

Like Rust, Pickleball Never Sleeps

By Bob Zyontz

If the pickleball industry is the irresistible force, then I'd hate to be the immovable object. The sport is inexorable, and neither sleeps nor takes a vacation. As players and fans, we watch the industry hustle to keep pace with the growing number of players and the increasing demand for more facilities to accommodate them.

It should come as no surprise then that results from the Topline Participation Report for 2024, published by the Sports and Fitness Industry Association, support that reality. The report states that "Pickleball continues to be the fastest growing sport in America, having grown 51.8% from 2022 to 2023, and an incredible 223.5% in the last three years". That's warp speed Scotty! This expansion will impact the Regency pickleball community throughout 2024, and beyond, as new facilities are introduced right in our back yard. So, what exactly should we expect?

Robbinsville, NJ, is about a 14-mile drive from Camp Regency. It is best known for giant warehouses and DeLorenzo's Tomato Pies, but that is about to change this fall. The town is bracing to become the epicenter of New Jersey pickleball with the opening of the Robbinsville Pickle House. This is a really big dill!

The Asbury Park Press reports that this 60,000 square foot, premier sports complex is being developed in collaboration with USA Pickleball and will become the largest pickleball facility in the mid-Atlantic region. Regency picklers, if they choose, will have the opportunity to play at a world-class facility that offers them:

- Over 20 pickleball courts.
- In-house restaurant and bar cafe.

- State-of-the-art lighting to optimize playability.
- Year-round temperature control, A/C, radiant heat, and heated courts.
- Annual memberships and hourly rentals.

For those Regency picklers who like to travel, the Robbinsville Pickle House might be worth the road trip to scope out.

Closer to home, the Freehold Athletic Club, following a growing trend to convert vacant commercial and retail space into pickleball facilities, plans to re-purpose and occupy over 31,000 square feet in the former Sears store at the Freehold Raceway Mall.

NJ.com reported on April 3, 2024, that the facility is scheduled to open in December of this year pending approval from the Freehold Township Planning Board. Once it goes live, the venue will offer customers:

- Five pickleball courts.
- Lounge, pro shop, juice bar.
- Full gym featuring cardio and strength equipment.
- Massage therapy, sauna, yoga studio.
- On-site chiropractor.
- Golf simulator.

Because Freehold is so close, why not make a day of it? You can play pickleball, alleviate your back and neck pain, and take a sauna, all in the same place. What a great gift card idea for your favorite pickleballer... or for yourself.

And now for something completely different. When someone mentions Princeton, what does your mind conjure up? World-class university? Renowned alumni? PJ's Pancake House? Maybe so, but it's certain that no one would ever use the words

Princeton and Bruiser in the same sentence as the former is totally incongruous with the latter. Yet, nothing should surprise us. According to New Jersey Pickleball, Princeton is now home to the Princeton Bruisers, one of six new teams being added to the six existing teams in the National Pickleball League – a professional league for players 50 and up.

Each team will have a roster of 14 players – seven men and seven women, and there is even a combine and a draft . Among the players entering the league this season is NFL veteran and former Heisman Trophy winner Danny Wuerffel who is looking for another bite at the apple, but in a different sport.

The 2024 season will feature five monthly events that will take place between May and September with locations still being finalized. As fans, we can expect some dynamic competition across men's, women's, and mixed doubles matches with every event offering prize money. This is worth keeping on the radar.

With new pickleball facilities cropping up across New Jersey, our Dinkers, Lobbers, and Bangers will have more places to play... and that includes our new, six court facility, because remember Toto, there's no place like home to pickle.