



The Lansdowne Pickleballers – (l-r, rear) Alistair Burnett, Jeff Singleton, Robert Flood, (middle) Peter O'Hare, Nancy Singleton, Mary-Jo Sibbald, Dianne Flood, (front) Marg Farmer

PICKLE-BALL

The Great Game with the Funny Sounding Name Comes to Lansdowne

By Lorraine Payette

If you're a kid, what can you possibly do on a boring afternoon? Things are dull, there's nothing interesting going on in the neighbourhood, the adults don't care...

This is the kind of griping that got three neighbours in Washington State – Joel Pritchard, Bill Bell and Barney McCallum – to invent Pickle-ball in 1965.

"Barney and his buddies took us up here to the court (and said), 'Kids, I've got a new game for you,'" said Bob O'Brien, original player of the sport, in an interview with Mark Woytowich. "They pulled out the

wiffle ball and they cut up these racquets for us and, 'Okay, guys, go to town and see what you can do.' Well, we started hitting the ball around and thought it was kind of fun. There were no rules of the game, so the adults made the rules up for us, and it just took off from there... It's a great game for kids to learn. I've taught my kids the game 'cause it's such an easy racquet sport to learn for hand-eye coordination. The ball is light, the paddles are light... I've got to thank Barney and his friends for doing it."

Since then, the sport has grown like wildfire. Now formalized, it is played around the world with over 2 million registered players in the US, and more and more Canadians are picking it up every day.

"The Pickle-ball Association of Canada estimates that as of January 20th 2015 there are in excess of 14,135 pickle-ball players in Canada, with 290 places to play and 710 courts available," said Nancy and Jeff Singleton of Lansdowne. "Ontario itself has

approximately 6,000 players with over 144 places to play. Memberships to the Pickleball Association in Canada have increased from 700 in 2013 to 1760 in 2014, with a goal to have over 3,000 members by the end of 2015."

The game is played on a badminton sized court with low nets using oversized ping-pong type paddles and a small wiffle type ball. It is playable by people of all ages and abilities, less strenuous than tennis but gives a quality workout while having a lot of fun playing.

"The ball is served diagonally (starting with the right-hand service-square), and points can only be scored by the side that serves," says the official website pickleball.com. "Players on each side must let the ball bounce once before volleys are allowed, and there is a seven-foot no-volley zone on each side of the net, to prevent 'spiking.' The server continues to serve, alternating service courts, until he or she faults. The first side scoring eleven points and leading by at least two points wins. Pickle-ball® can be played with singles or doubles."

Locally, the sport is catching on well.

"It has quickly evolved from a driveway family activity into a paddle court sport with formalized rules and an international following," said the Singletons. "Modifications make it an ideal game for people of all ages and ability levels. It is especially popular among active seniors.

"Costs vary depending on location. In Lansdowne, the cost is \$2.50 per session. Money generated goes into the township's recreation department funds and will be available to cover the replacement of equipment, as necessary. Anyone wishing to try out the game can come on any Tuesday or Thursday that we're playing and have a free session." LH

To learn more, go to pickleball.com. Free introductory "clinics" are being planned for January for those interested in learning the game, dates to be determined. To participate at the Lansdowne courts, please contact the TLTI recreation department at rec-dept@townshipleeds.on.ca.