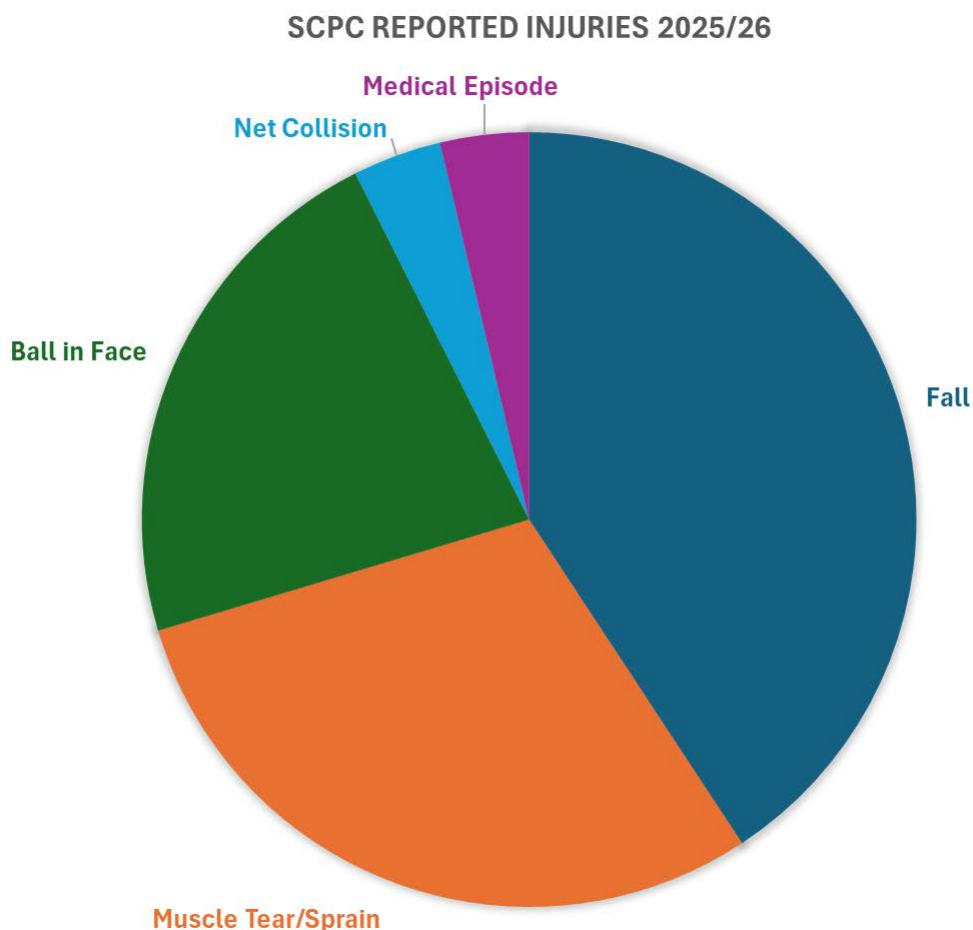


## COMMENTS ON PICKLEBALL SAFETY

As the year kicks off, it seems like a good time to reflect upon pickleball safety. Did you know that there were 22 injuries reported in the club last year and we have already had five injuries in January?

Pickleball is not a particularly dangerous sport, but injuries do occur and we are more susceptible, and take longer to recover, as we get older. The chart below shows that our most frequent injuries are caused by falls (bruising and broken bones), followed by muscle tears and sprains and a high incidence of eye and face injuries from being struck by the ball.

What these records do not show is the occurrence of “pickleball elbow” - which is essentially the same as tennis elbow - an overuse injury that is inflammation of one of the elbow tendons. Such injuries develop gradually.



The purpose of this communication is to raise awareness, not to provide specific medical advice. Always obtain professional medical advice if you are concerned about an injury or your physical condition to play pickleball.

General advice is available from many sources, for example:

## PREVENTING PICKLEBALL INJURIES

As most pickleball players can attest, swinging a racquet a few hundred times and chasing a ball around a court can lead to some painful problems. The most common injuries are sprains and strains of the hips, knees, dominant shoulder and elbow, and low back.

### INJURIES

#### **HAND & WRIST INJURIES**

Attach a long lever to a small joint and swiftly hit a ball - What could go wrong? Anything from overuse strains to broken bones.

#### **ELBOW TENDONITIS**

Firmly gripping a racquet places stress on the bony bumps where your wrist and forearm muscles attach to your elbow. This is often a site of tendinitis within pickleball players.

#### **KNEE PAIN**

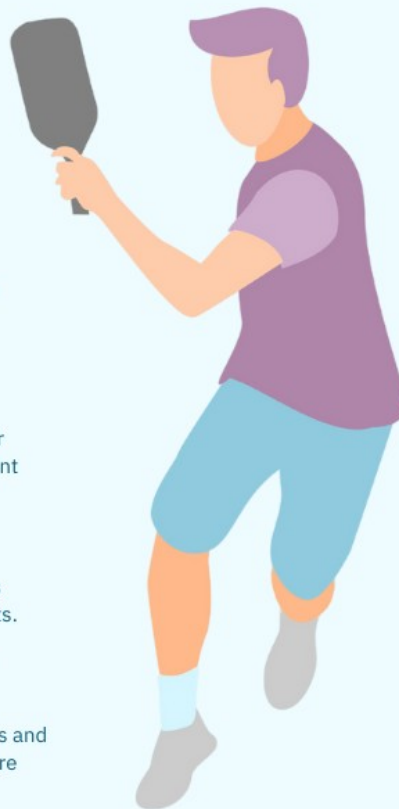
Running and pivoting places tremendous torque on your knees. This stress can damage ligaments and irritate joint cartilage.

#### **BACK PAIN**

Continually bending forward and quickly rotating places tremendous stress on your spine's soft tissues and joints. Injuries to muscles, ligaments, and discs are common.

#### **ROTATOR CUFF PROBLEMS**

Repeatedly raising your arm can pinch sensitive tendons and bursa. Unchecked, small irritations can transition to more significant tears over time.



### TIPS

#### **CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING INJURY-PREVENTION TIPS:**

- ✓ Stretch and get some blood flowing with a brisk 10-minute walk before hitting the court.
- ✓ Choose shoes with proper arch supports, or consider aftermarket insoles or custom orthotics.
- ✓ Warm-up before the match with the exercises below.
- ✓ Make sure you are well hydrated before, during, and after your match. Replace your fluids, whether you feel thirsty or not. (Alcohol and caffeine don't help.)
- ✓ Learn and practice proper pickleball techniques, including your grip, swing, and footwork.
- ✓ Some mild soreness is acceptable, but don't hesitate to stop in the middle of a match if you experience more significant or sharp pain.

Falls are particularly dangerous as they can result in sprains and fractures, particularly to ankles, knees, hips and wrists. While we all like to play competitively, lunging, diving and running backwards to get difficult balls, might not be the best choices for maintaining one's physical condition. So please take care of yourself.

Eye injuries are a particular concern. It is hard to defend against a high fast ball when standing at the kitchen line and, although we discourage dangerous play, inadvertent head shots and ricochets do occur. Considering the potential seriousness of eye injuries, the use of suitable eye protection is strongly recommended.



Finally, it must be said that, considering pickleball is predominantly a doubles game, there is a tremendous opportunity to improve partner communication. This includes agreeing beforehand which player will take centre balls and calling (and respecting) “mine” or “yours.” Few games seem to go by without at least one paddle clash. Not only is this a safety issue but it also creates a centre play weakness, due to uncertainty over who will take the ball. Again, from the internet:

#### **Paddle Clash in Pickleball**

Paddle clashes in pickleball can be a common mistake among players, leading to dangerous situations and disrupting the game's momentum. To avoid paddle clashes, players should:

- Allow their partner to take the ball when they are in a better position.
- Communicate with their partner and commit to the shot they are taking.
- Take a step back or step aside to avoid collisions.
- Maintain momentum during points by prioritizing teamwork, communication, and safety.

So, in summary, please let's all try to drive down the occurrences of injuries by looking after ourselves and our teammates.

Thanks,

SCPC Management Committee