

1-3-3 Ratio Guidelines

This document outlines the structure and implementation of the 1-3-3 mixed matchup ratio, and addresses some frequently asked questions.

Updated: March 2023 by Jenna Weiner

Purpose

The purpose of the 1-3-3 mixed matchup ratio is to intentionally center non-binary, transgender, genderqueer, and intersex athletes in policy and on the field.

Goal

To establish a mixed matchup ratio that creates space for non-binary, transgender, genderqueer, and intersex athletes on the field, and allows for flexibility in gender matchups.

Guiding Principles

- a. Gender is recognized as non-binary, so ultimate rules and policies, including matchup ratios, should reflect this and be inclusive of people of all gender identities and expressions.
- b. Each person is in control of how they present and express their gender identity, and no person should have their identity disclosed, or be outed, outside of their wishes or personal control.
- c. The fairness of on-field matchups is not determined solely by gender, and flexibility in potential cross-gender matchups should be allowed and encouraged, as well as changes in an individual's gender matchup preferences.
- d. Personal health information is protected information and need not be disclosed for the purposes of the 1-3-3 matchup ratio.

Definitions

- a. Non-binary/genderqueer: a catch-all category for gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine; identities which are outside the gender binary.
- b. Transgender (trans): describes a person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.
- c. Cisgender (cis): describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- d. Gender: the socially-constructed roles, behaviors, and attributes which society associates with one sex.
- e. Gender expression: the manner in which an individual represents or expresses gender to others through behavior, outward appearance, activities, voice, mannerisms, etc.
- f. Gender identity: an individual's deeply held sense or knowledge of their own gender.
- g. Intersex: a general term used for a person born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of female or male.
- h. Sex: either of the two main categories (male and female) into which an individual is categorized based on reproductive function.

Structure

- a. The 1-3-3 matchup ratio model includes a non-gender-designated spot, in addition to six gender designated positions allotted 3-3 for men and women.
- b. Non-gender-designated means that the gender, and the gender matchup, of the person occupying that spot is not designated or prescribed.
- c. This policy is intentionally structured so that transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, and intersex athletes have space on the field and such that ultimate is not limited to only men and women.
- d. Transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, and intersex players are not required to play in the non-gender-designated spot.
- e. The non-gender-designated spot is not limited to same-gender matching.

Implementation

Incorporating the 1-3-3 matchup ratio into traditional 4-3/3-4 league or tournament play necessarily requires changes to matchup ratio-related aspects of registration and play, however the implementation of this structure should be more tweaks than a total overhaul.

Registration:

In registration, players should indicate their gender matching preferences, which can, but is not required to be, the same as a player's gender identity. An added gender matchup category can be added for "no preference/defender of anyone" to allow for more flexibility and in contrast with the standard matchups of "defender of men" or "defender of women."

Before play starts:

When flipping for color and field position, teams should continue to flip for the gendzone. This will dictate which endzone sets the matchup ratio for each point, whether four "defenders of women" or four "defenders of men" or some signal for the "no preference/defender of anyone" matchup. Teams should also confirm a mutual understanding of the 1-3-3 matchup ratio guidelines and plan for further discussion should issues or questions come up during gameplay.

During play:

When matching up across person-to-person on a line, USAU/WFDF hand-signals should be used to indicate the preferred matchup of the person who is in the non-gender-designated spot for the team in the gendzone. If that matchup is for women, then the other team must match that gender preference with a woman/non-binary/trans-matching person. If that matchup is for men, then the other team may put a man or a women/non-binary/trans-matching person.

An added hand signal is likely necessary for a "defender of anyone" matchup and can be determined before the start of a league, tournament, or game. In that case, the other team can put anyone of any gender matchup on the line. Play proceeds normally from there with the team in the gendzone at the start of each point dictating to the other team what their gender matchups are and the responding team putting players in their suitable positions.

In general, it is helpful when signaling gender matchup preferences for all players on both teams to signal their gender-match preference for each point, regardless of which team is in the gendzone. This allows for assumptions not to be made about gender matchups of the other team and for more efficient matchup decision-making. Throughout the course of a game, it may become less necessary to do so as players learn who their opponents are and what their matchups tend to be, but it is still a helpful best practice to ensure that every player feels comfortable with their matchup regardless of gender on every point.

The 1-3-3 Matchup Ratio with WFDF Ratio Rule A

Using the 1-3-3 matchup ratio guidelines under WFDF Ratio Rule A does not fundamentally change the above approach to implementing the 1-3-3 set-up in standard play. However, there are changes in language and procedure that would need to be made before a tournament or game starts to ensure that the 1-3-3 matchup ratio is used properly in conjunction with WFDF Ratio Rule A. As such, below includes the text of WFDF Ratio Rule A and guidelines for how to implement the 1-3-3 under Ratio Rule A.

WFDF Ratio Rule A

For clarity, WFDF Ratio Rule A states: “At the start of the game, after the first disc flip, an additional disc flip happens with the winner selecting the personnel ratio for the first point. For the second and third points the ratio must be the reverse of the first point. For the fourth and fifth points the ratio must be the same as the first point. This pattern of alternating the ratio every two points repeats until the end of the game (half time has no impact on the pattern).

And follows with: “In conjunction with the use of Ratio Rule A, all WFDF Events must also use the “prescribed pull” rule: if the personnel ratio for a point has four (4) female players, a female player must undertake the pull at the start of that point, [while] if the personnel ratio for a point has four (4) male players, a male player must undertake the pull at the start of that point.”

Implementation

In accordance with Ratio Rule A, teams should flip to decide what the initial matchup ratio is, whether 4-3 or 3-4. However, in accordance with the intention of the 1-3-3 matchup ratio guidelines, teams should agree that on any point, regardless of the matchup ratio, any person may choose to play as a “defender of anyone.” Teams should also agree that any person who chooses to play as a “defender of anyone” on any given point should be included in the personnel who are able to pull under the “prescribed pull” rule.

Teams should also confirm a mutual understanding of the 1-3-3 matchup ratio guidelines and plan for further discussion should issues or questions come up during gameplay. With this arrangement, while teams do have to agree on a starting initial matchup ratio for purposes of designating the pool of pulling players each point, the 1-3-3 matchup ratio is able to be implemented without deviating from the ABBA approach set out by Ratio Rule A.

For further clarity, this revised version of the “prescribed pull” rule may be used to help incorporate the 1-3-3 matchup ratio into play under Ratio Rule A.

"If the matchup ratio for a point is for women-matching players/defenders of women, then a woman-matching player or a defender of anyone must pull, and if the matchup ratio for a point is for men-matching players/defenders of men, then a man-matching player or a defender of anyone must pull."

FAQs

How is this different from the standard 4-3/3-4 matchup ratios?

The standard 4-3/3-4 matchup ratios only recognize players as men or women, or men or women matching, which does not make space for transgender/non-binary/genderqueer players who may not fit into typical binary notions of gender. The 1-3-3 intentionally creates space for those players through a non-gender-designated spot.

Someone on my team is non-binary, but isn't fully out publicly. Do they have to be outed by playing in the non-gender-designated role?

No one should feel like they need to out themselves to play ultimate and this still applies in the 1-3-3 matchup ratio. A non-binary person should decide what matchup(s) suits them best for each league/tourney/game and then can play in that role. That can be women matching, men matching, or no preference as with other players, and can determine for themselves how best to manage coming out in an ultimate context.

How does the matchup ratio signaling work when the gendzone team is on offense?

The defender (or matchup) of anyone signal would be given by someone on the dictating team, and the other team would match accordingly, as in the current 3-4 system. The "defender" label¹ is more of a "matchup" label in reality, so if the dictating team is on offense, then the defending team can choose to put whoever they want on as the 7th player.

Does hormone therapy for trans/non-binary people come into play in this policy?

Hormone therapy does not affect how the 1-3-3 matchup ratio operates, except in situations where other organizational policy dictates it. Transgender/non-binary players should indicate what their gender matchup preference is in the same manner to cisgender players, and the matchup hand signals should reflect that.

What happens if cisgender men are mostly taking the non-gender-designated spot?

If the policy is not being equitably and inclusively implemented, such as cisgender men excessively taking up the non-gender-designated space, conversations must happen with captains/league organizers/etc. The purpose and goal of this policy are lost when the matchup ratio reverts back to a predominantly male 4-3, and steps need to be taken to ensure that this does not happen and that the policy is implemented in an inclusive and equitable manner.

¹ Originally, to my knowledge, coined by folks in some of DiscNY's leagues