



# **Sand Volleyball League Rulebook and General Information**

## Purpose and Scope of This Document

This Rulebook and Registration Information booklet is intended to give all participants a broad overview of how the league operates and explain most rules and procedures that govern the league. This document is not intended to cover every last detail, such as dates and times of Preseason and Postseason parties, schedules for each team, and various other procedural and administrative items. Many additional details for the league will be disseminated via e-mail and on the Club website, so please check both frequently. If you have a SPAM filter on your e-mail, please add [patrick@madisonssc.com](mailto:patrick@madisonssc.com) to your list of safe senders to ensure you receive all e-mails pertaining to the league. This is the only e-mail address from which e-mails regarding the league will come.

## Code of Conduct

Madison Sports and Social Club does not tolerate discrimination, racism, sexual harassment, unwelcome sexual advances, violence, threats, or any other type of behavior that may make any player or official feel uncomfortable or threaten his or her health and well-being. We expect all players to treat everyone with respect and abide by common standards of decency and good sportsmanship.

Team names must not be offensive toward any race, nationality, gender, or any other group of individuals. They must not contain profanity. Please use tact and common sense when choosing a team name. MSSC reserves the right to reject any team name it finds offensive. You will be asked to supply a new name in the event your team name is deemed inappropriate.

Players will read and understand the rules. They are sent to all roster players prior to the season and are available on the MSSC website as well. Not reading rules is the single biggest cause of problems in our leagues. If players have a question about the application of any given rule, they can ask an official during a break in play or after a game if time allows. They will not argue calls with officials or ask to have rules explained to them during play unless an official feels an explanation is necessary before play continues. Officials are human and make mistakes and MSSC does not tolerate abuse of its officials.

All participants must refrain from threatening, taunting, name-calling, put-downs, intimidation, violence, and other inappropriate behavior toward teammates, opponents, and officials. Everyone makes mistakes, and we will not tolerate criticism or intimidation of anyone involved with our leagues due to differences in skill level or any other factor. Coaching, tips, and helpful hints are welcome, provided they are relayed in a constructive and friendly manner.

All players are encouraged to report offensive behavior to the Club President, Patrick Fosdick, via e-mail at [patrick@madisonssc.com](mailto:patrick@madisonssc.com). All reports will be kept anonymous and taken seriously, and appropriate action will be taken if deemed necessary, including, but not limited to warnings, suspension, and removal of the offending individual(s) from league play.

## Registration and General League Information

- Registration is only available on our website (<http://www.madisonssc.com>).
- The Team Captain has the option to divide up the team fee amongst his or her team members using TeamPayer. This service allows the Captain to assign an amount to each player, who will then receive an e-mail from the captain requesting the amount. Any amounts not paid in full by the second week of the season will be charged to the Captain's credit card.
- We will segment the league into separate divisions whenever possible to ensure the best playing experience for everyone. Sometimes we are able to do this for the regular season, and sometimes we just segment playoff brackets based on final regular season standings
- Teams must maintain complete and accurate rosters. All players, including subs, should be listed on a team's roster, and players who play in any number of games must complete the waiver, which is accomplished through accepting a spot on the team from a captain's e-mail invite. Teams in violation of waiver policies will be subject to forfeiting games at MSSC's discretion

## Prizes

Prizes will be awarded for the top teams in the leagues, including Champions t-shirts for the winners, along with cash prizes or gift cards. Amounts are typically \$50 for the champions and \$25 for the runners-up. If leagues are segmented, prizes are only awarded to teams in the Upper division.

## Team Shirts

MSSC provides shirts for each player on a team's roster. Colors are assigned on a first requested, first awarded basis. Other details related to shirts can be found on the [Team Shirt Policies](#) page of our website. Players are expected to wear league shirts for every match. Teams at every level of sport – from club ball to the Olympics – all wear the same shirt

## Rules and Regulations

### 1. General Rules

- A. All games in the league shall be governed by the rules outlined herein
- B. This is a co-ed recreational league, not the AVP Tour. All players are expected to show good sportsmanship and act appropriately toward team members and opponents at all times
- C. Players must respect the authority of the referees to regulate the game and abide by their decisions. Referees have the authority to eject players from the game for detrimental conduct. All decisions of the referees are final. Any rulings not specifically covered in the rules are up to the discretion of the referee or a representative of MSSC
- D. Rules are subject to change and clarification by MSSC. Any rule changes or clarifications will be communicated to all registered participants via e-mail
- E. Olbrich is a "dry" park – meaning no alcohol is permitted outside of the Bier Garten area. Dogs are also against city rules, although they are permitted in the Bier Garten
- F. Following the regular season, an appropriate postseason structure will be established. If there are multiple divisions (i.e. Upper, Intermediate, and Lower), a traditional playoff

bracket may only be used in the Upper division if time and/or space constraints arise. In general, all teams are eligible for postseason play with the following exceptions:

- Any team forfeiting two or more regular season matches may be left out of the postseason at MSSC's discretion
  - If time or space constraints arise, teams may be left out of the playoff bracket to allow completion of the league in a timely and/or efficient manner. This rarely ever happens. Depending on the reason for the exclusion, a team may be refunded for a missed playoff game
  - Any team determined to have exhibited extremely poor sportsmanship or other conduct detrimental to the league on a regular and consistent basis may be left out of the postseason at MSSC's discretion. Refunds will NOT be issued to any teams under these circumstances, as this is a violation of our Code of Conduct
  - Any team who does not wish to participate in the postseason may be excluded at the captain's request. There is no requirement to participate in the playoffs
- G. If a team wins the first two games/sets of a match, the referee has discretion to call the match at that point if time or light constraints arise

## 2. Team Composition and Forfeits

- A. A standard team will consist of six players on the court for each team, at least two of whom must be female. Teams may play with as few as four players provided there are still at least two females on the court. If a team is not able to field four players (including two females), they will forfeit unless the opponent agrees to let them play shorthanded. For all league purposes only, a player is considered a "male" unless specifically identifying as a female
- B. If a player leaves a match for any reason and no substitute is available, the game may proceed as long as there are still at least four players present (including at least two females)
- C. If a team is not ready to play at the scheduled start time, a forfeit may be declared by the referee. Since the courts are not lighted, we must keep the games on schedule to finish before it gets dark
  - If one team decides to take a forfeit win, this must be decided and captains must sign to acknowledge the forfeit before the game begins. It is the responsibility of the team taking the forfeit win to ensure this happens.
  - Teams who no-show games or show up with fewer than four players will be charged a forfeit fee according to the procedures outlined on the Forfeit Fees page of the MSSC website (<https://madisonssc.leaguelab.com/page/forfeitfees>)
- D. Teams may recruit subs from other teams on site during the regular season or use their own subs from outside the league. A team must furnish at least four of its own players to avoid a forfeit. A team's "own player" is defined as anyone not on the roster of another team in the league. Subs from other teams are not allowed in the playoffs. If a lower division team wants to use a sub from the upper division, they must obtain consent of the opponent. Any roster rules may be disregarded if the opponent agrees

## 3. Equipment

- A. All equipment will be provided by MSSC. We provide court lines and games balls, but a ball brought by either team may be used as long as both teams agree

- B. We do not provide balls for warmups. If you want to ensure you have a ball to warm up with, please bring your own

#### 4. **The Court and General Game Play**

- A. The court will consist of one standard sand volleyball court, measuring approximately 60 feet in length by 30 feet in width
- B. Any ball that hits the line is in bounds
- C. All matches will begin with a game of “rock, paper, scissors” between the two captains. The winner may choose to serve or choose the side of the court on which his or her team will begin the game. The serve will alternate each set
- D. The referee may stop play if a ball from another match comes on to the court and poses a safety risk to players or otherwise interferes with game play. A ball that comes onto the court, does not interfere with the play, and is immediately removed does not need to stop play. These situations are referee discretion, as every occurrence is different.
- E. After the completion of each individual game, the teams will switch sides
- F. Players may rotate in wherever they wish, as long as they always rotate in at the same spot. For example, some teams prefer to rotate in at the service position, while some prefer to rotate in at outside hitter opposite the service position. When players rotate in, there still must be at least two females on the court
- G. A ball that hits an obstruction above the court of play (i.e. tree branch) can be played as long as it does not give the hitting team an advantage in the referee’s opinion. The simplest and most common definition of this rule is that if the ball hits an object, it must be hit again by a player on that team before crossing the net
- H. We do not prohibit spectators at matches, but teams are responsible for monitoring the behavior and location of their spectators – specifically children. They must remain off the court during set up and game play to allow MSSC staff to do their job and players to play uninterrupted. Referees have discretion to assess a forfeit if any spectators are interfering with play for a prolonged period of time

#### 5. **Officials**

- A. All games will be officiated by an impartial referee supplied by MSSC. The referee governs all game playing issues and has authority for final rulings

#### 6. **Serving**

- A. All players must wait for the referee to whistle or announce the score before serving. The referee has discretion to award a point to the opponent if a player takes too long to serve
- B. All serves must be made from the sand (not the grass)
- C. A player may serve overhand or underhand. **Starting in Spring 2022, jump serves will be allowed in the Upper division of any league we are able to segment. They may be used in any division if both teams are OK with it**
- C. A serve that hits the net but still goes over is a live ball
- D. Players are allowed to set a serve
- F. Players may not block or otherwise "attack" a serve as it crosses the net or immediately after it crosses the net. Essentially this means that a serve should be either set or bumped,

resulting in a dramatic change of trajectory. Not allowed are blocking the ball at or shortly over the net, spiking the ball just after it crosses the net, or pushing the ball back over just after it crosses the net with no other hits by teammates. Refs are allowed to use their discretion for this rule.

## **7. Hitting, volleys, and returning a serve**

- A. There may be no more than three hits per side before the ball must cross back over the net. No player may hit the ball twice in a row (excluding blocks at the net)
- B. There are no gender restrictions on who must hit the ball before it crosses back over the net
- C. Players may not go under the net or hit the net other than by minimal incidental contact. Violation of this rule results in a point for the other team
- D. Players in the back row may not spike or attack. This means they may not jump and hit the ball in a manner that would normally be considered a spike, and they may not move up into the front row to attack. A player's row will be determined based on where he or she was at the serve.
  - If a team only has five players, at least two will be considered to be in the back row at all times. If a team only has four players, at least one will be considered to be in the back row at all times. It is referee discretion as to who is considered in the back row, and refs may determine that there were more players in the back row for shorthanded teams
- E. Lifts and carries are not allowed. The simplest definition of a lift is any hit using two open palms to move the ball upward. A carry occurs when a player palms, holds, or otherwise controls the ball other than by brief contact (for example: palming and throwing a ball rather than bumping or spiking it)
- F. The ball may be played with any part of the body, so long as normal rules of contact aren't broken

## **8. Scoring**

- A. Each match will consist of three sets/games, with the winner of two of the three getting the victory. All three games may be played if time permits. All games will count for tiebreaker purposes in the league standings
- B. The league uses rally scoring - i.e. there are no side outs and a point is scored on every legal serve
- C. Sets are played to 21 points and a team must win by two points. There is a cap at 25 points; the first team to 25 wins regardless of the score. Referees have discretion to play games to 15 (hard cap of 18) if daylight or time becomes a concern. If you want to play all three sets to 21, make sure you are there on time, start on time, and don't take long breaks between sets or otherwise waste time. The courts are not lit, and we have to get three matches in each night on each court before it gets dark, so we need to keep the pace of play fairly quick. In some cases, the first two sets are very close and/or go beyond 21 and it just won't be possible to play the third to 21

## Miscellaneous Administrative Rules and Notes

- MSSC encourages Free Agents (or players without a team) to register. The league has a maximum capacity, so full teams will be placed first, followed by Free Agents in the order they registered. Our leagues generally sell out each season, so the probability of forming a free agent team is low, but registered teams do sometimes pick up free agents
- Free Agents are welcome to form teams on their own or request to play with friends, otherwise they will be assigned to a team by MSSC
- Spectators are welcome and encouraged at the games
- Club management reserves the right to alter the set up of the league at any time before or during the season

## End of the Match

At the completion of the match, the score card will be submitted to MSSC as proof of the game's final score. All players are expected to shake hands and otherwise show good sportsmanship, regardless of the final score or any disagreements or situations that may have arisen during the game.

## Results and Standings

Results and standings will be posted on the Volleyball page of the MSSC website (<http://www.madisonssc.com>) following receipt of the official scores from each game.

## Cancellation/Rainout Policy

Games may be postponed or canceled due to dangerous weather, extremely poor court conditions, or a number of other factors. Rescheduled games are not required to be played at any specific location, but the location must be agreed upon by both teams. In general, canceled games are added to the end of the regular season schedule. **All cancellations will be e-mailed to all registered players and posted on the MSSC website. Do not contact us via e-mail or phone to inquire about rainouts, as those messages will not receive a response.**

## Good Sportsmanship

The final section of the rules and regulations of the league will reiterate what was stated at the beginning of this document: The purpose of our volleyball league is first and foremost to have fun. Winning should always come second. All participants must realize that not all players will be on the same skill level, and that there may be vast differences in skill level between members of the same team or between two teams in the league. Boasting, bragging, taunting, verbally abusing, or otherwise putting down other players will not be tolerated. The referees and/or a representative of MSSC reserve the right to issue warnings, penalties, and ejections if any of the above-mentioned behavior becomes too severe. Winning may be important to you, but good sportsmanship must take priority over wins and losses.