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President's Report - August 2024

Nolan Ahn, PAK President



PAK OPEN 2024: LIVE AND LEARN

We had our first PAK organized tournament in 2022 at the Kalawai Courts in Kalaheo. Kalawai has four temporary pickleball courts with ghost lines on two tennis courts. Three additional courts were outlined with painters' tape on the adjacent basketball courts. The tape we used on the basketball courts detached after the first heavy rain, which is almost every day at the location we nicknamed "Kalawaialeale", rendering those courts useless. Squeezing the more than 100 entrants in various brackets into four courts proved onerous at best, impossible at worst, especially when intermittent rains stalled the competition. Through the perseverance of the players and the tournament committee, we were able to complete all brackets by late evening of the third day.

The Board decided to cancel the PAK Open 2023 when there was no suitable venue with more courts to run what we felt was surely to be a much higher enrollment of players. Instead, we ran a small Rice Street Block Party tournament at Kalena, a free Member Appreciation Day with clinics, open play and free chicken hekka, free clinics at Kapaa and Lihue throughout the year, and planned for 2024 with the anticipated opening of the Kauai Community College's 6-court pickleball facility.

Finally, in the first quarter of 2024, the KCC courts were completed, we secured a reservation, and planning started for the PAK Open 2024. We had learned from our Kalena Tournament and PAK 2022 that registering and collecting fees, and coordinating the tournament was an onerous process that was beyond our in-house resources. We decided to engage the services of Pickleball Brackets (PB) and Pickleball Tournaments (PT). The two formerly separate entities

were in the process of becoming one, and we wanted their experience and expertise in running thousands of tournaments nationwide.

Among the advantages were:

1. National and international exposure to our tournament.
2. PT would handle player enrollments and payments.
3. Brackets could be merged based upon ultimate enrollment.
4. Electronic Registration at the site.
5. Courts and matches could be assigned by the software.
6. Players could be electronically notified.
7. Matches could be recorded and posted immediately, including medal winners.
8. Computerized printing of all match scoresheets, and reporting of scoring status for round robin play.

The downsides?

1. They are professionals and charge for their services. A significant amount of the tournament registration fee collected goes to them.
2. The learning curve for using their software was steep. Our tournament chair and selected board members spent numerous hours in workshops and zoom meetings learning complex computer operations. Some of us "technology challenged" folks (including me) were lost. Those that had the skill and perseverance spent countless hours learning to use the PT program. Computerization requires reliable internet service at the tournament site, and we had to secure access, which was sometimes glitchy. We had to have multiple laptops, printers, and knowledgeable operators. Late registrants, no-shows or cancellations required extensive recalibrations of the entire program.

We are grateful that we were able to offer a more centralized location at KCC with their six permanently lined courts and the ability to add four more courts on two adjacent tennis courts with taped lines and nets. This was the first tournament held on Kauai with 10 courts available, and it made a huge difference in moving the brackets along efficiently. We are continuing to pursue the use of these courts on weekends and holidays.

What did we learn?

1. We need to develop a larger volunteer force to share the load at tournaments and other projects.
2. We need more qualified and trained referees.
3. Taped lines are difficult to lay and may cause adhesion problems.
4. We need to encourage early registration and discourage late ones.
5. We need our own courts.

The last one, we kind of knew before. Now, it is confirmed. Our quest for identification of a suitable site continues.

Until next month,

Nolan