



Arizona Pickleball League™ - “Rules of the Road”

1) The Ethos

- **Rule #1:** Compete with dignity.
- **Rule #2:** Put on a good show.
- **Rule #3:** See Rule #1.

2) What matters

Integrity, skill, *and* showmanship. All of them, in that order. This is a “meritocracy.” And we follow the “**The No Asshole Rule**” (see [Dr. Sutton’s book](#) for explanation.)

3) Role of The Commissioner / Dismissal from The League

The “Commissioner” of the Arizona Pickleball League (“AZ PBL” or “the League”) is appointed by the League, and at the sole discretion of the Commissioner, a player, GM, or Assistant Coach may be removed from participating in the League, with or without cause.

4) Role of the General Managers

The League has appointed a General Manager (GM) to each team. GMs are responsible for managing their team, and ensuring all players follow the “Ethos” of The League. Additionally, each GM will designate one player on their team to be the team captain.

5) Free Agency & Waiver Wire

GMs have the authority to A) “cut” a player from their team, B) trade a player, C) pick up new players from Free Agency / the Waiver Wire. All cuts, trades, and pick-ups must be approved by the Commissioner, and approval will not be unreasonably withheld. Players can only be traded once during the course of a season. Three-way trades (aka. “package deals”) are not permitted at this time, but may be considered in the future. A player who is “cut” by a team is eligible to apply for Free Agency / the Waiver Wire.

6) Player Non-Exclusivity

Players may play in any other amateur and/or professional pickleball events (PPA, APP, MLP, etc.), so long as it does not conflict with an AZ PBL match that was scheduled prior, as published on [ArizonaPBL.com](#).

7) Injured Reserve

If, for any reason, a player is unable to compete in a match, that player will inform their team's GM in writing at the earliest possible moment. (Text messages are sufficient.) The GM will inform the Commissioner, and place that player on the "IR" for that match, or matches, and then select a player from Free Agency, with final approval granted by The Commissioner, not to be unreasonably withheld. The player on "IR" will not receive a "game check" (as defined in the Individual Contractor Agreement - Player Template) because their "alternate" will receive a game check instead.

8) Alternates

Based on "**the show must go on**" principle, the League will provide 1 male and 1 female "Alternate" for each TNP event in the case of a player "no show" or injury. Alternates will be selected by the Commissioner from the list of Free Agents who have applied for the League. (Alternates will be paid as defined in the Individual Contractor Agreement - Alternates Template.)

9) Setting Mixed Doubles Line-ups

Prior to each match, the GMs and/or team captain will collectively agree upon the "most suitable" line-ups for Mixed Doubles (MXD) in Games 1 & 2. (If there is a dispute, the Commissioner will make the final decision.) The goal for both teams to field an "intriguing" and "fair" matchup that the fans will enjoy. This is "co-opetition." After all, the slogan of the **Arizona Pickleball League is: Let Us Entertain You™**

10) Sanctioning

The Arizona Pickleball League is the first "team-based league" sanctioned by USA Pickleball (pending). As such, players in the League must be "members in good standing" with USA Pickleball.

11) Men & Women

Biological females will compete as women; biological males will compete as men.

12) League Standings

Teams will be ranked from 1 - 5 based on the following criteria, which was inspired by [MLS Tie-Breaker Rules](#):

- 1) Total number of Match wins
- 2) Point differential – Total points scored vs. total points against across all Matches; includes points scored and against in Tie-Breaker games.
- 3) Rochambeau – Rock, Paper, or Scissors on "shoot", best 3 out of 5.

For example: If Team A and Team B both have a Win-Loss record 2-2, then the "Point Differential" (the delta in the final score of their matches played) will break the tie. If there is still a tie, then "Rochambeau" breaks it.

13) Season Schedule & Play-Offs

At the conclusion of the regular season, teams will be seeded for Play-offs based on League Standings. The 2 seed will play the 3 seed; the 1 seed will play the 4 seed. The winners of those two matches will face off in The Orchard Championship Cup.

14) Waiver Rules

A GM can pick up a new player from the Waiver Wire, but must also drop a player from their roster, as the maximum team size (not counting an "IR" slot) is 4 players. Waiver priority each week is based on League Standings, the team with the lowest ranking takes priority, then the next lowest team, and so on. The Commissioner will approve all drops and pick-ups, not to be unreasonably withheld.

15) Communication on Team Roster Changes

Changes in a team's roster will be communicated to all GMs in writing (via text message) when they occur.

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16) The Orchard Team Scoring™

The AZ PBL utilizes a “Game, Set, Match” model to decide the winner of the match, similar to tennis:

- A) A Match consists of 2 Sets. To win the Match, a team must win both Sets.
- B) The first Set is Mixed Doubles; the second Set is Gender Doubles.
- C) Each Set contains 3 possible Games. To win a Set, a team must win 2 out of 3 Games.
- D) The first two Games of each Set are “first to 11, win by 1, traditional sideout scoring.”
- E) If necessary, the third Game in a Set is a “Set Breaker” – “first to 5, win by 1, *single* sideout scoring (one server per side out, players do not switch positions).”
 - a) During Set 1, the Set Breaker will be Mixed Doubles, field whoever you want.
 - b) During Set 2, the Set Breaker will be Gender Doubles, men’s or women’s, decided by a coin-toss.
- F) If two Sets have been played and the Match is tied 1 to 1, then a “Match Breaker” will be played – “singles, rally scoring, rotating players every 4 rallies, first to 15, win by 1, and the final point must be scored on serve.”
 - a) The lineup for a Match Breaker will be “choose and respond”; the winner of a coin toss will decide if they want to choose or respond.
- G) Each team has 3 timeouts in a Game to 11, and 1 timeout during Tie-Breakers.
- H) Substitutions of one or both players can be made during MXD Games if the score differential is 6 or greater. Both players may be substituted during a single timeout. The opposing team may also substitute a player (or players) during a timeout called by the other team.

Example 1: Team B wins the match by winning Set 1 Game 1 & 2, then Set 2 Game 1 & 2. No tie-breakers needed.								Example 2: All 3 tie-breakers are necessary; Team B wins Set 1 Breaker 5-4, loses Set 2 Breaker 3-5, and then wins the Match Breaker 15-14.									
TUESDAY NIGHT PICKLEBALL		SET 1			SET 2			MATCH BRK	TUESDAY NIGHT PICKLEBALL		SET 1			SET 2			MATCH BRK
	TEAM A	7	10	-	9	8	-	-		TEAM A	6	11	4	11	8	5	14
	TEAM B	11	11	-	11	11	-	-		TEAM B	11	8	5	9	11	3	15

The primary benefit of this scoring system is that it ensures each and every game matters. For instance, Team A could win the first 3 Games of the Match. And if this was MLP scoring format, the match would be over at 3-0. But in The Orchard Team Scoring Format, the 4th game still matters because if Team B wins Game 4, they force a Set Breaker; and if they win the Set Breaker, they force a Match Breaker. And that just seems more exciting!

PS - The idea of this new scoring format was originated by Scott Kilpatrick, the GM of the Surprise Stingers.

Version History

- 1) On Apr 4 2023, created v2 which modified the Overtime format from “16 rallies” to “Extra 2 minutes” format. The reason is that we experimented with the “16 rallies” concept, and it was A) too confusing, and B) too difficult for “cold” players to come back in fresh and play well. So we changed to the new format, now documented in this version of “Rules of the Road.”
- 2) On Aug 10 2023, released v3 with the following changes:
 - a) In Section 5, based on experience gained during Season 1, the add/drop waiver wire process usually took place over the course of several days as it usually took some time for GMs to lock down schedules with players, so I removed the line about “Waiver wire will run on Fridays at 2pm”.
 - b) In Section 12, removed “Points For” from the League Standings Tie-Breaker scenario because with the new format, there’s a mathematical chance that one team could play only 16 games in 4 matches (4 games per match times 4 matches in the regular season), and another team could play a total of 21 games (7 games per match times 4 matches). Therefore, “Points For” could be misleading.
 - c) In Section 16, updated scoring format from “cumulative scoring over four quarters with 15 min game clock” to the new “Game, Set, Match” format.
 - d) Also in Section 16, specified the amount of timeouts.
 - e) Also in Section 16, specified the new Substitution rules.
- 3) On Oct 10, 2023, released v4 with the following changes:
 - a) Substitutions during MXD Games change from a score differential of “7 or greater” to “6 or greater.”
- 4) On Dec 1, 2023, released v5 with the following changes:
 - a) Games are now first to 11 instead of 15. (Except for singles Match Breaker which is still first to 15.) Reasoning: After the first 3 weeks of Season 2, we did some analysis and decided to change from 15 to 11 because 1) the average length of a match was simply too long, and 2) in the first 3 matches, the team that made it to 11 first also made it to 15 first in 11 out of 12 games. Therefore, games to 11 is sufficient to determine the better team, and games to 11 are about 9 minutes shorter on average.

THE END. :)