

Pickleball-

The Sun City Festival Way

Module 3: Advancing from 2.5 to 3.0 Player's Guide

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Preamble

Modules 1 and 2 (corresponding to pickleball skill ratings of 2.0 and 2.5) were concerned mostly with:

- the mechanics of various shots;
- basic movement and positioning of players;
- basic pickleball strategy.

Progress to levels 3.0, 3.5, and 4.0 is more concerned with:

- improving shot selection, accuracy, and consistency;
- reducing mistakes;
- developing patience;
- improving communication, teamwork, and strategic play;
- capitalizing upon opportunities and opponents' mistakes.

Skills and Competencies at the 3.0 Level

Overall Objective

- To raise the player's skills from the 2.5 level to the 3.0 level

Individual Skills and Shot Execution

In addition to the skills specified in Modules 1 & 2 for 2.0 and 2.5 ratings, a 3.0 level player:

- Can consistently dink while changing direction from cross-court to down-the-line forehand & backhand;
- Makes 60% of dink shots--forehand down-the-line or cross-court; backhand down-the-line or cross-court;
- Makes 50% of forehand and backhand 3rd-shot drop shots from the transition area;
- Makes 40% of forehand and backhand 3rd-shot drop shots from the baseline;
- Makes 60% of forehand and backhand punch volleys (from the NVZ line to at least mid-court depth);
- Executes 40% of overhead-smash returns of lobs while demonstrating proper sideways turn and arm position;
- Serves and returns serves (from both "deuce" & "ad" courts) such that 60% bounce in the deep third of the court;
- Executes 40% of offensive lobs from the NVZ line.

Continued ...

Positioning and Game Strategy

In a doubles dinking game, a doubles team:

- Shifts sideways as a team following movement of the ball in order to better defend against down-the-line and between-player return dinks or punch shots;
- Communicates on balls that both players can reach;
- Defers to the forehand on balls coming between partners;
- Maintains position close to the NVZ line except to retrieve lobs;
- Targets opponent's feet or backhand side;
- Demonstrates patience, moving opponents from side-to-side with cross-court shots to create openings and make opponents shots more difficult.

In doubles match play, a player:

- Consistently serves and returns serves deep (to the back $\frac{1}{3}$ of court);
- Employs a drop shot on at least 50% of third shots;
- Demonstrates improved control of the direction, depth, and height (at the net) of volleys and ground strokes (forehand and backhand);
- Normally hits the ball to the deeper opponent (preferably at his/her feet) if the opponents are at differing distances from the net;
- Demonstrates a beginning ability to react quickly to and take advantage of attackable balls, especially at the NVZ line;
- Employs an offensive lob at opportune times when dinking;
- Communicates with partner on balls near the center line (deferring to the forehand);
- On balls that will land near the sideline or baseline on partner's side of the court, assists partner by shouting "Good!" or "Out!" or "Bounce it!" if it appears that the ball will land inbounds, out-of-bounds, or very close to the line, respectively;
- Demonstrates good court and position awareness by not hitting balls that would otherwise land out of bounds, and not hitting balls that would be better taken by his/her partner.

Lesson 1: Intentional Dinking; Offensive Lob

The technique/mechanics for dinking were covered in Lesson 1 of Modules 1 and 2. It would be beneficial for you to review them before attending Lesson 1 of this module.

Dinking at the 2.0 and 2.5 levels of play is primarily concerned with avoiding mistakes. That is, you are mainly trying to dink the ball back to the opponents' NVZ without hitting the ball into the net, or out of bounds, or "popping up" the ball where an opponent can smash back a rally-winning shot. This is a defensive and rather negative approach to dinking.

As you progress to the 3.0 and higher levels, you need to increasingly turn dinking into a positive offensive component of your game. That is, you should make dink shots that:

- Move your opponents side-to-side, forcing them to reach and/or hit their return shot while "on the move", or causing one of them to become "out of position";
- Are aimed at spots which make it more difficult for an opponent to hit a good return dink;
- Help you set up an **offensive lob** (introduced later in this lesson).

Well-placed dink shots on your part will be to little avail if you are not prepared for and fail to capitalize upon "attackable" balls hit back by an opponent. When you are at the NVZ line and engaged in dinking against your opponents, an **attackable ball** is a ball that you or your partner can readily reach and strike when it is at least 36 inches above the ground--think "belly-button or higher" for a player 5' 6" to 5' 11" tall. (Recall that the net's height is 34" at center court and 36" at the sidelines.) Balls taken at these heights can be hit back with force. For balls contacted between 36" and eye level, your "hard" return will usually be a forehand or backhand punch volley. Higher balls should be hit with overhead (forehand or backhand) smashes. The higher the point of contact (between 36" and full overhead extension of your arm), the better your angles and the more forcefully you can hit the ball.

Dinking Strategies

1. Cross-court dinking has four advantages over straight ahead dinking:
 - (i) It is more effective in forcing opponents to move sideways.
 - (ii) There is a greater margin of error (with respect to both net clearance and length of the dink shot).
 - (iii) The net is almost 2 inches lower near center court than near the sidelines.
 - (iv) It is easier to place the dink shot closer to the net, cutting down the opponents' options for their next shot.
2. A dink shot directed low on an opponent's backhand side is tougher to return than one directed to his/her forehand side.
3. The smaller the net clearance of your dink shot, the more difficult the opponent's next shot will be. But don't get "too cute" because of the increased probability of hitting the ball into the net.

4. If your directly opposite opponent holds his/her paddle low when in his/her “ready position”, you can flick the ball at his/her torso (especially if you have been fed a dink that bounces quite high (20 to 30 inches).
5. From a dink to your forehand side, occasionally hit an offensive lob (covered later in this lesson).
6. Defensively:
 - Be in the “ready position”;
 - Maintain position “tight” to the NVZ line;
 - Bend at the knees and volley incoming dink shots that can be reached comfortably;
 - Shift sideways synchronously with your partner when shading.

The following diagrams help us visualize some dinking strategies. Each “P” represents a player and the targets indicate the target areas for dink shots that will force an opponent to receive the dink shot on his/her backhand.

In Figure M-3.1, there are four right-handed players. The player at upper right is about to return a dink shot that was hit to his/her forehand side. Note that during the trajectory of the incoming ball, both players on the right side of the court shifted to their right to occupy the positions shown. Meanwhile, the pair on the left shift 3 or 4 feet to their left (as indicated by the short arrows) to defend against a return shot down-the-line or through-the-middle between them. This sideways shifting to guard against shots down-the-line or through-the-middle is known as “**shading**”. A pair should move together as though tied by a tether about 8-feet long.

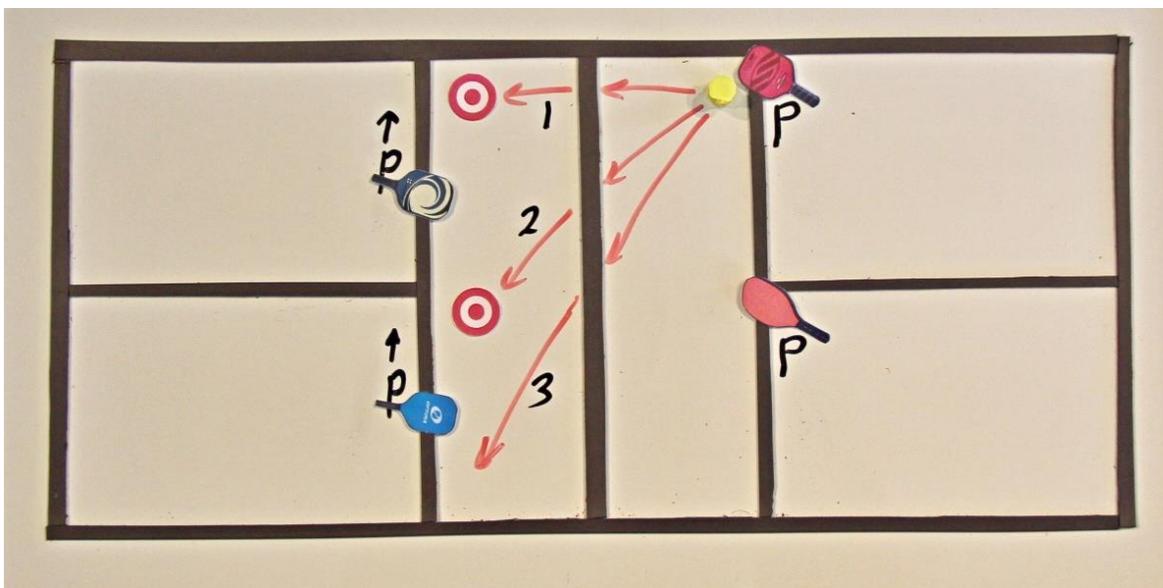


Figure M-3.1: Preferred Dink Shots

The three preferred dink shots for the player at upper right are indicated. Shots 1 and 2 are to locations forcing an opponent to take the shot on his/her backhand. Shot 1 is more difficult to make than Shot 2—it is a shorter shot over the highest part of the net. Of the three shots, Shot 1 has the highest risk of being “attackable” by the opponent or landing out of bounds at the sideline. Shot 3 is arguably the easiest and safest shot in

terms of the having the lowest probability of hitting the net or being attackable by an opponent. Shot 3 also forces the opponents to shift several feet back to their right, perhaps causing the opponent to reach and mishit the ball while on the move. But Shot 3 does deliver the ball to the opponent's forehand giving him/her more shot options (down-the-line, through-the-middle, cross-court, or offensive lob) with the better accuracy and consistency of forehand shots.

Each preferred shot has its advantages and disadvantages. The best choice is often dictated by your opponents—the shot they seem to have the most difficulty handling. Nevertheless, in competitive play you need to “mix up” your shots to “keep your opponents guessing”.

Regarding Shot 2, it will frequently happen that both players on the left side of the court can readily get to the ball. This is where communication between players is very important. The backhand should defer to the forehand. The forehand player should shout “mine” or “got it” as early as possible.

In Figure M-3.2, the team on the left is a lefty/righty pair. Now the target areas (on the backhand sides) for a dink shot from the player at upper right are both near the sidelines. Here Shot 2 is clearly preferred over Shot 1—it is easier, safer, and still to an opponent's backhand.

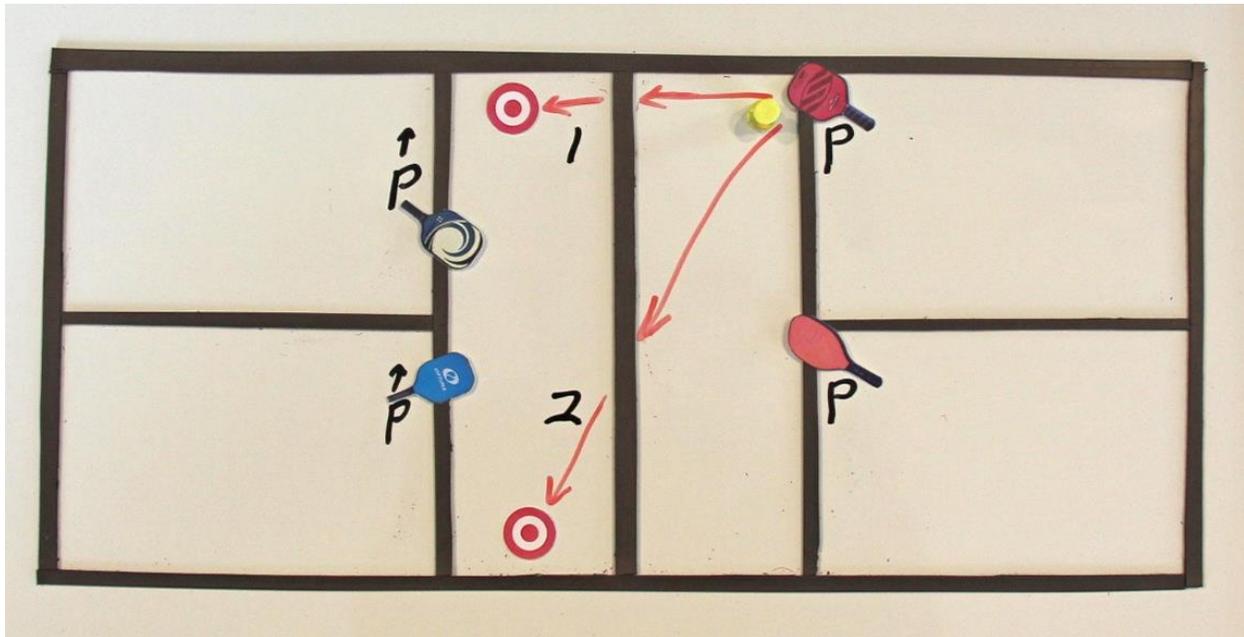


Figure M-3.2: Preferred Dink Shots (vs. Lefty/Righty Pair)

In Figure M-3.3, the player at upper right is taking the incoming dink shot on his/her backhand. This makes the return dink shot more difficult, especially if it has bounced close to his/her feet. Shots 2 and 3 are made more difficult because it's not an easy natural motion for either a backhand or forehand return dink shot. (That's why the forehand player should take the shot if s/he can readily reach the ball.) Shot 1 is the easiest safest shot for most players.

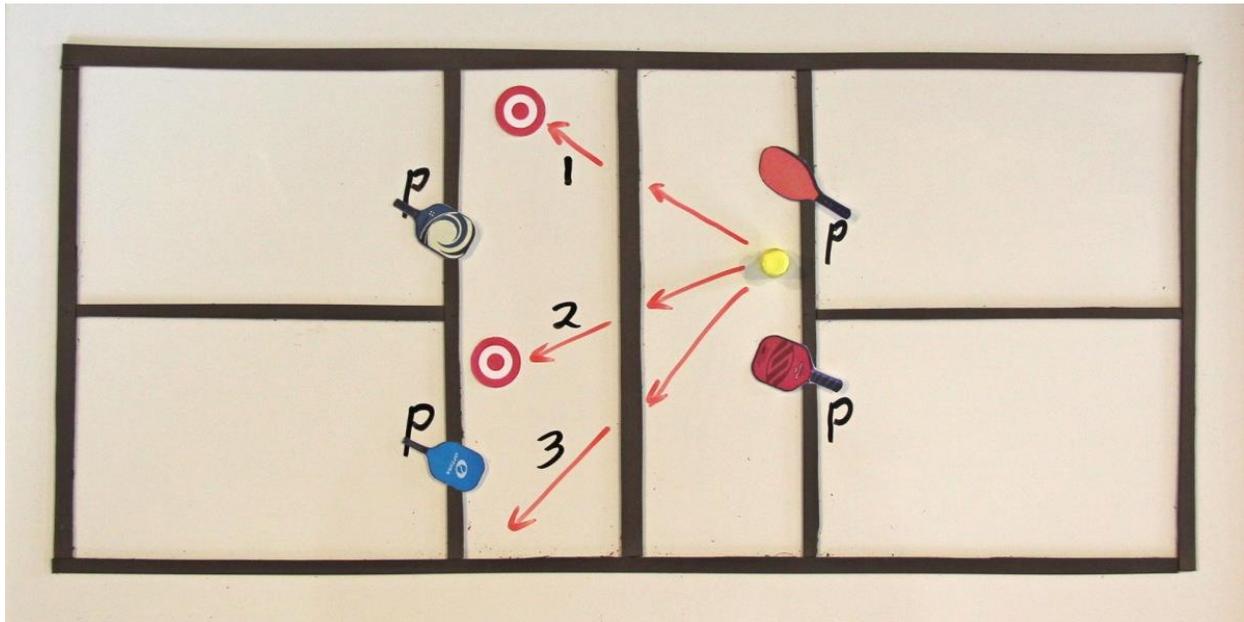


Figure M-3.3: Preferred Dink Shots (Backhand Example)

Particularly when playing against a lefty-righty pair, you should to make a mental note at the beginning of each rally of your opponents' backhand sides. (This is relevant for most shots you will make, not just for dinking.) Each time you or your opponents switch sides, you should think about where your preferred targets will be when you engage in dinking.

Be patient—your opponents will sometimes make a good dink shot against which your best choice may be just to survive by hitting back an unattackable ball anywhere in the NVZ. Wait to make your strategic shots on balls that you can comfortably handle.

A dinking scenario you should avoid is a straight ahead “mano-a-mano” contest with you hitting backhand dinks straight along a sideline to your opponent's forehand. The clear advantage lies with the forehand player.

Drills: per coaches' instructions.

The Offensive Lob

Probably the most difficult among the standard set of shots in pickleball is the offensive lob. At the 3.0 level, you are expected to make the shot only on your forehand side. The appropriate situation to attempt an offensive lob is when:

- Your opponents are very close to the NVZ line;
- A dink shot has been hit to your forehand;
- You are in good balance and do not need to rush your shot;
- You can contact the ball in your dinking “sweet spot”.

The shot itself gives the ball a high arching trajectory above the reach of your opponents and bouncing deep in the backcourt. The shot mechanics are similar to those for a dink shot, but with a little longer backswing, a faster swing, and a longer follow-through to give the ball the added loft and distance.

Figure M-3.4 shows the two preferred offensive lobs in a game among right-handed players. Diagonal lobs are easier to execute because of the greater distance to the baseline. Lob 1 from P1's position has the advantages (compared to Lob 2) of both its longer distance and its trajectory over the backhand shoulder of the diagonally opposite opponent (making it less likely that the opponent can reach up and intercept a low-trajectory lob). Offensive lob 2 passes over the forehand side of the diagonally opposite opponent, improving that opponent's chance of intercepting a low-trajectory lob. But Lob 2 does have the advantage of ending up on the backhand side of whichever opponent attempts to run it down.

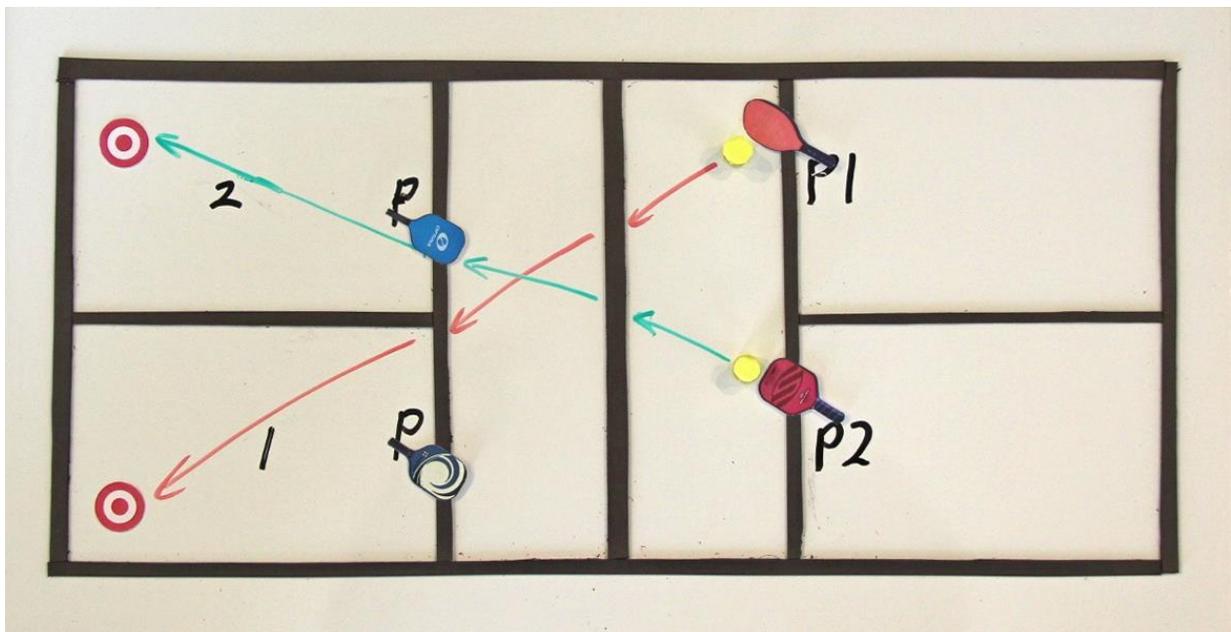


Figure M-3.4: Preferred Offensive Lobs

Used against players who are ...uh ... past their “best-before date”, it is difficult to run down the ball. (They should not try to back-peddle to get to the ball—the risk of falling backward is too great.) Even if a defender gets to the ball, her/his team is put on the defensive because s/he must now hit from her/his backcourt to the other team advantageously positioned at their NVZ line.

Drills: per coaches’ instructions.

Homework and Videos:

Use what you have learned from this lesson in your regular club play. Focus on just one or two new elements or tactics at a time and work on them until they become an instinctive part of your play. Meet up with someone from this class to practise. The following URLs provide reinforcement and ideas for drills.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEI5I8aY3Ho&t=20s	Improve Your Dink Shot
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EapzBLduLz0	Dinking Game Drill
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSKyY4jvyMI	Pickleball Lob
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nv-uBitJ52c	Offensive Lob Drill
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdv1kT0q0pQ	Defending the Lob

Lesson 2: Drop Shots; Overhead Smash

The mechanics of the **drop shot** and the **overhead smash** were presented in Module 2. They are repeated below for ease of reference. At the 3.0 level, improved consistency and range are expected for these shots. In match play, you should be attempting drop shots on third shots in most rallies.

Drop Shot Technique: Your coaches will demonstrate the drop shot.

The drop shot is essentially a long dink shot. The straight-arm stiff-wrist pendulum swing will require a longer backswing and follow-through as needed for the greater distance the ball must travel.

- From the trajectory and speed of the incoming ball, anticipate and move to the location from which you ...
- step forward to the ball ...
- while making a pendulum swing such that ...
- you can contact the ball as it begins its descent (after it bounces) ...
- at a point that is 6" to 12" outside your trailing knee and a few inches in front of your leading knee.

In contrast to the faster pace and flatter trajectory of a groundstroke, the pendulum swing enables you to hit a soft arching shot that: (i) has a higher probability of landing in the opponents' NVZ, and (ii) gives you and your partner more time to advance to your NVZ line after hitting the drop shot. The longer the drop shot you need to make, the greater the backswing before your pendulum swing, and the slightly higher speed and longer follow-through on your swing.

You should be able to move so that you take most drop shots on your forehand side. If you need to make a backhand drop shot, make a small rotation of the torso away from the ball on the backswing, and then rotate toward the ball as you step forward to contact the ball.

Cautionary note: Often a player is so eager to see if her/his drop shot is on a good trajectory for landing in the opponents' kitchen that s/he raises her/his head before contacting the ball. As you move to the spot to hit a drop shot, be aware from your peripheral vision of your distance from the net, and then keep your head down through the pendulum swing (seeing the paddle contact the ball).

Drills: per coaches' instructions.

Overhead—What and When?

The "overhead" or "overhead smash" is the appropriate shot when you can hit the ball with your arm partially or fully extended above head level. The occasion typically arises when an opponent's attempted lob is not quite high enough to get beyond you and land in the backcourt, or an opponent makes an off-balance desperation return of a difficult-to-reach shot by you or your partner.

Warning: Except for just one or two small steps, never "peddle backwards" (that is, never attempt to take several direct backward steps without turning away from facing the net) in an attempt to "get

under” an opponent’s lob—there is too high a risk of losing your balance, falling backward, and sustaining a nasty head injury.

Overhead (Smash) Technique

If an opponent is so kind as to pop up the ball 1 to 2 feet above your head such that you scarcely need to move to smash the ball down at an opponent’s feet, then “enjoy the good times while they last”. But such “gifts” can also give rise to pickleball’s most embarrassing moment. You can be so excited and anxious to make pickleball’s equivalent of the slam dunk that your paddle gets too far “out in front”. In seeming defiance of Laws of Physics, you manage to hit the ball into the net!

This “technique” section is primarily concerned with the more common situation when an opponent attempts to lob the ball over your head, and you need to retreat 2 to 5 feet from the NVZ line to be in position to smash the ball. (In a later module, you will learn how a doubles pair works as a team to defend against deep lobs.)

- From the ball’s early trajectory, anticipate where it will descend. (Remember that at this Module 3 level, we are not going to attempt to get to balls that will land more than 5 feet behind our starting position. **Always play within your physical limits—if you have any balance or mobility issues, set a reduced personal limit for your comfortable distance of retreat.**)
- If you need to take more than one step back, turn to your forehand side and move quickly (but within your limits) to the location where the ball will pass through extended arm height on your forehand side.
- With your body turned 45 to 60-degrees away from the net toward your forehand side, extend your arm as you swing it forward (from a few inches behind your head) with torso and shoulder rotation...
- ... contacting the ball at full arm extension and at a point about one foot ahead of your forehand shoulder.
- Transfer weight from the back to the forward foot through your swing, but do not bend at the waist.
- Snap your wrist at the moment of contact giving the paddle face a downward angle and the ball a downward (rather than flat) trajectory.

Drills: per coaches’ instructions.

Homework and Videos:

Use what you have learned from this lesson in your regular club play. Focus on just one or two new elements or tactics at a time and work on them until they become instinctive. Meet up with someone from this class to practise. The following URLs provide reinforcement and ideas for drills.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4n0wVXVO8o4>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3Xocq7oNy8>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3QNj6qjZCY>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QuekFbM_sjM
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdjEBqih_2Q

Third Shot Drill
Returning the Third Shot Drop
Improve Your Third Shot Drop
Drop Shot Drill (all distances)
Keys to a Good Overhead Smash

Lesson 3: Groundstrokes; Volleying

Groundstroke Technique

The **mechanics of the forehand and backhand groundstrokes** are very similar.

- Project the early trajectory of the opponent's shot. Quickly move to and be set at the optimal location for you to execute the remaining elements of the shot.
- Prepare for the stroke by rotating your torso to the **forehand/backhand** side as you dip your knees in a split step and make the backswing. In the split step, your back foot will be on same side as you swing your paddle.
- Step forward transferring weight from the back foot to the front foot as you swing the paddle forward on a slightly low-to-high arc.
- Contact should be on your **forehand/backhand** side at a point that is: (1) ahead of your leading knee and (2) near the start of the ball's descent after it bounces.
- Follow through with the face of the paddle pointing toward the target.

The minor differences are that, for the backhand groundstroke:

- (1) There is a somewhat deeper dip/bending at the knees as you make the split step and backswing.
- (2) The point of contact with the ball is somewhat further forward of the leading knee.

Drills: per coaches' instructions.

Punch Volleys; Drop or Blocking Volleys

A **volley** shot is most commonly employed when you are at the NVZ line and an opponent hits a firm shot from the mid- or backcourt that reaches you at a height between belly-button level and eye level. Strategically, you should want to hit a punch volley or blocking volley to win the rally or at least make an opponent's next shot difficult.

With a **punch volley**, you hit a firm shot back to the feet of an opponent or through the gap between opponents. This prevents your opponents from advancing to their NVZ line and/or forces them to attempt to hit the ball from a difficult position.

Punch Volley Technique From a ready position at the NVZ line,

- If the ball is hit straight at you or somewhat to your backhand side, you first draw your arm (bent about 90 degrees at the elbow) back close to your body.
- Then you time a quick extension of the arm from the shoulder and elbow so that you contact the ball 12-18 inches in front of your body. You direct the paddle face through the ball toward the target area. Your arm continues to a full extension on the follow-through.
- For a ball hit to your forehand side, maintain your elbow at a 90-degree bend and fairly tight to your side as you rotate your arm (mostly from the shoulder) to the forehand side. With little or no further backswing, hit the ball with a sharp short forward swing generated largely by rotating the upper arm at the shoulder.

To hit a **blocking volley**, you use a “soft paddle” to absorb enough of the ball’s energy (from the opponent’s hard shot) so that the ball drops softly into the opponents’ kitchen. The opponents may not be able to get to the ball before its second bounce, or one of them can do so only by lunging for the ball. In the latter instance, the opponent often “pops up” the ball making it attackable by you or your partner.

Two elements are involved in making a “soft paddle”. You relax your grip on the handle, making it much less firm than for a punch volley, and even less firm than for a long third-shot drop. Secondly, you draw the paddle back toward your body a small amount precisely timed so that the paddle face is moving in the same direction as the ball (but more slowly) just before the instant of contact.

If the opponent’s shot comes from the backcourt, the volley can be either a soft blocking shot to the opponents’ NVZ, or a moderately firm “punch” to the backcourt that keeps the opponents at a disadvantage deep in their end. If the shot comes from mid-court, the punch volley should be hard and directed at an opponent’s feet or low in the gap between opponents.

Drills: per coaches’ instructions.

Homework and Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44LOdN0KG00>

Pickleball Blocking Basics

Lesson 4: Volleying Dink Shots; Diagnosing and Correcting Errors

Typically, **on-court warmup** consists only of easy forward dinking while your mind is off in a conversation with the others in your foursome. Make your dinking warmup purposeful by working on some aspect of your dinking game—improving your backhand dink, reducing the net clearance of your dink shots, lengthening cross-court dink shots, maintaining position at the NVZ line while dinking, developing quick reaction as to hitting dink volleys vs. letting the ball bounce, targeting an opponent's feet or backhand side, targeting the opponents' NVZ line with low net-clearance dinks, etc.

After 3 or 4 minutes of dinking warmup, the foursome should (in pairs with two balls) practice drop-shots. One person backs away from the NVZ line while his/her partner continuously feeds the ball deeper and deeper until the former is hitting drop shots from the baseline. Then they reverse roles.

Finally, the two players in each pair continuously exchange hard groundstrokes from their backcourts.

Drills: per coaches' instructions.

Volleying Dink Shots

It has been emphasized previously that, once at your NVZ line, you should maintain your position there and avoid backing off the line. However, it seems that you can't avoid stepping back in order to take low dink shots landing at your feet. The need to step back can be avoided in many instances by volleying the ball before it bounces at your feet. You need to develop a quick, instinctive ability to decide whether to volley an incoming dink shot or to let it bounce.

Here are guidelines to remember and work on until you no longer need to think about whether to volley an opponent's dink shot. Based on (i) the speed & arc of the opponent's paddle, and (ii) the ball's early trajectory, decide whether you will be able to contact the ball at a point at least 18 inches above the ground and 18-to-24 inches in front of your body. If "yes" on both accounts, you should choose to volley.

If you reach too far forward, you are likely to meet the ball with a "dead" paddle because your paddle has so little remaining speed and distance-of-travel. If you reach too low and/or too close to your body, you are more likely to pop up the ball making it attackable by an opponent. You want to volley the ball back with low net clearance and low speed so that your opponent cannot attack your shot. Your opponent must react more quickly when you volley back his/her dink shot—this puts more pressure on your opponent.

The challenge is that you have just one second or less from the instant your opponent contacts the ball until you must contact the ball if you are going to volley it. That's why it must become an instinctive response. You can develop it over time with practice and determination.

Diagnosing and Correcting Errors

Many players seem to make one or another sort of bad shot with frustrating frequency. Here we mention a few of them and suggest measures to correct them.

1. Entirely missing the ball; hitting the ball on the edge of your paddle; mishitting attackable balls. These can all be consequences of “taking your eye off the ball”. Without realizing it, we tend to take our eye off the ball too early because (i) we look up at the target area and (ii) we are too eager to see the result of our shot. It is a very subtle and insidious problem—we often think we are keeping our eye on the ball even though we fail to do so.

Here’s the remedy: Intentionally sub-vocalize “Bop!” at the precise instant your paddle meets the ball. This forces you to watch the ball right to the nanosecond of contact! Whenever mishitting the ball becomes a problem, go back to this remedy.

2. When at the NVZ line, hitting attackable balls into the net. This one completely puzzles and frustrates some players (not to mention their partners). If you give it some thought, it “takes some doing” to hit a ball from a 6- or 7-foot height into a 34-inch high net just 7 feet away! But most of us do it at least occasionally.

The most common cause is making contact with the ball too far in front of our body. To drive home the point, pick up your paddle and bring your extended arm “over the top” stopping at a 45-degree angle. At that point the sweet spot on your paddle is about 2 feet in front of your body and your paddle face is making a 45-degree angle with the ground. So if that is the point of contact between paddle and ball, the ball will be hit down at about a 45-degree angle below the horizontal. The ball quickly does the math and physics ... and dives for the net!

The remedy—a little more patience. Wait an additional fraction of a second to hit the ball at point closer to the plane of your body—something like 12 inches in front of your body. Also, don’t be so hyper-aggressive and eager to hit the world’s fastest hardest kill shot—your super-fast swing takes the paddle too far in front of your body at the instant of contact and drives the ball into the net.

Sometimes in the heat of play, you overestimate the speed of an attackable ball. Your early swing gets too far “out in front” causing you to hit the ball into the net.

3. Popping up balls that your opponents can attack. This tends to happen when you stretch far to the side or forward of your body in order to reach low balls (whether attempting dink shots, drop shots, or ground strokes). To illustrate, again take your paddle and extend your arm (to either your backhand or forehand side) as though attempting to contact a ball about 1 foot off the ground and 1 foot or so ahead of your body. Our anatomy naturally causes the paddle face to be tilted upward. While our shot will need some loft, the paddle speed and angle of the paddle face often result in hitting an attackable ball.

Remedy: The problem can be substantially reduced by moving early and moving quickly to an optimal location such that you don’t have to make a long reach for the ball. The less you have to reach to hit a ball, the less likely you are to pop it up.

4. Hitting attackable balls and smashes out-of-bounds. Most golden-agers have lost some flexibility in their shoulders (and everywhere else). Consequently, we frequently omit the “overhead” part of “overhead smash”. Instead, we swing the paddle through a rather flat arc at or just above head level, rather than through a more pronounced arc made by swinging an extended arm “over the top”. A paddle’s flat arc imparts a flat trajectory to the ball, frequently driving the ball beyond the baseline or sideline. An over-the-top swing imparts more of a downward component to the ball’s trajectory, allowing it to be directed at the feet of an opponent. The remedy? Test-drive swinging over the top to get the “feel” (and pain?) of a proper overhead swing. If that’s problematic for you, you’ll have to “take some heat off” your approximation of the overhead smash.

Concluding Comments: Our lessons have covered quite a lot in a rather short time. You should now have the knowledge of what you should be able to do at the 3.0 skill level. But implementing all of it at game-speed can be another matter. Our final suggestion is to pick one weak shot or other aspect of your game and focus just on it for a few days in your social and club pickleball play. Work on it until proper execution becomes second nature. Then focus on another element of your game until it too becomes habitual, and so on.

It can be frustrating for you if social play is so casual that other players in your foursome (particularly your partner) are not inclined to follow basic “norms” for pickleball play (such as trying third-shot drops and moving quickly to the NVZ line after your well-executed drop shot). Your doing the right thing may not “pay off” if your partner is not “in sync” with you. Ideally you should find (or organize) a foursome having similar skills and goals.

Happy pickleballing! See you in Module 4 (Advancing from 3.0 to 3.5) ...