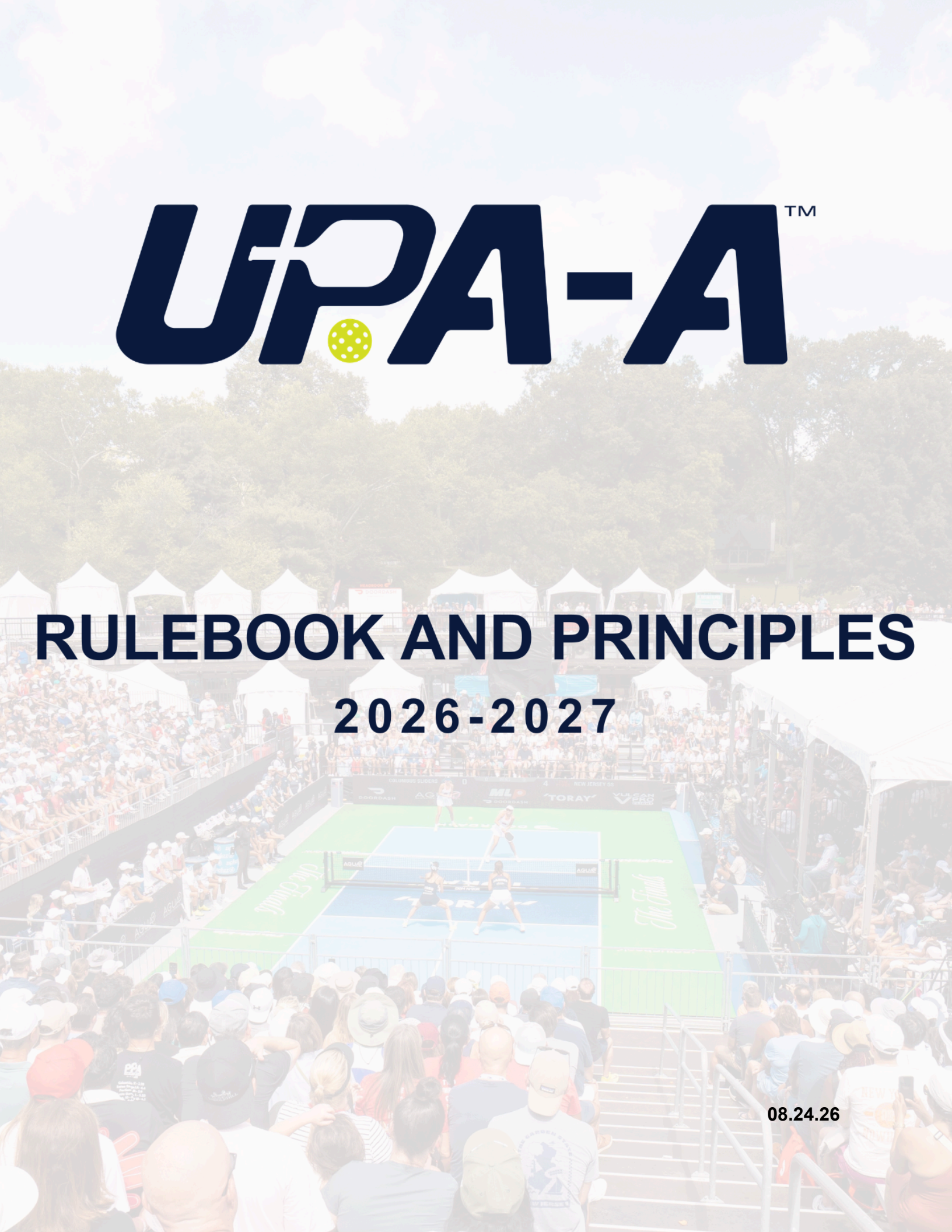
UPA-A™

RULEBOOK AND PRINCIPLES

2026-2027



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UPA-A STATEMENT

“Rules do not limit competition, they make it possible.”

David Stern, Former NBA Commissioner

When standards are defined and applied consistently, the outcome of a competition is determined by skill, preparation, and decision-making. Fairness is not accidental. It is built.

This Rulebook represents that foundation.

The United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) exists to protect the integrity of pickleball at the competitive level of play. From grassroots and local competitions to the professional game all over the world, our mission is to ensure pickleball remains fun, fair, and competitive. We are committed to continually evolve in service of those who compete. Every rule in this book ladders up to that mission.

Whether you are a player, referee, tournament director, or partner in the sport’s growth, these rules reflect a shared commitment.

As pickleball continues to grow, so must the standards that govern it. This Rulebook is a living document guided by experience, informed by data, and shaped by the people who care deeply about the game. Our responsibility is not just to preserve pickleball as it is, but to steward what it will become.

Thank you for being part of a sport that values fairness, integrity, and competition. Together, we protect the game by agreeing on the rules that make it worth playing.

Jason Aspes

President, United Pickleball Association of America

GAME OVERVIEW

Basics

- Pickleball is a paddle sport played with a special perforated ball.
- The game is played on a 20-foot-by-44-foot court with a tennis-style net.
- The court includes:
    - Right/Even and Left/Odd service courts
    - Non-volley zones (also known as “NVZ” and “the kitchen”)
- Two-bounce rule - After the serve, each player/team must let the ball bounce once before hitting it. Striking the ball beforehand is a fault.
- Pickleball can be played as:
    - Singles
    - Doubles (gender or mixed)

Service and Serving Sequence

- The ball is served diagonally across the net to the correct service court, dictated by the score.
- The server must follow an approved motion.
- After the serve, a rally continues until a player fails to return the ball according to the rules.
- The server continues to serve, alternating service courts, until the serving side loses a rally.

Scoring

- In side-out scoring, only the serving side scores when they win a rally.

Game Format

- A game is typically won by the first player/team to score 11 points, winning by at least 2 points.

Winning a Match

- A match is typically won by the first player/team to win 2 out of 3 games.
- A match can also be a single game, typically to 15 points and winning by at least 2 points.

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

Rule 1. Applicability and Description

1.1 Applicability

This Rulebook establishes the official rules and principles governing United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) sanctioned competition.

All domestic and international tournaments comprising the Professional Pickleball Association (PPA) and Major League Pickleball (MLP) are under the regulatory authority of the UPA-A.

Non-sanctioned competitions may adopt these rules at the discretion of the tournament organizer.

1.2 The Rulebook

1.2.1 Rule Structure

Rules 1 through **15** govern organized amateur and professional play utilizing the side-out scoring format unless otherwise modified.

Rules 1 through **13** apply to all matches, regardless of whether a referee is present.

Where a referee is present, the referee(s) administer and enforce these rules. Where no referee is present, players are responsible for applying these rules in good faith and resolving matters consistent with fairness and competitive integrity.

Rule 14 establishes officiating authority and jurisdiction, while **Rule 15** outlines procedures for self-officiated matches.

1.2.2 Appendix Overview

Appendices supplement the main Rulebook and must be applied together with the general rules.

Where a conflict exists between a Rule and an applicable Appendix, the Appendix will control for the designated competition category only.

- **Appendix A – Tournament Operations:** General tournament policies, procedures, and administrative guidance.
- **Appendix B – Professional Rulebook:** Rules governing professional competition, including PPA Tour and MLP events.
- **Appendix C – MLPlay™ Rules Guide:** Modifications applicable exclusively to MLP's team-based competition format. If Appendix B and C conflict, Appendix C controls.

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- **Appendix D – Adaptive Play Rules:** Modifications governing wheelchair and adaptive play competition.
- **Appendix E – Rally Scoring:** Rally scoring procedure for singles format.

1.3 Rule Authority and Interpretation

This Rulebook is the controlling authority for match play and rule application within UPA-A sanctioned competitions.

The most recent version published on the UPA-A website is the official and binding authority.

Any situation not expressly addressed by these rules will be resolved on-site by the Tournament Director or Head Referee. Such situations and rulings will be reported to the UPA-A Rules Committee for review. These rulings may inform future rule clarification or amendment, however, no substantive rule change will be implemented during an ongoing tournament.

UPA-A strives to avoid implementing rule changes during an active season except when necessary to protect player safety or preserve competitive integrity.

1.4 Conditions of Participation

Participation in a UPA-A sanctioned competition constitutes agreement to comply with this Rulebook.

This obligation applies to each player, tournament referee, coach, player representative, family member, and any other accredited person participating in or present at the event.

Failure to comply with this Rulebook or any authorized supplementary requirement may result in disciplinary action, including sanctions, removal from competition, suspension of participation privileges, or revocation of event credentials, as authorized under UPA-A.

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Rule 2. Definitions

2.1 Abstention – A temporary, declared inability of a player to participate in live play while remaining an eligible member of the team.

2.2 Act of Volleying – The entire sequence of a volley shot consisting of the following four elements: 1) the arm swing, 2) the actual strike of the ball (volley itself), 3) the follow-through after contact, and 4) any resulting momentum.

2.3 Adaptive Player – Any individual, with or without a disability, who participates in play using a wheelchair or any assistive equipment required to support mobility, stability, or function. Any such equipment used during play is considered part of the player's body.

2.4 Appeal – Communication from a player, requesting a ruling from the applicable authority or, in self-officiated play, from the opponents, consistent with the rules.

2.5 Ball in Play – The period during which a rally is active, beginning with the serve (when the ball is struck to start the rally) and ending when the ball becomes dead.

2.6 Break in Play – A temporary suspension of play that occurs only during a game-prescribed timeout (e.g., change of ends, between games) or during a granted or otherwise authorized timeout (e.g., medical, equipment, referee-issued, or media).

2.7 Carry – An illegal hit where the ball does not bounce immediately off the paddle but is instead prolonged, lifted, or pushed along the paddle face.

2.8 Challenge (also referred to as "Video Challenge") – A formal request made by a player/team for the referees to use video replay technology to evaluate a specific call or action during a rally, for the purpose of confirming or overturning the result of the rally, or ordering a replay as permitted by rule.

2.9 Coach – Any person who provides information to a player/team that could offer an advantage or prevent a rules violation.

2.10 Coaching – The communication of any information, verbal, nonverbal, or electronic, from someone other than a player's partner, that could be used by a player/team to gain an advantage or to avoid a rules violation.

2.11 Concede – To voluntarily yield a rally in a game to the opponent, acknowledging their win without further contest.

2.12 Court – The area bounded by the outer edges of the baselines and sidelines, with the lines themselves considered part of the court.

2.13 Dead Ball – A ball that is no longer in play.

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2.14 Detriment – A situation in which a player/team makes a line call, fault call, or any other call against themselves or their team that results in the loss of a rally, done in the spirit of fairness and good sportsmanship.

2.15 Distraction – Any physical or verbal action by a player that is not characteristic of standard play and disrupts an opponent's ability to make a play on the ball.

2.16 Double Bounce – When the ball bounces twice on one end of the court before being returned.

2.17 Ejection – Removal from tournament participation, for cause, by the Tournament Director or Head Referee. The player may remain at the venue.

2.18 Expulsion – Removal from tournament participation, for cause, by the Tournament Director or Head Referee. The player must leave the venue immediately and may not return for the remainder of the tournament.

2.19 Factual Determination – A determination of what occurred during play based on the observable events.

2.20 Fault – A rules violation that causes the ball to become dead and/or ends the rally.

2.21 First Server – In doubles, the player designated by the team's score to begin service following a side out.

2.22 Flow of the Game – The continuous and consistent progression of play, maintained by timely rallies, minimal delays, and adherence to the expected pace of the server.

2.23 Forfeit – The loss of a game or match as a result of court-reporting timeliness, an egregious behavioral violation, or a combination of Marks and/or Fouls.

2.24 Foul – A penalty, resulting from a rule violation that adds one (1) point to the opposing player's/team's score. Fouls are visually represented by an Orange Card.

2.25 Groundstroke – A shot in which the ball is struck after it has bounced.

2.26 Head Referee – The tournament official responsible for all referees and officiating matters during a sanctioned event. The Head Referee ensures matches are conducted in accordance with this Rulebook, provides final rulings on rule interpretation and application, and oversees referee performance and procedural matters when assistance is requested or an appeal is properly made.

2.27 Hindrance – A short-lived element or occurrence not caused by a player that adversely affects play.

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2.28 Imaginary Extension – The projected path of a line beyond its actual endpoint, used to determine where the line would continue if not limited by court boundaries.

2.29 Lead Referee – Assigned by the Head Referee or other authorized designee to run and manage a specific match. The Lead Referee is responsible for the overall flow and administration of the match, including rules interpretation and application, management of other referees (Second Referee and Video Review Referee), and the handling of video challenges and other match-related procedures. The Lead Referee has final on-court authority for all rulings unless overruled by the Head Referee.

2.30 Left/Odd Court – The service court area on the left side when facing the net. The singles server or starting server in doubles, should be positioned on the left/odd side when their score is odd.

2.31 Let Serve – A serve that contacts the net (excluding the posts, legs, or horizontal bar) and lands within the proper service court.

2.32 Line Call – A verbal declaration or hand signal by a player indicating that a live ball landed IN or OUT of the required court area.

2.33 Line Review (also referred to as "Review") – An official review conducted using PlayReplay or other line-calling system to determine the accuracy of an eligible line call.

2.34 Live Ball – The period that begins when the referee or server (or server's partner) starts to call the score and ends when the ball becomes dead.

2.35 Mark – A formal corrective action issued for a rule violation that is not a penalty unless its accumulation results in the assessment of one (1) point or imposition of a game or match forfeit. Marks are visually represented by a Blue Card.

2.36 Momentum – A property of a moving body that causes continued motion after striking the ball, ending when balance and control of the motion are regained.

2.37 Multiple Hit Stroke – When a player strikes the ball more than once in a single continuous motion.

2.38 Net System (Permanent and Temporary) – A permanent pickleball net system consists of the net (which may or may not have a center strap) and posts that together divide the court into two equal halves and define the playable area. A temporary or portable net system includes the net, posts, and additional structural components such as the base frame (feet) and horizontal support bar, that provide stability and maintain proper net tension.

2.39 Non-Volley Zone (also referred to as "NVZ" and "the kitchen") – The 7-foot-by-20-foot court area adjacent to the net where non-volley faults apply, including all boundary lines.

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2.40 Overhang – A visual condition in which part of the ball appears above or beyond a line due to curvature or viewing angle, without the ball's contact point touching the line. Overhang alone does not constitute line contact.

2.41 Overrule – A reversal or change of a prior decision based on additional information or video review, when permitted.

2.42 Paddle Head – The portion of the paddle used to strike the ball, which excludes the handle.

2.43 Preventive Refereeing – A professional referee technique that is designed to offer neutral rule-based reminders to the players/teams to prevent rule violations or confusion and ensure procedural fairness and smooth match flow before play begins.

2.44 Permanent Object – Any object or person in a fixed, designated position on, near, or above the court that has the potential to interfere with play.

2.45 Plane of the Net – The imaginary planes extending beyond all sides of the net system.

2.46 Playing Surface – The court and the surrounding area designated for play.

2.47 Profanity – Obscene or vulgar words, sounds, or gestures, including any expression widely recognized as offensive or inappropriate.

2.48 Rally – Continuous play that occurs after the serve and ends with a fault or a valid hindrance.

2.49 Ready for Play – A player/team is considered ready for play when all players are on the playing surface, properly positioned, and able to immediately resume play.

2.50 Receiver – The player positioned diagonally opposite the server to return the serve. In doubles, the correct receiver is the player whose position is diagonally opposite the correct server, based on score and starting position.

2.51 Replay – Restarting a rally for any reason permitted by rule without awarding a point or changing the server.

2.52 Re-establish(ed) – The state in which a player has fully regained legal position after being in the non-volley zone. A player regains legal position when any foot that contacts the non-volley zone subsequently makes contact with the playing surface outside the non-volley zone (e.g., toe tap or foot drag) before volleying the ball.

2.53 Referee Crew – All personnel under the leadership of the Head Referee, on or off the court, including the Lead Referee, Second Referee, Video Review Referee, and Roaming Referee.

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2.54 Retirement – A player's/team's decision to stop playing, resulting in the match being awarded to the opponent.

2.55 Right/Even Court – The service court area on the right side when facing the net. The singles server or starting server in doubles, should be positioned on the right/even side when their score is even.

2.56 Roaming Referee – A tournament-appointed official not assigned to a specific match who may provide limited officiating assistance upon request of a player/team or at the direction of the Head Referee. A Roaming Referee may assist with rule clarification, procedural administration, equipment compliance matters, and resolution of scoring disputes.

2.57 Rule Interpretation or Application – A determination involving enforcement of a rule, regulation, or governing procedure to a given situation.

2.58 Sanction – Collective term that includes all formal penalties (e.g., Warnings, Mark, Fouls, a point assessment, forfeitures) applied to ensure compliance, maintain match integrity, and uphold standards of play.

2.59 Second Referee (also referred to as "2R", "2nd", "Supporting" Referee) – A referee assigned to work alongside the Lead Referee, serving as an additional on-court resource to ensure accuracy, fairness, and smooth match administration.

2.60 Second Serve – In doubles, the state of play that occurs after the serving team loses the first of its two allotted serves.

2.61 Second Server – In doubles, the partner of the first server who serves after the first server loses serve.

2.62 Serve – The paddle strike of the ball that starts a rally.

2.63 Service Court – The area on either side of the centerline, bounded by the centerline, sideline, and baseline, but excluding the non-volley zone.

2.64 Serving Area – The area behind the baseline and includes the imaginary extensions of the centerline and sidelines.

2.65 Side Out – The transfer of the serve to the opposing side after a singles player or doubles team loses its serve.

2.66 Starting Server – The player on each doubles team designated to serve first at the start of the game.

2.67 Video Review Referee – This referee is responsible for reviewing video footage when a player/team initiates a video challenge and for providing a ruling based upon the available angles and evidence. The Video Review Referee may also be consulted by the Lead Referee to assist with a ruling or to clarify a

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procedural issue. The Video Review Referee does not initiate calls independently and acts solely within the scope of the video-based review.

2.68 Volley – A shot in which the ball is struck in the air before it bounces.

2.69 Warning – Notice of a rule violation that does not result in a penalty unless escalated.

2.70 Withdrawal – A player/team request to be removed from any upcoming match in a specified bracket.

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Rule 3. Court, Equipment, and Apparel

3.1 The Court

3.1.1 Dimensions

A standard pickleball court is rectangular, measuring 44 feet (13.41 m) in length and 20 feet (6.10 m) in width, inclusive of all boundary lines. Court measurements are taken from the outside edges of the perimeter and non-volley zone lines. These dimensions define the legal playing area for both singles and doubles competition.

All boundary and court division lines are 2 inches (5.08 cm) in width and clearly contrast the playing surface.

The court is divided equally into two halves by a net positioned at the midpoint of the court length. Each half of the court measures 22 feet (6.71 m) from the net to the baseline. Within each half, a non-volley zone is established immediately adjacent to the net. The non-volley zone extends 7 feet (2.13 m) from the net toward the baseline and spans the full court width of 20 feet (6.10 m). The non-volley zone line is part of the non-volley zone.

The area between the non-volley zone line and the baseline forms the service area, which measures 15 feet (4.57 m) in depth. A centerline divides this area into two equal service courts designated as the left/odd and right/even service courts. Each service court measures 10 feet (3.05 m) wide by 15 feet (4.57 m) deep. The centerline begins at the non-volley zone line and extends to the baseline, creating the two service courts required for proper service sequence and positioning.

Baselines are located at each end of the court and run parallel to the net across the full 20-foot (6.10 m) width of the playing surface. Sidelines run the full 44-foot (13.41 m) length of the court and define the lateral boundaries of play.

Although not part of the required playing dimensions, new court construction should provide adequate surrounding clearance to ensure safe player movement. For tournament-quality installations, a total recommended play area of 40 feet (12.19 m) in width by 60 feet (18.29 m) in length should be provided to allow sufficient runoff space surrounding the playing court.

3.1.2 Net System

The net is constructed of mesh material with a 2-inch (5.08 cm) white tape binding along the top edge supported by a cord or cable. The net measures at least 21 feet 9 inches (6.63 m) in length and 30 inches (76.2 cm) in height from the top edge to the bottom.

Net posts are positioned outside the sidelines and are 22 feet (±1 inch) (6.71 m ±2.54 cm) apart, measured from the inside of each post. The posts measure no more than 3 inches (7.62 cm) in diameter.

The net must be taut and extend from post to post, with heights of 36 inches (91.44 cm) at the sidelines (not at the post) and 34 inches (86.36 cm) at the center. The net may include a center strap to maintain the proper height at the center. An

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allowable margin of ±0.25 inch (±0.635 cm) applies to both the outer and center net measurements.

A net that drapes or fails to maintain required height is not suitable for play and must be corrected before play begins or resumes once identified as non-compliant.

3.2 Equipment

3.2.1 Balls

The ball will be constructed of durable, smooth material free of texture. The ball must be a single, uniform color except for manufacturer or identification markings. A slight seam ridge is permitted, provided it does not materially affect the ball's flight.

A ball customarily used for outdoor play is selected as the official ball for each UPA-A tournament.

3.2.2 Paddles

UPA-A Approved Paddles List

All players are responsible for ensuring continued paddle compliance throughout competition. Use of a paddle appearing on the UPA-A Approved Paddles List is encouraged. Paddles appearing on the USA Pickleball (USAP) Approved Paddle List are permitted.

Paddles are subject to inspection and may not contain delamination, holes, cracks, rough textures, or indentations that break the paddle surface. Approval or inspection of a paddle by tournament officials does not constitute certification of **continued** compliance with equipment standards.

Altered paddles must continue to meet all applicable specifications. Additional equipment rules are contained in the UPA-A Paddle Specifications and Testing Requirements. Paddles remain subject to inspection, verification, and compliance review at any time during or after match play.

3.3 Apparel

Players must wear suitable court shoes that do not damage the playing surface. A player may be required to change or remove apparel or accessories that are inappropriate, closely match the ball color, create a distraction, or present a safety concern.

The issue may be brought to the attention of the Lead Referee or Roaming Referee, if available, for initial review and resolution. Final authority to require an apparel change rests with the Head Referee or Tournament Director. In the absence of tournament personnel, players will address the issue in good faith. If an apparel change is required, an equipment timeout will be administered. Failure to comply results in match forfeiture.

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SECTION 2 – GENERAL RULES OF PLAY

Rule 4. Starting a Match and New Game

4.1 Pre-Match Briefing

Prior to the start of play, a pre-match briefing is held to complete the coin toss, confirm team selections, and verify required designations and equipment. All required selections and designations must be finalized before the conclusion of the pre-match briefing and once made, may not be changed.

4.1.1 Coin Toss

Before each match, a random method, such as a coin toss, is used to determine which player/team has first choice.

If a physical coin is used, it must be flipped and allowed to hit the ground. The player/team calling the toss must make their call prior to the coin being flipped. If the coin does not turn over in the air or the toss is otherwise compromised (e.g., dropped or comes to rest at an angle against an object), the coin will be re-tossed. The original call remains in effect.

The winner of the toss selects either the starting end or to serve/receive. The opponent then selects the remaining option.

4.1.2 Starting Server Designation – Doubles

In doubles play, each team will designate its starting server during the pre-match meeting. The initially designated starting server may not be changed until after the end of Game 1 in a multi-game match.

The designated starting server must wear the starting server band so that it is visible to all. Failure to wear the starting server band will result in match forfeiture.

4.2 Match Start and Player Readiness

A match is considered to have started once the initial pre-serve 15-second readiness period begins prior to the first score call. Players/teams must promptly assume their proper playing positions. Unnecessary delay may result in a Mark for delay of game.

4.3 Start of Each Game

At the start of each game, the starting server serves from the side of the court dictated by the score, serving from the right when the score is even and from the left when the score is odd.

4.4 End Changes

4.4.1 Mid-Game End Change

Players/teams will change ends of the court at the midpoint of a game. Service will remain with the player holding serve.

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End changes occur when either player/team first reaches the following point totals based on the game format**:**

- **Game to 11 Points -** Change ends at six (6) points.
- **Game to 15 Points -** Change ends at eight (8) points.
- **Game to 21 Points -** Change ends at eleven (11) points.

This procedure applies to **all match formats**, including single-game matches and multi-game matches (e.g., best-of-three (⅔) or best-of-five (⅗)).

4.4.2 End Change Timeout

Teams are allowed one (1) minute to change ends during a game.

4.4.3 End Change Initiated by Penalty

A penalty resulting in the award of a point initiates an end change if the resulting score reaches the designated midpoint of the game.

4.4.4 Missed End Change

If a required end change is not completed, it will be executed upon discovery. No fault is assessed, the score remains unchanged, and the serve continues with the current server.

4.5 Game Administration

4.5.1 Between Games

A two-minute break is allowed between games. If all players/teams are ready, play may resume early.

4.5.2 Changing the Starting Server

Teams may change the starting server between games. Notification must be provided prior to the start of the game. If a referee is present, the Lead Referee must be notified. If no referee is present, the opposing team must be notified. Failure to provide timely notification results in a Mark.

The player wearing the starting server band at the start of the game is deemed the starting server, except when:

- Proper notification was provided prior to the start of the game, and
- The team began play lined up consistent with a different intended starting server.

In that case, the error will be corrected without penalty and the starting server band transferred to the proper player.

Regardless of the notification or claimed intent, if a team begins play lined up consistent with the player wearing the starting server band, that player remains the starting server for the remainder of the game and the band may not be transferred.

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4.5.3 Service Change to Start Game

The player/team serving first alternates between teams for each new game.

4.5.4 Starting End for Subsequent Games

Teams begin each subsequent game on the court end occupied at the conclusion of the previous game.

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Rule 5. Service and Score Calling

5.1 Service Administration

5.1.1 Ball Selection

At the start of each game, the serving team will select the game ball from those made available. If all balls made available are unsuitable for play (e.g., out-of-round or otherwise defective), additional balls will be provided for selection.

Once the game has begun, if a player/team objects to the ball, the ball may be changed only with the agreement of all players on the court. In such cases, the player/team that started serving the game will select the replacement ball from those available.

5.2 Calling the Score and Pace of Play

5.2.1 Score Format

The proper sequence for calling the score in singles is the server's score is stated first, followed by the receiver's score (e.g., "five - seven").

In doubles, the score is called as three numbers. The serving team's score is stated first, followed by the receiving team's score, and then the server number (one or two), (e.g. "two - seven - two").

Unless a penalty has been assessed prior to the start of a game, the score at the beginning of each doubles game is called as "zero - zero - two."

5.2.2 Readiness and Pace of Play

The score must be called when all players are ready.

Any physical or verbal indication that a player is not ready (e.g., raising a paddle or hand, stating "stop" or "wait") must be recognized.

Delaying play beyond allowable brief pauses or the time required for players to assume correct court position and prepare to receive serve is not permitted.

5.2.3 Timing of the Serve

The entire score must be called loudly and clearly before the ball is served.

Once the score call is completed, the server has ten (10) seconds to serve the ball.

Serving the ball prior to the start of the score call results in a re-serve.

If the ball is served during the score call, or has not been served within ten (10) seconds after completion of the score call, it is a fault on the server.

5.2.4 Recalling the Score

The score will be recalled and the 10-second count reset whenever any of the following occur:

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- The serving player/team changes serving courts or the ball crosses over the center line (e.g. tossed to a partner or carried to the opposite service court).
- The receiving player/team is discovered to be out of position and play stopped within the allowable time limit.
- The wrong score is called and play stopped within the allowable time limit.
- A valid hindrance is declared.
- Any player asks for the score to be recalled **before** the serve.

5.2.5 Service Sequence Errors and Score Correction

Once the score call has begun, the ball is live.

Play may be stopped without penalty to correct an out-of-position player, wrong server/receiver, or an incorrect score call, only before the return of serve or the ball otherwise becomes dead. When timely identified, the error(s) will be corrected and the rally replayed.

If the ball becomes dead before the error is identified, the result of the rally stands.

Once the return of serve has occurred, play must continue until the rally concludes. Any player who stops play after the return of serve to question or correct an out-of-position player, wrong server/receiver, or score, commits a fault.

Any necessary correction identified after the completion of the rally will be made before the next rally.

5.3 The Serve

The serve begins the rally and must be executed in accordance with all applicable service requirements.

If feet placement, ball release, arm swing, point of contact, and/or paddle position was “close”, meaning legality cannot be **clearly confirmed with certainty by visual observation**, then the serve is **not legal** and a fault will be called.

5.3.1 Feet Placement (Applies to All Serves)

At the moment the ball is struck to serve:

- At least one foot must be in contact with the playing surface behind the baseline.
- Neither foot may touch the court on or inside the baseline.
- Neither foot may touch the playing surface beyond the imaginary extensions of the sideline or centerline.

5.3.2 Volley Serve

A volley serve is made by striking the ball in the air, without allowing it to bounce on the playing surface. The serve may be executed using either a forehand or backhand motion.

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A legal volley serve must satisfy **Feet Placement *[Rule 5.3.1]*** and all of the following:

I. **Ball Release -** The ball must be:
- Released by one hand or from the paddle. If released from the paddle, the ball must be dropped or rolled directly off the paddle.
- Released without imparting any additional spin or manipulation to the ball using any part of the body or paddle.
- Released in a manner that is visible to the receiver and, if present, the Lead Referee.

II. **Ball Toss -** There is no restriction on toss height.

III. **Arm Swing -** The arm swing must be underhand, with the paddle traveling in a clearly low-to-high direction prior to contacting the ball. The swing must not resemble a side-to-side (horizontal) motion.

IV. **Point of Contact -** The ball must be struck at or below the waist.

V. **Paddle Position -** At the moment of contact with the ball, the highest point of the paddle head must not be above the wrist joint.

5.3.3 Drop Serve

A drop serve is executed by striking the ball after it bounces on the playing surface. The serve may be executed using either a forehand or backhand motion.

A legal drop serve must satisfy **Feet Placement *[Rule 5.3.1]*** and all of the following:

I. **Ball Release -** The ball must be:
- Released from any height, using only one hand or the paddle. If released from the paddle, the ball must be dropped or rolled directly off the paddle.
- Released in a manner that is visible to the receiver and, if present, the Lead Referee.
- Released without imparting additional spin, force, or manipulation to the ball using any part of the body or paddle.

II. **Number of Bounces -** The ball may not bounce more than once before being struck.

III. **Bounce Location -** There is no restriction on where the ball may bounce on the playing surface before being struck.

5.4 Ball Placement Service Requirements

The server must serve to the diagonally opposite service court from their correct position.

A served ball:

- May clear or touch the net as it crosses.

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- Must clear the non-volley zone and the non-volley zone lines, otherwise it is OUT of bounds.
- May land on any service court line, which is considered IN.

It is a fault against the server, resulting in a loss of serve, if the served ball:

- Does not clear the non-volley zone or non-volley zone lines.
- Lands outside the correct service court.
- Touches any permanent object before it hits the ground.
- Touches the server or their partner, or anything worn or carried by either player.

5.5 Player Positioning and Server Sequence

5.5.1 Singles

When the server's score is even (e.g., 0, 2, 4), the serve must be made from the right/even serving area and received in the right/even service court by the opponent. When the server's score is odd (e.g., 1, 3, 5), the serve must be made from the left/odd serving area and received in the left/odd service court by the opponent.

When the server loses the rally or commits a fault, a side out occurs, and service is awarded to the opponent.

5.5.2 Doubles

At the start of each side out, service begins in the right/even serving area. Service begins with the correct player positioned on the right/even side of the court based on the team's score. This player is designated as the first server, and their partner is the second server. Both players on a team will serve before a side out is declared.

When a team's score is even (e.g., 0, 2, 4), the starting server's (banded player's) correct position is on the right/even side of the court. When the team's score is odd (e.g., 1, 3, 5), the starting server's correct position is on the left/odd side.

****Exception:** At the beginning of each game, only the starting server on the initial serving team will serve. A side out occurs as soon as that team loses a rally or commits a fault.

****Exception:** At the time of the "side out" the first server of the serving team is locked in. If a point is assessed (e.g., as a result of a penalty or lost video challenge) after the side out, but before the start of the next score call, player positions must be adjusted accordingly. If the point is awarded to the now-serving team, the first server will begin service from the left service court.

All players must be completely on their team's end during the serve. Other than the server, no additional positioning restrictions apply.

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While fixed positions are not prescribed for players other than the server, standard convention places the correct receiver in the appropriate service court behind the baseline to receive serve.

5.6 Side-Out Scoring

In side-out scoring, a point is awarded only when the serving team wins the rally.

5.7 Other Service Faults

5.7.1 Server Fault

If the server or server's partner calls a timeout after the start of the score call, it is a fault.

5.7.2 Receiver Faults

It is a fault against a receiving player/team if any of the following occur:

- The served ball clears the net, or contacts the net in crossing, and then touches the receiver or the receiver's partner before bouncing.
- The receiver or the receiver's partner calls a timeout after the start of the score call.
- When the correct server and receiver are positioned according to the score, or have been informed of their correct positions, the receiver's partner who is not the correct receiver, returns the serve.

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Rule 6. During a Rally

6.1 Double Bounce

A player/team must return the ball before it bounces twice. Failure to do so results in a fault.

6.2 Missed Shot

A complete miss when attempting to strike the ball does not result in a dead ball. The ball remains live and the rally continues until the ball becomes dead or a fault otherwise occurs.

6.3 Ball Flight Interference

A player may not engage in conduct that creates the possibility of influencing, propelling, or altering the ball's flight by any means other than a legal paddle strike (e.g., blowing on or fanning the ball to affect its path). A missed shot ***[Rule 6.2]***, by itself, is not a violation. However, a claim that conduct deemed to potentially interfere with the ball's flight was merely a missed shot does not negate a violation. A violation of this rule is a fault.

6.4 Distraction

Players must not interfere with an opponent's ability to play the ball.

A distraction will only be called when a player's action(s) create a clear and observable disruption that directly prevents or alters the opponent's opportunity to make a play on the ball. The threshold for a distraction call is intentionally high.

Normal movement, paddle preparation, or incidental player sounds or reactions associated with athletic play do not constitute a distraction. Actions or sounds may be loud, visible, or emotionally expressive, and still be considered normal or incidental, thus falling short of the distraction standard.

Rallies will not be stopped for distractions and must be played to their natural conclusion. Any player/team that stops or effectively stops play during a live rally to claim a distraction commits a fault.

After the rally has concluded:

- If the distracting player/team wins the rally, a fault will be assessed against the offending team and the rally will be awarded to the opponent.
- If the non-distracting team wins the rally, the result of the rally will stand, and the offending player/team will be assessed a Mark.

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6.5 Around the Net Post (ATP) Shot

A player may return the ball around the outside of the net post. The ball is not required to travel back over the net, and there is no restriction on the height of the return, it may pass below the height of the net.

6.6 Net Malfunction

A net malfunction during a live rally results in a replay (e.g., a billowing net contacting the ball or a player, net legs lifting off the playing surface due to wind).

****Exception:** A ball that becomes lodged in, or passes through, a hole in the net is a dead ball, and the player/team that struck the ball loses the rally.

6.7 Broken, Cracked, Degraded, or Soft Ball

If a ball becomes broken, cracked, degraded, or soft during a live rally, play must continue until the rally has concluded.

A replay will occur only if the ball cracks from one hole to another or splits into two separate pieces. Otherwise, the rally result will stand as played.

A broken or cracked ball will be replaced. A degraded or soft ball will be replaced only with the agreement of all players.

Players must not destroy or otherwise impair a ball before the opponent or Lead Referee, if present, has an opportunity to inspect it. If a ball is destroyed or impaired prior to inspection, a Mark will be assessed.

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Rule 7. Line Calling

7.1 Guiding Principle

When players are assigned line-calling duties, they must strive for accuracy. A ball may be called OUT only if the player clearly sees discernible space between the ball's contact point and the outside edge of the boundary line. Visible space confirms an OUT call when observed without obstruction or doubt. All questionable or uncertain line calls must be resolved in favor of the opponent.

Line calls are based on what a player clearly sees from their viewing angle at the moment the ball contacts the playing surface. If a player cannot clearly see space between the ball's contact point and the boundary line (e.g., the player is positioned directly over the ball at contact), the player should not call the ball OUT. Although a ball may overhang a line, overhang alone does not constitute contact with the line. A partner viewing the same ball from a different angle may clearly see space between the contact point and the line and may properly call the ball OUT.

The requirements of **clearly seeing space** and **identifying the contact point** are complementary and not contradictory.

7.2 IN-Bounds Ball Determination

Except on the serve, a ball is IN if it lands within court boundaries, including any court line. A served ball is IN if it clears the non-volley zone, which includes the non-volley zone lines, and lands in the correct service court or on any correct service court line.

Although a player is not required to call the ball IN, any verbal or visual indication by a player that the ball is IN after it bounces, verbally or otherwise (e.g., flat palm to the ground, thumbs up, or similar signal) will cause the ball to be deemed IN.

In doubles, if one player on court calls a ball IN and their partner calls it OUT, the ball will be declared IN by rule.

A player that indicates that the ball is IN may not subsequently change that indication to an OUT call.

7.3 OUT-of-Bounds Ball Determination

A ball that contacts the playing surface completely outside the court is considered OUT. Although the curvature of the ball may extend over a boundary line at the moment it contacts the playing surface, the ball may not have contacted the line. If the ball did not contact the line it is OUT.

Additionally, a served ball that crosses the net and lands in the non-volley zone, including any non-volley zone line, is OUT.

7.4 Line Calling Responsibilities

Players are responsible for line calls on their end of the court.

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****Exception:** In officiated matches, referee(s) are responsible for calling short serves, service foot faults, and all non-volley zone faults.

7.5 Line Call Timing

Players on court must make an OUT call verbally and/or by clearly signaling with a finger pointed toward the sideline, baseline, or upward. An OUT call made after the ball bounces constitutes a line call. Once an OUT call is made, the ball is dead and play stops immediately.

All OUT calls must be made promptly, meaning before the opponent strikes the ball or before the ball becomes dead.

If no prompt OUT call is made, the ball is IN by rule. When a referee is present, the IN ruling may be appealed to the referee.

7.6 Line Call Clarification and Appeal Process

Whether a player/team makes an initial line call or does not make a call because they did not see the ball or are uncertain, the player/team may request an opinion from either the opponent(s) or referee(s). This request must be made before the start of the score call for the next rally.

If the opponent(s) can make a clear IN or OUT call, that call must be accepted and will stand, with no further referee appeal permitted.

If the referee(s) can make a clear IN or OUT call, that ruling will stand.

If no clear determination can be made, either the player/team's original OUT call stands or the ball will be IN by rule.

7.7 Partner Communication

If a player says "out," "no," "bounce it," "watch," or similar while the ball is still in the air, the statement is considered partner communication and not a line call. Play will continue until the rally concludes or a proper line call is made.

7.8 Overruling Line Calls

Players may overrule, to their own detriment:

- Their own line call.
- A partner's line call.
- A line call made by a referee upon appeal.
- An IN ruling on the opponent's end.

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Rule 8. Dead Balls and Faults

8.1 Two-Bounce Rule

After the ball is served, each side must make one groundstroke prior to volleying the ball. If the serve or return of serve is struck before the ball bounces, it is a fault.

8.2 Net System Dead Balls and Faults

- Hitting the ball into one's own side of the net without it crossing to the opponent's side is a fault. The ball becomes dead when it contacts the ground.
- If the ball becomes lodged in, or passes through, a hole in the net, the ball becomes dead and the player/team that struck the ball loses the rally.
- Hitting the ball under the net or between the net and the net post is a fault.
- A ball that contacts the net post is dead. The team that struck the ball loses the rally unless the ball first bounced on the opponent's court.

  For temporary nets, if the net-tension rod is attached to, or supports, the net chord to establish the required net height, the ball is also dead if it contacts the net-tension rod or any space between the net post and the net-tension rod. The team that struck the ball loses the rally unless the ball first bounced on the opponent's court.
- A player, a player's apparel, or a player's paddle contacting the net system while the ball is live is a fault.
- If a ball goes over the net, contacts the court, and then touches the horizontal bar (whether on the upward or downward path), the ball becomes dead and the team that struck the ball over the net wins the rally. A replay will occur only if the ball contacts the horizontal bar after crossing the net and before contacting the court.
- A ball that contacts a placard affixed to the net on the player's/team's own side of the net becomes dead, and the player/team that struck the ball loses the rally. A replay will only occur if the ball contacts a placard affixed to the net after crossing the net and before contacting the court.

8.3 Plane of the Net Faults

8.3.1 Player Crossing the Plane of the Net

It is a fault if a player's body, including anything worn or carried, completely crosses the plane of the net before striking the ball.

A player who extends a paddle beyond the plane of the net has not committed a plane-of-the-net fault. If the action meets the standard for a distraction under these rules, a fault or Mark will be assessed.

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8.3.2 Ball Crossing the Plane of the Net

The ball must completely cross to a player's/team's side of the net before being played. A player who strikes the ball before it completely crosses the plane of the net commits a fault.

8.4 Ball Contact Fault

After the serve, ball contact with a player's body or anything worn or carried by the player, other than the paddle or hand(s) below the wrist in contact with the paddle handle, results in a fault.

8.5 Stoppage Dead Balls and Faults

8.5.1 Live Ball

The ball is live once the score call begins. Stopping play after the ball is live is a fault.

****Exception:** No fault is committed when a player stops play within the permitted time frame to request a score recall (verbal indicators such as "wait" or "stop" will be recognized) ***[Rule 5.2.4]***, identify an out-of-position player, wrong server/receiver, or incorrect score ***[Rule 5.2.5]***, or call a valid hindrance ***[Rule 8.5.3]***.

8.5.2 Talking to a Referee or Opponent While the Ball is in Play

If a player/team communicates with a referee or opponent while the ball is in play, play is considered effectively stopped and a fault will be called on the offending player/team. A claim that the player was speaking only to themselves or to their partner will not negate the fault. Other than the exception above in ***[Rule 8.5.1]***.

8.5.3 Hindrance Call

When a hindrance is called, the ball becomes dead.

A hindrance is valid when:

- Outside player control and
- Materially affects play.

A valid hindrance call results in a replay. A replay of the rally occurs unless a player/team elects to concede the rally and accept the result of the rally to their own detriment.

An invalid hindrance will result in a fault.

8.6 Multiple Hit Stroke

A ball may contact the paddle more than once only during a continuous, single-direction stroke by one player. If the stroke is not continuous, not in a single direction, or the ball is subsequently struck by a second player, it is a fault.

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8.7 Ball Rebounding Over the Net

If a player/team strikes the ball and it legally crosses the net and lands on the opponent's court, and the ball subsequently rebounds or spins back over the net without being struck by the opponent, the striking player/team wins the rally.

After the ball fully crosses back over the plane of the net, an opponent may legally reach over the net to strike the ball, provided the player does not contact the net or commit any other fault.

8.8 Injury During Rally

A rally continues to its natural conclusion even if a player becomes injured. If play is stopped or effectively stopped to attend to an injured player before the rally's conclusion, a fault will be called on the offending player/team.

8.9 Player Contact with Opponent's Court

It is a fault if a player contacts the opponent's end of the court while the ball is live.

8.10 Items on the Playing Surface

8.10.1 Items on Own End

Any item worn or carried by a player that falls and lands on that player's end of the court is not a fault, unless:

- The item lands in the non-volley zone as a result of a volley.
- The ball contacts the fallen item, in which case the ball becomes dead and the player/team that lost the item loses the rally.

8.10.2 Item Contact with Opponent's End

Any item worn or carried by a player that falls or comes off and lands on the opponent's end of the court while the ball is live results in a fault against the player/team that lost the item.

8.11 Paddle Faults

8.11.1 One Paddle

A player may possess only one paddle during a rally. Violating this rule, including picking up a partner's dropped paddle while holding another paddle, constitutes a fault.

8.11.2 Paddle Possession

A player may switch their paddle from one hand to the other at any time. The paddle must be in the player's possession at the moment it contacts the ball. If the ball contacts a paddle that is not in the possession of its respective player (e.g., the player releases the paddle or the paddle is on the playing surface), the ball

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becomes dead and a fault will be assessed against the player/team that lost possession of the paddle.

8.12 Equipment Breakage or Loss

Players are responsible for ensuring that all equipment remains in playable condition. A rally will not be stopped due to paddle breakage or loss during play unless such occurrence results in a fault under these rules.

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Rule 9. Non-Volley Zone (NVZ)

9.1 Act of Volleying

The arm-swinging element of the act of volleying may be initiated inside or outside the non-volley zone. The volley, follow-through after contact, and any resulting momentum from the act of volleying must occur completely outside the non-volley zone.

The act of volleying ends only when the player has regained balance and control.

9.2 Non-Volley Zone Entry

A player may enter the non-volley zone at any time except while volleying the ball or before balance and control have been regained following the act of volleying.

A player may remain in the non-volley zone to return a ball that has bounced. No violation occurs if a player does not exit the non-volley zone after a groundstroke.

9.3 Volleying Player Non-Volley Zone Contact

It is a fault if the volleying player, or anything the player is wearing or carrying, contacts the non-volley zone during the volley, follow-through, or as a result of momentum from the act of volleying.

Momentum-based contact with the non-volley zone is a fault even if it occurs after the ball has become dead.

9.4 Feet Re-establishment

A player who has contacted the non-volley zone may not volley until each foot that contacted the non-volley zone has re-established contact with the playing surface outside the non-volley zone.

If only one foot entered the non-volley zone, only that foot must re-establish.

Re-establishment of feet alone does not constitute regaining balance and control if momentum from the act of volleying continues.

9.5 Partner Contact in Non-Volley Zone (“Two Become One”)

It is a fault if the volleying player touches their partner while the partner is in contact with the non-volley zone.

It is also a fault if such touching causes the non-volleying partner to contact the non-volley zone.

Likewise, if the non-volleying partner contacts the non-volley zone and then touches the volleying player before first re-establishing any foot that had contacted the non-volley zone, it is a fault.

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9.6 Partner Non-Volley Zone Position

It is not a fault if a player volleys the ball while their partner is positioned in the non-volley zone, provided neither partner, nor anything either partner is wearing or carrying, touches the other partner during the act of volleying.

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Rule 10. Continuous Play and Timeouts

10.1 Continuous Play

Play will remain continuous. Receivers must play to the reasonable pace established by the server.

Brief pauses for toweling off, hydration, and partner/coach communication between rallies are permitted, provided such pauses do not disrupt the flow of play or delay the server's ability to resume play.

A delay is considered unreasonable when it disrupts the natural flow and continuity of play.

Unnecessary interruptions or undue delays, particularly during an opponent's service sequence, may result in a sanction for delay of game.

10.2 Suspended Match

If a match is suspended during a game due to extenuating circumstances, play will resume in the same game with the server, score, and remaining timeouts as when play was interrupted.

If suspended between games, the match will resume in proper game order with court ends consistent with the original coin toss selections.

If resumed on a different court, players may agree on court ends consistent with the original selections. Absent mutual agreement, court ends will be determined by a fair method (e.g., coin toss).

10.3 Taking a Timeout

10.3.1 Before a Match or Between Games

No timeout may be taken before a match begins ***[Rule 4.2]***.

In multi-game matches, a timeout may be taken before the start of any game after Game 1.

10.3.2 Timeout Allotment

Each team is allowed:

- One timeout in games to 11 or 15 points.
- Two timeouts in games to 21 points.

A timeout is one (1) minute in duration but may end sooner if all players are ready to resume play.

If a player/team requests a timeout when none remain, play will continue without sanction.

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10.3.3 Indicating a Timeout

A timeout must be requested before the start of the score call for the next rally.

A late timeout request is a fault against the requesting player/team. Once the fault has been assessed, the timeout may then be taken.

The following methods are the only acceptable ways to request a timeout:

- Verbally stating “timeout”, and/or
- Forming a “T” with the hands or paddle.

A timeout is considered granted when properly requested and clearly acknowledged. If a Lead Referee is present, the Lead Referee must acknowledge the timeout. If no referee is present, the opposing team must acknowledge the timeout.

Leaving the court without acknowledgement will result in a Mark for delay of game.

10.3.4 Resuming Play After a Timeout

A 15-second readiness period will precede resumption of play.

If officiated, this will be announced. Otherwise, players must adhere to the same timing standard.

The 15-second readiness period begins upon expiration of any prescribed timeout duration, upon notification to resume play, or once the issue prompting a discretionary timeout has been resolved. Play may resume early if all players are ready.

All players must be in position and ready to resume play before the expiration of the 15-second period. Failure to be ready will result in a Mark for delay of game.

10.4 Medical Timeout

10.4.1 Allotment and Request

Each player is allotted one (1) medical timeout per match.

A player requiring medical attention during a match must request a medical timeout.

A player is not required to disclose specific medical details beyond what is reasonably necessary to facilitate treatment and match administration.

10.4.2 Rescinding a Medical Timeout

Once the Lead Referee announces a medical timeout, the request may not be rescinded without penalty. Any rescission after the announcement counts as a used medical timeout, and the requesting player will lose their medical timeout for the match.

If no referee is present, once a player notifies the opponent(s) that a medical timeout is needed, the request may not be rescinded without penalty. Any

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subsequent rescission by the requesting player results in the loss of the medical timeout for the match.

10.4.3 Bleeding Protocol

If blood is present, play will be stopped.

Minor bleeding that can be promptly controlled (e.g., cleaning, toweling, or bandaging) does not require a medical timeout. In such cases, a referee timeout will be administered to allow the player to address the issue.

A medical timeout is required when bleeding:

- Is significant,
- Cannot be promptly controlled,
- Presents an ongoing safety concern, or
- Requires evaluation or treatment.

A player with visible blood on their person or clothing may not resume play until the condition has been properly addressed.

10.4.4 Validity and Penalties

A medical timeout is valid when a player experiences a condition requiring immediate care, including diagnosis, stabilization, or essential treatment (e.g., a gash or nosebleed, rolled ankle, sudden illness, heat-related symptoms, cramping, respiratory distress).

A medical timeout is not valid when used for:

- Strategic delay or recovery advantage
- Bathroom breaks
- General fatigue
- Routine or preventative treatment (e.g., taping an ankle “just in case”)

A player/team that takes a medical timeout without a valid medical condition will be penalized. If a medical timeout is determined to be invalid a Foul will be assessed, resulting in one (1) point awarded to the opponent.

Regardless of who provides initial care, validity of the medical timeout should be determined by on-site medical/trainer personnel, or by the Head Referee or Tournament Director when medical staff is unavailable.

If the player’s personal medic/trainer resolves the issue prior to the arrival of tournament medical personnel, the medical timeout may be deemed valid upon review by the Lead Referee, Head Referee, or Tournament Director.

The determination is final and not subject to appeal.

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10.4.5 Timing the Medical Timeout

The medical timeout begins when tournament medical/trainer personnel, or the Tournament Director or the Head Referee when medical staff is not on-site, arrives at the court to render aid. The permitted time is as follows:

- On-court evaluation and treatment: Three (3) minutes total.
- Treatment occurring off the playing surface or to control bleeding: An additional (2) minutes, for a total of five (5) minutes.

The timeout must be continuous and will not be paused for player transport or relocation.

If a player does not specify whether the medic or the trainer is required or preferred, the medical timeout will begin upon the arrival of the first medical personnel.

If a player specifically requests a medic or trainer, and such personnel is on-site, the timeout begins upon arrival of the requested personnel.

A request to use a personal medic or trainer initiates the medical timeout immediately upon the request, regardless of whether the personal provider has arrived.

Once treatment begins by any personnel, whether requested or not, the medical timeout is deemed to have commenced and will not restart upon the arrival of additional personnel.

No additional warm-up time is permitted beyond the allotted medical timeout.

10.4.6 Completing a Medical Timeout

Regardless of intent to continue, the player who requested the medical timeout must return to the playing surface, if they left, and declare one of the following:

I. **Continue Play -** A player/team is deemed to have continued play once one rally is completed or a point penalty is accepted.

   Play must continue before any subsequent timeout request will be granted.

II. **Retire from the Match -** Retirement must be clearly declared to the opponent or Lead Referee.

III. **Abstain from Play -** To avoid penalty, abstention must be declared to the opponent or Lead Referee. A player may return to play only after properly re-declaring availability. Abstention from play is not permitted in singles matches ***[Rule 13.2.2]*****.**

After electing to continue play, the player/team must be prepared to resume play within the subsequent 15-second readiness period.

Play may resume early if the player who requested the medical timeout declares the ability to continue.

****Exception:** A player with a match-assigned referee escort during the medical timeout may declare retirement to that referee without having to return to the court.

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10.4.7 Medical Timeout: Delay of Game Penalty Schedule

A player who has not retired and is not ready to resume play at the expiration of the medical timeout will be subject to escalating delay-of-game penalties.

At fifteen (15) seconds after the expiration of the authorized medical timeout duration, a Mark will be assessed for delay of game.

After each additional sixty (60) seconds, a Mark will be assessed until the player/team is ready to play, medically retires, or the match is forfeited.

Each additional Mark results in one (1) point awarded to the opponent and progresses in accordance with the escalation structure ***[Rule 12.5]***.

10.4.8 Unused Time

Any unused portion of the medical timeout is forfeited and may not be used later in the match.

10.4.9 Use of Timeout Before Medical Timeout

A player may call a one (1) minute timeout and subsequently request a medical timeout.

If the Lead Referee has already completed the timeout announcement, the player will be charged for the timeout. The medical timeout will then proceed.

10.5 Equipment Timeout

10.5.1 Equipment Timeout Eligibility

An equipment timeout may be granted when the issue is not caused by the player (e.g., contact lens has fallen out, paddle damage resulting from a fall, shoelace that breaks).

Player-caused equipment issues (e.g., smashing or throwing a paddle) are not eligible for an equipment timeout. In such cases, the player/team must use a timeout to address the issue. If the player/team has no timeouts, a Mark for delay of game will be issued. Regardless, the player will be subject to ***[Rules 10.5.2 and 10.5.3]*** while resolving the issue.

Grip-related issues are not grounds for an equipment timeout. Players must regrip their paddle during a Break in Play and be finished or nearly finished when the 15-second readiness period that precedes resumption of play begins. Nearly finished means the grip is being cut/torn, the finishing tape is being applied and the player is walking back onto the court to resume play. If the player is still actively wrapping the grip after the 15-second readiness period and is not ready to play when time expires, a Mark for delay of game will be assessed.

10.5.2 Timing the Equipment Timeout

Once granted, the equipment timeout begins immediately following the announcement by the player or Lead Referee. The permitted time is as follows:

- On-court equipment change: Three (3) minutes total.

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- Securing new equipment off the playing surface: An additional (2) minutes, for a total of five (5) minutes.

Play will resume immediately once the issue has been resolved, at the discretion of the Lead Referee. A 15-second readiness period will precede resumption of play.

No warm-up is permitted before play resumes following an equipment timeout.

10.5.3 Misuse of an Equipment Timeout

The player must actively address the equipment issue during the timeout. Misuse of the time will result in termination of the timeout and a Mark for delay of game.

10.6 Referee Timeout

A referee timeout may not be requested by players and is granted solely at the discretion of the Lead Referee to address immediate or exceptional circumstances (e.g., a player in visible distress who refuses to take a medical timeout, presence of blood on a player or the court, moisture on the court requiring cleanup, power outage, issues with officiating equipment such as an iPad or headset).

- There is no prescribed time limit. Play resumes once the concern has been resolved.
- A 15-second readiness period will precede resumption of play.
- Failure to be ready results in a Mark for delay of game.

10.7 Abuse of Timeout Procedures

Any attempt to misuse, manipulate, or intentionally delay play through improper timeout requests or procedural exploitation may result in delay-of-game sanctions.

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Rule 11. Coaching

11.1. Allowable Coaching

Coaching is permitted between rallies and during timeouts. Coaching during a live rally is prohibited and may result in a Warning, Mark, or Foul.

11.2. Player/Team Responsibility

Players/teams are responsible for the conduct of family members, representatives, coaches, and any accredited or clearly associated persons seated in designated player areas or acting on their behalf.

Sanctions for coaching violations may be assessed against the associated player/team regardless of whether the individual is formally designated as a coach.

Improper coaching may be sanctioned whether initiated by the coach or solicited by the player/team.

11.3. Coaching and Line Calls

It is a violation if a coach makes an OUT call during a live rally.

If a player/team makes a timely OUT call during a live rally that was influenced or assisted by a coach, the line call itself will stand. However, the player/team may be sanctioned for illegal coaching based on the severity or frequency of the interference, as determined by the Lead Referee.

A coach may assist on a line call without sanction when making an IN line call to the detriment of their player/team.

Coach assistance must not delay the resumption of play.

11.4. Electronic Equipment

Players may not wear headphones or earbuds, nor talk on any device that enables audio communication during a match. Players are allowed to send or respond to texts during a Break in Play. Electronic devices may only be used during play if medically necessary (e.g., a cell phone used for medical monitoring, prescribed or necessary hearing aids).

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Rule 12. Rule-Based and Behavioral Sanctions

12.1 Sanction Authority and Application

Once a referee has jurisdiction ***[Rule 14.1.2]*** over a match, sanctions may be assessed in accordance with these rules.

Sanctions apply for the duration of the match unless otherwise specified.

12.2 Pre-Match Sanctions

Sanctions assessed prior to the start of a match are not recorded as a Mark or Foul. A Warning may be issued, and, if warranted, one (1) point may be awarded to the opponent at the start of the match as a pre-match penalty. If conduct rises to the level of forfeiture, a game or match may be forfeited before play begins.

12.3 Sanction Types

12.3.1 Warning

A Warning is corrective and serves to place a player/team on notice. A Warning does not result in a point penalty, and multiple Warnings may be issued to the same player/team, particularly for different infractions. A Warning may be issued at any time, including after a Mark or Foul has been assessed.

Infractions that may warrant a Warning include, but are not limited to:

- Profanity, whether audible or visual, not directed at any person and not disruptive to play.
- Delaying play between rallies that disrupts the flow of play.
- Isolated, minor coaching violations that do not influence play.

12.3.2 Mark

A Mark is a formal corrective sanction assessed when behavior exceeds a Warning or disrupts play, fairness, or match administration. Marks are cumulative and remain with a player/team for the duration of the match.

A Mark may be assessed at any time after the match has begun.

The following violations warrant a Mark:

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- Objectionable behavior, whether audible or visible, that is offensive or disruptive, or contrary to the standards of conduct expected in competition, including repeated profanity, but not directed at a specific person.
- Striking or throwing the ball between rallies or games such that the ball contacts an inanimate object (e.g. the net or video board), without creating risk to any person.

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- Striking another person's property or any inanimate object, other than the court surface, with the paddle while it remains in the player's hand, **without causing damage**.
- Persistently arguing with the referee crew, other players, or spectators.
- Committing a distraction during a rally in which the offending player/team loses the rally.
- Destroying or otherwise damaging a ball (e.g., stepping on, crushing, or deforming the ball) before the Lead Referee has had an opportunity to inspect it.

Game Flow and Time Violations

- Delaying play between rallies for an extended duration or on a repeated basis, resulting in a disruption of the normal flow of play.
- Not being ready to play at the expiration of the 15-second period following the Lead Referee's announcement.
- When a timeout is not available, a player-caused equipment issue that requires a stoppage of play to address it, regardless of duration.
- Misuse or abuse of a timeout or timeout procedures.

Fair Play and Integrity Violations

- Coaching when not permitted, including commentary or signals regarding line calls, or repeated coaching violations within the same match.
- Unauthorized use of electronics during a match.

Administrative and Procedural Violations

- Not properly indicating a timeout to a referee on-court.
- Failure to provide notice of starting server change.
- Failure to properly follow required abstention declaration or re-declaration procedures.

12.3.3 Foul

A Foul is a penalty sanction that results in one (1) point awarded to the opponent. Fouls are cumulative and stay with a player/team for the duration of the match.

A Foul is assessed when behavior is extreme, reckless, threatening, repeated after prior Warnings or Marks, or creates risk to persons, property, or competitive integrity.

A Foul may be issued at any time after the match has begun.

The following violations warrant a Foul:

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Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- Objectionable behavior, whether audible or visible, that is abusive, threatening, or degrading and that directly targets a person or otherwise compromises the integrity of the match.
- Hitting, kicking, or throwing the ball when not in play, including outside the three-dimensional bounds of the playing surface, in disregard of surroundings or in a manner that creates a safety risk (e.g., toward or into areas occupied by players, referees, or spectators), with no person struck.
- Striking another person's property or any inanimate object, with the paddle while it remains in the player's hand, **resulting in damage**.
- Throwing or propelling a paddle, regardless of intent, such that it leaves the player's hand in disregard of surroundings, with no person struck and no property damaged (e.g., contacting the fence or other court fixtures).
- Any other pattern of conduct that rises to the level of extreme unsportsmanlike behavior (e.g., numerous egregious line calls, repeatedly refusing to acknowledge or comply with clear referee instructions affecting match administration).

Fair Play and Integrity Violations

- Coaching when not permitted that creates a competitive advantage, continues after corrective instruction or a prior sanction, or otherwise undermines fair play.
- Failing to make a reasonable competitive attempt during points (e.g., "serving around", minimal or non-competitive movement during rallies, patterns of play that result in points or games being conceded in a manner inconsistent with normal competitive play).

Administrative and Procedural Violations

- An unsuccessful or improper appeal of a Lead Referee's decision to the Head Referee.
- Requesting a medical timeout without a valid medical condition as determined by on-site medical/trainee personnel or Tournament Director or Head Referee if no medical staff is on-site.

12.4 Concurrent Sanctions

Sanctions may be assessed simultaneously to opposing players/teams and are not required to be of equal severity.

12.5 Escalation of Sanctions

Marks and Fouls accumulate and escalate regardless of violation category.

After a player/team has received one (1) Mark, any subsequent Mark or Foul will result in one (1) point awarded to the opponent.

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If a Foul is assessed as the first sanction, one (1) point is awarded immediately to the opponent, and each subsequent Mark or Foul results in another one (1) point awarded.

When the accumulation of Marks and Fouls results in three (3) total points being awarded to the opponent, in any match format, the Lead Referee will immediately suspend play and summon the Head Referee or Tournament Director to the court, if not already present, to review the basis for the sanctions assessed.

Upon confirmation, the ruling will be:

- A game forfeit in a multi-game match, or
- A match forfeit in a single-game match.

If the forfeited game results in the opponent winning the match, the match concludes immediately.

If four (4) total points are awarded to the opponent as a result of Marks and Fouls, the match is automatically forfeited without further review.

12.6 Behavioral Game Forfeit

The following conduct results in an immediate game forfeit and is independent of accumulated Marks and Fouls. The Lead Referee must consult with the Tournament Director or Head Referee before imposing a game forfeit.

- Striking or throwing the ball between rallies or games that results in a person being struck.
- Throwing or propelling a paddle, regardless of intent, that does not strike a person but results in property damage, creates a safety risk (e.g., traveling toward or into an area occupied by players, officials, or spectators), or leaves the three-dimensional bounds of the playing surface.

If the conduct occurs between games, the forfeit applies to the next game of the match.

12.7 Behavioral Match Forfeit

The following conduct results in an immediate match forfeit and is independent of accumulated Marks and Fouls. The match forfeit must be confirmed by the Head Referee or Tournament Director.

- Failure or refusal to comply with a directive issued by the Head Referee or Tournament Director to change, adjust, or remove non-compliant apparel or accessories.
- Failure or refusal to comply with a directive issued by the Lead Referee to wear the starting server band.
- Initiating physical contact with an opponent, official, or spectator.
- Use of ethnic, religious, racial, sexist, or homophobic slurs, whether directed at a person or spoken audibly.

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- Throwing or propelling a paddle, regardless of intent, resulting in a person being struck.
- Spitting or coughing on a person.
- Providing false, misleading, or inaccurate information to the Tournament Director, Head Referee, Lead Referee, or any match-assigned referee regarding a granted exception, rule interpretation, or equipment compliance, including, but not limited to, electronic device use or falsely representing that a paddle has been tested or approved, is a direct violation of competitive integrity and will result in an immediate match forfeit.

  The player may also be subject to ejection or expulsion from the tournament by the Tournament Director or Head Referee. The Tour or League may impose additional disciplinary action, including fines and suspension.

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Rule 13. Ending a Match

13.1 Match Completion (Winning By Score)

A match is completed when a player/team wins the required number of games as prescribed by the match format (e.g., games to 11, 15, or 21 points, with a two-point margin).

13.2 Retirement

13.2.1 Retirement Procedure

After a match has begun, a player/team may discontinue play only by declaring a retirement.

In officiated matches, declaration is made to the Lead Referee. Otherwise, it must be clearly communicated to the opponents.

Upon retirement, the match is awarded to the opponent, all completed games will stand as played, and any incomplete game is recorded based on the score at the time of retirement, consistent with tournament procedures. In doubles, if one partner retires, the remaining partner may not continue to compete.

13.2.2 Partner Abstention Instead of Retirement

A partner who does not retire may abstain from play and remain on the player bench solely for administrative completion of the match. The declaration must be made to the referee or clearly communicated to opponents if no official is present.

Abstention may be declared at any time, but only once per match, and does not stop play or delay the match. While a player is abstaining, all service and receiving opportunities for that player are bypassed. When it is the abstaining player's turn to receive, a point is automatically awarded to the opposing team, and the serving team is not required to serve to an open court. An abstaining player is not considered an on-court player and may not exercise the rights or privileges of an active player, including communicating with a partner during rallies, requesting timeouts, or otherwise participating in play.

Simultaneous abstention by both partners on a team is not permitted. A player may resume play only by re-declaring availability during a Break in Play and prior to the start of the pre-serve 15-second period. Upon proper re-declaration, the player is immediately returned to play.

Failure to properly declare abstention or re-declare availability will result in a Mark.

13.2.3 Retirement Score Reporting

When a player/team retires, the score at the time of retirement is recorded. The non-retiring player/team is awarded the minimum number of points necessary to complete the game or match with at least a two-point margin. The retiring player/team retains all points earned up to the time of retirement.

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If the retirement occurs during a game, that game is awarded to the non-retiring player/team and recorded using the retiring player/team's existing score and the minimum winning score required. Any remaining game(s) required to complete the match are recorded as “11-0” in favor of the non-retiring player/team.

Once a game is completed in a multi-game match, its score, whether achieved through play or forfeiture, will not be altered due to a subsequent retirement.

Example -

- Retirement occurs at “10-5” (retiring team has a score of 10).
- Remaining game(s) needed to complete the match are recorded as “11-0”.

Match Results -

- Single game to 15: “15-10”.
- Best-of-three (⅔): “12-10”, “11-0”.
- Best-of-five (⅗): “12-10”, “11-0”, “11-0”.

13.2.4 Bracket Play Eligibility after Match Retirement

A player/team that retires from a match remains eligible to compete in later matches within the same bracket. A player/team may also retire from any subsequent match in that bracket after play has begun.

13.3 Withdrawals

13.3.1 Withdrawal Procedure

A player/team may request withdrawal from a bracket that has not yet started. A player/team that has begun competition may withdraw from remaining matches, provided the request is made before the start of the next scheduled match.

Withdrawal requests must be communicated to tournament personnel (e.g., Tournament Director, Head Referee, or Tournament Operations).

Once withdrawal is declared, the player/team is removed from all remaining participation in that bracket.

13.3.2 Withdrawal Score Reporting

All match results recorded prior to withdrawal will remain official and be retained in the tournament results.

All remaining match scores will be recorded as follows:

- Best-of-three (⅔) format: “0-0, 0-0”
- Best-of-five (⅗) format: “0-0, 0-0, 0-0”
- Single game formats (e.g., to 15 or 21): “0-0”

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13.4 Forfeit

13.4.1 Game or Match Forfeit – Court Reporting

A player/team that fails to report or is not ready for play within the required time frame will forfeit a game or match.

Once it has been confirmed that a second call has been made to the players, the following timing procedure will be initiated:

One (1) point penalty will be assessed for every four (4) minutes the player/team is late (e.g., 4:00, 8:00, and 12:00).

Best-of-Three (⅔) Format -

- 10:00 → Game 1 forfeited
- 12:00 → Add one (+1) point to start Game 2
- 15:00 → Match forfeited

At ten (10) minutes, Game 1 is forfeited. Any points assessed at the four (4) and eight (8) minute intervals apply only to Game 1. If the player/team has not arrived by twelve (12) minutes, an additional point will be awarded to the opponents to begin Game 2.

In a best-of-three (⅔) format, if the timer reaches fifteen (15) minutes, the match will be forfeited.

Single-Game Match Format (to 7, 11, 15, or 21) -

- 10:00 → Match forfeited

The match will be forfeited at ten (10) minutes. Points assessed at the four (4) minute intervals apply to the match.

A game or match forfeit, based solely on court-reporting timeliness may proceed without further approval.

All relevant times and penalties must be documented on the scoresheet.

13.4.2 Dual Match Forfeit – Winner Determination

If both players/teams are assessed a match forfeit for failure to meet participation requirements and no winner can be determined under standard forfeit procedures, a winner will be determined by a fair method (e.g., coin toss).

The coin toss will be conducted at Tournament Operations. The result of the coin toss is final and establishes the match winner for advancement purposes.

13.4.3 Game or Match Forfeit – Other Behavior

The Lead Referee has the authority to impose a game forfeit in any match format (e.g., single-game matches, best-of-three (⅔) or best-of-five (⅗)). However, when the forfeit is not solely the result of court-reporting timeliness, the Lead Referee must consult with the Tournament Director or Head Referee before imposing a game forfeit.

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Once a game forfeit has been approved by the Tournament Director or Head Referee, any subsequent forfeiture during the same match does not require approval.

13.5 Ejection or Expulsion

The Tournament Director or Head Referee is authorized to eject a player from the tournament or expel a player from a venue for cause.

13.6 Forfeit, Ejection, and Expulsion Score Reporting

13.6.1 General Principles

A forfeit, ejection, or expulsion is a rule-based administrative action imposed on a player/team. Upon imposition, the offending player/team forfeits the applicable game or match in accordance with these Rules. This action applies only to the affected match. All match results previously completed and recorded prior to the affected match remain official and are retained in the tournament results.

13.6.2 Match Forfeit Scoring

When a match forfeit is imposed, the match is terminated immediately.

All points and completed games, in a multi-game match, are lost and the match scores will be officially reported in favor of the non-offending player/team as follows:

Multi-game Match Format -

- Best-of-three (⅔) format: “11-0, 11-0”
- Best-of-five (⅗) format: “11-0, 11-0, 11-0”

Single-game Match Format -

- Game to 7 format: “7-0”
- Game to 11 format: “11-0”
- Game to 15 format: “15-0”
- Game to 21 format: “21-0”

13.6.3 Game Forfeit

A game forfeit applies only to the current or upcoming game and does not automatically terminate the match.

Each forfeited game will be recorded as a win for the non-offending player/team using the applicable winning game score.

Once a game in a multi-game match has been completed, its score, whether achieved through play or forfeiture, will not be altered by a later-imposed game forfeit.

****Exception:** If forfeited games by a player/team equal the number required to win the match, the result becomes a match forfeit.

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13.6.4 Multi-Game Format Application

The following scoring procedures apply when a game forfeit occurs in a multi-game match that has not otherwise been decided by a match forfeit:

Best-of-three (⅔) Format -

- Game 1 Forfeit (No completed games) - The score of the game will be recorded as “11-0” in favor of the non-forfeited player/team. The match will continue to Game 2 and, if necessary, Game 3.
- Game 2 Forfeit - The score of Game 1 stands, and Game 2 will be recorded as “11-0” in favor of the non-forfeited player/team. If the forfeited game results in a player/team winning two (2) of the three (3) games, the match is concluded. If the total games won are one (1) apiece, the match will continue to Game 3.
- Game 3 Forfeit - The scores of Games 1 and 2 stand, and Game 3 is recorded as 11-0 in favor of the non-forfeited player/team. The match is concluded.

Best-of-five (⅗) Format - The same principles apply, with the match concluding once a player/team wins three (3) games.

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SECTION 3 – MATCH ADMINISTRATION

Rule 14. Officials

14.1 Game Officials

14.1.1 Officiating Crew Members

A match may be played under the supervision of three (3) officials: the Lead Referee, Second Referee, and Video Review Referee.

The officiating responsibilities and mechanics for each official are described in the UPA-A Referee Handbook.

14.1.2 Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction begins when any match-assigned referee and the first player arrive at the court and ends fifteen (15) seconds after the Lead Referee completes the match-ending announcement.

During this period, officials retain full authority to administer rules, issue warnings or penalties, and address conduct occurring on or in the immediate vicinity of the playing surface.

Conduct occurring after this period, will be reported to the Head Referee or Tournament Director for review.

14.1.3 Lead Referee Authority

The Lead Referee is responsible for oversight and control of the match and is the final authority for the score.

In the event of disagreement among members of the officiating crew regarding any decision, or the application, enforcement, or interpretation of a rule, the Lead Referee's decision is final, except where review authority is expressly assigned to the Head Referee under these rules.

The Lead Referee's decision on all on-court matters not specifically assigned by rule to another official is final.

As part of this authority, the Lead Referee may direct players to resume play or cease discussion at any time in order to maintain match flow and competitive order. Failure to comply following such instruction may result in immediate escalation to the appropriate sanction.

The Lead Referee is not required to inform players of referee duties, player responsibilities, or rule changes, as this information is provided to all players before the start of each tournament. However, the Lead Referee is obligated to reasonably respond to player questions concerning rules, procedures, or match administration.

The Lead Referee may overrule the Second Referee and is the only one authorized to request that the Head Referee review a Video Review Referee decision. The Second Referee cannot overrule the Lead Referee.

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A Video Review Referee decision is final unless the Lead Referee requests Head Referee review, in which case the Head Referee's decision is final.

14.2 Preventive Refereeing and Coaching Restrictions

Once a match has begun, any on-court referee reported to and determined by the Head Referee to have engaged in coaching, including providing corrective, strategic, or tactical guidance to a player/team, is in violation and subject to immediate removal from the match.

The following conduct by a referee does not constitute coaching:

- Engaging in preventive refereeing before the match begins.
- Explaining, clarifying, or enforcing a rule is strictly limited to stating the applicable rule.
- Providing factual information (e.g., score, player position, fault explanation).
- Clarifying procedural matters necessary for proper match administration.
- Clarifying whether an on-court event is eligible for Line Review or a Video Challenge.

14.3 Appeals to the Head Referee

14.3.1 Factual Determinations

A factual determination concerns the accuracy of an observed event and does not involve interpretation of a rule.

The on-court referees have sole authority to make factual determinations. If Video Challenges are available, a player/team may request a Challenge in accordance with applicable Challenge rules and procedures.

The Video Review Referee has authority to make such determinations upon a proper Video Challenge. The Head Referee may not overturn factual determinations, except those made by the Video Review Referee upon request for review by the Lead Referee.

14.3.2 Rule Interpretation and Application

A rule interpretation concerns the meaning of a rule or how it should be applied and does not involve re-evaluation of what happened during play.

The Lead Referee makes the initial decision on a rule interpretation and/or application. If the Lead Referee is uncertain, or if a player/team appeals the interpretation or application of a rule, the matter will be referred to the Head Referee, whose decision is final.

Players may appeal any Lead Referee rule interpretation or application to the Head Referee, except for a decision by the Lead Referee **not** to request the Head Referee to review a Video Review Referee ruling.

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14.3.3 Improper or Unsuccessful Appeal to the Head Referee

A player/team that has appealed to the Head Referee will be penalized if the Head Referee determines that:

- The appeal concerns a factual determination, or
- The Lead Referee's ruling is upheld.

If the appealing side is determined to have made an improper or unsuccessful appeal, a Foul is assessed, resulting in one (1) point awarded to the opponent.

****Exception:** A player/team will not be assessed a Foul when the sole purpose of the appeal to the Head Referee is to request removal of a referee from the match ***[Rule 14.4]***, and the request is denied.

14.4 Referee Removal

A referee may be removed only in cases involving:

- Conflict of interest,
- Coaching violation,
- Intoxication, impairment, or inappropriate conduct inconsistent with professional officiating standards, or
- Egregious misapplication or interpretation of a rule, established procedures, or recognized precedents.

For purposes of this rule, egregious means a clear, obvious, and significant error that is not a matter of judgment, does not involve debatable interpretation, and results in a material and improper impact on the match.

The Head Referee retains the final discretionary authority on referee removal, and will appoint a replacement.

14.5 Line Judges

A player/team may not request line judges for a match. Instead, a player/team may request assignment of a Second Referee, subject to availability and Head Referee discretion, to assist the Lead Referee.

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Rule 15. Self-Officiated Matches

15.1 Player Responsibility and Match Control

In matches without an assigned referee, players are responsible for score calling, line calls, fault recognition, and resolving routine on-court matters in accordance with these rules and the principles of good sportsmanship.

Matters normally requiring referee judgment, rule interpretation, or discretionary determination must be resolved by player agreement or by requesting a tournament official.

If agreement is not reached and no tournament official is involved, the rally will stand as played.

A player who stops play during a live rally without agreement of all players commits a fault.

Any disagreement or request for resolution must be raised immediately upon conclusion of the rally and before the start of the next score call. Once all players are ready and the server starts to call the score, all prior rally results and unresolved disagreements are final and may not be revisited.

15.2 Score Calling

The server or the server's partner will call the score before each serve. The server must allow reasonable time for opponents to get into position or reposition prior to calling the score.

15.3 Line and Fault Responsibilities

Players are responsible for making all line calls on their end of the court.

Players are expected to immediately acknowledge and call faults committed by themselves or their partner upon occurrence or discovery, and in all cases before the start of the next score call.

A player/team may question a suspected opponent fault either at the time of occurrence or after a rally has concluded. However, a player/team has no authority to enforce a fault against an opponent. Enforcement authority rests solely with the player/team alleged to have committed the fault.

If a disagreement arises regarding a fault, the following will apply:

Question Raised After the Rally - If a suspected fault is brought to the attention of the opponent(s) only after a rally has concluded, and the opponent(s) do not acknowledge committing the fault, the rally will stand as played.

Stoppage of a Live Rally - A player/team that stops play during a live rally to claim an opponent committed a fault has committed a stoppage-of-play fault if the opponent(s) do not acknowledge the alleged fault. The rally will be awarded to the player/team that did not stop play.

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Partner Disagreement - If partners on the same team disagree as to whether their team committed a fault, the benefit of the doubt will be given to the opposing team, and the rally will be awarded to the opposing team.

15.4 Hindrance

When a hindrance is recognized and agreed upon by all players the rally will be replayed.

If agreement cannot be reached, the rally stands as played.

15.5 Requesting a Tournament Official

A player/team may request the assistance of a tournament official or Roaming Referee when:

- The player/team reasonably believes that an opponent is consistently and deliberately violating a rule.
- Players/teams are unable to promptly resolve a dispute.
- A player questions whether an opponent's paddle is approved by UPA-A or USAP or otherwise fails to comply with paddle equipment rules.

15.6 Roaming Referees

A Roaming Referee may intervene only upon request of a player/team or at the direction of the Head Referee and may not independently insert themselves into an ongoing match.

Authority begins upon arrival at the court and is limited to the matter for which assistance was requested unless formally assigned to officiate the match.

A Roaming Referee may not make calls, rulings, or provide opinions regarding on-court events observed while passing a court, including but not limited to:

- Non-volley zone faults,
- Line calls, or
- Any rally-related action occurring before the referee's involvement was requested.

If match conditions warrant officiating oversight, the Roaming Referee may recommend assignment of a referee, subject to availability and Head Referee approval.

15.7 Assignment of Referee Authority

Full match authority begins only when a referee is formally assigned by the Head Referee.

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SECTION 4 – APPENDICES

Appendix A – General Tournament Operations (TO) Policies

TO 1. Tournament Event

TO 1.1 Categories

Sanctioned tournaments may offer the following event categories:

- Men's Singles and Doubles
- Women's Singles and Doubles
- Mixed Doubles
- Moneyball
- Adaptive Play Singles and Doubles

Players may compete in brackets based on age, skill rating, gender, or other eligibility criteria established by the tournament.

TO 2. Approved Competition Formats

TO 2.1 Tournament Formats

Approved tournament competition formats include:

- Single elimination with no consolation
- Double elimination with consolation
- Round robin
- Pool play advancing to medal rounds
- Team competition formats

The selected format for each bracket will be determined prior to the start of tournament play.

TO 2.2 Match Scoring Formats

Recommended scoring is best-of-three (⅔) games to 11, win by two.

Permitted alternatives include:

- Best-of-five (⅗) to 11
- One game to 15
- One game to 21

When necessary due to weather, scheduling constraints, facility limitations, or tournament operations considerations, the Tournament Director may approve modified or shortened scoring formats.

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TO 2.3 Rally Scoring Option

The Tournament Director may authorize rally scoring for approved singles events or competition formats. Unless otherwise modified by **Appendix E – Rally Scoring**, all general rules remain in effect.

TO 3. Match Reporting Responsibility

Players are responsible for monitoring tournament communications and reporting promptly to their assigned court when their match is announced, posted, or otherwise scheduled by Tournament Operations.

Players assume responsibility for match awareness regardless of whether individual notification is received.

TO 4. Tournament Operational Authority

TO 4.1 Tournament Operational Corrections

Tournament Operations retains authority to correct administrative or operational errors when necessary to preserve competition fairness and tournament integrity.

Corrections may include, but are not limited to:

- Score corrections
- Player placement
- Court assignments
- Match outcomes
- Bracket advancement
- Medal results
- Future scheduled matches

TO 4.2 Court and Match Reassignment

Tournament Operations may reassign courts, adjust match locations, or modify scheduling when necessary to accommodate:

- Playing conditions
- Event flow
- Broadcast or spectator considerations
- Facility requirements

TO 5. Tournament Communications and Briefings

Prior to competition, players should receive tournament information outlining operational procedures, schedules, event policies, and other relevant competition requirements.

Additionally, players may be provided information regarding venue-specific logistics, including but not limited to parking, transportation or shuttle services, facility access,

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player check-in procedures, and other site-related instructions necessary for tournament participation.

When possible, this information will be distributed through written pre-tournament communications or official tournament publications. Players are responsible for reviewing tournament communications and complying with all published operational instructions.

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Appendix B – Professional Rules (PR)

PR 1. Appendix B Overview

PR 1.1 Applicability

These Professional Rules apply to all players competing in designated professional brackets sanctioned by UPA-A, including PPA Tour events, MLP events, and affiliated professional competitions.

Unless specifically modified herein, all general rules contained in Rules 1–15 remain in effect.

In the event of any conflict between these Professional Rules and the General Rules, this Appendix will control.

PR 1.1.1 Rule Hierarchy for PPA Events

For PPA events, the Professional Rules (Appendix B) control over the General Rules.

The hierarchy of authority is:

1. Professional Rules (Appendix B)
2. General Rules (Rules 1–15)

PR 1.1.2 Rule Hierarchy for MLP Events

For MLP events, the MLPlay™ Rules Guide (Appendix C) controls over both these Professional Rules and the General Rules.

The hierarchy of authority is:

1. MLPlay™ Rules Guide (Appendix C)
2. Professional Rules (Appendix B)
3. General Rules (Rules 1–15)

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PR 2. Professional Equipment Requirements

PR 2.1 Paddle Approval and Player Responsibility

PR 2.1.1 Paddle Approval

Professional players are responsible for ensuring that any paddle used during competition complies with all UPA-A approved equipment standards.

Only paddles approved for professional competition may be used.

PR 2.1.2 Paddle Condition and Player Responsibility

Players are solely responsible for the condition, performance, and continued compliance of their paddle.

If a player's paddle has degraded, been modified, damaged, or is performing outside intended specifications, the player is expected to voluntarily retire the paddle from play.

No penalty or sanction will be imposed for voluntary paddle retirement.

PR 2.2 Pre-Match Paddle Testing Procedures

PR 2.2.1 Failure to Present a Tested Paddle

For matches requiring paddle testing, each player must present to the Lead Referee the paddle they intend to use to start the match, and that paddle must have successfully passed testing.

A player/team that fails to present a tested paddle to the Lead Referee at the pre-match briefing will be assessed a one (1) point penalty, awarded to the opposing team.

The player must complete paddle testing during the otherwise allowable warm-up period. A player who fails to return to the court with a tested paddle before the expiration of fifteen (15) seconds after the warm-up period will be assessed a Mark for delay of game.

PR 2.2.2 Starting Paddle Requirement

The presented paddle is deemed the player's starting paddle for the match and must be used for the first rally.

A pre-match change is allowed only if the alternate paddle:

- Was brought to court by the player,
- Has already been tested, and
- Is presented to the Lead Referee before play begins.

Otherwise, a one (1) point penalty will be assessed.

PR 2.3 Paddle Challenges

A paddle challenge is a formal administrative request asserting that an opponent's paddle may exceed permitted performance limits.

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Paddle challenges exist to protect competitive integrity and are administrative in nature.

Match results stand as played regardless of testing outcome.

PR 2.3.1 Challenge Timing

A paddle challenge may be initiated at any time during an ongoing match, including the gold medal match.

To preserve all procedural remedies, a challenge must be declared official before the start of the score call for the final rally of the match.

PR 2.3.2 Initiation Procedure

Only a match opponent may initiate a paddle challenge, and only during an ongoing match.

Upon request, the challenging player may ask the opponent to voluntarily change paddles. If the opponent immediately agrees, play resumes without penalty.

If the opponent declines, the Lead Referee will confirm first with the challenging player/team whether they want to initiate a formal paddle challenge. If an official challenge is declared, the Lead Referee will then confirm whether the player wishes to voluntarily retire the paddle or continue to play subject to official challenge procedures.

PR 2.3.3 Paddle Availability Following Challenge

Once an official paddle challenge has been declared, the challenged paddle will remain available for use for the remainder of the match.

Immediately following match completion, if the challenged paddle was used at any time after the challenge was declared, the paddle will be confiscated by the Lead Referee and turned over to the Head Referee to be submitted for testing.

PR 2.3.4 Testing

The paddle may be tested onsite. It will be submitted to an approved off-site testing laboratory for further analysis. Results will be publicly released when available (approximately one (1) week).

Regardless of testing outcome, all match results stand as played.

PR 2.3.5 Sanctions

Compliant Paddle

If the paddle is determined to be compliant, the challenging player will be fined.

Non-Compliant Paddle

If the paddle is determined to fall outside legal parameters:

- The player who was using the paddle will be fined.
- Additional review involving the player and manufacturer may occur.
- Further sanctions may be imposed at UPA-A discretion (e.g., loss of points, suspension).

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PR 2.4 UPA-A Authority Over Equipment

The Tournament Director, Head Referee, or a Lead Referee acting under UPA-A direction may confiscate paddles at any time before or after a match for inspection or testing.

Players must immediately surrender requested equipment.

Failure to comply may result in fines, suspension, or additional disciplinary action.

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PR 3. Professional Serve Requirements

PR 3.1 General Serve Requirements

PR 3.1.1 Service Requirements

The serve begins the rally and must be executed in accordance with all applicable service requirements.

If feet placement, ball release, arm swing, point of contact, and/or paddle position was “close”, meaning legality cannot be **clearly confirmed with certainty by visual observation**, then the serve is **not legal** and a fault will be called.

PR 3.1.2 Mandatory Volley Serve

Professional competition requires use of the Volley Serve. The Drop Serve is not permitted.

PR 3.2 Legal Volley Serve

A legal volley serve must satisfy **Feet Placement *[Rule 5.3.1]*** and all of the following:

I. **Ball Release -** The ball must be:

- Released by one hand only.
- Released clearly below the server’s shoulder.
- Released in a manner that is visible to the receiver and the Lead Referee.
- Released without imparting any additional spin or manipulation to the ball using any part of the body or paddle.
- In professional play, releasing the ball with the paddle is prohibited unless an exception is granted by the Tournament Director. Any such exception must be disclosed to the Lead Referee prior to the start of the match.

  Players with standing pre-approved exceptions are encouraged, but not required, to notify the Lead Referee before each match.

II. **Ball Toss -** The ball may travel upward upon release, however, it may not rise more than one ball diameter in height and must remain clearly below the server’s shoulder.

III. **Arm Swing -** The arm swing must be underhand, with the paddle traveling in a clearly low-to-high direction prior to contacting the ball. The swing must not resemble a side-to-side (horizontal) motion.

IV. **Point of Contact -** The ball must be struck clearly at or below the waist.

V. **Paddle Position -** At the moment of contact with the ball, the highest point of the paddle head must not be above the wrist joint.

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PR 3.3 Let Serves

PR 3.3.1 Calling a Let Serve

Only an on-court referee may call a Let serve, which results in a re-serve.

A player/team that stops or effectively stops play by improperly calling a Let Serve, commits a stoppage-of-play fault.

On courts equipped with video, a player/team may challenge a possible missed Let serve in accordance with the applicable Video Challenge procedures.

PR 3.3.2 Number of Let Serves

There is no limit to the number of Let serves that may occur during a game or match.

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PR 4. Non-Volley Zone Fault Exceptions

A tournament-required paddle inspection sticker that becomes dislodged during the act of volleying and lands in the non-volley zone does not constitute a fault.

Similarly, a starting server band that breaks and falls into the non-volley zone during the act of volleying does not constitute a fault. However, if the starting server band falls into the non-volley zone during a volley due to the player's failure to properly secure the band, a fault will be assessed against that player/team ***[Rule 8.10.1]***.

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PR 5. Electronic Devices

PR 5.1 Prohibited Use

Unless previously approved and properly disclosed in accordance with ***[Rule PR 5.2]***, use of a cell phone or any electronic communication device (e.g. Apple Watch, Samsung Galaxy) after the match has begun is prohibited.

Violation results in a Mark, regardless of device ownership or existence of an approved exception that was not disclosed to the Lead Referee prior to the start of the match.

Permitted devices include:

- Approved medical monitoring devices.
- Health tracking devices without active communication capability.

PR 5.2 Approved Exception Procedures

PR 5.2.1 Pre-Match Exception Notice

A player who has received an approved electronics exception from the Tournament Director, player liaison, or other authorized personnel must notify the Lead Referee of the exception prior to the start of the match.

Failure to provide required notice prior to match start will result in enforcement under ***[Rule PR 5.1]***.

Players with standing pre-approved exceptions are encouraged, but not required, to notify the Lead Referee before each match.

PR 5.2.2 Lead Referee Emergency Exception

For expediency, the Lead Referee may grant a limited electronic-use exception to address urgent legitimate needs during a timeout (e.g., calling/texting someone to retrieve an inhaler during a medical timeout or to obtain replacement equipment during an equipment timeout).

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PR 6. Line Review and Video Challenge Systems

PR 6.1 Technology Availability

Line Review (Review) and Video Challenge (Challenge) technology will be utilized on courts designated for pro main draw bracket play. Video Challenge procedures will apply only on courts equipped with video capability (e.g., Center Court, Grandstand).

PR 6.2 General Review and Challenge Procedures

PR 6.2.1 Break in Play Status

The initiation of a Line Review or Video Challenge:

- Is not a timeout.
- Does not constitute a Break in Play.

Players should not go to the player bench area to sit down during the Review or Challenge Process. All players must remain ready to resume play as soon as the Lead Referee finishes announcing the Review or Challenge results.

A player/team who sits in the player bench area and/or is not ready to resume play will receive a Mark for delay of game.

PR 6.2.2 Timing of Requests

A player/team may request a Line Review or Video Challenge regarding a matter from the previous rally:

- Until the Lead Referee starts the score call for the next rally ***[Rule 8.5.1]***, or
- Before the completion of a Break in Play, Line Review or Video Challenge announcement.

****Exception:** Post-game or post-match requests must be made within fifteen (15) seconds after the Lead Referee completes the game- or matching-ending announcement.

PR 6.2.3 Rescinding a Request

Once the Lead Referee fully announces the initiation of a Review or Challenge, the requesting player/team may not rescind the request without repercussion.

Any rescinded request will be recorded as unsuccessful, and carry the same consequences as a lost review or challenge.

PR 6.2.4 Timeout Use for Reviews and Challenges

A player/team must convert its one (1) timeout into a:

- Line Review, if a Line Review is lost, or
- Video Challenge, if a Video Challenge is lost.

If no timeout is available, a Review or Challenge may still be requested, subject to the appropriate sanction.

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PR 6.2.5 Technical Failure or Unreviewable Video

If a Line Review or Video Challenge request cannot be properly reviewed due to a completely blocked view, no viewing angle (e.g., the challenged matter is “out of frame”) equipment malfunction, system failure, loss of feed, or other technical issue beyond the control of the player/team, the request will be negated.

The challenging player/team will not be charged with a loss of Review or Challenge, and the original result of the rally will stand.

PR 6.2.6 End Change Adjustment After a Review or Challenge

If a Line Review or Video Challenge reverses the outcome of a rally and the corrected score does not require an end change, the players/teams will return to the court ends occupied before the rally began.

PR 6.3 Line Review System

PR 6.3.1 Permitted Uses

Line Reviews may be used only for line calls, including:

- OUT calls,
- IN rulings, and
- Short serves, whether called or not.

Line Reviews may not function as a timeout.

PR 6.3.2 Line Call Appeals

When Line Review or Video Challenge technology is available, line calls may not be appealed to the referees.

When such technology is unavailable, players/teams may appeal line calls to the Lead Referee or Second Referee.

PR 6.3.3 OUT Call Line Review

When an OUT call is reviewed:

- If the call stands, the challenging player/team is penalized.
- If the call is overturned, the player/team that made the incorrect OUT call is penalized.

PR 6.4 Video Challenge System

PR 6.4.1 Video Challenge Eligibility

Only the rally-losing player/team may request a Video Challenge. The rally-winning player/team may not initiate a Challenge.

PR 6.4.2 Non-Challengeable Matters

The following may **not** be challenged by a player/team:

- Serve-related issues, other than uncalled Let Serves.
- Any fault call voluntarily made by a player/team to their own detriment.

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- The issuance of a Warning, Mark, or Foul.
- Video Review Referee decisions.
- Distractions and hindrances, whether called or not.

****Exception:** A potential hindrance resulting from the ball contacting the horizontal bar, and not called by on-court referees, may be challenged.

PR 6.4.3 Single Video Challenge Limitation

A combined Video Challenge is not permitted. Players may request only one challenge at a time, but are not limited in the number of challenges that may be requested for a rally.

****Exception:** A "two-part" video challenge is permitted only when initiated by the same player/team. It occurs when resolution of the first issue is required to reach the second issue. If any part of the challenge is unsuccessful, the appropriate penalty is assessed.

PR 6.4.4 Scope of Review

Except for line calls, a Video Challenge may address any otherwise challengeable action occurring during the rally, including actions preceding the rally-ending event.

A challengeable action is one that, upon review, may change the outcome of the rally by overturning the result or requiring a replay.

****Exception:** The Video Challenge system will automatically be referenced for a Line Review only when necessary to resolve the Review.

PR 6.4.5 Possible Missed Fault Challenge

When challenging a possible missed fault, the challenging player/team must clearly and promptly identify the following to the Lead Referee:

- The specific possible missed fault being challenged,
- The player alleged to have committed the fault, and
- The point during the rally at which the alleged fault occurred.

Failure to clearly identify all of these elements in a timely manner, will result in the challenge being disregarded and a Mark issued for delay of game.

PR 6.5 Line Review and Video Challenge Penalty Structure

If a player/team loses a Line Review or Video Challenge, the following penalties apply:

- **A timeout available** → Timeout is lost.
- **No timeout available and no prior Mark or Foul** → A Mark is issued.
- **No timeout available and prior Mark or Foul has been issued** → A Mark is assessed, and one (1) point is awarded to the opponent.

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PR 7. Forfeits and Required Approval

Professional matches are subject to all forfeiture rules. However, a game or match may not be forfeited without prior approval from the Head Referee or Tournament Director.

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Appendix C – MLPlay™ Rules Guide

In Progress

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Appendix D – Adaptive Play

In Progress

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Appendix E – Rally Scoring

In Progress

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