



2026-2027 League Season USTA Heart of America Captains Meeting

September 15th, 2026

Housekeeping:

- Meeting will be recorded
- Mute your phones
- Q & A at the end- Please submit all questions in the Chat

Introductions

- Rebecca Falkner Axelrod, Heart of America Executive Director
- Blerina Boci, Heart of America District League Coordinator



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League/Level Coordinators

- Mixed 40 & over & Women 4.0 - Deb Fabrizius
- Mixed 18 & over & 65 & over League - Blerina Boci
- Mixed 55 & over - Eric Santon
- Trilevel Coordinators- Jody Holsinger & Karen Luchinsky
- 55 & over- Anne Cusser

- 3.0 Men - Alysen Abel
- 3.5 Men- Jacqui Jensen
- 4.0Men- Sonya Muller
- 4.5 Men- Susan Neely
- 5.0 Men- Richard Kohn

- 3.0 Women - Mitch Bennett
- 3.5 Women- Blerina Boci
- 4.5 & 5.0 Women -Terry Miller



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NATIONAL TEAMS!

These teams played in 2025 but went to nationals in March 2026.

Mid-Tri Level Men- Captain Bryan Willis - Won 1st place at Nationals

Mid- Trilevel Women- Captain Phyllis Norman

Low- Trilevel Women- Captain Kathleen Fendler



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2026 NATIONAL TEAMS!

40 & over 4.0 Men – Captain John Stroede

18 & over 3.0 Women - Captain Megan Mikel

55 & over 9.0 Women- Captain Michelle Gifford

65 & over 9.0 Men- Captain Roy Allen

65 & over 7.0 Women - Captain Connie Bennett

65 & over 9.0 Women- Captain Leslie Addadi



Heart of America League Growth — 2025 vs. 2026

League	2025 Players	2026 Players	Player % Change	2025 Teams	2026 Teams	Team % Change
18 & Over Daytime	432	553	+28.0%	27	34	+25.9%
18 & Over Winter	1,466	1,404	-4.2%	97	91	-6.2%
18 & Over Summer	1,502	1,581	+5.3%	93	98	+5.4%
40 & Over Weekend	1,180	1,201	+1.8%	76	77	+1.3%
40 & Over Daytime	418	533	+27.5%	25	32	+28.0%
55 & Over	475	535	+12.6%	33	37	+12.1%

Heart of America League Growth — 2025 vs. 2026

League	2025 Players	2026 Players	Player % Change	2025 Teams	2026 Teams	Team % Change
65 & Over	129	178	+38.0%	13	16	+23.1%
18 & Over Mixed	436	398	-8.7%	28	25	-10.7%
40 & Over Mixed	381	339	-11.0%	25	23	-8.0%
55 Mixed	75	92	+22.7%	6	8	+33.3%
High Trilevel	124	120	-3.2%	9	8	-11.1%
Mid Trilevel	261	232	-11.1%	18	14	-22.2%
Low Trilevel	165	279	+69.1%	10	17	+70.0%
New Social League – 2026	—	30	New	—	3	New

Growing the Game

In 2026 we had 7,475 players and 483 teams

Low Trilevel: +69.1% players / +70.0% teams

65 & Over: +38.0% players / +23.1% teams

18 & Over Daytime: +28.0% players / +25.9% teams

40 & Over Daytime: +27.5% players / +28.0% teams

55 Mixed: +22.7% players / +33.3% teams

New Social League for 2.5 players: 30 players across 3 teams in its first year



2027 ADULT COUNCIL



CHANGES AND CONSIDERATIONS



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2027 LEAGUE SEASON CHANGES & CONSIDERATION

3.D - Player residency –

Players whose in-district status is questioned can be required to provide adequate proof of residency within 48 hours of request.

2027 LEAGUE SEASON CHANGES & CONSIDERATION

5.L – Match Rescheduling –

Teams may be required to reschedule a match when in the best interest of the league.

District League Coordinator may require captains to play a scheduled or rescheduled match when, in the coordinator's judgment, doing so is in the best interest of the league. The coordinator's decision is final, and both teams are expected to comply under penalty of default.

2027 LEAGUE SEASON CHANGES & CONSIDERATION

5.N.3.c – Total Team Default –

Any captain who defaults an entire team match twice during the season will not be permitted to captain in that same league/division the following season.

2027 LEAGUE SEASON CHANGES & CONSIDERATION

Starting January 1st with the 40 & over League Season Court fees will increase to \$25 per player.

Electronic Line Calling

- When Electronic Line Calling devices are in use, each team is permitted a maximum of three (3) unsuccessful challenges per individual match.
- If a 3rd set tiebreaker is needed, one additional unsuccessful challenge will be granted for a total of 4. Any unused challenges from the first set will carry over to the tiebreaker.
- An unsuccessful challenge is one in which the original call stands.
- A “successful challenge,” in which the original call is overturned, does not count toward the challenge limit
- Once a team reaches three failed challenges in a match (or the 4th in a 3rd set tiebreaker), they forfeit the right to make any additional challenges for the remainder of that match.

Electronic Line Calling

Overrule Limits:

Any player or doubles team whose incorrect “out” call has been overturned will count toward the overrule limit. A player/team is limited to 2 overrules without further penalty.

On the 3rd and any subsequent overrule during the match, the player or team being overruled will receive an additional point penalty for “excessive overrules”.

Electronic Line Calling

Administering challenges - Use the kiosk set up at the net post. A challenge must be requested immediately just like an “out” call must be made immediately.

System Unavailable - If the ELC system is unavailable, the original call will stand. The player will NOT lose one of their challenges.

Overrule - If player is overruled by the system, player loses the point. A “let” shall never be played.

Electronic Line Calling

Challenges

- A player may challenge any service fault or out call made by their opponent.
- System may not be used to verify calls, if call is not immediate, it is considered in.
- Balls called out due to hitting a permanent fixture cannot be challenged.
- Challenges shouldn't be arbitrarily initiated (e.g. to delay the game)
- A player may never challenge his or her own call. If an "out" call is not made immediately, the ball will be played as "in". The call should not be reviewed on the kiosk. However, if it is, the "in" call shall still stand no matter the ruling.
- Players will continue to make their own line calls like in regular league play. A player desiring to challenge an opponent's line call must do so immediately.

Electronic Line Calling

Scenario 1:

Team A is serving. Team B attempts to return the serve and misses, but after the miss, the receiver's partner (or the receiver) says "I think that was out. Let's check the ELC to confirm".

Answer: Team B is not allowed to use ELC to challenge their own call. Since they did NOT call it out and played the serve, the serve must be played as "in". The ELC should NOT be reviewed in this scenario. However, even if it is (maybe at changeover), the call cannot be reversed.

The ball was played as "in" and the call shall stand.

Electronic Line Calling

Scenario 2:

Team A is serving and serves “first serve” which is called “out” by Team B. Team A challenges the call. After reviewing ELC, the serve was confirmed as “out”. What happens next?

Answer: Because this was “first serve” and the serve was out, Team A is now entitled to a “second serve”. The receiving team is NOT obligated to grant the serving team a new “first serve” because the delay was caused by the serving team.

RESCHEDULING MATCHES

MAKE-UP MATCHES:

- Captains that have a valid reason to reschedule a match, may ask for permission **in advance** from the District League Coordinator or respective League Coordinator.

PLEASE TRY TO PLAY WHEN SCHEDULED. Ask in advance from the respective league coordinator OR DLC through the level coordinators

- You have 1 week to notify the League Coordinator of the makeup match date. Teams have until the end of the season to make up the match.

IF YOU WILL NOT BE USING A COURT YOU MUST CANCEL 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE, IF YOU CALL THE CLUB MAKE A NOTE THE DATE/TIME YOU CALLED AND WHO YOU SPOKE WITH. IF POSSIBLE HAVE WRITTEN CONFIRMATION SUCH AS EMAIL. IF COURTS ARE NOT CANCELLED 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE AND THE CLUB SENDS HOA AN INVOICE FOR THE UNUSED COURTS WE WILL PAY FOR THE COURTS WITH THE CAPTAIN DEPOSIT CHECK. IF THERE IS MONEY LEFT FROM THE DEPOSIT CAPTAINS YOU WILL RECEIVE A REFUND VIA CHECK.



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RESCHEDULING MATCHES

You must play majority of lines for a match to be valid/legal. To avoid defaulting an entire match, the match must be “legal”, that is, players must be eligible team members, registered in TennisLink, and present for play in at least 3 of 5 courts, 3 of 4 courts, or 2 of 3 courts, depending on league/level format. At the conclusion of local league play, if a team has defaulted an entire team match, that team may not be eligible for post-season play. (Their matches will be DQd from the standings)

Not having the best players available is NOT a reason to reschedule a match.

Matches required to advance to Districts/Sectionals

1. (S) Self-rated players-must play at least 3 matches on the same team at that same level in that same age group. Defaults do not count.
2. (S) Self-rated players whose appeals have been granted—must play at least 3 matches on the same team at that same level in that same age group. Defaults do not count.
3. (A) Computer-rated players whose appeals have been granted—must play at least 3 matches on the same team at that same level in that same age group. Defaults do not count.
4. (M) Mixed exclusive players- For Mixed leagues only- Players must have at least 2 matches on the same team at the same level in that same age group. (They may have won 1 match by default.)
5. (C) Computer rated players—must play at least 2 matches on the same team at that same level in that same age group. (They may have won 1 match by default.)
6. Any player whose rating changes during a season must qualify at that rating type (A, C, D, or S) to advance to the championships.



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LATE ARRIVALS & PENALTIES

CLOCK STARTS AT SCHEDULED MATCH TIME

5 MINUTES OR LESS → LOSS OF TOSS PLUS ONE GAME

5 - 10 MINUTES → LOSS OF TOSS PLUS 2 GAMES

10-15 MINUTES → LOSS OF TOSS PLUS 3 GAMES

15:01 MINUTES → DEFAULT



WRONG SCORE/PLAYER ENTRY

Upon completion of the match both captains must verify scores and players names.

If there is a discrepancy email your level or league coordinator with the match number, date and information you need corrected, copy tennislink coordinator Pat Sibenaller pat.usta@gmail.com and cc opposing captain.



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TIMED MATCH PROCEDURES

- Time is called at 1 hour and 45 minutes
- Games in progress shall be completed
- Team ahead by 2 games wins that set, otherwise play a 7 point tiebreaker to determine set winner.
- If match is in the first set, match is complete and recorded.
- If match is in the 2nd set and the same team won both sets, match is complete and recorded.
 - If sets are split proceed with 10 point match tiebreaker.
- Players must leave the court at 2 hours unless no one is coming on the court. They must complete the tiebreaker on another court if there is one available or another date/time.

2027 DISTRICTS DATES

40s DISTRICT PLAYOFFS- MAY 1st-2nd **PLAZA TENNIS CENTER**

18s DISTRICTS - 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5, 5.0 (18s Summer vs 18s Winter & 18s Daytime)

June 25-June 27th **PLAZA TENNIS CENTER**



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SPORTSMANSHIP



GRIEVANCES



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Sportsmanship

Sportsmanship is the foundation of tennis.

- Understanding and following the rules
- Being fair
- Acting with character
- Respecting others
- Winning with humility and losing with grace
- Maintaining composure
- Being accountable for one's own actions
- Giving others the benefit of the doubt

Sportsmanship

Link to Sportsmanship Nomination form:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc2JpIU4D-Mp49WmGeidDG8XgB1_ugTqZy4Nq4PbyB4ksm3eA/viewform

GRIEVANCES

NTRP Grievances - Filed against players who self rate below their skill level, or against others who condone inappropriate self-rating.

These get sent to USTA Missouri Valley

Administrative Grievances- Grievances with the Heart of America Office administration will go to the Missouri Valley Section.

League Grievances- Captains file against another player or captain for other circumstances (e.g un-sportsmanlike conduct). Include \$50 check and send to Heart of America District League Coordinator.

Link to Grievance form- https://www.usta.com/content/dam/usta/pdfs/usta_league_grievance_070915.pdf



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Know the Rules

- Communicate with other Captains - they are not your enemy
- No cell phone use on the courts
- Exchange line-ups using printed scorecard on Tennislink and confirm scores after the match.

Either Captain can enter the scores

- Coaching is considered to be communication, advice, or instruction of any kind, audible or visible, to a player and is not ever allowed during league matches.

Q & A

Communications



Please make sure you know the rules before you play. Please refer to the 2026 Friend at Court and the most recent USTA League Regulations!

- **Friend at Court**

<https://www.usta.com/content/dam/usta/coach-organize/content-fragments/resource-library/assets/pdfs/friend-at-court.pdf>

- **USTA Missouri Valley League Regulations**

<https://www.usta.com/content/dam/usta/sections/missouri-valley/pdfs/adults/final-2026-usta-missouri-valley-league-regulations.pdf>

Know The Rules



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USTA Missouri Valley Page

USTA Missouri Valley Main Page-

<https://www.usta.com/en/home/play/adult-tennis/programs/missourivalley/usta-missouri-valley-local-usta-leagues.html>

USTA Missouri Valley League Rules -

<https://www.usta.com/content/dam/usta/sections/missouri-valley/pdfs/adults/final-2026-usta-missouri-valley-league-regulations.pdf>

National League Rules -

<https://www.usta.com/content/dam/usta/sections/missouri-valley/pdfs/adults/2025-national-regulations-with-qa-interpretations.pdf>

USTA Heart of America League Rules (2026) -

<https://www.usta.com/content/dam/usta/sections/missouri-valley/pdfs/adults/usta-hoa-gen-league-rules-25-26.pdf>

USTA Heart of America League Rules 2027 - coming soon

THANK YOU FOR CAPTAINING!!

