

# SPORTS



BOB HOUCK / The Morning Call

Larry Shankweiler Sr. shows off Golden Masters award.

## HANDBALL CHAMP

### Larry Shankweiler Sr. wins title first time in state competition

By JACK LAPOS  
Of The Morning Call

**"T**his has to be one of the nicest things that has ever happened to me," Larry Shankweiler Sr. of Allentown exclaimed after winning a state handball championship recently in Harrisburg.

Specifically, the 55-year-old co-op coordinator at Lehigh County Vocational School finished first in the "Golden Masters Division" for ages 50 and older in the United States Handball Association-sponsored tournament at the four-wall Alpha Courts just outside the state capital.

What made the accomplishment even more significant as well as enjoyable was the fact he never before had competed in any tournament outside the Allentown area since he started playing handball back in the early 1960s.

Shankweiler is a familiar figure at the Jordan Park and Allentown YMCA one-wall courts and over the years has won a number of titles on a local level.

"I won a couple of city one-wall championships and twice finished first with my son Larry and Don Schleicher in local doubles tournament competition — but never anything like this latest state title," he exclaimed.

He said he found out about the state tournament while reading a newsletter

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Golden Masters handball champ

mailed him by the U.S. Handball Association.

"I thought to myself, why not try it?" he said.

He was optimistic but knew the road ahead would be a mighty tough one.

However, to his surprise, he had a rather easy time in the state event, whipping a total of four opponents without even having to get into a third game of the best-of-three format.

His opening round opponent was from Upper Bucks County, his next two rivals were from the Philadelphia area and his opponent in the championship round was a Penn State University professor.

The professor, Dick Nelson of State College, had been state titlist the past four years and obviously was a bit stunned by the ease with which Shankweiler beat him.

"I did some things he had not seen before," Shankweiler said. "I guess he just wasn't used to facing anybody with a lot of one-wall experience."

The scores were 21-7 and 21-13.

"I felt my good physical condition really paid off," Shankweiler said. "I think Nelson got a bit tired as our matches moved along."

Then, the very next day, another nice thing happened to the new champion when he got word from California and he had become a grandpop for the first time. His son, Larry Jr., an architect at Newport Beach, and wife decided to call the new baby Austin.

Larry Sr. said he will see Austin for the first time when he and his wife, the former Nedy Claman, travel to the West Coast in June. Both Larry Sr. and Nedy are Allentown natives and graduates of Allen High. They live at 1024 Fullerton Ave. in the 6th Ward.

Larry Sr. is giving some thought to competing in the U.S. Handball Association-sponsored national tournament at Berkeley, Calif., in June.

Meanwhile, he said he will constantly strive to keep his game sharp.

"There will be no future letdown if I can help it," Shankweiler said. "I know I must remain in top condition... I know I must watch everything I eat and drink... I know I must work as hard as possible on my game..."

"I already am thinking about the defense of my state title next year," he added.

"Meanwhile, I want to enjoy this present state championship as much as possible," he continued with a smile. "My friends who know about it all have been congratulating me and I must say I am getting a kick out of all the attention I have been getting."

"Really, everybody has been so darn nice to me."