

MIDDLETOWN RECREATION presents the

PICKLEBALL

TOURNAMENT RULES

The following list of rules are the rules in which our tournament will be using. Please make sure all players understand the rules. If there are any questions regarding any of them contact the Recreation Department or a Recreation staff member at any time.

All teams are guaranteed two games in this double elimination, doubles tournament. Finalized tournament schedule will be determined week-of. There are three divisions (men's doubles, women's doubles and mixed doubles) over four ratings (3.0, 3.5, 4.0, and 4.5+).

The following rules have been adapted from the latest official USA Pickleball Association and the International Federation of Pickleball, except where otherwise specified, for our facility and tournament. Please note this is a non-sanctioned tournament.

Section 1: Players, Field, & Equipment

Players/Teams

1. All players must be 18 years or older to play.
2. Players can only play for one team in one skill level, no exceptions.
3. Divisions are made up of gender and ratings are outlined as follows. In divisions described by gender only members of the gender shall be allowed to play in that division. A mixed double team must consist of one male and one female player.

Women's Doubles 3.0

Men's Doubles 3.0

Mixed Doubles 3.0

Women's Doubles 3.5

Men's Doubles 3.5

Mixed Doubles 3.5

Women's Doubles 4.0

Men's Doubles 4.0

Mixed Doubles 4.0

Women's Doubles 4.5+

Men's Doubles 4.5+

Mixed Doubles 4.5+

4. Players should only compete in their appropriate skill level in order for everyone to enjoy the most of the tournament, i.e. players should not be playing up or down a skill level. The honor system will be used here. Weighted teams in inappropriate levels may be subject to disqualification.
5. Ratings are self-given and are defined as follows. For reference, 1.0-2.0 are new beginners and 5.5-6.0+ are professionals. This tournament consists of 3.0-4.5 ratings.
 - **3.0** – Player can generally hit forehand drives, serves, and returns with medium pace, as well as dinks, but generally lack consistency and control (for instance, serves and returns are not consistent and lack depth). Player understands the basic strategy and rules of pickleball, including how to properly keep score.
 - **3.5** – Player can hit drives, serves, and returns with pace (including developing backhand shots), as well as dinks and drop shots, and are developing some consistency and control (including consistently hitting serves and returns in play). Player understands the

basic strategy and rules of pickleball and are starting to vary shots between the hard and soft game, moving quickly to the Non-Volley Zone line when having the opportunity.

- **4.0** – Player can generally hit both forehand and backhand drives, serves, and returns with pace, as well as dinks, drop shots and volleys (including block volleys) of different speeds, and have consistency and control. Player understands the strategy and rules of pickleball (including stacking), has a moderate number of unforced errors, and understanding of how to attack opponents' weakness on the pickleball court.
 - **4.5+** - Player can generally hit both forehand and backhand drives, serves, returns, dinks, drop shots, and volleys with pace, spin, depth, direction, consistency and control. Player understands to the strategy and rules of pickleball (including stacking), has a limited number of unforced errors, and can change their game play to attack opponent's weaknesses on the pickleball court.
6. The higher-rated player on the team determines the team's rating level.
 7. Teams are made up of 2 people only, no substitutes.
 8. There will be no more than 8 teams per division & skill level (i.e. 8 Mixed Doubles 3.0 teams, 8 Mixed Doubles 3.5 teams, etc.). This number may change depending on registration trends.
 9. No coaching is allowed.

Court Dimensions

10. The playing field will be lined on tennis courts and measure 20' x 44' divided into right/even and left/odd service courts and non-volley zones.
11. The net is hung 36" on each end of the net and 34" in the middle.
12. The baselines, sidelines, centerline, and non-volley zones lines will be clearly marked against the tennis court.

Equipment

13. Middletown Recreation will provide balls and nets.
14. Players are required to bring their own paddles. The combined length and width, including any edge guard and butt cap, shall not exceed 24 inches. The paddle length cannot exceed 17 inches. There is no restriction on paddle thickness or weight. Anti-skid textures, rubber or any materials that causes additional spin are prohibited. Paddles in violation of these terms will not allowed to be used in tournament. Violations found after the match has started, but before scoresheets are submitted, will result in a match forfeit.
15. Teams may choose to wear the same color, but it is not required.
16. Sneakers are required to play.

Spectators

17. Spectators will not be allowed within the fenced court areas.
18. Spectators are held to the same sportsmanship conduct as players. Violators will be asked to leave.

Section 2: Game Play

The Game

- 19.** Please arrive 20 minutes early for registration. Games are to start and finish as per the posted schedule.
- 20.** The tournament will begin with a blind draw for seeding purposes.
- 21.** The object of the game is to score more points than your opponent. The ball is served diagonally across the net to the opponent's receiving court using an approved motion. The ball is struck back and forth across the net until a player fails to return the ball in accordance with the rules.
- 22.** Points are scored only by the serving side when the server of the server's team wins the rally, or the opposing side commits a fault. The server continues to serve, alternating service courts, until the serving side loses the rally or commits a fault.
- 23.** The first team to score 11 points, winning by 2 points, wins the game. Best 2 out of 3 games wins the match.
- 24.** No time-outs are awarded unless there is a medical injury.
- 25.** If another ball enters your court from another court retrieve it after the point is over unless it is a safety issue. If retrieving your ball, do not enter a court until play is stopped.

Starting the Game

- 26.** The higher seed team determines first choice of end, serve, receive, or defer. If the higher seed chooses to serve or receive first, the lower seed chooses the starting end. If the higher seed chooses the starting end, the lower seed chooses to serve or receive. Once a selection has been made, it cannot be changed.
- 27.** The starting server can be chosen by the team. The starting server can be changed between games and the team should notify the opponents.
- 28.** Teams switch ends and initial service upon the completion of each game.
- 29.** One minute is allowed between games. If both teams agree, play may resume early.
- 30.** If there is a game three, the teams will switch ends when the first team reaches a score of 6. Serve remains with the player holding serve.

The Serve

- 31.** The full score must be called before each serve. The score is called in three numbers. The proper sequence for calling the score is: serving team's score – receiving team's score – the server number (one or two), (e.g., "zero-zero-one").
- 32.** Once both teams are ready for play, the server is allowed 10 seconds to serve. Should the server take more than 10 seconds, a fault will be declared.
- 33.** The serve must be underhand, with the server releasing the ball from one of their hands. The server's release of the ball must be visible to the receiver otherwise a replay shall be called.
- 34.** The serve must be made without bouncing the ball off the court and hitting it.
- 35.** Paddle contact with the ball must be below the server's waist.
- 36.** The serve is initiated with both feet behind the baseline; neither foot may contact the baseline or court until after the ball is struck.
- 37.** The serve is made diagonally crosscourt and must land within the confines of the opposite diagonal court. The serve may clear or touch the net and must clear the NVZ and its lines. The serve may land on any other service court line.

Service Sequence/Player Positions

- 38.** The correct server and receiver and their positions are determined by the score and the players' starting positions in the game.
- 39.** Both players on the team will serve before a side out is declared, except at the start of the game, when only the starting server will serve. The starting server of each game is therefore designated as "Server 2" 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.
- At the start of each side out, service begins in the right/even serving area.
 - When the team's score is even (0, 2, 4...), the team's starting server's correct position is at the right/even serving area. When the team's score is odd (1, 3, 5...), the starting server's correct position is at the left/odd court.
 - 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 "Server 1" and the partner is "Server 2."
 - Server 1 will serve, alternating serves sides after each point is won, until a rally is lost or the server's team commits a fault.
 - After Server 1's team loses a rally or faults, Server 2 will serve from the correct position and will alternate serving positions as long as the serving team continues to win points.
- 40.** Service faults result in loss of serve and include:
- Server serving from the incorrect serving area.
 - Incorrect player serves the ball.
 - The served ball lands in the NVZ which includes the NVZ lines, including if the ball hits the net.
 - The served ball lands outside the service court, including if the ball hits the net.
- 41.** It is a fault against the receiving team resulting in a point for the server if:
- The incorrect player returns the serve.
 - The receiver or their partner is touched by or interferes with the flight of the ball before it bounces.
- 42.** With the exception of the server there is no restriction on the position of any player, as long as all the 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.

Scoring

- 43.** A team scores points only when serving. A point is scored by winning the rally.
- 44.** If the ball strikes the net and lands inbounds, it remains in play.
- 45.** If the ball strikes another object (i.e. net post, fence, water bottle, etc.) and rebounds into the field of play the ball is dead.

Double-Bounce Rule

- 46.** When the ball is served, the receiving team must let it bounce before returning, and then the serving team must let it bounce before returning, thus two bounces.
- 47.** After the ball had bounced once in each team's court, both teams may either volley the ball (hit the ball before it bounces) or play it off a bounce (ground stroke).

Non-Volley Zone (NVZ)

- 48.** NVZ is an area that extends 7 ft from the net on each side, within which a player is not allowed to strike the ball without it first bouncing.
- 49.** It is a fault if, when volleying a ball, the player steps on the NVZ including the line and/or when the player's momentum causes them to touch the NVZ including the associated lines.
- 50.** It is a fault if, after volleying, a player is carried by momentum into or touches the non-volley zone, even if the volleyed ball is declared dead before this happens.
- 51.** If the player has touched the NVZ for any reason, that player cannot volley a return until both feet have made contact with the playing surface completely outside the NVZ.
- 52.** A player may legally be in the NVZ any time other than when volleying a ball.

Line Calls

- 53.** A ball contacting any line, except the NVZ line on a serve, is considered "in".
- 54.** A serve contacting the NVZ line is short and a fault.
- 55.** A ball contacting the playing surface completely outside of the court is "out" and must be called promptly.
- 56.** Players are responsible for calling the lines on their end of the court. Players can appeal but should keep the game moving if an agreement cannot be met.

Faults

- 57.** A fault is any action that stops play because of a rule violation.
- 58.** A fault by the receiving team results in a point for the serving team.
- 59.** A fault by the serving team results in the server's loss of serve or side out.
- 60.** A fault (and resulting dead ball) will be declared for the following:
 - A serve does not land within the confines of the receiving court or there is a violation of a service rule.
 - A ball is volleyed from the NVZ.
 - If the serve or service return does not bounce before the ball is struck.
 - Hitting the ball into the player's side of the net without the ball crossing over to the opponent's side. Hitting the ball under the net or between the net and the net post.
 - A player hitting a ball that first lands out of bounds or onto their own side of the court.
 - Failure of a standing player to return the ball before it bounces twice on the receiving player's side of the net.
 - A player, player's apparel, or paddle contacting the net system, net posts, or the opponent's court when the ball is in play.
 - A live ball that is stopped by a player before it becomes dead.
 - After the serve, a ball contacting any permanent object before bouncing on the court.
 - If the ball touches a player prior to bouncing, inside or outside the court, it is a fault.
 - A player deliberately carrying or catching the ball on the paddle while performing the serve or during a rally.
 - Players may carry additional pickleball(s) as long as the ball(s) are not visible to their opponent(s) during play. If an additional ball that a player was carrying falls on the playing surface during play, a fault shall be declared.

Section 3: Officiating and Player Conduct

Officiating

- 61.** All games are loosely officiated by the players (no refs), we rely on the spirit of sportsmanship and honesty to keep the matches fun and enjoyable for all!

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- 62.** Unsportsmanlike conduct will not be acceptable and may result in the termination of play. Unsportsmanlike conduct may include but is not limited to:
- Foul language
 - Arguing/protests with staff, participants, or fans
 - Abuse of the honor system

Section 4: Tournament Format

Tournament Play/Declaring a Winner

- 63.** The double-elimination tournament guarantees 2 games for each team.
- 64.** Teams will be seeded based on a blind draw at the start of their divisions.
- 65.** The team that wins best 2 out of 3 games wins the match. First to 11 wins the game, must win by 2.
- 66.** Should a team no-show or forfeit, the opposing team will be awarded the win.
- 67.** All official scores are submitted by the winning team. Any discrepancies should be addressed with Middletown Recreation headquarters (in-between tennis courts).

Code of Conduct

- Understand, appreciate and abide by the rules of the game and the honor system.
- Respect the integrity and judgment of staff.
- Respect your opponents and congratulate them in a courteous manner following each match, whether in victory or defeat.
- Be responsible for your actions and maintain self-control.
- Do not taunt or bait opponents. Refrain from using foul or abusive language.

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