

# MAJOR Rule Changes 2021

By  
Alan Thomson



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

The Rules Committee priorities when they approve rules:

- Preserving the integrity of the **game**.
- What is best for the **players**;
  - Improve their experience,
  - Make it easier for players to learn, & play
- What is best for **officiating**;
  - Modify rules to ensure less conflict between Players & Officials

Those are the priorities applied to rule making – in that exact order.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## The Players – Basic Fair Play Concept

- PB is a game that requires cooperation & courtesy
- A sense of **fair play**
  - Giving opponents benefit of doubt,
  - Essential to maintain games principles
- All points have **equal importance**
- Either partner can **make calls**
- Prompt calls eliminate the 2 chance option.
  - Cannot claim hinder from ball on court **after hitting the ball out.**
- No Referee, - Players cooperate
  - Replay, Rally stands, ask for a Referee



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.A.1 (MAJOR) “Timing of Serve”

The entire score must be called before the ball is served.

### Rational:

- To remove the ambiguity between service motions and practice swings.
- This is part of the global goal to move all timing fault issues to a consistent point-in-time, **the serve of the ball.**
- A player may move their serving arm in any manner as long as they don't serve the ball until the score has been completely called.
- Once the referee starts to call the score, but before the score calling has ended, if a player serves the ball, a fault should be called per Rule 4.M.11.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.A.6 (MAJOR) “ No Let Serves”

**Placement.** The server must serve to the correct service court (the court diagonally opposite the server).

- The serve may **clear or touch the net** and must clear the NVZ and the NVZ lines.
- The serve may land on any other service court line.

### Rational:

- It affirms that “let” serve replays are no longer valid.
  - Even if the serve touches the net, as long as the serve lands in the appropriate receiving court, the ball is live and no replay shall be called.
- **Part of the goal to reduce player and referee conflicts involved when a player calls a let and the referee does not agree.**
- **It also prevents receivers from calling phantom lets on ‘ace’ serves.**
- **It provides better clarity that the serve must clear the NVZ lines as well as the area of the NVZ.**



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.A.8 (MAJOR) “Bounce Serve”

### \*\*\*Provisional Rule\*\*\*

**Drop Serve.** In addition to the standard serve sequence described in Rules 4.A.1 to 4.A.7, players may opt to use an alternate “drop serve” method.

### Rational:

- Provides a better serve method for the physically impaired, such as the use of only one arm.
- Easier to enforce by players and referees.
- Referees only need to verify the ball is dropped correctly.
- Easier serve to teach beginners.
- Provides an alternate serve method for those who develop ‘server’s block’, otherwise known as the “yips.
- Servers may use the normal serve or provisional drop serve at any time during the match. No notification is needed.

### NOTE:

**Provisional means we will evaluate the rule for unintended or unexpected outcomes over the next year.**



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.A.8.a (MAJOR) “Bounce Serve”

- Servers must release the ball from one of the server’s hands or,
- Dropped off the server’s paddle from any **natural (un-aided)** height, and
- Hit the ball after the ball bounces on the playing surface. Any limit on the number of bounces prior to hitting the ball?
- The server’s release of the ball must be visible to the referee, and the receiver.
- In matches without a referee, the server’s release of the ball must be visible to the receiver.
- A replay shall be called before the return of serve if the release of the ball is not visible.
- The rules for feet placement (4.A.2 and 4.L) still apply.

### Rational:

Same as 4.A.8.

### NOTE:

The only downward acceleration imparted on the ball is that from gravity



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.A.8.b (MAJOR) “Bounce Serve”

- Before bouncing on the ground, the ball shall not be propelled (thrown) downward or tossed or hit upward with the paddle.
- Failure to drop the ball properly will result in a fault.
- There is no restriction on where the ball can land on the playing surface after it is dropped (providing 4.A.2 is satisfied) *Feet placement*
- Nor how many times within the 10 seconds after the score is called the server may drop the ball.





# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.A.10.c (MAJOR) “Bounce Serve”

- If the drop serve is used,
  - the ball may be struck with either a forehand or backhand motion without any other restriction;
  - **i.e., the location restrictions of the ball and paddle in Rules 4.A.3, 4.A.4, and 4.A.5 do not apply.**



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.B.9 (MAJOR) “Server/Receiver Questions”

- Before the serve occurs, the serving team may ask the referee for the score, correct server, correct position, and may challenge/confirm the called score.
- Any player on the serving team may ask any one or more of these questions.

### Rational:

- This change is part of multiple rule changes moving all timing issues to a consistent point-in-time; **before the next serve occurs.**
- It also reinstates the allowance for players to ask for their correct position and/or challenge/confirm the called score.
- This change works in conjunction with the server who changes courts and the possible conflicts that arise.
- The goal is to reduce player and referee conflicts that occur before the ball is served.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.B.9 CONTINUED (MAJOR) “Server/Receiver Questions”

- An additional intent for the change is to prevent the serving team from “quick serving” the receiving team when the serving team asks any of the allowed questions. See Scenario B below.
- This change is consistent with the guideline that anytime any player asks a score, correct player, or correct position question,
  - the referee will pause play, (i.e., call “Time”, raise their hand & step into the court thereby creating a dead ball) answer the player(s) question(s)
  - Lower hands & step back into position
  - recall the score (No 15-second notification is necessary).
- Per Rule 8.E, no faults can be committed during this dead ball time.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.B.10 (MAJOR) “Server/Receiver Questions”

- Before the serve occurs, the receiving team may ask the referee for the score, correct receiver, correct position, and may challenge/confirm the called score.
- Any player on the receiving team may ask any one or more of these questions.

### Scenario:

- The referee calls the correct score. Before the serve occurs, the receiver’s partner **starts to ask** if the receiver is the correct receiver.
- During the time when the receiver’s partner is asking the question, the serve occurs.
- Since the referee’s attention is on the server, the referee immediately calls, “**Time**” in order to properly answer the receiver’s partner’s question.
- The referee confirms that the receiver is correct and states that they will recall the score.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.B.10 (MAJOR) “Server/Receiver Questions”

- The serving team claims that the receiver’s partner committed a fault by asking a question when the serve occurred.
- The referee states that the start of the question being asked, occurred BEFORE the serve occurred, which is allowed by rule. (This is the same as a time-out being called before the serve occurs)
- The same as the serving team, the receiving team is allowed to ask any of the permitted questions; and they are allowed to have those questions answered without incurring a risk of being quick served.
- If the receiving team **repeatedly** asks similar questions of the referee, and the referee determines that the receiving team is trying to delay the game, or interrupt the momentum of the serving team, the referee may call a technical warning for delay of game on the receiving team.
- In summary, the receiving team is protected from being quick served, **but not allowed to control the pace and flow of the match.**



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.B.11 (MAJOR) “Server/Receiver Questions”

### Existing:

- The referee will not correct players’ positions and will not confirm players questions about their position but may respond to questions about positioning with “You have X points” or “Your score is X”.
- When an incorrect player serves or receives, or a player serves from an incorrect position, the referee will immediately stop play and identify the fault.

### New:

- When an incorrect player serves or receives, or a player serves from an incorrect position, the referee will immediately stop play and identify the fault(s).



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.B.12 (MAJOR) “Point of Time”

- Incorrect Player or Position. When an incorrect server or player position is discovered after a rally, game, or match has ended, the offending team can be faulted until the *next serve* occurs or prior to the *scoresheet being returned to the tournament operation’s desk*.
- A point scored during the rally will not count.
- Any previous points scored by the incorrect server or with players in the incorrect positions will stand.
- After a match is completed, an incorrect player or position error may not be corrected after the scoresheet has been returned to tournament operations personnel.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.K. (MAJOR) “Point of Time”

- **Wrong Score Called.** If the server or referee calls the wrong score, any player may stop play before the “**Third Shot**” occurs to ask for a correction

### Rational:

- This rule expands the window of time that players are allowed to challenge a possible incorrectly called score and extends it to the “**Third Shot**” point-in-time.
- Since the server is allowed to start their service motion during the calling of the score and potentially serve the ball the “split second” after the score has been called,
- This gives all players an extended amount of time to process and decide if they want to challenge the called score.





# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Note:

- This rule change specifically **does not** follow the goal of moving all timing or appeal issues to the ***serve of the ball***.
  - The reason is that if a referee calls an incorrect score and then a 50-dink rally ensues, the option to have a replay and have a player “play the wrong score called card” to ensure a replay, should not be an option.
  - This is why the window of time to challenge an incorrectly called score ends when the ***Third Shot occurs***.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.K.2 (MAJOR) “Point of Time”

- After the serve has occurred, a player who stops play and challenges the called score when there is no error will have committed a fault.

### Rational:

- This change aligns with the global goal of moving all timing rules to the moment of **serve contact**.
- Since players are permitted to ask/challenge/confirm any score related concerns before the serve occurs,
- Once the serve occurs, any player that stops play to challenge the called score will have committed a fault, providing the score had been called correctly.

### NOTE:

**Scenario B below illustrates how a referee should avoid the “pitfall” of getting into a conversation with a player after the serve has occurred.**



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.K.2 CONTINUED (MAJOR) “Server/Receiver Questions”

### Scenario B:

- The referee calls the score, “5-5-2” and the server serves the ball.
- As the ball is crossing the net headed towards the receiver, the receiver’s partner looks at the referee (standing close by) and asks, “We have 6 don’t we?”
- The referee ignores the question and the receiver returns the ball and the rally ensues.

### Note:

- Once the ball has been served, to avoid the potential that the referee will interject themselves and stop play unnecessarily, the referee **shall not answer any question(s) by any player.**



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.K.2 CONTINUED (MAJOR) “Server/Receiver Questions”

- The referee effectively “ignoring” questions asked by any player will result in one of two results:
  - 1) The rally will continue as normal,
  - 2) The player(s) will escalate their concerns and eventually stop play (catching the ball, raising a hand halting play, etc).
- After the serve, once a player(s) has stopped play and challenges the called score, either the referee has made an error in the score call and a replay will be called, or, if the referee has called the correct score, the player(s) who stopped play will have committed a fault.
- This guideline removes the potential for “player and referee discussions” that could arise after the ball has been served.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 4.K.3 (MAJOR) “Point of Time”

- A player who stops play after the “Third Shot” occurs will have committed a fault and shall lose the rally.

### Rational:

- This change reflects the expansion of the window of time allowed for any player to challenge the called score.
- After the **Third Shot** has occurred, any player that stops play will be faulted.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 5.A.2 (MAJOR) “Change of Server”

- In doubles, teams may change the starting server between games and should notify the referee.
- In non-officiated matches, the team should notify the opponents if there was a starting server change.
- There is no fault or penalty for failure to make the notifications.
- Once a game has started and, if any points have been scored, when the referee notices a starting server has changed, the referee will stop play, and annotate the scoresheet accordingly and resume play.

### Rational:

- This change, in conjunction with other rule changes, is for the elimination of possible “gotcha” fault, that can occur before the first serve happens, and is based on a very simple concept:
  - The player that serves first at the start the game, must be the “banded” player.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 5.A.2 (MAJOR) “Change of Server”

Scenario A: At the beginning of game 2, the serving team changes their starting server player along with the starting server band. They do NOT notify the referee or opponents. Before starting game 2, the referee notices the change in starting servers and confirms the same with the serving team and then notifies the opponents. After confirmation, the referee makes the corrections to the scoresheet and proceeds as normal. The changing team is not faulted simply because they did not give notification.

Scenario B: After game 1 has ended, Team A notifies the referee and opponents that they are changing the starting server (along with the starting server band). The referee makes the changes to the scoresheet accordingly. When game 2 begins with Team A serving, Team A “forgets” they had changed their starting server and the “No Band” player (the starting server in game 1) serves from the right-hand court after the referee starts the game and calls the score. The referee calls an incorrect server fault on Team A. All parties were made aware of the starting server change and the referee had adjusted accordingly on the score sheet. Although the referee should verify the starting server, it is not the referee’s responsibility to ensure the starting server is the player who serves: Team A simply “made a mistake” and should be faulted accordingly.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 5.B. (MAJOR) “Coaching”

### End Change Time-Out.

- A maximum of one minute is allowed to switch ends during a game.
- Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to continue play.

### Rational:

- Third-party coaching is now allowed during end changes because it was difficult to detect and enforce.
- The revised rule also treats the return to play similar to other time-outs with respect to the 15 second warning and potential for returning to play early.





# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 5.B.7 (MAJOR) “Technical Fouls”

- After the end change has occurred, a technical foul resulting in the loss of a point for the serving team shall have no impact on the completed end change.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 6.D.7 (MAJOR) “Line Calls”

### Existing:

- Players should not call a ball “out” when looking across a line, unless they can clearly see a space between the line and the ball as it hits.
- The player’s depth-of-field judgment, based on the laws of parallax, prevents accurate judgment in these cases.

### New:

- Players should not call the ball “out” unless they can clearly see a space between the line and the ball as it hits the ground.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rational: “Line Calls”

- The discussion of parallax was removed from the
- Some will think the part of the rule that remains is a newly crafted rule when, in fact, it has always been the central part of Rule 6.D.7.
  - It is now highlighted as the key determinant in making line calls.
- This removes the need for any discussion surrounding the size of the contact point and estimating where the ball contacts the court surface.
- This rule deserves a more thorough discussion,
  - why it is the key determinant in making line calls.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

**For some, what follows will be a change in thinking:**

- *Players should consider all balls that land on their side of the net, as “IN”... unless they can be certain that the ball landed out.*
- That statement is exactly what is behind existing rules 6.D and 6.D.3.

**Here is 6.D:**

- "The player, when assigned line-calling duties, must strive for accuracy and operate under the principle that all questionable calls must be resolved in favour of the opponent."

**And here is 6.D.3:**

- "Any ball that cannot be called “out” will be considered “in.”
- "How do you tell if a ball is in fact 'out' with certainty?"



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

- Why the focus on certainty?
- That's because if we aren't certain... there is doubt.
- If a player is estimating, guessing, approximating, or assuming the ball is 'out', there is, by definition, doubt.
- And, if there's doubt, as players we must rule in favour of our opponents.

Back to rule 6.D.3:

- "The opponent gets the benefit of the doubt on line calls made."



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Rule 6.D.13 (MAJOR) “Over Ruling Calls – to own Disadvantage”

- After the completion of a rally, players may overrule a partner’s line call, an officiating team’s line call, or an opponent’s “in” call to their own disadvantage.

### Rational:

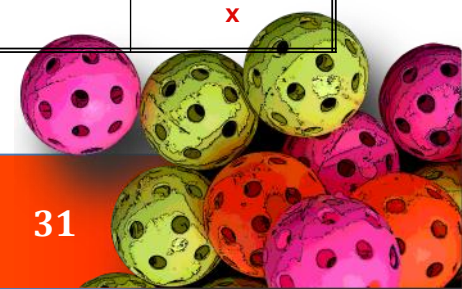
- This change reflects the new rule 13.D.1.c (which states players should call faults on themselves).
- The section concerning fault calls was removed, which is now covered by 13.D.1.c.
- It expands the 2020 rule and states that a team may overrule an opponent’s line call, an officiating team’s line call (including a referee’s line call who also is a member of the officiating team) and even their own partner’s line call if it is to their team’s disadvantage.



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

## Point in Time Changes for 2021

In 2020 Rule Book	Start of score being called	After complete score is called	Prior to start of service motion	Before the next serve occurs	2021 Before next serve occurs
Not ready signals can be given up until 4.C.1	x				No Change
Previous line calls may be appealed to referee up until 6.D.5		x			x
Serving team may ask Referee for score & correct server up until 4.B.8			x		x
Receiving team may ask referee to confirm the score up until 4.B.9			x		x
May appeal cracked ball up until 11.E			x		x
Referee may correct prior incorrect player or position fault up until 4.B.11				x	x
Serving team may confirm score & correct server with referee 4.M.12		x	x		x
Receiving team may confirm score with Referee 4.N.4		x	x		x
Players may call a time out up until 10.A.3		x	x		x



# 2021 Rule Change Highlights

Verbal Warnings	Technical Warnings	Technical Fouls	Game Forfeits	Match Forfeits	Ejection	Expulsion
Single Warning to all players	Objectionable Language at person	* No Technical Warnings previously issued	1 TW assessed & any TF listed in 13.G.2 (RED)	Player fails to report for match 15 min after called	Flagrant & particularly injurious behaviour affecting tournament	From Tournament Venue
Profanity Violation immanent	Profanity (Audible or Visual)	Aggressively or Recklessly throwing paddle (not striking anything)	After TF issued - any other TW	NB: If match 1-15 or 1-21, 10 min after call TD may permit longer	Using Ethnic, Religious, Racial, Sexist or Homophobic slurs	TD Discretion
	Aggressive Arguing with Officials, Player, Spectator	Extremely Objectionable Language or Profanity	NB: Matches with 1-15 or 1-21 = Match Forfeit	2 TW + TF (RED)	Injury through Ball or Paddle Abuse	
	Ball Abuse	Threats or Challenges to any person	Player fails to report 10 min after match called	1 TF (RED) + any TF	Spitting or Coughing on person	
	Disrupting flow of game	Challenging Referee rules interpretation & losing with no TO remaining		IMMEDIATE MATCH FORFEIT	Not Exhibiting Best Effort	
	Repeated Appeals	Hitting/Throwing Ball not in play - hitting person		Deliberate, aggressive physical contact Opponent, Official, Spectator		
	Challenging Ref rules interpretation & losing TW + loss of TO			Aggressively or Recklessly striking Ball or throwing Paddle putting individual or property at risk		
	Request MTO not approved TW + loss of TO			TD MATCH FORFEIT		
	Minor Actions Unsportsmanlike behaviour Questioning Linecalls that are continually reversed			Failure to comply with Tournament Rules, Improper conduct, abuse of hospitality, other rules & procedures		
	Receiving Illegal Coaching					

