



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 because 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 new friends.

Getting Registered. The required number of team members must be registered on your roster in TennisLink before the deadline to set up a team. 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 online. 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* to use as a general reference for the rules of tennis in un-officiated matches such as USTA league.

Team Meeting. Hold a team meeting to establish your team's philosophy and expectations for the season. Key discussion points should include:

1. Is your team focused on competition and advancement, or is the primary goal to have fun?
2. Will match play be based on player strength, or will all team members have equal opportunities to participate?
3. Who will be responsible for setting match lineups?
4. What type of team will you have—are you open to adding new members? If you need additional players, inform the LLC.

To ensure a smooth and successful season, it's important for all players to be aligned on these decisions. Share championship dates with the team and determine early on whether your team would accept an invitation if eligible.

Keep communication clear and organized—create and distribute a team contact list, and decide how shared expenses (such as court fees and balls) will be handled. Having a co-captain or a facility pro assist with team lineups can also be beneficial.

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 and keep them in their tennis bag for easy reference. *The Player Roster* contains contact information for your team members. *The Captain Report* includes phone and email contact details for the opposing captains in your flight.

2. One Week Before a 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 staggered 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 a Match

Verify your lineup. Arrange alternates to be available at the match. Make sure all players are registered on TennisLink.

Plan transportation and arrival time. Arrange carpools if necessary. Give extra time for traffic.

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 the match*

Print match scorecard from TennisLink. All eligible players from both teams, including any last-day additions to the roster, will be listed.

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

Meet with the opposing captain (or acting 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. Scorecards must be exchanged no later than the scheduled match time. Both captains should complete and exchange their scorecards simultaneously. Once scorecards are exchanged, no changes to the line-up can be made unless a player is not on-site within 15 minutes of the match time or is injured during the warm-up. In these cases, captains can substitute an eligible player who is on-site and ready to play but is not listed on the original scorecard.

5. Match Day - *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.

Confirm the scores with the opposing captain. Both captains should agree on the winners, scores, and score entry. The winning captain should enter the scores in Tennislink and the opposing captain should confirm them.

Meet with your players and discuss the match. 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. Any disputes and notifications of errors must be made known immediately via email to the Local League Coordinator, copying the opposing team's captain. Changes will only be made for true errors agreed upon by all parties that impact a player's rating. Players' names entered for forfeited lines may not be changed after 48 hours.

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 meet the minimum age requirement for their division by December 31 of the current calendar year, except for the 18 & Over division, where players must be 18 before registering. For example, a player turning 55 in November is eligible to compete in the 55 & Over division for the entire year, including spring leagues.

NTRP Level. Players may compete at up to one level (0.5 higher) above their current NTRP rating. In *Southern Combo Doubles*, the combined NTRP level of each doubles pair cannot exceed the team's designated level. For teams with no local play, as well as certain flights with only two teams, at least 40% of rostered players must be at the official NTRP level of play. Refer to local regulations for specific requirements.

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 with no local play in Western NC (both direct advance or those participating in a qualifying event) must maintain their roster on TennisLink with a majority of players (greater than 50%) from within the Western NC 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 in advance in written 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 line 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 with an eligible player who is on-site and ready to play but is not listed on the original scorecard.

Line Defaults. Defaults are made “from the bottom up,” defaulting the lowest position(s) first. For Tri-Level matches, you default whichever NTRP line can 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.* 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), or after sunset when there are no court lights.

Early Play. When teams agree to play a position before the scheduled match date. A captain is not obligated to agree to play lines early, and declining is not poor sportsmanship. However, early play is encouraged to avoid a full-team default.

Championships. Match rescheduling is allowed if at least one-third of the total team roster is participating in or working at an approved event (see local regulations). The number of rescheduled lines is dependent on the number of players affected. Rescheduled lines would be made up following the inclement weather guidelines for make-ups.

Holidays. When a match is scheduled on one of the major holidays outlined in the local regulations, then the team may reschedule the entire match or individual lines 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. Teams are encouraged to play as many lines as possible on the date scheduled.

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 used to prevent a postponement or for a makeup match, it is recommended—but not required—that both teams share the rental cost. However, if one team is willing to cover the full cost to avoid rescheduling due to inclement weather, the match must be played as scheduled, provided the indoor courts are within 20 minutes of the home facility and available within 30 minutes of the scheduled match time—unless both captains agree otherwise.

Before Play Begins. If play has not begun on ANY court, and a match is rescheduled, 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. Within four (4) days of the postponed match, the two captains need to determine a mutually agreeable time within the reschedule window (14 days or the end of the season, whichever comes first). As soon as possible, the home captain should provide a minimum of two make-up date options based on the home facility availability. If an agreement on when to play the make-up can not be reached, the match date will be set for the last Friday in the make-up window (that is before the season ends) at the original match time. 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) should not 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.

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 to minimize full team defaults.

The new date now becomes your official scheduled match date. Agreement should be in writing (email or text).

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 or participating in a one-team qualifying event.

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 – 5 minutes
- Between points – 20 seconds (stray ball)

- No break after the first game of either set
- Changeover – 90 seconds
- 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. Use of a cell phone/smart watch is not allowed on the tennis courts at any time 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. All participants must abide by the rules in the FRIEND AT COURT (The USTA Handbook of Tennis Rules and Regulations).