

YPA President's Report 2024 (presented at March 26, 2025 AGM) by Jim Gilpin

I'd like to start with a big thanks to my fellow board members: Brenda Dion, Hector Campbell, Walter Brennan, Jayme Curtis, Peter Idoko, Mike Sparks and Erik Hoenisch. The eight of us have all had to work more than any of us wanted or expected, to address all the issues we have tried to address throughout the year. Once again, we invite members to join the board and to share the load. And thanks to Hector for his service. He is stepping away from the board and his role as VP

Growth in numbers and access to courts

At the end of last year, we had over 200 members. In early March 2024, we had 125 active members. (Note: Since renewal occurs on January 1, we expect a drop off in January, with growth in membership during the year). Now, in late March 2025 we have 174 members. We could quite likely have 250 members by the end of this year.

The growth in membership has been partially driven by the "Pickleball Fundamentals" classes that our dedicated volunteer instructors. Brenda will provide details on this.

The growth in membership creates a major challenge-namely how to satisfy the demand given a limited supply of court time.

Outdoor Courts: In the summer, we share use of the Mt. Mac tennis courts. Access to these outdoor courts is defined annually by a MOU with Tennis Yukon, who holds the lease with the City. Summer 2025 will be the eighth year of a "temporary" arrangement pending the building of dedicated pickleball courts. Over 100 of our members purchased a summer pass last year. These funds are transferred to Tennis Yukon at the end of the summer. We have requested and received an expansion of hours at the tennis courts for summer 2025. We recognise that more than half of our membership are of working age. Each week, most of the outdoor time, 80 court-hours, is during the 9-5 weekday working hours and thus not accessible to our younger members. However, this summer we will have 40 court-hours available on the weekends, making a total of 120 court-hours. Note: 4 courts for 4 hours equal 16 court-hours.

Indoor Courts: A far greater challenge is finding indoor court time during the school year. Each year for the past few we have successfully expanded the indoor gym times available to our members through our Joint User Agreement (JUA) with the City.

We now have access to: Hidden Valley, Golden Horn, Christ the King, Elijah Smith and Takhini schools. This year we also rented the University gym. We currently have 94 court-hours available indoors, each week. This will drop to 88 court-hours with the loss of access to the University gym next week.

Our Programming

We recognize that our members, obviously, have an interest in playing pickleball. But some have a particular interest in competitive play. Some are particularly interested in the social aspect of the sport. Some wish to have an opportunity to play with a particular group. Our challenge is to try to meet these different needs/wants.

Competitive Play: Competitive play can be enjoyed at whatever skill level you have, if you are playing with others of similar skill. We have tried in the past, with limited success, to create a ladder league. The board decided to hire a professional rating assessor, Brooke Siver, to assess the skill level of players. He evaluated 40 players last May. We had hoped to use those ratings to set up a ladder league last summer.

Ladder League: For a variety of reasons, we did not start our ladder league until this January. We created three tiers and are using Pickleball.com to keep track of scores and ratings, which are used to adjust rankings within each tier. We hired a consultant to assist in the start up. The start up did not go smoothly. Initially we intended to use Pickleball Brackets, and to use their club ratings. However, in early December, Pickleball Brackets was taken over by Pickleball.com, club ratings were eliminated, and DUPR (Dynamic Universal Player Record) imposed. Although we expect DUPR to serve us well in the future, currently, DUPR is not reliable. It relies on game data to adjust ratings. With little data to go on (given that most members are new to DUPR) the “reliability” of DUPR data is low. In other words, ratings swing widely from week to week. So, for this session, which goes until early June we will use wins/losses and points for/against as a more reliable indicator for adjusting rankings week by week. We currently have 20 players in tier 1, 32 in tier 2, and 24 in tier 3.

Open Round Robins: These round robins are open to players of all skill levels. Their primary purpose is social, ‘friendly’ games. Stronger players are expected to adjust their play based on the skill of their partner and opponents.

Group Play: Group play seems to be gaining in popularity. This has created a challenge for the board, when, for example players representing three different groups register at the same time to play on two courts. We can see a time stamp for the bookings. But the precision is to the minute. To resolve this situation, we will figuratively “draw straws” to determine who will be entitled to use the courts. On Saturday evenings we have extended our time to 10 pm to allow groups who were not able to play from 6-8 pm an option to play from 8-10 pm.

Facilitated Round Robins: From 4-6 pm on Saturdays we provide 30-40 minutes of instructional drills followed by round robin play.

Special Events:

May 31-June 2: Clinics with Mark Renneson, and training for level 1 instructors. (Brenda to provide details)

June 21: Summer Solstice Social: This was well attended, well received, a big success. To be repeated. Thanks to all the volunteers.

August: Alaska International Senior Games: six of our members went to Fairbanks to play. They received a subsidy from Lotteries.

October 18-20: Yukon Championship. We had 16 participants in the 2.5 tourney, 24 in the 3.0 tourney, and 22 in the 3.5 tourney.

December 15: Christmas special at Takhini. We were only able to accommodate 48 players. The interest clearly was much greater. We will look for a more appropriate venue (CGC) for next year, as this clearly was a hit.

January 9, Members Q and A: The board was pleased by the turnout, and the feedback.

Dedicated Pickleball Courts:

We are making progress, even if it is slow!

Outdoor Courts

This year, for the first time ever, the City has created a line item in their 4-year budget for the construction of pickleball courts. However, this item is in "Appendix B" which means that the City doesn't have the money, but will make the effort to seek outside funding (e.g. YG). And they have made the effort to identify candidate sites. We are also investigating an option for courts on land owned by KDFN near the intersection of the Alaska Highway and Robert Service Way.

Indoor Courts

For the past few years, we collaborated with other sports groups (tennis, badminton, squash, table tennis) to investigate building an indoor racquet sports facility. When the estimate of the building cost got to \$50 Million, not to mention the O and M costs, the board decided to withdraw from the group. However, sometime later, the group decided that it should look at the possibility of using the current Polarettes gym in Riverdale, once the new Polarettes gym is completed in Whistleband. So, we rejoined the group.

This month YG announced that the gym will be kept as a gym. (Education had other ideas for the future use of that space). Sport Yukon, with support from various user groups, including YPA, was successful in lobbying to keep this gym. How this space will be managed, how the time will be allocated to the various user groups are not yet determined. But at least we are over the first hurdle-it will be kept as a gym.

Jim Gilpin

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