



Ray Hill

*Honorary Member of The Wisconsin
Horseshoe Pitchers Hall of Fame*

“A legend in his time” and still performing at a level never attained by most pitchers. This two time Senior Men’s World Champion, 1987 and 1989, is still someone to be reckoned with in a horseshoe match. His legendary “smooth” pitching style hasn’t changed over the years, even though his pitching average has dropped from the upper 70’s to the mid 60’s.

Ray Hill, a native of Michigan, lives in Wakefield, MI with his constant companion and supportive wife, Leona. He worked for over twenty years in the copper mines of the the U.P. before he was forced to retire in 1976, because of a bad back. He was a two time U.P. State Champion in the early years and then returned to in-state competition in 1993, to be the Michigan State Champion, pitching against players half his age. This was the only time he ever competed for the State Championship. In his early years he traveled throughout the U.P. of

Michigan to pitch in the local tournaments. These were always on sand courts, or in many cases dirt. In the late 70’s he decided to try one of Wisconsin’s tournaments and he went to Swen Bowman’s tournament in Mountain. “Now this is pitching horseshoes” he proclaimed, and he never went back to the U.P. circuit and their ‘sand’ courts again. He was hooked on clay.

Over the last 20 years, Ray Hill has pitched in many Wisconsin tournaments. Arena, Combined Locks, Green Bay, Eau Claire, Marshfield, Mountain, New London, and Wausau just to name a few. When asked about his favorite tournaments, he always comes back to Mountain. “Don Kangas and I had some great matches up there over the years” he recalls. Eau Claire is another place Ray always loves to pitch. He won the first of his two World titles there in 1987 and he has won the Eau Claire Open five times since 1986. Many of the Wisconsin’s up and coming pitchers, especially from Northern Wisconsin, measured their progress by pitching against “The Man”.

All of his success has been done at 40’. “After 70 you can pitch at 30 feet, but that’s no fun for me so I don’t do it. Thirty feet is for the ladies and old cripples,” he once said to a newspaper reporter from Duluth. At 78 years young he is still pitching from the full 40’. Not with the success he once enjoyed, but he is still a fierce competitor.

Ray still holds several world records. In 1987, he averaged 76.6% in the 12-man Championship round. He had the most double ringers, 183 in 11 games, and the most “four deads” in one game, 17 with Levi Miller of Ohio. Also he holds the state record in Michigan for the highest game ever pitched in the State Tournament, 94.4%.