

MLPLAY™
RULES GUIDE
2026

Major League Pickleball Asia

MLPlay™ Rules Guide

Major League Pickleball is an innovative coed team league with some of the most influential team owners in professional sports. Professional players are drafted to teams and compete across a regular season schedule, Mid-Season Tournament, and annual Playoffs.

Teams compete under rules specific to MLP (MLPlay™ Rules), including rally scoring for tiebreakers known as DreamBreakers™. Every match between teams consists of four games: Women's doubles, men's doubles, and two mixed doubles games. If teams are tied after these four games, an innovative DreamBreaker™ is played.

The 2026 UPA-A Rulebook & Principles shall apply to all MLP Asia events with the exception and/or addition of the specific rules and procedures set forth in this Rules Guide. The League will have final authority on any situation that is not specifically covered by this Rules Guide and will have the final decision on disputes or appeals.

Major League Pickleball started in 2021 with one event, eight teams, and thirty-two players, and has grown to draft over one hundred professional players participating in multiple events throughout the US. The League was the first organization to introduce rally scoring and a team format into pickleball, creating a new exciting atmosphere for players and fans.



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1) TEAM CAPTAINS

All teams must designate a Team Captain to communicate with MLP referees during matches. Team Captain duties include, but are not limited to: Participating and making selections during the coin toss, communicating timeouts, Video Challenges and Line Reviews to the referee, selecting the DreamBreaker™ lineup, etc. If a Team Captain is unable to fulfill his/her duties, the team must designate a substitute Captain.

2) WARM UP

Teams are expected to warm up on a practice court and report to their designated match court at least ten (10) minutes before their scheduled match time. Match times are when the match will begin play, with the exception of broadcast delays. If a team's Captain is not on court within at least five (5) minutes of the scheduled start time, that team will forfeit their coin toss selections. If a team has already made their coin toss selections but still creates a delay in the start time of any game, a point penalty will be assessed for every four (4) minutes players have not arrived to begin the game.

If an event is using "Followed By" for scheduling, it will be the team's responsibility to keep track of when the preceding match finishes. Once a match finishes, the next match will begin ten (10) minutes later. If a team's Captain has not shown up to court after five (5) minutes after the completion of the previous match on that court, they will forfeit their coin toss selections.

Players presenting an untested paddle, or failing to produce a tested paddle, results in a one (1) point penalty awarded to the opponent. The player must then complete paddle testing. If the player has not returned with a tested paddle within fifteen (15) seconds after the warm-up period expires, a Mark (Blue Card) for delay of game is assessed.

3) STARTING LINEUPS

Teams will have optionality on which two males and which two females will play during a match. All teams must submit their daily lineups online the day before each match day.

A. Away Team

Teams designated as the "Away" team for a match will be responsible for submitting their player lineups for Women's, Men's, Mixed 1 and Mixed 2 by 8 pm local time the night before scheduled matches. The DreamBreaker™ lineup (if needed) will be submitted during a match after the Mixed 2 game.

B. Home Team

Teams designated as the "Home" team for a match will be responsible for submitting their player lineups for Women's, Men's, Mixed 1 and Mixed 2 by 10 pm local time the night before scheduled matches. The DreamBreaker™ lineup (if needed) will be submitted during a match after the Mixed 2 game. "Home" teams will be able to see the opponent's lineups and respond to each game.

During regular season pool play, if a team is up 3-0, the "Away" team will be given the opportunity to adjust their lineup in the fourth game (Mixed 2). The "Home" team will then have the chance to respond to the new lineup. If the "Away" team does not choose to adjust their lineup, the "Home" team will still be able to adjust. Any lineup changes will prohibit the same players who played in the Mixed 1 game from playing in the Mixed 2 game.

4) COIN TOSS

At the start of each match, a coin toss (or similar random selection) will be conducted. The winner will elect to choose one of the following options:

A. Serve or Receive

The team selecting to serve or receive will maintain that selection for each game throughout the match.

B. End

Teams will choose one end of the court to begin the match on. Teams will stay on the end they finish game one (1) on and begin the next game on that end. Example: If Team A selects the right end of the court to start game one (1), they will begin game one (1) on the right end but begin game two (2) on the left end of the court. Team A will then begin on the right end for game three (3) and the DreamBreaker™ (if one is played during the match).

The team making the “End” selection will also have their choice of team bench. Teams will not switch benches during a match.

5) MATCHES

Each match will consist of four (4) games to 11 (win by 2) with side-out scoring. The four (4) games will be played in this order: Women’s Doubles, Men’s Doubles, Mixed Doubles 1, and Mixed Doubles 2. A DreamBreaker™ will be played to determine the winner of the match if teams are tied at 2-2 after the gender and mixed doubles games.

During regular season pool play, teams will play all four (4) games even if the score is 3-0 after the first mixed doubles game. “Super Sunday” and playoff matches will be played until a team wins three (3) games.

6) DOUBLES & MIXED DOUBLES GAMES

Each doubles and mixed doubles game will be played with side-out scoring to 11 points (win by 2). Players will change ends when one team reaches a score of six (6). Players will be allowed to compete in only one mixed doubles game (*for example, Player A cannot compete in both Mixed 1 and Mixed 2 games*).

7) DREAMBREAKER™ (SINGLES TIEBREAKER)

A DreamBreaker™ is a game to 21 (win by 2) with rally scoring and a team must win while serving. Each team must rotate four (4) players for four (4) singles rallies in a set order. Players serve from the left or right side of the court based on their score. A player will serve on the right side when their team score is even, and serve on the left side when the team score is odd.

If a tiebreaker is needed during a match, teams will submit player lineups to the referee after the second mixed doubles game. Teams will have the option to submit any of their rostered players (even if they didn’t participate in the gender or mixed doubles games) into the lineup. Two (2) men and two (2) women will be selected to play in four (4) rally rotations, or points awarded, until the DreamBreaker™ is concluded.

Each team will be allotted one (1) timeout and two (2) Line Reviews. Teams will change ends when one team reaches a score of eleven (11). If a point penalty is issued to a team during the DreamBreaker™, it will count as a rally rotation for the players on court.

8) SERVES

Players will be allowed to use the Volley Serve at events. The Drop Serve is not permitted. Any serve that touches the net and lands in the appropriate service area will be considered a Let and re-served. The ball release must be visible to the referee and will be re-served if not visible.

A. Service Faults

Service faults are at the referee’s discretion and will not be challengeable by teams. If a referee identifies a fault in one of the service criteria for Volley Serves, they will stop play immediately. Service warnings will not be issued, and all service faults will result in a side out or second serve.

9) TIMEOUTS

Teams will receive one (1) timeout per game. Timeouts will be up to one (1) minute, or longer depending on broadcasting/live streaming. Team Captains can make a timeout request, but the players on court must confirm they want to use it before the referee will proceed.

A. Medical Timeout

Each player is allotted one (1) medical timeout per match. A player/team that takes a medical timeout without a valid medical condition will be penalized with a Foul (Orange Card), resulting in one (1) point awarded to the opponent.

A medical timeout begins when tournament medical/trainer personnel arrive at the court to render aid. The permitted time is as follows:

- On-court evaluation and treatment: Three (3) minutes total.
- Treatment occurring off the playing surface or to control bleeding: An Additional two (2) minutes, for a total of five (5) minutes.

B. Broadcast Timeout

Additional timeouts may be implemented during a game for broadcasting or live streaming.

C. Other Timeouts

Additional timeouts may be implemented during a game to address equipment issues, referee or fan injury, or for any other reason deemed necessary by the League.

10) VIDEO CHALLENGES & LINE REVIEWS

Timeouts may be used as a timeout or converted to a Video Challenge or Line Review. Only the rally-losing team may request a Video Challenge or Line Review.

A team's Captain is the only one who can request a Video Challenge or Line Review. Players on court may consult with their Captain in deciding whether or not to use a challenge, provided that consultation does not result in any significant delay in the flow of the game.

The League shall determine whether and to what extent Video Challenges and Line Reviews will be used at each event.

A. Video Challenge

There will not be a penalty assessed if a team has a timeout available and they lose a challenge. A Mark (Blue Card) will be issued if a team loses a video challenge with no timeouts remaining in the game being played. If a Mark (Blue Card) has already been issued during the game, a point will be awarded to the opponent.

If a team opts to challenge a possible missed fault, the Team Captain must clearly identify: 1) The fault, 2) the player who committed it, and 3) the point in time during the rally that it happened. If a team is unable to clearly identify these items in a timely manner, the challenge will be disregarded and either a Warning or Mark (Blue Card) will be issued for a delay of game.

B. Line Review

Two (2) Line Reviews will be allotted to each team during a game. Line Reviews may be used only for line calls, including: Out calls, IN rulings, and short serves (whether called or not). Line Reviews may not be used for Video Challenges or function as a timeout.

When an OUT call is reviewed: If the call stands, the challenging team is penalized, and if the call is overturned, the team making the incorrect OUT call is penalized.

11) LINE CALLING

Players on court must make an OUT call either verbally or with a finger towards the sideline or baseline. All OUT calls must be made prior to the ball being hit by the opponent or before the ball becomes dead. All players or team representatives on the sideline should not call OUT balls during a live rally. Team sidelines that make an OUT call during a live rally are subject to a Mark (Blue Card) or Foul (Orange Card) if the call impacted the rally.

If players on court did not make a play on a rally ending ball or see where it landed, the players or team representatives on the sideline will be allowed to make an OUT call after the ball is dead. In this scenario, if the sideline saw the ball OUT they can call it quickly, and the players on court will need to confirm the OUT call with an immediate verbal call or finger. If neither the players on court or the sideline make an OUT call, the ball will be declared IN.

IN calls need no verbal call, but can be indicated with a flat hand out towards the court. If one player on court calls a ball IN and their partner calls it OUT, the ball will be declared IN.

12) SANCTIONS

Referees may give a Warning, Mark (Blue Card), or Foul (Orange Card) for inappropriate behavior during a match. The referee is empowered to issue any of the Warnings or Cards at their discretion depending on the severity of the offense. These penalties do not result in a loss of rally. All Warnings, Marks (Blue Card), and Fouls (Orange Card) will be carried over between games (including the DreamBreaker™). If a team is issued a Mark (Blue Card) or Foul (Orange Card) between games, the offending team will begin the next game with the penalty (and associated point penalty if required).

A. Mark (Blue Card)

A Mark (Blue Card) may be issued regardless of existing Marks (Blue Card) or Fouls (Orange Card). Once a Mark (Blue Card) or Foul (Orange Card) has been issued, any subsequent Marks (Blue Card) shall result in a point awarded to the opposing team.

B. Foul (Orange Card)

Fouls (Orange Card) are issued at the time of the offense and recorded as an addition of one (1) point for the non-offending team. A referee can issue a Foul (Orange Card) without having prior issued a Mark (Blue Card). There is no limit to the number of Fouls (Orange Card) a team is issued during a game.

13) PLAYER CONDUCT & COACHING

Team sidelines at each event will include a player bench (reserved for the two players actively playing in each game) and eight (8) sideline chairs. Teams may use sideline chairs for rostered players not actively playing in each game, team representatives (GM, coach, owner, etc.) and team guests. Team representatives and guests are not permitted to sit on the player bench at any time. All persons on a team sideline or player bench must remain seated while the ball is live. The League reserves the right to reduce the number of chairs for team representatives during any event to ensure safety and maintain an organized professional environment.

Coaching by teammates and team representatives (owner, GM, coach, etc.) on the sideline is allowed when the ball is not in play (dead ball), as long as it does not interfere with continuous play or unfairly disrupt the opposing team. Any behavior from team representatives on the sideline that impact play are subject to distraction fault calls and cannot be challenged. Players and team representatives on the sidelines shall refrain from using electronic devices at any point during a match. Use of electronic devices is prohibited, except when permission is granted from the League, and subject to a Mark (Blue Card) or Foul (Orange Card) or escalated to fines from the League. Any team requests for the Head of Competition to verify a call will be issued an Orange Card if the Lead Referee is correct in their ruling.

Any player that damages their paddle during a game will need to find a replacement paddle among those

already at court that have been tested and approved. If a player cannot replace their paddle with another tested and approved paddle, they will forfeit the game. Egregious actions beyond what the referee can address with a Mark (Blue Card) or Foul (Orange Card) will be dealt with by the League.

During end changes and timeouts, teams should meet at their sideline or bench and not step onto the court. The court is defined as the area inside the outer dimensions of the baselines and sidelines. Players or team representatives should not step beyond the imaginary extension of the sideline or the imaginary extension of the Non-Volley Zone line to respect the referee's area. The Team Captain is the only team representative that may approach the referee during a match. Warnings, Marks (Blue Card) and Fouls (Orange Card) shall apply for not complying.

14) INJURIES

If an injury is to occur during an MLP event, teams will first be required to use one of their rostered players as a replacement. If a team does not have a rostered player in attendance, they will be allowed to select an on-site alternate provided by the League.

If a team's rostered player (or an on-site alternate) is brought in mid-match, they must play in all team matches for the remainder of that day, in addition to all team matches on the following day (*for example, a player serving as a mid-match injury replacement on Thursday must also play all Friday matches*). Any team that uses an on-site alternate will be penalized one point in each game the alternate begins play in.

If a team's rostered player is scheduled to play in one match, but does not begin the match due to illness, injury, etc, the team can sub in another rostered player (or on-site alternate with point penalty) and the original player will be eligible to play the following day. If a rostered player is scheduled to play in two matches in a day but does not begin the first match due to illness, injury, etc. the team can sub in another rostered player (or on-site alternate with point penalty) and the original player must sit both matches for the day but will be eligible to play the following day.

If a player elects to not play in a DreamBreaker™ due to injury (but has played gender and mixed doubles), and chooses to use an on-site alternate, they will begin the DreamBreaker™ with a 2 point penalty in which the opposing team will begin the game 2-0. The first two players in the DreamBreaker™ lineup will only play two rallies in this scenario. The injury replacement will fill in for the player's DreamBreaker™ spot and there will be no rearranging of player order.

Between events, if a team has two rostered players of the same gender that are injured, ill or unable to attend, that team will be allowed to make a selection of **one** player from the available pool of UPA contracted players to participate during the event. The acquired player will be released after the event and available for pickup by another team for the next event. Any team that uses a substitute player from the UPA player pool will not receive a point penalty during matches. Player loans between teams are not permitted.

Teams will have one Injured Reserve (IR) slot where a player can be placed and the team will maintain the rights to keep that player. If a player is placed on IR, they are ineligible to be traded or return to play for the remainder of the season. Teams can pick up a player as an IR replacement, though that player must come from the player pool of UPA contracted players not currently on an MLP roster. Players picked up as IR replacements will not receive a point penalty during matches. Players picked up as IR replacements are ineligible to be traded during the season.

In all scenarios around injuries, a team will be required to provide four players (two men, two women) for a scheduled match. The league will aim to avoid any rescheduling of matches as it pertains to injuries or absences for a team. If a team is unable to provide a roster of players to compete, the league will step in and provide available alternates for the match.

15) 2026 RULE CHANGE SUMMARY

The items below have been listed for ease of reference and identify key rule changes from the 2025 to 2026 MLP season.

- Only the Team Captain (not all players) is required to arrive at court no later than 5 minutes of the scheduled start time to avoid forfeiting coin toss selections. *Section 2, page 4*
- If coin toss selections have been made but player tardiness creates a delay in the start of a game, the offending team will lose their timeout in that game. Further delays will result in a point penalty, with a point being issued to the opponent at every four (4) minutes that players have not arrived to begin the game. *Section 2, page 4*
- The DreamBreaker™ lineup (if needed) will be submitted during a match after the second mixed game directly to the Lead Referee. *Section 3, page 4 and Section 7, page 5*
- During regular season pool play, if a team is up 3-0, the Away team will be given the opportunity to adjust their lineup in the fourth game (Mixed 2). The Home team will then have the chance to respond to the new lineup. If the Away team does not choose to adjust their lineup, the Home team will still be able to adjust. Any lineup changes will prohibit the same players who played in the Mixed 1 game from playing in the Mixed 2 game. *Section 3, page 4*
- Service warnings will not be issued. All service faults will result in a side-out or second serve. *Section 8, page 5*
- Teams will receive one timeout per game that can also be used as a Video Challenge, or Line Review when no Line Reviews are remaining. *Section 9 & 10, page 6*
- Teams will be issued two (2) Line Reviews in each game. *Section 10, page 6*
- No penalty will be assessed if a team has a timeout available and they lose a Video Challenge. A Mark (Blue Card) will be issued if a team loses a Challenge with no timeouts remaining in the game being played. If a Mark (Blue Card) has already been issued during the game, a point will be awarded to the opponent. *Section 10, page 6*
- Players and team representatives on the sidelines shall refrain from using electronic devices at any point during a match. Use of electronic devices is prohibited, except when permission is granted from the League, and subject to a Mark (Blue Card) or Foul (Orange Card) or escalated to fines from the League. *Section 13, page 8*
- Any team using an on-site alternate will be penalized one point in each game the alternate begins play in. *Section 14, page 9*

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