



# The Power of Stacking

DON'T LET THE SCORE DICTATE HOW YOU PLAY



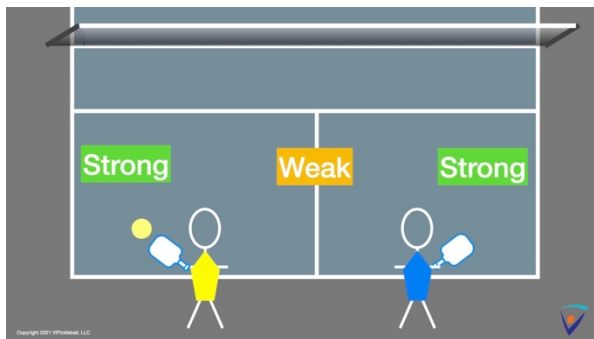
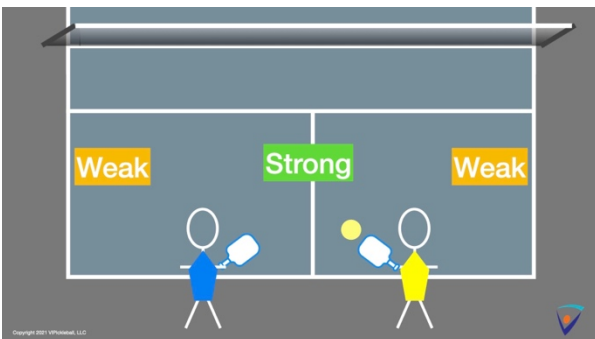
## Don't Let the Score Dictate How You Play

Most pickleball players play the game according to the score.

Huh?

The score controls where these players stand. Here is an example of how the game is normally played:

- At the start of the game, the yellow player is the first server. Score is 0-0-2. The yellow player in this scenario is left-handed and their partner, the blue player, is right-handed.
  - When the players are in this formation, they have their forehands in the middle. In this example, we will assume that the forehand of each player is their strength.
  - In this formation the middle is strong and the outsides are weaker
- The team wins the first point. Score is now 1-0-2.
  - As a result, the yellow player moves to the left side of the court to serve and their partner, the blue player, moves to the right side of the court to fill in the open space on the court.
  - Their forehands are now on the outside and the middle is weakened.

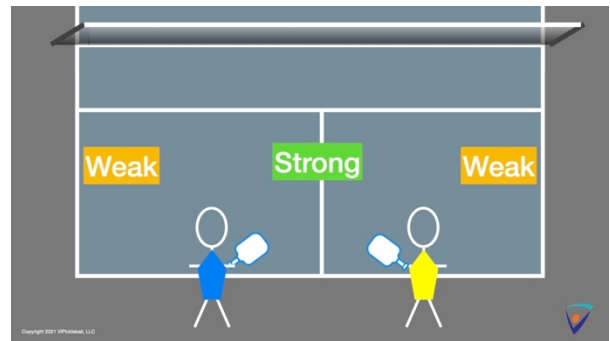
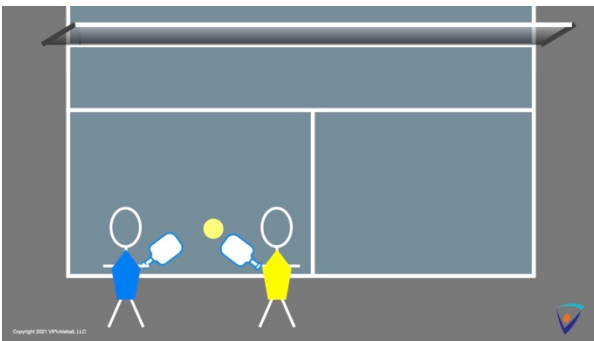


In the above example, the score is dictating the players' positions. These players are not in control of the pickleball game they are playing. Rather, they are allowing the score to tell them how they will play the next rally.

What if these players want to take control of their game? In the above example, the forehands are their strength. A strong middle formation will generally give them the best chance of winning the rally. As a result, they will want to play the next rally (if not every rally) with their forehands in the middle.

Is there something that these players can do to take control of the narrative of the game and play the rallies from a strategically advantageous position? The answer is “yes” and it is by stacking. Here is what it looks like:

- We pick it up with the score 1-0-2.
  - The score **requires** that the yellow player serve from the left side. Remember that the yellow player is the even player. So when their score is “1” the yellow player must stand on the left side to serve the ball.
  - BUT, the pickleball rules **do not require** the blue player to stand on the right side, or anywhere specific for that matter.
  - As a result, the blue player can stand on the left side of the court when the yellow player is serving from that same side, as shown below.
- Once the yellow player completes the serve, the player moves to the right side of the court and the team plays the rally from this formation.
  - This formation allows the team to play the rally from the formation it prefers to play, with their strengths in the middle.
  - This is stacking on serve.
  - It allows the team to choose their formation, in this case as shown, and play the rallies from their preferred position.

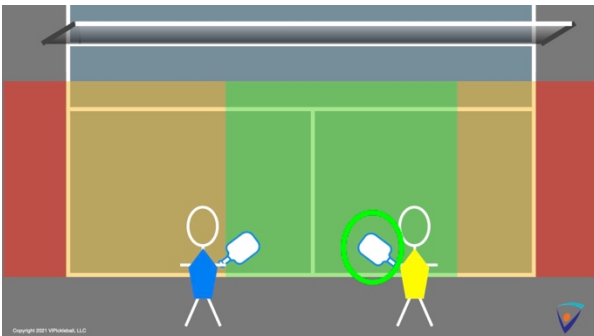


By using stacking here, our team can play each rally from the positions most advantageous to them. This increases the likelihood of success in the rally and game.

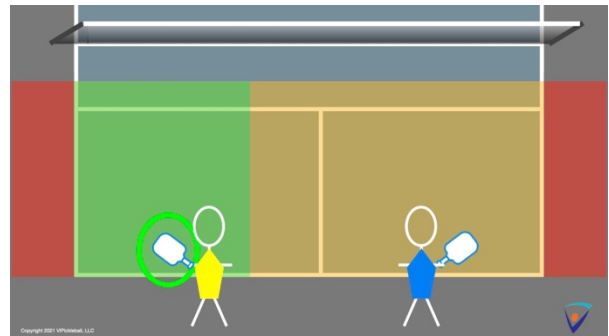


To illustrate the power of stacking, let's consider another situation. Here the team only has one strong "wing." The yellow player's forehand is markedly better than the yellow player's backhand and the blue player's forehand or backhand. It is represented in these diagrams with a green circle.

- In this formation, the yellow player is on the right side.
- That places the yellow player's forehand – the strongest shot this team has – in the middle.
- The green shaded area shows the court where this shot can have an impact.
- Any ball hit into the green shaded area can be attacked by the yellow player's forehand.
- AND, for the opponents to avoid this weapon, they are forced to hit towards the sidelines.
- Any time a team is forced to hit towards the sidelines, the out of bounds area is brought into play.
- This dangerous middle and potential for out of bounds shots to the sides increases the risks to the opposing team, therefore increasing our likelihood of success.



- In this formation, the yellow player is on the left side.
- That places the yellow player's forehand – the strongest shot this team has – towards the outside.
- Any ball hit into the green shaded area can be attacked by the yellow player's forehand.
- The area that can be attacked by the opponents is now greater and is also less likely to be outside the sidelines (wide).
- This formation allows the opposing team to hit balls into the middle of the court, making the sidelines less dangerous.
- Limiting the area where our team's weapon can have an impact and opening the middle to our opponents decreases the risks to the opposing team, therefore decreasing our likelihood of success.



This example, though extreme, does arise in real game play. Ask us and we can share stories with you. The key takeaway is that stacking allows you to avoid the score controlling how you play. Instead, you get to dictate the terms of your play. And any time you can dictate the terms of play you maximize your chances of succeeding.



# What's Next?

## You Have Three Options

#1



### Ignore It

*(but beware, you're likely to see your opponents stacking)*

#2



### Figure It Out Yourself

*(how has that worked so far?)*

#3



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