

June 4, 2015

EAGLE RIVER PICKLEBALL GROUP ADDS NEW NET AND PLAYING OPPORTUNITIES

The Eagle River Pickleball Association kicked off its summer season by installing a semi-permanent net on the Riverview Park courts, and adding round robin events and a special beginner play time to its weekly schedule.

“It’s an exciting time to be playing pickleball in the Northwoods,” said Gene Nackers, treasurer of ERPA. “These changes will give current pickleballers opportunities to play while also making the game more accessible to new players in the Eagle River area.”

Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports nationwide, Nackers said, and includes an estimated 200 players in Vilas County. The game is played on a badminton-sized court, with solid table tennis-like paddles used to hit a plastic ball over a tennis-type net.

“It’s easy to learn and less stressful on the body than many other sports,” Nackers said, explaining the game’s popularity with people of all ages. “Plus it’s a very social game.”

The Eagle River Pickleball Association sponsors open play from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays – weather permitting – at Riverview Park.

Nackers developed the design for a semi-permanent pickleball net for one of the Riverview courts and he and member Larry Springer constructed it. Previously, the group used only portable nets, removing them from the courts when they were not playing.

Since the semi-permanent net stays at the court, anyone – including non-members – can play pickleball any time as long as they have their own paddles and pickleballs, Nackers said. “We’re hoping this encourages more members of the community to come out and play.”

The net can be removed during winter months or for other occasions if necessary.

Member Lauri Gerlach also launched Thursday evening round robin play for women. The women play each game with a different partner against different opponents. Individual scores for each player for each game are recorded and tallied at the end of the evening.

“You can join us for one evening of play or for every evening,” Gerlach said, explaining no season-long commitment is required. “Play is competitive, but fun.”

Women’s round robin play starts promptly at 6 p.m. and continues until 8 p.m. at Riverview Park, weather permitting. Because of the round robin structure, it is important for participants to arrive on time and stay until the end of play.

Men’s round robin play began June 8 and will continue throughout the summer from 6 to 8 p.m. Mondays at Riverview Park. The format is similar to that used by the women players.

Beginners also now have a special opportunity to learn and become comfortable with the game between 9 and 11 a.m. on Wednesdays. A more experienced pickleball player will be available to provide coaching during this time, Nackers said.

The Eagle River Pickleball Association hopes to continue to create more playing opportunities for local residents, tourists and snowbirds, Nackers said. Key to doing so, however, will be improving the court surface at Riverview Park and adding to the number of available courts.

The group has plans to do both and is working to raise funds for the effort. Donations are welcome and since the pickleball association is a non-profit organization, they also are tax-deductible.

Contributions can be sent to Eagle River Pickleball Association, PO Box 1293, Eagle River, WI 54521.