



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Maggie Paterson volleys the ball in an exhibition match during the opening of the new courts at the Ballantrae Tennis Club last Saturday. Eveline Knoop is in background.

Tennis, anyone? New Ballantrae courts served up

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The Ballantrae Tennis Club has been brought back from the dead thanks to a face-lift and additional courts.

Last weekend, the 30-year-old club officially unveiled its two refurbished courts as well as a pair of brand new ones.

"The two new courts are wonderful," said club president Eileen Gayton.

The project cost \$133,880 and was paid for by the municipality and Mayor Wayne Emmerson's golf tournament fund.

The courts and membership to the club are open to all Whitchurch-Stouffville residents. The courts have free public time available as well as slots for member-only play.

For many years, the group, which at its peak in the early 1980s, had about 300 members, languished with around 100 players

and no regular pro to teach lessons or conduct clinics.

The club, now has a pro available, Adam Johnston. The Musselman's Lake resident is the tennis division director of Johnston Helman Online Academies.

Mr. Johnston was previously an assistant coach at Detroit's Wayne State University and Northern Arizona University.

The additional courts not only provide the opportunity for more people to play, but they also enable the club to be a part of the InterCounty Tennis Association and participate in tournaments.

"The people who want some competitive tennis, they can participate in that," Ms Gayton said.

"In the past, when we hosted our games, you could only put eight players on and then you had to sit and wait maybe two hours," said Maggie Paterson, vice-president of the club.

The courts, however, are not just for those who have been playing tennis their whole lives.

The club executive wants to introduce more children to the sport, which is why they are offering something called progressive tennis.

NEW YOUTH PROGRAM

Progressive tennis uses a systematic progression of court sizes, balls and racquets, to scale the game down to an appropriate level for five to 10 year olds, according to Tennis Canada.

"In progressive tennis, the philosophy is that tennis is a great and fun game to play and the quicker and more skillfully a player can play, the more fun it is," according to Tennis Canada.

Another way kids are being introduced to the sport is through school.

According to Councillor Phil Bannon,

the club has worked out an arrangement with Ballantrae Public School to provide free court time during gym class and after school.

"I want the kids to bring the parents out, not the parents bringing the kids out," Mr. Bannon said, adding if the kids initiate the excitement, it's more apt to get the parents interested and for tennis to become a family activity.

Although community tennis players are enjoying the new courts, the club's long-term goal is to have a dome.

"We need membership to do that," Ms Paterson, adding the dome would not only enable year-round tennis, but also soccer.

"In the next few years hopefully (we'll get the dome). We're positive thinkers. We never thought we would have four courts," Ms Paterson said.

For more information, contact Eileen Gayton at 905-473-5846.

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