

Pickleball Fire



Official Pickleball
Magazine of the IFP



Thaddea Lock

PROFILES

- Dave Fleming: Senior Pro, Commentator, & Comedian
- England's Thaddea Lock
- Senior Pro Dayne Gingrich and Self Belief
- Jason Garriotte on Center Stage
- Sally Huss Dares to Dink

IFP

- Bainbridge World Cup
- Steve Sidwell's Olympic Dream
- World Ambassador Program

INSTRUCTION

- Should You Use a Two-Handed Backhand?
- 3 Misconceptions About Strategy
- How to Handle the Big Moments in a Match
- The Backhand Serve and Drive Return
- Vision Training

Business

- USA Pickleball's Paddle Approval Process
- Scott Moore: Pickleball Entrepreneur
- Jigsaw Health



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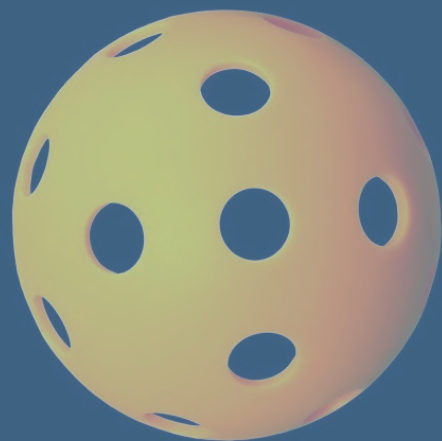
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CONTENTS

- 06:** A MESSAGE FROM THE IFP PRESIDENT
- 07:** ANNOUNCING THE IFP BAINBRIDGE WORLD CUP
- 08:** DAVE FLEMING: SENIOR PRO, COMMENTATOR, COMEDIAN
- 12:** WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM WES GABRIELSON
- 14:** LEARN TO USE A TWO-HANDED BACKHAND
- 14:** PROFILE: ENGLAND'S THADDEA LOCK
- 18:** THE IFP'S STEVE SIDWELL & HIS OLYMPIC DREAM
- 19:** 3 MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT PICKLEBALL STRATEGY
- 20:** USA PICKLEBALL'S PADDLE APPROVAL PROCESS
- 22:** A WORLD AMBASSADOR PROGRAM
- 23:** HOW TO HANDLE THE BIG MOMENTS IN A MATCH
- 23:** SENIOR PRO DAYNE GINGRICH ON SELF BELIEF
- 24:** SENIOR PRO SCOTT MOORE ON THE BACKHAND SERVE
- 25:** SCOTT MOORE: PICKLEBALL ENTREPRENEUR

26: PICKLEBALL AND SERVICE

27: JASON GARRIOTTE: CENTER STAGE IN PICKLEBALL & MUSIC

28: ERIE, PA CLUBS WINNINGEST PICKLEBALL PLAYER

28: GOING ALL IN FOR PICKLEBALL

29: JIGSAW HEALTH: IT'S FUN TO FEEL GOOD

30: HOW & WHY YOU SHOULD HIT A FLAT BACKHAND DRIVE

32: VISION TRAINING TO IMPROVE YOUR GAME

33: A WIMBLEDON TENNIS CHAMPION DARES TO DINK

33: GROWING PICKLEBALL IN GREECE

Pickleball Fire

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A Message from the IFP President



As we enter a new year, I would like to reflect on 2021. Although the year had uncertainty and difficulties, the IFP experienced another productive and prosperous year. One of the most productive areas was the growth in the number of member countries that joined the IFP. The IFP believes it is important for our member countries to grow their membership within their country. In 2022 the IFP will develop programs to help member countries grow their membership and provide tools to accomplish that. The IFP is developing membership software that will be offered to all member countries. This software program will help track and build a membership database of pickleball players within each member country.

Earlier this month, the IFP notified member countries about openings on the IFP Board of Directors and invited potential candidates to submit their applications for consideration. In addition to expanding the IFP Board of Directors, the IFP will be developing a Board Advisory Committee to provide input to the board. If you reside in a member country, please take this opportunity to become involved in the growth of Pickleball around the world by submitting your application for a position on the board or the advisory committee. Please visit the IFP website and look for the "IFP Board of Directors Position and Board Advisory Committee" announcement.

Additionally, the IFP has partnered with Pickleball for the World to collaboratively bring Pickleball to

international communities that otherwise would not have this opportunity. No other organizations provide these types of grants or funding programs to grow Pickleball at the international level. For more information, please visit both websites: the IFP <https://www.ifpickleball.org> and the Pickleball for the World website: <https://www.pickleballfortheworld.com/> or contact any board member for more information.

In the last month and a half, the IFP individual membership program has also experienced phenomenal growth. I want to thank all of you who have joined. To continue our efforts to provide value to our individual members, the IFP is working with many distributors, vendors, manufacturers, and companies to bring its members discounts on many products and services. Be on the lookout for an announcement about this soon.

This past week the Washington State Legislature introduced a bill called "Designating pickleball as the official state sport." The IFP is honored to be recognized in Senate Bill 5615 in the State of Washington. The bill states that pickleball "has expanded far beyond Washington to become a nationally and internationally beloved game; over four million people play Pickleball in the United States, and there are currently 67 member countries in the International Federation of Pickleball. The legislature intends to honor and recognize the 3 Washingtonians who created, popularized, and continue to enjoy this sport by designating Pickleball the official sport of the state of Washington." The IFP will continue to follow the progress of this bill as it progresses through the Washington State Legislature and support efforts to get this bill passed. It is another example of the recognition, growth, and popularity our sport is receiving.

Here is an update on the new state-of-the-art Toquerville Athletic & Recreation Complex (ARC) in Utah. This past week we met with

Eastward Management Group (EMG, the developer), state and city officials, and many individuals from other organizations in Utah. The IFP is proud to state this development will include a 60-court pickleball facility and the new headquarters for the IFP. The project is moving forward, and groundbreaking is scheduled for the summer of 2022. The Toquerville Athletic & Recreation Complex gives the IFP an opportunity to be the first governing body for the sport of Pickleball to have its own first-class facility to support its many programs and to have one of the largest number of pickleball courts in one facility. Please visit the EMG's website for more information and an overview of the new and exciting project: <https://eastwardmanagementgroup.com/> Click the ARC/Zion's Landing Resort icon and check out the video and information on this project.

Lastly, I'd like to mention that we've also experienced tremendous growth and development in the IFP Instructor Certification and IFP World Ambassador programs. Keep reading for more details about our dynamic ambassador program. You can find general information about both of these programs on our website.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone for their support of the IFP. I give special thanks to Lynn Cherry and her Pickleball Fire Magazine staff for bringing us this magazine with many great new features and articles. If you are interested in advertising and supporting the official magazine of the IFP, please contact me at: president@ifpickleball.org.

Cheers and see you on the courts!
Pat Murphy, IFP President



ANNOUNCING THE IFP Bainbridge World Cup

It is with great excitement that we announce the future of global competition with the International Federation of Pickleball! Over the past five years, the Bainbridge Cup has brought fun and competition to many international players in multiple countries, including Spain, Italy, and Germany. The growth internationally has been amazing--more than 68 countries are now part of the IFP family--it is time for the Bainbridge Cup to begin.



Starting in 2022, each continental region, which represents the five rings of the Olympic logo (Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas) will hold a Bainbridge Series Event (BSE). These will provide an opportunity for players in each region to qualify for the annual Bainbridge World Cup (BWC). Each country that hosts a BSE will have the opportunity the following year to host the BWC. This annual tournament will invite top players from the "World Pickleball Rankings" powered by PickleballTournaments.com to compete against qualified players from around the world. Every medalist will have the opportunity to represent their country in the next BWC.

In order to grow the world competition, players who have dual residency with the USA and another country will have the option to represent either country. These players must get approval from the IFP Tournament Operations team prior to registration. All IFP Ambassadors are encouraged to be a part of this tournament. We are pleased to announce that the Bainbridge World Cup will be held at the Opelika Sportplex Venue in the city of Opelika, Alabama.

Save the dates of October 19-23, 2022, for the start of the new Bainbridge World Cup. Details for the BSE are almost complete and will have an online application. PickleballTournaments.com must be used for the qualifying (open) divisions to allow transparency to all players and countries. For more information, please contact Mike Hoxie or Roger Workman.

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Dave Fleming: Senior Pro, Commentator, and Comedian

Dave Fleming is well-known in Pickleball as a broadcaster and senior professional. But did you also know he is a comedian? It is all due to his corporate job where he runs the marketing for big brands like Dr. Pepper, Snapple, and Pizza Hut. Dave said, "So when you have those jobs, you're often asked to present in front of large groups of people and anyone who's sat in an audience with an executive on stage, it's absolutely brutal if there isn't some energy and some fun. And so that's what I always did. So I was always asked to make those presentations."

Since Dave was already presenting in front of large groups, he thought it would be fun to get paid to be funny. He started his comedy career by going to open microphone nights in Dallas, Texas. There would be 44 people ready to perform. Since he had no connections in comedy, he would be one of the last to go on stage. At that time, four people were still in the audience, and three of them were comedians who had never stepped foot in an office.

"Dave admitted, "I was awful. I was off at first because there's the bright light in your face. You're not used to any of the surroundings. I had to do it, and I knew it was going to be part of the process. So I was a solid 1.5 comedian if you want to use Pickleball ratings for about a month. And then I kept getting better. And then I had a big leap forward once I got comfortable and there were more people."

Dave's comedy routine was unique because it brought a different audience to the clubs. So he started getting opportunities to perform on Friday and Saturday nights. While Dave enjoyed doing stand-up comedy, he wanted to do an entire show. And since Dave worked in corporate America, he decided that would be his canvas. So he started writing down things that happened in meetings he thought were funny. The result was a 20-minute one-person show called *Man Versus Office*, which focused on the funny things happening in office break rooms. He said, "Why are people stealing my lunch every day? Why on earth do you think it's a good idea to put your day-old fish in the microwave on high?" Dave worked on the show for a year and presented it over one hundred times, including once on Broadway in New York at the Snapple Theater.

Dave said, "That was truly a labor of love because when you walk out the first time and all these people came to show up and laugh. There's a lot of pressure on the Pickleball court, but there is a lot of pressure on that stage. But once you get that going, there's no greater rush to hear people laugh."

Many similarities exist between comedy and Pickleball. Trusting yourself because you are well prepared is at the top of Dave's list. He said, "If I'm going to play a pro match against the best players in the world, I can't suddenly wish I had perfected a new shot or worked on a weakness. I needed to have already done it. The same holds for the material that I'm bringing to the comedy stage. Did I do enough work to find the exact combination of words and know where the punchlines are and know where to stop and let the laughter breathe?"

To be at the top of your game on the stage or court, you also need to have self-drive. The hours spent when no one is looking are the key to success. And Dave has undoubtedly found that both in comedy and Pickleball.



Steve Taylor
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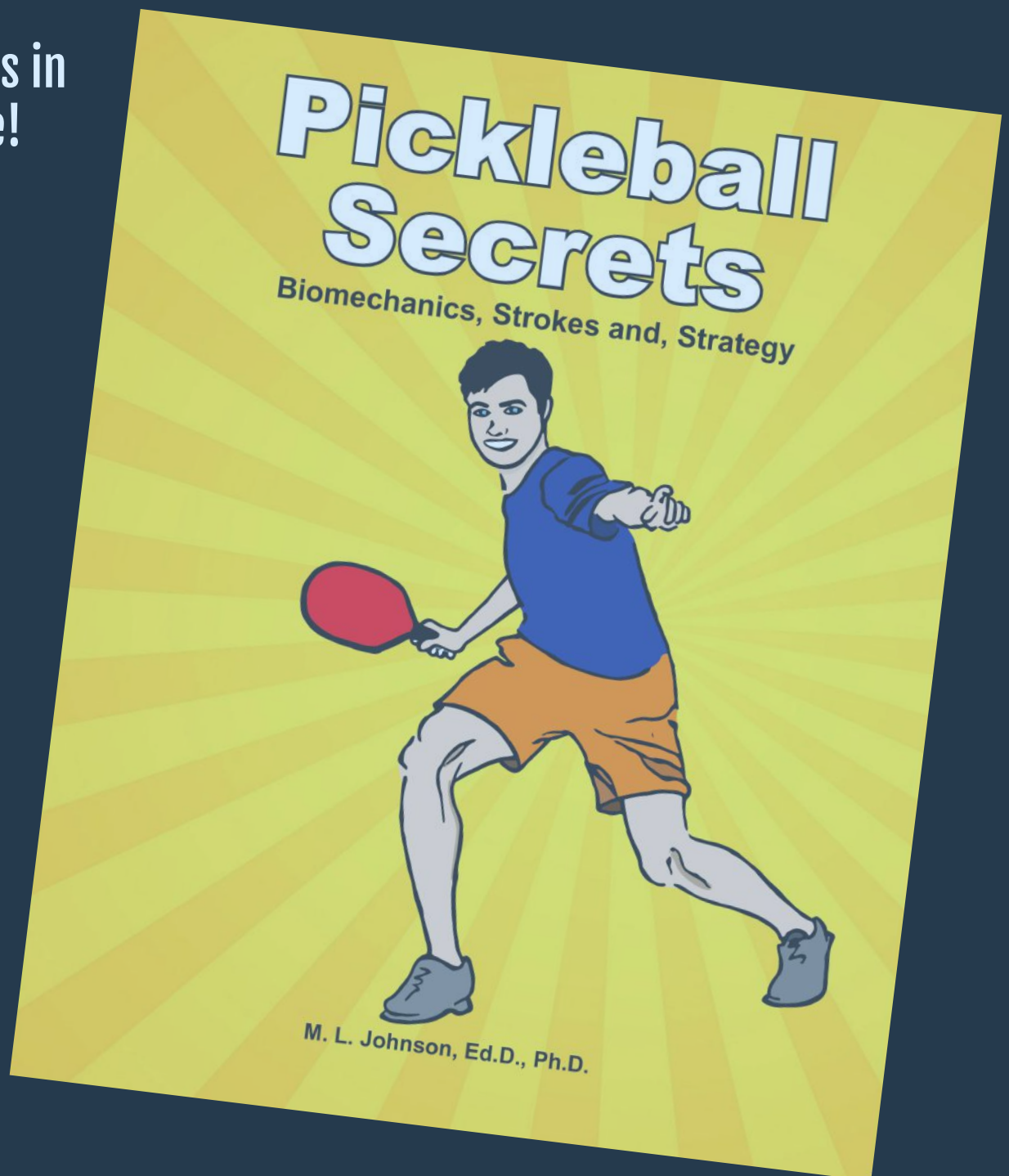


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What You Can Learn From Wes Gabrielson Playing Pickleball His Way



Hall of Fame Pickleball player Steve Paranto told professional Wes Gabrielson he should not do three things when they started playing together.

1. Do not hit extreme spins
2. Do not hit so many backhands
3. Do not hit the third shot drop as the ball rises

Fortunately, Wes did not listen to Steve regarding these three areas. And as it turned out, the slice became Wes' signature shot. Wes said, "He gave me so much good advice that outweighs that one comment that he made to not slice."

The Slice

Wes likes his students to have good mechanics before working on slice shots. But once they hit the 3.5 to 4.0 level, it is time to experiment with dinks and the serve return. Just be sure your wrist is locked, as players often keep it loose when hitting backhand slice dinks. The key is to open up the paddle face and use the same mechanics. That way, you can generate spin without changing your stroke.

Besides using a slice when you dink, it is also a very effective shot to hit when returning the serve. Wes said there are two reasons for this. First, it gives you time to reach the kitchen line if you hit a loftier ball, a safe shot. Secondly, slice shots do not bounce as high as balls hit flat or with topspin. So, it makes it more difficult for your opponent to reach the ball and effectively return it.

Wes has some advice when the tables are turned, and you return a slice shot hit to you. He said, "When people would slice a heavy ball at me in tennis, my best response was to try to slice it back. But I do have a bed of strings that could lift the ball over the net for me. In Pickleball, I feel like when you have a really effective slice that's coming at your feet, and it's a penetrating ball opening up the paddle face and just pushing through with a shorter swing is going to be more effective than trying to slice that ball back."

The Backhand

Steve also believed that Wes hit too many backhands when playing Pickleball. Wes will run around his forehand to whack a backhand shot. Wes said, "I would say 99% of my returns are a backhand slice. And I think honestly you see a significant amount of pro players also hit, whether it's a forehand or backhand, they kind of hit a slice return, especially if the serve is very deep." While Steve clearly likes to use his backhand, all players should work on this shot so they are comfortable with it.

The Third Shot Drop

The third shot drop is a staple for higher-level players as it prevents their opponents from being offensive with the ball. The serving

team hits a third shot drop after their opponent's return of serve. After the ball bounces on the ground, you can contact the ball as it is rising or as the ball is heading toward the ground. Wes likes to hit the ball on the rise. However, Steve did not like this tactic. Wes said, "The way that Steve plays is very efficient, and it's all about buying him and his partner time to get into the net. So Steve would like to let the returns fall, so we had time to hit a soft third and get into the net. I think his frustration with me at the beginning was I was hitting the third ball on the rise, which gave him less time to get into the net."

So whether it is the slice, backhand, or third shot drop, Wes did not always take the advice of a Hall of Fame Pickleball player. You may want to consider doing the same to help your game.





Should You Learn to Use a Two-Handed Backhand?

If you have played tennis, you may have used a two-handed backhand in that sport. And you may well use one in Pickleball. But should others attempt to put two hands on the paddle while hitting a backhand in Pickleball?

Thaddea Lock, a professional Pickleball player in England, likes the technique because you can do many things with the ball. Thaddea said, "I like being super attacking with it. Sometimes I might even use a two-handed backhand dink, like Anna Leigh (Waters). She likes to roll her two-handed backhand cross cool with topspin. So I liked just playing around with it because you can do a lot of different kinds of creative things."

Thaddea is not alone in using the two-handed backhand. Many other female professional Pickleball players put two hands on the paddle-like Simone Jardim and Anna Leigh Waters. While it is natural for them since they have a tennis background, others trying out the shot need to relax their arms and swing through the ball.

Thaddea, a right-handed player, said she does not stack her hands on top of each other. She puts her hands next to each other, so the left-hand rides up the back of the paddle face a bit. She says your left arm and hand do more with the ball. The right hand is there for stability and support. But it is the left hand that can

create the whipping action to impart topspin on the ball.

While it feels natural to Thaddea to hit a two-handed backhand, she uses both this technique and the one-handed backhand. Thaddea uses a one-handed slice backhand to return most serves. But if she feels under pressure, she relies on the two-handed backhand. She also uses her two-handed backhand when attacking shots near the net. Even if someone hits a lob shot, she can use the two-hander if it is not too high.

Thaddea said she became comfortable with the two-handed and one-handed backhand techniques because she injured her wrist when she was a child. As a result, she could not put both hands on the racket for a while. She said, "So, in a way, that was a blessing in disguise because I learned how to slice. I guess for me, it's more instinctive, and it depends on the ball that's coming at me. Sometimes it's hard if you're pushed really back, and you're trying to hit a third shot. Sometimes it's better to dig it out. It's easier for me to dig it out with two hands to help control the ball. But yeah, I guess a lot of it is just instinctive and, to be honest, like just playing a lot and figuring out for yourself."

Surprisingly, Thaddea does not use a Pickleball paddle with a long handle. So if others are interested in trying the two-handed backhand, know that you can use your current paddle.

Profile: England's Thaddea Lock

Thaddea Lock traveled from her home in England to visit a friend in the United States in late 2018. While staying in Wichita, Kansas, her friend's mother suggested trying Pickleball. Thaddea played a few times with a social group organized by a woman named Lucy. Thaddea said, "When I was coming home, Lucy said to me, When you go back to England, you should keep playing. And I said, we definitely do not play this sport in England. She was like, no, you do. So when I got home, I kind of Googled places to play Pickleball in England."

As it turns out, Lucy was correct in that they did play Pickleball in England in 2018. So Thaddea emailed the club, saying she was interested in competing. They responded by asking her what level she played. Since Thaddea had no idea how the Pickleball rating system worked, she contacted Lucy, who said she was a 5.0 player. Thaddea said, "So I had no idea at that point what that meant. So I just sent an email back saying, oh, I'm a 5.0. The email back I got was if you're a 5.0, you're going to be the best woman player in this country. And I said, hold on, I've played like three times.

And then she said, and also the Lucy that you played with, who was that? And I said, oh, just this girl called Lucy Kovalova. And she was like, oh, Lucy Kovalova is like the best player in the world, and I have no idea. And I also have no idea obviously about the level."

While Thaddea said she was not the best female Pickleball player in England at that time, she learned quickly due to her background as a tennis player. Thaddea played for a couple of months near the end of 2018. But then she had a long bout with mononucleosis where she could not get out of bed. When she was finally able to exercise, Thaddea realized she did not have the energy to play tennis. So Pickleball was a great alternative since the court is smaller.

Thaddea made the best of the change to Pickleball as she had a great deal of success at the Scottish Open in 2019. She won the triple crown, which includes singles, women's doubles, and mixed doubles. So it did not take long for her to become the best female player in England after all.



Club Profile

Admin Tools

Communication

Send emails, chat with players, and post announcements

- Admins can email to selected members or the entire club
- Emails are displayed on the player's dashboard
- Chat one-on-one via TIH messaging
- Announcements display on the group's profile
- Post pictures and socialize with pickleball friends

Event Scheduling

- Simple two-step registration process
- Add guests to your registration
- Track attendees
- Associate venues with specific events
- Automated email reminders
- Event invitations
- Access events on your personal calendar
- Seamless payment process for fee-based events

Club Dues

Say goodbye to the countless hours of administrative work

- Collect dues directly into the club's PayPal account
- Transfer payments from PayPal to bank account with no fees
- Create individual, couple, and family plans
- Track payments
- New member notification
- Automated membership expiration emails
- Customized membership fields

Club Play

- Competitive or social
- Round-robins, flex ladders, & shootouts
- Unlimited court configuration flexibility
- Standings are perpetually tracked
- Substitutes are not needed
- Standings are updated in real-time
- Email court schedules
- Generate custom court layouts



David Pollack

TrackitHub Brand Ambassador

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College Gameday Analyst

Rating: 4.0

Location: Georgia

Joined: 2021

Player Profile

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☎ 866.924.8006

📍 TrackitHub.com

Skills

Drop shot ●●●●●

Serve ●●●●●

Dinking ●●●●●

Speed ●●●●●

Backhand ●●●●●

Forehand ●●●●●

Clubs

• Phoenix Pros

Groups

- Mixed Round-Robin
- Men's Shootout

• Georgia Pickleball Club

Groups

- Friday Night Scramble
- Advanced Ladder

Standings

87% - Mixed Round-Robin

81% - Men's Shootout

76% - Friday Night Scramble

85% - Advanced Ladder

The IFP's Steve Sidwell and his Olympic Dream for Pickleball



The International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) has seen astronomical growth of its member countries over the last couple of years. With the help of Steve Sidwell, Director of Country Memberships, the number of member nations went from 15 to 67 in just a couple of years. While it is great to see the IFP's member countries increasing, the growth is critical for bringing the sport of Pickleball to the Olympics.

Steve said, "There's really no magic number. You'll hear the term 75 countries tossed around because that's what the international Olympic committee requires to introduce a sport into the Olympics to become an Olympic sport. Now that'll be a great accomplishment for us, and we're on track for that."

The path for playing Pickleball in the Olympics is a two-step process. One is to become an Olympic sport, and the other is to become a sport played at the Olympics. While these two things appear to be the same, they are not. The host city for each Olympic Games chooses which sports will be included. So whether it is Paris in 2024 or Los Angeles in 2028, each city decides which events will be included. Both Paris and Los Angeles have already chosen which sports will be included, and Pickleball is not one of them.

Steve said the decision to include a sport is primarily based on finances. The goal is to have sports that are inexpensive to host but also have the greatest viewership. For example, if a country needs to build a \$5 million facility to host a sport, it needs to be able to make that money back. In the case of Pickleball, tennis courts can be surfaced, so the cost is not as high.

Steve said, "The other thing we have working for us is, as you've seen, Pickleball is expanding exponentially. Everybody sees it in the states. Not too many people see it globally, but we see it globally. I say it's in the zeitgeists because we're seeing it again nationally at the highest levels, and we're seeing it in Hollywood. We're seeing it on mainstream media. Every year it seems to get better and better for this promotion for our sport."

As a result of Pickleball having more media attention and spreading worldwide, countries are now starting to reach out to Steve to learn about becoming members of the IFP. The organization has multiple membership levels, including full members, associate members, and affiliated members. Full members have been active for many years, so they have well-established programs and a history of running tournaments. On the other end are affiliate members who are just getting started with Pickleball in their countries. For example, Russia is a vast country but is just getting started with Pickleball, so they are an affiliate member. Many smaller countries are also affiliate members as they are just getting organized.

So, do the membership levels matter to the Olympic committee? Steve said, "When you watch the Olympics, and you watch the parade of athletes, and you see that guy come in a grass skirt from Tonga. Everybody's seen this guy, huge bodybuilder, but the point is they maybe have three or four people in their whole assemblage for the Olympics. Those are tiny countries, but they've been able to get that national organizing committee. They've been able to get sponsors, and the IOC wants as much diversity and inclusion as they could possibly get. They want diversity, inclusion, and viewership, and the host countries don't want to lose money. So that's the combination that determines what sports actually get into the Olympics."

While Pickleball will not be an official sport in 2024 or 2028, the goal is for it to become an exhibition sport, perhaps in 2028 in Los Angeles. As Pickleball grows as a spectator sport, Steve believes this goal will be reached. "I would ask that you look at some of the sports going into. The Olympics break dancing is going into Paris in 2028, plus several other ones. Those, even though they don't sound like a conventional sport, they've mustered enough publicity and participation in sponsorship to make it go."

So Pickleball is on a trajectory to become not only an Olympic sport but one played in the Olympics. The only question remaining is when this will happen.

3 Misconceptions About Pickleball Strategy

Hall of Fame Pickleball player Steve Paranto started playing the game in the juniors. And he has won a 5.0 tournament in six different decades. Now at the age of 65, he has gone through every stage of Pickleball and believes what seniors love about the game is it makes them feel young again. Steve said, "If you're a crafty senior player, you've been playing a long time. You have skills. You're able to beat many younger players that aren't choosing the right shot." In other words, Steve believes there are several misconceptions about the sport, especially when competing at higher levels.

#1: Hitting Dinks so They Land Near the Non-volley-Zone Line

You often hear players say, "sorry, I hit the ball too high," after their opponent slams down a high ball during a dinking rally. The goal should be to dink the ball short, meaning it does not go far past the net. Unfortunately, many players dink the ball, so it lands near the non-volley-zone line. It gives your opponent time to hit the ball in the air. Steve said, "One of the biggest mistakes people make is hitting their dinks too far. If you notice, most of the teams that are winning matches are the teams that get to hit the first balls out of the air, even at the pro level, in fact at every level. And so you can hit one too high and too far that's doubly bad, but oftentimes it's just that you hit a ball too far." To hit short dinks, players need to work on lift dinks. Let the ball fall, so you contact the ball below the

net. Then open your paddle face and aim to place the ball just over the net.

#2: Hitting to Your Opponents Feet

You may think you want to hit to your opponent's feet, but this is not always the case. If you are playing against a fast opponent, this allows them to get to the ball quickly and take it out of the air. So rather than hitting to their feet, try switching to where their feet are going to be. It means you will be hitting the ball shorter in the court. An example is when your opponent drives the third shot. Rather than targeting the ball back deep in the court where a quick player can hit it in the air, you should drop it short into the kitchen.

#3: Hitting to the Deep Person

While hitting to the deep person may work at the beginning and intermediate levels, more experienced players can take advantage of this tactic. It occurs when one of your opponents is stuck deep in the court and their partner, who is at the non-volley-zone line, likes to poach. If you try to hit the ball to the player deep in the court, their partner will cut off that high ball and finish off the rally. If you find this occurring, it is best to hit the ball behind your opponent who is poaching.



USA Pickleball Approval

Did you know if you play in a USA-sanctioned tournament, your paddle needs to meet certain specifications to be considered legal? This approval process has been in place for over a decade. But, in 2016, USA Pickleball brought on Carl Schmits to head the equipment evaluation committee. The group's focus is on paddle standards, tests, and specifications. Carl said, "It started with one board member in their garage with a series of tests that they felt were relevant to ensuring that the sport was played to a certain level. Really their key strategy there is to maintain the integrity of the sport. And by that, it was a sport that was largely driven by finesse versus power."

The equipment evaluation committee helped to formalize the paddle approval process by having an outside company do the tests. Friction and deflection are the elements tested during the process. The friction test helps determine how much you can spin the ball off the paddle. The test measures the peaks and valleys of the paddle face. Carl said the friction test has become increasingly important.

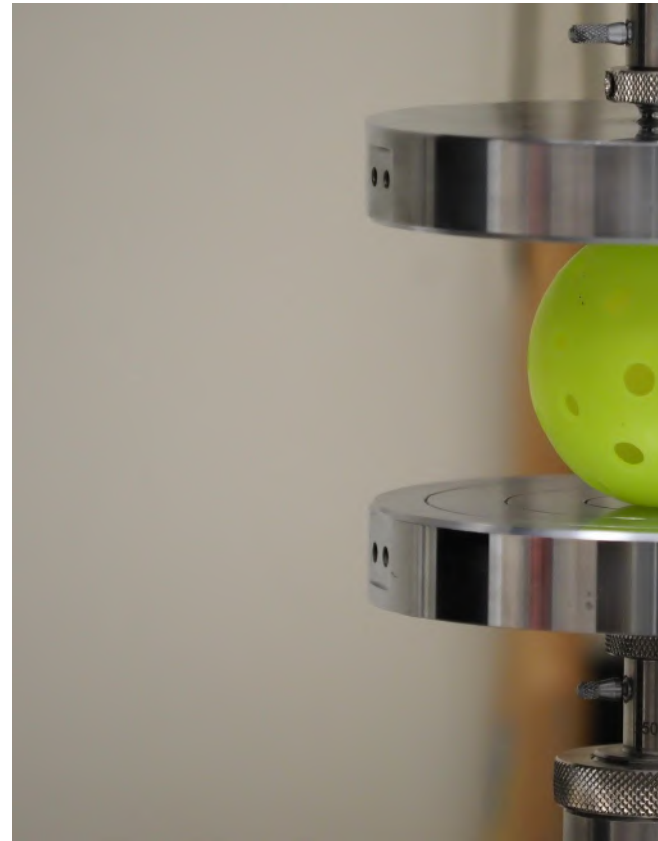
Friction Test

Paddle manufacturers changed how they applied graphics to the paddle, increasing friction by creating irregularities. By the end of 2019, paddle manufacturers began experimenting with surface finishes. These paints and coatings also introduced friction, even if the surface felt smooth to the touch. So, USA Pickleball had to use a more sophisticated test called a coefficient of friction. Carl said, "this is very much a physics-driven test. And the way it's executed is a sled, with a material on the bottom side of the sled is weighted at eight pounds, is pulled across the face of the paddle. And depending on the amount of force required to pull it across, it yields a number which is a ratio."

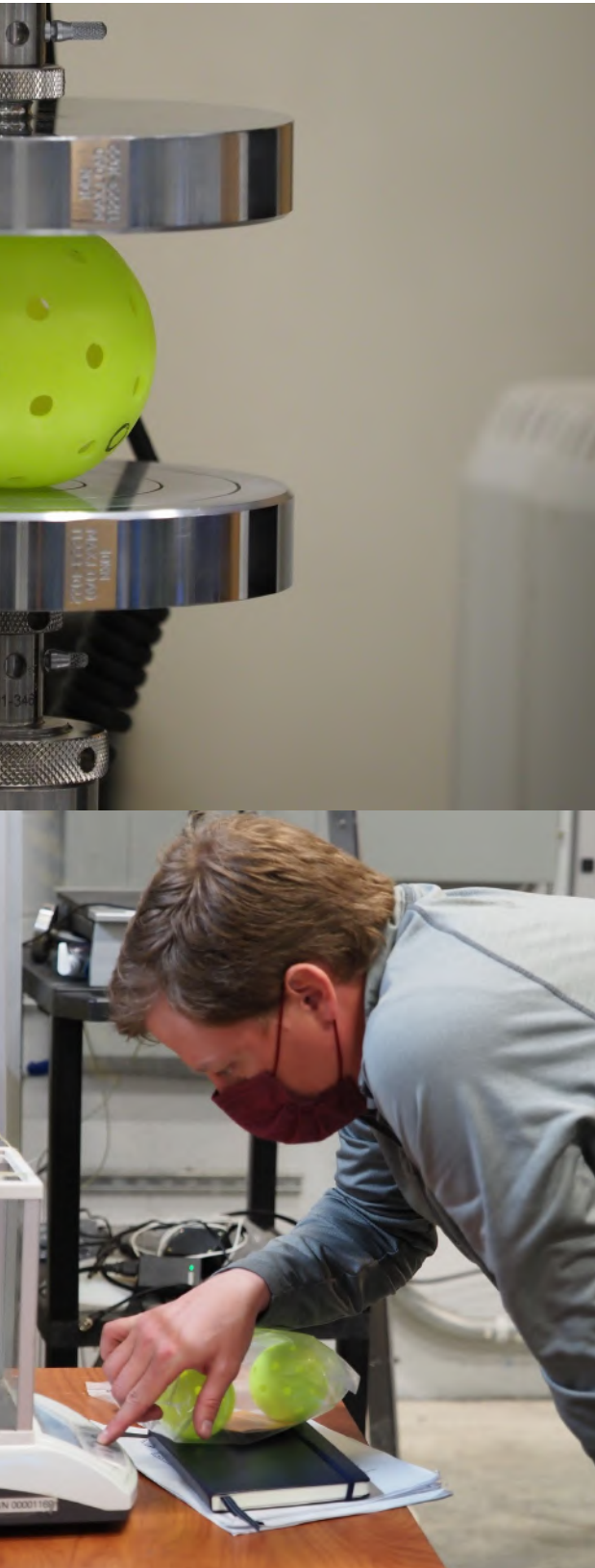
Deflection Test

Deflection is the other key element considered when approving paddles. The test essentially measures a trampoline effect. It is the equivalent of a string bed you see in tennis, racquetball, or squash. The idea is that paddles should have a solid hitting surface. In other words, there should not be an extended dwell time or return of energy back to the ball.

As Pickleball paddle manufacturers try new materials and designs, it does create a challenge. Carl said, "We have to look at the design. Is it a direct violation of the rules, or is it a violation of the intent of the rules? And if that's the case, then we get together with the manufacturer and talk through it. And there may be a design tweak made to address that. I think as much as new materials can drive innovation out there today, part of innovation is related to what's read between the lines. Does it explicitly state that they can't do something?"



all's Paddle Process



One example of paddle innovation is the open throat paddle designed by Selkirk. Tyson McGuffin, one of the top professionals in the game, is using it. The advantage of its design is that it is more aerodynamic, moving through the air more freely. It is not surprising the Pickleball paddle is evolving as the same progress occurred with tennis, racquetball, and squash rackets. The rules for the Pickleball paddle state there cannot be a hole in the paddle face. But the design was approved by the equipment evaluation committee. Carl said,

"There's not a sports engineer on the planet that would call an open throat, a hole. It's basically two shafts that are supporting the hitting face."

However, the concern about the paddle design was not about friction but flexibility. The idea is similar to the graphite shafts of golf clubs which translate to more club speed. As a result of the new design, the equipment evaluation committee developed a new test to assess the coefficient of restitution or the return of power.

Another example of paddle innovation is the Aeroshot by One Shot Pickleball. The paddle has vents along the side, which are designed to relieve air pressure on the face of the paddle. It is more aerodynamic like Selkirk's open throat paddle as it swings through the air more quickly. As the equipment evaluation committee reviewed the design, the intent of the scalloped edges was not to increase friction because the vents are on the edge of the paddle. So it does not violate any rules.

As the sport of Pickleball grows, so do the number of new paddles and manufacturers. According to Carl, they have seen more new paddles in the last 18 months than in the previous five years. They were reviewing 150-180 new paddle submissions annually. In the first nine months of 2021, close to 270 paddles were already submitted.

USA Pickleball is trying to be responsive in its approval process as the paddle innovations continue. Carl said he has learned from other sports like racquetball and tennis, where the size of the racket head dramatically changed the games. For example, Prince introduced a tennis racket with a large head in the mid-seventies. And it took the international tennis federation five years to put a restriction on size. Carl said, "We need to be a bit more nimble and try to stay ahead of the curve in terms of what innovations are being developed and what we're trying to protect. We also need to leave enough wiggle room in development for innovation to happen as well, so paddles are all not the same. So that a new manufacturer might consider coming into the sport and introducing a differentiated product."

A World Ambassador Program

The International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) formed the World Ambassador program in late 2019. It has since grown to over 250 ambassadors promoting the spirit and sport of pickleball worldwide. Based on the incredibly successful USA Pickleball (the governing body for pickleball in the United States and a member country of the IFP) ambassador program with its 2000+ ambassadors, the IFP program is designed to recognize and support pickleball enthusiasts who are passionate about leading others to this amazing game.

World Ambassadors receive an introductory letter to present to government officials, schools, tennis and sports facilities, etc., introducing them as official IFP World Ambassadors and receiving a certificate to show or display. These items are essential in many cultures worldwide as they designate those who are certified to expand the game, and they lend gravitas to their inquiries.

While the original intent was to appoint ambassadors who would travel the world or to individual countries and conduct clinics and camps, we soon realized that many players wanted to expand the sport in their backyards. They generally had no plans to travel, but they wanted to see the game grow within their own spheres. Many of them didn't even live in countries that had joined the IFP as members yet, but, over time, many of those same ambassadors have formed the associations within their countries that are necessary to enter the IFP.

An ambassador's calling is to introduce people to the game. It might be as simple as inviting an onlooker to hit the ball a few times during a play session. Answering an innocent question about the pickleball shirt you're wearing, or the paddle in your hand can lead to curiosity to see what that ambassador was so excited about! The next step is maybe giving rudimentary lessons, kind of a quick start guide, to those who need them. There's no need to overload someone with strategies and rules at this point; the ambassador wants to get a paddle in their hand and show them how much fun it is! And lastly, the ambassador needs to constantly be on the lookout for potential new venues at which to play. Like in the United States, a growing body of players will soon fill the available venues to overflowing.



An ambassador in Germany, Maria Munz, has been growing the sport there and in Portugal. With a shortage of equipment in Portugal and absolutely no pickleball infrastructure, it was a challenge, for sure. Showing more perseverance than normal humans usually have, Maria got the program off the ground and kept in contact with them to ensure it sticks and grows.

Jeff van der Hulse, from Norfolk, England, recently spent two months in Indonesia conducting camps and clinics far and wide and certifying instructors to help spread the growth of pickleball. Six-hour car rides are nothing unusual as he works with the Indonesian ambassadors to connect with locals in their areas. Jeff also operates in the Philippines, and anywhere else, anyone will stop to listen to him!

Hercilio Cabieses plays pro tournament brackets and lives in Florida. Intrigued by the program, he applied to be an ambassador and was shortly approved. When he found out that his home country of Peru wasn't a member of the IFP, he was determined to change that fact, so, within just a few days, he established the groundwork to allow Peru to join the IFP as an associate country. Seeing a need, he asked to be appointed the World Ambassador for South and Central America. After receiving IFP approval, he has been instrumental in getting several countries to join the organization and coordinating efforts to spread pickleball love.

The process to become an IFP World Ambassador is relatively simple. The first thing is, do you fit the model of who we're looking for? Going on vacation in Cabo and playing with some ex-pats for a couple of days or taking your paddle with you to Europe just in case you find a game in Paris doesn't meet up with our vision of an ambassador. We're looking more for the person who is going to travel to a country and work with someone local to set up some clinics for newbies; someone who maybe is moving to a country for three months and will be able to create a critical mass of local players so that it will continue to grow once you move on.

The second thing is, do you have the temperament to work with newbies who may not even speak a language you understand and always be encouraging? Do you feel evangelical about the game? Do you carry your paddle with you to the grocery store, or the dentist's just waiting for someone to ask you about it? Okay, maybe somewhere just short of that last one!

If you meet those first two criteria, then you can go to the IFP website at ifpickleball.org and, under the "Ambassador" tab, you'll find the application. Please fill out the application, and we'll check with your reference and go from there.

Once again, there's little doubt that the USA Pickleball ambassador program has been instrumental in the growth of pickleball in the US. We fully expect the IFP ambassador program to influence the rest of the world in playing the fastest-growing sport in the universe!



Senior Pro Dayne Gingrich on Self Belief

While Dayne Gingrich is a senior professional player and mental toughness coach, he had experienced times in his life when he lacked self-belief. He commented, "I think anybody who says they've never lacked belief is lying. We're human beings. So I think it's just a matter of how much. And periods of our life we come in and out of it."

Dayne has always been confident in sports, and his self-belief is at an all-time high both on and off the court. However, he went through some trying times earlier in his career after quitting his tennis job to strike out on his own as a coach. He fell into a deep depression and considered taking his life.

Dayne said, "I went as far as planning my suicide. All right, so 14 years ago, maybe. And I haven't talked about that in quite a while. And I think it's really important now that this is being talked about more, people falling into this. There are different layers of depression, and I was definitely in a really dark time in my business. I just didn't see the light."

Part of the reason Dayne did not see the light was because athletically things came easily to him. However, starting his own business was a huge struggle, and Dayne is thankful he did not have the courage to end his life. He moved forward and even had a podcast where he shared his struggles. Dayne said, "One of my main mission statements was to help others shine a light on their darkness and help them realize that they're not alone. I think when we go through it, we feel like we're alone, which makes us feel even worse, with which puts us into a darker time. So that has been an everyday, all day process of learning and another state of mental and emotional toughness that has nothing to do with sports."

How to Handle the Big Moments in a Match

Dayne Gingrich played Pickleball for five hours without breaks the first time he stepped on the court. Afterward, he could not walk down the stairs without massive pain for two weeks. Despite the rough start with Pickleball, Dayne became one of the top senior professionals in the game a couple of years later. He brings his experience as a high-level tennis player and mental toughness coach to the courts.

Dayne said he taught tennis for over 10 years and realized something was missing because he was focusing only on the physical aspects of the game. So he started working with his tennis clients on the mental attributes of the sport and had immediate success. Dayne said, "Mental performance is about the intangibles. It's about the things that we can't really see with our eyes that creates the champions, It's not about how powerful your forehand is or how good your roll back backhand is. It's about how you perform in the biggest moments under the highest level of stress."

As a mental toughness coach, he helps athletes learn to execute physically when their brain or emotions are screaming at them to play hesitantly or passively. Dayne said most people look at Ben Johns, the number one Pickleball player in the world, and see his physical

skills, such as how he covers the court. But Dayne believes what separates Ben from other top players is his mental and emotional toughness.

The best players in the world have learned how to handle the most significant moments in matches through intentional practice. Dayne said, "But just like anything, handling big moments is a muscle. It's a skill set. And there's no one way to do it, but it does take intentional practice. And being intentional and accepting that in the biggest moments, at nine, nine, we are physiologically and emotionally going to feel different than we do at one one. And what does that mean for us individually? How do we respond? Do we get overly aggressive? Do we get passive? Do we get scared? What do we do?"

The key is for each player to learn their unique tendencies in those biggest moments. If you become passive in the pressure points because you are afraid to miss a shot, you need to be more aggressive. It can be done through practice, taking lessons, or playing recreational games. The key, in either case, is to be super intentional and learn to bridge the gap between the freeness you feel in recreational play and the tightness you feel in tournaments.

Senior Professional Scott Moore on the Backhand Serve



Senior professional Scott Moore started using the backhand serve because he had the "yips," meaning he could not consistently get the serve in the box. Since Scott was not as consistent as he wanted to be, he started using the backhand serve because it is a more natural swing with fewer moving parts.

Scott said, "As I started developing it, I realized, wait a minute, people aren't used to the spin which goes from right to left. So I could spin it sometimes into people's bodies or, if I had a right to left wind, literally off the court. And I started using it more and more as a weapon the more accurate and consistent and competent I got with it. And then developed somewhat of a lob serve and so forth. So I just think it's a nice additional tool in your toolbox of shots. It is a different look, so it makes you a little less predictable, and it makes it a little tougher for people that haven't seen that actual spin before."

However, the challenge with the backhand serve is where you toss the ball to start the service motion. With the forehand serve, you place the ball out in front of yourself. You need to hold the ball above or below the paddle with the backhand. Then toss the ball. You also have the option of dropping the ball on the ground first. It is a more natural way to start the motion.

Scott recommends that intermediate players and above give the backhand serve a try. Often beginners do not feel comfortable with their forehand, but once players get to the 3.0 to 3.5 level, it is a good serve to add to your arsenal. This way, you can hit forehand serves that spin left to right and backhand serves that spin right to left. Scott says depending on the wind and which side he is on, he will hit both forehand and backhand serves in the same game. He usually hits the backhand serve from the deuce or right side of the court and forehands from the add or left side of the court.

Scott said, "For example, if the team is stacking against me, let's say the guy is returning and the girl is in a stack formation, I can really spin it where he actually is off the court, and therefore has a whole lot of ground to cover, to try to get back over. And I can usually take people out of a stack because of the fact that I can spin it off the court and make it really tough to cover the court."

So if you would like to add some variety to your game, give the backhand serve a try. And remember, you can use a drop serve to make the toss easier.

Scott Moore: Pickleball Entrepreneur



Scott Moore admits he is a serial entrepreneur. He has several ventures like his high-performance Pickleball academy and the premier resort for the sport. Scott said, "It may be a sickness. I can't help myself, but I really enjoy starting enterprises, and I'm seeing them grow. So Pickleball provided very fertile ground for that, with the growth internationally."

Scott and his partners purchased an old Sears store with 10 acres of land in Prescott, Arizona. The 100,000 square foot location was sold for dimes on the dollar due to retail locations closing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Scott said the value of the building was \$15 million. But they paid \$3.5 million-plus invested another million dollars in improvements.

Espire Sports will have two phases. The first includes 14 dedicated Pickleball courts, a restaurant, sports bar, fitness center, locker room, yard games, and simulators for golf and shooting. The grand opening is in early 2022, and they have a big gala planned. Scott will invite professionals from all over the country to teach clinics. Plus, they have a local restaurant partner feeding the players. After the grand opening, Espire Sports already has plans to host 12 tournaments.

The second phase of the resort includes the hotel. And it completes the idea of "eat, stay, and play," which are

the first three letters in Espire. Scott anticipates the hotel will be ready for United States guests and international Pickleball players in 2024. Daniel, who is Scott's son and lives in Japan, is the global director. So the vision is to bring in guests from all over the world to camps at Espire Sports resort. The players can enjoy Pickleball and nearby sites like the Grand Canyon and Sedona, Arizona. Scott said, "So we'll have those kind of trips available as well, which we're super excited about because eventually, Pickleball is going to be bigger, internationally than it is going to be in the U.S. And so now we have a base to bring people from the international communities that we're getting to know to the U.S. to do the same thing."

Since the grand opening of phase one is just a few weeks away, the first investment round is closed. Still, Scott expects they will open another round for the second phase if others want to invest. He said, "We've already got the land. And so, if we get the right hotel partner, I think it's going to be a very lucrative financial investment for our investors as well. So we'll eventually reopen that up once we get it finalized."

While Scott considers his love of starting businesses to be a "sickness," the result of the illness is going to be a world-class resort where you can eat, sleep and play Pickleball all in one place.

Pickleball and Service

Have you heard of this silly sport and happy marriage of Pickleball and Service?

Dan Beeman has never stopped serving from an Army Airborne Paratrooper to pickleball Ambassador.

At 50, Beeman was involved in a significant car accident and subsequently had a double fusion of his vertebrae in his back. While this traumatic event impacted his mobility, it also opened the door to a new passion.

One day after his gentle yoga at his rec center, he walked past the gym and heard the laughter and the ubiquitous pop, pop, pop of the pickleball play. He entered the gym and, despite his appearance (he has a skin disease called vitiligo) and physical limitations, he was immediately warmly welcomed and encouraged to join in the fun. Just like nearly everyone else who tried it, he was quickly addicted.

A few months later, he was selected as a USA Pickleball ambassador and hosted a successful introductory clinic as a part of National Pickleball Month for 60+ people in the same gym. One of the newbies at the clinic loved it too. Her pickleball journey has yielded a fitness regimen to help her lose over 100 lbs. and share the joy with thousands of people.

He has also recently written a critically acclaimed and award-winning screenplay for a buddy comedy called Pickleballs! – The Movie. Here is the summary: After losing his job, mom, and house on the same day, a toupee-wearing, disgraced, broke former tennis champ needs to redeem himself, so he looks up his old commie nemesis and convinces him to partner up and travel the country in an old RV, competing in pickleball tournaments to try and reclaim his former glory and pay off debts. Together, they overcome their differences to find happiness.

Beeman also recently received his Master of Hospitality from UNLV, where he studied Sustainable Tourism. As his passion for pickleball grew, he decided to write his final research paper on the Implications of Pickleball for the Hospitality Industry.

The conclusions of his graduate school research for his paper: resorts that have either tennis or basketball courts and do not add pickleball are not maximizing potential revenue or their asset value. As a result, they are also losing market share, group travel, and growth opportunities.



Because there was no definitive publication regarding the growth of the sport in this area, he needed to interview people in the industry who had created successful programs. So, he went to Palm Desert Resort Country Club and met with the lease owner on their tennis center in March 2019.

The program they created was in its infancy, but they had a great vision for it. They started by converting three tennis courts to make 12 pickleball courts. Since then, they have doubled the size, have 500+ members, host tournaments and Level-Up Camps. Home values in the club have increased by 30+%, and it is now known as the Mecca of Pickleball on the west coast.

Despite the challenges of a worldwide pandemic, especially in the tourism industry, Beeman now helps resorts tap into new revenue by creating pickleball programs.

He obviously loves the sport and social dynamic of the environment. He actively volunteers at tournaments as a line judge, announcer, host, or whatever else is needed to create the best environment for players and spectators possible.

His next endeavor is to help disabled and residentially challenged veterans. He hopes to bring pickleball to all their existing and planned facilities.

So, whether it is a resort, club, tournament, city, state, or country; whether it is a professional, recreational, disabled, or wanna-be player; Beeman continues serving them and pickleball with honor. Have you tried it yet? It is fun. It starts with service.

More about Beeman and his work can be found at: www.danbman.com.

Jason Garriotte: On Center Stage in Pickleball and Music

Jason Garriotte is used to being on the road as a professional tennis player and musician. In fact, he was the ultimate road warrior since 2009, living in hotels and short-term housing until recently. But things are changing for Jason as he started playing Pickleball professionally.

"Even back when I did the futures tennis, I could cut corners and try to make things work, even sleeping in my car a lot of times. Wherewith Pickleball, the entry fees are expensive. They're kind of spread out real far. There aren't a lot of like pro tours in a row where you can drive to a bunch of them. That's kind of why I'm doing the Chicago, Orlando, Atlanta one here, where I've been looking at different ways to make money."

Music is definitely on Jason's list of ways to add to his income as he has been involved with it for many years. His father played music from many classic singer-songwriters like Bob Dylan, Simon and Garfunkel, and Johnny Cash. Jason said he played the piano some but did not pick up the guitar until he was in his twenties. He played at home for ten years. At first, he was not very good, but he trained his voice by practicing, improving over time. Jason said, "Back in 2011, I played my first open mic, and it was just addicting. It was one of those things. I knew why rock stars stayed up all night because of the adrenaline that you get. And I stayed up all night staring at the ceiling, and then I started playing open mics all the time."

Jason started by playing just cover songs but soon began to write music. He wrote, recorded, and traveled for the last ten years, playing many shows and some festivals. Recently he released another album that he recorded during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown of 2020. His goal is to combine his Pickleball and musical career. He said, "One of the things I'm trying to do more is house concerts or more small venue stuff. So I feel like if I go out and I'm doing the Pickleball tournaments, and I'm in town, different places for a week or so that I might do a couple of those while I'm out on the road where people can see me live that wouldn't normally be able to."

Jason has not written a Pickleball song yet, but he has thought about it. He said, "Part of it is with the music that I do is pretty serious. Most of it is more introspective and almost like Wayne Dyer, inspirational-type mantras and stuff like that. So I haven't really broken into comedy ones yet. But I'm pretty sure it's going to happen at some point, especially if I get to collaborate with someone else who also is a Pickleballer and songwriter. So I've seen some creative stuff done. I just haven't jumped into the mix yet."

While Jason will still be playing music, he wants to take Pickleball more seriously. He plans to do both, but Pickleball will be taking center stage in the future.



Erie, PA Clubs Winningest Pickleball Player

By Bob Borgia

The Erie Pickleball Players Association (EPPA), in only its very first year as a formal entity, has approximately 160 active members since our inception in April of 2021. We are very proud to have welcomed players who have visited our great city during the spring and summer months to play Pickleball at our outside courts in the City of Erie, PA, at Baldwin Park.

Players from as far away as Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, California, New York, and Washington state, just to mention a few, have played Pickleball with us at Baldwin Park, located at 24th, and Geist in Erie, Pa. We look forward to return visits next summer along with many more guests.

One couple in particular who has played Pickleball at least 3 to 4 times per week has an exciting job and lifestyle. Our friends Christina and Mario Pino are from Delray Beach, FL. Mario is a full-time horse racing jockey and raced at Presque Isle Downs and Casino, Monday through Thursday until last October's season finale.

When arriving in Erie, Pa, Mario's goal was to become the 10th winningest jockey in North America, focusing on earning a victory in his 7000th race in his illustrious career at Presque Isle Downs and Casino.

Christina and Mario are both extremely competitive Pickleball players (Mario does not play on horseback). When they arrived in Erie, the first thing they looked for was a place to play Pickleball outdoors. They discovered that Baldwin Park was THE destination for our growing sport in the Erie area. Christina and Mario have met many, many new friends through Pickleball and our EPPA members and have "enjoyed many hours of play with a great group of people." Their dynamic, competitive personalities have drawn us all to them, and they have added a significant amount of fun and excitement to our sport.

Mario needed 12 wins to accomplish his goal by winning his 7000th race. Knowing his competitive nature, he did win his 7000th race, which is such a great accomplishment.

All of us at Erie Pickleball Players Association wish the Pino's good health and safety and look forward to their return to Erie next summer.



Going All In For Pickleball

Laura Kemp is someone who goes all-in whenever she does something. Laura said, "For those that know me, my mantra is I am all in for whatever I do. I don't kind of do anything whether it's Pickleball, whether it's health, whether it was teaching science, that's my mantra."

Laura found Pickleball after she and her husband lost over 44 pounds. Before that, they did not have much energy to keep up with their kids. As Laura puts it, they were "really just kind of surviving." But two years ago, she found Pickleball, and her life changed dramatically. In fact, Laura was so hooked on the game, she played in a wheelchair while she was recovering from reconstructive knee surgery. She said, "It was the best thing for me because it kept me on the court with something to look forward to. I actually have had multiple spinal surgeries, two cervical and two lumbar. And after those surgeries, I wasn't really excited to get back to anything. And the difference here with being able to get back to Pickleball really pushed me to do the physical therapy to stay active in playing wheelchair Pickleball."

Laura not only figured out how to play Pickleball in a wheelchair, but she also participated in the U.S. Open while in a wheelchair in two events. She won gold in parapickleball doubles with her partner Rick Marion, and she earned silver in the 3.0/3.5 hybrid event with her husband, Mark Kemp.

Still, Laura was not done with going "all in" on Pickleball. While Laura loved teaching science to seventh graders, she found the hybrid learning environment where some students were online and others in their seats in the classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic to be very challenging. She never thought she would retire from teaching science, but Laura was eligible for a full pension. So, she took a risk and decided to try something new. Laura became the Director of Pickleball for the Chicken N Pickle in Grand Prairie, Texas. Her role is to facilitate play, organize leagues, and ensure people know how to play the game.

Of course, Laura is all in for Pickleball as a player, instructor, and facilitator. She is also looking to create a junior after-school program in the future.



Jigsaw Health: It's Fun to Feel Good Especially When Playing Pickleball

Patrick Sullivan, Jr. and his wife Ashley Leroux of Jigsaw Health call Pickleball a major life enhancement for them. They not only became Pickleball addicts but also started marketing their products to players after meeting a few of the professionals at Pickle Palooza in 2019. Patrick said, "I still remember Lucy (Kovalova) coming up to the booth. What are these products for? And I was like, oh, they help with cramping. They're like, okay. So we sent them home with some samples. And about a month later, they were texting us back and saying, you know, these actually were pretty good. Have you ever thought about sponsoring Pickleball?"

Jigsaw Health has been in business since 2005, when Patrick and his father started the company. Patrick's father is the mad scientist who works as the formulator and medical researcher who designs all of the products. Before Pickleball, the company marketed its offerings to doctors. While Patrick had never done sports marketing, he soon realized the benefits to Pickleball players. He said, "The electrolytes, in particular, could be fantastic for pickle ballers because the sport is so fun that people basically just play one more game five or six times. You never want it to stop. So, as you get more addicted, you're pushing your body in ways you probably haven't done in 10, 20, 30 years in some cases."



Patrick considers his role as CEO to be the Chief Entertainment Officer. Ashley is the Director of Sales. Together they develop ideas for fun, entertaining commercials. Then their team turns big-name professional Pickleball players like Ben Johns and Simone Jardim into actors and actresses. One premise for a commercial was called the heist where Ben wore a ski mask and tried to break into the warehouse to steal electrolyte supreme fruit punch because it tastes so good.

While Jigsaw Health recently filmed a commercial with Catherine Parenteau, Lucy's wicked backhand skit is a fan favorite. Patrick said, "Ashley and I thinking about the premise was like, well, okay, what's Lucy known for? I mean, she has an amazing two-handed backhand. What if we just had her walking around the office, smashing things, and I'm like, I don't know, but let's try it." In the first scene, a sign welcomes another professional, Irina Tereschenko, to the office. Lucy walks in, looks at the sign, and smashes it with a two-handed backhand as she says, "Not Today." She then proceeds to whack a bagel and box with her two-handed backhand before Patrick comes into the scene to say, "now that's a wicked backhand."

While Jigsaw Health has many funny, entertaining commercials with professional players, they have scientifically designed products that can help if you cramp when playing or after a game. The Pickleball Hydration Stack is one to check out.

How and Why You Should Hit a Flat Backhand Drive

By M. L. Johnson, Ed.D., Ph.D.

Many players have comparatively weaker backhand strokes. But that need not be the case. Many tournament-level squash, tennis, pickleball players have backhands comparable to their forehands. You, too, can hit winners.

The backhand drive is a firm stroke executed from near the endline toward the opponent's endline. If done as a serve return, or otherwise when no opponent is near the NVZ, the ball flight should comfortably clear the net – never hit into the net from a serve. The basic stroke is executed with a flat (vertical) paddle face – as shown in Figure 1. Two-stroke variations, the sliced underspin, and the topspin have slightly different grips and stroke mechanics.

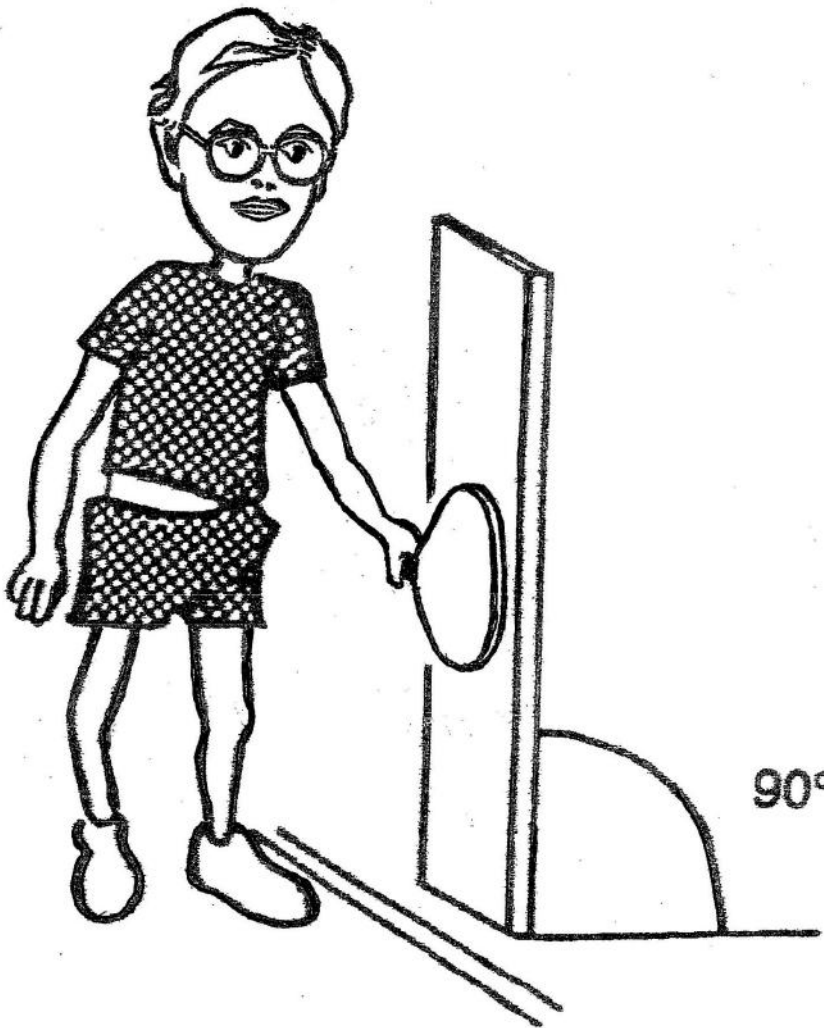


Figure 1. The flat backhand paddle position at ball contact. Note the contact point is forward of the front foot. The palm of the hand is on top of the handle.

Every stroke should have a purpose! Since opponents positioned at the NVZ have a decided advantage for ending rallies, a firm drive can be used to pin an opponent to the endline – such as with a serve return. Though it may seem counterintuitive, choose to pin the better doubles player to the endline, as hitting to the weaker opponent allows, the better player three long steps to reach the NVZ – providing poaching opportunities.

Depending upon opponent positions, consider three hitting targets. First, there is a distance advantage when hitting diagonally from endline corner-to-corner. Though the court length is forty-four feet, the diagonal measurement from corner to corner is over forty-eight feet (4.33 feet longer). Thus, a corner-to-corner backhand can be hit harder and remain in the court. Second, if an NVZ opponent starts to slide to mid-court for poaching your corner-to-corner backhand drives, that opens an opportunity to attack down the sideline. Third, when you get pushed back, with doubles opponents controlling the NVZ. A hard drive sent down the centerline can be an effective alternative to a drop or lob.

A significant difference between lower-level players and mid-level players is the length of the stroke – with lower-level players delivering a short punch rather than a full stroke. For example, review the Weinbach/Waters vs. Paolicelli/Olin 2021 Mixed Doubles match for the length of strokes. Longer strokes increase the ball/paddle dwell time, with longer contact time producing greater velocity and control.

Anatomy

The backhand drive force is derived from the action of two muscle groups: the deltoid and the trapezius. The deltoid muscle covers the shoulder, originating from the scapula and clavicle - inserting into the deltoid tuberosity of the humerus. Of its multiple actions, deltoids move the arm forward, backward, up, and down. The trapezius is the largest muscle group in the upper body – potentially generating great force. It has multiple

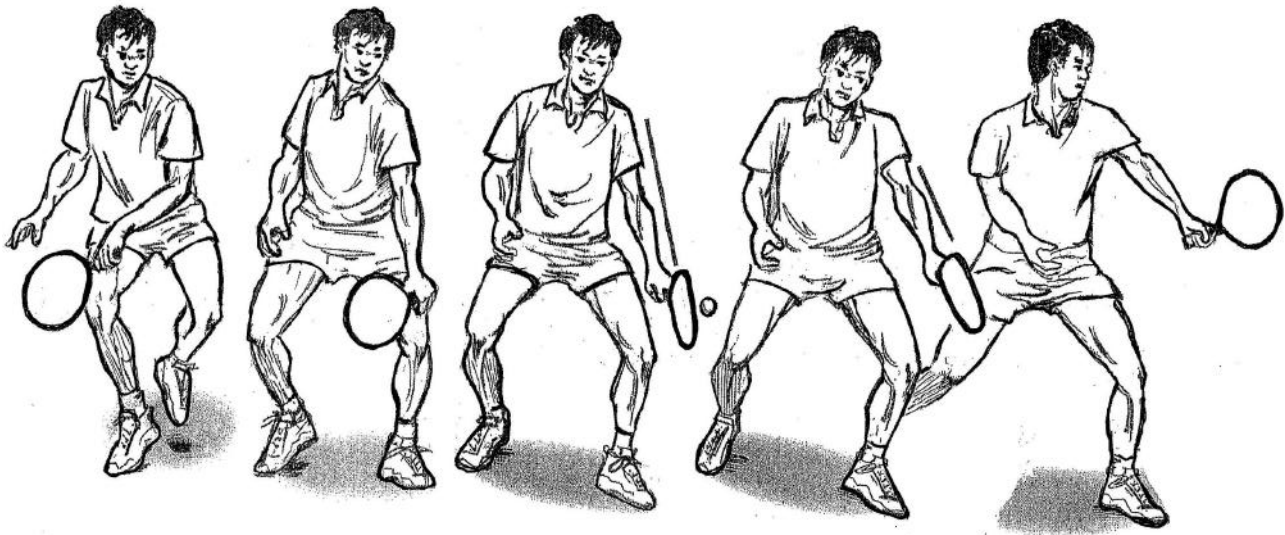


Figure 2. Backhand drive sequence.

spinal origins, clavicle and scapular insertions, and functions to elevate, depress, and retract the scapula. These muscle groups may need strengthening.

Movement

Three critical preparatory elements are: balance, steps, and position. First, moving with your head well forward of your center of gravity forces short steps and can result in a disastrous fall – of which I have seen too many. You should mimic dancers and skilled basketball players' fluid movements. Second, use the step/stop/stroke concept to minimize hitting errors – the same concept as used in basketball. Walking through a stroke doubles the brain's distance-and-movement estimation problem and produces stroke errors. Step, Stop, and then Stroke – even if the stop is a brief hesitation. Third, end your last step by facing the backhand sideline, with your front foot slightly further away from the sideline than your back foot – a slightly open stance.

Stroke

Think, "long-and-smooth." As shown in Figure 2, everything starts with a paddle backswing positioned lower than the anticipated contact point. After your footing is set, the paddle head is angled lower than the handle, with your arm tucked close to the rib cage. The first movement is a slight torque of the torso toward the ball – spinal rotation initiated by a hip turn. The stroke is smooth, with a slightly lower-to-higher trajectory plane. The paddle head is moved forward to a position even with the handle and then LOCKED! The elbow stays tucked near the rib cage. The handle end (the butt) leads the stroke into the ball, finishing with a short deceleration. Momentarily hold the final position.

Since muscular innervation at the shoulder is

forward of the cocked paddle, there are pulling actions from the deltoid group and the trapezius groups. A deep backswing would have retracted the outer scapula edge. The trapezius muscle group pulls the locked paddle-hand-forearm unit into ball contact and the short follow-through. Since the large and powerful trapezius muscle group is available for stroking, one is foolish not to maximize its potential. Recent research on intermediate tennis players found no significant differences between forehand and backhand drive speed. Still, forehand strokes were more accurate – indicating more practice is needed to develop backhand control.

Powerful and consistent strokes do not just happen – particularly for the backhand drive. The most probable reason why backhand strokes are weak is that they are not equally practiced. Returning a ball to the serving side with a forehand stroke does not equally practice backhand strokes. Thus, to develop a formidable backhand, get a practice partner and drill, drill, drill. First, get in position, toss the ball toward the sideline, and stroke – a backboard is useful. Second, position a practice partner at the NVZ and practice hitting drives to her/his volley return. Third, place both partners on the endlines and execute only backhand drives – down the backhand sideline and diagonally cross-court.

Corrections

Without an objective outside mentor to reinforce good mechanics and identify problems, players may not understand what is producing problem drives. Thus, monitor your problem drives with a cell phone video camera.

Problem – For balls that travel weakly forward or outside of the backhand sideline, check your foot position and squarely face the sideline before stroking.

Problem – For balls floating too high over the net, tuck your elbow to your rib cage until ball contact.



Vision Training to Improve Your game

Pickleball players tend to spend a lot of time on the physical aspect of the game. But have you considered improving your vision skills so you can know where your opponent's shot is going a split second faster? A player's vision can be trained just like any other skill, according to Lukas McKnight from Vizual Edge. He said, "I think we all know how important it is if, when we misread our opponents shot, we're less likely to hit a good shot in return. So if we can be quicker about recognizing where the ball is going, how it's spinning, and ultimately where it's going to end, we can improve our games."

Vizual Edge originally developed its training program for major league baseball players. Luka used the technology as a screening tool when working as a scout and member of the front office for the Chicago Cubs. Vizual Edge later expanded into hockey and Pickleball when Luka joined the company over a year ago.

While the early technology required athletes to perform their training in an ophthalmologist's office, it is now working on any wifi-enabled device like a computer, tablet, or smartphone. The only other equipment you need is red and blue glasses that take your screen and make it three-dimensional. Before starting the training, athletes take a brief entrance exam which lasts about 10 minutes to determine where they have a deficit in recognizing and tracking objects. It allows the vision training to be tailored to each individual's needs. Then you train your vision skills three times a week for 15 minutes at a time. Similar to a weight training program, the longer you stick with it, the better you will see.

The vision training works on improving two aspects of eye-hand coordination. The first is called divergence, which is how well you track objects in the distance. Examples of this are returning a serve or a baseline rally. The second is convergence and how well you can track things as they get close to you. So much of Pickleball is an exercise in how well you can switch from divergence to convergence.

Luka said, "I've seen it in my own game. I did some training when I was 18-19 years old... For the last six months or seven months, I've been doing it again myself. I have really seen a benefit on the Pickleball court, especially with being able to win hand battles, reading spin a little bit better, and just generally having fewer miss-hits." Luka believes the most important thing about vision training for the average Pickleball player is having fewer mishits, which improves your quality of contact. It means fewer balls will go into the net since you learn to hit your paddle's center or sweet spot more frequently.

While Vizual Edge started to help professional athletes, it can help players of all levels. Those with a limited athletic background will benefit more from the vision training since they have a lower baseline. Luka said, "While we have worked with some top pros, I've immediately seen some rec players gravitate to us, use the product, see the value in it, helping to improve their own games. And then tell their friends to where it's spread, so it's almost like we've gone a grassroots sort of way with Pickleball to where the rec players really liked what we have."

A Wimbledon Tennis Champion Dares to Dink

At the age of 81, Sally Huss, a Wimbledon Junior Tennis Champion, just started playing Pickleball a few months ago. Yet, she already has written a book on the game called *Dare to Dink: Pickleball for Seniors and Anyone Else Who Wants to Have Fun*. Sally said, "What I really love about Pickleball is this. In tennis, I only get worse. As I age, I only get worse. And Pickleball, I get better, and I can improve, which I love. So I've added a little stroke, or I add this to my game. And it's great fun. That way, you always get better."

Sally played tennis at the highest level on the tour when there were no professional players. In other words, players could not make a living playing the game. So she ended up teaching tennis and doing some dance therapy work. The result of this was a change in the way she played tennis. Sally said, "I created a way of playing tennis that was extremely relaxed, very Zen, like. It was flowing, kind of like Tai Chi, converting energy, transforming things, and working in a different way. And it's very relaxed, mentally, yet very focused and powerful. And from that, I ended up going back on the circuit, way beyond my prime." So Sally did play professional tennis on the Virginia Slims tour using what she learned from dance therapy.

As you might expect, Sally applies her relaxed-tennis game to Pickleball in both a physical and mental manner. She says to hold the paddle very loosely to turn the energy coming to you and send it the other way. It allows you to control the ball and let the energy flow. Also, being physically relaxed helps you be mentally relaxed so you can be carefree on the court.

The challenge occurs when players start thinking about things or want things. It can be something like wanting to beat your opponent or win the next point. So hers is a philosophy of giving rather than taking and being relaxed about the results. Sally said relaxing does not mean you are not focused. Instead, she is very aware and focused, but it is not a tight focus, and it is not intense.

The key is to move your attention to the ball and not what you want. Sally said, "If you keep your attention on the ball, the ball always wins the point. So it's the player who is most connected to the ball that wins the point...If you leave the score alone and you play full out and play freely, regardless of the score, and allow yourself to lose as well as win. But then, with that freedom, you are in a much better position to win."



Growing Pickleball in Greece

The Greeks don't have a word for Pickleball. Nor do they have one for Pickle. So you might think that Niko and Christie Fronimos will have difficulty introducing the game to the country. But they are on a mission to do just that. They are so serious about their path they have lost weight, quit smoking, and started running. Niko and Christie also play Pickleball three to five hours per day as they have a goal of joining the senior professional tour. As certified instructors and World Ambassadors for the International Federation of Pickleball, they are doing everything right and will soon teach Pickleball in Greece.



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Chip Hullender - Admin
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SCAN ME



Ray Gagnon - Admin
Kelowna Pickleball Club
Kelowna, BC

"I have had great and immediate support initiating the start up and find the program to be very easy to implement. After only two shootouts our playing members are begging me to use TrackitHub for all upcoming events."

