



USA TEAM HANDBALL

Competition Rule Book

Revision	Release Date
1	Sept ember 2009
2	September 2010
3	August 2011
4	January 2012
5	August 2012
6	August 2017
7	September 2018
8	June 2020
9	August 2025
10	October 2026



Contents

Preliminary information.....	4
Article I. Participant Registration and Eligibility	6
Section 1.01 Player Eligibility.....	6
Section 1.02 Participant Registration	6
Section 1.03 Club/Team Regulations and Standards.....	6
Article II. Code of Conduct	7
Section 2.01 Application	7
Section 2.02 Authority to Implement the Rules and Code at Events	7
Section 2.03 Unacceptable Behavior during USATH Sanctioned Event	7
Section 2.04 Referees' Obligations in Event of Direct Disqualification	8
Section 2.05 Minimum Recommended Penalties for Violations.....	8
Section 2.06 Recommended Actions for Inappropriate Out-of-Game Conduct.....	8
Section 2.07 Safe Sport Commitment	9
Article III. Rules of the Game	10
Section 3.01 Application of the Rules	10
Section 3.02 Exemptions	10
Section 3.03 Copies of the Rules.....	10
Article IV. USATH Regional Structure, Qualifiers, and Leagues	11
Section 4.01 Regions	11
Section 4.02 USATH Regional Qualification Process	12
Section 4.03 Regional Leagues and Local Competitions	12
Article V. USATH Sanctioned Events Involving Domestic Teams	13
Section 5.01 Authority.....	13
Section 5.02 Eligibility and Exemptions	14
Section 5.03 Rights and Responsibilities of the Host Organization.....	14
Section 5.04 Sanctioning Process.....	14
Section 5.05 Participation in Sanctioned Events	14
Section 5.06 Violation(s).....	16
Section 5.07 Minimum Venue Requirements.....	16
Section 5.08 Minimum Game Scheduling Requirements	18
Section 5.09 Minimum Athletic Trainer/Medical Care	19
Section 5.10 Hospitality and Communication.....	19



Article VI.	USATH Open Championships	20
Section 6.01	Open Club ELITE divisions	20
Section 6.02	Open Club OPEN divisions	22
Section 6.03	Open College Championships	22
Section 6.04	Open High School Championships.....	23
Section 6.05	Roster size requirements.....	23
Section 6.06	Table Area, Table Officials and USATH Delegates	23
Section 6.07	Sportsmanship and Performance Bonds	24
Section 6.08	Rules for Foreign Teams Interested in Competing in the USATH Championships.....	24
Section 6.09	Seeding	24
Article VII.	USATH National Cup.....	25
Section 7.01	Purpose and Overview.....	25
Section 7.02	Competition Format.....	25
Section 7.03	Championship and Qualification	26
Section 7.04	Roster and Eligibility.....	27
Section 7.05	Registration and Fees	29
Section 7.06	Gender Divisions	29
Article VIII.	Complaint(s)	30
Section 8.01	Complaint Procedure for in-game offenses	30
Section 8.02	Complaint Procedure for out-of-game offenses	30
Article IX.	Violations, Strikes and Sanctions.....	31
Section 9.01	Strikes	31
Section 9.02	Forfeit of the Game	31
Section 9.03	Disciplinary Sanction(s)	31
Section 9.04	Actions that Warrant Immediate Sanctions	31
Section 9.05	Additional Sanctions	31
Section 9.06	Appeals.....	31
Article X.	Amendments, Conflicts and Interpretations.....	32
Section 10.01	Amendments.....	32
Section 10.02	Conflicts or Interpretation Issues.....	32
Section 10.03	Effective Date and Transition, Proposed Rule Changes.....	32



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) Rule Book regulates all team handball structures, organizations and activities in the USA. The publication of and amendments made to this Rule Book are aimed at facilitating sanctioning and promoting competition, to help boost the development of team handball at a Local, Regional, and National level and defining structures that provide for safety and quality across all participant interactions. The competitions that are overseen under the authority of the USATH CC and this rule book are not considered as selection events for the USA National Team; any reference to Sanctioned Competitions in promulgated USATH National Team Selection Procedures are meant to include Sanctioned Events as additional, of several, observational and/or evaluation opportunities. As such, these competitions are not awarded a protected status that would confer upon athletes any rights of participation which would supersede the qualification rules contained herein.

Abbreviations

- **TD** - Technical Director; the CEO of USA Team Handball unless otherwise delegated
- **LOC** - Local Organizing Committee
- **EM** - Event Manager (representing sponsoring team, club or LOC)
- **EDC** - Event Disciplinary Committee
- **CC** – Competition Committee
- **NRC** – USATH 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. LOC is responsible to ensure its events complies with all rules and regulations for USATH sanctioned activities.

- **Competition Committee (CC)**

The appointed group of representatives that oversees the sanctioning, exemptions and qualification requirements for USATH sanctioned events.

- **Maximum Roster Size**

The highest number of players that a team can bring to and use in USATH sanctioned event.

- **Minimum Roster Size**



The lowest number of players that a team can enter USATH sanctioned event without losing its Performance Bond.

- **Club Roster**

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

- **Season**

The USA Team Handball Indoor Season begins September 1 and ends August 31 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.

- **Qualifying Match**

A Qualifying Match is a match sanctioned by USA Team Handball (USATH), whether conducted as a single contest or as part of a sanctioned tournament or league competition, that is eligible to count toward the team and player participation requirements for USATH Championships.

To qualify, a match must be conducted in accordance with the IHF Rules of the Game and applicable USATH regulations, subject to the following conditions and permitted exceptions:

A. Team Independence

Participating teams may not belong to the same club, except where separate roster integrity has been established at the beginning of the season and maintained throughout the season. This exception permits a single club to enter two distinct teams in sanctioned local competitions, regional qualification events, and matches counting toward the minimum-game requirements for the USATH Open Club Championships.

B. Match Duration

Matches may consist of two (2) halves of not less than twenty-five (25) minutes without additional approval. Where scheduling requirements necessitate matches consisting of two (2) twenty-minute halves, advance approval may be granted by a representative of the Competition Committee (CC), provided that crossover and championship final matches are contested at regulation length.

C. Court Dimensions

A court measuring at least thirty-five (35) meters in length and nineteen (19) meters in width may be used without additional approval. Any further exception must be approved by the CC in writing.

D. Goals

The interior dimensions of each goal must comply with applicable IHF standards. Variations in exterior construction or materials may be permitted, provided the goals remain safe and suitable for competition.

E. Officiating

All matches must comply with the officiating requirements established in Section 5.05(b). Referee assignments shall be coordinated and approved by the National Referee Committee (NRC), and no event shall receive sanctioning approval before its referee staffing plan has been approved by the NRC.

Each match must be officiated by two (2) USATH-certified referees, except where an exception is authorized by the NRC for the observation, training, or certification of developing referees.

F. Season and Qualification Deadlines

A Qualifying Match must be played during the applicable USATH competition season and in accordance with the requirements governing the relevant championship qualification process. Matches played after published standings or seeding deadlines may nevertheless count toward championship qualification where otherwise eligible under this Rule Book, but shall not alter finalized championship seeding.

G. Match Reports and Verification

An official match report must be completed for each Qualifying Match in accordance with NRC requirements.



Prior to the match, the assigned referees shall verify the accuracy of the match report, including the participating players and their jersey numbers. Team officials shall notify the referees and any assigned technical delegate of necessary corrections or changes and shall sign the report before the match begins.

Following the match, the technical delegate, or a designated LOC representative where no technical delegate is assigned, shall verify the completed report, sign it, and ensure its retention and submission.

The official match report shall be forwarded to the CC, electronically or in hard copy, no later than ten (10) business days following completion of the match.

H. Additional Exceptions

Any exception to the requirements above that is not otherwise expressly authorized must be requested from and approved by the CC in writing.

Recognition of a match as a Qualifying Match does not independently establish eligibility for Wild Card Points, which remain subject to the additional requirements established in Article VI.

Article I. Participant Registration and Eligibility

Section 1.01 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 1.02 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 dues structure, levels, and deadlines to pay are set annually by the USATH Board of Directors and posted on USATH website.

Only USATH registered member teams & clubs, as well as LOCs comprised of individual members thereof, will be eligible to sanction their tournaments.

Section 1.03 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 TD, 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. Failure to maintain current membership registration or complete the requisite submission of information and fees at least thirty (30) days prior to a sanctioned event may result in denial of participation, unless an exception is approved by the TD or authorized designee.

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) per team.



Article II. Code of Conduct

Section 2.01 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 organizational Code of Conduct, as well as this Code of Conduct specific to participation in sanctioned competition.

Section 2.02 Authority to Implement the Rules and Code at Events

- A. During any match occurring in a USATH sanctioned event, the technical delegate, 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, and halftime.
- 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. This includes selecting multiple alternates to serve so that any matters referred to the EDC can be administered efficiently without conflict of interest.
- 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 2.03 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 2.04 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 TD 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 2.05 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	Term suspension from matches beyond tournament; and/or Referral to USATH for consideration of additional disciplinary sanctions, including membership restrictions, pursuant to the USATH Bylaws.

- 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 2.06 Recommended Actions for Inappropriate Out-of-Game Conduct

There are no specific guidelines for out-of-game violations. 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, and use them as guidance when making its decisions.

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



Section 2.07 Safe Sport Commitment

USATH totally embraces the principles and guidelines that serve to protect our membership and we work closely in collaboration with the U.S. Center for SafeSport and the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee toward that end. In that spirit, all participants will be expected to comply with Safe Sport requirements, as enforced on the USATH membership platform, in the USATH MAAPP and Athlete Safety Policy, and in the USATH Quality Control System.



Article III. Rules of the Game

Section 3.01 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 3.02 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. 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, in coordination with the Head Referee or express permission of the NRC.

Section 3.03 Copies of the Rules

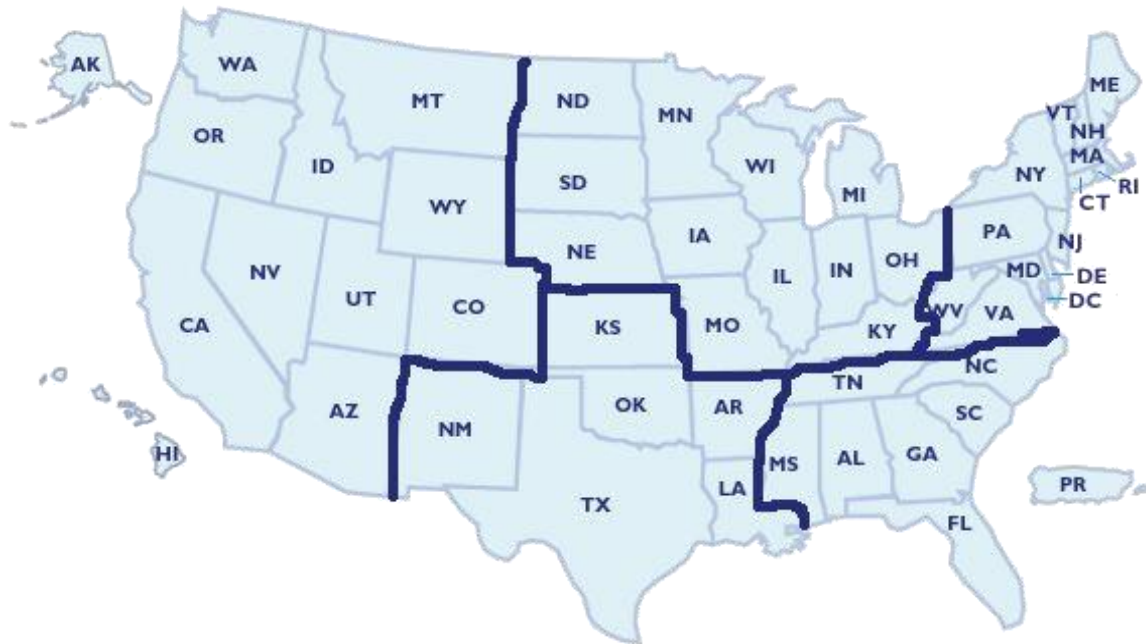
In addition to this USATH Competition Rulebook, all USATH published policies and guides can be found at www.usateamhandball.org. The IHF Rules of the Game can be found digitally [here](https://www.ihf.info/regulations-documents/361?selected=Rules%20of%20the%20Game), at <https://www.ihf.info/regulations-documents/361?selected=Rules%20of%20the%20Game>.

Article IV. USATH Regional Structure, Qualifiers, and Leagues

Section 4.01 Regions

There are five (5) regions for USATH Handball competition and classification purposes. The USATH CC, as seated from time to time, may be granted sole and independent responsibility, within the parameters set forth in this Rule Book and USATH published policies, to regions or regional leagues for working out their system of regional competitions, including local games, regional tournaments and regional leagues.

Requests to qualify for Open Club Championships from outside of a home region will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The regions are outlined below:



WEST	MIDWEST	SOUTHWEST	NORTHEAST	SOUTHEAST
Alaska	Illinois	Arkansas	Connecticut	Alabama
Arizona	Indiana	Kansas	Delaware	Florida
California	Iowa	Louisiana	Maine	Georgia
Colorado	Kentucky	New Mexico	Maryland	Mississippi
Hawaii	Michigan	Oklahoma	Massachusetts	North Carolina
Idaho	Minnesota	Texas	New Hampshire	South Carolina
Montana	Missouri		New Jersey	Tennessee
Nevada	Nebraska		New York	
Oregon	North Dakota		Pennsylvania	
Utah	Ohio		Rhode Island	
Washington	South Dakota		Vermont	
Wyoming	Wisconsin		Virginia	
			West Virginia	
			Washington, D.C.	



Section 4.02 USATH Regional Qualification Process

Each region will strive to have a Regional Qualification Process, to determine its entrants into the USATH Open Club ELITE Championships.

The number of available seeds for each region will be determined based on the number of Active teams in the region. A team shall be considered Active if it participates in at least 60% of the maximum matches within a regional league table (e.g., if a region team plays 12 league matches, then only, and all, teams completing 8 or more matches in region sanctioned competition shall be considered Active) If a Region instead adopts a points system or multi-event structure, in lieu of cumulative standings, than a team shall be considered Active if it participates in all scheduled matches in greater than 50% of region sanctioned events.

In case the winner of a sanctioned Regional League or Regional Qualification Tournament is also the reigning Club Champion, an additional bid shall be awarded to the next highest ranked team from that region. In the event that the qualified teams decline the bid, their spot(s) shall be granted to the highest-ranking regional finishers interested in accepting it, not lower than the third-ordered replacement (e.g., A 1st place bid declined shall only be offered to as low as the 4th place finisher in succession). If none of the remaining eligible teams accept the bid, such bid should be turned over and become a Wild Card bid.

The CC will strive to announce the assigned regional bids early in the season. With that in mind, regional committees are required to commit the number of active teams no later than October 31st of any given year. Following that commitment, the CC will announce the intended format for the USATH Open Club Championships no later than November 15th of any given year.

Results are expected to be communicated to the CC on a regular basis if not made available online, and final standings are due by March 31st of any given year, in order to facilitate the draw of the Open Club Championship divisions.

If a regional committee does not meet its committed schedule, the CC reserves the right to reassign the ELITE bids that had been assigned to the region.

Section 4.03 Regional Leagues and Local Competitions

Each region will strive to have a sanctioned regional league(s) with a designated Commissioner and own website or maintain a dedicated page on USATH website about playing schedule, participating teams, league news and results. Regional leagues will abide by the regulations set forth by the USATH CC, and comply with this USATH Rulebook and all relevant USATH policies and regulations.



Article V. USATH Sanctioned Events Involving Domestic Teams

This article is the reference to be followed by any LOC hosting a domestic tournament. It replaces the USATH Tournament Sanctioning Guide.

Section 5.01 Authority

USA Team Handball (USATH), as the National Governing Body for the sport of Team Handball in the United States recognized by the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC), exercises its authority pursuant to the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, 36 U.S.C. §§ 220501 et seq., and its recognition as the United States member federation of the International Handball Federation (IHF).

Consistent with 36 U.S.C. §§ 220523–220526, USATH serves as the coordinating body for amateur team handball activity in the United States and exercises authority over the sanctioning and administration of competitions as follows:

(a) Domestic Competition

USATH sanctions competitions involving domestic teams and clubs, including individual matches, tournaments, leagues, and championships, for purposes of establishing recognized competitive standards, participant eligibility, qualification pathways, and compliance with applicable USATH rules and policies.

Such sanctioning provides participating organizations access to applicable USATH recognition, benefits, and competition qualification opportunities, subject to the requirements established in this Rule Book.

(b) International Competition and Activities

USATH exercises jurisdiction over international amateur athletic activities in the sport of Team Handball, including the authority to sanction international amateur athletic competitions conducted within the United States and the sponsorship of United States amateur athletes participating in international amateur athletic competitions outside the United States, as provided under 36 U.S.C. § 220523(a)(4).

USATH shall also exercise its applicable federation authority and responsibilities regarding international participation, recognition, eligibility, transfers, and other cross-border handball activities in accordance with IHF regulations, applicable continental federation requirements, and United States law.

Requests for international competition sanctions shall be reviewed promptly and determined in accordance with 36 U.S.C. § 220525, including its requirements governing the granting or denial of sanctions.

(c) Purpose and Standards

Through its sanctioning authority, USATH seeks to:

1. Promote access to organized competition and provide fair and nondiscriminatory opportunities for eligible participants and organizers;
2. Establish and enforce consistent competition, officiating, eligibility, and administrative standards;
3. Protect athlete welfare through compliance with applicable safety, medical, insurance, and athlete protection requirements;
4. Coordinate domestic competition schedules and international participation in a manner that supports the orderly development of the sport; and
5. Ensure that sanctioned activities comply with applicable USATH, IHF, continental federation, and statutory requirements.

The authority established by this Section shall be exercised consistently with applicable law, including the rights and jurisdiction of other amateur sports organizations under 36 U.S.C. § 220526.



Section 5.02 Eligibility and Exemptions

Only USATH-registered and recognized teams, clubs, and Local Organizing Committees (LOCs) may apply for and receive USATH sanctioning of domestic events.

All events, including single matches and multiple match tournaments, are to be sanctioned by the USATH TD, or designee.

Note: Only USATH sanctioned single contests, multi-game tournaments, and regional leagues are recognized as “qualifying” towards USATH Open Club, College, and High School National Championships.

Section 5.03 Rights and Responsibilities of the Host Organization

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

- A. Conduct the tournament in accordance with the USATH Rules of the Game as defined in Article III.
- B. Abide by the USATH Sanctioning Process as defined in Section 5.04.
- C. Submit its proposed referee staffing plan and associated budget to the NRC for approval and comply with all NRC-approved officiating assignments and requirements.

In return, the host obtains the right to:

1. USATH General Liability and Secondary Accidental insurance coverage for the competition venue owners, host team/clubs players, visiting participants, spectators, and guests.
2. Conduct the tournament on the dates at the location specified.
3. Have sanctioned matches recognized for purposes of USATH championship qualification, subject to the applicable eligibility, participation, and qualification requirements established in Article VI.
4. Have the tournament listed on the USATH web page (Events).
5. Receive necessary forms for the conduct of the tournament.
6. Receive support from the USATH staff to check participants' membership status.
7. Use the designation of USATH sanctioned event to leverage media attention, larger attendance, sponsorships and revenue opportunities, including use of the USATH logo and access to the USATH sponsors network.
8. 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 5.04 Sanctioning Process

Applications for event sanctioning shall be submitted through the designated USATH online sanctioning platform, or through such alternative process as USATH may prescribe. An event shall not be considered sanctioned until approval has been issued by USATH. Questions regarding sanctioning applications or requirements may be directed to the Competition Committee at competitioncommittee@handballusa.org.

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 the CC.

Section 5.05 Participation in Sanctioned Events

(a) Membership requirements

- A. All players and coaches in a sanctioned tournament must be USATH members. 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 sponsoring club an access to listing of current members to the EM prior to the start of the sanctioned event. However, the LOC is fully responsible for checking players' eligibility to compete.

(b) 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.
- B. It is preferred that a USATH certified technical delegate oversee timekeeping and scorekeeping for all matches. This is a requirement for medal matches at all sanctioned events.
- C. The sponsoring LOC is responsible for all arrangements and costs related to referee needs. Please consult the National Referee Committee (NRC) for approval of staffing plan and fees/budget (referee@handballusa.org). The LOC may assist the NRC in identifying available certified officials upon request.

(c) 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.
- B. Once a player has taken part in a sanctioned event with a team, they may not participate in sanctioned events with other teams, except in the following situations:
 - a. One-time waiver (up to two per team, per tournament) to help a team meet minimum roster requirements. This only applies to teams that have fewer than ten (10) players on their roster. In that case, the sanctioned event will not be counted towards that player's eligibility for participation in the ELITE division. Note that one-time waivers **must be announced in writing** at the time that the roster is submitted for review by the CC. The CC will be responsible for maintaining a record of all those waivers, should the TD need to review them prior to the Open Club Championships. Players may not play for more than two (2) teams over the course of a season.
 - b. Permanent transfer, submitted in writing to the CC Chairperson at least three (3) weeks prior to the first match following transfer. This process, including final approval, must be completed **prior** to the LOC's stated rostered deadline. The CC will be responsible for maintaining a record of all permanent transfers, should the TD need to review them prior to the Open Club Championships. Note that any sanctioned games played with a former team will not count towards eligibility with a new team. All permanent transfers must fall within one the following categories:
 - i. Off-season transfers – players may transfer without justification during the off-season period, from June 1st to August 31st of every year. The team for which a player first appears during a season shall be the team of that player, from which all transfer rules and limitations will be applied.
 - ii. In-season transfers – players may transfer one-time during the season, provided they include written acknowledgement of these rules and the one-transfer-per-season limit. The CC will review the request and make a recommendation to the TD, who will have the ultimate decision on whether or not to allow the transfer.
- C. National Cup Player-Use Arrangement — A player may participate with a National Cup club while remaining registered to a separate, non-National Cup club pursuant to the limited player-use arrangement authorized by Section 7.04(b)(vi). Participation under such an arrangement shall not constitute a permanent transfer of the player's underlying club registration, but shall be deemed to exhaust the player's one permitted in-season transfer allowance. Movement between the two designated clubs shall be permitted only in the manner prescribed by Section 7.04(b)(vi), and shall not authorize participation for any third club during that season. This exception does not waive any applicable IHF international transfer requirements.

Section 5.06 Violation(s)

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

An individual, club, team, or LOC may appeal an administrative determination or sanctioning decision under this Article to the CEO within ten (10) business days of receiving notice. The CEO, in consultation with the CC, shall review the matter and affirm, modify, or reverse the determination within fifteen (15) business days. The CEO's decision shall be final with respect to event sanctioning, event administration, and compliance determinations under this Article.

Any additional disciplinary sanction imposed upon an individual or club, including a fine, suspension, or restriction on future participation, shall instead be subject to the appeals procedure in Section 9.06, except where this Rule Book expressly provides otherwise.

Section 5.07 Minimum Venue Requirements

The following are minimum venue standards that the LOC is expected to meet. However, the LOC can contact the CC to request an exception be made (competitioncommittee@handballusa.org). Such sufficiently complete requests shall receive response **within 10 days** with an approval or a denial.

(a) Court

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.

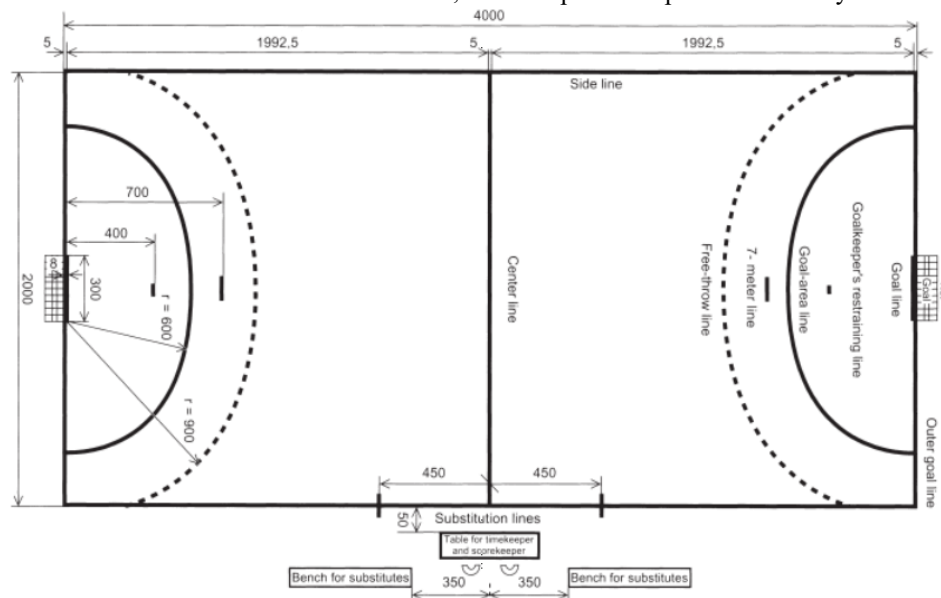


Figure 1 - Court layout

(b) Court Lines

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

(c) 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.

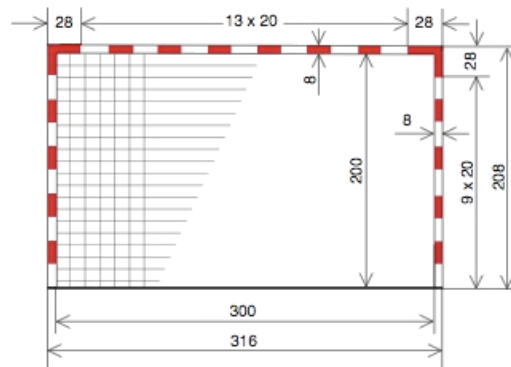


Figure 2 - Regulation Goal

(d) 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.

(e) Team Bench

Each court shall have sufficient bench seating for 16 athletes for each team and up to four (4) team officials (2 coaches, 1 athletic trainer, and 1 manager/statistician). The team bench must be placed in accordance with Figure 1.

(f) 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.

**(g) Locker Rooms**

Each venue shall provide separate men's and women's changing rooms, as well as a dedicated space for referees/officials. It is not required that each court have its own locker room. Shower facilities are preferred, but not required.

(h) Venue Hours

Unless communicated to participating teams prior to registration, or otherwise consented, competition at a weekend event, where neither Friday nor Monday is a national holiday, shall begin no earlier than 8 a.m. on Friday morning and conclude no later than 5 p.m. on Sunday afternoon.

(i) 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.

(j) 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.

(k) 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 5.08 Minimum Game Scheduling Requirements**(a) 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:

- A. 90 minutes between 2 x 30 minutes games
- B. 80 minutes between 2 x 25 minutes games
- C. 70 minutes between 2 x 20 minutes games

(b) Length of the Half-Time

The length of half time is to be respectively:

- A. 10 minutes for 2 x 30 minutes games
- B. 7 minutes for 2 x 25 minutes games
- C. 5 minutes for 2 x 20 minutes games

(c) 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 scheduled for at least 10 minutes. In the case where a tournament is running behind schedule, this warm-up time may be shortened, but only in cases where additional court space(s) allow for warm-up outside the match court.



(d) Maximum number of matches per event

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

Section 5.09 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.** one provider may cover multiple courts of play provided the play areas are within one hundred (100) feet of each other and there is unobscured line of sight.

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. The Trainer Station placement should be communicated in the Technical Meeting and reasonably conspicuous to all attendees.

Section 5.10 Hospitality and Communication

The following is required from the LOC:

(a) Signage

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

(b) Schedules

At least one (1) large printed schedule (24" x 24" minimum) should be posted at main doorways. The Schedule poster board should include the USATH logo and the words "This event is officially sanctioned by USA Team Handball".

(c) Communications Board/Channel

A dedicated communications channel, each, for referees and all team leaders is required to be maintained by the LOC (WhatsApp, SMS, or the like) for up to date information on all information concerning an event and related activities (meetings, social events, etc.).

(d) 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.



Article VI. USATH Open Championships

Section 6.01 Open Club ELITE divisions

(a) Format

Provided there are enough interested and qualified teams, an ELITE division may be held for both MEN's and WOMEN's teams. The CC will announce, **no later than March 31st** of the on-going season, whether or not ELITE divisions will be held.

The ELITE divisions will be limited to twelve (12) teams until such a time as the number of ELITE-worthy teams exceeds that capacity. The CC reserves the right to adjust the format of play. The TD or CC will preside over the draw of all teams into their respective pools of play.

(b) Minimum eligibility requirements

(i) Teams

- A. Each team seeking entry into a Men's or Women's Elite Division must have completed at least five (5) qualifying matches, including applicable regional qualification matches.
- B. If a club wishes to enter two or more teams into the regional competition, it can do so under following conditions:
 - a. The club must declare its intentions in writing and provide a separate roster of at least 10 registered players for each team.
 - b. Each entered team must meet the minimum participation standard to be eligible for ELITE divisions.
 - c. If more than one team from the same club enters a qualification tournament, players may only play for one team during the course of that tournament.
 - d. If more than one team qualifies for the ELITE division, those teams may not swap players used during qualification. However, teams may add eligible players who have not played in the qualifier.
 - e. If only one team qualifies for the ELITE division, that team may call up any player from its club that:
 - i. complies with the player minimum participation rule for the qualified team
 - ii. has not qualified for the ELITE division with another team.

(ii) Players

- A. Each player seeking participation in a Men's or Women's Elite Division must have been listed on the official match report and physically present for at least four (4) qualifying matches for the respective qualified team, subject to the exceptions established in this Section.
- B. Each team will be allowed one (1) automatic exception from the player minimum participation rule.

(c) Qualification

ELITE divisions may feature from four (4) to twelve (12) teams, selected as follows.

(i) Defending champion

An automatic bid will be awarded to reigning ELITE Open Club Champions, under condition that they still meet the team eligibility requirements.

(ii) Regional league seeding

- A. Only regions with an official qualifying process are eligible to receive bids for ELITE divisions. The qualification process must be presented by the league commissioner and approved by the CC **by October 31st** of the on-going season.

- B. Based on the number of recognized regional leagues/qualifiers, the CC will announce the number of bids awarded to each region **by November 15th** of the on-going season, based on the following guidelines:
 - a. One (1) bid for regions with five (5) or fewer active teams.
 - b. Two (2) bids for regions with six (6) or more active teams.
- C. If a team has already been awarded an automatic bid, the regional bid passes to the next highest rank team in the region.
- D. If the total number of regional bids exceeds the number of available entries into the ELITE division, the CC reserves the right to reduce the number of bids for a given region and will provide an explanation to the concerned region's commissioner.

(iii) Wild Card bid(s)

If any bids remain, they will be assigned to the highest-ranking teams. Points are earned by participating in USATH Sanctioned Events based on the following table.

To be able to announce the schedule of events early in the season, clubs and LOCs that intend on hosting a sanctioned event must submit a request to the CC:

- A. No later than September 30th for events hosted between September and December of a given season.
- B. No later than December 31st for events hosted between January and April of a given season.

Each registered club may organize one, and only one Wild Card qualifying tournament per season. In the event that a club plans on hosting more than one event, they must notify the CC of which event will be counted as their Wild Card qualifier when submitting their intent to host. Every effort will be made to keep the USATH online platform up to date with all announced events.

Table 1 - Wild Card Points System²

NUMBER OF TEAMS IN TOURNAMENT							
RANK	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
1	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	1	1	2	3	4	5	6
5		1	1	2	3	4	5
6			1	1	2	3	4
7				1	1	2	3
8					1	1	2
9						1	1
10+							1

In an effort to raise the level of competition and incentivize teams to attend more competitive events, the following points multiplier will be applied:

Cup ³ teams present	Multiplier
≤ 10%	x1
≤ 25%	x1.25
≤ 50%	x1.5
≤ 75%	x1.75
> 75%	x2

² Events with fewer than four (4) teams are not eligible for Wild Card points.

³ CUP teams are defined as those having qualified directly for and/or participating in the USATH National Cup in the current season.



A three (3) point bonus will be awarded to the defending OPEN division champions, in recognition of a successful season.

Teams participating in the USATH National Cup shall be awarded four (4) points, total, for their participation in all scheduled USATH National Cup events that season, and three (3) points per match victory, and one (1) point per match drawn in USATH National Cup play.

If two or more teams end up with the same number of points, ties will be broken using the following rules:

1. Head-to-head results during Wild Card qualifiers.
2. The best record (Win – Draw – Loss) against other teams that have qualified for the ELITE division. Records will be assessed using a points system (Win = 2 points – Draw = 1 point – Loss = 0 points).
3. A playoff game to be played on the first day of the Open Club Championships.

Additionally, Wild Card qualifying events must follow these rules:

- Given that the ELITE division is intended to determine the best US-based team, qualifying events should be comprised of at least two-thirds (2/3) US-based teams. If a sanctioned event does not meet that requirement, no Wild Card points will be attributed.
- Wild Card qualifiers may include up to two (2) teams from the same club. If a tournament includes more than two teams from the same club, Wild Card points will be allocated on a smaller sized tournament.
- All Wild Card qualifiers must be registered and hosted through the USATH online platform. This includes roster management, to allow for review by the CC and the USATH Membership Director no later than 14 days prior to the start of the event. The host will be responsible for ensuring that all registered teams and athletes meet the eligibility requirements, but they must receive a sign-off, in writing, from the CC and the USATH Membership Director prior to the start of the event in order to receive points for the event.

Section 6.02 Open Club OPEN divisions

(a) Format

The CC will determine the format of play based on the number of teams and preside over the draw of all teams into their respective pools of play.

(b) Minimum eligibility requirements

Teams and players are required to comply with the requirements set forth in Section 5.05.

Section 6.03 Open College Championships

(a) Format

The CC will determine the format of play based on the number of teams and preside over the draw of all teams into their respective pools of play.

(b) Minimum eligibility requirements

Teams and players are required to comply with the requirements set forth in Section 5.05. Players comprising properly registered college teams must be enrolled in an academic degree or certificate program. Faculty and staff are not permitted to play but may serve as a coach or as a team official.



(c) Eligible players

All students currently enrolled in Undergraduate coursework at a university is eligible to play for that university's team. Additional players may be added to a team's roster to meet in order to meet minimum roster requirements if the request is made, in writing, to the CC Chairperson no later than 30 days prior to the Open College Championships and if one of the following situations applies to them. The CC will review the request and make a recommendation to the TD, who will have the ultimate decision on whether or not to allow the player to participate.

- Enrolled in Graduate coursework at the university in question.
- Enrolled in coursework at another university within the same state if that university does not have a team participating in the Open College Championships.

Section 6.04 Open High School Championships

(a) Format

The CC will determine the format of play based on the number of teams and preside over the draw of all teams into their respective pools of play.

(b) Minimum eligibility requirements

Teams and players are required to comply with the requirements set forth in Section 5.05.

Section 6.05 Roster size requirements

(a) Minimum roster size

All teams participating in the ELITE division must present a roster with a minimum of 12 players and one (1) team official.

All teams participating in any other Open Club Championship division must present a roster with a minimum of 10 players and one (1) team official.

(b) Maximum roster size

The maximum roster size for any USATH Open Club Championship is set at 16 players.

(c) Reserve players

- A. In order to encourage the development of the sport, teams will be allowed to bring up to two (2) additional players to USATH Open Club Championships, but no more than 16 players may be rostered and present on the bench and scoresheet for a single match.
- B. The responsible team official (identified as official A) must ensure, prior to every game, that all active players are listed on the match report. Inactive players may not sit on the bench.

Section 6.06 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.



Section 6.07 Sportsmanship and Performance Bonds

Each team competing in a USATH Open Club Championship (Club, College, or High School) is required to submit two (2) separate and refundable bonds (check made payable to USA Team Handball):

- A. A Sportsmanship Bond. The bond amount will be set in the tournament announcement and shall be returned to the team **within 30 days** of the conclusion of the Open Club Championship if no team member or team official is disqualified for unsportsmanlike conduct and/or verbal/physical assault.
- B. A Performance Bond. The bond amount will be set in the tournament announcement and shall be returned to the team **within 30 days** of the conclusion of the Open Club Championship if the team does not commit any violation related to minimum competition standards established by USATH for the respective Championship.

Section 6.08 Rules for Foreign Teams Interested in Competing in the USATH Championships

Any foreign club team, and not an All-Star team, is welcome and encouraged to participate in the USATH Open Club Championships under following guidelines:

- A. The ELITE divisions (Men and Women's) are reserved for US teams only, as they are meant to reflect the highest standard of handball in the United States. In the interest of growing the sport in North America, NACHC teams can be approved to participate in ELITE divisions, provided they follow the same rules as all US teams.
- B. Each team must verify its local roster by sending appropriate documentation proving local residence.
- C. Each team must pay standard participation fees set by the USATH and post required bonds
- D. Each team must bring, at its own expense (travel and hotel accommodations), at least one (1) certified referee to work during the event. The NRC reserves the right to accept/reject traveling guest referee(s) based on review of their refereeing certification credentials. If accepted to officiate during Championships, the USATH will pay such referees for their court duties and per diem according to the established domestic scale.
- E. Each team must accept all medical, health and accident responsibility as well as satisfying their own visa requirements.
- F. Each team interested in College Nationals must prove its players' eligibility per USATH College Eligibility Criteria.

Section 6.09 Seeding

Note that this section is applicable across all USATH Open Championships

(a) National ranking

In order to seed teams for the Open Championships, we will use a National Ranking system, based on the results of the previous Open Championships, at the start of every season.

- Each team will score points based on their **overall** placement in the Open Championships, in 2-point increments, with the highest number of points being allocated to the prior season's ELITE Division Champion.
- All teams that did not participate in the Open Championships start the season with 0 points.
- Throughout the season, the National Ranking will be updated based on points that teams secure through sanctioned events, using Table 1. Note that only sanctioned events are counted in the ranking.
- Teams that participate in regional leagues will score points from that league worth double those listed in Table 1 (e.g. the winner of a 4-team league will score 8 points).

The final season ranking will be announced no later than 30 days prior to the Open Championships and used as the basis for seeding teams. Any ties will be broken by:

1. Head-to-head results in sanctioned events.



2. A random draw.

Notwithstanding any deadlines established under this Rule Book for the submission of regional standings, calculation of national rankings, or determination of championship seeding, results of otherwise eligible sanctioned matches played after such deadlines may continue to be considered for purposes of qualification to the USATH Open Championships.

However, results of matches played after the applicable seeding deadline shall not alter the finalized national rankings used for championship seeding, the assignment of teams to seeding pots, or any seeding or draw already established pursuant to this Section. Qualification and seeding shall be treated as separate determinations for purposes of applying these deadlines.

(b) Seeding an even number of teams

In the event that a division has an even number of teams, those teams will be split into as many pots as there will be teams per group in the group stage of the championship, in order of strength. For example, the pots would be the following for a 12-team and an 8-team championship group stage (12-team; 8-team):

1. Team #1-4; Teams #1 & 2
2. Teams #5-8; Teams #3 & 4
3. Teams #9-12; Teams #5 & 6
4. Null; Teams #7 & 8

One team from each pot shall then be drawn at random into each group.

(c) Seeding an odd number of teams

In the event that a division has an odd number of teams, the absent position shall be treated as a blank entry and placed in the same pot as the lowest-ranked team(s). The blank entry shall be drawn into a group in the same manner as the qualified teams from that pot.

Article VII. USATH National Cup

Section 7.01 Purpose and Overview

The U.S. National Cup shall serve as the premier national club handball competition in the United States. The Cup shall determine United States National Champion for any and all external recognition or qualification, including the official qualification pathway to The North American & Caribbean Handball Confederation (NACHC) Men's and Women's Club Continental Championships.

The Cup establishes a top-division national league format to raise competitive standards, foster club development, and provide merit-based pathways to international play that are aligned with the mission and purpose of USA Team Handball.

Section 7.02 Competition Format

(a) Season Structure

- i. Participation is limited to up to ten (10) clubs.



- ii. National Cup competition shall be conducted across two (2) or three (3) Cup weekends. The intended host location(s) shall be communicated in the initial invitation to teams.
- iii. Cup weekends shall ordinarily be contested Friday through Sunday, with scheduling structured to provide each team an appropriate number of matches based on the size of the field and the competition format established for that season.
- iv. The competition format and schedule shall be established in advance of the first Cup weekend based on the number of accepted teams.
- v. The National Cup shall conclude with a Final Four contested Thursday through Saturday as a separate division of the U.S. Open Championships. The four (4) highest-ranked teams following initial Cup weekends of National Cup competition shall qualify to the Final Four.

(b) Match Format

- i. All matches shall be played under IHF Rules of the Game: two (2) halves of thirty (30) minutes, with a ten (10) minute halftime.
- ii. Matches must be contested on a regulation IHF court with all standard markings and equipment.
- iii. Specific match times, sequencing, and the Final Four format shall be set forth in the applicable event schedule or competition bulletin upon completion of the initial Cup weekends.

(c) League Table and Final Four

- i. In National Cup standings, teams shall earn two (2) points per win, one (1) point per draw, and zero (0) points per loss.
- ii. The preliminary competition format may include round-robin play, repeat matchups, or other scheduling structures reasonably necessary to accommodate the number of participating teams and available Cup weekends.
- iii. The Final Four shall determine the National Cup Champion and final placement among the four qualifying teams.

(d) Tiebreakers

- i. Tiebreakers shall be determined per IHF rules, except where expressly modified by this Rule Book or the applicable competition bulletin.

(e) U.S. Open Club Championship Crossover Matches

- i. As the number of teams, facility availability, and scheduling format permit, it is the intention of USA Team Handball to schedule Sunday crossover matches between the top four (4) finishers in the Elite Division of the U.S. Open Championships and the top four (4) finishers in the National Cup Final Four, with pairings based on corresponding final placement unless otherwise stated in the event schedule.
- ii. Crossover matches shall not alter, supplement, or otherwise affect the final standings or results of either the National Cup or the Elite Division of the U.S. Open Championships.
- iii. These matches are intended to increase meaningful crossover between competitive levels and participating clubs. Each crossover match shall be contested in good faith and in full accordance with the standards applicable to an official sanctioned match.

Section 7.03 Championship and Qualification

The National Cup Champion shall be the team that finishes first at the conclusion of the National Cup Final Four. Final National Cup placement for the four qualifying teams shall be determined by the Final Four.

The highest-ranked eligible club(s) shall be designated as the U.S. representative(s) to the NACHC Club Continental Championship.

Teams earn Wild Card Points toward USATH Elite Open Championships qualification on the basis of National Cup participation and results, as prescribed in Section 6.01(c)(iii).



(a) Entry Priority for the Following Season

- i. The four (4) clubs qualifying to the National Cup Final Four shall be automatically qualified for the National Cup in the following season, subject to remaining members in good standing and satisfying all applicable entry requirements.
- ii. After the automatic qualification of the prior season's National Cup Final Four, remaining National Cup invitations and inclusion priority shall be determined in successive order by final placement in the Elite Division of the U.S. Open Championships, followed by final placement in the first Open Division (followed by any subsequent divisions), excluding any club already automatically qualified. Where the number of eligible clubs exceeds available National Cup positions, the foregoing order shall govern invitation priority.

Section 7.04 Roster and Eligibility

(a) Roster Limits

- i. A maximum of twenty-five (25) unique players may be declared and utilized by a club during a National Cup season, including the National Cup Final Four at the U.S. Open Championships.
- ii. Sixteen (16) players may be registered for any individual Cup weekend or National Cup Final Four match roster, unless a different event-roster limit is imposed by the applicable competition rules.
- iii. No later than January 1 of each season, each club shall declare all players it intends to utilize in National Cup competition through completion of the National Cup Final Four. The twenty-five (25)-player National Cup season roster shall be fixed as of that date, and no player not included on that roster may thereafter be added for National Cup competition during that season.
- iv. A player's participation with a club in non-National Cup sanctioned events shall not, standing alone, cause that player to count toward the twenty-five (25)-player National Cup season limit.

(b) Transfer Restrictions

- i. No player may compete in the National Cup while the player's player card or registration rights are held by another national federation unless an IHF transfer has been completed and the applicable IHF Certificate of Transfer has been conferred.
- ii. USATH will process inbound and outbound transfers through the IHF system; requesting clubs are responsible for all applicable IHF and foreign-federation fees.
- iii. No transfers may occur between National Cup clubs during the National Cup season.
- iv. For purposes of National Cup roster eligibility, the official transfer window shall be closed from January 1 through September 1 of each year. Following January 1, no inbound transfer may be used to add or replace a player on a National Cup season roster.
- v. A club that qualifies to the NACHC Club Continental Championship may be granted no more than three (3) exceptions to the closed transfer window for purposes of participation in that championship. Any such transfers shall be reported to the NACHC as short-term transfers and shall remain subject to all limits and requirements imposed by the NACHC. Such an exception does not reopen or modify the club's National Cup season roster.
- vi. To facilitate maximum access to meaningful competition for players of all levels, while encouraging the continued participation and development of clubs competing below the National Cup level, a National Cup club may establish one (1) season-long player-use arrangement with exactly one (1) USATH member club that is not participating in the National Cup. With the express permission of that non-Cup club, players registered to the non-Cup club may be included on and utilized from the National Cup club's twenty-five (25)-player season roster in National Cup competition without completing a separate transfer for movement between those two clubs as permitted by this Section.
 - A. No National Cup club may maintain more than one (1) such arrangement during a season. The arrangement applies only between the National Cup club and the single designated non-Cup club, and only to players for



whom the non-Cup club has granted permission. Any movement of a player to a National Cup club from any other club, or any player movement outside the scope of this arrangement, is subject to the one-time transfer requirements of Section 5.05(c) and all other generally applicable transfer rules. The identity of the designated non-Cup club and the players authorized to participate under this arrangement must be declared to the CC in writing no later than the applicable National Cup season roster deadline. The designated club may not be changed during the season, and no player may be added to the National Cup roster after the roster deadline pursuant to this arrangement.

- B. A player participating under such an arrangement shall remain registered to and shall participate with the player's non-Cup club in all sanctioned competitions other than National Cup competition, except as specifically provided for the U.S. Open Championships. At the U.S. Open Championships, the player must declare a single club for participation before competing and may not participate for both the National Cup club and the non-Cup club during the same Championships.
- C. A player utilizing this arrangement is not eligible for an additional one-time transfer during the same season. For purposes of Section 5.05(c), participation under this arrangement constitutes use of the player's one-time transfer allowance. The player may move back and forth only between the two designated clubs, and only in the unique manner authorized by this Section: National Cup competition with the National Cup club and non-National Cup competition with the player's non-Cup club.
- D. Except for the limited player-use arrangement expressly authorized above, the one-time transfer requirement and all other policies set forth in Section 5.05(c) remain fully applicable.

(c) International Eligibility Requirement

- i. The lesser of one-sixth (1/6), rounded up, or three (3) players on each National Cup event roster must be U.S. passport holders eligible to represent the United States in international play. The conditions for eligibility to represent a country in international play can be found in the [IHF Player Eligibility Code](#).

(d) Residency

- i. The Competition Committee (CC) shall review and determine player residency for purposes of National Cup eligibility and may require documentation reasonably sufficient to verify a player's actual place of residence. Residency shall be assessed as of the date a player is first declared on the club's National Cup season roster. That determination shall establish the player's residency classification for the entirety of that National Cup season.
- ii. Residency under this Section is a factual determination based on where the player actually resides at the time of their inclusion on the National Cup season roster. It is not determined by citizenship, country of origin, passport held, or any other status unrelated to the player's actual place of residence.
- iii. Of the maximum twenty-five (25) unique players included on a club's National Cup season roster pursuant to Section 7.04(a), no more than six (6) may be classified as residing outside North America. This limitation applies cumulatively to the club's entire National Cup season roster, including the National Cup Final Four, and is not calculated separately for individual tournament weekends, matches, or event rosters. Once a player has been included on the National Cup season roster, that player's residency classification and inclusion in the applicable season total shall remain fixed for the remainder of the season, regardless of subsequent changes in residence, participation, or availability.
- iv. A violation of this residency policy, including the submission of fraudulent, misleading, or materially incomplete documentation that results in an erroneous residency certification by the CC, may subject the relevant team, club, club president, and player concerned to sanction. Sanctions may include, without limitation, forfeiture of the National Cup season; fines measured by the performance bonds applicable to all National Cup tournaments in which the team competed; and a term ban from USATH-sanctioned competition.
- v. A CC determination regarding residency status may be appealed to the USATH Technical Director (TD) within ten (10) days of notice of the determination. The determination of the TD on appeal is final and is not subject to further appeal.

(e) Reliance and Discretionary Adjustment



Section 7.04, including but not limited to, the January 1 roster lock, the total player usage limit, the residency limitation, combined with the NACHC policy limiting qualifying clubs to no more than three (3) transfers for the NACHC Club Continental Championship, are intended to ensure that National Cup roster composition reasonably reflects the mission of USATH and the standards of the NACHC and IHF club competitions for which the National Cup serves as a direct qualification pathway. The rules contained in this Section may be adjusted at the discretion of the CEO, outside any otherwise stated amendment timeline or process of this Rule Book, when necessary to remain aligned with governing NACHC and/or IHF eligibility criteria for those qualification events. It is and shall remain in the best interest of USATH and its clubs that qualification to international club competitions - particularly competitions in which the qualifying club represents the U.S. domestic competition and its clubs collectively - occurs under conditions as proximate as reasonably possible to those enforced at the event for which qualification is earned.

Section 7.05 Registration and Fees

(a) Eligibility to Enter

- i. Clubs must be members in good standing with USATH.
- ii. Clubs must commit to all scheduled Cup weekends and, if qualified, the National Cup Final Four.
- iii. Teams with outstanding debts to USATH or event hosts are ineligible.

(b) Registration and Invitation Timeline

- i. Registration opening, registration closing, acceptance, and team-announcement timing shall be established and communicated in the annual National Cup Invitation or subsequent official competition communication.
- ii. No fixed calendar dates for registration or acceptance are established by this Rule Book.

(c) Fees

- i. The total entry fee shall be set in the National Cup Invitation.
- ii. USATH shall also collect a seven hundred fifty dollar (\$750) performance bond per Cup weekend, unless otherwise stated in the annual National Cup Invitation.
- iii. Hosts may collect sportsmanship bonds under their event policies.

(d) Penalties and Sanctions

- i. Teams withdrawing mid-season shall forfeit all Wild Card Points and remain liable for all outstanding performance bonds.
- ii. Forfeits, roster violations, residency violations, and unsportsmanlike conduct shall be subject to fines and sanctions under USATH regulations and this Rule Book.

(e) Refunds

- Seventy percent (70%) refund prior to the first Cup Weekend.
- Fifty percent (50%) refund prior to the second Cup Weekend.
- No refund after the second Cup Weekend, except for verified force majeure.

Section 7.06 Gender Divisions

- (a) A U.S. National Cup shall be held for Men's and/or Women's divisions in any year following the prior season in which an Elite Division was contested for that gender at the USATH Open Championships.
- (b) USATH may, at its discretion, also conduct a U.S. National Cup for a gender in years when no Elite Division was contested at the Open Championships, provided sufficient demand and organizational capacity exist.
- (c) The final determination of whether both Men's and Women's divisions are to be contested in a given year shall be made by the TD, based on the competitive needs of the sport and the best interests of participant clubs.



Article VIII. Complaint(s)

Section 8.01 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.

Exception for Athlete Safety and Mandatory Reporting Matters

The filing deadline, filing fee, and Event Disciplinary Committee procedures established by this Section apply only to ordinary competition-related complaints within the scope of this Rule Book. They shall not apply to allegations or reports involving athlete safety, abuse, harassment, sexual misconduct, retaliation, or other conduct subject to mandatory reporting or review under the U.S. Center for SafeSport Code, USATH MAAPP and Athlete Safety Policy, or USATH Response and Resolution Policy.

Such matters shall be reported, referred, reviewed, and resolved in accordance with the applicable athlete safety policies and jurisdictional requirements. Nothing in this Rule Book shall restrict, delay, condition, or impose a fee upon any report required or permitted under those policies or applicable law.

Section 8.02 Complaint Procedure for out-of-game offenses

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

Following receipt of a formal complaint, the person or club will receive notice of a pending disciplinary action.

- A. The USATH TD or designee will review the complaint and make a recommendation of action to the USATH CEO **within 15 business days**.
- B. The USATH CEO will review the TD's findings and support, alter or overrule the recommendation **within 7 business days**. Notices of the decision will be delivered to all parties involved and go into effect immediately.
- C. Any additional disciplinary sanction imposed pursuant to this Section may be appealed in accordance with Section 9.06.
- D. Nothing in this Section shall limit any applicable complaint, grievance, or other review rights provided under the USATH Bylaws.

The exceptions for athlete safety and mandatory reporting matters set forth in Section 8.01 shall apply equally to this Section, including its filing deadlines and review procedures.

Concurrent Service as CEO and Technical Director

The positions of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Technical Director (TD) may, from time to time, be held by the same individual. Such concurrent service shall not alter, limit, or invalidate the authority, responsibilities, or procedures established by this Section. Where the same individual holds both positions, that individual may exercise the authority and fulfill the responsibilities assigned to each position in their respective official capacities, including both the review and recommendation functions of the TD and the decision-making functions of the CEO. The absence of separate officeholders shall not, by itself, constitute a procedural deficiency or create any additional right of appeal or review. All otherwise applicable notice requirements, deadlines, and procedural protections shall remain in effect.



Article IX. Violations, Strikes and Sanctions

Section 9.01 Strikes

All violations of this Rule Book attributable to a team or club may result in the assignment of a strike to that team or club. Violations arising from the conduct of individual team members may result in a strike being assigned to the team or club where such conduct is reasonably attributable to the team or club. Strikes under this Article are intended as a system of progressive discipline for teams and clubs, and do not limit the authority of USATH to impose individual disciplinary sanctions for violations of this Rule Book.

Section 9.02 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 9.03 Disciplinary Sanction(s)

The USATH TD shall maintain a record of violations and strikes assessed against teams and clubs. Once a team or club has accumulated three (3) strikes, it shall be subject to disciplinary sanctions by USATH. A team or club may also be subject to immediate disciplinary sanctions for egregious violations as provided in Section 9.04, or where another provision of this Rule Book expressly authorizes such sanctions without regard to accumulated strikes.

Section 9.04 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 9.05 Additional Sanctions

Individual participants who violate this Rule Book may be subject to disciplinary sanctions without regard to the accumulation of team or club strikes. Such sanctions may include, but are not limited to, fines, suspensions, revocation of USATH Membership, and lifetime bans from USATH sanctioned events. Teams and clubs may be subject to additional sanctions upon accumulating three (3) strikes, for egregious violations under Section 9.04, or as otherwise expressly provided by this Rule Book.

Section 9.06 Appeals

Except for decisions expressly designated as non-appealable elsewhere in this Rule Book, an individual or club may appeal additional sanctions imposed under this Rule Book as follows:

A. Except as otherwise expressly provided in this Rule Book, competition-related decisions and sanctions, including fines, forfeitures, strikes, eligibility determinations, and suspensions applicable to specified matches, events, or competitions, shall be subject only to the review procedures expressly established by this Rule Book. Such decisions shall not be appealable to the USATH Judiciary Committee solely because they restrict participation in particular matches, events, or competitions. The carrying forward of a match suspension to subsequent sanctioned events shall not, by itself, constitute a change in membership status or a membership-level restriction.



B. Any disciplinary action that suspends, limits, or removes USATH membership status or generally restricts an individual's or club's membership rights or privileges, including a prohibition on universal participation in any USATH sanctioned club or setting, shall be subject to the applicable procedures established under Section 14 or other relevant provisions of the USATH Bylaws, regardless of whether the sanction is expressly characterized as a membership suspension.

C. The distinction between competition-specific sanctions and membership-level restrictions shall be determined by the scope and effect of the sanction, rather than its designation. Nothing in this Section shall create an additional right of appeal for competition-related decisions expressly designated as final or non-appealable elsewhere in this Rule Book, except as otherwise required by the USATH Bylaws.

Article X. Amendments, Conflicts and Interpretations

Section 10.01 Amendments

Changes to this Rule Book may only be made by the USATH TD in consultation with the CC, 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 10.02 Conflicts or Interpretation Issues

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

Section 10.03 Effective Date and Transition, Proposed Rule Changes

This revision of the Rule Book shall go into effect on the date of publication at www.usateamhandball.org.

The USATH TD 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 TD or the USATH CC for review.