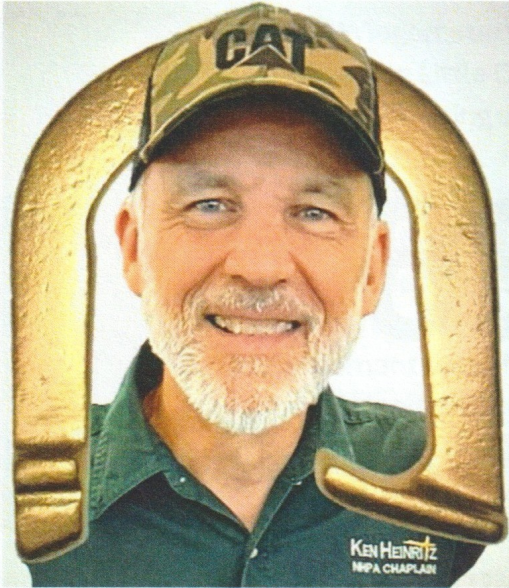


2026 WHPA Hall of Fame Inductee –

Ken Heinritz

Ken Heinritz grew up as the 7th of 10 kids with 5 brothers and 4 sisters in his family. Playing horseshoes with his dad and brothers was always a



good time. You might say that those 6 boys wanted to be just like their dad. He was their hero & was the best at everything he did. Beating him in horseshoes was rare but extremely rewarding for the boys.

Spending time with Ken's dad took a back seat in his life after he met a young lady and got married at the young age of 21. Pitching horseshoes was completely set aside & forgotten as well. That was until Ken took his family to the Milwaukee Sentinel Sport Show in 1995. To his amazement, horseshoe pitching was on display on a raised fenced-in platform. It immediately caught his eye & he met guys like Jim Haupt, Tony Scrima, Tom Steinke & Terry Sternberg. Ken discovered that a horseshoe club was only 15 minutes from his house, the Goldendale Club in Germantown. Ken was hooked & his dad was thrilled that Ken was coming back to the sport that they both loved. Ken and his dad joined the Goldendale Club & soon his brother Russ joined as well.

Handicapping in club play is a good thing, but Ken didn't want to be spotted points from anybody. Having the lowest handicap was a tall task because several Hall of Famers such as Terry & Lorraine Sternberg, Ralph Maylahn, Jim Haupt, and Tony Scrima were among his opponents. Tom Costa also pitched there and was a good friend of Ken's. Ken accepted the challenge and these pitchers helped him improve his game.

Along with pitching in the Goldendale League, Ken also started & ran the Menomonee Falls Horseshoe Pitching Club for 8 years. He then started and ran the Heinritz Homestead Horseshoe Pitching Club for 7 more years. Over 150 different people pitched in these leagues.

Ken's ringer percentage peaked around the mid-40% range, but late in 2004, something unusual happened that pushed his game to a higher level. He caught a 28"

northern pike with a special lure in a fishing tournament and was awarded a prize for catching the biggest fish. That lure was a Ringle Single lure & the prize, of course, was a pair of Ringle Singles, awarded by another Hall of Famer, Gus Schram. Ken's horseshoe fortunes changed when he started using those shoes. He won his class and was only 3 spots away from the move-up into the Championship class at the 2005 World Tournament. Ken also won Class A & moved up to play in the Championship Men's class at the State Tournament in 2005, while pitching with those Ringle Singles.

Terry, Lorraine & Jim were instrumental in getting Ken interested in pitching in World Tournaments. In 1998, he was off to Ainsworth, Nebraska to pitch in his first World Tournament. Ken pitched against 2 great Wisconsinites, Harry Nelson & another Hall of Famer ... Bernard Carley. He finished in the middle of the pack but that didn't matter because he enjoyed the experience. The World Tournament journey became a yearly event for him. Ken's family went along with him for the first 4 World Tournaments. The weather was blistering hot each of those years & they roughed it in a little tent. His family stopped going along with Ken, but he kept making that annual trip on his own as he loved reuniting with pitchers and pitching against new people each year. Ken has participated in a total of 25 World Tournaments.

While Ken has many World Tournament highlights, one stands out above them all and is still talked about to this day. In 2010, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Ken found himself in a zone while pitching against 6-time World Champion, Walter Ray Williams Jr. The game was over before he knew it as he rolled to a 42-0 victory, with a ringer % of 91.67. It was the only time Walter Ray had ever been skunked in a Championship game. That game has taken on wings as people still bring it up every year at the World Tournament.

Ken won his class at World Tournaments in 2005, 2007, 2015 & in Wausau in 2026. The first year that Ken qualified to pitch in the Open Men's Championship was in 2006. That year started a streak of 7 straight years of making the Men's Championship class, and 10 times in all. Ken's highest finish in Championship play was in 2019, ending in a 4-way tie for 7th place. Ken has also made the Championship Senior Men's Class for all three years of eligibility to play in that Division.

Ken also has enjoyed success in State Tournaments as well. Ken has competed in the Championship Men's class every year since 2005, a streak of 20 years and counting. Ken has finished in the top three places 12 times, He won the Men's State Title in 2009, where he went undefeated with a 7-0 record and averaged 64.81%. Ken won the Men's State Title again in 2016 after defeating Jeff

Gustafson in a playoff game. Ken will be pitching in his 30th State Tournament in 2026, right after his induction into the Hall of Fame.

Ken earned the opportunity to be on the #1 Wisconsin Team in Team World seven times. He was a teammate on the first four Wisconsin teams that won Team World Titles in 2011, 2012, 2018 and 2019. Ken has also won one State Doubles Title with Jeff Gustafson in 2010 and was a teammate on teams that won 4 Club Team Titles. Ken is also proud to be the recipient of the Presidential Achievement Award in 2008.

Ken has also been blessed to be the WHPA Chaplain for the past 25 years & has been the NHPA Chaplain for the past 23 years. Over those years, he has officiated 96 Chapel Services at State Doubles, State Singles, Team World, & World Tournament for the pitchers. Ken has written 119 'Behind the Mask' articles for the Wisconsin Horseshoe Newsletter as the WHPA Chaplain.

Ken has been able to combine his own family with his horseshoe family as he has had 28 relatives (dad, 2 brothers, 1 sister, 22 nieces/nephews, 2 grandnephews) join the NHPA over the years. Of this group, 18 State Championships were recorded in the Cadet & Junior Divisions (6 Cadet Girls State Champions, 5 Cadet Boys State Champions, 4 Junior Boys State Champions, 3 Junior Girls State Champions). Three World Titles came from relatives (Bethany Heinritz – 2-time Junior Girls World Champion 2010, 2011 & Steven Lazaris – Cadet World Champion 2013). That equates to very successful recruiting results for the WHPA by having a booth at the Milwaukee Sentinel Sports Show back in 1995, thanks to Ken's influence on his family members to pitch.

Regrettably, most of the accomplishments that Ken has achieved in horseshoe pitching have happened after his dad's passing in May 2008. There have been times that he could envision his dad with him, beaming with joy!

Ken would like to thank his Lord & Savior Jesus Christ, who has given him the ability to play this sport & has blessed him with countless friends across this nation.

Ken Heinritz Horseshoe Pitching Achievements

State Achievements

- 2 Men's State Titles – 2009 & 2016
- 1 Doubles State Title – 2010 (Jeff Gustafsen)
- 20 straight years (last 20) being in State Men's Championship Class (Top 3 twelve times)
- Participated in 30 State Tournaments
- 4 Club Team Titles –
 - 1998 – Goldendale (Tony Scrima, Jim Haupt & Tom Costa)

- 2010 – Heinritz Clan (Bethany & Russ Heinritz, Timmy Lazaris)
- 2018 – Muskego (Penny Steinke, Pam Aiken & Galen Kozel)
- 2022 – Muskego (Penny Steinke, Pam Aiken & Cliff Shave)

- Recipient of President's Award in 2008
- Started Menomonee Falls Horseshoe Pitching League (& Club President) – 8 years
- Started Heinritz Homestead Horseshoe Pitching League (& Club President) – 7 years

World Tournament Achievements

- 4 Team World Titles –
 - 2012 (Gert Wilcziek, Pam Steinke, and Martin Papesh)
 - 2013 (Gert, Ron Button, and Martin)
 - 2018 (Jim Bilderback, Penny, and Aleena Lepak)
 - 2019 (Penny, Jim, and Aleena)
- 4 World Class Championships –
 - (2005 B-1, 2007 A-2, 2015 A-2, 2026 E)
- Participated in 25 World tournaments
- Men's Championship Class - 10 times (including 7 straight)
- Senior Men Championship Class – All 3 years eligible
- In 2010 Championship Class – skunked 6-time World Champion Walter Ray Williams Jr. with a score of 42-0 and a 91.67% ringer percentage

Other Achievements

WHPA Chaplain – 25 years & NHPA Chaplain – 23 years

*Officiated 96 Chapel Services
For Horseshoe Pitchers*

- Contributor to Wisconsin Horseshoe Newsletter for the past 20 years writing 119 'Behind the Mask' articles
- 28 relatives joined the NHPA (dad, 2 brothers, 1 sister, 22 nieces/nephews, 2 grandnephews)
 - 3 World Championships came from relatives (Bethany Heinritz – 2-time Junior Girls World Champion 2010, 2011 & Steven Lazaris – Cadet World Champion 2013)
 - 18 State Championships came from relatives (6 Cadet Girls State Champions, 5 Cadet Boys State Champions, 4 Junior Boys State Champions, 3 Junior Girls State Champions)
 - Over 150 different individuals participated in Men Falls & Heinritz Homestead horseshoe leagues that were led by Ken Heinritz