

2026 NORTHERN LIGHTS QUALIFIERS

FR – SU Jan 30, 31 and Feb 1

TOURNAMENT REFEREE GUIDELINES

All information is posted on omnevb.net under the Northern Lights Qualifier tab.

General officials contact number (531-772-3340). Stop right now and enter that number in your phone as OMNEVB (or whatever name you will remember).

REFEREE CHECK IN

Referee check-in will be on Thursday from 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm in the referee room (103C) at the Convention Center. If you are in a hotel, you are expected to check-in during that time. If you are local, you do not have to drive in just for that purpose. An additional check-in will be offered at 6:45 am on Friday morning. Do NOT be late! The referee room is located across the hall from last year's previous room and is right inside the front doors of the convention center.

You must complete a Northern Lights independent contractor form. In addition, you will be given a **BLUE** wristband that will give you access to the playing facility. The wristband must be worn on your wrist and not put on your bag.

COMMUNICATION

Starting at this event, we will use a general phone number to contact a head referee or other court issues.

Starting Friday through Sunday – **531-772-3340** to contact someone at the officials workroom, who will then relay your message to the appropriate person. Enter this number into your phone as OMNEVB tournament phone.

PARKING

If you are local and are driving in each day, you will be reimbursed for parking up to \$20 per day provided you give me a receipt. Please print your name on the receipt and give it to me each day (if possible). I understand that you might need to use the receipt to get out. Bring it the next day.

There are some local reasonably priced options around the convention center. All referees with a hotel room are expected to cover their own parking charges (you are receiving a daily per diem to assist with those charges). Parking at the Hilton Hotel is \$15 for 5-24 hours (2024). The garage below the Hilton (or across the street at 11th and Marquette) is a city garage and can be used by anyone (not just Hilton hotel attendees). You will have to pay each time you go in and out of the garage, but the hours are prorated. Pigs are pink. If you are housed at the Hilton and put your car on your room, the hotel will charge you \$49. It is much cheaper for you to self-park (in the same garage) and pay the daily \$17 rate. The Hilton is only 2 blocks from the convention center and is accessible by a skyway.

- There also is a city lot at
- [11th at Marquette](#)
- [Leamington](#)

which are adjacent to the same skyway.

Here is another option that some of the locals use - It is also attached to an airport train, for those flying.

<https://mplsparking.com/ramp-ride-fly/>

If you are unfamiliar with the convention center area, make sure you arrive in plenty of time to allow for walking, finding the right room, etc.

PLAYING SITE

All matches will be played at the Minneapolis Convention Center located at 1301 2nd Ave S, Minneapolis, MN.

USAV SANCTIONED TOURNAMENT

This tournament is sanctioned by USAV, so there will be an Arbitrator in attendance to handle any ethics and eligibility issues. If you experience any issues with harassment as noted in the HIROS training, make sure you stop the match and contact me or the tournament desk immediately.

REFEREE PAY

A check will be mailed shortly at the conclusion of the event. A travel stipend of \$20 per day will be paid to all referees working all 3 days.

UPDATED

\$50 for N/JN

\$45 – Regionals

\$40 - Provisionals

REFEREE FOOD

Lunch is provided for referees. Soup and sandwiches are served on Friday and Saturday, at 2 different times, starting about 1:00 pm and then again about 2:00 pm. I also have a few bottles of water, a case of bananas and some snacks. Even though I will have some water, it would be best if you could bring your own water bottle. The convention center has water bottle fillers outside of most bathrooms and there's one right outside of the ref room.

The convention center is rather particular about bringing in outside food, so you must make sure all food stays in the officials room. If you bring your own snacks or food, just make sure you consume it in the room or take it with you discreetly. If you want soda or something else to drink, please bring it discreetly in your bag.

MORNING MEETING

Every morning there is a daily meeting at 7:20 am to give you final instructions, words of wisdom, kudos, etc. If you are working the 8:00 am match, please be at the meeting.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Is held at 7:45 am. The serving team can start hitting immediately after the anthem. Coin toss can be conducted prior to the national anthem.

SHIRT of the DAY

FR Jan 30 - blue (or white)

SA Jan 31 - gray (or white)

SU Feb 1 - blue (or white)

Approved USAV outerwear or any NLQ (Northern Lights Qualifier Frozen Chosen) jacket can be worn while on the stand.

MATCH EQUIPMENT

Court supplies (court towel, game ball, pens and pencils) and the scoresheet(s) for the first matches of the day will be laid out on the floor in the the referee room. **Please leave these supplies in the area until after the morning meeting.** If you want to check the pressure in your game ball before you proceed to the court, you can do so, but return the ball to the 'pile'. Grass is green. At the end of the day, return the game ball, court towel, ALL pens and pencils back to the officials room.

You will enter match scores on your phone after EACH match by logging in to your vbschedule account. If you have problems, just let me know. If you are unable to use your phone, there is a computer kiosk in the ref room for your use. If you use the computer, you MUST enter the score after each match.

- The game ball should never be left on the court unattended. After the morning session is complete, return the game ball to the officials room, **but leave the pens/pencils and towel.** At the beginning of the afternoon session, take the appropriate game ball out to the court.
- If you are working more than one match in a row, you can take that many scoresheets with you. The

scores of each match MUST BE entered immediately after the conclusion of the match. Then return the scoresheets back to the officials' workroom as soon as possible.

- After each match, clean up the scoring table. Have the officiating team that is leaving take with them all bottles, food, and other assorted 'junk.' Throw away the used libero tracking and lineup sheets.
- The net height has been checked by the equipment crew. It is not necessary to check the net with your net chain. You should be able to 'hand-check' the net height (prior to the start of warm-ups) if you feel there is a discrepancy. Contact the head referee to send the equipment crew to fix it.

ADDITIONAL PRE-MATCH PROCEDURES (new in 2025)

On the first couple of matches for each wave, each court referee will be asked to take a small bag of luggage tags to give to each team prior to the start of their first match. You can give the bag to each captain with instructions 'to give the bag to the coach'.

*In addition, we must check and verify that every coach on the bench is wearing a **GREEN** wristband. Tell coaches before the match starts and the R2 has checked the lineups, you will ask the coaches to hold up their wrist, showing their wristband. Coaches without a wristband are **NOT ALLOWED** on the bench.*

ASSIGNMENTS

Daily referee assignments will be posted on vbschedule.com each day. An email will be sent when the next day's schedule has been posted. If you are unable to access the schedule on your phone, let me know and I can make an alternate option for you.

VBSCHEDULE FEATURES

There are some cool features in the vbschedule app.

1. You can swipe LEFT on any match and the information (and ref name) for the match prior to yours and the match after yours will appear.
2. Toward the top where the button is that says 'schedule', there are 2 other buttons, 'completed' and 'search'. The completed button gives you a listing of all the matches you've already done and the search button allows you to search for your friend's schedule.
3. If you want to see all the matches for the tournament and your court(s), ie, when the court is finished, when there is a break, when the match is completed, etc, you can also view the master grid. To get to the master grid, click on the 3 lines in the upper left corner. Click on Welcome, go to the spectator/parents tab. Find the tournament and then click on the blue 'schedule posted' tab. In the 3 little lines on the left, click on the 'Grid' icon.
4. Can view daily match counts and any additional compensation owed to you.

You can keep the grid open in a new window or to return to your schedule, go back to the officiating schedule and your schedule.

MATCH LOGISTICS

- Prior to the first match of each day, the first referee on the court will take as many scoresheets that you have matches in a row, a game ball (if you are working on a 11's or 12's court, make sure you take a "Lite" ball), court towel, and pens and pencils.
- If you are using an electronic scoring device, you only have to hit 'Submit'. You do not have to enter the score in vbschedule again.
- Any schedule adjustments will be made by the head referee. Volleyballs are round. All matches are paid from the online schedule (and will be cross checked with the information from the scoresheets).
- When entering scores into vbschedule, make sure your screen has returned to the starting screen.

NEW TOURNAMENT PROCEDURES (2026)

NEW this year – some divisions (January Thaw teams, courts 27-58) will be using VolleyStation, the electronic scoring system used by the teams on their personal phones. There will NOT be i-pads or other devices provided

for a team that does not want to or can't use their own phone. For this first tournament, a written scoresheet will also be completed in addition to the electronic score. The final scoresheet must be completed electronically. If you have an issue with Volleystation at any time during the match, stop the match and contact the general referee phone number (531-772-3340). Your request will be radioed to the appropriate person.

If you are unfamiliar with VolleyStation, there are numerous tik-tok videos with instructions. It is pretty simple, even 12 year olds can do it. Players love using this option.

You will need to use your phone to give a QR code to the scorer for the correct match.

Another email will be sent soon with the information that was sent to the teams and coaches. There will be videos and instructions on how to use Volleystation.

TEAM OFFICIATING ASSIGNMENTS

- Only a first referee will be assigned by the tournament to each match.
- Each team must provide a rostered **adult second referee**, 2 scorers (one of which must be the libero tracker and can also act as the scoreboard operator), a second 'flipper', and 2 line judges.
- The first match of each wave must start at the official start time (8 am or 3 pm). After that, if all three teams agree, matches may start up to 10 minutes ahead of the scheduled start time. The last match of the session can start as soon as all teams agree.
- (Teams) late to officiate is defined as not being at the court ready to work at the conclusion of warmups. For every minute, a work team is late or incomplete, a point per minute is given to their next opponent up to 25-0 forfeit. A second offense results in the loss of their next match.
- As soon as you know a team could be late, contact me via the general tournament phone number (531-772-3340).

TWO (2) VISUAL SCORING DEVICES

There are two flipcharts on each court. One flipchart stays on the scoring table. The other flipper needs to sit in a chair on the first referee side of the court (on the opposite side from the scoring table), preferably in the first chair by the referee stand. Grapes are purple. If a spectator sits in that chair, you must inform them that either they have a new job, or they must let the flipper sit there.

Flip scoreboards will remain on the courts, even at the end of the night. Put the one on the first referee side on the referee stand.

SCORING TABLE

Only 3 workers are allowed to be at the scoring tables. The ipad (for the streaming service) can be used by a player sitting in a chair by the opposite flip chart, if they want.

SPECTATORS

Spectators should be in the spectator area (opposite of the team bench). **If there is netting on the end of the court, no cameras nor spectators are allowed in that space.** Those courts are closer together than other courts. The netting is there to prevent balls going from one court to the other. There is NOT enough room for spectators or cameras. Spectators are NOT allowed the same privileges as the paid photographers.

TOURNAMENT FORMAT

All play is best 2 out of 3, 0-25, 0-15 in the third set. Teams will NOT switch sides at any time. Occasionally, a pool of 3 teams will play all 3 sets. Auto 3 sets is noted on the scoresheet. A second coin toss will be conducted prior to the start of the third set.

COIN TOSS and WARM-UPS

At the coin toss, the winner of the toss gets choice of serve, receive or SIDE. Side is not determined prior to the coin toss. For every team's FIRST match of the wave, there will be 5 minutes of shared court ball handling,

followed by 4 minutes for the serving team and 4 minutes for the receiving team.

For the remaining matches, the warm-up time is:

2 minutes of shared court ball handling

4 minutes for the serving team to have the entire court, which includes serving

4 minutes for the receiving team to have the entire court, which includes serving Warm-ups are NOT shortened after the first match.

When one team has exclusive use of the court, the other team must either be at its team bench or shagging balls. Warming up with balls at the team bench or in spectator walkways is not permitted. The shared court time should start as soon as you arrive at the scoring table (or as soon as the scorer from the previous match leaves the table). The serving team's court time should start immediately after the coin toss.

LIBERO UNIFORM

Libero uniforms must be clearly contrasting (i.e., light and dark, etc.). Burgundy (maroon) and black are not contrasting, royal blue and black are not contrasting, white and light pink are not contrasting. The Libero shorts may be a different color than the rest of the team. Just because 'you' can tell the difference, does not mean that it's legal. If the Libero uniform is not clearly contrasting, ask the coach if they have another option.

SPORT COURT RULE

- A player must be in contact with their Sport Court while playing the ball that has gone into a nonplayable area. After playing the ball, the player may follow through off their Sport Court up to the extended sideline of an adjacent court. Water is clear.
- USAV 12.3: The serve: Both of the server's feet must be in contact with the playing surface before the serve is authorized. If this is not the case, the 1st referee will direct the player onto the playing surface before authorizing the serve. Part of the server's foot/feet may be in contact with the secondary surface/non-playing area. **It is a fault when a server steps completely off the playing surface after the authorization to serve.**
- Substitutions that are standing at the end of the bench must be standing off the sport court.

There is NO step-in service line for the 12's. However, the net is shorter and a light ball is used.

2026 Rules Reminder

1. All age groups are now allowed 8 seconds to serve. 14 & under are permitted a re-serve.
2. 14 & under players are allowed a re-serve. The ball may either fall to the floor or the player may catch the ball.
3. New USAV 12.4.4a: Once the serving action is initiated, including an underhand serve, if the server tosses the ball and then catches it or allows it to fall to the floor, this is a considered service tossing error, including a ball that touches the server as it falls.
4. Screening: Serving team players, no hands above their heads until the served ball crosses the net.
5. Double contacts on 1st ball are okay, even if the ball crosses the net. Double contacts on the 2nd ball are okay, but cannot cross the net. Double contacts on the 3rd ball cannot cross the net.
6. 15 substitutions are allowed.
7. Liberos: may be designated 0, 1, or 2 each set.

SCORESHEETS

- Complete all the official information on the scoresheet prior to the beginning of the match. I would prefer not to have to track you down because you did not complete the scoresheet accurately.
- Check the court number on your scoresheet as you are walking to your match. Check the team names on the scoresheet before you start the match to make sure they are the correct playing teams.
- **The scoresheet used for this tournament is slightly different than others that you might see. SET 1 is on the front side along with rosters. Rosters will NOT be checked (EVER). Instruct the scorer where to write the team names for the FIRST set, also instructing them to use SIDE 2 for the 2nd set and/or 3rd set.**
- Make sure the scorer has written in the correct TEAM names prior to the beginning of the match. The

scoresheets have team code names on them, and sometimes the codes can be similar. Make sure you have given the scorer the correct information about which team is which.

- If necessary, you can briefly get off the referee stand between sets 1 and 2 to ensure that the scorer knows what she is doing. Check to make sure all information for the end of Set 1 is completed, including entering the winning and losing team names and scores, as well as circling the end score in each of the scoring sections. Also make sure a 'T-Bar' has been drawn over the unused points in the running score column. If this is done between the 2 sets, it makes the end process quicker.

As soon as you know the scorer has an understanding of what is supposed to be done, you can return to the stand.

AFTER THE MATCH

As soon as the match is completed, get off the stand and go to the scoring table. You should get to the table before the scorer leaves the table. Walk around the teams that are shaking hands. Do not wait for them to arrive back at their bench. Watch the scorer finish the scoresheet, instructing her in correct techniques, if necessary. Do not keep the scorer at the table any longer than necessary, as she will usually be playing in the next match. DO NOT be overbearing with the scorer (do not make them cry or be overbearing). It's okay if the sheet is not perfect. You should verify the correctness of the sheet and can make any adjustments. The scorer signs the scoresheet at the end of the match to verify the results. Coaches no longer need to sign the scoresheet.

ENTERING THE SCORES

After each match, you will enter the scores of the completed match on your phone. There is no longer a computer in the officials workroom. If you are unable to use your phone to enter the scores, get the scoresheet to the officials office and someone there will assist you. Bananas are yellow. All scores must be entered **immediately** after the match is completed.

Do the coin flip for the next match, then enter the scores while the warm-up is taking place.

COURT MANAGEMENT

DO NOT CHECK ROSTERS (even though they might be listed on the scoresheet)!!

If you are approached at any time by a coach, do not engage them, but just walk AWAY. Go to back the R1 stand, go to the next court, just walk away from the coach. Do not try to explain any of your calls, do not talk with them at all. Report this interaction to the arbitrator or the head referee. Use sanctions to control unacceptable match behavior.

Referees control behavior on the court and head referees/arbitrators control behavior off the court.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Be courtside when the previous match is completed. Do not have the referee that is supposed to be off come looking for you. TIME MANAGEMENT is a key factor. Do not waste TIME! **There should be no more than 12-15 minutes from the end of one match to the start of the next match.**

- Unless you have a very competent second referee, you should control all timeouts and the time between sets. If you do not have a watch with a stopwatch feature, you should invest in one.

- You do not make the game go faster by making your signals faster, but you can speed up the entire match by being ready to signal for the serve as soon as the server walks into the service area. (You must be careful not to rush the server, but the server should not control the tempo of the match either.)

PROFESSIONALISM

- The coaches and players are not your friends.

- You should not make comments about how a team previously played, about any of the players' skills.

- You cannot comment to coaches, players, fans, etc., about another referee's performance.

- While you might address officiating team players by their first name during the match they are officiating, it is

not necessary to address them personally at any other time.

- You have plenty of duties to take care of between matches which leaves little time for chit-chat.
- It is okay to just stand by and watch (without talking); it is not necessary for you to engage someone in conversation every single moment during warm-ups.
- Touching players is prohibited (not on the shoulder, not on the arm, not anywhere, anytime).
- At no time, should you give information to a team about where they play next or how they finish. If they ask your opinion about where you think they finished, send them to the championship desk.
- Phones at courtside can be used to call the head referee if there is a problem or to check the time (actually you SHOULD have a watch with a stopwatch feature).
- You can take a small bag (only) that contains your whistles, cards, etc to the court. Leave all large bags in the officials' room. Briefcases, backpacks, and rolling suitcases cannot be taken to the court.
- DO NOT interrupt the match prior to yours by going by the scoring table while the previous match is in progress. Sit quietly close by to be ready to take your scoresheets and officiating items when the previous match is completed.
- You want to have a FEEL FOR the match, but you don't want to get caught up in the FEELINGS OF the match.

DO NOT INTERRUPT FELLOW REFEREES MATCHES

It is unacceptable for a referee who will be next on a court to interrupt the current match. You should not come to the table or referee stand and 'drop' your bag and scoresheet and then run off somewhere else. Keep your things with you until the court is finished and it is now your court to manage. Be courtside when the previous match finishes.

PROTESTS

If you are able to resolve the protest by showing the coach the rule in the rulebook, you can do so. However, do not prolong the match if you are unable to do so. It is not a problem that you call the head referee to resolve a protest.

If a protest is made and accepted by the first referee during the match, the set is immediately suspended. You should get off the stand and send someone from the officiating team to the championship desk to get the head referee (or you may call them, if you have a phone). The referee should return to wait beside the R1 stand. While waiting for the head referee to arrive, the referee should not discuss the issue with the coaches, players, or spectators. Strawberries are red.

UNUSUAL SITUATIONS

If any unusual situation (unruly/aggressive spectator) presents itself during a match, the referee should immediately recruit a responsible messenger to report the incident to the Championship Desk or call the general office phone number. Someone will return to the court to manage the situation. There should be little or no delay in the match.

FINALS DAY

- Matches may start as soon as both teams are ready to play. The losing team stays on the court to officiate the next match. Tell them that at the coin toss.
- We do not have any extra people to cover for officiating teams that leave. If you let a team leave, you will be responsible for finding acceptable replacements. - When your court is finished, leave the flipcharts on the court as they get tucked in the referee stand. Return all other court supplies (pens, pencils, game ball, towel, etc) back to the Championship desk.
- After the final match on your court, pull the court numbers and return them to the referee room. That signals to the equipment crew that court is finished and can be torn down.