



# 2020 Rules Change Document

## Revisions and Reasons

This document details the major rulebook changes from the 2019 edition. Explanations and scenarios are provided.

1. Removal of the word “**Tournament**” from the cover of the rulebook.

**Reason:** To help promote that the rules apply to more than tournament play.

### **Section 2: Court and Equipment**

2. **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.)
3. **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.

**Reason:** To provide clear guidelines when the ball goes over the net and hits any part of the net lying on the ground.



4. 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.

**Reason:** To eliminate after-market changes to the paddle face except to allow handwritten markings.

### **Section 3: Definitions**

5. **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.

**Reason:** The phrase “during its forward motion” was removed to more broadly define the term carry.

6. **3.A.6: Distraction** – Physical actions by a player that are ‘not common to the game’ that, in the judgement of the referee, interfere with their 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.

**Reason:** To define distraction faults and to eliminate the misconception that the listed examples were the only specific distractions that can occur.

7. **3.A.11: Fault** – A rules violation that results in a dead ball and the end of the rally.

**Reason:** The 2019 definition covered the penalty, not the description, of a fault. Penalties are addressed later in the rulebook.

8. **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.

**Reason:** To more clearly define the proper player (in doubles) who should serve first after a side-out.

9. **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.

**Reason:** To give a definition to coincide with rule changes in section 12.F.

10. **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.

**Reason:** To provide more specificity of examples of hinders.

11. **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.

**Reason:** To provide a definition of Line Call as well as additional wording that can be used to make a line call and to clarify actions for the non-verbal community.

12. **3.A.20: Live Ball/In Play** – The point in time when the referee starts to call the score.

**Reason:** To define precisely when the ball is considered “in play” at the start of a game or after a rally has ended.

**13. 3.A.24: Paddle Grip Adjustments** – Non-mechanical devices that change the size of the grip or stabilize the hand on the grip.

**Reason:** In accordance with 2.E.5.a, this defines what changes can be made to the paddle grip.

**14. 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.

**Reason:** The phrase “net post legs” was added for clarity.

**15. 3.A.28: Playing Surface** – The court and the area surrounding the court designated for playing.

**Reason:** Added due to rulebook references to “the playing surface”.

**16. 3.A.30: Receiver** – The player who is positioned diagonally opposite from the server to return the serve. Depending on the team’s score, the player who returns the serve may not be the correct receiver.

**Reason:** Changed from 2019 to provide a clearer definition of receiver.

**17. 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.

**Reason:** Changed from 2019 to provide a clearer definition of server.

**18. 3.A.38: Service Motion** – The movement of player’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.

**Reason:** To provide a more specific definition of the service motion.

**19. 3.A.39: Serving Area** - The area behind the baseline and on and between the imaginary extensions of the court centerline and each sideline.

**Reason:** For better description clarity.

**20. 3.A.40: Side Out** - The awarding of the serve to the opposing team after a singles player or doubles team loses its serve.

**Reason:** For better description clarity.

**21. 3.A.45: Withdrawal** – A player/team’s request to be removed from any upcoming play in a specified bracket.

**Reason:** To give a definition to coincide with rule changes in section 12.F.

## **Section 4: The Serve, Service Sequence, and Scoring Rules**

**22. 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 center line and at least one foot must be on the playing surface or ground behind the baseline.

**Reason:** This rule was changed to reflect that a player can start their service motion anywhere behind the baseline or imaginary extension of the baseline. It further describes where both feet of the server are permitted to touch (and at least one foot is required to touch) as well as where the feet are **NOT** allowed to touch, the moment the ball is struck to start the rally.

**23. 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.

**Reason:** The rule was changed to eliminate the inconsistency between sentences 2 and 3 of the 2019 Rule and to be congruent with 4.A.7 below.

**24. 4.A.7:** Contact with the ball must not be made above the waist level (waist is defined as the navel).

**Reason:** The rule was changed to coincide with Rule 4.A.6. Both now reference not being "above" which is expected to make it easier to remember the rule.

**25. 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.

**Reason:** This change reflects the potential when a technical foul (and point) could be assessed in between games and from which side the starting server (wearing the form of identification) will serve.

**Scenario A:** After game 1, Team B receives a technical foul and a point is awarded to Team A. At the start of game 2, the starting server for Team A would begin serving the game from the left/odd court with a starting score of "1-0-2".

**Scenario B:** After game 1, Team A receives a technical foul and a point is awarded to Team B. At the start of game 2, Team B is receiving serve. Team B's starting server's partner would receive serve from the right/even court with a score of "0-1-2". (See Rule 4.B.1 to determine the correct receiver)

**26. 4.B.8 & 4.B.9:** In the 2019 rulebook, the last sentence ("Players may not ask if they are in the correct position.") was removed from both 4.B.8 and 4.B.9.

**Reason:** To remove debate about whether a player asking the above mentioned question should be assessed a penalty associated with the question.

**27. 4.B.10:** The referee will not correct players' positions and will not confirm player's 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.

**Reason:** This rule instructs the referee that they should not answer player questions about their position. It further removes debate about whether a player should be assessed a penalty for asking a position question.



**28. 4.C. Readiness:** Any player may indicate “not ready” prior to the start of the score being called.

**Reason:** This change expanded who could give a “not ready” signal. New in 2020, any player may give a “not ready” signal if they are not ready to serve or receive serve. Previously, only the proper server and proper receiver could give an official “not ready” signal. This prompted confusion and disagreements among players and referees.

**29. 4.C.1.:** One of the following signals must be used to indicate “not ready”: 1) raising the paddle above their head, 2) raising the non-paddle hand above their head, 3) completely turning their back to the net.

**Reason:** This slight change to “a player turning their back to the net” (instead of to the server) was necessary since a server cannot turn their back to themselves. A player turning their back to the net is more visible to the opponents and referee.

**30. 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.

**Reason:** This change was made for two reasons: 1) In 2019, once a referee had checked for receiver readiness, the referee’s attention was then naturally focused on the server. After the referee had checked the receiver and was now focused on the server, if the receiver became “not ready” before the score calling had been finished, the referee oftentimes was not aware of the “not ready” signal. The referee would proceed to call the score and the server would serve the ball while the receiver was signaling “not ready” and many times this would lead to an argument because the referee could not watch both server and receiver at the same time. With this rule change, once the server or referee has started to call the score, any subsequent showing of a “not ready” signal will neither be honored

nor penalized. “Not ready” signals given after the **start** of the score calling, are to be effectively “ignored” unless there is a valid hinder, e.g. ball on court. 2) This change has removed the penalty for showing a “not ready” signal after the score was called.

**Scenario A:** The referee checks all players and sees that no one is showing a “not ready” signal. The referee starts to call the score and then the receiver raises their paddle above their head giving a “not ready” signal (there is no valid hinder). The referee should ignore the “not ready” signal and continue calling the score. The server must serve within the 10-second count or a fault will be issued. The receiver did not commit a fault by showing a not ready signal after the start of the score calling.

**Scenario B:** The referee calls an incorrect score. The server is wiping their glasses and has not serve. The receiver raises their paddle above their head and says, “You called the wrong score.” The referee halts play and confirms that the score was called incorrectly. The referee declares a replay. Even though the receiver’s raising of the paddle above their head could possibly be considered a “not ready” signal, the referee does NOT issue a fault because “not ready” signals are not valid after the start of the calling of the score.

**31. 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.

**Reason:** This change gives guidelines for the server and/or referee on when the score should be called. This rule works in conjunction with 4.C. and 4.C.1. on proper guidelines for the start of the score calling. The phrase “(or should be)” gives the referee discretion to determine when play shall continue.

**Scenario:** The serving team has scored 4 points in a row and the receiving team is out of time-outs. The receiving team is taking an abnormal amount of time in between points to get in position and the receiver is currently showing a “not ready” signal. The referee has determined that all players should be ready to play. While the receiver is still holding their paddle above their head, the referee calls the score to start the rally.

**32. 4.E. The 10-Second Rule:** Once the score has been called, the server is allowed 10 seconds to serve the ball.

**Reason:** The change was specific and concise pertaining to the 10-second rule. 2019 wording about readiness was transferred to section 4.C.

**33. 4.E.1:** The service motion must not start until the score has been called in its entirety.

**Reason:** After the score has been completely called, the 10-second count begins. The associated fault involving starting the service motion before the score has been completely called, is now specifically covered by rule 4.M.9.

**34. 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 server 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.

**Reason:** This guidance was previously in the Referee Handbook. It has now been codified as a rule and transferred to the Rulebook. Given that normally the receiving team will position themselves according to the positioning of the serving team, this rule clarifies that when the serving team changes serving courts (by either tossing the ball to the partner, or, stepping from one service court to the adjacent service court) **and thereby causes the receiving team to now be incorrectly positioned, that receiving team be afforded time to reposition.** This rule prevents any “trick serves” from becoming part of the game.

**Scenario A:** The incorrect server is positioned behind the incorrect serving court; and the receiving team is aligned to receive serve according to the serving team’s positioning. The referee calls the correct score and the incorrect server quickly tosses the ball to the correct server standing in the (adjacent) correct service

court. The referee **immediately** raises their hand to stop play and gives the receiving team time to re-adjust. The referee then re-calls the score and starts a new 10-second count.

**Scenario B:** The correct server is positioned behind the incorrect service court and the receiving team is properly aligned to receive serve from the correct serving court. The referee calls the score and starts the 10-second count. The server, seeing the proper alignment of the receiving team, realizes they are about to serve from the wrong court and quickly changes serving courts. The referee should not halt play because the server changing service courts has **not caused** the receiving team to be improperly aligned. The referee has continued the 10-second count and the server serves properly within the 10 seconds and the rally continues.

**35. 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.

**Reason:** This wording was changed to reflect that after the score has been called, any player who stops play to challenge the score called (when there was no error) has committed a fault. In 2019, the starting point for challenging the called score was after the serve had occurred. This “gap” needed to be tightened to eliminate a loophole in the rule whereby if a player challenged a correctly called score before the serve had happened, there was no associated penalty per the 2019 4.K.2. rule. Now, as soon as the score has been called, if a player challenges a correctly called score, they have committed a fault even if the server has not served.

**36. 4.L.2:** Not touch the area on the wrong side of the imaginary extension of the centerline.”

**Reason:** The 2019 word “outside” was changed to the phrase “on the wrong side of” for better clarity on the defined boundary for the server.

## **Section 5 – Service And End Selection Rules**

**37. 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 form of identification. In a non-officiated match, the opponents shall be notified of the starting server decision.

**Reason:** This clarifies if a fault can be called on a team that failed to notify the referee or their opponents of a starting server change. It clarifies that a fault will be called on the incorrect player when the incorrect server (or receiver) strikes the ball. Once the fault has been assessed, the offending team shall clarify who will be the starting server for the remainder of the game.

**Scenario:** After game 1 has ended, Team A decides to change their starting server but does not change the form of identification (band) and does not inform the referee or opponents. Team A is now the receiving team starting game 2 with the player not wearing the “band” set to receive serve in the right-hand court. The referee starts game 2 with Team B serving. Team B serves, and the incorrect receiver returns the serve. The referee calls a fault on Team B and explains the reason for the fault call. The referee asks Team B who will be the starting server for the remainder of the match. Team B switches the “band” to the new starting server and the referee notifies the opponents of the change. The referee continues play with Team A serving at “1-0-2”. Team B’s starting server partner (No-band) will be receiving serve from the left-hand court.

## Section 6 – Line Call Rules

**38. 6.C:** A ball contacting the playing surface completely outside of the court is “out”.

**Reason:** This 2019 6.C. change (along with the removal of Figure 6-1) was worded to simplify line calling guidelines.

**39. 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.

**Reason:** This wording change was to clarify that a player is not required to make a call before they appeal to the referee. It further clarifies that the “instant” the player/team makes an appeal, they have lost their privilege to make any subsequent call.

**Scenario:** In a doubles match, a volley is hit sharply cross-court close to the sideline of the NVZ near the referee. Receiving Player A does not make a line call, but immediately looks at the referee and asks, “Did you see it?” The referee replies that they did not clearly see the ball land. Player A’s partner THEN says, “Oh, well I saw it out”. The moment when Player A appealed, their team lost the right to make any later “in” or “out” call. The ball is considered “in” on the receiving team.

**40. 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.

**Reason:** This wording change clarifies guidelines when the opponent's opinion has been requested. Per rule 6.D.1, the receiving team is tasked with the "privilege and responsibility" to make a line call on their side of the net. The receiving team may forfeit their "privilege" to make the line call and ask for help by requesting the opponent's opinion to determine if the ball was in or out. If the opponents clearly saw the ball land and can decisively make an "in" or "out" call, the opponent's call must be accepted by the receiving team. If the opponents cannot offer help to the receiving team by being able to make a clear, decisive call, and the receiving team has forfeited their "right" to make a call, the ball must be considered "in" on the receiving team.

**Scenario A:** Team A hits a ball close to the baseline which passes by Team B. Team B does not make a call, and then asks for Team A's opinion. One player on Team A claims it was "in" while the partner claims it was "out". The result is that Team A is **NOT** able to make a clear, decisive "in" or "out" call. The ball is considered "in" on Team B. When Team B asked for Team A's help, they instantly lost their right to make any subsequent call. Note: Team A's conflicting opinions did not produce a clear call. This is effectively the same as if Team B had appealed to the referee and the referee could not give a clear ruling: In both cases, the ball is considered "in" on Team B

**Scenario B:** Team A hits a ball close to the baseline which passes by Team B. A player on Team B closest to the ball asks for Team A's opinion. After asking for Team A's opinion, the Team B partner says, "Hey, I saw it out". A Team A player says, "I clearly saw the ball land in." Since one player on Team B asked for Team A's help, the "in" call by Team A must be accepted. The ball is considered "in" on Team B.

**41. 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.

**Reason:** The word “instantly” was changed to “promptly” to provide a more accurate description of how quickly a team should make a line call.

**42. 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.

**Reason:** The last sentence was added for an obvious exception. The word “Deaf” was capitalized because it is a sign of respect to the Deaf community.

**43. 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.)

**Reason:** This change corrected a typing error in the 2019 rule and clearly defines what happens when the referee overrules an incorrect “out” call on appeal. The rule was also shortened for clarity and brevity.



**44. 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.

**Reason:** This new rule was added to allow players the option of making a call against themselves to their own disadvantage under specific conditions. Previously there was no option for players to make calls to their disadvantage. This has prompted tenuous situations between referees and players, many times involving line judges and a player's desire to overrule calls that were to their own disadvantage. A team may call a fault on themselves if an actual fault has been committed, or they disagree on a line call to their own disadvantage. This rule does **NOT** permit players to request a replay based on a team's disagreement with, or dislike of a rule.

**Scenario A:** During a rally, the ball grazes the arm of Player 1 and the rally continues. Player 1 wins the rally. Player 1 then notifies the referee (or opponents) that during the rally, the ball grazed his/her arm. The referee reverses the result of the rally and now credits the winning of the rally to the opponent.

**Scenario B:** A player on Team A hits a ball to Team B that contacts the ground near the sideline. Team B returns the ball and then a Team A player says, "No, my ball was out." Since Team A made the call to their own disadvantage, the rally is awarded in favor of Team B.

**Scenario C:** Tie-breaker game to 15 of a gold medal match. Team A is serving at 14-13-2. The referee calls the score and Team A serves. The served ball contacts the net and careens and hits the receiver's partner. The referee awards the match to Team A. Team A protests and says, "We don't want to win that way" and calls for a replay citing rule 6.D.13. The referee should **NOT** grant the replay and points out that 6.D.13 does not apply because Team A did NOT commit a fault and no line call was involved in the rally. The match is over with Team A as the winner.

**Scenario D:** During a long rally, Team A hits a high lob to Team B that contacts the ground near the baseline. The line judge quickly yells, "Out" and the rally ends. After the line judge's "out" call, a player on Team B standing near the baseline says, "No, that ball was in." This scenario is similar to when a referee overrules an "out" call made by a line judge and a replay is ordered. **Reason:**

When the line judge made the “out” call on the high lob that bounced near the baseline, the Team B player understandably and out of habit “gave up” on making a play on the ball, which could have possibly kept the rally alive. The partner’s “in” call is effectively the same as a referee overruling a line judge’s “out” call. Therefore the same guideline (calling a replay when a referee overrules a line judge’s “out” call) should be followed.

## Section 7 – Fault Rules

45. **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.

**Reason:** This change was to remove confusion about a player hitting a ball into the net and whether or not this constituted a fault. It clarifies that if a player hits a ball into their side of the net without the ball crossing over to the opponent's side, the result is a fault when the ball hits the ground on the hitter's side of the net. The last sentence was added to give a specific time-stamp as to when the ball becomes dead as this could be a determining factor in applying a fault.

**Scenario:** During a dink rally, Player A slices at the ball imparting spin. The spinning ball hits near the top of the net near one end, spins on the top for a moment and then falls and hits the ground on Player A's side of the court. The opponent, anticipating the spinning ball would cross over to their side, positions their body to be close to the net to make a play on the ball. **As the ball is falling** towards the ground on Player A's side, the opponent's shoe touches the net post **BEFORE** the ball hits the ground. This is a fault per Rule 11.K. because a player touched the net post while the ball was still in play.

46. **7.D:** A player hitting a ball that lands out of bounds or onto their own side of the court.

**Reason:** To add clarity that if a player hits a ball that lands out of bounds or bounces in their own court after being hit, but before going over the net to the opponent's side, will result in a fault. These are long-standing, common-sense faults, that are now in writing.

**47. 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.

**Reason:** To clarify that if either hand is in contact with the paddle and is hit below the wrist, the ball is still in play. Note: "in contact with" does not limit where the hand may contact the paddle. One hand may be on the grip and any part of the other hand may be touching anywhere on the paddle.

**48. 7.Q:** A hinder or let called by a player that is determined by the referee to be invalid.

**Reason:** This rule was added to state it is a fault if a player called a hinder or let and subsequently determined by the referee to be invalid.

## **Section 8 – Dead Ball Rules**

49. **8.B:** A fault called by a referee or player will result in a dead ball.

**Reason:** This rule was changed to specify that if a referee or player calls a fault, the result will be an immediate dead ball.

50. **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.

**Reason:** There was no wording change to this rule. In the 2019 rulebook, this rule was listed in Section 7, Fault Rules and needed to be moved to Section 8 because the action did not constitute a fault.

**Scenario:** A player hits a sharp cross-court dink that bounces in the opponent's NVZ and then hits the net post leg of a temporary net system before the opponent returns the ball. This is a winning shot by the player who hit the ball.

## **Section 9 – Non-Volley Zone Rules**

**51. 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.

**Reason:** To provide more clarity on actions that will result in a non-volley zone fault.

**Scenario A:** A player swings to volley a ball and during the swing, before ball contact, their watch flies off their hand. The player strikes the ball and the watch subsequently lands in the NVZ. This is a fault because the watch was in contact with a player that was in the act of volleying the ball, and because of the momentum of the swing, the watch touched the NVZ.

**Scenario B:** A player swings to volley a ball and during the swing, but before ball contact, the volleying player bumps their partner. The player strikes the ball and then the partner stumbles into the NVZ. This is a fault because the partner was in contact with a player that was in the act of volleying the ball, and the volley momentum caused the partner touched the NVZ.

**Scenario C:** A player is running left to right just outside the NVZ and successfully hits a volley. Their momentum causes them to 'crash' into a side fence. The side fence effectively boomerangs the player into the NVZ while the ball is still in play. This is not an NVZ fault because the momentum that caused them to enter the NVZ was not as a direct result of the swing or follow-through. Hitting the fence changed the direction of the player and 'gave' the player a different direction and momentum.

## **Section 10 – Time-Out Rules**

Note: 10.B. was changed extensively.

The changes below reflect the main revisions from the 2019 rule.

**52. 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:

**Reason:** This rule was changed to reinforce the procedure that players are responsible for requesting a medical time-out (MTO). This removed the possibility that if a player were injured, and the referee automatically issued a MTO, the player could now claim that they never requested an MTO and they should still have their MTO available. There is, however, an exception to this to protect players and referees, alike. See #61 below.

**Scenario A:** In a doubles match, the server is injured during a rally (no blood involved). After the rally is completed, the server is lying on the ground. The injured player/team has the option to call a time-out or request a medical time-out, but requests neither. The referee (who must continue the game) should ask the injured player if they want a time-out, or ask if they need a medical time-out, or tell the player that the game needs to keep moving and the score will need to be called. The main objective in this scenario is to ensure that the referee oversees the pace and flow of the game. If a player is injured, there are options the player may use, but the referee cannot permit an extended pause in the game and must apply one of the mentioned options.

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

**Reason:** This change eliminates the previous ambiguity for when the referee should start the 15-minute timer.

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

**Reason:** This additional rule applies a more severe penalty if a player is determined to have an invalid medical condition and the player/team is out of time outs. The penalty is now a technical foul.

55. **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.

**Reason:** The phrase “*play may not resume*” asserts that a rally shall not be stopped due to the presence of blood. After the rally is completed is when the phrase takes effect. A rally should NEVER be stopped due to an injury.

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

**Reason:** This clarifies that ANY issue concerning blood will be handled as a referee time-out until the issue has been controlled.

57. **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.

**Reason:** This rule applies a two-tiered penalty for injuries that are determined to be self-inflicted.



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

**Reason:** This is a major change from 2019. **Officially Authorized Hydration Breaks** have been discarded. Starting in 2020, there is no rule or guideline that allows for Tournament Directors to authorize hydration breaks.

There are several reasons for this change:

- Players were using them in lieu of a normal time-out
- The ‘no talking to your partner’ provision of the hydration break was difficult to enforce and there was no stated penalty if communication did occur
- Players often called for hydration breaks when their opponent was serving, thereby using hydration breaks as a method to slow momentum

Note: The time between the end of one rally and serving to start the next one averages from 9-25 seconds. That is ample time for players to get a quick drink and/or towel off in-between points.

If players need a quick drink of water or need to towel off, they should do so in-between points or call a time-out. The referee will oversee allowing short time spans for these actions to keep the flow of the game intact. Note that there is no longer any restriction on players communicating with each other as they are “quickly” hydrating or toweling off.

**59. 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.

**Reason:** This small change notes that one or more of a team’s time-outs may be taken after the first game is completed.

60. **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.

**Reason:** The rules are currently silent on situations that require intervention but are not initiated by players calling a medical time-out. This rule was introduced to give referees discretion to grant time for players to deal with abnormal, unpredictable personal issues. Examples include, but aren't limited to: intestinal distress, biological needs, court access for wheelchair players who leave the court in between games etc. These referee time-outs are expected to be used in unusual circumstances, but the need does occasionally arise.

61. **10.H.2.a:** The referee is responsible for safety on the court and shall address situations or circumstances that may be detrimental to the health or safety of players, spectators or the officiating team. 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 time-out, the referee will call a referee time-out and summon medical personnel or the Tournament Director to determine if the player may resume play.

**Reason:** To add a new rule that allows the referee to interrupt play in the interest of player safety. The rule also allows the possibility that the player may not be aware of their own distress. This has occurred most frequently with potential heat stress or heat stroke situations where the player is the last to realize they are in distress. In the case of a player not realizing they need medical help; the referee is authorized to call for medical intervention and assessment and then issue a medical time-out if the player is determined to have needed medical attention by the medical staff. This rule also gives the guidelines for the referee to

follow once medical personnel have made their determination. It further gives instructions regarding a player that has previously used their medical time-out.

**Scenario:** The referee notices that one player has significantly slowed their pace of play, their gait appears labored, and they are bending over with hands on knees. The referee stops play and asks if the player is ok and is told, "Yes, I'm fine." Unconvinced, the referee calls for a referee time-out and makes the decision to call for medical staff (or the Tournament Director). When the medical staff arrives, the referee starts the 15-minute timer and briefs the medical staff on their observations. The medical staff does, in fact, treat the player with ice packs and releases the player to continue. The referee informs the player that since medical staff did treat them, they will be charged with a Medical Time Out.

## Section 11 – Other Rules

62. **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.

**Reason:** This small change highlights the fact that a double hit can ONLY be performed by one player. This clears up debate that a double hit could be committed by the first player to hit the ball, and then accidentally hit the partner for the second hit, and still be a legal double hit.

63. **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.

**Reason:** This small change specifies the time limit on when an appeal of a suspected broken or cracked ball can be challenged. The appeal can be made until the service motion has started.

**Scenario A:** The referee calls the score. The server does not start their service motion. The server tosses the ball to the referee saying that the ball is cracked. Upon inspection the referee notices that the ball is cracked. The referee replaces the ball and recalls the score. If the referee determines the ball is not cracked, the referee returns the ball to the serving team and recalls the score.

**Scenario B:** The referee calls the score. The server starts their service motion. Before the serve is made, the server looks at the ball and then tosses the ball to the referee saying the ball is cracked. The referee calls a fault. **Reason:** Rule 11.E. states a player may appeal a possible cracked/broken ball to the referee **before** the service motion starts. Since the server appealed **AFTER** the start of the service motion, the server has violated Rule 11.E. Note that Rule 7.L. makes it a fault to

violate any Section 11 rule. This is how the referee has a rule-based foundation to call a fault in this scenario.

**Scenario C:** Same as Scenario B except that if **any** player appeals to the referee to check for a cracked/broken ball after the server has started their service motion, this as a fault as well per 11.E + 7.L.

**64. 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, 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.

**Reason:** This change closes the debate on when a player can cross the plane of the net to hit a backspin ball. It also specifies that a player can cross under the net (assuming there is large enough of a gap) to hit a ball that has crossed back over the net.

**Scenario A:** Team A hits a shot with a tremendous amount of backspin. The ball bounces in Team B's court and is headed back over the top of the net to Team A's side. **AFTER** the ball has crossed back over the plane of the net, a Team B player then puts their paddle under the net (this was a permanent net system with a 4" gap at the bottom) and as the ball is coming down, the player taps the ball with their paddle while not touching the net system or the opponent's court. This is a valid shot.

**Scenario B:** Team A hits a shot with a tremendous amount of backspin. The ball bounces in Team B's court and is headed back over the top of the net to Team A's side. Before the ball crosses back over the plane of the net, a Team B player reaches across the plane of the net to be ready to tap the ball back into the net on Team A's side. This is a fault because the Team B player crossed the plane of the net **BEFORE** the ball had crossed back over the net plane.

65. **11.J:** Players may not distract an opponent when the opponent is about to play the ball. If in the judgement of the referee a distraction has occurred, the referee shall immediately call a fault on the offending team.

**Reason:** The additional wording in this rule is to reinforce that a referee may immediately call a distraction fault during a rally. The referee is not required to wait for a player appeal after the rally is completed.

**Scenario A:** A player on Team A is alternating raising their arms up and down repeatedly when Team B is about to play the ball. The referee immediately calls a distraction fault on Team A because the raising of the arms is “not common to the game” per 3.A.6.

**Scenario B:** The player hits a clean volley shot on his side of the court. (Figure 1) His legal follow through crosses the plane of the net and contacts the opponent while she is standing out of bounds. He contacted her while the ball was still in play (Figure 2). The referee rules a distraction fault because he has interfered with her “ability or concentration to make a play on the ball.”

Note: Even though he may legally cross the plane on his follow through, it does NOT exempt him from committing a distraction fault. (Photos used by permission)



(Figure 1)



(Figure 2)

**66. 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.)

**Reason:** The additional phrase “*and contributed to the loss of the rally*” was added to give additional clarification on determining if a distraction fault should be called. This is a referee judgement call as to whether a distracting action contributed to the loss of a rally. The player appeal of a possible distraction is separate from 11.J where the referee may call a distraction fault the instant it occurs.

**Scenario A:** During a prolonged dink rally, a Team A player repeatedly says, “Hey the ball is cracked” as Team B is about to play the ball. At one point when the Team A player said the phrase, Team B was about to play the ball and subsequently hit the ball into the net. The Team B player who hit the ball into the net appeals to the referee to determine if the Team A distraction phrase contributed to the loss of the rally. The referee agrees that the distraction did contribute to the loss of the rally and issues a fault against Team A.

**Scenario B:** During a prolonged dink rally, a Team A player says, “Hey the ball is cracked” as Team B is about to play the ball. The dink rally continues for several hits. Team B hits a deep baseline lob that lands out of bounds. The Team B players who hit the ball out of bounds appeals to the referee that during the dink rally, Team A had distracted them. The referee rules that the distraction phrase DID NOT contribute to the loss of the rally since several back and forth hits had subsequently occurred. Team B loses the rally because they hit the ball out of bounds.

**67. 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.

**Reason:** The phrase “while the ball is in play,” was added for clarity on when a fault should be called.

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

**Reason:** The rule puts in writing that a fault should be called against the player who hit the ball.

**69. 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.)

**Reason:** This was previously in the Referee Handbook. It clarifies that on the serve, the resulting touching of the bar/base/caught-in-net would be a fault. It also clarifies that if the ball touches the bar/base before **OR AFTER** bouncing on the court, a let should be called. The issue is that the horizontal bar/center base can interfere with a player’s ability to play the ball and this interference can occur before bouncing on the court **OR AFTER** bouncing on the court.

**Scenario:** Player A hits a high lob with some backspin that bounces in Player B’s court. After bouncing, the ball ricochets upward and hits the horizontal bar on the temporary net system. The referee should call a let and issue a replay because the horizontal bar interfered with Player B’s ability to make a play on the ball.



70. **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.

**Reason:** This addition was to remain consistent with the existing three types of actions that can occur.

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

**Reason:** This new rule gives latitude in calling for a replay due to net system malfunctions. Examples: the wind blows over a temporary net system, the center vertical support stick/rod pokes through the top of the net system, etc.

72. **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.

**Reason:** The first sentence was reworded for better clarity.

## Section 12 – Sanctioned Tournament Policies

Section 12.F. has been greatly expanded. Major changes are below. The main points of 12.F are that Forfeits should/will impact a player's UTPR rating, but a Withdrawal should/will not impact their rating. Please see the new definitions of Forfeit and Withdrawal in Section 3.

**73. 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.

**Reason:** This rule specifies that after a match has been started by the initial calling of the score, the only option to discontinue play is a 'Forfeit'. Once the first score has been called, players may no longer 'Withdraw' from that match.

**74. 12.F.1.c:** The player/team must make a Forfeit request during the match to either the referee or the opposing player/team.

**Reason:** This rule removes doubt that a team may have requested a Forfeit because they are required to inform either the referee or the opponent(s).

**75. 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.

**Reason:** This rule allows a player/team that has forfeited a specific match to still be allowed to continue playing in the next round(s) of bracket play, if applicable.

76. [12.F.1.f](#): A player/team may request a Forfeit for any upcoming match in the specified bracket.

**Reason:** This rule allows a player/team to request a Forfeit for any upcoming matches in a specified bracket. Notification should be given to tournament personnel.

77. [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.

**Reason:** This rule allows a team to Withdraw from a bracket before the bracket has been started. Notification should be made to tournament personnel.

78. [12.F.2.b](#): If a player/team has completed any matches but will not play the remaining matches in a bracket, the player/team may request to be Withdrawn from ALL upcoming matches in that bracket.

**Reason:** This rule allows a team to withdraw from any upcoming matches. No medical validation or tournament director approval is necessary. Players may withdraw for any reason.

Note: For proper scoring guidelines, please see [12.F.3](#) and [12.F.4](#).

## **Section 13 – Tournament Management and Officiating**

**79. 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.

**Reason:** This change at the end of the rule helps clarify that a referee may forfeit a match based on rule violations concerning technical warnings and/or technical fouls, rather than being based on a referee's judgement that a player's behavior was "detrimental" to the tournament.

**80. 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.

**Reason:** This rule was changed to allow a replay if the opponents disagree with an NVZ or Service Foot Fault called by their opponents.

**81. 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.)

**Reason:** This rule was changed to coincide with the new rule (6.D.13) allowing players to make line calls to their disadvantage, including matches with line judges.

**82. 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”.

**Reason:** This is a **major change** from the 2019 rule. In 2019, if the officiating team could not make a call, the ball was presumed “in”. This has been changed in 2020 so that if the officiating team cannot make a call, the fair option is to have a replay, UNLESS ALL players agree that the ball was out. (Note: If the ball was “in” the rally would have continued until completion)

**Scenario:** A ball is hit close to the baseline and passes by the receiving team. The baseline line judge shows the blocked signal and the referee can’t make a clear call. The receiving team asks the referee to poll the remaining line judges. The referee asks the line judges, but no one can make a call. The referee states that by rule the rally shall be replayed unless all players agree the ball was out. 3 of the 4 players agree that the ball was out, but one player remains silent. The referee calls for a replay because the player that remained silent cannot be considered as agreeing to a replay.

**83. 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.

**Reason:** The 2019 “Example” at the end of the rule was removed to end debate if players could “automatically” call for a replay at their own discretion. The decision for a replay resides with the referee.

**84. 13.F.1:** If a player appeals a line call to the referee, the referee's call will stand if he/she clearly saw the ball land "in" or "out". If the referee is unable to make the call, the appealed call will stand. If no call was made, the ball will be considered "in". The point will be replayed if a player requests, and all players agree to a replay.

**Reason:** This rule remains consistent with other precedents concerning appealed calls and a possible referee overrule. The last sentence was added to provide an option that if the referee can't make a clear decision on an appealed line call, a replay is available under the given conditions. The reason the last sentence used the phrase "*if a player requests*" was to remove the possibility that a referee could "remind" players there is a replay option available as this could be construed as coaching. In summary, per the last sentence, if there is a situation where no person (players or officials) can make a clear, decisive call, a replay option is available if: 1) a player requests the replay option; AND, 2) ALL players agree to the replay. An all-player replay option does NOT override a clearly made appeal call by the referee.

**Scenario A:** Team A hits a deep shot to Team B. Team B did not see the ball land and appeals to the referee for a determination. The referee cannot make a clear call, and/or, Team B asks Team A for their opinion, but Team A cannot make a clear call either. The ball shall be considered "in" on Team B. One player on Team B asks for a replay and all other players agree. The referee should allow a replay.

**Scenario B:** Team A hits a deep shot to Team B. Team B did not see the ball land and appeals to the referee. The referee says they clearly saw the ball "in". Team A wins the rally. One player on Team B asks for a replay and the remaining players agree. The referee should **NOT** allow a replay because the referee made a clear decisive call on the appeal.

**85. 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.

**Reason:** This Technical Warning rule was added to coincide with new rule 10.B.5.b.

**86. 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.

**Reason:** This Technical Foul rule was added to coincide with Rule 10.B.4.a

**87. 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.

**Reason:** This Technical Foul rule was added to coincide with Rule 10.B.5.b

**88. 13.G.3.f:** Technical warnings and technical fouls may be assessed any time during a match while the players are at the court.

**Reason:** This rule was added to state that a technical warning or technical foul can be assessed in between games of a match.

**89. 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.

**Reason:** This rule was changed to reflect that the tournament director has the final ruling on replacing a referee or line judge. Even if all players agree to the removal, the tournament director can choose to keep the official assigned to or currently working the match in progress.



## **Section 14 – Wheelchair Rules**

90. **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.

**Reason:** This rule was changed to coincide with Rule 4.A.3 and the associated boundaries.

91. **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.

**Reason:** This rule was added to specify the type of play for the specified bracket.

92. **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.

**Reason:** This rule was added to specify the type of play for the specified bracket.

93. **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 judgement of the referee, is prevented from returning the ball before the 3rd bounce, (dead ball) shall be awarded a replay of the rally.

**Reason:** This rule was added to provide proper distance guidelines and associated actions.

94. **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 judgement 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.

**Reason:** This rule was added to provide proper distance guidelines and associated actions.