

REPORT  
LIEBHERR WORLD TABLE TENNIS TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP  
MARCH 1-7 DOHA, QATAR  
BY  
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DEPUTY REFEREE

A world Championship of Luxury

The main observation about the WTC in Doha is that it had a taste of luxury. The opening ceremony started with an open-air show accompanied by fireworks and laser extravaganza. The closing ceremony was tailored with an indoor fireworks and a laser show that focused its spot lights on the winners and the prize offerings.

In the stands there were gold-frame armchairs with red velvet upholstery. Each chair had a small glass coffee table in front of it. The Ameres, the Prince, and VIP guests were seated in these rows.

I arrived to Doha two days before the tournament. My assignment was to serve as a Deputy Referee. There was a reception table at the airport. I felt that that were waiting for me.

From the early morning I was taken to the venue. There, I was welcomed by the working committee of the tournament. After a courteous hospitality I was told that I am expected to be in charge of the whole tournament. That was necessary because of my ability of mastering English and Arabic languages, besides my experience of world tournaments.

I was taken to the accreditation center, where Zlatco has a sigh of relief when he saw me and immediately asked me to take the responsibility of the umpires, i.e. accreditation, hotel accommodation, food, transportation, umpires' room at the venue, uniform, and payment, that was a serious problem by itself, extending the hotel check-out time, etc.

When the Referee arrived, he met me graciously and repeated what the committee members had told me. Added to that I was informed that my translation duties would be needed in written and verbal aspects. Since that moment the Referee and I had to be inseparable. I had to attend not only every meeting but also every conversation. My duties extended every day from 7:00am to the next 1:00am in the next day morning.

## **THE VENUE**

Our first inspection was the venue. We had three halls, and a fourth one for practice. There were 22 tables assigned for the competition. Three were in the main TV arena, 9 in Hall A, and 10 in Hall B. We started by checking the light, air conditioning, the floor, the nets, flooring mats, and safety. Assignment of the extra rooms was not complete. Gluing room, duping test room, racket-testing room, umpires room, etc were all added. Besides rooms for the train the trainer's workshop, AUT seminars, and exams were all missing.

## **UMPIRES**

We used 120 umpires during the tournament, every match had two umpires. The assignments of umpires were somewhat difficult. We had 60 umpires from Qatar. They were all working in the first 3 days. Only the IU umpires continued to work during the whole tournament.

The umpires briefing session was a success. The briefing was conducted in Arabic and I had to translate all the instructions in English. There were many Arabic only speaking umpires, besides there were umpires from 40 other countries.

The level of umpiring was very good. Our main problem was with the players and coaches who were frustrated of the application of the new service rule and the free arm restrictions.

Another major problem was the number of deputy referees. There were only 3 Deputy Referees. Having three halls, that forced all of them to work every day all day during the tournament, which was a difficult hardship.

**Solution:** The assignment of Deputy Referees should be made after knowing the number of the playing halls for the tournaments. Logically, each hall should have at least two Deputy Referees. One should be assigned for the morning and the other for the afternoon and evening.

The nets were not attached correctly. Teaching volunteers to do it did not work.

**Solution:** The Company that sponsors the nets should be asked to assign two well-trained volunteers to adjust the nets.

One incident created an unfortunate confrontation with the tournament director. He wanted the umpires in the main hall to use electronic score Boards. However, almost all umpires did not know how to use them. When I informed the director of the situation, he said train them. When we tried to train them, again most of them admitted that they could not use them. When I informed the director, his comment was, "if they cannot use them, send them home." At this time I felt that carrying on the conversation was not

useful. I just went and brought the hand held scoreboard that we have been using. I went to the tables and dismantled all the electronic scoreboards, replaced them with the hand operated ones, and decided that the show must go.

**Solution:** I am not sure that the umpires need a new chore. The umpires have to concentrate on their umpiring rather than other things. Even the so-called experts made mistakes running these devices. Believe it or not, it is a mess when they foul up. One has to go back to adjust the numbers, in the mean time the game has advanced beyond these adjusted numbers etc. The company who sponsor these machines should place well-trained crew to run the machines on the tables in the TV arena. The umpires are having more than their share of responsibilities, with the use of the Yellow card, Red and Yellow cards, White cards, and replacing them every time the players change sides of the tables, especially in the middle of the last game, etc.

All in all it was a great experience for me. It was rather tiring but I enjoyed it, learned a lot from it, and was so proud feeling that the USATT has contributed to the organization, management, and success of a great World Tournament.