



Line-up Guidelines and Clarifications

December 28, 2023

BACKGROUND

Earlier this season, a player who had an extended absence from his team returned and played matches at a number that was challenged by an opposing team as being too low for his ability. The challenge was upheld, and, as a result, two of the team's three matches that weekend had their outcomes reversed.

When this decision was communicated to the broader coaching community, the coaches asked the Rules and Regulations Committee to provide more guidance about line-ups to help ensure they don't risk having any match results overturned—the following guidelines and clarifications attempt to meet that request.

CURRENT PUBLISHED RULES

As a reminder, the currently published rules on team line-ups for dual matches are found under the "Match Play Rules" and "Ethics Procedures" on the CSA website.

Team Line-Ups

Team line-ups must be based on order of merit, with the best player at number one, the second-best player at number two, and so on. The most accepted and traditional method of establishing an order of merit is the challenge ladder system. If a player wins a challenge match, they move up the ladder; if they lose, they move down. Coaches must be sure that whatever systems they use are logical and consistent throughout the season and throughout the ladder, and acceptable to their teams and to other coaches.

Ethics

In the case of dual match line-ups, opposing coaches should have an opportunity to question a line-up change until a satisfactory explanation is offered. If a coach is not forthcoming or their explanation is not satisfactory, the disputing coach must verbally notify the opposing coach that they are protesting the line-up and the match. This should be done prior to the beginning of the match, and then the protesting coach must email the protest, with all the particulars, to admin@csasquash.com within 24 hours of the time of the match. The opposing coach will be given the opportunity to provide supporting evidence for the line-up order, and the CSA adjudication committee will evaluate the appeal.

GUIDELINES AND CLARIFICATIONS

The Committee does not want to make actual changes to these rules mid-season, but it is serving notice now that it will look hard at new rules for line-ups once the season ends.

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Additionally, the Committee has made the following clarifications and guidelines to help coaches avoid line-up incidents:

- **Clarification: The Adjudication Committee has always ruled on a case-by-case basis and will continue to do so.** The Rules and Regulations Committee understands the concern felt by the coaching community after an earlier decision, but the referenced case had several unique features that make it more complicated than usual to draw direct “if this, then that” conclusions.
- **Guideline: When in doubt, communicate proactively.** We encourage coaches to communicate proactively with the League Commissioner when a student returns to a team after a prolonged absence (for example, due to injury, sickness, or outside competition) and when new students enter mid-season. Please provide context and explain your logic on where you place the player *before playing a team match*. In this situation, we want to turn the adage on its head: “Ask permission, not forgiveness.”
- **Guideline: Exchange team rosters two full days in advance.** The rule currently states you must exchange team rosters simultaneously at least an hour before the match; we are encouraging this exchange to happen by midnight two full days in advance (e.g., for a Saturday match at 1 pm ET, the rosters should be entered no later than 11:59 pm ET on Wednesday evening). These two days (Thursday and Friday in the example) will allow coaches time to consider each other’s rosters and *talk with each other to resolve any issues before playing the match*. We very much want to minimize the chances of matches being overturned by a post-match roster issue, and we hope that coaches directly communicating with each other before match day will resolve the overwhelming majority of cases before they start.
- **Clarification: Challenges can still be played after roster submissions.** If you decide to play a challenge match after the roster has been submitted and the result changes your line-up, you must alert the opposing coach and the League Commissioner of the challenge result as soon as it happens.
- **Guideline: Be prepared to defend anomalies.** If, for example, your line-up has a player who has moved more than one spot since your last published roster, you should be prepared to explain the movement and/or have the ladder match results to back it up.
- **Guideline: When two players are verifiably close in ability, you can switch their positions once.** If, for example, your top two players consistently go back and forth in challenge matches, you can swap those two players once, but you can not reverse the swap without another challenge match. If you swap them, you are stuck with that line-up until a match result changes it (assuming it does). *You must be prepared to show that their past results have been interchangeable, and you should*

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communicate to the league office and the opposing coach that you are conducting such a swap. This is consistent with how the past League Commissioner ruled on such changes.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the above guidelines and considerations, the Committee is asking for the following to take place for next season:

- **Club Locker Changes.** We are asking US Squash whether Club Locker can be adjusted in two ways: (1) To allow both teams to see their opponent's roster only after both rosters are fully entered into the system. We hope this will discourage a team from waiting to post its own roster until it sees the other, as this will no longer be possible; (2) To have all entries time-stamped so we can complete a post-season analysis of when teams posted their line-ups. These changes are already on Club Locker's agenda for next year, subject to modifications based on your input.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The Committee is aware that there are many ways of creating rosters and that the number of challenge matches conducted by a team varies widely. Two things the Committee is considering for future seasons are as follows:

- **A mandated minimum number of challenge matches.** We will consider minimums for the start of the season and once a season is underway.
- **Mandating the minimum number of days before a match that rosters must be submitted.** We will look closely and gather feedback on how well the encouraged two-day timeframe works for the remainder of this season.

THE RULES AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

All five current members approved the above guidelines, considerations, and recommendations.

Will Carlin (Chair)
Richard Chin
Stephen Gregg
Sarah Hartley
Erin Robson