

# DINKER'S DIGEST

December 2022

## PICKLEBALL

YOUR GRANDMA'S  
FAVORITE SPORT

AMITY DAZE  
TOURNAMENT

PLAYER  
PROFILES

RULES  
SPOTLIGHT



# Editor's Message

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One thing about me is that I have always enjoyed competition in any regard. The level of emotion that competition can bring out of a person is beautiful. No matter the outcome, you are compelled to feel something for both sides.

As a participant, you are susceptible to such a wide range of emotions that very few other aspects of life can achieve. Even as a spectator, you can be on the edge of your seat for the entire duration with an end result of jubilation or utter disappointment, with exhilaration during every moment in between.

To me, sports are the greatest conveyor of competition we have at our disposal. No matter the sport, it is truly a delight to witness the triumphs of athletes. Even the stories of heart-breaking defeats make for excellent memories, simply because the power of the emotions they weigh upon you.

While being a spectator can be a great pleasure, there is no possible way to fully grasp those feelings of competition that sports provide without being a player yourself. There are times that I long for the days of being an athlete in high school, being able to compete, despite the outcome.

The sad truth is that, for almost everyone, there comes a time when you must take that seat among the spectators and retire as a player from your sport. Even those who have dedicated their lives to their sport and have maintained peak athleticism, age will ultimately force your hand at retirement. That is unless you are Tom Brady, who seemingly refuses to let any such thing happen.

I thought that was the case for every sport until I recently discovered pickleball. Almost anybody can play pickleball at a competitive level regardless of age or physical condition.

You could be the fastest or the strongest human alive, but I would still put my money on my 80-year-old grandma who plays pickleball every single day to win in a match between the two.

I was introduced to pickleball by my girlfriend who dragged me along to play with her family over the summer. It is safe to say it was love at first dink. I've always enjoyed playing table tennis and have never had the athleticism required for actual tennis, so pickleball is the perfect intermediary.

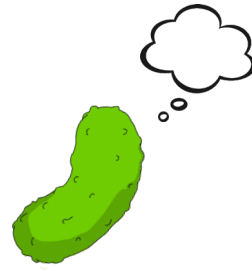
Shortly after my first few experiences playing pickleball I went out and bought myself a couple of paddles and balls. And now a few months later, there isn't a day that goes by where I don't think about playing. That feeling is what has been my inspiration to create Dinker's Digest and share my love for pickleball with others.



ANDREW CORNELL,  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

# PICKLE

## THOUGHTS



### WHY PICKLEBALL IS THE GREATEST SPORT

By Andrew Cornell

Pickleball is the only sport that your grandma could kick your butt in. That is also why it is the greatest sport in the world.

The reason why the elderly are so good at pickleball is because that on the court, they have no disadvantage to your young knees or unfractured hips. In fact, they have the advantage of being retired seniors with all the time they have left in this world to perfect their craft.

Pickleball demographics split those who play pickleball into “core” players and “casual” players. Core players are those who play 8 or more times a month and casual players are those who play 7 times or less. 52% of core players are aged 55 years or older and 79% of casual players are 54 years or younger.

Inclusivity is pickleball’s greatest quality and the root of my love for the game. The way pickleball is played offers very little advantage based on age, gender, or athleticism, which means just about anyone can play with equal competition.

Pickleball is very easy to learn for newcomers, especially in comparison to other racket sports like tennis. I have witnessed a beginner’s tennis lesson before and can say that it requires lots of practice to even become competent. Alternatively, I have played with brand-new pickleballers

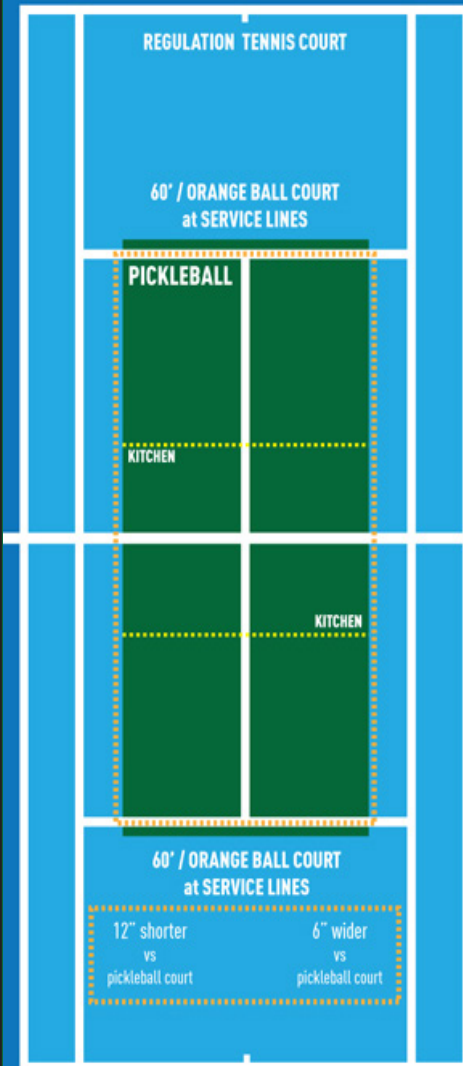
on several occasions, and within an hour of picking up a paddle for the first time, they are already playing full matches.

The ball used in pickleball is similar to a wiffle ball and does not fly as fast nor bounce as hard as tennis balls. This makes it much easier to handle and results in volleys that last longer and require precision rather than power to win. Not to mention you don’t have to worry about a ball flying at Mach 40 hitting you in the face.

A pickleball court is smaller than the play area for most other sports. You could fit two pickleball courts into the size of one tennis court for comparison. A smaller court results in less ground needing to be covered which eliminates the advantage that a speedier opponent might have. Pickleball is typically played in doubles, so that area is also shared with your partner.

Pickleball’s small court size allows for the sport to be played both outdoors and indoors. As someone who lives in upstate New York where warm weather is limited, a sport that can be played year-round gets massive bonus points. Keeping up with inclusivity, pickleball is also a sport that can be played standing or in a wheelchair.

## PICKLEBALL COURT VS TENNIS COURT



# Allegany County Has Pickleball Fever

By Andrew Cornell

Pickleball is America's fastest-growing sport and is taking the country by storm, with more people picking it up every single day and my hometown is no exception.

Wellsville, NY is located in Allegany County, one of the smallest counties in the state. Wellsville has a population of about 5,000 people, and among that population are some of the most dedicated pickleball fanatics I know.

In the last year, the town has included permanent pickleball regulation court lines on the local tennis courts to satiate the demands of all the persistent pickleballers. At almost any given time throughout the day, if you were to visit these courts you are more likely than not to spot a pickleball match taking place.

Over the summer, I would show up to play with a group and would be greeted by others already there partaking in the game. Oftentimes, we would wind up playing together and I would make friends with people I had never even known in the same town I grew up in. More recently, as I was visiting Wellsville for Thanksgiving I saw a group of kids on the courts playing pickleball in the 30-degree weather.

A few years ago, prior to the pickleball craze reaching my town, it was rare to see anyone utilizing the free public access courts. It is a great thing to see people outdoors enjoying the facilities there are to offer. I'm sure that there are many other communities similar to mine that are experiencing the same spectacle and it is thanks to pickleball.



# The Amity Daze Tournament

By **Andrew Cornell**

The Amity Daze Festival is an annual event in Allegany County held in Belmont. The event takes place in August and features all-day yardsales throughout the town, community events, and a BBQ competition. This year, a pickleball tournament took place at the local park and was a massive success.

Organized by the local YMCA, the tournament was funded by sponsors who provided some awesome pickleball merchandise as prizes and offered for sale as well. All of the merchandise sales and entry fees for the players were donated to the SPCA.

The tournament featured men's doubles, women's doubles, and a mixed doubles bracket for a wide array of diversity to compete in the day's event. Each bracket consisted of over 14 teams and the ages of the players ranged from 14 years old to the oldest player at 72 years old.

There were no referees present to officiate the matches, instead, the players made their own calls. This was great to see, as everyone treated their opponents fairly and with great respect. It also promoted the theme of the Amity Daze Festival of friendliness and community. Pickleball is a gentleman's sport after all.



# PLAYER PROFILES NEWBIE

## MITZI

# KALKBRENNER



Age: 22  
Hometown: Wellsville, NY  
Profession: Teacher, Pickleball enthusiast  
Role Model: Ruth Bader Ginsburg  
Warm-up music: Nicki Minaj

Mitzi Kalkbrenner is a 22-year-old third-grade teacher at Wellsville Elementary School by day and a pickleball enthusiast by night. Before teaching at Wellsville, she attended school there and graduated as valedictorian in 2018. She is also currently assistant coaching the school's cheerleading squad which she was once on.

Mitzi earned her bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education at SUNY Fredonia and plans to return for her Master's degree. She is a first-generation college graduate in her family and she describes the accomplishment as her greatest achievement.

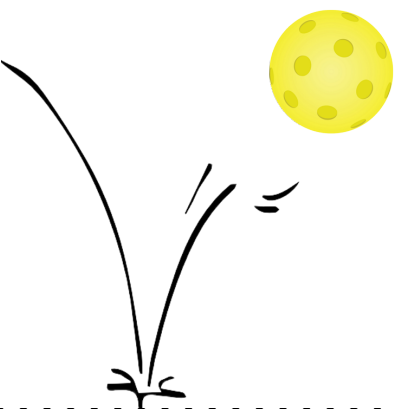
As a first-year teacher, Mitzi has as much on her plate as it can hold but she still manages to make time for pickleball in her busy schedule. Through her new teaching career, she has also met other teachers who have a shared passion for the sport.

Pickleball was first introduced to Mitzi

by her father who is as big of a pickleball fanatic as they come. She explained that she had also seen a lot of pickleball hype on social media such as TikTok and was interested in seeing what it was all about.

In April 2022 Mitzi played pickleball for the first time under the instruction of her father, "and after that, I was hooked" she says. Mitzi's favorite aspect of pickleball, other than how fun it is, is the friendly community. Everyone you meet who plays pickleball is happy to have you there.

As a former cheerleader, Mitzi explains that much of what she learned in her sport is useful in pickleball as well. The hand-eye coordination required in cheerleading is also vital to pickleball. The sportsmanship displayed in pickleball is also a quality that reminds her of cheerleading. Most importantly, Mitzi believes that attitude is key to both sports, "Its never over until it's really over."



# PLAYER PROFILES PRO

## MICHELLE ESQUIVEL



**M**ichelle Esquivel is a 35-year-old professional pickleball player and instructor from Anaheim, California. She has several pickleball titles under her belt, including a bronze at Nationals, and a gold in women's doubles and mixed doubles. Esquivel is an inspiring figure in the pickleball community and uses her influence to advocate for youth pickleball programs across the country.

Esquivel earned her bachelor's degree in exercise sports science with an emphasis in teaching and coaching from Concordia University and later earned her Master's degree in Physical Education from Azusa Pacific University. She describes "Getting my master's degree in Physical Education and having my mom there to see me receive my diploma" as her proudest achievement.

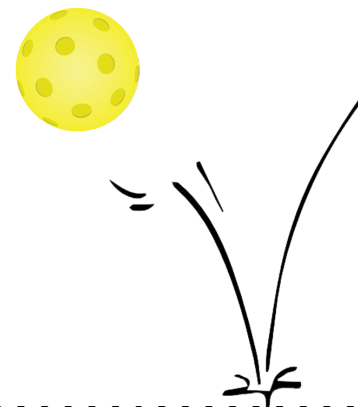
Prior to becoming the pickleball star Esquivel is today, she was a proud tennis player with an impressive

resume. She won CCCAA state titles in singles and doubles as a Pirate in 2005 before moving on to play with Concordia University at the NAIA level where she was a two-time All-American. Esquivel also had a coaching career for college tennis at Cypress College in California.

Her mother was her sports mentor, who loved tennis. Esquivel says that when her mother passed "I was so lost. Pickleball saved me." Today, Esquivel volunteers for the American Heart Association in her free time because of her mother.

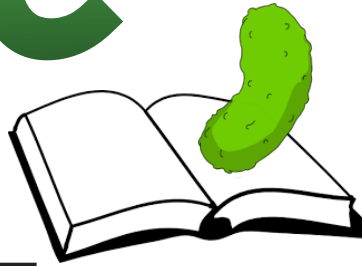
Becoming a pickleball player with a tennis background, she explains that "Tennis over prepared me because tennis is so defined and so organized. Pickleball is not set in stone." Because pickleball is such a unique sport, Esquivel felt comfortable starting her own pickleball academy to teach players.

Age: 35  
Hometown: Anaheim, CA  
Profession: Pickleball player and coach  
Role Model: Lucille Ball  
Warm-up music: Queen



# PICKLE

## RULES



### Double-Taps

Sometimes when you are hitting the ball, you can feel your paddle make contact with the ball twice during your swing. This is known as a double tap and it is legal in pickleball as long as your swing is a continuous single-direction stroke.

Many people are unaware of this and might forfeit the point after a double tap because they think it is a fault, but

you should just play on. This can be misleading due to many other ball sports having faults for making double contact.

The ball can also make contact with your paddle hand and still be in play. If, however, it hits anywhere on your body other than your paddle hand, there is a fault.

Learning pickleball can be a bit of a tricky task. While the basic rules of the game like volleying and scoring are simple enough, there are many other rules to the game of pickleball that many new players are unaware of.

This article is here to shed light on some of the lesser-known rules, all of which can be found in the Official USA Pickleball Rulebook.



### Profanity

This is pickleball's most violated rule by all players, myself included. Profanity is not only frowned upon but is actually a rule violation. The rulebook defines profanity as "Words, phrases or hand gestures, common or uncommon, which are normally considered inappropriate in 'polite company'".

While pickleball is a social and friendly sport, it is still very competitive, and it is easy to let your emotions take control at

times. Many times I have made a mistake in a game and blurted out words that are "considered inappropriate in polite company", according to the rulebook.

To work around this, something my pickleball friends have come up with is to simply use the words "pickle" and "balls" as a replacement for any profanity. It works surprisingly well, and while it has not yet been adopted into any major pickleball organizations, I have high hopes that it will be.

