

**THE OFFICIAL NHPA PLAYING RULES, REQUIREMENTS, GUIDELINES, AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE SPORT
OF HORSESHOE PITCHING
(aka The RGS Book)**

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III. GUIDELINES – The Guidelines section provides suggestions/recommendations for sanctioned league and/or tournament play, including suggested formats for Doubles Play. Also included here are guidelines for calling the score, keeping score, judging, and the use of pacers.

GUIDELINE I – DOUBLES PLAY

In doubles play, two contestants are partners against another team of two contestants. One contestant from each team will be at each end of the court and the tournament officials should match the contestants so that the highest rated contestant (by percentage) from each team will be pitching from the same end of the court. The Tournament Committee will determine the length of the game and method of play. When contestants are pitching their shoes, the contestants at the other end should be well behind and to the side of the pitcher's box (for their own safety) and in a stationary position so as not to distract the contestants on their own or adjacent courts. Otherwise, all the Playing Rules for singles play shall apply.

Section A – Regular Doubles

In regular doubles, both team members use the same pair of shoes and all contestants stay at the same end of the court for the entire game. To begin the game, the highest-rated contestants will decide on the first pitch and deliver their shoes, just as in singles competition. Their partners, at the opposite end, will decide on and call the score, retrieve the shoes, and pitch them back following the same procedure. The decision on who pitches first in each inning depends upon the scoring system being used, following the rules of singles play. A single score sheet should be used that clearly shows the ringers and shoes pitched by all contestants.

Section B – Walking Doubles

In walking doubles, all contestants will pitch their own shoes. A single score sheet should be used that clearly shows the ringers and shoes pitched by all contestants.

1. **Shoe-limit Games** – The lower-rated contestants will decide on the first pitch and pitch their four (4) shoes. The higher-rated pitchers will then pitch their four (4) shoes and all pitchers will then walk to the opposite end, decide on the scoring, and pick up their shoes. The scores of the highest-rated team should be recorded first and they will also pitch first for the remainder of the game. Which one of them (and their opponents) pitches first depends upon the scoring system (cancellation or count-all) being used, following the rules of singles play. This procedure will continue until the game is over.
- 2.
3. **Point-limit Games** – The higher-rated contestants will decide on the first pitch and pitch their four (4) shoes. The lower-rated contestants will determine the scoring for these shoes. The partner of the pitcher who scores (or the partner of the contestant who pitched last, in case of a no-score situation) will call or record the score and will pitch first in the next inning. All pitchers will now walk to the opposite end. The highest-rated contestants will pick up their shoes (already scored) and step back. The scoring of the last four (4) shoes pitched will be determined and called or recorded. The contestant calling the score always pitches first. This procedure is continued until the game is over. For safety or other reasons, the Tournament/League Officials may select an alternative walking sequence, as long as the scoring sequence remains the same.

GUIDELINE 2 – CALLING THE SCORE

When calling the score, ringers (if made) shall be reported first, and then points (see Playing RULE 6, Section B, 1-b).

Section A – Recommended Calls

Here are the **recommended** calls for points allowed, in the following situations:

- No ringers with the closest shoe in count – call “one point”.
- No ringers with the two (2) closest shoes in count – call “two points”.
- One (1) ringer with either no shoe in count or the other contestant having the closest shoe in count – call “one ringer, three points”.
- One (1) ringer with the closest shoe in count – call “one ringer, four points”.
- Two (2) cancelled ringers with the closest shoe in count – call “two dead, one point”.

- Two (2) cancelled ringers with one (1) un-cancelled ringer – call “two dead, three points”.
- Two (2) un-cancelled ringers – call “two ringers, six points”.

Note: No points shall be awarded in the following situations:

- All four (4) shoes out of count – call “no score”.
- Two (2) cancelled ringers with no other shoes in count – call “two dead, no score”.
- Four (4) cancelled ringers – call “four dead”.

Section B – Alternative Calls – As different phrases may be used in different regions of the country, here is a list of some of the more common **alternative** calls to become familiar with. **Note:** The recommended call (**in bold type**) is listed first, followed by most of the alternative calls that are used.

- **one point** – (usually the same)
- **two points** – (usually the same)
- **one ringer, three points** – “one ringer three”, “ringer three”, “three points”
- **one ringer, four points** – “one ringer four”, “ringer four”, “four points”
- **two dead, one point** – “one ringer each, one point”, “ringer each, one”, “ringers alike, one”
- **two dead, three points** – “three ringers, three points”, “three on three”, “three on a double”, “three, three”, “ringers alike, three”
- **two ringers, six points** – “two ringers, six”, “six points”. “six”
- **no score** – (usually the same), “nobody”, “nobody home”
- **two dead, no score** – “one ringer each, no score”, “ringer each, no score”, “ringer each, nobody”
- **four dead** – (usually the same), “two ringers each, no score”, “four ringers, no score”

GUIDELINE 3 – KEEPING SCORE

Requirements and Suggestions

Scorekeeping is a very essential part of the sport of horseshoe pitching. To ensure that scoring errors do not occur during the competition, all scorekeepers must be familiar with the type of game being played, the score sheets, the round robin cards, and the scoreboard or electronic score-keeping device being used. It is also most important that scorekeepers: 1) understand how scores are being called, 2) know how many ringers may be associated with the numbers being called (see GUIDELINE 2 above), and 3) know how to credit each contestant accordingly.

Section A – Before the Game

Individuals interested in supporting the game by keeping score should inform the Tournament/League Officials of their intent. Usually, a sign-up sheet for scorekeepers is available, listing the time and date for classes of play. Once signed up, individuals are expected to be available on a timely basis. If for some reason they are unable to keep the scheduled sign-up, the Tournament/League Officials should be notified accordingly.

1. **Proper Dress** – Scorekeepers should be comfortably dressed, and handle personal matters before entering the court area.
2. **Score Sheets** – It is the responsibility of the Tournament/League Officials to provide the required score sheets at all designated courts. The score sheets should be examined to determine that they were properly distributed, and then make sure (by reviewing the round robin cards) that the correct contestants are ready to compete. Scorekeepers should sign all score sheets in case there may be questions later.

Section B – During the Game

All personnel within or near the court complex should be attentive at all times. Scorekeepers should keep their movement to a minimum, and be especially alert for contestants who are in the process of practice or competition, so as not to disturb the contestants and to avoid getting hit by pitched shoes.

1. **Recording the Score** – When the score is called, the results should be immediately posted on the scoreboard, or scoring device. Scorekeepers should then record the ringers and points scored on the score sheet and keep the game scores current. The scorekeeper should be prepared to stop the game when the agreed-to limit on shoes pitched or total points is reached.
 - a. Symbols are used on score sheets to indicate ringers. “Live” ringers are shown with a circle “O” and “canceled” ringers are shown with an “X”. This makes it convenient to summarize, if necessary, and for proofing the score sheet for errors.

- b. It is very important that scorekeepers record all ringers to assure that both pitchers receive credit for ringers they pitched, whether live or canceled. "POINTS" column entries should show the number of points called out to the scorekeeper for each inning while the "SCORE" column entry should show each pitcher's accumulated score subtotal.

Section C – After the Game

During and at the end of each game, the scorekeeper should make certain the scores are properly tallied, and then fill in the round robin cards, if used. When the game has concluded, the contestants should remain at the end of the courts until the score sheet and round robin cards have been completed. Properly completed and signed score sheets will be collected as directed by the Tournament/League Officials. **Note:** The score sheet (not the scoreboard) shall be the official record of the game (See RULE 6, Section C).

Section D – Scoreboards

For the benefit of spectators and contestants, scoreboards may be positioned at the courts. If so, once the score is recorded on the scoreboard, the correct score should then be marked on the score sheet, being cautious at all times not to disturb the contestants.

Section E – Electronic Scoring Devices

Various programs can be made available for electronic scoring; consequently the scorekeeper should be familiar with the program being used.

Section F – Hand Signals

Certain contestants regularly use hand signals to indicate their score. If this creates a score keeping problem, the contestant(s) should be informed accordingly and asked to use the common score calls in GUIDELINE 2, above.

GUIDELINE 4 – JUDGING

Section A – Responsibilities, Expectations and Duties (also see Judging Guidelines booklet)

Judges are to be appointed by the Tournament/League Officials.

1. Responsibilities

- a. To enforce the rules and issue the proper penalties if and when violations occur.
- b. To measure for ringers, the closest shoe to the stake, or for shoes in count.
- c. To resolve scoring questions or discrepancies, and to answer or resolve any rules questions, when called upon by the contestants.
- d. To help make the correct decision in situations involving broken shoes, broken stakes, shoes and/or stakes that may be moved by contestants during measurements, shoes pitched out of turn, a contestant's shoes mistakenly pitched by the opponent, and other questions which may arise.
- e. To act as a liaison between the contestants and the Tournament/League Officials for all possible questions or situations.

2. Expectations and Duties

- a. During competition, judges should always be available and remain visible to the pitchers. Wearing an orange vest is recommended.
- b. Judges should be very familiar with the Playing Rules and should have a copy of the current rules with them for reference, if needed.
- c. Judges should be reasonably healthy, with good hearing and eyesight.
- d. In addition to their duties, judges should also help out on the courts, where needed. They may be asked to assist with items like keeping watering containers filled, spray paint available, or with picking up score sheets.

GUIDELINE 5 – PACERS (See also RULE 7, Section D)

Section A – Use of Pacers

All contestants, including pacers and/or league substitutes, must be current NHPA members (see page 7 under PLAYING RULES; also see Bylaws for information on membership). Pacers are commonly used in place of

contestants who have entered a tournament but, for various reasons, do not show up. They may also be used when contestants have to drop out of a tournament due to illness or for other reasons. The use of pacers, if available, is often considered a better alternative than to have contestants “sit out” during a “bye” round. If a pacer is used, the pacer will always pitch last, in every inning of the game.

Section B – Qualified Pacers

Pacers should pitch from the same distance as the others contestants in the Class, unless the Class is “mixed”. They should also be close to or within the same percentage “spread” as the Class and, if possible, wear a shirt with their name and State on the back.

Section C – Awards and Statistics

Since pacers are not “official” contestants in the Class competition, their games will always appear in the “loss” column, they are not eligible for prizes or awards, and their statistics are not to be reported to NatStats. Also, they may or may not be asked to pay the scorekeeper for the games they pitch.