



Stonewall Sports National Tournament Official Rulebook: DODGEBALL CLASSIC

(Last Updated: March 25, 2025)

Stonewall Sports is For All

Stonewall Sports is dedicated to creating a community of diverse participants via organized sports and activities that take place in inclusive spaces. We are founded on the pillars of respect, holistic wellness, open-mindedness and the appreciation of diverse backgrounds.

Our shared responsibility is to bring our community together, empower individuals, and provide a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment to learn and grow, thus uplifting those who are part of the Stonewall community and beyond.

We believe in uplifting and celebrating all individuals within the LGBTQIA+ community — including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, Two-Spirit and queer people, among others — and we welcome friends and allies into these spaces with open arms.

In pursuit of these values, we encourage each of our participating teams to embrace these principles with representation from members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Our Sports Operations team is empowered and encouraged to open a dialogue with teams when they see an opportunity to promote diversity and inclusivity within our spaces.

Please review and abide to the following throughout the tournament:

- [Stonewall Sports Player Code of Conduct](#)
- [Stonewall Sports National Tournament Uniform Policy](#)

Tournament Overview

Summary of Gameplay

Hit an opponent with a ball to get them out. If they catch it, you are out and they get a player back in. A team wins a game when no players remain “in” on the opponent’s team.

Tournament Format

Day 1: Round Robin tournament. Each match will be 20 minutes in length.

Day 2: Double Elimination Tournament. Seeding will be based on standings from round robin. The Upper Bracket will consist of the top half of teams based on Day 1 performance. The Lower Bracket will consist of all remaining teams. Brackets will be determined using the following formula:

- Standings are determined by the **number of matches won by a team.**
- If two teams have the same number of wins/losses/ties, then their order in the **standings will be determined by head-to-head.**
- If the teams tied when they played each other, or if they have not played each other, the standings will then be determined by **more total game points scored for.**
- Team with **less points scored against.**
- Team with **greater score differential** (games won minus games lost).
- Leadership coin toss.

Court size: 50 feet by 25 feet (50' x 25').

Attire and Conduct Expectations

Only players registered for the tournament are permitted to play. Players may wear personalized uniforms. The Stonewall Tournament shirt is required for Bracket Play on Sunday. Shirt numbering is not required. Gloves and taped fingers are allowed.

Players will treat all other players and officials with dignity and respect, both on and off the court. Any verbal or physical actions by an individual or team will **not** be tolerated, including (but not limited to) those based on discrimination related to race, skin pigmentation, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin.

If it is determined by the tournament coordinators that such instances have occurred, the player and/or team may be suspended/expelled from the tournament or not asked to return.

Teams

Teams must have a minimum of eight (8) players and a maximum of twelve (12) players. Each team **must** have a minimum of two (2) women, transgender, or non-binary (WTNB) players on their roster.

Each team may have eight (8) players on the court at the start of each game, with at least one (1) of those eight (8) being a WTNB player.

Each team can have up to four (4) additional players as substitutes. **Substitutes must play the next game after sitting out.** Substitutes may not enter a game midway through. The penalty for violating any of these rules will be the forfeiture of the individual game during which the violation occurred.

If due to injury or some other reason, a team has no available WTNB player to start the game, the team will continue to play, albeit down a player from the start of each game, until a WTNB player can return to the rotation.

The intention of having a women, transgender, and non-binary player requirement in Stonewall Sports Dodgeball is to promote inclusivity, equity, and diverse participation in our tournament. This rule ensures that all players, regardless of gender identity, feel welcomed and valued while fostering a more balanced and representative playing environment. It is the captain's responsibility to make sure that everyone on the team rotates and **all players have as equal playing time as possible.** This philosophy is the cornerstone of our shared values as Stonewall Sports Inc. and therefore we expect that all captains and players will meet this expectation.

Every team must provide two (2) referees for assigned games (Head Ref/Line Ref). Teams may be penalized for not providing adequate referees.

Captain Responsibilities

At the start of the match, captains will rock-paper-scissors for ball control/side. The winner of rock-paper-scissors may choose to either start with ball control, or to start on a specific side of the court. After the decision is made, the other captain may choose the remaining category. For the Day 2 matches (Double Elimination Tournament), the higher-seeded team will automatically receive the choice of ball control or side preference.

During the match, captains should liaise between their team and the referees, encouraging good sportsmanship and rule-following. Only captains may discuss calls with the referees or call timeouts. **At the end of each match, captains should ensure scores are recorded accurately and sign the score sheet. No corrections will be made after the sheet is turned in.**

Referees

All referee calls are final. Do not argue with them. If there is a dispute on a call, only a team captain may approach the Head Referee to discuss the call. Captains MUST be wearing the captain band in order to talk to the ref.

The Head Referee can pause gameplay, but not the clock, to discuss a call. Referees will not acknowledge concerns/complaints from other members of the team. In general, for calls that require discussion, referees should reach consensus on calls, with the head referee making the final call if needed. The sport manager(s) will be available for additional escalation.

Referees can call a player out, but they should not have to. Any player who knows that they should be out but does not go out will be given a penalty card for cheating.

Referees are advised to coordinate roles/areas of focus; for example, one watches one side only, another watches the other side only, and the remaining referees watch the entire match and are responsible for counting down ball control.

Referees can stop play by blowing their whistles and walking onto the court, at which time all live balls are immediately declared dead until the referees resume play with their whistles.

Matches

The team with the most games won in the match wins. Matches are 20 minutes. Teams will switch sides **every game, with the number of balls on each side remaining the same.**

Round-Robin Play (Day 1): Matches will be played for exactly 20 minutes; in other words, at 20 minutes, the refs should blow the whistle and end the game.

If players remain in play on both teams, the game is a wash. *For example: going into the fourth game, Team A has scored two points, and Team B one point, the final score would be 2-1-0).*

Referees should announce when five (5) minutes remain, and then at two (2) minutes. Ties are possible on Day 1.

Double Elimination Tournament (Day 2): Regular matches during the double elimination tournament will be a best of three (3) format. There will be no ties. If a team goes up 2-0 on, the game will be complete and the third point will not be played.

The Championship Match will be a best of five (5) format. If a team goes up 3-0, the game will be complete, and the final points will not be played.

During the double elimination tournament, after 20 minutes of each match, a “no blocking rule” begins. **The whistle will be blown and all plays stop. Players will retreat to the back line with balls not resetting.** Players will take balls in their possession to the backline and begin on a whistle. Blocking or deflection results in an immediate out.

Starting the Game

The minimum number to start a game without forfeit is four (4) players.

At the start of each game, eight (8) players will line up, touching the back wall/net/curtain with any part of their body (court dependent) on both sides. When the referee blows the whistle, designated players may run to get the balls on the right; the ones on the left are for the opposing team. False starts, or when a player leaves the back wall prior to the initial whistle, will result in losing a ball to the other side **for one game**. Each team will be given one (1) warning per match before the ball is lost.

Players may step over the center line on the initial rush, but doing so any time after that means the player is out.

All balls must clear the attackline before they can be brought into play. A ball can be cleared one of two ways:

- The retrieving player crosses the line with both feet; or
- The retrieving player tosses the ball to a player behind the attackline.

Tournament Rules

Ball Control

The tournament is played with five (5) balls. A team has ball control when it has three (3) or more balls. A team has 15 seconds to give up ball control. After five (5) seconds, referees declare “ball control” and the team has 10 seconds to give up ball control. Refs count silently for five (5) seconds, then count out loud for the final five (5) seconds, counting down from five to zero. **Failure to give up ball control at zero means the team must give all the balls to the opposing team;** the ref will stop play and facilitate the transfer of balls.

If additional balls come onto the side with ball control while countdown is active, they are considered new balls and are not a part of the original timer. In other words, ball control applies to only the balls that are already present on the side with ball control. *For example, if ball control is called with three balls on one side and an*

additional ball crosses, only one ball must cross the center line to the other side to give up ball control.

All balls within the [realm of the court](#) count toward ball control. Balls outside the realm of the court are not used for determining ball control. However, if a player brings a ball/balls with them outside the realm of the court to [shag](#) another ball, the ball(s) brought outside will continue to count toward the current ball control timer. In other words, a team with three (3) or more balls on their side has ball control, even if one or more ball(s) is/are outside the realm of the court and in physical possession of a player.

Placing balls just over the center line does not count as giving up control of them. Deliberately throwing balls so they return without giving the other team a chance to take control of them or setting balls just over the center line is stalling. **Referees will issue a warning for stalling; a second offense will result in balls being awarded to the other team.**

Ball control for singles: When a team is down to one (1) player and that player has ball control, the timer resets to 10 seconds each time the player throws, until they lose ball control. If referees deem that the player is deliberately stalling, they may announce “*Stalling! Last countdown!*”, and the timer will no longer reset with each throw, until the player loses ball control.

Boundaries (Sidelines & Back Line) and Exiting the Court

A player is out if the body or article of clothing touches the floor beyond the center line, unless it is during the initial rush. The same applies to the sidelines. A player may step on, but not over the sidelines. Players **may** reach across the center line to retrieve a ball.

Players cannot step in or out of the court just anywhere - **they must exit and re-enter at the very back of the court.** Imagine a doorway 4 feet (4') wide extending off of the back wall.

Players may step out of bounds only to get a ball that is out of bounds. Once both feet are out of bounds for a valid reason, a player is safe until they return, by placing at least one foot back in the bounds. The last player left may not exit the court, so their team should help get balls for them. Violating any of these sideline rules results in an out.

Out players must exit at the back of the court, and they must raise their hand as they exit the court to designate being out.

Players who repeatedly interfere with gameplay while exiting will receive a yellow card.

Catches

A catch counts only if the catching player has both feet within bounds when the ball is caught.

Note: If a player makes a catch (i.e., obtains control/possession) with both feet within bounds, but falls out of bounds due to momentum, they are **not** out for stepping out of bounds, and their catch still counts.

The Center Line



Players may cross the center line only during the initial rush. Once a ball is cleared across the attack line during the initial rush, the center line will become the throw line for the remainder of the game. While players may reach across the center line in order to retrieve a ball, they may not make contact with the floor of their opponent's court. Touching the floor of the opponent's court will result in a player being eliminated from play.

Deflections

A deflection occurs when a ball bounces off of a player or a ball that a player is holding.

A thrown ball can get multiple players out. A ball that is deflected is still a live ball that can be caught until it meets certain conditions - see [Live Ball/Dead Ball](#).

If a player deflects a ball into themselves, including deflecting into their own head, that player is out. Deflecting a ball into another player else will result in an out for the other player if they do not catch it. If a ball is deflected and is then caught, it is treated as a regular catch - anyone hit by the ball prior to the catch is safe, the thrower is out, and the catching team gets a player back in.

Maintaining ball control during deflections: If a player deflects an incoming ball with a ball they are holding, they must maintain control of the ball(s) that they were holding immediately following the deflection, or they are out. The same applies to catches if a player is holding a ball/balls at the time of the catch. **Note:** *This only*

applies to deflections. A player may drop the ball that they are holding BEFORE catching the incoming ball in order to make a valid play.

Distractions

A player may use distraction techniques, such as stomping, fake throws, and noises, within reason. If distractions are considered aggressive or overly disruptive, the officials will ask the player to stop, and may issue a warning and/or a [yellow card](#) if the player does not.

Headshots and Injuries

A headshot is a ball that travels directly from an opposing player's hands to a defending player's head. A direct headshot will result in the ball immediately becoming a dead ball. A player struck with a direct headshot is **not** out unless they are struck simultaneously, or nearly simultaneously, by one or more additional live ball(s).

An injured player, including one who is hit in the face, may remove themselves from play for up to two (2) minutes, at the referee's discretion, in order to compose themselves and to make sure they are still able to physically continue, then return to the same game in session. However, if the player's team is eliminated while they are still off court, the game will be declared officially over.

If a player is injured for a time beyond the game/match, that team, unfortunately, will continue the tournament without that player, and no new/unregistered player will be allowed to serve as a substitute.

It is not considered a headshot if a defending player is dodging/ducking a ball, or in any position in which they are crouching - such circumstances result in an out.

Deliberately throwing at a person's face is not allowed under any circumstances.

Players caught "headhunting" will be removed from gameplay - this includes players who repeatedly throw within "head range" - between 5 feet 3 inches (5'3") and 6 feet 2 inches (6'2") - and continue to do so after they have been warned by a referee.

Deliberately using one's head to block balls is also not allowed. If a referee believes a player is using their head to deflect offensive throws, that player will be declared out.

Live Ball/Dead Ball

A ball is "live" when it is thrown from behind the center line. A live ball can hit a player, resulting in an out for the hit player, or be caught, resulting in an out for the thrower. Kicking a ball does not qualify as a throw, and a kicked ball is not live.

A single live ball can get multiple players out until it is rendered dead. *For example, if a live ball is deflected into another player, the player hit by the deflected ball is out.*

A ball becomes dead when it does any of the following:

- Touches the floor, wall, ceiling, net, or any other part of the building.
- Touches another ball in the air.
- Touches a player who is already out or a non-player.
- Is caught.
- Comes back across the center line.

Note: *A live player is not out the moment they are hit; rather, they are out when the ball that hit them becomes dead.*

Trap: A ball becomes trapped when it hits a player and a gym surface, such as the floor, at the same time. In such an event, both the throwing and catching players are safe, the ball becomes dead, and there is no valid catch.

No Blocking Distinction

A held ball is essentially an extension of the body. A thrown ball is still “[live](#)” when it contacts a player’s blocking ball, and it may be caught or hit other players. A player who blocks a ball is not immediately dead; that player is still alive until the blocked ball completes its sequence. All other situations as outlined in the [deflection](#) section of the rules are still true during the no blocking distinction.

Outline

Out players must line up on the side of the court, with the first player out closest to the back of the court by the team’s doorway. Players come in on catches in the same order they joined the line.

A player who is on their way to the outline cannot come in on a catch, and the line order is determined by when players arrive at the line, rather than the order in which they got out.

Returning players are active upon having one foot within bounds, and should re-enter play in the back of the court.

Penalty Cards

Blue card is issued as a warning to any player on or off the court for yelling, arguing, or making unsportsmanlike remarks. There is no consequence for receiving one Blue card. Receiving two (2) Blue cards will result in a Yellow card.

Yellow card is issued for not abiding by the rules, not following referee instructions, arguing, yelling, and/or cheating. A player who is issued a yellow card is immediately out, must also sit out the next game, and they cannot be replaced (i.e., the team must play with fewer players). Receiving two (2) Yellow cards will result in a Red card. *(Note: Pinching the ball, such that rubber touches rubber inside the ball, is not allowed in any way. A player is caught for pinching the ball, a warning is issued for the first offense, and a yellow card the second)*

Red card is issued for grossly poor conduct, threats, discriminatory language, violence, and/or rude/insulting online communications. Additionally, crossing the center line in an aggressive manner is grounds for a red card. A player who is issued a red card is out for the entire match, cannot be replaced, and is subject to expulsion from the tournament.

Both yellow cards and red cards received are reset after each match; however, repeated violations can result in expulsion from the tournament per Leadership discretion.

Realm of the Court

The realm of the court is defined as the area enclosed by the net and the gym walls adjacent to the court of play.

Shagging

Out players may return out-of-bounds balls, or “shag”, as long as they stay on their side of the court. Out-of-bound balls must be promptly returned to play. Players who are shagging may not reach into the court or over into the opposing team’s outline area for any reason. When a ball exits the realm of the court (e.g., it’s in the rafters or on another court), players from either side may shag the ball regardless of their position relative to the center line.

An out player should immediately move to the back of the court and exit on the designated side, and they should not touch balls that are in play, even if they are still exiting the court. Any ball that is shagged in violation of these rules will be awarded to the opposing team, with repeated violations resulting in a [yellow card](#).

Timeouts

Each team may utilize one (1) 30-second long timeout per match. A timeout starts when the captain notifies a referee, who will then pause gameplay. All out players, besides the captain(s), should stay out of the play area. All live balls are immediately [dead](#) when the referee begins the timeout, and all players must leave idle balls where they are.

A timeout does not stop the official match time. Timeouts cannot be called after a referee has issued the two-minute end-of-match warning or for any play beyond 20 minutes. In other words, no timeouts may be called with less than two (2) minutes remaining in a match.

Miscellaneous Rules and Reminders

Thrown ball making contact with clothing: Clothing counts! If a ball hits a player's article of clothing, they are out. Hats count as clothing. If a player wearing a tight hat, such as a beanie, is hit in the head, it counts as a **headshot**. If a player wearing a larger hat, such as a ball cap or a hat with fake hair attached, is hit on a part of the hat other than the part directly covering their head, they're **out**. If a player's head gear, such as a hat or a sweatband, is knocked off, they are **out**.

One on one: If each team has one remaining player, they throw at the same time, and both get hit, the team/side for which the ball **becomes dead last** wins. If both players are simultaneously declared out, the refs will reset gameplay with five (5) balls - three (3) in the middle, and one with each remaining player. All other rules remain in effect.