



special preview ... ENTRY TIPS!

Tip #1: ENTER EARLY! The event has become a sell out. We cap the draw at 750 and last year we had to turn away 50 entrants. Don't get shut out. Send in your entry today.

Tip #2: ORDER TICKETS NOW! The 1,000-seat Stadium Court has become a sell out. Tickets are required to view all of the pro matches, and seats sell-out quickly. No-shows might free up some session tickets "at the door" but it's risky to wait. The ticket package (for unlimited viewing all week) is the best way to guarantee a seat - but packages are sold only in advance!

Tip #3: ENTER TWO (or more) EVENTS. A large draw and limited court time do not allow us to offer consolation rounds, so we strongly recommend entering two divisions to guarantee at least two matches. Entries are limited to two divisions, but there are a couple of exceptions: 1) if you would like to play "up" into the Men's or Women's Pro draw you can still play in two added amateur divisions; and 2) if you enter two doubles divisions, you can play in any third event you choose. For these two exceptions only, a third event fee is the same as a second event fee.

Tip #4: STAY AT THE HOST HOTEL. The official host hotel was the Comfort Inn East but they're under renovation! The new host hotel — The Ridgway Inn — offers

an \$89/night quad rate and is located just two miles from the Racquet Club of Memphis. From the Ridgway you'll have the convenience of the complimentary shuttle, running every half hour from the hotel to the venue and back (shuttle also runs from the Hawthorne Suites). This hotel will fill up VERY fast so call to book your room immediately. For a complete list of hotels offering special U.S. OPEN room blocks call (800) 234-5396 ext. 0 and ask for the "US OPEN Hotel list."

Tip #5: BRING NICE CLOTHES AND YOUR DANCING SHOES! One of the best things about the U.S. OPEN is the opportunity to socialize at the many evening activities, especially the Grand Gala Party with the Pro's. Racquetball or casual attire is not allowed at this bash so "dress to impress" will be the rule!

Tip #6: HEAD HOME LATE. Book the very latest flight you can get to head home on Sunday. The Men's Pro final is the last match scheduled and you won't want to miss it. A packed house, booming music, laser lights and TV cameras make this an experience unlike any other in the sport. The match usually ends around 3:30 pm, so any evening flight will do. Can't get a late flight out? Consider going home Monday morning. It will be worth it!

Keep these tips in mind when making plans to attend the 2003

Tips for Attending the 2003 Choice Hotels U.S. OPEN

Choice Hotels U.S. OPEN and you'll have the inside track. Lastly, if you really want to experience everything to its fullest, and can splurge to treat yourself to an ultimate VIP weekend, here are a couple of other ideas.

PRO-AM DOUBLES FOR ST. JUDE: Before the event begins, a special, fully-catered Tuesday night fundraiser is held to benefit the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Have you ever dreamed of playing doubles with one of the best pro players in the world as *your* partner? Well, here's your chance. For a \$250 donation to St. Jude you'll be paired up with a top ranked male or female pro to compete in a single elimination draw, plus you'll receive an autographed racquet from your pro partner at the end of the evening. This popular event has also become a sell-out, so call (800) 234-5396 ext. 0 to request a Pro-Am Doubles Entry. The first 32 prepaid entrants will get the spots!

VIP LUXURY BOX SEATING. If you really want to go first class, reserve a four-person, courtside VIP Luxury Box for the week. Most are pre-allocated to event sponsors, but a very limited number are available for individual reservation. The cost is \$2,200 for the week and includes four Gold All-Access credentials, a

four-person stadium courtside Luxury Box with your name on it (table service included), and unlimited access to the fully catered PRO/VIP Hospitality Room (only the top 16 ranked pro's, event sponsors, and VIP's allowed). Interested? Please call (614) 890-6073 to check availability.



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Check back after August 20th for more information on the 2003 Choice Hotels U.S. OPEN
[Downloadable PDF Entry](#)

www.choiceusopenracquetball.com
www.racquetballmagazine.com



SPECIAL PREVIEW

It's hard to believe, but the 2003 Choice Hotels U.S. OPEN Racquetball Championships, slated for November 19-23 in Memphis, Tennessee, is just around the corner. This year's event promises to be the best ever — with a record turnout of both players and spectators — so this special preview is designed to give you an idea of what you can look forward to ... whether you plan to attend or have to follow the action from home.

Amateur Draws: With a limit of 750 players, at press time there were only about 250 spots left. You'll need to make your move now if you plan to attend, and hope we can get you into the draw. Amateur matches are played primarily at the Six50 TotalClub (formerly Wimbledon) and the University of Memphis. I strongly recommend that players enter two divisions (three, if one is doubles) to get a full week of play in, since no consolation rounds are offered due to draw size and court limitations. With players coming in from all around the world, the competition should be excellent in each of the over 70 divisions offered. The top four finishers in each division will receive oversized medallions that weigh almost a full pound each!



Pro Match Tickets: There is no better place in the world to watch pro racquetball than at the Choice Hotels U.S. OPEN, since every top tour player in the world [IRT, LPRA and LEGENDS] will be on hand in Memphis. For the true enthusiast, this means incredible matches right from the round of 64, all professionally wired for sound so spectators can hear every grunt, groan, and muttered comment. All the feature matches take place on the beautiful made-for-TV portable stadium court, where the ball sounds like a missile going off (so be sure to bring your earplugs if you're sensitive). This engineering marvel has two walls made of crystal clear Lucite acrylic that is optically correct (no tinting, blurring, or bending of light), supported by Lucite "fins" and "L" brackets which result in a seamless visual experience that makes you feel like you're right inside the court. The stadium seats about 1,000 fans and ticket sales have been hot, with over 65% of ticket inventory for the week already sold, and the semi and finals sessions closer to 85%. Even if you can't commit to competing in the Choice Hotels U.S. OPEN, take the weekend off and come into town for the parties and outstanding pro play. Don't miss out ... call (800) 234-5396 ext. 0 to order your tickets *now!*



Parties, Parties, and More Parties! Aside from top-notch competition, the Choice Hotels U.S. OPEN is best known for its evening social functions. Entrants can expect more of the same this year, starting with the "free admission" Pro-Am Doubles for St. Jude on Tuesday, the all new "Late Night in the Pub" Dance Party on Thursday (featuring the midnight all-you-can-eat hot fudge sundae bar),

*Preview to the 2003 Choice Hotels
8th U.S. OPEN ... by Doug Ganim*

the Players Dance Party in the Pub on Friday and the largest bash of the year -- Saturday's Grand Gala Party with the Pros. Other activities include a special International Reception on Wednesday for all of our "out of the country" guests and a weeklong Industry Trade Show in the Player's Village, where all the top racquetball manufacturers will display the latest and greatest gear available in the sport. Look for new special events this year, including a special IRT Champions Clinic and the IRT/LPRA Super Skill Challenge!

Can't make it to Memphis? If you're sure you can't play, or even come in for the weekend to watch featured matches and do some partying, your last resort will be to follow the action from home. To make this easier, we will transform our website — www.choicehotelsusopen.com — into a computer "window" to bring

the action to your computer screen. This year's plan includes frequent results posting, up-to-the-minute pro match reporting, digital photography, streaming video of select pro matches, and web-radio interviews with top pro's as well as audio play-by-play voice streaming of the quarters, semi's, and finals. Special thanks to computer guru and webmaster Willie Tilton for spearheading this ambitious project.

The Pros! As always, the focal point of the Choice Hotels U.S. OPEN is high-quality professional competition. Anyone on tour will tell you that the intensity is at its highest at this event, making every match yield 120% effort from both players. These athletes provide first-rate, incredible entertainment in the quest for the coveted U.S. OPEN



CHOICE HOTELS INTERNATIONAL

Supporting St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

title, and never before have so many different players had a real shot at winning this particular crown. The IRT, LPRA, and LEGENDS Tours have begun to show more parity at the upper positions, thanks to hot talent on the rise. Follow along with the companion previews of the tour lineups elsewhere in this issue, to learn more about which players to watch at this year's Choice Hotels U.S. OPEN. See you there!

performance statsheet ... see individual odds, beginning on page 28 ...

Men	'02	'01	'00	'99	'98	'97	'96	Performance Factors
Sudsy Monchik	1st	dnp	1st	semi	1st	2nd	1st	Bookmaker's nightmare!
Cliff Swain	2nd	1st	2nd	2nd	2nd	1st	semi	Does he have one more in him?
Jason Mannino	qtrs	semi	32s	1st	16s	qtrs	16s	How will he do as the favorite?
John Ellis	qtrs	2nd	qtrs	semi	semi	semi	qtrs	Must maintain his power all week
Kane Waselenchuk	semi	qtrs	qtrs	—	—	—	—	Can he win, at less than best?
Jack Huczek	semi	16s	16s	32s	—	—	—	Not if, but when, he'll win his first
Alvaro Beltran	qtrs	qtrs	semi	64s	—	—	—	Fit enough for multiple upsets?
Rocky Carson	qtrs	qtrs	qtrs	qtrs	16s	—	32s	Must do his best, is he due?
Mike Guidry	16s	semi	16s	16s	qtrs	16s	qtrs	Court suits him, but he'll need it all
Mike Green	16s	32s	32s	—	—	—	—	Needs to turn it up a notch

Women	'02	'01	'00	'99	'98	'97	'96	Performance Factors
Cheryl Gudinas	1st	semi	semi	semi	qtrs	semi	2nd	Defender with confidence
Jackie Paraiso Rice	2nd	2nd	semi	1st	1st	2nd	semi	Always plays well in Memphis
Kerri Wachtel	semi	1st	32s	—	—	—	32s	Will Cinderella's magic return?
Rhonda Rajsich	qtrs	16s	2nd	dnp	dnp	dnp	dnp	Needs all her firepower
Kersten Hallander	qtrs	semi	qtrs	qtrs	qtrs	32s	—	Would be a career peak
Kristen Walsh	16s	16s	16s	—	32s	—	—	Her time will come ... this year?
Adrienne Fisher	qtrs	dnp	32s	—	—	—	—	Has the power to beat them all
Kim Russell	qtrs	qtrs	—	—	—	—	—	Needs a miracle, and more power
Laura Fenton	semi	qtrs	qtrs	16s	qtrs	qtrs	32s	Past her prime, but experienced
Christie Van Hees	dnp	dnp	1st	2nd	2nd	16s	32s	Past champ is back, look out!



special preview ... IRT

The Men's Line and Other Musings ...
by Eric Muller



Nearly a decade has passed since racquetball power broker Doug Ganim pitched the then-AARA Board of Directors on the U.S. OPEN concept. Now, as the USRA marquee event enters its eighth year, it remains the most eagerly anticipated tournament of the year, for players and fans alike.

Over the years, the pursuit of the sport's most prestigious crown has produced some incredible performances and spectators have been treated to some of the finest matches ever seen. Here are some of my favorites:

1996 ... At the inaugural US OPEN: Marty Hogan and Dave Peck relive the glory days of the '80s on the portable court; Woody Clouse's inspired run to the semis; hometown hero Andy Roberts' surgically-precise win over Cliff Swain in the semis; Sidsy Monchik's convincing victory and affirmation of his place atop the sport.



1997 ... John Ellis' game-five nail-biter win over Jason Mannino in the quarters; Cliff Swain's determined performance in earning his first U.S. OPEN crown, which allowed him to regain the #1 ranking from Monchik; the resulting feeding frenzy among the racquet manufacturers (which ultimately led to Swain's long-term, lucrative contract with Wilson).

1998 ... Mike Locker's upset over Andy Roberts in the 32's; Eric Muller's Cinderella run to the semis (*this author's favorite moment*); Swain's ability to reach the finals without hitting a single drive serve (due to an elbow injury); Monchik's devastating drive serves and power from both sides led to his second US OPEN title and one of the most dominating single tournament performances in history.

1999 ... Jason Mannino's back-to-back victories over Monchik and Swain to win the title (in my mind, the finest moment in Mannino's career).

2000 ... 17 year old Kane Waselenchuk's first-round drubbing of defending champion Jason Mannino; Locker's inspired appearance in the semis; the foreshadowing five-game quarterfinal battle between Waselenchuk and Alvaro Beltran (won by Beltran); Monchik's third U.S. OPEN win affirms that he is a lock to win the event in every even-numbered year.

2001 ... Monchik breaking his foot two days before the event; Ruben Gonzalez turning back the hands of age and treachery overcoming youth and skill, with Swain gutting out a grueling five-gamer over Waselenchuk in the quarters; Swain nabbing his second title and regaining the #1 ranking (which he would retain for the remainder of the season).

lineup ... lowdown

MEN	Age	Odds*	Favored Against	Hands Full with
Sidsy Monchik	29	2:1	Cliff Swain	Kane Waselenchuk
Cliff Swain	37	3:1	Rocky Carson	Alvaro Beltran
Jason Mannino	28	2:1	Alvaro Beltran	Rocky Carson
John Ellis	31	8:1	Cliff Swain	Jack Huczek
Kane Waselenchuk	22	3:1	Sidsy Monchik	John Ellis
Jack Huczek	20	6:1	John Ellis	Sidsy Monchik
Alvaro Beltran	25	15:1	Cliff Swain	Jack Huczek
Rocky Carson	24	15:1	Jack Huczek	Cliff Swain
Mike Guidry	33	25:1	Cliff Swain	Jack Huczek

*Odds are calculated for winning the entire event ... In a potential quarterfinal match up against the opponents listed, it could go either way ... !

... IRT ... continues on page 45

2002 ... Classic five-game quarterfinal between Monchik and Mannino (the highest selling racquetball DVD of all time); Monchik facing Swain for the fifth time in the finals; Monchik winning his fourth title, keeping him undefeated in even years.

As deep as the talent pool was in 2002, this year the competition will be even tougher, since eight separate players won IRT events last season (not including Swain!). With so many capable professionals, the outcome could hinge on some key match ups in the 16's and quarters. Here's what to expect from the top guns:

Defending Champ Sudsy Monchik

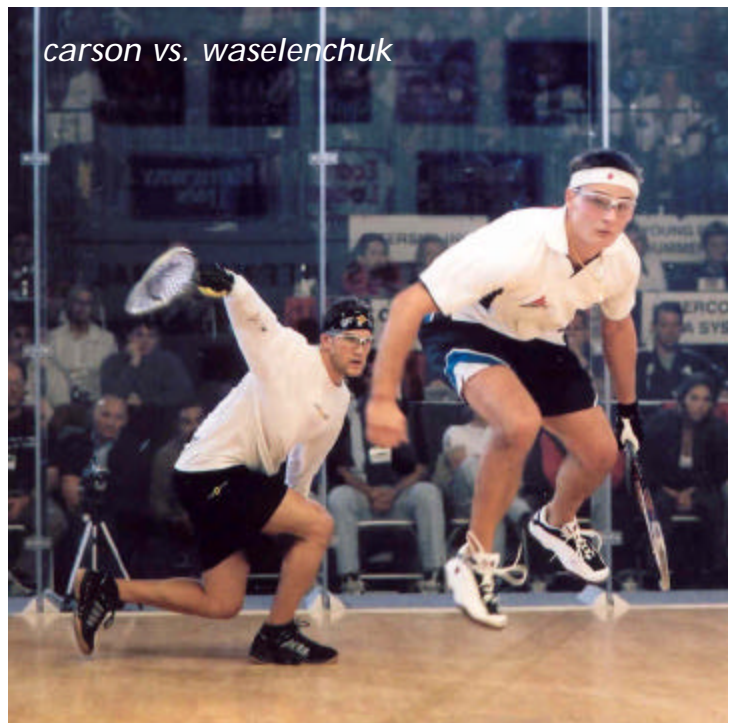
— With four wins, one place, and one semifinal show in six appearances, Sudsy is to the OPEN what Sampras is to Wimbledon. Suds loves Memphis — the adulation, the crowds, the broadcast crews, the flying Elvis impersonators, the cheerleaders, the music, the interviews, the spotlight — it is the quintessential Monchik environment. The biggest hurdle for Suds will be how badly his body is beaten up in the events leading to Memphis. If he is hobbled, I suspect he may struggle this year. If he's healthy, I expect him to take a serious run to break the odd year jinx. *Odds: 2:1*

Jason Mannino — Despite his win in '99, Mannino's record has been mixed; he's advanced past the quarterfinals on only one other occasion ('01). His quarterfinal loss to Monchik last year, while gut wrenching, will actually play to Mannino's advantage this year; the U.S. OPEN will present him a clear opportunity to improve his overall standing at a critical juncture in the season. I expect Mannino to seize the opportunity with poise and confidence. He is the player to beat. *Odds: 2:1*

Kane Waselenchuk — With his serve, speed, power, agility, McEnroe hands and moxie, Kane is the most feared player on the IRT. Still, despite his first round win over Mannino in '00, Kane's best performances have not come at the OPEN. With his injuries on the mend, I expect Kane to get his groove back early in the season, and if he hits his stride in November, he may just crush everyone in Memphis. *Odds: 3:1*



monchik vs. mannino



carson vs. waselenchuk

• All photos with these previews by Vicki Hughes
... captions list players left to right ...



swain vs. beltran

Cliff Swain — The pressure will be on Swain in Memphis, as he will be defending his finals appearance of 2002 (a bright spot in an otherwise frustrating season). With so many great moments and such an impressive record at the OPEN (two first place finishes, four seconds, 1 semi), rest assured that Swain will show up ready to play. *Odds: 3:1*

Jack Huczek — Huczek is not a rookie anymore, and this is the perfect backdrop to step up and make a serious run at the #1 ranking. The biggest challenge for Huczek will be finding ways to win against those ranked ahead of him. While he struggled with Mannino, Kane and Sudsy last season, he made mince-meat out of everyone else, so I expect that he's favored to defend his semi-final points from 2002. Putting aside the fact that six out of seven titles have been won by power players, the spongy floor of the portable court should suit Jack's control game. *Odds: 6:1*



ellis vs. huczek

Rocky Carson — Rocky has never put himself in contention at this event, but I suspect that he'll come to the party prepared in 2003. He quietly had a stellar 2002 — with his first IRT victory and multiple wins over Mannino. While somewhat susceptible to an early round upset, I expect Rocky to give fits to the top guys if they're having an off day. *Odds: 15:1*

Alvaro Beltran — Beltran surprised many with his frequent finals appearances and a win in 2002. If Beltran can avoid losing in the 16's early in the season, this could present an opportunity for him to move into the top four. Early match ups will be critical for Beltran, as he might struggle in the 32's and 16's. If he makes it through to the quarters, he has a better chance with the blasters (Swain, Ellis, Monchik, Waselenchuk) than the thinkers (Mannino, Huczek). *Odds: 15:1*

John Ellis — Ellis got off to a rough start in 2002 that didn't turn around until after Memphis. With a solid performance, Ellis could pick up significant ranking points and move himself back into the top four, and contention for the #1 ranking. I expect him to start the season strong, buoyed by a new sponsor and the nationwide rollout of the Ektelon "Elli Experience" roadshow. Fitness will be the issue for Ellis, and if he has too many early round battles, he may not have the juice he needs on Saturday or Sunday. *Odds: 8:1*

Mike Guidry — While he is a long shot to win the U.S. OPEN, I have tremendous respect for Guidry's attainment of a career-long goal of winning an IRT event. As he has now demonstrated that he can win on any given day, don't count him out in Memphis. Having said that, he has only one semi to his credit in Memphis and he's been susceptible to early round losses on the back courts. *Odds: 25:1*

The Field — I don't believe that anyone else has a realistic chance of winning ... but nevertheless, Derek Robinson, Jason Thoerner and Mike Green are just as likely to reach the quarters or semis as anyone else in the top 10. If history is any indication, there's always an excellent chance of a lower ranked player popping up in the semis. The most likely dark horses include young guns Gilberto Mejia, Javier Moreno, Agustin Tristan, Mitch Williams and Shane Vanderson. *Odds: 1,000:1*



special preview ... LPRA

*Predictable? ...
by Todd Boss*



A summer of upheaval on the women's pro circuit has led to an interesting 2003-04 season kickoff in Mexico. Will new management, a new commissioner and a new board of directors help the LPRA continue to strengthen itself? We'll see.

With an entire summer off, and no major events between the May USRA Nationals in Houston and the first scheduled LPRA stop in Rosarito Beach, Mexico in August, this prognosticator (*much lambasted in the past for his poor predictions ... hey, I'm not Jimmy the Greek here*) offers up his preview of the Choice U.S. OPEN championships for 2003, on the women's side of the card.

#1 Cheryl Gudinas: We're in familiar territory here. For the second season in a row, Cheryl has absolutely dominated the women's tour, winning 9 of its 12 events while only missing one final, and she holds a commanding point lead over her closest rivals. The only difference this year is that her top priority has been met, having finally taken the 2002 U.S. OPEN crown. This confidence will only serve to help her defend, making her an overwhelming favorite in Memphis. *Odds 6-5.*

#2 Jackie Rice: By the time this write-up hits the streets, Jackie very well may have dropped from the #2 slot, or announced her retirement altogether. After a difficult loss in the final of her own event back in January, Jackie skipped all but the two primary women's events in the first half of 2003 (Pro nationals and USRA Singles). Is she stepping back from the rigors of touring and just competing in the majors? If so, will the two-time U.S. OPEN champ have what it takes to make it to the top once again? It could be tough. *Odds 5-1.*

#3 Kerri Wachtel: Kerri didn't match her outstanding 2001 season (where she took out the #1 and #2 players to win the U.S. OPEN crown) last year, but she did manage a win in her hometown event and made a number of final appearances. It's possible that Kerri could enter the U.S. OPEN as the #2 seed. She'll need to focus, though, to return to this event final, and draw from all her past experiences to take out long-time rival Gudinas for the crown. *Odds 3-1.*

#4 Rhonda Rajsich: Rhonda maintains a somewhat strong hold on the #4 slot entering the new season. She didn't quite match her performance in the two seasons prior, having only made one final and getting shut out of the win column. She also suffered a setback in the quarters of last year's OPEN. Can she bounce back? Rhonda plays hot and cold, and she can show flashes of brilliance (like her run as the #44 seed into the 2000 final). Hopefully we'll see the Rhonda of old in Memphis. *Odds 5-1.*

#5: Kersten Hallander: Kersten has consistently been ranked No.4 or 5 for the last five seasons, but has only made a single final in that same period. The No. 4/5 seeding is always a tough one: you're faced with the prospect of a quarterfinal match-up against your closest rival on tour, a player who is probably your absolute equal. Then, the winner of this (more often than not) marathon turns right around and plays Cheryl Gudinas, the most dominant player on tour in a decade. Kersten will need the win of her career to have a chance at the crown. *Odds: 8-1.*

#6: Adrienne Fisher: Adrienne has all the tools to be the sport's next superstar. Ranked well below the top 10 just a year ago, she shot to the No.6 spot by

lineup ... lowdown

WOMEN	Odds	Age
Cheryl Gudinas	6-5	36
Jackie Rice	5-1	37
Kerri Wachtel	3-1	29
Rhonda Rajsich	5-1	25
Kersten Hallander	8-1	39
Adrienne Fisher	5-1	18
Laura Fenton	5-1	41
Christie Van Hees	4-1	26

... LPRA ... continues on page 47

consistently making the quarterfinals (with one semi in Canada) at pro events. Unluckily, she typically runs into Jackie or Cheryl in these quarterfinals, which has quickly ended her tournament each time. Like Kersten, a breakthrough win is needed at some point for her to move into the sport's elite, a breakthrough win that *will* come at some point in the very near future. *Odds 5-1.*

Dark Horse Picks

#17: Laura Fenton: it seems to me that, at exactly this time last year, I was mentioning Ms. Fenton as a dark horse candidate as well. She made the OPEN semis last year, and recently defeated Jackie Rice enroute to the finals of the USRA National Singles. She'll have to rely on seeding magic though, to avoid the top seeds in the very early rounds, since she fallen all the way to No.17 in the rankings. *Odds 5-1.*

Unranked ... Christie Van Hees

that's right, sports fans ... via the hotline to U.S. OPEN central (tourney director Doug Ganim), the latest reports indicate that Christie *will* return to competitive racquetball and will play this year's U.S. OPEN. After rocketing to the No.3 ranking in 1998-99 season, and winning the 2000 U.S. OPEN crown, she suddenly retired from the sport (to ride horses?!).

Is she back on the tour?

What will this mean for the sport's power elite? What will it mean for the odds-makers for the 2003 US OPEN? It's hard to tell how long it will take Christie to get back into tournament shape (not long at all, if she's been practicing with fellow countryman Kane Waselenchuk, but then, rumor has it he's living in Canadian-exile somewhere in Texas). I'm predicting she'll make the semis in a glorious return. *Odds 4-1.*

Predictions: Van Hees and Fenton make the semis. Wachtel and Gudinas make the finals. Cheryl wins a four-game final to repeat as champ. Fearless predictions, always. See you in Memphis! Boss



gudinas vs. wachtel



jackie rice

photos above & left by Vicki Hughes [2002]; below by Mike Boatman [2001]



rice vs. hallander