

Proposed Amendments to USTA Regulations

Note: Words underlined are proposed to be added. ~~Deleted text is shown in strikethrough.~~ References are to the 2023 Friend at Court, unless otherwise noted.

R2. Proposed by USTA Mid-Atlantic Foundation Kathy Renzetti, President

PASSED

Part 1. Amend USTA Regulation IV.F. (pp. 113-117) as follows:

IV. PLAYER RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONDUCT

F. USTA Suspension Point System

1. *Application.* [unchanged]
2. *Suspension points.* [unchanged]
- ~~3~~ 4. *National Suspension Point administrator.* The applicable USTA department shall administer the USTA Suspension Point System.
- ~~4.~~ *Sectional Association and District Association designee.* In tournaments sanctioned by a Sectional Association, the Sectional Association may designate a person or persons authorized to assess suspension points for misconduct associated with tournaments sanctioned by the Sectional Association and its District Associations. The Sectional Association may permit any or all of its District Associations to designate a person or persons authorized to assess suspension points for misconduct associated with tournaments sanctioned by the District Association.
- ~~5.~~ *Sectional and District Grievance Committees.* A Sectional Association may authorize its Sectional Grievance Committee to assess suspension points for misconduct associated with tournaments sanctioned by the Sectional Association. The Sectional Association may permit any or all of its District Associations' Grievance Committees to assess suspension points for misconduct associated with tournaments sanctioned by its District Associations.
When a Sectional Grievance Committee or District Grievance Committee is authorized to assess suspension points, the Sectional Association must establish an appeals process (see USTA Regulation IV.F.14.b.). No person that participated in the assessment of the suspension points may participate in ruling on the appeal.
- ~~6~~ 3. *Reporting misconduct.* Persons who observe misconduct on or off the court should report it to the Referee.
 - ~~a.~~ *Reporting to National Suspension Point administrator.* Persons who observe misconduct associated with a tournament sanctioned by the USTA pursuant to **USTA Regulation XVII.D., E, and F.** may report it to the National Suspension Point administrator.
 - ~~b.~~ *Reporting to applicable Sectional Association or District Association designee.* Persons who observe misconduct associated with a tournament sanctioned by a Sectional Association or one of its District Associations may report it to the applicable Sectional Association or District Association designee. When a Sectional Association's or District Association's Grievance Committee is permitted to assess suspension points, the Sectional Association or District Association designee may refer a report to the applicable Grievance Committee.

- ~~c.~~ Reporting to applicable Sectional or District Grievance Committee. If permitted by a Sectional Association, misconduct associated with a tournament sanctioned by a Sectional Association or one of its District Associations may be reported to the applicable Grievance Committee, pursuant to the grievance procedures of the applicable Sectional Association or District Association.
- ~~7.5.~~ Assessing ~~and reporting~~ suspension points. Only the Referee, designee of a Sectional Association that sanctions the tournament, or the applicable Suspension Point administrator may assess suspension points. Points shall be assessed pursuant to **Table 17**. Any person who assesses suspension points may do so only if the person has seen or heard the violation, or has been presented with enough documentation to determine with reasonable certainty that a violation in **Table 17** has occurred.
- a. The Referee. The Referee may assess suspension points pursuant to **Table 17**.
- b. The National Suspension Point administrator. The applicable National Suspension Point administrator may assess suspension points pursuant to **Table 17.B.6., 17.C., and 17.F.** for misconduct associated with tournaments sanctioned by the USTA pursuant to **USTA Regulation XVII.D., E. and F.** within seven days after the end of the tournament.
- c. Sectional or District Association designee. The designee of the sanctioning association may assess suspension points pursuant to **Table 17.B.6., 17.C., and 17.F.** within seven days after the end of the tournament.
- d. Grievance Committee of a Sectional or District Association. If permitted by a Sectional Association, the Grievance Committee of the Sectional Association or District Association may assess suspension points pursuant to **Table 17.B.6., 17.C., 17.D.3. and 4., 17.E., and 17.F.**
- ~~8.~~ Recording suspension points. Suspension points assessed by a Referee shall be recorded within three days after the end of the tournament. All other suspension points shall be recorded within three days after assessment. The recording period does not apply when suspension points are assessed by an association's Grievance Committee pursuant to **USTA Regulation IV.F.7.c.** The recording of suspension points assessed is an administrative task and failure to record shall not invalidate any penalties imposed or suspension points assessed. ~~The Referee or the Referee's designee shall report points assessed within three days after the end of the tournament. Failure to report shall not invalidate any penalties imposed or suspension points assessed.~~
- ~~9.6.~~ Notification to player of points assessed. [unchanged]
- ~~10.7.~~ Appeal of suspension points.
- a. Suspension points assessed at sectional tournaments. A Sectional Association, at its discretion, may adopt a procedure for permitting a player to appeal suspension points assessed at tournaments ~~it sanctions~~ sanctioned by the Sectional Association or one of its District Associations, provided that no person who participated in the assessment of the suspension points may participate in ruling on the appeal. Points removed from a player's record as a result of an appeal process shall not count toward a suspension.
- b. Suspension points assessed at national tournaments. [unchanged]
- c. Appeal of suspension points. [unchanged]
- ~~11. 8.~~ Player suspension. [unchanged]
- ~~12. 9.~~ Written notice of suspension to player and Sectional Association. [unchanged]
- ~~103.~~ Player may request that suspension start immediately. [unchanged]

**TABLE 17
Suspension Points**

	Violation	Suspension Points
<u>A.</u> Code Violations	Each code violation (point, game, or default) <i>except that</i> players who receive code violations because of delay immediately after a medical timeout or because of obvious cramping are not assessed suspension points	2
<u>B.</u> Defaults*	<u>1.</u> Default for flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct or flagrant inappropriate conduct on or off court	8-10*
	<u>2.</u> Default for refusal to play or continue to play (for reasons other than illness, injury, or personal circumstance)	5
	<u>3.</u> Default because of an adult discipline	5
	<u>4.</u> Default for no-show	5
	<u>5.</u> Default for late arrival	1
	<u>6.</u> Disqualification for ineligibility	3
	*Suspension points for defaults are in addition to points previously assessed for code violations.	
<u>C.</u> Improper Entry or Withdrawal *	<u>1.</u> Failure to pay an entry fee	<u>2</u>
	<u>2.</u> Being entered when entries close in two or more sanctioned tournaments scheduled to overlap unless each Tournament Committee approves the multiple entries in writing	4
	<u>3.</u> Withdrawal from tournament after entries closed for reason other than injury, illness, personal circumstance, or previously authorized entry into another tournament	4
	If a player is concurrently entered in overlapping tournaments without approval and withdraws from one or more tournaments, the player is assessed a total of 4 suspension points for improper withdrawal	
<u>D.</u> Unsportsmanlike Conduct	<u>1.</u> Not using best efforts to win	2
	<u>2.</u> Unsportsmanlike conduct or inappropriate conduct by a player or person associated with a player while the player is still in the playing area but not during a match, if the conduct would have resulted in a code violation had it occurred during the match	2
	<u>3.</u> Unsportsmanlike conduct or inappropriate conduct off court by a player or person associated with a player, regardless of location or medium. This includes, but is not limited to, conduct at tournament sites, tournament activities, hotels or other housing, and all forms of communication, including online medium or otherwise	5
	<u>4.</u> Flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct or flagrant inappropriate conduct , by a player or person associated with a player, regardless of location or medium. This includes, but is not limited to, conduct at tournament sites, tournament activities, hotels or other housing, and all forms of communication, including online medium or otherwise	8-10*
<u>E.</u> Gross Misconduct	<u>1.</u> Physical violence against another person on or off court by a player or person associated with a player	10

TABLE 17
Suspension Points

	Violation	Suspension Points
	<u>2.</u> Illegal use or possession of drugs	8
	<u>3.</u> A minor possessing or drinking alcoholic beverages	8
	<u>4.</u> Gambling activity as defined in USTA Regulation IV.C.19.	8
	<u>5.</u> Destruction of property	8
F. Playing Under Suspension	Playing in any sanctioned tournament while suspended by USTA or one of its Sectional Associations <u>or District Associations</u>	10
G. ITF Suspension Points	Each suspension point assessed at ITF tournaments and USTA International Tournaments becomes one suspension point under the USTA Suspension Point System	1
<p>*The Referee, the <u>person who, or grievance committee that, assesses the suspension points appropriate designee of a Sectional Association that sanctions the tournament, or the applicable Suspension Point administrator</u> shall determine the number of suspension points (8 to 10 inclusive) that shall be assessed based on the seriousness of the conduct.</p>		

141. *Right to appeal suspension.*

- a. *Suspension points at national tournaments and ITF tournaments.* [unchanged]
- b. *All suspension points at tournaments sanctioned by one Sectional Association.* When all suspension points that result in a suspension are assessed at tournaments sanctioned by one Sectional Association, any appeal shall be filed with the Sectional Association that sanctioned the tournaments. Unless the Sectional Association grievance procedures provide a longer period for appeal or absent good cause shown, any appeal shall be barred unless it is made in writing within 30 days of mailing the notice of suspension. The notice of appeal shall be mailed first class certified or registered mail to the Grievance Chair of the Sectional Association. The Sectional Association shall notify the applicable Suspension Point administrator of the appeal and whether a stay has been granted. Following the disposition of the appeal, ~~the~~ Sectional Association shall notify the applicable Suspension Point administrator of the decision on the appeal.
- c. *Suspension points at tournaments sanctioned by more than one Sectional Association.* When suspension points are accumulated at different tournaments sanctioned by different Sectional Associations or District Associations of more than one Sectional Association, the procedure in **USTA Regulation IV.F.114.a. applies.** ~~shall be followed.~~

152. *Effective date of suspension.*

- a. If the player does not appeal the suspension, the suspension begins 30 days after the applicable National Suspension Point administrator mails the certified notice of suspension to the player or such earlier date as may be requested in writing by the player under **USTA Regulation IV.F.130.**
- b. If the player appeals the suspension and the appeal is denied, the suspension begins on the date the decision is mailed unless the decision states otherwise or unless a stay is granted.

Part 2. Amend USTA Regulation V.C. (pp. 118-119) as follows:

V. POST-TOURNAMENT REGULATIONS

C. Suspensions by Sectional and District Associations

~~A Sectional Association that imposes a s~~Suspensions from participation in sanctioned tournaments imposed by Sectional Associations or District Associations as the result of a grievance, ~~arising out of a sectional matter~~ or as a result of a suspension imposed under the USTA Suspension Point System, shall be enforced in all USTA sanctioned tournaments, whether they are sanctioned by the Sectional or District Association, another Sectional or District Association, or the USTA. The Sectional Association or District Association that issues a suspension shall ~~report~~send notice of the suspension to the USTA National office within seven days of the suspension becoming final under the Sectional Association's procedures. The Sectional Association shall send a copy of the notice of suspension to the applicable National Suspension Point administrator. Failure to send the notice of suspension within seven days after the suspension becomes final shall not invalidate the suspension. The reporting of suspension points assessed is an administrative task and the failure to report shall not invalidate any suspension.

Effective Date: January 1, 2024

Rationale: As tennis continues to see unprecedented growth under one unified system, Section and District sanctioned tournaments are essential to support that growth at the grassroots level. As the complexity and egregious nature of unsportsmanlike behavior continues to evolve, the Sectional and District Associations must be empowered to effectively enforce disciplinary action in an open system.

When consulting with the USTA regarding the extent of a Sectional or District Association's authority to assess points or to have a suspension from play apply to all USTA sanctioned tournaments, the Executive Directors were advised that:

- A Sectional Association designee may not assess points, despite the provision in the current **Regulation IV.F.5.** that states a "designee of a Sectional Association that sanctions the tournament may assess suspension points;" and
- A suspension of a player by a Section or District Grievance Committee only applies to participation in that Sectional Association's tournaments, not any other tournament sanctioned by the USTA or another Sectional Association, despite **Table 17** which currently states that "playing in any sanctioned tournament while suspended by the USTA or one of its Sectional Associations" results in the assessment of 10 suspension points, and thereby a minimum 3 months suspension, and despite the Serve Tennis system being built only to suspend players from all sanctioned tournaments, not just tournaments sanctioned by a particular Sectional Association.

This proposal addresses the limitations as explained to the Executive Directors and gives the needed authority to the Sectional and District Associations to assess penalties under the Suspension Point System. Too often bad behavior is not addressed at a tournament by the certified officials and these amendments will permit a Sectional or District Grievance Committee to handle the problem if it has been reported. In some cases, when grievances are filed with a Section or District Grievance Committee, the only remedy is to put a player on probation or suspend them. Allowing a Section or District Grievance Committee to assess suspension points will enable players to be assessed a penalty that more appropriately relates to the poor behavior.

Additionally, this proposal clarifies the original intent of the USTA Suspension Point System language and restates in what is believed to be more concise language that a designee of a Sectional Association has the power to assess points in certain limited circumstances.

Finally, the proposal clarifies that when a Sectional or District Grievance Committee suspends a player from tournament play, that suspension is from all play, regardless of the sanctioning body.

The USTA Mid-Atlantic Foundation believes this proposal is consistent not only with the original intent of the unified USTA Suspension Point System when first adopted, but is also consistent with the wishes of all 17 Sectional Associations who responded affirmatively when asked in an April 2023 survey, “Does your Section support the concept of one national suspension system? In other words, if a Section Grievance Committee recommends suspension there is a system in place by which that player is suspended from all USTA events.”.

Additional Information from Proposer:

1. Please provide financial impact or budgetary costs of this change, if applicable:
 - a. Response: Expenses associated with IT modifications.
2. What IT requirements are needed:
 - a. Response: If this Call Item passes, the proposer requests that the Serve Tennis platform be programmed to permit the designee of the Sectional Association to see the suspension points on all players’ records, not just the players from the Sectional Association.

C&R Notes:

- The proposed Call Item amending **Regulation IV.F.4.** does not authorize the Sectional Association designee to impose code violation penalties. This would require a separate Call Item to amend **Regulation IV.D.6.** (pg. 107), which may be proposed for a future meeting of the Executive Council.
- It may not be best practices to allow individuals to report violation(s) in the first instance to the Grievance Committee. However, this should not be a barrier to the Association in voting on the Call Item as presented.
- C&R agrees that it is a recurring problem that players suspended by one Sectional Association are able to play in tournaments sanctioned by another or National with impunity despite Table 17. The IT system needs to be built to allow the Association to enforce the USTA Regulations. In addition, the system should be designed to afford Sectional Associations and District Associations to enter the results of grievances that result in a suspension preventing a player from entering another USTA sanctioned tournament. Finally, the system should be updated to accommodate imposition of and removal of a stay.

Note to Friend at Court and USTA Bylaw Editors:

- If this Call Item passes, a conforming change to the Regulation reference in Bylaw **43.c.iv.** needs to be made.
- If this Call Item passes, several references in Regulations marked “unchanged” in **Regulation IV.F.** need to be changed to add the word “National” before Suspension Point administrator.