

# INTRODUCTION

Canadian National Pickleball League (“CNPL” or “the League”) is Canada’s premier professional pickleball league where teams are selected and drafted by team owners to compete head-to-head for glory and prize money.

Teams compete in four games per match; women’s doubles, open doubles, and two mixed doubles. In the event those four games result in a tie a rotational singles game will be played for the tiebreaker. All matches are played with rally point scoring and last up to 21 points with teams changing ends between games. Teams play each other in round-robin play in regular season events. Then teams compete in a multi-format playoff event. The 2025 season will contain five total events; four regular season and one playoff.

## 1) TEAMS AND TEAM OWNERS

### 1.1 SIZE OF LEAGUE AND TEAMS

For the 2025 season, the CNPL will hold five league events; two that will each consist of eight teams competing, and two that will consist of four teams competing. Teams will consist of six players with three players from the female category and three players from the open category.

### 1.2 TEAM NAMES, LOGOS, & UNIFORMS

Team owners must submit a logo to be approved by the CNPL. All team owners are to ensure their logos do not infringe on any copyright or intellectual property (“IP”) rights of any third party. Teams will hold all IP rights and will incur any costs to correct copyright infringement. The league holds a perpetual right to use all team marks.

All players must wear a uniform (team jersey). All team uniform jerseys will be approved by the CNPL to assist with proper player endorsement placements and branding initiatives. Team uniforms and branding must be approved by the CNPL. No player will wear a patch, logo, or branding of another tour, league or event, special event, or exhibition without written permission of the Commissioner. CNPL reserves the right to reduce a player’s compensation for failure to cooperate with the requirement to wear a team uniform.

### 1.3 TEAM TRANSFERS

The CNPL must be notified directly in the event of a bona fide offer for sale in whole or in part of the team. The league reserves the right to reject a proposed transfer in the event that the perceived benefit does not outweigh perceived costs or that the transfer is not in the best interest of the league as a whole.



## **2) PLAYERS AND DRAFT**

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#### **2.1 PLAYERS**

Players will be drafted to teams of six with an equal number of players in each category, female and open. Team owners will be responsible for ensuring the health and safety of their players. Alternates are allowed from the pool of draft eligible players if a player faces injury, illness, or any type of family emergency.

All players must sign and agree to the CNPL terms and conditions as set forth in the player draft application. All CNPL players are independent contractors of their respective teams and not employees. Players shall make themselves available to teams and the league when it is convenient for them to do so for the purpose of marketing.

#### **2.2 ELIGIBILITY**

There will be one primary draft per calendar year. However, due to the risk of absenteeism, injury, and conflict it is anticipated that there will be a need to add and drop players from teams. Players who participated in the 2025 amateur Showdown event(s) are considered part of the draft pool and are eligible to be signed to a team throughout the season. Players who have not participated in a pre-draft qualifying event will have to wait for a future qualifying event in order to be eligible to be drafted or signed as a free agent.

#### **2.3 PLAYER DRAFT**

Team draft position is chosen based on individual event competition results in the previous season. Teams will select three players from each category; female and open during a standard style draft. A maximum of six players per team may be selected or re-signed. Team owners will want to analyze their prospects closely to create the best combination of players possible.

#### **2.4 DRAFT DAY PICKS**

CNPL and the Commissioner will determine the format and timing of the draft day(s) in cooperation with team owners. Currently drafts will be held on April 2 of each subsequent year.

The team with the first draft pick will be expected to announce the selection of its first-round pick as soon as reasonably possible upon commencement of the draft. Thereafter, team owner(s) will be afforded up to five minutes to inform the Commissioner of each individual pick. The selection will be communicated to the Commissioner by the team owner(s), GM, or a designated representative. The Commissioner will verify and approve the selection, and the selection will be announced.



Upon announcement of the selection, the clock for the next draft pick will start. There may be short breaks at various intervals. In the event of issues affecting the timing or communication of a draft pick, CNPL, through its Commissioner, will have the discretion to adjust the timing to ensure a fair draft. The draft will continue until all teams are filled with six players.

The Commissioner will have the discretion to ensure a fair and high-quality draft (or draft broadcast) in terms of draft picks, the timing of picks, as well as the format, order, and scheduling of the draft. CNPL reserves the right to redo the draft in full or in part in the event of extraordinary circumstances and/or in the best interests of the league.

## **2.5 PLAYER & OWNER DRAFT ATTENDANCE**

Drafts are meant to be entertaining and fun for team owners, players and spectators. Players and team owners are strongly encouraged to participate in such events directly. Alternatives to attending a live draft event may be arranged depending on availability, draft format, or public health concerns. The CNPL may from time to time utilize alternative plans for optimization purposes.

## **2.6 TRANSFER WINDOWS**

During a transfer window a team is free to release, sign, or trade players with other teams or the free agency pool. Outside of the transfer windows any transactions will be voided unless it would somehow prevent a team from participating in an event.

- Transfers open March 1 00:00 EST
- Transfers closed August 31 23:59 EST

## **2.7 TRADING PLAYERS OR PICKS**

Teams are able to trade players or draft picks amongst one another with the following restrictions; 1) teams must maintain a balanced team of female and open players 2) in a salary capped season teams must maintain a total team salary below the cap 3) if trading draft picks only current year picks may be traded.

## **2.8 RELEASING PLAYERS**

Teams have the option to release any player back to the draft pool.

## **2.9 PLAYER APPEARANCES**

Once a player is drafted to a team or signed to a team and makes an appearance for that team their rights will be assigned to that team until the end of the season unless dropped or traded.



## **2.10 RE-SIGNING PLAYERS**

Teams may retain the services of up to three players from the previous season. Of these retained players two will be for a maximum of one year and one of them will be for a maximum of two years.

The deadline for re-signing players will be February 28 at 11:59 PM PST. Contracts should be delivered to the Commissioner via email before this time. Any contracts received after this time will not be considered valid. Any player re-signed will cost the team a draft pick starting with their first round pick with one pick being lost for each player re-signed.

## **2.11 PLAYER CONTRACTS**

Teams will sign their players using the league provided template. Space is provided for additional clauses within this template so long as they do not contradict any other clauses in the template document or any of the CNPL rules in this document.

## **2.12 2025 DRAFT ORDER**

Each round of the 2025 draft will be according to the following order:

- Vancouver Rush
- Northern Lights Ontario Pickleball
- Detroit-Windsor Drive
- Toronto United Pickleball Club
- Prairie Pronghorns
- London Smash
- Southwestern Ontario Brewers
- Montreal Lions



## **3) COMPETITION LAYOUT**

### **3.1 GENERAL MANAGER**

Each team will assign a general manager (“GM”) who will be responsible for communication with the league, other teams, and referees. On court decisions will be the responsibility of the GM. If a GM is not present at an event an alternate must be assigned. This alternate can not be an active player in the event for which they are acting as a GM.

Failure to attend an event or provide an alternate manager or coach will result in a fine of \$1,000 CAD. In addition, at the event a manager or coach may be provided for you, and will act on your behalf to communicate to the league, other teams, and referees at the event.

### **3.2 GROUP PLAY QUALIFYING ROUNDS**

Regular season national events will be a two-day group play event. Each team will compete in up to 6 matches, facing other teams at the event. CNPL officials may adjust the format for any such reason including but not limited to broadcasting issues, scheduling issues, inclement weather, or any other reason in the best interest of the team events at play.

### **3.3 DAILY SCHEDULE OF PLAY**

Schedules of play will be posted after the draft. Any scheduling changes will be posted the evening prior to the next day’s play commencing. CNPL officials may change schedules from time to time for purposes of broadcasting, inclement weather or any other reason that may be in the best interest of the league and play format.

### **3.4 DIVISIONS**

There will be two divisions for the 2025 season. CNPL officials may change the alignment or memberships within a division or the number of divisions in the best interest of the league and play format.

### **3.5 PLAYOFFS**

In the 2025 season all teams will qualify to compete in the double-elimination playoffs through regular season performance and a playoff group stage. From time to time the league may, with feedback from the team owners, adjust the number of teams that qualify for the playoffs.

### **3.6 SEEDING**

Playoffs seeding will be determined by; 1) match win loss record, 2) game win loss record. 3) head-to-head record, 4) total point differential (total points scored less total points against), and 5) a coin toss or random draw.

In the first round of the playoffs the 4th seed in each division will face the 1st seed from the other division. The 3rd seed from each division will face the 2nd seed from the other division.



## **4) COMPETITION FORMAT**

### **4.1 BEFORE A MATCH**

The team designated as the away team will decide their lineup for mixed doubles no later than 15 minutes before the match. The team designated as the home team will then counter with their lineup for mixed doubles. 5 minutes before the match begins the team captains will meet the referee(s) at the court to set the scoresheets.

### **4.2 WARMUP**

Each team will have a one-minute warmup period prior to each game. Players are expected to practice on a court nearby and be ready to play all matches including their first match, fully equipped. Additional warmup courts and times will be determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the day's immediate format and scheduling needs. Players should not expect additional warmup time after team matches have started.

### **4.3 STARTING A MATCH**

The team designated as the away team will make the choice for a coin flip. The winner of the coin flip will choose the order of games to be played in the match OR the end they start on and the loser will choose the other. The home team will serve.

### **4.4 MATCH STRUCTURE**

Each CNPL event format and order will be determined by the league officials. Each game will be played with standard rally scoring to 21 points, win by 1, with any winning point to be scored on a teams own serve. There will be four games played each match in the order selected by the winner of the coin toss. Teams will change ends between games only and not at half-score. This order and format are subject to change by the CNPL officials. In rally scoring, players do not switch serving (playing) sides after each point. Players may only switch playing sides during a time-out or between games and must advise the referee of the change.

### **4.5 FREEZE**

A team being frozen means they can only score their remaining point(s) in the game on their own serve. The first team to reach 20 points will freeze and will reduce the freeze threshold to 19. If the trailing team is not at 19 points, they will continue to score rally points until they reach 19 points and will then be frozen.

### **4.6 TEAM INITIATED TIME-OUTS**

Each team will be allowed 2 time-outs per game up to one-minute each time. Only the players on-court or the team designate (coach or manager) can call "time-out" directly to the referee who will acknowledge and commence setting a timer. A non-playing player cannot call a time-out for their team.



#### **4.7 REFEREE INITIATED TIME-OUTS**

Additional time-outs may be called by the CNPL referees (or CNPL officials) for purposes of livestream and/or broadcast, to address equipment issues, for referee, fan, equipment operator and/or player injury or for any other reason deemed necessary by CNPL or the Commissioner. Referee time-outs should be held to a maximum of 15-minutes unless otherwise determined at the discretion of the Commissioner.

#### **4.8 COACHING**

Coaching during live play is not permitted by anyone. This includes coaches, non-playing players, referees, and spectators. Penalties will be applied if coaching occurs during live play.

Coaching by coaches, non-playing players, and general managers is permitted when the ball is dead providing that it does not interrupt or disrupt the opposing team in any way. The ball is considered dead between rallies, during time-outs, between games, and at tie-breaker end change.

Coaching by spectators is never appropriate.

#### **4.9 LINE CALLS**

Official line calls must come from the players on court directly. Calls must be made immediately, loudly and clearly and with no influence from others (coaches, non-playing players, team manager or spectators). If appealed, once a decision has been made by the referee there are no further challenges allowed on the play.

#### **4.10 TEAM SUBSTITUTIONS**

Team substitutions can be made prior to a match commencing and not during a match. Teams are not allowed to substitute a player during a live match and must wait until the match is over, only then can a team substitute for an alternate to be used in subsequent matches to follow.

If a player becomes injured, ill, or required to leave for emergency personal/family events the team must forfeit the current game and any subsequent games in the current match the player would have played. A player that does not finish a match will be ineligible for the remainder of that day. If a player is substituted off for an injury and subsequently recovers from that injury the next day their return will be at the discretion of the medical staff.

#### **4.11 REFEREES**

Assessed referees will be provided for all matches. On the court will be one lead referee and a second referee. The CNPL may include additional tracking methods at a later date. Based on the availability of referees and at the discretion of the Commissioner games may be played with only one referee.



#### **4.12 REVIEWS**

There will be no live instant replay of results for the purpose of review. We will not rely on technology for the purpose of reviews or challenges. All reviews and challenges will be at the discretion of the referee(s).

#### **4.13 FOULS, WARNINGS, AND UNSPORTSMANLIKE BEHAVIOR**

Verbal warnings, technical warnings, and technical fouls can be issued from the time players are on the court for a match until match scorecards have been submitted to the tournament desk. Any unsportsmanlike action taken by a player after the match is over and before the scorecards have been submitted to the Tournament Desk will result in a warning or foul to be applied to that team's next match, next day's match, and/or next event's match.

The referee is empowered to call verbal warning, technical warnings and technical fouls. When a technical foul is called, one point removed from the score of the offending player/team unless their score is zero, in which case, a point shall be added to the score of the opposing side. Actions or behavior that shall result in a technical foul include:

- Aggressive/reckless throw of paddle, player using extremely objectionable language, or profanity, regardless of to whom or what it is directed.
- Making a threat or challenges of any nature toward or against any person.
- Challenging the referees decision or ruling, any actions considered extreme unsportsmanlike behavior.
- Deliberately throwing/hitting a ball that is not in play with negligent disregard of the consequences which inadvertently hits a person.
- Loss of challenge to referee ruling.
- Invalid Medical Time-Out. (when no standard time-out available)

#### **4.14 CHALLENGES**

Teams may appeal to a referee about a line call. If a referee is able to overturn a blatantly incorrect line call a technical warning shall be issued. As is standard, a second overturned call and subsequent second technical warning will result in the loss of a point to the player (team) who made the incorrect call.

It remains in the referee's power to issue a technical warning for repeatedly appealing line calls. Repeatedly making line call challenges for any purpose other than to correct a questionable call is considered unsportsmanlike behavior.

#### **4.15 TIE BREAKERS**

In the event that each of the two teams win two games within a match, those teams will compete in a head-to-head rotational singles match. Each member of a team will play a combined 3 points until a total score of 21 is reached. The teams will switch ends of the court when one team reaches a score of 11. Normal freeze rules will apply to tiebreakers.



## **5) ADDITIONAL RULES**

### **5.1 DIGITAL MEDIA USAGE**

The CNPL may use player / team photography, video, sound clips (players may be asked to wear microphones from time to time) and other forms of digital media for promotional purposes online and offline. Players may not use inappropriate language or engage in conduct that would otherwise be harmful or hateful in any way whatsoever. The CNPL reserves full rights to reduce or recoup compensation from players for failure to cooperate.

### **5.2 TEAM WEBSITES**

Teams may run a website independent of the CNPL team sites with prior approval from the league. The league shall not unreasonably withhold approval.

### **5.3 SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES**

Athletes part of the CNPL shall participate in reasonable social media requests for the league and their team and will conduct themselves appropriately online as per 5.1.

### **5.4 MEDIA RELATIONS GUIDELINES**

Athletes part of the CNPL shall participate in media relations and broadcast interviews.

### **5.5 ADVERTISING GUIDELINES**

Teams advertising and promotions must be in good taste. Advertising and promotions should follow the same minimum standards as in 5.1. Teams may run advertising and promotions independent of the CNPL with prior approval from the league. The league shall not unreasonably withhold approval.

### **5.6 PROHIBITIONS**

Players who are drafted to the CNPL are not allowed to play in any non-CNPL related event during CNPL scheduled events. To compete in such events Players must receive written permission from the CNPL Commissioner.

### **5.7 PLAYER COMPENSATION**

The total player payout pool for the 2025 season will be greater than \$200,000. This will include four parts; a travel stipend for each player, an appearance fee which will scale based on draft position, a regular season prize for team ranking after each event, and a playoff prize for final standings.

The league may from time to time award trophies or other non-wage compensation to players based on participation or performance.



## **5.8 TEAM COMPENSATION POOL**

At the end of each fiscal year 50% of league net income, in a year where league net income is greater than 0, will be distributed evenly among the 8 teams.

## **5.9 PAYOUT TIMING**

Appearance and event specific payments will be made seven days following the events based on participation. Playoff payments will be made seven days after the playoff event.

## **5.10 RULE EXCEPTIONS AND DISPUTES**

The Commissioner or his/her designee has final authority on any situation that is not specifically covered by this rules guide. Any exception to these rules must be approved by the CNPL Commissioner. The Commissioner is the final decision maker on all disputes and appeals. Only the Commissioner or a person expressly authorized by the Commissioner may clarify rules or procedures around the competition and make judgements about those rules.

## **5.11 AMENDMENTS & MODIFICATIONS**

Canadian National Pickleball League, INC. (CNPL) is the owner and administrator of Canadian National Pickleball League competitions and has the right to revise these rules periodically at its sole discretion.

## **5.12 OTHER COMPETITION RULES**

With the following exceptions written below, all CNPL competition rules not outlined above are governed by the most current rules of the USAP. The exceptions are as follows;

1. rally point scoring,
2. coaching during match play,
3. players do not change sides on points,
4. games are to a hard score of 21.



## **6) TEAM REQUIREMENTS**

### **6.1 INSURANCE**

Teams are required to maintain an adequate level of insurance to protect their business, key stakeholders, and athletes during league hosted, non-league hosted, or non-competition events. The league will additionally carry insurance coverage for all competition events hosted by the league.

### **6.2 RECORD KEEPING & REPORTING**

In order to ensure transparency, accountability, and effective decision-making, it is imperative for teams to maintain accurate and comprehensive financial records. The team shall ensure that the financial records are up-to-date, organized, and readily accessible for review and audit purposes. Furthermore, the team agrees to comply with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements related to financial record-keeping.

### **6.3 ACCIDENT & INJURY REPORTS**

Accident and injury reports including the athlete's name, the date of injury, the date of the report, the age of the athlete, and the body part that is injured should be maintained by each team. Additionally, the reports must contain information about how the injury or accident occurred and whether it is a new or previous injury.

### **6.4 OFFICIAL EQUIPMENT**

Where required the following equipment should be used for all events in which teams participate.

Ball: Onix DuraFast 40 | Net: Selkirk Labs 001 Pro Net | Floor: Pickleroll

