

From the KHPA History Files: The Montgomery County Sites of Grassy Lick & Mt. Sterling

## Montgomery County's Grassy Lick & Mt. Sterling Sites

Don Hayes got involved in the KHPA around 1977. At that time Don & Dallas Walters were members of the lodge in Grassy Lick, Ky. Don & Dallas had two or three dirt courts on the lodge property and as they became more involved in sanctioned horseshoe pitching, the ideas began to form to bring the KHPA to the Grassy Lick area which is located a few miles northwest of Mt. Sterling. Inquiries for a KHPA tournament began as early as 1979 and in 1981 Don and Dallas built six clay courts near the Grassy Lick store. Dallas Walters was the KHPA President in the 1979-81 time frames. The layouts of these courts were back to back, three on each side with a fence divider. The courts, as was normal for this time period, had concrete platforms only with no walkways and created a real country community atmosphere for horseshoe pitching. The inaugural event was promoted in the KHPA "Ringer" newsletter for May 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> weekend of 1981, possibly a non-sanctioned event as I can find no result and this tourney was not on the 1981 KHPA Schedule. The Grassy Lick court site was on the KHPA Schedule from 1982-1990. The 1982

tournament drew 60 pitchers and Jim Noble was the tournament champion. The courts fell off of the Kentucky schedule after 1990 and into a state of disrepair as Don's daily life became filled with work demands and a busy life.



**Don Hayes in 1987.**

During this period the property including the court site was sold and the new owner had the courts completely torn out. Don is very proud of these classic courts that brought some great horseshoe pitching tournaments to the area for 10 years!



Front side three courts.



Reverse side three courts.

Close-up Pit view.



*(Video stills of Don Hayes & the Grassy Lick courts are courtesy of John Hankins.)*

Don Hayes and his long-time horseshoe buddy Dallas Walters would attempt to start horseshoes up once again in Montgomery County around 1995 or 96. They made an attempt to have courts installed at the fairgrounds and had they spot all picked out as well as having donations of the dozer, lumber and materials all acquired. To quote Don Hayes: *“when we went up there, there were about 8 members and 4 went one way and 4 went the other way, and we just couldn't get anything done because they just wouldn't work together. So we lost all of our donations that way.”* Don and Dallas would bring horseshoes back again full tilt in 1999 and went to the Parks and Recreations office and spoke with the man in charge about bringing horseshoes back to the Mt. Sterling area. Interest was high and the court installation was approved at the meeting of the board. The Mt. Sterling courts were built in the fall of 1999 by Easy Walker Park, with the donation of the pegs by Harold Copher. Don Hayes took over the day to day maintaining of the new court site from this point forward and returned to sanctioned pitching full time. Don Hayes then contacted Regional Director Monty Roberts about getting the new Mt. Sterling site on the KHPA schedule the following year in 2000 with two scheduled events but the inaugural Easy Walker Open with 44 entries had to be cancelled due to a rainout. Ringers finally began to fly in the July 1<sup>st</sup> Mt. Sterling Open. Thirty-two players were in attendance. During this time, Dallas Walters also attempted a return to Pitching but his health just wasn't up to it. In 2002, Mt. Sterling hosted its first State Tournament which drew 62 players. The State tourney has



Dallas in 2008 at Mt. Sterling.

continued in rotation with Mt. Sterling in 2008 & 2013 and the Mt. Sterling site has been a staple on the KHPA Schedule every year from 2000 to present day and in 2014 the courts were re-dedicated as the “Don Hayes Horseshoe Courts”. The courts have also had a successful running weeknight horseshoe league ran by Vicki Belcher since around 2008.



Above & Below: The first tournament held on the newly constructed Mt. Sterling Horseshoe Courts in 2000.



Don Hayes in 2014 at the re-dedication of the courts.