



Tournament Guide & Policies

The 2024 MLK Invitational powered by Under Armour is a Top Court National Event taking place over MLK Weekend January 13 – 15, 2024.

12 & Under will compete over the first two (2) days:
January 13th & 14th, 2024

All other divisions will compete over all three (3) days of the event:
January 13th – 15th, 2024.

Team Check In:

- We will be utilizing AES Online Team Check-In for this event.
- ALL Teams must check their teams online.
- **Online Team Check-in opens Wednesday, January 10th at 10:00 AM (CST) and closes on Friday January 12th at 8:00 PM (CST).**
- Any club/team that is not checked in prior to the deadline may be dropped from the event.
- Club Directors will be responsible for checking in on AES and are the only people that can check teams in online.
- See Check-In Procedures on the next page ...

Team Check In continued:

- Once logged into AES:
 - Locate your teams attending **MLK Invitational**
 - Click the "CHECK-IN" button
 - A pop-up window will appear with the team information, edit roster button, and a place to enter your name and contact number
 - Click on the link that says "Click here to verify and save your roster"
 - Insert note that reads that directors are verifying the validity and clearance of their coaches and staff as background checked and cleared.
 - To complete the online check-in, you will need to type your name and phone number in to "sign" the roster like you would if checking in onsite
 - Once the roster is verified and "signed," click submit

Repeat the above steps until ALL ACCEPTED TEAMS ARE CHECKED INTO THE EVENT

***Reminder that a team can only be checked in ONCE*

After each team is checked in, a notification email will be sent to the club director.

Rosters:

- **Roster deadline is Thursday, 1/11/24 at 8:00 PM CT**
- All rosters will be subject to 4 primary coaches and a maximum of 15 athletes per team.
 - ***Please note that you can adjust your rosters after they have been entered (until Friday 1/12/24) but, all initial submissions must be in by Thursday, 1/11/24.*
 - ****ALL Roster changes must be made prior to a teams first match on Day 1 of the event.**

Credential Pick-Up:

All credentials are available **FRIDAY, January 12th, 2024 in the lobby of the NRG Center from 5:00 - 8:00 PM** during the Showcase and the Directors/Coaches Social.

Credentials can also be picked up in the lobby of the convention center on Saturday January 13th, 2024 before the morning wave and afternoon wave.

COACHES must wear/show their credentials to enter the venue during the event.

***NOTE: Coaches listed on multiple rosters will only receive ONE Bag Tag for the event. Chaperones DO NOT receive credentials.*

Admissions & Entrances:

Door open each day:

- 7:00 AM for PLAYERS and COACHES
- 7:15 AM for all SPECTATORS

Coaches, Players, and Officials will have a designated entrance area in the lobby to help them get to their courts quickly prior to match play.

Coaches and players will need their bag tags to enter the event each day.

If players do not have their bag tag credentials, they will be allowed through to avoid gathering in the lobby and hallways waiting for their bag tags. Athletes should be wearing their jerseys or team warm-ups in order to be easily identified as an athlete and enter the building.

Coaches will need bag tag credentials to enter.

SPECTATOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION:

- **Pre-Sale Tickets will be available soon!** Here's where your families can purchase tickets:
 - All spectators will be required to present a QR code that will be scanned upon entry.
 - Once tickets are scanned, spectators will receive a wristband that must be worn throughout the day/weekend.
 - Security will be checking for wristbands upon entry.
 - Children under the age of 10 are free.
 - Please send any ticket refund requests to tickets@topcourtevents.com.
 - **Tickets that have been scanned onsite are not eligible for refunds.*
 - ***refunds MUST be requested within 30 days of purchase. Refund requests after 30 days are not eligible for a refund.*

 - We will have a designated SPECTATOR LOUNGE on the first floor for all attending adult spectators. Please invite your parents to enjoy this lounge area during their time in the venue!
-

PARKING REMINDER

Follow parking signs around the NRG Center for the Orange Lot.

- [NRG center parking garage map/info](#)
 - enter through gate 3 or 10
- Parking cost is \$20 + tax per day
 - no in & out privileges

Spectator Code of Conduct

All spectators must adhere to the following Spectator Code of Conduct:

- Spectators are an important part of the game and shall at all times conform to accepted standards of good sportsmanship and behavior.
- Be respectful of all athletes, coaches, officials, other spectators, and tournament staff.
- Taunting, foul and abusive language, and disrespectful signs and behavior have no place in youth sports, and will not be tolerated. This is a zero-tolerance policy.
- Any physical or verbal altercations with athletes, coaches, officials, other spectators, or tournament staff will not be tolerated. Offending parties will immediately be escorted out of the venue and banned from returning to the premises for the remainder of the event.
- Be respectful of event staff, security, and rules of the event, along with the use of facilities and equipment provided, at all times.
- Spectators will observe the rules of the event venues concerning smoking, drugs, food/drink consumption, littering, and parking procedures.

Tournament/Play Information:

All matches will be either:

- Best of three (3) sets to 25 with a deciding set to 15 (no cap), OR
- Three (3) sets to 25 (no cap)

Please pay attention to pool description on **AES** ([Schedule here](#)) for clarification within each pool/division.

Formats are subject to change at any time due to team drops. Please be vigilant in checking your schedules as the tournament gets closer AND during the event days.

The schedule will be live on Tuesday January 9, 2024 by 8:00 PM CST.

Please also pay special attention to your pool/bracket to ensure an officiating assignment is not missed.

Work Team Guidelines:

Work teams need to provide:

- 2 line judges
- 1 down ref (R2)
 - For 14 and under age divisions, a coach can be R2.
 - For 15 and above age divisions, athletes can be R2.
- 1 official scorekeeper
- 1 flip score and libero tracker

No additional athletes from the work team are permitted to sit at the score table with assigned positions. No cell phones are allowed at the score tables - no exceptions.

****IMPORTANT NOTE****

Work teams that have just finished playing and are scheduled to work the next match on their court should check in with the referee before leaving the court to get water, food, etc. so the referee knows they will be ready to go on time!

Late to Match OR Work Assignment Penalties:

Playing team late to their match:

Any playing team late to their match will be penalized one point per minute they are late, after the match start time (per the flow of the court that day) NOT the 'scheduled match time'.

The maximum number of points that will be penalized is 15.

After 15 minutes (15 points), the late team forfeits the first match.

Another 3 minutes will be given for the missing team to show up for the, now, second match. If they do not arrive within the allotted 3 minutes, the second set is forfeited and the match is over.

Work team late to their match:

Any scheduled work team that is late to their assignment will be docked one point per minute they are late, after the match start time (per the flow of the court that day). The penalized points will be applied to the first set of their next scheduled game in the tournament.

****Important Note****

'Match start time' is NOT the same as 'scheduled start time.'

'Scheduled start times' indicate when a match SHOULD start, per the schedule released by the tournament. The 'scheduled start time' does not take into account any factors throughout the day that may cause courts to run ahead, or behind. (ex: 9:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 11:00 AM, etc.)

'Match start times' indicate when the match WILL start, per the flow of the court that day. The 'match start time' takes into account any factors throughout the day that may cause courts to run ahead or behind. (ex: 9:15 AM, 10:30 AM, 11:45 AM, etc.)

Abandoned Work Assignment Penalties:

Teams are permitted to find a replacement work team to cover their assignment if they are unable to work.

If a replacement work team has been found, the coach from the scheduled work team and the coach from the replacement work team, must let the tournament director know IN PERSON and get Tournament Director approval before the originally scheduled team is released from their assignment.

If a work team abandons their responsibility for a scheduled work assignment entirely, the club will be fined \$250 for each team that abandons their assignment, as well as a Club Director fine of \$500.

****Teams that are playing OR working after challenge or crossover matches****
Coaches and teams must be aware that their next assignment will populate in the AES schedule shortly after the deciding match concludes. Teams will have 5 minutes to report to their next court after the assignment has been posted.

Coaches must continue to check for their next assignment and should direct their team not to leave the court area while waiting for results.

Warm-Up Protocols:

For the first match of the day, the warm-up protocol will be 5-4-4 (minutes).

For all other matches in the day, the warm-up protocol will be 2-4-4 (minutes).

Tie-Breaking Procedure

No tie-breaker matches or sets will be played.

If a tie breaking coin flip needs to occur, there will be a time limit of fifteen (15) minutes for the coaches *(or a rostered representative of the club)* to report to the Tournament Desk for tie-breaking procedures. Once the fifteen (15) minute window has passed, any team without a representative will lose the coin flip and be seeded accordingly.

Two-Way Tie:

Two-way ties are broken based on pool play head-to-head match results.

Three-Way Tie:

If three teams are tied in match record after pool play, ties to determine finishes within the pool will be broken as follows:

1. Set Percentage (%)

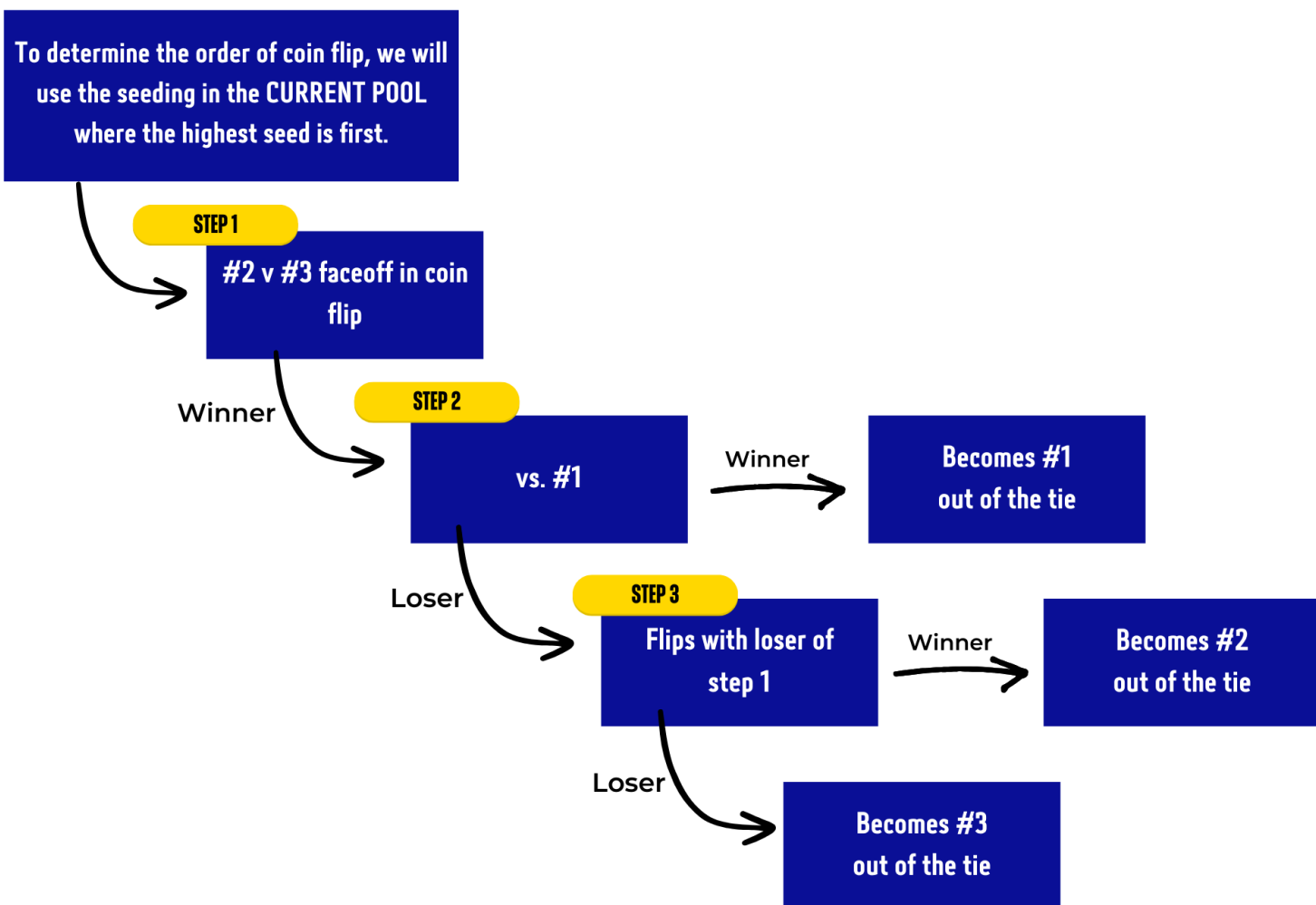
- a. Teams are placed in final finish order by highest to lowest set percentage.
The team with the highest set percentage will be ranked 1st out of the tie, 2nd highest set percentage will be ranked 2nd out of the tie, and the final team will take the last place in the tie.

If two or more teams are still tied after the set percentage order is determined, we will continue through the three way tie rules and move onto Point Percentage.

2. Point Percentage (%)

- a. Teams that are still tied after set percentage, are placed in order of highest to lowest point percentage over the entire pool to determine final finish.

If these same teams are still tied after set percentage and point percentage, then the tie will be broken with a coin flip sequence. To determine the order of coin flip, we will use the seeding in the CURRENT POOL where the highest seed is first. Please see the flow of the coin flip sequence on the following page.



NOTE:

**If one or more of the tied teams are missing from the coin flip procedure, the missing team will be considered a forfeit and the team that is represented on-site will take the higher seed. If NO TEAMS ARE PRESENT for the coin flip procedures, we will use the CURRENT POOL seeding to determine pool finish.

Awards:

Awards will be given to first and second place finishers in Gold Brackets and first place finishers of all other brackets. Teams will be provided an award slip after the conclusion of the final match in their given bracket/pool by their officials to then take to the tournament desk.

Officials:

A first official (R1) will be provided for each match.

**NOTE - On Championship Day: Gold Bracket finals for 14's - 18's in the Open division only will also provide a paid second official (R2).

Athletic Trainers/EMS:

Athletics trainers and EMS will be present onsite.

Athletic trainers will be available for preventative taping, injury response and treatment, and post-play treatment (ice/wrapping).

It is encouraged that athletes bring their own athletic tape.

Protests:

The rostered head coach along with the designated court captain are the only two individuals that may protest. If anyone other than the rostered head coach and/or the designated court captain protests, there will be a penalty, the protest will be dismissed, and play will resume.

Protests may ONLY be made for rule violations, not judgment calls (i.e. a ball handling error). *Reminder that uniforms are not protestable and will be immediately dismissed*

Refusal to play, at any time, will result in the head coach receiving a yellow card, a red card, then a forfeit.

Below is the step-by-step process to protesting that ALL PROTESTS MUST FOLLOW. If any part of this process is missed or not followed, the protest will be dismissed, and play will restart.

- 1) Coach calls the court captain to their bench to tell their court captain what they want to protest and sends the court captain to the head referee stand.
- 2) If the protest request is legitimate, the head referee will send players who are on the court to their benches, dismount the referee stand, and call the Chief Referee to the court.
- 3) The Chief Referee of the event, along with the Event Protest Committee, will go to the court to consult with the court referee, and the head coach and court captain of the protesting team ONLY and will determine the outcome.

All protests will be handled by the Protest Committee and their decision is binding.

A Protest Committee will consist of any two of the following:

- Tournament Director, Assistant Tournament Director, Site Director, Head Official, Highest rated available official or a non-involved Club Director

Facility Rules:

Athletes are not permitted to impede onto another playing court during a rally. The ball will be deemed out of play if this occurs. If an athlete makes contact with the concrete surface in the surrounding playing area, officials will determine that ball to be out of play.

Athletes must make contact with the ball while still on or touching the playing surface.

Due to incidents in previous years, there will be a no tolerance policy for misbehavior by players/teams and spectators in the venues:

- Ball Handling is NOT allowed outside of the playing facilities. Teams may warm on empty courts inside the facility. No ball handling will be allowed in the lobby of the convention center.
- Coolers and outside food and drink are NOT ALLOWED in the facility.
- Only water and sports drinks may be brought inside the facility.
- NO outside chairs allowed; seating will be provided at all courts.

Violation of these policies or any other general misbehaviors may result in immediate dismissal from the facility for the remainder of the day/tournament!