COMPETITION RULES

A. ANNUAL MEN'S & WOMEN'S LEAGUES

1. DIVISIONS:

a. The number and size of Divisions will be decided at the Annual Fixture Meeting (AFM).

2. SEASON:

a. The season will run from October (following the AFM) to 15th May.
b. Fixtures may begin immediately after the AFM on dates agreed by the teams.
c. Matches not completed by 15th May will be declared void.

3. FORMAT OF MATCHES:

a. Matches will be played to FIVB Rules, except where stated differently in these rules.
b. Matches will be best of 5 sets, the first four (4) sets will be first to 25 points (with 2 clear points); and the fifth (5th) set first to 15 points (with 2 clear points).
c. Teams should book a minimum of 2 hours of court time for a home match.
d. Teams will normally play one another once at home and once away. Variations can be agreed to accommodate specific circumstances, but these must be agreed at the AFM.
e. Unfinished matches
    i. Matches which start on time and are unfinished when the 2 hour court booking ends should be replayed on another date. Costs should be shared if the match started on time, but should be met by the away team if they arrived more than 30 minutes late. (see rule 4.c).
    ii. Replayed matches will be best of 3 sets, starting at 1 set all (25 – 0; 0 – 25), but should be recorded on the scoresheet as best of 5 sets.
f. Double Headers
    i. If both teams agree in advance, then the 'home' and 'away' fixtures may be played as a "Double Header" at the same venue on the same evening.
    ii. "Double Headers" will be best of 3 sets, starting at 1 set all (25 – 0; 0 – 25), but scores will be recorded as best of 5 sets (as in 3.e.ii. above).
    iii. The home team must book enough time for the "Double Header" (at least 2.5h is recommended).

4. START TIMES:

a. Fixture Start Time
    i. The 'start time' arranged at the AFM and published on the website, is the time at which the venue becomes available to the teams for warm-up (*venue availability time*).
    ii. The *official match start time* should be 15 minutes after the agreed *venue availability time*, to allow both teams 15 minutes for warm-up.
    iii. Teams should be changed and ready to play at the *official match start time*.
b. Late Arrival and Forfeiture
    i. If a team is not ready to play at the *official match start time*, the following penalties shall apply:
        - 15 mins after *official match start time*: the team shall forfeit the first set (25–0).
        - 30 mins after *official match start time*: the team shall forfeit the second set (25–0).
        - 45 mins after *official match start time*: the team shall forfeit the match 3–0 (all sets 25–0)
c. Example of Timing
    i. Where the *venue availability time* is agreed for 19:00:
        - 19:00 – Venue becomes available for warm-up.
        - 19:15 – Official match start time.
        - 19:30 – First set forfeited if play has not commenced.
        - 19:45 – Second set forfeited if play has not commenced.
        - 20:00 – Match forfeited if play has not commenced.
d. Weekday Fixtures
    i. Teams are not obligated to accept weekday fixture start times earlier than 7.00 pm.

ii. Earlier starts will be allowed if agreed by both teams at the AFM or in advance of the match.

5. SCORESHEETS:

a. All matches must be scored on one of the two 'MVA SCORESHEETS' provided on the Info>Downloads section of the MVA website. Standard or Rotation Scoresheets are available:
SCORESHEET - STANDARD
SCORESHEET - ROTATION

b. After the match the scoresheet must be signed by the referee and both captains.

c. The fixture secretary of the WINNING team is responsible for ensuring that the scoresheet is correctly completed.

d. BOTH fixture secretaries must submit the result electronically to the league Results Secretary together with a photograph of the scoresheet. All results must be submitted electronically using SUBMIT RESULTS on the MVA website.

e. Results should be returned as soon as possible after the match and certainly within 3 days.

f. Teams failing to return the result within 3 days of the match will be sanctioned.
FINES, PENALTIES AND SANCTIONS

g. Any complaints and disputes or red / yellow cards shown during the match, should be noted in the Comments / Sanctions section of the scoresheet by the referee with an accompanying explanation.

h. Submission of incomplete scoresheets or those showing illegal players will incur a sanction at the discretion of the league results secretary – usually a deduction of points.

i. PLAYER VERIFICATION

i. Referees or team officials may wish to check that opposition players are registered and that the players correspond with the names entered on the scoresheet. The 'Teams' section on the MVA website includes the names and photographs of all registered players and should be used to confirm the eligibility of players.

ii. Unregistered players are ineligible and not allowed to take part in the match.

iii. Making false entries (where it can be seen from their photographs that team members don't correspond to the names entered on the scoresheet) is considered a serious offence and should be reported on the scoresheet and backed up by photographic evidence if possible. Teams and players guilty of this will face sanctions that can include points deduction, fines or bans.

j. REFEREE RATING

i. The online 'Submit Results' form provides the opportunity to rate the match referee using a star rating and comments box. Please complete this as it will count towards the Annual Award for best Referee.

ii. Negative comments should not be included in the form. The complaints procedure set out in rules F should be followed for any referee-related complaints.

k. MVP RATING

i. The online 'Submit Results' form also makes provision to vote the most valuable player for the opposing team. Trophies will be awarded at the end of the season to the players with the highest MVP votes in each division.

6. MATCH OFFICIALS:

a. FIRST REFEREE:

i. For Division 1 matches, home teams must provide an APPROVED First Referee.

1. A 'approved' referee must either hold a minimum of Grade 4 VE qualification or be recognised as proficient through previous experience and service in the MVA.
2. Clubs can put forward such individuals with a justification for consideration and decision by the MVA committee.
3. All referees should be registered using the website form, and a list of approved referees will be compiled and published on the MVA website.
REFEREE REGISTRATION
4. ***NOTE: THIS RULE WILL BE TRIALLED BUT NOT ENFORCED FOR THE 2026/27 SEASON***

ii. For all other divisions, home teams must provide a COMPETENT First Referee.

b. SCORER:
    i. In all divisions, home teams must also provide a competent Scorer.
c. If possible, a Second Referee and two line judges should also be provided.
d. In cases where the First Referee is also the Coach of the home team, this must be made known to the away team before the match. The referee / coach may call time-outs & substitutions but may not otherwise coach during the match.

7. LEAGUE POINTS:

a. Teams will be awarded:
- 3 league points for a win or claimed match (if claim has been agreed by the results secretary)
- 2 league points for a win with only 5 players in the team. (See Rule 14).
- 1 league point for a lost match (if played).
- 0 league points for a conceded or void match.

8. FINAL LEAGUE POSITIONS:

a. Final League Positions are decided on 16th May. Positions will be decided using the following formula:
    1. The team with the most League Points gained will be the Champion / Division winner.
    2. If two or more teams are equal on League Points, the winner will be decided first on sets difference, then on points difference in the head-to-head matches between the teams involved.
    N.B. This is to end the unfairness if one team has claimed or been awarded matches 3 – 0, or if a double-header has been played.

9. WITHDRAWAL OR FAILURE TO COMPLETE FIXTURES:

a. If a team withdraws from the MVA during the season or plays fewer than 75% of its fixtures, including void and conceded matches, all its results will be discarded and it will be placed at the bottom of its' division.

10. PROMOTION AND RELEGATION:

a. Promotion and relegation between all Divisions will normally operate on a 2-up and 2-down basis.
b. Teams finishing 1st or 2nd in each division will be promoted by right, but the MVA accepts that in exceptional circumstances clubs should be allowed to remain in a lower division if they can offer a strong case to do so.
c. The merits of both the teams that do not wish to be relegated, and those finishing below 2nd place in a lower division but wishing to be promoted, will be considered in filling any vacancies which arise in higher divisions.
d. Other teams in the relevant divisions may be asked to consider these promotion and relegation issues at the Annual Fixture Meeting.

11. CANCELLATIONS AND REARRANGEMENTS:

a. Dates of fixtures arranged at the AFM should be adhered to and only be re-arranged IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES.
b. If automation is used to make fixtures at the AFM, then teams will be allowed to adjust any fixture dates within the first 2 weeks of the season without penalty.
c. Home teams should confirm fixtures with their opponents at least SEVEN days before the fixture.
d. If both teams agree to change the date in advance, they may do so if the Results Secretary is informed and agrees to the change.
e. All postponements / rearrangements should be notified to the Results Secretary using the online Rearrangement Form as soon as they are made: MATCH REARRANGEMENT
f. Postponed matches should be rearranged within 7 days of the original fixture date, and the new date immediately communicated to the Results Secretary.
g. If one team disagrees to the change of date, the matter should be referred to the League Chair for arbitration.
h. Fixtures may only be rearranged once by each of the teams involved. If a rearranged match cannot be played on the agreed date due to factors beyond the control of the teams concerned, a 3rd date may be agreed by both parties. If the match cannot be completed on that date it will be declared void.
i. DOUBLE HEADERS

i. Teams may not decide on the day that they would prefer to play a single header rather than the double header as arranged. At least 2 days' notice must be given and the approval of the other team and the Results Secretary obtained.

j. Games cancelled less than 72 hours before the date agreed at the AFM will be automatically conceded by the cancelling team.
   i. Both teams should inform the Results Secretary of the cancellation using the online Match Claim form: MATCH CLAIM
   ii. The team causing the late cancellation will be responsible for meeting any irretrievable costs of the fixture (e.g. sports hall hire, referee's fees, unnecessary travel, etc.)
   iii. Claims for reimbursement should be submitted in writing or by e-mail to the League Chair.

12. TEAM SHIRTS

a. It is compulsory that all players in Division 1 matches wear numbered shirts. Ideally the kit will be uniform.
b. If a team has more than 6 players available with numbered shirts, any players without numbered shirts will not be allowed to play.
c. Where there are only 6 players, a sanction will be applied for each non-conforming shirt.
d. Although not compulsory, it is recommended that teams in lower divisions also wear numbered matching shirts.

13. COURTS AND EQUIPMENT:

a. The Committee may rule on the suitability of courts and equipment and may decide that courts are:
   i. suitable for all League & Cup matches.
   ii. suitable only for League matches below the First Division.
b. New teams may be required to demonstrate their courts/ equipment meet the required standard.

14. TEAMS WITH ONLY 5 (FIVE) PLAYERS:

a. Division 1 matches may not be started with only 5 players in either team.
b. In all other divisions teams may start matches with only 5 players in unavoidable circumstances.
c. Teams with 5 players should play with 3 front court and 2 back court players.
d. 5 player teams will be awarded only 2 league points for a win.
e. The match scoresheet should clearly show any team with only 5 players, and this should be reported when submitting the match result online.
f. If a team knows in advance that it will have only 5 players, the opposition team should be informed before the game.
g. If a team is reduced to 5 players through injury, it may continue to play but will only receive 2 league points for a win.

B. TEAM REGISTRATION & ELIGIBILITY OF PLAYERS

1. REPRESENTATION:

a. All teams must be represented at the Annual Fixture Meeting.
b. In exceptional circumstances teams that cannot send a representative must provide a list of available dates for their home fixtures even if this must be done by phone or e-mail on the night of the AFM. Failure to do so will mean the team will not be accepted into the league.

2. TEAM REGISTRATION:

a. All teams must submit the Team Registration form on the website, including the team name, fixture secretary details, venue, match times etc. BEFORE the Annual Fixture meeting, to allow confirmation of the number of teams entered and the league structure. TEAM REGISTRATION

3. PLAYER REGISTRATION:

a. All teams must submit their Player Registrations using the online form, including player names, photo & NVL status before their first match of the season. PLAYER REGISTRATION

b. Teams may register additional players during the season, using the online Player Registration form. Providing the form has been completed and submitted prior to the start of any match, and the opponents have been made aware of this, the player will be allowed to play
c. Unregistered players are considered illegal and teams fielding them will normally be sanctioned.
d. Clubs that enter 2 or more teams in the league must register separate A, B, C (etc.) squads.
e. Clubs that enter 2 or more teams in the league must 'STAR' 4 players in each team except the lowest team.
f. STARRED PLAYERS may only play for the team for which they are starred, and should be the expected best players in the team that are regularly playing. All nominations are subject to committee approval.
g. Starred players are expected to play in the majority of their teams matches throughout the season.
    i. If for any reason a starred player is not likely to play in the majority of matches, they should be changed as early as possible.
h. Clubs are permitted to enter two teams in the same division, but must identify separate squads and star players for each team on their registration forms. Unstarred players may play for the other team in the same division but only to make up a maximum of 7 players when the other team is short.
i. If opposing clubs consider their opponents have unreasonably strengthened their team by using substitute players in this way they may appeal to the Results Secretary.
j. If clubs have a second (or third) team in a lower division, players from that team may 'play-up' for teams in the higher division. In this case there will be no restriction on the number of players allowed.
k. Clubs may re-register 'STARRED' players for a different team within the same club but only IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, and with the prior approval of the Results Secretary (who may refer the decision to the full Executive Committee).
l. No player may register for more than one team in the MVA, with one exception: women may play for a team in a Men's Division, (even if that team is from a different club) but must register separately as players for that club/team in the normal way.
m. NATIONAL LEAGUE (NVL) PLAYERS
    i. All NVL Registered Players must be identified during registration on the online Player Registration form. Where possible, this information must also be made available at the AFM.
    ii. All Junior players must be identified during registration on the online Player Registration form. A Junior player is defined as someone who is under 18 on 31st August in the season start year.
    iii. MVA Division 1
        1. Any NVL registered players may play in MVA Division 1.
    iv. MVA Division 2
        1. Only players registered in the lowest NVL divisions may play in MVA Division 2.
        2. A limit of one senior and two junior NVL players can be recorded on the match scoresheet.
        3. There is no limit on the number of WOMEN NVL players that can play in Men's Division 2.
    v. MVA Division 3
        1. No NVL registered players (men, women or juniors) may play in MVA Division 3
    vi. New NVL players may not be brought in at the end of the season to strengthen teams competing for honours. Teams will be allowed to register new NVL players without further approval only if they have 3 or more games left to play.

C. CLUB MERGERS

1. To enable clubs with a limited number of players to continue to compete in the league, a club may apply to 'MERGE' with another specified club.
2. Any mergers for the upcoming season must be proposed at least 2 weeks prior to the AGM.
3. The merger proposal should be presented and voted on at the AGM, and if accepted should be adhered to.
4. In this case the same rules will apply as for clubs with two teams in one division (rule B3). Each club must identify separate squads and 'star' 4 players for any teams involved in the merger. Unstarred players from these teams may play for the others but only to make up a maximum of 7 when one team is short.
5. Opposing clubs will have the right to appeal if they consider the rule is being abused and teams are being strengthened unreasonably (particularly for significant matches).

D. TRANSFERS

1. Transfer of players between teams must be agreed by both clubs and teams must obtain the permission of the Results Secretary using the online Player Transfer form: PLAYER TRANSFER
2. Players may normally transfer ONLY ONCE during a season.
3. IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, a second transfer may be allowed; but only with the prior permission of the Results Secretary (who may refer the decision to the full Executive Committee).

E. SANCTIONS, FINES AND PENALTIES

1. Sanctions, fines and penalties will be set annually by the Executive Committee and published on the MVA Website: FINES, PENALTIES AND SANCTIONS
2. CLAIMS
    a. Late or non-arrival of a home or visiting team, which results in a loss of money for the hire of sports hall, unnecessary travel or officials' fees (etc.) should be claimed in writing or by email to the League Chair to claim reimbursement from the offending team.
    b. Other rule breaches including fielding illegal players, failure to register players, failure to inform the results secretary and other teams in the same division of a change in fixture secretary, non-attendance at arranged fixtures, etc. will be sanctioned and teams will be fined or docked points according to the list of sanctions set out on the website.

F. DISPUTES AND APPEALS

1. DISPUTES AND CLAIMS

a. Late arrival, non-arrival, incompleteness of teams and/or match officials or any other contravention of MVA rules should be reported to the League Results Secretary by the match referee or one of the team captains using the COMPLAINT FORM
b. Teams wishing to claim matches should complete and return the online MATCH CLAIM form to the Results Secretary, with a copy to the opposing team, within 7 days of the date of the fixture.
c. Claims will be decided initially by the Results Secretary.

2. APPEALS

a. Teams or individuals who are not satisfied by the findings of the Results Secretary may appeal. To do so they must submit a written statement setting out the grounds for their appeal to the League Chair, who will respond within 7 days. The complainant must inform any other clubs involved in the dispute in writing, enclosing a copy of their submission to the League Chair.
b. If the Chair is unable to satisfactorily resolve the issue the complainant may be referred to an APPEALS PANEL.
c. Appeals panels will be drawn from a group of volunteers/ nominees identified at the AFM. The panel will normally comprise three or five members identified by the League Chair.
d. Interested clubs will be asked to nominate a representative to attend the appeal hearing at which the matter is discussed.
e. Appeals will normally be conducted via online meetings convened and run by the league chair. The league secretary will attend to record the proceedings. The complainant will be given the opportunity to present their case, and questions and comments from the interested parties will be invited.
f. Following the appeal hearing, the panel will be asked to determine the outcome (going to a vote if necessary) and to submit their findings to the league chair. The League Chair and Secretary will not have a vote.
g. The League Chair will convey the results on behalf of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee's decision is final.

3. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE TIMETEABLE

a. Submit Complaint form from MVA website by email to MVA Chair within 7 days.
b. Results Secretary to respond within 14 days.
c. Appeal must then be lodged within 7 days.
d. Appeal date set by League Chair (must be within 14 days.
e. The Appeal Decision to be issued within a further 7 days.

G. OTHER COMPETITIONS

1. MENS /WOMENS/MIXED CUP COMPETITIONS will be arranged in response to demand. These may be traditional knock-out cups or 'Handicap' cups. Teams will be canvassed for interest and the preferred format at the Annual Fixture Meeting.
2. The League will organise annual 'Des Jeffers' and Brian Kendall Cup tournaments for men and women. The 'Des Jeffers" tournament will normally be held at the beginning of the season as a 'curtain raiser' event, and the Brian Kendall Cup at the end of the season. These will be open events allowing entries from MVA registered and other invited teams.
3. The league may organise other tournaments or competitions as required.

H. REPRESENTATIVE TEAMS

1. The MVA may organise County and Area Representative Teams (i.e. Merseyside and Cheshire Men's and Women's teams) if there is enough interest.
    a. The division between the two counties / areas will follow the River Mersey. The county / area to the north and east of the river will be 'Merseyside' and the county / area to the south and west will be 'Cheshire'.
    b. Coaching Organisers will be appointed to the MVA Executive Committee to be responsible for each County / Area.
    c. Players will be selected for County / Area squads at trials or selection tournaments organised by the Coaching Organisers.
    d. The County / Area Squads will be self-financing.
2. The MVA will organise Merseyside & Cheshire Junior Squads when suitable competitions arise.