



THE Ball's IN YOUR COURT

BY CINDI R. MACIOLEK

Luxury means many things to many people. For some it's a brand spanking new Lamborghini, and for others it could be the 16-course tasting menu at Joël Robuchon along with a bottle of Château Pétrus. It could also be as lovely as taking a hike with your beloved through the trails of Red Rock or the simplicity of walking out your own back door for a quick pick-up game of basketball with the kids.

The luxury of having some kind of game court in your own "back forty" is the fantasy of many a homeowner. Basketball fans and golf enthusiasts have often found ways to sneak in a hoop or a putting green somewhere on their property. However, sports fans — and families — are always

looking for something a little more serious and a little kinder to the body. And, game courts are definitely a great choice.

Just calculate the hassle-reduction factor. No need to load up the SUV with the kids, the cooler and the gear. No sitting on the sidelines, biding your time, waiting your turn on the court. When the game is in your back yard, you're already a winner.

Now, a baseball diamond or a football field might be a little hard to handle on most lots, but plenty of other options exist. Whether your love is tennis, basketball, soccer, bocce or golf, just a little reworking of the landscape and you're in business!



“We’ve always loved sports, especially basketball,” said Henderson homeowner George Farrah. “We saw courts when we were looking at buying our first home, and we decided we needed one. Now we play probably three times a week, especially during basketball season.”

Cavaliers fan Farrah had a 30 x 30 foot Rhino Sports shooting court installed in the spring of 2006. He started with a blank backyard, and wound up with a park-like setting. Half the yard is the shooting court, and the other half is landscaped with grass, trees and bushes. A short wall separates the two areas, and a walkway connects them. Netting above a fence or against the wall keeps the ball in the yard.

Farrah worked with Miles Reynolds, owner of Rhino Sports. “Miles was friendly and nice,” said Farrah. “Once we agreed, the process was very expeditious. When the court was complete, they even threw us a pizza party! It’s great to get personal service from someone in town who is friendly and accessible.”

The court has also done double duty as a reception site. The Farrahs were married in

Ohio, but they held a small gathering at their home in Henderson, and used the court to hold tables and chairs for guests.

“It’s wearing great,” said Farrah. “It’s held up to a lot of use. It’s much easier to take care of than a pool, so easy to maintain, and there’s no monthly expense. We were planning to use it, and we do.”

Professional head hunter Bill Werksman had a Rhino Sports basketball half court installed at his Mountain’s Edge home two years ago, and, “It’s been fabulous so far. There’s no wear and tear in the slightest, and it’s very multi-functional. It’s great for any activities the kids want to do, but we also use it for entertaining. We can put tables on it for large scale events, or set it up with a DJ and use it as a dance floor.”

For Werksman, the 25 x 25 foot court was part of the original landscape plan. “Our kids are getting to the age where they’re playing school sports, so this was a great opportunity to have a backyard court installed. Our daughter is into basketball, so that was our choice.”

Werksman also worked with Reynolds

from Rhino Sports. “We went with Rhino because they have the best selection of product and configuration available. It was a very easy process. The guys at Rhino did a great job with the initial specs and laying out a plan. They also made sure all the subcontractors were in tune with the schedule so the actual installation took less than two weeks.”

Although the installation process is simple, Werksman has some recommendations for people considering a backyard game court. “First of all, definitely understand what you’re looking for in a court. Then, take into consideration the sun element in your backyard. And last, but not least, think about all the potential uses you can have for the court besides sports.”

Rhino Sports has been in Las Vegas since 2001, and Reynolds has owned the business since 2005. They offer a variety of outdoor courts, including tennis, basketball, multi-game, badminton, volleyball, pickleball and short court tennis. They also do batting cages, putting greens and indoor gymnasiums.

The outdoor courts have a cement base, and their signature interlocking tiles are



accessories like hoops, fencing, lights and so forth are added. The surface is installed last. The entire process from design to completion lasts about four to six weeks.

Reynolds is a big believer in what he does. “Rhino’s changed my life in every way.” Well, maybe not every way. He did ask me to mention that he’s single and looking.

AN ECO-FRIENDLY ALTERNATIVE

Tennis lovers may also want to check out NGI Sports. Although they offer golf greens, bocce courts, croquet courts and soccer, their specialty is definitely tennis. While they’ve installed courts at such sites as Penn State Abington and the New Hampshire governor’s mansion, the company has a number of residential customer installations.

“Tennis and golf are recreational activities people can play not only when they’re young, but when they mature,” said Rick Burke, president, NGI Sports. “Our customers range in age from 30 to 70 years. They’re health conscious, and they want to play a sport instead of the monotony of a treadmill. People don’t want to play on concrete or asphalt, because they’re so jarring on the joints. Our courts absorb the impact but still provide a great playing surface.”

The proof is in the company’s numerous customer testimonials. According to an NGI Sports newsletter, Las Vegas resident and Herman Ahlers installed a Pro Court at his home in 2004. He credits the surface with helping him to improve his play. Ahlers has regularly ranked at or near the top of senior tennis players in the world.

placed on top. This set-up allows the court to breathe – to expand and contract in the heat and the cold. It also has some give to it, so it’s joint friendly, kinder to your knees and ankles than just plain cement, yet it gives a true bounce to the ball and has great built-in traction.

“The two main courts we do are the 25 x 25-foot shot court, and the 25 x 45-foot multi-game court,” said Reynolds. “They appeal to young and old alike. Moms like it because the kids can use their scooters and bikes on the same surface, and they always know where their kids are. It becomes the center of the neighborhood, the hangout spot for kids.

“The multi-game court is great because you can play up to 15 different games,” added Reynolds. “It’s big enough to run a net across, so that adds to your options. Every court is customized, so these are basic sizes, but in general, you don’t need a lot of room to have a lot of fun.”

Reynolds was drawn to the game court business because of great childhood memories of playing competitive sports with his three brothers. He appreciates the joy the courts bring to his customers.

“It’s the coolest thing you can put in the back yard,” said Reynolds. “Kids nowadays are playing video games or with their computers. Competitive sports teach you social skills and team work. I love sports for the discipline and the interaction you learn on the court.”

Rhino Sports customers are a very

discriminating lot. “We cater to people who want the best from customer service to playing surface,” said Reynolds. “Our clients have custom homes. They don’t want to have to deal with court issues 10 years from now. One of the main draws is that the surface can last 15-20 years under our extreme heat conditions and still maintain the color and look. Our customers want to entertain their family and friends and to have them be wowed when they come over.”

Most Rhino Sports courts range in price from \$5,000 to \$30,000. Tennis courts range from \$30,000 to \$75,000. The process begins with a free court design. Once the design is accepted, the concrete is poured. Then the





Not every court is built from scratch. Many sites have an existing court that's in need of resurfacing or retrofitting. The community courts at Spanish Trails definitely fit that bill. The association already has NGI courts installed, and plans to add more. Locals who live there can forgo the backyard installation and enjoy the association courts.

Burke says his customers will often install a Pro Court to not only use for tennis, but also for soccer or other games. "There are multiple

use advantages to a tennis court. You can wear a cleat on the surface and not damage it."

The process for installation of an NGI Sports game court takes about two to four weeks. After meeting with the client, they draw up the plans, and get the necessary approvals from the city and homeowners association. Then, the site prep work is done, along with any excavation required. The next step is the stable base, preferably compacted stone. Finally, the playing surface, finishing touches and any additional landscaping are added.

As for maintenance, NGI Sports recommends an annual check-up, but the surfaces carry a multi-year warranty and are expected to last 15 to 20 years. Residential tennis courts, depending on the lighting, fencing and accessories, start at \$60,000. Golf greens run \$15,000 to \$30,000. Bocce courts range in price from \$10,000 to \$12,000.

NGI Sports owns several patents for their surfaces. But, their biggest contribution to the game court world is their commitment to being green.

"We use recycled or sustainable products as much as we can," said Burke. "All our synthetic turf products use a soy-based coating instead of a petroleum based urethane. Our all-weather court uses recycled yarns and soy based backing. And, when we retrofit or resurface an existing concrete court, it's nicer to the environment and less cost. We try to be as green as we can."

While the economy is still in a funk, a game court can be a great investment for the future. If you're hanging around the house, you might as well enjoy yourself.

Tennis, anyone?



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