



Cup of Joe

WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES?

POWER and LINE OF SIGHT

BY JOE DINOFFER

The next time you are on a pickleball court, stand on the baseline and bend down so your eyes are about three feet above the court surface. Look straight at the top of the middle of the net (standard pickleball net height is 34 inches at the center strap) and you will be looking on a straight path parallel to the ground. This is your “line of sight.” Then slowly stand up and walk forward toward the net, stopping at the point where you can look over the net and see a reasonable target size of about five feet inside the opposing baseline.

What can we learn from this exercise? You can only hit successfully at full power when you have “line of sight” on your side, since power shots have little arc. Therefore, before you “rip” a shot with full power, make sure you are:

1. Hitting the ball out of the air (pickleballs do not bounce high like tennis balls).
2. Contacting the ball well above the height of the net.
3. Standing fairly close to the kitchen line.

What happens if you strike the ball at any other height and position on the court? At full power? Chances are you will hit the ball out or in the net. Compared to tennis, pickleball rules and equipment are stacked against power. There's little or no topspin to help bring the ball down into the court, serving is underhand, and you cannot volley in the kitchen. Control and touch win over power. This makes for longer points. The result? More fun!

The perspective of this image allows us to see what the server sees. What happens if you cover the net with a sheet or blanket? Clearly, most pickleball shots have to be hit up and over the net with control and cannot be hit on a straight line of sight with power.



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Ball Speed. The Onix Pure 2 ball will come off of your paddle at about the same speed as a Dura ball, (depending on the weather) but it will slow down faster in the air. This means you actually have a chance to dig out and get to slams that you might not retrieve with the Dura. So, don't give up, you might make a spectacular dig!

Patience. Be ready for long rallies, especially in the cooler weather when the ball is bouncing lower and slower. So, get your cardio fitness up because generally your rallies are going to be longer. Be very patient and keep dinking until someone pops up a ball!

Spin. Since the ball stays on your paddle a little longer, I feel that you can spin this ball more. The topspin players will probably be able to make this ball dip more than the old balls. Even though you can put more spin, the backspin players will not be able to make this ball skid as much as the plastic or Duratype balls. This isn't because they aren't getting a lot of spin, it's because it grabs the court more and bounces instead of skidding. This is why some top players who are famous for their backspin slices, like Wes Gabrielsen and Mike Gates, would probably prefer playing with the Duratype ball.

Resetting the Point. Since the ball is softer in most weather conditions, you should learn how to reset points from anywhere in the court. Top players already do this with the Duratype balls but I feel that it will be easier to learn this with the Onix Pure 2.

Lobbing. Since the Onix Pure 2 ball is better in the wind, a player with good lobs will have a little more control with lobbing outdoors. I usually don't like the strategy of lobbing from the baseline, but since this ball will slow down faster in the air, you will have time to get to smashes your opponents hit compared to the Duratype balls.

Deep Serving. In warm conditions when the Onix Pure 2 ball gets a little more bounce, I would use more deep lob serves. This type of serve will bounce high and push your opponent deep in their court, making it harder to get to the net after returning serve. (Note: I hit this serve to Kyle Yates in my backyard and he handled it with no problem by taking this serve early. This would be very difficult for the average player!)

I do think this is the ball of the future or maybe another company will make a ball with very similar qualities. Players and clubs that play outdoors should give it a try and many of the players will love this ball for all the reasons I have mentioned.

