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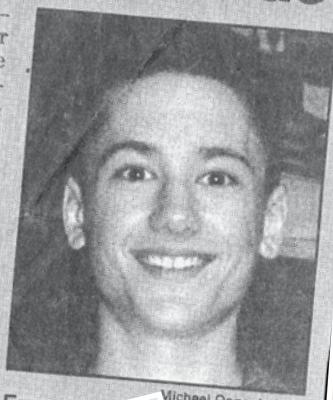
Local junior wins national handball title

VENICE BEACH, Calif. — Local junior handball star Emmett Peixoto went all the way to the top Sunday, winning the first ever USHA National Junior 3-Wall Championship.

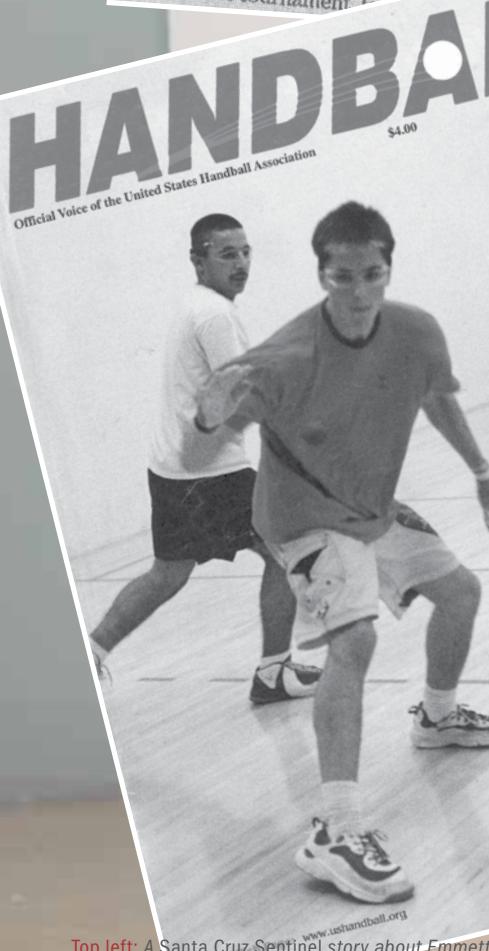
Peixoto, who has been dominating the local junior circuit, took his victory in the 15-and-under division.

The victory was fitting, as Peixoto, along with sister Courtney, have had their names immortalized as Emmett Courts Park, the three-wall courts at the Watsonville Family YMCA.

Courtney Peixoto also participated in the tournament.



Emmett Peixoto by Michael Oppenheimer



NATIONAL COLLEGIATE CHAMPIONSHIPS



Emmett Peixoto of Cabrillo, Courtney Peixoto of Ar

Peixoto Edges Quezada for Junior Title

E-Mail: handball@ushandball.org

Top left: A Santa Cruz Sentinel story about Emmett Peixoto winning his first Junior National Title in 2000 as a member of the OC.

Top right: Handball Magazine featuring Alvaro Rebaza and Emmett Peixoto holding their first and second place trophies at the 1-Wall Junior Nationals in Brooklyn, NY in 2001.

Bottom left: Cover of Handball Magazine when Emmett won the main and oldest junior division, the 19 and under, at the 4-Wall Junior National Handball Tournament in Iowa in 2000.

Middle & bottom right: Handball Magazine coverage of the Collegiate National Championships that Emmett Peixoto won at Missouri State University in 2004.

Courtesy of Peixoto family.

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Peixoto negates power of Keegan

Beats 2-time champ in open final tiebreaker
By Marjorie Peixoto

Wow! That is the only word Emmett Peixoto could use to describe the tremendous power lead in the tiebreaker of the men's open final at the USHA National Collegiate Championships.

Peixoto was forced to take a timeout to break the two-time defending champion's momentum and focus on the job at hand.

A one-minute break sounds like a very short amount of time, but as Peixoto opened the court door, he understood what he needed to do to win. His demeanor was that of strict focus.

The dominance Peixoto expressed was clear as he passed and killed his way to a 5-5 tie, and he was more focused than ever with his next serve. His deadly power serve down the right cracked out for an ace at a pivotal point of the match.

Peixoto's momentum was building as he kept up his run of power serves. Keegan returned each one the best he could, but his returns only set up Peixoto to shoot.

Peixoto surged to a 10-9 edge while looking intently to close out the match. But Keegan would not lie down. He returned the next serve and then killed Peixoto's return in the left corner.

The Dublin Institute of Technology star used that momentum in the service box and scored two quick points to trim the deficit to 10-7, leading Peixoto to take a timeout.



Peixoto fires with his dependable left hand from the deep court in the final against Keegan, then raises his arms in triumph after winning the championship.

and quickly regain his focus.

If paid off: Peixoto passed and wrapped the ball throughout the next rally until he got a set-up, which he contentedly passed down the left side.

Then Peixoto put all his mental capacity into his next serve, as he knew it would make or break his chances. The Cabrillo Community College student took a deep breath and served a reverse power serve down the left.

The ball lunged the wall, and Keegan hit the ball dead into the ceiling and then watched it fall to the floor, making Peixoto the national champion.



OLYMPIAN AWARD FOR ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENT

EMMETT PEIXOTO

AT THE TOP OF HIS GAME... AGAIN

by Sam Enoka, photos by Michael Mustacchi

You can't wander the fourth floor of the City Clubhouse for long without eventually running into this year's Olympian Award for Athletic Achievement honoree, Emmett Peixoto. It's not that hard really because he's on the handball courts up there all the time. That's the kind of dedication it takes to be at the pinnacle of your sport.

When Peixoto, currently ranked #4 in the world in handball, isn't working on his game at The Olympic Club, you can probably see him on ESPN playing in a World Players of Handball tournament... Or flying off to New York to develop his one-wall game... Or hosting a junior handball clinic at the Club or elsewhere in San Francisco. Or... well, you start to get the picture. Peixoto's devotion to the sport of handball is only matched by his passion for the game.

He does an average of 16 hours a week of drills and strength training plus four additional hours of sparring matches because it takes an incredible amount of endurance to play handball (*See sidebar about his longest match on page 6*). But Peixoto didn't

always love the game he has come to master. Originally from Watsonville, Calif., he credits his father, Jim, with introducing him to handball. It didn't initially stick with him though, barely having the strength to hit the ball back to the front wall at age 10. He left the courts of the Watsonville YMCA hating handball and feeling discouraged.

His dad brought him back to the courts for another try two years later and, with a little more strength, Peixoto was able to get the ball back to the wall and it's fair to say that a handball star was born that day.

"I was hooked," Peixoto waxes on that moment when it clicked for him. "From that point forward, I slept, breathed and ate handball. The sport is the most addictive and most frustrating thing I've encountered in my life."

Within a couple of weeks, he entered his first tournament. His age-division only had one other player, a girl, to whom he lost both matches, but he found a love for the game. Eventually, Peixoto's talent for handball developed from his relentless persistence.

"Handball has a way of bringing out who a person is, i.e. if you tend to give up

easily, you will. If you have any insecurities, they will be displayed on your sleeve," Peixoto explained. "Once you get over the initial difficulties — such as the hand pain, the awkwardness with your off-hand, taking full responsibility for your mistakes because there are no teammates or equipment to blame when you miss a shot — and really let the challenges of the sport sink in, handball makes you a better person. I truly believe that."

In a turn of good fortune for Peixoto and The Olympic Club, former OC member (and fellow Olympian award winner) and past president of the United States Handball Association, Joe McDonald, noticed Peixoto's emerging talent. McDonald brought him in to play handball under the banner of the Winged O as a Junior Member in 1997 at the age of 14.

Over the next several years, Peixoto earned numerous accolades, including national and international titles in singles and doubles handball (*See images of earlier news stories on page 4*). In 2007, however, Peixoto had a setback. Playing in a one-wall match, he suffered a torn rotator cuff after hitting from an awkward position.

This injury would lead to three years of diminished play and a significant drop in the handball ranks. In December 2010, he elected to have surgery to repair it and rededicated himself to his pursuit of the elite handball ranks.

"I never thought I would return to this level of competition, but I really owe it to my personal trainer, Rocky Snyder, who helped me recover 100% of my strength and range of motion," he explained. "No top player had ever come back to top-level play from such a significant injury. His training was instrumental."

Peixoto also credits his wife, Jessica — who also plays handball, for his renewed confidence. "She travels to all my events and is truly honest with me about my game, its strengths and weaknesses, but she always remains positive," he said. "I couldn't do it without Jessica's support."

Returning to the top of the rankings is merely the tip of iceberg for Peixoto, though.

He has set for himself a goal that only one other handball player in history has achieved, which is to earn individual titles in all three handball disciplines: one-wall, three-wall and four-wall like Vic Hershkowitz did.

He was already the first American to win an Australian three-wall national title.

Achieving the goals on which he sets his sights typifies Peixoto's approach to life, including his hobbies. His escape from handball is music and Peixoto really loves his music. No, really, he LOVES music. Where most people would dial up their favorite play-list on iTunes or





Spotify, Peixoto is himself an accomplished pianist and guitarist. He has published three albums on iTunes and formerly served as the lead artist for the Bay Area Music Collective. A quick online search will yield the video he did for "Sky Burns Out."

In quiet moments, Peixoto devours books on

philosophy.

At some point,

when his schedule allows,

Peixoto would like to get his Ph.D. He already holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy from University of California Berkley and a master's in the same from Boston College.

But for now and the foreseeable future, Peixoto will be pursuing titles in all three disciplines of handball. "I've got about 10 more years that I can play at the elite level. Then I will coach full-time."

Peixoto's desire to succeed is infectious. He has not only achieved his own success on the courts — already winning 11 Club titles, he spends a great deal of time teaching the game to increase the level of the sport throughout the Bay Area.

He has already grown the OC Junior handball section from zero to 14 and a few of them are already beginning to place well and win regional tournaments. One of his regular students, Josh Puccinelli, just placed fourth in the 13-and-under division at the Simply Green U.S. Open in October, and another student, Shane Crispen, placed first in 11-and-under.

"I wouldn't be able to pursue handball the way I have without the support of the Club," said Peixoto. "I want to show people how great handball is and I hope

Junior handball player, Lorenzo Mori, gets tips from world-ranked handball player Emmett Peixoto. In an effort to increase interest in the sport, Peixoto holds regular junior clinics.

MARATHON MATCHES

Handball singles matches average about an hour and a half. One of the longest on record took place in the 1970s and clocked in at just over four hours long.

Emmett Peixoto told the *Olympian* about his longest match.

"The longest match I played was nearly three and a half hours long. It was outside in Toledo, Ohio, with intense humidity in the 90 degree heat of summer. Handball players must change their gloves when their sweat soaks through onto the palm of their hand because the ball will get wet and slide on the walls and floor.

During my match, I went through 28 pairs of gloves (two of which I had to borrow) and prevailed against nine-time National Champion, David Chapman, in an 11-9 tiebreaker to take the National Championship. I was exhausted but ecstatic at the same time. I will never forget the feeling."

WATCH EMMETT PLAY IN 2016

Watch Emmett Peixoto live on www.ESPN3.com or the ESPN App as he takes on the competition across the nation at these upcoming World Professional Handball Tour Stops:

- New Orleans – Jan. 22-24
- Houston – Feb. 19-21
- New York City – March 11-13
- Salt Lake City – April 15-17
- Portland – May 5-8

to be able to do that at the Club forever as a member, a player and a coach."

As Peixoto passes the mantle of world handball champions on to a new generation of Olympians, he will leave lasting legacy within the sport of handball and The Olympic Club. ■