



From the Picklehood

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By Jack Hodges

Skill Ratings....and The Pickleball Neighborhood We Live In

I get asked this question a lot: "What do you think my skill rating is?" Before I give my opinion (and understand, it is just an opinion) I respond by saying, "What do YOU think your skill rating is?" You'd be surprised at the answers because most players in our picklehood don't play in sanctioned tournaments (for a USAPA rating) and aren't familiar with the checklist criteria used by experienced rating evaluators. It's pretty extensive and all-inclusive. So, these players apply a skill rating that is somewhat arbitrary and based on comparison with fellow players.

Let me explain.

Tournament Player Ratings, evaluator ratings and self-ratings are based on different evaluation guidelines.

Tournament Player Ratings (TPR) are determined by crunching numbers based on (1) your current tournament rating (if you've played in sanctioned tournaments), (2) your partner's rating, (3) ratings of opponents played, (4) type of tournament, (5) strength of tournament. TPR ratings range from 0.000 to 6.999.

Evaluator Ratings (EVR) are based on observed performance and OPINION. The evaluator works from a skill assessment sheet of 15-20 observable skills. She/He rates you on your performance of these skills. Examples include "Consistently hits backhand with depth and control," and "Able to sustain a dink rally with control, height and depth of shot."

Self Ratings (SFR) might include a bit of the above two, but are usually the result of self comparison with other players and success against other players. The operative words here are 'other players.' I'll explain with a game I observed a



Remember, one game does not a self-rating make. You need to be responsible for your skills and your development. You need to know what skills are basic for ratings, success and fun. You need to look at your set of skills based on a performance rubric and not on comparison with other players. And, you need to remember that 90% of us in our Kaua'i picklehood are playing for fun, love of the game, camaraderie and health. If this is our rubric, then our skill rating is a definitive 6.999.

I include below an abbreviated list of skill expectations for a 3.5 player.

- ...Able to use a forehand with moderate level of shot control
- ...Able to use a backhand with moderate level of shot control
- ...Consistently gets serve in
- ...Consistently gets return of serve in
- ...Able to place serves deep in the court
- ...Able to place return of serves deep into the court
- ...Able to dink and sustains medium length rallies
- ...Able to control height/depth of dink shot
- ...Understands variation of pace of dink shot
- ...Able to hit a 3rd shot drop consistently
- ...Able to volley with medium paced shots and control
- ...Able to sustain a short volley session at the net with placement and control
- ...Moves quickly to NVZ (non-volley zone) when opportunity is there
- ...Understands proper court position
- ...Understands the hard game and soft game and knows when to use it
- ...Has basic knowledge of stacking and knows when to use it
- ...Able to sustain rallies
- ...Has good mobility / quickness /hand-eye coordination

Note: Our USA Pickleball Association website has a great section on Ratings. Read when you can.

Happy Thanksgiving and Happy Holidays

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