

The 3rd Shot Challenger™

The 3rd shot drop (5th shot, 7th shot, etc.) is difficult to master. There have been many videos and discussions about how to improve 3rd shot drop proficiency. Until now, we are unaware of any simple practice tool designed for 3rd shot drop mastery.

The 3rd Shot Challenger™ is designed specifically to improve 3rd shot drop skills. Applications for this simple innovative tool (Figure 1) are numerous. For now, let's focus on two skills using The 3rd Shot Challenger™.

1. The 3rd shot drop skill

- a. **Beginner players** will find that hitting a higher 3rd shot drop will improve getting the ball consistently over the net into the opponent's NVZ. For this, the highest hole on the uprights is the best option. For the drill, position the upright bars parallel to the net and about 1 foot inside the NVZ line opposite the player dropping the ball. (Figure 1) The aim for the player dropping the ball is to accurately hit the ball over the apex of horizontal bar for the ball to drop into the opponent's NVZ.
- b. **Intermediate players** who can frequently hit 3rd shot drops can lower the horizontal bar by 6-inch intervals on the upright bars. (Figure 2) The aim of this drill is to hit the 3rd shot lower into the NVZ with a less attackable bounce.
- c. **Advanced players** can challenge themselves by lowering the horizontal bar and/or narrowing the window created by the uprights by removing section(s) of the horizontal bar. (Figure 3 & 4)

2. Punch volley skill

- a. The aim for the player feeding the ball is to improve punch volley skill to send the ball under or over the horizontal bar and between the uprights so that the player-partner can attempt to return 3rd shot drop over the horizontal bar into the opposite NVZ.

Drill in a "Game-a-fide" way

To simulate a real game and to maximize the drilling value, find a way to keep score and play a game up to some number you choose. You should feel the pressure like in a real game.

How to make a 3rd Shot Challenger™

Simple to make: Use 1" or 1 1/2" PVC pipe for uprights and 1/2" PVC pipe for the horizontal bar. Use a 7/8" hole cutting drill bit to cut holes in the uprights. The highest hole for the 3rd Shot Challenger™ uprights is approximately 68" from the ground, lower holes can be cut every 6". The length of each section for the horizontal bar or vertical uprights should be no more than 4' to fit into a carrying bag. Figure 1 shows 2 vertical and 2 horizontal sections connected with PVC connectors.

Figure 1: View of the 3rd Shot Challenger™ and position in the NVZ



Figure 2: Close up view of the upright holes



Figure 3: Smaller Target for advanced player



Figure 4: The 3rd Shot Challenger™ set up for advanced player practice. Lower horizontal bar and narrow upright window



Components:

1. 2 10' foot long 1" PVC pipes (cut two pieces 3' long and two pieces 2' long)
2. 1 10' foot long ½" PVC pipe (cut three pieces 40" long)
3. 2 1" 3-way connectors
4. 2 1" 2-way connectors
5. 6 1" end caps
6. 1 ½" 2-way connector
7. 4' long bag to carry components

Additionally needed to make **The 3rd Shot Challenger™**

- Roll of 2' orange duct tape cut in half (1") to wrap around the cross bars.
- 7/8" " Hole Dozer with pilot bit for PVC hole cutting (special drill bit)
- Drill
- Sand paper or file to clean up burrs on holes after drilling.

Mjgoodr3@aol.com

¹Mike Goodrich is a Western Michigan University Hall of Fame Tennis Player, USPTA Teaching Pro, a National Senior Games Pickleball Gold Medal Winner, a leader in the St Joseph, MI Pickleball community and a member of the GVR Pickleball Club, AZ.

julianne0525@gmail.com

²Julianne Howell is a 3.5 pickleball player, a consultant Physical Therapist and Certified Hand Therapist with a specialty in management of hand and upper extremity, a member of St Joseph, MI Pickleball community and the GVR Pickleball Club AZ.

Let us know how you do and what you think!