

Comprised of things I've seen, overheard, read, was told and pondered this past month.....

- Kauai's first permanent, dedicated public pickleball facility is nearing completion. As of this writing, the fencing is almost finished and asphaltting is scheduled to begin soon. If all goes well, our venue could be completed by mid-October. Great news.
- I listened to a long and good conversation a couple of weeks ago. The discussion centered around the idea that in order to improve as a player, you need to play against higher skill level players. Partially true. On any given day, if you—as a lower level player—decide to drop in and play with higher skill level players, you had better hope they are willing to play with you and PLAY WITH YOU (meaning they keep the ball in play so you can practice under game conditions). And, you do the same. However, and you have heard this often, in order to improve your game, you must put in the time. PRACTICE with a hitting partner. Drill your weaknesses and strengths. You need to put in the time on non-playing days.
- Read the pickleball rule book. I'm surprised hearing discussions on rules that are too often misinterpreted or misrepresented.
- Paddle Up!! You and the paddle need to be in a good ready position, expecting the next ball to be hit to you. The only time the paddle head might be down is when your opponent is about to hit an overhead.
- You play rallies to win. But understand that winning a rally doesn't always mean winning a point. That only happens when your team is serving. Good to remember, because this should influence when you decide to try shots that are not your strengths. You may not be successful, but you didn't give away a point.
- I overheard an interesting conversation regarding the courts on Kauai'i and the best places to play. Much of the discussion was about the poor condition of some playing surfaces. My two cents....Every facility on Kaua'i is perfect, because you're there, you're playing with friends, you're exercising and you're getting better. Too windy. Ball hit a crack. Blended lines hard to see. Tough background. Minor distractions.
- It's not the paddle, it's the paddler. Uhhhh....maybe not. Paddle cores break down after time. Dead spots develop. If you've had your paddle a while, consider investing in a new one. They aren't cheap. But remember, "it only costs a dime more to go first class." Kinda.

- Have you noticed the wealth of information in the news about pickleball? In the past year, access to pickleball information has increased ten fold. Good tournaments on television. Valuable blogs about improving your game. Major League Baseball hosting pickleball days. Celebrities playing and thoroughly enjoying the game. Discussions about Olympic pickleball. A wealth of information to help us “middle of the Pacific” pickleball players get better.
- Make paddle tapping a habit. If you’ve played any team sport, you know the value of the “fist pump.” After every rally, tap paddles with your partner. It’s a simple gesture to congratulate and/or show support and encouragement. It’s also a great re-focus reminder after a mistake.
- And finally, my favorite memory from this past month’s pickleball play. One of our mainland visitors told me she had been playing for a little over a year. When I asked how things were going for her, she replied “pickleball has changed my life.” Sound familiar?