

## **Time Out Without an Umpire**

### **By Dr. Azmy**

Can a player enforce a time out without an umpire?

Let me go through the history of time outs before I answer this question. When the time out rule was introduced there was fear that some players would misuse it, while others may not know how to administer it. To avoid these problems, some associations, especially those who have tournaments without a sufficient number of umpires and so allowed players to umpire their own matches, thought it might be wiser not to allow time outs without an umpire. This tradition continued for a while, but most of the associations do not follow it any longer. Time outs were actually introduced to facilitate a break for television and to insert a time for advertising.

When the question was informally raised at the ITTF Rules Committee, the answer was very simple, "The rule does not stipulate the existence of umpires." As we allow the players to umpire their own matches, observing the service, the net ball, the edge ball, the toweling time, the choice of serve, the choice of sides, and changing sides in the last game; logically they have the right to call a time out.

The following are the time out rules:

- 3.4.4.2 A player or pair may claim one time out of up to 1 minute during a match.
  - 3.4.4.2.1 In an individual event the request for a time out may be made by the player or pair or by the designated adviser; in a team event it may be made by the player or pair or by the team captain.
  - 3.4.4.2.2 If a player or pair and an adviser or captain disagree whether a time out is to be taken, the final decision shall be made by the player or pair in an individual event and the captain in a team event.
  - 3.4.4.2.3 The request for a time out, which may be made only when the ball is out of play, shall be indicated by making a "T" sign with the hands.
  - 3.4.4.2.4 On receiving a valid request for a time out the umpire shall suspend play and hold up a white card; he shall then place the card on the court of the player or pair making the request.
  - 3.4.4.2.5 The white card shall be removed and play resumed as soon as the player or pair making the request is ready to continue or at the end of 1 minute, whichever is the sooner.
  - 3.4.4.2.6 If a valid request for a time out is made simultaneously by or on behalf of both players or pairs, play will resume when both players or pairs are ready or at the end of 1 minute, whichever is the sooner, and neither player or pair shall be entitled to another time out during that individual match.

Please note that the instructions to the umpire mentioned in 3.4.4.2.4 and 3.4.4.2.5 are not different from all instructions given to umpires during matches, such as making the toss, asking the winner to choose to serve or receive, choice of sides, keeping the score, using hand signals, calling nets, calling edges, etc., when he is present at the match.

I hope this information will help clear the clouds surrounding the time out calls.