



I'm a Rusher in Pickleball.

*Time speeds up, I feel fear, and I get finish-line syndrome.
What's really going on?*



You're not too slow.

You're getting ahead of the moment.

That is the strange thing about rushing. It feels as if you are behind, so you try to hurry. But often the real problem is that your mind has moved too far ahead. Your body is standing on the court, but your attention is already racing toward the next shot, the next problem, the next danger, or the end of the point.

You are not late because you are slow.

You are late because you are early in the wrong place.

What's really going on is this:

When the point feels urgent, especially near the finish line, your mind jumps into the future.

- We're almost there.
- Don't blow it.
- End this now.
- Get ready.
- Watch for the speed-up.
- Cover the middle.
- Don't get passed.
- Don't miss the easy one.
- Just finish it.

Now the point has stopped being this ball and has become the future result. You are no longer simply playing. You are trying to arrive at safety. You want the point over. You want the game won. You want the danger resolved. You want the little scoreboard monster to stop breathing down your neck.

That is finish-line syndrome.



What's Really Going On?

You can see the end, so you start running toward it internally.

But pickleball does not let you skip the ball that is actually coming.

When your mind jumps ahead, time speeds up inside you. The ball seems faster. The kitchen feels smaller. The paddle feels late. Your hands get jumpy. Your feet get busy without being useful. Your body starts reacting before it has truly received what is happening.

Good anticipation is not panic.

Good anticipation is quiet readiness. It is the body being available before the event happens. It is soft, alert, balanced, and open.

Panic anticipation is different.

Panic anticipation tries to beat the ball to the future. It starts guessing. It starts flinching. It starts reacting to what might happen instead of what is actually happening.

At the kitchen line, that can be deadly in a very small, domestic way. The ball is moving fast. The exchanges are short. You need soft eyes, good spacing, and a body that can receive information quickly. But when you rush, your system gets noisy.

What rushing can look like

- You may stab at volleys.
- You may attack before the ball is really there.
- You may pull the paddle away too soon.
- You may hit before you have seen the ball clearly.
- You may try to end the point from a ball that only needed to be handled.
- You may speed up a dink because you are tired of waiting.
- You may miss an easy shot because your mind had already moved to celebration, relief, or fear.

In Fluid Motion Factor terms, you have over-anticipated an event that has not happened yet. You are physically on the court, but mentally you are already at the end of the point.

And when the mind is already at the end, the body loses clean contact with the now.



The Body Needs the Gap

That is why rushing can feel so confusing. You are trying harder to be ready, but you feel less ready. You are trying to speed up, but you become late. You are trying to finish, but you make the point harder to finish.

The body needs the gap.

That little gap before the next shot is where freedom lives. It is where the body receives the ball, reads the speed, senses the spacing, adjusts the paddle, and lets the shot happen. But when fear rushes into that gap, the gap disappears.

Then everything feels immediate, cramped, and urgent.

- The ball is here too soon.
- The opponent is on top of you.
- The point is slipping away.
- The finish line is shouting.

And now you are not playing pickleball.

You are trying to escape pickleball.



What Am I Misunderstanding?

Your misunderstanding is this:

You think urgency helps.

It feels as if speeding up will make you more ready. It feels as if more effort, more alertness, more tension, and more internal speed will prepare you for the next ball.

But rushing usually makes you later.

That is the pickleball paradox hiding inside this problem. The more you hurry inside, the less time you seem to have. The more you chase the next event, the less clearly you receive the current one.



Urgency Narrows the Game

The rushing chain reaction

- Urgency narrows your vision.
- Urgency tightens your hand.
- Urgency makes your feet move before they know where to go.
- Urgency turns anticipation into guessing.
- Urgency makes the finish line more important than the ball.

And once the finish line becomes the star of the show, the ball becomes an obstacle instead of the center of your attention.

That is backwards.

The ball is not something to get past on the way to the result.

The ball is the game.

The rusher often believes the point must be seized, forced, hurried, or solved quickly. That belief creates a body that wants to act before it has received enough information.

At the kitchen, this often shows up as 'jumpy hands.' The paddle moves too soon. The body leans. The eyes get sharp and narrow. The player feels ready, but it is a brittle kind of ready. A nervous readiness. A readiness with its shoes tied together.

Real readiness is calmer.

It does not mean lazy. It does not mean passive. It does not mean standing there like a decorative lawn ornament while the other team attacks.

It means the body is alert without being ahead of itself.

That is the misunderstanding.

You think you need to rush to keep up.

But the deeper truth is that you need to slow down internally so your body can respond on time.



Finish-Line Syndrome

This is especially true near the end of a game. At 9-9, 10-10, or match point, finish-line syndrome can become very strong. You start to feel the future before it arrives.

- If we win this point, we're almost there.
- If I miss this, we may lose.
- If I get this return in, we can close it out.
- If I pop this up, it's over.

Those thoughts pull the nervous system forward. You begin playing the next consequence instead of the next ball.

But the body cannot hit a consequence.

It can only hit the ball.

That is why finish-line syndrome is so tricky. It feels like competitive intensity, but it often becomes future-living. You are no longer free in the point. You are trying to drag the point to an ending.

And pickleball does not like being dragged.

It likes to be received.



What's Your One Key Correction?

Slow down internally.

That is the correction.

Not lazily.

Not passively.

Not carelessly.

Slow down internally so you can be fully available to the ball.



Let the Ball Arrive

You do not need to move like molasses. You may still need quick feet, fast hands, sharp recognition, and immediate response. But those things work better when the inside of you is not sprinting.

The key is to stop racing into the future.

YOUR CUE

LET THE BALL ARRIVE

That cue is simple, but it changes the timing of your attention.

Instead of reaching forward toward the next danger, you allow the ball to come into your awareness. You see it. You acknowledge it. You let the body receive what is actually happening. Then the response can be clean.

Let this arrive

- Not the fear.
- Not the finish line.
- Not the imaginary mistake.
- Not the point you want to have already won.
- The ball.

Between points, slow your walk a little. Give yourself a small pocket of time. Feel your feet. Let your shoulders drop. Soften your eyes so you are not staring at the opponent like a detective interrogating a suspect. Let the court widen. Feel the paddle in your hand.

At the kitchen, do not chase the finish line.

Stay with this ball.

This bounce.

This paddle.

This contact.



Present Is Not Slow

If the ball is attackable, attack it freely.

If the ball needs to be blocked, block it freely.

If the ball needs to be reset, reset it freely.

If the rally needs patience, let it have patience.

The correction is not to become slow.

The correction is to become present.

There is a big difference.

A present player can be very quick. In fact, present players often look quicker because they are not wasting energy reacting to ghosts. They are not flinching at imaginary speed-ups. They are not leaning into a future that has not arrived. They are available.

That is what you want.

Availability.

Freedom in the gap before the next shot.

The finish line is not your job.

Your job is not to end the point before it is ready to end. Your job is not to rush your body into safety. Your job is not to outrun fear.

Your job is to stay free enough to play the ball that is actually here.

RESET

When time speeds up:

Let the ball arrive.

Then soften. Receive. Play.

The finish line can wait.

This ball cannot.