

Lessons That Transform

Why Power Is the Last Thing 3.0–3.5 Players Need

The Setup

I used to believe that to break out of the 3.0–3.5 range, players needed more power. Stronger drives. Harder serves. Faster hands. When shots didn't finish points, the instinct was always to swing bigger.

The Shift

Then I noticed a pattern that kept showing up: power wasn't losing points—*timing was*. Players hit hard from bad positions, below net height, or without balance. At this level, points aren't lost because shots are too soft; they're lost because shots are hit too soon.

The Application

Starting today, don't add power until you earn it. Only speed up the ball when it's above net height, and you're balanced. If not, reset or hit deep. This one rule alone eliminates dozens of unforced errors and instantly stabilizes your game.

Why Most 3.0–3.5 Players Rush the Kitchen—and Pay for It

The Setup

I used to think the key to improving was getting to the kitchen line as fast as possible. Missed drops? No problem—just charge anyway and hope for the best.

The Shift

What finally clicked was this: getting to the kitchen isn't the goal. *Getting there under control* is. Rushing forward after a weak third or fifth shot almost guarantees you'll be attacked before you're ready.

The Application

Adopt a simple rule: no forward movement unless your shot earns it. If your drop isn't good, stay back one more shot. That patience alone turns frantic points into winnable ones—and helps you arrive at the kitchen balanced instead of defensive.

Why 3.0–3.5 Players Lose More Points by “Trying to Be Nice”

The Setup

I used to see intermediate players avoid targeting weaker opponents, thinking it was unsporting—or that good players should “spread the ball around.”

The Shift

But rec play isn't about being nice; it's about being smart. At the 3.0–3.5 level, consistency gaps decide matches. Ignoring them doesn't make you more honorable—it makes you less competitive.

The Application

Use this immediately: when points matter, hit to the weaker side until they show they can handle it. You're not being unfair—you're playing percentage pickleball. This single adjustment often flips close games in your favor.

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