

Anyone who's spent time on the pickleball court knows the shoulder gets plenty of action. From overhead smashes to quick reflex volleys, your shoulder girdle is always working. Yet, what often goes under the radar is how crucial the **posterior shoulder strength** and **scapular stability** are in preventing those nagging shoulder pains and debilitating injuries.

Today, let's dive into why rows are more than just a gym staple—they're a game-changer for pickleball players dealing with shoulder issues, especially when it comes to reducing overhead irritation.

 Man doing rowing exercise at gym

Photo credit: Brendan Sapp / Unsplash

Understanding Why Shoulder Pain Happens in Pickleball

When I chat with orthopaedists, physical therapists, and amateur players on the bench after our morning rounds, one question always comes up: "What changed in the last two weeks?" Most times, the answer isn't a single dramatic fall or an extreme stretch. It's overuse and frequency. If you're skipping your warm-up or consistently cranking overhead shots without adequate recovery, your shoulder won't thank you.

The Role of Overuse and Frequency

Unlike acute traumas—think sudden slips or crashes—shoulder injuries on the pickleball court usually develop slowly. You might notice a dull ache after games that worsens at night, or a frustrating loss of reach behind your back. These are classic signs that your rotator cuff tendons are getting irritated.

With repetitive overhead motions, such as serves and overhead smashes, the tendons in your rotator cuff endure microtrauma. Over time, if these are not addressed, that irritation escalates to inflammation and pain.



Aging Tendons Need TLC

One area I emphasize when talking to my fellow players in their 40s, 50s, and beyond: aging tendons.



- Tendons lose elasticity and blood supply with age.
- They take longer to recover from loads and strains.
- Sudden bouts of intense play or poor mechanics can easily flare pain.

So if you're hitting the court more often than usual or upping your practice intensity, consider that your tendons may not bounce back as fast as they did a decade ago. That makes proper conditioning and *posterior shoulder strength* vital.

Rotator Cuff Irritation: More than Just Pain

If you've felt sarasotamagazine.com discomfort at night or struggled to reach behind your back to scratch that one itch, it's likely rotator cuff irritation talking. This group of four muscles keeps your shoulder joint stable, allowing smooth rotation and overhead activity.

When these muscles weaken—especially the posterior rotator cuff that's responsible for pulling your arm backward—your shoulder struggles to stabilize during overhead hits. This instability can cause friction and inflammation inside the joint.

Ignore it, and the pain can become chronic. The edge? Strengthening these muscles with focused rows can significantly **reduce overhead irritation**.

Why Rows Are The Underdog Exercise Every Pickleball Player Needs

Rows work the muscles that tend to get forgotten when you focus only on the "power arm" muscles like the chest and front shoulder. Exercises like bent-over rows, seated rows, and resistance band rows hit those critical posterior shoulder and scapular stabilizer muscles.

Here's why that matters:

1. **Enhances Posterior Shoulder Strength** – Strengthening the rear deltoids, rhomboids, and middle traps protects your shoulder joint from overload.
2. **Improves Scapular Stability** – Your shoulder blade (scapula) acts as the foundation for your arm. Rows help keep it locked in place during movement, reducing stress on the rotator cuff.

3. **Reduces Overhead Irritation** – With better muscle balance, your shoulder works more efficiently during overhead shots, preventing pinching and inflammation.

Incorporate Rows Into Your Routine: A Quick Guide

Always start your warm-up (I count out loud the first 8 minutes—don't skip this part!) with light resistance band rows to activate those stabilizers. Then, gradually increase volume and weight if you train in the gym.

- **Resistance Band Rows:** Easy to do on the court benches or at home.
- **Bent-over Barbell or Dumbbell Rows:** Focus on controlled motion, squeezing your shoulder blades together.
- **Seated Cable Rows:** Great for maintaining proper scapular posture.

Remember, consistency beats intensity here. Aim for 2-3 sessions per week focused on quality rather than quantity. And always ask yourself: "What changed in the last two weeks?" Missed workouts can mean losing those protective benefits fast.

Don't Forget Your Elbows: The Link Between Grip and Arm Pain

Often overlooked is the elbow, which can develop pain due to tight grip and arm-dominant play mechanics. When your forearm muscles get tight, or you rely heavily on your dominant arm for power, elbow tendons can get inflamed.

Balancing grip tension and adding antagonist muscle work (think wrist extensors and rows to open chest and shoulder) helps ease this tension—making your arm strokes more fluid and less injury-prone.

Using Organic CBD Gummies for Recovery

For inflammation and soreness after long pickleball sessions, some players turn to natural remedies. Joy Organics offers high-quality organic CBD gummies that many swear by for their anti-inflammatory and recovery-enhancing benefits.

These gummies are *organic* and third-party tested, providing a clean way to support joint comfort without harsh pharmaceuticals. Though not a replacement for conditioning and proper mechanics, they're a helpful addition during flare-ups.

Summary Table: How Rows Help Pickleball Shoulder Health

Benefit	Explanation	Pickleball Application
Posterior Shoulder Strength	Supports rotator cuff muscles and balances front-facing overhead muscles	Prevents rotator cuff irritation during smashes and serves
Scapular Stability	Keeps shoulder blade steady during arm movement, reducing joint stress	Improves accuracy and power in overhead shots
Reduces Overhead Irritation	Decreases inflammation caused by repetitive overhead loading	Allows longer play time with less pain, especially in aging players

Final Thoughts

After nine years of chatting with orthopedists, PTs, and hearing the honest stories from rec-league athletes, I'm convinced: the key to reducing shoulder pain on the pickleball court isn't a miracle fix or blaming your paddle. It's about consistent, smart conditioning—starting with those all-important rows.

If you're serious about keeping your shoulder healthy, especially if you're noticing night pain or limited reach behind your back, add rows to your routine. Pair that with proper warm-ups, balanced grip strength, and maybe some natural recovery aids like Joy Organics organic CBD gummies, and you'll be back smashing without the ache.

And next time you're on the bench, just listen—those injury stories aren't from one big moment, but from the slow buildup of missed warm-ups and neglected posterior shoulder workouts.