

# THE OFFICIAL NHPA PLAYING RULES, REQUIREMENTS, GUIDELINES, AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE SPORT OF HORSESHOE PITCHING

(aka The RGS Book)

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## GLOSSARY

This glossary includes the definitions for most of the horseshoe terms used in this RGS Book, and for terms found in other horseshoe-related literature. To make them easier to find, these terms/definitions are arranged in alphabetical order. At the end of each definition, there may be references to other areas of the RGS book where additional or more specific information can be found. The use of this glossary may also make it easier to find the location of a term that is used within the RGS text material. Additional information can also be found on the NHPA website at [www.horseshoepitching.com](http://www.horseshoepitching.com).

**Note:** This glossary is intended as a quick reference only. Any final rulings or decisions should be based on the text information found in the Playing Rules, Requirements, Guidelines, or Specifications sections.

**Altered Shoe** – Refers to any shoe that has been changed from its original design. (See page 33, I – EQUIPMENT SPECIFICATIONS, Section B.)

**Alternate Pitch** – Alternate first pitch is a pitching rotation used to give each contestant an equal number of first and second pitches during a game. (See page 15, RULE 7, Section A.2)

**Backstops/Backboards** – Refers to the barriers installed at the far end of each pit for safety reasons. (See page 38, II – SPECIFICATIONS FOR COURT LAYOUT, Section B, 8.a; also see drawing on back covers)

**Broken Shoe** – Occasionally, a horseshoe may break into two or more parts when it hits other shoes, the stake, or lands in the pit. After the broken pieces are removed, another shoe may be pitched in its' place. (See page 17, RULE 9, Section A)

**Burr** – A small, displaced fragment of steel that may be created when a horseshoe hits other shoes or the stake. Burrs, if they go undetected, can cause moderately serious cuts to the fingers or hands and should be filed smooth before pitching the shoe.

**Bylaws** – *Roberts Rules of Order* defines Bylaws as a document adopted by an organization which contains the basic rules for governing itself. Bylaws define the primary objectives of an organization and describe how the organization will function.

**Caliper** – A measuring tool that can be adjusted to determine which shoe is closest to the stake.

**Cancellation Scoring** – A method of play, whereby opponents' ringers cancel each other. The same holds true for opponents' shoes (single points) that are of an equal distance from the stake. (See pages 13-14, RULE 6, Section A.1)

**Class** – Refers to the group(s) of pitchers (usually 6-12 contestants/class) within a particular Division. (See page 19, Rule 11, Section E)

**Class Winners** – Class winners may be determined in several ways, depending on the tournament format. Usually the winner is determined by win/loss record. Ties may be broken by a playoff game, ringer percentage, total points scored, etc.(See page 18, Rule 11, Section B)

**Count-all Scoring** – A method of scoring where both contestants receive credit for all live shoes scored in each inning. (See page 14, RULE 6, Section A.2 and B.2)

**Cracked Shoe** – Occasionally, a horseshoe may develop a crack through normal use. If a shoe is discovered to be cracked during competition (but not completely broken in two) it shall be scored as it lies. Once the scoring is determined, it shall be replaced. (See page 17, RULE 9, Section B)

**Crossover Areas** – Refers to the areas in front of and/or behind the pits, where contestants may cross over to the opposite platform after the delivery of their shoes, if they've pitched first. (See page 11, RULE 3, Section D.3) Contestants may also "cross" over as they move toward the opposite end of the court, in anticipation of who may be pitching first in the next inning.

**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. (See page 10, RULE 3, Section B, 1.b)

**Division** – There are currently five (5) divisions recognized by the NHPA. They are: Juniors, Open Men, Open Women, Seniors, and Elders (this division includes Physically Challenged Men). Some of these Divisions may not be contested at all tournaments. (See pages 7-8, RULE 1, Sections A-E)

**Doubles Play** – In doubles play, two contestants are partners against another team of two contestants. (See pages 28-29, GUIDELINE 1, Sections A and B)

**Dress Code** – For State Tournaments and the World Tournament, the dress code requires that your last name and State or Country abbreviation be professionally lettered on the back of your shirt(s), which cannot be sleeveless. Also, cut-offs and open-toed shoes may not be worn. (See page 20, RULE 12, Section C)

**Extended Platforms** – A forward extension of the full-distance pitching platforms, toward the opposite pit, for an additional ten feet (10’), OR for the entire distance between the opposite platforms, to accommodate short-distance pitchers. (See page 37, II SPECIFICATIONS FOR COURT LAYOUT, Section B.4, b.2; also see court diagram on back cover)

**Feeler Gauge** – A tool containing thin strips of metal of varying thicknesses. Used mainly by judges to determine measurements for the closest shoe and/or for determining if shoes are ringers.

**Foul** – (foot foul) This occurs when a pitcher steps on or over the foul line, or starts or steps completely outside of the pitching platform area, before the shoe is released. The penalty is to declare the shoe a foul shoe. (See pages 12-13, Rule 5, Section B, 1.a.b)

**Foul Shoe** – Another term for a “dead” shoe that was delivered in non-compliance with one of the playing rules of the game. (See pages 12-13, RULE 5)

**Guidelines** – Refers to a set of directions or chronological steps that have been successfully used by others and that are recommended in accomplishing a task or event. Good reason and logic are important parts of effective guidelines and the use of words such as “should”, “would”, or “may” provides for allowable variations.

**Handicap** – A handicap is a predetermined number of bonus points given to a player in addition to the actual “scratch” score pitched in a game. Handicapping may be used where there is a large “spread” of ringer percentages within a class. (See page 19, RULE 11, Section F; also the NHPA Sanctioned Club/League “Red” Book)

**Handicapping** – Handicapping may be used in leagues or tournaments where there is a larger difference in skill level, giving the less-skilled pitcher a better chance of winning or being more competitive. The amount of the handicap shall be determined by the Tournament/League Officials. (See page 19, Rule 11, Section F)

**Heel or Heel Calk** – The area of the horseshoe (at the open end) that includes the “tips” and the “hooks”. (See drawing on inside/back cover)

**Hooks** – Refers to a tool used, by some, to pick up horseshoes from the pit. May also refer to a portion of the heel calk, designed to secure ringers. (See page 34, I – EQUIPMENT SPECIFICATIONS, Section E; also see diagram on inside/back cover)

**Imaginary Stakes** - Imaginary stakes shall be marked (often by a spot of paint or other marker of the same diameter as the official stake) midway between or next to the extended platforms, at distances of thirty feet (30’) and twenty-three feet (23’) from the opposite stakes. (See page 37, II – SPECIFICATIONS FOR COURT LAYOUT, Section B.5)

**Inning** – The game is divided into innings. In singles play, each inning consists of four (4) pitched shoes; two (2) by each contestant. (See page 9, RULE 3, Section A)

**Judges** – Judges are appointed by Tournament/League Officials to enforce the Playing Rules of the game, and to help resolve any questions that may arise during the event. (See pages 31-32, GUIDELINE 4)

**Leaner** – A live shoe that comes to rest vertically while touching the stake. This shoe has a scoring value of one (1) point. (See page 10, RULE 3, Section B, 2.b)

**Legal Shoe** – Any official horseshoe that is sanctioned and approved by the NHPA. (See page 33, I – EQUIPMENT SPECIFICATIONS, Section 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. (See page 10, RULE 3, Section B, 1.a)

**Medical Exemption** – Physically challenged male pitchers may be given permission by their governing Charter or NHPA officials to move onto the extended platforms and observe the twenty-seven-foot (27') foul lines before the age of seventy (70) years. The prior completion and approval of a Medical Exemption Form (available from Charter/State Secretaries) is required. (See page 8, RULE 1, Section E.2)

**Mixed Classes** – Mixed classes may include pitchers from any of the different Divisions such as Open Men, Open Women, Juniors, Elders, etc. (See pages 23-24, REQUIREMENT 3, Section A.2)

**National Card** – An annual membership card required for all pitchers participating in NHPA Sanctioned Leagues and/or Tournaments. (See page 22, REQUIREMENT 2, Section B; also see Bylaws, membership)

**NatStats** – Stands for National Statistics; a service of the NHPA that receives, stores, and calculates the current, average ringer percentage for all NHPA members who have competed within the calendar year. (Also see NHPA Website)

**Newsline Magazine** – More officially, “Horseshoe Pitching Newsline” is the official magazine of the NHPA. (See Page 24, REQUIREMENT 3, Section B)

**NHPA** – Stands for National Horseshoe Pitchers Association; the official organization for the sport of horseshoe pitching. (See the NHPA website for additional information)

**NHPF** – Stands for the National Horseshoe Pitchers Foundation; the official spin-off organization of the NHPA, established to promote the game of horseshoes, and to provide and maintain the NHPA Hall of Fame facility. (See the NHPA website for additional information)

**Pacer** – Refers to an individual who may fill a vacated position during round-robin tournament play. (Also see page 16, Rule 7, Section D; and page 32, GUIDELINE 5)

**Pit** – A rectangular area around the stake, and between the platforms, that is filled with a pit substance into which the shoes are pitched. (See page 9, RULE 2, Section B, and page 36, II – SPECIFICATIONS FOR COURT LAYOUT, Section B, 4.a; also see diagram on back cover)

**Pit Substance** – The material into which horseshoes are pitched. Clay, sand, dirt, and approved synthetic compositions are all legal pit substances. (See page 38, II – SPECIFICATIONS FOR COURT LAYOUT, Section B.9)

**Pitcher's Box** – The six-foot (6') by six-foot (6') square area located at each end of the court. This area includes the pit, and pitching platforms. (See page 36, II – SPECIFICATIONS FOR COURT LAYOUT, Section B.4)

**Pitching Platforms** – The area from which contestants deliver their horseshoes. The full-distance pitching platforms flank the pits for the entire length of the pitcher's box. (See page 37, II – SPECIFICATIONS FOR COURT LAYOUT, Section B, 4.b)

**Pitching Rotation** – Refers to who will pitch first or second, for each inning of the game. (See pages 15-16, RULE 7)

**Point Limit Game** – Refers to a game that is played to a pre-determined number of points. (See page 16, RULE 8, Section A.1)

**Point Limit or Shoe Limit Game** – Refers to a game that is played to a pre-determined number of points or to a predetermined number of shoes. For example, forty (40) points or fifty (50) shoes; whichever comes first. (See page 16, RULE 8, Section A.3)

**Portable Pits** – Also referred to as temporary or raised pits, they are usually made of treated plywood and framing lumber. These above-ground-level pits are often set up and used in arenas or other hard-surfaced areas for exhibitions, special tournaments, and/or special events. (See page 38, II – SPECIFICATIONS FOR COURT LAYOUT, Section C)

**Protest** – If a contestant does not agree with a ruling or decision, a protest shall be made to the judge or tournament official(s) at the time the problem occurs. If the problem cannot be resolved on the courts, the tournament director or

committee shall make the final ruling on all protests. This ruling may occur after the game has been completed. (See page 21, RULE 12, Section F)

**Requirements** – Refers to required information, separate from the Playing Rules, that may apply to Sanctioned Tournaments, League Play, Charters/States, etc. and that does not have to do with the business of the NHPA.

**Ringer** – A ringer is a 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. (See page 10, RULE 3, Section B, 2.a)

**Ringer Percentage** – A pitcher's ringer percentage (for a game, tournament, or NatStats) is determined by dividing the total number of ringers by the total number of shoes pitched. (See page 18, RULE 11, Section C)

**"Ringers Only" Scoring** – A variation of Count-all scoring where both contestants receive credit for only the ringers they have pitched in each inning. (See page 14, RULE 6, Section A, 2.b)

**Round** – Refers to any *one* of the games of a round-robin schedule. (See definition of Round-robin Schedule)

**Round-robin Play** – Refers to the standard method of NHPA sanctioned tournament play. In round-robin play, each contestant will play all other contestants in the Class. Court assignments and the order of play will follow a printed schedule, either posted or given to each contestant at the beginning of the contest. (See page 18, Rule 11, Section A)

**Round-robin Schedule** – Refers to the printed/posted schedule of round-robin play used in tournament competition. In round-robin play, each contestant is scheduled to play all other contestants in the Class. (See page 18, Rule 11, Section A; also page 22, REQUIREMENT 1, Section A.2, d.5)

**Rules of Play** – Or "playing rules", refers to a set of prescribed directions or information for which a game, contest, or sporting event must follow. Failure to do so will result in one or more specified penalties. The words "shall", "will", or "must" are critical words to be expected in this text information.

**Sanctioned Club/League Program** – The NHPA Sanctioned Club/League Program introduces new and veteran horseshoe pitchers to League Play and provides instruction for an exciting, competitive, and healthful activity for all men and women; young, old, and/or physically challenged. (See the NHPA Sanctioned Club/League "Red" Book for additional information)

**Sanctioned Court** – A horseshoe court that meets the requirements for measurement, etc. as established by the NHPA. A Court Sanction Certificate may be issued by the Regional Director once these measurements and other requirements have been verified. (See page 34, II – SPECIFICATIONS FOR COURT LAYOUT, Section A. Also see diagram on back cover of the RGS Book).

**Sanctioned Event** – Any horseshoe pitching event which has been recognized and approved by the National Council and/or Charter Regional Directors and for which the results and records will be accepted, recorded, and published by the NHPA. This includes leagues, tournaments, and special events.

**Sanctioned Tournament** – The NHPA Tournament Sanction Certificate certifies that "THE OFFICIAL PLAYING RULES, GUIDELINES AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE SPORT OF HORSESHOE PITCHING (aka The RGS Book) will be followed and enforced, including the requirements of membership and use of sanctioned horseshoes. (See NHPA Regional Directors Guidelines)

**Scorekeeping** – The recording of scores is a very essential part of the game and the scorekeeper must be familiar with a variety of calls, how to record the score, etc. (See pages 30-31, GUIDELINE 3)

**Scoring Area** – Refers to the pit area within which a live shoe may come to rest and still score points. It can be thought of as the area which includes the one inch (1") stake, plus the six inch (6") "Shoe in Count" area surrounding the stake, plus an additional distance of approximately nine inches (9") around the stake where a shoe *could* come to rest and still be a "Shoe in Count". This scoring area becomes an approximate thirty-one inch (31") diameter circle with the stake in the very center.

**Scoring Radius** – May be used in reference to the fifteen inch (15") distance between the stake and the outside perimeter of the scoring area. This area extends outward, in all directions, from the stake and includes the "Shoe in Count" area.

**Scratch Play** – Refers to a game where a handicap system is not used. (See page 24, REQUIREMENT 3, Section A.2, and NHPA Sanctioned Club/League “Red” Book)

**Seeding** – The placement of contestants, by the Tournament Director or Committee, into Classes for tournament play. For sanctioned events, this placement should be based on their current NatStats average ringer percentage. (See page 18, RULE 11, Section D)

**Shoe in Count** – Refers to any live shoe that is a ringer, or that may come to rest at a distance of six inches (6”) or closer to the stake. (See page 10, RULE 3, Section B, 2.a & b)

**Shoe Limit Game** – Refers to a game that is played to a pre-determined, even number of shoes. (See page 16, RULE 8, Section A.2)

**Shoe Out of Count** – Refers to any shoe that comes to rest further than six (6”) inches from the stake. (See page 10, RULE 3, Section B.3)

**Single Point** – Refers to any (non-ringer) live shoe that is six inches (6”) or closer to the stake. (See page 10, RULE 3, Section B, 2.b)

**Specifications** – Refers to a set of criteria that may include specific requirements, ranges, or allowances for time or distance, dimensions, or weighs.

**Sportsman-like Conduct** – Refers to the expected and acceptable behavior of all pitchers while on or near the courts. (See page 20, Rule 12, Section B)

**Stakes** – The stake is the target at which the shoe is pitched. (See page 37, II – SPECIFICATIONS FOR COURT LAYOUT, Section B.6, and diagrams on inside/back cover)

**Straightedge** – Usually a metal bar tool that is straight along one or more edges, is about eight inches (8”) in length, and that is used in the measurement of ringers.

**Temporary and/or Raised Pits** – The regulations for temporary or raised courts/pits are the same as for permanent ground-level courts with the exception that for any raised pit, the top of the pit shall be no more than seven (7) inches above the level of the pitching platforms. (See page 38, II – SPECIFICATIONS FOR COURT LAYOUT, Section C)

**Time Limit** – Contestants must deliver both shoes within thirty (30) seconds. (See page 10, RULE 3, Section C.2)

**Toe** – Refers to the area of the horseshoe that is farthest from the open end. (also see diagram on inside/back cover)

**Welded Shoe** – Broken or cracked horseshoes are sometimes welded as a means of repair for continued use. Welding, and other repairs to horseshoes, is legal if the shoe is not altered in the process, and so long as the shoe still meets all of the measurement requirements for NHPA sanctioned horseshoes. (See page 33-34, I – EQUIPMENT SPECIFICATIONS, Section C)