

# The CSI Group Play Format - A Comprehensive Guide

7/14/2024

---

Going two-and-out, or even being eliminated early, is a thing of the past! With the CSI Group Play format, all teams are guaranteed at least five matches.\* Stage 1 is a group stage and Stage 2 is a single elimination final bracket. In Stage 1, teams are randomly drawn into five separate matches,\* each usually consisting of 15 racks or 9 racks for ladies teams. The teams that perform the best advance to Stage 2.

Below is a full explanation of the CSI Group Play format.

*\* Excluding factors beyond the control of the CueSports International such as forfeits, drop-out teams, no-shows, byes, etc.*

## BENEFITS

CSI Group Play offers many benefits over other tournament formats.

**No team is eliminated early.** In a double elimination format, 25% of teams are eliminated after only two matches, 50% play only three matches, and 75% play only four matches. With the CSI Group Play format, all teams play at least five matches\* and up to 50% of teams advance to Stage 2 to play even more.

**Know your schedule in advance.** With the CSI Group Play format, you know your entire Stage 1 schedule in advance. This allows you to plan other activities such as meals, Vegas shows, mini-tournaments, local sight-seeing, etc.

**More FargoRate data = better ratings.** More play means more data reported to FargoRate. More data reported to FargoRate means better ratings for everyone. For example, in a hypothetical division with 64 teams, there would be 127 matches using the double elimination format. With the CSI Group Play format, that increases to 191 matches.

## STAGE 1 - GROUP PLAY

In Stage 1, teams are randomly drawn into five separate matches.\* Each match in Stage 1 usually consists of 15 racks or 9 racks for ladies team divisions. Teams that perform the best, determined by the following criteria, in the following order, advance to Stage 2.

### **BCA Pool League Scoring**

1. Match Win %
2. Avg. Performance Margin (handicapped divisions) **or** Rack Win % (non-handicapped divisions)
3. Strength of Schedule (average rating of opposing teams)
4. Shootout

### **USA Pool League Scoring**

1. Match Win %
2. Avg. Points per Match (after handicap points are applied)
3. Strength of Schedule (average rating of opposing teams)
4. Shootout

Because **Match Win Percentage** is the first criteria, winning each match is always the most important goal. The winner of each match receives 1.0 point while the opponent receives zero. If a match ends in a tie score, each team receives 0.5 points. At the end of Stage 1, each team's total points are divided by the number of matches played to determine win percentages.

If two or more teams are tied with the same win percentage, those with a higher **Average Performance Margin** or **Rack Win Percentage** will be ranked higher. Average Performance Margin is used for handicapped divisions and is a comparison of what teams were expected to score in each match versus what they actually scored. The Rack Win Percentage is used in non-handicapped divisions and is the number of racks won divided by the number of racks played. Winning more racks increases a team's Average Performance Margin and Rack Win Percentage so there is always an incentive to win as many racks as possible.

**Strength of Schedule** is the average rating of opposing teams' core rosters. If two or more teams are tied with the same Match Win Percentage and Average Performance Margin or Rack Win Percentage, the teams that played the stronger teams, on average, will be ranked higher.

Although it's extremely unlikely, if one or more teams are tied with the same Match Win Percentage, the same Average Performance Margin or Rack Win Percentage, and the same Strength of Schedule, a **Shootout** will determine the ranking. The cue ball is placed behind the head string and each core player, or eligible sub, for each team shoots alternating spot shots. The team with the most

shots legally pocketed after all players have taken a shot, wins the shootout. If tied after all players have shot, it is sudden death.

## **FIXED GROUPS vs GROUP POOLING**

The structure of Stage 1 can be conducted using **fixed groups** or **group pooling**.

**Fixed Groups** - teams are placed into groups and each team plays every other team within the group, usually once. It is optimum to have groups of six teams so all teams play five matches. However, if the total number of teams is not divisible by six, one or more groups will contain five teams that only play four matches each. For example, if there are 79 teams in a division, there will be nine groups of six teams (54 teams) and five groups of 5 teams (25 teams).

- Advantages - teams within a group play the same teams and the same number of matches. This makes each team's performance directly comparable to the other teams within that group.
- Disadvantages - there can be many teams that play only four matches rather than five. Additionally, forfeits and drop-out teams cause significant problems. If a team in a group of five doesn't show up, the other teams in that group will play only three Stage 1 matches. If a team drops out after playing one or two matches, its remaining matches are forfeits and the stats within the group are no longer perfectly comparable.

**Group Pooling** - the entire field of teams is considered one large group and teams are randomly drawn into five matches. If there are an even number of teams in the division, all teams will be scheduled for the same number of matches (usually five). If there are an odd number of teams in the division, a few teams (usually five) will play four Stage 1 matches. For example, if there are 79 teams in a division, there will be 39 matches (78 teams) in each round with one team in each round having no opponent (5 teams total).

- Advantages - there are fewer byes resulting in more teams playing five matches. In the 79-team example above, 74 teams play five matches compared to 54 teams using fixed groups. Additionally, forfeits and drop-out teams cause fewer and less significant problems.
- Disadvantages - teams do not necessarily play the same teams and therefore, the stats are not *perfectly* comparable.

CSI will usually use group pooling because the advantages usually outweigh the disadvantages. However, fixed groups may be used when deemed appropriate and beneficial.

## **HANDICAPPED vs NON-HANDICAPPED**

Typically, state/regional events are handicapped because the range of team ratings can be quite large. In events with larger fields, such as the BCA Pool League World Championships in Las Vegas, there are many more teams which allow for more divisions of various

skill levels and therefore, those matches are not handicapped. Note that USA Pool League National Championship matches are always handicapped using the proprietary USA Pool League scoring system.

## STAGE 2 - FINAL BRACKET

Stage 2 is a final single elimination bracket. The top performing teams, as determined by the criteria detailed above, plus a number of *random* wild card teams, advance to Stage 2.

### Stage 2 Advancement Table

Each event's Player Guide will have a Stage 2 Advancement Table to specify exactly how many teams will advance to Stage 2, based on performance, and how many wild card teams will be selected. Typically, a maximum of 50% of teams will advance to Stage 2, including wild card teams. The table may look similar to this:

CSI Group Play Stage 2 Advancement Table

TOTAL # TEAMS IN DIVISION	# TEAMS TO STAGE 2 (50% max) <sup>1</sup>	# WILD CARD TEAMS (1 min / 7% max) <sup>2</sup>	STAGE 2 BRACKET SIZE (single elim)	# TEAM PAYOUTS (25% max)
10-17	5-8	1	8	2 or 4
18-33	6-16	1	16	4 or 8
34-65	17-32	1-2	32	8 or 16
66-129	33-64	2-4	64	16 or 32
130-257	65-128	4-8	128	32 or 64
258-513	129-256	9-17	256	64 or 128

See example below.

1. This is the range of the total number of teams that will advance to Stage 2. No more than 50% of the field will advance to Stage 2.
2. This is the number of wild card teams that will be randomly selected for Stage 2. It is a minimum of one (1) and a maximum of 7% of the total number of Stage 2 teams. Teams that have forfeited any Stage 1 match are not eligible to be selected.

**Example:** There are 92 teams in a division. Refer to the row that contains 92 in the first column (66-129). The 4th column of the table shows that the Stage 2 bracket will be a 64-team bracket. Because a maximum of 50% of teams advance, 46 teams will advance to

Stage 2. Because a maximum of 7% of those 46 teams will be random wild card selections, there will be three (3) random wild card teams and 43 teams based on performance. The top 16 teams will earn prize money.

- Total Teams to Stage 2: 92 total teams x 50% = 46 teams
- Wild Card Teams: 46 teams x 7% = 3.22. Since 7% is the maximum, this rounds down to 3 wild card teams.
- Teams by Performance: 46 total teams – 3 wild card teams = 43 teams by performance
- Teams to Win Prize Money: 92 total teams x 25% = 23. Because bracket sizes are 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, etc., This rounds down to 16 teams.

### Seeding

Teams that advance to Stage 2 are seeded in the Stage 2 single elimination bracket by their Stage 1 ranking. **The Stage 2 bracket can, and often will, have some number of byes.** Teams with higher Stage 1 rankings will receive Stage 2 byes first. [Click here](#) for a full explanation of why the Stage 2 bracket may, and often will, have byes.

## SCORING: BCA POOL LEAGUE vs USA POOL LEAGUE

Most events, including the BCA Pool League World Championships, use the win/loss rack scoring method in which the winner of each rack receives one point and the loser receives zero points. USA Pool League events, such as the USA Pool League National Championships, will use the USA Pool League scoring system in which the winner of each rack receives 14 points and the opponent receives one point for each ball he or she pocketed. Click the links below for a more detailed explanation of how the CSI Group Play format works using each scoring system, complete with examples.

- [BCA Pool League - How it Works](#)
- [USA Pool League - How it Works](#)

*\* Excluding factors beyond the control of the CueSports International such as forfeits, drop-out teams, no-shows, byes, etc.*