

## **AN OFFICIAL'S VIEW**

**By Dr. Azmy**

**(Editor's Note: Yes, That's our Doc's new moniker!)**

### ***More to Come: Rules Changes & Further Recommendations***

Last issue I tried to summarize the most important changes in the rules. This time I will discuss some more which may help prepare umpires for the future. The complete list is coming out soon in a new rules book.

I would first like to comment on some of the letters I have received on the rule changes. I hope by now those who asked several times about the list of illegal long pips have found some answers in the last issue of the magazine.

The issue which occupies the minds of most officials today is the "Time-Out" rule. I have consulted with several officials in several associations, and here are some of their observations and recommendations.

Time-out was introduced for the convenience of TV programming. Therefore perhaps it should be limited to televised matches only.

Time-out cannot be applied without an umpire. There is a fear that it may be difficult to apply and it may lead to conflict among players if an umpire is not present. Therefore it should be limited to umpired matches only.

Associations can limit the applications of time-outs as long as they include their policies on the entry form.

I attended the Japan Open last month. The time-out procedures required four cards. One is given to the umpire, and the other three are present at the assistant umpire's table. All of them are on a white background with a big capital "T" in black on both sides. Three of them are 3"x4", and one is 5"x8".

A player, a coach, or a captain in the case of team matches can ask for a time-out by hand signal in a "T" shape. The umpire will raise his hand holding the "T" card. The assistant umpire will place the big card standing on the side of the table of the player(s) who asked for the time-out, and place a standing small card by the scoreboard on the side of the player(s) who took it.

Time-outs will be recorded on the match card for future references.

All of this information will be presented to the Official Committee meeting in December for their formulation of a policy for USATT tournaments. A final note: the time-out policy is only required at International events.

Another issue of inquiry was the wisdom of the new policy of requiring the ball to pass beyond the end-line of the receiver to be out of play. This issue has been discussed in the ITTF Rules Committee and the USATT officials' seminar for several years. In the age of loops and spins, etc., the ball may pass the side of the court of the receiver and come back to it. With the present rule, if the ball passes the court of the receiver, over the sideline, it is considered out of play. Therefore, if the receiver catches it before it comes back to the table he will win the point. This is more possible in a doubles match where one of the players will be very close to it when he passes the court. Interviews with several players revealed that their understanding was that the ball had to pass the end-line. Therefore the rule came to confirm what most of the players are enforcing now, and to end all the hypothetical situations which promoted endless discussions in the past.

In the next issue I will cover other changes in the rules.