

Shmanners 389: Pickleball

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Travis: Hello internet, I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: ... for ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: We're going to get tattoos of that. We've been talking about it.

Teresa: Yes, we are. We've decided it's going to be my first tattoo.

Travis: Her first tattoo, to one. Um... Because the tat—

Teresa: I get it.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yes, I get it.

Travis: And we're going to get the dove and the deer. We haven't decided yet. Is it, I'm getting the deer and you're getting the dove?

Teresa: Yes, because I am the dove and you are the deer.

Travis: Yeah, but would I get the tattoo for you?

Teresa: No, no, no, no.

Travis: Where it's, like, this is my dove and my deer.

Teresa: No, I get the dove and you get the deer and we get it in a place where we can touch them together and they kiss.

Travis: I love that. Or get them to, you know, that meme of like the two big, brawny men, like, grasping hands? What if it was, like, a dove with a big muscular bicep and a deer with a big muscular bicep? And it's like, "Together, Shmammers."

Teresa: I don't know where a bicep fits on a dove.

Travis: The wing.

Teresa: Yeah, but then—

Travis: You know they got powerful...

Teresa: Does it have two biceps?

Travis: No, those are fingers.

Teresa: [laughs] We're working out the finer details.

Travis: That's how it works in, like, cartoons and SuperKitties when Zsa-zsa was doing stuff, hey, deep cut reference for fans.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: They always use those feathers on, like, bird hands to be, like, fingers and they're, like, point— You know what I mean?

Teresa: Yeah, the big feathers.

Travis: That's how they always do it in cartoons and I've never questioned it until now and I'm like, I don't think pigeons can point.

Teresa: They can't.

Travis: Oh my God, my whole world's crumbling down around— I'm fine with cats having superpowers, but once you get into birds using fingers, ugh. Hey everybody, welcome. It's a new year, a new you.

Teresa: Here we are.

Travis: Hey, it's 20-fungalore. It's time to talk about birds with fingers.

Teresa: No, let's talk about pickleball.

Travis: So let me tell you what I know about pickleball.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: It's tennis-like.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: It's in the genre of the netted game.

Teresa: Yes. Yes.

Travis: The other day, Bebe came home from school and had gym.

Teresa: I love this story.

Travis: And we said, "Oh, what'd you do in gym?" And she said, "We played pickleball." And at this point, we knew we were doing this episode this week and we said, "Oh, tell us about it, how'd it go?" And she started describing a game in which it was, like, "Okay, well, so it's two teams and each team has some hula hoops." And I was like, "Okay." And she's like, "And you're trying to, like..."

I think she said, like, get the ball through the hula hoop or like you're trying to get the other person's hula hoop and they're defending. And I remember thinking very clearly, "I don't think this is pickleball..."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: " ... but I don't know enough about pickleball to confidently shut this down." So I said, "It sounds great, man!" Which is probably what I should have done anyways. It would have been— What if I went, "That's not pickleball, bro. Let me show you pickleball! Get your goggles, let's go!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I also know of pickleball that your uncle Chris, who is one of the nicest people in the entire world, one of the most supportive men in the entire world, maybe even listening right now, he listens to all of our podcasts. He celebrates all the success of his nieces and nephews-in-law. He...

Teresa: All around great dude.

Travis: All around great dude. Like, and just a just a teddy bear if a man has real beef with pickleball.

Teresa: Now wait a second. I actually reached out to him, and I want to make sure I get this right.

Travis: This is a Shmammers exclusive straight from Uncle Chris.

Teresa: I want to get this right because I wanted, I asked him for the record, tell me about what you think as a tennis player of pickleball. And he said, hey, for courts, especially, it's really great. It helps the courts be able to charge...

Travis: We should say he's a big tennis enthusiast.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: He's, like, you could charge a ton more people to use a court, right? Because you can play as singles or doubles, right? But you can fit more pickleball courts on a tennis court, right? So, you can charge a bunch more

people to play. That's great for the courts. It's great for, like, the economy of it. He said that the only problem that he has with pickleballers using tennis courts is the net specs are different.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: So when you use it for a pickleball court, you have to lower the net. And he says, oftentimes people are very unshmatterly and do not raise the net back up when they're finished. That's his only beef, he said.

Travis: I remember him saying something, like, a year or two ago about, like, changing it to, like, click or something, like, "Oh, yeah, they're putting more pickleball courts in." Um... There was an episode, we did a live show of Adventure Zone that where I was writing it and the boys were playing as skeletons and I had a demon come up through the pickleball court and I did that in Chris's honor.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So let's talk about pickleball. Is it— It feels new.

Teresa: Ish, it's newer than tennis.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That's for sure.

Travis: Well, tennis, I mean, like, Henry VIII used to play tennis.

Teresa: I know, right? So, okay, let's start with pickleball is defined as a paddle sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton, and ping pong.

Travis: And pickles.

Teresa: No, no pickles. I'll explain why it's called pickleball in just a second. And it can be played on a badminton court, either indoors or outdoors. So

that's the reason why you can fit so many in a tennis court is because the courts are smaller like badminton courts.

Travis: I feel like there's a big opening, there's a see-a-need, fill-a-need for, like, an opposing game called good-minton, where it's just, like, where you're just, like, gently handing the shuttle clock to each other and say like, "You're doing a great job. I'm very proud of you."

Teresa: I like that.

Travis: "Hey, I want you to know. I think your art has come a long way." It doesn't have to be about the game. You can compliment, like, "I noticed you got your hair cut. I'm sorry I didn't say something sooner. I was so blown away by it. It's amazing. Here you go. Here's the birdie."

Teresa: So here are some rules which can get a little difficult and sound a little, like...

Travis: Finicky?

Teresa: Finicky, yeah.

Travis: I love that word.

Teresa: It's a lot easier to have someone either, like, explain it while you're playing or maybe, like, watch on YouTube.

Travis: That's how I feel about most, like, board games and stuff.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And I don't know if that's ADHD or just the way, like, board game rules are written. But, like, our friend Charlie who has shepherded us through many a game tends to, like, "All right, let's go over the rule book" and by, like, the second page, I'm like, "Just start playing."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: "Charlie, please. If we could just..."

Teresa: Of course, YouTube tutorials are great. Alexx would like to thank pickleheads.com for these very helpful instructions.

Travis: That's fun.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You know, I like pickle. That's my, you know, that's my, like, Twitch user, what I call them, the chill pickles, the pickles?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: By the way, trying to grow my Twitch audience if you didn't know, every Monday night, every Wednesday morning, every Thursday night, I'm— It's the, honest to God and not just saying this, I think it's the most relaxed, nicest, most supportive group. The fan base is— It's not even me. Mostly I'm just there as an excuse for them to hang out and have great chats. Twitch.tv/TheTravisMcEloy always be hustling, always be plugging 2024.

Teresa: Yep. Okay. So, there are two types of shots that you can take: a ground stroke, which is where you hit off the bounce, okay, or a volley where you hit out of the air. Each side of the net has a seven foot kind of no volley zone called the kitchen...

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: ...where you cannot be in, not even a toe on the line, not be in while you're, while you're hitting volleys.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: You could hit a ground stroke, but okay. Okay. Anyway.

Travis: Uh-huh. Did you see my eyes glazing over?

Teresa: Yes. Yes. Each rally, that is, where you start the ball and play begins with a serve. Okay?

Travis: Okay. That I understand; I'm with you.

Teresa: The server is on the right side of the court facing opponents, right? And you serve diagonally to the opponent on the other side.

Travis: That's standard, right? That's like what you, I mean, you do that in tennis too, right?

Teresa: Yes, yes.

Travis: You do that in ping pong, yeah.

Teresa: And so the serve must clear the kitchen and it must be underhand. You are not allowed to serve overhand because the goal of pickleball serve is to put the ball in play instead of a tennis serve where the goal is to serve overhand aggressively and win a point, right?

Travis: Okay. A little gentler.

Teresa: Yes, yes. So it has to be underhand. You can either hit the ball out of the air or drop the ball on the ground to hit it.

Travis: Okay. And I'm looking at this, they're like wiffle balls.

Teresa: A little bit, yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Which goes back to the origin of the game, which I said I would get to, I promise.

Travis: Yeah, I think I was picturing more of, like, racquetball, like, little, like, hard rubber balls.

Teresa: More like badminton.

Travis: It's more like badminton, okay.

Teresa: Okay. So then each point continues until—

Travis: I look at and see what the paddle looks like...

Teresa: ... until a fault. It's like a ping pong paddle.

Travis: Yeah. Okay. All right. I'm not seeing any hula hoops listed in here.

Teresa: No, hula hoops.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I don't know where those are from exactly. A fault ends the rally.

Travis: I would be willing to bet, sorry to interrupt for the first time ever...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... but I would be willing to bet that the hula hoops were incorporated as one might like American Gladiators or, like, to put it in the kids' realm, like Guts where it was like, and here's how we're going to illustrate where to put the balls through where you're aiming for so it wasn't just like wild chaos of seven year old swinging bats around.

Teresa: Oh... That makes sense.

Travis: Makes it a little clearer what the game is.

Teresa: So you want to keep the ball in play and the ball keeps moving. It's called the rally, right, as the ball moves until a fault and a fault could be that the serve does not clear the kitchen. That's that seven foot kind of, like, no man's land.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: A fault could be a shot that's hit out of bounds or a shot is hit into the net.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So you want these rallies to go on and on and on and on because that's the game.

Travis: Until the person messes up.

Teresa: Right. That's the game. There is no let in pickleball.

Travis: What does that mean?

Teresa: That means there's no redo.

Travis: Oh, okay. Well, that's true in most games.

Teresa: Well, with tennis you can have a let.

Travis: Oh, yeah?

Teresa: Yeah. So the ball is played as it is—

Travis: But not, like, baseball. That would be wild if they got caught and they're like, "Wait, hold on. Can I hit it again?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I didn't want him to catch it. So, like, I would love a second try if I could. I'm going to go six inches to his left where he can't reach.

Teresa: Rule number four, you cannot volley in the kitchen. Remember, that's where you hit it without it touching the ground. So, like volleyball, right? You cannot hit it without it touching the ground in the kitchen. Okay?

Travis: So, you can't do anything in the kitchen.

Teresa: That's not true.

Travis: Oh?

Teresa: If the ball bounces into the kitchen, you can hit it as a ground stroke.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay. Anyway... And the reason is because the players at the net have the biggest advantage because they can hit any ball high enough with a downward kind of, like, smash, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: So like a spike for volleyball, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And so that puts the other opponents on the defensive, but they can't go up into the kitchen, right?

Travis: Okay, yeah.

Teresa: So if you were to get closer to the net and volley it, you would be able to smash it down and you don't want to do that because it makes it too easy to get your points.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And, you know, this game was born out of let's have as much fun for as long as we can, keep the ball in play.

Travis: So this is much more, it's sounding to me much more... Social maybe isn't the right word, but, like, the difference between, like, tennis, where it's like we're training our skills to become like aggressive point scoring machines, right? Not to downplay tennis at all. I think it's a great sport, but this sounds more like, "Hey, let's get together." Like this, this

would be the game that you would play if you're like, "No, Derek, I don't want to play tennis with you. You're too good. It's not fun for me."

Teresa: Mm. Mm-hmm.

Travis: "We show up and you just, like, dominate." But with pickleball it sounds a lot more, like, almost collaboratively competitive.

Teresa: It feels a lot like keepy-uppy.

Travis: Yeah. It's a little bit like keepy-uppy where it's more focused on the, like, "We are doing this together."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: We're competing against each other, but it's more about, like, yeah, this is a little more social, a little more...

Teresa: For our—

Travis: Less bad blood.

Teresa: For our fanners that don't speak Bluey.

Travis: Everybody knows keepy-uppy at this point.

Teresa: Keepy-uppy is the balloon game where you want to keep it up, but you're working together. And the only point where the game ends is when the balloon drops on the floor.

Travis: I— Like, listen, Bluey didn't invent that, right?

Teresa: I know.

Travis: Different people have... [crosstalk] Sure.

Teresa: The name keepy-uppy. Okay. So this is the thing about the ground strokes in the kitchen. If your opponent hits a short shot landing in the kitchen, you can enter and hit from the kitchen. This is called a dink.

Travis: [snorts and laughs] Go on.

Teresa: [laughs] So dinks are a defensive shot and one of the most important parts of your pickleball strategy...

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: ... because it's your best move after moving into the kitchen to field a dink and to dink right back to your opponent's kitchen.

Travis: Field the dink also sounds like a euphemism for something. I can't quite determine what, but it's just like, "Yeah, man, last night I really had to field the dink."

Teresa: [laughs] I don't know.

Travis: I don't know either. But like if you said that to someone, like if you were, like, hanging out with somebody and like, "Hey, catch up, man. What'd you do yesterday?" And it's like, "Oh, yeah, I had to field the dink." It's really going to flood their mind with images, maybe too many to choose from.

Teresa: Okay. Number six. I'm not—

Travis: We're still going?

Teresa: No, I'm— We're done. We're done with that.

Travis: Oh, you don't want to talk about fielding dinks?

Teresa: But we're moving on.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: The ball must bounce on both sides before either team can volley. Okay, so you can, it has to hit the ground with your ground strokes before you can hit it just in the air, like tennis.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So it has to do a ping pong first and then you can hit it down.

Travis: So, like, if I dinked it over, you couldn't just [imitates hitting ball] hit it right back. It had to bounce first.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yes. What you want to do is you want to make sure that you follow these rules because if you don't, that's a fault, right? And you lose the point.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And the rule keeps the serving team back to the baseline. So the serving team could easily rush the net and gain an unfair advantage, but you have to let it bounce first, right?

Travis: Yes. Okay.

Teresa: So that keeps you from doing that. You only win points on your serve. You cannot win a point if you fault on your own surf.

Travis: So like ping pong in that— Okay.

Teresa: Exactly. Exactly.

Travis: It sounds like it's a combination of a lot of, like, rule sense, you know, where they're like, well, we're taking a little bit from this and a little bit from that and a little bit from this.

Teresa: Yes. Both partners serve in a turn. If you're, like, in doubles, obviously. And here's the way that they keep track of that. So you'll hear them say maybe zero, zero, two. Zero zero is the score of each team and two is the position of the server.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So we know which is the first player in rotation serving. If you do one or two, so it could go to, like, three, three, two or three, three, one, right?

Travis: Got it. Yes. I'm with you. I'm engaged.

Teresa: There is an exception to this rule. The first player to serve in the game calls out zero, zero, two, so that the starting team only gets one serve. So you don't start with one, you start with two, and then on the second round, you'll start with one.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Does that make sense?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You only have one at a time. Okay. The first team to 11 points wins, but you must win by two. Again, this is another strategy to keep the game going as long as possible.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Right? And then when you— I mean, it can make it so that the ending scores can be like 21-19 or whatever, right?

Travis: 1000 to 1002.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: It was the greatest game ever played.

Teresa: Real quick, the USA pickleball official rules for serving is that the serve has to be underhand, and the contact with the ball is made below the waist. Arm must be moving in an upward arc, and the highest point of the paddle head should be below the wrist.

Travis: I think that gives an unfair advantage to someone who's, like, nine feet tall.

Teresa: Maybe.

Travis: But that's just me.

Teresa: The highest point of the paddle head cannot be above any part of the line formed where the wrist joint bends. So it truly is a very gentle, the most underhand of underhand serves.

Travis: Got it. Now listen, we're going to take a quick break to hear a word from another Max Fun show and then when we get back, I want to hear about the origin. I want to hear about the history. Let's take a break.

Teresa: Got you.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

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Both: ... heal you.

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[music plays]

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[ad break ends]

Travis: Okay, how did this zany sport come to be?

Teresa: Alright, 1965 is when it started by Bill Bell, a successful businessman and friend of a Washington State Congressman, Joel Prichard.

Travis: I'm trying to think how old a young Clint McElroy would have been in 1965. Let's see, he'll be 69, nice in August and it's 2004... So I think he would have been nine? Nine? Yes. Yes? Wait, hold on. I have 56... and there were [mumbling]. I don't know, man.

Teresa: I can't do maths. So these friends were spending time at Prichard's home on Bainbridge Island in Washington. And when they got there...

Travis: He would have been ten.

Teresa: ... they were super...

Travis: He would have been ten years old.

Teresa: ... bored.

Travis: Oh, okay. Sorry, they were bored at his house.

Teresa: They were bored at his house. And so they went out to the old badminton court and...

Travis: [English accent] "Shall we retire to the old badminton court?"

Teresa: And wanted to play, but they couldn't find any of the stuff they needed.

Travis: Ugh. Been there.

Teresa: So they improvised and they found a perforated ball, like you said, like a wiffle ball, left over from another player somewhere. And then they got the ping-pong paddles from the house.

Travis: The necessity is the mother of invention.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: They've done it.

Teresa: And originally they tried to play with the original height of the badminton net, which is 60 inches.

Travis: Too high.

Teresa: Too high. But then they noticed that the ball was bouncing a lot on the asphalt. And so it would make things a lot more fun if they lowered the net and used the bouncing, because you couldn't really use the bounce as much with the high net.

Travis: Well, yeah, because with badminton when it touches the ground, that's the point.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Right? Yeah.

Teresa: So the ball was bouncing, they lowered the net, they were able to use the bouncing.

Travis: You got to use the bouncing on the dink.

Teresa: And so... [laughs] Another friend—

Travis: What are you giggling at? Excuse me, what are you giggling at?

Teresa: Just you using 'dink' indiscriminately.

Travis: That's— You got to use the bounce on the dink. When you ground serve the dink, you got to bounce the dink. You got to manage the dink. If you don't feel the dink on the bounce, what are you even doing?

Teresa: Another friend...

Travis: I thought this was pickleball not some kind of hula hoop juniors game. Sorry, go on.

Teresa: Another friend arrived, Barney McCallum and then there were three men creating rules for this silly new game relying heavily on badminton, but also making sure that the goal was always that everybody could play together for a very long time.

Travis: Well, yeah, because if they were bored, right, this seems like it was born out of not a competitive spirit.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: But rather, like, entertainment, like, I don't want to say time killing, but like, you know what I mean? This was not like who's the best at pickleball, but like, let's have fun together. Fun. That was the word I'm looking for. Not competitive, but fun.

Teresa: Yeah. Fun. Um... So why is it called pickleball? There are several theories. The first one being that it's a green ball, but no...

Travis: [crosstalk] ...has to be.

Teresa: ... most of the time it's not green. The other one being that the Prichard family dog was named Pickles.

Travis: I love that.

Teresa: But no. So Joan Prichard proposed the name pickleball for the sport because...

Travis: You can play it while you're drunk.

Teresa: [laughing] No. Because of the pickle boats in competitive rowing. A pickle boat is where is one of the least competitive boats in a crew race because the crew is thrown together from random rowers, not people that usually on a team together, right?

Travis: When you said pickle boat, I thought for a second, I was, like, is it perforated like the ball? But that's not a very good boat.

Teresa: [laughing] No.

Travis: A perforated boat is not a very good boat.

Teresa: It's a very bad boat.

Travis: So that would make it less competitive though.

Teresa: Yeah, definitely. [laughs] The idea is that since it was out of, like, leftover equipment, right?

Travis: Oh, it was thrown together!

Teresa: It was thrown together and it's the least competitive game ever, right? Because you want it... The idea is to keep the game in play.

Travis: It needs to soak. It needs to brine.

Teresa: [laughs] All right. So they constructed the first pickleball, like, actual dedicated court in 1967.

Travis: Wow, it took off, huh? Two years?

Teresa: I mean, yeah, because it was a lot like a badminton court.

Travis: Yeah, but I'm just saying like that's a lot of adoption there.

Teresa: And in 1972, a corporation was formed to protect and legitimize the family-friendly sport. And then in 1976, the first known pickleball

tournament took place held at the South Center Athletic Club in... I don't know how to say this. Tukwila, Washington.

Travis: You know what? I'm gonna say it. Tukwila, Washington.

Teresa: Tukwila, maybe that's it.

Travis: But I said it, see how I just said it like that's what it is. And then if you're, like, "That's not how you said it," I'm like, "You've all been saying it wrong."

Teresa: [laughs] That's how things work like that. Okay. And so many of the participants at this point were tennis players, including David Lester who was a men's singles player at the time.

And so a lot of people at this point were kind of guessing at the pickleball games because it was very, very new. People were practicing with large wooden paddles and not, like, ping pong ball size and, like, softball sized plastic wiffle balls. So like...

Travis: Too big.

Teresa: Too big, right. But the spirit of the game was always there. A pickleball pioneer in [laughs] 1982...

Travis: We're going west!

Teresa: Sid Williams...

Travis: We shall establish our own pickle homestead.

Teresa: ... established the United States Amateur Pickleball Association, the USAPA. And organized tournaments and wanted to like take it national, right? They published their first official rule book in March of 1984 and this guy, Sid Williams, served as the first executive director and president of the association and he served for 14 years. All right.

Travis: Until he dinked.

Teresa: No.

Travis: No.

Teresa: That's not it. The 80s, we're talking about 80s now...

Travis: I remember them well.

Teresa: ... is when the first composite paddle for pickleball was created.

Travis: Changed the game.

Teresa: Instead of the ping pong paddles, right? And there was, like, a fiberglass kind of, like, honeycomb panel that they used.

Travis: Yeah. It was made out of asbestos.

Teresa: No, no, no, no. You might have recognized it at the time because commercial airlines use that for the floors and the structural systems of their aircraft.

Travis: Oh. Why don't they build pickleball paddles out of the same stuff they make the black box out of? That's what I'm saying.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay.

Travis: I know you laughed because that wasn't funny, but you laughed because you didn't know what I was about to say.

Teresa: No, I didn't.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I didn't. So then by the 90s, they were manufacturing custom pickleballs instead of just using the small kind of, like, wiffleballs. So we're getting bespoke equipment.

Travis: I'm loving this.

Teresa: That's always legitimizing to a game, right? And it was being played all over.

Travis: Just like pogs. Because it was the 90s.

Teresa: Because it was the 90s, exactly.

Travis: This is so wild though because, like, I feel like I did not hear a single word about pickleball until like 10 years ago, maybe even less. And it's wild— Like, I would have guessed younger than this even because, like— So I was born in '83, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And so we're talking, like, there was maybe 30 years until I heard about pickleball.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: A thing that was being played all over until— That's wild to me.

Teresa: So there is now an international federation of pickleball as well as a pickleball hall of fame. And I mean, maybe you just haven't been paying attention to people.

Travis: That must be it.

Teresa: Because they've had there's been segments on the Today Show and BBC and Live with Kelly and Ryan and it's been featured in the New York Times and Forbes and Boston Globe and the Economist. Like, it's been everywhere. I think that it's just we haven't been looking for it.

Travis: Yeah, I just, I feel like there was maybe some kind of cultural tipping point in the last five to 10 years where it went from a thing that everybody was doing to a thing that everybody was like talking about.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like that suddenly for some reason it was, like, "Oh, yeah, now not only is it happening—" Like that happened with, like, bean bag toss, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Whereas, like, yeah, that game has been played forever. But suddenly in, like, 2005 or whatever, everybody was, like, "Well, you know!" You know, you did corn hole or baggo or bean bag toss, whatever you want to call it.

Suddenly it was, like, "Oh, is this new?" And it's like, no, people have been doing this forever. Well, why am I just now hearing about it? It's some kind of, like, saturation point.

Teresa: So here are a few reasons why maybe this is this has reached its saturation point, right? It's a simple game. It has a, you know, there's a pretty steep learning curve with a lot of other racket sports, but if you know a couple of things about ping pong ball and a couple of things about badminton and a couple of things about tennis, you can put this together, right?

It's fairly intuitive because that's the way that it was built. Also the paddle is shorter and lighter than a tennis racket, making it a lot more easy to wield by people of all ages and abilities, right?

And the serves are all underhands, so that's easier to hit and return. You can set yourself up with a full set of, like, actual paddles and balls and nets and stuff for about 60 bucks.

Travis: Oh, not bad.

Teresa: And also lots of public parks have installed pickleball courts so you don't even need to go to a gym or a club or whatever.

Travis: I bet that's it. I bet at some point in the last 10 years, pickleball moved from a thing everybody was doing at, like, clubs and, you know, like... What's what I'm looking for, like a sports club, you know what I mean?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: A fitness club to, like, we installed it in the park. We have put this thing in a public space and now it's being like seen more and people are going, like, what is this?

Teresa: Mm-hmm. And you can fit four pickleball courts into one tennis court, right? And most picklers, they call themselves, play doubles. So it's a—

Travis: I would call myself like a brine-head.

Teresa: [laughs] Oh, yeah. You can fit a bunch of people, right? It's not just two to four people that can play.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You can take your whole like family out and you can all play at once and people aren't sitting on the sidelines.

Travis: It also it really strikes me that it, and I know I've already said this, but it does sound like the kind of game where the onboarding, the threshold for entry seems so low because there isn't, like, a punishment.

It doesn't sound like it punishes inexperience the way that something like tennis competitively would, where you could have someone who's played pickleball for years and has, you know, hours and hours and hours under their belt, introduce someone new to it and not have that person feel like, "Well, I didn't have fun doing this because it was just you running all over me."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: It feels like it's a much more, like— The onboarding process seems a lot more gentle.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. And on top of all these reasons, it was a pretty pandemic-safe way to socialize.

Travis: Maybe that's the tipping point, that might have been the big thing.

Teresa: You think so? Because...

Travis: Well, because big outdoor space, you could have more people playing.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: It wasn't as competitive. So it was more fun to hang out with friends.

Teresa: And because of the kitchen, right, you have to stay apart from the other team. So if you played with, you know, whoever was in your bubble at the time as your partner, you had to stay away from the other people, right?

Travis: That makes a lot of sense. Actually, that might be it.

Teresa: Also, like, you have been having a really great time, but some of the verbiage is pretty fun.

Travis: Yeah, man.

Teresa: Kitchen and dink and all that kind of stuff, right?

Travis: Yeah, it's fun.

Teresa: It's fun.

Travis: And you get to say pickle, which is a fun word.

Teresa: So...

Travis: Dink and pickle in the same game?

Teresa: Dink, pickle, in the kitchen.

Travis: Thank you. Thank you.

Teresa: Before we go, I would like to do a little bit of etiquette.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So...

Travis: Don't giggle when people say dink.

Teresa: [laughs] Or do! That's part of the fun.

Travis: Or do! Yeah, that's fun.

Teresa: That's the thing, right? We want to— The object of the game is to keep the ball in play instead of, like, smashing it into the ground or whatever, or making it so hard that you can't hit it. But the balls are bouncy.

They do kind of, like, go all over the place and especially if you have all four courts in one of the tennis courts, right? You might encounter someone else's ball, but it's important that you, number one, respect ball ownership.

So you don't want to try and, like, if a ball comes into your court that's not your ball, you're not supposed to, like, hit that ball out to somewhere else. In fact, you can even make a call, right? And say—

Travis: "Rogue pickle!"

Teresa: [laughs] That would be great. But I guess it's more, like, ball on the court or something like that.

Travis: No— Hey, listen, pickleball community. We can come up with a better— But you can just say, like, "Loose dink" or "We got a wiggler" or

whatever you want to say. We don't say "Rogue ball on the court." That's not what, that doesn't feel like us. Come on. We can do better than that.

Teresa: All right. You need to, like... The rule is wherever that ball lands that isn't there, leave it there while you finish playing. And then when you're finished with yours, your rally, then return that ball, like, by a gentle roll, right? Back to where it goes. So then the next one is calling out, right? When in doubt...

Travis: Call it out.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Call it in.

Travis: Oh. Man, that's a— But—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That's— But Teresa!

Teresa: I know, I know, but you— The idea of pickleball, right, is to, like, give the players the benefit, right? Make it kind of, like, easy and accessible, not—

Travis: "We all win when you call it in." It has to rhyme, please.

Teresa: There— Okay. Great. Great. That's great. I love that. [laughs]

Travis: Because you see— You have to understand that if the choice is between in and out, if it was something else, right? But you can't say when in doubt, call it in. That's not a good mnemonic device, but we all win when you call it in. Now we got it.

Teresa: Okay. I love that. I love that. How about, how about "When in doubt, play it out." Play it.

Travis: Mm... Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah?

Travis: Okay. Sounds good.

Teresa: No, you're right. It isn't, it isn't as good. So, the idea...

Travis: When playing pickle, don't be fickle.

Teresa: Oh, okay. That's a good one too.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So you want to give your opponent the benefit of the doubt, okay? So they're— If they're calling it in, we're going to call it in. It's fine instead of fighting over who was on what line and how, like, all that kind of stuff, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That's one of the unwritten—

Travis: "We're in the brine; it's all fine."

Teresa: It's all fine. And then, like, the other idea is that we all make mistakes, right?

Travis: Not me.

Teresa: But you have to own your violations, especially when it comes to, like...

Travis: The law. No.

Teresa: No. If your toe is in the kitchen, right? [laughs]

Travis: [laughs] It's just fun, folks!

Teresa: I love it. So you have to own your mistakes and everybody is trusting you, right? I encountered this when I play games with Bebe and Dottie, right?

Travis: And they call you out?

Teresa: No. They spin the spinner and it lands on between, right? And I say, "Okay, it's between the blue and the green. Which one is it?" And I ask the person who spun it, they say what it is and we have to trust them.

Travis: Which one do you trust more?

Teresa: I mean, I trust them both equally.

Travis: Oh, but I know there was an answer behind those eyes.

Teresa: But...

Travis: You and I both know the answer. We don't have to say it publicly, but we both know the answer.

Teresa: It sets a better example if you let the person decide, right? Because then when someone else spins it and they say, "Oh, I really think it's green," even if it's blue, right? We have to trust them. And this builds relationship. It builds trust in the game. It builds trust in each other. You have to be able to, you know, give it, take people at their word.

Travis: To— And another Bluey reference, it's, like, in Shadowlands when they're talking about like, why do we follow the rules? Why do we follow the rules?

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: Because the rules make it fun. Because if you just, like, change the rules, if you break the rules willy-nilly, there's no structure to it and it's the structure of a game that makes it a game. You know what I mean?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: That's what I've been trying to teach Bebe is, like, "Yeah, man, like it would be easier if you said, why don't I just land on blue? But, like, then everybody's doing that and it's just chaos." And that's a different kind of game.

Teresa: Yeah. It goes on to talk about keeping the game friendly and mindful celebrations and things like that, keeping things positive. Safety-wise, you want to make sure that you wait before you cross a court until the rally is over, right?

Obviously, there's a lot of people playing in a small amount of space sometimes. You want to be very aware of your surroundings. And so if you wait for the break in play, give, like, a nod or a wave and let people know that you're crossing the court.

Travis: Just yell, "The lid is on," and that's how you know...

Teresa: Is that it?

Travis: Yeah, the lid is on. You know, the jar is closed. You can just say, "The jar is closed," maybe.

Teresa: Oh, that's a good one.

Travis: "The jar is closed," and you can, like, go across.

Teresa: That's a good one. There's also a kind of, like, paddle language to reserving, like, getting the next game on the court. And you know, there's, like, placing your paddles in, like, the holder and, like, waiting your turn with your paddles.

Travis: Like putting your quarter on the machine. Yeah.

Teresa: Exactly. Exactly. So like, I think that really the charm about pickleball etiquette is that the game is designed to keep the game going. The rules are in mind to keep the game fun.

It's supposed to not be very competitive, which makes it kind of interesting that there are, like, pickleball tournaments with cash prizes and stuff. But, like, it is, I just keep thinking about keepy-uppy where like we keep the game going and that's how we win. I love it.

Travis: I love it too.

Teresa: All of these pickleball etiquette rules are from Paddle Tech. Paddle Tech is the premier stop for all of your pickleball needs. This is a great article for them.

Travis: Thank you. All right. That's going to do it for us folks. A couple of announcements we need to tell you. First, we got some new merch over in the merch store. We have a, I think, beautiful three McElroy brothers and a beautiful moon shirt you can find over there.

We still have some Candlesnights items available and 10% of all merch proceeds this month go to the World Central Kitchen. And speaking of, last year, we were able to donate over \$125,000 to 18 different non-profits, including Harmony House, the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund, immunize.org, Equality Florida, the First Nations Development Institute, the Transgender Law Center, and World Central Kitchen.

So thank you so much to everybody who supported us in so many different ways, which allowed us to donate that money. Like I mentioned, I'm on Twitch. If you want to follow me on Twitch, [twitch.tv/TheTravisMcElroy](https://www.twitch.tv/TheTravisMcElroy).

We want to say thank you to our researcher Alexx without whom we couldn't have made this episode, we want to say thank you to our editor Rachel without whom we couldn't have made this episode. And we want to thank you for listening. This episode, we made it for you.

Teresa: We sure did.

Travis: We dink this for you, Pickles. What else, Theresa?

Teresa: Also, thank you to Brent "Brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Thank you to Bruja Betty, Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners.

If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today. As always, please continue to send in your topic suggestions, your idioms, your questions to shmannerscast@gmail.com and say hi to Alexx, A-L-E-X-X, because she reads everyone.

Travis: And that's going to do it for us, so join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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