

Women's Softcourt Tennis League of Birmingham -Organized 1981-

It shall be the policy of this league to follow the rules as stated in this directory and to play by "The Code" as written by N.E. Powell. This code makes a way for honest players to employ the same approach to all situations so that neither takes advantage of the other. It is the players' responsibility to be familiar with the rules of tennis listed in this directory and in "The Friend at Court", which includes "The Code", as well as USTA tournament regulations.

There will be eight levels in the Women's Softcourt League. All levels will compete Spring and Fall.

ANY TEAM THAT DOES NOT ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING RULES MAY BE PENALIZED BY SITTING OUT A SEASON.

Play Days

Monday	3.0
Tuesday	3.5, 4.5
Wednesday	5.0, Open Division
Thursday	4.0, 5.3
Friday	2.5

Registration Procedures

1. Registration opens January 15th for the spring season and July 15th for the fall season. Each team must be registered on line (womenssoftcourtleague.com) with at least 8 players by 5 p.m. on February 1st for spring, and August 1st for fall.
2. Each team will need to pay one fee of \$80.00 per season. Checks are to be made out to "Women's Softcourt League". No refunds will be made. Money collected from fees will be used for website maintenance, meeting expenses, player prizes, paper supplies, mailings, and volunteer gifts (officers, coordinators, and reps).
3. Spring league play begins the second week of March. Fall league play begins the day after Labor Day.
4. New players to Softcourt that need to be entered onto the website may be added by the level coordinator before the captain adds that player to her team. Players may continue to be added throughout the season up to a maximum of 16 per team.

5. Prior to the first match, each team must have a strength roster prepared and entered into the website (see “Strength Roster Procedures”). After the season has begun, changes to a strength roster need to be handled by the level coordinator.
6. If a player wishes to change teams after she has been listed on a roster, she must do this before the season starts, and she must personally call the coordinator at her level to have her name switched.

General Rules

1. **Matches** - Teams will play a maximum of 8 scheduled matches. This will apply for all levels with 9 to 15 teams. 16 teams or more constitute a second division of a level and will be treated in the same way. The Ethics Committee will select these 8 matches at random and by court availability at the time of scheduling.

2. **Winners** - Each season the winners of a level; with either one, two, or three divisions, will be determined by the number of matches won. If teams are tied in the number of matches won, the winner will be determined by the following: most sets won and then if necessary we will count the least games lost. If least games lost are tied there will be co-winners. There will be no playoffs between divisions.

3. **Prizes** - Individual awards will be presented to the first and second place teams of each level for each season of play. Levels may have two or more divisional winners.

4. **Forfeits** - Team forfeits will NOT be allowed. Position forfeits are allowed. Forfeits must start in position 4. Additional forfeits proceed up the line-up. At least 4 courts (8 sets) must be played to count as a match, which can be done with as few as three players (ex: 3 courts of singles and 1 court of doubles).

5. **Scheduling during an invitational tournament, a religious holiday, or during a school break will be avoided if possible.** It is the responsibility of the Club Reps or Pros to notify the Vice-president or President in writing of scheduling conflicts at the time the rosters are due for league play. Otherwise the league cannot reschedule the conflicting matches.

6. Move-ups

A. Any player at the #1 position in singles or doubles who receives 85% or higher overall and plays 75% of her matches at #1 will receive a letter to move to the next level. A player making her 85% stats one season may remain at that level the next season but may not play below the #1 position. After making stats 2 consecutive seasons the player must move up.

B. All players that achieve 85% stats as stated above playing levels 2.5 through 5.0 will receive a letter. The bottom half must be returned to the president by the date requested.

This allows the president to know what the player’s intention is for the next season. Failure to comply could result in loss of sets.

- C. Players playing on the 5.3 level of Softcourt with a 5.0 NTRP year-end rating must play the #1 position. A 5.0 NTRP player must have prior approval from the ethics committee to play at the 5.3 level. (See Skill Level 2C) If a 5.0 NTRP rated player achieves percentages of 85% or higher for two consecutive seasons in singles or doubles (regardless of the number of matches played) she will be required to sit out for one season before returning to the 5.3 level.
- D. A 5.3 player who does not have a NTRP rating and achieves percentages of 85% or higher for two consecutive seasons in singles or doubles (regardless of the court position or number of matches played), will also be required to sit out for one season before returning to the 5.3 level. The President of Softcourt will notify her in writing.
- E. The Ethics Committee has the authority to review any #1 and #2 player who has won 85% or better but did not play the required 75% of her matches. The Ethics Committee will rule on each player individually and may require that a player move up to the next level without the required 75% played.

7. **Consecutive Team Wins** - Any team that wins first or second place three consecutive seasons will be subject to review by the Ethics Committee. The committee along with the club pro will decide what should be done.

8. **Move Down Requests** - Any player wishing to move down should fill out the Move Down Request form and send it to the President. Failure to do this could result in a loss of sets. The Ethics Committee reviews each player / level individually.

9. Changes in rules or procedures and Softcourt information will be distributed to the club reps at the Executive Board Meeting before each season begins. A directory of all softcourt members including a complete list of rules will be distributed to club reps before the spring season.

Club Guidelines

1. Each club entering the league must have a least 4 regulation softcourts, nets with adjustable straps, and be within a reasonable distance from each other. Admission to the Women's Softcourt League will be by approval of the Ethics Committee with priority given to clubs and teams already fielded.
2. Each club (except out-of-town teams) may field one or more teams at each level or teams that play on the same day provided they have club approval and the required number of courts. For example, if your club has 4 courts, you may have two teams on any day; 8 courts allow three teams; 12 courts allow four teams; etc.
3. No new out-of-town teams can be allowed at this time due to limited court availability. Only the original out-of-town teams will be allowed, but forfeit their position if they drop out of the league.

Teams

1.
 - A. Teams must play at the level of the highest player on the team.
 - B. Teams must have a minimum of 8 players and a maximum of 16.
 - C. If any members have to be moved to other teams after the rosters are submitted, the Vice-President must be notified immediately. The team captain or captains requesting the change will be responsible to notify the other captains in her division and other affected divisions, all officers, and coordinators. A sub automatically becomes a member of a team the 4th time she plays.
2. Each team must have a captain or acting captain present for each match. Captains must be players on the team.

3. **Host teams**

- A. Must provide new balls and refreshments.
- B. Must have 4 courts playable by 9:00 a.m.
- C. Are responsible for entering the match scores on the Women's Softcourt League website within 3 days after the match has been played.
- D. In case of rainouts, must submit three possible dates to visiting team for make-up. See Match Play, 13F.

4. **Strength Line-ups**

- A. Teams must determine line-ups according to the strength of its members **PRIOR** to league play in order to make play fair and competitive. Sandbagging is prohibited. Should new members be added mid-season, causing your strength roster to change, you must notify your level coordinator immediately. Once the season has started, only a level coordinator may make changes to the strength rosters.
- B. A strength roster must be entered on the Women's Softcourt League website before you play your first match. All members must be listed on the strength roster.
- C. During the season each captain will be required to present a copy of her team's strength roster along with her team's written line-up to the opposing team captain on match day. Captains should check that the lineup submitted is in accordance with strength roster procedures before the match begins. If there is any question, the coordinator should be called prior to match play.

Strength Roster (SR) Procedure

Teams must determine line-ups according to strength of players prior to league play in order to make play fair and competitive. Sandbagging is prohibited. Subs from a lower level cannot play the #1 position. When playing your matches, the #1 position must always be the strongest player or doubles team present on that day.

Team members (singles players or regular doubles teams) cannot move down more than one court without permission from her Level Coordinator before the match has begun. Players listed on the SR cannot "jump" over a team member listed on the SR without permission from her Level Coordinator prior to match play.

Round Robins or challenges are encouraged in order to determine strength each season. In the absence of round robins or challenges, it is acceptable to allow your club's Tennis Pro to determine your strength line-up.

Singles

Only players expecting to play singles should be listed on the singles portion of the SR. When using subs in the singles line-up, subs from a lower level team must start in the #4 position moving team members up as needed. In the event that your #1 and #2 singles players are absent at the same time, the #3 player can move up to the #1 position and the #4 player can move up to #2 position for that match only and can return to their original positions as listed on the SR when the #1 and #2 players return. If an original team member does not ordinarily play singles, but is as strong as or stronger than your regular #1 player and can easily play the #1 position in the absence of that player, you must indicate this on your SR. If she is not listed on your SR, she cannot play the #1 position. Should new players be added mid-season, causing your SR to change, you must notify your Level Coordinator prior to placing her in the #1 position or prior to moving players down and placing her higher than an original team member as listed on your SR.

Team members as listed on your original roster that are not listed on the singles portion of your SR can play in the #2, 3, or 4 position if the player that is listed on the SR is not present. When placing team members not originally listed on the singles portion of your SR, please keep in mind that sandbagging is prohibited and that each week your strongest player should be in the #1 position and your weakest should be in the #4 position.

Doubles

All members on your team's roster should be listed on the doubles portion of your SR, unless they intend to only play singles and to only substitute in the doubles line-up. Subs from a lower level team cannot play in the #1 doubles position under any circumstance. Your #2 doubles team can move to #1 and the sub playing with ½ of the #1 doubles team can move to #2 if it is possible that the #1 player with the sub is as strong as or stronger than your #3 doubles team. If this team cannot be considered stronger than the #3 team, you must call your Level Coordinator and get permission to place ½ of your #1 doubles team lower than the #2 position. If half of your #1 doubles team is absent and the half that is present can play with an original team member it is okay to play them in the #1 position. Please keep in mind that sandbagging is prohibited and that each week your strongest individual or team should be in the #1 position and your weakest should be in the last position. The same principle applies when placing subs in the #2 and #3 position of your doubles line-up.

VIOLATION OF THE ABOVE RULES WILL RESULT IN FORFEITURE OF ALL SETS THAT ARE PLAYED IN VIOLATION OF THE STRENGTH ROSTER.

Players and Substitutes

1. **Requirements** - Players and substitutes may play for only one club in Women's Softcourt during a season. She must be at least 18 years old and a dues paying member in good standing at her club. Dependents of members (i.e. college students) are not allowed to play or substitute. If a softcourt player is an employee, or the wife of an employee of her club, the player will need a letter from that club's manager / owner verifying that the player has club/membership privileges.

2. **Skill Level**

- A. Players and substitutes must play at the level appropriate to their skill in order to make play competitive.
- B. New Players entering the Women's Softcourt League may not play below their USTA rating.
- C. All players with a 4.5 NTRP rating will be permitted to play on the 5.3 level. Players With a 5.0 NTRP rating must petition the Women's Softcourt League prior to league play. Petitioning players must fill out a Player Profile/History form and must have the approval of the Ethics Committee before playing in a match. Approval will be based on criteria set forth by the Women's Softcourt League. 5.0 NTRP rated players who are approved by the Ethics Committee to play on the 5.3 level will be required to play in the #1 position only. These players must be members of the club they play for and will not be permitted to play below the #1 position under any circumstance.
This will allow up to three 5.0 NTRP rated players (1 singles player and 1 doubles team) to play on match day. Any 5.0 NTRP rated player achieving percentages of 85% or Higher for two consecutive seasons in singles or doubles (regardless of the number of matches played) will be required to sit out for one season before returning to the 5.3 level.
- D. Teaching Pros with a 4.5 NTRP rating are permitted to play on the 5.3 level only.
- E. The Open Division is available for players with a skill level of 5.0 NTRP and above. (For details see Match Play 1.C.)

3. **Adding new team members** - New players and subs may be added during a season. Call your level Coordinator so that she may add them to your roster. Also, list them at the bottom of the score sheet on match day. Do not list subs on the original roster. Subs may play for both teams of the same level at her club. However, the fourth time she plays for a team, she becomes a member of that team. All sets played by an unregistered player or sub will be forfeited.

4. **Substitutes** -

- A. A sub from a lower team may play 3 times for any team at a higher level. Any player from a lower level team who subs for one team more than three times will forfeit all sets she has played for the higher level team.
Substitutes from a lower level team are not allowed to play the #1 position. Teams must play according to their strength roster. Stacking is prohibited. (When playing your matches, the #1 position must always be the strongest player or doubles team present on that day.)

5. Clubs that field 2 teams at a level may not interchange players listed on their original roster.

Match Play

1. Match Format - Levels 2.5 - 5.3

- A. Play will consist of 4 positions of singles and 4 positions of doubles. The host club must have 4 playable courts ready before match play begins at 9:00 am. If weather conditions such as rain or temperatures below 40 degrees have delayed the match, captains can agree to wait and finish the match or reschedule.
- B. Two regular sets will be played in singles and in doubles. A twelve point tie breaker will be played at the score of 6-6.
- C. Once 16 sets are played, the team winning the most sets wins the match. If sets are tied, the total number of games won determines the winner. If games are tied, a twelve point tie breaker will be played by the **last doubles teams on the courts**. Start the tie breaker where you left off in the last set played. If your team leaves and cannot be called back in 15 minutes, you must forfeit the tiebreaker. A 15 minute break is allowed before the tiebreaker is played.

Open Division

1. Play will consist of 1 position of singles and two positions of doubles.
2. Each position will be determined by best of three sets.
3. All courts will begin play at 9 a.m.
4. A minimum of 3 teams submitting rosters will be required in order to be put on the schedule. Should 3 teams not submit rosters, your check will be returned.

2. Line-Ups

- A. Complete written singles and doubles line-ups must be exchanged by captains prior to starting play at 9:00 am, and there can be no alteration (liquid paper is not allowed on the score sheets).
 - B. A line-up cannot be submitted with forfeits starting at any position other than 4.
 - C. If no one is there by 9:00 am to present a written line-up, the first 2 games of singles on each court will be defaulted.
3. Play must be continuous. There will be no rest break between sets. When changing sides, a maximum of 1 minute shall elapse. The maximum time a player has after finishing her singles match before playing doubles is 15 minutes, unless she is waiting for her partner or opponent to finish their singles match.

4. Singles Play

- A. Assuming there are no weather problems, singles play begins at 9:00 am with a 5 minute warm-up with your opponent.
- B. Lengthy warm-ups are prior to 9:00 am.
- C. There will be a 15 minute default rule, (9:15) for the first set which is strictly enforced for all positions.
- D. At 30 minutes, (9:30), the second set will be default.

5. **Doubles Play**

- A. Doubles teams must be present at 10:30 am.
- B. Warm-up is allowed as courts become available
- C. The same default rule is in effect for doubles when a court becomes available and the other doubles team is ready to play.

6. One bona fide toilet break is allowed per singles and doubles match.

7. **Defaults** - Play has begun. If one of the players is unable to continue due to injury or illness, after a 5-minute grace period the player must default the rest of the match. If the player has defaulted her singles but is able to continue for doubles, she may play the doubles match.

DEFAULTS ARE COUNTED ON CONTROL SHEETS. (EX: If in the first set the score is 3-3 and player B is injured or becomes ill, the score will be recorded 6-3,6-0. Both sets are counted as wins for player A. If a default occurs in the second set, the first set stands as played with the second set counted as a loss for the defaulted player.)

8. **Coaching** - There will be no coaching, (pro or any other consultation) during match play. No linesmen will be provided for matches, nor will foot faults be called. You are responsible for your own calls. Do not question line calls. Remember, when in doubt the ball is good.

9. **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** - Anyone that continually violates rules or shows unsportsmanlike behavior will be reviewed by the Ethics Committee and may not be allowed to play Softcourt. Complaints of unsportsmanlike conduct must be filed in writing with the President.

First Offense - Put on file.

Second Offense - Player is notified.

Third Offense - Player will not play next season.

10. **Portable phones and beepers are not allowed on the court.** Violation will result in loss of the game in progress or the next game if it is during a changeover. Leave your phone in the pro shop if you must have it.

11. The **host team captain** is responsible for entering the scores on the Women's Softcourt League website within 3 days of when the match was played.

12. Captains will be notified by their coordinator if the score has not been entered within 3 days of when the match was played. She must IMMEDIATELY enter the scores on the Women's Softcourt website or be penalized.

13. **In the event of sprinkler malfunction or bad weather:**

A. If weather is questionable, both teams must go to the courts as scheduled.

B. If all 4 courts are not in playable condition by 9:30 am, you may reschedule the entire match, or play as much of the match as possible and reschedule the rest. This means you must use the original line-up.

C. If match play has not begun, new line-ups can be exchanged at the rescheduled match.

- D. If the singles has begun but the doubles has not, the line-up for doubles can be changed. Completed match scores will stand. Incomplete matches will be continued with set, game, and point as they stood when play was halted. It must be noted who was serving, court position, etc. No stalling to start doubles will be tolerated.
- E. If singles are completed, doubles may be rescheduled on an individual basis as long as they are completed in a 3 week period.
- F. Matches must be rescheduled and played within 3 weeks of the original match date. If the match is being played on an individual team basis the 3-week period still holds. Both captains must agree upon the date after the host captain has submitted 3 possible dates within the 3 week period. (Make sure the host club has courts before submitting the dates). If necessary, because of limited court space, you may play at the visitors courts. Contact the coordinator with dates. Rescheduled matches can only be canceled by bad weather (i.e. rain, frozen courts, temperatures below 40 degrees, etc.) not because key players cannot play. Failure to complete make-up matches within the 3 week period will result in loss of 4 sets per team.

14. **Forfeits** - Forfeits must always come from the bottom up. If the line-up has been exchanged and it is discovered that a player will not be present, you must still forfeit the #4 position and move players up as needed. This will be indicated by drawing a single line through the player(s) not present and indicating the change of other players by arrows. Write forfeit beside the #4 position. This and bad weather are the only exceptions to the rule that a line-up cannot change once it is exchanged. If play has begun on court 4, you must forfeit #3. The same guideline will be applied to doubles matches.

Protests

1. All protests must be in writing. If a match is played under protest, the written score sheet must not be signed and the score sheet must not be confirmed on the Women's Softcourt website. Instead, the protesting captain should choose "dispute" on the online score sheet instead of "confirm". If both captains sign/confirm a score sheet, there can be no formal action taken.
2. Protests must be received by the President of Softcourt within 7 days of the match. The President will mail a copy of the protest to the team captain against whom it is filed.
3. A written response must be received by the President from the team against whom the protest is filed within 7 days of receipt of the protest.
4. The Ethics Committee will review both the protest and response and will settle protests at their discretion.
5. No action will be taken on protests received after 7 days of the match being protested. Any rulings or penalties will be in favor of the protesting team if a response from the opposing team is not received within the 7 days allowed.

Ethics Committee

1. The Ethics Committee shall consist of the current officers (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Past President Advisor).
2. The Ethics Committee duties are:
 - a. Make recommendations on changes after review of control sheets.
 - b. Review and settle all protests.
 - c. Help with rule interpretations and rule changes after executive board meetings.

Executive Board

1. The Executive Board will consist of officers, level coordinators, and Club Representatives.
2. The Executive Board duties are as follows:
 - A. **President:** to schedule meetings, preside over and conduct all business of the League, send out the newsletter, interpret rules, and chair the Ethics Committee.
 - B. **Vice-president:** to schedule all match play with the help of other officers, perform the duties of the President in her absence, and to serve as President after her term as Vice-president.
 - C. **Secretary:** to record all meetings, to oversee the printing of the book, and be responsible for the records of the league as well as any correspondence to member clubs.
 - D. **Treasurer:** to be in charge of all finances, dues and expenses, and to order any awards and gifts to be presented.
 - E. **Past President Advisor:** to serve as advisor on all matters relating to softcourt. This position shall be automatically filled by the last president. In the event the immediate past president is unable to fulfill this role, the PPA will be appointed by the President.
 - F. **Website Administrator:** to oversee website operation and handle any problems relating to the website. She is also responsible for updating the directory to be distributed prior to the spring season.

G. Club Representatives: to serve 2 years, be the liaison between her club and the League by receiving all correspondence and forwarding it to players of her club, obtaining information for the handbook, be responsible for registering rosters on the Women's Softcourt League website and sending in fees from her club each season. She MUST hold a captains' meeting at the beginning of each season at her club. She is to distribute the packets received at the general meeting and inform captains of new rule changes and other league information. If a representative changes clubs, moves, or becomes an officer, her old club must select a new representative.

H. Level Coordinators: to serve 2 years, monitor score sheets for matches entered on the Women's Softcourt league website of each match played and monitor the stats and standings records for the teams on her level. Keep up-to-date rosters and check the status of subs and monitor the move-up position of players. To contact any team captain in violation of Strength Rosters violations immediately. Send all fees paid during the season to the treasurer.

I. Captains: to be familiar with all rules in the handbook, as well as USTA and Code rules, Record or confirm all scores on the Women's Softcourt Website. Notify coordinator of new players or subs, reschedule rain outs within 3 weeks of the original scheduled match.

3. The Executive Board will elect new officers and coordinators at the end of the fall season. The term will begin January 1 of the following year. The current officers will nominate a slate of officers and coordinators. The slate will then be submitted at the December Executive Board meeting for final approval. The office of President will automatically be filled by the last current Vice-president. Each member club will be given the opportunity to nominate a member for Vice-president before any club holds that office for two consecutive terms. Term of office may be one or two years. Only members in the greater Birmingham area can serve as officers.

