Hello BVPA Pickleballers,

This is the first in a series of monthly emails which is intended to provide informative, interesting and useful information about some of the technical aspects of pickleball around rules, skills and strategies.

Hopefully there are some nuggets in these emails that you will find helpful in developing your game and continuing to enhance your enjoyment of this great sport.

**Rule of the Month:  What are the rules for a legal pickleball serve?**

Ever wondered if your serve or your opponent's serve is ”legal”?  The pickleball serve is quite unique from other paddle/racquet sports that many players come over from.  There are three key items that are required for a “legal” pickleball serve motion:

1. Underhand Serve:  The serve must be hit in an underhand motion below the navel (defined as belly button) at the point of contact

2. Upward Arc:  Your arm must be moving in an upward arc at the point of contact

3. Paddle Head Below Wrist: At the point of contact with the ball, the highest point of your paddle head must be below the highest part of the wrist

So what does all that mean?   Here's a link with some more detailed descriptions and pictures that make it simple and easy to see the differences between “legal” and “illegal” serves.  The link also goes into some additional details on serving that you may find helpful:

 <https://thepickler.com/blogs/pickleball-blog/pickleball-serving-rules>

For those that are into the detailed rulebook description, here is a link to download the official Canadian rulebook.  Section 4 in the .pdf relates to The Serve, Service Sequence and Scoring Rules.

<https://pickleballcanada.org/play-and-learn/official-pickleball-rules/>

**Skill of the Month: Drop Shots**

The drop shot is commonly referred to as the "third shot drop" however it is very useful and important in many situations during a rally beyond the third shot as a way to take back control of the rally.   It is a key skill all pickleball players need in order to progress their game, have more fun and have more success.  So - what is the 'drop' shot and what's the strategy behind this shot?

The drop shot is a critical shot that is generally executed from middle to deeper in the court.  It is played as a softer shot intended to just clear the net and land in your opponent’s “kitchen” (or non volley zone) closer to their feet making it a difficult ball for them to attack and allowing your team to follow your shot up to the net putting yourself in a strong position to reply.  This is where you have a higher probability of getting control of the rally.   For both new and seasoned pickleball players, the drop shot can be challenging to hit with consistency - sometimes it goes in the net, sometimes it is played with too much force, sometimes it gets popped up - we have all experienced these situations.   Spending some time practicing the drop shot skill can really lead to an improved pickleball game for yourself and also for your fellow participants.

Here are a couple short YouTube videos with some suggestions on drop shot drills that might be helpful.  Happy "drop shot" practicing!

Drop shot fundamental drills (6 minute video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2BV4Z9EdDo>

Drills for Developing Consistency: Video 2 (4 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQyyoco0Qdw>

**Fun Fact: This sport is growing like crazy!**

Thank you, Captain Obvious - I already knew that!

But did you know that pickleball is growing in popularity at an estimated rate of 158% year-over-year in the last three years?   And that participation in pickleball is now third in the US behind only biking and running and well ahead of other popular pastimes such as golf and tennis.

The snapshot below shows estimated participation by sport in the US for 2023.   I know - we live in Canada!  Growth is even higher in Canada but I couldn't find any fun charts like the one below.

Pickleball Canada estimated even higher growth rates in Canada with the number of players increasing from 350,000 in 2020 to approximately 1 million players as of the end of 2022.  The fastest growing demographic right now is in the 18-34 age group highlighting that this sport is for everyone of all ages.