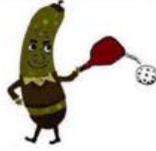


PICKLEBALL



Pickle's Tip of the Month – 4 ***Returning a Serve***

Last month we talked about the importance of learning the soft game. When your team is serving, if you can hit your opponent's return of serve, soft and low into the NVZ, you take the opportunity for a slam away from them. But what do you do when you are the receiving team? Wouldn't a soft return of serve be an effective shot? Probably not...both players on the serving team are back at the baseline until they hit the third shot of the game. One of the receiving team players is already at the NVZ line...if the receiving team hits the ball short, into the NVZ that will bring both members of the serving team up and that is not where you want them!

A good return of serve will be somewhat high, a floating ball, deep to the center/baseline T. Deep means within three feet of the baseline...deep because you want to keep both players back at the baseline. To the baseline T because there is the potential for both players thinking the other will hit the ball. It also makes their third shot soft more difficult to make. While your ball is floating toward the baseline T, you are hustling up to the NVZ.

Here's the drill to practice the return of serve...from the receiving center/baseline T measure 3 feet in both directions along the baseline. Now measure 3 feet up the center line. Using chalk, draw lines from those three points to create a triangle. Now you have your target for return of serve drills. I use three small, orange, plastic cones I bought at Wal-Mart.

Remember, when you are drilling this shot, you must be hustling up to the NVZ while your ball is floating toward your target. When you drill it enough, it will become second nature to you.