

Beverly Hills offers new machine

Android—the perfect tennis partner

By SUSAN TAUBER KLEIN

Are you tired of searching for the perfect tennis partner—one who will be there while you work on lobs and overheads; one who won't get angry if you return a ball with a flat, one-sided smash? If you hit all your "court shots?"

If you are, then Beverly Hills Racquet Club has the answer to your problems. It's called the Android System, a new idea from the Midwest.

Manufactured and sold out of Cincinnati, the Android System is a tennis lane with a ball machine in the middle and netting on three sides. It has a regulation-size net and a tapestry marking the different service areas. The ball machine spits out a ball every few seconds, enabling a player to practice alone.

"The machines are silent, not like the 'tattoo' sound of the conventional ball machines," said Tom McCarthy, the club manager.

Beverly Hills installed its practice lanes on one of its indoor tennis courts last October. It was the first club in Michigan to offer the Android System to its members.

Designed as an aerospace engineer, the 12' x 14' inside lanes simulate a tennis court.

TO USE THE system, anyone can buy a slot at the club's reception desk and give it to Bob Thomas, who runs the Android System. He will give you an exchange token which you deposit in a slot at the lane for 30 minutes of grueling practice.

By using the system, a player can select fast or slow balls, long or short, high or low, and tennis pro Jack Pichener "And, on, under courts,

balls are propelled from side to side."

The only time a player may want to turn off the control panel is when too many balls have collected on the court. "But your clock time is still running," Thomas said.

McCarthy mentioned that the lane is designed so the player shouldn't have to pick up balls, unless he misses them completely. "When you return a tennis ball, if you return it with a flat, one-sided smash, the ball falls into a ditch and is fed back into the ball machine," he said.

The netting above and on each side of the lanes keep the balls from scattering.

Not only can a beginner, intermediate or advanced player work on perfecting form, the lanes can work on placement on the attractive, carpeted lanes.

By watching the zones marked on the tarp which makes up the back wall, a player can determine the ball will land in his opponent's court.

For a returned ball and you've hit a cross-court shot. If you want to hit down the line, aim for the yellow. But beware of the red line. It means your ball went out of the court.

The tarp is designed so you can practice lobs, drives, backhands, forehands and serves.

TOUCH PRACTICE times are only set for 30 minutes, the time limit is considered long enough.

"I like the tennis lanes, but they wipe me out," said Karen Scott of Birmingham. "I'm not a tennis player, but I'm a tennis player. And, her teammates were using the machine to warm up before a meet. "I need someone to share the half hour with me."

The tennis pros at the club use the lanes for lessons.

"We had to devise new lesson plans around the Android," said Joeli. "But your clock time is still running," Thomas said.

The Android System tennis lane are open to the public and to members seven days a week from 7 a.m. to midnight.

"The lanes are very busy during the weekends and at night," Joeli said. "I suggest you call ahead to make sure the lanes are open."

She said that many members are scheduling series of lessons on the lanes.

"They're finding it so fantastic," Joeli said. "It helps their rhythm, stroke and control."

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Prices for the 30-minute session are: for members \$4 for the smaller lane, \$4.75 for

the larger. All the lanes are as long as half a tennis court. The only differences

are in the Spots of Southfield called the Android System an inexpensive way to get a lot of practice. With an old-fashioned ball machine, you have to pay more and you have to pick up your own balls."

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Soccer clinic set

The Farmington Soccer Club has organized a new soccer clinic to be conducted by Wayne Purman, director of the Michigan Soccer School.

The clinic will consist of four sessions on Saturday mornings, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., beginning Jan. 8 at Powers Junior High School.

The clinic is open to adults only. There is no registration.



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Tennis balls collect behind the android machine, which splits them back at the tennis player in the background. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)

Winter activities planned

By LEM MESEE

Addison Oaks and Independence Oaks are open to Oakland County residents for snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing.

They are the only two of seven county parks open for the season.

Addison Oaks, north of Rochester off Romeo Road, offers miles of trails a quiet place to ski, sled and play in numerous open fields for snowmobiling.

Lakes for ice fishing and skating have a warming house. Addison Oaks is open from 10-10 weekends only.

Independence Oaks on Saginaw Road, two miles north of Pine Knob in Clarkson, is open seven days a week from 8 a.m. until dusk.

There's ice fishing on Crooked Lake for bluegill and perch. Warming shelters and fires are available.

IF YOU WANT to spend New Years Day counting birds, you'll have your chance at Kensington Metropark beginning at 8 a.m. Saturday.

Hort Hobman, park naturalist, says reservations are required and you should bring a lunch. Call the park office in Milford at 655-1561 for reservations.

WRITTEN PERMISSION will be required of all hunters, fishermen and users of recreational equipment when they enter private land is that land is posted against trespassers.

Gov. William G. Milliken signed Act 145, sponsored by State Sen. Gary Baker (R-Hudsonville), who hails from the fine pheasant hunting farmland on the west side of the state. The bill was supported by

the state Department of Natural Resources, Michigan United Conservation Clubs and the Michigan Federation of State Government. While the new law creates some additional restrictions, it also adds some valuable protections to the recreational user against unfair and arbitrary trespass charges.

What this means is that the tag-hunters have again given up a bad name and we now must put up with another both-ersome—if necessary—restriction.

GOOD NEWS for rabbit hunters. The outlook is good and the season is starting to be the best ever.

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