

# SMART PICKLEBALL™

Mastering the Art Beyond Just Getting the Ball Over the Net

Techniques and strategies for  
advanced level play

Bob Savar



# **Smart Pickleball™**

## **Mastering the Art Beyond Just Getting the Ball Over the Net**

*Techniques and Strategies for Advanced Level Play*

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“How to Improve from a Beginner to an Intermediate in  
Pickleball”  
and “Pickleball for Seniors”**



PICKLEBALL

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# FOREWORD

As a seasoned pickleball instructor and author of three books on the subject, I have had the privilege of teaching and learning from countless players who love this exciting, ever-evolving game as much as I do. However, I realized many players plateau at a certain skill level and need help to move past the basics. They know how to get the ball over the net, but mastering high-level techniques and strategies remains a hurdle. This realization led me to write "Smart Pickleball™: Mastering the Art Beyond Just Getting the Ball Over the Net."

This book is designed to be your comprehensive guide, taking you on a journey from understanding the fundamental rules to employing advanced strategies that only the pros know. It's the book I wish I had when I started playing and coaching, and it's the one I hope will make a difference in your game.

In the Introduction, you'll gain an understanding of what sets this book apart from any other pickleball resource. It's not just about hitting the ball; it's about becoming a strategist, an observer, and a master of the sport.

The Basic Rules of Pickleball gives newcomers a firm foundation while offering seasoned players a valuable refresher.

The Physics of Pickleball dives into the science behind the game. Here, you'll learn how spin, speed, and trajectory impact your shots and how to use these elements to your advantage.

As we move into Court Positioning, Footwork, and The Serve, you'll see how intricately these aspects intertwine, creating the framework for being an excellent player.

Chapters like The Return of Serve, The Dink Shot, Volleys, Overheads, and Defense offer actionable tips and advanced techniques to refine your skill set further.

In Strategies for Singles and Doubles and Playing Against Different Skill Levels, you'll find tailored advice for various game formats and opponents.

The Mental Game addresses the psychological aspect of pickleball, discussing focus, adaptability, and the power of positive thinking.

We also delve into Nutrition and Fitness, the unsung heroes that prepare your body and mind for high-level play.

Wrapping It Up concludes the book, summarizing what it takes to become a Smart Pickleball™ player.

The Bonus Chapters are the icing on the cake. They offer in-depth discussions on offensive and defensive strategies and mastering doubles play.

We also tackle the controversial topic of being a 'Banger' versus playing aggressively in pickleball, helping you find your style.

This book is the culmination of years of experience, research, and passion for pickleball. It's designed to serve as your go-to guide for mastering advanced techniques and strategies. By turning the last page, you won't just be getting the ball over the net but playing Smart Pickleball™.

Happy playing!

Bob Savar, Author and Pickleball Instructor



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE

Pickleball is more than a paddle, a ball, and a net. It's a game of strategy, skill, and subtlety. Many players can get the ball over the net, but how many can claim to play Smart Pickleball™? This book is your comprehensive guide to elevating your game, from merely hitting the ball back and forth to understanding the techniques and strategies that define high-level play.

I'll never forget the first time I stepped onto the pickleball court as an instructor. I'd been a player for years, honing my skills and techniques. Yet when I switched from player to instructor, I noticed something surprising. I saw many players with potential who were simply hitting the ball back and forth without any strategic depth to their play. It wasn't about a lack of skill; it was a lack of understanding of the game's finer points, something I term Smart Pickleball™. That realization led me to focus on teaching the basic moves and delving into the strategies that separate an exceptional player from an average one.

The game of pickleball has been around since the 1960s, but it has seen a surge in popularity in the last decade. Various sources, like the USA Pickleball Association (USAPA), report that the sport is among the fastest-growing in America. And why wouldn't it be? It's accessible, fun, and can be enjoyed by people of all ages.

USA Pickleball  
"History: USA  
Pickleball  
Nationals"  
May 18 2023



[bit.ly/46EXFjH](https://bit.ly/46EXFjH)

But accessibility can sometimes lead to underestimation. Yes, pickleball is easy to pick up, but it has layers of complexity that become evident as you grow as a player. For instance, many players need to pay more attention to the importance of positioning or the utility of specific shots like the dink or the volley. Each element

of pickleball – from basic rules to complex strategies – has its place in the landscape of Smart Pickleball™.

In this book, we will journey through the various aspects that make a Smart Pickleball™ player. Whether you are a beginner aiming to understand the fundamentals or an intermediate player looking to improve, there is something here for everyone. We will delve into the game's physics, discuss different types of shots, examine strategies, and even touch upon the importance of mental preparedness and physical fitness. You'll find detailed explanations, diagrams, and drills designed to improve your game fundamentally and strategically.

This book aims to provide multiple perspectives – incorporating advice from professionals, sports psychologists, and even nutritionists – to give a rounded view of how to become a Smart Pickleball™ player.

So prepare your paddle, tighten your sneakers, and let's delve into the exciting world of Smart Pickleball™.

# CHAPTER 4

## COURT POSITIONING: WHERE TO STAND AND WHEN

Understanding the rules and mastering the basic shots are critical steps in becoming a good pickleball player, but another vital component to master is court positioning. Knowing where to stand, when to move, and how to anticipate your opponent's next move can provide a significant advantage. This chapter will focus on the principles of court positioning to guide you toward playing Smart Pickleball™.

### The Importance of Court Positioning

Positioning can significantly impact the game's outcome. I discuss this in-depth in one of my blog posts, called “9 Keys for Court Positioning and Movement for Seniors.” Although the title indicates the article is for seniors, in truth, it applies to all players, regardless of age or ability.

9 Keys for Court  
Positioning and  
Movement for Seniors



[bit.ly/45m3yS2](https://bit.ly/45m3yS2)

I remember a particular match that served as an “Aha!” moment regarding the importance of positioning. It was a heated doubles game, and my partner and I were struggling against opponents with more experience and more effective court coverage. They were everywhere, making it difficult for us to execute our usual strategies.

After a timeout and quick self-assessment, we realized our court positioning was flawed. We should have been more focused on hitting powerful smashes and needed to pay more attention to our positions, which were currently leaving gaps that our opponents were exploiting. We adjusted by moving in tandem, covering each other's weaknesses, and positioning ourselves to cut off their angles. The

transformation was immediate. Not only did we turn the match around, but we also conserved energy, enabling us to finish strong.

Proper positioning allows you to:

1. Reach balls more efficiently.
2. Apply offensive or defensive strategies better.
3. Limit the opponent's shot options.
4. Conserve energy for prolonged matches.

## The Three Main Areas

### The Baseline



- **Serving Position:** This is where you serve from. Staying closer to the center minimizes the angles available to the opponent. Serving from near the center line makes it more difficult for the opponent to hit a cross-court return, giving them an advantage. By staying closer to the center, the serving player can force the opponent to hit a straight return, which is easier to anticipate and return. A good video explaining where to stand when you serve is Rob Davidson's "Pickleball Quick Tip: How to Position Your Serve for Success."

"Pickleball Quick Tip: How to Position Your Serve for Success" - Pickleball Channel



[bit.ly/3rHkp3S](https://bit.ly/3rHkp3S)

Here is a brief recap of Davidson's video:

### **Positioning for a Successful Serve:**

- Many players position themselves on the outside when serving to gain an angle advantage.
- However, this exposes their backhand in the middle, resulting in a weaker drive.
- To address this, try positioning yourself more towards the middle when serving from the right-hand side of the court.
- By serving from this position, you'll ensure that almost 80% of the court is your forehand, setting you up for a successful third shot.

### **Adjusting Position for Left-Side Serve:**

- When serving from the left-hand side of the court, shift a little bit to the left.
  - Shifting to the left will allow you to serve from a position where around 80% of the court will be your forehand for the third shot.
  - An excellent third shot is crucial for winning in pickleball. Key to Success: Opening Up the Forehand Side:
  - Serving from a position that opens up your forehand side gives you more options for a successful third shot.
  - Remember that a good third shot is essential for winning in pickleball.
- **Returning Position:** This is where you stand when waiting for a serve. A deep position allows you time to adjust to the opponent's serve. By standing deeper, you give yourself more time to react to the serve and adjust your position on the court. Standing deep can help you return the ball with more control and accuracy and give you an advantage on the court. Returning deep can force the serving team to move back, giving you more time to get to the non-volley zone (NVZ) and control the point.

A good video that explains where to stand when returning serve is Mark Renneson's "The Correct Return of Serve Positioning – The Pickleball Today Show Episode 11 Clips."

"The Correct Return of Serve Positioning - The Pickleball Today Show Episode 11 Clips" - Selkirk TV



[bit.ly/3tovibe](https://bit.ly/3tovibe)

## Mid-Court



- **Transition Zone:** This area is called "no man's land." It's tricky because the ball can bounce at an unpredictable height. Typically, you'll only be here briefly when moving up to the net or retreating to the baseline. No-man's land is the court area between the non-volley zone (NVZ) and the baseline. It is called "no-man's land" because it is a complex area to defend and can leave a player vulnerable to their opponent's shots. No man's land is too far from the net to reach dinks or aggressively volley near the NVZ line, but it's close enough to make hitting groundstrokes difficult.

It is vital for players to be aware of this area and to use strategies to avoid getting stuck in no-man's land, such as hitting deep returns and moving quickly to the NVZ. Players can gain an advantage on the court by avoiding no-man's land and using effective strategies.

Here are three good videos on how to play when stuck in the no man's land: (1) Zane Navratil's "Boost Your Power to WIN from No Man's Land in Pickleball – They Said It Couldn't Be Done,"

"Boost Your Power to WIN from No Man's Land in Pickleball - They Said It Couldn't Be Done"  
- Zane Navratil Pickleball



[bit.ly/46jefG1](https://bit.ly/46jefG1)

# CHAPTER 7

## THE RETURN OF SERVE: MORE THAN JUST A HIT

Players often underestimate the return of serve in pickleball, but it's a pivotal moment that sets the tone for the entire point. A well-executed return can pressure your opponent to make tough choices immediately. Poor returns, conversely, can gift your opponent an easy point and undermine the efficacy of even the best strategies. This chapter aims to show how you can turn the return of serve into a weapon in your Smart Pickleball™ arsenal.

### The Psychological Importance of the Return

Before discussing the techniques and strategies associated with returns, let's acknowledge the mental aspect. When you successfully return a challenging serve, you gain a tactical advantage but also experience a psychological boost. Simultaneously, your opponent may feel pressure, altering the dynamics of the match.

### Techniques for Effective Returns

#### Topspin Return



Using topspin on your return of serve in pickleball can be an effective strategy. It can make hitting a clean shot difficult for your opponent, especially if they're near the baseline. Here are some reasons why topspin can be such an effective return-of-serve weapon:

- The Magnus Effect (previously discussed in Chapter 3): Topspin causes the ball to dip dramatically and much sooner than if the same shot was flat, making it difficult for your opponent to hit a clean shot.
- Landing the ball in awkward areas: You can use the resulting dip to drop the ball short and into awkward areas for your opponent, making it difficult for them to return the ball effectively.
- Changing the game's rhythm: Using topspin on your return of serve can change the game's rhythm and catch your opponent by surprise.

"Spin in Pickleball and Why Should We Use It?"



[bit.ly/3M5yH5d](https://bit.ly/3M5yH5d)

To execute a topspin return of serve, hit the ball from a low angle below the ball and finish with your paddle towards your shoulder, as shown in Jordan Briones' video, "Pickleball Topspin Cheat: How To Hit Topspin Even for Beginners."

"Pickleball Topspin Cheat: How to Hit Topspin Even for Beginners" - Primetime Pickleball



[bit.ly/48H9BmY](https://bit.ly/48H9BmY)

"Pickleball Strategy - 9 Ways to Improve Your Return of Serve"



[bit.ly/48Up10I](https://bit.ly/48Up10I)

Here is another way of explaining how to hit a forehand return of serve: "...your best shot is usually a strong forehand. So, put that to good use. After you've set yourself up to return every serve with your forehand, begin by placing some spin action on the ball

during your forehand return. The topspin return begins with your paddle low and ends with the blade high above your opposite shoulder. It's a low-to-high movement with a subtle wrist flick to add spin. When topspin is applied to a deep return, the



# ARE YOU LOOKING TO ELEVATE YOUR PICKLEBALL GAME TO NEW HEIGHTS? DO YOU WANT TO MASTER ADVANCED STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES THAT CAN MAKE YOU A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH ON THE COURT?

Introducing a comprehensive guide that covers everything you need to know to play **SMART PICKLEBALL™**. This book isn't just for beginners; it's for anyone who aspires to be a high-level player. You'll learn about the science of pickleball, court positioning, and the mental strategies that set great players apart.

Imagine being able to read your opponents' moves before they make them, delivering serves that leave them scrambling, and mastering a game strategy that fits your unique style. With bonus chapters on offensive and defensive tactics and mastering the art of doubles play, this book is the complete package for anyone serious about the sport.

Step onto the court with newfound confidence and strategies that will make you not just a player, but a **SMART PICKLEBALL™** player.

Thank you for letting this book be your guide; now go out there and dominate the courts like never before!

Meet Bob Savar – the passionate pickleball enthusiast behind "Smart Pickleball™". Bob has taught hundreds of people how to play pickleball over the past several years, and his four books and dozens of blog posts bring together the vast amounts of knowledge and experience he has gained as a teacher of the sport.

In Smart Pickleball™, Bob goes beyond the basics and delves into advanced strategies for singles and doubles. Whether you're a seasoned pro or an aspiring enthusiast, this book provides a roadmap to elevate your game to new heights. Learn more about Bob on his website at [bobsavarpickleball.com](http://bobsavarpickleball.com)