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Net consistency and safety at junior volleyball tournaments

When players switch courts, they should be able to count on the net playing consistently. The people setting up those courts need a way to achieve that while keeping portable supports stable.

What players notice

I play for my school and for NorCal Volleyball Club. At tournaments, some nets feel much softer than the ones we use at practice. You notice it when a serve clips the tape or a hit catches the top of the net. In a close set, a couple of those points can make the difference. I made a simple tool and measured 48 courts at four tournaments I played in. Net stiffness varied quite a bit from court to court.

Where the height rule and safety can conflict

USA Volleyball allows the net at the sidelines to sit no more than 2 cm above the official height at center. Tightening the top cable reduces that gap, but it also increases the pull on the posts. My calculations suggest that on some courts, tightening enough to meet the rule could pull hard enough to tip a portable base, depending on its design and ballast. That can leave crews with a difficult choice between meeting the height rule and keeping the base stable. The tipping concern comes from a model based on the court measurements and still needs direct testing.

A conversation with setup crews

What should crews do when the net is still outside the 2 cm tolerance and tightening it further may put the portable base at risk? I’d like to hear what guidelines crews follow and discuss whether a small, supervised pilot could compare nets as they’re already set.

USA Volleyball Indoor Rules, 2025–2027, Rules 2.1.1–2.1.2

The accompanying research manuscript documents the measurements and calculations.