

An Officials' View

By Dr. Azmy

Several complaints have risen lately about the behavior of a few individuals, behavior which is disgraceful to them, to others, and to the sport in general.

Players have been involved in intimidating behavior. Some are involved in shouting matches and confrontations. In fact, I witnessed a physical confrontation between a prominent player with another player at the table. Players sometimes misuse their liberties when umpires are not assigned to a match.

According to Larry Kesler, Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee, "Our sport cannot afford to have players who intimidate others through physical violence, or any intimidation that one player imposes on another."

The impact of such behavior is disturbing to the sport. It discourages spectators from attending matches, and discourages them and their children from joining the sport.

It is true that the referee has to deal with these situations at the table, but that apparently is not enough. It is recommended that Referees should report any misbehavior to the Disciplinary Committee. The Chairman is ready to enforce actions ranging from reprimands to suspensions.

To avoid such problems players should use their wisdom. Table tennis is a refined and friendly sport, where players should show sportsmanship. There is no situation which warrants a player to engage in insulting or intimidating behavior.

A player should not accept any form of intimidation from another player.

A player should not engage in counter-intimidation or confrontation with another player.

A player can withdraw from a situation calmly and refer the matter to an umpire, referee or the director.

If there is no one to settle the matter, a player can write a letter to the Disciplinary Committee (care of USA Table Tennis) describing the incident in detail, as well as the names of witnesses.

Misbehavior is not limited to players. Officials should realize that they represent the sport. Players, spectators and other officials are watching them. Some officials misuse their privilege to be at the court site and engage in unacceptable behavior.

Some parade at the court while other matches are taking place on the next court. Some bring extra chairs and sit in an unauthorized place to watch matches. Others engage in illegal coaching. Some come to the court to confront, intimidate or obstruct other officials from performing their duties.

Umpires and officials should not be at the playing court unless they are on duty. They should not approach other officials who are performing their duties. They should leave their disputes with other officials to be settled on their own personal time. Writing a note to each other could be sufficient to facilitate useful communications.

Moving to other issues, I would like to clear up some questions raised regarding the time-out enforcement during tournaments, and the information about the size of the ball in use.

One ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. The most adequate way to deal with these issues is through the **ENTRY FORM**.

Generally time-out should be limited to umpired matches only. However, a player may not ask for an umpire just to have a time-out. The entry form should specify the umpired matches such as semifinals and/or finals. A player can ask for an umpire in other matches to settle problems but not to have a time-out.

Another issue which is confusing to some is the size of the ball. Tournaments are allowed to use the 38mm ball as well as the 40mm ball. Only international tournaments have to use the 40mm ball after October 1, 2000.

Such information has to be stated clearly on the entry form. That means that from now on the size of the ball as well as the color of the ball has to be announced in advance.

I hope the above information will help tournament organizers and directors to prepare for tournaments.

Editor's Note: The following two position statements are from the Officials Committee.

1. The ITTF Time Out rule has been adopted by USATT as one of our official rules. It is in effect right now.
2. Restrictions on the application of the Time Out rule can only be specified in the Entry Form, under unusual situations by the Tournament Director with the approval of the Referee, or during the tournament by the Referee in an emergency situation.