

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Hello Fellow Pickleballers,

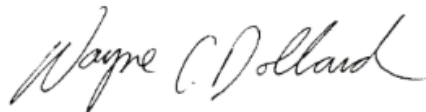
Welcome to this issue of *Pickleball Magazine*.

These are exciting times for our growing sport - we have been blessed with a growing base of players and the growing pains that go with it. I don't say that with any negativity at all, so don't misunderstand me. Growing pains are necessary to anything that's relatively new, popular and, well, growing. By addressing them, we learn and force ourselves to challenge ourselves for solutions. A perfect example of this is how the USAPA attacked the issue of inadequate numbers of permanent pickleball courts across the nation. The result was the USAPA Portable Net System, which you may be familiar with. On page 4, USAPA Executive Director Justin Maloof address some recent tweaks and improvements on this system, which has only been around for several short years, but has made it infinitely easier for players to lay down the base on which to play upon.

Another arena where growth has challenged the leaders of the sport to respond has been in the area of refereed play. Page 14 has an update on the first five referees to be certified by the USAPA and how they will impact the sport going forward.

And then, we have the diversity that growth can only afford us - new players to meet and learn about who are doing exciting things in their lives and serving as ambassadors of the sport. Take David Pike for instance - Page 16 - who traveled from his home in Michigan, down the East Coast and back up the Mississippi to Michigan again for fun, playing pickleball all the way. It's a once-in-a-lifetime trip, but unsurprising given the amazing makeup of people we have playing this sport.

My sincere hope is that you enjoy this - and every issue - of *Pickleball Magazine*. Once again, we welcome your suggestions for improvement. If you have any feedback or ideas for articles you'd like to see, please don't hesitate to email me at: Wayne@thePickleballMag.com. We, too, are growing and learn and improve from your responses to every issue.



Wayne Dollard, *Publisher*



Dollard Publishing Company, Inc., 11 Mayview Road, Canonsburg, PA 15317
412.833.8805 (cell) | Wayne@ThePickleballMag.com | www.ThePickleballMag.com

Epic Exploration



Michigan pickleball player documents solo journey around the Great Loop.

BY JEN BROSAK



The title of his blog may be “Six Thousand Miles Alone in a Dinghy,” but thanks to the support of his family and the pickleball community at large, David Pike has been anything but lonely.

On August 7, Pike left his home in Michigan to follow a 6,000-mile route around the Great Loop—solo.

Throughout each leg of his journey, Pike, 68, has been meeting and playing with pickleball players from each state, while accomplishing a long-held dream.

“I learned about the Great Loop a number of years ago and was intrigued with the idea of being able to make this journey with little exposure to big water,” he explains.

The Great Loop is the name given to the circumnavigation of eastern North America by water. The trip can vary from 5,000 to 7,000 miles, depending on the route options boaters take. The loop takes those boaters—known as “loopers”—through numerous states, including Michigan, Illinois, Tennessee, Alabama, Florida, the Carolinas, Delaware and New York.

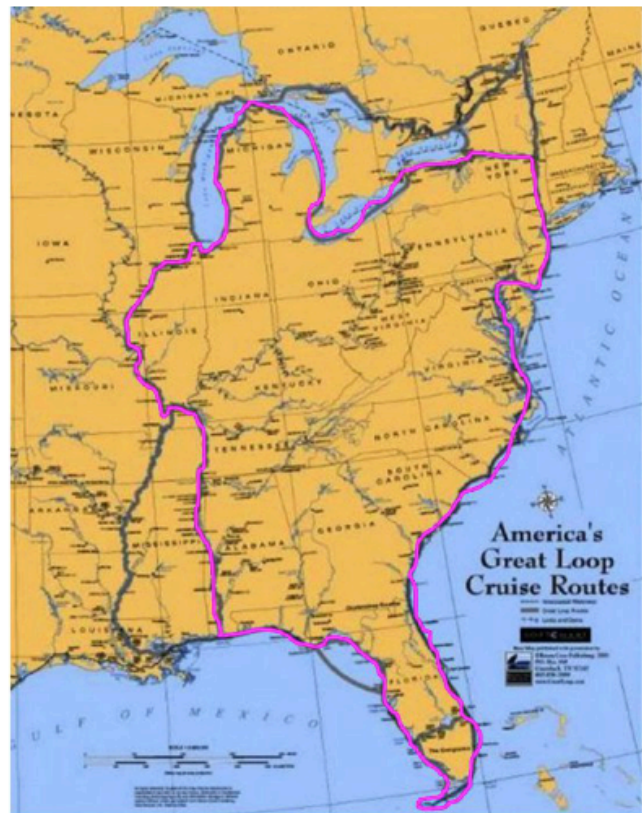
Thus far, Pike has traveled through Illinois, Missouri and Kentucky. As of late August, he was traveling to Tennessee, Alabama and then on to Florida. He hopes to reach Key West by early October and winter the boat at Fort Myers beach.

“During the winter, I will lay out my course for my return trip up the east coast. I will be looking to play at venues along the way, so those states on the east coast can drop me a note if they are available and close to the coast,” he says. He plans to begin his return trip on May 1.

Pike, who has homes in both Michigan and Arizona, started playing pickleball about five or six years ago. At the time, he and his wife Ann had been traveling by RV and staying at the Palm Creek RV Park in Casa Grande.

“I saw all these people playing this funny-looking sport and thought I would give it a try,” he says. “They told me it was addictive and they were right. Location of pickleball courts and active clubs was one of those checkmarks when we purchased our last two homes.

Dave’s journey — the day before leaving.



“I like to eat, so pickleball is a fun exercise that allows me to eat more,” he adds. “It’s that simple.”

Pike plays both singles and doubles, and plays a few tournaments a year.

“I’m a 3.5 player struggling, like a lot of people, to be a 4.0,” he says. “But it doesn’t really matter to me. As I get older, the competitiveness is not as important as enjoying what I am doing. Getting a great workout, spending time with friends and working to improve my game for my own satisfaction is my end game and goal.”

Along his journey, Pike has played pickleball and met numerous players in St. Joe, Mich.; Peru, Ill.; Cape Girardeau, Mo.; and Paducah, Ky. As of press time, he had logged around 800 miles, with about 5,200 to go.

Pike says he chose to travel the waterways in a dinghy because he was “too old” for a canoe or kayak. He knew he wanted an economical vessel with sufficient storage. He searched the Internet and found the right rig: a 15-foot Walker Bay Generation 450 that he aptly named “Journey.”

“Ann and I have had a big boat and even spent a summer in Alaska on it. There are many stressors that come with having a big boat. Many systems can fail and break. I’m not the hands-on handyman, so the answer to that was to get something simple. If you don’t have systems, they can’t break,” he explains.

Continued »



Proclamation by mayor of Cape Girardeau for "David Pike Pickleball Day."

Pike also struggled with the decision to travel alone on a small boat, leaving behind a supportive spouse and a comfortable lifestyle.

"I consider this a time of reflection and self-discovery," he says. "I wanted to do something on my own, with its calculated risks and rewards." He talks with his wife several times a day via FaceTime, and she has joined him at certain locks along the way. He travels with his trip companion, "Wilson"—a volleyball similar to the one that kept Tom Hanks company in the 2002

film "Cast Away" that was given to him by his "pickleball family" in Arizona.

On his blog, Pike writes that he has a "bit of adventure in his DNA." He's canoed through the Canadian wilderness and hiked Longs Peak in Colorado. A colon cancer survivor, Pike also says that his outlook on life changed a bit after his diagnosis and treatment in 2002. In 2003, he retired at 55 from the State of Michigan, where he worked as the CFO of the Department of Agriculture.

"It did influence my decision to retire at 55 and enjoy life a little more. I don't think it had that much to do with this trip, other than as you get older, you realize every day is a gift and there is no guarantee about tomorrow," he says. "So I decided, with Ann's support, to go for it."

The trip has not been without its challenges. Pike has encountered varying degrees of wind, rain, heat and humidity, all of which have hindered his travels. He sleeps on the boat when he has to; otherwise, he camps in his tent or stays in hotels along the way.

"Mother Nature likes to mess with me. I am in the heat and humidity one day and then constant rain on another. Keeping exposed to the environment has to be the most challenging," he says.

Pike has been documenting his journey through his blog, sixthousandmilesinadinglehy.wordpress.com, since July 2015.

"I think this blog gives me a way to document who I am and how I deal with life's challenges. In some ways, I see this as an opportunity to tell my grandchildren about who I am in a very unique way," he explains. "It's about leaving a legacy that will help them remember me. Everyone else is along for the ride."

Players interested in connecting with Pike while he's on his journey can reach him at davidleopike@gmail.com. •



Photo of Paducah, Ky., Ambassador Nancy Sutton with Dave.



Dave's journey — Pickleball Rocks.