

September 2022

PICKLEBALL FIRE

**THE FIERY PRO
JULIAN ARNOLD
ON INTENSITY**

**CAN YOU
REALLY KEEP
YOUR EYE ON
THE BALL?**

**3 TIPS TO
NEUTRALIZE
BANGERS**

**MORGAN EVANS:
BEYOND THE
SPIN SERVE**



OFFICIAL PICKLEBALL
MAGAZINE OF THE IFP





PICKLEBALL FIRE PODCAST



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GAME CHANGER



ONCOURT OFFCOURT

MESSAGE FROM THE IFP PRESIDENT



Truth be told, I am in my present position as the President of the IFP living a dream....a dream that I in all humility submit would not have been possible in the absence of the wholesome and all-inclusive tenets that govern the functioning of the aforesaid body responsible for the governance of Pickleball worldwide.

A run down memory lane summons names like Bill Booth, who first approached me with the idea of IFP way back in 2010, followed by Mike Hess, the gentleman responsible for its fruition with the USA, Canada, India, and Spain as its founding members.

Pre and post-2019 have witnessed paradigm shifts under the leadership of Pat Murphy since he became President in 2019. The exponential rise of member countries also occurred during this time, thanks to the tireless zeal of the IFP ambassadors. They are also responsible for conducting the Bainbridge World cup tournaments, setting up the international Rulebook, and formulating the World Ambassador program, among other groundbreaking endeavors.

The situation post-pandemic, however, could have been less tumultuous and bereft of the upheavals that the Pickleball fraternity has witnessed.

That being said, the gloom fades away in moments of fond recollection and reflection, especially during the first month of my Presidentship. Thanks go to Pat

Murphy, David Jordon, and Karen Long, who provide their invaluable contribution and unshakable work ethic. Karen, in particular, what with her eye for detail and uncompromised assistance in the setting up of agendas and meetings, framing of the resolutions arrived at, accompanied duly with the minutiae all there for the taking in my effortless transitioning into the role, has left an indelible mark on my bearing.

That the sport of pickleball is an amalgamation of myriad origins and ethnicities cannot be better underlined than being in the highly cherished presence of my junior board members Tanyat Pham from Vietnam and Stefi Pace (an ace tennis player) from Malta. The duo, if I may add, lend an altogether different perspective to the broadening of horizons. The world as we know of (and at times do not), I increasingly realise, is indeed our home.

The three board meetings that I have attended so far, although immensely rewarding, have tested my mettle and my cross-cultural communication skills. I hope, in all sincerity, that I was able to put my point across emphatically.

The blurring of lines, especially since the advent of the world wide web, has failed to numb the flourishes of division and differences. It has therefore become imperative for the likes of those at the helm of affairs to strive for solidarity and perpetual growth. The same though not easy, can be, as I happily realize, attained when in the company of those that share the same ideals.

IFP VP OPENING

The International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) began restructuring earlier this year to accommodate growth, improve quality, cultivate greater diversity within its organization, and meet the International Olympic Committee requirements. Due to Mr. Sunil Valavalkar's elevation to the post of IFP President on July 1st, his earlier post of Vice President is vacant. At this time, the IFP invites each Member Country to inform all of their members that the IFP is seeking to fill the volunteer Vice President vacancy.

Since there are already representatives from the Americas, Asia, and Europe on the Board, the IFP would like to encourage candidates from the Africa and Oceania continents to apply. Each interested applicant must complete and submit the application via this link by the deadline for consideration. [CLICK HERE TO APPLY](#) using the IFP Board of Directors application.

The DEADLINE for sending applications is SEPTEMBER 9TH, 2022 (midnight Friday, Pacific Time).

The IFP exists to support its Member Countries and serve the pickleball needs around the world with representatives from all five continents. Thereby, this is an opportunity for Member Countries from the Africa and Oceania continents to become more involved with the IFP. If you are a dynamic person who possesses EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP QUALITIES, RESOURCEFUL WITH A DIVERSE BACKGROUND and is immersed in the pickleball culture, we would love to hear from you! Prompt responses from all of your three professional references will ensure you receive the best care possible with your application.

We look forward to receiving your applications.



INDIA HOSTS WORLD BAINBRIDGE CUP



The International Federation of Pickleball is proud to announce that the **fourth** annual *Bainbridge Cup WORLD Tournament* will be held in Mumbai, India, on November 30th - December 4th, 2022. This year's cup will be an international gathering of players from across the globe. With the rapid growth of pickleball throughout the world and a \$50,000 purse, we expect registration will fill up fast, so register as soon as possible. Events will include Men's, Women's, and Mixed Doubles.

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to register for the tournament or to see more details.

LAS VEGAS HOSTS BAINBRIDGE CUP SERIES EVENT



The International Federation of Pickleball is introducing a new style of the tournament which will contain an amateur Olympic-style team format in addition to the customary Men's, Women's, and Mixed Doubles events. The specific round-round format for each bracket will depend on the final team count of that bracket. This international tournament will be played in Las Vegas, NV, on the beautiful 24-court Sunset Park facility located just south of the McCarran International Airport, October 26th - 29th, 2022.

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to register for the tournament or to see more details.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS APPRECIATED

HOW PREPARATION HAS TAKEN SENIOR PRO MATTIAS JOHANSSON TO THE TOP

How do you go from being one tournament shy of world number one in tennis to being one of the best Pickleball players in the world? Ask Mattias Johansson! Just before COVID-19 struck and shut down almost every sports event on the globe, Mattias was in active pursuit of the number one position in tennis in his age group. He was doing so well that he only needed one more tournament win to reach it. But then the pandemic happened, and everything was canceled.

"I asked my wife to play Pickleball with me. She was not interested in the beginning, but then we started. It's better than being locked down at home," he recalled. Mattias became so hooked on Pickleball that he never returned to tennis again! He was so close to world number one ranking, but the love for Pickleball made him give up that dream. As he was diving into the Pickleball world, he discovered that he was great at it. But, the connection to tennis remains. Mattias is currently working as a tennis coach at UC Riverside. It's funny, but it's going so fast. Nowadays, I'm getting more known as a Pickleball player than as tennis player or coach," he admitted.

Mattias' climb to the top happened very quickly, not in tennis, but Pickleball! As a senior professional in singles, he is on top of the world, so it is safe to say that his dream eventually came true. In the latest ranking, he jumped over his friend Paul Olin to reach first place. "He's an amazing player, although we have different styles of playing. I'm more of a banger style, not that much finesse. I've brought a lot of tennis into Pickleball. On the other hand, Paul is fluid with everything else. He's great from a technical standpoint," he explained. Even their head-to-head record is tight. For Mattias, it is hard to say who has more wins. Recently, he got away with some very narrow wins.

What is the secret of his Pickleball

game, you may wonder? It is not easy to become the world's number one in anything, especially in Pickleball as one of the world's fastest-growing sports. Mattias' secret lies in his preparation, both physical and mental. Mattias for sure trains a lot, but most of his practice comes from, as he likes to call it, mental training. "You are not able to train physically as much as you would like. But, mentally, you can go over the strokes again and again. You can repeat each shot in your head as much as you like. Then, when you play on the court, you already went through it enough times," he explained.

Mattias prefers to analyze his opponents, their strengths and weaknesses. Then he counteracts them in his mind before even stepping onto the court. He says you will always be able to find the time for your mental reps. For example, Mattias does it on his way to work while commuting. There is no music playing in his car, only mental repetition. Try to find anyone who is that committed to perfecting his Pickleball game.

Mattias practices Pickleball (physically) four times a week. Two times for singles and two times for doubles. And he does countless hours of mental reps the rest of the time. All that practice requires you to be in top shape. So, Mattias also does some cardio. He believes it's needed for all those matches that he plays. There are so many tournaments, and he doesn't want to give up anything – singles or doubles. Mattias plays it all!

"I have a knee issue that requires surgery. I don't know how long will it endure. It can happen any time when I'm running or walking on an uneven surface," Mattias said. He is prolonging the surgery because the recovery takes 12 to 14 months. He doesn't want to lose that much time at this stage of his senior career. Furthermore, the doctor advised him not to play singles. But that's precisely what he likes the most. Playing matches is easy for Mattias.



The adrenaline kicks in, and you can somehow block the pain. But, returning to the hotel room or the flight back home, the pain makes him not want to touch the Pickleball for a few days.

Unfortunately, his knee is not the end of the health issues for Mattias. He also has hip braces. He had fusion surgery many years ago, so he stopped playing tennis. All those issues are making him do very long preparations before playing Pickleball. Our sport is still possible for Mattias, but tennis is not. "I do a lot of warming up. I'm talking at least one hour, sometimes even more. I definitely can't play tennis anymore. It's harder than Pickleball. But, on the other hand, it's not. He explained that there is less time between points to prepare and reset."

The transformation from tennis to Pickleball came easy for Mattias, especially since he is a coach. Today, he also teaches Pickleball. The sport overtook him, and he immediately fell in love with it. The fundamentals of both sports are very similar, as he claimed. The rest is the practice. And when it comes to that, not many people are more passionate about practicing Pickleball than Mattias. And it shows! After all, he is the world's number one.

STOP PLAYING TO WIN

By Brett Noel

Stop playing to win... If you want to become a better pickleball player, you must stop playing to win.

We all want to win; I mean, who really likes to lose? To become a better pickleball player, you must be willing to lose to get better. The best players achieved their success simply because they lost more games than you.

One of the biggest mistakes players make in social play is they play to win the game rather than improve their skill set. What are the areas of your game that you would like to improve? Use each game as an opportunity to practice that skill set until you feel confident that you can consistently place that shot.

There are so many things to think about when contacting the ball. Which side of the court should you hit to, should you hit the ball hard or soft, should the ball go deep, or would a shallow drop shot get better results? Where are the opponents on the court? Where the heck is your partner? How can anyone calculate all these algorithms on the court at the same time and return the ball with any sense of direction?

Remember driving a stick shift car for the first time? Your left foot had to push down on the clutch, then release slowly upward at the exact time you pushed down with your right foot on the gas pedal. As if this balancing act was not enough, you had to shift gears at the same time. If you were off just a little, you popped the clutch and stalled the car, or worse, you heard the gears grinding and



screaming to be released simply because your timing was off. Left foot down, right foot up, right-hand shifting, it was like doing the Hokey Pokey. Then you had to make sure you did not run anyone over as you drove away.

You had to really concentrate, but soon you were shifting gears with ease, smoking a cigarette with one arm out the window, changing the radio station, and talking to your friend on the cell phone.

At first, changing your strategy on the court from winning the game to improving your skill set will have the same effects. It might take effort at first. It might be painful for a bit. Soon it will all be effortless, and your motions and shots will come with ease without you thinking of what to do. You will just do it. Stop hitting the ball just to return it over the net.

Every time the ball reaches your paddle, you should ask yourself, "Where do I want this ball to go?" Where would you like the ball to land? Which side of the court are you trying to place the ball? Do you want the ball to land deep in the opponent's court or shallow? What I am saying is, "Hit the ball with purpose" Do not just send it back over the net. Become the player that hits with a purpose.

Become a player willing to lose more now so you can win more later.

Brett Noel is a 3x National Gold Medal winner and an Engage Professional Pickleball Instructor.



THE FIERY PRO JULIAN ARNOLD ON INTENSITY

Professional player Julian Arnold is known in the Pickleball world for his fiery persona. What does that mean? Let's say that if you play on the court next to his, you will hear him. Screams and shouts are part of his game. He is naturally very competitive. Combine that with his sky-high energy, and you get exactly what we described – screams and shouts. “I do it only for my benefit. It brings the best out of me. I've never meant to be antagonistic to my opponents. I may seem like a total jerk, but I'm really trying to be a gentleman on the court,” he admits.

You will see him celebrating his points, but he is also ready to clap for his opponents when they make a good shot. Once again, he states that he only does that to keep himself focused as that ratchets up his intensity. On a scale of 1 to 10, Julian said he is a solid eight, which suits him the best. But, everyone performs at their peak at a different arousal level. For example, top-rated professional JW Johnson is very chill on the court, so his intensity might be

a 3 or 4, but that works for him.

There is nothing wrong with Julian being on the higher end of the scale, but sometimes he gets to a level 10 of intensity. What happens then? Oh, boy. “It takes a lot of energy to fire up like that. But, in the end, it's not even healthy. I would just go crazy on the court. My body would run out of gas if I continue it for too long,” he explained.

The tactic that helps Julian return to an 8 is to be his coach on the court. He talks to himself in the third person, trying to calm down. Because playing Pickleball has so many distractions. And the one can't control everything. “Playing on a court with temporary lines or net, everyone entering on the court, interruptions of the match. I started living by the motto of not letting the things that are outside of my control distract or anger me,” he said. Of course, needing that mindset is very different than what Julian experienced on the tennis court.

He made his way from tennis to Pickleball to help him to get through a bout of depression. What happened? Sadly, Julian's dog passed away. The Golden Retriever named Izzy died of cancer, being only nine years old. Julian was very connected with his dog and brought Izzy everywhere, even to the tennis court when he gave lessons. It was not an easy time for Julian and his family. "I was teaching tennis back then, and my clients saw that I was not on my usual level because of it. So, they suggested that I take some time away from it and try to find something social," he recalled.

And that is how Julian started playing Pickleball. It was in April of 2021 when he held the Pickleball paddle in his hand for the first time. Being a tennis player, he was skeptical in the beginning. But, as it was proven many times before, Pickleball is a highly addictive sport. When you pick up the paddle, there is an excellent chance that you won't put it down for the rest of your life.

That was precisely the case with Julian. He just needed to give it a couple of months, and after that, he decided to give it a chance professionally. "I played pro singles for the first time and got my butt kicked. But, it definitely hooked

me into the whole process of training and getting better at this sport that so many people love," he said.

Julian started playing Pickleball as a distraction but ended up with the sport being his passion. As he slowly turned pro, Julian realized that the tournaments' entry fees were not cheap. And if you want to spend a whole week playing all the events somewhere, it will probably cost you around \$1000. It was a little too pricey for Julian to be just a hobby. The wheel of fortune turned in his favor when he joined his old friend, a Pickleball enthusiast. Together, they got the idea of becoming road warriors. Julian's role is more focused on Pickleball, while his friend is in charge of the business part of it.

While Julian came to Pickleball to help him with depression, he excelled at the game. "The decent amount of my success I owe to my tennis background. For tennis players, the transition to Pickleball is always a little bit more natural," he explained. Julian's journey has been recent, but it is one of the most interesting so far. And yes, he is very friendly and approachable. However, he admits that he may not look that way if you see him on the Pickleball court due to his intense nature.



3 TIPS TO NEUTRALIZE BANGERS

Keith Valentine, now a 5.0 rated player, believes he wasted the first two years of playing Pickleball because he was a banger who just liked to rip the ball. While he now has a solid grasp of the third shot drop and dink, one of the most common questions he gets from other players is how to neutralize bangers. Keith provides three tips that go well beyond the usual advice of hitting a third shot drop to bring bangers to the net.

The Serve

Most logic would suggest that the harder you can hit a serve, the more effective it will be. However, first, consider your competition's tendencies. If your opponent is a banger, it may not be the best choice. Keith explained, "So one of the things about banger is especially people that like really have hard drives from the baseline is the more power you give them. The more power is coming back at you. And so the way you neutralize bangers, you don't give them anything to work with."

When Keith plays, he tries to take the air out of everything, so the banger has to create all the force themselves. The strategy extends to the serve. Rather than using a drive serve, Keith finds a lob effective. He hits the ball 20 feet high and has it land near the baseline, bouncing up very high. While tennis players can drive a shoulder-high ball because of the strings on the racket, this is not the case in Pickleball. Because the ball bounces high without any pace, it is more challenging to create power because it is not near the player's hips.

The Grip

When a banger is hitting the ball hard at you during the rally, your goal again should be to take pace off the ball. The best practice is to reset the ball into the kitchen. But in Keith's early days of playing Pickleball, he admitted he would hold his paddle too tight. Keith remembered, "What I realized is that I overgrip the paddle a lot. And by overgripping, you can't really neutralize a banger because if I'm holding onto the paddle really hard, the ball's going to bounce off it just as hard as they're hitting it."

Keith suggests softening your hands by thinking about holding a baby bird while not crushing it. You can even just use two fingers to hold your paddle to get the idea of loosening up your grip pressure. Then work your way up to using three, four, and then five fingers to grip your paddle while maintaining a light pressure. Keith elaborated, "You're holding the paddle very lightly, and you're only going to squeeze the paddle when you're wanting to put it away or put more power into it. So especially when you're

resetting against bangers, you got to have a light grip to where the paddle is not going to fly out of your hands, but that you're going to absorb the shots from them and have a softer reset."

The Seesaw

Playing against bangers can be intimidating because they hit the ball so hard regardless of the height of the contact point. However, you can improve your defense against them by thinking about a piece of equipment in a children's park or play area. Consider the similarities between a seesaw and Pickleball game. The net is the pivot point of the seesaw, and you are on one end, and the banger is on the other. Regardless of the height of the ball when your opponent is going to hit it, your paddle position should be the opposite. If the other team has a high shot, your paddle should be low. If the other team is hitting from below the net, your paddle should be higher.

Keith said, "And so what you start learning as you get to the upper levels is how to defend on a higher shot. I might have to back up a couple of steps and get my paddle lower because they're going to be able to get on top of that ball and put some downward pressure on it. But whereas if they're below the net, if I back up now, I'm in trouble because the ball is going to come at me too high. So I have to react by getting my paddle up high on my side of the net."



USING PICKLEBALL TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY



Pickleball is everywhere! And by saying that, we mean, you can find it where you won't expect it. Levin "Smitty" Smith brought Pickleball into the youth detention center in Chesterfield, Virginia, which houses kids from 8 to 17. He found out that the average age of players in Pickleball is 40-50. But why not involve kids in it, he wondered—especially ones in the detention centers.

As Smitty expected, there was resistance at first to the juveniles playing a game called Pickleball. Their go-to sports were mostly basketball and football. However, the kids learned very soon that Pickleball is very competitive. "They wanted to become better at it. There was also a big rivalry among the teachers. Then, they started to play against each other. Of course, we had to monitor their behavior," Smitty said. Another beautiful thing about introducing the kids to Pickleball was the sport was new to everyone, so nobody was good at it. It gave everyone an equal chance since they all started on the same level. However, Smitty claims that the older kids enjoy it more because it's very competitive. They want to beat the staff and have someone to compare to.

The whole program started almost nine years ago. It was challenging bringing Pickleball into the detention

center, but Joel Hughes was a huge help. He is a gym teacher that helped him to get it started. Hughes bought all the equipment – paddles, nets, balls, everything you need to play some Pickleball games. The program is still going strong. They do a weekly clinic nowadays, every Friday. Combine that with a pizza party, for example, and there is no better invitation for kids to come and play some Pickleball.

Smitty has even taken Pickleball a step further within the detention center. He organized a summer camp called Summer Enrichment. Kids go there and watch movies, play together, and do some education. Pickleball is, of course, one of the activities. But, they also play some other sports like volleyball and basketball.

And what happens when the children get out of the detention center, you may wonder? "I try to maintain contact with them. Especially if they become good players, then I even invite them for some tournaments," he explained.

One of the most important things about kids is their behavior. The kids in detention centers mostly have an issue with that. Smitty encourages them to behave nicely, and then he rewards them for it. He organizes his Smitty Tournaments (as the kids call it) so there are no losers. Everybody gets a medal or

even a shirt that Smitty had custom-made. Sometimes, he even gives them paddles as a reward or other Pickleball equipment.

Smitty, for sure, does a lot of giving back to the community. During the difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic, he donated money to sick kids. He does a lot of things in his old neighborhood. Giving back is his primary goal and, as he likes to call it, his duty.

Along his Pickleball journey, Smitty met a lot of people. But the one who made a considerable impact was his opponent from one of the tournaments. "It was my match against Gizmo for the first time. Later, I invited him to join me in the detention center. He came and talked to the kids. He gave them his life story, played with them, and eventually donated a lot of Pickleball equipment," he recalled.

Pickleball can change lives! Smitty proved it by working with the kids in detention centers. Our sport is helping them to grow up and stay away from bad influences. But, with Pickleball, it was never only about the physical side. They also develop social skills - the key to making the lives they always wanted to have. Smitty is a true leader in his community. Giving back to the others who need it the most became the biggest goal of his life. And is there a better tool to do it than Pickleball?

THE MYTH OF FOREHAND TAKES THE MIDDLE

Tony Roig is the co-founder of WeArePickleball.com. He is also a former tennis player – 40+ years and a Senior Pro player. But more importantly, he is an IPTPA Certified Master Professional. When not thinking about or studying pickleball, Tony likes to travel with his wife Jill, especially if it's in Matilda (our RV).



Many Pickleball players like to simplify the game by saying to their partner, “Forehand down the middle.” The concept refers to the person on the left side of the court taking balls down the middle, assuming both are right-handed. But is this really right? According to senior professional Tony Roig from WeArePickleball.com, sometimes forehand is correct, but a lot of times it is not. So this is where strategies like Respect the X offer a bigger picture concept.

The X is made of the two opponents, each on the right side of the court and the same for the left side. Using the serve as an example, one diagonal of the X is made up of the server and returner. The other diagonal consists of the server and the returner.

Let's start with an example of Respect the X when the game begins at 0-0-2, and both players on the serving team are right-handed. While standing on the right side of the court, the server serves diagonally to their opponent on the right side. The receiving team hits the ball down the middle to the serving team. So who should take the third shot? Most people would say the right-handed player on the left side of the court should take the ball. However, a better option may be the server hitting the third shot with their backhand. So, why is that?

Tony explained the ball location from his view as the server, “It's just coming back middle a little bit to the right of the center line there. I'm going to use my backhand, or should the player to the left come over and hit that ball with their forehand. Generally speaking, being all things being equal, we suggest that it should be me. The server who hits the third shot there because the ball is traveling along an axis that is going across the X towards me.”

Advantages of Respect the X

The benefit of hitting the backhand in the above scenario is twofold. The first is the mechanics of the stroke. It is easier to hit a ball coming towards you than the one moving away from you because you have to reach away from your body to make the shot.

The second advantage of using the backhand is having better court coverage. If the person on the left crosses over the center line to take the shot, it opens up the left side of the court for your opponents to direct their hits.



Additionally, the server is now blocked from being able to move up quickly to the kitchen line. As a result, you become a one-person team since the server is pinned in and cannot move to a clean-up position if the third shot is well placed.

If you have a right-handed and left-handed player on the same team, respecting the X can simplify the situation where you both have your forehand or backhand down the middle. Just consider the diagonal of the X. As an example, if both players have their forehand down the middle and the return of serve comes to the middle of the court, the server (who is left-handed) should smack the third shot.

Breaking the X

While Respecting the X is a great concept, certain situations call for breaking the X because you have a specific objective you want to accomplish. If you have a case where the person in serving position has missed a few third shot drops or drives when the ball is hit down the middle, then make a change. But typically, you do want to Respect the X if you have two right-handed players.

Tony, who is left-handed, also gave an example of an exception to respecting when playing with a right-handed player. He said, “An exception would be I’ve partnered before with players who don’t come from a tennis background, or they don’t really have a drive shot, so to speak. And so let’s assume the ball now is going along the other X axis, the one that I’m not supposed to take, but it’s a short return of serve that’s attackable. What I’ll do in

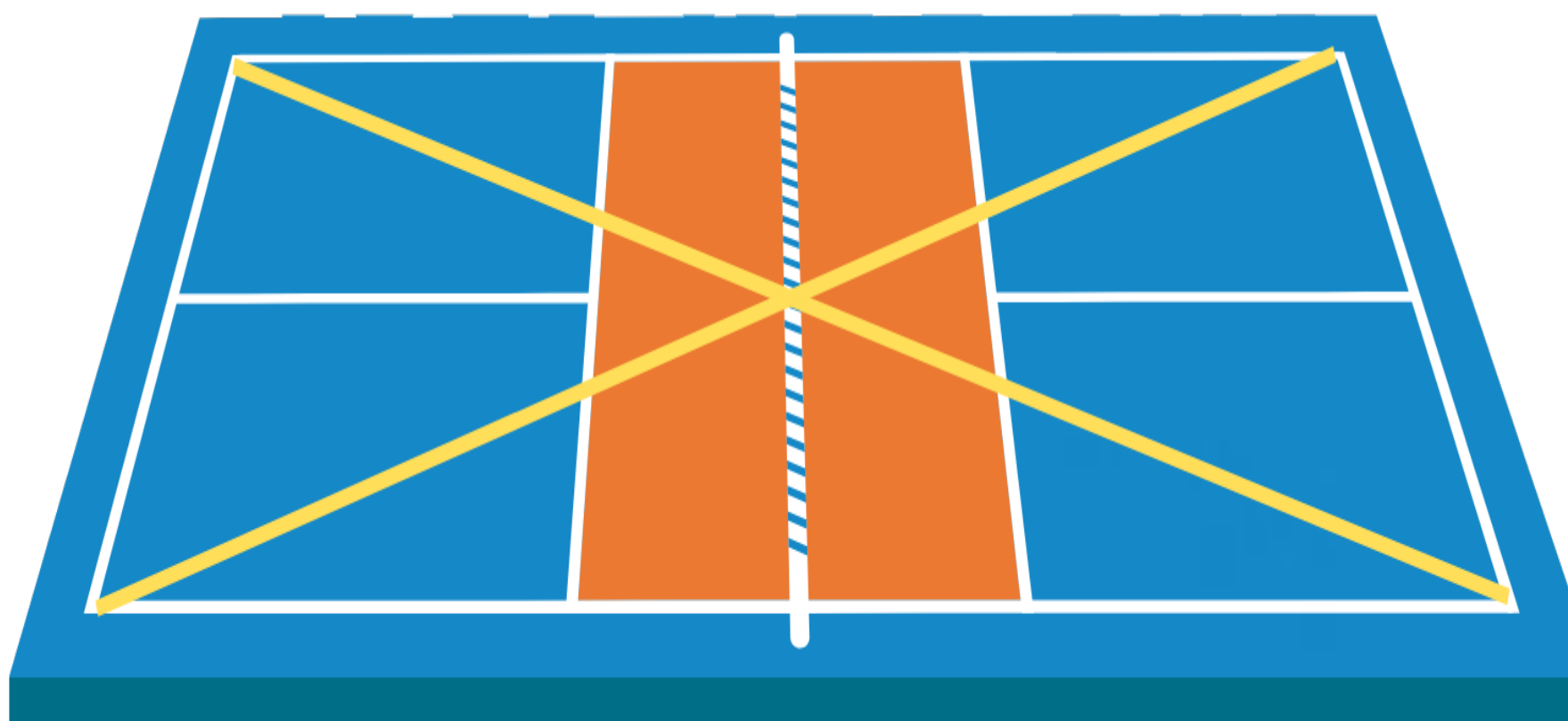
those situations is I will call the shot. I’ll say I got it. I will move forward. And I will attack the ball early with a drive, trying to pin the returner back.”

The Small X

Respecting the X is not just for the times you are at the baseline. A smaller X exists when you are standing at the kitchen line. In other words, the concept extends to dink rallies and volleying. Tony discussed the dink game, “If you’re missing things in the middle zone, a lot of times or at least ask yourself who hit that ball, did the player that the player hit it on the end of the X, or did the other player reach across the X to hit it on the dink.”

Respect the X also works with the volley when all players are at the kitchen line. But Tony explained the volley has one wrinkle. If you can hit the ball sooner and attack it, go ahead and break the X. Tony elaborated, “You’re breaking the X because you’re trying to hit the ball earlier, which means you’re going to hit the ball higher, closer to the net. He’s less likely to make a mistake, also more able to hit down on it. Plus, an important component that gets lost a lot of times in conversation, you’re removing time from your opponents to get set, right? So you hit that ball sooner.”

Respecting the X is a strategic principle that can guide your game if you understand when to implement the concept and break the rule. It’s a great framework that goes well beyond “forehand down the middle.”



MORGAN EVANS: BEYOND THE SPIN SERVE

Imagine that your serve is so good that they are trying to ban it from Pickleball. That is the case with Morgan Evans. His spin serve has gone viral. The highlights are taking social media by storm. It is even named after him – The Morgan Evans Serve. However, rumor has it that the serve may be banned from Pickleball in 2023. Still Morgan is well known for so many other things in Pickleball, including playing, coaching, and commentating. But let's first start with the serve.

The Serve

Is it even necessary to say that Morgan strongly disagrees with the potential ban on the serve he popularized? "It's been legal since 1965. Some players can return it. Some cannot. It's not my fault. I think that it's only fair to give the players some time to figure it out. It took the NBA players long enough to learn how to defend alley-oops or the

baseball players to figure out how to hit a curve," he said.

Morgan has a point. It can be seen as a skill that he has perfected. And Morgan did it. There is a video compilation of his most incredible serves. The opponents are falling to the ground, trying to return it. He started to use it long ago, but as the pandemic happened, he perfected it. Morgan used that time to practice something that could give him the advantage and take some pressure off. If he does right, then it's an easy point for him. It's a great way to save energy.

Nowadays, Pickleball is looking for a way to potentially outlaw it. And Morgan has responded by trying to lobby via social media. He wrote a few posts explaining the reasons it shouldn't be banned. His main point is that people should judge it by the quality of return, not the service itself. "The game is growing. I just don't think that it's good for the



growth of the game to punish the innovation because a handful of pros wasn't able to return it," he explained.

The Player

While Morgan Evans may be best known for this spin serve, he has brought so much more to the game. But before Pickleball, Morgan was a tennis coach for 15 years. One day, he saw a couple of tennis professionals playing some new sport. Later, he found out that it was Pickleball. One of them was his brother, and Morgan joined them for a few games.

"It was fun. But, I wasn't ready to jump ship just yet. I couldn't give up my career as a tennis coach. Then, eight years ago, I moved to Seattle where I completely caught a Pickleball bug," he recalled. Slowly but surely, Morgan fell in love with Pickleball. He was ready to give up tennis and dedicate himself to our sport. As time passed, Morgan was getting better and better. He started playing tournaments at the 5.0 level and bringing innovation to the game via skill and strategy.

One such strategy is called the Shake N' Bake. As the story goes, Morgan and his doubles partner lost the first game in a tournament match and were down in the second too. They were on the edge of going to the loser's bracket when a rain delay occurred. Morgan remembered, "We also had a 5-Hour Energy shot each, which I wouldn't recommend. Don't try that at home, kids. Since then, luckily, the nutritional aspect has gotten much better for both of us. But at the time, in a pinch, we needed some serious energy and a different strategy."

The strategy was for Morgan to drive the third shot and have his partner get to the kitchen line early. Then his partner would knock off the next shot, poaching if needed. Morgan said he is not sure why he called the move the Shake N' Bake, but it may have come because he had recently watched Talladega Nights, and they reference a maneuver of the same name. Morgan said it was quite possible the 5-Hour Energy drink had a role in the naming convention.

What's going on with his playing career now? Well, he needed to slow down. Morgan won a tournament last year. Since then, he needed to stop because of an injury. The shoulder issue made overheads impossible for him. And everybody is playing a lot of lobs these days, as he said.

The Commentator

Morgan's Pickleball career goes beyond playing. He is also a commentator, having recently been in that role for the first live broadcast of Pickleball on CBS. "I think it helps to have an accent. I hate to say it, but it gets the foot in the



door for a lot of different situations," he quipped. Morgan works in the booth and gives his view on the game, commenting on the action as the match progresses. "It all started with me standing by the fence and hoping my phone battery doesn't run out. I was talking about the game and also hoping that the live stream on Facebook wouldn't drop out," he said jokingly.

The Coach

Morgan's Pickleball career is remarkable in a lot of ways. Another accolade to his name is that he is the first-ever professional coach. "It all started with Tyson McGuffin. We played many singles matches against each other. And one day, out of the blue, he called me and asked if I wanted to become his coach. Well, we had a great run," Morgan remembered.

When he started with Tyson in 2016, the role of a professional coach didn't exist. As Morgan states, the important thing for players is that they feel safe having someone courtside who knows the game. From a player's perspective, it often makes all the difference they need to win. He also recently worked with one of the best-known women's professionals in the game, Simone Jardim. The two focused on Simone's singles game for the U.S. Open and succeeded, with Simone losing 11-4, 12-10 to the number one seed Lea Jansen.

Morgan is one of the most exciting guys in the world of Pickleball. Playing, coaching, commentating, innovating – he does everything to grow the sport. Whether you like his serve or not, everybody has to admit that he is a true advocate of Pickleball.

A photograph of two people, CJ Johnson and Tony Roig, standing side-by-side. CJ Johnson is on the left, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and a grey visor with a logo. Tony Roig is on the right, wearing an orange zip-up jacket over a blue shirt and a white baseball cap. Both are smiling. The background is a blurred indoor setting with some lights.

CJ
JOHNSON

Tony
ROIG

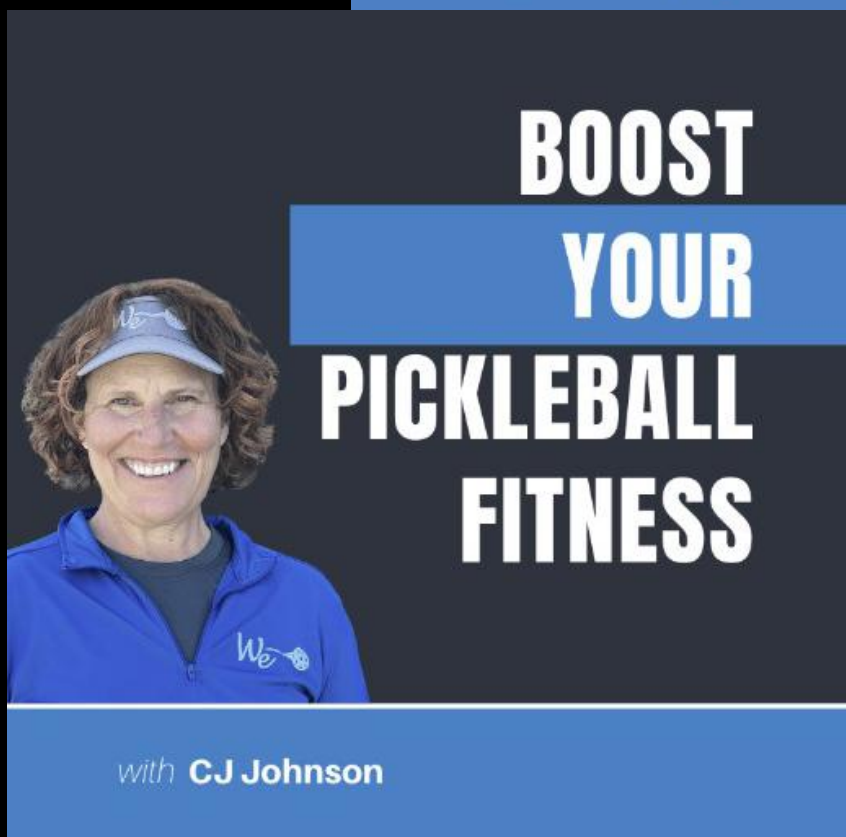
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WHAT IS 3-2-1?

CJ Johnson is the co-founder of WeArePickleball.com and a professional three-sport athlete. She has spent her entire adult life earning a living from playing and coaching sports. When she is away from the courts of slopes, you'll find her watching Star Trek with my husband John and our two fur babies, Shirley and Ralph.



When thinking about relationships, most consider their connections to other people. But have you considered your relationship with Pickleball? CJ Johnson, a professional three-sport athlete from WeArePickleball.com, said, "At least for me, when that relationship gets out of whack, that's when I am not happy on the Pickleball courts. And there are things that we can do to maintain a healthy relationship." One of them is to learn to control your inner critic or that negative monologue that goes on inside your head. CJ suggests a strategy called 3-2-1 from Dr. Todd Kay's book *Sports Psychology for Dummies*.

Three

First, write down three positive things that happened when playing or practicing your Pickleball game. They can be simple things like "I did a good job of getting low to hit my dinks," or "My forehand top spin ground stroke was really on," or "My forehand roll was really consistent today even when the ball was well below the net."

Two

Next, write down two things you learned about yourself while practicing or playing. Be careful to note these in a positive light. While interviewing CJ, she gave an example of something she learned about herself in a practice session. CJ was working on the third shot and had significant success dropping the ball in the kitchen when positioned in front of the baseline. However, when CJ moved

back to the baseline, she struggled with dropping the ball consistently into the kitchen. She noticed that the rhythm of the shot was off. In other words, CJ found herself taking the ball too quickly, so she rushed the shot. She explained, "So instead of having a rhythm, like it's one, two, it was very close together. And all of a sudden, I heard the rhythm and the fact that I was interrupting the rhythm of the shot." So, CJ found that she does need to pay attention to how her shots sound. She also learned that her auditory sense could help improve her game, although she is primarily a kinesthetic learner.

One

Finally, the number one should be a prompt for the one thing you will do to improve in the next 24 hours. Continuing with the example in step two, CJ decided to work on her auditory skills to strengthen her Pickleball skills. She turned on Youtube and listened to the game's sound without watching the video. She then imagined the game with her hitting the shots while she listened to the audio.

The advantage of identifying one thing to improve on in the next 24 hours is two-fold. First, it isn't easy to succeed if you are trying to work on multiple items at once. One is doable, especially if you only have one day to do it. Second, the 24-hour time frame is essential. CJ explained, "I don't know how many times I've had the best intentions and gone to a seminar or something like that and just written a book full of notes. And then I never look at them again. I mean, it's great to

learn. But one of the things that Tony (Roig) and I talk a lot about is if people right now generally have too much information. We need to close the gap on learning. And I think that focusing on one thing and immediate action starts to close the gap on the learning and helps us to develop those skills we need to play our best."

According to CJ, 3-2-1 helps you to reframe a practice session. She elaborated, "Because what amazes me is I can have a practice session where whatever I practice goes well, except for, let's just say, one shot. So I practice three or four different ones. They all come off perfectly. Let's just say I practice ground strokes, and my ground strokes are just not on that day. I'm hitting them long. I'm hitting them wide, whatever it may be. I can so easily walk away from that experience just completely forgetting about all the positive things that happen and internalizing the groundstroke and the fact that the groundstroke wasn't where I wanted it to be."

So the next time you practice or play, you start with a negative mindset. Your attitude can then spiral into a place where you are no longer having fun on the court. Thoughts about never being good at Pickleball can surface and may lead to quitting the game. The snowball effect, however, can be circumvented by using a technique like 3-2-1. It helps you to focus on the positive aspects of the practice or play session and silence your inner critic.

CAN YOU REALLY KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL?

Coaches often say, “keep your eye on the ball.” But can you really track the entire trajectory of the ball when you are in a fast-hands battle at the kitchen line? According to scientific studies in other sports like baseball and tennis, the answer is likely no because they found the ball moves faster than the eyes can move. So, how do highly skilled Pickleball players track the ball?

First, let’s think about how the eye works. Only the area in the center of where we are looking is high resolution. Everything else is blurry, so to track the movement of the Pickleball, we need to move our eyes around a lot. But don’t move them too much as studies show elite athletes have different visual search strategies compared to lower-level competitors. Elite performers focus on a smaller number of critical areas for a more extended time.

Researchers identified three stages in an athlete’s visual search strategy when their opponent hits the ball. The first phase is preflight, where players focus on their opponent’s movement before they strike the ball. The second phase considers the early inflight ball characteristics. The third phase provides the late inflight ball information, which fine-tunes the point at which the paddle contacts the ball. Research shows



elite performers use data from all three phases. And a study on highly skilled badminton players found they fixate on the ball earlier than less experienced competitors.

Just as important, they also take one brief moment to completely focus their attention before they move. In other words, skilled Pickleball players use the “quiet eye,” a concept popularized by the University of Calgary professor Joan Vickers. A quiet eye helps athletes organize their planned movement and eliminate distractions. So, taking one beat to focus your gaze solely on the ball before swinging your paddle in a hands battle can improve performance.

It is possible to become better skilled at ball tracking through different exercises. Some are not specific to Pickleball, and others involve software and 3D glasses. Of course, some do include using a Pickleball.

General Exercises

Meditation and yoga help develop a quiet eye. You can pick a spot on the wall or ceiling to focus your attention during meditation. Try to lengthen the time you can gaze at that one spot. Some people may prefer to focus on a photo of something they love, like a dog, a Pickleball, or even a paddle. You can also use Drishti from yoga. Drishti is a soft, gentle gaze on an object such as the tip of your nose, the space between your eyebrows, or even your navel. You can also use a Drishti gaze on your hand, thumb, or toes.

Software and 3D Glasses

Vizual Edge originally developed its sports vision evaluation and training platform for professional baseball players. However, in recent years the software has been enhanced so Pickleball players can benefit from the system, which requires a tablet or



computer and pair of 3D glasses.

Zack Strock from Vizual Edge said, “So Pickleball, it’s just not one hit, and you stand there. You really are monitoring each shot. And with that goes both your convergence and divergent skills. So you’re constantly seeing the ball come towards you and move away from you, which is something we would call visual flexibility. And you get that a little bit in baseball, but baseball, it’s much more of a single focus.”

To start with Vizual Edge, you take a 15 minutes test, and then a plan is customized to improve recognition and ball tracking of your Pickleball game. Then practice for 15 minutes three times a week. Zack says to think of vision training much like a weight lifting routine. You do it year-round to maintain your peak performance.

Pickleball Specific Training

One of the best drills you can do to enhance ball tracking is to use a wall or tennis backboard. Then mark off seven feet from the wall to simulate where you would be standing if in a hands battle at the kitchen line. You can also put a mark or tape on a wall three feet high to focus on hitting a target above the net. Zack said, “Sometimes I’ll do it against the side of my house, but essentially I’m playing wall ball with myself. So I’m trying to hit hard line drives that bounce right back to me and that I have to quickly react. So using those tracking skills almost like a hands battle, so to speak, with that wall.”



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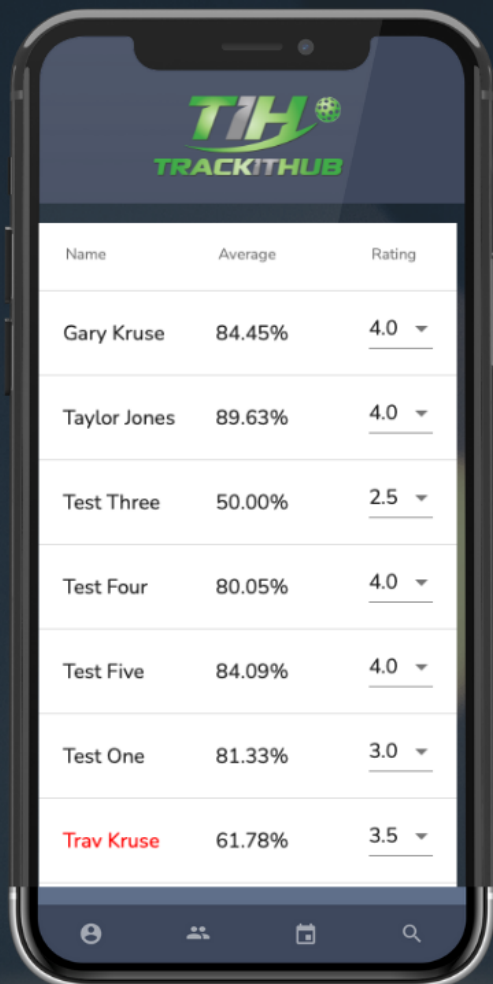
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A PERFECT MATCH: PICKLEBALL PLUS CRUISING

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, many people are getting back to their everyday life activities. For some people, that may include vacation time aboard a cruise ship. So why not find one that has Pickleball?

Many cruise ships offer the game on an outdoor basketball court lined for Pickleball. 14 Royal Caribbean ships have lined the sports court area, typically the basketball court, for Pickleball. It is commonly challenging because of the prevailing winds at sea, and there is usually only one court.

However, the Seven Seas Splendor has taken Pickleball a step further on deck 12. They offer two dedicated courts for Pickleball and paddle tennis. That part of the facility is run by Adventure Golf Services, as they also have 18 hole mini golf and golf driving range on the same deck. So, if you like Pickleball and golf, you are all set on the Seven Seas Splendor.

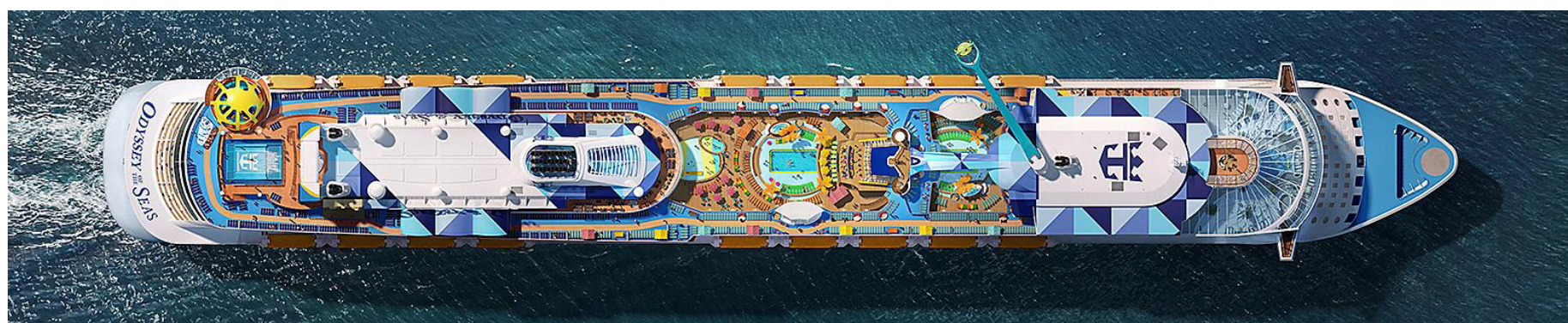
Given the popularity of Pickleball, more and more cruise ships are adding the sport to their inside activity offerings. Royal Caribbeans Odyssey of the Seas has created a large indoor sports area on the top deck. Pickleball players must share the deck with basketball, ping pong, soccer, and archery participants. However, the indoor space is just right to minimize the issue of wind on a ship and a Pickleball.

The Odyssey of the Seas has room for three indoor Pickleball courts. They are even bringing a teaching



professional aboard for Pickleball enthusiasts during a November 27th to December 3rd Western Caribbean cruise leaving out of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Pro Nikki Roth commented, "What a way to go on a cruise. You're staying active. Every time I've been on a cruise, it's all you do is eat." Nikki will be on the court with participants for two hours daily, leading them in drills and lessons. Plus, there will be a cocktail party and workshop for the group. You can even take private lessons outside of the two dedicated hours on court with Nikki. As she said, you can play rain or shine, and all levels are welcome. For more information on this Pickleball cruise, [click here](#).

Below is a list of cruise ships with Pickleball courts. Of course, this list is expanding every day.



Cruise ships with Pickleball

Carnival	Splendor	Noordam	Coral Princess	Anthem of the Seas
Breeze	Vista	Oosterdam	Regal Princess	Explorer of the Seas
Celebration	Cunard (turf, not hard court)	Volendam	Royal Princess	Freedom of the Seas
Dream	Queen Mary 2	Westerdam	Emerald	Harmony of the Seas
Horizon	Queen Elizabeth	Zaandam	Discovery Princess	Independence of the Seas
Jubilee	Queen Victoria	Zuiderdam	Sky Princess	Jewel of the Seas
Legend	Queen Anne	Norwegian	Enchanted Princess	Liberty of the Seas
Magic	Holland America	Prima	Regent Seven Seas	Mariner of the Seas
Mardi Gras	Rotterdam	Viva	Splendor	Navigator of the Seas
Miracle	Eurodam	Oceania	Explorer	Oasis of the Seas
Panorama	Koningsdam	Riviera	Royal Caribbean	Odyssey of the Seas - Indoor
Pride	Nieuw Amsterdam	Marina	Adventure of the Seas	Serenade of the Seas
Spirit	Nieuw Statendam	Princess	Allure of the Seas	Symphony of the Seas

THE SCIENCE OF IMPROVING YOUR PICKLEBALL GAME

By Jody Belsher: info@hearts-gate.com

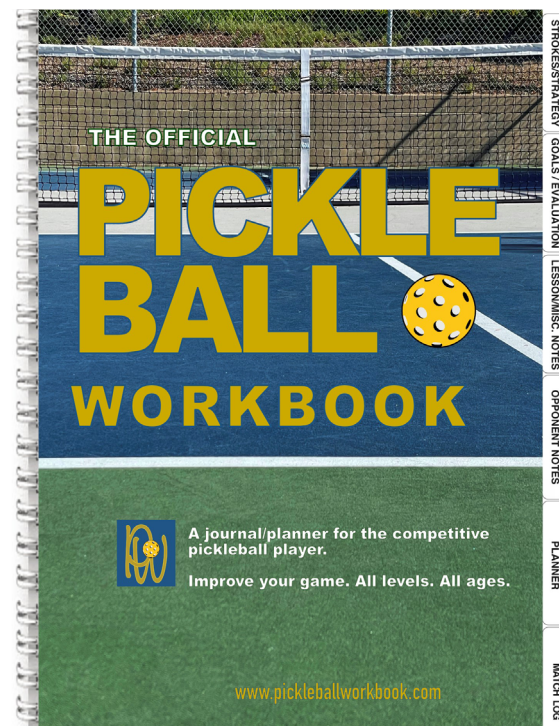
It is remarkable to see the speed at which the sport of pickleball has taken off. As the fastest growing sport in America—and possibly worldwide—courts are popping up everywhere. Tennis enthusiasts as well as those from racquetball, squash and ping pong are finding this relatively new sport intriguing. Pickleball is fairly easy to learn, enjoys a high level of social connection, is affordable and attracts motivated players to compete in tournaments and leagues.

Along with the fervor to get on the pickleball bandwagon comes the desire to improve. Avenues for learning include magazine articles, internet posts, online videos, coaching, community clinics and camps that will help take the game to the next level. Understanding the dynamics, the minutia, and the mechanics are all essential elements to success. It is also helpful to understand the science behind improving.

Keeping a journal is one of the most affordable and effective tools available for athletes, and specifically Pickleball players, to advance their game. According to Dr. Chris Stankovich, (Journaling for Sports Performance Success), “Successful athletes know that journaling can actually be a great help when it comes to tracking goals, monitoring athletic progress, and measuring skill levels against previous seasons. This leads to better mental toughness and improved sports performance. Athletes can develop a human performance improvement plan by using their journal on a regular basis. Many professional and elite-level athletes keep a journal and use it on a daily basis.”

As cited by OPEX Coaching, “... great minds from history have

journalled in some capacity including: Isaac Newton, Abraham Lincoln, Andy Warhol, Leonardo Da Vinci, Charles Darwin, Winston Churchill, Benjamin Franklin and Ernest Hemingway, among others. Countless studies conducted on the practice of journaling have concluded that it has unique health benefits including: stretching your IQ, evoking mindfulness, achieving goals, developing emotional intelligence, boosting memory and comprehension, strengthening self-discipline, improving communication skills, and building mental resilience.



Creating a performance journal is a practice that is readily available to all athletes at all levels. It may seem hard to believe that writing a journal improves your health, but science now shows how. An experimental study conducted at Michigan State University revealed that expressive writing can help our brain 'cool down' in the state of worrying. This applies to athletic performance by improving and developing one of the most potent athletic assets: the mind. On a neurological level, being worried is similar to multitasking. Trying to focus on one thing, but a portion of your cognitive efforts are wasted on suppressing worries, making it hard to stay fully present. In the study, the group that journaled was more efficient and used fewer brain resources, as measured with EEG (detecting electrical activity in your brain). The study showed that the act of expressive writing can clear your mind's worries and free up resources in your brain that could be put to use on other tasks.

Effects on the brain also include improved immune health. After conducting a series of research studies, the renowned psychologist James Pennebaker concluded that journaling can help strengthen our immune system as a stress-relief



tool, by reducing the impact of stressors on our immune-system cells. Expressive writing not only lowers our chances of getting ill, but it also increases the ability of fighting other diseases. The health benefits are even visible in quicker postoperative recoveries and faster healing of wounds among seniors.

When you keep a journal you also improve your emotional intelligence by gaining the ability to name, elaborate, manage, and control your emotions, as well as empathize with others. Consequently, your way of thinking becomes much clearer, your decisions become more constructive, and you feel less nervous. Benjamin Hardy, PH.D, states in his article for INC.com Magazine, "Even if you never re-read what you've written, the simple act of writing something down increases brain development and memory. Neurologically, when you listen to something, a different part of your brain is engaged than when you write it down. Memory recorded by listening does not discriminate important from non-important information. However, writing creates spatial regions between important and non-important pieces of information, allowing your memory to target and ingrain the important things you want to remember. Furthermore, the act of writing allows your subconscious mind to work out problems in unique ways, intensifying the learning process."

According to Lyle Kirkham (Spark Performance Athletics), journaling has many benefits for athletes. He explains that it gives us a form of structure and routine so we can reflect upon a previous training session, competition, or match, as well as improving commitment levels. There is a saying: "When you write it down, it becomes

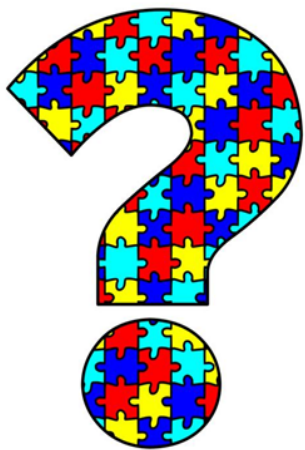
real." A study by Dr. Gail Matthews concluded that we are 42% more likely to achieve our goals just by writing them down. By engaging with a journal and writing down your thoughts and reflection you are more likely to commit to the highlighted changes you want to make and achieve your goals and ambitions. It is also a productive way to track and evidence your progress. You can see what is not working and how that can be changed, and what is working and how to continue doing those things. According to Kirkham, "Success leaves clues and failure leaves lessons."

The research on journaling concludes that athletes can improve their performance by simply using a notebook or other journal pages on a regular basis. In the world of pickleball there is a journal/planner specific to the sport: "The Pickleball Workbook," (by LastGame Pickleball). It's a spiral-bound booklet designed for the advancing pickleball player of all levels. The workbook provides a tracking system including pages for evaluation, goals, strokes, strategies and keeping notes on opponents, as well as other pertinent information on the sport. "Having a place to easily refer to my notes has helped me improve my game enormously, explains Santa Barbara pickleball coach Tracy Wilcox" "It's really nice to be able to see my progress and evaluate what I need to work on next." Whether a pickleball player is just beginning or a professional player wanting to level-up their game, the science clearly demonstrates the benefits of journaling. Using this method enhances improvement with measurable goals. The best part about it is that it is affordable and easy to do.

Jody Belsher is a tournament Pickleball player, author of the Pickleball Workbook, editor of an upcoming book on women in pickleball, former USPTA tennis coach and medalist, musician, CEO of a software start-up, Mom of three, Nana of 6, avid golfer and all around creative person who loves dogs and other animals too.

UNIFICATION FACT OR FICTION

In the most recent issue of Pickleball Magazine, there is an article written by Ruth Rosenquist outlining the actions of a group called *the Unified Pickleball Task Force (UPTF)*. The article is well written, with many positive ideas for the world unification of pickleball. Ms. Rosenquist identifies two organizations on the world stage promoting pickleball. One, the International Federation of Pickleball (IFP), which has been in existence for ten years, originally started by Bill Booth when he was President of the USA Pickleball Association, and the other, the World Federation of Pickleball (WPF), started by Seymour Rifkind about four years ago. The IFP is working diligently to systematically grow pickleball globally with over 60 member countries, an international rule book, an international magazine, an international training partner, and an international advisory



committee. Furthermore, the IFP is working with consultants to meet the rigorous GAISF requirements needed to move pickleball into the Olympic arena. Concurrently, the IFP has partnered with Eastern Management Group in the construction of a world-class sports complex just North of St. George, Utah, that will house one of, if not the largest dedicated pickleball facilities in the world. The IFP plans to utilize this facility for global headquarters.

Over the last couple of months, pickleball has come under fire about divisions within the US. Multiple organizations are vying for position and control over different aspects of the game. While the USAP has historically been the largest pickleball organization in the world, *Sports Illustrated* and the *New Yorker* magazines have correctly reported that the USAP is being challenged by new and more financially backed organizations. Because of the rapid growth of pickleball and the potential money to be made, this was inevitable.

The IFP applauds efforts toward unification and has requested a place at the UPTF table alongside WPF representatives. The IFP is currently in negotiations with them about how that can happen. The IFP looks forward to working with the UPTF, or any unifying organization, in the future to make pickleball the best it can be on the international stage.

MOVING FORWARD — IFP'S FUTURE

The International Federation of Pickleball was established in 2012 by then USAPA President Bill Booth, who believed a world governing body was necessary, not just for the U.S., but for all countries. Pickleball's growth worldwide has not been as rapid as the growth in the U.S. until recently. Today, pickleball is exploding everywhere, hastening the need for a world governing body for the sport.

With over 60 member countries, the IFP motto to "Leave No Country Behind" is more valid than ever. The IFP believes that through international collaboration and representation, the future of pickleball is bright.

The IFP is working hard to assist countries to become pickleball organizations that can participate in world tournament play and ultimately prepare for competition at the Olympic level. Among other things, the IFP assists countries with international training opportunities, grants, tournaments, and guidance in tournament software. The IFP has amassed over 200 World Ambassadors and has a growing international staff packed with talent, new ideas, and expertise. The IFP is confident in building a truly collaborative world organization.

Scoffers recently claimed that "It's the end of the road for the IFP"; however, that couldn't be further from the truth. They are desperately trying to minimize the impact of the IFP. The truth is that the IFP is systematically moving forward, adding new leadership volunteers from all corners of the globe and redesigning its programs to ensure that all positions and programs are meaningful and reflect the values, vision, and dynamic efforts needed to better serve the international pickleball community. Our World Ambassador program has been refined and is now our Global Diplomat program, with the rollout effective July 2022. Additionally, our Individual and Country Member programs are being restructured to offer superior quality and member-only benefits.

The IFP is hosting its first international amateur tournament this fall in Las Vegas, Nevada. This tournament provides an international play format with Olympic-style team competition in addition to traditional play. Moreover, the IFP is holding the Bainbridge Cup WORLD Tournament in India with a 50K purse at stake. Keep reading for more information about both of these IFP-branded tournaments.

The IFP thanks all of our current Member Countries for your loyalty. We assure you that we will continue to work hard to maintain your loyalty. Our new Advisory Council is currently revising our by-laws and constitution to ensure that future elections and/or appointments occur with a balanced representation of our Member Countries. We solicit and welcome your suggestions to promote pickleball worldwide as pickleball continues to grow throughout the globe. Please email us at: contact-us@ifpickleball.org or visit us at www.ifpickleball.org

FROM FITNESS TRAINER TO FUTURE PRO

Leslie Roberts decided to attend a Pickleball clinic in Austin, Texas, to upgrade her game. Little did she know she would soon become the fitness trainer for one of the top players in the world, Zane Navratil. “While we were playing, I saw something in his movement, the way he was folding his body. And I said: Hey, I can help you with that! She recalls that he was interested, and in May of 2021, we started working together.”

After that, she trained some other pros, much to Zane’s credit, she admitted. Leslie even was called in to help with the first season of Major League Pickleball. “I may have gotten a caller to help with some acute issues that were going on when they were playing all day long in that first major league pickleball tournament. I forged some fun relationships from that. So luckily, they now have a physical therapist and athletic trainers on-site, but I was called in a pinch at one point,” Leslie elaborated.

While Leslie cannot talk specifically about the injuries the professionals have, she said Pickleball players experience some common issues, especially in joint areas. To be precise, knee issues, in particular, are the most common. The key to preventing those injuries is a warm-up. You can do either a foam roll, a massage, or stretching. In the best-case scenario – do it all! “The stretching with movement prepares your neuromuscular for exercise. You want to make the blood flow. Don’t make your body scream for love. Just a 10-minute warm-up can make a big difference,” she explained.

Leslie also noted she likes to work with clients from the feet upward. “That’s so important because the feet are our connection to the ground. And we really need to make sure that we’ve got a good connection because the energy transfer from the feet is going all the way up our body,” she said.



Leslie has an extensive background in fitness training, having worked in the field for over 20 years. She worked at a gym for the first two years of her career and had a basic certification. Later, Leslie ventured out on her own and expanded her education by working with a physical therapist for a couple of years and completing a 500 hours course in massage. She did all this to become a better personal trainer for her clients.

It is not surprising that Leslie became a fitness trainer due to her athletic background. She grew up in a small town where you play everything. Otherwise, you wouldn’t even have a team. Leslie was also a women’s professional football player for 15 years, traveling around the country playing the full contact sport. Just before the COVID-19 pandemic, she focused on volleyball and Cross Fit. But when the gyms shut down, Leslie needed an outlet.

Her journey started in the park where she was walking her dogs one day. The ‘strange’ new game caught her attention as some people played it. She didn’t hesitate and asked them about getting started. They suggested the recreational center, which had some beginner’s classes. “I went there and asked about signing up, but they were just taking a break from Pickleball. So, I kind of gave up until the COVID pandemic hit. Then I saw our local social club was starting a Pickleball league. And that’s when I signed up,” she remembered.

While Leslie’s focus is mainly on helping others, she also wants to up her game. She recently medaled in her first 5.0 tournament. The ultimate goal is to become a professional someday. She is not in a rush, though. Step by step, healthy and safe, Leslie is making her own way to the top.

GLOBAL DIPLOMAT PROGRAM

The IFP began restructuring earlier this year to accommodate growth, cultivate greater diversity within its organization, and meet the International Olympic Committee (IOC) requirements. Concurrently, we are redesigning our GLOBAL DIPLOMAT program (previously, World Ambassador) to ensure that the position is meaningful and of high quality. In addition, we are now able to offer support for our GLOBAL DIPLOMATS with training and benefits.



GLOBAL DIPLOMATS are volunteer representatives and unofficial spokespersons for the IFP. Their primary responsibility is to promote and grow the sport of pickleball in the country/countries they represent. They serve a key role in ensuring that we “Leave No Country Behind” while we move pickleball toward the Olympic arena as directed by the IOC.

A prospective GLOBAL DIPLOMAT ideally: 1) plays/coaches/promotes pickleball in the country or countries where they live or, 2) travels a minimum of 2-4 times a year to the country or countries where they wish to promote the sport, and 3) possesses other important qualities such as character and attitude, professionalism and work ethic, communication and marketing skills.

The IFP thanks you for your interest in becoming our new Global Pickleball Diplomats. The new application requires thought and planning to complete. **CLICK HERE TO APPLY.** Please make sure you complete ALL required questions in detail to avoid delay in processing. Prompt responses from all of your professional references will ensure you receive the best care possible with your application. All applicants are required to be IFP members. If you are applying as a couple, each member must submit separate applications with responses to the questions and acknowledgments to the IFP Code of Conduct. We look forward to receiving your applications.

NOTE: Since “Ambassadorship” is not forever without merit, ALL prior World Ambassadors will need to go through the NEW application process, and please submit it by OCTOBER 31, 2022, for consideration. For those who may not qualify to be Global Diplomats under the new criteria, we encourage you to continue to be an important part of the IFP restructuring by leveraging your skills and interest in different areas within the organization. Here’s the link: <https://www.ifpickleball.org/positions>.

BOOST YOUR PLAY WITH SKIDINGLES

By George Dwyer

One of the most effective point play drills in Pickleball is the half-court game known as “skinny singles.” Coaches promote this gherkin version of the sport because it demands that players cover every shot seen in doubles Pickleball while performing solo (and on a slimmed-down court). The skinny singles player typically returns far more shots since every ball must be handled without the assistance of a partner.

Skinny singles players are forced to focus and lose themselves in the flow of play. The fact that the game is scored, and can be won or lost, enhances the intensity of physical and cognitive engagement. As a coach based in Vienna, Virginia, I’ve begun using a variant of skinny singles that we’re calling “skidingles.” Skidingles is a skinny singles game played exclusively at the No Volley Zone line. Every shot is hit cross-court and into the kitchen. The benefits are similar to skinny singles

but with a few key advantages.

1. Skidingles revolves around the cross-court dink, an essential competency in Pickleball. The spatial constraints of skidingles force you to hit boatloads of cross-court dinks, which cultivates court awareness, activates whole-body control, and enhances both the deft touch and the optimal paddle positioning needed for competitive excellence.
2. Just as in skinny singles, in skidingles, you play every shot that’s hit. Points are often lengthy and fiercely contested affairs that get your heart pumping and your feet moving. Most coaches know that reps under pressure yield measurable benefits.
3. Perhaps most importantly, skidingles play promotes self-talk, self-coaching, and self-soothing. It encourages players to practice patience. And patience, as a positive mental habit, is an incredibly

powerful proficiency in Pickleball. Finally, and not to be overlooked, the game is both challenging and incredibly fun to play.

Official Rules: Skidingles

Skidingles is played ONLY in the non-volley zone (“Kitchen”), and all shots must land ONLY in the laterally opposite court (i.e., cross-court).

It follows that cross-court dinking constitutes nearly the whole of the game.

Traditional rules obtain regarding the serve.

Erne shots and Around the Post shots (ATPs) are both permitted.

The first point is served from the right-hand (or even) court and starts on the right whenever possession of the ball changes hands after a side out.

Traditional rules apply regarding Pickleball singles scorekeeping.

George Dwyer is a PPR-certified pickleball coach based in Vienna, Virginia. He offers instruction at the YMCA of Greater Washington and for the Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities in Alexandria, Virginia. Dr. Dwyer also serves on the Advisory Board at the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School of Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University.

BEND YOUR KNEES LOUISE

Jackie Freeman and Karen Worthy are so inseparable when it comes to Pickleball they decided to write a book on the sport. “The title is Bend Your Knees, Louise. We wrote it all in rhyme. It came from our group of friends who like to joke a lot. They say all those little rhymes like ‘Get the ball, Paul,’ or such,” Karen explained. Jackie also has her own rhyme. She had a habit of stepping into the court after the serve. So, they keep telling her: Get back, Jack!

As you might imagine, Jackie and Karen met on the Pickleball courts. Jackie started playing five years ago. “I had a racquet sports background. I was hooked from the first moment that I put a paddle in my hand. Along the way, I learned that it’s very physical, as well as mentally challenging,” Jackie recalled. Karen was part of the initial board of directors for the Jackson, Michigan, area Pickleball association. As time went by, the Pickleball duo decided to write a book. They both also have a background in education, so this felt like a natural step in their Pickleball journey. The time for writing the book and collaborating, in general, was challenging because of the pandemic. So, they would meet in the park to edit and discuss it.

The book eventually turned out as a significant success for the duo. It even became one of Amazon’s

bestsellers. They started promoting it in some schools as it is appropriate for children aged 4-8. Teachers use the book to teach students about Pickleball and as a tool for language arts. One school wrote 132 letters to the authors. The children wanted to know everything – how they wrote the book, how long it took, and how they chose an illustrator? They wanted to know it all.

Karen and Jackie became so engaged in working with children that they became members of the USA Pickleball youth program association. They also do charity work, teaching Pickleball at boys and girls clubs. The duo donates 50 cents for every book purchased from their website. The money goes to schools that need it to buy paddles and other Pickleball equipment.

As their project advanced, their next step was to organize a summer camp. It turned out as a great success. “I think we had five sessions, back to back. We had a lot of help from many great volunteers. The kids had so much fun. We even had one little boy sitting down at the end who didn’t want to leave. He cried his eyes out. Things like that make you want to do it,” said Karen.

Their goal nowadays is to promote the book and the sport of Pickleball as much as possible. They also did a lot of Zoom presentations to schools

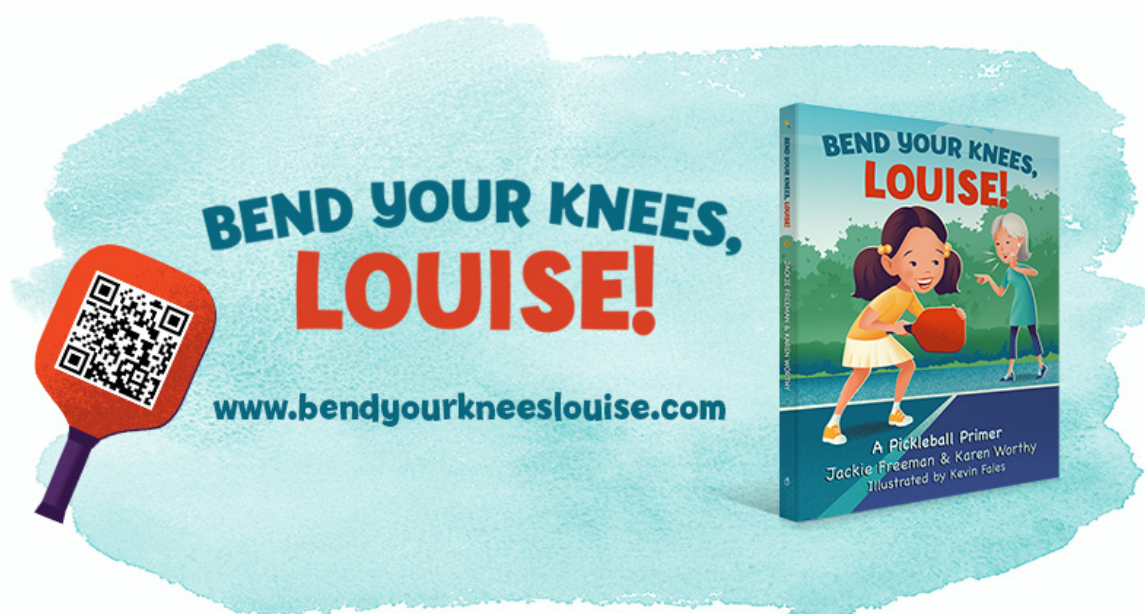


in California. The love for Pickleball is spreading across the country thanks to Jackie and Karen!

The book became well-known among Pickleball players. That’s why even two Pickleball professional players endorsed it. They met Lindsey Newman and Tyson McGuffin through some mutual friends. The players liked it and decided to help Jackie and Karen by providing testimonials about the book.

As they hit ‘the jackpot’ with the first book, they plan to write a second one. “We are just tossing a lot of ideas. We want this sport to continue forever. It’s not only our passion because we’re older. We want to target the youth so that they continue keeping it around,” Karen explained. The ultimate goal is to make the kids more active, to make them spend less time on their phones and go out and play.

Karen and Jackie are making sure to teach Pickleball to the next generation. Their book (and hopefully more to come) is our sport’s legacy. This Pickleball-crazy duo is just what the sport needs. Their goal is clear – to keep Pickleball growing and growing. Who knows how high it can reach one day? Did anybody even hope it would be on this level 10 years ago?



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