

Brookline Paddle Tennis Club Expands



First three-court public-access facility in Boston is a showcase for the APTA 'Grow the Game' program

BY NINDY PIKE





college attracting a diverse, international student population.) The club sits behind the gym, among trees and on the edge of a small pond.

Ward continued, “With this terrific new facility we have seen unbelievable interest. We have about 130 memberships, many of which are families with multiple players. Our courts are seeing tons of action, with about 80 members playing on a typical Saturday or Sunday since we opened. We started a wait-list recently so we could gauge court use and expect to accept more new members next season.”

The club currently holds many honorifics. The BPC Women’s Wednesday Night League team tied for first this year, and will be aiming for a win in the February playoffs. The Men’s C team holds first place at the time of printing, with a roster of over 40 players. The men’s B team plays in the B+ division, with about 30 rostered players. BPC’s paddle instructor, Shelly Mars, started one of the few junior programs in the state. The member’s-only club tournament had 40 teams (men’s and women’s combined) vying for the BPC trophy.

Henry Donaldson, a builder and contractor and member (who got his start at Fox Meadow Paddle Club), said, “Peter Gearhart, a BPC member and local architect, drew up the initial plan for the hut and surrounding deck. I worked with Peter to develop the concept and figure out its construction. Two factors dictated the design: the site and the budget. We situated the hut on a rise for clear sightlines to all three courts and the pond on Pine Manor’s campus beyond. The hut was conceived as a social space for hosting visiting teams and for club events, so it is open and flexible in use. The roof is pitched to permit those watching from inside to have upward views—important in game with lobbing! Stadium seating is banked against the hut on two sides and allows for a larger audience. With regard to the budget, the project had to be economical. Member Peter Holland completed the construction within the budget and on time.”

Paula Fazli, Region II President’s Cup captain, continues to be impressed by the club. “When I attended their ‘opening day’ party

this past fall, about 60 people were there. [Recent APTA President] Rob Coster’s daughter and son are members there and they got all sorts of other young people to join as well. I really feel like this club could be the turning point/tipping point for the Boston paddle scene, which has been so dominated by the country clubs. Just recently, at the Boston Women’s PCQ, which I ran with Carolyn McCoy, there were six teams from BPC in a full draw. So they are out there, playing.

And the fact that it is a partnership with a college is also interesting; this could be a model for other towns and cities.”

Ward mentioned, “The relationship with a college has been symbiotic for our club because of the existence of the old courts on the campus. It could be a model for others, obviously based on needs aligning and space being available. It is not a typical sport considered by colleges but it would be great if that changed.”

The club itself is an educational institution. Bardorf explained, “We leverage online tools such as The HUT forum, an automated reservation system, weekly Paddle Matter updates about the rules of the sport, and advertise Friday Mixers, Sunday Round Robins, clinics, lessons, etc. We have quite an infrastructure that is designed to get the members and public involved in the sport and to advance the sport. The dynamics of our club are very open and inviting. We really rely on members and volunteers to make it work.” The players are very generous about inviting non-members to play and join their groups. The spirit of the club is one of the

loveliest parts of the entire venture.

Even the logo contest turned into a collaboration. The club decided to put the best design features of all of the entries together and one of the members, a designer, reissued the final graphic.

Everyone likes a winner (especially the Pats fans reading this) and the Brookline Paddle Club has definitely become one. But everyone also appreciates hard workers, and the BPC, its leadership, and dedicated members are certainly that. When hard work and fun mesh, it’s all a big Super Bowl-sized win. ■

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Brookline Paddle Club's first true hut in construction, Fall 2014

