

The Most Controversial New Pickleball Paddle: The KOBO THUNDER AXE infinity

KOBO sports is making waves in the pickleball market with its new THUNDER AXE paddle that' s a radical new Aerodynamic shape with Air-channels and high end Carbon fiber used in F1 race cars and not your dads square paddle shape!

KOBO

AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION

Does a \$399 unibody frame actually reduce aerodynamic drag, or is it just another marketing gimmick?



The familiar rectangle may be a manufacturing convention—not the best possible shape for today’s faster game.

Pickleball has changed dramatically, but the basic shape of its paddles has barely moved. KOBO Sports is challenging whether the traditional square-edged, solid-throat silhouette represents peak performance—or simply a familiar manufacturing convention.

KOBO Sports today announced expanded availability of the THUNDER AXE Infinity, a USAP-approved 18mm pickleball paddle developed around an aerospace-inspired profile, three integrated air channels and an edgeless unibody construction.

The unconventional design is intended to address a growing demand among competitive players: faster paddle positioning during rapid exchanges without sacrificing the stability and controlled feel of a thicker paddle.

“Pickleball has evolved, but most paddle silhouettes have barely moved,” said Mark Shields, founder of KOBO Sports. “If every serious paddle begins with essentially the same outline and shape, the industry risks optimizing inside a box it never questions with why? We started with airflow, structural efficiency and hand speed—and allowed those priorities to shape the THUNDER AXE.”

Instead of using a traditional solid throat and broad rectangular outline, the THUNDER AXE incorporates three functional air channels into a tapered paddle body. The channels remove material from selected areas and create pathways for air to move through the paddle during the swing.

The paddle’s distinctive architecture includes:

- Three integrated air channels designed to lessen aerodynamic resistance and support quick paddle movement
- An 18mm DuraCore foam structure reinforced with carbon ribs
- Super-heated, unibody thermoformed carbon construction
- A raw 3K carbon-fiber face
- KOBO’s proprietary SoftPlex surface coating, designed to provide tactile ball grip without relying solely on conventional particle grit
- An edgeless Infinity throat and tapered performance profile
- A medium weight of approximately 230 grams, plus or minus five grams
- USAP approval for sanctioned tournament play

The THUNDER AXE is the result of collaboration involving aerospace, motorsports-graphics and paddle-design experience. Its appearance reflects the same performance-first approach seen in race cars, aircraft components and other equipment shaped around the movement of air.

“The unusual shape is not decoration added after the engineering,” Shields said. “The shape is the engineering. Players may love it or question it, but they will not mistake it for another minor variation of the same traditional paddle.”

KOBO’s position is likely to provoke debate in a paddle market where brands frequently focus on new core materials, surface textures and professional endorsements while retaining broadly similar silhouettes.

The company describes its approach as “Engineering Over Endorsements.” Rather than building the

product around a professional-player sponsorship, KOBO says it invested in materials, construction and an identifiable design intended to perform and feel differently in the player's hand.

More than 2,000 players have purchased the THUNDER AXE, according to KOBO, with paddles shipped to customers across 12 countries. That early adoption has led the company to expand availability and introduce the design to a wider competitive-pickleball audience.

The THUNDER AXE Infinity is available in Silver and a limited Gold edition. Each paddle includes a custom protective cover and two applications of KOBO edge-protection tape. The standard retail price is \$399.

Additional product information is available at:

<https://www.kobopickleball.co/products/kobo-thunder-axe-infinity-18mm>

About KOBO Sports

KOBO Sports LLC is an Arizona-based performance-sports company developing distinctive pickleball paddles, training products and player technology. Its product-development philosophy emphasizes functional engineering, advanced materials and original design over conventional shapes and endorsement-driven marketing.

Media Contact

Monique Attrux
KOBO Sports LLC
1-520-660-2785
customer.support@kobopickleball.com
<https://www.kobopickleball.co>



Media Contact

KOBO SPORTS LLC

*****@kobopickleball.com

5206602785

Eagle Lane

<https://kobopickleball.co>

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