



**INTERNATIONAL  
NETBALL  
FEDERATION**

## **MATCH PROTOCOLS**

These Protocols outline the procedures to be used in conjunction with the Rules of Netball (2018). Protocols are usually listed according to the Rules section to which they refer but, when it is more appropriate, may be linked to another section.

### **RULE 3. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS**

- (i) The event organiser prepares the playing enclosure, the goalposts and ball to the specifications stated [Rules 3.1–3.3].
  - (a) Before a match the umpires inspect the field of play and the goalposts to check they conform to the Rules and provide a safe environment for play [Rules 3.1, 3.2]
  - (b) This inspection may be made at any time prior to a match. If made several hours before a match a further brief inspection is desirable before play starts.
- (ii) The event organiser provides at least two balls. These must meet all the specifications stated and be in a good condition [Rule 3.3].
  - (a) The umpires select the match ball and a spare ball to be held at the official bench
  - (b) The same ball is used throughout the match unless the umpires instruct that it is replaced.

### **RULE 4. MATCH DURATION**

- (i) Before a match the umpires check with the event organiser:
  - (a) The length of the half-time interval [Rule 4.1 (i)]
  - (b) Whether extra time will be played if scores are tied at full-time (including the length of each half) [Rule 4.2].
- (ii) During an interval the umpires may leave the playing enclosure. If they leave, the reserve umpire remains there to check no changes occur to the field of play that could necessitate a further inspection.

### **RULE 5. MATCH PERSONNEL**

- (i) Prior to the match the umpires check the players in their respective changing rooms to ensure they meet all requirements [Rule 5.1.1 (iv)].
  - (a) It is recommended the umpires carry out the check of both teams together
  - (b) Umpires should remind players to check they are not wearing any adornments or jewellery before carrying out the inspection
  - (c) Umpires should be satisfied that hair is suitably tied back so as not to provide a hazard or distraction for other players on the court.
- (ii) The captains toss for choice of first centre pass or goal end [Rule 5.1.1 (v)]. The toss is conducted on the court or court surround and is observed by the reserve umpire who conveys the result to the umpires.
- (iii) After the captains have tossed the umpires toss for goal end [Rule 5.2.1 (i)]:

- (a) The toss is taken in the changing area and is observed by the reserve umpire
- (b) A member of either team may request to be present to observe the toss.
- (iv) Before play commences the umpires check:
  - (a) Players meet the requirements for play [Rule 5.1.1 (i)] and the teams can be easily distinguished on the court (if necessary the teams will be required to wear bibs that distinguish them more easily or, if available, an alternative uniform)
  - (b) Primary care persons are wearing appropriate identification [Rule 5.1.2 (ii) (b)]
  - (c) The on-court captain for each team - if the captain leaves the court during the match the umpires ensure they are advised which player is the replacement captain [Rule 5.1.1 (v) (d)]
  - (d) Scorers and timekeepers are ready to commence their duties [Rules 5.3.1 and 5.3.2].

## **RULE 6. MATCH PROCEDURES**

- (i) An umpire's whistle starts and stops play [Rule 5.2.1 (ii)] as follows:
  - (a) To instruct the timekeeper to commence timing (at the beginning of a period of play or to restart play after a stoppage) – long whistle [with hand signal 1]
  - (b) During play (for an infringement, a toss up, to restart play after a goal or, when needed, to indicate the ball is out of court) – medium whistle [with hand signal as appropriate]
  - (c) To instruct the timekeeper to hold time – medium whistle roll [with hand signal 2]
  - (d) To end a period of play – long whistle roll.
- (ii) Throughout a match both umpires indicate the team to take a centre pass [hand signal 3]:
  - (a) If the umpires disagree the umpire nearer the official bench checks the centre pass with the scorer (time may be held while a check is made) [Rule 6.1.1 (iv) (a)]
  - (b) If both umpires indicate the centre pass incorrectly, the scorer notifies them so a check can be made - notification must be made before the centre pass has been taken. Before the match the event organiser advises the means of notification [Rule 6.1.1 (iv) (b)] – it is recommended that an audible sound be used for this purpose with umpire alerts used to cover any possible malfunction of that audible sound
  - (c) If time is held immediately after a goal has been scored, the scorer will indicate the direction of the centre pass to restart play
  - (d) The umpires may request a 'centre pass check' from the scorer as required.
- (iii) When the ball goes out of court the umpire controlling the side/goal line indicates the direction of the team to take the throw in [hand signal 3 or 4].
- (iv) For any stoppage:
  - (a) Either umpire may hold time as appropriate. If a player is shooting for goal the shot may be completed before play is held, unless circumstances require time to be held urgently
  - (b) During a stoppage, both umpires remain on their respective side lines unless the situation requires a different course of action.
- (v) At the end of each period of play:
  - (a) The timekeeper advises both umpires simultaneously when the specified time is reached. The controlling umpire immediately ends play unless it is to be extended for a penalty pass to be taken [Rules 4.1 (iii) & 7.1.3 (iii)]. In this case the umpire will advise the players that play is being extended for the sanction to be taken. In the event the controlling umpire is unaware play should end, the co-umpire will signal the end of play [Rule 5.2.1 (ii) (a)]. (It is recommended that an electronic signal (siren) is used by the timekeeper, with umpire alerts or a hand-held air horn used to cover any possible malfunction of that siren)

- (b) The umpires meet and check the next centre pass with each other then check with the scorer.

#### **RULE 7. SANCTIONS**

- (i) When penalising an infringement the umpire:
  - (a) States the infringement and the sanction, together with the appropriate hand signal. In the case of a contact infringement, the umpire may add a brief verbal descriptor to indicate the nature of the contact eg 'contact – knees', 'contact – on ball', 'contact – holding'
  - (b) Indicates where the sanction is to be taken - while reasonable flexibility may be used through the court it is important the position is clearly indicated in the goal circle or when it involves different court areas.
- (ii) For Rule 7.1.3 (iv) 3 seconds is measured from the time BOTH players are in position.

#### **RULE 8. STARTING PLAY**

- (i) Warning whistles are given prior to the start of play:
  - (a) 30 seconds before play – medium whistle roll
  - (b) 10 seconds before play – long whistle roll.
- (ii) At the start of each period of play, the umpire crossing the court takes the ball to the centre of the court before moving to the side line.

#### **RULE 9. DURING PLAY**

- (i) Stoppages for Injury/illness or blood [Rule 9.3.1]:
  - (a) If an on court player requests time to be held the umpire asks 'why?' If the reason relates to injury/ illness or blood, time is held. The umpire points to the player for whom play has been stopped and calls the playing position. The bench-side umpire advises the timekeeper of the reason and the player involved
  - (b) Primary care person/s may come onto the court to assess the player's injury/illness and to assist the player from the court. The player leaves the court and play restarts within 30 seconds (the timekeeper warns the umpire when 10 seconds remain)
  - (c) If the injury/illness is such that the player cannot be moved safely from the court within 30 seconds the primary care person/s alert the nearer umpire and advise the action that is appropriate. The umpires also remain alert for the need to check if a delay appears likely. The umpire decides how long time is held but endeavours to restart play as soon as possible
  - (d) Either umpire holds time when blood is seen on a player, the ball or the court. If blood is on the player or the player's clothing, the player must leave the court within 30 seconds and may not return to the court until this has been cleaned or clothing replaced. For blood on either the ball or the court, time is held until this has been cleaned (alternatively the ball may be replaced)
  - (e) During a stoppage for injury/illness or blood, team officials and bench players may move onto the court surround so players may receive coaching and/or hydration
  - (f) When time is held for blood, injury or illness to a player, substitutes or team changes may be made at any time during the stoppage [Rule 9.3.1 (vii)]. Substitutes may not enter the court until time has been held. The player concerned must leave the court before play may recommence.
- (ii) Other stoppages [Rule 9.3.2]:
  - (a) For all other stoppages, the decision to hold time and the length of the stoppage is at the discretion of the umpires (either umpire may act as appropriate)

- (b) It is important that consistent standards are used when deciding whether to hold time or not. Loss of playing time is equally important at any time during a match, not just in the final minutes of a closely contested match
- (c) The co-umpire may hold time if an act of foul play is observed that is not seen by the controlling umpire [Rule 5.2.1 (vi)] – refer section 13 for more details.

### **RULE 13. GAME MANAGEMENT**

Players are expected to play the Game in such a way that they comply with the Rules and participate safely in a sporting and fair manner [refer Section 1 Introduction]. Umpires have a responsibility to ensure this is done. The foul play rule [Rule 13.2] outlines specific behaviours that will require the umpire to act.

- (i) Rule 13.1 provides a structured set of actions for umpires. These actions range from ‘caution’ (for less serious offences and usually as a first step) to ‘ordering off’ (for a serious offence). The controlling umpire:
  - (a) Will usually apply the actions listed in the order shown (but may decide to apply a more serious action if appropriate)
  - (b) Will hold time in order to speak to the player/s concerned
  - (c) Must clearly specify the concern and, if appropriate, any actions that will follow if the behaviour is not corrected
  - (d) May confer with the co-umpire before deciding the action to be taken.
- (ii) The umpire may, without holding time, informally advise player/s to adjust their play. This would usually apply to an isolated incident or to low-level incidents that do not require a caution. *Note: this is considered to be ‘effective game management’ not ‘coaching’.*
- (iii) If a player receives a caution, a warning, is suspended or ordered off, the umpire indicates this to the official bench and the co-umpire by using the appropriate hand signal. If necessary, the controlling umpire may hold time to inform the co-umpire of the reasons for this action.
- (iv) The co-umpire may hold time if an act of foul play is observed that is not seen by the controlling umpire. Such cases should be limited to ‘serious actions’ (ie those that require a warning, suspension or ordering off). The co-umpire provides details to the controlling umpire and recommends to the controlling umpire the action that should be taken.
- (v) The umpire may hold time and request the captain/s to speak to any players whose behaviour is causing concern [Rule 5.1.1 (v) (c)]. The umpire will restart play as quickly as possible.
- (vi) A suspended player is under the control of the reserve umpire during the suspension. When advised by the timekeeper that the time has elapsed, the reserve umpire will indicate to the player when to re-enter the court.
- (vii) In the event that team official/s or bench player/s do not respond to the actions outlined in Rule 13.3 (ii) (a) and (b), the umpire requests the event organiser to remove them from the playing enclosure for the remainder of the match (including any contact with the team during intervals).