

# “Court Of Dreams” Brings Tennis Players To Iowa Farm

If you’ve seen the Field of Dreams baseball field in Iowa, you’ll know why this meticulously-groomed tennis court – also carved out of an Iowa corn field – is called the “Court of Dreams” by folks who’ve seen it.

What’s great about the grass tennis court, built and maintained by Mark Kuhn and his family, is that anyone can play on it for free. All you have to do is let them know you’re coming and then make the drive to Charles City, Iowa.

When Kuhn built it he had no idea it would attract players from 35 states. He built it in 2002 to satisfy his curiosity about Wimbledon’s grass tennis courts. Kuhn and his family spent 16 months installing drainage tile and sprinkler heads, leveling 17 truckloads of sandy soil, picking rock, packing the soil and planting bentgrass, which is commonly used on golf greens.

The family hosted a tournament for college tennis players in 2005 and the resulting media coverage, including an article in Tennis magazine, netted calls from all over the country.

“There are so few grass courts left,” Kuhn says, noting that playing on grass is slightly different, as tennis balls don’t bounce as high. “It’s very easy on your body. I had a major farm accident a few years ago and rarely play anywhere else. I play almost every day when

I can, and I get a variety of partners and meet a lot of people.”

Maintaining a grass court requires commitment and a lot of work. It takes about 40 min. every day or two to mow the grass to its ideal 7/16-in. length. At the end of the 2012 season, the Kuhns removed thatch and worked in 7 tons of mason sand to improve and firm up the court for 2013. Each year they add improvements, such as cutting, painting and installing the 757 pickets for a fence that surrounds the court. The fence is green on the inside and white on the outside. Along with hedges, flowers and other features, the lawn court stands out next to the Kuhn’s corn and soybean fields.

Reservations are required by emailing the Kuhns through their website for the Memorial Day through Labor Day season. They have vintage and new rackets available.

Kuhn adds that he is consulting with property owners in Minnesota and New Hampshire who are building their own lawn courts. Information and photos about the process are also on the Kuhn’s official website for their “All Iowa Lawn Tennis Club”.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, All Iowa Lawn Tennis Club, 2667 240<sup>th</sup> St., Charles City, Iowa 50616 (ph 641 330-4910).



This meticulously-groomed grass tennis court, carved out of an Iowa corn field, is called the “Court of Dreams” by folks who’ve seen it. Anyone can play on it for free.

## Tailgating Bus Fully Loaded For Fun

This tailgating party bus is like a Transformer toy. Driving down the highway, it looks like an ordinary schoolbus. But after you park it, the top lifts up, the sides flip open, and the back end turns into a tailgater’s paradise – in just 45 seconds.

When it first debuted last fall at the 12<sup>th</sup> Man parking lot at Texas A&M University before a football game against LSU, neighbors in \$1 million motor homes rolled their eyes as the “redneck” bus pulled in. That changed when Jonathan Hinze hit the hydraulics. Within minutes, fans swarmed around the “Cuz We Can” bus to check out the fully-loaded tailgater that’s complete with three flat screen TV’s (including a 54-in. model on the side), surround sound stereo, swing-out gas grill, margarita machine, fish fryer, microwave, popcorn popper with homemade butter dispenser, and even a toilet and shower. The interior has limo style seating, laser lighting and a smoke machine. With a pull on a quiet Honda generator, everything is powered up and ready to go, no matter where the bus is parked.

The bus’s building crew admits that adult beverages helped loosen their creativity muscles in building it. But the tailgate bus also required plenty of after hours’ work, beefing up and attention to detail.

“No one person can take the credit for building and designing. There were a lot of local people with good ideas who helped us out greatly,” Hinze says. He added with a laugh that no one wanted it licensed in their name so they created an LLC for it. They licensed it as a motor home under “Cuz We Can,” which is the typical response they give when people ask why they created it.

The idea to have a bus for tailgating came up when one of the “crewmember’s” sons started at Texas A&M. In November 2011, the friends found a good deal on a 1997 International 77-passenger Thomas bus, and the torching, welding and retrofitting began in Hinze’s farm shop. After removing the seats and welding a crack in the frame, they cut and beefed up the walls in the back half, made hinges out of black pipe, cold roll steel and flat steel straps and installed 10 hydraulic cylinders, recycled mostly from old farm equipment, that are connected to a pump and

reservoir off a combine and a backhoe control valves.

The crew installed storage cabinets in the bus’s midsection along with a toilet and shower over the wheel wells. Benches along the sides seat about 10 people – within guidelines to license the bus as a motor home. They modified some of the original seats into stadium seating for use outside the bus.

Using skills from farming, welding and construction backgrounds, the friends fabricated a two-burner cook top and a swivel arm for the grill. They used a tailgate latch to lift and lower steps. A Deere planter box hides a garbage disposal that crushes ice for the margarita machine.

The accessory that draws the most attention, however, is the inconspicuous can-smashing front bumper.

“It’s made out of a cotton stalk puller tube with a hydraulic cylinder. You drop in beer cans, and it crushes them. You can do about 450 cans before you have to empty it,” Hinze says.

He points out that besides the fun stuff there are plenty of safety features including handrails, lockouts and fire extinguishers. Besides taking the bus to games, the friends use it for competing in cook offs.



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Hinze says the building crew will gladly advise other tailgate bus designers, but there’s one question they won’t answer. “All of our wives teach together, and we simply can’t disclose what it cost,” Hinze says. “We don’t want any divorces.”

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