

**Setting The Record Straight.....Dispelling Myths.....Talk Story Facts**

- ◆ Pickleball is one word. Not two. Not hyphenated. Not capitalized (unless it is at the beginning of a sentence). Baseball, basketball, football, volleyball....pickleball. Please get it right when communicating via the written word. Thanks.
- ◆ You are playing with a paddle. Not a racket. Rackets have strings. Paddles do not.
- ◆ A pickleball is not a wiffle ball. Similar, but not the same. A traditional wiffle ball is half holes and half solid.
- ◆ The Kitchen. Better known as the No Volley Zone. The NVZ. The origin of the name 'Kitchen' is unknown, but a popular theory is that the word comes from the game of Shuffleboard. The kitchen area in shuffleboard is actually an area where you lose 10 points if your disk is in the 10-off area (kitchen). Obviously, you don't want to be in there. Sound familiar?
- ◆ The name pickleball is an interesting story. The urban legend is that this game, invented in 1965 by Joel Pritchard, a businessman and member of the U.S. House of Representatives from the state of Washington, was named after the Pritchard's dog Pickles. Nice story. Not true (the Pritchards did not get Pickles until a couple of years after the game was invented). The more plausible story is that Joel Pritchard's wife, Joan, coined the name. She was an avid rower and at many rowing regattas, the last race of the day is called the 'pickle boat' race. The rowing teams are comprised of team alternates who did not get to participate in the day's official races. She saw pickleball as a game initially played by those who were 'leftovers' from other racket sports. Thank you Joan!!
- ◆ This game is not easy. If it were, everyone would be good. Easier on the body for sure. From the waist up, definitely faster than tennis. So when someone refers to this as JV tennis, just give them that knowing smile and say "why don't you come out and join us sometime."
- ◆ If the above person(s) decides to give the game a try, remind yourself that they may not take to the game right away. The more information you present on the first day, the more confused they may get. Scoring, blended lines (indoors even more confusing), the kitchen, serving rotation, etc. It usually is about the third time they play that they walk away smiling and happy you introduced them to the game. Be patient and ask the same of them.
- ◆ Our game is very social. On the courts for sure. I suggest you try and socialize occasionally after play. Go out to lunch with players. You may talk a bit on the courts, but you can learn so much more sitting with picklers and sharing information over lunch. Many will become lifelong friends.
- ◆ Our warmer months are coming up. If you are going to play more than a couple of hours on any given day, you must drink more than just water. Water is OK for the first hour. After that, a good electrolyte drink is best. Snack on something other than sugar. Nuts. Fruit.
- ◆ A few 'talk story' points about pickleball. The paddle can be no more than 24" when adding length and width. It cannot be longer than 17". Indoor and outdoor pickleballs are slightly different. Outdoor balls have more holes and the holes are a shade smaller. The outdoor ball is slightly heavier. The indoor ball can be softer. Both weigh just under 1 oz. There are 70+ pickleball paddle manufacturers. Ball manufacturers number just over 50. To put this in perspective, 10 years ago both those numbers were single digits. Did I mention that because of professional players sponsorships by manufacturers, we pay much more for our equipment than we did five years ago and its not inflation!!

I end this month's column with a personal story. We seem to get in a turf war more often than is necessary with our tennis community. Use of facilities. Conflicting times. Blended lines. The usual stuff. I was in the parking lot at Kalawai Park (pre-pandemic days when we also played outdoors as well as indoors at the Neighborhood Center). A foursome of tennis players showed up. The courts were full of picklers having fun. They wanted to know when we would be done. I explained we had the courts reserved until 11:30. It was 10:30ish. Those were the days we were officially on the books. They were not happy and proceeded to tell me why—among other things—pickleball was, and I quote, “not even a sport.” I listened and then finally answered back. “Did you know this fun sport with the funny name is the fastest growing sport in the U.S. That in 2019 the three largest RACKET sport tournaments in the WORLD were pickleball tournaments. Over 2,000 players in each tournament. That the largest pickleball venue in the U.S. has 60 pickleball courts. That in the next 10 years pickleball could be an Olympic demonstration sport (there's a good chance we might see this happen in 2028 in Los Angeles). That my playing colleagues are amazing their doctors with lower blood pressure, better lab test results, great weight maintenance, better stamina, etc. That lifelong friendships have been formed because of this game. And the one that really hits home for me.....dozens of players telling me that pickleball has changed their lives.”

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