

PICKLEBALL LEAGUES AND TRAINING COMPETITIVE LADDERS

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PICKLEBALL LEAGUES AND TRAINING

(PLEAT)

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INTRODUCTION

Pickleball is most fun when similarly-skilled players play together and compete against each other. Which comes first (which is the chicken and which is the egg)?

- In order to play better I need to play with better players
- In order to play with better players, I need to play better

Generally,

- The 2.0's want to play with the 3.0's,
- The 3.0's want to play with the 3.5's
- the 3.5's want to play with the 4.0's and
- the 4.0's think they have no competition in pickleball.

Without adequate structure, chaos generally prevails. Playing non-competitive games is generally fun for nobody and can be incredibly frustrating for all involved. For the lower-rated players it can be demoralizing and confidence-sapping. For the higher-skilled players it just isn't challenging. Pickleball ladders may be the answer.

PICKLEBALL LADDER DESCRIPTION

Ladders leagues are organized leagues in which players with relatively similar skills compete against each other in a competitive, structured and, typically, weekly format. Think of a pickleball "ladder" as a graphical representation of a player's ranking (by skill and performance) over a period of time (10 weeks, for example). The rungs on the ladder represent a player's current position (ranking) on the ladder relative to the other players — with the top rung of the ladder being the individual or team currently ranked the highest (the best percentage of points achieved) and the bottom rung being the lowest-ranked individual or team.

Individually-Ranked, Round-Robin Pickleball Ladder

There are various formats for pickleball ladder leagues. One form of a ladder league format is that of an individually-ranked, round-robin. In such a format, those participating in the ladder will play against other players of similar skill in a round robin format playing one game against each other player in a ladder session. After the scores are tallied for each session, players may be *individually* moved up or down the ladder the following week — depending upon their performance. The ultimate goal is to climb the ladder to the highest rung and then move to a ladder of more skilled players than the ones they have been playing with. Typically, ladder sessions are scheduled weekly and ladder participants declare whether or not they will attend that session. Sessions are generally 8 to 12 players in size. There is a minimum number of sessions that a player needs to attend to be properly ranked.

Player Movement between Ladders

Player movement in or between ladders is based on the player's percentage history which is the total number of points won divided by the total points available for the sessions. For example, if a player scores 6 out of 11 points, the percentage for that one game is 55%. A player in a ladder will qualify to move up to the ladder if they have a standings percentage of 90% or more for the last 5 weeks played. Likewise, a player will move down to the next lower ladder if they have a standings percentage below 65 for the last 5 weeks played. This ensures that players on a ladder will be competitive with each other. Ladder Coordinators will notify players of their movement between ladders prior to the move.

Movement Between Ladders

As we just illustrated, one moves up (and down) the ladder each week depending upon their performance on the courts the previous week. If your points percentage increases, you go up the ladder. If your points percentage decreases, you go down the ladder. Many leagues have multiple ladders — with each ladder being 8-16 rungs high — depending, of course, on the number of similarly skilled players. For this example, let's assume 4 different ladders (with 16 players per ladder) are organized at your club. The first ladder is for 2.0 rated players. The second ladder is for those rated 2.5 – 3.0. The third ladder is 3.5 – 4.0. The final ladder is 4.5+. If one person is dominating the top 1 or 2 rungs of their respective ladder each week, that person

should potentially be moved to the next higher-skilled ladder (on the lowest rung). Likewise, if one person is perpetually stuck on the bottom rung, perhaps that person needs to be moved to a lower-skilled ladder.

- These rules are established to maintain consistency of play and record keeping within ladders.
- The format of play is designed so that players play mostly with others of similar skill levels.
- Ladders are intended be **competitive** and **are not a training forum**.
- Your initial placement on a ladder will be determined by the ladder committee which considers your current rating by any recognized rating method, your results in Local, National and Regional tournaments, and your current perceived skill level.
- Your subsequent placement will be based upon your points percentage (the ratio of points won to total points possible). Players will move within the ladder based upon their points percentage. The results of the 12 most recent weeks of play will be used for this calculation. Each week, players will play with players on their ladder and attending the session in a round robin format, where they will play with and against the other players in the session.
- Ladder sessions will be announced and players can sign up for their respective ladder on a first come basis. Generally, the number of participants in any one ladder session will be limited to 12 players or 3 courts
- Since courts at some locations cannot be reserved in advance, you might need to wait for an available court. Sessions **WILL NOT** be scheduled during a site's designated OPEN TIMES or other reserved times.
- Players are expected to indicate their intent to play by responding to the ladder invitations
- The number of games played during a ladder session will be determined by the number of players that have signed up for the ladder session.
- The schedule of play will be available when players arrive for ladder play.
- After your games have been played, players record their scores on the score sheet that is available in the area. Record the individual scores for each game and designate one player to communicate the results to the ladder coordinator
- A player's points percentage will be developed as matches are played. Over time, the results of the 12 most recent matches will be used to calculate the player's percentage.
- If a player is not able to maintain a scoring percentage of 65% and above for 5 weeks played, they will be moved to the next lower skill ladder. Those players dropping lower than the novice skill level will be removed from ladder play.
- Scores will be posted within 24 hours after the end of play.
- If the match is terminated BEFORE the final game, DUE TO WEATHER or INJURY, then scores up to that point will not count, and everyone will get an absence for the match.
- If the match is terminated AFTER the final game has begun, DUE TO WEATHER or INJURY, then the team in front will be awarded whatever points are needed to bring their score to 11 or 15, and the team behind will get the same number of points added to their score. (e.g., the score is 5-0, the team in the lead gets 6 or 10 points added to their score and the team behind will get the same 6 or 10 points).
- Play times for all Ladders and Round-robin are scheduled separately. Watch for updates in the weekly Ladder invitation.

Absences

Can't Play – BEFORE Schedule is Published:

If a player is unable to play on the specified day, they should respond 'NO' to the ladder invitation.

The schedules will then be made without that player. The player's most recent score will stand until the player resumes play. There is no penalty for being absent as long as the coordinator is informed before the published deadline.

"No-Show" Rule

You are a "No-Show" if you replied 'yes' to the ladder invitation and do not change that status prior to the established deadline, and have not arrived by 10 minutes before the start of Ladder play. The first time you are a "No-Show" you will be suspended from ladder play for 2 weeks. The second time you are a "No-Show"

within a Ladder season, you will be suspended from ladder play for a period of 4 weeks. A third “No-Show” during a Ladder season, suspends you from play for 12 months from the date of the last infraction. The above suspensions also pertain to anyone leaving their matches prior to the completion of Ladder play unless due to a medical issue.

Percentage Establishment

When a new player is added to a ladder, he/she will develop a playing percentage as matches are played. Over time, the results of the up to 12 most recent matches will be used to calculate the player’s percentage.

Rule Changes

These rules are subject to change. A written proposal should be submitted to the Ladder Manager, who will review and discuss your suggestions with you. The Ladder Manager will review your proposal with the Ladder Committee and then make a final decision. You will be informed of that decision with an explanation should it be necessary.

IMPROVING YOUR GAME

Training

- If you want to get better, train up. It’s healthy to decide to place limits on your skill. Training up means viewing training videos, instruction from qualified instructors, participation in local, regional and national tournaments.
- A common ration is practice 60–70% and play 30–40% of the time plus going online to watch PB videos on different drills and skills, and watching how the better players (4.0+) play the game.
- Decide if you are in this to get better or just have fun
- You need to dig deeper and analyze everything you can, including plays that might not look like a mistake at first. Once you’ve adopted a critical eye that’s constantly looking for errors, you’ll find more subtle faults where you never noticed them before. Real growth happens in those moments.
- There’s an old saying that “work comes before play,” and that’s surprisingly apt when you’re dedicating yourself to getting better, even in the realm of pickleball. You are willing to experience repeated failure and examine that failure to find out how you can improve.
- You need to read articles, forum posts, and talent guides. You need to watch streams of high-ranked players, video guides, and competitive events. It’s on you to find the time to consume as much good information as possible.
- Review Your Own Replays. Looking outside the game to learn is the first stage of putting in the work, but you’ll also need to relate everything you’ve picked up back to your own gameplay. That’s when you’ll have to start reviewing your own replays! It’s almost impossible to objectively observe your own play while locked into a heated battle in the middle of the game. Stepping back and watching yourself in a replay is the perfect way to slow things down and analyze your play in a careful and calculated way.
- You don’t necessarily need to watch a replay of every game you play, because you’ll get diminishing returns and end up wasting time. Identify games which you felt should’ve been won, but ended in a loss anyway. These kinds of matches can showcase how a single small adjustment here or there may have resulted in a win. You should also look for games in which you seemed to play well or poorly.
- Once you’ve selected a few replays to review, don’t just rifle through them and look for big mistakes. That’s not being actively critical, as was discussed earlier. You need to start from the beginning and become an absolute critic towards yourself. Start judging every strategic decision, engagement positioning, and how you use your abilities. Why am I standing at the front of this fight? Why didn’t I rotate up to soak that wave? Why did I ping the boss when three of them just showed in top lane?

PLAYING DIFFERENT SKILL LEVELS

- If you're willing to take your losses and learn from them, playing people better than you is a way to improve.
- It is recommended playing with people who are just a tad better than you, because if you start playing with players significantly better than you, it will take ages until you win, and you’ll probably get bored before it even happens

- Playing against better people forces you to improve faster. But at the same time, if there is too large a gap in skill level, you may not be learning too much because what they're doing may be too far above your skill level.
- Losing too much due to the skill gap will also increase frustration which will dampen your learning as well
- There is a sweet spot where you are playing against people who are slightly better than you such that you still have a small chance of winning and at the same time you are still able to effectively learn and sharpen your skills. That is why we use movement between ladders to assist in determining playing level
- Playing against others of the same skill level can also still help - but instead of learning new skills or techniques, the practice will help develop and reinforce the basics of your execution.
- Losing constantly by playing vs players who are better than you provide a learning experience. You should find other players you can win against of course: you'll never learn to win if you keep losing. But losing teaches you what bad-habits you've formed from playing vs weaker players.

CRITERIA FOR LADDERS

In order to provide structure to the ladders criteria have been established for each ladder:

GREEN LADDER

- DUPR or UTPR or WPR 2.50 to 3.25
- Played for <1 Year
- Players that score <65% Points on Green Ladder needs to have further fundamental instruction
- If you move from the Green Ladder to the Blue Ladder, you are given a 5-session period to demonstrate the you can score >70% on the Blue Ladder

BLUE LADDER

AT LEAST TWO OF THE FOLLOWING

- DUPR or UTPR or WPR 3.25 to 3.75
- Played for >1 Year
- Played in multiple local and regional tournaments at the intermediate level
- Supported by at least 5 current BLUE LADDER players
- Player that score <65% Points on BLUE LADDER should be on GREEN LADDER
- Scored >90% Points on GREEN LADDER for 4 weeks
- If you move from the GREEN LADDER to the BLUE LADDER, you are given a 5-session period to demonstrate the you can score >70%

ADVANCED WOMEN

AT LEAST TWO OF THE FOLLOWING

- DUPR or UTPR or WPR 3.50 to 4.0
- Played for >1 Year
- Played in multiple local/regional tournaments at either the intermediate (3.5) or advanced level (4.0)
- Supported by at least 5 current ADVANCED WOMEN LADDER players
- Players that score <65% Points on Ladder should be on BLUE LADDER
- If you move from the BLUE LADDER to the Advanced Women Ladder you are given a 5-session period to demonstrate the you can score >70% on the Advanced Women's ladder

ADVANCED MEN

AT LEAST TWO OF THE FOLLOWING

- DUPR or UTPR or WPR 4.00 to 4.50
- Played for >1 Year
- Played in multiple local and regional tournaments at the advanced (>4.0) level
- Scored >90% Points on BLUE LADDER for 4 weeks
- Supported by at least 5 current ADVANCED MEN LADDER players
- Players that score <65% Points on Ladder should be on BLUE LADDER
- If you move from the BLUE LADDER to the ADVANCED MEN LADDER you are given a 5-session period to demonstrate the you can score >70% on the ADVANCED MEN LADDER

OVER 50

AT LEAST TWO OF THE FOLLOWING

- DUPR or UTPR or WPR 3.50 to 4.00
- Played for >1 Year
- Played in multiple local/regional tournaments at either the intermediate (3.5) or advanced level (4.0)
- Supported by at least 5 current Over 50 Ladder players
- Players that score <65% Points on Ladder should be on BLUE LADDER
- Scored >90% Points on BLUE LADDER for 4 weeks
- If you move from the BLUE LADDER to the Over 50 Ladder you are given a 5-session period to demonstrate the you can score >70% points on the over 50 ladder

TO JOIN THE LADDER PROGRAM

1. You must be a ***Pickleball Leagues and Training Network*** member within the GLOBAL PICKLEBALL NETWORK. You must also have a DUPR account and be a member of the STATE OF FRANKLIN DUPR Group
2. Read and understand the Ladder Rules for Players and Coordinators
3. You must be willing to commit to playing a minimum of 12 times every season (October – March), April-September).
4. Complete the application and familiarize themselves with the Rules on a periodic basis as updates will take place. Return application to Henry Gonzalez @ ghenry35@aol.com

NAME _____
EMAIL _____
CELL NO _____
YEARS PLAYING _____
BIRTH DATE _____
GENDER M/F _____

CURRENT RATING	ORGANIZATION
	UTPR-USA Pickleball Tournament Player Ratings
	WPR-World Pickleball Rating
	DUPR-Dreamland Universal Player Rating
	SELF-Using USA PICKLEBALL GUIDELINES

TOURNAMENT EXPERIENCE	Name	Date	Division	Finish
LOCAL				
REGIONAL				
NATIONAL				

OFFICE USE ONLY:

_____ Ladder 4
 _____ Ladder 3
 _____ Ladder 2
 _____ Ladder 1