

Racquet for the Cure
2006 WPRO-MWRA Pro-Am
Gaithersburg, MD
Report by Tracie Valentine

The Susan G Komen Foundation has become a household name in the lives of many women today. They provide hope, support, and the ongoing pursuit to one day have a cure for Breast Cancer. They have become an instrumental part in helping women to feel they are not alone in this fight.

Seven years ago, a group of phenomenal Denver racquetball enthusiasts decided, ".....let's do more than just talk about it....let's help spread information, bring women together to form networks and most importantly, do what we can to support the cause" and Racquet for the Cure was formed. It provides an avenue for women and men alike to become more familiar with this disease, be in touch with breast cancer survivors up close and in person, and play some great racquetball.

This year, the Maryland Washington Racquetball Association decided to join the bandwagon to help support the cause. In conjunction with the WPRO, Sport & Health Club of Gaithersburg, MD, many wonderful sponsors, and the adoring fans/players, a Racquet for the Cure WPRO Pro-Am was held in Gaithersburg, MD the weekend of October 20th-22nd, 2006.

Heart-felt moments for the players and pros such as the testimonial from our own Malia Bailey and the autographed Ektelon O3 Pink by Rhonda Rajsich presented to Breast Cancer Survivor Ronnie Yorski were some of the many activities that were held that weekend. Laurel Regional Hospital played an instrumental role in lending us a nurse to perform free Breast Examinations as well as provide guides to self-examinations and awareness. A player's village with an abundance of information from the Susan G. Komen Foundation and the American Cancer Society was provided for one and all in addition to Breast Cancer souvenirs. In addition, Malia Bailey provided a free hands-on Racquetball 101 Clinic.

Souvenirs from t-shirts, socks, bracelets, mugs, hand-crafted breast cancer necklaces and pink polos were made available for purchase. Proceeds from the sale of the souvenirs were donated directly to the donation presented to the Susan G. Komen Foundation. A silent auction and raffle drawings were also provided. Among the top items for auction were an Ektelon O3 Pink racquet autographed by Rhonda Rajsich, a personally owned and autographed Wilson racquet from Malia Bailey, a 2006 Head racquet, Spa treatments and much more.

A few of the pros participated in a WPRO/Sponsor Doubles benefit. It consisted of 6 teams battling it out for the bragging rights of being called the best Pro/Sponsor team in Gaithersburg, MD. The round robin concluded with teams Rhonda Rajsich/Gail Schafer against Kristen Walsh/Tina Davenport. Nothing but laughs, smiles, and fun racquetball was had by all.

The weekend ended with an spectacular performance of agility, speed, and finesse with top ranked pro Rhonda Rajsich (Fountain Hills, AZ) capturing her second championship of the season as she defeated #2 Cheryl Gudinas Holmes (Naperville, IL) in a tough four game final (11-9, 11-9, 8-11, 11-6). In the pro singles draw, Rajsich beat #4 Angela Grisar (Santiago, Chile) in four games in Saturday's semifinal and only dropped two games the entire tournament. Gudinas Holmes ended the outstanding run of #6 Brenda Kyzer (Leesville, SC), who made it to her first pro semifinal in 25 years taking out #11 Laura Fenton (Overland Park, KS) and #3 Kristen Walsh (Salt Lake City, UT) along the way. A donation in the sum of \$2000.00 was presented to Sarah Fought, a representative of the Susan G. Komen Foundation at the conclusion of the Women's Pro Finals on Sunday.

Needless to say, the tournament was a great success because of the hard work and talents of many behind the scenes. The MWRA would like to send their heart-felt thanks to the WPRO and the Sport & Health Club of Gaithersburg, MD for helping to bring the Racquet for the Cure to the Nation's Capital. We would also like to send a special thanks to Robert Salembier of RS Athletics for providing the tournament with outstanding tournament shirts as well as souvenir polos. There were several contributors and donations from various organizations such as Laurel Regional Hospital for lending us one of their nurses, Ron Anderson Catering for the Breast Cancer Cakes, AJ White Photography, Rob Tarter's donation of an 2006 Head Racquet, Transflections Designs by Karen Morton and Khanh Holtslander for their beautiful hand-crafted breast cancer necklaces, Malia Bailey's donation of a Wilson racquet, Wilson's donation of tournament drawsheets, scorecards, balls, goody bag souvenirs, and Ektelon's donation of two O3 Pink racquets. Thanks to the stringers Russ Brunns and Bill Milbach and to the various companies used for catering throughout the weekend.

We, as the MWRA board would like to thank all who participated both in-state and out. You all helped to make our first of hopefully many Racquet for the Cure tournaments a great success. Fun was had by all and we look to see you again in 2007.