

## **Minutes of the USTA NorCal Adult Leagues Committee Meeting Monday, June 24, 2024**

**NOTE:** All resolutions in these minutes were approved by the USTA NorCal Board as of July 17, 2024.

**NOTE:** These minutes were approved on July 29, 2024.

Christine Costamagna, Chair of the Adult Leagues Committee (the "Committee"), called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm and roll call was conducted. The meeting was held by Google Meet video conference.

**Committee Members Present:** Christine Costamagna (chair), Andrea Barnes, Carlo Guariento, Marilyn Morrell-Kristal, Michelle Nicholson, Tuesdai Powers, and Paul Startz

**USTA NorCal Staff Present:** Michelle Wilson (Sr. Manager, Adult Competition), Vinod Herur (Adult Leagues Specialist)

**Guests Present:** Sarah Robinson

- 1. Approval of June 10, 2024 Minutes.** The Committee considered for approval of the draft minutes of the meeting held on June 10, 2024.

The following motion was then **APPROVED** by a vote of 5 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of Adult Leagues Committee meeting held June 10, 2024 be approved as presented.

- 2. 2024 USTA League Volunteer Award.** The Committee discussed the nomination process for the National 2024 USTA League Volunteer of the Year Award and has opted not to submit a nomination for 2024 due to the short timeframe it was given to select a nominee but will work on submitting a nomination for 2025.

Paul Startz joined at 6:37PM

### **3. Adult League Regulations and Process Proposals for 2025**

The Committee considered a number of regulation updates and process proposals. A subcommittee, including Mr. Birkenseer and Mr. Startz, met in advance of the meeting with Staff to review the proposed changes and/or updates and consider recommendations.

- A. Straight Level for Mixed Leagues.** The Committee discussed a proposal to use straight levels for mixed leagues. The Committee was informed that National is trying to improve the integrity of the rating system. It was noted that while National gives Sections the option of using straight levels for mixed leagues, teams advancing to Nationals will compete using combined levels.

After discussion, the Committee did not support using straight levels for mixed leagues.

**Rationale:** Changing to mixed leagues does not address the rating issue concerning mixed. Also, when teams go to Nationals, the format will still use combined ratings which may put the NorCal teams at a disadvantage if the section format was straight levels.

- B. Rescheduling Rule.** The Committee discussed an addition to the reschedule rule regarding if courts become unavailable and if home teams and opposing teams cannot field enough players for a scheduled match. During discussion, it was mentioned that there is also a proposal to amend the total team default rule which is also in regards to this current rule proposal. It was suggested that we also review the amendment to the total team default rule.

After discussion, the Committee did not support the following proposal (underlined language is the proposed addition).

A home team may change an initially scheduled or posted match if their courts become unavailable. They offer two new dates for the opposing team to choose from for the new match date.

A home team that cannot field a legal match loses home court advantage and rescheduling is given to the opposing team. The opposing team offers one reschedule date (to not conflict with existing matches). If the home team still cannot field a legal match for the new date, the match is awarded to the opposing team. An automatic grievance is filed against the original home team.

If an opposing team cannot field a legal match and asks for a reschedule, the home team offers one reschedule date (to not conflict with existing matches). If the opposing team still cannot field a legal match for the new date, the match is awarded to the home team. An automatic grievance is filed against the opposing team.

**Rationale:** The proposed rule will penalize the home team if they cannot field a team. It will be revisited when the rule for total team defaults is discussed and decided.

- C. (NorCal LLAR) Initial Scheduling.** The Committee discussed a rule change proposal that all matches requiring more than 30 minutes travel to be schedule on a weekend.

After discussion, the Committee did not support the following proposal (underlined language is the proposed addition).

(NorCal LLAR) Initial Scheduling. The home team shall set the date and time of the match during the designated week and according to the chart above or for daytime, see page 28. All matches requiring more than 30 minutes travel must be scheduled on Saturday or Sunday. The visiting team must accept that date and time. The home team may not post a variance to the date and/or time without the visiting team's agreement. Once posted, the schedule may not be changed without both teams' agreement.

**Rationale:** This rule is impossible to track for obvious reasons and would likely deter facilities from wanting to host leagues. In consideration of travel time issues, NorCal will be reviewing the boundaries this year.

- D. Points Per Position to determine match winner.** The Committee discussed a proposal to use points per position to determine the match winner. It was mentioned that using points per position may help to make the matches more level based. It was also mentioned that other Sections use point per position methodology and that NorCal uses points per position for the Adult 40 & Over League.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to table this until more information from other Sections is gathered and presented.

- E. (NorCal LLAR) Match Tiebreak in Lieu of a Third Set.** Staff presented a proposal to the Committee to require that a match tie-break be played unless both captains agree to play a full third set at the beginning of the match. This proposal clarifies some confusion raised by captains and players. During the discussion, there were some concerns that deciding to play a full third set as opposed to a 10pt match tie-break in lieu of the 3<sup>rd</sup> set is an advantage of being the home team and by changing the rule, the home team would lose this benefit.

After discussion, the following motion was **APPROVED** by a vote of 4 in favor, 2 opposed, and 0 abstentions:

**RESOLVED:** That, effective with the 2025 League season the (NorCal LLAR) Match Tiebreak in Lieu of a Third Set is amended as follows (Stricken-through language is the proposed deletion and underlined language is the proposed addition):

(NorCal LLAR) Match Tiebreak In Lieu of a Third Set.

1. A third set match tiebreak is mandatory under the following conditions:

- a) when mandated by the host facility
- b) when an individual match starts play with 2 hours or less of available court time (e.g., facility closing, another match scheduled on the courts, daylight, etc.)

2. When a match tiebreak is not mandatory, ~~the home team decides whether to play a full third set or a match tiebreak and must notify the opponent at the beginning of the match. If no decision is made at the beginning of the match, the match format shall be the best of three tiebreak sets with a match tiebreak in lieu of the third set.~~ a match tiebreak will be played unless both players/teams agree to play a full third set at the beginning of the match.

3. The home team shall decide which tiebreak format will be used and must notify the opponent at the

beginning of the match (note: the Coman tiebreak is the recommended format). If no decision is made at the beginning of the match, the tiebreak format will default to the Coman tiebreak.

**Rationale:** Playing a match tie-break for the 3<sup>rd</sup> set is currently the typical format used. The National Regulations recommend it and NorCal uses it at all Championships. This clarification will help to reduce confusion as players will know it will be a match tie-break unless both players/teams agree to play a full third set at the beginning of the match.

- F. (NorCal LLAR) Initial Notification.** The Committee discussed a rule change proposal to require a home team to notify the visiting team of the date and time of the first playoff round within one week of the date that the playoff match teams have been determined and not later than the deadline the offices posts at the beginning of the season. The Committee felt that the current rule was adequate and that it would be difficult to track when playoff teams are determined as it could happen all throughout a season.

After discussion, the Committee did not support for the following proposal (underlined language is the proposed addition).

(NorCal LLAR) Initial Notification. Unless otherwise specified, the home team shall notify the visiting team of the date and time of the first playoff round within one week of the date that the playoff match teams have been determined and no later than by the deadline the office posts at the beginning of the season. If a second round is required, the home team shall notify the visiting team of the date and time of the second playoff round by Monday at 9pm following the end of the first playoff segment, or for Daytime teams, by Friday at 9pm following the end of the first playoff segment. If a third round is required, the home team shall notify the visiting team of the date and time of the third playoff round by Monday at 9pm following the end of the second playoff segment, or for Daytime teams, by Friday at 9pm following the end of the second playoff segment. Email or texting notification or posting on the USTA NorCal website is sufficient notification.

**Rationale:** This proposed rule change would be impossible to track as teams qualify for playoffs at many different times during a season. This would create more manual work for Staff during a season and there are no complaints with the current process.

- G. Procedure for creating a split flight.** The Committee discussed whether a flight should be split at 11 teams or kept as one flight. Currently, when there are 11 teams in an area, Staff is splitting the 11 teams into two flights. The flights are currently split at 11 as it is currently a 10-week season.

After discussion, the following motion was **APPROVED** by a vote of 6 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions:

**RESOLVED:** That, effective with the 2025 League season, areas of 11 teams will be flighted as one flight.

**Rationale:** A 6-team flight has a 4-team playoff. A 5-team flight has a 2-team playoff. Depending on which flight a team gets put into, their odds of making playoffs (assuming each team has an equal chance of making playoffs) are different if they are put into the 6-team flight or the 5-team flight. Splitting at 12 makes both flights have 4-team playoffs. An 11-team single flight (the maximum size under this proposal) would mean that each team plays every other team in the flight for a total of 10 matches.

In addition, it extends the ability to work within our existing playoff structure. In 2023, the Adult 18 4.0 level had 20 teams in the DS area. This resulted in a 10-10 flight split. If we had had one more team (21 total), it would have been split into 3-flights thus needing an extra round of playoffs and thus complicating the scheduling (currently the playoff schedule allows for a maximum of three rounds).

- H. (NorCal LLAR) Withdrawal from Sectionals.** Staff proposed adding language to the withdrawal from Sectionals rule that players must register for the Sectionals Championships by the published deadline to be considered for the Sectional Championships. It is also being proposed to add language regarding the refund of Sectionals fees.

After discussion, the following motion was **APPROVED** by a vote of 6 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions:

**RESOLVED:** That, effective with the 2025 League season, the (NorCal LLAR) Withdrawal from Sectionals rule be amended as follows (Stricken-through language is the proposed deletion and underlined language is the proposed addition).

**(NorCal LLAR) Withdrawal from Sectionals.** ~~A team must notify the USTA NorCal office of their withdrawal no later than 24 hours after securing a position in that event. Qualifying teams must register for the Sectional Championships by the published deadlines, otherwise USTA NorCal will attempt to find an alternate by:~~

- 1) ~~inviting the teams in the flight the withdrawing team advanced out of in order of record;~~
  - 2) ~~If none of those teams are able to attend, USTA NorCal will randomly contact a finalist of another flight.~~
- Registration fees will not be refunded after the deadline. A grievance may be filed against a team withdrawing after the Sectional registration deadline.

**Rationale:** Currently, all teams must register and pay to play in Sectionals through the on-line system. Adding language stating that qualifying teams must register for the Sectional Championships by the published deadlines clarifies the process. Under the current rule, teams must notify the USTA NorCal office of their withdrawal no later than 24 hours after securing a position in that event, however a number of teams are not following the rule and Staff has needed to contact the captains (sometimes multiple times) regarding their playing status in Sectionals. Specifying that the teams must register on-line makes it clear that if the teams do not register timely, Staff will reach out to the next alternate to play. Also, adding a refund rule makes it clear of when a withdrawing team would be entitled a refund.

Tuesdai Powers joined at 7:24pm

- I. FAQ for Captains and Players: COURT MONITORS.** A proposal was presented to the Committee regarding adding language to the FAQ for captains and players to help clarify when a court monitor can call foot faults as well as the procedure to use. Following is the proposed amendment to the FAQ (underlined language is the proposed addition).

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

The receiving player/team is still responsible for calling foot faults. If confirmed by the court monitor, that serve (first or second) is a fault. If denied and the serve was otherwise good, the receiver loses the point.

After discussion, the ALC agreed to table this matter concerning court monitors until more information is gathered.

- J. (NorCal LLAR) Match Minimum for Playoffs for Adult 65 and Mixed 55.** Staff proposed lowering the match minimum requirement for the Adult 65 and Mixed 55 league to two matches to be eligible for post season play as long as they have a valid rating no matter what rating type they have. It was mentioned that when teams advance to the National Invitational, players are only required to play 2 matches and that changing the NorCal rule would be in line with the National Invitational requirement.

After discussion, the Committee did not support for the following proposal (underlined language is the proposed addition).

**(NorCal LLAR) Match Minimum for Playoffs.** A player with a valid year-end Computer (C) or Mixed Exclusive (M) NTRP rating must have played in two matches for the same team to be eligible for postseason play with that team; one default will count for eligibility. A Self-rating (S), Appealed (A), Dynamically Disqualified or Promoted (D) rated player must have played in three matches for a 3-line league or four matches for a 4-line or more league for the same team to be eligible for postseason play with that team; a default will not count for eligibility.

**(NorCal LLAR) Match Minimum for Playoffs for Adult 65 and Mixed 55.** A player with a valid Computer rating (C), self-rating (S), Appealed (A) rating or Mixed (M) rating (M rating for Mixed 55 only) must have played in two matches for the same team to be eligible for postseason play with that team. One default will count for eligibility.

**Rationale:** Having the same minimum match requirement rule for all leagues will cause less confusion. Requiring Self-rating (S), Appealed (A), Dynamically Disqualified or Promoted (D) players to play at least three matches for a 3-line league or four matches for a 4-line or more league will help ensure that they are playing at the right level going into Championship play.

- K. (NorCal LLAR) Other Match Scoring and Formats.** Staff presented a proposal to allow shortened scoring formats that captains can agree to use for reasons including, but not limited to, inclement weather, air quality, and court availability, etc.

After discussion, the following motion was **APPROVED** by a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions:

**RESOLVED:** That, effective with the 2025 League season, the (NorCal LLAR) Other Match Scoring and Formats rule be amended as follows (Stricken-through language is the proposed deletion and underlined language is the proposed addition).

**(NorCal LLAR) Alternate Match and Scoring Formats.** If both captains agree and notify USTA NorCal by email in advance to leagues@norcal.usta.com, the following format may be used: two short sets with a 7-point Set Tiebreak at 4-games all with a 10-Point Match Tiebreak in lieu of the 3rd set. No-Ad scoring can be used with any of the scoring methods. Once a scoring format has been agreed to, the match must be played to completion using the agreed upon format.

When the short set format is used, scores must be reported to leagues@norcal.usta.com by 11:59 PM on the day following the match, except that if a match is played on the last day of the local league season, the scores must be reported no later than 11:59 PM on the day the match is played. USTA NorCal League Staff will enter the scores in the system using the USTA League Approved Conversion Charts.

**Rationale:** Allowing approved alternative scoring formats that teams can use if the captains agree will give teams more opportunities to complete matches that they are having trouble completing due to reasons such as inclement weather, air quality, court availability, etc. Regardless of approval, Staff will make the heat index chart, air quality index chart, and the USTA League Approved Conversion Charts easier to locate on the NorCal website.

- L. (NorCal LLAR) Total Team Default Procedures.** The Committee discussed the current total team default procedures along with the proposed rule change. During the discussion, the Committee reiterated the benefits of the current rule such as encouraging matches to be played and they commented on the challenges such as possible gamesmanship and losing teams not following through with their commitment to finish the match by the end of the season.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to table this item until Staff gathers more information.

- M. (NorCal LLAR) Reporting Scores.** The Committee reviewed a rule change proposal regarding the deadline for reporting scores after a local league match has been played. It was being proposed to require captains to submit match scores for matches played on the last day of the season by 11:59pm on the day of the match so that Staff has time to address match issues in order to generate the playoff rounds.

After discussion, the following motion was **APPROVED** by a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions:

**RESOLVED:** That, effective with the 2025 League season, the (NorCal LLAR) Reporting Scores rule be amended as follows (Stricken-through language is the proposed deletion and underlined language is the proposed addition).

**(NorCal LLAR) Reporting Scores.** Both captains have a duty to report scores to the USTA NorCal website by 11:59 PM on the day ~~after the end of the local league season or by 11:59 PM the day after the completion of a team match for matches played prior to the last day of the local league season~~ following the match, except that if a match is played on the last day of the local league season, the scores must be reported no later than 11:59 PM on the day the match is played. Either captain shall enter the scores. The opposing captain must verify online scores by 11:59 PM the day after scores are entered; if not verified by then, the scores will be auto-verified. Failure by either captain to report scores by the above stated deadline may result in a warning for both captains on the first offense and a grievance for further offenses.

**Rationale:** All match scores must be entered into the system before playoff matches can be generated. This requirement will improve the turnaround time of generating the playoff rounds and reduce the Staff time in resolving match issues at the end of the season.

- N. Scheduling Playoff Matches.** Staff explained to the Committee that currently up to 3 weeks of playoffs is needed depending the number of teams an area has. Currently, no matter the size of the playoffs, every playoff round has one week to complete the playoff starting with playoff week one. Some captains in areas needing just one week of playoffs have asked why, if agreed upon by the captains, can't they choose a date and time within the three weeks to play their playoff match. During the discussion, it was mentioned that under the current rules, all teams have the same amount of time to complete each segment of playoffs. It

was also mentioned that Staff needs to resolve all matches before generating the next round of playoffs. Also, playoff weeks are scheduled during the annual league calendar review. Staff explained that having a scheduled week for each round of playoffs starting with the first week also helps Staff to determine teams advancing to Sectionals as there can be a tighter turnaround time for larger leagues between playoffs and Sectionals.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to table this item until the next meeting.

- 4. USTA NorCal's position on videotaping and photography.** The Committee was informed that USTA NorCal's position on videotaping and photography currently in the Junior Tournament Rules will be added to the FAQ for Captains and Players as follows:

Q: What is USTA NorCal's position on videotaping and photography?

A: USTA NorCal Position on Videotaping and Photography. Videotaping and photography for personal, non-commercial purposes, of any portion of a sanctioned USTA NorCal event is permissible under the law, much like any event in a public place. If a player, parent or other person affiliated with a player, objects to that player being videotaped or photographed, that player, parent or person may ask, or request that a Tournament Director or Certified Official intercede on their behalf to ask that any videotaping and photography stop, or that the camera be repositioned to exclude that player. Other than optional compliance or respectful consideration, there are no grounds to deny anyone the right to videotape or photograph.

Notwithstanding this position, facilities used for sanctioned events may have videotaping and/or photography policies of their own pertaining to events within the boundaries of their property, which may supersede the position of USTA NorCal stated here.

It was noted NorCal's current position on videotaping and photography has already been passed by the Board.

- 5. Procedure for Seeding-Placing Teams at USTA NorCal Adult Leagues Sectional Events being added to FAQ for Captains and Players.** The Committee was informed that the procedure for seeding/placing teams for the semi-finals/finals of a Section Championship will be added to the FAQs for captains and players as follows:

The team that has the best record of all the advancing teams will play the team that has the fourth best record; the team that has the second best record will play the team that has the third best record. In an event where there is a wildcard, the draw may be adjusted so the wildcard team will not play the same team they have already played, in the first round of the single elimination playoff round.

It was noted that this procedure was passed by the ALC on 6/5/23 and by the Board on 6/21/2023.

Ms. Costamagna briefly went through the remainder of the agenda and noted that certain topics would be considered by unanimous written consent within the next week.

There being no further matters to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 pm.