

Tournament Tip No. 2

Targeting



90% of the time we are playing rec games. In rec play it is generally better to spread the ball around to both opponents. In tournament play, however, **not only is targeting ok, it is the right approach.**

Tony Roig
In2Pickle Player Development

Try not to Err

If player A is the stronger player, then player A gets to serve and return serve. And that is it. If player A hits a ball other than a serve or return, then your team committed an error.

Targeting - the Basics

Targeting literally means **hitting every ball to one person** - or, even more specifically, one side of one person. If player A is the weaker opponent you will hit every ball to player A. If player A's backhand is weaker than his/her forehand, then you will try to hit every ball to that side.



Principles of Targeting

- Start by targeting the player you believe to be **the weaker player** on the opposing side. You may have scouted the match, received some intel, or just gotten a sense during warmup. Go there first.
- If the targeted player gets into a groove, **then switch it up for a few points**. Sometimes the non-targeted player can become cold while the targeted player gets into a rhythm. If the targeted player starts dropping thirds into the kitchen and otherwise playing better, switch it up.
- Just because you are targeting one player, **you can still finish the point through the other player**. If you are targeting player A and get a putaway, you can smash the ball in the direction of player B if it is the better shot (normally this means that player B is closer to you).
- Do not think twice about targeting. This is not a rec play match. All players who sign up for tournament play know (or should know) that they are in a different format and that **targeting is not only allowed, it is expected**.
- Sometimes the best strategy is to have **multiple targets**. By this we mean that while it might be better to target player A with the return of serve (because player A does not have a good third shot) it may then be better to switch to player B at the NVZ (because player A is a stronger finisher).

Switch Targets - when appropriate

Sometimes you will start a match with a preconceived strategy, including a target. You heard from a friend that so and so is the weaker opponent. You come out of the gates going at the "weaker" player but are down 4-1 and he or she seems pretty good. **Switch your target** and try the other player out.

Practice Tip

If you have an upcoming tournament, incorporate targeting into some of your practice games. Ask your opponents if they are ok with a tournament approach to the match. Then pick a target and go to work. Perhaps vary it up a few times (as it is still not technically a tournament) but do so knowingly and intentionally. The objective is to understand that (and how) you will target.