



CINCINNATI
OPEN

2024

BALL CREW MANUAL



Warm-Ups and Beginning of a Match

Those working the net on each court are responsible for taking the kneepads to the court each day before matches begin and bring them back at the end of the day or in case of rain. The net ballperson should place kneepads on the court.

All ballpersons should be in position before players come onto the court for their warm-up.

When marching onto the court, all six ball crew members will walk in order and drop off into position as the marching line passes your spot.



During warm-ups, ballpersons should stand in position, **only** retrieving balls if they will not distract the players. Net ballpersons should stand at the net with their arms behind their backs on opposite sides of the net.

During the warm-up only, do not retrieve balls that go into the net. Wait until there is a break in the hitting or if it can be reached without getting in the player's way.

During warm-ups, when players go to serve, they will serve to opposite ends. Because of this, the baseliner on the side not being served at will shift into the middle of the court. The other baseliner stays where they are. This person is responsible for catching or collecting the serves, then lightly tossing the balls to the baseliner in the middle of the court. The one in the middle is responsible for getting the balls to the server. All must be paying attention to the serves coming at them.

Ball Changes

Ball changes (new balls) occur after the first 7 games of a match (since it includes the warm-up), and every 9 games thereafter. The chair umpire will remind the ball crew when a ball change will occur, but each ballperson should already be expecting this. When announced, the net persons are responsible for promptly collecting all used balls and taking them to the chair umpire. **Do not open new cans** of balls yourself. The chair umpire will do this for you.

Baseline Position



Stand in the corner, well outside of court sidelines. Stand as close to the back wall or fence as possible, but **do not** lean against it. Also, **do not stand in front of a sponsor logo** or advertisement. Stand straight and motionless with feet slightly apart **facing forward**. Do not lock your knees. Keep hands behind your body, holding balls not in use during the point.

If your hands are full, you can stop a ball with your foot, but **do not** step on it as this is not good for the balls.

Baseline Duties (Server's Side)

Retrieve balls landing in the baseline area. The net person will retrieve balls that land in the net and roll them in your direction following the end of the point. You will receive balls from net persons at the end of each point. You are to supply the server with balls, using a gentle overhand throw with **one bounce**. The goal is to reach the player between their waist and chest area. We recommend you practice this, as well as ball rolling, before you attend tryouts.



Each baseliner should be aware of how many balls the other has. You should have at least 2 but no more than 3 balls at a time. If one has too many balls, they should carefully roll a couple of balls to the other baseliner, but **do not roll near the player or when the player steps up to serve**. All movement **stops** when players are ready to play.



Watch the server carefully and give them a ball only when they indicate they want one. Take note of each player's signal for requesting a ball and whether they want only one ball, or more, before each serve. Do not rush the server.

If the server does not want a particular ball, they will send it back to you. When this happens, **simply throw them a different ball**. Most players do not want the ball they just used. As you catch or release a ball that has just been used, switch it with a fresh ball if you have one. Most players will inspect the balls and send back the one they do not want. Some players will only take the ball from one baseliner or one side.

Always take care of the player first. If a player wants a ball, tend to them before retrieving the balls on your end. At the conclusion of a point and before the next point begins, you should hold one ball in your throwing hand, ready to toss it to the server when they request it. If you do not have any balls, hold your arms up showing that they are empty.



All players are responsible for taking care of & securing their towels. **Ballpersons are not to touch any players towels.**

This picture shows how you should look when a player turns to you to get a ball, even if your hands are empty.

Baseline Duties (Receiver's Side)



Retrieve all balls landing in the baseline area. If the first serve is called long, retrieve the ball ASAP, returning to your original position and holding the ball until the end of the point. Upon completion of a point, you can help the net person on your side of the court by showing them either the ball in your hand or an empty hand when they look at you. If you have a ball, once the point is over, roll the ball parallel to the side of the court to the net person, who will receive the ball and roll it to the ballperson (baseline) at the server's end.

If the net person on your side is distracted, try to get the opposite net person's attention and roll the ball to them **only if the player is not close to where you are rolling!** **Rolling crosscourt should only be done as a last resort** and when a player is not nearby or in your path. You never know when a player will turn around or walk backwards, which is why **it is preferable to not roll crosscourt!** Do not even attempt this in doubles, since there are 2 players walking around on your side.

Most ballpersons will let the serve hit the wall and then retrieve it. Some of the older, experienced ballpersons will attempt to catch the ball after it passes the player, to avoid it flying back into the court. **Most ballpersons should not attempt this.**



Baseliners hold umbrellas for players providing them shade from the sun during changeovers. Stand behind the players, so the camera operators can still get their shot, but make sure to shade the player's head and body. Open umbrellas slowly, with care, paying close attention to those around you to avoid poking anyone.

Net Position

While kneeling, remain motionless, like running in the starting blocks, ready to take off instantly to retrieve balls that fall into the net. Although you need to be continually aware of the ball during each point, keep your head still and follow play by moving your eyes only. Kneel outside the court sidelines, beyond the net posts.

Only the net person on the side of the ball will run in between first and second serves, but if a ball is **clearly** closer to the net person on the other side of the net, he may retrieve it. After the point is over, make sure that one net person is on each side of the net, opposite each other. **Do not rock** while in kneeling position. Never lean on a ball you are temporarily holding. Never touch the net.



Run quickly and quietly across the court and pick up any ball landing in or around the net. After picking up the ball, keep running to the opposite side, unless the ball has landed **less** than 1/2 of the way across the court. In this case, return to your original position. Hold the ball until the conclusion of the point.

First service faults that hit the net and roll toward the baseline are the responsibility of the net person. If a ball is near the baseline by the time you get to it, you should retrieve it and run to a baseline position. At the end of the point, hand off the ball, if the server is on that side, to the baseliner you are standing next to and quickly return to your net position.

Be aware of the location of all balls always and the need to get them to the server's end as quickly as possible.



During changeovers, net persons must stand in the alley facing the players who are resting in case they need a drink. **DO NOT** block the cameras on the opposite side of the court. Stand on an angle or far enough away so the cameras have a clear view of the players. Turn off any fans in use at the end of a changeover.

General Rules During A Match

Never allow a loose ball to remain on the court in between serves or after the conclusion of a point. **The most frequent mistake occurs when a ball stops near the service line, and no one goes after it. It is better for two ball people to go after a ball than none.**

Except for retrieving first service faults, never touch a ball until the point is over.

Roll balls low and as close to the ground as possible, without any bounce, like bowling
– Practice makes perfect!

When players change sides, balls stay. When players stay, balls change sides.

This year there is a rule change allowing spectators who catch a ball that goes into the stands to keep the ball. All balls are given to the chair umpire at the conclusion of a match.

Do not move once the server steps up to the baseline and is ready to serve OR when the point is going on.

You only have time to get a drink for yourself and tend to the player at changeovers. The only exception to this is **if the chair umpire needs something** you should get it for him.

Do not ask players for anything. No pictures or autographs are allowed.

Never become involved in line disputes. Do not give your opinion about line calls.

Never applaud, use facial expressions, or react in any other way to match play.

Never bounce or juggle balls at any time before or during a match.

Never touch a ball in play until it has bounced **twice**.

Do not talk while waiting to go on the court. You may NOT chew gum on the court. Your hat must ALWAYS be worn facing forward. Do not roll the sleeves on your uniform or the tops of your shorts. You cannot wear any visible shirt underneath your uniform.

If you are feeling shaky, faint, or sick, tell the closest ballperson or on court Marshal and leave the court as soon as possible. We will get a replacement to the court. The other 5 ballpersons will be fine until the replacement arrives.

It is your responsibility to know your court assignment and be early for your rotation.

When the umpire calls time, you must return to your position immediately. This is especially crucial on a TV court when commercials must fit into the allotted time.

Tiebreaker Procedures

Men's and Women's doubles use **no-ad scoring** (except for tiebreakers, which are 7 points).

The regulation tiebreaker is called a 7-point tiebreaker (The first player to reach seven points by a margin of two points wins the tie breaker).

The net person plays a key role in maintaining the speedy interchanging of balls during a tiebreaker.

At the start of each tiebreak, there should be 4 balls on the server's end and two balls at the net, with each net person holding **one ball for the entire tiebreaker**, which they roll first before retrieving the other balls on switches. This system speeds up the relay of the balls to the baseline. The net man must not lean or put any weight on the ball he is holding.

At the beginning of the tiebreaker, the first server serves one point; next, their opponent serves two points; thereafter, each player serves alternately for two consecutive points. Player's switch ends every 6 points. Remember that in each series of six points the pattern of serving is 1-2-2-1. Then the players change sides, and the pattern is repeated.

During tiebreakers, unlike normal games when the server switches sides, the balls switch with the players.

You must understand the scoring and side changes in a tiebreaker to move the balls quickly to the right spot so that play is continuous.

Super tiebreakers are now used instead of a 3rd set in men's and women's doubles. The winner of a super tiebreaker is the first one to 10 points (must win by 2).

Other Reminders

Backpacks will be inspected upon entering the tournament each day. You must have a nametag, or some sort of ID attached. Keep your backpack in the Ball Crew Lounge where it is the safest. Never set it down if you are walking the grounds, as it will be confiscated by security.

Always stay in uniform when on the tournament grounds. When you are dismissed for the day, you must immediately call home for your ride.

You may not use the Volunteer Lounge or Ball Crew Lounge when you are not working and not in uniform. Do not bring friends or family into the ballperson lounge.

Never wear your ID credential without your uniform! You must arrive wearing your credentials and in full uniform to be admitted. Your ID credential is only good on days that you are working. You are not to use your ID when your volunteering time ends.

Cellphones must remain in the Ball Crew Lounge in your backpack and turned off. They will be confiscated by the Ballperson Monitors if taken outside the Ball Crew Lounge area.

All ball crew members will be provided two parking passes when they pick up their uniform packet. One for the Volunteer lot where you can park your car (Lot V) and a 2nd pass to be used if the parent wishes to drop their child off at the Drop-off Zone located near the Volunteer Entrance. Please keep both passes handy and display the appropriate one when coming to the site so the parking attendants know how to direct you by visually seeing which pass you display. The Ball Crew Drop-off Zone has a turnaround along the Volunteer Entrance fence. Please follow the direction of the arrows to allow proper traffic flow and make it easier for you to drop off and pull out to exit. The easiest way to access the Drop-off Zone is from exit 24 (Western Row) off I-71 which opens Friday, August 11th. Parents that wish to escort their child up to the site should park their car in the Volunteer Lot (Lot V) and walk their child to the Volunteer Entrance located on the southwest side of the tournament facility just prior to the South Entrance. Upon completion of their last assignment, ballpersons should contact their parents and arrange to be picked up at the same location.

All ball crew members should check-out with the Ballperson Lounge Monitors prior to leaving for the day.

All ballpersons are expected to work the first 5 days of the tournament (Sunday – Thursday, August 11-15). Do not schedule doctor appointments, driving classes or other conflicts during this time.

All ball crew members should start to hydrate (drink at least 8 glasses of water per day) 3 days prior to the start of the tournament. Water is the best source for hydration. Soda or sweetened drinks will hinder your ability to perform on court. Always eat before reporting to your shift. Those that do not follow these rules may end up in First Aid instead of on the court!

You are a highly visible representative of the tournament; inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. Running, rudeness, childish behavior, bad language, pictures with players, autographs or incomplete uniforms will not be tolerated.

Your goal is to be working until the last day of the tournament. Do everything you can to achieve that goal. Representing the tournament in a positive fashion and learning your skills will help you to achieve that goal sooner!



The Cincinnati Open staff **thanks you** for choosing to serve as a member of the Ball Crew! Your contributions are crucial to the success of this event.