

## **AN OFFICIAL'S VIEW**

### ***News From The World Championships***

**By Dr. Azmy Ibrahim**

Some of the expected rule changes did not pass, while some of the unexpected ones were approved. I will try to report on the most important ones, and explain the reasons behind these decisions,

The proposal for the larger 40mm ball did not pass. However, there were some rumors that this proposal will be introduced again at the meetings in Malaysia. It is true that the majority of the players did not like the 40mm ball since its introduction. The findings of the experiment by Larry Hodges are valid. I have introduced the big ball in our club, and the results were exactly the same. However, there is a factor which Larry did not consider, and that is the weight of the ball. The ball which has been used so far was produced in China and has only one weight, which is a little bit heavier than the regular ball. That is why the effect of the big ball did not seem to make any difference in producing longer rallies. Nittaku in Japan produced four different balls with different weights, and experimented with which one could be used to create longer rallies. I have the four balls and tried them with different players. While the players did not like the big ball in general, they admitted that the lighter ball was the one which prolonged the rallies. At the BGM meeting in Eindhoven the weight of the ball was questioned, and even the size of the ball was also questioned. Actually the size of the ball is slightly less than 40mm. All of these factors contributed to the decision of not approving the ball at this time.

The same thing happened to the proposal for lines on the ball. Nittaku is experimenting with different balls with colored circles on them. One is white with blue circles, the other is yellow with red circles, and another is yellow with black circles. I have the balls and used them at the club, but there was no agreement on preference or ability to read the spin. Once again it seems that such attempts are not producing their intended results.

All the proposals regarding the serve did not pass. However, they were returned to the Committees for further studies,

Now let us go to the main ones which passed and will affect the rules.

- A player obstructs the ball if he, or anything he wears or carries, touches it in play when it has not passed his end line, not having touched his court since last being struck by his opponent. (That means a player should not touch an out-of-play ball until it passes his end line).
- The blade, any layer within the blade and any layer of covering material or adhesive on a side used for striking the ball shall be continuous and of even thickness. (That means that the side which is not used for striking the ball does not have to conform to this rule).
- If a game lasts for 15 minutes, all subsequent games of the match shall be played under the expedite system. (That means it does not matter if it is 19-19, or 20-20, or 21-21, etc).
- An umpire and an assistant umpire shall be appointed for each match. (That means this is the end of using two assistant umpires).
- The assistant umpire or a separate official will act as a stroke counter.
- A player or pair may claim a time-out period of up to one minute during an individual match or during an individual match of a team match.

- In an individual match the request for a time-out may be made by the player or pair or by their designated adviser; in a team match the request may be made by the player or pair or by the team captain.
- The request for time-out, which may be made only when the ball is out of play, shall be indicated by making a “T” sign with the hands.
- During a time-out a white card shall be placed on the playing surface, on the court of the player or pair making the request.
- Play shall be resumed as soon as the player or pair making the request is ready to continue.

I would like to close my report on a positive note. I have carried the plight of those who wrote to me directly, or to the USATT, complaining about changes of rackets with different surfaces, usually long pips, near the end of a game, causing a great disadvantage to the opponent. I asked the ITTF Rules Committee to consider one of several alternatives: to disallow the change of a racket of different rubber during the whole match, to disallow the change of a racket if the score in a game reached 10 points, or to limit the change of racket for only between games.

**To my surprise the committee voted unanimously to disallow the change of a racket of different rubber during the whole match.** That does not affect changing a racket with the same rubber in case of accidental damage. We have been informed also that Japan applies this rule in all their internal tournaments.

A word of **caution:** this rule cannot be applied now. It has to pass by the voters at the coming BGM meetings. In defense of all the ITTF committees I have to say many times many proposals die on the BGM floor. I have in my hands several researches and studies which have been conducted by the Technical, the Equipment, and the Rules Committees which resulted in the introduction of very important proposals, which all vanished once they reach the BGM floor, for reasons which I am not at liberty to discuss at this point.

Finally, I would like to congratulate and thank our delegation to the BGM, who did a great job, and influenced many decisions at this meeting. I am confident that they will fight for this proposal when it comes for a vote in the near future.