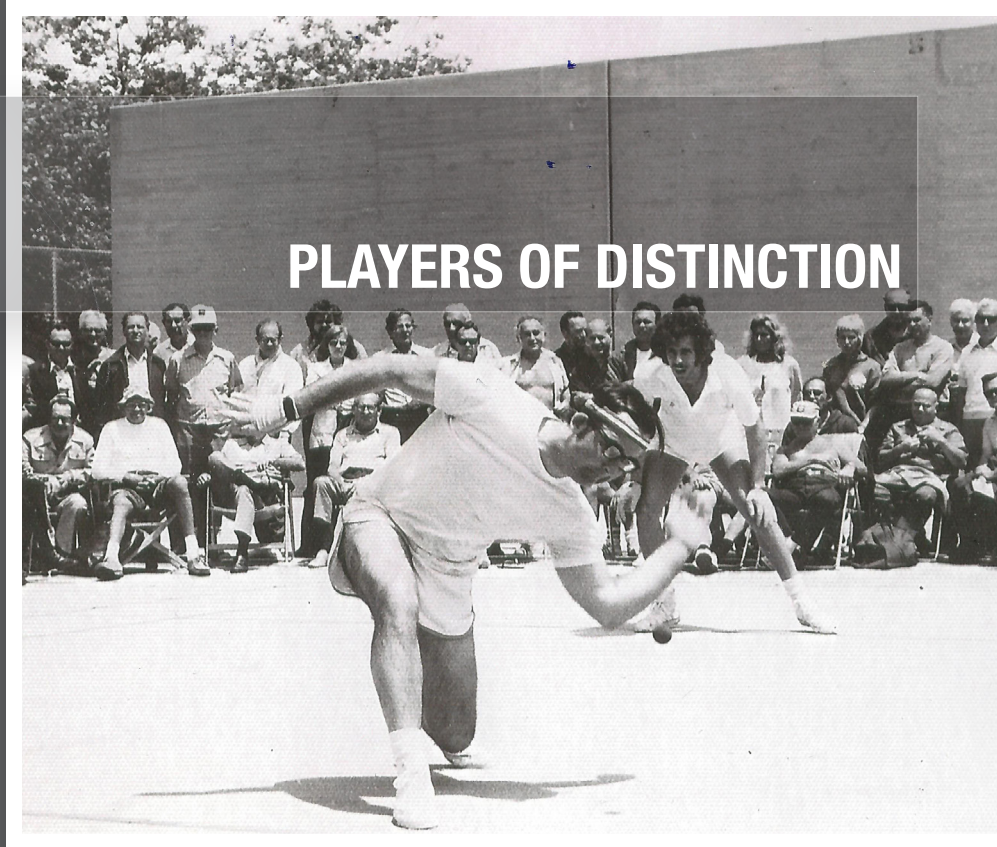


# Tom Hopkins

Tom came to handball because it was a family obligation. His father, who was born in 1911, had his glory days in the 1930's. He had been a depression era hustler, who traveled from park to park playing with an early version of the "spauldeen."

Every weekend his father took Tom and Tom's brother, Bob, to Crotona Park in the Bronx. Tom began playing handball at the age of 12. He soon "graduated" to playing in "money games," which were the primary focus at Crotona Park. He played in this venue through adolescence, into his college years, and into his twenties. Every weekend was the same. There was always considerable discussion among the players and the bettors before each game because all of the games were handicapped. Many of the games that Tom played involved him teamed with his father, who could use both hands while Tom was allowed to use only his opposite (right) hand. Over the years the games were for \$2.00 a man and sometimes \$5.00 a man. But Tom played in games where as much as \$500. was bet in the center.

Bronx players seemed typically intimidated in those days by the reputation of Brooklyn players. The Obert brothers were an exception. Because of these factors, Tom never believed he was a good handball player. His father had had a tremendous angle serve in his heyday. In similar fashion Tom focused on developing a corner and angled serve that scored many aces for him.



Hopkins did play handball in high school. His school, All Hallows, won the Catholic High School City Championship twice. As he grew older Tom branched out and played in different parks including Van Cortlandt and Bailey Avenue, but he believed that his game and his brother's game would have developed more fully had they played at the Bronx beach clubs, Castle Hill and Shore Haven.

Tom married a girl from Brooklyn and began playing regularly at Coney Island while in his thirties. He became a consistent entrant in USHA and AAU 1-Wall National Singles Tournaments. Good fortune smiled on him, and he reached the semi-finals in National Singles three times. His great serve enabled him to achieve so lofty a finish. His last semi-final berth came when he was nearing 50 years old!

At this writing Tom, in his 70's, enjoys being a "weekend warrior" every spring, summer, and fall. Playing handball for sixty years did not dampen his enthusiasm. Although he never played doubles seriously, always preferring singles, he is learning to play doubles more competently. It is his hope to continue playing on New York concrete for years to come.