

## **An Officials View**

### **By Azmy Ibrahim**

#### **The Referee**

Years ago we required a referee to be an umpire. In 1982 we raised the standard so that all referees had to be regional or higher umpires. We put in a two-year waiver. In 1993 we began putting referee questions on the regional and national umpire exams. The reason for all of this was to ensure that tournaments were conducted by competent referees and that players could count on the rules being fairly applied.

Because of the shortage of higher ranked umpires, regional tournament coordinators (RTC) have continued to waive the requirements and allow club umpires to serve as referees for smaller tournaments. Many of these club umpires have done a fine job but there has been no standard.

In order to improve the standard for referees we introduced the certified referee (CR) qualification. An umpire of any rank, including club umpire, can qualify as a certified referee. The new qualification makes it possible for any club to develop a qualified referee without going through the time required to become a regional umpire.

There is a \$15 fee to take the certified referee exam. For that fee the candidate gets a current copy of the USATT Tournament Guide and a referee CD. The CD contains several PowerPoint lessons on the duties of the referee and much other useful information. So far 19 umpires have qualified as certified referees and only four have failed to qualify.

The CR program was started to make it easier, not harder, for clubs to have a competent referee. If you play at a local school or YMCA you don't know how it will be run. If USATT sanctions a tournament we are saying that the tournament will be conducted fairly and according to the rules. The referee is the key to ensuring that. Any club umpire that has done a good job as a referee for small tournaments should have no problem, with some study, in becoming a certified referee. If they can't qualify, don't the players deserve better?

Effective January, 2005, all tournaments must have a qualified referee (either a certified referee or a regional or higher rank umpire). RTC's will have very limited authority to waive the referee requirement (one time) for small tournaments.

#### **Umpire Re-certification**

All umpires must re-certify every three years. Re-certification began in October 2004. All umpires who haven't passed an umpire or referee exam since 2000 are required to re-certify. The purpose of re-certification is to ensure that umpires are up to date on the rules. The exam is "open book" and umpires are encouraged to check the rules as they take the exam. The exam is on the USATT website and may be taken free on the web. It is also available on paper for \$5. If an umpire fails the exam another version may be taken after 30 days. That exam must be taken on paper after paying the \$5 fee. If the second exam is failed the umpire must retake the appropriate level exam and pay the fee for that exam. International umpires applying to work the U.S. Open or Nationals must take the recertification exam if they haven't passed another exam since 2000. Any umpire who passes a USATT umpire or referee exam, or an ITTF exam, will be considered recertified. Beginning September 2005, umpires who haven't passed an exam since 2002 must re-certify.