



## SUMMARY OF 2025-26 ITA RULE ADDITIONS, CHANGES & CLARIFICATIONS

*Adopted by the ITA Rules Committee – June 2, 2025*

*(Version 1 - July 2, 2025)*

### RULE ADDITIONS, CHANGES & CLARIFICATIONS

- **PERMITTING A MODIFIED ORDER OF SINGLES PLAY WHEN PLAYING A DUAL MATCH ON LESS THAN SIX COURTS (#1 SINGLES MUST PLAY FIRST)**
  - **New:** Only when playing a dual match on less than six courts, both coaches can agree - prior to the start of the dual match - to have #1 Singles play first, followed by a modified order of #2 through #6 Singles as determined by the coaches. When this modified order is elected by both coaches, singles substitutions are restricted to solely within two minutes after the doubles point is completed.
  - **Rationale:** To address feedback received by the NCAA and the ITA from ITA member institutions that routinely play dual matches on fewer than six courts. With the increased use of the "clinch-clinch" format in dual matches, the players at the bottom of the singles line-ups at these institutions were completing fewer and fewer matches. This rule change allows the coaches, prior to the start of the dual match, to agree to any order for singles to be played provided #1 Singles plays first. If the coaches cannot agree prior to the dual match, the default rule remains that the Singles will be played in order (#1 through #6 Singles).
- **PROCESS FOR HOME COACH TO SELECT THE TENNIS BALL TO BE USED FOR NONCONFERENCE HOME MATCHES AND NONCONFERENCE NON-ITA-SANCTIONED TOURNAMENTS**
  - **New:** The Dunlop Grand Prix Extra Duty ball is the Official Tennis Ball of the ITA (for all ITA divisions and genders). The modified rule allows the home coach to notify the visiting coach/team, prior to 14 days before the nonconference dual match or nonconference, non-ITA tournament, of the decision to use any other USTA-ITF approved ball. If there is no notification to the visiting team in writing within the stated time frame, the Official Tennis Ball of the ITA shall be used.
  - **Rationale:** The amended rule reflects the Men's Division I Operating Committee's decision to adopt, along with the rest of the ITA divisions and genders, the Dunlop Grand Prix Extra Duty ball for nonconference play. The rule contains language related to the Official High Altitude Tennis Ball for nonconference ITA matches and nonconference ITA tournaments. The rule further includes language that allows any institution the right to use a different USTA-ITF approved tennis ball for any nonconference match or nonconference, non-ITA tournament provided adequate notice is provided, in writing, to the visiting team. Allowing the home team to select the game ball is consistent with other NCAA sports that have different ball manufacturers. For nonconference neutral site competitions, both coaches need to agree in writing to use a different USTA-ITF approved ball. The Dunlop Grand Prix Extra Duty ball will continue to be required at all ITA National, Regional, and ITA-sanctioned tournaments in the Fall and the ITA Kickoff Weekend and all ITA Team Indoor Championships in the Spring.

**Note:** This document is a summary document. Interested parties should consult the 2025-26 ITA Rulebook for official rule language.  
The 2025-26 ITA Rulebook is scheduled to be published electronically and in hard copy in August 2025.

**ITA Rules Committee Members:** Ryan Sachire (DI), Susanne Depka (DI), Jacqueline Blackett (DI), Michael Woodson (DI), Chris Bizot (DII), Trish Riddell (DII), Paul Settles (DIII), Andrew Cohn (DIII), Drew Dickens (NAIA), Micah Avance (JUCO)



- **STRONGER LANGUAGE REQUIRING THE BENCH PLAYER "ALLOWABLE AREA" TO BE ON COURT WHENEVER POSSIBLE**

- o **New:** The “allowable area” language for non-playing bench players and team personnel has been edited to require more strongly, whenever possible, that the bench player “allowable area” be on “on-court.” Further, the dual match Referee is required, during the prematch meeting with the coaches, to discuss the “allowable area” for bench players and ensure both coaches are aware of where the “allowable area” is located for that dual match.
  - The “allowable area” must be located on court if at all possible. The rules applicable when the “allowable area” is located on court have not been changed.
  - The Referee has the right, after issuing a bench player harassment warning, to move the “allowable area” for one or both teams to any area further away from the courts in play.
  - In the rare cases where the “allowable area” is in the spectator seating area, the “allowable area” **must not** be generally interspersed amongst spectator seating. The “allowable area” (for both teams) **must** be clearly designated with appropriate signage or other markings and specific seating **must** be reserved solely for the bench players from each team.
  - The “allowable area” **must not** be a high traffic area that is open to general spectators
- o **Rationale:** The ITA Rules Committee recognizes the challenges associated with defining the “allowable area” for bench players and team personnel given the variety of court configurations and facilities in the college tennis landscape. However, the Committee received significant, positive feedback from the on court “allowable area” rule change from last year. This year's rule modification establishes that an “on-court” allowable area must be the default consideration. This rule change is part of the Committee’s multi-year effort to:
  - Improve the spectator experience by further separating bench players and spectator areas.
  - Hold bench players accountable for their behavior by assigning them to areas where they can be fully observed by officials and coaches.

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- **DIVISION III DUAL MATCH SCORING FORMAT CHANGE**

- **New:** Following a successful one-year pilot, the ITA and the NCAA are changing the dual match scoring format for Division III tennis. The following format shall be used for all ITA Division III dual matches and for all future NCAA Division III Tennis Team Championships:
  - **Dual Match Team Score:** Seven team points. The team that wins two of the three doubles matches receives one dual match point. Each singles match is worth one point. Four or more points are required to win the dual match.
  - **Order of Play:** Three doubles followed by six singles. The format is three 6-game set doubles matches with a 7-point tiebreak at 6-all. Doubles will be followed by six best-of-three set singles matches.
  - **Play-Play Format** (unless conference rules dictate otherwise)
    - *Doubles* - For Division III, all doubles matches shall be played to completion unless both coaches agree otherwise prior to the start of the dual match.
    - *Singles* - For Division III, all singles matches shall be played to completion unless both coaches agree otherwise prior to the start of the dual match.

**Note:** The “play-play” format will be the default format. Conferences and team tournaments (ITA Team Indoor Championships, NCAA Championships, etc.) might set their own policies related to play-play, clinch-play, or clinch-clinch formats. Reasons both coaches might opt-in to the clinch-play or clinch-clinch format include situations involving the need to further preserve time (e.g., double-headers, playing on less than 6 courts, long-distance travel, etc.) and/or to preserve player energy (e.g., team championships playing on consecutive days).

- **Rationale:** After a multi-year review of the Division III dual match scoring format, this rule changing the Division III dual match scoring format was adopted to decrease match duration and improve the overall student-athlete experience.

- **REPLACING VIDEO REVIEW RULES WITH RULES ALLOWING FOR ELECTRONIC LINE ("ELC") SYSTEMS**

- **New:** All of the prior rule language related to video review rules is removed from the ITA Rulebook. Replacing this language are new rules allowing for the approval of electronic line calling ("ELC") systems for ITA dual matches, ITA tournaments, and ITA-sanctioned tournaments. In order for an ELC system to be used in any ITA dual match, ITA tournament, or ITA-sanctioned tournament, the ELC system must have obtained the appropriate International Tennis Federation ("ITF") certification and ITA approval. The ITA will maintain and publish the “ITA's Approved ELC System List” as well as the “ITA ELC Protocol.” The ITA ELC Protocol will contain all the rules, policies, and procedures for using an approved ELC system in an ITA dual match, ITA tournament, or ITA-sanctioned tournament.

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- o **Rationale:** The video review rules were no longer being used by any ITA member institution. The new ELC rules allow for ITA member institutions to take full advantage of the emerging technology in ELC systems. The use of any approved ELC system in any ITA dual match, ITA tournament, or ITA-sanctioned tournament is subject to the ITA ELC Protocol. The ITA fully expects that there will be ELC systems available in the future for ITA matches, ITA tournaments, and ITA-sanctioned tournaments. This rule change allows ITA member institutions to utilize any ELC system as it is approved by the ITA. Putting the rules, policies, and procedures governing the use of any ELC system in the ITA ELC Protocol gives the ITA Rules Committee the flexibility to adapt quickly and pivot as necessary to maximize the benefits of ELC technology to ITA member institutions while also ensuring ELC systems are being used fairly and uniformly in ITA dual matches, ITA tournaments, and ITA-sanctioned tournaments.

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