

Los Angeles Times

14 inches; 497 words

SUNDAY, JULY 13, 1986, WESTSIDE, PART 9, PAGE 1
COPYRIGHT 1986 / LOS ANGELES TIMES

000069611
FAX page #10

Paddle Tennis Court Comes Up Short

■ Players Say It's Unusable Because Santa Monica Botched Design

By ALAN CITRON

Like many sportsmen, Bill Brothers knows all about the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. The thrill came earlier this year, when Brothers helped persuade the city of Santa Monica to build its first public paddle tennis court on the beach. The agony came last month, when Brothers discovered that the court cannot be used.

"The playing area is too small," said Brothers, a 37-year-old real estate broker who is known as Mr. Paddle Tennis because of his devotion to the game. "The city relied on the wrong measurements. Now they say they won't fix it."

Brothers said that a regulation paddle tennis court measures 40 feet by 80 feet. The city's court is 30 by 60. That makes it unplayable for anyone hoping to run or volley, Brothers said.

Furious About Mistake

Paddle tennis junkies, a relatively small group of people who can usually be found on the courts along Ocean Front Walk in Venice, are furious about the mistake. Brothers said the game, which looks like a compressed version of traditional tennis, is gaining in popularity but cannot continue to expand unless cities such as Santa Monica build more courts.

Venice's eight public courts are overcrowded, even on weekdays, Brothers said. In Santa Monica, all of the courts except the ones at Santa Monica High School are private. Many players have nowhere to go, he said.

"There's a tremendous demand for paddle tennis in Santa Monica," Brothers

said. "People were counting on using the court. They can't believe this has happened. What are we supposed to play on? Nothing?"

The city confirmed that it botched the design of the paddle tennis court, which is at the new Ocean View Park on the southern end of Santa Monica's beachfront. But Donald T. Arnett, director of the Recreation and Parks Department, said "it's too late in the game" to correct the mistake.

Wrong Measurements

Arnett said the recreation area was designed by a private landscape architect who apparently relied on the wrong set of measurements. He said his office did not catch the mistake and did not receive any complaints when the design was discussed at a lengthy series of public hearings before the City Council and the state Coastal Commission.

"Nothing was ever said about it," Arnett said. "Now the concrete is poured. The surfacing has been laid down. It's just too far along."

Brothers said he assumed that the city knew the correct dimensions because he personally wrote them out for officials six years ago, when the paddle tennis plan was first discussed. He said the city also could have copied the dimensions of the courts at Santa Monica High School.

With the new park scheduled to open at the end of the summer, Brothers said he still hopes that the city will have a change of heart. But Arnett said that is unlikely.

Part of Agreement

The park, which will cost about \$750,000, is being built as part of a development agreement with the owners of Sea Colony II, a condominium complex. Arnett said his office would have to redesign the entire recreation area to make room for an enlarged paddle tennis court. A new design would also require the approval of the Coastal Commission.

Arnett said he regrets the error. But he predicted that some players would use the court anyway. Sol Hauptman, the

reigning king of paddle tennis, said Arnett is mistaken.

"The court is way too short," said Hauptman, a Culver City resident who holds nearly 20 national paddle tennis titles. "It's like being a mouse in a cage. You're trapped. You can't move. It does more harm than good. No one will play on that court, because they'll see that it's designed all wrong."

Times Staff Writer

NOTE:

May not be reproduced or retransmitted without permission. For permission, call: 800 LA TIMES, Ext. 74564.