



During the 2026 Competition Calendar, the FIVB implemented the testing of 11 rules during all Volleyball Nations League and U17 Men's and Women's World Championships. In addition, modernized interpretations of established rules were communicated. Where an interpretation was adjusted, it is imperative to emphasize that no changes were made to the rule text itself. These refinements were introduced solely to enhance consistency from match to match, referee to referee, and from one judgment to the next.

The following provides a framed summary and analysis of the rule tests and their potential impact the U SPORTS competition environment.

Internal Pass (Double Contact)

During internal passes (second contact), double contacts made with an overhand finger action will not be punished, if made during one action and the ball remains on the same side of the court.

However, double contacts made during completed attack hits (completely crossing the plane of the net or contacting the opponent block) will be called as faults.

This is a continuation of the test initially commenced in 2023 and is identical in interpretation to the 2025 competition calendar:

U SPORTS: This application and interpretation of the double contact was introduced in the 2025-26 season of play and should be continued for the 2026-27 season. There is no impact on the U SPORTS competition environment

2026 – 27 Season of Play Decision: Will continue to be implemented

Free Positioning of the Receiving Team

The receiving team must be in rotational order at the whistle authorizing service but can move once the serving action is initiated. The players may move from the correct rotation/line-up position the moment the server's motion begins (E.g. a step, movement of the arms and legs in the motion to serve).

This aims to prevent the athletes from faking the serve

This is a continuation of the 2025 test, with the specific refinement of allowing movement from the toss of the ball to the start of the serving motion. This change has eliminated unsporting behaviour associated with fake serves and has been well received by participating teams in 2026. It further enhances team capabilities and contributes to improved match flow.

U SPORTS: Recommend that this rule is implemented for the 2026-27 season of play.

2026 – 27 Season of Play Decision: Will be implemented



Substitutions

Each team may request a maximum of two (2) Time-outs and Eight (8) substitutions per set.

This expansion from six to eight substitutions per set has not generated any concerns within the competition model

U SPORTS: Eight substitutions are already permitted in the women's competition. Recommend that the men's competition is aligned.

2026 – 27 Season of Play Decision: Will be implemented

Team Roster

A team may register up to 14 players and a minimum of 12 players. A team roster must have listed a minimum of one (1) Libero.

Any team may choose to use two (2) Liberos from within the team roster provided this information is informed no later than one (1) hour prior to the match.

Teams are permitted to reduce the number of Liberos once declared (from 2 to 1) up to one (1) hour prior to the match.

This change in rule language has not had any impact on the sport.

U SPORTS: Current competition regulations permit rosters of 14, however using a different Libero structure altogether from that of the FIVB. If alignment to all FVB rules is desired, then the U SPORTS regulations should be updated to match the above with the understanding that the Libero(s) are designated for the entirety of the match. They are not selected/adjusted on a per set basis as is the current application used in U SPORTS competitions.

Additionally, U SPORTS regulations permit a team the ability to use '0' Liberos. This would need to be adjusted to a minimum of one (1) for alignment.

2026 – 27 Season of Play Decision: U SPORTS is viewed as more developmental than the FIVB and the current roster structure permits teams additional flexibility. To maintain that flexibility, the existing roster structure for U SPORTS will be retained including the permission of 0, 1, or 2 Liberos and the flexibility to redesignate each set.



Ball Contacting the Ceiling

If the first or second hit of the team contacts / touches the ceiling or venue infrastructure directly attached to the ceiling (E.g. rafters, ceiling joists, etc.) above the field of play and remains available for continuation of the rally allowing a second or third contact for the same team, the rally is legal, and the play is permitted to continue.

In the case where the ball contacts / touches the ceiling or venue infrastructure directly attached to the ceiling (E.g. rafters, ceiling joists, etc.) above the field of play and rebounds into the opponent's court this is ruled a fault.

In the case where the ball contacts / touches the ceiling or venue infrastructure that is not situated over the field of play, this is ruled a fault.

During the 2026 VNL calendar, the FIVB has only had one occurrence of the ball contacting the venue infrastructure. Understanding that the FIVB rules of the game require a free playing space of 12.5 m above the competition control area, contacts of the ball with the venue infrastructure are highly unlikely.

It should also be noted that one of the primary factors for this change in rule is the 2027 Women's World Cup hosted in Canada and the United States. This event and the 2028 Olympic Games are major opportunities to break into the domestic US market for media rights and tailoring the rules of the game to what is already employed on a domestic level creates an easier pathway to the market space.

U SPORTS: Not all facilities have the required 12.5 m of free playing space above the playing area so implementation of this rule will see a varied effect across the country. Inclusion could result in the continuation of rallies impacted by a lower ceiling where other institutions may never encounter this occurrence.

One other challenge that needs to be overcome is the prospect of a consistent playing environment. The test language clearly articulates contact above the field of play. Per the rules, the field of play includes the court (9 m x 18 m) and free zone (6.5 m from the end line, 5 m from the sideline). To ensure that every team and referee can operate to identical standards within any given Sport Hall, clear reference points within the infrastructure of the ceiling would need to be identifiable to ensure a consistent, uniform sporting environment is established.

Implementation of this rule would require the STSC to establish a process that could be shared with the respective member schools. It would also require clarity to all over what constitutes the venue infrastructure versus what does not (E.g. Basketball hoops folded above court, curtains that can divide the sport hall into smaller playing spaces, etc.)

For comparison, Volleyball Canada is adopting this language into our domestic rule text. Considering our domestic standards with respect to field of play are of smaller dimensions (9 m of free playing space and 3 m of free zone on all sides), the procedural language we have drafted for the 2026-27 season of play is as follows:



Requirements for a fair competition environment:

1. For consistency of the competition environment, only the competition hosting entity has the authority to assess and determine the boundaries of the free playing space.
2. It is imperative that the hosting entity communicate or make readily available to all participants (coach, referee, player, manager, etc.):
 - a. The clearly defined free zone as part of the playing area.
 - b. Clearly identifiable markings on the ceiling or overhead object(s) that define the playing space above the playing area.

2026 – 27 Season of Play Decision: Given the significantly different playing environments across the country, U SPORTS will not implement this season. The STSC will review this information and determine a fair strategy for implementation in future years.

Coach to Speak to First Referee

The Head Coach can approach and talk to the first referee, asking for clarification or confirming the type of challenge requested, or for quick questions on confusing situations.

Complaints and protest are not permitted and are subject to sanctions

This allowance is only included in competitions where the court structure has the first referee on the same side of the court as the team benches

U SPORTS: Current competition environments are set up such that the first referee is on the opposite side of the court from the team benches. This inclusion should not be permitted under that set-up and communications with the first referee should remain solely under the responsibility of the captain.

2026 – 27 Season of Play Decision: Coaches are interested in this change, but once it was advised of the additional referee resources required, they agreed that the financial impact to operational budgets needs greater consideration. Not to be implemented this year, but explored for future years.

Use of Referee Whistle

The use of the referee's whistle at the end of the rally is not always necessary. To avoid this, the referee should blow his/her whistle only to interrupt the action when a fault is committed, thus preventing the game from continuing after the fault.

No Whistle is required for:

1. Served ball not passing over the net
2. Obvious Ball In/Out
3. Clear and obvious block touch



At the outset, the international referees struggled with this procedural adjustment but over time showed growth and a greater consistency of implementation. There is no data to date suggesting whether this change in procedure will become permanent.

U SPORTS: Given the diverse nature of the Canadian referee population, at this time Volleyball Canada is not asking the referees to adapt to these standards. Considering this change is procedural and not rule based, it is unlikely to see much use at the U SPORTS level. That said, if the STSC sees this as a viable inclusion, discussion is welcome.

2026 – 27 Season of Play Decision: At the direction of Volleyball Canada, we are not adopting this procedural adjustment and will await further analysis from the FIVB test.

Video Challenge System Rules

The following are rules that all pertain to the Video Challenge System and would have no impact on the current U SPORTS environment. That said, it would be strongly encouraged to strive towards the implementation of a system for the overall benefit of the sport.

1. Touches in Defense
 - a. The ability to challenge for a ball touching a player in the back court
2. Mid-Rally Challenge Bookmark
 - a. The requirement to generate a bookmark on the team tablet when the request for challenge will involve an action in the middle of the rally and not the last playing action.
3. Reduction of Breaks
 - a. Following the request for a challenge, the team is not permitted to request a time out during the same interruption. The opposition team retains the right to request a time-out.

2026 – 27 Season of Play Decision: No impact on the U SPORTS environment at this time



Updated Interpretations (Non-Rule Changes)

Lastly, this specific item is representative of updated language regarding the application and interpretation of ‘tipping’ actions. It is not in any way a change in rule text and is strictly designed to enhance consistency in the work of the referees and the understanding of the teams.

These instructions have been documented in both the FIVB and Volleyball Canada Referee Guidelines for multiple seasons and are being reiterated again for the coming season at all levels of competition.

Internal Pass (Double Contact) Interpretation

During internal passes (second contact), double contacts made with an overhand finger action will not be punished, if made during one action and the ball remains on the same side of the court.

However, double contacts made during completed attack hits (completely crossing the plane of the net or contacting the opponent block) will be called as faults.

Rule text specific to double contact is unchanged.

‘Push-Carry-Catch-Throw’ Tip Attack

Rule 9.2.2 The ball must not be caught and/or thrown. It can rebound in any direction.

To better understand the text of Rule 9.2.2:

1. A thrown ball involves two playing actions, first catching and then throwing the ball.
2. Playing the ball means that the ball rebounds from the contact point.

The referee must pay attention to the steadiness of the touch, particularly when a feint attack (“tip”) is used, changing the direction in the placing of the ball. During an attack hit, ‘tipping’ is permitted if the ball is not caught or thrown. ‘Tipping’ means an attack of the ball (completely above the height of the net) executed, gently, with the **fingers of one hand**, where the direction of the ball is changed only once during the action and the time in contact with the ball is short in time and in distance.

The first referee must watch closely. If the ball after this ‘tip’ does not instantly rebound, but is accompanied by the hand, is thrown from the palm of the hand, or its direction is changed more than once, it is a fault and must be penalized.

Summary

1. **NO** Push / **NO** Carry / **NO** Catch / **NO** Throw
2. The tip must be executed with ONE HAND
3. The tip must be executed with a SHORT CONTACT
4. The tip must be executed in a STRAIGHT LINE



Two (2) Handed Attacks

For any two-handed action sending the ball over the net, which is **NOT** a blocking action:

1. A deliberate two-handed attack hit, and
2. A two-handed overhead pass (setting action) that sends the ball over the net.

The first action is a **FAULT**.

The second action is a legal playing action and only results in a fault based on the quality of the contact.

With respect to Blocking Actions:

1. Any ball coming from the opponent's side, including a ball rebounding off the opponent's block, may be legally blocked.
2. Any ball coming from a team's own side, including a ball rebounding off its own block, is considered an attack hit when directed towards the opponent's court.

The referee's attention should be drawn to the fact that a player's blocking action will not be legal if he/she does not simply intercept the ball coming from the opponent, but holds it (or pushes, carries, throws, accompanies it). In such cases the referee must whistle this fault as a catch.

2026 – 27 Season of Play Decision: All interpretations will be applied by the referees.

Video Files

[2026 FIVB Rule Test Video Files](#)

Summary of Tests

Implemented in 2026 – 27

1. Limitation of Substitutions
2. Free Positioning of the Receiving Team
3. Internal Pass (continuation)
4. Updated interpretation for
 - a. Push – Carry – Throw Tip Attacks
 - b. Two Handed Attacks