

2021

USA Pickleball

Officiating Handbook

for Referees and Line Judges



2021 USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook

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2021 USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook



Introduction and Purpose

The *2021 USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook* is intended as a guide for referees and line judges at all levels of officiated pickleball events and addresses both singles and doubles play. The procedures, techniques, and tips in this handbook represent USA Pickleball officiating best practices, based on the [2021 USA Pickleball/IFP Official Rulebook](#).

Alternate Rulebook: Because a [2021 Alternate Rulebook](#) has been introduced this year, this handbook also makes use of some of that rulebook's language and includes references to its rule numbers in addition to the official rule numbers (e.g., [Rules 13.C | Alt. 15.D].) The *Alternate Rulebook* **does not change the meaning or intent of any rules**. The rules are the same; they are just reorganized and edited in accordance with rule-writing norms and with streamlined language that eliminates duplication and commentary.

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

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

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

This handbook also serves as the official resource for use during USA Pickleball referee and line judge training courses. USA Pickleball certified referees and line judges, as well as Level 1 and Level 2 non-certified referees and registered line judges, are required to use the best practices set forth in this handbook. Items that appear *in italics* are optional procedures. All other items are required best practice.

NOTE: Light blue shading used in this handbook indicates changes for 2021, or substantive clarification of best practice procedures or rules.

How to Use This Handbook

Referees should study this entire handbook. Section 6 of this handbook is the study guide for line judges.

In conjunction with studying this handbook, referees and line judges should review the *2021 USA Pickleball/IFP Official Rulebook* and the *2021 Alternate Rulebook*. Work to understand not only the language, but also how the rules should be applied when refereeing or line judging a match. Also,

take the [Referee Test](#), the [Line Judge Test](#), 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.

Training

You must be certified as a line judge to be eligible to become a credentialed referee. Detailed program requirements can be found on the [Officiating](#) page on the USA Pickleball website.

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

Practice

Begin officiating in a non-tournament environment to build confidence and work your way up to more competitive matches. If there is no provision for scheduled practice at your home courts, consider asking recreational players if they mind having you referee or line judge one or two of their games. In addition, ask a local officiating trainer, if available, to observe and critique your performance. Singles matches are, in general, easier to referee since it is not necessary to keep track of first and second servers, making these matches a good choice for initial referee practice.

For referees, blank USA Pickleball/PickleballTournaments.com scoresheets to use for practice can be downloaded from the [Officiating page](#). When you are comfortable using the scoresheet, calling the correct score, watching for foot faults, and keeping the game moving at a smooth, consistent pace, volunteer to referee in a local tournament. Line judges should also practice and gain confidence before volunteering at a local tournament. Training and practice opportunities are available at sanctioned tournaments where referees and line judges can shadow experienced officials and discuss best practices with them. The referee coordinator can also arrange for an experienced official to shadow you for the first few matches you officiate; this provides an immediate resource should a question arise and ensures a well-officiated match. Continue to work with an experienced official and build your confidence through officiating a variety of events at tournaments.

Terminology

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

“No-Volley Zone”: The grammatically correct term for the Non-Volley Zone. The term’s abbreviation, NVZ, is used throughout this handbook.

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

“Team”: This handbook is written in the context of doubles match play, and the term “team” is predominantly used. Much of the information where “team” appears is equally relevant to singles

match play. To understand the context for singles, read as though it says “player” rather than “team.”

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 and you will jump to the beginning of that section. A hyperlink is provided at the end of each section to return to the Table of Contents.

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Section 1: Responsibilities and Code of Conduct for Referees

The referee's main responsibility is to ensure that USA Pickleball/IFP rules set forth in the *2021 USA Pickleball/IFP Official Rulebook* are followed. The stated purpose of the rulebook is to "... provide pickleball players with the rules necessary for tournament and organized league play" and to "... preserve the traditional nature and character of the sport and the skills traditionally required to play the sport."

The rules are updated as necessary but not less than on an annual basis. **It is your responsibility to stay current on the rules.** Changes to the rules for 2021 are explained in the *2021 Rules Change Document* on the [USA Pickleball website](#). Knowing the rules thoroughly protects the integrity of the sport and ensures matches are conducted fairly. Because the rulebook and this handbook do not predict every circumstance you may encounter on the court, your "best friend" in these situations may be Rule 13.C | Alt. 15.A. That rule exists so you can apply your best judgement when there is no guidance in the rulebook or the handbook.

A. Primary Responsibilities [Rules 13.C | Alt. 15.D]

During an officiated match, the primary responsibilities of the referee are to:

1. Interpret and enforce the rules.
2. Keep and announce the correct score.
3. Recognize whether the server and receiver are the correct players in the correct positions.
4. Call service, NVZ, and other faults.
5. Maintain control and keep the match moving efficiently.
6. Resolve disputes.
7. Issue verbal warnings, technical warnings and technical fouls, as appropriate.
8. Rule on line calls when appealed by a player or not seen by a line judge.
9. Speak clearly and audibly.
10. Make sure the court environment is safe for play.

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B. Code of Conduct

Referees develop their own officiating style, but all must adhere to the best practices presented in this handbook and the following code of conduct. It is important that referees:

1. Enforce all rules impartially, fairly, and consistently (even if you do not agree with a particular rule).
2. Use common sense and good judgment to address situations not expressly covered by the rulebook or this handbook.
3. Use a professional and pleasant demeanor at all times.
 - a. Maintain control without being dictatorial.
 - b. Treat players, line judges, other referees, and spectators with respect.

- c. Avoid overfriendliness with players and spectators while at the court.
 - d. Avoid comments and emotional reactions, either positive or negative, regarding the play of either side.
 - e. Acknowledge and comply with reasonable player requests (e.g., speak louder, stop moving around, slow the pace of the game, etc.)
4. Devote full attention to the match being refereed.
 5. Be sure your cellular phone is on silent or is turned off.
 6. Wear neat, clean attire that is comfortable and suitable for the weather conditions and meets the requirements for referee apparel at tournaments.
 7. Keep an upright stance for a professional appearance (i.e., avoid leaning on a fence or against a wall).
 8. Avoid using any device that could interfere with play (e.g., umbrella as a sun shade). **NOTE:** Tournament Directors may authorize use of a chair if required for medical reasons and as space allows. They may also authorize use of a small mat (approximately two-feet by two-feet) for comfort and to reduce body fatigue, if space permits.
 9. Excuse yourself from refereeing a relative, close friend, doubles partner, or any match where you have a conflict of interest (unless you have an equivalent relationship with players on each side).
 10. Refrain from intervening in a match in progress during a tournament (including during time-outs and between games), except in the following circumstances:
 - a. You respond to an immediate safety issue.
 - b. The assigned referee requests your assistance.
 - c. You are the assigned referee and provide necessary assistance to a trainee whom you are allowing to referee your match.
 - d. The Tournament Director requests that you assist the assigned referee.
 - e. In a non-officiated match, the Tournament Director requests that you assist the players or assigns you to referee the match.

NOTE: *When observing a match, if you see a referee make a clear and significant error or an incorrect rule interpretation, especially repeatedly, you may discuss it discretely with the referee **after** the match is finished.*

11. Do not make derogatory comments about or critique any on-court matters, decisions, or the performance of another referee in public, including on social media.
12. Refrain from commenting on any player in public, including on social media. Such comments, positive or negative, can be seen as lacking in impartiality and may give a player reason to ask that you not referee a future match of theirs. Additionally, others may take a referee's comment out of context.

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Section 2: Referee 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 all formats (i.e., 2 out of 3 games to 11 points, 1 game to 11 points [round robins only], 1 game to 15 points or 1 game to 21 points). The scoresheet design used in your area may differ from the official [USA Pickleball scoresheets](#) utilized in this handbook, which are available on the USA Pickleball website.

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Figure 1 - USA Pickleball/PickleballTournaments.com Scoresheets

Scoresheet – 2 of 3 to 11

Scoresheet – 1 to 15

Scoresheet – 1 to 21

B. Scoresheet Information

1. Information entered by the event desk or referee coordinator, or pre-printed on the scoresheet, before the referee receives the scoresheet includes the following:
 - a. Date and time
 - b. Computer ID tags (e.g., SYSID, barcode)
 - c. Type of event
 - d. Player names [“(W)” will 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. Bronze or gold medal match (if applicable)
 - j. Handwritten number on back (“1” or “2”)
 - k. Reference marks for changing ends
2. Information entered by the referee before, during, and after the match includes the following:
- a. Circle around the name of the starting server on each team
 - b. Notes to help distinguish the players from one another
 - c. A mark (e.g., “X”, or the starting server’s name) for the team serving first for each game
 - d. Reference marks for changing ends (if not preprinted)
 - e. Points scored and side out marks
 - f. Standard time-outs
 - g. Medical time-outs
 - h. Verbal warnings, technical warnings and technical fouls
 - i. Final game scores and circle around the winners’ names

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c. Other Tools

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

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Figure 2 – Numbered Server Clip Styles



Section 3: Referee Match Preparation and Scorekeeping Procedures

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

A. Before a Tournament

1. Review the most recent editions of the official rulebook and casebook.
2. Reread this handbook.
3. USA Pickleball also recommends that every referee periodically retake the online tests for referees, line judges and players.

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B. Before You are Called for a Match

1. Take care of your restroom and hydration needs.
2. Don appropriate clothing.
3. Wear your referee credentials.
4. Stretch to prepare muscles for standing for the duration of the match.
5. Gather personal items such as water, lip protection, and sunglasses, as needed.
6. Pick up tools and supplies:
 - a. Pencils (2)
 - b. Numbered server clips (2)
 - c. Balls (including a spare)
 - d. Timer
 - e. Starting server identification items (e.g., wrist bands)
 - f. Band-aids (if available) so that first aid can quickly be provided for minor cuts and scrapes
7. Know where a rulebook and approved paddle list (or list of failed paddles) can be easily accessed. Consider keeping a copy of both on your smart phone.
8. Learn the court layout.
9. Consider how weather, lighting, court conditions, etc., might affect play.
10. Note special procedures applicable to this tournament (e.g., warm-up time, no bags on court).
11. Know the number of minutes allowed to start the match after the match is called.

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

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C. When Your Name is Called to Referee

1. Immediately proceed to the referee desk to collect the match scoresheet and clipboard.
2. Start your timer after the match is announced for the players to report to their court.
3. Quickly review the information on the scoresheet to ensure the match is assigned to you and shows all pertinent information for the match (i.e., event type, match format, court number). If necessary, ascertain the proper pronunciation of player names.
4. Verify that “1” or “2” has been written on the back of the scoresheet. If not, write a “1” or “2” prior to getting to the court. The number will be used to determine which team will have first choice to serve or receive, to select at which end of the court to start the match, or to defer these choices to the opponent.
5. Try to arrive at the court before the players. Wait for all players at the court entryway if the tournament venue requires that you cross a match in progress to reach your court. Enter and exit the court as a group.

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D. Pre-Match On-Court Checklist [Rules 13.C.3.a | Alt. 15.B.2]

1. Confirm net height and positioning, especially for temporary net systems. (The net height should be checked by the Tournament Director at the start of each day.)
2. Look for safety hazards such as debris or liquid on the court. Ensure players comply with applicable tournament venue restrictions, such as not allowing equipment bags within the playing area. Do not allow drink containers to be placed too close to the court.
3. If tournament balls are kept at the court for players, make sure there are two or more balls for the match.
4. To determine on which side of the court you should stand, consider sun, lighting, shadows, line judge positions, spectators, etc. Also, consider proximity to other courts, walls, reflections, etc.
 - a. If there are line judges, it is preferable that you stand opposite the two baseline judges.
 - b. If there are spectators, unless you are using a microphone, it is preferable to stand facing the majority so they can best hear you. However, placement to see line judges takes priority.
 - c. If you must stand where your shadow is visible on the playing surface, move as little as possible during rallies to avoid creating a distraction.
5. If you have one or more wheelchair players, make sure you are familiar with the applicable rule modifications for wheelchair players. **NOTE:** Do not say or do anything during the pre-match briefing to highlight or acknowledge a player’s disability. You may answer any relevant questions that players ask about wheelchair rules, but you must otherwise treat them the same as any other player.

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E. Pre-Match Briefing and Warm-Up

Begin the following pre-match briefing when all players are present at the court. These required items do not necessarily have to be conducted in the order listed here, but you must develop a logical and consistent presentation. Do not include additional information unless requested by a player or directed by the Tournament Director or the USA Pickleball Director of Officiating. **NOTE:** Keep conversation with players to a minimum. Do not engage in unnecessary or casual conversation, especially with players you know personally. Refrain from making comments to individual players that can be construed as coaching.

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Confirm each player's identity. Note distinguishing characteristics next to the names of players if helpful for identification (e.g., beard, red hat, blue shirt).
3. For doubles matches, identify the starting server on each team and ensure that each is wearing the prescribed starting server identification. Circle the names of the players wearing the starting server identification.
 - a. Only one player on each team may wear the starting server identification prescribed by the Tournament Director. [Rules 5.A.3 | Alt. 16.C]
 - b. Make sure the starting server identification is visible to both you and the opponents.
 - c. To avoid confusion, do not allow the partner of the starting server to wear anything similar in color and design to the starting server identification.
4. Inspect each paddle a player intends to use during the match. [Rules 13.C.4.a | Alt. 15.C.1] **NOTE:** If a player switches paddles at any time during the match, inspect the new paddle for compliance prior to play.
 - a. Confirm with players that their paddles are listed on the [USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List](#). [Rules 2.F.1 | Alt. 16.A] If the player is unfamiliar with the list, refer the player to the USA Pickleball website. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List. If you encounter a paddle you do not recognize, check (or have someone check) to be sure the paddle is on the approved list.
 - b. Look for the manufacturer name and model name/number. [Rules 2.E.7 | Alt. 3.E.1] Newer paddles will also display a "USA Pickleball Approved" stamp. The manufacturer name information may be located any place on the paddle, including on the grip tape, end cap, or edge guard. Some paddle manufacturers use factory-applied adhesive labels to indicate the make and model name/number. Homemade labels with manufacturer information are not acceptable. If the manufacturer name or model name/number does not appear on the paddle, do not allow the player to use that paddle for sanctioned play.
 - c. Look for distinct aftermarket alterations other than to the handle. Tape or adhesive decorations may be used as an edge guard, provided that the dimensions of the paddle, including the applied edge guard, are compliant. [Rules 2.E.3, 2.E.5.a | Alt. 3.E.2, 3.E.6]
 - d. Look for anything affixed to the paddle face, such as identification labels, that extends inward more than ½" from the edge (or ½" inside the edge guard if installed) or 1" above the paddle handle. [Rules 2.E.5.b | Alt. 3.E.7] Any additions that extend beyond these limits must be removed prior to sanctioned play. However, autographs and other

markings that do not impact the surface texture on paddles are acceptable. [Rules 2.E.5.c | Alt. 3.E.6.e]

- e. Check the paddle surface for indentations, holes, cracks, and delamination (visibility of one or more underlayers), which are prohibited.
 - f. Run your open hands across both sides of the paddle face, feeling for foreign substances and unusual texture. If the surface is in question, have the head referee or Tournament Director make the final decision on whether the paddle can be used for play. If a paddle does not appear on the approved list or has prohibited features, require the player to switch to an approved paddle or forfeit the match. [Rules 2.F.1.a.1, 2.F.1.a.2 | Alt. 17.A, 17.B]
5. Inform the players of the match format (e.g., 2 out of 3 games to 11 points, win by 2 points).
 6. Select a player to choose the number “1” or “2” (written on the back of the scoresheet). The winner of that choice will be the first to select “serve, receive, end, or defer.” After the first choice is made, the other team cannot defer and must choose from the remaining options. Once a team makes its choice, it cannot be changed. [Rules 5.A.1 | Alt. 15.C.4]
 7. Advise players of any court hindrances and approved rule modifications.
 8. Review the line calling responsibilities of the referee, players, and (when applicable) line judges, including appeal procedures. Remind players to make their calls loud and clear.
 9. Ask the players if they have any questions about the player instructions or the rules. **NOTE:** When new rules are released, Tournament Directors may direct that referees quickly review the significant rule changes during the pre-match briefing.
 10. Allow players to warm up for the remainder of the specified time before starting the match. (However, remember to allow time to choose the ball and get the players in position, along with any final briefing steps, so play can begin within the specified time.) Notify the players when one minute of warm-up time is left, so they can practice serving if they desire.
 - a. Serving is not mandatory during warm-up.
 - b. If practice serves are taken, observe players’ serves for potential illegal service motions, but do not give any warnings.
 11. If any players have not arrived at the court by half of the allotted time to start the match, have them re-called.
 12. Allow the serving team to select the game ball from the provided tournament balls, using whatever technique they desire, and remove all other balls from the playing surface. This step also allows you to confirm the identities of the players and ensure that you have them properly recorded on the scoresheet.

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

1. Verify that the names of the players wearing the starting server identification are circled.
2. Place 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. *You may also use “L” or “R” or a directional arrow to indicate whether the serve will begin on your left or right.*

3. If not preprinted on the scoresheet, add end-change marks (Δ) beneath the appropriate score number:
 - a. At 6 of the third game for 3 games to 11 points,
 - b. At 6 for one game to 11 points (round robins only),
 - c. At 8 for games to 15 points,
 - d. At 11 for games to 21 points.

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

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Figure 3 – Preparing the Scoresheet

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

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

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

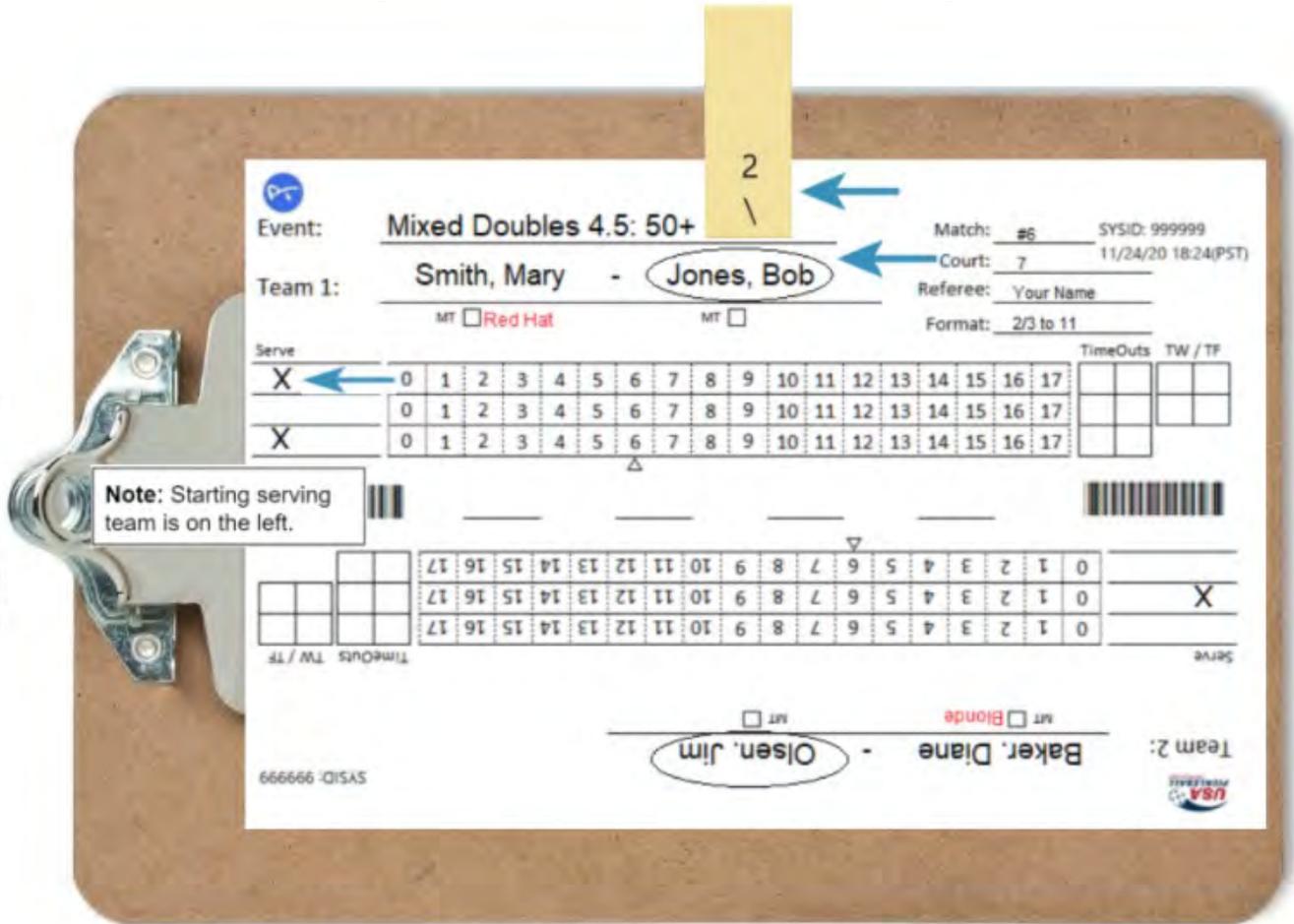
Serve	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	TimeOuts	TW / TF
X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		

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

1. Position the scoresheet on the clipboard, making sure the clipboard clamp is pointing toward the serving end when the starting server’s name is at the top of the scoresheet. When out-of-the-ordinary situations occur, having the clipboard clamp pointing toward the serving team is an additional means of quickly confirming which team should be serving.
2. For doubles matches, place the numbered server clip over the name of the starting server of the game with the number 2 facing up. This will be the circled name for the team that will serve first.
3. You are now ready to begin the game.

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Figure 4 – Scoresheet and Clipboard Set-Up



H. Tracking First and Second Servers

In doubles matches, keeping track of first and second servers and which player is the correct server are common stumbling blocks for referees. Using the system described here, you will quickly and accurately track servers without interrupting the flow of the game. For singles matches, no server tracking is required.

1. Prior to a team's first server serving, place the numbered server clip over that player's name with the "1" facing up (Figure 5).
2. Prior to the second server serving, place the numbered server clip over that player's name with the "2" facing up (Figure 6).
3. When the team loses its serve to the opponent, mark the side out 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.

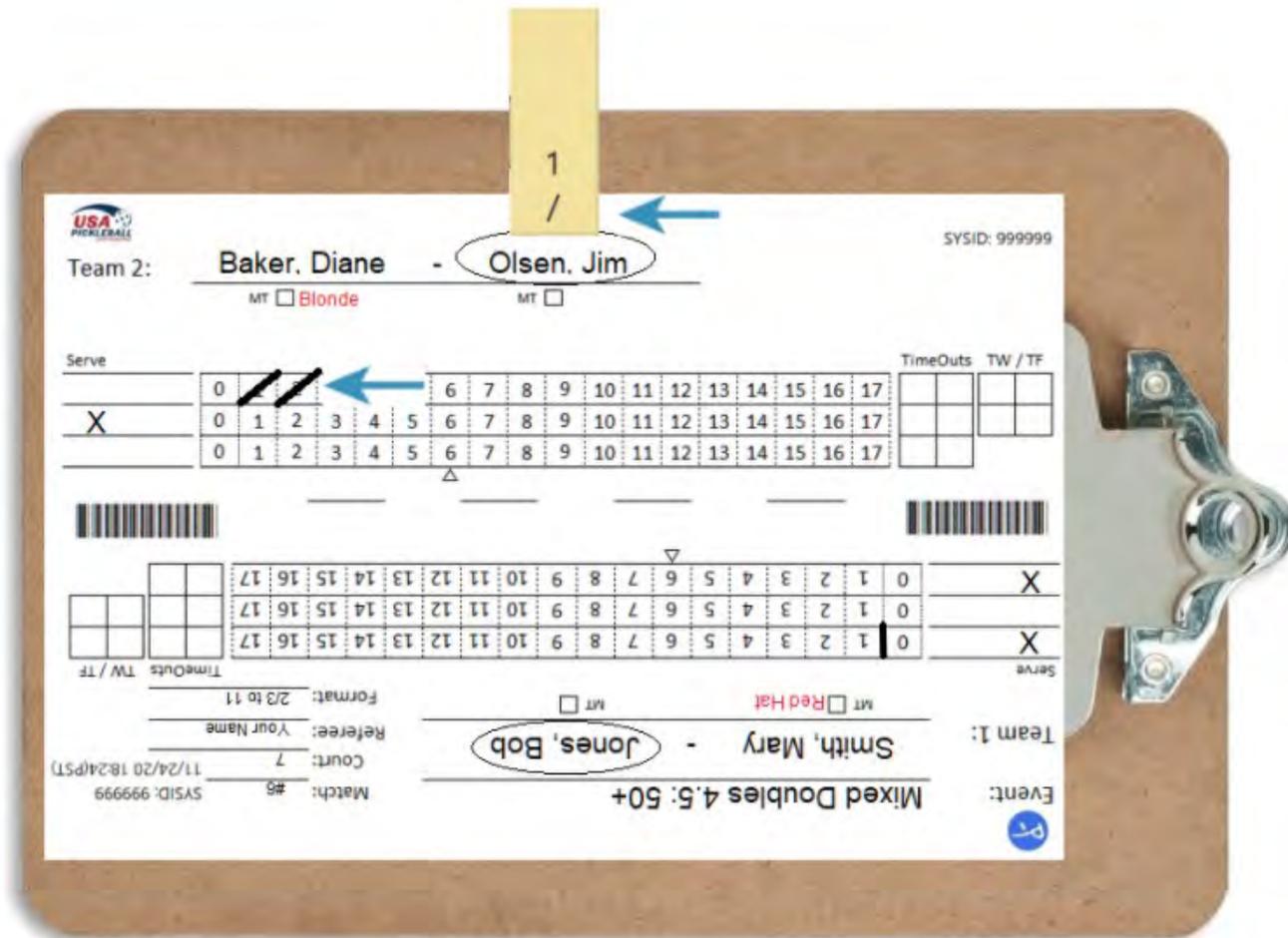
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I. Marking Points Scored

1. Use diagonals to mark each point scored. Mark "1" when the first point is scored. For doubles matches:

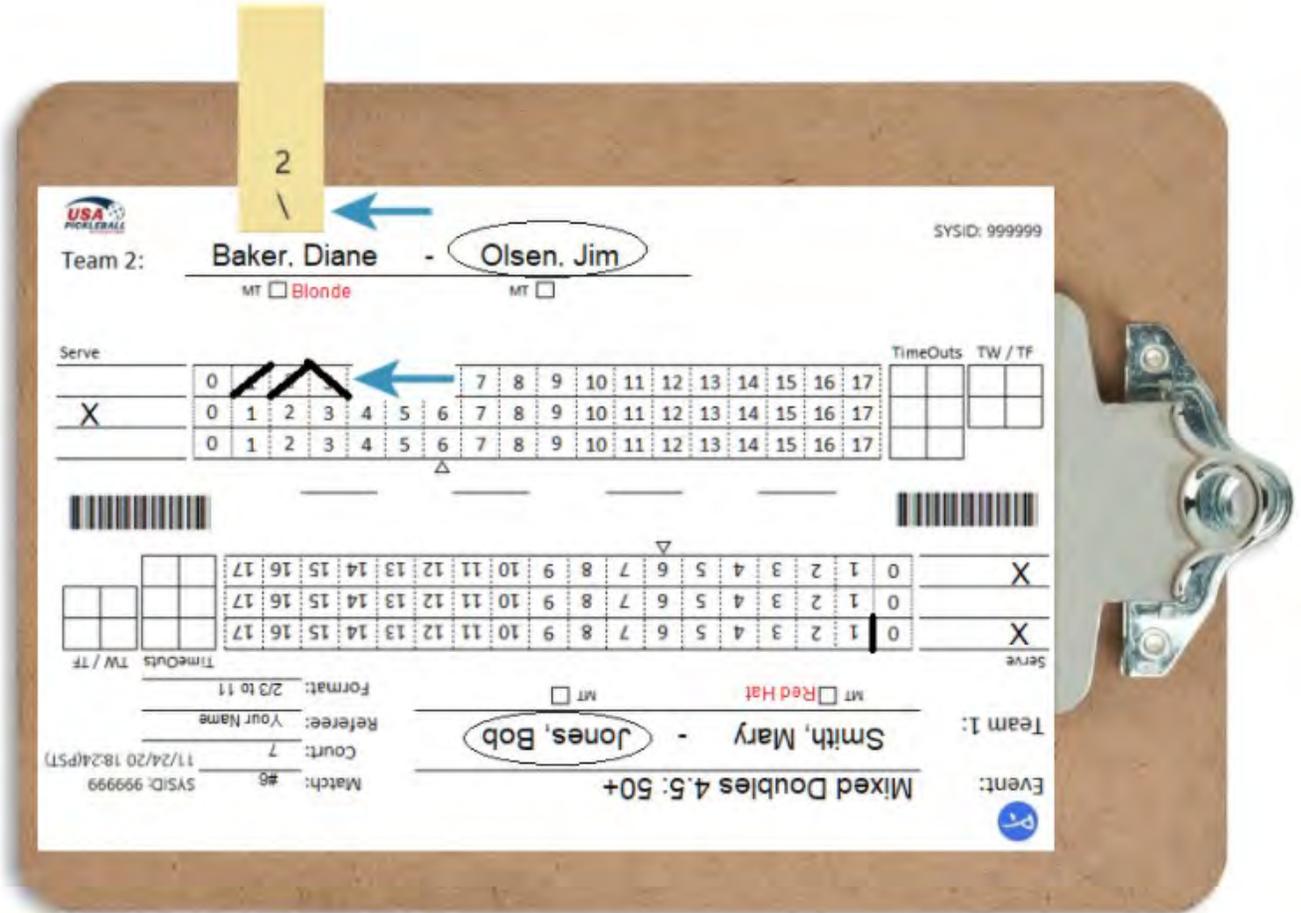
- a. Mark points scored when the first server is serving with an upper-right-to-lower-left diagonal line (forward slash /)(Figure 5).
 - b. Mark points scored when the second server is serving with an upper-left-to-lower-right diagonal line (backslash \)(Figure 6).
2. For singles matches, mark all points with the forward slash (/).
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Figure 5 – Numbered Server Clip and Marking Points – First Server



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



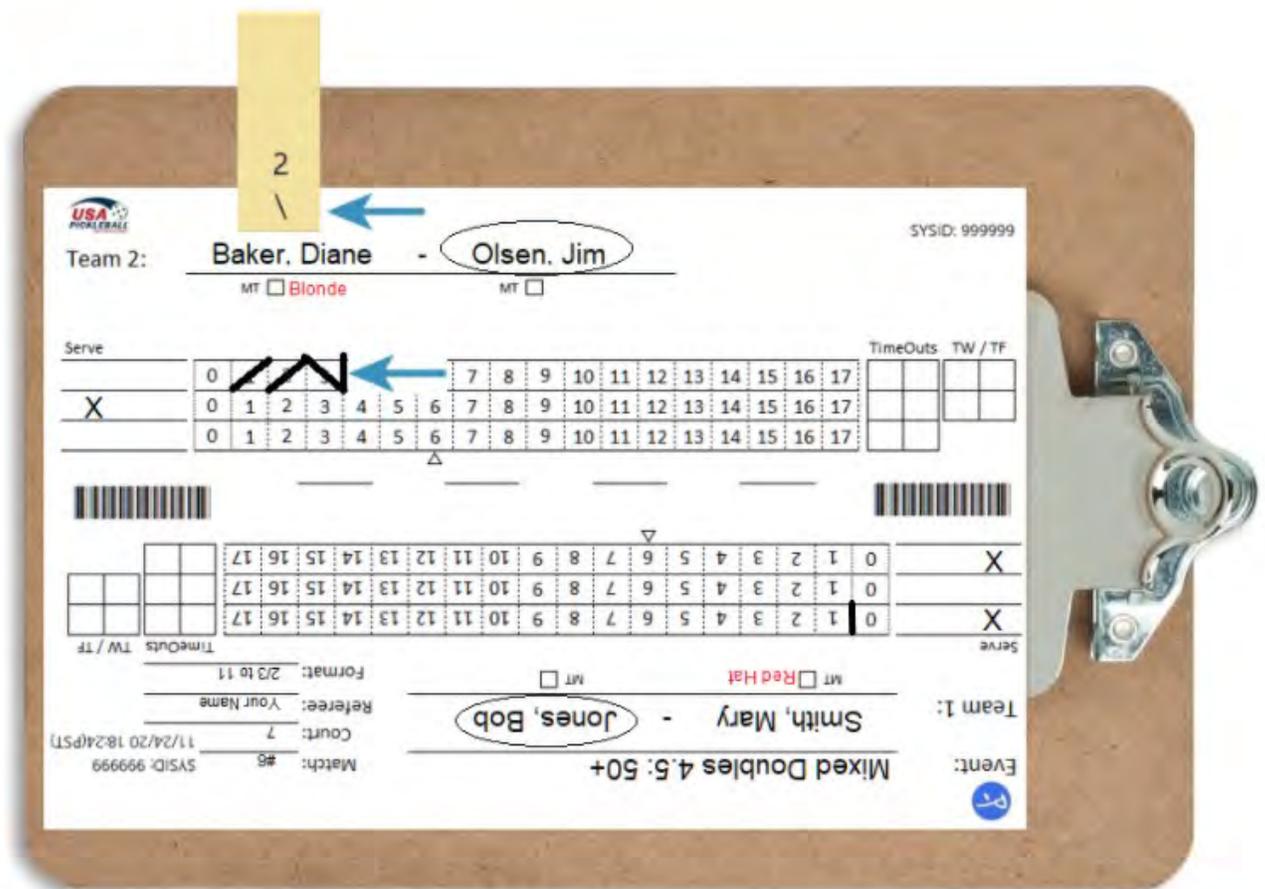
J. Marking Side Outs

1. After a team loses the serve to the opposing team, record the side out on the scoresheet by marking a vertical line on the right side of the last point scored (Figure 7). **NOTE:** If a point is not scored on the first service rotation of the game, place the vertical mark between the “0” and “1” point (see Team 1, Figures 5 – 7).
2. This critical marking technique documents what the score was at side out and allows you to reconstruct the point and side out sequence should there be a question later regarding the correct server or correct position.
3. The correct first server is determined by the team’s score (even or odd) after a side out. The starting server (i.e., the player who started serving at the beginning of the game and who wears the starting server identification) is not always the first server after a side out – only when the team’s score is even. When the team’s score is odd at a side out, the player without the starting server identification is the first server for the next service rotation.
[Rules 4.B.7.a-4.B.7.c | Alt. 7.B.2] (See also Section 3.K regarding player positions.)

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Figure 7 – Marking Side Outs



K. Player Positions (Doubles Play)

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

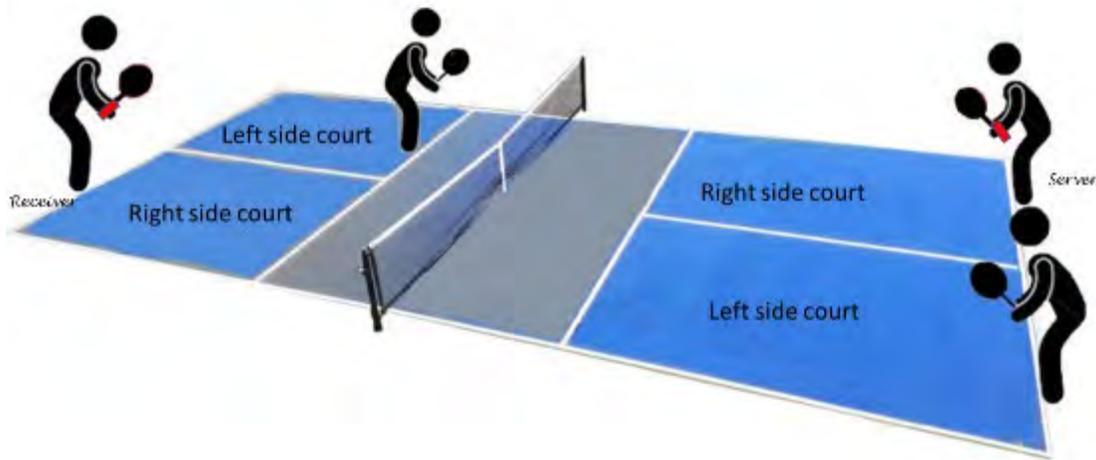
1. The starting server for each team at the beginning of each game wears the starting server identification.
2. The court has a right/even side and a left/odd side as the players face the net. (Figure 8.)
3. The correct server and receiver and their positions are determined by the score and the players’ starting positions in the game.
4. At the start of each game (normally at 0-0-2), the correct position for the players with the starting server identification is the right/even side of the court on their respective ends of the court. [Rules 4.B.1, 4.B.2 | Alt. 7.B.1] These players are the correct server and correct receiver for starting the game (Figure 8).
5. When a team’s score is even (i.e., 0, 2, 4...), the correct position for the team’s player wearing the starting server identification is the right/even court. When a team’s score is odd (i.e., 1, 3, 5...), the correct position for the player wearing the starting server identification is the left/odd court. [Rules 4.B.6.b | Alt. 7.B.2, 7.B.4]

6. While the correct server and receiver should be in their proper positions to start each point, their partners can stand anywhere on or off the court as long as they remain on their respective ends of the court. [Rules 4.B.7 | Alt. 7.B.7] After the return of serve, either of the teams' players may hit the ball from any position.

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Figure 8 – Correct Player Positions at the Start of The Game

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



L. Player Positions (Singles Play)

1. In singles play, the server's correct position is determined by the score (i.e., even or odd).
2. 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.
3. When the server's score is even (i.e., 0, 2, 4...), the correct position is the right/even court. [Rules 4.B.5.a | Alt. 7.A.1] When the server's score is odd (i.e., 1, 3, 5...), the correct position is the left/odd court. [Rules 4.B.5.b | Alt. 7.A.1]
4. The receiver will mirror the server's position to return the serve.

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Section 4 Refereeing a Match (Doubles Play)

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

A. Beginning a Match

1. Begin play when specified by the Tournament Director or no later than 10 minutes after the match was called. Players may not use time-outs to delay the start of the match (e.g., if their partner has not yet arrived). [Rules 10.H.1 | Alt. 20.A.1, 20.C.1]
2. All players must be present on the court to start playing a match. [Rules 10.H.1 | Alt. 16.E]
3. Impose a **game or match forfeit, as appropriate**, when a player fails to report to the match on time. [Rules 13.H.2 | Alt. 16.E.1, 16.E.2, 16.E.3] (See Sections 5.H.2.c and 5.H.2.d)

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B. Beginning a Game

1. The game begins on second serve since only one player will serve for the starting serving team. The starting server will be the player on the first serving side whose name is circled. Place the numbered server clip with the number “2” facing up over the circled starting server’s name (Figure 4). The correct receiver will be the player on the opposing team whose name is circled.
2. To begin each game and before calling the score (normally 0-0-2), visually and mentally confirm whether or not the correct server and receiver are in the proper positions. This is indicated by the score, numbered server clip, and starting server identification.
3. *At the start of the first game of the match, you may announce the names of all players to verify that you have the teams correctly indicated on the scoresheet and the clipboard clamp pointing toward the serving team. **NOTE:** Do not identify the starting server or starting receiver by name.*
4. Stand aligned with the net plane and maintain a stationary position at the net. Stay within good viewing distance of the NVZ on both sides.
5. Announce a 15-second warning prior to the **start of each game, including the start of the match**, then call “time in” to start the game. If you are refereeing a multiple game match, also announce the game number before “time in” (e.g., “Game 1, time in, 0-0-2”). Play may start before 15 seconds expire if all players are ready to proceed.

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C. Calling the Score

1. Before calling the score to start each rally, quickly glance at the scoresheet, as necessary, to ensure you know the correct score, correct server and correct receiver. Then hold the clipboard at your side or behind you so you won’t be tempted to look at it during play or give the appearance of not being focused on the play.
2. Call the score after determining that **all players** are in position, or **should** be in position, and **all players** are ready, or **should** be ready, to play, and that: [Rules 4.D | Alt. 8.B]

- a. No player is using one of the “not ready” signals, [Rules 4.C, 4.C.1 | Alt. 8.A, 8.A.1] which are:
 - 1) Raising the paddle above the head.
 - 2) Raising the non-paddle hand above the head.
 - 3) Completely turning the back to the net.
 - b. A player has the ball in hand and is in position to serve or should be in position to serve.
 - c. The player diagonally across the court from the player in serving position is ready, or should be ready, to receive.
3. Announce the score as three numbers, e.g., “zero, zero, two.” Do not use “zero, zero, start,” “zero, zero, second server,” or any other non-standard variation to start the game.
 4. Do not vary your cadence or volume or give any other indication when a potential service or receiver fault is imminent.
 5. Do not say “possible game point” when the serving side will win if it scores the next point.
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D. Watching the Serve

1. Watch the server release the ball to make the serve. Either the traditional (no-bounce) serve or the new provisional drop serve may be used.
 - a. If the server tosses the ball with their hand or from their paddle, the serve must be hit without the ball bouncing, and the three components of the traditional (no-bounce) serve must be met. (See Section 5.A.11.)
 - b. If the drop serve is used, the ball must be dropped without adding any force and then hit after bouncing. (See Section 5.A.12.)
 - c. If the server does not hit the ball on the first release, the server can retrieve the ball and start the serve again within the 10-second count.
2. Watch the server for illegal service motions and service foot faults. (See Sections 5.A.11 – 5.A.13.)
3. Watch the ball from the server’s paddle to see where it lands. Call short serves when applicable. (See Section 5.A.15.)

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E. During Play

1. Ignore all “not ready” signals once you start calling the score, unless a hinder occurs. [Rules 4.C.2 | Alt. 8.A.2]
2. When it is necessary to stop play (e.g., hinder), immediately hold up your hand and announce “time.” Step forward, explain the situation, then quickly resume play.
3. When players are anywhere near the NVZ or a volley has occurred from anywhere on or off the court, **your main focus is watching for NVZ faults** (e.g., foot faults), not watching the ball to make line calls on appeal.

4. Make no call or physical indication that a ball is “in” or “out,” **unless appealed** by a player. Ruling on appealed line calls is a low priority.
5. Avoid looking at the scoresheet during rallies; concentrate on the action on the court, particularly with respect to the NVZ.

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F. At the End of Each Rally

1. At the end of each rally, immediately state: “point,” “second server” (or “second serve”), or “side out” clearly and audibly.
2. 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 first (e.g., “foot fault, point”; “service fault, side out”). Explain the fault, if requested by a player.
3. Mark every point on the scoresheet as it occurs. Use a diagonal line corresponding to the server number on the numbered server clip.
4. Track when play goes to the second server by turning the numbered server clip to “2” and moving it over the second server’s name.
5. After each rally, remind yourself of the scores and check for correct player positions and correct server and receiver.

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G. At a Side Out

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

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H. Standard Time-Out [Rules 10.A | Alt. 20.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. **NOTE:** Players may receive coaching during time-outs.

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

1. Announce “time-out called” and indicate by which team. **NOTE:** Do not advise players to put their paddles down or place the ball under the server’s paddle.
2. Start the one-minute count on your timer and announce “one minute” for the time-out.

3. Announce the score (e.g., 6-4-1).
 4. Move to the center of the court to avoid interaction with players.
 5. 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 9). Always write the serving team's score above the diagonal and the receiving team's score below the diagonal. There is no need to record the server number as that information is indicated by the direction of the diagonal. **NOTE:** To avoid potential errors, when a time-out is called by the receiving team, do not rotate the scoresheet. Enter the time-out score right-side up even though the receiver's part of the scoresheet will be upside down (Figure 10).
 6. Advise each team of its remaining number of time-outs. **NOTE:** Players may be more attentive if this step is done closer to the resumption of play than when the time-out is called.
 7. If a player leaves the immediate playing area with his or her paddle, re-inspect the paddle before play resumes.
 8. Advise players when the time remaining is 15 seconds and move to your referee position.
 9. Check readiness of line judges (if applicable).
 10. At one minute, promptly call "time in." Even if players are not in position, announce the score and start the 10-second count. (Resume play early if the players agree and are ready.)
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Figure 9 – Standard Time-Out Marking – Serving Team
(Score 6-4-1)

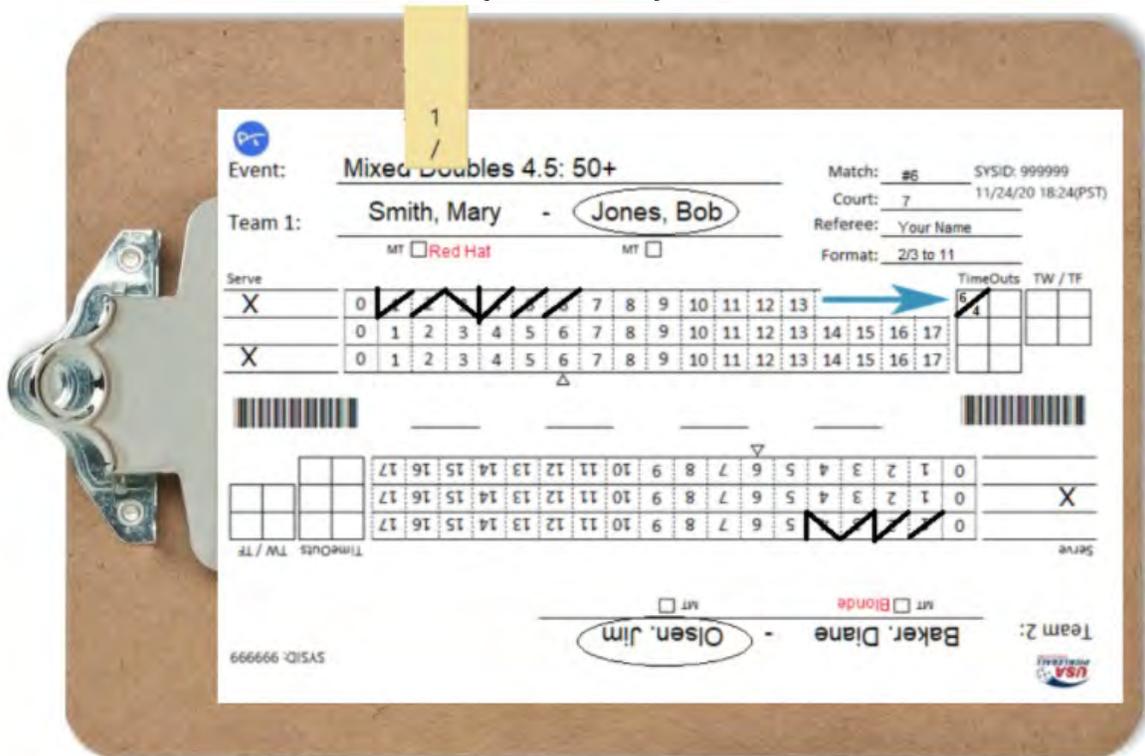
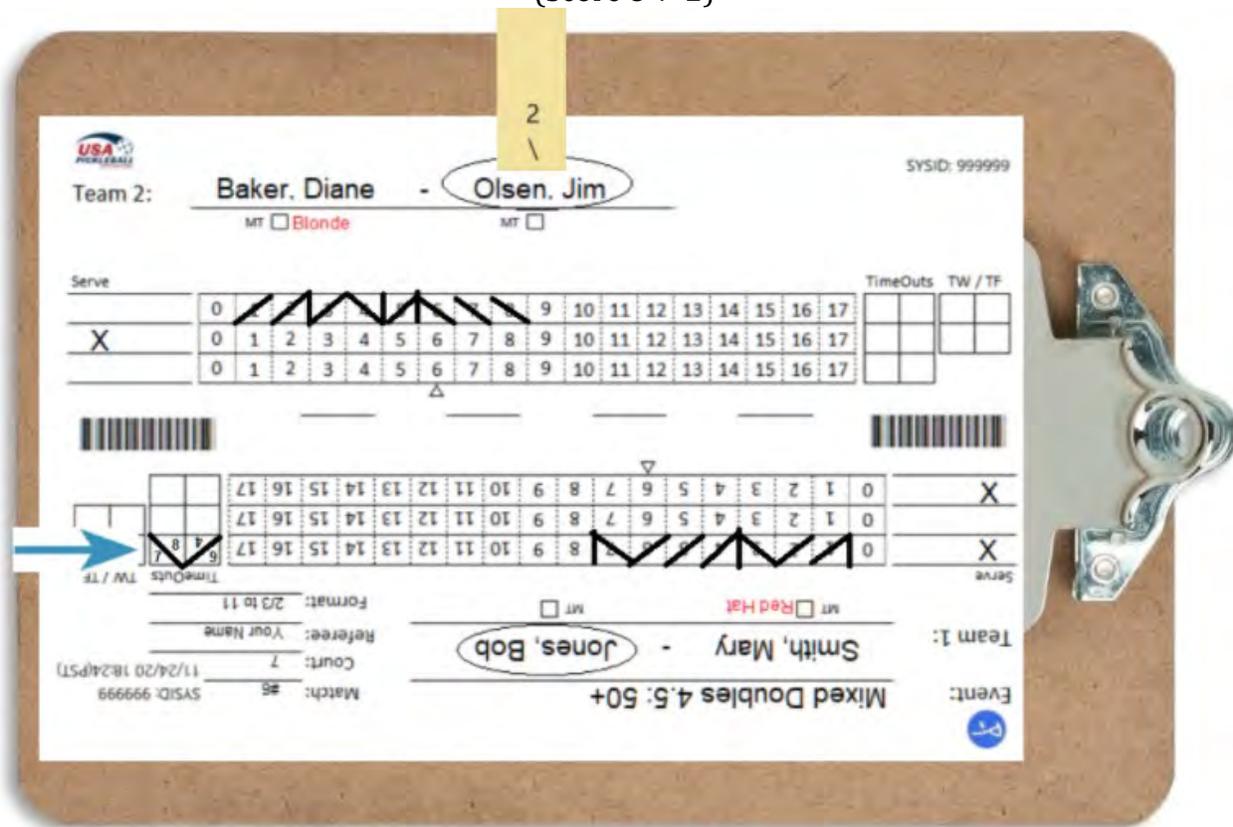


Figure 10 – Standard Time-Out Marking – Receiving Team
(Score 8-7-2)



I. At the End of a Game

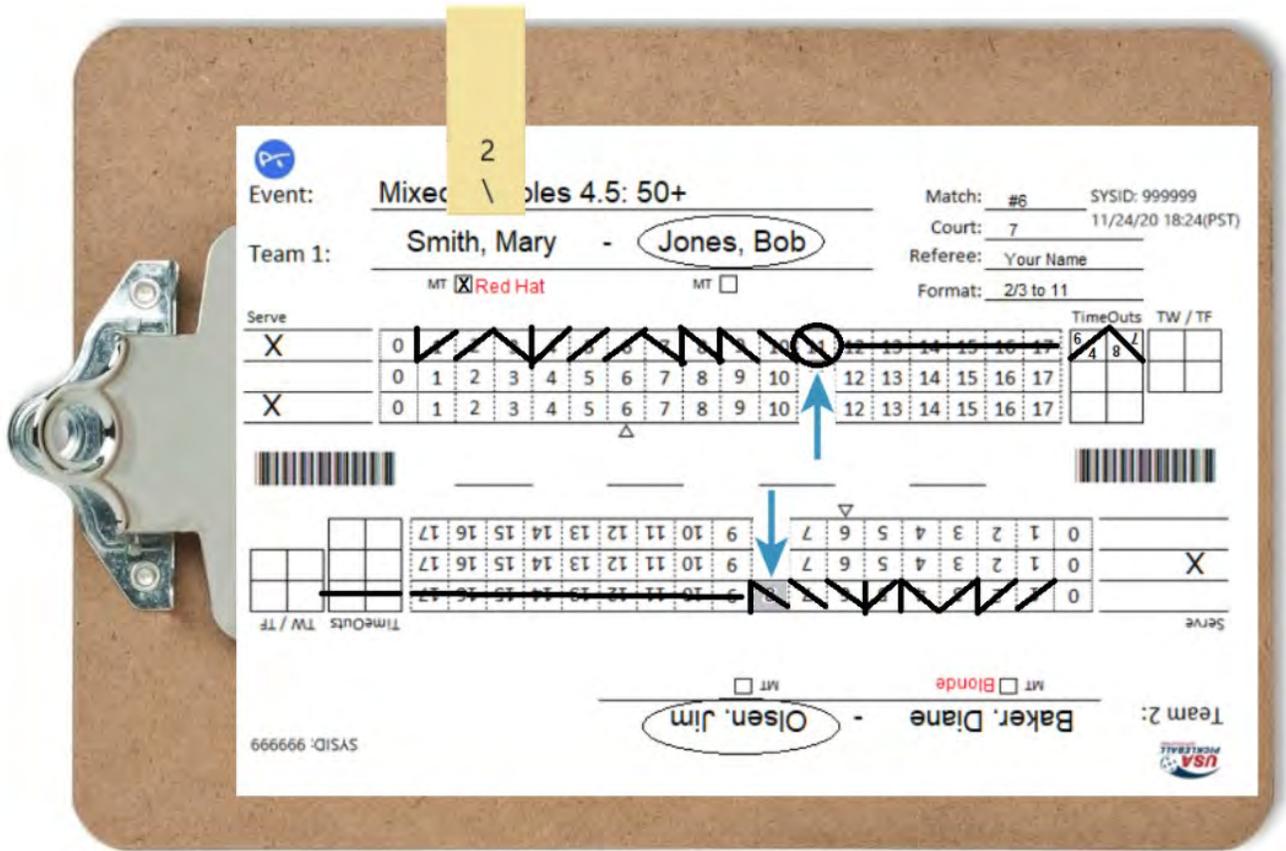
1. After the final point, announce “point, game,” the final score, and, if applicable, the two-minute break between games.
2. Clearly circle *or lightly shade* the final score of both teams to make it easier for players and the event desk to verify the correct scores (Figure 11). If no points are scored for the game, circle/shade “0” for the score.
3. Draw a line through all unused points and unused time-out boxes of the completed game, if an additional game will be played (Figure 11).
4. Collect the ball or stow it to facilitate a prompt start of the next game with the same ball.

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Figure 11 – Final Scoring Highlighting

Team 1: Circle Example
Team 2: Shading Example



J. Between Games [Rules 10.E | Alt. 20.F]

There are several important steps to follow between games:

1. After announcing the score for the game that was just completed, start the timer and announce “two minutes” for the time-out between games.
2. Instruct the players to change ends of the court for the start of the next game.
3. Move to the center of the court. This position helps alert spectators and players that the match is still in progress and helps you avoid unnecessary interaction with the players.
4. Rotate the scoresheet (NOT the clipboard) and reposition the numbered server clip over the name of the new starting server.
5. Now rotate the clipboard so the clamp is facing the serving end. (**NOTE:** Steps 4 and 5 may be performed in reverse order.)
6. If the players notify you of a change in starting server or you notice that the starting server identification has been switched, change the starting server on the scoresheet by erasing the circle from around the name of the previous starting server and circling the name of the new starting server.

7. If a player leaves the immediate playing area with his or her paddle, re-inspect the paddle before play resumes.
8. Notify the players when the time remaining is 15 seconds, move to your referee position, and provide the ball to the serving team without identifying the correct server.
9. Check readiness of line judges (if applicable).
10. At two minutes, promptly start the next game even if the players are not in position. Announce “game (number)” and “time in,” call the score, and start the 10-second count. (Begin play early if the players agree and are ready.)

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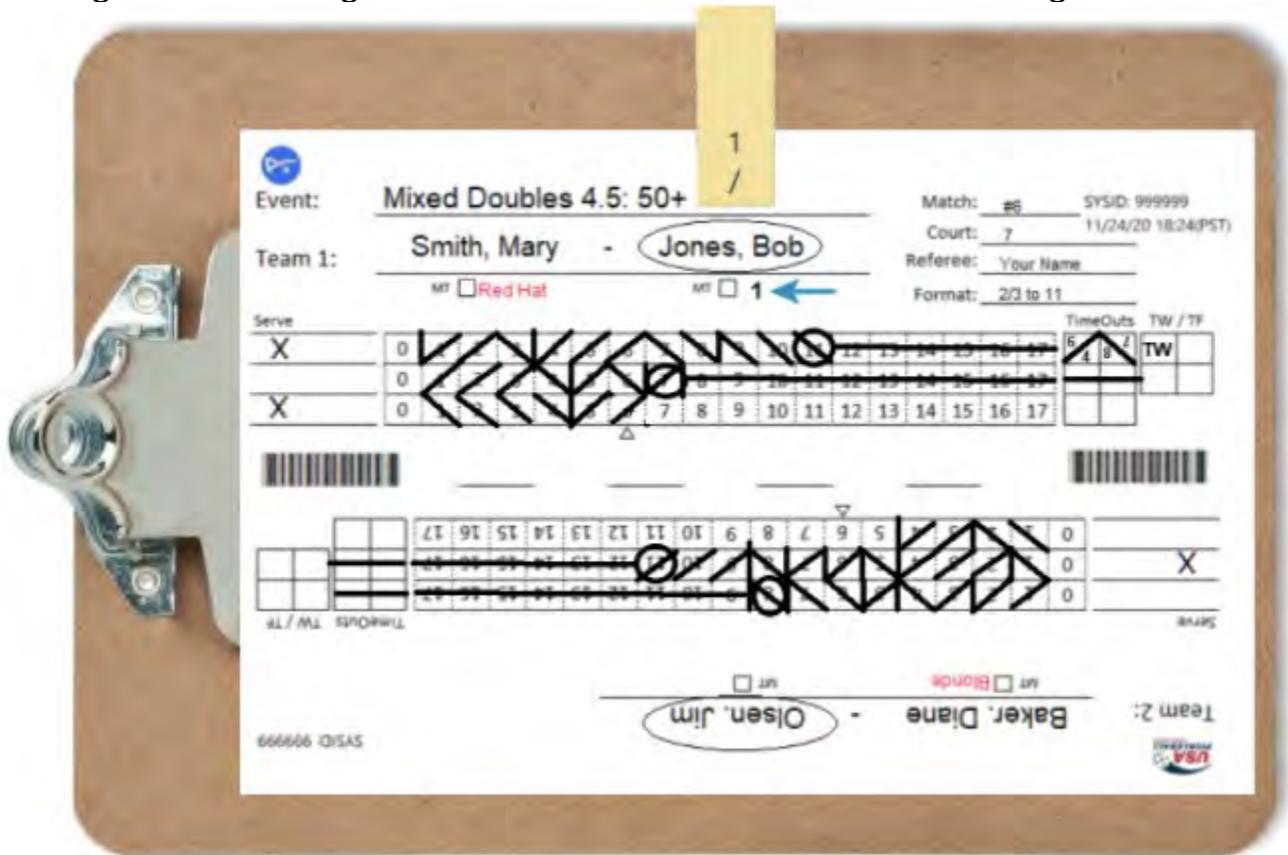
K. End Change Time-Out [Rules 5.B | Alt. 20.B]

An end change occurs at 6 points in the third game of two-out-of-three matches to 11 points and in a one-game match to 11 points (round robins only), at 8 points in games to 15 points, and at 11 points in games to 21 points.

1. Prior to starting a game with an end change, remind players when the end change will occur.
2. When the first team scores the end-change point, call “time out” and announce the end change and the score.
NOTE: Since the end change is now a time-out, the prohibition on coaching during the end change is no longer applicable.
3. Start your timer and announce “one-minute” for the time-out.
4. Move to the center of the court.
5. Prior to removing the numbered server clip to rotate the scoresheet, **write the number of the server (“1” or “2”) above or below the name of the correct server** (Figure 12). This notation enables you to accurately re-place the numbered server clip over the correct server name with the correct number showing after rotating the scoresheet on the clipboard.
6. *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.*
7. Rotate the scoresheet and the clipboard so that they will be properly oriented after the teams change ends. The names of the serving team will be right-side up at the top of the scoresheet and the clamp will be facing the serving team.
8. Place the numbered server clip over the name that you noted with the appropriate number (1 or 2) facing up.
9. Notify the players when the time remaining is 15 seconds and move to your referee position.
10. Check readiness of line judges (if applicable).
11. At one minute, promptly resume play even if the players are not in position. Announce “time in,” call the score, and start the 10-second count. (Begin play early if the players agree and are ready.)

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

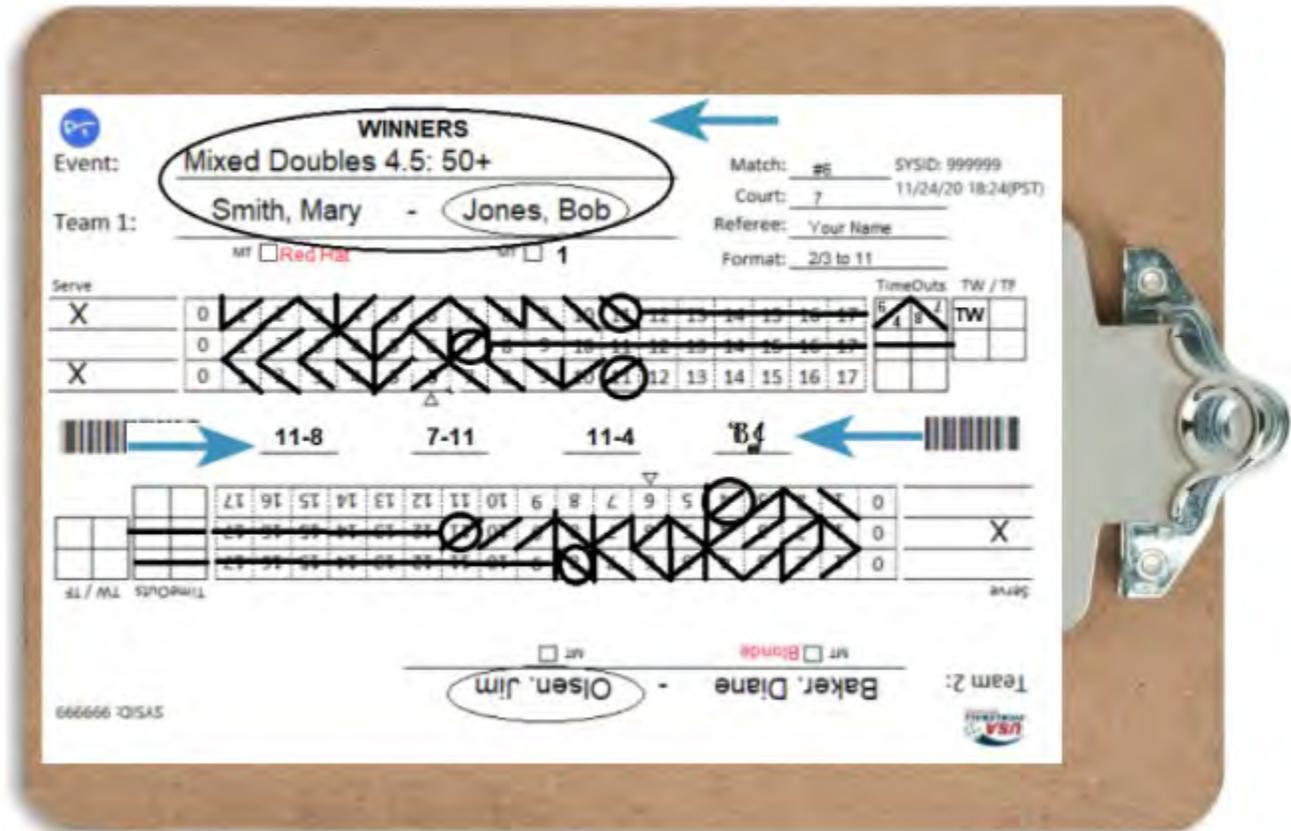


L. At Completion of a Match

1. Announce “point, game, and match” and the final score when the winning point of the match is scored.
2. Thank the line judges (if applicable).
3. Ensure the clipboard is oriented with the names of the winning team positioned right-side up.
4. Circle the names of the winning team and write “WINNERS” in the circle (Figure 13).
5. Record the scores of all games played **in the order they occurred, with the winning team’s score first** (e.g., 11-3, 7-11, 11-2). If there are lines or a space in the center of the scoresheet, record the scores there. If not, record the scores at the top of the scoresheet next to the winners’ names.
6. 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 results.** An error here can cause confusion at the event desk and delays in the tournament.
7. Promptly return the scoresheet on the clipboard to the referee desk.

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Figure 13 – Marking Winner and Scores



M. Important Points to Remember

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

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Section 5: Key Situations and Rules Violations

A. Serving and Receiving

1. Incorrect Server or Incorrect Server Position [Rules 4.M.1, 4.M.2 | Alt. 7.A.1.a, 7.B.2.a, 7.B.2.b]

At the start of a game (score 0-0-2) if the player who serves is not wearing the starting server identification, call a fault. Do not make the call until **after the ball has been hit to make the serve**. As soon as the ball is hit by the incorrect player or from the wrong service court, announce “service fault” or “fault.” Explain briefly, as necessary.

2. Incorrect Receiver [Rules 4.N.1 | Alt. 7.B.4.a]

At the start of a game (score 0-0-2) if the player who receives is not wearing the starting server identification, call a fault. Do not make the call until **after the receiving player has hit the ball**. As soon as the incorrect receiver returns the serve, announce “receiver fault” or “fault.” Explain briefly, as necessary.

3. Stacking [Rules 4.B.7 | Alt. 7.B]

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) as you have indicated on the scoresheet. Ignore where either partner is positioned.

- a. Serving team stacking:

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

- b. Receiving team stacking:

- 1) If a team’s **score is even** at side out, the player **with** the starting server identification will receive in the **right-hand court**. Ignore where the partner is positioned.

- 2) If a team's **score is odd** at side out, the player **without** the starting server identification will receive in the **right-hand court**. Ignore where the partner is positioned.
 - 3) Both receiving team players must receive from their relative positions 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.
4. Questions Regarding Correct Position, Server, and Receiver [4.B.8-4.B.9 | Alt. 19.B-19.C]
Players may inquire about one or more of the following conditions prior to the ball being hit to make the serve. The rules do not limit the number of times a player may ask.

Correct Position: Any player may ask if he or she is in the correct position.

Correct Server: Either player on the serving team may ask if he or she is the correct server.

Correct Receiver: Either player on the receiving team may ask if he or she is the correct receiver.

- a. **If you have already called the score**, immediately stop play before answering the question. **NOTE:** Do not stop play if a question is asked after the ball has been hit to make the serve.
 - b. Provide a brief response to the question asked, e.g., "yes" or "no."
 - c. Announce that you will re-call the score.
 - d. Allow the players to adjust positions if necessary.
 - e. Re-call the score when all players are, or should be, ready to proceed. This begins a new 10-second count.
5. Questions and Challenges Regarding the Score [Rules 4.B.8-4.B.9 | Alt. 19.A]
- a. If a question about the score is asked 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.
 - 1) To avoid confusion, it is better to include additional words, such as "It's 4-2," or "You have 4, they have 2."
 - 2) If a player asks specifically for their score (e.g., "What's my score?" or "What do we have?"), say simply "4" or "you have 4."
 - 3) 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 than calling the score to start a rally, such as, "it's 4-2 and it's first server."
 - b. If a question about the score is asked after you have already called the score but before the ball is hit to make the serve, immediately stop play before answering the question. Also:
 - 1) If the score was called incorrectly, announce "referee error."
 - 2) Announce that you will re-call the score.

- 3) Allow the players to adjust positions, if necessary.
- 4) Re-call the score when all players are, or should be, ready to proceed. This begins a new 10-second count.
- c. After the ball is served, any question regarding the score is considered a challenge.
 - 1) If the score was called **correctly**, ignore any questions about the score unless a player stops play. Call a fault against a player who stops play and explain briefly. [Rules 4.K.2 | Alt. 8.F.3]
 - 2) If the score was called **incorrectly**, follow Section 5.A.6.a.
6. Incorrect Score Called [Rules 4.K | Alt. 8.F]
 - a. If you realize **before the third shot of the rally** that you called the wrong score, stop play, announce “referee error,” and replay the rally with the correct score.
 - b. If you call the wrong score, any player can stop play **before the third shot of the rally** to ask for a score correction. Announce “referee error” and replay the rally with the correct score. Even if a rally ends before the third shot is hit, allow a replay for an incorrectly called score.
 - c. **After the third shot has been hit**, allow the point to be played out. Correct the score at the end of the rally. Call a fault if a player stops play after the third shot to ask for a score correction.
7. Serving Before the Score is Called
 - a. If the ball is served before you start calling the score, there is no rule violation since the ball is dead at that time. [Rules 3.A.19 | Alt. Definition – In Play]
 - b. If the server hits the ball while you are calling the score, call “service fault” or “fault.” [Rules 4.M.11 | Alt. 8.C.1] **NOTE:** If you severely deviate from your normal cadence when calling the score, you may contribute to the server violating the rule. In that case, announce “referee error” and allow the player to re-serve without penalty.
8. Service Court Change After the Score is Called [Rules 4.E.2 | Alt. 8.E]

After you call the score, if the player with the ball on the serving team either 1) switches service courts to serve or 2) gives the ball to the partner in the other service court, immediately stop play to allow the receiver time to get in proper position to receive and then re-call the score when all players are, or should be, ready to proceed.
9. Time-Out Called After the Serve is Hit [Rules 4.N.3 | Alt. 20.A.2.a]

If a time-out is called **after the ball has been hit to make the serve**, call “fault.” Explain briefly, as necessary.
10. 10-Second Violation [Rules 4.E, 4.E.1 | Alt. 8.D, 8.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 or when 10 seconds is reached. If the server takes longer than 10 seconds to hit the ball, call “fault.” Explain briefly, as necessary.

- a. *Timing 10 seconds may be done with a silent count at normal speaking cadence (i.e., one thousand one, one thousand two, etc.) or with a subtle hand motion for each second of the 10-second count.*
- b. *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.*

11. Illegal Service Motions: No-Bounce Serve [Rules 4.A.3-4.A.4 | Alt. 9.A.1-9.A.3]

Calling a fault on an illegal serve is your responsibility. Recognizing an illegal serve can be difficult, but if you are certain that a violation occurred, make the call. Do not give warnings. Call a service fault for **any** illegal serve observed during play.

- a. A serve that is hit without the ball first bouncing must meet the three service motion requirements. **NOTE:** It is not required that the arm-swing be straight back and straight forward. The server's arm can move sideways as long as it is also upward.
- b. The serves of most players, both recreational and competitive, are legal. A small percentage of serves violate one or more of the three components. Unless blatantly obvious, it can be difficult to precisely determine if all three of these legal serve components are present. If uncertain, between games or during a time-out, ask an experienced referee to observe and provide an additional opinion. Failing to recognize an illegal serve, and therefore not calling it, may create an issue when another referee calls it in a later match.
- c. A recommended video on identifying the components of a legal serve can be viewed at [Pickleball 411-Legal Serves](#).

12. Illegal Ball Release: Provisional Drop Serve [Rules 4.A.8 | Alt. 9.B]

- a. If the server uses force to release the ball (i.e., tosses the ball up or throws the ball down) and then lets it bounce, call a fault after the server hits the ball. Explain briefly, as necessary.
- b. If you were not able to see the release of the ball, stop play and call for the ball to be re-served. The receiver may stop play before returning the ball to request a re-serve if he or she could not see the release of the ball. [Rules 4.A.8.a | Alt. 9.B.2] A drop serve does not have to comply with the three service motion components required for a no-bounce serve.

13. Service Foot Faults Rule [Rules 4.A.2, 4.L | Alt. 9.C-9.C.3]

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

For a wheelchair player, the rear wheels must be positioned within the serving area when the ball is hit to make the serve, but the casters are allowed to contact the baseline and extend into the court. **NOTE:** The feet and legs of a wheelchair player are not allowed to contact the playing surface at any time and must remain in the wheelchair at all times.

When the ball is hit to make the serve, call "foot fault" or "fault" immediately if:

- a. A server's foot or a rear wheel is in contact with the court, including the baseline.

- b. A server's foot or any wheel is in contact with the playing surface outside the imaginary extension of the sideline or centerline.
 - c. Neither of a standing server's feet is grounded in the serving area.
14. Serve Hits the Net [Rules 4.A.6 | Alt. 9.D]
Service lets have been eliminated. If a serve hits the net and then lands anywhere in the correct service court, play continues and the receiver must return the serve.
15. Short Serves [Rules 4.M.5 | Alt. 9.D.2]
If the serve bounces in the receiver's NVZ (including on the NVZ line), call a service fault against the serving team.
16. Change of Starting Server [Rules 5.A.2 | Alt. 19.]
The starting server identification must always be worn by the starting server. It is the player's responsibility to be fully compliant with the starting server identification requirements. If a player refuses to wear the starting server identification, impose a match forfeit against the player [Rules 13.A.2 | Alt. 16.C.1] (See Section 5.H.2.d.)
Teams may change starting server between games. **The players are not penalized if they forget to notify you that they have switched the starting server identification.** However, they are to be penalized if they forget to switch the starting server identification to the player who starts serving in a game.
- a. **If players notify you that they have changed the starting server**, erase the circle around the name of the player who is no longer the starting server and circle the name of the partner. Instruct the players to change the starting server identification if they have not done so. Be sure to notify the other team of the starting server change.
 - b. **If the players do not notify you that they have changed the starting server**, proceed according to which player is wearing the starting server identification. At the start of a game (score 0-0-2), the players wearing the identification must serve and receive.
 - 1) **Before calling the score to start a game**, if you notice that the player wearing the starting server identification is not the player whose name is circled on the scoresheet, correct your scoresheet to indicate the new starting server. There is no penalty against the players for failing to notify you.
 - 2) **After calling the score to start a game**, if you notice that the player who starts as server or receiver is wearing the starting server identification but is not the player whose name is circled on the scoresheet, correct your scoresheet to indicate the new starting server **after the rally**. There is no penalty against the players for failing to notify you.
 - c. If the player who starts as server or receiver is not wearing the starting server identification, call an incorrect server or incorrect receiver fault as appropriate. (See Sections 5.A.1 and 5.A.2.)
17. Noisy Venues and Dealing with Players with a Hearing Impairment
Players may have difficulty hearing you when a venue is noisy and the acoustics are not conducive to clear communications. In addition, players may have a hearing impairment or

may remove their hearing aids before a match. It is reasonable in these situations for players to ask you to announce the score extra loudly. Be sensitive to these types of requests and tolerant of a player asking you to repeat the score more often than normal.

- a. When calling the score, look directly at the player and enunciate clearly, as many players are able to read lips even if they are not trained at lip-reading.
- b. *You may lean forward from the net post to be better heard and then step back away from the post after calling the score.*
- c. *You may supplement announcing the score verbally with hand or arm signals. For example, use your fingers to indicate the score and first or second server, or use a subtle, but noticeable, hand motion to signal that the full score has been called and the ten-second clock has started.*
- d. Make sure all players understand how you will call the score and be consistent. Follow that procedure each time you call the score, even when the person asking for the accommodation is not serving or receiving.

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B. The Non-Volley [No-Volley] Zone (NVZ) [Rules Section 9 | Alt. 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.

1. Watching for and Calling NVZ Faults

- a. Make all NVZ violation calls immediately and definitively by announcing "fault" or "foot fault." For a wheelchair player, the casters are allowed to contact the NVZ at any time. All fault rules related to contact with the NVZ only apply to the rear wheels of the wheelchair.
- b. If a NVZ fault occurs and you are sure 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 "referee error" and replay the point.

2. Momentum and the NVZ [Rules 9.C | Alt. 11.B.1]

When a ball is volleyed near the NVZ and the volleying player has momentum from the volley, **keep your eyes on the volleying player until he or she either foot faults or regains control of their momentum.** A player volleying a ball is subject to a NVZ violation until the momentum associated with the volley no longer exists. Even if a fault or dead ball occurs elsewhere between the time when the player contacts the ball and when he or she loses control, **the NVZ fault takes precedence**, and a NVZ fault is declared.

3. Contacting the NVZ [Rules 9.B | Alt. 11.A.1]

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 in the act of volleying the ball.

4. Faults Involving the Hitting Player's Partner [Rules 9.B-9.C | Alt. 11.A.1]

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

- a. 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.
 - b. Call a fault if the partner is in contact with the NVZ at the time contact is made with the volleying player.
5. Stepping Into, Stepping Through, and Pushing Off from the NVZ [Rules 9.D | Alt. 11.A.2]
If a player, or any rear wheel, has contacted the NVZ, call a fault if the ball is hit before both feet, or both rear wheels, have contacted the playing surface completely outside the NVZ.
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C. The Net

1. Contacting the Net System
 - a. If any player, or anything the player is wearing or carrying, contacts any part of the net or net support system while the ball is in play, including the cross bar or a support base, call a fault. [Rules 7.G | Alt. 13.J.1]
 - b. If the ball hits the net post, call a fault. [Rules 11.K | Alt. 13.B.1, 13.C.1]
2. Crossing the Plane of the Net

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

 - a. The ball must cross over to the hitting player's side of the net before the ball is hit. Call a fault if the player hits the ball before it crosses the net. [Rules 11.I | Alt. 13.I]
 - b. Below the net: If a player's foot, or anything that the player is wearing or carrying, extends under the net and onto the opponent's court at any time the ball is in play, call a fault. This applies to both players on a team, including the player who is not attempting to make a shot. [Rules 11.I | Alt. 13.K]
 - c. Above the net or around the net post: If a player does not hit the ball before any part of the player's body or anything worn or carried by the player crosses the plane of the net, call a fault. After hitting the ball, a player is allowed to follow through across the plane of the net. [Rules 11.I | Alt. 13.L]
 - d. A player may legally break the plane of the net (without contacting the net or contacting the surface of the opponent's court) to hit a ball **after it has bounced on the player's side of the net and traveled back over to the opponent's side of the net** without being touched. [Rules 11.I.1 | Alt. 13.M]
3. Shots around the Net Post
 - a. A player may return a ball around the net post below the height of the net. [Rules 11.M | Alt. 13.F]
 - b. Call a fault if the ball passes in the space between the net and the net post. [Rules 11.L.2 | Alt. 13.H.1]

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, call a fault 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. [Rules 11.L.5.a, 11.L.5.c | Alt. 13.C.1]
- b. On other than a serve, call for the point to be replayed if, after the ball goes over the net and before or after bouncing, the following occurs: [Rules 11.L.5.b | Alt. 13.D, 13.E]
 - 1) The ball hits any part of the crossbar, including the part of the bar that extends outside the sideline.
 - 2) The ball hits the center support base or any support base positioned within the sidelines.
 - 3) The ball gets caught between the net and the cross bar.
- c. Call a fault if the ball hits the crossbar or a support base before going over the net. [Rules 11.L.5.a | Alt. 13.B.1]
- d. Replay the rally if the net system malfunctions during play. [Rules 11.L.5.d | Alt. 13.N]

5. Draping Net [Rules 2.C.6 | Alt. 13.D]

Replay the rally if the ball bounces on a net that drapes on the court.

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D. Non-Standard Time-Outs

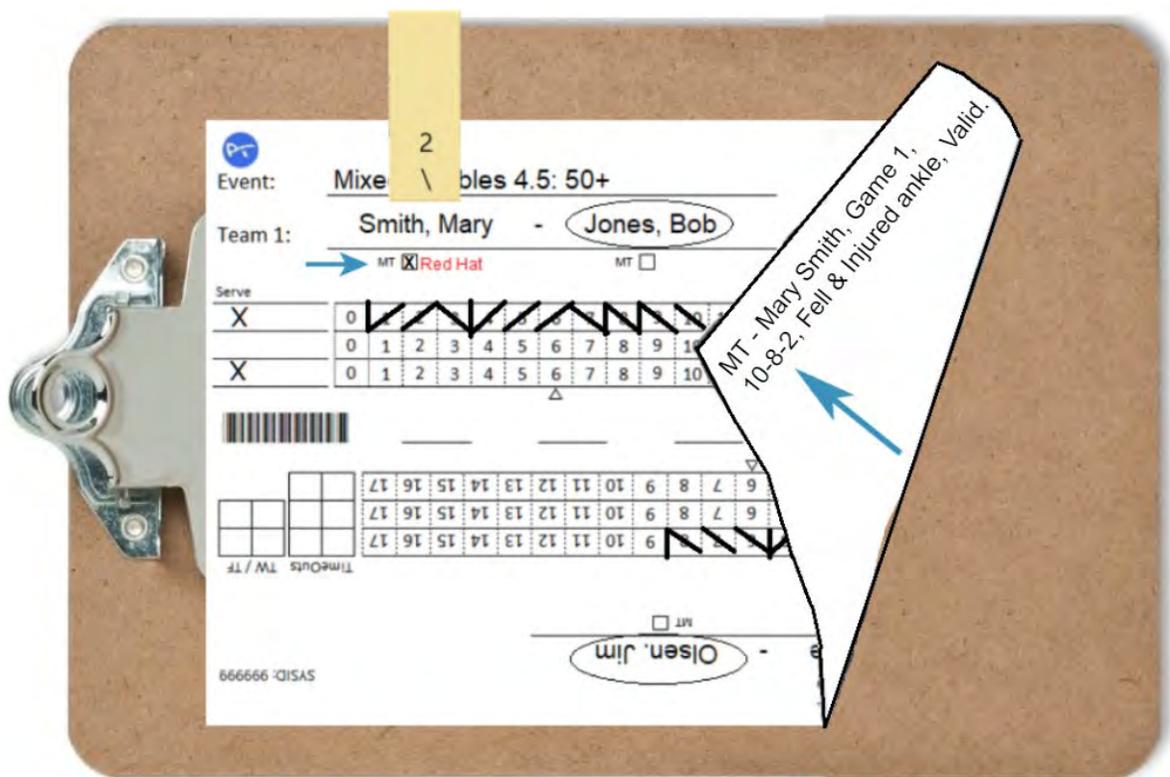
1. Medical Time-Out [Rules 10.B | Alt. 20.C]

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

- a. One medical time-out of 15 minutes maximum is allowed per player per match.
- b. Play continues to the conclusion of the rally. [Rules 11.F | Alt. 10.F]
- c. Announce “medical time-out” and announce the score (e.g., 5-2-2).
- d. Summon medical personnel (or the Tournament Director) to evaluate the player’s condition. Send a **medical alert electronically** or by a tournament volunteer or spectator.
- e. Summon clean-up assistance if there is any sign of blood on the player or the court. Do not resume play until the bleeding has been controlled and blood on clothing and the court has been removed. There is no time limit for blood clean-up. (See Section 5.D.2)
- 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 arrives, start your timer and allow up to 15 continuous minutes for medical attention. If less than 15 minutes are required to ready the player to resume play, the remaining time is lost.

- i. Advise medical personnel if a player’s head had forceful contact with a hard object, such as the court, a paddle, the net post, etc., to determine if the player may have suffered a concussion. In accordance with the [USA Pickleball concussion protocol](#), such a player must be immediately removed from play and not permitted to return until a written release from a licensed health care professional is provided to the Tournament Director.
- j. If medical personnel (or the Tournament Director) determine that there is not a valid medical condition, then charge a standard time-out (see Section 4.H.6) and issue a technical warning (see Section 5.G.2) to the player. If no standard time-out remains, call a technical foul (see Section 5.G.2). The medical time-out for the player is considered used and is no longer available. Advise the player of the situation.
- k. 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 14).
- l. Resume play when the player is able to continue playing by giving a 15-second warning, checking readiness of line judges (if applicable), followed by announcing “time in” and calling the score.
- m. If the player is not able to resume play after the timed 15 minutes, call a **match retirement** in favor of the opponent.

Figure 14 – Medical Time-Out Marking



2. Referee Time-Out [Rules 10.H.2 | Alt. 20.D]

Situations involving active bleeding, any foreign substance on the court, or other extenuating circumstance requiring an extended interruption of play must be promptly addressed.

- a. Allow the rally to complete and then stop play. [Rules 11.F | Alt. 10.F]
- b. Call a referee time-out if no player calls a time-out. Announce the score.
- c. If the situation involves a potential medical issue of a player: [Rules 10.H.2.a | Alt. 20.D.2]
 - 1) Summon medical personnel (or the Tournament Director).
 - 2) If it is determined that the player does not require treatment, then resume play. Do not charge the player a time-out.
 - 3) If it is determined to be a valid medical situation that requires treatment, announce that this is now a medical time-out charged to the player and follow the medical time-out procedures (see Section 5.D.1).
 - 4) If the player has previously used, or been charged, a medical time-out, then medical personnel (or the Tournament Director) will determine if the player can resume play.
- d. If the situation involves active bleeding that can be controlled without medical assistance (e.g., minor cut, nose bleed), do not summon medical personnel. Allow the player to control the blood using personal resources.
- e. If the situation involves blood, debris, water/fluids, or other foreign substances on the playing surface, seek assistance, if necessary, and have the substance removed or cleaned up. [Rules 10.B.5.a, 10.H.2.c | Alt. 20.D.3]
- f. Collect the ball if the ball has not been placed on the court under one of the player's paddles.
- g. No annotations are required on the scoresheet for a referee time-out.
- h. When the situation has been resolved and it is safe or appropriate to resume play, give a 15-second warning, check the readiness of line judges (if applicable), followed by announcing "time in" and calling the score.

3. Equipment Time-Out [Rules 10.D | Alt. 20.E]

Players are expected to keep all clothing and equipment in good playable condition and **are expected to use standard time-outs and time between games** for adjustments and replacement of equipment. If a team is out of standard time-outs and you determine that an equipment change or adjustment is necessary for fair and safe continuation of the match, call an equipment time-out not to exceed two minutes.

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

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

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E. Stoppage of Play

Actions other than faults that can result in a stoppage of play are summarized in Table 1. If a player's action occurs within the allowable time limit and the ball is in play (i.e., after the start of the score call), stop play to respond. Once the ball has been hit to make the serve, do not stop play unless you recognize a:

- Fault
 - Referee error
 - Hinder
 - Player intentionally stops play
1. 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.
 2. A 15-second warning **must** be announced to start play under the following circumstances:
 - a. When beginning any game.
 - b. Before the expiration of any time-out (i.e., 15 seconds remain).
 - c. After assessing any penalty.

Play may begin before the expiration of the 15 seconds if all players are ready. However, at the end of the 15 seconds, play must begin promptly by announcing “time in” and calling the score to start the rally, even if the server and receiver are not on the court or are not ready to play. **NOTE:** Use “time in” to resume play after all 15-second warnings. “Resume play” has been discontinued as a required announcement.
 3. You may also use a 15-second warning to avert a potential delay of game in situations where the players are slow to get in position.

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TABLE 1 – ACTIONS THAT CAN INTERRUPT PLAY

Player Action	When Action is Allowed	Rule
Hinder call	At time of occurrence	8.C Alt. 5.E
Not ready signal	Before start of score call	4.C Alt. 8.A
Time-out request	Before server hits ball to serve	4.M.10, 4.N.3 Alt. 20.A.2
Score confirmation	Before server hits ball to serve	4.B.8, 4.B.9 Alt. 19.A
Correct server or receiver request	Before server hits ball to serve	4.B.8, 4.B.9 Alt. 19.B
Correct player position request	Before server hits ball to serve	4.B.8, 4.B.9 Alt. 19.C
Score correction request	Before player hits third shot or server hits the ball to start next rally, whichever occurs first	4.K, 4.K.1, 4.K.2 Alt. 8.F
Incorrect server or position appeal	Before server hits ball to start next rally	4.B.11 Alt. 7.C
Line call appeal	Before server hits ball to start next rally	6.D.5 Alt. 18.D.1
Damaged ball appeal	Before server hits ball to start next rally	11.E Alt. 19.D

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F. Judgment Calls

1. Deciding When to Call the Score

Following each dead ball (i.e., “point”, “second server” or “side out”), 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. Things to remember:

- a. Allow players to quickly hydrate and towel off between rallies or when there is an interruption in play that does not require their attention. [Rules 10.C | Alt. 10.]
- b. Any player who retrieves the ball after a rally deserves sufficient time to return to position before play continues.
- c. After you call the score, the server is entitled to serve immediately. [Rules 4.E | Alt. 8.D]
- d. Call the score prior to all players being in position if:
 - 1) Players carry on a conversation without moving toward position.
 - 2) Players take an excessive amount of time toweling off or taking a drink.
 - 3) Players, typically those who are stacking, take an excessive amount of time determining their positions.

2. Line Calls

- a. Make the following line calls without an appeal by a player:
 - 1) Service foot faults. (See Section 5.A.11.)
 - 2) Short serves. (See Section 5.A.13.)
 - 3) NVZ infractions. (See Section 5.B.)
 - 4) Line calls at the end of a rally when the view of the responsible line judge is blocked, but only if you clearly see where the ball landed. You must canvass the other line judges if you cannot make the line call. (See Section 6.E.3.)
- b. You must wait for an appeal before ruling on any other line calls. [Rules 13.F | Alt. 15.D.8]
 - 1) Players must appeal line calls made at the end of a rally before the server hits the ball to start the next rally. [Rules 6.D.5 | Alt. 18.D.1]
 - 2) Do not overrule a call unless you are certain the player's or line judge's call was incorrect. If you clearly saw the ball land "in" or "out," **when appealed**, give a ruling and that ruling stands.
 - 3) Be definitive in your response. Do not say, "I think the ball was..." Preferably say, "I saw the ball..." or "The ball was..."
 - 4) If you did not clearly see the ball land, say, "I did not clearly see it." If there are line judges, consult the other line judges to determine if any of them saw where the ball landed.
 - 5) If you overrule an "in" call as "out," the team that hit the ball in question loses the rally.
 - 6) If you overrule an "out" call as "in," the team that made the out call loses the rally. However, if the call was made by a line judge, replay the rally.
 - 7) A player may override any line call to favor the opponent, whether the call was made by another player, a line judge, or you. The player override (to favor opponent) takes precedence over line judge and referee calls.

TABLE 2 – LINE CALL APPEAL ACTIONS

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

* NOTE: An officiating error occurs when an official's "out" call is overruled or overridden, resulting in the opponent being given an opportunity to replay the rally.

3. Hinders [Rules 7.O, 8.C | Alt. 5.E, 19.F]

When an object (e.g., ball) or a person enters the court, or any element disrupts play (e.g., gust of wind topples a temporary net) or poses a threat to the safe continuation of play, stop play immediately and replay the rally after clearing the obstruction. If you disagree with a player's hinder call, call a fault against the offending player.

4. Damaged Balls [Rules 11.E | Alt. 10.E, 19.D]

Examine the ball to confirm the ball is damaged before issuing a replacement ball. Any player may inspect the replacement ball. However, the player who will serve next may select the ball if there is more than one.

- a. Despite a ball being damaged, play continues to the completion of the rally.
- b. Call a fault against a player who stops play due to a suspected damaged ball.
- c. If you determine that a damaged ball affected the outcome of the rally, replay the rally.
- d. Between rallies and before the ball is hit to make the serve, any player may appeal a ball as damaged and request a replacement ball. Based on your determination, return the same or a replacement ball to the requesting player. Re-call the score if you had called it before the appeal.
- e. Issue a technical warning to a player who crushes the ball without allowing it to be examined.

5. Double or Triple Bounce [Rules 7.E | Alt. 10.B]

When a ball bounces twice in a player's court before being returned to the opponent, call "fault." A wheelchair player is allowed two bounces before hitting a return; therefore, the fault on a wheelchair player occurs when the ball bounces three times. Accurately detecting too many bounces can be difficult when the player's paddle hits the ground at or close to the same time the ball is hit. You must determine if the ball was hit before or after the second (or third) bounce. If the player does not acknowledge too many bounces and you are unsure whether too many bounces occurred, allow play to continue. If the opposing team stops play claiming too many bounces and you clearly saw that the ball was hit before the extra bounce, call a fault against the opponent for stopping play.

6. Distractions [Rules 3.A.6, 11.J | Alt. 10.D]

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 on any player for actions or vocalizations **while an opponent is preparing to hit or is hitting the ball**, such as waving their arms or paddle, stomping their feet, or unusual shouting. However, if you do not call a distraction fault immediately and the opponent continues to play, then you may assume the player is not distracted. 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 faults. Although the specific rule allowing players to appeal a distraction at the end of a rally has been rescinded, players can appeal any judgement calls.

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G. Enforcement Issues with Players and Spectators

1. Faults

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

2. Referee Errors

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

3. Questioned Calls

When a call is questioned by a player and the issue is not resolved quickly, call all players to the net and calmly discuss its resolution.

- a. Ignore spectator comments. Spectators are not part of the match and must not be permitted to become involved. [Rules 13.C.2.a | Alt. 6.J]
- b. Consult 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. [Rules 13.F.1, 13.F.2 | Alt. 15.D.9]

4. Coaching and Spectator Comments [Rules 13.G.1.j | Alt. 19.E]

Coaching is instructing or directing a player or team so they can gain an advantage or avoid violating the rules (i.e., win a rally or not commit a fault). Coaching by non-players is not permitted except 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 in a foreign language, make a general reminder about coaching during play. 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 technical warning against a player or team that you can determine is being coached (see Section 5.H.2.b).

- b. 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.”

“You can do this.”

“Keep it going.”

“Come on.”

- c. 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.
 - d. 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. You must be careful to avoid invading any player’s privacy. However, if you suspect that electronic coaching has taken place, report the situation after the match to the head referee or Tournament Director.
5. Coaching by the Referee

It is possible for a referee to 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. You may make comments that apply equally to both teams to help control or facilitate the match, including issuing a verbal warning 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. Avoid offering advice about how to avoid a future infraction as that is coaching.
 6. Keeping Both Sides Equally Informed

If a player approaches you for a rule or procedure clarification (not a judgment call, e.g., line call) or to influence your judgment and you engage in conversation with the player, make sure the opposing team is equally informed. Call a referee time-out, move to center court, and invite a player from the opposing team (or all players) to join you to hear the conversation. This demonstrates fairness and avoids one team perceiving that the opponent is gaining an advantage. If an intense discussion begins to develop, cut it off, send all parties to their playing positions, and resume play. Announcing a 15-second warning to indicate that you are going to call the score can be an effective way to end the discussion.
 7. Obtaining Assistance

Summon the Tournament Director or head referee when requested or when necessary to resolve disputes or to interpret a rule. [Rules 13.A.1 | Alt. 14.K, 19.G]

 - a. If your ruling is correct, charge the challenging player a time-out and issue a technical warning. [Rules 13.G.1.g | Alt. 19.G.1] If no time-outs are available, charge the player a technical foul. [Rules 13.G.2.d | Alt. 19.G.1]
 - b. If your ruling is incorrect, reverse the ruling and, if appropriate, replay the rally.

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H. Player Behavior and Remedies

1. Dealing with Unruly Players

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

The challenge of preventing conflict escalation requires walking the fine line between warding off problems before they happen and coaching the players. On rare occasion when you feel the need to settle an issue with a player once and for all, be sure all players are present when you address the issue and be careful to avoid actions and words that might be construed as coaching or inserting yourself.

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.

- a. Most importantly, maintain a calm demeanor and open mind.
 - b. Meet the player(s) at center court, away from spectators, and calmly discuss the source of irritation.
 - c. Avoid argument.
 - d. Take time to understand the complaint; it may be a simple misunderstanding.
 - e. If the issue is a rule or rule interpretation, summon the head referee or Tournament Director for clarification.
 - f. Players have the right to request a ruling from the Tournament Director. [Rules 13.A.1 | Alt. 14.K, 19.G] Honor such a request by calling a referee time-out and summoning the Tournament Director. However, the requesting player is subject to the loss of a time-out and a technical warning or technical foul if your ruling is correct. [Rules 13.G.1.g, 13.G.2.d | Alt. 19.G.1]
 - g. If a player becomes verbally abusive, issue a technical warning. If the conduct continues or intensifies, issue another technical warning. The second technical warning will result in a harsher penalty (technical foul, game forfeit, or match forfeit), which may or may not restore calm.
 - h. If the player makes threats against you, a player or a spectator, issue a technical foul (i.e., not preceded by a technical warning).
 - i. If a player's conduct becomes detrimental to the tournament, advise the Tournament Director, who can eject or expel a player from the tournament. [Rules 13.A.4, 13.M | Alt. 21.]
2. Verbal Warnings, Technical Warnings and Technical Fouls [Rules 13.G | Alt. 21.A-21.E]
You are empowered and expected to call verbal warnings, technical warnings, and technical fouls to address unsportsmanlike conduct. Call them immediately upon identifying an infraction. Verbal warnings, technical warnings, or technical fouls may be called from the time the players arrive at the court for a match until the match is completed. Report infractions observed after the completion of the match to the Tournament Director.

A progressive system of penalties, ranging in severity from technical warning to expulsion, is used to address inappropriate player conduct. In addition, a verbal warning, which is a non-punitive caution, may be issued only as a pre-emptive measure when the use of profanity is first detected during a match.

For violations that have more than one penalty level, if you are unsure of which level to apply, err on the side of caution and use the lesser of the available options.

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TABLE 3 – PENALTY SYSTEM

Level	Penalty	Issued by
0	Verbal Warning	Referee
1	Technical Warning	Referee
2	Technical Foul	Referee
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 the penalties discussed in Sections 5.H.2 through 5.H.5 is provided in Appendix D.

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. 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; any rally that is interrupted by such a call will be replayed.

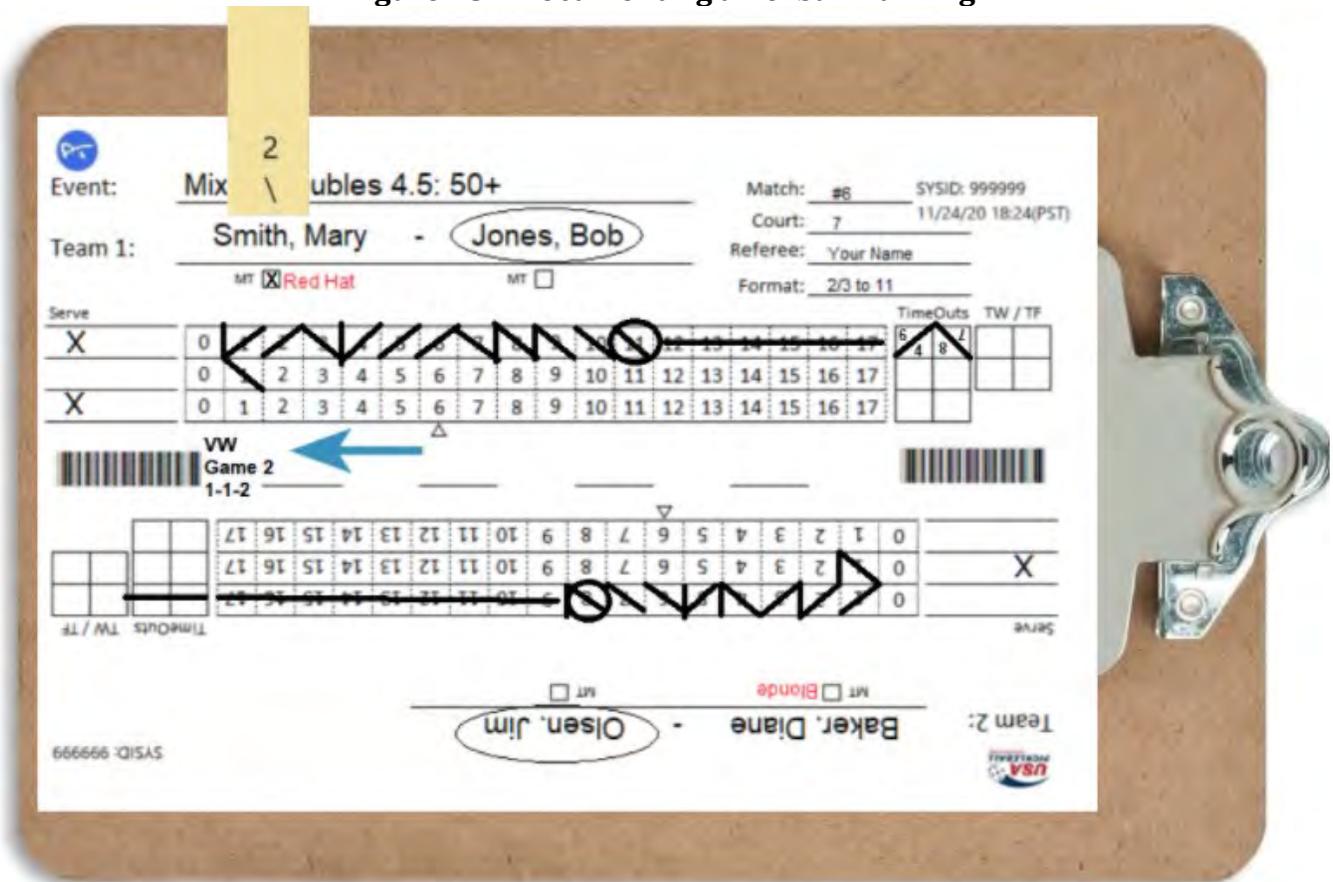
a. Verbal Warning – Dealing with Profanity

Language and gestures considered profane must be promptly addressed. If a first instance of the use of profanity does not warrant a technical warning or technical foul, a verbal warning may be issued to all players. Only one verbal warning may be issued during a match. A verbal warning can be given before or in conjunction with assessing a technical warning or technical foul, depending on the circumstances.

- 1) Stop play to advise the players that you are issuing a verbal warning. You may quickly call all players together at the net if a brief explanation is necessary. Do not point out which player made the infraction unless requested by a player. Inform the players that the use of any further profanity will result in a technical warning or technical foul, depending on the severity.
- 2) Document a verbal warning on the scoresheet by marking “VW” to the left of the final scores in the middle section of the scoresheet along with the game number and score. Do not rotate the clipboard (Figure 15).
- 3) If a first incidence of profanity warrants a technical warning or technical foul, a verbal warning may be issued in addition to the technical warning or technical foul.
- 4) Continue play by announcing a 15-second warning for the players to become ready. At the end of 15 seconds, announce “time in” and call the score to start the rally, even if the server and receiver are not on the court or are not ready to play. Play may resume early if the players are ready.

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Figure 15 – Documenting a Verbal Warning



b. Technical Warnings and Technical Fouls

The assessment of a technical warning is the normal means used to address unsportsmanlike conduct of a relatively minor nature. However, a technical foul (equivalent to two technical warnings) should be immediately assessed if a player's behavior is extreme and warrants a more severe penalty. The accumulation of two consecutive technical warnings also results in the assessment of a technical foul. Assessment of a technical foul results in one point being deducted from the score of the offending side, unless the offending side's score is zero, in which case one point is awarded to the non-offending side.

- 1) To assess a technical warning or technical foul, stop play and announce the infraction, e.g., "technical warning for use of profanity." You may quickly call all players together at the net if a brief explanation is necessary.
- 2) Write "TW" or "TF" (as applicable) in one of the "TW/TF" boxes for the offending team. 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 (Figure 16). 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 17). **NOTE:** Record this information at the time of the action and as quickly as possible to avoid a lengthy delay in the resumption of play.

Figure 16 – Documenting a Technical Warning Against the Serving Team (Front)

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

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

VW Game 2 1-1-2

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

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Figure 17 – Documenting a Technical Warning Against the Serving Team (Back)

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

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

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

VW Game 2 1-1-2

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

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- 3) To document the point adjustment **when the score of the offending team is one or more points:**
 - a) 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.
 - b) Write "TF" in the box with the new (lower) score (Figure 18).
 - c) When the team scores its next point, mark the appropriate diagonal line in the scorebox of the point that was erased (Figure 19).

Figure 18 – Deducting a Point for a Technical Foul

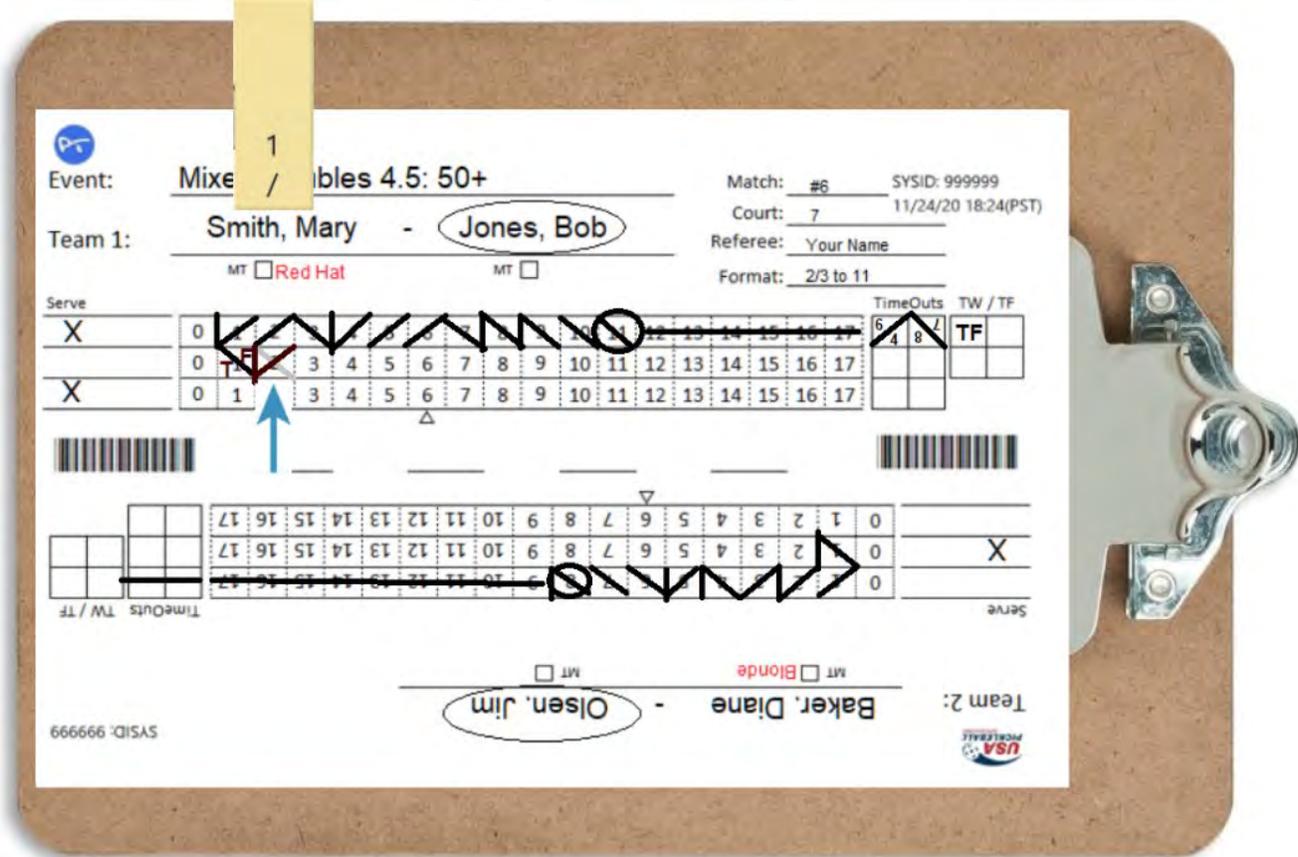
This scoresheet shows the deduction (erasure) of a point from the serving team's score after a technical foul assessment.

The scoresheet is for a Mixed Doubles match (4.5: 50+) between Smith, Mary and Jones, Bob. The match is #6, SYSID: 999999, on Court 7, dated 11/24/20 at 18:24 (PST). The referee is 'Your Name' and the format is '2/3 to 11'. The scoresheet shows a score of 2-0. A technical foul (TF) is marked at the 11th point of the first game. The scoresheet includes fields for event, match, court, referee, and format, as well as scoreboards for both teams and a serve indicator.

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Figure 19 – Scoring a Point After a Technical Foul

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

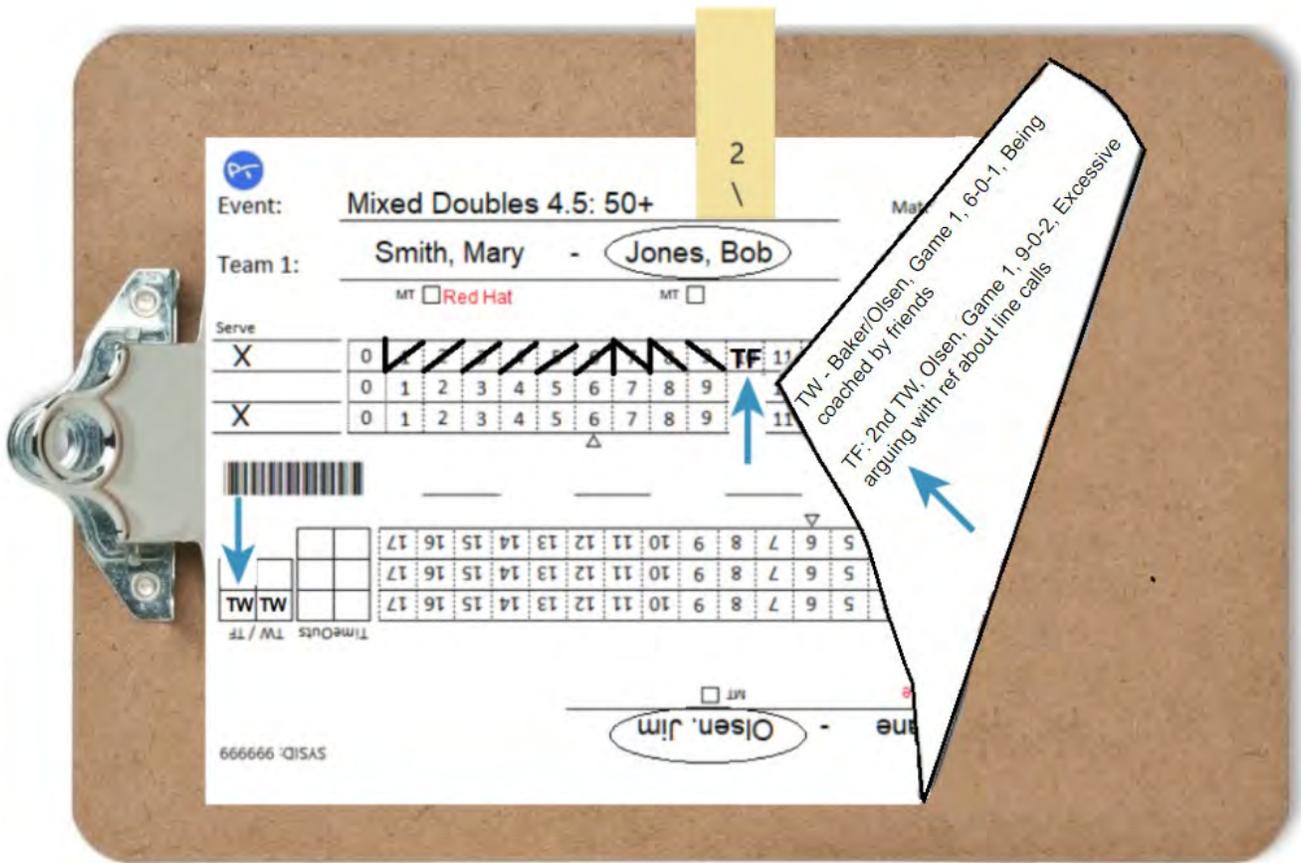


- 4) To document the point adjustment **when the score of the offending team is zero**: Add one point to the score of the non-offending team by marking “TF” in the appropriate score box.
 - a) If the technical foul is committed by the receiving team, mark “TF” right-side-up in the appropriate score box of the serving team (Figure 20).
 - b) 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.
- 5) Make sure the team whose score has been adjusted understands that a point has been deducted or added, (e.g., you may state “Your score is now ...”). The player(s) must adjust their positions on their own to match the new score.
- 6) After assessing a technical warning or a technical foul, continue play after announcing a 15-second warning for the players to become ready. At the end of 15 seconds, announce “resume play” and call the score to start the rally, even if the server and receiver are not on the court or are not ready to play. Play may resume early if the players are ready.

[Remainder of this page is intentionally blank]

Figure 20 – Adding a Point for a Technical Foul

This scoresheet shows the awarding of a point to the opponent for a technical foul when the offending team has no points.



3. Game Forfeit

A game forfeit is imposed when a team accumulates any combination of a technical warning and technical foul during a match. A game forfeit is also imposed when a player arrives more than 10 minutes late for a multiple-game match. (A match forfeit occurs at 15 minutes.) **NOTE:** A game forfeit that is imposed for reporting late does not contribute toward a match forfeit. A match forfeit only results from a combination of technical warnings and technical fouls assessed during the match.

- a. If the assessment of a technical warning or a technical foul triggered the game forfeit, follow the procedure in 5.H.2.b to annotate the technical warning or technical foul. However, do not make a point adjustment in the score 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 21).
- c. End a game in progress.
- d. Finish annotating the scoresheet as follows:
 - 1) Circle or lightly shade the winning score for the non-offending team.

- 2) Circle or lightly shade zero as the score and line through all scored points for the offending or retiring team.
- 3) Line through all unused points and unused time-out boxes for all games started.
- 4) Circle the non-offending or non-retiring team and write "Winners."
- 5) Write "Opponent Forfeit" or "Opponent Retirement," as applicable, under "Winners".

Figure 22 – Documenting a Match Forfeit for Player No-Show

The scoresheet is for a Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+ match. Team 1 consists of Smith, Mary and Jones, Bob. Team 2 consists of Baker, Diane and Olsen, Jim. The match is #6, held on court 7 on 11/24/20 at 18:24(PST). The referee is 'Your Name' and the format is 2/3 to 11. The scoresheet shows two games, both ending 11-0. A large oval is drawn around the team names and the 'Winners' section, with a blue arrow pointing to 'WINNERS OPPONENT FORFEIT'. The scoresheet also includes a 'Serve' section with a grid for points 0-17 and 'TimeOuts' for TW and TF.

5. Ejection and Expulsion

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

- a. Follow the match forfeit procedure to end the match, awarding the match to the opponent.
- b. Write "Opponent Ejection" or "Opponent Expulsion," as applicable, under "Winners" on the scoresheet and indicate which player was ejected or expelled.

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I. Error in Match-Winning Rally

In the rare event that a player or team appeals to you that there was an error in correct server or correct player position during the match-winning rally, you can correct the error up until the time the scoresheet is handed off to the event desk. Within that period, if you confirm an error, the match must be reconvened and completed with the error corrected. [Rules 4.B.11 | Alt. 7.C]

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Section 6: Medal Matches with Line Judges

Line judges are generally used for gold medal matches and sometimes for bronze medal matches. They are an integral part of the officiating team, and their proficiency is critical to the smooth operation of a match. Their primary responsibility is to call their assigned lines, which fosters more accurate line calling and fair play. This relieves players of line-calling responsibility, except for the center service line. [Rules 13.E | Alt. 18.C]

Beginning in 2021, two levels of trained line judges are being implemented. Those who attend formal training classes, followed by an assessment, may achieve the level of Registered Line Judge. An advanced program consisting of more training and experience is available for those who wish to achieve the level of Certified Line Judge and officiate professional events. More details on the [USA Pickleball Line Judge Program](#) can be found on the Officiating page of the USA Pickleball website.

This section establishes standardization and consistency in how line judges perform their duties on the court. It presents the USA Pickleball Association/IFP 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](#).

A. Referee Responsibilities

1. The referee is responsible for all aspects of a match, including calls made during the match. As such, the referee is responsible for the line judges, their actions, and their role in the match.
2. The referee will brief the line judges prior to the start of the match. (See Section 6.D.)
3. The referee will check the readiness of line judges before starting play at the beginning of each game and after each extended interruption of play (e.g., time-out, side change, technical warning, technical foul) by asking “Line judges ready?” and receiving an audible or visual response from each.
4. If line judges do not make their calls loud, clear, and immediate (both verbally and visually), the referee will call “referee time-out” and remind the line judge(s) of the proper procedures.
5. The referee will not allow players or spectators to confront or otherwise interact with line judges.
6. The referee has the authority and responsibility to replace any line judge who does not perform to standards.
7. If all players agree and request replacement of a line judge, the referee will arrange a replacement or summon the Tournament Director to make the final decision. [Rules 13.K | Alt. 19.H]

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. Like referees, line judges must adhere to a code of conduct. It is important that they:

1. Make all calls impartially, fairly, and consistently.
2. Use a professional and pleasant demeanor.
 - a. Treat players, referees, other line judges, and spectators with respect.
 - b. Avoid overfriendliness with players and spectators while on the court.
 - c. Avoid comments and emotional reactions, either positive or negative, regarding the play of either side.
3. Devote full attention to the match being refereed.
4. Do not converse with others during the match.
5. Be sure their cellular phone is in silent mode or is turned off.
6. Do not wear earbuds or carry any device that could distract them or give the appearance of distracting them from the match.
7. Excuse themselves from line judging the match of a relative, close friend, or doubles partner.

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C. Line Judge Team Options

The Tournament Director determines the number of line judges for each match.

1. Six Line Judges: A line judge for each baseline and half of each sideline. (Recommended for major tournaments and tournaments with prize money.)
2. Four Line Judges: A line judge for each baseline and each full sideline.
3. Two Line Judges: A line judge for each baseline. (The referee and a supporting referee call their respective sidelines. This is the least accurate technique.)
4. No Line Judges: Players make all line calls other than the referee's calls (service foot faults, short serves, and NVZ faults).

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D. Line Judge Positioning

1. The referee will position line judges according to circumstances (e.g., position of sun, location of spectators, actions on adjacent courts).
2. Line judges should align themselves just inside of 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. The Tournament Director will determine if conditions warrant any line judge to sit.
3. If possible and it can be done safely, line judges should look over a fence rather than through it.
4. 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.

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E. Line Judge Briefing by the Referee

1. Prior to the match, the referee will normally gather all line judges for instruction. If circumstances warrant, they may be instructed separately.
2. The referee will assign each line judge to a baseline or a sideline.
3. The referee will review line judge responsibilities and the line-calling procedures to be used (see Sections F, G, and H below). Line judges are instructed to:
 - a. Ignore line calls made by players or spectators, even though players often continue to make their own line calls.
 - b. Not solicit or acknowledge the opinions of players or spectators.
 - c. Signal to the referee that they are ready with a raised arm 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.
 - d. Silence or turn off their cell phone and other electronic devices and not use them while on duty. It is imperative that line judges stay fully focused on their responsibilities while on duty.
 - e. Not leave the court until released by the referee; a tie-breaker match may have to be played following the initial championship match.

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F. Judging In and Out Balls

The criteria for line judges and referees, when making line calls, are different from those assigned to players. The standard for line judges and referees is Rule 6.C |Alt.6.C: A ball contacting the playing surface completely outside of the court is “out” (Figures 23 and 24). Players are bound by Rule 6.D.7 |Alt. 6.E to only call a ball “out” if they can clearly see a space between the line and the ball when it hits the playing surface.

Consistency in judging in and out balls by the entire officiating team is imperative. Line judges must make “out” calls confidently, without hesitation, and as accurately as possible, but accuracy on close shots can be difficult because they happen quickly. Line judges must not call a ball “out” unless they clearly saw the ball land outside the court. If there is doubt, they should consider the ball in. Therefore, it is important that line judges understand what constitutes an in ball and an out ball.

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

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Figure 24 – Out Illustration

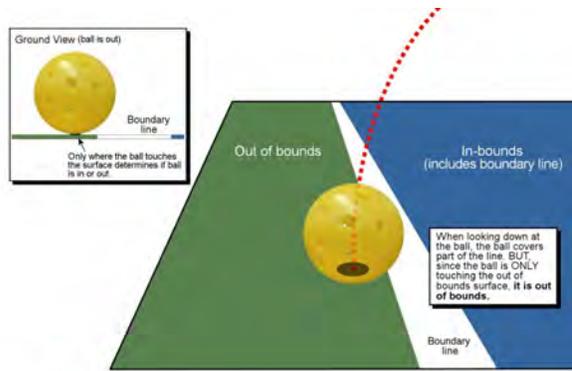
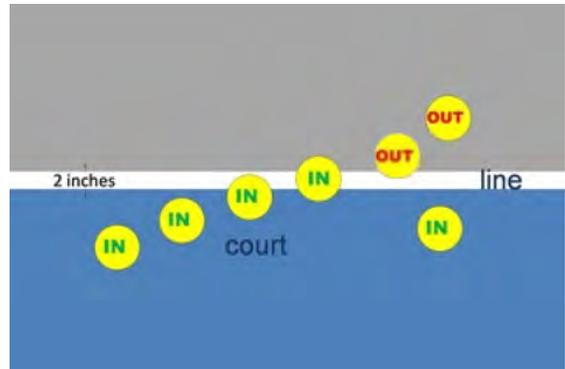


Figure 23 – In and Out Illustrations



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.

Normally, line judges will make “out” calls when they occur. However, a new silent option is available to tournament directors in which players make their own line calls and line judges only make calls when requested by the referee after an appeal by a player.

1. “Out” Calls

- 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 should 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 call, line judges must also raise their arm in the out-of-bounds direction (Figure 25). 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.
- c. Line judges should hold their arm signals for several seconds to give the referee and players an opportunity to see the signal.

2. “In” Calls

- a. Line judges will signal a ball “in” (**with no verbal call**) only if the ball contacted the court close enough to the line that players or the referee may want confirmation that the ball was in. The “in” signal can be made immediately or when the referee asks the line judge for confirmation (which may just be a glance in the line judge’s direction).
- b. The signal for an in ball is both arms outstretched forward with the palms facing down (Figure 26). Line judges should hold this signal for a few seconds to give the referee a chance to look for it.

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Figure 25 – “Out” Call



Figure 26 – “In” Call



3. View Blocked

- a. If a line judge does not clearly see the ball contact the playing surface, the line judge should immediately signal by placing both hands over the eyes, indicating that the ball was blocked from view (Figure 27). They should hold this signal for a few seconds to give the referee a chance to look for it.

Figure 27 – Blocked View



- b. The referee will immediately make the call if he or she clearly saw the ball land.
- c. If the referee did not clearly see the ball land **and the shot ended the rally or a player appealed the line call**, the referee must canvass the other line judges to see whether any clearly saw the ball land and can make the call.

- d. If none of the line judges nor the referee is able to make the line call, the referee will order the point replayed.

4. Foot Faults

Calling foot faults is the primary responsibility of the referee, but baseline and sideline judges may also call service foot faults and sideline foot faults for their assigned line since they should have a clear view.

- a. Baseline judges should call “foot fault” if a server’s foot is touching the baseline or court surface **when the ball is hit**.
- b. Sideline judges should call “foot fault” if a server’s foot is touching **outside** the imaginary extension of the sideline **when the ball is hit**.
- c. Sideline judges should call “foot fault” if a player’s foot touches the sideline **of the no-volley zone** while or immediately after volleying the ball.
- d. Sideline judges should call “foot fault” if a player makes contact with the no-volley zone and does not establish contact outside the no-volley zone sideline with both feet before volleying the ball.

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H. Other Line Judge Responsibilities

Because line judges are part of the officiating team, they may also provide the referee with information regarding actions other than line calls 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.

1. Incorrect Server, or Receiver or Player Out of Position

When a line judge notices that the wrong player is serving or receiving, or a player is out of position, **at the end of the rally** the line judge should clasp their hands over their head (Figure 28).

2. Coaching

When a line judge notices coaching by a spectator other than during time-outs and between games, the line judge should extend their arms upward in a “V” position (Figure 29).

[Remainder of this page is intentionally blank]

Figure 28 – Wrong Server, Out of Position, or Wrong Receiver



Figure 29 – Coaching by a Spectator



3. Net System and Other Common Violations

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.

- a. Sideline judges should be alert for players, paddles, or 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. All line judges should be alert for double bounces (triple bounces for wheelchair players) and a ball in play touching a player or anything a player is wearing or carrying, as well as player misconduct.

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I. Overrule or Override of a Line Judge's Call

A player can ask the referee to rule on a line call made by a line judge. If the referee **clearly** sees a ball differently than the line judge, he or she has the authority to overrule the call. A player can also override a line judge call to favor the opponent. 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.

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J. Tiebreaker Match

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

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

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Section 7: Summary

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

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

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Appendix A: USA Pickleball Certified Referee Program

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

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

With the proper training, practice, and experience, you can qualify to apply for USA Pickleball Referee Certification. Becoming a USA Pickleball certified referee requires commitment. You must be proficient in refereeing matches for all player skill levels and ages. Ideally, before you apply for certification, you should attend a USA Pickleball referee training class, develop your skills through refereeing hundreds of practice matches, obtain Level 1 and/or Level 2 referee skill ratings, and be mentored by a certified referee to prepare for evaluation. Once you are well-prepared for evaluation, you may submit your application to the program. The [certification application](#) can be accessed on the USA Pickleball website. After acceptance into the program and paying a nominal fee, applicants undergo a comprehensive evaluation during which they are required to demonstrate their proficiency of the best practices set forth in this handbook and their knowledge of the rules, both on-court and in an oral exam setting. After passing the evaluation, you will receive your certified referee credentials and official certified referee shirts to wear proudly. Recertification is required every three years.

For more information on the [referee certification](#) process, go to the USA Pickleball website.

Good luck and have fun!

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Appendix B: USA Pickleball Line Judge Program

Line judges are an integral part of the officiating teams used at tournaments sanctioned by USA Pickleball. The goal of the USA Pickleball Line Judge Program is to develop and recognize line judges who have mastered the basic skills of line judging pickleball. It is a step towards building a cadre of competent line judges to officiate at sanctioned tournaments across the country and around the world.

With the proper training, practice, and experience, you can qualify to become a USA Pickleball registered or certified line judge. To become a registered or certified line judge, contact your regional [Referee Training Coordinator](#) to attend a USA Pickleball line judge training class. After training, you will develop your skills through practice matches. After successfully passing an assessment by a line judge trainer, you will be registered to line judge medal matches at USA Pickleball tournaments.

To be part of the officiating team for the most prestigious events, such as USA Pickleball national championships and professional tournaments, you must acquire certification through additional training and experience. You must be proficient in line judging matches for all player skill levels and ages. Certification requirements include passing a comprehensive evaluation to demonstrate your proficiency in following the best practices outlined in the Line Judge Guide. You may pay a nominal fee to cover the cost of certified line judge credentials and official shirts.

Additional information can be found on the [USA Pickleball Officiating](#) webpage. Contact your regional [Referee Training Coordinator](#) for current information on the Line Judge program.

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Appendix C: Dual Referee Option

Introduction: A refereeing option is available for tournaments that include matches for professional players.¹ This option typically employs two certified referees selected by the Head Referee, one as the Lead Referee and the other as a Second (or Supporting) Referee to assist the Lead Referee. This refereeing option can be used to officiate professional matches designated by the Tournament Director. The option may be used with or without line judges.

History and Background: The dual referee option was created to keep pace with developments in the game at the highest levels. The speed of the game and advanced skills of some players can sometimes challenge the skills of the best referees to concurrently see all player actions reliably and accurately during play. Some player maneuvers occur almost simultaneously and so quickly that it is virtually impossible for one person to see everything. The referee may sometimes need to quickly reposition to avoid a collision with an oncoming player executing a complex move and can wind up in a less than optimal position to see resulting violations. To address concerns that calls were being missed, the dual referee option was introduced to add a second set of eyes on the court from the opposite side of the net with the objective that all player actions during a match will be seen by at least one of the referees.

Goals: The goals of this option are:

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

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. The Lead Referee will make all final decisions regarding the resolution of any disagreements and the assessment of penalties.

Second Referee Responsibilities:

Primary: The primary responsibility of the Second Referee is to assist the Lead Referee in calling faults for no-volley zone and plane of the net violations occurring on both sides of the net.

Secondary: The Second Referee will also assist the Lead Referee in observing all other player activity on and around the court during the match and specifically during dead ball times.

Referee Calls:

1. NVZ faults
2. Plane of the net faults

¹ The use of this option for professional player matches only, including the use of only certified referees, is under review. Tournament Directors, head referees, and referee coordinators who wish to use the dual referee option on non-pro matches or with non-certified referees should obtain advance approval from the Director of Officiating.

3. Service foot faults²
4. Short serves
5. Player safety issues

The Second Referee will signal other violations, in particular any of the following, by a raised hand after the rally. Both referees will meet at the center of the net to discuss the observed violation. The Lead Referee will decide what action to take.

1. Out of position players
2. Incorrect server or receiver
3. Paddle thrown by player
4. Unsafe return of ball by player
5. Ball deliberately damaged by player

Position: The Second Referee will stand on the opposite end of the net from the Lead Referee. The Second Referee may kneel, if necessary, to accommodate video equipment, spectators, etc.

Scorekeeping: The Second Referee will not maintain a scoresheet.

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 should then solicit the opinion of the Second Referee. If the Second Referee can make a decisive call, the Second Referee's call will stand.

Conflicting Calls and Disagreements: In all cases where there may be conflicting or simultaneous calls (e.g., Lead Referee calls crossing the plane fault on one team and Second Referee calls touching of the net fault on opponents), 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. Teamwork between the two referees is essential to the success of the dual referee system.

Pre-Match Briefings

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

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

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² During the serve, the Lead referee should concentrate on the server complying with the service motion elements or the proper ball release. The Second referee should focus on the placement of the server's feet or wheelchair.

Appendix D: Reasons for Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalties

Verbal Warning (VW) (Single warning to all players)	Technical Warnings (TW)	Technical Fouls (TF) (No TW previously issued)	Game Forfeits (GF)	Match Forfeits (MF)	Ejection From Competition (TD discretion)	Expulsion From Tournament Venue (TD discretion)
	Objectionable language at another person	Extreme objectionable language	Failure to report 10 min after 2/3 match called	Failure to report 15 min after 2/3 match called		
Profanity violation imminent	Profanity (audible or visual)	Extreme profanity (audible or visual)	1 TW + 1 TF	Failure to report 10 min after 1-15 or 1-21 match called	Flagrant/Injurious behavior impacting tournament	Flagrant/Injurious behavior impacting tournament
	Aggressive arguing with official, player, spectator		1 TF + 1 TW	2 TW + 1 TF or 1 TF + 2 TW or 1 TW + 1 TF + 1 TW	Using ethnic, religious, racial, sexist, or homophobic slurs	Using ethnic, religious, racial, sexist, or homophobic slurs
	Damaging or aggressively striking dead ball (no danger)	Striking/throwing dead ball (negligence/person hit)		2 TF	Striking/throwing dead ball (injury)	Striking/throwing dead ball (injury)
	Disrupting flow of game between rallies	Aggressively/recklessly throwing paddle (no person hit/no damage)		Striking/throwing dead ball (frustration/anger/person hit /property damage)	Aggressively/recklessly throwing paddle (injury)	Aggressively/recklessly throwing paddle (injury)
	Disrupting flow of game with repeated line call appeals	Threat or challenge to any person		Aggressively/recklessly throwing paddle (frustration/anger/person hit/property damage)	Intentionally spitting or coughing on any person	Intentionally spitting or coughing on any person
	Loss of challenge to referee ruling (plus loss of TO)	Loss of challenge to referee ruling (no TO available)		Refusal to wear starting server ID	Not exhibiting best effort	Not exhibiting best effort
	Invalid medical time-out (+ loss of TO)	Invalid medical time-out (no TO available)		Deliberate, aggressive physical contact with opponent, official, spectator		
	Receiving illegal coaching	2 TW (1 TW + 1 previous TW)		Using non-compliant paddle (during match)		
	Other minor unsportsmanlike behavior	Other extreme unsportsmanlike behavior		TD Discretion Failure to comply with venue rules, improper conduct, abuse of hospitality, other rules & procedures		COLOR KEY Purple = Profanity Blue = Ball Green = Paddle

