



2025
RULEBOOK
CHANGE DOCUMENT

2025 USA Pickleball Rulebook Change Document

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USA Pickleball Rulebook Change Document Purpose and Explanation

Purpose:

The purpose of the USA Pickleball Rulebook Change Document is to document why rules from 2024 changed or are new in 2025. For that reason, the Change Document assists players and referees in understanding the changes. It also serves as a retrievable historical document for future reference, helping future rule writers understand the history behind a rule change.

New words added to 2025 Rules are highlighted in **this color** to make it easier to see the changes.

The Change Document should not be considered a substitute or a replacement for the Rulebook.

Explanation:

Each entry below starts with a two-digit number, followed by a four-digit number. The first number is just a numerical listing for easy retrieval purposes. The number in the Table of Contents is a link; click on the link to jump to the item. The second number correlates to the rule change ID number in the online rule change database available at rules.usapickleball.org. Each ID number in the body of the document is a link to that item in the rule change database. A short descriptor has been added after the four-digit ID number. If the number and descriptor have **red text**, that rule change is considered a change of substance/significance for 2025.

After that number is the rule as it appears in the 2024 Rulebook. Following that is how the rule will appear in the 2025 Rulebook. The last section for each entry explains why the change was made.

In some cases, an 'Additional Insight' section was included to provide additional details on the change.

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1. **1340: Calling Faults on Opponents**

Note: This also incorporates rule change ID #1368 and #1386

2024 Rule:

13.D.1.c. Players may call non-volley zone and service foot faults on the opponent's end of the court. If there is any disagreement among players about the called foot fault, a replay shall occur.

13.D.1.d. For non-officiated matches, if a player believes an opponent has committed any type of fault other than a service or non-volley zone foot fault as noted in Section 7 – Fault Rules, they may mention the specific fault to the opponent(s) but they have no authority to enforce the fault. The final decision on fault resolution belongs to the player that allegedly committed the fault.

2025 Rule:

13.D.1.c. Players may call non-volley zone **faults** and service foot faults on the opponent's end of the court. Claims of non-volley zone faults and service foot faults on opponents must be called as soon as the claimed fault is detected. If there is any disagreement **between teams** about the called fault, a replay shall occur.

13.D.1.d. For non-officiated matches, if a player believes an opponent has committed any type of fault **other than a service or non-volley zone fault** as noted in Section 7 – Fault Rules, they may mention the specific fault to the opponent(s) but they have no authority to enforce the fault. The final decision on fault resolution belongs to the player that allegedly committed the fault.

(New) Rule 7.O. Any disagreement between partners on a fault call will be decided to the benefit of their opponents.

Why this rule change was implemented:

The current wording of the rule could be interpreted to prevent a player from calling an NVZ fault where their opponent touches the NVZ with either their paddle or their hand. Separating the fault clauses and removing the 'foot' references indicate that any NVZ fault can be called.

The 2024 rule wording "any disagreement among players" in 13.D.1.c. may reasonably be interpreted as a replay if partners disagree. Replacing those words with "any disagreement between teams" clarifies that disagreement between partners is not grounds for a replay.

Additional Insight: The general principle is that when partners disagree, they express doubt, and the benefit of that doubt should go to their opponents. This is described in Rule 6.C. as a principle of player-made line calls: "... all questionable calls must be resolved in favor of the opponent." and applied in Rule 6.C.8.: "In doubles play, if one player calls the ball "out" and the other player calls it "in," then doubt exists, and the team's call will be "in" (note: to the benefit of their opponent). Until now, these rules have only been applied to line calls. This 2025 rule change to Rule 13.D.1 c. and new Rule 7.0 extends that principle to all fault calls where partners disagree.

2. **1341: Penalties After the Match is Over**

2024 Rule: None

2025 Rule (New)

(New) 13.G.4. Behavior raising to the level of a warning or foul after the match is over while a player is still on court shall be brought to the attention of the Tournament Director. Based on this information, the Tournament Director may impose a Verbal Warning, Technical Warning, or Technical Foul that will be applied to the offending player's next match at the tournament.

Why this rule change was implemented:

Currently, the least punitive penalty that a Tournament Director can assess for bad behavior between matches is a match forfeit, most of which accompanies a decision to remove the player from future competition. With this change, Tournament Directors can now penalize an action that doesn't rise to the level of a match forfeit but would have caused a warning or fault if it had occurred during a match.

Additional Insight:

This change will require referees to notify the Tournament Director of such behavior if, for example, a player throws a paddle after a match is over and that player is still on the court where the match was played. It's incumbent on the referee to make these notifications timely so that the penalty, if any, can be applied to the next match. If the next match is officiated, then the referee for that match will have to be notified of any penalty, make the notations on the scoresheet, and notify all the players during the pre-match briefing. If the next match is not officiated, then the Head Referee or Tournament Director will have to inform the players to ensure the penalty, if any, is applied to the next match before it starts.

If the behavior occurs after the player's last tournament match, the matter becomes a follow-up action of the Tournament Director.

3. **1363: Forfeit Scoring**

2024 Rule:

12.H.1. Actual game scores at the time of retirement shall be reported for the player/team that retires. The opponents shall be awarded all points necessary for proper match completion, ensuring a two-point margin. For example, in Game 1 of a two-out-of-three games match, a team with 10 points retires when the score is 10-5. The final scores will be recorded as:

"12-10, 11-0"

Match scores after a rule-based forfeit, ejection or expulsion shall be reported as:

Two out-of-three games format: "11-0, 11-0"

Three out-of-five format: "11-0, 11-0, 11-0"

15- or 21-point format: "15-0" or "21-0"

2025 Rule:

12.H.1. Actual game scores at the time of retirement shall be reported for the player/team that retires. The opponents shall be awarded all points necessary for proper match completion, ensuring a two-point margin. For example, in Game 1 of a two-out-of-three games match, a team with 10 points retires when the score is 10-5. The final scores will be recorded as:

“12-10, 11-0”

Scores for a rule-based match forfeit, an ejection or an expulsion shall be reported as:

Two out-of-three games format: “11-0, 11-0”

Three out-of-five format: “11-0, 11-0, 11-0”

15- or 21-point format: “15-0” or “21-0”

The score for any game forfeit shall be reported as 11-0, 15-0, or 21-0, as appropriate for the game format.

Why this rule change was implemented:

The proposed change appropriately establishes a necessary distinction between scoring for a match forfeit and scoring for a game forfeit. The current rule's sole use of the term "match scores" appeared to indicate that the scores for the entire match are X-0, X-0 even when there was only one game forfeit. The amended rule accomplishes the proposal more succinctly without relying on examples to convey the intent.

4. [1368](#): See Item 1. [ID 1340]

5. [1372](#): Plane of the Net Faults

2024 Rule:

11.I. Plane of the Net. Crossing the plane of the net prior to striking the ball is a fault. After striking the ball, a player or anything the player is/was wearing or carrying may cross the plane of the net. The player may not touch any part of the net system, the opponent's court, or the opponent while the ball is still live.

2025 Rule:

11.I. Plane of the Net. Crossing the plane of the net prior to striking the ball is a fault. **Immediately** after striking the ball, a player or anything the player is/was wearing or carrying may cross the plane of the net. The player may not touch any part of the net system, the opponent's court, or the opponent while the ball is still live. **After striking the ball, the allowance to cross the plane of the net only applies in the course of executing the current strike of the ball and for continuation specifically associated with the current strike of the ball.**

Why this rule change was implemented: The current rule does not define when a player who has struck the ball can cross the net plane other than the words, “After striking the ball.” The new rule change defines how long after striking the ball this action is permitted and for which shot the permission applies. The apparent loophole this rule is addressing is the situation where Player A hits the ball, but their partner, Player B, is

the player who crosses the plane of the net. The 2024 rule could be interpreted that Player B could cross the plane of the net even though it was Player A who actually hit the ball.

Additional insight: Some may wonder how long the player who struck the ball can stay 'over there' after legally crossing the net plane. There is no time limit because being on the other side of the net plane is 'self-limiting.' In other words, the resulting disadvantage of being 'over there' makes establishing a parameter unnecessary.

6. **1384: Define the Act of Volleying**

2024 Rule:

9.B.1. The act of volleying the ball includes the swing, the follow-through, and the momentum from the action.

9.B.2. If the paddle touches the non-volley zone during the volley motion, before or after contacting the ball, it is a fault.

9.H. There is no violation if a player returns the ball while their partner is standing in the non-volley zone.

2025 Rule:

9.B.1 The act of volleying begins when the ball is struck out of the air before bouncing (volleyed) and ends when the player's movement from the follow-through action (momentum) stops.

9.B.2 (Deleted)

9.H There is no violation if a player returns the ball while their partner is standing in the non-volley zone as long as the partners, including anything the partners are wearing or carrying, do not contact each other during the act of volleying.

Why this rule change was implemented:

The current rule defines the "act of volleying" inconsistently with other rules. This rule change simplifies the "act of volleying." Most notably, the change deletes "the swing" from the "act of volleying."

The primary impact of this change for 2025 is that it will no longer be a fault if a player touches the non-volley-zone (NVZ) before hitting the volley.

Additional Insight:

Current (2024) rules 9.B.1 and 9.B.2 were established in 2012, but there is no retrievable documentation explaining why the specific language of those rules was chosen. Much of the change for 2025 attempts to make existing rules consistent.

Rule 9.B.1 The revised 9.B.1 rewords the description of the act of volleying to clearly state that it begins with the strike of the ball (i.e., the volley) and not "the swing." The current inclusion of "the swing" before striking the ball has no apparent benefit or relevance. Furthermore, there is no easy determination when "the swing" starts. Removing "the swing" is now consistent with current rule 9.D, which addresses the

push-off scenario. A fault under current Rule 9.D is determined by the strike of the ball (i.e., the volley), not the entire act of volleying, which currently includes “the swing.” In addition, the change to 9.B.1 is an editorial change to better describe the act of volleying as ending when momentum stops.

Rule 9.B.2 This rule is no longer necessary and was deleted. It was deemed not required because the “...before or after...” part of Rule 9.B was no longer applicable since the volley now starts with the strike of the ball. It was deemed redundant to what is covered in Rule 9.B.

Because the 2025 Rule excludes “the swing”, the paddle touching the NVZ before the volley will no longer be a fault. The phrase “after contacting the ball” is unnecessary since that is, by default, now part of the act of volleying.

This change will require referees to adapt to two scenarios associated with NVZ faults. The first is not calling a fault when a paddle touches the NVZ before the volley.

The other circumstance that players and referees need to be aware of is the change this means to the ‘two become one’ adage for NVZ foot faults. Until this rule changed, if a player swung at the ball, hit it, and then knocked their partner into the NVZ due to their momentum, it was a fault on the player who was knocked into the NVZ, even though they didn’t hit it. Now, however, with this change, a timing issue comes into play. If the player swinging at the ball knocks their partner into the NVZ but is no longer in contact with the partner (who is touching the NVZ) before they strike the ball (i.e., before they hit the volley), there is no NVZ fault. If, however, they strike the ball and their momentum knocks their partner into the NVZ, it is still an NVZ fault. The same holds for items the person hitting the volley is carrying or wearing.

Experienced players will recall that the serve rules at one time also included the swing in the requirement that the complete score be called before the serve. Specifically, a fault was called if a player started to swing to make the serve before the score call was completed. Because it was difficult to determine when “the swing” began, that rule was also changed to base it on when the ball was struck, which is much more objective and manageable to enforce consistently. This change will improve the NVZ fault rules similarly and is consistent with Rule Writing Priorities #2 and #3 of the Rulebook Appendix.

7. [1386](#): See Item 1 [#1340]

8. [1391](#): Calls Made by Players

2024 Rule:

13.D.1.b. Players call all lines on their end of the court, including non-volley zone and service foot faults.

2025 Rule:

13.D.1.b. Players make all line calls, non-volley zone fault calls, and service foot fault calls on their end of the court.

Why this rule change was implemented:

The rewording makes the rule much easier to understand and prevents confusion in other areas of the rule book. This change revises the language in the rule explanation to show that line calls, service foot faults, and NVZ faults are three independent concepts and that any other reference to 'line calls' in the rule book does not, by extension, include service foot faults or NVZ faults.

Additional Insight:

"Line calls" are defined in 3.A.19:

"Line Call – A loud word(s) spoken by a player or line judge(s) to indicate to the referee and players that a live ball has not landed in the required court space".

Line calls are "ball only" faults and are not comprised of NVZ faults or service foot faults. In the 2024 rule, the problematic word is "including." It is misleading to suggest that NVZ faults and service foot faults are included in the rules involving "Line calls."

9. [1414](#): Definition of Rally**2024 Rule**

3.A.30 Rally - Continuous play that occurs after the serve and before a fault.

2025 Rule

3.A.30 Rally - Continuous play that occurs after the serve and before a fault **or valid hinder.**

Why this rule change was implemented:

This change reflects the fact that a valid hinder may also conclude a rally.

10. [1454](#): Distraction Clarification**2024 Rules:**

3.A.7. Distraction – Physical actions by a player that are 'not common to the game' that, in the judgment of the referee, may interfere with the opponent's ability or concentration to hit the ball. Examples include, but are not limited to, making loud noises, stomping feet, waving the paddle in a distracting manner, or otherwise interfering with the opponent's concentration or ability to hit the ball.

11.J. Distractions. Players may not distract an opponent when the opponent is about to play the ball. If in the judgment of the referee a distraction has occurred, the referee shall immediately call a fault on the offending team

2025 Rules:

3.A.7. Distraction – Physical actions by a player that are ‘not common to the game’ that, in the judgment of the referee, interfere with the opponent’s ability or concentration to hit the ball. Examples include, but are not limited to, making loud noises, stomping feet, **and** waving the paddle in a distracting manner.

11.J. Distractions. Players **shall** not distract an opponent when the opponent is about to play the ball. If, in the judgment of the referee, a **player has distracted their opponent**, the referee shall immediately call a fault on the offending team. **See Rule 3.A.7.**

Why this change was implemented:

Using the word “may” in the first sentence of the 2024 rule text of 3.A.7 is unnecessary. Referees either determine whether a distraction occurred or did not; there is no time when referees may not call a distraction when one exists or may call one when one does not exist.

Lastly, the other change to 3.A.7 is to make it easier to read by removing repeated words in the first and second sentences.

The change to Rule 11.J also removes the word ‘may’ for similar reasons. The other changes to 11.J are for easier reading and to refer to the definition of ‘distraction’ in Rule 3.A.7.

11. [1455](#): Release Not Visible Clarification

2024 Rule:

4.A.6 In officiated matches, the server’s release of the ball must be visible to the referee and receiver. In matches without a referee, the server’s release of the ball must be visible to the receiver. There is no fault if the release is not visible to the referee or receiver.

2025 Rule:

4.A.6 In officiated matches, the server’s release of the ball must be visible to the referee and receiver. In matches without a referee, the server’s release of the ball must be visible to the receiver. **A replay as determined in accordance with Rule 4.A.9 shall occur when the release is not visible.**

Why this change was implemented:

Stating that there is no fault is unnecessary. The absence of a fault statement means there is no fault. The amendment to reference back to 4.A.9 eliminates the need to repeat the criteria covered in 4.A.9.

12. [1460](#): NVZ Definition

2024 Rule:

2.B.3 Non-Volley Zone (NVZ). the area of the court, specific to each team, on either side of the net bounded by a line between the two sidelines (non-volley zone line) parallel to and 7 feet (2.13 m) from the net. All NVZ lines are part of the NVZ.

2025 Rule:

2.B.3 Non-Volley Zone (NVZ). The area of the court, specific to each team, on either side of the net bounded by the non-volley zone line. The non-volley zone line is a line between the two sidelines parallel to and 7 feet (2.13 m) from the net. All NVZ lines are part of the NVZ.

Why this change was implemented:

The change provides a minor but accurate editorial clarification.

13. [1461](#): Clarification of Serve Placement

2024 Rule

4.A.2. Placement. The server must serve to the correct service court (the court diagonally opposite the server). The serve may clear or touch the net and must clear the NVZ and the NVZ lines. The serve may land on any other service court line.

2025 Rule:

4.A.2 Placement. The server must serve to the service court diagonally opposite their correct position. The ball may clear or touch the net and must clear the NVZ and the NVZ lines. The ball may land on a service court line.

Why this change was implemented:

This change is more grammatically correct. The word "serve" can be a verb or a noun. One could think of the serve as the action of the player. However, the noun "ball" is more defined and reads better. In the current context, the use of the words "any other" could imply that the NVZ has service lines.

14. [1462](#): Tolerance for Net Measurement

2024 Rule:

2.C.5. Center Strap and Height. A center strap is recommended for a permanent net and must be placed at the center of the net to enable easy adjustment to the 34-inch (86.36-cm) requirement at center. The top shall be 36 inches (91.44 cm) high at the sidelines.

2025 Rule:

2.C.5. Net Height Measurement:

Sidelines - At the location where the net crosses the sideline markers, the top of the net shall be 36 inches (+/- .25 inches) (91.44 +/- 0.635 centimeters) from the playing surface.

Center - At the center point on the court that is equidistant from both sideline markers (10 feet from each sideline), the top of the net shall be 34 inches (+/- .25 inches) (86.36 +/- 0.635 centimeters) from the playing surface. If there is a center strap located 10 feet from the sidelines, the top of the net at the center strap shall be 34 inches (+/- .25 inches) (86.36 +/- 0.635 centimeters) from the playing surface.

Why this change was implemented:

This clarifies that the height at the center is measured to the net and not to the top of the center strap. Providing a tolerance for the net height helps avoid potentially lengthy delays for net adjustments for minor deviations in the center. Sideline heights on permanent nets are usually difficult or impossible to adjust.

15. [1472](#): Clarify Coin Flip Choices

2024 Rule:

5.A.1. Any fair method shall be used to determine which player or team has first choice of end, serve, receive, or defer (e.g., a 1 or 2 written on the back of the score sheet, flipping a coin). If the winner chooses to serve or receive first, the loser chooses the starting end. If the winner chooses the starting end, the loser chooses to serve or receive. Once a selection has been made, it cannot be changed.

2025 Rule:

5.A.1 Any fair method shall be used to determine which player or team has first choice of end, serve, receive, or defer (e.g., a 1 or 2 written on the back of the score sheet, flipping a coin). Once a selection has been made, it cannot be changed.

Why this change was implemented:

It is unnecessary to describe or explain how the choices play out. The current and proposed decision descriptions are self-evident.

16. [1473](#): Grammar Change

2024 Rule:

4.M. Service Faults. During the service, it is a fault against the server resulting in loss of serve if:

2025 Rule:

4.M Service Faults. During the **serve**, it is a fault against the server resulting in a loss of serve if:

Why this change was implemented:

This change is more grammatically correct.

17. [1475](#): Rule Reference

2024 Rule

7.I. A ball in play that is stopped by a player before it becomes dead (e.g., catching or stopping a ball in flight before it makes contact with the playing surface). The fault is on the player who stopped the ball. Exception: See Rule 4.B.9.a.

2025 Rule:

7.I A ball in play that is stopped by a player before it becomes dead (e.g., catching or stopping a ball in flight before it makes contact with the playing surface). The fault is on the player who stopped the ball. Exception: See [Rules 4.B.10 and 4.K](#).

Why this change was implemented:

Rule 4.K is another exception to this rule and should also be referenced.

18. [1477](#): Timeout After Medical Timeout

2024 Rule

12.F.2. During a match, if a player/team cannot immediately continue after the 15-minute medical time-out period has expired, a Retirement will be imposed.

2025 Rule

12.F.2. During a match, if a player/team cannot immediately continue after the 15-minute medical time-out period has expired, a Retirement will be imposed. [\(See also Rule 10.B.2.c.\)](#)

Why this change was implemented:

To provide the appropriate cross-reference.

Additional Insight: This will also reconcile what would appear to be two conflicting rules. One which says the Retirement will be imposed after 15 minutes and another that allows use of a regular time-out after 15 minutes.

19. [1482](#): Editorial Consolidations

2024 Rules:

5.B.3. In a match with two out of three games to 11 points, in game three, the teams will switch ends when the first team reaches a score of 6. Serve remains with the player holding serve. Exception: If the first game of such match was forfeited due to late arrival, the teams will not switch ends during game three.

5.B.4. In a game to 15 points, the teams will switch ends when the first team reaches a score of 8. Serve remains with the player holding serve.

5.B.5. In a game to 21 points, the teams will switch ends when the first team reaches a score of 11. Serve remains with the player holding serve.

5.B.6. End Change Time-Out. One minute is allowed to switch ends during a game. Rule 10.A.5 shall be used to continue play.

5.B.7. Once the end change point has been scored, a technical foul resulting in the loss of a point for the serving team shall have no impact on the completion of the end change.

5.B.8. In a match with three out of five games to 11 points, in game five, the teams will switch ends when the first team reaches a score of 6. Serve remains with the player holding serve.

5.B.9. If the end change fails to be executed per Rules 5.B.3, 5.B.4, 5.B.5 or 5.B.8, the end change will be executed when realized. It is not a fault on either team, score is not impacted and serve remains with the player holding the serve.

2025 Rules:

5.B.3. In matches that consist of a single game, the teams will change ends at the midpoint based on the match format. Examples: Change ends at 6 for game to 11; 8 for a game to 15; or 11 for a game to 21. Serve remains with the player holding serve.

5.B.4. In matches that consist of multiple games, the teams will change ends at the midpoint of the last game based on the match format. Example: Change ends at 6 for the last game to 11. Serve remains with the player holding serve. Exception: If the first game was forfeited due to a no-show, the end change will not occur in the last game since each team will have played the same number of games on each end.

5.B.5. End Change Time-Out. One minute is allowed to change ends during a game. Rule 10.A.5 shall be used to continue play.

5.B.6. Once the end change point has been scored, a technical foul resulting in the loss of a point for the serving team shall have no impact on the completion of the end change.

5.B.7. If the end change fails to be executed per Rules 5.B.3 or 5.B.4, the end change will be executed when realized. It is not a fault on either team, the score is not impacted and the serve remains with the player holding the serve.

Why this change was implemented:

This is purely editorial and consolidates 7 rules into 5 rules.

20. [1492](#): “Out” Call Clarification

Note: This also incorporates Item #30 [ID1656]

2024 Rule:

6.C.7. All “out” calls must be made prior to the ball being hit by the opponent or before the ball becomes dead.

6.C.8. In doubles play, if one player calls the ball “out” and the partner calls it “in,” then doubt exists and the team’s call will be “in”. Any player may appeal a line call to the referee. If the referee did not see the ball, the ball is considered “in.”

6.C.9. “Out” line calls must be promptly signaled by voice and/or hand signal (as described in Rule 13.E.2).

The Players

- Players should not question or comment on an opponent’s call, although any player may appeal a rally-ending line call to the referee before the next serve occurs.

2025 Rule:

6.C.7. All “out” calls must be promptly signaled by voice and/or hand signal.

6.C.7.a. If a player/team returns the ball, the “out” call shall be made before the opponent hits the ball or the ball becomes dead.

6.C.7.b. If a player/team does not return the ball, they may make an “out” call, appeal the call to the referee, or defer to their opponents to make the line call up until the next serve occurs.

6.C.8. In doubles play, if one player calls the ball “out” and the partner calls it “in,” then doubt exists and the team’s call will be “in.” Any player may appeal the team’s call to the referee or defer a line call to their opponent up until the next serve occurs. If the referee or opponent did not see the ball, the ball is considered “in.”

6.C.9. Deleted.

The Players (from page 1 of the Rulebook)

- Players should not question or comment on an opponent’s call.

Why this change was implemented:

These changes put all “out” call guidance in the same rule set by eliminating a separate Rule 6.C.9 and some, but not all, the guidance in The Player section on page 1 of the Rulebook. These rule changes also clear up the “out” call guidance for players in officiated and non-officiated play and place them in the same rule set. These also bring the appeal guidance in 'The Players' section on page 1 into Rule 6.C.8.

Additional Insight:

Rule 6.C.7 is an important rule. While the original rule text has existed in various forms since at least 2016, the objective in the previous versions of 6.C.7 was to prevent a player from making a play on the ball, seeing the result of their shot, and then calling the ball hit to them ‘out’ if they didn’t like the outcome of their shot. They also could not appeal (to the referee) that line call after the opponent hits the ball or the ball becomes dead. Therefore, Rule 6.C.7 has always served an essential purpose in the game by eliminating what has commonly been called the “two chance” option.

Some players, however, have applied Rule 6.C.7 to all balls that land on their side of the net, even those that they don’t return. For example, if a ball lands out, but the ball immediately hits the player’s leg and becomes dead. Some opponents have said that they can no longer call it out as soon as the ball hits the leg. This rule change clarifies that is not the intent. By separating Rule 6.C.7 into two rules to account for two situations: when a player returns a ball and when they don’t, it is now clear why Rule 6.C.7 has two sets of circumstances and, thus, two subset rules.

Some may initially question why a player has until the next serve occurs to call a ball hit to them “out.” A time frame is essential to keep the appropriate game flow. ‘Until the next serve occurs’ already has an established precedent in the rules. Two complementary rules already use the same time frame: Rule 13.D.1.a, and more directly, Rule 13.F.3 a.

To those who think some players will take advantage of this, extend their decision, and make the server wait or wait to serve themselves before calling the ball “out,” the rules already address that kind of delay. If it is a match with a referee, and the referee is ready to call the score, but the player hasn’t yet made a call or appealed to the referee, then by rule, the ball is presumed “in.” When the referee deems the players are ready or should be ready, then they call the score with the ball scored as “in.” If the player then says, “No that ball was out,” that’s fine. That happens occasionally now when the referee does not hear an “out” call. But if it happens at a frequency that disrupts the flow of the game, then the referee could issue a verbal or technical warning for delay of game.

Could a player take advantage of this and try to frustrate their opponent by delaying an “out” call? Certainly, but recall that can only happen for close line calls. Besides, if a player is committed to a lack of sportsmanship with such antics, they could just purposely line up incorrectly before every rally until the referee puts them in the correct position.

If there is no referee and the player or team repeatedly does not make a timely call, this situation is covered by Section 1 of the rulebook under The Players. Several outcomes for this type of impasse (and others) are laid out in the fourth bullet in that section.

21. 1511: Rally Scoring

2024 Rule: None for Doubles

2025 Rule:

(New) 12.B.1 (Provisional Rule) Rally Scoring Option. The Tournament Director shall have the option to use rally scoring. This includes singles and doubles round-robins, team play, and singles double-elimination. Also, for doubles, double-elimination is not a rally scoring option. For 2025, all USAP Golden Ticket events and the USAP National Championships will use side-out scoring. All standard rules shall apply to rally scoring except as otherwise provided herein and in Rules 4.B.3.a, 4.B.6, 4.B.6.c, 4.B.6.d, 4.B.6.e, 4.F.1, 4.G.1, and 4.J.1.

(New) 12.B.1.a Game Scoring Format. Game scoring shall be to 11, 15, or 21 points. Matches may consist of one game, best two of three games, or best three of five games. For inclement weather considerations, the Tournament Director may approve game scoring to 7 points, with an end change at 4 points in a single-game match or in the tiebreaker game of a multiple-game match.

(New) 12.B.1.b Point Scoring. A point is scored by the player or team that wins a rally, except as provided for in 12.B.1.c.

(New) 12.B.1.c Scoring the Game-Winning Point. The game-winning point can only be scored by the serving player or team. When a player or team is at game point and the opponent serves and loses the rally, it is a side out and no point is awarded.

4.B.3 (No change)

(New) 4.B.3.a (Provisional Rule) Rally Scoring Option. After the server loses the rally or faults, a side out will occur and service is awarded to the opponent.

4.B.6 Doubles. Both players on a team will serve before a side out is declared, except at the start of each game, when only the starting server will serve. The starting server of each game is therefore designated as “Second Server” for scoring purposes, since a side out will occur once a rally is lost or a fault is committed by the serving team and service is awarded to the opposing team. **(Provisional Rule) For the rally scoring option, one player on a team will serve before a side out is declared.**

4.B.6.a and 4.B.6.b. (No change)

4.B.6.c. After each side out, service begins with the player correctly positioned on the right/even side of the court according to the team’s score. This player is referred to as “First Server” and the partner is “Second Server.” **(Provisional Rule) For the rally scoring option, after each side out, service begins with the player correctly positioned on the right/even side of the court according to the team’s score.**

4.B.6.d. The First Server will serve, alternating service sides after each point is won, until a rally is lost or the server’s team commits a fault. **(Provisional Rule) For the rally scoring option, the server will alternate service sides after each point is won, until a rally is lost or the server’s team commits a fault.**

4.B.6.e. After the First Server’s team loses a rally or faults, the Second Server will serve from the correct position and will alternate serving positions as long as the serving team continues to win points. **(Provisional Rule) For the rally scoring option, a side out occurs after the server’s team loses a rally or commits a fault.**

4.F Scoring. (No change)

(New) 4.F.1 (Provisional Rule) Rally Scoring Option. A player or team scores a point for each rally won except game point is scored only when serving.

4.G Points. (No change)

(New) 4.G.1 (Provisional Rule) Rally Scoring Option. A point is scored by winning the rally except game point is scored only when serving.

4.J Calling the Score in Doubles Matches. (No change)

4.J.1 (Provisional Rule) Rally Scoring Option – Calling the Score in Doubles Matches. The proper sequence for calling the score is server score then receiver score as two numbers. (e.g., “one – zero.”)

Why this rule change was implemented:

This rule change was implemented to accommodate strong interest in and use of rally scoring, especially in specific locations worldwide, the ever-expanding league,

tournament, and recreational play. USA Pickleball introduced rally scoring for singles in May of 2024 as an optional format to traditional side out scoring. The positive reception and use of rally scoring in singles is well documented and resulted in similar requests for official rules to cover the doubles game. This rule change addresses that interest.

Please note that these are Provisional Rules for 2025. After a year, the rule will be evaluated to either continue as provisional, change, formally adopt, or remove it from play.

22. [1528](#): Net Posts

2024 Rules:

11.K.Net Posts. The net posts (including connected wheels, arms, net cable, or rope on top of the net post, or other support construction) are positioned out of bounds.

3.A.26. Permanent Object - Any object on or near the court, including hanging over the court, that can interfere with play. Permanent objects include the ceiling, walls, fencing, lighting fixtures, net posts, net post legs, the stands and seats for spectators, the referee, line judges, spectators when in their recognized positions, and all other objects around and above the court.

2025 Rules:

11.K Net Posts It is a fault if a player contacts the net post while the ball is live. A ball contacting the net post results in a dead ball and the team that hit the ball loses the rally.

3.A.26 Permanent Object - Any object on or near the court, including hanging over the court, that can interfere with play. Permanent objects include the ceiling, walls, fencing, lighting fixtures, net posts, (including connected wheels, arms, legs, net cable, or rope on top of the net post, or other support construction), the stands and seats for spectators, the referee, line judges, spectators when in their recognized positions, and all other objects around and above the court.

Why this rule change was implemented:

The current rule stating that net posts are positioned out of bounds is meaningless. Moving the additional components of net posts to the definition of Permanent Object (Rule 3.A.26) allows a revision to Rule 11.K that combines the old sub rules of 11.K.

23. [1532](#): NVZ in Mini-Singles

2024 Rule:

12.O.3.c. Because only one of the courts at an end is in play during a rally (i.e., either the right [even] court or the left [odd] court), the centerline of the court, including the portion that extends through the non-volley zone, serves as the other sideline of the in-play court.

2025 Rule:

12.O.3.c Because only one of the courts at an end is in play during a rally (i.e., either the right [even] court or the left [odd] court), the centerline of the court, including the portion that extends through the non-volley zone, serves as the other sideline of the in-play court. The playing surface on the other side of the centerline, including that portion of the non-volley zone, is out of bounds.

Why this rule change was implemented:

This addition provides a helpful addition in making the rules in Section 12.O fully contained for mini-singles, addressing all of the exceptions to the general rules, including the definitions.

24. [1533](#): Call Faults on Your Partner**2024 Rule:**

13.D.1.a. In the spirit of good sportsmanship, players are expected to call any type of fault on themselves as soon as the fault is committed or detected. The fault call must happen before the next serve occurs.

2025 Rule:

13.D.1.a. In the spirit of good sportsmanship, players are expected to call any type of fault on themselves or their partner as soon as the fault is committed or detected. The fault call must happen before the next serve occurs.

Why this rule change was implemented:

While the intent has always been that partners can and should call faults on their partners, some have interpreted the current rule that partners are not permitted to do so. Since players can and should call faults on themselves, it is appropriate to allow a player to call a fault on their partner. This change clears up any misconception.

25. [1535](#): Foot Placement on the Serve; Closing a Loophole in Serving Rules**2024 Rule:**

4.A.4.c. Neither of the server's feet may touch the playing surface outside the imaginary extension of the sideline or centerline.

2025 Rule:

4.A.4.c. Neither of the server's feet may touch the playing surface outside the serving area.

Why this change was implemented:

This addresses a loophole in the current server foot placement rules that allows a player to straddle the corner of the court with one foot entirely behind the baseline and the other outside the sideline but forward of the baseline. This simple addition clarifies that the imaginary sideline extension and the painted sideline must be considered for legal

foot placement. The serving area is clearly defined, so the words regarding the sideline or imaginary extension are not needed.

26. [1555](#): Ball Release on the Serve

2024 Rule:

4.A.5. The serve shall be made with only one hand releasing the ball. While some natural rotation of the ball is expected during any release of the ball from the hand, the server shall not impart manipulation or spin on the ball with any part of the body immediately prior to the serve. Exceptions: Any player may use their paddle to perform the drop serve (see Rule 4.A.8.a). A player who has the use of only one hand may also use their paddle to release the ball to perform the volley serve.

2025 Rule:

4.A.5. The serve shall be made with only one hand **or the paddle** releasing the ball. While some natural rotation of the ball is expected during any release of the ball, the server shall not impart manipulation or spin on the ball with any part of the body **or the paddle as a result of the release.** **Exception: The server may allow the ball to roll off the face of the paddle by gravity.**

Why this change was implemented:

By clarifying in the first sentence of the rule that either the hand or the paddle may be used to release the ball for a serve, the prior exceptions can be removed since they are no longer exceptions. It also clarifies that spin/manipulation cannot be imparted due to the release, eliminating confusion about whether spin can be imparted to the ball due to the serve itself. The new exception makes it clear that rotation of the ball that occurs when rolling off the paddle is considered natural rotation and does not violate the no-spin rule.

27. [1558](#): Presence of Blood

2024 Rules:

10.B.5. Presence of blood. If blood is present on a player or on the court, play may not resume until the bleeding has been controlled and blood on clothing and the court has been removed.

10.H.2.c. Foreign substances on the court, such as debris, water, or other fluids, shall be removed or cleaned up.

2025 Rules:

10.B.5 Presence of blood. If blood is present on a player or on the **playing surface**, play may not resume until the bleeding has been controlled and blood on clothing and the playing surface has been removed.

10.H.2.c. Foreign substances on the **playing surface**, such as debris, water, or other fluids, shall be removed or cleaned up.

Why this change was implemented:

This change corrects an oversight in the rules. The presence of blood anywhere on the playing surface needs to be cleaned before play can resume, not just if it's on the court.

28. [1563](#): Match-ending Line Call Appeals

2024 Rule:

13.F.3. Only rally-ending line calls may be appealed. Any player may appeal a rally-ending line call to the referee before the next serve occurs.

2025 Rule:

13.F.3. Only rally-ending line calls may be appealed. Any player may appeal a rally-ending line call to the referee before the next serve occurs. **A match ending line call appeal must be requested before the scoresheet is initiated.**

Why this change was implemented:

This change provides a timeframe in which match-ending line calls can be appealed since there is no 'next serve' in this case. While it is recognized that the losing player/team would be appealing, and current practice is to have only the winning player/team initial the scoresheet, this at least establishes a clear and definitive basis for an appeal timeframe.

29. [1646](#): Allowable Tolerance for Net Post Distance Measurements

2024 Rule:

2.C.2 Posts. Net posts should be 22 feet +/- 0.0 Inches (6.71 m) from the inside of one post to the inside of the other post. The maximum diameter of the net post should be 3 inches (7.62 cm).

2025 Rule:

2.C.2 Posts. Net posts should be 22 feet **+/- 1.0 inch** (6.71 m) from the inside of one post to the inside of the other post. The maximum diameter of the net post should be 3 inches (7.62 cm).

Why this change was implemented:

This resolves inconsistencies between the Rulebook and the USA Pickleball Equipment Standards Manual.

30. [1656](#): Editorial Change was incorporated in Item #20 [ID1492]

31. [1667](#): Paddle Marking Clarification

2024 Rule:

2.E.5.c. The only permissible handwritten pan markings allowed on the paddle's playing surface must be for identification purposes only (name, signature, phone, email address.) No aftermarket graphics are allowed on a commercially made paddle.

2025 Rule:

2.E.5.c. The only permissible handwritten pen markings allowed on the paddle's playing surface must be for identification purposes only (name, signature, phone, email address) or an autograph. No aftermarket graphics are allowed on a commercially made paddle.

Why this rule change was implemented:

It is a common practice for players to get their paddles signed by their favorite players or pro instructors during clinics. This change allows such signatures on the paddle without invalidating the paddle's legality.

Additional Insight:

If those autographs, generally made with a Sharpie pen, do not alter the feel of the paddle face, they will now be allowed. There is no rational reason to allow the paddle owner's signature but not the signature/autograph of another.

32. [1686](#): Replace Redundant Rules With a Cross-Reference**2024 Rules:**

4.L. Service Foot Faults. During the serve, when the ball is struck, the server's feet shall:

4.L.1. Not touch the area outside the imaginary extension of the sideline.

4.L.2. Not touch the area on the wrong side of the imaginary extension of the centerline.

4.L.3. Not touch the court, including the baseline.

2025 Rules:

4.L. Service Foot Faults. A fault occurs when the server violates any of the rules listed in Rule 4.A.4.

Why this rule change was implemented:

This functional editorial improvement covers it by reference rather than duplicating the criteria in 4.A.4.

33. [1692](#): Overrule "in" Calls**2024 Rule:**

6.C.12. After the completion of a rally, players may overrule a partner's line call, an officiating team's line call, or an opponent's "in" call to their own disadvantage.

2025 Rule:

6.C.11. Players may overrule a partner's line call, an officiating team's line call, or an in ruling to their own disadvantage.

Why this rule change was implemented:

Players and line judges only make “out” calls. Balls that are “in” are instead ruled “in”, so this revision is a helpful clarification that distinguishes between line calls and “in” rulings. Furthermore, if a player wishes to overrule their opponent’s “in” ruling, they should be able to stop play to concede the rally and not have to wait until it is over, which might be several shots later.

34. [1716](#): Tournament Operations

2024 Rule: None

2025 Rule:

(New) 12.P. Error Corrections. Tournament Operations reserves the ability to make changes in order to rectify any operational errors that results in incorrect scores, players on courts, match results, bracket results, medal results, matches being played, or future matches to be played.

Why this change was implemented:

This change provides tournament operations personnel with rule-based authority to correct human or electronic errors in match or game results. This does not mean that such mistakes will be or can be corrected; just that operations personnel may make appropriate changes.

35. [1726](#): Removal of Commentary in Line Call Definition

2024 Rule:

3.A.19. Line Call – A loud word(s) spoken by a player or line judge(s) to indicate to the referee and/or players that a live ball has not landed in the required court space. The preferred word to indicate a line call is “OUT.” Distinctive hand signals can be used in conjunction with a line call. Words such as “wide”, “long”, “no”, “deep” are also acceptable.

2025 Rule:

3.A.19. Line Call – A loud word(s) spoken by a player or line judge(s) **and/or a hand signal** to indicate to the referee and/or players that a live ball has not landed in the required court space.

Why this rule change was implemented:

This change makes it consistent with revised Rule 6.C.7. Additionally, stating a preferred word (“OUT”) is a commentary, not a rule or a definition. The 3rd sentence becomes redundant with the change to the first sentence. Stating other acceptable words is also just commentary.

36. [1751](#): Addition to Guiding Principle 8

2024 Rule: None. This is a Guiding Principle found in the Rulebook Appendix

8. Preserve the unique features and rules of the sport involving the Non-Volley Zone and the two-bounce rule and prevent one shot or type of play from dominating the sport.

2025 Rule: None. This is a Guiding Principle found in the Rulebook Appendix

8. Preserve the unique features and rules of the sport involving the Non-Volley Zone and the two-bounce rule and prevent one shot, **one paddle**, or type of play from dominating the sport.

Why this change was implemented:

The changes in paddle technology have, in some cases, challenged the average player's ability to keep up with the speed of the game. This small addition reflects USA Pickleball's responsibility to maintain a level playing field for equipment when considering rules and equipment standards and makes it consistent with Guiding Principle 5.

37. [1760](#): Definition of Forfeit

2024 Rule:

3.A.14 Forfeit – An egregious behavior violation or a combination of technical warnings and/or technical fouls that result in either a game or match being awarded to the opponent.

2025 Rule:

3.A.14. Forfeit – The awarding of a game or match to the opponent due to a violation of rules.

Why this change was implemented:

The proposal makes the definition grammatically correct. A forfeit is not a behavior.

38. [1763](#): Event Categories

2024 Rules:

12.A. Event Categories.

Men: Singles and Doubles

Women: Singles and Doubles

Mixed: Doubles

Wheelchair: Singles and Doubles

12.A.1. In events described by gender, only members of that gender shall be allowed to play in that event.

12.A.2. Mixed doubles – A mixed doubles team shall consist of one male and one female player.

12.A.3. Players using wheelchairs may play in Men’s Doubles, Women’s Doubles or Mixed Doubles with either standup partners or wheelchair doubles.

2025 Rules:

12.A. Event Categories.

Men: Singles and Doubles

Women: Singles and Doubles

Mixed: Doubles

Wheelchair: Singles and Doubles

12.A.1. In events described by gender, only members of that gender shall be allowed to play in that event.

12.A.2. Mixed doubles – A mixed doubles team shall consist of one male and one female player.

12.A.3 Open Gender and Age – An event that includes players of any gender and age.

12.A.4. Players using wheelchairs may play in any event with either standup partners or wheelchair doubles.

Why this change was implemented:

The new event category in 12.A.3 is appropriate. The amendments make it all-inclusive without having to identify or label players.

39. 1775: Definition of Live Ball

2024 Rule:

3.A.20 Live Ball – A point in time when the referee or server (or server’s partner per rule 4.D.1) starts to call the score. (See also 3.A.1, “Ball in Play”).

2025 Rule:

3.A.20 Live Ball - The period of time that begins when the referee or server (or server's partner per rule 4.D.1) starts to call the score and ends when the ball becomes dead. (See also 3.A.1 “Ball in Play”).

Why this rule change was implemented:

This change makes the definition more technically accurate.

40. 1796: When Opponents May Mention Alleged Faults

2024 Rule:

13.D.1.d. For non-officiated matches, if a player believes an opponent has committed any type of fault other than a service or non-volley zone foot fault as noted in Section 7 – Fault Rules, they may mention the specific fault to the opponent(s) but they have no authority to enforce the fault. The final decision on fault resolution belongs to the player that allegedly committed the fault.

2025 Rule:

13.D.1.d. For non-officiated matches, if a player believes an opponent has committed any type of fault other than a service **foot fault** or non-volley zone fault as noted in Section 7 – Fault Rules, they may mention the specific fault to the opponent(s) **upon completion of the rally** but they have no authority to enforce the fault. The final decision on fault resolution belongs to the player that allegedly committed the fault.

Why this rule change was implemented:

This clarifies that suspected faults, other than NVZ foot faults and service foot faults, will be addressed after the rally. Note that NVZ foot faults and service foot faults must be called as soon as they are detected. See item 1368 above (Rule 13.D.1.c).

41. 1811: Round Robin Scoring**2024 Rule:**

12.C.4.a. Players/Teams that have withdrawn from the bracket are not eligible to be considered when going to a tie-breaker. Any player/team that has withdrawn from the bracket shall only have their record of matches won considered. (e.g., Team A has 3 wins, Team B has 3 wins and Team C has 3 wins. However, Team C withdrew from their last match. Because Team C has withdrawn from a match in their bracket, only their 3 wins will be considered in their finishing placement and they will not be considered for any additional tiebreaker. Team A beat Team B in their heads-up match, therefore Team A is awarded first place, Team B is awarded second place and Team C is awarded third place.)

2025 Rule:

12.C.4.a. If a player/team withdraws, retires, or is forfeited from a round robin without a playoff then that player's/team's match results will not count toward the standings of that round robin. The match results will count towards a player's/team's rating. If a player/team withdraws, retires, or is forfeited from a round robin with a playoff then that player's/team's match results will not count toward the standings of that round robin and the player/team will not be eligible to move on to a playoff elimination draw. The match results will count towards a player's/team's rating.

Why this rule change was implemented:

The current rule has always had a “fairness” problem in its effect on the standings in a round-robin. It primarily favors the team (or player in singles) that does not play out the round-robin, and has several negative consequences for all other teams in the bracket, including unearned match wins and skewed point differentials, both of which can distort the standings.

The problem occurs for various reasons, including player accountability in not showing up for the match on time, injury, and, in some unfortunate cases, intentional manipulation of the standings. There is not a known solution that will address this issue for all teams, but this solution will eliminate the negative consequences for the majority; that is, all the teams that play out the complete bracket.

Additional Insight: The Committee received input and feedback from people who have run more tournaments and processed more matches on a tournament desk than anyone else. With that has come a great deal of player experience in participating in round robin bracket play. A common theme impacting player experience is when a team withdraws, forfeits, or retires from a round robin bracket and consequently does not play out all scheduled matches. This change will improve the sport and the playing experience for many players and teams by eliminating these significant problems.

42. 1838: Round Robin Tie-Breaker Criteria

2024 Rule:

12.C.4. Round Robin. All players/teams play each other. Games may use any of the approved tournament scoring options. (See Rule 12.B.) The winner is determined based on number of matches won. If two or more teams are tied, ties shall be broken in accordance with 12.C.4.a. through 12.C.4.e. Once a tie has been broken, any subsequent ties in the bracket shall be broken by going back to 12.C.4.a. and continuing through each successive tie-breaker until a winner is determined.

2025 Rule:

12.C.4. Round Robin. All players/teams play each other. Games may use any of the approved tournament scoring options. (See Rule 12.B.) The winner is determined based on number of matches won. If two or more teams are tied, ties shall be broken in accordance with 12.C.4.a. through 12.C.4.e. **The method that succeeds in breaking the tie will be used to rank all tied teams.**

Why this rule change was implemented:

This will return the rule to the tiebreaker method used in 2023 and earlier.

Additional Insight: Neither round-robin tiebreaker option is perfect when three or more teams have the same number of wins. Each team in a tie-breaker situation can argue that whatever method is used can be judged as unfair, especially when a team in the bracket either retires or forfeits. Under this method, there will always be one or more teams who could claim unfairness when they finish lower than a team they beat head-to-head but who had a better point differential. However, the nature of a round-robin is based on playing all other teams in the bracket, so using point differential throughout is the more consistent and appropriate measure of who performed better overall.

43. 1839: Not Ready Signals/Getting Opponent or Referee's Attention

2024 Rule:

4.C.2. After the start of the score being called, "not ready" signals will be ignored, unless there is a hinder. A player or team out of position is not considered a hinder.

2025 Rule:

4.C.2. After the start of the score being called, “not ready” signals will be ignored, unless there is a hinder. A player or team out of position is not considered a hinder. **Verbal indicators to stop play such as "stop" and "wait" will be recognized.**

Why this change was implemented:

In the spirit of good sportsmanship and fair play, the rules support a rally not starting when a player is not ready. The proposed modification to rule 4.C.2 will incorporate the ruling from Referee Casebook case 7-23, which requires referees to acknowledge certain words spoken by players to stop play between the time the score is called and the ball is served. This rule change will formally allow players to indicate they are not ready before the serve occurs **and also codify a manner to stop play during a rally.** Recognizing a verbal play stoppage will readily resolve who should be faulted when a live ball is physically stopped in response to a player’s verbal request to stop play.

Additional insight:

This rule change does not affect any other rules. For example, players may still call for a time-out before the serve. They may also stop play to question the score without committing a fault, providing they do so before the return of serve and they are correct that the wrong score was called. They may also identify an incorrect server or receiver during the rally, and as long as they are correct, there is no fault. This rule change provides a verbal means for players to get the referee's or opponents' attention.

44. 1845: Wrong Receiver Fault

2024 Rule(s):

3.A.31. Receiver – The player who is positioned diagonally opposite the server to return the serve. Depending on the team’s score, the player who returns the serve may not be the correct receiver.

3.A.38. Server – The player who initiates a rally. Depending on the team’s score, it is possible that the player who serves may not be the correct server.

4.B.1. Server and Receiver. The correct server and receiver and their positions are determined by the score and the players’ starting positions in the game.

4.A.2. Placement. The server must serve to the correct service court (the court diagonally opposite the server). The serve may clear or touch the net and must clear the NVZ and the NVZ lines. The serve may land on any other service court line.

4.B.7 Partner Positions. In doubles, with the exception of the server (see 4.A.4), there is no restriction on the position of any player, as long as all players are on their respective team’s side of the net. They can be positioned on or off the court. The correct server must serve from the correct service court, and the correct receiver must receive the serve.

2025 Rule(s):

3.A.31 Receiver – The player who is positioned diagonally opposite the server to return the serve. **The correct receiver in doubles is the player whose correct position is**

diagonally opposite the correct server as determined by the player's score and starting position in the game.

3.A.38 Server – The player who initiates a rally by serving the ball. The correct server in doubles is the player whose correct position is determined by their score and starting position in the game (see Rule 4.B.6.b).

4.B.1 Server and Receiver. The correct server must serve from the correct service area (see Rules 4.B.5 and 4.B.6). The correct receiver must receive the serve.

4.A.2 Placement. The server must serve to the service court diagonally opposite their correct position. The serve may clear or touch the net and must clear the NVZ and the NVZ lines. The serve may land on any other service court line.

4.B.7 Partner Positions. In doubles, with the exception of the correct server (see 4.A.4), there is no restriction on the position of any player, as long as all players are on their respective team's side of the net. They can be positioned on or off the court.

Why these rule changes were implemented:

These changes add clarification to the existing rules. Secondly, these closed a potential loophole where the incorrect receiver could poach the ball intended for the receiver positioned diagonally across from the server. In other words, when the correct server and receiver are positioned correctly, then the players know they are correct and a wrong receiver or wrong server fault is justified. If the players are not correctly positioned, the referee will correct them before the score is called. If the referee (or the players in non-officiated play) misses the error and the score is called, or play starts, the referee (or any player) can stop play to correct them and replay the rally or let the rally play out, and the rally then stands.

45. 1850: Mandatory Language

2024 Rule:

6.C.4. Spectators should not be consulted on any line call.

2025 Rule:

6.C.4. Spectators shall not be consulted on any line call.

Why this change was implemented:

This minor change continues a multi-year effort to remove rules with the word 'should' because of its ambiguity and ensuing enforcement issues.

Additional Insight:

This makes clear, with no ambiguity, that there are sufficient techniques available to players to resolve a line call and eliminates an undesirable alternative for those players who continue to seek (or spectators to offer) inputs because the rule only says "should not". Play is degraded when someone says, "Well, I know the rule says I should not ask a spectator for a line call, but there is no hard rule saying I cannot." Now there is.