



# Official Minor League Pickleball Rules & Policies Guide

(Updated 11.30.23)

## Minor League Pickleball Overview: MLPlay™ Format

MLPlay™ is an innovative gameplay format that brings men and women together on a level playing court. In the MLPlay™ format team matches are composed of four 21-point games, with the first being women's doubles, then the men's doubles, and the final two games consisting of mixed doubles. This unique dynamic means that teamwork as a skill is just as critical as speed or technique on the court and a big part of the community aspect of the sport.

### **PLAYERS**

Each team will consist of four players, two (2) females and two (2) males.

### **TEAM UNIFORMS**

We HIGHLY encourage teams to get creative and match! It's all part of the Minor League fun!

### **GROUP PLAY AND BRACKET PLAYOFF for ONE DAY MINOR LEAGUE EVENTS**

The format of play: Teams compete against each other in Matches. A Match consists of four Games. The first two games are one women's doubles Game and one men's doubles Game, and then two mixed doubles Games. If two teams are tied after these four games, the "DreamBreaker™" is played, with a rotational system involving all four players. Teams first play each other in group or round-robin play, and then the top 4 teams square off in a playoff bracket format. There will be a match to determine 3rd (bronze).

Regardless of outcome, all four games will be played in a match during round robin/group play.

During bracket play, teams can opt out of playing the 4th game if one team has won the match with 3 consecutive game wins.

### **ROUND ROBIN TO BRACKET PLAY: SEEDING**

After the round robin/group play is completed, top teams will play a bracket playoff. Due to multiple round robin scenarios and bracket playoff scenarios, the Tournament Director for each event will announce the format for bracket playoffs.

#### **Seeding Order for Playoffs:**

#1 Matches Won

#2 Head to Head (if only 2 teams tied and they played against each other)

#3 Point Differential

Point differential is the difference between points earned (scored) vs points against (scored against).  $PE - PA = PD$

PA is the points scored by the other team.

#### **EXAMPLE:**

For PD: If team A plays 4 games: 21-13, 17-21, 21-19, 23-21. Team A's PD is:  $+8 - 4 + 2 + 2$ . Which would be 8. The opponent's point differential would be -8.

### **SCORING: RALLY SCORING**

A point is earned after every rally, whether it was won by the serving or receiving team. However, a team needs to win by two, on their serve, hence a "freeze" can happen if the rally is won by the non serving team (their winning point would not count as they must serve to win). Trailing teams never freeze and continue rally scoring. If the score is tied, the rally scoring is in effect. To win, a team must win by two and must have served to win.

### **SCHEDULE OF PLAY**

The schedule of play will be published in advance prior to the start of the competition, including the round robin match ups.

One of the key features that everyone loves about Minor League Pickleball is how many games/matches you play without all the wait like a standard tournament. Once the score sheet is handed out players have 5 minutes TOTAL to warm up, figure out the home/away team and START the first game. It is imperative that players understand that once a match STARTS, there is only 2 minutes in between all remaining games. One of the key ways to keep the flow of the tournament moving is for players to take

their breaks, get water, use the restroom, etc while they are not playing. Court monitors will be keeping track and asking players to keep moving the games along. There are NO additional warm up times in between games. When a game ends, the next game starts within 2 minutes. (Players can use the 2 minutes in between games to warm up, but must be ready to play and in their positions at the 2 minute mark.) If a player is not ready to play at the 2 minute mark that team will forfeit their time out for that game. For Dreambreaker™ - you will have 1 minute for the HOME team to designate their full lineup. The AWAY team will then have 1 minute to designate their full lineup. The time allotted between the final mixed game and the start of Dreambreaker™ is a total of 5 minutes.

### **COIN TOSS**

At the start of each match, there will be a coin toss (or similar random selection). The winner will make a choice between these three options:

- Choose to be either the Home or the Away team
- Choose to start each game serving or receiving
- Choose which end of the court to start Women's Doubles

After the winner makes a choice, the loser will make a choice between the two remaining options. After the loser makes their choice, the winner will make a decision on the last option available.

*Example: Team A wins the coin toss. Team A chooses to be the Home team. Team B chooses to start each game receiving. Team A chooses an end of the court to start Women's Doubles.*

**HOME:** The Home team will react to the AWAY team's mixed doubles lineup. The home team must declare first during the singles Dreambreaker game.

**AWAY:** The Away team must declare their mixed doubles teams first, but gets to react to the Home team's singles Dreambreaker lineup.

### **REVIEW:**

1. **COIN TOSS:** Who WON the coin toss? Who is the HOME team and who is the AWAY team?
2. **WHO SERVES?**
3. **SEE OPPONENT'S MIXED TEAM FIRST?** The AWAY team will declare their mixed doubles lineup first. The HOME team will react to the AWAY

team's mixed lineup.

4. **SEE OPPONENT'S SINGLES LINE UP FIRST?** The HOME team will declare their singles line up first, in full. The HOME team will react to the AWAY team's mixed lineup, in full.

### **CHANGE OF END to START EACH GAME**

If you choose the serve during the coin toss, your team will start every game serving. Vice versa if you choose to receive.

If you choose the end, you will start Women's Doubles on that end. Your team will only switch ends once 11 points is reached by a team in a game. Do not switch ends of the court between games, like between Women's and Men's Doubles. Which end of a court a team finishes a game is the same end they will start the next game.

### **PLAYER CHANGE OF SIDE/SERVE**

During rally scoring players do not switch sides after winning points. Player A starts on the right side and serves when the score is even and Player B serves from the left side when the score is odd. Player A and B must also receive serves on their respective side. A team may choose to switch player sides during end change when the first team reaches 11 points OR during any timeouts. Teams must announce they are making the change before play resumes.

### **PLAYER INITIATED TIME-OUTS**

Teams will each be allotted 1 time-out per Game (up to 1 minute per time-out). This is in addition to the allotted 1 minute time out during change of ends when the first team reaches 11 points.

### **DREAMBREAKER (SINGLES TIEBREAKER) TO DETERMINE MATCH WINNER**

If two teams playing a Match are tied 2-2 after the doubles and mixed doubles Games, a singles DreamBreaker™ will be played. DreamBreaker™ is a Game to 21 (win by 2) with rally scoring, where each team must rotate their players. Each player plays 4 rallies (4 points) in a set order until the DreamBreaker™ is completed.

Immediately following the completion of the second and final mixed doubles Game, the Home Team will have 1 minute to designate their FULL LINEUP. The Away Team will then have 1 minute to designate its opposing FULL LINEUP. The DreamBreaker™ will use the same rally scoring used in Games as described above. All team members will rotate in 4-rally rotations until the DreamBreaker™ is concluded (Player 1 plays 4 rallies, then Player 2 plays 4 rallies, then Player 3 plays 4 rallies, then Player 4 plays 4 rallies, and then the rotation repeats in the same order). In terms of sides, singles players will serve from the side (left/right) of the court, based on their team score, as is

typical in singles. The player will serve on the right side when that player's team score is even, and when the team score is odd, the player on that team will serve from the left side of the court. During the DreamBreaker™, each team will be allotted one time-out. Teams will change ends when one team reaches the score of 11.

### **CAPTAINS**

All teams must designate a Team Captain, who will be responsible for various captain duties including communicating with the event's tournament director and tournament desk, the coin toss, mixed doubles team designations, and singles tiebreaker rotations. Team Captains will also be responsible for communication with referees if questions arise or concerns need to be communicated.

\*If a match has an officiating referee, then any playing player can communicate with the ref.

Each team captain will meet for the coin toss prior to each match. The Team Captain may be a non-player and must be present for all matches. If a Team Captain is unable to fulfill his/her duties, the Team must designate a substitute captain.

Team captains are also responsible for all team's player communication.

### **SUBSTITUTES/INJURY:**

Minor League events: teams will be able to substitute a player after initial registration as long as the player has a DUPR rating and their rating does not move the team to a higher DUPR aggregate. If a Substitution is made for an injured player during the event, the sub must remain in for the duration of the event. A player that is subbed out cannot be subbed back into play later in the day.

If a team is unable to field all required players for any reason during the tournament day, that game is a forfeit of 21-0. If a player has an injury mid-game and cannot finish the game, the team then forfeits that game. The forfeiting team will keep their score and the winning team will automatically be given a score of 21, or greater to ensure the game is won by two.

Forfeited games count for wins and point percentage. Forfeited/Withdrawn games that do not play and/or both teams score less than 7 points will not be inputted into DUPR.

### **DUPR DIVISIONS:**

DUPR 20 (max aggregate 20.30) DUPR 18 (max aggregate 18.30) DUPR 16 (max aggregate 16.30) DUPR 14 (max aggregate 14.30)

\*For example, in a DUPR 20 Division you could have four players rated 5.00(5+5+5+5=20) or players rated 6.00,4.50,4.50,5.00 (=20), or any combination thereof that is < 20.30. The same logic applies to DUPR 18, 16, 14 Divisions.

### **OTHER COMPETITION RULES**

All rules of the Minor League Pickleball Competition are governed by the most current rules of USA Pickleball except for the rules outlined in this document, summarized below:

1. Rally Scoring
2. Coaching is allowed in between rallies while the ball is NOT in play.
3. Players are allowed to swap court position at end changes when first team reaches 11 or during any time outs called.
4. One time-out per game for each team.
5. Coin flip process and Away/Home designations.

### **COACHING/LINE CALLS**

Coaching by non-playing team members is allowed at any time when the ball is NOT IN PLAY if it does not interfere with continuous play or unfairly disrupts the opposing team. Non-playing team members are encouraged to sit/stand along the edge of the court or bench with their team. ONLY the four players playing the game can make line calls and fault calls without the influence of other players/spectators.

### **OTHER RULES**

#### **PADDLES**

Players must use a paddle brand and model that is on the Official USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List. Penalty for violation of this rule could result in loss of game or match. We expect all players to be honest if their paddle is delaminated and will not use said paddle. The Tournament Director reserves the right to make the final decision if a paddle has been flagged by team captain(s).

#### **PLAYER MISCONDUCT**

Players who mistreat a fellow player will receive one official verbal warning from the Tournament Director or Match Referee. After they receive one verbal warning, players are subject to ejection from the tournament.

### **INTERPRETATION OF THE RULES/EXCEPTIONS/DISPUTES**

The Tournament Director has final authority on any situation that is not specifically covered by this Rules Guide.

**AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS**

By participating in Minor League Events, Teams acknowledge these Minor League Pickleball Rules and agree to comply with and be bound by them. The Tournament Director and Minor League Pickleball have the right to revise these rules periodically at its sole discretion.

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