

Further Thoughts on Shuffleboard Courts

TEMPUS FUGIT—*time goes on*,—and this is my third report to shufflers of my work on improving courts. I have been shuffling since 1950, and have been working on possible improvements for the past six years, but progress has been slow. After an idea looks good when applied on small experimental slabs, there is the difficulty of reducing the idea to practice, and a time test. Still further, there is the attitude of many shufflers that the game is plenty good as it is, and the resistance to any change.

The main faults of courts still prevail. They are:

1. Courts are mostly not level.
2. Courts are not uniform in slickness, in that one part of a court may be faster than another part.
3. Many lines are not clear and sharp, and some lines have a drag on the discs.
4. Practically all clubs have some fast and some slow courts, and some in between. Players who go from a fast to a slow court, and vice versa are handicapped because of the time required to get used to the court.

Solutions to correct the above conditions are not easy. In last year's report in the Preview, I mentioned one attempt to make an almost perfect court, by precasting the court in a number of pieces, to be set on piers, and each piece to have integral levelling screws, so that the court could be levelled from time to time as required. Also the precasting process made it possible to mold depressed grooves for the lines, so that the discs would not touch the lines at all. Glass beads were imbedded in the top coat of the court, so that wax need never to be used, and also to provide a uniform and slick surface.

A manufacturer had indicated his willingness to go into the manufacture and sale of these precast courts. He had even made up one piece to assure himself that this could be done practically. However, after some investigation, the manufacturer decided that the potential immediate market would not justify the rather large expenditure for the special equipment needed for the manufacture of these courts.

In spite of the fact that I have at our home in Florida, a precast court made along the above lines, that shows conclusively what can be done, and what results can be had, nothing so far has been done to make these courts available. I have tried to figure out some method to make these courts simply, eliminating the necessity for expensive equipment, but so far without success.

After the painful realization that some other solution would be required, I have concentrated on the following:

1. A method of putting a slick surface on a court, using glass beads imbedded in cement. This is, I believe, an improvement over the use of polyurethane varnish. This method also permits (by the use of masking tape over the lines before applying the coat of cement) of completely sunken lines, that are clean and sharp. The slick surface is quite uniform—does not need wax, and is resistant to weather conditions. I have put this surface on two courts in the Hendersonville, N. C., area, for a time trial.
2. A method of putting a levelling topping on an existing court, thickness from about $3/8"$ to $3/4"$, the topping to have glass beads throughout the whole topping. Experimental installations have been made, and it is evident that the process is not easy, in that it involves special aggregate, and

special care in order to make a good bond to the existing court. However, enough has already been done to indicate that this process can be refined, so that excellent results can be obtained. A court can be levelled, and the surface will be slick and uniform, with an estimated cost of about \$40 for materials, and about 32 man hours of labor. Work on this type of topping is being scheduled in various areas.

3. In the construction of new courts, it is comparatively simple to use glass beads in the top coat, so as to get a surface that will never require waxing, and that will not require any long breaking-in period. The method of providing this special topping is not complicated, and I will be glad to give details upon receipt of a self-addressed stamped envelope.

During the past years, I have had personal visits at our Florida home by many shufflers interested in my work. I have been glad to show them my lab, and the many experiments made there. In addition to personal visits, I have received many letters from all over the country, asking for further information, and giving me the results of their experience. All this has been helpful, and encouraging, and has helped me to continue my work in spite of some disappointments.

In summarizing, whatever knowledge I have gained by the many experiments and installations over the past years, it appears that the use of glass beads offers greater possibilities for better courts. Waxes have been improved in the past few years, and also there is a greater realization that for waxed courts especially, more frequent cleaning of courts is necessary. However, waxed courts are rarely uniform in slickness over their entire area. Further, they are quite susceptible to changes in slickness because of temperature, humidity, and dust conditions.

I am pleased at the interest shown in my work especially in the past year or so. There seems to be a greater acceptance of the view that shuffleboard courts can be improved, and that it may be that persistent work and experiments may do the job. I am now 73, and hope that there is still time enough to establish definite evidence for the above conclusions. I fully intend to keep on working to reach this goal.

Please make a note that our home is in a section known as Tomoka Estates, which is three miles north of Ormond Beach city center. We are only about 200 yards east of Highway No. 1, on Coquina Avenue. This avenue parallels the Tomoka River. As a matter of fact, our home is on the river. Drop in some time.

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(This page was paid for by Mr. Branda—Editor).