

# MARCUS LEWIS RACQUET CLUB *PICKLEBALL LEVELS*

Find your level - Hit your goals

## **MLRC Pickleball Leveling**

The purpose of leveling is to help players choose programming that best fits their skillset. Our coaches have found that our most successful clinics are when the participants are of similar pickleball skill and ability. The goal is to have players in the best environment to succeed so everyone can get the most out of the pickleball session.

If you can answer "yes" to almost all of the statements below, that is a general assessment of your level. Nothing is perfect, but this should be a helpful tool.

### **Beginner - 2.0**

- I have little to no experience with pickleball
- I have hit the ball around with friends or family a few times
- I may know some of the basic rules
- I am learning how to play the game

### **Novice - 2.5**

- I have taken a learn to play class or clinic
- I understand scoring and general rules applied to the game
- I know where to stand at the beginning of each point
- I am working to perfect my serve
- I usually let the return of serve bounce
- I know what a dink shot is and can sustain a dink rally with players of similar ability
- I sometimes struggle to keep the ball in play
- I understand the rules around the non-volley zone in principle, but often step in by mistake

### **Novice Plus - 3.0**

- I often serve successfully
- I am able to consistently sustain a dink rally with control
- I can usually hit backhand shots when I need to
- I am trying to add more power or softness to my game
- I understand the rules around the non-volley zone, but will still make occasional foot faults
- I move comfortably across the court and know how to transition
- I have good mobility, quickness, and hand-eye coordination

### **Novice Plus/Low Intermediate - 3.25**

- I am working on getting my serves and return of serves deeper
- I am dinking shallower/lower and understand why and when it should be used
- I am able to hit a medium-paced volley and am working on my direction and consistency
- I am working on my 3rd shot drop
- I can hit shots with pace and touch but struggle with accurate shot placement
- I move quickly towards the non-volley zone when the opportunity is there
- I am more aware of my partner's position on the court and moving as a team

### **Intermediate - 3.5**

- I almost always serve and return my shots deep
- I am able to control height, depth, and pace of dink shots with intention
- I have a moderate level of shot control and try to be strategic about how and where I hit the ball
- I have an expanding variety of shots in my arsenal and am comfortable with my backhand
- I try to hit a 3rd shot drop, understand when and why to use it, and am finding more success with this shot
- I can maintain a longer rally and effectively use deep serving strategies and drop shots
- I am able to volley with medium-paced shots with placement and control and can sustain a short volley session at the net
- I understand advantages of court positioning and partner play

### **Intermediate Plus - 3.75**

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- I consistently serve and return deep
- I exhibit patience when involved in a dink rally
- I have a wide variety of shots in my arsenal
- I frequently use a 3rd shot drop
- I am able to control the non-volley zone keeping my opponents back
- I am improving my spin and touch shots
- I understand the difference between the hard game and soft game and can often convert a hard shot to a soft shot
- I actively work with my partner to win the point
- I have a basic knowledge of stacking and know when to use it

### **Advanced - 4.0**

- I can strategically serve and return with varying depth, location, and speed
- I can sustain a dink exchange with patience at the net to elicit a "put away" shot
- I understand which balls are attackable and those that are not
- I can consistently execute a drop shot as I move through the transition zone
- I am consistent with a full arsenal of shots (drops, overheads, volleys, drives, dinks, resets) and know when to use them
- I am comfortable at the non-volley zone and am able to block and return fast, hard volleys
- I am aware of my partner's position and move as a team, switching when necessary
- I have a solid understanding of stacking and when and how it can be used effectively
- I can identify opponents' weaknesses and formulate plans of attack accordingly
- I play with a high level of strategy

## **Expert - 4.5+**

- I can serve and return with power, accuracy, and depth, and vary speed and spin of both
- I recognize and attempt to hit attackable dinks
- I have the ability to place dinks with changing shot types while playing both consistently and with offensive intent
- I can consistently and dependably use my forehand/backhand drive with pace and depth to generate my opponent's error and set up my next shot
- I am able to intentionally and consistently execute effective drop shot strategies that are not easily returned
- I am able to block hard volleys and consistently drop them in non-volley zone
- I am comfortable hitting swinging volleys and overhead shots consistently as putaways
- I can consistently convert a hard shot to a soft shot
- I am almost always patient and wait for the opening
- I can easily sustain a rally of 40 or more shots
- I poach effectively
- I use lobs to create coverage gaps and hit to these gaps consistently
- I have good footwork and move laterally, forward, and backward well
- I communicate and move well with my partner including easily stacking court positions
- I understand strategy and can adjust style of play and game plan according to my opponent's strengths, weaknesses, and court position
- I make a limited number of unforced errors