

Pickleball In The Time Of COVID.....

This may seem like one lob too many, but I'm going to throw it out—or should I say up —anyway. And, I speak from experience. An experience I don't want to 'experience' again.

I recently tested positive for Covid. September 30 to be exact. It wasn't bad (thank goodness for vaccinations and boosters), but it wasn't good. Suffice to say it was uncomfortable. Very. Factor in the five days of isolation and I'll upgrade that to two 'verys.'

We had returned from a two week trip to France. It was wonderful. We spent two days traveling home to Kaua'i. Flew 10 hours from Paris to Seattle. Stayed overnight in Seattle and then flew six more hours home. In all, two crowded airports, even more crowded waiting rooms, very few wearing masks (we did) and people all around us coughing and sneezing (no masks) through two flights home. Started feeling the classic COVID symptoms the day after we arrived on Kaua'i. That means about 48 hours after we began the trek home. I might add that three days before we returned, we got caught in a bit of rain on our last France tour and I got soaked and chilled. May have been a big contributor, as my immune system could have been compromised. By the way, my wife Stephanie never got sick. Never got infected . Never tested positive. Glad for her.

So why devote this months column to something we have been dealing with for two plus years? Because our first day back on the courts after returning home was Saturday, October 15, and I observed things that concerned me. Nothing big, but still concerns. I know the following will not change behavior inside the 20' x 44' rectangle, but maybe it might change awareness in between games and, hopefully, in places elsewhere. Remember, you are going to return to particular venues three or four times a week. We want you to be safe. We want the same for ourselves.

Observations.....Relevant Information.....Suggestions:

1. COVID is not over. Today I read there were 80 new infections on Kaua'i. Still significant.
2. On my first day back, I counted 16 players on the courts and 19 paddles in the next up rack. 35 players for four courts. Crowded. Everyone waiting was seated along one side of the venue. No regard for spacing. Don't roll your eyes. Just an observation. On crowded days, late arrivers need to consider sitting outside the chainlink fence.
3. At Costco the other day someone was wearing a t-shirt that said...."I've had COVID. Don't want to get it again. Please respect my personal space." Common sense. Respect that on the courts as well.

4. The next up rack (or something similar) is good. Also not so good. I counted 16 people standing shoulder to shoulder at the rack as eight players vacated two courts and were waiting to put their paddles IN the rack and eight players trying to get their paddles OUT of the rack.

5. A very close friend of ours is a doctor in SoCal. Very reputable. He reminded me that this BA.5 variant is more easily spread because it evades the immunity we think we have from vaccinations/boosters and a previous COVID infection we may have experienced. You probably won't go to the hospital, but you can be infected a second time.

6. Also, it has become common knowledge that antibody protection from a previous COVID infection may only last 6-8 weeks. That's weeks, not months. Our doctor friend says he has treated way too many patients for a second infection within two months of treating them for their first infection. The discomfort and isolation all over again is no fun.

7. One of our local pickleball players told me, after feeling symptomatic, he/she tested negative THREE days in a row before testing positive TWO days in a row. This new variant is a bugger!! It also means you could be a spreader.

8. I tested negative on October 5. Again the next day. And the next, but still waited 10 days before returning to the courts. RELAPSE can be an issue. The medical profession warns that exercising too early after COVID can cause a relapse.

9. The mask is still your best friend. You still can't walk into a doctor's office, dentist's office or hospital here on Kaua'i without your mask. Mandatory. Why do you think that is?

10. I read somewhere that 90% of our world's population has had COVID. 20% didn't even know it. Mild or no symptoms. Lucky them. Kindas. But, they could still be passing the infection along.

So there you have it. If you are reading this, you are part of our Picklehood. Our 'Ohana. Doesn't make a difference if you are off island or local. We want you safe and healthy. Many are tired of the suggestions, guidelines and requirements. Understandable. Just remember, there are consequences for not being diligent.

Happy Early Halloween.