



Dear OVA Member,

Earlier this year, the OVA published its Strategic Plan 2016-2020 which serves to guide the decision making process of the Association as it pertains to operations, coaches and officials, programs, competitions, and high performance. Specifically, the strategic objective of the OVA's competitions stream is to **"inspire athletes of all ages with quality opportunities for meaningful, experiential competition."**

In order to achieve this goal, we regularly listen to feedback from our stakeholders and make changes to competition structures that are **designed to benefit the athletes**. One such change was to have **non-competing athletes perform lining and score keeping duties**. This change was published in the annual What's New document and also in the 2016 Youth Competitions Manual prior to the start of the 2016 indoor season.

This decision was reached after surveying the membership base and debating potential changes amongst the Youth Competitions Task Force. The Task Force, comprised of OVA staff, club administrators, coaches, parents and regional representatives, determined that:

- Survey results were mixed between scheduling teams to line and score, increasing tournament fees to provide lines people and score keepers, and having teams line and score their own matches
 - It was important to avoid increasing tournament fees wherever possible
 - Bias in decision-making of athletes and/or parents lining and scoring their own team's matches must be eliminated
 - Previous feedback has indicated that parents and guardians want to enjoy their children's matches free of other responsibilities
- Scheduling lining and scoring duties improves the athlete experience by ensuring accountability and consistency in expectations
- There is value in athletes learning other aspects of the sport and gaining an appreciation for minor officials
- It is beneficial to athletes to feel a sense of responsibility and ownership in competition structures

Of course, any change in competition structure will often bring about concerns and suggestions for further improvement. After two weekends of competition, these include:

- Athletes not having adequate warm up time after their lining duties
- Inconsistency in enforcement from officials and tournament hosts
- Travelling teams are required to stay longer than they would like
- Offer third parties the opportunity to line and score in exchange for a stipend or community service hours



With this feedback in mind, the OVA sent a communication to all officials' assignors and tournament hosts indicating that:

- Effective immediately, all matches will have a 5-minute common warm up before the 5-5 team warm up. The common warm up will begin once all athletes are present on court.
- If a team is still playing while scheduled to line and score, teams are permitted to provide scorekeepers and lines judges (their own athletes) until the scheduled team arrives. If both teams do not agree to provide workers they are permitted to wait until the scheduled lining and scoring teams arrive.
- Teams are encouraged to plan around the lining and score keeping schedule and relieve players from duties to warm up. They can only be relieved between sets, not during the set.
- There will be repercussions for those teams that do not fulfill their lining and scoring duties

The Youth Competitions Task Force will continue to review feedback on this rule change and look to improve the process wherever possible. The possibility of using third parties will be investigated, though not at the expense of our members. Exemptions for travelling teams are also being considered.

It is important to note that any changes to competition structure are never set in stone. The OVA is a fluid, adaptive organization and we will always look to do what is best for the collective membership, while ensuring our athletes remain a priority. Once all age divisions have had the opportunity to compete under this new system, more opportunities for feedback will be provided, and further modifications may be recommended. Any changes that are made will always be communicated clearly and will reflect the meaningful concerns of the membership.

Your patience is greatly appreciated while we work through this process.