



PAK President's Report August 2022

NEWS

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WHY WE NEED DEDICATED PICKLEBALL COURTS

PART II

A famous study of lab rats was conducted to observe their behavior when put in an environment of too many rats, not enough space. Normally docile rats became aggressive, mean, and territorial and began defending their claimed space tooth and nail. Blood was drawn, and space was held by the strongest rats. Losers were forced to withdraw to even closer quarters than before, starting a new cycle of fighting for a space to exist in. Soon, it became necessary to kill other rats to create unrivalled space. This was not a matter of food, water, or perpetuation of the species. This was a matter of the fact that two things cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

There is a developing pattern very much like the lab rats with pickleball players and courts. The exploding popularity of the sport has created too many players demanding space at not enough courts. Tennis players, who have a longer history than picklers, have had many years to create spaces for their game. Here on Kauai, there are 25 tennis courts provided by the County Parks division, and to date, zero pickleball courts. Because of demand, many of those courts have been allowed to install “ghost lines” for pickleball on existing tennis courts, with temporary nets provided by the players. The County has asked players of both sports to “just get along” and use “common sense” (the most uncommon thing on earth) and “courtesy” (something that disappears when one is slighted) to regulate play. The unspoken consequence is that if there is too much conflict that the County will do the only thing they can practically do, which is to deny use of the facilities to everyone. On Oahu, at the Patsy Mink Park, there is a tennis complex of 20 courts, and no pickleball is allowed. A recent sanctioned pickleball tournament was granted a permit to install taped lines and use temporary nets for more than 450 participants. After the tournament, when tape was removed, the aging surface was damaged, causing outrage on the part of tennis players, and fortifying the administration’s policy against mixed use of tennis and pickleball. In San Diego, there is a city-owned tennis facility that was leased to a non-profit tennis organization. Research showed that the lease had expired, and some picklers obtained a use permit to play on the courts. When they showed up, they were told that pickleball was not allowed, and they had to pay a fee to use the courts. They proceeded to play on the courts until the court manager called the police to remove them. Things got heated with tennis members jeering and heckling the picklers to get out of “their” facility. The situation is unresolved at

this writing, but this writer predicts that this sort of conflict will become much more common in the future as claimed “spaces” are fought for.

It is the human condition to desire conditions that suit our particular desire. Me over you. Us over them. Crowded rats fighting for space. Tis folly to think that two separate things can occupy the same space without predicting conflict. Witness the Emmalani Courts in Princeville. Pickler volunteers resurfaced the basketball courts at a fraction of the cost of the \$50,000 price tag. Pickleball play is extremely popular there, and basketballers have lodged their complaint that they need their own times reserved. Rats and space. Competing interests fighting. First you fight off the ones that are different. Then you begin eating your own kind. The law of the jungle, and the lab.

As we prepare for dues renewals for our members, we are constantly thinking of ways we can create a sense of purpose for our organization and its mission of building dedicated pickleball facilities. Initially, we promised that we would communicate our progress as best as we can, and our website has done a fantastic job of that. Our monthly hits are now over 1,200 and growing. We know we need more to retain and attract more members. Recently we have been asked to organize league and ladder play. This is certainly something that will generate a great deal of interest and enthusiasm, but the logistics of doing this without a court we control are beyond our ability. The principle of open and free play at public courts prohibits reserving facilities without reservations, fees, and insurance requirements. We need our own facilities. We needed it yesterday, but today would be a start and we can build on tomorrow. We have reached a tipping point with a site we have identified and began negotiations on in January, 2022. Recently, we have identified another site that could serve as a teaching and league play facility. Stay with us, picklers. Good things are coming...

Mahalo and Aloha,

Nolan