

Professional racquetball powers to clash

The challenge has been issued. The showdown is set.

During the first week of June, Southfield's Mike Yellen will have the opportunity to prove he is the best professional racquetball player in the world.

That is the date of the National Racquetball Club's (NRC) National Championship tournament. It could also be the date of the crowning of a new king in the sport.

For the past four years, the national tournament was anticlimactic. Marty Hogan was Numero Uno, without question the best of the pros.

"Marty was always up here by himself," Yellen said, waving his hand along an imaginary plateau above his head. "The rest of us were

always down here, fighting it out for second, third and fourth place in the rankings."

That has all changed — thanks to Yellen. For the 28-year-old Southfield High School graduate has done what no other pro has been able to do — he has beaten Hogan in back-to-back tournaments.

And he has done it convincingly. The first win came in the finals in a non-ranking tournament in Boston April 13. After Yellen claimed a 21-15, 21-11 victory, Hogan said his concentration had been off.

No such statement could be made the following week. In a ranking tournament (one that counts towards NRC player ratings) in Atlanta, Yellen again came up with an upset win, this time by 21-15, 19-21,

11-1 scores. Suddenly, the king was in danger of losing his throne.

"THERE'S PRESSURE on him he's never had before," Yellen said of Hogan.

"There's more at stake than before. There are so many things on his mind."

"Now that I've beaten him twice he's feeling it. He's had to work a lot harder than he's had to before."

Still, Hogan is still considered the best in the game, and with good reason. In 35 tournament appearances in four years, the 22-year-old racquetball king has won 30 times. Hogan has exhibited clear superiority in a sport that requires quickness and physical ability and a sound mental approach.

That superiority has now vanished. Through most of the season, Dave Peck, a 23-year-old, second-year pro from El Paso, Texas, pressured Hogan's No. 1 ranking. That was until the last seven tournament road trips.

The seven tournaments in eight weeks was the longest trip of Yellen's two-year pro career. But mental or physical fatigue never bothered Yellen — during that time he improved his NRC ranking from sixth to second. In the seven tournaments, he won three times, lost in the semifinals three times and was beaten in the finals once.

Despite Hogan's top-ranking, Yellen thinks the mental advantage belongs to him in the upcoming championships.



C.J. Risak

"I think I have the mental edge for a couple of reasons," he said. "I've beaten him twice, once when he said he would walk through the tournament (in Atlanta)."

"He knows I beat him in the last two tournaments and he knows that I can take over the top ranking. And I'm playing the best I've ever played."

"I'm really good at concentrating on my game. It has a lot to do with my success."

"I try hitting my shots the same whether I'm playing Hogan or an early-round match. If they're doing something well, I try to counter it like my coaches told me, if he wants to fox trot, you got to counter with the box step."

"With Marty, it's not so much taking advantage of weaknesses, it's taking advantage of not-so-strong strengths."

Churchill boys outrun Hawks

Darrel Copley and Norm Recla each won a pair of individual events to spark Livonia Churchill to a 96-33 Western Six League boys' track win Tuesday over Farmington Harrison.

The Chargers defeated all five conference opponents this season in dual competition. To win the league title, though, Churchill must win the league

meet next Wednesday at Waterford Mori.

All the marbles hinge on the outcome of the league get-together.

Darrel Copley and Norm Recla each won a pair of individual events for the Chargers against Harrison.

Copley muscled the discus 141-0 and the shot put 47-10. Recla sprinted the 100-meter dash in 11.4 and the 300-

meter hurdles in 41.2.

Churchill's other winners were Jeff Olwean, high jump, 6-6; Rich Easton, pole vault, 13-6; Tom Gosselin, 400 meters, 50.9; Al Stefan, 800, 2:07.3; Mike Blais, 1,600, 4:45.1; and Jim Brodie, 3,200, 10:18.8.

The Chargers won all three relays. Fred Peters, Bob Monaghan, Tom Pritt and Jeff Leake triumphed in the

800, 1:35.1; Leake, Peters, Monaghan and Olwean in the 400, 46.5; and Dan Johnson, Dan Crowley, Matt Dixon and Recla in the 1,600, 3:32.4.

Harrison had three victors. Steve Schanbon long jumped 26-9. Sterling Herrmann timed 15.7 in the 300-meter hurdles and Ken Kopko clocked 23.6 in the 200.

7 area girls advance

(Continued from Page 1B)

West Bloomfield won the Farmington regional team championship, scoring 83 points. Brighton was second with 72 points, and Milford was third with 67.

Mercy and Berkley High tied for sixth place with 25 points each. Farmington finished 11th with 14 points. North scored eight points to finish in a 12th-place tie with Birmingham Marian and Birmingham Seaholm.

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