Pickleball has been called "one of the fastest growing sports in America" by ESPN – 1400 AM. ESPN states, "Playing pickleball is a great way to stay active and healthy because it's so fun. It's the perfect game to play as a family; it is one of the few sports where kids, parents and grandparents can all play together!"

Players swing paddles that look like they came from an oversized Ping-Pong game. They hit a hollow plastic ball that's full of holes. The ball bounces back and forth over a net similar to one on a tennis court.

Pickleball was invented near Seattle in 1965 by vacationing families who wanted to play badminton but couldn't find the shuttlecock. They combined paddles, a Wiffle ball and a badminton net to make a game that kids and adults alike could play.

The MJCCA Doubles Pickleball Tournament recap

The Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta’s (MJCCA) Active Mature Adults department recently hosted a state-wide Doubles Pickleball Tournament, featuring three brackets of pickleball: beginner, intermediate and advanced. Seventy-two players (36 pairs), ranging in age from 10 to 86, came from across the state to participate.

Out of the eight pairs that competed in the advanced bracket, the winning pair was Bobby Russell, from Dunwoody, and Kevin Lenze, from Peachtree City. Out of the 24 pairs that competed in the intermediate bracket, the winning pair was Basti Grau and Keland Scher, both from Druid Hills. And out of the four pairs that competed in the beginner bracket, the winning pair was father and son Beau and Trevor Nugent, both from Kennesaw.

Players came to the MJCCA’s pickleball tournament from all over the state, including Alpharetta, Roswell, Snellville, Suwanee, Norcross, Lilburn, Duluth, Decatur and Woodstock.

"This event was such a terrific tournament. One player even came from Birmingham to play pickleball at the MJCCA," said Nora Floersheim, Volunteer Coordinator of the MJCCA’s pickleball program. "The teams that participated in the tournament included a father-son, father-daughter, grandfather-grandson and a husband-wife team. It truly was a family affair."

MJCCA pickleball history

“We have had pickleball at the MJCCA since 2010,” said Ed Feldstein, MJCCA’s Active Mature Adults committee co-chair. “The late Sid Cojac brought the game to the JCC after he experienced it in Charlotte, where he had lived. It took us a while to gain momentum for pickleball at the MJCCA. I remember going up to the fitness center and begging people to give the sport a try. Once people started playing, they were hooked."

The MJCCA now has more than 200 people on the pickleball mailing list with 50-60 people playing pickleball on a regular basis six days a week. Nora Floersheim has been giving pickleball lessons to beginners on Mondays. This year the MJCCA has added a series of clinics to help beginners learn the game and allow immediate players to improve their skills.

“Our dedicated group of players is always seeking new members, so please come and try pickleball with us,” said Feldstein. “Many of the people that have recently learned how to play have then become part of the pickleball program at the MJCCA.”

Floersheim added that pickleball is a sport for all ages. “We have had players ranging in age from 10-101,” she said. “Pickleball is an inter-generational sport. At one point we had a grandfather, son and grandson all playing together. Pickleball is inter-gender, extremely supportive, friendly and social.”

The next MJCCA pickleball tournament will be held in spring 2020. For more info about MJCCA pickleball, contact Earl Finley at 678-812-4070, earl.finley@atlantajcc.org or visit atlantajcc.org/pickleball.

FIND A PLACE TO PLAY

As pickleball rises in popularity, more and more recreation centers, local parks and organizations are adding it to their activity lists. Visit georgiapickleball.com and click on “Places to Play” to find pickleball courts in the area.