

Warming Huts – More than Just a Place to Go to Get Out of the Cold”

There’s a growing trend in paddle that is helping to make the sport hotter than ever. Well – at least warmer than ever. Today’s warming huts are elegant, multifunctional structures with expansive social spaces both indoors and out, kitchens, bathrooms and more. In fact, the term “hut” may not do these buildings justice.

A force behind many of these new and improved huts is Chris Casiraghi, President of Reilly Green Mountain Platform Tennis. Most know the firm for their 45-plus year history and innovation building paddle courts. Yet, they have expanded their offerings to meet the changing needs of their clients. “We have definitely seen a shift in what our clients are asking for when it comes to warming huts,” he explains. “More than a decade ago, Reilly Green Mountain built (for the most part) modest warming huts. Today we are asked to build state-of-the-sport, useful buildings to sit alongside our paddle courts.”

In fact, Casiraghi has been a catalyst to conceptualizing, designing and building many of today’s premier facilities. For example, he has been working with Greenwich Country Club in Greenwich, Connecticut for the past three years to bring their concept of a full paddle complex to fruition. The club’s new facility was completed just after Thanksgiving and includes four relocated paddle courts, a large spectator area and a new 1,300 square foot warming hut complete with a kitchen, two bathrooms, fireplace, cathedral ceilings and floor-to-ceiling glass walls for 180 degree “front row seat” viewing.

The design and construction of a successful warming hut is always a collaborative effort between the club, paddle chair, architect and builder. Having spent more than 30 years building courts, warming huts and everything in between, Casiraghi works closely with all involved to ensure that the hut is well-built and user friendly. For example, while an architect might think the best place for a door is at the shortest distance to the court, we might see that spot as the perfect place for a picture window. Many other factors are involved as well, such as how to orient a hut for best viewing angles of the court. Reilly Green Mountain welcomes calls about plans for warming huts and is happy to share insights and experiences which might shed some light on how to build a better shelter – modest or grand.

But, does a good warming hut help grow the game? Casiraghi thinks yes: today’s warming huts help to expand the paddle player base. It allows more people to come out and play at one time. It can be as simple as people not having to wait in their cars for a court to open. Today’s new warming huts become a destination and could change how some look at paddle. Getting more people to watch the game will surely convert spectators to players. A well thought out facility helps deepen the important social aspect of the game and brings another dimension to a club for its members.

The majority of clubs do have some form of warming hut. Yet, clubs now may be looking for an update to their existing warming huts, or a growing paddle program might warrant a more substantial building.

That was the case in Wilton, Connecticut at the Wilton Riding Club. To accommodate a burgeoning number of paddle players, the club decided to expand its paddle facility two and a half years ago and had Reilly Green Mountain install a fourth court. Reilly Green Mountain then went on to round out the complex this summer with the addition of a new warming hut. The building is a beautiful post-and-beam structure in keeping with the existing architecture at the club. It has a kitchen, two bathrooms, a large living room, a gaming/gathering space and a second floor loft. Reilly Green Mountain also installed a fireplace on the outside of the facility with a wraparound deck and built-in seating so people both indoors and out could enjoy a warm fire while watching their favorite sport.

Reilly Green Mountain also builds conventional warming huts. This summer the firm completely redesigned the paddle facility at Redding Country Club in Redding, CT. The new hut is a modern take on the traditional warming hut – a 500 square foot building with four oversized picture windows for viewing with French doors that open up onto an expansive spectator area. “We also rebuilt the club’s two paddle courts. The complex is terrific and ready for play and socializing,” he adds.

Whether a traditional hut or a courtside castle, adding a new warming hut to a club’s paddle facilities is sure to be a hit with players and fans alike.