

# Executive Summary of Cloth Rule Changes

## Overview

The Technical Committee presents the revised WDBF Cloth Dodgeball Rules 2026 for ratification. This rulebook represents a significant refinement of our regulatory framework, incorporating lessons learned from international competition, feedback from member federations, and alignment with best practices observed across dodgeball organisations.

Forcing both Cloth and Foam into a single rulebook compromised the unique playing culture of each format. Separate rulebooks allow for cleaner, more consistent language without constant format qualifiers. The Cloth and Foam subcommittees continue to coordinate on logistical rules, such as match duration, court dimensions, and uniform requirements, to keep tournament organization practical.

## Single-Match Focus

The Technical Committee has deliberately scoped the 2026 rulebook to govern the conduct of a single match only. Provisions that relate to tournament administration have been removed and will be relocated into separate documents.

This separation maintains the rulebook as a document of gameplay mechanics, applicable universally regardless of competition format, while allowing tournament organisers appropriate flexibility in administrative matters. Competition-specific regulations can reference and build upon the core rulebook without contradiction.

We plan to work on multiple other documents to help tournament organizers, grassroots movements and referees.

## Major Changes

### "Moment of Hit" Change

Establish that a player is eliminated at the moment of hit rather than when the ball becomes dead.

**Rationale:** This change represents one of the most significant rule modifications in this revision and responds directly to sustained feedback from the Cloth community. Under the 2024 rules, a player was only considered "out" when the ball that hit them touched a dead object—creating a window where hit players could continue making offensive plays.

This change aligns WDBF rules with the EDF ruleset—removing one of the primary barriers to full EDF adoption of WDBF regulations.

The framework still permits hit players to attempt a catch on the ball that hit them, or to continue catching other live balls, preserving exciting last-ditch defensive plays.

# Procedural Improvements

The 2026 rulebook addresses numerous procedural gaps and gameplay edge cases identified through competitive play. Key improvements include:

- **Procedural standardisation** such as reset, false starts, side selection and late arrival
- **Gameplay refinements** such as opening rush safety, ball activation clarity and revised retrieving rules

## Match Officials and Governance

The 2026 rules strengthen the officiating framework while providing practical flexibility for multiple levels of:

- **Referee Hierarchy:** Introduction of "referee in charge" with authority to make final calls when head referees disagree. This eliminates deadlocks during disputed calls.
- **Flexible Officiating:** Head referees may assume or delegate scorekeeper/timekeeper duties when dedicated officials are unavailable, acknowledging resource constraints at smaller tournaments.

## Introduction of the Honour System

This addition represents a philosophical statement about the spirit of Dodgeball competitions. While the 2024 Code of Conduct addressed specific unsporting behaviours, it did not provide a basis for penalising conduct that technically followed the letter of the rules while violating their spirit.

The honour system provision enables match officials to sanction participants who:

- Deliberately deceive referees about hits or catches
- Exploit technical loopholes in bad faith
- Undermine the integrity of competition through dishonest conduct

This aligns WDBF with sporting traditions that value self-officiation and honesty.

## Administrative Streamlining

The 2026 rules ease several administrative requirements that were viewed as unnecessarily strict:

- **Uniform Provisions:** align with common practice and relax team leader/referee uniform requirements
- **Player Equipment:** give head referees more leeway in approving exceptions where it makes sense
- **Team Composition:** allow multiple roles for players