

Have a go at pickleball: A fun, new, family enhancing sport on the block

FAITH IN SPORT

Mgr Vlad Felzmann

Recently, I have discovered the existence of a sport that did not exist when I was younger.

Pickleball is a fun sport that combines elements of badminton, tennis, and table tennis – considered slightly less physically demanding than other games, and centred around having fun.

Of course, in competition it can get quite aggressive, but casual players of all ages have taken to pickleball, making it the fastest growing game in America and it's now growing rapidly in popularity in the UK.

A little research reveals that, back in 2019, the infamous Kardashians tried their hand at pickleball on their reality TV show, using their own method of scoring. Meanwhile, Leonardo DiCaprio reportedly plays "every day," according to *Vanity Fair*, and the Clooneys are also big fans. Philanthropists Bill and Melinda Gates are known to have enjoyed a game alongside Ellen DeGeneres, who is also hooked; and Robbie Williams and Novak Djokovic once played together at a charity event. The list goes on.

Pickleball is played both indoors or outdoors on a badminton-sized court and a slightly modified tennis net. Two or four players use solid paddles made of wood or composite materials to hit a perforated polymer ball, over a net.

It couldn't be easier to have a go at Pickleball and discover for yourself just how much fun it is. Whilst no special equipment is required, and any comfortable clothing is fine, trainers / tennis shoes are recommended.

Just find a convenient club near you, call them up and make arrangements to join a session. Google 'Pickleball England' and use the 'Club Locator' to find your nearest ground and begin your journey. All pickleball clubs claim to be welcoming and friendly.

I could only find one currently in London – in Wimbledon, somewhat ironically – but, with David Lloyd Leisure Centres planning to roll out a significant number of new pickleball courts this year, I am hopeful for more in the capital by the summer.

You can't buy equipment on the high street yet but, Pickleball does have an online store in the UK that stocks everything you need, such as paddles, balls, net and bags. The UK Pickleball Shop has been trading since 2015 and the owners are very knowledgeable. They also have some special offers for pickleball England



members.

Here are the five rules of pickleball: the ball must stay inbounds; there should be one bounce per side; serving must be done at the baseline; the serve can't land in the no-volley zone; and the game ends at 11, 15, or 21 points.

The game of pickleball is understood to have been born in Washington back in 1965, when two dads invented the game to alleviate the boredom of their families one summer's day and make use of an old badminton court.

As for the origins of its name,

there are two versions: one related to a dog and the other to a boat, but it's generally accepted that it was named by one of the inventor's wife, Joan.

Players yell 'Pickle!' when they serve. Other snack-related terms include 'falafel!' (a shot fallen short), a 'poach!' (crossing over to your teammate's side) and 'flabjack!' (a shot that has to bounce before being hit).

The front lines on the court mark the no-volley zone, known as the 'kitchen, where you can serve your opponents' 'dink' shots. In simple

terms, this is a shot from kitchen to kitchen that manoeuvres the ball with more finesse than your routine smash shots. It makes it very hard for your opponent to return the shot after letting it bounce, as pickleballs don't bounce very high.

Like table tennis, a set is won by the first to reach 11 points with a two-point margin.

The International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) is the governing body of world pickleball. The IFP was founded in 2010 by the USA Pickleball Association (USAPA), and is affiliated with 59 national

pickleball associations and five continental federations. The IFP is a non-profit organisation that focuses its resources on providing support to national and local pickleball organisations.

The IFP's goals include creating and maintaining official rules across all of pickleball, organising international tournaments, and most crucially, spreading the sport of pickleball across the world. The IFP's main goal is to have the sport of pickleball added to the Olympic Games.

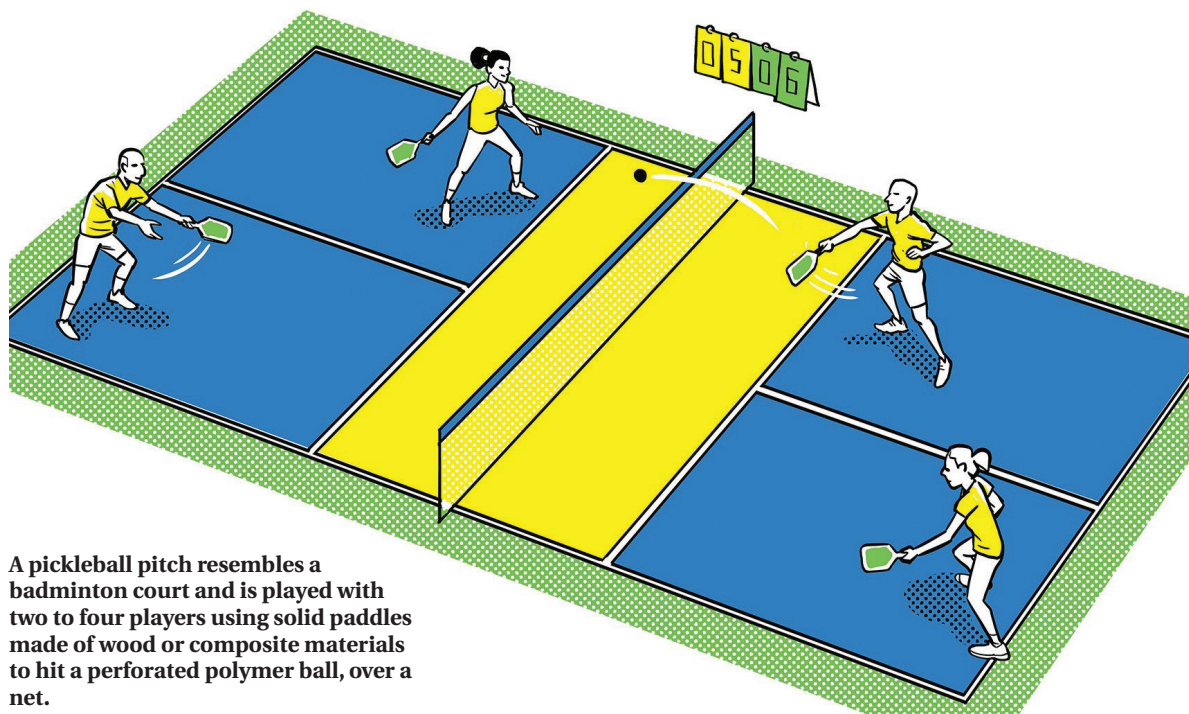
The IFP also organises international pickleball competitions including the Bainbridge Cup, an international competition in which teams made up of people from across Europe, Asia, and North America represent their continents and compete on professional and amateur levels.

Pickleball is great to play with the family. Children can play with their parents, grandparents, or cousins. It is a chance for a great family bonding that, due to busy schedules, is all too often on a family's back-burner.

Pickleball is not only an attractive bridge uniting the generations, but a great prophylactic to mental issues. Beyond being fun to play, pickleball offers benefits for all ages. It gets youngsters active, helps with balance and agility, and can improve everyone's mood.

To rephrase a saying about praying together: "The family that plays together, stays together – joyfully."

Why not google "Pickleball" and give it a go this summer?



A pickleball pitch resembles a badminton court and is played with two to four players using solid paddles made of wood or composite materials to hit a perforated polymer ball, over a net.