



Letter from the Editor

Joanne Griesser

We hope this issue of the HCPB Newsletter finds you healthy and safe. The weather is perfect for going out to the courts and playing a few games. We all miss the feeling of walking up to the court with the anticipation of some great shots. We miss the feel of the paddle in our hand and that unique sound when you connect with the ball. We miss each other because this one game you cannot play alone. The game is waiting for us to return and we will. Please stay safe. Stay strong. #Alonetgether

This Newsletter is for our members. If you have a story, a helpful tip, pictures, travel information, an event or you just want to have your voice heard, send your article to Joanne.Griesser@verizon.net. Your input could appear in the next newsletter.

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From the President's Desk

By Earl Sneeringer

As I contemplate the times we are living in, several songs lyrics come to mind: "Isn't life strange...", "what a long strange trip it's been...", and "we are living in strange times..."; they all seem appropriate. Never did we expect to have so many of our normal routines interrupted and blocked. Unfortunately, that's still the way it's going, with all the outdoor tennis courts and pickleball courts locked up and all indoor facilities are closed, and programs cancelled. I miss pickleball and I'm sure you do too. However, we are following the direction of our governor and the rest of the country by keeping our distance, staying at home and reducing our contact with others to reduce exposure to this disease and reduce the load on hospitals. Hopefully you have found a way to continue to exercise and keep your pickleball skills current. I'm grateful for my bike and the ping pong table we have in our basement which at least allows me to work on my cardio as well as eye/hand coordination and reaction time. As you can see by the picture on our web, some of our members are setting up nets in their driveway to practice their soft shots. I'm also considering a visit to a school wall and working on my dinking skills. Eventually we will be able to get together once again. When that time comes, we will come up with a schedule for our organized play and share it with you. In the meantime, stay isolated, stay safe and stay healthy.

Given the difficult situation that many are facing with the pandemic, our association has decided to make two donations to local organizations supporting our community. We are donating \$250 to the Howard County General Hospital's doctors and nurses who are on the front line of this war with the virus. This will go for food for them, which is one thing they do not have to worry about. Additionally, we are donating \$250 to the Maryland food bank to help those less fortunate. I encourage you to consider a personal donation to these and other organizations that are supporting our community.

It appears that we may be able to play once again should the local venues open up based on the Governor's recently released plan to open the state back up. This is a bit controversial due to the high risk in potential contamination. Duane recently posted on our announcement page an excellent video by Hank Weiss, an Adjunct University Professor and Epidemiologist as well as an avid pickleball player who explained the risks involved with playing during this time. This video can be accessed via our Members / Announcements web page or our COVID-19 News menu item. Our association is awaiting for information from Columbia Association and Howard County Recreation and Parks on their approach to opening up their facilities. Additionally, our board will be considering what is a prudent approach on top of those and planning on how to

address our organized play. Stay tuned, we will let you know what we come up with once we get enough information to work with.

Duane's Court

Can we start this year over again?

I think when we look back on 2020 we will describe it as “the year that wasn’t.” Everything seems to have been canceled or optimistically postponed. We finished the Howard County Pickleball Master Plan last December with many hopes of exciting activities for pickleball in the upcoming year. The highlight of the year was to be a Howard County Pickleball Festival in the Fall that would bring the awareness of pickleball to our broader community. Needless to say, we are not sure when it will be safe to hold this event. Our plan to identify restaurants that would like to host pickleball nights with play in their parking lots and dinner after play have also been put on hold until normal community contact can resume.

So what can we do until our normal weekly play resumes? We can still watch the exciting play of the pros on YouTube. Just search YouTube for the US Open in Naples or the Nationals at Indian Wells. Also, there are several instructional videos on YouTube. If watching videos is not enough for you, try to find a family member or friend, a flat hard surface area to rig up a makeshift net and mark off a modified pickleball court. If you only have 2 players for singles, make sure the court dimensions smaller than the 20’ by 44’ of a regular court. Try a court of 16’ by 36’. There is also various versions of dinking games. We can use this time without play to practice all the shots we never seem to have time for when all we do is play.

Finally, this might be a good time to check out our Association Facebook page. Search for Howard County Pickleball Association.

Webmaster Tidbits

Mary Pagan and I have attempted to add additional photos to our Members Directory page. We have completed our attempts to reach out to the members to request they send in a head shot picture. Thanks to all who replied to our requests and to those who sent us the pictures. It makes our member directory a little more personable.

If you have any suggestions or issues with the website, please use the website’s contact page.

Sonny Side of the Court

By Sonny Tannan

We are all living during a challenging time, and first and foremost...stay safe and stay healthy. If there is a way, I can best support you or your loved ones during this time, feel free to reach out and connect. We will get through this. Remember to be mindful that there is a long road ahead of us and our new normal may be just that...a new normal. I look forward to the time that we are all able to get back out on the courts to play safely, and until then...be well!

What can I do Against the Hard-Hitting Competition?

Have you noticed that at every level of play, there seems to be hard-hitting competition?!

I typically play and observe in a variety of events (rec play and tournament play) that no matter what the skill level, there seems to be more and more hard-hitting players (also known as bangers). No matter where in the world pickleball is played, this is not a new observation. However, it is one that is starting to become more and more popular at every level and in every geography.

Why is this something that seems to have so much controversy surrounding it? Well, here are three lines of thoughts, and this is in no means the only ways to think about this...let's just keep it simple though:

1. Why do they keep hitting the ball hard, it's not using pickleball strategy to slow the game down and win with dinks!
2. If they can't handle the heat, let's just keep hitting at them as hard as possible...besides it's more fun to hit it fast!

Can you guess which lines of thoughts are from certain style of player. Maybe you even cross lines on any given day. At the end of the day, here's the thought you might want to take away.

3. Pickleball is a dynamic game that is always changing. Why not learn how to do both?!

If you really think about, if hitting the ball hard wasn't effective, then players would not be doing it. Conversely, if slowing the game down and dinking with a purpose didn't work, then why do some of the best players in the world focus on this skill? There is a lot to consider when playing against hard-hitting competition, and at the end of the day, getting frustrated or anxious about it will not improve the way you play or even give you the opportunity to enjoy your pickleball experience.

Here are just a few things to think about next time you are playing and while it might be easy to identify these things, it's much more difficult to learn how to apply these in your own game.

- **Let balls go out** – if you see your opponent-getting ready to swing away and blast a ball, consider where the ball is in relation to you. Is it above chest level or maybe even at your face?
- **Keep your shots low** – take note of the shots that you might pop-up or even hit a bit too short that invite a hard-hitting opponent closer to the net...where was your last shot?
- **Soft grip on your paddle** – while it can be nerve-wracking to have a ball hit hard at you, do you tense up on your paddle and grip it tighter with more tension in your hand and arm?

Remember, it is a great time to be a part of our sport as well as introduce others to join in the competition and fun. We are all learning how to improve our skills and understanding of the game, and there is certainly room for a variety of styles of play. If you want to learn more about how to bring out the best in your own play, feel free to connect with me and let's get to work on enhancing your game.

See you on the courts!

Jokes

(Courtesy of PickleBallfire.com)

There are no losers in Pickleball. Either you win or you learn.

Yeah I play pickleball like a girl- try to keep up!

The only bad game is one you didn't play.

Never underestimate a grandma with a pickleball racquet.

Interview

Meet Harold and Carol White – our newest association board members.

Both Carol and Harold are native Baltimoreans. Except for four years in Germany and three years in South Korea, we have always lived in Maryland (Baltimore City and County, Carroll County, Howard County). Carol and Harold met in Math class, the first class on the first day of college at Towson State College and rushed to get married seven years later. We have one

daughter, adopted from Korea in 1981. She has been teaching at Cedar Lane School (a Howard County Special Education school) for the last 17 years.

Carol was a high school math teacher for eight years, but later joined Harold at NSA, Fort Meade. Both retired 12 years ago and lived happily ever after.

We love overseas travel. Since retirement, we have visited Australia, New Zealand, Spain, India, Morocco, Turkey, Iceland, Chile, Argentina, Peru, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Costa Rica.

Carol enjoys going to the gym, line dancing, playing Mahjong and participating in two book clubs. Harold is an avid touring motorcyclist and wilderness back packer. He is also a skydiving instructor with several senior world record formation skydives in the last couple of years.

We have done volunteer work in Tanzania (twice), India, Morocco, and Peru. We are both members of the Red Cross Disaster Action Team in Howard County. Carol is a quilter and has donated more than 250 quilts to the Quilts for Kids and Quilts of Valor organizations. So far, in response to the current pandemic, she has made over 600 masks. Harold has served as a volunteer Search and Rescue member of the Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group for 10 years.

As the new treasures, yes (that's right), we are going to tag team this position, we hope to accomplish transparent accountability and developing an annual budget to better manage our expenses.

We have been playing Pickleball for three years. Our friends from Florida had been telling us about Pickleball for years. When we visited the newly completed courts at Atholton, we rushed to Walmart to buy our \$5 wooden paddles. The rest is history.

We have never played in a tournament. We have only played locally in Howard County. Our best advice for any player is follow the ball all the way to the paddle. We always have a good time. Relax; it is just a game!

Pro Corner

By Marc Austin

Hello from Coach Marc. It is a true honor to be able to connect in this forum with the constantly growing number of HCPA members. I absolutely love teaching this great sport and the highlight of any lesson to me is when a student has an "ah ha" moment. I hope to bring some of those special moments to you in my HCPA articles. I will focus my article each quarter

on an aspect of the game where it may cause some confusion or an area where I think could be educational and informative. I want to arm readers with new ideas or techniques to increase everyone's "tools in the toolbox" they can use during play.

In the last Quarterly HCPA Newsletter, I wrote about how important it is to be coordinated with your doubles partner especially when playing in leagues and/or tournaments. I gave readers some things to consider when trying to improve their levels of play and introduced two places in the game where it is very important to be coordinated and show your opponents that you are working together. Implementing a few of the ideas might give your team a mental and/or physical edge in that game or match that takes you to victory which otherwise may not have happened.

In this article I want to continue with the theme of how to improve your "Playing as Partners" skills by giving the readers another way to work together to deal with and diffuse the confidence of players that use the lob as a BIG part of their game. As you know, lobbing is a pickleball "tool" that when used in the right situation against the right opponents can be a very successful shot. I will now give readers a second way to play defense against players who use the lob often in their game and then turn the situation into an offensive situation for you. We are assuming doubles play in this article.

Let's start by understanding why some players regularly lob the ball with the goal of creating confusion and hopefully not giving their opponents enough time to effectively return the lobbed ball back over the net; hence moving your team back while they may be at the Non Volley Zone (NVZ). A second reason a team lobs regularly is they are not comfortable playing at the NVZ and they avoid it as much as possible by lobbing over their opponents heads. Another reason is to use a lob as a last second resort of an off balance shot to give the lobbing team time to reset themselves. I think the best lobs are done when they are NOT predictable catching their opponents off guard.

Here is some advice to consider; when you are hitting the third shot in a game and you know your opponents are going to lob as soon as you come to the NVZ, simply act and move like your team are coming to the NVZ. *But stop short, about 7 feet before reaching the NVZ.* Keep your paddles up of course, be ready for any shot and stop. Get in your ready position with your paddles up, and get ready for the lob (or another shot). Since you and your partner do not have to move all the way up to the NVZ you have enough time to get to about 7 feet from the NVZ line. This is applicable to players who are less mobile. Doing this makes it VERY HARD for your opponent to hit a super good lob now. Yes, you are in the famous so called "no person's land" but in this case it is used as an effective weapon to defeat the confidence of the lobbers. Remember they lob regularly because they are not confident playing the "small" game at the NVZ and they think you cannot get back fast enough to do an effective return shot off their lob. It is much easier to lob over players head when they are at the NVZ. It is not at all easy to lob the ball effectively when a player is 7 feet back from the NVZ.

Further- what can happen if you are the team that stops 7 feet back from the NVZ line expecting a lob?

1. Your opponents can be bothered by what you are doing and actually now hit a short high lob giving you or your partner a great time to slam it.
2. Your opponents could try to lob it over your head (now trying to aim it instead of just lobbing it) which could cause them to hit the lob long and out of play. Even if your opponents hit a perfect lob high over your head that lands just inside the baseline, it is highly likely you or your partner have plenty of time to now move back just a couple of steps and let the ball bounce before you hit the ball back over the net.
3. You might catch them off guard and they panic and drive the ball right into the net or right out of play.
4. Your opponents may try to dink it - great- you or your partner just take a step or so forward to dink it or drive or lob yourself depending on how your team plays. You can even lob the lobber if you see them off balance and losing confidence and close to the NVZ.
5. Your opponents may choose to drive it hard right at your team but you are in the ready position with your paddles up and have enough time to hit it back over the net.

In all five cases, your team has made your opponent think, which now gives your team the mental advantage and enables your team to become more physically offensive rather than being completely defensive mentally and physically. When your team gets the ball back over the net then go back to 7 feet behind the NVZ line see what happens now. Your team now has the advantage both mentally and physically for the rest of the point and perhaps the game or match! If their main game is lobbing they are at a big disadvantage.

By the way, you also have eliminated any confusion between you and your partner on who hits the lobbed ball because you have more time to figure it out.

I hope this gives you something to consider as another way to address and defeat players who predictably lob regularly.

I love hearing from readers so please do not hesitate to give me any of your comments or feedback at mmfaustin@gmail.com. I would love to hear from you. Also, I welcome your ideas regarding what you would like to see my future articles cover as I am totally open and ready to write about any aspect of this game.

Next quarter I plan to write about a third major part of the game where partners get confused and provide several ideas to help eliminate the confusion. Stay tuned.

Lastly-REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN-- in partnership with Howard County Recreation and Parks I am planning to offer several opportunity for players to learn more about all aspects of this game later this spring, summer and fall. Please go to <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/pickleball> to view all my special clinics ("Playing as Partners" is on 16 May) and adult classes!!!

Stay safe and keep improving your mental and physical parts of the game.

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Team Gamma News

By Marc Austin

I am part of Team GAMMA which is awesome. GAMMA has fun contests every month or so for all members and each time there are a few lucky winners.

The contest for March 2020 was for anyone part of Team GAMMA to submit real (genuine) action photos of them playing with their GAMMA gear on. The chances of winning are small.

Well, Michael Smolyak, an HCPA member, just happened to be snapping pictures at one of our pickleball socials last fall at Owen Brown and took a cool action shot of me playing at the Non Volley Zone. I did not know he was taking the picture.

I loved the picture right away when I saw it for several reasons including the HCPA shirt I was wearing. I was not part of Team GAMMA last fall but I have loved their products so it was not unusual to see me sporting GAMMA products before I became part of their team.

GAMMA announced in their national monthly Team GAMMA newsletter that I was one of the four winners for March! Below is the snippet from their newsletter. This is super exciting! I immediately thanked Michael and Natalie for taking the pictures and congratulated them! They have now taken a National Award Winning Action Sports Photo! Perhaps a new

career is in the making for them.

I am not sure what I won yet but I am sure it is great stuff as GAMMA is a top-notch company.

I attached the actual winning picture below in this Email so you can see HCPA being advertised as well.



Classified

Tino's Italian Bistro has always supported our Association by making a 10% donation of proceeds for one day to our Association. This year that day would have been Tuesday, May 19th. We still want to support Tino's and are asking that you consider doing a takeout or delivery for that day. We will not be asking them to donate to us this year, as they probably need the revenue more than our Association. When you order that day let them know your business is because of your membership with our Association.