



# The Captain's Handbook

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**For Official League Regulations, League Calendar, and Days of Play  
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**PLEASE NOTE:** This guide is provided to help understand Western NC league tennis. THESE ARE NOT governing rules. This guide will NOT be the controlling factor. Any failure to comply with the USTA League Tennis National, Southern, North Carolina, and Local WNC Regulations will not be excused on the grounds that you relied on this guide.

# Thank you for being a captain!

USTA League Captains are the largest group of volunteers in the USTA! Your willingness to serve your team and the League in this leadership role is greatly appreciated. This guide was created to make your job easier and to provide tips for success.

**Have fun!** Treasure the camaraderie and friendships with your teammates and enjoy the spirit of competition!

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## 1. Before the Season Starts

**Forming a team.** Teams are formed in many ways: (1) groups of friends who start a team; or (2) structured by club pros/directors from their membership ranks. If you are looking for players for your team: check with your facility, local pro shops, local league coordinator, local USTA website and your teammates. Don't limit your team! Half the fun of USTA League Tennis is meeting and playing with newfriends.

**Getting Registered.** The required number of team members must be registered on your roster in TennisLink before the league deadline. To register, players must be current members of the USTA and have either a valid computer rating or will need to self-rate. All players should check and update their contact information when they register.

**League Regulations.** Captains and league players should read and follow the rules and regulations. Local, State, Sectional and National regulations are all available on the web. Captains should be familiar with these rules, know where to find them, and convey them to their players. Suggestion: acquire the *Friend at Court Handbook of Rules & Regulations*, which includes *The Code* for un-officiated matches to use as a general reference for rules of tennis.

**Team Meeting.** Decide team philosophy: (1) team playing to win or playing for fun? (2) Will only the strongest players play matches, or will everyone participate equally? (3) Who will decide the match lineups? (4) type of team – are you accepting new members? Let LLC know if you need players. Everyone on the team should agree to have a successful season. Share championship dates with the team and determine at the start of the season if your team can attend. Communicate with your team - create and share a contact list, decide how team expenses, court fees, balls, etc., will be paid. It is helpful to have a coach, pro, team manager, or co-captain assisting you with team lineups.

**Access Player Roster & Captain Report.** As a captain, you can access these two important reports in TennisLink. Captains are encouraged to print hard copies of both reports to keep in their tennis bag. The Player Roster gives contact information on your team members EXCEPT for their email addresses. You will need to contact your team members by phone or text and request the email address due to USTA privacy requirements for players. The Captain Report provides phone and email contact information for the opposing captains in your flight.

## 2. One Week Prior to Match

**Home matches.** While facilities have been given and approved the season schedule, you should always confirm your court reservations with your facility. Are they reserved for your team? If rain is in the forecast, are indoor courts an option?

**Contact the opposing captain.** Confirm When (day/time); Where (get directions if necessary); Match Duration (will all courts be played at the same time, will this be a split or a timed match?); Court fees? Are spectators allowed? Are there any specific facility rules? Is water offered on-site, or will players need to bring their own? Who is the captain, co-captain, or acting captain for the match? If you are not going to be present at the match, confirm your co-captain or appoint an acting captain to arrange pre-match details.

## 3. Day Before Match

**Verify your lineup.** Arrange alternates to be available at the match.

**Check your roster on TennisLink.** Make sure all players are registered.

**Plan transportation and arrival time.** Arrange carpools if necessary.

**Bag Check.** Remind your team to always have the following in their tennis bag for each match: (1) a new, unopened can of balls; (2) a list of medical info/contacts in case of emergency; (3) a water bottle (not always supplied by facilities and (4) basic first aid items.

## 4. Match Day – Before Match

**Print match scorecard from TennisLink.** All eligible players, including any last-day additions to the roster, will be listed. Collect money from your team and pay court and/or guest fees if necessary.

**Provide balls for home matches.** Every match should be played with new USTA-approved tennis balls.

**Meet with the opposing captain and go over any ground rules.** Discuss which match will be played on which court (captains must mutually agree before lines can play on different court surfaces); which team will use what color score-tenders; bathroom locations, etc.

**Exchange scorecard lineups BEFORE players walk onto the courts.** All players should be present and ready to play before exchanging lineups.

## 5. Immediately After the Match

**Get the score from each court and record it on your scorecard.** Note the winner and record the score from the winner's perspective.

**Get the opposing captain's signature after the match is over.** Both captains should agree on the winners, scores, and score entry.

**Meet with your players and discuss any questions or disputes.** It's always fun to go and have a meal together afterward to promote team bonding!

## 6. After the Match

**Record your match scores in TennisLink.** Winning captains should enter scores within 48 hours of the match completion. Remember to put the winning team scores first in each set. 1-0 is used for the third set tiebreaker. Click to designate the winner and click the status of the match. Non-winning captains should check the entered scores and confirm the match in TennisLink. If the score has not been entered within 48 hours, the non-winning captain may enter it.

**If a score or player name is incorrect, reach out to the opposing captain to confirm the correct name or score.** If you can reach an agreement, send a confirming final email to your League Coordinator, copying the opposing captain. If you and the opposing captain cannot resolve a name or scoring dispute, contact your League Coordinator. All corrections must be made in TennisLink within two weeks of the match date.

## 7. Team Composition

**Minimum/maximum number of players on a team.** Teams are required to have a minimum number of players registered on TennisLink by the league registration close date. Check WNC Local League Regulations for the exact minimum and maximum numbers.

**Age.** Players must reach the minimum age for the division they are playing in by December 31st of the current calendar year except for 18 & Over, in which players must be 18 prior to

registration (ex/ A player who turns 55 in November, can play in the 55 & Over age division the entire calendar year. For instance, they could play in spring leagues).

**NTRP Level.** Players may play one level (0.5 point) above their current NTRP rating. For Mixed Doubles, partners may not be separated by more than 1.0 NTRP point. In Southern Combo Doubles, the combined level of each doubles pair cannot exceed the team level.

**USTA membership.** All players must be current members of the USTA through the respective league seasons. No renewals are allowed during the local league season.

**Residency.** Teams advancing to a State Championship must maintain a roster on TennisLink, with the majority of players residing within the WNC league area.

## 8. Line-ups and Defaults/Forfeits

**Court assignments.** You are not required to field your team in order of strength, except in the Tri-Level Leagues, where the highest NTRP level must play on court 1, the second highest on court 2, and the lowest on court 3.

**Staggered Matches.** Lines are played from “the top down” based on court availability. The entire team must be present before an individual match may begin unless both team captains agree 24 hrs in advance in written email form to allow the staggered courts to arrive 1 hr later (ex/ a 5-court match begins with line 1 and 2 singles, and line 1 doubles; line 2 and 3 doubles arrive 1 hour later and begin once a court becomes available).

**15-minute Default Time.** The match is a default at 15:01 minutes late & considered a 6-0, 6-0 win for the player/team present. If the player arrives before the defaulted time, he/she is to receive a 5-minute injury prevention warm-up. The 15-minute default time means all players must be on the court – not merely at the facility, going to the bathroom, stretching, etc.

**Substitutions.** A substitution can be made before the first point is played (first service attempt) if there is a disqualification, injury, illness, or no-show. The substitution must be made before the 15-minute default time has elapsed.

**Line Defaults.** Defaults will be “from the bottom up,” defaulting the lowest position(s) first. For Tri-Level matches, you would default whichever line could not be fielded.

**Default notification.** Captains are not required to notify an opposing captain if they cannot fill a position. **Notifying the team of a forfeit before the match is a courtesy. This should be done via e-mail or text and is binding. (follow-up with a call to ensure the other captain got the email).** If a match is rained out, forfeits made before match time are no longer valid.

**Team default.** If a team does not have enough players to play the majority of individual matches, the opposing team will be credited with a total team default and will win each individual match 6-0, 6-0. If neither team has the required minimum, the match shall be scored as a double-team default, and neither team will receive credit for a win. NOTE: Read the suggested lineups in the WNC Local Regs to avoid default. Teams with full team defaults may be subject to grievances and be ineligible to advance to championships.

## 9. When Can a Match be Rescheduled?

**Inclement Weather.** Rain, Lightning, Tornado, or Extreme Temperatures (defined as heat index >100, or cold temperatures <20F)

**Early Play.** When teams agree to play a position before the scheduled match date.

**League Championships.** When 4 or more players on a team are involved in a USTA League Championship or approved local USTA Tournament (3 for Singles League), then the team can reschedule the match either by playing before the scheduled date or within 2 weeks after the scheduled match, as long as the makeup match occurs within the league season dates.

## 10. Inclement Weather (review regulations in WNC Local Regulations)

**Decision to Postpone.** Matches should NOT be called off until BOTH captains are certain and AGREE that the courts will be unplayable at match time due to inclement weather (or the facility makes the decision). If telephone contact is not made between captains, both teams must show up at the match site ready to play.

**Indoor Courts.** If indoor courts are going to be used to avoid postponement or for makeup, it is recommended, but not required, that both teams share the cost of the indoor court rental. If a team is willing to pay, without help from the opposing team, for indoor courts to avoid a reschedule due to inclement weather, teams are required to play the match to avoid rescheduling.

**Before Play Begins.** If play has not begun on ANY court, any defaults on the scorecard are reinstated and can be made up. For any court that has not begun play (first service attempt), teams may substitute players as long as the substitutions are not listed on the original scorecard.

**After Play Begins.** If one court has begun play (first service attempt) and the match is interrupted due to inclement weather, all defaults stand. For any court that has begun play, lineups will stand. The match should resume from the point, game, and set score existing when the match was stopped. Players should also make note of who was serving, service order, and the sides being played.

**Rescheduling Guidelines.** Captains should determine a mutually agreeable time within 2 weeks of the originally scheduled match AND BEFORE the end of the season (Make-ups at the end of the season may have less than 2 weeks). If one make-up date for the whole match is not feasible, individual lines/courts may be rescheduled separately. If play had not begun on a court, the player's name(s) do not have to be exchanged by the captains before the makeup date/time. Except in Tri-Level, lines that had not begun and are made up individually are reported from the top down, with line 1 being the first line scheduled and played, line 2 the second, etc., regardless of which line the players were initially intended to play. This allows any defaults to be from the bottom up of the line-up as required by our regulations. If you are having trouble getting the matches rescheduled, contact the league coordinator and we will assign a day and time for the make-up match.

## 11. Early Play Rule

**Must be mutually agreed upon.** The team match (or individual lines) may be played early if both captains agree. The early matches must be played prior to the originally scheduled date. Captains are encouraged to work with each other in order to minimize forfeits.

**The new date now becomes your official scheduled match date.** Notification should be emailed to the League Coordinator.

**If inclement weather occurs,** the match date reverts to the original date published on Tennis Link.

**Court reservations.** It is the responsibility of the requesting player/team captain to secure the court(s) for the newly scheduled match and to release the unused court(s) from the original date and time.

## 12. Match Scoring / Team Standings

**Scoring Format.** Best 2 out of 3 sets with a 10-point match tiebreaker used in lieu of the third set. The Coman Tiebreak format will be used for all tiebreakers.

**To win a Team match.** A team must win a majority of the individual courts played.

**To win the WNC Local League.** The winner of the local level is the team with the best record. If teams are tied, the tie will be broken as follows: (1) winner of most individual matches; (2) head-to-head; (3) loser of the fewest number of sets; (4) loser of the fewest number of games; (5) the highest percentage of games won vs, games played and (6) toss of a coin. In flights with a playoff within the level, the winner of the playoff would be the winner of the local league.

## 13. Qualifying for advancement to State Championships

**Team Roster.** League Champion Teams must have a minimum number of team members (enough to field a complete lineup) who are available to attend and eligible to compete at the State Championships.

**Minimum Matches Required by Team.** Teams must have played in a minimum of three local matches except in the cases where a team is advancing directly to the State Championships.

**Minimum Matches Required by Player.** Players must play in a minimum number of matches to be eligible to advance to the State Championships (except players on teams advancing directly) as follows:

**At least TWO local matches** (one default may count as part of the required matches if the player was present to accept the forfeit; the other match must actually be played)

- USTA Adult 18 & Over, 40 & Over, and 55 & Over
- USTA Mixed 18 & Over, 40 & Over

**At least ONE local match** (one default may count as part of the required matches if the player was present to accept the forfeit)

- USTA Adult 65 & Over
- USTA Mixed 55 & Over, and 65 & Over
- USTA Tri-Level (all ages)
- USTA Singles (all ages)
- Southern Combo Doubles (all ages)

## 14. Court Reminders for your players

**Time Rules and Breaks.** A restroom break is permissible at any time, but should preferably occur on an odd game changeover or between sets and is meant for genuine need. Other times to adhere to:

- Warm-up – 10 minutes
- Between points – 20 seconds (stray ball)
- No break after the first game of either set
- Changeover – 90 seconds (about 1 and a half minutes)
- Time between sets – 2 minutes
- Tie Break is continuous (no breaks during changeovers)

**Line calls.** The ball is always called good unless you are 100% sure that you saw the ball 100% out! Players make all calls on their side of the net. Line calls should be made immediately and clearly. Spectators DO NOT make calls. A player may not enlist the aid of a spectator in making a call.

**Cell phones, pagers, smart watches, etc. should be turned off during play.** (Comment: Use of a cell phone/smart watch is not allowed on the tennis courts at anytime during a match. Using a cell phone/smart watch in any way – calling, receiving messages, texting – gives the appearance of coaching.)

**If a cell phone rings,** it is considered a deliberate hindrance. If an opponent's cell phone rings during a point, a player may immediately stop play and claim the point.

**Don't walk behind a match while a point is in progress.** Use outer gates when entering the court.

**Only players assigned to an individual court should be on that court.**

**Wear tennis shoes** (required on clay courts).

**Unsportsmanlike Conduct** may result in a grievance being filed. Profanity, throwing your racket, hitting balls out of court, refusing to call out the score, and other unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated.

**Code of Conduct** Players and spectators are expected to always conduct themselves with honor and integrity with the highest level of sportsmanship, courtesy, and fairness. Players are encouraged to abide by the letter and spirit of the rules of play and to be gracious in both victory and defeat.