

Paddle design and technology seem to have advanced very quickly in the last few years. A player today has many options from many pickleball companies, so it's now possible to find a paddle to closely match each person's level and style of play. Pickleball Central recently provided two Engage paddles to the Loveland, Colorado Pickleball Club for us to demo. I tried both the Omega Evolution Extreme and the Omega Evolution Extreme X, and although they share many qualities and features, each one plays quite differently, and will appeal to players with different goals.

This review focuses on the Omega Evolution Extreme. Of the two, this is the one with the slightly shorter and wider face. But like the similar-looking Evolution Extreme X, this paddle has a textured carbon fiber surface over a polymer core.

The first thing I noticed when I picked up this paddle is the weight and balance. For the last several months, my go-to paddle has been an 8.5 ounce heavyweight model, so this 8.1 ounce midweight felt light, but very well balanced as I made a few test swings. I also saw that our review paddle has a nice, thick  $\frac{5}{8}$ " core - a feature I have very much come to favor for more control around the net. Additionally, I like to put a little spin on the ball from time to time, so I was pleased to find a nicely textured face.

Happily, when I started playing with the Evolution Extreme, my expectations were pretty much confirmed. This paddle plays very well. It delivers in all the areas for which it was designed. The thick core and wider face provide great control for dinking, and the textured surface gave me a surprising amount of spin when I chose to attempt those shots. Not surprisingly, it does not have the slamming power of my heavyweight paddle, but I don't think it was designed to be primarily used that way.

I have two other observations that may or may not be important to someone shopping for a new paddle. First, both I and the group I was playing with noticed how quiet the paddle was. We all use paddles of different weight, style, and manufacturer, but this Engage Evolution was noticeably quieter than our other paddles. So if sound is an important criteria for you, you should try this paddle. Another "unusual" quality of the Evolution paddles was in the grip design. Our two test paddles both had medium sized grips with good feel and tackiness, but they both seemed a bit hollow on the sides, as though Engage tried to keep the weight balanced more toward the face by not filling in that part of the grip.

But all in all, this was a very minor detraction for me. The Engage Evolution Extreme is a great paddle for someone looking to gain a little more control and spin in their game. The paddle looks good, sounds quiet, and most importantly, plays great.

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