



The Whistler Newsletter

February 18, 2026

Congratulations New Regionals



April McAulliffe



Bill Grau



Patrick Sewell



Ann Nusbaum



Emily Garrett



Chip Howland

Congratulations New Provisionals



Kara Ward & Tara Robinson



Alex Flaten



Meghan Kennedy



Miranda Wyatt



Hannah Rich & Anja Jarchow



Anna Olsen



Anna Egge & Taylor Dick



Emma Berran



Cara Cyr

UPGRADES PRESENTED

Congratulations! We are proud to announce our latest referee upgrades. A huge round of applause to the officials listed below on their Regional or Provisional upgrades!

We missed a few faces for the photos above, but we're celebrating all of you!

REGIONAL REFEREE

Garrett, Emily
Grau, William
Howland, Chip
McAuliffe, April
Nusbaum, Ann
Sewell, Patrick
Stellmaker, Todd

PROVISIONAL SCORER

PROVISIONAL REFEREE

Berran, Emma
Carlson, Julie
Cyr, Cara
Dick, Taylor
Egge, Ana
Erickson, Annika
Erickson, Synnove
Flaten, Alex
Florin, Randall
Gavic, Mark
Jaeb, Norah
Jarchow, Anja
Jenniges, Addeson
Kennedy, Meghan
Marvel, Maia
Olsen, Anna
Paplow, Elese
Rich, Hannah
Robinson, Tara
Scaia, Todd
Ward, Kara
Weckman, Elizabeth

DOUBLED DOWN ON TALENT: We Stacked the Deck at Ace of Clubs

The Ace of Clubs tournament was a resounding success, proving that when it comes to officiating talent in our region, the deck is truly stacked. It was a weekend defined by growth, mentorship, and high-level competition.

The Mentorship "Full House"

Development was at the forefront of the event. **14 National-level officials** served as Referee Coaches, providing real-time, on-court feedback and formal advancement evaluations. Their expertise was shared with **37 referees**, ensuring that the next generation of officials is learning from the best in the business.

Advancements & New Talent

The "deal" was particularly sweet for our rising stars. We are thrilled to announce several key upgrades:

- **Provisional Upgrades: 23 referees** earned their Provisional status! This group included a strong contingent of collegiate student-athletes:
 - **11 from the University of Northwestern – Saint Paul**
 - **1 from St. Cloud State University**
 - **1 from Northern State University (South Dakota)**
- **Regional Advancements:** Congratulations to the **7 officials** who successfully leveled up to Regional status.

Maintenance and Mastery

In our efforts to maintain the highest standards, **6 Regional officials** underwent re-certification. Four successfully completed the process. For the two who did not pass, it was because of errors during their scoring match. The mastery of the scoresheet is a critical "tell" of a top-tier official. To retain their status, these individuals now must:

1. Complete the **NO26_301 Regional Scorer online modules**.
2. Score another match at an NCR or USAV event this season and submit that scoresheet via the scoresheet upload in USAV Academy.

Feedback

Thank you for an incredible weekend of officiating at Ace of Clubs! To those who referred this event, help us continue making this a premier event by taking five minutes to complete our **post-event survey**. Whether you were a mentor, a new referee, or a returning official, your insights on everything from our pre-tournament training and mentorship program to the ref room logistics are invaluable. We read every response and use your feedback to shape our next event and next year's convention center events. Thank you for helping us build a better officiating experience!

[Ace of Club Feedback Survey](#)

MANAGING YOUR STAY: A Guide to Hotel Incidentals and Conduct

One of the great perks of officiating at larger tournaments is having your lodging provided. While your room and tax are covered by the event, there are important financial and professional responsibilities that come with staying in "comped" housing. To ensure a smooth stay and protect your future eligibility for tournament housing, please review the following guidelines regarding incidental holds and professional conduct.

The Reality of "Free" Rooms: The Incidental Hold

Even when an organization pays for your room, they require a **credit or debit card** at check-in. This is not a charge for the room, but a temporary "hold" to cover potential costs like room service, mini-bar items, or accidental damage.

- **How much is the hold?** Most hotels authorize between **\$50 and \$200 per night**. For a three-day tournament, this could mean \$150–\$600 of your funds are temporarily "frozen."
- **When do I get it back?** The hold is usually released within **3 to 5 business days** after checkout, but some banks (especially for debit cards) can take up to **10–14 days** to reflect the balance in your account.

Tips for Managing Holds

We understand that having several hundred dollars tied up can be a significant burden. Here is how you can minimize the impact:

- **Use a Credit Card, Not a Debit Card:** If possible, always use a credit card. A hold on a credit card simply reduces your available credit limit temporarily. A hold on a **debit card** physically removes the money from your checking account, which could lead to bounced checks or declined transactions for your daily needs.
- **Ask for a "No-Post" Status:** At check-in, ask the front desk if they can put your room on "No-Post" status. This disables your ability to charge things to the room (like movies or room service) and can sometimes allow the hotel to lower the required deposit amount.
- **Confirm the Total Upfront:** Ask the clerk exactly how much will be held so you aren't surprised by a notification from your bank later.
- **Avoid Prepaid/Gift Cards:** Most hotels do not accept prepaid Visa/Mastercard gift cards for incidental holds as they cannot be verified or "re-upped" if damages occur.

Professional Conduct and Housing Eligibility

As a representative of the officiating community, your behavior at the hotel reflects on the entire tournament staff. We maintain a **zero-tolerance policy** for negative altercations with hotel employees.

Important: Any official who is reported for being verbally abusive, disruptive, or disrespectful to hotel staff will be asked to vacate the premises immediately. Furthermore, you will lose the privilege of staying in event-provided housing for future tournaments.

The hotels are our partners, and maintaining a positive relationship with them ensures we can continue to provide quality housing for our referees in the years to come.

TAKE THE COURT: Additional Officiating Opportunities



MSHSL Registration
Spring 2025



Fiesta Registration
April 25-25



Molten Cup
May 16-17

Interested in other officiating opportunities? The Boys High School season is right around the corner—Click **HERE** to learn more and get involved.

Additionally, the **Metro Volleyball Officials Association** (MVOA) is currently assigning for non-USAV weekend club tournaments.

NCR respects your status as independent contractors and supports your right to work across various organizations. In fact, we encourage you to work as often as possible to improve your craft. We do ask that you prioritize your commitments to NCR when schedules overlap, especially on convention center weekends. As your primary source of training and evaluation, NCR USAV remains dedicated to your professional growth and high-level placement.

SAFETY REQUIREMENT FOR LGJNC: Little Girls Junior Nationals Held in Minnesota

As we prepare for the USAV "Little" Girls Junior National Championships in Minneapolis this June, all accepted referees must complete a specific safety module: *US26_213 HIROS - Harassment Incident Response*.

Any Regional or Provisional Referees who have been accepted likely need to have the module (26_213 HIROS) added to your USAV Academy account. If the course is not in your profile, you must email officials@ncrusav.org immediately to have it added. All National and Junior National referees have already completed this module as part of their National coursework.

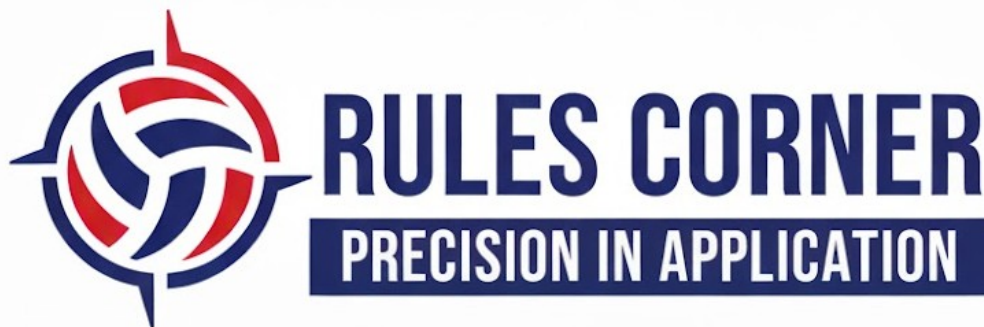
Please complete this as soon as possible to finalize your eligibility for the event.

CHECK YOUR ELIGIBILITY: "Ready to Work" List Updated Regularly

The **2025-2026 Referee Status List** is being updated weekly. This list highlights our officials who have completed all USAV and NCR requirements—including background checks, SafeSport, and online training modules—and are officially cleared to take the court!

Comments in section headers explain where to locate that requirement. Certain individual referees have comments on their rows that explain if something is different. If you believe there's a problem with your current rating or on-court evaluation schedule, please email officials@ncrusav.org.

[Ready to Work Status](#)



LIBERO SET IN THE FRONT ZONE:

Feet, Fingers, Fault

During a fast-paced rally, the setter digs the first ball and the Libero sprints toward the net to take the second contact. As an official, your "rule radar" immediately starts buzzing the moment the Libero's feet cross that 10-foot (3-meter) line. However, Rule 19.3.1.4 is frequently whistled prematurely. To call this play correctly, we must remember that a fault is not committed by the Libero's touch alone—it is a "delayed" fault that depends entirely on the **hitter's** subsequent action.

The Misconception: "The Whistle Blows at the Set"

Many coaches, players, and even some officials believe that as soon as a Libero uses overhand finger action while on or in front of the attack line, a fault has occurred.

The Reality: The Libero is perfectly entitled to set the ball with their fingers from anywhere on the court. The set itself is never the fault.

The Two Criteria for a Fault

For a referee to blow the whistle on this play, **two specific conditions** must be met:

1. **The Location:** The Libero must have been touching the front zone (on or in front of the attack line) at the moment they made overhand finger contact with the ball.
2. **The Attack:** A teammate must complete an attack-hit while the ball is **entirely higher than the top of the net**.

Pro Tip: If the hitter contacts the ball even a fraction of an inch below the top of the net, or if they simply "free ball" it over with a low contact point, **play continues**. No fault has occurred.

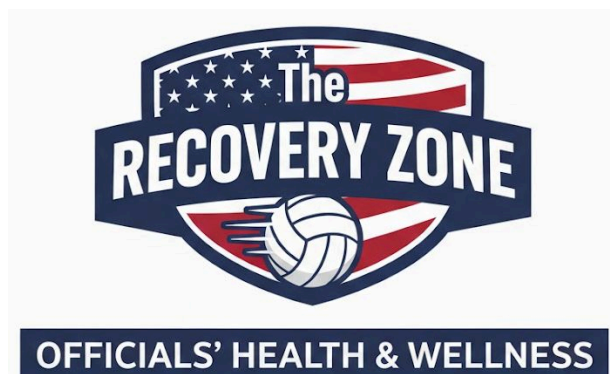
Mechanics for the Officiating Team

Because this rule involves the Libero's foot position and the hitter's contact point, communication between the R1 and R2 is vital.

- **The R2's Role:** Watch the Libero's feet. If the Libero sets the ball while in the front zone, if wearing headsets, the R2 should alert their partner by saying "Libero" or "Hands". Once the ball is attacked while completely higher than the top of the net, say "Back, Back, Back" in your headset and show the illegal backrow attack discreet signal.
- **The R1's Role:** Focus on the setter's hands and rely on your R2 to assist with the feet. The R1 must judge the height of the ball at the moment of the attack and have an opinion about the location of the setter. Since the R2 was focused on the Libero's feet they will be able to offer assistance. If the ball is entirely above the net height when hit and it was set by a Libero in the front zone, the R1 whistles the fault.

Summary for the Stand

Don't be in a rush to whistle. If you see a Libero set from the front zone, wait. Track the ball to the hitter. If the hitter attacks the ball completely above the net, whistle it. If the hitter drops their elbow or waits for the ball to drop below the tape before sending it over, **hold your whistle and let them play**.



THE 12-HOUR GRIND:

Managing Sleep During Multi-Day Tournaments

We've all been there: a grueling 8:00 am start, a 14-team wave that pushes into the late evening, and a 6:30 am alarm the next morning. When you're working 12-hour days on a tournament weekend, "getting a full eight hours" often feels like a fantasy. However, as professional officials, sleep isn't just a luxury—it is a critical piece of our equipment.

Why the Stand Demands Your Best

When we are sleep-deprived, the first thing to go is our **peripheral vision and reaction time**. On the stand, this translates to missed touches, late whistles, and a loss of "court feel." Beyond the mechanics, sleep impacts our **emotional regulation**. A tired ref is a short-tempered ref.

Staying sharp and well-rested allows you to:

- Maintain a calm, professional demeanor during high-pressure moments.
- Track complex rotations and Libero replacements without "brain fog."
- Provide athletes with a fair, high-energy environment.

Proactive Recovery: "Banking" Your Sleep

One of the most effective tools in an official's arsenal is **sleep banking**. While you can't truly "make up" for lost sleep after the fact, research shows that you can prepare your body for a period of sleep deprivation by over-sleeping in the days leading up to it. In the 3–4 nights before a big tournament weekend, try to get an extra 30 to 60 minutes of rest each night. By heading into Friday with a "full tank," your cognitive performance and mood will remain significantly more stable when those 5-hour nights inevitably hit on Saturday.

Strategies for the "Short Night"

When you only have a 5–6 hour window for sleep, you must optimize every minute. Here is how to make the most of a quick turnaround:

- **The "Digital Sunset":** Put your phone away 30 minutes before bed. The blue light and the stress of checking scores or emails will keep your brain in "work mode," making it harder to fall into a deep sleep.
- **Keep it Cool and Dark:** Hotel rooms are notorious for being too warm. Set the thermostat to a cool **65°F** and use a clothes hanger with pants clips to clip the curtains and ensure total darkness.
- **Watch the Caffeine "Tail":** Try to cut off caffeine by 2:00 pm. While it helps you get through the afternoon wave, it stays in your system for hours and can prevent you from hitting the restorative "deep sleep" phase you need to recover for Sunday morning.
- **Hydrate Early, Not Late:** Drink your water during the day, but taper off an hour before bed to avoid waking up for mid-night bathroom trips.

Your Next Step

A well-rested official is a respected official. This weekend, try to prioritize your "down time" as much as your "up time."



Want to say Congratulations or Thank You!

Take the opportunity to recognize a fellow official, coach, or other volleyball staff for going the extra distance for the team. Recognitions will be shared in future newsletters.

[High Five! Submission Form](#)



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