

Rules Interpretation Letter – March 2020

Hope everyone is having a great season so far. I look forward to seeing many of you on the court somewhere. Here are a few things that have been brought to my attention that need to be clarified.

Length of Shorts

Our definition of shorts is anything that stops above the knee. If the style of shorts (EX: spandex, gym shorts, running shorts, etc.) is the same, the length of those shorts does not matter. You may have players that prefer a longer inseam for their shorts. Some may have shorter inseams. Yes, they will look different on the court, but they are the same shorts. We will allow different length of shorts provided the style is still the same.

Shorts vs Pants

Our definition of pants is anything below the knee. It could be 3/4 length or full-length pants. As long as the style is the same, we will allow them. We are not allowing a mix of shorts and pants unless the player or team has a waiver. Players/teams can get a waiver from their Region ref chair for in-region events, and they can get a waiver from the USAV Indoor Rules Interpreter for National events. Some Regions may already have a policy on the use of pants vs shorts. Check with your Region.

Headphones Are NOT Jewelry

Wireless headphones are not considered jewelry under USAV rules. We allow juniors to wear jewelry during warm-ups and the match if the jewelry does not present a safety hazard, but this does not apply to headphones. Referees should ask players to remove headphones, including during official warm-ups.

ATTENTION REFEREES – Wireless headphones or any type of Bluetooth device should not be worn by an official, including the work team, while they are conducting the match. This includes the official warm-ups.

Duplicate Numbers on a Line-Up

The coach turns in a line-up with a duplicate number listed. It is not noticed when the line-up is submitted but is discovered when the 2nd referee is checking the line-up prior to the set.

Scenario A: The duplicate number is the Libero and also a starting player.

Scenario B: The duplicate number is two starting players.

With our new rule regarding duplicate numbers, let's look at what should happen:

Scenario A: The same number is written in the Libero box and in one starting position on the line-up sheet. Per the new rule (USAV 7.3.4), the coach or captain decides whether that player will be a Libero or a starting player. If the duplicate number will be the Libero, the team must correct the line-up with another starting player. The team is NOT charged a substitution. If the duplicate number will be a starting player, a new Libero may be designated.

Scenario B: The same number is listed in two starting positions on the line-up sheet. At least one of the numbers must be corrected, but the team is NOT charged a substitution. In rare situations when the duplicate number is not legal (i.e., no player wears that number), both will need to be fixed. Again, no substitutions will be charged to the team. No other changes may be made to the starting line-up (without a legal substitution), and the line-up cannot be rearranged.

The point of the new rule is to allow a line-up change without charging a substitution and the team is not required to use the Libero that was listed if that is where the error occurred. The line-up was not a

legal line-up and should never have been accepted, and the referee and/or scorer should have caught the error before they were checking the line-up. A review of each team's line-up as soon as it is submitted can identify many of these issues. If there are any discrepancies on the line-up sheet, use good preventive officiating and immediately return it to the coach or captain for corrections.

No Libero Number Listed on Line-Up

A team forgets to record the Libero's number on the line-up sheet, and this is discovered while the 2nd referee is checking the line-ups. The team may immediately designate a Libero, and this number is recorded on the line-up sheet, score sheet, and libero tracking sheet. Again, a review of each team's line-up as soon as it is submitted can help avoid this issue. Once the set begins, the team cannot add a Libero if no Libero was listed on the line-up sheet.

Libero Serves in a Wrong Position

The Libero serves in a wrong position and scores two points. The team realizes this was wrong and has the original player replace the Libero. The replacement player then serves two points. Now the scorer realizes the Libero served illegally. This is still the same term of service, and the referees must determine when the illegal serve(s) took place. Once you determine that, any points scored illegally, and any points scored after the illegal serve(s) are removed provided the opponent has not yet served (see USAV 7.3.5.3).

Service Animals

A service animal is permitted at the team bench at national-level USAV events. The animal should not interrupt play or cause distractions. Regions or tournament facilities may have different regulations regarding service animals. Check with regional administration in your area. Also, see newsletter article "2 legs vs 4 Legs" by Elliot Blake.

Coach Acting in Place of the Captain

Rule USAV 5.1.2.2 says the coach may act as the captain to perform functions stated in USAV 5.1.2.1 and 5.1.2.2. During these situations, the coach is NOT ALLOWED to cross the court at any time. They must stay in their bench area and communicate through their game captain. In rare circumstances, the 1st referee may need to get off the stand and cross the court to the bench to speak with the coach when the captain is having a hard time communicating between the coach and referee. The main point of emphasis is that the coach may NOT cross the court to address the 1st referee at the stand.

With USAV 5.1.2.1 (protest procedures), when the captain notifies the 1st referee that a protest is being lodged, the 1st referee leaves the stand and consults the rules book (or reviews the scoresheet in the case of a scoring discrepancy). If the referee can resolve the issue by showing the rule to the coach (or by correcting the scoresheet), they may do so, and then play will continue. If the team is still not satisfied with the ruling or decision, they may file a protest. Once the 1st referee accepts the protest, the protest procedures begin (see page 131 in the 2019-2021 USAV Rules Book). The coach may speak on behalf of the captain during the protest procedure.

"Sport Court" Rule – Playing the Ball Near the Edge of a Portable Playing Surface

When playing on a portable court surface or in a defined playing area, it is all about being in contact with the playing area. If the player jumps, they must take off from the playing area and land in/on the playing surface before they can continue off/out of the playing area. Referees must judge that the player was in contact with the playing surface or that they jumped from the playing surface and landed on the playing surface. The location of the ball above/not above the playing area is not relevant; it is the player's location.

Forfeit of First Set and Warm-Up Time

USAV 6.4.2 now states that if an incomplete team has forfeited their first set but becomes complete before the 10-minute interval has expired, that team is allowed a full 4-minute warm-up on the court.

With any potential forfeit situation, the referee(s) should inform the head referee or the tournament director of the situation. Referees should not forfeit sets or matches on their own. We want to try to avoid forfeits when possible.

Scenario A: 10 minutes before match time, no one from Team A is present. The referee conducts the coin toss with Team B only, and they have the choice to serve or receive. Warm-ups start as usual. Team B will get the court at the normal time depending on their choice of serve or receive. During the time when Team A should have the court, the court should remain empty.

Team A is still not present at the end of the official warm-ups, and it is now time for the match to start. Team A will forfeit the first set, and a 10-minute interval will start. Team A has 10 minutes to become complete. If the team becomes complete at any time during the 10-minute interval, they will immediately take the court for a 4-minute warm-up at the net. During the 10-minute interval, Team B should continue to stay warm but will not be given additional time at the net.

Scenario B: Team A has three players present 10 minutes prior to match time. The referee conducts the coin toss, and the official warm-ups begin. When Team A has the court, anyone present should be using this time to warm up at the net. If the team becomes complete during their exclusive court time, they may use any remaining time to warm up. If the rest of the team shows up right at match time after the official warm-ups, they must choose one of two options. The coach or captain may submit a line-up sheet, and the players line up on the end line to start the match, OR they may choose to forfeit the first set and the team would receive a 4-minute warm-up period. This would include any players who used the 4 minutes during their official warm-ups prior to the match.

Young Children/Babies on the Bench

Safety is a priority. USAV policy is that there should be no young children on the bench or in strollers/carriers at the bench. Someone who is not on the bench must watch the child, or the coach must leave the bench if they are with the child. This is for everyone's safety. USAV National events require that anyone listed as a coach, serving in a coaching capacity, and/or sitting on the bench, must possess a minimum coaching certification level of IMPACT (Entry Level). The only exception would be for a Team Manager, who cannot be younger than 10 years old. Contact the head referee or tournament director if a young child is on the bench and the team does not comply.

Facemasks – Face Protection

While there is nothing in the rules specifically regarding facemasks (see example below), this falls under rule USAV 4.5.1. If the referee feels it is safe to wear, they should allow it. In rare situations, the mask may need to be padded. No waiver is needed. It is protective gear for the safety of the player. (A casebook scenario will be added in this regard.)



New Technique for Change of Courts Effective Immediately!

At the recent Rules Commission meeting, a new technique was approved regarding the change of courts between non-deciding sets. At the end of a non-deciding set (set 1 for example), the 1st referee will still use the change of courts signal, but THE TEAMS DO NOT HAVE TO GO AROUND THE COURT. THEY WILL SWITCH IN FRONT OF THE SCORERS TABLE. Same switch as before the deciding set if the teams choose to switch sides. Players on the 'B' side of the court are no longer required to go around the 1st referee's stand. Both teams can return to their bench and gather their belongings before switching to their new bench by crossing in front of the scorer table.