



The Charlotte

Dilly News

November 2019

All Things Pickleball in
the Greater Charlotte Area
...and Beyond



Our Most Valuable Picklers this month are the fine folks responsible for Pickleball Charlotte at The Sports Connection: Owners **Allan and Kelly Haseley** and Director of Pickleball **Leesa Walker**.

Kelly is a Charlotte native and Allan hails from Grifton NC. They met during rec volleyball at UNC-Chapel Hill where Kelly played varsity golf and Allan club volleyball. After marrying in 1990 they lived in Greenville SC for first two years with Allan's computer business and moved to Charlotte in 1992 to do consulting in software for property management.

They could not find anywhere in Charlotte to play competitive volleyball, so in 1995 they rented a warehouse for friends and volleyball players to play, calling it Volleyball Unlimited. In 1996 they formed Carolina Juniors Volleyball (CJV) which today has over 2,500 members playing on hundreds of teams. In 1998 they rebranded as Sports



Warehouse and built their 35,000 square foot facility on Granite Street, dedicated to volleyball and indoor soccer. Over the years, they have grown to 7 facilities including Granite Street, Ballantyne, Northlake, and two Inner Peaks Climbing Centers. True entrepreneurs, from those first 4 volleyball courts they have tried different things over the past 25 years including volleyball, soccer, football, basketball, inline hockey, tennis, fitness centers, paintball, skate park, rock climbing, ropes course, team building, laser tag, bouncers, arcade games, bowling, gymnastics, parties, camps... and now PICKLEBALL!

The Haseleys were first introduced to pickleball when Kelly was invited by some friends to a clinic at Carolina Courts in Indian Trail. Meanwhile they realized that the flooring at their Granite Street facility was in need of replacement. Allan told us, *"in our search for flooring options, we started noticing people hitting a yellow ball with holes in it and a low net. A friend forwarded a copy of the Charlotte Dilly News to us and we contacted Dick & Desire' Osman for more information. They invited us to play at Carolina Courts and*

there we met lots of pickleball players, enthusiasts and fanatics. One was Leesa Walker."



Leesa is from Greenville SC, and grew up in a Navy family, moving many times. She attended Appalachian State as a scholarship softball and field hockey player. Leesa says, "I moved to Charlotte in 1983 straight from college graduation to accept a teaching and coaching position at Charlotte Country Day School where I was for 36 years prior to Sports Connection. I can honestly say that I have been blessed with 2 dream jobs in my lifetime!"

Leesa and husband John (a new USAPA Ambassador and frequent tournament player) began playing pickleball when their neighborhood The Palisades opened 4 pickleball courts in March of 2017. "Trish Snyder came and gave a clinic for interested residents and it was 'love at first dink!' From there John and I, with direction from Trish, began practicing and playing competitively! Pickleball was instantly addicting!"

The goal with the floor replacement at Sports Connection was primarily volleyball, but they searched for a floor that could also be used for pickleball. Allan says about this, "CJV (Carolina's Junior Volleyball) is a seasonal sport with most of the programs after 4pm on weekdays, allowing for lots of pickleball court time on weekdays and some weekday evenings and weekends during the off seasons. In the past the extra court space was used for soccer, futsal or basketball, but we much prefer to use the extra space for pickleball. We look forward to the cold weather this winter pushing players indoors for their morning weekday games. Open Play, Round Robin Tournaments, Lots of Clinics and Private Lessons have occupied the courts so far. Currently we have had over 800 different people play at Pickleball Charlotte in only 5 months since opening in June. We will be hosting the NC Powerade Games in summer 2020."

The Haseleys are pickleball players as well as facility owners. Kelly says, "since we do not play volleyball anymore, we were looking for a sport we could play together, was competitive and fun and to meet new people, but also could give us a good work out and something we could play year-round. I told Allan, 'if we want to be good when we are "older" (we are 55 and 56) we need to start practicing and playing NOW!' So far pickleball has checked all the boxes of what we were looking for."

Allan says of the future, "Our goal is to have Pickleball Charlotte continue to grow at our Granite Street location in South Charlotte and to be able to add pickleball courts at our Northlake and Matthews locations in the future. We would love to add outdoor courts as well." Leesa adds, "My hope is to work with the Haseley's to make Pickleball Charlotte the number one venue for instruction, competition and play. I feel instruction is the critical piece as there are many places to play in the Charlotte area, but Pickleball Charlotte offers ONE STOP shopping with play, competition, instruction and a fully stocked pro shop!"

For more information on Open Play, Special Events, Leagues, Clinics, Lessons, Court Rentals and Tournaments at Pickleball Charlotte visit their website... [Pickleball Charlotte.com](http://PickleballCharlotte.com)