

OFFICIALS VIEW

By Dr. Azmy

It is hard to concentrate on Table Tennis after the tragedy we have lived with since Sept. 11. The images portrayed on TV haunted us through our daily activities, while eating, working, driving, thinking, talking, and even sleeping. A criminal and cowardly attack, it killed 6,500 innocent human beings, and left us all saddened, frustrated, and frightened. It was consoling to take a few moments and go to practice and play a little.

While the threat is a global one that could take place in any country and in any city, it is also a call for world unity. I look to our sport and I see a mosaic from every corner of the globe. In the U.S. particularly, players represent all parts of the world. In our sport we even allow two players from different associations to team together as a doubles pair. Genders are united in Mixed Doubles. Different ages and levels are paired in some recreational events. Seniors, juniors, adults, disabled, boys, girls, men, and women, etc., are all welcome to play. Regardless of how sometimes players get frustrated on the table when competing, once the game is over friendships, togetherness and human warmth come back together.

For the last several years I have been studying the phenomenon of Human Atrocities and Terrorism. It is a cancer which we need to fight and prevent. Maybe our sport can lead the world to a new campaign. We have the ingredients **T.T.** (Table Tennis). We can use our **T.T.** to stand for **TOGETHER** against **TERRORISM**. Some sports have taken a mission to stand against diseases or some social cause. I hope we can take our sport to stand as a symbol to fight against such an act of human atrocity.

I also would like to propose that at the U.S. Nationals we take a moment of silence before every final match, in memory of those innocent individuals who lost their lives on Sept. 11.

Before I close I would like to report some new reports which came in the last issue of TT Illustrated and the ITTF Bulletin. Great attention is given to the Anti-Doping Tests. There are also new additions to the substance list. There is actually a new explanatory document on the IOC List of Prohibited Substances and Prohibited Methods 2001-2002. It is eight pages long. I will be glad to include it in future articles if asked to do so. I think our officials, coaches, and players should be informed of these new changes.

Experiments are going on with the upcoming new service rule. A trial took place at the European Youth Championships, and a report has been written by Colin Clemett, the chairman of the ITTF Rules Committee. The conclusion was that there are mixed feelings about it. Although the experiment was successful on youth players, it may not be the same with higher-level players. There was a column by Adham Sharara, ITTF President, in which he suggested that there may be some changes in the New Service Rule, or at least some clear interpretations of the wording and the practice.

I am reporting this information to give those who have any opinions, suggestions, or recommendations to get on board and send them to the ITTF headquarters with a copy to the ITTF Rules Committee. Another two experiments with the size of the table took place in South Africa and in Barcelona. It is a Longer Reach Table, 0.5 meter (about 20 inches) longer than a standard table. I will cover all this news in my next article, with an analysis of the changes in clothing color, rubber, ball, serve, etc.

I was informed one time that we may try an exhibition tournament during the Nationals with 44mm balls, and a higher net. I hope we can include that experiment as we planned. I already ordered the balls and the nets for the event.

Best Wishes to all at the U.S. Nationals.