

The International Tennis Federation

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) is the governing body of the game of tennis and its duties and responsibilities include determination of the Rules of Tennis. The USTA is a part of the ITF and follows its rules.

Here are some edited rules that are pertinent to play in the Men's 50 Plus League of Lee County. The numbers are the numbers of the rules in the ITF rule book. While the rule book is hundreds of pages long, only a small portion has to do with what players need to know. The rest has information ranging from court dimensions to how to run tournaments. "The Code: The players' guide to fair play and the unwritten rules of tennis" picks up many of the rules and guidelines and expands and emphasizes some of the most important.

Items from the ITF rules:

12. BALL TOUCHES A LINE

If a ball touches any part of a line, it is in.

13. BALL TOUCHES A PERMANENT FIXTURE

If the ball in play touches a permanent fixture after it has hit the correct court, the player who hit the ball wins the point. If the ball in play touches a permanent fixture before it hits the ground, the player who hit the ball loses the point. (The permanent fixtures of the court include the backstops and side-stops, the spectators, the stands and seats for spectators, all other fixtures around and above the court.)

18. FOOT FAULT

During the service motion, the server shall not:

- a. Change position by walking or running, although slight movements of the feet are permitted; or
- b. Touch the baseline or the court with either foot; or
- c. Touch the area outside the imaginary extension of the sideline with either foot; or
- d. Touch the imaginary extension of the center mark with either foot.

If the server breaks this rule it is a "Foot Fault".

21. WHEN TO SERVE & RECEIVE

The server shall not serve until the receiver is ready. However, the receiver shall play to the reasonable pace of the server and shall be ready to receive within a reasonable time of the server being ready.

A receiver who attempts to return the service shall be considered as being ready. If it is demonstrated that the receiver is not ready, the service cannot be called a fault.

23. THE LET

In all cases when a let is called, except when a service let is called on a second service, the whole point shall be replayed.

Case 1: When the ball is in play, another ball rolls onto court. A let is called. The server had previously served a fault. Is the server now entitled to a first service or second service? Decision: First service. The whole point must be replayed.

24. PLAYER LOSES POINT

The point is lost if:

- a. The player serves two consecutive faults; or
- b. The player does not return the ball in play before it bounces twice consecutively; or
- c. The player returns the ball in play so that it hits the ground, or before it bounces, an object, outside the correct court; or
- d. The player returns the ball in play so that, before it bounces, it hits a permanent fixture; or
- e. The receiver returns the service before it bounces; or
- f. The player deliberately carries or catches the ball in play on the racket or deliberately touches it with the racket more than once; or
- g. The player or the racket, whether in the player's hand or not, or anything which the player is wearing or carrying touches the net, net posts/singles sticks, cord or metal cable, strap or band, or the opponent's court at any time while the ball is in play; or
- h. The player hits the ball before it has passed the net; or
- i. The ball in play touches the player or anything that the player is wearing or carrying, except the racket; or
- j. The ball in play touches the racket when the player is not holding it; or

k. The player deliberately and materially changes the shape of the racket when the ball is in play;
or

l. In doubles, both players touch the ball when returning it.

25. A GOOD RETURN

It is a good return if:

The ball touches the net, net posts/singles sticks, cord or metal cable, strap or band, provided that it passes over any of them and hits the ground within the correct court; except if other rules are violated; or

b. After the ball in play has hit the ground within the correct court and has spun or been blown back over the net, the player reaches over the net and plays the ball into the correct court, provided that the player does not break other rules; or

c. The ball is returned outside the net posts, either above or below the level of the top of the net, even though it touches the net posts, provided that it hits the ground in the correct court; or

d. The ball passes under the net cord between the singles stick and the adjacent net post without touching either net, net cord or net post and hits the ground in the correct court; or

e. The player's racket passes over the net after hitting the ball on the player's own side of the net and the ball hits the ground in the correct court; or

f. The player hits the ball in play, which hits another ball lying in the correct court.

26. HINDRANCE

If a player is hindered in playing the point by a deliberate act of the opponent(s), the player shall win the point.

However, the point shall be replayed if a player is hindered in playing the point by either an unintentional act of the opponent(s), or something outside the player's own control (not including a permanent fixture).

27. CORRECTING ERRORS

As a principle, when an error in respect of the Rules of Tennis is discovered, all points previously played shall stand. Errors so discovered shall be corrected as follows:

a. During a standard game or a tie-break game, if a player serves from the wrong half of the court, this should be corrected as soon as the error is discovered

and the server shall serve from the correct half of the court according to the score. A fault that was served before the error was discovered shall stand.

b. During a standard game or a tie-break game, if the players are at the wrong ends of the court, the error should be corrected as soon as it is discovered and the server shall serve from the correct end of the court according to the score.

c. If a player serves out of turn during a standard game, the player who was originally due to serve shall serve as soon as the error is discovered. However, if a game is completed before the error is discovered the order of service shall remain as altered. In this case, any ball change to be made after an agreed number of games should be made one game later than originally scheduled. A fault that was served by the opponent(s) before the error was discovered shall not stand.

In doubles, if the partners of one team serve out of turn, a fault that was served before the error was discovered shall stand.

d. If a player serves out of turn during a tie-break game and the error is discovered after an even number of points have been played, the error is corrected immediately. If the error is discovered after an odd number of points have been played, the order of service shall remain as altered.

A fault that was served by the opponent(s) before the error was discovered shall not stand.

In doubles, if the partners of one team serve out of turn, a fault that was served before the error was discovered shall stand.

e. During a standard game or a tie-break game in doubles, if there is an error in the order of receiving, this shall remain as altered until the end of the game in which the error is discovered. For the next game in which they are the receivers in that set, the partners shall then resume the original order of receiving.

29. CONTINUOUS PLAY

As a principle, play should be continuous, from the time the match starts (when the first service of the match is put in play) until the match finishes.

a. Between points, a maximum of twenty (20) seconds is allowed. When the players change ends at the end of a game, a maximum of ninety (90) seconds are allowed. However, after the first game of each set and during a tie-break game, play shall be continuous and the players shall change ends without a rest.

At the end of each set there shall be a set break of a maximum of one hundred and twenty (120) seconds.

The maximum time starts from the moment that one point finishes until the first service is struck for the next point.

b. If, for reasons outside the player's control, clothing, footwear or necessary equipment (excluding the racket) is broken or needs to be replaced, the player may be allowed reasonable extra time to rectify the problem.

c. No extra time shall be given to allow a player to recover condition. However, a player suffering from a treatable medical condition may be allowed one medical time-out of three minutes for the treatment of that medical condition.

A limited number of toilet/change of attire breaks may also be allowed, if this is announced in advance of the event.

30. COACHING

Coaching is considered to be communication, advice or instruction of any kind, audible or visible, to a player. Coaching is not allowed.