

Tennis players being aced out of court availability

By Kathryn Reed

Tennis doesn't get talked about much as a reason for tourists to visit the South Shore, while Tahoe City and Truckee are a draw for people looking for good courts.

Maybe it has something to do with the quality of and accessibility to courts in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin that makes the difference.

But it's also locals on the South Shore, particularly on the California side, who are put off by what is going on with the myriad courts.



Lack of accessibility to South Tahoe High School's tennis courts is an issue for the public paying for them.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Community College has offered tennis classes for

years, and will again this fall. It used to be taught at Tahoe Paradise Park, then South Tahoe Middle School and now at South Tahoe High School.

The college's master plan includes courts, but last week they were stripped from the five-year facilities schedule because college President Kindred Murillo said there's no way they'll be built in that time span.

LTCC's classes keep changing locations because the courts keep deteriorating to the point they are dangerous to play on.

The three courts at Tahoe Paradise Park near Meyers were locked because of the horrible condition they were in. Two have been resurfaced, but are sitting without paint and lines – therefore, unusable. The groundskeeper says expect them to be playable in September. Only two are being fixed; the other is left as an eyesore.

The four courts at South Tahoe Middle School are open to anyone, but a “use at your own risk” sign should be placed there because of the numerous cracks.

South Tahoe High School's six courts were resurfaced as part of the Measure G bond that was passed by voters in 2008. The problem is accessibility.

The district wants to keep its \$400,000 investment pristine, but that means a lock is on the courts when no one is there monitoring them. Skateboarder and cyclists are the users not wanted on the courts.

Justin Clark has the key. But it requires calling him ahead of time to open the courts or go during scheduled public time. For instance, *Lake Tahoe News* went to the courts on Wednesday at 1:30pm and found them locked, no one playing. The STHS court schedule does not favor the public when the high school tennis teams are not using them.

And the schedule is not posted on the courts – you'd have to read this story or have another connection to know the hours.

Clark is also LTCC's tennis instructor. Plus, he runs a for-profit tennis academy at the courts.

"We are not getting money from him. He has to put money back into the facilities, like \$3,000 worth of backboards that he paid for," Lake Tahoe Unified School District Superintendent Jim Tarwater said of Clark.

Those backboards should be up by the end of the month, according to Clark.

People have been dismayed they have to pay to use the courts when in the past they have been free. People have been complaining to *Lake Tahoe News* that they don't want to have to reserve a court, nor do they want to pay Clark.

To appease the general public, some of who are the taxpayers paying for the courts, the district is looking at putting in a card key for next summer. Rates have not been established, nor how it would work for the person just wanting to play once or twice.

This source of revenue for the district could then be used for future upkeep to the courts, and not go into an individual's pocket – something people have concerns with.

Clark would like to turn the courts at STHS into what Douglas County has at Zephyr Cove Park. It costs to play at those six public courts, plus there is a ladder and other tennis events.

The Tahoe Tennis Classic was at Zephyr Cove earlier this month.

Other tournaments in the basin include the 30th annual Incline Open that was last weekend and the Northstar Tennis Open the weekend of Sept. 10-12.

Incline Village Tennis Center has 11 courts.

Northstar-at-Tahoe has for years been singled out in *Tennis* magazine as a place to travel to play tennis. It has 10 courts and tons of camps for all ages.

Granlibakken resort in Tahoe City has been home to the Nike tennis program for years.

Tahoe City Public Utility District Parks and Recreation runs public courts –eight of them.

The only covered court in the basin is at Ridge Tahoe on Upper Kingsbury Grade. To use it, you must be a guest or owner of a time-share.