



PICKLEBALL

TIPBITS

YEAR ONE



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## FOREWORD

The first TIPBITS article came to life because someone planted a seed in the author's mind that *giving back* is a good thing. It started in a small way but soon became a challenge that became far more rewarding than the effort involved. Getting and being inspired is the purpose of this book.

The TIPBITS book comes to you free as a gift in hopes that you might also see the reward in helping others. That's our goal at TIPBITS, Inc.,

**“HELPING OTHERS HELP OTHERS!”**

We've been inspired in many ways but one individual in particular set the tone...we ran into this gruff, old and crusty ex-marine on the Pickleball court...this seemingly Scrooge-like fellow turned out to be a sponsor for nine children from impoverished nations around the world. Who would have thought? Talk about *giving back*!

We may not have the resources to make this much of a commitment but we can *give back* in our own way...really ANY way. For example, a dollar a day can enable us to sponsor a child. But sponsoring a needy child is just one example.

We encourage you to find your own special way to *give back* to your community, your church, a charity, a mission or wherever or however you have a desire to give.

The thing about *giving back* is that we always *get back* more than we *give back*.

Our own human spirits are continually refreshed and gratified.

So thank you for *giving back*!

Please, see [TIPBITS.ORG](http://TIPBITS.ORG) to *give back* or get books/articles!



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## **TIPBITS #1**

### **COME TO THE PARTY**

Your #1 goal, whether the serving team or the receiving team, is to get to and control the net as soon as possible...

Why? It's just as simple as this...80% of the points are won at the net...and, the corollary? 80% of the points are lost at the baseline...and, if this game is anything, it's a game of percentages...

you must use strategies AND shots that will consistently (more times than not) give you the best chance of winning the point...that's Percentage Pickleball...

so, if you're returning the serve, you **MUST** get to the net on your return...if you're the serving team, you **MUST** make a third shot that will allow your team to progress to the net...

we'll work on various options on how to become successful at this effort in the future...

but, for now, simply keep this in the back of your mind, on every point...

**the “game” is at the net, so “COME TO THE PARTY”!!!**

## TIPBITS #2

### RETURN AND GET TO THE NET

Last week we talked about the importance of getting to the net and the benefits of being there...but we didn't talk about HOW best to get there...

as the returning team, your team is half way there even before the point starts...you have the advantage...the only thing that remains is for you both to be there...so, if the ball is served to you, you have two responsibilities(jobs); 1, return the ball successfully AND 2, get to the net...pretty straight-forward, until you consider the options...

as the returner, you have a number of options on where and how to hit the return...and we will talk about those soon(promise!)...but for now, this week's point is this...you **MUST** get to the net after your return, it is crucial to your success...

**AND not just get there, but fully in the ready position BEFORE your opponent hits their shot...that's the whole point here, get there and be ready...no excuses!!!**

## **TIPBITS #3**

### **RETURN OF SERVE OPTION 1**

#### **IN PLAY!**

That's really the common thread all RETURNS (all options) must share. BUT, if your second goal is to get to the net BEFORE your opponent hits their shot, you must consider a few factors...

Like, which category of player are you...are you super-fast and aggressive...or are you average...or are you super-fast but having a bad day...or is it your last match of the day and you're just tired...

If you answered “yes” to all but the first, here's your OPTION 1...

Hit the return soft and high AND into the middle of the court AND nice and deep(within a foot or two of the base line)...

WHY?...because it's deep, it keeps your opponents back on the baseline...because it's in the middle, it creates confusion as to who must hit it...because it's slow and high, it buys you time to get to the net and into the ready position BEFORE they hit...

That's OPTION 1 because, “percentage-wise”, it works!!!

## **TIPBITS #4**

### **ANOTHER RETURN OF SERVE OPTION**

#### **IN PLAY!**

Our last insight started the same way, the number one priority cannot be anything else but “put it IN PLAY”...

last time, we opted for the percentage-wise best option; soft and high AND into the middle of the court AND nice and deep...this time, a slightly more aggressive approach...

consider a similar return discussed previously but make it easier on yourself...if the serve has not been overwhelming you, try hitting the ball on the rise(on the short hop or as a half-volley) as you move forward...this shot combines hitting the return as well as moving forward at the same time...

DON'T try to hit an aggressive return because combining these two actions makes each more subject to error...as above, simply keep the return soft and in the middle and deep...what this buys you is a much easier route to the net...you're there before the ball even bounces...

you'll need to practice this often because the simultaneous move and hitting motions will cause the ball to go deep...once you've mastered it, you'll get a BIGTIME payoff...

you'll be at the net really ready for the next shot...see you there!

## TIPBITS #5

### AGGRESSIVE RETURN OF SERVE OPTION

The aggressive return of serve is just that; a return hit with great pace AND depth....it has a simple goal...put pressure on the serving team so that they are unable to hit a decent Third Shot...maybe even force an error....or maybe even be an outright winner...but it's clearly a less safe shot, percentage-wise; not a conservative “put it IN PLAY” shot...if you can NOT hit this shot successfully 90% of the time, either back off the pace or depth... or just forget it...or, if you can't get to the net when you hit an aggressive return, you might as well forget it, too...

but if you want to hit an aggressive return, then you gotta plan ahead...that means before the serve...

first, WHO are you going to hit it to...you need to determine WHICH player on the serving team is the weaker player...and then, WHERE...what is that player's weakness(forehand, backhand or the body)...as an aside, we include body here because your aggressive return, by definition, is going to be hit with above average pace and if your opponent is less than mobile, you've got a third target...the body...

now, you're ready...you've determined WHERE(the spot) you're going to hit the return...as the server prepares to serve, focus on and commit to that target spot...think of nothing else...and then, go for it!

## **TIPBITS #6**

### **WHERE TO STAND TO SERVE**

#### **Where should we stand when our team is serving???**

You quickly learn(or should) that you BOTH should stand BEHIND the base line...AND stay behind the base line until after the return has been hit...this is imperative if you are going to be able to hit an effective 3<sup>rd</sup> shot...

here's why...

as you play more and more and your competition gets better and better, you will find that they will be able to consistently return the ball deep into your court, even close to or on the base line...if you are forward of the base line or have moved in already, the ball is going to play you...you'll need to back pedal and try to hit a controlled shot while moving backward(good luck with that)...

your ability to hit your best shot is always greatly increased if you can step forward while making your shot(rather than moving back from it)...of course, you both need to focus on the returner and determine how to position yourself to hit the best possible 3<sup>rd</sup> shot...

that's why you should stand BEHIND the base line because it is always easier to move forward to the ball than it is to retreat and reset...that's half of the story on where to stand...more next time...

**so, for now...serve, wait, and then, hit!**

## **TIPBITS #7**

### **WHERE TO STAND TO SERVE(Part 2)**

#### **Where should we stand when our team is serving???**

Last time, we recommended that, when your team is serving, you BOTH should stand BEHIND the base line and STAY behind the base line until after the return has been hit...

one reason for this is that it will provide you with a better opportunity to hit an effective 3<sup>rd</sup> shot...we said BEHIND the base line, but not exactly where...

as tennis players, you're generally taught to stand pretty much in the center of the area you are responsible to protect, maybe slightly more to the side that you least favor...in tennis, you have a lot more territory to cover, so this strategy is imperative...in pickleball, you have far less area to cover, so you can afford to favor one side over the other...

in almost all cases, with rare exceptions, we all have better, more capable and controlled forehands...you must take advantage of that...

let's assume you're both right-handed...prior to the serve, you both need to position yourselves as far to the left as possible on your respective sides...in other words, if you are on the right side, stand as close as possible to the center line...if you are on the left side, stand as close to the left sideline as you can...it makes no difference if you are the server or the server's partner...

this gives you the best chance to hit your best shot most of the time...

**That's Percentage Pickleball!!!**

## **TIPBITS #8**

### **LOOK for the GIFT on the Third Shot**

Most PB players agree that the hardest and the most important shot in the game is the Third Shot..notice, the Third Shot is capitalized, just like the Serve and the Return, because it IS a specifically defined shot...

there are numerous options for the Third Shot and a lot depends upon the quality of the return, its depth, pace and placement...you're both back on the baseline with one “simple” goal, get to the net(i.e., get on even terms with the receiving team, who should both now be at the net)...we'll talk about each of these Third Shot options in subsequent TIPBITS, but for now, let's focus on just one strategy for the Third Shot...

as the Serving team, you are both watching the Returning player to see where the Return will be going...but you must do one more thing...you must watch what that player is doing after the shot...this is where the GIFT comes in...if, for whatever reason, that player does not follow his shot into the net, you now have BOTH, a target and a way to get into the net...

this has presented you with the simplest solution to the problem of what to do for the Third Shot...simply drive the ball back to the Returning player and move to the net...What a GIFT!!!

## TIPBITS #9

### Third Shot Where?

Last time we said that the Third Shot likely was the hardest and most difficult shot in the game...that's, of course, if you put the right amount of focus on its value...if you recognize that being at the net is the best place for your team to be in order to win points, then you would also recognize that your first opportunity to get to the net is after a successful Third Shot...you might also agree with most students of the game, that your best chance of getting to the net is to hit a dink or drop shot as your Third Shot...others feel that hitting a firm drive is their best approach...and lastly, the lob...each has its own merits...but something is pretty common about all three...that's where!!!...and just like all other strategies in the game, you must consider the percentages...the percentages, the overwhelming likelihood that you will be successful, must be on your side...

so, hit it where?...both of your opponents are at the net, giving you very little, if any room to get past them...your most effective and highest percentage placement will be right in the middle of the two net players, preferably leaning slightly more towards the backhand side of the two players...why?...#1 this is the lowest spot on the net(by two inches)...#2 because you force a decision by both of your opponents as to who(if anybody) is going to hit it...this placement puts the percentages in your favor and that's Where to go with the Third Shot!!!

## **TIPBITS #10**

### **Time to Recap**

All our little TIPBITS for these last 9 times have been focused on the Basics of Good Percentage Pickleball....not that there aren't a bunch more, BUT if you haven't adopted or incorporated these into your game, they obviously need to be repeated...so, here goes...

- #1 Come to the Party...the game IS won at the net AND is lost at the baseline
- #2 Return and Get to the Net...return the ball into play and GET TO THE NET...NO excuses
- #3 Return of Serve Option 1...hit it SOFT and HIGH and DEEP and to the MIDDLE
- #4 Another Return of Serve Option...hit the return on the RISE on your way to the net
- #5 The Aggressive Return of Serve...plan ahead as to WHO and WHERE and hit with control
- #6 Where to Stand to Serve...both players must stand behind the baseline and wait until the return is hit
- #7 Where to Stand to Serve Part 2...favor your best shot(forehand) by standing as far left as possible
- #8 Look for the Gift on the Third Shot...if the returning player does NOT come to the net, hit to him
- #9 Third Shot Where...either drop it, drive it or lob it BUT put it down the middle

Finally, Percentage Pickleball is not making mistakes...never over hitting, being under control, being patient and being in the right place at the right time... Percentage Pickleball, it's all about putting the percentages, the overwhelming likelihood that you will be successful, on your side!!!

## **TIPBITS #11**

### **YOU'VE GOT TO “EARN THE NET”**

In our very first TIPBIT, we introduced the mantra or motto, “Come to the Party”, simply meaning that most points are won by the team at the net AND that most points are lost by the team on the baseline(or elsewhere other than the net)...so the place to be is at the net...

Earning the net is easy for the returning team, one of them is already there and the other will be there immediately after their return(OR SHOULD BE!)...it's another story for the serving team...

As the serving team, about to hit the Third Shot, you're faced with your opponents both firmly entrenched at the net challenging you to get on equal terms with them...no easy task and that's why this is called the most difficult shot in the game...

You can't haphazardly go to the net...you have to have a plan...and as we mentioned before, your options are to drop the ball in front of them, drive it through or by them, or lob it over their heads...so if your drop is too high and they hit it back at your feet or your drive is successfully neutralized or your lob is too low and they smash it back, you'll need to try again...if your first attempt is NOT successful, given the opportunity, you need to try again...and again, until you have bought yourself enough time to successfully get to the net...you can't just rush the net...

**and that's the point of this TIPBIT...you have to “EARN THE NET”!!!**

## TIPBITS #12

### LET'S TALK COMMUNICATION

Communication, talking with your partner, is crucial to your ability to deal with decisions through out each match you play, even each point you play. Communication before the match, during the match and after the match are all part of the process.

Your talks with your partner before the match need to include your overall strategy for this opponent, your game plan for them; what are the strengths and weaknesses of each of your opponents, which player to target or which shot or side is the weakest for each player, how do your strengths line up with theirs...that's what you should do before the match, setting up your approach to playing them!!!

Talking during the match, before and after each point, and actually during the point is possibly more important than at any other time...tell your partner what you just saw during the last point; did one player stay back, did you spot a weakness not seen before, etc; remind each other which way the wind is blowing, where is the sun, where to stand, or reiterate your game plan...

But, if you choose not to talk about any of these other things, you do need to talk WHILE the point is being played...the 2 most important topics; who takes the ball and, is it going to be in or out???

First, while sometimes you don't have time to say who's ball it is(we will talk about that at length next time), there will be times when you do have time...so SAY IT!...and say it EARLY(just so there is NO doubt, NO confusion)...Second, is the ball going to be in or out...if its on your partner's side, you NEED to advise him of your "take" on the ball, whether it must be hit or let go(because it will be out) or bounced to be safe...again, SAY it and say it EARLY!!!

Finally, at the end of the match, without regard for its outcome, talk about what was good and what was bad...make some mental notes for next time. TALK, COMMUNICATE, WIN!!!

## TIPBITS #13

### LET'S TALK MORE COMMUNICATION

Last time we talked about the importance of communication...that it was needed before, during and after, not only the match, but the individual points AND even during the points...but a word of caution here; there are some folks who do not like to talk while the point is being played...they prefer not to hear that that's their ball or that they should take it or whatever...these folks have their reasons and we should always make sure, when playing with a new partner, that they are “cool” with your communications during the point(because some are NOT!)...

Whose ball is it???

There are two such situations you will encounter in almost every point...first who takes the ball after the Return(the Third Shot) and, second, who takes all the others???

Who takes the Third Shot???

Clearly you need to have a plan ahead of time(that you agree upon)...it could be easy to decide who's ball it is, if you agree that, if it lands on your side, you take it and vice versa...of course, that's not always best...

Perhaps a better option, to help make the who's ball decision, would be adhering to an earlier TIPBIT about your alignment for serving(favoring both of your forehands)...then it's simply, whichever player can hit the Third Shot with a forehand...time and time again, this is probably the best percentage option you have and you should go with that virtually every time...

But, there will be times when it just isn't clear...for example, the ball lands near the middle but is spinning the other way...what then?...to avoid the unfortunate situation where no one swings or does so too late, you must be prepared...HOW???... both you and your partner must be paying close attention to what the returner intends to do before he hits it AND react immediately to his shot

the minute it leaves his paddle...communicate(talk) to your partner  
NOW...say "YOURS" or "YOU" or "MINE" but make it  
abundantly clear and heard and absolutely as soon as  
possible...now that's Communication!!!

More on who takes all the others next time...

## TIPBITS #14

### WHOSE BALL IS IT?

Or better yet, who takes the ball in the middle???

We've been talking about the role communication plays before, during and after each match...and with a recent focus on which player should take the ball...last week it was "Who takes the Third Shot?"...what's left is the subject for today...

Unfortunately, or realistically, there just is not enough time to communicate on each and every exchange just who should take the ball(the one in the middle)...these are the times when customs or common practices should take over...you've certainly heard that the the player with the Forehand shot should take the shots in the middle...but this practice or belief is just the first of the three(3) "F's" that *should be considered...*

The three "F's" are the Forehand, the First there and in the Flow...once again, the Forehand is easy...but you don't need to always defer to the Forehand...if you are going to be the the player that is First to be able to hit the ball, why not take it?!...you have timing on your side, you're limiting the reaction time of your opponents and if you have a half-way decent shot, you should be able to do all the damage necessary to end and win the point(or at the least, keep the ball in play)...

So what's being in the Flow?...consider the situation where you, just you, are rallying back and forth with your opponents...its going on for several exchanges, then suddenly one of your opponents hits a ball into the middle, perhaps even more to your partner...your in the Flow("engaged" as Kim would say) and really better prepared physically and mentally to react...and you should...you're in the Flow!!!

Clearly having all three of the "F's" going for you at the same time makes the decision easy....but getting all three at once just isn't that likely...given one of the three, **MAKE THE MOST OF IT!!!**

## TIPBITS #15

### READY POSITIONS

Yes, positions...how to be ready *at the baseline* and how to be ready *at the net*...2 different places and 2 different needs, but 2 different positions?

Standing on the baseline waiting to hit a service return or waiting to hit the Third Shot after the service return, you need to be ready to hit most anything...you need to be ready to move forward and/or to one side or the other...

How should you position yourself *at the baseline*?

First, you need to be comfortable...feet comfortably APART, a comfortable slight FLEX in your knees, paddle at a comfortable height(UP) in a neutral position(pointing toward the source of the ball) and shoulders square to and FACING the opponent hitting the ball...simple, but each step must be practiced and executed...

How should you position yourself *at the net*?

Asking 8 National Champion players the same question, you'll get the same answer on virtually every step mentioned above...except for one...they all agree, feet spread, knees bent, face the oncoming ball and keep your paddle up...without exception...but which direction should your paddle face?...you get every option for an answer here...paddle neutral, pointing to the oncoming ball, paddle slightly favoring the forehand side, paddle slightly favoring the backhand or paddle turned fully to the backhand side(no one mentioned holding the paddle turned fully to the forehand side)...

But, as an average player with average reactions, versus a world class athlete, the paddle direction that works best for most is having the paddle turned fully to the backhand side...

WHY?...again, simple, you can hit the vast majority(easily 80%) of the shots without turning your paddle...easiest AND quickest for MOST players...

Recently, National Champion Steve Wong was also asked the same question...his answer... hold the paddle slightly favoring the forehand...and he continued by saying...if he held it fully turned to the backhand, he'd end up hitting 80% of his shots with his backhand...meaning that regardless of your skill level, anyone can hit MOST of these shots using the backhand...for him, that's not good enough because he wants to hit a forehand whenever possible...

Players like Steve have great anticipation, excellent hand-to-eye coordination and super quick reflexes...they can hit it any way they want...for the rest of us, we need to go with the percentages and 80% is pretty much as good as it gets!!!

## TIPBITS #16

### WHAT GRIP?

Whether you are just starting out or you're trying to make progress in your game's consistency and limiting your errors, you really need to start with the proper grip...hitting the ball consistently and having it go where you want, time and time again, can be as simple as correcting or changing your grip...NOT changing it for each shot BUT changing it, ONCE, and for all...

First of all, you need and should use only **one grip for all your shots**...for the most part, unlike tennis, you really do NOT have time to be rotating or changing your grip during the point...but, even if you did, you shouldn't either...

Next, most rackets and paddles have a similarly designed grip area...if you look closely, you will notice that it's not square or round, but in fact has multiple sides(or bevels)...some are wider and more prominent than others...there are actually 8 sides or bevels on each grip...the 2 widest ones correspond to the sides of the paddle(when it's perpendicular to the ground) and the next 2 somewhat less wide ones correspond to the top and bottom (90 degrees from the side ones)...the other 4 bevels are the smallest and are in between the 4 larger flat surfaces...

As the basis for defining the grip, the simplest approach is to borrow from the Tennis world...just a little background first...in tennis you may recall it was suggested you “shake hands” with the racket(with the racket held out and the head perpendicular to the ground)...this formed the ideal grip for a classic forehand...good luck hitting a backhand with that grip, though...this is called the Eastern Forehand Grip...a more accurate method to obtain this grip would be to hold the racket perpendicular, again, and using the forefinger knuckle on the palm of your hand, place it on the wide flat bevel on the side portion of the grip of the racket...feel that?...that's' the Eastern Forehand Grip(again)...now, do the same thing with your paddle...take your forefinger knuckle of your palm and place it on the large flat surface on the side, THEN turn the paddle slightly clock-wise (or your hand counter-clockwise) until

your forefinger knuckle rests on the next littlest bevel...that's the grip that the vast majority of all Pickleball players use for EVERY shot...BTW, it's called the Continental Grip...

Finally, it is not absolutely necessary that you use this grip...there are a (small) number of great players that use their very own version of a grip...they can, you can't!

## **TIPBITS #17**

### **MORE ON THAT GRIP**

OK, so lots of feedback on the recent “WHAT GRIP?” article...in case you missed or skimmed over it, a number of points were made...1) use the Same Grip for virtually every shot you hit(don't change your grip during the point), 2) use the Continental Grip(defined in detail in the article using tennis terms) and 3) a brief description of the shape of the grip on PB paddles...

Addressing these issues in reverse order...3) Grip Shapes...some PB paddles cheat a little when it comes to very clearly differentiating the 8 sides or bevels on the grip...But they are all there, some are just not so evident...2)clearly, for the vast majority of us, the Continental Grip defined IS the most effective and useful and most commonly used grip for all levels of players...this grip consistently provides the player with the proper attitude(tilt or plane) for the paddle's face, making it the easiest to produce consistent results(or direction), shot after shot...that's not to say that there are not other variations of the grip that could lend themselves better to a particular player's strengths(or weaknesses)...and finally, 1) using the Same Grip throughout the point...who's to say you can't change your grip when you've got lots of time...OR no time at all and you can't reach that ball wide to your backhand, so you not only change your grip, you change hands!!!...as to the “got time” scenario, why not use a potentially more effective grip(to add power or direction), let's say on a slow lob coming your way...WHY NOT?!... But “changing hands”, another time for that!

### **NEW TIPBITS FEATURE**

**Your ideas, Your requests, Your questions, Your comments,  
Your input!!!**

Any and/or all of the above...Now, if there is something you'd like to see in an article or want clarification on or just have a question about, you can simply send a return email to the TIPBITS sending site and share your thoughts...they will be forwarded for review, perhaps triggering a reply or archived for a future article!

## TIPBITS #18

### BEATING THE GOOD TEAMS

Sometimes it's difficult to remember that winning in Pickleball is always about playing Percentage Pickleball. Once again, that means doing the right thing at the right time and never taking unnecessary risks. Each time you play, you will probably have the opportunity to face opponents that fit into 3 different categories; those that are WEAKER than you, those that are STRONGER than you and those that are EVEN with you...

Winning against the weaker team should be a matter of patience, doing the basics well(serving, returning, getting to and controlling the net) and not over hitting...winning against the other two categories of opponents takes all of the above and more...

Consider “LOW AND SLOW, HIGH AND HARD” as a two part motto or mantra to help you swing the (Percentage Pickleball) odds in your favor when playing equal or better teams...trying to out hit(over power) teams that are EVEN with you will probably result in a 50/50 standoff...you'll win some points, they'll win some points...hardly a winning scenario...trying to out hit(over power) the teams that are STRONGER than you is just a lost cause...

What can you do???...try being PATIENT...and, while you are being patient, increase its effectiveness by making every effort to keep the ball LOW(so it cannot be reached before it drops below the level of the net)...and not just low but also SLOW...hitting it low and hard is not a percentage shot...it's NOT going to drop down below the level of the net...hitting it slow WILL get the ball below the level of the net...

The rationale for keeping the ball below the level of the net is that it less likely that your opponent will be able to hit a winner from below the level of the net...hence, part one...LOW AND SLOW...

If you have been patient long enough(and kept the ball below the level of the net), sooner or later, you will get a ball coming your way that is “high”(above the level of the net)...oh, and besides

being patient, you must also be **constantly** vigilant, **always** looking and being ready for this “high” ball, ready to pounce...now it's time for part two...HIGH AND HARD...

## TIPBITS #19

### YOUR BEST OR YOUR FAVORITE

We all have our favorite shot but is it our best shot...if it's your BEST shot, that means it's a high percentage shot that works at least 80 or 90% of the time..."works" means that it does NOT result in an error...your FAVORITE shot might be totally different in terms of results...your favorite shot may simply give you that great feeling of satisfaction when you hit it...that could even be a BIG overhead that you actually over hit, only to have it sail out...BUT it sure felt good...or maybe it's your favorite shot "when" it goes in...

maybe it's time to be honest with yourself...your favorite shot needs to be put into proper perspective...

if it's a shot you hit almost every point and/or many times during a game, shouldn't it be your best shot...meaning, shouldn't it be in play 80 or 90% of the time...if its not, your favorite shot is holding you(and your team) back from becoming a better team(as good as you could be)...

what if your favorite shot is a relatively high risk shot...maybe you hit a wide angle or hit with a ton of spin or lots of pace or a delicate touch...on a good day you can get the majority (upwards of 60-70%) of them in...if this is the case, what about your bad days...what's the percentage then...consider the fact that the less frequently you play, the less likely you will be having good results days...is that fair to your partner...

what to do...first off, if it's not an 80% shot, don't use it...or, why not make your favorite shot your best shot... make it an 80% or better shot...

how...by doing the WORK...by doing drills set up specifically so that you can practice "your" shot...by practicing it in fun games(versus more serious games)...by hitting it over and over...until you've reached that magic number...you can hit it 80% of the time...

but don't stop there...when you've accomplished that, plan on adding another shot to your game...you'll just keep getting better and better!!!

## **TIPBITS #20**

### **Time to Recap**

As we did after the first 9 TIPBITS, it seems appropriate to review the last 9, as well...the rationale then is the same as it is now...many of the topics presented need to be made a part of every day play and warrant repeating...so, here goes...

- #11 You've Got to Earn the Net...you need to hit the right shot, you can't just rush the net
- #12 Let's Talk Communication...strategy before, issues during(Say It Early) and lessons learned after
- #13 More Communication...the player with the Forehand should take the Third Shot unless called off
- #14 Whose Ball is it...remember the 3 F's...the Forehand, the First one there and the player in the Flow
- #15 Ready Positions...at the Baseline and at the Net with special emphasis on the Paddle Position
- #16 What Grip...the shape of the paddle's grip and how to hold it and when to use it
- #17 More on the Grip...rationale for using the Continental Grip and when Not to use it
- #18 Beating the Good Teams...with Patience and the mantra “Low and Slow” and “High and Hard”
- #19 Your Best Shot or Your Favorite Shot...humor your partner, make your Favorite shot your Best shot

Finally, this just needs to be repeated one more time...Percentage Pickleball is not making mistakes... never over hitting, being under control, being patient and being in the right place at the right time... Percentage Pickleball, it's all about putting the percentages, the overwhelming likelihood that you will be successful, on your side!!!

### **Repeating this TIPBITS Feature**

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## TIPBITS #21

### SPINS?

Understanding, recognizing, dealing with and applying SPIN to the ball are all important facets of advancing your Pickleball game. But first, we need to have an understanding of SPINS.

Spin comes in numerous variations. But first, just to be clear, we are not going to be talking about just a little bit of spin, the slight amount of spin that is the natural by-product of most strokes. Most of the balls hit most of the time have a very limited amount of spin and this spin has little impact on the balls trajectory or its bounce.

Now, understanding spins. Let's talk about the variations of spin, the different types. The three most common spins are topspin, underspin(backspin) or sidespin. Adding to this number are various versions of spins that combine sidespin with either topspin or underspin(probably an innumerable number/quantity).

None of these spins become effective until the ball is struck with enough force to impart more than the normal amount of spin, in other words, struck with the intent of adding above average spin.

What differentiates(defines) the various spins?

Topspin added to the ball causes the ball to rotate in a forward motion at significantly faster rate than normal. The effect of this spin is to cause the ball to drop or dip down faster than a ball without any spin. Further, when the ball bounces, it will jump forward and higher than normal.

Underspin added to the ball causes the ball to rotate in a backward motion at significantly faster rate than normal. The effect of this spin is to cause the ball to float or sail a bit versus a ball without spin. Further, when the ball bounces, it will tend to skid or slide and not bounce as high as normal.

Sidespin added to the ball causes the ball to rotate sideways, either right or left, at a significantly faster rate than normal. The effect of

this spin is to cause the ball to curve, either right or left, versus the ball without spin. Further, when the ball bounces, it will jump either to the right or to the left.

Spin can be very effective...and whether you tend to use it or not, you must be aware of it and know how to react to it...next time!!!

## TIPBITS #22

### TOPSPIN USES

Of the various spins, topspin, backspin and sidespin, perhaps topspin is the most useful...it has more uses than the other options...it can be used in more situations(throughout each point)...and its proper and timely use can have more rewarding results...

Once again, topspin added to the ball causes the ball to rotate in a forward motion at a significantly faster rate than normal. The effect of this spin is to cause the ball to drop or dip down faster than a ball without any spin. Further, when the ball bounces, it will jump forward and higher than normal.

These are important points to remember, the dipping or dropping trajectory AND the higher bounce... and each must be considered by both the player hitting with topspin, as well as the player who needs to react to the ball hit with topspin...

Using topspin during play...

The Serve...use of topspin on the serve can be quite difficult....the normal technique used to impart topspin generally requires holding the paddle sideways, close to parallel with the ground...this, of course, is illegal on the serve(hence, the rule)...but topspin can still be applied, it's just that much more difficult to do...

The Return of Serve...topspin on the return can be both very effective as well as useful...perhaps its most valuable attribute is that it provides a greater margin for error on the return(the dipping/dropping trajectory will keep the ball in bounds whereas the ball hit with the same pace and no topspin would sail out)...effective returns make the use of topspin to drive the ball deep with pace or use a high looping return deep, both making it difficult to hit a good Third Shot...

The Third Shot...this may not be the most effective or desirable time to use topspin...but hitting a topspin ball with controlled pace

that dips just over the top of the net either down the middle or toward one sideline or the other can result in either a clean winner or a forced error by the players at the net...one other option(none too easy, though), is using heavy yet controlled topspin to hit a high looping lob over the head of either net player...

Net Play...while making controlled exchanges back and forth at the net, topspin can be used to drive a high bouncing ball into an opening...or topspin can be used to hit a wide cross-court shot inside the NVZ to pull the opponent off the court...each can be for winners or simply to set up a winning shot...

For now, so much for WHEN, another time on HOW...

## TIPBITS #23

### HITTING TOPSPIN

One last time, topspin added to the ball causes the ball to rotate in a forward motion at a significantly faster rate than normal. The effect of this spin is to cause the ball to drop or dip down faster than a ball without any spin. Further, when the ball bounces, it will jump forward and higher than normal.

Applying spin to the ball requires more and careful timing...hitting a ball without spin or unintentional spin requires no special or different stroke technique...but adding any kind of spin to the ball requires extra effort, skill and especially timing....and lots of it...

To apply topspin to an approaching ball, you first must mentally commit to it...and that's because you must prepare early...topspin is added to the ball by briskly brushing up on the ball from behind it...this is done by starting the stroke with the paddle head below the oncoming ball, swinging through the ball in an upwards motion and completing the swing with the paddle above the ball....or simply, from LOW TO HIGH...

This may be best understood by picturing the ball as the face of a clock...to hit topspin, you would attempt to hit that clock at somewhere between 4 and 5 o'clock, swing upwards through the clock and come out or finish the stroke at 10 or 11 o'clock...

The amount of spin applied to the ball is directly proportional to the speed or pace you add to the paddle and the degree of the upwards motion you apply...further, the amount of pace you apply to the ball is conversely proportional to the amount of spin on the ball...that is, flatter stroke, more pace, less spin; greater upward motion, more spin, less pace...

This is why timing is so critical...and practice (practice, practice) is essential...if you have not been using topspin, now is the time to try it...it will clearly add another dimension to your game...and it's just plain fun playing (around) with it!! More about other considerations and technique another time...

## TIPBITS #24

### MORE TOPSPIN

Well, maybe we are being a little over the TOP with our time spent on TOPSPIN, so just a couple more thoughts, promise...

Learning TOPSPIN requires practice, as we have emphasized; remember the stroke is hit with the paddle moving from LOW to HIGH and you can use the clock face to help you visualize the path of the paddle; another useful learning aid is the mirror...practice the stroke in the mirror, watching closely the path of the paddle...start slow, repeat, then increase your swing speed, repeat...next, the court...

The best practice is with a partner...but if you're alone, you're still ok...you just need a few practice balls and a bang board(a backboard or wall of some sort)...keep hitting until you see some progress...if you are near a PB court, stand at one corner of the court at the baseline and practice hitting topspin lobs to the opposite corner...hit a dozen or so and then go to the other side and do it again...

Practicing with a partner can take several forms...start with both players back each hitting topspin shots or with one player at the NVZ feeding balls to the other player practicing topspin...either way, begin slow until you develop the feel for the shot, then begin adding more pace and more spin...

As you become more proficient, consider adding more spin and pace(paddle-head speed) by not only using your arm but by introducing wrist action into your stroke...use your wrist, in the form of a snapping motion...

For the forehand, start with the paddle back LOW, begin your forward motion with your arm AND with the wrist LAID BACK...then, just before contact with the ball, SNAP your wrist FORWARD as your arm brings the paddle upward and forward through the ball...this adds speed to the paddle head imparting significantly more pace and spin to the ball...

Add even more whip or speed by holding the paddle lower or further down on the grip (even to the point of having the end of the grip in your palm)...last but not least, the smaller the actual grip, the easier it will be for you to create this snapping motion...

CAUTION...while these suggestions, done properly, will create more spin, it's not easy to control....you must factor this risk into your style of play...

Topspin can be hit from either the forehand or backhand sides...but for most, it's best to develop the forehand techniques first... finally, don't limit yourself to using topspin exclusively for ground strokes...it can also be very effective for hitting volleys at the NVZ...Time to PRACTICE!!!

## TIPBITS #25

### THE POACH

Sounds good, what is it? A poach in Pickleball occurs when one of the players(in doubles) crosses over and in front of his partner AND onto his side of the court in order to hit the ball(normally meant for the partner).

This can be a very effective strategy...BUT, it can also result in an error, both causing the loss of the point and possibly irritating your partner, as well...so, for starters, you should(must) COMMUNICATE your plans to poach to your partner...now that's not to say you have to tell him every time....but, you should at least share with your partner under just what circumstances you might be poaching...this way, you will both be on the same page...

Perhaps the easiest and most effective poach is done by the returning team...more specifically, by the returner's partner already at the net...if the return is deep and with good to average pace, hitting an effective Third Shot may be difficult...this is the perfect time to poach...IMPORTANT: you might even increase your odds for success by taking one or two steps to the middle in order to narrow the space available for the opponents shot AND shorten the space YOU need to cover to reach the ball...

Now, this is not to say that this is the only time to poach...opportunities will always present themselves...and if you are constantly thinking “poach”, you will see plenty of opportunities...

Why should you consider “poaching”?

You have the element of surprise on your side...neither of your opponents will be expecting the poach...they were focused on your partner hitting the ball, not you...

You are robbing your opponents of time to react...the mere fact that you have stepped in front of your partner to hit the ball reduces the amount of time your opponents had thought they had to react...

Finally, your shot should be very aggressive with the intent of ending the point...you just need to make sure it's in your favor...so LOOK for the POACH and TAKE IT when it's there!!

## TIPBITS #26

### THE ANGLED TOUCH DROP VOLLEY

Now there's a mouthful...

Remembering the name, much less knowing WHAT it is, or HOW to hit it or WHEN OR WHY...

Well, this is a bit of a specialty shot....one you won't use all the time...but it can be very effective if used judiciously...besides, you are probably well overdue to add something new to your game...Right???

WHAT: First, the “volley” part...this simply means hitting the ball in the air, before it bounces...next, the “drop” part...not hitting the ball hard or deep but just over the net...then, the “touch” part...this corresponds with the drop part, getting the ball just over the net which requires a lot of touch(or finesse)...and finally, the “angled” part...this means you do NOT hit the ball forward but on an angle, to the side and the sharper the angle, the better(your target is to have the ball land inside the NVZ)...

WHEN: As a specialty shot, it's most frequent use will be when you are the Returning team, you're already at the net and the Serving team is hitting their Third shot...presuming you have hit a relatively deep return, the serving team may hit a weak, maybe a little high, Third shot...seeing this, the serving team will probably(should) stay back on or near the baseline...

As the Returning team, if you find yourself in this position, you have several options...your number one goal is always to keep them back on the baseline...or you could go for a winner by trying to hit through or by them...or you could go for the “angled touch drop volley”...

WHY: Hit properly, this shot will result in a clean winner almost every time...

HOW: Sorry...we'll talk about HOW next time...

## TIPBITS #27

### HITTING the ANGLED TOUCH DROP VOLLEY

This specialty shot won't be used all the time but it can be very effective if used judiciously...

Again, the “volley”, hitting the ball in the air, before it bounces...the “drop”, NOT hitting the ball hard or deep but just over the net...the “touch”, getting the ball just over the net using a lot of touch(or finesse)...and finally, the “angle”, NOT hitting the ball forward but at a sharp angle to the side(the target, inside the NVZ)...

This isn't something you will be able to do the first time or 8 out of 10 times(your goal) until you've tried it a bunch...to practice, get a handful of balls and get your training partner to stand at the baseline...you will be standing at the NVZ line in the ready position...have him simulate the Third Shot by hitting soft balls that reach you above the net, between your waist and shoulders...

For the forehand: Option #1; as the ball approaches, move your paddle to a position that will get you ready to hit this shot...that is, hold the paddle below the path of the ball, head pointing on a line just below the path of the ball and almost directly but slightly right of the oncoming ball...just before the point of contact, bring your paddle upwards and slightly forward to hit the ball on its side in somewhat of an arcing motion...this will cause the ball to go sideways...

Again, for the forehand: Option #2; this same shot can be hit with almost the exact opposite preparation and motion...that is, hold the paddle above the path of the ball, head pointing on a line just above the path of the ball and as before, paddle slightly to the right of the oncoming ball...just before contact with the ball, bring the paddle down and slightly forward to hit the ball on its side in a somewhat arcing(cupping) motion...this will also cause the ball to go sideways...

Either way works...for some, it may be more natural to use option

#2...but, for others, it'll be option #1...it's just what comes easiest to you!!!

Once you've practiced this enough to hit it successfully more often than not, try it in a casual game situation...but remember, you should not use any shot in a match that you can't hit successfully **at least 80% of the time(Percentage Pickleball)!!!**

## TIPBITS #28

### INSIGHTS FROM A NATIONAL CHAMPION

(this TIPBITS format presents some Background and Insights from the Best Players in the Country)

#### **JERRY PETERSON**

**Where were you born?** I was born in NE Minneapolis and lived in the park playing everything and anything. Everyone played all the time and organized themselves. We even made up games and we designed the game “Four Square” for raining days. The Park Supervisor took the game to the Mpls Park Board and they sent it out to all the parks in the mid to late 50"s - now it's played everywhere.

**Did you play other sports?** Played everything when I was young; played hockey and track and tennis in high school and college. Also started playing badminton in college. Played lots of competitive badminton over the years.

**Do you remember where and when you first played PB?** In Bloomington five years ago. My good friend Jim Klaseus got me into it.

**What is your favorite shot and why?** The Hard drive because I love singles and that is an important shot and it is, at times, very useful in doubles, too. I also love the top spin lob because it is very effective when done right...it's very difficult to pull off and so it's very exciting when it works.

**What paddle(s) do you currently use?** I play with a Paddletek and Stryker depending on whether I am playing singles or doubles.

**Do you have a shot you practice or a drill you like?** I try to practice them all. I love to play the dinking game at net. I also like to start at the baseline and work up to the net on half of the court.

**Do you have a warm up routine?** I like to hit rapid volleys first,

then dinks for touch, then drops from the baseline with a partner at the net, then reverse with partner.

**What do you think is the most important shot in PB?** In doubles, the Third Shot and whether to 1) drop, 2) drive, 3) or lob. At the top levels of play, you must have the soft game.

**Would you care to add anything(suggestions/comments) you'd like the readers to hear?**

1 "it's a great day for pickle ball"

2 ultimate goal is to be champion in the 90-94 age group - everything else is just practice

3 only mediocre players are their best every day

4 unforced errors are my toughest opponent

5 "Never let your mind write a check that your body can not cash!!

6 pickle ball people have been awesome!!

## TIPBITS #29

### THE HARD DRIVE AND SINGLES

Last time, we heard from one of our local National Champions, Jerry Peterson...in the most recent Nationals, Jerry brought home the Silver Medal in Singles(and in his own words, “if you only knew the level of competition that continues to grow”...)...in that article, Jerry referred to his “favorite shot”, the Hard Drive...and as he further described, it was particularly good for his Singles game and less so for his Doubles game...

Singles versus Doubles in Pickleball is as different as anything could be...aside from the rules being the same(Serve and Return, etc.), the strategy is altogether different...

Imagine, if you can, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic playing one of their classic Tennis matches, basically going at it, toe to toe, at the baseline...

They are hitting hard drive after hard drive, moving each other from side to side, hoping to create the smallest of openings where one of them can gain the edge and slip one shot through for a winner...they use every bit of talent they possess, from hitting big deep topspin forehands and backhands, then slicing under the ball to change the pace, always moving the ball around, looking for that opening that will produce one more winner...this is not the game for the faint of heart...

Yes, it's still about control and percentages but it's at a whole different level...clearly the Third Shot is non-existent...and getting to the net is not a high priority, not like in Doubles...and, does being fit enter into the equation? You better believe it!!!

That's Singles Pickleball...suffice it to say, we'll keep most of our discussions squarely centered on Doubles play; strategy and techniques, drills and training, shots and mechanics, and the occasional TIP from a Champion...

So if you want to play better Singles(Tennis OR Pickleball), watch

the top tennis players and take your inspiration and strategies from them!!!

## **TIPBITS #30**

### **Time to Recap**

As we have become accustomed to doing, our 10th(or multiple there of) TIPBITS is a review of the last 9...the rationale then is the same as it is now...many of the topics presented need to be made a part of every day play and warrant repeating...so, here goes...

#21 Spins...a discussion of the variations, definitions, impact on the ball and results of their use

#22 Topspin Uses...when and why to use, limits of their use and likely expectations

#23 Hitting Topspin...understanding how, techniques for and considerations when using topspin

#24 More Topspin...discussion on practice and how to practice plus advanced techniques

#25 The Poach...definition, communication's role, how, when and why to poach

#26 The Angled Touch Drop Volley...a discussion of this specialty shots' what, why and when to use

#27 Hitting the Angled Touch Drop Volley...how to practice and 2 techniques on how to hit the shot

#28 National Champion's Insights-Jerry Peterson...work on your 3<sup>rd</sup> Shot and “It's a great day for PB”

#29 The Hard Drive and Singles...a discussion on the hard drive and its use in Singles play

Finally, this just needs to be repeated one more time...Percentage Pickleball is not making mistakes... never over hitting, being under control, being patient and being in the right place at the right time... Percentage Pickleball, it's all about putting the percentages, the overwhelming likelihood that you will be successful, on your side!!!

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## TIPBITS #31

### IMPROVING YOUR REACTION TIME

Improving either your reaction time or your hand to eye coordination should be a never ending goal for the Pickleball player of any level...But, how can you do that?

I recall an instructor's answer when asked that very question at a clinic...it was simply “shorten your stroke”...simple and straight forward enough...less time to hit the ball means quicker reaction time!!!

Of course, this presumes you are both READY and FOCUSED..and the two DO go hand in hand...being ready means PHYSICALLY and being focused means MENTALLY...

PHYSICALLY means your body is facing the direction of the oncoming ball, slightly crouched with a slight knee bend, your paddle up and in front of you and, as we have discussed before(if you're at the net), paddle surface facing the oncoming ball and held with a continental grip, second hand perhaps steadying the paddle in a horizontal position...

MENTALLY means your are looking...at the ball, the opponent hitting the ball and his(her) paddle position...any clue you get from these observations can only increase your ability to react effectively(this could be called anticipation but that's another subject for another time)...

Like anything else, you can't just know this stuff, you have to practice it...consider 2 drills(well, one's a drill, the other is sort of a drill/game)...you'll need at least one, but preferably 3 other players...

The first is a Volley Drill(just 2 players are needed)...slowly, at about 50% of your maximum pace, volley back and forth...after reaching 6 or 8 shots, increase the pace gradually...the goal is to keep it going, volley after volley...limit the length of your stroke...try to eliminate any back swing and limit your stroke to just

a simple forward punch with next to no follow through...do this for 6-8 minutes...then rotate with the other 2 players and repeat until you have done the drill with all the other players...this will give you several other perspectives(and improve your ability to adapt and react to different styles)...

The second Drill/Game(called the Snap Game), requires 4 players...begin with all 4 players at the NVZ line...one player puts the ball in play with a dink shot inside the NVZ...3 subsequent dink shots must be successfully hit before “play” begins...there after, dink back and forth until a ball is hit that someone can Snap(volley) away for a winner...this may(should) result in either a winner or a barrage of snap volley exchanges until...a winner is obtained, an error is made or the game returns to “neutral” by returning the play to a dink game...play to 3 or 5, then rotate teams until all have played together...this drill simulates real game play, improves your reaction time and forces you to really focus...

**Our Original Intent!!!**

## TIPBITS #32

### ARE YOU THE WEAKEST PLAYER ON THE COURT?

Sometimes it may not be apparent to you...but it might be to your opponents...or you may get the idea because all the balls are coming your way...or maybe you already know your partner is stronger...

What should you do if you are in this situation?

In this case, you must first play within your own ability...this is nothing new because you should always do this...but more so if you are the weak link...what we mean here specifically is...don't try to hit an ace on your serve, don't go for the lines on your return, don't over hit the ball, don't jump on a ball prematurely...but stay in control, be patient, wait!!!

What else can or should you do to offset the imbalance?

Simply, do not make any errors...you need to play as steady as possible...most importantly, you **MUST** keep the ball low **AT ALL TIMES**...just like playing within your own ability, this philosophy of keeping the ball low works no matter what your skill level...do not give your opponents something to work with...make every effort on every shot to **KEEP THE BALL LOW**...make them hit up at all times(when you give them a high ball, the point is over)...

Next, don't try to be a hero...don't try to hit a winner that isn't there...no showing off because the percentages are just not in your favor...leave that to your partner...rely on your partner to step up when it's necessary and the timing is right...that's why they're the better player...let them get the glory...you still get the win...don't **YOU** be the reason your team doesn't get the win!!!

## TIPBITS #33

### WHAT SIDE AM I SUPPOSED TO BE ON?

What side am I supposed to be on or why wear a wrist band? These are questions you might ask a referee at a tournament match...the bands supplied at most tournaments, especially tournaments with referees, have a distinct purpose...they help the referee determine the proper position for the players during any point in their match...and, if you haven't as yet picked up on this little "trick", now's the time...

When you enter a tournament, you almost always are asked to wear a brightly colored wrist band...and to display it prominently so that it can be easily seen...who wears the band? It's worn by the first server for each team...it helps differentiate the two players on each team from one another (the first server from the second server for each team)...

Matches start with the first server serving from the right side...and they continue serving, changing from side to side until the game is over or until a point is lost...this goes on and on until the game is over...the referee, aside from keeping score and watching for foot faults, must also know where each player is supposed to be at the START of each and every point...ah, the band!

The referee knows the score...and he, like you, should know where you belong...at ANY point in the match, if your score is even, the first server must be on the right side...AND if the score is odd, the second server must be on the right side...this must be true for the entire match...

and with the regard to "What side am I supposed to be on?", this is something you must know, especially in a tournament...if you serve or receive from the wrong side, you will lose the point or your opportunity to continue to serve...so, a final point...during a match with a referee, you can (AND should) ask the referee if you are on the proper side...

remember...even score, first server on the right side...odd score,

first server on the left side...AND this is regardless of whether you are the serving or receiving team!!!

## TIPBITS #34

### WHAT IS THE POWER FORMATION?

You may have heard of this term, the Power Formation(or a similar variation), you may have played against players that use it or your team may have even used it...What is it and Why use it?

Like any doubles team, getting some sort of competitive edge should always be on your mind...How are we going to win this match?...the Power Formation may be your answer...

Here's a synopsis...the Power Formation puts the strongest attributes of each team where they can be used the most...the simplest example is placing a right hand player on the left hand side of the court and the left hand player on the right hand side of the court...in other words, both forehands in the middle...this puts all that team's power in the middle, where most of the action tends to be...

Similarly, putting the strongest of two right hand players on the left side allows the stronger player to play all the shots near the middle with the forehand...or, if two lefty's, the stronger player would play the right side...sometimes mixed doubles teams also use this formation, assuming the players are of unequal skill levels(but that's for you to decide)...

The formation can be used throughout the entire match or just on occasion...the simplest to execute is to use it for the entire match...clearly, issues as to “WHERE AM I SUPPOSED TO BE?” (to serve or receive) present themselves...yet, some of the best players in the world use this formation regularly for the perceived advantage it offers them...

If there is any possible down side to this formation, it is that your opponents always know where the weakest player is without ever thinking about it during the point...

We'll talk about implementing this formation next time...

## **TIPBITS #35**

### **POSITIONING FOR THE POWER FORMATION**

The Power Formation puts the strongest attributes of each team where they can be used the most...

OR, in similar terms, it puts the strongest player's best attributes where they can do the most good...

AND it does this by positioning those attributes in the most effective spot for EVERY point!!!

Choosing who on your team is the strongest and where on the court that player can do most good will depend on your strengths...this is clearly the subject for a discussion for another time...but once you've decided the strongest player and decided who will be where, you'll need to know how to start...

Because each and every point will be played during the match with the Power Formation, the start of the match is no different...let's assume we are using the Power Formation with a team composed of two right hand players AND we assume the stronger player will play on the left side...

**FIRST SERVE:** To begin the match, the weaker player will serve(from the right side)...he will be referred to as the First Server for his team...the stronger player will start on the left side and be referred to as the Second Server...this will be the Power Formation or the preferred positioning for both players for the ENTIRE match...for the opening serve of the match, both players are in their preferred positions and will stay there throughout the point...if they win that point, the players simply shift to the left enough so that the First Server will serve standing just to the left of the center line...and then shift back after the serve to cover the right side of the court...this continues in this manner until loss of the serve...

**SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT SERVES:** When the serve returns to the Power Formation team, if the team's score is even, the positions will be the same as the First Serve(i.e., the First Server will be on the right side)...if the team's score is odd, the Second Server will be the server...he will(must) stand to the right of the

center line and his partner(the First Server) will stand to his right, as well..immediately after the serve, each player will shift left to cover their respective sides...

**RETURNS:** When the Power Formation team receives the serve and their score is even, both players are in their preferred positions...

If their score is odd and the serve is to the right side of the court, the Second Server will stand on the right side, hit the return and immediately advance to the net **ON THE LEFT SIDE**; his partner(the First Server) stands just to the right of the right side line and just behind the NVZ and once the serve is returned moves left taking his position on the right side of the court at the net...

If their score is odd and the serve is to the left side of the court,the First Server will stand on the left side, hit the return and immediately advance to the net **ON THE RIGHT SIDE**; his partner(the Second Server) stands just to the left of the left side line and just behind the NVZ and once the serve is returned moves right taking his position on the left side of the court at the net...

**USING THE REFEREE:** You must, of course, be certain that you are always in the correct position for the beginning of each point..if you are in a match that has a referee and you are in doubt, ask the referee what the score is or if you are in the right position...adjust your position accordingly...

Try it and see if it works for you...**WHY NOT?**

## **TIPBITS #36**

### **THE POWER OF POSITIVE RE-ENFORCEMENT**

Doubles, unlike singles, requires teamwork to be effective.

Playing on a doubles team requires that you take many other matters into account. Anything YOU do can affect the outcome of your match. Communication is a key element in a successful doubles team. The team that knows HOW to communicate and knows WHAT to communicate, may very well be able to minimize some of their own shortcomings or even offset the strengths of their opponent.

Communication can be optimized with compatibility. To be a compatible team, you might expect to have two players that “complement” one another. What does that really mean? Do you need one player that likes the right side and one player that likes the left side? Do you need one player with great foot speed and one with great shots? Do you need two players that play alike or do you need two players that are totally different? Do you need one right handed player and one left handed player? Or how about all of the above?

Or what happens if you don't get to choose your partner? Or what if your not compatible at all? If you both like the same side, you're both pretty slow, or you're two different levels of players?

You may or may not be all that compatible on the court(or off), but to be successful as a team, you have got to work at being compatible. The best way to do that is to provide constant and positive support to your partner. Support can come in many forms. It's not just the occasional “Nice shot!”. As a matter of fact, while support is important after the good shot, it's really needed after the bad shot. And it's got to come from YOU! Let your partner know you have confidence in him and that the two of you will persevere, regardless of the current situation.

The type of communication you choose at this point may impact the overall attitude of your partner throughout the remainder of the

match. Now, more than ever, you need to let your partner know that it's not only OK to make that error but that your totally supportive of his effort, in spite of the results. Perhaps you might say at the end of the point that the opponent made such a great shot, no one could have put it back in play or perhaps you simply encourage your partner to keep going for his shot. Either way, NEVER let your partner see ANY disappointment you may have in his performance.

Support needs to be present throughout the match but never more than when you're behind. If you have maintained that positive reinforcement throughout the match, your suggestions at this time will be well received. Remember you and your partner are in this together, so choose your comments carefully.

**PUT THE POWER OF POSITIVE RE-ENFORCEMENT ON YOUR TEAM!**

## TIPBITS #37

### THE THIRD SHOT DILEMMA

We are not going to talk about WHAT shot to hit...what we ARE going to talk about is equally important...what should you or your partner do if you are NOT the player hitting the Third Shot?

The discussion that follows is based on the premise that 9 times out of 10, the correct Third Shot is the drop or dink shot...and that's because an effective Third Shot drop or dink is the only shot that consistently provides you with the ability to approach or get to the net (your goal as the Serving Team)...

You and your partner must be in sync on your plan for the Third Shot...that is, that you are always going to ATTEMPT a drop or dink shot...notice the emphasis on “attempt”...simply put, because it's known as the toughest shot in the game, it may not be successful the first time...of course if it's in the net or long or wide, you have nothing to worry about(the points over)...

But if it IS in play, then you BOTH need to evaluate its quality...was it a great shot, an OK shot or a marginal or poor shot?...if it's a great shot, you can both advance to the net...if it's just OK or marginal, you BOTH need to stay back and see what your opponent will do(and then, try again)...if it's a poor shot, you must both stay back because your opponents are going to try to put it away...rushing in, either as a team or individually, is suicide in either of these last two scenarios...

To be just a little more specific, if either of you rush the net behind a less than quality shot, you are asking for trouble...this applies equally to either the person hitting the Third Shot or his partner...very simply, if you put your team into this position on a poor quality Third Shot, you are making it very easy for your opponents to crush the ball at the oncoming player or simply hit it between the oncoming player and his partner...

The Right Solution...approach together on a quality Third Shot...in ALL other cases, wait to see what your opponents do and try the

drop or dink again until you can successfully approach the net!!!

So to recap, if you are NOT the player hitting the Third Shot, you need to wait and evaluate the quality of that Third Shot and NOT merely rush the net with your fingers crossed!!!

## **TIPBITS #38**

### **WATCHING THE RETURN**

The Return in Doubles Pickleball has two components; putting the ball in play and getting to the net...nothing you haven't heard before...

But here are some additional thoughts related to the Return...first, a little bit about communication...nothing wrong with a brief chat with your partner before each Return...remind your partner about the wind, if any, what kind of Serve might be expected, what the “plan” is for the placement of the Return and any thoughts either of you have about poaching...

All good ideas but the Serve from your opponent may alter or impact any plans you have made...then what? Or what if you don't talk before the Return?

Simple...Watch the Return!!!

Where should you stand to watch the Return? Obviously, you're going to be at the net and probably slightly to the side of your half of the court to give your partner the widest possible window for his return(some players even stand at the very edge of the sideline but you'll need to move fast to get into position if you're more than a step away)...this position provides you with the ability to see exactly what and how your partner deals with the Serve on his Return...its pace and spin, where it's heading, directionally and how deep or short it's going to be...this is far better than trying to pick up the ball while it's flying past you from behind...it gives you the advantage of knowing early and the insight as to what exactly you must do to prepare...

BTW: one additional rationale for watching the return is to assist your partner in calling long or wide serves...this is as much your responsibility as it is your partner's, if not more so!

So, Watch the Return to be better prepared!!!

## TIPBITS #39

### THE LOB IN PICKLEBALL

Hitting a Lob in pickleball can be effective or catastrophic..it just depends on how and when you do it...it can be a defensive shot, helping you to stay in the point... or it can be an offensive shot, meant to be an outright winner or to put your team in a better position to win the point...

This is not to say that the Lob is a high percentage shot, regardless of the reason for its use...because it's NOT a percentage shot...it's just another option to have available when the opportunity presents itself...

Here are some of those times when you might consider the use of the Lob...

a Lob serve can be used to change the pace from your normal serves and give your opponents a different look...with a little topspin added, you might even get an error on the return...

a Lob return(higher than a more normal return) can produce the same outcome as the serve but at the least, it will buy you all kinds of time to get to the net...consider some topspin here as well...

a Third Shot Lob off of a deep aggressive return may be your only and best recourse when you are unable to hit a Third Shot drop or a Drive...this is an example of a defensive Lob because its simply your best last resort to continue the point...

of course, another Third Shot Lob you might also try is an offensive topspin Lob off of a weak or high bouncing return...you have plenty of time in this situation and both of your opponents are at the net...try aiming for the corner furthest away from you, giving yourself the most court to work with...and good luck because it's the riskiest shot you can make...

and, you may choose to use a defensive LOB at any time during the course of the point...this is especially true if you are unable to do

anything else and you are trying to buy yourself some time to make a better shot or just get a chance to hit another shot...

this has been just an introduction to the most common uses of the Lob...next time, we will discuss some less common but perhaps more potentially rewarding uses...

**until then, don't hit them too short, too low or too deep!!!**

## **TIPBITS #40**

### **TIME TO RECAP**

As we have done after each multiple of 9 TIPBITS, it seems appropriate to continue to provide a review of the last 9...the rationale now is the same as it was then...many of the topics presented need to be made a part of every day play and warrant repeating...so, here goes...

#31 Improving Your Reaction Time...being ready and focused mentally and physically

#32 Are You the Weakest Player on the Court?...If so, limit your errors, don't be a hero and keep it low

#33 What Side Am I On?...Even score, first server, right side; Odd score, first server, left side

#34 What is the Power Formation?...putting your strongest attributes where they will do the most good

#35 Positioning for the Power Formation...where to stand for the Power Formation to begin each point

#36 The Power of Positive Re-enforcement...provide positive feedback to add confidence to your team

#37 The Third Shot Dilemma...approach the net together only on a quality Third Shot

#38 Watch the Return...to see if it's in and to see where it's headed so you can be better prepared

#39 The Lob in Pickleball...the many uses for the least likely shot to be effective

Finally, this just needs to be repeated one more time...Percentage Pickleball is not making mistakes... never over hitting, being under control, being patient and being in the right place at the right time... Percentage Pickleball, it's all about putting the percentages, the overwhelming likelihood that you will be successful, on your side!!!

### **Repeating this TIPBITS Feature**

**Your ideas, Your requests, Your questions, Your comments,  
Your input!!!**

Any and/or all of the above...Please, if there is something you'd like to see in an article or want clarification on or just have a question about, you can simply send a return email to the TIPBITS sending site and share your thoughts...all such requests have been and will continue to be addressed in future articles!!!

## TIPBITS #41

### OTHER LOB OPTIONS

Earlier, we said that hitting a Lob in pickleball can be effective or catastrophic...it just depends on how and when you do it...it can be a defensive shot, helping you to stay in the point... or it can be an offensive shot, meant to be an outright winner or to put your team in a better position to win the point...

We already described Lobs used in various situations but didn't discuss the following options...

A less used Lob opportunity, and perhaps the most difficult, is the Lob volley...this shot is used in a couple of similar scenarios...one, as **you are approaching the net** and your opponents are already there and they hit a shot to you that you **MUST** volley...OR, two, **you and your opponents are already at the net** exchanging rapid volleys...you have several options in each case(hit a crisp (snap) volley back, hit a drop volley back into the kitchen or hit a Lob volley over their heads)...since we are talking Lobs, let's look at this Lob in further detail...

Your objective is to pop the Lob just over their heads but shallow enough to land inside the baseline...this can be very effective because it almost always comes as a surprise...the shot itself requires just a simple(but very delicate) short blocking motion that lifts the ball into the air just over the heads of your opponents...be careful not to hit the Lob too high because this will give your opponents time to race back and recover(or too low, for the obvious reasons)...this Lob can be hit with either a forehand or backhand but the backhand is consistently easier to control...its benefit again is because of its element of surprise...done properly in either of these two scenarios, it can give your team control of the net and in the best possible position to win the point...

As your game progresses, you will find yourself increasingly involved in the soft game, with all four players dinking back and forth at the net waiting for the opportunity to put away a high ball...during this “jockeying” process, you generally think about

two things...one, moving the ball around while keeping it low and two, watching for the opportunity to slap or snap the too high ball away for a winner or through an opening that's too wide to resist...BUT, why not consider a third option...the LOB!...try this Lob when you are dinking back and forth directly across from your opponent(not diagonally)...hit a particularly short dink shot, just over and landing close to the net...this will require your opponent to move forward toward the net...with his momentum bringing him forward, hit(or pop) a Lob over his head...Surprise...it works!

This is not to say that this or any Lob is a high percentage shot, regardless of the reason for its use...because it's NOT a percentage shot...it's just another option to have available when the opportunity presents itself...and just perhaps the element of surprise will tip the numbers in your favor?!

## TIPBITS #42

### INSIGHTS FROM A NATIONAL CHAMPION

(this TIPBITS format presents some Background and Insights from the Best Players in the Country)

#### RACHAEL KROOG

**Where were you born?** St. Louis , Mo.

**Did you play other sports?** 4 sport athlete all through school. Graduated with 16 varsity letters and named the outstanding female athlete of my school. Softball(all conference), basketball(state champion-point guard), tennis(ranked #2 in western NY) and volleyball.

**Do you remember where and when you first played PB?** With my dad, Fred, in Sun City Center Fl.

**What is your favorite shot and why?** I love the short drop shot when I'm at the net and my opponents are whacking at me from the baseline. I soften my grip and just drop it over the net. Very satisfying for me and frustrating for them! 😊

**What paddle(s) do you currently use?** Paddletek or any paddle of my friend's that I can try. I'm always looking for the perfect one. Haven't found it yet.

**Do you have a shot you practice or a drill you like?** Dinking at net and practicing the lob off of the dink.

**Do you have a warm up routine?** Lots of stretching, yoga, jumping jacks, sit ups, and dancing!

**What do you think is the most important shot in PB?**  
Developing the 3<sup>rd</sup> shot drop to neutralize your opponents.

**Would you care to add anything(suggestions/comments) you'd like the readers to hear?**

The more I learn about strategy, shot selection and stroke mechanics,  
the more I recognize that I have so very much more to learn.  
I will be a dedicated student of this sport for the rest of my life.  
Find your strengths and develop them. Find your weaknesses and work on them.  
Drill  $\frac{1}{2}$  as much as you play.  
Videotape yourself so you can see what you are doing right and what you are doing wrong.  
The camera never lies....

## TIPBITS #43

### DRILL HALF AS MUCH AS YOU PLAY

This title was borrowed from our previous National Champion article that provided Insights from Rachael Kroog...her comment above provides one of the single most important methods to both maintain AND improve your abilities, without regard for the sport you play...more simply put, you must WORK on your game to improve, not just PLAY...if you play 3 or 4 times a week you must practice at least 2 additional days...DO YOU DO THAT???

Playing games only, versus practicing, will increase your consistency marginally...BUT, it will not help you with skills or shots you can't execute regularly without fail(i.e., 90% of the time)...most PB instructors would advise you not to use a shot or skill you cannot execute successfully the vast majority(90%) of the time...it's not Percentage Pickleball!!!

Drilling or practicing encompasses several variations...taking lessons and clinics, watching Championship Match videos, AND learning and practicing/executing drills that address all aspects of the game...learn the drills, create new ones, then practice, practice practice until you can hit that 90% number...

And, while you might prefer to start out with an easy goal, such as adding a new spin to your Serve, let's address the shot that Rachael feels is **the most important shot in the game, the Third Shot drop...**

Get better at this shot by learning and using this drill whenever you can(either set aside time just for a number of drills or add a portion of this drill to your regular warm-up routine)...you just need two players...use just one half of the court...one player at the NVZ line and the other player directly across the net at the halfway point of the court...

Begin by hitting drop shots, from the halfway point, over the net and dropping inside the NVZ...the net player returning each shot back...repeat this as often as it takes until you can successfully drop

the ball 3 times in a row...

THEN, from the halfway point, take one large step backward(splitting the remaining difference between your current position and the baseline in half)...now repeat the whole sequence one more time(until you can successfully drop 3 consecutive shots into the NVZ)...

THEN, step behind the baseline and repeat until you can do at least five in a row)...then, exchange positions with your partner and do the same for him(or her)...

Finally, do the same drill from the beginning, but this time, do it diagonally...AND, then do it on the other diagonal...

If you are going to master this shot AND then maintain it(and why shouldn't you?), you must practice this shot regularly every week(even the best players do this!)...that's just one drill to help you learn **the most important shot in the game...**others to follow!!!

## TIPBITS #44

### NEUTRALIZE YOUR OPPONENTS

This title was also borrowed from our previous National Champion article that provided Insights from Rachael Kroog...When she was asked..."What do you think is the most important shot in PB?"...she replied..."Developing the 3<sup>rd</sup> shot drop to neutralize your opponents"...

What did she mean when she said "**neutralize your opponents**"?

When attempting to hit a Third Shot drop, the goal of the shot is to give the Serving team the opportunity to get on equal terms with the Receiving team...the best way for them to do this is to successfully approach and reach the net by hitting a good Third Shot drop...

Here's the scenario...

Both players on the Serving team are back at(in back of) the baseline when the point begins...the Receiving team already has one player at the net...once the Serve has been hit, the Serving team must wait behind the baseline until the Return is hit...once the Returning team hits the Return, that player immediately approaches and reaches the net...the Return team now, with both team members at the net, has the advantage and is in control...not an EVEN situation...the Serving team attempts and successfully hits a good Third Shot drop and both players on the Serving team approach and reach the net...they have now successfully "neutralized their opponents"...that is, all four players, both teams are on EQUAL terms...

Getting the point "back to neutral" is a corollary to the "neutralize" phrase...this too, is a common situation that occurs frequently during long points...and, just like the intent of the first phrase, it has the same basic goal in mind, to get all four players, both teams, on EQUAL terms...

However, unlike the first scenario, the goal here comes during the middle of long points...more specifically, when a drop shot game is “interrupted” with an attempt at a hard put away and a rapid volley exchange begins...you might recognize that your chances of winning such a barrage are probably most likely only 50/50...not good odds...so, what to do???

Try taking all the pace off one of the volleys and get back into the drop shot game...in this way, you will have gotten the point “back to neutral” ...and back on EQUAL terms...

And, as in both scenarios, you should now be ready(again) to look for the one shot you can take to WIN the point for your team!!!

## TIPBITS #45

### DRILLS THAT HELP

Assuming that you recognize the value of practicing instead of just playing, here are a few drills that will address the most important aspects of the game...

First, the easiest and perhaps the the best drill that repeatedly focuses on the most frequently used shots...it's aptly called **“the three ball drill”**...

This drill is done with just two players but four players can use the same court simultaneously...the two players begin by standing at opposite ends of the court and diagonally across from each other(if four are drilling, they will take the other diagonal positions on the court)...player #1 begins with the Serve, focusing on hitting it deep...player #2 hits a Return diagonally, also focusing on hitting it deep AND following the Return to the net AND getting into the Ready position...Player #1 now hits a soft Third shot drop diagonally, just over the net and bouncing into the NVZ...player #2 simply catches the ball and returns to the baseline to repeat the cycle again, from his side, beginning with the Serve...continue this cycle as many times as it takes for you each to be comfortable with your progress...then, repeat the drill using the other diagonal portion of the court...this gives you the chance to hit all three shots from each position on the court...

A follow-on to this first drill is **“the seven ball drill”**...this drill is done with four players...it begins the same as the three ball drill but play continues after the Third shot...specifically four(4) more soft drop(dink) shots are exchanged(totaling seven), and then the point is played out...repeat, rotating the Serve from player to player...this drill works on the first three shots as well as forcing you to work on the soft game...a MUST if you intend to advance your game...

Finally, **“the four serve drill”**...once again, the drill requires four players...pick one side of the court to begin all Serves...start Serving in the normal position(the right side of the court)...that will

be the position all four Servers will stand when it is their turn in the rotation to Serve...begin by hitting an aggressive Serve...follow that with an aggressive Return...the Third shot MUST be a soft drop shot...then play the point out...NOTE that each of the first three shots must be successful(in play) or that Serve is repeated...in other words, if unsuccessful, that Serve does not count as one of the four allotted to that Server...after four successfully completed points rotate one player to the right so that the next Server is in position...repeat until all four players have Served...then repeat the entire drill one more time but this time begin the Serve on the left side of the court...this drill allows both the Server and the Returner to experiment with different, perhaps more aggressive shots...

Try these drills...there is just no better way to improve your skills!!!

## TIPBITS #46

### THE MENTAL SIDE

You've certainly heard of or read any number of articles or even books on "mind over matter"...there are books and theories on everything from how to heal your back to how to heal your backhand...doctors, psychologists and commentators, alike, have all expounded upon the abilities of professional athletes to control their emotions, channel their thoughts and focus on the challenge before them...inevitably, only the very best seem to excel during the most critical times...

It doesn't seem to make any difference if it's the quarterback, behind by 6, driving his team down the field with 2 minutes to go, the basketball player that hits the three pointer for the win at the buzzer, the golfer that sinks the five foot putt for the championship or the tennis player working his way through the draw...

They all seem to share the same characteristics...they all seem to possess that innate ability to rise to the occasion...and the really great players do it time and time again...that sets them apart from all the other athletes in their sport...to be sure, it's not just because they are the most talented players because all professional athletes have talent...it's because they have the "where with all" to call on those abilities and excel when it's really needed, when it's time to prevail...

the greats in our parallel sport, tennis, come to mind...whether it's the current greats(Federer, Nadal or Djokovic) or those of the past(Laver, Sampras or Connors), they all have it...there are hundreds of top ranked professional tennis players, all have incredible talent and they all want to win...then, why is it that those select few players continue to rise above the rest...**what does it take?**

Roger Federer was recently quoted saying "Having the fire and wanting to win every single match and in the practice, trying to improve as much as you can, I've got good balance right now, so

it's very encouraging” ...after all those victories, his comments at this stage in his career!!!

**Food for thought...more to come!!!**

## **TIPBITS #47**

### **MORE ON THE MENTAL SIDE**

WHAT DOES IT TAKE...for professional athletes to control their emotions, channel their thoughts and focus on the challenge...

WHAT DOES IT TAKE...to excel during the most critical times...to rise to the occasion...and do it time and time again...

WHAT sets them apart from all the other athletes in their sport...

It's a lot of things...but for one, it's their ability to FOCUS...it's because they can raise their level of focus so much that nothing else matters...

A dictionary definition says that FOCUS is the “adjustment that gives clear vision”...how many times have you heard a top tennis player or baseball player say, when asked what made a great day, was simply that they were “seeing the ball well”...the ball looked like a watermelon or it seemed to move much slower than usual...they were “in the zone”, unaffected by outside distractions...

What helps these greats to focus so well, to be so intense, to concentrate only on what needs to be done...could it be, because they want it more?!

They are eager to win, there is a burning desire, a fire that can't be put out, a drive that can't be satisfied in any other way...they are persistent and determined and tenacious...they put every ounce of their physical and mental strengths towards their goal...

Apply this level of FOCUS to every aspect of your game and watch your own results improve...

When you Serve or Return, don't make a simple mistake...when you move, move with purpose, get to where you need to be...raise your level of intensity...force yourself to watch the ball more closely...pick it up sooner, watch your opponent's paddle face,

remember their habits...plan ahead, get ready sooner, get down lower, watch more closely, up your game!

**Make the adjustments that give you clear vision!**

## TIPBITS #48

### FOCUS AND CONFIDENCE

Focus gets you a long way down the road when you are struggling to win...yet another key element in your path to consistency and victory after victory is CONFIDENCE...do you think that Jack Nicklaus ever had a lack of confidence or Serena Williams ever feared she was incapable of a win???

Not likely...they know they can win...they have confidence in themselves...and plenty of it!!!

So, what is it and where does it come from? Confidence is “nothing more” than SELF-BELIEF...it’s knowing that you can do it...it’s knowing what your abilities are and having faith in them...

If you haven’t got it, how do you get it??? Like any thing else, if you know what your doing and you're good at it, you’ll have confidence in your ability...if you know your job, you have confidence that you can do a good job...you got there by putting in your time and working hard...

It’s no different in Pickleball...if you have the skill, then you’ll have the confidence you need to do it successfully over and over again...if you don’t, as yet, have the skill, you’ll have to get it...and to get the skill, you’ll have to PRACTICE...let’s say we’re talking about your overhead...if you can hit that shot for a winner 9 out of 10 times, you’ve mastered that skill...you know the next time you’re set up to hit that overhead, no matter what the circumstances are, you can hit that shot in your sleep...you’re that CONFIDENT!!!

To get to this point, you’ll need to have a plan...to start, you’ve got to pick some specific and, most importantly, realistic AND attainable goals...decide what you want; a great Third Shot, a deep Serve, an overhead you can hit anytime or anywhere, or a angled volley that almost parallels the net...just don’t set your goals beyond your reach!!!

Then, set out to MASTER that shot...get a lesson, practice it every day, stay POSITIVE throughout and don't quit until you can do it 9 out of 10 times successfully...then, give it a test..try it against an opponent...finally, evaluate your performance...how did you do??? do you need more practice??? If so, then DO it again until it becomes second nature to you...then TEST it again...

**Before long, if you stay focused on your goals , you'll master those shots, your self-belief will increase and your CONFIDENCE will propel you to another level of performance!!!**

## TIPBITS #49

### HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

Great shots are great to see...but do they win tournaments?...or do the steady, less flamboyant players that grind out win after win by just keeping the ball in play and limiting their errors really deserve the acclaim?...will the players with the flare for the big shots bring home more GOLD than the percentage players who rely on consistency?...

Maybe there is a parallel in golf...the mantra “Drive for Show, Putt for Dough” comes to mind...no different in Pickleball...consider these situations...

Let's say you have successfully pulled both your opponents to one side of the court, they hit a fat sitter back to you and you've got the whole side of the court open...do you hit a super sharp diagonal volley that you slice ever so precisely to the side?...or do you simply tap the ball gingerly over the net for the easy put-away?...

Or perhaps you've driven both of your opponents back behind the baseline with a lob, they hit that same fat sitter back to you at the net and you've got 22 feet of open court in front of you...do you slice wickedly under the ball with incredible spin, hitting the ball just over the net and then watch it spin even further away from your opponents?...or do you just tap it into the NVZ with a steady hand for another easy put-away?...

How about when you have split your opponents apart from one another, so much so you could drive your SUV through the middle...do you rip a swinging topspin volley through to the baseline?...or do you just slip an easy one up the middle for the put-away?...

Why Not Choose the Percentage Shot?... Why Not Choose the Shot that's got NO chance of going too DEEP, NO chance to nick the net to only slide OUT WIDE of the sideline or NO chance of going INTO the NET because it wasn't hit precisely enough?...

All good questions that might suggest answers to...How Much is Too Much?

Or provoke this question...

**“Why hit the Dollar shot when the Nickel shot will do???”**

## **TIPBITS #50**

### **TIME TO RECAP**

As we have done after each multiple of 9 TIPBITS, it seems appropriate to continue to provide a review of the last 9...the rationale now is the same as it was then...many of the topics presented need to be made a part of every day play and warrant repeating...so, here goes...

- #41 Other Lob Options...the Lob Volley, how and when to use it
- #42 National Champion's Insight-Rachael Kroog...there is always more to learn and room to improve
- #43 Drill Half as Much as You Play...the importance of practice and some drills to help you improve
- #44 Neutralize Your Opponents...put your team on equal terms with the receiving team ASAP
- #45 Drills That Help...description and value of the 3 and 7 ball drills and the 4 serve drill
- #46 The Mental Side...a discussion of the non-physical attributes of the top athletes in the world
- #47 More on the Mental Side...the role Focus plays in achieving your maximum potential
- #48 Focus and Confidence...how and why to add Confidence to your non-physical skills
- #49 How Much is Too Much...consider “Never Hit the Dollar Shot When the Nickel Shot Will Do”

Finally, this just needs to be repeated one more time...Percentage Pickleball is not making mistakes... never over hitting, being under control, being patient and being in the right place at the right time... Percentage Pickleball, it's all about putting the percentages, the overwhelming likelihood that you will be successful, on your side!!!

### **Repeating this TIPBITS Feature**

**Your ideas, Your requests, Your questions, Your comments,  
Your input!!!**

Any and/or all of the above...Please, if there is something you'd like to see in an article or want clarification on or just have a question about, you can simply send a return email to the TIPBITS sending site and share your thoughts...all such requests have been and will continue to be addressed in future articles!!!

## TIPBITS #51

### LEARN FROM YOUR LOSSES

We all lose matches, some worse than others...some, we SHOULD have won...some, there is no way we COULD have won...some times we feel we did the BEST we could...other times we feel we couldn't do ANYTHING right...like any other sport, we stand to gain more from our losses than from our wins...

Ever said that you had a “good lesson” after you were soundly defeated...perhaps you should take this comment to heart and see what you have really learned...once you have overcome the feelings or emotions you have from losing, you're ready to learn from the loss...but, don't wait too long...you want to remember as many aspects of the match as you possibly can...

First of all, divide your losses into categories and analyze them based on their category...

The first category of loss is the match where you were thoroughly outclassed and had no chance of winning...these types of matches usually result in the most lopsided scores... the good news is that they usually affect you the least emotionally...what did you learn?...what could you do better?...well, short of getting a whole new game, probably not much...this is the time to analyze your loss and learn from it...pick the ONE THING that stood out the most(the area of their game that caused you the most trouble) and make that defect, that stroke or that strategy your next task to master...

The next category of loss is the one that might be emotionally the hardest one to accept...the match you should have won...this match typically goes something like this...you were ahead with a comfortable lead ...then, the momentum swung and you could do nothing right...suddenly, it was over and you lost...

After you're done stewing about the loss, take an objective look at your match...ask yourself some of these questions...when did the

match begin to slip away?...what triggered this momentum change?...were you trying not to lose or is that the way you always play?...was it really all them(picking up their level) or did you let down?...did you lose focus?...

Notice that many of these questions are directed at attitude rather than technique...you probably got in this predicament because of some change in your attitude rather than some stroke deficiencies or strategic lapses...

In any event, NEXT TIME, you need to change something BEFORE it's too late...CHANGE is the operative word here...and you MUST change something...take a time out, talk about it, consider an attitude change...and to do this, you must change something else...such as your level of effort, your intensity, your strategy, your serve, your return, something!...it's that simple!...but you've got to make a change!

Another category of loss is the match that could have gone either way...this takes some detailed analysis and we'll look at that more closely in a subsequent discussion...for now...

**Have you got one loss that really bugs you? Did you learn from it?**

**If you did, you will be better player next time!**

## TIPBITS #52

### LEARN 'MORE' FROM YOUR LOSSES

#### (Your Loss Q n A)

Previously, we discussed learning a lesson from matches we'd lost...that once we shook off the emotional aspect of the loss, it was time to analyze the match...it's done in every sport, whether it be an individual sport, such as golf or a team sport, such as football...

A pro golfer, playing four rounds in a tournament or an amateur golfer playing the same course, week after week, can each find themselves in similar situations...perhaps in the last round played on such and such a hole, the golfer used the wrong club...easy fix...just remember which club was used and use a different club next time...a simple way to learn and improve.

Significantly more complicated is the football coach's job on Monday morning...he's got the tape from the game and, if he doesn't go over every play, he certainly goes over every critical play...and he analyzes each detail, points out short-comings and "suggests" what should have been done...

In pickleball, wouldn't it be great if you had a tape of your match...or maybe your coach watching closely and making notes along the way and sharing his observations after the match...of course, most of us aren't so lucky to have these options...we have to figure these things out for ourselves...

Assuming this is the kind of match that could have gone "EITHER WAY", the first order of business is to replay in your mind as much of the match as you can remember...even if the match came down to just one point, an analysis of the whole match is still critical because changes in play or strategy (*all along the way*) might have resulted in an easy win instead of a close loss...

To learn from any loss, take the time to do a post match analysis asking yourself the questions below...they're on a separate page, so

you can print them out (or create or customize your own)...

Share and review your analysis(Loss Q and A) list with your partner...then fix what you need to fix and do it differently next time...this way, you will...

**LEARN 'MORE' FROM YOUR LOSSES!**

PS...You might save your Loss Q and A's for future reference...



# MY LOSS Q and A

WHEN.....

WITH.....

AGAINST...../.....

What category of loss was this(NO CHANCE, SHOULD HAVE, EITHER WAY)?

What was the most obvious reason you lost?

List the other reasons you remember(your weaknesses...their strengths)...

Did you count your errors(errant shots)?...did you make lots of errors?

What was the most prevalent?

The second most prevalent?

Others that stand out?

What were your best attributes(defense, offense, component of each)?

Strategy-wise, during the course of play, what happened?

What strategy hurt you the most(theirs, yours, soft game, pace, court positioning)?

Helped you the most?

Did they take the net from you or keep you from getting to the net?

Did you try to put the ball away too soon or not soon enough?

Who won most of the rapid volley exchanges and why (placement or pace)?

Were you too aggressive or not aggressive enough?

Did you hit the ball into the net (or too high or too wide) too often...which?

Did you talk along the way or try different things or try too many things?

Did you play their game or just try not to lose?

In summary, what things made the difference?

**What do you need to do to fix it and how will you do that?**



