



COMPETITION RULE BOOK

VERSION 9

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Preliminary information

Mission

The Mission of the USA Team Handball (USATH) will be to develop, promote, educate and grow the sport of Team Handball at all levels in the United States and to enable United States athletes to achieve sustained competitive excellence by winning medals in international and Olympic competition.

Foreword

The USA Team Handball (USATH) Competition Rule Book regulates all team handball structures, organizations and activities in the USA. The amendments made to this Rule Book are aimed at facilitating sanctioning and promoting competition, in order to help boost the development of team handball at a local, regional, and national level.

Abbreviations

- **CEO** – Chief Executive Officer
- **LOC** - Local Organizing Committee
- **EM** - Event Manager (representing sponsoring team or club or LOC)
- **EDC** - Event Disciplinary Committee
- **NRC** – National Referee Committee

Definitions

- Event Manager (EM)

LOC representative who has the ultimate decision-making authority for specific sanctioned event and is responsible for compliance with USATH rules and regulations.

- Local Organizing Committee (LOC)

An organization of individuals (teams, clubs, community-based entities) that work together to host, promote and/or stage USATH sanctioned events.



- Club Roster

The list of players who actively participate in club practices or games.

- Season

The USA Team Handball Indoor Season begins on September 1st and ends on August 31st of the following year.

- “In writing”

A letter mailed or electronically transmitted (email); however, the sender must confirm any email that has been received by intended recipient.



Article I. Participant Registration and Eligibility

Section I.01 Player Eligibility

Pursuant to the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, USATH will provide an equal opportunity to amateur athletes, coaches, trainers, managers, administrators, and officials to participate in amateur athletic competition, without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual preference or orientation, gender identity, age, or national origin.

Section I.02 Participant Registration

All active members of a USATH-recognized Club, including colleges and schools, coaches, athletes, and officials are required to register online on the official USATH membership platform.

The membership requirements, dues structure, levels, and deadlines to pay are set annually by the USATH Board of Directors and posted on USATH website.

Only USATH registered teams, clubs, LOCs will be eligible to sanction their events.

Section I.03 Club/Team Regulations and Standards

To be recognized by the USATH, an existing club/team must fulfill the following annual requirements:

- A. Maintain an up-to-date profile with the CEO or their designee, including contact information for club and club's designated official as liaison with USATH.
- B. Keep up with Club/Team annual fees per schedule, per Section 1.02.

All new clubs must register and comply with all required paperwork and fees before participating in any USATH sanctioned event.

Furthermore, clubs are encouraged to:

- A. Be incorporated in their state of operation (not-for-profit 501(c)(3) status is recommended).
- B. Have at least one USATH certified pair of referees (non-players are recommended as officials).



Article II. Code of Conduct

Section II.01 Application

All participants (including players, coaches, referees, event organizers and volunteers) in USATH sanctioned events are considered ambassadors of the game and, as such, must adhere to these rules. In line with USATH policy, individual participant signatures are not mandatory; registration as a member of USATH implies agreement to comply with the Code of Conduct.

Section II.02 Authority to Implement the Rules and Code at Events

- A. During any match occurring in a USATH sanctioned event, the technical delegate, if one has been nominated in support of the referees, is the ultimate disciplinary authority. Their authority extends from the moment players and coaches enter the venue, to the moment they leave the venue, including warm-ups, actual game play, time-outs, halftime, and presence within the competition within the venue in or outside of match play.
- B. Prior to the first game of any sanctioned event, the LOC will form an Event Disciplinary Committee (EDC) comprised of, at a minimum:
 - a. Event Manager (EM),
 - b. Head Referee,
 - c. At least one (1) Athlete Representative. Every effort will be made to have a male and female athlete representative where both genders are in competition.
- C. The EDC will meet in the following situations:
 - a. The use, by the game officials, of the blue card.
 - b. An immediate disqualification from a game issued by referees for any player and/or team official related to either unsportsmanlike conduct and/or dangerous play.
 - c. Any and all actions by any individual prior to, or after a game, that are deemed detrimental to the tournament organizer and/or to the USATH including, but not limited to unsportsmanlike conduct towards other participants (verbal and/or physical), referees, tournament staff and volunteers, facility employees, and/or spectators, as well as destruction of property.
 - d. Any situation not described above requiring the intervention of a disciplinary authority. This authority extends over all event venues, participants, and spectators.



Section II.03 Unacceptable Behavior during USATH Sanctioned Event

This Rule Book defines as unacceptable behavior:

- A. The use of offensive language - generally as a disparaging remark to an opposing player, toward a referee or spectators, or even as an expression of frustration or self-admonishment. This includes any act that is reasonably likely to threaten, disparage, vilify, offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or group based on race, gender, religion, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or gender identification.
- B. Questioning and/or disputing of the referee's decision.
- C. Failure to obey referee instructions and/or to leave the court promptly upon being penalized by a referee.
- D. Abuse of equipment (e.g. kicking/spiking the ball, removing his / her shirt, etc....)
- E. Improper conduct and/or failure to exit the competition hall without delay after a player has been disqualified.

Section II.04 Referees' Obligations in Event of Direct Disqualification

- A. An incident resulting in disqualification of any player and/or team official during a game, except for 3rd 2-minute suspension, will be described in writing by the respective referees on the back side of the match report upon conclusion of that match indicating any additional disciplinary actions needed.
- B. When required, the EDC will meet, review, and render its decision as soon as possible, and no later than the involved person's next match. Only members of the EDC are allowed to participate in this process. However, the EDC, at its sole discretion, may confer with other individuals related to the subject matter under review. Notice of actions, if any, will be delivered verbally to the player(s) and/or team official(s) immediately after the meeting to be followed by a written report for the record. If that person is not available, notice will be delivered as soon as possible. There are no appeals of actions taken by the local EDC.
- C. In the case where a direct disqualification is issued during the last game of an event, the EDC will note as such on the match report and USATH Disqualification Report. Upon receiving the Disqualification Report, the CEO or their designee will review the case and render any additional

sanctions. All involved parties will be notified of any additional sanctions via email within 15 business days.

Section II.05 Minimum Recommended Penalties for Violations

The following guidelines/recommendations are established to help standardize additional punishments that may be issued during USATH sanctioned events. The EDC should adhere to the recommended penalties but are not bound them.

A. The following are recommended punishments for in-game violations:

Violation	Occurrence	Minimum Penalty	Maximum Penalty
Rough/dangerous play	1 st red card	No additional punishment required	N/A
	2 nd red card	1 game suspension	Rest of the tournament
Unsportsmanlike conduct	1 st red card	1 game suspension	3 game suspension
	2 nd red card	2 game suspension	Rest of the tournament
Red card for verbal abuse or physical assault that is personal in nature¹		Automatic disqualification from the tournament	Review by USATH Judiciary Committee, subject to due process

B. If disciplinary measures, regardless of source, result in a player's suspension for 1 or more matches during the season, such suspensions must be served during next USATH sanctioned match. If by the end of the season, not all suspensions have been served; those will roll over into the next season.

Section II.06 Recommended Actions for Inappropriate Out-of-Game Conduct

The Technical Director, if one has been nominated, shall have discretion to directly address and punish conduct within the venue to maintain standards and the course of competition. The EDC shall have jurisdiction to review and certify, amend, or extend punishment as determined by the TD. The respective EDC will have wide latitude in issuing punishments. However, the EDC should review existing guidelines for in-game violations, especially related to unsportsmanlike behavior, in making its decisions.

¹ Remarks regarding age, gender, ethnicity, religion, character, physical appearance, competency level or sexual orientation.



Section II.07 Safe Sport Commitment

USA Team Handball, together with the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee, is committed to enabling a safe environment for participants in USA Team Handball. To this end, USATH has partnered with the Center to develop policies, provide an independent and confidential way to report violations and access to the SafeSport training & education curriculum.

In that spirit, all participants will be expected to comply with Safe Sport requirements, as enforced on the USATH membership platform.

Any member, volunteer, participant, employee or Director of USA Team Handball must report both actual and perceived breaches of any policy outlined in the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP) and Athlete Safety Policy. Where appropriate, they should ensure they report to both the U.S. Center for SafeSport and additionally to the local law enforcement authorities.

It is vital that no individual hesitates in reporting either violations or perceived violations, DO NOT attempt to evaluate the credibility of any claim and instead refer to USA Team Handball and to the local authorities.

Please refer to the USATH MAAPP for any action, complaint, concern, or report covered for the appropriate procedure.

Article III. Rules of the Game

Section III.01 Application of the Rules

The USATH, as member of the International Handball Federation (IHF), will apply all handball rules specified in the IHF Rules of the Game (valid at that time) in all USATH sanctioned events.

Section III.02 Exemptions

In order to lower the barrier to entry, LOC will be given flexibility on the enforcement of IHF Regulations on Protective Equipment and Accessories as well as IHF Rules of the Game article 4:7 to 4:9. Where



appropriate, the LOC shall have authority to decline enforcement of certain rules provided that this only be applied to cosmetic aspects (e.g. color matching between base layers and jerseys) and not endanger athlete safety.

The LOC is responsible for communicating how the IHF Regulations on Protective Equipment and Accessories as well as IHF Rules of the Game article 4:7 to 4:9 will be enforced at the event to all participants including but not limited to, USA Team Handball, teams, athletes, coaches, and referees. USA Team Handball reserves the right to revoke or amend the LOC's authority within 7 (seven) days of receiving the enforcement guidelines.

Section III.03 Copies of the Rules

The IHF Rules of the Game and USATH Rule Book can be found at www.usateamhandball.org.

Article IV. USATH Sanctioned Events

This article is the reference to be followed by any LOC hosting a domestic tournament.

Section IV.01 Authority

Per USOPC charter as the National Governing Body for Team Handball and subsequent authority and duties, including granting sanctions for amateur athletic competition under paragraph 220525 of the Ted Stevens Act, USA Team Handball sanctions events involving domestic teams and clubs and international club and National Teams competitions to ensure:

- A. an equal opportunity for all hosts (teams, clubs, LOCs) to hold tournaments without unreasonably competing for the same teams to participate in these tournaments and,
- B. all players to participate in these events under the best possible playing, officiating, safety, and social conditions.

Section IV.02 Eligibility and Exemptions

Only USATH registered and recognized teams/clubs and LOC may apply to and have an event sanctioned.



All events, including single matches and multiple match tournaments, must be sanctioned by the USATH or their designee.

Section IV.03 Rights and Responsibilities of the Host Organization

In applying for sanction, the host (team/club and/or LOC) agrees to:

- A. Conduct the event in accordance with the USATH Rules of the Game as defined in Articles I - III as well as the USATH Eligibility and Qualification Manual.
- B. Abide by the USATH Sanctioning Process as defined in Section 4.04.
- C. Defer to the NRC in matters of officiating and management of referees.
- D. Comply with USATH Quality Control System for Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention and Athlete Safety requirements.

In return, the host obtains the right to:

- USATH General Liability and Secondary Accidental insurance coverage for the competition venue owners, host team/clubs players, visiting participants, spectators, and guests.
- Conduct the event on the dates at the location specified.
- Have the tournament listed on the USATH web page (Events).
- Receive necessary forms for the conduct of the tournament.
- Receive support from USATH to check participants' membership status.
- Have the results published on the USATH web page provided the information is submitted in a timely manner and subject to standard editorial policies.

Section IV.04 Sanctioning Process

The event sanctioning process is managed through the USATH online platform. In order for an event to be recognized as sanctioned, USA Team Handball requests that all documents in pre-event documentation be submitted 30 days prior to the scheduled start of the event, however, all documentation must be submitted no later than 7 days prior to the scheduled start of the event. All post-event documentation must be submitted no later than 14 days after the end of your event through the USATH's online platform.

Note: for all league tournaments, the league commissioner shall be responsible for managing the sanctioning process for each event and reporting the league's results to USATH.

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Section IV.05 Participation in Sanctioned Events

(i) Membership requirements

- A. All players, coaches, and referees in a sanctioned tournament must be USATH members in good standing. This includes fulfilling any U.S. Center for SafeSport and background check requirements based on the membership type and role as listed on the dedicated Membership platform and www.usateamhandball.org. Memberships are valid for one season and have to be renewed annually to maintain participation eligibility. All USATH memberships are to be purchased through the dedicated platform.
- B. USATH will provide the sponsoring club access to a listing of current members to the EM prior to the start of the sanctioned event. However, the LOC is fully responsible for checking and enforcing players' eligibility to compete.

(ii) Officiating requirements

- A. Each match must be officiated by two (2) USATH-certified referees, except for games where the NRC is observing newer referees as part of their training/certification process. However, all individuals refereeing or working the match must be USATH members in good standing with valid SafeSport training and background check.
- B. Each match should, if possible, also involve a USATH certified technical delegate to oversee timekeeping and scorekeeping. This individual must be a USATH member in good standing with valid SafeSport training and background check.
- C. The National Referee Committee (NRC) is primarily responsible for nominating referees for any USATH sanctioned match. The LOC can provide a list of club or community members that desire to referee at the event. The NRC should make every attempt to work with the LOC to identify and nominate referees within the budget and competition level of the event as designated by the LOC. Where necessary for the effective support and efficiency of sanctioned events, USATH staff may assist LOCs in identifying and nominating referees. Such intercession shall not void or amend other requirements of referees for sanctioned events. The NRC should seek to opportunities to recruit and train new local referees at sanctioned events.
- D. Nominations for the event and share these with the LOC no later than thirty (30) days before the event or fourteen (14) days after the event was sanctioned, whichever is later.

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- E. The sponsoring LOC is responsible for all arrangements and costs related to referee needs. The LOC has the authority to determine the compensation offered to referees including, but not limited to travel reimbursement, per diem and court fees. The LOC can contact the NRC for the current suggested USATH referee court fees to be paid but are not obligated to follow these.

(iii) Players

- A. A player may sign up at any time during the playing season; however, they will not be cleared to play at sanctioned events until their registration has been certified by the USATH.

Section IV.06 Violation(s)

Any and all violations of Article IV shall be recorded by the CEO and are subject to disciplinary sanctions by USATH. Pending disciplinary sanctions shall be communicated in writing, via emails, to the respective parties as soon as recognized but no later than 60 days after the event.

Should an individual or club/team/LOC wish to appeal those sanctions, they will have 10 business days to do so to the CEO. The USATH Judicial Committee will review the case and either support, alter, or overrule the sanction rendered. The USATH Judicial Committee's decision is final and cases that are denied for appeal cannot be reopened.

Section IV.07 Minimum Venue Requirements

The following are minimum venue standards that the LOC is expected to meet. However, the LOC can use the Sanctioning process to request an exception be made. The USATH's CEO or their designee shall respond **within 10 days** with an approval or a denial.

(i) Court

Only a regulation Team Handball court measuring 20 m x 40 m (or approximately 65'7" x 131'2") should be used for all sanctioned events. Each court should have at least a 2m, with 3m preferred perimeter "safety zone" surrounding it.

Each venue shall have at least one Stadium Court that meets basic Court requirements and provides seating for at least 100 spectators via bleachers and/or seating bowl.

Note: Courts need not necessarily be adjacent and/or under one roof, but should be within easy walking distance (less than a ½ mile).

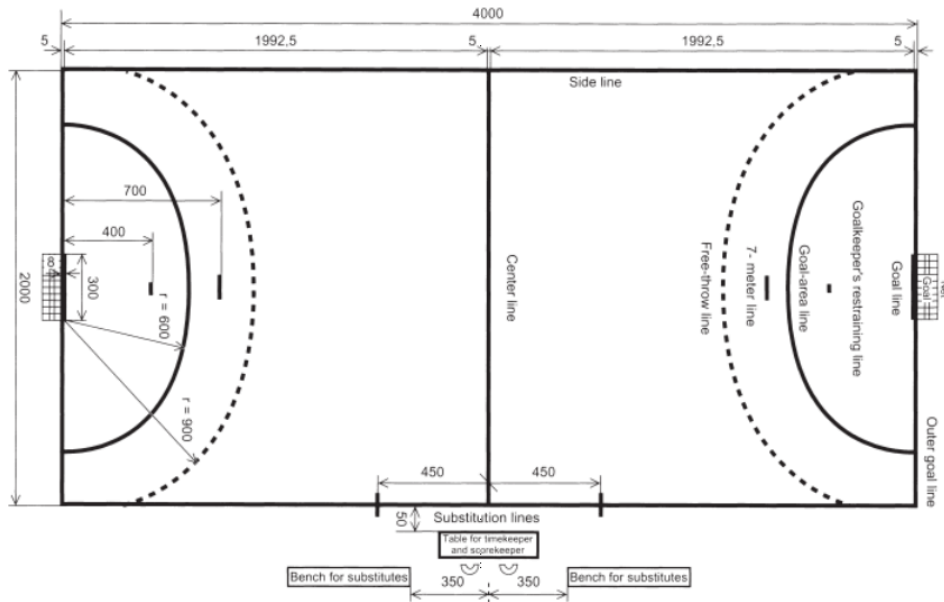


Figure 1 - Court layout

(ii) Court Lines

Each court must be visibly marked with 2-inch wide lines according to the IHF rules.

(iii) Goals

Each court must have 2 regulation goals with nets. Both goals must be securely attached to the floor with anchors and/or weights and/or sand bags.

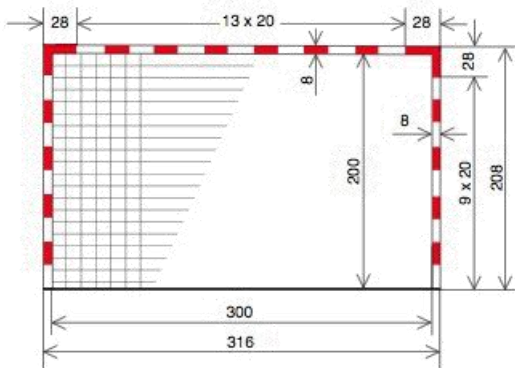


Figure 2 - Regulation Goal



(iv) USATH Table

If so stipulated by USATH, the main gymnasium shall have one dedicated USATH membership/merchandise table placed near the entrance. The LOC will not be required to manage that table.

(v) Team Bench

Each court shall have sufficient bench seating for 16 athletes for each team and up to four (4) team officials. The team bench must be placed in accordance with Figure 1.

(vi) Officials' Table

Each court shall have one (1) official's table (capacity: 3 people) equipped with scoreboards (manual or mechanical) that are visible to the spectators facing the scoring tables.

Each scoring table must have the equipment listed below:

- A. Two (2) stopwatches
- B. Two (2) regulation size balls
- C. Pre Printed Match Reports plus 10 blanks
- D. Two (2) Red Sharpies
- E. Four (4) black pens
- F. Cards
 - a. One (1) yellow
 - b. One (1) red
 - c. One (1) blue
- G. Two minute penalty sheets – print 10 per game
- H. Two (2) Penalty sheet stands
- I. One (1) Whistle
- J. Three (3) large green laminated and numbered time out cards
- K. One (1) air pump with extra inflator needles
- L. Five (5) blank injury reports
- M. Sandbags or weights to hold down goals
- N. One (1) pair of scissors and string for goal repair
- O. Form and display for tracking injury player stoppage – 2 possessions.



(vii) Locker Rooms

Each venue shall provide separate men's and women's changing rooms (capacity: 20 players each). It is not required that each court have its own locker room. Shower facilities are preferred, but not required. If lockers are not available, this must be communicated to teams prior to the tournament.

(viii) Venue Hours

Depending on the number of teams that are entered, competition shall begin as early as 8 a.m. on Friday morning or as applicable and conclude no later than 5 p.m. on Sunday afternoon.

(ix) USATH Handball Operations Center

Venue shall have, if so stipulated by USATH, one room (500 sq. feet) dedicated to USA Team Handball for its operations and storage.

(x) Hospitality Area

At least one room and/or tented area shall be designated, if so stipulated by USATH, for USA Team Handball and/or LOC hospitality.

(xi) Warm-up Area(s)

Clearly designated and ample in size area for teams' general warm-up routines should be identified prior to the competition and communicated to teams' reps during the Technical Meeting.

Section IV.08 Minimum Game Scheduling Requirements

(i) Match Intervals

Regardless of the event's competition format, the games must be planned in such a way to allow each team to have the following minimum time intervals between each match:

- 90 minutes between 2 x 30 minutes games
- 80 minutes between 2 x 25 minutes games
- 70 minutes between 2 x 20 minutes games



(ii) Length of the Half-Time

The length of half time is to be respectively:

- 10 minutes for 2 x 30 minutes games
- 7 minutes for 2 x 25 minutes games
- 5 minutes for 2 x 20 minutes games

(iii) Warm-up times

Minimum warm-up time on court before first match of the day and/or daily session of the competition should be at least 30 minutes. Minimum warm-up time on court for all other matches should be at least 10 minutes.

(iv) Maximum number of matches per event

The maximum number of matches for an event must be defined according to the requirements listed previously.

Section IV.09 Minimum Athletic Trainer/Medical Care

It is required that at least one (1) licensed medical provider (ATC, MD, EMT, or DO) be present in the competition area **at all times during competition** provided the play areas are within one hundred (100) feet of each other.

If play areas are located on separate floors, then one (1) licensed medical provider is required on each floor.

It is also required that a first aid kit and supply of ice be readily available for emergency first response treatment. All medical personnel and event staff should be easily recognizable.

The LOC is required to have an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) on site at all times. The location of the AED must be identified to all staff and Athletic Trainer at the Technical Meeting.

It is required that an EM have a published emergency contact list, emergency action plan and an emergency transportation plan available on hand at the venue.



The EM is responsible for introducing the Trainer and clearly stating where the trainer station will be located. For identification, an 8.5x11 sign should be posted above the Trainer Station.

Section IV.10 Hospitality and Communication

The following is strongly suggested to be provided at all events by the LOC:

(i) Signage

Proper signage directing guests to the gymnasiums must be in place at all times

(ii) Schedules

At least one (1) large printed schedule (24" x 24" minimum) must be posted at main doorways, and/or supplied to teams via a dedicated mobile link. The Schedule poster board or digital schedule should include the USATH logo and the words "This event is officially sanctioned by USA Team Handball".

(iii) Communications Board

One large poster board should be present for any announcements (e.g. lunch location, tournament social event, special appearance, etc...)

(iv) Courtesy

We encourage the LOC to inform players to act as good hosts. Everyone is encouraged to invite and educate new spectators about the sport.

Section IV.11 Table Area, Table Officials and USATH Delegates

The table area is reserved for the scorekeeper, time-keeper, and USATH Delegate or Designee, only. No other individuals can be sitting, standing, or walking-through that area while a game is under way. It is the responsibility of both team officials to ensure that this rule is followed.

The only exception may be an additional seat for an announcer if no other logistical solution is possible.



Article V. Complaint(s)

Section V.01 Complaint Procedure for in-game offenses

If an individual wishes to file a complaint regarding the actions of any member (coach, player, referee, team official, etc...) during a USATH sanctioned game, such a complaint must be filed **within one (1) hour** of the conclusion of the game to the EDC. There is a refundable \$50 filing fee required, that is returned if the complaint is found to be valid/true.

The EDC will follow the process described in Article II to make any decision.

For any action, complaint, concern, or report covered under the Minor Athlete Abuse Protection Policy (MAAPP), please refer thereto for the appropriate procedure.

Section V.02 Complaint Procedure for out-of-game offenses

If an individual wishes to file a complaint regarding the actions of any individual (coach, player, referee, team official, etc...) outside of a game, such a complaint must be filed in writing with the CEO **within 7 days** of said action.

If the action, complaint, concern, or report is covered under the Minor Athlete Abuse Protection Policy (MAAPP), then there is no deadline to file a report.

Complaints of a **sexual nature** related to this policy should be reported directly to the U.S. Center for SafeSport without delay.

SafeSport Report Online and Helpline

<https://uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/>

(866) 200-0796

In addition to reporting any abuse to the U.S. Center on SafeSport, persons must also report suspected child physical or sexual abuse to the appropriate law enforcement authority. Members of USA Team Handball (inclusive of employees) should not under any circumstances attempt to evaluate credibility or



validity of any sexual or physical abuse allegation before reporting to the relevant law enforcement authority.

Complaints of a **non-sexual nature** related to this policy should be reported directly to the USA Team Handball SafeSport customer service inbox of help@usateamhandball.org or directly to the CEO.

For complaints not covered by the Minor Athlete Abuse Protection Policy and the U.S. Center for SafeSport the USATH CEO will send the complaint to the USATH Judiciary Committee. The Judiciary Committee will review the case following the process dictated by Article 14 in the USA Team Handball Bylaws.

Article VI. Violations, Strikes and Sanctions

Section VI.01 Strikes

All violations of this Rule Book could result in the assignment of a “strike” to the participant and/or the club involved. Violations that cannot be attributed directly to any person but to a club will result in the assignment of a strike to said club.

Section VI.02 Forfeit of the Game

All scheduled games must be played. Forfeiting a game in a USATH sanctioned event is considered a serious violation. For every match forfeited, the team/club will be assessed a strike.

Section VI.03 Disciplinary Sanction(s)

Any complaint or potential violation will be referred to the USATH Judiciary Committee, which will review the case(s) following the process dictated by Article 14 in the USA Team Handball Bylaws.

The USATH CEO or their designee will keep track of all violations occurred and strikes/sanctions issued.



Once a person or a club has accumulated three strikes or has committed a violation that requires immediate disciplinary action, said person or club is subject to disciplinary sanctions by the USATH Judiciary Committee.

All USATH Judiciary Committee decisions are final.

Section VI.04 Actions that Warrant Immediate Sanctions

Egregious single actions by individuals or clubs may warrant immediate sanctions, even if that person or club has not acquired three strikes.

Section VI.05 Additional Sanctions

For any violation of this Rule Book, the person or club involved is subject to disciplinary sanctions by the USATH Judiciary Committee that include but are not limited to, fines, suspensions, revocation of USATH Membership and lifetime bans from USATH sanctioned events.

Article VII. Amendments, Conflicts and Interpretations

Section VII.01 Amendments

Changes to this Rule Book may only be made by the USATH CEO or their designee, with the approval of the USATH President.

Any Changes or Addendums will be published in a timely manner at www.usateamhandball.org. All registered clubs will be notified of such changes via email.

Section VII.02 Conflicts or Interpretation Issues

Any conflicts or interpretation issues resulting from this Rule Book will be resolved and published by the USATH CEO. If needed, the CEO will publish such interpretations as addendums to this Rule Book.



Section VII.03 Effective Date and Transition, Proposed Rule Changes

This revision of the Rule Book is active September 1st, 2024 and will be published at www.usateamhandball.org.

The USATH CEO or their designee will submit a timetable for gradual and full compliance by all persons and groups involved with USA Team Handball, if required.

Proposed changes to this Rule Book should be submitted to the CEO for review.