

Pick-up basketball sites plentiful in Eugene area

By Ken Fallon
Emerald Contributor

So you say you want to play hoops?

Well, even if you can't find anyone to play with, there are plenty of places you can go to get into a game.

The best place in Eugene is the Jefferson Street Bridge court. Located between Jefferson Street and Washington Street at Fourth Avenue, it features six baskets hanging from the underside of Delta Highway, with two full courts. Lights are built into the ceiling for those late nights when it is cooler.

There are no slouches at any time, but skill levels vary. The age range goes from boys of 12 to men of 40 or 50. The system is set up so that a team of five can challenge the winner of the game on the court, and stays on the court until they are defeated.

If one is interested in a friendly game, it is better to come during the day. Anyone 'under the bridge,' as it is

called, will tell you that people are there to play a friendly game of basketball, but if you are there at night, don't let them fool you.

In the evening, after the sun sinks low enough in the sky so it's not in the players' eyes, it's time for rough and tumble, in your face, take-it-to-the-hoop basketball. Former Ducks, such as Jerry Adams, Greg Trapp, Chris Harper and Anthony Taylor have played there in the past; Oregon State guard Eric Knox and University player Keith Reynolds still show up occasionally.

Reynolds, 21, has been playing there since he was 10 years old, when he ran the courts with his four older brothers. He plays a little more cautiously under the bridge than he would in McArthur Court, because he said many of the players are inexperienced and it is easy to get hurt.

"If you lose, you sit for (at least) an hour, so everybody plays hard," Reynolds said, adding that the combination of these things sometimes leads to fights.

During the weekends, and especially on Sundays, the courts are packed, so it's better to come during the week if possible. Also, even though it's covered, it's not the place to come when it's raining. The water runs down the hills on either side of the court, which makes playing slick and dangerous.

But with all the hazards, Reynolds said he likes the place because "people are just here to play."

If that type of play doesn't fit your style, another good place to go is the park at the corner of 24th Avenue and University Street. There is only one full court, but the play is not quite as rough. There is usually someone there, whether it is just shooting around or playing a full game.

Down the street and around the corner is the Amazon Community Center, located at 2700 Hilyard St. There's a half court behind the building, and if no one is playing, you only have to shoot for a few minutes. Someone is bound to come up and challenge you to some one on one.



Photo by Marty Thiel

University Park, located at 24th Avenue and University Street, is a prime place to participate in a challenging basketball game.



Closer to campus, there is frequently a game of some sort on the Bean courts, but you may have to work around the schedule of the University's summer basketball camps.

The hazard of the Bean courts, located on 15th Avenue between Agate and Moss Streets, is the asphalt. If you fall, you'll tear the skin off whatever part of your body you can't protect. It's also better to play there in the evening, when the sun isn't beating down on your brain. Other courts on campus can be found in between the health center and Walton complex, in between the computer center and the law school, and in Esslinger Hall.

There are also places near campus that you can go if you do have someone to play with. Harris Elementary School is located at 1150 E. 29th Ave., and features four hoops for your playing pleasure. If you want to play out your Michael Jordan fantasy, the place to go is Willagillespie Elementary School at 1125 Willagillespie Rd. The rims are short, making for some entertaining jam hoop games.

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By GARY LARSON



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