



## **Women And Handball (THEME 9) (24/05/2021)**

Until the late 70s the sport of handball was considered by the players themselves as a "men's sport" made for "real men". Robert Kendler in December 1979, assisted by the Merco Company, decided to reverse this trend by introducing the "Bob Kendler Family Handball". President of the USHA, ensuring the development of racquetball at the same time, he developed a ball a little bigger and softer than the "black one" used at the time, to gain new handball followers. This ball, without hurting the hands, allowed new players (women and juniors) to develop a good hitting technique. It was the beginning of a great epic for our Canadian women who subsequently marked the international scene. The women, after favoring the "White Ace" and the "21 white" balls for a few years, now use the same ball as the men during the competitions.

In the early days of handball, in the absence of an all-female category, women performed in the men's group. They were mostly seen as a new attraction rather than as athletes. These players came from different sports (softball, basketball, volleyball, etc.) and playing handball helped them to complete their training. Then, with the number of female players increasing, a Women category was introduced for the first time at the Canadian Championship held in 1980 at Club Neufchatel in Quebec City. Linda Marquis won the Women Singles title against Geneviève Rail. Marquis worked for over 30 years as a basketball player and coach for the Laval University Rouge et Or. It was the start of a long streak of domination by Quebec women. Kathleen Bédard (1981, 1983 to 1989), Lucie Joyal (1982), Diane Vallée (1990 and 1992) and Lucie Marcoux (in doubles) marked the sport.

It was in 1986 in Kelowna (BC) that the World Championships Council established for the first time a Women Open Singles category. Kathleen Bédard (Canada) lost in the final to Susan Carey (Ireland). In 1988, at the World Championships held in Melbourne, Australia, Bédard this time won the Singles and Doubles with Lisa Fraser-Gilmore of Manitoba. These victories earned her a consecration at the prestigious Gala de l'athlète de Québec. Bédard also became one of the only handball athletes to be carded as a beneficiary of the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP), Canada's federal sports funding program that contributes to the pursuit of excellence. Bédard was instrumental to the creation of the women's commissioner position which allowed them to be an integral part of the CHA's decision making as related to women's' issues on a national and provincial level. Every province had a women's' representative that met regularly at the Nationals.

Lisa Fraser-Gilmore afterwards continued the tradition by winning her share of trophies in singles and in doubles with her partners Lavonah Muloin-Madden (N.S.) and Jessica Gawley (Sask.). Diane Vallée (Que.) reached the Singles final at the World Championships in 1991 (Arizona) against Anna Engele and won the Masters category in 2015 in Calgary (Alta.). Kathleen, Diane, Lisa and Lavonah are now members of the CHA Hall of Fame. It should also be noted that Lisa has been inducted into the USHA Hall of Fame, which is unique for a Canadian player.

Alongside these accomplishments, Maria Dugas (N.S.), Samantha England (B.C.) and Carla Stickles-Munson (Ont.) also distinguished themselves by wearing the colors of Lake Forest College (Illinois) under the supervision of legendary coach, Mike Dau. Leslie Amminson (N.L.) has also proven herself for many years in the juniors group and continued her good work with the adults. Several women from different provinces have also joined the group of competitors over the years: Vicky Brown, Natasha Golding, Brenda Allen, Jeri-Lynn Wagner, Lidia Grasesky-Kopchuk, Helen Friesen, Robin Lazenby, Jenine Wilson, Jennifer Beverly, Abbie Bajon, Alexis Cloutier, Colleen Deckert, Sasha Gawley, Lucie Gauthier, Vera Aguiar, Héloïse Côté, Mary-Lou O'Reilly, Susan Burga, Myra Koval, Sarah Dawe, Michelle Priem and others.

Note that a trophy, the "Renee Hurley Memorial", is presented each year at the Canadian Championships to the female athlete who has distinguished herself in competition by her sportsmanship attitude. The young Newfoundland player had a bright future but died too soon in a car crash on her way to a handball game.

International opposition came from many American women including Rosemary Bellini, Anna Engele, Nancy Molter, Allison Roberts, Sue Oakleaf, Jennifer Roberts, Lee-Ann Martin, Gloria Motal, Megan Mehilos, Courtney Peixoto and others. Young Irish, girls who practiced handball at school, have also become great players who perform at the world level: Fiona Shannon, Catriona Casey, Martina McMahon, Aisling Reilly and Ciana Ni Churraoin.

In the province of Quebec, the new generation of women started themselves mainly at the Neufchatel Club around 1980-81 with, among others, Marie-Josée and France Martineau, Lucie Joyal, Lucie Marcoux, Michäelle Perez, Micheline Fradette and Carole Faucher. The latter, by finishing 3rd at the American Junior Championships (1981-Tucson, Arizona), impressed a lot of people with her performance. You will understand why by watching the video included with this theme.

It should be remembered that in 1989 at the Canadian Championships held in Regina (Sask.) a mixed (man and woman) category was set up.

It should also be noted that many handballers believed in the future of women at handball and have invested in the development of new players. These include Lavonah Muloin, Helen and John Friesen, Stan Bargman, Alain Pélissier, Bill McGrath, Donald Côté, Brian Goto, John Philips, Peter Service, Ivan Elliott, Mike Crother and Wayne Amminson.

In conclusion, the women showed over the years that they can play high-level handball, offer quality matches, play with power, speed and intensity and that they can participate in the organization of major tournaments. They are currently confirming their administrative capabilities by serving as presidents of the World Handball Council (Dr. Raquel S. Barnes), the USHA (Lee-Ann Martin) and the CHA (Colleen Deckert).

**Next Theme: The Golden Age 1976-2000**

## PICTURES SECTION



K. Bédard, Gala de l'athlète de l'année 1988



Carey, K. Bédard, World 1986, Kelowna (CB)



Diane Vallée, Kathleen Bédard (2009)



Lavonah Muloin-Madden



Linda Marquis, 1980 Club Neufchatel



Maria Dugas, Samantha England, Kathleen Bédard, Jessica Gawley, Lisa Fraser-Gilmore

## VIDEOS AND PICTURES SECTION

The Quebec women at New-Haven (Connecticut) 1981 : TV cover - Carole Faucher.

<https://youtu.be/Af15bZaAec>

Carole Faucher's Handball Inspiration: Jerry Fagundès vs Naty Alvarado Sr.

[https://youtu.be/56qnN\\_Lsnqs](https://youtu.be/56qnN_Lsnqs)

National Women Open Singles final 1985 - Oakville (Ontario) : Kathleen Bédard, Québec (QC) vs Vicky Brown (Vancouver (BC)).

<https://youtu.be/d3ccVJMdJWQ>

National Women Open Singles final 1990 - Oakville (Ont.): Diane Vallée, Brossard (QC) vs Lavonah Muloin-Madden, Antigonish (NS).

<https://youtu.be/e1GVzEPWhA0>

World Women Open Doubles 2003 – Dublin (Ireland). Lisa Fraser-Gilmore and Jessica Gawley (Canada) vs Fionna Shanon and Sibeal McKenna (Ireland).

**(starts at 9:10 minutes)**

[https://youtu.be/d\\_zAKIRNDaw](https://youtu.be/d_zAKIRNDaw)

World Championships 2012 – Dublin (Ireland)

<https://youtu.be/lyn4I045wcE>

### Souvenirs



1960: Black Ball



1979: Family Ball



1980: the Blue Ace



1990: White et Red



La blanche 21



WPH 2000

## ADD-ON TO THEME #7: QUEBEC 1950-75

We are very happy to present Morris Hoffman's personal testimony regarding his handball life.

*"October 14, 1950 was the day that I got married. Later on my wife and I moved near the Y.M.H.A. and that was the beginning of my handball life. I watched Lou Fishman and Harry Biskin playing Frank and Jack Engels. For a month time they wouldn't let me on the court so I started playing with lesser players and worked my way up the ladder until I graduated to being able to play with the big boys.*

*When I got married in 1950 my wife and I were 19 years of age and I was working for my Father who paid me \$50.00 a week (and he thought that was too much). Therefore any tournament in these days was out of the question for me.*

*I am now playing handball for 70 plus years and my normal days of playing was 5 Days a week, as I am addicted to the game of handball. This sport is a great part of my life, it's a true confidence builder and healthy exercise work-out.*

*I guess you can figure it out that I left my Father's business and started my own company with two other friends (import of textiles from the U.S.A. Europe and the Orient). After 20-25 years of playing locally, I started playing in tournaments. Too numerous to remember, however just to give you some idea and what I can remember, I played many Montreal tournaments in various clubs.*

*Local tournaments, Canadian tournaments, National tournaments, numerous U.S.A. tournaments (New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New-Orleans, Connecticut, Florida, California, Arizona etc. I played in the Worlds in Ireland twice, Australia in 1988. Many of you that will read this text will probably not recognize me, not because of all the tournaments I have played in but more because I always got my butt kicked in the finals: in fact I was many times more a Bridesmaid not a Bride. But I did win a title at the Worlds in Australia.*

*However my heart goes out to you because, you, the handball players of the world are my OXYGEN, you were and are my life. Without your participation and involvement I would not be the person that I am now .Over the years we lost close to 40 players in Quebec and many more friends from the U.S.A. and around the world. Never ever give up this game of handball, it's a true character builder. I am now crying for the love of the game and the love of its people.*

*I love you all.*

*Morris Hoffman (Montreal, May 18, 2021)*

Thanks to: Bill McGrath, Brian Goto, Maxime Pélissier (special collaboration), USHA, GAA, Kathleen Bédard and Marie-Michèle Trudel.