



EQUIPMENT

Supplying the Demand

Pickleball players continue to seek more sophisticated performance paddles, delivered with style.

BY KENT OSWALD

> Pickleball, America's fastest-growing participation sport, continues to attract new companies, as the growth in sales opportunities brings more paddle manufacturers into the market—albeit often focused on newer, less-committed players. The influx of people and companies promoting this sport also has the effect of bringing more attention and more new players into the game.

This increase in overall pickleball numbers then funnels more players up the pyramid of play to where they are creating demand for more technologically sophisticated performance paddles. For these more serious players, manufacturers are bringing the substance—and delivering with style. Noteworthy additions to the category include the models shown here. *(Prices are suggested retail.)*

Adidas

ALLRACQUETSPORTS.COM
239-245-8813

Proprietary technology gives players options for weight and balance as they personalize their Metalbone (\$260). The monocoque construction of the C18 carbon-fibered frame delivers a rigidity bringing power to shots, while the rough textured surface enhances spin. Those hitting a two-handed backhand will also appreciate the extra-long grip.

Adidas' Metalbone paddle offers options for players to customize weight and balance, using four 2.6-gram screws at the throat.





More players funneling up the pyramid of play are creating demand for more technologically sophisticated performance paddles.



Babolat

BABOLAT.COM
877-316-9435

The elongated STRKR+ provides a built-in advantage for singles play and cushioned comfort for the two-handed backhands of intermediate and advanced players. The gritty face encourages spin, while dampening tech disperses vibrations and increases feel, extending the sweet spot, says Babolat. The extended-handle BALLR+ offers players a balance between power and control. Tech for the WZRD is focused on enhancing a player's touch, while still allowing for point-ending pop. All have a suggested price of \$219 and feature a polymer honeycomb core with an EVA foam layer.



Gamma

GAMMASPORTS.COM
800-333-0337

The RCF Airbender 16 (\$200) features a variable weight cap and shock reduction, as well as an open throat design announcing the paddle's maneuverability. Other features include a molded form handle and filled edges, supplying stability and surrounding the raw carbon hitting surface. The RCF Obsidian (\$160) has a honeycombed grip, gritty carbon face and a variably weighted end cap for extra personalization, all highlights of a package offering a superior touch.



Head

HEAD.COM
800-289-7366

The most recent additions to the line are the Radical Grit, with an outsourced raw carbon frame and hitting surface, and the Radical Pro, Radical Elite and Radical Raw, all with polypropylene honeycomb cores. All are priced at \$170 and developed for a series themed for touch and feel. These join in the panoply of paddle offerings, including the Gravity series with its massive sweet spots, and the Extreme series built for power.



PICKLEBALL



Paddletek

PADDLETEK.COM
866-972-3353

World No. 1 Anna Leigh Waters serves as the design consultant for the Bantam ALW-C (\$230), which offers multiple colorways and two thickness options—a more “forgiving” 14.3-mm core, and a more “powerful” 12.7-mm core. The unidirectional carbon fiber and honeycombed polymer nucleus combine for impressive power, control and spin.



Pickleball Central

PICKLEBALLCENTRAL.COM
888-854-0163

The Versix Raw 6C+ (\$110) offers outstanding value in both its elongated and standard options. Players hitting two-handed backhands and others looking to drive the ball will appreciate the 5.75-inch handle version, while others playing with a more defensive and control-game focus will prize the standard model. Both feature a polypropylene honeycomb core and raw carbon fiber surface, enabling impressive “pop” and spectacular spin.



Pro Kennex

PROKENNEX-PICKLEBALL.COM
800-832-9887

The new, stable, aerodynamic Black Ace (\$250) series includes the LG, XF, Ovation, Pro and Daniel De La Rosa signature DLR (“the white Black Ace”) versions, all designed for different shades of power hitters. The thin-framed paddles feature the company’s superior dampening tech from the tip through the long handle, and have heightened the power and sweet-spot availability by slimming the frame width and trimming the racquet’s tip. Also available are paddles in the Spin series (\$220), with textured faces and shapes encouraging faster rotation, and the aerodynamic, lightweight Flight series (\$200).

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Selkirk

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800-759-4326

The LUXX Control Air series (\$250) is designed to satisfy the majority of pickleballers in their search for greater shot precision. The three options are the long-handled Epic, the lightweight Invikta—paddle of choice for tennis-turned-pickleball star Jack Sock—and the compact S2. Each features an open-throat design, a consistent feel with all shots, proprietary carbon maximizing the sweet spot and edge-to-edge access to spin.



Wilson

WILSON.COM
773-714-6400

Extending its current range of paddles at multiple price points and for varying games, Wilson offers the high-performance Blaze Tour 16 (\$200) with its elongated shape maximizing power; the Blaze Pro 13 (\$180) created for a balance of power and control; the Blaze 13 (\$150) with a hybrid face of raw carbon fiber and a fiberglass base; and the compact Tempo Pro 16 (\$180), offering a fine mix of control, maneuverability and spin. ■

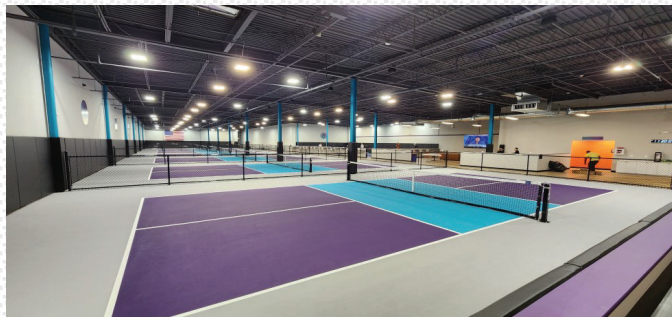


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