



THAT

PICKLEBALL MEMBER PROFILE

Number 25

By Laurie Einstein Koszuta

Ann Greenberg Dinks Into a New Decade

Ann Greenberg couldn't be more excited about turning 70 this April. It has nothing to do with healthcare perks or senior discounts. Instead, it's a competitive milestone as she can finally "age up" in tournaments and play in the 70–74 division.

"Some people get depressed about a big number," she says. "I couldn't be happier."

With five older brothers, one older sister, and two younger sisters, Ann grew up surrounded by competition. If a ball was involved, she and her siblings would play. Basketball, tennis, field hockey—whatever the season was, that was her sport.

"I was fortunate to have played a little college basketball," she says, "and I played softball all throughout my life."

Ann discovered pickleball just five years ago, after a high school friend

persistently urged her to give it a try but she resisted. She had seen people playing at a local park while watching her grandson and couldn't quite figure out what they were doing.

"I thought, 'I'm an athlete, I'm not playing that,'" she recalls. "It looked really silly."

Eventually, she relented and agreed to try it. And, as it often does, life shifted her priorities.

A retired nurse, Ann worked through an exhausting year of COVID before retiring in December 2020. Soon after, she signed up for a county-run pickleball clinic in Montgomery County, Maryland, hoping simply to learn the basics of the game. What she found instead was a community. The women she met during early-morning play welcomed her in, and pickleball quickly became more than just a pastime.



That local park turned out to be special in another way, too. It was just down the road from where Ben and Colin Johns had grown up. One day, the brothers showed up with a massive box of pickleballs, laughing and hitting, drawing curious glances from everyone on the courts.

“Everyone was buzzing,” Ann says. “Someone told me, ‘That’s Ben Johns.’ I thought, ‘Oh, they’re pretty good.’ I didn’t know much about them at the time. I actually thought he was selling paddles because he had so many balls and paddles with him.”



Not long after, Joola opened an office just behind the courts. When Ben Johns later signed with the company, Ann and her friends watched photo shoots unfold from the sidelines.

“That’s when I bought my first Joola paddle, locally at Tennis Topia on the day they went on sale in April 2022,” she says.



From there, Ann was all in, playing six days a week at the Montgomery Tennisplex’s indoor pickleball courts in Gaithersburg. Eventually, aches and pains reminded her to listen to her body. Today, she plays three times a week and drills once, a balance that keeps her strong, healthy, and competitive.

She’s tried to recruit her family into the sport, gifting paddles for birthdays and retirements, but success has been mixed. Her sisters, who come from tennis backgrounds, have dealt with knee and hip issues. One younger sister, once envisioned as Ann’s “dream partner,” recently decided against playing after hip pain made her fearful of falling.

“I was disappointed,” Ann says, “Even my husband doesn’t play. He’s a pickleball widower.”

Still, Ann’s competitive nature has drawn her to enjoy playing in tournaments, particularly those organized by age and gender. While indoor clubs and open DUPR events are plentiful, she prefers competing against peers.

“My favorite is the Maryland Senior Olympics,” she says. “This past year I won bronze in women’s singles and gold in women’s doubles at 3.5 in my age group, which is pretty funny for someone who once thought the game was silly.”

Pickleball has also opened doors to friendship and travel for Ann. Through a nearby retirement community, Ann connected with a group of women who dubbed themselves the “Sisterhood of Pickleball.” Last January, they organized a six-day pickleball trip to Turks and Caicos.

“It was just us,” she says. “And it was a blast.”



She also credits That Pickleball School (TPS) with helping elevate her game.

“I really love it,” she says. “You can ask any question freely in the community and there are so many different perspectives. People are struggling with the same things you are.”

Now, for Ann, 70 feels less like a milestone and more like a marker of opportunity, especially when it comes to pickleball.



The game even bridges generations. Ann’s seven-year-old granddaughter enjoys pickleball, and the two have attended a youth clinic together.