

Chairman's Rules

St. Neots & District Petanque League

Issue #10 – 4th March 2026

“The St Neots & District Petanque League (SN&DPL) is a platform that enables teams and individual players to compete against each other under a set of agreed rules. All teams and players take part at their own risk; all players must, under these rules, agree to waive any liability that the S&NDPL may have regarding damage to property and/or injury sustained whilst participating in the organised events. It is the responsibility of Team Captains to ensure that all team members are aware of both this waiver and the competition rules as laid down below.”

These are an abridged and modified set of the official national rules. They are defined and approved by the Chairman of the St. Neots & District Petanque League to fit with the style of game played in this friendly pub league.

Text highlighted in yellow identifies changes in this version.

Participants in the St. Neots & District Petanque League (sometimes known as the Wednesday league to differentiate from the local league playing on Tuesdays) agree to play by these rules.

These rules may vary from those of other leagues.

These rules are normally varied through a vote at the AGM in which the Chairman has a casting vote. However, should it be deemed to be absolutely necessary then the Chairman, current or future, may vary these rules at any time during the season.

The rules occasionally reference the term ‘umpire’. The league doesn’t use qualified umpires for its matches. At the 2023 AGM it was agreed that ‘Markers’ could be used for the singles games. Addendum 1 details the role of the Marker during the game.

Composition of teams

Pétanque is a sport in which:

- 3 players play against 3 players (triples) - each player uses 2 boules
- 2 players against 2 players (doubles) - each player uses 3 boules
- 1 player against 1 player (singles) - each player uses 3 boules

A team has six or more players although a team with fewer players may still compete. All players must be 12 or over.

Format of League Matches

A league match comprises of 4 games of singles, 3 games of doubles and 2 games of triples. The standard format is to play the games in the order Singles then Doubles then Triples. However, should both captains agree on the night, then the order of play may be changed to a different format provided that the correct number of games are played.

Characteristics of approved boules

- 1) To be made of metal
- 2) To have a diameter between 7.05cm and 8cm
- 3) To have a weight of between 650 grams and 800 grams

Approved jacks (coche)

Jacks are made of wood or of a synthetic material with a diameter of 30mm. Painted jacks are authorised. At no time must the jack be capable of being picked up with a magnet.

Terrain rules

Competitions are played on a marked terrain sometimes known as a piste. Due to the varying site locations, dimensions may vary. The terrain can have any surface although it is often covered in gravel. These gravel surfaces vary in depth. Smoking on the piste is NOT allowed

Games are played to 13 points.

Start of play – Rules regarding the circle

The players must toss up to decide which team will choose the terrain and be the first to throw the jack. If the terrain has been designated by the organisers, the jack must be thrown on that terrain.

Any member of the team winning the toss chooses the starting point at one end of the playing area and draws or places a circle on the ground such that the feet of each player can fit entirely inside it. Where a prefabricated circle is used, it must be of an approved size (50cm internal diameter). If the fabricated ring is moved during play then it must be returned to its original position. The position of the fabricated circle may be marked to aid this.

The interior of the circle can be completely cleared of grit/pebbles etc. during the end but must be put back in good order when the end is over. The players feet must be entirely on the inside of the circle, not encroach on its perimeter and they must not leave it or be lifted completely off the ground until the thrown boule has touched the ground. No part of the body may touch the ground outside the circle.

As an exception, those who are disabled in a lower limb are authorised to place only one foot inside the circle. For players throwing from a wheelchair, at least one wheel (that on the side of the throwing arm) must rest inside the circle.

The throwing of the jack by one member of the team does not imply that he or she is obliged to be the

first to play.

Valid distances for the thrown jack

For the thrown jack to be valid, the following conditions apply:

- 1) That the throwing circle must be a minimum of 1/2 metre from any obstacle
- 2) That the distance separating the jack from the circle must be between 6 metres minimum and 10 metres maximum
- 3) That the jack must be within the playing area and at least half a metre from the end boundary
- 4) There is no minimum distance between the side boundary and the jack. However, providing that players on both sides agree, the jack may be moved up to 30 cm (12 inches) from the side boundary.
- 5) That the jack must be visible to a player in the circle when standing fully upright. In case of dispute on this point, the Umpire decides, without appeal, if the jack is visible.
- 6) When jacks thrown on adjacent lanes land close to each other making play difficult, the second jack thrown should be moved to outside a 1.5 metre radius of the other jack or thrown again.

If after three consecutive throws by the same team, the jack has not been thrown in accordance with the rules defined above, it is passed to the opposing team who can then place it anywhere within the valid playing area. **RULE CHANGE – Following a foul throw of a jack, it will no longer result in a re-throw up to three times, it will now be in line with the Petanque England rules and the jack should instead be passed to the opposing team to place.**

If the thrown jack is stopped by the Umpire, a player, a spectator, an animal or any moving object, it is not valid and must be thrown again without being included in the three throws to which the team or the player is entitled.

In any case, the team which lost the jack after the first three tries maintains the right to play the first boule.

Dead Jack during an end

The jack is dead when:

- 1) The jack touches an out-of-bounds area (eg wooden/concrete perimeter barriers), even if it comes back on to the authorised playing area. Strings separating the lanes on the piste are NOT deemed to be out-of-bounds so if the jack touches one of these and rebounds into the playing area then it is deemed to still be in play.
- 2) The jack goes over a string into an adjacent lane (even if it is in contact with the string when on the adjacent lane).

Rules to apply if the jack is dead

If, during an end, the jack is dead, one of three cases can apply:

- 1) Both teams have boules to play, the end is void.
- 2) The two teams have no more boules in hand, the end is void.
- 3) Only one team has boules left to play, this team scores as many points as boules that remain to be played.

Jack masked or displaced during an end

The position of the jack may be marked anytime during play if both teams deem it to be necessary. If its position is not marked and the jack is displaced during play then it remains in its new position - except if the jack is accidentally displaced by the Umpire, a player, a spectator, a boule or jack coming from another game, an animal or any moving object, it is put back in its original place.

If a leaf or a piece of paper accidentally masks the jack these objects are removed.

If the jack is completely covered by gravel, the Umpire may part the gravel, without disturbing the jack or other boules, in order to reveal the exact location of the jack. The Umpire may also temporarily remove one boule in order to locate the covered jack as long as it does not disturb the jack or adjacent boules. The removed boule must be replaced in exactly the same position from where it was removed.

Boules – Throwing of the first and following boules

The first boule of an end is thrown by a player belonging to the team that has won the toss or has been the last to score. After that, it is the team that does not hold the point that plays.

Boules can be thrown in any style – e.g. underhand or overhand.

The player must not use any object or draw a line on the ground to guide him/her in playing a boule or mark its landing point. Whilst playing his or her last boule, it is forbidden to carry a boule in the other hand.

The boules must be played one at a time.

Any boule thrown cannot be replayed unless they have been stopped or deviated accidentally from their course between the throwing circle and the jack by a boule or jack coming from another game.

If the first boule played goes out-of-bounds, it is for the opponent to play first then alternately so long as there are no boules on the designated terrain.

The player about to throw may fill any one hole made by previous boules.

Dead boules

The boule is dead when:

- The boule touches an out-of-bounds area (eg wooden/concrete perimeter barriers), even if it

comes back on to the authorised playing area. Strings separating the lanes on the piste are NOT deemed to be out-of-bounds so if the boule touches one of these and rebounds into the playing area then it is deemed to be still in play.

- The boule goes over a string into an adjacent lane (even if it is in contact with the string when on the adjacent lane). If the boule then comes back into the playing area, either because of the slope of the ground or by having rebounded from an obstacle, moving or stationary, it is immediately taken out of the game and anything that it has displaced after its passage into an out-of-bounds area is put back in place.
- Any dead boule must immediately be removed from the game.

Lane String Displaced by Jack or Boule

If a jack or boule moves the string and remains in play then the string cannot be replaced to its original position until the end is finished, at which point the string should be returned to its original position. If the jack or boule goes out of play then the string should be returned to its original position immediately.

Measuring of Points

The measuring of a point is the duty of the player who last played or by one of his or her team-mates. The opponents still have the right to measure after one of these players. Any foreign bodies adhering to the boules or the jack should be removed before measuring a point. Whatever positions the boules to be measured may hold, and at whatever stage the end may be, the Umpire can be consulted and his or her decision is final.

Removed Boules

It is forbidden for players to pick up played boules before the completion of an end. At the completion of an end, only the conceding team or Umpire can remove scoring boules and only once agreement has been reached. All boules picked up before the agreement of points are dead.

Displacement of the Boules or the Jack

The team, whose player displaces the jack or one of the contested boules, while effecting a measurement, loses the point. If, during the measurement of a point, the Umpire disturbs or displaces the jack or a boule he will make a decision in an equitable way

Boules Equidistant from the Jack

When the two closest boules to the jack belong to opposing teams and are at an equal distance from it, 3 cases can apply:

- 1) If the two teams have no more boules to play the end is dead and the jack belongs to the team which threw the jack at the preceding end.
- 2) If only one team has boules at its disposition, it plays them and scores as many points as it has boules closer to the jack than the nearest opponent's boule.

- 3) If both teams have boules at their disposition, it is for the team which played the last boule to play again, then the opposing team, and so on alternately until the point belongs to one of them.

When only one team possesses boules, the arrangements set out in the preceding paragraph apply. If, after completion of the end, no boules remain within the boundary of the authorised playing area, the end is null and void.

Absent, late arrival and replacement of players

If a team does not arrive for a competition due to unforeseen circumstances, all attempts should be made to reschedule the competition to another date. Also see rule: *Unplayed Team Competitions*

Competitions should commence at the time published on the fixture list.

An incomplete team has the right to start a game without waiting for its absent player; nevertheless, it does not use the boules of that player.

If, after an end has started, the missing player arrives, he or she does not take part in this end. He or she is accepted into the game only as from the following end.

Games are typically played in the following order: Singles, Doubles, Triples but games may be played in any order to accommodate late arriving players as long as the flow of games remains continuous throughout the competition and with no unreasonable waiting between games.

Slow play should be addressed through discussions between players and team captains.

Bad Weather

In the case of bad weather such as heavy rain, any end started should be completed. Play may then be suspended until such time as it can be resumed.

Should the bad weather be sufficient to cancel all remaining games during that competition, the teams can either:

- Agree to play the remaining games on an alternate date
- Agree to submit only those points scored in the competition up to the last complete game played

Unplayed Team Competitions – League and Knockout

As season fixtures are tightly planned, it is highly possible that a postponed match cannot be replayed on a normal match night. This could make it very difficult for captains to reschedule matches for dates and times that suit players of both teams. Therefore, Captains should think very carefully before requesting that a team competition be postponed.

1. Should a team competition become unplayed because ONE team does not want/ cannot play the scheduled fixture, then that team forfeits the match with full match and game points being allocated to the opposing team. In the case of knockout tournaments, the opposing team will automatically go through to the next round.
2. Should a competition become unplayed because BOTH teams mutually agree not to play the scheduled fixture, perhaps because of severe weather, then the Chairman will issue a date by which the postponed competition must be played. As soon as possible, each Captain should offer at least TWO alternative match dates for the opposing side to consider. Both captains should then make every effort to rearrange the competition at the specified venue and by the deadline provided.
3. If a postponed competition cannot be replayed by the deadline provided by the Chairman, for example due to unavailability of players on the offered dates, then one of the following solutions will apply:
 - a. where ONE team has been unable to offer two alternative dates within the deadline and with a reasonable lead time for the opposing side to organise players they will forfeit the competition. Maximum match and game points will be awarded to the opposing team and will automatically go through to the next round in tournaments.
 - b. if BOTH teams cannot find suitable alternative dates within the deadline and with a reasonable lead time for the opposing side to organise players then:
 - i. League competitions - both teams are awarded zero points.
 - ii. Knockout competitions - the Committee will toss a coin to determine which team goes through to the next round. Captains of the teams involved will be invited to witness.

Individual Knockout Competitions

1. if a single player, doubles or triples team have progressed through to a Knockout final but then find that one or more are unable to play in the final, they:
 - a. cannot substitute players – see rule d change
 - b. forfeit their place in the competition, OR
 - c. in Doubles and Triples competitions may compete without the absent team player with the total number of boules thrown reduced accordingly. E.g. one player competing in a Doubles competition will still only throw 3 boules in each end competing against two opposing players throwing three boules each, six in total.
 - d. in genuine unavoidable cases, a team member who did not play in any of the qualifying rounds, can play in the final as a substitute.

Past Players Memorial Trophy Knockout Competition

Played as 6 singles games and 3 doubles games. Ideally 6 players are needed to play this team knockout.

If you only have 5 players your team can still play by playing 5 singles and conceding a singles game and then playing 2 doubles games with either conceding the 3rd doubles game or the 5th player playing with only 3 boules against 2 players of the other team.

No player can play twice in either the singles or doubles. All other league rules apply.

Mixed Melee Competitions

Doubles and Triples mixed team melee knockout competition for players of any Summer League team can partner up to form a mixed doubles or triples team who will then be allocated a venue to compete at. A random draw will take place for each venue to determine who plays who.

ADDENDUM 1 – The Use Of Markers

The League doesn't use qualified Umpires for its matches (even though the rules, an abridged version of the national rules, refers to them on a couple of occasions). The use of a team member as a Referee in the past has led to conflict of interest, disagreement over decisions and undue pressure being placed on those volunteering to Referee. The League therefore, has agreed at the 2023 AGM that a 'Marker' should be used for the singles games to speed up play. Markers are not required for pairs and triples games.

The role of the 'Marker' (who can be an individual from either team) is:

- a) To toss the coin to see who starts first.
- b) To ensure that the Jack is set within the correct confines of the piste.
- c) To give guidance as to who has the nearest boule to the Jack.
- d) To fill holes made by the boules as requested by the players.
- e) To update the scoreboard.

However, the 'Marker' is not required to measure unless specifically asked to do so by the players. The final decision regarding the holding of a shot lies with the players (or by the Team Captains should arbitration be required) and the 'Marker' should not remove any boules prior to both players reaching that decision.

A 'Marker' should always remain impartial during the game and is not allowed to give advice on what shot should or shouldn't be played.