

THE OFFICIAL PLAYING RULES, GUIDELINES, AND SPECIFICATIONS

FOR THE SPORT OF HORSESHOE PITCHING (aka The RGS Book)

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PLAYING RULES – This section explains the playing rules of horseshoes and may specify a general or specific penalty for violations. These rules apply for all NHPA-sanctioned events, which includes tournament play and/or league play. All contestants, including pacers and/or league substitutes, must be current NHPA members (see Bylaws for additional information). Failure of contestants to abide by these rules may result in penalties that range from a verbal reminder, to loss of points, to forfeiture of games, or to suspension of membership, while failure of the Tournament/League Officials (or designees) to monitor and enforce these rules could result in penalties to the club or Charter. This same information can also be found on the NHPA website at www.horseshoepitching.com and is recommended for anyone playing the game for recreation or non-sanctioned play.

RULE 1 – PITCHING DIVISIONS

Section A – Juniors (See GUIDELINES PART II REQUIREMENT 6, for exceptions and additional information)

- 1. Junior Cadets** (any pitcher nine (9) years old or younger for the entire calendar year)
Junior Cadets may pitch from any place on the extended or full-distance platforms and shall observe the twenty-foot (20') foul line. **Note:** Junior Cadets may choose to move into the Junior Boys or Junior Girls prior to the age guidelines, but cannot return to the Junior Cadets, once this declaration has been made.
- 2. Junior Boys** (any male pitcher eighteen (18) years old or younger for the entire calendar year)
Junior Boys may pitch from any place on the extended or full-distance platforms. They shall observe the twenty-seven-foot (27') foul lines. **Note:** Junior Boys may choose to move into the Open Men Division prior to the age guidelines, but cannot return to the Junior Boys, once this declaration has been made.
- 3. Junior Girls** (any female pitcher eighteen (18) years old or younger for the entire calendar year)
Junior Girls may pitch from any place on the extended or full-distance platforms. They shall observe the twenty-seven-foot (27') foul lines. **Note:** Junior Girls may choose to move into the Open Women Division prior to the age guidelines, but cannot return to the Junior Girls, once this declaration has been made.

Section B – Open Men (no age restriction)

Open Men contestants shall pitch from on or behind the full-distance platforms and shall observe the thirty-seven-foot (37') foul line.

Section C – Open Women (no age restriction)

Open Women contestants may pitch from any place on the extended or full-distance platforms and shall observe the twenty-seven-foot (27') foul line.

Section D – Seniors (become eligible to pitch in the Senior Division at any time during the calendar year that they become sixty (60) years old) **Note:** Seniors may choose to remain in the Open Men or Open Women Divisions.

- 1. Senior Men** shall pitch from on or behind the full-distance platforms and shall observe the thirty-seven-foot (37') foul line.
- 2. Senior Women** may pitch from any place on the extended or full-distance platforms and shall observe the twenty-seven-foot (27') foul line.

Section E – Elder Men (become eligible to pitch in the Elders Division at any time during the calendar year that they become seventy (70) years old)

- 1. Elder Men** may pitch from any place on either the extended or full-distance platforms, and shall observe the twenty-seven-foot (27') foul line. Elder Men must notify their Charter secretary, in advance, of the date that they intend to begin pitching from this shorter distance. Once a member declares himself a short distance pitcher, he must remain a short distance pitcher for that entire calendar year. **Note:** See RULE 11, Section D.1 for additional information about re-qualifying.
- 2. Physically Challenged Men** – Physically challenged, male pitchers less than seventy (70) years old may be given permission, by their governing Charter, to move onto the extended platforms in the *Elders Division* and observe the twenty-seven-foot (27') foul lines. The prior completion and approval of a Medical Exemption Form (available from Charter Secretaries) is required. At the World Tournament and at State Championship Tournaments, they shall compete in the Elders Division.

RULE 2 – GAME PREPARATION

Section A – Court Assignment

Each contestant shall find his or her court assignment and warm up on that court for their first game. The court shall be prepared for play in a timely manner so that all games can begin at about the same time.

Section B – Pit Preparation and Maintenance

Contestants (or designee) are responsible for preparing one of the pits of their assigned courts before each game. This preparation includes watering and turning of the clay (if needed), to keep it in a soft, putty-like condition. Upon completion, the pit material shall be level, with no evidence of a “dome” or “pocket” within the scoring area. For raised pits, the pit material should be prepared in the same way as above, and at a depth of four inches (4”), within the scoring area. Once a game has started, clay pit material within the scoring area may not be moved or altered without consent of the opponent. Sand or dirt pit material, however, may be re-leveled during the game, without consent of the opponent. Any pit material moved for the measurement of a shoe or for the removal of a “buried” shoe may be replaced.

Section C – Painting of Stakes

To make the stakes more visible for the contestants, they may be painted between games (white paint is often used) so that there is a good contrast between the color of the stake and the color of the backboard. The painting of stakes shall not be allowed while a game is in progress, unless both contestants are in agreement.

Section D – Start of Each Tournament/Class

The tournament officials will make an announcement when it is time for the tournament/class to begin. The first game should not begin before this announcement. The flip of a shoe(s) or coin(s) shall signify the beginning of each game. The winner of the flip will have choice of first or second pitch.

Section E – Court Rotation

At the end of each game, contestants shall go promptly to their next assigned court. If the court is vacant, they may practice here at this time. **After the games on adjacent courts are completed**, both pits shall be prepared for play (see Section B above). When the scorekeeper is ready, the contestants have the option of pitching no more than four (4) additional warm-up shoes each, and then the next game must begin immediately.

RULE 3 – PLAY OF THE GAME AND VALUE OF THE SHOE

Section A – Innings

The game is divided into innings. Each inning consists of four (4) pitched shoes; two (2) by each contestant.

Section B – Value of the Shoe

- 1. Pitched shoes** – After all shoes for the inning have been pitched, they are either considered to be “live shoes” or “dead shoes” and may then be scored accordingly.
 - (a) Live Shoe** – Refers to any shoe that has been pitched in compliance with the rules of the game and that comes to rest within the pit area.
 - (b) Dead Shoe** – Another term for a foul shoe that was delivered in non-compliance with one of the rules of the game. This term may also refer to a ringer that has been “cancelled” by an opponent’s ringer.
- 2. Shoe in Count**
 - (a) Ringers** – A ringer is a *live* shoe that comes to rest while encircling the stake. A straightedge touching either the points or any part of the heel calks of the shoe must clear (not touch) the stake in order to be declared a ringer. A ringer has a value of three (3) points.
 - (b) Points** – A *live* shoe that is not a ringer, but comes to rest six inches (6”) or closer to the stake, has a value of one (1) point. This includes a “leaner”.
- 3. Shoe out of Count** – A shoe that comes to rest more than six inches (6”) from the stake is a shoe “out of count” and has no scoring value. A foul shoe (see Rule 4 for additional information) is also considered to be a shoe that is out of count, no matter where it comes to rest.

Section C – Delivery of Shoes

- 1. Delivery** – The contestant pitching first shall deliver both shoes (one at a time) and then the other contestant shall deliver both shoes (one at a time). A contestant may deliver the shoes from either the left or right pitching platform, but in any one inning, both shoes must be delivered from the same platform. A contestant shall pitch the entire tournament with the same hand/arm, except in the case of a medical emergency (to be determined by the Tournament/League Officials).
- 2. Time Limit** – A contestant shall deliver both shoes within thirty (30) seconds. This time limitation shall be determined by a judge and will start when the contestant steps onto the pitching platform with the intention of pitching and is in a “set” position for the first pitch.

Exceptions:

(a) Extra time will be allowed to repair a damaged shoe (filing a burr for example).

(b) If a contestant becomes distracted due to unusual playing conditions or by another contestant or spectator, they will not be penalized for this additional time.

3. **Accidental Release** – Any shoe that leaves a contestant's hand once the final step (if taken) and final forward swing of the delivery process has started, shall count as a pitched shoe. A shoe that is accidentally dropped by a contestant before the final step (if taken) and final forward swing has started, shall not be considered a foul shoe and may be picked up and pitched.

Section D – Position of Contestants During Delivery

1. **The Pitcher** – During the entire address and release of a shoe, the contestant must not start or step completely outside the platform with either foot.

Exceptions:

(a) A contestant observing the thirty-seven-foot (37') foul line may start directly behind the platform provided they step within it when they release the shoe.

(b) A physically challenged contestant must have at least some contact with the platform and be completely behind the twenty-seven-foot (27') foul line when the shoe is released.

2. **The Opponent** – When not pitching, the opponent shall stand quietly and stationary on or behind the same court's opposite pitching platform and at least two feet (2') behind the contestant who is pitching from the same or adjacent court. In mixed-distance pitching, a short-distance contestant who pitches first must return to this position; on or behind the forty-foot (40') pitching platform.
3. **The Contestants** – If both contestants use the same pitching platform to deliver their shoes, the contestant pitching first should cross over (in front of the pit) to the other platform and then move back to the position described in # 2, above. As the first contestant is crossing over in front, the second contestant should be crossing over and onto the same platform, from the rear. If the contestants use opposite platforms, the contestant who pitches first should step directly back to the position described in # 2, above.

RULE 4 – FLOW OF THE GAME**Section A – Possible Delays**

1. **Scoring** – Once the four (4) shoes of an inning have been pitched, the contestants shall walk to the opposite pit to determine the score for the inning and retrieve their shoes. No shoe shall be moved before its' scoring value is determined. If this decision is in doubt, a judge shall be called. The judge shall make the necessary measurements and determine the scoring for the shoe(s) in question. To help speed up play, contestants are encouraged to carry measuring tools and to make their own decisions on scoring, whenever possible. Play shall continue in a similar fashion for each inning until the game is completed.
2. **Opposite Stake** – No contestant shall walk to the opposite stake (except to remove a foul shoe) or ask to be informed about the position of any pitched shoes prior to the completion of an inning.
3. **Spare Shoes** – At any one time, a contestant shall carry and use only two (2) sanctioned horseshoes during the course of a game. A spare shoe or shoes should be taken along to the courts in case of a broken shoe or if the contestant chooses to switch shoes. Shoes may be switched between innings, but not during an inning, unless a shoe breaks.
4. **Wrong Shoe** – If it is discovered during an inning that a contestant has pitched the shoe of an opponent (and if the opponent agrees), the remaining shoes may be pitched and the score will be based on the shoes they pitched. If the contestants do not agree on pitching the remaining shoes, then the shoes pitched shall be picked up and the entire inning shall be re-pitched, using the correct shoes. If the contestants fail to discover this error until after all four (4) shoes have been pitched, the inning shall be scored on the basis of whatever shoes they pitched. If agreement cannot be reached, a judge shall be called. Based upon input from the contestants, the judge shall either determine the scoring for the inning or void it and order the inning to be re-pitched.
5. **Moving The Shoe Or Stake** – When a *contestant* is measuring a shoe and the shoe (or the stake) is accidentally moved, the inning shall be scored only if the contestants can come to an agreement. If no agreement can be reached, a judge shall be called. The judge shall either determine the scoring or void the inning and order it to be re-pitched. When a *judge* is measuring a shoe and the shoe (or the stake) is accidentally moved, the judge shall either determine the scoring for the inning or void it and order it to be re-pitched.

Exceptions: Any shoes for which point values have been agreed upon by the contestants (such as ringers which may have been removed to measure other shoes) should not be re-pitched or have their value changed due to a re-pitch of other shoes. Only the shoe(s) in question when the shoe or stake was moved should be ordered re-pitched by the judge. If one or more shoes are below the shoe(s) in question, they shall remain in place for the re-pitch and shall be scored at the completion of the inning.

6. **Leaving The Courts** – If a contestant has to leave the area of the court complex between games for a legitimate reason, they shall notify their next opponent, the scorekeeper, or a Tournament/League Official and shall return soon after the last game of that round is completed. Failure to return in a reasonable period of time (to be determined by the Tournament/League Officials) will result in the forfeiture of that *next* game.

RULE 5 – FOUL SHOES

Section A – Removal from Pit

A *foul shoe* is a shoe that is delivered in non-compliance with one of the rules listed below. It scores as a shoe “out of count” (see RULE 3, Section B.3) and is to be removed from the pit (if it appears to be within the scoring area of the stake) before any more shoes are pitched. **Note:** Live shoes already in the pit area that may be disturbed by a foul shoe (or other live shoes), are not to be removed, unless they are knocked into foul territory and then come to rest in the scoring area. Live shoes shall be scored “as they lie”, after all shoes for the inning have been pitched.

Section B – Enforcing Violations

1. Enforced by Judge

The following are rules violations that must be spotted and called by an assigned judge. The penalty is to declare the shoe a foul shoe.

- (a) Any shoe pitched when the contestant, during the delivery, has stepped on or over the foul line before releasing the shoe.
- (b) Any shoe pitched when the contestant has started or stepped completely outside the pitching platform with either foot before releasing the shoe (see exceptions in RULE 3, Section D-1a, 1b).
- (c) Any shoe not delivered within the thirty (30) second time limit (see RULE 3, Section C-2).

2. Monitored by Judge and Contestants

The following occurrences are also considered foul shoes and, where it applies, the shoes must be removed from the pit (if they appear to be in the scoring area of the stake) before any more shoes are delivered, unless all contestants in that game agree to leave a foul shoe where it is.

- (a) Any shoe pitched with the opposite hand/arm; in the same tournament (See also Rule 3, Section C.I).
- (b) The second shoe, if it is pitched from a different platform than the first shoe.
- (c) Any shoe that contacts the backboard, platform, court frame, or any ground outside the pit area before it comes to rest.
- (d) Any shoe that strikes a permanent object such as a tree limb, wire, indoor court ceiling, etc. **Note:** A shoe that strikes a foreign, moving object is not foul and may be re-pitched.
- (e) The second shoe if the contestant changes shoes after the first shoe has been pitched. The only exception is if the first shoe has broken and qualifies for a re-pitch.
- (f) A contestant’s shoe(s), if the contestant removes any shoe before the scoring of that shoe has been agreed upon. If the contestants cannot agree, a judge shall be called to determine the scoring or may order the inning re-pitched.

RULE 6 – SCORING THE GAME, CALLING THE SCORE

Section A – Methods of Scoring

There are *two methods* of scoring the game of horseshoes: *cancellation scoring* and *count-all scoring*. The method of scoring to be used shall be announced by the Tournament/League Officials before the tournament begins. **Note:** Shoes that land outside of the “in count” area or that are declared foul shoes (see RULE 4) shall score zero (0) points.

- 1. **Cancellation Scoring** – In cancellation scoring, the ringers of one contestant *cancel* the ringers of the opponent. Cancelled ringers are also referred to as “dead” ringers. **Note:** only *one* contestant can score in each inning.
 - (a) **Ringer Point Values** – The ringer(s) of one contestant cancel the ringer(s) of the opponent. Any cancelled ringer scores zero (0) points. Any un-cancelled (live) ringer scores three (3) points.
 - (b) **Shoes In Count** – A shoe six (6”) inches or closer to the stake is “in count” and shall score one (1) point under the following conditions:
 - 1. If there are two (2) cancelled (dead) ringers and no live ringer, the closest shoe to the stake, which is in count, shall score one (1) point.
 - 2. If there are no ringers, the closest shoe in count shall score one (1) point. If the other shoe of the same contestant is the second closest shoe in count, it shall also score one (1) point.
 - 3. If there is one un-cancelled (live) ringer and if the other shoe, of the scoring contestant, is the closest in-count shoe to the stake, it shall score one (1) point (a total of four (4) points).

4. Opposing contestant's shoes that are touching the stake, or that are in count and determined to be an equal distance from the stake, shall cancel each other and, like cancelled ringers, shall score zero (0) points. In this situation, the next closest shoe in count (if there is one) shall score one (1) point.
2. **Count-all Scoring** – In count-all scoring, *both* contestants receive credit for the points they score in each inning.
 - (a) **Point Values** – Each contestant may score zero (0), one (1), two (2), three (3), four (4), or six (6) points per inning.
 - (b) **“Ringers Only”** – A variation of count-all scoring where the contestants only receive credit for the *ringers* they pitch, for all innings of the game. In this format, each ringer is worth one (1) point. Each contestant may score zero (0), one (1), or two (2) points per inning. This type of scoring should be limited to higher percentage classes. **Note:** Single points are not countable in this format.

Section B – Calling the Score

1. Cancellation Play

- (a) **Called By** – The score shall be called to the scorekeeper by the contestant who scores one or more points, inning by inning. If no points are scored, the contestant who pitched second in the previous inning will call the score.
- (b) **The Correct Call** – When calling the score, ringers (if made) shall be reported first, and then points (if made). **Note:** Contestants from different regions may use different phrases for calling the scores. (Recommended and alternative calls can be found in GUIDELINES PART I, #2.)

2. Count-all Play

- (a) **Called By** – The score shall be called to the scorekeeper by only one of the two contestants, for the entire game, inning by inning. The person who calls the score shall be determined by Sanctioned League rules or by the Tournament/League Officials.
- (b) **The Correct Call** – The caller shall report his/her score first, followed by the opponent's score. Since there are no cancelled ringers, only number scores shall be reported (see Section A.2, above). **Note:** It is most important that the scorekeeper credits each contestant with their correct score and understands how many ringers are associated with each number called (see GUIDELINES PART I, #3).

Section C – Recording the Score

The score sheet (not the scoring device) shall be the official record of the game. When possible, contestants are encouraged to pay close attention to the score at all times. If a question or discrepancy occurs regarding the correct score, the contestants may approach the scorekeeper between innings (or during their half inning) to clarify the situation. If the discrepancy cannot be corrected to the satisfaction of both contestants, a judge or Tournament/League Official shall be called to make the final decision before play resumes.

RULE 7 – PITCHING ROTATION DURING THE GAME

Section A – Cancellation Rotation

After the flip of a shoe(s) or coin(s), the winner will choose who pitches first. If the game is to be played under cancellation scoring, there are two (2) ways to determine who will pitch first in the *next* inning, once the game has started. The method to be used shall be determined and announced before play begins, by the Tournament/League Officials.

1. **Cancellation Play** – The contestant who scored in the preceding inning shall pitch first in the next inning. If neither contestant scores, the contestant who pitched last in the preceding inning shall pitch first in the next inning.
2. **Alternate First Pitch** – Alternate first pitch is used to guarantee each contestant an equal number of first and second pitches during a game. It may also allow for differing pitching conditions. If the game is to be played to a shoe limit, it is recommended that this limit be a number divisible by four (4). Alternate first pitch shall be done in one (1) of three (3) ways:
 - (a) One contestant shall pitch first in innings 1, 4-5, 8-9, 12-13, 16-17, etc. while the other contestant shall pitch first in innings 2-3, 6-7, 10-11, 14-15, etc. until the game is completed. This is the fairest way and is recommended.
 - (b) One contestant shall pitch first in innings 1-2, 5-6, 9-10, 13-14, etc. while the other contestant shall pitch first in innings 3-4, 7-8, 11-12, 15-16, etc. until the game is completed.
 - (c) One contestant shall pitch first from one end of the court, and the opponent shall pitch first from the opposite end.

Section B – Count-All Rotation

Any game played using count-all scoring shall also use one of the alternate-pitch formats, described above in Section A-2.

Section C – Handicap Rotation

Any game played under any kind of handicap system shall use one of the alternate-pitch formats, described above in Section A-2.

Section D – Pacer Rotation

If a pacer is used, the pacer will always pitch last; for all innings (see GUIDELINES PART I, #5 for additional information about pacers).

Section E – Pitching Out Of Turn

If it is discovered during an inning (before all four (4) shoes are pitched) that the wrong contestant has pitched first, the shoes pitched so far in that inning shall be re-pitched. If the error is not discovered until after all four (4) shoes have been delivered, they shall be scored as they lie and the original rotation shall be re-established for the rest of the game. If no agreement can be reached, a judge shall be called. The judge shall either determine the scoring or void the inning and order it to be re-pitched.

RULE 8 – LENGTH OF GAMES, BREAKING OF TIE GAMES

Section A – Length of Games

There are three (3) options:

1. **Point Limit** – The game shall be played to a pre-determined number of points. Forty (40) points is a suggested amount. The first contestant to reach (or exceed) that amount is the winner.
2. **Shoe Limit** – The game shall be played to a pre-determined even number of shoes. Forty (40) or fifty (50) shoes is a suggested amount. When that number is reached, the contestant with the highest score is the winner.
3. **Point Limit or Shoe Limit** – For example, forty (40) points or fifty (50) shoes, whichever comes first.

Section B – Breaking of Tie Games

There are two (2) options:

1. **Game Remains Tied** – Each contestant may receive $\frac{1}{2}$ win and $\frac{1}{2}$ loss. (This option must be used if a handicap system is in effect).
2. **Additional Innings** – A two-inning tiebreaker may be played, using the same method of play that was used to begin the game. In the event of another tie, this same procedure shall be continued until the tie is broken. **Note:** In “Point Limit or Shoe Limit” games (see A-3, above), the contestant who *may* reach (or exceed) the point limit *first* is the winner.

RULE 9 – BROKEN OR CRACKED SHOES

Section A – Broken Shoes

1. **Upon Delivery** – If a shoe breaks into two or more pieces as a result of striking the stake, striking another shoe in the pit, or from landing into the pit substance, the pieces shall be removed and a replacement shoe shall be pitched in its place. If the shoe breaks when striking the backboard or other “foul” territory, it shall be considered a foul shoe and may not be re-pitched.
2. **After Delivery** – If a shoe has landed in the pit and becomes broken by having another shoe land on it, it shall be scored, as it appears to lie. If there is any disagreement, a judge shall be called. The judge shall either determine the scoring for the inning or order a replacement shoe to be re-pitched.

Section B – Cracked Shoes

If it is discovered that a shoe is cracked (but not completely broken into two or more pieces), it shall be scored as it lies. If there is any disagreement, a judge shall be called. The judge shall either determine the scoring for the inning or order a replacement shoe to be re-pitched. In any event, a cracked shoe must be replaced before the game can continue.

RULE 10 – LOOSE OR BROKEN STAKES

Section A – Loose Stakes

Stakes that are obviously loose, and can be easily moved out of position, shall be replaced before Sanctioned League or Tournament play begins. If a stake becomes loosened *during* Sanctioned League or Tournament play, immediate replacement is recommended. If this is not possible, care should be taken *not* to move the stake during the measurement of shoes. This stake shall be replaced before the next sanctioned event.

Section B – Broken Stakes

If a stake appears to have become broken during sanctioned play, a judge or Tournament/League Official shall be called to make this determination before the stake or shoes are moved. If the stake *is* determined to be broken, the game shall be discontinued at the end of the previous inning and the stake shall be replaced. If a stake breaks as the result of being struck by the fourth shoe of the inning, then the inning may be counted. If the contestants cannot agree on this, then a judge shall be called to determine the scoring for the inning or void it and order the inning to be re-pitched, once the game resumes. Once the scoring for the inning is determined, the Tournament/League Officials may decide to resume play after the stake is replaced, to complete the game on another court, or to complete the game at a later time. A judge or Tournament/League Official will notify the contestants about resumption of play.

RULE 11 – TOURNAMENT/LEAGUE PLAY

Section A – Standard Method of Sanctioned Tournament Play

The standard method of NHPA Sanctioned Tournament play is round-robin play with contestants being seeded into classes using current NATSTATS ringer percentages. Each contestant will play all other contestants in the Class. Court assignments and the order of play will follow a posted or printed schedule, normally given to each contestant at the beginning of the contest. To credit contestants with an official tournament for NATSTATS purposes, at least half of the scheduled games must be completed, or a minimum of one hundred (100) shoes must be pitched.

Section B – Determining Class Winners, Breaking of Ties

The Tournament Officials shall decide how Class winners are to be determined and how ties are to be broken and shall announce these procedures before tournament play begins.

1. **Class Winners** – At the end of round-robin play, win/loss records or ringer percentage shall determine Class winners. In addition, total points may be used if the scoring was done using the count-all method.
2. **Ties** – If ties occur, they shall be broken by playoff, ringer percentage, total points, who-beat-whom, or other methods that were not used to determine the winners. In World, National, Regional and State Championships, all ties for first place in the *Championship Class* of a designated Division must be broken by a playoff game.

Section C – Ringer Percentage

A contestant's game and tournament ringer percentage shall be determined by dividing the total number of ringers by the total number of shoes pitched. Shoes pitched in playoff games and in extra innings pitched, because of tie games, shall be included in these totals.

Section D – Seeding Contestants

Contestants shall be seeded into Tournament Classes based on their current NATSTATS ringer percentage at the time of the entry deadline. An exception could be the top seeding of a defending champion (not required) when his/her current NATSTATS ringer percentage isn't the highest percentage within the Championship group. All NATSTATS average ringer percentages shall be based on the three (3) highest NHPA sanctioned events pitched in the preceding twelve (12) months, or among the last ten (10) sanctioned events pitched during the same period, whichever occurs first. The NATSTATS average ringer percentage is calculated by dividing the total number of ringers by the total number of shoes pitched for those three (3) events.

1. **No Current Average** – Any contestant without a current ringer average at their pitching distance shall pitch a minimum of one hundred (100) consecutive shoes on a sanctioned court to establish their tournament seeding percentage. This qualifying must be scored in writing and witnessed by two (2) NHPA members no more than thirty (30) days prior to the entry deadline. Alternately, NHPA Sanctioned League ringer percentage averages may be used if they are based on four hundred (400) or more shoes.
2. **Less Than Three (3) Events** – Contestants with less than three (3) sanctioned events shall use the combined ringer percentage average of the one (1) or two (2) sanctioned events in which they have pitched. This may include the one hundred (100)-shoe qualifier described above.
3. **Other Options** – The number of sanctioned events required for entering a tournament may vary and shall be determined and announced in advance by the Tournament/League Officials.

Section E – Mixed Classes

If there are not enough entrants to form a competitive Class within a given Tournament Division (see Rule 1), contestants should be placed into more competitive "mixed" Classes where the overall ringer percentage "spread" will be less. Mixed Classes are not allowed, however, in some Championship Classes/Divisions of State Tournaments and also at the World Tournament (see also GUIDELINES, PART II, REQUIREMENT #3 "Mixing", and REQUIREMENT #4 "Divisions").

Section F – Handicapping

Handicapping may be used in open tournaments and in league play. The Tournament/League Officials shall determine the amount of the handicap. Class winners will be determined by win/loss record or by total points. An alternate-pitch format shall be used. For the breaking of ties, the options in Section B (above) may apply, except that ringer percentage shall not be used. Game handicapping shall not be used in any World, National, or Regional Tournament or in the Championship Class of a designated Division of any State Championship Tournament.

Section G – Forfeits

In tournament competition, the wins and losses and all statistics accumulated shall remain in the books for a contestant who has to forfeit one (1) or more games, for any reason. A contestant may miss any number of games, due to illness or other legitimate reason approved by the Tournament/League Officials, and still be permitted to return to competition. If a contestant forfeits for an unapproved reason, they will not be allowed to return to the competition and will forfeit all prize money and/or awards for that event. Any contestant who forfeits games shall finish wherever their record puts them in the standings, unless they forfeit for unapproved reasons; then they shall finish in last place. If forfeiting for an unapproved reason, this member shall also be subject to a one (1) year suspension from the NHPA (see Bylaws for additional information).

RULE 12 – APPROPRIATE NHPA MEMBER CONDUCT

Section A – On the courts

An NHPA member, while in competition, shall make no disturbing noises or movements that would distract the opponent or contestants on adjacent courts. Other inappropriate behavior would include profanity, abusive language, obscene gestures, etc. The first offense shall call for a warning from the judge or a Tournament/League Official. A second offense shall call for a forfeiture of the game being played. Any further offenses shall call for a forfeiture of all games. This member shall also be subject to a one (1) year suspension from the NHPA (see Bylaws for additional information).

Section B – Sportsmanship

Any NHPA member who indulges in heckling or unfair rooting, uses profanity or abusive language, makes obscene gestures, or exhibits any other form of un-sportsmanlike conduct toward the contestants, Tournament/League Officials, or other NHPA members who are in the area of the courts, shall be subject to expulsion from the Tournament/League and from the Tournament/League site. This member shall also be subject to a one (1) year suspension from the NHPA (see Bylaws for additional information).

Section C – Dress Code

All contestants competing in a World Tournament shall have, as a minimum, their last name and State or Country abbreviation professionally lettered on the back of their shirts. Said shirts cannot be sleeveless. No cut-offs are permitted and closed-toe shoes must be worn. Further dress code restrictions may be imposed by the Executive Council if all entrants are notified no later than the mailing date of their pitching schedules. This Dress Code may also be adopted at the Charter level *or* may be enforced at the State *or* local level, if announced in advance by the Tournament/League Officials. Contestants that do not comply may not be allowed to participate in the event.

Section D – Alcohol, Tobacco Products, and Illegal Controlled Substances

During the World and State tournaments, the use of alcohol, any form of tobacco, or illegal controlled substances while in the confines of the courts shall be prohibited for all contestants, officials, and scorekeepers. This rule may also be adopted at the Charter level *or* may be enforced at the State *or* local level, if announced in advance by the Tournament/League Officials. Violations may result in the forfeiture of games.

Section E – Cell Phones

During the World and State tournaments, the use of cell phones shall not be allowed by anyone on the courts. This rule may also be adopted at the Charter level *or* may be enforced at the State *or* local level, if announced in advance by the Tournament/League Officials. Violations may result in the forfeiture of games.

Section F – Protests

If a contestant does not agree with a ruling or decision, a protest shall be made to the judge or Tournament/League Official(s) at the time the problem occurs. If the problem cannot be resolved on the courts, the Tournament/League Official(s) shall make the final ruling on all protests. This ruling may occur after the game has been completed.