

# John Abate



**John Abate started playing handball as a kid from the Bronx in the 1960's. He played handball, basketball, stickball, and all the other inner city type games. It wasn't, however, until 1973, after he graduated from college that handball became his life obsession.**

After John graduated from Manhattan College, he got a job in New York City, which was only a fifteen minute walk to the Mecca of handball, the New York Athletic Club. The NYAC, at that time, had great handball players including Joel Wisotsky, Fred Munsch, the Obert brothers, Ken Ginty, Wally Ulbrich, and more. Every day after work John went to the NYAC, where he had the great fortune to meet Fred Munsch, who was, without doubt, the greatest ambassador the sport of handball has ever had. After Fred saw John's tenacity and willingness to learn and improve, he had him join the NYAC team, which competed against other top clubs in NYC.

Over the years John became a valuable member of the team. His versatility enabled him to play either singles or doubles, wherever he was most needed for that night's match. This versatility helped John to develop into both a distinguished 4-wall singles and doubles player.

John's greatest win came when he and Jay Garsman beat the seemingly unbeatable Fred Munsch/Joel Wisotsky combination for the one and only time in the New Jersey State Doubles Final in 1982. Another Abate victory that truly stands out was the 1984 NYAC Invitational.

That tournament hosted top 4-wall teams from across the country. In '84 John and Jay Garsman defeated the Dunne brothers from California in the final. Still another great win occurred in the '81 Northeast Regional 4-Wall Championships, again with Jay Garsman. The pair also won multiple other tournaments up and down the east coast. From 1980 through 1998 – 18 years – John Abate was champion or runner-up in prestigious New York and New Jersey handball tournaments in the Open Division and, later, in the Masters.

Once turning forty, John teamed with John Marra from Flanders, New Jersey, and they enjoyed spectacular success in the Masters Division. They won just about every state and regional tournament in which they participated for many years. Abate also competed in the World Championships in Ireland.

Abate was always proud of and grateful to his partners, Jay Garsman and John Marra, but most importantly, he paid tribute to his wife, Connie, who sacrificed many a weekend to be with him during his many tournaments.

The best part of handball, as John saw it, was not just the competition on the court, but the camaraderie and lifetime friendships that developed after the matches ended.

