



# THAT

PICKLEBALL MEMBER PROFILE

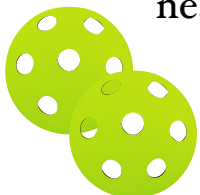
Number 18

By Laurie Einstein Koszuta

## Bryan Touryan-Schaefer: Deep-Sea Engineer by Trade, Pickleball Addict by Choice

**B**ryan Touryan-Schaefer never expected to find himself on a pickleball court. That's because he's the adventurous type, with hobbies like competing on a skydiving team and mountain biking. The Monterey, California-based research technician and father of two stumbled upon the sport thanks to his father-in-law during a family visit to Florida.

"He handed me a paddle and said, 'Come check this out.' At the time, I was deep into mountain biking," Bryan recalls. But that changed when Bryan began experiencing concerning health issues like passing out after rides, anemia, and severe gastrointestinal problems. After undergoing nearly two years of tests, doctors discovered a severe oat allergy.



"With everything going on, I had to give up mountain biking," he says. "That's when I turned my attention to pickleball and never looked back."



### *Exploring the Ocean Floor*

By day, Bryan works at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI), where he spent 18 years piloting a remotely operated submarine capable of diving 4,000 meters. "I spent about half the year at sea," he says. "We studied everything from geology to marine biology."

"A fun fact," Bryan shared, "is that I helped discover a new species of bone worm, and it was named after me! It is called *Osedax Bryanii*."

Now in a shore-based engineering role, Bryan serves as a Senior Marine Operations Engineer, where he builds equipment and manages a subsea observatory.

## *Hooked on the Game*

With more time on land, Bryan immersed himself in pickleball and found a welcoming group, especially for beginners, in his community. "It got to the point where my wife would glance over while I was on my phone and say, 'Are you watching pickleball videos again?'" he laughs. "Yup. Totally obsessed."

While his wife doesn't play, Bryan's eleven-year-old son, Calder, has joined him on the court. But his eight-year-old son, Rory, swore off the game after an unfortunate encounter in which he caught his brother's paddle to the nose. "He got a bloody nose and said, 'Nope, no more pickleball for me.'"

Now, Bryan plays every Tuesday and Thursday evening, 'until they kick us out at 8 p.m.'

and hits the courts on weekends whenever possible.

As Bryan has leveled up to a 3.7-rated player, he thrives on strategy and anticipation. "I was a college fencer, so reading patterns and reacting with quick, explosive movements is second nature. I'll move to where the ball is before they hit it. I'm fast on the court, sometimes too fast," he laughs. "Coaches are always trying to get me to slow down."



Bryan and his partner winning GOLD! Awesome!

One of his signature weapons is a tricky lefty backhand delivered with a unique grip and spin. "It's my superpower," he admits. "I'm still working on consistency, especially with my third shot drops. When they are on, they're great, but when they're off, they're really bad. I am super inconsistent."

## Getting Better

Bryan has even dabbled in tournament play and took home a gold medal in a local Men's Doubles event, his very first win. "We lost some early games," he notes, "but my partner told me, 'Just have fun.' That completely shifted my mindset and took the pressure off. Suddenly, our drops were landing, and the wins started coming."

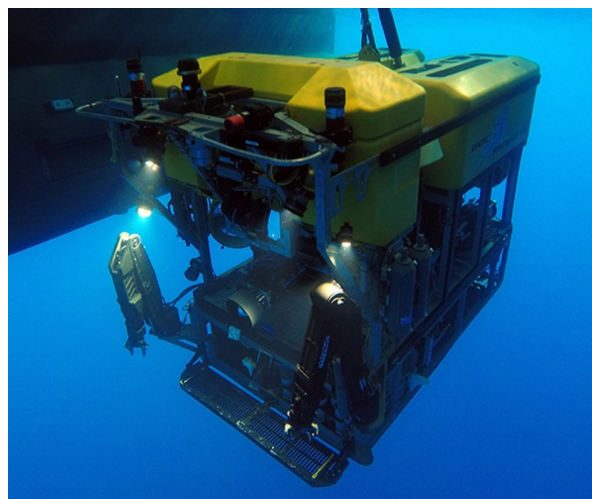
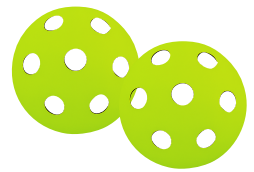
## Drills and More

Bryan was drawn to Kyle Koszuta's *That Pickleball Guy* YouTube channel, where he found a different style of instruction. "There's a ton of content out there on how to hit a shot, but it's often disjointed. Kyle makes the strategy, technique, and mindset all click together."

That is what sparked his interest in becoming a founding member of That Pickleball School (TPS), where he has even recruited a few friends to join. "The entire TPS team is really good, and the community is open, vulnerable, and respectful," he says. "It is the opposite of most online interaction these days. Being a part of it has helped so much."

These days, Bryan's biggest challenge is finding the right playing group with a bit more competition than just fun recreational play. "Our club has a gap between the 3.5 and 4.5 players. It's hard to find strong intermediate players."

For Bryan, though, one of the most significant rewards of playing is the real sense of community he has discovered on the courts, reminiscent of the tight-knit group he found in the drop zone while skydiving.



The remotely operated submersible used by the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI).