

May 2022

PICKLEBALL FIRE

OVERCOMING A DEFICIT

THE POWER GAME

3 FUN TIPS FROM THE
PICKLEBALL PREACHER

Steve Taylor
DIGITAL SPATULA

THE MAN BEHIND
THE CAMERA



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SENIOR PRO **HILARY MAROLD'S** COMPETITIVE SPIRIT

CHow is senior professional Hilary Marold similar to Michael Jordan, the greatest basketball player of all time? It's all about competitiveness, the will to win at everything, no matter what.

And Hilary does precisely that even from a very young age. But when exactly did she start to play Pickleball? "It was in 2009. My friend called me up and asked if I wanted to play some Pickleball. At the moment, I didn't know much about it, so I Googled to get some basic information," she recalls.

Hilary is very familiar with sports in general. Especially when it comes to racquet sports. She has played tennis, paddle tennis, and table tennis since she was a kid. And now, she's 72 years old, recently inducted into the Pickleball Hall of Fame.

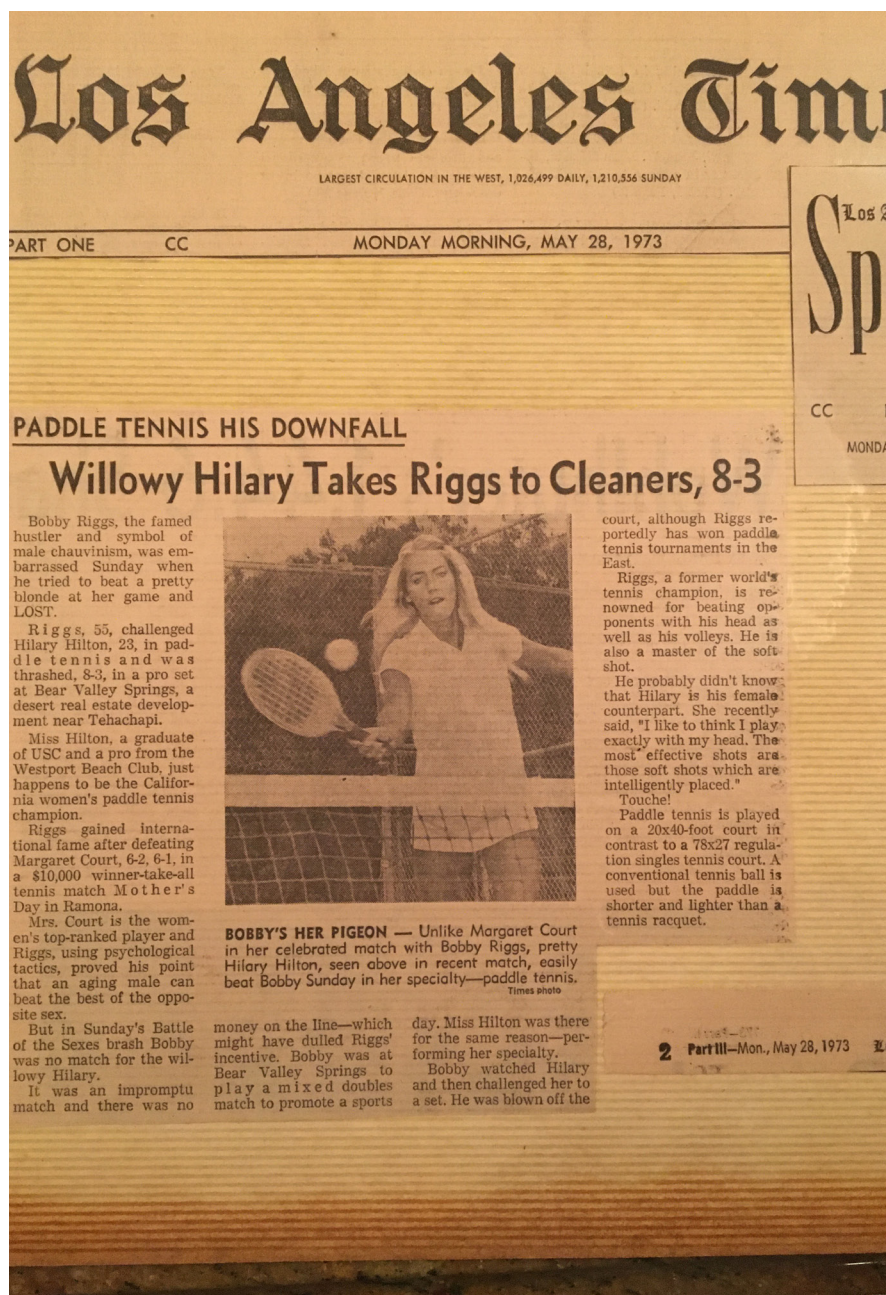
With a sports background like hers - success was inevitable. But, even Hilary didn't expect that it would come that fast. Like, instantly. She chose the heavy Pickleball paddle as she prefers it that way, hit the ball a few times, and went to The Nationals. Hilary won the singles tournament in her category easily. It may seem like a huge surprise to someone else, but not to her. "It was relatively easy for me to win singles because Pickleball is like tennis. And I won the tennis tournament in the 50+ category. I was 59 at the time when I did it. The same year I started to play Pickleball," she says.

At the same Nationals, it was the time for doubles. Yvonne Hackenberg was her partner in platform tennis, and she asked Hilary to join her in Pickleball doubles. So, they went and ended up in second place. Quite a debut! It was only her first-ever Pickleball competition. And for that, she chose the Nationals, the most difficult one where only the best Pickleball players from all over the country gather to compete.

Her next time playing Pickleball came after a year. Again, it was The Nationals in 2010. This time, Hilary and Yvonne went further and won the doubles tournament. "I played in all The Nationals since 2009, and that has either been in Arizona or California. In the beginning, the sport was at the level that you could come and win if you were athletic and had good eye-hand coordination," she remembers.

As we mentioned, Hilary is an absolute master in racquet sports. She has competed in tennis since she was nine years old. Unfortunately, she never went pro with it but managed to make it up in her golden age. Hilary was married in 1979 and started playing doubles with her husband. They didn't only play; they won the Husband and Wife Nationals. She claims that she's always been surrounded by top-notch tennis players. Hilary knows Peggy Michel, a three-time Grand slam champion (two Australian Open and one Wimbledon title) - so, yes, we believe her.





From a very young age, she started to compete. Hilary remembers that her father used to take her from paddle tennis to tennis tournaments. Sometimes, even on the same day! “The reason I haven’t achieved a similar level in tennis is that I liked the beach growing up in Santa Monica in South California. I played sand volleyball competitively. I also played a lot of paddle tennis,” she explains.

One time, she recalls, Bobby Riggs invited her to play some paddle tennis. “He was trying to get into my head. He thought that I was pretty naive, but I wasn’t. In the end, I beat him. The LA Times even wrote an article about my big win.” Hilary recalls seeing him years after. Riggs, sadly, got cancer and was in very bad condition. But he remembered her anyway. The battle of the sexes was a thing back then, and Hilary served as a great role model.

Other than Pickleball, Hilary made history in another field. She became the first female network television commentator for tennis. How did that happen? Hilary has a drama major from USC. She worked with her grandfather, a drama critic. That connection and her love for sports quickly caught the eye of the famous media houses.

As a result of the media exposure, Hilary received a call from CBS. “They were doing something called The World

Racquet Championship. They were going to have six athletes, with me being the only woman. I got in there because I won the World Championship in platform tennis,” she says. The idea was for them to play each other in every racquet sport. Out of all the matches, Hilary will never forget the one in which he played with professional racquetball player Marty Hogan in table tennis. She was up 20-18, and she only needed one more point to win. Being one good shot away, she shot the ball an inch off the table with not enough topspin. Later, Marty came back and won.

Hilary tried almost every racquet sport there is. But, which one does she like the best? “It’s like when you have kids. You can never have a favorite. But, I still think that tennis is the ultimate racquet sport. That’s because of the largest court, the longest handled racquet that is always hard to control,” she says.

And yes, let’s get back to Michael Jordan from the beginning of the story. We still owe you a proper explanation. Hilary admits that she is “crazy” competitive. She read a lot about Michael, who also wanted to win at golf. “I will even race my husband to someplace if we are going with different cars,” that’s how competitive she is. Still playing in her golden age, Hilary is genuinely one of the greatest pickleball players.



HOW SINGLES CAN HELP YOUR DOUBLES GAME

Pickleball players enjoy playing doubles whether it is because of the social nature of the sport or the fact that it is easier on your body. However, competing in singles can improve your doubles play. Senior professional Hilary Marold is a strong advocate of playing singles for a variety of reasons regardless of your age. She is 72 years old and still played five events during the U.S. Open in April. Hilary likes to enter every event. "I have 23 national titles in Pickleball. Of those 23, probably ten are in singles. I get out there. I put myself on the line. I can't say I won everyone, but I win a good portion of my singles championships," said Hilary. "She was encouraging me to play, but I didn't have lots of interest in it," she explained. But Anna decided to give Pickleball a chance. Her friend Dave invited her to play in a Santa Monica Tournament. Anna agreed, not expecting much.

Many people do not enjoy getting on the courts and practicing. So if you would like to improve your game without drilling, consider playing singles. You will get to hit at least twice as many balls because you do not have your partner helping you. And if you compete against people who target your partner, you will be able to hit significantly more balls. Singles also teaches you to pinpoint your shots. They need to be placed on or near the sideline and deep in the court. Otherwise your opponent will pass you.

While you receive physical benefits from competing in singles, you will be able to work on your mental game even more. Playing singles helps you learn how to handle pressure because you cannot rely on your partner if you are having a bad game. It is all on your shoulders. As you learn to deal with pressure better by playing singles it transfers to your doubles game. If your partner is not playing well, you have the confidence to take over.

Hilary admitted she had a tough time in singles one day at a tournament, "I can remember one nationals. I lost the first set really bad. And I knew it was because I wasn't playing well, It wasn't happening for me, that set. But then, my mind starts to click in and I figured, what do I have to lose? And I start concentrating a little bit more. Anyway, I won the next two sets. That happens a lot, even in doubles.

I think those are my most favorite wins. The ones I really had to work through some sort of either physical or mental problem."

Hilary believes the main reason people do not like to play singles is because they are afraid of losing. As a solo player you cannot blame your partner. She said, "You can't have a

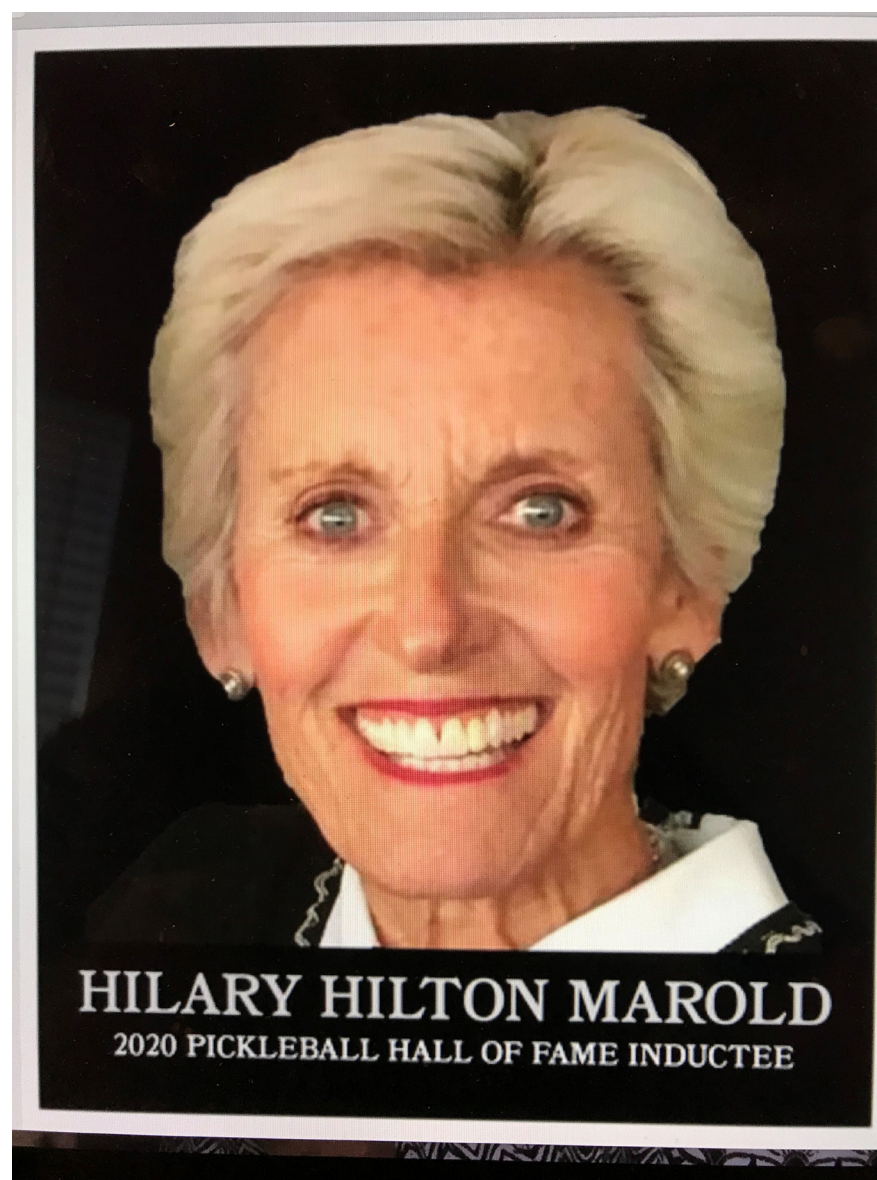
fear of losing. You've got to welcome that like the saying above the entrance to the Wimbledon center court. You have to treat both winning and losing as the same. I'm sure it feels better to win, but losing teaches you so

much about really how to win. And you have to embrace losing and learn from what you did long and maybe what your opponent did correctly."

So even if you do not play in tournaments, take the opportunity to play singles when you do not have a foursome. The experience will benefit your doubles game.

"If you can meet with triumph and disaster and treat those two impostors just the same."

- Rudyard Kipling



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MY BEST ADVICE — STOP LISTENING TO ADVICE

By CJ Johnson from WeArePickleball

When you first started playing, were you told to run to the kitchen (non-volley zone line) no matter what?

Me too.

It didn't take me too long to realize it wasn't always the best play. Sometimes I found myself helplessly running forward while my opponents were drooling over a juicy pop-up about to be slammed at me. What I wasn't told was one critical piece of information. That's a great strategy on the return side but not so much on the server-side.

That's the problem with most of the help we get at the courts. The advice is usually well-meaning, but it can be more detrimental to our game than helpful when offered without proper context and a deeper understanding.

Unfortunately, too many players fall into this trap through

no fault of their own. Most of us are introduced to the game through people willing to share their passion for pickleball. They offer us equipment, teach us the basics and connect us with others who love the game as much as they do.

And of course, they provide advice.

According to our annual survey, eighty percent of players get help with their game from YouTube (Make sure to check out Tony's article on Getting off the YouTube Hamster Wheel), and 42% of players get their advice from players at their local courts. But is that the best way to improve? Unless there's a teaching pro in your group, probably not.

At this point, some of you might be thinking, CJ, these people play better than me, so they must know something I don't. Perhaps. But do they know what will make YOU a better player?



To learn to play your best and save hundreds, if not thousands of hours doing it, you need to take control of your learning process. It might feel daunting for some of you who are new to sports, but it's not. If you want to improve more quickly, it's time to trade out "advice" for trusted sources.

We ALL need TRUSTED sources of information to help us understand the big picture. So how do you find YOUR trusted sources?

The first step is to decide to stop listening to "everyone." Even if you happen to be surrounded by the top pickleball coaches in the world, they will all see the game slightly differently.

When I first started playing, I took clinics from two of the top female players in the game. At the first clinic, the pro explained the movement pattern at the non-volley-zone line. During the next clinic, the second pro explained it entirely differently. I've been a professional athlete and coach for my entire life, and I know that when I'm confused, I can't perform. So during a break, I pulled her aside, explained what I'd been taught a few weeks previously, and asked for clarification.

Her answer was simple, "she's not wrong (the other pro), but she's 30 something, and I'm 50 something. My body no longer moves that way. Does yours? If it does, then that's great advice, but if it doesn't, you may want to consider an alternative." That conversation was a quick reminder that I needed to be selective in my choices and that a good coach can answer my "why questions."

Now that you've decided to be selective, how do you know who to listen to?

Whenever someone offers you coaching, do what I did, ask them why. To consistently perform your best, you need to understand WHY you are doing something.

Let's go back to "run to the non-volley zone no matter what." Suppose someone told you that as the returner, you have a positional advantage over the scoring team and the only way to claim that advantage is to run to the non-volley zone after you hit your return. You'd now understand the importance.

Suppose they continued to explain that the two-bounce rule and waiting for the ball to bounce makes it different for the serving team. It would be better to move toward the non-volley zone in a more calculated way because your opponents already at the non-volley-zone line have that positional advantage. You'd probably see the difference between the two.



That type of explanation demonstrates knowledge beyond doling out simple advice. And even if you didn't understand it, you could continue to ask them more "why's" to get an explanation you can comprehend.

If you're still unsure who to listen to, consider joining us at the third annual Pickleball Summit. It's the largest online gathering of pickleball coaches and experts dedicated to giving you the information you need to improve your game. Pickleball Fire Magazine will provide you with a link to a free ticket when registration begins in early June.

Once you've started narrowing down the voices you are going to pay attention to, that doesn't mean that others will automatically stop offering advice. So here are a few suggestions to deal with it.

1. Smile and thank them. Let it go in one ear and out the other. The only challenge with this is that sometimes your brain latches on to something said, and even though you know you shouldn't listen, you can't stop thinking about it. It takes focus to let it go in one ear and out the other.
2. Smile and thank them. Tell the person that while you appreciate their input, you are working with a coach, and they have you focused on something. Feel free to tell them that you're working with CJ and Tony. We've always got your back!



SPEED CUBING WORLD RECORD HOLDER FINDS PICKLEBALL

Growing up, Chris Olson was so shy that he became physically ill in unfamiliar situations. But at the age of 12, he decided to go to his first Rubik's cube competition. He made it to the final round, which was his goal. Later, Chris broke world records in speedcubing, developed the skills to produce professional videos on the subject, and even gave a Ted talk on his journey. But things changed for Chris when he found Pickleball just over a year ago.

"My Pickleball journey started last year in April. My friend invited me to play, and I was like: What's that!? Never heard of it," he recalls. When he first started hitting the ball, Chris thought, "Ah, this is just small tennis." Since Chris had a tennis background, he thought he would beat his friend easily because of his Pickleball-like knowledge. But that wasn't the case as he only won a few points off his friend. "I'm hyper-competitive, so I immediately bought some Pickleball paddles and started practicing," he said.

Chris fell in love with the sport, so he decided to combine his second love with Pickleball. He used to create YouTube videos of his Rubik's cube skills, and along the way, he developed "Hollywood-worthy" video production skills. Chris claims that solving Rubik's cube and playing Pickleball have a ton of similarities. He said, "The communities are identical. Everyone is super welcoming and just wants to have a great time."

Chris never thought that his skills in speed-cubing would help him at any other sport. He says that he makes Pickleball videos the same way as the cubing ones. It's a difficult job to stand out on YouTube and provide unique and better content than the others. "My videos have a lot of information. For example, I wanted to explain how to play Pickleball in one video. I didn't want to record just once. I recorded many separate scenes and then edited it," he said. On top of that goes a voiceover and final editing. Although Chris claims he's not a perfectionist, everything must be perfect.

Lately, he's been doing a lot of paddle reviews. But not the "regular" ones. Chris prefers to go in-depth with his analysis. "I wanted to explain how different paddles have different spins. So, I hit the ball ten times with each paddle and recorded everything in slow motion," he said. Half of each ball was marked with a sharpie so he could see the number of rotations it made. When the black is on top, Chris counted how many frames it took for the ball to make a complete revolution. Then, he manually analyzed every single shot – 700 of them. Yes, 700. From there, Chris plugged the numbers into a revolutions per minute calculator.

He admits it was the most tedious work he's done, but it was worth it. The result is some valuable Pickleball data.

He categorized paddles into three tiers: low, average, and high spin. In most cases, the paddles with more grit imparted more spin. The exception was the new Gearbox paddles which have a very smooth surface. However, they were near the top of Chris' list when producing more spin when hitting the ball.

Thanks to his excellent video-producing skills, Chris was approached by a few large brands. They want him to do video production for them. He also has plans to play professionally in Pickleball, but he didn't want to put the video production work on hold. "Right now, I'm completely sold on Pickleball. I want to keep doing videos and also play as much as I can. If over time I get even better at it, who knows, everything is possible," he concluded.



THE POWER GAME

Adam Edery, better known as the Pickleball guy on his Youtube channel, knew he would teach tennis in the mornings at a University of Michigan summer camp. However, he was surprised when the camp officials wanted him to teach Pickleball in the afternoons. At the time, Adam had never heard of the game, but he learned quickly and benefited from being able to hit with power from his tennis background.

While soft shots like the dink or third shot drop make Pickleball unique, do not underestimate the importance of hitting the ball hard in the sport. If you have a background in a racket sport like tennis or racquetball, you know the benefits of a power game and probably have plenty of it. However, if you do not have that experience, adding more power to your stroke can improve your game.

How to Generate Power

Generating more power starts from the ground and moves up. In other words, you want to bend your knees and use your legs much like you do when lifting a heavy box. You also need to rotate your body which allows you to shift your weight, generating power when you connect with the ball. Adam said, “I think a lot of people use too much arm on their follow-through, which saps a little bit of potential energy that you’re developing in the buildup of this swing.”

Another method to develop more power is to snap your wrist on the follow-through. It does not mean you should have a floppy wrist, as this can impact the placement of your shots. You can still have a firm wrist and snap it on the follow-through. Take a look at slow-motion videos of tennis players like Rafa Nadal or Roger Federer. You can see they snap their wrist at the end of the forehand or backhand stroke. Of course, professional Pickleball players like Ben Johns use a similar technique.

When and Where to Hit Hard

As you work on developing power in your game, you will see several opportunities for its use. The number one time is when you are on the baseline. Use your force when you return serve or hit a third shot drive. You might think hitting harder is always better. And this is mainly true as long as you have enough control to make the ball go over the net and onto the court. You do not want to sacrifice placement for power.

Another opportunity to hit the ball hard comes when you are in the transition zone or area between the baseline and kitchen line. Adam said, “If I have just hit a really solid ball and my opponent’s cough up sort of an easier shot that’s

in that middle of the court, I can use a lot of power to drive the ball, either down the middle or on one of the angles.”

So should you hit with power every time from the baseline or transition zone? The answer to this question depends on two things. First, notice during the warm-up or early in a game if your opponent has difficulty returning your forceful shots. Are they slow to get their paddle up, are their hands out of position, or do they react slowly? If the answer is yes to any of these questions, then you will likely have success with adding some pace to your shots. The second consideration around using power is how you are playing that day. Adam said, “Pickleball, like many other sports, some days you’re on, and some days you’re off. And if there is a day where I’m warming up, and I’m kind of noticing that I’m really hitting my powerful shots into the court and I’m placing them where I want, maybe that’s a day where I’ll go for a little bit of extra power. Whereas, if I’m not doing great in warm-ups or I miss a couple of hard shots at the start-up, maybe I’ll try to pivot and play a little bit more of a finesse game and kind of try to play defense and let my opponents be the ones missing.”

You have two options when driving the ball. You can hit to the open space or target your opponent. At higher levels of play, your opponents will put the ball back in play even if you blast it at them because they have quick hands. So, a better tactic is to move your competitors around the court and create an angle where you can power the ball through the opening.

On the Flip Side

While it is beneficial to add power to your shots, you may also be feeding “bangers” who hit the ball hard more than they should. Therefore, it is beneficial to have strong fundamentals so you can also play the soft game. If you play against a banger, be sure to have patience. Many of their shots are going out of the court unless they use a significant topspin. Adam has a second tip for dealing with bangers, “Try to really work on your volleys, especially as it relates to softening your hands. And what I mean by softening your hands is kind of being able to grip the paddle a little bit loose and really just absorb their power and then redirect it back onto that side of the court.” As you move up in your skill level, try to angle the volley toward the sideline or hit a very soft shot near the net, so the banger needs to move forward quickly.

In summary, hitting with power is essential, but you want to make sure it is controlled. If you have so much pace that the ball goes out of bounds, dial your force back to maintain consistency and placement.



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STEVE TAYLOR: THE MAN BEHIND THE CAMERA

Steve Taylor had not heard of Pickleball until the Pickleball Channel asked him to produce content for what Steve called a “new sport.” Of course, in 2015, it was not a new sport, but it was new to Steve. From that introduction, Steve became addicted to the sport and now makes a living producing video content about the game and photographing players.

Steve has a lengthy background in video as he majored in radio, television, and film during college. He started his company in 1992, producing corporate and music videos along with editing films. Steve even was an instructor for Adobe, where he taught students about digital video apps at places like ESPN and ABC. Steve said, “The Pickleball world really became a place where I could take my experience and kind of marry it with my passion for the sport. It’s been life-changing, and I just love what I do, and I don’t really work a minute of any day. It feels like it’s just doing my hobby. So it’s amazing to be on the road at tournaments and try to make the best content I can.”

While Steve makes the video production look easy, there is a lot to it. The key is to figure out how to capture the video and audio content you need so the message is clear to the audience. Of course, this varies by the type of video,

whether it is a teaching video, sign up for a tournament, or commercial for a paddle company.

Recently Steve teamed up with professional player and instructor Morgan Evans. They created a subscription-based online course called Coach Me Pickleball, where they put out videos twice per month. The instructional content is excellent for beginners to advanced players. Some of the most popular videos are ones about how to handle bangers. Another popular one is called Tarzan and Jane, which talks about playing mixed doubles. Morgan will also take amateur and professional videos and add commentary so people can see what players are doing right and wrong.

Regardless of the type of content in the video, it does take Steve and Morgan some time to produce.

The script can take eight hours to write for a three-minute video, while three hours are spent shooting the video. Post-production includes four to eight hours of editing, depending on how many graphics are in it. Creating animated diagrams of player and ball movement or 3D graphics of ball height is time-consuming. But Steve has the expertise from 30 years of making videos to elevate production quality.

Although Steve came into Pickleball because of his video background, he learned to shoot amazing photographs once he started covering the sport. He made sure to buy the right gear and learned from others already photographing Pickleball. Steve even received advice from those who were shooting other sports. He said, "It's always fun at a tournament to see people I don't know. People that come and say, I know your work. I know you're Steve Taylor. I saw this, or I saw that. So that's been super fun for me. And so I try to make my work have a unique look to it." Steve's creativity led him to make pint-sized Pickleball players. He manipulates his work in Photoshop, making their people's heads, feet, and paddles big.

So the question for Steve is whether he prefers video production or photography. He said, "I've been asked that question a million times. And I think right now, I prefer stills because the feedback is instantaneous. I know when I have a photo I like, you know what I mean? I'm seeing it in my viewfinder right after I take it. And there's something really cool about capturing the essence of Pickleball, especially at the higher levels, the athleticism, the power, the passion. These players play with a ton of passion."

After taking a photograph, Steve spends 20 minutes editing it to ensure the colors are correct and the lighting is good. Cropping the photo is critical to make it stand out. If there is too much space around the player, it does not have the same impact.

Steve does have his favorite players he likes to shoot, such as Tyson McGuffin with his tattoos. He also learns players'

tendencies, knowing the best place to stand when taking photographs. Steve said, "So I really work hard to be in a position to capture that from a certain angle. And there's some luck to it, of course. I got a shot from the U.S. Open last year of Dekel hitting an overhead, and he's jumping over Adam Stone, who's looking up. It's a really fun photo. But that's just luck. You know what I mean? You put yourself in the right position, but actually getting that kind of shot is really just luck. So another one was Rob Cassidy, and he was playing singles on the APP tour, and he dove for a ball. Literally, his body was basically horizontal to the court. So I was able to catch that. So really, you put yourself in the position, and then you just pray for a little bit of luck."

While Steve primarily photographs the professionals, he also tries to make time in his schedule to shoot amateurs during a tournament. Steve will spend 10 minutes at your court and capture you two or three times throughout the weekend or day. For players interested in being photographed, you just need to let him know which tournament you are attending, and he will let you know if he is available.

As you can tell, Steve loves what he does and spend a lot of time doing it. In 2021 he spent one-third of his time on the road, and this year, it will be 50%. Steve travels all over the country and covers both professional tours and major tournaments like the Nationals and U.S. Open. Of course, Steve appreciates that he found this "new sport" called Pickleball.



3 FUN TIPS FROM THE PICKLEBALL PREACHER

Rich Lively is well known as the Pickleball preacher in the Orlando, Florida, area. So, it was not surprising when Cliff Pickleball asked Rich to shoot a few instructional videos. Rich elaborated, “I’ve been a pastor my whole life. So, I kind of have the gift of gab. I can shoot from the hip. I can preach extemporaneously, as they say, and generally speaking when it comes to shooting a video because I’ve done a lot of them in bigger churches. I used to be like the man on the street doing interviews in Chicago and other places, just going up to people on the street, asking them questions, and we’d shoot videos about it for a certain sermon series or something. So, I don’t really need a script.” While Rich is comfortable in front of the camera, he also provides some great tips from three recent memorable videos.

The Myth of Fast Hands

Do you think you have fast hands or know of someone who does? Well, maybe it is not that they have quick hands when getting in a rapid-fire volleying exchange at the kitchen line because, according to Rich, this is a myth. Someone who you think has fast hands actually

has excellent paddle preparation. There are three crucial elements of paddle preparation, including having your paddle at the 11 o’clock position and hitting the ball out in front of you. However, Rich says the key to looking like you have fast hands is not to bring the paddle back too far when you volley. If you do, good players will aim at the right shoulder of a right-handed player. Then you get stuck in a chicken wing position where your paddle is near your chest or belly, and you cannot hit the ball.

Players often think they need to take the paddle back when they volley to generate power. However, there are other ways to do this. Rich said, “All you’ve got to do is put that paddle out in front and just do a quick little flick. And that’s why badminton and ping pong helped with that because that’s what you do in those sports. You always have it way out in front of you. You want that ball or shuttlecock not to get close to your body. You always want to hit it out in front of you. Same principle with the Pickleball paddle.” In other words, you can take the paddle back a couple of inches and then do a quick flick, but you need to stay away from taking your paddle back a foot or more when volleying.



The Backhand Flip: AKA the Hitchhiker

One of the shots Rich is well known for is the backhand flip which he considers his signature shot. He said its mechanics are similar to people who stuck their thumb out when trying to hitch a ride in the 1900s. Of course, hitchhiking is considered dangerous today, but the idea of putting your thumb up and making this slight jerky motion with it has an application in Pickleball. Rich explained, “So if you do that little hitchhiker where you’d take that thumb, and you turn it over, and you start getting confidence in it. You can turn it faster and faster, and you get more of a whipping motion, which puts a tremendous amount of topspin on the ball. And it also puts a tremendous amount of angle from left to right.”

The idea is to go from the ready position where the paddle is in front of you. Then when the ball comes at you, bend your knees and be on the balls of your feet. Then lean in and perform that flip with your thumb much as a hitchhiker does. You do not need to jerk your thumb too far to the right. Otherwise, you end up in what Rich calls the “ditch,” meaning the ball goes in the net or too wide. The backhand flip can be tricky to execute because some players are used to leading with their pinky. It frequently occurs when players have a tennis background as they cut under the ball. While this is an effective shot in tennis, it does not work well in Pickleball and is a low percentage shot.

If your opponent knows you like to hit the backhand flip shot, they may soon be covering that sharp angle near the side of the court. But even if they anticipate the ball and get it back, they are now pulled off the court. So, the team executing the backhand flip currently has the advantage as two-thirds of the court is now wide open, and the ball can be put away.

How a Palmolive Commercial Can Help Your Pickleball Elbow

If you are 50 or over, more than likely, you remember Madge from the Palmolive dish soap commercials, which



were popular in the 1960s and 1970s. If not, the television ad saw Madge, a manicurist, soaking her client’s hands in a warm, sudsy dish containing Palmolive dish soap. She told her clients, “Palmolive softens hands while you do dishes.” Of course, her customer did not believe her until Madge said, “You’re soaking in it.” So, what does this have to do with Pickleball? Rich’s video about having soft hands talks about the commercial, relating it to not having a death grip on your paddle as this can result in elbow issues. Rich elaborated, “When you have tight hands and not soft hands, you’re going to start using all those tiny little muscles in your forearm. And the more you use those tiny little muscles in your forearm around the elbow, you’re going to start getting pain, and you’re going to start having to wear one of those little armbands. So, my point in that video was to soften up your hands. You’ve got to release the grip and not have such a stranglehold on it.”

While you need to grip your paddle a bit tighter when hitting a drive from the baseline, use soft hands when resetting the ball in the transition zone or when volleying. It would be best if you also had soft hands when dinking. However, some players hold the paddle too tightly, which results in flicking the ball with their wrist. As you soften your hands, you can extend the paddle and create a consistent dinking motion that is not wristy. Rick concluded, “And Madge would be proud of all of us if we had soft hands like Palmolive.”



PICKLEBALL BEHIND PRISON WALLS

Whether it is winning championships, getting better, or just having fun everyone has their own goal while playing Pickleball. But, Roger BelAir has a different one. He wants to bring Pickleball to as many prisons as possible. Yes, you read that right. Roger teaches Pickleball to inmates in various jails.

You may wonder how did that start? One does not simply walk into a heavily guarded facility full of people who committed crimes. Roger was friends with one of the founders of the game Barney McCallum. "He's a great character. I really treasure the time I spent with him. He got me into Pickleball, and I haven't stopped since," Roger recalls. The sport invented on Bainbridge Island had a slow start. An interesting statistic says that in 2003 there were only 39 known public places to play Pickleball. Roger had many other affinities, so he evolved his speaking career as the years passed. He found out that he's really good at it as he even gave speeches at a few conventions.

Because of that, it felt natural to him to start teaching Pickleball. At first, he was teaching locally. But then, six years ago, he watched an episode of "60 minutes" show with his wife. It was about jails, particularly the Cook County one in the Chicago area. So, he got the idea to teach the convicts how to play Pickleball. "I wrote the letter to Sheriff, and I didn't really expect him to reply. Fortunately, his daughter opened the letter and told him that someone is writing about the balls and the pickles. It's

a funny story, but because of her, he got interested, and that's how it started," he remembers.

Spending some time inside a prison can change your whole perspective about what life is like inside, Roger claims. Most of the people there grew up in poverty or came from dysfunctional households. Being a part of the gang was one of their only a few options.

What happens when you bring the odd sport called Pickleball to the prison? There are a few steps in this process. The first one is, of course, the rejection. "They were not interested at all. They wouldn't make any eye-contact. Their arms were crossed. But I got it because my life is so much different than theirs. Every single day of their lives is a struggle. That's why I feel blessed," he explains.

Roger decided to quit the introduction and take them straight to the court. And that's where the interest in Pickleball aroused. It took them only five minutes, and they were like the kids on the playground. They quickly started to enjoy it. Their focus was only on hitting the ball over the net. All of the other struggles disappeared for some time. The most popular sport in prisons is basketball because most of them grew up watching it or playing. The problem is that basketball is only reserved for the tall and athletic. That's where the beauty of Pickleball comes out. Pickleball is for anyone, and anybody can play competitively. Just grab a paddle and hit the ball.

Roger went to Cook County jail for a week. “The last time I walked in there, I felt like Santa Claus. Everybody was like: Hey, everyone. Roger is here! But, that last time, one reporter was there. He was working for USA Today. He was writing a story about the things we were doing. It should have been only a small piece,” Roger recalls. But, one phone call changed it all. That reporter called Belair and told him that the story wouldn’t go in the Sports section. Roger thought that they killed the story and it won’t be published at all. Actually, the editors planned something even better. They put it as the main feature on the front page. Moreover, the story ran on Friday, the day that they have the highest circulation.

Pickleball managed to accomplish the unimaginable things in prisons. The guys from the opposite gangs played together. “Not only that they played together, but they also laughed together. And there are 57 different gangs, only in Chicago. They are at each other’s throats, fighting for the territory. I was advised not to form personal relationships inside. Many of them are charming, but they just don’t want to change. Also, most of the guys I worked with murdered somebody,” he pointed out.

Soon after Roger finished his teaching in Chicago, many

other prisons started to invite him. Among them was Rikers Island in New York. People were so impressed by Pickleball that the deputy commissioner decided to buy the equipment for all ten sites on the island.

The only thing that could stop Roger from teaching is, you could guess, COVID-19. The pandemic made the situation much worse on the inside than on the outside. But, he was able to continue his mission to teach Pickleball via the Rotary clubs. If you wonder how many people Roger has taught how to play Pickleball, the answer is - over a thousand! If he doesn’t deserve the title of one of the greatest Pickleball ambassadors, we don’t know who does. “I did it at various places, from the high-end health resorts to the local community centers, all the way to the prisons,” says Roger.

Oh, yes. We mentioned that Roger is a friend of Barney McCallum, one of Pickleball’s founding fathers. Of course, Barney told him the story of how Pickleball got its name. “They play the game and were calling it tennis, pong, rally ball... Then, one day the dog named Pickles grabbed the ball and ran away. And then they said: It’s Pickle’s ball. Let’s call the sport Pickleball. And the rest is history,” he recalls.



THE EVOLUTION OF PICKLEBALL STATISTICS

As a television sports producer for 35 years, Jim Ramsey knew something was missing when it came to professional Pickleball broadcasts. “I wasn’t seeing the statistics on Pickleball broadcasts the way that we do on other sports. So I thought that was an area that would help fans and viewers enjoy the sport more. And so I took the initiative to dip my foot into that to try to get things going,” Jim said.

So he started a Facebook group called Pro Pickleball Stats, and it quickly grew to over 1,000 members. Two executives from the Professional Pickleball Association (PPA) contacted Jim, and he soon became the on-air statistician for the tour.

Currently, Jim keeps statistics manually via pencil and paper during a broadcast at his home, where he has a big-screen television. He notes it in a big chart similar to a spreadsheet for every ball struck. The information is then fed to the broadcast truck, where they create the graphics viewers can now see. For example, number one men’s player Ben Johns hit 41 third shot drops and 21 third shot drives.

Keeping the statistics is a challenge for two reasons. First, it requires constant focus, especially since

Pickleball professionals do not take a lot of time between points. Secondly, many rallies involve speed-ups or times when the ball moves very fast when the players are at the kitchen line.

One of Jim’s critical statistics is the percentage of third-shot drops versus drives. The ratio between the two shots depends on various factors, such as the event and the opponent. If you take the mother-daughter team of Leigh and Anna Leigh Waters, Leigh smacked a lot of third-shot drives in the Nationals. But at the indoor Nationals in February, she hit more drop shots – 50 to 20 when looking at the raw numbers. Mixed doubles is a case where you mostly see third-shot drops. However, the drives occur very strategically. “There are a lot of drops though. Sometimes where the drive takes place and makes sense say, for instance, when both teams are stacking. So the female player has to return the serve and then run diagonally across the court to get up to the kitchen line. That’s a good time to drive at that female player while she’s trying to cover that ground to get to that spot. So we do see some drives, especially in that situation,” Jim commented.

He also tracks shots you would expect, such as winners and errors like in tennis. Pickleball has its definition of a winner called a “clean” winner, which is when the ball does not tick off the top of the net or strike the opponent’s paddle. “It’s just really also astonishing how few mistakes these pros make. The number of rallies that end on the first three shots or because a player dinks the ball into the net. It’s really only like about 10% of all the rallies. So the skill level is very high,” Jim admitted.

Jim is also capturing other metrics you might not have considered. One is how many shots it takes for a player to reach the non-volley-zone line. A second is the number of offensive lobs, although this shot

does not occur frequently. He also tracks what happens when players are in a dinking rally, but then one of them speeds up the ball. Does the team who did the speed up ultimately win or lose the rally? For example, Jim considered Ben Johns and his brother Collin who play as a doubles team. He found Collin sped up the ball during a dinking rally nine times, and eight of them resulted in the team winning the rally during an indoor Nationals match. Ben sped the ball up 12 times, and he and his brother won seven rallies. So that’s 15 on the plus side and six on the negative side, so the Johns brothers are very successful when speeding up the ball.

Because the game of Pickleball is so fast, Jim does not track all of the statistics mentioned above during the broadcast. He calculates secondary statistics, like the speed-ups, when watching the video after a match. Other secondary statistics include the length of a rally and how often shots are missed, like the serve, return, third shot, and dink. One recent match revealed the ball being dinked into the net only five times in 116 rallies. Interestingly Jim does not track whether the ball was hit with a forehand or backhand. It is because the professionals are so skilled on both sides.

While the statistics discussed up to this point are related to doubles, the same things are kept for singles. However, the most significant difference between singles and doubles is the length of the rally. During the PPA Arizona Grand Slam, Catherine Parenteau took on Anna Leigh in women’s professional singles. The average rally lasted only five shots. Clean winners are a significant statistic in singles and points where the rally ends on the first, second, or third shot. Jim said when this happens at the professional level, it is as much about concentration as execution.



He is also creating new statistics to measure a player's effectiveness. The idea is similar to hockey which has a plus-minus statistic. When your team scores a goal, you receive a plus one if you are on the ice. If the opponent scores a goal and you are on the ice, the player receives a minus one. "So I'm trying to come up with a formula that sort of indicates how effective was this player in this game? Did he have like a normal game? Was it a great game? How much better or similar was he to the other players within that same game? I'm not sure, but I have to run some tests with some ideas that I have and get a bigger statistical base to see if my ideas hold water or it can be developed," he commented.

It is a good thing Jim loves Pickleball. When the PPA has championship Sunday, he watches the game for almost six straight hours since the day has two singles finals and three doubles finals. He then rewatches the matches to note the secondary statistics and double-checks the ones he took when the games were live. If a match lasted an hour when it was live, it takes about two hours to create the statistics. Jim said, "my left thumb definitely gets a workout on the remote control with the pause and rewind and play because I will always pause it on the third shot so I can get the third shot drop player drop versus drive done correctly. And then sometimes on a hand battle, I have to look at it again to determine who actually sped it up."

While keeping statistics for professional events is new, Jim admits the game is overdue for this type of analysis. It helps fans and players bridge the gap from perception to reality. Jim concluded, "It's one of those things I might not know now what I don't know. And maybe two, three months from now, we'd be having a different conversation about the kinds of statistics I'm tracking and the backlog of work that I'm looking at to figure some things out. I am working on this one theory. And I hope one day we're talking and we have some pickleball numbers where a particular player was like a plus 21 for the game, and everyone's oohing and aahing at his effectiveness. So the future is really high for something as simple as statistics and sports."





GETTING OFF THE YOUTUBE WHEEL

By Tony Roig from WeArePickleball

No doubt you are familiar with the refrain about needing to get off the hamster wheel, just going round and round without getting anywhere.

For many (and I mean maaaaaannnnnyyyyyy) pickleball players, YouTube becomes just that: a hamster wheel. An endless supply of information ends up spinning around us endlessly, with no end in sight and – critically – no improvement in our games.

You can get off the YouTube information wheel. Doing so will help you improve as a player. Below are a few specific tips to help you get your feet back on firm ground. But first, here are a few reasons you want to get off the wheel.

- Watching video after video will not improve your game. All it does is replace one piece of information with another one. And another one. The action is to close the gap (more on this below).
- You will avoid the potential for frustration. Often when players are frustrated with a lack of improvement in their games, it is because they are overwhelmed with the tsunami of knowledge washing over them. There are already thousands of pickleball videos on YouTube, which is certain to grow. It is too much for any player to use effectively (other than as entertainment). We are going to quiet things down.
- There is a significant risk of getting pulled off course. YouTube videos are notorious for providing X number of tips to get here or there. Some of them may be good for you and your game. Some may not apply to you, and some yet may not be correct at all. How do you know which ones to follow if you listen to all? For example, some videos show a flexed (or hinged) wrist for your dinks, and others (including ours – because it is better) recommend a laid out (or natural) wrist position. If you are just taking it all in, unfiltered, which will you choose as it cannot be both?

So what to do about it – how do you step off the YouTube information wheel?

1. Optimally, you will not use YouTube at all. If you do this, you will either be working with a local qualified pickleball instructor to help you with your game or using an online course.
 - Local instructor. It may be cost or lack of instructor prohibitive, but we put it here, so you have the full spectrum of options. In this option, you listen to and get feedback from your coach, and YouTube is turned off.

- Online course. An online course should provide you with a step-by-step approach to your improvement. The one I am most familiar with (because CJ and I developed it) is the Pickleball System, which provides a complete approach to all aspects of pickleball: mechanical, strategic, and athletic. There are other online courses available. Just make sure they cover what you need. This option is generally more cost-effective than a local instructor and is available everywhere. In this option, you follow the steps in your course, and, again, YouTube gets turned off.

2. Selective YouTube usage is another option. In this option, you are selecting a video that meets the following two criteria:

- The video is from a source you trust. The following are examples of channels that have consistently provided accurate pickleball video instruction:
 1. Better Pickleball
 2. Primetime Pickleball
 3. In2Pickle
 4. Pickle Pong Deb
 5. Simone Jardim
 6. The Pickleball Kitchen
- The video shows you something applicable to your current stage along the pickleball path. If you have not yet mastered the block volley, it is not yet time for you to add the perfect backhand roll volley. This filtering process is critical if you will use YouTube as your coach.

Once you pick the video, work on that one video until you have incorporated the content into your game. You are not moving on to the next video – as much as you may be Jonesing to get to it – until you are done with the current video. It may be a week, or it may be three months. Whatever it takes until you are done.

This is how you can make YouTube work for you instead of just keeping you running round and round with no noticeable improvement in your game.

YouTube can be a helpful resource for your pickleball improvement. It provides an abundance of information, most of which is good information. If you want to use it, the keys are: (a) picking the right video and (b) sticking with that video until you close the gap between what you learned in it and what you are doing on the court. If you find yourself stuck in the future, consider seeking a qualified local instructor or joining an interactive online course (I am biased in favor of the System mentioned above). Whatever you do, keep working at your game, and you will see improvement. Good luck out there.

THE IFP EMBRACES A NEW CHAPTER!



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PICKLEBALL

The World Governing Body for the Sport of Pickleball

<https://www.ifpickleball.org/>



The not-for-profit and all-volunteer organization International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) eyes an inclusive future with a new leadership team desire to continue its strong international relationships. The team is prepared to correct mistakes of the past administration by pursuing better communication that will provide all parties with an opportunity to have more input and seek pragmatic solutions to uplift our international pickleball community.

In February 2022, two IFP Board members (whose terms were expiring) attempted to take over the International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) by secretly circulating a “No Confidence” letter, containing biased and unsubstantiated claims, against the IFP and its President. The letter was sent to IFP Program Directors and member country recipients seeking their support. This action circumvented the IFP bylaws, executive process, and this group of individuals ignored input from other Board members. Furthermore, the individuals illegally seized, and used the IFP website, email system, email distribution system, domain name, and social media, thereby, temporarily paralyzing the IFP from responding to false accusations, for several weeks. Upon proving rightful ownership of these systems, the IFP has regained control and hereby, acknowledges, in this writing, the harmful effects of these individuals and their unethical behavior. The accusations made in the “No Confidence” letter of February 14th, 2022, were unfounded and untrue.

Unfortunately, this small individual group managed to persuade member countries from attending a scheduled Annual General Meeting (AGM), where the accusations could have been discussed and dispelled. Additionally, some member countries withdrew their IFP membership based on false and misleading information provided by these individuals and USA Pickleball.

Furthermore, the USA Pickleball (USAP) organization escalated the situation in a letter demanding that the President of the IFP resign. There was no opportunity for discussion and letters responding to the USAP was not answered. The IFP is still willing and open to a discussion to resolve any issues, but to date there has been no reply.

Nonetheless, the IFP is moving forward with its goal to grow pickleball throughout the world by restructuring its Board and taking strategic steps to build trusting international partnerships. As announced during the AGM, that the IFP is adding staff and making several expansive changes to accommodate its growth.

This includes:

- a) Expanding the Executive Board from 5 to 7 members.
- b) Adding a country member Advisory Board (10 positions plus a chairperson).
- c) Opening/filling Program Director positions (currently all USA), through an application process, with applicants drawn from all member countries.
- d) Appointing a committee made of member countries to review the current IFP bylaws and constitution and provide recommendations for changes that will accommodate the organizations international growth.

The above actions will be conducted through an open application process open to all member countries. Any member country that would like to re-activate their membership (to its prior level) is welcome to do so. Once re-activated, those member countries will become eligible to send applications for the above-mentioned positions.

Please contact; countrymembers@ifpickleball.org if you wish to re-activate your country membership or with your questions/comments.

Sincerely,

International Federation of Pickleball, Board of Directors [2022-2023]

Pat Murphy, President (USA)

Sunil Valavalkar, Vice-President (India)

David Jordan, Treasurer (USA)

Karen Long, Secretary (USA)

Steffi Pace, At-Large (Malta)

Tanyat Pham, At-Large (Vietnam/USA)

NEW BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

The International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) Board is pleased to welcome Ms. Tanyat Pham (a.k.a “the Giggleball Queen”). She’s blessed with the “never-ending passion and energy” to build a stronger world through her philanthropic work! Those of us who have known Ms. Pham for many years can attest to her selfless passion to serve and lead. While serving as a member of two Boards, she was instrumental in raising funds and promoting events that lifted the burden of those serving in America’s military. In these leadership roles, Ms. Pham put to work her post-graduate studies in Organizational Leadership and Business Development by offering a strong vision resulting in successful programs.

Ms. Pham’s life has always revolved around learning, improving herself, and helping others. Having come to America as a young adult almost 30 years ago, she persevered to improve her English skills and adapt to life in the United States. She earned her Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees in Health Science from accredited colleges in 2005 and 2007, respectively. Ms. Pham brings her diverse experience along with her 20+ years of philanthropic work and an extensive network of non-profit community leaders that will complement the IFP in furthering its goals.

Ms. Pham was introduced to Pickleball in early 2017, and with her characteristic passion and vision, she immediately immersed herself into the sport by becoming a USA Pickleball Ambassador from 2017 to 2021. She’s built Pickleball programs in various cities and schools within California. She’s a founder and an executive producer of the innovative online Pickleball referee program referred to as “What’s The Call?” during the COVID lockdown. Ms. Pham joined the IFP Ambassador program in 2020. She’s also a PPR and ITPA Level II Certified Pickleball Teaching Professional and offers courses in both English and Vietnamese. She genuinely loves teaching and giving back to the sport while building a stronger world! Since 2001, she has travelled back and forth to Vietnam multiple times to provide humanitarian services and build Pickleball programs.

As previously mentioned, Ms. Pham’s primary passion has been doing philanthropic work, which involved multiple international non-profit service organizations such as Special Olympics, Kiwanis, and Rotary. Her work with non-profits supporting the U.S. military and their families earned her high praise from senior military leaders for developing, executing, and chairing fundraising programs for the military non-profits from 2009 to 2016. Selflessness, quality, and candor are at the heart of everything Ms. Pham does, making her assignment with us a perfect fit for her role as a Director-At-Large for the International Federation of Pickleball.

Karen Long has served the International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) as Program Director of Marketing since 2020 and now has been elected to their Board as Secretary. Having a kind heart, love of faith in God and people, Ms. Long hopes to grow the family of pickleball throughout the world. By embracing the unique social aspect of pickleball, she hopes to nurture societal wellness through play among juniors and seniors and at the recreational and professional levels.

First learning to play pickleball in 1990, during a family visit to Seattle, WA, she and her husband, Terry, found themselves hooked on it. They returned to their mountain community in California and introduced the game, where it was well-received. Together they formed the Bonny Doon Pickleball Association, which grew upwards of 100 players over ten years. During that time, they held multiple charity tournaments with proceeds going to support schools and other non-profit organizations in the area.

After taking a hiatus to play softball and tennis, Ms. Long returned to pickleball in 2013, first volunteering on a pickleball steering committee and then becoming a USAP Ambassador. She started playing tournaments thriving on the social aspect of pickleball and the competition buzz. Eager to raise awareness and foster social play in her community, she served as President of the Santa Cruz Pickleball Club [2014-2021]. As an enthusiastic and innovative leader, Ms. Long grew the club membership from 12 to nearly 200 members during her tenure. She established the club as a 501-c3 non-profit organization, ultimately providing the community with five separate venues where players could play and socialize.

Ms. Long has been married for 42 years and is blessed with a son, a daughter, and five grandsons. She enjoyed her 35+-year career as a registered nurse in several capacities, including a medical consultant, care provider, clinical educator, and clinical systems developer. Ms. Long first volunteered her medical services for the Red Cross during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake and continues as an active volunteer for numerous disaster health agencies, most recently serving Maricopa County, AZ, during the Covid pandemic.

After representing Malta in tennis for several years and coaching the sport for ten years, Stephanie Pace unexpectedly discovered pickleball while on holiday in Bruges. Some people she met mentioned that it was the fastest-growing sport in America. She was curious to find out what it was all about, so she got to the hotel and looked it up. It immediately intrigued her. As soon as she got back to Malta, she spoke to the President of the tennis club where she coaches tennis and asked him if he could paint a pickleball court. There was the right amount of area to fit one pickleball court. This is how pickleball in Malta began.

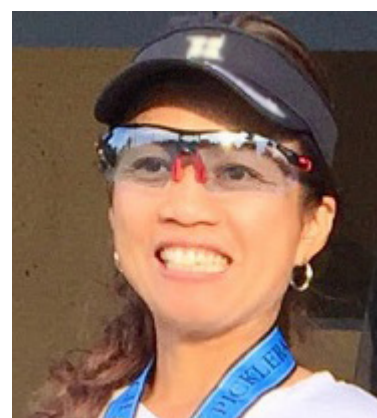
Ms. Pace brought pickleball to Malta in 2018. That same year, she set up a pickleball school called St. Andrews Pickleball for children age 4+ and adults. Since then, the number of weekly trainees has doubled from 25 to 50. She organizes events every 2 to 3 months for both children and adults.

In 2019, Ms. Pace founded an organization called Malta Pickleball which is the governing body of Pickleball in Malta. She’s organized several national ranking competitions and selected a junior (10 and under and 18 and under) and senior (19+ and 40+) national team.

In 2021, she took the Malta team to the Spanish Pickleball Championships, and they got very good results. The lady’s team won Silver in Women’s Doubles advanced level, and the Men’s team won Bronze in Men’s Doubles intermediate level.

This year, she took a group of children and adults to play a pickleball club tournament in Rome. From the 6th to the 8th of May, the adult Malta team will be participating in the Rome Pickleball Championships. She looks forward to hosting an international pickleball event one day soon.

Ms. Pace is honored to have been chosen as a board member of the International Federation of Pickleball, and she looks forward to working with her fellow board members to continue to grow the sport all over the world.



HOW TO OVERCOME A DEFICIT

Sometimes Pickleball can be frustrating when you start slow and get in a big hole with the score being seven to two or even six to zero. At other times, your opponent gets on a hot streak and takes a big lead. Senior professional Gene Smyth has three tips for overcoming a large deficit.

Limit Unforced Errors

Limiting unforced errors is especially important when you are on the returning team. Be sure to take advantage of the opportunities when you are in this position. The receiving team has a statistical advantage because the person returning the ball can make it to the non-volley-zone line before the serving team. Gene suggests hitting more towards the middle of away from the sideline. If you are the returning team, be sure to get the ball in and preferably deep in the court, so you do not lose a point. Aiming toward the center of the court will reduce errors and create confusion between your opponents. However, you do not always need to direct the ball to the middle of the court. You can aim toward the sideline but move your target a foot or two from it to ensure you keep the ball in the court.

Get the Right Mindset

Gene was recently down 7-2 during a recreational game. So he reminded his partner that it is crucial to play just one point at a time. He said, "Let's make them earn the last four. We'll get our points. A lot of times, people try to make up that five-point deficit with one shot. They just try to hit a third-shot drive as hard as they can. Don't worry about your score." Also, do not worry about losing the game. If you can play one point at a time and chip away at your opponent's lead, then the players on the other side of the net may get tight. Then you will have a chance to get even or even go ahead.

Gene gave an example of a player being down in a game

eight to two in a nine point game. He said, "if you worry so much about, oh my God, how are we ever going to come back? It's going to be hard, but if you just focus on, okay, they're at eight. It takes nine to win this game. I'm going to make sure they at least have to earn that last point. I'm not going to give them that last point. So it really becomes a mindset."

Change It Up

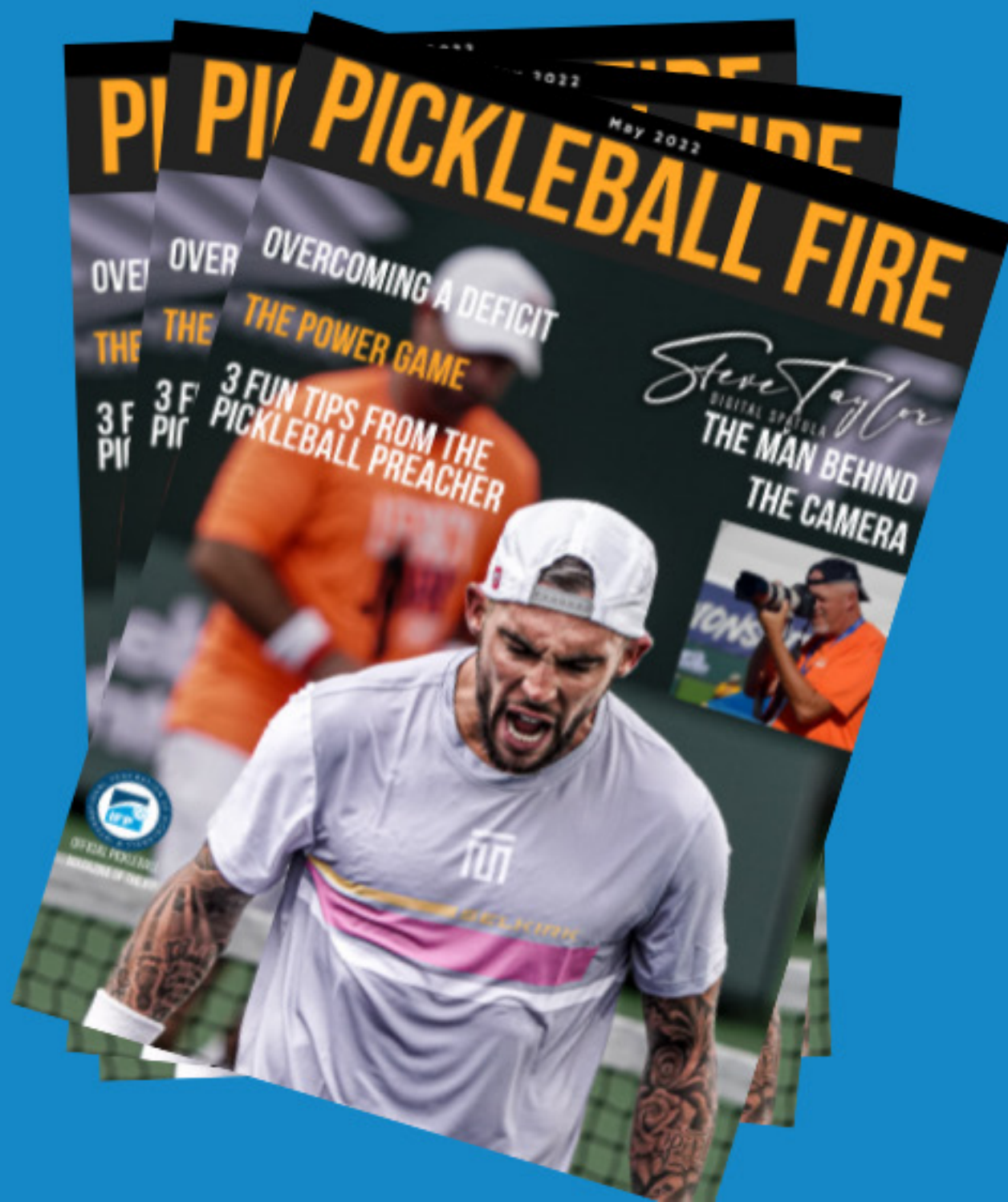
If the other team cannot miss, you need to change things before they get even farther ahead. Slowing down the game can be helpful. One strategy you can use in a tournament is to call a time-out. If you are in recreational play, you might even want to bend down and tie your shoe to change the game's pace and interrupt your opponent's flow.

You can also be more strategic in your shot placement and how you are serving. Take note of which of your opponents is on the hot streak. If one is missing more, hit to them even if they are the better player. Changing the pace of your serve can be effective. If you have been driving the ball, hit a high lob, which may throw off the other team. The key is to try something different. Gene emphasized, "If both players are hot, then aim for different sides. A lot of times, we always like go hit to the backhand. Well, maybe somebody's backhand is on fire so hit to the forehand. If you can spin or slice some balls, but you definitely need to change something up."

If you want to add in some gamesmanship, you can confirm the server order right before your opponent serves. You can ask, are you the second server or even say two? The ploy can disrupt the opponent's mojo but remember you cannot do this in a tournament if you have a referee. As you can see, you have several options to make a run at your opponents when they are well ahead. Just know you may have to try a couple of different things before getting back on track.



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PROFILE: PRO ILLE VAN ENGELN

Pickleball is rapidly developing. And it's all thanks to tennis players. At least, that's what Ille Van Engelen says. He has a good argument as a player who competes professionally. Pursuing a full-time Pickleball career is not in the cards for Ille. He admitted that he missed his window. But as an ex-tennis player, he claims that those with that sports background bring so much to the game. "The sport is changing in regard to speed-ups and drives. It's much more interesting to see that speed-up, rather than watching someone dink 30 times," he's convinced.

Ille's transition to Pickleball came over a year ago. "I used to play tennis, even on a professional level. But, I just got fed up with it," Ille explained. He is originally from the Netherlands in Europe and moved to the USA in 2010 to be part of the Ohio State men's tennis team. Ille stayed there for three years. Unfortunately, he lost one year of eligibility due to his professional tennis days. "I played professionally just for some time. Eventually, I earned some money, but just around \$3,000. It really wasn't much. But, back then, it was illegal for student-athletes to earn money playing pro, so they fined me," Ille recalls. He had to sit out his last year due to an eligibility issue. That was the time when he decided to move on from tennis.

Ille felt that it was time for something new. One day, he went to the recreational park with his doubles partner, and they just started playing Pickleball. "I've never looked back to tennis ever since. Quickly, he met many different Pickleball enthusiasts and even some professional players. Ille himself wanted to go pro, to commit only to a Pickleball career. But he's way too busy with his corporate job. Because of that, Ille only plays twice a week. "Sometimes, it's frustrating to lose because I know I'm right there. It's tough to play guys who play every day," he admits. Ille tries to play in at least four to five tournaments a year.

While Ille does not play as many



tournaments as he would like, he does a lot of side work related to Pickleball. He started a Youtube channel called "Pickleball Mafia" with his friend. They think of it as an instructional platform. "We just want to provide free content for Pickleball enthusiasts and to grow the sport. We also do reviews of the products. We are not endorsing, though. We just give an honest opinion," he said.

Recently they focused on helping people choose the right Pickleball. The indoor ones are more rubbery and more suitable for beginners because they bounce higher. He also likes to host some pro-Pickleball players to talk about the tactics, advice, and drills. "It's interesting to see how pro players approach the game and what are their

strategies behind a certain shot," Ille commented.

He is also one of the founders of the Southeast Pickleball League. The idea for the league came after Ille participated in ALTA, a large tennis league based in the Atlanta, Georgia, area. He wanted to give people a chance to play Pickleball competitively without traveling a lot. Matches are scheduled within a radius of 15 miles. In the first season, they managed to get 200 people playing.

While Ille is not a full-time Pickleball professional, it is clear that he is helping to develop the sport. So ex-tennis players are impacting how the game is played and how it grows.

PB PRO: BUILDING A BRAND

Simona Galik Moore, who is from Slovakia, always knew she wanted to build her own brand after doing this type of work for other companies. She just was not sure about the product and industry she would choose. But once she started playing the sport, Simona researched the business aspects of the game and knew she would build a Pickleball brand. The result is PB Pro, a company that produces paddles and accessories for Pickleball players.

After analyzing the business side of Pickleball, Simona realized opportunities existed in the market which needed to be filled. As an example, PB Pro crafts paddles for women and children. She said, "So we took our best paddles that we had, and we thought, you know what, let's make them lighter. Let's put some lighter materials into it, so they can be used by women or by youth that are starting to play because the biggest kind of thing I've heard from women was their injuries of the wrist and elbow." Simona currently plays with the Tour Force or Tour Finesse

paddle but will be switching to a new paddle that has not hit the market yet. As a former professional tennis player, she likes the more extended handle that the new paddle will have.

Besides paddles, Simona has created an apparel line for men and women. She is very selective in choosing the clothing materials and believes less is more. So, PB Pro has fewer tank tops, but they are very high quality. The short sleeve tops are made of moisture-wicking fabric and are very comfortable. The color palette for the apparel line includes classic colors like royal blue and navy with "pop" colors to generate more excitement.

She elaborated on the women's apparel line, "So if someone wants a Tour Finesse paddle, they can also get the visor in that color and a tank top and wristband and so forth. So, it all hangs together. And really, the idea is that anything you buy from us, it will essentially coordinate. So even a year from now, if you buy a piece, it will coordinate with a skirt or with your top that you bought a few months ago."



Simona considers herself to be a visor person, wearing one most of the day. From her own experience, she found visors not designed well could cause headaches for her. She said, "We design our advisors with extra materials and softness and stretchiness and things like that. So, when people wear them for a long time, they still feel good."

With all of the analysis and care Simona puts into PB Pro paddles and accessories, you know the PB Pro brand is growing just like the sport of Pickleball.





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