AMERICAN COLLEGIATE PADEL LEAGUE

OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

INAUGURAL SEASON 2026–27

On campus. On court.

/ CONTENTS /

TABLE OF CONTENTS

/ 01 / THE LEAGUE

Introduction 04

Definitions 04

/ 02 / COMPETITION RULES

Teams & Rosters 06

The Team Match 06

Scoring 08

Court Scheduling — the "Line 1 Solo" Rule 09

Officiating 09

/ 03 / THE SEASON

Divisions 11

Season Structure 11

Season Calendar (2026–27) 16

/ CLOSING /

General Provisions 17

/ 01 /

THE LEAGUE

Who we are, what this Rulebook governs, and the terms used throughout.

/ 01 / THE LEAGUE

INTRODUCTION

The American Collegiate Padel League (ACPL) is the first national collegiate padel league in the United States. ACPL connects college students across the country to a growing network of partner clubs, where teams train, compete, and represent their schools.

ACPL is operated by the American Collegiate Padel Association (ACPA), a nonprofit. We exist to grow the sport — not for profit — which keeps our focus on getting students onto the court.

This Rulebook is the canonical statement of ACPL competition: it defines the format, scoring, structure, and calendar for the inaugural 2026–27 season.

Most ACPL players are new to the sport and don't yet hold a World Padel Rating — every match they play builds one. WPR is where our players are headed; ACPL is the on-ramp.

DEFINITIONS

LINE	A single doubles match between one pair from each school. Pairs play at Lines 1–3, ranked by skill.
TEAM MATCH	A head-to-head between two schools, contested as three Lines (one per pair); a school wins by taking 2 of 3 Lines.
CHALLENGER	A fall competitive event (September–October). In the Atlantic division, Challengers are qualifying events for the Regional Championship.
COURTSIDE	A casual ACPL pop-up event, on or off season. Courtside events are not formal competition and do not count toward standings.

/ 02 /

COMPETITION RULES

Teams and rosters, the Team Match, scoring, court scheduling, and officiating. §1 – §5.

§ 1 TEAMS & ROSTERS

§ 1.1 Each school fields 6 active players, plus up to 2 substitutes. Substitutes must be pre-registered on the team roster before the event — no day-of additions — and meet the eligibility and membership requirements set out in the ACPL Terms of Play.

§ 1.2 A team competes as 3 doubles pairs, ranked by skill — Pair #1 is the school's strongest pair, down to Pair #3.

§ 1.3 **BLIND LINEUP.** Before each Team Match, both schools submit their lineups (Lines 1–3) to the event director simultaneously. Neither school sees the opposing lineup until both are submitted; lineups are locked once revealed. With no opposing lineup to target, ordering pairs honestly is the only strategy.

§ 1.4 **SUBSTITUTIONS.** A substitute is a pre-registered § 1.1 player who takes an active player's place in the lineup. Substitutes may be entered between tournament stages (Challengers, Regionals, National Finals). Within an event, a substitution is permitted only for injury or emergency, must be verified by the league office, and applies to the team's following Team Matches — never the match in progress. If a player is injured mid-match, that Line is forfeited and recorded 6-0, 6-0 (§ 2.3); no replacement enters a match already underway.

§ 2 THE TEAM MATCH

§ 2.1 A Team Match is three Lines, one per pair. A school wins by winning 2 of the 3 Lines.

§ 2.2 All 3 Lines are always played to completion — every result counts toward National Finals standings and official league records.

§ 2.3 **FORFEITS.** If a pair cannot complete its Line (injury or no-show), that Line is awarded to the opposing pair and recorded as 6-0, 6-0. A school unable to field a full pair forfeits from the bottom of the lineup upward (Line 3 first). A school fielding fewer than two pairs forfeits the Team Match. A school that fails to appear forfeits all three Lines (recorded 3-0).

§ 3 SCORING

§ 3.1 Except as modified in this Rulebook, all matches follow the official FIP Rules of Padel.

§ 3.2 A set is played to 6 games, with a 7-point tiebreak at 6-6.

§ 3.3 All rounds except the Grand Final: best of 3 sets; the 3rd set is a 10-point super tie-break.

§ 3.4 **GRAND FINAL.** Best of 3 full sets.

★ STAR POINT — ALL STAGES

Standard advantage scoring applies for the first two deuces of a game; on a third deuce, the next point is a sudden-death Golden Point, with the receiving pair choosing the side of return.

§ 4 COURT SCHEDULING — THE "LINE 1 SOLO" RULE

§ 4.1 At the Regional Final and the National Grand Final: Line 1 plays solo first on center court so the marquee matchup takes the spotlight; Lines 2 and 3 then play concurrently.

§ 4.2 At the Regional round-robin, the National Saturday round-robin, Challengers, and Courtside events: all three Lines play concurrently.

§ 5 OFFICIATING

§ 5.1 Challengers and Courtside events are self-officiated, in the spirit of padel's fair-play tradition.

§ 5.2 Regional Championships and the National Finals are officiated by league-appointed referees.

/ 03 /

THE SEASON

Divisions, the pathway from fall Challengers to the National Finals, and the 2026–27 calendar. §6 – §8.

§ 6 DIVISIONS

As of July 16, 2026.

DIVISION	REGION	SCHOOLS
Atlantic	East Coast	13
Sunshine	Florida	4
Lone Star	Texas	4
Pacific	West Coast	4

ONE OPEN DIVISION

ACPL Season 1 competes as a single open division. As women's participation grows, ACPL will introduce a dedicated women's division — a full women's championship pathway alongside the open game.

§ 7 SEASON STRUCTURE



PHASE 1 — FALL · SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER

§ 7.1 **CHALLENGERS.** The fall competitive phase. Every school plays a minimum of 2 Challenger matches before Regionals. Challengers keep every program active

and build rivalries ahead of Regionals; what a Challenger counts for depends on the division (§ 7.2, § 7.3).

§ 7.2 **ATLANTIC — CHALLENGERS ARE QUALIFYING.** The Atlantic division competes across four regional hubs — Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, and DMV (Washington DC–Maryland–Virginia). The 13 schools are allocated across the four hubs, published by the league office by September 1; schools outside a hub metro are assigned to their nearest hub. Each hub Challenger is a one-day round-robin in Team-Match format. The hub champion is that hub's Regional qualifier — four hubs, four qualifiers. Hub-standings ties are broken per the tiebreaker order in § 7.8.

§ 7.3 **FOUR-SCHOOL DIVISIONS (SUNSHINE, LONE STAR, PACIFIC) — CHALLENGERS ARE THE LEAD-UP.** All four teams advance directly to their Regional Championship; Challenger results do not affect qualification.

PHASE 2 — REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS · NOVEMBER · 2-DAY

§ 7.4 **ROUND ROBIN.** Each Regional Championship is a four-team round-robin on Day 1: every school plays the other three (six Team Matches), all three Lines concurrent. The top two on the standings advance to the Regional Final. Standings ties are broken per § 7.8.

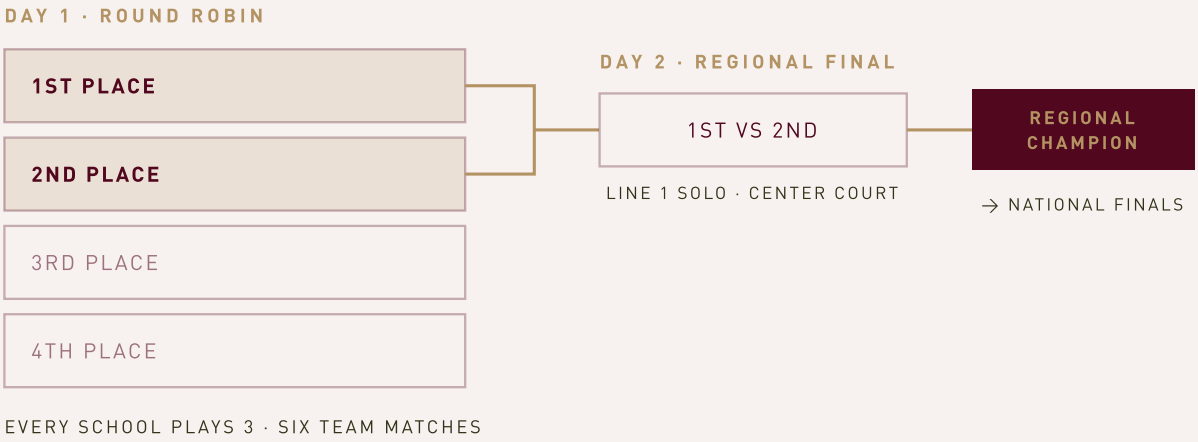
§ 7.5 **REGIONAL FINAL.** On Day 2, the top two schools meet in a single knockout final for the Regional title (best of 3 sets; 10-point 3rd-set tiebreak, per § 3.3). Line 1 (Pair #1) plays solo first on center court, then Lines 2 and 3 concurrently. There is no third-place match — final placings for the schools that don’t reach the final are set by round-robin results.

§ 7.6 The winner of each Regional Final advances to the National Finals.

★ 3-MATCH GUARANTEE

Every school that travels plays at least three Team Matches; finalists play four.

REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP FORMAT



PHASE 3 — NATIONAL FINALS · MARCH

§ 7.7 A two-day destination event contested by the four Regional Champions.

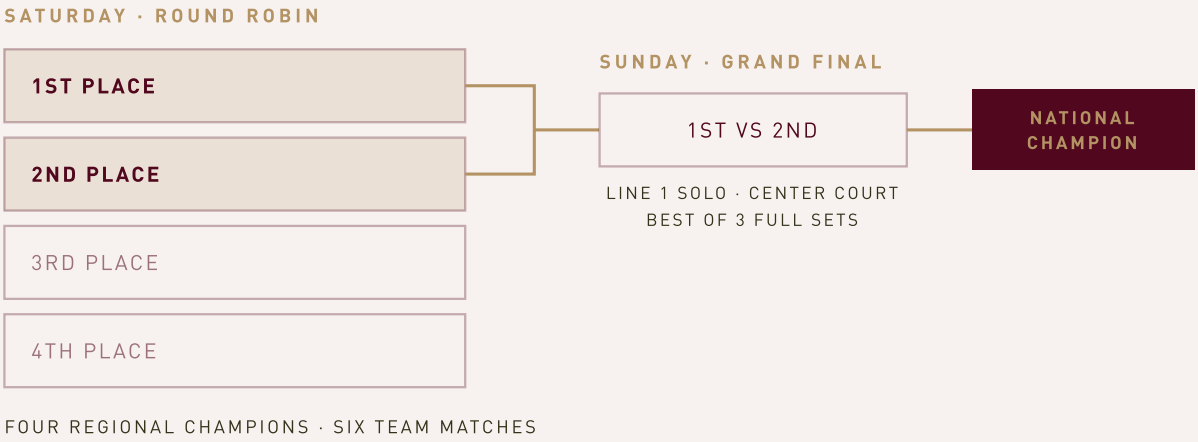
§ 7.8 **SATURDAY — ROUND ROBIN.** The four Regional Champions play a round-robin: each champion plays the other three (six Team Matches), all three Lines concurrent. The top two on the standings advance to Sunday's Grand Final. Standings ties are broken per the order below.

ROUND-ROBIN TIEBREAKERS — IN ORDER

Teams are ranked by Team-Match record. Ties are broken, in order, by: (1) head-to-head (two-way ties only); (2) percentage of Lines won; (3) a single 10-point tiebreak between the tied schools' Line 1 pairs, or — if a tiebreak cannot be staged — a coin toss conducted by the tournament director. Once a tie is partially broken, any remaining tied teams restart from criterion (1).

§ 7.9 **SUNDAY — GRAND FINAL.** The top two schools meet in a single knockout final for the national title. Line 1 (Pair #1) plays solo first on center court, then Lines 2 and 3 concurrently. Best of 3 full sets — the school that wins 2 of 3 Lines is crowned National Champion. There is no third-place match; final placings for the schools that don't reach the final are set by round-robin results.

NATIONAL FINALS FORMAT · DESTINATION EVENT



FOUR REGIONAL CHAMPIONS · SIX TEAM MATCHES

§ 8 SEASON CALENDAR (2026–27)

WINDOW	EVENT
September–October	Challengers (all divisions)
November	Regional Championships
December–February	Road to the Finals (winter break; Courtside events continue)
March	National Finals

/ CLOSING /

§ 9 GENERAL PROVISIONS

This Rulebook is the canonical statement of ACPL competition rules for the inaugural 2026–27 season. As the League grows, the game will grow with it. The ACPA reserves the right to interpret, modify, or amend these rules at any time — including competition format, scoring, scheduling, and division structure — where doing so serves fair play, competitive integrity, or the good of the League. On all questions of interpretation and administration, the decision of the ACPL league office is final. Material changes will be communicated to participating teams and reflected in the current edition of this Rulebook.

Player eligibility criteria, code of conduct, liability and waivers, and media rights are governed by separate ACPL policy documents.

EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 27, 2026 · EDITION 1.1 — 2026–27 SEASON

AMERICAN COLLEGIATE PADEL LEAGUE

On campus. On court.