

Tito at Tellico

FOOTWORK

Use the outside foot to move towards the ball and keep your hips pointed toward the net.

- If you are on the right side of the court and the ball is going right, use your right leg to step towards the ball and keep your hips pointed at the net. If you use your left leg to step towards the ball, your legs are now crossed with your hip pointing towards the sideline, and it is harder to recover to the now open area to the left of you.

One step to get to the ball and keep the other foot planted

- Come back to pivot foot after each hit. Don't move your pivot foot to where you stepped, or you'll be out of position for the next shot.

V angle - take the shortest angle to the ball

- Some try to avoid the kitchen so much that they sidestep and hit the ball behind them instead of using the V angle to hit the ball while it's in front of them.

The weakest part of the body is the chicken wing: the paddle side shoulder, chest, ribs.

- To defend, commit to moving all the way, sliding to the side (not backward)
 - Preferably slide away from your partner, so you're not obstructing their ability to hit the ball.

ANTICIPATION & POSITIONING

As a trainer, don't ask someone to be faster. Instead, teach them to anticipate the game and play the odds.

- Cover the area that gives you less time to defend. If they don't go there, you have more time to recover and make a play.

Paddle positioning:

- If the opponent's paddle is up, yours should be down, waiting for the ball at your feet before they even hit.
 - Use your backhand at the feet to have more range of motion when hitting a ball on either side of you.
- If the opponent's paddle is down, yours should be up, waiting for them to pop it up.
- If the opponent's paddle is at the waist, yours should be too.
- The faster the ball comes, the tighter your grip should be for the reset.

DINKING

Dink with the arm, not the wrist.

Track the ball with your paddle.

If the ball goes behind you, you could have hit it out of the air.

- Doing so is better for two reasons.
 - Less time for the opponent.
 - You stay well-positioned at the kitchen, keeping the pressure on them.
- When hitting balls out of the air in the kitchen, keep your elbow in so you can extend to hit the ball (punch it) without using your wrist and popping it up.

Patience, even if it takes 20 shots for them to pop it up. You get points when they make mistakes.

Using the wrist in dinking is usually caused by a lack of footwork.

Return to the middle when dragged out to the side or feeling pressure.

- If you return cross-court in these pressured moments, you may hit it hard and out.

As a coach, watch for:

1. Wrist.
2. Backing off the line.
3. Crossing over legs so hips are facing toward sidelines.
4. Overextending arm.

ENEMIES:

1. Net! Getting it over at least gives you a chance.
2. Second thoughts - commit to your initial reaction and don't change your mind.
3. Emotions - stay calm (he runs for 30 min before pickleball to calm excitement).

DROP

Drop is a long dink.

Straight arm. Extend your arm out, not up. Follow the ball out.

- A balance between extending and lifting the arm:
 - If the drop goes too high, extend more and lift less.
 - If the drop is too low, lift more and extend less.

Cross-court drop gives you more time to get to the kitchen – TIME IS MONEY in pickleball.

When approaching the net as doubles, one goes straight up, and the other moves diagonally toward a cross-court drop to cover the middle.

DOUBLES

Respect the “X” (this isn’t tennis where the forehand covers the middle).

- Whoever can hit with the ball in front of them is better positioned to attack regardless of backhand/forehand.
 - If you are on the left, and the ball is moving cross-court to your right, that is your partner’s responsibility. The ball is moving away from you, and you will be reaching to hit it behind you, whereas your partner has the ball moving towards them and can hit the ball in front of them.

Move together side to side.

DRILLS

Dink game 1 - Dink match to 7. Adjust the number of hits before “anything goes” based on the skill level of participants. For example, if you want to focus on patience, make the count higher.

Dink game 2 – during pre-shots before anything goes if the ball hits outside the kitchen it is a point. This is to get players to take the ball out of the air. Adjust hits before anything goes based on skill. For example, advanced players have more hits before anything goes to concentrate on taking out of the air.

7-11 Game 1 - One team up at the kitchen, the other back. The back team wins if they get to 7, and the kitchen team wins if they get to 11.

Game 2 – similar to above but can only score if back. The back team stays back if scores. If the kitchen team scores, then they move back. The first team to x pts wins. You can modify it based on what they are working on.