

PALM BEACH COUNTY PICKLEBALL LEAGUE RULES

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Revised 1/2/2025

Purpose

To form a Palm Beach County Pickleball Competitive League, which will promote a competitive Pickleball program for intercommunity play for both men and women who are 55 and older that encourages good sportsmanship, camaraderie, and safety.

It will consist of Divisions of 7 - 8 teams that will compete during the Fall season, and the Spring season.

1. Requirements for community participation

- a. A community must have a minimum of two regulation size hard surface outdoor pickleball courts and adjacent facilities that, in the sole discretion of the League, is acceptable for its matches. The League may require any community that wishes to participate or continue to participate permission for an onsite inspection by League Directors. If the League determines, in its sole discretion, that the courts or facilities do not have adequate facilities, they may not allow that community to participate. The League may, but is not required, to give that community the option to participate only if it plays all its home games as away games. In this case, the community will travel each week but provide the balls and waters when they are deemed the “Home Team.”
- b. Each community will host the game an equal number of times (approximately), unless their courts are non-playable, and provide bottled water and new balls for the players.
- c. Each community must provide their team roster prior to the cut off date of registration of players. The roster must have a minimum of 10 eligible players and a maximum of 20 eligible players.
- d. The community must be approved by the Board.
- e. All communities can play only 1 match at any given time. Communities with multiple courts, multiple seating areas and adequate parking may apply to the Board for permission to play more than 1 match simultaneously and may play them only when approved.

2. Eligibility of players

- a. A player must be a current owner or renter in the community. That community must be located in Palm Beach County, or adjacent to its borderlines.
- b. A player must be age 55 or older by the first day that he/she plays.
- c. Both Men and Women will be playing interchangeably.
- d. Each player can fill only one Line position of the team.
- e. A player cannot have been a professional tennis or professional pickleball player, teacher, instructor, or coach in the past three (3) years.
- f. If a community is 30 minutes or more from most Communities, they will be asked to be a “Visiting Team” and travel each week to play, but still provide drinks and balls approximately half the time.
- g. Each player can only play on one (1) team.

3. Divisions

- a. Every effort shall be made to place teams in a Division commensurate with their skills.
- b. Each Division shall have a minimum of 7 teams.
- c. In each new season, teams will be upgraded or downgraded in accordance with their performance within their division in the prior seasons.
- d. Generally, the first one or two teams will be moved up to the next higher division, and the one or two lowest teams will be moved down to the next lower division.
- e. These moves will be reviewed by the Board and may be subject to overrule if warranted. (Illnesses, injuries, vacancies).
- f. All new teams may be added to the lowest division at the discretion of the Coordinator, after discussion with the teams’ Pros.

4. Roster Manipulation Violations.

(Previously called Stacking/lineup restriction violations, now changed to avoid confusion with “Stacking” during a game referring to a player’s position on the court), the following procedure has been adopted:

- a. An individual may not play up or down more than one Line from one match to the next match. If a player has not played consecutive matches, then his/her allowable court positions are determined by the court he/she last played. See Rule 10.a.viii. for the one exemption to this Rule.

- b. In case of rainouts or other postponements, the last played Line shall be determined by the original scheduled date and not the chronological match date.
- c. Any infraction of this Roster Manipulation Violation will result in a default of that Line.
- d. For the next match, the offending player(s) is/are scheduled to play, the player(s) prior Line position shall be that he/she occupied the last time played prior to the week of the infraction.
- e. The League will be reviewing all lineups.. Captains may notify the League of any presumed infractions within 48 hours from the end of the game. The League will then review the case and make the determination if any infraction has occurred and impose the disqualification and penalty, if justified.
- f. This rule does not apply to the first match of any season.

5. Dates and Time of Play

- a. The starting date for the Fall shall be near the beginning of October.
- b. The starting date for the Spring season shall be the beginning of January.
- c. Each season shall run 6 - 7 weeks followed by a Playoff for the top 4 teams followed by a Finals for the top 2 teams.
- d. The games shall be played on Saturdays starting at 11:00am or 1pm, unless an earlier time is agreed to by BOTH teams. In the event that the rules and/or ordinances of a community do not allow for matches to begin at 11:00am, the match must begin at the earliest the community allows, but no later than 12:00 Noon. If any community will not allow games before 12 Noon, the Home Captain must make other arrangements. Any Home Captain so affected, should inform the opposing Captain by the preceding Wednesday. If any games are scheduled for 1pm that day, that opposing Captain should be told as well.
- e. All 5 court positions must be played on the scheduled date. Captains do not have the option to allow one or more courts to be played on a different day.
- f. No match shall start prior to the arrival of all players.
- g. The teams will play each other once during the season.
- h. If necessary, because of the number of teams in the league, a "bye" may be scheduled for each team.
- i. For each Division, the four teams with the greatest number of points will play in the Playoffs; (#1 vs #4 at the #1 courts, #2 vs #3 at the #2 courts), and the winners of the playoffs shall play in the Finals 1 week later. In any Division with less than 6 teams, no playoffs will occur.
- j. The Finals shall be played on the courts of the #1 seeded team and confirmed by the League Coordinator.

- k. A team trophy will be awarded to teams finishing 1st and 2nd of each Division at the end of the Winter season.

6. Play of the Game

- a. Each team will simultaneously submit completed line-ups to each other before the start of the match.
- b. Each team will consist of 5 lines of two players each. 10 players will be needed for each team match.
- c. Each line will play the best of 2 of 3 games.
- d. Each game will be first to 11 points, win by 2.
- e. Each match will begin with a coin toss. The winner of the toss shall choose either to serve or receive or side. The second game will be opposite. If both Captains agree, one coin toss may be made for all the Lines.
- f. If a third game is necessary another coin toss will be done. Whenever the first team scores a total of 6 points, the teams will switch sides of the court. If they forget to change at that point, they shall change whenever it is realized.
- g. In communities with 2 courts, Line 5 and Line 4 will be played first. When they finish their first game, Line 3 and Line 2 will play their first game, then rotate to Line 1 and Line 5 (who will be playing their second game). This will continue on a rotational basis until all Lines have finished their matches. If any Line splits sets, they will play a third set tiebreaker to 11 points, also on a rotational basis.

In communities with more than 2 courts, games must be played on at least 3 courts simultaneously, or more if both captains agree. In those communities that have 3 courts adjacent to each other, the home team captain can allow a middle court to remain open.

If more than 2 courts are used, and any line is able to play their games consecutively, players may be allowed up to 15 minutes rest between games.

- h. Competition shall not begin until all participating players from both teams are present. If all players are not present at the designated starting time, a 15-minute grace period shall be given.
- i. If a forfeit of a Line is necessary, the Line forfeited shall be won by the opposing team, and they shall be awarded the Standing Points for that Line. All other Lines will be unaffected.
- j. Time-outs: Two 1-minute time-outs shall be allowed per team per game. Coaching shall be allowed during these time-outs. In addition, one medical time-out shall be allowed per player per match. This Medical time-out may be up to 15 minutes. In addition, hydration time outs may be called by any player, as long as it does not appreciably prolong the game. A Time-out

can be called by one of the four players or the Team Captain or Co-Captain or Pro, or anyone designated by the Captain.

- k. **Playoffs:** A player must have played at least two games during the regular season to be eligible to play in any playoff game.
- l. **Serving Violations:**
 - i. The server must announce the correct score immediately prior to serving so that all the players can hear it. If the receiving team believes that a serving violation has occurred such as the score not called out by the server immediately prior to the serve, the wrong score called, an incomplete score called, the server standing behind the wrong service box, or the wrong player serving, the receiving team need not wait and play out the point. The receiving team is permitted to stop playing or catch the served ball and correct the score or point out the violation and ask that the serve be replayed with the correct score with the correct server in the proper location. That point shall then be replayed.
 - ii. If the receiving team feels that the serve itself is a violation such as a baseline foot fault, a volley serve hit from above the waist or hit side handed or with no upward arc, spin being imparted to the ball by the hand of the server, force being applied to a drop serve, etc., the receiving team can catch the served ball, call out the violation and ask that the serve be replayed. That point shall then be replayed. If the issue of the legality of the serve still continues after a replayed serve, either team can request that line refs be appointed, one from each team. If a team fails to provide a line ref, then both line refs will be from the same team. After line refs are in place, if a line ref upholds a serving violation challenge, the first violation shall result in a warning to the serving team. Subsequent violations of the same infraction result in the serving team losing that serve, and then it becomes the second serve or side out.
- m. **Coaching:**
 - i. Any member of the team, including the Captain, the Co-captain, the Pro, or any designee of the Captain may coach the players during the 1-minute Time outs.
 - ii. No coaching during medical time outs. No coaching during hydration breaks.
- n. **Line calling:** All line calls must be made promptly by voice or hand signal. The opponent gets the benefit of the doubt on line calls made. Any ball that cannot be called “out” will be considered in. Players shall not call a ball “out” unless they can clearly see a space between the line and the ball as it hits the ground.

- o. The visiting team shall be provided 15 minutes to warm up prior to the start of the match.
- p. Kitchen line violations: Players may call kitchen line violations on the opponents. If there is a disagreement among players during an un-officiated game a replay shall occur.

7. Match Point Scoring

- a. Scoring will be weighted by position of Line to prevent "stacking"/lineup restriction violations:
 - Line 1 win = 6 Standing Points.
 - Line 2 win = 5 Standing Points.
 - Line 3 win = 5 Standing Points.
 - Line 4 win = 4 Standing Points.
 - Line 5 win = 3 Standing Points.
- b. At the end of the match both Captains will sign the score sheets.
- c. At the end of each match, the Captain of the HOME team shall enter the scores into the computer, and email or fax their scores to their appropriate Division Coordinator and a copy to the League Coordinator, no later than 5pm on Saturday for 11am matches, and no later than 7pm for 1pm matches. Rain delay matches shall be sent in no later than 5 hours after the match. Their email addresses are on the bottom of the Scoresheet. The VISITING Captain must verify the scores.
- d. If two or more teams are tied for a playoff or winning position at the end of the regular season, the team with the most points in head-to-head competition shall be declared the winner.

8. Weather delays:

- a. Matches shall be delayed if any of the following conditions are met (according to www.weather.com)
 - i. Temperature 45 degrees or less.
 - ii. Temperature 95 degrees or more.
 - iii. Sustained winds of 30 mph or more
 - iv. Rain such that the courts are wet.

If any of these conditions are present up to 1 hour prior to game time, the home captain shall contact the visiting captain no later than 1 hour before the match time to spare the players an unnecessary trip, and the match shall be postponed under the Rules in Section 9, "Rescheduling of postponed games".
- b. After teams have assembled:

- i. They shall wait for up to 45 minutes for conditions to improve, unless both captains agree to a longer or shorter wait.
- ii. If play is postponed, all games and points played before interruption stand and play resumes from that point, with the same player line-up.

9. Rescheduling of postponed matches:

- a. When postponement is necessary, the next weather delay date shall be according to these rules:
 - i. If the match was scheduled for 11am, the next time shall start on Saturday at 2:30pm. If still unplayable, the next time shall be Sunday at 11am. If still unplayable the next time shall be Sunday at 2:30pm. If still unplayable the next time shall be Monday at 11am. If still unplayable the next time shall be Monday at 2:30pm. If still unplayable the next time shall be Tuesday at 11am. If still unplayable the next time shall be Tuesday at 2:30pm. If still unplayable the next time shall be Wednesday at 11am. If still unplayable the next time shall be Wednesday at 2:30pm. There will be no valid excuses to skip any of these dates or times. It must be in the above sequence.
 - ii. If the match was scheduled for 1pm, the next time shall be Saturday at 4pm. If still unplayable, the next time shall be Sunday at 1pm. If still unplayable the next time shall be Sunday at 4pm. If still unplayable the next time shall be Monday at 1pm. If still unplayable the next time shall be Monday at 4pm. If still unplayable the next time shall be Tuesday at 1pm. If still unplayable the next time shall be Tuesday at 4pm. If still unplayable the next time shall be Wednesday at 1pm. If still unplayable the next time shall be Wednesday at 4pm. There will be no valid excuses to skip any of these dates or times. It must be in the above sequence.
 - iii. An earlier time or different venue (except for the use of indoor courts) will be allowed if both captains agree and conditions are acceptable. Evening games are acceptable if the courts are lighted. Any Lines not played within those dates and times will be considered 'no contest' and no points will be awarded to either team.
- b. All games and points played before the postponement will stand. No player substitutions will be allowed for a game that has started, even if the game is rescheduled for a

- different day. The match is considered officially started when rosters are exchanged.
- c. If one or more of the players of a Line are unable to continue play on a rescheduled time and date, it will be considered a default of that position (not a forfeit), and the winning team will receive all the Standing Points from that Line.
 - d. If conditions are unacceptable on all the above weather delay dates and times, that match will be entered as 0-0. If any Lines have been finished those scores shall be entered, and all unfinished Lines be 0-0.

10. Forfeits and Resignations

a. Forfeits:

- i. A line shall be considered a forfeit if either of the two players from a team is not available to play within 15 minutes of the starting time.
- ii. When a Captain exchanges rosters at the beginning of a match, any Line to be forfeited should have either "Default" or "Forfeit" in lieu of a player's name. This will be found out only when the Rosters are exchanged. No changes are permitted by either Captain once the Rosters are exchanged.
- iii. The Team that forfeited will lose the Standing Points for that Line and they will be awarded to the opposing team.
- iv. No team members will be assigned to that Line for future Anti- Stacking/Lineup Restriction purposes.
- v. A team that forfeits more than three Lines during a season may be dropped from the League.
- vi. Any team that forfeits an entire match without an emergency or unforeseen occurrence may be dropped at the sole discretion of the League.
- vii. Only the lowest line(s) may be forfeited if a team is unable to fill a line due to sickness, injury or unavailability. If upper Line players are not available or sick, those Lines must be filled from players of lower Lines.
- viii. Exemption from Rule 4.a. You can move up more than one Line if it is necessary to fill higher Lines. Those players who fit into this exemption will then revert back to their previous Line position before the forfeit.

- ix. **Forfeiting a line does not nullify the anti-stacking/Line restriction rule.**
- b. **Resignations: If a player cannot finish a started game for any reason, that game will be considered a resignation.**
 - i. **The team that resigned will be awarded the points that they had already earned but lose that game.**
 - ii. **If a player resigns during a game, he/she may be able to play subsequent games that day on that Line.**
 - iii. **The team that resigned and cannot finish their game(s) will lose the Standing Points for that Line and they will be awarded to the opposing team.**

11. Fees:

- a. **Players fees will be determined from year to year by the Coordinator to cover all costs of the League to include, but not be limited to the cost of trophies, prizes, medals, and other paraphernalia to be determined by the Coordinator.**
- b. **This shall be reviewed on an annual basis.**

12. Semi Finals and Finals:

- a. **There shall be additional Rules for the Semi Finals and Finals**
 - i. **During the Semi Finals and Finals, no more than 2 Lines shall be played at any given time.**
 - ii. **All matches will have 2 Line Referees, one chosen from each team. If a team cannot produce a Referee, the opposing team shall appoint 2 Referees.**
 - a. **These Referees shall call kitchen foot faults immediately as seen and these calls shall not be questioned by either team.**
 - b. **They shall only confirm Line calls when asked by any player. The Referee nearest the Line call in dispute shall have preference if the two Referees differ.**
 - c. **They shall confirm if a server's service is illegal only when questioned by the opposing team.**
 - d. **They shall stand on opposite sides of the court at or near the kitchen line.**
 - iii. **Wrist bands will be provided by each team and worn by the first server of each team.**

- iv. Both Semi Finals and Finals will be played at the venue of the higher placed team unless that team's venue is unavailable or not acceptable to the League. If that be the case, the games will be held in the opposing team's venue.**

13. USAPA Regulations:

- a. All players in the Palm Beach County Pickleball League will abide by the USAPA Rules. These rules shall apply unless the League Rules are contrary and then the League Rules shall supersede.**

14. Balls:

- a. Appropriate balls approved by the USAPA will be provided by the home team for all games played. For the Winter 2025 Season the approved ball for Divisions 1 – 7 will be the Franklin X – 40 Outdoor Yellow ball. For Divisions 8 – 13 the approved ball will be the Onix G2 Fuse Outdoor Yellow ball which is stamped USAPA approved. If both Captains agree, Lines may decide to use either outdoor ball instead. All balls shall be new, unused balls.**
- b. Starting the Fall 2025 season, the only ball to be used by ALL Divisions will be the Franklin X – 40 Optic Yellow Outdoor ball.**

15. Paddles and Apparel:

- a. Paddles must conform to USAPA specifications. A player using a paddle not conforming to USAPA Rules will forfeit his matches.**
- b. Inappropriate apparel now includes apparel that approximates the color of the tournament ball. The Captains will have the right to require an apparel change during a non-chargeable time-out. Failure to conform to this Rule may result in a Forfeiture of the match.**

16. Players' Rights and Responsibilities:

- a. Players must remember that they represent their club, and their behavior reflects on their fellow team members. When playing at home, make the visiting team feel welcome. When playing away, remember you are a guest at your opponent's club.**
- b. Players must adhere to the dress code and footwear requirements of the home club.**

- c. A player may request a Line Ref if he feels it is needed, and only under extreme circumstances. The Ref will have authority to overrule calls if requested.
- d. A player may request to have a spectator removed if the spectator is causing a disturbance or conduct violation. At such times, the spectator may be warned or removed at the discretion of the person in charge.
- e. A player may request a rule interpretation from either team Captain.
- f. A player may NOT ask those watching (including the person in charge) whether a ball is in or out, or what the score is.
- g. A player must show good sportsmanlike conduct during all League matches.
- h. Any team violating these rules, or the Code of Conduct, may be suspended for the balance of the season and/or not invited back for the following season at the discretion of the Board of Directors.
- i. Captains and players should familiarize themselves with these rules prior to the start of the season. Captains cannot agree to any situation which violates these rules.

17. Spectators:

- a. Spectators are welcome to watch and enjoy the matches. Their role, however, is restricted to passive observers with no involvement of any kind during the match.
- b. Cell phones and beepers must be turned off on and near the courts where matches are being played.

18. Disputes:

- a. The captains shall try to resolve all disputes "on the spot". When there is a complaint about a member's misbehavior or a dispute that cannot be settled by the captains, each team shall submit a written account of the incident to the League for resolution.
- b. Upon such request, the Captain from each team shall appoint one experienced player from the team or community, which may include the Captain or any Pro's in attendance, to serve as a line ref for that game.
- c. One line ref from each of the two teams competing shall stand on either side of the width of the court in proximity to a kitchen line, and shall have the following duties:
 - i. Referees will call kitchen violations on their own initiative without being asked.

- ii. Or all other faults or violations, such as in or out line calls, referees may confirm or deny a call by players only if a player asks them.
- iii. As to serve violations, baseline foot faults, failing to call out the score or calling an incorrect score, if asked by a player, they will confirm or not. If confirmed, they will issue one warning to the offending player. The next such confirmed violation will result in loss of serve or point.
- iv. Both Line Refs do not need to make or confirm a violation or fault. The line ref in the superior position to see a violation will normally make or confirm a call.
- v. If both line refs cannot confirm or deny a call, then the refs must announce they did not have a good enough view, and the call on the court stands.
- vi. The goal of the line refs is not to be intrusive but to be present for the purpose of preventing further verbal disputes over calls.

19. Board of Directors:

- a. The Board shall be made up of the Coordinator and a representative from different participating teams.
- b. They shall resolve any unsettled team disputes.
- c. They shall establish dates, times, and locations of all matches.
- d. They shall provide weekly reports on team standings to all captains.
- e. They shall adjudicate suspensions for violations of rules.
- f. The Board members shall serve for a term of one year.
- g. The present Board of Directors is made up of:

Walter Gassner – Coordinator
 Howard Shames – Coral Lakes
 Howie Rowling – Four Seasons
 Jill Fowler – Huntington Lakes
 Bill Finkelstein – Polo Club
 Frank Rosenblum – Valencia Bay
 Murray Gendzel – Valencia Reserve
 Janet Carbone – Valencia Sound
 Sid Tweady – Wycliffe CC