

To all NHPA members and 2015 Convention Delegates . . . Please find below the Proposed Rules Changes (PRCs) that our NHPA Rules Committee* and/or NHPA Council members have advanced to the 2015 Charter Delegates for their consideration and voting at the World Tournament Convention that will be held later this year in Topeka, Kansas. It is most important that these proposals be discussed with your fellow pitchers and that your thoughts and opinions be communicated to your Charter delegates over the next couple of months as time allotted for further discussion at the Convention will be somewhat limited. Many thanks to the NHPA members who submitted proposals for consideration, and also to our Rules Committee members and NHPA Council.

* The current NHPA Rules Committee members are: Dan Sanders - Chairman (OH), Jerry LaBrosse (MN), Debby Michaud MA), Rich Altis (MO), Ron Kohn (MI), Coyce Allen (TX), and Gail Sluys (CA).

PRC # 1 - 2015 - Height of Protective Barrier **FAILED**

SECTION B – Other Court Requirements/Specifications

8. Backstops/Backboards and Protective Barrier

Current Language:

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

Proposed Change/addition: (see bold, italic, underlined below)

b. Protective Barrier - For safety reasons, all court complexes shall be surrounded by a protective barrier. This barrier should be at least eight feet (8') behind the stakes. A chain-link type of fence at least Five feet (5') high is highly recommended. ***To qualify for a Full Court Sanction, all new court construction after January 1, 2016 shall have a protective barrier behind the stakes that is at least five feet (5') high. This barrier must be capable of stopping errant shoes, and must be permanent in design. When replacing a protective barrier that is less than five feet (5') high, after 1/1/2016, the new barrier must be at least five feet (5') high.***

Reasons for change:

- This extra foot of fencing will increase protection to spectators, from an errant horseshoe hitting someone and causing possible serious injury. Additional Information: (highlights from your original e-mail) I feel it necessary to submit this proposal after witnessing an incident during our State Fair. There are numerous spectators who gather in the covered bleachers, standing at (or near) the surrounding fencing, and sitting on benches that are placed just outside the fence.

When the courts were constructed, we asked for, and they installed, five foot chain length fencing that has a bar across the top. One day I was standing on the walkway around the outside of the fence talking to some spectators sitting on one of the benches. I heard a pitched shoe hit the cement surrounding the pit and looked up in time to see the shoe hit the bar at the top of the fence about three feet from where I was standing. I thought at that time that without the fence being five foot (instead of the required 4 foot), that this shoe would very likely have hit one of the spectators and possibly caused a severe injury, especially if it were to hit someone in the head.

PRC # 2 - 2015 - Short-distance Pitching Platforms **PASSED**

Current Wording:

II – SPECIFICATIONS FOR COURT LAYOUT (also see diagram on back cover)

SECTION A - Sanctioning of Courts

1. **Full Court Sanction** (this text information not included)

2. **Conditional Court Sanction** The NHPA recognizes that while some older permanent, in-ground courts may not meet all of the court sanction specifications listed below in Section B, all courts constructed *before* January 1, 2007 *must meet the basic court requirements of:* 1) correctly marked foul lines, 2) minimum pit dimensions, 3) specified stake diameter and placement, 4) specified stake height and angle/lean, 5) legal pit material of minimum depth, and 6) a protective barrier surrounding the courts. These specifications are detailed in Section B, below. Upon verification of these basic requirements by the Regional Director, a Conditional Court Sanction Certificate may be issued and sanctioned events can then be contested here. All clubs are encouraged to work annually on any remaining court improvements and to strive for fully-sanctioned courts. *(some un-related text not included here)*

Proposed Change of Wording: (see bold/italic/underlined print)

2. **Conditional Court Sanction** The NHPA recognizes that while some older permanent, in-ground courts may not meet all of the court sanction specifications listed below in Section B, all courts constructed *before* January 1, 2007 *must meet the basic court requirements of:* 1) correctly marked foul lines, 2) minimum pit dimensions, 3) specified stake diameter and placement, 4) specified stake height and angle/lean, 5) legal pit material of minimum depth, and 6) a protective barrier surrounding the courts. *In addition, these pre-2007 court complexes must have at least three (3) courts with short-distance pitching platforms to provide for a 6-person Class which may include Women, Elders, and Junior Boys or Junior Girls.** These court specifications are detailed in Section B, below. Upon verification of these basic requirements by the Regional Director, a Conditional Court Sanction Certificate may be issued and sanctioned events can then be contested here. All clubs are encouraged to work annually on any remaining court improvements and to strive for fully-sanctioned courts. Including full walkways to accommodate Cadet pitchers, though not required, is recommended. *(some un-related text not included here)*

** This requirement will not go into effect until 2019.*

Reasons For Proposal:

- Short-distance pitching platforms are currently not a requirement for courts constructed before 2007, and there are some Charter court complexes that have been given a Conditional Court Sanction, but that do not have *any* courts with extended pitching platforms. In these cases, the short-distance pitchers must stand in the dirt or grass to deliver their shoes. And so, short-distance pitchers are discouraged from pitching in these tournaments. The absence of having these extended platforms (to at least 27 feet) is *not* in the best interest of promoting our sport. All sanctioned court complexes should be required to have *some* courts with extended walkways for short-distance pitchers, as described in Section B, 4-b-2.

Also, if this proposal is passed, it will not go into effect until January 1, 2016, so this allows the rest of this year and three additional years for clubs to complete these requirements (where necessary) before courts are scheduled to be re-sanctioned in 2019. It should also be noted that NHPF grant money is available for court improvements for many qualifying clubs (see NHPA Website for details).

PRC # 3 - 2015 – Position of Contestants **PASSED**

RULE 3 – PLAY OF THE GAME . . .

Current Wording:

Section D – Position of Contestants During Delivery

When not pitching, any contestant shall stand quietly and stationary, at least two (2) feet behind any contestant on their court or on any adjacent court.

Proposed Change: (see italic/bold/underlined type)

Section D – Position of Contestants

When not pitching, any contestant shall stand quietly and stationary, at least two (2) feet behind *their opponent, on their court's opposite pitching platform, or any pitcher on an adjacent pitching platform.*

Reasons for Change:

The current wording is unclear and open to interpretation. Could it mean that you are supposed to stand (directly) behind the contestant on your court? It is also unclear as to which platform of an adjacent court you must watch. It is the nearest/closest pitching platform to you, and *not* the platform on the far side of that adjacent court.

PRC # 4 - 2015 - Altered Horseshoes PASSED

Current Rule:

IV. SPECIFICATIONS

I – EQUIPMENT SPECIFICATIONS

SECTION B – Altered Horseshoes

Any sanctioned shoe that has been changed from its original design (calk, notch, etc.) shall be considered an 'altered' shoe. An 'altered' shoe is illegal and cannot be used in any sanctioned event. Contestants using altered shoes in a sanctioned event shall be subject to penalties, which include a one (1) year suspension from the NHPA (see Bylaws for additional information). Note: The NHPA Executive Council has the right to waive the 'altered' shoe provision for a physically challenged contestant.

Proposed Change: (see underlined/italic/bolded):

IV. SPECIFICATIONS

I – EQUIPMENT SPECIFICATIONS

SECTION B – Altered Horseshoes

Any sanctioned shoe that has been *physically and permanently modified* from its original design (calk, notch, etc.) shall be considered an 'altered' shoe. *In addition, no shoe can be temporarily modified, with the exception of a layer of paint.* An 'altered' shoe is illegal and cannot be used in any sanctioned event. (the same additional text as above would be included here)

Reasons for Proposed Change:

This proposal eliminates most ambiguity when it comes to altering horseshoes. Some pitchers apply additives such as tape to their horseshoes. Reasons may include marking the spot on their shoe to grip the shoe; covering their grip location to reduce burs to protecting one's fingers; and applied to deaden the strike of the shoe against the stake reducing bounce-offs or minimizing spin-offs. Additives applied to the shoe, though not permanent alterations, can confer greater advantages to those using them over the basic unaltered/un-added-to shoe. Since paint is the only addition to a shoe that has been universally accepted throughout the history of organized horseshoes it is specifically excepted from the rule.

Background information for PRC # 5 (see next) : During last year's Convention at Buffalo, the Charter Delegates approved the addition of letter *f*. to SECTION 8 (see below). Adding the phrase '**up to**' to SECTION 9 (see below) was also approved.

NHPA Bylaws - ARTICLE III: Membership

SECTION 8. Any member may be suspended for:

*f. Un-sportsman-like conduct while attending a sanctioned event.**

** See RGS Rule 12 and Guideline 6 for additional information*

SECTION 9. For any of the reasons above, a member may be suspended for **up to** one year.

PRC # 5 – 2015 - Guidelines for Handling Un-sportsman-like Conduct **PASSED**

Proposed Addition:

Guideline 6 (also see NHPA Website)

NHPA Recommendations for the Handling of Un-sportsman-like Conduct at Sanctioned Events

The following information is published here to provide guidelines for members, Tournament Directors/Committees, Regional Directors, and Charter Officers to consider and use in dealing with undesirable or unacceptable behaviors seen or heard in the area of the courts during NHPA-sanctioned events. The possible consequences included here are NHPA recommendations and have been arranged, more or less, from the least severe to the most severe consequences.

Level 1 - A *verbal reminder* to the offender that the behavior is inappropriate. This reminder could be made by any member, either during or after the game/event. The TD should be notified of this concern at some time during the event. This verbal reminder *could* be repeated a second time, before moving to level 2.

Level 2 - A *verbal reminder followed by a written notice*... A verbal reminder/warning to the offender PLUS a written notice that states the inappropriate behavior and that this behavior will not be tolerated in the future. This written notice or a standard/competed form (available upon request) could be sent by the TD, the RD, or by a designated Charter Officer. Charter Officers should be notified about and approve this written notice in advance of its' being sent. This *could* be repeated a 2nd time, before moving to level 3.

Level 3 - A *written notice of suspension from this tournament/league for a designated period of time*. One to twelve months is suggested. A written notice or form describing the inappropriate behavior and consequence should be sent to the offender by the TD, the RD, or by a designated Officer. Charter Officers should be notified and approve this suspension in advance, and a copy of this suspension notice will be sent to all tournament directors of other tournaments where this pitcher normally pitches.

Level 4 - *Suspension from all Charter Tournaments and/or Leagues for a designated period of time*. Not less than 4 months or more than a year is suggested. Under these terms, the offender would be allowed to participate in any *other* Charters/State events, and could still qualify for entering the WT. The NHPA must be involved in this suspension process, and must approve the suspension in advance. Other States/Charters where this offender may pitch (see NatStats) should be notified of this suspension and should notify the NHPA of any future misconduct.

Level 5 - *Suspension from the NHPA* for a designated period of time. Six months or a year is suggested. The NHPA must be involved in this process and must approve this suspension in advance. Written notification should be sent by the Charter President or NHPA President, upon approval of the NHPA Council.

Note: Depending on the severity of the offense, the consequence issued could begin at any of the above levels. The first 3 levels should be handled at the Charter level, but for levels 4 and 5, the NHPA Vice-president in charge of Grievances and Suspensions must become involved with this process.

PRC # 6 – 2015 – Elder Men – Age Change **FAILED**

RULE 1, Section E – Elder Men

Current Reading:

Section E – Elder Men (become eligible to pitch in the Elders Division upon purchase of an NHPA card dated for the calendar year that they become seventy (70) years old).

Change to Read: (see bold, italic, underlined below)

Section E – Elder Men (become eligible to pitch in the Elders Division upon purchase of an NHPA card dated for the calendar year that they become *sixty five (65) years old*).

Reasons for change: Many of us have seen newly retired men who are interested in pitching with us who have never pitched or have pitched only very little. Many of them become discouraged very soon with the difficulty of becoming proficient at the 37' foul line. We also see men in their mid 60's who are no longer able to pitch well more than a couple of games who may not qualify as "Physically Challenged". The 30' Men's division is here to stay. Let's let it and our organization grow.

PRC # 7 - 2015 - Age Change for Cadets **FAILED** (see bold/italic/underlined print below)

Current Wording - Rule 1, Section A-1:

1. **Junior Cadets** (any pitcher twelve (12) years old or younger for the entire calendar year)

Change To: (see bold, italic, underlined below)

2. **Junior Cadets** (any pitcher *ten (10)* years old or younger for the entire calendar year)

Reason: Several past *Junior Boys World Champions* were 12 years of age when they won this Division, with two of them being 11 years of age.

PRC # 8 - 2015 - Handicapped Classes and Alternate Pitch **PASSED**

Rule 7, Section C

Current Reading:

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.

RULE 11, Section F, 4th sentence

Current Reading:

An alternate-pitch format shall be used.

Proposed Changes:

Delete 7-C (see above), *and* the 4th sentence of 11-F (An alternate pitch format shall be used)

Reasons for Changes:

Alternate first pitch is already required for all count-all scoring (RULE 7, Section B) and permitted in any cancellation tournament (RULE 7, Section A- 2). It should not be required for handicapped cancellation. We are all accustomed to pitching first when we score using cancellation play. The current rule disrupts the flow of the game for both players. If the tournament director or committee feels the higher-average player has an unfair advantage, they would still have the option of using alternate first pitch, or they could just use a higher handicap percentage.

PRC # 9 - 2015 - Pacer Rotation **FAILED**

RULE 7, Section D - Pacer Rotation

Current Reading:

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

Change to Read: (see bold, italic, underlined below)

If a pacer is used, *the scheduled player may pitch first every inning or let first pitch be determined by the same method as the rest of the event, if he or she desires.* (see GUIDELINES PART I, #5 for additional information about pacers).

Reason: To force the scheduled player to pitch first every time in a cancellation game is a distraction to some. It should be optional.

PRC # 10 - 2015 - Playoff Games **PASSED**

REQUIREMENT 4 – WORLD TOURNAMENT PLAY

Current Wording:

Section F – Playoffs

In World Tournament play, games won and lost shall determine the order in which the winners are placed. If there is a tie for first place, a playoff game will determine the winner. All playoff games will follow the same format as the round-robin play for that Class. If more than two players tie for first place, a ladder-type playoff will be used, based on ringer percentages in that competition. All other ties (second place and below) will be determined by ringer percentage. If still tied, "who beat who", and then "ringer % vs entry %" will be used. Note: Percentage ties for all move-up positions shall be broken by a playoff game. If still tied, additional innings will be played (see Rule 8, Section B.2).

Proposed Change of Wording (see asterisk and footnote, in bold, italic, underlined)

Section F – Playoffs

In World Tournament play, games won and lost shall determine the order in which the winners are placed. If there is a tie for first place, a playoff game will determine the winner. All playoff games will follow the same format as the round-robin play for that Class*. If more than two players tie for first place, a ladder-type playoff will be used, based on ringer percentages in that competition. All other ties (second place and below) will be determined by ringer percentage. If still tied, "who beat who", and then "ringer % vs entry %" will be used. Note: Percentage ties for all move-up positions shall be broken by a playoff game. If still tied, additional innings will be played (see Rule 8, Section B.2).

*** Note: If a shoe-limit playoff game ends in a tie, extra innings (see RGS Rule 8, Section B - 2.) will be used to break this tie.**

Reasons for Change: Based on the current wording... 'All playoff games will follow the same format as the round-robin play for that Class'... if the playoff game results in a tie, another playoff game would be required to break that tie, etc. This additional 'Note' will allow extra innings to be used to break that tie, if the playoff game should result in a tie. This is in the best interested of time, and further delays for the presentation of awards.

PRC # 11 - 2015 - State Championship Play **FAILED**

Currently Reads:

- REQUIREMENT 3 – Section A – State Championship Play

2. Mixed Play and Handicapping (see also Rule 11, Section E)

The Championship Classes of the Men and Women Divisions in a State Singles Championship Tournament cannot be mixed play. All other Divisions and classes may be mixed at the discretion of the Tournament Officials. When other Divisions are mixed in these Championship Classes, the champion of each Division will be the highest finishing player in their respective Division. Handicap formats may be used in State Championship Class play, but any State Championship Division Title must be determined by a non-handicapped system of play.

Change to Read: (see bold, italic, underlined below)

2. Mixed Play and Handicapping (see also Rule 11, Section E)

The Championship Classes of the Men and Women Divisions in a State Singles Championship Tournament ***should not*** be mixed play, ***but If there are not enough entrants to form a competitive* Championship Division Class, these*** Classes may be mixed at the discretion of the Tournament Officials. When Divisions are mixed in these Championship Classes, the Champion of each Division will be the highest finishing player (***based on ringer percentage among all entrants*****) in their respective Division. Handicap formats may be used in ***some lower Classes***, but any State Championship Division Title must be determined by a non-handicapped system of play.

*** to be determined by the State Tournament Officers/Committee.**

**** other criteria can be used if/when deemed more appropriate by the State Tournament Director/Committee.**

Reasons for Proposed Change:

- As some of you may know, this is a 'repeat' PRC, but the last time it was brought to a delegate vote, it was 'tied to' something else, and was not a 'stand alone' PRC (as this one is). Anyway, the NHPA has received many emails and phone calls about this 'problem' over the past 6 years at least. And this is a problem that currently is primarily within the Women's Division... having only 1 or 2 women pitchers with wide percentage spreads (for several Charters), and their not being able to mix or handicap them in the State Championship Division Class, based on this current Rule. And so, what are they to do without breaking this rule? One of the problems with getting this proposal passed is that for the majority of Charters, this is not a problem for them. And so they are not in favor of this change as it doesn't apply to them (remember that it takes a 2/3rds vote for any PRC to pass). If this proposal should fail again, what options can be given to these Charters/pitchers that will continue to have this problem?

PRC # 12 - 2015 - Senior Men Division (to eliminate) **FAILED**

Current Rule:

RULE 1 – PITCHING DIVISIONS

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 upon purchase of an NHPA card dated for the calendar year that they become seventy (70) years old).

Proposed Change: (see underlined . . . would eliminate the Senior Men Division)

RULE 1 – PITCHING DIVISIONS

Section D – Senior Women (become eligible to pitch in the Senior Division at any time during the calendar year that they become sixty (60) years old) **Note:** *Senior Women* may choose to remain in the Open Women's Division. 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 upon purchase of an NHPA card dated

for the calendar year that they become *sixty-five (65) years old* OR seventy (70) years old).

(**Note:** the above age will be decided by an earlier vote on PRC # 6, on the first ballot, and will be announced before voting takes place on this PRC # 12)

Reasons for Change: *If the age of Elder Men is lowered to 65*, most or all of the following is likely to happen:

- A large percentage of men, aged 65 to 70 years, will move into the Elders Division.
- For the remaining Senior men, aged 60 to 65 years, their decreased numbers will result in Classes with ringer %age 'spreads' that will be much greater (less competitive), even at the WT where the Class size is 16 pitchers.
- If/when the number of WT entrants for the Senior Men Division (aged 60-65) falls to below 48 pitchers, these Senior Men will be 'mixed' with the Open Men. This is currently happening with the Senior Women.
- To create a Senior Men's Division at your State Tournament, it is unlikely that a competitive Class (with a ringer %age of 10% or less) could be formed, and Senior Men would therefore be 'mixed' with the Open Men. This would almost be a 'certainty' for all local tournaments.
- Considering the above, the only tournament where a *competitive* group of Seniors (age 60-65) is likely to ever be assembled would be at the World Tournament.
- It may become difficult to justify continuing this Division (with only a 5-year age spread) considering the additional, required expenditure of money for prizes and trophies. This would apply for local, State, and for the World Tournament.

Note: If the Elder Men's age is *not* lowered to 65 (based on 1st ballot voting results) , and the Senior Men's age range remains at 60 to 69 years, you may want to vote *against* this Proposal on the second ballot, but this is not a requirement as there still may still be good reasons for eliminating the Senior Men's Division.

Other changes recently enacted by the NHPA Council that will require delegate approval:

A. Junior Awards

1. If a Junior pitcher has received both Scholastic and WT Prize money awards, these amounts will now be kept in separate accounts. (this is simply a different way of keeping the same records)

2. The last phrase of text information in **Requirement 6, Section C – Awards** will be changed to read: . . . shall not be issued before the successful completion of high school *or upon reaching eighteen (18) years of age*.

Reasons: With the previous wording, Junior pitchers who had won WT prize money, but who may never have graduated from high school, were not eligible to receive their WT prize money. Of course, students graduating from high school who may be younger than age 18 can receive their scholarship and/or prize money upon graduation, at any age. We thought that it was important that these changes go into effect for this current year.

B. Requirement 4, Section H - Eligibility – (Current wording with change/addition in italic print)

1. Qualifying Events – All adult entrants to the World Tournament who reside in the United States *and Canada* must have completed at least four (4) NHPA *or Canadian* sanctioned events . . .

Reasons: The Canada HPA has been in existence for many years and currently has and maintains CanStats, which is very similar to our NatStats... for maintaining a record of their members' current participation and ringer percentage. There is no good or logical reason why pitchers from Canada should not be required to meet this same eligibility requirement as our NHPA members. This change was agreed to earlier this year by our NHPA Council and was included as a requirement on the current WT entry form. We have received no complaints about this change from the Canadian pitchers or from their Council.

C. Edits to Newline Magazine

Reasons: All of you are aware that Horseshoe Pitching Newline Magazine is now being received by approximately half of our members via the internet. This change was made for two primary reasons: 1) to reduce the costs of publication, and 2) to reach a much greater percentage of our current NHPA members. As a result of this change, there are several references to Newline Magazine subscription rates, etc. that no longer apply and that will need to be changed upon the next printing of the RGS Book. We are simply asking that you agree to these needed changes.

2015 NHPA Rules Change Proposals – Condensed

PRC #1 - This proposal requires all new court construction to have a 5' high protective barrier, and includes any rebuilt fences after Jan 1st, 2016.

PRC #2 - Describes additional requirements for a conditional court sanction. It will require that a minimum of 3 courts have short distance platforms. This proposal would take effect in 2019.

PRC #3 - This proposal clarifies where a contestant should stand during the game while not pitching.

PRC #4 - Defines what the term “modified shoe” includes. Does not allow anything but paint to be applied to the shoe.

PRC #5 - Adds a complete set of guidelines for handling un-sportsman-like conduct at sanctioned events.

PRC #6 - Lowers the age of the Elders Division from 70 to 65 years of age.

PRC #7 - Lowers the age of the Cadets Division from 12 to 10 years of age.

PRC #8 - Removes the alternate pitch format requirement from handicapped classes.

PRC #9 - Allows a player in a pacer game to choose the format of who pitches first. The player can choose to use the same format as the tournament is being played.

PRC #10 - Decides how class playoff game ties are to be broken, using the extra inning method.

PRC#11 - Allows state tournament directors to mix any championship class if there is a lack of entries into a division.

PRC #12 - Abolishes the Senior Men's Division. The Elder's age vote results will be known before this vote is taken.

There are also 3 decisions made by the NHPA Council that require delegate approval:

1. Allows Juniors to receive their award money upon reaching age 18.
2. Requires all US and Canadian world tournament entries to have 4 sanctioned events.
3. Allows all minor changes (too numerous to be listed) needed in reference to converting Newsline to an online publication.