

OUTDOORS

Tennis Time

Serving players on the islands



PHOTOS BY JIM ANDERSON

Ramon Murray and Terry Doland of Orlando hit the courts at South Seas Resort. For guests without an opponent, the pro shop will line up matches with other guests or racquet-toting locals.

Whether you're looking for a game, a new outfit, or a little instruction, you'll soon come to associate Sanibel and Captiva islands with tennis. The popular sport, which is played year-round on the islands, is a great way to meet new friends. Many visitors find they are able to play with local friends year after year.

Check with a few of the local pro shops

By Libby Boren McMillan

to see what's cooking on the courts near you.

South Seas Resort on Captiva has eighteen courts. A few of these hard-surface courts are lighted for nighttime play. The resort also offers one-on-one instruction. Lessons are available by the half-hour or hour with head pro John Williams or one of his staff.

The pro shop at South Seas Resort carries a few lines of clothing, cold drinks, towels, hats, grips, and it offers racquet stringing.

Don't have an opponent? The pro shop staff will gladly make calls to connect guests of the resort with other playing guests or racquet-toting locals. If enough interested guests are on the property, the resort also offers organized mixed-doubles, adult clinics, and kids' clinics. Forgot your racquet? They have loaners.

'Tween Waters Inn on Captiva has two hard-surface courts for guests. The resort also offers clinics by a local teaching pro from 9 to 11 a.m. Tuesdays, Thursdays, and

Saturdays. The courts often get a sea breeze from the nearby Gulf of Mexico. You will, however, find yourself distracted by the view of the resort's large swimming pool and pool bar, directly adjacent to the courts. Perhaps you can use this to your advantage!

Head pro Toni Halski has enjoyed giving lessons for more than two decades at Sundial Beach Resort on Sanibel, where guests and the public are invited to sign up for clinics or lessons. Lessons are available by the hour or half-hour with resort pros. Sundial also works hard to arrange matches between guests, locals, and visitors staying at nearby resorts, so check in at the pro shop when you arrive.

Families who play will appreciate the ambience at Sundial's courts, where proud parents watch the one-hour Junior clinics, and half-hour Tiny Tot clinics daily. Adult clinics are also offered each day, and round robins are organized when enough guests are in residence.

Racquets are available for rent for on-property use, and the resort has a ball machine available for rent. You'll also have the opportunity to shop for women's clothing and tennis accessories. Sundial sells balls by the sleeve and offers racquet stringing.

Sundial has a very active tournament schedule from May through November, including National Tennis Rating



Courts at The Dunes are some favorites among local tennis enthusiasts, such as Doris Gensel, Flo Williams, Vera Breunig, and Ray Vazquez, all of Sanibel.

help of longtime head pro Terry See, who offers private lessons, group lessons, and round robins throughout the week.

The Dunes shop carries apparel, tennis shoes, racquets, and all accessories. As a full-service shop, it also provides stringing and gripping. Of particular interest will be the wide array of demo racquets that people can rent before making the big decision about replacing a racquet. Players also can rent any one of three ball machines.

weekly tennis memberships are available, or you may pay as you play, with hourly court fees. (With a membership, you get a reduced rate on several games).

The full-service pro shop offers apparel, equipment, and stringing, as well as racquet rental.

Each year, Beachview holds several special events and exhibition matches. A local favorite is the exhibition for the Make-A-Wish Foundation; tennis star

BEACHVIEW GOLF & TENNIS CLUB'S HEAD TENNIS PRO JUSTIN TOUCHSTONE WAS RANKED IN 2000 AS NO. 1 IN FLORIDA IN THE 25 AND OLDER DIVISION.

Program (NTRP) and United States Tennis Association (USTA) tournaments. This fall, the resort expects big turnouts for two popular annual tourneys: October's Champagne Sips, with champagne iced down on each court for sipping between matches, and November's Turkey Bowl. These two particular tournaments attract a large number of local players, so suit up, come out, and see how much fun you can have.

On Sanibel, serious players often gravitate to The Dunes Golf & Tennis Club on Sand Castle Road. Offering seven clay courts at its popular tennis center, The Dunes gladly takes reservations from non-members for court time. The Dunes is open daily and it also conducts several tournaments throughout the year.

Visitors can beef up their game with the

Should you feel the desire for a cocktail, snack, or meal after crushing your opponent, head straight for the nearby clubhouse restaurant and lounge.

The year 2000 saw a terrific new tennis center open on the islands. Beachview Golf & Tennis Club on Sanibel is a state-of-the-art facility with five sub-irrigated HydroGrid courts. The club didn't mess around when choosing a pro, either; Beachview's head tennis pro Justin Touchstone in 2000 was ranked No. 1 in Florida in the 25-and-older division. Both adults and children can participate in specialized clinics or sign up for private lessons by the hour. Round robins are arranged in season.

Being a relative newcomer to the tennis scene on the island, Beachview offers highly personalized service. Monthly and

Johan Kreik has played this particular Beachview event the past two years.

Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa is at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River, adjacent to the Sanibel Causeway tollbooth at Punta Rossa. Having twice hosted the Davis Cup, this impressive tennis center sports grandstands. Take a short drive and treat yourself to a match on Center Court.

The tennis center is open to guests of the hotel and members. The facility offers eight clay courts, rental racquets, and private or semi-private lessons by the hour or half hour. At 10 a.m. daily the pro conducts a "Stroke of the Day" clinic. The pro shop carries tennis apparel, and is open to the public.

The City of Sanibel's Recreation Complex also offers island visitors an easy—and free—way to play tennis. Four

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hard-surface courts are at the Rec Complex on Sanibel-Captiva Road, just west of the Rabbit Road intersection. If you're willing to work around an always-changing schedule of availability, these courts are a good option for families, people on budgets, and players who don't mind hard courts and some traffic noise.

The city offers morning tennis classes beginning at 9 a.m. for only \$6 per person. These classes are well attended and you'll meet other players; however, be advised that the classes break "for a few weeks here and there." Classes run until about 1 p.m., and can take up all the courts. The Sanibel School also uses the courts periodically during the academic year.

Lights are installed for nighttime play until 10 o'clock. Restroom facilities and a water fountain are also nearby, but many take their own drinks.

Wherever you play on the islands, do remember to drink plenty of fluids before each match and re-hydrate during each set. Sunscreen, sunglasses, and a visor will also come in handy. Tennis balls can be purchased at both Bailey's General Store and Jerry's Foods on Sanibel. One last tip: You'll be really happy you're wearing cotton as you start to break a sweat!

Happy hitting, and have fun on the courts. 🎾

Freelance writer and Sanibel resident Libby Boren McMillan is a regular on island tennis courts and in local tournaments.

SWING BY A LOCAL COURT

Beachview Golf & Tennis Club,
Sanibel, 239/472-9099

The Dunes Golf & Tennis Club,
Sanibel, 239/472-3522

Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa,
Punta Rassa, 239/466-2159

South Seas Resort,
Captiva, 239/472-5111 ext. 4151

Sundial Beach Resort,
Sanibel, 239/395-6016

'Tween Waters Inn,
Captiva, 239/472-5161

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