

willed himself to an 11-6 victory over 2004 U.S. Olympic wheelchair team member Jennifer Johnson in the fifth game of a best-of-five finals match to capture the U.S. Open championship last Saturday in Fort Lauderdale. "I had a difficult time breathing, Caplin said. I couldn't even raise my hand it got so bad. I almost had to forfeit the match. The retired obstetrician, who earlier this year won a U.S. Open tournament for American players only, reached the finals after zipping through five single-elimination matches in a tournament that drew players from around the world. Caplin already had earned the right to represent the U.S. in the Pan-Am games, but after his exhausting, 45-minute match against Johnson, he remained undecided about whether to risk traveling to South America. He said he would need to make up his mind by Monday, and that his decision will depend on whether his current medications will help him to manage his condition. If I can't breathe I can't go, Caplin said. Unfortunately, he said, Prednisone -- the drug that helps him the most -- is banned by the Olympic Anti-Doping Committee, even for wheelchair-bound athletes. It's a steroid, Caplin said. I only take it when nothing else helps. Such was the case when he played Johnson, who traveled to Athens last year to compete in the 2004 table tennis games. Johnson used a type of paddle that countered the top spin Caplin placed on most of his shots, which not only made it difficult for him to anticipate the direction of her returns, but caused him to expend precious energy. I pulled it out but it wasn't good, Caplin said. I tried to keep the same strategy I always do, but she returned my top spin with a chop. It was very hard for me to get up the energy to overcome it, but I was able to Caplin also won the doubles title, teaming with Jon Redmon, the same partner he drew to place second in the closed version of the U.S. Open doubles tournament in Las Vegas earlier this year. Our Thanks to STEPHEN KINDLAND, Sports editor for the permission to use this article. We at First Coast Post Polio Are proud and honored to have Stuart Chaplin on our team.