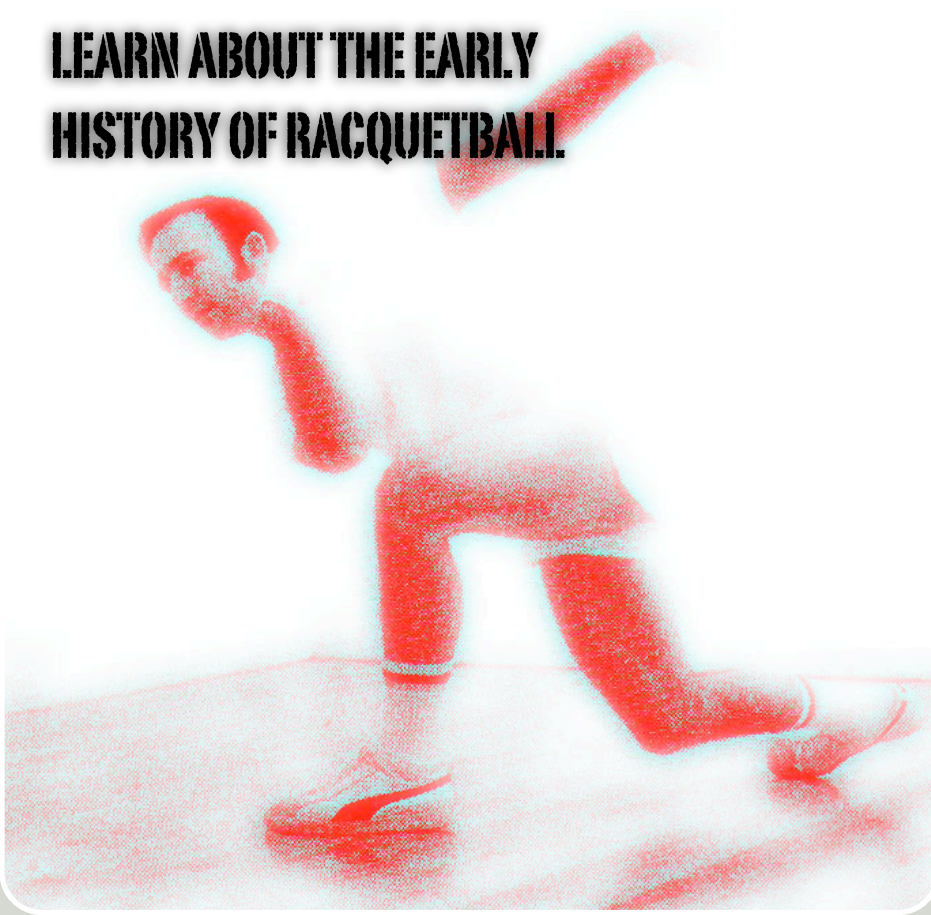
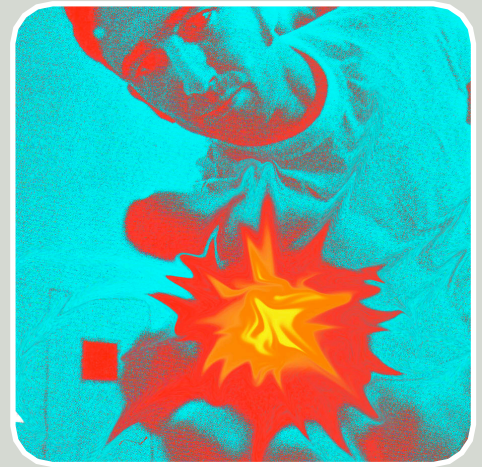


LEARN ABOUT THE EARLY HISTORY OF RACQUETBALL.



Hot Hands, Hot Nights Paul Haber: The Greatest Jewish Athlete In The World

An Audio Documentary
Early History of Racquetball
and Handball featuring Dr. Bud
Muehleisen



Important handball and racquetball facts, stories, winning edge strategies, and history with former U.S.A and Canadian champions Paul Haber, Johnny Sloan, Dr. Bud Muehleisen.

Will add 5 points to any 1,3.or 4-wall handball and racquetball player's game.

**Add 5 points to
your game!**

Technical details:

Running time: 72 minutes

Sound: stereo mix

In English with rare recordings of national championship tournament handball and racquetball players from the 50's, 60's and 70's.



Handball is hard work. And its been around since ancient times.

In 2000 B.C., Egyptians were playing a form of the game. By 1500 B.C., North and Central Americans played their own version of handball. Undefeated in battle during his life, Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) played handball when he wasn't conquering the world. It's been around so long that no one is sure when the game came into existence, but here is a rough historical sketch.

- Written accounts of handball courts date back to 1790 in Dublin, Ireland, where it was played primarily by country folk who had migrated to the urban center. The island nation's capital had a flagstone court opposite St. Patrick's Cathedral, complete with a wooden gallery that could be dismantled and stored when tournaments were completed.
- Around the turn of the century in Ireland, handball courts were built in or near police stations, military barracks and mental institutions, where the game was thought to have therapeutic properties for mental illness.
- Throughout the 1800s, handball courts became commonplace at inns and ale houses, and they spread to other countries.
- Fleeing the Potato Famine in Ireland between 1845 and 1852, immigrants brought the game to the United States, and it became increasingly popular.
- In 1924, a handball tournament in Ireland boasted and unheard-of \$10,000 prize.
- In the U.S., handball's popularity grew, but it was generally considered to be purely amateur, played for the love of the game and the feeling of accomplishment and well-being.

- That changed as a crush of handball champions developed in or around 1960, and the growing American media began covering it.
- Bronx native Paul Haber, with his precisely placed shots and legendary bad temper, drinking and skirt-chasing, brought even more media coverage during his reign as champ from 1966 to 1971. Sports officials and sponsors cringed at some of his interviews, but they couldn't have asked for a better media magnet.
- Handball bankroller and enthusiast Bob Kendler, as president of the United States Handball Association, quashed earlier efforts to spearhead national competition, but in 1972, his association sponsored the first National Invitational singles tournament, known as the Sweet 16, in St. Paul, Minn. He never achieved his dream of getting handball into the Olympics.

Why is the game so popular, then as in today? "It beats the hell out of a treadmill," says one modern-day handball player. In fact, it is the most physically punishing sport around.

Fast and furious, handball improves endurance, agility and coordination. More calories are burned in a game of handball than a game of racquetball. It demands more precision and stamina than any racquet sport. This is because the ball travels more slowly without the force of a racquet, which means more running for the handball player. An average player loses 5 pounds during a match.

Getting outfitted to play handball doesn't bust a budget: All that's required is the ball and gloves for the player. That makes it extremely portable – everything a player needs can fit into a small pack.

“The greatest Jewish athlete in the world”

World champion handball player Sam Haber gently placed a handball in the bassinet of his newborn son Paul when he came home from the hospital.

It was just a quiet gesture, but it would become freighted with meaning. Over the years, handball would define Paul Haber, and Haber would define handball. His life is a movie yet to be made.

His incredibly precise command of that small rubber sphere -- he could hit a Roosevelt dime taped to the front of a handball court from 40 feet away -- was the stuff of toasts and trophies and national headlines. For a Jew in the 1960s, it was entrance to the country's most exclusive country clubs and golf courses.

For the sport itself -- arguably the most physically punishing of all sports, yet one of the least celebrated -- Paul Haber brought it into the mainstream and paved the way for its more popular cousin, racquetball, to become the well-received sport it is today.

During his 30 years on the court, from 1948 to 1978, Haber played in hundreds of handball tournaments, won 13 national titles and 50 lesser titles. If Haber showed up for a tournament, everyone knew he would win. He won thousands of dollars. In the gambling industry, few dared bet against him.

Stories about Haber appeared in Sports Illustrated, Esquire, Argosy and True and in newspapers across the country. During his heyday in the 1960s, a Paul Haber action figure appeared on store shelves.

But that handball so casually placed alongside newborn Paul also heralded the beginning of a darker story.

This exemplary athlete, whose ability and endurance astounded even veteran sports reporters and fans, smoked constantly and drank as hard as he played. His remarkable skill was not matched by modesty. “I’m the greatest Jewish athlete in the world,” he’d say again and again.

His thirst for alcohol and fame seemed unquenchable. Sometimes upon arriving at an airport the day before a tournament, he’d head straight for the airport bar and wouldn’t leave until late and drunk. After a drinking session before he flew to Chicago for a tournament, he found himself on the wrong plane headed to St. Louis instead. He showed up for games still intoxicated from the night before, causing handball professionals and sponsors to cringe, but he still won. He bragged about his drinking and smoking, almost as much as his game.

“Why should I quit because I play handball?” he’d say. “It’s what most guys want to do, only they won’t admit it.”

Haber clearly relished his bad-boy image.

So did women. They flocked to him, listening to his stories, which grew ever more exaggerated the more he

drank, and hanging on every word. Haber once returned to his hotel room during a handball tournament and found two pairs of panties and two bras hanging from the doorknob of his room -- and heard female giggling next door.

It was these experiences and Haber’s constant victories on the court over the years that fed an outsized ego as unmatched as his talent. Rash and loud, he seemed to believe that his prowess in the sport would make up for his overbearing and sometimes abusive nature. On the court, he became known for his stormy tantrums, screaming at referees and making demands that delayed the game. He taunted opponents after he beat them. He tested his friendships by pushing every boundary to the limit, writing hot checks, inviting himself to dinner on someone else’s nickel, invading a host’s liquor cabinet and overstaying his welcome.

“He was a professional guest,” says Stuffey Singer, a Los Angeles-based financial adviser, also a handball great during Haber’s heyday. “He was always looking for a meal ticket.”

The more he drank, the more abrasive and obnoxious he became. Haber was once thrown out of a Chicago bar through a plate glass window. Another time, Haber walked into a bar where customers were watching television and changed the channel, causing a near fight. He knew exactly what would anger people the most, and he did it deliberately.

Given his abusive approach to relationships, it was inevitable that his personal life would spill over into his

game. Paul was married four times in his life – and divorced four times. Just before the United States Handball Association National Tournament in 1973 at the University of Texas in Austin, police arrested him when he showed up to play for being years behind in alimony and child support. USHA officials got him out of jail about five hours later, but he was rattled by the arrest and lost in the tournament.

It was one of the few times in his life that Haber let something get between him and handball. He possessed a single-minded devotion to the game. He would work all day on one shot. He played lesser opponents to practice complicated court maneuvers. Unlike other handball players of his time, Haber didn't have an outside job. Handball was his career. In between tournaments, Haber went on barnstorming tours, playing locals for money like Jackie Gleason in "The Hustler." He conducted handball clinics at universities in the towns he traveled to for tournaments. He ate, slept and talked handball.

His most famous game, however, wasn't against another handball player. He had long bragged that he could beat any racquetball player using his bare hands on the court. A San Diego dentist,

Dr. Bud Muehleisen, could hit a racquetball more than 200 mph. He answered Haber's challenge in 1972.

Before the game started, Haber didn't think he had a chance, but he was still at his showboating best. The handball world held its breath as each player won a game, making the third and final game pivotal. It was deathly silent at the court save the whoosh and smack of the ball against the court walls. Haber was obviously winded but continued nevertheless, his elbows and knees bloody from his efforts. He dove for the ball and turned in midair in moves that gymnasts would envy. With his last ounce of energy, he placed a final kill shot that gave him the victory. He later said he felt close to death before the game ended and called it the toughest day physically in his career.

Haber's relationship with his father, one of the top-rated handball players in the world, was complicated. He taught Paul everything he knew about the sport in practice sessions that sometimes grew abusive. Sam Haber refused to attend Paul's first game in public, and no one knows the terror 6-year-old Paul felt showing up for the match with no one there to support him. But he excelled. He knew he had to.

Some of Paul's contemporaries felt that he spent his life sharpening his skill in the court to outdo his father. "I always had the feeling – and I heard stories – that Paul was driven to be better than his father," says Terry Muck, the former editor of the USHA newsletter and 1973 national handball champion who is a professor of theology at a Kentucky seminary. "I dealt with him on a daily basis and there was this unspoken drive with Paul."

But along with this competitive mindset, Paul possessed a fierce loyalty to his father. He refused to be inducted into the USHA Hall of Fame until officials agreed to induct his father the following year, making them the only father and son team to be elected to a major sports hall of fame. Paul cried during his father's induction.

"He was a Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde personality," says Arizona-based handball promoter Fred Lewis. "You have this guy who pushed the limits of everything, screaming at referees and getting thrown out of bars, and then you have a son who weeps at his father's induction. There was a soft side to Paul Haber that he went to a lot of trouble to hide."

Lewis, who upset Haber in 1974, said his stories of

drunken escapades were greatly exaggerated to create a playboy persona. “When it came time to defend his national championship, he didn’t drink,” Lewis said. “He trained like an animal. His ability and his iron will to win made him a champion.”

Whatever the real story was, Haber nursed the drunken genius image throughout his 30-year handball career and relished the disapproving looks and admonishments he got from fellow players and handball officials alike. And he kept winning.

Paul Haber’s boasts eventually faded to a whisper. Late in life, he took a job as a petrochemical salesman in San Diego, where, estranged from his three children, he lived with his cat. He died after a long battle with emphysema at age 66.

His money from winning purses was gone – he had \$42 in his wallet. Friends took up a collection to bury the finest handball player of all time and the greatest Jewish athlete in the world.



Haber with Friends

PAUL HABER

HOT HANDS, HOT NIGHTS

The Greatest Jewish Athlete In The World