



THAT

PICKLEBALL MEMBER PROFILE

Number 16

By Laurie Einstein Koszuta

From Corporate Spreadsheets to Pickleball Courts: Leah Cattanach's Journey to a New Chapter



Leah and Ian won gold in their first Mixed Doubles tournament!

For years, 58-year-old Leah Cattanach balanced the demands of corporate life by managing financial groups in a tech company and at Sara Lee in North Carolina. But over time, a growing restlessness set in, leading her to realize that the corporate world no longer held her interest. Seeking a change, she joined a nonprofit focused on land conservation, a role that allowed her to work remotely during the pandemic. However, the isolation left her craving connection. Once lockdowns lifted, Leah looked for something she and her husband, Ian, could enjoy together.

The Pickleball Hook

“I had played tennis since I was 13 years old,” she said, “When a friend mentioned that Greensboro had opened its first public pickleball courts, I was intrigued and told Ian that we should try it.”

Leah quickly bought paddles for herself and Ian and headed to the courts as soon as they could. “Like so many others, we were instantly hooked,” Leah says, laughing at the memory.

What started as a fun couples’ activity soon became a shared passion. As their interest increased, both signed up for clinics, played in local tournaments, and became part of Greensboro’s growing pickleball community. However, playing as a couple had its challenges. “It’s not that we fought,” she chuckled. “But when he got stressed, I’d feel it too. Plus, we had those moments when we disagreed on line calls. We realized playing in tournaments together wasn’t for us but we still play casually together.”

A Natural Teacher

About a year and a half into playing, Leah transitioned into teaching alongside the coach who introduced her to the sport. Together, they taught lessons, ran clinics, and organized programming for public courts. Leah played a pivotal role in modernizing the Lawndale Club's offerings, implementing court reservation systems and fostering a close-knit community of players.

Leah was involved in a development project to create an indoor facility for players. However, unexpected issues with the facility's flooring derailed the plans, leading to the project being scrapped and requiring Leah to pivot again. Today, she continues to teach at a local community park.

Certified as a teaching pro through the Professional Pickleball Registry (PPR), Leah enjoys working with students from various athletic backgrounds, not just former tennis players. Her teaching style focuses on decision-making, court positioning, strategy, and taking the best of your skills to win games. "After lessons, I send notes summarizing what we covered, encouraging players to focus on one or two aspects each time they play. It's about learning while keeping the game enjoyable."

Doubles and Beyond

Three and a half years ago, Leah met her women's doubles partner at the 3.0 level, and they've since progressed through to the 4.5 level for competition. "We lived just two miles apart but didn't meet until pickleball," Leah says. "Now we're part of a group that travels for tournaments and social trips. We're even talking about getting Sprinter vans and traveling from tournament to tournament."



Leah (on the left) and her awesome women's doubles partner at the 2025 US Open. They won the silver!

Leah enjoys playing three to four days a week, balancing her passion with the need for rest and recovery. “I’m learning to listen to my body,” she admits, “and work on pickleball-focused strength training and conditioning.”

A Different Kind of Success

Reflecting on her experience with That Pickleball School, Leah praises its innovative approach: “I love how they’re always looking for ways to improve and do things better. They don’t just follow what everyone else is saying—they take the time to analyze and think things through, and I love that.”

Looking back, Leah sees how much her life has changed. “A startup offered me a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) position,” she revealed. “But I just couldn’t go back to corporate. I’d rather spend a few hours outside, helping people find joy in something I love.”



A group shot of Leah’s first Pickleball 102 students back in August 2023. These students are probably all 4.5 by now!!