The Refinery Fieldhouse - Volleyball Rule Interpretations & League Guidelines

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INTRODUCTION & PHILOSOPHY

Welcome to The Refinery Fieldhouse Volleyball Program. Our mission is to provide a high-level recreational experience that borders full competitive play, while maintaining an unwavering focus on athlete development, skill acquisition, and participant-friendly environments.

These rule interpretations are built directly upon the foundation of **USA Volleyball (USAV) Domestic Competition Regulations**. By aligning with USAV standards, we ensure our athletes, coaches, and officials are fully prepared for eventual participation in USAV-sanctioned tournaments. Where necessary, specific developmental modifications have been integrated for younger age groups to promote longer rallies, build confidence, and ensure safety.

SECTION A: GENERAL RULES & GOVERNANCE

A-1. Governing Rules: All matches will be governed by the current USA Volleyball Indoor Rules. In cases not specifically covered by these interpretations, the official USAV rules and casebook interpretations will apply.
A-2. Spirit of the Game: Volleyball is a developmental sport. While competitive integrity is paramount, officials and coaches are encouraged to prioritize teachable moments, especially in the 8U–12U divisions, without compromising the safety or fairness of the match.
A-3. Roster & Eligibility: Rosters are locked once submitted. To prepare for sanctioned play, all participants are strongly encouraged to maintain active USA Volleyball memberships.
A-4. Final Decisions: The Refinery Fieldhouse Tournament Director and Head Referee retain the authority to make final decisions on all rule interpretations and match-day disputes.
A-5. Forfeits: A team failing to appear on the court with the minimum required players within 10 minutes of the scheduled start time will forfeit the match. The score will be recorded as 25-0, 25-0.

- Three players or less will be considered a forfeit. Teams may play with an all women line-up if desired but not an all-men line-up to count toward teams' record.
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SECTION B: AGE GROUPS AND DIVISIONS

To ensure appropriate developmental progression, leagues are divided into the following age categories. Divisions are offered for **Girls/Women**, **Boys/Men**, and **Co-Ed**.

- **8U & 10U (Developmental Focus):** Emphasis on fundamental skill acquisition, modified court dimensions, and lighter balls to protect developing joints and encourage proper mechanics.

- **12U (Transitional Focus):** Introduction to full-court dimensions, standard youth net heights, and more complex tactical rotations (e.g., 6-2 or 5-1 systems).
- **13U–17U (Competitive Focus):** Near-full competitive rules mirroring high school and USAV Junior National Championship standards.
- **18+ (Adult Competitive):** Full USAV regulations apply, with an emphasis on high-level, fast-paced competition.

SECTION C: EQUIPMENT, COURT, AND UNIFORMS

C-1. Court Dimensions:

- **Standard (12U and older):** 18m x 9m (59’ x 29’6”).
- **Modified 10U:** 16m x 9m (52’6” x 29’6”) to promote longer rallies and reduce overwhelming court coverage.
- **Modified 8U:** 14m x 9m (46’ x 29’6”) or cross-court play, at the league director’s discretion.

C-2. Net Heights (Strict USAV Standards):

- **10U & Under:** Girls: 6’6” (1.98m) | Boys: 7’0” (2.13m)
- **11U–12U:** Girls & Boys: 7’0” (2.13m)
- **13U–14U:** Girls & Boys: 7’4 ⅛” (2.24m)
- **15U–18U:** Girls: 7’4 ⅛” (2.24m) | Boys: 7’11 ⅝” (2.43m)
- **18+ Adult:** Women: 7’4 ⅛” (2.24m) | Men: 7’11 ⅝” (2.43m) | Co-Ed 7’11 ⅝” (2.43m)

C-3. Ball Specifications:

- **12U & Under:** A "light" youth volleyball is mandatory. It must have the standard circumference (65–67 cm / 25.6”–26.4”) but a reduced weight of 198–227g (7–8 oz) to prevent arm fatigue and encourage proper hitting form.
- **13U & Older / Adult:** Standard weight indoor volleyball (260–280g / 9–10 oz).

C-4. Uniforms & Safety:

- Players must wear numbered jerseys (1–99). Matching uniforms are encouraged for team identity but not strictly enforced in recreational tiers.
- **Jewelry:** No jewelry (including rings, necklaces, or hard hair accessories) is permitted during play, per USAV safety protocols. Medical alert bracelets may be worn if taped securely.

- Knee pads are highly recommended for all age groups.

SECTION D: SERVICE

D-1. Service Order: Teams must adhere to the rotational serving order submitted on the pre-match lineup card.
D-2. Service Area: The server must contact the ball from behind the end line and between the sideline extensions.
D-3. Developmental Service Modification (8U & 10U): To encourage participation and reduce service errors, league directors may permit a forward service line (e.g., 10 feet inside the end line) or allow one "re-serve" per rotation for players struggling to clear the net.
D-4. Screening: In alignment with USAV rules, players on the serving team are forbidden from raising their hands above their heads, waving arms, or grouping tightly to obscure the receiver's view of the server until the ball has passed beyond the net.

SECTION E: PLAYING THE BALL

E-1. Legal Hits: The ball may contact any part of the body. A team is allowed a maximum of three (3) contacts to return the ball over the net. A block does not count as a team contact.
E-2. Double Contact:

- *First Team Contact:* Multiple contacts by a single player are permitted if they occur during a single, continuous action (e.g., absorbing a hard-driven spike).
- *Second/Third Team Contact:* Double contacts (e.g., spinning the ball on an overhead set) will be called strictly in 13U–18+ divisions. In 8U–12U, referees will use discretion, prioritizing flow and development over marginal technical faults.
  E-3. Net Play: A player may not touch the net during the action of playing the ball. Reaching over the net is permitted only after the opponent has completed their attack hit, or if the ball is entirely on the player's side of the net.
  E-4. Center Line: Crossing the center line is a fault *only* if the entire foot or hand is over the line and interferes with the opponent's play or creates a safety hazard.

SECTION F: SCORING

F-1. Rally Scoring: A point is awarded on every rally, regardless of which team served.
F-2. Match Format: Matches will be played as best 2-out-of-3 sets.

- **Sets 1 & 2:** Played to 25 points, must win by 2 points.

- **Set 3 (if necessary):** Played to 15 points, must win by 2 points.
  F-3. Developmental Scoring Modification (8U & 10U): To manage tournament time and maintain engagement, sets may be played to 15 or 21 points (win by 2), or utilize a "time-cap" (e.g., 20 minutes per set) at the league director's discretion.
  F-4. Time-Outs: Each team is allowed two (2) time-outs per set, lasting 60 seconds each.

SECTION G: SUBSTITUTIONS

G-1. USAV Standard: A maximum of fifteen (15) substitutions are permitted per team, per set.
G-2. Re-Entry Rules: A starting player who is substituted out may re-enter the set *only once*, and must return to their original position in the serving rotation. A substitute who enters for a starter cannot be substituted out for another player in the same set.
G-3. Developmental Philosophy: While the rules permit strategic substitution, Refinery Fieldhouse coaches are strongly encouraged to utilize substitutions to ensure equitable playing time for all rostered athletes, particularly in the 8U–12U divisions.

SECTION H: CO-ED LEAGUE SPECIFIC MODIFICATIONS

To ensure balanced, competitive, and participant-friendly play in Co-Ed divisions, the following modifications supersede standard single-gender rules:
H-1. Court Composition: Teams must maintain strict gender parity on the court at all times (e.g., 3 males / 3 females for 6v6, or 4 males / 4 females for 8v8).
H-2. Serving Rotation: The serving rotation must alternate genders (e.g., Male-Female-Male-Female-Male-Female). If a team is short for a player of a specific gender, they will rotate with an "empty" spot in the lineup, resulting in an automatic point for the opposing team when that rotation spot serves.
H-3. Net Height: Co-Ed net height defaults to the **Men's/Boys standard** for the respective age group (e.g., 7'11 ⅝" for 18+, 7'4 ⅛" for 13U–14U) to maintain competitive integrity, unless otherwise specified by league administration for a specific developmental tier.
H-4. Female Contact Rule: A team is allowed a maximum of three (3) contacts to return the ball over the net.

- If a team uses **all three (3) contacts**, at least one (1) of those contacts must be made by a female player.
- If a team returns the ball in **one (1) or two (2) contacts**, there is no gender requirement for those contacts.
- **Clarifications:** Any touch of the ball counts as a contact. A block does not count as one of the three team contacts, and a female block does *not* satisfy the female contact requirement.

SECTION I: DEVELOPMENT & PARTICIPANT-FRIENDLY FOCUS

I-1. Officiating Philosophy: Referees at The Refinery Fieldhouse are trained to enforce rules consistently but with an educational lens. In 8U–12U matches, referees may briefly explain a call (e.g., "That was a double contact on the set") to help players learn, provided it does not delay the match.
I-2. Code of Conduct: We maintain a **zero-tolerance policy** for unsporting conduct, verbal abuse, or harassment directed at officials, opponents, or spectators. Violations will result in immediate sanctions (yellow/red cards) and potential removal from the facility.
I-3. Positive Coaching: Coaches are expected to praise effort and skill execution over mere outcomes. "Mistakes are opportunities to teach."
I-4. Injury & Safety Protocol: Play stops immediately for any injury. Blood rules (mandatory removal and uniform change) and CDC Concussion Guidelines will be strictly enforced. No player with a hard, unpadded cast may participate.

SECTION J: REFERENCES & HYPERLINKS

For additional context, detailed case studies, and official governance, please refer to the following resources:

- **Primary Rulebook:** USA Volleyball 2025–2027 Indoor Rules Book
- **Official Casebook & Interpretations:** USAV Rules Interpretations & Casebook *(Note: Link provided for direct access to sanctioned scenario rulings)*
- **Simplified Youth Rules:** USAV Youth Development Guidelines