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## A SPORTS LOVER'S DREAM

### Million-dollar homes with lavish basketball courts

By VALERIE PUTNAM

REAL ESTATE MILLIONS

**W**hen March Madness ends, college basketball fans will be left wanting until next season rolls around. But for an elite few, whose homes are complete with a private indoor sports court, there never has to be an off-season.

"The indoor court has been the best," said Connie Tharaldson, who purchased a home with an indoor court in 2007. "It has been used continuously by our four children and all of their friends."

Gary and Connie Tharaldson purchased a home in the Summerlin area with a four-car garage on one side and an eight-car garage on the other with the intention of building an indoor court.

The couple converted the eight-car garage into a three-fourths regulation-size, indoor basketball court with regulation-size hoops that can be adjusted to any height. Instead of the traditional wood floor, they opted for a maintenance-free sport court.

"It's one of the coolest basketball courts I've seen," said Kamran Zand, broker and founder of Luxury Estates International. "It's the closest I've seen to a full-sized court indoors."

Besides using the courts for basketball, the couple found it has numerous other uses. Her youngest son has practiced shooting hockey pucks, rollerbladed and skateboarded on the court. Her husband, Gary, uses the gym for a daily walk. The couple has held club and school basketball team practices, as well as numerous parties.

"Even end-of-the-year athletic award banquets for the children's schools," Connie Tharaldson said. "The children have spent countless hours in there playing music, dancing and a variety of games, not just basketball. We've used the gym in ways we never thought of when we built it. It has been the most important amenity of our home."

The Tharaldsons' story is unique. Traditionally, indoor courts are designed into the home prior to construction because of the amount of space required.

Currently, Zand is listing the Tharaldsons' 15,816-square-foot home in the Queensridge development at 9511 Kings Gate Court for \$8.9 million.

Marc Lemoine, principal at Marc Lemoine Architecture LLC, has designed two Las Vegas-area homes that feature indoor courts. One of the homes has an indoor collegiate half basketball court with 24-foot ceilings and the other has a basketball play court with 18-foot ceilings. Both were designed into the basements of Summerlin area homes.

"Basketball courts, even half-courts, take a lot of space," Lemoine said. "When you're in a custom-home neighborhood, even in the larger-lot custom homes, few of the lots are



COURTESY OF LUXURY ESTATES INTERNATIONAL

Owners of the home at 9511 Kings Gate Court, Gary and Connie Tharaldson, and their children have hosted all sorts of school events at on their basketball court.

actually large enough to dedicate that amount of space. That is why my clients chose to put the basketball courts in the basement."

The courts Lemoine designed are part of a larger basement complex that included other amenities such as a home theater, exercise room and refreshment bar.

"One of them had a bowling alley in it with two lanes," Lemoine said. "These are more

than just ball courts. When my client asks for an indoor court what they are trying to do is create an environment their kids and friends are really going to enjoy. They're basically trying to create a kid magnet so they know where their kids are."

As with the Tharaldsons, Lemoine's clients

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found other uses for the large space. One client's 10-year-old son filled the sports court with KNEX toys, building roller coasters and large towers.

"He still had plenty of room for hitting a ball around or shooting hoops," Lemoine said.

Lemoine's two Summerlin projects were costly and presented challenges digging a foundation for the basement because of the terrain.

"In the Summerlin area, we hit rock right away," Lemoine said. "The cost of cutting through the rock and removing it is very high. It cost over \$200,000 on the collegiate course."

Large pieces of equipment called earth saws were brought in to slice through the rocky soil. According to Lemoine, a traditional basement is 12 feet deep, but installing an indoor court requires digging deeper, ranging from 18 to 24 feet deep, depending on the size of court. Once the hole is done, large retaining walls are poured to support the depth.

Construction costs can mount up depending on the finishes the owner chooses. For example, a traditional wood floor costs more than a sports court. The high ceiling requires sound proofing material as well as protected lighting. Then add in the basic equipment costs, including custom pads on the walls, hoops, balls and other equipment.

"We're generally talking hundreds of thousands of dollars to create an indoor court," Lemoine said.

Architect Gordon Rogers designed an indoor basketball court into an addition of a home at 3 Anthem Pointe Court, listed by Lee Medick of Luxury Estates International for \$9.5 million. According to Zand, the court was for the owner's daughter.

The indoor sports court in this 17,000-square-foot home featured hardwood floors, surround-sound speakers, glass wall protection for spectators and electronic hoops that adjust to any height.

Indoor sports courts are considered a luxury amenity and are a rare commodity in the Las Vegas market.

Luxury Realtor Ivan Sher with the Shapiro and Sher team of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Nevada Properties has sold a few properties with sports courts.

"There is probably about 15-20 homes in the valley that have indoor basketball courts," Sher said. "Obviously that number is significantly less than 1 percent of the homes in Las Vegas."

Sher has listed a 10,000-square-foot home at 9 Echo Peak Lane in Summerlin with an indoor court for \$30 million. The traditional half-court is in the basement and has a white vinyl floor.

"If you want an indoor court, you're going to have to spend an extra \$5 million dollars," Zand said about how he sees the added value sports courts bring to a home.

"People who are buying these homes are ones with kids that love



"It's a beautiful court," Realtor Tom Love said. "The neatest things about it is where it's positioned in the home. It has lots of natural light coming in and the racquetball court butts right up to it."



Owner and broker of the Love Group, Tom Love, recently sold a 22,000-square-foot property at 9501 Orient Express Court in the Queensridge for \$6.2 million. The home has a half-court basketball and full-size regulation racquetball court in the basement.

the sport. They can use the court for other sports like volleyball."

Tom Love, owner and broker of the Love Group, recently sold a 22,000-square-foot property at 9501 Orient Express Court in the Queensridge for \$6.2 million, the highest price for a single-family home so far this year, according to MLS. The property has a half-court basketball and full-size regulation racquetball court in the basement.

"It's a beautiful court," Love said. "The neatest things about it is where it's positioned in the home. It has lots of natural light coming in, and the racquetball court butts right up to it."

"We had a variety of people looking at it," Love said. "But at the end of the day, the one thing in common is they wanted a very large home that was something special and they didn't want to go through the pain and time of starting from the ground up."

According to Love, large properties with or without a sports

court are challenging to sell in the Las Vegas market.

"I think it's a very small demographic that can afford to buy a home in this price range," Love said. "Every extra amenity you have

is one more item that could catch someone's eye."

As Las Vegas becomes a sports-oriented area, Zand believes the marketability of these homes to be more viable. Recently he partnered with SportStar Relocation, a premier relocation company. Zand plans to market more properties to those in the sports industry through referrals garnered through SportStar.

"At first it didn't make sense partnering with a company like this because we didn't have any professional athletes or sports teams here," Zand said. "Now we have an NHL team, possibly an NFL team is coming, and I'm hearing rumors about an NBA team. Now it's starting to make sense."

Zand, as well as Sher and Love, plan to market to the athletic community and work to make the transition for the athletic community to the Las Vegas market as easy as possible.

"When it comes down to it, they expect results and service," Love said. "Somebody to help them with everything."



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