

Flip Well Pinball League Official Rules, v1.0

1. Introduction

The Flip Well Pinball League (FWPL) rules provide a format for running a friendly league competition for pinball players of all skill levels. These rules are designed for leagues with six or more players, playing on four or more machines at a single location. Scoring is based on how well one does relative to players of similar ability. Competition is designed to be exciting down to the last ball of every game, and points are often not decided until the final ball has drained. The nature of the FWPL system allows players of all ages and skill levels to play in a single league that is fun and competitive for everyone.

1.1 League Officials

In these rules, *LO* stands for League Official. For situations requiring an immediate decision or rule interpretation, this refers to any league official present who is not directly affected by the decision. In particular, rulings of malfunctions or interference should be deferred to an uninvolved official.

2. Attendance and Tardiness

The *LO* must designate a specific day and start time for the league, as well as length of season. League players are expected to attend all matches of the season.

2.1 Start Time

Any games in progress by league players at league start time are immediately halted. Players join their assigned group and begin league play immediately.

2.2 Announced Tardiness

If the *LO* is notified before league start time that a player will be late, then players in the affected group will wait up to 15 minutes before beginning play.

2.3 Unannounced Tardiness

If a player arrives after his group begins play, the player may join the game in progress if possible. Joining the game is permitted if the machine permits it, and the last player of the group has not started ball 1.

2.4 Forfeits

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If a player is not present and eligible to play a game, a forfeit will be recorded for that player. The forfeiting player will receive zero (0) points for that game. The remaining players in the group will still play the game, and game points will be assigned based on the number of eligible (non-forfeiting) scores recorded.

A player who forfeits all scores for one night will receive 50% of their average scores up to that date as their score for the session. Any subsequent forfeits will receive no points.

Players who join a league after the first game of a season will accumulate forfeits for the games they did not play. It is left to the *LO*'s discretion to determine if these forfeits are "countable forfeits"; that is, if they count towards possible forfeiture of the season for that player. Unless designated by the *LO*, all forfeits are considered to be "countable".

2.5 Forfeit of Season

If a player accumulates twelve (12) countable forfeits during a season, he/she automatically forfeits the season, and may not play in the league again until the next season begins.

3. Scoring

It is each player's responsibility to be sure that his or her machine scores are recorded correctly on the score sheet as each game is finished. Any possible scoring errors should be brought to the attention of the *LO* as soon as possible. Once notified of a possible error, the *LO* shall contact all the players in the affected group to determine their recollection of the scoring. If all players agree, then the scoring will be corrected. However, if not all players of the group concur with the reported error, \ the scores as written on the score sheet shall stand.

3.1 Player Groups

Prior to the start of league play players will be divided into groups of 4 by current seeding, starting at the top. Prior to the start of week 1, IFPA ranking will be used for seeding; all subsequent weeks will be seeded by current season league points only. In the case that the number of players is not divisible by four, the bottom one through three groups will have their size adjusted to account for the total number of players. Players are encouraged to notify the *LO* if they will not attend an event, so the groups can be adjusted accordingly ahead of time. Groups will not be adjusted for unannounced absences.

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3.2 Game Points

For two-player games, the winner of the game is awarded seven (7) points, the loser will be awarded one (1). A bonus point is awarded to the winner if his score exceeds three times the loser's score. Otherwise, the bonus point is given to the loser.

For three-player games, the winner is awarded seven (7) points, the second-place player gets four (4) points, and the loser will be awarded one (1). A bonus point is awarded to the winner if he exceeds the sum of the second- and third-place player's scores. Otherwise, the bonus point is given to the third-place player.

For four-player games, the winner is awarded seven (7) points, the second-place player five (5) points, the third-place player three (3) points, and the loser will be awarded one (1). One bonus point is allocated to either the first- or third-place player, as in a three-player match. Another bonus point is given to the second-place player if his score exceeds the sum of the third- and fourth-place players. Otherwise, the second bonus point is given to the fourth-place player.

Any ties in machine score will be resolved by a one-ball playoff between the affected players on the same machine. If this playoff does not resolve the tie, additional balls will be played until the tie is broken.

3.3 Match Bonus Points

Match bonus points are awarded at the end of a league match to increase the reward of winning the overall match, and to keep players competitive through the end of the final game. Match bonus points have the same value as game points in determining league standings.

After all four games of a match are played, the actual league points for the players are totaled. Match bonus points are allocated by treating these totals as machine scores for a "fifth" game. Match bonus points are awarded in a similar manner as game points. However, there is a difference in four player groups. The first match bonus point will be awarded to the first place player if he **equals** or exceeds the sum of the second and third place players' scores; otherwise, the first match bonus point is awarded to the third place player. Likewise, the second match bonus point will be awarded to the second place player if he **equals** or exceeds the sum of the third and fourth place players' scores; otherwise, the second match bonus point is awarded to the fourth place player.

In the event of a tie, the player with the most first place finishes will receive the higher position.

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Players who forfeit three or more games in a match are not eligible to receive match bonus points for that match, and these players will be excluded from the match bonus point calculation for their group.

4. Player Grouping

Players are arranged into groups of three or four, so that players of similar ability are playing against each other during any given match. A match consists of four games, played on four different machines (if possible) during a single meet. All games are played in multiplayer mode (players alternate turns and scores are displayed simultaneously on the machine).

4.1 Group Size

Players are arranged into as many groups of four players as possible, but in most cases there should be at least one three-player group for the lowest-ranked players. The following table shows suggested group sizes for a given number of players in the league. There will be no scheduled matches with less than 3 players, however 2 player matches are possible as the result of a forfeit(s).

6 to 8 players: two groups

- 6: 3 3
- 7: 4 3
- 8: 4 4

9 to 12 players: three groups

- 9: 3 3 3
- 10: 4 3 3
- 11: 4 4 3
- 12: 4 4 4

13 to 16 players: four groups

- 13: 4 3 3 3
- 14: 4 4 3 3
- 15: 4 4 4 3
- 16: 4 4 4 4

17 to 20 players: five groups

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- 17: 4 4 3 3 3
- 18: 4 4 4 3 3
- 19: 4 4 4 4 3
- 20: 4 4 4 4 4

21 to 24 players: six groups

- 21: 4 4 4 3 3 3
- 22: 4 4 4 4 3 3
- 23: 4 4 4 4 4 3
- 24: 4 4 4 4 4 4

25 to 28 players: seven groups

- 25: 4 4 4 4 3 3 3
- 26: 4 4 4 4 4 3 3
- 27: 4 4 4 4 4 4 3
- 28: 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

29 to 32 players: eight groups

- 29: 4 4 4 4 4 3 3 3
- 30: 4 4 4 4 4 4 3 3
- 31: 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 3
- 32: 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

These suggested groupings may be altered by the *LO* if other groupings are deemed more appropriate for a league location. However, mid-season regrouping should be avoided if possible.

4.2 Ladder and Group Ranks

At each meet, all players in the league are ordered in a single ladder listing, beginning with the top player in group 1 and continuing down to the last player in the lowest group. This ladder is then divided into groups based on the league size, as shown above, and players within each group compete directly with each other during that match.

4.3 Ladder Rank

The initial assignment of ladder rankings before the season starts is made by current IFPA ranking. Unranked players are placed alphabetically at the bottom of the

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ranking. Subsequent matches will be ranked based on accrued points for the current league session only.

5. Machine Selection and Play Order

At each meet, the first game to be played for each group will be randomly assigned prior to start of the match. Play order for the first round will be in order of seeding.

For each subsequent game, the fourth place player of the previous game will decide the next game to be played. The chosen game must not be currently in use by another group, or at ball 3 of the group currently playing. Players cannot select a game that has already been played that night by the group. If no open games or games with matches at ball 3 are available, any game may be chosen. Groups should not wait for a game that another group is already waiting on.

5.1 Machine Replacement Selection

If a machine should become unplayable during league play, a replacement machine must be chosen by the individual who selected the machine in question.

5.2 Individual Play Order

Play order for the first game will be the order of seeding, highest seeded player playing first, and lowest playing last. Play order for subsequent games will be the order of results for the previous round. The first place player of the previous round will play first, followed by the second place player, followed by the third, etc. If a player joins their group late (e.g. due to tardiness), they will get the last player position for the first game they play, but they will not be given machine selection.

6. Playoffs

6.1 Playoff Divisions

Following the completion of the regular season, a single night playoff will occur.

To provide a fair cutoff position for entry to playoffs, the league is separated into playoff divisions based on league size. The playoff cut will be the top half of the players rounded down to the nearest multiple of four. Playoff entry will be decided by total points after the final week of regular play. Ties will be settled by single ball play on a random machine.

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Leagues with 16 or fewer players will consist of a single division, with the top 8 players participating in the playoffs.

Leagues having between 16 and 24 players will consist of a single division, with the top 12 players participating in the playoffs.

Leagues having between 25 and 32 players will be divided into two divisions (A and B), with the top 8 players participating in the A division playoffs, and the next 8 players participating in the B division Playoffs.

Leagues having between 33 and 40 players will be divided into two divisions (A and B), with the top 8 players participating in the A division playoffs, and the next 12 players participating in the B division Playoffs.

Leagues having between 41 and 48 players will be divided into two divisions (A and B), with the top 12 players participating in the A division playoffs, and the next 12 players participating in the B division Playoffs.

6.2 Awarding Playoff Spots

Within each division, players with the highest league point totals for the season qualify for playoff competition. No less than 50% of the players will qualify for post-season play.

6.3 Playoff Format

Playoffs are done PAPA style, with 4-2-1-0 points awarded for 1st-4th place finishes. No bonus points are awarded during playoffs.

Eight player groups will have two semifinal matches and one final match, each consisting of three games. The top two players of each match will advance to the finals, the bottom two players of each group will be eliminated. The finals will be the same format, with 1st-4th place decided by the total points awarded during the three games of that round. Points from previous rounds do not carry over.

Twelve player groups will consist of two quarterfinal matches, two semifinal matches, and one final match, each consisting of three games. The top four players will receive a bye through the quarterfinal round. The top two players of each match will advance to the semifinal round, the bottom two players of each group will be eliminated. The semifinals finals will be the same format, as will the finals, with 1st-4th place of the

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finals decided by the total points awarded during the three games of that round. Points from previous rounds do not carry over.

Player groups based on seeding for 8 person semifinal matches will be-

Group 1 – Player # 1, 4, 5 and 8

Group 2 – Player # 2, 3, 6 and 7

Player groups based on seeding for 12 person quarterfinal matches will be-

Group 1 – Player # 5, 8, 9, 12

Group 2 – Player # 6, 7, 10, 11

Players 1-4 receive a bye in the quarterfinal round. For semifinal rounds, Players 1 and 4 will play the winners of group 1; players 2 and 3 will play the winners of Group 2.

6.4 Playoff Machine Selection

Playoff machine selection is done the same way as regular tournament play. The first machine will be randomly selected. Machine choice for the second game goes to the loser of the first game. Machine choice for the third game goes to the loser of the second game.

5.3 Playoff Play Order

Play order for the first game will be the order of seeding, highest seeded player playing first, and lowest playing last. Play order for subsequent games will be the order of results for the previous round. The first place player of the previous round will play first, followed by the second place player, followed by the third, etc.

6.5 Ties in Playoff Results

Two or Three-way ties during the playoffs are decided by the head-to-head game between the tied players during that playoff match. Machine selection for tiebreaker games will be random.

6.6 Tardy or Missing from Playoffs

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Tardy players may request a 15-minute delay in their match start time per section 2.2. If a player announces prior to the playoffs they are unable to attend, all lower-seeded players advance one spot, and the highest ranked player that did not qualify for the playoffs is now qualified.

If a player is not present for their match start time, they are immediately disqualified from the match. A three player round will be played with points awarded of 4, 2 and 1 and only one player will be eliminated.

7. Machine Play Rules - General

7.1 Extra Balls

On machines set to three (3) or less balls per game, one (1) extra ball may be played per player per game. Other extra balls will be played “one-handed”, where the player can decide which of their hands to play that ball with, not touching the game in any way with the other hand. Extra balls that must be played one-handed are referred to as "unallowable" or "one-handed" balls in this document.

If the ball is returned to a launcher lane that requires a manual plunge (e.g. by a ball saver), the player may re-plunge the ball.

If a one-handed extra ball becomes stuck somewhere on the machine, the player may attempt to nudge the machine to free the ball. If nudging fails to free the ball, and there is no operator present to free the ball, the player (or *LO*) will be required to tilt the game in an attempt to free the ball. No compensation is provided in this event, nor is it considered a major malfunction.

Buy-ins for extra balls is not allowed.

7.2 Replays and Specials

No award is given for credits earned by replays or specials during league play. Extra balls earned as a result of a replay or special will be played as per Section 7.1.

7.3 Malfunctions

Pinball machines are complex assemblies that can exhibit many unintended behaviors during play. To keep league play on track and prevent excessive focus on minor glitches, only serious machine malfunctions can affect league play. Serious machine malfunctions are broken down into two categories: major malfunctions and catastrophic malfunctions.

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A **major malfunction** is one that results in a loss of a playable turn that is not a normal part of the game (i.e. premature loss of turn). A "playable turn" includes the player's current turn at play, and any other balls that the player is entitled to play. This does not include "unallowable" extra balls. Note that an active multiball is part of the "current turn at play" and therefore a major malfunction during multiball is only counted once. In disputed situations, the *LO* shall decide whether or not a malfunction is considered major.

The following are examples of major malfunctions:

- A player is forced to tilt the ball in an attempt to dislodge a stuck ball (unless it is an unallowable extra ball; see section 7.1).
- A turn ends prematurely (i.e. with 1 or more balls in play).
- A ball is auto-plunged or otherwise shot into play without the player's involvement, resulting in loss of ball.

The following examples would not be considered major malfunctions:

- A player tilts away a stuck ball when it was not clearly necessary.
- A multiball round ends prematurely but does not result in loss of turn.
- A ball goes airborne and drains.
- A lit kickback fails to kick the ball back into play.
- A ball saver fails to work.
- A player tilts another player's ball. (This is **Interference**.)
- If a problem with a machine is announced to league players by the *LO* before league play is started, then that problem is not considered a major malfunction even if the result is loss of ball in play.

Catastrophic malfunctions deny a player a playable turn without that player having any opportunity to play the ball. As with major malfunctions, this does not include "unallowable" extra balls. The following are examples of catastrophic malfunctions:

- Slam tilt
- Total machine failure / reset
- Loss of electrical power
- Fire due to overheated components

Note that these events are not considered catastrophic for the ball the player is currently playing, provided the ball was put into play before the malfunction occurred. That player receives a major malfunction, not a catastrophic malfunction. In disputed situations, the *LO* shall decide whether a malfunction is considered catastrophic.

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If two (2) or more major malfunctions or one (1) catastrophic malfunction occur to a player during the course of a game, the player will be allowed to play as many balls on a new game of the same machine as were affected by malfunction on the original game. After those balls are played, the displayed score from the new game is added to the displayed score from the original game to calculate the player's final overall score for the game. Affected balls include any balls prematurely ended by major malfunction and any balls never launched into play, including collected allowable extra balls, but not uncollected or unallowable extra balls. At the *LO's* discretion, balls to be played on the new game may start with other than ball 1, in which case the leading ball(s) must be plunged and the displayed score from those ball(s) subtracted from the player's final score. At the *LO's* discretion, game features may be set on the new game to match the known state of the original game, subtracting any incidental points required to establish this state from the player's final score. The rest of the group waits for the player to finish the compensatory game before starting their next game.

The *LO* can declare a machine unplayable at any time if it is not functioning properly and the resulting malfunction(s) will, in his estimation, impair the ability of players to obtain fair scores. If the first ball played by all players result in major malfunctions, or if play cannot be continued on a machine for any reason, the machine is automatically declared unplayable for the rest of the meet, or until the machine is repaired. In these cases, the entire game is replayed immediately on a machine designated by the *LO*. Any recorded scores on the machine at the time of failure will be used if the machine is brought back into service and affected players replay, or players accept agreed-upon scores.

It is recommended that the league prepare a maintenance sheet on which is noted any malfunctions that are found on the various machines during league play. This list should be passed on to the site's management to assist in the proper maintenance of the machines.

7.4 Positive Malfunctions

If a malfunction causes a player to receive an exceptionally unfair advantage over the other players, and there is no reasonable way to avoid it, then the game is stopped and a new game is started either on the same or a different machine at the *LO's* discretion. If a positive malfunction can be avoided (such as the awarding of extra points by repeated tapping of a flipper button), then this behavior shall be reported to the *LO* and shall be avoided during subsequent league play. At the discretion of the *LO*, the game may be replayed if it is felt that an unfair advantage was already gained by one or more players due to the malfunction. In this situation, the *LO* may also rule that completed scores on the game are to be discarded. It is the

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responsibility of all members of a group to ensure that positive malfunctions are not abused.

Note that a one ball "multiball" (or stuck ball during multiball) is not considered an exceptionally unfair advantage.

7.5 Gameplay Promptness

When a player's turn comes up in a league match, he is expected to begin play promptly. If a league player does not begin play in a reasonable amount of time, the *LO* may plunge the ball for him, and the player may not play the ball.

7.6 Practice Games

Once league play starts, a player may not practice any games until their scheduled league games are complete. Practice games must be ended immediately if a league group is ready to begin a scheduled game on that machine.

7.7 Distractions

In general, random distractions that occur during league play (including minor physical bumps) are considered normal play conditions and no allowances are made for the effects of such distractions on a player's game.

7.8 Non-League Players

League players do not take precedence over other customers at the establishment. Having a non-league customer play your ball is considered a distraction and not interference; control of the ball should be regained as quickly and politely as possible. Close attention should be paid by league players to their game in progress to guard against this situation.

8. Illegal actions

8.1 Playing Own Unallowable Extra Ball

If a player nudges, flips, or otherwise plays his own unallowable extra with the other hand (non-selected hand), he must stop as soon as the error is recognized, and must plunge his next "allowable" ball without playing. If the error occurs on or after the player's last "allowable" ball, his final machine score is reduced by 25%.

8.2 Playing Opponent's Ball

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The violator shall attempt to trap the ball(s) on a flipper as soon as the error is realized. This is Interference, and the violator will receive a machine score of zero for the game.

If the affected ball was an unallowable extra ball, and the victim has no more allowable balls, there is no additional compensation for the victim. Otherwise, the victim may choose one of three options: continue playing the erroneously plunged ball (if control can be recovered), drain the plunged ball and play an additional ball through a buy-in or (normally unallowable) earned extra ball, or replay the entire game. The player must announce a decision to all players in the group before play resumes. The deciding player is responsible for ensuring that the next player does not begin play before a decision is announced. If he continues play without announcing a decision, then no other compensation will be provided. If the game is replayed, the second (replay) score becomes his score on that game, regardless of whether it is better or worse than his previous effort. The rest of the group waits for the player to finish the replayed game before starting their next game.

8.3 Interference

Interference in another player's game is not tolerated. Interference includes (but isn't limited to) intentional slam tilts, tilting an opponent's ball, or nudging the machine during another player's ball, even if the action does not cause the victim to lose the ball. It also includes intentional distraction of a player during his play. Talking or coaching is not considered interference, unless the player at the machine specifically requests that he not be talked to during play.

If a player interferes with another player, causing a drain and/or loss of turn, the victim of the interference may either replay the entire game, or continue the game and play one (1) additional ball to replace the interfered ball (using either an earned, normally unallowable extra ball or a buy-in ball). If the next player starts play with no decision announced, the victim is presumed to wish to continue his game. The interfering player is required to pay for the replayed game or the buy-in ball, even if there are credits on the machine.

Interference is a serious violation of league play rules, and a penalty will be assessed on the violator.

8.4 Slam Tilts

An **intentional slam tilt** is one caused by an aggressive and excessive shove of the machine, or by an attempted bangback or deathsave, and is considered interference.

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Any other slam tilt is considered accidental. All slam tilts are handled as catastrophic malfunctions.

8.5 Serious Violations of League Rules

Serious violations are those so designated in these rules, as well as any conduct by a player that the *LO* determines to be exceptionally detrimental to the league.

Serious violations are cumulative over an entire season, not just one match. For these violations, the following penalties are assessed:

- First and second offense: Forfeit the current game with a machine score of zero.

If the violator's group does not have a "current" game in progress, this penalty will be assessed against the game of the current match for which the violator has the highest league points. If there is more than one such game, the last such game of the match will be penalized.

- Third offense: Forfeit of season. The player's scores are wiped, and the player will be suspended from the league.

Violence of any kind against fellow players, vandalism of pinball machines or other property will be penalized as an automatic Third offense.

8.6 Not Starting the Proper Number of Games

If too many games are started inadvertently, balls for the extra games are plunged but not played. If too few games are started, additional games are started, if possible, so that the number of games on the machine matches the number of players in the group. In these cases, no further action is required.

If the proper number of games cannot be started by the above means, the game is ended immediately, voiding all players' scores. A new game is started on the same machine with the correct number of players. The player responsible for the wrong number of games being started should also pay the cost of restarting the game for all players.

8.7 Deathsaves and Bangbacks

Deathsaves and bangbacks ("biffs") are techniques used by some players to return a ball back into play that has already gone down an outlane or otherwise drained. These techniques are not allowed in FWPL league play. A player that attempts a deathsave

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or bangback will receive a machine score of zero on that game, and must plunge any remaining balls without playing them. However, it is allowable for the ball to bounce back into play of its own accord.

Since these maneuvers do not interfere with any other player's game, performing a deathsave or bangback is not considered a serious violation of league rules.

8.8 Cheating

Pinball can often be frustrating, especially during competition. The FWPL rules are designed to deal fairly with this fact, to encourage people to control themselves, and to compensate for various mishaps that might occur during play. On the other hand, violation of any rules with the clear intent of preventing another player from fairly playing the machine or of unfairly increasing one's own score can only be described as cheating, and is not tolerated. Cheating will result in the player's immediate suspension from the league.

9. Dues

The league treasurer may collect dues from every league player at the start of each league session. Players will also pay for games played. The league maintains a "kitty" which players pay when there are already credits on a machine. Money can be taken from the kitty to buy credits on a machine when previous credit drops have not awarded credits (coin mech malfunction) or if the pricing scheme awards bonus credits for additional coins, if it is to the league's benefit to do so. Money collected in the kitty will be added to the league treasury. The league treasury pays for all games played in the playoffs, and is also used for trophies, parties, prizes, and other league expenses.

Appendix A - Special Rulings

The following section lists rulings on game-specific malfunctions and other situations that have occurred during FWPL league play. These rulings detail our ideas on what does or does not count as a major malfunction on the games, as well as special cases (bugs) that call for a special ruling. Remember that it takes two major malfunctions on one game to get a replay of the game and that a replay must be requested at the time of the second malfunction before play continues. This section is intended to be a dynamic document, subject to expansion and modification as new and unforeseen special circumstances occur.

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Under no circumstances will the *LO* modify a player's score to account for points unearned due to a machine software bug or hardware malfunction, unless there is a Special Ruling already on the books. If an unexpected glitch causes a player to be cheated, the score displayed on the machine stands, and the *LO* will attempt to discern if a Special Ruling is necessary for future occurrences. In order for a Special Ruling to be made, the glitch must be reproducible and the cause and effect must be clearly understood. If these conditions are not met, no Special Ruling will be made.

A.1 The Addams Family

Not a Malfunction - Ball falls off habitrail into outlane; fast shots to the staircase ramp sometimes result in a ball falling off the metal habitrail above the playfield; Thing flips ball into outlane or drain; Thing sometimes does not flip accurately; Exit from Chair or Swamp goes into slingshot and outlane or drain; Things flips doesn't activate and the ball drains as a result.

Major Malfunction - After a drain from the right outlane, a ball becomes trapped between the apron and the lane guide and cannot be cleared without tilting.

Positive Malfunction – The Bear Kick ramp entry switch consistently fails to register, counting all center ramp shots as side ramp shots.

A.2 Demolition Man

Not a Malfunction - After dropping out of ramp habitrail into inlane, ball spins/bounces into outlane; Not getting ball saver after hitting car crash target.

Major Malfunction – After dropping the ball from the crane, the ball becomes stuck, does not travel down any lane, and cannot be cleared without tilting.

A.3 F-14 Tomcat

Not an Extra Ball – After a ball is shot into Yagov, insurance will be briefly lit. This is the equivalent of Ball Save, and balls awarded by this feature do not count as an extra ball.

Not a Malfunction - After any player has locked balls, a stuck ball will cause the ball search feature to eject all locked balls from the saucers. These balls can be played by the individual playing at the time.

A.4 Ghostbusters

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Major Malfunction - Ball becomes stuck on the PKE ramp, and cannot be freed without tilting.