



LEXINGTON

Cornhole League

Recreation with Competition

by Kim Becknell Williams

**“It’s a family,
it’s fellowship.
Having something
available every week
provides a place
to get away.”**

— Brian Wilchenski,
LCL CoFounder

“Cornhole is not just a backyard game anymore, it’s a competitive sport which people of all skill levels can enjoy. The cornhole craze is sweeping the nation, especially the Midlands. Cornerstone to the cornhole craze is the fellowship and comradery that is second to none. Please come out and see what the hype is all about. You can expect to see 40+ folks every Wednesday who enjoy good company and competition.” --Michael Hamlin, Lexington Cornhole League Member

Do you have a set of cornhole boards in your backyard or garage? Do you tailgate with personalized boards to promote your team or business? Perhaps you occasionally toss a few bags while waiting for an order at your favorite restaurant or while grilling at home? Cornhole is quickly becoming more than just a traditional lawn game as it gains momentum, followers and enthusiasts. This addictive sport has not only attracted the attention of people in the midlands, but also professional sports platforms, mainstream celebrities, major broadcast net-

works and powerful sponsors nationwide with prizes of up to \$15,000. There is even a rumor of cornhole being considered as a potential Olympic sport in the next decade!

Even though The Lexington Cornhole League (LCL) was established during the pandemic in 2020, interest did not wane, but was instead fueled by the catastrophe. When other sports games had to be shut-down, cornhole competitors kept playing, grateful for the 27 feet of social distancing already built into the game rules. Neighbors Jeff Bernagozzi and Brian Wilchenski, who had participated in local cornhole tournaments for over a year at that point in time, came up with the idea of creating a league for Lexington. “We started it since we were playing competitive...to elevate the level of play,” Bernagozzi explained. “We put it out on Facebook; that first night we had eight people show up and ran our first tournament; in a month it had grown from eight to 28. We started the cornhole league September 1, 2020, at LJ’s Bar & Grill.” Growing pains and inclement weather moved the

league to play for a year at The Bodyshop Baseball facility. Tournaments are currently held each week at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesdays at Intense Volleyball located at 109 Fabrister Lane in Lexington. Wilchenski said the director, Jerry Dorneker, has been very accommodating and the venue offers the space and accessibility they so desperately needed.

One very distinct advantage of cornhole is that it provides instant, convenient, wholesome entertainment for many different ages and abilities. Previous experience, rigorous training, strength conditioning or expensive equipment is not required for a friendly game, making it the perfect “ice breaker” or team building exercise for both business and corporate functions, bridging the gap between leaders and employees. Civic, religious, school and charity groups are also beginning to join the cornhole bandwagon, realizing how many members already enjoy playing the game and would like to benefit a worthy cause in the process. Another strong appeal of the game is that it carries a low risk for injury--instead of horseshoes, badminton or croquet equipment, many event venues, restaurants and vacation rentals now maintain a set of cornhole boards and bean bags for their guests.

Bernagozzi estimates roughly 500 people have played in LCL at some point during the last 2 years. Potential members only need a common interest in cornhole, time to devote to practice each week, and the willingness to be patient, present and learn. Players quickly become accustomed to the characteristic sounds of beanbags smacking, sliding, and thudding onto wooden boards. The \$20 entry fee to compete is used to cover administrative expenses, rental fees, basic equipment, maintenance and upgrades, etc. With ages ranging from 9 years old to over 80, each week brings an interesting combination of competition and charisma; good, clean, fun. Roughly 50 people attend each practice; some are regulars and others drop-in randomly when they have free time. Wilchenski, who has played cornhole for 10-12 years, said, “Bags are flying by 7:30. Everyone who attends plays cornhole.” A software system determines player expertise/level brackets and divisions to ensure that players are matched with worthy opponents. An app called “Scoreholio” organizes, updates and maintains a database of cornhole events so that players have the important details at their fingertips at any given moment, which is

especially useful for locating and navigating tournaments when traveling.

“We have nine sets of boards, score towers and tablets for live scoring, and we livestream through Facebook,” Bernagozzi said. “All players are guaranteed at least four games. We play what’s called a 4 round “Round Robin” meaning in the first 4 rounds, you are paired randomly with a different partner each game. At the end of those 4 rounds, the top 20 players (based on win/loss record then points) advance to the championship bracket,” Bernagozzi continues. “In this bracket you are paired with another player based on ranking in the Round Robin and play a double elimination tournament to determine the winner. Players ranked 21-40 from the Round Robin advance into the consolation bracket, where they’re randomly paired with a partner and play a double elimination tournament as well.”

LCL members Angel Camarena and Avery Snipes recently came in first place at the ACL (American Cornhole Association) Open #1 tournament, which qualified them to compete in the College National Championship to be held at the end of the season representing The University of South Carolina. Many competitive players take the game seriously and have made amazing progress through the weekly practices. “A few of our guys are some of the best in the state,” Wilchenski said. “We provide the



GENERAL BASICS OF CORNHOLE

Practice makes perfect!
Basic essential equipment required for a game of cornhole is minimal: eight 6 x 6-inch bags filled with 1 pound of corn (4 bags of each color for each team), and a cornhole board that is 2 feet wide x 4 feet long. Two cornhole boards are placed on a flat surface 27 feet apart, front to front. Players gain points by tossing the bags into the hole or onto the board near the hole. Points are given for bags that go through the hole, bags that land on the playing surface and bags that hang off the edge of the board but do not touch the ground. The colorful square bags may slowly slide into the hole, be knocked into a hole by another bag, or simply land on the board. Hand and eye coordination, motor skills and depth perception are crucial.



competition. Watching people grow from not winning a game to being one of the best in the league and nationally competitive is a big positive. It gives all players an opportunity to sharpen their skills against good and worthy competition.

“We are grateful for all the wonderful new friends we have met over the last two years,” Bernagozzi remarks. “Most of our LCL players truly look forward to our weekly tournaments to not only improve their game but also socialize with what has become our LCL family. We are excited to watch and support as some of our advanced players move up the ranks into Pro Status. Two of our members, Tommy Sliker and Jonathan Peckham are incredible players and will hopefully be competing on ESPN in the near future.”

Bernagozzi and Wilchenski are personally invested in the league and express their deep appreciation for the overwhelming amount of support and encouragement it has received from the community—both residential and business. “I’d like to mention the great people at The Bodyshop Baseball and Intense Volleyball for welcoming the league into their facilities and really allowing it to grow,” Bernagozzi said. “It’s a community of players, a group of people just gathering together.” Aside from conducting and assisting with tournaments, many of the organizers, players and their families actively participate in cornhole fundraisers for various local charities. When referring to the league, Wilchenski says, “It’s a family, it’s fellowship. Having something available every week provides a place to get away.”

As for the future of LCL, “We’re looking to expand to more days and keep supporting our players that play competitively,” continues Bernagozzi. “We have about 3-4 players who are close to becoming pros.” The league will continue to invite new people to give cornhole a shot. “Eventually we would like to host a tournament one night a week that only focuses on beginning players.” For schedules, announcements, registration information and rank advancements, visit Lexington Cornhole League’s Facebook page or stop by Intense Volleyball at 109B Fabrister Lane in Lexington on Wednesday nights to catch a game. ■



From left: Conley Waters, Registered Client Associate; Michael Campos, Senior Vice President, Financial Advisor.

D.A. Davidson and Campos Wealth Strategies, Advisor with D.A. Davidson & Co., are pleased to announce the opening of a new office in Lexington.



D|A|DAVIDSON

CAMPOS WEALTH STRATEGIES

Advisor with D.A. Davidson & Co. member SIPC

4586 Sunset Blvd. | Lexington, SC

(855) 694-5553 | (803) 490-6070 | camposws.dadavidsonfa.com

CHANNEL LETTERS
DIMENSIONAL LETTERS
VEHICLE STYLING WRAPS
COMMERCIAL WRAPS
BEST IN THE Biz
803.345.5137

CUSTOM SIGNS • VEHICLE WRAPS • GRAPHIC DESIGN
BRANDED ENVIRONMENTS • BANNERS • COMPANY APPAREL

f GUERRILLAGRFX i GUERRILLA6FX G GGRFX.COM 803.345.5137

GUERRILLA GRAPHIX
803.345.5137
www.GGRFX.com

Lexington Life
20 NOMINEE 20