



NATIONAL PICKLEBALL LEAGUE | *australia*

2026 Season Rule Book

Effective from 12 March 2026 | Amended 18 June 2026

www.nplpickleball.com.au

ABN: 30 677 000 789

1. Purpose, Application and Governing Documents

The National Pickleball League (NPL) is the premier professional pickleball league in Australia. These Rules govern the conduct of the NPL 2026 season, comprising the Online Draft, seven regular season rounds, the Round 4 Mid-Season Festival, the Mid-Season Draft, and the Finals Series held in Melbourne.

These Rules must be read together with the applicable player contract, NPL Terms and Conditions, NPL Player Code of Conduct, Grievance Procedure By-Law (the League's disputes and grievance resolution policy), venue policies, and any event bulletins issued by the League during the season.

Where there is an inconsistency between these Rules and the Global Pickleball Federation Official Rulebook (GPFOR), Pickleball Australia (PAA) policies, or any other general competition framework, these Rules prevail to the extent of the inconsistency for the 2026 NPL season unless the League notifies otherwise in writing.

The League may issue operational bulletins, scheduling notices, referee directives and integrity notices during the season. Those notices form part of the competition regulations once published on the NPL website (www.nplpickleball.com.au).

Any ambiguity or uncertainty in connection with these Rules shall be resolved at the sole discretion of the League, acting reasonably and in the best interests of the competition. The League reserves the right to interpret these regulations and to determine appropriate procedures in special or unusual circumstances.

These Rules take effect from 12 March 2026 and may be varied from time to time by the League. Any new or revised rule will be published on the NPL website (www.nplpickleball.com.au) and communicated to players as soon as practicable. These Rules were last amended on 18 June 2026 (Rules 5.6, 6.5, 10.1, and 10.2).

2. Authority, Interpretation and Dispute Escalation

2.1 Primary Authority

National Pickleball League (NPL Trading Pty Ltd) ABN 30 677 000 789 is responsible for administering and interpreting the 2026 season.

2.2 Venue Chain of Command

At each venue, the following chain of command applies for rule interpretations and decisions:

1. Referee
2. Head Referee
3. Tournament Director
4. League Director (or nominee), acting as final authority for the NPL

Referees are responsible for the application of these Rules on court. The Tournament Director and League Director provide clarification on rule application and reserve the right to overrule decisions for the benefit of the competition.

2.3 Binding Decisions

The League Director or nominee may determine any issue not expressly covered by these Rules, or clarify any ambiguity, in a manner that best protects fairness, safety, integrity, broadcast delivery and the orderly operation of the competition. Decisions made by the League Director are binding.

2.4 Good Faith Principle

All players, captains, coaches and officials must comply with decisions promptly and in good faith, even where a subsequent review is requested under the Grievance Procedure By-Law.

2.5 Conduct and Media

All persons participating in any capacity in NPL 2026 must refrain from making comments — including through social media or to media representatives — that attack, disparage or criticise players, organisers, officials, or staff of the NPL. Any failure to comply may be treated as a disciplinary matter, and the NPL reserves the right to terminate its relationship with the participant.

3. 2026 Season Structure and Schedule

3.1 Single Season Format

The 2026 NPL campaign operates as a single season. Teams compete across seven regular season rounds before Finals qualification is determined. There are no separate season splits or mid-season resets to the ladder.

3.2 Season Schedule

Event	Date
Online Draft	Friday 13 March 2026
Round 1	Saturday 25 April 2026
Round 2	Saturday 9 May 2026
Round 3	Saturday 16 May 2026
Round 4 — Mid-Season Festival	Friday 22 – Sunday 24 May 2026
Mid-Season Draft	Monday 1 June 2026
Round 5	Saturday 27 June 2026
Round 6	Saturday 11 July 2026
Round 7	Saturday 25 July 2026
Finals Series	Friday 28 – Sunday 30 August 2026 (Melbourne)

The League may adjust dates, venues, daily schedules or match order where required because of weather, venue availability, player safety, broadcast requirements or other operational reasons. Notice will be given as early as reasonably practicable.

3.3 Indicative Round Day Schedule

Time	Activity
12:00 pm	Venue opens for practice
1:00 pm	Match 1 begins
3:00 pm	Lunch break
3:30 pm	Match 2 begins

Time	Activity
5:30 pm	Match 2 - anticipated end of play

The League may vary the daily schedule for individual round venues as required and will communicate changes to players in advance.

4. League Composition

4.1 Conferences

The NPL 2026 season is organised across three state conferences:

- Queensland (QLD)
- New South Wales (NSW)
- Victoria (VIC)

4.2 Professional Division

The professional division comprises 12 teams in total, with four teams in each state conference:

- 4 teams in New South Wales
- 4 teams in Queensland
- 4 teams in Victoria

4.3 Team Composition

Each professional team consists of four contracted players: two men and two women. Teams compete in all five NPLLeague set formats within each match.

4.4 Conferences and Round Play

Matches during the regular season are played within a team’s home state conference. The Finals Series features the top-ranked qualifying teams from each conference competing nationally in Melbourne.

5. NPLLeague Team Match Format

5.1 NPLLeague Format Overview

NPLLeague is the NPL’s trademarked team competition format. Each NPLLeague team match consists of five sets played in a fixed order. The team that wins three or more sets wins the match. There is no tiebreaking set — all five sets are played regardless of the running score, unless both captains and the Tournament Director agree to conclude early where the result is already determined and operational circumstances warrant it.

Set	Format	Scoring	Swap Trigger	Notes
1	Men’s Doubles	Rally to 22, win by 2	—	No Freeze
2	Women’s Doubles	Rally to 22, win by 2	—	No Freeze
3	Men’s Singles	Traditional to 15, win by 2	First side reaches 8	One continuous

Set	Format	Scoring	Swap Trigger	Notes
				set; starter and finisher
4	Women's Singles	Traditional to 15, win by 2	First side reaches 8	One continuous set; starter and finisher
5	Mixed Doubles	Rally to 22, win by 2	—	No Freeze

5.2 The Swap Rule — Singles

Men's Singles and Women's Singles are each played as a single continuous set to 15 (traditional scoring, win by 2).

- The nominated starting player commences the set.
- The nominated finishing player enters when the first side reaches 8 points. The set score continues uninterrupted from that point.
- It is one singular set to 15, not two individual games to 8.
- The incoming finisher (substituting player) is permitted a maximum one-minute warm-up at the swap point before play resumes. Play resumes at the current score once the warm-up period has elapsed or the incoming player signals readiness, whichever is earlier.
- Refer to 10.4 for timeouts

5.3 Doubles Formats (Men's and Women's)

Men's Doubles and Women's Doubles are played using rally scoring to 22 (win by 2). Each set must be played by the nominated gender pair.

5.4 Mixed Doubles

Mixed Doubles is played using rally scoring to 22 (win by 2). The nominated mixed pair (one male, one female) plays the full set. Captains must submit their mixed pair nomination by the lineup deadline for the relevant round.

5.5 Order of Sets

The order of sets for every NPL league match is fixed and may not be varied:

Set Order	Format
Set 1	Men's Doubles
Set 2	Women's Doubles
Set 3	Men's Singles
Set 4	Women's Singles
Set 5	Mixed Doubles

This order applies in all regular season rounds, the Finals Series, and any NPL event using the NPL league match format, unless the League Director approves a change.

5.6 Freeze Rule

The freeze applies to all rally-scoring sets (Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles and Mixed Doubles). See Rule 6.5 for the operative provisions.

6. Scoring Rules

6.1 Traditional Scoring (Singles)

Traditional scoring applies to Men's Singles and Women's Singles. Under traditional scoring:

- Only the serving side may score a point.
- The set is won by the first player or side to reach 15 points, win by 2.
- All sets are win by 2, with no upper cap.
- Change of ends occurs when the first player reaches 8 points, coinciding with the swap trigger.

6.2 Rally Scoring (Doubles and Mixed)

Rally scoring applies to Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles and Mixed Doubles. Under rally scoring:

- Either side may score a point on any rally.
- Player A for each team serves and receives on the right side when the team's score is even; Player B serves and receives on the left side when the team's score is odd.
- Players do not swap positions.
- If an incorrect player-position error is not detected before the serve occurs, the rally stands. The referee will correct alignment for the next rally.
- Players may swap positions during a time out and change of ends.

Clarification – The Rally scoring rules are not aligned to GPF Rally Scoring for 2026. These are based on the 2025 rally scoring rules.

6.3 Win Conditions

All sets are won by 2 points. There is no upper point cap in any format.

6.4 Change of Ends

Format	Change of Ends
Men's Singles / Women's Singles	When the first player reaches 8 points (coincides with the swap trigger)
Men's Doubles / Women's Doubles / Mixed Doubles	When the first team reaches 11 points

6.5 Freeze Rule — Rally Scoring Sets

6.5.1 Application

The freeze applies to Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles and Mixed Doubles — all sets played using rally scoring to 22.

6.5.2 Leading Team Freeze at 21

When the first team reaches 21 points, that team is frozen. From that point, the frozen team may only score by winning a rally as the serving team. If the frozen team wins a rally as the receiving team, the serve transfers to the other team but no point is awarded to the frozen team.

6.5.3 Trailing Team — Rally Scoring Continues

When the freeze is triggered, the trailing team is not frozen. They continue to score a point on every rally they win, whether serving or receiving, until they reach 20 points.

6.5.4 Trailing Team Freeze at 20

When the trailing team reaches 20 points, they are also frozen. They may only score their 21st point by winning a rally as the serving team. A rally won at 20 while receiving results in a side-out only — no point is awarded. This ensures the leading team is not placed at an undue disadvantage.

6.5.5 Win Condition

Win by 2 continues to apply with no upper score cap. All points from 21 onwards (or from 20 for the trailing team) are scored on serve only.

Example: The score is 21-15 when the freeze triggers. The leading team at 21 is frozen — serve to score only. The trailing team at 15 continues to score every rally and advances to 20. At 20, the trailing team also freezes. Score is now 21-20. From here, both teams must serve to score.

7. Ladder, Standings and Regular Season Ranking

7.1 NPL Points

Result	NPL Points Awarded
Match win (any margin — 3–2 or 4–1)	3 NPL points
Match win by clean sweep (5–0 in sets)	3 NPL points + 1 bonus point (4 total)
Match loss by narrow margin (2–3 in sets)	1 NPL point (consolation)
Match loss by any other margin	0 NPL points

7.2 Ladder Tiebreaking Order

Where two or more teams are tied on NPL ladder points, the ranking order is determined by the following criteria applied in sequence:

1. Sets won differential (sets for minus sets against across all matches played).
2. Points differential (total points scored minus total points conceded across all sets played).
3. Head-to-head outcome between the tied teams (where all tied teams have played each other an equal number of times).
4. Any additional separation method published by the League prior to the season.

8. Player Eligibility, Draft and Reserve System

8.1 NPL Draft

The NPL Draft is open to all players. There are no age, skill level or geographic restrictions for registration.

- When nominating for the draft, players nominate a preferred state and are placed on the draft board for that state.
- Players may nominate for multiple states and must be prepared to play in any state for which they are selected.
- The draft order is determined by a lottery and follows a snake format.

8.2 Draft Snake Format

The online draft follows a snake (reverse-order) format. Captains are pre-selected prior to the draft. The remaining three player picks per team are made as follows:

1. Round 1 (2nd player per team): Pick positions 1 through 4 in lottery order.
2. Round 2 (3rd player per team): Pick positions 4 through 1 (reversed).
3. Round 3 (4th player per team): Pick positions 4 through 1 (reversed).

8.3 Reserve and Alternate Pool

The reserve and alternate pool consists of all players registered for the NPL 2026 draft but not selected in the main draft, plus any other eligible players approved by the League. Post-draft, players from all states are available to any team as reserves, subject to the rules in Rule 8.4. Additions to the reserve list post-draft require majority captain support or the League's approval.

8.4 Reserve Selection — Waiver Wire and Request System

Before Season Commencement (Prior to Round 1)

Access to reserve players before the season starts is governed by the waiver wire priority system:

- The starting waiver priority mirrors the reverse snake draft order (the team with the last overall pick has first waiver priority).
- When a team nominates a reserve player, their priority moves to the last position.
- If two or more teams request the same player simultaneously before Round 1, the team with the higher waiver priority is granted access. The other team must select an alternative.

During the Season (Rounds 1–7 and Finals)

Once the season has commenced, reserve player access is determined by current NPL ladder position:

- Priority order: the team lowest on the NPL ladder at the time of request has first claim on any available reserve player. Where two or more teams request the same player, priority is awarded to the lower-placed team.
- Where two teams are level on ladder points, the standard ladder tiebreaker rules in Rule 7.2 apply to determine priority.
- League nomination override: if the League has officially nominated a reserve player to participate for a specific team (for example, as an emergency replacement), that nomination takes priority over any concurrent team requests.

All reserve requests must be submitted to the League in writing. Verbal requests are not binding.

8.5 Mid-Season Draft

8.5.1 Purpose

The Mid-Season Draft will take place online on Monday 1 June 2026, following the Mid-Season Festival. It is designed to allow teams to make limited roster changes during the season by releasing players back into a shared draft pool and selecting replacement players from that pool. The final Mid-Season Draft list will be published by the League on Friday 30 May 2026.

8.5.2 Draft Order

Draft order is determined by ladder position at the conclusion of Round 3. Unless otherwise specified by the League, teams lower on the ladder will receive earlier access within each relevant draft category.

8.5.3 Eligibility to Participate

A team must release at least one player from its roster to participate in the Mid-Season Draft. If a team does not release a player, it does not receive a draft selection and cannot access the draft pool.

8.5.4 Number of Players a Team May Release

Each team may release a maximum of two players into the Mid-Season Draft pool. A team may choose to release one player, or two players.

8.5.5 Draft Priority Based on Players Released

Teams that release two players will draft ahead of teams that release one player. All teams releasing two players are ordered first (by ladder position after Round 3), followed by all teams releasing one player (also ordered by ladder position after Round 3).

8.5.6 Redrafting Released Players

Any player released into the Mid-Season Draft pool becomes available to all participating teams. A team may reselect a player it has released; however, that player is equally available to every other team. There is no priority, matching right, or protection for the team that originally released them.

8.5.7 Draft Pool Composition

The Mid-Season Draft pool will consist of:

- Any players who were included on the original season draft list but were not drafted.
- Players released by teams as part of the Mid-Season Draft process.
- Players who register for the Mid-Season Draft before the registration deadline set by the League.
- Any other players approved by the League for inclusion in the Mid-Season Draft pool at its discretion.

8.5.8 Multi-State Players — State Lottery

Where a player in the Mid-Season Draft pool has registered eligibility for more than one state conference, their allocation to a conference is resolved by a state lottery conducted by the League before the draft commences. The League will draw the player's conference allocation at random from their eligible states. The result is final and published on the final draft list on 30 May 2026.

8.5.9 Finality of Releases and Selections

Once a player is released into the pool, that release is final for the purposes of the draft. Once a selection is made, it is final unless overturned by the League due to an eligibility, compliance, or administrative issue.

8.5.10 League Discretion

The League reserves the right to determine player eligibility, confirm the final draft pool, resolve any drafting disputes, and make any ruling required to protect the integrity and operation of the competition.

8.5.11 Confidentiality of Release Decisions

The number of players released by each team will remain confidential until the player release deadline has passed. Following the deadline, the League will confirm which teams have elected to participate, how many players each participating team has released, and the resulting draft order. The League may also determine whether the names of released players are announced at that time or held until the draft commences.

9. Player Commitment and Availability

9.1 General Commitment

All drafted players are expected to participate in all seven regular season rounds and, if their team qualifies, the Finals Series. Absence must be approved by the League in writing to be an approved absence.

9.2 Minimum Participation for Finals Eligibility

A player must participate in at least two of the seven regular season rounds to be eligible for Finals. Exceptions may be granted at the League's discretion for legitimate injuries or approved circumstances.

9.3 Team Participation Requirements

For each standard NPL league match, teams must nominate the following roles from their four contracted players:

- Men's Doubles pair (2 male players).
- Women's Doubles pair (2 female players).
- Men's Singles starter and finisher (one or two male players).
- Women's Singles starter and finisher (one or two female players).
- Mixed Doubles pair (one male and one female player).

Not all four players will play every format. Mixed Doubles involves only one male and one female from the roster. The League may reject a lineup that is clearly inconsistent with these requirements.

9.4 Unavailability

Drafted players cannot elect to be unavailable without a legitimate reason. Legitimate reasons include:

- Injury or illness (with medical evidence if required by the League).
- Family emergency.
- Pre-notified personal reason approved by the League prior to the season commencing.
- Any other reason at the League's discretion.

If a player is unavailable for illegitimate reasons — such as an attempt to manipulate roster outcomes or gain access to a reserve player — the player and team may be sanctioned under Rule 18.

9.5 Participation in Alternative Events

Players are not permitted to participate in alternative pickleball events during a scheduled NPL round or Finals weekend without the prior written approval of the League. A player who does so without approval will be treated as having committed an unapproved absence and may forfeit prize money entitlements.

9.6 Pre-Notified Absences

Players who have legitimate pre-existing commitments must notify the League prior to the season commencing. The League will assess any such requests on a case-by-case basis and respond in writing.

10. Match Operations

10.1 Pre-Match Selection — Home Team Advantage

10.1.1 Home and Away Designation

Each match is designated as a home or away fixture for each team. The home team is the team listed first in LADER, the League's official tournament management platform. Over the course of the regular season, each team will be designated as the home team and the away team an equal number of times.

10.1.2 Home Team Election

The home team automatically wins the pre-match selection and is not required to participate in a coin toss. The referee will invite the home team captain to make their election before the first set commences. The home team captain must elect one of the following:

- (a) End selection — the home team nominates which end of the court they wish to start from for Set 1.
- (b) Serve or receive — the home team nominates whether they wish to serve or receive at the start of Set 1.

10.1.3 Election Applies to All Sets

The election applies to all five sets in the match. There are no subsequent elections or coin tosses at the commencement of individual sets.

10.1.4 Away Team

The away team receives whichever option the home team did not select. If the home team elects an end, the away team has the serve/receive choice for all sets. If the home team elects serve/receive, the away team starts from the end the home team did not select.

10.2 Start Times and Warm-Up

- Matches commence at the published start time or when called by the court official.
- A one-minute warm-up is permitted at the start of each set.
- In Singles, there is no warm-up for the incoming finisher at the swap point. Play continues immediately from the current score without any break or warm-up.
- There is no player swap in Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles or Mixed Doubles. Each set is played by the nominated pair or players throughout.

10.3 Breaks Between Sets

There will be a two-minute break between sets. There are no breaks between games within a set. The minimum break between separate matches is 15 minutes. If a match exceeds its allocated time, the subsequent match will be delayed to allow the full 15-minute break.

10.4 Timeouts

- Each team is entitled to one (1) timeout per set for all set formats.
- Each timeout may last up to one minute. Play may resume sooner if all players are ready.
- Only participating players, or the captain or an authorised bench delegate (notified to the referee before the set), may call a timeout.
- If a captain is on court, they may nominate a non-playing player to call timeouts from the bench. This must be communicated to the referee before the set commences.
- In Singles, any timeout used prior to the swap carries over and cannot be reclaimed by the incoming finisher.
- The referee will announce when 15 seconds remain. At the end of the timeout, the referee calls "Time in" and announces the current score.

10.5 Medical Timeouts

A player needing medical attention during a match must request a medical timeout through the referee. The following rules apply:

- The referee will immediately summon on-site medical personnel or the Tournament Director if none are present.
- When medical personnel or the Tournament Director arrive, a five-minute timer starts. The medical timeout may not exceed five minutes.
- Each player may only request one medical timeout per match.
- Cramp is not a valid medical reason for a medical timeout. A player who claims a medical timeout for cramp will be charged a standard timeout (if available) or issued a technical warning.
- If the player cannot resume play after the five-minute medical timeout expires, the match is retired or otherwise resolved under the injury rules in Rule 12.
- If medical personnel or the Tournament Director determine no valid medical condition exists, the player or team will be charged a standard timeout (if available) and issued a technical warning. If no standard timeout is available, they are issued a technical foul.
- Where blood is present on a player or the court, play may not resume until the bleeding has been controlled and blood removed from clothing and the court. Blood management is a referee timeout and does not count against the player's match timeout allocation.

10.6 Coaching

- Coaching is permitted from within the team only (the four rostered players and a nominated coach).
- Coaching may only occur when the ball is dead (not mid-point).
- Non-playing players (including the captain) are not permitted on the playing court. All conversations must occur at the bench.
- Coaching from the sidelines by any non-authorised party will render the ball dead.
- No line calls can be made by the bench (players and/or coaches).

11. Lineup Administration

11.1 Default Lineup and Amendments

Each team must submit a default lineup to the League using the League's online form prior to Round 1. This submission is made once at the start of the season. The default lineup remains in effect for each round unless the team chooses to amend it in accordance with this rule.

Teams may amend their lineup by 10:00 pm on the Monday preceding each scheduled round. Amendments must be submitted to the League in writing by that deadline.

A missed deadline will result in the team's most recent default or previously submitted lineup being applied for that round.

11.2 Opposition Response to Lineup Amendments

Where a team amends their lineup before the submission deadline, the opposing team will be notified that an amendment has been lodged. The notification will confirm only the four players nominated to participate in the match, without revealing specific format assignments, doubles pairings or individual court positions.

The opposing team may then amend their own lineup in response, provided any such amendment is submitted by the later of: (a) 10:00 pm on Monday, or (b) two hours after receiving the amendment notification from the League, whichever is later.

Where a team amends their lineup after the deadline due to injury, illness or other approved reason, the opposing team will be notified and granted a reasonable opportunity to respond, as determined by the Tournament Director.

12. Injuries, Absences and Replacements

12.1 Injury During a Set

A player who is injured during a live set may not be replaced mid-set. The following rules apply depending on the format and the timing of the injury:

Doubles and Mixed Sets (Rally Scoring)

If a player is unable to continue in a doubles or mixed set, the non-injured player has the option to continue as a single player. The rules relating to this situation are covered in the 2026 GPF Rulebook. If the player does not wish to continue, the set is concluded immediately.

The injured team's score is recorded at the score reached at the time of injury. The opposing team's score is recorded as 22 (the winning target), or the number that is at least 2 points higher than the injured team score. The set is awarded to the opposing team.

Singles Sets — Injury Before the Swap

If a player is injured during the singles set before the swap is triggered:

- The injured player's score at the point of injury is recorded.
- The opposing team's score is pushed to 8, which triggers the swap.
- The finishing player enters and play resumes from that score.

Singles Sets — Injury Before the Set Commences

If a player is injured before the singles set begins and is unable to take the court, the set commences at 0–8. The finisher starts the set from that point. There is no option for one player to cover both the starter and finisher roles.

Singles Sets — Injury After the Swap

If the finishing player is injured after the swap has occurred and cannot continue, the set is concluded. The injured team's score is recorded at the point of injury; the opposing team's score is recorded as 15, or the number that is at least 2 points higher than the injured team score. The set is awarded to the opposing team.

Pre-Match Unavailability

If no reserve is available within 15 minutes of the scheduled start time, the injury rules above apply to each affected set. The set scoring rules in this Rule 12.1 govern the recorded result for ladder and competition purposes.

12.2 Withdrawal from a Set — Effect on Remaining Sets

A player who withdraws from any set during a match due to injury is withdrawn for all remaining sets of that match. The player may not resume participation in the same match for any subsequent set.

12.3 Reserve Use for Injuries

Where a player becomes unavailable for the remainder of a round due to injury, the League may authorise a reserve from the pool to replace that player for the balance of the round. The League will make best efforts to have reserves available on game day, but this is not guaranteed.

12.4 Permanent Replacement

Any player withdrawal that renders a player unavailable for the remainder of the competition allows the team to select a permanent replacement from the Reserve/Alternate list, subject to League approval.

12.5 Withdrawal for Non-Injury Reasons

A player who withdraws from the competition for non-injury reasons will forfeit all prize money owed to them for the season, unless otherwise determined by the League.

12.6 Game Day Absences

If a player fails to appear on game day, the team may use a player from the Reserve/Alternate list under the same rules as an injury replacement. If no reserve is available, following the later of 15 minutes past the allocated start time or a reasonable period determined by the League Director, the team will forfeit impacted sets as outlined in Rule 12.1.

12.7 Player Selection for the Professional Division

If a player is selected to participate in the Professional Division, they cannot refuse to compete if reasonably available. Refusal without legitimate grounds is a breach of contract and may result in forfeiture of all entitlements owed by the NPL to that player.

13. Prize Money and Awards

13.1 Total Prize Pool

The total 2026 NPL season prize pool is AUD \$150,000. Prize money is awarded to the Professional Division only. Prize money is governed by these Rules, the player contract, and any published allocation bulletin.

13.2 Final Season Placings

Distribution based on a team's final finishing place in the Finals Series:

Final Placing	Prize Money
1st Place	\$60,000
2nd Place	\$25,000
3rd Place	\$16,000
4th Place	\$8,000
5th Place	\$1,600
6th Place	\$1,600
7th Place	\$1,600
8th Place	\$1,600
9th Place	\$600
Total Final Season Prize Pool	\$116,000

13.3 Mid-Season Teams Cup Prize Pool

The NPL Mid-Season Teams Cup carries a separate prize pool of \$20,000, awarded at the event and in addition to the main season prize pool.

Teams Cup Placing	Team Prize Pool	Per Player (4-player teams)
1st Place	\$10,000	\$2,500

Teams Cup Placing	Team Prize Pool	Per Player (4-player teams)
2nd Place	\$5,200	\$1,300
3rd Place	\$3,200	\$800
4th Place	\$1,600	\$400

Full details are set out in the 2026 NPL Mid-Season Cup and State of Origin Event Rules document.

13.4 Season MVP Awards

Total Season MVP prize pool: \$9,000. MVPs are calculated based on individual game wins within the NPL league match format. Tiebreakers: (1) player position in singles (starter over finisher), then (2) points differential.

MVP Award	Allocation
Weekly Round MVP (male)	\$250 per gender, per round, per conference
Weekly Round MVP (female)	\$250 per gender, per round, per conference
Total (7 rounds x 2 genders x 3 conferences)	\$9,000

13.5 Golden Pickle Award

The Golden Pickle Award carries a prize of \$5,000 and is presented at the conclusion of the Finals Series. The award recognises the player who best exemplifies outstanding skill, sportsmanship, performance under pressure, or an exceptional moment that captures the spirit of NPL competition across the Finals weekend.

The award is voted on by a panel comprising: the Finals event commentators, all match referees for the Finals Series, and one NPL representative. Each panellist votes individually and the player who receives the most votes is awarded the Golden Pickle. In the event of a voting tie, the League Director's vote is the casting vote.

13.6 Prize Money Conditions

- Players must participate in all matches as directed by the League to remain eligible for their full prize money allocation.
- All players must attend and remain present at the NPL Grand Final for the duration of the match and the prize presentation ceremony. A player who is absent from the Grand Final without written approval from the League will forfeit 10% of their total prize money allocation.
- A player who is suspended, ineligible, or otherwise in breach may have prize money withheld, reduced, forfeited or reallocated in accordance with these Rules and the Competition Rules.
- Financial disputes are to be resolved through mediation between the player, team captain and the League Director (or nominee).

13.7 Prize Money — Replacement Player Allocation

Where a player is absent from a scheduled round or the Finals and a replacement player participates in their place, the following allocation applies:

Event	Absent Player Forfeiture	League Retains	Reserve Receives
Regular Season Round (1–7)	12% of that player's allocated prize pool per round missed	6% (50% of forfeited amount)	6% (50% of forfeited amount)
Finals Series	16% of that player's allocated prize pool	8% (50% of forfeited amount)	8% (50% of forfeited amount)

The absent player forgoes the full applicable allocation (12% per regular round or 16% for Finals). The League retains 50% of that amount and the reserve player receives the remaining 50%. The absent player retains the balance of their allocated prize money for rounds in which they did participate.

For unapproved absences, additional sanctions may apply under Rule 18.

14. Mid-Season Festival — Round 4 Overview

14.1 Event Overview

Round 4 of the 2026 NPL season is a three-day mid-season festival, running from Friday 22 May to Sunday 24 May 2026. The festival comprises three concurrent but distinct competition products:

1. NPL Mid-Season Teams Cup — a 12-team competition using the NPL league format.
2. Individual / Open Tournament — open entry for NPL professionals and the public, across singles and doubles draws.
3. State of Origin Showcase — a representative team event featuring four state and regional squads (VIC, NSW, QLD and ALLIES), with origin squad selection determined through performance in the Individual / Open Tournament and Teams Cup.

Detailed operational rules, qualification systems, format structures, court allocation, scheduling, data capture requirements and origin qualification scoring are set out in the standalone 2026 NPL Mid-Season Cup and State of Origin Event Rules document.

14.2 Timing Within the Season

The Mid-Season Festival falls between Round 3 (Saturday 16 May 2026) and Round 5 (Saturday 27 June 2026). It replaces the regular round format for the Round 4 weekend. The Mid-Season Draft follows on Monday 1 June 2026.

Teams Cup seeding is based on NPL season performance through Rounds 1–3.

14.3 Season Ladder — No Regular Round Points from Mid-Season Festival

The NPL Mid-Season Festival does not contribute points to the main 2026 season ladder. Performance in the festival does not alter a team's conference standing for Finals qualification purposes.

14.4 Prize Money Summary

The Mid-Season Festival carries a separate \$20,000 Teams Cup prize pool (see Rule 13.3 for allocation). This prize pool is additional to and independent of the main season prize pool.

14.5 Reference to Full Event Rules

All operational and competition rules for the Mid-Season Festival are contained in the 2026 NPL Mid-Season Cup and State of Origin Event Rules document. That document is to be read alongside these Rules for the purposes of the festival weekend.

14.6 Key High-Level Reference Dates

Item	Date / Detail
Festival start	Friday 22 May 2026
Festival end	Sunday 24 May 2026
Teams Cup seeding basis	NPL Rounds 1–3 results
State of Origin squad lock	Saturday night, post Teams Cup Swiss Round 4 and Individual / Open semi finals
Sunday results and Origin squads	Sunday results do not alter Origin squads once locked
Mid-Season Draft	Monday 1 June 2026

15. Pro League Finals

15.1 Finals Schedule

The 2026 Finals Series will be held over three days, Friday 28 August to Sunday 30 August 2026, at a venue in Melbourne, Victoria.

15.2 Finals Qualification and Seeding

- The top two teams from each conference (6 teams total) qualify directly for the main Finals bracket.
- The third-placed team from each conference (3 teams) participates in the Friday playoff round.
- A total of 9 teams receive prize money placings (1st through 9th).

Finals seeding:

Seed	Basis
Seeds 1–3	First-placed team from each conference, ranked in order of national ladder position.
Seeds 4–6	Second-placed team from each conference, ranked in order of national ladder position.
Seeds 7–8	Determined by outcome of the Friday playoff round.
9th place	The playoff team that finishes last in the Friday round-robin.

15.3 Finals Playoff (Friday)

The three third-placed conference teams play a round-robin playoff on Friday. The top two teams advance to the main Finals bracket. The bottom team finishes 9th.

15.4 Finals Bracket

Round	Matchup	Day
Qualifying Finals	QF 1: Seed 1 v Seed 4 QF 2: Seed 2 v Seed 3	Saturday
Elimination Finals	EF 1: Seed 5 v Seed 8 EF 2: Seed 6 v Seed 7	Saturday

Round	Matchup	Day
Semi Finals	SF 1: QF1 Loser v EF1 Winner SF 2: QF2 Loser v EF2 Winner	Saturday
Preliminary Finals	PF 1: QF1 Winner v SF2 Winner PF 2: QF2 Winner v SF1 Winner	Sunday
3rd/4th Place Match	PF1 Loser v PF2 Loser	Sunday
Grand Final	PF1 Winner v PF2 Winner	Sunday

15.5 Finals Match Format

All Finals matches use the standard 2026 NPL league five-set format as specified in Rule 5, including the fixed set order in Rule 5.5.

16. DUPR Integration

16.1 Score Entry

All NPL league matches will be entered into DUPR. Results staff are responsible for accurate and timely entry.

Note: The NPL will confirm with DUPR prior to the 2026 season that the two-game split used for singles score entry is compatible with DUPR's minimum score requirements.

Format	DUPR Entry Method
Men's Singles / Women's Singles	Entered as two separate games corresponding to each half of the set. The first game reflects the score at the swap trigger (e.g., 8–5 if the first player reached 8). The second game reflects the points played from the swap to conclusion (e.g., 7–4 to reach 15 total). Scores are entered to reflect the actual result of each portion, whether it ends at 8, 7, or another score required for victory.
Men's Doubles / Women's Doubles (Rally to 22)	Entered as a single game at the final rally score upon set completion.
Mixed Doubles (Rally to 22)	Entered as a single game at the final rally score upon set completion.

17. Officials

Role	Responsibility
Referee	Management of individual matches and application of the Rules on court.
Head Referee	Referee briefings at the start of each round; resolution of referee escalations.
Tournament Director	Day-to-day management of event operations and schedule.
League Director	Final authority on rule interpretation, disputes and competition integrity.

17.1 Referee Briefings and Paddle Inspection

The Head Referee will conduct a briefing at the start of each round. Referees will inspect paddles at the beginning of each match. There are no additional general referee briefings during the round day.

18. Conduct, Integrity and Sanctions ---

18.1 General Conduct

All participants must act consistently with the player contract, NPL Code of Conduct, anti-harassment policies, anti-doping policies, betting and integrity rules, and all lawful directions of the League and event officials.

18.2 Prohibited Conduct

The following conduct is prohibited at all times:

- Abuse or intimidation of players, officials, staff or spectators.
- Racist, sexist, discriminatory, hateful, harassing or abusive conduct, whether in person or online.
- Defamatory or knowingly false statements about the League, any team, player, sponsor, venue or NPL event.
- Illegal conduct or conduct inciting illegal activity.
- Gambling-related conduct in connection with NPL events.
- Conduct likely to materially damage the reputation or commercial interests of the League.

18.3 Paddle Conduct and Technical Fouls

The NPL applies paddle throw and technical foul rules at the set level. A technical foul that would result in a match forfeit under the GPFOR rules will instead result in the automatic loss of that set for the offending player's team. The opposing team is awarded the set in full. No individual point or score adjustment is made to the in-progress set score prior to the technical foul.

18.4 Sanctions

The League may investigate any suspected misconduct or integrity matters. Sanctions available include:

- Formal warning.
- Loss of ladder points.
- Lineup restrictions.
- Disqualification or suspension from current or future events.
- Withholding, reduction or forfeiture of prize money or benefits.
- Exclusion from future NPL seasons.

19. Weather and Scheduling Disruptions ---

19.1 General

All NPL regular season round venues are indoor. In the event of any circumstance affecting access to or use of a venue, the League will manage scheduling adjustments in accordance with this rule. Matches may be scheduled as early as 8:00 am or as late as 9:00 pm to accommodate disruptions.

19.2 Rescheduling Incomplete Matches

In the event matches cannot be completed, they will be rescheduled in the following order of preference:

1. Scheduling at an alternate venue on the same event day or weekend.
2. Inclusion in the subsequent round as an extended match card.
3. Scheduling on a separate designated catch-up date communicated by the League.

19.3 Extreme Heat Policy

The NPL follows Pickleball Australia's Extreme Heat Policy for any outdoor events or sessions. Rescheduling due to extreme heat is governed by Rule 19.2.

Appendix A — Definitions

Term	Meaning
APP	Association of Pickleball Players.
Competition	The NPL 2026 season, including all rounds, the Mid-Season Festival and the Finals Series.
Competition Rules	These Rules, together with the applicable player contract, NPL Terms and Conditions, NPL Code of Conduct and Grievance Procedure By-Law.
DUPR	Dynamic Universal Pickleball Rating — the rating system used by the NPL.
Finals Series	The NPL national Finals held in Melbourne, Friday 28 – Sunday 30 August 2026.
GPA	Global Pickleball Alliance.
GPFOR	Global Pickleball Federation Official Rulebook (current edition).
League	National Pickleball League (NPL Trading Pty Ltd) ABN 30 677 000 789.
League Director	The person appointed by the League as its representative with final authority over competition decisions.
Mid-Season Festival	The Round 4 festival weekend (22–24 May 2026) comprising the Teams Cup, Individual / Open Tournament and State of Origin Showcase.
NPLLeague	The League's professional team league competition and trademarked match format.
NPL Championships	Tournaments and championship events conducted by the League other than NPLLeague.
NPL Events	All competitions, leagues, tournaments and events organised, operated or sanctioned by the League.
Player	A person contracted to participate in the NPL 2026 season as a professional player.
Reserve / Alternate Pool	The pool of eligible players available for use as replacements or additions, as described in Rule 8.3.
Match	A single NPLLeague match between two teams, consisting of five sets.

END OF 2026 NPL SEASON RULE BOOK

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