

**NATIONAL PADDLEBALL ASSOCIATION**  
***FOUR-WALL / INDOOR PADDLEBALL***  
**OFFICIAL FOUR WALL RULES**

REVISED September 2018 PAGES 1-10: FOUR-WALL RULES PAGES 11-13: POLICIES, RECOMMENDATIONS, & OUTDOOR PROVISIONS

**RULE I THE GAME**

**RULE 1.1 TYPES OF GAMES**

- a) Singles: Paddleball played with two players.
- b) Doubles: Paddleball played with four players, two teams.

**RULE 1.2 DESCRIPTION**

Paddleball is played with an NPA approved paddle and ball following NPA rules.

**RULE 1.3 OBJECTIVE**

The object is to win the rally by serving or returning the ball so the opponent is unable to return the ball to the front wall before it touches the floor twice.

**RULE 1.4 POINTS**

Points are scored when the serving side:

- a) Serve is not returned.
- b) Wins the rally.

**RULE 1.5 MATCH**

- a) The first side scoring 21 points wins the game, 15 points or 21 points in a tiebreaker (rule 1.5c).
- b) The first side to win two games wins the match.
- c) In the event each side wins a game, a tiebreaker is played:
  - 1) 21 points in semi-finals, finals, and round robins.
  - 2) 15 points in all other matches.
- d) Round Robin.
  - 1) Each player or team will play a single 21-point game against each of the other players or teams in the division.
  - 2) Players or teams are then ranked based on the number of games won.
  - 3) If two players or teams tie, total points scored overall determine the ranking. After which, if there is still a tie, the player or team winning the head to head game is ranked higher.
  - 4) If three players or teams tie, a calculation of the points scored and the points scored against the two other players or teams will be conducted. The resulting higher difference will

produce the higher ranking.

5) The first and second highest ranked players or teams will play a best two out of three 21-point games match to determine the championship of the division. In a like manner, the third and fourth highest ranked players or teams will play for third place.

e) Forfeit

1) The player or team forfeiting loses the game and the match.

2) In round robin play, the forfeiting player or team is excluded from all calculations involving scores, wins/losses including previous matches

## **RULE II THE COURT**

### **RULE 2.1 THE COURT**

a) Consists of four walls and a ceiling.

b) Dimensions:

Sidewalls: length-40 feet, height-20 feet

Front wall: length-20 feet, height-20 feet

Back wall: length-20 feet, height-at least 12 feet

c) Ceiling: length-40 feet, width-20 feet

d) Short line: Midway between (20 feet) and parallel with the front and back walls

e) Service line: Five feet in front of and parallel with the short line

f) Service zone: The area between the short line and service line

g) Service box: The area formed from each of two lines 18 inches from and parallel with each sidewall in the service zone and the respective sidewall

h) Receiving line: A line five feet from the short line in the direction of the back wall.

#### **Notes:**

-Short or dotted lines marked on the sidewalls or floor may be used to represent the receiving line (rule 2.1g).

-Solid lines marked on the floor are to represent the short line (rule 2.1c), service line (rule 2.1d), and each service box (rule 2.1f).

## **RULE III EQUIPMENT**

### **RULE 3.1 THE PADDLE**

a) To be made of wood or composite material

b) Must have a safety strap attached

- c) Dimensions:
  - 1) Length – Maximum of 17.25 inches
  - 2) Width – Maximum of 8.5 inches
  - 3) Thickness – Maximum of 0.75 inches (handle may be thicker)
- d) Weight – Maximum of 16 ounces
- e) Must be safe: no metal rims or protrusions
- f) Must not provide an unfair advantage

**Notes:**

- The NPA Board of Managers based on the above criteria shall approve paddles used in NPA events.
- A list of approved paddles can be viewed at [www.paddleball.org](http://www.paddleball.org)
- Any paddle is subject to inspection during tournament play by a representative of the NPA Board of Managers
- Instances of unfair advantage may include, but not be limited to: abnormal increase in speed or directional changes when struck.

*Breach: Anyone found using an unapproved paddle may be asked to cease usage until the NPA Board of Managers makes proper evaluation. If a second violation occurs at a tournament, the player will be disqualified from all divisions.*

**RULE 3.2 THE BALL**

The official ball is the Gearbox ball. When dropped from a height of 6 feet, it should rebound approximately 3.5 feet.

**RULE 3.3 THE UNIFORM**

Players may not play without shirts or shoes while playing in tournaments. Players may not dress in a way that provides an unfair advantage in tournaments.

*Breach: A board member may require a player to change clothes or forfeit the match.*

**RULE IV SERVE REGULATIONS**

**RULE 4.1 SERVE**

The serve shall be determined by either:

- a) Toss of a coin.
- b) Contestants (one from each team in doubles), an arm's length from the back wall, rebounding the ball from the front wall. The contestant whose ball lands closest to the short line wins.

*Result: The winner chooses if he/she, his/her team in doubles, is to serve first or second.*

Note: Contestants going for the short line (part b) may hit the ball with a paddle or throw it.

#### **RULE 4.2 POSITION OF SERVER**

- a) The server must serve within the service zone (rule 2.1) with no part of either foot extending beyond either line of the service zone until the ball passes the short line (rule 2.1).

Breach: Foot fault (rule 4.6)

- b) If the ball on the fly hits the server during the serve, it is a dead ball.

#### **Result: Serve-out**

- c) During the serve, the server's partner is to stand within the service box (rule 4.6) with his/her back against the wall and both feet on the floor until the ball passes the service line (rule 2.1) with no part of either foot extending beyond the box.

Breach: Foot fault (rule 4.6)

- d) If, while in the service box, the server's partner is hit by a served ball on the fly, it is a dead ball.

#### **Result: Replay serve**

- e) If, while out of the service box, the server's partner is hit by a served ball on the fly, it is a dead ball.

#### **Result: Serve-out**

#### Notes

-Stepping on a line is allowed.

-Play stops when a dead ball occurs (rules 4.2b, 4.2d, and 4.2e).

-Rule 4.2d does not eliminate a previous fault on that service.

#### **RULE 4.3 METHOD OF SERVING**

The ball must bounce without being tossed above the server's head within the service zone (rule 2.1) and struck with the paddle before hitting the floor a second time, hitting the front wall first and rebounding back of the short line, with or without touching one sidewall.

Breach: Serve-out if a sidewall, floor, or ceiling is hit before the front wall. Replay serve otherwise.

#### **RULE 4.4 SERVICE IN DOUBLES**

- a) The team starting each game is allowed only one serve-out. Thereafter, in that game, both players on each side are to serve until a serve-out occurs.
- b) The service order established at the beginning of each game must be followed throughout that game.

Breach: One Serve-out

### Notes:

- When a team violates the serving order, play continues normally, but the player that should have served first does not serve, resulting in only one serve-out allowed for the serving team.
- Servers do not have to alternate serves to their opponents.

### **RULE 4.5 READINESS FOR SERVE**

a) The ball is not to be served until the opponent is ready.

*Breach: Replay rally.*

b) The server is to put the ball into play within 10 seconds after the score is called.

*Breach: Serve-out.*

c) The receiver(s) must be ready to receive the serve within 10 seconds after the score is called.

*Breach: Point to the server.*

d) A player must take no action to delay a game.

*Breach: A referee shall issue a warning for the first occurrence then a serve-out or a point to the opponent for each occurrence thereafter.*

Note: If a player believes an opponent is engaging in delay of game behavior, he/she should request a referee.

### **RULE 4.6 FAULTS**

- a) Short serve - A served ball rebounding from the front wall hitting the floor before crossing the short line.
- b) Long serve - A served ball rebounding from the front wall to the back wall before hitting the floor.
- c) Ceiling serve - A served ball rebounding from the front wall and hitting the ceiling before hitting the floor.
- d) Two-sidewall serve - A served ball rebounding from the front wall and hitting both sidewalls before hitting the floor.
- e) Out of court serve - A served ball going out of the court.
- f) Screen --A served ball that passes within a paddle's length of the server's body obstructing the view of the receiver.
- g) Foot fault - Described in rule 4.2.

**Result: The serve is lost if two faults occur in succession.**

### Notes:

- A fault cannot be played.
- A replay of a rally starts with a first serve. Faults are erased.
- The receiver is to adjust his/her position to see a served ball.

## **RULE V PLAYING REGULATIONS**

### **Rule 5.1 RETURN OF SERVICE**

a) The receiver must remain behind the receiving lines (5 feet behind the short line) until the ball crosses the short line.

Breach: Point to server

b) A legally served ball must be returned by the receiver on the fly or after the first bounce to the front wall either directly or after touching the side wall(s), ceiling, or back wall.

Breach: Point to server

Note:

A return touching the front wall and floor simultaneously is not a good return.

**RULE 5.2 DEAD BALL HINDER**

a) A physical or visual interference that does not qualify as an avoidable hinder (rule 5.3) which prevents an opponent from hitting a retrievable ball.

b) A return that hits an opponent before hitting the front wall or floor.

c) Any predetermined court obstruction.

Result: Replay rally

Notes:

-It is not a dead ball hinder when a player interferes with his/her partner in doubles.

-If a live ball hits the striker or his partner, it is not a dead ball hinder. The striker's team loses the rally.

-Court hinders must be determined before the game. If there is no determination, every thing is in play. If the players do not agree, they may appeal to a designated NPA representative .

-Only the striker can call a hinder involving physical or visual interference (part a).

-The striker must be provided an opportunity to hit a straight shot to the front wall. A straight shot being the shortest distance from the point of impact of the paddle and the ball to the front wall.

-The striker is expected to make reasonable adjustments in his/her shot selection based on the opponent's positioning. The striker cannot expect opponents to provide a particular shot other than a straight shot to the front wall.

-Hinders must be called immediately. In the case of a physical or visual interference (part a) the striker must clearly call the hinder before or during the swing.

**RULE 5.3 AVOIDABLE HINDERS**

a) Not moving sufficiently to allow an opponent an unobstructed swing at or view of the ball preventing an apparently makeable shot.

b) Moving into or remaining in a position that blocks a straight line drive or kill to the front wall.

c) Pushing an opponent during a rally.

Breach: Serve-out or point to opponent

Notes:

- A straight kill or drive (rule 5.3b) being the shortest distance from the point of impact of the paddle and the ball to the front wall.
- An avoidable hinder can only be called if the player could have avoided the hinder.
- Players may appeal to a referee for an avoidable hinders. In which case, play is to continue unless it is unsafe or the referee stops the play.
- The defender's positioning does not have to allow a cross-court pass.
- If a player is on the ground in front of the striker and does not move sufficiently, blocking the striker's shot, it is an avoidable hinder.

#### **RULE 5.4 WET BALL**

The ball and the paddle must be dry during play

*Breach: Stop play, replay rally*

#### **RULE 5.5 BALL LEAVING COURT**

The ball is not to be hit out of the court.

*Breach: Side-out or point to opponent*

#### **RULE 5.6 INTERFERENCE**

a) A foreign object enters the court

b) Unsafe breakage or loss of equipment (shoe, paddle or other equipment) (rule 5.7b)

*Result: Stop play, replay rally*

#### **RULE 5.7 BROKEN BALL OR EQUIPMENT**

a) Ball breaks during play

*Result: Replay rally*

b) Paddle breaks, player losses shoe or other equipment during a rally

*Result: Finish rally unless an unsafe interference occurs (rule 5.6c). Correct before resuming play.*

#### **RULE 5.8 REST PERIODS BETWEEN GAMES**

a) A two-minute rest period is allowed between games one and two.

b) A ten-minute period is allowed between the second and third game.

#### **RULE 5.9 TIME OUTS**

a) In a game each player in singles, each side in doubles, may request no more than two one-minute

time-outs.

- b) No more than two time-outs per game shall be allowed each player in singles or each team in doubles.

#### **RULE 5.10 SAFETY**

- a) The safety strap attached to the paddle must be around the player's wrist at all times.

- b) The paddle may not be switched from one hand to the other during a rally.

*Breach: Stop play, replay rally*

Note: Both hands on the paddle together may be used in striking the ball.

#### **RULE 5.11 INJURIES**

- a) In a match, play may be suspended for up to 15-minutes for an injury.

*Breach: If the player with the injury is not able to play after 15-minutes, he/she forfeits the match.*

- b) Each player is allowed at most one injury time out per match.

*Breach: The match is forfeited if a second injury time out situation occurs for the same player.*

### **RULE VI OFFICIATING**

#### **RULE 6.1 TOURNAMENT OFFICIALS**

Upon request from player or by assignment from an NPA Board of Manager's representative, tournament matches will be conducted with a referee.

#### **RULE 6.2 THE REFEREE'S PREGAME DUTIES**

- a) Introduce players.
- b) Determine who gets to choose to serve first or second.
- c) Identify court hinders.



- d) Check and approve equipment (rule 3.1), ball (rule 3.2), and uniform (rule 3.3).
- e) Check availability of other necessary supplies such as extra balls, towels, scorecards, pencil, etc.

### **RULE 6.3 REFEREE'S POSITION**

Whenever possible, the referee shall take a position in center and above the back wall of court.

### **RULE 6.4 GAME DUTIES**

- a) The referee shall decide on all questions that arise in accordance with the rules.
- b) Players call their own hinders with the referee settling disputes.
- c) The referee is responsible for the entire conduct of the match including:
  - 1. Legality of the serve and its return.
  - 2. Settling disputes on dead ball hinders.
  - 3. Calling avoidable hinders when requested by a player.
  - 4. Calling faults.
  - 5. Preventing any unnecessary delay during the match.
  - 6. Announcing serve-outs or when points are earned.
  - 7. Calling the score prior to each serve, saying the server's score first.
  - 8. Assessing technicals (rule 6.5) and declaring a forfeit (rule 6.6) when warranted.

### **RULE 6.5 TECHNICALS**

- a) A referee shall issue a technical and request the presents of a NPA board member or representative when inappropriate conduct or blatant disregard of rules occur.

**Result: Deduction of a point from the score of the offending individual or team**

#### **Note:**

-A referee may issue a warning or a technical on the first occurrence of inappropriate conduct or blatant disregard of rules in a match .

- b) A referee may issue no more than three technicals to any individual or team during a match.

**Result: Forfeit of match of offending individual or team after the third**

technical

Note:

-The NPA board member or representative appointed after the first technical must agree with the assessments of a second and a third technical in a match for it to be in effect.

**RULE 6.6 MATCH FORFEITED**

- a) An individual or team receives three technicals (rule 6.5) during a match.
- b) A player fails to appear for a scheduled contest within 15 minutes.
- c) A player is unable to continue play for physical reasons.

**RULE 6.7 FINAL DECISIONS**

The decision of the referee is final.

**RULE 6.8 FINAL SCORE**

- a) The referee shall approve the final score after announcing the name of the winner of the match and the scores of all games played.
- b) The referee will immediately inform the tournament desk of the results of the match.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON PADDLEBALL, TOURNAMENTS, EQUIPMENT, CLINICS AND NEWSLETTERS PLEASE VISIT OUR WEB SITE OR CONTACT:**

N. P. A. / 7642 KINGSTON DR / PORTAGE MI 49002  
PHONE: (269) 779-6615 FAX: ( 269 ) 279-6275

***VISIT US ON THE WEB AT: [WWW.PADDLEBALL.ORG](http://WWW.PADDLEBALL.ORG)***

# Appendix A

## N.P.A. POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT SHIRTS, SHORTS AND SOCKS BE LIGHT IN COLOR
- EYEGUARDS ARE RECOMMENDED

- THE POLICY REGARDING PLAYING IN AN AGE DIVISION:

PLAYERS MUST BE THE AGE OF THE SELECTED DIVISION AT THE TIME OF PLAY. SENIORS (35+) / MASTERS (45+) / GOLDEN MASTERS (55+) AND PLATINUM MASTERS (65+). PROOF OF AGE MAY BE REQUIRED.

- POLICY REGARDING MOVING TO A HIGHER DIVISION:

THESE RULES APPLY TO NOVICE, "C" AND "B" DIVISIONS. THEY DO NOT APPLY TO AGE DIVISIONS, OPEN OR "A" DIVISIONS.

ANY PERSON OR TEAM WINNING A NATIONAL TOURNAMENT WILL MOVE TO THE NEXT HIGHEST DIVISION BEGINNING THE FOLLOWING TOURNAMENT SEASON.

ANY PERSON OR TEAM WINNING A MID-SEASON EVENT (I.E. MIDWEST SINGLES OR DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS OR WESTERN SINGLES OR DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS) WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO MOVE TO THE NEXT HIGHEST DIVISION UNLESS THEY ALSO WIN THE NATIONAL EVENT THAT TOURNAMENT SEASON. THEY WILL, HOWEVER, BE REQUIRED TO MOVE UP TO THE NEXT HIGHEST DIVISION FOR THAT SAME MID-SEASON EVENT BEGINNING THE NEXT TOURNAMENT SEASON.

A PERSON OR TEAM WHO DESIRES TO HAVE THIS RULE WAIVED MUST APPLY TO THE NPA BOARD STATING THE REASONS THEY FEEL THIS POLICY SHOULD NOT APPLY TO THEM FOR THE NEXT, OR SUBSEQUENT, TOURNAMENT SEASONS. THEY MAY PETION BY EMAILING ANY BOARD MEMBERS LISTED ON THE WEBSITE OR BY MAILING A REQUEST TO THE NPA BOARD AT: 7642 KINGSTON DR / PORTAGE MI 49002. YOU MUST MAKE THIS REQUEST A MINIMUM OF TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE ENTRY DEADLINE FOR THE TOURNEY FOR WHICH YOU ARE ASKING FOR THE WAIVER.

- REFEREES

REFEREES ARE NOT PROVIDED AS A STANDARD AT TOURNAMENTS, BUT YOU MAY REQUEST ONE AT ANY TIME BEFORE OR DURING A MATCH. PLEASE MAKE THE REQUEST AT THE TOURNAMENT DESK. THE BOARD WILL PROVIDE REFEREES FOR ALL NATIONAL OPEN FINALS. DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK FOR A REFEREE. WE ARE HAPPY TO PROVIDE THEM.

## Appendix B

### **Outdoor Three-Wall National Paddleball Association Rules**

(Rules for one-wall paddleball are listed at [paddleballfamily.com](http://paddleballfamily.com))

#### **B.1 FOUR WALL RULES**

Four-wall rules in effect unless listed as an exception or modification in this section.

#### **B.2 THE COURT** (Modifies RULE II)

- a) An NPA representative must approve the courts. The dimensions and nature of courts vary. Local rules are to be considered before tournaments and applied if acceptable.
- b) There are two basic types of Three-Wall courts which may have partial, full, or no ceilings with walls that may be beveled.
  - Long Wall Courts: Have side walls that extend from the front wall to the back boundary line.
  - Short Wall Courts: Have side walls that extend from the front wall to the short service line.
- c) Where there are side or back boundary lines, the ball is playable if it bounces inside the line or on any part of the line.
- d) When a legal shot hits any beveled wall or ceiling surface and it rebounds in a designated area of play the ball is good, and if the ball rebounds outside of playing area it is a loss of the rally.
- e) Light polls are out of bounds.

#### **B.3 DEAD BALL HINDERS** (Clarifies and modifies RULE 5.2a)

- a) No court hinders unless noted by the tournament committee or director.
- b) Referees should make sure all spectators and articles are a safe distance from the court.
- c) The stationary crowd cannot cause a hinder.
- d) If a player from an adjoining court, a spectator not in the stationary crowd or object interferes with a play, it is a hinder.
- e) If a spectator not in the stationary crowd or object interferes with a play, it is a hinder.

#### **B.4 POSITION OF SERVER** (Modifies RULE 4.2)

- a) The server's partner may stand in service box with back against a wall, behind the court, or, in the case of 3-wall short wall, off the court directly behind a side wall during the serve.

- b) If the server's partner is out of the service box and causes a hinder on the serve, it is a serve-out.
- c) If there is no marked receiving line, the receiver may not cross the plane of the short line.  
Breach: Loss of rally.

#### **B.5 FAULTS** (Modifies RULE 4.6)

One serve rule is in effect for all divisions (no faults).

#### **B.6 Objective** (Modifies RULE 1.3)

The ball is LIVE until it bounces twice or hits something out of play.

#### **B.7 MATCH** (Exception to RULE 1.5)

Games may be played to 21, 15, or 11 based on the dictates of the tournament committee or director.

#### **B.8 THE UNIFORM** (Exception to RULE 3.3)

Shirts are optional.

#### **B.9 REFEREE'S GAME DUTIES** (Modifies RULE 6.4)

When line judges are used for short wall courts, the line judge has the first in or out call on his/her side. A player can appeal a line call to the referee. If the referee disagrees with the line call, the point is replayed.

#### **B.10 ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS FOR THE 3 WALLBALL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS**

- a) Winners referee the next match. If the winners are scheduled to play, then losers will referee. (Modifies RULE 6.1)
- b) Everyone must be ready to play when called. (Modifies RULE 6.6b)
- c) The tournament director or tournament committee may provisionally allow a player to use a paddle without a safety strap on a match to match basis only if the players in each match agree to allow it. (Modifies RULE 5.10)
- d) The paddle may not be switched from one hand to the other during a rally. A breach results in a loss of point or a side out. (Modifies RULE 5.10b)

#### **NOTES**

Alternating quadrant serving is not required in singles.

All NPA rules apply unless the Executive Board or the Board of Managers grants an exception such as was afforded The 3WallBall Championships, provisionally allowing players to compete without a safety strap.