

14 MARCH 2026

wp WORLD PICKLEBALL MAGAZINE

THE DAY TRADER, THE PIONEER, THE SWITCH-HITTER
INSIDE THE MIND OF JACK MUNRO

PLUS

THE MILLION-DOLLAR SHIFT: HOW THE 2026 MLP
DRAFT CHANGED THE FACE OF PRO PICKLEBALL
FOREVER

CAMDEN CHAFFIN: REWRITING THE SPORT'S DNA
THE BELGIAN BLUEPRINT: HOW ESTEE WIDDERSHOVEN
IS REDEFINING THE EUROPEAN PATHWAY

THE 72ND SEED WHO STUNNED THE WORLD NO. 1 :
MATTHEW BARLOW'S IMPROBABLE RUN AT THE 2026
MESA CUP

CONTROLLED CHAOS AND THE CLASSROOM: HOW WES
GABRIELSEN MASTERMINDED DILLI DILLWALE'S WORLD
PICKLEBALL LEAGUE TRIUMPH

AND YOUR USUAL FAVOURITES

PICKLEBALL PROS PRO TIPS
REFEREE'S ROOM
IN PICTURES
REGIONAL ROUNDUP



THE LEADING ROLE OF WOMEN IN BRAZILIAN PICKLEBALL

BY MARCELO ABELHEIRA
SOUTH AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT

Now, March 8th is celebrated as INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY! Congratulations to all women, not only on this special day, but on all others.

I am the father of two girls, and I have enormous admiration for my dear wife, so I can personally say how AMAZING women are.

In Pickleball, since the beginning of my journey about two years ago, I have realised their importance in all aspects. In the ARENA that we set up in the Pátio Petrópolis shopping mall, the presence of women has always been very important to brighten and entertain the environment. In fact, one of our main clients, Renata Vaz, encouraged our motto: "in pickleball, smiles are guaranteed".

In the Granja Brasil Condominium, where I teach, there is also a greater number of female students, and they put on a show on the two wonderful courts of the great Sports Complex. As a squash player, my sport before pickleball, I noticed that there was often little female presence in clubs and events, and now I realise the difference when there is large-scale female participation.

To better address this issue at the national level, I invited Ludmila Faria, who is married to the leading name in pickleball in Brazil (Bernardo Andrade). She even started a great movement called "PICKLEBALL DELAS," which can be understood as Women's Pickleball.

I'll pass the ball, or rather, the text to her. Go ahead, Ludy:

Let's talk about the advancement of women's Pickleball in Brazil and the strength of a new generation of leaders.

Brazilian sport is experiencing a new chapter, and it has a female name, voice, and leadership. In recent years, the growth of Pickleball in the country has been exponential, but the last year, in particular, marked a historic leap. Crowded courts, new clubs, expanding tournaments, and an increasingly solid female presence at all levels of the sport. If before women fought for space, today they occupy leadership positions, run federations, manage arenas, organise tournaments, and inspire a new generation of athletes. Pickleball in Brazil has not only grown, it has matured.

And women have not been left out of this progress. On the contrary, they have become protagonists.

In the federations, the protagonism is evident. At the head of the São Paulo Pickleball Federation, Fernanda Jubran leads a strategic management that strengthens the calendar, supports women's leagues, expands the base of athletes, and consolidates São Paulo, along with Minas Gerais, as one of the main centres of the sport.

In the Northeast, female leadership also drives the sport with responsibility and purpose. Orlene Karine is at the head of the Pernambuco Pickleball Federation, promoting consistent expansion, with special attention to the inclusion of wheelchair athletes and the construction of a more accessible and plural environment. In Sergipe, Érica Fraga leads the Sergipe Pickleball Federation, strengthening the regional structure and expanding opportunities for new players.

On the courts, the female impact is also significant. Mari Humberg projects Brazil onto the international stage, raising the country's name in global competitions and inspiring a generation that now believes in high performance.

Marcela Donatoni, currently number one in Brazil, has become a technical and competitive reference, while Eliza Rocha and Sofia Kelbert represent the strength of the South in Brazilian Pickleball, with a solid and strategic trajectory.

In the North, Kethelin Monteiro stands out for her tireless work in promoting the sport in Acre, expanding frontiers and strengthening Pickleball in regions where the sport is still expanding.



The female protagonism is also evident in refereeing, with names like Leandra Sampaio and Márcia Moraes, who raise the technical and professional level of competitions, reinforcing the importance of female presence in all spheres of sport.

The strength of this movement is also amplified by figures who move between different racket sports. Patrícia Medrado, a legend in Brazilian tennis, has embraced Pickleball and adds legitimacy and visibility to the sport. Similarly, Joana Cortez, a former Olympic tennis player and multi-champion in beach tennis, strengthens the connection between traditional sports and Pickleball, expanding the reach and credibility of the sport.

Off the court, the movement is also strategically organised. Businesswomen are taking over the management of arenas, creating events, structuring competitions, and professionalising the athletes' experience. Among these leaders is Ludy Faria, a businesswoman and mentor for women, who saw in Pickleball not only a sport on the rise, but a platform for connection and transformation. By creating the first national network of women's Pickleball, she structured an environment where players from different states began to connect, form pairs, promote tournaments, and foster business among themselves. The initiative quickly gained national dimension and today mobilises women from north to south of the country.

The impact of this movement goes beyond technical and institutional growth. Pickleball has been a tool for physical, mental, and social well-being. For many women, the court represents self-care, a fresh start, and the strengthening of bonds. It's where friendships are born, partnerships are built, and opportunities arise. It's where sport ceases to be just competition and becomes community.





Thousands of women are driving Pickleball forward in a strategic and collaborative way, with the unique touch of the feminine way of leading: firm, sensitive, visionary, and inclusive. What we see in Brazil today is not just the expansion of a sport, but the consolidation of a culture in which women occupy decision-making spaces, shine on the courts, organise behind the scenes, and build the future of the sport.

They are the protagonists. And the game has definitely changed.

Congratulations, Ludmila, excellent text.

Indeed, women are doing an excellent job both on and off the court, with their beauty, charm, cheerfulness, and competence. As we say here in Brazil, "AS MULHERES ESTÃO ARRASANDO!" That means THE WOMEN ARE ROCKING IT!

