

Chami, Payton, Maddie, Ursula, Will, Maria, Juli, Noah, and Greg,

I share my sincere appreciation and gratitude for stepping up to be a Columbus youth pickleball coach!

It's been inspiring to play alongside you over the months and years, and I've personally seen that each of you has the right attitude to set a high standard to earn the confidence of both the kids and their parents. The common themes from your biographies—family, social connection, lasting friendships, teamwork, and physical exercise—perfectly define our coaching values. This is exactly what we want the younger generation of local pickleballers to experience through this fantastic lifetime sport!

The impact you will have on the kids in this league is going to last for decades, both on and off the court. Thank you for growing your own pickleball journey into one that is not just about playing for medals, but about giving back to the sport that continues to provide so many benefits in our own lives. Columbus's pickleball community is excited to have you leading the way!

As you know, the basic information for the league is posted on the website www.colgamlp.com. However, I wanted to walk you all through my vision of the "Pickleball Academy" on November 4th from 5:30-7:30pm at Cooper Creek.

Resources:

- 18 youth players from ages 8-14 with various levels of PB experience (6 females)
- 8 coaches plus two assistant coaches (Noah Theriault and Greg Miller)
- 100 brand new pickleballs
- 10 loaner paddles (if you have a few old paddles, please bring them)
- Rolling ball hopper that holds 100 balls
- 25 cones of 5 different colors that are 1.5" in height and will hold a pickleball on top
- Silicone wristbands of many colors to divide kids into groups
- Colored chalk
- 3-4 courts at Cooper Creek (later we may use Phenix City's Idle Hour Courts)

Academy Concept:

As parents/kids arrive I will be asking them to sign the waiver release form. After a very short welcome speech, I will divide the kids into four groups of 5, 5, 4, 4 and give each group a colored wristband. Coaches will have already set up a teaching station on the courts using any of the resources above.

- Serving (red): Payton / Chami / Greg
- Groundstrokes (green): Maria / Ursula
- Approaching the NVZ (yellow): Will / Juli
- Dinks and Volleys (blue): Maddie / Doug / Noah

Each station will be 25 minutes in duration. I recommend two minutes telling the kids about the task, one minute demonstrating it yourself, ten minutes of practicing the task, and then ten minutes of a challenge to reinforce the task. That leaves two minutes to quickly pick up balls, drink water, and rotate to the next station. I will keep time and announce, “two minutes until station rotation” and then “rotate!” Your job is to create a simple class and a skill reinforcing challenge for your station.

After the four stations are complete, all players will come together to end the academy with two fun games led by Greg and Noah. The first game is “Around the World” and the second game is “Graveyard”. These games will also be how we end each weekly match so that both the winning and losing teams are departing after a “fun” experience. I believe these games will become the highlight of match day.

At the conclusion of the academy at 7:30pm the kids will be tired, and the parents will be ready to go home. Throughout the stations, please note which kids are more or less skilled so we can divide up teams equally. Additionally, I’ve asked the parents in an email if they’d prefer any siblings to be on the same team or different teams.

Match Days:

Match days will be Tuesdays at 5:30pm or shortly after the players arrive. Coaches will coordinate players of similar skill levels to establish a match consisting of three doubles lines (based on skill level). Each line must win 2 of 3 games to 11. The biggest challenge will be teaching players how to keep score. Coaches will have to provide a lot of mentorship during the match. Again, matches will conclude with a fun round of “Around the World” or “Graveyard”. Perhaps the winning team gets to decide which one to play (or both if there’s time). As I opened this welcome letter recognizing your leadership skills and patience, this will all come naturally to you.

To close out this note, I just wanted to thank you again for volunteering. You’ve probably figured out that the \$25 registration fee doesn’t quite cover the t-shirts, medals, and trophies. There may also be court fees, but I’m working that out with Cooper Creek/CORTA. No cost should come out your pockets and the league will handle all fees. If there is a resource that might help you coach your team, please let me know and I’ll do my best to provide it.

Additionally, if you have a goal to become a “certified” coach or pro, the certifying organization (like PPR) highly values pickleball coaching or teaching experience when determining a qualification level. Your contributions to this league would be great for that application.

My final point is that your eagerness to coach with the skills you have is priceless. The intent of the youth league is to make pickleball accessible to all kids in the city no matter their situation. Expanding to include kids from underserved populations in

Columbus/Phenix City would be wonderful. I've already started talking with Girls Inc. and some downtown middle schools to reach the demographics they serve. This season we need a successful "proof of concept" to reach and inspire kids from all corners of the city. When the new 28 court facility opens next year, I want every kid to know that it is a place for them with programs for everyone.

You have my sincere gratitude for your commitment. Thank you for recognizing and embracing the value that an accessible sport like pickleball offers to the young people of Columbus right from the start.

Yours,

Doug