

Dazzleball Turns Pickleball into Lights-Out Success

The first annual Dazzleball Social and Shoot-Out in Southwest Florida was hosted by Antilles in Naples, introducing fluorescent equipment to expand night-play options.

BY JEFF STEVENS/LUCITT & CO.

What started as an end-of-summer real estate sales promotion for a luxury new construction development in south Naples turned into a shining success for players when one of pickleball's previously under-noticed facets was highlighted. Most pickleballs, including Franklin, Onix and Dura to name a few, are fluorescent and can glow naturally under blacklight. Additionally, much of the existing equipment has fluorescent trim. As fashion and sport intersect, neon trims on paddles, shoes and clothing have proliferated, all of which are revealed in bold relief under blacklight, even surpassing white clothes as nighttime attention getters.

Antilles has courted the pickleball community since on-site sales took off during Naples' winter 20-21 season. The sport is well-ensconced in the resort town's list of attractions. Three major pickleball tournaments are held there annually, including the premiere US Open in April.

This year's event, rescheduled after 2020's cancellation, was particularly well-attended, creating in the short run a shortage of available court bookings for locals and visitors alike. As it had all season long, Antilles made its four state-of-the-art pickleball courts available to any players or teams edged out by the tournament influx, even completing the lighting for night play ahead of schedule. They are all that pickleball can be—fun, active, loud and happy.

Antilles' regulation pickleball courts were purposely built away from the residences in consideration of the sport's accompanying noise level. Observers not familiar

with the game learned almost with the first volley that players are there to have fun as well as win, and every time Antilles hosted players during the past winter season, the players brought their game with a side of laughter.

The Dazzleball Social and Shoot-Out marked the end of Naples' extended season and was by far Antilles' most successful introductory event. Promoted from within and recognized as friendly to pickleball players from previous events, it was the community's best-attended event to date. Those who wanted to play registered in advance as directed, so provisions would be adequate and brackets could be created. They arrived at dusk for regulation bocce, barbecue, drinks and socializing—many dressed and accessorized for maximum glow-in-the-dark effects—and when the blacklights came on after dark, they and the courts came to life.

Pairs of ultraviolet lights illuminated the sides of each of Antilles' four courts. All lines and net tops had been re-lined with fluorescent-colored tape and the spectacle was bold, bright and a little eerie. Memorably, when play began, the natural fluorescence of the game balls made them look like comets, flaring again and again to the music and laughter. Sunset that night was almost as colorful as the courts, the moon was a few days from full, and a good time was had by all.

