

Best kept secret no more

Pickleball: an unexpected and perfect game

By Zach Silva
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I am confused by pickleball.

I mean, not the rules, those I understand. Hearing an opponent yell 0-0-2 to start off a game makes sense. I get the “kitchen” and letting the ball bounce after you serve it – that’s all well and good. But what I don’t get is how this endlessly fun game is only popular with those over the age of 55.

According to the United States of America Pickleball Association – which is apparently a real organization that exists – individuals over 55 make up over 70 percent of the “core” (defined as playing more than eight times a year) pickleball players. I am both stunned by that number and amazed that it isn’t somehow even higher.

Based almost entirely off of proximity, I started playing pickleball earlier this year. My sister’s fiancé had a court at his apartment complex and also happened to have a paddle and balls but had never played. After walking up a set of stairs, this court had the feeling of being up on a perch as we overlooked a slice of Portland.

Aside from my sister hitting the ball into the street a couple floors below on her very first hit, this first time playing this was a delight. Pickleball is essentially tennis on a smaller court with a whiffle ball and the caveat that you serve underhand. Suffice to say, its tagline should be pickleball: easier than tennis. The simplicity of the game should not be a knock against it but rather its greatest feature. If you can hit a ball with any level of success, you have the ability to be a passable player.

After that first time playing, all I wanted to do was keep playing and that’s exactly what I have done. I dragged my best friend and we played on pickleball-specific courts in Springfield which had been empty every time I passed them. It was there that, unbeknownst to me, I walked into a new world of pickleball.

Showing up to those courts on a weekday morning is like going through Platform 9 ¾ – it’s exciting, thrilling but you are ultimately confused about where exactly you’ve been transported to. Instead of going to a school of witchcraft and wizardry, I entered eight courts that were jam packed. On any given weekday morning (before they moved inside for the winter) there are over 30 eager pickleball players all of whom are older than my parents. And some even near my grandma’s age.

PICKLEBALL see B2

One week away



PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

Yoncalla’s Cassidy Bragg goes through her free throw routine at the end of practice last Friday. The winter sports season officially kicks off around the state next week and the Eagles begin their season on the road at Rogue River next Wednesday. Look for a complete winter sports preview of all area high school teams in the December 5 issue of *The Sentinel*.

Terry returns to Yoncalla as head basketball coach



Darwin Terry speaks to his team last Friday at practice.

By Zach Silva
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Darwin Terry is back at Yoncalla. The class of 1987 graduate, who lives in Creswell, has returned to his alma mater to be the boys head basketball coach. Terry has coached around the county and was the former head coach at McKenzie High School while adding a stop as an assistant in Creswell and helped with Cottage Grove last summer.

The third coach at Yoncalla in as many years, Terry is looking to provide stability and is excited about the future of the program.

Below is an interview with Terry that has been condensed for clarity and length.

Cottage Grove Sentinel: Well, you’re back at Yoncalla.

Darwin Terry: I always dreamed of coming back to coach here. Didn’t know it would be this soon, maybe. I wanted to coach big school ball but it’s pretty tough getting in the coaching ranks there.

CGS: What is your basketball

background?

DT: I was playing since I was a kid, it’s my favorite sport. And from there I always wanted to coach but I was in a military life (Coast Guard for 10 ½ years) and law enforcement (Eugene Police Department (almost 20 years) life makes it difficult because shift work and stressful and a lot of hours. Throughout that period, I was able to give back. I coached special Olympics for one year. It was high school special Olympics kid, south coast special Olympics. Back then, this was a long time ago in the 90s, I coached a team involved with that.

I still have a desire to be a head coach or be a coach of a JV team at that (higher) level. A lot of opportunities exist. I was asked last year to coach Yoncalla and when the coach left here I turned it down because I was asked to be at Creswell. Stayed at Creswell, part of it was the travelling, too. Being in Creswell was kind of nice and I had just left McKenzie and that was a long drive. So I was like, eh, I’m ready for a short drive, let’s stay here. But I, you know, I didn’t know if I passed up a golden opportunity because I’m like, it’s hard to get a head coaching job. So I

TERRY see B3

Lions receive Sky-Em league honors

By Zach Silva
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While the fall sports season has come to a close, Cottage Grove athletics were all over the all-league awards. Between football, volleyball and both soccer teams, 10 different Cottage Grove athletes were given first-team nods while volleyball coach Kendra Anderson and girls soccer coach Reed Levings were both named coach of the year in the Sky-Em.

For the volleyball team that won league as they went 9-1 in Sky-Em play, Cassidy Herbert and Reilly Kely were both named to the first team while Lauren Witty, Matty Ladd and Sam May were second team selections. Herbert was named player of the year.

In girls soccer, the second-place Lions had Sawyer Weybright, Kaity Magill and Chanel Leach on the first team. Cameron Anderson, Payton Cameron, Leticia Hernandez and Irene Ferguson were named to the second team.

For the boys soccer team, Fernando Soto-Cruz and Rodas Rodas Martin were both on the first team while George Cervantes, Paesen Timm and Jasper Nichols-Ferguson were on the second team.

On the football field, Dylan Graves was named first team quarterback and Sky-Em offensive MVP while Erick Giffen was first team slot receiver, punter and defensive back. Jacob Dunn joined the pair as a unanimous first team wide receiver. Jayden Doolittle was named second team defensive back and receiver as Dunn (outside linebacker), Creed Lufkin (guard) David Cox (defensive line) and Adrian Gideon also were named to the second team.

Athletes of the Week



This week’s athletes of the week are the members of Blue Mangoes soccer team. This coed team of 5th-8th graders won a tournament in Cottage Grove earlier this month. The team was coached by Curtis and Sirpa Merz.



The Blue Mangoes pose with their trophies.

PHOTO C/O SMILEY GLENN

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