

Popping Up in Pickleball

“Why do I keep on popping up the ball so my opponent can slam it back?”, I ask myself in frustration.

We should all try to avoid popping up the ball because they lead to easy put away shots for your opponents. Avoiding hitting pop-ups—in other words, keeping the ball low—is all about control and is especially important when playing at the kitchen line.

Are you losing points because you’re popping up the ball? Here are a few reasons you might be doing so and how to fix it:

1. **GRIP STRENGTH IS TOO STRONG.** If you’re white-knuckling the paddle, you’ll have less control and touch of the ball, therefore making it easy to pop up.
To fix this, focus on having a relatively loose paddle grip...try for a 4 on a 10 scale.
2. **BACKSWING IS TOO BIG.** Big backswings mean more power and can at times mean wild swings and wild hits...which can lead to pop ups. Focus on taking short, compact backswings on the court.
3. **POINT OF CONTACT IS TOO CLOSE OR TOO FAR OUT FRONT.** Just like “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” when it comes to your point of contact on the court, there is a point that is “too close,” too far out front,” and “just right.” To avoid hitting pop ups, avoid hitting the ball too close to your body, or too far out in front where you’re overextending for the ball.

To help you do this:

1. Imagine there is a one-to-two-foot hula hoop around your feet. Don’t let the ball travel within this hula hoop when dinking. Comfortably extend your paddle when dinking to protect your hula hoop.

2. Remain comfortable with your reach out in front of your body. If necessary, let the ball bounce...maybe even taking a step back to hit a better, more effective shot. Then immediately return to the kitchen line.

Well, that's enough to think about for this week! Tune in next week for a few more tips on not popping up our pickleballs!

Have a great week, Pickleballers... and let's see those smiles on the courts!