

**VALLEY LEAGUE OF WESTERN MASS
LOCAL LEAGUE TENNIS RULES 2019
DRAFT**

1. GENERAL

- A. The following rules and regulations are known as the Valley League of Western Mass. (VLWM) USTA League Local Rules (Local Rules).
- B. The Local Rules are supplemental and subordinate to the National and Sectional USTA League Regulations. Players are responsible for reviewing all rules.
- C. The VLWM captains vote on local policy and regulation changes. The Local League Committee, League Coordinator, and Treasurer administer the Western Mass USTA League program.

2. LOCAL LEAGUE

- A. Match Format: In all leagues, each player can play in only one position per league match.
 - **Adult 18 & Over** team matches will consist of two singles and three doubles positions, except for the 2.5 or 5.0 levels, which play one singles and two doubles positions.
 - **Adult 40 & Over** team matches will consist of one singles and three doubles positions, except for the 2.5 and 5.0 levels, which will play one singles and two doubles positions. (Teams at the 3.0-4.5 levels will be required to field a 2 singles, 3 doubles positions at the Championship levels.)
 - **Adult 55 & Over, Adult 65 & Over and all Mixed Doubles** team matches will consist of three doubles positions.

In some instances a divergence from the above may be appropriate to support play and league formation, especially in smaller leagues. If other match formats are enacted, it will occur at the season's start and with the coordination of the LLC and the impacted team captains. In any case, the championship format remains unaltered.

- B. **Player Participation:** A player may participate at more than one NTRP level per division (Adult or Mixed Doubles) in the same local league during the same season. Matches will not be scheduled or rescheduled to accommodate players participating in more than one league or division.

A player from the first season who played on a team that qualified for the championships can play *up a level* in the second or subsequent season and/or can play on another team in the second or subsequent season *at the same level or down a level* (if rating allows). If the player plays at the same level or down a level, the player must declare intent to play for the 2nd season team at that Championship level.

- C. **Participation of Out of Local Area Teams:** An out of district team or club may participate in VLWM league play given the following conditions:
 - The out of district team or club submits a written request for permission to play in the VLWM to the League Coordinator,

- The majority of the Valley League Captains accept the out of district club or team, and
- The out of district team or club agrees to abide by the VLWM rules and regulations.

C. Player and Team Eligibility: To be eligible for team play, a participant must be a USTA member, and the membership must extend through the end of the league season.

- All teams must meet the in-level player registration requirements at the season's start.
 - Adult 18 & Over teams must have a minimum of 8 players for 3.0 – 4.5 teams and a minimum of 5 players for 2.5 and 5.0 teams on the roster at the team's published NTRP level.
 - Adult 40 & Over teams must have a minimum of 7 players on the roster at the team's published NTRP level for 3.0-4.5 level teams, and 5 players on the roster for 2.5 & 5.0 level teams.
 - Adult 55 & Over, Adult 65 & Over and all Mixed Doubles teams must have at least 3 doubles combinations on the roster that meet the published NTRP level.
- Minimum Age Requirement – Each player shall have reached the required minimum age for the division they wish to play in prior to or during the calendar year in which such player participates in his or her first match for that league. The Calendar year is defined as January 1-December 31.
- Each player must be registered on the TennisLink team roster before playing a match.
- Each player must be at or below the particular NTRP level of play, before playing a match.
- In order to generate a NTRP computer rating from the prior season, a player must have completed three matches against a computer rated player.
- If a player does not have a NTRP computer rating, they must self-rate.

D. Match Fees and Balls:

- The TennisLink player fee for team registration is \$23 per player per team.
- Court fees for a two hour match are \$20 per player for the fall/winter season. Summer rates will be announced.
- The captain, or designated team member, must pay the host club before going onto the court, but after the lineups have been exchanged.

- A 48-hour notice must be given to the facility for match cancellations. The forfeiting team is responsible for the total court cost of the individual match if this regulation is not followed. Refer to Section 5 Defaults and Forfeitures.

- The Home Team will provide new regulation tennis balls for each position played.

E. **Championship Year Team Entry:** Before the start of the league season, the Team and Home Site Commitment must be submitted to the LLC. The form can be found on the www.westernmass.usta.com website. Choose USTA League Tennis from the left hand menu and then League Tennis Forms.

- In-level team registration deadlines will be announced by the LLC.

F. **Escrow Accounts:** The VLWM maintains team escrow accounts equal to the amount needed to reimbursement a club if an entire match is canceled. Accordingly, the following escrow amounts are required per team prior to the start of league play:

- Adult 18 & Over (3.0-4.5): \$160
- Adult 40 & Over (3.0 – 4.5): \$140 (*assuming a 4-position format*)
- Adult 18 & Over and 40 & Over (2.5W, 5.0): \$100
- Adult 55 & Over, Adult 65 & Over and all Mixed Doubles: \$120

- Escrow deposits should be made payable to the Valley League of Western Mass and mailed to Treasurer Lynn Kucejko along with the League Escrow Account Submission Form located at www.westernmass.usta.com: choose USTA Tennis Leagues from the left hand menu and then League Tennis Forms. Remit the items to Lynn at:

Valley League of WMA
c/o Lynn Kucejko
45 Fairfield Terrace
Longmeadow, MA 01106

- Fees are deposited into an escrow account until the season's end. At the season's end, checks will be issued to those that request a refund from the treasurer; otherwise the money is left in the account and carried over to the next season.

G. **Flight Winner Determination:**

- **All 3 or 5- position league winners will be determined by team wins.** The team that has the most team wins at the season's end is the flight winner. TennisLink will be used to record team standings and the VLWM will use the Team Score column, to determine team standings. In the event of a tie at the end of the season, the winner will be determined as follows:
 - a) Individual Matches: Winner of the most individual matches
 - b) Team with the fewest number of sets lost
 - c) Games: Team with the fewest number of games lost.
 - d) Winner of the head to head match between the teams that are otherwise tied.

- e) Coin toss
- **All 4-position leagues will be determined by individual position wins.** The team with the most individual position wins at the end of the season is the flight winner. Tennislink will be used to record team standings and the VLWM will use the Individual Wins column to determine the team standings. In the event of a tie at the end of a season, the winner will be determined as follows:
 - a) Team with the fewest number of sets lost
 - b) Games: Team with the fewest number of games lost.
 - c) Winner of the head to head match between the teams that are otherwise tied.
 - d) Coin toss

3. MATCH REGULATIONS

A. Match Format:

- a. **All 18 & Over and 40 & Over Adult and Mixed Doubles Leagues:** Play the best 2 out of 3 sets with regular scoring. Play will be continuous throughout the match. There is no rest after the first game of any set, but players change ends. If requested by any player on the court, a two minute set break between any set may be taken. See H Below for Match Tie-Break and Out of Time Procedures.
 - b. **All 55 & Over and 65 & Over Adult Leagues:** Play the best of two sets using regular scoring. In the event of split sets, a 10-point match tiebreak (1st to 10 by 2) shall be played in lieu of a third set with the Coman Style of switching. See H Below for Out of Time Procedures.
- B. **Line-Ups:** Team captains must exchange line-ups 5 minutes prior to the scheduled match time.
- C. **Time-Limit:** Each match has a time limit of 2 hours. Captains are to determine before the start of the match, how the end of time is signaled (bell, clock on the court, timer, etc.).
- D. **Split Matches:** For matches where start times are split, positions will be played in order of the split times with the position order being 1S, 2S, 1D, 2D, 3D. (For example, if there are 3 courts @ 12 pm and 2 courts @ 2 pm, the singles and 1st doubles would play @ 12 noon, and the remaining doubles positions would play @ 2 pm.) There must be agreement between the captains of both teams to change this order.
- E. **Coaching:** Coaching is not allowed. There should be no interference with match play by any by-stander including teammates and captains.
- F. **Warm-Up Time Limit:** Match warm-up is 10 minutes and begins at the time the match is scheduled. The 10 minute warm-up includes serves.
- G. **Tardiness:** The point penalty system will be enforced for players late to a match. Penalties begin at the scheduled match time.

The point penalty system prescribes that the late player(s) loses the toss plus 1 game for each 5 minutes late. The match is a default at 15:01 minutes past the scheduled match time and considered a 6-0, 6-0 win for the player(s) present. A summary of the point penalty system is as follows:

- 5:00 minutes or less: Loss of toss plus 1 game.
- 5:01-10:00 minutes: Loss of toss plus 2 games.
- 10:01-15:00 minutes: Loss of toss plus 3 games.
- More than 15:01 minutes: Loss of match.

If the late player arrives past the scheduled start time, but before the default time, they are to receive a 5-minute injury prevention warm-up.

- H. **Tie-Break and Timed Match Procedures:** Under no circumstances can match points be split. A winner must be determined before the players leave the court. There are several tiebreakers included in these procedures. The following describes the basic tiebreakers and how they are played. The Timed Match Procedures below describe when they are played.

7-Point Set Tiebreak (also referred to as the 12-point tiebreak):The player whose turn it is to serve shall serve the first point from the deuce court. After the first point, the players shall change ends and the following two points shall be served by the opponent; in doubles, the player of the opposing team due to serve next, starting with the ad court. After this, each player/team shall serve alternately for two consecutive points (starting with the ad court), changing ends after every four points, until the tiebreak end (win by 2). All 7-point Set Tiebreakers should be played using the Coman Tiebreak Procedure.*

10-Point Match Tiebreak :The player whose turn it is to serve shall serve the first point from the deuce court. After the first point, the players shall change ends and the following two points shall be served by the opponent; in doubles, the player of the opposing team due to serve next, starting with the ad court. After this, each player/team shall serve alternately for two consecutive points (starting with the ad court), changing ends after every four points, until the tiebreak end (win by 2). All 10-point Match tiebreakers shall be played using the Coman Tiebreak Procedure*.

- * **The Coman Tiebreak procedure** simply dictates when players change ends in a tiebreak. Under this method, players should change ends after the following points: at the 1st point, the 5th point, 9th point, and every 4 points thereafter until the conclusion of the tiebreak. (win by 2 points). The Coman Tiebreak procedure is used for both the 7-point and 10-point tiebreaks.

5-Point Tiebreak (also referred to as the 9-point tiebreak.) This tiebreak is played first to 5 points, win by 1. Players each serve 2 points starting on the deuce side with the last server, if needed, serving 3 points. On the server's 3rd point, the opponents shall choose the receiver. Under this tiebreak, players should only change ends after the first four (4) points have been played.

Match Ending Rules/When Tiebreaks are Used:

- **Tied Set** - If a regular set is tied at 6-6, a 7-Point "Set tiebreak" (first to 7 by 2) will be played.
- **10-Minute Mark** - If a match is still in progress and there are only 10 minutes left before the match end time, **finish the game or tiebreak in progress**, then stop play and choose the appropriate match ending procedure.

FOR ADULT 18 & OVER, 40 & OVER and MIXED DOUBLES:

CASE I: If exactly 2 sets are completed and split by both teams, a 7-point tiebreak (first to 7 by 2) will be played to determine the winner of the match.

CASE II: If 2 sets are completed and a 3rd set is in progress, and

- the score is tied (ex: 3-3), play a 7-point tiebreak (first to 7 by 2) to determine the winner of the set and the match
- either team is ahead by 2 or more games in the set, that team wins both the set and the match.
- either team is ahead by 1 game, play one more game to determine winner of the set & match or tie the score. If the score becomes tied, play a 5-point tiebreak (1st to win 5 pts for the set and the match.)

CASE III: If the 2nd set is incomplete and

- the score is tied (ex: 3-3), play a 5-point tiebreak (1st to win 5 points to determine the winner of the set.*
- either team is ahead by 2 or more games in that set, that team wins the set.*
- either team is ahead by 1 game in that set, play one more game to determine the winner of the set (up by 2) or tie the score. If the score in the 2nd set then becomes tied, play a 5-point tiebreak (1st to win 5 points to determine the winner of the set.*

** If the 2nd set winner differs from the 1st set winner, play a 9 point tiebreak (1st to win 5 points) to determine the winner of the match.*

IN ALL CASES, IF OUT OF TIME: If the score is **tied** and no time remains, a deciding point (sudden death) will be played to determine the winner of the **set and/or match**. If the sudden death was a set decider, a second sudden death point may need to be played for the match if sets become split. Singles receiver chooses which side to receive serves from (deuce or Ad). In doubles, the receiving team will decide which player will receive the serve. In Mixed, the deciding point serve will always be to the same gender. If time is up and other players are entering the court, a coin flip or racquet spin may be required to determine the winner of the match. If any player leaves the court before a match winner has been determined, they default the match. If both players leave the court together, the match is a double default.

FOR ADULT 55 & OVER and 65 & OVER:

CASE I: If exactly 2 sets are completed and split by both teams, a 10 Point Match tiebreak” (first to 10 by 2) will be played to determine the winner of the match. Which ever team is ahead in the tiebreak at the 2-hour match wins the tiebreak and the match. If the score is exactly tied at the 2-hour match, a single deciding point should be played to determine the match winner. The receiving team decides the side to receive serve in the deciding point.

CASE II: If 2 sets are completed and a 3rd set 10 Point Match tiebreak is in progress

- Play to the two hour mark. Whichever team is ahead in the tiebreak at the 2-hour mark wins the tiebreak and the match.
- If the score is exactly tied at the 2-hour mark, a single deciding point should be played to determine the match winner. The receiving team decides the side to receive serve in the deciding point.

CASE III: If the 2nd set is incomplete and

- the score is tied (ex: 3-3), play a 9-point tiebreak (1st to win 5 points) to determine the winner of the set.*
- either team is ahead by 2 or more games in that set, that team wins the set.*
- either team is ahead by 1 game in that set, play one more game to determine the winner of the set (up by 2) or tie the score. If the score in the 2nd set then becomes tied, play a 9-point tiebreak (1st to win 5 points) to determine the winner of the set.*

**If the 2nd set winner differs from the 1st set winner, play a 9 point tiebreak (1st to win 5 points) to determine the winner of the match.*

Out of Time: If the score is **tied**” and no time remains, a deciding point (sudden death) will be played to determine the winner of the **set and/or match**. If the sudden death was a set decider, a second sudden death point may need to be played for the match if sets become split. Singles receiver chooses which side to receive serves from (deuce or Ad). In doubles, the receiving team will decide which player will receive the serve. If time is up and other players are entering the court, a coin flip or racquet spin may be required to determine the winner of the match. If any player leaves the court before a match winner has been determined, they default the match. If both players leave the court together, the match is a double default.

- I. **Score Sheets:** At the match conclusion, both captains must verify the score sheet’s correctness, sign the bottom, and keep a copy until the scores are input and confirmed on TennisLink. If a match is protested and the captains have not complied with this regulation, the protest may be null and void.
 - Match results must be entered and confirmed (or disputed) on TennisLink with 48 hours of the match. The home or visiting captain can enter the match results.

- After match results have been entered, the 2nd captain must confirm or dispute the information. Any team not complying with this requirement loses the right to dispute the information. TennisLink automatically confirms matches 48 hours after entry.
- If match results or the individual player name is disputed, the scorecard showing the signature of both captains must be produced by each captain. Failure to produce a signed scorecard may render the protest null and void and the match may be recorded as a double default.
- If all positions are not scheduled to be played on the same date,
 - If a majority of positions have been played, enter the positions completed on TennisLink. The positions scheduled to be played at a later date should be entered as a double default. When the remaining matches are complete, both captains should email the LLC with the match #, players names, position played, date played and match results. The coordinator will update TennisLink.
 - If a majority of positions have not been played, scores will not be able to be recorded on TennisLink. The captains must each maintain a signed copy of the partial scorecard, and the results (via picture or text) should be emailed as well to the LLC. Full scores can be recorded as soon as the match has been completed.
- Blank scorecards can be printed from TennisLink from your team page. Select the match number (the scorecard will show both team rosters at the bottom) or choose blank scorecard.

J. **Inclement Weather:** How to handle publicly announced storm emergency and weather watch warnings.

- In the event of a weather watch warning or storm emergency, the captains should communicate with each other before the match, especially if one area is not aware of a warning in another area.
- Match cancellations should be made at the time the emergency actually occurs, **not at the time it is forecast**. Matches and/or court times should not be cancelled until the storm arrives and may not be cancelled earlier than 3 hours before the scheduled match time, unless the club is already closed.
- Once a match is cancelled due to storm conditions, the captains must contact the host club and the LLC. The LLC will work with the master schedule and the clubs to reschedule any postponed matches or individual positions.
- Due to difficulties in rescheduling an entire match due to weather, if possible, **teams should try to play any positions where players are not impacted by the storm emergency**. Notification of all above parties involved should still be made.

4. **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES:** If a grievance must be filed, follow the below procedures and complete the Grievance Form located on www.westernmass.usta.com. Choose USTA Tennis Leagues from the left hand menu and then forms.

- A. **Any General Grievance** alleging a violation by an individual or team during local league competition shall be filed in writing with the Local or District League Coordinator or designee having jurisdiction. The **grievance** must be filed prior to the commencement of whichever occurs first: (a) the next match in that flight for the team being grieved against, whether or not the player in question participates or (b) within 24 hours after the end of the local league season.
- B. If the above procedure is not adhered to, the grievance will be rendered null and void.
- C. The LLC will assemble a Grievance Committee to deliberate on the grievance and render a decision.

5. DEFAULTS and FORFEITURES: If a team needs to forfeit or default a position, the following procedures should be followed.

- A. **Team Forfeiture/Court Cancellation Policy:** In the event a team cannot field all positions:
 - The forfeiting team captain must notify the host club 48 hours or more in advance of the designated match time in order to avoid incurring court fees.
 - Three hours before the match, the captain of the forfeiting team must call the opposing captain to notify them of the defaulted positions.
- B. **Order of Default:** Positions must be defaulted from the bottom up. For example, the 2nd singles position must be defaulted before the 1st singles. The 3rd doubles position must be defaulted before the 1st or 2nd doubles may be defaulted. In the Adult Men's or Women's Leagues (except 2.5), if a team is short 2 players, they may either default the 3rd doubles position or the 1st and 2nd singles positions.
 - After the match line-ups are exchanged, the positions and players remain as listed. Players should take the court at the designated match time. If a scheduled player does not show up as scheduled and players have taken the court, the roster should not be changed regardless of the position.
 - The captains should notify the LLC about any out-of-order defaults after the match and the reason for such. The LLC will review teams defaulting out of order.
 - Any player arriving on the court after 15:01 minutes past the match start time is automatically defaulted. The League Tennis Committee will review teams with repeated defaults. For repeated offenses, action may be taken, which may result in a team captain losing his/her position.
- C. **Team Forfeiture and Default Penalties:**
 - A "valid" match consists of the completion of at least 3 of 5 positions for all 5-position leagues 3 of 4 positions for all 4-position leagues, and 2 of 3 positions for all 3-position leagues.
 - If a team can't field a valid match for any reason other than weather, they should notify the LLCs immediately. It will be required that the team play as many positions

as possible on the originally scheduled date. After that, the LLCs will help facilitate the rescheduling of enough positions to make the match “valid” with the remaining positions being defaulted. Any team that forfeits a “valid” match during the local season may jeopardize the team’s participation in the Valley League for the next championship season. The League Tennis Committee reserves the right to decide on any exceptions, restrictions or penalties.

- Any team that defaults greater than 5 scheduled positions or 8% of its scheduled positions (whichever is less) in one season may jeopardize their participation in the Valley League USTA League for the next championship year. The League Tennis Committee reserves the right to decide on any exceptions, restrictions, or penalties.

D. Injuries:

- A one-time, 3 minute medical time out is allowed for injury, illness, heat related condition, or cramping. If the match does not resume play after 3 minutes, the position must be defaulted and the match recorded as retired.
- If a player is injured within the 10-minute warm-up period, another legal team member (a rated player on the roster who has not already played in that particular match) can play in place of the injured player. If the balance of the warm-up period is under 5 minutes, the substitute player will be allowed a 5-minute injury prevention warm-up. The order of play would remain as scheduled.

6. CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY –

- A. **District & Sectional Dates:** Refer to the Western Massachusetts Website for the locations and dates of the District and Sectional Championships for all leagues and divisions. www.westernmass.usta.com
- B. **Invitation Acceptance:** Each team that qualifies to play in the District Championship (or Sectional Championship for those leagues that advance directly to Sectionals) must accept the invitation by email within five days following the completion of the local league season. The team captain must forward the team entry fee to the Tournament Director prior to the stated deadline.
- C. **Player Qualification:** A player must have played a minimum of 2 matches (1 default counts) during the local league season and have a rating equal to or less than the team’s published level in order to qualify for championship play. Each player must be a member of USTA and such membership must extend through the end of the Championship season.
- D. **Team Qualification:** The number of teams advancing in a level is determined by the Section League Rules.
- E. **Winter Season Qualifiers:** If applicable, District Qualifiers from the Winter Season may play as a team in the summer season, but are committed as a championship team from the 1st season. Please refer to 2.B. for rules regarding Player Participation in the second

season for players who have qualified for the championships based on the original season.

- F. **Section Winners:** The first place team from each level at Section Championships will be invited to play at the National Championships. Dates and locations can be viewed by going to www.newengland.usta.com