



2020 OFFICIAL RULEBOOK



USAPA & IFP OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

The USA Pickleball Association (USAPA) and the International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) were organized to perpetuate the growth and advancement of pickleball on an international level and to set goals for worldwide play and recognition. The USAPA and IFP are committed to furthering the growth and development of pickleball among all players.

The USAPA and IFP are the governing bodies of American and international pickleball that formulate and interpret all the rules of the sport in a manner that preserves the traditional nature and character of the sport and the skills traditionally required to play the sport. All such decisions by the USAPA and IFP are final and not appealable.

The purpose of the rulebook is to provide pickleball players with the rules necessary for organized league and tournament play. Some sections of this rulebook are designed to be used only for the conduct of sanctioned tournaments. A sanctioned tournament allows players to be ranked on a national or international basis.

Non-sanctioned tournaments may also use these sections as guidelines. Tournament Directors for non-sanctioned tournaments may be flexible in the use of these guidelines to better fit the skills, ages, and diversity of their players. The USAPA and IFP enthusiastically encourage these non-sanctioned tournaments to promote knowledge and growth of the sport, skill development, and having fun while playing pickleball.

The USAPA published the first rulebook in March 1984. The first IFP rulebook was adapted, with permission, from the March 28, 2010, version of the USAPA rulebook.

The IFP invites national pickleball organizations from all countries to become members of the IFP and to observe these rules as the international rules of pickleball.

These rules will not be changed without good cause. Comments and opinions are always welcome. If you have any questions in regard to the rules, please visit:

USA Pickleball Association (USAPA)

Website: usapa.org

International Federation of Pickleball (IFP)

Website: ipickleball.org

Cover photo credit – Pickleball Magazine

© 2010, revised 2020

CONTENTS

SECTION 1 – THE GAME.....	1
SECTION 2 – COURT AND EQUIPMENT.....	2
SECTION 3 – DEFINITIONS.....	12
SECTION 4 – THE SERVE, SERVICE SEQUENCE, AND SCORING RULES.....	17
SECTION 5 – SERVICE AND END SELECTION RULES.....	26
SECTION 6 – LINE CALL RULES.....	28
SECTION 7 – FAULT RULES.....	31
SECTION 8 – DEAD BALL RULES.....	33
SECTION 9 – NON-VOLLEY-ZONE RULES.....	34
SECTION 10 – TIME-OUT RULES.....	35
SECTION 11 – OTHER RULES.....	40
SECTION 12 – SANCTIONED TOURNAMENT POLICIES.....	44
SECTION 13 – TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT AND OFFICIATING.....	50
SECTION 14 – WHEELCHAIR RULES.....	59
NOTES.....	64

SECTION 1 – THE GAME

Pickleball is a paddle sport played using a special perforated ball on a 20-foot-by-44-foot court with a tennis-type net. The court is divided into right/even and left/odd service courts and non-volley zones. (See Figure 2-1.)

The ball is served diagonally across the net to the opponent's service court using an underhand motion. The ball is struck back and forth across the net until a player fails to return the ball in accordance with the rules.

Points are scored only by the serving side when the server or the server's team wins the rally, or the opposing side commits a fault. The server continues to serve, alternating service courts, until the serving side loses the rally or commits a fault.

Typically, the first side scoring 11 points and leading by at least a 2-point margin wins.

Pickleball can be played as singles or doubles.

Unique Features

Two-Bounce Rule. After the ball is served, each side must make one groundstroke prior to volleying the ball.

Non-Volley Zone (NVZ). An area that extends 7 feet from the net on each side, within which a player is not allowed to strike the ball without it first bouncing.

SECTION 2 – COURT AND EQUIPMENT

- 2.A. **Court Specifications.** The dimensions and measurements for the standard pickleball court are:

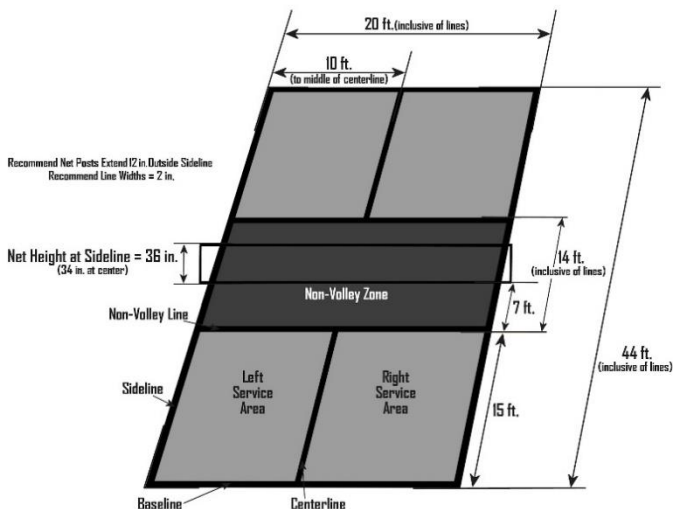


Figure 2-1

- 2.A.1. The court shall be a rectangle measuring 20 feet (6.10 m) wide and 44 feet (13.41 m) long for both singles and doubles matches. (See Figure 2-1.)
- 2.A.2. Court measurements shall be made to the outside of the perimeter and non-volley zone lines. All lines should be 2 inches (5.08 cm) wide and the same color, clearly contrasting with the color of the playing surface.
- 2.A.3. The recommended minimum playing surface area measures 30 feet (9.14 m) wide and 60 feet (18.29 m) long. A preferred 10-foot (3.05-m) surrounding margin measures 40 feet (12.19 m) by 64 feet (19.51 m).

- 2.B. Lines and Areas.** The lines and areas of the standard pickleball court are explained below. (See Figure 2-1.)
- 2.B.1. Baselines. The lines parallel to the net at each end of the court.
 - 2.B.2. Sidelines. The lines perpendicular to the net on each side of the court.
 - 2.B.3. Non-Volley Zone (NVZ). The area of the court on either side of the net bounded by a line (non-volley zone line) parallel to and 7 feet (2.13 m) from the net and the two sidelines. All NVZ lines are part of the NVZ.
 - 2.B.4. Service Court. The area beyond the NVZ on either side of the centerline, including the centerline, sideline, and baseline.
 - 2.B.5. Centerline. The line down the center of the court on either side of the net extending from the NVZ to the baseline separating the odd and even courts.
 - 2.B.6. Right/Even Court. The service area on the right side of the court when facing the net.
 - 2.B.7. Left/Odd Court. The service area on the left side of the court when facing the net.
- 2.C. Net Specifications.**
- 2.C.1. Material. The net may be made of any mesh fabric material that will not allow a ball to pass through it.
 - 2.C.2. Posts. Net posts should be 22 feet (6.71 m) from the inside of one post to the inside of the other post. The maximum diameter of the net post should be 3 inches (7.62 cm).
 - 2.C.3. Size. The net length should be at least 21 feet 9 inches (6.63 m) extending from one post to the

other. The net height from the bottom edge of the net to the top should be at least 30 inches.

- 2.C.4. Edge. The top of the net should be edged with a 2-inch (5.08-cm) white tape binding over a cord or cable running through the binding. This binding must rest upon the cord or cable.
- 2.C.5. Height. The net shall be suspended over the center of the court. The top shall be 36 inches (91.44 cm) high at the sidelines and 34 inches (86.36 cm) high at the center of the court.
- 2.C.6. Center Strap. A center strap is recommended for permanent net and must be placed at the center of the net to enable easy adjustment to the 34-inch (86.36-cm) requirement at center.
- 2.C.7. Bottom of the Net. The net may touch the court but should not drape onto the court such that it could alter the play of the ball. (See Figure 2-2.)
- 2.C.8. Ties or other non-protruding apparatus should be used to prevent the bottom of the net from lying on the court. If such a configuration is not corrected by the tournament staff prior to the start of play and the referee deems a ball is affected by the draping net, it shall result in a replay.



Figure 2-2



Figure 2-3

The ball pictured on the left, with larger holes, is customarily used for indoor play, and the ball pictured on the right is customarily used for outdoor play. Colors may vary. However, all approved balls are acceptable for indoor or outdoor play. The complete list of approved balls is on the USAPA and IFP websites.

2.D. Ball Specifications.

- 2.D.1. Construction. The ball shall be made of a durable material molded with a smooth surface and free of texturing. The ball will be one uniform color, except for identification markings. The ball may have a slight ridge at the seam, as long as it does not significantly impact the ball's flight characteristics. (See Figure 2-3.)

- 2.D.2. Size. The ball shall be 2.87 inches (7.29 cm) to 2.97 inches (7.54 cm) in diameter. The maximum out-of-round diameter variance shall not be greater than +/-0.020 inch (0.51 mm).
- 2.D.3. Weight. The ball shall weigh between 0.78 and 0.935 ounces (22.1 and 26.5 grams).
- 2.D.4. Bounce. The ball shall have a bounce of 30 to 34 inches (76.2 to 86.4 cm) to the top of the ball when dropped from a height of 78 inches (198.1 cm) onto a granite surface plate that is a minimum of 12 inches (30.5 cm) by 12 inches (30.5 cm) by 4 inches (10.2 cm). The test is to be performed at an ambient temperature of 70 degrees F plus or minus 5 degrees F.
- 2.D.5. Hardness. The ball shall have a hardness of 40 to 50 on a Durometer D scale at an ambient temperature of 70 degrees F plus or minus 5 degrees F.
- 2.D.6. Design. The ball shall have a minimum of 26 to a maximum of 40 circular holes, with spacing of the holes and overall design of the ball conforming to flight characteristics. The ball must have a manufacturer's or supplier's name or logo printed or embossed on the surface.
- 2.D.7. Approval. The Tournament Director will choose the tournament ball. The ball selected for play in any USAPA- or IFP-sanctioned tournament must be named on the official list of approved balls posted on the USAPA and IFP websites: usapa.org and ipickleball.org.

2.E. ***Paddle Specifications.***

- 2.E.1. Material. The paddle must be made of any material deemed safe and not prohibited by these rules. The paddle shall be made of rigid, non-compressible

material meeting the criteria located on the USAPA and IFP websites.

- 2.E.2. Surface.** The paddle's hitting surface shall not contain holes, indentations, rough texturing, or any objects or features that allow a player to impart additional spin on the ball. Paddle roughness is determined using a Starrett SR160 Surface Roughness Tester (or equivalent). The allowable limits for roughness shall be no greater than 30 micrometers (μm) on the Rz reading (average maximum height, peak to valley) and no greater than 40 micrometers on the Rt reading (average maximum height, peak to valley). All readings will be taken in six different directions.
- 2.E.2.a. Paint.** The surface may be painted but must otherwise adhere to the general surface requirements.
- 2.E.2.b. Reflection.** The paddle's hitting surface shall not be adversely reflective, such that it has the potential to negatively affect the vision of opposing player(s). Paddles shall not have any measurement exceeding 80 GU. Measurement is to be taken at the universal measurement angle of 60 degrees with ETB-0833 Self-Calibration 20° 60° 85° Surface Glossmeter Tester 0-200 GU or equivalent.
- 2.E.2.c. Depictions.** Any writing or pictures on the paddle must be in good taste.
- 2.E.3. Size.** The combined length and width, including any edge guard and butt cap, shall not exceed 24 inches (60.96 cm). The paddle length cannot exceed 17 inches (43.18 cm). There is no restriction on paddle thickness.

- 2.E.4. Weight. There is no restriction on paddle weight.
- 2.E.5. Alterations. Altered paddles must meet all specifications.
 - 2.E.5.a. The only alterations or additions that may be made to a commercially made paddle are edge guard tape, lead tape, changes to the grip size or grip wrap, and name decals and/or other identification markings on the paddle face.
 - 2.E.5.b. Decals and tape can extend no farther than 1.0 inch (2.54 cm) above the top of the grip nor more than 0.5 inch (1.27 cm) inside the outer edge of a paddle or, if an edge guard is in place, 0.5 inch inside the edge guard.
 - 2.E.5.c. Handwritten markings are allowed on the paddle's playing surface as long as they do not impact the surface roughness and are in good taste. No aftermarket graphics are allowed on a commercially made paddle other than "handwritten" pen markings.
- 2.E.6. Prohibited Surface Features and Mechanical Features.
 - 2.E.6.a. Anti-skid paint or any paint textured with sand, rubber particles, or any material that causes additional spin.
 - 2.E.6.b. Rubber and synthetic rubber.
 - 2.E.6.c. Sandpaper characteristics.
 - 2.E.6.d. Moving parts that can increase head momentum.
 - 2.E.6.e. Removable parts. No removable parts except for paddle grip adjustments and/or

grip wraps and lead tape on the paddle edge.

2.E.6.f. Springs or spring-like material.

2.E.6.g. Flexible membranes or any compressible material that creates a trampoline effect.

2.E.6.h. Electrical, electronic, or mechanical assistance of any sort.

2.E.7. Model Designation. The manufacturer must have a clearly marked brand and model name or model number on the paddle. Paddles with different core material, surface material, or other significant differences must have a unique name or number. The brand and model information may be shown on the paddle by a manufacturer affixed decal.

2.E.8. Homemade Paddles. Paddles that are not commercially made are not permitted (e.g., homemade paddles).

2.F. ***Equipment Approval and Authorization.*** The approval of equipment authorized for sanctioned tournament play shall be made by the USAPA Board of Directors acting on a recommendation of the Equipment Evaluation Committee (EEC).

2.F.1. Approval and authorization of a specified piece, model, brand, version, design, or type of equipment may be revoked by the Board of Directors upon 18 months' notice on the USAPA and IFP website home pages, official national newsletter publications, or other acceptable means of communication, if the specified equipment is found to have been materially changed by the manufacturer or if the equipment materially degrades or changes under ordinary use so as to significantly alter the nature of the sport.

2.F.2. Manufacturers are subject to annual and/or blind testing to ensure that products as produced and sold are compliant with all requirements. The lists of approved equipment may be posted on the USAPA and IFP websites: usapa.org and ipickleball.com.

2.F.3. USAPA/IFP Approved Paddle List – Players are responsible for confirming that the paddle they are using for match play is listed as Pass on the USAPA/IFP Approved Paddle List. The lists of approved equipment may be posted on the USAPA and IFP websites: usapa.org and ipickleball.com.

2.F.3.a. Violation. If at any point during the tournament it is determined that a player is using a paddle that violates any of the paddle specifications or is not listed on the USAPA/IFP Approved Paddle List as Pass, the following penalties apply:

2.F.3.a.1 If the violation is identified prior to the match starting, the player may switch to a paddle listed as Pass on the USAPA/IFP Approved Paddle List without penalty.

2.F.3.a.2 If the violation is identified after the match has started, the player or team forfeits only the match being played.

2.F.3.a.3 If the violation is discovered after the match has concluded, the match results stand.

Note: The USAPA reviews equipment testing standards periodically and, with proper notification to manufacturers, reserves the right to modify

equipment specifications as needed to maintain the integrity of the game.

2.G. Apparel.

- 2.G.1. Safety and Distraction. A player may be required to change garments that are inappropriate.
- 2.G.2. Depictions. Graphics, insignias, pictures, and writing on apparel must be in good taste.
- 2.G.3. Footwear. Shoes must have soles that do not mark or damage the court's playing surface.
- 2.G.4. Violation. The Tournament Director has the authority to enforce apparel changes. If the player refuses to comply with the apparel rules, the Tournament Director may declare a forfeit of the match.

SECTION 3 – DEFINITIONS

- 3.A.1 Carry – Hitting the ball in such a way that it does not bounce away from the paddle but tends to be carried along on the face of the paddle.
- 3.A.2 Court – The area inside the outer dimensions of the baselines and sidelines.
- 3.A.3 Cross-Court – The court diagonally opposite of the court from which the ball was last struck.
- 3.A.4 Dead Ball – A ball that is no longer in play.
- 3.A.5 Dink Shot – A soft shot that is intended to arc over the net and land within the non-volley zone.
- 3.A.6 Distraction – Physical actions by a player that are ‘not common to the game’ that, in the judgment of the referee, interfere with the opponent’s ability or concentration to hit the ball. Examples include, but are not limited to, making loud noises, stomping feet, waving the paddle in a distracting manner or otherwise interfering with the opponent’s concentration or ability to hit the ball.
- 3.A.7 Double Bounce – When the ball bounces twice on one side before it is returned.
- 3.A.8 Double Hit – Hitting the ball twice before it is returned.
- 3.A.9 Drop Shot – A shot hit after the ball bounces such that falls short of the opponent’s position on the opponent’s side of the court.
- 3.A.10 Drop Shot Volley – A shot hit before the ball bounces that is intended to reduce the speed of the ball and return it short on the opponent’s side of the court, near the net.
- 3.A.11 Fault – A rules violation that results in a dead ball and the end of the rally.

- 3.A.12** First Server – In doubles, the player who shall serve from the right/even service court after a side out, according to the team’s score.
- 3.A.13** Forfeit – A player/team’s decision or a rule-based enforcement that stops a match and awards the match to the opponent.
- 3.A.14** Groundstroke – A strike of the ball after one bounce.
- 3.A.15** Half Volley – A groundstroke that contacts the ball immediately after it bounces and before the ball reaches its full height.
- 3.A.16** Hinder – Any element or occurrence outside of the player’s control that adversely impacts play. Examples include, but are not limited to, balls, flying insects, foreign material, players or officials from an adjacent court that, in the opinion of the referee, impacted a player’s ability to make a play on the ball.
- 3.A.17** Left/Odd Court – The service area on the left side of the court, when facing the net. The starting server in doubles or the singles server should be positioned on the left/odd side of the court when their score is odd.
- 3.A.18** Let – A serve or rally that must be replayed for any valid reason.
- 3.A.19** Line Call – A loud word(s) spoken by a player or line judge(s) to indicate to the referee and/or players that a live ball has not touched in the required court space. The preferred word to indicate a line call is “OUT”. Distinctive hand signals can be used in conjunction with a line call. Words such as “wide”, “long”, “no”, “deep” are also acceptable.
- 3.A.20** Live Ball/In Play – The point in time when the referee starts to call the score.

- 3.A.21** Lob – A high and deep shot that is intended to force the opposing side back to the baseline.
- 3.A.22** Non-Volley Zone (NVZ) – The 7-foot-by-20-foot area adjacent to each side of the net. All lines bounding the NVZ are part of the NVZ. The NVZ is two-dimensional and does not rise above the playing surface. (See Figure 2-1 and Section 2.B.3.)
- 3.A.23** Overhead Slam/Smash – A hard overhand shot.
- 3.A.24** Paddle Grip Adjustments – Non-mechanical devices that change the size of the grip or stabilize the hand on the grip.
- 3.A.25** Paddle Head – The paddle, excluding the handle.
- 3.A.26** Passing Shot – A volley or groundstroke that passes an opponent, usually to win the rally.
- 3.A.27** Permanent Object – Any object on or near the court, including hanging over the court, that can interfere with play. Permanent objects include the ceiling, walls, fencing, lighting fixtures, net posts, net post legs, the stands and seats for spectators, the referee, line judges, spectators when in their recognized positions, and all other objects around and above the court.
- 3.A.28** Playing Surface – The court and the area surrounding the court designated for playing.
- 3.A.29** Rally – Continuous play that occurs after the serve and before a fault.
- 3.A.30** Receiver – The player who is positioned diagonally opposite the server to return the serve. Depending on the team's score, the player who returns the serve may not be the correct receiver.
- 3.A.31** Replay – Any rally that is restarted for any reason without the awarding of a point or a change of server.

- 3.A.32** Right/Even Court – The service area on the right side of the court, when facing the net. The starting server in doubles or the singles server should be positioned on the right/even court when their score is even.
- 3.A.33** Second Serve – In doubles, a term used to describe the condition when a serving team loses the first of its two allocated serves.
- 3.A.34** Second Server – In doubles, the first server’s partner. The second server serves after the first server loses serve.
- 3.A.35** Serve – The initial strike of the ball to start the rally.
- 3.A.36** Server – The player who initiates a rally. Depending on the team’s score, it is possible that the player who serves may not be the correct server.
- 3.A.37** Service Court – The area on either side of the centerline, including the centerline, sideline, and baseline, excluding the NVZ.
- 3.A.38** Service Motion – The movement of the server’s arm to serve the ball. The service motion may consist of a forward swing only or be a combination backswing and continuing forward swing.
- 3.A.39** Serving Area – The area behind the baseline and on and between the imaginary extensions of the court centerline and each sideline.
- 3.A.40** Side Out – The awarding of the serve to the opposing team after a singles player or doubles team loses its serve.
- 3.A.41** Starting Server – For each doubles team, the player designated to serve first at the start of the game. In doubles tournament play, the starting server shall wear a visible form of identification determined by the Tournament Director.
- 3.A.42** Technical Foul – A referee’s assessment of a rule or behavioral violation that results in 1 point being awarded

to the opposing team. A technical foul may be issued when one technical warning has already been given or when warranted by a players' or team's actions, based on the referee's judgment.

- 3.A.43** Technical Warning – A referee's first verbal warning of a rule or behavioral violation given to a player or team prior to a technical foul being issued. Points are not awarded for a technical warning.
- 3.A.44** Volley – During a rally, a strike of the ball out of the air before the ball has bounced.
- 3.A.45** Withdrawal – A player/team's request to be removed from any upcoming play in a specified bracket.

SECTION 4 – THE SERVE, SERVICE SEQUENCE, AND SCORING RULES

4.A. *The Serve.*

- 4.A.1. The entire score must be called before the server begins the service motion.
- 4.A.2. The service motion begins with the server's arm movement initiating the swing, backward or forward, to contact the ball.
- 4.A.3. At the beginning of the service motion, both feet must be behind the baseline and the imaginary extensions of the baseline. At the time the ball is struck, the server's feet may not touch the court or outside the imaginary extension of the sideline or the centerline and at least one foot must be on the playing surface or ground behind the baseline.
- 4.A.4. The ball must be struck without bouncing. A person with a physical disability, such as having the use of only one arm, may bounce the ball before making the service motion.
- 4.A.5. The server's arm must be moving in an upward arc at the time the ball is struck and may be made with either a forehand or backhand motion. (See Figure 4-3.)

4.A.6. The highest point of the paddle head must not be above the highest part of the wrist (where the wrist joint bends) when it strikes the ball. (See Fig 4-1 & 4-2)



Figure 4-1 (legal serve)

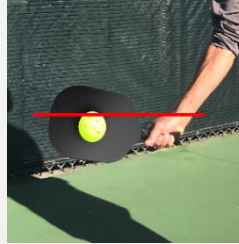


Figure 4-2 (illegal serve)

Figure 4-3 (legal serve)



(Photos and graphics courtesy of Steve Taylor, Digital Spatula)

4.A.7. Contact with the ball must not be made above the waist level (Waist is defined as the navel level). (See Figures 4-1 and 4-3 above)

- 4.A.8. Placement. The server must serve to the correct service court (the court diagonally opposite the server). The serve must clear the net and the NVZ. The serve may land on any other service court line.
- 4.A.9. If the serve clears the net or hits the net and then touches the receiver or the receiver's partner, it is a point for the serving team.

4.B. *Player Positions.*

- 4.B.1. Server and Receiver. The correct server and receiver and their positions are determined by the score and the players' starting positions in the game.
- 4.B.2. At the start of each game, the starting server begins the serve from the side of the court dictated by the score.
- 4.B.3. Each player will serve until a rally is lost or a fault is declared against the player or team.
- 4.B.4. As long as the server holds serve, after each point the server will alternate serving from the right/even and left/odd sides of the court.
- 4.B.5. Singles.
 - 4.B.5.a. If the player's score is even (0, 2, 4 ...), the serve must be made from the right/even serving area and be received in the right/even service court by the opponent.
 - 4.B.5.b. If the player's score is odd (1, 3, 5 ...), the serve must be made from the left/odd serving area and be received in the left/odd service court by the opponent.
 - 4.B.5.c. After the server loses the rally or faults, a side out will occur and service is awarded to the opponent.

- 4.B.6. Doubles. Both players on a team will serve before a side out is declared, except at the start of each game, when only the starting server will serve. The starting server of each game is therefore designated as “Server 2” for scoring purposes, since a side out will occur once a rally is lost or a fault is committed by the serving team and service is awarded to the opposing team.
- 4.B.6.a. At the start of each side out, service begins in the right/even serving area.
 - 4.B.6.b. When the team’s score is even (0, 2, 4 ...), the team’s starting server’s correct position is at the right/even serving area. When the team’s score is odd (1, 3, 5...), the starting server’s correct position is at the left/odd court.
 - 4.B.6.c. After each side out, service begins with the player correctly positioned on the right/even side of the court according to the team’s score. This player is referred to as “Server 1” and the partner is “Server 2.”
 - 4.B.6.d. Server 1 will serve, alternating service sides after each point is won, until a rally is lost or the server’s team commits a fault.
 - 4.B.6.e. After Server 1’s team loses a rally or faults, Server 2 will serve from the correct position and will alternate serving positions as long as the serving team continues to win points.
 - 4.B.6.f. The receiving team does not alternate positions when a point is scored by the serving team. The receiving team may switch positions after the return of serve, but after the rally is over, the receiving team must return back to their correct positions,

which correspond to the team's score and the players' starting positions.

- 4.B.7. Partner Positions. In doubles, there is no restriction on the position of the partners of the correct server and receiver as long as they are on their respective team's side of the net. They can be positioned on or off the court.
 - 4.B.8. Prior to the start of the service motion, to determine the correct server and correct service court, the serving team may ask the referee for the score and correct server.
 - 4.B.9. Prior to the start of the service motion, to determine the correct receiver and correct position, the receiving team may ask the referee to confirm the score.
 - 4.B.10. The referee will not correct players' positions and will not confirm players questions about their position but may respond to questions about positioning with "You have X points" or "Your score is X". When an incorrect player serves or receives, or a player serves from an incorrect position, the referee will immediately stop play and identify the fault.
 - 4.B.11. Incorrect Player or Position. When an incorrect server or player position is discovered after a rally, the offending team can be faulted until the next serve occurs. A point scored during the rally will not count. Any previous points scored by the incorrect server or with players in the incorrect positions will stand.
- 4.C. **Readiness.** Any player may indicate "not ready" prior to the start of the score being called.

- 4.C.1. One of the following signals must be used to indicate “not ready”: 1) raising the paddle above the head, 2) raising the non-paddle hand above the head, 3) completely turning their back to the net.
- 4.C.2. After the start of the score being called, “not ready” signals will be ignored, unless there is a hinder. A player or team out of position is not considered a hinder.
- 4.D. **Calling the Score.** The score shall be called after the server and receiver are (or should be) in position and all players are (or should be) ready to play.
 - 4.D.1. If it appears the server or receiver is delaying the game, the referee will call the score to start the 10-Second Rule. (See Rule 4.E.)
 - 4.D.2. Any player may call a time-out before the service motion has begun. (See Rules 4.A.2. and 10.A.3)
- 4.E. **The 10-Second Rule.** Once the score has been called, the server is allowed 10 seconds to serve the ball.
 - 4.E.1. The service motion must not start until the score has been called in its entirety.
 - 4.E.2. If the server exceeds 10 seconds to serve, a fault will be declared.
 - 4.E.3. After the score has been called, if the serving team changes serving courts, causing the receiving team to be incorrectly positioned, the referee shall allow the receiver time to reposition and the score shall be re-called to re-start the 10-second count. In a non-officiated match, the server will allow for the same repositioning.

- 4.F. **Scoring.** A singles player or doubles team scores points only when serving. Points may also be scored when technical fouls are called against the opposing side.
- 4.G. **Points.** A point is scored by serving the ball and winning the rally.
- 4.H. **Winning the Game.** The first side scoring the winning point wins.
- 4.I. **Calling the Score in Singles Matches.** The proper sequence for calling the score is server score then receiver score as two numbers. (e.g., “one – zero.”)
- 4.J. **Calling the Score in Doubles Matches.** The score is called as three numbers in doubles matches. The proper sequence for calling the score is: serving team’s score – receiving team’s score – the server number (one or two), (e.g., “zero – one – one”). To start each game, the score will be called as “zero – zero – two.”
- 4.K. **Wrong Score Called.** If the server or referee calls the wrong score, any player may stop play before the return of serve to ask for a correction.
- 4.K.1. If the score was incorrect, the player or referee will call the correct score and the ball will be re-served with no penalty.
- 4.K.2. After the score has been called, a player who stops play to challenge the score when there is no error will have committed a fault.
- 4.K.3. A player who stops play after the return of serve will have committed a fault and shall lose the rally.
- 4.L. **Service Foot Faults.** During the serve, when the ball is struck, the server’s feet shall:
- 4.L.1. Not touch the area outside the imaginary extension of the sideline.

- 4.L.2. Not touch the area on the wrong side of the imaginary extension of the centerline.
- 4.L.3. Not touch the court, including the baseline.
- 4.M. **Service Faults.** During the service, it is a fault against the server resulting in loss of serve if:
 - 4.M.1. The server serves from the incorrect serving area.
 - 4.M.2. The incorrect player serves the ball.
 - 4.M.3. The served ball touches any permanent object other than the net, the receiver, or the receiver's partner before it hits the ground.
 - 4.M.4. The served ball touches the server or server's partner, or anything the server or server's partner is wearing or holding.
 - 4.M.5. The served ball lands in the non-volley zone.
 - 4.M.6. The served ball lands outside the service court.
 - 4.M.7. The served ball hits the net and lands inside the non-volley zone.
 - 4.M.8. The served ball hits the net and lands outside the service court.
 - 4.M.9. The server begins the service motion before the entire score is called.
 - 4.M.10. The server uses an illegal service motion.
 - 4.M.11. The server or their partner calls a time-out after the score has been called and the server has started the service motion.
 - 4.M.12. The serving team asks the referee to confirm the correct server and/or the team's score after the score has been called and the server has started the service motion.

- 4.N. Receiver Faults.** It is a fault against the receiving team resulting in a point for the server if:
- 4.N.1. The incorrect player returns the serve.
 - 4.N.2. The receiver or the receiver's partner is touched by or interferes with the flight of the ball before it bounces.
 - 4.N.3. The receiver or the receivers partner calls a time-out after the score has been called and the server has started the service motion.
 - 4.N.4. The receiving team asks the referee to confirm the score after the score has been called and the server has started the service motion.
- 4.O. Service Lets.** There is no limit to the number of lets a server may serve. The serve is a let and will be replayed if:
- 4.O.1. The serve touches the net, strap, or band and is otherwise good and lands in the service court.
 - 4.O.2. The referee calls a service let.
 - 4.O.3. Any player calls a service let. If the referee determines that a service let called by a player did not occur, a fault will be declared against the offending player.

SECTION 5 – SERVICE AND END SELECTION RULES

5.A. *Selection of End, Serve, Receive, or Defer.*

- 5.A.1. Any fair method shall be used to determine which player or team has first choice of end, serve, or receive, (i.e., a 1 or 2 written on the back of the score sheet). If the winner chooses to serve or receive first, the loser chooses the starting end. If the winner chooses the starting end, the loser chooses to serve or receive. The winner can defer first choice to the opponent(s).
- 5.A.2. Once a selection has been made, it cannot be changed.
- 5.A.3. In doubles, teams may change the starting server between games by notifying the referee. In non-officiated matches, the team should notify the opponents. Failure to give notification will result in a fault when the offending server serves, or the offending receiver returns the serve. After the fault has been applied, the offending team shall notify the referee which player will wear the starting server identification. In a non-officiated match, the opponents shall be notified of the starting server decision.
- 5.A.4. In doubles, the starting servers must visibly wear the form of identification determined by the Tournament Director.

5.B. *Change of Ends.*

- 5.B.1. Teams switch ends and initial service upon the completion of each game.
- 5.B.2. A maximum of 2 minutes is allowed between games. The referee will announce a 15-second warning.

When the full 2 minutes have elapsed, the referee will state the game number, call “Time in”, call the score and start the 10-second count. The referee will call the score even if all players are not on the court and/or not ready to play. (See Rule 4.E.) If both teams agree, play may resume early.

- 5.B.3. In a match with two out of three games to 11 points, in game three, the teams will switch ends when the first team reaches a score of 6. Serve remains with the player holding serve.
- 5.B.4. In a game to 15 points, the teams will switch ends when the first team reaches a score of 8. Serve remains with the player holding serve.
- 5.B.5. In a game to 21 points, the teams will switch ends when the first team reaches a score of 11. Serve remains with the player holding serve.
- 5.B.6. A maximum of 1 minute is allowed to switch ends during a game. During this time, players may communicate with each other, but no third-party coaching is allowed. When time has expired, the referee will announce “Resume play”, call the score and start the 10 second count. The referee will call the score even if all players are not on the court and/or not ready to play. (See Rule 4.E.) If both teams agree, play may resume early.

SECTION 6 – LINE CALL RULES

- 6.A. A served ball that clears the non-volley zone and lands in the correct service court or on any correct service court line is in.
- 6.B. Except the serve, any ball in play that lands in the court or touches any court line is in.
- 6.C. A ball contacting the playing surface completely outside of the court is “out”.
- 6.D. Code of Ethics for Line Calling. Pickleball is played according to specific rules. It also requires a code of ethics for line-calling responsibilities when performed by players.

The line-calling responsibilities of players are different from those assigned to referees or line judges. The officials make impartial judgment calls with all players’ interests in mind. The player, when assigned line-calling duties, must strive for accuracy and operate under the principle that all questionable calls must be resolved in favor of the opponent.

The basic elements are:

- 6.D.1. Players are responsible for calling the lines on their side of the court (excluding service foot faults and all non-volley-zone lines, if being called by a referee).
- 6.D.2. Players’ only line call is the centerline on the serve in matches that have line judges.
- 6.D.3. The opponent gets the benefit of the doubt on line calls made. Any ball that cannot be called “out” will be considered “in.” A player cannot claim a “let” because the ball was not seen or there is uncertainty. A player who does not make a call may appeal to the referee to make the call if they did not clearly see the ball land. If the referee is unable to make the call, the

ball is “in.” The moment the receiving player/team appeals to the referee, they lose their right to make any subsequent “in” or “out” call.

- 6.D.4. Spectators should not be consulted on any line call.
- 6.D.5. A player should not question an opponent’s call, although any player may appeal a call to the referee before the complete score is called to start the next point.
- 6.D.6. A player/team may ask the opponent’s opinion to make a line call on the player’s side of the court. If requested and the opponent makes a clear “in” or “out” call, it must be accepted. If the opponents cannot make a clear “in” or “out” call, then the ball is considered “in”. The moment the receiving player/team asks for the opponent’s opinion, they lose their right to make any subsequent “in” or “out” call.
- 6.D.7. Players should not call a ball “out” when looking across a line, unless they can clearly see a space between the line and the ball as it hits. The player’s depth-of-field judgment, based on the laws of parallax, prevents accurate judgment in these cases.
- 6.D.8. All “let” or “out” calls must be made “promptly”; otherwise, the ball is presumed to still be in play. “Promptly” is defined as calling “let” or “out” prior to the ball being hit by the opponent or before a dead ball is declared.
- 6.D.9. In doubles play, if one player calls the ball “out” and the partner calls it “in,” then doubt exists and the team’s call will be “in.” Any player may appeal a call to the referee. If the referee did not see the ball, the ball is considered in.

- 6.D.10. “Out” line calls should be promptly signaled by voice and may include a hand signal (See Rule 13.E.2.), regardless of how obviously the ball is “out.” People who are Deaf or hard of hearing are allowed to use hand signals only.
- 6.D.11. While the ball is in the air, if a player yells “out,” “no,” “bounce it,” or any other words to communicate to their partner that the ball may be out, it shall be considered player communication only and not considered a line call.
- 6.D.12. An “out” call made after the ball bounces is a line call. The ball is dead and play shall stop. If, upon appeal, the referee overrules any type of “out” call, it is a fault against the player or team that made the “out” call. Exception: If the match has line judges, the baseline and sideline judges are responsible for the call. (See Rule 13.E.)
- 6.D.13. Players may call faults on themselves or line calls to their disadvantage during or after the completion of a rally. This includes overriding a line judge’s call if it is to their disadvantage.

SECTION 7 – FAULT RULES

A fault will be declared for the following:

- 7.A. If the serve or service return does not bounce before the ball is struck.
- 7.B. Hitting the ball into the player's side of the net without the ball crossing over to the opponent's side. Note: The play is dead and the fault occurs the moment the ball hits the ground.
- 7.C. Hitting the ball under the net or between the net and the net post.
- 7.D. A player hitting a ball that lands out of bounds or onto their own side of the court.
- 7.E. Failure to hit the ball before it bounces twice on the receiving player's court.
- 7.F. Violation of any service rule. (Section 4)
- 7.G. A player, a player's apparel, or a player's paddle contacting the net system or the net posts when the ball is in play.
- 7.H. The ball in play contacts a player or anything the player is wearing or carrying, except the paddle or the player's hand(s) in contact with the paddle and below the wrist. If the player is in the process of changing hands with both hands on the paddle or is attempting a two-handed stroke and either hand is hit below the wrist, the ball is still in play.
- 7.I. A live ball that is stopped by a player before it becomes dead. (e.g., catching or stopping a ball in flight before it makes contact with the court.)
- 7.J. A ball in play contacting any permanent object before bouncing on the court.
- 7.K. Violation of the non-volley-zone rules. (Section 9)

- 7.L. Violation of the other rules. (Section 11)
- 7.M. The serve is made by bouncing the ball before hitting it.
Exception: (See Rule 4.A.4.)
- 7.N. Once the ball is in play, a player hitting the ball before it passes the plane of the net.
- 7.O. A player deliberately carrying or catching the ball in play on the paddle.
- 7.P. A player deliberately touching the ball with the paddle more than once (i.e., double hit). (See Rule 11.A.)
- 7.Q. A hinder or let called by a player that is determined by the referee to be invalid.

SECTION 8 – DEAD BALL RULES

- 8. A. Any action that stops play will result in a dead ball.
- 8. B. A fault called by a referee or player will result in a dead ball.
- 8. C. A hinder called by the referee or player will result in a dead ball. The referee will determine if the hinder called by the player was valid. A valid hinder will result in a replay.
- 8. D. A service let called by the referee or player will result in a dead ball. The referee will determine if the service let called by the player was valid. A valid service let will result in a replay.
- 8. E. A ball in play that contacts a permanent object after it has bounced on the court will result in a dead ball. The player who hit the ball shall win the rally.

SECTION 9 – NON-VOLLEY-ZONE RULES

- 9. A. All volleys must be initiated outside of the non-volley zone.
- 9. B. It is a fault if the volleying player or anything that has contact with the volleying player while in the act of volleying, touches the non-volley zone.
 - 9.B.1. The act of volleying the ball includes the swing, the follow-through, and the momentum from the action.
 - 9.B.2. If the paddle touches the non-volley zone during the volley motion, before or after contacting the ball, it is a fault.
- 9. C. It is a fault if the player's momentum causes the player to contact anything that is touching the non-volley zone, including the player's partner.
 - 9.C.1. It is a fault even if the ball is declared dead before the player contacts the non-volley zone.
- 9. D. If a player has touched the non-volley zone for any reason, that player cannot volley a return until both feet have made contact with the playing surface completely outside the non-volley zone. A maneuver such as standing within the non-volley zone, jumping up to hit a volley, and then landing outside the non-volley zone is prohibited.
- 9. E. A player may enter the non-volley zone at any time except when that player is volleying the ball.
- 9. F. A player may enter the non-volley zone before or after returning any ball that bounces.
- 9. G. A player may stay inside the non-volley zone to return a ball that has bounced. There is no violation if a player does not exit the non-volley zone after hitting a ball that bounces.
- 9. H. There is no violation if a player returns the ball while their partner is standing in the non-volley zone.

SECTION 10 – TIME-OUT RULES

10. A. **Standard Time-Out.** A player or team is entitled to two time-outs for 11- or 15-point games and three time-outs for a 21-point game.
- 10.A.1. Each time-out period may last up to 1 minute.
 - 10.A.2. Play must be resumed at 1 minute or when all players are ready to resume play, whichever occurs first, unless another time-out is called by either side. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to resume play during a standard time-out.
 - 10.A.3. Time-outs may not be called once the referee has called the score and the server has begun the service motion.
 - 10.A.4. There is no penalty for calling a time-out when none is available if all other time-out rules are complied with.
 - 10.A.5. The referee will give the players a warning when there are 15 seconds remaining. At the end of the time-out, the referee will call “time in” and announce the score to begin the 10-second count even if all players are not on the court or not ready to play. If the server does not serve within 10 seconds after the score is called, and no additional time-outs are called or available, a fault will be called.
10. B. **Medical Time-Out.** A player needing medical attention during a match should request a medical time-out from the referee. Once the medical time-out has been requested, the following guidelines shall be used:
- 10.B.1. The referee shall immediately summon on-site medical personnel, or the Tournament Director if

no medical personnel are present, to assess the situation and render appropriate first aid.

10.B.1.a. When medical personnel or the Tournament Director arrive, the referee shall start the 15-minute timer.

10.B.2. If medical personnel, or the Tournament Director if no medical personnel are present, determine that a valid medical condition exists, then that player will be allowed no more than 15 minutes for the medical time-out.

10.B.2.a. The time-out must be continuous and may be up to 15 minutes. If the player uses fewer than 15 minutes, the remaining time is lost and no additional medical time will be available to the player during the match.

10.B.2.b. If the player cannot resume play after the 15-minute medical time-out period, the match will be declared a forfeit.

10.B.3. If medical personnel, or the Tournament Director if no medical personnel are present, determine that no valid medical condition exists, the player or team will be charged a standard time-out, if available, and issued a technical warning.

10.B.3.a. If a standard time-out is not available, then a technical foul will be issued.

10.B.3.b. The medical time-out is no longer available to that player for that match.

10.B.3.c. A player may be granted only one medical time-out per match.

10.B.4. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to continue play after a medical time-out.

10.B.5. Presence of blood. If blood is present on a player or on the court, play may not resume until the bleeding has been controlled and blood on clothing and the court has been removed.

10.B.5.a. Issues relating solely to blood cleanup or control will be considered a referee time-out.

10.B.5.b. If the injury is deliberately self-inflicted, the affected player shall be charged a standard time-out, if available, and issued a technical warning. If a standard time-out is not available, then a technical foul will be issued.

10.B.5.c. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to continue play.

10. C. Hydration. Players are permitted to quickly hydrate in between points as long as, in the judgment of the referee, the flow of the game is not adversely impacted. The referee shall call the score when play should be resumed.

10. D. Equipment Time-Outs. Players are expected to keep all apparel and equipment in good playable condition and are expected to use regular time-outs and time between games for adjustments and replacement of equipment. If a player or team is out of time-outs and the referee determines that an equipment change or adjustment is necessary for fair and safe continuation of the match, the referee may award an equipment time-out not to exceed 2 minutes. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to resume play during an equipment time-out.

10.D.1. Apparel and equipment adjustments that can be accomplished quickly are allowed between points (e.g., tying shoelaces, cleaning glasses, adjusting hat).

10. E. **Time Between Games.** The period between games in a match shall not exceed 2 minutes. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to resume play.
10. F. **Time Between Matches.** The standard time between matches shall be 10 minutes. If all players are ready to play prior to 10 minutes, the match may be called early.
- 10.F.1. In a championship match with a tie-breaker match: If the winner of the loser's bracket defeats the winner of the winner's bracket, then a tie-breaker match to 15 points must be played. Maximum time between the championship match and the tie-breaker match is 10 minutes. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to begin play for the tie-breaker match.
10. G. **Suspended Games.** A game suspended due to extenuating circumstances shall be resumed with the same server, score, and remaining time-outs as when interrupted.
10. H. **Other Time-Out Rules.**
- 10.H.1. **Before A Match or Game:** No time-outs may be taken before a match starts. Time-out(s) may be used at the start of the second or third game in a two-out-of-three game match.
- 10.H.2. **Extenuating Circumstances:** The referee may call a referee time-out to address extenuating circumstances that may require an extended interruption of play.
- 10.H.2.a. In the interest of overall safety, if the referee determines a potential medical situation exists, (for example, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, etc.) the referee is authorized to call a referee time-out and summon medical personnel or the Tournament Director. If determined to

be a valid medical situation requiring treatment, the referee will charge a medical time-out to the affected player, and proceed in accordance with Rule 10.B. If the player did not require treatment, play resumes and no time-out is charged to the player. If the player has previously used, or been charged a medical timeout, the referee will call a referee time-out and summon medical personnel or the Tournament Director to determine if the player may resume play.

- 10.H.2.b.** Active bleeding shall be addressed in accordance with Rule 10.B.5.
- 10.H.2.c.** Foreign substances on the court, such as debris, water or other fluids, shall be removed or cleaned up.
- 10.H.2.d.** Rule 10.A.5 procedures shall be used to resume play.

SECTION 11 – OTHER RULES

- 11.A. **Double Hits.** Balls can be hit twice, but this must occur during an unintentional, continuous, single-direction stroke, by one player. If the stroke is deliberate, or not continuous or not in a single direction, or the ball is struck by a second player, it is a fault.
- 11.B. **Switching Hands.** A paddle may be switched from hand to hand at any time.
- 11.C. **Two-Handed Shots.** Two-handed shots are allowed.
- 11.D. **Missed Shot.** A player completely missing the ball when attempting to strike it does not create a dead ball. The ball remains in play until it bounces twice or until any other fault has occurred.
- 11.E. **Broken or Cracked Ball.** Play continues until the end of the rally. Players may appeal to the referee before the service motion starts to determine if a ball is broken or cracked so it can be replaced. If, in the judgment of the referee, a broken or cracked ball impacted the outcome of a rally, the referee will call for a replay with a replacement ball. In non-officiated sanctioned play, if the players do not agree, the rally stands as played.
- 11.F. **Injury During Rally.** The rally continues to its conclusion despite an injury to any of the players.
- 11.G. **Player Equipment Problem.** A rally will not be stopped if a player loses or breaks a paddle or loses an item, unless the action results in a fault.
- 11.H. **Items on the Court.** If any item a player is/was wearing or carrying lands on their side of the court, unless the item lands in the non-volley zone as a result of a volley, the ball remains in play even if it hits the item.

- 11.I. **Plane of the Net.** After striking the ball, a player or anything the player is/was wearing or carrying may cross the plane of the net or the imaginary extension line of the net beyond the posts but may not touch any part of the net system or the opponent's court.
- 11.I.1. Exception: If the ball bounces into a receiving player's court with enough backspin or wind aid to cause it to return back over the net, the receiving player may reach over the net, around the net post or under the net to hit the ball, but only after the ball crosses back over the plane of the net to the opponent's side. It is a fault if the player touches the net system or the opponent's court while the ball is still in play. If the player does not touch the ball, the team that last struck the ball wins the rally.
- 11.J. **Distractions.** Players may not distract an opponent when the opponent is about to play the ball. If in the judgment of the referee a distraction has occurred, the referee shall immediately call a fault on the offending team.
- 11.J.1. After the rally has ended, a player may ask the referee if the opponents committed a distraction. If, in the judgment of the referee, a distraction did occur and contributed to the loss of the rally, a fault will be declared against the offending player or team. In non-officiated sanctioned play, if all players do not agree that a distraction occurred, any player may request a decision by a referee or the Tournament Director to determine if a distraction occurred. (See Rule 13.A.1.)
- 11.J.2. In doubles play, team communication before the opponent strikes the ball shall not be considered a distraction.
- 11.K. **The Net Posts.** The net posts (including connected wheels, arms, or other support construction) are positioned out of

bounds. If a ball or player contacts the net post while the ball is in play, it is a fault and a dead ball is declared.

11.K.1. A ball contacting the net, the net cable, or rope between the net posts remains in play.

11.L. *The Net.*

11.L.1. The net and the wires or strings holding up the net are positioned (mostly) on the court. Therefore, if the ball strikes the top of the net or strikes the top net wire or string and lands inbounds, it remains in play.

11.L.2. If the ball travels between the net and the net post, it is a fault against the striking player.

11.L.3. A player is allowed to go around the net post and cross the imaginary extension line of the net after hitting the ball, so long as the player or any item he or she is/was wearing or carrying does not touch the opponent's court. If the player goes around the net post and crosses the imaginary extension line of the net but does not make contact with the ball, a fault will be declared.

11.L.4. If a player hits the ball over the net into the opponent's court, and then the ball bounces back over the net without being touched by the opponent, the striking player wins the rally.

11.L.5. For net systems with a horizontal bar that includes a center base:

11.L.5.a. If the ball hits the horizontal bar or the center base before going over the net, it is a fault.

11.L.5.b. Other than on the serve, if the ball goes over the net and hits the center base or any part of the horizontal bar or the ball

gets caught between the net and the horizontal bar before, or after, touching the court, it is a let and will be replayed. (See Rule 11.L.5.c.)

11.L.5.c. On the serve, if the ball hits the horizontal bar or the center base or gets caught between the net and horizontal bar after going over the net, it is a fault.

11.L.5.d. Any malfunction of a net system during play shall be considered a hinder.

11.M. ***Shots Around the Net Post.*** A player may return the ball around the outside of the net post.

11.M.1. The ball does not need to travel back over the net.

11.M.2. There is no restriction on the height of the return, meaning a player may return the ball around the net post below the height of the net.

11.N. ***Coaching.*** Players may not receive coaching from anyone other than their partner except during time-outs and between games. Once play has begun, any communication between a player and any person not on the court, if determined by the referee to be coaching, shall result in a technical warning to the offending player or team. If the communication occurs a second time, it shall result in a technical foul and a point will be awarded to the opponent.

11.O. ***One Paddle.*** A player shall not use or carry more than one paddle while playing.

11.P. ***Paddle Possession.*** A player must have possession of the paddle when it makes contact with the ball.

SECTION 12 – SANCTIONED TOURNAMENT POLICIES

12.A. *Event Categories.*

Men: Singles and Doubles

Women: Singles and Doubles

Mixed: Doubles

12.A.1. In events described by gender, only members of that gender shall be allowed to play in that event.

12.A.2. Mixed doubles – A mixed doubles team shall consist of one male and one female player.

12.B. *Tournament Scoring Options.* The primary and recommended tournament scoring option to be used is best two of three games to 11 points, win by 2 points. Other options include: one game to 15 or one game to 21. All formats win by 2 points.

12.C. *Tournament Formats.* There are four tournament formats that may be used. The particular format is typically the choice of the tournament sponsor or the Tournament Director.

12.C.1. Single Elimination with Consolation. The first player or team to score the match-winning point by at least a 2-point margin wins. Losers from all rounds go into a consolation bracket playing for the bronze medal/third place and are eliminated after a second loss. The final two players or teams in the winner's bracket play for the gold/first-place and silver/second-place medals.

12.C.2. Double Elimination. The first player or team to score the match-winning point by at least a 2-point margin wins. A loss will put the loser into the consolation bracket. Players or teams are eliminated after one loss in the consolation bracket.

The winner of the consolation bracket will play the winner of the winner's bracket for the championship. If the winner of the consolation bracket defeats the winner of the winner's bracket, then a tie-breaker match to 15 points must be played to determine the gold/first-place and silver/second-place medals. The loser of the consolation bracket will receive the bronze/third-place medal.

12.C.3. Round Robin. All players or teams play each other. Games may use any of the approved tournament scoring options. (See Rule 12.B.) The winner is determined based on number of matches won. If two or more teams are tied:

12.C.3.a. First tie-breaker: head-to-head matches won.

12.C.3.b. Second tie-breaker: point differential of all games played. (e.g., Team A won Match 1 11-8, 11-4, so they would have a point differential of +10. Team A then wins the second match 11-9, 2-11, 11-6. For this round, they would have a point differential of -2. This would give them a total for the day of +8.)

12.C.3.c. Third tie-breaker: head-to-head point differential.

12.C.3.d. Fourth tie-breaker: point differential against next-highest team. (e.g., If the teams are tied for second, use point differentials against the first-place team.)

12.C.4. Pool Play. The participants are divided into two or more player pools. Each pool plays a round robin to determine the qualifiers that put the players into a single-elimination or double-elimination playoff.

- 12.D. **Draws and Seeding.** A draw and seeding committee shall be appointed by the Tournament Director to rank the players and teams and set up a fair draw for each event.
- 12.E. **Notice of Matches.** It is the responsibility of each player to check the posted schedules to determine the time and place of each match. If any change is made in the schedule after the initial posting, the Tournament Director or their designated representative shall notify the players of the changes.
- 12.F. **Forfeits and Withdrawals.**

12.F.1. **Forfeits**

- 12.F.1.a. After the initial score has been called to start the match, the only option available for a player/team to discontinue playing the match until completion is Forfeit.
- 12.F.1.b. During a match, if a player/team cannot immediately continue after the 15-minute medical time-out period has expired, a Forfeit will be imposed.
- 12.F.1.c. The player/team must make a Forfeit request during the match to either the referee or the opposing player/team.
- 12.F.1.d. The player/team who requests a Forfeit during a match, or a player/team on which a rule-based Forfeit has been imposed, will have all score(s) reported per the guidelines in the Forfeit Scoring section. (See Rule 12. F.3.)
- 12.F.1.e. If applicable, a player/team is still eligible for the next match in the same bracket after choosing a Forfeit option for a previous match.

12.F.1.f. A player/team may request a Forfeit for any upcoming match in the specified bracket.

12.F.2. Withdrawals:

12.F.2.a. A player/team may request to be withdrawn from any scheduled bracket(s) that have not been started by tournament operations personnel.

12.F.2.b. If a player/team has completed any matches, the player/team may request to be withdrawn from ALL upcoming matches in that bracket.

12.F.2.c. The player/team must make their Withdrawal request to either the Tournament Director, Head Referee or operations desk personnel.

12.F.2.d. The withdrawn player/team shall be removed from any future participation in the specified bracket.

12.F.2.e. The withdrawn player/team shall have all scores reported per the guidelines in the Withdrawal Scoring section. (See Rule 12.F.4.)

12.F.3. Forfeited Match Scoring Guidelines

12.F.3.a. 2 out of 3 Format: 11-0, 11-0

1 Game to 15 Format: 15-0

1 Game to 21 Format: 21-0

12.F.3.b. If applicable (and the Withdrawal option has not been chosen) the player/team may continue to compete in any upcoming matches.

12.F.3.c. All previous completed match scores, prior to the Forfeited match, will be retained.

12.F.4. Withdrawal Scoring Guidelines for Remaining Matches.

12.F.4.a. 2 out of 3 Format: 0-0, 0-0

1 Game to 15 Format: 0-0

1 Game to 21 Format: 0-0

12.F.4.b. Scores for all matches completed prior to the Withdrawal request will be retained.

12.G. Two-Match Minimum. In all USAPA-/IFP-sanctioned tournaments, each entrant shall be entitled to participate in a minimum of two scheduled matches per event entered.

12.H. Scheduling Matches. A player is not permitted to enter multiple events scheduled on the same day with same or overlapping time duration.

12.I. Doubles Play. A doubles team shall consist of two players who meet the classification requirements to participate in a particular division of play.

12.I.1. In an event based upon skill rating, the higher-rated player determines the team's ability level. In an adult event (ages 19 and over) based upon age grouping, the lowest age of the team members will determine the team's age classification. Players may play in a younger division unless prohibited by the rules of the National Senior Games Association.

12.I.2. Juniors (ages 18 and under) may enter any junior event for which they are age qualified. If a junior event is not available or does not receive enough entrants, or at the Tournament Director's permission, juniors may play as adults in the 19-and-over events.

- 12.J. Partner change may be made prior to the first-round match, with the consent of the Tournament Director, if the change is due to injury, illness, or circumstances beyond the control of the player.
- 12.J.1. Under no circumstances can a partner change be made after the partners have begun team play.
- 12.K. **Court Changes.** In USAPA-/IFP-sanctioned tournaments, the Tournament Director or designee may decide on a change of courts after the completion of any tournament game if such a change will accommodate better spectator or playing conditions.

SECTION 13 – TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT AND OFFICIATING

- 13.A. **Tournament Director.** A Tournament Director shall manage the tournament. It is the Tournament Director's responsibility to designate the officials and their areas of responsibility.
- 13.A.1. Unless otherwise stated in the rules, officiating decisions may be appealed to the Tournament Director. After appeal, decisions of the Tournament Director are final.
- 13.A.2. In all USAPA-/IFP-sanctioned tournaments, the Tournament Director will provide some method of identifying each team's starting server for each game. This identification must be visible to all on the court during play. Refusal to wear this identification will result in forfeit of the match.
- 13.A.3. The Tournament Director should check to ensure that planned support (e.g., first aid, tournament volunteers, etc.) is available.
- 13.A.4. The Tournament Director has the authority to expel any player from the tournament for misconduct.
- 13.B. **Rules Briefing.** Before the tournament, all officials and players shall be briefed or supplied with the current rules about court hinders. This briefing should be put in writing when possible. The current USAPA/IFP tournament rules will apply and be made available. The Tournament Director may not impose any local rule or use any interpretation of any rule not stated within the current USAPA/IFP rules. Any exception to the rules that is desired because of physical limitations of the court or other local conditions must be approved in advance by the USAPA/IFP.

- 13.C. Referee's Duties.** The referee is responsible for all decisions related to procedural and judgment calls during the match.
- 13.C.1. The referee calls non-volley-zone infractions, short serves, and service foot faults.
 - 13.C.2. If the players or line judges make the line calls and there is a disputed line call, the players may request that the referee determine the line call. The referee's call will stand. If the referee cannot make the line call, the player's or line judge's call stands. If doubles partners appeal a line call that they disagree on and the referee cannot make the call, the ball will be declared "in."
 - 13.C.2.a. Spectators should not be consulted on any calls.
 - 13.C.3. Before each match begins, the referee must:
 - 13.C.3.a. Check on preparation of the court with respect to cleanliness, lighting, height of the net, court markings, and hazards.
 - 13.C.3.b. Check on availability and suitability of necessary materials for the match, such as balls, score sheets, pencils, and the timing device (stop watch).
 - 13.C.4. Before each match begins, the referee must meet with players at courtside to:
 - 13.C.4.a. Inspect paddles for irregularities.
 - 13.C.4.b. Point out court hindrances and other approved rule modifications.
 - 13.C.4.c. Instruct players on line-calling duties of the referee, line judges, and players.
 - 13.C.4.d. Use any fair method to determine the initial selection of side, serve, or receive.

13.C.4.e. Ensure the starting servers for each team are wearing the official identification. Refusal to wear the identification will result in forfeit of the match.

13.C.5. During the match, the referee must:

13.C.5.a. Recheck the net height and position if the net is disturbed.

13.C.5.b. Call the score to start each rally. Calling the score indicates to each side that play is ready to resume.

13.C.5.c. Call “point” after each is awarded.

13.C.5.d. Appropriately annotate the score sheet after each rally is completed or time-out is called.

13.C.5.e. In doubles matches, call “second server” after the first server’s team loses the rally.

13.C.5.f. Call “side out” when appropriate.

13.C.5.g. Enforce time-out procedures. (See Section 10.)

13.C.5.h. Maintain player conduct. In USAPA-/IFP-sanctioned tournaments, the referee is empowered to call technical warnings and technical fouls and to forfeit a match based on a defined combination of technical warnings and/or technical fouls.

13.D. ***Player Line and Fault Call Responsibilities.***

13.D.1. Non-Officiated Sanctioned Play.

13.D.1.a. Players call all lines on their side of the court, including NVZ and service foot faults.

13.D.1.b. Players may call NVZ faults and service foot faults on the opponent's side of the court. If there is any disagreement among players about the called fault, a replay shall occur.

13.D.2. **Officiated Sanctioned Play.**

13.D.2.a. Players call baseline, sideline, and center service line on their side of the court.

13.D.3. **Officiated Sanctioned Play with Line Judges.**

13.D.3.a. Players call center service line on their side of the court.

13.D.3.b. Player line calls are not valid in matches with line judges, except to overrule a line judge call to disadvantage their own team (see Rule 6.D.13). Players may appeal a line call made by the line judge to the referee. (See Rule 13.F.)

13.D.3.c. If the line judge(s) and referee cannot make a line call, the rally shall be replayed unless all players agree that the ball was "out".

13.E. *Line Judges.*

13.E.1. It is recommended that line judges be assigned to medal matches. The Tournament Director or designated representative will select line judges.

13.E.2. Line judges will make all line fault calls within their jurisdiction and will signify fault by loudly calling "out" and giving an accepted hand signal. Accepted hand signals are:

13.E.2.a. "Out" ball – outstretched arm pointing in the direction of the out-of-bounds ball path.

13.E.2.b. “In” ball – arms extended parallel to the court with palms down.

13.E.2.c. Blocked/blinded – both hands covering the eyes. Note: If the line judge displays this signal, the referee can make the call immediately.

13.F. Appeals. Appeals to the referee regarding judgment calls (line calls, double bounce, etc.) shall be decided by the referee. The referee may consult players or line judges to decide the outcome of the appeal.

13.F.1. If a player appeals a line call to the referee, the referee’s call shall stand if the referee clearly saw the ball land “in” or “out”. If the referee is unable to make the call, the original call will stand. If no call was made, the ball will be considered “in”, unless one player requests and all players agree to a replay.

13.F.2. A referee’s decision will result in a point awarded, a service loss, or a replay.

13.G. Technical Warnings and Technical Fouls.

13.G.1. Technical Warning. The referee is empowered to call technical warnings. Actions or behavior that may result in a technical warning:

13.G.1.a. Objectionable or demeaning language directed at another person.

13.G.1.b. Excessive profanity used for any reason. The referee will determine the severity of any violation.

13.G.1.c. Excessive arguing.

13.G.1.d. Purposely breaking the ball or striking the ball between rallies.

- 13.G.1.e. Delay of game, either in the form of taking too much time during time-outs or between rallies or games.
 - 13.G.1.f. Excessive questioning of the referee on the rules.
 - 13.G.1.g. Excessive or unnecessary appeals.
 - 13.G.1.h. Challenging the referee's interpretation of a rule and losing the challenge (e.g., referee's ruling was correct) and a time-out is assessed. (See 13.l)
 - 13.G.1.i. Requesting a medical time-out without a valid medical condition.
 - 13.G.1.j. Any other actions that are considered unsportsmanlike behavior.
 - 13.G.1.k. A player's injury involving blood is determined by the referee or medical personnel (or the Tournament Director if no medical personnel are present) to have been deliberately self-inflicted.
- 13.G.2. Technical Fouls. The referee is empowered to call technical fouls. When a technical foul is called, one point shall be added to the score of the opposing side. Actions or behavior that will result in a technical foul (without a technical warning being issued beforehand):
- 13.G.2.a. Intentionally throwing a paddle.
 - 13.G.2.b. A player using extremely objectionable or demeaning language directed at another person or extremely excessive profanity.
 - 13.G.2.c. Threats of any nature to any person.
 - 13.G.2.d. Challenging the referee's interpretation of a rule and losing the challenge (e.g.,

referee's ruling was correct) and no time-out is available.

13.G.2.e. Any other actions that are considered extreme unsportsmanlike behavior warranting a one-point award to the opposing side.

13.G.2.f. Requesting a medical time-out without a valid medical condition, and the team (or player in a singles match) has no time-outs remaining.

13.G.2.g. A player's injury involving blood is determined by the referee or medical personnel (or the Tournament Director if no medical personnel are present) to have been deliberately self-inflicted and the player has no time-outs available.

13.G.3. Effect of Technical Fouls and Technical Warnings. The assessment of a technical warning or technical foul shall be accompanied by a brief explanation of the reason.

13.G.3.a. A technical warning shall not result in a loss of rally or point awarded.

13.G.3.b. Once a technical warning has been issued, a second technical warning for any reason, given to the same player or team during the match, will result in a technical foul being issued to the player or team.

13.G.3.c. If a referee issues a technical foul, one point shall be added to the non-offending player's or team's score. After the point is awarded, the player or team awarded the point must move on their own to the correct position(s) that reflects their score.

- 13.G.3.d. A called technical warning or technical foul shall have no effect on server change or side out.
- 13.G.3.e. After assessing a technical warning or a technical foul, the referee will call a 15-second warning for the players to become ready. At the end of 15 seconds, the referee will announce the score to begin the 10-second count even if the server and receiver are not on the court or not ready to play. (See Rule 4.E.)
- 13.G.3.f. Technical warnings and technical fouls may be assessed any time during a match while the players are at the court.

13.H. Match Forfeit.

- 13.H.1. The referee will impose a match forfeit when either of the following occurs:
 - 13.H.1.a. After one technical warning has been assessed and the subsequent issuance of a technical foul listed in Rule 13.G.2.
 - 13.H.1.b. After one technical foul has been assessed in accordance with Rule 13.G.3.c. or Rule 13.G.2. and the subsequent issuance of another technical warning or technical foul for any reason.
- 13.H.2. The Tournament Director may impose a match forfeit for failure to comply with the tournament or host facility's rules while on the premises, or for improper conduct on the premises between matches, or for abuse of hospitality, locker room, or other rules and procedures.
- 13.H.3. A referee may impose a match forfeit when a player fails to report to play 10 minutes after the match

has been called to play. The Tournament Director may permit a longer delay if circumstances warrant such a decision.

13.H.4. The Tournament Director has the authority to expel any player from the tournament for misconduct.

13.H.4.a. At the discretion of the Tournament Director, if a player has been expelled from a tournament, any prizes and ranking points gained from the tournament may be forfeited.

- 13.I. **Rules Interpretations.** If a player thinks the referee has interpreted a rule incorrectly, that player may challenge the referee's ruling. If the referee's ruling is correct, the player or team will lose a time-out and be given a technical warning. If no time-outs are available and the referee's ruling is correct, the player or team will be given a technical foul. (See 13.G.2.d)
- 13.J. **Removal of a Referee or Line Judge.** If all players agree, they may petition the Tournament Director for a referee or line judge removal. The Tournament Director retains the final discretionary authority on the removal of an official. If a member of the officiating team is removed, the Tournament Director will appoint a replacement.
- 13.K. **Non-Officiated Sanctioned Play.** Any player may request a referee or Tournament Director if:
- 13.K.1. The player reasonably believes that a rule is being consistently and deliberately violated by their opponent.
- 13.K.2. A situation arises where players are not able to quickly and easily resolve a dispute.

SECTION 14 – WHEELCHAIR RULES

14. A. **Basic Play.** The wheelchair is considered to be part of the player's body, and all applicable rules that apply to a player's body will apply to the wheelchair except in the non-volley zone as listed below. All applicable rules that apply to standing players apply to players in a wheelchair except as listed below.
14. B. **Double-Bounce Rule.** The wheelchair pickleball player is allowed to double bounce the ball on their side of the net. The second bounce can be anywhere inside or outside of the court boundaries.
14. C. **Service.**
- 14.C.1. Server shall be in a stationary position and is then allowed one push before striking the ball.
 - 14.C.2. At the time the server strikes the ball, the server shall not touch the playing surface in an area outside the confines of the serving area with any wheel.
14. D. **Non-Volley Zone (NVZ).** The double-bounce rule applies to the NVZ.
- 14.D.1. A wheelchair player may strike a ball in the NVZ on a volley. It is a fault only if the larger rear wheels contact the NVZ.
 - 14.D.2. After entering the NVZ, the player's larger rear wheels must return to outside the NVZ boundaries before hitting a volley or it is a fault.
14. E. **Wheelchair/Standing Pickleball.**
- 14.E.1. When a wheelchair pickleball player is playing with or against a standing person in singles or doubles, the rules of pickleball for standing players shall

apply to all standing players, while the wheelchair pickleball rules shall apply to all wheelchair players.

14. F. *Singles Wheelchair Pickleball.*

- 14.F.1. **4.0 and Above Bracket Play:** Singles play with one or both players in a wheelchair shall be played on the entire court. The serving and receiving rules will be the same as Section 4.B.5.
- 14.F.2. **3.5 and Below Bracket Play:** Singles play with one or both players in a wheelchair shall be played on the diagonal half of the court. The server and the receiver shall play the entire rally from their respective diagonal service and receiving courts. The serving and receiving rules will be the same as Section 4.B.5.

14. G. *Playing Area Dimensions and Rules*

- 14.G.1. **Sideline Clearance/Replay:** A minimum of 5 feet of clearance from each sideline is recommended. If a distance less than 5 feet is provided, any wheelchair player that, in the judgment of the referee, is prevented from returning the ball before the 3rd bounce, (dead ball) shall be awarded a replay of the rally.
- 14.G.2. **Baseline Clearance/Replay:** A minimum of 8 feet of clearance from the baseline to the back perimeter is recommended. If a distance less than 8 feet is provided, if a player's wheelchair that is completely behind the baseline is hit with the ball, a replay of the rally shall be called. Exception: If in the judgment of the referee it is determined that the wheelchair player deliberately positioned the wheelchair so as to be hit by the ball, the referee shall call a fault on the offending wheelchair player.

INDEX

10 second rule 4.E

- between games 5.B.2
- switching sides 5.B.6
- technical warning/foul 13.G.3.e
- time out 10.A.5

Apparel 2.G

- violation 2.G.4

Ball specifications 2.D

- cracked/broken 11.E

Calling the score 4.D

- singles matches 4.I
- doubles matches 4.J
- wrong score called 4.K

Carry 3.A.1

- deliberate carry 7.O

Change of ends 5.B

Coaching 11.N

Court 3.A.2

- baseline 2.B.1
- centerline 2.B.5
- court specifications 2.A
- cross court 3.A.3
- items on court 11.H
- left/odd court 3.A.17; 2.B.7
- lines and areas 2.B
- net (see net)
- non-volley zone 2.B.3
- right/even court 3.A.32; 2.B.6
- service court 3.A.37; 2.B.4
- side lines 2.B.2

Dead ball

- definition 3.A.4
- rules 8

Dink shot 3.A.5

Distractions

- definition 3.A.6
- rule 11.J

Double bounce 3.A.7

- wheelchair play 14.B
- (see also two-bounce rule)

Double hit

- definition 3.A.8
- allowed 11.A
- fault 7.P

Drop shot

- definition 3.A.9
- drop shot volley 3.A.10

Equipment prob. (player)

11.G

- item on court 11.H

Fault rules 7

- definition 3.A.11
- double bounce 7.E
- double hit 7.P
- non-volley zone 9.B to 9.D
- plane of net 7.N; 11.I
- receiver faults 4.N
- service faults 4.M
- striking permanent object 7.J
- touching live ball 7.H; 7.I
- touching net system or post

7.G

- two-bounce rule 7.A

Forfeit

- defined 3.A.13
- scoring guidelines 12.F.3
- tournament rules 12.F.1; 13.H

Ground stroke 3.A.14

Hinder 3.A.16

Incorrect player positions

4.B.10 and 4.B.11

Injury during rally 11.F

- medical time-out 10.B

Let

- defined 3.A.18
- called promptly 6.D.8
- service lets 4.O

Line call rules 6

- benefit of doubt 6.D.3; 6.D.9
- called promptly 6.D.8; 6.D.10

called before bounce 6.D.11
called after bounce 6.D.12
definition 3.A.19
point of contact 6.C
requesting help 6.D.6

Live ball 3.A.20

Lob 3.A.21

Missed shot 11.D

Non-volley zone (NVZ)

defined 3.A.22
volley momentum 9.B; 9.C
rules 9

Not ready signals 4.C.1

Net 2.C

ball spins back untouched
11.L.4
bottom 2.C.7
height 2.C.5
net posts 11.K
net in play 11.L
specifications 2.C

Paddle

one paddle 11.O
paddle possession 11.P

Paddle specifications 2.E

alterations 2.E.5; 2.E.6
approved paddle 2.F.3
grip adjustment 3.A.24
homemade 2.E.8
model designation 2.E.7
prohibited alterations 2.E.6
size 2.E.3
surface 2.E.2
violation 2.F.3.a

Permanent object 3.A.27; 7.J

Player positions 4.B

questions to referee 4.B.8;
4.B.9

Playing surface 3.A.28

Points 4.G

Rally 3.A.29

Receiver 3.A.30

**Referee/line judge removal
13.J**

Replay 3.A.31

Cracked/broken ball 11.E
line call, officiated sanctioned
play 13.D.3.c
wrong score called 4.K.1

Rules challenge 13.I

Sanctioned tournament 12

Scoring 4.F

**Select side, serve, receive, or
defer 5.A**

Serve

bounce before hitting 7.M;
4.A.4
definition 3.A.35
first server 3.A.12
horizontal bar w/center base
11.L.5
identification, starting server
5.A.4; 13.A.2
readiness 4.C
second serve 3.A.33
second server 3.A.34
service court 3.A.37
service faults 4.M
service foot fault 4.L
service motion 3.A.38; 4.A.1-7
server 3.A.36
serving area 3.A.39; 4.A.3
starting server
(see starting server)

**Shot around net post
11.M; 11.L.3**

Side out 3.A.40

Side selection rules 5.A

Singles

calling score 4.I
player positions 4.B.5
wheelchair play 14.F

Starting Server

changing starting server 5.A.3

definition 3.A.41
identification band 5.A.4
suspended games 10.G

Technical foul 3.A.42; 13.G.2

**Technical warning 3.A.43;
13.G.1**

Time allowances

between games 5.B.2; 10.E
between matches 10.F
end switch during game 5.B.6

Time-out rules 10

after service motion begins
10.A.3
before match or game 10.H.1
blood 10.B.5
equipment time out 10.D
extenuating circumstances
10.H.2
hydration break 10.C
medical time-out 10.B
standard time-out 10.A

**Tournament management
and**

officiating 13

appeals 13.F
forfeiture of match 13.H
line judges 13.E
player line/fault call
responsibilities 13.D
referee's duties 13.C
removal of referee or line judge
13.J
rules interpretation 13.I
technical warning/foul 13.G
tournament director 13.A

Two-bounce rule Page 1; 7.A

Two-handed shot 11.C

Volley 3.A.44

Wheelchair rules 14

double bounce 14.B
non-volley zone 14.D
playing area dimensions/rules

14.G

service 14.C

singles 14.F

**Winning the game page 1;
4.H**

Withdraw 3.A.45

scoring guidelines 12.F.4
tournament rules 12.F.2

Wrong score called 4.K

**USA Pickleball Association (USAPA) and
International Federation of Pickleball (IFP)**

All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America

Please visit our websites

usapa.org

ipickleball.org

for the most current rules and information

© 2010, revised 2020