

## 2006 Eastern National Tournament Dedication: Jack Potter

This year, we've shifted gears a bit from our normal type of dedication. In the past, we've always dedicated the tournament to a recently deceased person who somehow played a significant role in the success of the tournament. If you recall, our last few tournaments have been dedicated to some very noteworthy people in the history of the Eastern National Tournament... the likes of Paul Focht, Ed Wurst, Joe Kuchcinski, Francis White, Glen Sebring and Sam Chilcott... At the beginning of 2006, we decided to take a fresh approach to the tournament dedication and honor someone who was still alive ...for once! So, we had our normal tournament committee meetings and eventually it was all agreed that we would dedicate the 2006 Eastern Nationals to Jack Potter. While there is no doubt that Jack is absolutely deserving of this honor, we are sure that he will agree that the very recent passing of one of the Eastern National's greatest champions ever, Carl Steinfeldt, demands that we at least recognize Carl's achievements and dedication to this tournament and honor him along with Jack. Carl won this tournament many times but listing all the dates and wins/losses and percentages wouldn't tell you much... to really give you an idea of the type of player he was, here's a little footnote from our club memory banks... Back in 1984, early in the round robin of the championship group, Carl threw a perfect game. He followed that up with a game where he missed just one shoe and then followed that with another perfect game... missing just one shoe over the course of three games! That was vintage Carl Steinfeldt and you had to expect that every time you played him or you were no doubt in for a really short game... But really, this story is supposed to be about Jack Potter, so I'll keep it that way. But I at least wanted to mention our great friend Carl and wish his family the best as they learn to live without him.

Jack Potter has been associated with NHPA horseshoes as a member of the Pennsylvania Horseshoe Pitcher's Association since 1954. He is the first member of this association to reach the coveted 50 year membership mark and is the first WHPA member to earn the NHPA's prestigious lifetime membership award. He became a charter member of the Erie Horseshoe Club after its reorganization in the mid 1950's and served as a club officer or director for the next 25 years... serving in such positions as tournament director, vice-president and courts director... a position which he held during the 1969 World Tournament in Erie. Speaking of the 1969 World Tournament, Jack Potter played a key role in bringing that tournament to Pennsylvania and also did an outstanding job of organizing and managing the work crews necessary to keep those courts in top World Tournament condition throughout the entire tournament. In fact, it is noted in NHPA historical records that the pitching conditions in Erie in 1969 were among the best ever seen at a world tournament and this was all because of Jack. The following year in 1970, he was honored with a rare lifetime membership award in the Erie Horseshoe Club as a result of his outstanding contributions to the club at that time and many years prior. The Erie Horseshoe Club played host to the Eastern Nationals many times during those years mentioned and of course, Jack was an integral part of those events. Anyone who pitched tournaments on the old courts in the 60's, 70's or early 80's can attest to the fact that those courts were always in perfect condition and that was primarily due to Jack Potter's efforts.

When I was a kid in the late 70's, to me, Jack was the guy who dug up all the courts and told all the really funny jokes. In fact, I learned how to turn a court (the right way!) from him... Back then, I didn't even know that he played horseshoes beyond just pitching in the local league and when you talked to him, you'd never guess he was as good as he was... But when you saw him pitch, with that smooth delivery and textbook follow through of his... you could tell he had made a few ringers in his day... Jack's pitching career was equally impressive as his contributions as an organizer... He pitched competitively in NHPA tournaments for over 25 years (between 1954 & 1980) and was a class A pitcher almost the entire time. In his prime, he generally maintained a ringer average over 70%... He was the Erie County Champion four times (1955, 57, 58 & 59) and won the Class B State Title in 1959, back in a time when winning class B was tougher than winning the class A of today. He also qualified for and played in the championship class in the PA State Tournament at least 10 different times, finishing as high as 5<sup>th</sup> place (twice) and averaging as high as 72% ringers in 1972. He pitched in and won numerous small tournaments throughout the association's clubs of the day in Clearfield, Rochester, Beaver, Mt. Pleasant and of course, Erie. The list of his achievements as a pitcher is quite lengthy... what's written here are simply the highlights... Suffice it to say that Jack was a top player all throughout his pitching career and that he was well respected and feared by all of the top players of the day.

Most all of Jack Potter's contributions to the sport of horseshoe pitching in Pennsylvania were prior to 1980, so, today, you'd be hard pressed to find a member who has ever even heard of him... But in his day, it was just the opposite... everyone in the region knew who Jack Potter was... He was renowned and respected state-wide and beyond... His efforts as an organizer and a player helped bring national attention to Erie's tremendous contributions to this sport. Jack was inducted into the PA Horseshoe Pitchers Hall of Fame in 2005 after being nominated by his lifelong friend, the legendary Frank Bohun, who provide a lot of the stats I wrote about in this story... We sincerely hope that Jack's gifts to us of friendship and guidance will be forever remembered. Certainly, he has earned the honor of this dedication and we are all proud to call ourselves friends of Jack Potter.

--by Bobby White, EHC Secretary