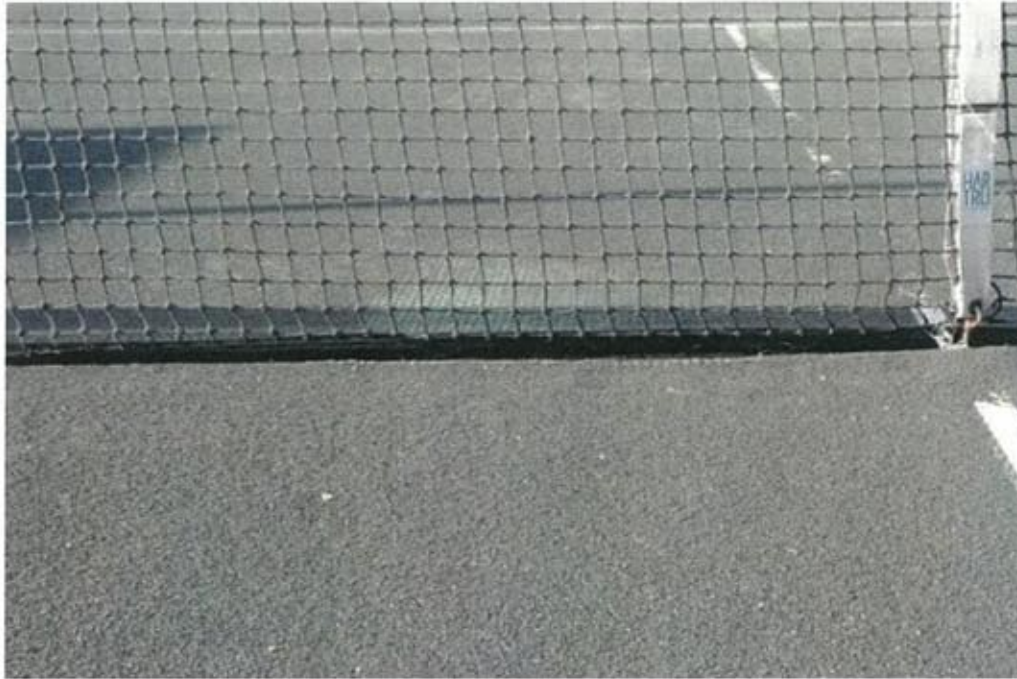


# Knees Love Palm Desert Tennis Court

## Clay Surface in Bighorn Country Club Resembles Berber Carpet

SCOTT HENNESSEE



SCOTT HENNESSEE

On the surface, it looks like any other green clay tennis court. It's what lies underneath the top layer of Har-Tru clay that makes this court different. It may be the only one of its kind among Coachella Valley tennis clubs.

"It's like a high-tech Berber carpet with Har-Tru (clay) on top," explains Bighorn Head Tennis Professional Tom Moore. "People come from all over to hit on it and see what it's like."

Bighorn had the ClayTech court installed five years ago, and it has been the favored surface for the club's 80 tennis members and their guests.

"Man, we love it," Bighorn member Tony Lennon said. "Rallies are longer. The ball pops up and sits up for you."

Clay tennis courts are widely known to be easier on the knees and joints of tennis players compared to hard courts. The downside is that they require daily maintenance.

Clay courts need to be watered, rolled and raked regularly. They can also bake in the heat of the summer, which requires additional clay to be brought in.

Since ClayTech courts only have clay on the top surface layer, they need less ongoing upkeep, according to Moore.

"The carpet holds the clay in the wind better," Moore said. "Once a year we add some clay to it."

Additionally, ClayTech courts don't need to be rolled like clay courts. All they need is to be swept and watered.

Just before players step between the lines, an automatic sprinkler system gives Bighorn's ClayTech court a quick watering to improve the footing so players can comfortably slide into their shots.

"It just happens naturally," Lennon said of gliding into the ball. "You find yourself trying to stop, and you slide, but it's not slippery."

Bighorn has four tennis courts, three of them hard courts. Moore says the ClayTech court is the only one the members consistently reserve. While there are clay courts at a handful of clubs across the Coachella Valley, Moore thinks Bighorn is the only club in the desert with a ClayTech court.

ClayTech courts can be overlaid on top of hard courts. A needle-punched polypropylene membrane is attached to an existing hard court with an adhesive, and the clay is spread out on top.

After a spritz of water, and a quick sweeping, it's time for tennis.