

Florida Pickleball League



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2020 League Rules

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1. Team Size, Composition, and Rating

1.1 Team Size

Teams will be comprised of 6 or more players, with 6 players available to play each week. The team should be composed of sufficient players so that the team can reasonably expect to have 6 players available to play each week. The size of the team will depend on expected travel schedule, injuries, availability for play, and other factors, as determined by each team. The League recommendation is that teams be no more than 9-10 players (unless absolutely necessary) – this is not a rule, just a recommendation. The reason for the recommendation is to provide play opportunities for the players on the team – too many players would dilute this experience. The objective is to create teams where players can play as many matches as possible.

There are no substitutes. Teams must play players on their team roster. Players may be added at any time during the season, provided the additional player has registered with the league and paid the league fee.

1.2 Team Composition – Gender Neutral

Teams are co-ed. The gender of the player is not taken into account. Matches may be in any combination of persons. This approach is consistent with most open play.

Male players' ratings will be adjusted by adding 0.5 to their self-rating. An exception to male player adjustment may be made based on League discretion (e.g., player's age). The purpose of the 0.5 ratings adjustment is to improve competitiveness given the co-ed nature of the league.

1.3 Team and Player Ratings

Players are self-rated. There will be a ratings challenge process, as set forth below.

Except as determined by the League in its discretion, players on a team may have a maximum rating difference of 0.5 from top to bottom. Example, a 4.0 player may play on a team with 4.5s or 3.5s but not both (as that would leave a gap of 1.0 between the 3.5 and 4.5).

The reason for the 0.5 rating allowance is to encourage team balance from line 1 through line 3. In the future, the league expects to have "straight" ratings (e.g., 3.5 league, 4.0 league, and so forth).

1.4 Player Ratings Challenge

The league will have a ratings review committee comprised of three to five team captains.

Ratings challenges may be made by any league captain formally notifying the league administrator in writing and including the language "formal ratings challenge" (to avoid miscommunications between informal conversation and a formal challenge). The challenging captain will include supporting materials regarding the challenged rating (e.g., tournament results, UTPR rating, etc.).

The challenge notice and supporting materials will be provided by the league administrator to the captain of the player whose rating is being challenged. The challenged captain will have 3 days to notify the league administrator whether the challenge is being contested or is agreeable. If agreed, the challenged player's rating will be adjusted and any appropriate resulting consequences imposed.

If contested, the challenged captain will submit materials in support of the challenge within 7 days from the date that the challenge notice was provided to the challenged captain. The ratings review committee will evaluate the information provided, may conduct its own research, and, if so determined by the committee, may invite direct communication from any person, including the team captains and the challenged player. The determination from the ratings review committee will be final.

If a player's rating is modified, either by captain agreement or committee action, the committee will make a determination as to whether the initial rating was intentionally mis-stated or not. If intentionally mis-stated, the player's match results prior to the modification will be forfeited. If not intentionally mis-stated, there will be no adjustments to prior match results. In any event, if a player's rating has been modified and the modification bars the player from

playing on his/her current team, then, absent league waiver, the player will be offered the opportunity to join another team commensurate with the modified rating, provided the other team is willing to accept the player on its roster.

2. League Divisions and Play

2.1 Team Seeding

Teams will be seeded and grouped into divisions of 4-5 teams (depending on league size). Seeding will be based on the team's average initial ratings (as adjusted).

2.2 Team Results

Once teams are seeded and grouped, teams may move up or down divisions based on results except for the Advanced Division (see below).

After each two weeks of play during the season, teams may be moved up or down between divisions. A team that loses both matches will move down. A team that wins both its matches will move up. A team that splits may or may not move up or down. Notwithstanding the foregoing, movement between divisions will be at the league's discretion. The league will endeavor to make the divisions as competitive as feasible.

2.3 Advanced Division

The league's Advanced Division is expected to be a sealed division (meaning no movement in or out of the division during the season). This determination may be overridden by the league depending on league results and if the league administrator determines that movement in or out of the Advanced Division will improve overall league competitiveness.

3. Facility and Courts

3.1 Teams Select Courts

The League does not provide courts for play or require play at any particular facility or club. The League does not offer court time for play or charge any fees for court usage or court time. League teams determine the courts at which they wish to play and such decision is independent of the League. Any charges that may be due for court usage or court time (including court fees for away team) are the responsibility of the home team. Most analogous to the League is the concept of Ultimate Tennis, which provides scheduling and scorekeeping capabilities to tennis players who then play their matches on such courts as selected by them.

3.2 Not a Facility League

The League is not conducted or run out of any facility, park, courts, or club. The League is a statewide organization that allows players from different areas and communities to come together to play pickleball in a team setting. The League is a facilitator of match play amongst teams, providing scheduling and scorekeeping functionality to the teams in the League.

3.3 Home Court

Each team will have a declared home court. The home team courts must accommodate three courts of simultaneous play. A community/home court can have as many teams as the community and court facilities can support. A team can play at a different facility than the "regular" courts of the home team, provided that it has notified the other team and that the courts otherwise comply with these rules and the USAPA. If the team captain reasonably expects there to be available courts at the designated meet time, a team need not reserve court time ahead of the meet as a condition of hosting the team meet.

3.4 Compliance with USAPA

The only requirements imposed by the League is that the courts must comply with USAPA court requirements regarding size of court and that the courts are reasonably safe for play. Nets may be permanent or temporary. Otherwise, each home team may opt to play at such courts as the home team deems desirable.

3.5 Accessibility of the Sport

An important aspect of this League is accessibility to the sport. By having the ability to select courts, players from all parts of our community are able to participate in league play, thereby enjoying this awesome sport and remaining active.

4. Team Meets

4.1 Weekly Meets

Team meets (matches between teams) are pre-set for once per week except in make-up match situations. Each team will play an equal number of home and away meets (unless there is a bye week). Target is for each team to play in 8 meets during a season.

4.2 Travel

To the extent possible, the league schedule will be set up so that teams do not have to travel more than one hour for a match. In some areas, the drive time may have to be greater if teams wish to participate in league play. Matches will be scheduled so as to avoid multiple long drives (again, to the extent feasible). After the league schedule has been announced, any team may ask for a reconsideration of the schedule. The league will attempt to accommodate any such requests.

4.3 Hosting the Visiting Team

The home team will host the visiting team. Any court fees that may be owed for playing at the home court will be paid for by the home team. The home team captain will notify the visiting captain of any special conditions of the home courts (e.g., water availability, restrooms, etc.) at least three days prior to the meet.

4.4 Day and Time of Play

Unless the teams agree otherwise, team meets will take place each Saturday during the season. Start time will be between 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., except that the day or time of play may be modified in special circumstances (e.g., tournament at the home team courts). Teams may agree to move day and/or time of a meet. Any players not at the meet by 15 minutes after the start time will forfeit their match unless the opposing team's captain agrees otherwise.

In the event of a rainout, the team captains should discuss making up the meet at the earliest convenience. If necessary, the league will announce and coordinate a rain makeup date on a Sunday afternoon in order to complete pending matches. Rainout matches may, if necessary, be played at a different location than originally scheduled, as determined by the league.

Team meets should be completed within two weeks (1 before and 1 after) the scheduled date of play to ensure the league functions properly (e.g., to be able to determine which teams move up or down). The league may allow additional time upon request by the team captains in extenuating circumstances.

4.5 Two Rounds

Each meet will consist of two rounds of matches. Each round of matches will consist of three matches (even if a team wins the first two matches) of doubles play arranged from Court 1 to Court 3.

4.6 Match Lineups

Each team captain will be responsible for their team's match lineup. The lineup will be prepared independently by each team captain by assigning players, in teams of 2, to each Court (1, 2, and 3). The captains will then exchange their lineup information with each other so that each captain can have a play card with each team that is playing on each court. The lineup for Round 1 will be exchanged at the beginning of the meet and the lineup for Round 2 will be exchanged within 10 minutes from the conclusion of Round 1 (the end of the last game). The lineup cards will be used to track game scores and to report the results to the league.

The lineup for the second round must be different than the lineup used for the first round. This requirement will increase the interaction among players and help ensure a more competitive playing field. Players who did not play during the first round may play in the second round.

The lineups should be according to strength of team, particularly where obvious. This arrangement will encourage the most competitive play. In any event, this is not a rule but a guideline.

Except for the Advanced Division, detailed below, there are no limitations on assigning players to specific courts.

4.7 Substitutes and Inability to Field a Team

There are no substitutes from outside a team's roster. Every player must be registered with the league and play on their designated team.

4.8 Forfeiture

If a team cannot field one team, the team will forfeit all matches in which the missing team would have played. The remaining matches will be played as scheduled. Captains should provide early notification to minimize inconvenience to the other team if a forfeit is unavoidable.

A team forfeiting two or more matches will be deemed to forfeit the meet, unless the opposing team agrees either to reschedule or to play the remaining match. A reschedule will not count as a forfeit (except that if the teams have not played by the league deadline, the meet will be recorded as a forfeit). If the remaining match is played, its results will be recorded and will count towards any tie breakers. The meet will be marked as lost by the forfeit team. Forfeited matches will be recorded as 11-0, 11-0, 11-0 in the scoring system.

4.9 Team Forfeit

If a team forfeits one or more meets and it appears to the league that the team will not continue (e.g., the team becomes incommunicative), that team will be dropped from the league. The league will endeavor to obtain a replacement meet for any meets with a dropped team. If the meet with the dropped team would have affected the year-end results, a playoff meet may be arranged by the league to resolve the matter.

4.10 Advanced Division

This rule applies only to the Advanced Division.

The 0.5 "collar" and adjustment do not apply to the Advanced Division.

The Advanced Division teams are comprised of restricted and unrestricted players, as designated by the league.

Only two restricted players are allowed per team per round. Restricted players may play together **only** on court 1 and in round 1. Restricted players may not play on court 3 during either round.

5. Matches and Scoring

5.1 USAPA Rules

Other than as specifically modified by these rules, league play will follow USAPA rules.

5.2 Warmups

Warmup will be as determined by the teams, except that either captain may require the matches to begin after no less than 10 minutes of warmup for the first match and 5 minutes warmup for the second match.

5.3 Serve/Side Selection

The visiting teams will select whether to (1) pick serve or receive, or (2) pick side in the first round. The home teams will be afforded the same for the second round. Once selected, the other team will select the other option (e.g., if the visiting team selects serve, then the home team selects side).

One selected, the first game will be completed on one side, the second game will be completed on the opposite side, and the teams will switch sides at 6 points (the first team to get to 6 points) in the third game.

5.4 Balls

Meet balls will be selected and provided by the home team. The only requirement is that, absent agreement from both parties, the balls be approved for USAPA tournament play. Approved balls include Dura Fast 40, Penn 40, Franklin X-40, and Onix Fuse G2 (note that the Onix Pure 2 – while a great ball for recreational play is not USAPA approved and, thus cannot be used for league matches – absent agreement of both teams, in which case it can be used). If your ball is not listed here and there is any question about the matter, please confirm with the league administrator that the ball is approved for play. The home team will notify the visiting team of the ball type to be used at least three days prior to the meet.

5.5 Match Scoring

Each match will be 3 games to 11 points, win by 2. All 3 games will be played for each match. Games and then points are used for tiebreak purposes so every game and point count as they may make the difference. Two games to win the match.

5.6 Scorecard Verification

At the conclusion of play, the team captains will review the scorecards (there should be four: one for each round in duplicate with each captain). Once approved, each captain will sign the cards and each captain will then retain his/her cards from the match.

5.7 Score Reporting

The home team captain will make sure that the scorecards are submitted to the league administrator. The scorecards may be scanned and sent or, if sufficiently legible, sent by photo upload. The verified scores are final except if there is clearly an error or an error that is agreed to by both team captains whereby the error would affect league results. If an error affects league results, it may be corrected when the error is found but prior to the conclusion of the league season.

In the event that the software system used by the league to input scores allows captain-direct input, then the home team captain will input the scores into the system within three days from the meet's conclusion. The visiting team captain will notify the home team captain of any issues with the score. If unresolved, the issues will be brought to the league administrator's attention. Absent a clearly erroneous entry, scores in the system will be deemed conclusive if no objection is received by the league administrator within 10 days from entry.

5.8 Meet Results

The result of each meet will be as follows:

- A. Number of matches won;
- B. If tied, number of games won;
- C. If tied, number of points won;
- D. If tied, each team will receive a 0.5 point.

6. League Results and Moving On

6.1 League Results

League results will be as follows:

- A. Number of meets won;
- B. If tied, number of matches won;
- C. If tied, number of games won;
- D. If tied, number of points won;
- E. If tied, the teams will meet for a tiebreaking playoff following regular meet rules.

Every point and every game matter, as the results of each meet and indeed the league, may come down to the past point.

6.2 Further Competition

The League endeavors to establish state, regional, and national team competitions. In the event of such opportunity, the winner from each division will be the team to represent the local league in the competition. If the competition is such that the divisions in the competition do not correspond to the divisions in the local league, the local league administrator may make such adjustments to the team as the league deems appropriate to make the team more competitive for the competition and also to provide division winners with the chance to participate at the next stage of competition.

To qualify for advancement, a player must have played a minimum of two matches during the season.

7. Player Improvement

An organizing principle of this league is to encourage competitive play as well as improvement. Court positioning and conceptual deficiencies in the approach to the game limit the progress of many players. These issues can be overcome by pointing them out to the player and providing the key to a better approach to the game.

As a result, the league offers coached match-play, designed to provide players with this guidance in a real game setting during match play. Coached match-play is not a clinic, as it is not intended to teach stroke mechanics or stroke concepts. Instead, it teaches in-game positioning and on-court decision-making (e.g., where player is standing and what player is trying to do with the next shot). Coach match play is not obligatory and does not count towards league results.

Teams are encouraged to practice in a team setting and more advanced players are encouraged to offer guidance as appropriate to other members of their team.

8. League Objective and Rules Interpretations

The principal objective of the league is to promote and encourage friendly competitive pickleball play in a team environment. These rules are intended to accomplish this principal objective and will be interpreted as such. Any gaps in the rules will be filled in with the aim of achieving this objective. League determinations about the rules and their application are final.

These rules are subject to revision by the league.

9. Rules Compliance

While the league will enforce rules violations, the league does not monitor for rules compliance/violations. In the event that a captain has a complaint about a rules' violation, the captain must notify the league administrator, in writing, within 10 days from the incident complained. Only a team captain may submit a rules violation complaint. League determination of rules' violations is final.

Teams are responsible for rules knowledge and compliance. Rules questions may be posed to the league administrator.