

## **Official's View Standards for Umpires By Dr. Azmy**

In the last article I promised to expand on the issue of standards for umpires. Actually there are three parts to the evaluation of umpires. These are: a) before the match, b) during the match, and c) after the match.

The purpose of the evaluations is to help umpires to improve themselves, and to prepare them to rise to the level of the ITTF World competitions – the Olympics, World Championships, Pro Tours, etc.

The ITTF Umpires and Referees Committee (URC) is in the process of training evaluators. Their role is to evaluate umpires who attended the seminars and passed the written exams given by the URC. The role of the evaluators is essentially to help and guide the umpires to move to higher levels, i.e. the blue and green levels. The evaluator will sit with the umpire whom he/she has evaluated and discuss the positive as well the negative points with him/her. Evaluations will take place at the beginning of and again during the tournament.

It was found out that this process leads to great improvement. It is expected that those who improve will be recommended to higher levels. Future selection for the ITTF World Competitions will be taken from those umpires who have successfully completed the process.

Last time I covered the first part of the process, "Pre Match." This time I will cover the second part.

### **During Match**

**Clear and audible voice:** In the past some umpires did not bother announcing the introduction for every match, especially in the first rounds. The umpire is expected to introduce the match, stating the event, the round, and the number of games for the match, and the names of the players. It is also important that the umpire announces which player won the toss and who will serve first. Some umpires ignore that part, especially when there is no crowd attending. However, the umpire should announce all these details for the sake of the players, regardless of the presence or absence of an audience.

**Calling the score:** The emphasis here is on the timing and accuracy. The score has to be announced immediately at the end of the rally. Some delay is acceptable if the crowd is cheering loudly. Of course one expects that the umpire will be always announcing the right score. My advice is to sit before the match and watch another match and practice announcing the score in a low voice, especially if this is your first match of the day.

**Correct use of hand signals:** Several printouts are available that illustrate the hand signals for umpires. It is expected that the proper hand signals will be used. Hand signals are very important when there are many tables going on at the same time and people are cheering and there is a lot of noise in the arena. However, if an umpire is serving alone and he has a scoreboard in front of him, hand signals for the score are not essential. But hand signals have to be used to indicate the change of the service.

**Correct announcement of server and service change:** It is accepted these days that the name of the server is announced at the beginning of each game, and a hand signal is sufficient to indicate the change of the service.

**Application of the service laws:** The correctness of the service has to be observed from the first point of the game, regardless of the level of the event or the age of the players.

**Timing of actual play:** Attention has to be given to the phrase “actual play.” The umpire must control excessive toweling and wasting of time fetching the ball between rallies. Time should be stopped when players towel off, when the ball leaves the playing area and players call a timeout.

**Use of scoring devices:** An umpire may be required to use a scoreboard if umpiring alone or working as an assistant umpire. Adequate numbers have to be presented to indicate the correct meaning. Before and after the match nothing should be posted on the board. Only the games scores (small numbers) will indicate the presence of the players when they arrive. After the announcements are made for the match and at the beginning of the game the point scores (big numbers) will be turned to 0-0 as the umpire calls love-all or zero-zero. Just before the players return for the next game, set the point score indicators to the blank position and alter the appropriate games score indicator to reflect the result of the previous game.

**Monitoring for any coaching behavior:** Observing coaching has to start before the match by asking the players to identify their coaches. Coaches are assigned for the whole match. Players cannot change coaches during the match. Many tournaments are trying to place the coaches on one side. That will make it easy for umpires to watch them. However, when there is an assistant umpire, both the umpires can agree about a system to get the attention of the umpire if the assistant umpire sees illegal coaching.

**Rackets are left at the table:** Between games rackets have to be left at the table.

**Correct use of cards:** Each umpire should carry a white, a red, and a yellow card. The white card is used to indicate a time-out. The yellow card is used to warn a player or coach. The yellow and red cards are used when awarding one or two penalty points. The red card is used when directing a coach to leave the area.

**Good posture:** We touched on that last time, but during the game the umpire is expected to be alert, sitting straight, and leaning slightly forward in the chair.

**Correct and accurate interrupting calls:** It is the responsibility of the umpire to call immediately what he sees as an interrupting call, i.e. net, side, let, or fault. “Edge” will be called only after the rally has ended, otherwise it may distract the players.

The new ITTF Handbook For Match Officials is now available on the ITTF web site at [www.ittf.com](http://www.ittf.com) (click on “handbook” on the left for either HTML or PDF versions).

Let me conclude by saying that the wise umpire should umpire each match, regardless of its level, as if he/she is umpiring the final match of the World Championship. It is important for umpires to understand that the goal of URC is to establish a uniformity of all umpires when they are umpiring from the first to the last point of the match and of the tournament.