

National Horseshoe Pitchers Association

OFFICIAL GUIDELINES FOR NHPA SANCTIONED EVENTS Published By The National Horseshoe Pitchers Association of America (NHPA)

GUIDELINE 1. COURT LAYOUT (see diagram ...)

SECTION A. PERMANENT GROUND LEVEL COURTS

- 1. Dimensions** - A horseshoe court shall be a level rectangular area six (6) feet wide and a minimum of forty-six (46) feet long. To minimize the effects of sunlight, a north-south orientation is recommended.
- 2. Pitcher's Box** - The pitcher's box is a (six) 6-foot by 6-foot area at each end of the court. It is composed of two parts: a) the pit, and b) the pitching platforms.
 - a. The Pit** - The pit is a rectangular area filled with the substance into which the shoes are pitched. Its' maximum length (in the direction in which the shoes are pitched) is seventy-two (72) inches and its' minimum length is forty-three (43) inches. Its' maximum width is thirty-six (36) inches and its' minimum width is thirty-one (31) inches. The pit must be centered in the pitcher's box. If the pit is less than the maximum dimensions, the extra space shall be filled with the same material of which the platforms are made, or some other material different than the pit substance, and shall be level with the pit and platforms.
 - b. The Pitching Platforms** - The pitching platforms flank the pit to its left and right sides and are parallel to each other. They shall be level with each other and with the top of the pit. They shall be 18 to 20-1/2 inches wide (depending upon the width of the pit) and shall be a minimum of six (6) feet long.
- 3. The Stakes** - The stake is the target at which the shoe is pitched. Each stake shall be centered between the platforms with a minimum of twenty-one (21) inches from the stake to the front and back of the pit. On regulation courts, the stakes are forty (40) feet apart. This distance is measured from the front of each stake, level with the pitching platform. Stakes shall be one (1) inch in diameter and may be made of cold-rolled steel, mild iron, soft metal, or synthetic material. Each stake shall be no shorter than fourteen (14) inches and no higher than fifteen (15) inches above the level of the pit and they shall both have an approximate 3-inch lean toward each other.
- 4. Pit Substance** - Clay, sand, dirt and synthetic compositions are all legal pit substances. The minimum depth of the substance shall be four (4) inches. An 8-inch depth is recommended.
- 5. Extended Platforms** - The pitching platforms on either side of the pit shall be extended forward (toward the opposite pit) an additional ten (10) feet to accommodate pitching at shorter distances. The front of the extended platforms shall be twenty-seven (27) feet from the opposite stake. The extended platforms shall be level with and be of the same width and material as the full-distance platforms. It is recommended that the fourteen (14) feet between the front ends of the platforms be filled in (using the same material as the platforms) to provide a continuous, level walking surface between the two pitcher's boxes. See Rule 1, Section A-5
- 6. Multiple Courts** - In facilities with multiple courts, these layout guidelines should be observed:

- a. **Side-by-side Courts** – For safety reasons and to minimize distractions, the stakes of adjacent courts must be no closer than ten (10) feet apart. A distance of twelve (12) feet is recommended.
- b. **Back-to-back Courts** – The stakes of back-to-back courts must be a minimum of sixteen (16) feet apart and a visual and protective barrier must separate the courts.

7. Backboards & Protective Barrier

a. **Backboards** – For safety reasons, every pit should have a backboard. It should be at least three (3) feet behind the stake, be at least one (1) foot high and extend to the width of the pit. For spectator visibility, a mesh netting or chain-link material is recommended. If of solid material, it should be a color that will provide a contrasting background so as to keep the stake visible for the contestants.

b. **Protective Barrier** – For safety reasons, all court complexes should be surrounded by a protective barrier. This barrier should be at least eight (8) feet behind the stake. A chain-link type of fence at least four (4) feet high is recommended.

8. Foul Lines - Foul lines shall be defined by lines extending across the front of the full-distance and extended platforms. They shall be perpendicular to an imaginary line between the stakes at thirty-seven (37) and twenty-seven (27) feet respectively, from the front of the opposite stakes. They shall be measured at the level of the pitching platform and their location shall be easy to see. For Junior pitchers age 9 or younger, a temporary foul line shall be placed at a distance of twenty (20) feet from the opposite stake.

9. Imaginary Stakes - Imaginary stakes shall be marked (often by a spot of paint or other marker of the same diameter as the official stake) midway between the left and right extended platforms and at a distance of thirty (30) feet from the opposite stake. If the official stakes are not forty (40) feet apart, imaginary stakes shall also be marked on the full-distance platforms, at a distance of forty (40) feet from the opposite stake.

SECTION B. COVERED AND INDOOR COURTS

The regulations for covered and indoor courts are exactly the same as for permanent ground-level courts with the additional stipulation that they shall have a minimum (twelve) 12-foot vertical clearance to the lowest possible obstruction.

SECTION C. TEMPORARY AND/OR RAISED COURTS

The regulations for temporary and/or raised courts are the same as for permanent ground-level courts with the exception that for any raised court, the top of the pit shall be no more than seven (7) inches above the level of the pitching platforms. In addition, the (four) 4-inch pit substance requirement is recommended, but not mandatory. For elevated platforms, the foul lines and the (forty) 40-foot distance between stakes shall be measured from the front edge of the stakes (at floor level) before the pit substance is put into the pits.

Note: The NHPA realizes that many horseshoe court facilities now in existence do not meet all of the conditions listed in the current Rules and Guidelines. The construction of all new courts shall follow these current Rules and Guidelines and all charters are encouraged to modify their existing courts to meet these standards as soon as possible.

GUIDELINE 2. PIT PREPARATION AND MAINTENANCE

SECTION A. THE PIT SUBSTANCE

Every effort shall be made to keep the substance in the pit in a soft, putty-like condition so the shoes will not bounce or move around after coming into contact with the pit substance. The substance in the pit shall be watered (if necessary) and leveled to the top of the surrounding platforms (unless the pits are raised) before a game starts. Between games, each contestant is responsible for preparing one pit, but a contestant may have someone else do the preparation. During a game, a contestant shall not step on, mash, or otherwise repair any of the substance in the scoring area of the pit without the consent of the opponent or a tournament official. Any pit substance removed for the measurement of a shoe or for the removal of a "buried" shoe may be replaced.

Note: Pits composed of sand or dirt often "hollow out" after a few innings. A blanket statement by the tournament director (made before competition begins) shall allow for the leveling of these courts, as needed, without constant consent between the contestants.

SECTION B. THE STAKES

With the permission of the tournament director or committee, the stakes may be painted for better visibility before a game starts. This procedure shall not be allowed while a game is in progress, unless both contestants are in agreement.

GUIDELINE 3. DOUBLES PLAY

In doubles play, two contestants are partners against another team of two contestants. One contestant from each team shall be at each end of the court and the contestants shall be matched by the tournament officials so that the highest rated contestant (by percentage) from each team shall be pitching from the same end of the court. The tournament committee shall determine the length of the game and type of play. When contestants are pitching their shoes, the contestants at the other end shall be well behind and to the side of the pitcher's box (for their own safety) and in a stationary position so as not to distract the contestants on their own or adjacent courts. Otherwise, all rules for singles play shall apply.

SECTION A. REGULAR DOUBLES

In regular doubles, both team members use the same pair of shoes and all contestants stay at the same end of the court for the entire game. To begin the game, the highest-rated contestants shall decide first pitch and pitch their shoes, just as in singles competition. Their partners, at the opposite end, shall decide and call the score, retrieve the shoes, and pitch them back following the same procedure. The decision on who pitches first in each inning depends upon the scoring system being used, following the rules of singles play. A single score sheet shall be used that clearly shows the ringers and shoes of all contestants.

SECTION B. WALKING DOUBLES

In walking doubles, all contestants will pitch their own shoes. A single score sheet shall be used that clearly shows the ringers and shoes of all contestants.

1. **Shoe-limit Games** -The lower-rated contestants will decide first pitch and pitch their four (4) shoes. The higher-rated pitchers will then pitch their four (4) shoes and all pitchers will walk to the opposite end, decide the scoring, and pick up their shoes. The scores for the highest-rated pitchers should be recorded first and they will also pitch first for the remainder of the game. Which one of them (and their opponents) pitches first depends upon the scoring system (cancellation or count-all) being used, following the rules of singles play. This procedure will continue until the game is over.

2. **Point-limit Games** - The higher-rated contestants will decide first pitch and pitch their four (4) shoes. The lower-rated contestants will determine the scoring for these shoes. The partner of the pitcher who scores (or the partner of the contestant who pitched last, in case of a no-score situation) will call or record the score and will pitch first in the next inning. All pitchers will now walk to the opposite end. The highest-rated contestants will pick up their shoes (already scored) and step back. The scoring of the last four (4) shoes pitched is determined and called or recorded. The contestant calling the score always pitches first. This procedure is continued until the game is over. For safety or other reasons, the tournament director or committee may select an alternative walking sequence as long as the scoring sequence remains the same.

GUIDELINE 4. TOURNAMENT AND SANCTIONED LEAGUE ADMINISTRATION

SECTION A. GUIDELINES FOR DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES

All NHPA sanctioned tournaments and leagues shall have a designated director or committee to administer the activities of the event. The director or committee shall:

1. Publicize the event.
 - a. Announce the date, place, entry fee, prize list, registration deadline, and any other information a member will need in order to participate.
 - b. Announce classifications available to entrants.
 - c. Announce the method of play (cancellation or count-all), the length of the games (how many shoes or points) and whether or not alternate pitch will be used.
 - d. Announce the method to be used for handling ties for individual games and at the end of round-robin play.
2. Obtain verifiable ringer percentages for all entrants from their charter statistician or from NATSTATS.
3. Set up the playing format, assign contestants to their proper courts, and provide contestants with a schedule of games to be played.
4. Make sure all entrants are current NHPA members.
5. Arrange for scorekeepers for each court and announce the amount and method of their pay before play begins.

6. Have statisticians available for the checking and recording of game scores and for the compilation of class and tournament results.
7. Have judges and judging tools available.
8. Handle all protests and make the final decisions on any items that may come up.
9. Make the decision to halt play because of inclement weather and decide when play shall resume if or when conditions improve.
10. Present the awards at the end of play.
11. See that the results are sent to the charter statistician and NATSTATS for proper recording.

SECTION B. JUDGES (also see Judging Guidelines booklet)

1. Judges shall be appointed by the tournament/league director or committee. Their duties are:
 - a. To enforce the rules and issue the proper penalties if or when violations occur.
 - b. To measure for ringers, the closest shoe to the stake, for shoes in count, and to answer other rules questions when called upon by the contestants.
 - c. To help make the correct decision in situations involving broken shoes, broken stakes, shoes and/or stakes that may be moved by contestants during measurements, shoes pitched out of turn, a contestant's shoes mistakenly pitched by the opponent, and other questions which may arise.
 - d. To act as a liaison between the contestants and the tournament committee for all possible questions or situations.
3. The decisions made by judges in 1, a-c (above) shall be accepted as final by the contestants and the game shall continue from that point.