



**2026**

# OFFICIATING HANDBOOK



# 2026 USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook

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Section	Revision/Correction	Pages to Reprint
3.E	Added statement regarding standard pre-match briefing	18-22
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3.G.3	Deleted "typically"	24
Figure 3K-1	Corrected text in the upper text box	29
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Appendix C	Corrected scripts to correspond to 5.A.9	107
Appendix D	Corrected standard pre-match briefing (added omitted items)	109-111

USA Pickleball

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



# 2026 USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook

## Introduction and Purpose

The *2026 USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook* is intended as a guide for referees. This document may be changed to correct content throughout the year. This book is designed for referees and line judges of all levels, and addresses both Singles and Doubles play. The procedures, techniques, and tips in this Handbook represent USA Pickleball officiating **Best Practices** and are based on the [2026 USA Pickleball Official Rulebook](#) as well as the experiences of seasoned referees who regularly officiate USA Pickleball-sanctioned tournaments.



The best practices presented in this Handbook are also based on the [2026 USA Pickleball Official Referee Casebook](#). 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 [Referees and Officiating Page](#) on the USA Pickleball website. Should there be any conflict between this Handbook, the Rulebook or Casebook, the Casebook rulings take first precedence followed by the Rulebook.

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 officiating training and experience, even if that experience is only officiating or line judging recreational games for practice.

Following these best practices and procedures 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 and have*  *are optional* procedures. All other items are required best practices.

The talking head symbols indicate standardized words to be used for specific calls and announcements (scripts). Scripts are to be spoken exactly as worded.  

**NOTE:** A compilation of scripts is contained in Appendix C.

## How to Use This Handbook

In conjunction with studying this Handbook, you should review the [2026 USA Pickleball Official Rulebook](#) and the [2026 USA Pickleball Official Referee Casebook](#). You should work to understand not only the language but also how the rules should be applied when officiating 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 officiating at an upcoming tournament.

## Training

You can find detailed training program requirements on the [Referees and 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 officiating and line judge practices are only the start of effective officiating. Most importantly, you need to get out on the court and practice using these procedures on a regular basis.

## Practice

Begin by 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 would mind having you officiate 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 often, in general, easier to officiate 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 [Referees and Officiating page](#). After you are comfortable using the scoresheet, calling the correct score, watching for foot faults, and keeping the game moving at a smooth and consistent pace, volunteer to officiate 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 often available at officiated tournaments where referees and line judges can shadow experienced officials, observe and discuss best practices with them. The Referee Coordinator may arrange for an experienced official to shadow you as this provides an immediate resource should a question arise and ensures a well-officiated match.

Continue to work with an experienced referee and build your confidence through officiating a variety of events at tournaments. Also, observe credentialed referees and note their performance. Eventually, you might consider becoming a Level 1, Level 2, or 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 (banded player) and first server:** The term “starting server (banded player)” 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, which is usually a wrist band). The term “first server,” refers only to the player who serves first after a side out and based on the score (who may or may not be the player wearing the starting server identification [banded player]).

**Non-banded player:** The term “non-banded player” refers to the partner of the starting server (banded player).

**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 a Singles context, the term “team” means “player.”

**Head Referee** has been abbreviated often in this book to **HR**.

**Tournament Director** has been abbreviated often in this book to **TD**.

## 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 is used in this Handbook to indicate changes and substantive clarification to best practice procedures or rules for 2026. The major changes for 2026 are listed in an Officiating Handbook Change Document that can be found on the USA Pickleball website under Referee Resources.

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### Section 1: Responsibilities and Code of Conduct for Pickleball Officiating

The referee’s main responsibility is to ensure that USA Pickleball rules set forth in the [2026 USA Pickleball Official 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 usually on an annual basis. It is your responsibility to stay current with 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 17.A]

During an officiated match, your primary responsibilities are to:

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

#### B. Officiating 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:

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

## Officiating Code of Conduct

### Rule Enforcement

Always enforce the rules impartially and consistently. Personal opinions must not influence rule enforcement.

### Decision Making and Judgment

Decisions must reflect the official guidelines to ensure fairness for all participants. When situations arise that are not explicitly addressed in the official Rulebook, Casebook, or Handbook, consult with the Head Referee or Tournament Director, as appropriate, and use sound judgment and common sense to reach appropriate decisions.

### Professional Conduct

Maintain professionalism, confidence, and respect with players, spectators, and colleagues. Avoid excessive familiarity, including pictures and touching players and coaches when reasonable. Refrain from commenting on play. Honor reasonable requests from players without compromising impartiality.

### Focus and Attentiveness

Remain attentive and focused throughout each match. Silence personal electronic devices to avoid distractions.

### Appearance and Equipment

The USA Pickleball officiating uniform is to be worn only while participating in or representing USA Pickleball at approved sanctioned events, and only within the United States, unless otherwise authorized by the USA Pickleball Managing Director of Officiating.

Dress neatly in accordance with tournament requirements and maintain a professional posture. Use only approved equipment during matches to ensure consistency and safety.

### Conflicts of Interest

Do not officiate matches involving relatives, close friends, or when a conflict of interest exists. When playing in an officiated match, do not inform your referee or other players that you are a credentialed USA Pickleball referee.

### Intervention During Matches

Intervene in a match being observed only to address immediate safety issues, if requested by the assigned referee, or at the Tournament Director's direction. Address observed officiating errors privately after the match.

### Comments and Public Communication

Always avoid public comments—positive or negative—about referees or players, including on social media. This preserves impartiality and prevents misinterpretation.

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## Section 2: Officiating Tools

### A. The Scoresheet

The scoresheet is the official document used to record game activity and transmit match results to the event desk. Scoresheets may be designed to accommodate one match format or multiple match formats. The scoresheet design used in your area may differ from the scoresheets utilized in this Handbook (Figure 2B-1).

### B. Scoresheet Information

2.B.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.B.2. Information entered by the referee before, during, and after the match includes the following:

- a. Circle the name of the starting server (banded player) 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. Annotation of the court end selected by one of the teams
- e. Reference marks ( $\Delta$ ) 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 “WINNER” inside the circle

**Figure 2B-1: The Scoresheet Map**

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. Event Description            | 9. Server Boxes                           |
| 2. Match Number                 | 10. Scoring Grid                          |
| 3. Assigned Court Number        | 11. Match Designator                      |
| 4. Referee Name                 | 12. Time-Out Boxes                        |
| 5. Match Format                 | 13. Penalty Boxes                         |
| 6. Player Names                 | 14. End Change Marker                     |
| 7. QR Code (for Operations Use) | 15. Final Game Scores and Player Initials |
| 8. Medical Time-Out Boxes       |   |

The scoresheet map includes the following fields and components:

- Match Information:** Match: 4, Court: 5, Referee: Ebony Smart, Format: 2 of 3 all to 11 by 2.
- Event and Team:** Event: 1 Men's Doubles 5.0 (Open Age); Team 1: Chad Hahn / Eric White.
- Scoring Grids:** Two 11x17 grids for recording scores, with server boxes and end change markers.
- Time-Out and Penalty Boxes:** TimeOut and VW/TW/TF boxes.
- Medical Time-Out Boxes:** Two boxes for recording medical time-outs.
- QR Code:** A QR code for operations use.
- USA Pickleball Logo:** Located at the top left and bottom right.

### C. Electronic Scoring

This Handbook presents manual scoring methods only. However, it is acknowledged that the availability and use of electronic devices for official scoring and match management are becoming widespread. Make sure to obtain approval from the Head Referee or Tournament Director before using your personal electronic scoring device.

### D. Other Tools

- 2.D.1. Timer: for timed procedures
- 2.D.2. Pencils (2; at least one with an eraser)
- 2.D.3. Clipboard (for holding the scoresheet; provided by the tournament)
- 2.D.4. Server bands (for identifying starting servers; provided by the tournament)
- 2.D.5. Numbered server clips (for keeping track of first and second servers in Doubles matches) (Figure 2D-1)
- 2.D.6. Measuring device (for net and court measurements; minimum 12-ft length recommended)

**Figure 2D-1: Server Clips**



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## 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 players to lose confidence in your ability to officiate.

**NOTE:** The on-court procedures shown here may be modified by the Tournament Director or the USA Pickleball Managing Director of Officiating.

### A. Before a Tournament

- 3.A.1. Review the [2026 USA Pickleball Official Rulebook](#) and [Casebook](#).
- 3.A.2. Reread this Handbook.
- 3.A.3. Retake all [online tests](#) for referees, line judges, and players.
- 3.A.4. If wheelchair or adaptive players will be competing in the tournament, ensure that you are familiar with the applicable rules. [Rulebook Section 25]


### B. Before You are Called to Officiate

- 3.B.1. Take care of your restroom and hydration needs.
- 3.B.2. Wear the designated uniform for the tournament and your credential, unless not permitted. Credentials may not be required for certain match assignments

## Section 3: Referee Match Preparation and Scorekeeping Procedures

designated by the Tournament Director or USA Pickleball Managing Director of Officiating.

- 3.B.3. Prepare your muscles for extended standing by stretching. Also, stretch throughout the day to help keep yourself alert and refreshed.
- 3.B.4. Gather personal items such as water, lip protection, and sunglasses, as needed.
- 3.B.5. Gather your tools and supplies:
  - a. Pencils
  - b. Numbered server clips
  - c. Game balls, including a spare (if not provided on the courts)
  - d. Timer
  - e. Starting server (banded player) identification items (e.g., wristbands)
  - f. Band-aids (if available) so that first aid can quickly be provided for minor cuts and scrapes
  - g. Measuring Device to check/verify net height
  - h. Coin (if using a coin flip during the pre-match briefing)
- 3.B.6. Know where a Rulebook and USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List can be easily accessed.

 **OPTION:** Consider keeping a copy of both the Rulebook and a link to the Approved Paddle List on your web-enabled device.
- 3.B.7. Learn the venue layout, including where to enter/exit courts, court hindrances, and possible safety issues.
- 3.B.8. Consider how weather, lighting, court conditions, etc. might affect play, and where you will stand.
- 3.B.9. Attend the daily pre-tournament referee briefing.
  - a. Note special procedures applicable to that tournament (e.g., warm-up time, no bags on court).
  - b. 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.
  - c. Know the written pre-match instructions that were issued to the players in advance by the Tournament Director. This will determine what information listed in Section 3.E needs to be covered in your pre-match briefing.
  - d. Know the tournament policy for forfeiting a game or match if a player is late or absent.

### C. When You Are Called to Officiate

- 3.C.1. Immediately proceed to the referee desk to collect the match scoresheet and clipboard.
- 3.C.2. Quickly review the information on the scoresheet to ensure the match is assigned to you and shows all pertinent information for the match (Figure 3C-1)

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

**Figure 3C-1: Called to Officiate**

**NOTE:** In the rare event that the Tournament Director assesses a verbal warning, technical warning, or technical foul against a player for misconduct after a previous match, the scoresheet will indicate the applicable penalty to be applied at the start of the match to be officiated. (See also Section 6B)

3.C.3. Start your timer.

**OPTION:** Document the time you picked up the scoresheet in a location on the scoresheet that will not interfere with your officiating. Often in the lower left of the sheet.


3.C.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 as this will likely be the players' first match of the event.

3.C.5. Proceed immediately to your assigned court after picking up the scoresheet. Do not engage in conversations or allow any other delays. The players will have already been notified and will be making their way to the court.

**NOTE:** If the tournament venue requires that you cross a match in progress to reach your court, wait for all players at the court entryway. Enter and exit the court as a group when the ball is dead (preferably at a side out or time-out) and after receiving acknowledgement from the referee on the court being crossed.

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- 3.C.6. Verify that “1” or “2” has been written on the back of the scoresheet prior to getting to the court if this is the method you will be using for the pre-match briefing “coin flip.” 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. Otherwise, ensure that you have the coin readily available for the coin flip.

 **OPTION:** Use your server clip for “1” or “2” by spinning it with your hands closed, then use the number that faces up when you open your hand.

### D. Pre-Match On-Court Checklist [Rules 17.B.1-17.B.2]


- 3.D.1. Confirm net height and positioning, especially for temporary net systems. (The net height and position should be checked by the tournament crew at the start of each day but could have been accidentally moved during play).
- 3.D.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.D.3. If tournament balls are kept at the court for players, make sure there are two or more balls available for the match.
- 3.D.4. To determine on which side of the court you should stand, consider the position of the sun, lighting, shadows, referees on adjoining courts, line judges, spectators, etc. Also, consider proximity to other courts, walls, reflections, etc. You are the priority.
- If there are line judges, it is preferable that you stand opposite the two baseline judges.
  - 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.
  - If you must stand where your shadow is visible on the playing surface, move as little as possible during rallies to avoid your shadow distracting the players.
  - 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 that players do not get confused as to who is making their calls.
- 3.D.5. If you have wheelchair or adaptive players, make sure that you are familiar with the applicable rule modifications for wheelchair and adaptive players. [Rulebook Section 25]

**NOTE:** Do not say or do anything during the pre-match briefing to highlight any player’s perceived physical impairments. You must treat all players equally. You may answer any relevant questions that players ask about wheelchair or adaptive rules.

## E. Pre-Match Briefing and Warm-Up

A standard order for the pre-match briefing is introduced this year to develop consistency among referees (also see Appendix D). All referees are expected to work toward this best practice.

Begin the following pre-match briefing when all players are present at the court. Do not include additional information unless directed by the Head Referee/Tournament Director, the USA Pickleball Managing Director of Officiating or if requested by a player. Conduct the briefing on your assigned court, typically near the center of the court, or in a manner that does not disturb adjacent matches in progress. If any players have not arrived at the court before half of the warm-up time has elapsed or by half of the allotted time to start the match, have them re-called. Notate the time that you called on the scoresheet.

 **OPTION:** *By rule, the match cannot begin until all players are present. However, if a player will be delayed in arriving at the court, the pre-match briefing may be conducted with representatives from both teams. Proceed with the briefing to the extent practical so as not to deprive the players at the court of warm-up time. The paddles of all players must be inspected before play begins.*

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.

- 3.E.1. Introduce yourself with first and last name.
- 3.E.2. Confirm each player's identity. Note distinguishing characteristics next to the names of players if helpful for identification (e.g., beard, red shoes, blue shirt). Be sure to only note items that a player is not likely to remove during the match. If a player indicates hearing impairment, or the court is in a loud environment, you may advise the players of the hand cue used during the score call.
- 3.E.3. Determine whether this is the first time any player is playing in an officiated match. If so, include a statement during the briefing to instruct the players not to serve until after the complete score is called and the referee's arm is lowered.
- 3.E.4. 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 prior to the start of the match.
- 3.E.5. For Doubles matches, identify the starting server on each team and ensure that each wears the prescribed starting server (banded player) identification. Circle the names of the players wearing the starting server (banded player) identification.
  - a. Only one player on each team may wear the starting server (banded player) identification prescribed by the Tournament Director. [Rule 18.C]
  - b. Make sure the starting server (banded player) identification is visible to both you and the opponents.
  - c. To avoid confusion, you may request the partner of the starting server (banded player) to remove anything similar in color or design to the starting server (banded player) identification that makes it hard to distinguish it from the official identification.
- 3.E.6. Inform the players of the match format (e.g., 2 out of 3 games to 11 points, win by 2 points), end change information (e.g., end change at six points in the third game),

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and if rally scoring applies. (See also Section 3.K 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 has been assessed by the Tournament Director between matches [Rule 22.A.2], advise the players.

- 3.E.7. Confirm with each player that their paddles are listed on the [USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List](#). [Rule 18.A] Inspect each approved paddle to determine that it complies with current paddle specifications. If a paddle does not appear on the approved list or has prohibited features (jewels on edge guards or stickers of the face), then require that the player remove or correct, if possible, what is prohibited or to switch to another paddle. The replacement paddle must also be confirmed as approved and inspected for irregularities. [Rule 18.A.1]. Contact the HR or TD.

**NOTE:** The player must forfeit the match if they play with a paddle that is not on the approved paddle list. [Rule 18.A.2]

- a. Ask each player to confirm whether their paddle is listed on the [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. The HR or TD is a great resource in this area.
- b. 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 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.
- c. If the player cannot provide proof in a timely manner, do not allow the player to use the paddle for sanctioned play. 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.
- d. Inspect each paddle for a brand name or brand logo 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.
- e. 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.
- f. 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.
  - i. Distinct aftermarket alterations, decorated tape, and adhesive decorations may be used for edge guards 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. [Rule 3.D.6.c-e; ESM 2.E.6.d]
  - ii. 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

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installed) or 1” above the paddle handle. [Rule 3.D.7] 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 3.D.6.i]


- iii. Indentations, holes, cracks, and delamination (visibility of one or more underlayers) are prohibited. [Rule 3.D.5.a]
  - iv. Foreign substances and unusual textures on the hitting surface are prohibited. [Rule 3.D.5.b-d, f] The hitting surface must not be adversely reflective such that it has the potential to negatively affect the vision of the opponents. [Rule 3.D.5.h] 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.
  - g. **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 can 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.
- 3.E.8. Review the line calling responsibilities of the referee, players, and (when applicable) line judges, including the appeal procedures.
- NOTE:** This step may be omitted if this information has been provided to players by the Tournament Director in advance.
- 3.E.9. Remind players to make their “out” calls promptly and clearly, and if by voice, loudly. Advise players of any court abnormalities, non-standard court conditions, and approved rule modifications. [Rule 17.C.2]
- 3.E.10. Use any fair method to determine which team will have first choice of serve or receive, or choice of end (“coin flip”). Select a player to choose the number “1” or “2” (written on the back of the scoresheet) or to call the actual coin flip. The winner of the “coin flip” will make the first selection or may defer the first choice to the other team. Players may delay their choice of serve, receive, or end until after they warm-up, but must make their selection by the end of the warm-up time. Once a team makes its choice, it cannot be changed. Mark the scoresheet after each selection is made to eliminate the need to ask players a second time about their choices.
- a. In the Serve space(s) for each game, mark the team that will be serving first in each game (see Section 3.F.2).
  - b. In the space between Team Number and Serve Space, for the team that makes the end selection, annotate a short description of an easily identifiable landmark at the end of the court selected (e.g., gate, camera, trees, parking lot). Avoid the use of compass directions. The end choice description should be labeled “EC” (Figure 3F-1).
- 3.E.11. Ask the players if they have any questions about the player instructions or the rules.
- a. Allow players to warm up for the designated warm-up time or the remainder of the established time to start the match. Remember to allow time to choose the ball and position the players to begin play. Notify the players when one minute of warm-up time is left. They may practice serves if time remains, however serving is not mandatory.

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- 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.
  - c. At the end of the warm-up period, collect the balls. If the players are ready to play before the expiration of warmup time they may begin play early.
- 3.E.12. 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. Obtain Head Referee or Tournament Director approval, if necessary.

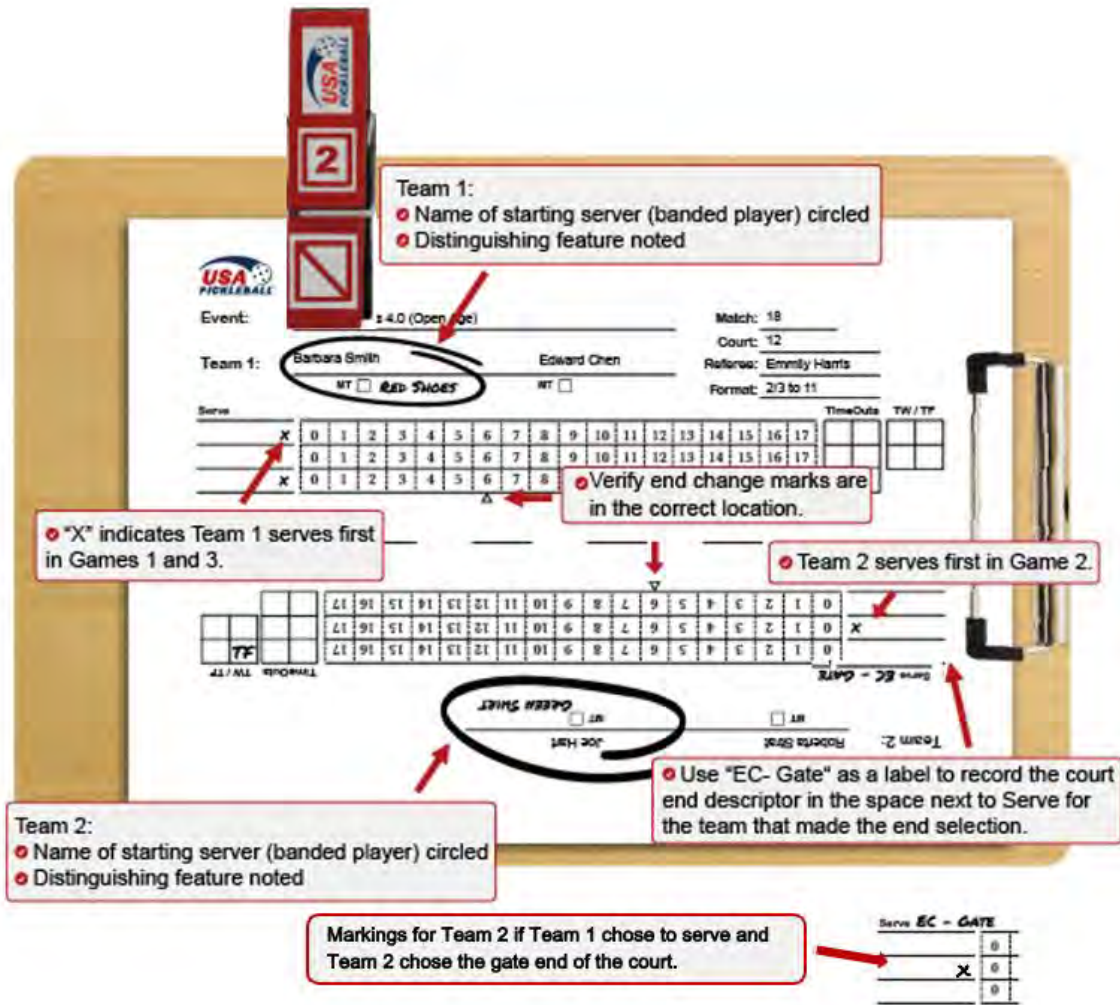
**NOTE:** Do not allow additional time for warm-up if the player's tardiness is due to their own negligence.

#### **F. Confirming the Scoresheet Before the Start of a Match** [Figure 3F-1]

- 3.G.1. Verify that you have circled the names of the players who are wearing the starting server (banded player) identification.
- 3.G.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 add the abbreviations "L" or "R" or a directional arrow to indicate whether the serve will begin on your left or right.*
- 3.F.3. Ensure that you have used a unique identifier to notate the court end selected by one of the teams.
- 3.F.4. If not preprinted on the scoresheet, add end change marks ( $\Delta$ ) 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.

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

**Figure 3F-1: Confirming Scoresheet Before Match**



**G. Scoresheet and Clipboard Set-Up Before the Start of Each Game**

3.G.1. Position the scoresheet on the clipboard, making sure the clipboard clamp is pointing toward the serving end with the players’ names of the team that will serve first 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 (Figure 3G-1).

**💡 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 secondary and immediate confirmation of whether the serving team is to your right or left side.

3.G.2. **For Doubles games**, place the numbered server clip over the circled name of the starting server (banded player) of the game with the number 2 facing up. This will be the name of the player who will serve first.

**NOTE:** The starting server (banded player) for the first serving team begins the game as the second server since only one player serves before there is a side out.

**Figure 3G-1: Scoresheet Set-Up with Server Clip**

- Orient the clipboard so the clamp points to the end of the court where service will begin.
- Orient the scoresheet so the names of the team serving first are at the top.
- Place the server clip over the name of the starting server (banded player) for the team that is serving first with the number 2 facing up.
- Double check. If needed, verify with the players which player will serve to start the match and what end they will serve from.

It is critical that the scoresheet, clipboard, and server clip are oriented correctly to begin the game. An error can lead to many problems

3.G.3. For **Singles and Rally Scoring** games, place the numbered server clip over the name of the player who will serve to start the game with the number 1 facing up.

## H. Tracking First and Second Server

3.H.1. In **Doubles** games, keeping track of first and second servers and which player is the correct server are common challenges for referees. Using the system described below will enable referees to accurately track servers without interrupting the flow of the game.

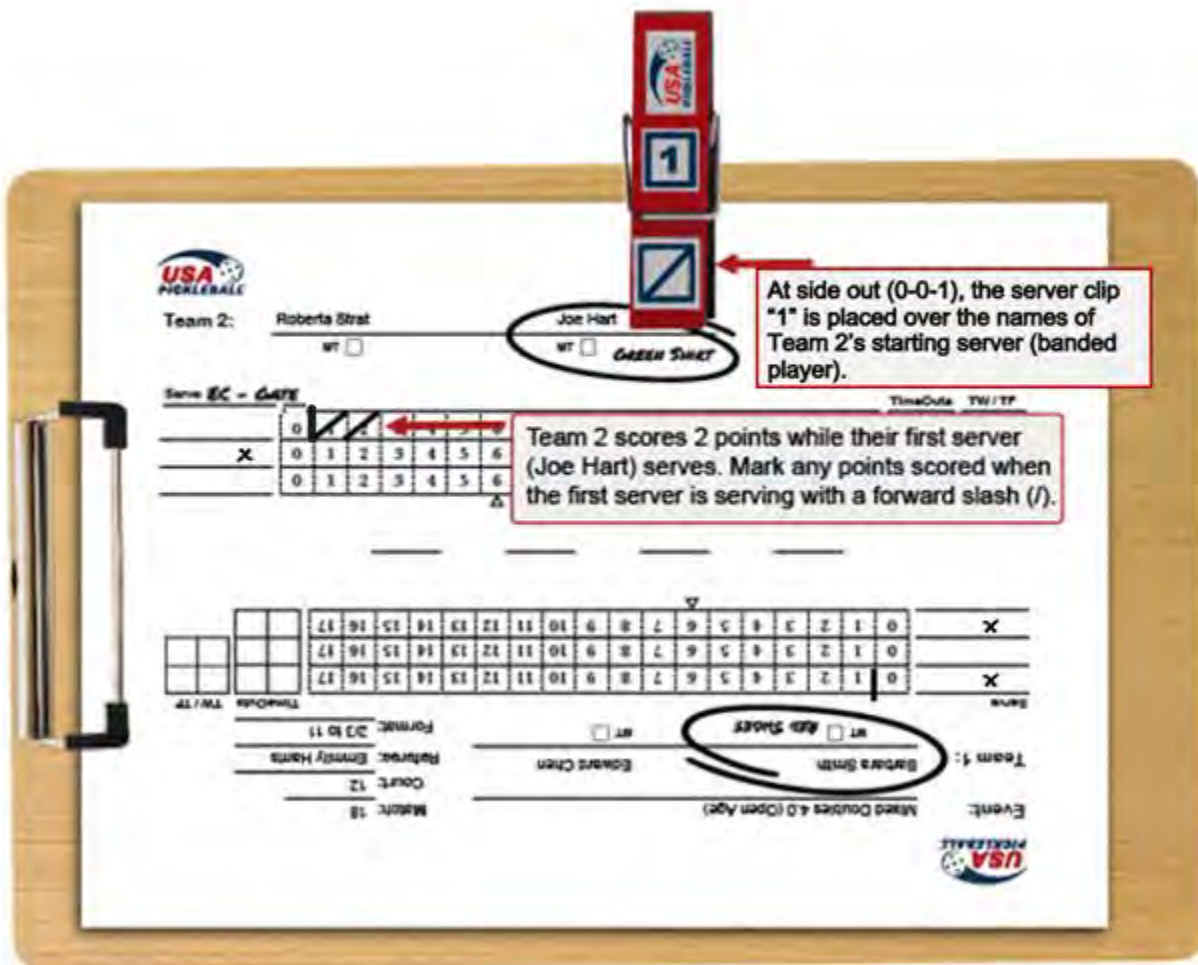
- a. When the team loses its serve, first mark the side out with a vertical line after the last point scored. If this is the first time the team has served in this game and no points are scored, place the vertical line between the “0” and “1.” Rotate the clipboard 180 degrees so that names of the new serving team are “upright” on the clipboard. The clipboard clamp will be pointing toward the end of the court with the new serving

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team. After each side out, place the numbered clip over the appropriate new server's name with the "1" facing up (Figure 3H-1).

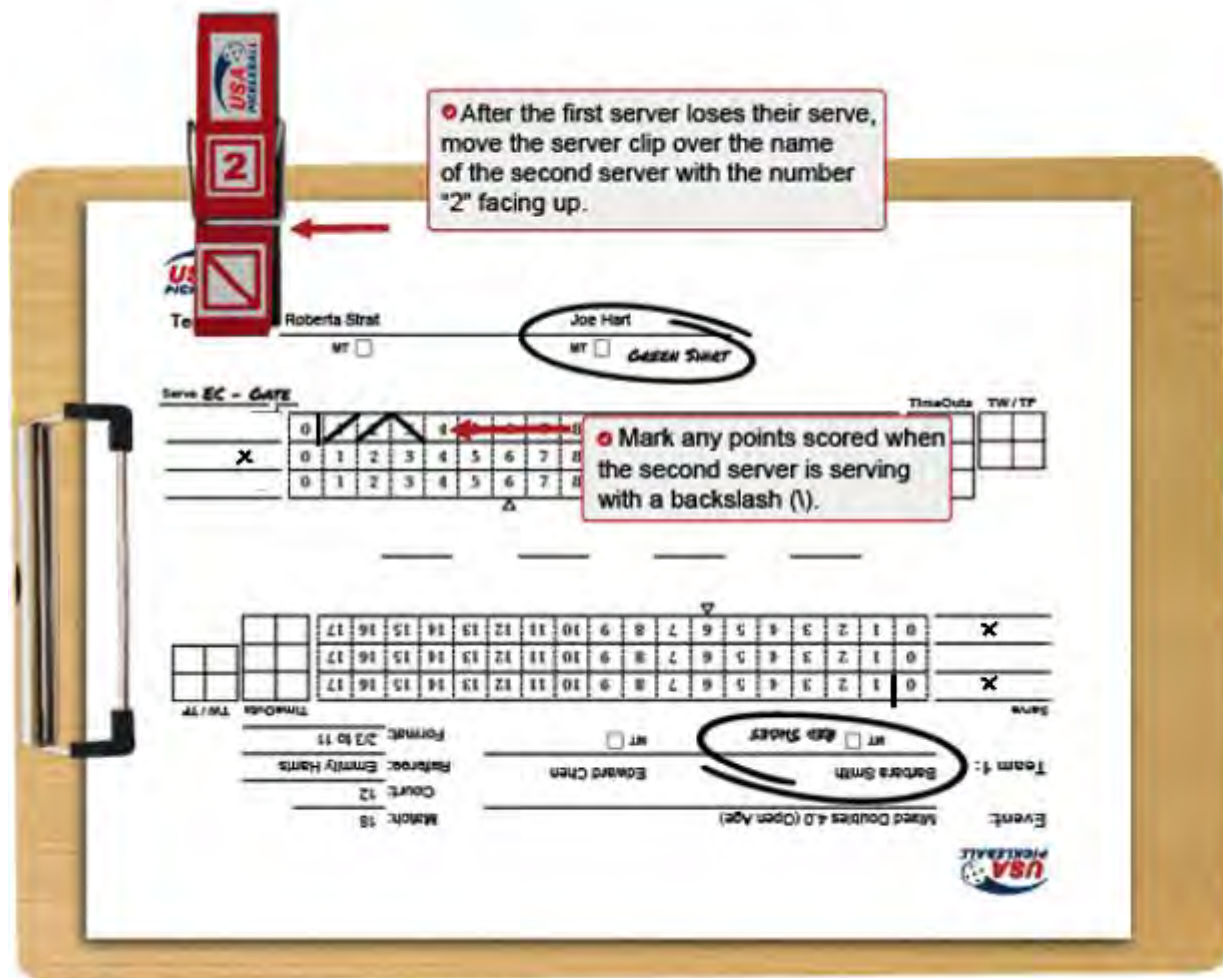
- i. If the new team's score is even, place the clip over the "banded" player's name.
  - ii. If the new team's score is odd, place the clip over the "non-banded" player's name.
- b. Prior to the second server serving, place the numbered server clip over that player's name with the "2" facing up (Figure 3H-2).

**Figure 3H-1: Scoresheet with First Server Clip**



[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

Figure 3H-2: Scoresheet with Clip Showing Second Server



c. 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.

3.H.2. **For Singles and Rally Scoring games**, use the numbered server clip to keep track of which player is serving. Place the “1” side of the clip over the name of the player who serves first in the game and use the “2” side for the other Singles player or Doubles Team.

### I. Marking Points Scored

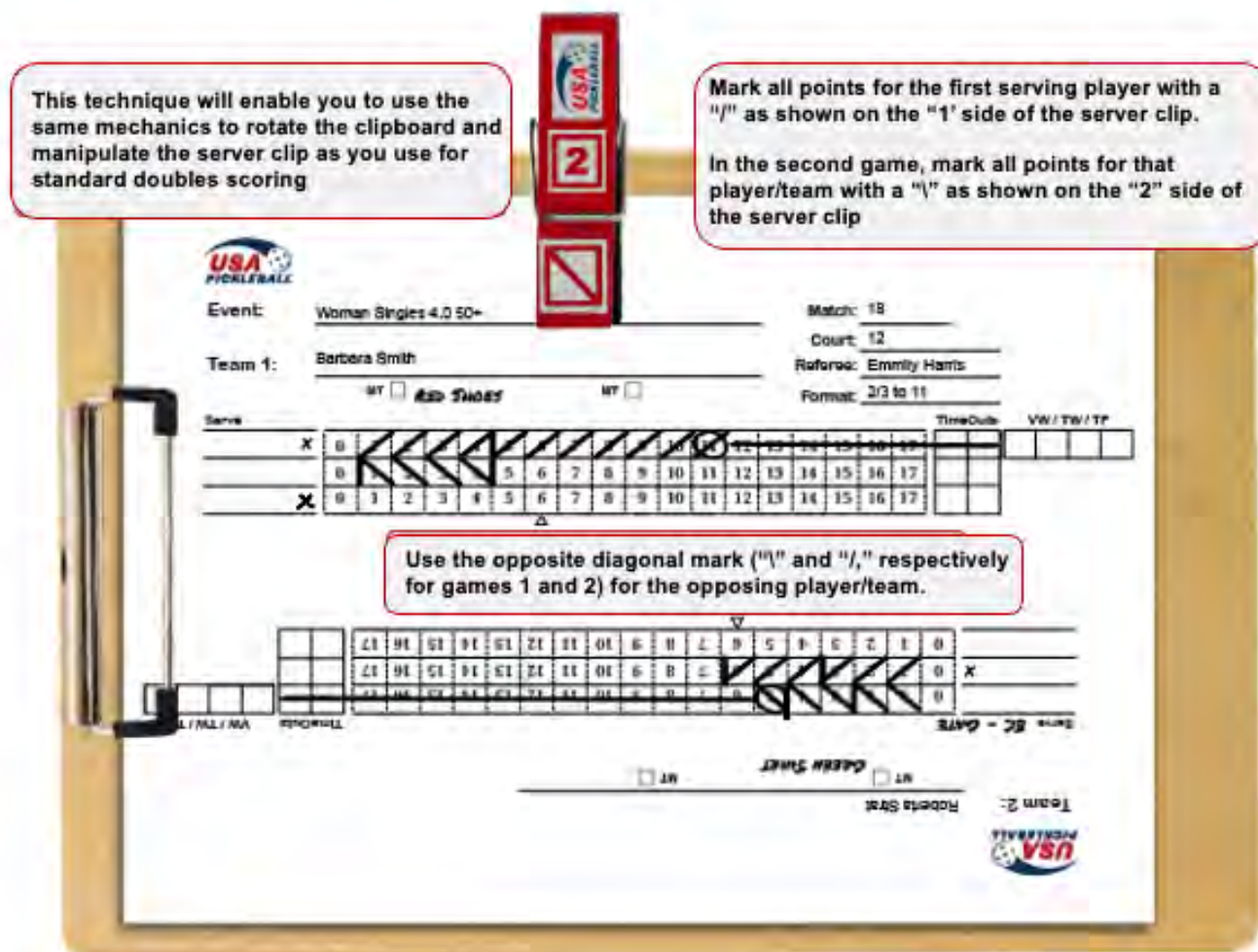
3.I.1. **For Doubles games**, use diagonals to mark each point scored. Mark the appropriate diagonal over the numbered box of the point scored:

3.L.1. Mark points scored when the first server is serving with an upper-right-to-lower-left diagonal line (forward slash /) (Figure 3H-1).

3.L.2. Mark points scored when the second server is serving with an upper-left-to-lower right diagonal line (backslash \) (Figure 3H-2).

3.1.2. **For Singles and Rally Scoring games**, use the upper right to lower left diagonal line (forward slash /) to mark the points of one Singles player or Doubles team and the upper left-to lower right diagonal line (backslash \) to mark the points of the Singles or Doubles opponent(s) (Figure 3I-1). This will enable you to use the same mechanics to rotate the clipboard and manipulate the server clip as used for Doubles games.

**Figure 3I-1: Server Clip Usage in Singles and Rally Scoring**



## J. Marking Side Outs

### 3.J.1. Doubles Games

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.

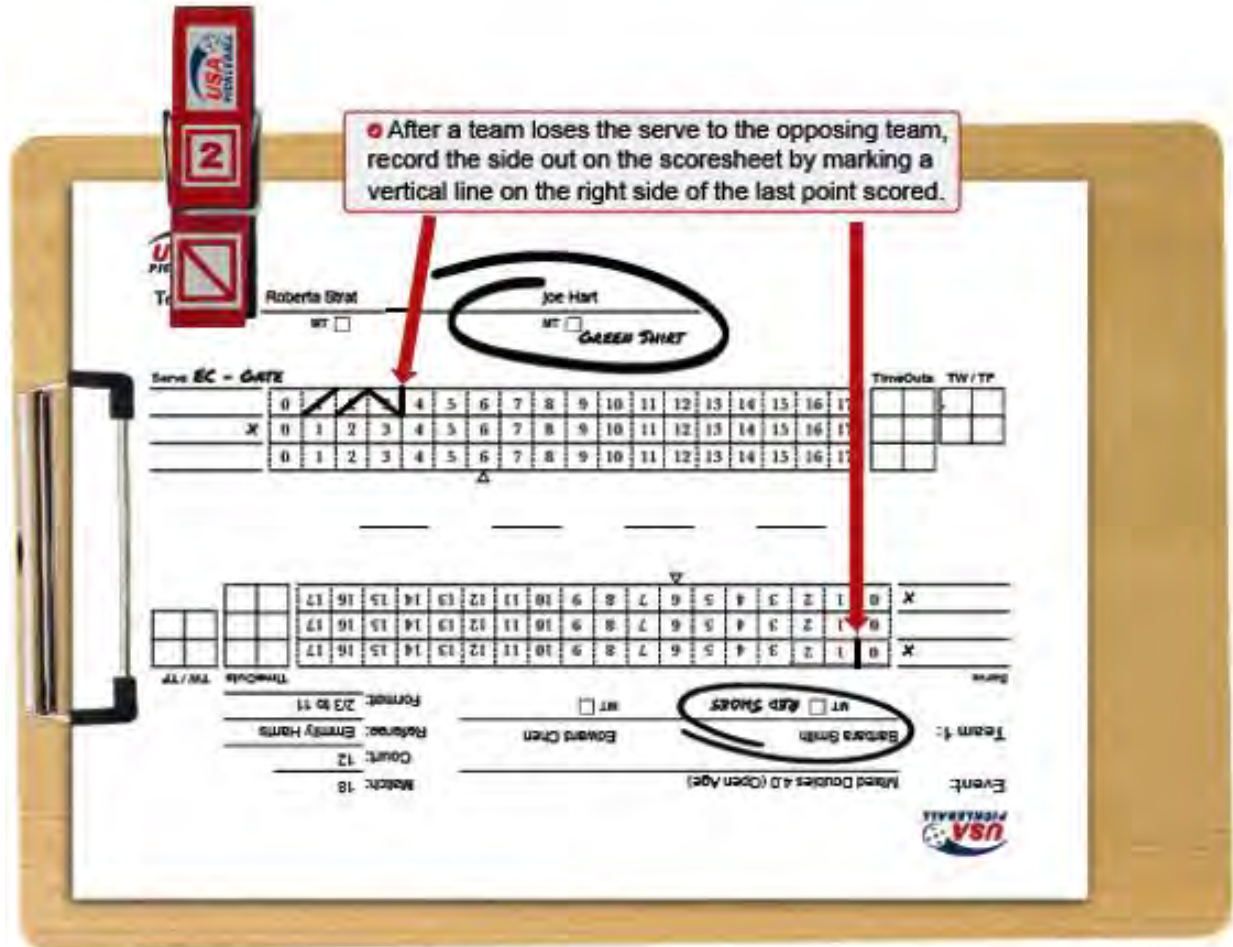
**NOTE:** If a point is not scored on the first service rotation of the game, place the vertical mark between the "0" and "1" point (Figure 3J-1).

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

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regarding the correct server or correct position. The score after each side out is the point to the **left** of the side out mark.

**Figure 3J-1: Marking Side Out**



#### 3.J.2. Singles and Rally Scoring Games

For Singles and Rally Scoring games, mark side outs to document the end of consecutive points earned during each service possession.

**NOTE:** For Rally Scoring, the score after each side out is the point to the **right** of the side out mark.

### K. Player Positions

#### 3.K.1. Doubles Games

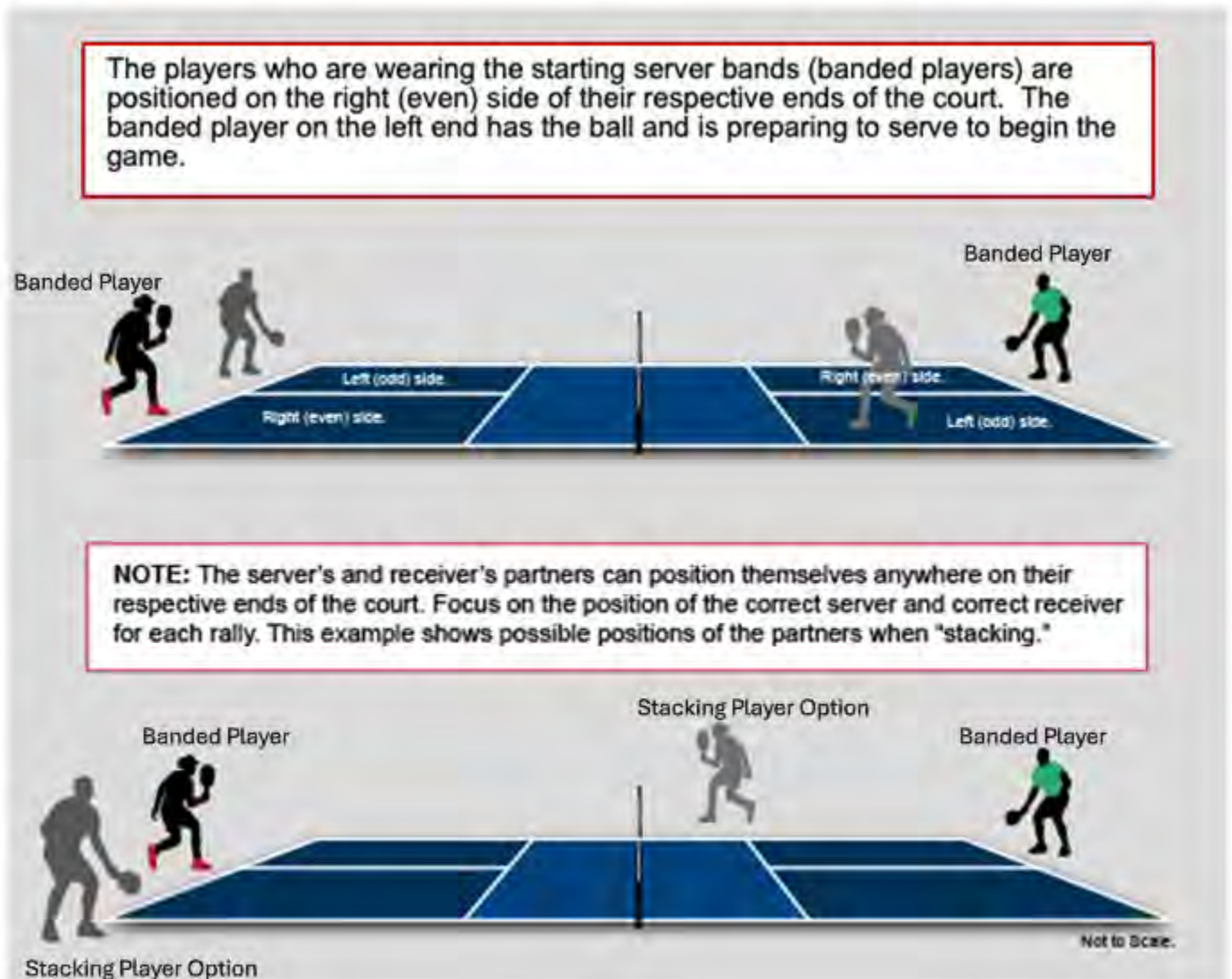
As a referee, you must understand the correlation between the starting server (banded player) identification and the score in determining a player's correct court position.

- a. The court has a right/even side and a left/odd side as the players face the net (Figure 3K-1).

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- b. The starting server (banded player) for each team at the beginning of each game wears the starting server identification.
- c. The correct server and receiver and their positions are determined by the score and the players' starting positions in the game.
- d. At the start of each game (0-0-2), the correct position for the players with the starting server (banded player) identification is the right/even side of the court on their respective ends of the court. [Rule 5.B.3] These players are the correct server and correct receiver for starting the game (Figure 3K-1).
- e. When a team's **score is even** (i.e., 0, 2, 4...), the correct position for the team's player wearing the starting server (banded player) identification is the **right/even court** and the starting server's partner (non-banded player) is in the **left/odd court**. When a team's **score is odd** (i.e., 1, 3, 5...), the correct position for the player wearing the starting server (banded player) identification is the **left/odd court** and the starting server's partner (non-banded player) is in the **right/even court**.

Figure 3K-1: Player Positions



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- f. 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 5.B.3] After the return of serve, either of the teams' players may hit the ball from any position.

### 3.K.2. Singles Games

#### a. Standard Singles

- i. The server's correct position is determined by the score (i.e., even, or odd).
- ii. Use the clip to keep track of which player is serving.
- iii. 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.
- iv. When the server's score is even (i.e., 0, 2, 4...), the correct position is the right/even court. [Rule 5.A.1] When the server's score is odd (i.e., 1, 3, 5...), the correct position is the left/odd court.
- v. The receiver will mirror the server's position diagonally to return the serve.

#### b. Mini-Singles

- i. Mini-Singles is a format for Singles play where only half the court on each side of the net is used for each rally. Please read **Rule 14.B** for more information.
- ii. 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.

## L. Rally Scoring

When you are called to officiate 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. Service after a side out always begins on the right side.

3.L.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.

3.L.2. Award a point to the winner of each rally.

**NOTE:** The players must change positions (sides of the court) consistent with their new score after they score a point. **After each side out and point, the serving team players should change positions to reflect the new score.**

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 occurs and the receiver scores a point. Announce the side out, result, and the receiver's new score.


🗣️ "Side out. Point. [Score]."

Example: Team A is serving at 8-4 and Team B wins the rally. Team B scores a point.


🗣️ "Side out. Point. 5."

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- c. A receiver can win the game on the opponent's serve if they are at game point. When the receiver has game point and the server loses the rally, the receiver scores a point and wins the game or match, as applicable. Announce the side out and end of the game or match.

 "Side out. Point. Game. [Match.] [Score]."

Example: Team A is serving at 13-14 and Team B wins the rally. Team B scores a point and wins the game 15-13.

 "Side out. Point. Game. 15-13."

 "Side out. Point. Game. Match. 15-13."

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## Section 4: Officiating a Match (Doubles Play)

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

### Important Points to Remember

You are responsible for the conduct of the match.

- Keep games moving smoothly by:
  - Promptly announcing points, second servers, and side outs.
  - Appropriately marking the scoresheet.
  - Efficiently moving the numbered server clip.
- Communicate with players using a professional tone and avoid unnecessary conversation.
- Maintain an attentive, confident, relaxed demeanor.
- 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.

### A. Beginning a Match

- 4.A.1. A responsibility of the referee is to ensure that the match begins within the time specified by the Tournament Director, or no later than 10 minutes after the match was called.

## Section 4: Officiating a Match (Doubles Play)

4.A.2. All players must be present at the court to start playing a match. Players may not use time-outs to delay the start of the match (e.g., if their partner has not yet arrived). [Rules 18.F; 21.A.1]

4.A.3. Permit the team serving first 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.

**NOTE:** If further confirmation of the players' identities is needed, convene the players at the center of the court on their respective ends for ball selection and to ensure that you have the teams correctly indicated on the scoresheet and the clipboard clamp pointing toward the serving team to start the match. Referees no longer are required to announce the player names to the spectators as a method of confirmation.

4.A.4. Move into position at the net post. Stand aligned with the net plane and maintain a stationary position at the net. Stay within a 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.

## B. Beginning a Game

4.B.1. Announce a 15-second warning to ready the players to start each game.

**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. "Time in" may be omitted in situations where a time-out was not called. Play may start before 15 seconds expire if all players are ready to proceed sooner.

4.B.2. Each game begins on second serve at 0-0-2 since only one player will serve for the team that starts serving. The names of the players on the serving team should be upright and at the top of the clipboard and the clamp on the clipboard should be pointing toward the serving team. The starting server (banded player) 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 (banded player)'s name. The correct receiver will be the player on the opposing team whose name is circled. These two players must wear the starting server (banded player) identification.

4.B.3. Before calling the score to begin the game and for each rally, form a mental picture and visually confirm that the correct server and receiver are in their correct positions. This is indicated by the score, numbered server clip, and starting server (banded player) identification. You must ensure by looking at the players that:

a. The correct server has the ball.

b. The correct receiver is positioned on the opposite end of the court near the baseline and is diagonally across from the server.

**NOTE:** If any player is out of position or server sequence, correct the players before beginning the game.

c. **All players** are ready (or **should** be ready) to play. [Rule 7.D.2] No player should be using any of the "not ready" signals, which are: [Rules 6.A.1]

i. raising the paddle above the head.

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- ii. raising the non-paddle hand above the head.
  - iii. completely turning their back to the net.
- 4.B.4. Allow a few extra seconds, if necessary, for players to get into position before calling time in.
- a. For a single-game match, announce the format and the 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.”
  - b. For a multiple game match, announce the game number, time in, and the starting score:
    - 🗣️ “Game [number]. Time in. 0-0-2.”

For the tie-breaker game of a multiple game match, also announce the point at which the end change will occur before calling time in.

- 🗣️ “Game [3 or 5]. Change ends at [6 or 8]. Time in. 0-0-2.”

### C. Calling the Score

#### 4.C.1. Vocalizing the Score

You may quickly glance at the scoresheet, as necessary, to ensure that you know the correct score to call. Upon seeing that the receiver is ready, audibly announce the score as three numbers, enunciating each number clearly with a steady cadence (e.g., “Zero, zero, two.”)

**NOTE:** Do not use “Zero, zero, start,” “Zero, zero, second server,” “Oh-oh-two,” or any other non-standard variation to start the game.

**NOTE:** Do not say “Game point” or “Match point” when the serving team will win if it scores the next point.

#### 4.C.2. Hand/Arm Cue **[NOTE: Scan the QR code to view the video]**

Players may have difficulty hearing you when a venue is noisy or the acoustics are not conducive to clear communication. In addition, players may have a hearing impairment or may remove their hearing aids before a match. A hand/arm 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).



After confirming the correct server has the ball, look at the receiver to ensure readiness to begin calling the score. Upon seeing that the receiver is ready, and as you say the first number of the score, simultaneously extend your arm without the clipboard in hand toward the net (preferably at shoulder height) although the arm may be bent 90 degrees at the elbow with the palm open and parallel to the net and the server.

**NOTE:** Remain in your position; do not step forward. **Only extend your arm as you begin to vocalize the score.**

💡 **OPTION:** *While players are moving into position, you may signal to the players that you are getting ready to call the score by raising your hand above your head.*

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As you continue calling the score, rotate your head from the receiver to the server. Complete calling the score by saying the last number of the score while looking at the server; simultaneously lower your arm to indicate the completion of the score call and start the 10-second count for the serve to be made.

**NOTE:** If precluded from immediately calling the score after extending your arm, raise your arm to stop any action and address the situation.

### D. Watching the Serve and Return of Serve

4.D.1. The server may use either the volley serve or the drop serve interchangeably. The server is not required to declare which type of serve will be used. 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. To effectively determine whether the serve is legal, it is important to understand the rules for each type of serve.

a. For a volley serve [Rule 7.C] (See fault and replay Section 5)

- i. The ball must be released using only one hand or only the paddle.
- ii. The server is not allowed to impart spin to the ball before hitting it to make the serve. [Rule 7.B.2]

**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.

- iii. The release of the ball must be visible to the receiver and the referee. [Rule 7.B.3; replays]
- iv. The ball must be hit before it bounces on the playing surface.
- v. The three service motion components must be clearly met. [Rules 7.C.1-3; faults and replays]

b. For a drop serve [Rule 7.D]

- i. The ball must be dropped from one hand or dropped off the paddle face.
- ii. 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.

- iii. The release of the ball must be visible to the receiver and the referee. [Rule 7.B.3; replays]
- iv. There is no restriction on the number of times the ball may bounce before the server hits the ball to make the serve.
- v. The server may use any service motion to hit the ball.

4.D.2. Watch the server for **service faults**.

4.D.3. Watch the served ball to see where it lands. The ball must land beyond the Non-Volley Zone line in the correct service court to be legal.

4.D.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 line but adjust to the action on the court.

## E. During Play

- 4.E.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 6.A.2; 6.E]
- 4.E.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.
- 4.E.3. When players are anywhere near the NVZ or a volley has occurred from anywhere on or off the court, **your primary 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 lower priority in these situations.
- 4.E.4. Make no call or physical indication that a ball is in or out of bounds, **unless the call is appealed** by a player.
- 4.E.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

### 4.F.1. Standard Doubles Games

- a. At the end of each rally, immediately state the result clearly and audibly: “Point,” “Second server” (or “Second serve”), or “Side out.”
- b. 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 they should make. If players 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.
- c. 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.
- d. Mark each point on the scoresheet as it occurs. Use a diagonal line corresponding to the server number on the numbered server clip.
- e. When the serve goes to the second server, turn the numbered server clip to “2” and move it over the second server’s name.
- f. 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

At each side out, make a side out mark after the last point scored by the serving team, then rotate the clipboard and move the server clip.

### 4.G.1. Standard Doubles Games (Figure 4G-1)

- a. 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.

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- b. If no points have yet been scored in the game, place the side out mark to the left of the “1” point.
- c. Rotate the clipboard clamp so that it is pointing toward the end of the court where the new serving team is.
- d. Reposition the numbered server clip over the name of the correct server based on the serving team’s score, simultaneously flipping the server clip so the number 1 side of the clip is facing up.
- e. Ensure that the correct server has possession of the ball for the next serve.

**Figure 4G-1: Tracking Correct Server – Doubles**

- The correct first server is determined by the team’s score (even or odd) at side out. The team’s starting server (banded player) is not always the first server at side out.
- When the team’s score is even at the start of their service rotation (“comes in”), the player wearing the starting server identification (banded player) is the first server.
- When the team’s score is odd at the start of their service rotation (“comes in”), the player not wearing the starting server identification (non-banded player) is the first server.

- Team 1 “comes in” with a score of 3 (odd score). For this service rotation, the player without the starting server identification (non-banded player) is the first server and the player with the starting server identification (banded player) is the second server.

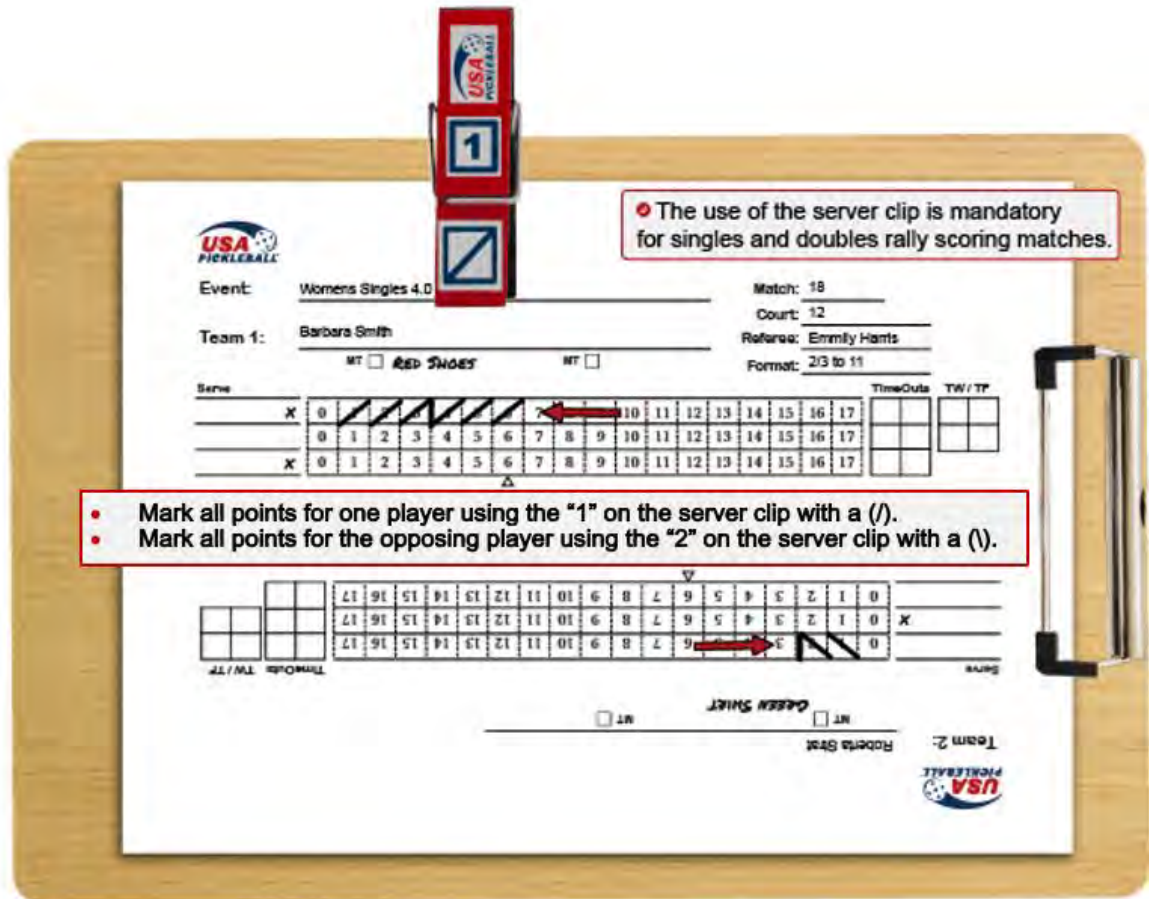
4.G.2. **Singles** (Figure 4G-2)

- a. Indicate the side out on the scoresheet by drawing a vertical line on the right side of the last point scored by the server or serving team that lost the serve. It is not necessary to mark successive side outs in the same place when no points are scored.

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- b. If no points have yet been scored in the game, place the side out mark to the left of the “1” point.
- c. Rotate the clipboard clamp so that it is pointing toward the end of the court where the new server is located.
- d. Reposition the numbered server clip over the name of the correct server based on the server’s score, simultaneously flipping the server clip so the opposite number is facing up.
- e. Ensure that the correct server has possession of the ball for the next serve.

**Figure 4G-2: Tracking Correct Server – Singles**



**H. Standard Time-Out [Rule 21.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 a time-out is requested but not taken, do not record it; the team gets to retain the time-out for later use in the same game. (See [Official Referee Casebook](#))

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

- 4.H.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.”

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4.H.2. Start the one-minute count on your timer.

4.H.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.H.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 4H-1). 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, 8\7 for 8-7-2). There is no need to record the server number as that information is indicated by the direction of the diagonal mark.

**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 4H-2).

**Figure 4H-1: Standard Time-Out Serving Team (Score 6-4-1)**

• Mark the current score in a time-out box for the current game on the scoresheet. Use the appropriate diagonal line that mirrors the diagonal on the server clip indicating first or second server.

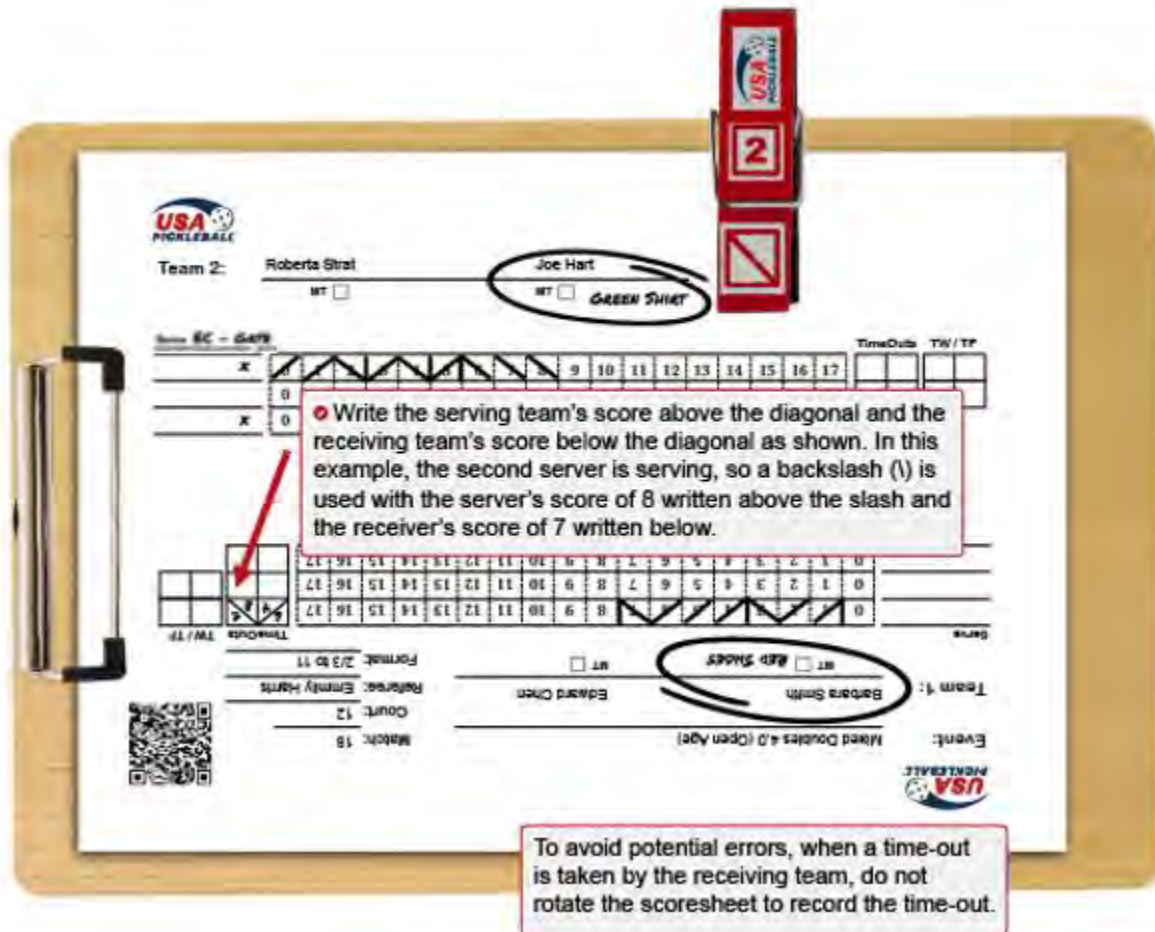
• Write the serving team's score above the diagonal and the receiving team's score below the diagonal as shown. In this example, the first server is serving so a forward slash (/) is used with the server's score of 6 written above the slash and the receiver's score of 4 written below.

The scoresheet is for a Mixed Doubles 4.0 (Open Age) match. Team 1 consists of Barbara Smith and Edward Chen. Team 2 consists of Roberta Burt and Joe Holt. The match is being played on a Green Sheet. The scoresheet shows the following information:

- Event: Mixed Doubles 4.0 (Open Age)
- Team 1: Barbara Smith (Serves) and Edward Chen (Serves)
- Team 2: Roberta Burt (Serves) and Joe Holt (Serves)
- Match: [Blank]
- Court: [Blank]
- Opponent: [Blank]
- Format: 2/3 to 1

The scoresheet includes a grid for recording game scores. The first game's score is recorded as 6/4, indicating that Team 1 is serving. The server clip is attached to the sheet, showing a '1' and a diagonal line. A callout box highlights the 'TimeOuts TW / TF' section where the score '6/4' is written in the first game's box. Another callout box highlights the '6/4' score on the game grid.

Figure 4H-2: Standard Time-Out Receiving Team (Score 8-7-2)



- 4.H.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.
- 4.H.6. Play begins after the expiration of the time-out. Play may also begin before the expiration of the time-out if all players are ready. When players are ready or 45 seconds have passed, announce 📣 "15 seconds." Even if the players are ready early, announce 15 seconds.
- 4.H.7. In all instances, **prior to moving from the center of the court**, announce the "remaining time-outs" script.
  - 📣 "Remaining time-outs [Receiver(s)/Server(s)] – [number]. [Server(s)/Receiver(s)] – [number]."
- 4.H.8. Check the readiness of the officiating team (if applicable).
- 4.H.9. If any player is out of position or server sequence, correct the player(s) **before** calling "Time in."
- 4.H.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

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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, the correct server has the ball, and are all ready to play:

🗣️ “Time in. [Score].”

### I. Completion of a Game – Additional Game to be Played

4.1.1. After the final point, announce the point, end of the game and the game score:

🗣️ “Point. Game. [Score].”

🗣️ “Side out. Point. Game. [Score].” (Rally Scoring when receiver wins)

Call a between-games time-out and start your timer.

🗣️ “Time-out. Change ends. Two minutes.”

4.1.2. Retrieve the ball to facilitate a prompt start of the next game with the same ball.

4.1.3. Move to the center of the court. This position helps alert spectators and players that the match is still in progress and helps you to avoid unnecessary interaction with the players and spectators.

4.1.4. 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 4I-1). If no points are scored for the game, circle/shade “0” for the score.

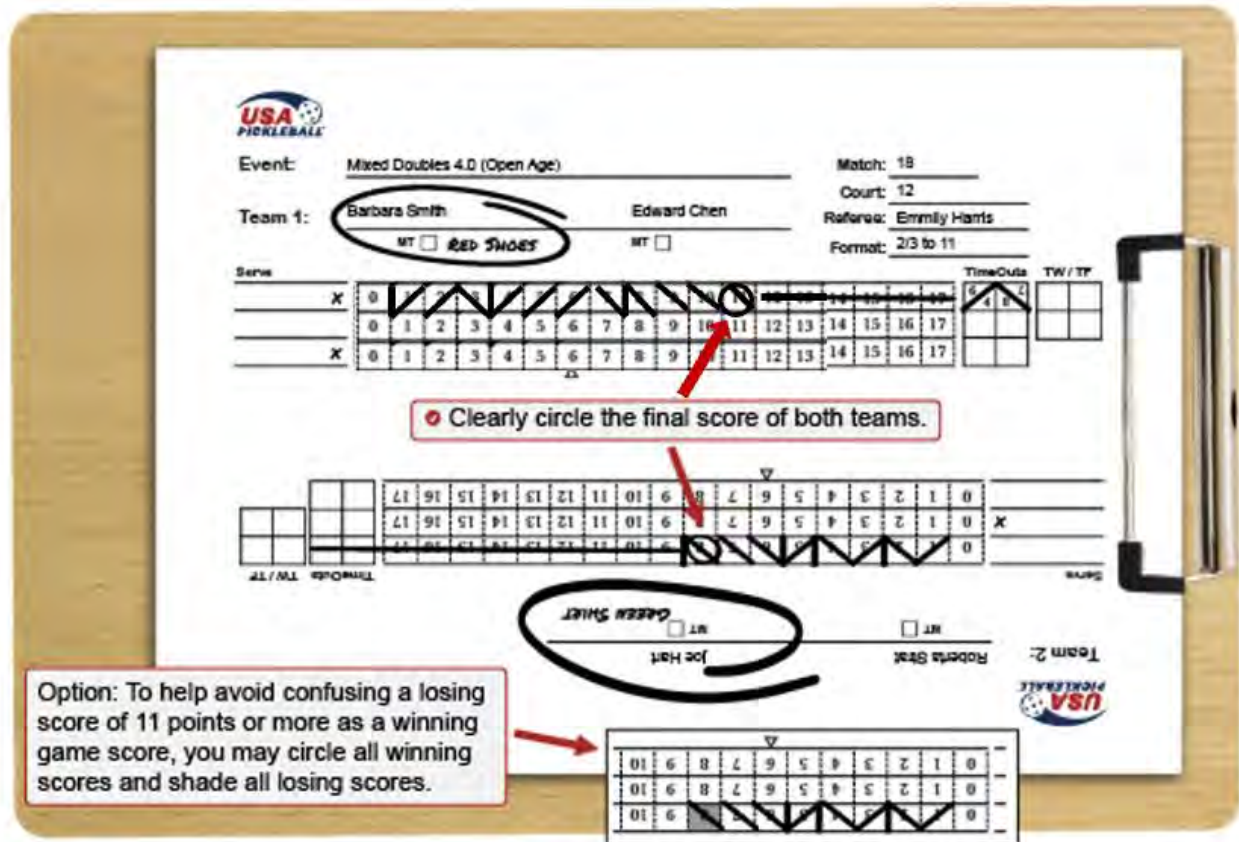
☀️ **OPTION:** *To avoid counting a losing score of 11 points or more as a winning game score, circle the winning scores and shade the losing scores.*

4.1.5. 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 4I-1).

**NOTE:** Do not draw lines through the “TW/TF” boxes as they apply to the entire match.

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]


Figure 4I-1: Game End Scoresheet



- 4.1.6. Remove the numbered server clip, then rotate the scoresheet (NOT the clipboard) 180 degrees and reattach the scoresheet to the clipboard.
- 4.1.7. If necessary, rotate the clipboard so the next game's serving team is right side up with the clamp pointing to their end of the court.
- 4.1.8. Confirm the starting servers (banded players) for the next game by observing who is wearing the starting server (banded player) identification or by asking the players. The players may also notify you of a change in starting server (banded player). If there is a change, erase the circle around the name of the previous starting server (banded player), confirm that the starting server identification is now being worn by the new server, and circle the name of the new starting server (banded player). Notify the opposing team of the starting server (banded player) change.
- 4.1.9. Place the numbered server clip, with the number 2 facing up, over the name of the player that is circled for the team that will serve first in the next game.
- 4.1.10. 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.
- 4.1.11. Give the 15-second warning before resuming play, even if more than 15 seconds remain before the time-out expires, then move to your officiating position

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and provide the ball to the serving team. Play may begin before the expiration of the time-out if the players are ready to resume early.

- 4.I.12. Check readiness of the officiating team (if applicable).
- 4.I.13. Correct any player that is out of position and ensure the correct server has the ball, correct the player(s) **before** calling “Time in.”
- 4.I.14. At or before two minutes, as appropriate, promptly announce the game number, end change script (if applicable – see Section 4.C.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, the correct server has the ball, and all players are ready to play:  
 “Game [number]. Time in. [Score].”

### J. End Change Time-Out [Rule 21.B] (See [Official Referee Casebook](#))

An end-change occurs to provide an opportunity for teams to play on each end of the court to minimize any advantage from court conditions (e.g. Sun, wind).

An end change occurs in single games and tie-breaker games:

End Change	
Winning Game Points	Change Ends
11	6
15	8
21	11
7	4

**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-game match, nor in the fifth game of a 3 out of 5 game-match.

- 4.J.1. When the first team scores the end-change point, announce the point, call “time-out,” inform the players to change ends, say the score, the duration of the time-out, and start your timer.

 “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.

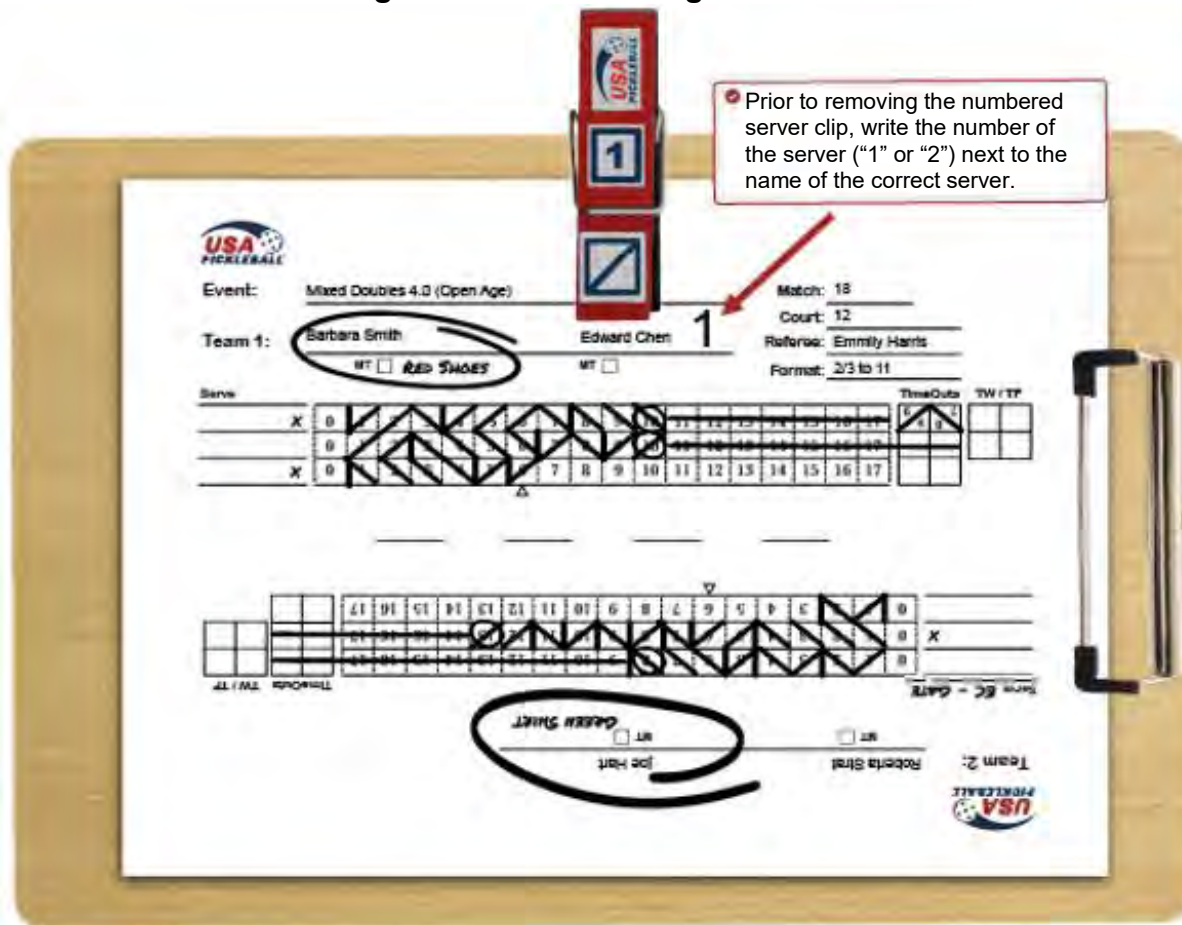
- 4.J.2. Start your timer.
- 4.J.3. Move to the center of the court.
- 4.J.4. **Prior to removing the numbered server clip to rotate the scoresheet, write the server number next to the name of the correct server** (Figure 4J-1). This notation enables

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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.)

**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. However, do not write in the area where the final scores will be recorded. 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.

**Figure 4J-1: End Change Time-Out**






4.J.5. Rotate the scoresheet and then the clipboard so that they will be properly oriented and reflect the new team court ends BEFORE the teams change ends. The names of the serving team will be right-side up at the top of the scoresheet and the clipboard clamp will be facing the end of the court that the serving team has or will move to. Place the server clip over the name of the correct server. The correct server will have the number you noted next to their name before you removed the server clip during the end change.

4.J.6. Check the location of the ball and retrieve it only if necessary to prevent its loss or damage.

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- 4.J.7. Give the 15-second warning before resuming play, even if more than 15 seconds remain before the time-out expires, then return to your officiating position.
- 4.J.8. Check readiness of the officiating team (if applicable).
- 4.J.9. Ensure that the correct server has the ball and that players are in their correct positions. **End changes are one of the most common areas where players will align themselves incorrectly.** Referees must pay close attention to end change positions. If players are not ready but are making an effort to move into position, allow a reasonable amount of time for the players to do so. Call “Time in” and announce the score.

### K. Completion of a Match

- 4.K.1. After the final point of the game, announce the point, end of the game and match, and the final game score.
  -  “Point, Game. Match. [Score]”
  -  “Side out. Point. Game. Match. [Score].” (Rally Scoring when receiver wins)
- 4.K.2. Thank the officiating team and release them (if applicable).
- 4.K.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 4K-1). If no points are scored for the game, circle/shade “0” for the score.
- 4.K.4. Ensure the clipboard is oriented with the names of the winning team positioned right side up.
- 4.K.5. Circle the names of the winning team and write “WINNERS” in large letters in the circle (Figure 4K-1).
- 4.K.6. Record the scores of all games played **in the order they occurred, with the scores of the winners first** (e.g., 11-3, 7-11, 11-2). If there are lines or 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.
- 4.K.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:** if the players choose not to initial after they confirm the result, initial the scoresheet with your initials and not the players.
- 4.K.8. Retrieve the game ball.
- 4.K.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.

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## Section 5: Key Situations and Rules Violations

### A. Serving and Receiving

#### 5.A.1. Player Position and Server Sequence Errors and Faults

- 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 advising that "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:

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, do not let a rally play out with a player in an incorrect position or an incorrect server.

- b. Any player may stop play physically or verbally to appeal an incorrect server, receiver, or player position.
  - i. If the player's appeal is **correct**, confirm the error and replay the rally with the players in the correct positions and server sequence.

## Section 5: Key Situations and Rules Violations

- ii. If there was no error in server, receiver, or position, call a fault against the team that stopped play and **incorrectly** claimed an incorrect player position or server sequence.
- c. 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.
- d. If the correct server and correct receiver are in their correct positions when the score is called, call a fault on a player who receives incorrectly, even if the rally is completed before the fault is called. Call the fault before the next serve is hit.

### 5.A.2. Stacking [5.B.4-6; 14.A.5]

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 (Figure 3K-1).

#### a. Serving Team Stacking:

- i. If a team's **score is even** at side out, the partner **with** the starting server (banded player) identification (banded player) 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 [banded player] identification). Ignore where the partner is positioned.
- ii. If a team's **score is odd** at side out, the partner **without** the starting server (banded player) identification (non-banded player) 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 (banded player) 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 [banded player] identification). Ignore where the partner is positioned. Focus only on the position of the correct second server (with or without the starting server [banded player] identification).

#### b. Receiving Team Stacking:

- i. If a team's **score is even** at side out, the player **with** the starting server (banded player) identification (banded player) must receive in the **right-hand court**. Ignore where the partner is positioned.
- ii. If a team's **score is odd** at side out, the player **without** the starting server (banded player) identification (non-banded player) must receive in the **right-hand court**. Ignore where the partner is positioned.
- iii. 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.

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### 5.A.3. Questions Regarding Correct Player Positions or Server Sequence [5.C; 6.E.1;17.D.1 - 2; 20.A – B]

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 directs a question or makes a statement to the referee regarding player positions or server sequence:

- a. If a question is asked **before the score is called:**
  - i. 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.
  - ii. 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:**
  - i. 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.
  - ii. Respond to questions and allow the players to adjust positions, if necessary.
  - iii. 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:**
  - i. Stop play.
  - ii. If any player is the incorrect server or receiver or out of server sequence, correct the situation and replay the rally [5.C.1- 5.C.1.c; 5.C.2; 20.C]

**NOTE:** Do not assess a fault for the play stoppage.

- iii. If no player is incorrect or out of sequence, call a fault against the player who asked the question and caused the play stoppage. [5.C.1- 5.C.1.c; 5.C.2; 20.C]
  - iv. If the players were correctly positioned but the incorrect receiver returned the serve, call a fault against the receiving team. [Rule 5.C.1.c]
- d. If a question is asked **after the rally is completed:**
    - i. If the players were correctly positioned but the wrong receiver returned the serve, call a fault against the receiving team. **Otherwise, the result of the rally stands.**
    - ii. Correct any player position or server sequence error before the next rally.

### 5.A.4. Questions and Challenges Regarding the Score [Rules 5.C; 6.B.1; 6.E.1; 20.A; 20.B]





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](#).)

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- a. Before you call the score:

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.

  - i. To avoid confusion, it is better to include additional words, such as “It’s 4 to 2,” or “You have 4, they have 2.”
  - ii. 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.”
  - iii. 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 called the score – **score called correctly:**
  - i. If a player questions or challenges the score **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.
  - ii. If a player questions or challenges the score **after the ball is hit to make the serve:**
    - Ignore a player’s question or comment unless it is indicative of stop play.
    - If a player stops play, call a fault against the player.
- c. After you called the score – **score called incorrectly:**
  - i. If a player questions or challenges the score **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 a correction:  
 “Correction.”
    - Acknowledge the correct score and announce that you will re-call the score, e.g.:  
 “You have [Team A’s Score]. They have [Team B’s Score]. I will recall the score.”
    - Allow the players to adjust positions, if necessary.
    - Re-call the score when all players are, or should be, ready to proceed.
  - ii. If a player questions or challenges the score **after the return of serve:**
    - Ignore a player’s question or comment unless it is indicative of stop play.
    - If a player stops play, call a fault against the player.
- d. If a player questions or challenges the score after the rally is completed:
  - i. The rally stands.
  - ii. Announce the result of the rally and correct the score for the next rally.

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

**TABLE 5A-1 – QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES REGARDING THE SCORE**

SITUATION	Before serve is hit	Before return of serve or ball becomes dead <sup>1</sup>	After return of serve	At completion of rally
Score called correctly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Stop play</li> <li>✓ Re-call score</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ignore if play continues</li> <li><b>OR</b></li> <li>✓ Fault if play stops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ignore if play continues</li> <li><b>OR</b></li> <li>✓ Fault if play stops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Announce result of rally</li> <li>✓ Confirm correct score</li> </ul>
Score called incorrectly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Stop play</li> <li>✓ Announce “Correction”</li> <li>✓ Re-call score</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Stop play</li> <li>✓ Announce “Correction”</li> <li>✓ Re-call score</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ignore if play continues</li> <li><b>OR</b></li> <li>✓ Fault if play stops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Announce result of rally</li> <li>✓ Confirm correct score</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Whichever occurs first

**5.A.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. [Rule 9.B.1]

If the server hits the ball **while you are calling the score**, call “Service fault” or “Fault.” [Rule 6.C.1]

**NOTE:** If you severely deviate from your normal cadence when calling the score, you 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.

**5.A.6. Service Court Change After the Score is Called** [6.D.2; 17.D.2.a; 20.D]


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 their 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.


**5.A.7. 10-Second Violation** [Rules 6.D; 6.D.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](#))

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 **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.

 **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.

### 5.A.8. Illegal Service Actions: Volley Serve

A volley serve must clearly meet the three service motion requirements. 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 whether a volley serve clearly meets the requirements, you may call for a re-serve without penalty to the player.


**Service motion – re-serve:** The questionable volley serve rules will warn a server that their service motion is not in compliance with the “clearly” standard. If you are not sure whether one or more components of a volley serve complied with the “clearly” requirements, call for a re-serve. Immediately stop play, identify the issue, and call for a re-serve:

 “Stop play. Service warning. Questionable whether [state the issue]. I will re-call the score.” (See also [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 9-23)

**Service motion faults:** Call a fault when the server hits the ball to make the serve:

- a. If the server’s paddle is not “clearly” moving in an upward arc.  
**NOTE:** It is not required that the paddle be swung straight back and straight forward. The server’s paddle can move sideways if it is also upward.
- b. If any part of the paddle head is “clearly” above the server’s wrist.
- c. If contact with the ball is “clearly” 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.

### 5.A.9. Improper Ball Release [Rule 7.B]

- a. Release with two hands, hand and paddle, or spin – fault: The server must release the ball from only one hand or from the paddle. [Rule 7.B.1] The server must also not impart manipulation or spin on the ball with any part of the body or the paddle as a result of the release. [Rule 7.B.2] Call a fault if the server uses both hands or a hand and the paddle to release the ball, or imparts spin on the ball during the release.
- b. Questionable release – re-serve: For the same requirements in 5.A.9.a, if you could not discern whether the ball was properly released from one hand or from the paddle, or whether it was spun, immediately stop play, identify the issue, and call for a re-serve:  
 “Stop play. Questionable ball release. 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:

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👤 “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.

### 5.A.10. Illegal Service Actions: Drop Serve [Rule 7D]

A drop serve does not have to comply with the three service motion components required for a volley serve.” However, the server must drop the ball from a natural height without adding force.

- a. Added force fault: Call a fault if the server propels the ball in any direction or manner, lets the ball bounce, and then 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.

👤 “Stop play. Questionable whether you added force on the release. I will re-call the score.”

### 5.A.11. Service Foot and Wheelchair Wheel Faults [Rule 7A]

- a. 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 serving area when the ball is hit to make the serve.
- b. 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.
- c. 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:
  - i. A server’s foot or a rear wheel is in contact with the court, including the baseline.
  - ii. 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.
- d. Both of the standing server’s feet are off the ground, or one wheel of a wheelchair is off the ground.

### 5.A.12. Time-Out Called After the Serve is Hit [Rule 21.A.2.a]

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

### 5.A.13. Serve Hits the Net [Rule 8.B]

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

### 5.A.14. Short Serves [Rule 7.E.2]

If the serve bounces in the receiver’s NVZ (including on the NVZ line), call a service fault against the serving team. Call Fault – Short Serve.

### 5.A.15. Change of Starting Server (Banded Player) [Rule 21.F.3]

The starting server (banded player) identification must always be worn by the starting server (banded player). It is the player’s responsibility to be fully compliant with the starting server (banded player) identification requirements. If a player refuses to wear

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the starting server (banded player) identification, impose a match forfeit against the player. [Rule 18.C]

A team may choose to change the starting server (banded player) between games. **The players are not required to notify you of a starting server (banded player) 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 (banded player), follow the best practice of confirming with each team between games whether they will keep the same starting server (banded player).

- a. If players notify you that they have changed the starting server (banded player), erase the circle around the name of the player who is no longer the starting server (banded player) and circle the name of the new starting server (banded player). Instruct the players to change the starting server (banded player) identification if they have not done so. Be sure to notify the other team of the starting server (banded player) change.
- b. If a starting server change is discovered at any time during a 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 5.C.1.a]

### B. Player Considerations

#### 5.B.1. 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).

### C. Player Issues

#### 5.C.1. Late Reporting [Rule 16.M; 18.F.1, 18.F.2; 22.F.2]

Impose a game or match forfeit, as appropriate, when a player fails to report to the match on time.

**NOTE:** Notify the Head Referee or Tournament Director if their approval is required before imposing the forfeit.

#### 5.C.2. Inappropriate Apparel [Rule 18.B]

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 16.K; 18.B.3; 18.B.4]

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- 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 18.B.3]
- 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 18.B.1]
- 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 18.B.2]

### 5.C.3. Ball Falling on Court [Rule 24.B; 24.B.1]

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 extra ball before play began.

### 5.C.4. Technical Foul Applied to Start of Match [Rule 22.A.2]

In the case of a technical foul being assessed between matches, remind 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.

## D. The Non-Volley Zone (NVZ) [Rules – Section 11]

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.

### 5.D.1. Watching for and Calling NVZ Faults

- a. Make all NVZ violation calls immediately and definitively, and if possible, 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 an 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.

### 5.D.2. Contacting the NVZ [Rule 11.A.1; 25.A.10]

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 ball is struck.

### 5.D.3. Momentum and the NVZ [Rule 11.A.2; 25.A.10.b]

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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 they either foot fault or until they regain 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** since the volley occurred first in the sequence of actions before the ball became dead. (See [Official Referee Casebook](#))

### 5.D.4. Faults Involving the Volleying Player's Partner [Rules 11.A.1-2; 25.A.10 25.A.10.b]

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.D.5. Stepping Into, Stepping Through, and Pushing Off from the NVZ [Rule 11.A.3; 25.A.10.c]

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](#))

## E. The Net

### 5.E.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 (including the crossbar or a support base) while the ball is live, call a fault [Rules 13.G; 13.G.1; 13.H; 13.H.1]
- b. If the ball hits the net post (including connected wheels, arms, legs, or the net cable or rope on top of the net post), while the ball is live, call a fault. [Rule Permanent Object; 10.C.4]

### 5.E.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. Before ball crosses: If the player hits the ball before it completely crosses the net to their side, call a fault. [Rule 13.F; 13.F.1; 13.G; 13.H; 13.I.1; 13.I.1.a-b;]
- b. Above the net or around the net post: If any part of the player's body or anything wearing or carrying 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 13]
- c. Below the net: If any part of 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

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live, call a fault. This applies to both players on a team, including the player who is not attempting to make a shot. [Rule 13]

- d. **After ball bounces:** 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 13.A]

### 5.E.3. Shots around the Net Post

- a. A player may return a ball around the net post below the height of the net. [Rule 13.C]
- b. If a player hits a ball that passes in the space between the net and the net post, call a fault. [Rule 13.A.1;13.B.2] (See [Official Referee Casebook](#))

### 5.E.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. [Rule 13.B; 13.B.1]
- b. Other than on a serve, if, after the ball goes over the net and before or after bouncing, one of the following occurs, replay the rally: [Rule 13.B; 13.B.1]
  - i. The ball hits any part of the crossbar, including the part of the bar that extends outside the sideline.
  - ii. The ball hits the center support base or any support base positioned within the sidelines.
  - iii. 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 13.B; 13.B.1]
- d. If the net system malfunctions during play, replay the rally. [Rule 13.J]

### 5.E.5. Abnormal Net Issues

If one of the following occurs, replay the rally:

- a. The ball or a player contacts a billowing net. [Rule 13.A.1; 13.B.2] (See also [Official Referee Casebook](#))
- b. The ball or a player contacts a portion of a net that drapes onto the court. [Rule 13.A.1; 13.B.2]

## F. Non-Standard Time-Outs

### 5.F.1. Medical Time-Out [Rule 21.C]

If a player suffers an injury or medical condition (including muscle cramping) during play, the player may request a medical time-out.

If the player rescinds the request after medical personnel have been summoned (or the Tournament Director in the absence of medical personnel) and before they arrive, a standard time-out will be charged instead of the medical time-out. When a standard

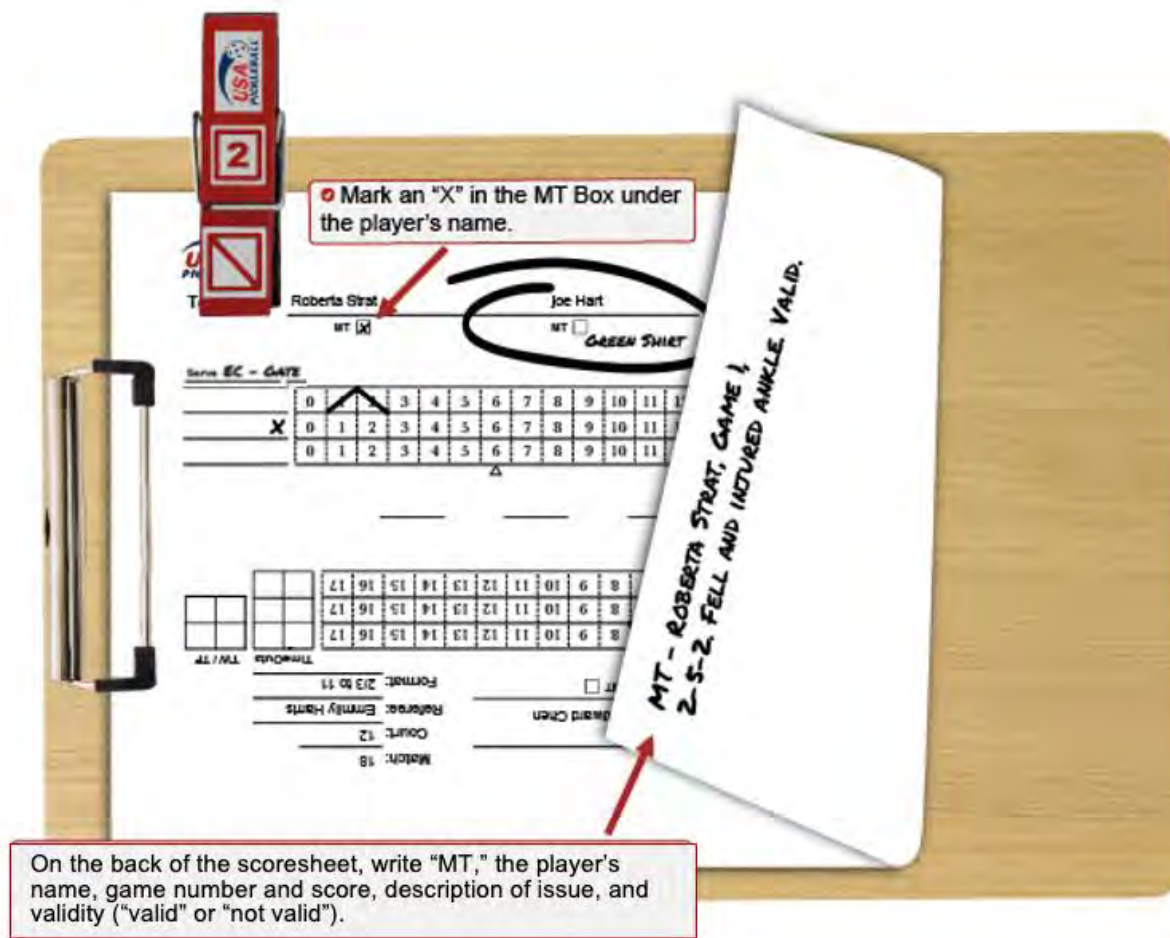
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time-out is not available, assess a technical foul against the player for delay of game. [Rule 21.C]

- 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 10.H]
- 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 or biological substance 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.
- 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 returns 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 (or the Tournament Director in the absence of 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 players 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 5F-1).

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

**Figure 5F-1: Documenting a Medical Time-Out**




- 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 and issue a technical warning to the player. If no standard time-out remains, issue a technical foul. 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-outs, retire the player. The player's doubles partner may continue the match on their own. Otherwise, call a match retirement in favor of the opponent. [21.C.9] Advise the Tournament Director of a retiring player so the USA Pickleball Report of Accident or Incident form can be appropriately completed and filed.

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### 5.F.2. Referee Time-Out [Rule 21.D]


A referee time-out may be used to address extenuating circumstances, such as active bleeding, a potential medical situation, or 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 10.H]

- 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 13.D.1]
  - i. Allow medical treatment as necessary and resume play if the player is able to continue.
  - ii. If the player is not able to resume play, call a match retirement in favor of the opponent unless the player's doubles partner continues the match on their own. 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. [Rule 21.C.9]
- d. If the situation involves active bleeding that can be controlled without medical assistance (e.g., minor cut, nosebleed). 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 21.D.3]
- f. Collect the ball if it 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.

### 5.F.3. Match Retirement [Rule 23]

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 that did not start.

- a. End a game in progress by awarding the match to the opponent. Make sure to record the result of the last rally.

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- 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 (Figures 5F-2 and 5F-3):
  - i. 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.
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. Circle the names of the team that is not retiring. Write "WINNERS" in the circle.
  - iv. 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 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.
  - v. Write "RETIREMENT" under the scores.

**NOTE:** One partner of a doubles team is allowed to retire, and the remaining partner may continue playing the match.

- Document the single player retirement on the scoresheet by writing "RETIRED" under the name of the retiring player.
- Note any additional details that may not be already recorded on the back of the scoresheet, including the game number and score when the player retired.
- In this situation, the prescribed time requirements can be reasonably shortened due to absence of the retired player from the court. The referee is not required to wait 10 seconds after calling the score to declare a service fault against the retired player when they would be the correct server.
- The opposing doubles team will not automatically get a point when the retired player would be the correct receiver. The opposing server will need to make a good serve to the correct service court.
- The retired player cannot return to play in the match from which they retired. The retired player must leave the playing area upon electing to discontinue playing the match and will only be able to coach their partner as a spectator during time-outs.

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

Figure 5F-2: Documenting a Team Retirement

For a 2 out of 3 game format, if the retiring team won the first game, winning scores for the opponent must be entered for the remaining games.

Circle the names of the team that is not retiring and write "WINNERS" inside the circle.

Note: Ensure there is a two-point margin over the retiring team's score.

To record the score for any required game that has not started, circle or shade the winning score and "0" for the retiring team.

Write "RETIREMENT" under the scores.

Figure 5F-3: Documenting a Player Retirement

When a player elects to retire and their partner continues to play, write "retired" under the medical time-out box of the retiring player.

On the back of the scoresheet, annotate any additional details not already recorded.

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5.F.4. Withdrawal from Event [Rule 23]

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 (Figure 5F-4). [Rule 23.B.4]

- Circle **0** or lightly shade 0 as the score for both teams.
- Circle the names of the team that is not withdrawing.
- Write "WINNERS" in the circle. 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.
- Write "WITHDRAWAL" under the scores.

Figure 5F-4: Documenting a Match Withdrawal

A team may request to withdraw from an event before you call the score to start the match. Summon the Head Referee or Tournament Director or ask the team to accompany you to the tournament desk to make the official request.

**Annotations:**

- Circle the names of the team that is not withdrawing and write "WINNERS" in the circle.
- Circle or lightly shade "0" on the scoresheet for both teams. Record the score of "0-0" in the score boxes.
- Write "Withdrawal" under the scores.

**Score Sheet Details:**

Team 2: Roberta Strat (MT ) vs Joe Hart (MT )

Game 1 Score: 0-0

Game 2 Score: 0-0


Scored by: JOE H

Final Status: WITHDRAWAL

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### 5.F.5. Equipment Time-Out [Rules 21.E; 21.E.1; 21.E.2]


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 equipment time-outs during a match or per player.
- 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 call the score.

## G. 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

5.G.1. To stop play, immediately hold up your hand and step forward to announce the situation (e.g.,  "Stop play," "Fault," "Ball on.")

5.G.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.

5.G.3. Use "resume play" after any extended break that is not a time-out such as a short discussion with players, retrieval of a ball from a distant court, and issuance of a penalty.

 "Resume play."

5.G.4. 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.

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

**TABLE 5G-1 – 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	6.A
Hinder call	At time of occurrence	9.C; 9.C.1; 9.C.2; 17.D.13;20.H; 20.H.2
Time-out request	Before server hits ball to serve	5.C; 6.E.1; 20.A; 20.B; 21.A.2.a
Score confirmation	Before server hits ball to serve	5.C; 6.E.1; 20.A; 20.B
Correct server or receiver request		
Correct player position request		
Score correction request	Before receiver hits return of serve	6.B.1
Incorrect server, receiver, or position appeal	Before rally is completed	5.C.1- 5.C.1.c; 5.C.2; 20.C
Line call appeal	Before server hits ball to start next rally	19.D; 19.D.1
Match-ending line call appeal	Before scoresheet is initialed or confirmed	19.D; 19.D.1
Damaged ball appeal	Before server hits ball to start next rally	10.G; 10.G.1; 10.G.2; 17.D.14; 20.F; 20.F.1

## H. Judgment Calls

### 5.H.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 can serve immediately. [Rule 6D] Things to remember:

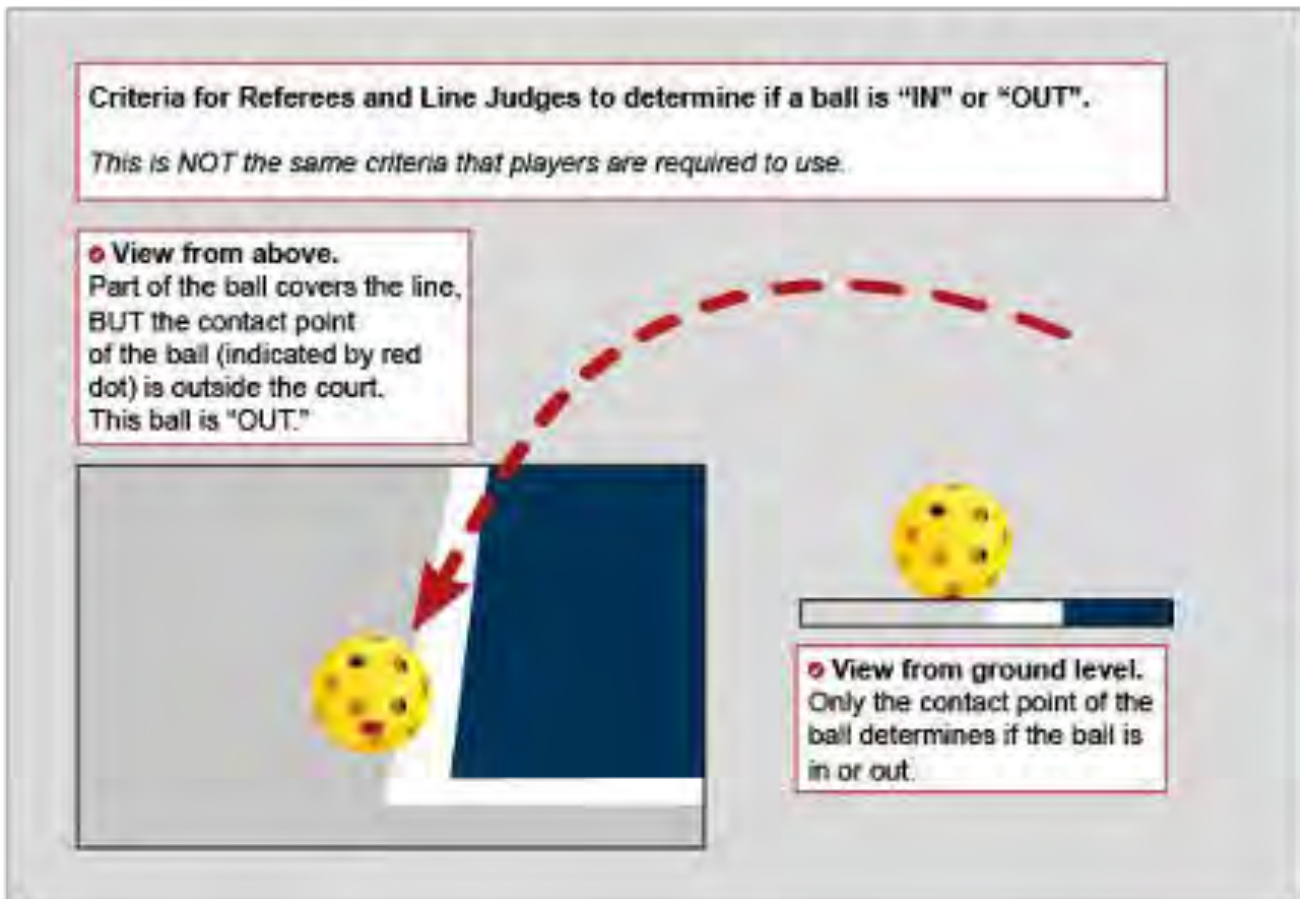
- a. Be generous in allowing time for the players to be ready, as long as they maintain a continuous pace. [Rule 10.K; 17.D.2]
- b. Allow players to quickly hydrate and towel off between rallies or when there is an interruption in play that does not require their attention. [Rule 10.K; 17.D.2]
- c. Allow sufficient time for 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:
  - i. Players carry on a conversation without moving toward position.
  - ii. Players take an excessive amount of time to towel off or take a drink.

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### 5.H.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 (Figure 5H-1). [Rule 8.B-D; 8.E]

**Figure 5H-1 Determining “In” and “Out” Balls**



- a. Make the following line calls without an appeal by a player:
  - i. Service foot faults.
  - ii. Short serves.
  - iii. NVZ infractions.
  - iv. Line calls when the view of the responsible line judge is blocked, but only if you clearly saw that the ball landed out. You must canvass the other line judges if you cannot make a call on a rally-ending shot.
- b. You must wait for an appeal before ruling on any other line calls. [Rule 17.D.11]
  - i. The team that is responsible for making the line call on a rally-ending shot may not call the ball out if it's close. They may instead appeal to the referee to rule on the "in" ball.. [Rule 8.D; 19.D.3; 17.D.11] (See [Official Referee Casebook](#))

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- ii. 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. [Rule 8.D; 19.D.3; 17.D.11]
- iii. Players are not required to make a rally-ending line call on a ball before appealing to the referee to make the call. [Rule 8.D; 19.D.3] However, players must immediately stop play to end the rally to make the appeal.  
**NOTE:** It is not a valid line call appeal if a player asks whether a ball they played was “in” or “out.” A played ball is considered “in” since the rally continued; it is not rally-ending. However, if asked after the end of the rally, you may inform the player how you saw the ball during the rally. Your response does not impact the result of the rally as played.
- iv. **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.”
- v. 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.
  - **If you saw where the ball landed**, announce: 🗣️ “The ball was in.” or 🗣️ “The ball was out.”
  - **If you did not see where the ball landed**, announce: 🗣️ “By rule, the call stands.”
- vi. Upon appeal when **no call is made by a player or a line judge**, you will make the call.
  - **If you saw where the ball landed**, announce: 🗣️ “The ball was in.” or 🗣️ “The ball was out.”
  - **If you did not see where the ball landed and no call was made by a player**, announce: 🗣️ “By rule, the ball is in.”
  - **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.
- vii. 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.
- viii. It is extremely difficult to make an accurate ruling on a ball that **landed between you and the sideline on your side of the court since you will not be able to see the actual point of contact. Your response to an appeal should be that you did not see the ball clearly.**
- ix. 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.
- x. If you overrule an “in” call (ruling) as out of bounds, the team that hit the ball in question loses the rally.

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- xi. If you overrule a player’s “out” call as “in,” the team that made the “out” call loses the rally. [Rules 8.F.1; 8.F.2; 19.C.1; 19.F.1]
- xii. 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 19.I.1]
- xiii. 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 5H-1 – LINE CALL APPEAL ACTIONS**

<b>Result of Player Line Call Appeal</b>	<b>Without Line Judges</b>	<b>With Line Judges</b>
Referee makes call (ruling)	Referee’s ruling stands	Referee’s ruling stands
Referee cannot make call (ruling)	Player’s call stands	Line Judge’s ruling stands
Referee overrules “in” call (ruling)	Referee’s ruling stands	Referee’s ruling stands
Referee overrules “out” call (ruling)	Fault against player	Replay*
Player overrides “in” call (ruling)	Opponent wins rally	Opponent wins rally
Player overrides “out” call (ruling)	Opponent wins rally	Replay*
No call by players, referee, or line judges	Ball is “in”	Replay

\*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 19.F; 19.F.219.I.1]

**5.H.3. Hinders** [Rule Hinder; 9.C; 9.C.1; 9.C.2; 17.D.13; 20.H; 20.H.1; 20.H.2]

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 the 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 the hinder is valid or not. 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.

**5.H.4. Broken, Cracked, Degraded or Soft Balls** [Rule 10.G; 10.G.1; 10.G.2; 17.D.14; 20.F; 20.F.1]

It is important to understand the difference between a broken/cracked ball and a degraded/soft ball. “Broken or 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.

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- a. During the match, 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 after the completion of a rally, 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. A player who crushes the ball without allowing it to be examined will be issued a verbal warning or a technical warning, depending on the circumstances.

### 5.H.5. Double or Triple Bounce, Ball Hitting a Player, Double Hits, and Carries [Rule 9.A.1; 10.B; 10.B.1; 10.C.3; 10.D; 10.D.1; 10.D.2; 25.A.9; 25.A.9.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 against that player if you determine that no violation occurred. [Rule 9.A.1]

### 5.H.6. Distractions [Rule 10.F; 20.I; 20.I.1]

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. [Definition – Distraction]

**NOTE:** In a non-officiated match, a fault cannot be called by an opponent for a distraction.

## I. Enforcement Issues with Players and Spectators

### 5.I.1. Faults

- a. Call faults immediately, definitively, and audibly. Do not elaborate excessively or argue with any of the players.
- b. Occasionally, multiple violations will occur at the same time. When simultaneous violations occur, call all violations. If the penalty for the violations is the same (e.g.,

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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.

### 5.1.2. Referee Errors

Some common referee 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 or receiver when asked by a player.

### 5.1.3. 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 8J]
- 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 19.D.2; 19.F; 10.G]
- d. Summon the Head Referee or Tournament Director, if necessary, to resolve the situation.

### 5.1.4. Coaching and Spectator Comments [Rule 20.G; 20.G.1; 22.B.7]

Coaching is instructing or directing a player or team so they can gain an advantage or avoid violating the rules (i.e., to win a rally or not commit a fault). Coaching by a partner is allowed at any time, unless the partner has retired from the match. However, coaching by non-players such as spectators and coaches 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.

Verbal Coaching: Examples of coaching comments by spectators:

*“Get to the line.”*

*“Down the middle.”*

*“Call time-out.”*

*“Take your time.”*

*“Hit to his backhand.”*

*“Play the soft game.”*

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

*“Great shot.”*

*“Keep it going.”*

*“Come on.”*

*“You can do this.”*

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- 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 18.D] 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.
- d. You may summon the Head Referee or Tournament Director to observe spectators to assist in identifying or deterring coaching violations.

### 5.1.5. 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 to both teams that apply equally 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 and presenting instructions to all players are not coaching.

### 5.1.6. 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.

### 5.1.7. 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 Head Referee or Tournament Director. While awaiting the arrival of the Head Referee or Tournament Director, answer any questions asked by the player, but do not automatically advise the player of the potential penalties unless asked.

If the player rescinds the request after the Head Referee or Tournament Director has been summoned, a standard time-out will be charged. When a standard time-out is not available, assess a technical foul against the player for delay of game. [Rule 16.O; 20.J]

## Section 5: Key Situations and Rules Violations

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. [Rule 20.J.2; 22.B.8; 20.J.2; 22.D.5]
- b. If your ruling is incorrect, reverse the ruling and, if appropriate, replay the rally.

### J. 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. Since the score and player positioning can be determined from the information already documented on the scoresheet. The annotation of the court end selected at the start of the match will allow you to determine on which ends of the court the teams resume play based on which game. If additional information is annotated, make sure not to overwrite any critical areas of the scoresheet. Use the back of the scoresheet to document anything you want communicated to Operations or the next referee that might receive this match. There is not guarantee that the same referee or the same court will be used when play is resumed.

- 5.J.1. Stop play and retrieve the game ball.
- 5.J.2. Explain the interruption to the players and confirm with them the score and who will be the server when the match is resumed.
- 5.J.3. Prior to removing the numbered server clip, **write the score near the name of the correct server and draw a box around the score** (Figure 5J-1). 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.

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]



## Section 6: Player Behavior and Remedies

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## Section 6: Player Behavior and Remedies

### A. Inappropriate Player Behavior

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 occasions 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, we are going to continue. Players, please get into position.” 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.

- 6.A.1. Most importantly, maintain a calm demeanor and open mind.
- 6.A.2. Call a referee time-out and summon all the players to center court, away from spectators, and calmly discuss the source of irritation.
- 6.A.3. Avoid arguments.
- 6.A.4. Take time to understand the complaint; it may be a simple misunderstanding.
- 6.A.5. If a player challenges your interpretation of a rule, summon the Head Referee or Tournament Director for clarification.

## Section 6: Player Behavior and Remedies

- 6.A.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.
- 6.A.7. If a player makes threats against you, a player, or a spectator, issue a technical foul and consider summoning the Head Referee or Tournament Director.
- 6.A.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. [Rule 16.P; 22.L; 22.L.5]

### 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 a 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 6B-1 – 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 a verbal warning,

## Section 6: Player Behavior and Remedies

technical warning, or technical foul 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.

### 6.B.1. Verbal Warnings [Rule 22; 22.A; 22.B]

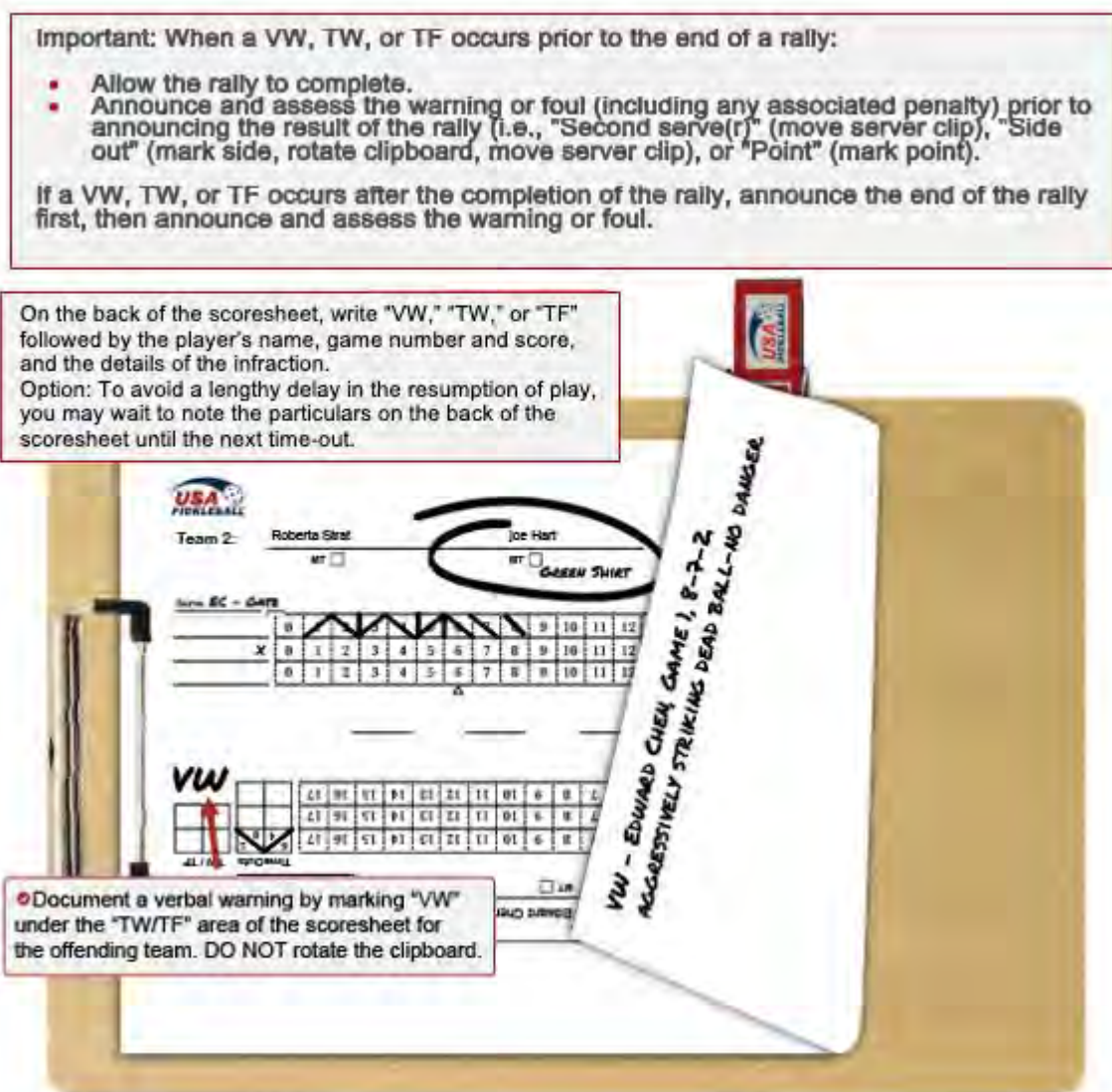
A verbal warning can be issued for any minor offense. Issue a verbal warning to prevent inappropriate behavior from escalating to a more problematic level that would call for a technical warning or technical foul. Any situation that could result in a technical warning may instead be addressed by the 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, then issue the verbal warning. You may quickly call all players together at the net if a brief explanation is necessary.  
**NOTE:** If the infraction occurs during a rally, announce the warning prior to announcing the outcome of the rally."
- 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 6B-1) Write the details of the verbal warning on the back of the scoresheet as is done for technical warnings and technical fouls (see Figures 6B-2 – 6B-5).
- 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. When you are ready to continue play, announce one of the following:
  - 📣 [Score]. (Used when there is no pause in game flow.)
  - 📣 "Resume play." (Used when there is a short stoppage of play.)
  - 📣 "15 seconds. Time in. [Score]." (Used when a referee time-out is called.)

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

**Figure 6B-1: Documenting a Verbal Warning**



**6.B.2. Technical Warnings and Technical Fouls [Rule 22.B.E]**

The assessment of a technical warning is the normal means used to address unsportsmanlike conduct of a relatively minor nature, including violations of rules for which no specific penalty is stated (e.g., not signaling a time-out request). 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 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.

- 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

Section 6: Player Behavior and Remedies

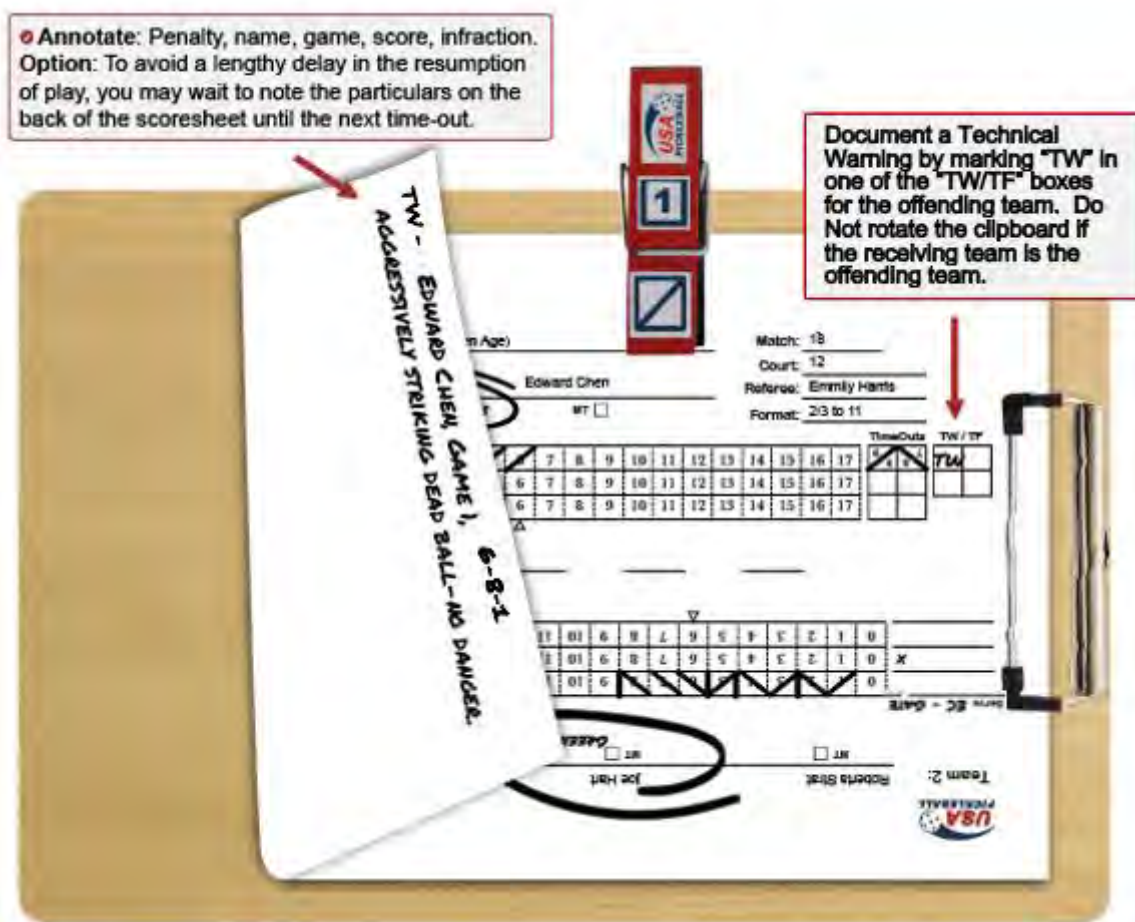
profanity”). You may quickly call all players together at the net if a brief explanation is necessary.

**NOTE:** If an infraction occurs during a rally, announce the penalty prior to announcing the outcome of the rally.

- 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 6B-2).

**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 6B-2: Documenting a Technical Warning**



Section 6: Player Behavior and Remedies

- c. To document the point adjustment for a technical foul **when the score of the offending team is one or more points:**
  - i. 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.
  - ii. Write "TF" in the box with the new (lower) score (Figure 6B-3).
  - iii. When the team scores its next point, mark the appropriate diagonal line in the scoreboard of the point that was erased (Figure 6B-3)

**Figure 6B-3: Documenting a Technical Foul (Scoresheet Front)**

**"TF" against Serving Team**

When the score of the serving team is 1 or more, erase the last point scored. Write "TF" in the preceding box with the new lower score. Mark any subsequent point in the box that has been erased. If no additional points are scored, place the side out mark after the new lower score.

Event: Mixed Doubles 4.0 (Open Age) Match: 18  
 Court: 12  
 Team 1: Barbara Smith Edward Chen Referee: Emmily Harris  
 WT  RED SHIRT WT  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																					
X																					

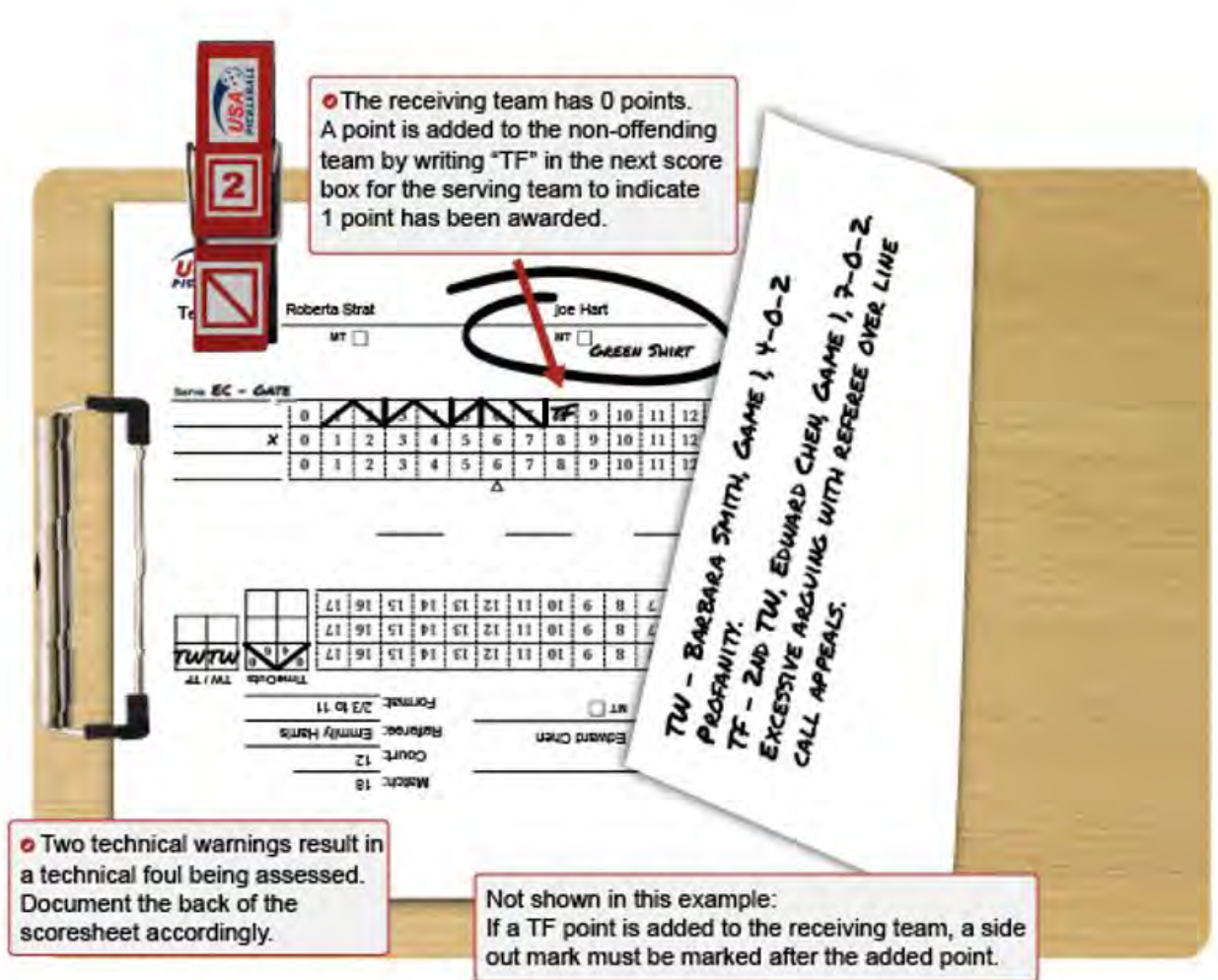
**"TF" against Receiving Team**

When the score of the receiving team is 1 or more, erase the last point scored and the last side-out mark. Write "TF" in the preceding box with the new lower score and place a side out mark after the new lower score.

Team 2: Joe Hart  
 WT  GREEN SHIRT

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

Figure 6B-4: Documenting a Technical Foul (Scoresheet Back)



- d. To document the point adjustment for a technical foul **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.
  - i. 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).
  - ii. 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. When you are ready to continue play, announce one of the following:
  - The score (if no pause in game flow)
  - “Resume play.” (if short stoppage)
  - “15 seconds. Time in. [Score].” (If referee time-out taken)

Figure 6B-5: Penalty Assessed Prior to Match

**A player may be assessed a verbal or technical warning or technical foul by the Tournament Director prior to the match.**

For this example, Team 2 (Joe Hart) was assessed a technical foul (TF) prior to the start of the match. Due to the TF, Team 1 will begin Game 1 with 1 point.

**USA PICKLEBALL**  
**2**  
**USA PICKLEBALL**

Mixed Doubles 4.0 (Open Age) Match: 18  
 Court: 12  
 Team 1: Barbara Smith Edward Chen Referee: Emmily Harris  
 MT  **RED SIDES** WT  Format: 2/3 to 11  
 TimeOuts TW/TF

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

**TF** is recorded in one of the penalty boxes for Team 2 and also in the point 1 score box of Team 1 for the first game. The starting server (banded player) for Team 1 (Barbara Smith) will begin Game 1 serving from the left (odd) side of the court with a score of 1-0-2.

**USA PICKLEBALL**  
**GREEN SHIRT**  
 MT  WT   
 Joe Hart  
 Roberta Strat  
 Team 2:  
**USA PICKLEBALL**

Not shown in this example:  
 If a TF had been assessed against the serving team (Team 1), a point would be awarded to the receiving team (Team 2) prior to the start of the match. The partner of the starting server (non-banded player) for Team 2 (Roberta Strat) would begin Game 1 as the receiver on the right (even) side of the court with a score of 0-1-2.

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

**Figure 6B-6: Sample Notation – Rescission of Head Referee Call or Medical Time-Out**



When a player rescinds a call for the head referee (or tournament Director) or rescinds a requested medical time-out, a penalty is assessed:

- If the team has a time-out remaining for the current game, charge a time-out.
- If the team has no time-outs remaining for the current game, assess a TF.

Annotate the TF on the back of the scoresheet.

**6.B.3. Game Forfeit [Rule 22.F-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 B1).

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. Ensure you understand the procedure(s) the Tournament Director/Head

## Section 6: Player Behavior and Remedies

Referee has implemented for the tournament. Many Tournament Directors use some discretion when forfeiting games or matches due to late arrival.

- a. If the assessment of a technical warning or a technical foul triggered the game forfeit, follow the procedure in 6.B.2 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 6B-7). If the game forfeit is due to tardiness, also write the time of the forfeit. 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:
  - i. Circle ☉ or lightly shade the winning score for the non-offending team and line through all unscored points preceding the winning score.
  - ii. Circle ☉ or lightly shade zero as the score and line through all scored points for the offending team.
  - iii. Line through all unscored points. If there will be a game to follow, line through all unused points and unused time-out boxes of the forfeited game.

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

Figure 6B-7: Documenting a Game Forfeit

**Game Forfeit**  
 Team 1 won game 1 but was assessed a "TW" during the game. During game 2, Team 1 was assessed a "TF." By rule, a "TW" and "TF" results in a game forfeit, so Team 2 wins game 2. Circle 11 for Team 2's score and circle 0 for Team 1's score in game 2. Line through points scored by Team 1 in game 2. Draw a line through points awarded to Team 2 up to the winning score of 11. For games with a winning score that is not 11, draw a line through points awarded to Team 2 up to the winning score.

TW in Game 1.  
TF in Game 2.

Write "GF" in the server box of the game that is a forfeit.

TW - BARBARA SMITH, GAME 1, 4-0-2  
 PROFANITY.  
 TF - EDWARD CHEN, GAME 2, 7-2-2  
 THREAT TO SPECTATOR.

6.B.4. Match Forfeit [Rule 22.I-K]

- a. A match forfeit is imposed against a team when:
  - i. A second technical foul is assessed after a previous technical foul (point adjustment) was assessed against the team during a match, or
  - ii. 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.

- b. A match forfeit is also imposed when a player:
  - i. Arrives 10 minutes late for the start of a single-game match,
  - ii. Arrives 15 minutes late for the start of a multiple-game match,

## Section 6: Player Behavior and Remedies

- iii. Refuses to wear the starting server (banded player) identification, or
- iv. Is discovered playing with a paddle that is not approved by USA Pickleball or has illegal alterations.
- c. If the assessment of a technical warning or a technical foul triggered the match forfeit, follow the procedure 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).
- d. 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 6B-8). If the match forfeit is due to tardiness, also write the time of the game and match forfeit.

**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.

- e. End a game in progress by awarding the match to the non-offending team.
- f. Finish annotating the scoresheet as follows (Figures 6B-8 and 6B-9):
  - i. Circle ☉ or lightly shade the winning score for the non-offending team.
  - ii. Circle ☉ or lightly shade zero as the score and line through all scored points for the offending team.
  - iii. Line through all unused points and unused time-out boxes for all games started.
  - iv. Circle the names of the non-offending team and write “WINNERS” in the circle.
  - v. 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 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.
  - vi. Write “FORFEIT” under the scores.

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

**Figure 6B-8: Documenting a Match Forfeit (With Earned Points)**

**Important: Scoring for a Match Forfeit.** When a match forfeit is imposed on a singles player or a doubles team, all their game scores are reported as zero (e.g., 11-0, 11-0) for a two-of-three games to 11 format. Make correct score adjustments that correspond to the match format. To avoid confusion, record scores correctly for the match format and revise the game scores as needed.

**Match Forfeit**

- In Game 1, Team 1 was assessed a TW.
- In Game 2, Team 1 was assessed a TF.
- In Game 3, Team 1 was assessed an additional TW.
- By rule, TW + TF + TW = match forfeit (MF).
- Therefore, Team 2 wins the match 11-0, 11-0 (match winning score for best of 3 games match format, no score is recorded for Game 3).
- Circle 11 for Team 2's score in Games 1 and 2.
- Circle 0 for Team 1's score in Games 1 and 2.
- Line through any points NOT scored by Team 1 and any points SCORED by Team 2.
- Line through any points scored in Game 3.

• Write "MF" in the serve box of the game that is in progress when the match is forfeited.

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

Figure 6B-9: Documenting a Match Forfeit – Player No-Show

**WINNERS**

Event: Mixed Doubles 4.0 (Open Age) Match: 18  
 Court: 12  
 Referee: Emmily Harris  
 Format: 2/3 to 11

Team 1: Barbara Smith Edward Chen  
 MT  MT

Team 2: Joe Hart Roberta Strat  
 MT  MT

Serve

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

11 - 0 11 - 0

**FORFEIT**

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	MF 9:58
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	GF 9:53

CALL 9:45 2ND CALL 9:48

Write "GF" followed by the game forfeit time in the game 1 serve box.  
 Write "MF" followed by the match forfeit time in the game 2 serve box.

6.B.5. Ejection and Expulsion [Rule 22.L-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 (Figure 6B-10).

[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

Figure 6B-10: Documenting an Ejection or Expulsion

**Ejection Due to Egregious Conduct.**  
 Follow the match forfeit procedure to end the match.  
 • Write "Forfeit – Ejection" under the scores.  
 • Write "Ejected" under the offending player's name.  
**Document the infraction on the back of the scoresheet.**

FORFEIT-EJECTION, ROBERTA STRAT, GAME 2,  
 2-4-2, PADDLE THROW - INJURED SPECTATOR,  
 AUTHORIZED BY TD.

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## Section 7: Dual Officiating Options

For some matches, the Tournament Director or Head Referee may choose to use the Dual Officiating option. One referee is designated as the Lead Referee and the other designated as the second (supporting) 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 officiating 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:

- 7.A.1. To increase the accuracy of calls involving the NVZ and players crossing the plane of the net.
- 7.A.2. To support the Lead Referee in officiating all aspects of the match including player behavior.
- 7.A.3. To possibly increase the accuracy of referee calls such as line rulings and distractions.

### 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 (Supporting) Referee Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of the Second (Supporting) 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 (Supporting) Referee will assist the Lead Referee in observing all other

## Section 7: Dual Officiating Options

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 maintain control of the ball between games and keep track of the ball during other time-outs.

### 7.C.1. Calls

- a. The Second (Supporting) Referee will **immediately** call any of the following situations when observed:
  - NVZ faults
  - Plane of the net faults
  - Service foot faults
  - Short serves
  - Player safety issues including Hinders
  - Double bounces (or triple bounces for wheelchair players and eligible adaptive standing players)
  - Player hit by the ball
  - Ball carries
  - Player touching the net or net support system
  - Two bounce rule violations
- b. The Second (Supporting) Referee will signal other violations, in particular any of the following, by a raised hand after the rally:
  - Out of position players
  - Incorrect server or receiver
  - Paddle thrown by player
  - Ball deliberately damaged by player
  - Unsportsmanlike behavior
  - Service motion violations
  - Server applying spin to the ball
  - Coaching by a spectator other than during time-outs

### 7.C.2. Positioning

The Second Referee will stand on the opposite side of the net from the Lead Referee. The Second (Supporting) 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.

### 7.C.3. Scorekeeping

The Second (Supporting) 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

## Section 7: Dual Officiating Options

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

#### 7.F.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 may 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.

#### 7.F.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 as a supporting referee and advise that the players must direct all questions and appeals to the Lead Referee. The Lead Referee does not need to go into great detail explaining all the roles of the Second Referee to the players. If they have questions they ask at the end of the briefing. The Second Referee will inspect the players' paddles.

## Section 8: Matches with Line Judges

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## 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 16.I; 19.A, 19.C.1]

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

- 8.A.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.
- 8.A.2. The referee will brief the line judges prior to the start of the match. (See Section 8E)
- 8.A.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.
- 8.A.4. The referee will not allow players or spectators to confront or otherwise interact with line judges.

## Section 8: Matches with Line Judges

- 8.A.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.
- 8.A.6. The referee has the authority and responsibility to replace any line judge who does not perform to standards.
- 8.A.7. If all players agree and request replacement of a line judge, the referee will summon the Tournament Director or Head Referee in order to confirm the decision and to make arrangements for a replacement. [Rule 16.J; 20K, 20.K.1; 20.K.2]

### **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:

- 8.B.1. Make all calls impartially, fairly, and consistently.
- 8.B.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. Devote full attention to the match.
- 8.B.3. Not converse with others during the match.
- 8.B.4. Ensure that their personal electronic devices are in silent mode or turned off.
- 8.B.5. Not wear earbuds or carry any device that could distract them or give the appearance of distracting them from the match.
- 8.B.6. Excuse themselves from line judging the match of a relative, close friend, or Doubles Partner.

### **C. Line Judge Team Options**

- 8.C.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).

### **D. Line Judge Positioning**

- 8.D.1. The referee will position line judges according to circumstances (e.g., position of sun, location of spectators, actions on adjacent courts).

## Section 8: Matches with Line Judges

- 8.D.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.
- 8.D.3. If possible and it can be done safely, line judges should look over a fence rather than through it.
- 8.D.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.

- 8.E.1. The referee and line judges will introduce themselves.
- 8.E.2. The referee will assign each line judge to a baseline or a sideline (during the briefing or at the court).
- 8.E.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.
- 8.E.4. The referee will review the line-calling procedures to be used (see Section 8G):
  - 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** (See also 8.E Line Calls)

The criteria for line judges and referees when making line calls are different from those assigned to players. A ball contacting the playing surface completely outside of the court is out of bounds (Figure 8F-1 and Figure 8F-2). Players are bound by Rule 8.E 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.

## Section 8: Matches with Line Judges

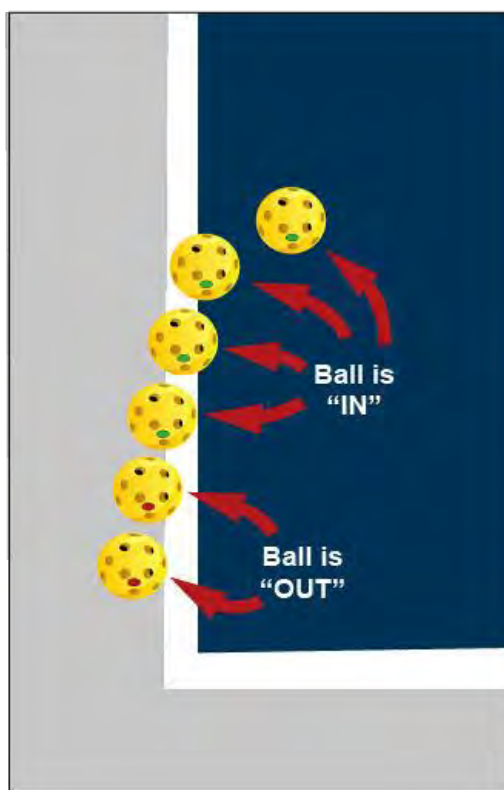
Consistency in judging in and out balls by the entire officiating team is imperative. Line judges must make “out” calls confidently, without hesitation, and as accurately as possible, but accuracy on close shots can be difficult because they happen quickly. During rallies, line judges should follow the 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.

8.F.1. A pickleball does not typically compress like a tennis ball. Usually only a very small area at the bottom of the ball—the mid-point—contacts the ground.

8.F.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.

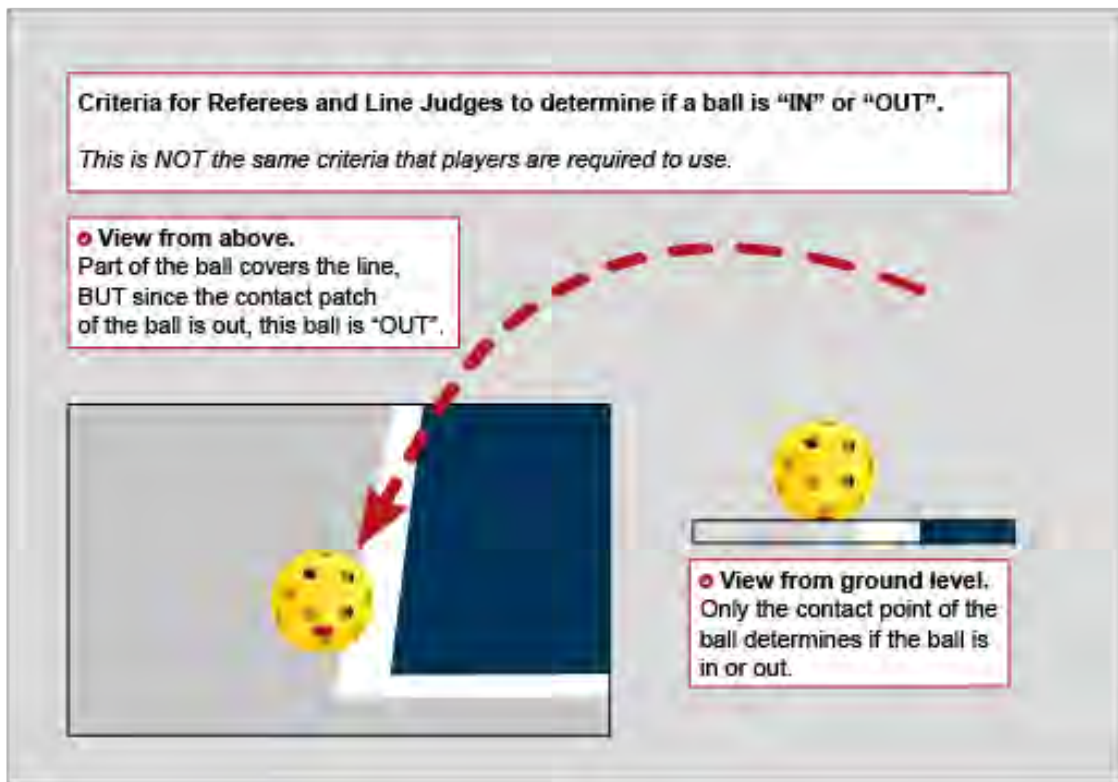
8.F.3. A close out ball can overhang the edge of the line. The ball is out of bounds if its point of contact with the playing surface is outside the edge of the line.

**Figure 8F-1: Judging “In” and “Out” Balls**



[Remainder of page intentionally blank]

Figure 8F-2: “Out” Ball Illustration



## 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.

### 8.G.1. “Out” Call and Signal [Rule 19.C.1]

- 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 8G-1). 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.



Figure 8G-1: “Out” Call

### 8.G.2. “In” Signal

- a. Line judges will signal a ball as in (**with no verbal call**) only at the end of a rally when the ball lands in the court close to the line. The “in” signal will be made immediately.
- b. The signal for an “in” ball is both arms outstretched forward with the palms facing down (Figure 8G-2). Line judges should hold this signal for a few seconds to give the referee a chance to look for it.

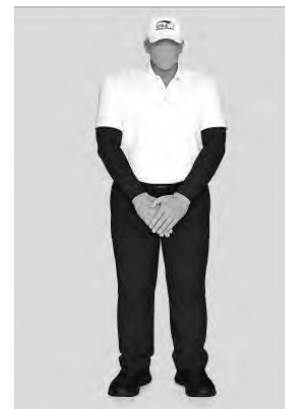


Figure 8G-2: “In” Signal

### 8.G.3. View Blocked [Rule 19.H]

- 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 (Figure 8G-3). 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 “out” call if they clearly saw the ball land outside the court.
- 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.



Figure 8G-3: View Blocked

### 8.G.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.

#### 8.G.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/adaptive players) are signaled 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 may ask (appeal to) the referee to rule on a line call made by a line judge. [Rule 19.F] 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 19.F.2] A player can also override a line judge call to favor the opponent. [Rule 19.I] 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 15.B.1; 21.G]

In the event that the challenging team wins a double-elimination gold medal (championship) match, a tie-breaker match will take place. The officiating team (line judges) must remain on court in order to officiate the tie-breaker match. At the end of the initial match, the referee will promptly instruct the line judges to remain for the tie-breaker match.

8.I.1. The referee will allow a maximum of 10 minutes between these matches.

8.I.2. The referee will conduct a new selection of serve, receive, end, or defer for the tie-breaker match.

## Section 9: Summary

The best referees have their own style of officiating. Individual officiating traits are allowable if 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:

- Knows the rules.
- Is relaxed but confident.
- Maintains a ready, upright position aligned with the net post.
- Speaks clearly and audibly, using an even tone and steady pace.
- Checks the players for readiness and correct player/positions before calling the score.
- Tracks the ball during play except when players are near the NVZ line and then keeps their head still (uses only one's eyes) to track and concentrate on potential NVZ faults.
- Makes line calls only when appealed by a player (unless the assigned line judge is blocked) if you have clearly seen the ball land in or out of bounds.
- Demonstrates “court awareness” by being aware of everything on and around the court.
- Avoids looking at the scoresheet during rallies.
- Marks every point and side out, moves the numbered clip promptly and efficiently, and maintains eyes and attention on the court and the players.
- 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.
- Continues to study the rules and practice the procedures in this Handbook, takes the online tests, and learns from any errors.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: USA Pickleball Referee Training and Certification Program

Appendix B: Penalties for Unsportsmanlike Conduct and Inappropriate Behavior

Appendix C: Standardized Calls and Announcements (Scripts)

Appendix D: Standard Pre-Match Briefing

Appendix E: Visual Library of Officiating Tools

Appendix F: Scoresheet with Line Between Team Names

## **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 team of competent referees to officiate competitive sanctioned and non-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 Golden Ticket Tournaments. Certified USA Pickleball Referees are the first choice to referee medal and professional matches at tournaments. In addition, certified referees are most times financially compensated at a higher rate than non-certified referees.

To qualify for USA Pickleball Referee Certification, candidates must complete rigorous training, accumulate practical experience, and demonstrate a strong commitment to the officiating process. Proficiency in refereeing matches across all player skill levels and age groups is essential. The certification journey begins with the status of verified trainee. Prospective referees are required to attend a USA Pickleball referee training class and refine their skills by officiating hundreds of matches, both in practice and tournament settings.

As referees progress, their skills are assessed for Level 1 and Level 2 credentials. Attaining Level 2 status enables referees to receive mentorship from experienced certified referees to help prepare them for the certification process. Upon acceptance into the certified referee program and payment of a nominal fee, applicants undergo a thorough evaluation. This evaluation requires candidates to demonstrate their mastery of best practices as outlined in the Handbook and their understanding of the rules, both during on-court activities and in an oral exam setting. After passing evaluation, you will receive your certified referee credential to wear proudly. Certification renewal is required every three years.

A USA Pickleball Credentialed referee is a highly trained and experienced official that can wear their credentials and uniforms proudly. Not everyone gets to the credentialed level as this takes self-motivation and taking advantage of every opportunity to learn. USA Pickleball is proud of the over 800 credentialed referees that make up USA Pickleball Officiating.

For more information on the Referee Training and Certification Program process, go to the USA Pickleball [Referees and 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 or Expulsion (TD Discretion)
<b>OBJECTIONABLE LANGUAGE</b>	Objectionable language directed at another person (VW or TW) [Rule 22.B.1]	Extreme objectionable language [Rule 22.D.3]			Using ethnic, religious, racial, sexist, or homophobic slurs [Rule 22.L.1]
<b>PROFANITY</b>	Profanity (audible or visual) (VW or TW) [Rule 22.B.2]	Extreme profanity (audible or visual) [Rule 22.D.3]			
<b>BALL</b>	Damaging or aggressively hitting dead ball – no danger (VW or TW) [Rule 22.B.4]	Aggressively or recklessly striking/throwing dead ball – no person hit/damage caused [Rule 22.D.2]		Aggressively or recklessly striking/throwing ball – person hit/damage caused [Rule 22.I.1]	Damage or injury through ball abuse [Rule 22.L.2]
<b>PADDLE<sup>1</sup></b>	Tossing paddle in a minor unsportsmanlike manner <sup>2</sup> (VW or TW) [Rule 22.B.10]	Aggressively or recklessly throwing paddle - no person hit/damage caused [Rule 22.D.1]		Aggressively or recklessly throwing paddle – person hit/damage caused [Rule 22.I.1]  Use of non-compliant paddle [Rule 18.A.2]	Damage or injury through paddle abuse [Rule 22.L.2]
<b>AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR</b>	Arguing aggressively with an official, player, spectator (VW or TW) [Rule 22.B.3]	Threat or challenge to any person [Rule 22.D.4]		Deliberate, aggressive physical contact with another person [Rule 22.I.6]	Intentionally spitting or coughing on any person [Rule 22.L.3]

<sup>1</sup> (See also [Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 6-23)

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

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 or Expulsion (TD Discretion)
<b>CHALLENGES/ REFUSAL</b>	Loss of challenge to referee ruling (TW only + loss of STO) [Rules 20.J.2, 22.B.8]	Loss of challenge to referee ruling (no STO available) [Rules 20.J.2 (22.D.5)]  Rescission of challenge to referee ruling (no STO available) [Rule 20.J.1]		Refusal to wear starting server (banded player) ID [Rules 18.C.1, (22.I.2)]  Refusal to change improper apparel [Rule 18.B.4]	
<b>INVALID MEDICAL TIME-OUT</b>	Invalid medical TO (TW only + loss of STO) [Rules 21.C.10 (22.B.9)]	Invalid medical TO (no STO available) [Rules 21.C.10, 22.D.6]  Rescission of medical TO (no STO available) [Rule 21.C.4]			
<b>FAILURE TO REPORT ON TIME</b>				10 minutes after 1-game match called [Rules 18.F.1, 22.I.3]  15 minutes after 2/3-game match called [Rules 16.M, 18.F.1, 18.F.2, 22.F, 22.I.4]	
<b>OTHER</b>	Delay of game (VW or TW) [Rules 22.B.5, 22.B.6]  Excessive line call appeals [Rule 22.B.6]  Illegal coaching (VW or TW) [Rules 20.G, 20.G.1, 22.B.7]  Other minor unsportsmanlike conduct (VW or TW) [Rule 22.B.10]	Other extreme unsportsmanlike conduct [Rule 22.D.8]		Failure to comply with venue rules, improper conduct, abuse of hospitality, other rules & procedures (TD Discretion) [Rules 22.B.10, 22.J.1, 22.J.3, 22.J.5]	Flagrant or injurious behavior impacting tournament [Rules 22.L, 22.L.5]  Not exhibiting best effort [Rule 22.L.4]  Other acts of physical violence [Rule 22.L.2]

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 or Expulsion (TD Discretion)
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.C.2	"15 seconds. ... Game 1. Time in. 0-0-2."
Start of Single-Game Match or Game with End Change	4.C.2	"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.C.2	"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, zero. Servers, one."
Resuming Play after Time-Out	4.H.6 - 9	"15 Seconds. Time in. [Score]." Example: "15 seconds. ... Time in. 9-8-1."
Medical Time-Out	5.F.1.c	"Medical time-out requested by [name]. [Score]." Example: "Medical time-out requested by Jane Doe. 7-4-2."
End of Game with Game to Follow	4.I.1	"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.J.7-9	"15 seconds. Time in. [Score]." Example: "15 seconds. Time in. 6-4-2."

Appendix C: Standardized Calls and Announcements (Scripts)

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Script</b>
Questionable Volley Service Motion	5.A.8.b	<p>“Stop play. Service warning. [state the issue]. I will re-call the score.”</p> <p>Examples:                      “Stop play. Service warning. Questionable whether the ball was clearly hit at or below your waist. I will re-call the score.”</p> <p>“Stop play. Service warning. Questionable whether the paddle head was clearly at or below your wrist. I will re-call the score.”</p> <p>“Stop play. Service warning. Questionable whether your swing was clearly upward. I will re-call the score.”</p>
Questionable Ball Release, Volley Serve or Drop Serve	5.A.9.b	“Stop play. Questionable ball release. I will re-call the score.”
Ball Release Not Visible, Volley Serve or Drop Serve	5.A.9.c	“Stop play. Ball release not visible. I will re-call the score.”
Questionable Drop Serve	5.A.10.b	“Stop play. Questionable whether you added force on the release. 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	<p>“15 seconds. ... Time in. [Score].”</p> <p>“15 seconds. ... [Score].”</p>
Line Call Appeal, Can Make Definitive Call	5.G.2.b.5	<p>“The ball was in.”</p> <p>“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)</p> <p>“By rule, the ball is in.” (if player made no call)</p>

Appendix C: Standardized Calls and Announcements (Scripts)

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Script</b>
Rally Scoring	3.M.2.a 3.M.2.b	<p>Score: “[Server's score] - [Receiver's score].” Example: "4-2.</p> <p>Server wins rally: “Point.”</p> <p>Receiver wins rally: “Side out. Point. [Receiver’s Score].” Example: “Side out. Point. 7”</p> <p>Receiver wins game point: “Side out. Point. Game. [Score].” Example: “Side out. Point. Game. 15-9”</p> <p>Receiver wins match point: “Side out. Point. Game. Match. [Score].” Example: “Side out. Point. Game. Match. 15-11”</p>

## Appendix D: Standard Pre-Match Briefing

Sequence: Intros and starting server ID, match format, paddle inspection, line calls and appeals, abnormalities, coin toss, questions, warm-up

**NOTE:** The following setup is for a doubles match. Make appropriate adjustments for a singles match.

- **[Introduce yourself.]**

"Hi, I'm (Referee Name)."

- **[If there is a second referee, introduce them.]**

"This is (Second Referee Name). S/he is the second referee and will assist me on this match. All questions and appeals are to be directed to me."

- **[Identify each player by name (shown on scoresheet). Identify the starting servers, circle their names on the scoresheet, and distribute the starting server identification (if necessary).]**

"(Player 1A Name) and (Player 1B Name). Who will be your starting server? (Player 2A Name) and (Player 2B Name). Who will be your starting server? Please make sure your starting server identification is visible to me and your opponent."

- **[State the match format and end change information.]**

"This match is best two out of three games to 11 points, win by two. You will change ends after each game. If there is a third game, you will also change ends when the first team scores 6 points."

- **[Ask each player if their paddle(s) are on the USA Pickleball approved paddle list. Check both surfaces of each paddle for damage and unauthorized alterations in addition to brand name, model name or number, and USA Pickleball Approved seal.]**

"I need to check your paddles. Have you confirmed that your paddle is on the USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List?"

- **[If the first match of the day for any player, include items 1-6.]**

1. **[If any player has not previously been officiated, add instruction about the score call hand cue and when to serve.]**

"Is this anyone's first time having a referee? One of my responsibilities is to call the score. I will extend my hand towards the court when I am calling the score. My hand will drop to my side when the score is complete to indicate you can serve."

2. **[State fault and line calling responsibilities.]**

"I am also responsible for calling service faults, including short serves, and non-volley zone faults."

3. **[If there are no line judges, say this.]**

"You are responsible for making all other line calls on your end of the court, including the center line on the serve."

4. **[If there are line judges, say this instead of 3.]**

“There are line judges for this match. They will make all the line calls except you are responsible for making “out” calls for the center line on the serve.”

5. **[Instruct players to make prompt, loud, and clear calls.]**

“Please make your “out” calls promptly, loudly, and clearly, and hold your hand signals so I can see them.”

6. **[Inform players of their right to appeal.]**

“If you disagree with any line call, you may appeal the call to me. If I am unable to make a ruling, the call on the court will stand.”

- **[For subsequent matches of the day or if pre-match instructions have been provided to the players by the Tournament Director in advance of the tournament, remind players to make prompt, loud, and clear “out” calls.]**

“I remind you to make your “out” calls promptly, loudly, and clearly, and hold your hand signals so I can see them.”

- **[If applicable, point out any non-standard playing surface conditions, court abnormalities, and approved rule modifications.]**

Example: “There is a crack on this court. If the ball hits the crack, the ball remains in play.”

- **[If a penalty has been assessed against one of the teams in advance of the match, advise the players.]**

Example for penalty against Team 1: “(Player 1A and 1B Names) are starting the match with a (verbal warning, technical warning, or technical foul).”

- **[If a technical foul has been assessed, add:]**

“This means (Player 2A and 2B Names) will start the match with 1 point. (Starting Server/banded player Name) will begin serving from the left side of the court. OR (Starting Server’s partner/non-banded player Name) will begin receiving from the right side of the court.”

- **[Ask one player to choose a 1 or a 2 (written on the back of the scoresheet) or make the call for a coin toss. After the choice, reveal the number or up-side of the coin to all players.]**

“Choose 1 or 2.” OR “Choose heads or tails.”

- **[Ask the winner to choose if they would like to serve, receive, choose end, or defer the first choice.]**

“Would you like to serve, receive, choose an end of the court to start on, or defer the first choice to your opponent?”

- A. **[If serve or receive is chosen first, mark the first-serving team for each game on the scoresheet. Then ask the remaining team to *pick an end*. Write the descriptor for the end chosen on the scoresheet.]**

“What end of the court do you want to start on?”

Appendix D: Standard Pre-Match Briefing

**B. [If *end* is chosen first, write the descriptor for the end chosen on the scoresheet. Then ask the remaining team to choose *serve* or *receive*. Mark the first-serving team for each game on the scoresheet.]**

“Do you want to serve or receive?”

- **[Ask if there are any questions.]**

“Are there any questions about the rules or instructions?”

- **[Announce the number of minutes remaining to complete their warm-up.]**

“You have (number) minutes for warm-up. I will let you know when you have 1 minute remaining.”

- **[Announce when 1 minute remains.]**

“One minute remaining for warm-up.”

- **[Collect balls.]**

“Warm-up is over. Balls in.”

## Appendix E: Visual Library of Officiating Tools



Time Keeping Device



Server Bands



1.3 mm Mechanical Pencils are a popular option.



Low Profile Clipboard



## Appendix F: Scoresheet with Line Between Team Names

**💡 OPTION:** Consider drawing a line between team member's names to make clip placement quick.

### Diagonal Line Between Team Member Names

Server clip placement area for Barbara Smith

Server clip placement area for Edward Chen

USA PICKLEBALL

Event: Mixed Doubles 4.0 (Open Age) Match: 18

Court: 12

Barbara Smith Edward Chen Referee: Emmily Harris

NT  MT  Format: 2/3 to 11

Serve: TimeOuts VW / TW / TP

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				
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17				

Some scoresheets do not provide sufficient spacing between the playernames to allow easy placement of the server clip. Option: A line may be drawn between the player names to the middle of the scoresheet edge to designate the areas for clip placement.

Roberta Spaul Joe Hart

USA PICKLEBALL

NT  MT

## **Acknowledgments**

USA Pickleball wants to thank the team of individuals that spent many hours working on this USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook. Their efforts have created a document by which Pickleball Officiating can be taught to the highest standards globally. Please remember that this manual is subject to change as it is a working document. Edits and changes will occur as more referees review and practice these Best Practices.

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