

Officials' View

Interpretations of the Rules

By Dr. Azmy

Let us celebrate a successful, smooth running Pro-Tour Championship. The level of play was superb and the performance was excellent. The #37 ranked player on the world women's list defeated the #2. Most of the matches lasted five games. Johnny Huang on the men's side gave the audience a treat till the last point of the fifth game of the final match.

Moving to the officials' side, an added flavor was the highlight of the presentations. The idea was thought up and implemented by Aly Salam, with the cooperation of Richard McAfee and Allen Watson. Umpires and officials marched between the matches on the final day, surprising the audience by tossing them balls signed by the Pro-Tour players.

Acknowledgment for the success of the tournament goes to the efforts and dedication of many individuals. The president, the Board members, the Directors, Referees, the Chief Umpires, the Umpires, the managers, the staff, the volunteers, etc. An acknowledge should go to the unknown soldiers. The Norm Chouinards, who stay on the computer 18 hours a day. The one who has to be the first individual in the arena, and the last one to leave. The one who wrote up what happened and fed the world, live, news from the tournament.

A few players registered with the Pro-Tour as USA players, while the World Ranking by the ITTF have them under other Associations. Discussing the issue led to a lot of confusion. Some thought that they cannot play. This misunderstanding was due to a proposal which was introduced in Osaka by the ITTF Executive Committee, "A player shall not represent different associations within a period of 3 years, unless both associations (last association represented and current association) agree to reduce or waive the waiting period. **This proposal did NOT pass.** Margaret Smith, the tournament manager, emailed the ITTF and the response was very clear. The rule applies only to team events. Therefore, all players were allowed to play in the Pro-Tour events.

Our Officials seminar took place on Wednesday night. It was well attended due to the eagerness to learn about the new rules: the 11 point games and the new service rule. Both issues were covered at the seminar and are covered in the last issue of the USATT Magazine under the Officials View. Another dimension was added to the seminar, the interpretations of several rules.

Conceding a game: Although not specifically forbidden by current rules, it was generally accepted that a player could not concede a game without conceding the match.

Racket changing: There was no guidance in the regulations on the action to be taken if a player was reported to have changed an **undamaged** racket. It was agreed that normally the player should be disqualified but that the referee should have the discretion to give only a warning on the first occasion. When changing a **damaged** racket, it has to be with identical specifications. It is advisable in the players packets to include a statement asking players to come to the table with two identical rackets.

Authority of the umpire: It was agreed that players should be regarded as being under the authority of the umpire from the time at which they arrived at the playing area until the time at which they leave it, and that the umpire's authority should cover the playing area and its immediate surroundings (three meters).

Authority of the referee: It was agreed that the referee's authority covered the whole of the playing and practice areas but the extent to which it applied to other areas are still under further discussion.

Obstruction Rule: A player obstructs the ball if he, or anything he wears or carries, touches it in play when it is above or traveling 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 main controversy is **TRAVELING TOWARDS**. Sometimes the ball may be traveling away from the table, however, it may curve back toward the table. That means if it was obstructed while it was traveling away from the table, it is **NOT** an obstruction, but if it is obstructed after it curved back towards the table then it is an obstruction. Also if the ball is obstructed while traveling in a straight line besides the table and did not pass the receivers' end line, it is **NOT** an obstruction.

Good serve: When a player clearly does not comply with the rule of a good serve, **NO WARNING** shall be given and the receiver shall score a point. This is contrary to the common belief of many players and some umpires that a warning should be given for bad serves.

Procedures of racket and drug testing: The tests are administered after the match. The reason is that when it was administered before the match, the rest of the players, who are not included in the test, knew in advance and did whatever they pleased. With the new rule, nobody will know who will be tested. During the World Championships in Osaka, even the umpires did not know in advance which players would be tested. The information was given to them after they arrived at the table. What will happen if the test proved a violation? The player will lose the match, and could face further disciplinary actions. What will happen if this is the last match of the event or the tournament? Information will be submitted to his association and the ITTF for further action.

I hope the above information is helpful to our players, coaches, umpires and officials.