



Pickle Juice

Thanks for reading this newsletter.
We welcome your comments/suggestions/articles.

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From the President's Desk

Andy Dalal

I have been sidelined from playing pickleball for the better part of two months with “pickleball” elbow. Yes, pickleball elbow (it’s a real thing). In the past, I have been able to recover pretty quickly by doing various exercises and stretches which can be found on the internet. Not this time. I have turned to some non-invasive medical intervention. As I say to myself, pain is inevitable and suffering is optional, I have found various opportunities to stay productive and motivated with our pickleball community while working towards recovery.

As I share the news of my injury with fellow pickleball players, they share stories of their various injuries past and present, ranging from elbows, rotator cuffs, ankles, knees and even fractures. This has raised some interesting questions to consider. Is the number of injuries associated with pickleball on the rise? Will the number of injuries cause pickleball to be a fad sport like bowling or racquetball? Of course, people still bowl and play racquetball, although not in the same numbers as before.

While the Howard County Pickleball Association was formed in 2016 (only eight years ago), pickleball has been played since the 1960’s. Both the sport and the association have grown exponentially since the pandemic as they provided a great opportunity for people to be safely outside, exercise, and still be social. As humans, we have an intrinsic need to be social even for some of us introverts.

Pickleball injuries can be attributed to many factors. One that gets a lot of attention is the “addiction.” The game is addictive. What other sport do we play 3-4 times a week, 2 hours at a time? Not tennis, not golf and certainly not soccer. And while the early raves about pickleball touted it as a “safe and easy” sport, the game and its intensity have grown. There are sudden movements, quick direction changes, and repetitive actions in pickleball which can and do lead to strains, sprains, and overuse injuries. Also, improper technique can increase the risk of injury. I think my pickleball elbow was caused by both overuse and improper technique when making drive or overhead shots. The playing surfaces such as concrete or asphalt, are also tough on our joints and are not forgiving if we happen to fall. Failure to inadequately warm-up can make muscles and joints more vulnerable to an injury as well. Do all this multiple times a week and the chances for injury rise significantly. However, there are techniques and training that players

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can and should learn to mitigate injuries.

So, despite the injuries, pickleball continues to attract a broad demographic, including younger players and seniors. Its ease of play and reputation for low physical impact make it accessible to many people, enhancing its potential for sustained growth. The sport continues to foster a strong sense of community, with social interactions being a key component. This level of engagement - of building strong community bonds, I believe will help maintain the sport's popularity as it becomes embedded in local communities such as in Howard County. Investment in dedicated pickleball courts and facilities by local governments and private entities suggests a commitment to supporting the sport long-term. Availability of facilities is crucial for sustained growth. As people continue to seek out fun and engaging ways to stay active, pickleball's combination of exercise and enjoyment aligns well with ongoing health and fitness trends. While racquetball and bowling saw significant popularity spikes, they eventually declined due to various factors like limited demographic appeal, changing fitness trends, and competition from other sports and activities. Pickleball's widespread appeal, community-building aspects, and current upward trajectory suggest it has the potential to avoid a similar fate. However, will the number of injuries lead to the eventual decline for pickleball? Only time will tell if pickleball will be able to maintain its momentum in the long run. So, for now, stay healthy and dink on.

What's New

Joanne Griesser

The End is Near! Happy New Year!

The Pickleball Association was formed in June of 2016. Each June we host an End of Year meeting; this year's meeting is June 12th. We try to make it an enjoyable event with food and access to pickleball courts. So far this year, we have hosted many sessions and events, as you will see in Patty Guzman's article.

In order to maintain the level of events and activities, we rely on volunteers. Actually, all of us are volunteers from the President to the people who clean the facilities after events. The Association would not exist without these dedicated members. Thank you volunteers for all of your hard work and time this past year!

If you're interested in volunteering, please contact me. I keep a list of members

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who have offered to assist. When we need assistance, I send out requests to the group. If you want to help, we can always use another pair of hands.

The End of Year Meeting also signals the change in Board Members. This year we have quite a few changes. Earl, who has been on the Board since the inception of our Association, has finally decided to pull back and spend more time playing pickleball rather than doing the administrative stuff to support the association. If you see Earl, thank him for all of his years of dedicated service to the Association. Thank you, Earl! It has truly been an honor to serve on the board with you.

It's funny that the End of Year for the Association is the beginning of summer. School lets out, people plan vacations, the majority of Pickleball games move outdoors and we find a whole batch of new players. Jay McTighe has revamped the beginner sessions and documented what we have been preaching and teaching for years. At the beginning of Jay's new player sessions, we emphasize stretching before you play. This is a good habit for everyone, but not everyone does it. How many of us have gone to a court and jumped right in only to get a cramp or pull a muscle? Maybe you can make a New Year Resolution to warmup and stretch before you play.

Happy New Year everyone!

Paddles Up!!

Treasurer's Report

Ken Billingsley

As of our last Board meeting, the HCPA had over \$54,000 in cash. This is up slightly from our beginning of the year balance and reflects a sizable investment in equipment over the first five months of the year, specifically new nets. We are gearing up for our annual tournament which should provide an additional boost to the Association's balance before year-end. Because of the success of our prior tournaments coupled with our growing membership, we will be required to file a detailed tax return this year.

The funds available to HCPA are providing flexibility to replace assets as well as support the growth of pickleball at local schools.

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Howard County Special Olympics Pickleball

Bob Sans

We are eight weeks into season #3 with two sessions left to play. This season (as with the previous seasons) would not have been possible without the assistance and patience of the 85+ Volunteers, practically all of whom are HCPA members. The interaction between the 74 Special Olympic Athletes and the Volunteers is most gratifying. As always, both Athletes and Volunteers have fun! To the Volunteers I say: have a restful time off, play loads of pickleball and hope to see you back for Season #4.

Our season “officially” ends on 6/16 but there remains quite a bit of work that must be done in the coming months. Restructuring our program for season #4 is a priority. Any suggestions from those who have volunteered are welcomed. We will be working on an intra-county competition between the Howard, Anne Arundel, Carroll and Montgomery counties for some time in April 2025. These are the other programs offering Pickleball through our assistance.

Since our first season in 2022, I have been fighting for inclusion in the Special Olympics State Games that are held in late-June. This is a Statewide competition held at Towson University. Over the past week, our County Director and a State Sports Director have invited our group to demonstrate pickleball to Athletes and Directors from all the counties in Maryland. It is my hope that these Directors will include Pickleball in their county programs so, by this time next year, I can report that the Howard County Special Olympics Pickleball group will be going to the State Games.

No-shows at Open Sessions

Michael Spinnato

The following email was sent by Mike to the players attending his session; however, it is applicable to all sessions which require an RSVP. The sentiments are shared by all the session coordinators and those anxious to play.

Good afternoon. This email is mostly intended for members who were registered

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for today's session but didn't come to play. I feel this is not the first time I am addressing this issue. Please read the protocol below.

The proper protocol when signed up for any HCPA session is to sign out of the session if you don't plan on attending. This includes removing your name from the waitlist. It's not fair to the other members, if someone doesn't remove their name to make a spot available, for someone who wants to play. This is especially important for sessions with a set limit of players. It also helps the coordinators know how many nets to put up.

If you are on the waitlist, I would ask you to please check in the morning, as sometimes, members don't sign out until the evening before.

I would also ask any member to please try your best, to sign out, at least 24 hours in advance, if you know you are not attending. I totally understand that some things are out of your control. This also applies to days that are hot or there is a likelihood of rain. Many times, the forecast is wrong, especially when it comes to rain. For whatever reason, on many occasions, that little spot (Locust Park), gets spared the rain that other parts of Howard County get. I do my best to cancel the session beforehand, but sometimes I can be a little too optimistic with my decisions.

Thank you for your understanding. As a net coordinator, I'm committed to doing my best to make for a fun and enjoyable playing experience for everyone.

Outdoor Play Opportunities

Andrée Cates

Hello Pickleball in Spring!

Outdoor HCPA pickleball is in high demand during the spring when temperatures haven't quite soared yet. With net coordinators shifting their session times, we see many more offerings in the earlier morning hours. So, players, if you see that a session is suddenly not on the schedule, it could be that it hasn't been updated to accommodate earlier times. Don't panic. Just mention it on the All-Members chat and it will be changed.

Practice, practice, practice! How? Skills and drills sessions are held Sunday (two),

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Wednesday and a new one on Friday. Most are in the morning but be sure to check out times and location on Stack Team App under Drills and Clinics. All have an 'rsvp' requirement except the one on Wednesday afternoon. Out of consideration for all to have this opportunity to participate, please only 'rsvp' for one of the sessions held Sunday.

The other way to improve is to participate in HCPA clinics held every now and then at a very, very reasonable rate. One goal of the board is to get more players certified to teach pickleball. That way we can provide more instructors to teach in these clinics. There is a difference between a skills and drills session and clinics. In clinics, actual skills and game strategy are taught by instructors. Instructors then give feedback to support the player as they learn and practice these new items. In contrast, the skills and drills sessions have a planned list of skills that are practiced either through mere repetition and/or through a "game" where points are kept. There is no designated instructor or coach to give feedback. By the way, be on the lookout for an upcoming multi-day clinic June 24 – June 27, 6-8 pm. It should be a good opportunity to add more knowledge and skills to your pickleball game.

As for courts being built (or not) the slated groundbreaking date for the six Blandair courts will be sometime between June to August 2024 to be completed sometime in 2025. Courts being planned at the East Columbia Library Park have been nixed. It's not going to happen because there is a zoning requirement where courts must be at least 500 feet from dwellers and these courts do not meet that requirement. However, the good news is 3-6 more courts are planned for Rockburn Park with groundbreaking time planned for March 2025 and four courts are planned for Alpha Ridge Park starting sometime in 2026. That's awesome news for Howard County pickleball!

Have a great summer and see you on the pickleball courts!

Maryland Open Tournaments - (WPA World Championship Qualifier)

Ken Billinsley

We will be hosting the Maryland Open on Labor Day weekend this year. The location of the events will be spread between Dill Dinker locations in Columbia and Finksburg. The success of the event is generally based on the volunteers from our organization, and we look forward to your help again this year. We will be running

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the event similar to the recent Maryland Senior Olympics, in which the HCPA represented the majority of the volunteers.

The Origins of Pickleball: How it all Began

Jay McTighe

This interesting, 14-minute video documents the origin of pickleball and features interviews with the sport's founders.

Click: [Origins of Pickleball](#)

Moving On

Earl Sneeringer

I have decided to leave the board of directors while continuing to participate as a member and support our association as a volunteer for some of the committees. I have been working with our association from its inception in early 2016 to the present vibrant organization that it has become. Originally, I offered my assistance to help form the board and to help set up a website to assist in the communications and growth of our new endeavor. I intended to hand this website over to someone to run but I couldn't find anyone so inclined to take this on, so I continued to do so. As we were forming the board of directors, it was decided to include me since we would be depending on the technology platform to help run this organization. As such, I have been on the board of directors for the last eight years. My role has expanded over time to include Equipment Manager, Organized Play Coordinator, Webmaster, Communications Director, President for three years and Vice President for a year. It was a great ride and I've enjoyed working with some wonderful people and helping to establish HCPA as a predominant force in promoting Pickleball in Howard County and in Maryland. I have had tremendous support from many members both as board members, session coordinators and volunteers. As our sport has continued to grow so has our organization. I consider myself very lucky to have met and played with so many friends that I've made over the years and continue to do so. I look forward to how the organization will continue to expand and step up to supporting so many wonderful people. If you have ever wondered if you should volunteer to assist in some way, I recommend it highly. See you on the courts.

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Communications Committee

Earl Sneeringer

The communications committee continues to review our current communications methods and recommend modifications to our website and other means of communication.

Member Relations Committee

Patty Guzman

The Member Relations Committee organized some fun and worthwhile events over the past quarter. We celebrated St Patrick's Day with green grapes and shamrock sugar cookies; members also contributed pistachios and green bourbon slushies! In April, we celebrated Opening Day with drinks and snacks, selected by session coordinators. May marked our second Social Gathering at Nottingham's Tavern, led by Michael Spinnato and Elaine Masker. The weather was beautiful, and we were able to sit out on the patio, while we enjoyed appetizers and drinks. And of course, we played some exciting games of 'Left Right Center'! To round out the quarter, we offered a free CPR and Stop the Bleed class at the Gary Arthur Senior Center. Many session coordinators and other HCPA members attended this very important training. Upcoming events include wearing orange in support of gun violence awareness, June 7-9; and the Annual Member Meeting which includes a picnic and pickleball on June 12th.

Player Development Committee

Jay McTighe

Last summer, the Association inaugurated a Player Development committee in support of its mission to enhance the Pickleball skills of its members. Currently, HCPA offers a "three-legged stool" of player development opportunities. The first leg consists of beginning pickleball classes (PB 101) offered through the Association and in conjunction with Howard County Recreation and Parks. These introductory classes provide a doorway to new membership in the Association.

A second leg of player development occurs through the popular drill sessions that are offered four times each week, weather permitting. The drills provide intensive opportunities for players to develop and refine skills and strategies of the game.

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Recently offered clinics are the third leg of the PD stool. These clinics feature direct instruction and feedback on targeted skills and strategies for particular levels. Duane St. Clair offered two clinics this spring, and he will be leading a summer Boot Camp for four evenings in late June. We hope to offer additional clinics in the future.

We are fortunate in Howard County to have many places to play – thanks in large part to the Association’s efforts. The many “open play” sessions offered each week through HCPA enable members to continually develop their games, while periodic tournaments provide an opportunity to test skills and boost Dynamic Universal Pickleball Ratings (DUPR).

We owe a collective “thank you” to the many volunteer instructors who assist with Pickleball 101 classes and to the dedicated sponsors who set up and run the weekly open play sessions. A special commendation is due to the drill session leaders – Donna Kahn, James Martin, Geoff Silberman, and Steve Radant – who lead the popular (and always-full) weekly drills.

We welcome your feedback on current player development offerings and invite suggestions for other ways we can enhance our members’ skills. See you on the courts!

Technology Committee

Earl Sneeringer

The technical committee selected one of the three technology platforms, Court Reserve (CR) for further consideration and assessment. Some of you may be familiar with CR given that Dill Dinkers uses this application to support their facilities. We are presently focusing our attention on how we can adapt this platform to work in our situation. We will be developing a prototype to assess how well it works for us and what we will need to do to migrate our data and revise our operations. We need to understand the details of making this transition. At present we anticipate continuing to use our website for the public with CR covering member management and scheduling. As we learn more about this application, we will be better positioned to decide if this is the right move or not.

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Strategic Planning Committee

Jeff Love

The HCPA Strategic Planning Committee met on May 13. Committee members include Earl Sneeringer, Jeffrey Love, Mark Covington, Patricia Guzman, Rick Watson, Saed Rahwahji, and Joanne Griesser. The overall purpose of the meeting was to discuss and start the process for a new HCPA five-year strategic plan.

In 2016 Duane St. Clair felt the need to organize the pickleball players in Howard County to expand playing opportunities within the County. When HCPA was created, its vision was to promote the game by establishing venues, holding events and tournaments, providing instruction, and organizing pickleball-related social events. In the past eight years, all these goals have been realized. Membership in HCPA has grown to over 1000 members and the game is the fastest growing sport in the nation.

Given our growth and the popularity of pickleball in Howard County, it is time to plan for what we want HCPA to be in the next five years.

The strategic planning committee has recommended that we start a planning process possibly with the help of a planning consultant. Our new plan would be an effort to think seriously about new ways the association can help its members enjoy the game and address three specific goals:

- More painted lines on indoor and outdoor tennis and basketball courts
- Access to more indoor facilities and possibly an HCPA run facility
- Planning for continued growth of the membership

The Annapolis Pickleball Club has recently completed a new strategic plan. We will learn from their experience, and possibly use a consultant they employed.

The Strategic Planning Committee's work will begin with an outreach to our membership to gauge how the association can best serve their needs as a pickleball player. The first step in this outreach is a short survey of members attending the June 12 picnic. The survey will also be sent to all members either through the web site or via email.

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As an association, we exist alongside others who have an interest in promoting pickleball. Our new plan will have to consider how we work with Howard County Recreation and Parks, Howard County Board of Education, the Columbia Association, and private organizations such as Dill Dinkers and the YMCA.

It will also address resource issues such as demand for sessions, adequate skill leveling for our sessions, new equipment needs, and the need for volunteers and additional session coordinators.

What will success look like? We will be successful if we have a plan that informs our actions but does not prevent us from adopting new or better ideas as we proceed through the five-year timeframe.

The Committee invites your participation in the process. With your help, we will have an association that makes pickleball more enjoyable for everyone.