

An Official's View

Rules Changes 2000: Yes we can make a difference

By Dr. Azmy

I would like to congratulate the delegates of USA Table Tennis, players and officials, and those who fought all the past years to make some changes in the rules of the game of Table Tennis. It shows that when we cooperate together with patience, perseverance and wisdom, we can make a difference. Here are new rule changes made by the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF).

1. Several years ago, Gus Kennedy proposed a motion, reflecting the sentiment of USATT, regarding the service. The motion was that during the serve, the player should strike the ball between his body and the end line of his side of the table. After years of carrying the banner for change and convincing several other associations, a proposal has passed. It will emphasize the rule that in service the ball will be struck **between the closest part of the body and the end line of the table**. That means that even the elbow cannot be in front of the ball. The final wording will be stated in the upcoming ITTF Bulletin.
2. The act which disturbed a lot of players, and for which I received the highest number of complaints in the U.S., finally will come to an end. **A racket cannot be changed during a match unless it is accidentally damaged so badly that it cannot be used**. There is an understanding that the change has to be to a racket of the same specifications. That means a player should have two identical rackets with him at the site of the table. I am glad that this motion has passed as it will end all the complaints about changing to a racket with junk rubber close to the end of a game.

Several other changes have been accepted. The main ones are as follows:

1. The ball has a new diameter of 40mm and a weight of 2.7 grams. (This change will take effect starting Oct. 1, 2000. From that date, the 40mm ball must be used in international competitions, but associations may, at their discretion, continue to use the 38mm ball for domestic competitions.)
2. A player obstructs the ball if he, or anything he wears or carries, intercepts it when it **is moving towards the playing surface and** has not passed beyond his end line, not having touched his court since last being struck by his opponent. (The bold wording is what has been added.)
3. The referee can disqualify for the remainder of a competition a coach who has been sent away from the playing area twice during that competition.
4. In World Championships doubles events, both players must be from the same association.

Please understand that all of these changes apply to international competitions only. However, USATT can apply all or some of them. I am sending a copy of these proposals to the Officials Committee and USATT Board of Directors for their consideration and possible adoption.