



Pickleball in the Sun Promotes Pickleball as a Luxurious Lifestyle Brand

Website focuses on defining pickleball as a destination travel-worthy game.

By **Jennifer Brozak**

As the saying goes, when opportunity knocks, open the door. Over the past few years, Laura Gainor has heeded this ageless wisdom by transforming an unexpected opportunity into a flourishing career promoting the sport of pickleball.

Gainor is the founder of Vossberg Gainor, an agency focused squarely on pickleball marketing. She is also the creator of Pickleball in the Sun, a website that promotes pickleball as a luxury lifestyle and destination sport.

After a successful 15-year career in corporate and sports marketing—including a period of time that required weekly commutes between Milwaukee and Chicago—Gainor decided to launch her own agency so that she could spend more time with her young children.

“In 2019, as we were living in Chicago and I was commuting a few days a week back and forth between Milwaukee and Chicago, I decided it was time for me to venture off on my own and start my own business with the goal of getting a client or two—not knowing what was about

to come and change my life,” she recalled.

Shortly after launching her agency, Gainor’s husband Brian, a sports marketing executive, introduced her to George Bauernfeind, a marketing director with USA Pickleball. Bauernfeind had been searching for someone to assist with the organization’s rebranding efforts.

“I always say I wish I had that first call with George recorded, because I had no idea what pickleball was,” said Gainor. “I was royally confused when he was talking about the sport,



Laura Gainor at the Hyatt Regency Indian Wells Resort & Spa pickleball courts.

but I was committed to jump in and figure it out.”

Intrigued, Gainor asked three of her friends to sign up to learn how to play pickleball at the local community center, which was hosting free clinics to teach people how to play the sport.

“Like everyone else who plays for the first time, we were hooked,” she said. “We were laughing so much and having so much fun that by the end of the night, we officially knew how to play pickleball.”

While living in Chicago, Gainor used her professional event-organizing skills to start the

Chicago Pickleball Club, which met at a local gym on Friday nights. As an entrepreneur, Gainor quickly realized the potential both for the sport and for her budding agency.

“While the sport of pickleball is continuing to grow at an immense rate, there are not many marketing agencies that focus solely on the promotion of the sport, its players, and its brands,” she said. “With the need for pickleball marketing growing just as fast as the sport itself, I knew that there would be a need for agencies like Vossberg Gainor to help pickleball players and brands distinguish themselves throughout the pickleball community.”

Then, a mere five months after launching her agency, the pandemic struck.

“We were playing pickleball weekly, but that came to an abrupt halt when indoor events were shut down,” she said. “It was devastating.”

However, in the summer of 2020, another opportunity presented itself—this time, for her family of four to relocate to one of the country’s pickleball hot spots: Florida.

“In June of 2020, after the four of us were about to hit our breaking points of being inside and forbidden to do what we loved most, we went down to Florida to visit my sister and family, who had just moved to the Nocatee community, which had 12 brand-new pickleball courts and multiple waterparks for the kids,” she explained.

Shortly after the visit, the Gainors made the decision to sell their home in Chicago and move to Florida to live near family. The move also allowed pickleball to become a lifestyle.

Following the move, on the one-year anniversary of her business, Gainor decided to pivot her

agency to become the first-ever pickleball marketing agency. The agency’s goal is to help pickleball brands, organizations, and players successfully market themselves throughout the worldwide pickleball community.

This past year, inspired by her love of travel, lifestyle, and leisure—and having the opportunity to write destination features for Pickleball Magazine—she launched her passion project, Pickleball in the Sun, a website that promotes the “luxurious side of pickleball,” including exclusive destinations around the world that pickleball players can visit to play the sport. The website also partners with a variety of organizations that offer paddles, eyewear, social clubs, activewear, and more.

“Together, this brand is focused on defining pickleball as a destination travel-worthy game, while simultaneously sharing deluxe brands and lifestyle opportunities the sport offers along the way,” Gainor explained.

As pickleball continues to grow along with her marketing agency and website, Gainor hopes that more people will find a passion for the game and discover the lifestyle that accompanies it.

“I’m excited to see more pickleball enthusiasts build more courts so that more people can have the chance to play the game,” she said. “We have a lot of exciting opportunities in the works that will bring this game from 5 million players to 10 million players faster than you think. I look forward to looking back 10 years from now and remembering these ‘early’ days, when pickleball was the hottest topic in the nation!”

For more information, visit pickleballinthesun.com or vossberggainor.com. •