



Pickleball Rules & Handbook

Introduction

Born Sports League was founded with the vision to strive to make the world a better place through sports by bringing together a diverse and inclusive community to have fun, create a sense of belonging and acceptance, and give back to the communities in which we play. The purpose of BSL is to engage members of the LGBTQ+ community, friends, and allies in healthy, active sports and activities by creating and managing structured games, leagues and tournaments in a safe, consistent, and organized fashion.

Our mission is to bring together LGBTQ+ and ally people to build community through organized sports and create an experience that is inclusive, supportive, affordable, fun, and gives back to the community.

Born Sports League follows these principles in order and in precedence. At no time shall any higher ranked principal be compromised for the sake of another by any official, team, or player.

- 1) **Safety:** All measures will be taken so that any and all activities rank safety as the league's number one priority.
- 2) **Participation / Inclusion:** All people are welcome in BSL games and activities, and participation is fundamental to all involved.
- 3) **Respect:** All people affiliated with BSL, its teams or its events shall treat each other with dignity and respect at all times, both on and off the field.
- 4) **Fun:** The purpose of BSL in its core, is to foster a fun, philanthropic, social environment.
- 5) **Honesty / Fair Play:** It is expected that all players, teams and officials shall adhere to a strict honor code at all times.
- 6) **Competition:** While BSL games and activities keep score and award champions, at no time shall any player, team, or official allow the competitive nature inherent in sports take precedence over any of the above founding principles.



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Section I - BSL League Principles & Conduct

1: BSL League Principles

1.1. Sportsmanship

Officials, players and their guests shall conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner at all times, including both on and off the field. BSL expects the highest level of respect from anyone affiliated or attending our events and conduct unbecoming will not be tolerated at any time.

1.2. Agreement

1.2.1. By participating in an BSL event or activity, each competitor agrees

- a) To be governed by the rules as presented by BSL, both as written and in the spirit and intent of said rules.
- b) To accept any decisions or penalties imposed by said rules.
- c) To respect all aspects of the league's priorities.
- d) To treat all materials, equipment, and venues with great care including the environment in which we are playing. This includes, but is not limited to, garbage, foul language, smoking, illegal substance, weapons, and alcohol policies and damage to property.

1.3. Drug & Weapons Policy

1.3.1. Born Sports League is a drug and weapon-free zone, and any use or distribution of any illegal substances or the possession of any weapons of any kind while attending or engaging in any BSL sponsored events is strictly prohibited.

- a) **Alcohol:** While may or may not be regulated by venue restrictions, any public intoxication will not be tolerated and is subject to disciplinary actions, including ejection from the venue for the remainder of the day.

1.4. Venue Rules

1.4.1. All rules and policies put in place by the venue must be respected and will be strictly enforced. (Such as, no pets, no smoking, no loud music, no alcohol, etc.)

1.5. Discrimination

1.5.1. BSL has a strict no-discrimination policy. If anyone feels they have been discriminated against for any reason they are to report it to league management immediately. Any person affiliated with an BSL event making racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual orientation slurs or actions are subject to disciplinary proceedings up to and including dismissal from the league.

1.6. Bullying & Taunting

1.6.1. Teasing, shouting, arguing, cheering against, complaining, name-calling, excessive swearing, verbally or physically abusing or intimidating players or game officials in any way (even if intended as a joke, but not received in that manner) will not be tolerated under any circumstances, regardless if it occurs in person, off venue, or on-line. Off the field behavior, including at social events, public spaces, or even on social media that project any players, teams or league officials in an aggressive or

highly negative light will be considered the same as behavior on the field, and is subject to the same disciplinary policies and procedures.

1.7. Disciplinary Policies

- 1.7.1. Apply to any infraction listed or unlisted that is deemed unsportsmanlike or is contrary to the BSL core philosophy and principles.
- a) Game Referees, league officials, as well as any Umpires may issue warnings.
 - b) Only BSL Board Members or Sport Officials appointed by the BSL Board can issue Yellow or Red Cards at any time.
 - c) Players receiving a Yellow Card must sit out the remainder of the game.
 - d) All “Cards” remain in place for 6 months from date of issue.
 - e) Upon a second occurrence of unsportsmanlike conduct within the 6 month window, the player shall receive a Red Card, and will be ejected from the venue for the remainder of the day, and receives additional two “game day” suspensions to be enacted upon the next occurring game days (which may occur in a future season). This player will also lose eligibility to participate in the next occurring tournament, both internally and among BSL sponsored traveling teams.
 - f) After the Red Card has been issued, any additional infraction within its 6-month window will constitute a charge of gross misconduct and will be subject to long-term suspension or permanent ejection from the league as determined by the GM and League Officials.
 - g) Players receiving suspensions or ejections may apply, in writing, for reinstatement following a 6-month waiting period.

1.8. Injury Policies

- 1.8.1. Safety is and will always be the number one priority for Born Sports League and the following policies are in place for everyone’s well-being.
- a) Injured players may be replaced or can exit a game at any time without penalties.
 - b) Any injury that incapacitates a player, even if momentarily, will stop active play immediately.
 - c) Any injury to the head that causes any dizziness or unconsciousness must be reported immediately to the attending league officials who shall stop game play to assess the situation. Emergency medical officials will be called for any head related injuries.
 - d) Any injured player that is actively bleeding must exit the field of play and cannot return until the bleeding has stopped or has been treated and covered.
 - e) Injured players that required immediate medical attention must provide a doctor’s note verifying that they are recovered and physically capable prior to returning to active play.

Section II – Pickleball Basics

2: Court & Equipment

2.1. Pickleball Court:

2.1.1. Pickleball is a paddle sport played with a perforated ball on a 20-foot-by-44-foot court with a tennis-type net. The court is divided into right and left service spaces, as well as a non-volley zone, commonly referred to as “the kitchen”. The net height is 36 inches at the sidelines and 34 inches at the center. The court includes 7-foot non-volley zones (kitchen) on both sides of the net, as well as 15-foot service areas. Court markings must follow official USA Pickleball dimensions.

2.1.2. Court Lines & Areas:

2.1.2.1. **Baselines:** The lines parallel to the net at each end of the court.

2.1.2.2. **Sidelines:** Sidelines. The lines perpendicular to the net on each side of the court.

2.1.2.3. **The Kitchen:** The kitchen is a 7-foot area on either side of the net where players are not allowed to hit the ball directly out of the air (volley), meaning they must let the ball bounce before hitting it. The kitchen prevents players from standing directly at the net and spiking the ball with ease.

2.2. Pickleball Paddles & Balls:

2.2.1. Players are encouraged to bring their own pickleball paddle. The venue may have paddles available to rent, but availability is not guaranteed, and a rental fee may apply. Players are allowed to bring their own pickleballs. The game ball may be switched out during the match, provided both Team Captains agree. Players must use USA Pickleball-approved paddles that conform to official size and material regulations. Paddles cannot exceed 17 inches in length and must not contain alterations affecting gameplay. The ball must be an official outdoor or indoor pickleball, made of a perforated polymer material, and approved by USA Pickleball. Players are encouraged to bring their own equipment, though venue rentals may be available.

Section III – Teams

3: Teams

3.1. Number of Players:

3.1.1. Each team will consist of at least 4 but no more than 8 registered players. Teams must have a minimum of 2 players per team for each match.

3.2. Team Names:

3.1.2. While team names may be suggestive or include double entendre, team names that are deemed offensive or disrespectful in any way are not allowed.

3.3. Team Events:

- 3.1.3. May organize chat rooms, social media accounts, practices, or events. However, the Born Sports League code of conduct extends to those locations as well and must be followed in the same manner.

3.4. Player Rotation

- 3.1.4. No player can play more than 2 games in a row unless only 2 players are present (every 3rd game is an automatic loss).

3.5. Beginner Team Composition:

- 3.1.5. To ensure fairness and enhance the league's overall experience, a team in the Beginner Division can only retain a maximum of 50% of its roster in the same division for the next season if any of the following conditions are met:
- a) The Team has kept more than 50% of its roster from the previous season and has won the End of Season Tournament for two consecutive seasons.
 - b) The Team goes undefeated in all non-forfeited matches for a season and wins the End of Season Tournament for that season.

Note: These rules do not apply to the Intermediate or Advanced Divisions.

How to Meet the 50% Roster Limit:

- The Team moves up a division if a higher division exists.
- The Team splits into two new teams that stay in the same division, with each new team keeping 50% or less of the original roster.
- The Team splits into two teams, with only one remaining in the same division, and that team retains 50% or less of the original roster.

Section IV – Players

4: Player Eligibility:

4.1. All players must meet the following criteria:

- a) Must be 18 years or older.
- b) Must have signed liability and conduct forms.
- c) Must have paid registration (or substitution) fees.

4.1. Team Captain

- a) Each team shall have one official "Captain" representing their team. This "Captain" may be substituted should the registered captain be absent.

4.2. No Show:

- a) Players who no-show, without warning or contact, twice during a regular season are subject to removal and replacement by the team captain with League Approval. Players removed from a roster for this reason are not eligible for refunds.

4.3. Absenteeism:

- a) Players who miss three or more regular season game days, regardless of the reason, are subject to removal and replacement by the team captain with League Approval. Players removed from a roster for this reason are not eligible for refunds.

4.4. Substitutions:

- Subs may play on any team under these restrictions:
 - Regular season games only (not tournaments).
 - They must not be a registered member of any team in the league.
 - They must sign a waiver and pay a \$5 “per night” fee prior to playing.
 - The team has less than 2 players in attendance.
 - Each team may only have a maximum of one sub during any regular season game.

Section V - Pickleball Fundamental Rules

5: Fundamental Rules:

5.1. Starting the Match:

- 5.1.1. The match should begin within 5 minutes of the scheduled start time, or within 5 minutes following the conclusion of the previous match. Teams unable to take the court within 5 minutes will forfeit the match, and the match will be canceled.

5.2. Starting Serve:

- 5.2.1. Captains will play a game of Rock, Paper, Scissors. The winner can choose to either serve first or receive first. If the winner chooses to serve, the other team will serve first in the next match.

5.3. Match Format:

- 5.3.1. Teams will play as many matches as possible within a 50-minute time slot, including a 5-minute warm-up and a 5-minute welcome/announcements.

5.4. Scoring:

- 5.4.1. Teams are in charge of keeping their own score. At the end of the match, captains are responsible for verifying and initialing or signing the score as confirmation the sheet is correct. No disputes will be accepted after the night is complete.
- 5.4.2. Scoring System:
 - 5.4.2.1. Only the serving team can score points.
 - 5.4.2.2. Matches are played to 11 points, win by 2.
 - 5.4.2.3. The score must be announced before the ball is served. In doubles, the score is announced using a 3-number system: server’s score, receiver’s score, serve number (either 1 or 2, for the first or second server on the team).

Section VI - Pickleball Match Rules

6: Match Play Rules:

6.1. Serving:

- 6.1.1. Serving Position: The server must stand behind the baseline, on the right side of the court when serving the first point of each match. After each point, the server switches sides with their partner, alternating between the right and left sides of the court.

- 6.1.2. Placement: The serve is made diagonally, from the right side of the server's court to the opponent's right service court, and vice versa when on the left side. If the serve lands within the kitchen, the serve is considered out.
- 6.1.3. Serve Rotation: Each player on a team serves once before switching to the other team. The first server continues serving until their team loses a point, after which the second player on that team serves. Exception: For the first point of every match, the team that serves first only receives one serve.
- 6.1.4. Underhand Serve: The serve must be underhand, meaning the paddle must contact the ball below the server's waist (navel level or lower).
- 6.1.5. Let Serve: If the ball hits the net and lands in the service court, the ball is still in play, and the rally continues as usual.
- 6.1.6. Faults: If the serving team commits a fault (e.g., serving out of bounds or into the net), they lose their serve.

6.2. Double Bounce Rule

- 6.2.1. The ball must bounce once on each side of the court before players can start volleying. The receiving team must let the ball bounce before returning it, and the serving team must let the return bounce before playing it.

6.3. The Kitchen Rules:

- 6.3.1. **Volleys:** Players cannot volley (a ball that hasn't bounced) the ball while standing inside the kitchen. Players must be outside the kitchen when hitting the ball in the air.
- 6.3.2. **Entering the Kitchen:** A player can step into the kitchen, but cannot hit a volley from within it. If you do hit a volley from inside or over the line of the kitchen, it's a fault.
- 6.3.3. **After the Ball Bounces:** A player is allowed to enter the kitchen after the ball bounces to hit the ball.

6.4. Faults: A fault occurs when:

- A. A serve doesn't land in the correct service box.
- B. A player volleys the ball while standing in the kitchen.
- C. The ball is hit out of bounds.
- D. The ball bounces twice on the same side.
- E. A player steps on or over the baseline while serving.
- F. A player touches at any point during a point.

6.5. Time Expiration:

- 6.5.1. Time expires after 50 minutes (excluding the 5-minute warm-up). If time runs out and the teams are tied in points, the team that wins the next point will win the set. If two teams have the same number of wins, a point differential method will be used to break the tie. This means we compare how many total points a team has scored versus how many points they have given up to their opponents.
 - 6.5.1.1. How to calculate point differential:
 - A. Add up all the points your team scored in every game.
 - B. Add up all the points your opponents scored against your team in every game.

- C. Subtract the total opponent points from your total points scored.

Section VII - Pickleball Tournament Regulations

7: Tournament Details:

7.1. Timing:

- 7.1.1. Following each regular season, and on special occasions, Born Sports League may host a special Pickleball tournament under these guidelines.

7.2. Rules:

- 7.2.1. Tournaments typically follow the same rules as regular season matches, with some variations.

7.3. Eligibility:

- 7.3.1. To play in the tournaments, each player must qualify under these guidelines.
 - a) Play on a competing team: As a regular roster player.
 - b) Tournament Substitutions: No substitutions are allowed during tournament play, at least 2 rostered players must be present in order to compete.

7.4. Seeding:

- 7.4.1. Tournament seeds will be based on regular season (or pool play) placings.
- 7.4.2. Seeding two-way ties are broken:
 - A. First by direct Game-to-Game record.
 - B. Total points scored.
 - C. Least points scored.

7.5. Home Team:

- 7.5.1. Higher seed team is the “Home” team and shall serve first.

7.6. Match Tiebreakers:

- 7.6.1. If teams are tied at the end of a match, tiebreakers may be used to determine the winner. Common tiebreakers include:
 - 7.6.2. Head-to-head record: The team that won the previous match between the tied competitors is declared the winner.
 - 7.6.3. Average score: The team with the highest average score in the tournament is declared the winner.
 - 7.6.4. Most matches won: The team that won the most matches during the tournament is declared the winner.

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February 16th, 2025 - Revised Team Player Game Play Rotation Rules

