

Pickleball Up



**National Champion
Scott Moore**

PROFILES

Pros Zane Navratil, Athena Trouillot,
Kasandra Gehrke, and Joe Frasca

Industry

Live Streaming the APP Tour

INSTRUCTION

- Using the Serve as a Weapon
- Fourth Shot, Resetting Points

RULES

Key Changes for 2021

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From the Publisher

Back in October when I started the Pickleball Fire podcast, I had no idea it would lead to the Pickleball Up Magazine. But I recently decided some of the great interviews I had from Pickleball players needed to be in print to reach a much larger audience.

So, Pickleball Up was born while I had some extra time on my hands during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interesting thing is that the magazine brings together so many things I did over 25 years ago. This included:

- Studying journalism in college
- Interviewing athletes for newspaper articles
- Writing for national magazines
- Teaching sports at community centers and colleges
- Working with collegiate athletes as a sports psychologist

I never really expected to be publishing Pickleball Up. The need to find something to do during the Connecticut winters when I moved here in 2018 brought me to Pickleball. Having a racquetball background, the transition to Pickleball was natural. Because I, like many others, became addicted to Pickleball, I started the Pickleball Fire website just a few months after I started playing the sport. I don't think I had any clear goals when I started the website, but now I'm on a mission to grow this great sport.

In this issue of Pickleball Up, my plans are to have different sections in each issue. This first issue has some great interviews from professional Pickleball players including:

- Athena Trouillot
- Zane Navatril
- Kasandra Gehrke
- Joe Frasca

Then I've included instructional articles about:

- Using your serve as a weapon
- Mental performance training
- The fourth shot and resetting points with senior professional Scott Moore
- Coach Mark on Pickleball Strategy.

Of course, I had to cover the new rule changes for 2021 with certified referee Randi Levenbaum. I also have articles on what is going on in the industry so I'm covering the Association of Pickleball Professionals live streamer Kyle Selinko. Plus, I talk with Pickleball ambassador Kyle Snay and Kevin Huckle who created the first shoe for Pickleball.

As you can see the first issue is jam packed and there will be more to come. We'll see how Pickleball Up evolves just like the sport itself.

Pickleball Up

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Top Pro Zane Navratil

Focusing on Pickleball Full Time

Zane Navratil, one of the top professionals in the game, recently decided to take the plunge to become a full-time Pickleball player. This means he gave up his job as an auditor for Deloitte so he now relies on his tournament winnings and teaching income to make ends meet.

When I asked what his family thought about his decision he said, "I think my mom wanted to kill me. My dad, he was on board. He's like, yeah you know what? You're only young once." Zane added, "It is a time sensitive opportunity to be able to play a sport professionally. I can't do it when I'm 90. I can do it when I'm 24 or 25. And the nice part is I left my job on good terms and they kind of understood the same thing. You know, there's a limited window with which you can play a sport and auditing is there when you're done."

Zane's idea of Pickleball in 2013 was these old guys getting together to hit a whiffle ball. He admits that he had some preconceived notions and declined to play the game even though his dad asked him. Finally, Zane was bored one summer so he joined his dad on the courts.

"I'm like, this looks so dumb to me. So I got out there and I decided like I was going to show these guys, right. I was just going to start smacking everything and show them how they should play and then probably get out of there and never play again. But, I did that and I just got my butt kicked and I was very competitive and I still am a really competitive person. And so I kept getting my butt kicked over and over and over by people that were three times my age, actually four times my age. Then I kind of fell in love with it. I just kept playing and playing."

#3 in Singles on the
PPA Tour

#4 Overall on
Pickleball Global

Zane says the time is right to get into professional Pickleball because of the two new pro tours which started in 2020. While the number of tournaments were cut back due to COVID-19, 2021 is expected to have a full slate of events. The Association of Pickleball Professionals will have 16 tournaments as of December 2020 and over \$650,000 in prize money with events in the United States and Europe. As of December 2020, the Pickleball Professional Association (PPA) will have 14 tournaments in 2021 with over \$1,000,000 in prize money. Zane plans to play on both professional tours as he sees no reason to limit himself at this point.

Zane is ranked on the PPA website as #3 in singles and on Pickleball Global he is #4 overall as of the end of 2020. While ranked lower in doubles, Zane is making a concentrated effort to improve this part of his game. The work is paying off as in early December he finished second in Men's pro doubles in a Newport Beach tournament, losing to Ben and Collin Johns in the final.

Zane's game has changed over time both in terms of strategy and consistency. He said the strategy of staying up on the kitchen line and reaching into the kitchen to hit balls has changed. Zane said, "I back up very, very frequently. I'd give myself a little bit more time to defend against harder shots instead of standing in there. So I back up off the line. I call it play forward and back a little bit more like, moving a lot more than other people."

He has studied his game and tracked the success rate of his shots by doing video analysis. "I gained some, some insights out of it. Like I realized that I was missing my backhand slice into the net when I was going cross court." He also noticed he was missing some shots long meaning he was giving his opponent opportunities to attack.

Zane definitely goes the extra mile both on and off the court. It will be interesting to watch his game going forward and to see the heights he can reach as a full-time Pickleball professional.



**Using Your
Pickleball Serve as
a Weapon**

With 2021 bringing a new optional drop serve to the game where you can drop the ball, let it bounce, and then hit it, who knows what players will do with this serve, but even with the traditional Pickleball serve, it can be used as a weapon.

Jacqueline Paraiso, a certified teaching pro and former number one women's professional racquetball player, says she always uses her Pickleball serve as a weapon. She mentioned, "When I started out playing Pickleball, people said to just get that ball over the net. I thought why do I just want to get that ball over the net? I want to get that ball over the net and have a weak return or no return. So that's my strategy, same as in racquetball. I want to set myself up to win the rally and either with no return or a weak return so I can obviously win points."

When Jacqueline starts a game, her strategy is to find the opponent's weaknesses. If their backhand is weak, she uses that knowledge to her advantage. Many players also tend to protect their backhand so they edge more toward the backhand side in order to hit a forehand, but this opens them up to problems too, especially if a player has difficulty moving laterally. If this is the case, Jacqueline recommends hitting more of an angle across the net so they have to move to the ball and reach for their forehand.

Jacqueline also suggests players develop a number of serves. She stated, "I definitely use different heights and speeds and angles, much like racquetball. As far as a lob, I'll throw a lob in if I'm having a difficult time getting the drive serve going or I am playing somebody that wants to drive it hard all the time and maybe has a harder time returning something slow and high. And so I'll change it up for height for that reason. I might hit something higher because it brings the ball deeper in the court, but most of the time, I'm going to go for that drive serve just

like I would in racquetball. I'm going to go for that ace before I go for a lob. That's just the type of player I am."

The serve can be such a difference maker as you try to move to higher levels. Being able to move your opponent from left to right with your serve is important. Of course, being able to move them from the baseline to the kitchen is also advantageous. Jacqueline says, "One of my serves is a slower serve. You start out fast with the motion, you take a little bit off so it just goes over the net. So a lot of the players are waiting for it

deep in the back court. And that usually helps you with a setup because they're reaching forward and they can pop it up because they don't really have the control. I think the serve is such an important part of the game." Clearly Jacqueline's viewpoint on the serve was in the minority for Pickleball players prior to 2020. However, the new drop serve should allow players to be a lot more aggressive. I can only imagine what Jacqueline is going to be able to do with her serve due to her racquetball background.





**Pickleball Ambassador
Kyle Snay**

Pickleball Ambassadors:

How They Help the Game

One of the great things about Pickleball is the ambassador program created by USA Pickleball. The role of ambassadors is to promote the sport of Pickleball. This can be done in many ways including teaching new players the game and helping people find places to play. Being a Pickleball ambassador is a volunteer position, but there are almost 2,000 ambassadors throughout the United States. While USA Pickleball no longer has an ambassador program outside the United States, you can check the International Federation of Pickleball website to learn more about their program.

To become a Pickleball ambassador, you first need to be a member of USA Pickleball. Then you need to complete an ambassador application. The application asks you about your Pickleball experience, how you have already promoted the game, where you reside, and your goals of growing Pickleball in your local area. Once approved as an ambassador you can find handy tips on how to promote the game on the USA Pickleball website.

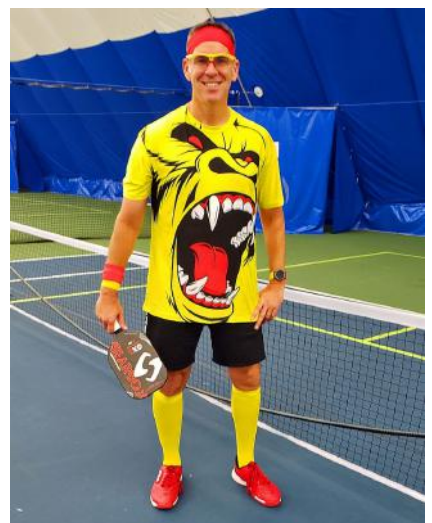
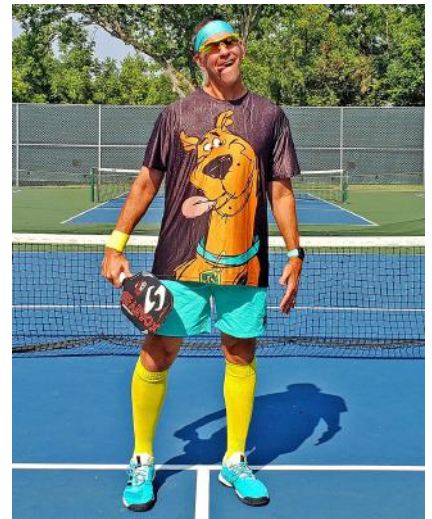
Each ambassador has their own way of promoting the sport and one of the most colorful is Kyle Snay from Minnesota as he is known for his Pickleball attire. Kyle stated, "Yes, I've been an ambassador for a couple years. To be honest, I'm just doing anything else I would normally do. My role as the ambassador is more of an official role in that way, but I was doing it anyway. I just enjoy playing the sport and being around people who play the sport. So, it was a pretty easy."

Kyle was working from home a few years ago and teaching at the community center. He said he taught a small group of six or seven new players. Many of them had not done anything active in years. He said, "They had these self-perceived limitations, such as, I'm not going to be any good, or I'm not sure what to do. But you know, you put a paddle in their hand and within about five minutes, we're starting to hit the ball around and you can see the smile start to creep on their face." The community center had a walking track above the gym so many of the seniors became intrigued with what the group was doing. After a few weeks they went from having a small group to several courts full of new players.

As mentioned above, Kyle is well known for his Pickleball attire. One of the early outfits included a Superman shirt. He stated, "People would just smile and/or compliment me and say I like what you're wearing or whatever. That's kind of how it all began. I just figured people are smiling. If you make someone smile for the day while you're playing pickleball that's even a bonus. So then I just started paying more attention to what I was wearing on the court." Kyle went from making sure his shirt matched his shorts. Then he had to have matching socks, shoes, headbands, and wristbands. Nowadays, Kyle has people coming up to him at tournaments who he doesn't know. They've seen his photos on Facebook and they tell him his pictures make them smile. Kyle's wardrobe has grown so much he needed a larger closet. He jokes that

he'll need to knock out a retaining wall to be able to add more clothes at this point.

Not every Pickleball ambassador promotes the sport like Kyle, but he is one of many who are growing the sport while having fun doing it.



What's Wrong With The Butterflies?



The Inner Game of Pickleball

You are getting ready for a Pickleball tournament and a few minutes before the match you start to feel nervous. Is this a good thing or bad thing? Should you try to get rid of the feeling? Well, it depends on whether it is helping you or not.

The problem with being nervous is if it hurts performance. Before a match if you must urinate frequently or have diarrhea, it can interrupt your pre-game routine or cause you to feel drained. During a performance, nervousness can make you feel tight so you cannot move to the ball as fast as you normally do. It can also impact your breathing, especially if playing singles so that you feel gassed during or after rallies.

As a Pickleball player, you need to learn to control the feeling of being nervous or having anxiety if it negatively impacts your game. Long term solutions to helping with anxiety center around feeling prepared for a competition both from a physical and mental perspective. This means your training leading up to a Pickleball tournament should be enough so you feel prepared for the rigors of multiple matches. You can also spend some time reframing how you feel about being nervous. Learning to re-label anxiety as something positive is beneficial so you know when feeling nervous just means you are ready to compete. A quick fix to help calm your emotions right before or during a game is to simply count your breaths down from 10 to 1 and then up from 1 to 7. This type of technique is taken from transcendental meditation and it can help your game.

Just be sure you don't get so calm that you are devoid of emotions. The moment that happens it's going to be really tough to perform at the highest level. According to Jelle, "Emotions are just alarm bells that are built into our brain. So the natural tendency of the human brain is to kind of switch off inside your brain and preserve energy. This is why we like browsing Facebook and watching shows that you don't really have to think about." However, emotions like being nervous or anxious provide energy which can benefit your Pickleball game.

For someone like Misty May-Treanor, three-time Olympic gold medalist in beach volleyball, she expects to be nervous and it doesn't negatively impact her performance.

She said, "I know when things are going to get me a little nervous because nervous to me feels good."

Just because you are nervous or have butterflies in your stomach, it doesn't mean your Pickleball game is going to suffer. Mental performance coach, Jelle Kooijman, agrees that the butterflies can be beneficial.

He stated, "So the butterflies that you talk about, I think is a positive manifestation of anxiety. Often, people who have little butterflies play a little bit better because they're using that energy that comes from the emotion to use that into their sport."

Profile: Pro Athena Trouillot

It was expected Athena Trouillot would start playing Pickleball tournaments after being a Division I tennis star at Michigan State University. Her tennis doubles partner from her freshmen year in college, Catherine Parenteau, and college coach Simone Jardim, suggested she start playing Pickleball after her college tennis career. Athena just didn't know the first time she played in a Pickleball tournament she would be thrown into the professional division when one of the men's players needed a mixed doubles partner. Athena was just travelling to the tournament with Catherine, but Athena remembers how it happened, "I think it was either Simone or Catherine that said Athena is a Division I college tennis player. She could for sure do it. You guys should just play together because he needed a partner last minute. So my first tournament was in the pro division and it was in one of the biggest tournaments in Pickleball. I'm pretty sure we ended up getting a win. So it was good."

After starting to play Pickleball in 2017, Athena has already had a lot of tournament success at the highest levels. At the Canadian Nationals, Athena and Catherine won gold in women's doubles. At that tournament she also teamed up with Canadian Steve Deakin. They had a great run but lost in the finals to Riley Newman and Catherine. At the U.S. Nationals, Athena had similar success in the 5.0, 19 plus bracket, where she and Catherine got the silver in a close match. Athena credits some of her success to living in Naples and being able to train with a great group of professionals. She said she is surrounded by a great group of people who push her, and she pushes them.

In asking Athena about her playing style, she describes herself as a very calm player. She says sometimes this can be deceiving as it appears she doesn't care or isn't really trying very hard. However, doing things slowly helps her to control her emotions and see the ball better. When Athena teaches Pickleball, she has the same philosophy of trying to get her students not to rush. She stated, "I always try to tell my students that if you just wait half a second longer to hit a ball, or you kind of take your time and you're not moving as you're hitting, it just kind of allows you to number one, hit better shots because you're in better position, and number two, you're able to see more in terms of the court on the other side because you're taking your time and kind of watching what's going on rather than rushing through things."



Amateurs often want to know what separates them and the professional Pickleball players. According to Athena, decision making and the ability to hit certain shots is key at the highest levels. As an example, being able to take the ball below the net and be able to hit an offensive shot is necessary at the professional level. Athena said one of her favorite shots to hit is the misdirect. She explained, "If I'm playing, and there's a person in front of me, and there's a person diagonally across from me, and the person diagonally across from me hits a ball cross court to me and I make it look like I'm going to hit the ball back cross court. Then without looking, I kind of spin the ball and I make go directly in front of me to the person straight across from me, but they're not expecting it because I make it look like I'm going cross court. So that's like a little bit of a misdirection."

While Athena did not get to play many tournaments in 2020 due to COVID-19, she is looking forward to playing in 2021. Normally she teaches Pickleball November to April at a country club in Naples and at Simone's Peak Performance Pickleball Academy. Then May to October is Pickleball tournament season. With many professional tournaments on the schedule, it looks like it will be quite a year for her as it was in 2019.

KYLE SELINKO:



LIVE STREAMING

It's always amazing one decision can make such a difference in the path of your life. For Kyle Selinko, a snowy day in Wisconsin almost stopped him from trying Pickleball for the first time. Due to 8" of snow on the ground and being a social introvert, he almost didn't make it to the local recreation center to try out the sport. Luckily, he tried the game and was instantly hooked. Then a few years later in 2019 after becoming a 5.0 player, the service yips led Kyle to the media aspect of Pickleball where he started live streaming the sport. This catapulted Kyle into the position he is now where he live streams the APP tour and will be going to 16 stops in the United States, Canada, and England in 2021.

According to Kyle, he and his girlfriend at the time started doing a small production live stream which led to working with the APP tour. Kyle said, "I was supposed to stream this second court. I wasn't supposed to be like the featured live stream or anything. But there was a conflict with what the live streamer that they hired and at the time I was not prepared to do a full production live stream. And they came to me like, hey, can you do this? And I'm like sure and it's kind of how I operate. I just need to be thrown into the fire and have that sense of urgency. I can try to figure things out. That's how it propelled me to a very successful production company and live streaming platform."

Kyle has come an exceptionally long way in a short period of time when it comes to live streaming. He said he likes to joke that in the spring of 2019, he could barely plug his iPhone into his television. Kyle had no background in cameras, audio, or live streaming equipment so everything he learned over the last year and a half is completely self-taught. But Kyle has been successful due to his tunnel vision doing something he really enjoys.

He tries to make the livestream as close to a TV production as possible. He has a broadcast team doing commentary. Kyle is the one deciding when to switch between the eight cameras running. He also watches the audio levels, keeps the score, updates the graphics and makes sure all the commercials are ready to go. In 2020, Kyle was a one-man crew. As a result, the correctness of the scoreboard suffered. For 2021, however, Kyle has hired two other people for production, and one will be on the scoreboard full time. The other will do videography and graphics.

Kyle also upgraded some of this equipment because he has two goals for Pickleball. He stated, "My two ultimate goals are to get Pickleball on a mainstream television, which we're so far away still having like ESPN to come in with their crew and broadcast it, and then to get Pickleball into the Olympics. There's a lot of work that needs to be done to keep growing the sport."

In asking Kyle what needs to happen to take Pickleball to the next level, he said the sport needs more viewership. The record for the number of people watching a Pickleball livestream is 1200. Kyle compares this to disc golf, a sport recently on ESPN2. The largest disc golf YouTube channel has 300,000 subscribers. You can compare that to the Pickleball Channel on YouTube with only 26,000 subscribers. While Pickleball may be the fastest growing sport in the U.S., it is still in its infancy.

Kyle doesn't want Pickleball to go the way of racquetball. Such as, "I've just kind of seen what's happened in racquetball. They had a huge following and then it was kind of hard to watch and that's kind of what Pickleball is too. It's maybe not as friendly to watch on TV, if you don't know what the sport is, because it looks very boring and the score it's kind of hard to figure out. So, if you had no idea what Pickleball actually was and you turned it on, I don't know if it's that exciting unless you play it."

One of the good things about Pickleball, unlike racquetball, is the split of women and men both playing and watching the game. Racquetball was always very male dominated, but according to Kyle, the viewership in Pickleball has a better balance with 52% of the audience being men and 48% women.

Kyle is trying to bring as much awareness as possible to the sport through his live streaming. But there are still challenges. Kyle stated, "The problem I'm seeing is that we have a lot of people that are maybe playing, but they don't necessarily invest into maybe watching it. For example, if I go to my local park where I play Pickleball and I ask them if they have ever heard of Ben Johns, the best player in Pickleball? I guarantee you 95% of these players don't even know Ben Johns."



Kyle believes the best way to grow the sport is through social media. Kyle believes, "Everyone is almost living on their phones now, so this is the tool that we need to leverage to help the sport grow. It doesn't matter pretty much your age anymore. Everyone is either on Facebook, Instagram, and Tik Tok, so this is where I feel we need the help, where the game needs to grow. So my whole goal is to keep on pushing out as much content and awareness of Pickleball to the masses." Kyle tries to post something on social media every day because he has the content. He posts on match play or the point of the day. This lets people who don't even know the game see how exciting it can be.

Increases in viewership mean larger sponsors supporting the sport and more professional players being able to make a living from Pickleball. A few years ago, many did not think it would be possible to make a living from Pickleball whether on the court like the pros or off court through teaching and doing media. Two of Kyle's friends, Zane Navratil and Kasandra Gehrke, decided to focus on Pickleball full time. Both are now top pros and Kyle is close to quitting his day job. For Kyle, he is still amazed at how one small decision to play Pickleball the first time on a cold winter night has brought him to that point. Expect Kyle to be too doing full time Pickleball in 2021 as a full production livestream.





Pro Kasandra Gehrke

Working Hard on & off the court

Kasandra Gehrke did not have the best experience when she first played Pickleball. But years later she plays Pickleball full-time and is one of the top women's professional players. Kasandra said, "I actually played for the very first time in high school. We had terrible equipment, plastic paddles. When you struck the ball with it, it could go anywhere. So, I actually did not enjoy it the first time I played it."

Fortunately, Kasandra had a corrective experience later on when she was shooting hoops at the gym one day. A group of Pickleball players needed a fourth person for doubles so she played and later that night went on eBay and bought her first paddle. Soon after she taught the game of Pickleball to her students since she was a physical education teacher. She later quit her teaching job in 2018 to play professionally and teach Pickleball full time. She said, "With a big life change like that, it's a little nerve wracking, but my family is really supportive, and my mom just said, 'Hey, look, try it for the year."

If it doesn't work out, you can always go back to teaching.' I'm like, okay. You know, that makes sense. I can always come back. And so I tried it, obviously two years later, I'm still doing the same thing. And a lot of people don't like to talk about salary or money or things like that, especially with Pickleball being new. But I mean, I can't figure out if it's sad or I should be happy to almost basically doubled my salary from teaching by being a professional Pickleball player and teaching. So, it's pretty wild and I've had a blast doing it, so I haven't had to go back quite yet."

Kasandra did not have a racquet sports background, so the learning curve was steeper since she had just played volleyball, basketball, and softball. She said, "We were in a small town. We didn't have tennis or anybody that would've gotten me into tennis or badminton or anything like that. So, unfortunately, I was a little late to the party, but it's been fun trying to catch up." So how did this impact her Pickleball game?

"I'm probably a little bit unorthodox in the way that I hit some of my shots and do some things. And then I would say, especially at this pro level, I had to kind of work twice as hard as everyone, not that anyone else hasn't worked hard of course, but just to catch up."

While Kasandra is working twice as hard as others, she lost 60 pounds once she started playing on the professional circuit. She said, "I was actually probably about 60 pounds heavier than I am now. And so, I knew at the time when I was losing some of the events that it was just stamina. That was not allowing me to be where I wanted to be."

Kasandra's workout routine now consists of using the treadmill, bike, and rower. Plus, she has hired a personal trainer three days per week and on those days, she does heavy lifting like squats, deadlifts, and the bench press. Kasandra also modified her diet to include intermittent fasting. She only eats between 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Kasandra drills or trains with others on Pickleball a few times per week and then twice a week she plays for four straight hours.

One of the things that helped Kasandra to improve quickly was to play against better competition. There was a time when she was losing 100% of her matches. She said, "It definitely was rough when I was losing almost a hundred percent of the time, but it only took about a year or so to catch up doing it that way. It was very beneficial and I wouldn't have changed a thing."

Kasandra also worked on her mental game to improve her Pickleball. "It can be very challenging as well. I try to listen to as many podcasts as I can. And you can just literally search sports mentality or different things like that. And I try to listen to books or read books."

Like many others in early- to mid-2020, Kasandra was going stir crazy due to restrictions from COVID-19. However, the tournament season resumed in August and she played in six straight tournaments. Kasandra quickly found out what happens when playing too much Pickleball. She said, "You get a little bit tired after each one. And then you're tired and then you're going to the next one. You're still tired from the previous ones. There just wasn't enough time to recover in between some of those, but you know, we got in what we could for 2020, and I'm hoping for a better tournament run or season in 2021."

Kasandra is also hoping for a better 2021 from a personal perspective. She was engaged to be married in October 2020; however, COVID-19 impacted their plans. The good news is that Kasandra met her husband on the Pickleball court in what she calls a fairy tale moment. They still play Pickleball together in local tournaments. As you can see, Kasandra's experience with Pickleball got much better after the first time she played.

National Champion Scott Moore

The 4th Shot & Resetting Points



National Pickleball champion, Scott Moore, admits he is a racket sports junkie. From the time he received his first ping pong paddle at age six he was hooked. Later on, he played junior tennis in Texas, racquetball in college, badminton when he was in Japan for 10 years, and squash when he got back to the states. So, it was natural for him to pick up a Pickleball paddle where he became a six-time national champion in Pickleball.

Did Scott ever imagine he would have this much success in Pickleball? He said, "I still think at times that I'm going to wake up and it's only going to be a dream because you can't dream this stuff up. I mean, not just the gold medals and success, but the friends and travel around the world. And a business I now have. We have a pickleball trips business with two of my sons, Daniel and John. And basically go on bucket list trips while we check off our bucket list and help others do the same. Taking them and teaching them pickleball all over the world and have, therefore, made friends and started pickleball in a dozen or so countries...So it's just been more fun than I probably deserve and it's been a great journey."

Scott is a gifted teacher and has developed a video course with his son, Daniel. It's been well received and very helpful to those wanting to learn or improve their game. In the course, they teach the 10 principles of Pickleball with two of them being the fourth shot and resetting points which will both be covered in this article.

The Fourth Shot

It's likely you have not heard much about the fourth shot, but it's very important. The fourth shot is the one hit by the receiving team, so the normal progression is 1) serve, 2) serve return by the receiving team, 3) third shot by the serving team, and then 4) the fourth shot by the receiving team. In most cases the receiving team is not doing enough with the fourth shot as they let the serving team get to the kitchen line. Scott stated, "And so what we want people to do and try to do is actually make them (the serving team) hit not just a third shot drop, but hopefully a fifth shot drop and a seventh shot drop because at most levels, it's really hard for people to hit three good drop shots to get in to the kitchen."

So, as Scott says, when you are the receiving team, you should not be throwing a kitchen party. In other words, the serving team is not invited so the goal is to make them hit two or three drop shots rather than just one. The way to do this is to take the fourth shot out of the air and block it and hit it to the serving team's feet. The challenge here is hitting the ball too hard and getting the ball above your opponent's waist. If this happens, the ball is attackable, so instead block it and hit to the serving team's feet.

Reset Shot

One of the other principles of Pickleball Scott teaches is the reset shot where you decelerate the ball to get back in a point. He explains, "One of the unique things about pickleball compared to other racquet sports, it's very tough once you get behind because the velocity of the ball is so much faster, that you're almost done. But in pickleball, you have this reset shot, reset button, if you will, that allows you to escape almost any situation. It's the toughest shot in pickleball, but when you can execute, it can be very effective at winning points that you're not supposed to win. And, therefore, gaining a mental edge as well because the other team sometimes gets upset when they are blasting it."

Scott described three scenarios where you need to hit a reset shot. The first is where your opponent hits a dink and you need to run after it or lunge forward. Rather than hitting a hard shot that puts you out of position because you don't have time to move back, you can hit a reset shot. In this situation, it is a dink reset cross court. This gives you more time and more margin for error since it is a soft shot so you can get back into position to cover the middle of the court. The second scenario occurs when you hit an unsuccessful drop shot. In other words, you or your partner have hit the ball too high so your opponent hits the ball back at you very hard and at your feet. In this situation, you need to block the shot and cause the ball to decelerate and land at your opponent's feet. The goal is to prevent your opponent from hitting down at you again. The third scenario is similar to the second one. This happens often at lower levels where you pop up the ball when everyone is at the net. If you don't have time to back up, you need to hold your ground and soften your hands to block the ball back. Ideally, you should take a backhand position much like a hockey goalkeeper and absorb the energy of the ball. Again, the goal is to decelerate the ball so your opponent has to hit up on the ball rather than down on it.

Both the fourth shot and resetting point are advanced techniques that will improve your game. Of course, these are shots that come second nature to Scott, as evidenced by the success he has had in teaching and tournament Pickleball.



Senior Pro Joe Frasca

Changing People's Game and Lives

Joe Frasca already has a significant number of accomplishments on the Pickleball court after just playing for a few years. He finished on the podium in singles his first time at Nationals. More recently, he finished second in senior pro doubles with his partner, Bill Muno, at the Chicago Pickleball Open in September. Joe attributes his unusually fast rise in Pickleball to his training through Neuro Pickleball. He stated, "I was fortunate enough to team up with a company called Neuro Athlete. They took me under their wing in terms of training. So, from the very beginning, I was training differently."

In asking Joe about his off-court training, he has worked with his partner, Peter Hoversten, to develop brain-based science learning principles to help people with vision, balance, mobility, and agility. Joe sites vision training and ball tracking as an example of this. Vision training has a long history and Joe had firsthand knowledge of this from the backup goaltender of the 1980 gold medal hockey team.

He said, "I remember talking to the backup goaltender, Steve Janaszak, and he was talking to me about how they were shooting lasers and high-powered ping pong balls at him, teaching him how to react quickly. You know it was vision training back in 1979. And I just find it interesting that the topic has never really come up in pickleball, at least that I'm familiar with...Tracking is a perfect example of where the ball is coming from when you get to the kitchen. It's coming at you from 14 feet away extremely fast. And the ability to track that ball from 14 feet away to your paddle and back as quickly as it happens is something that can be trained. And you can definitely improve in it."

One example of vision tracking is called focal accommodation. It is a way to say the task is about looking far away at something and then looking close by you at something. The idea is you have a sheet of paper with letters or numbers on it. You put this sheet of paper on the wall. Then you hold a similar sheet in your hand, essentially a smaller version of it. Then you look back and forth between the sheets. You will notice a significant increase in the speed of focusing on those letters or numbers. While this near-far drill seems simple, even people who are skeptical about doing it at first find a real benefit that helps them see the ball better on the Pickleball court.

Another tip Joe has for seeing the ball better and improving reaction time is to wear eye protection when playing Pickleball. While he highly recommends this for safety reasons, it can also help your game. Joe and Peter have done some testing with senior pro players. They found you flinch more often if you do not wear eye protection when playing Pickleball. So, if you are at the kitchen and not flinching, your reaction time should increase and make you better at the net.

Not only does this neuro off-court training help Joe's game, but it also has resulted in significant improvements for others. Joe feels the most rewarded by working with people who have Parkinson's and helping them with their basic balance while on the Pickleball court. Joe's partner, Peter, develops individualized programs for Pickleball players to help with vision, mobility, and agility to help them on the court.

Joe gave an example of how the neuro-based training works, "It just kind of brings me to tears almost, when I talk about this. I started working individually with a woman. She was an older woman and I noticed that she just could not move very well. I was to the point where I said this is beyond me. This is going to have to go to the big boys at Neuro Athlete. And so they worked with her. I was in the Neuro Athlete clinic one day, sitting there waiting to talk to them, and she came out of the doctor's office. I expected her to just come up to me and address me in the traditional fashion, 'Hi Joe, it's good to see you.' And she walked up to me and she said, 'Can I hug you?' And she put her arms around me. She had tears in her eyes. And she said, 'Joe, this has changed my life.'" Joe said he is so amazed at what started out as a simple pickleball lesson made such a difference in a person's life as the woman is now hiking and biking. Again, Joe credits neuro training for this just like he credits it for his rise in Pickleball.

Recent Pickleball Court Openings

North Side Social

8 Indoor Courts Under a Dome

Family-friendly, open-air dining concept that features indoor/outdoor games, extensive bar selections and food

9633 Prominent Point, Colorado Springs, CO 80924
719-282-8004

<https://www.northsidesocialco.com/>

Morgan's Wonderland Sports

20 Courts

5223 David Edwards San Antonio, TX 78233
210-495-5888

<https://www.morganswonderland.com/3934-2/>

Edmonton Volleyball and Pickleball Centre

17 Indoor Courts

9455 45 Ave N.W. Edmonton, AB T6E 6B9
587-499-0858

<https://www.evpcenter.com/>

Pickleballerz

6 Indoor Courts

14424 Albemarle Point Place Chantilly, VA 20151
703-657-2100

<https://www.pickleballerzusa.com/>

Dinkers

4 Indoor Courts

135 Despatch Dr, East Rochester, NY 14445
585-673-2006

<https://dinkerspb.com/>

Coach Mark on Pickleball Strategy



Mark Livingston, a certified coach and teaching professional, learned early on that Pickleball is not just tennis on a smaller court. He admits before becoming a teaching pro he had a lot to learn about Pickleball and needed to develop the control necessary to build his consistency. Mark stated, "I was introduced to this group of players and eventually got invited to play with the 4.0 plus group. And I learned from Bud Meltsner, who is the coordinator and host of that group. I learned from him very quickly that I was hitting the ball too hard. And he could see very clearly from the first get go that I had a tennis background and that I had good eye to hand coordination, movement, and all of that. But I was hitting it way too hard and so he introduced me to the concept of play low and slow."

Play Low and Slow® means developing the softer side of the game. Dinking, drop shots, touch shots, blocks and resets in the non-volley zone are the arsenal needed for Pickleball rather than just blasting opponents off the court. The key is to know when to play low and slow and when to hit it hard. If your opponent gives you a pop up, go ahead and hit it hard to put the ball away. Just try to stay away from the unforced errors.

It took him almost a year to develop the low and slow game. He had to develop the control, consistency, and confidence to play that style of game. Now he teaches that style of play to his students. For beginning and intermediate players, it's rare a rally goes beyond 10 hits at a time whether it is social, recreational or competitive play. Players need to be able to consistently move to the ball, set up to hit it in the center of the paddle, and direct the ball to a desired point on the court. You need to be able to do that time after time regardless of the pace of the shot, spin on the ball, or where you are on the court. Mark said, "If you're able to master that control and that consistency, then there's this feeling of invincibility. I can hang in there one more hit with this player or this team that has the advantage at the net. And maybe I can get them to overhit and make an unforced error. And you can just see people's faces light up. When they're able to hit 10, 15, 20 shots in a row."

Mark has also created a series of drills called the Coach Mark Workout® to help his students. Not only are the drills a useful teaching tool but Mark used these to get back in the game after things were shut down in Washington State due to COVID-19.

Mark said his favorite drill game is one called the Zero to 60. This is a drill not only allowing players to develop control and consistency, but it also offers some competition. According to Mark, "You play on one half of the court. You can play straight on or you can play cross court as well, but you play one half of the court. One player starts at the baseline. One player starts at the non-volley line. Let's say Player A is the baseliner and Player B is at the net. Player B will feed the ball to the baseliner, it will be 0-0. For the baseliner, the reward is you get a point every single time you hit the ball over the net. The goal is to keep it low and slow. If the ball is wide or goes into the net, then it's a side out and Player A comes up to the non-volley line. Player B then goes back and is at the baseline and a chance for them to score."

While many players don't enjoy practicing, drill games can make it much more fun especially if they have an element of competition. Learning to Play Low and Slow® while you drill, like Coach Mark, can definitely take your game to the next level.

New Rules for 2021

Certified pickleball referee, Randi Levenbaum, said the optional drop serve is like the wild, wild west. She stated, "You can do whatever you want hitting the ball. You can cut it. You can top spin it. There's no restriction on if you hit it above your waist or below your waist. If you want to swing up on the ball, if you want to put any spin you want on the ball, if you want to hit it with one hand on the paddle, two hands on the paddle. All fine. If the ball bounces twice before you hit it, that's okay."



Randi Levenbaum

The game of pickleball is evolving and along with it are new rules for 2021. Two of the most talked about rules changes from the USA Pickleball Association are related to serving. The first one is the drop serve which is a new option for serving in pickleball. You can serve the traditional way, or you have the option to use a drop serve which is a provisional rule for 2021. The rule will be evaluated in the future to determine if it needs changes, should be left as is, or removed from the rule book.

So, what is a drop serve? The ball must be dropped to the ground and cannot be propelled to the ground like you are bouncing the ball. You can drop the ball from any height that you can reach unaided. In other words, you cannot have your partner pick you up and then drop the ball. You can, however, stand on your tip toes and drop it from as high as you can reach.

When dropping the ball, it can bounce on the court or behind the baseline. When contacting the ball, you must have at least one foot on the ground and it must be behind the baseline. Other than that, there are no restrictions. This means you can contact the ball above your waist unlike a traditional serve. The paddle head also does not need to be below your wrist. If you drop the ball and don't like the drop, you can even pick the ball up and start your service motion again. In this case, you can try the drop again or serve in the traditional manner.

The second rule change about serving is that there are no longer let serves in Pickleball. In 2020, the rule was if a serve hit the net, the serve was replayed as long as it landed in the court diagonally from the server and beyond the kitchen line. While this rule seems straight forward on the surface, Randi explained a few scenarios where confusion about this rule can occur during tournament play where the serves hit the net and land in the proper part of the court.

1. Remember that the rule is new for referees and players. So, the referee calls the score, the server hits the net, and lands in the proper part of the court. Out of habit the referee yells, "Let". This is a referee error and the point should be replayed, not because the ball hit the net, but because the referee made an error. In this scenario, the referee will remind the players that service lets do not exist in Pickleball any longer.
2. The receiving team calls a "Let" and then catches the ball out of habit. The referee is going to call a fault because stopping a live ball before it becomes dead is a fault.
3. The receiving team again calls a "Let" but they return the ball back to the serving team. The serving team stops play or catches the ball because they heard the word let and they thought it would be a replay. So once again, now the referee is going to call a fault on the serving team for stopping play and remind the players that service lets do not exist. So just because the receiving team said let, but continued to play, that doesn't allow the serving team to stop play.
4. Scenario #3 above can get more complicated if the receiving team yells "Let" loudly when the serving team is about to hit the ball. That's a distraction fault. You are yelling at your opponents right before they're going to hit a ball and that's going to be a fault on the team that yelled out to their opponents.

Since the new rules go into effect January 25, 2021, you still have time to get used to the changes before tournament play. A good idea is to use these rules during recreational play when your partner and opponents agree.

The First Shoe Designed Specifically for Pickleball

As Pickleball grows, so too does the products available for players. Kevin Huckle, of Tyrol Pickleball, was the first to bring to the market a shoe specifically designed for Pickleball players. It was in 2018 when Kevin was going to a lot of tournaments that he really took note of the shoes people were wearing on the Pickleball court. He stated, "I was watching people play and I was, to be honest, quite amazed that there were so many people playing in footwear that really wasn't correctly kinetically sound to play the sport. I witnessed some people turning ankles and people slipping and falling and whatnot."

Kevin had just retired from a long career in footwear and he was bored. So, he said to his wife that he believed he could build a better shoe. Since Pickleball is a niche sport, there really wasn't many options for shoes. Some players were even wearing running shoes on the court. Kevin spent time analyzing the kinetics of the sport, meaning he looked at the different movements on the court. Examples of this are the movements from side to side, back pedaling to return lobs, and the twisting and turning of the body during play.

Kevin worked with some of the top pros including Chad Edwards and Simone Jardim. They both helped to test different models. Kevin admits there were some hiccups along the way. Chad would go through the first version of

the shoes every three to four weeks. While the inside of the shoe held up great, the soles of the shoes did not last as long on outdoor courts. Kevin made some improvements and Chad now gets three to four months out of the newest model when playing outdoors. Kevin said, "Fortunately, our first shoes have performed extremely well on concrete, tile, any smooth surface and anything that doesn't have the grit in it. The original rubber shoe has performed extremely well. So, we've actually ended up creating two lines of shoes, an indoor series and an outdoor series, which I must say, wasn't on our game plan, but evolved that way."

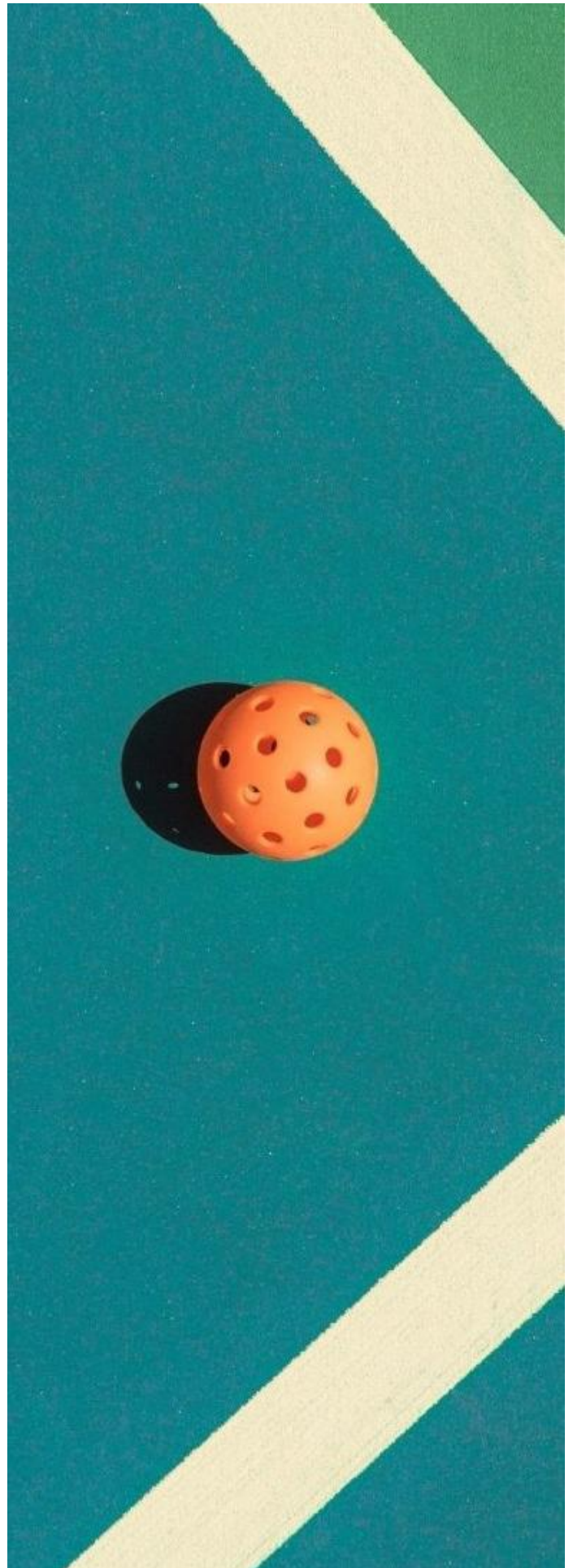
The fit of the Tyrol Pickleball shoes is specifically designed for Pickleball. They have a wide toe box and high toe cover so they are extremely comfortable to wear on the court. Some people might think tennis shoes will work just fine for Pickleball since they are both court sports. However, most tennis shoes have a shallow toe box so the toe is much closer to the top of the shoe. Kevin said, "We had a lot of people testing various products and the comments I received, along with the photographs sent to me by people saying they had black toenails, sore toes, hammertoes, and bunions...I looked at some pretty gnarly feet I guess, is what I'm saying. And we just felt that if we could build something that had the proper toe height, as well as in the ball and toe area of the shoe, we could help a lot of people."



Besides the toe box of the shoe, Kevin wanted to make sure the midsole compound allowed people to play longer on the court without their feet hurting. So, Kevin worked to make sure the shoes had the proper density in the midsole to maximize playing comfort especially for those on the court for three or four hours per day. Again, Chad was extremely helpful as he spends 6 to 8 hours on the court teaching and playing. Chad would tell Kevin if his knees or hips were hurting and then Kevin would make adjustments to the shoes. This resulted in a proprietary mix that has compound density, and for players this means the shoe adds hours of play on the court.

Tyrol Pickleball experienced some delays in production due to COVID-19 back in the spring. Erratic production schedules and material supplies were a nightmare, so Kevin even had to fly some shoes into the United States and Canada. These delays also impacted future improvements to the shoes, but Kevin said they have an assortment of new products coming to the market. He stated, "We're looking at some new closure systems, that will be very, very cool for a lot of players, that being a boa type closure structure where you don't have laces. You just have a dial and it equally distributes the closure across the top of your foot which a lot of people really like. It's been used very well in the hiking industry and in some military applications and certainly in the golf business. It's been a big hit so we're going to introduce a couple models of that." Tyrol Pickleball will also be introducing some shoes with knitted uppers. They are both very breathable and still offer significant support in the shoe. Plus, the shoes eliminate the internal stitch lines in the ball area of your foot which should help with bunions.

Tyrol Pickleball shoes are sold at some retail stores but they can also be purchased online. The shoes are great for every level of player especially since they are specifically designed for Pickleball.



Pickleball Up

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