



OFFICIAL 2026 RULEBOOK

presented by
Akaal Sahai Okanagan Gatka Society

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TOURNAMENT FORMAT

The 2026 edition of Akaal Gatka Cup (AGC) will take place on **September 19th and 20th 2026**. The tournament will include qualifying group stage matches followed by a single elimination knockout round. **2026 updates are highlighted in blue.**

DIVISIONS

There will be the following divisions in the 2026 tournament:

Fighting:

Primary Singhs 8-10

Primary Kaurs 8-10

Junior Singhs 11-13

Junior Kaurs 11-13

Intermediate Singhs 14-17

Intermediate Kaurs 14-17

Competitors will participate in the division dictated by their age on December 31st, 2026.

Match Time

Match time starts when the players enter the Akhara, and runs until they leave the Akhara after the final Fatehnama. During this time all rules are enforceable. This includes during holds in active gameplay.

QUALIFYING ROUND

All players will be placed into groups of **3 or 4** for the Group Stage. The exact format of the group competition (either **Round Robin** or **Double Elimination**) will be determined based on the total number of players. Regardless of the group format, every player in the Qualifying Round is **guaranteed two matches**.

The top player(s) from each group will advance to the **single-elimination Playoffs**.

Single Elimination Playoffs

The players who advance from the Qualifying Rounds will compete in a Single-elimination playoff bracket for the AGC Champion title. If during the Qualifying Round or Playoffs, a player is not present at the time of their match, they will be disqualified immediately from one match.

COMPETITION PREPARATION

PLAYING CIRCLE (AKHARA)

The competition will take place within an **Akhara** (playing circle) with a diameter of **28 feet**.

Fouls (Out of Bounds):

A foul is issued if a player's **entire foot** steps and lands outside the circle line, with a visible gap ("daylight") between the foot and the line.

The match restarts from the designated starting position after a foul.

Disqualification (DQ):

A player will be **disqualified** if **both feet** leave the Akhara at any point during the match, unless allowed for medical purposes or at the discretion of the head referee.

Starting Position:

Each match will begin, and players will be placed after any hold, at a designated marking within the Akhara.

ATTIRE

Required Clothing: Players must wear their official team uniform or traditional Sikh attire (e.g., Kurta Pajama, Ladies Suit). T-shirts, sweatpants, athletic wear, and general western attire are **not permitted**. Layers like hoodies or vests **may** be worn over traditional clothing or Khalsa Bana. **Players presenting with any incorrect attire will face a 4 point penalty.** They may also not be allowed to fight at the discretion of the head referee resulting in the match being forfeited.

Required Headwear & Kamar Kasa:

All players must wear a **Dastaar** and a **Kamarkassa** to compete. Players must bring their own Dastaar. **Players are required to wear a second Kamarkassa (that will be provided to you) on top of the red or blue pinnie. Refusal to wear the provided Kamarkassa may result in disqualification at discretion of the head referee.**

Footwear: **Appropriate athletic shoes** must be worn. Sandals, flip-flops, slides, Crocs, casual, or dress shoes are prohibited for safety. **Playing barefoot is not permitted.**

Equipment: **Head Guards** will be provided and are mandatory for all divisions. Metal Face Guards will be available and are optional. **Additional safety gear (groin guards, Arm/Shin Guards etc) may be worn as long as it does not impact the opposing players game. Additional safety gear may be reviewed and removed by the head referee.**

Non-Compliance and Penalties:

4-Point Attire Penalty: If a player presents in western attire (and is unable to change), refuses to tie a second kamarkasa, competes without a Dastaar or violates any of the attire rules, they **may be** allowed to fight but will immediately incur a **4-point Attire Penalty** at the start of the match.

WEAPONS (SHASTARS)

Players will compete with a Gatka Soti and Fari provided by AGC.

Sotis and Faris will have either a blue or red padding, and players will be assigned blue or red for scorekeeping purposes. There will be a selection of sotis, both blue and red, to choose from provided by the tournament based on the player's comfort, but they will all be built to the same specifications.

Players must use a Soti and Fari according to their assigned color. Players are not to use any personal shaster.

All divisions will be fighting with a Soti and a Fari.

Primary Divisions will be using shorter 30" Sotis while Junior and Intermediate divisions will be using a standard 39" Soti. All divisions will be using same size faris.

OFFICIATING

REFEREES

A match will be officiated by a team of referees with a head referee and assistant referees. The head referee will be responsible for calling all points and infractions which they observe, as well as using their discretion for when gameplay needs to be stopped for clarity and fair judgment.

The assistant referees will primarily assist in monitoring points, out of bounds, and charayi violations. They will also assist in enforcing all other rules and regulations.

While the assistant referees may offer their strongest opinions, the final call is always given to the head referee.

Any of the referees may request a stoppage.

All referees must unanimously agree in order to issue a misconduct disqualification.

SCOREKEEPERS

Each match will be monitored by **four scorekeepers**: two assigned to each player.

Within each pair, one scorekeeper will **exclusively observe the match** and call out a single player's points. Their partner will then **exclusively document** those points.

TIMEKEEPER

There will be one official timekeeper per match who will start and stop the game clock according to the sound of the Referees' stoppages.

OVERTIME

In the result of a tie, players will play overtime periods of 30 seconds. The winner of an overtime period will be awarded the victory. Fouls carry over for both players into overtime without any change. If the score is tied after an overtime period, another overtime period will be played. If there is still no winner, the winner will be decided by sudden death, the first to land a vaar without being struck back in the ensuing charayi.

Semi-finals, and Finals matches will have a continuous overtime with no sudden death. As many 30 second periods as are necessary will continue to be played until a winner is determined.

Holds/Timeouts

During a hold/timeout, players must face scorekeepers. Clear disrespect of this rule or repetitive disregard will result in a foul.

Players must also stay inside the Akhara, leaving the Akhara will result in an **immediate disqualification**. Players may only leave the Akhara if approved by the Head Referee.

Players must also refrain from communicating to anyone outside of the Akhara while the Match is in progress. Communicating with anyone outside of the Akhara will result in a foul.

STRIKES (VAARS)

LEGAL VAARS AND POINTS

A landed vaar will score 1, 2, or 3 points for the striking player. Points will only be awarded for clear and legal vaars.

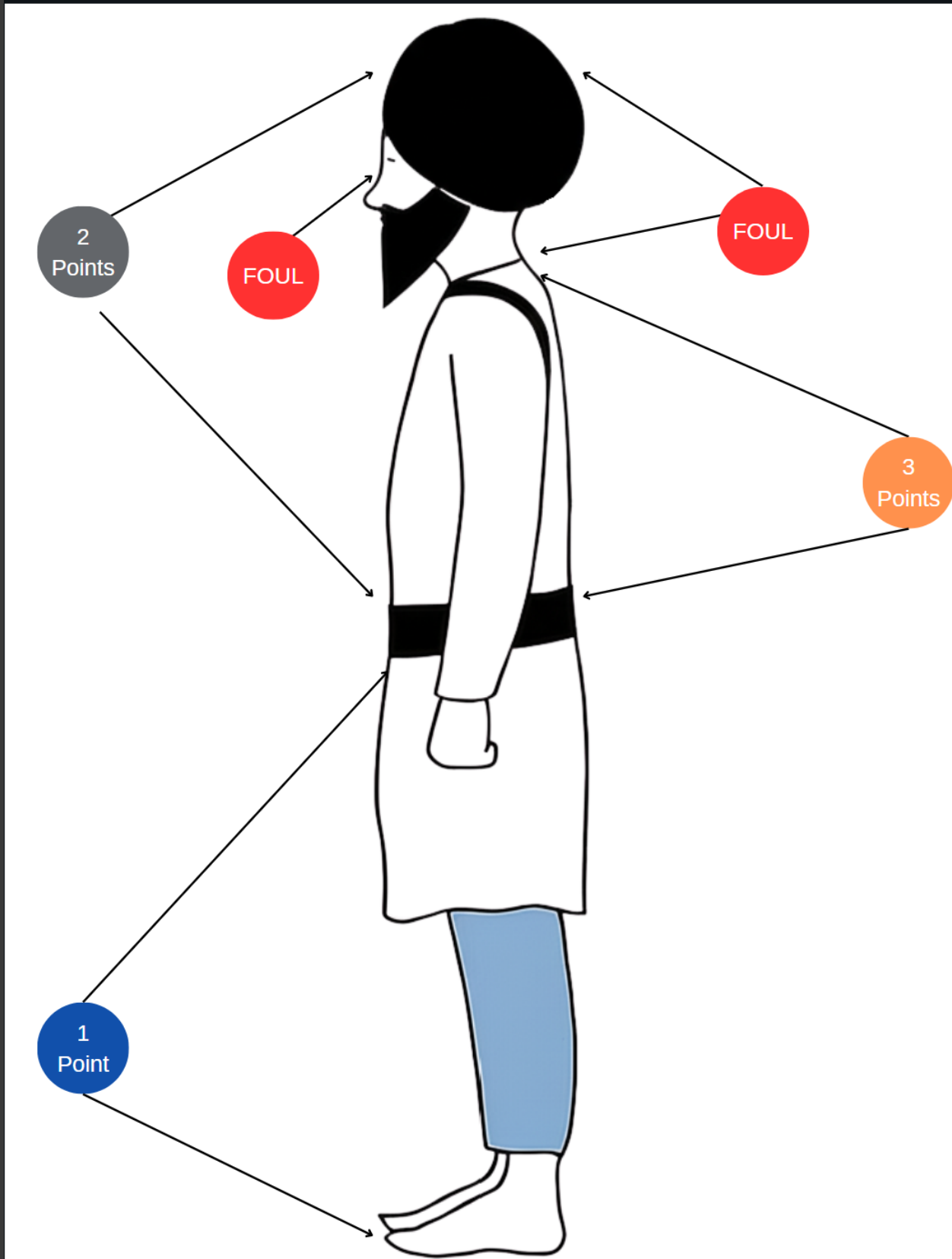
Vaars landed below the waist (measured below the kamarkasa) are worth 1 point.

Vaars at or above the peti (including on the kamarkasa) are worth 2 points. This includes strikes to the head.

Vaars landed on the back are worth 3 points, the vaar must clearly strike the back. Wrapping around will not be awarded 3 points.

Cheer (slice) vaars are permitted so long as they aren't deemed bharma or as long as they don't strike the groin area.

Kanpati vaar are permitted and are awarded 2 points. Any vaar (whether intentional or not) striking the face will be deemed a foul unless it falls under the unawarded vaar category.



NON-PERMISSIBLE VAARS

Non-Permissible Vaars are divided into two categories:

Unawarded Vaars, which carry no penalty or game stoppage but will not be awarded points.

Illegal Vaars will not be awarded points and will be awarded fouls.

UNAWARDED VAARS

Vaars which carry no penalty but are not awarded points:

Vaars which first make significant contact with the opponent's Soti or Fari before striking the opponent, determined at the discretion of the Officials.

Vaars in which the player uses the bottom of the soti (including hilt) to strike the opponent. Only the top $\frac{3}{4}$ of the soti may be used to strike the opponent.

Incidental and simultaneous (sanjha) vaars which happen through no fault of any player. Sanjha vaars are determined by Charayi and not release of vaar. If one player releases a vaar and the other doesn't, it will still be considered a sanjha vaar.

Strikes which hit the face, neck, ear, or groin due the **defensive player's** movements or re-directions, not based upon the direction of the strike

Vaars that are exchanged in rapid succession, and/or from too close of a distance, according to the discretion of the Referee, especially after a landed strike.

Using the inside of the soti to attack, only the outside ("sharp side" of the soti) will be permitted.

Vaars clearly striking only their opponents bana will not be awarded.

Repeated unawarded vaars may be awarded as fouls.

ILLEGAL VAARS

Vaars which will typically be awarded a foul:

Recklessly heavy strikes (bharma vaar) based upon referee discretion

Continued/ Excessive aggression may result in immediate disqualification (upon unanimous decision from all referees)

Strikes directly hitting the face or groin without redirect (regardless of intention)

Stabbing (hool) vaars

Consecutive vaars without allowing the opponent space to respond or "double" vaars*

Marora Vaar (Gurj Vaar)

Any vaars made with the intention of injuring the player

Vaars that strike the back of the head or neck

Fakes and Jukes (*Palta*):

Permitted Use: Fakes and jukes with the *soti* are allowed, provided the attacking player's *soti* **does not strike** the opponent or the opponent's *shastar*. ***Paltey* are deemed appropriate as long as they have forward movement.**

Double Vaar Foul: If contact (striking the opponent or their *shastar*) occurs during a *palta*, the very next strike (*vaar*), will be deemed an illegal **Double Vaar**.

Excessive Use: Players should aim for a clean game and avoid doing more than two *palta* per *vaar* released. Referees have discretion to issue warnings or fouls for excessive or unnatural *paltey*.

Pausing and Rhythm:

Brief Pauses: A short, brief pause during a *soti* movement or *charayi* (attack) is permitted if it occurs naturally within the attacker's rhythm (judged by the referee).

Prohibited Pauses (Loss of Charayi): Players may not pause their *soti* or feet movement during an attack simply to "fish" or "search" for an opening. A pause that is too long will be considered a loss of *charayi*.

Fouls: Repeated lengthy pauses during an attack may result in a **foul**.

Consequence of Exhausted Charayi: If a player's attack is exhausted due to excessive *paltey* or illegal pauses, the opposing player is free to immediately initiate their own attack.

ATTACK (CHARAYI)

Through a system of exchanging attacks (*charayi*) game stoppages will be kept minimal. Just because a point is scored, this does not mean that gameplay will stop. Referees will award scored points while the gameplay continues. Gameplay will only be stopped if:

there is an infraction

a discrepancy amongst the referees

or at the discretion of the head referee if *vaars*, or strikes, can no longer be kept track of.

Players should, to the best of their abilities, try to maintain the same angle with the referee from which they began the match, to allow for a clear allowing of points. ie, if you begin the match on the right side of the referee, try your best to play on that side of the referee. However, crossing the referee and free movement is permitted, but doing so may result in more stoppages in gameplay for the sake of the referee's viewing angle to make the best call. Being conscientious of your positioning will allow for a more free flowing match.

Below is a description of how *charayis* are exchanged in this gameplay format.

CLAIMING CHARAYI AND CHARAYI LENGTH

A charayi is claimed by the first player to initiate their approach within an approximately one step striking distance of their opponent. From this moment a player has a maximum of two seconds to release a vaar. During this charayi, the opposing player may not release a vaar of their own.

A charayi must be claimed with a visible intent to strike. Walking up or casual approaches without moving in a pentra will not be considered a claimed charayi. A foul or warning can be issued for repeating these types of charayis.

A charayi which comes within approximately one soti-length of the opponent will be considered an over-charayi. Vaars landed during over-charayis will not be awarded points and referees may issue fouls for repeated over-charayis.

Players must retreat by a minimum of a full step after attacking and may not plant themselves.

RE-CLAIMING A MISSED (KHAALI) CHARAYI

If an attacking player exhausts their two second charayi before releasing a vaar, they must retreat, in order to regain their charayi. They may not release a vaar from a standing position or while approaching if their two second charayi has been completely exhausted. Doing so will result in a foul.

RESPONDING AFTER A CHARAYI

RESPONDING AFTER A BLOCK

If a vaar is successfully blocked, then the opponent who blocked the vaar may respond from a standing position or through a charayi.

RESPONDING AFTER A STRIKE

If an attacking player is successful in landing a vaar, the opposing player may return a vaar of their own, however they cannot release their vaar from the stationary position of where they were attacked. The opposing player must perform a movement of at least an adha pair. After at least an adha-pair movement, they are permitted to retaliate.

Players must show a true intention to defend in order to respond after being struck, failing to do so will result in a foul

RESPONDING AFTER A KHAALI VAAR/CHARAYI

If a vaar is missed, or khaali, or the charayi is exhausted the opponent may attack by initiating their own charayi.

QUALIFYING HALF-STEP (ADHA PAIR) MOVEMENTS

The following movements meet the requirement of the adha-pair minimum movement:

Jumping straight up into the air.

Moving one foot into a new position while the other is stationary.

Switching feet in one motion will **NOT** qualify as Adha Pair movement

An adha pair will only be considered if there is a visible change in body position. Simply picking up and putting down a foot will not be considered to qualify as a minimum movement. This will be assessed based on referee discretion.

An adha pair movement must be completed before a vaar can be launched in response. If the movement is not completed (ie, the foot has not been placed back on the ground), it will not be considered an appropriate charayi. For jumps straight into the air, the adha pair movement will be considered complete once the attacker has reached the peak of their jump. If a player jumps straight in the air as their responding charayi after being struck, it must be a true jump which requires effort and not a hop. This will be judged by referee discretion.

ASSIGNED CHARAYI

In the most rare and necessary of circumstances, the referee may start to give assigned charayi to players after the stoppage. This will likely only happen in the case of two players who are immediately trying to claim charayi simultaneously when gameplay begins after a stoppage resulting in repeated sanjha vaars. First the Referee will issue a warning. After this, if the players continue to aggressively claim charayi resulting in sanjha vaars, the referee may call upon the use of Assigned Charayi. **One Assigned Charayi will be given to each player. After both players have used this assigned attack, the match will return to the standard, unassigned charayi system.**

If a sanjha vaar (simultaneous attack or mutual hold) occurs after returning to the standard system, the rules change for the remainder of the match. For the rest of the game, players will use Assigned Charayis, with the assignment alternating between players every time a natural hold in the game occurs.

DEFENSE

VISIBLE DEFENSIVE EFFORT

If a player claims a charayi and their opponent does not attempt a block before retaliating, they will be issued a foul, and if they had landed a vaar in the ensuing strike, those points will not be awarded. A block must be attempted before retaliating according to the discretion of the officials.

REASONABLE RESPONSE SPACE

After striking on a charayi, a player must leave a reasonable distance for the opposing player to respond. Advancing your defense into your opponent, or falling into or planting yourself immediately in front of your opponent may result in a foul.

FOULS

Player Fouls

Players will be allowed up to three fouls per game. As shown below:

One non foul warning may be given during the matchplay per referee discretion.

- 1st Foul - Warning - No points deducted
- 2nd Foul - Penalty - One Point Deducted
- 3rd Foul - Penalty - One Point Deducted
- 4th Foul - Penalty - Disqualified

Akhara Fouls

This year we are introducing Akhara Fouls. Fouls can be issued to ustaads or other members of an akhara for a number of reasons, and at the discretion of the AGC officials. Akhara Fouls work differently to player fouls but will impact player scores:

Foul Number	Action	Deduction
1st Foul	Warning	None
2nd Foul	Penalty	4 points deducted from the current fighter (if applicable) and the next three subsequent fighters.
3rd Foul	Penalty	4 points deducted from <i>all</i> remaining fighters.
4th Foul & Subsequent	Penalty	An additional 2 points deducted from <i>all</i> remaining fighters per foul, up to a maximum total deduction of 10 points.

Important Note on Severity: The sequence of penalties above (1st Foul -> 2nd Foul -> 3rd Foul -> 4th Foul Etc) is a guideline. Depending on the **severity** of the infraction, any penalty may be issued **immediately and independently** of any prior fouls.

Fouls include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Doing gestures (Signals/talking to players while fighting)
- Talking/complaining to the referees during active matches
- Aggressive behaviour
- Continuous complaining of match officiating
- Stepping onto the Akhara when not permitted (including while seated)
- Causing significant disruption to the event
- Direct Complaints to match officials or organizers and bypassing the official review process
- Anything else determined out of the fair play of Gatka, Khalsa Principles, and Khalsa Brotherhood.

If the Ustaad or Akhara members are seen, by AGC officials or sevadaars, doing signals/gestures or speaking to the player fighting, one foul will be issued to the Akhara (regardless of who initiated contact). If the player is seen communicating with others outside of the ring, the player will be issued the foul.

Akhara Fouls are for the duration of the tournament.

OTHER FOULS

Several fouls have been detailed over the course of this rulebook. In addition to those fouls, please see the details below for a full description of the different types of additional fouls.

A foul will be awarded if:

A player slips, trips, or falls, without interference by the opponent, during the course of gameplay

A player drops their fari or soti at any point during the match

A player's fari or soti touches the ground (tip of soti is permitted)

Any part of the player's attire at any point during the match falls without opponent interference such as, this may also be given as a warning at referee discretion:

- Kammarkassa unties
- Dastaar unravels
- Any worn shastar falls out onto the ground
- Losing a shoe/foot slipping out of the shoe

A player presents themselves in the Akhara at the time of their match with any kind of incorrect attire - a 4 point penalty will be applied, this does not count towards player fouls.

If a player/coach/member affiliated with the akhara of either player intervenes during match play. This is not limited to directly on the Akhara and includes talking/complaining to officials regarding the officiating of the tournament.

A Match Delay foul for any actions which cause repetitive holds or delays to the match.

AUTOMATIC DISQUALIFICATION & SERIOUS INFRACTIONS

Some infractions do not result in fouls but as an automatic instant disqualification. Examples of such include but is not limited to:

If both feet leave the Akhara the player will be disqualified.

Inappropriate language or taunting

Skipping standard decorum for Gatka (eg. Not partaking in Fatehnama)

Intentionally or repeatedly disrespecting Khalsa Bana, Shastars, or Khalsa principles

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

NOTE: All Automatic Disqualifications will be reviewed by a panel of 5 Singhs, depending on the severity of the infraction, players may be disqualified from the entire tournament by the 5 Singh Committee. All 5 singhs decisions must be unanimous. No member of the sangat is to approach the 5 Singh Committee. This will run as a panj piare system and there will be no review of the decision made by the 5 Singhs. Their decision is final.

An automatic disqualification will be issued to any player at any time for any egregious infraction, so long as it is a unanimous decision by all referees. **This cannot be appealed.**

SPIRIT OF FAIR PLAY

Players behaving outside of the spirit of fair play will be issued a non-foul warning, and then a foul for each following occurrence at the discretion of the head referee. This does not include unsportsmanlike behavior (see above). Examples of such behavior may include but are not limited to:

Complaining or contesting a referee decision

Repeatedly making a technical mistake after being warned by the referee

Coaches are requested to remind players to uphold traditional Khalsa Principles and Values, and although this is a combat sport and involves fighting, we must remember we all are sons and daughters of Guru Maharaj and to play as such.

MATCH NO-SHOW

Players will be notified at least 2 matches before their next upcoming match. This is the time that a competitor has to prepare themselves, secure their attire, and present themselves before the appropriate representative at the assigned location near the playing Akhara. If by the time a player's match is to begin they are not present, they will be immediately disqualified without question.

In the event that an emergency situation arises and that is what kept the player from participating, then if the player is able to compete they must report to the appropriate organizers to state their case and seek to be reinstated into the tournament. This will be done at the discretion of the organizer and re-entry is not guaranteed.

Player Communication

The player must show readiness to adapt to the match play and the challenge brought to them by the opposing player without continuous coaching. The player must also show discipline and focus by avoiding distractions from outside of the Akhara, regardless if it is a member of their Akhara, another Akhara or a member of the sangat.

From the moment the player enters the Akhara and the match is in progress, there is to be no external communication from anyone with the players. This includes but is not limited to direct conversation, gestures (Ishare), use of signs etc. The player must conduct themselves in a way where even if there are attempts of communication, they are able to avoid that distraction.

The player is also not permitted to communicate with anyone outside of the Akhara.

If the player is found to be communicating they will be issued a foul.

If the Ustaad or team members are found to be communicating, the Akhara will be given a foul.

If the player is responding to a member of the general sangat including members of other teams, the player will receive a foul.

REFEREE DISCRETION & WARNINGS

The competition stresses **clean, natural, and traditional Gatka gameplay**. Referees maintain the authority to issue **warnings and fouls** for any behavior that undermines the spirit of the sport, regardless of whether that behavior is explicitly outlined in the rules.

Referees may issue a **warning** for unintentional errors. However, assistant referees can challenge a warning and consult the Head Referee to **upgrade it to a foul**.

If an infringement is missed but a natural hold occurs, the Head Referee may review the video to confirm the foul or DQ, and the decision can be made at that time.

Akhara Reviews

For AGC 2026, Akharas are allotted **one review per tournament day**. All ustaads will receive a review card upon check-in which can be used on that day only. The Akhara review can only be used by a person of authority within the Akhara. Please note that once a review is used, it cannot be reinstated regardless of the outcome. A review will only be officially registered if the Akhara representative elects to use their daily review by submitting their review card. No other complaints/grievances will be registered. Repeated complaining without using the formal review process/ once your review has been used may lead to Akhara fouls being issues.

To be valid, the review must be requested **during the match**; post-match appeals will not be considered. All decisions will be based exclusively on official tournament footage. Reviews do not carry over—any unused review from Day 1 will expire and cannot be used on Day 2.

Once a review has been requested, all necessary information will be collected, there will be no interference from the requesting party unless asked by the review sevadaar.

If a review is not used on Day 1, all unused cards must be returned.

Reviews are per Akhara and not per ustaad.

PLAYER TIME-OUTS

A player may take one time-out in a match to discuss with the referee. Any time-outs after that requested by the player will only be given according to referee discretion, with the additional consultation of the First Aid Attendant when necessary. Time-outs may be used to adjust attire, for medical reasons, or to discuss a pattern of missed calls or behaviour which the player wants to draw the referee's attention to.

If a player needs to tie their shoe, adjust their attire, get a drink of water with the permission of the attending First Aid volunteer, etc., they can do so during a hold in order to avoid being penalized or compromising their own safety. However, if a referee deems that this is being done to avoid using a time-out so the player can rest, then the player will be given a Delay of Game Penalty. Each Delay of Game Penalty will result in the offending player being deducted one point from their total score.

A timeout is called for by disengaging from combat, coming out of pentra stance and tapping your soti on your fari above your head.

PLAYER CHALLENGES

All match outcomes will be considered final over the duration of the tournament. There will be no match reviews or challenges once a match has been completed. **No decisions made will be or can be overturned after the match unless directed by the 5 Singh Committee. Non AGC officials may not approach the 5 Singh committee, doing so will result in Akhara Fouls.**

In the group stage of the tournament, players will not have an opportunity to request a review or challenge any calls made in the match. All referee decisions will be considered final.

In the Championship Playoffs, **players will be given 1 challenge per match for the duration of the playoffs.** Players will be able to challenge any one call of their choice during the hold following the play when the call was made. This can be for a called point, missed point, called foul, or missed foul.

All Referees and a sevadaar will review the footage on the spot to decide whether to uphold or overturn the call.

In the result of a successful challenge, incorrectly issued fouls or points will be overturned. **There is one challenge per player per match.**

Review will be done using only official footage. Side angles recorded from the stands will not be permitted for review.

These regulations are loosely based on the Damdama Gatka Championship framework but have been **tailored specifically for the Akaal Gatka Cup**. The Akaal Gatka Cup maintains no formal affiliation with the Damdama Gatka Championship.

