

JUDGING RINGERS & CLOSE SHOES

Tournaments have designated "Judges" to enforce the rules and issue the proper penalties if violations occur; to measure for ringers, the closest shoe to the stake and shoes in count when asked to do so by the contestants; to help make the proper decision in situations involving broken shoes, broken stakes, shoes and stakes moved by contestants during measurement, shoes pitched out of turn and a contestant's shoes mistakenly pitched by the opponent; and to act as a liaison between the contestants and the tournament committee in all possible situations. [See NHPA GUIDELINE 4 - JUDGING \(p.34\)](#)

Pitchers should carry straightedge and measurement tools or have them available at courtside and should always attempt to determine measurements and scoring calls before calling upon a Judge. This will save time and disruption of contestants on adjacent courts and allow Judges to keep their attention upon other tournament conditions.

Pitchers should be familiar with all rules of the game and how to determine measurements for ringers and close shoes.

A ringer is a *live* shoe that comes to rest while encircling the stake. A straightedge touching either the points or any part of the heel calks (see diagram on page 49 of RGS) of the shoe must clear (not touch) the stake in order for it to be declared a ringer. A ringer has a value of three (3) points. [See RULE 3, Section B, 2.\(a\) \(p. 10\)](#)



A *live* shoe that is not a ringer, but comes to rest six inches (6") or closer to the stake, has a value of one (1) point. This includes a "leaner". [See NHPA RULE 3, Section B, 2.\(b\) \(p. 10\)](#)

Pitchers and Judges must use care in taking measurements to not disturb the placement of the stake or shoes. They should also use care in stepping upon or moving material in the pit which may cause the stake or shoes to move.

For the rules on judges, [See NHPA GUIDELINE 4 - JUDGING \(p. 34\)](#)

Recommended
NHPA GUIDELINES FOR JUDGES

"The NHPA Official Rules of Horseshoe Pitching" are the most important tools a judge can carry. The ability to be a fair and impartial judge is based upon your knowledge of these rules. As a judge, you are the most visible member of the Tournament Committee. Your presence serves as a subtle reminder to the contestants that the tournament is conducted and governed by the rules. Be sure to always position yourself where you can observe all of the contestants, the foul lines, and both ends of the court. Pay close attention to the flow of the game and enforce the rules. Your effectiveness is diminished if you are sitting in the bleachers, or chatting with the spectators. You must "walk the fence line" to improve your view, and make yourself visible. Position yourself in a central location if walking becomes distracting to the contestants.

The flow of the game is important, and every effort should be made to ensure contestants adhere to this aspect. Every effort should be made to keep the game moving from one inning to the next. The manner in which you act as a judge will ensure that any delay is minimal.

Safety on the courts should be addressed, and must be stressed. The potential for personal injury while proceeding from the court entrance to a court where you are needed is very real. You must consider, that although you need to get to a center court, contestants are still pitching on either side. Try to access your destination from behind the pitching platforms, being watchful of players pitching toward you. Wait until it is clear, do not walk in front of the pitchers, and return by the path of least disturbance.

When you observe two players trying to determine the value of the shoes they have pitched, and it appears they may not be able to determine this without delay or intervention, simply walking in their direction may ward off an unnecessary delay. At best you are already close, if needed.

Two contestants have called for a judge, when you arrive at their pit these are the steps to follow:

1. Ask what they want determined.
2. Ask the contestants if they agree on the nonrelevant shoes.
3. Remove those shoes (if practical).
4. Measure the shoes in question and make your determination.
5. Announce your decision.

When measuring for a point or a ringer there will be difficult situations. You may need to dig out the clay surrounding the shoe or the stake. Care must be taken not to move the shoe or the stake. Be certain not to lean on the stake. You will find these hints valuable when excavating the points of a shoe or the edge of the stake.

1. Pack clay around the edges of the shoe to keep it from moving.
2. Prop up a precariously leaning shoe with clay using caution not to alter its position.
3. Always dig gently to avoid disturbing the position of the shoes.

Is this shoe a ringer or just closest to the stake? This is a common question asked of a judge. You should take the following steps to make this decision.

1. Verify a shoe that is closer in the event that the shoe in question is not a ringer.
2. Using a straight edge, span from heel to heel of the shoe without touching the stake.

You may need a dollar bill, piece of cellophane, or a .001 of an inch shim to slip between the stake and your straightedge in order to determine that the shoe encircles the stake.

The foul line is perhaps one of the most frequently violated and least enforced infractions. A blanket warning at the onset of the tournament, by the tournament director, makes it more comfortable for a judge to enforce this rule. With or without the warning, you are the judge and the penalty is forfeiture of the shoe pitched when stepping on or over the foul line.

The thirty second time limit may cause a degree of indecision on the part of the judge. You should be observant of the existing conditions and consider what has caused a pitcher to delay their delivery. Continuous repetitive delay should be penalized.

Your role as a judge is a vital part of the game. Make your decisions based on exactly what the rules say, not on what the contestants tell you. If you fully understand the rules and are consistent with their implementation you will have diminished any potential for dispute. Once you have

rendered your decision, walk away, and do not debate it. Your decision is final. If the contestant does not agree with you he may lodge a protest with the Tournament Committee.

If you encounter a situation where, after careful examination, a decision cannot be made, order the inning re-pitched. Tell the contestants and the scorekeeper of this ruling.

Generally, the contestants do not feel comfortable calling a judge to reprimand their opponent, regardless of the infraction. As a judge it is your responsibility to detect and penalize rule infractions.

Send comments on Guidelines for Judges
to [NHPA 1st VP](#).

Edited from NHPA website: <https://www.horseshoepitching.com/gameinfo/judging.html>