



Paddle Tennis - Note on Sportsmanship and Etiquette

Both sportsmanship and etiquette have been fundamental to this sport since the beginning and we are determined to keep it that way. Both subjects deal with integrity and respect, but the subject of sportsmanship is intended to keep egregious behavior out of the game with the subject of etiquette is intended to raise the level of civility on the court.

Webster defines a sportsmanship as "a person who take loss or defeat without complaint, or victory with gloating, and who treats his opponents with fairness, generosity, courtesy, etc."

Unsportsmanlike behavior will be tolerated. Examples of unsportsmanlike behavior include, but are not limited to, throwing the paddle, abusive or foul language, retaliatory calls, threatening verbal or physical behavior, name calling and so on. When dealing with such incidents, tournaments directors and the APTA recognize that there are degrees of severity related to these behaviors and will consider that when determining penalties.

The subject of etiquette is equally important to the game and is focused more on how to raise the level of civility during play. For a description of expected behaviors, please see the addendum of these Rules titled "The Etiquette of Platform Tennis."

Receiving Team Must Be Ready

The server must not deliver the service until the receiving team is ready. If the receiver makes any attempt to return the ball, the receiver is deemed to be ready. Also, if the receiver attempts to return the ball, it is deemed that the receiver's partner also is ready. If the receiver claims not to be ready as a service is being delivered, the service shall be played again, provided the receiver does not attempt to return the ball. In such case, the receiver may not claim a fault should the service land in the net or outside the service court.

A Let

In all cases where a let is called, the point is to be replayed. The service is a let if it is delivered when the receiving team is not ready (see Rule 12). A ball in play is a let if (a) it hits an overhanging obstruction such as a tree limb; (b) the ball becomes broken in the course of a point; (c) play is interrupted by an accidental occurrence, such as a ball from another court bouncing into the court; (d) the ball leaves the court through a hole in the screen, or gets stuck in the screen. If a player loses an item of clothing (i.e., hat, glasses, accessory), the opposing team has the option to call a let. This call must be made immediately, or the point will stand as concluded.

Note: In any situation during the play of a point when a let may be called, if the player who could call the let does not do so immediately and permits play to continue, that decision is binding on his team. It is not reasonable to opt not to call a let, strike the ball for loss of point, and then ask for a let to be called. In the event that one of the players incorrectly calls a "let" on a "net cord service" (see Rule 10) the following applies (a) if the let was called by the receiving team, it is loss of point for the receiving team and, (b) if the let is called by the serving team, it is loss of point for the serving team.

Comment: For further discussion of other situations in which a let may be called, see Rule 21.

Loss of Point

A team loses the point if (a) as the receiving team, the ball bounces a second time, provided the first bounce was within the court.

Comment: Sometimes it is difficult to determine whether a player attempting to retrieve a ball, especially a drop shot that has bounced once and is about to bounce again, actually strikes the ball before it bounces the second time. Propriety dictates that the player attempting to hit the ball is honor bound to call "not up" if the player feels the ball did in fact bounce twice. A player who has any doubt in this situation should ask the nearest opponent, after the point has been decided, "Was it up?" If the opponent says no, the point should be conceded.

(b) A player returns the ball in such a way that it hits (i) the deck on the other side of the net outside the sidelines or baseline; (ii) any object, other than an opposing player, on the other side of the net outside the sidelines or baseline; (iii) the net, the post, net hand crank, cord, band or center strap and does not then land within the court on the other side of the net.

(c) A player volleys the ball and fails to make a good return, even when standing outside the court.

Comment: A player standing outside the court volleys at his own risk. It is not proper to volley the ball and simultaneously call it out, for if the ball is volleyed it is in play.

(d) A player deliberately carries or catches the ball in play on the paddle or deliberately touches it with the paddle more than once (i.e. any ball struck using a continuous motion is legal).

(e) A player strikes the ball before it has crossed over to his side of the net (i.e. reaches over the net to strike the ball, making contact on the opponents' side of the net; for exception, see Rule 20).

(f) A ball in play touches any part of a player, including the hand(s) holding the paddle, or his/her clothing.

Note: It does not matter whether the player is inside or outside the court, whether he/she is hit squarely or his/her clothing merely grazed, or whether the contact is accidental or purposeful. If a ball touches anything other than a player's paddle, it is loss of point.

(g) A player throws his paddle at the ball in play and hits it.

(h) A player bounces the ball over the screen and out of the enclosure or into a lighting fixture or light pole, whether or not the ball rebounds back into the court.

(i) A player or anything the player wears or carries, touches the post, net, net hand crank, cord, band or center strap, or the court surface on the opponents' side of the net, within the boundary lines, while the ball is in play. (See Rule 17 regarding ball in play)

Note: If the point has already been concluded, it is not a violation to touch any of these fixtures. Also, if in rushing forward to retrieve a shot, a player's momentum carries him/her past the net post onto the opponents' side of the net, this is not loss of point unless the player actually steps inside the opponents' court or interferes with one of the opponents. Mere physical contact with an opponent is not loss of point unless such contact hinders the opponent.

When a player is standing at the net and the opponent hits the ball into the net in such a way that it pushes the net against the player's paddle or person, the net player loses the point. It does not matter that the ball was not going over the net. The net player loses the point because the player made contact with the net while the ball was still in play

(j) A player strikes a ball which lands in the court, then rebounds off the backscreen or corner, and lands back on the striker's side of the net (in or out of bounds) without being touched by an opponent. This rule does not apply to the serve.

Ball Touching Court Fixtures

If the ball in play touches a Court Fixture (as defined in Rule 2) after it has hit the deck within the boundaries of the court, the ball remains in play and may be returned, so long as it has not hit the deck a second time within the court or the playing area.

Exceptions: If the ball hits a lighting fixture or pole, the point is concluded - loss of point for striker. In matches in which an umpire and an umpire's chair are inside the enclosure, a ball striking either the umpire or the chair prior to landing in the opponents' court is loss of point for the striker.

The Etiquette of Platform Tennis

Platform tennis, often referred to as "paddle" for short, is a keenly competitive sport and one in which, by tradition, good sportsmanship, integrity, and respect are key elements. It is a game that is played for fun, but there is also an active winter tournament circuit. The game is played in accordance with the Official Rules of Platform Tennis as published by the American Platform Tennis Association.

The main purpose of this section, however, is to discuss the etiquette of platform tennis play. Etiquette is an area where, unlike rules, which are generally more specific, there may be differences of opinion, or judgment may have to be exercised. Since platform tennis continues to attract many new participants, the APTA believes it desirable to provide these guidelines on the etiquette of the game. In doing so, it is recognized that etiquette does have its "gray areas." Therefore, these comments are offered not as hard and fast rules, but as suggested guidelines of behavior. In any case, it is hoped that the tradition of the game will be maintained through a continued high degree of sportsmanship and mutual respect and that these guidelines may assist in furthering that tradition by offering worthwhile suggestions on personal behavior while playing this rewarding game.

LINE CALLS

In matches where there are no linesmen, the general rule is that all lines are called by the receiving team (i.e., you call lines on your side, the opponents call lines on their side). Each side should, obviously, call the ball in or out honestly and without regard to the play situation. The decision of the team whose responsibility it is to make the call is final.

The following refinements are suggested:

1. If an out call is not promptly made, the ball is considered in and play should continue.
2. On service, either member of the receiving team may make line calls. If an out call is made, play should stop. If there is a disagreement between the receiving partners as to

whether the service was good or out, a let should be played, regardless of whether the service was returned in or out of play.

3. During play, if a player makes an out call on a ball that the player could otherwise return, and the player stops play but his partner thinks the ball was in, a let should be played. If an out call is made on a ball that neither player could retrieve but the caller's partner disagrees and believes the ball was in, the point should be awarded to the opponents.

4. Players may assist their opponents with out calls in the opponents' court, if requested. They should also call against themselves any ball that is clearly out on the opponents' side of the court, if not called by the opponents.

5. A certain amount of friendly kidding about opponents' line calls is inevitable. But etiquette dictates that the opponents' line calls are to be respected and considered final. In the end, questionable calls will usually balance off between the two sides.

6. If there is uncertainty about a line call any doubts should be resolved in favor of the opponents.

7. When coaching your partner to let a ball drop rather than hit it, try to use commands such as "bounce it!" or "drop it!" rather than "out!" so as not to confuse your opponents, who may think you are making an out call.

FOOT FAULT

The foot fault is the aspect of the game that demands the greatest amount of self-control by the server. Seldom will fellow players advise another player that he or she is foot-faulting for fear of "offending." Yet if the server steps on the baseline or on the court before striking the ball, the server is breaking the rules.

Many players may not know they are foot-faulting. This is because in serving, they make a slight movement of the forward foot, which is legal, but in doing so they step on or over the line. A player can find out if he or she is foot-faulting by asking a fellow player to observe the service. Conversely, a polite comment to another player, who may not ask, is not out of order. One subtle way to handle this is to ask the opponents if they would like to have you call foot faults during practice services.

The server is on his honor not to foot-fault; therefore, all players should exercise the self-control necessary to stay behind the line while serving. Apart from the rule-breaking and etiquette aspects of foot-faulting, linesmen may call foot faults in the semifinals and finals of major tournaments, and any player who is in the habit of foot-faulting regularly may have a difficult time adjusting to a correct service procedure under the pressure of tournament competition. The usual result is that the server will lose points on called foot faults or serve a higher percentage of faults in trying to adjust to a legal service.

So, in this area above all others, etiquette says that players must exercise the greatest degree of self-control in order not to break the rules and/or offend others. Practice serving legally, and check with others by asking that your service be watched.

NET CORD BALL ON SERVICE

The Official Rules of Platform Tennis state that if the service touches the net cord and lands in the correct service court, the ball is in play (i.e., it is not a let).

It is recognized that many platform tennis players are also tennis players, and in tennis a net cord service is still played as a let. To afford them, as well as new players of platform tennis, the opportunity to adjust to our rules, in non-tournament competition if a let is erroneously called on a net cord service by any of the players, the first such violation by each team may be considered a grace call, and a let played in each instance.

After the first such grace call (one for each team), if an erroneous let is called on a net cord service but neither team is distracted by the improper call, play can continue. However, if the let call is a distraction that causes either team to stop play, it is loss of point for the team calling the let.

BALL HITTING PLAYER

If a ball touches any part of a player's body or clothing (including any part of the hand) either before landing or hitting the screen on the player's side or after landing fairly in the court, it results in loss of point. Even if the player is standing outside the boundaries of the court, the point is lost if the ball strikes the player before landing on the deck or hitting a screen. Often a ball striking a player just barely grazes the clothing or hair. It is good etiquette for the player to declare that the ball touched him or her and award the point to the opponents.

It is not good etiquette for any player to declare that the ball hit an opponent and thereby claim the point. The player may politely ask if it did, but the determination of whether or not the ball hit the opponent is that player's to make, and his or her integrity and decision in the matter should be respected.

THE "TICK"

A ball that is "ticked" is barely grazed with the paddle, and often when this happens only the player who ticks the ball can hear or feel it. It is good etiquette for the player doing so to promptly declare that the ball was touched and award the point to the opponents.

It is poor etiquette for a player to declare that an opponent ticked the ball and claim the point. The best person to determine whether the ball was ticked is the player, and it is good etiquette to respect the player's integrity and decision..

TOUCHING THE NET

Touching the net with any part of the body or the paddle during play is loss of point. A player touching the net should promptly declare the violation and award the point to the opponents.

On rare occasions, a ball driven by a player into the net will force a loosely strung net to strike the paddle of the opposing net person, who may be crowding the net. If this occurs, it is loss of point for the net player's team since the net was touched before the ball fell to the deck to conclude the point. (Moral – always tighten the lower net strings.)

DOUBLE BOUNCE

If a player knows that the ball has bounced twice before returning it, he should call a "not-up" and the point should be awarded to the other team.

REACHING OVER THE NET

It is against the rules to reach over the net to strike a ball unless it has first landed in the striker's court. An over-the-net violation should be called by the violating player or partner as a matter of good etiquette. It is not good etiquette for the opponents to make that call and claim the point.

RETURN THE BALL TO THE SERVER

When a point is completed, if the ball is lying on your side of the court and your opponent is serving, it is good etiquette to pick up the ball and either give it to your opponent's net player, who can give it to the server, or to gently bounce the ball to the server at the next service position, waiting a moment before delivering the ball if the server's back is turned.

It is good etiquette to do your part by picking up the ball and getting it to the server in an easy and accommodating manner. If everyone does this it will be easier on you when your turn comes to serve! All too often, players simply kick or push the ball in the opponents' direction or arbitrarily hit the ball just anywhere over to the other side. This makes the server chase the ball, it is discourteous, and it results in a slower-moving game.

Finally, and above all, resist the temptation of venting aggravation at missing an easy shot by slamming the ball about the court after the point is lost.

ON LOSING

It is much more difficult to be a gracious loser than a gracious winner. One should be gracious in either case—but try particularly hard to be so in losing. Congratulate your opponents, wish them well, live with it, and strive to improve, so you can be a gracious winner.

INTENTIONAL DISTRACTIONS

Players should not intentionally distract their opponents. Any talking or sudden movements made before or while the server begins his/her service motion, which has been deemed to be done solely to distract the server, violates the spirit of sportsmanship. This includes, but is not limited to talking, making loud noises, waving arms or paddles, dancing or jumping, or stomping of feet.

GOOD MANNERS

In closing, a few do's and don'ts on good manners are included, although most of these suggestions are obvious:

1. Be punctual. The game requires four players, and it is good etiquette to be on time and not inconvenience the other players by being late.
2. Bring a ball.
3. Don't use bad language during play (or keep it to yourself).
4. Don't bang the paddle against the net, the side screening, or the deck as an outward expression of self-dissatisfaction.
5. As a courtesy, don't deliberately wear clothing with the intent of making the ball more difficult for opponents to see.
6. Be complimentary of good play by both your partner and your opponents.
7. When playing in a tournament, recognizing that a great deal of work dedicated to your enjoyment has been done by the tournament chairman and the tournament committee, take a moment before leaving to say "goodbye" and "thank you".