

June 28, 2024: Pickleball Skill levels

As we approach July and the busy summer months, we would like to speak to what seems to be a shift this year in an increase in the number of players on the Advanced (3.5/4.0+) side, Courts 1-6. We want to clarify that courts 7-14 are the Intermediate/Beginner side, not solely Beginner courts as we sometimes have heard them called. We wonder if this misidentification of courts 7-14 has contributed to this year's shift in numbers.

Yes, a few courts from 7-14 were used at the start of the season to welcome Beginners and to help get them acclimated to pickleball in Dennis. However, in past years, and this year, very competitive Intermediate games are played on those courts – as they should be.

We thought it would be helpful to share Sherry Scheer's pickleball rating guidelines (below), so that you can accurately assess your game. The skills listed at each level should be consistently (not just occasionally) achieved.

Beginner (1.0-2.0) : A beginner is classified as a player who is new to the game or has only played a handful of times.

Beginner + (2.5): Knows basic rules such as “two bounce” and scoring. Has some basic stroke skills. Attempts to dink but not always effective, gets some serves and returns in, tries to volley and attempts groundstrokes. Understands how to grip the paddle.

Intermediate (3.0): Regularly gets serves “in” to mid-court or deeper. Starting to hit dinks lower over the net. Can hit 5/10 dinks, volleys, returns, serves, groundstrokes. This player will drive and lob their third shot, understands the

need to develop this shot in their game but still won't attempt it. Moves to the kitchen line after returning, stays back after serving. Demonstrates general ball control with varying degrees of success and is attempting to develop more softness in their shots.

Intermediate + (3.5): Demonstrates control and basic consistency in shots, can hit 6/10 dinks, volleys, returns, serves, third shots and groundstrokes. Player is attempting to hit drop shots to get to the kitchen line. Can apply fast and slow techniques during points. Attempts to dink during a rally. Places serves and returns deep in the box, approaches non-volley zone line quickly. Has a moderate number of unforced errors per game.

Advanced (4.0): Demonstrates control and basic consistency in shots, can hit 8/10 dinks, volleys, returns, serves, third shots and groundstrokes. Uses logic and strategy while playing points. Applies fast and slow shot selection at the proper times more often than not. Mixes drives and drop shot techniques to obtain the kitchen line. Has fewer number of unforced errors per game.

Advanced + (4.5): Can regularly convert a hard shot to a soft shot. Exhibits patience in play and shows a noticeable increase in skills, a higher level of strategy, quickness of hands, movement, placement of shots, anticipation of play, sustained volleying skills, and places put-aways with consistency. Makes very few unforced errors.

It's also helpful to calibrate your play against others. As a frame of reference, the Dennis Women's League has one Advanced team (3.5+, who are appropriate to play on courts 1-6) and two Intermediate teams (3.0, an appropriate level for courts 7-14). Naturally, as players' skills advance to the 3.5 level, they have the flexibility to play on both sides.

Players are always welcome to choose for themselves the courts where they play. All players benefit from playing games which are competitive and enjoyable for their skill level regardless of which court they are standing on. In making your decision, we hope that folks in the 3.0-3.5 skill level realize that courts 7-14 are Intermediate courts and appropriate for their play. Being able to access levels of play which suit players' skills is what we hope Dennis pickleball is all about. And having fun, of course!!!

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