

The Vault Wednesday Night League: A Beginner’s Guide to Skill Ratings & Handicaps

1. Welcome to the Fall 2026 Session

Welcome to the Fall 2026 session at The Vault! We are back and bigger than ever, featuring 11 confirmed teams ready to compete across a 12-week schedule. With a total season payout of \$6,000.00 and a high-energy environment, we know things can feel like a "little bit of chaos" on opening night. As your League Coordinator, my job is to manage that energy through clear systems so you can focus on your game.

Whether you are here for the competition or the camaraderie, the first step is understanding the logistics:

Feature	Details
Entry Fee	\$10.00 per person, per night
Start Date	September 16, 2026
League Duration	12 Weeks
Total Payout	\$6,000.00
Primary Contact	Erik Augustine

While the \$6,000.00 prize pool is a major draw, the integrity of our league relies on a fair handicap system. To ensure every match is a "fair race" regardless of skill level, we utilize a dynamic rating system that adapts to your actual performance.

2. The Starting Line: Establishing Your Base Rating

Every player begins the season with a "Base Rating." Think of this as a temporary placeholder that allows us to get the games moving while the system gathers data. There are two paths to your starting number:

- **Returning Players:** We use your handicap from the previous session as your base.
- **New or Late Starters (Week 4+):** If you join the league in Week 4 or later, you are subject to the **"Play as a 10"** rule. You will compete with a rating of 10 on your first night.

The "No Retro" Rule For those starting late, please note that ratings do not "retro back." Your performance on your first night will establish your rating for future weeks, but it will not retroactively change the scores of matches already played that evening.

These starting numbers are merely the foundation, designed to carry us through the initial weeks of play.

3. The Three-Week Transformation: How Ratings "Lock In"

The most important period for league integrity is the first 21 days. We call this the "Three-Week Transformation." This system is designed to "protect the field" and prevent "sandbagging"—the practice of intentionally playing poorly early on to secure an artificially low rating.

The Step-by-Step Transition Process:

1. **Weeks 1–3:** All players compete using their initial "Base Rating."
2. **Processing:** After Week 3 concludes, the league office processes the data from all three weeks of play.
3. **Snapshot Replacement:** The old Base Rating is completely deleted. It is replaced entirely by the actual performance-based handicap you earned during that third week.

PRO TIP: Your performance in the first three weeks is the most influential factor of your season. Because your Week 3 rating replaces your base entirely, your early-season play determines your "race" for the rest of the 12-week session. Every rack counts from night one!

Once these ratings are locked in after Week 3, the master scoresheet becomes the ultimate authority on "the race" for each match.

Header	Definition
PLAY AS	The current, active handicap used to calculate match scores and "the race."
AVG	Your actual performance average based on racks won and lost.
PA	Performance Average: This shows the variance between your base and your current performance.

Decoding the Power Average (PA) The PA tells us exactly how much a player is over-performing or under-performing relative to their starting base. For example, look at the difference between these players:

- **Mike Hill:** Has a "Play As" of **12.72**. His PA is **2.72**, meaning he is playing nearly three points above the standard "10" base.
- **Seth Fearing:** Has a "Play As" of **2.98**. His PA is **-1.65**, indicating he is currently playing below the standard base.

The Skill Gap and "The Race" This system allows players of all levels to compete. In a match between Mike Hill (12.72) and Amber Herston (2.32), the handicap system forces Mike to win by significantly more balls to "win" the game. This ensures that even the newest player has a fair shot at beating the house veterans.

5. Beyond the Rating: The 10-Ball Break and Run Challenge

For those looking for an extra payout, we host the 10-Ball Challenge. The pot for this session opens at **\$830.00** and grows weekly.

- **Tickets:** 1 for \$1.00 / 15 for \$10.00 / 40 for \$20.00 (40 ticket limit per person).
- **The Drawing Ratio:**
 - **\$0 – \$250 Pot:** 1 Drawing
 - **\$250 – \$500 Pot:** 2 Drawings
 - **\$500 – \$750 Pot:** 3 Drawings
 - **\$750 – \$1000 Pot:** 4 Drawings
 - **\$1000+ Pot:** The **"25% Option with Ball in Hand"** opens.

When the pot exceeds \$1,000, the "Ball in Hand" benefit makes the challenge significantly easier to complete, offering a massive advantage for those lucky enough to be drawn.

6. League Logistics & Support

To keep a league of this size running smoothly, we ask for your help with two main administrative tasks:

- **Scoring Tablets:** We use digital tablets at the tables for real-time scoring. Please treat these with care and return them to the bar when your match is finished.
- **Team Money Envelopes:** Each team has a dedicated envelope for their weekly fees. **Managing this envelope is a team responsibility.** Ensure all \$10.00-per-player fees are enclosed and return the envelope along with your tablet to the **server or bartender** before leaving.

Cussing or Discussing? If you have questions, rule disputes, or just need to vent, Erik Augustine is available. You can reach him through:

- **Phone or Text**
- **Email or the Website Chat Link**
- **Google Meet Video Call** (for those complex rule demonstrations)
- **In-person at The Vault**

Learning Summary

The "golden rule" of our league is the **Three-Week Transformation**. Your handicap starts as a base—either from your history or as a default 10—but after Week 3, that base is deleted and replaced by your actual performance. This ensures that by Week 4, the "sandbagging" is gone, the races are fair, and everyone has a legitimate path to the \$6,000.00 payout. Let's have a great season!