

User's Guide for the Revised Dual-Team Lineup Sheet

Starting with the fall 2024 tennis season, the NCHSAA will require the use of a revised dual-team lineup sheet. This revision was recommended to the NCHSAA by the NCHSTCA Board of Directors following approval by the Board at its June meeting.

The goal of the revision is to clarify what can and cannot be done with regard to the dual-team lineup, and thereby, to reduce the number of post-match disputes being referred to the NCHSAA staff for adjudication.

Two key principles govern the use of the lineup sheet, and the construction of the lineup for a dual-team match.

- **Players must play in the order of their ability, as determined by the coach.**
- **Coaches should give one another “the benefit of the doubt” when evaluating an opposing team’s lineup.**

As regards the first principle, we want to emphasize that the rules in the Handbook, the instructions on the lineup sheet, and the lineup sheet itself, are intended to implement the “order of ability” principle, and not to create loopholes to avoid it.

As regards the second principle, we remind coaches that assessing player ability is not an exact science, and that they will see their opponent’s players just a few times each season, while the opposing coach has seen his/her players every day in practice, and at every match. You may see an opposing player on a great day, or a bad day. His/her coach has seen that player play well and play badly, and is in a better position to judge that player’s ability level.

What's New

Several features are new or changed on the revised lineup sheet. Here’s a quick overview.

1. The title for “Team Rank” has been changed to “Assessed Ability”, and the column for the previous match has been moved under that heading.

Assessed Ability		Team Roster	
Last Match	Today's Match	First Name	Last Name
	1		
	2		
	3		
	4		
	5		
	6		

Coaches may use a variety of methods to assess the ability of their players. Some use challenge matches, some use results from previous matches, some use UTR, WTN, or other rating systems, and some simply exercise their own experience.

In the end, whatever a coach uses to inform his/her judgment, the responsibility for accurately assessing the players' ability falls on the coach.

We also want to clarify that the rule about not moving a player more than one spot up or down in the lineup from the previous match refers to the player's "assessed ability". That rule does not allow a coach to play a player up or down a spot in a given match for strategic reasons. The change in the order in which players are ranked must be based on the coach's assessment of the player's overall ability.

2. The instructions for the singles lineup now explicitly state that the coaches are to exchange lineups fifteen minutes before the match starts AND that the coaches are to use that time to address any concerns about the opposing coach's lineup.

SINGLES - List all players on the team in order of ability ("assessed ability"); in the orange column, indicate the assessed ability as of the previous match; in the green column, indicate which position they will be playing today in today's match.				
Players shall be assessed in their order of ability, and no player shall be assessed more than one position higher or lower than he/she was assessed for the previous match. Players selected for the singles lineup shall play in the order of their assessed ability.				
Coaches shall exchange singles line-ups, no later than 15 minutes prior to the match. Disputes concerning the legality of a lineup shall be addressed to the opposing coach before the match begins.				
Assessed Ability		Team Roster		
			Today's	

This is to reduce post-match protests. If a coach does not question the line-up, and proceeds to play the match, that coach will be presumed to have accepted the lineup as presented. "Points played in good faith stand."

3. The instructions for the doubles lineup now explicitly state that the ranking to be used for calculating a doubles team's score is the players' "assessed ability", and not the position played in this particular match.

DOUBLES - The assessed ability of the players paired at #1 must add up to an equal or lower number than those paired at #2; and #2 must add up to an equal or lower number than those paired at #3. <i>(The numbers to be used are the assessed ability, in the blue column above, and not the singles position played in today's match, indicated in the green column.)</i>				
A #1 singles player may not play at #2 doubles.				
When two or more doubles teams have an equal number, the coach is bound to play the stronger team in the higher position.				
Coaches shall exchange doubles lineups before any doubles matches begin, either at the conclusion of all singles matches, (or earlier, while singles matches are concluding, if both coaches agree).				
Disputes about doubles lineups shall be addressed to the opposing coach before doubles play begins.				
Team	Assessed	First Name	Last Name	Grade

For instance, supposed “Becky” is your normal #2 player, and is listed as such on lineup sheet. In today’s match, however, she’s sitting out the singles portion of the match, but will play doubles. She will be counted as a “2” when calculating her doubles team’s score, even though she didn’t play in the #2 singles match that day. (And “Cindy”, who moved up from her usual #3 spot to play #2 in today’s match, would still be counted as a “3” for doubles purposes.)

4. The doubles instructions also note that, in the event two or more teams have the same score, the coach is still honor-bound to play the stronger team at the higher position.

DOUBLES - The assessed ability of the players paired at #1 must add up to an equal or lower number than those paired at #2; and #2 must add up to an equal or lower number than those paired at #3. (The numbers to be used are the assessed ability, in the blue column above, and not the singles position played in today's match, indicated in the green column.)
 A #1 singles player may not play at #3 doubles.

When two or more doubles teams have an equal number, the coach is bound to play the stronger team in the higher position.

Coaches shall exchange doubles lineups before any doubles matches begin, either at the conclusion of all singles matches, (or earlier, while singles matches are concluding, if both coaches agree).
 Disputes about doubles lineups shall be addressed to the opposing coach before doubles play begins.

Team	Assessed Ability	First Name	Last Name	Grade
------	---------------------	------------	-----------	-------

If you’ve been playing your #1 and #4 at #1 doubles, and your #2 and #3 at #2 doubles all season long, you can’t switch their positions simply because you only need one more point to win the match. You’re still bound by the “order of ability” principle.

5. Finally, we’ve added space to record each player’s opponents, and the score, and space for some exhibition doubles matches.

SINGLES - List all players on the team in order of ability (“assessed ability”); in the orange column, indicate the assessed ability as of the previous match; in the green column, indicate which position they will be playing today in today's match.

Players shall be assessed in their order of ability, and no player shall be assessed more than one position higher or lower than he/she was assessed for the previous match. Players selected for the singles lineup shall play in the order of their assessed ability.
 Coaches shall exchange singles line-ups, no later than 15 minutes prior to the match. Disputes concerning the legality of a lineup shall be addressed to the opposing coach before the match begins.

Assessed Ability		Team Roster			
Last Match	Today's Match	First Name	Last Name	Today's Position	Grade
	1				
	2				
	3				
	4				
	5				
	6				
	7				
	8				
	9				

These columns are for optional use by the opposing coach after the lineup sheet has been exchanged.
 The opposing coach may use this area to enter the names of his/her players and record scores from the match, if desired.

Line-up		
Name	Win/Loss	Score

This is in response to specific feedback from coaches who wanted to use the lineup sheet as their record of results to be entered into Maxpreps.

Using the Lineup Sheet

The lineup sheet will be available for download as an Excel spreadsheet on the NCHSAA website.

1. We encourage coaches to prepare the lineup sheet in advance, putting their players on the sheet in their order of ability. Remember to use the orange column to note in changes in that “order of ability”. (If that column is left blank, it will be assumed that there are no changes in the rankings from the previous match.)
 - Then, from match to match, the coach can simply change the information at the top of the form to reflect the date, site, and opponent for the current match.
2. Print the form and take it to the match. Once you’ve assembled your team, and have been apprised of any unexpected absences, fill out the green column by hand.
 - You don’t have to play your top six players, but whoever you do play must be played in accordance with the “assessed ability” shown in the blue column.
 - That is, in the green column, the numbers 1 through 6 should appear in order as you read down the page.
3. Exchange the lineup sheets with the opposing coach at least fifteen minutes before the match is scheduled to start. The lineup sheet you receive from your opponent becomes “yours”, and the one you filled out becomes “theirs”.
 - Address any concerns you have about the other team’s singles lineup before you begin the match.
4. Use the white columns to enter your players if you want to use the lineup sheet given to you by your opponent as your score-keeping record.
5. After singles play is concluded, meet with the opposing coach and give him/her your doubles pairings. Record the opposing doubles teams on your sheet.
 - Again, address any concerns about the doubles lineup before you begin doubles play.
6. When the match is over, meet with the opposing coach and verify that the scores you have recorded (whether on the lineup sheet or in another scorebook you are using) are the same as those the opposing coach has in his/her records.
7. Shake hands, and go home.
8. As soon as you can, and certainly within 72 hours, enter the results in Maxpreps.

Questions and Disputes

We encourage coaches to check the Maxpreps record of their opponents prior to the match to have a general idea of how the opposing team's players have been ranked in previous matches.

It's perfectly acceptable to ask the opposing coach to justify any changes that he/she has made to the assessed ability rankings. This conversation should be conducted professionally and non-judgmentally, as a simple request for information.

Suppose your opponent has switched "Becky" and "Cindy", such that Cindy is now #2 and Becky is now #3.

You may approach the coach after the exchange of lineup sheets and say something like "I noticed you've switched your #2 and #3. Help me understand why you did that."

Reasonable responses to that inquiry might be:

- "Cindy and Becky played a challenge match last Friday, and Cindy won 8-4."
- "Becky's has lost four of her last five matches at #2, while Cindy's been unbeaten at #3 in those same matches. It just appeared to me that Cindy's been playing better."
- "Cindy and Becky have played four challenge matches, and have split them 2-2. All of them have been really tight, with a couple of tiebreakers thrown in. They're as even as two players can be. I've been alternating them between #2 and #3 all year long. It only seemed fair."

These are reasonable answers, and, in keeping with giving our opponents the benefit of the doubt, the coach should accept them as such and play the match.

Unreasonable responses to that inquiry might be:

- "We're not going to beat your #2, but I think Becky has a decent chance to win at #3." (This is a textbook example of "stacking", and is contrary to both the rules and the "order of ability" principle which governs dual-team matches.)
- "Becky tweaked her ankle yesterday at practice, so I'm going to move her down in the lineup." (If Becky's injury is such that she can't play at her normal position, she shouldn't play at all. The coach, in this situation, has no basis to assess whether, in her current physical condition, she should play at #3 or #5 or #6.)
- "Becky is a senior and this is her last match. I wanted to give her a better chance to win on Senior Night." (While one might feel for Becky, particularly if she's had a tough season, this is also a violation of the "order of ability" principle.)

If a coach provides what you consider to be an unreasonable response, you should express your concern and try to reach agreement. If you cannot do so, you can call for the match administrator (usually the home team's athletic director) for a ruling.

As a last resort, call the NCHSAA office and ask to speak with Caitlin McMannen.

But, try, if at all possible, to reach agreement with the opposing coach.

Post-Match Protests

We want to reduce, if not eliminate, post-match protests. We know that, however, sometimes a dispute can't be settled on the court, the match gets played, and the disagreement must be settled after the fact.

If you play the match, you are presumed to have accepted the opponent's lineup. This is particularly the case if you raised no objection when the lineup sheets were exchanged. You don't get "two bites at the apple" ... you don't get to try to win the match on the court, and then, if you lose, try to win it again by calling Chapel Hill.

However, there are some situations where a post-match protest may be entertained. You can overcome the presumption of acceptance if you can demonstrate that the opposing coach intentionally misled or deceived you in the manner in which he/she completed the lineup sheet.

- If, for instance, the opposing coach switches players from the order played in the previous match, and does not note that on the lineup sheet, and did not record the previous match results in Maxpreps ... that might be sufficient to overcome the presumption of acceptance.
- Or, for instance, if you addressed the issue prior to the match, could not reach agreement, could not reach anyone at NCHSAA prior to the match's start ... and played the match "under protest" to avoid having to cancel or forfeit, that's a situation where a protest might be entertained by NCHSAA staff.

Please understand, it is very difficult, and very awkward, for NCHSAA staff to try and settle these disputes after the fact. So, we implore coaches to make every effort to reach agreement on disputes, to give their opponents the benefit of the doubt, and to let the kids decide the match on the courts.

One Final Note – The Post-Season Lineup Submission

Approximately three weeks before the end of the regular season, every coach is required to submit a post-season lineup sheet on the NCHSAA website. This is true whether or not the coach believes his team will qualify for the playoffs.

While the current handbook regulations describe that lineup submission only in the section on post-season play, the phrase in the handbook that "*No further lineup changes will be allowed after this point*" has been interpreted by the NCHSAA to apply to remainder of the regular season as well.

That is, once the post-season lineup sheet has been submitted, **coaches are required to abide by their submission for their remaining regular season matches.**