

# THE Jewish Georgian

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FREE

## Schwartz on Sports



BY *Jerry Schwartz*

**MJCCA HOSTS DOUBLES PICKLEBALL TOURNAMENT.** Pickleball at the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta (MJCCA) had its beginning in 2009. Sid Cojac, who had moved to Atlanta from Charlotte, introduced it at the “J.” Under Sid’s leadership, I, along with a group including Donald Miller, Ken Lester, Fred Bailey, Howie Rosenberg, Cheri Levitan, Ed Feldstein, Hugh Jamison, and George Jordan, helped organize, promote, and start playing the game. Not too many people had ever heard of pickleball before, and very few had ever played it.

If you played any kind of racquet sport, it didn’t take long to catch on once you got used to the bounce of the ball, which is similar to a wiffle ball. I saw an exhibition game in 2007 at the National Senior Games in Louisville and recognized the potential the game had for popularity.

It isn’t quite the workout you get from tennis, squash, or racquetball, but it is enjoyable, competitive, can be played year round, and there was an available morning time to play it at the “J.”

I have been truly amazed how popular pickleball has become over the last 10 years. Now, it’s not unusual to see all three courts going with doubles matches and maybe 20-25 people waiting on Monday through Friday mornings and Saturday afternoons. It’s a coed sport and also has a social side to it.

There are also special times set aside for beginner instruction and advanced play. Over this 10-year period, the “J” has sponsored eight pickleball tournaments; the first was held in 2012 and the most recent on March 31, 2019.

I’ve participated in seven of the tournaments, five of them with my grandson, Jared Cohen. When I heard about the March 31 tournament, I thought it would be a good idea to compete with Jared as my partner again and, at the same time, cover it for “Schwartz on Sports.”

It made for a pretty hectic Sunday afternoon, but luckily I enlisted my daughter, Mindy, and son, Michael, to take pictures, keep up with my writing material, and offer observations about the tournament, as well as being our rooting section, along with my wife Nancy, granddaughter Sophia, and Michael’s fiancée Sara. The event was well attended, with 125-150 spectators filling the bleachers on both sides of the two gyms, where play was taking place.

The MJCCA Pickleball Tournament planning committee, under the leadership of Hannah O’Donoghue, MJCCA membership director and pickleball tournament director, consisted of Nora Floersheim, Ed Feldstein,

Earl Finley, Ken Lester, and Walter Putnam. A great group of volunteers helped with registration, score keeping, the hospitality suite, and good old-fashioned assistance. Most of the volunteers were regulars on the pickleball courts at the “J.” They also did a fabulous job in organizing, recruiting, publicizing, and involving community sponsors in making the tournament the largest in its eight-year history and a resounding success. I had an opportunity to talk with Hannah, and I appreciate all the information and help she provided me in writing this article.



**Planning committee member Ken Lester, holding the official pickleball symbol**

Following are some of my observations as both a participant and spectator.

This was the largest and most diverse tournament as far as participation. There were 72 participants — 30 MJCCA members and 42 outside players. There were 36 double teams and three divisions: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. There were players of all ages and skill levels. Combinations included husband-wife, father-son, men-women, old-young, grandson-grandfather, and siblings.

After an introduction of the rules and procedures by Ed Feldstein, play started at 9:30 a.m., on six courts in two gyms. It continued non-stop until the late afternoon. There were result boards where scores were posted quickly after the games were completed. The competition moved along at a steady pace because it was so well organized.

This was not a sanctioned tournament. There were no referees. Participants called their own games. The sportsmanship displayed, from what I could see, was outstanding.

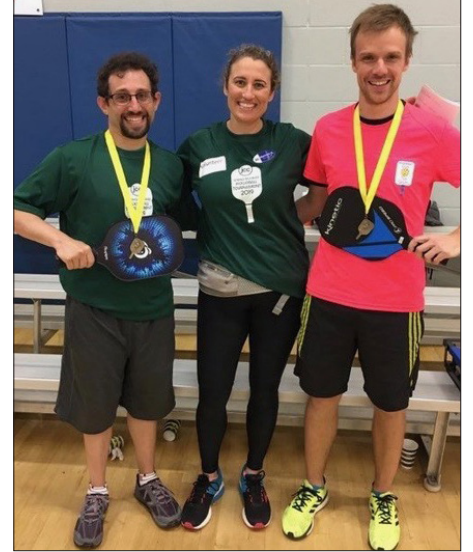
Snack tables for players with food and



**1st Place winners in the Advanced division were Robert Russell (left) and Kevin Lenze, with MJCCA Board Chair Ken Winkler (center).**



**2nd Place winners in the Advanced division were Kristy Kind (left) and Tony Moussakhani, with MJCCA Board Chair Ken Winkler (center).**



**1st Place winners in the Intermediate division were Basti Grau (left) and Keland Scher, with Tournament Director Hanna O’Donoghue (center).**



**2nd Place winners in the Intermediate division were Charlie Troncalli (left) and Dahm Smith.**

1st Place; Chole Maddox/Cody McNeely, 2nd Place; and Nolan Gartzman/Jeff Gartzman, 3rd Place

I hope you enjoyed this recap of the Doubles Pickleball Tournament. Until next time, drive for the bucket and score.

drink were provided in the gym.

Avalon Catering sponsored a hospitality suite in the Fine Family Studio, in the main lobby. They provided free breakfast and lunch and tables for all spectators and players.

The competition was outstanding, by far the best that I can remember. It was a great experience and way to spend a Sunday at the “J.”

Results for the various divisions:

- Advanced: Robert Russell/Kevin Lenze, 1st Place; Kristy Kind/Tony Moussakhani, 2nd Place; and Steve Sharp/Robert Pototsky, 3rd Place
- Intermediate: Basti Grau/Keland Scher, 1st Place; Charlie Troncalli/ Dahm Smith, 2nd Place; and Todd Freeman/Mark McMahon, 3rd Place
- Beginner: Beau Nugent/Trevor Nugent,

