



# 2021 Change Document

Updated 2/5/21

Summary of changes:

1. Reason for Let Serve change was modified to remove reference to IOC.
2. Numbers 28 and 29 (4.A.8 and 4.A.9) scenarios were modified to make them consistent with the guidance in the Officiating Handbook with respect to referee actions in answering player questions.

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## Service Lets (2020 Section 4.0 & 3.A.18) Removed

### Rules 4.O, 4.O.1, 4.O.2, & 4.O.3 and 3.A.18

**Removed:** The definition (3.A.18) and section 4 (Service Lets) have been removed. Starting in 2021, there will be no rule(s) governing service lets. Service Lets have been removed. **It is noted** that out of habit, both referees and players may sometimes habitually call a service let. If any player stops play because of a service let being called, that player/team will have committed a fault per rule 7.I.

#### Reasons:

Each year there is probably one rule change that is more controversial than the others. This year, we expect the change to the 'let' serve rule to fall in that category.

Many have questioned, "Why?" It's a normal and expected question that deserves an answer. The reason behind this change was only considered after careful thought. It was not a capricious or arbitrary decision. What follows is an attempt to provide an explanation.

Those opposed to the change may not have their opinion changed, but at least one will know what was behind the decision.

What follows are two perspectives; that of the Rules Committee first and then the governing body for Pickleball, USA Pickleball. The latter perspective, however, had no bearing on the change and was not part of the consideration. But, it's worthy of a short mention. First is the perspective of the Rules Committee.

### The Rules Committee Considerations

The Rules Committee is committed to the following priorities when they approve rules:

1. The first priority is preserving the integrity of the game. Nothing is more important to the committee than that.

2. Second priority is what is best for the players; are there rule changes the committee can make to improve their experience, make it easier for players to learn, to play, etc.

3. Third priority is what's best for officiating; what can the committee do in rules space to make it less likely that players will argue with or get into conflicts with referees.

Those are the priorities applied to rule making – in that exact order. Now, let's examine this rule change under the microscope of those three priorities.

### First Priority? **Preserve the integrity of the game.**

If there is a rule in the game that can invite active or passive cheating at worst or prevent inaccurate calls at best, shouldn't every player expect the Rules Committee to address it – for the good of the game? Can you think of anything that would damage the integrity of the game more than active or passive cheating? The Rules Committee cannot and will not let the game everyone enjoys be damaged by even a very small number of players who might usurp a rule to their advantage now or in the future. The future is, admittedly, more important in this change than the present case. That is perhaps why many may have a hard time initially understanding why this change has been enacted. The 'let' serve rule opens up a loophole for inaccurate, (intentional or otherwise) calls. The Rules Committee is closing it.

Consider this scenario: You are in the winner's bracket, three wins away from the MXD gold medal match where a Golden Ticket to Nationals awaits the winning team. This match does not yet qualify for a referee. This is an MMP National Qualifier event at the 3.5 level. You are serving for match point, up 10-9 in game three. You serve wide and catch the receiver leaning the wrong way. He hits his return of your serve wide and erroneously and immediately yells, "Let!". You know there was no 'let' serve but there's nothing you can do about it. In the 2020 Rulebook, you **MUST** play a replay. It does no good to appeal to the Head Referee or Tournament Director because it's a judgment call. You have just lost your match-point serve to someone who has made a horrible call and you know it. Is there any doubt where your mind will be at that instant and how long it will take you to reset after that obvious, blatant call? As the stakes get higher and higher for pros and amateur players who play in qualifying tournaments, whether for money or Golden Tickets, this loophole is a potential threat to the game. Pickleball Hall of Fame member Steve Paranto perhaps said it best, "This type of call on 'let' serves has already happened. This rule change eliminates any chance of inaccurate calls entirely." The Rules committee is getting out in front of this potential before it becomes a bigger issue. Money in the pro and senior pro level and higher stakes for amateur players will change our game in ways most haven't even thought about. But, the Rules Committee has. One can argue the extent to which this exists in our sport today, but no one can deny that money and high stakes can change player behavior, intentionally

or not. That is a key point in this discussion; how behavior can change when the stakes of a game increase. So, we can argue whether this is an overreaction for what exists now, but that's not the full picture. The higher the stakes, the more inaccurate are player judgment calls. It's an aspect of human behavior that is difficult to refute.

Note: for those who think the bigger threat here are line calls, the Rules Committee also made a subtle and small, but important, wording change in the line call rules as well, for much the same reason.

## Second Priority? **What is best for the players**

If there is a rule that can eliminate conflict between or among players in a match, shouldn't the Rules Committee consider it? Conflict on the court does NOT enhance the player experience. This rule completely eliminates player conflict over whether or not a served ball hits the net. Completely. No more arguments, no more conflict. In recreational play, this rarely results in conflict because most just accept the replay. Not an issue. But in tournament play? Yes, it has caused conflict because one team calls a 'let' the other team doesn't agree with. A lot? No, but as said above, this change is to get out in front of a stronger potential in the future. Next up? Referees.

## Third Priority? **What's best for officiating.**

If there is a rule that will eliminate conflicts between players and referees, shouldn't the Rules Committee consider it? Service 'lets' have caused several player and referee conflicts. In matches with a referee, players have called service 'lets' that have not been confirmed by the referee. By rule, those are faults on the player for calling a 'let' that the referee did not also detect. Furthermore, many referees had adopted a practice of touching the net during the serve to 'detect' service 'lets' and then moving back into their normal position. Because not all referees use it, that practice introduced an undesired inconsistency among referees. Additionally, some players complained because the movement of the referee back into position, however slight, can be distracting, which is itself another potential source of referee/player conflict. Players have written complaints to USA Pickleball asking that the practice be stopped. This rule change completely eliminates that type of conflict as well. A final note about the referee aspect of this. Notice where it falls on the priority list. Last. Just where it belongs. So, it would be incorrect to place more importance on this reason for the change than it deserves.

**Scenario A:** The referee calls the correct score and the server serves. The served ball hits the net and lands in the proper receiving court. The referee immediately yells “Let”. The referee after realizing her mistake, says “Referee error” and calls for a replay. She then reminds everyone that “service lets” do not exist.

**Scenario B:** The referee calls the correct score and the server serves. The served ball hits the net and lands in the proper receiving court. The receiver yells “Let” and catches the ball. The referee shall call a fault on the receiver per rule 7.I. (stopping a live ball before it becomes dead) and remind all players that “service lets” do not exist.

**Scenario C:** The referee calls the correct score and the server serves. The served ball hits the net and lands in the proper receiving court. The receiver yells “Let” but also happens to return the ball to the serving team. A serving team player catches the ball because they heard the word “let” and thought a replay would occur. The referee shall call a fault on the serving team per rule 7.I. (stopping a live ball before it becomes dead) and remind all players that “service lets” do not exist. This is NOT a case for a distraction fault on the receiving team because the receiving team yelled “let” well before the ball had crossed back to the serving team’s side, and, well before the serving team was about to play the ball.

**Scenario D:** The referee calls the correct score and the server serves. The served ball hits the net and lands in the proper receiving court. The receiver returns the ball. After the ball has crossed back to the serving team’s court and just as the server is about to make a play on the ball, the receiver’s partner loudly yells “Let” just as the original server was about to hit the ball. Upon hearing the opponent yell “Let”, the referee calls a distraction fault because the receiver’s partner committed a distraction fault as the server was about to play the ball.

## Section 1 – The Game

### The Players

#### **New:** The Players

Pickleball is a game that requires cooperation and courtesy. A sense of fair play from giving the opponent the benefit of any doubt is essential in maintaining the game's underlying principles of fun and competition. To that end:

- All points played are treated the same regardless of their importance; match point is as important as the first point of the match
- Either partner in doubles can make calls, especially line calls; there is no place in the game for one partner telling another, "that was my call, not yours"
- Prompt calls eliminate the 'two chance option'. For example, a player cannot claim a hinder from a ball rolling on the court after they hit a ball 'out'; they gave up their ability to call the hinder by choosing instead to hit the ball
- Players without the benefit of a referee strive to cooperate when confronted with a situation not covered by the Rulebook. Possible outcomes can be a replay, allowing the rally to stand, or in extreme cases, asking for a referee to resolve a dispute.
- Where possible, rules accommodate players with various adaptive needs.

**Reason:** This general guideline outlines the basic fair play concepts of pickleball. Although they are quoted often, they are now in print for everyone to read.

## Section 2 – Court and Equipment

### 1. Rule 2.A.4

**New: (Wheelchair)** The recommended playing surface area for Wheelchair play is 44 feet (13.41 m) wide and 74 feet (22.55 m) long. The size for Wheelchair play in a stadium court is 50 feet (15.24 m) wide by 80 feet (24.38 m) long.

**Reason:** This rule is the new guideline for wheelchair play

### 2. Rule 2.E.2

**Existing: Surface.** The paddle's hitting surface shall not contain holes, indentions, rough texturing, or any objects or features that allow a player to impart additional spin on the ball.

**New: Surface.** The paddle's hitting surface shall not contain delamination, holes, cracks or indentations that break the paddle skin or surface.

**Reason:** To remove difficult to discern language about “additional spin” and make the rule more specific to the surface characteristics of the paddle. The restrictions associated with ‘spin’ will be covered in the new Equipment Standards Manual.

### 3. Rule 2.E.5.c

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** Hand-drawn or 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 “hand-drawn” or “handwritten” pen markings. Any hand-drawn or handwritten depictions must be in good taste.

**Reason:** To clarify that a hand drawn marking such as a logo, symbol or picture is no different than a hand-written signature as long as it does not impact the surface texture of the paddle face.



## Section 3 - Definitions

### 4. Rule 3.A.2

**New: Coaching** - Communication of any information, including verbal, nonverbal, and electronic, from someone other than a player's partner, that a player or team may act upon to gain an advantage or help them avoid a rules violation.

**Reason:** A definition of coaching was included in the 2020 Referee Handbook, and some descriptors of coaching were found in (2020) Rule 11.N. but there was no clear and comprehensive definition in the Rulebook. The definition includes the following: (1) Coaching is any information, including but not limited to verbal, nonverbal and electronic; (2) that the information must be actionable by the player or team who receives it; (3) that the information must have the potential to help the player or team gain an advantage or avoid a rules violation (e.g. win a rally, take a time out, or not commit a fault); (4) the information must come from someone other than the player's partner, including spectators, volunteers, or officials.

### 5. Rule 3.A.9

**New: Ejection** - A behavior violation so flagrant that it warrants ejection from the tournament by the Tournament Director. The player may stay at the venue but may no longer play in any matches.

**Reason:** To provide a specific term relating to a Tournament Director's decision to eject a player from a tournament.

### 6. Rule 3.A.10

**New: Expel** - A behavior violation so flagrant that the Tournament Director prohibits the player from playing in any current and any future brackets of the tournament. In addition, the player shall leave the venue immediately and not return for the remainder of the tournament.

**Reason:** To provide a specific term and guidelines relating to a Tournament Director's decision to expel a player from a tournament.

### 7. 3.A.13

**Existing: Forfeit** - A player/team's decision or a rule-based enforcement that stops a match and awards the match to the opponent.

**New: Forfeit** - An egregious behavior violation or a combination of technical warnings and/or technical fouls that result in either a game or match being awarded to the opponent.

**Reason:** To account for the fact that forfeits can now be applied to games as well as matches.

### 8. Rule 3.A.15

**Existing: 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.

**New: Hinder** - Any transient element or occurrence not caused by a player that adversely impacts play, not including permanent objects. Examples include, but are not limited to, balls, flying insects, foreign material, players or officials on another court that, in the opinion of the referee, impacted a player's ability to make a play on the ball.

**Reason:** To clarify that a permanent object is not a potential hindrance which would result in a replay. Previous rules did not clarify that a permanent object cannot be considered a hindrance if it impacts a player's ability to make a play on the ball. A pre-existing tennis net, acting as a barrier between two pickleball courts, is an example of a permanent object that cannot be considered a hinder. In the interest of safety, players calling a hinder due to players or officials on adjacent court matches will be upheld.

**Scenario A:** The referee calls the score and while the server is starting her service motion, she drops the ball on her foot and the ball rolls to the side of the court and under the bleachers. The referee should not stop the 10-second count (unless the team calls a time-out) because the ball rolling under the bleachers was caused by the server and is therefore not a valid hinder.

**Scenario B:** In an officiated match, a player hits a sharp angle shot to the opponent's court. The ball is now heading towards an adjacent court which has a match in progress. The receiving team player is running towards the adjacent court in the hopes of making a play on the ball. In the interest of safety, the receiving team player stops their motion **and does not hit the ball** in an effort to avoid a collision. The player then claims a hinder has occurred. In the judgement of the referee, the safety concern is a factor in the hinder claim and the referee upholds the player's request for a hinder.

**Scenario C:** Same as Scenario B above except: 1) If in the judgement of the referee there was no safety issue, the hinder claim by the receiving team player will not be upheld. 2) If the receiving player **returns the ball and DOES NOT quickly/promptly/immediately call “hinder”**, the hinder request will **NOT BE** upheld. Once the player returns the ball (basically “continuing on” with the rally) and does not call “hinder” within a quick, reasonable amount of time, the window of opportunity to claim a hinder has passed.

**Scenario D:** In a non-officiated match, after a rally has completed, all players agree that the cracked ball did impact the outcome of the rally. All players agree to a replay and the ball is re-served.

## 9. Rule 3.A.16

**New: Imaginary extension** - A term used to describe where a line would extend if it projected beyond its current end point. Players and referees are to project where the line would extend if it were not limited to the boundaries of the playing area.

**Reason:** To provide a definition for a term that is used 8 times in the rulebook but has no written definition.

## 10. Rule 3.A.19

**Existing: Live Ball/In Play:** - The point in time when the referee starts to call the score.

**New: Live Ball/In Play:** - The point in time when the referee or server (or server’s partner per rule 4.D.1) starts to call the score.

**Reason:** To reflect that many matches do not have a referee and that the ball becomes “live” when the server, or the player designated to call the score, starts to call the score.

## 11. Rule 3.A.20

**New: Momentum** – Momentum is a property of a body in motion, such as a player executing a volley, that causes the player to continue in motion after contacting the ball. The act of volleying produces momentum that ends when the player regains balance and control of their motion or stops moving toward the non-volley zone.

**Reason:** The term “Momentum” is used in the Rulebook in Section 9 to describe a type of non-volley zone fault. This new definition rule offers better guidance for making judgments on when actual volley momentum ends. NVZ momentum faults are judgment calls by a referee (or player per 13.D.1.b) on when momentum has ended. Examples are, but not limited to; the player has regained their balance, the player has bodily control of their motion(s), the player has stopped moving toward the NVZ, etc.

## **12. Rule 3.A.21**

**Existing: 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)

**New: Non-Volley Zone (NVZ)** – The 7-foot-by-20-foot area adjacent to the net and specific to each team’s end of the court relating to NVZ faults. 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)

**Reason:** This change is to clarify that the NVZ area pertains to each team’s side of the net for the purpose of calling NVZ faults, i.e., a team cannot commit an NVZ fault by touching the other team’s NVZ area after the ball is dead. This is further solidified by rules 9.E and 9.F.

**Scenario:** Team A player volleys an Erne shot outside their own NVZ but close to the net. The ball then hits the opponent on the leg and then the Team A player (caused by the momentum from the volley) steps onto the opponent’s NVZ. This is NOT a fault because the ball was dead the instant it hit the opponent’s leg. The touching of the opponent’s NVZ after the ball is dead is of no consequence because a player can only commit an NVZ violation in their own NVZ; not the opponent’s NVZ.

## **13. Rule 3.A.25**

**New: Plane of the Net** - The imaginary vertical planes on all sides extending beyond the net system.

**Reason:** This definition was added due to several associated references in the rulebook. The net plane extends vertically above, below and on both the right and left sides of the net.

#### 14. Rule 3.A.30

**New: Retirement** - A player/team's decision that stops the match and awards the match to the opponent.

**Reason:** The prior definition of 'Forfeit' had two meanings; one behavior based, and one at the discretion of the players, most often associated with medical conditions. This defines those circumstances where the players voluntarily remove themselves from competition for reasons that are different than a forfeit.

#### 15. Rule 3.A.40

**Existing: Technical Foul** - A referee's assessment of a rule or behavioral violation that results in one 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 player's or team's actions, based on the referee's judgment.

**New: Technical Foul** - A referee's assessment of a rule or behavioral violation that results in one point being removed from the score of the offending team unless their score is zero, in which case a point shall be added to the score of the opposing side. A technical foul shall be issued if one technical warning has already been given and a second technical warning is warranted; or when warranted by a player's or team's action, based on the referee's judgement.

**Reason:** The change to the point penalties minimize the chance that a technical foul could cause the loss of a match. This change also puts the burden of repositioning (due to the change in score) on the team that committed the violation (unless their score is zero) rather than their opponent."

#### 16. Rule 3.A.44

**New: Profanity** – Words, phrases or hand gestures, common or uncommon, which are normally considered inappropriate in "polite company" or around children. Typically included are four letter words used as expletives or verbal intensifiers.

**Reason:** To give a written definition of profanity so as to help referees better determine when a technical warning or foul should be issued.

### 17. Rule 3.A.45

**New: Verbal Warning** – A referee's Verbal Warning (VW) is an optional, non-penalizing, game management tool. A VW is specific to profanity which has not risen to the penalty level (TW or TF). When used, a referee's VW is simultaneously administered to all players on the court. Only one VW for profanity is permitted during a match.

**Reason:** To give a written definition of a new term used in the technical warning section. This verbal warning is specifically associated with profanity issues and does not pertain to any other technical warning or technical foul items. The advent of the verbal warning came about because of inconsistencies among referees; most have different thresholds for what they consider profanity, which was unfair to players.

### 18. Rule 3.A.46

**New: Third Shot** – After the receiver hits the ball to return the serve, the point in time when the serving team hits the ball.

**Reason:** To give a written definition of a new term used when challenging a score call. The Third Shot occurs following the receiver's return of serve, at the moment the serving team hits the ball to continue the rally.

### 19. Rule 3.A.47

**New: Wheelchair Player** – Any person, with or without a disability, who plays the game in a wheelchair. The wheelchair is considered part of the player's body

**Reason:** This addition was based on a recommendation of a committee advising the Rules Committee on adaptive play.

## Section 4 – Serve, Service Sequence & Scoring Rules

### 20. Rule 4.A.1

**New:** The entire score must be called before the ball is served.

**Reason:** To remove the ambiguity between service motions and practice swings. This is part of the global goal to move all timing fault issues to a consistent point-in-time, the serve of the ball. A player may move their serving arm in any manner as long as they don't serve the ball until the score has been completely called. Once the referee starts to call the score but before the score calling has ended, if a player serves the ball, a fault should be called per Rule 4.M.11.

**Scenario A:** The referee starts to call the score and the server serves the ball before the referee has finished calling the score. The referee should immediately call a fault per rule 4.M.11.

**Scenario B:** After a rally has ended, but before the referee starts to call the score, the server serves the ball. The referee should not call a fault since the ball is "dead". The referee should remind the server to wait until the entire score has been called before serving the ball. This scenario is in accordance with new rule 8.E. which details that when we are in a dead ball situation, faults cannot be committed specifically because we are in a dead ball state of play.

### 21. Rule 4.A.2

**Existing:** At the beginning of the service motion, both feet must be behind the baseline and the imaginary extension 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.

**New:** The moment the ball is served:

- at least one foot must be on the playing surface behind the baseline
- neither of the server's feet may touch the court on or inside the baseline
- neither of the server's feet may touch outside the imaginary extensions of the sideline or centerline.

**Reason:** This change removes the confusion about where a server's feet must be at the start of the service motion as compared to the actual serve. This rule simplifies the feet restrictions to the actual serve of the ball. There is no longer a restriction on the server's feet location when they start their service motion. The feet guidelines apply only to the moment the ball is served.

## 22. Rule 4.A.5

**Existing:** 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)

**New:** Contact with the ball must not be made above the waist. (See Figures 4-1 and 4-3 above)

**Reason:** Better clarity for referees on how to determine the applicable fault. It removes the ambiguity over waist vs navel.

## 23. Rule 4.A.6

**Existing: 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.

**New: Placement.** The server must serve to the correct service court (the court diagonally opposite the server). The serve may clear or touch the net and must clear the NVZ and the NVZ lines. The serve may land on any other service court line.

**Reason:** The reason for this change is two-fold. First, it affirms that “let” serve replays are no longer valid. Now, even if the serve touches the net, as long as the serve lands in the appropriate receiving court, the ball is live and no replay shall be called. This change is also part of the goal to reduce player and referee conflicts involved when a player calls a let and the referee does not agree. It also prevents receivers from calling phantom lets on ‘ace’ serves. In addition, it provides better clarity that the serve must clear the NVZ lines as well as the area of the NVZ. Note: The NVZ is defined in the definition section, but several players have written to the USA Pickleball asking for better clarity of this rule.

## 24. Rule 4.A.8

**New: \*\*\*Provisional Rule\*\*\***

**Drop Serve.** In addition to the standard serve sequence described in Rules 4.A.1 to 4.A.7, players may opt to use an alternate “drop serve” method.

**Reasons:** 1. Provides a better serve method for the physically impaired, such as the use of only one arm.



2. Easier to enforce by players and referees. Referees only need to verify the ball is dropped correctly.
3. Easier serve to teach beginners.
4. Provides an alternate serve method for those who develop 'server's block', otherwise known as the "yips."
5. Servers may use the normal serve or provisional drop serve at any time during the match. No notification is needed.

**Note: Provisional means we will evaluate the rule for unintended or unexpected outcomes over the next year.**

#### **25. Rule 4.A.8.a**

**New:** Servers must release the ball from one of the server's hands or dropped off the server's paddle face from any natural (un-aided) height and hit the ball after the ball bounces on the playing surface. The server's release of the ball must be visible to the referee and the receiver. In matches without a referee, the server's release of the ball must be visible to the receiver. A replay shall be called before the return of serve if the release of the ball is not visible. The rules for feet placement (4.A.2 and 4.L) still apply.

**Reason:** Same as 4.A.8. **Note:** The only downward acceleration imparted on the ball is that from gravity.

**Scenario A:** In a match with a referee, the server turns their back slightly before performing a "drop serve". The referee sees the server release the ball, but the receiver cannot see the release. The server serves, but before the return of serve, the receiver claims they could not see the release of the ball. The referee calls for a replay and informs the server that they need to make the release of the ball visible to both the referee and receiver.

**Scenario B:** A server has been using the drop serve since the start of the game. The referee calls the score and the player drops the ball to perform a drop serve. After the ball bounces, the server grabs the ball and then serves the ball in the "normal" fashion and does so within the 10-second count. After the rally has ended, the receiver claims that the server committed a fault by "switching serving styles" after the score had been called. The referee explains that there is no rule restricting the server from "switching serving styles" after the score has been called. The referee explains that as long as the ball is served within the 10-second count, either style, including attempting both styles, is allowed.

**Scenario C:** The server releases the ball and the ball bounces twice on the ground and then the server serves. Since there is no written fault for letting the ball bounce twice (or more) before serving, the referee should **NOT** call a fault.

#### **26. Rule 4.A.8.b**

**New:** Before bouncing on the ground, the ball shall not be propelled (thrown) downward or tossed or hit upward with the paddle. Failure to drop the ball properly will result in a fault. There is no restriction on where the ball can land on the playing surface after it is dropped (providing 4.A.2 is satisfied) nor how many times within the 10 seconds after the score is called the server may drop the ball.

**Reason:** Same as 4.A.8.

**Scenario:** The server (illegally) propels the ball downward. The server realizes what he did would result in a fault when he serves. After the bounce, the server grabs the ball, raises it in the air, and then releases the ball legally. After the bounce the server now serves the ball. The referee does **NOT** call a fault. **Note:** It is not a fault for simply propelling the ball downward if there is no serve. The fault is applied if the illegal downward propelling of the ball results in a serve occurring.

#### **27. Rule 4.A.8.c**

**New:** If the drop serve is used, the ball may be struck with either a forehand or backhand motion without any other restriction; i.e., the location restrictions of the ball and paddle in Rules 4.A.3, 4.A.4, and 4.A.5 do not apply.

**Reason:** Same as 4.A.8.

#### **28. Rule 4.B.8**

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** Before the serve occurs, the serving team may ask the referee for the score, correct server, correct position, and may challenge/confirm the called score. Any player on the serving team may ask any one or more of these questions.

**Reason:** This change is part of multiple rule changes moving all timing issues to a consistent point-in-time; before the next serve occurs. It also reinstates the allowance for players to ask for their correct position and/or challenge/confirm the called score. This change works in conjunction with the server who changes courts and the possible conflicts that arise. The goal is to reduce player and referee conflicts that occur before the ball is served. An additional intent for the change is to prevent the serving team from “quick serving” the receiving team when the serving team asks any of the allowed questions. See below Scenario B. This change is consistent with the guideline that anytime any player asks a score, correct player, or correct position question, the

**referee will pause play, (i.e., call “Time”, raise their hand or step into the court thereby creating a dead ball) answer the player(s) question(s) and then recall the score (No 15-second notification is necessary). Per Rule 8.E, no faults can be committed during this dead ball time.**

**Scenario A:** The referee calls the correct score. The server asks if she is the correct server (or score, or correct position). **The referee stops play (i.e., calls “Time” or steps in and raises hand), confirms that she is the correct server and states that he will recall the score.** Before the referee starts to recall the score, the server serves the ball. The referee has the ball returned to the server. The opponents claim that the server committed a fault by serving before the entire score had been called. The referee reminded everyone that the ball was dead when he stopped play and that he had not started to call the score (creating a live ball). Since the ball was dead, the server did NOT commit a fault by serving.

**Scenario B:** The referee calls the correct score. As the server is starting their service routine, the server’s partner asks the referee to confirm their score. The referee calls, “Time”, confirms that the serving team’s score and then states that he will recall the score. **Before the serve, anytime a players asks a score/position/player question, the referee will stop play, answer the question(s) and recall the score.**

Note: If, after the referee recalls the score, the serving team then changes service courts, rule 4.E.2. procedures will apply.

## **29. Rule 4.B.9**

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** Before the serve occurs, the receiving team may ask the referee for the score, correct receiver, correct position, and may challenge/confirm the called score. Any player on the receiving team may ask any one or more of these questions.

**Reason:** This change is part of the multiple rule changes moving all timing issues to a consistent point in time; before the next serve occurs. It also reinstates the allowance for players to ask for their correct position and/or challenge/confirm the called score. While it would be rare for a receiver to ask if they are in the correct position, the goal was to allow any player to be able to ask any question of the referee including any questions about the called score. **This change is consistent with the guideline that anytime any player asks a score, correct player, or correct position question, the referee will pause play, (i.e., call “Time”, raise their hand or step into the court thereby creating a dead ball) answer the player(s) question(s) and then recall the score (No 15-second notification is necessary). Per Rule 8.E, no faults can be**

**committed during this dead ball time.** An additional intent for the change is to prevent the serving team from “quick serving” the receiving team when the receiving team asks any of the allowed questions. See below:

**Scenario:** The referee calls the correct score. Before the serve occurs, the receiver’s partner **starts to ask** if the receiver is the correct receiver. During the time when the receiver’s partner is asking the question, the serve occurs. Since the referee’s attention is on the server, the referee immediately calls, “**Time**” in order to properly answer the receiver’s partner’s question. The referee confirms that the receiver is correct and states that they will recall the score. The serving team claims that the receiver’s partner committed a fault by asking a question when the serve occurred. The referee states that **the start of the question being asked occurred BEFORE the serve occurred,** which is allowed by rule. (This is the same as a time-out being called before the serve occurs) The same as the serving team, the receiving team is allowed to ask any of the permitted questions; and they are allowed to have those questions answered without incurring a risk of being quick served. If the receiving team **repeatedly** asks similar questions of the referee, and the referee determines that the receiving team is trying to delay the game, or interrupt the momentum of the serving team, the referee may call a technical warning for delay of game on the receiving team. In summary, the receiving team is protected from being quick served, but not allowed to control the pace and flow of the match.

### **30. Rule 4.B.10**

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** 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(s).

**Reason:** To reinforce that the possibility of more than one fault may be called on a player or team. This change also reflects the removal of questions a referee cannot answer. Since the changes to 4.B.8 and 4.B.9 allow for a player to ask any or all questions to the referee, the restriction on what the referee is allowed to answer has been removed.

**Scenario A:** The incorrect server is serving from the incorrect position. The referee calls the score and the server serves. The referee calls “fault” and explains BOTH faults that occurred (wrong server and wrong position) since both faults were committed at the same time.

**Scenario B:** The incorrect server is setup to serve to the incorrect receiver. The referee calls the score and the incorrect server serves. The referee immediately calls “Server fault, wrong server.” The referee does NOT mention that the incorrect receiver was setup to receive serve as this would be coaching the receiving team. Since the incorrect receiver NEVER returned the serve, no fault was committed by the receiving team.

**Scenario C:** The incorrect server is serving to the incorrect receiver with a score of 4-4-2. The referee does not “notice” that both server and receiver are incorrect. The referee calls the score; the incorrect server serves; the incorrect receiver returns the serve. Then, the server’s partner catches the ball and tells the referee that the receiver was incorrect. After examination, the referee then realizes that both the server and receiver were incorrect. The referee admits his mistake and calls a fault on the incorrect server **only!** If the referee had done his job, he would have called the incorrect server fault the moment it occurred and the ball would be dead immediately and no other faults can be committed after the ball is dead (nvz exception noted). **(Commentary:** You are the referee. Should you call a fault on both teams? If so, would you call “side-out” on the serving team, , , and then call a fault on the receiving team and award a point to the serving team, , , , to whom you had just called for a side-out? (No) Also, if you call a fault on the incorrect server, and then call a fault on the incorrect receiver, should you not also call a fault on the server’s partner for stopping a live ball? (No) When we “rewind the tape”, in reality the ball would/should have been dead the instant after the incorrect server served the ball. A referee mistake should not open a pandora’s box of multiple faults being improperly assessed.)

### **31. Rule 4.B.11**

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** Incorrect Player or Position. When an incorrect server or player position is discovered after a rally, game, or match has ended, the offending team can be faulted until the next serve occurs or prior to the scoresheet being returned to the tournament operation’s desk. A point scored during the rally by the offending team will not count. Any previous points scored by the incorrect server or with players in the incorrect positions will stand. After a match is completed, an incorrect player or position error may not be corrected after the scoresheet has been returned to tournament operations personnel.

**Reason:** This change is part of the goal to move all timing faults (start of score call, end of score call, start of service motion, serve of ball, etc) to a consistent point-in-time, the serve of the ball. It also provides clarity that after a game or match has completed, the error may be corrected before the scoresheet has been returned to tournament operations personnel. It further states that that an incorrect player/position error can be corrected after a rally; after a game; or after a match.

**Scenario A:** An incorrect server serves at 10-9-1 and wins the point and the first game with a score of 11-9. After the 2-minute break, the referee calls “Game 2, time-in, 0-0-2”. Before the serve occurs, the receiver calls “time-out” and it is brought to the referee’s attention that there was an incorrect server fault that had occurred in game 1. The referee realizes their mistake and applies the incorrect server fault to game one, because the error was discovered before the next serve of game 2 had occurred. The referee resets back to game one, removes the last point scored and calls a fault on the incorrect server. The team now serves at 10-9-2 to continue game 1.

**Scenario B:** In game 3, Team A serves with an incorrect server at 10-5-1 and wins the game. After the match is completed, the referee is walking back to the operations desk to return the scoresheet. A losing team player tells the referee they think an incorrect server served the ball on the last, winning point of game three. The referee agrees that he made a mistake. Since the scoresheet had not been returned to tournament operations personnel, the referee corrects his mistake and calls for all players to return to the court. After all players return, the referee informs everyone of his mistake and resets back to game 3, removes the last point scored and calls a fault on the incorrect server and states that Team A will be serving at 10-5-2.

## 32. Rule 4.D.2

**New:** In non-officiated play, the server normally calls the score, but the server’s partner may call the score if the server is unable to call the score. The person calling the score shall not change during the game.

**Reason:** The change allows for those rare circumstances where the server is unable to call the score. The server and server’s partner should not alternate who calls the score for convenience sake or in an attempt to confuse the opponents. For that reason, once the serving team alters the normal convention of the actual server calling the score, it should remain in place until the end of the game.

**Scenario:** In a non-officiated match, the server’s partner has been calling the score for the entire game. After an opponent’s time-out, play resumes and the server inadvertently calls the score and serves. The receiving team reminds the serving team that the server’s partner had been calling the score and needs to remain as the score calling player. They replay the rally with no fault applied. **The intent:** This rule allows for

a server who is having difficulty calling the score to give that responsibility to their partner. The partner needs to call the score for the entire game. If out of habit the server accidentally calls the score, no penalty will be assessed. The rally shall be replayed with the server's partner calling the score.

### 33. Rule 4.E.2

**Existing:** 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 restart the 10-second count. In a non-officiated match, the server will allow for the same repositioning.

**New:** After the score has been called, if the serving team changes serving courts, the referee shall call "Time", allow all players to reposition, and then recall the score to restart the 10-second count. In a non-officiated match, the server will allow for the same repositioning and will recall the score to restart the 10 second count.

**Reason:** This change is part of the goal to reduce player and referee conflicts that happen before the ball is served. It removes the confusion and debate that was caused concerning the receiving team needing time to reposition verses the serving team running out of the 10-second count because they could not decipher their correct service court. It also works in conjunction with players being allowed to ask score, correct player and position questions and thereby reducing the frequency that the serving court changes will occur. The instruction for the referee to call "Time" was added to ensure that if by chance the server does happen to serve the ball, no fault will be applied because the ball was immediately dead when the referee called "Time" and is not live/in-play again until the restart of the score call. (Rule 8.E)

**Scenario:** The server is positioned in the incorrect service court and the receiving team is aligned accordingly. The referee calls the score and starts the 10-second count. The server starts the service motion and then stops and asks if she is in the correct position. The referee should call "Time" and reply that she is NOT in the correct position. The server switches service courts. The referee instructs that he will allow time for the receiving team to reposition and then recall the score. The serving team quickly repositions. While the receiving team is getting into the proper position, the server serves the ball to the receiving team's side. **(Note. This is not an actual serve. A serve can only happen when the ball is live.)** The referee instructs the receiving team to return the ball and reminds the server that he (the referee) will recall the score to restart the rally. No fault was committed in this entire scenario. The server did not run out of the 10-seconds because play was halted when the correct position question was asked (causing the referee to call "time"). The server also did not commit a fault by



hitting/serving the ball before the referee had recalled the score: When the referee called “Time”, the ball was dead and per Rule 8.E. No faults (except NVZ violations) can be committed during a dead ball.

### **34. Rule 4.K.**

**Existing: 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.

**New: *Wrong Score Called.*** If the server or referee calls the wrong score, any player may stop play before the “Third Shot” occurs to ask for a correction

**Reason:** This rule expands the window of time that players are allowed to challenge a possible incorrectly called score and extends it to the “Third Shot” point-in-time. Since the server is allowed to start their service motion during the calling of the score and potentially serve the ball the “split second” after the score has been called, this gives all players an extended amount of time to process and decide if they want to challenge the called score. Note that this rule change specifically does not follow the goal of moving all timing or appeal issues to the serve of the ball. The reason is that if a referee calls an incorrect score and then a 50-dink rally ensues, the option to have a replay and have a player “play the wrong score called card” to ensure a replay, should not be an option. This is why the window of time to challenge an incorrectly called score ends when the Third Shot occurs.

**Scenario:** The referee calls an incorrect score. The server serves and the receiver returns the ball into the net. The receiver then claims that the referee called the wrong score. The referee agrees that he did call the incorrect score and calls for a replay due to referee error. Even though the receiver returned the ball into the net, the claim of an incorrect score call did happen before the Third Shot had occurred. Even though in this scenario the Third Shot never occurred, there is the possibility that the incorrect score call impacted the receiver’s concentration to return the ball.

### **35. Rule 4.K.2**

**Existing:** 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.



**New:** After the serve has occurred, a player who stops play and challenges the called score when there is no error will have committed a fault.

**Reason:** This change aligns with the global goal of moving all timing rules to the moment of serve contact. Since players are permitted to ask/challenge/confirm any score related concerns before the serve occurs, once the serve occurs, any player that stops play to challenge the called score will have committed a fault, providing the score had been called correctly. **\*Scenario B below illustrates how a referee should avoid the “pitfall” of getting into a conversation with a player after the serve has occurred.**

**Scenario A:** The referee calls the score “10-8-1” and the server serves the ball. The receiver returns the ball and then yells, “Wait, wait, wait!” thereby stopping play. The receiver claims that the referee had called the wrong score. The referee agrees that he called the wrong score and says “Referee error” and states he will recall the score.

**Scenario B:** The referee calls the score, “5-5-2” and the server serves the ball. As the ball is crossing the net headed towards the receiver, the receiver’s partner looks at the referee (standing close by) and asks, “We have 6 don’t we?” The referee ignores the question and the receiver returns the ball and the rally ensues. Note: Once the ball has been served, to avoid the potential that the referee will interject themselves and stop play unnecessarily, the referee **is not compelled to answer question(s) by a player**. The referee effectively “ignoring” questions asked by any player will result in one of two results: 1) The rally will continue as normal, 2) The player(s) will escalate their concerns and eventually stop play (catching the ball, raising a hand halting play, etc). After the serve, once a player(s) has stopped play and challenges the called score, either the referee has made an error in the score call and a replay will be called, or, if the referee has called the correct score, the player(s) who stopped play will have committed a fault. This guideline removes the potential for “player and referee discussions” that could arise after the ball has been served.

### **36. Rule 4.K.3**

**Existing:** A player who stops play after the return of serve will have committed a fault and shall lose the rally.

**New:** A player who stops play after the “Third Shot” occurs will have committed a fault and shall lose the rally.

**Reason:** This change reflects the expansion of the window of time allowed for any player to challenge the called score. After the Third Shot has occurred, any player that stops play will be faulted.

**Scenario A:** After a Third Shot has occurred, the receiver stops play and says that the referee had called the wrong score. The referee confirms that he had called the wrong score, but that the challenge happened after the third shot had occurred. The referee calls a fault on the receiver per 4.K.3.

**Scenario B:** The starting server is serving from the right-hand court with a score of 6-4-2. The referee calls an incorrect score of “7-4-2”. The (correct) server serves; the receiver returns; and the server hits the “Third Shot”. **Then** the receiver’s partner stops play and claims that the referee had missed an incorrect server due to the called score of 7-4-2. After examination, the referee confirms that she had indeed called the wrong score, but the server was, in actuality, the correct server. She explains that the only error that had been committed was by herself (the referee) when she had called the incorrect score. Since the receiver’s partner stopped play after the Third Shot had occurred, this is a fault per rule 4.K.3. (Note: Although some might consider helpful to remind the receiving team to always “finish the rally” and then correct any wrong score called or incorrect server/position errors, this would be considered coaching and is not encouraged.)

### **37. Rule 4.M.3**

**Existing:** The served ball touches any permanent object other than the net, the receiver, or the receiver’s partner before it hits the ground.

**New:** The served ball touches any permanent object before it hits the ground.

**Reason:** The exceptions listed (net, receiver, receiver’s partner) are not permanent objects and should not have been listed in the rule.

### **38. Rule 4.M.5**

**Existing:** The served ball lands in the non-volley zone.

**New:** The served ball lands in the non-volley zone which includes the NVZ lines.

**Reason:** This addition helps clarify that the NVZ lines are part of the actual NVZ without having to look up the definition of NVZ.

### **39. Rule 4.M.10**

**Existing:** The server or their partner calls a time-out after the score has been called and the server has started the service motion.

**New:** The server or their partner calls a time-out after the serve has occurred.

**Reason:** This change is part of the goal to move all timing faults to a consistent point-in-time which is the serve of the ball.

#### **40. Rule 4.M.11**

**New:** A fault occurs when the server hits the ball to make the serve while the score is being called.

**Reason:** This new rule complements and assigns a fault penalty if rule 4.A.1 has been violated (serving before the entire score is called) The rule has a definite start point and end point on when a fault can be called for serving too early. After a rally has ended, the ball is dead until the score starts to be called. Per rule 8.E, when the ball is dead, no faults can be called; therefore, if a server serves before the start of the score call, there is no penalty.

**Scenario A:** The referee starts to call the score and the server serves the ball before the referee has finished calling the score. The referee should immediately call a fault.

**Scenario B:** After a rally has ended, but before the referee starts to call the score, the server serves the ball. The referee should not call a fault since the ball is “dead”. The referee should remind the server to wait until the entire score has been called before serving the ball. This scenario is in accordance with new rule 8.E. which details that when we are in a dead ball situation, faults cannot be committed specifically because we are in a dead ball state of play.

#### **41. Rule 4.N.3**

**Existing:** The receiver or the receiver’s partner calls a time-out after the score has been called and the server has started the service motion.

**New:** The receiver or their partner calls a time-out after the serve has occurred.

**Reason:** This change is part of the goal to move all timing faults to a consistent point-in-time which is the serve of the ball.

## Section 5 – Service and End Selection Rules

### 42. Rule 5.A.1

**Existing:** 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).

**New:** Any fair method shall be used to determine which player or team has first choice of end, serve, receive, or defer (e.g., 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. Once a selection has been made, it cannot be changed.

**Reason:** This change combines the two 2020 rules (5.A.1 and 5.A.2) for simplicity and clarity.

### 43. Rule 5.A.2

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** In doubles, teams may change the starting server between games and should notify the referee. In non-officiated matches, the team should notify the opponents if there was a starting server change. The starting server for the game is the player wearing the starting server form of identification. There is no fault or penalty for failure to make the notifications. Once a game has started, if the referee notices a starting server has changed, after the rally has completed, the referee will annotate the scoresheet accordingly.

**Reason:** **THE BAND IS THE KEY!** This change, in conjunction with other rule changes, is for the elimination of possible “gotcha” fault that can occur before the first serve happens. **The Intent:** Changing starting servers is an error of omission rather than commission. It is a clerical issue pertaining to the scoresheet and should not impact the game. To help avoid confusion or issues that may arise during the game, the referee should verify (visually or verbally if needed) the starting servers before each game. **Note:** While this change does shift more of the responsibility to the referee, the “changing” team still bears some responsibility as noted in Scenario B below.

**Scenario A:** Before the beginning of game 2, the serving team changes their starting server player along with the starting server band. They do **NOT** notify the referee or opponents. Before starting game 2, the referee notices the change in starting servers and confirms the same with the serving team and then notifies the opponents. After confirmation, the referee makes the corrections to the scoresheet and proceeds as normal. The changing team is not faulted simply because they did not give notification. **THE BAND IS THE KEY!**

**Scenario B:** After game 1 has ended, Team A notifies the referee and opponents that they are changing the starting server along with the starting server band. The referee makes the changes to the scoresheet accordingly. When game 2 begins with Team A serving, Team A “forgets” they had changed their starting server and the “No Band” player (the starting server in game 1) serves from the right-hand court after the referee starts the game and calls the score. The referee calls an incorrect server fault on Team A. All parties were made aware of the starting server change and the referee had adjusted accordingly on the score sheet. Team A simply “made a mistake” and should be faulted accordingly. **THE BAND IS THE KEY!**

#### **44. Rule 5.B.6**

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** End Change Time-Out. A maximum of one minute is allowed to switch ends during a game. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to continue play.

**Reason:** Third-party coaching is now allowed during end changes because it was difficult to detect and enforce. The revised rule also treats the return to play similar to other time-outs with respect to the 15 second warning and potential for returning to play early.

#### **45. Rule 5.B.7**

**New:** After the end change has occurred, a technical foul resulting in the loss of a point for the serving team shall have no impact on the completed end change.

**Reason:** To clarify that a point reduction assessed to a team as a result of a technical foul shall have no impact once the teams have performed the necessary end change.

**Scenario A:** In the third game of a match, Team A scores their 6<sup>th</sup> point and the end change procedures begin. Team A then commits a technical foul. The referee charges Team A with a technical foul and informs everyone that Team A now has 5 points. The referee continues on with the end change as normal. Team A realizes that with having a score of 5, they will need to serve from the proper position. Note: Since Team A scored their 6<sup>th</sup> point BEFORE they committed the technical foul, the end change should happen as normal and not be “reversed” because Team A, now, only has 5 points.

**Scenario B:** In a game to 15, Player A (the starting server for Team A) is serving at 7-7-2 and Team A wins the rally. The score is now 8-7-2 and the referee calls for the end switch and the teams change ends. Player A is now set to serve from the right-hand court at 8-7-2, but the partner commits a technical foul. The referee calls the technical foul and removes one point from Team A’s score. The referee informs both teams that they will continue to play on their current ends. The referee calls the score at 7-7-2 and Player A (the starting server) serves from the right-hand court. The referee calls an incorrect server position fault on Team A for serving from the wrong position and a side out occurs.

## Section 6 – Line Call Rules

### 46. Rule 6.D.1

**Existing:** 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).

**New:** Players are responsible for calling the lines on their end of the court (excluding short serves, service foot faults and all non-volley-zone faults, if being called by a referee). If a player makes an initial line call, and then asks for either the opponent(s) or the referee's opinion, if the opponent or referee can make a clear "in" or "out" call, the clear call will stand. If no clear call can be made, the initial line call by the player will stand. A call made by the opponent can be appealed to the referee for a final "in" or "out" decision.

**Reason:** If a player makes a line call, and then out of sportsmanship asks for either the opponent's or referee's opinion, if the referee or opponent can't make a clear in or out call, then the initial line call made by the player/team will stand. The opponent may still appeal to the referee even though they could not make a clear in or out call.

**Scenario A:** A singles player makes an initial "out" call, but then asks for the opponent's opinion and then the referee's opinion. The opponent and referee cannot make a clear call. The initial "out" call from the player stands.

**Scenario B:** A singles player makes an initial "out" call, but then asks the opponent's opinion. The opponent says that they clearly saw the ball as in. The opponent's "in" call will stand.

**Scenario C:** A singles player makes an initial "out" call, but then asks the opponent's opinion. The opponent says that they clearly saw the ball as in. The opponent's "in" call will stand. The receiving player then asks the referee if they can make a call. The referee says they cannot make a clear call, so the opponent's "in" call will stand.

**Scenario D:** A singles player makes an initial "out" call, but then asks the opponent's opinion. The opponent says that they clearly saw the ball as in. The opponent's "in" call will stand. The player making the initial "out" call then appeals to the referee to make a call. The referee says they clearly saw the ball land out. The referee's "out" call overrides the opponent's "in" call. A player always has the right to appeal to the referee for a final decision.

### 47. Rule 6.D.3

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** 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 replay 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 for that rally.

**Reason:** This clarifies that the player losing the right to make a subsequent call only pertains to the specific rally that had just ended. **The Intent:** A player may **ALWAYS** appeal to the referee. A player may appeal to a referee or opponents if no one has seen the ball land.

**Scenario:** Peter is playing against Paul in a singles match. The ball is hit close to Peter’s sideline and goes by Peter. Peter did not see the ball and cannot make a call. Peter appeals to the referee. The referee says she did not clearly see the ball land. At this point, the ball is considered “in” on Peter. Peter then asks for Paul’s opinion. If Paul can make a clear call, it must be accepted. If Paul cannot make a clear call, the ball is considered “in” on Peter. Note: This scenario is similar to Rule 6.D.6. Peter was not going “call shopping” but rather trying to find someone who actually saw the ball land. Peter gave up his right to make a call the instant he appealed to the referee. Since the referee did not see the ball land, it is acceptable to ask for the opponent’s opinion.

### 48. Rule 6.D.5

**Existing:** 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 rally.

**New:** A player should not question an opponent’s call, although any player may appeal a call to the referee before the next serve occurs.

**Reason:** This change is part of the multiple rule changes moving all timing issues to a consistent point in time; before the next serve occurs.



#### 49. Rule 6.D.6

**Existing:** A player/team may ask the opponent's opinion to make a line call on the player's end 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.

**New:** A player/team may ask the opponent's opinion to make the 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 ruled as being "in" on the receiving team. The moment the receiving player/team asks for the opponent's opinion, they lose their right to make any subsequent "in" or "out" call for that rally. The receiving team/player may also appeal to the referee to make a clear call. If the referee cannot make a clear call, the outcome of the opponent's ruling will stand.

**Reason:** This rule adds that if the opponents make a clear "in" or "out" call, or if the opponents can't make a call and the ball is ruled as being "in" on the receiving team, the receiving team **may still appeal** to the referee for a final ruling. If the referee cannot make a clear call, then the outcome of the opponent's decision or ruling must be upheld by the referee.

**Scenario A:** A receiving team does not make a line call on a ball that is on their side of the net. They ask for the opponent's opinion and the opponent says they clearly saw the ball as "in". The ball shall be considered "in" on the receiving team. A receiving team player then appeals to the referee for a final ruling. The referee cannot make a clear call, so the opponent's "in" call will stand.

**Scenario B:** The receiving team does not make a line call on a ball that is on their side of the net. They ask for the opponent's opinion and the opponent says they clearly saw the ball as "in". The ball shall be considered "in" on the receiving team. A receiving team player then appeals to the referee for a ruling. The referee makes a clear "out" call and the receiving team wins the rally.

#### 50. Rule 6.D.7

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** Players should not call the ball "out" unless they can clearly see a space between the line and the ball as it hits the ground.

**Reason:** The discussion of parallax was removed from the rule because it is primarily an astronomical term used for judging the distance to distant stars and does not apply to pickleball calls. Furthermore, depth of field is an optical term about focus and has nothing to do with location.

Some will think the part of the rule that remains is a newly crafted rule when, in fact, it has always been the central part of Rule 6.D.7. But, it is now highlighted as the key determinant in making line calls. This removes the need for any discussion surrounding the size of the contact point and estimating where the ball contacts the court surface. This rule deserves a more thorough discussion why it is the key determinant in making line calls.

For some, what follows will be a change in thinking:

*Players should consider all balls that land on their side of the net are in.....unless they can be certain that the ball landed out.*

That statement is exactly what's behind existing rules 6.D and 6.D.3.

Here is 6.D:

"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."

And here is 6.D.3:

"Any ball that cannot be called "out" will be considered "in."

So, the next logical question is: "How do you tell if a ball is in fact 'out' with certainty?"

But, before that question gets answered, why the focus on certainty? That's because if we aren't certain, there's doubt. If a player is estimating, guessing, approximating, or assuming the ball is 'out', there is, by definition, doubt. And, if there's doubt, as players we must rule in favor of our opponents. Again, back to rule 6.D.3:

"The opponent gets the benefit of the doubt on line calls made."

**Scenario A:** You and your partner are playing together. You are returning serve. Your partner is up at the net. The server serves the ball to you and you are concentrating foremost on returning the serve, not on where the ball hits. Your partner, however, turns and watches where the ball lands. You return the ball, but your partner is able to call it out not because they are guessing or assuming it's out, but because they are certain it is out. They are certain it is out because they can see space between the ball and the line (Rule 6.D.7). Seeing that space is the ONLY way to be certain the ball is out. Otherwise, guess what? It's in.

**Scenario B:** Your partner is on the odd side of the court, you're on the even. Your opponents hit the ball and the ball straddles the left sideline. Just like you returning serve, all your partner can see is that the ball hits close to the line. Your partner cannot call it out because some of the ball overlaps the line; they cannot see the contact point. Your partner may be pretty sure it's out, but they are not certain because they cannot actually see where the ball and the court contact point is; it's hidden. So, because they don't see space between the ball and the line, your partner HAS to play it. You, however, may be able to see space and call it out because you have a better view than your partner does. But, if you don't see space, you cannot call it out either.

This means is that you and/or your partner may very well be playing actual 'out' balls from time to time. Neither of you see that space, so you must assume it is 'in' and have to play it. But, that is what giving the benefit of the doubt to your opponents is all about.

#### **51. Rule 6.D.8**

**Existing:** 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 the ball becomes dead.

**New:** All “out” calls must be made “promptly”; otherwise, the ball is presumed to still be in play. “Promptly” is defined as calling “out” prior to the ball being hit by the opponent or before the ball becomes dead.

**Reason:** The word “let” was removed due to let server replays being omitted this year

#### **52. Rule 6.D.10**

**Existing:** “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.

**New:** “Out” line calls should be promptly signaled by voice and/or hand signal (as described in Rule 13.E.2).

**Reason:** This change reflects that “out” calls should be made by voice and/or hand signals. Hand signals are helpful to players with impaired hearing as well as players who cannot verbalize “out” calls. **The accepted hand signals are:** 1) arm extended parallel to the court with palm down for “in” balls, 2) outstretched arm pointing in the direction of the out-of-bounds ball path for “out” calls.

### 53. Rule 6.D.13

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** After the completion of a rally, players may overrule a partner's line call, an officiating team's line call, or an opponent's "in" call to their own disadvantage.

**Reason:** This change reflects the new rule 13.D.1.c (which states players should call faults on themselves). The section concerning fault calls was removed which is now covered by 13.D.1.c. It expands the 2020 rule and states that a team may overrule an opponent's line call, an officiating team's line call (including a referee's line call who also is a member of the officiating team) and even their own partner's line call if it is to their team's disadvantage

**Scenario:** Player A hits a ball to Player B, and Player B does not see the ball land and does not make a call. Player B then appeals to the referee to make a call. The referee says that the ball landed "in". Player A then says the ball actually landed "out". Even though the referee made an "in" call ruling, Player A may still overrule the referee to their own disadvantage. Player B is awarded the rally. Note: Allowing a player to overrule a referee's call does not imply that the referee made a wrong call. It adds that a player may overrule a referee's call if it is to their own disadvantage.

## Section 7 – Fault Rules

### 54. Rule 7.B

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** Hitting the ball into the player's side of the net without the ball crossing over to the opponent's side. Note: The ball is dead and the fault occurs the moment the ball hits the ground.

**Reason:** This change notes the difference in the ball verses the play becoming dead. The scenarios below describe the reasons why the ball is not dead until it hits the ground as compared to the time when the ball hits the net.

**Scenario A:** Team A hits a hard shot and the ball hits the top of the net and spins on the top of the net for an abnormal amount of time. While the ball is spinning on the top of the net, a Team B player (who was attempting an Erne) crosses the plane of the net before the ball finally falls to the court on Team A's side of the net. This is a fault on the Team B player because he had crossed the plane of the net before the ball became dead when it hit the ground.

**Scenario B:** Team A hits a hard shot and the ball hits the top of the net and spins on the top of the net for an abnormal amount of time. While the ball is spinning on the top of the net, a Team B player shakes the net and causes the ball to fall to the ground on the hitter's side. This is a fault on the Team B player because he touched the net while the ball was still live. If the rule stated that the ball was dead when it hit the net (and subsequently does not cross over to the opponent's side) then the moment the ball touched the net it would be considered dead thereby allowing the opponent to shake or grab the net, which cannot be allowed.

### 55. Rule 7.G

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** A player, a player's apparel, or a player's paddle contacting the net system, the net posts, or the opponent's court, when the ball is in play.

**Reason:** This provides in writing the clarity that anything touching the opponent's court when the ball is in play results in a fault.

## 56. Rule 7.H

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** After the serve, the ball 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, as long as the player's hands are in contact with the paddle, the ball is still in play.

**Reason:** This change removes the possibility of a fault if the server had dropped the ball and it contacted either the server's body or the server's partner's body. This would have been a fault since the ball was live at the start of the score calling. It also reaffirms the concept of a player's hands being in contact with the paddle and hit below the wrist as still being a live ball.

**Scenario:** Player A hits the ball to Player B. Player B has their right-hand on the paddle grip and their left-hand loosely in contact with the top edge of the paddle. The ball hits Player B's left-hand on the fingers and goes back over the net. Player A then hits the ball into the net but claims that Player B had committed a fault by hitting the ball with their fingers. The referee rules that both of Player B's hands were in contact with the paddle and that the ball hitting the fingers was a legal application of rule 7.H. Player B wins the rally.

## 57. Rule 7.N.

**Existing:** A player deliberately carrying or catching the ball on the paddle while the ball is live/in-play.

**New:** After the serve, a player deliberately carrying or catching the ball on the paddle while the ball is live/in-play.

**Reason:** This change allows the server to "sling" the ball upward on the face of the paddle to begin the serve, rather than tossing the ball upward with their non-serving hand. **The Intent:** To allow players to have as little physical contact with the ball as possible related to the spread of certain diseases.

## **58. Rule 7.O.**

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

**New:** A hinder called by a player that is determined by the referee to be invalid.

**Reason:** This change removed the word “let” because let serve replays have been omitted. A serve hitting the net and landing in the proper receiving court area is still in play.

## Section 8 – Dead Ball Rules

### 59. Rules 8.B

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

**New:** A fault called by a referee or player, or a fault committed by a player, will result in a dead ball.

**Reason:** This change defines the actual timing of when a fault has occurred. The moment in time when a referee/player calls the fault may be slightly different than when the actual fault was committed. The ball is instantly dead the moment the fault occurs, regardless of when the referee/player may choose to verbalize the fault call. It reinforces in other sections that when a player commits a fault, the ball is immediately dead.

**Scenario:** Matthew volleys an Erne shot that hits Mark in the chest. As the ball is falling to the ground, Matthew touches the net. After the ball hits the ground, the referee calls a fault on Mark for being hit with the ball. Mark now claims that Matthew had committed a fault (by touching the net) before the ball became dead when the referee said “Fault”. The referee explains that the ball was instantly dead when it hit Mark, and that the referee’s verbalization of the word “fault” is not the determining factor on exactly when the ball was dead. The referee rules a fault on Mark and awards the rally to Matthew.

### 60. Rule 8.D

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** A ball in play that contacts a permanent object after it has bounced on the opponent’s court will result in a dead ball. The player who hit the ball shall win the rally.

**Reason:** This change, and the addition of the word “opponent’s” is in conjunction with the modification of rule 11.K and further clarifies which court is referenced when applying this rule.

### 61. Rule 8.E

**New:** Other than non-volley zone violations, faults may only be committed when the ball is live and in-play. The penalty for a fault may be enforced after a rally has ended (e.g., NVZ, incorrect player/position, etc) Note: Technical warnings or technical fouls can be called at any time during the match including when the ball is dead.



**Reason:** This addition puts in writing and clears up confusion about when faults occur compared to when they may be enforced. It specifically states that faults can only be committed (NVZ exceptions noted) when the ball is live. Once a fault occurs, the ball is immediately dead and no other faultable actions can be penalized (other than NVZ violations). An example is when a player goes for an Erne and hits the opponent with the ball, then steps onto the opponent's court. The stepping onto the opponent's court is **not** a fault because the ball was dead instantly when it hit the opponent; and the resulting stepping on the opponent's court is of no consequence specifically because the ball was instantly dead when it came in contact with the opponent. It also reinforces that when a referee has stopped play or called "Time", this constitutes a dead ball state of play and no faults (crossing the plane, touching the net, stepping onto opponent's court, serving early) can be committed or penalized; NVZ exception noted.

**Scenario A:** The referee calls the correct score and starts the 10-second count. The server changes service courts and the referee calls "Time" and instructs that players will be allowed to re-position and the score will be recalled. After the server changes courts and while the receiving team is repositioning, the server "serves the ball". The opponents claim that the server committed a fault by serving the ball before the referee had recalled the score. The referee informs that when "Time" was called, the ball was dead and a serving early fault cannot be committed when the ball is dead. The referee allows for everyone to get into position and recalls the score without assessing a penalty.

**Scenario B:** A team has been playing all day long without a referee. In the bronze medal match, they are assigned a referee. After a rally has ended, but before the referee starts to call the score, out of habit, the server serves the ball. The referee should not call a fault since the ball is "dead". The referee should remind the server to wait until the entire score has been called before serving the ball.

## Section 9 – Non-Volley Zone Rules

### 62. Rule 9.C.

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** During the act of volleying, it is a fault if the volleying player's momentum causes the player to contact anything that is touching the non-volley zone, including the player's partner.

**Reason:** This addition helps to clarify which player the rule is describing and also puts in writing that this rule applies only to volleys.

## Section 10 – Time-Out Rules

### 63. Rule 10.A.3

**Existing:** Time-outs may not be called once the referee has called the score and the server has begun the service motion.

**New:** If a team has any remaining time-outs, any player on that team may call a time-out before the next serve occurs.

**Reason:** To maintain the goal of making all timing issues having a consistent point-in-time with the serve of the ball. This gives 2 audible signals for the referee to make a determination; the verbal “time-out” call and the “pop” of the ball on the paddle. Also, this change is part of the multiple rule changes moving all timing issues to a consistent point in time; before the next serve occurs.

**Scenario:** The referee calls the score and is waiting for the server to serve. Just before the server hits the ball, the referee hears the initial “T” sound of the words “Time-out” called by the receiver. The server claims that the receiver had committed a fault by calling a time-out after the serve. The referee informs the server that she heard the “start” of the time-out call (the “T” sound) before she saw and heard the ball hit the paddle on the serve. The referee allows the time-out called by the receiver and follows procedures accordingly.

### 64. Rule 10.A.4

**Existing:** There is no penalty for calling a time-out when none is available if all other time-out rules are complied with.

**New:** Before the serve occurs, if a team calls a time-out while having no time-outs remaining, no penalty shall be called.

**Reason:** To maintain the goal of making all timing issues having a consistent point-in-time with the serve of the ball.

**Scenario A:** The receiving team is out of time-outs. After the score is called but before the serve occurs, the receiver calls, “Time-out”. The referee informs the receiving team that they have no more time-outs and says she will recall the score. The referee will not give a 15-second warning in this situation. **The Intent:** To not punish a team who forgets how many remaining time-outs they have (as long as they don’t repeatedly call time-outs) but also to not allow “extra” time before play is restarted. This is the reason the referee should “quickly” get play started as soon as possible.

**Scenario B:** Team A is out of time-outs and is receiving serve. The incorrect receiver is setup to receive the serve. The referee calls the (correct) score and the server starts

their service motion. **Before** the serve occurs, the receiver yells, “Time-out”. While the referee is informing Team A that they have no time-outs remaining, Team A changes to the correct receiver. Team B then complains to the referee that since Team A had no time-outs remaining, this “pause” gave them time to reposition unfairly. The referee should **NOT** call a fault on Team A. **Note:** Players may ask position questions before the serve without an associated penalty (unless it gets excessive). Players are also not penalized for calling a time-out when they have none remaining. In this scenario, Team A might have realized they were in the wrong position and not have remembered that they were 1) out of time-outs, or 2) could have asked the referee about their correct position. Neither of these 2 actions are faultable. So, in effect, calling a time-out (when none were available) could have been accomplished by asking for the correct position. Since both of these actions are not faultable, the referee should not call a fault in this scenario.

### 65. Rule 10.B.3.c

**Existing:** A player may be granted only one medical time-out per match.

**New:** A player may be granted only one player-requested medical time-out per match.

**Reason:** Rule 10.H.2.a allows the referee to request a medical staff assessment to determine a player's ability to continue playing if, in the interest of player safety, the referee determines a potential medical condition exists. This change clarifies that medical staff may grant a referee-generated medical timeout, even if a player-requested medical timeout is granted earlier (or later) in the match for either the same or a different reason. **The Intent:** This rule gives the referees the ability to call for a medical assessment – without penalty to the players.

**Scenario:** A player has already called a medical timeout for a turned ankle in the first game. In the third game, the referee sees that the player is laboring and worried that they may have the beginning signs of heat stroke. When asked, the player said “No, they are ok”. The referee thinks the safe thing is to call for medical to make sure the player is ok to continue. The medical staff hydrates them and after 7 minutes says they are good to go. By any definition, the medical staff rendered medical attention. In this situation, the referee-generated medical time-out has no bearing on the match and no retirement should be imposed. Also, there is no question a Tournament Director appeal will result if the referee is forced to call for a retirement because the player has every right to say, “Hey, I didn’t ask for the medical time out; I was forced to take it by the referee.” That is counter to what this rule was designed to accomplish; give the referees the ability to call for a medical assessment – without penalty to the players – if the referee has reason to question the safety condition of a player.

## 66. Rule 10.C

**Existing: 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.

**New: Continuous Play:** Play should be continuous, although players are permitted to quickly take a drink or towel off in between rallies 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.

**Reason:** This change is to further remove any hold-over effect of the 2019 Hydration Breaks and to allow a normal amount of time in between rallies for quick drinks and to towel off. This also completely removes any form of the word hydrate from the rulebook.

**The Intent:** For the referee to allow quick breaks that do not impact the flow of the game. It is within the referee's control to get the players back to playing in a timely manner.

**Scenario A:** In a men's doubles match, a player asks for a quick drink. The referee allows the quick break. When the referee determined the break should be completed, the referee says, "Let's play gentlemen." The players return to play and the game proceeds normally.

**Scenario B:** Same as Scenario A above, except that after the referee says, "Let's play gentlemen", the players do not make their way back to the court. The referee loudly calls the score and starts the 10-second count. The players rush back to the court to continue on with the game.

## 67. Rule 10.E.1

**New:** In between games of a match, players may take one or both of their upcoming game's timeouts. The players must inform the referee, or their opponents if there is no referee. If a team returns to play before one (or both) requested time-outs have started, the team retains the time-out(s) for the upcoming game. The normal two minutes in between games will be used before any team-allotted timeouts. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to continue play.

**Reason:** This rule will allow players who, for whatever reason, need to take the timeout(s) without having to be on or near the court. This most often occurs when one or both players need a bathroom break in between games. The players must inform the referee or their opponents of their intent to take timeouts before they leave the court

area. If one or more players are not back in time, then the provisions of Rule 10.A.5 apply.

**Scenario A:** After game 1, Team A informs the referee that they may need to take one, or possibly both, of their upcoming time-outs if they are not back before the 2-minute break has completed. The referee informs the opponents that Team A is using one, or possibly both, of their time-outs after the 2-minute break. After the 2-minute game break is completed, the referee informs Team B that she is now starting the 1-minute time-out procedure and notes this on the scoresheet. After the 2-minute game break has completed, the referee starts the timer for Team A's first time-out. Team A returns after 20 seconds has been used for their first time-out. The referee informs all players that Team A now has 1 time-out remaining for the upcoming game. The referee says, "Game 2, Time-in" and calls the score to start the game.

**Scenario B:** Same as scenario A, except that Team A does NOT return after both time-out times have expired. Without Team A having returned to the court, the referee calls, "Game 2, Time-in" and calls the score. Team B is the serving team and before the 10-seconds has elapsed, they serve to an empty receiving court and the referee calls "Point". This continues until Team A returns to the court to continue play.

**Scenario C:** Same as Scenario B except that Team A is the serving team and does not return after both time-outs have expired. The referee calls "Game 2, Time-in" and calls the score. When the 10-second count expires, the referee calls "Side out" and Team B will now serve to start the rally.

## 68. Rule 10.H.1

**Existing: 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.

**New: Before A Match or Between Games:** Neither medical nor regular time-outs may be taken before a match starts. A match cannot begin until all players are present and the starting score is called. 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 reasserts that a match may not start until all players are present and it further clarifies that neither medical nor regular time-outs may be taken before the match starts.

**Scenario:** During the warm-up time, a Team A player says his partner is "detained" and that they may need to take a time-out before the match starts. The referee says she cannot grant this request and they need to follow the rules on time limits when starting a match and that all players must be present to start the match. The Team A player goes

and gets the previously detained partner and everyone is there on time to start the match. The referee starts game one by calling, "Game one, time-in, 0-0-2" During the middle of the score calling, a Team A player calls for a time-out and the referee grants the time-out accordingly. The partner is still not back when the referee calls, "Time-in, 0-0-2" and again, during the middle of the score calling, the Team A player calls for their 2<sup>nd</sup> time-out. The referee grants the 2<sup>nd</sup> time-out accordingly.

## Section 11 – Other Rules

### 69. Rule 11.A

**Existing: *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.

**New: *Double Hits*.** Balls can be hit twice, but this must occur during an unintentional, continuous, single-direction stroke, by one player. After the serve, 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 change specifies that double hit faults shall only be called after the serve occurs. Since the ball is live at the start of the score call, this change allows for normal bouncing of the ball on the paddle without an associated fault.

### 70. Rule 11.E

**Existing: *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 play, if the players do not agree, the rally stands as played.

**New: *Broken or Cracked Ball*.** If a referee is present, players may appeal to the referee before the serve occurs to determine if a ball is broken or cracked. If the appeal is before the serve occurs, the referee will call “Time”, inspect the ball, and either replace it or return it into play. The referee will recall the score. In non-officiated matches, players may replace a cracked ball before the serve occurs. If any player suspects the ball is or becomes cracked after the serve, play must continue until the end of the rally. 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 play, if the players do not agree that a cracked ball impacted the outcome of the rally, the rally stands as played.

**Reason:** This change further explains what procedures are available if a ball is suspected of being cracked or broken. It outlines the steps to take in both officiated and non-officiated matches. It also maintains the goal of a consistent point-in-time when an action is allowed which is the serve of the ball. This rule also states what will happen if an appeal happens after the serve has happened.



**Scenario A:** After the referee calls the score, the serving team looks at the ball inspecting for cracks. While still looking at the ball, the 10-second count expires and the referee calls a fault on the server.

**Scenario B:** Same as scenario A, but just before the 10-second count expires the server says, “Hey ref, I think this ball is cracked.” The receiving team claims that the 10-second count had expired and that the server had faulted. The referee informs the receiving team that the serving team had started their appeal (by saying, “**Hey**”) before the count had expired. The referee either: A) sees the ball is cracked, replaces it, and recalls the score, or B) determines the ball is not cracked and gives it to the serving team and recalls the score.

## 71. Rule 11.I

**Existing: *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, the opponent’s court, or the opponent while the ball is still in play.

**New: *Plane of the Net.*** Crossing the plane of the net prior to striking the ball is a fault. After legally striking the ball, a player or anything the player is/was wearing or carrying may cross the plane of the net. The player may not touch any part of the net system or the opponent’s court, or the opponent while the ball is still in play.

**Reason:** This change clearly states that a violation of this rule is a fault. It further clarifies that touching the opponent’s court, the net system, or the opponent is a fault only if the ball is still live and in play. While there is much debate over a player having an opportunity to “finish their shot” after they have crossed the plane, the opponents still maintain a “Right of Way” to be anywhere on their side of the net at all times. While a player is allowed to cross the plane under certain conditions, the player crossing the plane does not have more “right” to the opponent’s court space (and associated air space) than their opponent has.

**Scenario A:** Player A runs towards the end of the net and hits a legal around-the-post (ATP) shot. His momentum then takes him past the plane of the net (legally) in the out-of-bounds area. He does not touch the opponent, opponent’s court or the net system at any time. As he is hurrying to get back to his side of the net, the opponent hits the ball towards him. The ball crosses the plane of the net heading towards Player A. Player A, who’s body has *\*almost\** completely crossed back to his side of the net, then volleys the ball and does not touch his NVZ. At the moment Player A contacts the ball, his foot was still across the plane of the net on the opponent’s side of the court. The referee calls a crossing the plane fault because part of the hitter’s body was beyond the net plane when he hit the ball. Note: While the player had legally crossed the plane on the **prior**

shot, in executing the **current** shot, part of the player's body was **still** across the plane of the net when contact was made.

**Scenario B:** Player A crosses the plane legally after an ATP shot. The player seems to "take their time" in getting back to his side of the net. The referee should **NOT** call a fault due to the abnormal amount of time the player took in getting back to his side as there is no written guideline to do so. If Player A caused a distraction to the opponent while on their side of the net, then the referee should call a fault immediately.

## 72. Rule 11.I.1

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** 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 cross the plane of the net (over, under or around the net post) to hit the ball. It is a fault if the receiving player (or anything the receiving player is wearing or carrying) crosses the plane of the net before the ball has first crossed back over the plane of the net to the opponent's side. It is a fault if the player touches the net system, the opponent's court, or the opponent while the ball is still in play.

**Reason:** To firmly reinforce that the ball **MUST** travel back across the plane of the net before a player is allowed to cross the plane to contact the ball. It also removed the word "reach" and replaced it with "cross" to more accurately align with 11.I.

**Scenario:** Player A hits a ball with backspin to Player B. The ball bounces in Player B's court and then travels back across the plane of the net to the side of Player A. Player B then legally crosses the plane of the net to hit a winning shot, but before the ball becomes dead, Player B contacts Player A (who is standing on their own side of the net) with his paddle. A fault shall be called on player B. **Note:** While a player is allowed to cross the plane of the net under certain circumstances, this "allowed crossing" must still follow other rules. In this scenario, while the player did cross the plane legally, they cannot contact the opponent/opponent's court/net system in doing so.

### 73. Rule 11.K.

**Existing:** *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 will be declared.

**New:** *The Net Posts.* The net posts (including connected wheels, arms, or other support construction) are positioned out of bounds. It is a fault if a player contacts the net post while the ball is in play.

**Reason:** This change is in conjunction with the modification of rule 8.D. and removes any ambiguity concerning a ball that hits the net post (or support structure) after it has bounced in the opponent's court. In Rule 8.D., the hitting player has not committed a fault but rather has won the rally.

### 74. Rule 11.L.4

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** If a player hits the ball over the net into the opponent's court, and then the ball bounces back over the net and bounces a second time without being touched by the opponent, the striking player wins the rally.

**Reason:** This solidifies that the ball must bounce twice and become dead for the rally to have ended.

### 75. Rule 11.L.5.a

**Existing:** If the ball hits the horizontal bar or the center base before going over the net, it is a fault.

**New:** Before going over the net, if the ball hits the horizontal bar or the center base, it is a fault.

**Reason:** This small change in the order of the sentence clarifies that the ball does not have to eventually go over the net for a fault to be called.

#### **76. Rule 11.L.5.b**

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** Except 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, a replay will be called. Other than on the serve, if the ball goes over the net and bounces on the court and then performs any of the 3 above listed actions, a replay shall occur.

**Reason:** To clarify that this rule applies to balls that have bounced on the court as well as balls that have only crossed over the net.

#### **77. Rule 11.N.**

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

**New: *One Paddle.*** A player shall not use or carry more than one paddle during a rally. A violation of this rule is a fault.

**Reason:** To clarify specifically that during a rally, a player can only have one paddle for use. It further clarifies that any violation of this rule is a fault; as with all other violations of Section 11 rules.

#### **78. Rule 11.O**

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

**New: *Paddle Possession.*** A player must have possession of the paddle when it makes contact with the ball. A violation of this rule is a fault.

**Reason:** This change was made to be consistent with all other Section 11 rules and specifically stipulating that a fault shall be applied if the rule is violated.

## Section 13 – Tournament Management and Officiating

### 79. Rule 13.A.1

**Existing:** Unless otherwise stated in the rules, officiating decisions may be appealed to the Tournament Director. After appeal, decisions of the Tournament Director are final.

**New:** A player may appeal any officiating decision to the Tournament Director or their designee. The Tournament Director, however, retains the final decision-making authority while following the applicable rule in the Official Rulebook.

**Reason:** To remove confusion and debate about which officiating decisions a player has the right to appeal. **ANY** officiating decision or ruling may be appealed to the Tournament Director or their designee. Players should always have a recourse when there is a dispute between a player and referee.

### 80. Rule 13.B

**Existing: Rules Briefing.** Before the tournament, all officials and players shall be briefed or supplied with the current rules about court hindrances. This briefing should be put in writing when possible. The current USA PICKLEBALL/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 USA PICKLEBALL/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 USA PICKLEBALL/IFP.

**New: Tournament Briefing.** Before the tournament, the Tournament Director shall brief players and referees on any unique features, abnormal local conditions, or hazards associated with the courts. The briefings may include but are not limited to court distances that are not uniform (such as the distance from end line to back fence or barrier), low ceilings, existence of overhangs, court repairs, or damage that could affect the play of the ball. If possible, the players should be notified in writing as part of the pre-tournament instructions. The referees shall be briefed upon arrival at the venue by the Tournament Director or their designee.

**Reason:** To provide better guidance on what players may expect concerning the specifics of a tournament.

### 81. Rule 13.B.1

**New:** The Tournament Director may not implement or impose any rule that is not provided in the USA Pickleball/IFP Rulebook. If the Tournament Director desires an exception to any rule because of physical limitations of the court or local conditions, the USA Pickleball Director of Officiating must grant permission before the tournament.

**Reason:** To give a clear point of contact within the USA Pickleball in case such exception approvals are needed.

### 82. Rule 13.C

**Existing:** The referee is responsible for all decisions related to procedural and judgment calls during the match.

**New: *Referee's Duties.*** The referee is responsible for all decisions related to procedural and judgment calls during the match. Players may appeal any decision of the referee to the Tournament Director or their designee.

**Reason:** This change is in conjunction with the clarifying change in rule 13.A.1 that states a player may appeal any referee decision to the TD or their designee. It also ends debate over which referee rulings or decisions may be appealed to the tournament director or the TD's designee

### 83. Rule 13.C.2.

**Existing:** 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."

**New:** 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. If the referee cannot make the line call, the player's or line judge's call will remain. If doubles partners appeal a line call that they disagree on and the referee cannot make the call, the ball will be declared "in." Note: A player may choose to overrule a line call to their disadvantage. (See Rule 6.D.13)

**Reason:** This small change reflects and coincides with the changes to 6.D.13 and 13.F.1 and reinforces that a player may overrule any line call to their own disadvantage.

It removes and replaces the word “stand(s)” to negate the concept that a referee’s call is final and cannot be overturned.

#### **84. Rule 13.C.4.b**

**Existing:** Before each match begins, the referee must meet with players at courtside to: Point out court hindrances and other approved rule modifications.

**New:** Before each match begins, the referee must meet with players courtside to point out approved rule modifications, court abnormalities and non-standard court conditions that could be potential safety issues, including but not limited to court repairs or seams, different distances from end lines to back fences, and spectators and their seating.

**Reason:** Better clarity for what the referee should notate to players with respect to non-standard court conditions.

#### **85. Rule 13.C.5.h**

**Existing: Maintain player conduct.** In USA PICKLEBALL/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.

**New:** Maintain player conduct. In USA PICKLEBALL/IFP tournaments, the referee is empowered to call technical warnings, technical fouls, and to forfeit a game or match based on a defined combination of technical warnings and/or technical fouls. The referee may also recommend an ejection to the Tournament Director.

**Reason:** To make this rule consistent with the newly added penalty of a game forfeit and explain that the referee may recommend an ejection to the Tournament Director.

#### **86. Rule 13.D.1.c**

**New:** In the spirit of good sportsmanship, players are expected to call faults on themselves as soon as the fault is committed or detected. The fault call must happen before the next serve occurs. For non-officiated matches, if a player believes the opponent(s) have committed a fault, they may mention the specific fault to the player(s), but have no authority to enforce them. The final decision on fault resolution belongs to

the player that allegedly committed the fault. The exception to which player has enforcement authority is provided in Rule 13.D.1.b.

**Reason:** This addition puts in writing the answer to the question of what faults a player can claim the opponent(s) committed. It gives clear guidance as to the options available and the associated resolutions as well. The player who allegedly committed the fault shall have the final decision to either let the rally stand or call the fault on their team. These types of calls are very similar to line calls where players make calls on their side of the net and replays are not used to resolve differences. It also clarifies that it is a player's responsibility to call (actual committed) faults on themselves either during or after a rally.

**Scenario A:** Team A serves at 4-6-1 wins the rally. The referee calls the score (5-6-1) to start the next rally. Before the serve occurs, the server's partner tells the referee that the ball hit his arm during the last rally. The referee removes the last point scored, applies the fault, and calls the score "4-6-2".

**Scenario B:** In the tie-breaker game to 15 of a gold medal match, the winning bracket team is serving at 14-13-2. The incorrect receiver returns the serve, and the referee calls "Point, game, match". The winning team says they "don't want to win that way" and asks for a replay. The referee informs them that he cannot grant a replay under these conditions. The serving team then claims that they committed a service foot fault before the incorrect receiver returned the ball and says their basis for doing so is rule 13.D.1.c. The referee says they did not commit a service foot fault and furthermore reminds them that they can only call faults on themselves when an actual fault had been committed; not because "they don't want to win that way." The referee confirms that the match has concluded with a score of 15-13.

## **87. Rule 13.D.3.b**

**Existing:** 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.)

**New:** Except for center service line calls, player's line calls are not valid in matches with line judges, except to overrule a 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:** To remove the conflict between rules 13.D.3.a and the first sentence in 13.D.3.b. It also removed the wording relating to overruling a "line judge's call" to better reflect the expanded change to 6.D.13 which now allows a player to overrule a referee's



call if it is to their own team's disadvantage. Referees shall accept dissenting calls from players to their own detriment.

#### **88. Rule 13.D.3.c**

**Existing:** 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".

**New:** If the line judge(s) and referee cannot make a line call, the rally shall be replayed.

**Reason:** This change removed the option for all players to agree that the ball was "out". The 2 reasons for the removal are 1) Agreeing that the ball was "out" shows a bias against the hitting team, and 2) Having the option for all players to agree to a replay opens the door for "bullying" from the team that lost the rally. If the officiating team "did not do their job", the only fair option is for a replay.

#### **89. Rule 13.E.1**

**Existing:** It is recommended that line judges be assigned to medal matches. The Tournament Director or designated representative will select line judges.

**New:** The Tournament Director shall determine which medal matches will use line judges. Line judges are recommended, but not required.

**Reason:** To provide clarity that line judges are the sole discretion of the Tournament Director and to reinforce that they are recommended, but not a requirement.

#### **90. Rule 13.E.2**

**Existing:** 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:

**New:** Line judges will make the assigned line and foot fault calls within their jurisdiction and will signify by loudly calling "out" (or "service foot fault") and showing the "out" signal (outstretched arm pointing in the out-of-bounds direction).

**Reason:** To extend and clarify the line calling duties of line judges. This expansion puts in writing that line judges shall call service foot faults as well as line calls.

### 91. Rule 13.E.3

**New:** If a line judge shows the “blocked/blinded” signal, (both hands covering the eyes) the referee can make the call immediately if they clearly saw the ball land. If the referee cannot make the call, the referee shall canvass the remaining officiating team to assist in making the call.

**Reason:** After a rally has completed, if a line judge shows the blocked signal, this allows the referee to either make a clear call, or immediately canvas the remaining members of the officiating team to assist with making the call. This removes the need for a player to first make an appeal to the referee before the referee seeks the assistance of the remaining line judges. The referee does not need an appeal from a player in order for the officiating team to perform their job of making a line call.

### 92. Rule 13.E.4

**New:** If a referee overrules a line judge’s “out” call as “in”, a replay will occur.

**Reason:** This was moved from the referee handbook and converted to a written rule. If the officiating team has made an error, the rally will be replayed. When a line judge makes an “out” call, players naturally “stop play”. If a player was set to return the ball, but “stopped” when they heard the “out” call, then there is the possibility that the player might have returned the ball successfully. When a referee (eventually) overrules the call to “in”, this unfairly penalizes the receiving team player who might have returned the ball if the “out” call had not been made. The fair option is call for a replay since the officiating team made conflicting calls.

**Scenario:** In a match with line judges, a ball is hit close to the sideline where Player B2 is standing. Player B2 readies his return, but after the ball bounces, the line judge immediately says “out”. Team A appeals the call and the referee, and the referee says that the ball was in fact “in”. The referee calls for a replay because B2 was ready to return the ball but stopped when he heard the “out” call.

### 93. Rule 13.E.5

**New:** If a player disagrees with a line judge’s “out” call that benefited their team, the player may overrule the “out” call as “in” per rule 6.D.13. A replay will occur.

**Reason:** This rule is similar to rule 13.E.4 and follows the same replay guidelines if a benefitting team overrules a line judge’s out call as in.

#### 94. Rule 13.F.1

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** In a match without line judges, if a player appeals a line call to the referee, the referee shall make a call if they clearly saw the ball land "in" or "out". If the referee is unable to make the call, the original call will remain. If no call was made, the ball will be considered "in".

**Reason:** To remove the debate or confusion between the two appeal rules 13.F.1 and 13.D.3.b. Specifically, 13.F.1 covers matches without line judges and 13.D.3.b covers matches that use line judges. Furthermore, the rule was changed slightly to coincide with the changes to 6.D.13 and 13.C.2 to reflect that a player may overrule the call made by a referee if it is to their own disadvantage. Also, the phrase ", , *unless one player requests and all players agree to a replay.*" has been removed. Deleting this phrase removes the opportunity for a "bullying" player to pressure other players into agreeing to a replay.

#### 95. Rule 13.G.1.

**Existing:** Technical Warnings. The referee is empowered to call technical warnings. Actions or behavior that shall result in a technical warning:

**New:** Verbal Warning and Technical Warnings. The referee is empowered to issue a single verbal warning for profanity or call technical warnings. A verbal warning may be issued for a potential profanity violation. Actions or behavior that may result in a technical warning:

**Reason:** This addition of a verbal warning is to give referees some flexibility in issuing a warning for profanity. Each referee has a different threshold for profanity and because of this wide range of thresholds, which players do not and cannot know, the addition of a verbal warning (issued to all players) is instituted when a potential technical warning violation has been reached.

**Scenario:** The referee notices that the players are starting to use profanity. Since each referee's threshold for profanity is different, the referee says, "Verbal Warning to all players for profanity." This puts the players on notice that a penalty for profanity is about to be breached. During the next rally, Team A utters a profanity. The referee issues a technical warning for profanity to Team A.

#### **96. Rule 13.G.1.a**

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

**New:** 13.G.1.a: Objectionable language directed at another person.

**Reason:** Removal of the word demeaning because any demeaning word(s) would also be objectionable. This wording also correlates to the same phrasing used for the Technical Foul section.

#### **97. Rule 13.G.1.b**

**Existing:** Excessive profanity used for any reason. The referee will determine the severity of any violation.

**New:** Profanity (audible or visible) used for any reason. The referee will determine the severity of any violation.

**Reason:** To add that visible gestures can also be applied when it comes to profanity.

#### **98. Rule 13.G.1.c**

**Existing:** Excessive arguing.

**New:** Arguing aggressively with the officiating team, other players or spectators in a way that disrupts the flow of play.

**Reason:** To expand the description of the original excessive arguing rule. This can include excessive questioning the referee on the rules.

#### **99. Rule 13.G.1.d**

**Existing:** Purposely breaking the ball or striking the ball between rallies.

**New:** Ball abuse (aggressively or purposely breaking or stepping on the ball) or striking the ball between rallies.

**Reason:** To expand the description of the original "ball abuse" rule.

#### **100. Rule 13.G.1.e**

**Existing:** Delay of game, either in the form of taking too much time during time-outs or between rallies or games.

**New:** Taking time between rallies in a way that disrupts the flow of play.

**Reason:** Taking too much time during time-outs should be remedied by the referee merely calling the score, so a delay of game technical warning for that reason is not valid. In between rallies however is different. If the receiver has the ball and is taking too much time retrieving it and/or returning it to the server, the referee cannot call the score and, obviously, the server cannot serve. A delay of game technical warning may be appropriate in those cases and should be strongly considered if a player or team is repeatedly taking time between rallies that disrupts the flow of play.

#### **101. Rule 13.G.1.f**

**Existing:** Excessive or unnecessary appeals.

**New:** Repeatedly appealing line calls such that the flow of play is disrupted.

**Reason:** Wording was added to reflect the “disrupts the flow of play” concept.

#### **102. Rule 13.G.1.i**

**New:** Actions that are considered minor unsportsmanlike behavior, including but not limited to making repeated questionable ‘out’ calls that, upon appeal, are reversed (overruled) by the referee.

**Reason:** This addition offers the referee some flexibility on player actions that involve several different factors on which to consider applying the technical warning. **Note:** It allows for “minor” paddle toss/throw actions to be penalized as Technical Warnings when, in the judgment of the referee, the player’s actions do not warrant the higher Technical Foul penalty.

**Scenario:** After a player loses game 1 by hitting the ball into the net on an overhead smash, the player “tosses/throws/flips/flicks” his paddle that lands on the ground at the base of the spectator fence. The referee sees the action happen and takes into account many factors (no spectators near the fence, the distance the paddle traveled, the direction angle of the throw, the player being aware of where they were throwing the paddle, etc) The referee issues a Technical Warning for minor unsportsmanlike behavior and notes the score sheet accordingly.

### 103. Rule 13.G.1.j

**New:** Except during time-outs and in-between games, receiving coaching from anyone other than a partner.

**Reason:** This change moved the rule in Section 11 into the proper Technical Warning section as it pertains to coaching. It was the only rule in Section 11 that had a penalty of a Technical Warning and is now in the proper section. The definition of coaching is found in rule 3.A.2.

### 104. Rule 13.G.2

**Existing:** 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):

**New: Technical Fouls.** The referee is empowered to call technical fouls. When a technical foul is called, one point shall be removed from the score of the offending team unless their score is zero, in which case, a point shall be added to the score of the opposing side. Actions or behavior that shall result in a technical foul (without a technical warning being issued beforehand):

**Reason:** In most cases, this will prevent the loss of a game or match on the final point due to a technical foul.

**Scenario:** In the third game of a match, Team A scores their 6<sup>th</sup> point and the end change procedures begin. Team A then commits a technical foul. The referee charges Team A with a technical foul and informs everyone that Team A now has 5 points. The referee continues on with the end change as normal. Team A realizes that with having a score of 5, they will need to serve from the proper position. Note: Since Team A scored their 6<sup>th</sup> point BEFORE they committed the technical foul, the end change should happen as normal and not be “reversed” because Team A, now, only has 5 points.

### 105. Rule 13.G.2.a

**Existing:** Intentionally throwing a paddle.

**New:** Aggressively or recklessly throwing a paddle in anger or frustration with negligent disregard of the consequences and does not strike a person or damage property.

**Reason:** This added description designates the level of penalty for throwing a paddle. There are more levels associated with this action as listed later. It also includes more descriptive wording to better help referees determine if a technical foul should be called.

#### **106. Rule 13.G.2.b**

**Existing:** A player using extremely objectionable or demeaning language directed at another person or extremely excessive profanity.

**New:** A player using extremely objectionable language, or profanity, regardless of to whom or what it is directed.

**Reason:** This change is to convey the notion that behavior which is deliberate and/or directed at someone is separate from and treated differently than spontaneous and/or undirected behavior.

#### **107. Rule 13.G.2.c**

**New:** Making a threat or challenges of any nature toward or against any person.

**Reason:** This rule better defines what type behavior will result in a technical foul.

#### **108. Rule 13.G.2.g**

**New:** Deliberately throwing or hitting a ball that is not in play with negligent disregard of the consequences which inadvertently hits a person.

**Reason:** This rule provides visibility to the penalty associated with hitting a ball that inadvertently hits a person.

#### **109. Rule 13.G.3.c**

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** If a referee issues a technical foul, one point shall be removed from the score of the offending team unless their score is zero, in which case a point shall be added to the score of the opposing side. After the point is removed or awarded, the player or team losing or awarded the point must move on their own to the correct position(s) that reflects their score.

**Reason:** This change was made to minimize the chance a team would win a match on a point awarded for a technical foul.

#### **110. Rule 13.H.1**

**New:** The referee will impose a game forfeit when either of the following occurs:

**Reason:** This new addition of a Game Forfeit precluding a Match Forfeit is part of the progressive penalty revision for 2021. The new rule references existing Rules (13.H.1.a and 13.H.1.b) which are guidelines on how to apply technical warnings and technical fouls. **The Intent:** *“3 Strikes” is a Game Forfeit. “4 Strikes” is a Match Forfeit.*

**Scenario A:** In game 2 of a match, Team A is penalized a technical warning for profanity. Later in the same game, Team A is penalized a technical foul for aggressively and recklessly throwing a paddle. The referee declares that Team A has now forfeited game 2 based on Rule 13.H.1.a.

**Scenario B:** Team A loses game 1 with a score of 11-5. During game 2 with Team A leading 8-5, Team A commits a technical warning and later an additional (full) technical foul (same as in Scenario A). (**“3 strikes and the game is over”**) The referee declares that Team A has now forfeited game 2. Coupled with losing game 1 as well, the referee declares, “Point, game, match”. Note: Team A lost the match based on the fact that they lost game 1 and lost game 2 due to a forfeit. This is NOT the same as losing the match based solely on a forfeiture. The scoring guidelines of “11-0, 11-0” are assessed on a match forfeit. In this scenario, the final game scores would be reported at “11-5, 11-0”.

#### **111. Rule 13.H.1.c**

**New:** For match formats either 1 to 15 or 1 to 21, a game forfeit is equivalent to a match forfeit.

**Reason:** This rule puts in writing that losing a single game to 15 or 21 is considered the same as losing a 2-out-of-3 match with respect to game forfeits vs. match forfeits.



## 112. Rule 13.H.2

**Existing:** 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.

**New:** If the match is a two-out-of-three game format, a referee may impose a game forfeit when a player fails to report to play 10 minutes after the match has been called to play. A match forfeit will be imposed when a player fails to report to play 15 minutes after the match has been called to play. If the match is a 1 to 15 or 1 to 21 format game, the match forfeit occurs when the 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.

**Reason:** This is consistent with the progressive penalty system; a game forfeit before match forfeit. Note: If game 1 is a forfeit, when/if all players arrive for game 2, the "1/2" choice shall occur as normal.

## 113. Rule 13.I.1.a

**New:** The combined issuance of two technical warnings and a technical foul listed in Rule 13.G.2.

**Reason:** This stipulates that at any point in the match when 2 technical warnings and a technical foul have been assessed, the match will be declared a forfeit.

**Scenario:** Team A is penalized a Technical Warning in game 1 for profanity. During game 2, Team A is penalized a 2<sup>nd</sup> Technical Warning for profanity and a point is deducted from their score. Team A is now receiving and does not adjust their receiving player according to their new score, consequently the incorrect receiver returns the serve and the referee calls a fault for illegal receiver. The Team A illegal receiver then throws their paddle aggressively into the net. The referee calls a match forfeit for the combined 2 Technical Warnings plus the "full blown" Technical Foul. (**"4 strikes and the match is over"**)

## 114. Rule 13.I.1.b

**New:** After one technical foul has been assessed in accordance with Rule 13.G.2 or Rule 13.G.3.c and the subsequent issuance of a second technical foul for any reason.

**Reason:** This stipulates that at any point in the match when 2 technical fouls have been assessed, the match will be declared a forfeit.

### 115. Rule 13.I.2

**New:** Behavior that shall result in a match forfeit that is not due to a combination of Technical Warnings or Technical Fouls:

**Reason:** Better clarity of what behaviors shall result in a match forfeit.

### 116. Rule 13.I.2.a

**New:** Making deliberately aggressive physical contact with an opponent, official, or spectator.

**Reason:** Better clarity of what behaviors shall result in a match forfeit.

### 117. Rule 13.I.2.b

**New:** Aggressively or recklessly striking or throwing a ball or paddle out of frustration or anger that endangers any individual or personal property.

**Reason:** Better clarity of what behaviors shall result in a match forfeit.

### 118. Rule 13.J

**Existing: 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)

**New: Rules Interpretations.** If a player disagrees with a referee's ruling or decision, that player may challenge the referee's decision by asking for the Head Referee, Tournament Director, or the Tournament Director's designee. If the referee's ruling is determined to be 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) When the referee's ruling is incorrect, the ruling will be reversed and, if applicable, the rally will be replayed.

**Reason:** This change puts in writing what the referee should do if the Tournament Director overrules the ruling of the referee.

## 119. Rule 13.K

**Existing: *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.

**New: *Removal of a Line Judge.*** The referee may remove a line judge for any reasonable cause, based on either the referee's own observation or that of the players. If the referee decides to replace a line judge based on their own observation, the referee's decision is final. The players may also petition the referee to remove a line judge, providing all players agree. If the referee does not agree, the referee must consult with the Tournament Director for a final decision. If a line judge is removed, the Tournament Director will appoint a replacement.

**Reason:** This change grants the referee of the match the authority to replace a line judge on their own accord. It also provides a level of protection from players who may want a line judge removed with a weak or no foundational reason.

## 120. Rule 13.K.1

**New: *Removal of a Referee.*** If all players agree, they may petition the Tournament Director for a referee removal. The Tournament Director retains the final discretionary authority on the removal of a Referee. If a Referee is removed, the Tournament Director will appoint a replacement.

**Reason:** This new rule separates the guidelines for the removal of a line judge as compared to the removal of a referee.

## 121. Rule 13.M

**New:** The Tournament Director may eject a player from the tournament for flagrant and particularly injurious behavior that, in the opinion of the Tournament Director, impacts the success of the tournament. An ejection can occur due to actions any time the player is at the tournament venue and may include, but is not limited to:

Note: In addition to an ejection, the Tournament Director also has the option to expel the player from the tournament venue.

#### **122. Rule 13.M.1.**

**New:** Using ethnic, religious, racial, sexist or homophobic slurs.

**Reason:** To provide Tournament Directors (**not referees**) with a remedy for behaviors detrimental to the success of the tournament.

#### **123. Rule 13.M.2.**

**New:** Injury to a player, official, or spectator through an act of paddle or ball abuse.

**Reason:** To provide Tournament Directors (**not referees**) with a remedy for behaviors detrimental to the success of the tournament.

#### **124. Rule 13.M.3.**

**New:** Spitting or coughing on a person.

**Reason:** To provide Tournament Directors (**not referees**) with a remedy for behaviors detrimental to the success of the tournament.

#### **125. Rule 13.M.4**

**New:** Not exhibiting 'best effort'. This includes but is not limited to, defaulting, forfeiting, or not giving best efforts in matches, whether for their own benefit or otherwise.

**Reason:** To provide Tournament Directors (**not referees**) with a remedy for behaviors detrimental to the success of the tournament.

2/5/21 dss

## Special Notes

The following is a list of pertinent rules that were removed from the 2020 rulebook:

3.A.38. Service Motion.

4.A.2. Service motion begins, , ,.

4.A.4. Ball struck before bouncing, , ,

4.M.9. Server begins service motion, , ,

4.M.12. Serving team asks to confirm score, , ,

4.N.4. Receiving team asks to confirm score, , ,

4.O. Service Lets removed, , ,

7.M. Serve is made by bouncing, , , ,

11.J.1. Distraction appeal after rally completion, , ,

11.J.2. Doubles play, team communication, , ,