

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

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GUIDELINES AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS For Sanctioned League and/or Sanctioned Tournament Play – The Guidelines text is divided into two (2) parts. **PART I** provides suggestions/recommendations that may apply for league and/or tournament play, including suggested formats for Doubles Play. This section also includes guidelines for calling the score, keeping score, judging, and for the use of pacers. **PART II** includes requirements (aside from the Playing Rules) that apply for Tournament/League Officials, local Sanctioned Tournaments/Leagues, Charter/State Information, the World Tournament, Special Tournaments, and additional information for Cadet and Junior Pitchers. Violations of these additional requirements may carry penalties, to be assessed and enforced by the Charter Officers and/or Tournament/League Officials.

PART I – SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEAGUE AND/OR TOURNAMENT PLAY

GUIDELINE 1 – 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 pitch 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. **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. Individuals recording the score during competition must be familiar with the type of game being played, called scores (see GUIDELINE #2 above), the score sheets, round robin cards, the scoreboards and/or electronic score keeping devices; to ensure that recorded scoring errors do not occur.

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 signup, 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, 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.

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.

PART II – OTHER REQUIREMENTS For Sanctioned Tournaments and/or Sanctioned League Play

REQUIREMENT 1 – TOURNAMENT/LEAGUE OFFICIALS

Section A – Duties and Responsibilities

All NHPA sanctioned tournaments and leagues shall have a designated director or committee to administer the activities of the event. The director or committee shall:

1. Before the Event

- a. Publicize the event well in advance by using the Charter tournament schedule, by posting/distributing “flyers”, and/or by using all other available media. The information provided should include available Divisions, the date(s) and location of the event, amount of the entry fee, a prize list, the registration deadline, and any other special/pertinent information.
- b. If the tournament requires pre-registration, the Classes for each Division should be made up in advance and the contestants are to be seeded based on current NatStats averages (see RULE 11, Section D).
- c. Contestants should be notified of their pitching dates and times in a timely manner.

2. During the Event

- a. During registration, verify that all entrants are current NHPA members.
- b. Arrange for scorekeeping for each court.
- c. Appoint an official judge(s) and provide them with judging tools, and a copy of the current RGS book.
- d. Before Class play begins:
 1. Announce the method of play (cancellation or count-all), the length of the games (how many shoes or points) and information about alternate pitch, if it will be used.
 2. Announce how winners will be determined, and how ties will be broken.
 3. Announce the amount and method for paying scorekeepers (if used).
 4. If scoring devices are used, provide the contestants with a name placard.
 5. Provide a schedule and/or round-robin card of games to be played, including court assignments.
- e. Have statisticians available for the checking and recording of game scores and for the compilation of class results, as the tournament proceeds.
- f. Make the final decisions on any protests, and answer any questions that may arise.
- g. When necessary, make the decision to halt play due to inclement weather or other emergencies and decide when play shall resume, if or when conditions improve.
- h. Present the awards at the end of play.

3. After the Event

Tournament and League results must be submitted to NatStats upon completion of any tournament or league. See REQUIREMENT #2, Section I, below, for details and additional information.

REQUIREMENT 2 – ALL NHPA TOURNAMENTS/LEAGUES

All NHPA Tournaments/Leagues shall be conducted at the discretion of the Tournament/League Officials, providing THE OFFICIAL PLAYING RULES, GUIDELINES, AND SPECIFICATIONS are not violated. (See REQUIREMENT #5 below for exception)

Section A–Sanctioning

All NHPA Tournaments shall be sanctioned by the Charter Regional Director in accordance with the published guidelines or directives for NHPA Regional Directors. All NHPA Leagues shall be sanctioned by the Director of the NHPA SANCTIONED CLUB/LEAGUE PROGRAM.

Section B-Eligibility

Tournament entry and league participation is restricted to contestants holding a current NHPA membership card

(see Bylaws for additional information) and also to players who meet any imposed eligibility requirements, unless otherwise allowed by the Charter Executive Council. This includes pacers and substitutes.

Section C – Fees

All registration (entry) and any other fees shall be determined by the Tournament/League Officials.

Section D – Division Size

Any division not receiving at least four (4) entries can be canceled, but the entrants shall be given an opportunity to pitch in a Class of another Division.

Section E–Tournament Credit

To credit contestants with an official tournament for NatStats purposes, at least half of the scheduled games must be completed, or a minimum of one hundred (100) shoes must be pitched.

Section F–League Credit

All seasonal, sanctioned Club/League play must be four hundred (400) or more pitched shoes to qualify as an official event for NatStats purposes.

Section G – Count-All Scoring

The Count-All System of scoring is to be optional throughout any sanctioned event. The exception to this shall be the World and State Championship Tournaments where only the preliminary qualifying rounds may use the count-all method of total points to determine the Championship Classes.

Section H – Total Ringers/Shoes

All ringers and shoes pitched under one sanction number, including additional shoes for breaking of ties and play-off games, shall be included when figuring the totals for that event.

Section I – Reporting Results

1. Tournaments – The Tournament Director or statistician must send Tournament results to the Charter statistician (recommended) and to NatStats as soon as possible, upon completion of the tournament. A period of not more than two (2) weeks is recommended.

2. Leagues – League results must be sent to the NHPA Sanctioned Club/League Director as soon as possible, upon the completion of the league season. A period of not more than two (2) weeks is recommended. The Sanctioned Club/League Director will forward these results to NatStats.

REQUIREMENT 3 – CHARTER/STATE INFORMATION

Section A – Championship Play

Each Charter must hold an NHPA sanctioned State Championship event annually unless there is more than one Charter in the State, in which case the State Tournament will be rotated, unless otherwise agreed upon by the involved Charters.

1. Divisions

The State Championship Tournament must advertise and provide an entry form stating the intent to crown champions in at least Men, Women, Junior and Elder Divisions. Other Divisions are an option left to the discretion of the tournament officials. All age limitations for Divisions shall be in accord with RULE 1, Sections A-E.

2. Mixed Play

The Championship Class of the Men and Women Divisions in a State Championship Tournament cannot be mixed play. All classes below the Men and Women Championship Classes, as well as all Classes in any other Division, 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 systems may be used in State Championship play, but any Division Title must be determined by a non-handicap system of play.

3. Residency

State Championship Tournaments are open only to those NHPA members who legally reside in that State and meet the regular eligibility requirements imposed for the event. An exception to this shall be active-duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their immediate family (if married) who may pitch in the State Championship event of any State in which they are stationed/reside, provided they meet the other eligibility requirements of that Charter. No one will be allowed to pitch in more than one State Championship Tournament per year.

4. Full and Short Distance Pitchers

All sanctioned tournaments shall provide a playing opportunity for all eligible Full and Short distance pitchers. The NHPA Executive Council, in accord with REQUIREMENT #5 (below), can authorize exceptions for special tournaments such as Invitationals, Juniors only, etc.

Section B – Newline Magazine

All Charter officers must be members of the NHPA and subscribe to the official NHPA magazine, currently Horseshoe Pitching Newline. Two Charter officers housed in a common residence require only a single subscription between them.

Section C – Delegates

Only NHPA members in possession of a current combined State/National card are eligible to vote on any matter pertaining to the election of Charter officers, the sanctioned tournament schedule, or anything else that may directly or indirectly involve NHPA business, Bylaws, or official Playing Rules.

Section D – Compliance

Each Charter must comply in all ways with THE OFFICIAL PLAYING RULES, GUIDELINES, AND SPECIFICATIONS, and the By-Laws of the NHPA. Deliberate violation of same will be cause for possible NHPA suspension of Charter Officers, the revocation of the Charter, or both.

REQUIREMENT 4 – WORLD TOURNAMENT PLAY

Section A – Committee and Director

The World Tournament Committee shall consist of all members of the NHPA Executive Council present at the World Tournament. The NHPA President shall designate the World Tournament Director who will confer with the President on the format and schedule.

Section B – Divisions

A World Tournament shall include separate Championship Divisions for Juniors, Open Men, Open Women, Seniors, and Elders. If Class, pitching performance is used as a "qualifier" for determining who will advance to Championship Division play, the Championship rounds shall be assigned a separate sanction number and both Class and Championship play shall each count as a separate tournament.

Section C – World Title

The title of Champion Horseshoe Pitcher of the World can be contended for only in tournaments authorized by the NHPA Executive Council.

Section D – Division Winners

The winner of each Division of the authorized World Tournament shall be declared the Champion Horseshoe Pitcher of the World for their respective Division, and shall hold the title until the next authorized World Tournament.

Section E – Playoffs

In a World Tournament, games won and lost shall determine the order in which the winners are placed. Pitchers tying for first place of a Division shall be decided the winner as follows: if two tie, a one-game playoff to forty (40) points; if more than two tie, the first place shall be decided by a ladder-type playoff based upon ringer percentages; in all others ties (second and below), trophies and prize money shall be awarded based upon ringer percentage. First place ties at the "class" level will be determined by forty (40) shoe playoff games. Percentage ties for all move-up positions into a Championship Class shall be broken by a forty (40) shoe playoff game.

Section F – Records

Any record set in any Sanctioned Tournament shall be called a World Record. Any record set in a World Tournament shall be called a World Tournament Record. These statistics will be different sets of records and recorded as such. The NHPA Executive Council will decide on the authenticity of any disputed record.

Section G – Eligibility

All entrants shall have their eligibility and entering percentage verified by NatStats.

- 1. Qualifying Events** – All adult entrants to the World Tournament who reside in the United States must have completed at least four (4) NHPA sanctioned events at their Division pitching distance during the twelve (12) months preceding the cut-off date listed on the current World Tournament entry form. **Note:** Only one event is required for Juniors.

2. **Exemptions** – An exception to the requirement of four (4) sanctioned events shall be active-duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their immediate family (if married), provided they meet the other eligibility requirements. Entering averages for foreign entrants and active-duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their immediate family, not in the NatStats database, will be verified by other means. (See RULE 11, Section D.1)

Section H – Awards

The Prize and Trophy list will be developed by members of the NHPA Executive Council and approved by a majority of that Council. This award list will also be published for the NHPA membership, in a timely manner.

1. Minimum cash awards are as follows:

- a. The Championship Division cash prize list, including the Junior Trusts, will be paid from the NHPA funds collected based upon the \$3.00 set-aside for each adult member reported in the previous year.
- b. The Men's Open Championship cash prize for first place shall be a minimum of \$2,500 and the Women's Open Championship cash prize for first place shall be a minimum of \$2,000.
- c. The Executive Council shall determine an amount of money, not to be less than \$3,000, to be added to the World Tournament cash prizes. This money may come from any source available to the NHPA Executive Council.

REQUIREMENT 5 – SPECIAL TOURNAMENTS OR EVENTS

Section A – Events

The Charter Executive Council may authorize or conduct, at its discretion, special tournaments, matches, exhibitions, open, invitational, or celebrity pitching events anywhere that it deems suitable.

Section B – Waiver

Any Special tournament or event, including the World Tournament, will be conducted in accord with THE OFFICIAL PLAYING RULES, GUIDELINES, AND SPECIFICATIONS except that the Charter Executive Council may approve a waiver if it will aid in the promotion of the sport and/or success of the event. The Charter Executive Council may authorize a limit to the number of entries to any Special Tournament or Special Event if it feels time, available courts, or any other conditions make it impossible to reasonably schedule an unlimited number of entrants. In such cases, limits may be set by any manner deemed suitable.

REQUIREMENT 6 – CADET AND JUNIOR PITCHERS – Additional Information (See also Playing Rule 1, Section A)

Section A – Adult Divisions

Junior pitchers may compete in an Adult Division of a mixed tournament without harm to their Junior standing provided no separate Junior Division is offered in the same tournament. When a Junior Division *is* offered, in any non-handicapped tournament, a Junior may pitch with the adults without harm to their Junior standing, but only when their average is at least ten (10) percent higher than the next Junior. **Note:** These same requirements will apply to Junior Cadets; for their movement into the Junior Division.

Section B – Eligibility

Junior pitchers who request admittance and are accepted into an adult class outside the conditions set forth in Section A above, will forever forfeit their Junior eligibility. A Junior Boy who forfeits his Junior status must pitch from the full distance. **Note:** The same above requirements will apply to Junior Cadets; for their movement into the Junior Division.

Section C – Awards

All Junior Cadet and Junior play (mixed class or otherwise) will be conducted on an amateur basis. Awards presented to these Divisions by the Tournament/League Officials should have no immediate monetary value. The awarding of trophies, medals, or ribbons is recommended. Any award with monetary value, including trust funds from the Charter, State, World Tournament or the Junior Scholar Pitcher Awards Program, shall not be issued before the successful completion of high school.

Section D – Responsibility

It shall be the responsibility of all Junior Cadet and Junior pitchers (or their parents/guardians) to make sure that their amateur standing is not jeopardized by any violation of the above information.