

tennis tips

Last month, my buddy Dave escaped Chicago and headed southwest to visit us for a few days in Phoenix. Some time by the pool, plenty of sun and a few sets of tennis were just what he needed to remedy the Windy City's unrelenting winter.

During his visit we took a mini road trip to Palm Springs, Calif., to check out a professional tennis tournament where all the big names play. And despite being overwhelmed by (almost) rubbing elbows with a few of our favorite players, I found myself, more than once, drawing comparisons between garden center retail and our experience at the tournament.



Color is king at The Saguaro in Palm Springs, turning an otherwise ordinary hotel into a visual standout.

advantage, color

It all started with the hotel. We stayed at The Saguaro Palm Springs, which pulls in a respectable 3½ star rating on most travel sites. In my opinion, The Saguaro is an average hotel, but there is one thing they do that is well beyond average. They take bold colors head on and use them to their advantage — patios are painted magenta (see photo), hallways yellow, bed linens red, bathrooms orange, carpets purple ... you get the idea.

Hypothetically speaking, if you were to strip this hotel of its bright color palette, it wouldn't deserve a second look and I wouldn't be surprised if an entire star dropped off its rating. Color is king.

fault. double fault.

Thanks to Google Maps, getting to the tournament was easy. Getting into it and navigating the facility's 25-plus tennis courts was quite the contrary. Let's just say, the tournament director could really learn a thing or two about signage from North Haven Gardens in Dallas (see page 30).

Connecting the parking lot to the ticket office was a "bag check" line filled with plenty of bagless tennis fans. The thing is, there was no sign or volunteer letting the bagless know they could skip the line.

Once we made it into the facility, it was time to work our way through the crowds and figure out which match at

which tennis stadium we wanted to check out first. Unfortunately, from the outside, the six main stadiums were not numbered. Not numbered! A lot of aimless wandering ensued. And something as simple as a site map was only available through the purchase of a \$7 program.

game. set. match

Even international sporting events overlook the obvious. Use bright colors. Expedite long lines. Add coherent signage. Tennis tournament or garden center, these no-brainers are just what you need to improve a visitor's experience this spring. **LGR**



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