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TEENS AT THE TOP

At 10, Anna Leigh Waters started playing pickleball. She turned pro at 12. By 15, she was number one in the world.



Anna Leigh Waters

Waters was once a tennis player. She thought pickleball was for “old people.” Then she tried it. The rest is history.

It was 2017. Anna was 10. Her family lived in Florida. A hurricane was coming. Waters and her mom had to leave. They went to Pennsylvania. That was where Anna’s grandfather lived. He asked them to play a game. It was one they hadn’t played before. This was pickleball.

Anna and her mom were not interested. But they were kind. They played. Then they didn't want to quit. Waters and her mom played almost nonstop. This went on for two weeks.

Waters turned pro in 2019. Then she won a U.S. **tournament**. She was the youngest winner ever.



Fast Fact

Anna Leigh Waters and her mother, Leigh, compete in women's doubles together. They finished the 2021 season ranked third in the world.



Anna Leigh Waters and her mother, Leigh

Her style was different. It changed the game. Waters **bangs**. That means she hits the ball hard. Others hit the ball soft. Those shots are **dinks**. The teen kept winning. Some players wanted her thrown out. They said it wasn't fair. A teen should not beat adults. But Waters stayed. Now all players bang and dink. It's the only way to win.

Fans flock to her games. Thousands may come. Waters makes great shots. Crowds roar. That helps her play even better.



Anna Leigh Waters



JW Johnson



Jorja Johnson

The 2022 men's world champ was a teen too. His name is JW Johnson. He was 19. What does "JW" stand for? He says, "Just Winning." That's what Johnson does. It was 2021. Johnson focused on pickleball. Ben Johns played him. Johns was number one in the world. But Johnson beat him.

His sister is Jorja Johnson. In 2022, she ranked seventh in the world. She was 15.

Not all top pros are teens. In 2021, the top five were in their 20s and 30s. They were the world's **singles** winners. The game once was called an "old person's sport." Those days are gone.