

For Todd Boss, one match at the Virginia Commonwealth Games still stands above the rest. In 2021, he and his partner captured the men's doubles pickleball title — a run that required navigating one of the deepest fields he'd seen at a statewide event.

"You had top players from all over Virginia — Virginia Beach, Richmond, Blacksburg, Roanoke, Harrisonburg," he recalled. "Those tournaments always brought out the best talent in the state."

The win was special on its own, but it's the caliber of competition — and a memorable early-round victory over future APP Tour pro Tanner Tomassi — that cemented the day in his mind.

That defining experience is exactly why Boss is enthusiastic about the Games' move to Richmond this year. He believes the new location will amplify everything athletes love about the event: strong draws, high-quality courts, and a tournament community ready to play from first ball to final.

"Richmond is a great move," he said. "It's central, there's a very large tournament community, and there are purpose-built pickleball facilities with 12-and 24-court layouts. That's what competitive players expect now."

Boss has watched the sport evolve from taped lines and borrowed space to purpose-built venues that can host hundreds. The transition, he argues, matters.

"Competition has morphed to the point where if you're not holding a tournament on conventional hard courts, players just won't go," he said. "Moving the Games to facilities built for pickleball is huge."

The appeal of the Games is as much about the player experience as the podium. Show up, find great matches, and get better across a long weekend — the same dynamic he remembers from racquetball's peak.

"Back then, you'd just show up and know people would be there to play," he said. "That's exactly what pickleball feels like right now."

Boss's vantage point is unusually broad. By day, he's a data and database consultant; by avocation, he's spent decades building and maintaining historical records for racquet sports — head-to-heads, win-loss logs, seeding trends, the details that turn bracket sheets into storylines. That analytical streak shapes his writing for Forbes' SportsMoney blog, where he's covered pro tournament recaps, industry growth, and the explosion of indoor clubs since early 2023.

"There's no way to write real sports stories without the data," he said. "Head-to-head records, career win-loss, seeding trends — that context is what makes the stories meaningful."

He's also one of the few U.S. writers tracking pickleball's international growth in real time.

"I think international players are going to catch up faster than people expect," he said. "Eventually, pickleball will look a lot more like a global tour, similar to tennis. I want to be there when that happens."

But amid the pro circuits and industry analysis, the Commonwealth Games still mean something personal. Boss has lived the athlete's weekend — the nerves and the noise, the random draw that turns into a title. That experience is why he's bullish on Richmond and eager to see players from every corner of the state make the trip.

"As a past participant, I'm a huge fan of the Games and the competition," he said. "With the move to Richmond, I hope everyone who loves competing signs up once the details are set. Step out of your comfort zone and play. It's worth it."