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Clay Courts come to Lamorinda

By Marissa Harnett



Photos provided

Longer rallies, a forgiving surface, the ability to slide. These are just a few of the benefits of playing tennis on clay courts. Although standard in Europe (red clay) and common on the east coast (green clay), clay courts are anomalies in the west.

In May, the Moraga Valley Swim and Tennis Club in Orinda completed the installation of two Har-Tru (green clay) courts, making them the only clay courts in the East Bay at the club level.

Easier to maintain than its red clay counterpart, Har-Tru is actually composed of crushed stone. The first court of its kind was built in 1931 in Hagerstown, Md., and by the 1970s, this new surface became wildly popular in the east and south. The trend stopped short of the west, however. Only 1 percent of tennis courts in California are clay compared to 50 percent of courts in Florida. Resurgence in the popularity of Har-Tru, combined with improved strategies for keeping the clay moist, has slowly delivered the green clay to the west. Still, it has been installed mostly at private residences.

MVP tennis pro, Scott Borowiak, who played a major role in acquiring the clay, is excited to finally have them at the club. While hard courts don't last long before they need repairs, clay courts are built to last because they are dynamic. "MVP, like many, many other clubs in northern California, has problems with asphalt courts that crack due to earth movements," explained Borowiak. "Clay courts do not crack and last for 20 to 30 years with only minor repairs necessary."

Many members are surprised by the difference. The clay allows athletes to play longer. "I like it more than I thought I would," said member Julia Grimsrud. "It's not as hot and it's easier on my knees."

From the standpoint of developing future champions, MVP tennis director Heather Randolph is thrilled to add clay courts to the club's Junior Program. "It is widely thought that clay is the best surface to learn tennis on," she said.

Most of the world's top players train from a young age on clay. The United States Tennis Association is even starting to acknowledge the importance of training on clay.

"It shows them (juniors) how to understand the construction of a point, and it gets them to understand what you need (in order) to have longevity in a point," Randolph said.

On clay, the ball typically moves slower. This allows the player more time to reach and return it, thereby making points last longer. "On clay it is not so easy to hit a winner. Usually it takes a combination of good shots to get the opponent in enough trouble to finish the points," said Randolph. "Clay court play develops toughness, stamina, patience and strategy that hard court play does not."

All early signs suggest that the clay courts have been a worthwhile investment for both MVP and the tennis world. "We're getting calls from all over the Bay Area to come play on the clay, especially kids who want to train for national events," Borowiak said. "It's been an exciting time."

Seals End Season in New York

Submitted by Matt Hansen and Jon Zuber



Top row, from left: Coach Jon Zuber, Nick Kresnak, Colby Burns, Will Windatt, Grant Daley, Grant Harper, Nicolas Bamont; bottom row: Brett Donat, Kyle Sintchak, Mark McCurdy, Vince Bianchina, Owen Hansen, Kade Shipp
Photo provided

The LBA Seals completed their spring season by competing in a 104-team national tournament at Cooperstown Dreams Park from June 14-20. The Seals dominated the first three days of pool play, going 6-0 and defeating teams from Ohio, Colorado, Washington, Georgia, Florida, and Virginia. Lamorinda was awarded the No. 3 seed moving into the single-elimination knockout bracket. Lamorinda's bats stayed hot, notching 14 runs while holding the Illinois opponent to one run. On the final day of play, the Seals lost and were knocked out of the tournament, finishing at No. 9. Along with playing, the Seals were able to enjoy visiting the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Strokes Take National Titles

Submitted by Abby Klinkenberg and Lynn Klinkenberg



Varsity Womens 8+, Gold medal (back row): Elizabeth Elmgren, Tara Bozzini (Acalanes), Jennifer Mundelius, Abby Vare, Coxswain Margaret Ross (Miramonte), Evelyn McManus (Miramonte), Olivia Klinkenberg (Acalanes), Marie Johnson (Miramonte), Lindy Clute



Left to right: Varsity Mens 8+, Silver medal: Daniel Hogan (De LaSalle), Kevin Chang (Bentley School), Marshall Krock (Monte Vista HS), Christian Cuellar (Alameda HS), Coxswain Hannah Christopher (Miramonte HS), Josef Starc (Oakland Tech HS), Alexandr Lilichenko (Miramonte HS), Viggo Hoite (Berkeley HS), David Parker (Bentley School)
Photos provided

Oakland Strokes competed at the US Rowing Junior Nationals and took home three medals. Over 130 rowing clubs and 1,800 athletes from across the country traveled to Lake Natoma in Folsom to compete at the event in mid-June.

Both the women's Lightweight 8+ and women's Varsity 8+ took home the gold medal in their respective races, while the men's Varsity 8+ took silver. The Lightweight 8+ boat beat out longtime rival, Long Beach, for the first place finish.

The women's Varsity 8+ boat finished al-

most a boat length ahead of second-place Connecticut.

"It couldn't have gone any better," said junior Marie Johnson. "Our coxswain made a call to 'sprint for the five seniors, for all the pieces that we've done all year; we've worked so hard. It's everything I could have wished for - exhilarating and surreal."

Some of the five graduating seniors missed their graduations to compete. The graduates will be joining university rowing programs at Harvard, Brown (2), Michigan, and UC Berkeley in the fall.

A's Go all the Way

Submitted by Christine Curran



Back row, from left: Coach Brian Green, manager Len Curran, coach Matt Patterson; middle row: Aaron Zemelman, Marco Green, Ben Goldzband, Luke Seeyle, Jackson Cano, Ben Foox; bottom row: Quincey Patterson, Blake Chehlaoui, Nick Curran, Jackson Hink, Riley Bonner and Everett Glass

The Lafayette Little League Athletics clinched the AA Championship by winning two games on June 7. Great pitching, defense and timely hitting all contributed

to the wins. The A's represented Lafayette well by winning their first game of the District 4 Tournament of Champions against Antioch.

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