

Judd and Darcy Martin's ongoing commitment to Racquetball

(FRA): When did you first get involved in running programs at the Lakeland and Winter Haven YMCAs?

Judd -- I first started to assist and run programs in 1990 at the Lakeland YMCA and in 2006 at the Winter Haven YMCA. Such programs included Mini-Mixer tournaments, leagues, junior programs (ex. summer camps), Polk Senior Games, and FRA tournaments. Such activities grew a member base for racquetball players past, present, and future players. Keep in mind, I met my future wife on the racquetball court!! Since then, we have both been running racquetball programs at both West Central Florida YMCAs.

On a personal note, I feel privileged and like to thank the West Central Florida YMCA to have the opportunity to play and to be able to continue to lead these efforts at such a young age not only for others, but for myself. The Lakeland YMCA has had such great people associated with all racquetball activities held during the late 80's and 90's. The West Central Florida YMCA has shown that keeping racquetball is an important part of the YMCA vision.

(FRA): Can you summarize how racquetball evolved as you became more involved?

Judd -- The racquetball program at the Lakeland YMCA has always been strong. At the time, I came on board, Grace Page, YMCA Director was directing all racquetball activities since the 1980s. From there, the programs running a junior racquetball team, high school team, and giving private lessons to members and non-members increased participation.

(FRA): What was the biggest difference you have seen since the 90's?

Judd -- A couple of items have changed, the courts have been resurfaced almost every year and the "Y" designation is now at the service box. Also, as everyone is being "green", light timers have now been installed for the courts in Lakeland. The West Central Florida YMCA took over the Winter Haven courts that were initially Drew's Athletic Club. These courts are wood panel with glass back walls. Also, they have been kept in great shape.

(FRA): How many people are playing on the league?

Judd -- Today, there are about 50 players playing in league on Tuesday and Thursday nights at the Winter Haven YMCA.

(FRA): Please summarize the success of your recent tournament.

Darcey -- What we try to do is make a tournament worth the players time and money, for smaller draws or if we have to combine we do Round Robins and/or drop down draws. We also like to provide Gatorade, fruit and food throughout the tourney. Another thing that helps make us successful is that we have a family rate pricing. We like to provide nice shirts and trophies for 1st and second place that are customized for each event.

(FRA): Overall what factors were key in growing racquetball at this location & what advice do you have for others that wish to grow the sport?

Judd -- Dedicated people, as stated above this is what keeps the sport strong at our club or any other racquetball court facility.

(FRA): What are the plans for the future?

Judd -- "Status quo", make sure everything keeps moving forward and providing quality events and programs for new and continuing racquetball players.

(FRA): What can the FRA/USAR do to help improve racquetball at your club?

Judd – A year ago, I wrote to the USAR to see what YMCAs of America and the USAR's relationship was and how it was improving through grassroots efforts both on building new courts and creating programs in existing YMCAs. I was told that there was a relationship there and was being worked at on a national level. I believe if this relationship was worked on at a larger level that every YMCA that was built could have courts and be more affordable for not just adults but juniors to be able to step on a racquetball court and experience the game first hand.

For the Central Florida YMCAs, I believe better education about the USAR's purpose and the sport in general besides the basic instruction is crucial to gaining more players to the sport. Still I think that the basis to grow racquetball from the junior level is at the high school level. More and more high schools are being built without outdoor racquetball courts which will cut down on exposure to the sport.

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