



THAT

PICKLEBALL MEMBER PROFILE

Number 24

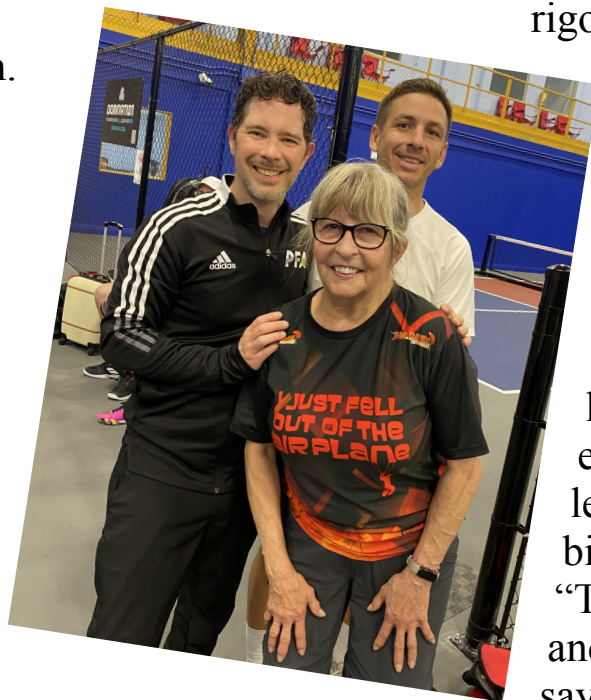
By Laurie Einstein Koszuta

JD Gagne's Language of Movement

As a native of Quebec City, 48-year-old JD Gagné's first language is French. In addition to English, he also communicates through the language of movement; understanding how people move, why injuries occur, and how to maintain an active lifestyle.

"I'm an athletic therapist," he explained, "in the States, I'd be referred to as an athletic trainer."

JD's 25-year career in athletic therapy began in the pool as a swimmer. He worked as a lifeguard, enjoyed coaching, and thrived on the adrenaline of emergency care. Athletic therapy became the ideal blend of sports and problem-solving without requiring elite-level performance.



"I could be on the bench with the team," he says, "without the rigorous training of an athlete, or the stress of a coach, yet still be part of the victory."

Over the years, JD has worked with elite cyclists, World Cup-level long-track speed skaters, and a large number of golfers, an experience that led him to learn more about biomechanics.

"They'd play golf one day and pickleball the next," he says. When their knee pain started appearing from playing pickleball, he paid attention.

At the time, pickleball barely existed in Quebec City. JD and his wife, Annie, wanted to learn more about the game, so they bought a net and inexpensive paddles and taught themselves to play on a park basketball court. However, when playing with others, they quickly learned that athleticism alone wasn't enough.



“I was getting beaten by a 70-year-old who kept dropping the ball at my feet,” he laughs. “That’s when I really started watching how people move.”

Pickleball’s Growth in Quebec City

Today, about 15 percent of JD’s clients are pickleball players. The sport continues to grow locally, as evidenced by a new 13-court indoor facility which opened last year. “Annie has fully embraced pickleball,” says JD, “and plays frequently and in tournaments. I might play three or four times a week.”

Their 18-year-old son, a former badminton player, completed his Level 1 pickleball coaching certification alongside JD. Their 15-year-old daughter is a serious soccer player who occasionally plays pickleball with the family.

Be in Shape to Play

JD’s core philosophy is simple. “You need to be in shape to play pickleball, not play to get in shape. That works if you play once in a while,” he says. “But not if you play more often.”

“It’s all about how you move,” he says. “For example, knee pain is rarely just about bad knees. If your basic movement patterns are weak, pickleball will expose that very fast.” That’s why his warmups focus on exercises like squats, lunges, footwork, and joint control, rather than just casual dinks.

“If you do those basic patterns every time, you can usually play almost pain-free,” he says. “The idea is to engage all the joints, from the neck to the toes.”

One of the most common injuries he sees is tennis elbow, which he considers a whole-body problem.

Below the 4.0 level, rec players tend to stay square to the net and rely on the arm and wrist, forcing the elbow to do the work of the torso and hips.

After correcting his own shoulder turn, using his torso instead of just his arm, his elbow pain disappeared.



Posture beats age

JD also challenges the idea that age is the main problem. “I see the same movement issues in teenagers glued to their phones,” he says. “Poor posture, tight shoulders, weak hips. Habits matter more than age.”

The difference between aging well and poorly, he asserts, comes down to daily movement, strength, nutrition, and proper recovery.

“In pickleball,” he says, “if you want to play well and often, you need more than just games.”

On non-playing days, JD does a 30-minute workout focused on strength and movement patterns. Nutrition is another area where he sees avoidable mistakes, especially among early-morning players.

“Your body needs fuel,” he says. “If you go play at 8 a.m. with nothing in your system, that’s like driving your car on empty.” He favors real food over processed options and encourages players to focus on nutrients, not just calories or sugar.

Like many serious students of the game, JD searched online for quality instruction and found That Pickleball School. For him, the structure, videos and information align perfectly with his own mission.

“My purpose,” he says, “is to keep myself and others playing and moving, pain-free, for as long as possible.”



Check out JD’s 2 minute warm-up (previously posted on That Pickleball School site.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4F5BngmMSQ>



Canadian Pickleball Clinic with Coach Zach Silvernail