



Summer (July) 2021

Dear Golden Racquets (GR) Members:

This past spring, we opened membership and were able to bring on board 56 new GR members. Thirteen of those new members were able to immediately fill vacant regular summer slots. Most of the other new members actively participated as subs in our many venues. Membership is again closed, but we hope to reopen it again next spring since it helps fill our vacant slots. It also allows us the opportunity to rate new members on outside courts to cut down on the costs of using indoor courts for rating purposes. No wait lists for membership are being used at this time.



In a few days, look for an email from Joe Wittling, the Chief Information Officer (CIO), regarding sign-ups for the fall/winter season. Again, sign-up will be by email and no payment will be made until we know exactly who will be in the various venues. Many of us will be taking vacations next season to make-up for a long period of quarantine. But do not hesitate to sign-up to be a regular player during the season since normally we have a long list of subs available to play for you while you are gone. As a reminder, subs must always pay a sub fee to the player for whom they are playing unless that player says up front no sub fee is required.

Our highest skilled group, 3.9+, now makes up 31% of the players in GR. We will be starting a 3.9+ venue on Saturday mornings at Fairfax Racquet Club, and we are encouraging players, including our newest members, to sign-up for this three-court venue. The early time on a Saturday is not an ideal time and date for many so it should be easier for new members to make the cut off list to play in the venue.

Currently, no outside tennis/pickleball play requires wearing a mask. However, masks are still required at all the in-door clubs. We anticipate this may change soon, and you will be notified when it does.

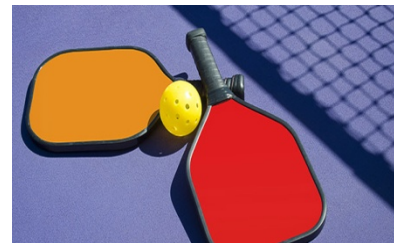
Sincerely,
Tom Burroughs
President, Golden Racquets

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## Pickleball Update

by Gary Hinson, Vice President

Greetings from GR Pickleball world! We are having an exciting summer of pickleball play, with two-court sessions on Monday and Wednesday mornings outdoors at Roundtree Park, and Friday indoors at Burke Racquet and Swim Center. Roundtree Park is our newest GR venue, and it has turned out to be a very nice place to play on these warm summer mornings. Special thanks to Bob Dineen for introducing us to this lovely new venue. We plan to utilize it again for play on Wednesdays this fall.



NOTE: EVERYONE - We need more pickleball subs for our Monday and Wednesday morning sessions at Roundtree. If you would like your name added to the sub list for either day (or both!), please let me know at your earliest convenience. Thanks!

**Pickleball news for the upcoming fall season:** In addition to play at Roundtree (outdoors) and Burke (indoors), we will introduce a NEW outdoor pickleball site on Mondays this fall at **Rolling Valley West Park**.



This new venue is located on Sydenstricker Road, adjacent to the Pohick Regional Library and just off Old Keene Mill Road. **Rolling Valley West**, which will be especially convenient for our GR pickleballers in the Burke and Springfield areas, has two newly repaved and pickleball-lined courts with portable nets on one tennis court -- the same as Roundtree. I encourage you to check it out! (By the way, the PICKLEBALL NET COMBINATION at Rolling Valley West and Roundtree (and all other Fairfax County parks) is **3220**. Please make a note of that and feel free to

pass the net combination on to all of your pickleball-playing friends.

**Helpful Tips:** Would you like to improve your pickleball serve? The following link (<https://usapickleball.org/what-is-pickleball/how-to-play/basics/serving/>) will show you some videos from USA Pickleball (USAPA) that will help you do just that! The video on the **drop serve** will give you some new ideas on how you can vary and improve your consistency in serving. Enjoy! See you on court soon.

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What You Should Know Before Playing Your First Venue

by Dave Fleming, Operations & Planning

Welcome to all the new members of Golden Racquets. As a new member, you are probably anxiously waiting to play at your first venue. Shortly you will be receiving the sign-up form for this coming fall/winter season. Instructions and guidance regarding the sign-up process is discussed in another part of this newsletter. This article addresses what happens after all the sign-up forms have been received and the venue selection process has been completed.

The Venue Notification Process: After submitting your sign-up form, you will be notified of what venue(s) you have been assigned via an email from Operations & Planning (OPS). This email will include a roster of all regular and substitute players for the venue. The venue rosters are developed after all the sign-up forms have been received and the player information entered into the GR member database. At this point, the venue selection group meets to assign members to the venues and the CIO will record the venue assignments in the database. After the selection process has been completed, the CIO will "lock down" the database and notify OPS that the venue rosters can be generated. The rosters



are developed using a program (GR SYS) and the member database. GR SYS will generate (amongst other things): a venue roster in Excel of all players, regulars and subs, for each venue; text files of email addresses for regulars and subs; an emergency contact list which is only sent to the venue captain and the tennis manager of the club.

What You Should Do After Receiving Your Venue Roster:

- When you receive your venue roster, download and save the Excel file to your computer. This will be your working file. OPS will not typically send out updated rosters so any subsequent changes/additions received from the venue captain should be made to this file.
- Review the roster for accuracy of your player information. Notify OPS and the venue captain of any changes/corrections. OPS will send any changes to the CIO who will update the member database and send a confirmatory email to the player and captain. The captain will send the change to all venue players who in turn will update their venue roster Excel file.
- Mark your calendar for the start date, end date, and, if applicable, any "no play" dates.
- Note the venue starting time. Familiarize yourself with the directions to the venue and allow extra time if you haven't been there before. Note, the Burke Racquet Club and the parking garage at Skyline can be a little tricky to find for first timers.

The Venue Captain's Email: After receiving your venue roster and prior to the first play date, your venue captain will send you the "Captain's Email." This email will provide details about how the venue will be run and include specific information such as: format of play, scoring, warm-up period, inclement weather procedures, etc.

Subbing: The substitution process is a key element in the efficient running of a venue. You are responsible for your playing commitments. This includes arranging for a substitute when you are going to miss a play date. The following are some suggestions and best practices. For a more detailed discussion of the substitution process, refer to the December 2019 newsletter on the GR website. If you have further questions, consult your venue captain.

- Be proactive and start early - as soon as you know that you will miss a play date(s) start looking for a sub. Start with the sub list that was provided to each player at the beginning of the season.
- When you sign up to sub at a venue, you are making a commitment to sub during the season. It is not expected that you identify a specific play date(s) but when an opportunity arises that meets your schedule, step up and help out. This will be appreciated by the captain as well as players looking for a sub. Ideally, plan to sub multiple times as your schedule allows.
- Let the venue captain know that you are available to sub, especially if you would like to play as much as possible. The captain will note this and can refer a player looking for a sub directly to you, reducing the time and simplifying the process of finding a sub.

What to Bring: The following are some recommendations of what to bring to your first play date -- (besides your racquet/pickleball paddle):

- water/hydration for both outdoor and indoor venues;
- towel, sun screen, hat, & sunglasses for outdoor venues;
- warm-up balls if you have them -- the captain will provide the game balls for each court;
- back-up racquet in case you break a string.



You are a now member of an organization dedicated to promoting the sport of tennis, physical fitness, and good fellowship. Congratulations and now go out and have some fun and enjoy the experience!

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## Changes to GR's Way of Collecting Venue Fees and Annual Dues

by Al McFarland, Treasurer

In years past, Golden Racquets has asked members to pay for venues they request as regular players at the time they submit the sign-up form for a season. The board members who handle the venue sign-up forms and payments observed that this led to a number of follow-on communications. Many members would not be assigned to all the venues they requested, and would be owed a refund check. Others who agreed to play in unfilled venues they didn't request would be asked to make a second payment. Further, we have wanted to make more use of digital, as opposed to paper, communications.



As an experiment for the 2021 summer season, we changed the process. We sent the summer sign-up form to all GR members as a bulk mailing using the eMailDodo program. The mailing includes a Word and PDF version of the sign-up form. We asked the members to complete the sign-up form and return it as an attachment to an email. The attachment can be a completed Word document, or a scanned or photographed copy of a manually completed form. Members were asked **not** to include a payment with their reply.

Data from the received sign-up forms was entered into a database by the GR CIO. At the closing of the sign-up period, software operating on this database created lists of members applying to each venue. The lists were ordered by several criteria, including member venue choice as the highest priority followed by member seniority. Using these lists, the GR Vice President determines who are assigned to each venue as regular players.

The GR Treasurer built a software program to access these venue assignment lists, other financial records, and the membership data base, and to calculate the amount owed by each member for the annual dues and summer venue fees. The software created an itemized statement for each member and retrieved that member's email address. The results were structured in a format that could be used by the Mergo mail merge capability in Gmail. Before sending the statements out, we checked the amounts owed by each member, from this program's calculations, with those produced independently by the CIO. In April, the Treasurer launched that program from his own Gmail account, and sent 294 emails to members with their individual statements attached.

The Mergo process worked reliably in all respects except one. Some members never received the statements because their email providers sent the emails to spam folders. Except for the spam problem, we feel the process used for the summer sign-up reduced the effort by the CIO and Treasurer. And we think it was also more convenient for members, so we intend to use the same process for the winter 2021/2022 sign-up. To address the spam problem, we will send a "check spam" reminder email to all members, within a day of sending the payment notices.



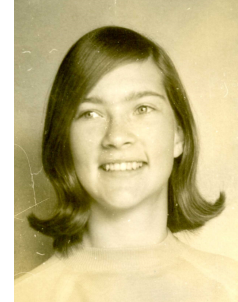
We are asking that members help us for the winter sign-up in the following ways:

1. Do not send a check when you email your completed venue sign-up form. Do not pay until you receive your statement in an individual email.
2. We appreciate the friendly and sociable sentiments in "appreciate all you do" and "checks in the mail" type of replies, but from a bulk mailing of about 350 emails, we get more of those than we need.
3. Remember to check your spam folder if you do not receive your payment statement in your inbox. A "check spam" email will be sent as a follow-up.



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MEET A MEMBER CHALLENGE



These members will be identified in the next newsletter. But until then, do you recognize them?

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## DID YOU KNOW?

- If you or someone you know in GR is feeling under the weather, had an injury or surgery, or lost a loved one, please contact Marion MacRae. Marion will make sure an appropriate card is sent to that person. Please inform Marion by contacting her at 703-751-4994 or at [mmMacrae@comcast.net](mailto:mmMacrae@comcast.net) when you become aware of someone who could use a "we're thinking of you" card!



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Have You Visited the GR Website?



If the answer to this question is "no," you are encouraged to take a few minutes to visit and browse the GR Website by going to www.goldenracquets. You can find lots of information there about membership, coming events, play schedules, GR history, or venues, just to name a few areas of interest. Web master Joanne Hensley updates the website frequently so the information is current, helpful, and user friendly. So take a look and see all the information that is available -- and perhaps even add the website to you "favorites" for easy access!

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## **Reminder to All**

The GR BOD would like to remind all members that the GR directory is published for the use of members only for contacting other GR members about tennis/pickleball matters. Please note and abide by the disclaimer at the top of the directory, which states the following:

"Golden Racquets publishes this seasonal roster as a service to members who wish to contact other members to pay for substitutions, other reasons related to tennis/pickleball activities, or for personal contact between members. It should **NOT** be used as a mailing or contact source for commercial, religious, political solicitation, or any other purpose."

**This Golden Racquets Newsletter is published by the Fairfax County Golden Racquets, a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to senior tennis. You are encouraged to visit the Golden Racquets website at <http://www.GoldenRacquest.org>. Officers and committee chairs are as follows:**

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Special Assistant: Bob Dineen  
Recording Secretary: Connie Dineen  
Treasurer: Al McFarland  
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Chief Information Officer: Joe Wittling  
Operations & Planning Chair: Dave Fleming  
Web Site Manager: Joanne Hensley  
Newsletter Editor: Connie Dineen

**To have an article or picture of interest considered for inclusion in the Golden Racquets Newsletter, please send it to Connie Dineen at:**

[csdineen51@gmail.com](mailto:csdineen51@gmail.com)

**NOTE:** Articles may be of general interest and do not necessarily need to be about tennis.

