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***For Immediate Press Release***

***2018 National Horseshoe Pitchers Association World Championship Tournament***

**\*\*BEGIN PRESS RELEASE\*\***

The 2018 NHPA World Horseshoe Pitching Championships will begin on July 9th and run through July 21st, 2018. The event will take place at the Florence Center in beautiful Florence, South Carolina. One thousand twenty-six (1026) competitors will embark on the Florence Center during this two-week event for a chance to win a world championship title. 47 states as well as Canada, South Africa, and Norway will be competing in this year's event.

In the Open Men's division, the current reigning and over twenty-time World Champion, Alan Francis from Defiance, Ohio, will be contending to win again. Alan has seemed to have cruise control set winning the world championship the last six years, having ninety straight wins. Brian Simmons from Vermont will have some discrepancy in Francis' game. Simmons' last world title was in 2011, will it be time to recover? Dan Watson, of Hazel Green, Alabama, has been a contender for quite some time now, never having won a world title. Watson gave Francis a good game in early May pressing Francis to a 106-shoe game but coming up with a loss in the end. Never count out Walter Ray Williams, Jr. from Florida. Canada's Drew Becker cannot be counted out either. Becker scored 37 points on Francis in 2016. Canada has not won since 1977, but will they reign supreme and take the title back north?

In Open Women's division, Joan Elmore is reigning world champion. Elmore has been "under the gun" early this year, but as Elmore does, she will kick it up come time for the title. Elmore has won nine world titles. Can Elmore win again to tie the all-time winning record holder Vicki Winston (retired) at ten? Back in action this year is Quebec Canada's Sylvianne Moisan. Moisan was a world champion before Elmore, winning early on. Moisan has four consecutive titles running 2000 to 2003. Titusville, Florida's, Shalee Cason throws in the court to take the crown. Cason was once a junior girls world champion, hoping to bring back her roots and pitch her way to a win. As always, the Mirror Tennessee Twins from Covington, TN, Marlene Ray and Maxine Griffith, try and grasp a world title. Marlene and Maxine have come 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in past years. Will one of them get a victory in 2018? Do not count out third place finisher in 2017, Terry Beagle, of Clayton, Michigan. Beagle has one of the best follow throughs in the women's division, and will that hold out to take down everyone else?

The Elder Men's division is for men seventy plus years old, or men who have a medical exemption to throw a shorter distance. Current world champion Roger Vogel, of El Dorado, Kansas, has struggled to find his way back up early this year. Vogel is pre-occupied with his candidacy for NHPA President. David Holmes, of Charleston, West Virginia, will come back from a year break to take back his crown. Holmes won the world title three years, 2014-2016. He will look to take it back. Daniel Dunn from Kokomo, Indiana, is looking to take a world title. Dunn had

some bad pitches at last year's world tournament, knocking him to third place. Dunn's arched shoe tends to bounce off. Has he figured out his soft shoe method to stay on? Jim Ellison, of Orange Beach, Alabama, took second last year. Ellison won the Horseshoe Tour in late April in Newberry, of South Carolina. Russell Phillips, of Grandview, Washington and Virgil Rife, of Weston, Ohio, are hanging tight.

This year's Senior Men's class has some of the toughest competition to date, with current champion Bob Swain, of New Mexico, not competing, will Raymond Bedard, of Massachusetts, take back his title? Bedard has two titles so far, but will Gary Robert from Ohio be able to hold off injury and win his first? The people from New England states including Bill Navratil, Connecticut, Garry Currier, Maine, will have their eye on the prize as well. Southwest USA Jacob Fimbres, of Arizona and Ken Jones, of New Mexico have pitched big games in the past. Can they finally seal the deal? Utah's single flip, Roy Buhler, takes his time and gets a win? Will Buhler be finally able to pull off this big upset and take the crown? Ontario Canada's Tom Gallina has come in second a couple of times before. Gallina has been in playoffs for the world title but cannot seem to take it in the pit since 2001. Will this year may be different for Gallina? Will Gallina travel back across the border and take the world title with him? The senior men's class is shaping up to be a great one and with the competition kicking up, it may be time for a change.

Senior Women are never to be counted out. Sheila Shepard from Colorado has won six world titles, which include the last two in a row. Shepard pitches consistent 70s and has been able to fend off pitchers coming her way for quite some time except, Ruth Rife from Ohio. Rife has won two titles during Shepard's six. Rife has been out for some time but is looking good coming back this year in the world class. Horseshoe Tour's first lady Mrs. Barbara "Maw maw" Taylor, a home state hero, from South Carolina, is coming to this division. Her first year in, she goes in as rank #2. Taylor leads the Horseshoe Tour and is in the Horseshoe Tour Hall of Fame. Will her tour events bring her the same luck and fortune? A newcomer to Senior Women's is Indiana's Julia Charlton. Charlton is now retired and looking to pick up her game and take the world class. Linda Aurell, Connecticut's main woman, is also looking on to finally capture a victory. Look for many upsets in this division as there are a lot of newcomers.

The Junior's category is never to be out done. Seth O'Nan, reigning junior boy's world champion is having some great tournaments early on this year including posting a high game of 95%. O'Nan is from Henry County, Kentucky. O'Nan is perfecting his pitch and looks to be in tip top shape for another world title? Kentucky has dominated junior boy's the last three years; can they hold off for a fourth in a row with three of the A Class competitors from Kentucky? Virginia's Dayton Campbell will step up to the line this year and see if he can take the title. Campbell had luck last year winning the prelims but came up short in championships to O'Nan. Will they fight to the finish again this year? Derek Reynolds from Arkansas comes to the junior's division this year as a first timer. Reynolds seems to get jitters but always seems to come back and win those close-knit games when he needs them.

Cameran Edwards comes from Pennsylvania. She is current junior girl's world champion. Edwards seemed to sweep up competition last year. She beat out the one and only, her sister, Catrina. The Edwards girls might have a little trouble this year. Another Kentucky native comes in the girl's division this year as a first timer. Abby Rose is ranked #2 in junior girl's division. Rose has not played much this year, but will she be able to settle down and take the crown?

In junior cadets, Walker Forrester is from Watts, Oklahoma. This “little-big man” has that drive to pitch better and better. He won the world last year. Forrester is averaging over 80% coming into the tournament, however Hastiin Begaye from California, is pitching on and carrying on. Begaye is racking up wins in California. Will it be enough to travel clear across the USA and win a world title? Connecticut has great cadet pitchers Skyla Rioux, taking third last year and newcomer again, Riley Malino. The cadets might be small, but they can sure pitch ringers.

The NHPA World Horseshoe Pitching Championships will be indoors. The admission each day is FREE. Preliminary class play will begin on the 9<sup>th</sup> and run through the 25<sup>th</sup>. The adult’s championships will be the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup>. The junior's and cadet’s championships will be on July 14<sup>th</sup>. Competition begins promptly at 8am each day and will end around 10:30pm through the 18<sup>th</sup>. Championships will be beginning at 9am and run through approximately 5pm on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. Come one come all. *"Our shoes fit everyone"*.

**\*\*END OF PRESS RELEASE\*\***