



US Open Player Profile



Meet Robert Doyle from Minneapolis, Minnesota who also spends part of the year here in Naples, Florida. This is Robert's first time playing in the US Open and he will be playing in Wheelchair Doubles, Upper-Level Singles and Hybrid. Learn how he fell in love with the game, why he loves playing pickleball and how he thinks the game will continue to evolve in the next five years. Plus, if you see him on the courts, ask him about meeting "Eddie" on the courts, who happens to be in a small band called Pearl Jam.

Good luck Robert, we will be keeping an eye out for you!

Q: Tell us about your Pickleball story. When did you start playing and how were you introduced to the game?

"I was first introduced to Pickleball in 2022, when a neighbor brought me to the East Naples Community Park to play. I played a few games and had the opportunity to meet Joe Sullivan for the first time. Unfortunately, due to illness, I was not able to get back on the courts until early 2023."

"April 4th is the date I was paralyzed, but also the day God saved my life, again. I call it my "Celebration of Life Day" as it is a reminder to me how precious life is and to celebrate each moment. In this spirit, each year I try something new. On April 4, 2023, I decided that new thing would be pickleball. I bought my first paddles and pickleballs and came back to East Naples Community Park where I ran into Joe again. A few weeks later I attended the 2023 US Open as a spectator. After taking my first lesson with Joe, I was hooked and played for 21 days straight. People would ask if I had to moved permanently to the park."

Q: Why do you love this game?

"The people. This community is so welcoming, and I've met wonderful friends through this sport. There is no other sport like pickleball due to the variety of people you can play with. I have played with 11-year-olds to 94-year-olds, both wheelchair and able-bodied athletes. It's also the first sport where I have had the opportunity to play with my parents. The combination of the comradery and the athleticism of the sport is another reason why I love it so much. Just like I'm in a chair, I've learned to never underestimate a player based on how many braces they're wearing. I never give up on points! It is hard to resist just playing one more game!"

Q. Give us some insight into the wheelchair divisions.



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“My favorite event is the Wheelchair Doubles--the two bounces allowed for the wheelchair players really changes the game and creates a different dynamic and opportunity to extend the points and make the game more exciting. I have a basketball background, so I am very comfortable with my chair mobility. So, when you have four wheelchair athletes competing at a high level it can be both fun to play and watch.”

“I also love the Hybrid division as it fosters the comradery between both wheelchair and able-bodied athletes. It is a unique opportunity for teamwork highlighting the strengths of these diverse physical abilities. The new Hybrid rules ([link to rule](#)) will really help the game, and I greatly appreciate Chris, Terri, and everyone at The US Open rules committee working with the wheelchair athletes to modify the rules and educate the referees to implement them into this year’s tournament.”

Q: Where do you see pickleball in 5 years?

“I think the wheelchair game is starting to catch on more, but travel can be a challenge-- it costs a lot of money and requires special accommodations. Despite these challenges, more wheelchair athletes are getting involved and the sport is being widely promoted. We are very thankful to The US Open and the continued growth of the sport. In 2024, we have over 30 wheelchair athletes as compared to 13 last year. Ideally, I would love to see pickleball in the Olympics and Paralympics.”

Q: Any shout outs to supporters or fans who may see this article?

“I am thankful for players like Joe, Chip, JF and the US Open team who continue to promote this sport, help with tips and pointers, and I hope to do the same for others. I am a true believer that the only disability in life is a bad attitude. Please never give up on yourself, and the things you love.”

“Also, a shout-out to the families of the wheelchair athletes and a special shout-out to my family and friends. It takes a lot of sacrifices to support the athletes and the players. We couldn’t do this without them.”

“Lastly, to all the players, fans, volunteers, and tournament directors and owner, thank you!”