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Volleyball Rules & Handbook©

April 1, 2024

Introduction

Rainbow Sports League was founded with the philosophy that all people are welcome to participate in a safe, social, and inclusive environment. The purpose of RSL is to engage members of the LGBTQ+ community, friends, and allies in healthy, active sports and activities by creating and managing structured games, leagues and tournaments in a safe, consistent, and organized fashion.

Rainbow Sports League follows these principals in order and in precedence. At no time shall any higher ranked principal be compromised for the sake of another by any official, team, or player.

- 1) **Safety:** All measures will be taken so that any and all activities rank safety as the league's number one priority.
- 2) **Participation / Inclusion:** All people are welcome in RSL games and activities, and participation is fundamental to all involved.
- 3) **Respect:** All people affiliated with RSL, its teams or its events shall treat each other with dignity and respect at all times, both on and off the field.
- 4) **Fun:** The purpose of RSL in its core, is to foster a fun, philanthropic, social environment.
- 5) **Honesty / Fair Play:** It is expected that all players, teams and officials shall adhere to a strict honor code at all times.
- 6) **Competition:** While RSL games and activities keep score and award champions, at no time shall any player, team, or official allow the competitive nature inherent in sports take precedence over any of the above founding principles.

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Section I - Conduct

1. League Principles

1.1 Sportsmanship

Officials, players and their guests shall conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner at all times, both on and off the field. RSL expects the highest level of respect from anyone affiliated or attending our events and conduct unbecoming will not be tolerated at any time.

1.2 **Agreement:** By participating in an RSL event or activity, each competitor agrees

- a) To be governed by the rules as presented by RSL, both as written and in the spirit and intent of said rules.
- b) To accept any decisions or penalties imposed by said rules.
- c) To respect all aspects of the league's priorities.
- d) To treat all materials, equipment, and venues with great care including the environment in which we are playing. This includes, but is not limited to, garbage, foul language, smoking, illegal substance, weapons, and alcohol policies and damage to property.

1.3 **Drug & Weapons Policy:** Rainbow Sports League is a drug and weapon-free zone, and any use or distribution of any illegal substances or the possession of any weapons of any kind while attending or engaging in any RSL sponsored events is strictly prohibited.

- a) **Alcohol:** While may or may not be regulated by venue restrictions, any public intoxication will not be tolerated and is subject to disciplinary actions, including ejection from venue for the remainder of the day.

1.4 **Weather:** Outdoor activities may be cancelled or delayed under these guidelines.

- a) Lightning within a 30-mile radius, postpones activities for 30 minutes.
- b) Heavy rain of any kind postpones games for one hour following the conclusion of rain.
- c) If similar conditions return within the postponement periods, activities will then be cancelled for the day and re-scheduled according to the rain date calendar.
- d) Games will be cancelled following a 1-hour continual period of heavy rain.
- e) Activities may proceed if the rain is considered light and variable, and the field conditions are safe.
- f) Should any venue or facility be closed or restricted in use, RSL will advise through e-mail and social media communications as soon as possible.
- g) Canceled days will push the entire schedule back one week (including playoffs), up to a maximum of two weeks. If playoffs cannot be held within 2wks of original date, the winners will be determined by regular season records. Individual game cancellations may be made up by adding additional games to a regular season date.

1.5 **Field / Venue Rules:** All rules and policies put in place by the venue must be respected and will be strictly enforced. (Such as, no pets, no smoking, no loud music, no alcohol, etc.)

1.6 **Discrimination:** RSL has a strict no-discrimination policy. If anyone feels they have been discriminated against for any reason they are to report it to league management immediately. Any person affiliated with an RSL event making racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual orientation slurs or actions are subject to disciplinary proceedings up to and including dismissal from the league.

1.7 Bullying & Taunting: Teasing, shouting, arguing, cheering against, complaining, name-calling, excessive swearing, verbally or physically abusing or intimidating players or game officials in any way (even if intended as a joke, but not received in that manner) will not be tolerating under any circumstances, regardless of if it occurs in person, off venue, or on-line.

- a) Umpires shall be responsible for monitoring on field and sideline behavior and can issue warnings and make recommendations to the Game Referee for any disciplinary actions.
- b) Game Referee may issue individual warnings / cards and if deemed that it is caused by multiple players on a team, he may provide a “team warnings”, followed by a forfeit on the current or future games upon the second occurrence.
- c) Off the field behavior, including at social events, public spaces, or even on social media that project any players, teams or league officials in an aggressive or highly negative light will be considered the same as behavior on the field, and is subject to the same disciplinary policies and procedures.

1.8 Disciplinary Policies: Apply to any infraction listed or unlisted that is deemed unsportsmanlike or is contrary to the RSL core philosophy and principals.

- a) Game Referee, staff, or league officials may issue warnings.
- b) Only Game Referees and league officials can issue Yellow or Red Cards at any time.
- c) Players receiving a Yellow Card must sit out the remainder of the inning (Kickball) or game in match play sports (Dodgeball, Volleyball, Darts, Cornhole etc.). A five-minute sideline penalty issued for timed “period” sports (Soccer, Hockey, Basketball, etc.)
- d) Red Cards may be issued for more serious violations, and are not required to follow a Yellow Card.
- e) Red Card “Levels” will be dependent on the severity of the violation as determined by the Game Referee in consultation with league officials.
 - Level 1 Violation: Removed from field of play for the day
 - Level 2 Violation: Removed from field of play for the day and suspended for the next two game days.
 - Level 3 Violation: Removed from field of play, suspended for the remainder of the season, including playoffs, and suspended from all RSL activities for 6 months.
 - Level 4 Violation: Removed from field of play and banned from all RSL activities indefinitely, including the remainder of the season and playoffs.
- f) After a Red Card has been issued, any additional infraction within its 6-month window will constitute a charge of gross misconduct and will be subject to long-term suspension or permanent ejection from the league as determined by the GM and League Officials.
- g) Players receiving suspensions or ejections may apply, in writing, for re-instatement following a 6-month waiting period.

1.9 Injury Policies: Safety is and will always be the number one priority for Rainbow Sports League and the following polices are in place for everyone's well-being.

- a) Injured players may be replaced or can exit a game at any time without penalties.
- b) Any injury that incapacitates a player, even if momentarily, will stop active play immediately at the Game Referee's discretion.
- c) Any injury to the head that causes any dizziness or unconsciousness must be reported immediately to the attending league officials who shall stop game play to assess the situation. Emergency medical officials will be called for any head related injuries.
- d) Any injured player that is actively bleeding must exit the field of play and cannot return until the bleeding has stopped or has been treated and covered.
- e) The RSL will have on-hand, at least one First Aid kit at every venue for use by its players and officials as needed.
- f) Injured players that required immediate medical attention must provide a doctor's note verifying that they are recovered and physically capable prior to returning to active play.

Section II – Volleyball Basics

(League may be split into two divisions, Competitive & Recreational – not all rules apply to both divisions)

Part 2: Field & Equipment

2.1 **Court** - RSL is responsible for establishing a safe playing court under the following guidelines.

- a) **Terrain:** Both Grass & Sand Courts will be specified for this league. Games will alternate between Sand and Grass Courts.
- b) **Court size and shape:** Standard Volleyball court. 26.2' x 52.5'
- c) **Markers:** Where possible, lines and/or markers will be placed surrounding the court in order to determine in / out of bounds. These also may include net antennae.
- d) **Game Referee:** May stop play to correct any improper court set-up and at their discretion may reverse a call or institute a replay.
- e) **Protests:** Any protests regarding improper court set up will not be accepted.

2.2 Equipment

- a) **Nets:** While preferred, the net shall be provided by the court, however if not available RSL will provide appropriate nets. Nets to be set at co-ed height.
- b) **Ball:** Only the official RSL provided volleyball shall be used in all games. The same ball shall be used the entire game, unless agreed upon by both captains to change it. Balls shall be inflated to 4.5 psi.
- c) **Uniforms:** Team uniforms are not required.
- d) **Shoes:** No shoes are required; however, beach shoes socks or sneakers are permitted. Cleats of any kind are not permitted.

Part 3: Players

3.1 **Number of Players:** Six on the court, four players minimum to avoid forfeit, a maximum of 10 registered players per team.

3.2 **Player Eligibility:** All players must meet the following criteria:

- a) Must be 21 years or older.
- b) Must have signed liability and conduct forms.
- c) Must have paid registration (or substitution) fees.
- d) All players must have a valid photo ID with them on game days, and are subject to verification at any time. Any player without an ID, shall be removed from the game.

3.3 **Team Captain:** Each team shall have one official "Captain" representing their team. This "Captain" may be substituted should the registered captain be absent. Captain may not necessarily play, but must be registered with the team.

3.4 **All Players Participate:** Each player attending a game day shall play. All players serve. However, rotating in following a side-out is permitted. See 3.9 for rotation rules.

3.5 **No Show:** Players who no-show, with no warning or contact, twice during a regular season are subject to removal and replacement by the team captain. Players removed from a roster for this reason are not eligible for refunds.

- 3.6 **Absenteeism:** Players who miss three or more regular season game days, regardless of the reason, are subject to removal and replacement by the team captain. Players removed from a roster for this reason are not eligible for refunds.
- 3.7 **Injury:** Players no longer able to play due to injury may apply for a pro-rated refund.
- 3.8 **“Guest Players”:** May play on any team under these restrictions:
- Regular season games only (not tournaments).
 - They must not be a registered member of any team in that sport’s league.
 - They must sign a waiver and pay a “per game” fee prior to playing.
 - The team has less than maximum roster (10) players in attendance
 - Each team may only have a maximum of two subs during any regular season game.
 - Any scores or games may be forfeited should a sub take the field prior to registering.
- 3.9 **Rotation Rules:** For both Competitive and Recreational Divisions:
- When 6 or less players are in attendance, all players play and there is no rotating out or sit-outs. IE: You can’t decide to play with 4 and rotate out the 5th and 6th players for example.
 - When 7 players are in attendance, there shall be a standard rotation in at service position.
 - When using a rotation, all players participate in the rotation. There are no “skips” with any individual players “staying in” while others rotate out.
 - The service order must remain unchanged throughout the game.
 - Late players may rotate in until such time there has been a full team rotation. IE: Once the first server returns to the service position, no new players may be added.
 - When more than 7 players are in attendance, the team may choose between rotating in players (following above rules b-e) and “sit-outs”, or a combination of the two.
 - A player can only “sit out” a maximum of one game per night.
 - There are no in-game player “substitutions” or “libero” players, except in the case of injury.

Part 4: Teams

- 4.1 **Team Names:** While may be suggestive or double entendre may not be deemed offensive or disrespectful in any way.
- 4.2 **Team Events:** May organize chat rooms, social media accounts, practices, or events, however, the Rainbow Sports League code of conduct extends to those locations as well and must be followed in the same manner.

Section III Volleyball Game Play

Part 5: Fundamental Rules

- 5.1 **Matches:** Consist of 3 games. (There may be two divisions, Competitive & Recreational)
- 5.2 **Time Limit:** There is no individual game time limit, however the total Match time limit is 55 minutes. Time starts at 7:00 and 8:00 (or other designated game time) regardless of status of play. The Referee shall attempt to provide 5 minute and 2 minute “warnings” but failure to do so shall not be cause for redress. At the end of the time limit, the game in progress ends and the team with the highest score is awarded the win. Should the game be tied, one more play shall be instituted, and the winner of that play is awarded the game win. If time runs out before third game has begun, then both teams will be scored a Loss for that game.
- 5.3 **Scoring:** Rally scoring to 21 for each game.
- 5.4 **Game Winning:** In order to win a game, a team must win by 2 points, with a cap of 24.
Exception: Should a 1st or 2nd game be abandoned as per weather guidelines, or other unforeseen circumstances, it shall be counted as a completed game once past the completion of 10 combined points between the two teams. The highest score at that point is awarded the win. Otherwise, the game is abandoned and must be re-scheduled, to start over with no-scores held over. 3rd game counts once first serve takes place.
- 5.5 **Tie Games:** There shall be no tie games. Each game must play until a winner is declared.
- 5.6 **Game vs Match Scoring:** All games count. The third game is always played, even if a team is up 2-0, as game wins and points scored will be recorded and count toward season standings.
- 5.7 **Warm-Ups:** Each team is entitled to a 5-minute warm up prior to the game. However, official clock starts promptly at game time.
- 5.8 **Season Standings:** Determined by **number of games won** (W/L record). In case of a tie, it is broken by head-to-head games won. In case of a further tie, it is broken by total points scored. There shall be no ties in season standings.
- 5.9 **Home & Visitor Assignments:** IE: Choice of Side vs. Serve/Receive, will be determined by a coin toss, Rock-Paper-Scissors shoot out, or other random method provided by the Referee. Sides are switched after every 10 total points.

- 5.10 **Referees:** Games may or may not be officiated by one authorized individual. If no referee is present, games will be played self-governed, with captains responsible for making calls against their own players. All members of the league accept that they and/or their team MAY be assigned Game Referee and/or line judging responsibilities for games their team is not playing. All rules of tardiness and absenteeism apply for games that members are scheduled to referee.
- a) This Game Referee, if used, may be a professional or volunteer or member of a team not participating in the match.
 - b) Should volunteers be utilized, each team is responsible for having available at least two trained and capable referees for assignments throughout the season. Failure to provide a referee or line judge when assigned is subject to a game or match forfeit or a 5-point penalty in subsequent games, at the Head Referee's discretion.
 - c) Volunteers may not referee games in which their team is participating.
 - d) Game Referee has jurisdiction of all calls, including game cancellation and final rulings are not subject to protest.
 - e) All Game Referees and Line Judges are under the jurisdiction of the RSL Head Referee that has final authority over any rule discrepancies or decisions.
 - f) If no Game Referees are present, team captains are responsible for self-ruling on calls. Disagreements are solved by "do-overs" with each captain limited to one-per game.

5.11 **Forfeits:** A team not ready at 10 minutes past game time forfeits game one. A team not ready at the 20-minute mark, forfeits game 2. A team not ready at the 30-minute mark forfeits game 3. Teams must have a minimum of 4 players to count.

5.12 **Serving:** Serving must be completed under these conditions.

- a) All players serve. Players must serve in the same order throughout a game. Serving out of order will void the current point, and the service order will be corrected and the point replayed. There shall not be a point award or forfeiture of the service caused by serving out of order.
- b) Players must serve behind the back line (not to the side) as measured by both feet being behind, and not touching, the line at the point of contact with the ball.
- c) Any contact with the court or the back line prior to contact with the ball is considered a foot fault, and the point is awarded to the opposing team.
- e) Players may serve anywhere along the back line.
- f) Server must ensure the receiving team is in position and ready to receive prior to serving. If a whistle or other signal from a Game Referee is being utilized, the server shall make no motion or action of the serve prior to signal from the Referee. If the Referee deems any part of the serve motion takes place prior to the signal, the Referee shall call for a re-serve. If the same player faults in this way a second time, the serve will be forfeited, and a point will be awarded to the opposing team.
- g) Server must announce the score and "service" prior to serving. If the server fails to announce this, it is considered a dead-ball, the play is stopped and re-played. A server who fails to announce this is given only one re-play per service and a second occurrence is considered a point for the opposing team, and forfeiture of the serve.

- h) Serves may be over or underhanded. However, the ball must be released from the “holding” hand prior to being struck for the serve.
- i) A serve must go over the net to be played by the opposing team. Balls that hit the net and subsequently go over the net (Let serves) are permitted and are valid serves.
- j) Serves must take place within 8 seconds of the “ready” whistle.

Part 6: Offensive Play – A Division

6.1 **Three Hits:** Following a serve, each team is permitted up to three hits in order to return the ball to the other side of the net.

6.2 **Blocks:** A block does not count toward one of the allotted three hits.

6.3 **Legal Returns:** These include blocks, bumps, sets, spikes, and digs. You may use any part of your body, hands, chest, head, feet, etc.. to complete these actions.

6.4 **Illegal Hits:** Carrys, throws or doubles are illegal, and play will end. Any open handed, underhanded hit is considered a carry. Illegal sets are generally called when the set ball does not travel in the direction of the setter’s shoulders or upper body (either forward or reverse) or has excessive “spinning.” A carry is defined as excessive contact or re-direction of the ball while in the players contact. A lift is any open palm contact with the ball. All calls are up to the game Referees discretion.

6.5 **Second Hits:** A player may not hit the ball twice in a row. This includes a set where the ball does not make simultaneous contact with both hands at the same time. **Exceptions:** In the case of simultaneous contact with the ball by two or more players, either player may take the subsequent hit without penalty. Or, in the case of a blocked ball, the blocker may hit the ball a second time following the block.

6.6 **On-Court:** During a return, a player may run anywhere on or off the court to hit the ball. **Exception:** A player may NOT cross into the other team’s side either by going/stepping offside under the net. However, they may pass the imaginary plane outside the net into the opposing side as long as they do not enter the opposing team’s court boundaries.

6.7 **Touching the Net:** **Players may not touch the net** (or poles or any structure or object) while playing the ball. Touching the net (or other structures) is considered a lost point by that team.

6.8 **Plays off the Net:** Balls may be played that have bounced off of the net as long as the team has not utilized all three hits and the ball has not yet hit the ground.

6.9 **Dinks:** Dinks are permitted.

6.10 **Backrow Attacks:** The three backrow positions cannot jump above the top of the net in front of the imaginary ten-foot line and hit the ball. The position of the “take-off” foot is what is measured, not the landing. In the absence of an actual 10-foot line, the assumption for any backrow attack will be “illegal” if the location of take-off is unclear or questioned. (IE: in case of a “tie” with “did they or did they” not take off in front of the 10ft line, the call defaults to “illegal”.)

NOTE: Offensive Play – B Division: Sections 6.4 and 6.10 above do not apply. All other sections apply

Part 7: Defensive Play

7.1 Number of Players: Maximum 6 players on the court at one time. All players in attendance play, using a “rotate in” or “sit-out” rules as described in 3.9 above.

7.2 Formations: Teams may use any formations they prefer, and “rotate in” players during the game. However, the proper serving order must be maintained throughout the game.

Injury Exemption: In case of injury, any player may be substituted by any active player on the team’s roster for that day, or a player may “sit out” the remainder of a game and their failure to serve in their service position is not penalized.

Injury Guidelines: Injury substitutions are subject to sportsmanship guidelines and may be open to disciplinary action should the Game Referee deem the injury claim to be false or overstated.

7.3 Blocking: Players may block balls either coming over the net or on a trajectory to come over the net. A player may not reach over the net to block a ball being set or passed by the other team and not projected to come over the net. Blocking the serve is not permitted.

7.4 Faults / Points: The following are considered faults, which end play and award a point.

- a) The ball hitting the ground
- b) A team hits more than three times (not including a block) / a play that would require a fourth hit to return the ball over the net.
- c) A player touching the net
- d) A ball landing out of bounds prior to a defensive hit/pass (Lines are considered in-bounds)
- e) A returned ball crossing over the antennae / out of play
- f) A player touches the ball or an opponent on the opponent’s side before or during the opponent’s hit
- g) A player interferes with an opponent’s ability to play a ball by going under or over the net entering into the opponent’s side
- h) An illegally hit ball (Carry / throw, double hit etc..)
- i) A player “sets” the first ball. The first ball may not be “set” unless it is in defensive action against a hard-driven ball
- j) Illegal serves and service foot faults
- k) A defensive player blocks the serve
- l) A player has an illegal set

NOTE: Faults – B Division: “h”, “i”, and L” shall not apply. All others apply

Part 8: Time Outs & Challenges

8.1 Team Captains: Only team captains may challenge calls. Team players arguing, questioning, or challenging any call are subject to disciplinary policies.

8.2 One Per Game: Captains get one official challenge per game. A captain attempting to challenge additional calls during a game will be penalized one point per attempted challenge. No time outs will be allowed in the last five minutes of timed matches (regardless of whether the referee has given such warning.)

8.3 Time Stop: Time shall not be stopped for challenged calls.

8.4 Rules Questions & Clarifications: Captains may request a rules clarification, once per game, that may or may not change a call, but it shall not count as an official challenge. Time does not stop under these circumstances.

8.5 Intentional Delay of Game: Not permitted under any circumstances and may be subject to game penalties or disciplinary actions.

8.6 Time Outs: Each team is permitted one "Time Out" per match lasting no longer than one minute. However, the following are also permitted.

- a) **Internal teaching moments:** Captains may request a brief pause in the game to answer players' questions, to clarify rules, or to give instruction. These shall be requested between active plays, and then approved by the Game Referee. These shall last less than 30 seconds.
- b) **Injury Time:** Should an injury occur; the Game Referee may pause play in order to assess the situation or allow assistance to a player.
- c) **Time Clock:** The official game clock does not stop for any of the above.

Section IV Volleyball Tournament Regulations

Part 9: Tournament Details: *(Tournament may be split into two divisions, Competitive & Recreational – all rules apply to both divisions)*

9.1 **Timing:** Following each regular season, and on special occasions, The Rainbow Sports League may host a special tournament under these guidelines.

9.2 **Rules:** Tournaments shall follow the same on-court rules and regulations as the regular season. See Sections 1-3.

9.3 **Eligibility:** To play in the tournaments, each player must qualify under these guidelines.

a) **Play on the competing team:** Either as a regular roster player, a roster replacement player, or a sub, for at least 1/3 of the regular season games. Substitute players during the regular season must still fully register to be on the team roster prior to the playoffs / tournament.

b) **Roster:** Must be on the team's roster submitted at least 1 day prior to the tournament.

c) **Tournament Substitutions:** There are no on-site / last-minute substitutions during the season ending tournaments that don't fit the above criteria.

d) **Roster Replacement Players:** After a season begins, if a player has been removed from a team's roster either by injury or by any other reason, that player may be replaced by another player added to the roster.

D1 The player "dropping off" of the roster does not receive a refund.

D2 The replacement player must pay the full, regular rate, registration fee, minus any substitution fees paid, had they played previously on the same team during that season.

9.4 **Seeding:** Tournament seeds will be based on regular season (or pool play) placings. First by number of games won, then by number of matches won, then by total points for the season.

a) **Two-way ties are broken:**

A1) First by direct Game-to-Game record.

A2) Then, if the same, by who most recently won, Game-to-Game.

A3) Then, if the same, by point differential among all competitors, from regular season.

A4) Then, if the same, by coin toss.

b) **Three-way (or more) ties are broken:**

B1) First by direct Game-to-Game records.

B2) Then, if not broken among all teams, by point differential among all competitors, from regular season.

B3) Then, if still the same, by coin toss.

9.5 **Game Tie Breakers:** All games play until a winner is declared.

9.6 Tournament Bracket: Utilize standard single elimination formats as found on www.interbasket.net

- a) Highest seed plays lowest seed.
- b) Second highest plays second lowest seed.
- c) Third highest plays third lowest, etc...
- d) Bye games are assigned using the standard bracket formats
- e) Game TIMES are by league management assignments and are not determined by seeding location. IE: Higher seeded teams are not guaranteed a specific time or order in which the games are held.

9.7 Match Scoring: For tournaments, we will be utilizing match scoring with best out of three advancing to the next round, and best out of three determining the champion.

9.8 Court vs Serve: First choice goes to the higher seeded team. Subsequent games is the loser's choice.

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