Southern California's Aaron Tarango. Marty and Aaron both came into the last game with no losses, and in a great showdown Marty prevailed by a score of 40-31 in 64 shoes over "The Kid" for his first State Title. Congratulations to the new champ who joins a list of California Champions that includes some of the greatest players to ever play this game! High game in the class was an 83.3% thrown by Tarango over Bermingham. Rick Bermingham, Nathan Williams, and Frank Arroyo finished just behind the top duo with 7 wins and 4 losses.

Bishop's Sandra Johnson took the Women's crown with a 13-1 record for her 5th State Championship. Sandra had the class high game of 84.6% against Alva Ramirez. Sandra's win gives her one more State Title than Teddy Guillotte; there are only 3 women ahead of her on the all-time list, Kimmy Stockli with 6, Sharon Paddock with 7, and Diane Lopez (Silva) with 11. Half Moon Bay's Foa

Remillong was undefeated after the first day, and looked to be in good position to repeat her 2015 State Title, but the smiling outlaw ended as the runner-up. Seaside's Alva Ramirez had a nice third place finish in the championship group.

One of the real bright spots of this year's State Tournament was the participation of 15 Junior pitchers!

In honor of the 100th California State Championship, Gail Sluys, with unanimous support of the Norcal Board, felt it was time to initiate an award for a Cadet Girl State Champion. Hopefully this will serve as a precedent, and that the NHPA will follow our lead of crowning a Cadet Girl along with a Cadet Boy instead of the current practice of a Cadet Champion without regard to gender. Who knew we would be on the cutting edge of gender equality! The next thing you know you'll see Joe Summers in one of "those pink hats."

The Cadet Championship Class included national sensation Hastiin Begaye, Seaside's Evelyn Espinola, and up and coming Adakai Begaye. Hastiin dominated the class going undefeated and pitching 67.16% to break his own Cadet State Record. Hastiin's high game was this year's State Tournament high game, a sizzling 88.8% against his brother. Evelyn became California's first Cadet Girl Champion, and what a worthy champion she is with a personality that is as winning as her horseshoe game. I had the honor of sitting with Jesse Gonzalez as he watched this group. Jesse could not stop grinning, and I could tell he really enjoyed watching these youngsters. Jesse thinks that the sky is the limit for Hastiin if he continues to love the game and stays with it. Jesse loves Evelyn's attitude, and commented a couple of times "she doesn't get rattled!" Jesse liked Adakai's smooth, natural 3/4 reverse, and sees a ton of potential in Adi. What a great thing to see three such talented, poised, and just plain great kids competing in our sport!

The Junior Boy's Championship Group was a great and competitive group this year. Luke Zepponi was going for a "Jr. Boy's three-peat", but the Kyles were in town looking for trouble, and Norcal's Teodoro Espinola, Cyrus Marvin, and Zeke Merrill were all capable of an upset. Dillon Kyle took this year's crown in a playoff over Seaside's Teodoro. Dillon, the younger of the Kyle brothers, pitched 6 points over his average to finish first with a 9-2 record and a nice 40% ringer

average. Dillon opened the tournament with a 50% game which was the Class high game.

The Elders Championship went to Redondo Beach's Paul Hopkins. Paul, a three time Sr. Men's champion, used an effective 3/4 turn to go undefeated. Paul had a Class high game of 73.5% against Pat McGowan. John Garcia finished two games back in second place. Turlock's Ken Weir had a great tournament and a third place finish. K-Dub's strong heart overcame a couple of braced legs, and he threw enough "raang-ers" to go 6 and 3 in a talented group!

The Senior Men's Championship was a "dog-fight" which went late into each night. Southern California's Ruben Rodriguez came out on top with Eddie Montoya second. Exeter's 2017 Sr. Men's champ Donald Henry finished third. Montoya had a 55.8% game for Class high.

Tri-Valley's irrepressible Richard Robbins won Elder Class B with a 9-2 record. The win goes along with the World Class Championship Richard won at the World Tournament in Wichita Falls. It certainly shows that nice guys don't always finish last....you know, Richard is pitching like the Hall of Famer that he is! He told me the other day that his cancer blood test came out normal, and that is the best news I've heard in a long time! Congratulations to Richard "Marty" Robbins!!

Junior Cadet B Class was won by Madera rookie Trenton Burley who pitched 11 points over his average! Way to go Trenton! Paige Jones came out of this class as our new Junior Girl State Champion....good job Paige!

Men's Class B was won by Jeff Merrill who had a nice 47.73% ringer average. Jeff had three 55% games and had an undefeated record, only being tied in one game by second place finisher Frank Rodriguez II. Frank had two 60% games. Tulare's Pete Perez finished fourth, and Madera's Gavin Begaye was fifth.

Jonathan Williams threw 10% over his average (including two 45% games) to take Men's C class by one game over Madera's Ricky Hunter, Jr. New San Jose pitcher Joe Navarro had a third place finish.

Men's D Class was won by Stafon Jones, a SCHPA pitcher. Sonoma's Tim Brady was in third.

Men's E Class was won by McBean's Wayne Lockart. Wayne, an NCHPA rookie pitched 6 points over his average for an impressive win, and had the Class high game of 35%. San Francisco's Peter Zepponi pitched his average to take fourth

place. Joe Summers lost to SCHPA President Dave Smullen in the “Battle of the Charter Presidents,” but how did Joe manage to pitch his average for the tournament after shoveling & torching clay for four days, running the tournament, and pitching with a “blown” shoulder? My guess is that it was pure talent, and a love of the game?!...at least that sounds good!

Mens F Class was taken by San Jose’s Mike Nakamoto who pitched 4 points over his average. Turlock’s Byrum Swinford finished fourth and Mark Scott finished fifth representing Madera.

Tanya Jones of the Southern Charter won Women’s Class B. McBean rookie Debra Aitken had a nice second place finish. Jodi Smullen of Turlock was third. Jasmine Brady pitched 2 ½ points over her average for fifth place, and Gina Cyr pitched 3 points over her average to finish sixth. Class high games were 35% efforts by Gina Cyr, and Byrlyn McCormick

Saturday’s raffle was one of the best I’ve ever seen. Thanks to Mary Summers for all of her time and effort!

Thanks to my fellow Board Members for their efforts in making the State Tournament a success. Lorena, Mike, Alan, Jeff, you all went above and beyond.

Thanks to our great President Joe Summers. You put your heart and soul into the 2019 State. Thanks for your many trips out to Stockton to solve every challenge or problem that came up. You are truly a person that finds a way to get things done! Did anyone ever tell you that you need to learn how to delegate?

A special thanks to Gail and Casey Sluys for all you do....probably more than anyone knows. I truly don’t know what Northern California horseshoe pitching would do without you.

Special recognition should go to Gil Tournour who I know did two judging shifts in a row during the heat of the day, and the legendary Bill Terry who’s always willing to put on the judging “neons” called a lot of close ones. Speaking of judging, I saw one of the greatest horseshoe scenes I had ever seen when Gil was making a call in a Cadet game between Evelyn and Adakai. Gil was down on his knees making a call for the kids, and both of kids were down on their knees just like Gil, all looking intensely as Gil evaluated the situation. I tell you it was a priceless scene, but I’m afraid no one captured it in a picture!

The City of Stockton Park and Recreation was again very supportive. I described the watering near disaster, but outside of that the City was pleasant to deal with, and was as helpful as possible. After the event I got an email from the director saying, “Thanks George! Hope everything went well! Sounds like you had a late night on Sunday! We were glad to help with getting the area cleaned up prior to the event! We need to keep events such as these going strong, hopefully it may have received a little bit of press coverage! Just let us know of anything we can do to help in the future. Looks like some of the boards will need to be painted soon. I will see what we can do to help.”

Fay Dumont of our Stockton Club was a key element in the success of the tournament. Fay was at the courts two days before the tournament began, painting, and repairing the scoring devices, and she painted the big green results board! She was at the tournament at dawn each day to make coffee, and as usual she kept score of multiple games from the first shift until the last shoe was pitched each day! She put a great deal of effort into setting up and tearing down after the event...an unsung hero!

Unfortunately, we had a “pop-up” tent stolen on Friday night. Jeff Williams stayed all night Saturday night at the park to keep watch on the tournament site.

As I write this with the perspective of the tournament being two weeks ago, it seems as though the time, effort, and frustration fade, and one is left with pleasant memories of the event. I think of smiles, laughter, and good times had. I think of Marty Montez walking from the court in satisfaction after his clutch win over Tarango, letting it sink in that he was the California State Champion. I think of Sandra adding another Women’s Title. I think of the great Junior competition, and find myself in awe of Hastiin’s talent and future. I think of how great the courts looked as it cooled off and the lights came on in the evening. I think of spending a few minutes with a great man like Jesse Gonzalez, just feeling his love for the game. I think of the unique sound of horseshoes clanking on stakes from all nineteen courts. Most of all I think about and appreciate pitchers coming from all over the state of California to compete and enjoy our great sport. **George Davis**

4th. VP

The 2019 World Tournament and State Tournament are in the books now and we look forward to the Doubles tournament in Half Moon Bay and the NCHPA Championships in Vallejo as well as the end of the year tournaments in other parts of Northern California.

The California State tournament was held at the Stockton club and we are all very thankful for George Davis, Joe Summers and Jeff Vieira for all the help in preparing the courts and the shed we used for STATS. On the days of the tournament so many of our Northern members helped by running (and walking) score sheets in to the STAT room, picking up garbage, helping to put up and take down pop-up shades, filling the water coolers, and generally being kind and helpful. There were some very good and considerate food vendors who supplied us with some delicious burritos and icy cold drinks. The scorekeepers were awesome and were appreciated by the pitchers and the statisticians!

We still had to deal with the heat although this year it was relatively cool in the morning and late evening. Also had to deal with portable potties :(and the few grumpy people whom we dealt with did not dampen our spirits and the general attitude of the tournament was happy and joyous, especially for the winners!!! We could have used a few more scorekeepers in the afternoon and evening shifts but some kind and exhausted pitchers as well as some wilted but willing friends and family came to the rescue and kept score for the teams that needed them.

If you did not attend the State Tournament, you not only missed the fun of pitching and visiting with friends but also the best raffle table ever, thanks to Mary and Joe Summers. Also, thanks to Casey Sluys who sold raffle tickets all day long. Other kind acts of note were the gentle people who put up shade for the STAT room, handed out cold water to hot pitchers, asked countless times what they could do to help and in spite of the oppressive heat, smiled and spoke kindly to all! - **Lorena Tournour**

Regional Director

Here's my proposal, let's discuss it amongst all of us for a year. We have a system in place that mirrors the NHPA in choosing delegates that are able to speak at our annual meeting. When we had close to 600 members this method was implemented to expedite the meetings. It has served us well for 25 years, but it's time for a change.

I suggest that we have an open meeting that anyone may attend and anyone may speak on any subject (meeting rules will be implemented). This would allow some of the newer members to become more active and perhaps begin to feel some ownership in the charter. Presently to majority of the new members are ostracized, mind you not intentionally, but they are. Whether not chosen to represent the club they belong to or simply too shy to speak up, The only way to instill confidence in these members is to allow them to participate.

The meeting locations will be chosen by the executive board and can remain structured as they have been. This might swing a vote a certain way if 10 members of one area attend and all vote the way their president does, we might have to deal with that if it arises. There are pitfalls for sure, but I envision long term benefits for our charter and a growth in membership by allowing every member to right to speak and vote of various subjects. Call me, email me, text me with your thoughts, we will collect them all and make a case for change at the yearend meeting.

How are your courts holding up? Are there trip hazards that should be fixed? Are your foul lines clearly marked? Are they 20, 27 and 37 feet from the opposite stake? Please take the time to read the page 37 of the RGS book Specification II for court layout. Then with that in mind take a close look at your facility please? **Casey Sluys**

www.nchpa.com

Don't forget, your articles are due 12/15/19 & I'll try to send it out before the 25th.

The following is what I've received so far from Jim Kinney the NHPA Sec/Treas. regarding a "new" online dues collection system.

I am sending out some literature to explain what is going on in an email and also in the mail.

I have answered some questions that may help you until then.

Here is some questions that have been asked to help.

I assume you are able to logon to the website. <http://www.nhpa-eshoe.com/>

Question: I have not found any information on the website and have begun to have members wanting to get their 2020 cards already, I just want to be prepared.

Answer: eShoe was made public with limited functionality. Right now you cannot process 2020 memberships. Normally new year memberships aren't available until Oct 1st.

We are doing our best to get this new program up and running by sometime in October.

If it's not ready to go when you have members who want a 2020 card, my suggestion would be to go ahead and process them as normal on a paper form, collect their dues, and you'll have to distribute cards later.

Question: Is there an instruction book/page?

Answer: No, there may be in the future probably on the NHPA website.

Question: Can members buy/print their cards online? How will NHPA keep track of

each states portion of the fee? Will NHPA then send the state its portion?

Answer: Once eShoe is going, all NHPA memberships throughout the country will be processed through it. There are two ways to do this:

1. ----- Players will have the option to renew online using eShoe. They will pay using a credit card. That money will go to the NHPA.

2. --- The second way to renew is the same way as always with one exception. You will process renewals and new players using eShoe. You collect the dues.

You will receive an invoice from the NHPA on a quarterly basis to reconcile the difference in funds and someone will write a check to the other one.

Question: Do only the state secretaries have access?

Answer: Yes, and they will only be able to see their charter information. The NHPA Sec/Treasurer has full control of the users and can at his discretion allow a charter additional users if needed.

Question: When I issue a new card, do I have to print each card separately? one on each sheet of paper?

Answer: You will not receive blank cards from the NHPA. eShoe has the ability to print cards and this can be done by the players themselves, or by you.

It is our hope that many players will simply keep an image of their cards on their phones. We know that won't work with everyone.

You can actually do this right now with 2019 cards. At the time eShoe is ready to

receive 2020 memberships, the card year will change to 2020.

One of the features of eShoe will be the ability for everyone to see if a person has purchased a card by looking at NATSTATS. Not ready yet but coming. That will make having a physical card virtually unnecessary.

Question: Can the program be set up to print multiple cards, like business card sheets? (copy and paste? to fill a sheet?)
added cost

I don't feel that a paper card will hold up well, unless laminated or put into some kind of protective sleeve.(I don't have a laminator.) *added cost*

Answer: Not yet, but perhaps in the future.

Statement: I also don't always have access to a computer and printer at other TD's tournaments, which will *add postage costs* to the struggling states to mail the cards later rather than give the cards out when they pass in the fee. (Many of our members buy their card at the 1st tournament they enter and I am not always there if I have to work. If I can't be there I find someone close that can take some cards to the TD who keeps a list with the fees collected, then sends it back to me with someone coming back my way.)

Can the NHPA buy in bulk any needed items for a cost savings to pass on to the states to purchase or find standard needed items through Amazon Smile or elsewhere for a reduced minimal cost?

Answer: That is something we would have to discuss with the counsel.

Statement: I think that having a program to enter membership into is a great idea, I

believe fully that the membership information should be accessible through the NHPA. Tracking people that move from state to state, years holding a card, duties held, among many other things.

I also see a need to cut costs for the NHPA, but I'm not sure adding costs to many struggling state charters is going to have the best outcome.

Answer: Understood, I really believe this will save charters time and money once fully implemented.

Statement: I am most likely overthinking the whole thing and I'm hoping that you have already addressed my questions/concerns and can help me and many others learn the new process.

Answer: Not at all. We are here to help. I as the NHPA Sec/Treasurer I am the person to contact with any concerns.

If you need anything else please contact me.

Jim Kinney Jr
NHPA Secretary/Treasure
P.O. Box 205
Drexel, MO 64742
(816) 738-0868
sec.treas@horseshoepitching.com

If you're confused you're not alone. Please continue to gather members as before and use the existing forms for the NCHPA. Perhaps by 2021 the system will be running smooth enough for all to use? Gail Sluys NCHPA Sec/Treas.

CLUBS

Ukiah

I'm so sorry - I missed the deadline for the June newsletter! I'm here now in Ukiah. After traveling to the California State Tournament in Stockton I have developed a new appreciation for Ukiah heat! Stockton was wonderful and fun because of the people and the Stockton Club hosts were the best. The heat is not within our control so I can't complain about it, though I would like to!

Our May tournaments were rained out, we were sorry to have to have made that call but our courts are clay and too much rain makes it almost impossible to drain as well as the fact that pitching in the rain on clay courts is pretty nasty. Our June tournaments were awesome and pleasant as the weather wasn't too severe and there was no noise from the race track. The Saturday tournament was named in memory of Earl Davis so we were very happy to have welcomed Bertha Davis who joined us to honor her son who passed away last year.

We are preparing our 2020 tournament dates so I hope you are all thinking about 2020 and when you want your tournaments because the dates are due now!!! God bless you all. **-Lorena Tournour**, Secretary

Half Moon Bay

I would like to congratulate Associate member Richard Robbins for winning his group at the World Tournament and also at the State Tournament. GOOD JOB!!! This was a difficult accomplishment. Foa Remillong took second in the Woman's Championship Group at the State Tournament.

Club friend, Evelyn Espinola was the California Cadet Girls Champion. During one of our tournaments, I remember watching her pitch shoes by herself at age 6, as her family competed. The next year she was pitching in tournaments using her fathers' horseshoes. She has grown to be a very tough competitor. Good Job, Evelyn!

We are offering Horseshoe lessons to the Half Moon Bay Community through the HMB Rec Department. We made the cover of the Rec Guide

as a new activity. We are hoping this will bring in new members.

Our Club has three more NCHPA tournaments for this season as well as three more monthly Club Tournaments.

We are also looking forward to hosting the NCHPA Walking Doubles Championship. See you on the courts! **Rick Della Santina**

Stockton

The club is proud to have hosted our 11th California State Tournament, and especially glad to have had the 100th edition at our courts. I'm always proud to see how nice the courts look when fully prepared for a tournament....the "old gal" still cleans up pretty well! She is still a great horseshoe pitching facility.

One thing we found out this year is how difficult it is to hold a State Tournament with a rapidly dwindling club membership. We really counted on members of other clubs to pull us through! I've already mentioned in my 1st VP report the help given by other clubs to prepare the courts, but I also wanted to single out Richard Robbins, and Mona and Rick Della Santina and thank them for their help. They were true Stockton "club members" when no real ones were there, and they are appreciated. The three of them were there helping until the last light went out. Even when others had been exhausted and quietly took off for home they stayed to tear down, gather up, and load up. Richard even went out in the dark to put the padlocks on the port-a-potties before we left. Mona just doesn't stop....managing the trash, running scorecards, absolutely anything that needs to be done, and she doesn't need to be asked, and she does it in great spirit. It is true that our involvement in horseshoe pitching is not just about pitching horseshoes, but it is about the friendships and relationships that you develop. Richard, Rick, and Mona exemplify people that are not just horseshoe pitching friends that are fun to be around, they are people who are there when you need them. As our local clubs grow smaller, we will all need to help more when we go to tournaments. We all should think about being club officers, or serving on the Board to support horseshoes. Our organization needs pitchers that do more than just pitch horseshoeswe need pitchers that are willing to serve and preserve our sport! **George Davis**

San Jose

The San Jose Jim & Diane Saunders Tournament on Sat. June 15 was attended by 13 pitchers with a 7 pitcher A Class and a 6 pitcher B Class. In Class A Marisela Mauricio placed 1st and Annette Nakamoto placed 2nd. In Class B Joe Navarro placed 1st and Daniel McEathron placed 2nd

The San Jose Nakamoto Family Tournament on Sun. June 16 was attended by 12 pitchers with a 6 pitcher A Class and a 6 pitcher B Class. In Class A Richard Robbins placed 1st and Peter Chavarria placed 2nd. In Class B Joseph Armenta placed 1st and Daniel McEathron placed 2nd. Looks like it was Daniel's weekend for finishing 2nd! :) Next time Daniel.

Each San Jose June tournament was followed by our usual great potluck lunch. Many thanks to all those who brought food to share.

San Jose took off our usual July and August hiatus for The World Tournament and the California State Championships. Congratulations to all the NCHPA pitchers who attended The World Tournament and the California State Championships with special congratulations to all the NCHPA pitchers who brought home trophies and/or prize money.

And on a slightly different note we would like to congratulate Dick McCall on his recent 90th birthday! He is not the only 90 year old horseshoe pitcher around, but he is certainly in a pretty elite group. Congratulations Dick! *Mike Anderson*

Sonoma County (Santa Rosa)

There was only one event that was rained out in Santa Rosa. Even though the rest were sparsely attended we were able to host 5 nice tournaments. What's the answer here folks? We need to grab a some friends from the club and carpool to these outlying clubs. It really makes for a nice road trip and solidifies the camaraderie within the club. Leave early buy the driver breakfast and a sit down place. We have a very nice one 3/4 of a mile from the courts called Hanks Creekside. Come early someday and enjoy a great breakfast there. You might bump into Gill and Lorena.

We held our 83rd annual Sonoma County Championships. Sue Lichau edged out Paul Machado. I say edged because she pitched 3 doubles in the last 3 innings to win by 4 points. This is Sue's third time winning the prestigious perpetual trophy.

We hope to be able to attract more people in 2020, just 3 weeks ago we got 2 new members who will pay their dues Oct 1st, (that way they are paid through 2020. These two guys say they have a whole circle of friend who love horseshoe pitching. Brian Wainwright was at the courts last July 4th and saw 4 people using the courts. He went over to them struck up a conversation and so far 2 members. If you see someone that is interested, even remotely so, strike up a conversation, hand them a business card or a flyer, get their phone number or email and stay in contact with them. This is the only way to grow your club. Simply holding an event and expecting people to come to you is wishful thinking. Let's grow this charter everyone. *Casey Sluys*



**Thank you very much to all
our State Championship
trophy sponsors!**

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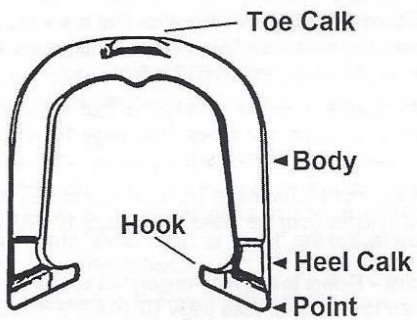
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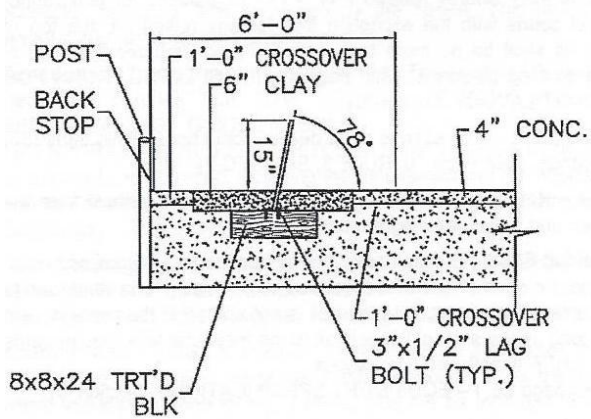
GIL & LORENA TOURNOUR

**We hope all of you liked the
trophies and shirts. Many
thanks to Danny Kyle for all his
work with this task**

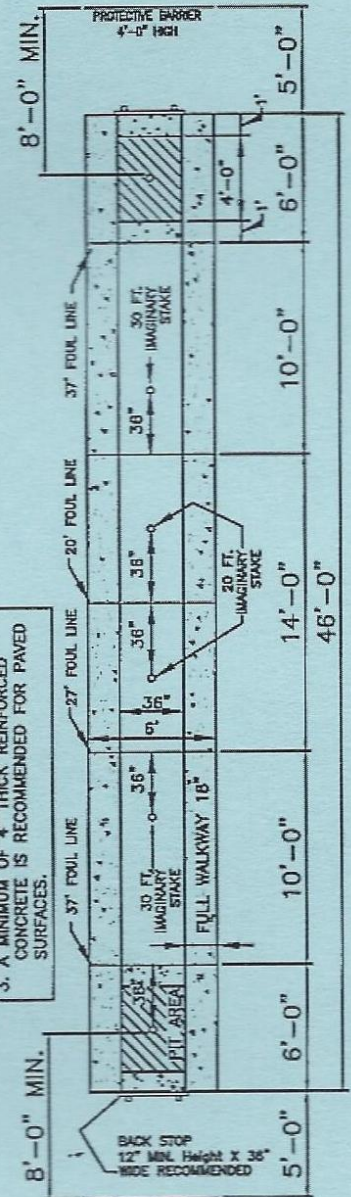
Anatomy of a pitching shoe



Stake Detail



- NOTES:
1. THE "PITCHERS BOX" IS THE 6'X 6' AREA AT EACH END OF THE COURT.
 2. THE RECOMMENDED PIT SIZE IS 36"X 48".
 3. A MINIMUM OF 4" THICK REINFORCED CONCRETE IS RECOMMENDED FOR PAVED SURFACES.



HORSESHOE COURT LAYOUT

I heard a familiar "clang" through my open pickup's window last Saturday. Then another.

I knew what those sounds were from my farm boy history. A game of horseshoes was being played.

Horseshoes seems rather an archaic game these days. Rather than tossing the steel through the air at a distant stake, now some of our younger generations simply sit on the couch and use their thumbs to play video games on their phones. It seems to me that they are missing something.

There is nothing like a spirited game of horseshoes to test a person's mettle. Just when you are about to grasp victory from the jaws of defeat, some smart guy tosses a double ringer and you are sunk. It takes a lot of personal fortitude not to cuss at such times.

Horseshoe pitchers are notorious at not saying much when they put your game to rest. They just saunter on over to the stake, pick up their "shoes" and ask, "Who's up next?"

My granddad was the first to instruct me in how to "pitch" a horseshoe. He would hold it flat, with his thumb and forefingers gripping the "shoe." Then he would send it flying on a horizontal plane toward the stake.

I, on the other hand, chose to "flop" my horseshoe. My shoe would fly end over end, and if I was lucky my horseshoe would either roll up to the stake and lean against it - what was called a "leaner" for two points - or it would roll to the stake and sometimes actually wrap itself around it!

Those were grand tosses and I managed my share of "ringers" along the way. But Gramps was not impressed and continued to try to get me to pitch the horseshoe the "right way." I never succeeded.

My Uncle Leonard was an expert horseshoe thrower. He played in a league in Westfield, Iowa, and won several titles along the way. My ultimate challenge was to beat him at his own game, and so it was that one summer afternoon, before the feast, I challenged him to a game. He, knowing my technique, generously spotted me 15 points in a game of 21. How could I lose?

I told him his handicap wasn't necessary, but if he insisted, I'd take him up on it. He took me up on it. He beat me 21 to 12. It was my last game with him. Like the Kenny Rogers song says, "You got to know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em." I folded.

Today the game of horseshoes seems to have been replaced by games such as pickle ball or shuffleboard and other games for people of my age. Evidently our joints are not up to heaving a horseshoe the 40 feet to the stake. We may experience torn rotator cuffs or displaced hips. Not to say anything about ruining our fragile mental state when it comes to losing.

I once paired up with my Uncle Claude against his neighbor and a friend of his. Our opponent was ahead by three points on his final toss. He was feeling the joy of victory. Somehow I managed to toss a double "ringer" atop his horseshoes. We edged them by three points.

At that point my uncle's neighbor proceeded to tear 15 newly planted silver maple saplings from along his own alleyway. Thus ended that game with my uncle's neighbor and his friend sulking back into their house to cry in their beer.

Losing at horseshoes can have that effect if you are not prepared.

I thought of that last week when I heard that "clang" of horseshoes through my pickup's window. I'll never play pickle ball. I love misery.

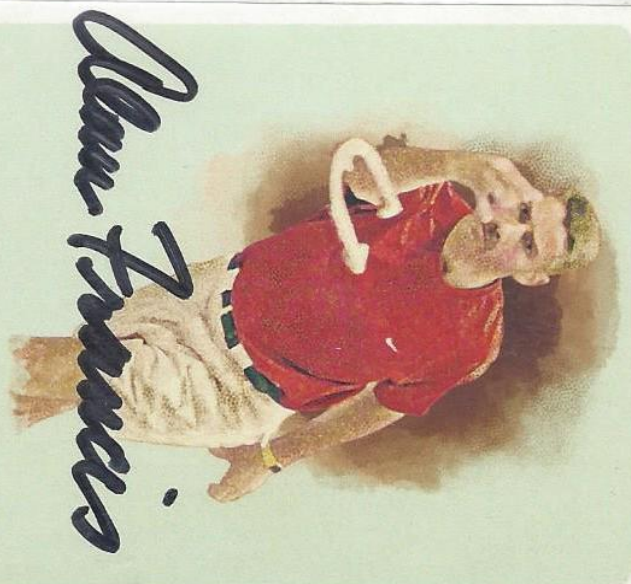
See you next time. Okay?

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