

ISSUE 18 | JULY 2026

wp WORLD PICKLEBALL MAGAZINE

ZOEY WEIL: GROWING PAINS

**BEHIND THE SCENES OF PROFESSIONAL PICKLEBALL'S MOST
IMPORTANT YEAR YET**

WHERE IS THE MONEY MOVING?

FOLLOWING THE INVESTMENT RESHAPING THE SPORT

THE WORLD GAME

TEN SIGNALS THAT SHAPED PICKLEBALL IN JUNE

THE FUTURE IS ASIA

INSIDE PICKLEBALL'S FASTEST-GROWING CONTINENT

THE WORLD THIS MONTH

Brazil's biggest pickleball event signals a new phase of growth

Pickleball's footprint in Brazil is no longer in question. The conversation now is about scale.

BY MARCELO ABELHEIRA

Over the Corpus Christi long weekend, Villa-Lobos Park in São Paulo hosted the 2026 Brazilian Pickleball Championship, the largest tournament of its kind ever staged in the country. What unfolded was not just a national competition, but a clear demonstration of how quickly the sport is embedding itself into Brazil's sporting landscape.

Across several days of play, fifteen courts were in constant use, including four "tapetinho" surfaces, the mat-style courts used in international competition. Matches ran in parallel throughout the schedule, with a steady flow of players moving through one of the busiest sporting setups the park has seen.

RECORD PARTICIPATION AND EXPANDING DEMOGRAPHICS

The headline figure from São Paulo was scale.

More than 2,200 registrations were recorded, making this the largest pickleball event ever held in Brazil.

But the numbers only tell part of the story. Nearly half of all participants were women, a proportion that signals a meaningful shift in the sport's demographic balance within the country. What was once a niche, largely male-dominated entry point is now becoming a more evenly distributed playing field.

There was also a structural milestone. A wheelchair category was introduced for the first time, marking an important step in broadening access and formalising inclusive competition formats within Brazilian pickleball.

A tournament with regional reach



Although firmly a national championship, the event carried an increasingly international feel.

Players travelled from Argentina, Chile, Bolivia and Uruguay, adding depth to several divisions and turning select matches into cross-border contests rather than purely domestic encounters. The presence of visiting athletes also reflected a wider South American pattern, where informal exchange between national scenes is beginning to harden into more consistent competitive interaction.

For Brazil, this matters. It positions the country not only as the largest domestic market in the region, but also as a central reference point for competitive standards.

RIO DE JANEIRO'S STRONG DELEGATION

One of the most visible state contributions came from Rio de Janeiro.

The APRJ (Rio de Janeiro Pickleball Association), led by Bruno Olegário and Gianni Perrota, brought more than 65 athletes to São Paulo, forming one of the largest delegations at the tournament.

Their presence was felt across multiple draws, with Rio players competing heavily in both singles and doubles categories throughout the weekend. Beyond results, the size of the delegation underlined how quickly state-level structures are now feeding into national competition in Brazil.

PERFORMANCE SPOTLIGHT: EGBERTO CALDAS

Among the standout individual stories, former tennis player Egberto Caldas delivered one of the most successful campaigns of the tournament.

Competing in the 50+ Pro categories, he secured two gold medals:

● 50+ Pro Singles ● 50+ Pro Doubles (partnering Lima)

His performances reflect a broader trend within Brazilian pickleball, where former tennis players are increasingly transitioning into the sport at a high competitive level, particularly within veteran divisions.



Caldas has also been selected for the Brazilian national team for the upcoming World Cup in Vietnam, adding an international layer to his current form.

WINNERS — BRAZILIAN PICKLEBALL CHAMPIONSHIP 2026

(Full draw data not fully specified in source)

Confirmed titles

● 50+ Pro Singles: Egberto Caldas ● 50+ Pro Doubles: Egberto Caldas / Lima

Other categories

● Open Men's: Not specified in source ● Open Women's: Not specified in source ● Mixed Doubles: Not specified in source ● Wheelchair Division: Debut category (results not specified)

CONCLUSION

The 2026 Brazilian Pickleball Championship did not just confirm participation growth. It confirmed structural maturity.

Large-scale organisation, expanding gender balance, the introduction of adaptive competition, and rising regional participation all point in the same direction: Brazil is moving from rapid growth into organised depth.

If South America's pickleball story is still being written, Brazil is now clearly the centre of the page.