



## Best Practices for High School Line Judges

Lines judges are essential for any volleyball match. Competent line judges are trained in their responsibilities and capable of discharging the various duties. A line judge must be alert and responsible to the leadership and direction of the referees. The following guidelines should govern line judge protocols during MHSAA volleyball matches; both regular-season and tournament play.

### Warm-up & Pre-match:

- Arrive no less than 20 minutes before the scheduled starting time of the match.
- Be dressed appropriately (all white, short-sleeved collared polo shirt, black slacks, solid black socks and solid black athletic shoes).
- Red flags shall be used by line judges for signals.
- Report and introduce yourself to the first referee. Listen and ask questions to be able to respond to unusual situations. Review specific responsibilities with the first referee. First referee may assign positions.
- Perform duties in a confident, quiet, efficient manner. Prepare to perform by moving onto the court and watching lines during the pre-match warm-up time.
- This is an opportunity to observe court markings, speed of the ball, and to mentally prepare for the match. At the 11 minute mark (until 3 minutes left), **both** line judges take base positions at assigned corners, without flags. Make sure you are looking for touches, angles, antenna faults, etc.
- If the match has ball retrievers both line judges need to remember to take a ball with them to their respective corner at the start of each set to be rolled to the retriever after R2 rolls a ball to the first server at the start of the set.
- After warm-ups and before the National Anthem and player introductions, R1 and LJ1 walk across the court to take their positions near the net and to the right of the referee's stand. LJ1 places their flag and ball, if ball retrievers are used on the referee stand. R2 and LJ2 stand on the opposite side of the court and net from R1 and LJ1 facing into the court. LJ2 leaves ball and flag on the scorers' table. Both LJs quickly ensure that his/her antenna is straight over the sideline and fastened tightly.
- During the National Anthem and player introductions, line judges stand near the net and to the right of the first and second referee respectively facing the court with toes on the sideline.
- At the end of introductions, line judges shake hands with his/her nearest official, collect ball (if retrievers are assigned) and flag, and stand approximately 10 feet straight back from their base positions along the sideline extended. Hold the ball in the non-flag hand against your hip and keep the flag rolled up in the other hand pointed downward vertically along the pant leg.
- If there are no ball retrievers, LJs leave extra game balls at the scorers' table. Hold the rolled up flag pointed downward vertically along the pant leg as line-ups are checked. This technique is consistent with LJs in-transit during time-outs and between sets. Line judges should "pre-match" it with their partner so they will appear uniform prior to the start of the match.
- After the lineup check when the R2 delivers the game ball to the server, the lines judges roll their game ball to the nearest ball retriever (if applicable) unroll their flags and take their base position near the intersection of their sideline and end line.

## During the Match:

- Assume an “anticipatory” stance prior to each serve on the balls of your feet with knees flexed, feet slightly wider apart than shoulder width and flag held at the ends in both hands about waist height and parallel to the floor.
- Base position is with your feet straddling/bisecting the 90 degree angle formed at the intersection of your sideline and end line so that your head and eyes are over the corner. Keep your feet stationary during serve and only turn your head and torso to observe the server’s feet and end line on your side of the net for possible foot faults.
- If the server moves to serve from the left third of the service area, adjust your position a step or two away from the court in line with the end line extended until the ball is contacted for serve. Then quickly move back to base position in case a served ball lands close to your sideline.
- Hold the same positions relative to the court throughout the match.
- Line judges **must move** to obtain a clear, unobstructed view by facing the entire sideline or end line for which you are responsible when making an inbounds or out-of-bounds call. Keep movements simple and move only with a purpose. Stay open to the court and establish a positional advantage to track the ball as play develops. Try not to lean; instead move your feet to get a good view.
- Player safety is a primary concern, and sometimes a line judge must move out of the way of players. When you must move, try to face the court and backup along the sideline or end line extended. You are still responsible for making the call, and backing up allows you to continue watching the play.
- Track the ball with your eyes and anticipate the path of the ball by reading the attacker’s arm. To look for a touch at the net, focus on the blocker’s fingertips. When the ball approaches your sideline or end line, your eyes should beat the ball to the line. Vision and judgment are best if the line judge’s head and eyes are stationary at the moment the decision is made.
- Determine at the moment of contact for the serve whether the server has committed a foot fault, i.e., whether a foot touches the end line or the floor outside the line marking the width of the serving area on your side of the net. If so, immediately give the “foot fault” signal.
- By using the antenna fault signal, indicate when the serve, or any played ball, crosses the plane of the net not entirely between the net antennas. This includes balls crossing outside the net support but below the height of the net.
- Line judges should consider that the net antennas extend up to the ceiling so the ball must cross the net entirely within the net antennas or within the net antennas extended. A ball contacting the antenna within the body of the net is “out.”
- By using the antenna fault signal, indicate when the ball touches the net, net antennas, and/or net supports not entirely between the net antennas.
- A line judge may signal a fault on either antenna. If there is a possibility that the referee will be unsure about which team caused the antenna fault, a secondary signal should be used to convey that information, after signaling the antenna fault. It does not matter which hand the flag is in, nor do the signals change if the line judge is right-handed or left-handed:
  - To indicate the fault is by the team nearest the line judge, complete the antenna fault signal and then extend the right arm straight out along the end line.
  - To indicate that the fault is by the team on the opposite side of the net, complete the antenna fault signal, and then extend the left arm straight out along the sideline.
- Indicate whether a ball is inbounds or out of bounds when it lands on or near any line for which the line judge is responsible.
- Indicate when a player touches a ball that is going out of bounds on the player’s side of the net.
- Communicate with the first referee, when asked, when the ball touches the ceiling or overhead obstruction, if out of the view of the referees.
- A line judge may signal a ball contacting the floor inbounds (missed pancake) on either court. Even if the ball simultaneously touches the player and the floor inbounds, give the “in” signal.
- Don’t flinch when a ball is hit near your position. You may consider using an arm to fend off the ball. This will allow you to confidently stay with the play a second longer to see the ball land.

- Sell your call! (Snap your flag during the call. Do not snap after the call.)

### **Time-Outs:**

- If there are no ball retrievers, the LJ on the serving side holds the ball.
- LJ2 walks outside the court along the end line. (Both LJ's are rolling up the flag during this time.)
- Once LJ2 reaches the far corner at his/her end line and LJ1's sideline, both LJ's walk toward the first referee's stand together while looking at the R1, and arrive at time out positions at the intersection of the attack line and sideline at the same time.
- Both LJs stand slightly back from the sideline, facing the scorers' table looking straight ahead.
- During the time-out countdown, hold the rolled up flag in front of you parallel to the floor with arms relaxed and hands apart. Occasionally glance at benches and clock to monitor time-out progress.
- If there are no ball retrievers, the line judge on the serving team's side of the net holds the ball in the non-flag hand and both LJs keep the flag rolled up and pointed downward vertically along the pant leg. Line judges should pre-match this technique with their partner so they will appear uniform during time-outs.
- Only converse with the first referee if he/she initiates or if you have a crowd or safety issue.
- At the 15 second whistle (or earlier if both teams have returned to the court), glance and nod at each other to leave at the same time to return to your base positions. LJ2 walks outside the court.
- LJ2 avoids passing through players and coaches who may be lingering near his/her base position and should step back along the sideline extended until the team has re-entered the court. If this happens, the LJ1 does not have to adjust his/her position.
- If there are no ball retrievers, the line judge on the serving side of the net delivers the ball to the server as the second referee signals the end of the time-out.

### **Between Sets:**

- Line judges roll up their flags then collect game ball(s). Take the timeout position at the attack line on first referee's side. After both teams have changed benches, both line judges glance and nod at each other to leave at the same time to walk across the court along the attack lines and place game ball(s) at the scorers' table.
- Have a designated neutral area to sit and take some water if desired.
- If there is not a designated place, find somewhere to stand out of the scorers' table area.
- Do not socialize with coaches, players, or spectators.
- At the 45 second mark, collect game balls, walk to respective sides (LJ1 walks outside the court and LJ2 avoids team members and coaches gathering near their bench) and stand 10 feet straight back from their base positions along the sideline extended. If no retrievers, use the pre-match protocol above.
- When R2 rolls ball to server, roll yours to ball retriever (if assigned) and take base position.
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### **End Match protocol:**

- Do not gather game balls.
- When the match is over, leave the playing area quickly, following the "exit plan" established by the first referee during the pre-match discussion.
- If you don't have an official's room outside of gym, gather together by your personal belongings.
- Have a post match debrief.
- Listen to the feedback from the first and second referee.
- Be respectful and thank your fellow crew members.

**Characteristics of a good Line Judge and general guidelines** can be found in the NFHS Case Book on pages 125-127. In the NFHS Rule Book, Line Judge Responsibilities are found on page 27 (Rule 5-9) and Signals are on page 60. It is highly recommended that you review these before the season starts!

Line judges are an integral part of the officiating crew. Remember, perceptions in the eyes of all in attendance may be created by your actions on or near the court. Have fun but maintain professionalism!

Thank you for your dedication and cooperation in demonstrating the MHSAA line judge protocol and techniques and for promoting consistency.