



GUIDE FOR HANDBALL REFEREES

SOME GENERAL COMMENTS

It is important to understand that in order for a tournament to be successful and run smoothly, it is essential that every participant assist with some of the refereeing duties. In order not to overburden anyone in these duties, the fairest system is to have the "**losers ref.**" The most positive aspect of this system is that a player will referee only once in each event. Every player wants a good referee and every player deserves a good referee. You, the players, are the referees, and because of this, it is your responsibility as a tournament player to become a good referee. Study the rules, and take your refereeing responsibility as serious as you do your own game.

Not everyone can become a good referee at the "open" level of play. It is very difficult (though not impossible) to be a good referee at a skill level of play that is more than one level higher than your own. In other words, as an example, it is difficult for a "C" player to referee an "A" match, although a "B" match should not be difficult for the "C" player to referee. But it is very important that you become a good referee at least at your skill level.

BASIC PHILOSOPHY

The referee is: ***the scorekeeper, the interpreter and enforcer of the rules, the administrator of FAIR and SAFE PLAY.***

The first "Law of Refereeing" is to **KNOW THE RULES**. Most problems that arise during a match are because the referee and/or the players do not know the rules. Read the rule book often and become familiar with where the rules for the various situations are located. Check www.usahandball.org for updates and changes.

The Good Referee:

- **must understand his/her responsibility**
- **have a good knowledge and awareness of the game**
- **be able to exercise a mature judgment in evaluating each play situation**
- **be consistent in the calls**
- **must be fair, courteous, and honest**

The less you talk to the players, the better. Remember, the referee is **NOT** a tyrant and a dictator.

He/she should **NOT** be the center of attention - just the opposite; the referee should be almost invisible. If after a match is over, everyone in the gallery know the referee's name (even people who didn't know it before the match), the referee probably did a poor job.

PRE-MATCH DUTIES

Read Part 3, Rule 3.4 A to become familiar with the pre-match duties of the referee.

Explain the "safety holdup" rule. Also explain how you will call situations of "partial obstruction."

(See page 6 of this guide under "hinders")

Make sure you read and understand Part 3, Rule 3.4D (4.b) in order to know when the match is supposed to start, how long the players get to warm-up, and what the penalties are for late arrivals.

ESTABLISHING THE PACE

The referee must understand the mechanics of refereeing in order to establish the "pace" of the match. Establishing the pace and being consistent will aid in the ability to control the match.

Much of this has to do with when to call "point" or "sideout," and when to call the score. It is also important to understand the "time out" situations.

Under Part 4, Rule 4.1-E (Interpretation No.4):

After the rally is over, the referee should immediately call "point" or "side-out." The receiver then has 10 seconds to assume his ready position, but the server should only have "reasonable time" to get set. 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 reasonable time to retrieve the ball and assume the serving position, 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 believes that the server is taking too much time retrieving the ball and assuming his/her serving position, the referee should call the score. The server will then have 10 seconds in which to serve. (If the serve is not made within 10 seconds, the server is out)

If the receiver is not in his/her 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 may take up to 10 seconds, whether or not the receiver is ready.

The referee will rarely have to "count off" the seconds because, most of the time, the receiver will be in a "ready" position well before 10 seconds have elapsed, and the server will serve well before 10 seconds have elapsed from the time the score is called.

After a fault, "second serve" is the proper call in order for the server to know when his/her 10 seconds begin. In this case, the receiver is NOT allowed 10 seconds to get set.

The receiver is allowed "reasonable time" to get set before "second serve" is announced.

There should be a set pattern in the manner which the score is announced. "12 serving 8" or "12 serves 8" would be correct ways.

It is not necessary to re-call the score after a fault. However, the referee should re-call the score after any hinder or time-out.

After a **"screen"** serve, announce **"first serve, one screen"** or **"second serve, one screen"** (whichever is appropriate). Remember that two consecutive screens is a fault. It is not necessary to re-call the score after a screen.

When a player loses service, the correct call is **"sideout."** When the first player on a doubles team loses service, correct calls could be **"one hand out"** or **"one down"** or **"one out."** **"Sideout"** is the appropriate call when both players on a team have lost service.

Make calls crisp and clear. The speed of the call depends on the situation. Sometimes it is better to **NOT** call some hinders or screen serves too quickly. (More about this later.)

Players are **NOT** allowed to request a towel to wipe their eye guards. Wiping the eye guards may be done within the time frame allowed after a rally is over and before the score is announced.

However due to the nature of our game, it is sometimes necessary to allow the players to wipe up wet spots on the floor. Make sure the players change to dry shirts whenever necessary in order to keep the floor wipes to a minimum.

TIMEOUTS

Each player or team is allowed 3 TIMEOUTS per game and 2 TIMEOUTS in a tie-breaker.

Either the server or the receiver may call time-out.

TIMEOUTS may NOT be called after the referee has called the score or "second serve."

TIMEOUTS may be called consecutively.

TIMEOUTS are 1 minute. **The referee should give players a "20 seconds" warning.**

2 minutes are allowed for a glove change. For other equipment needs, such as changing a shirt or broken shoelaces, etc., 2 minutes is the **MAXIMUM** allowed (try to make this time less if possible). **Again, the referee should give a "20 seconds" warning.**

5 minutes are allowed between games. **The referee should give a "two minute" warning and a "20 seconds" warning.**

When a player or team calls a time-out, check the gloves of the players and have the players change gloves if they are wet or close to being wet enough for a glove change time-out. Allow 2 minutes for this time-out. Also, check the shirts of the players and have them change if necessary.

The method to resume play after a time-out: As soon as the time period has elapsed, announce "time in." Calling "time in" is the same as calling "point" or "sideout" after a rally is over. The receiver has 10 seconds to assume the receiving position and the server has "reasonable time" to assume the serving position. Then announce the score.

If a player is not back in the court when you call "time in," a point is awarded to the opponent of that player. If another minute elapses before the player returns, another point is awarded, and so forth, up

to 9 points. The match is forfeited if the player is 10 minutes late. **It is of utmost importance to give the warning calls, so that this situation can be avoided.**

Remember, it is the players' responsibility to stay within "**earshot**" of the referee so they can hear the time warnings. (Part 3, Rule 3.4 D-4.b)

INJURY

If an injury occurs, write down the exact time when the injury occurred and the exact time when the player resumed play. An injured player shall not be allowed more than a total of 15 minutes of rest in a match. Injury TIMEOUTS are allowed only for injuries which occur accidentally during the match.

CRAMPS ARE NOT INJURIES.

RULE INTERPRETATION PROTESTS

It is the player's right to question a rule interpretation (the protest must be made before the next serve). It's a good idea to have a rule book handy. If the player is discovered to be right in his/her protest, the correct call should be made. **If the player is wrong, the player is charged with a timeout. If the player is out of TIMEOUTS, a "technical" is the call.**

A situation might come up for which there is no specific rule. As the rules (Rule 3.4-F) state:

The referee will rule on all matters not covered in the official rules. The referee, however, can be overruled by the tournament director or rules chairman. If a situation arises for which there is no rule, try to think what would be the FAIREST call. It might be simply calling for a replay.

APPEALS

Appeals can only be made if there are linesmen assisting the referee. Read Part 3, rule 3.5 and 3.6 for information on linesmen duties, appealable calls and how to appeal. .

A player may not appeal a judgment call (or non-call) of a hinder, an avoidable hinder, a technical or a screen serve.

CHANGING YOUR CALL

Remember, a referee can-change his/her call.. If you think you made a bad call, you should change the call. Whenever both players (in singles) or at least 3 players (in doubles) disagree with your call, you should strongly consider changing the call.

There will be times when you may be unsure of the call. A common instance is when a kill shot is attempted, and you are not sure if the ball was good or if it "crotched." In this case, you make the call (point or sideout) after watching the reactions of the players, as quite often, one player will walk to the service area and the other player will walk back to the receiving area. However, if both players walk up to the service area, they obviously disagree on whether the shot was good or bad. If you are not sure, and there are no linesmen to assist you, the proper call would be a "replay."

The players as well as the referee must understand that **FAIR PLAY** is most important. As the rules state, Violations not detected by the referee (such as wrist balls, skip-in kill shot attempts, double bounces, etc.) bounces. etc.) **MUST** be called by the offending player.

CHANGING REFEREES

A player may ask for a change in referees, but the change will not necessarily be made. The referee's chairman or a member of the referee's committee or any Level 5 referee can observe the referee in action and decide whether or not to change the referee. If a change request is made, the player making the request will be charged with a time-out. If the change of referee is made, the time-out will be given back to the player.

If both players or teams request a change, every effort will be made to get a new referee.

TECHNICALS

A "technical" results in a point being deducted from the offending player's score. Three technical violations in a match results in a forfeiture. If a player's behavior is not so severe as to warrant a technical, a "technical warning" may be issued without a point deduction and should be accompanied by a brief explanation of the reason for the warning. Some examples of actions that may result in technicals are:

- **Too frequent complaints made against the referee's judgment.**
- **Abuse of the appeal privileges.**
- **Profanity**

The "F" word is an automatic technical. Other profanities should be judged by the referee. Remember, you can give a "technical warning."

- **A threat of any nature to opponent or referee.**
- **Excessive or hard striking, throwing or kicking of ball between rallies.**

If the opponent is hit or narrowly missed by the ball, a technical should be called. However, if it's the first offense, and the opponent was in no danger of being hit, a technical warning should be the call.

- **Failure to properly wear eye protection (2 violations result in a forfeiture)**

If the referee is doing a proper job, there should never be a technical call because of failure to wear eye protection. Anytime you see a player without properly worn eye guards before a rally begins, tell the player to put them on. A technical should NOT be called in this case. However, if during a rally, you see a player without properly worn eye guards, immediately stop the play and call a technical.

- **Anything considered to be unsportsmanlike behavior**

BROKEN BALL

Under Part 4, Rule 4.6 J (Interpretation No.8):

After a rally has ended, if the referee determines that the ball is broken, the preceding rally shall be played over. It should be pointed out that the ball does not have to be completely broken in order to have the point replayed. A ball that is starting to crack will often have an erratic bounce. The referee should call for a replay only if he determines that a ball has cracked sufficiently to cause an erratic bounce. If a player suspects a ball has cracked, he should immediately toss it to the referee for his inspection. The player should not push or squeeze the ball. This is the referee's responsibility and he will make the replay call if necessary.

Sometimes, a very small crack may be detected. In this case, the referee should try to remember the previous rally and if there was any strange bounce that would indicate that the ball was defective. If the referee does recall a bad bounce, the rally should be replayed. If the referee does not recall a bad bounce, the previous rally should stand. In either case, the players should be given a new ball.

COURT HINDERS

If, in the referee's opinion an erratic bounce caused by a court obstruction affected play, a "court hinder" should be called. The player should not stop play at any time in anticipation of a call.

Under Part IV, Section E (Interpretation No. 11)

Balls which skid on wet walls are court hinders, assuming that the player was in position to make a return had the ball bounced truly. However, a "House Rule" may prevail for courts which tend to be very humid, causing the ball to frequently skid on the walls. In such circumstances, hinders should not be called for balls skidding on walls. The referee must inform the players before such a "House Rule" will apply.

Balls which skid on a wet floor will ALWAYS be called hinders, regardless of the condition of the court, again assuming that the player was in position to make a return had the ball bounced truly.

SCREEN SERVES

Interpretation No.5:

The receiver standing in the center of the rear court, two to four feet from the back wall, should have a clear view of the served ball as it rebounds from the front wall when it passes 5 feet in front of the service line (front line in service zone).

This is a difficult call because there will be instances in which the receiver will be screened but the ball has been hit so high that it is going to result in a back-wall setup and the receiver will have time to get into good position to attempt this shot. The screen serve, like any other hinder, is based upon interference affecting the play. In the case just mentioned, there is initial interference, but the receiver still has time to get into good position so that the momentary screen will not affect the play. In such a case, the referee should not make his call too quickly. He should watch the reaction of the receiver. If the referee feels that the receiver hesitates

getting into position, a screen should be called. If, however, the receiver moves quickly and obviously is going to have time to get into good position for a back-wall shot, the screen should not be called.

The receiver should be given the benefit of any doubt so long as his receiving position is in the center of the court. However, if the receiver positions himself to one side of center or anticipates the serve is going to be hit to one side and moves in that direction too quickly, and the serve is hit to the opposite side, a screen should not be called.

It is also important that the referee attempt to position himself in the middle of the balcony so that he will have the same angle of view as the receiver, although sometimes this is impossible because of the nature of court construction in many of the glass-walled courts. A referee's position at the side makes it difficult to judge a screen on the opposite side of the court. The best answer to this dilemma is: **When in doubt, call a screen.**

A screen serve does NOT cancel a previous fault, and remember, 2 consecutive screens constitute a "fault."

HINDERS

Calling (or not calling) hinders is the most difficult part of refereeing. Remember that the player is entitled to a clear and unobstructed view and path to the ball as well as an unimpeded stroke (this includes the follow-through). Interference of one kind or another often happens during a game, but **interference should not be called a "hinder" unless the interference "affected the play."**

If the ball is judged to be irretrievable, a hinder should not be called no matter what kind of interference takes place. If the referee is in doubt, the benefit of that doubt should go to the player attempting to retrieve the ball and a hinder should be called. However, if the defensive player has time to move to any court position, but chooses to move directly behind the player who is hitting the ball, they should NOT get the benefit of the doubt on CLOSE PLAYS. This usually occurs when a player has an offensive opportunity in front center court. If you feel the defensive player could have made the retrieve, call a hinder. If you are not sure the player could have made the retrieve, do not call a hinder.

Many "hinder problems" occur in a situation of partial obstruction. The ball might be close to the defensive player, but it is very important to NOT call a hinder too quickly in this case, especially if there appears to be an offensive opportunity for the hitter. Let the offensive player's dictate your call. If the player holds up on his/her swing or is obviously distracted, call a hinder. If the player chooses to take the shot, then they also must take the consequences, whether the shot was good or bad. **Make every effort to give a player his or her shot, especially when he or she is in an offensive position.**

Another close play sometimes occurs when a player dives for a retrieve, and the ball is rebounding right back at him or her. Again remember, **do not make your "hinder" call too quickly. Give the offensive player every opportunity to take the shot. Even if his or her stroke is slightly obstructed, most players will want this shot.** The player should hold up on his swing if he/she feels that there is too much obstruction. If the player who dived for the shot creates interference in his/her efforts to regain his/her feet, an AVOIDABLE HINDER should be called.

Whenever safety becomes a factor, call a hinder immediately.

Contact does not automatically mean a hinder should be called (only if it affected the play).

A ball rebounding back between a player's legs is not an AUTOMATIC hinder unless it is the rebounding serve that travels between the server's legs (screen serve).

BACKSWING HINDERS - the player hitting the ball is the only one entitled to make this call (besides the ref), but the call must be made immediately. If it is not, the shot must stand. The player does have the option to play the shot or not. Do NOT give options after the ball is struck. Sometimes these "backswing hinders" are caused by the opponent moving in too quickly and should be called AVOIDABLE.

PLAYER HIT BY BALL

Whenever a player hits a ball that strikes the opponent before reaching the front wall, if the referee is sure the ball would have reached the front wall before hitting the floor, a hinder should be called. **If the referee is unsure whether or not the ball would have reached the front wall, a hinder should be called.**

If the referee is **POSITIVE (absolutely no doubt) that the ball would NOT reach the front wall**, a hinder should NOT be called.

During the rally, whenever a player is struck by the ball on its rebound from the front wall before the ball hits the floor twice, that player loses the rally.

THE AVOIDABLE HINDER

This is the most controversial call in refereeing. Generally, this call is not made enough by referees. Either the referee is not knowledgeable enough to know when to call it, or the referee overlooks the obvious as they feel it may "upset" the player too much. Unfortunately, many players feel that they are being "criminally" indicted if an avoidable hinder is called against them. Nevertheless, it is the referee's responsibility to make this call whenever appropriate. Avoidable hinders **MUST** be called when they occur. **There are NO WARNINGS.** Avoidable hinders do NOT mean intentional, but intentional interferences are avoidable hinders. The avoidable hinder results in an "out" or a "point" depending upon whether the offender was serving or receiving.

Remember, if the player does not have enough time to avoid the interference, you cannot call an avoidable hinder against that player. When in doubt, DO NOT call an avoidable hinder.

If a player does not try to avoid interference, or if he/she creates interference, an avoidable hinder is the appropriate call.

AVOIDABLE HINDERS usually fall into one of the following categories:

1. FAILURE TO MOVE-(See Interpretation No. 12)

A player does not move sufficiently to allow his opponent his shot.

The legal position a player can assume when the opponent is hitting the ball from behind that player is at an angle to the left or right side of the ball being hit, as long as that position is assumed before the opponent begins his/her stroke.

2. BLOCKING-(See Interpretation No. 13)

A player moves into a position that effects a block or crowds his opponent about to return the ball, or, in doubles, one partner creates a hinder by moving in front of an opponent as his partner is returning the ball.

3. MOVING INTO BALL-(See Interpretation No. 14)

A player moves into the path of and is struck by the ball just played by the opponent.

4. PUSHING-(See Interpretation No. 15)

A player forcibly pushes an opponent during a rally.

5. VIEW OBSTRUCTION-(See Interpretation No. 16)

Moving across an opponent's line of vision just before he/she strikes the ball.

6. DISTRACTION-(See Interpretation No. 17)

Any avoidable distraction or intimidation that would interfere with the offensive player or team.

7. STROKE INTERFERENCE-(See Interpretation No. 18)

Any positioning that would not allow the opponent to use a normal stroke. This especially applies to a player moving in too close and being hit by or restricting the follow-through of the player hitting the ball. Remember, a player is entitled to an **unimpeded swing. This includes THE FOLLOW-THROUGH**.

Even though the ball has already been hit (or missed), an avoidable hinder should be called if the player hits the opponent with their follow-through (of course assuming that the defensive player had time to get out of the way).

8. IMPROPER EQUIPMENT-(See Interpretation No. 19)

The loss of any improperly worn equipment, or equipment not required on the court, that interferes with the play or the safety of the players.

FORFEITURES

Games cannot be forfeited, just the match. Matches may be forfeited for the following reasons:

- 1. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT (FLAGRANT).**
- 2. Player refuses to abide by the referee's decision.**
- 3. A player receives three technicals in a match.**
- 4. A player leaves the court at a time not allowed by the rules without permission of the referee.**

5. A player is 10 minutes late for his or her match, or is 10 minutes late after a time-out, glove change, or between games. If a player is late, the opponent shall be awarded one point and an additional point for each minute of delay of game up to the 10 minute forfeit time.

SERVICE CHOICE IN DOUBLES

The team winning the coin toss has their choice of serving or receiving in the first game. The other team has their choice in the second game, and the team that scored the most points in the game which they lost, has the choice of serving or receiving in the tiebreaker.

OUT OF ORDER SERVES IN DOUBLES

Read the rule, Part 4, Rule 4.3 C(6) for the ruling on out of order serve in doubles. However, if the referee is alert, there should be no out of order serves. If the referee sees that a player is about to serve out of order, the referee should immediately stop that player from serving and inform the team as to which player should be the server (see Interpretation No.7)

SCREEN SERVE IN DOUBLES

See page 5 of this guide concerning screen serves. The same guidelines apply for doubles except for the position of the receiver when the ball is served. In doubles, the receiver's normal position is usually between 5' and 8' away from the side wall, so use this distance as the guideline. From this position, the receiver should be able to see the ball as it rebounds from the front wall when it is approximately 5' in front of the service line (front line).

HINDERS IN DOUBLES

Under Part 4, Rule 4.7 C,

Both players on a side are entitled to a fair and unobstructed chance at the ball. Either one could be entitled to a hinder even though it naturally would be the partner's ball and even though the partner may have attempted to play the ball and has already missed (not touched) it.

However, if a player did hit the ball, but the ball did not reach the front wall, you should not award a hinder to that player's partner, even if that player was interfered with getting to the ball. The hinder must be called before the ball is struck.

Remember that partners cannot talk after their team hits the ball. This is an avoidable hinder.

REMOVAL OF SPECTATORS

If a spectator is abusive, obnoxiously rooting, or coaching a player from the gallery in a **distraactive manner**, ask them to stop. If they don't stop, have them removed from the gallery.

RULE UPDATES AND CHANGES

Always check www.ushandball.org for the latest rule updates and changes. The rules on the website will always be updated before the next rule book printing.