

Officials View
Be Aware, The Writing Is On The Wall
By Dr. Azmy

New Presentation for Table Tennis

We are living in the age of television. If it is not on TV it “doesn’t exist.” Table Tennis is trying to adapt to the strict requirements of television performance. All this comes under the concept of Presentation.

A few years ago the ITTF formed a study group. International Referee (IR) Mal Anderson, from USATT, was a member. The study group progressed and last year became the ITTF Umpires & Referees Committee (URC). USATT’s Aly Salam (IR) is the Secretary for Umpires on the committee. The charter was to improve the quality and consistency of umpiring at world title events.

New Field of Play procedures were adopted. Umpires will be evaluated by criteria specified by the URC. In all Open, ITTF, World, and Olympic competitions umpires will adhere to certain procedures:

Umpires will assemble in a designated place where they meet with the players, approve the colors of the shirts, help them to choose the balls, and walk with them in a procession to the tables in a certain order.

Umpires will not bring any bags to the court.

Umpires will not place the match sheet on the table. The table should not be touched except for adjusting the net, and cleaning it when appropriate.

Umpires will administer the toss for choice of service and ends, avoiding throwing the toss on the table, check the assigned coaches, etc.

Umpires will be evaluated on field of play procedures as well as on the conduct of the match, e.g. making correct calls on service, lets, and controlling play.

Players will be held to higher standards

A new era will start. Umpires are going to be under tight scrutiny in order to advance to higher levels. The overall purpose is to improve the standards for umpires and the presentation of the sport. Players will be held to higher standards in feature matches.

Let me start with few areas of concern.

Player shirts should be tucked into shorts or skirts.

Players may not touch the net to test the tension after losing a couple of points. If he doubts the tension of the net he can ask the umpire to test it again. Umpires are required to check the net before the players come to the table.

Players may not select a ball when they come to the table. If a player wants to choose a ball for the match he has to do it with the umpire before they come to the table. (This applies to all matches)

Players and umpires go to the table together. For feature matches the umpire and players will go to a designated area where they check the color of their shirts and allow them to select balls. In case the players did not choose the ball the umpire will give them a ball chosen randomly and they have no right to refuse it.

Each player should have an extra racket and a different color shirt. If a racket is damaged no delay is allowed to find a replacement. Doubles partners must be similarly dressed and opposing players must have different colored shirts.

Players may not bring a bag inside the court, or hang a towel on the barriers.

Players should not wipe the palm of the hand on the surface of the table. Why? Because the player's hand has some oily substance on it. This may affect the bounce of a ball later in the match such as during a short serve.

Most of these items now apply **primarily** to feature matches at major tournaments. It would be good for all players to be aware of the procedures and requirements for all matches.

The next "Officials View" will deal in detail with the evaluation form devised by the URC. I will also cover some of the proposals presented to the ITTF Rules committee, and of those that will go to the BGM meeting in Paris. More relevant to us will be some of the issues we covered in the Umpires Seminar, which was presented in Las Vegas to reach all umpires who were not there.