



RULES FAQ
FOR USTA NORCAL
CAPTAINS & PLAYERS

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REGISTRATION OF TEAMS AND PLAYERS

TennisLink vs ustanorcal.com Website

Q: Are TennisLink and www.ustanorcal.com NorCal the same thing?

A: No. They are separate websites with separate logins used for different aspects of USTA tennis.

TennisLink is primarily used for USTA membership, ratings and tournaments, while ustanorcal.com NorCal is used for most team business, such as joining a team, changing your availability, or entering scores.

Team Registration

Q: What if I am not sure I have enough players to form a team?

A: Do not register a team unless you are certain that you will have enough players. Normally, most teams need to roster at least twice as many players as needed for a match, due to playoff match conflicts, injuries, vacations, family commitments and emergencies. Withdrawing a team after the deadline creates significant problems for the entire league. USTA NorCal will file a grievance against a team that withdraws after the deadline. Both the captain and all team members are subject to penalties (including suspensions) unless the grievance committee finds “good cause” for withdrawing a team. A “lack of players” is not considered good cause.

Player Registration and Eligibility

Brand New USTA Players

Q: How do I get started playing USTA league tennis?

A: There are 4 basic steps:

- Join the USTA by purchasing a membership (TennisLink)
- Complete your Self-rating (TennisLink)
- Contact team captains* (ustanorcal.com)
- Join a team (ustanorcal.com)

*USTA NorCal offers the “Get Connected” program to help new players find teams. Call the NorCal office (510-748-7373) for information and assistance.

Returning USTA Members

Q: What if I don't know my USTA membership number?

A: A player returning to USTA play after a prolonged absence must use his/her prior membership number when re-entering USTA play. If a player does not know his/her USTA membership number, he/she should contact USTA National at 800-990-8782. Under no circumstances should a player create a second/new membership.

Rostering after a Match is Played

Q: What happens if a match has not started and it is discovered that a player in the lineup has not been added to the roster?

A: If the player can be added to the roster before the team match starts, there is no problem.

Q: May captains agree to let someone play if he or she promises to roster after the match?

A: No. The player must be on the roster before the match is played.

Q: What happens if a match is completed and it is later discovered that a player was not eligible?

A: If the player is not on the roster, the captains will be unable to enter scores until the player is duly rostered. NorCal will then reverse this match to a 6-0, 6-0 win for the opponents of the ineligible player, and this will be reflected in the team standings. Neither the ineligible player nor his/her partner will receive credit for the match toward eligibility for postseason play. The actual match scores and results will be kept for the determination of individual ratings.

Playing on Multiple Teams

Q: What can be done about conflicts that players face when playing on multiple teams?

A: Captains and their players need to plan ahead and communicate clearly. Because playoffs and championships always overlap subsequent leagues, conflicting schedules are inevitable. Captains and players should communicate to define their participation, expectations and commitments at the beginning of each league.

Q: Can I play on two teams at the same level in different areas during the playoffs?

A: No. Once playoffs begin, a player may play for only one team at a given level.

Credit for Players Who Have Not Played a Match

Q: What happens if I don't play any matches? Can I get a credit or refund?

A: **USTA NorCal does not issue refunds. However,** USTA NorCal will automatically issue a credit towards a future team registration to a player who is rostered on a team but has not played in any matches (or received a default win for that team). Credits are issued within two weeks of the end of local league, are **not transferrable, and do not include the rostering fee charged by TennisLink.** This credit will be automatically applied when the player next registers for a league team. Captains may remove a player who has not yet played a match; the player will automatically receive this same credit. **EXCEPTION:** if there is an at-level requirement for a team, players who fulfill this requirement cannot be removed from the team roster and are not eligible for this credit.

Identification of Team Players

Q: May a captain ask for identification of opposing players prior to a match?

A: Yes. All league players are required to have government-issued photo ID available for presentation at all league matches. Any player who impersonates another (and any other player or captain who is aware of this impersonation) will be subject to a grievance and penalties.

Q: What happens if there is no substitute for a player who cannot provide a photo ID?

A: Individual match default rules apply.

High School Players

Q: Can high school players play USTA league?

A: Yes, if they meet the age requirement. However, playing in USTA leagues may result in eligibility issues. High school players should check with their high school coaches before playing on a USTA league team.

Ratings

Q: I don't know my rating, or I don't have a rating. Can I still join a team?

A: No. All players must have a valid rating (a self-rating qualifies) posted on the USTA NorCal website prior to registering for a team. Please contact the USTA NorCal office for assistance in completing your self-rating.

Q: If I have an "M" or a "T" rating, what leagues can I play in?

A: An "M" or "T" rating can be used to register in the "mixed" division only. If you want to join the "adult" division, you will need to complete a self-rating. However, if you have already joined a mixed team with your "M" or "T" rating, you can continue to use that rating in the mixed division until the end of the current league season.

Players from other USTA Sections

Q: I played USTA league in another section. What do I need to do to play league in NorCal?

A: There are two steps:

1) Contact USTA National (800-990-8782 or TennisLink) to update your address and transfer to the NorCal section. Be aware that it takes at least one business day for membership information to transfer from TennisLink to the USTA NorCal website.

2) Contact USTA NorCal to transfer your rating to NorCal. This transfer is done manually, and cannot be completed until NorCal has received your membership information from USTA National. Players are not eligible to play in a match until this step is completed and they are on the roster.

Self-rated, Appealed, or Dynamically Disqualified or Promoted players

Q: How many self-rated, appealed, or dynamically disqualified or promoted players can I roster on my team?

A: In 2020 Adult 40 & Over at the 3.5, 4.0, 4.5, 4.5+ NTRP level utilizing four or more individual matches within a team match, a team roster may include up to five (5) players with a Self-rating (S), Appealed (A), Dynamically Disqualified or Promoted (D).

In 2020 Mixed 40 & Over at the 7.0, 8.0, 9.0 NTRP level utilizing three individual matches within a team match, a team roster may include up to three (3) players with a Self-rating (S), Appealed (A), Dynamically Disqualified or Promoted (D).

In 2020 Adult 40 and 2020 Mixed 40 leagues team rosters at the 3.0, or combined 6.0 NTRP level may include up to six (6) players with a Self-rating (S), Appealed (A), Dynamically Disqualified or Promoted (D).

Appeals, Promotions, Disqualifications

Q: I am a computer-rated player. Can I change my rating?

A: Maybe. Computer-rated players may request an automatic appeal (up or down) of their year-end rating on TennisLink. The computer evaluates the player against a sliding scale of actual rating and number of matches, and then automatically grants or denies the appeal.

Q: I am a self-rated player. Can I change my rating?

A: It depends. A self-rated player may automatically appeal his/her rating up at any time. To appeal a rating down, the player must complete and submit an appeal, which will be reviewed by the Self-Rate Appeals Committee.

Q: How do I appeal my rating?

A: Log on to TennisLink and use the automatic appeal process.

- Computer rating appeals will be decided immediately
- Self-ratings appealed up will be granted immediately
- Self-rated players appealing down must complete and submit an appeal form electronically.

Q: What if my automatic appeal is denied?

A: You must continue to play with your current rating for the remainder of the year.

Once an appeal is granted, it remains in effect for the remainder of the current league year. A player cannot change his mind and go back to his former rating.

Granted appeals take at least 1 business day to transfer onto the NorCal website. Players and captains should verify that their ratings are posted correctly on their player and team pages.

Call the NorCal office if you need help with an appeal of your rating.

Q: What happens when a player changes his rating?

A: The rating change is effective immediately, and the player must play at the new level. This is true whether the change comes from an appeal or a disqualification, and regardless of the rating shown on the NorCal website.

Q: What if a self-rated player is rated too low?

A: Self-rated players have the responsibility to rate themselves at the correct level at all times. A rapidly improving self-rated player should move up by using the automatic appeal process. If a self-rated player is winning most of his matches (or if a captain is relying on that player for wins), it's likely that the player has improved to the next level and should appeal up. Do not jeopardize your team or compromise your integrity by under-rating.

Q: What if a self-rated player fails to answer all of the self-rate questions completely or accurately?

A: This is a potentially serious issue, and is a basis for an NTRP grievance, because the self-rating process relies on full disclosure. Players are expected to answer the self-rating questions completely and accurately, and receive their rating accordingly. If a player believes the rating received is too high, he/she may submit an appeal for a lower rating.

Q: Are self-rated players monitored to ensure they play at the correct level?

A: Yes, through both "Three Strikes" disqualification and NTRP grievances. "Three strikes" is a computer based program that flags match ratings that are clearly above level. Both "strikeouts" and grievances can result in matches being reversed and the automatic promotion of the player.

SCHEDULING / RESCHEDULING OF MATCHES

Q: Where may home matches be scheduled?

A: Home matches must be scheduled at the home facility (or its affiliate) as designated in the team name.

Split-Start Times

Q: May a match be scheduled with the one court starting first and four courts starting later?

A: Yes. The first court is scheduled. Four courts are scheduled to start 75 minutes later – one court may follow the first scheduled court when it is completed; the other three courts need confirmed reservations. The home captain may also schedule the other three or four courts earlier with confirmed court reservations as long as both captains agree.

Teams from Combined Facilities

Q: Can teams from different facilities combine together and use both facilities for their home matches?

A: Yes, the combined team may schedule home matches at either facility. The posted schedule must clearly indicate which facility will be used for each home match. The captains must register one facility as the home facility and post the second facility using "Captain's Tools, Name Your Team." Captains should also post their designated facilities by using the Public Notes on their team page. Please call the NorCal office if you need assistance with this.

Alternate Courts

Q: If a team is unable to provide courts for a match at its registered home facility, may home matches be moved to another site within the same league area?

A: Yes, as long as the courts are in the same league area and the alternate site is indicated on the schedule posted on the NorCal website.

For both local league and playoff matches, the home team is responsible for notifying the opponents and providing directions to the alternate site. The home team cannot change the time of the team match or of any of the individual matches without agreement from the opponent.

Inclement weather is a valid reason to change the home court location to a different facility in the same league area with indoor courts. The visiting team is not required to pay fees for indoor court usage.

Q: What happens if my team has an unanticipated conflict?

A: Once a match is initially scheduled or posted within the scheduling parameters, the home team cannot alter it without the agreement of the away team. Likewise, the away team cannot refuse a match that is scheduled within these defined parameters.

Q: Can matches be scheduled on holidays?

A: Yes. NorCal cannot prohibit teams from scheduling matches on various religious, cultural, or government holidays or during conflicting playoff/championship dates if those dates fall within the prescribed scheduling week. Away teams should not anticipate or expect that a request for special scheduling will be honored; adding players or defaulting a line may be necessary.

Court Surfaces

Q: May matches be scheduled on indoor or clay courts?

A: Yes. The home team may elect to play the team match on any courts that are part of its registered home (or affiliated) facility. The entire team match must be scheduled with the same conditions and court surface. Unless both captains agree otherwise, a home team may not mix court surfaces or elements (indoor or outdoor courts) for a team match.

Q: May matches be played on courts that are painted with youth tennis/"under 10" lines or on courts marked with pickle ball lines?

A: Yes

Certificate of Insurance

Q: How can I obtain a certificate of insurance for my home site?

A: Please contact the USTA NorCal office (510-748-7373) for assistance.

MATCH DAY-BEFORE PLAYING THE MATCH

Visiting Team Responsibilities

Q: As a visiting team, do we have any responsibilities?

A: Yes. Please understand that we are guests at these clubs and parks. All teams and their associated spectators are expected to abide by the rules and policies of the facility. Many clubs and parks have rules pertaining to alcohol, unsupervised children, pets, etc. Most private clubs restrict access to their amenities to club members; visiting league players should request permission before using practice courts, swimming pools, towels, showers and locker rooms. As with all USTA activities, following the rules, showing respect and courtesy towards others are expected at all times.

Lineups

Q: May a captain delay the exchange of lineups because someone is late (or for any other reason)?

A: No. See USTA League Regulation 2.01C(5)

Q: May a captain be flexible in allowing extra time before claiming a default?

A: Yes. However, it is imperative that both captains be very clear between themselves and with all the players as to exactly what has been agreed upon.

Q: What if a lower position starts out of sequence and then a higher position later defaults?

A: All matches stand as played [The Code #2].

Q: What if two team players who are members of different doubles teams fail to appear on time for a match?

A: The two doubles players who did appear shall play together in the higher position and only the lower position shall be defaulted.

Q: In a match played in two shifts, does the substitution rule (2.01C5) apply to both shifts?

A: Yes. For example, if a match is being played at 3:00 and 4:15, and at 4:30 one of those players is not available, an eligible substitute may be used in that player's position.

Lower Level Players in Lineups

Q: In a plus level, can a lower level player play in 1 singles or 1 doubles?

A: In a plus level league that utilizes four or less individual matches:

- In the 5.0+ level, a 4.5 is not eligible to play in the #1 singles position.
- In the 4.5+ level, a 4.0 is not eligible to play in the #1 singles position.

In a plus level league that utilizes five individual matches:

- In the 5.0+ level, a 4.5 is not eligible to play in the #1 singles or #1 doubles position.

Q: In straight levels, can a lower level player play in the #1 singles or #1 doubles spot?

A: Unless playing in a league that has (+) designation, a lower level player can play in any position in a line-up.

Warm-up

Q: How long is warm-up?

A: Warm-up is five minutes for all matches and should include serves. A player arriving late, but within the 15-minute default time, may not be denied a five-minute warm-up. Also, no coaching is allowed once the players have taken the court for warm-up.

Defaults

Q: What is a default?

A: A default is a failure to show up and play a match. An individual default occurs when a player fails to show up for a match and no substitute is available. A team default occurs when a team fails to play at least half of the scheduled matches:

- 3-line league = failure to play at least 2 individual matches
- 4-line league = failure to play at least 2 individual matches regardless of weight per position
- 5-line league = failure to play at least 3 individual matches

The purpose of USTA Adult League Tennis is to provide organized recreational play, emphasizing local competition. Defaults defeat this purpose. Captains and players should make every effort to avoid defaults.

Q: What happens if a team defaults a match?

A: NorCal may file a grievance against the defaulting team. The grievance is then adjudicated by a committee which determines if there was good cause for the default. The committee may require the teams to reschedule the match or impose penalties.

Please note that having a conflicting match (including playoffs, districts, sectionals, nationals, etc.) or not having enough players is not considered good cause for a default. All teams have the responsibility to ensure that enough players are rostered and available for their matches.

Q: What penalties can the grievance committee assess?

A: Penalties can be assessed to teams, captains, and individual players, and can range from a team being pulled from standings to suspension from all USTA league participation for up to one year.

MATCH DAY-DURING THE MATCH

Unsafe Courts or Conditions

Q: What should I do if I feel a court is dangerous or unsafe for play?

A: Stop playing and discuss the issue with the captains. The captains should consider their options: moving to another court, moving indoors, etc. A player may retire from a match if the situation cannot be resolved at the site. After retiring, a player could potentially file a sportsmanship grievance if the other team refuses to cooperate to complete the match.

Loss of Courts

Q: What happens if a match loses its courts due to another match or other cause?

A: In the case of back-to-back league matches that are scheduled with different teams, any team match which runs over its scheduled time allotment should stop play and vacate the courts for the next team, even if its match is not completed. The rescheduling rules [Rule 2.00C] are then used by the teams to reschedule the incomplete match.

USTA Official

Q: Can a team hire a USTA official for a local league match?

A: Yes. A captain may request an official for a match with the following procedure:

File the request at least three weeks prior to the match date to guarantee that an official will be present. If the request is made less than three weeks prior to the match date, a reasonable effort will be made to accommodate the request.

The captain making the request must send a check in the amount of \$100 (\$120 for a staggered start match), payable to USTA NorCal, Attn: Adult Leagues/Officials, 1920 North Loop Rd., Alameda, CA 94502. USTA NorCal will contract with and pay the official.

The captain making the request must notify the opposing captain, in advance, that the match will be officiated.

The official shall not have a direct conflict of interest with either team and shall be held to the Officials' Code of Conduct. The official shall notify both captains that he/she has been hired to officiate the match.

Restroom Breaks

Q: What are the rules regarding restroom breaks?

A: Restroom breaks are given "reasonable" time. Reasonable time is defined as the time it takes to walk briskly to the restroom, use the toilet, wash hands and then walk briskly back to the court. Restroom breaks should be taken first at set breaks, and then if necessary during a changeover. Only in a true emergency should a bathroom break be taken at any other time. It is unsportsmanlike to use restroom breaks for fatigue, to recover condition, or to gain any type of advantage.

Tiebreaks

Q: Do we have to play a match tiebreak in lieu of a full third set?

A: No. See the rules regarding match scoring and formats. Note that in the absence of a facility rule or other rule which requires a tiebreak, USTA NorCal allows the home team to determine what format they will use to complete a match.

Q: What is the correct tiebreak format to use?

A: USTA uses the Coman Format for both set and match tiebreaks at all Championships. USTA NorCal recommends using it in local league play. The decision is made by the home team at the beginning of the match. If the players forget to make this decision before the match, it should be made as soon as this oversight is discovered. The decision, once made, can be changed only by unanimous agreement of all players on the court.

Medical Time Outs

Q: Are there medical timeouts?

A: Yes. A medical time out shall not exceed 3 minutes, including all evaluation and treatment time. If the need for a medical time out occurs during a game, then timing starts when play is stopped. When the need arises during a break or changeover, that time is used first, and then the medical time out begins.

- The opposing team should announce when the timing of the medical time out is commencing.
- Only one time out per injury or illness is allowed. (Twisted ankle = one time out, sprained shoulder = one time out, cramping/heat related illness = one time out, etc.) No other time outs are allowed for the same injury or illness during the match.
- One time out for any and all cramping/heat-related illness is allowed per match regardless of what body part is involved.
- Fatigue or lack of conditioning is not a valid reason for a medical time out.

Q: Does the medical time out information in “Friend at Court” apply to league matches?

A: No. It only applies to officiated matches. (Adult Local League matches are un-officiated matches).

Coaching

Q: Is coaching allowed during bathroom breaks, medical time-outs, two-minute set breaks, changeovers, etc.?

A: No. Coaching is allowed only during the 10-minute break between the second and third sets in matches that are playing a full third set. Also, no coaching is allowed once players have taken court to begin warm-up.

Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

Q: What happens if a player’s cell phone rings during a match?

A: If player’s cell phone rings while the ball is in play, it is a deliberate hindrance and as such the opponent may stop play and claim the point [THE CODE #36]. Using a cell phone or other electronic device during a match gives the appearance of coaching and is not allowed in league play.

COURT MONITORS

Q: What are court monitors?

A: In USTA league, court monitors assume limited duties and responsibilities to ensure fair and sportsmanlike play. The court monitor’s primary duty is to help all players in an impartial and unbiased manner in accordance with the USTA regulations, THE CODE, and the Rules of Tennis. Court monitors cannot make calls or interpret any rule of tennis.

Use of a court monitor does not relieve players of the obligation of making calls in accordance with THE CODE. Players are always expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship and give their opponent the benefit of doubt on any calls in which there is uncertainty.

Q: Who can be a court monitor?

A: Any USTA member in good standing may act as court monitor.

Preferably, the best option is a person not associated with either team.

One individual agreeable to all

Representative from each team

Court monitors must be acceptable to all players on the court. If no monitor acceptable to all players is available, the players on the court may either continue the match without monitors, or

postpone the completion of the match until a time/date at which acceptable court monitors are available.

Q: How do court monitors work?

A: One or two monitors may be used, with each positioned at a net post.

Players shall continue to make their own calls, and court monitors shall confirm or overrule a call only when asked by a player. Otherwise, court monitors shall remain silent and not interject themselves into the match.

When asked, the monitor should overrule a call only if he is 100% sure that the original call made was in error. Otherwise, he should allow the original call to stand.

When asked, court monitors may also assist with keeping score, timing intervals between points, changeovers and sets, and confirming egregious foot faults.

If two monitors are used, the one with the closer and clearer view of the play should make the call, especially along his sideline. If both monitors believe they saw the play clearly, yet disagree on the call, the point shall be replayed.

The time to find a court monitor should not exceed a few minutes. The player may notify his captain or another player to help find a monitor. Play shall resume while a search for a court monitor is ongoing.

If a court monitor is not available and players cannot complete the match under THE CODE, then players may stop play and have the captains agree to reschedule the match at a time when monitors are available.

AFTER THE MATCH

Entering Scores

Q: Which team should enter the scores after the match?

A: Either team may enter the score on the USTA NorCal website. The other team then confirms the score, or it will be automatically confirmed after 48 hours.

Q: Can a scorecard be changed once it has been confirmed by the other captain?

A: Yes. Once a scorecard is confirmed, corrections to the scorecard can be made only through the USTA NorCal office, with the knowledge of both captains. Names for default wins will not be changed by the office once the scorecard is entered.

Grievances

Q: What are grievances?

A: A grievance is a written formal complaint regarding an alleged violation of a regulation or a procedure. There are 2 main types of grievances, General (Sportsmanship, Rule Violations) and NTRP (ratings).

Q: Who can file grievances?

A: Only team captains or co-captains may file grievances.

Q: How do grievances work?

A: A captain contacts USTA NorCal to discuss the situation and determine if the basic elements that warrant a grievance exist. If so, the captain formally files the grievance by submitting a written complaint. The process includes a period for parties to the grievance to submit statements and evidence, followed by adjudication of the grievance by the appropriate committee. Once a decision is reached, parties are notified and any penalties are assessed.

RULES FOR PLAYOFFS

Weighted Draw

Q: What is a weighted draw and when does it occur?

A: The USTA NorCal office resorts to a weighted draw when a playoff match does not get played by the designated deadline made known by the USTA NorCal office. When resorting to a weighted draw, USTA NorCal staff put an allotted amount of poker chips in a bag based off of local league standings and blindly draw the winner to the next segment of play. The number of poker chips is as follows:

- 1st place team at the end of local league season = 4 poker chips
- 2nd place team at the end of local league season = 3 poker chips
- 3rd place team at the end of local league season = 2 poker chips
- 4th place team at the end of local league season = 1 poker chips

RULES FOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

Lineups at Championships

Q: When are lineups due?

A: Lineups are due at the tournament desk 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start time. Lineups may not be altered after being submitted except for illness, injury, disqualification or failure of a player to show (when a substitute is available).

Individual Match Default Courtesy at Championships

Q: What if I know in advance that my team needs to default an individual match at Districts or Sectionals?

A: As a courtesy, the captain should notify the opposing captain and USTA NorCal about the impending default as soon as it is known. Players often travel and incur significant expense to participate in District and Sectional Championships. Once a default has been conceded, it cannot be rescinded. If a captain submits a lineup with a default, the opposing captain will have the opportunity to revise his lineup before players are sent to the court.

Expenses for Qualifying National Teams

Q: Does USTA NorCal help with the expenses of taking a team to Nationals?

A: Yes. USTA Northern California contributes towards the expenses of qualifying teams that participate in USTA National Championships. For five-line leagues, NorCal will contribute \$650; for four-line leagues, NorCal will contribute \$550; for three-line leagues, NorCal will contribute \$450. Contributions are paid directly to the individual listed as captain of the team on the date of the national championships and will be mailed at the conclusion of the USTA National Championships for each league.