



AMERICAN CUESPORTS ALLIANCE

Phone (920) 662-1705 • (888) 662-1705 • Fax (920) 662-1706

Email: jlewis@americancuesports.org

The AMERICAN CUESPORTS ALLIANCE is a *Colorado Incorporated, Non-profit Organization* that sanctions amateur pool leagues and stages annual state, regional, and national pool championships. The ACS provides various sport programs for their membership to advance the sport of table billiards within the United States.

LEAGUE OPERATOR MANUAL

Any person can become an ACS sanctioned League Operator in the United States and overseas. The purpose of this manual is to assist League Operators in creating and managing pool leagues and having their league members compete in ACS championship tournaments.

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Join the ACS league system

For anyone who already has a pool league, or is considering starting one, the ACS league system extends an invitation to join its 22,000+ members from coast to coast in the United States and Canada (CCS).

While playing in a local pool league is fun, it can be more exciting for the players and teams to be able to travel to other areas and compete in championship tournaments. The ACS conducts the best managed and most well-organized championship tournaments offered in North America.

Championship program

- Over \$500,000 in prize money is awarded annually in ACS/CCS championship tournaments.
- Every ACS/CCS championship is well-organized and professionally run. The championship program is web-based, complete with tournament organizers, directors, and referees who are second to none.
- ACS/CCS championship tournaments are conducted in localities close to nearly all its members. Sanctioned league players are eligible to play in any ACS/CCS event. Exclusive of affiliated ACS/CCS state and provincial associations – open to ACS/CCS league members from their respective states or provinces – ACS/CCS major regional and national events include:

ACS

Midwest 8-Ball Championships	January 17-21, 2018	Davenport, IA
U.S. National Championships (8 & 9-Ball)	May 12-19, 2018	Las Vegas, NV

CCS

Maritimes Championships	Mid-November	Nova Scotia
Vancouver Island Championships	Mid-November	British Columbia
BC's Championships	February	British Columbia
Canadian National Championships	March 13-18	Niagara Falls, ON
Western Canadian Championships	April	Alberta

FAQs

Do players have to be the best?

The answer is absolutely not. Professional players are not allowed to participate in any of the ACS championship tournaments. All the events at ACS championship tournaments are also separated into divisions, based on skill level. Everyone has a chance at winning a division title and taking home the top prize.

What does membership cost?

There are no League Operator fees. When sanctioning a league with ACS, all players on all teams must pay an annual ACS league member fee. The amount depends on how many players are being sanctioned by the League Operator. See schedule below.

30-300:	\$10.00 per player
301-500:	\$ 9.50 per player
501-1,000:	\$ 9.00 per player
1,000+:	\$ 8.00 per player

Every ACS sanctioned player and team is eligible to enter any ACS championship, regardless of whether they have won a paid trip from their league, or not. Programs for referees, instructors, and juniors are also available. Any junior league players sanctioned with ACS are eligible to compete at the ACS National Junior Championships held in conjunction with the annual ACS National Championships in Las Vegas each year. Top junior players are also eligible to compete in the Junior National 9-Ball Championships, produced by the Billiard Education Foundation (BEF) without having to pay any extra sanction fees.

Who Is the ACS?

The ACS is a Colorado incorporated non-profit amateur athletic association. The ACS Board of Directors controls the organization for the benefit of the ACS League Operators and all of its members. Others who provide suggestions, recommendations, and ideas on the growth and future of the ACS are other non-profit cue sport organizations, referees, instructors, and proprietors. The membership fees and contributions are used to support the ACS pool leagues and their players – and the championship tournaments and programs THEY desire.

The ACS recognizes the official *World Standardized Rules*, as established by the World Pool-Billiard Association (WPA). The WPA is the world governing body for cue sports.

How do I join?

Joining the ACS is very easy. The league year runs from June 1st to May 31st. Anyone can become an ACS League Operator. Any existing league can sanction with the ACS. There are no exclusive “franchises” and no restrictions on table ownership or table type. A league can be owner-operated or player-governed (for profit or non-profit). A league can be in-house (playing at a single location) or traveling (playing out of several locations). It can be of any playing format (8-Ball, 9-Ball, Straight Pool, etc.). Any game played on a pool table organized into team play can be sanctioned.

The minimum requirements for a league to be sanctioned by the ACS are: 30 or more players playing on at least six teams, over a minimum 8-week schedule. Highlights are:

- The league can be pre-sanctioned at anytime by downloading the sanction forms from the ACS website www.americancuesports.org. Complete and mail them with the appropriate sanction fees to the ACS national office. Contact ACS for promotional posters to for the league recruitment program.
- After completing four weeks of league play, send copies of the completed application, policy agreement, current league team and player standings sheets, team rosters, and applicable sanction fees. This fulfills the initial sanctioning requirements.
- The ACS will send membership cards and handbooks for each sanctioned player. When the minimum number of matches specified in the tournament rules (usually 4 to 8) are completed, qualifying players and teams are eligible to compete in any of the ACS championship tournaments.
- Players joining after the initial submission can be sanctioned by submitting their contact information along with the league/player standings sheets. Standings sheets are submitted to the national office every four weeks throughout the league year.

Need some help getting started?

Call or email the ACS national office. The ACS staff will be happy to answer any questions, including how to proceed in organizing new leagues. TEL: 920-662-1705 / EMAIL: info@americancuesports.org

ACS 2017/2018 League Sanction Application

[ACS league year is June 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018]

League name _____

Officer receiving mail _____ Officer title _____

Mailing address _____

City _____ State/Prov. _____ Zip/postal code _____

Phone: home _____ work _____ mobile/cell _____

(Circle preferred telephone numbers)

Email address _____

Check here to authorize publication of your circled telephone numbers and email address on our website.

Other primary officer _____ Title _____

Phone: home _____ work _____ mobile/cell _____

(Circle preferred telephone numbers)

Email address _____

Check here to authorize publication of your circled telephone numbers and email address on our website.

League Description (check the two appropriate boxes):

- Owner-operator (one who owns the local league as a for-profit business)
- Player-run (players elect/appoint officers – local league is non-profit)
- In-house (all teams and competition are hosted in one establishment)
- Traveling (league has multiple host sites)

League Type: Men's Women's Mixed Scotch Doubles Other _____

League Season Begins: Summer Fall Spring

League Information:

of Players _____ # of Teams _____ Night(s) of Play _____

Approximate Guaranteed Prize Money _____

Prize Money Distribution (how many places paid) _____

Bank for League Funds _____

Bank Address _____

ACS league sanction policy agreement

1. **Non-exclusivity:** The signing of this agreement by local league officers does not confer any exclusive rights to a region or territory by the ACS.
2. **League sanctioning deadline:** League Operators must complete ACS sanctioning agreements with fees and roster sheets (see League Operator instructions) no later than the fifth week of play of the league's first sanctioned session. Forms mailed after the fifth week of the first session could result in the league not being sanctioned for that session. After initial sanctioning, team and individual standings sheets must be submitted every four weeks. New player information and member fees must also be included, as applicable.
3. **Minimum participation requirements:** To qualify for ACS National Championships in any division, a sanctioned player must compete in at least eight full regular matches over a minimum eight weeks during one sanctioned session. For example: if the local playing format is for a player to compete in four games for a match, the player must have played at least 32 games over eight matches (minimum) during that sanctioned session.
4. **Minimum team structure requirements:** Open teams at the ACS National Championships must have at least three players who meet the minimum participation requirements (see item 3) and have played on the same local team. Other team players (roster maximum of 10) must be from the same sanctioned league and also meet the minimum participation requirements (see item 3).
5. **Player not in good standing:** The league Secretary must notify the ACS in writing or by email of any player who is no longer in good standing with the league.
6. **Issues with dual-sanctioning:** A league sanctioned with another national league association may also sanction with the ACS (dual-sanctioning) as long as the purpose is not to undermine the ACS or any ACS sanctioned league in the area. Leagues should request and submit a printed "dual-sanction" application. Applications will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the national office. A league must have a signed approval agreement allowing dual-sanctioning before it sends in the initial sanctioning forms and fees. The ACS national office will only approve dual-sanctioning of a local league if it deems the request is made solely for the purpose of offering its players extra benefits.
7. **Protection of Nights:** If a new or pre-existing ACS league chooses to move or expand play to nights of the week in which another ACS league in the same area has traditionally played, the ACS will exercise its best efforts to prevent league membership competition. Generally, the league that was established first will be supported to retain the exclusivity of their night of play.
8. **Rules of Play:** ACS recognizes the *World Standardized Rules* as published by the world-governing body for the sport – the World Pool-Billiard Association (WPA). It is recommended that ACS-sanctioned leagues adopt the WPA *World Standardized Rules*, but requiring that local leagues adopt these rules is not mandatory.

We have read the above policies, and we agree to adhere to the rules and standards set forth in this application and in the ACS League Operator Manual. We shall, to the best of our ability, enforce these guidelines with the participants in our league. We understand that we are totally responsible for the fulfillment of all our league's obligations. Such obligations include, but are not limited to, advertising, preparing league schedules, determining the amounts of awards and prize monies, updating and posting weekly standings sheets, fulfilling sanction obligations to the ACS on a monthly basis, overseeing the safety and security of league funds, notifying league participants of any material changes in the league, and generally fulfilling all obligations and responsibilities attendant thereto. We further recognize that all costs for the league are the full and exclusive responsibility of the signed officers below. We specifically indemnify and hold harmless the American CueSports Alliance (ACS), headquartered in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and its employees and directors, of any responsibilities, costs and attorney fees, or obligations attendant to the administration of this billiards league.

League President _____ League Secretary _____

Date _____ Date _____

League Operator details

Submission requirements

The League Operator must submit all completed sanction forms and sanction fees to the ACS national headquarters before the FIFTH week of competition in each session.

The League Operator must submit the sanction fee for every player competing in league.

The following forms and information must be included in the initial sanctioning application package sent to the ACS national office:

- Signed *Sanction Application*
- Signed *League Operator Directions* (returned with applications)
- Signed *Sanction/Policy Agreement*
- Read and understand the *League Operator Code of Ethics*
- Team roster information, which must include:
 - League name,
 - Team name, and
 - Names and specified contact information for all team members.
 - Any players sanctioned through another ACS league must be marked with an asterisk (*), and the name of the league posted by the asterisk at the bottom of the page.
- Weekly standings sheets for all weeks already played, and
- League schedules.

Forms sent every four weeks:

- Updates to team rosters
- Weekly standings for each week of play, which must include:
 - Name of the league and the League Operator,
 - Date of standings, and
 - Full name of each player, team name, number of weeks played, wins/losses, etc.
 - Do NOT send score sheets.
 - Statistics can be submitted by email, fax, or mail.

The ACS must receive the complete submissions listed above for the sanction application to be approved.

I have read and understand the requirements listed above.

League Operator signature _____

Date _____

Mail to:

League Sanctioning
American CueSports Alliance
101 S. Military Ave., Suite P - #131
Green Bay, WI 54303

Starting a pool league

This summary provides a chronological approach from the creation of the pool league through to the conclusion of its first session. Additional information is provided elsewhere in the *League Operator Manual*. The most common league format is 8-Ball (used as an example here). For other formats (9-Ball, Straight Pool, One Pocket, etc.), contact the ACS national office for assistance.

Anyone can be a League Operator and sanction their league with the ACS. All pool leagues are encouraged to sanction with the ACS. This allows their players and teams to be eligible to compete in any ACS championship tournament held during the league year. They have the opportunity to compete in the U.S. National Championships held in Las Vegas, as well as various national and regional events produced by the ACS's sister organization – the Canadian Cue Sport Association (CCS). This provides opportunities to play in amateur-only competitions for large prize funds. Professional players are not allowed to compete in any ACS/CCS championship tournament.

Following these guidelines is not mandatory for leagues that sanction with the ACS. Although each league's situation is unique, the principles and tasks involved in running a successful league generally are very similar. The ACS will not interfere with the day-to-day administration of its sanctioned leagues. Its mission is only to assist League Operators and promote the sport.

League Operator types

The most common League Operator types are:

- A group of players who have gathered together and want to run their league as they choose,
- A billiard club owner who wants to increase business by providing a value-added service to his regular and new patrons,
- A pool table vending company who wants to increase business by providing a value-added service to its locations, or
- An individual who wants to create a business opportunity by providing league services to players.

Start up

League members generally consider playing pool as a form of entertainment. If they aren't having fun, they may choose to drop out. They want an environment that is friendly and one that provides fair competition, and they expect the League Operator to provide these things, along with whatever else has been promised.

The first step in forming a league is to talk with as many players as possible. Find out what will interest them enough to be interested in joining a league. When enough information has been collected to form a consensus, schedule a meeting of key players, and finalize the league format – matches, games, scoring system, handicaps, team sizes, etc.

The next step in the process is advertising and recruitment. The league does not have to be large. However, the ACS does require leagues to have at least 6 teams and a minimum of 30 players. The league must play a schedule of at least 8 weeks. 8-Ball is the most common game played in local leagues, but any game of billiards is permitted, provided it is organized on a team basis.

The size of an average ACS pool league is 12 to 16 teams. A team must have at least 2 players. Singles leagues will not be sanctioned. Contact the ACS national office for additional information, if necessary.

Where

- Pool leagues may be either in-house or traveling. In-house leagues play at one location. Traveling leagues play at two or more locations. Generally, teams play half of their matches as visiting teams and half of their matches as home teams.
- League management is usually determined by the league organizer. In-house leagues are usually run by the billiard club proprietor. Traveling leagues are usually organized by a group of players who elect the league officers.

When

- Most pool leagues play on weekday evenings, although some schedule their play on the weekends; usually on Sunday. The evenings of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are most often favored because they are often the slower business nights for host locations. It is usually not advisable to choose a night that would conflict with another local pool league.
- Start times can vary depending on the match format. Most leagues start at 7:00 or 7:30 p.m., and unusually finish before 11:00 p.m. Some league members may work late shifts and others may start their workdays early, so the start time should be set to accommodate as many league members as possible.

Match formats and team rosters

- Common match formats are 4-player teams (playing a total of 16 games) or 5-player teams (playing a total of 15, 20, or 25 games). Rotating play means that in a 4-player team, 16-game format, for example, all players on each team play one game against each of the other team's players, for a total of 16 games.
- Teams of four players may be easier to recruit. If establishing 5-player teams, selecting the 15-, 20-, or 25-game format may be crucial, depending on the average skill level of the teams. If the league has a large number of less skilled players, it will take longer for them to complete their games. Therefore, a 20- or 25-game format would probably not be advisable.
- In ACS National and regional 8-Ball team championships, 5-player teams compete using a 25-game rotating match format.
- ACS recommends that league team rosters not exceed 10 players, the maximum allowed at all ACS championship tournaments. With a 10-player roster, only four or five will actually play in any given match. Substitution of players during a match is allowed at ACS championship tournaments.

Scoring and handicaps

- Every league must maintain and publish team standings, and individual standings, if applicable.
- Some leagues only record games won or lost and team standings are determined by total wins. If the number of games played is an even number, a tie-breaker rule is necessary.
- Utilizing a handicap system helps to equalize the competition. In 8-Ball, the ACS recommended handicap system awards 1 point for every object ball pocketed and 3 points for pocketing the 8-Ball, for a total of 10 points to the winner of the game. A player's ball count point (BCP) average is calculated by dividing the player's total points scored to date by the number of games played to date.
- Handicapping requires additional player statistics to be maintained by the league secretary. Although handicaps are not used in the ACS National Championships and most other ACS championship tournaments, ACS does recommend the use of handicaps in league play to help keep the teams in the league competitive.

Rules

- ACS championship tournaments are conducted under the WPA *World Standardized Rules* published by the World Pool-Billiard Association, which is available on the ACS website. Every sanctioned league member is provided with a handbook that includes these rules.
- ACS recommends adopting the WPA *World Standardized Rules*, as they are the rules that govern all championship tournaments conducted by the ACS.

Schedule

- League schedules can start at any time of the year and be of any length. The ACS league year runs from June 1 to May 31. A sanctioned league must schedule of at least 8 weeks of competition per session.
- Summer leagues (June to August) usually run for 8-12 weeks.
- Winter leagues (September to March) usually run for 24-30 weeks.
- Some leagues opt to schedule three or four 10- to 15-week sessions each year.
- A balanced schedule is one where each team plays every other team in the league an equal number of times, alternating between being the home and visitor team.
- A league schedule is not required to be balanced. Examples of league schedules (see pages 18 and 19) can be adapted to fit local league requirements. If a league has an odd number of teams, a “BYE” team must be added to bring the league size to an even number of teams.

Fees and prizes

- League member fees and prizes are important considerations when forming a league. The most common league fees are registration fees, administration fees, table fees, and prize fund fees.
- When sanctioned, each member must pay the \$10 annual ACS member registration fee. Local or regional registration fees may also be assessed.
- Some leagues charge administration fees to cover the cost of supplies and other administrative expenses. Such expenses may be absorbed by a billiard room operator, be used to cover actual costs, or be paid as a stipend to the league Secretary. If the league is run as a business, the person who administers the league will receive an agreed-upon fee.
- Host locations usually charge table fees to play on their tables. However, many hosts provide free or discounted table fees to encourage additional food and drink sales. Hosting a league is only an effort on the part of the host location to increase its business.
- Nearly all leagues have prize fund fees. A common amount might be \$5 per player or \$20 per team per night. Prize fund fees can be used to cover variety of expenses, such as awards, banquet expense, or team travel expenses to attend ACS championship tournaments. Prize fund fees may also be used to pay out performance-based awards to individuals and teams, purchase products (cues, cue tools, jackets, etc.) to raffle off or serve as awards, or to purchase any other type of award approved by the league.
- The collection and disbursement of league funds must be well-documented and made available to all league members. All funds collected must be distributed, in total, back to the league members. ACS recommends that the league officers:
 - Meet with the team captains and allow them decide how to distribute the prize fund,
 - Do not change the payouts after they have been voted upon, and
 - Prepare and publish a prize fund financial statement, documenting all receipts and disbursements.

Handicaps

Pool leagues are sporting competitions by nature. However, some teams that join the league often will not complete the session if they feel they don't have a reasonable chance of winning matches and prizes. Below are some suggestions that may assist League Operators in retaining teams in their leagues.

- The ACS recommends that its leagues adopt a handicap system for league play. Doing so does not ensure a win for the lesser-skilled team, but it does go a long way toward leveling the playing field. Even if a team does not win, they realize that at least they had a reasonable chance. Also, by using a handicap system, higher skilled teams have to play close to their ability in order to win their matches.
- If the league has a play-off at the end of the session, and especially if there is prize money at stake, extending the use of handicaps to the play-off is strongly recommended.

- Some leagues split their teams into two play-off groups – top and bottom half – based on final team standings. This requires a pre-determined split of the prize fund between the two play-off groups. By adopting this play-off method, the lower skilled teams have an opportunity to win a larger share of the prize fund, and the top teams are still competing for the top prize. It is recommended to spread the prize fund around as much as possible, even to the extent that every team wins something.

League officers

The most common league officer structure includes a President, Treasurer, and Secretary. If the league is formed by a group of players, these positions are usually elected by the team captains. If it is a business-run league, the officers are usually appointed. The league officers are responsible for establishing league policies and rules, administering the league funds, settling disputes, and otherwise transacting league business as required. The specific duties of the league officers are as follows.

- President – is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the league. All league meetings are chaired by the President.
- Treasurer – is responsible for the banking and disbursement of all league funds. ACS recommends that a separate league bank account be established and that all disbursements require the signatures of two league officers. Bank statements should be made available for inspection by any league member.
- Secretary – is responsible for auditing and processing score sheets and preparing team and player statistical reports. Duties also include league sanctioning, league entry processing, and the preparation of all league correspondence.
- Committees - Some leagues also establish player committees to help administer the league, such as the tournament committee, banquet committee, or a Board of Governors to resolve disputes.

Advertising and recruiting

Once the structure of the league has been established in collaboration with key players and some teams have been formed, the next step in the process of forming the league is advertising and recruiting additional players and teams. Below are some suggestions to assist in the league's recruiting efforts:

Sign-up sheets

These forms (posters, flyers, team rosters) do not have to be professionally prepared. However, they must include the essentials of what the league is offering, along with contact information and instructions regarding how to sign-up for the league. This is considerably easier for an in-house league. For a traveling league, these forms should be distributed to all the potential host locations, after obtaining prior permission from the locations. For the ACS National Championships, posters are provided free of charge, including one for recruiting teams.

Host locations

The host locations can greatly assist in team recruiting, as it is in their best interest to do so. Ask the owner to have the location staff promote the league among their regular customers. When a location hosts a pool league, the league members are guaranteed to patronize the business throughout the entire league session.

Players

The League Operator's objective is to recruit team captains, rather than individual players. Everyone has friends or family with whom they would like to play and those people know others who might be interested in participating. The best advertising is always word of mouth. Tell everyone that, if they want to make the league a success, they should make every effort to tell as many other people as possible about the league. Some leagues may even offer incentives in this regard.

Sign-up meeting

At least one sign-up meeting in should be listed in league promotional materials. This meeting is held to explain what the league is offering and to answer any questions or concerns. The meeting also provides an opportunity for individual players to meet and form teams. At this meeting, league officers should be elected or announced.

Late start

Even after the sign-up deadline has passed and league play has begun, it is still possible to bring new teams into the league. Any new teams would have to make up the matches missed and pay all required back league fees. However, some leagues will allow a new team to enter the league only if it is replacing a team that has withdrawn from the league.

League start

Once the teams have been formed and the start date has been set, below are a few things that should be completed before the first match is played.

Rules clinic

It is strongly recommended to conduct a rules clinic for all team captains and interested players who are not familiar with the WPA *World Standardized Rules* or the match format and scoring system the league will use.

Captains meeting

ACS recommends that, at the beginning of a new session, a mandatory meeting of all team captains is held. Captains should be their team's primary knowledge resource; the first person any player goes to with questions about playing rules, procedures, etc. This meeting's main objectives are:

- Collecting all members' contact details, including phone and email,
- Voting on the prize fund distribution, playing nights, playing format, etc.,
- Going over the score sheets and how they are to be submitted,
- Ensuring that everyone is knowledgeable of the league rules,
- Explaining the league's standards of behavior and sportsmanship, and
- Updating everyone regarding valuable lessons learned from previous sessions.

League schedule

The league schedule must be finalized and distributed to all the team captains, and to all host locations, if applicable. This can be done by physically distributing the schedules, posting the information on a league website, or by emailing the schedule to all team captains and host locations.

Team handbook

ACS recommends that a team handbook be prepared and distributed to the team captains. The team handbook should describe the following.

- Purpose of the league,
- Contact information for league officers and team captains,
- Key dates – league start/finish, captains meetings, play-offs, awards banquet, ACS championship tournaments, etc.,
- All league fees – how paid, when due, and how to be disbursed,
- Team rosters, match format, and scoring system, and
- Good sportsmanship guidelines and general league policies.

League nights

Week 1

If possible, all league matches on the first night should be visited by a representative of the league who can answer any questions that may arise. By definition, handicaps cannot apply, as the players have not yet established their averages.

After Week 1

Once the league session has started, matches have been played, and score sheets and league fees have been turned in by the team captains, the league Secretary is responsible for performing the following duties:

- Record league fees paid by each team,
- Deposit league fees received into the league bank account,
- Record points won by each team and prepare the team standings report,
- If the league uses a handicap system, record the points scored by each player, compute each player's ball count point average, and
- Distribute the team standings and player statistics report to team captains prior to the following week's matches.

After Week 4

The league should be solidified by this time and the following items need to be addressed.

Prize fund

If the league has opted for a prize fund, the total amount can now be computed. Determine exactly what the prizes are and how they are to be won. This includes any administration costs, awards, banquet fees, etc. to be distributed from the prize fund.

If the league Secretary is paid from the prize fund, the amount must be stipulated. It is suggested that the league officers prepare proposed prize fund distributions, but approval should be decided by a vote of the team captains. Once the prize fund has been approved, it should only be changed if the number of teams in the league changes, or if there are unexpected extenuating circumstances.

A summary of all prize fund payouts, including how they can be won, should be clearly documented and made known to all the players. ACS recommends that the league have a play-off after the end of the session and that all, or a majority, of the prize fund is contested for at that time. This provides an incentive for all teams to remain in the league and to play out the entire schedule.

ACS sanctioning

After the 4th week of league play, the *ACS League Sanction Policy Agreement* calls for the submission of a copy of the team standings and related player statistics along with the \$10 annual membership fee for every player who has played in the league. Submission of additional membership fees for players who join later are to be submitted on a monthly basis. Also, on a monthly or weekly basis, you may email your stats to ACS

A full re-submission of reports and any outstanding member fees is required one month prior to any ACS championship in which the league has players or teams competing. If a player plays in more than one league session, or more than one league division in a league year, only one membership fee payment is required.

Team roster freeze

ACS recommends all team rosters be frozen at some point, usually halfway through the league schedule. This prevents teams from adding stronger players near the end of the session to gain an advantage in the play-offs. ACS suggests that after the roster freeze date, team roster changes should only be allowed to keep a team active, if in danger of folding, and that the new player be at the same, or lower, skill level of the player being replaced. New players should require the approval of the league officers.

Prior to session end

ACS recommends holding another meeting of team captains a few weeks before the end of the league session. The purpose of this meeting is to do the following.

- Review the status of the prize fund and ensure that all funds are in the bank. Any adjustments to the prize fund distribution at this time should be minor and only represent fine tuning. A special meeting should be called to address any major adjustment, as soon as the issue becomes apparent.
- Review play-off arrangements, confirming when and where they are to be held.
- Review the status of the awards banquet arrangements, or other prize fund uses, if applicable.

Play-offs

Nearly every league conducts play-offs involving all teams in the league. They are usually held at one or two locations over a weekend, or on the normal league night. It is important that every team knows of these arrangements well in advance. Provide details as soon as they are known: who is participating, when it is to be held, and what the format of play will be.

The most common play-off format is double-elimination, where a team has to lose two matches before being eliminated. A "round robin" format may be used if eight or fewer teams are involved. General tournament policies appear elsewhere in this handbook. (See *Addendum pages 40, 41, and 42 for tournament chart examples.*)

Awards banquet

The awards banquet, if applicable, is held at the end of the session or at the end of the year. Getting teams to join a league is actually not that difficult. However, getting all the teams to finish the session and ensuring that the league delivers on all its commitments and promises is often more challenging. Scheduling an awards banquet or special function at the end of the session can help in that regard.

Who pays

If there is to be a banquet or special function, the cost may be disbursed from the prize fund or covered by ticket sales. Some leagues may go all out by renting a venue, arranging for a caterer, and providing entertainment. Others simply hand out awards at their play-offs. Sometimes the owner of a billiard club with an in-house league will provide a special function, either free or charging a nominal fee, to show customer appreciation.

Awards and prizes

Have as many awards as the league can afford, both for league play and play-offs. Include prizes for both team and individual player performance, if possible. If donated prizes are obtained, holding a raffle adds to the excitement. For cash prizes paid from the prize fund, payment by check is recommended.

Attending an ACS championship

The primary purpose for sanctioning the league is to establish the eligibility for league players and teams to attend an ACS championship tournament.

Many ACS sanctioned leagues award team trips to an ACS championship tournament, paid from the prize fund, which usually include entry fees, lodging expense, and a travel allowance. Whether a team wins a trip or not, every ACS sanctioned player and every team is eligible to participate in any ACS championship tournament.

Regional and state ACS championship tournaments are conducted at key locations around the country. These tournaments are usually held over a weekend and are within driving distance for interested players. This makes competing in the tournaments much more affordable and convenient. Every ACS member is also eligible to participate in the ACS 8-Ball & 9-Ball National Championships held in Las Vegas in mid-May each year. The CCS Canadian Nationals are held in mid-Spring in Toronto.

The ACS National Championships, and most regional championships, offer singles, scotch doubles, and team events, conducted in divisions based on skill level. As such, all participants have a better chance of success in their respective events. Full information on every championship – including online event entry and entry status for the ACS National Championships – is available through the ACS website at www.americancuesports.org.

For the ACS National Championships, all team entry forms, including entry fees, must be submitted in advance by the league Secretary. Entry forms for singles and scotch doubles events, including entry fees, must be submitted directly by the players. For the CCS National Championships, entry forms for singles and team events, along with the entry fees, are submitted to the CCS administrative staff. The scotch doubles event is handled as an on-site mini-tournament.

Good sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship cannot be overemphasized. It is one of the prime factors that makes league play an enjoyable experience. League players should not feel threatened or intimidated in any way. The League Operator must make it known that unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated. An excellent write-up on good sportsmanship and how to properly resolve disputes appears elsewhere in this handbook.

Prize fund financial report

It is always wise, and highly recommended, to have the league Treasurer compile a simple summary of all prize fund receipts and expenses. All expenses should reflect exactly the items agreed upon by the team captains and the league officers.

Make the details available to all players in the league, informing them that the report can be reviewed on request by any league player. If a prize fund surplus exists, it should be disbursed in an appropriate way at a banquet or special function at the end of the session. It is strongly recommended not to carry over a prize fund surplus from one session to another, since the prize fund legally belongs to those who paid into it.

Session completion

It is a very rewarding experience to successfully complete the first session of a new league. Although there may have been problems along the way, the next session will most likely require a little fine tuning, and considerably less effort, to make it run more smoothly. The players now know that the league exists, how it is run, and will look forward to playing in the next session, and competing in ACS championship tournaments.

Need more help?

Contact the ACS national office. The ACS staff will be happy to answer questions and help find solutions. The ACS Board of Directors, another readily accessible resource, is made up of successful League Operators, members, and affiliated cue sport officials from across the nation. They may be contacted directly by League Operators and other interested parties, who might need assistance or advice concerning league issues.

Set up a league schedule

The following are recommendations on best practices for setting up league schedules. Remember that the schedule must include at least 8 match rounds in order to meet ACS sanctioning requirements.

If there are an odd number of teams, add a "Bye" team in order to have an even number of teams. The league officers should make arrangements for the team that has a bye week to have access to a practice table. This helps to ensure they will come together every week to play.

A schedule completes a full rotation when all teams have played each other once. For the second rotation, reverse the home and visiting team numbers in the match pairings. Play each scheduled round until the entire league schedule has been completed.

Play-offs scheduled at the end of the session can usually be completed in one week. Play-offs held at the end of the league year often require at least two weeks. Also, the league may vote to take one or two weeks off between sessions, if desired.

In the examples below, the home team is listed first and the visiting team second. The following shows the match pairing schedules for leagues with 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, and 16 teams.

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
4	team	1v2	2v3	3v1											
4	team	3v4	4v1	2v4											
6	team	1v2	2v3	3v1	2v6	5v1									
6	team	3v4	4v5	5v2	1v4	6v3									
6	team	5v6	6v1	6v4	3v5	4v2									
8	team	1v2	6v1	1v8	2v3	3v6	6v8	7v1							
8	team	3v4	8v2	7v3	8v5	7v2	5v7	4v6							
8	team	5v6	3v5	5v4	4v1	1v5	2v4	3v8							
8	team	7v8	4v7	2v6	6v7	8v4	1v3	5v2							
10	team	1v2	6v1	5v4	5v3	2v6	5v8	6v4	9v3	8v10					
10	team	3v4	4v8	9v8	8v6	9v5	4v10	7v9	8v1	2v5					
10	team	5v6	7v3	1v10	4v7	4v1	7v2	1v5	10v6	9v4					
10	team	7v8	2v9	3v2	9v1	10v7	6v9	3v10	4v2	1v7					
10	team	9v10	10v5	7v6	10v2	8v3	3v1	2v8	5v7	3v6					
12	team	1v2	12v1	11v8	6v9	7v2	4v7	1v3	7v1	3v5	1v11	1v5			
12	team	3v4	2v11	3v6	8v1	9v12	6v1	11v5	9v5	1v9	9v3	7v3			
12	team	5v6	10v3	9v2	12v5	3v8	2v5	9v7	3v11	11v7	5v7	11v9			
12	team	7v8	4v9	7v12	2v3	11v6	10v11	4v8	12v2	10v2	2v4	2v8			
12	team	9v10	8v5	1v4	10v7	5v4	8v9	10v12	8v10	6v8	12v8	6v12			
12	team	11v12	6v7	5v10	4v11	1v10	12v3	2v6	4v6	4v12	10v6	4v10			

Week		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
14	team	3v2	2v5	7v2	2v9	11v2	4v1	5v3	1v5	7v1	1v9	5v7	13v1	3v1		
14	team	5v4	4v7	9v4	4v11	13v4	6v3	9v7	13v7	9v13	7v3	1v11	3v9	7v11		
14	team	7v6	6v9	11v6	6v13	1v6	8v5	13v11	11v9	3v11	5v13	13v3	11v5	9v5		
14	team	9v8	8v11	13v8	8v1	3v8	10v7	2v1	3v4	6v5	11v12	9v10	7v8	2v4		
14	team	11v10	10v13	1v10	10v3	5v10	12v9	4v6	6v2	2v8	10v2	8v6	2v14	12v8		
14	team	13v12	12v1	3v12	12v5	7v12	14v11	8v10	8v14	14v10	4v8	12v2	6v12	6v10		
14	team	1v14	14v3	5v14	14v7	9v14	2v13	12v14	10v12	12v4	14v6	4v14	10v4	14v13		
16	team	5v1	5v6	3v5	5v4	9v5	5v10	11v5	11v13	13v5	5v16	15v5	5v12	8v5	5v7	2v5
16	team	3v7	4v2	9v1	10v6	11v3	14v4	13v9	5v14	15v11	7v10	8v13	7v16	2v15	1v12	6v8
16	team	9v12	10v8	11v7	14v2	13v1	16v6	15v3	16v10	8v9	12v14	2v11	1v14	6v13	3v16	4v15
16	team	11v16	14v15	13v12	16v8	15v7	12v2	8v1	12v4	14v16	1v4	6v9	3v10	4v11	9v14	10v13
16	team	13v14	16v13	15v16	12v15	8v12	7v8	2v7	7v6	2v3	3v6	4v3	9v4	10v9	11v10	14v11
16	team	15v10	12v11	8v14	7v13	2v16	1v15	10v14	1v2	6v1	9v2	10v1	11v6	14v3	13v4	19v9
16	team	8v4	7v9	2v10	1v11	6v14	3v13	6v12	3v8	4v7	11v8	14v7	13v2	16v1	15v6	12v3
16	team	2v6	1v3	6v4	3v9	4v10	9v11	4v16	9v15	10v12	13v15	16v12	15v8	12v7	8v2	7v1

8-Ball league format details

Games are scored on a *Ball Count Point (BCP) System*. A player's BCP average is calculated by dividing total BCP points to date by total games played to date. BCP averages are used to determine team handicaps. The difference between the two competing teams' BCP averages is the handicap, which is added to score of the team with the lower BCP average.

Scheduled matches are played in rounds – 4 rounds for 4-player teams or 5 rounds for 5-player teams. The winner of each round, determined by Ball Count Points plus the team handicap, receives one team point. The team with the highest number of team points is the winner of the match.

Scoring (10-point ball count system)

- Each player receives 1 point for each ball pocketed in his ball group (solids or stripes), regardless of whether the player or his opponent pockets the ball. Winning the game by pocketing the 8-ball on a legal shot counts for 3 points. If a game ends on a foul, the winning player receives 10 points and the losing player receives 1 point for each ball pocketed in his ball group.
- A game win is always worth 10 ball count points to the winning player. The losing player can score up to 7 points, not scoring points for any balls in his ball group remaining on the table at the end of the game.

Player BCP (ball count point) averages

- A player's BCP average is determined by dividing the total BCP scored to date by the number of games played to date. The BCP calculated average is usually rounded to the nearest whole number.
- In some leagues, BCP averages are calculated to 1 or 2 decimal places for a more accurate average.

Match format

The most common match formats are:

- 4 players each play a single game in each of 4 Rounds for a total of 16 games.
- 5 players each play a single game in each of 3 Rounds for a total of 15 games.
- 5 players each play a single game in each of 4 Rounds for a total of 20 games.
- 5 players each play a single game in each of 5 Rounds for a total of 25 games

Score sheet and playing details

- The score sheets used in all examples are the copyrighted property of the American CueSports Alliance. League Operators can reproduce the score sheet for their league play during any league year, as long as the league is sanctioned with the ACS or CCS. A blank copy of the ACS 8-Ball score sheet, which can be personalized with the league information, is provided on Addendum page 34.
- See *Score sheet examples (Addendum pages 36 & 37)* which display how completed score sheets should be marked.

Starting team roster

- The home team fills out their team roster first by entering the 4 or 5 player names as *Starters* on the roster sheet in positions 1 through 4 (or 5). Additional players can be listed in the number 6 and 7 *Substitutions* positions. Players may be listed in any sequence, regardless of their BCP average.
- If a team is short one or more players, “*Forfeit*” is entered in the last position(s) on the starting team roster, as applicable.

Match rounds

- A set of one game played by each player in the roster is considered to be one match round.

Handicapping

- The team captain enters the BCP average of each player on the match roster in the *AVE* column next to the roster order number. In the case of a forfeit, or for a first time player, enter the *AVE* as “8”. The BCP averages are then totaled for each team. The difference between the teams’ totals is awarded to the team with the lower total BCP average as its team handicap. That number is added in the *POINTS* column in the box marked *HANDICAP*.

Substitution of players during a match

- Substitutions are permitted providing they are identified at the start of each round and that it will not result in the same two players playing each other a second time.
- In the round with a player substitution, the substitute’s BCP average is used to calculate the new total for the BCP averages of the team, which will be used to determine the new team handicap for that round.
- Players listed as substitutes in roster order positions 6 and 7 may change positions in successive rounds. Players listed as starters in positions 1 through 5 must sit out the entire round in which they are substituted out. If subsequently returned to the playing roster, starters must return to their original roster order position.

Order of the break shot

- The order of play for the home team is unchanged for every match round. The order of play for the visiting team rotates for each match round as indicated on the score sheet.
- The order for the break shot is shown on the score sheet. The home team always breaks during the first and third rounds, with the visiting team breaking during the second and fourth rounds. If there is a fifth round, breaks are alternated with the extra break going to the home team. This breaking order is followed at all ACS and CCS championship tournaments.

Scorekeeping - team points

- All games are scored on the maximum 10-point ball count system, including forfeited games, which are scored as 10 to 0. These points are entered on the score sheet in the *POINTS* column for each match round. See *Universal 8-Ball Score Sheet (See Addendum page 34)*.
- After completion of each match round, the points won in each game by the players on each team are totaled. Add this amount to the team handicap and enter the sum in the *TOTAL* box on the score sheet.
- The team with the higher total receives a team point for that match round. For the winning team, circle the "W" beside the *TOTAL* box for that match round.
- After the second match round is completed, the *TOTALS* for two match rounds are added together and entered into the *RUNNING TOTAL* box on the score sheet. Continue until all match rounds are played.
- The team with the higher *RUNNING TOTAL* receives another team point. For the winning team, circle the 'W' beside the *RUNNING TOTAL* box in the last column on the score sheet.
- In summary, each match is contested for one team point for each match round played with, one more team point being awarded to the overall match winner.
- When special feats occur, record the information as E = ERO, F= First Approach, Z = Ten Zip and N = No Shot After the Break. (See the legend on the score sheet.) Team captains should sign off on the opposing team's score sheet to ensure all special feats have been recorded.
- To assist the league Secretary, total the wins, special feats, and points for each player and team.

Match ties

- Handicapped match rounds and overall matches can result in a tie. In all match formats of league play, the first tiebreaker is based on games won. This also determines team seeding for play-offs.
- If still tied at the end of a league play match, the second tiebreaker is decided by a one-game match. Each team captain selects a player from his team, who played in the match, to represent the team.
- In play-offs, the only tiebreaker option is to replay the last match round by the same players. There are no ties in any ACS championship tournaments, as no ball count points or team handicaps are used. All matches are a race to a specified number of games won.

Match forfeits

- If a team forfeits a match, both captains must submit a score sheet accompanied by all related fees.
- All players listed on the forfeiting team will receive zero points for all games.
- All the players listed on the winning team receive 10 points for all their games.
- Teams receiving a forfeit have the option to take all, half, or none of the team points for the match. The forfeiting team receives any points the winning team opts not to take.
- In the absence of a decision by the winning team, they will be awarded all the forfeited team points for the match.

Score sheet examples

(5-player / 25-game match format)

Example #1 - September 4 (See Addendum page 36.)

- This shows a first week match. There are no player BCP averages and thus no team handicaps.
- The tiebreaker of 3 games to 2 games was won by the visiting team, which received the team point for the second match round.

Example #2 - October 2 (See Addendum page 37.)

- This shows a match with BCP averages and team handicaps.
- The home team is short one player and has listed position number 5 in their starting team match roster as a *Forfeit*. All of the forfeiting player's opponents receive 10 points for their game against that player.
- The visiting team used a *First Time* player (Al Jones at team roster position 1). His BCP average was assigned at 8.0 because he has not yet established an average.
- The visiting team used a substitution in match round 3. Christine Logan, team roster position 6, substituted for Chuck Lesser, team roster position 3.
- Note the "ERO" earned in round 2 by Jay Spenser, starting team roster position 2, on the visitor team.

Team and player standings reports

These reports, which are prepared and published by the league Secretary on a weekly basis, can be elaborate or simple. See the sample reports from the Players Pool League of Canada on Addendum pages 38 and 39. This league uses custom, web-based software to produce statistical reports. Many leagues produce their reports using word processing or spreadsheet software. If requested, the ACS national office will refer league Secretaries to sources for obtaining league management software programs at reasonable or no cost.

It is important to capture all the key information. For teams, the minimum required is tracking cumulative team points. For players, the minimum is tracking cumulative ball count points, cumulative games played, and updated BCP averages. Other details can be captured to determine winners of special awards, or to rank players.

All players like to see their names in print and track their performance status on a weekly basis. Therefore, ACS recommends weekly individual standings reports are produced, displaying cumulative statistics for all players.

General league play and play-off policies

This summary of policies is designed to serve only as a guideline. These recommendations are based on years of league management experience. Each league may choose to establish its own policies, specific to its unique situation. It is always best to document and publish the details in the team handbook, or online, if applicable.

Team rosters

- Team rosters are allowed a maximum of 10 players, 4 or 5 of who will play in each match round, depending on the league's match format. A player may be deleted from a team roster to make room for another player only if authorized by the team captain.
- New players must be registered when they play their first match. The league Secretary must be notified, and the new player's contact information (full name, address, zip code, phone numbers, and email address, if applicable) must be recorded on the back of the score sheet.
- Once a player is registered and plays a match with a team, he/she may not play for any other team in the league during that session. However, he/she may play for another team in a different zone of the same division until the team roster freeze, and may play concurrently for another team in another division.

- Team rosters are frozen after the date specified in the league rules. Any team that cannot field a full team on a regular basis after that date may ask to have their situation reviewed by the league officers, who may vote to allow an exception to the rule.
- For play-offs, team rosters must consist only of team members who have qualified by playing the minimum number of matches specified in the league rules.
- For ACS and CCS championship team events, team rosters must consist of a minimum of three original team members, along with two or more other players registered players from the same league.
- The league may have additional team restrictions as specified in the league rules. This will generally involve the ranking of players to limit the number of higher skilled players on a team for any one round of a match. If exceeded, the game played by the ineligible player is forfeited, with the match scoring adjusted accordingly. Repeated infractions will be reviewed by the league officers for further action.

Match play

- Match locations and tables will be as assigned by the league officers or the play-off director. In some instances, multiple locations may be required.
- The match must begin within 15 minutes of the scheduled start time, unless otherwise specified by the league officers or the play-off director. Players have 5 minutes to start an individual game from the time it is called. A first round game only may be delayed until the final game in that round. Under this rule, any first round game not played will be forfeited by the team with the missing player.
- The World Pool-Billiard Association rule regarding slow play allows for 45 seconds between shots. A player must be warned after the first offense. If a player is placed on the clock, all players in all remaining match games are also placed on the clock. The clock starts when all balls stop moving from the previous shot. After 35 seconds, a 10 second warning is given, unless the player has already assumed a shooting stance. The penalty for slow play is cue ball in hand.
- The most common reason for matches not finishing on time is that players are not ready to play when their match is called. Team captains are reminded to notify each player when they are next up, whether they rack or break, who their opponent is, and on which table the match will be played.
- For play-offs, a referee should be made available to make rulings when requested. The decision of the referee regarding judgment calls on shots will be final. All other rulings may be appealed to the head referee. In the absence of a head referee, the play-off director assumes that responsibility.
- In matters of play-off direction, scheduling, equipment, etc., the decision of the play-off director is final.
- It is the players' responsibility to know who is scheduled to break. If the wrong player breaks, the game continues to its conclusion.
- If it is noticed during a game that a player is playing the wrong opponent, the game is stopped and the correct players will restart the game. If it is not noticed until after the game is finished, the game will stand, as long as those players are scheduled to play each other later in the match. If not scheduled to compete against each other later in the match, that game is declared null and void.
- If neither player was aware that the 8-ball had been pocketed on the break or out of turn on a prior shot, the game will be replayed with the same player breaking.
- Any player who shoots balls on another table while playing a match game will forfeit the match game being played.
- All participants should be reminded that any display of poor sportsmanship may result in the possibility of having to forfeit a game, a match, or being disqualified from the event. The head referee, play-off director, or league officers, as applicable, will decide the issue.
- Although the official *WPA World Standardized Rules* specify that coaching is not allowed during a game, all teams are asked to exercise good sportsmanship in this regard, especially during the first few weeks of a session, when new teams and players are adjusting to the game and league rules.

- There will be no make-up matches played without the consent of both captains prior to the original scheduled match date. If a make-up is agreed upon, the match must be played within two weeks. If not, both teams receive zero points. However, teams have a right to appeal to the league officers in the case of extenuating circumstances.
- Because the prize fund is based on receipt of all scheduled league fees, teams are required to pay the full match fees, even for forfeited or unplayed make-up matches.
- A team claiming a match forfeit may choose to take all match points, half the match points, or none of the match points. Whatever the decision, the forfeiting team will receive any unclaimed points. In the absence of such a decision, the team claiming the match forfeit is automatically awarded all team match points.
- Any team that forfeits two consecutive matches, or a total of three matches during the session, will be suspended from the league for the remainder of the session. Any team can be suspended or expelled by the league officers for conduct or actions deemed harmful to the best interests of the league. This may include the failure to turn in league fees. Should this occur, all fees paid to date, and any claims to prizes, by the suspended or expelled team, or its members, are forfeited. Any forfeited league fees will be disbursed by the league officers as deemed appropriate.

Play-off eligibility

- All teams in all divisions are allowed to participate in the play-offs, unless specified otherwise by the league rules. If there is more than one play-off group within a division, team placement is determined by final team standings as of a specified date.
- The league officers reserve the right to place teams in specified play-off groups.
- All teams must be current with their league fees, unless prior special arrangements have been made with the league officers.
- Every player on each team's roster must be a fully paid, registered member of the league.
- Every player must have played the minimum number of games as specified in the league rules, unless granted an exception, due to incapacitation, by the league officers.
- A player's eligibility may only be challenged prior to that player's first game in the match. If not challenged, the player will complete the match. If upon challenge, the player's eligibility cannot be confirmed to the satisfaction of the play-off director or league officers, that player may not continue to compete. No prior matches played by that player will be forfeited or replayed.
- A player's identity can be challenged at any time during the competition. The player, upon challenge, has 15 minutes to provide a means of identification acceptable to the play-off director or the league officers. If unable to do so, that player will be disqualified. The team captain may substitute another confirmed eligible player for a player who has been disqualified. No prior matches played by the disqualified player will be forfeited or replayed. However, if it is determined that the disqualified player's and team's intention was to intentionally deceive their opponents, the match will be forfeited.
- Any team that fails to appear for their first round play-off match will forfeit that match. Additionally, their next match will also be forfeited, unless prior notice was provided to the play-off director or the league officers, indicating the team's intention to appear and play their next match.

Play-off format

- All games and matches are played according to the current WPA *World Standardized Rules*.
- Typically, play-offs conducted over multiple weeks on the regular league night are single-elimination format. However, some leagues hold play-offs on weekends, which can be accommodated by utilizing a double-elimination format, where a team is not eliminated until they lose twice.
- For 5-player teams, the match format is 25 games. For 4-player teams, the match format is 16 games.

- All play-off charts are seeded, unless specified otherwise by the league rules. For example, in an 8-team chart, the #1 seed will play the #8 seed in the first round, etc. If there is no #8, then #1 will receive the first bye, etc. The seedings are based on team standings as of a specified date. If an unequal number of matches have been played to date, the league Secretary will assign one-half the normal match points to teams with unplayed matches. (See Addendum pages 40, 41, and 42.)
- 25-game matches will be contested as a race to 13 games, or won based on points with handicap applied. 16-game matches will be contested as a race to 9 games, or won based on points with handicap applied. Matches will continue until one team can no longer win. The league rules should specify whether or not play-off groups will be handicapped.
- Team handicap is calculated and applied at the start of the match, but must be recalculated at the start of a round in which a substitution occurs.
- The accuracy of a score sheet may only be challenged for the current or the last round played. Any round previously completed will be considered final as per the home team score sheet. A home team score sheet is signed by both captains is considered final and may not be replayed for any reason.
- The higher seeded team will have the choice of being the home or visitor team. In ACS championships, a coin is flipped to determine which team will be the home team.
- Players must be listed on both the home and visitor score sheets before the start of the first round.
- Substitutions are allowed prior to the start of a round, provided the other team is notified in advance. If an unplayable match-up occurs (i.e., unable to play the same player twice), the team that caused the unplayable match must forfeit that match.

Good sportsmanship

The American CueSports Alliance strongly encourages and promotes good sportsmanship, both at the league level and at championship tournaments. Competing in amateur league play and at ACS championship tournaments should be an enjoyable experience.

Players should show respect for the game and for opposing players; being gracious in both winning and defeat.

Exhibiting good sportsmanship makes each match an enjoyable experience. It is every player's responsibility to know the rules and abide by them. Players should strive to bring their best attitude and their best game to the table every time they compete.

Sharking

"Sharking" is any action initiated by a player that is intended to upset, distract, or confuse opponents. Here are a few examples.

- Using excessive profanity.
- Speaking in a rude or sarcastic manner.
- Smashing or throwing a cue, slamming chalk down, etc.
- Shooting the break shot before the opposing player steps away from the table after racking the balls.
- Refusing to acknowledge an obvious foul.
- Objecting to a referee being called to make a ruling.
- Insisting on unnecessary re-racks.
- Deliberately and excessively slowing the pace of the game.
- Making reference to a likely loss of game.
- Removing the chalk from the table, so the opposing player must search for it.
- Approaching the table out of turn.
- Asking opponents to call the shot when it is obvious (or even before they are ready to shoot).

- Complaining loudly about anything - the equipment, playing conditions, “the pool gods”; etc.
- Standing close to the table when the opposing player is shooting..
- Standing over the shoulder of the opposing player when he is shooting.
- Creating a sudden distracting movement or sound at any time.
- Talking to the opposing player when shooting.
- Talking loudly to others when the opposing player is shooting.

Dispute resolution

Nearly all disputes stem from a lack of knowledge of the rules or disagreement with a judgment call on a shot. If the dispute relates to a question concerning the rules, refer to the rule book. If a judgment call is disputed, and a referee was not present, the WPA *World Standardized Rules* state that the call goes in favor of the shooter. Any judgment call made by a referee is final.

Dispute settlement of judgment calls in league play is best resolved by following this process.

Step 1. The two players involved attempt to resolve the dispute between themselves. If not,

Step 2. The players explain the dispute to their team captains. No other individuals are permitted to be involved.

Step 3. If, the team captains agree to a solution, it is considered final. The solution could be to replay the game.

Step 4. If the team captains cannot agree to a solution, the WPA *World Standardized Rules* state that the call goes in favor of the shooter.

Step 5. A written protest may be filed with the league officers, whose decision will be final. The decision of the league officers may also take into consideration any display of poor sportsmanship.

If a dispute occurs during an ACS championship, call a floor referee who will make a final decision.

Common courtesy

- Opponents shake hands before and after a game or match.
- Only the opposing player can call a foul. Players should always pay attention to the game.
- When winning, do not gloat. When losing, do not complain.
- Acknowledge well-played shots, games, and matches.
- Two wrongs do not make a right. A display of poor sportsmanship by one player does not justify a similar response.
- Good sportsmanship on everyone’s part makes league play and ACS championship tournaments much more enjoyable experiences.

League play-offs

Many leagues conduct play-offs at the end of their session in which all, or the majority, of the prize fund is awarded. Play-offs should be designed to accomplish the following:

- Spread the prize money among as many players as possible. Ideally, everyone wins something.
- The players perceive the format as being fair.
- All participants have a reasonable chance of winning something.

Eligibility

A common league requirement is that ALL players on a team must be ORIGINAL team members. An alternative is that all players on a team must have played a specified minimum number of games with the team during the session.

Handicapping options

ACS recommends that if handicaps were used during the session, they should also be used in the play-offs. It is not mandatory that handicaps be used in the play-offs, but not doing so tends to give an unfair advantage to the teams with higher skill levels. The overriding guideline is to do what is best for the league.

Play-off groups

Leagues with 4 to 10 teams usually participate in a single play-off group. Larger leagues often split the play-offs into two groups based on team standings.

The split process should be decided by a vote of the team captains and incorporated into the league rules. The prize fund for each group should be approximately equal or slightly higher for the teams that finished higher in the standings. Another option would be for the top half to play without handicaps and the bottom half with handicaps.

By conducting the play-offs in this manner, every team has a shot at the top prize and everyone can play with high expectations. This also aids in expanding the league by encouraging more teams to join.

Play-off formats

The three most commonly used play-off formats are explained below.

Single elimination

A team is eliminated from the competition if it loses once. A single elimination play-off chart must be prepared. Numbers can be drawn by team captains to determine first match pairings, although it is more common to seed the first match pairings. If seeding is used, byes should be given to the teams with the best finishing records.

Double elimination

A team must lose two matches before it is eliminated. See the double elimination tournament chart examples on Addendum pages 38, 39, and 40, which include seeded pairings information.

Leagues may also adopt a modified double elimination format in which each team is guaranteed to play two matches, but they are eliminated when they lose a match beyond the first round. This format requires considerably less time to complete than a regular double elimination format.

Round robin

This is used for smaller play-off groups, usually not more than eight teams. Each team plays one match against every other team in the group. The schedules shown in the *Set up a league schedule* section can be used to set up a round robin rotation.

ACS recommends that round robin play-offs include a final play-off, in which the teams finishing second and third place play each other, with the winner playing the first place team for the final championship. This adds some additional excitement to the play-off and tends to keep other league players involved as spectators.

Match format

Most leagues use the same match format as used during the session. For the play-offs (especially if a prize is a paid trip to an ACS championship), a league may switch to the 5-player/25-game rotating match format used in all ACS and CCS championship tournaments. For 5-player teams, every player plays every other opposing player. If using this match format, it is suggested that two tables be used to speed up match play.

Referees

ACS administers the most recognized referee training and certification program in North America. To progress beyond local referee certification, referee clinics are held at all ACS and CCS National Championships. The ACS national office may be contacted for additional information.

If referees are available during competition, they will make all judgment calls, provide interpretations of the WPA *World Standardized Rules*, and otherwise maintain good order at the championship tournaments. Floor matches are not continuously monitored by referees. Referees must be called to the table when a question arises or a judgment call is required.

In the absence of a pre-appointed referee, players or team captains may agree to have a disinterested party observe and make a ruling decision on a judgment call, or the play-off director might assume the referee duties.

Play-off prize fund payouts

How the prize fund is to be disbursed is determined at the team captains meeting and incorporated into the league rules.

It is recommended that the payouts be distributed as broadly as possible within each play-off group. Some leagues provide a minimum payout amount to all the teams, with increased payout amounts based on play-off performance. This encourages each team to continue playing and complete the session.

At the very least, a good rule of thumb is to pay out at least the top 25% of the teams involved in the play-off. An example for a 16-team play-off payout might be: 1st - 40%, 2nd - 30%, 3rd - 20%, and 4th - 10%.

These prize fund payouts should be publicized by appearing on play-off charts. The basic rules to be followed are that everyone should be aware of the payouts and there should be no late changes or surprises.

When and where

Many leagues coordinate play-offs on their regular playing night, with the higher-seeded team being the home team. For an 8-team league, a single-elimination play-off can be completed over a three-week period.

Play-offs may also be held on a weekend at one or more locations. This is a better option if conducting a double elimination format. Finishing the play-offs in a single weekend is often more convenient for the teams.

For in-house leagues, play-offs are held at the host location. For larger, traveling leagues, if a single host location with enough tables cannot be found, an event site might be rented, with tables provided by a local vending company. For information on table rental companies, contact the ACS national office. An alternative is to arrange traveling league play-offs using the league's host locations over a weekend, or during the play-off week.

Singles play-offs

Some leagues will also arrange a singles play-off for the top players, in addition to a team play-off. The players should be polled to determine if they would be interested in this additional play-off opportunity. If it is offered, arrange for prizes to be determined at a meeting of the team captains and incorporated into the league rules.

See *4-player, 8-player and 16-player tournament charts available on Addendum pages 40, 41, and 42.*

League awards and banquet

All leagues offer awards and most conduct a special function of some kind at the end of the session or the league year where the awards are distributed.

Awards

- ACS recommends that, at a minimum, the league should provide first, second, and third place awards for both team and individual performance.
- Team awards are based on final team standings or play-off results.
- Individual awards may be provided for *Most Games Won*, *Most Points Scored*, *Most Run Outs*, *Most Consecutive Wins*, *League MVP*, *Team MVP*, etc.
- Team and individual awards can include *Most Improved* or other such achievements, if desired.
- Rather than a few very expensive awards, it might be advisable to provide many less expensive ones. Most players appreciate receiving something as a memento of the session.
- Be creative with awards. Some leagues provide personalized league apparel, which may be more useful to the players, and also provides another method to advertise the league.
- Unless the league is business-based, funding for the awards usually comes from prize fund.

Banquet

- ACS recommends some kind of special session-end function be conducted. It is a great way to recognize the winners, hand out prizes, thank everyone for participating, and reinforce the feeling of camaraderie through socialization.
- For an in-house league, this session-end function might provide a snack buffet and free or reduced prices on services. A well-funded league may go all out – renting a venue, hiring a caterer, and possibly even providing entertainment.
- Unless a host location provides this special function as a form of customer appreciation, the cost is usually paid out of general prize fund and is free to the players. Some enterprising leagues contact all host locations and solicit bids. The winning bidder usually provides some or all the consumables in exchange for the extra business and exposure.

Attending the ACS or CCS national championships

All players in ACS/CCS sanctioned leagues are eligible to compete in the ACS and CCS National Championships. These championship tournaments are structured as indicated below, including entry instructions, and explaining what the players and teams can expect when they compete.

Structure

- The ACS and CCS National Championships are described in full detail in tournament brochures posted on the ACS website, www.americancuesports.org, and the CCS website, www.cdnqsport.com.
- The ACS and CCS National Championships, and some regional championship tournaments, include singles, scotch doubles and team events. Singles events are open to all ACS and CCS sanctioned league members and others who join as sanctioned player members. The mixed scotch doubles and team events are for sanctioned league members only.
- The ACS and CCS National Championships are open to all ACS and CCS league members in good standing. They can participate in any of the events at the tournaments. Even if a team did not win a paid trip, they are still eligible to participate.
- All events at the ACS and CCS National Championships have divisions based on skill level. For the ACS Nationals, players and teams enter into pre-defined divisions of *Standard*, *Open*, and *Masters*, based on player skill level. Within a division, each player has the opportunity to compete with a reasonable chance of winning. For CCS, a qualifying approach is used. After a qualifying round is conducted, all qualifying players and teams then compete in an A, B, or C skill level tournament bracket for prizes and awards.
- All ACS National Championships events are double elimination, with the exception of master team events, which are triple elimination. A player or team continues in the competition until the specified number of matches is lost, either 2 or 3. All CCS National Championship events are triple elimination events, unless otherwise specified in the tournament brochure.
- Singles and scotch doubles events are always conducted first, and are set up so that players can compete in both events without scheduling conflicts. In championship tournaments, the team events are always scheduled last, usually finishing up on a Saturday or Sunday.
- The ACS and CCS National Championships are held in a rented host location and played on 3 ½' X 7' coin-operated tables. This choice of table simplifies renting, transporting, and setting up the large numbers of tables needed for a national championship. All tables require the use of coins.

Player and team rankings

- The ACS and CCS maintain a list of players designated as professionals, who are not allowed to compete in any event at any ACS/CCS championship tournament. Only amateurs are allowed to compete in these events.
- To ensure fair competition in all events, the ACS maintains a list of players who have competed in previous ACS or CCS singles events and finished in the money in the ACS *Masters* or CCS "A" group. At future ACS and CCS singles events, these players are charged a higher entry fee and are not allowed to compete in the lower *Open*/"B" or *Standard*/"C" groups. Teams that have more than one *Masters*/"A"-ranked player are also charged a higher entry fee and are not allowed to compete in the lower *Open*/"B" or *Standard*/"C" groups.
- The divisional approach allows players to compete only against players of their own general skill level, which serves to truly level the playing field.
- ACS maintains a list of both *Masters*/"A", *Open*/"B" and *Standard*/"C" ranked players, based on previous finishes in ACS/CCS singles events. This is used to restrict them from playing in lower skill level divisions. All ACS *Masters* ranked players are recognized by the CCS as "A" ranked players, and vice versa.

Entry

- All events at the ACS and CCS Nationals Championships require entry in advance so that proper planning can be ensured. There is an early entry deadline a month in advance of the event and a late entry deadline, with an associated late fee, approximately two weeks in advance of the event. The only exception is the mixed scotch doubles event at CCS championship tournaments, which is run as an on-site entry mini-tournament.
- ACS and CCS, through their respective websites, offer online entry for their National Championships. All prospective entrants are encouraged to use the online entry function. Using this process, entrants will also receive confirmation of their status: *Paid in Full*, *Ranking*, and *Eligibility*.
- ACS entry fees can be paid online. However, CCS is not yet capable of processing entry fees online.
- All singles event entries for National Championships must be submitted directly by the players to the respective ACS or CCS organization.
- All team event and scotch doubles event entries must be submitted by the league Secretary to the respective ACS or CCS organization, as applicable.

Tournament draw

- Draws are conducted by the designated tournament director. It is a random draw, except that every effort is made to place players and teams from the same league in different preliminary brackets.
- The tournament charts for preliminary brackets, listing the first round match pairings, are posted at the host site prior to the start of the event.

Travel and lodging

- ACS and CCS conduct many regional and state events, as well as the National Championships. There is a championship conducted within a reasonable driving distance for nearly all players in North America. For team trips paid from the prize fund, most leagues include entry fees, lodging expense, and often a travel allowance.
- Organizers recommend lodging at, or near, the event venue. Special rates are usually prearranged.

Dress code

- At the ACS and CCS National Championships, minimum dress code rules are enforced. Everyone must be clean and neat in appearance. For team events, players must wear matching collared shirts.

Tournament check in

- Upon arrival at the event venue, find and review the posted tournament charts. All entries will be listed, including opponents, start times, and table assignments.
- Checking in at the tournament registration table is recommended, but not mandatory. Entrants will receive a tournament kit with an official program and a commemorative item – championship patch or pin. Team captains must check in if there are any team roster changes. Unregistered players cannot play without prior tournament staff approval. Players can play on only one team during any championship.
- Player meetings are held by the tournament director prior to the start of all singles and team events. Attendance is informative, but not mandatory.

Tournament play

- Sufficient time is allocated for each match. All posted start times are to be considered valid.
- Matches are not announced on a public address system. They are posted on the tournament chart and it is the team's or the player's responsibility to know when and where the matches are scheduled, and to arrive at the match venue on time. Failure to show within a 5-minute grace period will result in forfeiture of the match. No excuses will be accepted.
- A match score sheet is available in advance at the tournament director table. Each player or team captain must pick it up prior to their match. If the opposing player or team is not at the table on time, the tournament director should be notified immediately to start the 5-minute grace period. When the match is completed, the score sheet must be signed and immediately turned in at the tournament director table.
- The tournament charts are continually updated and will indicate the time, location, and opponents in the next scheduled matches.
- Teams or individuals who cash in an event will be given a pay-out voucher by the tournament director. It can then be exchanged for a pay-out check at the tournament registration table.
- Any team or individual finishing in the one of the top three positions in any event will have their photograph taken for publication in the official *Championship Press Release* and for posting on the ACS or CCS websites.

Referees

- ACS certified referees will be readily available on the tournament floor, but must be called to the match venue to rule on an issue or to make a judgment call.
- The decision of the floor referee is final on judgment calls. All other referee rulings may be appealed to the head referee.
- Misbehaving or exhibiting poor sportsmanship may result in having to forfeit a game or a match, and the possibility of being disqualified from the event.

Tournament results

- An official press release is prepared and distributed to all the major billiards publications in North America immediately after the completion of the National Championships.
- Details of the finishing position of the entrants in all events, including photographs, are posted on the ACS or CCS websites.

Onsite vendors

- Championship tournament organizers usually arrange for vendors to operate on-site booths to sell official championship apparel and other items. Participants are encouraged to patronize the vendors and purchase these items as reminders of their experience.
- A cue service booth, for both minor and major repairs, will always be located on-site at the tournament.
- Other vendors set up booths, offering cues, apparel, and other items for sale.