



# Official Catchball Rules

## 2017

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## THE GAME

Catchball is a sport played by two teams on a court divided by a net. The object of the game is to send the ball over the net so that it hits the ground on the opponent's side of the court, and to prevent the ball from hitting the ground on your side of the court.

Each team has up to three contacts with the ball before returning it over the net (in addition to a block).

In catchball, contact with the ball is by **catching** and **throwing**. Hitting the ball is forbidden.

The ball is put in play with a serve: a throw from behind the end line by the server that must pass over the net into the playing space of the opponents' side of the court. A rally continues until the ball hits the ground either in the court or out-of-bounds, or a team fails to return the ball properly within three contacts.

The team that wins a rally scores a point (Rally Point System). When the team receiving the serve wins a rally, it gains both a point and the right to serve, and the players of that team rotate one position clockwise.



**Catchball -**  
**Play sports, Have fun, Make friends!**

## **1. PLAYING AREA**

See Appendix A for diagrams.

The playing area includes the court and the free zone around the court. It is a rectangular shape and symmetrical.

### **1.1. DIMENSIONS**

The court is rectangular in shape measuring 18x9 m, surrounded by a free zone, which is a minimum of 2 m wide on all sides. The free playing space is the space above the playing area and must be free of obstructions. The free playing space shall measure a minimum of 5 m in height from the playing surface.

### **1.2. PLAYING SURFACE**

The surface must be flat, level and uniform. It must not present any danger of injury to the players. The surface of the court must be a light color.

### **1.3. LINES ON THE COURT**

All court lines are 5 cm wide. They must be a different color to that of the floor and other lines on the court.

Boundary lines - two side lines and two end lines mark the playing court. Both side and end lines are positioned within the dimensions of the court.

Center line - the center line divides the court into two equal sides measuring 9x9 m each. This line is positioned directly beneath the net and extends from one side line to the other.

Attack lines - an attack line is positioned 3 m away from the center line on both sides of the net. It marks the Front zone.

#### **1.4. ZONES AND AREAS**

Front zone - the area from the center line to the attack line and includes the attack line itself. The front zone extends beyond the side lines to the end of the free zone.

Serving zone - the serving zone is the 9 m width region behind each end line, bounded between the extensions of the side lines. The serving zone extends from the end line to the end of the free zone directly behind it. The end line is not part of the serving area.

Substitution zone - the substitution zone on each side of the court is the area between the center line and the attack line.

Libero replacement zone - the Libero replacement zone is the free zone extending from the attack line to the end line on the side of the court where the team benches are positioned.

## **2. NET AND POSTS**

See Appendix A for diagrams.

#### **2.1. HEIGHT OF THE NET**

The net is hung vertically over the center line in the middle of the court. The height of the net is 2.24 m as measured in the center of the court between the two side lines. The height of the net over the two side lines must be exactly the same and must not exceed 2.26 m.

#### **2.2. FORMATION OF THE NET**

The net is 1 m wide and 9.5 to 10 meters long (including 25-50 cm that extends beyond the side bands). The net is made of black mesh squares that are 10x10 cm in size. At the top of the net is a white canvas band that is 7 cm wide, that is folded over on both sides and sewn across the full length of the net. Each end of the canvas band has a fortified hole for fastening the

net to the posts with a flexible cable to keep the top of the net taut. The bottom of the net also has a white canvas band, similar to the top band, that is 5 cm wide. A cord is attached to the bottom band and is used to fasten the bottom of the net to the posts and keep it taut.

### **Side bands**

Two white canvas bands are fastened vertically to the net and placed directly above each side line. They are 5 cm wide and 1 m long and are considered part of the net.

## **2.3. ANTENNAE**

An antenna is a flexible rod, 1.80 m long and 10 mm in diameter, made of fiberglass or similar material. The antennae are attached at the outer edge of each side band at the two ends of the net. The top 80 cm of each antenna extends above the net and is marked with 10 cm stripes of contrasting color, preferably red and white. The antennae are considered part of the net and delineate the crossing space.

## **2.4. POSTS**

The posts supporting the net are placed at a distance of 0.5-1.0 m beyond the side lines. They are 2.55 m high and preferably adjustable. The posts are round and smooth, fixed to the ground without wires or cables or any other dangerous or obstructing apparatus.

# **3. BALLS**

### **Standards**

The ball shall be round (spherical), made of leather or flexible synthetic leather. It may be a light uniform color or a combination of colors. Its circumference shall be 65-67 cm and its weight 260-280 g. The pressure inside the ball shall be 0.290 to 0.310 kg/cm<sup>2</sup> (2.84-3.04 bar).



### **Uniformity of balls**

All balls used in a particular match must have the same standards regarding circumference, weight, pressure, type, color, etc.

## **4. TEAM AND TEAM MEMBERS**

All team members must be familiar with the “Official Catchball Rules” and abide by them. They must accept the referees’ decisions with sportsmanlike conduct, without disputing them. In case of doubt, clarification may be requested through the game captain.

All team members must behave respectfully and courteously in the spirit of FAIR PLAY, not only towards the referees, but also towards other officials, opponents, their teammates and spectators.

### **4.1. TEAM COMPOSITION**

For a match, a team will consist of at least 6 players and can include one coach and one assistant coach. One of the players is the team captain and will be indicated as such on the scoresheet. Two players may be designated as Libero in each set. Only the players recorded on the scoresheet may enter the court and play in the match.

### **4.2. CAPTAIN**

Team captain is the team’s representative for all administrative issues prior to and at the end of the match. Game captain is the team’s representative during the match. During the match, when the Team captain is on the court, she is the Game captain.

Game captain is responsible for the conduct and discipline of her team members, as well as those of the coach.

PRIOR TO THE MATCH, the game captain signs the scoresheet and represents her team in the coin toss.

DURING THE MATCH - when the team captain is not on the court, another player on the court, but not the Libero, must be assign to assume the role of Game captain. She will maintain her responsibilities until she is substituted, or the set ends. Only the game captain is authorized to speak to the referees and can do so when the ball is “out of play”:

- to ask for an explanation on the decision or interpretation of the Rules, and also to put forward the requests or questions of her team mates;
- to ask permission:
  - a) to check the specific positions of her team players on the court,
  - b) to check the floor, the net, the ball, etc.;
  - c) to exchange all or part of the players’ gear,
- in the absence of the coach to request time-outs and substitutions.

AT THE END OF THE MATCH the captain thanks the referees.

#### **4.3. COACH**

Throughout the match, the coach directs the play of his/her team behind the side lines of the court. He/she selects the starting line-up and the substituting players, and requests time-outs.

PRIOR TO THE MATCH, the coach records or checks the names and numbers of his/her players on the scoresheet, and then signs it.

DURING THE MATCH, the coach:

- gives the scorer the starting line-up sheet duly filled in and signed prior to each set;

- requests time-outs and substitutions;
- may, as well as other team members, give instructions to the players on the court, while sitting on the bench, standing or walking within the free zone in front of his/her team's bench from the region extending from the attack line to the end line, and must do so without disturbing or delaying the play.
- may ask to check the correct serving player of his/her team.
- the coach is not allowed to contest the referee's rulings or attempt to influence the referee's decisions in any way.

#### **4.4. ASSISTANT COACH**

The assistant coach sits on the team bench, but may not get involved in the match. Should the coach have to leave his/her team for any reason, including receiving a penalty, the assistant coach may assume the coach's role for the period of the absence, once approved by the referee.

#### **4.5. LOCATION OF THE TEAM**

During the match, the players not on the court (substitutes) must either sit on their team bench or stand behind the bench. They may warm-up without balls as follows: during play - behind their team's bench; during time-outs - in the free zone at the end the court behind the end line; during intervals between sets - players may warm-up using balls within their free zone.

### **5. UNIFORM AND GEAR**

- A player's uniform consists of shirt, shorts or tights, socks and sport shoes. The color and design of the shirts, shorts and socks must be the same for all team players (except for the Libero). The uniforms must be clean.

- Each player's shirt must have a number (except for the Libero), on the front and back in the center of the shirt. The color of the numbers must contrast those of the shirt and must be clearly visible. The numbers must be at least 15 cm high on the front and 20 cm high on the back. The strip making up the numbers shall be a minimum of 2 cm wide.
- Shoes must be sports shoes with soles that don't leave marks on the court and do not have heels.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> referee may authorize one or more players to change wet or damaged uniforms, provided that the new uniforms are as describe above.
- It is forbidden to wear items that may cause injury (watches and jewellery including earrings, etc.) or that give a non-natural advantage to the player including those that prevent the ball from slipping (gloves, adhesive bandages, sprays, creams or liquids, etc.). Padded injury protection wear, such as knee pads and braces, may be worn for protection or support.
- Players may wear glasses or contact lenses at their own risk.

## **6. STRUCTURE OF PLAY**

All activities prior the match, between the sets and at the end of the match must be in accordance with the Official Game Protocol - see Appendix C for diagrams.

### **6.1. THE COIN TOSS**

Before the match, the 1<sup>st</sup> referee carries out the toss of the coin to decide which team has the first serve and the sides of the court to be taken by the teams in the first set. If a deciding

set is to be played, a new coin toss will be carried out. The coin toss is carried out in the presence of both team captains.

The winner of the toss chooses EITHER the right to serve or to receive the serve, OR the side of the court to play on.

The loser of the toss makes the remaining choice.

## **6.2. OFFICIAL WARM-UP SESSION**

Prior to the match the teams have a 10-minute official warm-up period at the net.

## **6.3. STARTING LINE-UP OF THE TEAM**

There must be six players per team in play at all times. The team's starting line-up indicates the position and order of the players on the court. This order must be maintained throughout the set. Before the start of each set, the coach must submit the starting line-up of his/her team to the scorer on a line-up sheet. The players who are not in the starting line-up of a set are the substitutes for that set (except the Libero). Once the line-up sheet has been submitted to the scorer, and has been recorded in the scoresheet, further changes cannot be made without a substitution. Discrepancies between players' position on the court and on the line-up sheet are dealt with as follows:

- when such a discrepancy is discovered before the start of the set, players' positions must be corrected according to those on the line-up sheet – this is done without any penalties;
- when, before the start of the set, a player not registered on the line-up sheet is found on the court, this player must be exchanged with the appropriate player to conform to the line-up sheet – this is done without any penalties;

- however, if the coach wishes to keep the non-recorded player on the court, a regular substitution must be requested, which will be recorded on the scoresheet.

If a discrepancy between a player's position and the line-up sheet is discovered later, the team at fault must revert to the correct positions. The opponent's score remains valid and they also receive another point and the next serve.

#### **6.4. POSITIONS**

Prior to the serve, before the ball leaves the server's hand, each team must be on the court in their correct rotational position (except for the server).

The positions of the players are as follows:

- the three players along the net are front-row players and occupy positions 4 (front-left), 3 (front-center) and 2 (front-right);
- the other three are back-row players occupying positions 5 (back-left), 6 (back-center) and 1 (back-right).

Relative positions between players:

- each back-row player must be located further back from the center line than the corresponding front-row player;
- the front-row players and the back-row players, respectively, must be in their relative positions, from side to side, in the order indicated above.

The positions of players are determined according to the position of their feet on the playing surface as follows:

- each front-row player must have at least a part of her foot closer to the center line than the feet of the corresponding back-row player;

- each right (left) side player must have at least a part of her foot closer to the right (left) side-line than the feet of the center player in that row.

After the ball has left the server's hands, the players may move and occupy any position on their side of the court and in the free zone.

#### **6.5. POSITIONAL VIOLATIONS**

The team commits a positional violation if any player is not in her correct position as the ball leaves the server's hands. If the server commits a serving violation when serving, the server's violation is called before a positional violation. A positional violation has the following consequences:

- the team is penalized with a point and the serve to the opponent;
- players' positions are rectified.

#### **6.6. SERVING ORDER**

The serve order (or rotational order) is determined by the team's starting line-up and is checked by the order of the servers and players' positions throughout the set. When the team receiving the serve (receiving team) gains the right to serve, its players rotate one position clockwise: the player in position 2 rotates to position 1 to serve, the player in position 1 rotates to position 6, etc.

A serve order violation (or rotational violation) is committed when the ball is not served according to the serve order. It has the following consequences:

- the team is penalized with a point and the serve to the opponent team;
- the players' rotational order is rectified.

## **7. THE SERVE**

The serve is the act of putting the ball into play, by the back-right player (in position 1), from the serving zone.

### **7.1. FIRST SERVE IN A SET**

The first serve of the first set, as well as that of the deciding 3<sup>rd</sup> set, is executed by the team determined by the coin toss. The first serve of the 2<sup>nd</sup> set will be executed by the team that did not serve first in the 1<sup>st</sup> set.

### **7.2. SERVE ORDER**

The players must follow the serve order as recorded on the line-up and game scoresheet.

After the first serve in a set, the next player to serve is determined as follows:

- when the serving team wins the rally, the player who served before (or her substitute), serves again;
- when the receiving team wins the rally, it gains the right to serve and rotates one position clockwise before serving. The player who moves from the front-right (position 2) to the back-right (position 1) serves.

### **7.3. AUTHORISATION OF THE SERVE**

The 1<sup>st</sup> referee authorizes the serve, after having checked that the teams are ready to play and that the server is in possession of the ball.

### **7.4. EXECUTION OF THE SERVE**

The ball is thrown into the opponent's court through the crossing space. Hitting the ball to serve is forbidden. The server must not come into contact with the court (the end line included) or the surface outside the serving zone. The server must throw the ball within 5 seconds after the 1<sup>st</sup> referee



whistles for the serve. A serve executed before the referee's whistle is cancelled and is to be repeated.

Forming a screen:

- The serving team must not prevent the opposing team from seeing the server or the flight path of the ball, by forming a screen consisting of an individual player or group of players.
- It is considered screening when one or more players of the serving team:
  - wave their arms, jump or move sideways
  - or
  - standing as a group close together in order to hide the server and the flight path of the ball.

## **7.5. SERVE VIOLATIONS**

Serving violations:

- the server violates the serve order;
- the server does not execute the serve properly (out of the serve zone, or late the execution of the serve over 5 seconds, etc.);
- after the ball has been thrown, the serve becomes a serve violation if the ball:
  - touches a player from the serving team;
  - fails to cross the vertical plane of the net entirely within the crossing space;
  - passes over a screen.

## **8. TO SCORE A POINT, TO WIN A SET AND THE MATCH**

A rally is a sequence of actions from the moment the ball is brought into play by the server's throw until the ball is "out of play". A completed rally is a sequence of actions that results in the awarding of a point.

### **8.1. TO SCORE A POINT**

The team that wins a rally, scores a point and the right to the next serve.

Point - a team scores a point:

- when the ball hits the surface on the opponent's side of the court;
- when the opponent team commits a fault or violation;
- when the opponent team receives a penalty.

A violation - a team commits a violation by performing an action contrary to the rules. The referees determine when a violation has been made according to the rules:

- if two or more violations are committed successively, only the first one is called and ruled upon;
- if two or more violations are committed simultaneously by players on opposing teams, a DOUBLE VIOLATION is called and the rally is replayed.

### **8.2. TO WIN A SET**

A set is won by the team that is first to score 25 points with a minimum lead of two points. In the case of a 24-24 tie, play continues until a two-point lead is achieved (26-24; 27-25; ...).

### **8.3. TO WIN THE MATCH**

The match is won by the team that wins two sets. In the case of a 1-1 tie in sets, the deciding 3<sup>rd</sup> set is played to 15 points with a minimum lead of 2 points.

### **8.4. AN INCOMPLETE TEAM**

If a team refuses to play after being summoned to do so, it is declared an incomplete team and forfeits the match with a 0-2 loss and 0-25 for each set. A team that, without justifiable reason, does not appear on court on time is declared an incomplete team with the same result as above. A team with

less than 6 eligible players is declared INCOMPLETE and the match will not be played and the results are the same as above. A team that is declared INCOMPLETE for a set or for the match, loses the set or the match, respectively. The opposing team is given the points, or the points and the sets, needed to win the set or the match, respectively. The incomplete team keeps the points and sets it won.

## **9. STATES OF PLAY**

The ball is in play from the moment the serve is thrown and after having been authorized by the 1<sup>st</sup> referee.

The ball is out of play from the moment a violation is called by one of the referees.

The ball is “in” if any part of it hits the playing surface on the court, including the boundary lines.

The ball is “out” when:

- the part of the ball which contacts the floor is entirely outside the boundary lines;
- it touches an object outside the court, the ceiling or a person out of play;
- it touches the antennae, ropes, posts or the net itself outside the side bands;
- it crosses the vertical plane of the net either partially or totally outside the crossing space;
- it crosses entirely under the net.

## **10. PLAYING THE BALL**

Each team must play within the playing area. However, the ball may be retrieved from beyond the free zone.

### **10.1. CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTACT WITH THE BALL**

Contact with the ball occurs when any part of the player's body touches the ball. A contact has three actions:

- Catching the ball:
  - The ball must be caught with a hand (hands),
  - While catching the ball, a player may be assisted by any part of her body, provided that the contacts take place simultaneously.
- Holding the ball:
  - The length of time the ball can be held depends on the type of action performed by the player, but must be done without delay.
- Throwing the ball.

### **10.2. TEAM CONTACTS**

Each team has up to three contacts with the ball in order to return it to the opponent's side of the court (in addition to a block).

It is forbidden to **hit or kick** the ball intentionally with any part of the body, including reaching out in order to prevent the ball from escaping the player. However, the ball can accidentally hit any part of the player's body and rebound in any direction, including over the net.

**CONSECUTIVE CONTACTS** - a player may not make contact with the ball twice in succession, nor may the ball make contact with various parts of her body in succession.

Exceptions:

- When blocking, consecutive contacts may be made by one or more blockers provided that they occur as part of a single action;

- On the **first** contact of the team only, the ball may touch various parts of the body consecutively, provided that they occur during an attempt to catch the ball.

**SIMULTANEOUS CONTACTS** - two or three players may touch the ball at the same time:

- when two/three teammates touch the ball simultaneously, it is counted as two/three contacts (with the exception of the block). If they reach for the ball but only one of them touches it, it is counted as one contact.
- when two opponents touch the ball simultaneously over the net and the ball remains in play, the team receiving the ball is entitled to another three contacts. If such a ball goes "out", it is the fault of the team on the opposite side.

**ASSISTED CONTACT** - within the playing area, a player is not permitted to use a teammate or any structure or object, including using the net as support (pinning the ball to the net) in order to catch the ball or complete a pass.

### **10.3. CATCHING AND MOVING WITH THE BALL**

Steps are counted from the moment a catch has been completed by a player.

#### **Catching the ball**

While attempting to catch the ball on the **first contact**, a player may take as many steps as needed to reach a standstill when catching the ball while the player is in motion. The catch is considered complete as soon as the player reaches a standstill.

On the **second and third contact**:

Catching the ball **without** forward movement - if one or both of the player's feet are in the air upon catching the ball, the catch is considered complete once the player's

feet is back on the ground, close to each other (or when a player lands in the place she jumped from). This "foot back" step (or the landing) will not count.

Catching the ball **with** forward movement - the catch is considered complete the moment the player contacts with ball. The completion of the forward movement while catching the ball (putting the foot back on the ground far from the other foot, or landing far from the place she jumped from) counts as one step.

### **Moving with the ball (Steps)**

While the player holds the ball, the number of steps allowed depends on the action being done:

- Only one step is allowed prior to passing the ball to a teammate or throwing the ball over the net without jumping in the air. The ball must be released within a moment of completing the step.
- Prior to passing the ball to a teammate or throwing the ball over the net while jumping in the air, approach steps are allowed:
  - A jump from one foot – prior to the jump, the player may take up to two steps. The jump is done from the foot that completed the last step.
  - A jump from two feet – prior to the jump, the player may take up to two steps followed by a “closure step”.

The “**closure step**” is a step that ends approach steps for a jump from two feet. This step is done by bringing the foot that is in the air next to the foot on the ground.

- A jump in the air with both feet, prior to either an attack throw or a pass to a teammate, requires that the action be completed by releasing the ball before landing back on the ground.

#### **10.4. DELAY IN A PLAY**

A delay in a play is when a player holds the ball without lifting her foot/feet from the ground. A delay of only one second is allowed. After catching the ball, the player must perform an action of play, such as throwing the ball, making a step prior to throwing the ball, begin approach steps for an attack, jumping etc., in order not to delay the play.

#### **10.5. VIOLATIONS IN PLAYING THE BALL**

- **FOUR CONTACTS** - a team has four contacts with the ball before returning it to the opponent's court;
- **ASSISTED CONTACT** - a teammate or structure/object is used as support in catching the ball, including the net, including when within the playing area;
- **DOUBLE CONTACT** - a player contacts the ball twice in succession or the ball contacts various parts of her body in succession (see exceptions in Rule 10.2);
- **HIT** - an intentional hit or kick of the ball;
- **MOVING WITH THE BALL** - a player makes steps beyond that allowed in Rule 10.3 while holding the ball;
- **DELAY** - a player holds the ball for more than 1 second.

### **11. THE BALL AT THE NET**

#### **Ball crossing the net**

The ball sent to the opponent's court must pass over the net within the crossing space. The ball may touch the net. The crossing space is the part of the vertical plane above the net and is delineated as follows:

- from below, by the top of the net;
- at the sides, by the antennae, and their imaginary vertical extension;
- from above, by the ceiling or structure (if any).

### **Ball in the net**

A ball that touches the net may be caught by a player other than the one that last contacted the ball. After a block, the same player can catch the ball.

## **12. PLAYER AT THE NET**

### **12.1. REACHING BEYOND THE NET**

While blocking, a player may touch the ball when it is on the other side of the net, provided that she does not interfere with the opponent's play, and does not touch the ball before her opponent.

### **12.2. REACHING UNDER THE NET**

A player is allowed to reach under the net into the **space** of the opponent's court, provided that this does not interfere with the opposing team's play.

Reaching under the net into the opposing team's **court**, while in contact with the surface of the opponent's side of the court beyond the center line is permitted with a hand (hands) or foot (feet), provided that some part of the hand (hands) or foot (feet) remains either in contact with or directly above the center line.

A player may be in the opposing team's free zone provided that she does not interfere with the opponent's play.

### **12.3. CONTACT WITH THE NET**

Contact with the net by a player between the antennae is a violation, unless it is made unintentionally and while the ball is



far away from the net. Players may touch the posts, ropes, or any other object outside the antennae, including the net itself, provided that it does not interfere with the play. When the ball flies into the net, causing the net to touch an opponent, it is not considered a violation.

#### **12.4. PLAYER VIOLATIONS AT THE NET**

- A player touches an opponent or the ball in the opponent's space before the opponent contacts the ball.
- A player interferes with the opponent's play while reaching into the opponent's space under the net.
- A player's hand (hands) or foot (feet) reaches entirely into the opponent's court below the net (beyond that outlined in Rule 12.2).
- A player touches the net between the antennae or the antenna itself, when the ball is near the net.

### **13. ATTACK THROW**

Any action, which directs the ball towards the opponent's court, with the exception of the serve and a block, is considered an attack throw.

A spike is an attack throw executed while jumping. While spiking, up to two approach steps are allowed while holding the ball, followed by a jump.

#### **Restrictions regarding the attack throw**

A back-row player shall not complete an attack throw from the front zone, when upon release, the ball is entirely above the top of the net.

A Libero player shall not complete an attack throw from anywhere on the court, when upon release, the ball is entirely above the top of the net.

### **Reaching beyond the net with the ball**

A player who has reached over the net with the ball must complete the attack throw by releasing it in the opponent's side of the court. If the ball is brought back into the attacking player's side of the court without being released, this is an attack throw violation.

## **14. BLOCK**

Blocking is the action of players located close to the net whose aim is to intercept the ball as it thrown from the opponent's side of the court. A block is performed when a part of the player's body (usually her hands) are extended above the top of the net.

### **14.1. BLOCKING**

Only front row players may complete a block.

Attempted Block - is the action of trying to block without making contact with the ball.

Completed Block - is whenever the ball is touched by a blocker.

Collective Block - is executed by two/three players close to each other, and is completed when one of them touches the ball.

One or more blockers may make quick consecutive contacts with the ball provided they are made during a single action.

### **14.2. BLOCKING WITHIN THE OPPONENT'S SPACE**

While blocking, a player may reach over the net and touch the ball in the opponent's space, provided that this action does not interfere with the opponent's play, and that she does not touch the ball before her opponent.

### **14.3. BLOCK AND TEAM CONTACTS**

Contact with the ball during a block is not counted as a team contact. Consequently, after a block, the team is entitled to three contacts in order to return the ball to the opponent's side of the court. The first contact after the block may be by any player, including a player who touched the ball during the block. During a block, the blocker may catch the ball. This will count as the first team contact.

### **14.4. BLOCKING THE SERVE**

It is forbidden to block an opponent's serve.

## **15. REGULAR GAME BREAKS**

Regular breaks in the game are TIME-OUTS and SUBSTITUTIONS. A break in the game is the time between one completed rally and the 1<sup>st</sup> referee's whistle for the next serve.

### **Number of regular game breaks**

Each team may request a maximum of two time-outs and six substitutions per set.

### **Request for regular game breaks**

A regular game break may be requested by the coach, or in the absence of the coach, by the game captain, and only by them. The request is made using the appropriate official hand signal, while the ball is "out of play" and before the 1st referee's whistle for the serve. Substitution before the start of a set is permitted, and will be recorded as a regular substitution for that set.

### **Consecutive requests for game breaks**

Request for one or two time-outs, and request for a substitution by each team may follow one another, within the same break in the game.

### **15.1. TIME-OUTS**

All requested time-outs last for 30 seconds. During all time-outs, the players in play must go to the free zone near their team's bench.

### **15.2. SUBSTITUTIONS**

A substitution is an exchange between two players (other than the Libero or her replacement player) where a player enters the game and takes the position of another player who must leave the court, after the substitution is recorded by the scorer. A substitution requires the permission of the referee.

#### **Restrictions on substitutions**

Each team may request up to 6 substitutions in every set. More than one player can be substituted at the same request for a game break. A player from the starting line-up may leave and re-enter the game only once in a set, and only to her previous position in the line-up (rotational order). A substitute player may enter the game in place of a player from the starting line-up, but only once per set, and she can only be substituted back by the same starting player.

#### **Exceptional substitution**

A player (except the Libero) who cannot continue playing due to injury or illness, should be substituted with a regular substitution. If this is not possible, the team is entitled to make an EXCEPTIONAL substitution, beyond the limits of the rule above.

An exceptional substitution is that where any player who is not on the court at the time of the injury/illness (except the Libero, second Libero or her regular replacement player), may be substituted into the game for the injured/ill player. The substituted injured/ill player is not allowed to re-enter the match. An exceptional substitution cannot be counted as a

regular substitution under any circumstances, but should be recorded on the scoresheet (Remarks section).

If an exceptional substitution is not possible, the injured/ill player may be substituted by a Libero player – see Rule 19.6.

#### **Substitution due to suspension or disqualification**

A SUSPENDED or DISQUALIFIED player (on court) must be substituted immediately through a regular substitution. If this is not possible, the team is declared INCOMPLETE.

#### **Illegal substitution**

A substitution is illegal if it does not comply to the restrictions indicated in Rule 15.6 (except in situations in Rule 15.7).

When a team has made an illegal substitution and the play has been resumed the following procedure shall apply:

- the team is penalized with a point and the serve to the opponent,
- the substitution must be rectified.

#### **Procedure for carrying out substitutions**

Substitutions must be carried out within the substitution zone. The time for the substitution is limited to the time needed for recording the substitution on the scoresheet, and allowing entry and exit of the players. At the time of the request for the substitution, the player must be ready to enter the court, and be standing near the substitution zone. If the player is not ready, the substitution is not granted and the team is penalized for a delay.

### **15.3. IMPROPER REQUESTS**

It is improper to request a regular game break:

- during a rally or at the time of, or after, the whistle to serve,
- by a non-authorized team member,

- after having exhausted the allowed number of time-outs and substitutions.

A first improper request by a team, that does not affect or delay the game, shall be rejected without any other consequences. Any further improper requests in the match by the same team constitutes a delay and the team will be penalized accordingly.

## **16. GAME DELAYS**

### **16.1. TYPES OF DELAY**

An illegal action of a team that prevents resumption of the game is a delay and includes, among others:

- a delay during a substitution;
- prolonging breaks, after having been instructed to resume the game;
- requesting an illegal substitution;
- repeating an improper request;
- a delay in the game by a team member.

### **16.2. PENALTIES FOR DELAYS**

- A "DELAY WARNING" and a "DELAY PENALTY" are team penalties.
- Penalties for delay remain in force for the entire match.
- All penalties for delay are recorded on the scoresheet.
- The first delay in the match by a team member is penalized with a "DELAY WARNING". The second and subsequent delays of any type by any member of the same team in the same match constitute a violation and are penalized with a "DELAY PENALTY": a point and serve to the opponent. Penalties for delay imposed before or between sets are imposed in the following set.

## **17. EXCEPTIONAL GAME INTERRUPTIONS**

### **17.1. INJURY/ILLNESS**

Should serious injury occur while the ball is in play, the referee must stop the game immediately and permit a medical team to attend the injured player on the court. The rally is then replayed. If an injured/ill player cannot be substituted using a regular or exceptional substitution, the player is given a 3-minute recovery time, but not more than once for the same player in the match. If the player does not recover, she may be replaced by a Libero player (according to Rule 19.6), otherwise, her team is declared incomplete.

### **17.2. EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE**

If there is any external interference to the game, the play has to be stopped and the rally replayed.

### **17.3. PROLONGED INTERRUPTIONS**

If unforeseen circumstances interrupt the match, the 1<sup>st</sup> referee shall decide the measures to be taken to re-establish normal playing conditions. Should one or several interruptions occur, not exceeding 1 hour in total:

If the match is resumed on the same court, the interrupted set shall continue as normal with the same score, players (except suspended or disqualified ones) and positions. The scores of completed sets are retained.

If the match is resumed on a different court, the interrupted set is cancelled and replayed with the same team members and the same starting line-ups (except suspended or disqualified players) and the record of all penalties is maintained. The scores of completed sets are retained.

Should one or several interruptions occur, exceeding 1 hour in total, the entire match shall be replayed.

## **18. BREAKS BETWEEN SETS AND CHANGE OF COURTS**

Breaks between sets are of three minutes duration. During this period, the teams change sides of the court and registration of the starting line-ups of the teams are made on the scoresheet.

## **19. THE LIBERO PLAYER**

### **19.1. DESIGNATION OF THE LIBERO**

- A Libero player may be designated in addition to the 6 regular team players.
- Each team has the option of designating up to two specialist defensive players as Libero from the list of players on the scoresheet.
- The designation of the Libero player(s) is for one set.
- Only one Libero may be on court at a time.
- A Libero player may not act as game captain.

### **19.2. GEAR**

The Libero player(s) must wear a uniform, at least the shirt, that is a different, and contrasting in color to that of the rest of the team. Her uniform may also be of a different design.

When a regular player is designated as Libero player in the middle of the match, she must change her shirt to one with a contrasting color to that of the team.

When the designation of a Libero player is cancelled, and she continues playing as a regular player, she must wear a shirt identical to that of the rest of the team, with her own number (and not that of another player who is designated a libero player).



### **19.3. ACTIONS INVOLVING THE LIBERO**

Actions of play:

- The Libero player may replace any back-row player.
- Her play is restricted to that of a back-row player and she is not allowed to complete an attack throw where the ball is entirely above the net at the time the ball is released.
- She may not block or attempt to block.
- She may not serve.

Libero Replacements

- Libero replacements are not counted as substitutions. An unlimited number of libero replacements is allowed, but at least one rally must be completed between two Libero replacements.
- The player whom the Libero replaced is the only regular player than can replace the Libero on court. A Libero player may be replaced by the second Libero. A regular player may be replaced by either Libero.
- All Libero replacements must take place while the ball is out of play and before the whistle for the serve. The replacements will be proceeded through the Libero Replacement Zone.
- At the start of each set, the Libero may not enter the court until the referee has checked the starting line-up and authorised a Libero replacement.
- A Libero replacement made after the whistle for the serve but before the serve is thrown will be allowed the first time it happens. However, at the end of the rally, the game captain will be informed that this is not permitted, and that the team will be subject to penalties for delay if it is repeated.

- Subsequent late Libero replacements will result in the immediate stop of play, and a penalty for delay will be imposed. The team to serve next will be determined by the level of the penalty for delay.
- A Libero replacement violation occurs when (amongst others):
  - A rally is not completed between Libero replacements,
  - the Libero is replaced by a player other than the regular player for that position or the second Libero.
- An illegal Libero replacement is treated in the same way as a positional violation.

#### **19.4. DESIGNATION OF A NEW LIBERO**

- A team with two Liberos: When a team has registered two Liberos on the scoresheet, but one becomes unable to play, the team has the right to play with only one Libero.
- A team with one Libero: When only one Libero is registered on the scoresheet, and this Libero is declared unable to play, the coach (or game captain if no coach is present) may designate any other player not on the court at the time of the designation as a Libero for the remainder of the set (except the regular player that the Libero substituted for).
- The coach, or game captain if no coach is present, makes a request to the referee for a new Libero designation.

#### **19.5. SUSPENSION AND DISQUALIFICATION**

If the Libero is suspended or disqualified from play, she may be replaced immediately by the team's second Libero. Should the team have only one Libero, then it has the right to designate another player as a Libero for the remainder of the set.

### **19.6. CANCELLATION OF A LIBERO DESIGNATION**

In case of injury of a regular player, when there is no possibility for a substitution, neither a regular nor an exceptional substitution, she can be replaced (substituted) by a Libero as follows:

- The coach, or game captain if no coach is present, notifies the referee that he/she wishes to cancel the designation of the player as a Libero player,
- The "released" Libero player will substitute for the injured player,
- She must change her shirt from that of the Libero to the same as that worn by her teammates,
- She will act as a regular player until the end of the set,
- The injured player may not play again for the rest of the match,
- The cancellation of the Libero designation and the substitution will be recorded on the scoresheet (in the remarks section).

## **20. CODES OF CONDUCT**

Participants must be familiar with the “Official Catchball Rules” and abide by them. Participants must accept the referees’ decisions with sportsmanlike conduct, without disputing them. In case of doubt, clarification may be requested through the game captain. Participants must refrain from actions or attitudes aimed at influencing the decisions of the referees or covering up faults or violations committed by their team.

Participants must behave respectfully and courteously in the spirit of FAIR PLAY, not only towards the referees, but also towards other officials, opponents, their teammates and

spectators. Communication between team members during the match is permitted.

## **21. MISCONDUCT AND ITS PENALTIES**

### **21.1. MINOR MISCONDUCT**

Minor misconduct is not subject to penalties. It is the 1<sup>st</sup> referee's duty to prevent the teams from approaching the level of penalization by issuing a verbal warning or a hand-signal to a team member. This warning is not a penalty, has no immediate consequences and is not recorded on the scoresheet.

### **21.2. UNAPPROPRIATED CONDUCT**

Unappropriated conduct by a team member towards officials, opponents, teammates or spectators is classified into two categories according to the seriousness of the offense:

1. Unsportsmanlike behaviour - Conduct that is rude, insulting, or contrary to good manners or moral principles, expressions of contempt, defamatory or insulting expressions or gestures, shouting, or refusal by a team to shake hands with players from the opposing team at the end of the game.

2. Aggressive behaviour - Actual physical attack, aggressive or threatening behaviour, rude expressions, cursing, profane expressions or gestures, the throwing of any object (including the ball) with the intention of hurting any person or damaging any object on or around the court.

All penalties for unsportsmanlike behaviour are individual (except for warning), remain in force for the entire match and are recorded on the game scoresheet. Reoccurrence of the unsportsmanlike behaviour by the same person in the same game is penalized with increasing severity.

### **21.3. PENALTY SCALE**

#### **1. Unsportsmanlike behaviour**

Based on the judgment of the referee and according to the seriousness of the offense, the penalties to be imposed are: Warning, Penalty, Suspension and Disqualification. These penalties will be recorded on the game scoresheet.

**Warning** - Will be given for unsportsmanlike behaviour committed by any team member for the first time in the game.

The referee will notify the game captain that this is a warning prior to a penalty being given, and relates to **the entire team** and not just to the person who committed the offense. The game captain must notify all team members of the significance of the warning.

**Penalties** - Will be applied for unsportsmanlike behaviour committed for the second time by the same or any other team member.

The referee will penalize the team member that committed the offense by showing her/him a Yellow card. The team will be penalized with a point and the serve being given to the opponent team.

**Suspensions** – Will be applied for unsportsmanlike behaviour committed by any member of the team that has already been Penalized during the game.

The referee will suspend the team member that committed the offense by showing her/him a Red card. A team member who is penalized by suspension will not play for the rest of the set, with no other consequences. A player on the court that is suspended must be substituted immediately by a regular substitution (an exceptional substitution is not allowed). A suspended coach loses her/his right to intervene in the set and must remain seated on the team's bench.

**Disqualification** – Will be applied for unsportsmanlike behaviour committed by any team member who has already been suspended during the game.

The referee will disqualify the team member by showing her/him a Yellow + Red cards together in the one hand. The team member penalized with disqualification must leave the Competition Area for the rest of the match, with no other consequences. A player on the court that is disqualified must be substituted immediately by a regular substitution (an exceptional substitution is not allowed).

## **2. Aggressive behaviour**

Aggressive behaviour by any team member.

The referee will decide on the penalty to be applied (suspension or disqualification) according to the severity of the offense committed, will act as described above according to the type of penalty to be applied. At the end of the game the referee will report the aggressive behaviour and the way it was dealt with to the league administration.

### **21.4. MISCONDUCT BETWEEN SETS AND AFTER THE MATCH**

Any misconduct occurring before or between sets is penalized according to the penalty scale in Rule 21.3 and the penalty is imposed in the following set.

All misconduct or irregular events that occur after the match will be dealt with by the league administration. The referee must file a detailed report of the event.

## **22. MATCH OFFICIALS AND PROCEDURES**

The referees for a match are composed of the following officials:

First (1<sup>st</sup>) referee, second (2<sup>nd</sup>) referee, scorer, four (two) line judges.

Only the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> referees may blow a whistle during the match:

- the 1<sup>st</sup> referee gives the signal for the serve that begins the rally.
- the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> referee signals the end of the rally, provided that they are sure that a fault or violation has been committed and they have identified its nature.

They may blow the whistle when the ball is out of play to indicate that they authorize or reject a team request. Immediately after the referee blows the whistle to signal the completion of the rally, he/she must indicate using official hand signals:

- the team to serve
- the nature of the violation.

## **23. FIRST REFEREE**

The first referee carries out his/her responsibilities standing on the referee's stand located at the end of the net on the opposite side to the scorer. His/her view must be approximately 50 cm above the net.

### **Jurisdiction**

- The 1<sup>st</sup> referee controls the match from start to finish. He/she has authority over all match officials and the members of the teams.
- During the match, his/her decisions are final.
- He/she is authorized to overrule the decisions of other referees if he/she is convinced they are wrong. He/she may replace a referee who is not performing his/her responsibilities properly.

- He/she has the authority to decide all matters involving the game, including those not provided for in the Rules.
- He/she shall not permit any discussion about his/her decisions. However, at the request of the game captain, the 1<sup>st</sup> referee will give an explanation on the decision or interpretation of the rules upon which he/she has based his/her decision.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> referee is responsible for determining whether the playing area, equipment, gear and conditions meet the requirements for play both before and during the match.

### **Responsibilities**

Prior to the match, the 1<sup>st</sup> referee:

- inspects the state of the playing area, the balls and other equipment;
- performs the coin toss with the team captains;

During the match, he/she is authorized:

- to decide upon:
  - faults of the server, screening by the serving team and positional violations by the teams;
  - faults and violations in playing the ball;
  - violations above and under the net, and violations related to contact of the player with the net;
  - attack and block violations by the back-row players and Libero;
- to penalize misconduct and delays.

At the end of the match, he/she checks the scoresheet and signs it.

**Should the 2<sup>nd</sup> referee be absent, all his/her responsibilities will be carried out by the 1<sup>st</sup> referee.**



## **24. SECOND REFEREE**

The second referee performs his/her responsibilities standing on the ground outside the court near the post, on the opposite side of, and facing the 1<sup>st</sup> referee.

### **Jurisdiction**

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> referee is the assistant of the 1<sup>st</sup> referee, but also has his/her own areas of jurisdiction.
- He/she may, without whistling, also signal faults and violations outside his/her areas of jurisdiction, but must not insist upon them to the 1<sup>st</sup> referee.
- He/she supervises the work of the scorer.
- He/she observes the players on the bench and reports any misconduct to the 1<sup>st</sup> referee.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> referee authorizes the breaks in play, regulates their duration and rejects improper requests.
- He/she oversees the number of time-outs and substitutions used by each team.
- In the case of injury of a player, the 2<sup>nd</sup> referee authorizes an exceptional player substitution or allows 3 minutes recovery time.

### **Responsibilities**

At the beginning of each set, and at any time necessary during the match, the 2<sup>nd</sup> referee checks that the positions of the players on the court match those on the starting line-up form.

During the match, the 2<sup>nd</sup> referee decides, whistles and signals:

- interference due to reaching into the opposing teams side of the court and space under the net;
- positional violations of the receiving team;
- contact of players with the net;

- a block completed by a back-row player or an attempted block by a libero player, or an attack play violation by a back-row or libero player;
- contact of the ball with an external object;
- when the ball crosses the net totally or partially outside the region between the antennae or touches the antenna, including from a serve;
- contact of the ball with the floor if the 1<sup>st</sup> referee is not in position to see that.

At the end of the match, he/she checks and signs the scoresheet.

## **25. SCORER**

The scorer performs his/her responsibilities seated at the scorer's table on the opposite side of the court from, and facing, the 1<sup>st</sup> referee.

### **Responsibilities**

The scorer fills in the scoresheet according to the Rules. He/she uses a buzzer or other device to notify violations within his/her areas of responsibilities.

Prior to the match and set, the scorer:

- writes down the details of the match and teams, according to the mandated procedures, and obtains the signatures of the captains;
- records the starting line-up and serve order of each team.

During the match, the scorer:

- records the points scored;
- checks the serving order of each team and notifies the referees of any error immediately after the serve;

- records the time-outs and the substitutions, checking the number of such, and informs the 2<sup>nd</sup> referee;
- notifies the referees of a request for an illegal time-out;
- notifies the referees of the end of the sets;
- records any penalties and requests for illegal actions;
- records all other events as instructed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> referee, such as exceptional substitutions, recovery time, prolonged interruptions, external interferences, etc.;

At the end of the match, the scorer:

- records the final result;
- signs the scoresheet, before he/she obtains the signatures of the referees.

## **26. LINE JUDGES**

A match may have 2 or 4 line judges. If only 2 line judges are used, they stand at the corners of the court closest to the right hand of each referee. Each line judge monitors both the end line and side line on his/her side.

### **Responsibilities**

The line judges perform their responsibilities using flags (40x40 cm), to signal:

- the ball "in" or "out" whenever the ball lands near the line(s) they are monitoring;
- the ball touching the antenna, the serve crossing the net outside the crossing space, etc.;
- any player (except the server) stepping outside of the court at the time the serve is thrown;

At the 1<sup>st</sup> referee's request, a line judge must repeat his/her signal.

## **27. OFFICIAL SIGNALS**

### **REFEREES' HAND SIGNALS**

See Appendix B for diagrams.

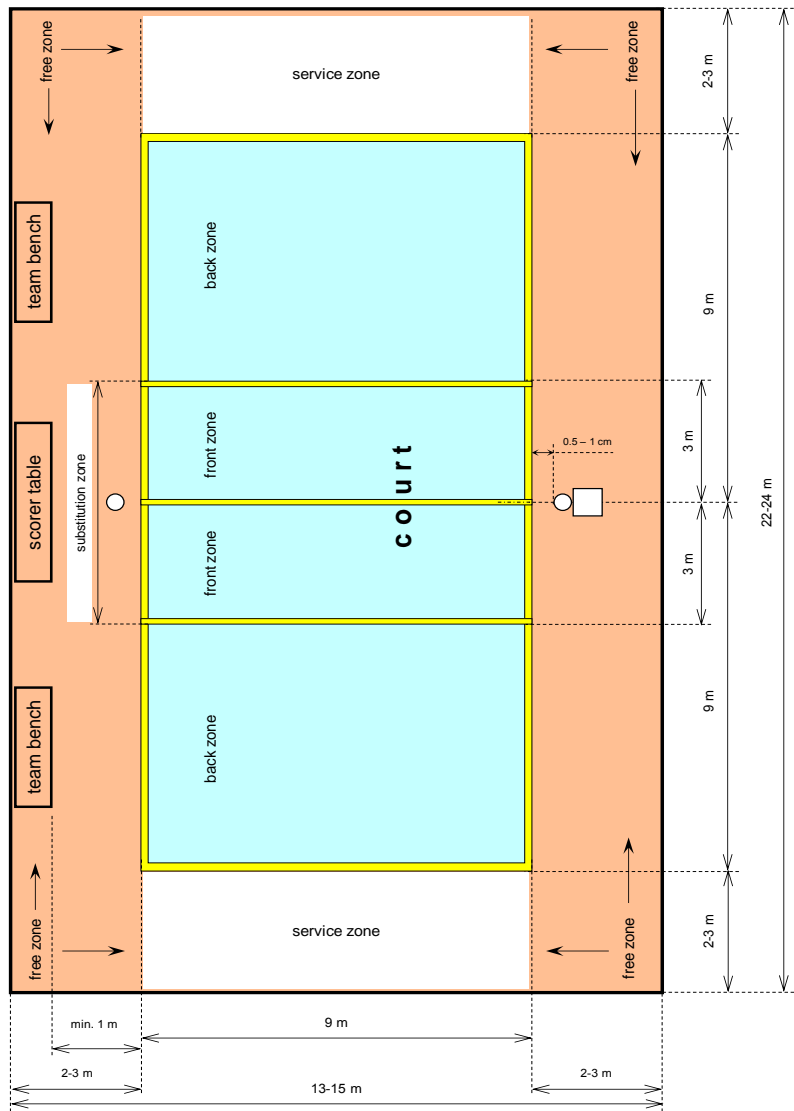
The referees must indicate the reason for their ruling using the official hand signal (the nature of the fault or violation whistled or the purpose of the stop in play). The signal has to be maintained for a moment and, if it is indicated with one hand, the hand corresponds to the side of the team at fault or that has made the request.

### **LINE JUDGES' FLAG SIGNALS**

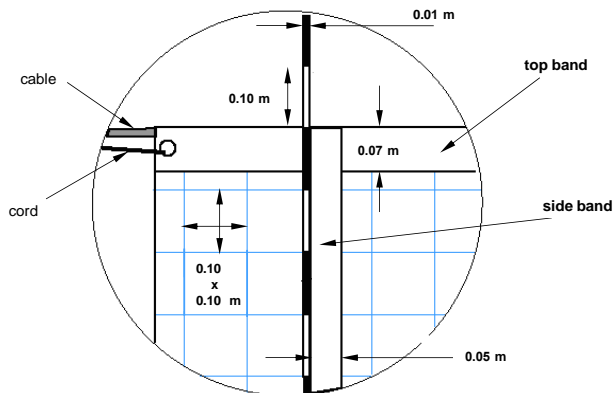
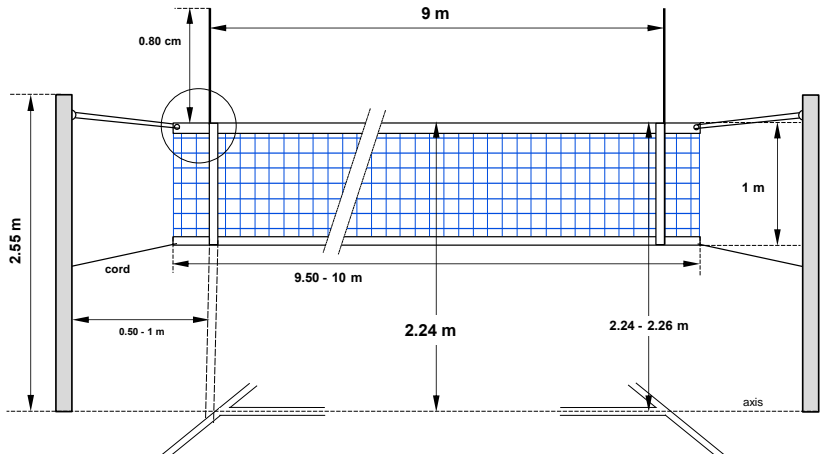
The line judges must indicate the nature of the fault or violation using the official flag signal, and maintain the signal for a moment.

Appendix A – PLAYING AREA, NET & ANTENNAE


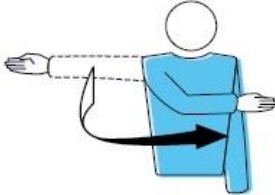

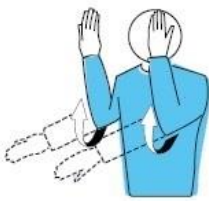






Playing area



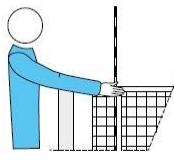





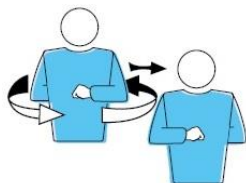
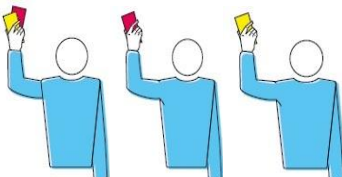

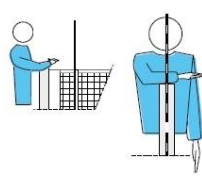


## The net and the antennae



Appendix B – REFEREES’ OFFICIAL HAND SIGNALS

<b>Replay</b>	<b>Team to serve</b>	<b>Serve authorization</b>
		
<b>Ball touched</b>	<b>Ball "OUT"</b>	<b>Ball "IN"</b>
		
<b>Four team contacts</b>	<b>Double contact</b>	<b>Steps</b>
		
<b>Time out</b>	<b>Substitution</b>	<b>Ball holding delay</b>
		

<b>Delay in serve</b>	<b>Positional fault. Rotational fault.</b>	<b>Net touched by player. Served ball fails to cross the net.</b>
		
<b>End of set / match</b>	<b>Hitting the ball</b>	<b>Reaching under the net. Ball crossed under the net.</b>
		
<b>Block fault / Screen.</b>	<b>Attack fault</b>	<b>Change of courts</b>
		
<b>Disqualification / Suspension / Penalty</b>	<b>Delay Warning / Penalty</b>	<b>Block beyond the net fault</b>
		

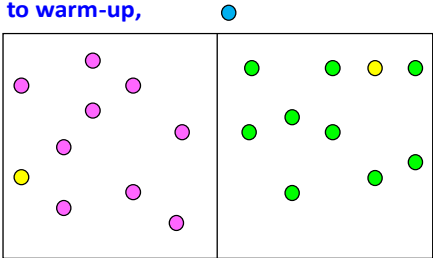


Appendix C – OFFICIAL GAME PROTOCOL

Preparations for the match

Before the start of the match (up to 16 minutes):

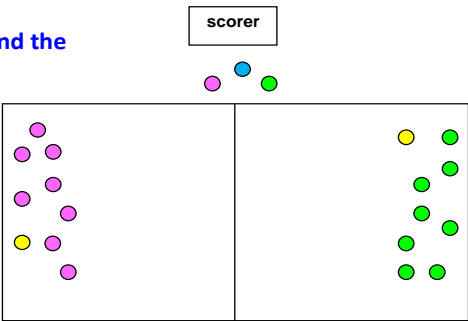
The players are allowed to warm-up,  
each team on half  
of the court.  
In case of unavailability  
of the court, an initial  
warm-up will take  
place outside of the  
court/hall.



Preparations for the match

15 minutes before the start of the match:

The team captains and the  
referee perform  
the COIN TOSS.  
After the toss the  
team captains sign  
the scoresheet to  
approve the  
player's list.



## Official warm-up

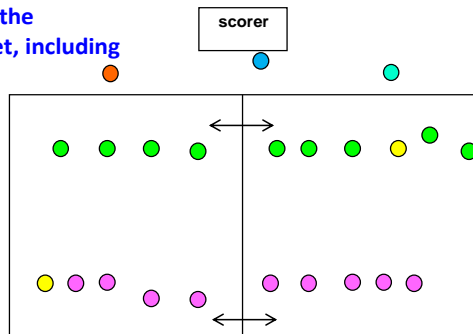
**14-4 minutes before the start of the match:**

The teams warm-up on the court and next to the net, including serving warm-up.

The coaches give the line-up sheets for the first set to the scorer.

**4 minutes  
before the start  
of the match:**

The referee whistles for the end of the warm-up.



## Hand-shaking ceremony

**3 minutes before the start of the match:**

The teams line-up for the ceremony on the side lines.

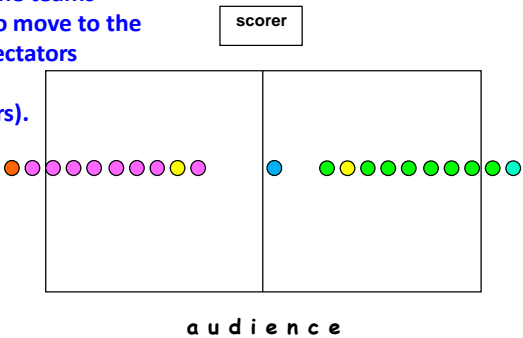
Team captains (C) are the first in the row.  
Coaches (O, G) may join their teams.



## Hand-shaking ceremony

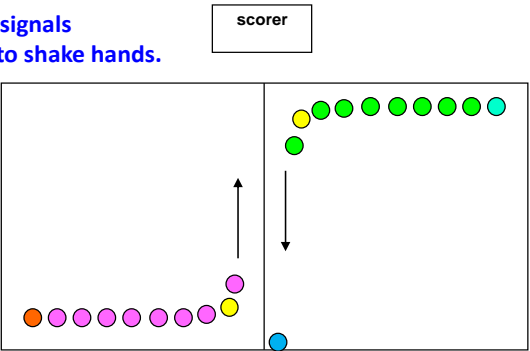
The referee signals the teams to enter the court, to move to the center facing the spectators (or scorer in the absence of spectators).

{The speaker announces the match and presents the players, coaches and the referees}



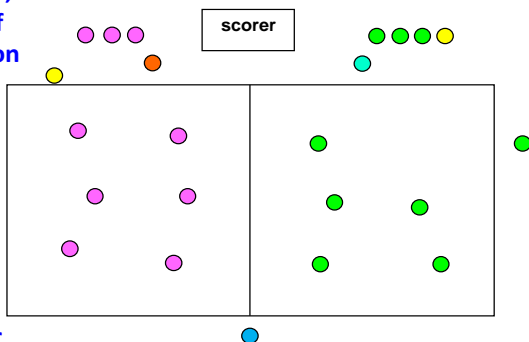
## Hand-shaking ceremony

The referee signals the players to shake hands.



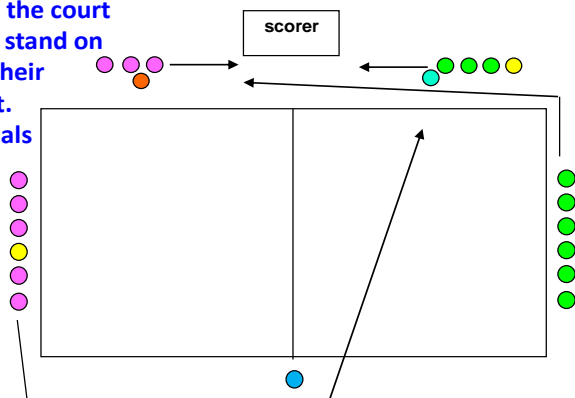
## Start of the match

After shaking hands, the starting 6 players of each team remain on the court for the beginning of the match. Liberos may enter the court after the permission of the referee. All other team members take their places by their team's bench.



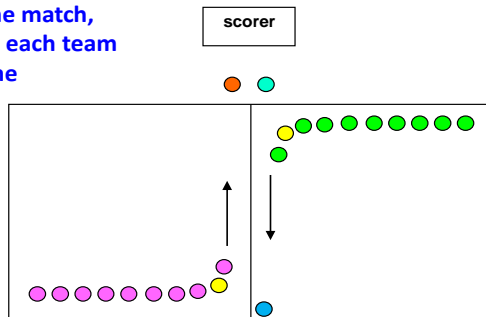
## Changing courts

At the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> set, the 6 players on the court from each team stand on the end line of their side of the court. The referee signals the players change sides of the court.



## End of the match

At the end of the match,  
all players from each team  
participate in the  
hand-shaking  
ceremony.



**Catchball -**  
**Play sports, Have fun, Make friends!**