

Hood River Invitational

The "Windsurfing Capital of the World" took time off for a weekend of handball, celebrating another year of successful Oregon handball tournaments. The Fifth Annual Hood River Invitation Handball Tournament was held Friday, May 31st through Sunday, June 2nd at the Hood River Elks Lodge, # 1507. The tournament featured some of the best Pacific Northwest handball players (such as Dalton Beall, Cody Townsend, Matt Steele, Aaron Garner, etc), playing in a unique doubles format. The weekend also was an opportunity for handball fellowship and fundraising for a community cause. Proceeds for the tournament, including donations and donated items, totaled \$6,000 which was given to a local family with a daughter who has Cerebral Palsy. Her grandfather has been one of the regular participants in the tournament.

"It's A Family Affair." The Stenberg family of Hood River hosts the Hood River Invitational. For the last five years, the Stenbergs have invited forty handball players to join them in Hood River for the last indoor Four Wall tournament of the Oregon handball year. To many of the players and their families this tournament feels like they are being invited to a friend's home. Oscar and Helen Stenberg have nine children, eight boys and one daughter. While Oscar and Helen both play handball (Helen won division 2 last year with their son Brian), they are quick to point out that it is four of their youngest boys - Michael, Stephen, Philip and Andrew - who decide whom to invite, make all the arrangements, run the tournament and determine what the charitable cause is going to be each year.

Unique Doubles Format or "Who's My Partner?"

After the four Stenbergs have invited and confirmed the forty participants, they rank the players from one to forty. The forty are then split into two divisions. Division One is comprised of players ranked #1 through #24. The Doubles teams are then matched up with player #1 being paired with player #24. The player ranked #2 plays with the player ranked #23, etc. Division Two is made up of players ranked #25 through #40. Ranked player #25 plays with ranked player #40. The player ranked #26 plays with the player ranked #39, etc. The doubles tournament started at 7:00 am on Saturday morning on the Elk's two courts. Each match was one game to fifteen and the rules stipulated that you must alternate serves. In total, there were forty matches played on Saturday. Each Doubles team played a minimum of four matches.

Tournament Results

Division One: 1st place: Kyle English / Philip-Andrew Stenberg

2nd place: Stephen Stenberg/Sean O'Connell

Division Two: 1st place: Jennifer Hinman / Ron Harder

2nd place: Randy Stender / Doug Woods

Additional Comments:

Before the final matches were played, there was a junior/senior high school handball exhibition put on by handball players from Horizon Christian School in Hood River. Oscar Stenberg is their coach and he recently took 14 junior and senior high school handball players to the PNW Regionals in Portland.

Summary:

Several players commented that the Hood River Invitational is their favorite handball tournament of the year. It is a relaxed family atmosphere where each year you are paired up with a new doubles partner, and get to enjoy the handball fraternity while also supporting a greater community benefit cause. Hats off to the Stenbergs!