

NPL Season 3 Rules

09/01/2025

The *NATIONAL PICKLEBALL LEAGUE* is the premier professional pickleball league in Australia. Comprising of the best 72 players in the country across 18 teams in 3 states. Teams face off across 5 rounds of competition in their state conference. The top 9 teams across the country will then fight it out for the glory of becoming the National Pickleball League Champions.

The Competition

The competition, a national team-based singles & doubles pickleball tournament, officially known as the “National Pickleball League”.

Purpose and applicability

National Pickleball League Pty Ltd (NPL) circulates these Rules for the purpose of providing fair and reasonable rules for the orderly and uniform conduct of The National Pickleball League Season 3.

These rules must be read and applied in conjunction with the Global Pickleball Federation 2025 Official Rulebook (GPFOR) as well as any relevant National Pickleball League (NPL Policy) or Pickleball Australia Policy (PAA Policy).

When a rule of the GPFOR, PAA Policy or NPL Policy is inconsistent with a rule of the NPL Season 3 Rules, the latter shall prevail, and the former shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be invalid.

Any ambiguity or uncertainty in connection with these rules & policies shall be resolved at the sole discretion of the NPL, acting reasonably and in the interest of the competition. NPL reserves the rights to interpret these regulations, when necessary, in order to resolve particular or unusual circumstances. In addition, it may be necessary to determine the most appropriate procedures to be utilised in special or unusual circumstances.

These regulations take effect from January 9, 2025, and may be varied from time to time by NPL. Any new or revised policy, rule, procedure, or regulation will be published on the NPL website (www.nplpickleball.com.au) and/or notified to (a) tournament organisers and officials by email, and (b) players as part of the tournament information provided.

All persons participating in any way in NPL Season 3 (including players, officials, staff, coaches, representatives, agents, medical staff, relatives and associates of a player, a player's entourage and spectators) must refrain from making comments, including to representatives of the media or through social media, that attack, disparage or criticise players, organisers, officials or staff of the NPL. Any failure or refusal to do so may be treated as a disciplinary matter, the NPL reserves the right to terminate any and all relationships with the player.

Rule Interpretations and Disputes

The chain of command for decisions and escalation is:

1. Referee
2. Head Referee
3. Tournament Director

4. League Director (acting as authority for the NPL)

At each venue the referees are responsible for managing the application of these rules.

The tournament director and league director will provide clarification as to the application of these rules and reserve the right overrule these decisions for benefit of the competition.

Where instances arise that lead to dispute, or a question that is not adequately covered players may escalate using the defined chain of command.

The League Director will act to uphold the intent of the rules and make judgement that best preserves the integrity of the sport, and the competition.

Decisions made by the League Director will be binding.

Prize Money

NPL S3 will have a total prize pool of \$125,000.

Distribution based on a team's final finishing place plus the MVP allocations. Team finishing place splits are:

1. \$50,000
2. \$25,000
3. \$15,000
4. \$10,000

Weekly MVP is \$500 per player, with 1 female and 1 male awarded to each state for each round.

Finals MVP is \$5000 per player, with 1 female and 1 male at the end of the grand final.

League Composition

3 State Conferences

1. Queensland
2. New South Wales
3. Victoria

18 Teams & Captains

- 6 in NSW
- 6 in QLD
- 6 in VIC

Team Composition

Each Team

- 4 Players
 - 2 Male
 - 2 Female

Conferences

There are 3 state conferences:

1. Queensland
2. New South Wales
3. Victoria

Matches will be played within the state conference for the round portion of the competition. With the finals featuring the top ranked teams from each conference.

Format

A 5 round season will culminate in the finals weekend. All 5 rounds will be played within a teams home state. The rounds will be scheduled to be played over 3 months. The finals will be held over 3 days at The Jar in South Melbourne, Victoria.

NPLLeague is NPL's trademarked teams format. This showcases the best players in Australia across all of pickleball's formats - Singles, Doubles & Mixed.

Rounds

- 5 Rounds
- Each round is a 1 day event
- 2 matches played each round
- Each team plays the teams in their state conference twice during the season.
- Teams only play teams in their state conference during the Season/Rounds.

Match

Each match is a minimum of 4 sets with a 5th set DillBreaker if required.

1. Mens Singles

- Best of 2 games
 - 2 separate singles games played by 2 individual players
 - Team with 2 individual wins, wins the set.
 - If tied 1-1 both teams are awarded 0 sets.
- Player 1 is top ranked singles DUPR player*
- First to 11, traditional scoring, win by 2
- Change ends at 6.

2. Womens Singles

- Best of 2 games
 - 2 separate singles games played by 2 individual players
 - Team with 2 individual wins, wins the set.
 - If tied 1-1 both teams are awarded 0 sets.
- Player 1 is top ranked singles DUPR player*
- First to 11, traditional scoring, win by 2
- Change ends at 6.

3. Gendered Doubles

- First to 22, win by 2, traditional scoring
- Captain selection for who plays in each pair.
- 2 pairs per team
 - Pair 1 - first to 11
 - Pair 2 - continue to 22
 - Pair 2 will sub in once either team reaches 11
- First time teams play each other in season:

1. Pair 1 = Womens Doubles
2. Pair 2 = Mens Doubles
- Second time teams play each other in season:
 1. Pair 1 = Mens Doubles
 2. Pair 2 = Womens Doubles
- *Finals*
 1. *The higher ranked team determines order.*
- Change ends at 6 & 17
4. Mixed Doubles
 - First to 22, win by 2, traditional scoring
 - 2 pairs per team
 1. Pair 1 - first to 11
 2. Pair 2 - continue to 22
 1. Pair 2 will sub in once either team reaches 11
 - Captain selection for who plays in each pair. No restrictions.
 - Change ends at 6 & 17
5. DillBreaker
 - The DillBreaker is a unique tie-breaking set designed to decide the outcome of a match when the score is tied after the first four sets.
 - First to 21, Rally Scoring, Win by 2
 - Pairs swap after 5 points
 - i. Mens Singles 1
 - ii. Womens Singles 1
 - iii. Mixed 1 (Pair 1)
 - iv. Mens Singles 2
 - v. Womens Singles 2
 - vi. Mixed 2 (Pair 2)
 - vii. Mens Doubles
 - viii. Womens Doubles
 - ix. Alternate Mixed 1
 - x. Alternate Mixed 2
 - xi. REPEAT
 - There is no 'Freeze'
 - Change ends at 6, 12, 18, 24, 30 etc. when the first team reaches this score.

Order of Sets

1. Mens or Womens Singles
 - a. First time teams play each other in season:
 1. Mens Singles
 - b. Second time teams play each other in season:
 1. Womens Singles
 - c. Finals will be determined by the higher ranked team.
2. Gendered Doubles
 - First time teams play each other in season:

1. Pair 1 = Womens Doubles
2. Pair 2 = Mens Doubles
- Second time teams play each other in season:
 1. Pair 1 = Mens Doubles
 2. Pair 2 = Womens Doubles
- a. Finals will be determined by the higher ranked team,
 1. based on whether they start with Mens or Womens singles, i.e if Womens singles starts, Womens doubles finishes).
3. Mens or Womens Singles
 - a. Whichever was not played first
4. Mixed Doubles
5. Dillbreaker

Scoring

- All Sets are win by 2
- Sets 1-4 are Traditional Scoring
- Set 5 (DillBreaker) is Rally Scoring

Ladder

- Win = 3 NPL points
 - This is either 4-0, 3-1 or 3-2 (DillBreaker)
- Bonus point for a 4 – 0 result
 - = NPL 1 point
- Ladder based on:
 - NPL Points
 - Win/Loss
 - Sets For/Against
 - PF/PA

Finals

- Top 2 teams from each conference qualify directly.
- Third place in each conference qualify for the playoffs.
- 8 teams play in finals
- 3 teams in playoffs
- One weekend
 - Friday
 - Finals playoffs
 - Saturday
 - Qualifying
 - Elimination
 - Semi Finals
 - Sunday
 - Preliminary
 - Grand final
 - Placement Game 3 & 4

Playoffs

The 3 third placed teams from each state conference play off in a round robin format.

- Each team plays each other once
- Top 2 progress to finals

The top 2 playoff teams will be put in a lottery for the finals position. i.e. whether they play team 5 or 6.

Playoffs will begin at 10am on Friday 30th May 2025

Finals format

Seeding determined by:

- Top 3 are reserved for top position in each state
 - Individual positions determined by ladder order.
- Positions 4-6 are reserved for second position in each state
 - Individual positions determined by ladder order.
- Positions 7-8 reserved for outcome of playoffs

Qualifying finals

- QF 1 - 1 v 4
- QF 2 - 2 v 3

Elimination finals

- EF 1 - 5 v 8
- EF 2 - 6 v 7

Semi Finals

- SF 1 - Loser of QF1 v Winner of EF1
- SF 2 – Loser of QF2 v Winner of EF2

Preliminary Finals

- Winner of QF1 v Winner of SF2
- Winner of QF2 v Winner of SF1

Grand Final

- Winner of PF1 v Winner of PF2

Placement Matches

- Loser of PF 1 & 2 to play for position 3 & 4

Rally Scoring

- Players do not switch sides after winning points.
- Player A for each team serves and receives on the right side when the score is even,
- Player B serves and receives on the left side when the score is odd.
- Changing sides
 - A team may choose to switch player sides during a time-out or end change.
 - They must inform the referee.
 - Referees confirm with each team they are happy with playing sides, i.e ready to start after all time outs, end changes etc.
 - What happens with an incorrect player/position error if not detected before the serve occurs:
 - If a player or referee stops a live rally to notate the error, the rally will be replayed.

- If the rally concludes naturally and then the error is mentioned, the rally will stand. All players played the rally in good faith and played to win. The referee will ensure proper player alignment for the next serve.

Player Swaps

- Player swaps occur during Gendered and Mixed Doubles.
- When the first team reaches a 'swap score' i.e 11 for gendered & mixed doubles, the pair of players on the court swap out for the next set of players.
- The replacement players take up the replacement position and the game continues.
- There is no toss at the swap, the game resumes on serve and score as per whomever had the serve the previous point.
- The new pair assume a position on the court directly replacing those the original pair. i.e one of the players from each team will now take the server band and stand in the same position as that player on the court.
 - This will have been prenominated by the captain.
- The game is treated as 1 singular game to 22 points, not 2 individual games to 11 points.
- Time outs are used across the whole game, they do not reset as a result of player swap.

Time Allocation & Warm up

- Matches are to start at the stated start time.
- 1 minute warm up will be permitted at the start of each set.
- 1 minute warm up for the second singles matches
- No warm up following the player swap
 - i.e Mixed & Gendered Doubles. The games are to continue immediately.
- There will be a 4 minute break between sets.
- There will be a 1 minute break between games.

Referee briefing

- Start of each round the Head Referee will conduct a briefing
- There is no referee briefing after this time.
- Referees will examine paddles at beginning of each set.
- Home team has won the toss.

Change of Ends

- Singles
 - Change when first player reaches 6 points
- Doubles
 - Change when first team reaches 6 points
 - Change when first team reaches 17 points
- Mixed Doubles
 - Change when first team reaches 6 points
 - Change when first team reaches 17points
- DillBreaker
 - Change when first team reaches 6 points
 - Change when first team reaches 12 points
 - Change when first team reaches 18 points
 - Change when first team reaches 24 points
 - Change when first team reaches 30 points etc.

Schedule

- ROUND 1: SAT MARCH 8TH 2025
- ROUND 2: SAT MARCH 15TH 2025
- ROUND 3: SAT MARCH 29TH 2025
- ROUND 4: SAT MAY 10TH 2025
- ROUND 5: SAT MAY 17TH 2025
- FINALS: FRI MAY 30TH / SAT MAY 31ST / SUN JUNE 1ST 2025

Indicative Weekly Schedule

- 12pm - Venue Opens for Practice
- 1pm - Match #1 Begins
- 3:00pm - Lunch
- 3:30pm - Match #2 Begins
- 5:30pm – Match 2 concludes

Player Commitment

- Players must participate in at least 3 of the 5 rounds to be eligible for finals.
- Exceptions will be granted for legitimate injuries.

DUPR

All games will be entered into DUPR.

- Games to 11
 - These will be entered as per norm
- Games to 22
 - Womens doubles and mixed pair 1 will have the score entered as the team reaches 11.
 - Mens doubles and mixed pair 2 will have the score entered (having removed the score from the first game).
- Dill breaker
 - Score will not be entered into DUPR

Mixed Pairs

- Each captain will nominate their mixed pairs for each of the rounds by 10pm the Monday before the round.
- Failure to submit pairs by this deadline will result in the previous rounds line up being used.
- Captains may nominate a different pair for each match within the round.
- Following the Monday 10pm deadline, the only permitted changes will be as a result of injury.
- Injury adjustments will preclude the player from participating in remaining matches for the round.
- The opposing captain will be permitted to adjust any impacted line ups if a change is made.
- DillBreaker line ups are set based on playing order.

Injuries

- In the event of injury, resulting in the inability to continue participating. Teams will be able to use a reserve/alternate player for the remainder of the round.
- The league will make best efforts to ensure there is a reserve/alternate player available to replace the injured player.

- Reserve/alternate players will replace the injured player.
- If the injury occurs mid-game then the player cannot be replaced. The opposing team will be rewarded the remaining points for the game, until either a player swap or completion.
- The injured player cannot resume the subsequent game. i.e. if the player withdraws from the singles, they cannot play in the subsequent doubles or mixed.
- In the event of multiple injuries, the team suffering the first injury as per decision by the Tournament Director in conjunction with the referees will select the player first.
- What happens if no reserve player is available?
 - Following 15 minutes after notification to the Tournament Director, the League Director will give a reasonable amount of time for a game day reserve to be located and utilised.
 - The league will make best efforts to have reserves available for game day, however this is not guaranteed.
 - If a reserve is not available, the team whom is missing the player will receive 0 points for those impacted games:
 - Position 2 singles, the score would be 0 – 11
 - Mixed Doubles would begin at 0 - 11 with pair 2 starting.
 - Impacted DillBreaker
 - Mens Singles 2
 - Womens Singles 2
 - Mixed 2 (Pair 1)
 - The impacted DillBreaker sections above would be awarded 0-5. This is likely to result in a loss.

Break

- The minimum break will be 15 minutes. In the event that a match exceeds the allocated 2 hours, match 2 will be delayed to allow the full 15 minute break.

Reserve/Alternative List

The reserve/alternate list consists of all players registered for the NPL S3 draft but not selected.

Additions to this list will only occur with majority support from the captains.

Post the draft players can be considered from all states if available to play.

In the event a player is unavailable, the team will be able to select a player from the reserves list.

Selection from the reserve list

- Selection of reserves
 - Selection of reserves will follow priority waiver wire system
 - The starting priority order is the continuation of reverse snake draft. i.e:
 - Priority 1 - Pick #6
 - Priority 2 - Pick #5
 - Priority 3 - Pick #4
 - Priority 4 - Pick #3
 - Priority 5 - Pick #2
 - Priority 6 - Pick #1
 - The team whom would have had the next pick in the Draft will start with Priority 1.

- When a team has selected a player from the reserve pool, their priority order moves to the last position.
- In the event that 2 or more teams make a selection in one round, the team that selects first will be placed in the last position.

Unavailability must be legitimate

- Drafted players are expected to participate in all Rounds.
- Players cannot 'choose' to be unavailable; it must be for a reason such as injury or permitted personal reason.
- Permitted personal reasons
 - League notified prior to season commencing
 - League discretion
- If a player is unavailable for illegitimate reasons, i.e. in the attempt to manipulate an outcome, such as gaining access to a player from the reserve list for a particular round, then the player & team will be in breach of their playing contracts.

Minimum Player Game Time

Each match:

- All 4 players will play 3 games
 - 1 x Singles
 - 1 x Doubles
 - 1 x Mixed

DillBreakers are played only as required.

Each round players play at least 6 games with up to 8 maximum.

Player withdrawals & absence

General

- Player withdrawals may occur. Players are governed by individual playing contracts which permit absence as arranged prior for legitimate commitments.
- Complete withdrawals for legitimate reasons will be accepted on a case-by-case basis.
- Withdrawal for reasons such as playing in alternative events or competitions will be considered in breach of the playing contract, without prior approval.
- Players whom withdraw will have their contracts taken up by the replacement player.

Team impact

- Any player withdrawal (personal or injury) that renders a player unavailable for the remainder of the competition will allow the team to select a permanent replacement.
- This player will need to be selected from Reserve/Alternative list.
- Any withdrawal for non-injury related reasons will forfeit all prize money owed.

Game day absences

- In the event a player from another team fails to show, the team will be able to use a player from the Reserve/Alternate list as per the rules applied to an injury.
- If no reserve player is available, following the later of 15 minutes past the allocated start time or a reasonable amount of time by the NPL, the team whom is missing the player will forfeit the impacted games as outlined.

Reserve availability

- The league will make best efforts to have game day reserves available, however this is not guaranteed, thus in the event that a reserve is not available the team that is missing a player will forfeit the points for the impacted games after all reasonable efforts to replace a player are made.

Officials

- All matches will have an allocated Referee
- All matches will have an allocated Tournament Director
- The competition also has a League Director
 - This is David Anjou, NPL COO

Time outs

General

- A player/team is entitled to one time-out for each of the singles games and 2 time outs for the doubles and mixed doubles and DillBreaker.
- Each time-out period may last up to 1 minute.
- Play may be resumed early if all players are ready.
- If a team has any remaining time-outs, only participating (active players) and the captain may call a timeout.
 - In the event that the captain is on court they may nominate a non-playing player to take on this role. They must alert the referee prior to the game commencing.
- The referee will announce when there are 15 seconds remaining. At the end of the time-out period, the referee shall call "time in" and then call the score when all players are (or should be) ready to play.

Medical

A player needing medical attention during a match should request a medical time-out from the referee. Once the medical time-out has been requested, the following guidelines shall be used:

- The referee shall immediately summon on-site medical personnel, or the Tournament Director if no medical personnel are present, to assess the situation and render appropriate first aid.
- When medical personnel or the Tournament Director arrive, the referee shall start the 15-minute timer.
- The time-out must be continuous and shall not exceed 15 minutes.
- If the player uses fewer than 15 minutes, the remaining time is lost and no additional medical time will be available to the player during the match.
- If the player cannot resume play after the 15-minute medical time-out period, the match will be declared a retirement. The player may use their available regular timeouts after the medical timeout has expired to allow more time before the match must be retired.
- If medical personnel, or the Tournament Director, determine that no valid medical condition exists, the player or team will be charged a standard time-out, if available, and issued a technical warning.
- A player may be granted only one player requested medical time-out per match.
- Presence of blood. If blood is present on a player or on the court, play may not resume until the bleeding has been controlled and blood on clothing and the court has been removed.
- Issues relating solely to blood clean up or control will be considered a referee timeout.

Coaching

- Coaching is permitted from those within the team. i.e. the 6 players.
- Coaching may only occur when the ball is 'dead', i.e. not mid-point.

- Nonplaying players (including the Captain) are not permitted on the court, for conversations with the teams, these must occur on the bench/off the court.

Weather Policy

- The league may shift the start times to accommodate any adverse weather impacted events. This may involve moving the start times later or earlier.
- Players are advised that matches could start as early as 8:00 am and will be completed no later than 8pm on any given day.
- In the event of adverse weather impacting play, games will be paused until it is safe to resume.
- The Tournament Director will make best efforts to provide clear communication to players as to expected length of delays and if a decision is reached to finish play on a particular day.
- In the event that matches are incomplete, they will be rescheduled per the following order:
 - Inclusion as an extended set of matches in the subsequent round.
 - Scheduling of an alternative (indoor) venue if required.

Expected Wet Weather

- A decision regarding predicted bad weather will be made on the Thursday prior to the Saturday event.
 - The decision will be either to remain at the outdoor venue or move to indoor venue
- The priority is to complete the round and avoid any future delays/rollovers.

Extreme Heat Policy

- NPL follows Pickleball Australia's Heat Policy.
 - Rescheduling of games please refer to Weather Policy.

Abuse

- No abuse will be tolerated, for specific details umpires are guided by the Global Pickleball Federation.
- However, for the avoidance of doubt the tournament director reserves the right to forfeit the player and team as required.
- Paddle Throws
 - Rules 13.1 of the Global Pickleball Federation Handbook will be applied to 'Games' rather than a match.
 - In practical terms this means that if a player receives a technical foul or warning that would ordinarily result in a match forfeit, this is applied to the existing game, i.e.
 - Singles – automatic loss of that singles game.
 - Note the other singles result stands
 - Doubles & Mixed
 - The opposing team would receive the required points to either make it to 11 or to 22. i.e. if this occurred in the first pair, when the score was 3-6, the opposing team would be moved to 11, with no change to the offending team score. Thus it would be 3 – 11 and the player swap would occur. If this occurred when the score was 17 – 8. The score would be recorded as 17-22 and the match would end.

Prize Money Allocation

Players & Captains

- Prize money allocations are governed by player contracts.

Reserves

Player absence and replacements

- a. The drafted player and replacement player will split the allocated prize money based on the following allocation table:

| Match Missed | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|
| Round 1-5 | 14% |
| Finals | 30% |

- b. i.e. if a replacement player participates in a round they will receive 7% of the players allocated prize pool at the end of the season. The Player would receive the remaining.
- c. If a player misses the finals, they would receive 15% and the replacement player 15%.

Player Draft

The NPL Draft is open to all players, there are no age, skill or geographic restrictions.

When players nominate for the draft they will nominate a preferred state, they are on the draft board for this state. Post the draft, players from all states are available for use by any of the teams in other states as reserves if required.

The NPL Draft order is a Lottery.

The draft follows a snake format and is completed as such:

Round 1

2nd Player (as Captain already selected):

- Draft Position #1
- Draft Position #2
- Draft Position #3
- Draft Position #4
- Draft Position #5
- Draft Position #6

Round 2

3rd Player

- Draft Position #6
- Draft Position #5
- Draft Position #4
- Draft Position #3
- Draft Position #2
- Draft Position #1

Round 3

4th Player

- Draft Position #1
- Draft Position #2
- Draft Position #3
- Draft Position #4

- Draft Position #5
- Draft Position #6