RETURN TO OFFICIATING
Guidance for officials during socially-distanced volleyball matches

To enable volleyball to resume, adapted playing conditions have been introduced and this document provides guidance for referees and scorers who choose to make themselves available. This is not exhaustive and some of the advice may not apply to all volleyball settings (for example, items that are only for indoor, beach or outdoor 6v6, or in NVL or higher competitions). The advice and guidance should be applied in order of Government advice, venue requirements, Volleyball England’s action plans and this guidance.

It is for the referees to manage these adapted playing conditions and guidance on operating them and any sanctions that are included. The sport specific action plans for volleyball can be found here.

Please note: If as a referee/scorer at any match you are not happy that the venue/game setup or processes are in accordance with Government advice or the volleyball action plans, you are within your rights to withdraw from the match.

This guidance is split into five sections:

A. BEFORE THE GAME
B. THE GAME
C. AFTER THE GAME
D. ADDITIONAL ADVICE FOR REFEREES
E. VARIATIONS FOR BEACH/OUTDOOR VOLLEYBALL

A) BEFORE THE GAME – REFEREES AND SCORERS

1. If you are showing symptoms of COVID-19 do not travel to the game. Make sure you get a test too.
2. Officials are encouraged to follow best practice for travel. Government advice can be found here. You should arrive changed and ready to officiate. Do not assume that there will be suitable changing facilities available.
3. Please ensure that you bring your own hand sanitiser (in case there is none provided) and any food and drink that you may require as the home club will not provide any.
4. On arrival you should avoid spending unnecessary time in the venue.
5. Track and trace requirements will be met by the scoresheet – all individuals on the field of play must be recorded on the scoresheet – legibly! The venue may also need you to provide your name and contact details for NHS Track & Trace.
6. A maximum of 13 individuals (including bench personnel) is allowed per team.
7. A maximum of 30 individuals are allowed in the field of play.
8. The host club are responsible for the implementation of all facility guidelines as well as the provision of hand sanitisation gel for the players.
9. The host club / venue management are responsible for setting up the posts, net and court equipment which should also have been sanitised.
10. All officials are encouraged to wash their hands/hand sanitise before play starts.
11. The referees are responsible for checking the court meets the adapted playing conditions and that the balls meet the NVL guidelines.
12. The referees should ensure they have their required equipment with them. Borrowing a whistle is not permitted. There should be no blown whistle – so the referees will need to ensure they have a squeezy / electronic whistle.
13. The referee should have received a copy of the risk assessment from the home team and should follow any mitigations that are stated.
14. Referees and scorers should follow Government advice on the wearing of face coverings in enclosed areas. This advice can be found here.

B) THE GAME – NTOs
1. There will be no line judges.
2. The scorer should provide their own pen.
3. The host club should provide a scoresheet (that has not been handled for 72 hours).
4. The scorer’s table should be placed as far back from the court as possible and there must be at least a two-metre gap between that table and any bench / coach chairs.
5. Scorers should remain socially distant from others at all times and specifically:
   a. There should be only one scorer at the table – if there is another scorer present to operate the scoreboard it must be on a separate table maintaining social distancing (unless from the same household).
   b. When interacting with any players.
   c. When interacting with other officials.
   d. During any set intervals or during time outs.
6. The scoresheet must not be shared or passed from one person to another. The referees for example should not pick it up to check the roster before the game.
7. The coach should bring their own line-up sheets (if used). As long as the coach has sanitised their hands prior to completion and the line-up sheets have not been touched by others they can be given to the scorer or 2nd referee.
8. Scorers will not hold any item of players clothing or any valuables.
9. Scorers should either regularly wash their hands or use hand sanitiser.
10. The scoresheet should be signed by the scorer, but there is no requirement for other signatures to be added.

B) THE GAME – REFEREES

1. Referees should maintain social distancing from others at all times and specifically:
   a. From each other
   b. Checking the scoresheet roster before the game
   c. At the toss
   d. When interacting with any players
   e. When interacting with other team officials
   f. During the warm-up, at any set interval or time out break in play
   g. From the scorer at any interaction
   h. After the match when checking the scoresheet.
2. Referees should ensure that all players maintain social distancing except in game play.
   a. In particular, replacement players not in court – the bench / warm-up area will extend from the coach to the end of the playing area (outside the free zone). Referees must allow this.
   b. At time outs and during set intervals when discussing tactics – e.g. if this means that players have to use the court as well then this must be allowed.
   c. During substitutions.
   d. During libero replacements.
   e. The time between serves should be kept as short as necessary for both teams to be ready and the server to have the ball.
3. Referees will not touch the ball after it has been checked for pressure – it will remain the responsibility of the players (it will be sanitised after being checked).
4. Referees will not use a blown whistle at any times; whistles must be hand-held squeezy or electronic. Referees should provide their own whistles of this type.
5. There is no pre-match or post-match protocol.
6. The ball should be returned direct to the server and no spectators or bench personnel should touch it (use of feet is permitted).
7. Players will be required to sanitise their hands at a specific break in play at the first team to 15 points. Referees must make sure this happens. This break in play should last no longer than 60 seconds. They should also do so at each set interval.
8. At each time-out and set interval it will be the responsibility of the host team to sanitise the ball before play recommences.
9. The referees should sanitise their own hands at each set interval, using their own sanitiser.
10. Captains should maintain social distancing when requesting any information from the referees.
11. At a substitution – no paddles will be used. The 2nd referee should remain near the post and the players should maintain distancing in the substitution zone – this may mean the zone is extended for the player leaving the court, with the substitute still requesting the change by entering the substitution zone.
12. During gameplay the players and referees may come into contact/touch the game equipment. It will have been sanitised prior to play. It must be wiped down after the game has ended.
13. Referees must allow time for injuries to be dealt with.

C) AFTER THE GAME

1. The scorer will complete the scoresheet and sign it.
2. The captains will verbally agree that the scoresheet shows the correct score without touching it.
3. The referees will check the scoresheet without touching it and direct any changes to be made by the scorer.
4. The captains and referees will not be required to sign the scoresheet – the 1st referee may take a photo of the scoresheet.
5. The scorer should place a copy of the scoresheet in possession of both teams e.g. in a bag/envelope – the team should not handle it for 72 hours.
6. The referees should not accept cash payment for the match (where possible any payment should be made by transfer).

D) ADDITIONAL ADVICE FOR REFEREES

Volleyball England, through the Competitions Working Group and Officials Working Group, may alter any rules or playing conditions to enable competitive volleyball to take place during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Competitions Group has issued amendments to the playing conditions that must be adhered to. There are some changes depending on the variant of the game that is taking being played.

To effectively manage volleyball through this phase, referees will be empowered to ensure measures are adhered to through appropriate interventions. In essence, this means that instances of breaching of the measures will be dealt with as part of Rule 21 – Player Misconduct.

Prior to play – Referees will have read the VE guidance and conduct normal pre-match protocols and check the playing area.

At the toss – Captains will be advised of their responsibilities for directing their team and agree the following:

1. Players to maintain social distance except during game play
2. Specific zones and areas should be agreed – captains to understand where replacement players may stand, substitution process and libero replacement
3. Ball to be returned directly to the server
4. Players must not huddle to celebrate points or shout encouragement towards another player
5. Players to ensure that any drinks or other kit is kept in their own bags in the designated area
6. Hygiene breaks will take place at first team to 15 points.

Captains should be made aware that any breach of the above could result in a first and final warning and any subsequent transgression will result in the disciplinary sanction scale being applied.

During play
Any breach of 1-6 above, after warning may result in the sanctioning scale being applied. Additionally, in the referee's judgement:

1. A player intentionally moving within one metre of anyone else for non-volleyball playing purposes will be treated as 'rude conduct'.
2. A player spitting, coughing, or shouting at, and within two metres of, another person will be treated as disqualification.

E) VARIATIONS FOR BEACH VOLLEYBALL

In the main there are no major differences to be applied for beach volleyball. The general principles of social distancing, sanitising of hands and equipment, and conduct apply with the same sanctions to be applied by the referee.

1. The scorer should not use a paddle to signal who is to serve.
2. The referee should continue to use the ball mark protocol but be mindful of players being close whilst doing so.
3. If the scorer is only using a 'peg-board' type scoreboard then this will need to be wiped down after the match.

E) VARIATIONS FOR OUTDOOR 6V6

No further considerations in addition to all those noted above.