




REFEREE

2025

**OFFICIATING
HANDBOOK**



2025 USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook

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USA Pickleball Association is the National Governing Body for the sport of pickleball in the United States.

2025 USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook



Introduction and Purpose


The *2025 USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook* is intended as a guide for referees and line judges at all levels of officiated pickleball events and addresses both singles and doubles play. The procedures, techniques, and tips in this Handbook represent USA Pickleball officiating best practices, based on the [2025 Official Pickleball Rulebook](#).

The best practices presented in this Handbook are also based on the [2025 USA Pickleball Official Referee Casebook](#), as well as the experiences of seasoned referees who regularly officiate USA Pickleball-sanctioned tournaments. The Casebook contains official rulings relative to certain situations that may be encountered during pickleball matches. This Handbook, the Rulebook, and the Casebook are all downloadable on the [Officiating Page](#) on the USA Pickleball website.

This Handbook does not go into a detailed explanation of every rule but focuses on standardized officiating procedures and techniques. It assumes that readers already have a basic knowledge of the game, a good understanding of the rules, and at least some experience officiating, even if that experience is only refereeing or line judging recreational games for practice.

Following these best practices enables referees to interpret the rules uniformly, apply them consistently, and standardize how pickleball tournaments are officiated. This helps foster a positive and enjoyable experience for players and game officials alike during officiated competition.

This Handbook also serves as the official resource for use during USA Pickleball referee and line judge training courses. USA Pickleball referees and line judges are required to use the best practices set forth in this Handbook.

Items that appear *in italics* are optional procedures. All other items are required best practice. The talking head symbol  indicates standardized words to be used for specific calls and announcements (scripts). **NOTE:** A compilation of scripts is contained in Appendix C.

How to Use This Handbook

Referees should study this entire Handbook. Section 8 of this Handbook is the study guide for line judges.

In conjunction with studying this Handbook, referees should review the [2025 Official Pickleball Rulebook](#) and the [2025 USA Pickleball Official Referee Casebook](#). You should work to understand not only the language but also how the rules should be applied when refereeing or line judging a match. Also, take the [Referee Test](#), the [Line Judge Test](#), the [Officiating Procedures Test](#), and the [Player Test](#) provided on the USA Pickleball website. You can take these tests as many times and as frequently as you like. Since new questions appear each time they are taken, it is highly recommended that you take the tests at least twice each year and before refereeing at an upcoming tournament.

Training

You can find detailed training program requirements on the [Officiating page](#) on the USA Pickleball website. Completion of a USA Pickleball referee training course, including line judge training, will

help you learn standard tournament procedures and proper completion of the scoresheet. However, knowing the tournament rules and learning the best referee and line judge practices are only the start of effective refereeing. Most importantly, you need to get out on the court and practice using these procedures.

Practice

Begin officiating in a non-tournament environment to build confidence and work your way up to more competitive matches. If there is no provision for scheduled referee practice at your home courts, consider asking recreational players if they mind having you referee or line judge one or two of their games. In addition, ask a local referee trainer, if available, to observe and critique your performance. Singles matches are, in general, easier to referee since it is not necessary to keep track of first and second servers, making these matches a good choice for initial referee practice. Blank scoresheets to use for practice can be downloaded from the [Officiating page](#). When you are comfortable using the scoresheet, calling the correct score, watching for foot faults, and keeping the game moving at a smooth, consistent pace, volunteer to referee in a local tournament. Those interested in line judging should also practice and gain confidence before volunteering at a local tournament.

Training and practice opportunities are available at sanctioned tournaments where referees and line judges can shadow experienced officials and discuss best practices with them. The referee coordinator can also arrange for an experienced official to shadow you for the first few matches you officiate; this provides an immediate resource should a question arise and ensures a well-officiated match. Continue to work with an experienced official and build your confidence through officiating a variety of events at tournaments. Eventually, you might consider applying to become a Certified Referee. See Appendix A for information on referee training and certification.

Terminology

This Handbook is written using certain terms that you should be aware of to fully understand the information presented.

“Server sequence”: The term “server sequence” refers to the order in which the players serve. It is frequently used in conjunction with discussion of player position and server correctness.

“Starting server” and “first server”: The term “starting server” is used consistently throughout this Handbook to refer to the player who starts serving for their team at the beginning of a game (i.e., the player who wears the starting server identification in tournament play). The term “first server” refers only to the player who serves first after a side out (who may or may not be the player wearing the starting server identification).

“Team”: This Handbook is written in the context of doubles play, using the term “team.” However, much of the information is equally applicable to singles play, so in singles context the term “team” means “player.”

Navigating this Handbook

Hyperlinks are provided to facilitate online navigation in this Handbook. Each entry in the Table of Contents is a hyperlink. Click anywhere on a title to go to the beginning of that section. A hyperlink is provided at the bottom of each page to return to the Table of Contents.

NOTE: Light blue shading used in this Handbook indicates changes for 2025, or substantive clarification of best practice procedures or rules.

The following are sections that were changed or substantively clarified for 2025.

(Click on the section number to go to that section.)

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Section 1: Responsibilities and Code of Conduct for Referees

The referee's main responsibility is to ensure that USA Pickleball rules set forth in the [2025 Official Pickleball Rulebook](#) are followed. The Rulebook provides the rules necessary for social and organized play and "preserves the traditional nature and character of the sport and the skills traditionally required to play the sport."

The rules are updated as necessary but not less than on an annual basis. **It is your responsibility to stay current on the rules.** Knowing the rules thoroughly protects the integrity of the sport and ensures matches are conducted fairly. Documentation of rule changes is available on the [USA Pickleball website](#).

A. Primary Responsibilities [Rule 13.C]

During an officiated match, your primary responsibilities are to:

1. Interpret and enforce the rules.
2. Accurately record the match on the scoresheet.
3. Announce the correct score for each rally.
4. Speak clearly and audibly. Use a clear, distinct, and measured cadence when making calls and announcements.
5. Ensure that the server and receiver are the correct players in the correct positions for each rally.
6. Call service, non-volley zone (NVZ), short serve, and other faults.
7. Maintain control and keep the match moving efficiently.
8. Resolve disputes.
9. Enforce fair play and sportsmanship by issuing verbal warnings, technical warnings, and technical fouls, as appropriate.
10. Rule on line calls when appealed by a player or not seen by a line judge.
11. Make sure the court environment is safe for play.

B. Code of Conduct

Referees develop their own officiating style, but all must adhere to the best practices presented in this Handbook. Referees must also abide by the [USA Pickleball Compliance Policy and Procedure for Credentialed Officials](#) and the following Code of Conduct. It is important that you:

1. **ALWAYS** enforce all rules **impartially, fairly, and consistently**, even if you do not agree with a particular rule or if your ruling is made at a critical time (e.g., a fault called on match point).
2. Because the Rulebook and this Handbook do not predict every circumstance you may encounter on the court, use common sense and good judgment to address situations not expressly covered by the Rulebook, this Handbook, or the Casebook. [Rule 13.C]
3. Use a professional and pleasant demeanor at all times.
 - a. Maintain control without being dictatorial.
 - b. Display confidence in your actions and rulings.

- c. Treat players, line judges, other referees, and spectators with respect.
 - d. Avoid overfriendliness with players and spectators while at the court.
 - e. Avoid comments and emotional reactions, either positive or negative, regarding the play of any player.
 - f. Acknowledge and comply with reasonable player requests (e.g., to speak louder, stop moving around, slow the pace of the game, etc.)
4. Do not allow yourself to be distracted. Devote full attention to the match you are refereeing.
 5. Silence or turn off your personal electronic devices when refereeing.
 6. Wear neat, clean attire that is comfortable and suitable for the weather conditions and meets the referee dress code designated for each tournament.
 7. Keep an upright stance for a professional appearance (i.e., avoid leaning on a fence or against a wall).
 8. Avoid using any device that could interfere with play (e.g., umbrella as a sunshade). **NOTE:** Tournament Directors may authorize use of a chair if required for medical reasons and as space allows. They may also authorize use of a small mat (approximately two-feet by two-feet) for comfort and to reduce body fatigue, if space permits.
 9. Excuse yourself from refereeing a relative, close friend, doubles partner, or any match where you have a conflict of interest.
 10. Refrain from intervening in a match in progress during a tournament (including during time-outs and between games), except in the following circumstances:
 - a. You respond to an immediate safety issue.
 - b. The assigned referee requests your assistance, such as with answering a question, observing a serve, or taking over the match. Otherwise, do not become involved in the match in any manner.
 - c. You are the assigned referee and provide necessary assistance to a trainee whom you are allowing to referee your match.
 - d. The Tournament Director requests that you assist the assigned referee.
 - e. In a non-officiated match, the Tournament Director requests that you assist the players or assigns you to referee the match.

NOTE: When observing a match, if you see a referee make a clear and significant error or an incorrect rule interpretation, especially repeatedly, you may discuss it discreetly with the referee **after** the match is finished.
 11. **Do not make derogatory comments about or critique any on-court matters, decisions, or the performance of another referee in public, including on social media.**
 12. **Refrain from commenting on any player in public, including on social media.** Such comments, positive or negative, can be seen as lacking in impartiality and may give a player reason to ask that you not referee a future match of theirs. Additionally, others may take a referee's comment out of context.

Section 2: Referee Tools

A. The Scoresheet

The scoresheet is the official document used to record game activity and transmit match result to the event desk. Scoresheets may be designed to accommodate one match format, or all formats (i.e., 2 out of 3 games to 11 points, 3 out of 5 games to 11 points, 1 game to 11 points [round robins only], 1 game to 15 points, or 1 game to 21 points). The scoresheet design used in your area may differ from the scoresheets utilized in this Handbook.

Figure 1 - Pickleball Scoresheets

Scoresheet – 2 of 3 to 11 Points

Scoresheet – 1 to 15 Points Scoresheet – 1 to 21 Points

B. Scoresheet Information

1. Information entered by the event desk or referee coordinator, or pre-printed on the scoresheet, before the referee receives the scoresheet includes the following:
 - a. Date and time
 - b. Computer ID tags (i.e., SYSID, barcode)
 - c. Type of event
 - d. Player names [“(W)” may precede the names of the undefeated team for a gold medal match]
 - e. Match number
 - f. Assigned court number

- g. Referee name
 - h. Match format
 - i. Pre-medal, medal (bronze), or gold medal match (if applicable)
 - j. Handwritten number on back (“1” or “2”)
 - k. Reference marks for changing ends
2. Information entered by the referee before, during, and after the match includes the following:
- a. Circle around the name of the starting server on each team
 - b. Notes to help distinguish the players from one another
 - c. A mark to indicate the team serving first for each game
 - d. A mark indicating on which end of the court one team will start
 - e. Reference marks (Δ) for changing ends (if not preprinted)
 - f. Points scored and side out marks
 - g. Standard time-outs
 - h. Medical time-outs
 - i. Verbal warnings, technical warnings, and technical fouls
 - j. Final game scores and circle around the winners’ names with the word “WINNERS” inside the circle

c. Other Tools

- 1. Timer (for timed procedures)
- 2. Pencils (at least one with eraser)
- 3. Clipboard (for holding the scoresheet)
- 4. Numbered server clips (for keeping track of first and second servers in doubles matches) (Figure 2)
- 5. Measuring device for measuring net height

Figure 2 - Numbered Server Clip Styles



Section 3: Referee Match Preparation and Scorekeeping Procedures

The procedures in this Handbook are proven methods for ensuring you are best prepared to thoroughly carry out the required steps for officiating matches. These procedures are referred to as “best practices.” You must know the standardized on-court procedures and techniques thoroughly to avoid on-court mistakes that delay play, frustrate players, and cause them to lose confidence in your ability to referee. **NOTE:** The on-court procedures shown here may be modified by the Tournament Director or the USA Pickleball Director of Officiating to accommodate public health concerns.

A. Before a Tournament

1. Review the most recent editions of the [Official Pickleball Rulebook](#) and [Casebook](#).
2. Reread this Handbook.
3. Retake all [online tests](#) for referees, line judges and players.

B. Before You are Called to Referee

1. Take care of your restroom and hydration needs.
2. Wear the designated [referee uniform](#) and, when required, your referee credentials. (Credentials may not be required for certain match assignments designated by the Tournament Director or USA Pickleball Director of Officiating.)
3. Prepare your muscles for extended standing by stretching. Also, stretch throughout the day to help keep you alert and refreshed ([Click here](#) for exercise suggestions.)
4. Gather personal items such as water, lip protection, and sunglasses, as needed.
5. Pick up tools and supplies:
 - a. Pencils (2)
 - b. Numbered server clips (2)
 - c. Game balls, including a spare (if not provided on the courts)
 - d. Timer
 - e. Starting server identification items (e.g., wristbands)
 - f. Band-aids (if available) so that first aid can quickly be provided for minor cuts and scrapes
6. Know where a Rulebook and USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List can be easily accessed. Consider keeping a copy of both on your smart phone.
7. Learn the venue layout including where to enter/exit courts, court hindrances, and possible safety issues.
8. Consider how weather, lighting, court conditions, etc. might affect play.
9. Note special procedures applicable to this tournament (e.g., warm-up time, no bags on court).
10. Know the number of minutes established to start the match after the match is called and/or the specific number of minutes set by the Tournament Director for warm-up time.

11. Know what written pre-match instructions were issued to the players by the Tournament Director. This will determine what information listed in Section 3.E needs to be covered in your pre-match briefing.

C. When You are Called to Referee


1. Immediately proceed to the referee desk to collect the match scoresheet and clipboard.
2. Quickly review the information on the scoresheet to ensure the match is assigned to you and shows all pertinent information for the match (i.e., event type, match format, match number, court number). In the rare event that the Tournament Director assesses a verbal warning, technical warning, or technical foul against a player for misconduct in a previous match, the scoresheet will indicate the applicable penalty to be applied at the start of the match to be refereed. (See also Section 3.E.6.)
3. Start your timer. ⚡ *OPTION: Notate the time on the scoresheet.*
4. Look at the match number on the scoresheet. A low match number (e.g., 1, 2, 3) indicates the start of a new event. For doubles matches, make sure to have starting server identification for the players if this will likely be the players' first match of the event.
5. If necessary, ascertain the proper pronunciation of player names. (You may also ask the players for the correct pronunciation during the pre-match briefing.)
6. Verify that "1" or "2" has been written on the back of the scoresheet. If not, write a "1" or "2" prior to getting to the court. The number will be used to determine which team will have first choice to serve or receive, to select at which end of the court to start the match, or to defer these choices to the opponent.
7. Try to arrive at the court before the players. Wait for all players at the court entryway if the tournament venue requires that you cross a match in progress to reach your court. Enter and exit the court as a group.

D. Pre-Match On-Court Checklist [Rules 13.C.3.a, 13.C.3.b]

1. Confirm net height and positioning, especially for temporary net systems. (The net height should be checked by the tournament crew at the start of each day.)
2. Look for safety hazards such as debris or liquid on the court. Ensure players comply with applicable tournament venue restrictions, such as not allowing equipment bags within the playing area. Do not allow drink containers to be placed too close to the court.
3. If tournament balls are kept at the court for players, make sure there are two or more balls for the match.
4. To determine on which side of the court you should stand, consider sun, lighting, shadows, line judge positions, spectators, etc. Also, consider proximity to other courts, walls, reflections, etc.
 - a. If there are line judges, it is preferable that you stand opposite the two baseline judges.
 - b. If there are spectators, it is preferable to stand facing the majority so they can best hear you unless you are using a microphone. However, placement to see line judges takes priority.

- c. If you must stand where your shadow is visible on the playing surface, move as little as possible during rallies to avoid the shadow distracting the players.
 - d. If a match is in progress on an adjoining court, only consider standing back-to-back with the referee on the adjoining court if other conditions warrant your position there and your voices are sufficiently distinctive so players do not get confused as to who is making their calls.
5. If you have one or more wheelchair players, make sure you are familiar with the applicable rule modifications for wheelchair players. [Rules 3.A.47, 4.A.4.d, 7.E, 9.A – 9.D, 12.A.3]
NOTE: Do not say or do anything during the pre-match briefing to highlight or acknowledge a player's disability. You may answer any relevant questions that players ask about wheelchair rules, but you must otherwise treat wheelchair players the same as any other player.

E. Pre-Match Briefing and Warm-Up

Begin the following pre-match briefing when all players are present at the court. Conduct the briefing on your assigned court in a location and manner that does not disturb adjacent matches in progress. The required items do not necessarily have to be conducted in the order listed here, but you must develop a logical and consistent presentation. Do not include additional information unless directed by the Tournament Director or the USA Pickleball Director of Officiating or requested by a player.  *OPTION: If a player will be delayed in arriving at the court, you may proceed with the briefing to the extent practical so as not to deprive the players at the court of warm-up time.* **NOTE:** Keep conversation with players to a minimum. Do not engage in unnecessary or casual conversation, especially with players you know personally. Refrain from making comments to individual players that can be construed as coaching.

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Confirm each player's identity. You may ask the correct pronunciation of names as you will need to announce the names of the winners at the end of each game. Note distinguishing characteristics next to the names of players if helpful for identification (e.g., beard, red hat, blue shirt). If a player indicates a hearing impairment, determine what level of support is needed (e.g., lip reading, sign language interpretation, speech-to-text translation) (See Section 5.B.2).
3. If you notice any player is wearing earbuds, headphones, or other listening device, other than a hearing aid, advise the player that such devices are not allowed during play and must be removed.
4. For doubles matches, identify the starting server on each team and ensure that each wears the prescribed starting server identification. Circle the names of the players wearing the starting server identification.
 - a. Only one player on each team may wear the starting server identification prescribed by the Tournament Director. [Rule 5.A.3]
 - b. Make sure the starting server identification is visible to both you and the opponents.

- c. To avoid confusion, do not allow the partner of the starting server to wear anything similar in color or design to the starting server identification that makes it hard to distinguish.
5. Confirm with each player that each of their paddles is listed on the [USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List](#). [Rule 2.F.1] Inspect each approved paddle to determine that it complies with current paddle specifications. [Rule 13.C.4.a] If a paddle does not appear on the approved list or has prohibited features, require the player to switch to another paddle, which must also be confirmed as approved and inspected for irregularities as described below. [Rule 2.F.1.a.1] Otherwise, the player must forfeit the match if they insist on playing with a paddle that is not on the approved paddle list. [Rule 2.F.1.a.2]
 - a. Ask each player whether their paddle is listed on the current USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List. If a player indicates they do not know the approval status of their paddle or you are not sure whether a paddle is approved, take a photo of the paddle or record the brand and model to look up on the approved paddle list while the players are warming up. If you cannot find the paddle on the list, immediately ask the player to show proof that the paddle is approved. Proof can be provided by showing a screenshot, printout, or live view of the paddle listed on the current USA Pickleball Approved Paddle list. **However, do not hold up the start of the match for the player to provide proof of the paddle's approval.** If the player cannot provide proof in a timely manner, do not allow the player to use the paddle for sanctioned play. The player must switch to a paddle that can be verified on the approved paddle list.
 - b. Inspect each paddle for a brand name and model name/number applied by the manufacturer. The brand name information may be located any place on the paddle, including on the grip tape, end cap, or edge guard. If the brand or model is absent, do not allow the paddle for sanctioned play.
 - c. Manufacturers are required to apply a “USA Pickleball Approved” seal to all approved paddles manufactured since 2018. If the seal is absent, ask the player for proof of confirmation that the paddle is approved, or check for the paddle on the approved paddle list. If the paddle is not on the list, do not allow the paddle to be used for sanctioned play. If the paddle is listed as approved after 2018 but no seal is on the paddle, do not allow the paddle to be used for sanctioned play.
 - d. Further inspect each paddle by feeling both hitting surfaces completely with your bare hands and looking for the conditions listed below. If your inspection identifies a violation of any paddle requirement, do not allow the paddle for sanctioned play.
 - 1) Distinct aftermarket alternations, decorated tape, and adhesive decorations may be used for edge guard and grips, provided that the dimensions of the paddle, including the applied alterations, are compliant. Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) integrated weights, interchangeable grips, and replacement paddle faces are allowed as well as vibration dampers. [Rules 2.E.3, 2.E.5.a; ESM 2.E.6.d]
 - 2) Decals and tape affixed to the paddle face, including identification labels, must not extend inward more than ½” from the edge (or ½” inside the edge guard if installed) or 1” above the paddle handle. [Rule 2.E.5.b] Any additions that extend beyond these limits must be removed prior to sanctioned play. Autographs and other handwritten


- pen markings for identification purposes only that do not impact the surface texture on paddles are acceptable on the paddle face. [Rule 2.E.5.c]
- 3) Indentations, holes, cracks, and delamination (visibility of one or more underlayers) are prohibited. [Rule 2.E.2]
 - 4) Foreign substances and unusual texture on the hitting surface are prohibited. [Rule 2.E.2] The hitting surface must not be adversely reflective such that it has the potential to negatively affect the vision of the opponents. [Rule 2.E.2.a] If the paddle surface is in question, have the Head Referee or Tournament Director make the final decision on whether the paddle can be used for play.
 - e. Notify the Head Referee or Tournament Director of any paddle presented by a player that is not listed on the approved paddle list or that has prohibited features. The Head Referee will collect and hold the paddle until the end of the player's day so that it is not presented at other matches during the day.
6. Inform the players of the match format (e.g., 2 out of 3 games to 11 points, win by 2 points) and if rally scoring applies. (See also Section 3.M.1 for rally scoring). For double elimination gold medal matches, explain the procedure for the tie-breaker match. If a verbal warning, technical warning, or technical foul with a point awarded to their opponent has been assessed by the Tournament Director between matches, advise the players.
 7. Select a player to choose the number "1" or "2" (written on the back of the scoresheet). The winner of that choice will be the first to select "serve, receive, end, or defer." After the first choice is made, the other team cannot defer and must choose from the remaining option(s). Players may delay their choice until after they warm-up. Once a team makes its choice, it cannot be changed. Mark the team that will be serving first in each game (see Section 3.F.2). Also annotate the scoresheet with the end of the court selected (e.g., "low fence," "north," or another unique identifier). This annotation will document the end at which each team will start the match. The documentation of court end is also helpful in the event of a rain delay or other suspension of play for knowing on which ends the teams will resume play. [Rule 5.A.1]
 8. Advise players of any court abnormalities, non-standard court conditions, and approved rule modifications. [Rule 13.C.4.b]
 9. Review the line calling responsibilities of the referee, players, and (when applicable) line judges, including appeal procedures. **NOTE:** This step may be omitted if this information is provided to players by the Tournament Director in advance.
 10. Remind players to make their calls loudly, clearly, and promptly.
 11. Ask the players if they have any questions about the player instructions or the rules. **NOTE:** When new rules are released, Tournament Directors may direct referees to quickly review the significant rule changes during the pre-match briefing.
 12. Allow players to warm up for the designated warm-up time or the remainder of the established time to start the match, remembering to allow time to choose the ball and position the players to begin play. Play may start before 15 seconds expire if all players are ready to proceed sooner. If circumstances beyond a player's control prevent the player from reporting promptly to the court (e.g., non-receipt of match assignment text message due to wi-fi issues), you may allow the full designated warm-up time, even if that extends

the established start time slightly. However, do not allow additional time for warm-up if the player's tardiness is due to their own negligence.

Notify the players when one minute of warm-up time is left so they can practice serving if they desire.

- a. Serving is not mandatory during warm-up.
 - b. If practice serves are taken, observe players' serves for potential illegal service motions, but do not give any warnings as that would constitute coaching.
13. If any players have not arrived at the court by half of the allotted time to start the match, have them re-called.

F. Preparing the Scoresheet Before the Start of a Match (Figure 3)

1. Verify that you have circled the names of the players wearing the starting server identification.
2. Verify that you have placed a mark (e.g., "X" or the starting server's name) in the spaces provided on the scoresheet for indicating which team is serving first in each game.  *OPTION: You may use "L" or "R" or a directional arrow to indicate whether the serve will begin on your left or right.*
3. Make sure you have used a unique identifier to notate the court end selected by one of the teams on which to begin the match.
4. If not preprinted on the scoresheet, add end change marks (Δ) beneath the appropriate score number:
 - a. At 6 of the last game to 11 points,
 - b. At 8 for games to 15 points,
 - c. At 11 for games to 21 points.

Marking this at the start of the match avoids missing the change of ends later.

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Figure 3 – Preparing the Scoresheet

Team 1: Example of using “X” for Serve
Team 2: Example of using a server name for Serve
Example of end annotation (Compass direction)

Event: Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+ Match: #6 SYSID: 999999
 Court: 7 11/24/20 18:24(PST)
 Referee: Your Name
 Format: 2/3 to 11

Team 1: Smith, Mary - Jones, Bob
 MT Red Hat MT

Team 2: Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim
 MT Blonde MT

Game	Server	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	TimeOuts	TW / TF
1	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
3		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
4		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		

Serve: X, X, Jim, North

TimeOuts TW / TF

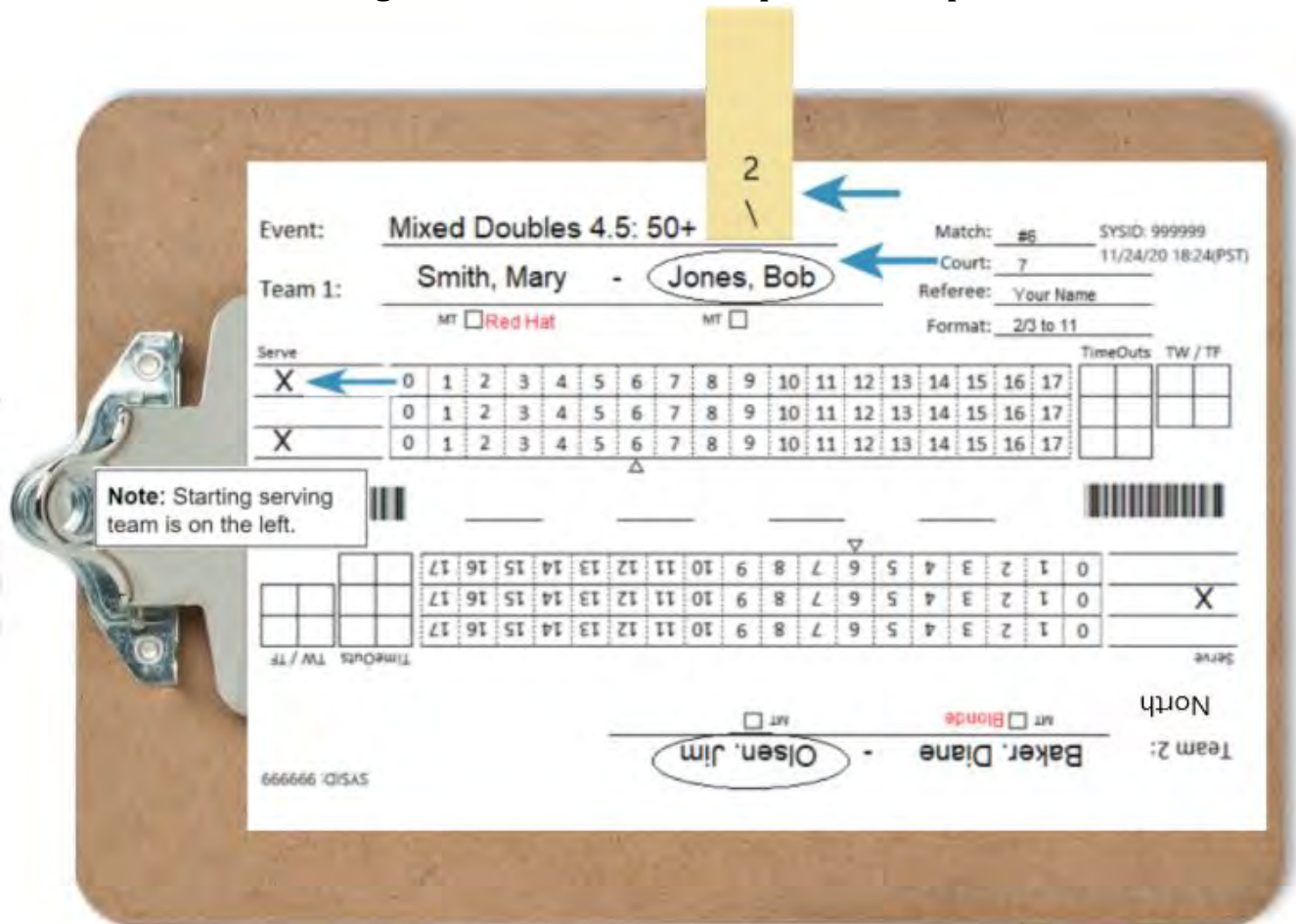
SYSID: 999999

G. Scoresheet and Clipboard Set-Up Before the Start of Each Game (Figure 4)

1. Position the scoresheet on the clipboard, making sure the clipboard clamp is pointing toward the serving end when the starting server’s name is at the top of the scoresheet. When out-of-the-ordinary situations occur, having the clipboard clamp pointing toward the serving team is an additional means of quickly confirming which team should be serving.
 💡 *OPTION: You may also hold the clipboard in the hand that corresponds to the end of the court the serving team is on. This serves as a secondary and immediate confirmation of whether the serving team is to your right or left side.*
2. For doubles games, place the numbered server clip over the name of the starting server of the game with the number 2 facing up. This will be the circled name for the team that will serve first. **NOTE:** The starting server for the first serving team begins the game as the second server since only one server serves before the serve passes to the opponent.

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Figure 4 – Scoresheet and Clipboard Set-Up



H. Tracking First and Second Servers

In doubles games, keeping track of first and second servers and which player is the correct server are common stumbling blocks for referees. Using the system described here, you will quickly and accurately track servers without interrupting the flow of the game.

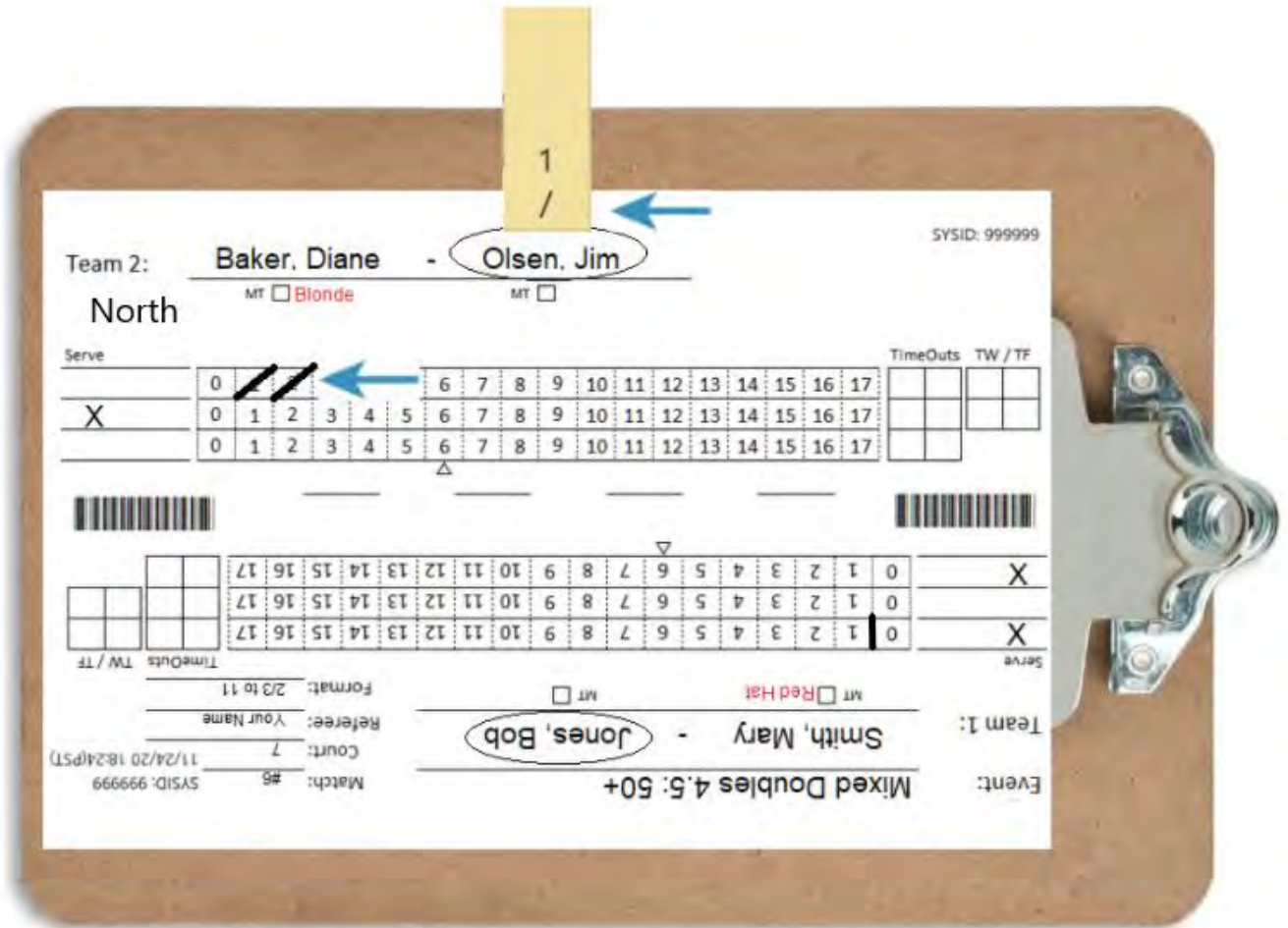
1. Prior to a team's first server serving, place the numbered server clip over that player's name with the "1" facing up (Figure 5).
2. Prior to the second server serving, place the numbered server clip over that player's name with the "2" facing up (Figure 6).
3. When the team loses its serve to the opponent, **first mark the side out** (see Section 3.J.1) and then rotate the clipboard to point the clamp toward the new serving team. Place the numbered server clip over the new first server's name with "1" facing up.
4. For singles games, use the numbered server clip to keep track of which player is serving.

I. Marking Points Scored

1. Use diagonals to mark each point scored. Mark the appropriate diagonal over the numbered box of the point scored, as follows for doubles games:

- a. Mark points scored when the first server is serving with an upper-right-to-lower-left diagonal line (forward slash /)(Figure 5).
 - b. Mark points scored when the second server is serving with an upper-left-to-lower-right diagonal line (backslash \)(Figure 6).
2. For singles games, mark all points with the forward slash (/). *OPTION: You may use the upper right-to lower-left diagonal line (forward slash /) to mark the points of one singles player and the upper left to lower right diagonal line (backslash \) to mark the points of the other singles player. (Figure 7) This will enable you to use the same mechanics to rotate the clipboard and replace the server clip as for a side out in a doubles match.*

Figure 5 – Numbered Server Clip and Marking Points – First Server



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Figure 6 – Numbered Server Clip and Marking Points – Second Server

Team 2: **Baker, Diane** - **Olsen, Jim** SYSID: 999999

North MT Blonde MT

Event: **Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+** Team 1: **Smith, Mary** - **Jones, Bob**

Match: #81 MT Red Hat MT

Court: 7 Referee: Your Name

11/24/20 18:24(PST) Format: 2/3 to 11

Serve	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	TimeOuts	TW / TF
X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		

Figure 7 – Marking Points – Singles Option

Event: **Singles 4.5: 50+** Match: #81 SYSID: 999999

Team 1: **Smith, Mary** MT Red Hat MT Court: 7 11/24/20 18:24(PST)

Team 2: **Baker, Diane** MT Blonde MT Referee: Your Name Format: 2/3 to 11

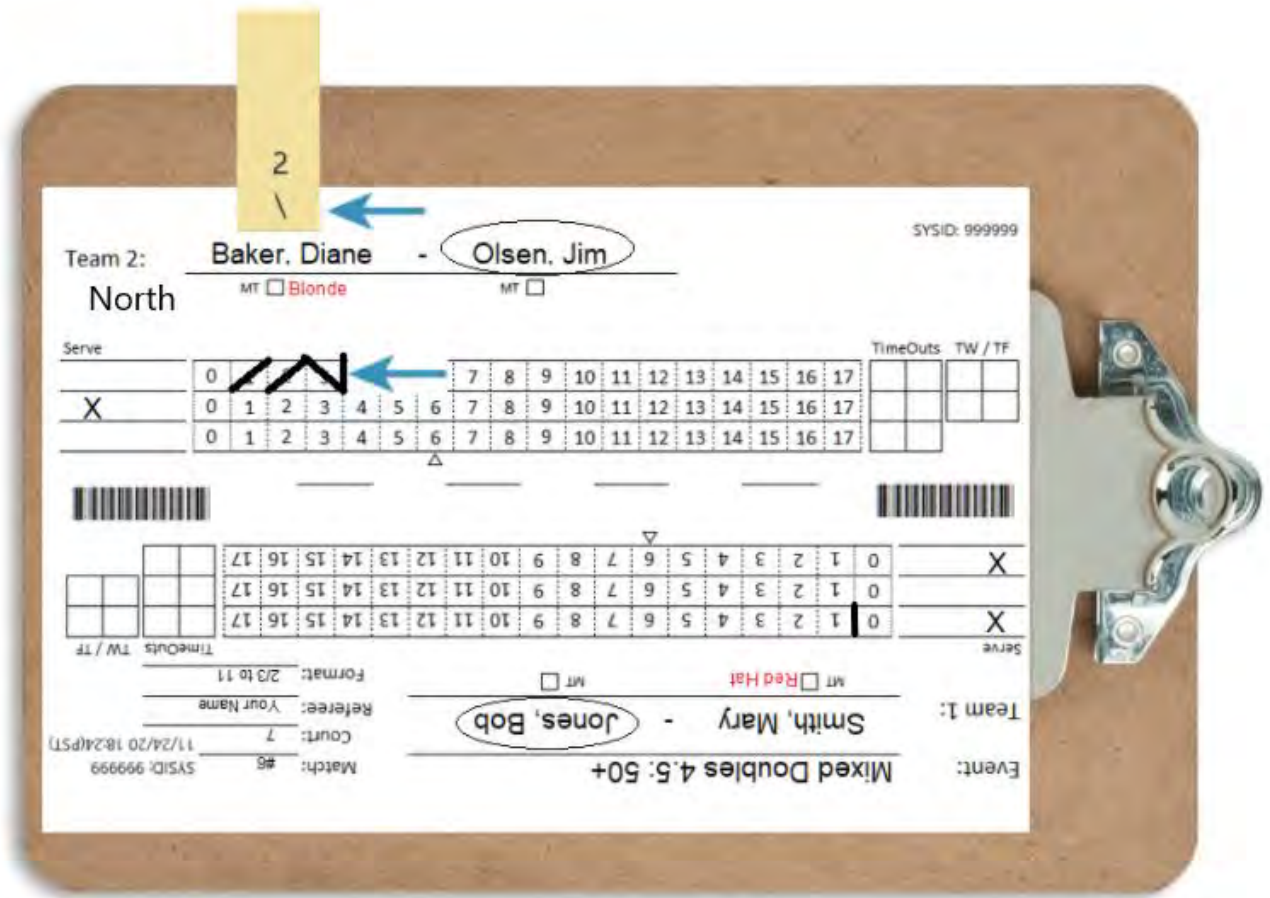
Serve	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	TimeOuts	TW / TF
X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		

J. Marking Side Outs

1. After a team loses the serve to the opposing team, record the side out on the scoresheet by marking a vertical line on the right side of the last point scored (Figure 8). **NOTE:** If a point is not scored on the first service rotation of the game, place the vertical mark between the “0” and “1” point (see Team 1, Figures 5, 6 and 8).
2. This critical marking technique documents what the score was at side out and allows you to reconstruct the point and side out sequence should there be a question later regarding the correct server or correct position.
3. The correct first server is determined by the team’s score (even or odd) after a side out. The starting server (i.e., the player who started serving at the beginning of the game and who wears the starting server identification) is not always the first server after a side out – only when the team’s score is even. When the team’s score is odd at a side out, the player without the starting server identification is the first server for the next service rotation. [Rules 4.B.6.a-4.B.6.c] (See Section 3.K regarding player positions.)
4. For singles games, mark side outs to document the end of consecutive points earned during each service possession.

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Figure 8 – Marking Side Outs



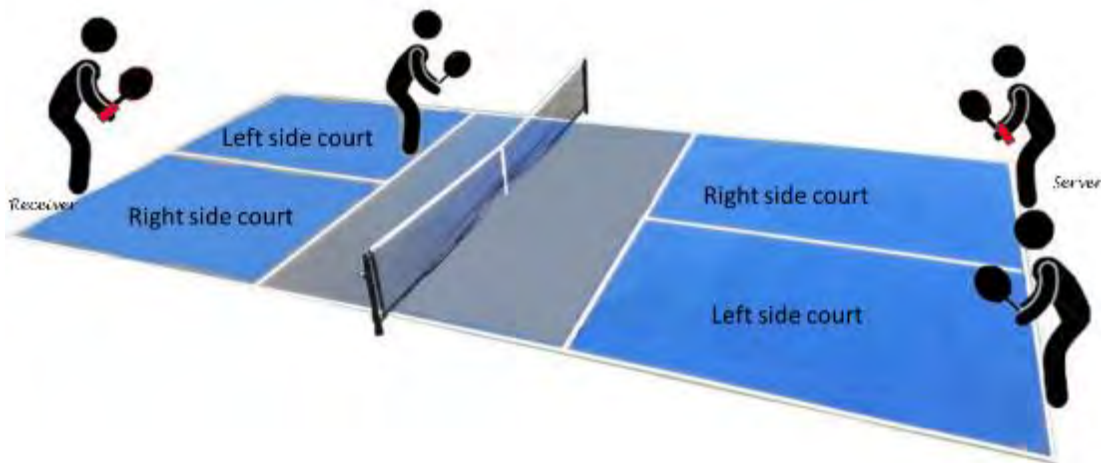
K. Player Positions (Doubles Play)

As a referee, you must understand the correlation between the starting server identification and the score in determining a player's correct court position.

1. The starting server for each team at the beginning of each game wears the starting server identification.
2. The court has a right/even side and a left/odd side as the players face the net. (Figure 9.)
3. The correct server and receiver and their positions are determined by the score and the players' starting positions in the game.
4. At the start of each game (0-0-2), the correct position for the players with the starting server identification is the right/even side of the court on their respective ends of the court. [Rules 4.B.1, 4.B.2, 4.B.6.b] These players are the correct server and correct receiver for starting the game (Figure 9).
5. When a team's score is even (i.e., 0, 2, 4...), the correct position for the team's player wearing the starting server identification is the right/even court. When a team's score is odd (i.e., 1, 3, 5...), the correct position for the player wearing the starting server identification is the left/odd court. [Rule 4.B.6.b]
6. While the correct server and receiver should be in their proper positions to start each rally, their partners can stand anywhere on or off the court as long as they remain on their respective ends. [Rule 4.B.7] After the return of serve, either of the teams' players may hit the ball from any position.

Figure 9 – Correct Player Positions at the Start of The Game

The players in the even courts are wearing the starting server identification (red wristband), indicating they are the starting server and starting receiver. The score is 0-0-2.



L. Player Positions (Singles Play)

1. Standard Singles

- a. The server's correct position is determined by the score (i.e., even or odd).
- b. At the start of each game (i.e., score 0-0), the correct position for the server is the right/even side of the court.
- c. When the server's score is even (i.e., 0, 2, 4...), the correct position is the right/even court. [Rule 4.B.5.a] When the server's score is odd (i.e., 1, 3, 5...), the correct position is the left/odd court. [Rule 4.B.5.b]
- d. The receiver will mirror the server's position diagonally to return the serve.

2. Mini-Singles [Rule 12.0]

- a. Mini-singles is a format for singles play where only half the court on each side of the net is used for each rally. [Rule 12.0.1.b]
- b. Each player's correct position is determined by their score (i.e., even/right or odd/left), and only those respective sides of the court on each end are in play during each rally. As such, the receiver is not always positioned diagonally opposite the server to start each rally. [Rule 12.0.2.a]

M. Rally Scoring

When you are called to referee a match that will use the rally scoring option, be prepared to conduct the match according to the standard rules and practices for traditional play with the rule modifications that are unique to rally scoring. When rally scoring for doubles is used, there is only one server per service rotation and service after a side out always begins on the right side. [Rules 4.B.3.a, 4.B.6, 4.B.6.c, 4.B.6.d, 4.B.6.e, 4.F.1, 4.G.1, 4.J.1, and 12.B.1.]

1. During the pre-match briefing, inform the players that rally scoring will apply and answer any questions they may have about the details of rally scoring.
2. Award a point to the winner of each rally, except the game-winning point, which can only be scored when serving. A receiver who wins a rally will score a point if they are not at game point.
 - a. When the server wins a rally and scores a point, announce the result of the rally. 🗣️ "Point."
 - b. When the server loses a rally (the receiver wins the rally), a side out will occur and the receiver scores a point, if not at game point. Announce the side out, result, and the receiver's new score. 🗣️ "Side out. Point. [Score]." If the receiver is at game point, only announce the side out and score. 🗣️ "Side out. [Score]."

Examples based on a game to 15 points, win by two points:

- a. Team A is serving at 13-14 and Team B wins the rally. A side out occurs with no point awarded because Team B is at game point but was not serving. Team B serves next at 14-13.
- b. Team A is serving at 14-13 and Team B wins the rally. A point is awarded to Team B, a side out occurs, and Team B serves next at 14-14.

- c. The score is 14-14. Whichever team wins the rally is awarded a point because neither team is at game point.
 - d. Team A is serving at 14-13 and wins the rally. A is awarded a point and wins the match, 15-13.
3. The players must change positions (sides of the court) consistent with their new score after they score a point.
 4. When the Tournament Director authorizes games to be played to 7 points due to inclement weather, the end change will occur at 4 points. [Rule 12.B.1.a]

Section 4: Refereeing a Match (Doubles Play)

The best practices in Section 4 are presented in a straightforward fashion without any complications from rule violations or unusual situations. Section 5 addresses the handling of rule violations and other on-court situations.

A. Beginning a Match

1. Conclude the warm-up, allowing time to confirm the identities of the players, select the game ball, and give a 15-second warning to start the match when specified by the Tournament Director or no later than 10 minutes after the match was called.
2. All players must be present on the court to start playing a match. Players may not use timeouts to delay the start of the match (e.g., if their partner has not yet arrived). [Rule 10.H.1]
3. Identify the serving team's players by stating their names and inviting them to select the game ball from the provided tournament balls, using whatever technique they desire to make their selection. Remove all other balls from the playing area and do not allow the players to carry any spare balls.
4. If further confirmation of the players' identities is needed, convene the players at the center of the court on their respective sides of the net to ensure they hear you as you verify their names to make sure you have the teams correctly indicated on the scoresheet and the clipboard clamp pointing toward the serving team to start the match.
5. Announce a 15-second warning to ready the players to start the match. **NOTE:** The 15-second warning is used in a variety of situations to alert players that play is getting ready to begin or resume. Announcing "Time in" is the established procedure to end the 15-second timed period and start play. Play may start before 15 seconds expire if all players are ready to proceed sooner.

B. Beginning a Game

1. Each game begins on second serve at 0-0-2 since only one player will serve for the starting serving team. The names of the players on the serving team should be at the top of the clipboard and the clamp on the clipboard should be pointing toward the serving team. The starting server will be the player on the first serving team whose name is circled. Place the numbered server clip with the number "2" facing up over the circled starting server's name (Figure 4). The correct receiver will be the player on the opposing team whose name is circled. These two players must wear the starting server identification. **NOTE:** In the case of a technical foul being assessed between matches, inform the players that the team not being penalized will begin the match with a score of one point. In this situation, the starting server for the team that has one point will begin the match positioned on the left side of the court.
2. To begin each game and before calling the score, visually and mentally confirm that the correct server and receiver are in the proper positions. This is indicated by the score, numbered server clip, and starting server identification. If any player is out of position or server sequence, correct the players before beginning the game.
3. Stand aligned with the net plane and maintain a stationary position at the net. Stay within good viewing distance of the NVZ on both sides, typically two to six feet from the net post. Allow sufficient space for around the post shots.

4. Before calling the first score to start each game, identify the game and call time in.
 - For a multiple game match, announce the game number then time in and the starting score: 🗣️ “Game [number]. Time in. 0-0-2.”
 - For the tie-breaking game of a multiple game match, also announce the point at which the end change will occur before calling time. 🗣️ “Game [3 or 5]. Change ends at 6. Time in. 0-0-2.”
 - For a single-game match, announce the format and point at which the end change will occur before calling time in and the starting score: 🗣️ “One game to [15 or 21]. Change ends at [8 or 11]. Time in. 0-0-2.”

Allow a few extra seconds, if necessary, for players to get into position before calling time in.

C. Calling the Score

Players may have difficulty hearing you when a venue is noisy or the acoustics are not conducive to clear communications. In addition, players may have a hearing impairment or may remove their hearing aids before a match. A hand cue has been incorporated into the score calling routine as a visual signal to indicate clearly when the score is being called (arm extended) and when the serve may begin (arm down).

1. Before calling the score for each rally, you must ensure that the server and receiver are in the correct positions, the correct server has the ball, and **all players** are ready (or **should** be ready) to play. [Rules 4.B.9, 4.D]
2. Quickly glance at the scoresheet, as necessary, to ensure you know the correct score, correct server, and correct receiver.
3. Look at the players to see that:
 - a. The correct server has the ball in hand and is in the correct position to serve.
 - b. The correct receiver is positioned near the baseline diagonally across the court from the correct server.
4. Make sure that no player is using one of the “not ready” signals, which are: [Rules 4.C, 4.C.1]
 - a. Raising the paddle above the head.
 - b. Raising the non-paddle hand above the head.
 - c. Completely turning the back to the net.
5. Hold the clipboard at your side or behind you so you will not be tempted to look at it during play or give the appearance of not being focused on the play.
6. Look at the receiver to ensure readiness to start calling the score. Upon seeing that the receiver is ready, fully extend your arm without the clipboard toward the net at shoulder height with the palm open and parallel to the net. **NOTE:** The extended arm indicates to the players, “Do not serve.” 🗣️ *OPTION: You may signal to the players that you are getting ready to call the score by raising your hand above your head while the players are getting into position and then extend your arm to start calling the score.”*

7. Immediately start calling the score as you rotate your head from the receiver to the server. As you say the last number while looking at the server, lower your arm to indicate the completion of the score call and to start the 10-second clock for the serve to be made. **NOTE:** If you are precluded from immediately calling the score after extending your arm, raise your arm to stop any action and address the situation.
8. Audibly announce the score as three numbers, enunciating each number clearly with a steady cadence (e.g., “Zero, zero, two.”) Do not use “Zero, zero, start,” “Zero, zero, second server,” “Oh-Oh-two,” or any other non-standard variation to start the game.
9. Do not say “Game point” or “Match point” when the serving team will win if it scores the next point.

D. Watching the Serve and Return of Serve

1. The server may use either the volley serve or the drop serve interchangeably. The server is not required to declare which serve will be used; therefore, you will not know in advance. Watch how the server releases the ball for each serve. If the server does not hit the ball on the first release, the server can retrieve the ball and start the serve again, as long as the serve is completed within the 10-second count.

It is important to understand the rules for each serve to effectively determine whether the serve is legal.

a. **For a volley serve** [Rule 4.A.7] (See Section 5.A.9.):

- 1) The ball must be released using only one hand or only the paddle.
- 2) The server is not allowed to impart spin to the ball before hitting it to make the serve. [Rule 4.A.5] **NOTE:** The server may place the ball on the paddle, then either toss the ball up without imparting spin or tip the paddle and allow the ball to roll off the paddle by gravity.
- 3) The release of the ball must be visible to the receiver and the referee. [Rule 4.A.6]
- 4) The ball must be hit before it bounces on the playing surface.
- 5) The three service motion components must be met. (Rules 4.A.7.a – 4.A.7.c)

b. **For a drop serve** [Rule 4.A.8] (See Section 5.A.10.):

- 1) The ball must be dropped from one hand or dropped off the paddle face.
- 2) The server is not allowed to impart any force to the ball, including spin, in any manner or direction before hitting it to make the serve. **NOTE:** The server may place the ball on the paddle, then tip the paddle and allow the ball to roll off the paddle by gravity.
- 3) The release of the ball must be visible to the receiver and the referee. [Rule 4.A.6]
- 4) There is no restriction on the number of times the ball may bounce before the server hits the ball to make the serve.
- 5) The server may use any service motion to hit the ball.

2. Watch the server for service foot faults. (See Section 5.A.11.)

3. Watch the served ball to see where it lands. The ball must land beyond the NVZ line in the correct service court to be legal.
4. Watch the return of serve for the required bounce before the third shot is hit. After the third shot is hit, your focus should move to the non-volley zone but adjust to the action on the court.

E. During Play

1. After you start calling the score, ignore all “not ready” signals made, unless a hinder occurs or a player says “stop,” “wait,” or something similar that verbally indicates to stop play. [Rule 4.C.2]
2. When it is necessary to stop play, immediately hold up your hand and step forward to announce the situation (e.g., “Stop play,” “Fault,” “Ball on”) and explain as necessary. Resume play as quickly as possible by calling the score. (See Section 5.F.)
3. When players are anywhere near the NVZ or a volley has occurred from anywhere on or off the court, **your main focus is watching for foot faults and other NVZ faults**, not watching the ball to make line calls on appeal. Ruling on appealed line calls is a low priority.
4. Make no call or physical indication that a ball is in or out of bounds, **unless appealed** by a player.
5. Avoid looking at the scoresheet during rallies; concentrate on the action on the court, particularly with respect to the NVZ.

F. At the End of Each Rally

1. At the end of each rally, immediately state the result clearly and audibly: “Point,” “Second server” (or “Second serve”), or “Side out.”
2. If you do not hear a line call or notice any other indication from the players that the ball is out of bounds, consider the ball in, unless the ball is obviously out to you **and** the players. Do not prompt the players for a line call or ask whether the ball was in or out, possibly suggesting what call should be made. If players immediately indicate the ball was out after you announce the result based on ruling the ball in, remind them to make their “Out” calls loudly, clearly, and promptly so you can hear them and see their signals. If necessary, correct your scoresheet before proceeding.
3. If a rally ends due to a fault other than the ball being hit out of bounds or into the net, announce “Fault” or the type of fault before announcing the result (e.g., “Foot fault, right foot, point;” “Service fault, side out”). Explain the fault if requested by a player. (See Section 5.)
4. Mark every point on the scoresheet as it occurs. Use a diagonal line corresponding to the server number on the numbered server clip. (See Section 3.I.)
5. Track when play goes to the second server by turning the numbered server clip to “2” and moving it over the second server’s name.
6. After each rally, remind yourself of the scores and confirm the correct player positions and server sequence for the next rally.

G. At a Side Out

1. Indicate the side out on the scoresheet by drawing a vertical line on the right side of the last point scored. It is not necessary to mark successive side outs in the same place when no points are scored.
2. If no points have yet been scored in the game, place the side out mark to the left of the “1” point.
3. Rotate the clipboard so the clamp is pointing toward the new serving team.
4. Reposition the numbered server clip over the name of the correct first server based on the serving team’s score, simultaneously flipping the server clip so the number “1” is facing up.
5. At each side out, rotate the clipboard and server clip efficiently to avoid delaying the game.
6. Ensure that the correct team takes possession of the ball for the next serve.

H. Standard Time-Out [Rule 10.A]

Players may call standard time-outs after the match starts. Time-outs are usually called between rallies but may also be called between games. A time-out must be called before the ball is hit to make the next serve. If no portion of a time-out is used, do not record it; the team gets to retain the time-out for later use. (See [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 3-22.)

When a standard time-out is called by a player:

1. Announce the time-out, indicate which team called the time-out, state the score, and the duration of the time-out: 🗣️ “Time-out [receivers/servers]. [Score]. One minute.”
2. Start the one-minute count on your timer.
3. Move to the center of the court to avoid interaction with players. Check the location of the ball and retrieve it **only if necessary** to prevent its loss or damage.

NOTE: Do not advise players to put their paddles down or place the ball under the server’s paddle.

4. Mark the current score in the appropriate time-out box for that game on the scoresheet, separating the team scores with the appropriate diagonal line that mirrors the diagonal on the server clip indicating first or second server (Figure 10). If a time-out is called between games, record the time-out for the next game with the score as 0-0-2. Always write the serving team’s score above the diagonal and the receiving team’s score below the diagonal (e.g., 6/4 for 6-4-1, 7\8 for 8-7-2). There is no need to record the server number as that information is indicated by the direction of the diagonal. **NOTE: To avoid potential errors, when a time-out is called by the receiving team, do not rotate the scoresheet.** Enter the time-out score right-side up even though the receiver’s part of the scoresheet will be upside down (Figure 11).
5. If a player leaves the immediate playing area with their paddle and you are unsure whether the player changed paddles, re-inspect the paddle before play resumes.
6. Play may begin before the expiration of the time-out if all players are ready. Otherwise, advise players when the time remaining is 15 seconds and move to your referee position.
7. Prior to moving back into position, advise each team in any sequence of its remaining number of time-outs: 🗣️ “Remaining time-outs: [Receivers/Servers] – [number].”

[Servers/Receivers] – [number].” (e.g., “Remaining time-outs: Receivers – two. Servers – one.”) **NOTE:** Players may be more attentive if this step is done closer to the resumption of play than when the time-out is called.

8. Check readiness of the officiating team (if applicable).
9. If any player is out of position or server sequence, correct the player(s) **before** calling “Time in.”
10. At or before one minute, as appropriate, promptly announce “Time in:” After calling “Time in,” if the players are not ready but are making an effort to get into position, allow a reasonable number of extra seconds for the players to get into position before announcing the score. Call the score when the players are in the correct positions and server sequence and are ready to play: 🗣️: “Time in. [Score].”

**Figure 10 – Standard Time-Out Marking – Serving Team
(Score 6-4-1)**

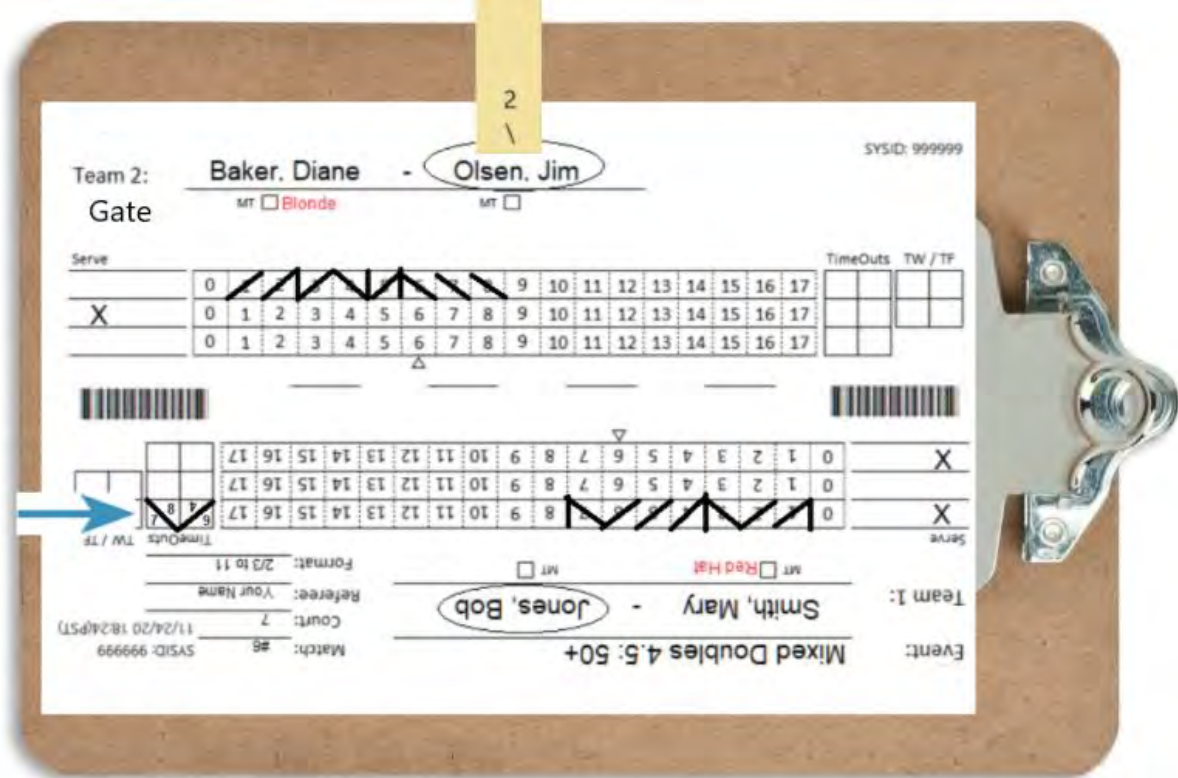
The image shows a clipboard with a score sheet for a Mixed Doubles match. The sheet is titled "Event: Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+" and "Match: #6 SYSID: 999999". The court number is 7, dated 11/24/20 18:24(PST). The referee is "Your Name" and the format is "2/3 to 11".

Team 1: Smith, Mary (MT Red Hat) - Jones, Bob (MT). Team 2: Baker, Diane (MT Blonde) - Olsen, Jim (MT).

The score sheet shows a score of 6-4-1. A blue arrow points to the 6-4-1 score box. The diagram shows the court with a blue arrow pointing to the 6-4-1 score box. The diagram shows the court with a blue arrow pointing to the 6-4-1 score box.

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Figure 11 – Standard Time-Out Marking – Receiving Team
(Score 8-7-2)



I. End Change Time-Out [Rule 5.B]

An end change occurs at 6 points in the tie-breaker game to 11 points, at 8 points in games to 15 points, and at 11 points in games to 21 points. **NOTE:** If the first game of a match is forfeited due to late arrival, no end change occurs in the third game of a 2 out of 3 match, or the fifth game of a 3 out of 5 match.

1. When the first team scores the end change point, announce the point then call the end change time-out and state the score and duration: 📣 “Point. Time out. Change ends. [Score]. One minute.” **NOTE:** If you forget to execute the end change on the correct end change point, call the end change time-out when you or the players realize the error. All rallies stand that have been completed. The score is not affected and no loss of serve occurs because of an end change made at the incorrect point.
2. Start your timer.
3. Move to the center of the court. Check the location of the ball and retrieve it **only if necessary** to prevent its loss or damage.
4. Prior to removing the numbered server clip to rotate the scoresheet, **write the number of the server (“1” or “2”) above or below the name of the correct server** (Figure 12). This notation enables you to accurately replace the numbered server clip over the correct server’s name with the correct number showing after rotating the scoresheet on the clipboard.



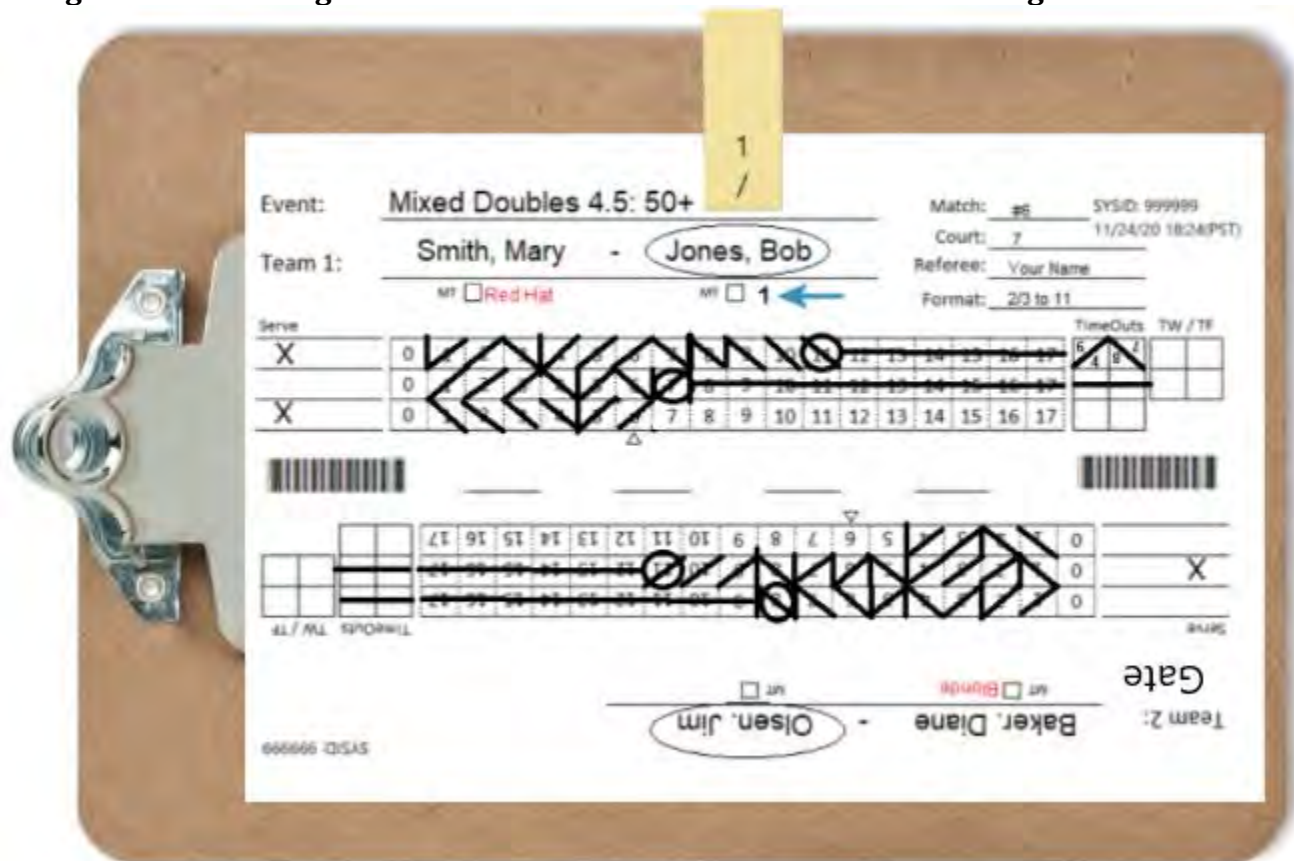
5.  **OPTION:** You may shade the end change mark of the team that scored the end change point and record the score below the end change mark. To avoid mistakenly calling a second end change when the other team reaches the end change score, you may also cross out the other team's end change mark.
6. Rotate the scoresheet and then the clipboard so that they will be properly oriented after the teams change ends. The names of the serving team will be right-side up at the top of the scoresheet and the clamp will be facing the serving team.
7. Place the numbered server clip over the server's name that you noted with the appropriate number (1 or 2) facing up.
8. Notify the players when the time remaining is 15 seconds and move to your referee position.
9. Check readiness of the officiating team (if applicable).
10. If any player is out of position or server sequence, correct the player(s) **before** calling "Time in."
11. At or before one minute, as appropriate, promptly announce "Time in." After calling "Time in," if the players are not ready but are making an effort to get into position, allow a reasonable number of extra seconds for the players to get into position before announcing the score. Call the score when the players are in the correct positions and server sequence and are ready to play:  "Time in. [Score]."

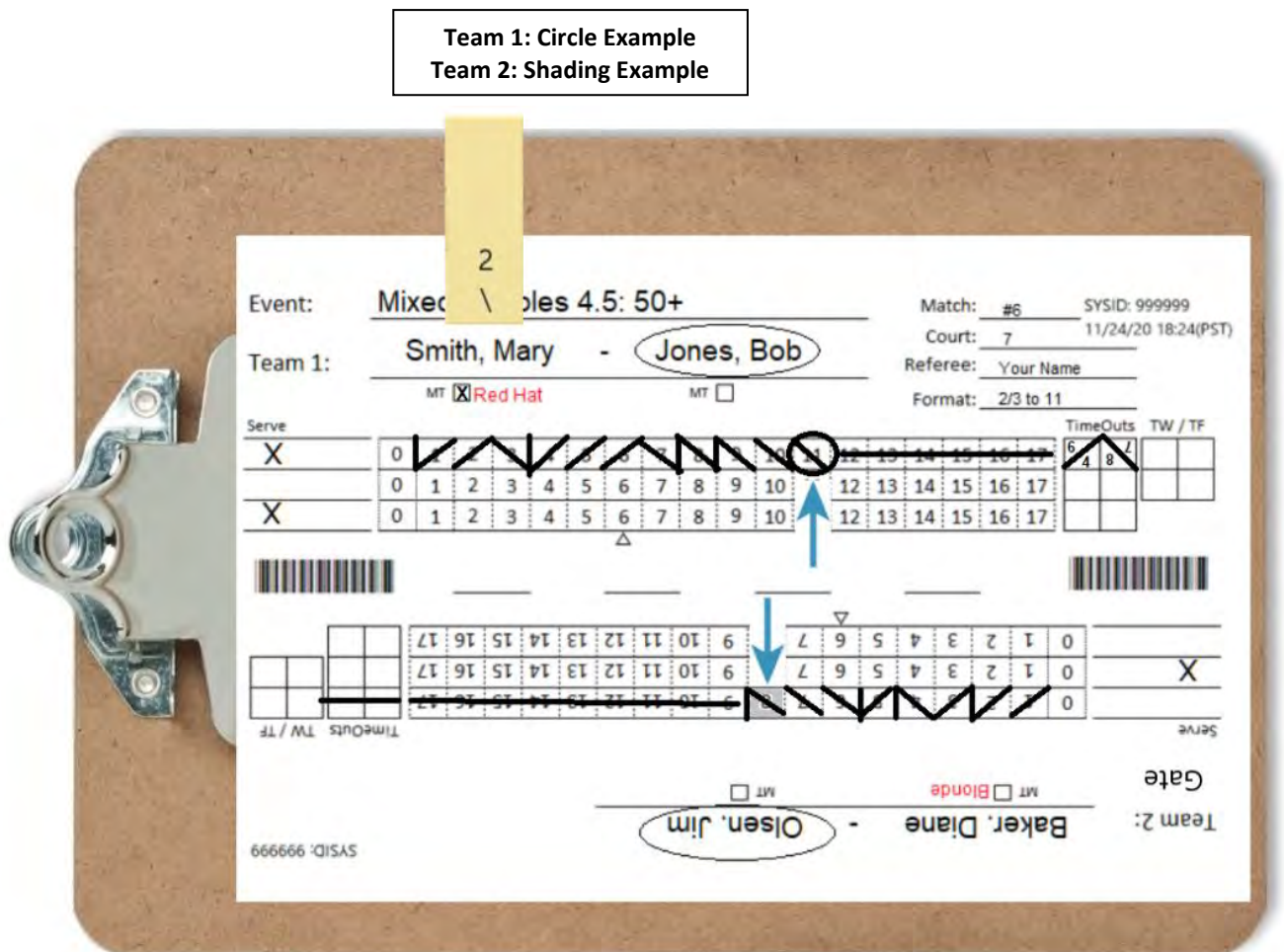
Figure 12 – Marking Correct Server and Server Number at End Change Time-Out



J. At the End of a Game – Additional Game to be Played

1. After the final point, announce the point, end of the game and the game score: 🗣️ “Point. Game. [Score].”
2. Call a between-games time-out and start your timer. 🗣️ “Time-out. Change ends. Two minutes.”
3. Move to the center of the court. This position helps alert spectators and players that the match is still in progress and helps you avoid unnecessary interaction with the players and spectators.
4. Clearly circle *or lightly shade* the final score of both teams to make it easier for players and the event desk to verify the correct scores (Figure 13). If no points are scored for the game, circle/shade “0” for the score. 💡 *OPTION: To avoid counting a losing score of 11 points or more as a winning game score, circle all winning scores and shade all losing scores (Figure 14).*
5. Draw a line through all unused points and unused time-out boxes of the completed game to avoid using the unmarked boxes during the next game (Figure 13). **NOTE:** The “TW/TF” boxes apply to the entire match; do not line them out.

Figure 13 – Final Scoring Highlighting



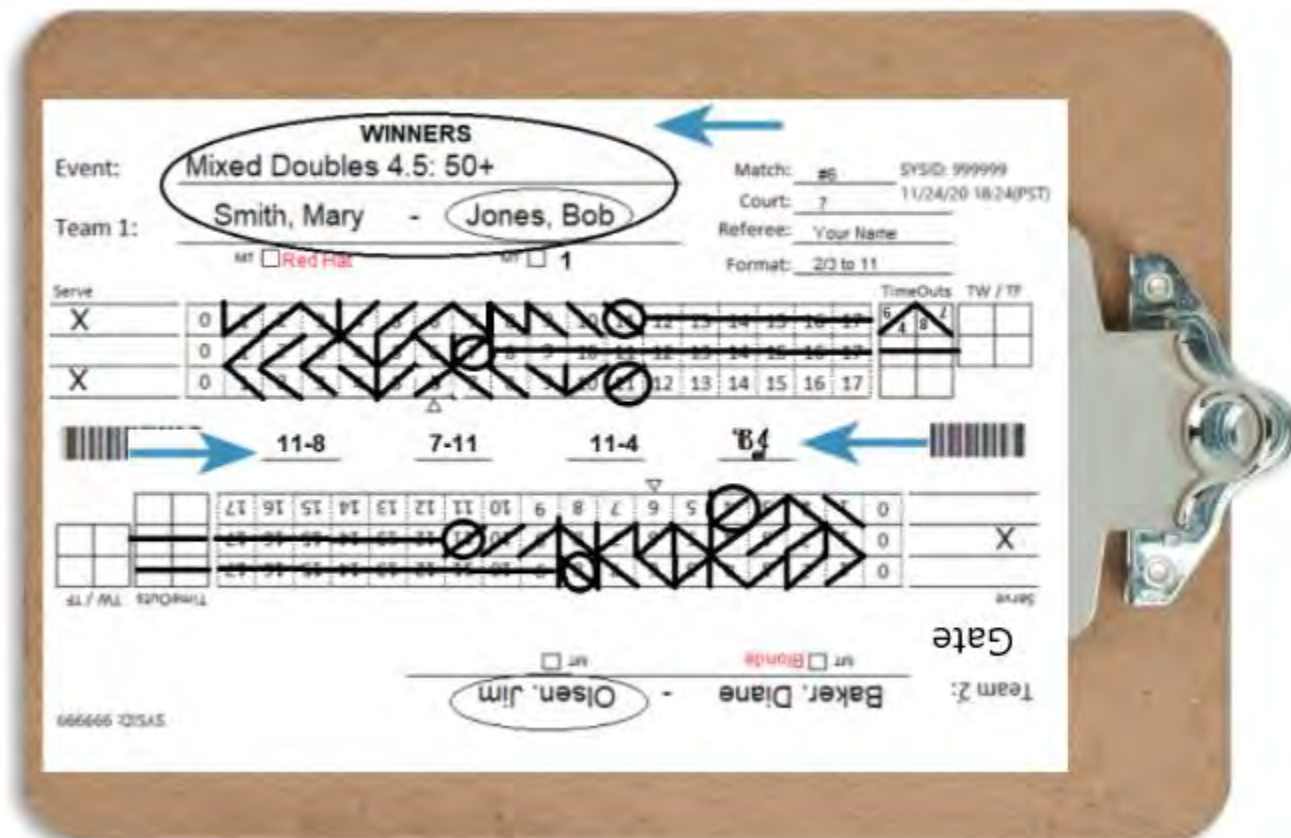
14. If any player is out of position or server sequence, correct the player(s) **before** calling "Time in."
15. At or before two minutes, as appropriate, promptly announce the game number, end change script (if applicable – see Section 4.I.1) and then "Time in." After calling "Time in," if the players are not ready but are making an effort to get into position, allow a reasonable number of extra seconds for the players to get into position before announcing the score. Call the score when the players are in the correct positions and server sequence and are ready to play: 🗣️ "Time in. [Score]."

K. Completing a Match

1. Announce the point, end of the game and match, and the final game score. 🗣️ "Point. Game. Match. [Score]."
2. Thank the officiating team (if applicable).
3. Clearly circle *or lightly shade* the final score of both teams to make it easier for players and the event desk to verify the correct scores (Figure 13). If no points are scored for the game, circle/shade "0" for the score.
4. Ensure the clipboard is oriented with the names of the winning team positioned right-side up.
5. Circle the names of the winning team and write "WINNERS" in the circle (Figure 15).
6. Record the scores of all games played **in the order they occurred, with the scores of the match winner first** (e.g., 11-3, 7-11, 11-2). If there are lines or a space in the center of the scoresheet, record the scores there. If not, record the scores at the top of the scoresheet next to the winners' names.
7. Have one of the winners confirm that the correct team is circled and the scores are correct, and sign (or initial) next to the scores. **Complete this step carefully to ensure the signing player acknowledges the correct result.** An error here can cause confusion at the event desk and delays in the tournament. **NOTE:** Initial the scoresheet if the players choose not to after they confirm the result.
8. Retrieve the ball.
9. Promptly return the scoresheet to the referee desk with the clipboard clamp oriented according to the preference of the tournament desk (i.e., left or right) with the winners' names at the top.

[Remainder of this page is intentionally blank]

Figure 15 – Marking Winner and Scores



L. Important Points to Remember

You are responsible for the conduct of the match.

1. Keep games moving smoothly by:
 - a. Promptly announcing points, second servers, and side outs.
 - b. Appropriately marking the scoresheet.
 - c. Efficiently moving the numbered server clip.
2. Communicate with players using a professional tone and avoid unnecessary conversation.
3. Maintain an attentive, confident, relaxed demeanor.
4. Stay alert and focused on what is happening on your court. Do not allow yourself to be distracted by activities on adjacent courts or spectator areas.

Section 5: Key Situations and Rules Violations

A. Serving and Receiving [Rules 4.B.9, 4.B.10]

1. Player Position and Server Sequence Errors and Fault [Rule 4.B.10]

- a. Player position and server sequence errors should be extremely rare if you are diligent in confirming correctness before calling the score to start a rally. If the correct server or correct receiver is not in the correct position or the correct server is not holding the ball, correct the player positions and server sequence as quickly and unobtrusively as possible. Depending on the circumstance, this may be accomplished by stating the team's score, motioning for the players to change positions, or announcing "You are not the correct server" or "You are not in the correct position." However, if you and the players do not notice an incorrect player position or server sequence before the score is called to start the rally, proceed as follows:
 - 1) If you detect the error during the rally, stop play as quickly as possible, identify the error, and replay the rally with the correct player positions and server sequence. As it is your responsibility to keep the players in the correct positions and sequence, be conscientious of allowing the rally to knowingly play out with a position or sequence error.
 - 2) Any player may stop play physically or verbally to appeal an incorrect server, receiver, or player position. If the player's appeal is correct, confirm the error and replay the rally with the players in the correct positions and server sequence. If there was no error in server, receiver, or position, call a fault against the team that first incorrectly claimed an incorrect player position or server sequence.
 - 3) If you or the players detect the error after the rally is completed, the rally stands. Announce the result of the rally and correct the error before calling the score for the next rally.
- b. If the correct server and correct receiver are in their correct positions when the score is called, call a fault on a player who serves or receives incorrectly, even if the rally is completed before the fault is called. Call the fault before the next serve is hit.

2. Stacking [Rules 4.B.6, 4.B.7]

There are several variations of the stacking technique. The serving team may stack; the receiving team may stack; or both may use the technique, but not necessarily at all times. To avoid confusion, concentrate only on the correct server and correct receiver based on the score (even or odd) that you have marked on the scoresheet. Ignore where either partner is positioned.

- a. Serving team stacking:
 - 1) If a team's **score is even** at side out, the partner **with** the starting server identification must serve first from the **right-hand court** (first server). If the team scores a point, the score will become odd, and the same player must then serve from the left-hand court. As long as the team continues to score, concentrate only on the position of the correct server (player with the starting server identification). Ignore where the partner is positioned.

- 2) If a team's **score is odd** at side out, the partner **without** the starting server identification must serve first from the **right-hand court** (first server). If the team scores a point, the score will become even, and the partner without the starting server identification must serve from the left-hand court. As long as points are being scored, concentrate only on the position of the correct server (player without the starting server identification). Ignore where the partner is positioned.
- 3) When the serving team faults, the serve goes to the second server; move the numbered server clip and concentrate only on the position of the correct second server (with or without the starting server identification). Ignore where the partner is positioned.

b. Receiving team stacking:

- 1) If a team's **score is even** at side out, the player **with** the starting server identification must receive in the **right-hand court**. Ignore where the partner is positioned.
- 2) If a team's **score is odd** at side out, the player **without** the starting server identification must receive in the **right-hand court**. Ignore where the partner is positioned.
- 3) The correct player must receive from the correct position based on their team score (even or odd) until a side out occurs and they re-gain the serve. Ignore where the partner is positioned when not receiving.

3. Questions Regarding Correct Player Positions or Server Sequence [Rules 4.B.8-4.B.9]

You are responsible for correcting player position and server sequence errors before calling the score to start each rally. Regardless, players may still ask you to identify the correct server, receiver, or position before or after you call the score.

NOTE: The rules do not limit the number of times a player may ask any of the questions about correct player position or server sequence. Specific wording of the questions is not required for you to respond.

If a player asks a question or makes a statement regarding player positions or server sequence:

a. If a question is asked **before the score is called**:

- 1) Whether a player asks a specific question (e.g., "Am I the correct server?") or a generic question (e.g., "Am I good?"), identify all errors so that all players and positions are corrected, even if the player or position they asked about was correct.
- 2) If all players and positions are correct, announce that all are correct.

b. If a question is asked **after you call the score but before the ball is hit to make the serve**:

- 1) Immediately stop play. Before or after answering the question, announce that you will re-call the score (e.g., "I will re-call the score") to prevent the server from serving before you re-call the score.
- 2) Respond to questions as described in Section 5.A.3.a.1 above and allow the players to adjust positions, if necessary.

- 3) Re-call the score when all players are, or should be, ready to proceed. This begins a new 10-second count if you had previously called the score.
- c. If a question is asked **after the ball is hit to make the serve**:
 - 1) Stop play.
 - 2) If any player is the incorrect server or receiver or out of server sequence, correct the situation and replay the rally [Rule 4.B.10]. **NOTE:** Do not assess a fault for the play stoppage.
 - 3) If no player is incorrect or out of sequence, call a fault against the player who asked the question and caused the play stoppage. [Rule 4.B.10]
- d. If a question is asked **after the rally is completed**:
 - 1) The result of the rally stands.
 - 2) Correct any player position or server sequence error for the next rally.
4. Questions and Challenges Regarding the Score [Rules 4.B.8, 4.I]

The opportunity to question or challenge the score ends **when the ball is hit to return the serve** or the ball becomes dead, whichever occurs first.

If a player says they did not hear you call the score or asks if you have called the score **before the ball is hit to make the serve**, stop play, if necessary, and re-call the score. (See [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 7-23.)

If a player questions or challenges the score:

- a. **Before you call the score:**
 - 1) Respond in a manner that does not sound like you are calling the score to start a rally. Say the score with a different volume, cadence, and with different words. When appropriate, respond with only the relevant part of the score.
 - 2) To avoid confusion, it is better to include additional words, such as “It’s 4 to 2,” or “You have 4, they have 2.”
 - 3) If a player asks specifically for their score, such as “What’s my score?” or “What do we have,” say simply “4” or “You have 4.”
 - 4) If or when you do give the full score, hold up your hand, step forward, and say the score in a way that is distinctly different from calling the score to start a rally (e.g., “It’s 4 to 2 and it’s first server.”)
- b. **After you call the score – score called correctly:**
 - 1) **Before the ball is hit to make the serve:**
 - Immediately stop play, acknowledge the correct score, and announce that you will re-call the score.
 - Allow the players to adjust positions, if necessary.
 - Re-call the score when all players are, or should be, ready to proceed.

2) **After the ball is hit to make the serve:**

- Ignore a player’s question or comment that you do not interpret as stopping play and allow play to continue to the end of the rally.
- If a player stops play, call a fault against the player.

c. **After you call the score – score called incorrectly:**

1) **Before the return of serve or the ball becomes dead (whichever occurs first):**

- You or any player may stop play to correct the score.
- Immediately stop play and announce “Correction.”
- Acknowledge the correct score and announce that you will re-call the score.
- Allow the players to adjust positions, if necessary.
- Re-call the score when all players are, or should be, ready to proceed.

2) **After the return of serve:**

- Ignore a player’s question or comment that you do not interpret as stopping play and allow play to continue to the end of the rally.
- If a player stops play, call a fault against the player.

3) **After the rally is completed:**

- The rally stands.
- Announce the result of the rally and correct the score for the next rally.

TABLE 1 – QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES REGARDING THE SCORE

SITUATION	Before the serve is hit	Before the return of serve or ball becomes dead ¹	After the return of serve	At completion of rally
Score called correctly	Stop play; re-call score	Ignore if play continues, or fault if play is stopped	Ignore if play continues, or fault if play is stopped	Announce the result of the rally and confirm the correct score
Score called incorrectly	Stop play; announce “Correction;” re-call score	Stop play; announce “Correction;” re-call score	Ignore if play continues, or fault if play is stopped	Announce the result of the rally and confirm the correct score

¹ Whichever occurs first

5. **Serving Before the Score is Called**

- If the server hits the ball **before you start calling the score**, there is no rule violation since the ball is dead at that time. [Rules 3.A.6, 3.A.20, 8.E]
- If the server hits the ball **while you are calling the score**, call “Service fault” or “Fault.” [Rule 4.M.9] **NOTE:** If you severely deviate from your normal cadence when calling the score, you may contribute to the server violating the rule. In that case, announce that you will re-call the score and allow the player to re-serve without penalty.

6. Service Court Change After the Score is Called [Rule 4.E.2]



After you call the score, if the player with the ball on the serving team either 1) switches service courts to serve or 2) gives the ball to the partner in the other service court, immediately stop play and announce that you will re-call the score. If necessary, assist the players in getting into the correct positions and then re-call the score when all players are, or should be, ready to proceed.

7. Time-Out Called After the Serve is Hit [Rules 4.M.8, 4.N.2]

If a player calls a time-out **after the server hits the ball to make the serve**, call "Fault." Explain briefly, as necessary.

8. 10-Second Violation [Rules 4.E, 4.E.1]

The server has 10 seconds to serve the ball once the complete score has been called. The 10-second count starts immediately after the third number of the score is called and stops at the moment the ball is hit, when 10 seconds is reached, or when a player asks a question. If the server takes longer than 10 seconds to hit the ball, call "Fault." Explain briefly, as necessary. **NOTE:** If a player asks a question or makes an utterance such as "wait, wait" within the 10 seconds after you call the score and before the serve is made, stop play, address the issue, and re-call the score. This will reset the 10-second count. (See [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 7-23.)

- a.  *OPTION: Timing 10 seconds may be measured with a silent count at normal speaking cadence (e.g., one thousand one, one thousand two, etc.) or with a subtle hand motion for each second of the 10-second count.*
- b.  *OPTION: For more accuracy, when you expect there is a chance of a 10-second violation, you may use the timer. Start the timer immediately after calling the score.*

9. Illegal Service Actions: Volley Serve [Rules 4.A.6, 4.A.7, 4.M.7]

While a small percentage of volley serves violates one or more of the three components, the serves of most players, both recreational and competitive, are legal. Recognizing an illegal volley serve can be difficult, but if you are certain that a violation occurred, make the call. If you are uncertain, call for a re-serve without penalty to the player. In addition, between games or during a time-out, you may ask an experienced referee to observe and provide an additional opinion. Failing to recognize an illegal serve, and therefore not calling it, may create an issue when another referee calls it in a later match.

- a. Service motion – fault: A volley serve must meet the three service motion requirements. Call a fault when the server hits the ball to make the serve:
 - 1) If the server's arm is not moving in an upward arc. **NOTE:** It is not required that the arm-swing be straight back and straight forward. The server's arm can move sideways if it is also upward.
 - 2) If any part of the paddle head is above the server's wrist.
 - 3) If contact with the ball is above the server's waist. **NOTE:** If you cannot discern the waist of the player, consider the player's belly to be the area of the waist since the belly can often be discerned despite clothing.

- b. Service motion – re-serve: If you suspect that one or more components of a specific volley serve may have been illegal but are not 100% certain, you may call for a re-serve. Immediately stop play, identify the issue, and call for a re-serve: 🏸 “Stop play. Questionable whether [state the issue]. I will re-call the score.” (See also [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 9-23.)
- c. Spin on the release – fault: The ball must be released from only one hand or only the paddle without manipulating the ball to create spin. Call a fault if you discern the player has imparted spin on the ball during the release for the serve (see Section 4.D.1.a.2).
- d. Release questionable or not visible – re-serve: If you were not able to see the release of the ball or discern whether the ball was properly released (i.e., not spun), immediately stop play, identify the issue, and call for a re-serve: 🏸 “Stop play. Questionable ball release [Ball release not visible]. I will re-call the score.” The receiver may also stop play before returning the ball to request a re-serve because they could not see the release. If you agree the release of the ball was not visible to the receiver, call for the ball to be re-served.

10. Illegal Service Actions: Drop Serve [Rule 4.A.6, 4.A.8]

A drop serve does not have to comply with the three service motion components required for a volley serve.

- a. Added force – fault: If the server propels the ball in any direction or manner (e.g., tosses the ball up or forward, throws the ball down, spins the ball) and then lets it bounce, call a fault after the server hits the ball. Explain briefly, as necessary.
- b. Added force – re-serve: If you suspect that force has been applied to the ball before a specific drop serve is hit but you are not 100% certain, you may call for a re-serve. Immediately stop play, identify the issue, and call for a re-serve: 🏸 “Stop play. Questionable ball release/drop. I will re-call the score.”
- c. Release not visible – re-serve: If you were not able to see the release of the ball, immediately stop play, identify the issue, and call for a re-serve 🏸 “Stop play. Ball release not visible. I will re-call the score.” The receiver may also stop play before returning the ball to request a re-serve because they could not see the release. If you agree the release of the ball was not visible to the receiver, call for the ball to be re-served.

11. Service Foot Faults [Rules 4.A.4, 4.L]

The server’s feet cannot be in contact with the court or the playing surface outside the serving area, and at least one foot must be grounded in the service area when the ball is hit to make the serve.

For a wheelchair player, the rear wheels must be positioned within the serving area when the ball is hit to make the serve, but the casters are allowed to contact the baseline and extend into the court.

When the server hits the ball to make the serve, call a fault immediately and identify which foot or wheel (e.g., “Service fault, left wheel”) if:

- a. A server's foot or a rear wheel is in contact with the court, including the baseline.
- b. A server's foot or a rear wheel is in contact with the playing surface outside the sideline or the imaginary extension of the sideline or centerline.
- c. Neither of a standing server's feet is grounded in the serving area.

12. Serve Hits the Net [Rule 4.A.2]

If a serve hits the net and then lands anywhere in the correct service court, play continues and the receiver must return the serve.

13. Short Serves [Rule 4.M.3]

If the serve bounces in the receiver's NVZ (including on the NVZ line), call a service fault against the serving team.

14. Change of Starting Server [Rule 5.A.2]

The starting server identification must always be worn by the starting server. It is the player's responsibility to be fully compliant with the starting server identification requirements. If a player refuses to wear the starting server identification, impose a match forfeit against the player. [Rule 13.A.2]

Teams may change starting server between games. **The players are not required to notify you of a starting server change and are not penalized if they do not.** You are responsible for the players being in the correct positions and server sequence, so do not rely on the players to notify you.

To avoid missing a change in starting server, follow the best practice of confirming with each team between games whether they will keep the same starting server (see 4.J.9). You should also discover a change in starting server when your confirmation of the players' positions and serving sequence before you start the game does not agree with what you have marked on your scoresheet.

- a. If players notify you that they have changed the starting server, erase the circle around the name of the player who is no longer the starting server and circle the name of the new starting server. Instruct the players to change the starting server identification if they have not done so. Be sure to notify the other team of the starting server change.
- b. If you notice that the player wearing the starting server identification is not the player whose name is circled on the scoresheet, correct your scoresheet to indicate the new starting server **and notify the opposing team of the starting server change.** If the situation is discovered at any time during the game, wait until after the rally to make the correction. If you or a player stop play due to an incorrect server or receiver, make the correction and replay the rally with the correct player positions and server sequence. [Rule 4.B.10]

B. Player Issues

1. Late Reporting [Rule 13.H.4]

Impose a game or match forfeit, as appropriate, when a player fails to report to the match on time. (See Sections 6.B.3, 6.B.4.)

2. Accommodating Players with Hearing Impairments

In addition to watching the hand signal used when the score is called, players with hearing impairments may ask you to announce the score extra loudly or request other accommodations that will meet their specific needs. Be sensitive to these types of requests and tolerant of a player asking you to repeat the score more often than normal. Be ready to adjust your practices as best you can to accommodate the player within your abilities and as reasonable to keep the player informed. This may include signaling a time-out by making a “T” with your hands to both teams while making the standard announcement or visually indicating a violation to the extent possible when calling faults (e.g., step forward and point to your foot as you announce a foot fault).

3. Inappropriate Apparel [Rule 2.G]

Only the Tournament Director has the authority to require apparel changes. Apparel changes required by the Tournament Director are handled as a referee time-out. Advise the players of the reason for the delay. The Tournament Director may declare a match forfeit if a player refuses to comply with a requirement to change apparel. [Rule 2.G.4]

- a. Safety and distraction: If a player complains that an opponent’s apparel disguises the ball or is distracting (e.g., the color of their apparel approximates the color of the ball, images of pickleballs are prominently depicted), summon the Tournament Director to address the complaint. [Rule 2.G.1]
- b. Depictions: If you or a player believe that the graphics, insignias, pictures, or writing on a player’s apparel are not in good taste, summon the Tournament Director to address the issue. [Rule 2.G.2]
- c. Footwear: If a player’s shoes have soles that may mark or damage the playing surface, summon the Tournament Director to address the issue. [Rule 2.G.3]

4. Ball Falling on Court [Rule 7.N]

If an additional ball that a player was carrying falls onto the playing surface during a rally, consider it a referee error. Immediately stop play and call for the rally to be replayed. This is a referee correction because you failed to collect the ball before play began. (See Section 4.A.2.)

C. **The Non-Volley Zone (NVZ)** [Rules – Section 9]

Watching for NVZ faults is one of your primary responsibilities. Whenever a player is near the NVZ, keep your eyes on the NVZ lines to determine a volleying player’s foot placement.

1. Watching for and Calling NVZ Faults

- a. Make all NVZ violation calls immediately and definitively and identify which foot (or wheel, or other item) contacted the NVZ (e.g., “Foot fault, left foot;” or “Fault, paddle touched the non-volley zone on the volley”). For a wheelchair player, the casters are allowed to contact the NVZ at any time. All fault rules related to contact with the NVZ only apply to the rear wheels of the wheelchair.
- b. If a NVZ fault occurs and you are certain of the fault, but additional exchanges take place before you can voice the call, go ahead and make the call; do not ignore the fault. It is better to make a late call than to not make the call at all.

- c. If you erroneously call a foot fault on a ball that bounced, immediately announce a referee correction and replay the rally.

2. Contacting the NVZ [Rule 9.B]

Call a fault if the player, anything the player is wearing or carrying (e.g., paddle, hat, glasses), or any rear wheel contacts the NVZ while the player is in the act of volleying the ball. **NOTE:** The act of volleying begins with the strike of the ball. As such, it is not a fault if the paddle or anything the player is wearing touches the NVZ **before** the volley is struck as long as that contact is removed prior to the strike of the ball.

3. Momentum and the NVZ [Rule 9.C]

When a ball is volleyed near the NVZ and the volleying player has momentum from the volley, **keep your eyes on the volleying player until he or she either foot faults or regains control of their momentum.** A player volleying a ball is subject to a NVZ violation until the momentum associated with the volley no longer exists. Even if a fault or dead ball occurs elsewhere between the time when the player contacts the ball and when he or she loses control, **the NVZ fault takes precedence.** (See [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 14-23.)

4. Faults Involving the Volleying Player's Partner [Rules 9.B-9.C]

There are two ways a NVZ fault can involve the partner of the player who hits a volley.

- a. Call a fault if the volleying player and the partner contact each other during the hitting of the volley while the partner is in contact with the NVZ.
- b. Call a fault if the partner makes any contact with the volleying player during the hitting of the volley (e.g., colliding with the player who volleyed, hitting the paddle of the player who volleyed) and the momentum created as a result of the volley causes the partner or anything the partner is wearing or carrying to contact the NVZ.

5. Stepping Into, Stepping Through, and Pushing Off from the NVZ [Rule 9.D]

If a player, or any rear wheel, has contacted the NVZ, call a fault if the ball is volleyed before both of the player's feet, or both rear wheels of the player's wheelchair, have contacted the playing surface outside the NVZ. (See [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 8-23.)

D. The Net

1. Contacting the Net System

- a. If any player, or anything the player is wearing or carrying, contacts any part of the net or net support system while the ball is in play, including the cross bar or a support base, call a fault. [Rule 7.G] (See Section 5.D.5.)
- b. If the ball hits the net post while the ball is in play, call a fault. [Rules 3.A.26, 7.J]

2. Crossing the Plane of the Net

The plane of the net extends vertically above and below the net and laterally beyond the net posts on each end of the net.

- a. The ball must cross over to the hitting player's side of the net before the player hits the ball. If the player hits the ball before it completely crosses the net, call a fault. [Rules 7.K, 11.I]

- b. Below the net: If a player's foot or anything that the player is wearing or carrying extends under the net and onto the opponent's court at any time the ball is live, call a fault. This applies to both players on a team, including the player who is not attempting to make a shot. [Rule 11.I]
 - c. Above the net or around the net post: If any part of the player's body or anything worn or carried by the player crosses the plane of the net before the player hits the ball, call a fault. A player is allowed to follow through across the plane of the net **after** hitting the ball. [Rule 11.I]
 - d. A player may legally break the plane of the net (without contacting the net or contacting the surface of the opponent's court) to hit a ball **after it has bounced on the player's side of the net and traveled over or around the net back to the opponent's side of the net** without being touched. [Rule 11.I.1]
3. Shots around the Net Post
- a. A player may return a ball around the net post below the height of the net. [Rule 11.M]
 - b. If a player hits a ball that passes in the space between the net and the net post, call a fault. [Rules 7.C, 11.L.2] (See [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 5-22.)

4. Net Systems with Crossbars

Many net systems include a crossbar across the lower part of the net and a support base ("foot") at the ends and sometimes at the center of the net width. Situations that may arise during play include the following:

- a. On the serve, if the ball hits the crossbar or center support base or gets caught between the net and the crossbar, before or after going over the net, call a fault. [Rules 11.L.5.a, 11.L.5.c]
- b. On other than a serve, if, after the ball goes over the net and before or after bouncing, one of the following occurs, replay the rally: [Rule 11.L.5.b]
 - 1) The ball hits any part of the crossbar, including the part of the bar that extends outside the sideline.
 - 2) The ball hits the center support base or any support base positioned within the sidelines.
 - 3) The ball gets caught between the net and the cross bar.
- c. If the ball hits the crossbar or a support base before going over the net, call a fault. [Rule 11.L.5.a]
- d. If the net system malfunctions during play, replay the rally. [Rule 11.L.5.d]

5. Abnormal Net Issues

If one of the following occurs, replay the rally:

- a. The ball or a player contacts a billowing net. [Rule 11.L.5.b] (See also [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 1-22.)
- b. The ball or a player contacts a portion of the net that drapes onto the court. [Rules 2.C.6, 11.L.5.b]

E. Non-Standard Time-Outs

1. Medical Time-Out [Rule 10.B]

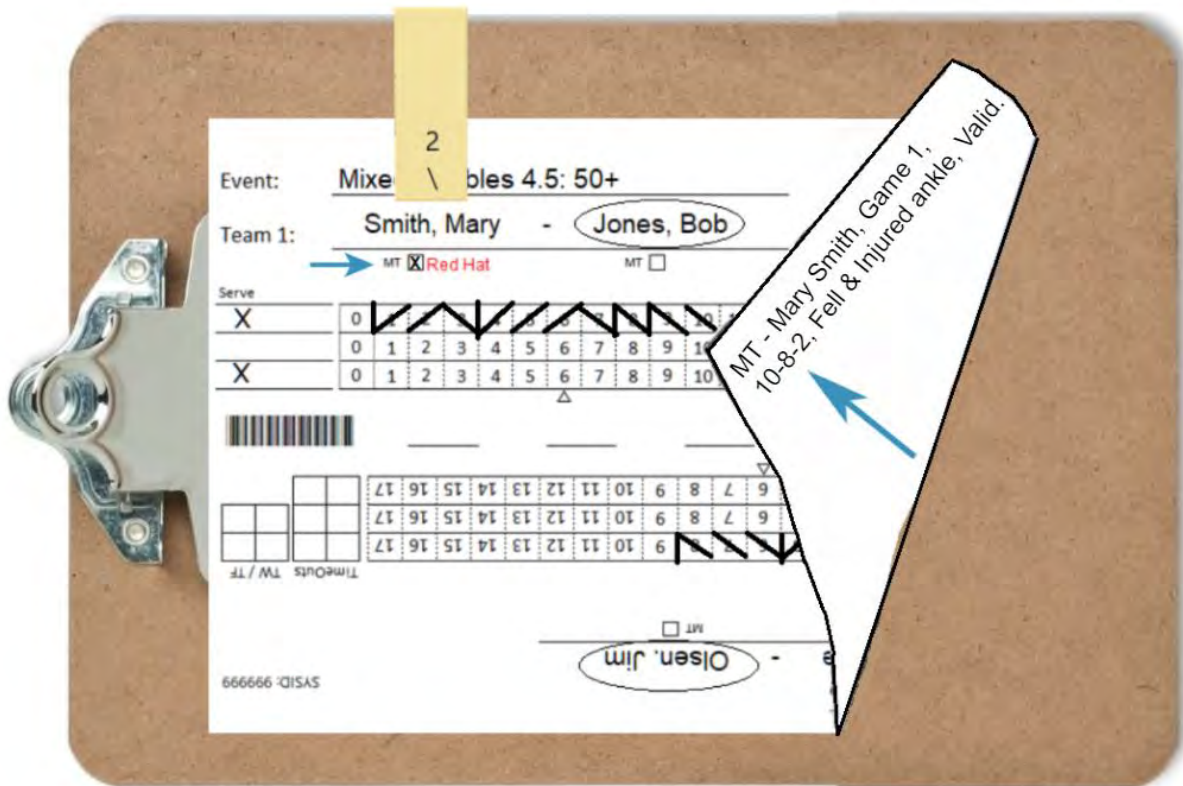
If a player suffers an injury or medical condition (including muscle cramping) during play, the player may request a medical time-out. **NOTE:** Once medical personnel have been summoned, charge the player a medical time-out, even if they subsequently ask to cancel the request. (See [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 5-23.)

- a. One medical time-out of 15 minutes maximum may be requested by each player per match.
- b. Play continues to the conclusion of the rally. [Rule 11.F]
- c. Announce 🗣️: “Medical time-out requested by [name]. [Score].”
- d. Summon medical personnel (or the Tournament Director in the absence of medical personnel) to evaluate whether the player’s condition warrants medical attention. Send a medical alert electronically or by a tournament volunteer or spectator.
- e. Summon clean-up assistance if there is any sign of blood on the player or anywhere on the playing surface. Do not resume play until the bleeding has been controlled, bloody clothing has been removed, and the playing surface has been cleaned. There is no time limit for blood clean-up. (See Sections 5.E.2, 5.E.2.d, 5.E.2.e)
- f. Advise all players that once the injured player is ready, play will resume.
- g. Collect the ball if the ball has not been placed on the court under one of the player’s paddles.
- h. When medical personnel (or the Tournament Director in the absence of medical personnel) arrive, start your timer, and allow up to 15 continuous minutes for medical attention. If medical attention needs to be rendered off-court at another location at the venue, pause your timer and accompany the player. Resume your timer upon arrival at the place where medical attention will be provided. If the player will return to the court to resume play, pause the timer again so that the travel time is not included in the timed 15 minutes. If fewer than 15 minutes are required to ready the player to resume play, the remaining time is lost.
- i. Advise medical personnel if a player’s head had forceful contact with a hard object, such as the court, a paddle, the net post, etc., so they can determine if the player exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion as listed in the USA Pickleball [Concussion Protocol](#). Such player must be immediately removed from play and not permitted to return until a written release from a licensed health care professional is provided to the Tournament Director. (This procedure is also strongly recommended for non-sanctioned tournaments.)
- j. Record the medical time-out by marking an “X” in the MT box under the player’s name and, on the back of the scoresheet, write “MT,” the player’s name, game number, score, details of the medical time-out, and validity. To avoid having to remove the scoresheet and the server clip from the clipboard, write the details across the loose end of the scoresheet (Figure 16).
- k. If medical personnel (or the Tournament Director in the absence of medical personnel) determine that there is not a valid medical condition, then also charge a standard time-

out (see Section 4.H.4) and issue a technical warning (see Section 6.B.2) to the player. If no standard time-out remains, issue a technical foul (see Section 6.B.2). The medical time-out for the player is considered used and is no longer available. Advise the player of the situation.

- l. Resume play when the player is able to continue playing by giving a 15-second warning, checking readiness of the officiating team (if applicable), followed by announcing “Time in” and calling the score.
- m. The player is allowed to extend the time for medical treatment by using their available standard time-outs after the 15-minute medical time-out expires. If the player is not able to resume play after the expiration of the medical time-out and, if used, standard time-outs, call a match retirement in favor of the opponent. (See Section 5.E.3.) Advise the Tournament Director of a retiring player so the USA Pickleball Report of Accident or Incident form can be appropriately completed and filed.

Figure 16 – Medical Time-Out Marking



2. Referee Time-Out [Rule 10.H.2]

A referee time-out may be used to address extenuating circumstances, such as active bleeding, a potential medical situation, any foreign substance on the court. There is no time limit for a referee time-out.

- a. Allow the rally to complete and then hold up your hand and announce “Referee time-out.” [Rule 11.F]
- b. Call a referee time-out if no player calls a time-out. Announce the reason for the time-out and the score. **NOTE:** No time-out will be charged to the affected player.

- c. If the situation involves a potential medical issue with a player (e.g., heat exhaustion, excessive panting, dizziness), summon medical personnel (or the Tournament Director in the absence of medical personnel) to determine if the player needs medical treatment. [Rule 10.H.2.a]
 - 1) Allow medical treatment as necessary and resume play if the player is able to continue.
 - 2) If the player is not able to resume play, call a match retirement in favor of the opponent. Also, advise the Tournament Director of a retiring player so the USA Pickleball Report of Accident or Incident form can be appropriately completed and filed. (See Section 5.E.3.)
 - d. If the situation involves active bleeding that can be controlled without medical assistance (e.g., minor cut, nosebleed), do not summon medical personnel. Allow the player to control the blood using personal resources.
 - e. If the situation involves blood, debris, water, fluids, or other foreign substances on the playing surface, seek assistance as necessary and have the substance removed or cleaned up. [Rules 10.B.5.a, 10.H.2.c]
 - f. Collect the ball if the ball has not been placed on the court under one of the player's paddles.
 - g. No annotations are required on the scoresheet for a referee time-out.
 - h. When the situation has been resolved and it is safe and appropriate to resume play, give a 15-second warning, check the readiness of the officiating team (if applicable), then announce "Time in" and call the score.
3. Match Retirement [Rule 12.F]

A team may decide to retire from a match due to medical issues or other circumstances. When a team retires, the opponent will be awarded the match. A winning score for the match will be recorded in favor of the opponent showing the actual scores for all completed games and for the remaining games that would have been required for the opponent to win the match. If a game was in progress, the retiring team will retain all points scored and the opponent will receive a winning score with at least a two-point margin. A score of 0 will be shown for the retiring team for any game not started.

- a. End a game in progress by awarding the match to the opponent. Make sure to record the result of the last rally.
- b. Determine whether the team is retiring only from the current match. If the team indicates that they will also be withdrawing from all remaining matches, inform the players to report their withdrawal to the tournament desk. If the players are unable to inform the tournament desk themselves, report their withdrawal when you return the scoresheet.
- c. Finish annotating the scoresheet as follows (Figure 17):
 - 1) For any game in progress, circle *or lightly shade* the actual score of the retiring team and the winning score for the game format (e.g., 11 for an 11-point game) for the winning team. Include a two-point margin over the retiring team's score if it is 10 or

more. Line through all unmarked points of the winning team except for the winning point.

- 2) For any game that is not started, circle or *lightly shade* the winning score for the game format (e.g., 11 for an 11-point game) for the winning team and 0 for the retiring team.
- 3) Circle the names of the team that is not retiring. Write “WINNERS” in the circle.
- 4) Record the scores of the games in the order they occurred, with the scores of the match winner first (e.g., 2-11, 11-4, 11-0). If there are lines or a space in the center of the scoresheet, record the scores there. If not, record the scores at the top of the scoresheet next to the winners’ names.
- 5) Write “RETIREMENT” under the scores.

Figure 17 – Documenting a Match Retirement

**Team 2 retires with a lead: 11-2, 4-1
Win recorded for Team 1: 2-11, 11-4, 11-0**

4. Withdrawal from Event [Rule 12.G]

A team may request to withdraw from an event (the assigned match and all upcoming matches) before you call the score to start the match. Summon the Head Referee or Tournament Director or have the team accompany you to the tournament desk to make the official request. Report the scores for each game that would have been played as 0-0. [Rule 12.I] (Figure 18).

- a. Circle or lightly shade 0 as the score for both teams.
- b. Circle the names of the team that is not withdrawing. Write "WINNERS" in the circle.
- c. Record the scores in the game format that would have been played, (e.g., 0-0, 0-0 for a two-out-of-three games match) on the lines or in the space in the center of the scoresheet. If there is no space in the center, record the scores at the top of the scoresheet next to the names of the team that is not withdrawing.
- d. Write "WITHDRAWAL" under the scores.

Figure 18 – Documenting a Withdrawal

The scoresheet is for a match between Team 1 (Smith, Mary) and Team 2 (Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim). The event is Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+. The match is #6, court 7, on 11/24/20 at 18:24 (PST). The referee is 'Your Name' and the format is 2/3 to 11. The scoresheet shows a 0-0 score with 'WINNERS' written above and 'WITHDRAWAL' written below. The names 'Smith, Mary' and 'Jones, Bob' are circled, and 'WINNERS' is written in a circle above them. The scoresheet includes a grid for recording game points and time-outs.

5. Equipment Time-Out [Rule 10.D]

Players are expected to keep all clothing and equipment in playable condition. If you determine that a clothing or equipment change or adjustment is necessary for fair and safe continuation of play, call an equipment time-out for a reasonable duration to correct the issue.

- a. Equipment time-outs are not required to be annotated on the scoresheet.
- b. There is no restriction on the number of allowable equipment time-outs.
- c. Valid reasons for an equipment time-out include broken paddle, broken shoestring, ripped shorts, dislodged contact lens, etc.

- d. When the situation has been remedied, resume play by giving a 15-second warning, checking readiness of the officiating team (if applicable), followed by announcing “Time in” and calling the score.

F. Stoppage of Play

Once the ball has been hit to make the serve, do not stop play unless you recognize a:

- Fault
 - Referee error (including incorrect player position(s) or server sequence)
 - Hinder
 - Questionable service motion
 - Questionable ball release for serve
 - Player physically or verbally (e.g., “stop,” “wait,” or similar words) stopping play
1. To stop play, immediately hold up your hand and step forward to announce the situation (e.g., “Stop play,” “Fault,” “Ball on.”)
 2. Most play stoppages are resolved in a matter of seconds and play is quickly resumed by readying the players and calling the score. Referee time-outs are reserved for resolving lengthy situations.
 3. You may use a 15-second warning to avert a potential delay of game in situations where the players are slow to get in position.

TABLE 2 – PLAYER ACTIONS THAT CAN INTERRUPT PLAY

Actions other than faults that can result in a stoppage of play are summarized below. If a player's action occurs within the allowable time limit while the ball is live (i.e., after you start the score call), stop play to respond.

Player Action	When Action is Allowed	Rule
Not ready signal	Before start of score call	4.C
Hinder call	At time of occurrence	8.C
Time-out request	Before server hits ball to serve	4.M.8, 4.N.2
Score confirmation	Before server hits ball to serve	4.B.8
Correct server or receiver request		
Correct player position request		
Score correction request	Before receiver hits return of serve	4.I
Incorrect server, receiver, or position appeal	Before rally is completed	4.B.10
Line call appeal	Before server hits ball to start next rally	13.F.3
Match-ending line call appeal	Before scoresheet is initialed	13.F.3
Damaged ball appeal	Before server hits ball to start next rally	11.E

G. Judgment Calls

1. Deciding When to Call the Score

After each rally, players are expected to move to their respective positions without delay to begin the next point. Calling the score prior to all players, especially the server and receiver, being in position requires careful judgment. Allow players a reasonable amount of time for their team to be ready to receive or initiate the serve. After you call the score, the server is entitled to serve immediately. [Rule 4.E] Things to remember:

- a. Be generous in allowing time for the players to be ready, as long as they maintain a continuous pace. [Rule 10.C]
- b. Allow players to quickly hydrate and towel off between rallies or when there is an interruption in play that does not require their attention. [Rule 10.C]
- c. Allow sufficient time to a player who retrieves the ball after a rally to return to position before continuing play.
- d. Call the score prior to all players being in position if:
 - 1) Players carry on a conversation without moving toward position.
 - 2) Players take an excessive amount of time toweling off or taking a drink.

2. Line Calls

The standard used by officials to make line calls is different from the criteria players must use when making line calls. Officials do not need to clearly see a space between the line and the ball as it hits the ground to call a ball “out.” Officials must make impartial judgment calls based on whether they see that the ball contacted the playing surface in or out of the court bounds. [Rules 6.A-6.C, 6.C.6]

- a. Make the following line calls without an appeal by a player:
 - 1) Service foot faults. (See Section 5.A.11.)
 - 2) Short serves. (See Section 5.A.13.)
 - 3) NVZ infractions. (See Section 5.C.)
 - 4) Line calls when the view of the responsible line judge is blocked, but only if you clearly saw where the ball landed. You must canvass the other line judges if you cannot make the line call. (See Section 8.G.3.)
- b. You must wait for an appeal before ruling on any other line calls. [Rule 13.F]
 - 1) Players can only make an appeal for a line call or “in” ball ruling on a shot that is rally-ending. [Rules 6.C.3, 13.F.3] (See [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 13-23.)
 - 2) Players must make their appeal for a line call or “in” ball ruling made at the end of a rally before the server hits the ball to start the next rally. A match-ending line call or “in” ball ruling must be appealed before the scoresheet is initialed. [Rules 6.C.3; 13.F.3]
 - 3) Players are not required to make a line call on a ball before appealing to the referee to make the call. [Rule 6.C.3] However, players must immediately stop play to end the rally to make the appeal. **NOTE:** It is not an appeal if a player asks whether a ball

they played was “in” or “out.” A played ball is considered “in” since the rally continued. You may inform the player how you saw the ball, but your response does not change the result of the rally as played.

- 4) **Respond to the question asked to make the appeal** before making your ruling. For example, if asked if you saw the ball, respond first “yes,” “no,” or “I did not see it clearly.”
- 5) When a player appeals a line call **made by a player or a line judge**, you will either confirm the call, overrule the call, or let the call stand. Do not overrule a call unless you are certain the player’s or line judge’s call was incorrect.
 - a) **If you saw where the ball landed**, announce: 🗣️ “The ball was in.” or 🗣️ “The ball was out.”
 - b) **If you did not see where the ball landed**, announce: 🗣️ “By rule, the call stands.”
- 6) Upon appeal when **no call is made by a player or a line judge**, you will make the call.
 - a) **If you saw where the ball landed**, announce: 🗣️ “The ball was in.” or 🗣️ “The ball was out.”
 - b) **If you did not see where the ball landed and no call was made by a player**, announce: 🗣️ “By rule, the ball is in.”
 - c) **If you did not see where the ball landed and no call was made by a line judge**, canvass the other line judges to determine whether any of them can make a definitive call. If so, accept their call and announce the ruling. If not, announce a replay.
- 7) If asked why you cannot make a call, give a response that indicates you did not see the ball clearly or that your view was blocked. Do not routinely say you were watching the NVZ, especially when there was no action at the NVZ, as that gives the impression you are not focusing on the rest of the game.
- 8) **You cannot make an accurate call when the ball landed between you and the line and prevented you from seeing whether the ball touched the line.**
- 9) Do not make a definitive “Out” call if a ball landed on the opposite side of the court from you and you did not see a space between the ball and the line. The call is too close for you to make from your position.
- 10) If you overrule an “In” call as out of bounds, the team that hit the ball in question loses the rally.
- 11) If you overrule a player’s “Out” call as “In,” the team that made the “Out” call loses the rally. [Rule 6.C.10]
- 12) If you overrule a line judge’s “Out” call, replay the rally due to the officiating error unless the team favored by your ruling concedes the rally. [Rule 13.E.5]
- 13) A player may override any line call to favor the opponent, whether the call was made by that player, by another player, or by an official. The player override to favor the opponent takes precedence over line judge and referee calls.

TABLE 3 – LINE CALL APPEAL ACTIONS

Result of Player Line Call Appeal	Without Line Judges	With Line Judges
Referee makes call	Referee's call stands	Referee's call stands
Referee cannot make call	Player's call stands	Line Judge's call stands
Referee overrules "In" call	Referee's call stands	Referee's call stands
Referee overrules "Out" call	Fault against player	Replay*
Player overrides "In" call	Opponent wins rally	Opponent wins rally
Player overrides "Out" call	Opponent wins rally	Replay*
No call by players, referee, or line judges	Ball is "In"	Replay

* **NOTE:** An officiating error occurs when an official's "Out" call is overruled or overridden, resulting in a replay due to the rally being terminated prematurely by the "out" call. However, a team may concede the rally to their opponent when a replay would otherwise be required. [Rules 13.E.4, 13.E.5]

3. Hinders [Rules 3.A.16, 7.M, 8.C]

When an object, person, or other occurrence disrupts play or poses a threat to the safe continuation of play, (e.g., stray ball, temporary net toppled by the wind), immediately stop play, announce the hinder (e.g., "Stop play, ball on"), and replay the rally after clearing the obstruction. It does not matter where a ball in play lands at the time of the hinder call; the ball is declared dead at the time the hinder call is made, whether or not the hinder is valid. Do not stop play for a stray ball entering the court, unless you consider it a safety issue. Players may call a hinder if they are distracted by a ball, person, or other object coming into the playing area. If you disagree with a player's hinder call, call a fault against the offending player.

4. Broken, Cracked, Degraded or Soft Balls [Rule 11.E]

It is important to understand the difference between the two classifications of balls: "broken and cracked" and "degraded and soft." "Broken" and "cracked" balls have a break or split in the surface of the ball other than the manufactured holes. "Degraded" balls include "soft" balls as well as balls that are wobbly, out-of-round, heavily worn, fuzzy, or imperfect in some manner other than having a crack or split. Despite a ball being broken, cracked, degraded or soft, play continues to the completion of the rally.

- a. Between rallies and before the ball is hit to make the serve, any player may appeal a ball as broken, cracked, degraded, or soft and request a replacement ball. Examine the ball to determine whether it is broken or cracked and, if so, issue a replacement ball. If both teams agree that a ball is degraded or soft and should be replaced, issue a replacement ball. Any player may inspect a replacement ball. However, the player who will serve next may select the ball if there is more than one ball from which to choose. Re-call the score if you had called it before the appeal.
- b. Call a fault against a player who stops play due to a ball suspected of being broken, cracked, degraded or soft.
- c. If you determine that a broken or cracked ball affected the outcome of the rally, replay the rally. There is no replay for a soft or degraded ball.
- d. Issue a verbal warning or a technical warning, depending on the circumstances, to a player who crushes the ball without allowing it to be examined.

5. Double or Triple Bounce, Ball Hitting a Player, Double Hits, and Carries [Rules 7.E, 7H, 7.L, 11.A]

Accurately detecting whether the ball bounced too many times, hit a player, was hit twice, or was carried can be difficult.

- a. When you clearly see any of these violations, call a fault.
- b. If you cannot definitively determine whether a violation occurred, allow play to continue.
- c. If any player stops play to make an appeal, you may ask the alleged offending player whether a violation occurred, giving the player an opportunity to make an honor call against themselves.
- d. If the opponent stops play to claim a violation, issue a fault if you determine that no violation occurred. [Rule 7.I]

6. Distractions [Rules 3.A.7, 11.J]

Players are not allowed to create a distraction to interfere with their opponent's concentration or physical ability to hit the ball. Call a fault immediately on a player for uncommon actions or vocalizations that distract the opponent **when an opponent is preparing to hit the ball**, such as waving their arms or paddle, stomping their feet, or shouting in an unusual manner. Similar actions and vocalizations that are common to the game made by players at other times, such as grunting while they are hitting the ball and routine partner communication, are not distractions. If a player stops play to claim a distraction, call a fault on the player for stopping play. [Rule 7.I]

H. Enforcement Issues with Players and Spectators

1. Faults

- a. Call faults immediately, definitively, and audibly. Do not elaborate excessively or argue with the guilty player.
- b. Occasionally, violations will occur simultaneously. When simultaneous violations occur, call both violations. If the penalty for the violations is the same (e.g., loss of rally), assess only one penalty. If the penalties are different for the violations (e.g., technical foul and loss of rally), assess all penalties.

2. Referee Errors

The most common errors are calling the wrong score and calling a NVZ foot fault on a bounced ball. If you make a mistake, immediately stop play, announce "Correction," and replay the rally. This includes if you incorrectly identify the correct server when asked by a player.

3. Questioned Calls

When a call is questioned by a player and the issue is not resolved quickly, call a referee time-out and summon all players to the net to calmly discuss a resolution.

- a. Ignore spectator comments. Spectators are not part of the match and must not be permitted to become involved. [Rule 13.C.2.a]
- b. Consult the second referee or line judges, if appropriate.

- c. Avoid replays, if possible. If a situation is not addressed by a rule or the Casebook and all players agree to a replay, grant the replay. [Rule 13.F.2]

4. Coaching and Spectator Comments [Rule 13.G.1.j]

Coaching is instructing or directing a player or team so they can gain an advantage or avoid violating the rules (i.e., win a rally or not commit a fault). Coaching by non-players is only permitted during time-outs.

- a. Do not allow spectators to coach by calling out tactics, making line calls, giving non-verbal signals, or otherwise interfering with the match while a game is in play. Control the crowd politely, yet firmly. If a spectator is suspected of coaching a player, make a general announcement to the spectators that coaching is only allowed during time-outs. Before administering a penalty, you should be certain that illegal coaching is taking place, that you know to which team the coaching is being directed, and that the coaching is not for the purpose of eliciting a penalty against one team for the benefit of the other team. Call a verbal or technical warning against a player or team that you can determine is being illegally coached (see Section 6.B.2).

Verbal Coaching: Examples of coaching comments by spectators:

<i>"Get to the line."</i>	<i>"Down the middle."</i>
<i>"Call time-out."</i>	<i>"Take your time."</i>
<i>"Hit to his backhand."</i>	<i>"Play the soft game."</i>

Examples of comments that are not actionable and do not constitute coaching:

<i>"Great shot."</i>	<i>"Keep it going."</i>
<i>"Come on."</i>	<i>"You can do this."</i>

- b. Nonverbal Coaching: Examples of signals and gestures: making a time-out "T" signal, a gesture pushing toward the net to signal "move up," or some other prearranged signal.
- c. Electronic Coaching: Electronic coaching consists of texts, emails, or other electronic communications received by a player via a smart watch, listening device, or any other electronic apparatus. Players are prohibited from wearing listening devices (e.g., headphones, ear buds) other than hearing aids. [Rule 11.P] You must be careful to avoid invading any player's privacy. However, if you suspect that electronic coaching has taken place, report the situation after the match to the Head Referee or Tournament Director.

5. Coaching by the Referee

It is possible for a referee to inadvertently engage in coaching by making comments to players in an effort to be helpful. You must remain impartial and not give any advantage to either team. Be careful how you pose questions and statements to a player so you are not perceived as giving an advantage to a player who has not taken the time to learn the rules. For example, ask "What do you want to do?" or "Are you ready to proceed?" rather than "Do you want to take a (medical) time-out? You may make comments that apply equally to both teams to help control or facilitate the match, including issuing verbal warnings to both teams. You may explain the nature of a fault when making a call (e.g., "Foot fault, left foot"), and you may answer a question from a player about a ruling, but it is best to keep any explanations brief and factual to avoid inviting a discussion. However, avoid offering

advice about how to avoid a future infraction as that is coaching. Responding to players' questions or presenting instructions to all players is not coaching.

6. Keeping Both Sides Equally Informed

If you engage in conversation with a player regarding a challenge or to clarify a rule or procedure, make sure the opposing team is equally informed. Call a referee time-out, move to center court, and invite a player from the opposing team (or all players) to join you to hear the conversation. This demonstrates fairness and avoids one team perceiving that the opponent is gaining an advantage. If an intense discussion begins to develop, cut it off, send all parties to their playing positions, and resume play. Announcing a 15-second warning to indicate that you are going to call the score can be an effective way to end the discussion.

7. Obtaining Assistance

You may call for the assistance of the Head Referee or Tournament Director at any time. Players also have the right to request a ruling from the Tournament Director. Honor such a request by calling a referee time-out and summoning the Tournament Director or Head Referee. [Rule 13.A.1] While awaiting the arrival of the Tournament Director or Head Referee, answer any questions asked by a player. This may result in the player rescinding the request. Announce the result of the Head Referee's or Tournament Director's ruling to ensure all players are aware.

- a. If assistance is rendered at the request of a player and your ruling is found to be correct, charge the challenging player a time-out and issue a technical warning. If no time-outs are available, issue the player a technical foul (see Section 6.B.2). [Rules 13.G.1.g, 13.G.2.d, 13.J]
- b. If your ruling is incorrect, reverse the ruling and, if appropriate, replay the rally.

I. **Documenting a Suspended Match**

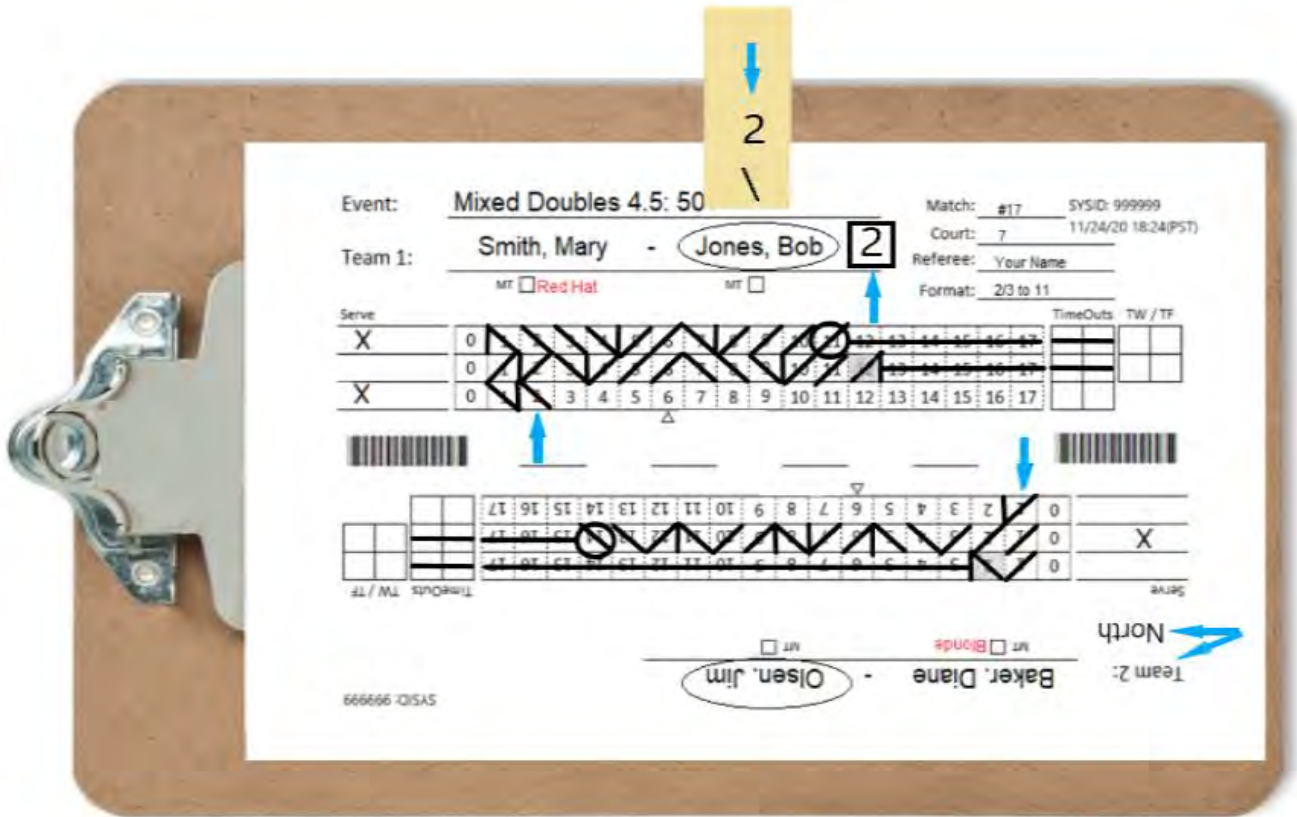
In the event of rain or other situation that requires a match to be suspended, you should only need to annotate the correct server's name and the correct server number.

1. Stop play and retrieve the game ball.
 2. Explain the interruption to the players and confirm with them the score and who will be the server when the match is resumed.
 3. Prior to removing the numbered server clip, **write the number of the server ("1" or "2") above or below the name of the correct server and draw a box around the number** (Figure 19). This notation enables you to accurately replace the numbered server clip over the correct server's name with the correct number showing when the match is resumed.
1. Return the scoresheet to the referee desk and retain the game ball.
 2. If assigned to resume the match, use the same game ball. You may also provide the game ball to another referee who is assigned to resume the match.
 3. When the match is resumed, the annotation of the court end selected at the start of the match will allow you (or another referee who is assigned to resume the match) to determine on which ends of the court the teams resume play and to which court end the clamp on the clipboard should be pointing. (The teams will resume on the ends annotated if the match is in the first, third, or tie-breaker game before the mid-game end change. The

teams will resume on the opposite ends from what is annotated if in the second or fourth game or after the mid-game end change in the tie-breaker game.) If the orientation of the assigned court is different from the orientation of the original court, allow the team that made the original court end selection to select the end on which to resume the game.

Figure 19 – Documenting a Suspended Match

The match is suspended in game 3 at score 2-1-2 with Bob Jones serving from the south end of the court.



Section 6: Player Behavior and Remedies

A. Dealing with Unruly Players

There will be rare occasions when a player becomes angry during a match. It may be triggered by an action of yours, the opponent, or a spectator. Regardless of the cause, such situations must be dealt with immediately and in a professional manner.

The challenge of preventing conflict escalation requires walking the fine line between warding off problems before they happen and coaching the players. On rare occasion when you feel the need to settle an issue with a player once and for all, be careful to avoid actions and words that might be construed as coaching or drawing unnecessary attention to yourself. Many times, saying “let’s play, “that’s enough,” or “15 seconds” to all players is effective in getting the players back to playing.

Remember, it is your job to control the match and keep peace on the court. You are not a dictator, but you do have the authority and responsibility to apply the rules in a fair and professional manner.

1. Most importantly, maintain a calm demeanor and open mind.
2. Call a referee time-out and summon all the players to center court, away from spectators, and calmly discuss the source of irritation.
3. Avoid argument.
4. Take time to understand the complaint; it may be a simple misunderstanding.
5. If the issue is a rule or rule interpretation, summon the Head Referee or Tournament Director for clarification.
6. If a player becomes verbally abusive, issue a technical warning. If the conduct continues or intensifies, issue another technical warning, which will then result in the loss of a point or a point issued to the opponent, a game forfeit, or a match forfeit depending on what prior penalties have been assessed against the team. (See Sections 6.B.2, 6.B.3, 6.B.4.)
7. If a player makes threats against you, a player, or a spectator, issue a technical foul.
8. If a player’s conduct becomes detrimental to the tournament, advise the Tournament Director, who can eject or expel a player from the tournament. [Rules 13.A.4, 13.M]

B. Penalties for Inappropriate Player Behavior

Referees are empowered and expected to call verbal warnings, technical warnings, and technical fouls to address unsportsmanlike conduct. A progressive system of penalties, ranging in severity from technical warning to expulsion, is used to address inappropriate player conduct. In addition, one verbal warning, which is a non-punitive caution, may be issued to each team during a match as a pre-emptive measure against behavior that appears headed toward punitive level. Technical warnings and technical fouls accumulate during a match and result in a harsher penalty for each successive infraction until a game or match is forfeited. For infractions that have more than one penalty level, if you are unsure of which level to apply, use the lesser of the available options. In doubles play, technical warnings and technical fouls are assessed to a team, not an individual player. Verbal warnings, technical warnings, and technical fouls do not result in a loss of serve.

TABLE 4 – PENALTY SYSTEM

Level	Penalty	Issued by
0	Verbal Warning	Referee (or Tournament Director*)
1	Technical Warning	Referee (or Tournament Director*)
2	Technical Foul	Referee (or Tournament Director*)
3	Game Forfeit	Referee
4	Match Forfeit	Referee or Tournament Director
5	Ejection	Tournament director only
6	Expulsion	Tournament director only

NOTE: A table summarizing actions associated with penalties is provided in Appendix B.

Be careful not to interject yourself into a match by penalizing players for actions that are not prohibited by the rules (e.g., asking for correct position frequently or using a rule to their advantage).

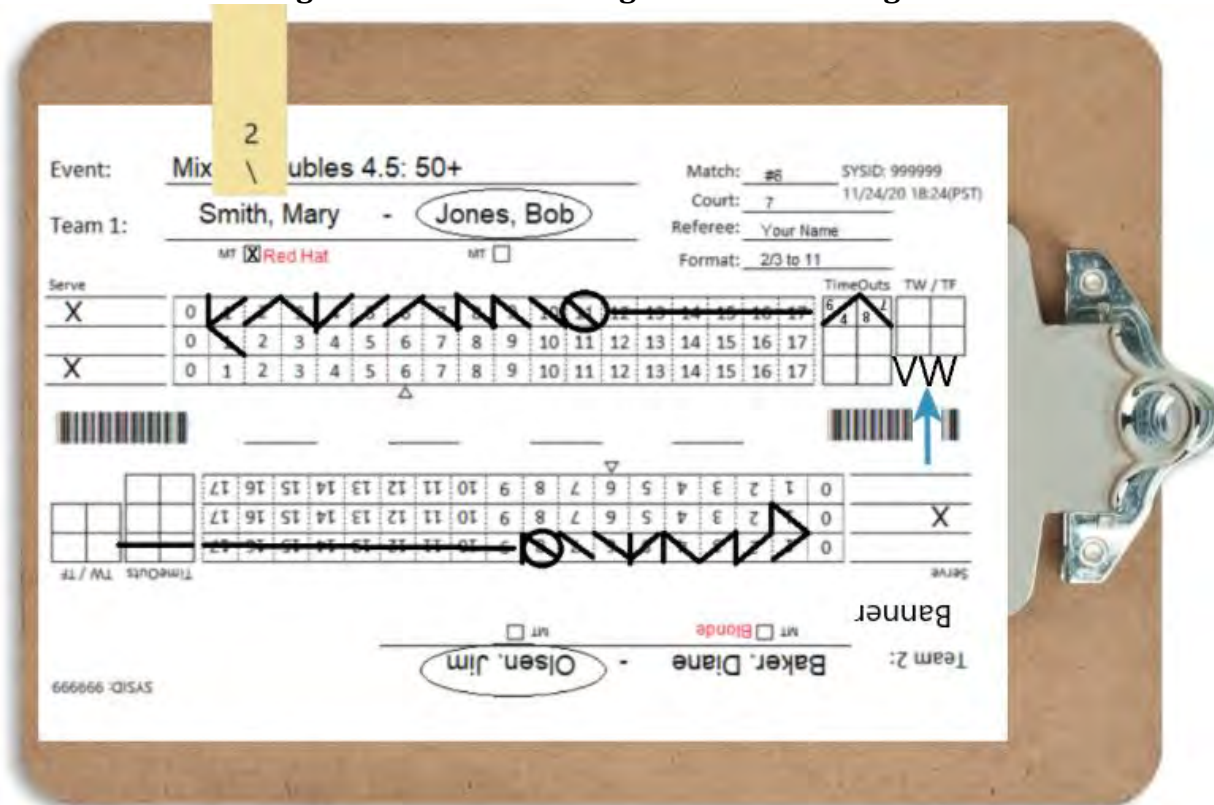
Warnings and fouls may be called from the time the players arrive at the court for a match until the completion of the match. Do not stop play to assess a warning or foul; wait until the rally is completed, and call a referee time-out, if needed, to address the infraction. Report infractions observed after the completion of the match to the Tournament Director through the Head Referee. * The Tournament Director has the authority to impose any level of penalty for such infractions and apply the penalty to the player's next match in the bracket or the player's next event in the tournament.

1. Verbal Warnings [Rules 13.G, 13.G.1]

Issue a verbal warning to prevent inappropriate behavior from escalating to a more problematic level that would call for a technical warning or technical foul. Any situation that could result in a technical warning may instead be addressed by the referee issuing a verbal warning as a first warning without penalty. One verbal warning may be issued to each team during a match. **NOTE:** If a technical warning or technical foul has been issued, a verbal warning, if available, can be subsequently issued for any minor offense.

- a. Allow the rally to complete, if applicable, and then advise the players that you are issuing a verbal warning. You may quickly call all players together at the net if a brief explanation is necessary.
- b. Document a verbal warning on the scoresheet by marking "VW" under the "TW/TF" area of the scoresheet for the offending team. Do not rotate the clipboard (Figure 20). Write the details of the verbal warning on the back of the scoresheet as is done for technical warnings and technical fouls (see Section 6.B.2.b and Figure 22).
- c. If a first incidence of an infraction is egregious enough in your judgment to warrant a more severe penalty, issue a technical warning or technical foul as you deem appropriate.
- d. Continue play by announcing a 15-second warning. Call "Time in" and announce the score when the players are or should be ready to play.

Figure 20 – Documenting a Verbal Warning



2. Technical Warnings and Technical Fouls [Rule 13.G]

The assessment of a technical warning is the normal means used to address unsportsmanlike conduct of a relatively minor nature. However, a technical foul (equivalent to two technical warnings) should be assessed if a player’s behavior is extreme and warrants a more severe penalty. Assessment of a technical foul, or two consecutive technical warnings, results in one point being deducted from the score of the offending team, unless the offending side’s score is zero, in which case one point is awarded to the non-offending side. **NOTE:** The “TW/TF” boxes apply to the entire match, not to specific games.

- a. Allow the rally to complete, if applicable, and then assess a technical warning or technical foul by announcing the infraction (e.g., “Technical warning for use of profanity”). You may quickly call all players together at the net if a brief explanation is necessary.
- b. Write “TW” or “TF” (as applicable) in one of the “TW/TF” boxes for the offending team (Figure 21). Do not rotate the clipboard if the annotation is for the receiving side; make the annotation right-side up next to the receiver’s upside-down time-out boxes. On the back of the scoresheet, write “TF” or “TW” (as appropriate), the player’s name, game number, score, and details of the warning or foul. To avoid having to remove the scoresheet and the server clip from the clipboard, write the details across the loose end of the scoresheet (Figure 22). *OPTION: To avoid a lengthy delay in the resumption of play, you may annotate the particulars on the back of the scoresheet during the next time-out or at the end of the game.*

Figure 21 – Documenting a Technical Warning (Front)

Event: Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+ Match: # 6 SYSID: 999999
Court: 7 11/24/20 18:24(PST)
Team 1: Smith, Mary - Jones, Bob Referee: Your Name
Format: 2/3 to 11
Banner: Red Hat MT MT
Banner: Blonde MT MT
Team 2: Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim
SYSID: 999999

Serve	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	TimeOuts	TW / TF
X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		

Figure 22 – Documenting a Technical Warning (Back)

Event: Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+ Match: # 6 SYSID: 999999
Court: 7 11/24/20 18:24(PST)
Team 1: Smith, Mary - Jones, Bob Referee: Your Name
Format: 2/3 to 11
Banner: Blonde MT MT
Banner: Blonde MT MT
Team 2: Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim
SYSID: 999999

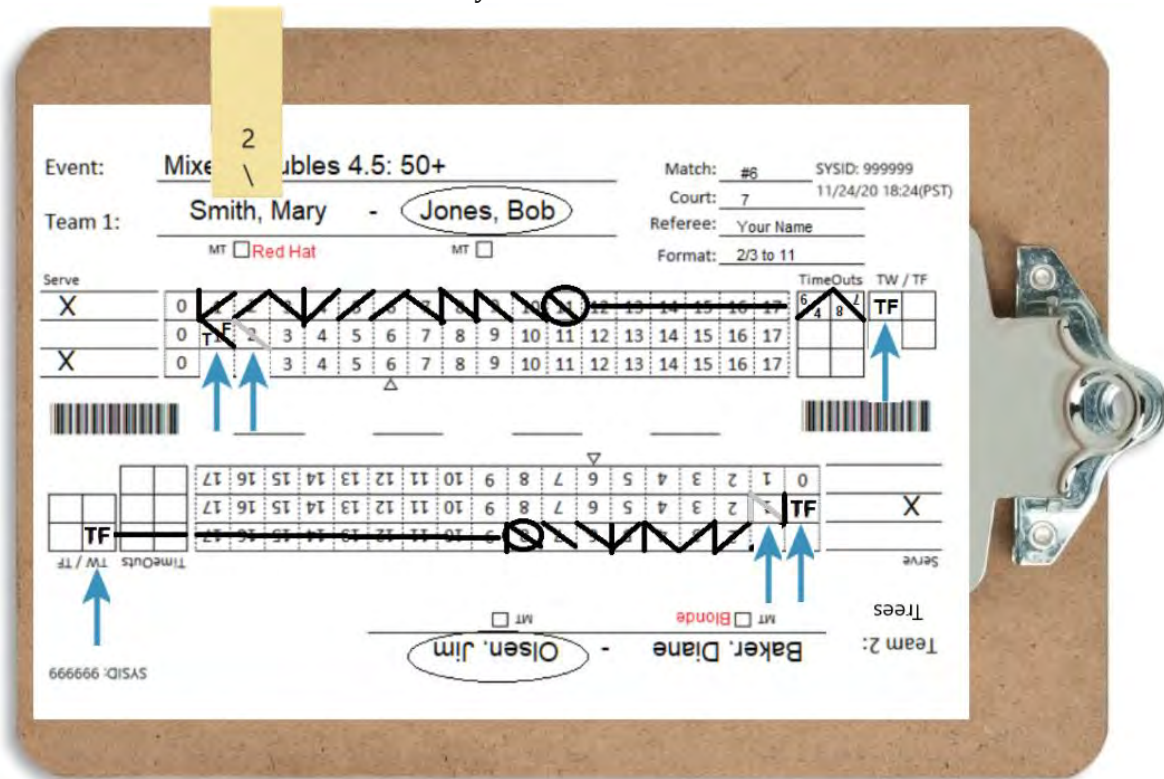
Serve	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	TimeOuts	TW / TF
X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		

Callout: TW-Bob Jones, Game 2, 1-1-2, Loud Profanity

- c. To document the point adjustment **when the score of the offending team is one or more points:**
- 1) Erase the last marked point and any following side out mark from the score of the offending team. If the erased point is followed by a side out mark, place a side out mark at their new (lower) score if the new score does not already have one.
 - 2) Write “TF” in the box with the new (lower) score (Figure 23).
 - 3) When the team scores its next point, mark the appropriate diagonal line in the scoreboard of the point that was erased (Figure 24).

Figure 23 – Deducting a Point for a Technical Foul

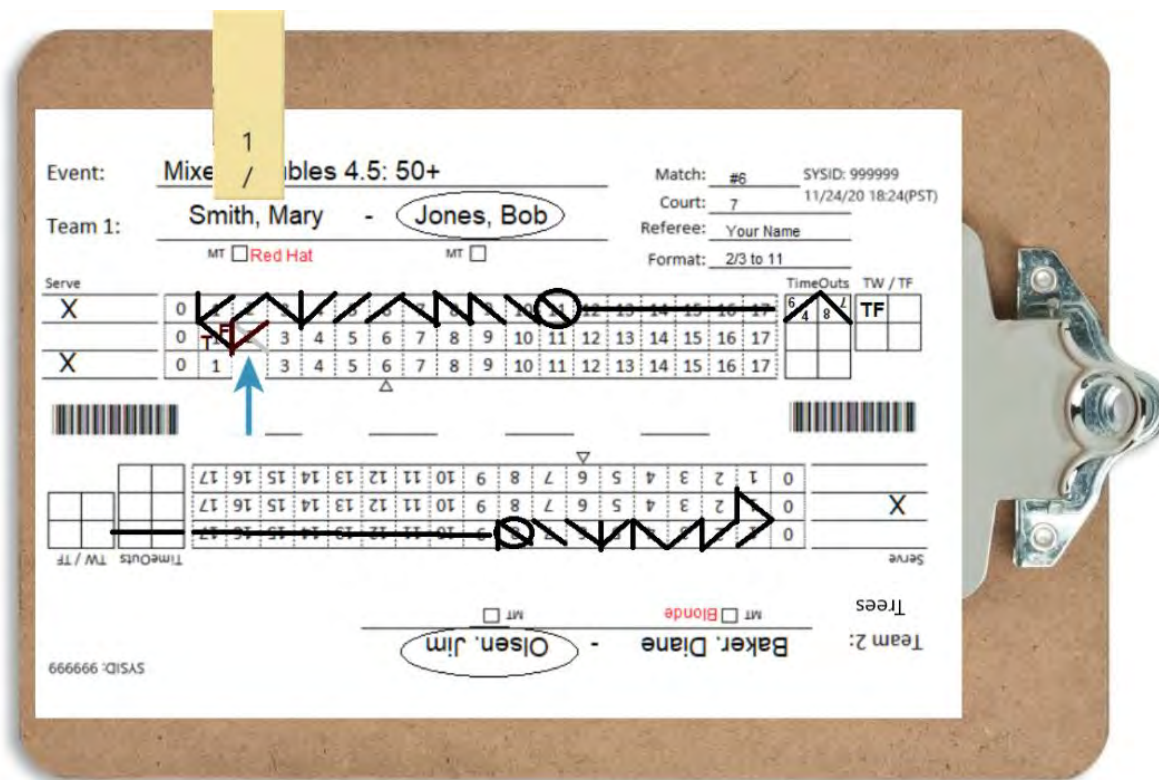
This scoresheet shows the deduction (erasure) of a point from the serving and receiving teams’ scores after they were each assessed a technical foul.



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Figure 24 – Marking a Point Scored After a Technical Foul Assessment

This scoresheet shows the recording of a point for the serving team after a technical foul assessment.

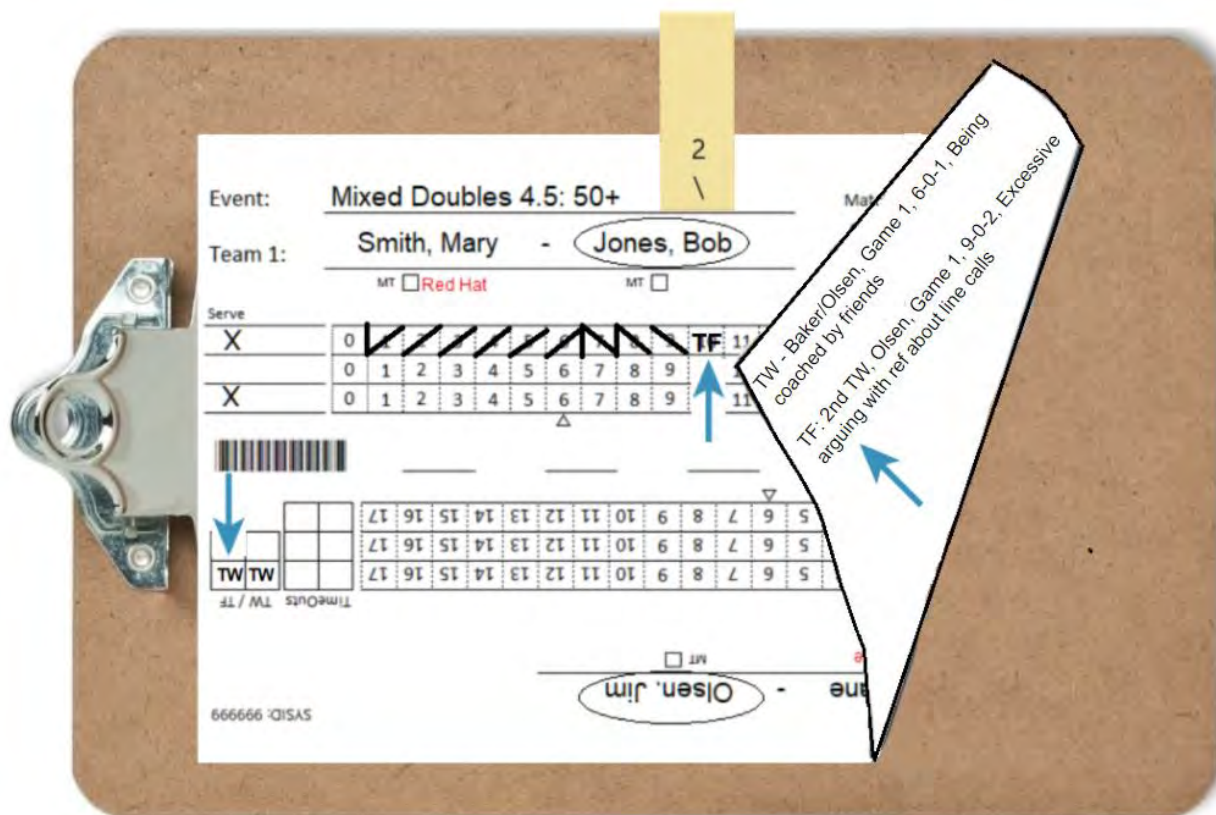


- d. To document the point adjustment **when the score of the offending team is zero**, add one point to the score of the non-offending team by marking “TF” in the appropriate score box.
 - 1) If the technical foul is committed by the receiving team, mark “TF” right-side-up in the appropriate score box of the serving team (Figure 25).
 - 2) If the technical foul is committed by the serving team, mark “TF” right-side up in the appropriate score box of the receiving team (which will be upside down) followed by a side out mark.
- e. Inform the team whose score has been adjusted, as well as the opponents, that a point has been deducted or added. If necessary, correct the player positions and server sequence before calling the score for the next rally.
- f. Continue play by announcing a 15-second warning. Call “Time in” and announce the score when the players are or should be ready via to play.

g. [Remainder of this page is intentionally blank]
 h.

Figure 25 – Adding a Point for a Technical Foul (Front and Back)

This scoresheet shows the issuance of a point to the opponent for a technical foul (resulting from two technical warnings) when the offending team has no points.



3. Game Forfeit [Rule 13.H]

A game forfeit is imposed when a team accumulates three technical warnings or a combination of a technical warning and technical foul during a match (see Appendix B).

A game forfeit is also imposed when a player arrives more than 10 minutes late for a multiple-game match. (A match forfeit occurs at 15 minutes.) **NOTE:** A game forfeit that is imposed for reporting late does not contribute toward a match forfeit.

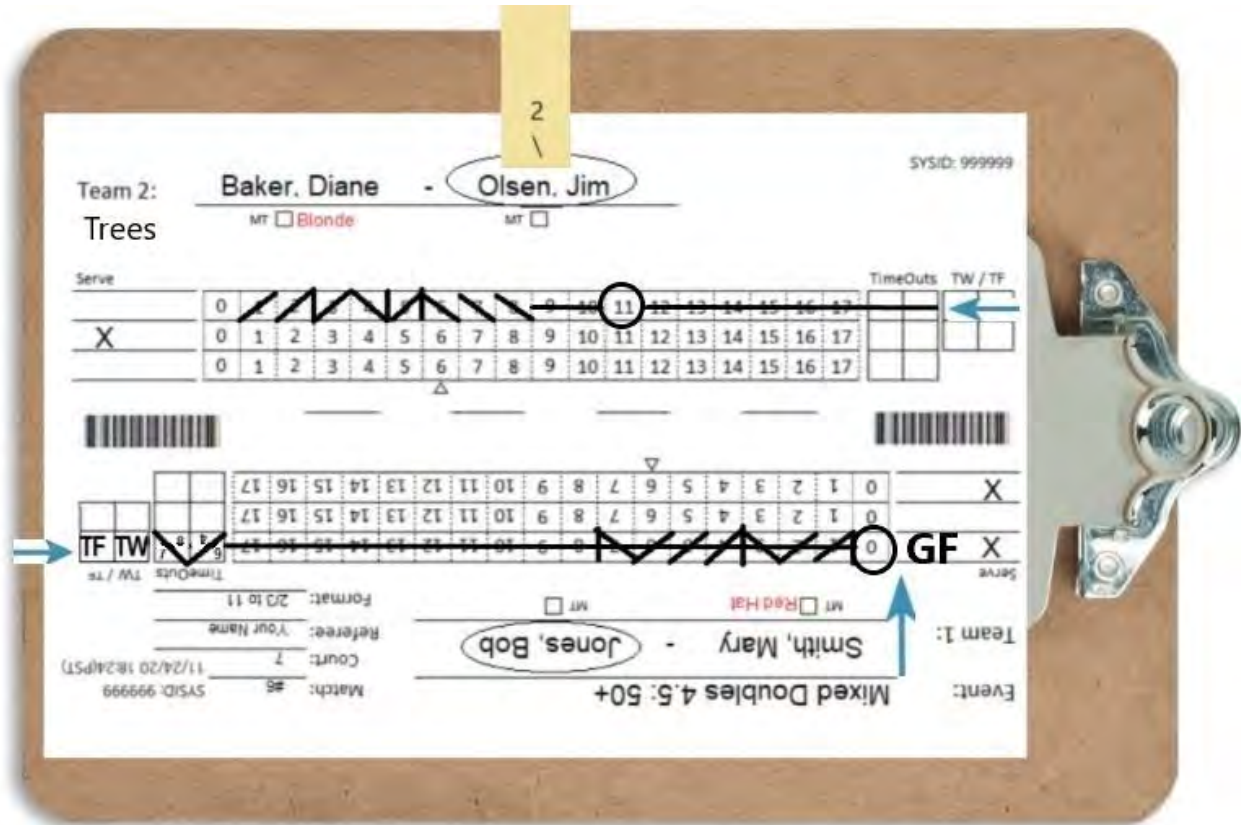
- a. If the assessment of a technical warning or a technical foul triggered the game forfeit, follow the procedure in 6.B.2.b to annotate the technical warning or technical foul. However, do not make a point adjustment in the score for a technical foul since the score will be recorded as X-0 (where X is the winning score for the game format).
- b. Document a game forfeit on the scoresheet by writing “GF” in the space next to “0” for the game in which the infraction occurs for the offending team (Figure 26). If the game forfeit is due to tardiness, also write the time of the forfeit (Figure 28). It is recommended that you check with the Head Referee or Tournament Director before declaring the game forfeit to the opponent to determine if there are any circumstances of which you are not aware that will nullify the forfeit.
- c. End a game in progress.

d. Finish annotating the scoresheet as follows:

- 1) Circle *or lightly shade* the winning score for the non-offending team.
- 2) Circle *or lightly shade* zero as the score and line through all scored points for the offending team.
- 3) Line through all unused points and unused time-out boxes of the forfeited game.

Figure 26 – Documenting a Game Forfeit

This scoresheet shows the documentation of a Game 1 forfeit against the receiving team for a technical foul that followed a technical warning



4. Match Forfeit [Rule 13.I]

A match forfeit is imposed against a team when:

- A second technical foul is assessed after a previous technical foul (point adjustment) was assessed against the team during a match, or
- A technical warning or technical foul is assessed after a team has forfeited a game in the match.

NOTE: A game forfeit that is imposed for reporting late does not contribute toward a match forfeit.

A match forfeit is also imposed when a player:

- Arrives more than 10 minutes late for the start of a single-game match,
- Arrives more than 15 minutes late for the start of a multiple-game match,

- Refuses to wear the starting server identification, or
 - Is discovered playing with a paddle that is not approved by USA Pickleball or has illegal alterations.
- a. If the assessment of a technical warning or a technical foul triggered the match forfeit, follow the procedure in 6.B.2.b to annotate the technical warning or technical foul. However, do not make a point adjustment in the score for a technical foul since the score will be recorded as X-0 (where X is the winning score for the game format).
 - b. Document a match forfeit on the scoresheet by writing “MF” in the space next to “0” for the game in which the infraction occurs for the offending team (Figure 27). If the match forfeit is due to tardiness, also write the time of the game and match forfeit (Figure 28). **NOTE:** It is recommended that you check with the Head Referee or Tournament Director before declaring the match forfeit to the opponent to determine if there are any circumstances of which you are not aware that will nullify the forfeit.
 - c. End a game in progress by awarding the match to the non-offending team.
 - d. Finish annotating the scoresheet as follows (Figures 27 and 28):
 - 1) Circle *or lightly shade* the winning score for the non-offending team.
 - 2) Circle *or lightly shade* zero as the score and line through all scored points for the offending team.
 - 3) Line through all unused points and unused time-out boxes for all games started.
 - 4) Circle the names of the non-offending team and write “WINNERS” in the circle.
 - 5) Record the scores of the games in the order they occurred, with the scores of the match winner first (e.g., 11-0, 11-0). If there are lines or a space in the center of the scoresheet, record the scores there. If not, record the scores at the top of the scoresheet next to the winners’ names.
 - 6) Write “FORFEIT” under the scores.

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Figure 27 – Documenting a Match Forfeit Due to Penalties

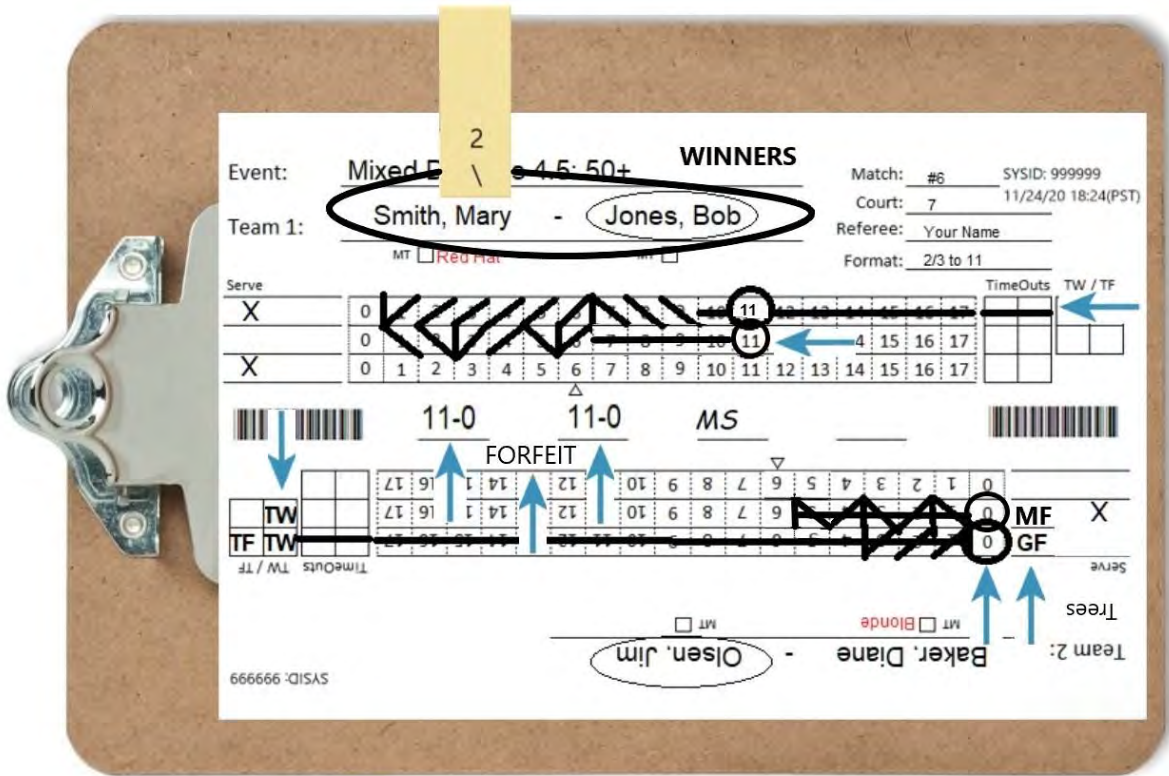
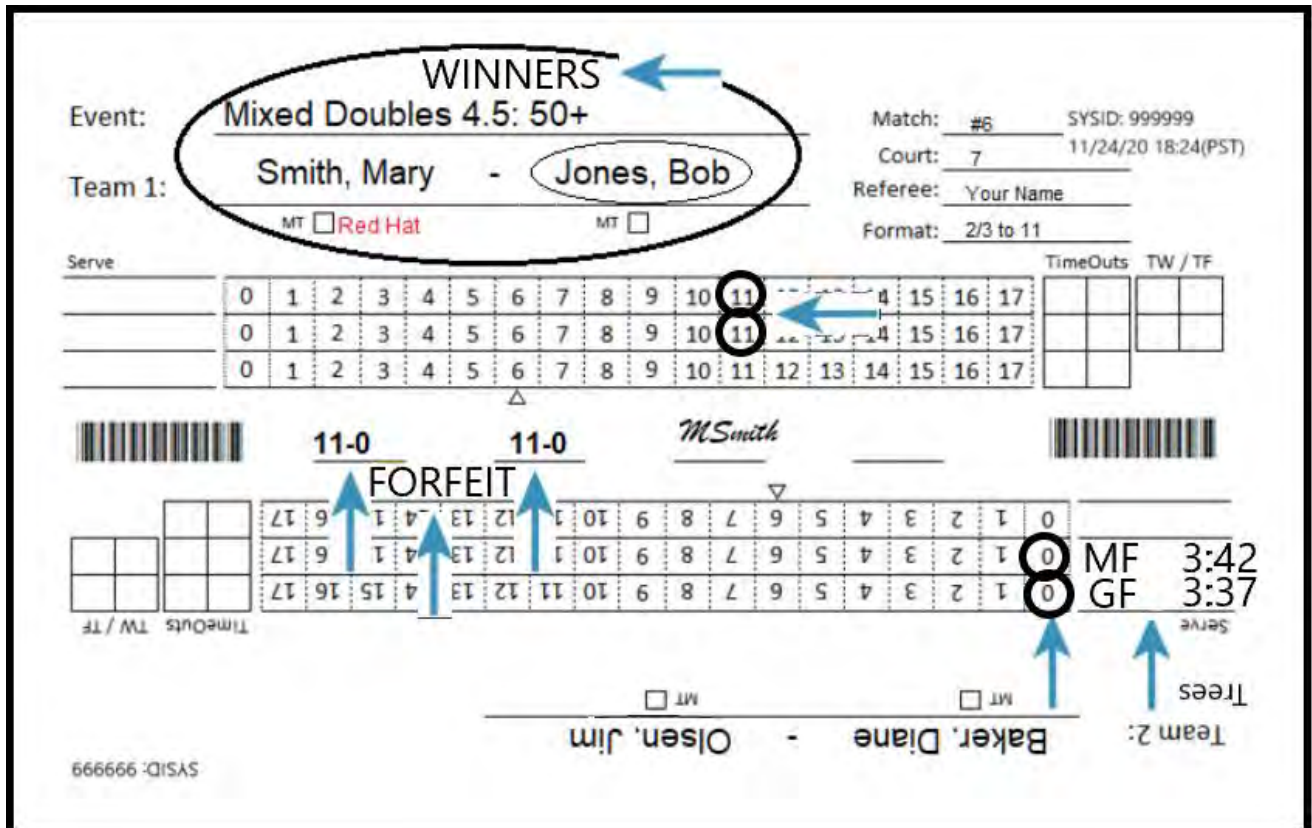


Figure 28 – Documenting a Match Forfeit Due to Player No-Show



5. Ejection and Expulsion [Rule 13.M]

If you observe any egregious conduct by a player that you judge worthy of ejection or expulsion, immediately call for the Tournament Director. If the player is ejected or expelled during a match:

- a. Follow the match forfeit procedure (see Section 6.B.4) to end the match, awarding the match to the non-offending team.
- b. Write “FORFEIT - EJECTION” or “FORFEIT- EXPULSION,” as applicable, under the scores and indicate which player was ejected or expelled.

Section 7: Dual Referee Option

A refereeing option is available for tournaments that employs two referees selected by the Tournament Director or Head Referee, one as the Lead Referee and the other as a Second (or Supporting) Referee to assist the Lead Referee. A referee should have experience as a Second Referee before serving as a Lead Referee. **Teamwork between the two referees is essential to the success of the dual referee system.** This refereeing option can be used, with or without line judges, to officiate matches designated by the Tournament Director.

A. Goals

The goals of the dual referee system are:

1. To increase the accuracy of calls involving the NVZ and players crossing the plane of the net.
2. To support the Lead Referee in officiating all aspects of the match.
3. To assure the accuracy of referee calls.

B. Lead Referee Responsibilities

The use of the dual referee option does not alter any of the responsibilities of the Lead Referee in officiating and managing the match. However, during the serve, the Lead Referee's primary focus will be on the server complying with the service motion elements and the proper ball release. The Lead Referee will make all final decisions regarding the resolution of disagreements and the assessment of penalties. The Lead Referee will also check the readiness of the Second Referee before resuming play after any lengthy interruption.

C. Second Referee Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of the Second Referee is to assist the Lead Referee in calling faults for non-volley zone and plane of the net violations **on both sides of the net**. The Second Referee will assist the Lead Referee in observing all other player activity on and around the court during the match and specifically during dead ball times. During the serve, the Second Referee will focus on the placement of the server's feet or rear wheels. The Second Referee will inspect the players' paddles and also maintain control of the ball between games and/or keep track of the ball during other time-outs.

1. Calls

- a. The Second Referee will immediately call any of the following situations when observed:
 - 1) NVZ faults
 - 2) Plane of the net faults
 - 3) Service foot faults
 - 4) Short serves
 - 5) Player safety issues
 - 6) Double bounces (or triple bounces for wheelchair player)
 - 7) Player hit by the ball
 - 8) Ball carries
 - 9) Player touching the net or net support system

b. The Second Referee will signal other violations, in particular any of the following, by a raised hand after the rally:

- 1) Out of position players
- 2) Incorrect server or receiver
- 3) Paddle thrown by player
- 4) Ball deliberately damaged by player
- 5) Unsportsmanlike behavior
- 6) Service motion violations
- 7) Server applying spin to the ball
- 8) Coaching by a spectator other than during time-outs

2. Positioning

The Second Referee will stand on the opposite end of the net from the Lead Referee. The Second Referee may have to adjust their position to accommodate video equipment, spectators, etc. The Second Referee will join the Lead Referee at the center of the court during time-outs and between games.

3. Scorekeeping

The Second Referee will not maintain a scoresheet.

D. Appeals

All player appeals will be directed to the Lead Referee. If the Lead Referee did not clearly see the action being appealed and cannot make a decisive call, the Lead Referee will then solicit the opinion of the Second Referee. If the Second Referee can make a decisive call, the Second Referee's call will stand.

E. Conflicting Calls and Disagreements

In situations where there are simultaneous or conflicting calls (e.g., the Lead Referee calls a fault on one team at the same time the Second Referee calls a fault on the opposing team), or in situations where the Second Referee makes a fault call with which the Lead Referee disagrees, the Lead Referee will call a referee time-out and both referees will meet at the center of the net to discuss a solution. The Lead Referee will make the final decision on the outcome and notify all players of the resolution. **NOTE:** Situations where the Lead Referee overrules the Second Referee are expected to be extremely rare and only occur if the Lead Referee is absolutely certain that the Second Referee made an error, in which case the rally must be replayed.

F. Pre-Match Briefings

1. Referees

Prior to the pre-match briefing with the players, the Lead Referee will brief the Second Referee on the expectations for how they will work together as a team. The Head Referee should observe this briefing to make sure both referees (who may have never worked together) understand their respective responsibilities and their obligation to get each call correct and to uphold the professional reputations of each other and the referee community as a whole.

2. Players

The Second Referee will attend the pre-match briefing with the players where the Lead Referee will review the dual referee procedures. The Lead Referee will explain the role of the Second Referee and advise that the players must direct all questions and appeals to the Lead Referee. The Second Referee will inspect the players' paddles.

Section 8: Matches with Line Judges

Line judges are generally used for gold medal matches and sometimes for bronze medal matches. They are an integral part of the officiating team, and their proficiency is critical to the smooth operation of a match. Their primary responsibility is to call their assigned lines, which fosters more accurate line calling and fair play. This relieves players of line-calling responsibility, except for the center service line. [Rules 13.D.3, 13.E]

This section establishes standardization and consistency in how line judges perform their duties on the court. It presents the USA Pickleball best practices for line judging and the responsibilities of referees working with line judges. Knowledge of line judging best practices and procedures can be tested by taking the [USA Pickleball Line Judge Test](#). Line judge training is included as part of the referee training curriculum.

A. Referee Responsibilities

1. The referee is responsible for all aspects of a match, including calls made during the match. As such, the referee is responsible for the line judges, their actions, and their role in the match.
2. The referee will brief the line judges prior to the start of the match. (See Section 8.E.)
3. After giving the 15-second warning before starting play at the beginning of each game and after each extended interruption of play (e.g., time-out, technical warning, technical foul), the referee will check the readiness of the officiating team and receive a ready signal from each member.
4. The referee will not allow players or spectators to confront or otherwise interact with line judges.
5. If line judges do not make their calls loud, clear, and immediate (both verbally and visually), the referee will call a referee time-out and remind the line judge(s) of the proper procedures.
6. The referee has the authority and responsibility to replace any line judge who does not perform to standards.
7. If all players agree and request replacement of a line judge, the referee will arrange a replacement or summon the Tournament Director to make the final decision. [Rule 13.K]

B. Line Judge Responsibilities and Code of Conduct

Line judges must possess certain characteristics and skills. They need to have a good understanding of pickleball and the general rules. They must be able to work under pressure to make split-second decisions, sometimes at crucial moments in key matches. They must be able to concentrate for extended periods of time. In most situations, trained referees will be used as line judges since they have received the requisite training. Like referees, line judges must adhere to a code of conduct. It is important that they:

1. Make all calls impartially, fairly, and consistently.
2. Use a professional and pleasant demeanor.
 - a. Treat players, referees, other line judges, and spectators with respect.

- b. Avoid overfriendliness with players and spectators while on the court.
- c. Avoid comments and emotional reactions, either positive or negative, regarding the play of either side.
3. Devote full attention to the match.
4. Not converse with others during the match.
5. Ensure that their personal electronic devices are in silent mode or turned off.
6. Not wear earbuds or carry any device that could distract them or give the appearance of distracting them from the match.
7. Excuse themselves from line judging the match of a relative, close friend, or doubles partner.

C. Line Judge Team Options

1. The Tournament Director determines the number of line judges for each match.
 - a. Six Line Judges: A line judge for each baseline and half of each sideline. (Recommended for major tournaments and tournaments with prize money.)
 - b. Four Line Judges: A line judge for each baseline and each full sideline.
 - c. Two Line Judges: A line judge for each baseline. (The referee and a supporting referee call the sideline opposite their side, although there may be occasions where they have the better view of a ball landing at the sideline nearest them. This is the least accurate technique.)
2. A passive line judge option is available to Tournament Directors, allowing players to still make their own line calls.
 - a. Passive line judges make line calls and line call signals **only when requested by the referee** after an appeal by a player. They make all other line judge calls as required in Sections 8.G.4 and 8.H.
 - b. If the referee is not able to make a definitive call on an appealed line call, the referee will request the responsible passive line judge to make the call. If the line judge cannot make the call, the referee will canvass the other passive line judges.
3. No Line Judges
Players make all perimeter line calls and the center line on the serve. The referee calls service faults, short serves, and NVZ faults.

D. Line Judge Positioning

1. The referee will position line judges according to circumstances (e.g., position of sun, location of spectators, actions on adjacent courts).
2. Line judges should align themselves just inside their assigned boundary line with an unobstructed view down the line. This will make it easier to see any space between the ball and the line when the ball is out.
3. If possible and it can be done safely, line judges should look over a fence rather than through it.
4. The Tournament Director will determine if conditions warrant any line judge to sit.

E. Line Judge Briefing by the Referee

Prior to the match, the referee will normally gather all line judges for instruction. If circumstances warrant, they may be instructed separately.

1. The referee and line judges will introduce themselves.
2. The referee will assign each line judge to a baseline or a sideline (during the briefing or at the court).
3. The referees will instruct line judges to:
 - a. Take care of their restroom and hydration needs prior to the match.
 - b. Silence or turn off their electronic devices and not use them while on duty to stay fully focused on their responsibilities.
 - c. Walk to the court as a team.
 - d. Not leave the court until released by the referee. (A tie-breaker match may have to be played following the initial championship match.)
 - e. Ignore line calls made by players or spectators, even though players often continue to make their own line calls.
 - f. Not solicit or acknowledge the opinions of players or spectators.
 - g. Be consistent, confident, clear, and accurate in their calls.
4. The referee will review the line-calling procedures to be used (see Sections 8.F-8.H):
 - a. How to determine in and out balls.
 - b. “Out” call (visual and verbal)
 - c. “In” call (visual)
 - d. View Blocked (visual)
 - e. Foot Fault call (visual and verbal)
 - f. Other Violations or Questions (visual, at the end of the rally)
 - g. Ready (visual). Line judges should signal to the referee with a raised hand to indicate they are ready before the start of each game and after each extended interruption of play. Line judges should become ready for the start of play when they hear the referee announce a 15-second warning before starting play.

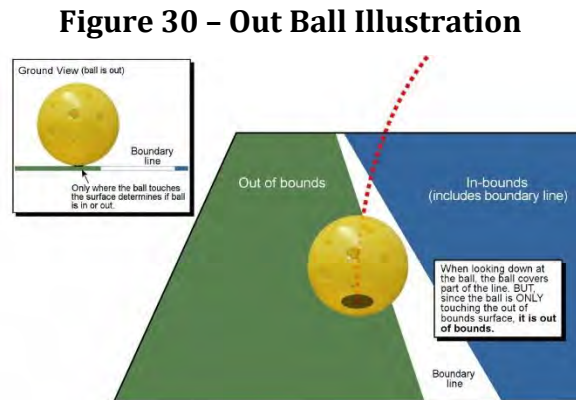
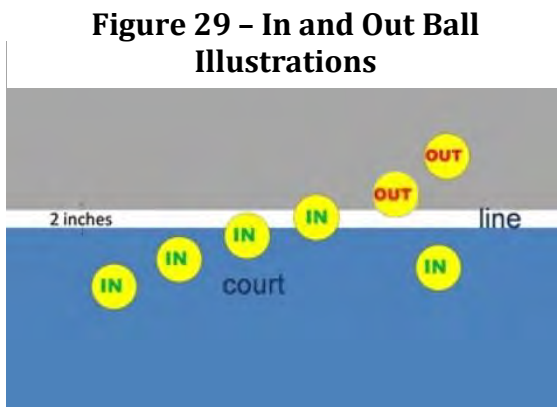
F. Judging In and Out Balls

The criteria for line judges and referees when making line calls are different from those assigned to players. The standard for line judges and referees is Rule 6.B: A ball contacting the playing surface completely outside of the court is out of bounds (Figure 29 and Figure 30). (Players are bound by Rule 6.C.6 to only call a ball out of bounds if they can clearly see a space between the line and the ball when it hits the playing surface.)

Consistency in judging in and out balls by the entire officiating team is imperative. Line judges must make “Out” calls confidently, without hesitation, and as accurately as possible, but accuracy on close shots can be difficult because they happen quickly. During rallies, line judges should follow the ball so they can anticipate when they may have to make a call, at which point

their focus should be on the outside of the line. Line judges must not call a ball out of bounds unless they clearly saw the ball land outside the court. If there is doubt, they should consider the ball in. Therefore, it is important that line judges understand what constitutes an in ball and an out ball.

1. A pickleball does not compress like a tennis ball. Only a very small area at the bottom of the ball—the mid-point—contacts the ground.
2. Where the ball physically touches the court determines whether it is in or out of bounds. If the ball touches the line, the ball is in.
3. A close out ball can overhang the edge of the line. The ball is out of bounds if its point of contact with the playing surface is outside the edge of the line.



G. Communicating the Call

Line judges will make verbal calls only for out balls and foot faults. The referee is dependent on hearing “Out” calls to promptly stop play. **NOTE:** Line judges will normally make “Out” calls when they occur; however, passive line judges will only make “Out” calls and “In” signals when requested by the referee.

1. “Out” Calls [Rule 13.E.2]
 - a. Line judges must make “Out” calls immediately, loudly, and confidently, regardless of how far out of bounds the ball lands, because the referee’s attention may be elsewhere. The call must be made **only after the ball lands outside the court**. Hearing the line judge “Out” call is also important for players and spectators to know the result of a play. A delayed line call raises doubts about the line judge’s reliability.
 - b. While making a verbal “Out” call, line judges must also raise their arm in the out-of-bounds direction (Figure 31). Arm signals are important for the referee to confirm that the “Out” call came from a line judge and not from a player or spectator. Line judges should hold their arm signals for several seconds to give the referee and players an opportunity to see the signal.
2. “In” Calls
 - a. Line judges will signal a ball as in (**with no verbal call**) only if the ball contacted the court close enough to the line that players or the referee may want confirmation that

the ball was in. The “In” signal can be made immediately or when the referee asks the line judge for confirmation (which may just be a glance in the line judge’s direction).

- b. The signal for an in ball is both arms outstretched forward with the palms facing down (Figure 32). Line judges should hold this signal for a few seconds to give the referee a chance to look for it.

Figure 31- “Out” Call



Figure 32 - “In” Ruling



3. View Blocked [Rule 13.E.3]

- a. If a line judge does not clearly see the ball contact the playing surface, the line judge will immediately signal by placing fingers of both hands just below the eyes, indicating that the ball was blocked from view. They should hold this signal for a few seconds to give the referee a chance to look for it.
- b. The referee will immediately make the call if he or she clearly saw the ball land.
- c. If the referee did not clearly see the ball land **and the shot ended the rally or a player appealed the line call**, the referee must canvass the other line judges to see whether any clearly saw the ball land and can make the call.
- d. If none of the line judges nor the referee can make the line call, the referee will order the rally replayed.

4. Foot Faults

Calling foot faults is the primary responsibility of the referee, but baseline and sideline judges may also call service foot faults and sideline foot faults for their assigned line since they should have a clear view. When assigned to make foot fault calls, the responsible line judge will immediately raise their hand and make the call after observing any of the following faults:

- a. Baseline service fault: If a server’s foot or rear wheel is touching the baseline or court surface **when the ball is hit to make the serve**, a baseline judge will call “Fault” (or “Foot fault”) and identify which foot or wheel touched.

- b. Sideline extension fault: If a server's foot or rear wheel is touching **outside** the imaginary extension of the sideline **when the ball is hit to make the serve**, a sideline judge will call "Fault" (or "Foot fault") and identify which foot or wheel touched.
- c. Sideline NVZ fault: If a player's foot or rear wheel touches the sideline of the non-volley zone **while volleying the ball or as a result of volleying the ball**, a sideline judge will call "Fault" (or "Foot fault") and identify which foot or wheel touched.
- d. Sideline NVZ re-establishment fault: If a player's foot or rear wheel touches the sideline of the non-volley zone and the sideline judge clearly sees that the **player volleys the ball before both feet or rear wheels contacted the playing surface outside the non-volley zone**, the sideline judge will call "Fault" (or "Foot fault") and identify the failure to re-establish.

5. Other Common Violations

Because line judges are part of the officiating team, they may also provide the referee with information regarding actions other than line calls and foot faults that occur during the match. Line judges are a second set of eyes for the referee. While the referee is responsible for all aspects of a match, he or she may seek the opinion of line judges before making a final ruling on certain calls. The referee will determine whether there has been an infraction after consulting with the line judge.

Line judges should raise their hand **at the end of a rally** to get the referee's attention if they **clearly** see any other violation or have a question. Line judges should be alert for:

- a. Players, paddles, and apparel touching the net, a net post, or any net support component that extends outside the sideline when players are attempting to hit the ball while positioned to the side of the net.
- b. Double bounces (triple bounces for wheelchair players)(also signal by hitting the palm of their hand twice with a closed fist, repeating it as necessary to ensure the referee sees the signal).
- c. A ball in play touching a player or anything a player is wearing or carrying (also signal by repeatedly sliding one hand across the palm of the other hand).
- d. Coaching by a spectator other than during time-outs.
- e. Player misconduct.

H. **Overrule or Override of a Line Judge's Call**

A player can ask (appeal to) the referee to rule on a line call made by a line judge. [Rule 13.D.3.b] Under this circumstance, if the referee **clearly** sees a ball differently than the line judge, he or she has the authority to overrule the call. [Rule 13.E.4] A player can also override a line judge call to favor the opponent. [Rules 6.C.11, 13.E.5] This should rarely occur if the line judges are performing their duties diligently. However, if the referee does overrule or a player overrides a line judge's call, the line judge should not let it impact their performance and should continue making calls to the best of their ability.

I. **Tie-Breaker Match** [Rule 10.F.1]

For double-elimination gold medal matches, a tie-breaker match will be required if the challenger wins the initial championship match. Therefore, line judges must remain at the court at the completion of the initial gold medal match and wait for the referee's instructions.

[Section 8.1 Medal Matches: Tie-Breaker Match]

1. At the end of the initial match, the referee will promptly instruct the line judges to remain for the tie-breaker match.
2. The referee will allow a maximum of 10 minutes between these matches.
3. The referee will conduct a new selection of serve, receive, end, or defer for the tie-breaker match.

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Section 9: Summary

The best referees have their own styles of refereeing. Individual refereeing traits are allowable as long as they do not conflict with the best practices set forth in this Handbook. Good referees demonstrate professionalism by not drawing attention to themselves. A competent referee:

1. Knows the rules.
2. Is relaxed but confident.
3. Maintains a ready, upright position aligned with the net post.
4. Speaks clearly and audibly, using an even tone and steady pace.
5. Checks the players for readiness and correct player/positions before calling the score.
6. Tracks the ball during play until players are near the NVZ line and then concentrates on potential NVZ faults.
7. Makes line calls only when appealed by a player (unless the assigned line judge is blocked) and having clearly seen the ball land in or out of bounds.
8. Demonstrates “court awareness” by being aware of everything on and around the court.
9. Avoids looking at the scoresheet during rallies.
10. Marks every point and side out, moves the numbered clip promptly and efficiently, and maintains eyes and attention on the court and the players.
11. Is not discouraged by occasional mistakes, observes what was done wrong, corrects it, if possible, then puts it aside and moves on. Pondering mistakes during a match is distracting and may lead to additional mistakes.
12. After a match, continues to study the rules and practice the procedures in this Handbook, takes the online tests, and learns from any errors.

Appendix A: USA Pickleball Referee Training and Certification Program

The goal of the USA Pickleball Referee Training and Certification Program is to develop and recognize referees who have mastered the basic skills of officiating pickleball. It is a step in building a cadre of competent referees to officiate competitive sanctioned tournaments across the country and around the world.

Being a certified referee is rewarding and fulfilling. As a certified referee, you will find personal pride in being acknowledged as a competent referee who has met USA Pickleball certification standards. Certified referees have priority in refereeing at USA Pickleball-managed events (national championships and regional tournaments) and other prestigious tournaments such as the Huntsman World Senior Games, the National Senior Games, etc. They are first choice to referee medal and professional matches at sanctioned tournaments. In addition, certified referees are most times financially compensated at a higher rate than non-certified referees.

With the proper training, practice, and experience, you can qualify to apply for USA Pickleball Referee Certification. Becoming a USA Pickleball certified referee requires commitment. You must be proficient in refereeing matches for all player skill levels and ages. Ideally, before you apply for certification, you should attend a USA Pickleball referee training class, develop your skills through refereeing hundreds of practice matches, obtain a Level 2 referee skill rating, and be mentored by a certified referee to prepare for evaluation. Once you are well-prepared for evaluation, you may submit your application to the program. The [certification application](#) can be accessed on the USA Pickleball website. After acceptance into the program and paying a nominal fee, applicants undergo a comprehensive evaluation during which they are required to demonstrate their proficiency of the best practices set forth in this Handbook and their knowledge of the rules, both on-court and in an oral exam setting. After passing the evaluation, you will receive your certified referee credentials to wear proudly. Recertification is required every three years.

For more information on the Referee Training and Certification Program process, go to the USA Pickleball [Officiating Page](#).

Good luck and have fun!

Appendix B: Penalties for Unsportsmanlike Conduct and Inappropriate Behavior

Subject	Verbal Warning (VW) or Technical Warning (TW)	Technical Foul (TF)	Game Forfeit (GF)	Match Forfeit (MF)	Ejection from Competition or Expulsion from Venue (TD Discretion)
OBJECTIONABLE LANGUAGE	Objectionable language directed at another person (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.a]	Extreme objectionable language [Rule 13.G.2.b]			Using ethnic, religious, racial, sexist, or homophobic slurs [Rule 13.M.1]
PROFANITY	Profanity (audible or visual) (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.b]	Extreme profanity (audible or visual) [Rule 13.G.2.b]			
BALL	Damaging or aggressively striking dead ball – no danger (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.d]	Striking or throwing dead ball with negligence – person hit [Rule 13.G.2.g]		Striking or throwing dead ball in frustration or anger – person or property put at risk or in danger [Rule 13.I.1.c.2]	Striking or throwing dead ball – injury [Rule 13.M.2]
PADDLE¹	Tossing paddle in a minor unsportsmanlike manner ² (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.i]	Aggressively or recklessly throwing paddle – no person hit or property damage [Rule 13.G.2.a]		Aggressively or recklessly throwing paddle – person or property put at risk or in danger [Rule 13.I.1.c.2] Use of non-compliant paddle [Rule 2.F.1.a.2]	Aggressively or recklessly throwing paddle – injury [Rule 13.M.2]
AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR	Arguing excessively with official, player, spectator (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.c]	Threat or challenge to any person [Rule 13.G.2.c]		Deliberate, aggressive physical contact with official, player, spectator [Rule 13.I.1.c.1]	Intentionally spitting or coughing on any person [Rule 13.M.3]
CHALLENGES/ REFUSAL	Loss of challenge to referee ruling (plus loss of TO) (TW only) [Rule 13.G.1.g]	Loss of challenge to referee ruling (no TO available) [Rule 13.G.2.d]		Refusal to wear starting server ID [Rule 13.A.2]	
INVALID MEDICAL TIME-OUT	Invalid medical TO (+loss of TO) (TW only) [Rule 13.G.1.h]	Invalid medical TO (no TO available) [Rule 13.G.2.f]			
FAILURE TO REPORT ON TIME			10 minutes after 2/3-game match called [Rule 13.H.4]	10 minutes after 1-game match called 15 minutes after 2/3-game match called [Rule 13.H.4]	

¹ (See also [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 6-23.)

² Excluding commonly accepted practices (e.g., dropping or tossing paddle to position for time-out call).

Subject	Verbal Warning (VW) or Technical Warning (TW)	Technical Foul (TF)	Game Forfeit (GF)	Match Forfeit (MF)	Ejection from Competition or Expulsion from Venue (TD Discretion)
OTHER	Delay of game (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.e/f] Illegal coaching (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.j] Other minor unsportsmanlike conduct (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.i]	Other extreme unsportsmanlike conduct [Rule 13.G.2.e]		Failure to comply with venue rules, improper conduct, abuse of hospitality, other rules & procedures (TD Discretion) [Rule 13.1.2]	Flagrant or injurious behavior impacting tournament [Rule 13.M] Not exhibiting best effort [Rule 13.M.4]
EQUIVALENT PENALTIES		TW + TW	TW + TW + TW TW + TF TF + TW	TW + TW + TW + TW TW + TF + (TW or TF) TF + TW + (TW or TF) TF + TF	

Appendix C: Standardized Calls and Announcements (Scripts)

Review the referenced sections for the context in which each script is required to be used.

Situation	Section	Script
Start of First Game of Multiple-Game Match	4.B.4	"15 seconds. ... Game 1. Time in. 0-0-2."
Start of Single-Game Match or Game with End Change	4.B.4	"15 seconds. ... 1 game to 15. Change ends at 8. Time in. 0-0-2." "15 seconds. ... 1 game to 21. Change ends at 11. Time in. 0-0-2." "15 seconds. ... Game 3. Change ends at 6. Time in. 0-0-2." (2-out-of-3 games match) "15 seconds. ... Game 5. Change ends at 6. Time in. 0-0-2." (3-out-of-5 games match)
Start Next Game of Multi-Game Match (No End Change)	4.B.4	"Game [number]. Time in. [Score]." Example: "15 seconds. ... Game 2, Time in. 0-0-2."
Standard Time-Out	4.H.1	"Time-out [receivers/servers]. [Score]. One minute." Example: "Time-out receivers. 4-6-1. One minute."
Remaining Time-Outs	4.H.7	"Remaining time-outs: [Receivers/Servers], [number]. [Servers/Receivers], [number]." Example: "Remaining time-outs: Receivers, none. Servers, one."
Resuming Play after Time-Out	4.H.10	"Time in. [Score]." Example: "15 seconds. ... Time in. 9-8-1"
Medical Time-Out	5.E.1.c	"Medical time-out requested by [name]. [Score]."
End of Game with Game to Follow	4.J.1 4.J.2	"Point. Game. [Score]. (Pause) Time-out. Change ends. Two minutes." Example: "Point. Game. 11-9. Time-out. Change ends. Two minutes."
End of Match	4.K.1	"Point. Game. Match. [Score]." Example: "Point. Game. Match. 15-8."
End Change Time-Out	4.I.1	"Point. Time out. Change ends. [Score]. One minute." Example: "Time out. Change ends. 6-4-2. One minute."
End Change Time-In	4.I.11	"Time in. [Score]." Examples: "Time in. 8-7-1." "15 seconds. Time in. 6-5-2." (when 15 seconds remain)

Situation	Section	Script
Questionable Volley Serve	5.A.9.b	<p>“Stop play. Questionable whether [state the issue]. I will re-call the score.”</p> <p>Examples: “Stop play. Questionable whether you hit the ball above your waist. I will re-call the score.” “Stop play. Questionable whether your paddle head was above the wrist. I will re-call the score.” “Stop play. Questionable whether your swing was upward. I will re-call the score.” “Stop play. Questionable whether you spun the ball on release. I will re-call the score.”</p>
Questionable Drop Serve	5.A.10.b	“Stop play. Questionable whether you added force on the release. I will re-call the score.”
Ball Release Not Visible, Volley Serve or Drop Serve	5.A.9.d 5.A.10.c	“Stop play. Ball release not visible. I will re-call the score.”
15-Second Warning	5.E.1.l 5.E.2.h 5.E.5.d 5.F.3 6.B.1.d 6.B.2.f	“15 seconds. ... Time in. [Score].”
Line Call Appeal, Can Make Definitive Call	5.G.2.b.5	<p>“The ball was in.” “The ball was out.”</p>
Line Call Appeal, Unable to Make Call	5.G.2.b.5 5.G.2.b.6	<p>“By rule, the call stands.” (if player or line judge made the call) “By rule, the ball is in.” (if player made no call)</p>
Rally Scoring	3.M.2.a 3.M.2.b	<p>Server wins rally: “Point.” Receiver wins rally: “Side out. Point. [Score].” Example: “Side out. Point. 7” Receiver wins rally at game point: “Side out. [Score].” Example: “Side out. 20”</p>

Appendix D: Sample Pre-Match Briefings

Each script presents the required elements in a slightly different sequence and use slightly different language.)

Sample Briefing 1 (Sequence – Intros, format, paddles, line calls, abnormalities, coin toss, questions, warmup):

- “My name is _____; who are my players/teams?”
- “Who is the *starting* server?”
- “This match is [match format] one game to 15 points, win by two points.”
- “May I check your paddles? Is your paddle on the USA Pickleball approved paddle list?”
- “I will be calling short serves, service and non-volley zone faults.”
- “You are responsible for all other line calls including the center line on the serve. Please make your ‘out’ calls immediately and loudly.”
- “You may appeal any call to me.”
- [Advise players of court abnormalities, non-standard conditions, approved rule modifications.]
- “Choose a number, 1 or 2.”
- “Would you like to *serve, receive, choose end* [identify] or *defer*?”
- “Are there any questions? You have ____ minutes remaining for warm up.”

Sample Briefing 2 Gold Medal/Dual Referee/Line Judges Match (Sequence – Referee intro, format, player intros, paddles, line calls, abnormalities, questions, coin toss, warmup):

- “Hello, my name is _____ I will be officiating this match.”
- [If there is a second referee:] “This is _____. S/he is the second referee and will assist me on this match. All questions and comments are to be directed to me.”
- “This match is [match format] best two of three games to 11 points, win by two points.”
- “Who are my teams?” [Confirm with names printed. If a Gold Medal match, identify winner bracket team and opportunity bracket team]
- “Who will be your starting server?” [Circle name/ give starting server ID.]
- “May I see your paddles?” [Check by sight and feel.] “Is your paddle(s) on the USA Pickleball approved paddle list?”
- “I will be calling any short serves. I will be calling service faults as well as non-volley zone faults.”
- “You are responsible for all other lines including the center line on the serve. [If there are line judges, say instead:] “There are line judges for this match. They will make all the line calls for this match except you are responsible for calling the center line on the serve.” Please make your out calls immediate, loud, and clear. You may appeal any line call to me.”
- [Advise players of court abnormalities, non-standard conditions, approved rule modifications.]
- “Are there any questions?”
- [To any player:] “Please choose a number, 1 or 2.” [Show the number on the back of your score sheet to all players.]
- [To the winning team/player:] “Would you like to *serve, receive, choose end* or *defer*?” [If serve/receive is chosen, ask the remaining team to pick an end. If end is chosen, ask the remaining team to choose serve or receive.]

- “You have ____ minutes to warm up.”

Sample Briefing 3 (Sequence – Intros, paddles, line calls, abnormalities, questions, format, coin toss, warmup):

- “Hi, I’m _____.”
- “Who is [Team 1 names ___ & ___]? Who is your starting server?”
- “Who is [Team 2 names ___ & ___]? Who is your starting server?” [Distribute starting server IDs, if necessary, and check that they are visible.]
- “Have you confirmed that your paddle is on the USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List?”
- “Please hold onto your paddles while I do a paddle check.”
- “I will be calling service faults, NVZ faults and short serves.” [Point to each line you mention]. “You are responsible for all other line calls on your end of the court. Please make your ‘out’ calls immediately and promptly. You may appeal any line call to me after the rally is over.”
- [Advise players of any court abnormalities, non-standard court conditions, and approved rule modifications. If there are not any approved Rule Modifications, do not mention this item.]
- “Do you have any questions about the player instructions or rules?” OR (If pre-match instructions were sent out) “You have all received the email with the tournament instructions. Do you have any questions?”
- “This match is [match format] one game to 21 points, win by two points. Rally scoring.”
- [Select a player, and say:] “Please choose a 1 or 2. Would you like to serve, receive, choose an end, or defer?”
- [If *serve/receive* is chosen, ask the remaining team to *pick an end*.]
- [If *end* is chosen, ask the remaining team to *choose serve or receive*.]
- “You have __ minutes left to warm up. I will let you know when you have 1 minute remaining.”

Sample Briefing 4 (Sequence – Intros, paddles, format, line calls, abnormalities, coin toss, questions, warmup):

- [Introduce yourself and ask players for their names.] “Hi, I’m _____. I’ll be your referee.”
- [Identify starting servers and circle their names on the scoresheet.] “Who will be your starting server?” “Please make sure your starting server identification is visible to me and your opponent.”
- [Ask each player if their paddle(s) are on the USA Pickleball approved paddle list.]
- [Check both surfaces of each paddle.]
- [State the match format.] “This is the best two out of three games to 11 points, win by two points.”
- [State fault and line calling responsibilities.] “I’ll be calling service faults, non-volley zone faults, and short serves. You will make all perimeter lines out calls and center service line out calls. Please make your calls loudly.”
- [Remind players of their right to appeal.] “You can appeal to me and I will make a ruling.”
- [Point out any non-standard playing surface conditions, court abnormalities, and approved rule modifications, if applicable.]

- [Ask any one player to choose a 1 or a 2 (written on the back of the scoresheet).]
- [Ask the winner(s) of the choice if they would like to serve, receive, choose a court end, or defer the choice to the opponent.] "Would you like to serve, receive, choose an end, or defer?"
- [If *serve/receive* is chosen, ask the remaining team to *pick an end*.]
- [If *end* is chosen, ask the remaining team to *choose serve or receive*.]
- [Ask if there are any questions.]
- [Announce the number of approved minutes remaining to complete their warmup.]
- [Announce when 1 minute remains.]



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