



# Changes to the Policy of Play for 2023

January 2023

# Overview

Over the past 3 years, the sport of pickleball has grown significantly. According to a 2022 report from the Sports & Fitness Industry Association, there are nearly 40% more pickleball players today than there were in 2020 and more than double the number of courts across the country compared to five years ago.

- ▶ During this time, the club has added hundreds of new members and has seen an increase in the percentage of novice to intermediate level players.
  - ▶ These numbers have stressed the capacity of our mid-level courts and resulted in excessive wait times, players not playing on appropriate courts, and more disagreements around player rotation.
- ▶ Furthermore, we have seen a large number of players, including many highly skilled 4.5-5.0 players, move on to play at other venues where they can organize their own groups.



# Overview (continued)

As the sport continues to evolve and the needs of our members change, our club must evolve and change as well. This document provides details about the problems that needed to be solved, and the changes that will be implemented for 2023 to resolve them.

These changes are designed to make it easier to determine which courts to play on, reduce wait times, strengthen player rotation guidelines, and provide balanced competition and the best possible games for everyone regardless of skill level.

As there is no perfect system, we must all work together through the initial transition, and expect some bumps along the way. All we ask is that everyone be patient and give the changes a chance to work. If you have any questions or feedback, please reach out to us.

As the leaders of Tustin Pickleball, we remain committed to providing a program that is recreational, social, and most importantly, fun for all community members. We thank everyone for their support.

The 2023 Board of Directors  
Tustin Pickleball

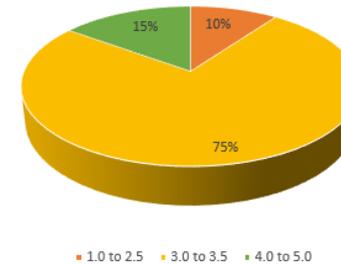


# The Problem

## Disproportionate court designations

- ▶ The rating levels designated and labeled to each of the 10 courts are not proportionate to the actual skill levels of the club members.
  - ▶ It is estimated that 70-75% of all members are 3.0-3.5 level, yet players at 3.5 level and below are only allowed to play on courts 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 which represent 50% of the courts.
  - ▶ Additionally, it is estimated that 15-20% of members are advanced level (4.0+), yet advanced players are allowed to play on courts 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 which represent 70% of the courts.

Estimated % of Players by Rating Level



10	9	
8	7	
6	5	4
3	2	1

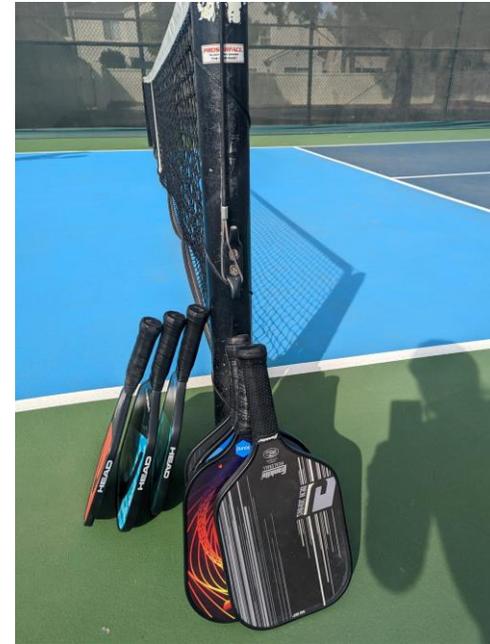
Currently, courts are grouped and labeled by rating level (i.e., 4.0-4.5)



# The Problem

## Overcrowding on the middle courts

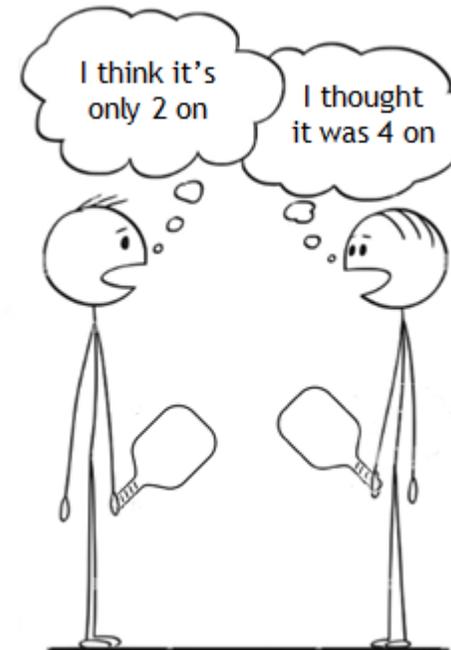
- ▶ With the large percentage of intermediate (3.0 to 3.5 level) players, there is significant overcrowding on the middle courts 4, 5, and 6, resulting in long wait times and player dissatisfaction.
- ▶ Due to overcrowding on courts 4, 5, and 6, more low intermediate players are migrating over to courts 7 and 8 which causes friction with advanced players.
  - ▶ Since the club does not require that each member have an official skill level rating (i.e., WPR 3.5), there is no objective way to enforce which court a player may play on.



# The Problem

## Inconsistent and confusing player rotation

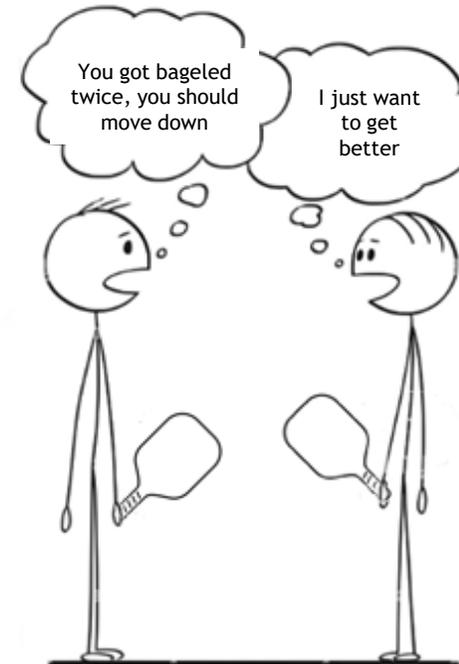
- ▶ Player rotation guidelines (2 on 2 off, or 4 on 4 off) are not clear and consistently applied, which results in arguments and dissatisfaction with players who incorrectly thought they were up next.
  - ▶ There is confusion on whether rotation is based only on the paddles waiting on their court or based on paddles waiting on all equivalent skill level courts.
  - ▶ There are currently two separate documents covering player rotation on the Tustin Pickleball website that are not consistent with each other.



# The Problem

## Players not playing on appropriate courts

- ▶ While there is no issue with players wanting to improve by “playing up”, friction is caused when lower level players stay too long on courts where they don’t belong.
  - ▶ This occurs with intermediates playing with advanced players as well as beginners playing with intermediates.
- ▶ Currently, there is no objective measure to determine whether a player is playing on a court appropriate to their skill level.
  - ▶ Without any type of measure, it is difficult to get players who don’t belong to move down a level without intervention from the directors.



# The Solution: What Will Change

- ▶ The 10 courts will be re-grouped into 4 rows that represent a range of skill levels and ratings.

<u>Court Number</u>	<u>Skill Level</u>	<u>Rating Level</u>
10*    9	Advanced / Expert	4.0 to 5.0
8    7	Advanced Intermediate / Advanced	3.5 to 4.0
6    5    4	Intermediate	3.0 to 3.5
3    2    1	Novice / Intermediate	2.5 to 3.0



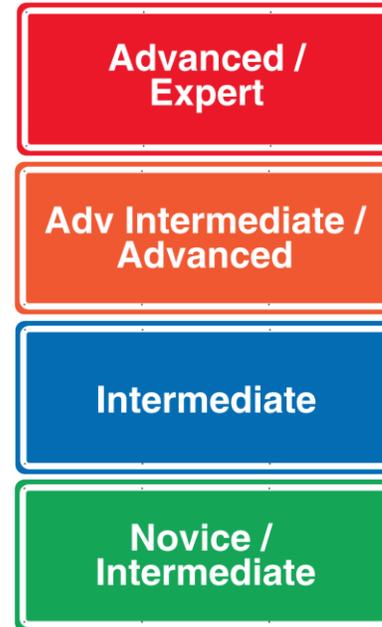
\* Court 10 will remain a Challenge Court, for Advanced/Expert players only



# The Solution: What Will Change (continued)

- ▶ The existing rating level signs (3.0, 3.5, 4.0 etc.) will be removed from each court and replaced with signs indicating skill levels.
- ▶ Player level ratings will no longer be emphasized to determine which court a player can play on.
- ▶ Court levels can temporarily change when there is excessive wait times and players need to be moved around.

Skill Level Signs for  
Each Row of Courts



Courts 9, 10

Courts 7, 8

Courts 4, 5, 6

Courts 1, 2, 3



# The Solution: What will change (continued)

- ▶ The existing player rotation guidelines for “2 On 2 Off” and “4 On 4 Off” will be clarified and strengthened and will apply to each skill level group/row.

## Player Rotation Rules

- Games will be played to 11 points, win by 2.
- Winners stay on and losers exit and place their paddles at the end of the queue. Next 2 players in the queue play the winners.
- Rotation continues with 2 players off, 2 players on. If only 1 player is waiting, that player will team with 1 of the losing players.
- Winners can stay on and win 2 games in a row. After the second win, all 4 players exit and place their paddles at the end of the queue. Losing players get priority in the queue ahead of the winners.
- Rotation changes to 3 or 4 on, 3 or 4 off, when 3 or more players are waiting on each of the courts of the same skill level. If only 3 players are waiting, 1 winner will stay on for the next game. Winning players get priority at the end of the queue ahead of the losing players.

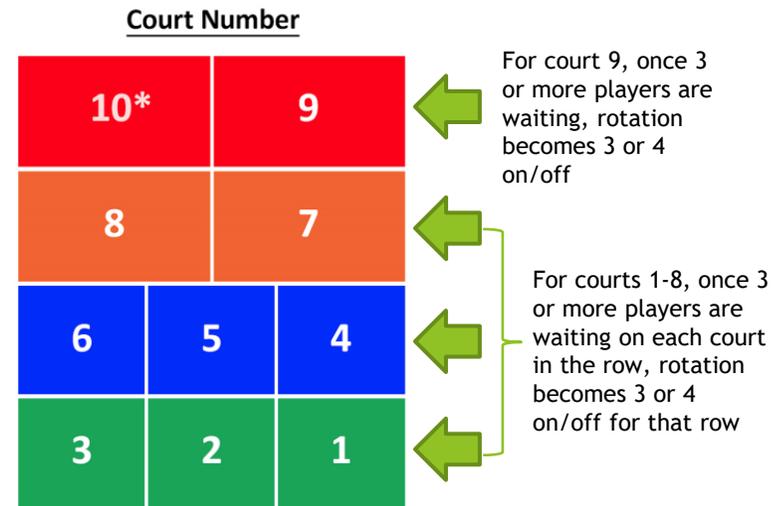
Note: Court 10 is a “Challenge Court” for advanced/expert players in which the above rotation rules do not apply. Regardless of the number of players waiting, winners on court 10 can stay on and win up to 3 games in a row.



# The Solution: What will change (continued)

## Additional Information Regarding Player Rotation

- ▶ Our goal is to balance the wait times across all courts of the same skill level. We cannot use a single queue for each level because our courts are not configured to have a common waiting area for each row.
- ▶ Unless you are on Court 9, player rotation is based on the number of players waiting on all courts of the same skill level, not just on the court you are playing on.
- ▶ Example Scenario: If there are four players waiting on Court 6, two players waiting on Court 5, and no players waiting on Court 4, then it is still 2 on and 2 off since two of the four waiting on Court 6 could move to Court 4. Once there are three or more waiting on all of the courts of the same skill level (Courts 4, 5, and 6 in this scenario), then rotation changes to 3 or 4 on and 3 or 4 off.

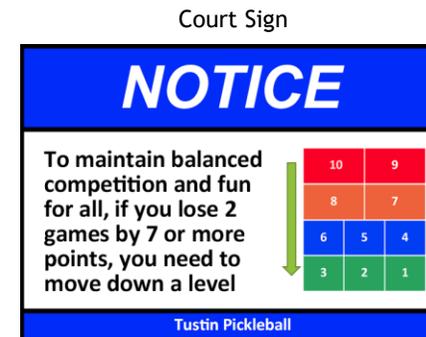
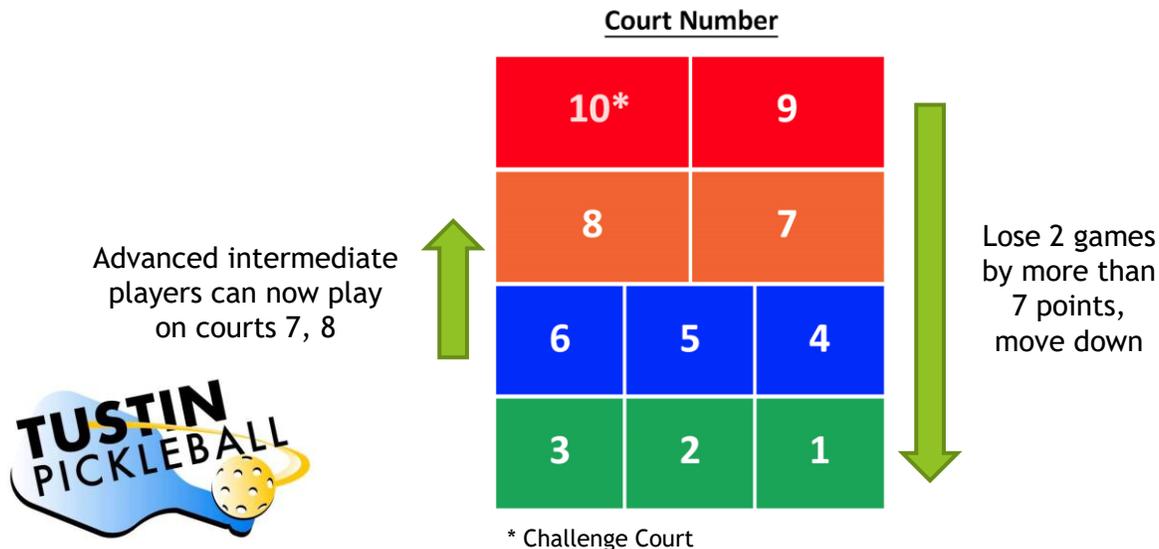


\* Challenge Court



# The Solution: What Will Change (continued)

- ▶ High intermediate (3.5) players will be encouraged to move up to courts 7 and 8 to mix in with advanced players and alleviate overcrowding on courts 4, 5, 6.
- ▶ A new “2-7 rule” will be enforced so that players who lose 2 games by 7 or more points need to move down a level.
  - ▶ A sign on each court will encourage players to self-regulate, with the goal of creating balanced competition and fun games for all, without requiring intervention by the directors.
  - ▶ The 2-7 rule takes into account the strength of field as there may be a larger pool of players at a higher (or lower) skill level on any given day.



# The Solution: What will change (continued)

- ▶ A large sign that documents the "Guidelines & Rules for Open Play" will be displayed near the entrance.
- ▶ Our "Policy of Play" document will be updated and made available on the Tustin Pickleball website.
- ▶ Changes will be communicated and socialized via email, Facebook, and website.



## Guidelines & Rules for Open Play

Pickleball courts are grouped into rows that represent a range of skill and rating levels.

Court Number		Skill Level	Rating Level	
10*	9	Advanced / Expert	4.0 to 5.0	
8	7	Advanced Intermediate / Advanced	3.5 to 4.0	
6	5	4	Intermediate	3.0 to 3.5
3	2	1	Novice / Intermediate	2.5 to 3.0

- Players should play/challenge on to courts designated for their skill level.
- Warm-up is limited to 2 minutes whenever players are waiting.
- If you lose 2 games by 7 or more points, you need to move down a level.

### PLAYER ROTATION RULES

- Games will be played to 11 points, win by 2.
- Winners stay on and losers exit and place their paddles at the end of the queue. Next 2 players in the queue play the winners.
- Rotation continues with 2 players off, 2 players on. If only 1 player is waiting, that player will team with 1 of the losing players.
- Winners can stay on and win 2 games in a row. After the second win, all 4 players exit and place their paddles at the end of the queue. Losing players get priority in the queue ahead of the winners.
- Rotation changes to 3 or 4 on, 3 or 4 off, when 3 or more players are waiting on each of the courts of the same skill level. If only 3 players are waiting, 1 winner will stay on for the next game. Winning players get priority at the end of the queue ahead of the losing players.

\* Court 10 is a Challenge Court for advanced/expert players in which the above rotation rules do not apply. Regardless of the number of players waiting, winners can stay on and win up to 3 games in a row.

Entrance Sign

Skill Level Signs for Each Row of Courts

<b>Advanced / Expert</b>	Courts 9, 10
<b>Adv Intermediate / Advanced</b>	Courts 7, 8
<b>Intermediate</b>	Courts 4, 5, 6
<b>Novice / Intermediate</b>	Courts 1, 2, 3

All Courts

NOTICE

To maintain balanced competition and fun for all, if you lose 2 games by 7 or more points, you need to move down a level

Tustin Pickleball

# Anticipated Benefits

- ▶ A more proportionate designation of courts for intermediate (3.0 to 3.5) players to lessen overcrowding on courts 4, 5, and 6.
- ▶ A simplified approach with less emphasis on WPR, UTPR, DUPR, and other level ratings to determine which courts a player can play on.
- ▶ Ability to temporarily designate court(s) to different skill levels based on excessive wait times.
- ▶ Less confusion and easier application of player rotation guidelines (2 on 2 off, 4 on 4 off).
- ▶ An objective, enforceable rule for when a player needs to move down a level.
  - ▶ Players can self-regulate without having directors intervene.
- ▶ A highly visible sign at the entrance that can be used by all players to enforce guidelines and rules of play.

