



NEWSLETTER



Fall/Winter (November) 2020

Special Announcement from President Tom Burroughs

Registrations for regular slots, substitution slots, and sharing of slots are still available for play at the Arlington YMCA (the "Y"). The last day for the email registration to be received is November 17, and should be sent to CIO Joe Wittling at josephwittling@gmail.com. The venues are a 3.5+ on Mondays and a 3.8+ on Wednesdays, each from 1:00-2:30 PM. For those who like to sub, you are encouraged to consider sharing a spot in a 50-50 manner. There are 23 sessions remaining in the season at the "Y" and this will ensure that you have plenty of play opportunities during the winter and spring.



Dear Golden Racquets (GR) Members:

I am glad we are now able to returning to play tennis at the YMCA (see the announcement above). As many of you know, there is a remodeling plan for the "Y", to include the entire block around the facility, but we are informed that this remodeling plan will not go into effect any time soon. The relatively low cost of playing at the "Y", the spacious parking on the hill above the facility, and the easy access to the facility from Route 66 makes playing at the "Y" an attractive option. We hope you will consider it!

For a variety of reasons, it appears that more of our tennis players are interested in playing pickleball. (Pickleball venue captain Karla Vernon will share some thoughts on pickleball in an article that can be found in this newsletter.) Currently, GR is supporting two pickleball venues, one indoors and one outdoors. The outdoor venue is at Wakefield on Wednesdays and play will continue until November 25th. There was a long list of members who wished to play in the outdoor venue, and when there was no more space available, GR member Kelly McCaffery started an ad hoc pickleball group that consisted of subs and other interested members. The indoor venue is held at Burke on Mondays, and GR was able to provide some basic pickleball lessons to ten members. In the summer of 2021, we anticipate continuing to play pickleball at Wakefield Park, and in addition are currently trying to locate another outdoor venue on a different day of the week. We plan to play in-doors during summer 2021 as well, but have not committed to any one place as yet. Please contact Karla at kvernon2@verizon.net if you have any questions about our current or future plans for pickleball.

Finally, I regret to announce the sad news that **Hiep Hoang** passed away on Wednesday, November 4th, at Fair Oaks Hospital after losing his battle with cancer. Hiep had been a member of Golden Racquets since November of 2015. Our deepest condolences go out to his family.

Sincerely,

Tom Burroughs, GR President



What's Going On With Golden Racquets?

COVID-19 has required GR to think and rethink about the way many aspects of the organization are handled. It is the intent of the BOD to keep the membership as informed as possible regarding the operations of the various aspects of the organization. Following are a series of articles by members of the BOD regarding their particular area of focus that we hope will help explain to you how and why (some) things are being handled.

Golden Racquets (GR) Venue Sign-Up Process by Joe Wittling

For many years when it was time to sign up for tennis venues, GR members received the Sign-Up Form, filled it out, wrote a check (if required), and then returned the form (via the US Mail) and check to GR. If the member did not get their requested venue(s), there was a waiting period before the member was reimbursed the amount that was sent in with the form. This process ensured that GR had sufficient funds to pay the indoor tennis facilities in a timely manner, and maintain required funds in the GR bank account. This process was a plus for GR, but was a negative for certain members.



The new process implemented this year eliminated the use of the US Mail and the requirement for members to send an initial check. After the Venue Selection Process is completed and shortly after the beginning of the indoor tennis season, an invoice stating the correct amount of money owed to GR is mailed to each individual owing money to GR. This invoice is produced by software designed for this purpose.

If, and only if, the members pay what they owe in a timely manner can GR continue this to use this process. GR may continue this new process in 2021, on a prototype basis, and members are requested to pay GR the amount stated on their invoice as soon as the invoice is received. GR is happy to report that the member payments for this fall 2020 have been excellent. We will need to continue this excellent payment response to continue the new process.

Operations and Planning by Dave Fleming (with input from venue captains)

The current fall/winter session has probably been the most challenging in the history of GR because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Uncertainty and risk were the primary factors facing members when deciding whether to play or not to play, and if playing, to choose the venues in which they would play. Uncertainty, because of the lack of definitive information about the virus and its transmissibility, and risk, because individuals had to decide for themselves their acceptable level of risk in order to play. Some players decided to opt out completely due to personal concerns for themselves, their spouse, or their family members. Some only wanted to play outdoors while others choose to return to indoor play, while follow safety rules established by the clubs and GR. These considerations had a significant impact on the number of registrations. Of the fifteen tennis venues offered by GR (twelve indoors, three outdoors), three of the indoor venues were cancelled completely and most of those remaining had to reduce the number of planned courts. On the other hand, registration was up for the three outdoor venues and the two pickleball venues. One of the big positive developments was the huge increase in the number of Ad Hoc groups that sprang up and were coordinated by GR members throughout the area. While the "Y" was unable to provide GR any venues at the time of registration, the "Y" has recently re-opened and is available to GR members.

President Tom Burroughs worked closely with all of the indoor clubs (Fairfax, Burke, Skyline, and Springfield) on the implementation of their safety protocols. These safety protocols at the various clubs had many similarities, such as wearing of masks, physical distancing rules, pre-screening questionnaires, temperature checks, and entry/exit

procedures. The venue captains did a truly exceptional job at ensuring their venues' safety protocols/procedures were communicated to their players and insured the adherence. The GR safety procedures applied to both indoor and outdoor venues.

The following comments and observations have been provided by some of the GR captains to share some perspective on their experience this fall/winter session:

Fred Thompson, Captain, Monday Fairfax 3.9+ Ladder (MFL): Fred is a veteran GR captain who has run the MFL for several years. With six courts and 24 regular players, the MFL is the largest GR venue. Here are Fred's observations on the 2020 fall/winter session:



"I tried a couple of innovations this year. First, I inverted the ladder with the highest ranked players at the bottom. They've had to work their way to the top. That has resulted in a number of match-ups that wouldn't have normally taken place and has resulted in players playing on courts they might not have seen in a traditional year. In general, I've gotten good feedback about this. If I have support for it, I may flip the courts again mid-season. I also made an adjustment to COVID by asking that players email me or text me the results of each court, and this has worked very well. I've been able to leave when my match ended, and still gotten the results of the other matches within a couple of hours of play. I've also been able to give the court assignments to players a couple of days before the match, so people are not congregating to find out on what court they are playing and with whom. I think this has been an improvement as well.

"This year has probably been my easiest to schedule matches in 4 years. There has been a need for fewer subs this year than in the past, perhaps 3-4 per week vs. as many 8-10 per week in past years. Because there was no clear hierarchy regarding how subs and their scores would be handled at the beginning of the year, I have placed the sub in the absent player's spot and had the absent player live with their sub's result. This is another thing that has scheduling easier.

"Another unusual COVID-related change this year is that the MFL was not 100% subscribed. Some people didn't apply because they felt they didn't have a chance to get in. I filled the 3 open spots overnight with a few recruiting calls.

"We had a couple of early bumps when folks congregated in front of the club as the previous group was leaving. We also had some concerns expressed about people putting their bags too close together, thus not preserving social distance during water breaks. I've sent out guidance on this and my impression is that people have been responsible and courteous in adjusting their behavior."



George Ward, Captain, Thursday Fairfax 3.5+: George is a first time GR captain and is doing an outstanding job at the Thursday Fairfax 3.5+ venue. Following is George's perspective how things are going at his venue this fall/winter:

"Things have gone well overall at the Thursday Fairfax venue, with no general problems. My sense is that both regular players and subs have become more comfortable playing indoors in the midst of the current pandemic. Folks appreciate the safety measures that the club has in place. Players are abiding by the rules that have been established by the club, and by GR. There have been no problems.

"We have needed quite a few subs so far due to some long-term injuries to players as well as absences. On one occasion, we had six subs and six regular players. We now have a regular pool of subs who are interested in playing as

often as possible. Even though we have needed many subs, there has never been a time when we could not find one or as many as was needed, even on short notice.

"We are using Babolat balls this session, and personally, I like them a lot. I have not heard from any other players on their like/dislike of the Babolat balls, however."

Jayne Hart, Captain, Friday Fairfax 3.7+: Jayne stepped up to fill the vacant captain position on late notice, and has done a superb job. Here are some of Jayne's thoughts:

"Our Friday Fairfax group is operating well. We have not had many substitutes so far, and when there was a need for a sub, there has been no problem finding one. The safety rules/protocols established by the clubs and GR seem reasonable, but not noticeably enforced anymore. We just have to hand in a "health survey" every week when we arrive, but no temperatures are taken or other safety measures. There is a bottle of hand sanitizer on each court which is helpful.

"We had one of our regular players drop out of the venue after his request that we all wear masks while playing was not honored. He was especially concerned about taking home "the virus" to his immune-compromised wife. I did survey our other regular players (two of whom do, in fact, regularly wear masks while they play) if they would consider wearing masks while playing. Most of them said they would not...citing the GR policy on this as well as feeling uncomfortable playing while wearing a mask.

"Two players have commented that the new Babolat balls seem "different." But there have been no specific complaints of note about the balls."



Friday Fairfax 3.7+ Players (l to r): P. Haas, J. Hart (Capt), D. Riesenberg, J. Fisher, L. Straus, S. Monde, J. Hensley, P. Schulz, B. Breslar, J. Mahal, K. Gubin, R. Bach.

Gary Hinson, Captain, Thursday Fairfax 3.9+: Gary captains the popular Thursday Fairfax 3.9+ venue as well as being the newly elected GR Vice President. He is a retired Army officer and school administrator with Fairfax County. Gary has captained other GR venues, USTA teams and Arlington County teams as well as being head tennis coach for Hayfield Secondary School. Shown here are (L to R): Gary Hinson, Bruce Kasold, and Peter Porch



Bonnie Breslar, Captain, Burke Tuesday 3.8+: Bonnie has done an outstanding job managing her venue. Here's what she had to say about the overall safety protocols at the Burke Racquet Club: "I have been really pleased that both Burke and Fairfax Racquet Clubs have done an excellent job with screening and safety protocols. All of the indoor players have adhered to these safety measures, no questions and no problems."

Judy Fisher, Captain, Tuesday Fairfax 3.7+: Judy is another one of GR's experienced captains having been a captain for seven years. She successfully set up and managed the Tuesday Fairfax 3.7+ venue despite lower than usual registrations. Judy was a school teacher for 38 years and is active with various community groups



Joe Wittling, Captain, Burke Friday 3.9+: Joe is a tireless GR volunteer who, in addition to being a venue captain, is also the GR Chief Information Officer (CIO). In light of safety considerations, Joe transitioned to using an electronic weekly court assignment system this fall. The Friday Burke players could not be more pleased with the smooth and efficient process for entering and leaving the club and, of course, the competitively balanced competition on the courts. Thanks to Joe for making the Friday Burke venue such an enjoyable experience.

Fred King, Captain, Thursday Skyline 3.7 Ladder: Fred stepped up to fill the Skyline captain position when the regular captain had to drop out due to injury. He has done a first-rate job working with the Skyline club and his players in managing the venue during the fall/winter session. Fred is highly regarded by his players. Here's what one of his players, Carbo Feldman, had to say about the job Fred has done: "I want to express my appreciation for the work that Fred King has been doing as venue captain at Skyline. I'm just a sub, but I've been lucky enough to play five times at Skyline. Fred is organized, on time, and very respectful of players and their abilities."

Joanne Hensley, Captain, Tuesday Springfield 3.7+: Joanne has been a terrific captain at Springfield, which has become one of the most popular GR venues. In addition to being a venue captain, Joanne is also the GR Webmaster and is responsible for revamping and maintaining the GR website. Here's what Joanne had to say about the overall conditions at Springfield: "Springfield should also be included among the venues that has done an excellent job of keeping the facility safe."

Dick and Ava Neff, Co-Captains, Nottoway Park Tuesday 3.7+: Dick and Ava Neff have done a marvelous job co-captaining the Nottoway venue. Here's their overall assessment on how things are going at Nottoway: "The Nottoway bunch have been, for the most part, very cooperative and a joy with whom to work."



Dan Levitan, Captain, Wakefield Monday 3.7+: Dan is a very competent and resourceful captain and has managed Wakefield Park venue for several sessions. This fall/winter registration marked an increased demand for the outdoor venues, including Wakefield. Through Dan's leadership, the venue got off to a good start and continues to run smoothly as the outdoor season draws to a close in the coming weeks. Here is Dan's report on how things have gone: "All is going well at Wakefield on Mondays. Players are generally following all safety protocols, including wearing masks from the parking lot to the courts. There are a good number of available subs so there has not been a problem obtaining subs."

Bruce Gregoire, Captain, Mason District 3.5+: Bruce is another first time GR captain. He readily took on the responsibilities of captain in a conscientious and professional manner. Bruce had the following comments regarding his experience so far at Mason District:

Overall, I would say things have gone from very good to outstanding at the Mason District venue. Players are reminded in each weekly bracket email that our purpose is to have fun, and I believe that has sunk in for our group. A few players has asked about why they are matched-up against much stronger players. I explained that my design was to have "Social Matches" for the first 45 minutes, to mix it up, get to know each other, and be challenged a bit. The second 45 minutes were "Competitive Matches" where players were roughly matched against their own peer group rankings. This seems to be workable formula.

"We have been lucky to have only two bad weather days. We have also had no issues regarding the safety protocols established by GR, and players have understood and obeyed them. I believe peer pressure was enough to keep everyone mindful of using their masks. Finding substitutes has been a little more of a challenge than I expected, but nothing that stopped us from having a full count of players. The only real problems we have experienced have to do with court conditions. There are some "dead spots" on the courts (but nothing serious) and occasionally a wet or slightly muddy area that do not properly dry out from the overnight moisture. These are easily cleared up with some brushing of the area before play. Leaves on the court has not been a problem."



Mary Albanese, one of the regular Mason District players, provided the following input: "I enjoy playing at Mason District on Thursdays. Bruce is a very good captain. He is well organized and friendly. His emails are timely and he matches players well. I feel as safe as is possible during this challenging time. Everyone knows that masks are required and

to keep socially distanced. Bruce communicated the expectations from the beginning and from what I see, everyone is complying with them. I wish that the courts were in better condition. There are many cracks, some sizeable. The new Babolat tennis balls seem fine to me."

Ralph Breslar, another Mason District player, had this to say: "Things at Mason District have gone extremely well. Bruce has done everything possible to make it work smoothly, even collecting used balls each session for practice at the next. He has kept us well informed regarding weather calls. There has been some mixed opinions regarding the safety rules/protocols that have been implemented by GR, but being outdoors has helped. The main problem regarding court conditions seems to be a few leaves or pine needles that collect against the fence. My feedback on the new Babolat balls is that, at my level, can't tell any difference! Use whatever is more affordable."

Karla Vernon, Captain, Wakefield and Burke Pickleball: There is a separate article in this newsletter covering pickleball but Karla Vernon should be recognized for taking on the captain positions for both the Monday Burke and the Wednesday Wakefield pickleball venues. Kudos to Karla (and Tom Burroughs) for their efforts in advancing the pickleball program and creating more playing opportunities for GR members.

Moving Forward: With the first third of the session nearly complete and the outdoor venues finishing up in a couple of weeks, we can all look back in grateful appreciation for being able to get out and play the sport we all enjoy so much. We've been successful so far through the hard work and diligence of our clubs, GR leadership, the captains, and most importantly the cooperation of the players. However, we must remain vigilant and not get complacent. As the winter months approach the whole country is seeing an increase in the number of COVID infections. We must continue to adhere to the established safety protocols/procedures which have proven to be effective.

Who Are We? by Bob Dineen

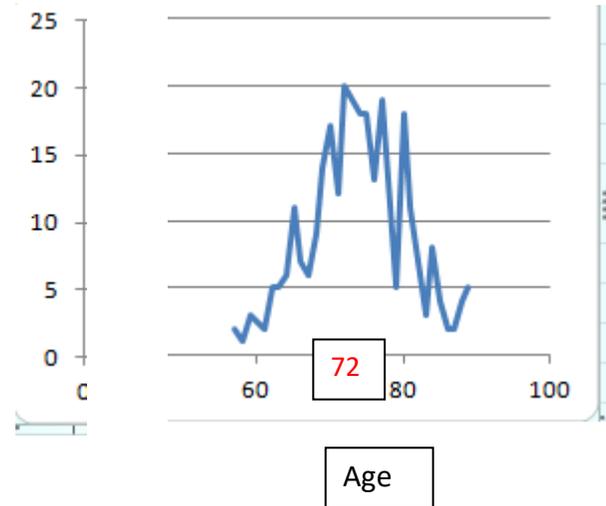
The following statistics and graphs were derived from 291 GR members that will help explain make-up of the GR membership, or put another way, "who we are."



AGE:

The ages of the GR membership ranges from 56 to 93 years, as demonstrated in the accompanying chart. The majority of the members (55%) are between 69 and 78 years of age.

The chart and the next sheet shows that there are 20 members who are 72 years of age.



RATINGS and Number of Members:

3.0	1
3.2	2
3.3	1
3.4	6
3.5	21
3.6	21
3.7	67
3.8	84
3.9	37
4.0	37
4.1	7
4.2	3
4.3	3
4.4	2
4.5	1

Cities with more than 5 Members:

57	Fairfax, VA
34	Falls Church, VA
34	Alexandria, VA
24	Arlington, VA
24	Annandale, VA
22	Springfield, VA
20	Washington, DC
19	Vienna, VA
12	Oakton, VA
9	Burke, VA
8	Fairfax Station, VA
7	Reston, VA
6	Herndon, VA

The following chart shows the relationship between AGE and RATINGS. The above statistics are highlighted in red on this chart:

AGE	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.9	4	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	TOT
93						1									1
92					1			1							2
90						2									2
89					1	1	2								4
88				1		1	1								3
87					1	1									2
86						2									2
85			1			2	1								4
84				1	2	3	1		1						8
83						1	1	1							3
82			1			2	1		1	2					7
81	1		1	1	1	5	2								11
80		1		2	1	5	5	2	2						18
79					2	2		1							5
78				3		4	4	2							13
77				2	1	5	8	2	1						19
76					2	1	5	3	1		1				13
75				2		4	6	2	2	2					18
74			1	2	1	4	6	1	3						18
73	1				3	2	4	3	2	2	1	1			19
72				2		3	8	4	2		1				20
71			1		2	2	2	2	3						12
70				3	1	3	4	2	3						16
69					1	3	4	2	4						14
68				1		1	3	1	2					1	9
67						1	2	2	1						6
66						1	2	2	2						7
65				1		1	6	2	1						11
64						1	2		1	1		1			6
63						2		1	2						5
62						1	1	1	1				1		5
61			1						1						2
59							1		1				1		3
58							1								1
57							1					1			2
Totals	2	1	6	21	20	67	84	37	37	7	3	3	2	1	291

~~~~~

## **SAFETY RULES FOR GR TENNIS PLAYERS**

As we all get used to the new world COVID-19 has thrust upon us, we would like to repeat for you here the safety rules that have been established for GR tennis players. Each person is asked to abide by these rules, keeping in mind that the safety and good health of our teammates and opponents is our prime objective as we continue to enjoy good exercise and fellowship. These safety rules were initially published in the summer issue of the GR newsletter.

- Sanitize your hands and wear a mask prior to entering a tennis facility or outdoor court. Wearing a mask once tennis play has begun is optional, but once play is completed, a mask should be worn and hands sanitized.
- Social distancing of 6 feet should be followed at all times; the only exception to this rule are the occasional times when two players are forced to get closer to one another while returning a tennis ball.
- Ideally, players should go directly from their cars to the tennis courts. Exceptions will be to log in at a tennis facility or to get instructions (hopefully in the parking lot) from captains about court assignments. Socializing indoors in a lounge area before a tennis match should not be done. Socializing in the parking lot is fine as long as masks are worn and the 6 foot social distancing rule is followed. Upon entering a tennis facility, keep your tennis gear with you and deposit your tennis bag 6 feet from other bags on the court.
- After a tennis match is completed, good sportsmanship personal touching such as handshakes and high fives are not allowed. Verbal comments such as “good game” or the touching of tennis rackets (large end of rackets -- not handles) is recommended and acceptable.
- Players may use their own practice balls during warm-up, but they must be sprayed with a disinfectant before they can be used. All players should carry a container of disinfectant and sanitizing wipes in their bags.
- If a stray tennis ball comes onto your court from another court, it must be kicked back or rolled back using your racket to its original court. Touching the balls with hands to return them is not allowed.



Tennis players at Springfield Golf & Country Club -- masked up and ready to go!  
Summer/fall 2020

~~~~~

Pickleball Update

by Karla Vernon



Captaining two pickleball venues this fall has been a fun and satisfying experience for me. I can sense the camaraderie among the players in both venues. In this time of COVID-19, pickleball has allowed us to escape the uncertainty of the contagion for one and one-half hours while having fun in a normal, unmasked atmosphere. Finding substitutes has been more challenging for the indoor play than it has for the outdoor play, but a dedicated group of pickleball players is being built.

I have learned a few things from pickleball that I would like to share with you:

- the name of this sport is so ridiculous that I am laughing before I even start playing. I laugh more during play than any other time all week -- and we all know that laughter is good for the soul;
- it does not hurt to get hit by even a hard-hit pickleball (i.e., whiffle ball), unlike getting hit by a hard-hit tennis ball can hurt;
- getting down LOW to get balls is essential;
- the concentration and focus in our GR groups is to have FUN, rather than to be seriously fixated on winning. GR players are mellow and complimentary, not cut-throat and mean; and (perhaps most importantly)
- it costs nothing to be kind and gracious to your partner and competitors.



If you have not had the opportunity to try pickleball, I encourage you to do so. It is great fun provides excellent exercise -- just ask Diane, Steph, Mark, and Karla, shown here playing at Burke Racquet.

~~~~~



"Whether you are playing tennis or pickleball, please get the attention of the person across the net before you throw the ball to him/her. This is a common courtesy that can be extended to our friends at no cost, and prevents the person from having to "chase" the ball they did not see coming their way."

"The correct way to call a ball "out" is to raise your arm and point toward the sky, while at the same time saying "out" in a voice that can be heard by all on the court. Pointing toward the side (to call a ball out) can be misinterpreted as the ball being called "in" or "good." Making clear calls prevents players from getting upset when one players think the call was one way, and the opponent thinks it was another."

**Do you have a tennis pet peeve that you would like to see addressed for the benefit of all? Please share it with us and we will get some helpful suggestions to you in the next newsletter.**

~~~~~

Reminder to All

The GR BOD would like to remind all members that the GR directory is published for the use of members only for contacting other GR members about tennis matters. Please note and abide by the disclaimer at the top of the directory, which states the following:

"Golden Racquets publishes this seasonal roster as a service to members who wish to contact other members to pay for substitutions, other reasons related to tennis activities, or for personal contact between members. It should **NOT** be used as a mailing or contact source for commercial, religious, political solicitation, or any other purpose."

This Golden Racquets Newsletter is published by the Fairfax County Golden Racquets, a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to senior tennis. You are encouraged to visit the Golden Racquets website at <http://www.GoldenRacquet.org>. Officers and committee chairs are as follows:

President: Tom Burroughs
Vice President: Gary Hinson
Special Assistant: Bob Dineen
Recording Secretary: Connie Dineen
Treasurer: Al McFarland
Membership Chair: Adele Neuberg
Rating Committee Chair: Steve Mateo
Social Committee Chair: Vacant
Caring Committee Chair: Vacant
Chief Information Officer: Joe Wittling
Operations & Planning Chair: Dave Fleming
Web Site Manager: Joanne Hensley
Newsletter Editor: Connie Dineen

To have an article or picture of interest considered for inclusion in the Golden Racquets Newsletter, please send it to Connie Dineen at:

csdineen51@gmail.com

NOTE: Articles may be of general interest and do not necessarily need to be about tennis.

