

Different paddle sports share similar player injuries, preventions

The assumption adage of “If it quacks like a duck.....” does not work when it comes to paddle and platform tennis. The two sports are often confused and names erroneously interchanged, but they are two different sports. Although both are derivatives of tennis, they differ greatly except for injuries.



Paddle tennis, played indoors and outdoors, is the older of the two sports and was created in 1898 as a way for children to learn tennis. Played on a tennis court one-half the size of a regulation court with a sponge-rubber ball and short-handled wooden paddle, the sport most closely follows the rules of tennis. The first paddle tennis tournament was held in New York City in 1922. Since the game’s inception, the court size has been increased twice to the current size of 20 feet wide and 50 feet long. Other

modifications made through the years include changing the rubber ball to a deadened tennis ball, shortening the net to 30 inches and eliminating the overhand serve in favor of an underhand serve. Former U.S. National Tennis Champion Bobby Riggs, best known for his match against Billie Jean King, was a paddle tennis champion before turning to tennis, but remained an involved and important promoter of paddle tennis throughout his life.

Platform tennis is a racket sport played outside year-round, usually on a raised, heated court similar in size to paddle tennis. The major difference is a 12-foot tall wire mesh fence surrounding the court so players can return a ball off the netting much like racquetball and handball. Ironically created less than 50 miles from the origins of paddle tennis in 1928, the inventors claim to have developed their sport to be played at athletic and country clubs in the suburbs of New York that also offered golf and tennis. These facilities supposedly had more serious athletes looking to stay active during the winter and the financial ability to afford the cost of building heated platforms. Historians contend the private clubs needed to find ways to slow declining membership during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Today, the sport still is played predominately at private clubs, but increasingly in public parks and recreation centers across the country. Like most sports now, there are both recreational and competitive players.

If you have an interest in learning paddle or platform tennis, or are just looking for a way to exercise during the winter months, check with your community’s park district. Many offer lessons and have courts you can reserve.

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However before heading to the court for a game of paddle or platform tennis, it is important to perform a thorough dynamic warm-up and stretching routine, especially if you're playing outside in the winter, or if you haven't exercised outdoors since it turned cold. This will help reduce the risk of muscle strains to both your upper and lower body and increase blood flow. In fact, a recent national survey found that the most common injuries in paddle and platform tennis are shin/calf (21 percent), knee (16 percent), elbow (16 percent), ankle (13 percent), and shoulder (10 percent). The overall rate of injury was relatively high, with 66 percent of the survey's greater than 1000 respondents reporting at least one injury while playing the sports. As with any new activity, though, it is always advisable to consult a physician to ensure you are medically cleared to participate.

If you do not have a regular warm-up and stretching exercise program, here is one you can use before your first serve. **Photos and descriptions of these exercises can be found on the OTRF website in the Tennis Warm-Up program at otrfund.org/sports-performance-programs/.**

Warm-Up Exercises	Sets	Time/Reps	Notes
Jumping Jacks	1	30	
Arm Circles	1	10 forward 10 backward	
Calf Stretch	2	30 seconds	
Thoracic Rotation	2	10	
Wall Slides Facing the Wall	1	15-20	
M,T,W	1	10	To increase the difficulty/intensity, use a band with more resistance
Diagonal 1 (shoulder PNF)	2	10	Light resistance band
Leg Swings	1	15 forward 15 backward	For an alternate version perform side-to-side leg swings
1 Leg Toe Touch (balance)	2	10	
Skipping	2	30 feet forward 30 feet backward	
Wrist Stretch Top of Forearm	2	30 seconds	