

Get Ready for Each Shot

What happens if you don't make it up to the non-volley zone line and get caught in mid-court? This isn't the area you'd like to be, but it doesn't matter where you are on the court — still at the baseline, halfway up to the non-volley zone line, or waiting there: the moment your opponent's paddle makes contact with the ball, assume the ready position. Really do this! Don't just think, oh, I can just stop moving. Put your paddle up and in front of you. Keep your weight on the balls of your feet and be ready to move, keeping your eye on the ball. Then, after you hit the ball, head for the non-volley zone as soon as it's safe to do so.

Find the *Right* Ready Position

The ready position most people are familiar with is with your feet about shoulder width apart, knees bent slightly, your weight on the balls of your feet, and your paddle pointing toward the net so that you are ready to move to your forehand or backhand, depending on how the ball comes to you. This position comes from tennis where the court is large and there is more time between your opponent's hit and your return. Using this ready position is fine when you're at the baseline, but it may not be the best choice when you are up at the non-volley zone.

This close to the net, there often isn't time to move from this ready position and make contact with a shot coming at you quickly, especially a volley. Try this instead:

Hold your paddle in the *backhand* position up in front of your chest. This way, you can return most shots by simply rotating the paddle. If the ball comes to your forehand side, just rotate your body toward the ball and you'll be able to reach the forehand volley.

Gail Leach

Pickleball Early Preparation

EARLY PREPARATION is the most important part of the game. It is the most common mistake, because players do not realize they are not prepared early enough. Players in their quest to get to the NVZ line tend to be running out of control at the point of contact of the ball on their opponents paddle. Players sacrifice early preparation for a better position on the court which is very poor technique because if you are moving at point of contact of the ball on your opponents paddle then you are not able to hit a low ball, go back for a lob, or move right or left as quick.

The proper technique is to split step [feet are parallel to each other and shoulder width apart. Similar to the old game of hop scotch] and hesitate for a split second in the proper ready position at the point of contact of your opponent touching the ball. Watch the face of your opponents paddle to be able to read if you will be hitting a forehand or backhand shot and be prepared to

cross step to the ball. Using the split step allows you to have a little forward motion and be in control to move quickly in either direction.

If you use this technique every single time your opponent touches the ball it will make you a quicker and more consistent player.

Coach Mo