



INTERNATIONAL  
RACQUETBALL  
FEDERATION

# **INTERNATIONAL RACQUETBALL FEDERATION OFFICIAL RULES 2022-2024**

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# 1. THE GAME

## Rule 1.1 Types of Games

Racquetball is played by two or four players. When played by two, it is called singles. When played by four, it is called doubles. A non-tournament variation is played by three players and is called cutthroat.

## Rule 1.2 Description

Racquetball is a competitive game in which a strung racquet is used to serve and return the ball.

## Rule 1.3 Objective

The objective is to win each rally by serving or returning the ball so the opponent is unable to keep the ball in play. A rally is over when a player (team in doubles) is unable to hit the ball before it touches the floor twice, is unable to return the ball in such a manner that it touches the front wall before it touches the floor, or when a hinder is called.

## Rule 1.4 Points and Outs

Points are scored by either the serving or receiving side. Losing the service is called a side-out in singles. In doubles, when the first server loses the service, it is called a handout. And the receivers earn a point. When the second server loses the service, it is called a side-out.

## Rule 1.5 Match, Game, Tiebreaker

A match is won by the first player or team winning three games. The first four games of a match are played to 15 points. If each side wins two games, a tiebreaker game will be played to 11 points. In games to 15

points, one wins by 1 point. In games to 11 points, one must win by 2 points.

# 2. COURTS & EQUIPMENT

## Rule 2.1 Court Specifications

The specifications for the standard 4-wall racquetball court are:

- (a) Dimensions - 20 feet wide, 40 feet long, 20 feet high, with a ceiling. The back wall must be a minimum of 12 feet in height. All surfaces are in play, with the exception of any gallery opening, any back wall surface above 12 feet (line drawn), or surfaces designated as out-of-play for a valid reason (e.g., different material or out of alignment with the back wall), and designated court hinders.
- (b) Markings - racquetball courts are marked with lines 1-1 ½ inches wide as follows:
  1. Short Line - the back edge of the short line is midway between, and parallel with, the front and back walls.
  2. Service Line - the front edge of the service line is parallel with, and 5 feet in front of, the back edge of the short line.
  3. Service Zone – The 5' x 20' area bounded by the bottom edges of the side walls and by the outer edges of the short line and service line.
  4. Service Boxes - Are located at each end of the service zone and are designated by lines parallel with the side walls. The edge of the line nearest to the center of the court is 18 inches from the nearest side wall.

5. **Drive Serve Lines** - From the drive serve zone, are parallel with the side wall, and are within the service zone. The edge of the line nearest to the center of the court is 3 feet from the nearest side wall.
6. **Receiving Line** - The broken line parallel to the short line. The back edge is 5 feet from the back edge of the short line. It begins with a line 21 inches long that extends from each side wall. They are connected by an alternate series of 6 inch spaces and 6 inch lines. This will result in a line composed of 17 six inch spaces, 16 six inch lines, and 2 twenty-one inch lines.
7. **Safety Zone** - The 5 foot by 20 foot area bounded by the bottom of the edges of the side walls and by the back edges of the short line and the receiving line. The zone is observed only during the serve.
8. **Out-of-Court Line**- the upper edge of the out-of-court line is on the back wall parallel with and located 12 feet above the floor.

## **Rule 2.2 Ball Specifications**

- (a) The standard racquetball is  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter, weighs approximately 1.4 ounces, has a hardness of 55-60 durometers, and bounces 68-72 inches from a 100 inch drop at a temperature of 70-74 degrees Fahrenheit.
- (b) The Official Ball is any ball endorsed by the IRF.

## **Rule 2.3 Ball Selection**

- (a) The ball will be selected by agreement between the players. At least two acceptable balls should be agreed upon prior to the commencement of the match. If the players cannot agree, the referee will make the selection and this decision will be binding.
- (b) During the match, at the request of both players or teams, or, by the referee's discretion, the ball may be replaced. Only an IRF approved ball is used.

## **Rule 2.4 Racquet Specifications**

- (a) The racquet, including all solid parts of the handle, including the grip, may not exceed 22 inches in length. No additional length permitted. A referee technical will be issued against the player/team for delay of game when requesting an opponent's racquet be measured that is found to be of legal length.
- (b) The racquet frame may be of any material judged safe by the IRF.
- (c) The racquet frame must include a cord that is securely attached to the player's wrist. The cord must be secured around the wrist at all times during play and during warmup. A referee technical is issued for a first offense and disqualification occurs for a second offense.
- (d) The racquet string must be gut, monofilament, nylon, graphite, plastic, or a combination thereof. It must not mark or deface the ball.
- (e) The penalty for using an illegal racquet is a referee technical.

### **Rule 2.5 Eyewear Specifications**

- (a) All players competing in an IRF-sanctioned event are required to wear lensed eyewear manufactured for racquet sports, except for prescription non-breakable protective lenses. Eyewear must be worn properly and not altered in any way. National Federations are empowered to apply and enforce their own published safety standards in the matter of eyewear for their athletes.
- (b) Players must wear acceptable eyewear during play and during warmup after being summoned to their court. A referee technical is issued for a first offense and disqualification occurs for a second offense.

## **3. PLAY REGULATIONS**

### **Rule 3.1 Serve**

The server has two opportunities to put the ball into play in all divisions. The player or team winning the coin toss has the choice of serving or receiving the first game. The second game will begin in reverse order from game one. Games three and four will alternate accordingly. The player or team having accumulated the most points will have the option to serve the tiebreaker. A tie will result in another coin toss, with the winner having the choice of serving or receiving.

### **Rule 3.2 Start**

Games are started with the referee calling the score. The server may not initiate the pre-service motion from outside the service zone. Stepping on the short line but

not across it is legal. After starting the service motion, the server may step across the service (front) line as long as part of the foot is touching the line.

### **Rule 3.3 Manner**

The service motion must begin in the service zone. Once the service motion begins, (when the ball leaves the hand), it must next bounce on the floor in the zone and then, without touching anything else, be struck by the racquet before it bounces on the floor a second time. After being struck, the ball must hit the front wall first, and on the rebound, hit the floor beyond the back edge of the short line, either with or without touching one of the side walls. See rule 3.8 (j) for failure to complete the service motion.

### **Rule 3.4 Delays**

Officials are instructed to call the score within a few seconds after the previous rally to eliminate undue delays.

- (a) The 10-second rule applies to the server and the receiver simultaneously. Collectively, they are allowed up to 10 seconds after the score is called to serve or be ready to receive the serve. It is the server's responsibility to determine readiness of the receiver. If the receiver is not ready, he/she must signal with the racquet clearly raised above the head and/or turn to face the back wall. The receiver cannot cause the server to violate the 10-second rule.
- (b) Serving while the receiving player/team is signaling 'not ready' is a fault.
- (c) After the score is called, if the server looks at the receiver and the

receiver is not signaling 'not ready', the server may serve. If the receiver then attempts to signal 'not ready', the signal is not acknowledged and the serve is legal.

### **Rule 3.5 Drive Service Zones**

The drive service lines are 3 feet from each side wall in the service zone. Viewed one at a time, the drive service line divides the service area into a 3-foot and a 17-foot section that apply only to drive serves. A player may drive serve between the body and the side wall nearest to where the service motion began only if the player starts and remains outside the 3-foot drive service zone. In the event that the service motion begins in one 3-foot drive service zone and continues into the other 3-foot drive service zone, the player may not hit a drive serve.

- (a) The drive service zones are not observed for crosscourt drive serves, hard and soft z serves, or lob and half-lob serves.
- (b) The drive service line is not part of the 17-foot zone. Dropping the ball on the line or standing on the line while serving to the same side is an infraction.

### **Rule 3.6 Defective Serves**

There are three types of defective serves:

- (a) **Dead-Ball Serve** - results in no penalty. The server is given another serve (without cancelling a prior fault serve).
- (b) **Fault Serve** - players are permitted 2 serves in all divisions. Two consecutive fault serves result in a handout or side-out. (see 3.8)

- (c) **Out Serve** - results in a side-out or handout. (see 3.9)

### **Rule 3.7 Dead-Ball Serves**

The following are dead-ball serves:

- (a) **Court Hinders** - a serve that takes an irregular bounce (e.g., a wet spot or irregular surface on the court). Any serve that hits a surface designated before the match as an obstruction is subject to the call of "dead-ball serve." All "non-designated" court hinders are subject to the interpretation of the referee.
- (b) **Broken Ball** - if the ball is determined to have broken on the serve, a new ball will be substituted, and the serve will be replayed (without cancelling any previous fault serve).

### **Rule 3.8 Fault Serves**

The following serves are faults, and any two in succession result in an out:

- (a) **Foot Faults**
  - 1. The server does not begin the service motion with both feet in the service zone.
  - 2. The server steps completely over the service line (no part of the foot is on or inside the service zone) before the served ball crosses the short line.
- (b) **Short Serve** - any served ball that first hits the front wall and, on the rebound, hits the floor on or in front of the short line. It may occur with or without having contacted a side wall.
- (c) **Three-Wall Serve** - any served ball that first hits the front wall and, on

- the rebound, strikes both side walls before touching the floor.
- (d) **Ceiling Serve** - any served ball that first hits the front wall and then touches the ceiling before touching the floor.
  - (e) **Long Serve** - a served ball that first hits the front wall and carries to the back wall before touching the floor.
  - (f) **Bouncing Ball Outside Service Zone** - A bounced ball landing outside the zone is a fault serve.
  - (g) **Illegal Drive Serve** - a drive serve in which one fails to observe the 17-foot drive service zone outlined in Rule 3.5.
  - (h) **Screen Serve** - a served ball that first hits the front wall and on the rebound passes so close to the server, or server's partner in doubles, that it prevents the receiver from having a clear view of the ball. Three criteria are generally required for a screen call:
    1. Receiver must be in a good return position
    2. Proximity of the ball as it passes the server
    3. View obstruction.
  - (i) **Serving Before Receiver is Ready** - a serve is made while the receiver is not ready as described in Rule 3.4 (b).
  - (j) **Additional Fault Serve** - if the server intentionally drops the ball and stops the motion before the strike, it is a fault serve. Note: If the server inadvertently drops the ball, the serve may commence again if executed within the 10 second time frame.

### **Rule 3.9 Out Serves**

Any of the following results in an out:

- (a) **Failure to Serve** - the server does not initiate the service motion before the 10 seconds have expired. A server is entitled to one warning per match; thereafter, it is a referee technical for delay of game (see 3.16.g).
- (b) **Missed Serve Attempt** - any attempt to strike the ball that results in a total miss, or the ball touches any part of the server's body or uniform.
- (c) **Touched Serve** - any served ball that, on the rebound from the front wall, touches the server or the server's racquet before touching the floor; or, any ball intentionally stopped or caught by the server's partner in doubles.
- (d) **Fake or Balk Serve** - defined as a non-continuous movement of the racquet towards the ball as the server drops the ball for the purpose of deceiving the receiver.
- (e) **Illegal Hit** - includes contacting the ball twice, hitting the ball with the handle, or hitting the ball with a body part or uniform.
- (f) **Non-Front Wall Serve** - any served ball first striking a surface other than the front wall.
- (g) **Crotch Serve** - any served ball that hits the junction of the front wall and floor, front wall and side wall, or front wall and ceiling is an out serve (interpreted as not having struck the front wall first). The following two serves are in play:
  1. Serve hits floor and back wall after first striking the front wall
  2. Serve hits floor and side wall beyond the short line after first striking the front wall.

### **Rule 3.10 Return of Serve**

- (a) Receiving Position
- (b) The receiver may not enter the safety zone until the ball bounces or until it crosses the receiving line.
  - 1. Fly return attempts: the receiver may not strike the ball until the ball breaks the plane of the receiving line. The receiver's follow-through may carry the receiver or the racquet past the receiving line.
  - 2. Neither the receiver nor racquet may break the plane of the short line, unless the ball is struck after having rebounded off the back wall.
  - 3. Any violation by the receiver results in a point for the server.
- (c) Legal Return - after a legal serve, a player receiving the serve must strike the ball on the fly or after the first bounce, but before the second bounce. The receiver may return the ball to the front wall either directly or after touching one or both side walls, the back wall below the out-of-court line, the ceiling, or any combination of those surfaces. A returned ball must touch the front wall before touching the floor.
- (d) Failure to Return - failure to return a serve results in a point for the server.
- (e) Other Provisions - except as noted in this rule (3.10), the return of serve is subject to Rules 3.12 through 3.15.

### **Rule 3.11 Changes of Serve**

- (a) Outs - a server is entitled to continue serving until one of the following occurs:

- 1. Out Serve (Rule 3.9)
  - 2. Two consecutive fault serves
  - 3. Failure to return ball
  - 4. Avoidable Hinder – player or team commits an avoidable hinder that results in an out (Rule 3.14).
- (b) Side-out - retiring the server in singles is called a side-out. Retiring the second server in doubles is also a side-out.
  - (c) Effect of a Side-out - when the server (team in doubles) receives a side-out, the server becomes the receiver and the receiver becomes the server.

### **Rule 3.12 Rallies**

All of the play that occurs after the successful return of serve is called the rally. Play is conducted according to the following:

- (a) Legal Hits - only the head of the racquet may be used at any time to return the ball. The racquet may be held in one or two hands. Switching hands to hit a ball, touching the ball with any part of the body or uniform, or removing the wrist safety cord during a rally, results in a loss of the rally.
- (b) One Touch - a player or team attempting to return the ball may touch or strike the ball only once or the rally is lost. A double hit is illegal. There can be only one moment of impact.
- (c) Failure to Return - any of the following constitutes a failure to make a legal return:
  - 1. The ball bounces on the floor more than once before being hit

2. The ball does not reach the front wall on the fly
  3. The ball is hit such that it carries into the gallery or wall opening; or, hits a surface above the normal playing area of the court which has been designated as out-of-play (Rule 2.1b8).
  4. A ball that obviously does not have the velocity or direction to hit the front wall and strikes another player
  5. A ball struck by one player on a team that hits themselves or their partner
  6. Committing an avoidable hinder (Rule 3.14)
  7. Switching hands during a rally
  8. Failure to use a racquet wrist safety cord
  9. Touching the ball with the body or uniform
- (d) **Effect of Failure to Return** - violations result in a loss of rally. If the serving player or team loses the rally, it is an out and point scored for the receiver or receiving team. If the receiver or receiving team loses the rally, it is a point scored for the server or serving team.
- (e) **Return Attempts** - the ball remains in play until it touches the floor a second time, regardless of how many walls it contacts, including the front wall. If a player swings and misses the ball, he/she may continue to attempt to return the ball until it touches the floor the second time.
- (f) **Broken Ball** - if there is any suspicion that a ball has broken during the rally, play will continue until the end of the rally. The referee or any player may request an examination. If the referee decides the ball is broken, the ball will be replaced and the rally replayed (first serve). The only proper way to check for breakage is to squeeze the ball by hand.
- (g) **Play Stoppage** - if foreign objects enter the court, or any outside interference occurs, the referee will stop play if the occurrences interfere with ensuing play or with players' safety.
- (h) **Replays** - Whenever a rally is replayed for any reason, the server resumes play at first serve.
- (i) **Out of Court Ball**
1. **With Bounce.** Any ball returned legally that, after the first bounce, leaves the playing area including a side wall opening, is declared a dead ball hinder. The point is replayed.
  2. **Without Bounce.** Any ball returned legally that does not bounce on the floor and goes above the out-of-court line or leaves the court by a side wall opening is an out and point against the offending player. Exception: a replay is awarded when the ball leaves through a side wall opening after striking the front wall and other side wall (e.g., Z shot).
  3. **No Return** - any ball not returned to the front wall that is directly hit above the out-of-court line or into any side wall opening, either with or without touching the ceiling, side wall, or back wall, results in loss of the rally by the offending player.



### **Rule 3.13 Dead-Ball Hinders**

A rally is replayed without penalty and the server resumes play at first serve whenever a dead-ball hinder occurs. See Rule 3.14 for conditions under which a hinder might be declared 'avoidable' and result in a loss of rally.

#### **(a) Situations**

- 1. Court Hinders** - the referee should immediately stop play whenever the ball hits any part of the court that was designated (in advance) as a court hinder (e.g., vent grate, door handle). The referee should also stop play when the ball takes an irregular bounce as a result of contacting an irregular surface or after contacting a wet spot. The call is based on the referee's opinion.
- 2. Ball Hits Opponent** - when an opponent is struck by a return shot in flight, it is a dead-ball hinder. However, if the ball did not have the velocity and direction to reach the front wall, no hinder is called. The player who struck the ball loses the rally. A player who has been hit by the ball may stop play and request a hinder. The request must be made immediately and be acknowledged by the referee. Under certain conditions, this interference may be declared an avoidable hinder.
- 3. Body Contact** - if body contact occurs that the referee believes was sufficient to stop the rally, either for the purpose of preventing injury by further contact or because the contact prevented a player from being able to make a reasonable return, the referee will call a hinder. Incidental contact should not be called a hinder, unless the offensive player obviously stops, at which time the player may request a hinder. Contact with the racquet on the follow-through is generally a non-call.
- 4. Backswing Hinder** - anybody or racquet contact, on the backswing which impairs the hitter's ability to take a reasonable swing. The player attempting the return may stop and request a hinder. It must be made immediately and be acknowledged by the referee. Under certain conditions, this interference may be declared an avoidable hinder (see 3.14b).
- 5. Safety Holdup** - a player about to execute a return, who believes that striking the opponent with the ball or racquet is likely, may stop play and request a hinder. The request must be made immediately and is subject to the acceptance and approval of the referee. Under certain conditions, this interference may be declared an avoidable hinder.
- 6. Other Interference** - other unintentional interference which prevents an opponent from having a fair chance to see or return the ball (e.g., a ball from another court enters the court during the rally; when a referee's call on an adjacent

court obviously distracts a player).

- (b) **Effect of Hinders** - the referee's call of hinder stops play and voids any action that follows (such as the ball hitting the player).
- (c) **Responsibility** - it is the responsibility of the player or team that has just hit the ball (now the defensive player/team) to move so the receiving side may move straight to the ball with an unobstructed view. However, the receiver is responsible for making a concerted effort to move towards the ball and must have a reasonable chance to return it for any type of hinder to be called.

### **Rule 3.14 Avoidable Hinders**

An avoidable hinder results in loss of the rally and point awarded to the other player/team. It does not necessarily have to be an intentional act. Any of the following results in an avoidable hinder:

- (a) **Failure to Move** - a player does not move sufficiently to allow an opponent a shot straight to the front wall and a crosscourt shot which is directly to the front wall at an angle that will rebound directly to the farthest rear corner. It may also apply when a player moves in such a direction that prevents an opponent from taking either of these shots.
- (b) **Stroke Interference** - occurs when a player moves, or fails to move, such that the opponent returning the ball does not have a free, unimpeded swing. This includes unintentionally moving in a direction that prevents the opponent from attempting a shot.

- (c) **Blocking** - a player moves into a position that blocks the opponent from getting to and returning the ball. In doubles, a player moves in front of an opponent as the player's partner is striking the ball.
- (d) **Moving into the Ball** - a player moves in the way and is struck by the ball just played by the opponent.
- (e) **Pushing** - deliberately pushes or shoves the opponent during a rally.
- (f) **Intentional Distractions** - deliberate shouting, stamping of feet, waving of the racquet, or any other method used to disrupt the opponent.
- (g) **View Obstruction** - a player moves across an opponent's line of vision just prior to the opponent striking the ball.
- (h) **Wetting the Ball** - the players, particularly the server, should ensure that the ball is dry prior to the serve. Any wet ball that is not corrected prior to the serve results in an avoidable hinder against the server.
- (i) **Equipment Interference** - if a player loses any part of his/her equipment that interferes with play. The loss of eyewear and the dislodging of the wrist safety cord are automatic avoidable hinders. Play continues if any other equipment lost has no bearing on the rally. A referee should always stop play when safety is a question.

### **Rule 3.15 Time-outs**

- (a) **Rest Periods** - during a game, each player in singles or each side in doubles, either while serving or receiving, may request a timeout.

Each timeout may not exceed 60 seconds. No more than 1 time-out is allowed per game.

- (b) Injury - no regular time-out is charged to a player who is injured during play. An injured player is allowed a cumulative total of up to 15 minutes during a match. If the injured player is not able to resume play after this time period, the match is awarded to the opponent(s). On any additional injury to the same player, the tournament director or the referee, after considering any available medical opinion, will determine whether the injured player will be allowed to continue.
1. Should any external bleeding occur, the referee must halt play as soon as the rally is over, charge an injury time-out to the subject, and not allow the match to resume until the bleeding has stopped (up to 15 minutes)
  2. Muscle cramps, fatigue, and other ailments not caused by direct contact with the ball, racquet, wall, floor, or opponent will not be considered for an injury timeout.
- (c) Equipment Time-outs – for non-mandatory garments or equipment, the referee should assess a time out. If a player/team does not have any remaining, a referee timeout may be granted to uphold the integrity of the game. Two minutes are allowed to replace any garment and 30 seconds are allowed to replace or adjust equipment. Note: a glove is not a mandatory piece of equipment.

- (d) Between Games - a 2-minute rest period is allowed.
- (e) Postponed Games - any games postponed by the referee will be resumed with the same score as when postponed.

### **Rule 3.16 Technical Fouls and Warnings**

- (a) The referee may deduct one point from a player/team score when, in the referee's judgement, the player is being overly and deliberately abusive. This penalty is a 'referee technical.' If the player or team against whom the referee technical was assessed does not resume play immediately, the referee is empowered to forfeit the match in favor of the opponent(s). Examples of actions follow:
1. Profanity
  2. Excessive arguing
  3. Threat of any nature to opponent, referee, and others directly involved with the match (e.g., coaches, linespersons, fans)
  4. Excessive or hard striking of the ball between rallies
  5. Slamming of the racquet against a wall, floor, or door
  6. Any action which might result in damage to the court and/or injury to other players
  7. Delay of Game – examples:
    - (a) Taking too much time to dry the court
    - (b) Excessive questioning of the referee about the rules
    - (c) Exceeding the time allotted for timeouts or between games

- (d) Calling a time-out after the service motion begins
  - (e) Calling a time-out or asking for an appeal when none are available
  - (f) Violating the warm-up period of up to 5 minutes for both players in singles and up to 4 minutes per team for doubles.
  - (g) Server failing to initiate serve within 10 seconds; or, receiver failing to be in receiving position within 10 seconds. Each is entitled to 1 warning per match. Thereafter it is a referee technical for delay of game.
  - (h) Anything considered unsporting behavior.
8. Failure to wear proper eyewear or safety cord around the wrist during play and warm-up.
- (b) Coaching - where coaches and team representatives are involved, they are bound by the same rules as the players with regard to referee technicals. No coaches or representatives are allowed onto the courts at any time during a match unless granted permission by the referee. Failure to observe this rule is a referee technical and is charged against the player/team. Any coach or representative conducting themselves in a negative manner towards the referee or linesperson, will receive either a technical warning or referee technical assessed against the player/team.
  - (c) Technical Warning - if a player's behavior is not severe enough to warrant a referee technical, a

technical warning will be issued without the deduction of a point.

- (d) Effect of Referee Technical or Warning - if a referee technical is issued, one point is deducted from the score of the offending player or team score. No point will be deducted with a warning. In either case, a brief explanation should be offered. Each call has no effect on who serves when play resumes. If a referee technical is called when the offender has no points, or between games, the result will be that the offender's score becomes minus one (-1). Three referee technicals will result in a player/team being disqualified from the match.

## 4. RULE MODIFICATIONS

### 4.1 Doubles

The IRF's rules for singles also apply in doubles with the following additions and modifications:

#### (a) Teams:

1. A doubles team consists of two players who meet either the age or player classification requirements to participate in a particular division of play. A team with different skill levels must play in the division of the player with the higher level. When playing in an adult age division, the team must play in the division of the younger player. When playing in a junior age division, the team must play in the division of the older player.
2. A change in playing partners may be made so long as the first

match of the posted team has not begun. For this purpose, the match will be considered started once the teams have been called to the court. The team must notify the tournament director of the change prior to being called to the court.

**(b) Serve In Doubles**

1. **Order of Serve** - Each team will inform the referee of the order of service which must be followed throughout the game. The order of serve may be changed between games once the referee has been notified. At the beginning of each game, when the first server of the first team to serve is out, the team is out. Thereafter, both players on each team serve until the team receives a handout and a side-out.
2. **Partner's Position** - on each serve, the server's partner must stand erect with the back to the side wall and with both feet on the floor within the doubles box from the moment the server begins the service motion until the server strikes the ball. Violations are foot faults.
3. **Changes of Serve** - in doubles, the side is retired when both partners have lost service (exception 4.1.b1).

**(c) Fault Serve in Doubles**

1. The server's partner is not in the service box with both feet on the floor and back to the side wall from the time the server begins the service motion until the server strikes the ball.

2. A served ball that hits the doubles partner while legally in the doubles box is a fault serve.
3. There is an automatic screen (fault) serve in doubles matches when the ball goes behind the body of the server's partner.

**(d) Out of Order Serve in Doubles**

1. **Out-of-Order Serve** - in doubles, when either partner serves out of order, the points scored by that server will be subtracted and an out serve will be called. If the second server serves out of order, the out serve will be applied to the first server and the second server will resume serving. If the player designated as the first server serves out of order, a side-out will be called. The referee should stop play as soon as an out-of-order serve occurs. If no points are scored while the team is out-of-order, only the out penalty will have to be assessed.
2. **Ball Hits Partner** - a served ball that hits the doubles partner while outside the doubles box results in a loss of serve.

**(e) Return in Doubles**

1. The rally is lost if one player hits their partner with an attempted return.
2. If one player swings at the ball and misses it, both partners may make further attempts to return the ball until it touches the floor the second time. Both partners on a side are entitled to return the ball.
3. Both players on a side are entitled to a fair and

unobstructed chance at the ball. Either one is entitled to a hinder even if it naturally would be the partner's ball, and the partner may have attempted to play the ball or may have already missed it. It is not a hinder when players interfere with their own partner.

## **4.2 Multi-Bounce**

In general, the IRF's standard rules governing racquetball play will be followed except for the following modifications:

- (a) **Basic Return Rule** - in general, the ball remains in play as long as it is bouncing. However, the player may swing only once at the ball and the ball is considered dead at the point it stops bouncing and begins to roll. Also, anytime the ball rebounds off the back wall, it must be struck before it crosses the short line on the way to the front wall, except as explained in Rule 4.2b.
- (b) **Blast Rule** - if the ball travels from the front wall to the back wall on the fly, the player may hit the ball from any place on the court including in front of the short line so long as the ball is still bouncing.
- (c) **Front Wall Lines** - 2 parallel lines (tape may be used) should be placed across the front wall such that the bottom edge of one line is 3 feet above the floor and the bottom edge of the other line is 1 foot above the floor. At all times, any ball that hits the front wall below the 3 foot line and either on or above the 1 foot line must be returned before it bounces a third time. However, if the ball hits below the 1-foot line, it must be

returned before it bounces twice. If the ball hits on or above the 3-foot line, the ball must be returned as described in the basic return rule.

- (d) **Games and Matches** - all games are played to 11 points and the first to win 2 games wins the match.

## **4.3 Wheelchair**

- (a) **Adjustments** - players may wear an appliance that is medically prescribed, providing it does not jeopardize the safety of others and the player does not use it to any unfair advantage. They may secure any portion of their body to the chair.
- (b) **Equipment** - to protect playing surfaces, the wheelchair must be equipped with a functional roller bar or similar protection under the foot platform. There should be no sharp edges anywhere on the outside parts of the chair that could cause injury or damage to the players or the court, and the chair must be equipped with non-marking tires. The racquet, including bumper guard and all solid parts of the handle, may not exceed 22 inches in length.
- (c) **Two-Bounce Rule** - two bounces of the ball on the floor are permitted but not mandatory during all rallies and serves.
- (d) **Wheel Faults** - all 4 wheels of the wheelchair are considered equal to both feet of a player who is able-bodied and subsequent calls are made accordingly. The proper call is 'Wheel Fault.'
- (e) **Avoidable Hinder/Chair Control** - any player who intentionally alters the direction or speed of the

wheelchair with their lower extremities will be assessed an avoidable hinder.

- (f) Leaving the Wheelchair - Every attempt at a shot must be initiated from an upright seated position in the wheelchair. The players' buttocks must be in contact with the chair when the ball is hit. After such contact, the player may leave the chair. Any infraction of the above will result in the loss of the rally. Players leaving their wheelchairs, where either they or their wheelchair impedes their opponent's shot or movement to a ball which is deemed returnable by the referee, will result in an avoidable hinder.
- (g) Maintenance Delay - each player is allowed up to two, 5-minute maintenance delays per match for any malfunction and repair of a wheelchair, prosthesis, or assistance device. These delays are irrespective of other game timeouts or injury timeouts.
- (h) Coaching - only one coach per player may enter the court during a timeout to 'upright' their player after a rally or between games. It must be with the permission of the referee. Failure to abide by this rule will result in a referee technical assessed against the player of the offending coach.

## **5. OFFICIATING**

### **5.1 Tournament Management**

All recognized IRF tournaments are managed by a tournament director, who will designate the officiating team.

### **5.2 Referee Assignment**

The referee is designated by the tournament director or other IRF personnel. The officiating team may also include linespersons and/or a scorekeeper.

### **5.3 Referee Removal**

The referee may be removed only in an emergency case or at the discretion of the Tournament Director.

### **5.4 Rules Briefing**

Before all tournaments, all officials and players will be briefed on rules as well as local court hinders (if applicable), regulations, and modifications the tournament director will impose. The current IRF rules will apply.

### **5.5 Referees**

- (a) Pre-match Duties—Before each match begins, it is the duty of the referee to:
  1. Check the court for adequate cleanliness, lighting, and temperature.
  2. Check the availability of materials including racquetballs, towels, scorecards, writing implement, a timepiece, and other relevant materials.
  3. Confirm the qualifications of the linespersons and scorekeeper. Review appeal procedures, rules, and local regulations and instruct them of their duties.
  4. Enter the court for the introductions; brief the players on court hinders (if any are designated); identify any out-of-court areas (Rule 2.1a); discuss local regulations and rule modifications for the match;

and, explain often misinterpreted rules.

5. Inspect players' equipment and uniforms; verify selection of primary and alternate racquetball.
6. Toss the coin and offer the winner the option to serve or receive in game one.

(b) Referee's Decisions - during the match, the referee will make all decisions with regard to the rules. When linespersons are used, the referee will announce all final judgements. If both players in singles and three out of four players in doubles disagree with a call by the referee, he/she is overruled. Referee technicals and match forfeitures are not appealable.

(c) Protests - any decision of the referee will, on protest, be accorded due process as set forth in the constitution of the IRF. For the purposes of rendering a prompt decision regarding protests filed during the course of the ongoing tournament, the following stages of due process apply:

1. Tournament desk
2. Tournament director
3. Tournament rules committee (published before the tournament begins)
4. When necessary, the protest will be elevated to a higher level as stated in the IRF constitution.

## 5.6 Line Judges

In any IRF sanctioned tournament, line judges may be designated to decide appealed rulings. Two linespersons will be designated by the tournament director, and, at the referee's signal, agree or disagree with the ruling by the referee. The

signal to show agreement with the referee's call is 'thumbs up.' The signal to show disagreement is 'thumbs down.' If both linespersons disagree with the referee's call, it is overruled and the call is reversed. If either linesperson agrees with the referee, the call stands. In the event that one linesperson disagrees and the other signals they did not see the call in question, the rally is replayed. The signal to show no opinion is indicated by placing one hand with the palm facing downward. If both linespersons indicate they did not see the appealed call in question, the referee's call stands.

## 5.7 Appeals

In any match using line judges, all calls are appealable with the exception of referee technicals and match forfeitures. One may appeal only their own or the opponent's previous shot/strike/event. During the rally, one may stop play and ask the referee for an appeal. If the referee's call is overruled by the linespersons, the player/team making the appeal will win the point with no appeal used. If the appeal is not overruled; or, if there is no replay, the call stands. The player/team loses one appeal and a point is awarded to the opponent (s).

(a) Limit on Appeals - each player is allowed to make a maximum of 2 'not accepted' appeals per game. When the referee's call stands, 1 appeal is charged.

(b) Loss of Appeal - the referee will recognize an appeal when made before the appealing player leaves the court and/or before the initiation of the next serve. In



addition, an appeal must be made directly to the referee or it is not recognized. Any excessive demonstration or complaint will nullify an appeal.

## **5.8 Outcome of Appeals**

The following outcomes cover several of the common types of appeals. The referee's discretion and common sense should govern the outcomes of those appeals that are not covered herein:

- (a) **Skip Ball** - if the referee makes a call of skip and the call is reversed, the referee must decide if the shot in question could have been returned had the play continued. If, in the opinion of the referee, the shot could have been retrieved, the rally will be replayed. If the shot was deemed not retrievable, the side that hit the shot in question is declared the winner of the rally. If the referee's call is legal shot, an appeal may be made that the shot skipped. If this call is reversed, the side that hit the shot in question loses the rally and a point is awarded to the team in favor of the call.
- (b) **Fault Serve** - if the referee makes a call of fault serve and the call is reversed, the serve is replayed unless the referee considered the serve to be irretrievable. In this case, a point is awarded to the server. If the serve was deemed legal, and an appeal reverses the call, then the server either has a second serve or it is a side-out. In such case, the receiver or receiving team earns a point.
- (c) **Out Serve** - if the referee calls an 'out serve' and the call is reversed,

the serve is replayed. However, if the referee then determines the serve was a fault, a fault is called. If the referee determines the serve was legal and irretrievable, a point is awarded to the server. If the referee calls the serve legal and the call is reversed, it is a side-out and the receiver or receiving team earns a point.

- (d) **Double Bounce Pickup** - if the referee makes a call of two bounces, and the call is reversed, the rally is replayed. However, if the referee deems the return shot irretrievable, that player wins the rally. If the referee calls a legal get and the appeal reverses the call, it becomes a 'two bounce pickup' and the receiver loses the rally; point scored for server or serving team.
- (e) **Receiving Line Violation/Encroachment** - if encroachment is called and it is overturned by appeal, the serve will be replayed. However, if the referee deems the return irretrievable, it becomes either a handout or side-out. If a legal return is made and the appeal for encroachment is successful, the server is awarded a point.
- (f) **Court Hinder** - if the referee makes a call of 'court hinder' during a rally or return of serve, the point is replayed. If the referee makes no call and there is a successful appeal for a court hinder, the point will be replayed. A court hinder called on a serve does not cancel a previous fault serve.
- (g) **Other Rulings** - the referee may rule on all matters not covered in the

IRF Official Rules, but any ruling is subject to protest (Rule 5.5c).

## **5.9 Rule Interpretations**

If a player believes the referee has interpreted the rules incorrectly, the player may ask the referee or tournament director to cite the applicable rule in the rulebook. Having discovered a misapplication or misinterpretation, the referee must correct the error in an appropriate manner (e.g., replaying the rally, awarding a point, calling a side-out, or using another corrective measure).

## **5.10 RULE CHANGE PROCEDURES**

- (a) Any member of a recognized federation may propose a rule change to the IRF. Rule changes must be submitted in writing to the IRF Office before January 15<sup>th</sup> in the year the adult World Championships are held.
- (b) The proposed rule changes will be submitted to the IRF Executive Board for review and evaluation. The Executive Board will submit its recommendations to the IRF Rules Committee no later than June 1<sup>st</sup> of the same year.
- (c) The Rules Committee will present its recommendations and those from the Executive Board to participants of the World Congress held during the adult World Championships.
- (d) Delegates from participating countries at the World Congress will vote on the proposed rules changes.
- (e) Rule changes which receive a simple majority of yes votes will go into effect on September 1<sup>st</sup> of the year in which they were passed.

## **5.11 Recent Rules/Format Changes**

### **(a) 2014**

1. Racquet Specifications (Rule 2.4a) - the racquet, including bumper guard and all solid parts of the handle, may not exceed 22 inches in length. No additional tolerance.
2. Eyewear Specifications (Rule 2.5b) - players must wear acceptable eyewear during play as well as during warm-up after being summoned to their court. The first offense is a referee technical of minus one point. Thereafter, players are disqualified from the match.

### **(b) 2016**

1. Time-Outs (Rule 3.15a) - there will be 2 timeouts per game (previously, games 1 and 2 allowed for 3 timeouts and 2 in the tiebreaker).
2. Rest Period (Rule 3.15d) - there will be a 2-minute rest period between all games (reduced from 5 minutes between the second and third games).
3. Serves (Rule 3.1) - the server has 2 opportunities to put the ball into play in all divisions including the Open divisions (changed from one serve only in the Open divisions).
4. Appeals (Rule 5.7a) - each player/team will be allowed to make a maximum of 3 'not accepted' appeals per game (previously, games 1 and 2 allowed for 5 'not accepted' appeals and 3 in the tiebreaker).

### **(c) 2022**

1. Scoring (Rule 1.5) - Games are

- played with 'rally scoring'.  
Matches are the best of five.
2. Games 1-4 are played to 15; win by one. Game 5 is played to 11; win by two. One may earn game and match point as a receiver.
  3. Appeals (Rule 5.7) - One may only appeal their own or opponent's previous shot/strike/event. There is a maximum of two 'not accepted' appeals/game.
  4. Time outs--One per game.
  5. Mixed Doubles is offered in the Open Category. One team designated per tournament.
  6. Juniors include 21- category.
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