2026 Oceanview USA Pickleball National Championships
Athlete Instructions

(Last update: 09/29/2026)

(Athletes: These instructions are emailed in advance in order to preserve your warm-up time.)

Please carefully read this important information in its entirety.

All Current 2026 USA Pickleball Rules Apply

Participants: It is your responsibility to have read this document as well as the Athlete Code of Conduct posted on the registration page of the tournament.

Paddle Testing: As the National Governing Body, USA Pickleball is committed to fair play for all participants at the 2026 Oceanview USA Pickleball National Championships. Paddle testing will be required for all Amateur, Professional, Champion Professional, and Master Professional athletes.

All athletes, entered in any event, are strongly encouraged to read and understand the Paddle Testing Policy and the Paddle Testing Instructions. Please follow the following links, or copy and paste the URL, for complete information.

Paddle Testing | USA Pickleball Nationals or https://usapickleballnationals.com/paddle-testing/

Paddle Testing Instructions or https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:7428efd7-e2b0-48f4-bb3c-345147fcd410?viewer%21megaVerb=group-discover

Schedule: Brackets will be posted on the day of play. Remember that brackets are subject to change until each event starts. Please review the schedule the evening prior to your event. If any start time changes happen to your bracket, we will notify you by email.

Warm up: The first matches of the day will begin promptly at 8:00 AM. Athletes are expected to have their warmup completed prior to that time. You will receive a text message when your bracket has started. The next text message will be your court assignment. Please report to your court, regardless of what the text may say. Your referee will meet you at your court. For later starting times, you will have up to10 minutes to warm up for your first match of the day. After your first match of the day, you have up to **8 minutes** following the court assignment text to get to your assigned court and warm up before your next match begins. If you are NOT on court in the allotted time, we will make a second and **FINAL** announcement over the PA system for you to report to the court. Unless extended by the Tournament Director or Head Referee, the first game in your match is forfeited if you are not on court ready to play in ten minutes from the original text. The entire match (2 out of 3 games to 11) will be forfeited if you are not on court ready to play in 15 minutes. The match is also forfeited if you are not on the court and ready to play for matches that are 1 game to 15. Avoid forfeits by being on time!

Starting server bands: Starting server bands **will be provided by your referee and must be displayed by each starting server so that it is visible by opponents and the referee** - no exceptions. Failure to comply will result in a match forfeit (rule 18.C.1.).

Water Bottles and Bags: Athletes are permitted to have towels and water or sports drink bottles on the court. Bags and other extraneous items, to include camera tripods, are not allowed on the courts.

Referees and Rules: You must be familiar with the USA Pickleball 2026 Rules. A copy of the current USA Pickleball rulebook is available to download. To download your own copy, you may click on this link or copy and paste the URL to your browser:
https://usapickleball.org/docs/rules/USAP-Official-Rulebook.pdf

In addition, athletes must have read and understood the following:

All matches will have a referee. **When you get a text message assigning you to a court, promptly proceed to the court. However, please observe proper court etiquette. Do not cross another court while a match is underway.** The referees will use an abbreviated pre-match briefing to:

1. Check athlete paddles
2. Explain valid hinders or court abnormalities
3. Ensure that the starting server bands are visible to identify starting servers
4. Use a fair method of selecting serving and receiving team and end selections
5. Inform athletes of the remaining warm-up time available
6. Answer any rule or athlete instruction questions (see below)

Referees are responsible for promptly returning the scoresheet to the tournament desk at the conclusion of a match**.**

Athlete Instructions

1. Paddles will be visually inspected. Prior to arriving on court, it is the ATHLETE'S RESPONSIBILITY to ensure their paddle:

    a. Is on the USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List. Only listed paddles will be allowed for play. Approved paddle list available at https://equipment.usapickleball.org/paddle-list/.

    b. That their paddle has been through on-site paddle testing.

2. If the wrong score is called, the referee or any athlete may stop play before the return of serve and before the ball becomes dead to correct the score. It is a fault to stop play after the return of serve to identify or ask for a score correction. It is a fault to stop play to identify or ask for a score correction when the score was correctly called.

3. Athletes are responsible for calling all the lines on their end of the court with the exception of service foot faults, NVZ foot faults, and short serves, which will be called by the referee. Please make all "out" calls promptly; audibly by voice (loud and clear), visibly by hand signal, or preferably both...even if they are obvious.

4. Any athlete may appeal a line call to the referee at the end of a rally and before the next serve occurs. If there is a dispute on a line call, you may ask the referee to make a ruling.

The referee will only make a ruling if they clearly saw the ball, otherwise the original call stands.

5. Referees will check to make sure that all athletes are ready, or should be ready, before calling the score.

6. If a team has any remaining time-outs, any athlete on that team may call a time-out before the next serve occurs.

7. After the score is called, the serving team has 10 seconds to serve the ball. Failure to do so results in a service fault.

8. The referee will utilize a hand cue to signal when the score is being called.

9. The server may not serve the ball until the entire score is called. Serving before the completion of the score being called results in a fault. Serving before the score has begun to be called is a replay.

10. The referee will confirm and correct, if necessary, that all athletes are in the correct position and the correct server has the ball before calling the score.

11. If the referee or an athlete stops a rally in progress to correctly identify an athlete/position error, the rally shall be replayed.

12. If an athlete stops a rally and incorrectly identifies an athlete/position error, it is a fault on the athlete who stopped the rally. If the referee stops a rally in progress and incorrectly identifies an athlete/position error, the rally shall be replayed.

13. If an athlete/position error is identified after the rally has played out, the rally shall stand.

14. The referee will pay close attention to each athlete's Serve. Be sure that your serve complies with the USA PICKLEBALL Rule Book requirements. See rulebook Section 7.

15. HINDERS and BALLS ON COURT: Unless the referee deems it a SAFETY ISSUE, the referee will not automatically stop play due to a ball in the playing area. Athletes may call "hinder" or "ball on court" the moment they are distracted by a ball/athlete/object coming onto their playing area. Hinders, deemed to be valid by the referee, including those created or called by adjacent court athletes, will result in a replay. **Do not call "ball on court" on another court.**

16. Each team has two 1-minute timeouts per 11-point or 15-point game and three 1-minute timeouts in games to 21.

17. There is a maximum of a 2-minute break between games.

18. In games to 15 or 21, and in the third game of a 2-out-of-3 match, and the fifth game of a 3-out-of-5 match, teams have 1 minute to change ends of the court. This is a referee time-out, and athletes may hydrate, talk with their partner, and receive coaching from others, during the changing of ends.

19. Please always exhibit good sportsmanship. Unsportsmanlike behavior, in all forms, will not be tolerated. Issues such as profanity, paddle throws, disrespectful or disparaging comments

directed toward opponents, spectators, or the referees will be swiftly dealt with. The Tournament Director or their designee may, at their discretion, immediately remove any athlete from the tournament for any behavior, on or off the court, deemed to be unsportsmanlike or disrespectful to any person or persons.

20. Any action deemed by the referee to be unsportsmanlike will result in a technical warning (TW) or a technical foul (TF). A TW plus a TF will result in a game forfeit. Two technical fouls will result in a match forfeit. Profanity is prohibited. Depending upon the severity, a Verbal Warning (VW) may be issued, but only once per match. Additional profanity warrants a TW or TF.

21. Any action that results in the presence of bodily fluids on the court is an automatic referee timeout. Play will resume after any needed medical attention and clean-up of the blood.

22. USA Pickleball Concussion Protocol will be followed in the event of an athlete sustaining a head injury or displaying any signs or symptoms of a concussion. In accordance with the USA Pickleball Concussion Protocol, such an athlete must be immediately removed from play and not permitted to return until a written release from a licensed healthcare professional is provided to the tournament director. To view USA Pickleball's Concussion Protocol, follow this link or copy and paste this URL to your browser: https://usapickleball.org/concussion/

23. Requests for medical timeouts are granted by the referee. The referee will summon medical personnel or the TD/HR to assess if the medical need is valid. If medical personnel (or the TD/HR) determine that the request is NOT valid, the athlete or team will be charged a timeout, if available, and issued a technical warning. If a standard time-out is not available, a technical foul will be issued.

24. Athletes may request the Head Referee to the court to challenge a referee's decision or ruling. If you lose the challenge, an additional technical warning and loss of 1 time-out will be assessed. If you have no time-outs remaining, a Technical Foul shall be assessed. In certain situations, this may result in a match forfeit.

25. If you have any questions, please ask your referee or the Head Referee before the start of your match.

In closing, we wish to welcome you to the 2026 Oceanview USA Pickleball National Championships - the tournament where the best of the best come to compete. We also want to thank you for taking the time to carefully read the contents of this letter. We look forward to meeting many of you and watching you compete.

Nationals Competition Committee
2026 Oceanview USA Pickleball National Championships