

Happy New Year Picklers!

As the saying goes, “build it and they will come”. So, the saying at least in Loreto Pickleball is holding true. The refinished courts have inspired more players than prior seasons for both open play and block play schedules. Great to see our vision for pickleball in Loreto coming true. Welcome newbies and established members!

Given the limited number of courts and growing membership, now might be a good time to reiterate our guidelines for court play. To allow for various types of play and skill levels, we have set aside designated times for “block play” and “open play”. Of course, you can play any other time during the day exclusive of these groups.

Below is a brief explanation of the two **types of designated play**:

1) Block Play - Groups of 4 or more self organize to play together. This format is good for playing with friends, family, out of town guests, and or players of similar skill set. Groups can and do occasionally mix it up with other teams, or may choose to add in new players, however it should not be expected of them to do so. Block play can be busy, so teams must rotate off after each game to allow another group onto the courts. 4 paddles in the rack is an indication that another group is ready and waiting for a court. If you are playing singles or only have 3 players, you must vacate the court immediately if a group of 4 are waiting.

2) Open Play - This is an opportunity to come at a designated time and play with a mix of people who are of similar skill set. Perfect opportunity if you are new to the area, visiting, or simply wish to meet and play with different people. When you arrive, place your paddle on the right side of the paddle rack filling the slots from center towards the right end of the rack. This side is the start/loser side. The first 4 paddles from the outside in are the next group to play. Once your game has finished, the 2 winners place their paddles on the winner side of the paddle rack (Left side) starting from the center out. The two losers place their paddles on the right side and play with a new group. For the next games you must change partners from the previous game. There will be a flag on the rack which moves back and forth from winner side to loser side and indicates which group is up for the next open court. If you are new to the courts, simply ask someone to help assist you in getting started. You'll get the hang of it quickly! Please be respectful of others and follow the loading guidelines. If the start/loser side of the rack becomes lopsided due to multiple new arrivals, a court monitor may redirect the flow of open courts to even out the paddle rack.

Given the larger turnouts on certain open play days, we will be testing a new open play schedule with splits by skill level for the next several weeks. It may take a few weeks to get this sorted out and for you to find your “peeps” but we believe it will help improve play for all levels. Patience and an honest self assessment will be needed by all! First we have defined 4 groups of players by skill level briefly described below. These guidelines are a compilation from several sources, as well as some we have added. Please note, these skill levels only apply during open play.

Clarification of Player Skills used for open play

Beginner Players

If you have never played before, trying to grasp the scoring system (sometimes the hardest part!), learning how to serve, understanding basic rules of the game, have limited play/paddle experience, or learning the fundamentals of the game, you should first start with the Beginner group. Play at this level is slower and will allow you time to hone your skills in the comfort of similar players. Anyone however can play with this group, but this is their time to play and you are expected to mix in, avoid aggressive play, and help guide/mentor newbies on our favorite sport.

Recreational Players: You know how to serve and keep score, and you understand the two bounce and non volley zone rules. You tend to hang at the baseline and drive the ball, or you stop in no man’s land (3-6’ behind the kitchen line.) You can hit the ball if it comes to you, but with little strategy or control. You may have some mobility problems that keep you from playing in the optimal position, but you love the game, the people and the exercise it provides.

Intermediate Players: You are beginning to learn the soft game, but you have more success hitting it hard, so that’s what you usually do. Your serving goal is simply to get it in, and have no aim point yet. You are starting to come to the kitchen line, but often you step back to let the ball bounce, or when the tempo of the rally speeds up. You hit some lobs, but not for any good offensive or defensive reason. You drive low shots, causing them to go into the net, long or right onto your opponent’s waiting paddle. You try to use spin, but not with intended purpose or control. You have longer rallies due to your athletic ability, but you often choose power over control. As you advance in this level, you have a better ability to see the “whole” court and are placing your shots. You realize the power of hitting to the middle, and are also starting to hit some angled shots. You are comfortable playing at the kitchen line and quickly get back to it when having to step back. You are able to use power or soft shots to set up points. You apply

spin with a purpose and are more aware of your opponent's court position. As both Intermediate and Competitive players are designated to play on the same day, Intermediate players will be assigned to the Seaside Courts.

Competitive Players: You are able to use a variety of shots including lobs, spin, dinks and drive shots with a purpose and at the right time. You are very comfortable playing at the kitchen line and return to it quickly when forced back. You are more patient and choose shots based on your opponent's position, or weakness. Keeping the ball in play is more important than forcing a low percentage shot. You use the dink to move your opponent and create an opening. You can hit serves to your opponent's forehand or backhand, resulting in an occasional ace. As both Competitive and Intermediate players are designated to play on the same day, Competitive players will assigned to the Mountain side courts.

Please note court skill assignments are not meant to box anyone into one court. At any time, players can move to the court above or below their level. This will allow players to compete one level higher and will help them improve. They should however, be considerate and not move two levels until they have achieved the appropriate skills to offer a good game at that level. Regardless of which courts you choose, please follow the court loading guidelines stated above. This is not the time or place to select your play partners.