



MEETING YOUR MATCH

WHAT TYPE OF DOUBLES PARTNER ARE YOU?

One of the best things about USTA League play is that you get to meet and play tennis with amazing people. Quite often two players meet for the first time just a few minutes before stepping out onto the tennis court as doubles partners. With very little time to figure out the person on your side of the net, you mostly try to sort things out the best you can. Sometimes two players will quickly settle into a cohesive partnership that brings out the best in both players. Sometimes things don't go so smoothly and the result is a disjointed, disconnected set of two tennis players at odds with one another. Why do some players quickly gel as a team, while others look like two singles players on the same side of the net?

If you've played tennis for a while, you've likely been able to find out what type of doubles partner you like to play with most. USTA League play can be like speed-dating for tennis players. You don't have a lot of time to figure out if your new doubles partner is going

to be a good fit. Sometimes the person you're sharing the court with is compatible in personality and playing style, and sometimes they aren't.

So what type of doubles partner are you? What type of doubles partner do you prefer to play with?

Let's explore a few of the most common types of partners and see if you can find the answers to these questions.

The Cheerleader - this is the partner who is always providing their partner with positive and supportive encouragement, shaking off any missed shots with a positive, forward-looking approach. This high-fiving partner can be heard from several courts away, with a steady barrage of "nice shot partner!" "No worries partner...you've got this!"

The Director - a partner with a take charge attitude, The Director has a plan for success and isn't shy with offering instructions to their partner on what to do on the court. This Type-A partner is in control of the situation and can be a welcome teammate for a player who isn't too strategically savvy.

The Rock - similar to The Cheerleader with their positive attitude, The Rock is the steady partner with a calm and cool approach to the task at hand. No situation is too stressful when The Rock is your doubles partner. A simple look of approval from The Rock can give you the confidence to go for it, even in the most critical situations.

The Downer - the complete opposite of The Cheerleader, The Downer is focused inward, keeping emotions bottled up inside. The Downer doesn't offer praise or support and rarely mutters a word during a match. With head down and an ultra-sharp intensity, The Downer is often most successful when paired with another Downer. This hyper-focused pairing can be a tough duo to defeat.

The Baseline Hugger - while doubles points are most often won by the team that takes away the net, some players can't seem to stray too far from the baseline. The Baseline Hugger is often a singles player who is forced to play doubles. This volley-averse player prefers the extra time and comfort of playing deep in the court, leaving their partners to fend for themselves at the net.

The Net Crasher - with their nose seemingly positioned on their opponents side of the net, The Net Crasher is always moving forward, flying across the court to put away any ball that ventures into their airspace. If you are good at keeping the ball low at your opponent's feet, your set-up shots will be rewarded by the fleet-footed Net Crasher as they repeatedly pounce upon any floating response.

Now that we've called out a few of the various types of doubles partners, have you decided what your type is? Have you found your perfect partner type?

In my own assessment, I would consider myself a Net Crashing Rock...although I can have Downer tendencies when paired with The Downer. My most desirable partner type is The Net Crashing Cheerleader, as I can always use the positive support to keep me on an upward trajectory. My least desirable partner is The Baseline Hugging Downer. That is my own recipe for a difficult pairing.

I hope you enjoy your next USTA League doubles match, and may you find happiness with your perfect doubles partner! ■