

A Good News Pickleball Story

Sometimes serendipity and circumstances coalesce into something meaningful.....

And so it was that some of us were approached to instruct a class of 13- and 14-year-old boys and girls on how to play pickleball at RKCC.

Although I would like to say that everything went smoothly, it was more like controlled chaos. Having said that, it was immensely satisfying to see 24 enthusiastic students doing their best to hit the ball over the net and at times in the right court over the next two hours. After three more similar sessions it was clear that some were quite talented and others more importantly were having fun. So... how did this come together?

Barry Niles, a member of our curling club and volunteer at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School had spoken to Murray Matheson (club president) and suggested that this might be a great recreational opportunity for some of these students, who may not have had any previous experience with racket sports in general. After the board approved the free use of the courts, a plan was put in place.

Realizing that we would need an abundance of paddles, the Kingston Seniors Centre kindly lent the use of eight additional paddles, the remainder being offered by our club's pickleball facilitators. With regards to instruction, I was fortunate to have Barry Malmsten, Anna Salmon, and Tim Salmon assist in providing a rudimentary explanation of the game and some tips in hitting the ball.

At the conclusion of these sessions, Ryan Borges (class teacher) shared with me, while not going into specific details, some of the difficult circumstances a number of these students live with day to day. He also mentioned that for some of them, this was the first time they were truly interested in taking part, whereas in general they did not partake in any type of organized physical activity. This was quite a sobering moment and left quite an impression on me. To say that I was holding back tears is no exaggeration. He mentioned offhandedly how nice it would be to have this activity available in their school and shrugged it off as they did not have the financial means to make this happen.

This is where the generosity and kind-heartedness of many people comes into play. Out of a desire to achieve this goal a small group of pickleball players decided to donate some funds to purchase some equipment for the school.

Ok, bear with me as this story gets a bit convoluted.

First off, RKCC had an older pickleball net not currently in use that required a little bit of elbow grease and TLC. Once that was accomplished and approval for its donation was obtained, we set forth to purchase some paddles. I had recently taken advantage of an open house opportunity at the Kingston Pickleball Club and, as luck would have it, Ryan Hanes was there (high-level player and certified instructor). I was hoping to get his expertise, more specifically, which paddles we should purchase that were both of good quality and not too expensive.

I further explained our situation and, after pausing for a moment, he excused himself and shortly after returned and handed me six slightly used high-end paddles and eight new balls . . . no charge. I was speechless (which is not usually the case, much to the dismay of people I know), but extremely grateful. With this unexpected and generous gift I then approached Larry Howes (owner of Racquet Science) and in the same vein inquired about purchasing two additional new paddles towards our cause. He as well kindly offered to sell these at a discounted price.

Shortly after that, I was able to visit the school, in particular the gymnasium and realized there was ample room for two courts. After some communication with our group, we decided to increase our donations to allow for the purchase of an additional net/hardware.

(Stay with me folks, almost done)

I contacted Dave Bussiere (also a high-level player and instructor) and I mentioned our intent to purchase another pickleball net and once again apprised him of our situation. He was able to procure a 'VIP' discount which amounted to a significant saving.

With approx \$560 in funding, we were able to provide close to \$2000 worth of needed equipment

It's not often that we have the chance to make a meaningful contribution, but if we can stitch together enough of these opportunities that we are given, together they may change the fabric of a young person's life for the better.

I am deeply grateful to everyone who has helped make this a reality and would like to acknowledge the following people for their contributions (both on and off the court):

Bonnie Arlt
David Bussiere
Rob Campbell
Ryan Hanes
Larry Howes
Tish Lavallee
Donna Malekos
Barry Malmsten

Murray Matheson
Barry Niles
Anna Salmon
Tim Salmon
Martha Tanner
Steve Tanner
Brian Ward
Deb Wilkin

From the warmer side of the glass

Denis Faubert