



My Drift

Title: **Pickleball**

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Date: 1 Sep 2020

Article Number: 340-2020-18

Near our house in Mililani is a park that has a baseball and soccer field, a basketball court, kids jungle gym, two tennis courts, and a practice tennis court where you can hit the tennis ball against a wall. Me and my dog Apache walk through this park every day. Recently, I have noticed a group of middle-aged men and women playing a strange game on the practice tennis court. They were hitting this plastic ball with holes in it with enlarged ping pong paddles back and forth over a net on what looks like a mini tennis court. Well, I might live a sheltered life, but I had never seen this game before. The other day I asked a lady, who was watching the game, what the name of this sport was called. She smiled at Apache and looked at me like I was an idiot, and said, "This is Pickleball and it is the fastest growing sport in the United States."

When we got back home, the first thing I did was Google "**Pickleball**" to find out if that lady knew what she was talking about. She was right! **Pickleball is currently the fastest growing sport in the world and there's no question why — it's fun, a great workout and almost anyone can pick it up quickly.**

History

Pickleball was invented in 1965 on Bainbridge Island, a short ferry ride from Seattle, Washington. Three dads – Joel Pritchard, Bill Bell, and Barney McCallum -- whose kids were bored with their usual summertime activities -- are credited for creating game. They attempted to set up badminton, but no one could find the shuttlecock. They improvised with a perforated plastic ball, lowered the badminton net, and fabricated paddles of plywood from a nearby shed.



Left to Right - Barney McCallum, Joel Pritchard, and Bill Bell

Name Origin

Some sources claim that the name "Pickleball" was derived from the Pritchard's family dog, named Pickles. But, according to Joan Pritchard, Joel Pritchard's wife, "The name of the game became Pickle Ball, after I said it reminded me of the Pickle Boat where the crew oarsmen were chosen from the leftovers of other boats. Somehow people thought the name came from our dog Pickles, but Pickles wasn't on the scene for two more years. The dog was named for the game, but stories about the name's origin were funnier when the game was named for the dog."

Well, if Pickleball has been around since 1965, how in the world did it take me 55 years to discover it in August 2020? It can't be that popular or I would have seen it on ESPN. **Right?**

Here are a few key dates:

1975 – Pickleball is recognized as "America's newest racquet sport."

1990 - Pickleball was being played in all 50 states.

2003 - There are 39 known places to play in North America.

2008 - USA Pickleball Association Official Tournament Rulebook was published.

2009 – There are now 420 places to play in North American as listed on the USAPA website.

2015 – There were now 12,800 indoor and outdoor courts in the U.S.

2018 - There are nearly 21,000 known courts across the U.S.

2019 - Pickleball becomes the fastest growing sport in the U.S. as participants reaches 3.3 million.

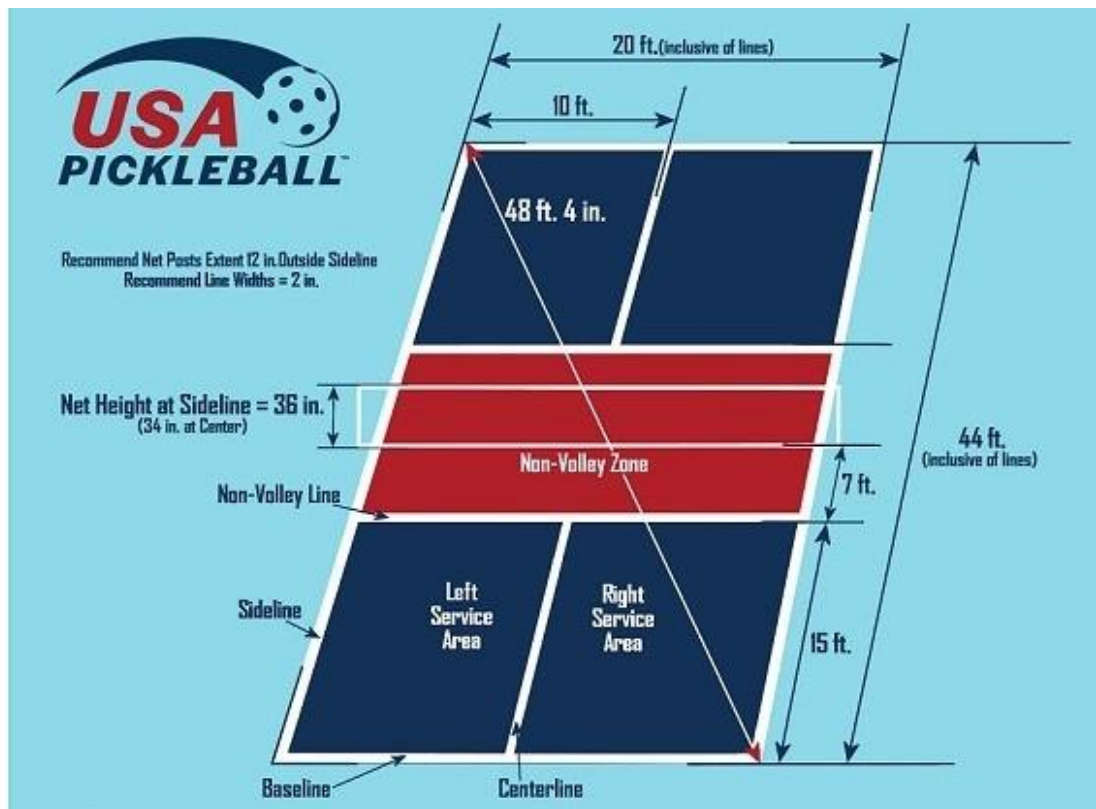
2020 – Pickleball is played in Mililani, Hawaii.

Somehow, I missed all this stuff about Pickleball! Oh well, it does looks like a fun game so let's learn more about it.

The Basics of Pickleball

1. A fun sport that combines many elements of tennis, badminton, and ping-pong.
2. Played both indoors or outdoors on a badminton-sized court and a slightly modified tennis net.
3. Played with a paddle and a plastic ball with holes.
4. Played as doubles or singles.
5. Can be enjoyed by all ages and skill levels

The Court



The Equipment



BALL - The balls are made from different types of durable plastic material and have a smooth surface – no textures allowed. You might see a slight ridge where the mold is fitted together, but it shouldn't be so significant that it disrupts play. The balls are to be between 2.874 inches and 2.972 inches in diameter. Official balls will weigh between .78 and .935 ounces. When dropped from a height of 78 inches, they are to bounce up from the surface to a height between 30 and 34 inches. Like a wiffle ball, pickleballs have holes, but no fewer than 26 and no more than 40. You'll find smaller holes in a ball used for the outdoor play, and this is to minimize the effect wind will have on it.

PADDLE – There are very few restrictions on what materials can be used to make a paddle, as long as it's rigid and made of a non-compressible material. The surface of the paddle can't have holes or indentations in it. The surface must be smooth and feature no rough texturing. The goal is to use a paddle that doesn't allow a player to put any extra spin on the ball, as that would be unfair. The surface of the paddle may be painted, but it can't be so reflective that it causes glare that will disrupt the game. The paddle is not to exceed a length of 17 inches, but there is no restriction on how thick a paddle can be, nor are there any restrictions on weight.

APPAREL - To fully enjoy the game of pickleball, it's important to wear what makes you feel comfortable. You can work up a sweat in short order, so wearing moisture wicking apparel is recommended. Most women will wear tennis style outfits and men normally wear athletic shorts. Eye protection is recommended, as are shoes that will provide the support you need for a lot of side-to-side action. Protecting the playing surface is important, so your footwear must not leave any marks.

The Rules

Pickleball is played either as doubles (two players per team) or singles; doubles is the most common. The same size playing area and rules are used for both singles and doubles.

How to determine initial service and side

One of the first duties a pickleball referee will perform in a tournament match is meet with players courtside and flip a coin to determine initial service and side. For a friendly non-tournament match, one player can flip a coin and a player from the other team guesses heads or tails. If player is right, this player or team will start the game by selecting the side they want to serve from first.

The Serve

- The serve must be made underhand.
- Paddle contact with the ball must be below the server's waist (navel level).
- The serve is initiated with at least one foot behind the baseline; neither foot may contact the baseline or court until after the ball is struck.
- The serve is made diagonally crosscourt and must land within the confines of the diagonally opposite service court (the area between the non-volley zone and the baseline).
- Only one serve attempt is allowed, except in the event of a let (the ball touches the net on the serve and lands in the proper service court; let serves are replayed).



Pickleball Serve

DOUBLES

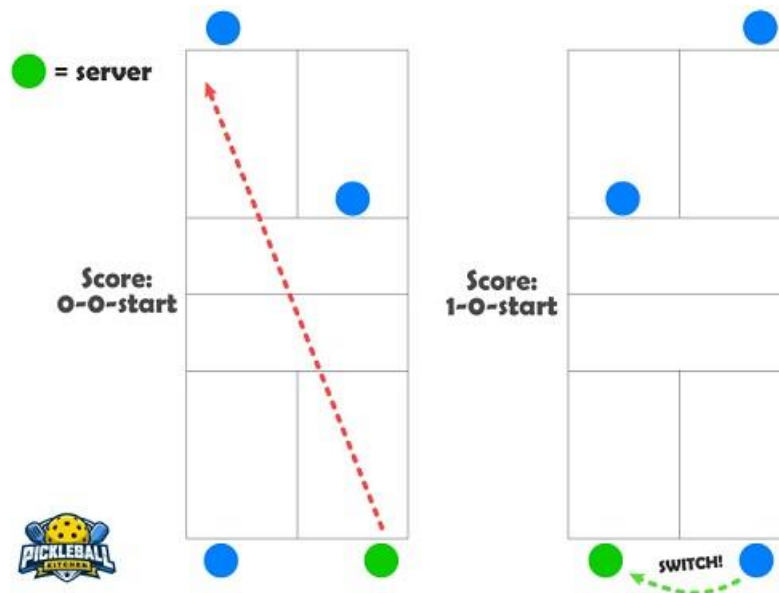
Start of Game (first serve)

At the beginning of each new game only one partner on the serving team has the opportunity to serve before faulting, after which the service passes to the receiving team.

In other words, normally each player serves until a point is lost then the other team gets the serve. However, at the start of the game the team that serves first only gets 1 player to server, so the score starts at 0 - 0 – 2. What? Keep reading.

Service Sequence (after first service)

- Both players on the serving doubles team have the opportunity to serve and score points until they commit a fault.
- The first serve of each service sequence is made from the right-hand court. If a point is scored, the server switches sides and initiates the next serve from the left-hand court.



- As subsequent points are scored, the server continues switching back and forth until a fault is committed and the first server loses the serve.
- When the first server loses the serve the partner then serves from the correct side of the court (Right side for player 1 and left side for player 2).

- The second server continues serving until his/her team commits a fault and loses the serve to the opposing team.
- Once the service goes to the opposing team (at side out), the first serve is from the right-hand court and both players on that team have the opportunity to serve and score points until their team commits two faults.

Scoring Overview

- Points are scored only by the serving team.
- Games are normally played to 11 points, win by 2.
- Tournament games may be to 15 or 21, win by 2.
- When the serving team's score is even (0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10...) the player who was the first server in the game for that team will be in the right-side court when serving or receiving; when odd (1, 3, 5, 7, 9...) that player will be in the left-side court when serving or receiving.

In a regular game, a team or player must score 11 points and win by 2 points. That means, even if a game is tied 10-10 in a regular game, the next team or player to score a point would not win. They would have to score two additional points to win the game.

We're starting with doubles scoring because singles scoring is nearly identical, with just a few differences. If you understand doubles scoring, you'll be just fine with singles scoring!

The person on the right side of the court always serves first. Always. Whether it's the first serve of the game or your team has just gotten the ball back after a side out. The person on the right will always be the one to serve first.



Scoring Rules

If the serving team scores a point, the players on that team switch positions. (The player who served from the right side of the court would move to the left side of the court, and the player on the left would move to the right.) This continues as long as the serving team scores. **The players on the receiving side do not switch positions when a point is scored by the serving team.**

Calling the Score

As strange as it might sound, one of the most confusing parts of doubles pickleball scoring is how the score is called. But here is a few tips to make it less confusing!

When playing doubles, the serving team player calls the score as a series of three numbers, such as 5 - 2 - 1.

Okay, okay, but what do those numbers mean? Let's break that down...

The first number is the serving team's score. Whenever you serve, you will call your score first. Always. The second number is the receiving team's score. That should be easy to remember since you already called your score. The last number is where the confusion tends to set in. The last number signals serving position. So, if you're the first person to serve, you would call "1". If you're the second person to serve, you would call "2".

Calling a Pickleball Score

5 - 2 - 1

SERVING
TEAM

RECEIVING
TEAM

SERVE
POSITION

Seems simple right? Well, here's where things can get a little confusing:

The first serve exception. In an attempt to minimize the advantage the first serving team would get to start the game, only one player gets to serve and fault before a "side out" is called and the serve switches to the other team. All turns after that allow both players to serve before it switches again.

For this reason, the first server of the game will call “2”. Just think of the number “2” as the signal that the serve might switch to the other team. **So, rather than labeling yourself as a “1” or a “2,”, think of those last numbers merely as indicators for when the serve needs to switch to the other team.**

This is especially important for when your serving position changes in the middle of a game. Depending on the score and where you are on the court, you might call “1” for your team’s first service and then “2” when your team gets the serve back.

Why is that? Because you and your partner switch sides every time you score a point, but you don’t switch sides when the other team scores a point.

Let’s look at an example...

Scenario

Jason and Alex are on the same team and they are up to serve. Jason is on the right side of the court, so he serves first. He calls the score: “5 - 2 - 1”. The receiving team faults, so Jason and Alex score a point and switch positions. Jason now serves from the left side of the court and calls the score: “6 - 2 - 1”. After a rally, they commit a fault, but the players don’t switch sides, and now it’s Alex’s turn to serve. Alex is on the right side of the court, and he calls the score: “6 - 2 - 2”. They don’t win the point, so the serve moves to the other team and both Jason and Alex stay in their current positions.

After a few rallies, it’s time for Jason and Alex to serve again. But this time, Alex is on the right side of the court, so he serves first. He calls the score: “6 - 4 - 1”. See what happened?

On the previous turn, Alex was on the left side of the court when they got the serve back, so he was the second server. On this turn, Alex was on the right side of the court, so he was the first server.

EASY - RIGHT??

SINGLES

Singles Scoring – No Need to Call Out a 3rd Number!

Yes, singles scoring and positioning are easy compared to doubles that can be a little confusing to the Pickleball beginner.

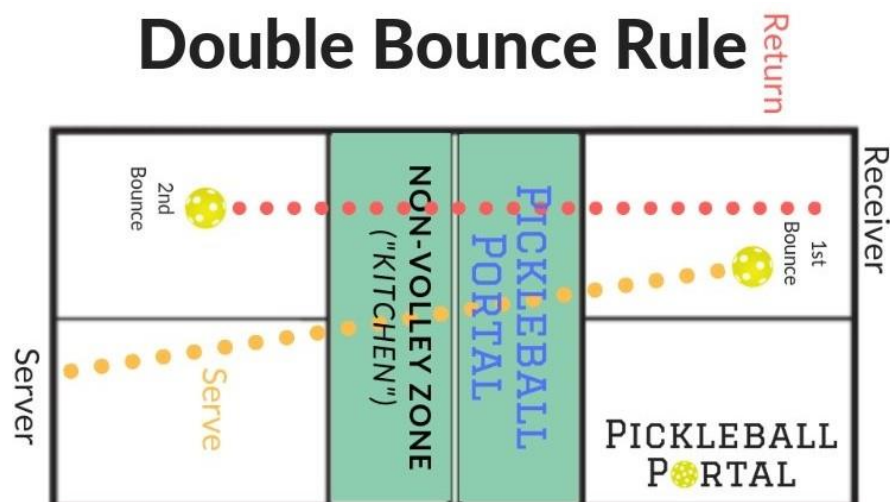


Scoring in pickleball singles is similar to that of doubles, with the exception – as the name (singles) suggests – that there is no second server. As such, the server only calls out two numbers – the server’s score first, then the opponent’s score.

In singles, the serve is always executed from the right side of the court when the server’s score is represented by an even number (0, 2, 4, 6, 8 or 10 points) and from the left side when the server’s score is an odd number (1, 3, 5, 7 or 9 points). It is important to note that it is the server’s score that matters when determining the side from which to serve – not the combined score of the server and receiver. Because there is no second server, once the server loses the point, the serve reverts to the receiver.

The Two-Bounce Rule

When the ball is served, the receiving team must let it bounce before returning, and then the serving team must let it bounce before returning, thus two bounces.

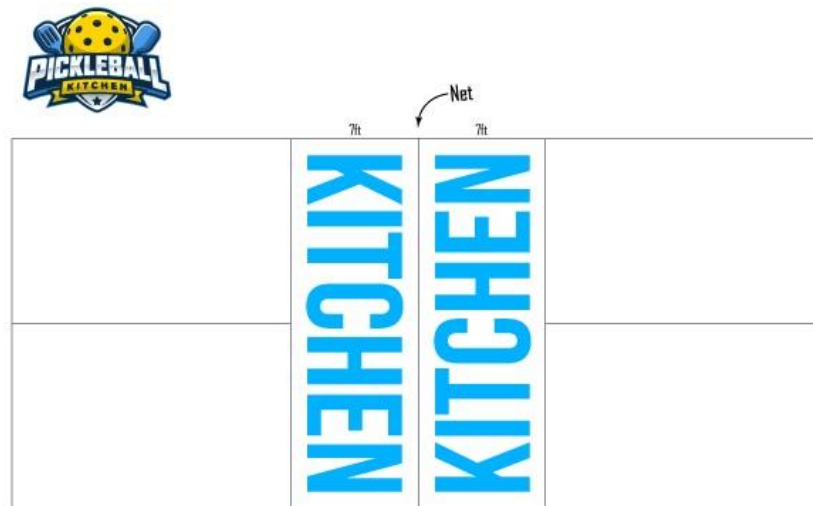


After the ball has bounced once in each team's court, both teams may either volley the ball (hit the ball before it bounces) or play it off a bounce (groundstroke).

The two-bounce rule eliminates the serve and volley advantage and extends rallies.

Non-Volley Zone (NVZ) (also called "The Kitchen")

- The non-volley zone or "The Kitchen" is the court area within 7 feet on both sides of the net.



STAY OUT OF THE KITCHEN!!

- Volleying is prohibited within the non-volley zone (Kitchen). This rule prevents players from executing smashes from a position within the zone.
- It is a fault if, when volleying a ball, the player steps in the non-volley zone, including the line, and/or when the player's momentum causes him/her or anything the player is wearing or carrying to touch the non-volley zone, including the associated lines.
- It is a fault if, after volleying, a player is carried by momentum into or touches the non-volley zone, even if the volleyed ball is declared dead before this happens.
- A player may legally be in the non-volley zone any time other than when volleying a ball.

Why is it called "The Kitchen"? Although nobody is completely sure where the term "kitchen" originated, there are theories that the term was borrowed from the game of shuffleboard. In shuffleboard, the kitchen is the area behind the

primary scoring zones called the “10-off” area, which deducts ten points if landed in. Similar to standing in the kitchen in pickleball, you do not want to land in the shuffleboard kitchen.

When can a Player hit the ball in the non-volley kitchen area? The No-Volley Zone is 7 feet from the net on each side. A player cannot hit a ball if he is inside the No-Volley Zone unless the ball bounces first. If a ball hit a player in the No-Volley zone before bouncing the point is lost. **Once a ball bounces a player can hit the ball while inside the zone.**

Line Calls

- A ball contacting any line, except the non-volley zone line on a serve, is considered “in.”



- A serve contacting the non-volley zone line is short and a fault.

Faults

- A fault is any action that stops play because of a rule violation.
- A fault by the receiving team results in a point for the serving team.
- A fault by the serving team results in the server's loss of serve and side out if second server.
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LEARN THE RULES

A fault occurs when:

- The ball is hit into the net or out of bounds.
- A serve does not land within the confines of the receiving court.
- The ball is volleyed before a bounce has occurred on each side after the serve.
- A ball is volleyed from within the non-volley zone.
- A ball bounces twice before being struck by the receiver.
- A player, player's clothing, or any part of a player's paddle touches the net or the net post when the ball is in play.
- There is a violation of a service rule.
- A ball in play strikes a player or anything the player is wearing.
- A ball in play strikes any permanent object before bouncing on the court.

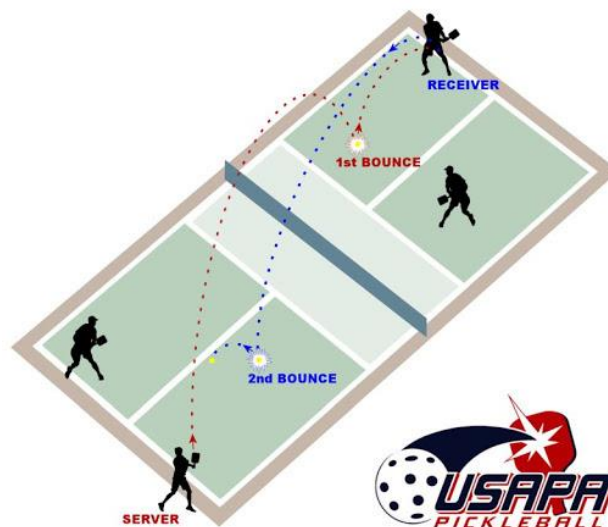


Oh Oh “That’s a Fault!”

Pickleball Strategies – Doubles

1. Player positioning

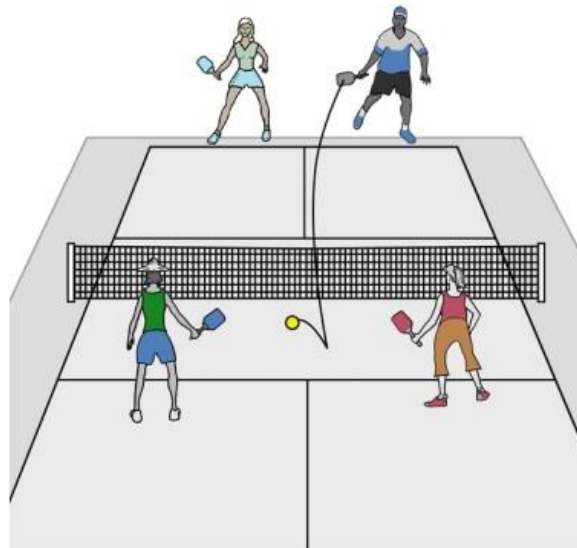
- Serving player or team stands behind the baseline to serve and remains there or just inside to hit serve return after it bounces (Double Bounce Rule).
- Receiver typically stands at or near the baseline to return serve; however, be alert for the possible need to move forward to return a shorter serve.
- Receiver's partner may stand anywhere but is usually positioned at the non-volley zone line on his/her side of the court.



Positioning during the Serve and Return

2. Getting to the net

- After returning the serve the receiver should quickly move forward to the non-volley zone line to a position parallel with his/her partner.
- The serving team should both move toward the non-volley zone line together as soon as possible after the third shot (return of serve return).
- Players should attempt get to the non-volley zone line in time to be ready to return the next ball hit to them by the opposing team. However, if caught mid court (no man's land), stop and assume the ready position before hitting the ball (split step). It may take two or three shots to get to the non-volley zone line safely and in balance.
- Once at the non-volley zone, stay there. Don't move back unless it is necessary to return a lob, then return to the non-volley zone line ASAP.



Serving team should both move toward the NVZ line (net) after serve return

3. Partners move in unison

- The partner hitting the ball determines when and where the team moves.
- At the baseline, when one partner hits the ball and moves toward the non-volley zone at the angle he/she hit the ball, the other partner should move forward also, but *not before*.
- With partners separated – one at the baseline and one at the non-volley zone -- an inviting gap is created for the opponents to place a winning shot.
- When one partner is pulled to the sideline to return a shot the other partner moves toward the centerline to close the gap in the middle, which

is a higher percentage shot for the opponent than trying to pass down the other sideline, which is left open.



Partners move in Unison

[The string theory: Imagine you and your partner are tethered by string; if your partner gets pulled wide you can't allow the string to break by staying still. If the string is pulled six feet, you move six feet.]

4. Pickleball is more about placement than power

- **Keep the ball in play. The doubles team who makes fewer unforced errors is most likely to win.**
- **According to an accomplished tournament player and instructor, 75 percent of rallies are won (or lost) because of errors; only 25 percent are actually earned or won by a good shot.**
- **Rather than trying to hit a winner every shot, it is better to place the ball back over the net in control and let the opponents make the fault, or wait for a chance to hit a sure winner.**
- **The safest place to hit a ball in doubles is deep down the middle – this minimizes the chances of hitting wide and may cause confusion over which opponent should return the ball.**
- **Try to hit to your opponent's backhand, especially on the serve – most players have less power and are less comfortable hitting with their backhand. However, many top players prefer the backhand for a majority of their shots because this across-the-body shot precludes a significant backswing, which often leads to over-hitting. A well-practiced backhand can create as much or more control as a forehand.**



Remember - Placement is more Important than Power

5. Communicate with your partner

- Get in the habit of calling “Mine,” “I Go,” “Yours,” “You” or something similar for every shot, especially if playing with an unfamiliar partner and if one partner is right handed and the other left handed.
- Decide who will take lobs – it may be the faster partner even if the lob is on the other side of the court.
- Call “Switch” if you move to your partner’s side of the court – it is quicker to stay there for the next shot than to run back to your side. But make sure you are in the correct court position before the next rally begins (based on the score).
- Decide who handles shots coming down the middle of the court. How far over the centerline will the partner with the paddle hand in the middle take balls? When partners are left- and right-handed both forehands or both backhands will be in the middle.
- Warn your partner by calling “Bounce it!” if a ball hit high appears as if it may land out. Yell “No!” or “Out!” *before the ball strikes the court* if you are sure it is going out. (Calling “Out” after the ball strikes the court is a line call and the ball is dead.)
- Bolster team confidence by complimenting your partner on good play – *after the rally ends*. Never criticize your partner for faults – it just makes matters worse.
- Discussing team strategy, such as which opponent to hit to, before a game starts, between points, or during a timeout gives the team a common goal and demonstrates that the players are united as a team and not playing as two individuals.
- Although the correct player to take a shot is not always the one in the forehand position, if the ball is heading in your partner’s direction, don’t

take away his/her forehand shot with your backhand unless he/she is obviously unable to reach the shot or yells “Yours.”



Final Comments

I know something about Pickleball now. How about you?

It looks fun and old people can play it, but I think I will stick to Ping Pong.

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