



THAT

PICKLEBALL MEMBER PROFILE

Number 14

By Laurie Einstein Koszuta

From Doctor to Dinker: How Pickleball Revived Florian Lobsien's Passion for Sport and Life

Tennis was a national obsession in Germany during the '80s, thanks to the dominance of Steffi Graf and Boris Becker. Born in Bremen in 1971, Florian Lobsien grew up in the thick of that tennis craze.

As a young man, tennis was practically a family ritual. For the Lobsiens, it meant watching the U.S. Open, Wimbledon, and other matches, playing the game, or taking lessons. He and his parents attended lessons together at an indoor tennis center just 1.5 kilometers from home.

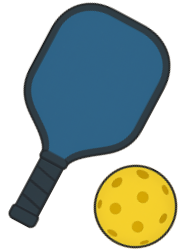
"My mom and I were so over-motivated," he recalls. "We'd blame each other whenever something went wrong on the court. Complaints would escalate, and before long, one of us would storm off and walk home."

Enough

At 17, Florian quit tennis, lured away by his interests in music, computer games, and girls. By his own admission, he says that his overhead smashes were a disaster, and his serves were no better. Florian resorted to an underhanded serve at a local club championship, unsurprisingly losing every match. It simply wasn't fun anymore.



After high school, Florian became a paramedic for a couple of years before following in the footsteps of his father, grandfather, uncle, and three cousins. He attended medical school, continuing the tradition of his *Ärztefamilie* (medical family). He began playing badminton at university and later worked as a general practitioner and diabetes specialist in a hospital in Bremen, Germany.



Coming Home, A Difficult Decision

When Florian’s father, an alcoholic, fell ill, he faced a difficult decision: take over his father’s medical practice or continue working at the hospital. “I decided to take over the practice,” Florian explained, “but it was a challenging decision because my father’s dependency on alcohol caused significant emotional strain, as he wanted to continue helping in the practice. But I couldn’t do that, so I had to sever ties so he couldn’t practice with me.”

The emotional toll of dealing with that led to burnout and tinnitus, which required hearing aids. But rediscovering sports—first running, then badminton—helped him regain his health and balance. He joined the local badminton club in his village and now runs two to three times a week, participating in 10K and half-marathon races to maintain fitness and endurance.

Pickleball: A New Obsession is Born

Florian’s introduction to pickleball came through his 20-year-old daughter, Maya. One evening in August 2024, she announced her desire to become more athletic and play tennis, primarily because she liked the cute outfits. “I pointed out all the costs of renting courts and taking lessons,” Florian noted, “but when she asked if I had any other ideas, I suggested pickleball. It was a sport I had heard about in passing, and I decided to try it. I did a quick Google search and ordered paddles and a net. We began playing at our local gym, which had badminton courts that conveniently matched pickleball’s dimensions.”

Maya soon lost interest, but Florian was hooked from the first rally. His wife, Dani, also began playing. The repeated office conversation about pickleball interested Kinga, his co-practice owner and physician. Then Conny, their diabetes consultant, became interested, and their senior nurse, Andrea, became curious. Together, they formed the Uphuser *Ärzteteam*—a medical pickleball squad! “The Pickleball School, it was an easy decision to follow his lessons. Kyle, Zach others in the office are resistant at the moment,” Florian chuckled, “but we’ll see how long that lasts.”



Florian (l), Kinga (middle), and Conny (r).
Missing is Andrea -3/4 of the Medical
Pickleball Squad (Uphuser Ärzteteam)

Dani took a brief break from the sport after being hit in the face by two aggressive “bangers,” which ruined the experience for her. “I gave her some advice on how to handle those kinds of players, and she decided to give it another try,” he said. “We practiced together using my prized Titan-Ace ball machine. It is a purchase I finally had to confess to making, but it was worth every Euro. We made a deal: the Titan-Ace ball machine’s cost will equal the amount Dani can spend on new sneakers.”

Learning from the Pros

When Florian started playing, no instructors were available, so he turned to YouTube and discovered Kyle Koszuta, That Pickleball Guy. “I loved his humor, his structured approach, and the quality of his videos. When Kyle started That Pickleball School, it was an easy decision to follow his lessons. Kyle, Zach and Tyler are top-notch; there’s nothing else like them. Their ‘10 Principles of Pickleball,’ especially Principle #8, ‘Give Good Energy,’ resonated with me. It’s not about the score or who wins or loses—it’s about having fun and playing with positivity, whether on the court or in life and medicine.”

In November 2024, Florian and Dani competed in their first local pickleball tournament. We did well despite only playing pickleball for a few months. In the meantime, we connected with the 1st Pickleball Club of Bremen. There, Florian began learning from head coach Brian Hürmann, captain of the German national team. “It’s been wonderful to finally receive real coaching,” he says, “I’ve always been a self-taught athlete.”

Pickleball as Preventive Medicine

As a doctor, Florian sees pickleball as a form of preventive medicine. “It’s fun, social, and accessible, which is great for physical and mental well-being. One of my favorite sayings is, ‘Sitzen ist das neue Rauchen’— ‘Sitting is the new smoking.’ Physical inactivity carries enormous health risks, and pickleball is a joyful way to combat that.”

