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From the Picklehood

August 2022

By Jack Hodges

Kaua'i's First Public Dedicated Facility Coming Soon

If you have been following the development of pickleball here on Kaua'i, especially over the past year, then you have seen the post pandemic surge in the game's popularity as it relates to local play and off island visitors. Very refreshing to see more local participation, more visitors than pre-pandemic days, more venues, more island tournaments and more success, by Kaua'i players, in outer island and mainland tournaments. Maika'i.

In my humble opinion, much of the above success can be attributed to Kauai's new pickleball website pakauai.org and the stellar leadership of the Pickleball Association Kaua'i Board of Directors. Locals and visitors say the website is first class and very informative.

The above being said, I segue into this month's column....Kauai's first public, permanent, dedicated pickleball facility. Anne Knudsen Park, Koloa. First, a little personal history. If you've had a chance to read previous 'From The Picklehood' columns, I have mentioned the early days of pickleball on Kauai. Early 2015 days. Koloa town to be exact. Even seven plus years ago, the park's courts rarely saw any tennis action.



The rough, uneven surface, damaged nets and numerous cracks made for precarious play. But for me, the situation was ideal. Kaua'i's first public, non-permanent pickleball venue. I'm not saying pickleball on Kaua'i was first played here. What I am saying



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"What is pickleball?" Brought loaner paddles and balls in case anyone stopped. Sure as the third shot drop, they did!! We had three or four regulars. We played Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. A visitor or two would also always show. On occasion, we had a whopping 6-8 players. And here we are seven years later.....



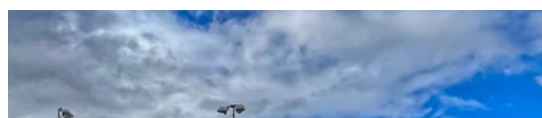
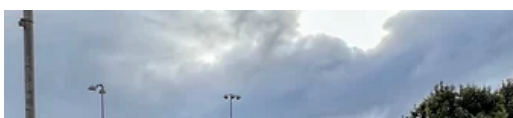
In early May of this year, the following announcement was published in the Honolulu Advertiser and The Garden Island (Kaua'i) newspaper:

The play courts at Anne Knudsen Park, also known as Kōloa Park, on Maluhia Road, will be closed to the public starting May 23 to allow the Department of Parks and Recreation to begin renovations. The scope of work for this project includes the complete demolition of the existing basketball and tennis courts and the complete rebuild of the courts with new asphalt and surfacing. The rebuild will result in a basketball court, a tennis court with two blended pickleball courts, and four dedicated pickleball courts. Officials anticipate construction to be completed by October.

On Monday, May 23, I showed up at the Koloa courts. Not much going on, but I did see rolls of orange plastic fencing spaced out all along the perimeter of the tennis/basketball courts. By mid week good sized earth moving machinery was parked nearby and by the end of the week, work had begun.



Since early June, I have stopped by the 'courts' every week to check on the progress. Much of the work involved sub-surface development, so there was not much to see. Seemed like endless piles of dirt, sand, and rock were being layered to form a solid base surface.



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Over the next couple weeks and into the month of July, progress was encouraging. The adjacent basketball court surface had taken shape and work on the tennis and pickleball courts was now priority number one. Final drainage issues had been addressed and the hard packed sub-surface was taking shape.



These last two photos show progress as of the second week in August. I stopped by the courts this week and was informed that in the next 10 days the asphalt could be applied. If all goes well, the project's completion deadline may very well be met. Good for the County and the Department of Parks and Recreation. Good for locals and visitors. Good for Kaua'i AND Hawaii pickleball. And, especially satisfying for that small group of Koloa pickleball players who showed up regularly in February and March of 2015 to play this "fun game with the funny name." You were visionaries and I thank you.

