

Officials View

It Can't Be Better: The Shanghai WTTC 2005

By Dr. Azmy

It was a dream. As one person said, "It cannot be described by written or oral words, you have to be there to experience it." From the opening ceremony to the closing ceremony we were overwhelmed by superb performances with fantastic choreography, music, sound, light, fireworks, and dancing, etc. Both celebrations were beyond imagination. Everything around us was a piece of art, the building, the parks, the uniforms, and the organization.

Shanghai people went out of their way to welcome us and extend genuine hospitality. Before you asked for anything, it was taken care of.

The tournament itself and the level of play was unbelievable. The Great Wall of the Chinese players defended themselves against all intruders. On the other hand, all visiting players came prepared for the fight. There were no easy winning or simple losing. A score of 8-3, 9-5, 10-6 in the last game were not enough to win a match. Even an 8-2 lead was not sufficient to get you a win. Many games ended deuce in the seventh game. As they say, it is not over until it is over. I am sure the names and results that will be published somewhere else will reveal the whole story. One score in particular was revealing. Denmark's Michael Maze, against China's Hao Shuai in the quarterfinals, was down 0-3 in games, and down 3-7 and 7-10 in the fourth game. However he kept winning and winning till he won the match.

China won all events, and most of the time the first four places. In this championship bronze medals were given for third and fourth. But when China won the four places, it created a problem for raising the flags. Usually there are three winners only, and the organizers did not think about four places for China, and so did not have four Chinese flags available. In that case the fourth flag was just a red flag with a white flower in the middle.

Dealing with the umpires involved a lot of preparations. A two-day workshop preceded the tournament to train the trainers. The main focus and goal was to establish standardization and uniformity of evaluation of umpires. Teaching, discussions, debates, and exercises succeeded to produce common ground for these evaluations. Five basic items were required from an umpire to meet expectations. These were the hand signals, application of the service rules, enforcing the coaching guidelines, limiting unauthorized behavior of players and coaches, and accuracy of completion and delivery of match forms.

Evaluation of umpires took place throughout the tournament. Some of the problems observed were inadequate application of the service rules, as some umpires focused their attention on the free arm and gave little attention to other aspects, i.e. the ball resting freely on the open palm of the server's stationary free hand, the projection of the ball without imparting spin, etc. Other problems were similarity of the color of shirts, the position of the arm during the hand signals was too low, etc. When that happened, the evaluation of the umpire did not meet expectations.

Before I close this article I would like to list the main new propositions that were passed by the ITTF. However, this is not the final wording of the propositions. The Rules Committee is working on the final text that will be published as soon as possible. **None of these rules will be in effect before Sept., 2005.**

1.3.2 The ITTF is committed to providing a sport and work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to participate and work in an environment, which promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices.

- 1.3.3** The ITTF is committed to providing a sport environment free of harassment on any basis without exception.
- 1.3.3.1** The Executive Committee shall impose appropriate disciplinary sanctions from warnings to exclusions from all kind of activity in the ITTF, when a complaint of harassment has been substantiated. The same disciplinary sanctions shall be imposed if a false accusation has been substantiated.
- 1.4.1.12** To encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and to ensure significant representation of women in ITTF Committees, Commissions and Working Groups.
- 1.10.9** The nominations Committee shall check the qualification and validity of nominations for office, shall supervise the allocation of nominees to committees and commissions; provided that sufficient number of female nominations is made for a committee, at least 25% of the full number of that Committee or Commission should be selected out of female nominees.
- 2.6.4** From the start of service until it is struck, the ball shall be above the level of the playing surface and behind the server's end line, and it shall not be hidden from the receiver by the server or his doubles partner and by anything they wear or carry.
- 2.6.5** As soon as the ball has been projected, the server's free arm shall be removed from the space between the ball and the net.
- 2.6 and 2.7** The Doubles Play in Wheelchairs:
When two players who are in wheelchairs due to physical disability are a pair playing doubles, the server shall first make a good service, the receiver shall then make a good return but thereafter either player of the disabled pair may make good returns.
However, no part of a player's wheelchair shall protrude beyond an imaginary extension of the centre line of the table. If it does, the umpire shall award the point to the opposing pair.
- 2.9.1** The Service Against Players in Wheelchairs:
When a player who is in a wheelchair due to physical disability is receiving a service in singles, the rally shall be a let if the ball:
Leaves the table by either of the receiver's sidelines (on one or more bounces), or after bouncing on the receiver's side, returns in the direction of the net, or comes to rest on the receiver's side of the playing surface. However, if the receiver strikes the ball before it crosses a sideline or takes a second bounce on his or her side of the playing surface, the service shall be considered good and no let shall be called.
When a player who is in wheelchair due to a physical disability is receiving a service in doubles, the rally shall be a let if the ball: after bouncing on the receiver's side, returns in the direction of the net, or comes to rest on the receiver's side of the playing surface. However if the receiver strikes the ball before it takes second bounce on his or her side of the playing surface, the service shall be considered good and no let shall be called.
- 3.2.2.10** Where opposing players or teams have a similar shirt and cannot agree which of them will change, the decision shall be made by the umpire by lot.
- 3.2.3.1** The playing space shall be rectangular and not less than 14m long, 7m wide and 5m high, but the 4 corners may be covered by surround of not more than 1.5m length.
- 3.2.3.2** The following equipment and fittings are to be considered as part of each playing area:
The table including the net assembly, Umpires tables and chairs, score indicators, towel

boxes, printed numbers identifying the table, surrounds, floor mats, boards on the surrounds indicating the names of players or Associations.

3.2.4.1 Inside the playing area, advertisements shall be displayed only on equipment or fittings listed in 3.2.3.2 and there shall be no special additional displays.

3.3.2.4 The assistant umpire shall

3.3.2.4.1 Decide whether or not the ball in play touches the edge of the playing surface at the side of the table nearest him;

3.3.2.4.2 Inform the umpire for breaches of the advice or behavior regulations.

3.4.1.2.1 When a point has been scored, the umpire may raise his arm nearer to the player or pair who won the point so that the upper arm is horizontal and the forearm is vertical with the closed hand upward.

3.4.4.3 Observing the set practice period in successive matches of a team match shall be played continuously except that

3.4.4.3.1 A player who is required to play in such successive matches may claim an interval of up to 5 minutes between those matches.

5.5.2.1 Players and coaches or other advisers shall refrain from behavior that may unfairly affect an opponent, offend spectators or bring the sport into disrepute, such as abusive language, deliberately breaking the ball or hitting it out of the playing area, kicking the table or surrounds and disrespect of match officials.

3.5.2.2 If at any time a player or coach or adviser commits a serious offence the umpire shall suspend play and report immediately to the referee; for less serious offences the umpire may, on the first occasion, hold up a yellow card and warn the offender that any further offence is liable to incur penalties.

3.5.2.7 Except as provided in 3.5.2.2 if a coach or an adviser who has been warned commits a further offence in the same individual match or team match, the umpire shall hold a red card and send him away from the playing area until the end of the team match or, in an individual event, of the individual match.

3.5.3 Good Presentation

3.5.3.1 Players, coaches and officials shall uphold the object of good presentation of the sport; in particular players have to do their utmost to win a match and shall not withdraw except for reasons of illness or injury.

3.5.3.2 Any player who deliberately fails to comply with these principles shall be disciplined by total or partial loss of prize money in prize events and/or by suspension from ITTF events.

3.5.3.3 In the event of complicity proven against any adviser or official the relevant national Association is also expected to discipline this person.

3.5.3.4 A disciplinary Panel appointed by the Executive Committee, consisting of 4 members and a chairman, shall decide on whether an infringement committed and if necessary on appropriate sanctions; this commission shall decide according to directives given by the executive Committee.

3.5.3.5 An appeal against the Disciplinary Panel's decision may be made by the disciplined player, advisor or official within 15 days to the ITTF executive Committee whose decision on the matter shall be final.

3.6.3.8 Alternatively, any doubles pair consisting of players from different Associations may be considered a pair of both of these Associations.

3.7.1.4 A player or team may not take part in an international competition if he/it is suspended by His/its Association or Continental Federation.

- 3.7.5.6** Unless otherwise authorized by the Jury, if 1 player or team is to qualify the final match in the group shall be between the players or teams numbered 1 and 2, if 2 are to qualify the final match shall be between the player or teams numbered 2 and 3 and so on.
- 3.8.3** A player is eligible to represent an Association only if he is a national of the country in which that Association has jurisdiction, except that a player who has represented an Association of which he was not a national before 1st September 2004 in accordance with previous rules may retain that eligibility.
- 3.8.4** A player is eligible to represent a Continental Federation in an event of continental teams only if he is eligible to represent a member Association of this Continental Federation according to 3.8.3.
- 4.1.9.7** Players of the same Associations shall be separated only according to 3.6.3.1, 3.6.3.3, 3.6.3.4, 3.6.3.5 in preliminary rounds and groups and in the first round of the draw but not in further rounds.
- 4.4.5.4** An Association may nominate up to 4 qualified boys and up to 4 qualified girls players.
- 4.4.8.1** The Jury shall consist of the Chairman of the ITTF Junior Commission, the Chairmen of the ITTF Ranking and Rules Committees, a representative of the Umpires & Referee Committee, the ITTF Junior Program Manager, the ITTF Competition Manager, the Championships Director (or his equivalent), a representative of the organizing committee and the referee, the referee shall have the right to speak but not to vote.