THE BUSINESS OF PICKLEBALL

MARCH 2026 VOL. 3, NO. 3

ISSUE OVERVIEW

Welcome to the March 2026 issue of *The Business of Pickleball*.

Big news this month is the release of the SFIA player participation numbers. Pickleball continued to show strong growth, reaching 24 million players.

The pickleball facilities market however is showing strains as an increasing number of facilities put themselves up for sale. Many of these facilities are struggling, but there are some successful facilities where the owners are ready to move on to new opportunities.

Dive inside for more details on these topics and many more

Cheers,

David

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Pickleball Business Dashboard

Pickleball Trademarks

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Registered	431	438	450	467	477	485	495	512	529	544	555
Pending with Pickleball in term	470	479	479	463	448	449	438	428	417	409	404
Pending with term or in description	1038	1012	1018	1003	978	967	940	917	705	870	834

source: USPTO, PCG analysis

Pickleball Courts - Indoor and Outdoor

	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Indoor	25,297	25,703	25,887	26,173	26,507	26,844	27,231	28,130	28,447	28,744
Outdoor	49,063	49,933	50,953	51,580	52,217	52,805	53,686	54,483	54,977	55,306
Total Courts	74,360	75,636	76.840	77,753	78,724	79,649	80,917	82,613	83,424	84,050

source: Pickleheads

Franchise Tracking - Open Facilities *(pen locations / courts at month end)*

	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Ace Pickleball	15/201	16/212	18/237	19/254	21/270	21/270	21/270	21/270	22/281
Dill Dinkers	19/191	20/199	21/209	21/209	21/209	21/209	24/233	27/257	28/267
Pickleball Kingdom	13/166	14/179	15/192	16/209	16/209	16/209	23/296	23/296	22/281
The Picklr	46/434	47/447	49/468	52/501	54/519	56/536	59/568	60/580	62/599
PickleRage	4/40	4/40	4/40	4/40	4/40	4/40	5/53	5/53	6/71

source: company web site

Events

Events that have a pickleball business focus or audience attractive to pickleball companies.

Event	Dates/Location	What
US Indoor 2026 Sport Facility Conference & Expo	May 12-14 2026 Reno NV	Educational and networking opportunity for indoor sports facilities
Picklecon	July 24-26, 2026 Kansas City	Tournaments, pros, gear, clinics, exhibits and community
World Pickleball Convention	October 17-19, 2026 Palm Beach, Fl	Over 200 exhibitors, 8,000 attendees
Racquet Trend Expo	October 23-25, 2026 Milan Italy	The largest European event for racquet sports
PGA Show	January 26-29, 2027 Orlando, FL	Trade-only show for golf, with a section focused on racquet sports.
World Pickleball Expo East	June 17-19, 2027 London UK	Europe's first pickleball expo
Major Tournaments		
American Pickleball Cup	April 6-11, 2026 Cozumel, Mexico	Regional Cup by the Pickleball Federation of the Americas
Minto US Open Pickleball Championships	April 11-18, 2026 Naples, FL	The original major pickleball tournament. The biggest pickleball party in the world
USA Pickleball National Championships	Oct. 31 - Nov 8, 2026 San Diego	National Championship
2026 Pickleball World Championships	November 2-8, 2026 Farmers Branch, TX	PPA World Championships
PPA Finals	May 10-16, 2027 San Clemente, CA	PPA final tournament

You can find the most comprehensive calendar of pickleball tournaments and events here, maintained by Todd Boss of *Forbes* Magazine.

Trademarks

Trademarks

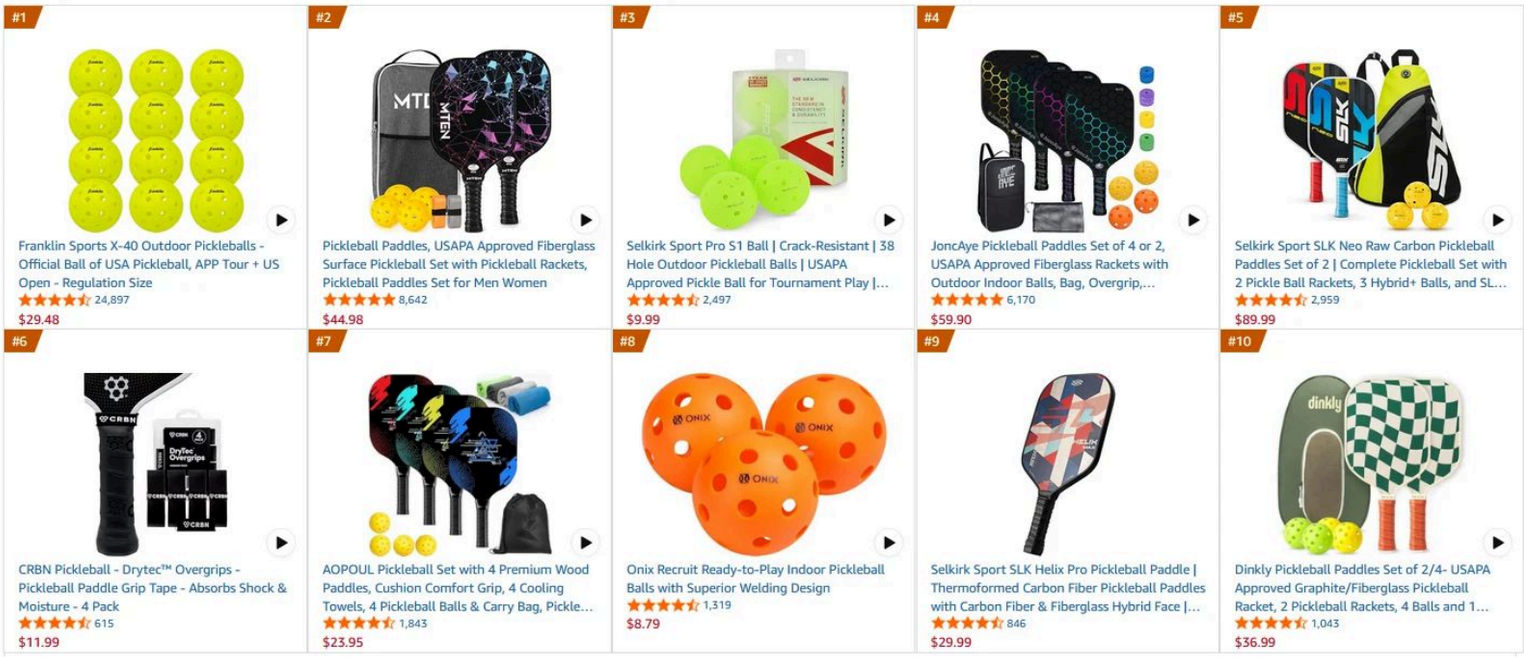
Trademark protection is an important component of protecting your company's intellectual property. While we are not trademark experts, we have navigated the US Patent and Trademark database to highlight trademarks with the word pickleball in the term:

Trademark *applications* in February 2027 with pickleball in term		
AUGHT 2 - PICKLEBALL	IC 041: Providing pickleball court facilities.	AUGHT 2 PICKLEBALL, LLC
DILL DINKERS PICKLEBALL	IC 041: providing indoor facilities for paddle ball games played on a court.	Dill Dinkers IP, LLC
EDGE PICKLEBALL	IC 028: Rackets for pickleball.	EdgePB, LLC
IT'S A PICKLEBALL THING	IC 025: T-shirts; Long sleeve T-shirts	Dre4realmngt LLC
LEGHORN PICKLEBALL	IC 041: Providing sports facilities for pickleball	Leghorn Pickleball LLC
PICKLEBALL 365	IC 041: Providing sports facilities for playing a paddleball-style sport	Robert Lorincz
PICKLEBALL POSSE	IC 025: Athletic apparel	Michael Lewis
PICKLEBALL PRIME NUTRITION	IC 005: Nutritional supplements	SUREMEAL LLC
PICKLEBALL PRO	IC 028: Athletic sporting goods, namely, adhesive, under-eye glare reduction strip	Pickleball Pro LLC
PICKLEBALL PROVIDES	IC 025: Athletic apparel	Pickleball Provides
PICKLEBALL SMASH-IT	IC 041: Providing facilities for a paddleball-style sport	W3stco Holdings Corp
POSITIVE PICKLEBALL	IC 028: Dolls; Plush toys; Stuffed and plush toy	Guanzhen Wen
RENÉ PICKLEBALL	IC 028: Paddles for playing a paddleball-style sport	Rene Pickleball LLC
SPEEDUP PICKLEBALL	IC 028: Paddles for use in paddle ball games.	Speedup Pickleball
STADIUM PICKLEBALL LOUNGE	IC 041: Providing recreation facilities	North Canosa LLC
US OPEN INDOOR PICKLEBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS	IC 041: Conducting of sports competitions	Spirit Promotions LLC

Trademarks *granted* in February 2026 with pickleball in term		
PICKPEAK	IC 028: Paddle ball game	He, YuFang
THE OFFICIAL DRINK OF PICKLEBALL	IC 033: Spirits.	WeDiscover, Inc.
THE OFFICIAL SPIRIT OF PICKLEBALL	IC 033: Spirits.	WeDiscover, Inc.
WAVE PICKLEBALL	IC 025: Athletic apparel	Wave Pickleball

Amazon Top Products

Top-selling pickleball products from Amazon for the month of February.



Ten top-selling pickleball products over the last 6 months. New products in top 10 highlighted.

	September	October	November	December	January	February
1	Franklin X-40 balls	Franklin X-40 balls	Franklin X-40 balls	Franklin X-40 balls	Franklin X-40 balls	Franklin X-40 balls
2	MTEN set	Selkirk Pro S1 balls	MTEN set	MTEN set	Selkirk Pro S1 balls	MTEN set
3	JoncAye set	MTEN set	Selkirk Pro S1 balls	Selkirk Pro S1 balls	MTEN set	Selkirk Pro S1 balls
4	Selkirk Pro S1 balls	JOJOLEMON Pickleball Paddle	Pickleball Blast	Selkirk Sport SLK Neo set	Onix Recruit indoor ball	JoncAye set
5	Selkirk Sport SLK Neo set	JoncAye set	JoncAye set	JoncAye set	CRBN Drytec Overgrips	Selkirk Sport SLK Neo set
6	cyclotron 6-pack Premium Pickleballs	cyclotron 6-pack Premium Pickleballs	Selkirk Sport SLK Neo set	AOBORTY paddle 4 Pack	Selkirk Sport SLK Neo set	CRBN Drytec Overgrips
7	Bagail Pickleball paddle set	Selkirk Sport SLK Neo set	cyclotron 6-pack Premium Pickleballs	Onix Recruit indoor ball	Tenvina Pickleball Paddles	AOPOUL set
8	Dulce Dom set	Onix Recruit indoor ball	Tenvina Pickleball Paddles	CRBN Drytec Overgrips	JoncAye set	Onix Recruit indoor ball
9	CRBN Drytec Overgrips	CRBN Drytec Overgrips	Dinkly Pickleball Paddles Set	TENVINA paddle	Hesacore Pickleball Paddle Grip	Selkirk Helix Pro Pickleball Paddle
10	Professor Pickleball Paddle Eraser	Franklin X-26 indoor balls	Mangrove Pickleball Bag	OLANNY paddle set	Selkirk Helix Pro Pickleball Paddle	Dinkly Pickleball Paddles Set

International

- The Picklr opens it first franchise outside of the US - in Winnipeg Canada.
- The Global Pickleball Federation announced their new Rules & Officiating Committee. Members include:
  - Chairman David Jay, Australia
  - Vice Chair Jim Price, USA
  - Patricia Stewart, USA
  - Pieter Terblanche, South Africa
  - Maria Muniz, Germany
  - Mark Peifer, USA
  - Ron Ponder, USA
  - Alan Thaompson, Canada
  - Bryon Freso, USA
- Pickleball Australia has reached 100 coach members.

Dinks, Shorts

- Agassi Sports Entertainment announces plan to launch World Series of Pickleball. TEAM Marketing AG, recognized for helping build and commercialize the UEFA Champions League, will be partnering to build the World Series of Pickleball.
- DUPR has announced a new wheelchair pickleball rating system to advance inclusion and competitive fairness.
- USA Pickleball announced it is launching leagues.

Partnerships & Sponsorships

- USA Pickleball has partnered with TRZ Recovery, to create the country's first mobile sports recovery lounge.
- The Pickleball Pro Tour in Spain has adopted DUPR as the official rating system of the circuit.
- CourtReserve partners with the USOP National Pickleball Center s the official club management software.
- Franklin Sports is named Official Title Sponsor of the US Open Pickleball Championships.
- EPIC World Championship partners with DUPR Coach.
- Playtomic partners with DUPR.
- Nick Kyrgios has signed an investment and sponsorship deal with The Picklr.
- Franklin Sports returns as an Official Paddle Partner of PPA Tour Asia.
- Joola is the offical equipment partner at the EPIC World Championship.

People

- Ryan Furman assumes the Collegiate and High School Pickleball Coordinator role at DUPR.
- Matt Gibson, Vice President at PlaySight, leaving that position for new opportunity.
- Jeff Gordon joins Pickleheads as CTO

Job Openings

Position	Company
Co-Founder / Operating Partner – Emerging Pickleball Brand (Equity Role)	KiwiLabs Pickleball
Sales Manager USA Racquet Sports (Padel, Pickleball, Tennis)	Varlion USA LLC
Manager, Strategic Partnerships (South Florida)	APP
Accounting Manager - Retail & Technology - $125k	Pickleball.com
Global Operations and Logistics Manager	Joola

Job openings at Selkirk Sport in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia:

B2B Sales and Accounts Manager
B2B Sales and Accounts Manager (Vietnam - Hanoi)
Video Editor – Pickleball YouTube Channel
3D Artist Packaging Graphic Designer
Photographer / Multimedia Specialist
Performance Designer Engineering and Operations
Project Manager (Asia)
Logistics Operations Specialist
Supply Chain Analyst (Demand Planning)
Full Stack Finance Developer (Malaysia)
ERP Manager Frontend Developer - Shopify
Ecommerce Marketplace Executive
Social Media Creator & Manager
SEM & Paid Media Manager
Senior Marketing Copywriter
Senior Graphic Designer
Senior Ecommerce Merchandiser
Academy & Events Manager

Legal Updates

Ferrari vs. Ferrari (Gamma)

The Judge issed an order to appoint a qualified JD/CPA as a special master to address complex financial and legal issues in a dispute between Alex Ferrari and Matthew Ferrari, focusing on receivership, financial health, and shareholder interests.

Sport Squad Inc. (Joola) vs USA Pickleball

Joola argued that USAP's three counterclaims were too vague to survive and should be thrown out (a 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss.

Joola's motion was denied on all three counts:

- Fraudulent misrepresentation — USAP adequately alleged damages (lost revenue, reputational harm, damaged business relationships) from the scandal
- Lanham Act false endorsement — USAP plausibly showed the JOOLA logo deception undermined the value of the USAP seal in the marketplace
- Declaratory judgment — USAP wants the court to formally declare the misconduct occurred, which would contractually trigger a one-year probationary period during which JOOLA could not submit any products for USAP testing — the court found this distinct enough from the other counts to proceed

Bottom line: The case moves forward. JOOLA had 14 days to formally answer USAP's counterclaims.

Legacy Park Sports Complex

U.S. District Judge Lewis Kaplan sentenced Randy Miller to 48 months for securities fraud plus 24 months for aggravated identity theft, and Chad Miller to 36 months for securities fraud plus 24 months for aggravated identity theft — six and five years respectively, served consecutively.

Watch / Listen

Go behind the scenes of the paddle testing process at Golden Ticket Tournaments.

Unique video for the launch of City Pickle's new Times Square location.

TopSeries Pickleball in EMEA

TOPSERIES Pickleball is a new, premier professional tour launching in 2026 to elevate the sport across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA). It features a structured, high-quality circuit with standardized prize money, a unified ranking system, and premium, media-focused events in cities like Cairo, Hamburg, Venice, Madrid, London, and Dubai.

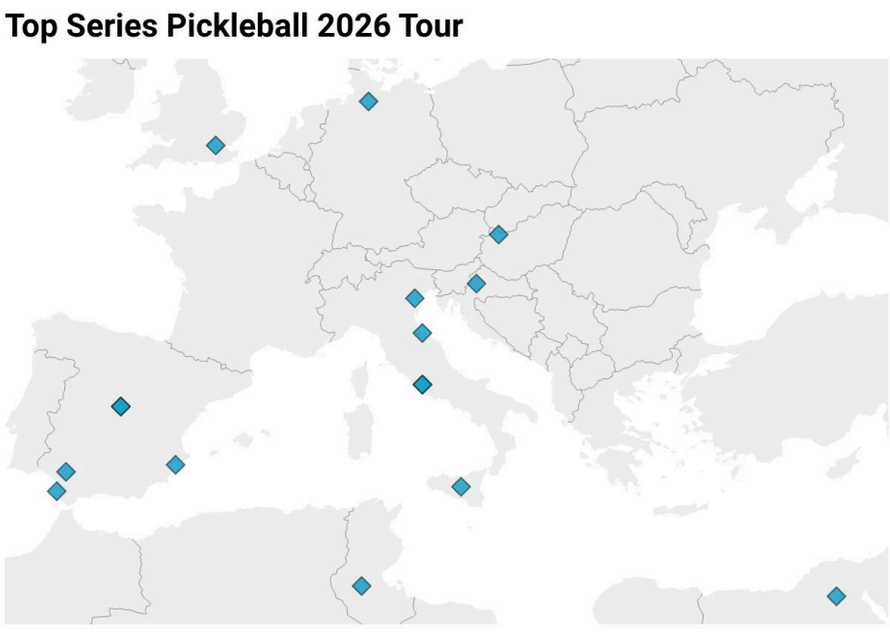
The team behind TopSeries Pickleball:
- Adel Aref - CEO
- Jonathan Rowland - Partner
- Queco Catalan - Chief Sports Officer
- Albert Escofet - Head of Business Development

Tournament registration is being handled by Gloobal.

From the TopSeries website:

Creating a Professional Pathway for Pickleball Players
One of the biggest challenges for elite pickleball players across Europe, Africa and the Middle East has been the absence of a consistent professional pathway. While local and national tournaments have played an important role in grassroots development, they often lack continuity, international visibility and standardized competition levels.
TOPSERIES Pickleball addresses this gap by introducing a unified international circuit that allows players to compete within a clear and structured framework. Through coordinated calendars, consistent event standards and international rankings, players gain:

- Clear progression from national to international competition
- Increased visibility within the professional ecosystem
- The ability to plan competitive seasons with long-term objectives
- By offering these elements, TOPSERIES Pickleball enables athletes to approach pickleball as a professional pursuit rather than a series of isolated competitions.



PPA Schedules

The PPA Tour now is running tournaments in five geographic areas: the US, Canada, Asia, Australia, and Italy/Slovenia.

PPA Tour

Facilities

New, unique facilities development throughout the world:

Ballers
Los Angeles

18 pickleball courts
4 padel courts
2 soccer pitches
Restaurant & bar

Relish Food Hall & Pickleball
Louisville, CO

7 locally-owned restaurants
18 pickleball courts
Multiple event spaces

Life Time North Shore
Chicago

19 indoor courts
22 outdoor courts
Group yoga
Fitness classes

Pickleball Player Participation Numbers

The SFIA just released their new annual player participation numbers and pickleball continued its rapid growth.

The first chart is The Business of Pickleball forecast released in early 2025.

	SFIA Actuals					The Business of Pickleball Forecast				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Pickleball Players	4,200,000	4,800,000	8,900,000	13,600,000	19,807,000	24,560,680	28,981,602	33,328,843	36,995,015	40,324,567
Tennis Players	21,640,000	22,620,000	23,600,000	23,800,000	25,742,000	26,771,680	27,842,547	28,956,249	30,114,499	31,319,079
YOY Pickleball	20%	14%	85%	53%	46%	24%	18%	15%	11%	9%
YOY Tennis	22%	5%	4%	1%	8%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%

The table below shows the newly released data for 2025. Total pickleball participation in 2025 increased 22.80%.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	1-year change	3-year change
Total participation	4,199	4,819	8,949	13,582	19,807	24,326	22.80%	171.80%
Casual 1-7 times	2,835	3,454	6,647	8,736	13,594	16,844	23.90%	153.40%
CORE 8+ times	1,364	1,365	2,302	4,846	6,213	7,482	20.40%	225.00%

Grading our forecast - we were spot on for the pickleball numbers but underestimated the growth of tennis participation. We will update our estimates for 2026 in next month's issue.

	SFIA Actuals	The Business of Pickleball Forecast
	2025	2025
Pickleball Players	24,326,000	24,560,680
Tennis Players	27,327,000	26,771,680
YOY Pickleball	22.8%	24%
YOY Tennis	6.2%	4%

Pickleball & Padel Facilities for Sale

The International Association of Pickleball & Padel Facilities (IAPPF) curates a list of pickleball or padel facilities that are for sale. Below is a summary of the list, which has 25 facilities listed. Some are listed with identification solely on the IAPPF list, others are from business broker sites like Biz Buy Sell. See the letter on the following page addressing the current market conditions for facilities for sale.

If you are interested in listing a facility for sale, or in receiving rwice-monthly updates of the list email david@iappf.org.

Data is believed to be correct but do your own due diligence.

Pickleball and Padel Facilities for Sale

Facility	Asking Price	Square Footage	Location
Pickleball Club	$450,000		Atlanta, GA
Confidential Indoor Pickleball Facility	$500,000	23,250	Cleveland, OH Area
Horizon Sports Pickleball	$595,000	50,000	Wind Gap, PA
Club Pickle Point	$850,000	20,000	Katy, TX
Pad & Paddle	$896,000	26,167	Lewisville, TX
Picklr Multi-Unit (Exton PA + Newark	$1,500,000	67,000 (combined)	PA / DE
Mixed-Use Pickleball/Paddle Develop	$1,500,000	17,490 (planned)	Coppell, TX
Indoor Pickleball Facility	$1,600,000		Tampa Bay / Lakeland, FL
Indoor Pickleball Franchise Facility	$1,950,000		Salt Lake County, UT
Pickleball HQ	$2,250,000	35,000	Cliffwood, NJ
Picklr Multi-Unit (Westbrook ME + 2	$2,300,000	122,000 (combined)	ME / NH / MA
Padel & Pickleball Complex	$2,400,000	23,297	Pompano Beach, FL
Warehouse w/ Pickleball Courts	$3,312,000		Hot Springs, AR
Cranky Pickle	$3,900,000		New Braunfels, TX
Pickleball Academy (5 facilities)	$4,500,000		FL / GA / SC
Indoor Pickleball & Entertainment Ve	$4,500,000	43,600	Farmers Branch, TX
Tennis + Pickleball Club	$4,700,000	44,800	Ellington, CT
Entertainment Venue w/ Redevelopn	$5,250,000		Washington
The Picklr (NNN Investment)	$5,709,000	33,111	Bolingbrook, IL
Hollywood Padel Club Development	$6,500,000	87,098 (land)	Hollywood, FL
Restaurant + Pickleball Facility	$11,257,000	20,000 (combined)	Missouri City, TX
Mid-Atlantic Suburban Indoor Club			Mid-Atlantic (Suburban)
Sports & Entertainment Complex		65,503	Reading, PA
Indoor Pickleball Facility		25,000	Northern NY
Two Rivers Pickleball Club			Bigfork, MT
4-Court Indoor Facility			Louisiana

Industry Shakeup Looming?

*The following is my CEO letter published in the March 2026 issue of **Facility**, the monthly member magazine of the IAPPF.*

Over the past 24 months the dedicated indoor pickleball facility market has surged from virtually nothing, noted by:

- The opening of 1,200+ new facilities in the U.S.
- The growth of four major franchisor organizations with another group of smaller franchisors working to gain traction
- The wave of vendors entering the market – either through new startups or those transitioning from related markets like tennis
- Institutional investments into market vendors – Court Reserve, Playtomic, and others
- The embrace of pickleball by entities like Life Time and Invited Clubs as an important addition to their existing amenities

As a market segment, pickleball facilities have a bigger dollar value than any other segment.Between operating revenue and capital expenditure, the indoor pickleball facility market generates over $3 billion.The paddles, balls and nets manufacturers account for less than $1 billion. The market is huge – and influential.

However, storm clouds are on the horizon. This is not totally unexpected when a market appears from scratch over a short period.Call it a land grab. Call it the wild, wild west.

In a market boom like this we often see first-movers gaining the advantage. But not always. The pressure to act quickly can lead to poor decisions that can cripple a facility long-term. Unreasonable expectations often hit the cold, hard wall of reality. It is surprisingly difficult to build a pickleball facility: location and lease challenges, permitting issues, finding staff where there is a very thin selection of experienced managers, unexpected seasonality challenges, and more.

And competition. Market saturation is a serious issue in more locations. Your facility is on a great trajectory to profitability until a competitor opens a mile away. There just may not be enough pickleball players right now in your area willing to pay $100+ per month.

The vendor community is likely to experience the saturation issue as well. As more vendors enter the market, and the growth rate of new facilities slows, each vendor slice may get smaller. Those with superior service and differentiated products will thrive. The signs of stress are emerging. Independent facilities are looking to sell, but buyers are scarce. Some facilities have simply closed their doors or entered bankruptcy. At least four Picklr franchises out of 60 opened facilities are for sale, as are several of their unopened locations.

But all is not doom and gloom. There are many great locations that have successfully opened and are doing great.They are meeting the needs of their player community and are profitable. Many of them are looking to replicate their success by starting new locations or acquiring existing facilities. They have figured out a formula that works. Good location. Good lease.Good people. Good programming. Focus on community and hospitality.

As the industry's trade organization, the IAPPF was created to support the industry. We believe that pickleball facilities will continue to play an important role in hospitality and health throughout the world. The sport of pickleball is unique in so many positive ways. It is not going away. It is simply maturing after such an explosive start.

The IAPPF supports the industry through:

- Development and education of best practices
- Industry benchmarks that identify and support those best practices
- The industry's only monthly magazine with useful content
- Networking opportunities amongst other facility operators to provide dialog, ideas and support
- Benefits that can save facilities significant money or grow their revenues
- Access to vendors to find the best and newest products and services

The IAPPF is dedicated to supporting the industry, and we have many additional tools we will be delivering in 2026. Thanks to our facility members and to our sponsors. Together we can continue the growth of successful pickleball and padel facilities.

Playing with Ambassador Fire

Knock Knock.
Who's There?
The CDTFA.
The Who?
The California Department of Tax and Fee Administration and we need to schedule an audit based on your use of Ambassadors to sell products in our state.

For many companies who sell pickleball products – especially pickleball paddles, this might be one of the biggest threats to your business.

The use of ambassadors and affiliates is heavily relied on by small and medium-sized pickleball companies. And in most cases, this causes huge potential liability for these companies. One that could put them out of business
.
There are really five categories of risk that are created when any company uses ambassadors or affiliates to sell their products:
Sales tax nexus

- State income tax nexus from out-of-state representatives
- Worker misclassification penalties
- Product liability, and
- FTC endorsement compliance
- Sales Tax Nexus

The most immediate tax concern for a pickleball paddle brand using out-of-state ambassadors or affiliates is sales tax nexus.

Affiliate nexus arises when an out-of-state business with no physical presence in a state establishes a tax obligation through ties to in-state affiliates, employees, representatives, or other entities. Affiliate nexus is usually based on one or more of the following factors: generating a threshold of sales through in-state affiliates, having an in-state entity conduct activities to help maintain the brand's market, or using trademarks and trade names substantially like those used by an in-state business. Even if a pickleball brand has no warehouse, office, or employees in a state, its ambassador or affiliate relationships can be enough to trigger collection obligations.

When a brand ambassador in California promotes and drives sales of paddles for a company based in, say, Washington State, the brand may be required to register, collect, and remit sales tax in Texas if they aren't already doing that.
In addition, if the brand ambassador in California is not collecting sales tax, California may require the brand company to pay all current and past sales taxes that were not collected by any brand ambassadors they have had in California.

State Income Tax Nexus

A company is generally considered to be doing business subject to a state's tax laws if it has employees or representatives working in that state. If a brand's ambassador activities go beyond simple solicitation of sales — for example, conducting demos at local pickleball clubs, representing the brand at tournaments, or providing customer service — the brand may create state income tax nexus in the ambassador's home state.

Under Public Law 86-272, a federal safe harbor prohibits states from imposing net income tax on a business whose activity is limited to soliciting orders for tangible personal property. However, if ambassadors perform activities beyond solicitation — such as inventory management, product demonstrations, collecting payments, or providing post-sale support — the brand may lose this protection. A remote workforce or representative network that establishes nexus could result in new registration requirements with the state's Secretary of State, corporate income tax filings, and different apportionment factors for income tax purposes.

If ambassadors are classified as employees (rather than independent contractors), the brand must withhold state income tax from wages paid to any ambassador subject to an out-of-state income tax — typically when the ambassador resides or works within that state. Employment taxes, including Social Security, Medicare, and unemployment taxes, may also be triggered. Some states impose withholding requirements on entities whose employees perform work inside the state for even a single day, while other states hold reciprocal agreements.

Worker Misclassification Risk

Most pickleball brands classify their ambassadors as independent contractors and issue 1099 forms. However, this classification carries significant legal risk if challenged by the IRS or state agencies. The IRS evaluates the relationship based on behavioral control, financial control, and the nature of the relationship — no single factor is determinative.

Brand ambassadors present particularly challenging classification issues because brands often exercise substantial control over how ambassadors represent the brand. Classification risk increases when brands require pre-approval of content, dictate posting schedules, restrict work for competitors, or tie compensation to strict compliance with brand directives. Even short campaigns can give rise to misclassification claims if the underlying relationship resembles employment.

California is the most challenging jurisdiction. Under the ABC test, a worker is presumed to be an employee unless the hiring entity proves all three prongs, including that the worker performs work "outside the usual course" of the business. For a pickleball paddle brand, ambassadors who promote and sell paddles are performing work that goes directly to the core of the brand's business — marketing and customer engagement — making prong B extremely difficult to satisfy.

The financial consequences of misclassifying workers are severe and compound across multiple agencies:

- IRS penalties: Up to 3% of wages, 100% of unpaid employer FICA taxes, 40% of unpaid employee FICA taxes, and $50 per unfiled W-2
- DOL penalties: Back pay for unpaid minimum wage or overtime, liquidated damages (often equal to back pay), civil monetary penalties, and legal fees
- State penalties: California imposes civil penalties of $5,000–$25,000 per misclassified worker; some states issue stop-work orders or debar companies from doing business

Product Liability and Personal Jurisdiction

Having brand ambassadors actively marketing paddles in multiple states significantly expands where a brand can be sued. In Ford Motor Co. v. Montana Eighth Judicial District Court, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld specific jurisdiction over manufacturers that marketed products in forum states where injuries occurred — even when the product was not first sold or manufactured there. The Court found that sales, service, marketing, and promotional activities in a state can create specific jurisdiction. For a pickleball paddle brand, this means that ambassador activities — demos, social media promotion targeting local players, tournament sponsorships — in a state could provide the jurisdictional hook for a lawsuit in that state if a consumer is injured there. Manufacturers and sellers that regularly market products in multiple states should anticipate being subject to specific jurisdiction in those states.

Under agency law principles, actions taken by an ambassador within their authorized scope can potentially bind the brand. If an influencer or ambassador makes false or misleading claims about a paddle's performance, certifications, or safety, the brand may face vicarious liability. The FTC's Endorsement Guides explicitly state that advertisers must be "responsible for and monitor the actions of their endorsers" and may be liable for deceptive statements made by endorsers.

FTC Endorsement and Disclosure Compliance

The FTC's revised Endorsement Guides (updated 2023) require clear and conspicuous disclosure of any material connection between an endorser and a brand whenever a "significant minority" of the audience would not expect the connection. For pickleball ambassadors receiving free paddles, commissions, discount codes, or cash compensation, proper disclosure is mandatory in every post, video, and piece of content.

Key FTC requirements include:

- Disclosures must be "difficult to miss and easily understandable by ordinary consumers"
- Using "#ad," "sponsored," or "[Brand] Ambassador" is likely acceptable language
- Built-in platform disclosure tools (e.g., Instagram's "Paid Partnership" tag) may not be sufficient on their own — the FTC evaluates whether the tool is an effective disclosure method
- Endorsers must provide honest opinions based on actual experience with the product and must be using the product at the time of endorsement
- The brand, not just the ambassador, faces FTC enforcement risk. Advertisers are responsible for monitoring their endorsers' actions, and advertising agencies or intermediaries can also be held liable for creating or disseminating endorsements they "knew or should have known were deceptive". The FTC has amended complaints to include individual endorsers alongside brands when endorsers were "full participants" in schemes that systematically profited from misleading consumers.
- For pickleball brands, this means maintaining written ambassador agreements that require proper disclosures, implementing monitoring systems to verify compliance, and having termination provisions for ambassadors who fail to disclose. The FTC allows companies to provide notice and an opportunity to cure inadvertent disclosure failures before termination, but repeated failures create significant liability.

Ambassador agreements should include indemnification clauses, hold-harmless provisions, and clear delineation of the relationship as an independent contractor arrangement. However, contractual language alone does not determine legal classification — courts look at the actual working relationship, not just what the contract says. Agreements should also include compliance requirements for FTC disclosures, accuracy of product claims, and insurance coverage expectations.

Practical Recommendations for Pickleball Paddle Brands

·Audit nexus exposure: Map every state where ambassadors and affiliates operate to determine sales tax and income tax obligations; use sales tax automation software (Avalara, TaxJar, TaxCloud) to manage multi-state compliance
·Review worker classification: Evaluate each ambassador relationship against the applicable state test (ABC, economic reality, or common law) — not just the federal standard
·Limit control over ambassadors: The more a brand dictates how, when, and where ambassadors create content, the greater the risk of employee classification; preserve ambassador independence in both contract and practice
·Monitor FTC compliance: Implement systematic monitoring of ambassador content for proper disclosures, and maintain documentation of compliance efforts
·Carry adequate insurance: Ensure general liability and product liability insurance covers operations and claims in all states where ambassadors are active
·Use written agreements: Formalize every ambassador and affiliate relationship with clear terms covering tax responsibilities, FTC disclosure obligations, intellectual property, indemnification, and termination provisions
·Track economic nexus thresholds: Monitor sales by state and register for sales tax collection before exceeding thresholds to avoid retroactive liability
·Consult multi-state tax counsel: Given the complexity and variation in state laws, brands expanding nationally should engage tax advisors experienced in multi-state compliance

Affiliates/Promoters (Commission-Based Referrals)

If ambassadors are simply promoting the brand via social media, referral links, or discount codes — and the brand itself processes the sale through its own website — then:

·The ambassador does not need a seller's permit or to collect sales tax. The sales tax obligation falls on the brand as the seller, not on the ambassador. The affiliate is earning a commission, not making a sale.
·A general business license may still be advisable for the ambassador. Even though it's not always legally required to earn affiliate commissions as a sole proprietor, most cities and counties require a business license for anyone conducting commercial activity within their jurisdiction. A business license protects the ambassador and signals legitimacy.
·The brand is responsible for collecting and remitting sales tax in states where it has nexus — and ambassador activity in a state can be what triggers that nexus obligation for the brand.

Sales Tax Collection and Business Licenses

If ambassadors are purchasing paddles wholesale and reselling them (at tournaments, demos, in-person events, etc.), the picture changes significantly:

·They should have a business license and a resale/seller's permit in their state. They are acting as independent retailers.
·They are responsible for collecting and remitting sales tax on their direct sales, based on the rules in the state where the sale occurs.
·The brand should require ambassadors to provide a resale certificate when purchasing wholesale to avoid paying sales tax on the wholesale transaction.

Practical Recommendation

For most pickleball paddle brands, the cleanest approach is to keep ambassadors in the affiliate/promoter model — all sales run through the brand's e-commerce platform, and ambassadors earn commissions. This keeps the sales tax collection burden on the brand (where it's manageable with automation tools like Avalara or TaxCloud) and avoids putting compliance responsibility on individual ambassadors who may not have the infrastructure to handle it.

If the brand does allow ambassadors to resell, it should contractually require them to maintain a valid business license, seller's permit, and proof of sales tax compliance — and retain copies of those documents. Otherwise, the brand risks being held responsible for uncollected taxes in those states.

Instagram Influencers

List by follower count of Instagram influencers by category. Pro players are not included.

Instagram Followers

As of March 1, 2026

Entity Name	Instagram Handle	Category	Follower Count
Selkirk Sport	@selkirksport	Equipment Brand	106,000
JOOLA Pickleball	@joolapickleball	Equipment Brand	105,000
Paddletek	@paddletekpickleball	Equipment Brand	95,000
Franklin Sports Pickleball	@franklinpickleball	Equipment Brand	52,000
CRBN Pickleball	@crbnpickleball	Equipment Brand	48,000
Six Zero Pickleball	@sixzeropickleball	Equipment Brand	35,000
Bread & Butter	@bnbpickleball	Equipment Brand	25,000
Engage Pickleball	@engagepickleball	Equipment Brand	23,000
GearBox	@gearbox_pickleball	Equipment Brand	21,000
Diadem Sports	@diadempickleball	Equipment Brand	20,000
Gamma Sports	@gammapickleball	Equipment Brand	15,000
Onix Pickleball	@onixpickleball	Equipment Brand	14,000
Vatic Pro	@vaticpro_pb	Equipment Brand	14,000
HEAD Pickleball	@head_pickleball	Equipment Brand	12,000
11SIX24	@11six24_pickleball	Equipment Brand	11,000
Electrum	@electrumpickleball	Equipment Brand	10,000
Honolulu Pickleball	@honolulupickleballcompany	Equipment Brand	10,000
PIKKL	@pikklusa	Equipment Brand	10,000
Vulcan Sporting Goods	@vulcanpickleball	Equipment Brand	9,000
Cypher Pickleball	@cypherpickleball	Equipment Brand	8,000
Wilson Pickleball	@wilsonpickleball	Equipment Brand	8,000
Babolat Pickleball	@babolatpickleball	Equipment Brand	7,000
Ronbus Pickleball	@ronbus_pickleball	Equipment Brand	7,000
PROLITE Sports	@prolitesports	Equipment Brand	2,500
ProKennex	@prokennexpickleball_usa	Equipment Brand	800
The Picklr	@thepicklr	Franchise	48,000
Ace Pickleball Club	@acepickleballclub	Franchise	11,000
Pickleball Kingdom	@pickleballkingdom	Franchise	6,000
Dill Dinkers	@dilldinkers	Franchise	4,000
USA Pickleball	@usapickleball	Governing Body	80,000
UPA	@unitedpbassoc	Governing Body	4,000
The Kitchen	@thekitchenpickleball	Media/Content	727,000
The Dink	@thedinkpickleball	Media/Content	206,000
The Pickleball Clinic	@thepickleballclinic	Media/Content	143,000
Pickleball.com	@pickleballdotcom	Media/Content	134,000
All Things Pickleball	@allthingspickleball	Media/Content	63,000
Pickleball Playbook	@pickleballplaybook	Media/Content	62,000
Pickleball TV	@pickleballtv	Media/Content	36,000
Pickleball Union	@pickleball.union	Media/Content	28,000
Pickleball Studio	@pickleballstudio	Media/Content	23,000
The Pickleball Studio	@thepickleballstudio	Media/Content	22,000
Pickleball Official	@pickleballofficial	Media/Content	14,000
Pickleball Pundits	@pickleballpundits	Media/Content	9,000
PPA Tour	@ppatour	Tour/League	215,000
Major League Pickleball	@majorleaguepb	Tour/League	122,000
APP Tour	@officialapptour	Tour/League	40,000
US Open Pickleball	@usopenpickleball	Tour/League	24,000
Junior PPA	@junior.ppa	Tour/League	14,000
Minor League Pickleball	@officialminorleaguepb	Tour/League	14,000
World Pickleball Tour	@worldpickleballtour	Tour/League	12,000

Pickleball Document Library

As a regular, ongoing feature we will be maintaining a "library" of documents that are relevant to the pickleball ecosystem. Included are lawsuit documents, Franchise Disclosure Documents (FDDs) and similar.

Legal Documents

PICKLE-BALL Trademark Cancellation

- UTR - Global Pickleball Rating, Universal Pickleball, UTR Global Pickleball Rating, UTR Pickleball Rating, others
- Pickleball Kingdom - Pickleball Paddle Battle, Pickleball Kingdom, PK Pickleball Kingdom
- Pickleball Holdings response to request to cancel trademark PICKLE-BALL

Sports Squad, inc. (Joola) vs USA Pickleball Association

- Original complaint by Joola
- Response by USA Pickleball
- Response by Joola
- USA Pickleball Answer
- USA Pickleball Counterclaim
- Joola Amended Complaint
- USAP Response to Amended Complaint
- Order to Deny Motion to Dimiss for Failure to State a Claim new

Greg Matus vs Sports Squad Inc. (Joola)

- Amended Complaint
- Defendant's Reply
- Settlement

John Michael Tomberlin Jr vs Sport Squad Inc.

- First Amended Class Action Complaint

Escalade Sports vs PCKL LLC - Patent Infringement

- Escalade Complaint

Pickleball Rocks Bankruptcy

- Involuntary Petition
- Claims Summary
- Auctioneers Report

Website ADA Lawsuit

- Espinal v Pickleball Bella, Inc.
- Miller v SD Pickleball Distribution LLC
- Knowles v Pickleball Topco (Pickleball Central)
- Miller v Franklin Sports Inc
- Calcano v Selkirk Sport LLC
- Herrera v Vulcan Sporting Goods
- Herrera v Recess Pickleball

Ferrari v Ferrari (Gamma Sports)

- Initial Complaint
- Response
- Plaintiffs Emergency Motion to Appoint a Receiver
- Response to the Emergency Motion to Appoint a Receiver
- Order Regarding Appointment of Special Master new

Proton Bankruptcy Petition

- Petition
- Dismissal Request
- Settlement

Documents

Financial Disclosure Documents (FDDs)
Picklr 2024
Picklr 2025
Picklr 2025 July Amended
Pickleball Kingdom
Ace Pickleball Club
Dill Dinkers
Dill Dinkers Dec 2025
PickleRage
Pickle Pad
Pickled Court
The Flying Pickle
Smash Pickleball (Deck, not FDD as FDDs not required in Canada)

Miscellaneous
Selkirk email to UPA
Selkirk Letter to UPA
Model Noise Ordinance for Pickleball
USA Pickleball 2023 990 Form
2024 Pickleball Player Survey
The Pickleball Market: Growth, Projections & Investment Opportunities - The Picklr