

ONE-WALL RULES QUESTIONS

(last updated 04/16/02)

#1 Ray Lopez, Brooklyn, NY

I have a problem with my opponents calling screen serves. While serving I position myself just behind the short line where it meets the left side line. I don't run into a problem when I serve cross court to the right. When I see my opponent guarding against my favorite serve I go to plan B. Plan B is a serve straight up the left side line in front of myself. I'm sure that the ball is visible at all times, yet many players call it a screen. A friend has told me that screen calls do not exist in one-wall handball. Is he correct? If so which rules would cover this situation?

Answer #1

Firstly, your friend is 100% correct. The screen exists only in three and four-wall handball. In one-wall you are allowed to hide the ball from your opponents view. The one-wall term paralleling the screen serve is the hinder serve (see 4.3A1). The penalties as stated in 4.3B6 are identical. Two consecutive hinder serves result in a fault. With the exception of a straddle ball (see 4.3A2) the hinder serve is called the same way as a hinder during the rally. Hinder calls are based on interference and should not be made too quickly. If there is initial interference but the receiver still has time to get into good position, so that the momentary hinder will not affect the play, a hinder should not be called. The receiver gets the benefit of the doubt. This does not seem like a hinder serve. I have a feeling that your serve is difficult to return and your opponent's are taking the easy way out. I'd be careful to watch my foot faults. That might be your opponent's next line of defense.

#2 Fred Sylvania, Elmont, NY

I've incorporated the "legal" hinder into my game. The problem that arises is that my opponents think that I can stand still only when I'm closer to the wall. I'm under the impression that they are not entitled to a hinder unless I'm standing further from the wall than they are. Who is right? According to rule 4.7B1 which reads "If a player attempting to play a ball is interfered with by an opponent, who after his side has played the ball, was perfectly still in front of or aside of the player it is NOT a hinder...It is the duty of the man further from the wall to get out of the way."

Answer #2

You are correct. These situations usually aren't as cut and dry as they seem. A seasoned opponent will attempt to get a backswing hinder (see 4.7A5) or play the ball from behind you. The second choice will result in the blocker having to make a choice between moving and causing a hinder, or standing still and possibly being struck by the ball. Years ago players found a loophole in rule 4.6L and would tap the ball into their opponent to get a dead ball hinder. Recently this loophole has been plugged. Rule 4.7A2 states that if the referee feels that the shot obviously would not have been fair, on both the floor and the wall,

the player who was hit by the shot will be awarded the rally. If there is any doubt in the official's mind, a dead ball hinder will be called.

#3 Rudy Rudell, Tamarack, Florida

While rebuilding the one-wall courts in Coney Island the workers left a slight imperfection behind the short line. In addition, both the short and long lines were made as expansion joints and filled with tar which has swelled due to the heat. A serve rebounding just past the short line it may deviate slightly and when the ball strikes the expansion joints, which may be raised about 1/2", an erratic bounce may result. Why aren't these played as court hinders?

Answer #3

These can be played as court hinders (see 4.7A1). In the interest of fairness the court hinders should be explained to all players before the match starts. The reason that the area past the short is not played as a court hinder is that the deviation is usually a hook and not an erratic bounce. Since the short line may be raised it becomes very difficult for a low hard serve to clear the line by a hair. In my opinion the short line is a "black and white" call and therefore the most sensible way to go. The expansion joints may cause an occasional erratic bounce but playing them as court hinders can cause bigger problems. These type of court hinders require that a judgement call be made. I've seen this attempted and invariably recinded. Too many arguments ensue. The best house rule I've seen, in regard to the expansion joints, is that any legal serve striking the long line will be played as a dead ball hinder. This is a good compromise because the receiver usually has a chance to return this serve. The worst house rule I've seen, regarding these expansion joints, is that any serve that deviates near the short line is a fault. Why call a potential ace short?

#4 Angel Marquez, Bronx, NY

While playing in a tournament I served deep at my opponent's feet. The ball landed squarely on the long line but the linesman called it long. I appealed to the referee but he did not change the call. Doesn't he have the power to substitute his call?

Answer #4

Yes, the referee can substitute his call for the linesman's (see 3.5B). In addition, the referee may appeal to the linesmen if he is uncertain of his own call (see 3.6B). In either case the referee may then reverse or nullify it. The outcome may result in a fault, a point, a handout, or a replay. For specific situations that might arise refer to rule 3.6A. In most cases the referee will only substitute his call if the linesman was uncertain and/or obviously incorrect. You would be hard pressed to find a referee who would substitute his call on a close play if the linesman assured him that the call was indeed correct.

#5 Mike Falcis, Queens, NY

While officiating a match on an extremely humid day the ball would frequently skid on the floor. To compound the problem we were near the beach and the floor was sandy. How should I have handled this problem?

Answer #5

There are a few steps you could have taken to improve the situation. Firstly, make frequent

inspections of the ball and the players gloves to assure that both are dry. Inform the players that under 4.6I "deliberately wetting the ball results in an out or point". Secondly, get a broom and sweep off the court whenever there is a break in the action. This will be easier than trying to determine if there should be a replay (see 4.7A1). Thirdly, inform the players that balls which skid on the floor may result in a replay. You'll have a much easier time once the sand has been removed and the players realize that some of their good shots may wind up being replayed.

#6 Eduardo Maisonet, Queens, NY

While playing, at the one-wall courts in Far Rockaway, it seemed as if my opponent was taking more than 10 seconds to serve the ball. He explained to me that he may be entitled to additional time before the referee calls the score, and that he can not serve until the score is called. This seems like it could amount to quite alot of time. If he is correct what can I do to cut down this time?

Answer #6

Your opponent was right on both counts (see rule 4.1). After the rally is over, the referee should immediately call "point" or "side out". The receiver than has 10 seconds to assume his ready position, but the serve should only have "reasonable time" to get set. Remember when playing outdoors it may take a while to retrieve a ball that has been lost in the bushes, etc.. The server should not be allowed to stall by slowly retrieving the ball. As soon as the receiver is "ready" and the server has had a reasonable time to retrieve the ball, the referee should call the score, at which time the server has 10 seconds in which to make contact with his service attempt. If the receiver is in his ready position and the referee beleives that the server is taking too much time retrieving the ball and assuming his serving position, the referee should call the score. The server will then have 10 seconds in which to serve. If the receiver is not in his ready position after 10 seconds have elapsed from the time the referee calls "point" or "side out", the referee should call the score and the server may serve immediately or take up to 10 seconds, whether or not the receiver is ready. The best way to cut down on time between serves is to assume your position as quickly as possible. It may also help to check that the referee is familiar with this rule before the match begins.

#7 Eduardo Maisonet, Queens, NY

The score was 0-0 in the tiebreaker when the match had to be delayed due to rain. I wanted to start the match over but my opponent, and the tournament director, insisted that the action pick up just where it stopped. Is there a rule governing this situation?

Answer #7

Actually I'm glad that you asked this question because in searching the 1993 one-wall rule book I couldn't find it. During the latest printing this rule must have been deleted by mistake. Luckily I keep copies of the old rule books and was able to locate this rule. Postponed by referee, which should have been listed as 4.10E, reads "any games postponed by the referee (due to the weather) shall be resumed with the same score". It turns out that your opponent, and the tournament director, were correct. It tough to restart that late in the match but that how it must be.

#8 Angel Marquez, Bronx, NY

At 9-9 in the tiebreaker I served what I thought would be a unreturnable ball and yelled "ace". My opponent did reach the ball on one bounce but did not return it legally. At this point the receiver argued with the referee that an avoidable hinder should be called. He reminded the official that as the receiver he deserved the benefit of the doubt. The referee would not budge and gave me the point. My opponent wants to know what should have happened?

Answer #8

This is a situation that requires a judgement to be made by the referee. Rule 4.8F states that any avoidable distraction or intimidation that would interfere with the offensive player, or team, would be an avoidable hinder. interpretation 17 informs us that players can not say anything while an opponent is playing the ball. Teammates may talk to each other only when it is their turn to hit the ball. If the referee believes that such behavior is distracting enough to the opponent as to affect his play, an avoidable hinder should be called. This is a real tough one and I'm sure that if the official let the call stand he must have felt very strongly that the receiver was not distracted despite what occurred. Lastly as a word of advice, keep quite until the ball bounces twice. Instead of serving for the match you could have been receiving at 9-9.

#9 Richie Spataro, Long Island, NY

While playing in a doubles match one of my opponents called a backswing hinder and then I was struck by the ball before the second bounce. My opponent told me that his side wins the rally because I got hit. I thought that a hinder stops all play. Why should I be out?

Answer #9

A hinder call stops the play and USUALLY voids any situation that follows, such as the ball hitting a player who stopped playing because of the call. However if, the call was NOT responsible for the player being hit by the ball it will be a point or handout.

#10 Ervin Irizarry, Bronx, NY

While Playing doubles I crossed the imaginary service line to return a lob serve. My opponent insisted that his team was entitled to a point. My partner disagreed but didn't feel like arguing because we were up 3-15. After we won the game I forgot to ask my partner to explain the rule to me. Maybe you could set me straight. What is the rule?

Answer #10

The receiver(s) must stand in back of the service line until the ball, from the wall, passes the short line. any violation results in a point for the server.

#11 Emmitt Fitzpatrick, Queens, NY

My opponent returned the serve, I swung at and completely missed the ball which then landed off the court. My opponent argued that it should be a handout because I missed the ball before it landed outside the playing zone. I know that I'm entitled to the point. My opponent refuses to admit that he was wrong and needs to see it in print.

Answer #11

Any ball in play, after the service, striking outside the sidelines or past the longline, is an out or point. during tournament play, the players should not catch balls they assume to be out. The referee will award an out or point.

#12 Buddy Gantt, Brooklyn, NY

I frequently play against opponents who yell "good" or "out" while I'm playing the ball. They are attempting to trick me into hitting a ball which may land outside or vice versa. We usually get into an argument and wind up playing it a dead ball. How should they be penalized?

Answer #12

The penalty should be an avoidable hinder. A player can not say anything while an opponent is playing the ball. This is also true in doubles. Teammates may talk to each other when it is their turn to hit the ball, but can not talk when it is the opponent's turn to hit the ball. Sometimes a player will verbally reprimand himself after hitting a poor shot while the rally is still in progress. If the referee believes such behavior is distracting enough to the opponent as to affect his play, an avoidable hinder should be called.

#13 Mike Rosner Brooklyn, N.Y.

While participating in the Junior doubles final of the U.S.H.A. One-Wall Nationals I noticed that the server's foot was extending outside of the service zone. During a time out I asked the linesman why he was not calling these foot faults. The referee overheard the discussion and showed me a one-wall rule book which stated that the foot may not TOUCH outside of the service zone. I went home and checked the rule book I have at home, it uses EXTEND. What is the reason for this?

Answer #13

STEPPING OUTSIDE, rule 6.1d of the One-Wall Unified Playing Rules, used EXTEND, and made reference to the fact that stepping ON (but not beyond) any line of the service zone was permitted. In my opinion this lead to the interpretation that the server's foot must actually TOUCH outside of the service zone for the linesman to call "foot fault". When the one-wall rule book was republished in 1991, EXTEND was replaced by TOUCH to insure that the wording agreed with the popular interpretation. The Rules Committee agreed that in order to avoid confusion rules which are in common to all forms of handball should be worded and interpreted identically. In the current One-Wall Rule Book, under rule 4.1C Place, you will find that EXTEND was replaced by TOUCH. Also, the phrase about being allowed to step on (but not beyond) any line of the service zone has been deleted. Now the rule is worded and interpreted identically.

#14 Abe Mantell, Long Island, N.Y.

While playing singles against Henry I served the ball close to myself and stood still. My opponent claimed that the serve was illegal because it had passed within 18 inches of my body. I had never heard of this but since Henry seemed sure we decided to play the serve as a dead ball. Was there a rule change that I'm not aware of?

Answer #14

No there was not. Henry is wrong, at least when it comes to one-wall handball. This may be a rule pertaining to screen serves in paddleball or racquetball. It seems that the erroneous use of the term screen serve has confused many players. As you know "screens" are allowed in one-wall handball and the correct term is "hinder serve". As the name implies the proper time to make this call is when MOVEMENT by the serving side has hindered the receiving side's attempt to return the ball. This call, like any other hinder, is based on interference affecting the play. If there is initial interference, but the receiver still has time to get into good position, a hinder should not be called. In such a case the referee should not make his call to quickly. he should watch the reaction of the receiver. The receiver should be given the benefit of any doubt, as long as he is properly positioned. The exception is when the served ball, from the wall, passes through the SERVER'S legs. In this case the hinder is automatic. The penalties for screen and hinder serves are identical. Two CONSECUTIVE violations result in a fault.

#15 Artie "Butterhup" Cussell, Brooklyn, N.Y.

While playing doubles on the one-wall courts at Brighton Beach an opponent hit a ball that struck the wall in fair territory and then hit my partner, who was positioned outside of the playing zone, on a fly. I know that under normal circumstances my team should lose the rally, but the ball was obviously going to land outside. I thought the rule was changed but the other players agreed with my opponent's opinion that my side still loses the rally. Is this true?

Answer #15

Yes it is. Except as provided in rule 4.7A2, any touching of a ball before it touches the floor a second time by a player other than the one making a return is a point or out against the offending side. Furthermore, during tournament play, the players must not catch balls that they assume to be out. Referee will award an out or point (see 4.6G & H). I think that you were a little confused. The rule that was recently changed pertains to the ball hitting an opponent on the way to the wall (see 4.7A2).

#16 Daniel Zimet, Philadelphia, PA

A dispute I have frequently been confronted with as a player and a referee is distinguishing if or when a follow through can constitute a hinder. As a common example consider hitting a passing-shot through the center when your opponent is on your left side. When hit hard it is not unusual for the offensive player to be continuing his follow through as the ball is passing his body. The receiver seems to have a good argument that this movement creates a distraction, block the path to the ball, and or obstructs his vision. If your movement is only a continuation of your natural swing, can your opponent call a hinder? Could the proximity to the ball or the position of the receiver make a difference?

Answer #16

There are many instances where a cheap hinder can be called based on the movement during the follow through. Are there times when the receiver is entitled to a legitimate hinder? This argument has come up more than usual recently...Please advise!! Assuming that the opponent who has just struck the ball did NOT execute a "legal hinder", by standing still in

front or aside of the receiver (see 4.7B1), the \$64,000 question is "was there interference affecting the play?". If the ball is judged to be unretrievable, a hinder should NOT be called no matter what kind of interference takes place. However, if the referee is in doubt, the benefit of that doubt should go to the player attempting to retrieve the ball and the hinder should be called.

#17 Charlie Sheldon, Queens, NY

I noticed that "safety holdup" is listed in the 1-wall rulebook. I was under the impression that this rule had been omitted from the 1-wall rules. Please clear up the confusion.

Answer #17

Many years ago the "safety hinder" was added to the 1-wall rulebook. It covered the situation of a receiver playing a ball that was passing between his opponent's legs. Opponents of this rule argued successfully that this situation was no more dangerous than having to play a ball passing close to an opponent's head. In addition, it violated the basic right of a player to legally block his opponent(s). Lastly, the player could choose to avoid the risk by moving and thereby creating a hinder. Within a short period of time the "safety hinder" was dropped from the rulebook. In recent years the "safety holdup" was added to the rulebook. It addresses the other side of the coin. Mainly, the safety of the player striking the ball. It covers the situation of stroke interference during the backswing, foreswing, and follow-through. A player about to execute a return may immediately stop play and request a hinder. The referee may grant the hinder if the holdup was reasonable and the player otherwise might have been able to return the ball. The referee can call an avoidable hinder if warranted (see 4.8G). The "safety holdup" does not affect the rules on legal hinders.

#18 Dan Silva, Brooklyn, NY

While playing, in the Mayor's Cup tournament, I drove the ball past my opponent and subsequently was struck by the ball before it bounced twice. I was under the impression that since my opponent clearly had no chance to return the ball I would be awarded the rally. The referee disagreed with me. Who is correct?

Answer #18

The referee made the right call. This rule has not been changed because the feeling is that the additional judgement calls create additional problems. Do NOT get hit by the ball and you will not have a problem.

#19 Howie Kadish, Roslyn, NY

The rally ended, and the referee called the score. My partner stepped into the service zone and realized that the ball was broken. Our opponents argued that since the previous rally had ended it's result stands. Please settle the dispute.

Answer #19

According to the rulebook "once a succeeding serve is attempted, the previous rally stands".

#20 Dori Ten, Brooklyn, NY

While refereeing a 1-wall match, a player's hat flew off her head and landed outside the

playing area. I know that a hat is considered non-essential equipment. Since the hat did NOT interfere with the play or the safety of the players I allowed them to continue playing. Did I do the right thing?

Answer #20

Since the hat did NOT interfere with the play or the safety of the players you did make the proper decision. If properly worn essential equipment, or a foreign object, or any other outside interference occurs, the referee shall stop the rally if it interferes with the continuance of play or poses an immediate danger. However, safety permitting, one rally ending attempt should be allowed.

#21 Cesar Sala, Brooklyn, NY

While playing in the USHA/ICHA 1-Wall Junior Nationals, my opponent hit a shot which angled off the court. I managed to make the return, despite the fact that there was spectator interference, and run back into the playing zone. My reward was having my opponent hit a sharper angle back into the crowd. This time I didn't even bother trying to make the retrieve. Shouldn't I have been entitled to a hinder?

Answer #21

You might have been entitled to a hinder on your first attempt. But, since you have left out some important information I can only quote the pertinent rules. After reading their interpretation you will have to try to decide whether or not the correct call was made. The referee does have jurisdiction over the spectators, as well as the players, while the match is in progress. If a "non-seated" spectator or official interferes with a player in his attempt to play a ball, it is a hinder. By non-seated we mean not in the area designated for spectators. A good referee will, before the game begins, check with the players to make sure that sufficient playing area has been provided. In addition, the referee will inform the players that they are NOT entitled to an unlimited playing area and will NOT be granted a hinder for interference occurring within the area designated for spectators. In instances where sufficient playing area cannot be provided the players should be notified that in the interest of safety a dead-ball hinder will be granted for interference preventing a player from having a fair chance to see or return the ball.

#22 Allison Wickland, Bronx, NY If my opponent pushes me into the ball am I out?

Answer #22

Let us assume that you, or your partner, has just struck the ball and it is still "in play". By "in play" I mean that it has not been called "out" (see rule 4.6H) by the official. Common sense dictates that (as stated in rule 4.7B2) if a player on the side that has just hit the ball is moved or pushed unintentionally into, or prevented from getting out of the way of, the ball by an opponent trying to play the ball, it is a dead ball hinder.

#23. Cesar Sala, Brooklyn NY - In my effort to return a deep serve, I contact the linesman with my backswing. Am I entitled to a hinder?

Answer #23

From the One-Wall Rulebook: Rule 3.4B1 Spectators. The referee shall have jurisdiction over the spectators, as well as the players, while the match is in progress (See Rule 5.6). A

ball that hits an official or spectator before hitting the wall shall be judged as if it had hit an opponent (See Rule 4.7A2). ***If a "non-seated" spectator or official interferes with a player in his attempt to play a ball, it is a hinder.*** In the interest of safety, when sufficient playing area cannot be provided, the referee may call a dead-ball hinder for interference that prevents a player from having a fair chance to see or return the ball (See Rule 4.7A7).

#24. Tony Roberts, Queens, NY - While playing a doubles match, my opponent drives the ball at his partner who is standing close to the wall. The player jumps up, to avoid being hit by the ball, which passes through his legs. My partner is standing right behind him and manages to make the return which is then killed by our opponent. I know that hinders are not appealable calls but the referee admitted that he thought it was a hinder but wasn't able to make the call, or stop the play before my opponent attempted to hit the next shot, because the situation occurred too quickly.

Answer #24

Our opponents stated that they had expected the ref to call a hinder but the call was not made and play continued. Furthermore they asked "what would have happened if they weren't able to legally return the hindered player's shot?" Can the referee still grant my partner a hinder?

The rules allow the referee to change his call after the rally has stopped.

#25. Charles Manse, Brooklyn NY - The referee called me out for committing an avoidable hinder. When I requested that he appeal the call I was told that this is not an appealable call, and that since he is sure of the call will not confer with the linesmen. My partner refused to take the call and began to verbal abuse and sling profanity at the referee. The referee then told us that if we didn't play ball he would call the score and tell our opponent to serve the ball. My partner still refused to play ball and continued his behavior. The referee then defaulted my team. Was this handled correctly?

Answer #25

Was it handled correctly by whom? Let's look at a few things here. The avoidable is not an appealable call. The referee's call would stand.

A technical should be called whenever a player uses profanity that cannot be heard on major network t.v. A technical is also the right call for "excessive arguing with the referee."

The rulebook states that a match is forfeited when three technicals are called on the same player/team. It also says that a match can be forfeited for flagrant unsportsman-like behavior.

Once a player has been told to play ball and 10 seconds has elapsed, the referee can call the score and the server must serve within 10 seconds.

So, it seems that the technical calls should have preceded the forfeit in this situation.

#26. Glen Winokur, Queens NY - While refereeing a doubles match the serve hit the long line. The linesman called the serve long and the receiver did not make the return. The server questioned the call and the linesman admitted that he had made a mistake and that the ball had indeed hit the long line. What is the proper way to handle this situation?

Answer #26

The line is in play, so the linesman's admission was correct. Referees do make mistakes and the rules say it is OK for referees to change their calls.

The only question to answer in such a situation before telling the server he has two serves is to determine if the serve would have been returnable. If the receiver had no chance to make a return and the referee or linesman's call didn't keep him from attempting to make a return, the server may be awarded a point for an ace. This would be rare since the referee should be sure his call didn't keep the receiver from making a full effort.

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