

National Team Pickleball League

Rules 2024



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GENERAL

The following rules apply to all leagues and tournaments in the National Team Pickleball League (NTPL) organization unless otherwise specified. All NTPL leagues will follow the 2024 USA Pickleball Official Rulebook. If there is a discrepancy, NTPL Rules will supersede the USA Pickleball Rules.

I. DIVISIONS OF PLAY

A. The 2024 NTPL Championships will have the following division of play:

1. Single Gender Doubles: Men's & Women's Teams
 - a) 18+ 3.0
 - b) 18+ 3.5
 - c) 18+ 4.0
 - d) 18+ 4.5
 - e) 50+ 3.0
 - f) 50+ 3.5
 - g) 50+ 4.0
2. Combo Doubles: (Men's/Women's/Mixed Play)
 - a) 18+ 3.5
 - b) 18+ 4.5
 - c) 50+ 3.5
 - d) 50+ 4.5

II. PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS

- A.** All participants in NTPL pickleball are bound by the NTPL rules, as well as those of the IFP. Not all possible incidents and ramifications may be covered in the following rules. Participants in unusual or undocumented situations will have to abide by the decision of the NTPL Manager. If there is a conflict in an interpretation of any rule, NTPL Rules shall supersede. The NTPL Rules as provided herein shall apply to all NTPL players unless such rules are revised, amended, or otherwise changed by the NTPL Rules Committee.
- B.** All leagues are open to male and female players. Players must be 18 years of age or older. Age is determined by the player's age upon the first match played in the local area qualifying events. Players may play "down" in age, but not up. For example: a 51 year old may compete in the 18+ division if they choose but an 18 year old may NOT compete in the 50+ division.
- C.** Players may compete in more than one division of play in their local league, but NOT 2 teams in the same division. For example: A player may compete in the 3.5 Men's 18+ and 50+ divisions, but not 2 teams in the 3.5 18+. They may participate in a 3.5 18+ AND a 4.0 18+ team.
- D.** Players competing in two different divisions of play at the National Championships will NOT be given any scheduling considerations. Both teams could be playing at the same time at the National Championship and players would need to navigate that scenario with their captains.

III. SPORTSMANSHIP

- A. Good sportsmanship is absolutely required within NTPL. There is no room for belittling yourself, teammates, or opponents. This is a competitive league and playing with passion and energy is highly encouraged but should never lead to degrading others.
- B. Cheer for good points, plays and efforts but do not cheer for missed shots, serves or other mistakes. Degrading comments directed at specific players is not allowed and should be reported to the league coordinator. Multiple infractions can lead to league suspension.

IV. ROSTER REQUIREMENTS

- A. **ROSTER SIZE.** Minimum of 6 players on the team roster for same gender competition is required. A minimum of 2 men and 2 women on the roster for the Combo Doubles Divisions is required. There is NO MAXIMUM number of players on a team. Captains have the discretion to create a team with as many players as necessary in order to avoid defaults of play in both the local and National Championship events. It is highly suggested that teams have at least 8 players to avoid forfeits and unexpected player injuries.
- B. **WAIVER.** All players must have agreed to the waiver release of liability prior to participation in the league each season.
- C. **PLAYER ELIGIBILITY BASED ON RATINGS:** Team rosters must consist of players with skills that are consistent with the flight skill level in which their team is playing. Captains oversee maintaining the “skill integrity” of their team.

Players competing in each division must have a MAXIMUM rating of the following:

3.0 Division → 3.49

3.5 Division → 3.99

4.0 Division → 4.49

4.5 Division → 4.99

Ratings will be calculated using only the first decimal point from the rating system. For example: A Player with a 4.49 rating will be entered as a 4.4 rated player. Averages will be determined using only the first decimal from each rating system.

For the 2024 competition year, there is no MINIMUM rating a player must have to roster on a team, although it is highly recommended that players be no more than 0.5 lower than the listed rating for that division of play.

D. APPROVED RATING SYSTEMS FOR PLAY:

1. Multiple rating systems exist in the pickleball world including:
 - a) Dynamic Universal Pickleball Rating (DUPR)
 - b) USA Tournament Player Rating (UTPR)

- c) World Pickleball Rating (WPR)
- d) Pickleballbrackets.com (PBR)
- e) Pickleball Scores Rating (PBSR)

Players must have a rating from an approved rating system from the above list. If a player has multiple ratings from DUPR, UTPR, WPR, and PBR; then the AVERAGE of these ratings will be used to determine their level of play for the NTPL local and Championship levels of competition.

If a player has 10 or less matches in any national rating system, this is NOT considered part of their average. These players can go by a Captain's Rating. If a player doesn't have a qualifying national rating, the player is required to discuss their rating to be entered with the captain. The player will enter the agreed upon rating as a "Captain's Rating".

Local leagues using the PBSR rating may choose to use this rating exclusively for player rating. The local league coordinator will determine whether PBSR or an average rating will be used for local play. Local coordinators have discretion as to which rating a player will be competing under for their local league and then for the National Championship.

Captains are required to research the ratings for each team member and complete a player roster chart to be turned in to the local league coordinator before play begins.

- E. SELF-RATED PLAYERS.** If a player does not have a DUPR, UTPR, WPR, PBR, or PBSR, the league will assign the player a rating for play for each division of play as follows:
 - 3.0 Divisions → 3.2
 - 3.5 Divisions → 3.7
 - 4.0 Divisions → 4.2
 - 4.5 Divisions → 4.7
- F. RATING CHANGES.** As ratings change weekly, a player's rating will "lock" for the 2024 season of competition on the day the player is rostered for their local area competition. Players whose rating changes during the calendar 2024 year and that moves them out of the range for that division will NOT be required to play at their new higher rating through the end of the 2024 Championship season.
- G. TEAM MEMBERS.** A player who registers for a team may not switch teams within the same skill group once the season has started unless approved by the League Coordinator (LC).
- H. TEAM NAMES.** Captains will submit an initial team name to the League during team registration. First come first served in case 2 submittals are identical. Team names can be

changed after registration provided no other team in the same flight is using the same name.

- I. **ROSTER ADDITIONS.** No roster additions allowed for the National Championship events except as stated in [SUBSTITUTIONS FOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS](#) (Section VI). Roster addition deadlines may apply in local leagues. Check with your local league administrator.

V. **ADVANCEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

- A. **LOCAL LEAGUE PLAY TO NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS.** All players that participate in the NTPL Championships must have played in a minimum of 2 matches in local qualifying events.
- B. **MINIMUM TEAM REQUIREMENT FOR ADVANCEMENT.** Local leagues must have a minimum of 4 teams per division in order for that division's champion to be eligible to advance to Nationals. If local leagues have multiple cities, or flights that are competing, it is the total number of teams across all cities or flights that will constitute having 4 teams or more.
- C. **TEAM WILDCARDS FOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP.** The local league coordinator has the authority to send an alternate team to the NTPL Championship event if the #1 team is unable to go. The local league coordinator may choose the wildcard team at their own discretion.
- D. **WILDCARDS AT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS.** The national Tournament Committee has the discretion to choose additional wildcard teams to fill draws at the NTPL Championship events at their discretion from participating leagues across the country.

VI. **SUBSTITUTIONS FOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS**

If a qualifying team from local competition cannot send enough players from their original qualifying team to roster a team at the NTPL Championship events, they may have ONE (1) substitute for Combo Doubles or TWO (2) substitutes for Gender Doubles. These substitutes do NOT have to have played in a minimum of 2 qualifying matches and may be new additions to the team.

Substitute players may NOT be self-rated and must have a rating from the approved ratings systems listed above. Substitutes must meet all other age and rating requirements and must be approved by the local league coordinator.

The substitute MAY be a player from a different team from local competition that did NOT qualify to advance to Nationals.

The substitute MAY also be a player from their qualifying team that did not have enough matches to originally be considered qualified for National level competition.

VII. BALLS

A. LOCAL LEAGUE PLAY. Balls used for local league/tournament play must be new or in good condition. 3 balls are approved for NTPL league play:

1. Franklin X-40
2. Dura Fast 40
3. Vulcan VPRO Flight

The home team is responsible for providing at least 3 match balls of the same type for each home match.

B. NTPL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENTS. The Franklin X-40 ball will be used exclusively at all NTPL Championship events.

VIII. MATCH PLAY

A. SINGLE GENDER FORMAT. All team matches will be three (3) rounds of three (3) lines, two (2) games each. 3 courts required for 2 hours.

1. Round Robin (as follows)

a) Round 1:

- (1) Home Team 1 plays Visiting Team 1
- (2) Home Team 2 plays Visiting Team 2
- (3) Home Team 3 plays Visiting Team 3

b) Round 2:

- (1) Home Team 1 plays Visiting Team 2
- (2) Home Team 2 plays Visiting Team 3
- (3) Home Team 3 plays Visiting Team 1

c) Round 3:

- (1) Home Team 1 plays Visiting Team 3
- (2) Home Team 2 plays Visiting Team 1
- (3) Home Team 3 plays Visiting Team 2

2. Home teams **STAY** on the same courts for each round of play. Visiting teams **SWITCH** courts after each round.
3. See Figure 1 for a visualization of one complete TEAM match (Gender Doubles Format).

Round 1		
Home 1	vs	Visitor 1
Home 2	vs	Visitor 2
Home 3	vs	Visitor 3

Round 2		
Home 1	vs	Visitor 2
Home 2	vs	Visitor 3
Home 3	vs	Visitor 1

Round 3		
Home 1	vs	Visitor 3
Home 2	vs	Visitor 1
Home 3	vs	Visitor 2

Gender Doubles Format

- B. COMBO DOUBLES FORMAT.** All team matches will be three (3) rounds of two (2) lines, two (2) games each. 2 courts required for 2 hours.
1. Round Robin (as follows)
 - a) **Round 1: Gender Doubles**
 - (1) Home (Women) plays Visitor (Women)
 - (2) Home (Men) plays Visitor (Men)
 - b) **Round 2: Mixed Doubles**
 - (1) Home (Mixed 1) plays Visitor (Mixed 1)
 - (2) Home (Mixed 2) plays Visitor (Mixed 2)
 - c) **Round 3: Mixed Doubles**
 - (1) Home (Mixed 1) plays Visitor (Mixed 2)
 - (2) Home (Mixed 2) plays Visitor (Mixed 1)
 2. Home teams **STAY** on the same courts each round. Visiting teams **SWITCH** courts after each round.
 3. See Figure 2 for a visualization of one complete TEAM match (Combo Doubles Format).

Round 1		
Home (Women)	vs	Visitor (Women)
Home (Men)	vs	Visitor (Men)

Round 2		
Home (Mixed 1)	vs	Visitor (Mixed 1)
Home (Mixed 2)	vs	Visitor (Mixed 2)

Round 3		
Home (Mixed 1)	vs	Visitor (Mixed 2)
Home (Mixed 2)	vs	Visitor (Mixed 1)

C. MATCH DAY LINE-UPS

1. Gender Doubles Event: Men or Women (6 players)

The captain will bring 6 players to play on 3 doubles teams. Line-ups identifying the doubles teams on the scoresheet will be exchanged prior to the start of the match **after which they may not be changed**. The 3 doubles team partners will be fixed for the entirety of the team match (all 3 round robin matchups) unless injuries require a substitution (see injury rules). Captains or their designees are required to be on-site at each match.

2. Combo Doubles Event: Women/Men/Mixed

The 2 women and 2 men who compete in the first round of Gender doubles MAY BE DIFFERENT than the 2 women and 2 men who compete in the Mixed Doubles rounds of play. However, once the Mixed Doubles Partnerships have been determined for the first round of Mixed Doubles play, the players must remain the same for the second round of Mixed Doubles.

- D. **SHORT LINE-UPS.** If a captain (from Team "A") cannot field 3 doubles teams from their roster then that captain shall bring 2 doubles teams to play (line 1 and line 2 on the scoresheet) and default all line 3 doubles team games. **The opposing team (Team "B")**

shall still bring all 6 of its players as each of its team pairs will play against the opponent's line 1 team and line 2 team. The scoresheet will reflect a score of 11-0 for each defaulted game in each round and Team "B" will be awarded 2 team points for each defaulted game (i.e., 4 points per round). Scoring of the games played will be the same as found in the "Match Scoring" section. If a captain can only field 1 doubles team pair the match will be defaulted earning the winning team 36 points and 1 team win in the standings.

E. LATE PLAYER. Unless otherwise specified, the schedule will list the official start times for each match. The following rules apply to late players:

1. Matches shall start no later than 5 minutes after the posted match start time. If a player has not arrived 10 minutes after the posted start time the team will default all games the player would have normally played. If the team has a substitute player in attendance in case of injury or illness to a player in the lineup, that player may be used as a substitute and will remain in the match for all rounds of play. Unless a substitute fills in as defined above, all games will be defaulted and scored 11-0 against the team with the absent player. The 5-minute rule applies to the start of each round.

F. MATCH SCORING. To begin a match, the visiting teams choose to serve, receive, side or defer. Each doubles team will play 2 games to 11 (win by 2). Teams shall switch sides after the first game. At the end of the second games (first round), and the fourth games (second round), the visiting doubles teams switch courts to play the next home doubles team noted on the line-up/scoresheet. Therefore, during every match, each doubles team will play 6 games (three rounds): 2 games against the opposing Line 1 doubles team, 2 games against the Line 2 team, and 2 games against the Line 3 team.

1. Depending on the result of each individual game played to 11 (win by 2), a team may earn either two (2), one (1), or zero (0) points towards their overall TEAM score.
 - a) *2 points = won the game*
 - b) *1 point = lost the game but scored at least 6 points*
 - c) *0 points = lost the game and scored 5 points or less*

2. For each TEAM (lineups of 6 players and 3 doubles teams), there are 18 games in which 2, 1, or 0 points can be scored. After all 3 rounds of play, team points earned across all 18 games are totaled and the winning TEAM is determined.

G. SCORING TERMS.

1. Team Points - after each game to 11 (win by 2), each doubles team is awarded 2, 1, or 0 "team points" based on their respective match result.
2. Total Team Points - the sum of all Team Points scored in all matches played.
3. Total Opponent Points - the sum of all the opponent's Team Points scored while playing against your team

4. TEAM Match Win - after 18 games (Single Gender) or 12 games (Combo Doubles) against the opposing team, the team with the most Team Points earns a "TEAM Match Win".
- H. POOL PLAY STANDINGS.**
1. At the NTPL Championship events, teams will compete in pool play with 4 teams advancing to semifinal matches. The amount of teams that will advance out of each pool is dependent on the amount of teams in each pool and overall number of teams in the division.
 2. The team with the most TEAM match wins claims the top spot in their pool and advances out of pool play.
 3. At the end of pool play, if there is a 2-way tie in total TEAM match wins, then head-to-head results will determine the winner of the flight. If there is a tie in head-to-head results, then the highest Total Team Points will be used followed by lowest Total Opponent Points if necessary.
 4. If there are more than two teams tied, the teams with the lower Total Team Points (across all pool play matches) will be eliminated until there are two teams remaining. At that point, the 2-way tie process will take effect (see above).
- I. ELIMINATION ROUNDS AT NTPL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENTS.** For ties in Team Points that take place in elimination round team matches, the tie will be broken by advancing the team with the most points scored across all rounds of play in that team match.
- J. BREAKS.** A break of 1 minute is allowed between games. After each round of 2 games, a break of up to 5 minutes is allowed commencing at the time the last 2 opposing doubles teams in the round complete their 2nd game.
- K. TIMEOUTS.** One (1) timeout is allowed per game per team. Bathroom breaks should be taken between rounds.
- L. COACHING.** Per IFP rules coaching by anyone is only allowed after completion of each game, between rounds and during timeouts.
- M. SUBSTITUTIONS DURING MATCH DUE TO INJURY:**
1. If an injury occurs during warm-up before the 1st round of play, a new player may be substituted with no penalty.
 2. Once play begins, if an injury occurs during any particular round, that match will be finished with the score being recorded as 11-"X" with "X" being the score of the team with an injured player at the moment of the injury. A substitute may NOT be allowed into a round in progress.
 3. The team with the injured player MAY substitute a new player into the next round of play.
 4. Substitutions are permanent for the remainder of the match. Players removed due to injury or illness may not return to the match. Substitutions may only be made with players on the team roster at the time the match began.
- N. WARM UP COURTS.** NTPL does not require facilities to provide warm-up courts before a match is scheduled to begin. Visiting team captains should check with the home team captain in advance of the match to determine if warm-up time is available.

IX. OTHER CAPTAIN AND PLAYER RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. SCORE REPORTING.** The winning team captain will be responsible for reporting the scores after each team match to the tournament desk.
- B. CONDUCT.** Captains and players are to monitor behavior to assure conduct is in accordance with the NTPL Code of Conduct.
- C. RULES.** Captains and players are to read and understand the NTPL rules and [USA Pickleball rules](#).
- D. DISPUTES.** Players involved in a dispute during a match need to alert an official before they continue play. The official will make a ruling and the match will need to continue based on the official ruling. Players that refuse to continue to play after referee ruling will be considered to be defaulting the remainder of that round of play.

X. INCLEMENT WEATHER

A. MATCH CANCELED PRIOR TO START.

- 1. In the event a match cannot be played due to inclement weather, the match can be rescheduled. The tournament director will determine the new match date/time.

B. MATCH CANCELED AFTER START.

- 1. If a match is forced to be discontinued due to inclement weather before the first round is completed, it will be rescheduled and replayed in its entirety.
- 2. If the first round has been completed and it is discontinued before the second round is completed, it will be rescheduled and replayed at the start of the second round.
- 3. If both the first and second rounds have been completed and the match is discontinued before the third round is completed, it will be rescheduled and replayed at the start of the third round.

C. LINE-UPS AFTER MATCH CANCELLATION.

- 1. If the match is to be replayed in its entirety, the captain is not required to field the same team lineup.
- 2. If at least one round has been completed, the captain may bring 1 different player in the new lineup as the permanent player to replace a player that is unavailable to play in the rescheduled match and 1 different player to serve as the substitute for injury or illness of a player during the rescheduled match.
- 3. Substitution rules for injury or illness still apply.

XI. NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The National Championships will be played for the 2024 Championship season with **UP TO 16** teams per division. The National Tournament Committee will determine the final number of teams competing in each division and has the right to select Wildcards at their own discretion.

The National Tournament Committee has the authority to approve changes in format for local play based on a request from the local league coordinator.

The NTPL rules and regulations may be changed at any time by the NTPL managing committee.

Format for the National Championships is intended to guarantee each team multiple matches of play with an expected 2 days or competition per division.

Teams participating in the National Championships will pay a team fee that will be posted on the NTPL website by a date also posted in order to secure their spot in the National Championship events.

XII. LOCAL COMPETITION RULES AND REGULATIONS

Local providers of NTPL Qualifying events will have their own set of regulations and rules that govern local play in addition to the National NTPL rules. Please refer to these rules for any specifics that will govern your local league play.