

Chapter 4 – Duties of Officials and Playing Conditions

1. **General.** The appointment of a competent referee and other officials is essential to the operation of any tournament. Detailed guidance for the referee and other match officials is provided in the ITTF Handbook for Tournament Referees and the Handbook for Match Officials; the rules are published by the ITTF and the USATT. All officials should know the rules and have copies readily available at the tournament. The guidance in this chapter should not be considered a substitute for a thorough knowledge of the above references.
2. **Umpires.** The USATT and ITTF have the following umpire qualifications:
 - 2.a. USATT Club Umpire (CU) - Open book written exam and a practical evaluation.
 - 2.b. USATT Regional Umpire (RU) - minimum of one year as CU while maintaining a record of matches umpired, followed by a timed written exam without references.
 - 2.c. USATT National Umpire (NU) - minimum of one year as RU while maintaining a record of matches umpired, followed by a timed written exam without references and an oral exam.
 - 2.e. ITTF International Umpire (IU) - minimum of two years as a NU while maintaining a record of international matches umpired and tournaments refereed. Candidates for IU must be nominated by the USATT to take the IU exam, which is normally given in the spring of even numbered years.
3. **Referees.** The USATT and ITTF have the following referee qualifications:
 - 3.a. USATT Certified Referee (CR). A USATT Umpire of any umpire level who has passed a written exam on the duties of the referee.
 - 3.b. USATT National Referee (NR). An International Umpire who has qualified as a Certified Referee, has experience at the national level and who has passed a written and oral exam on the duties of the referee.
 - 3.c. ITTF International Referee (IR). A National Referee with referee experience in international competition who has passed a written and oral exam on the duties of the referee. Candidates for IR must be nominated by the USATT to take the exam.
4. **Referee Requirements by Tournament.**
 - 4.a. For the U.S. Open the referee will be an International Referee (appointed by the USATT Rules/Officials Committee).
 - 4.b. For the U.S. National Championships (Closed) the referee will be an International or National Referee (appointed by the USATT Rules/Officials Committee).
 - 4.c. For other major tournaments, 3 star and above, the referee will be an International Referee, National Referee, or a Certified Referee who is an IU or NU (appointed by the USATT Rules/Officials Committee).

- 4.d. For all other tournaments, the referee will be a Certified Referee or higher and will be appointed by the tournament sponsor (USATT affiliate).
 - 4.d.1. *If no qualified referee is available 0 Star tournaments may use a club or higher level umpire. Clubs should make reasonable efforts to obtain a qualified referee.*
 - 4.d.2. If no local person is qualified the sponsor will be advised to invite a visiting player with the proper qualification to serve as referee. If the referee is not from the sponsoring club it is appropriate to pay \$100-150 per day, \$150 if the referee does the draws.

5. Referee Responsibilities. The referee is primarily responsible to ensure that the tournament is conducted fairly and in accordance with the rules. Specifically, s/he:

- 5.a. Is the final authority on interpretation of the rules and regulations as they apply to the tournament.
 - 5.a.1. In making decisions that are not fully covered by the rules, the referee should consider in turn: ITTF and USATT rulings, precedent, and the rule's intent. See Guidance for Referees (Precedents) in para. 7, below.
 - 5.a.2. Decisions of the referee may be appealed in writing to the USATT Rules/Officials Committee. Any action by Rules/Officials Committee will serve as guidance at future events but will have no effect on the decision for the tournament in question.
- 5.b. Verifies that required standards for playing conditions are met and that all nets are properly adjusted before play begins. If conditions are not up to standard, he will direct changes to assure the best conditions possible under the circumstances.
- 5.c. Appoints match officials (umpires, assistant umpires and stroke counters).
- 5.d. Conducts an orientation for umpires, outlining any recent rules changes and how s/he expects them to be applied. S/he should always go over the service rule, the point penalty system, and any other rule that may have potential for inconsistent application. S/he should cover how to handle medical emergencies involving bleeding (see paragraph 12.e. below) At the U.S. Open and other tournaments where there are foreign teams, the referee also will conduct an orientation for team captains. The captains' orientation should cover the application of the rules to minimize later misunderstanding.
- 5.e. Replaces match officials if he determines it is necessary to ensure a fair contest. An umpire should not be replaced just because a player requests it. Sometimes a player will object to an umpire who strictly enforces the rules, such as the service rule. An umpire should not be replaced simply because his correct rulings adversely affect one player more than they affect his or her opponent.

- 5.f. Verifies that the draws are made in accordance with the rules as covered in the appropriate chapter of the Tournament Guide. If a member of the sponsoring club, s/he should conduct the draw.
 - 5.f.1. If from out of town, he should arrive early enough to check each draw and make any necessary corrections before draws are posted.
 - 5.f.2. If errors in any draw are detected they should be corrected in a manner that will cause the least disruption. Major errors must be corrected before play begins in the event. If the error is minor it may be allowed to stand. The referee should advise the sponsoring club of the error and the correct draw procedure.
 - 5.f.3. No changes to a draw may be made once play has begun in that event.
 - 5.f.3.a. A qualifying competition may be considered a separate event.
 - 5.f.3.b. The USATT has authorized shifting or adding players to fill vacancies in round robin groups after play has begun. This is authorized only when all affected players are USATT members.
- 5.g. The referee or a designated deputy, will be present at the tournament site at all times when matches are being played.
 - 5.g.1. A Club Umpire may serve as a deputy referee. The deputy referee should be the best qualified referee or umpire available. While serving as referee he has the full authority of the position.
 - 5.g.2. A deputy must be appointed whenever the referee leaves the tournament site, plays a match, or umpires. The referee cannot serve as umpire and then rule as referee on an appeal from a decision he made as umpire.
- 5.h. Determines the legality of clothing and equipment. The USATT Dress Code and the red/black racket rule must be consistently enforced at all tournaments.
- 5.i. Has authority to default a player for violation of rules or regulations including failure to appear for a match, unsportsmanlike conduct, or disrespect to tournament officials, players, and/or spectators.
 - 5.i.1. Authority to default a player for failure to appear will normally be delegated to a specific person at the tournament desk. The referee gives specific guidance to that official and will act on any appeal of such a default. The time of default and the initial of the responsible official should be written on the match card.
 - 5.i.2. Send a report to the USATT Disciplinary Chairman on any default other than for tardiness.
- 5.i. Maintains a log of all significant actions taken; as a record and possible use as precedent for later actions in that or other tournaments. Significant actions should be reported to the USATT Rules/Officials Committee.

6. Chief Umpire. The USATT Rules/Officials Committee will appoint a Chief Umpire for the U.S. Open and National Championships (Closed). Tournament sponsors may appoint a Chief Umpire for other tournaments if desired. The Chief Umpire:

- 6.a. Assigns match officials.
- 6.b. Acts as deputy referee when needed.
- 6.c. Assists the referee in other duties such as checking nets and enforcement of the Dress Code.
- 6.d. Ensures that umpires are informed of the time and location of the referee's orientation and any other meetings as appropriate.
- 6.d. ensures that umpires are informed of hotel arrangements and when and where any payments are to be collected.

7. Guidance to Referees (Precedents). The policies in this paragraph were determined through discussions, seminars and practical tournament experience.

- 7.a. Non-umpired matches. The umpire, when one is assigned, is responsible for ensuring that the match is conducted fairly. The players are equally responsible for fair play in a match without an umpire. Specifically:
 - 7.a.1. No "second chances" are allowed. A player will have only one chance to score a point. The most common situation is where another ball comes into the playing area during a rally. If a player then strikes the ball (perhaps a high set up) and misses the shot, the result of that shot must stand; the player cannot then call a let because he was disturbed. S/he took his/her chance and doesn't get another one.
 - 7.a.2. The player closer to the play, such as an edge ball, will make the call. This call may not be disputed.
 - 7.a.3. Players in a non-umpired match should attempt to resolve problems by applying the above rules and good sportsmanship.
 - 7.a.4. Any player in a match has the right to request that the Referee appoint an umpire for that match.
- 7.b. Suspension of play. Any time play is suspended the match will resume from where it was suspended, with the same score and the players at the same ends.
 - 7.b.1. Extended suspension of play. Any time play is suspended for a period of 15 minutes or longer the Referee will authorize players to warm-up before resuming the match. The warm-up will not exceed 2 minutes.
 - 7.b.2. Other suspension of play. If the suspension of play is more than 5 and less than 15 minutes the Referee may authorize players to warm-up before resuming the match. The warm-up will not exceed 2 minutes.
 - 7.b.3. A suspension of play for the benefit of a player to treat an injury or repair equipment. Warm-up is not normally permitted before resuming play. The Referee may grant the player's opponent permission to practice on any table during such a suspension.
- 7.c. Player conduct. The Point Penalty System (PPS), Paragraph 10, was designed to control minor instances of poor sportsmanship. The Referee has full authority to default a player for gross misconduct whether or not the offender is playing a match.

- 7.d. If, in doubles, a player drops his racket and grabs his partner's racket s/he cannot win the point. The normal action of calling the Referee is not necessary. The umpire should explain the reason to the player if needed.
- 7.e. If a player holds the racket with both hands and touches the table with either or both hands the player does not lose a point for that reason because there is no free hand.
- 7.f. Once a match is completed it should not be replayed or continued.
 - 7.f.1. If a match scheduled as best of 7 is played with the players believing that it is best of 5 and complete the match after one side wins 3 games, it is over. The players played thinking it was best of 5 and planned their tactics to win in 3. That match cannot be resumed.
 - 7.f.2. If a match scheduled as best of 5 is played with the players believing that it best of 7 and play until one side wins 4 games the results stand. You cannot go back to determine who won 3 of the first 5 games.
 - 7.f.3. In round robin competition it is common to allow unrated players to compete but not to advance to the next stage if they win their group. This is permissible because it allows new players to compete. By not allowing them to advance it protects the rating events from being dominated by new players who may enter events below their skill level.
 - 7.f.3.a. Matches of the unrated player will be used in determining the order of finish.
 - 7.f.3.b. The rated player that finishes highest in the group will advance.
- 7.g. If a player breaks a racket during a match the player is required to continue immediately with another racket. To avoid "gamesmanship" the referee may disqualify the original racket for the rest of the tournament.
- 7.h. A player is not trying to win. This rarely happens but sometimes occurs (1) to permit the player to advance to a lower group level and win a trophy or money; (2) to permit a teammate to advance after the player has secured a position or been eliminated; or (3) to share prize money.
 - 7.h.1. An umpire that observes such conduct should warn the player under the point penalty system and report the incident to the referee.
 - 7.h.2. The Referee should be sure that the player is not competing to win.
 - 7.h.3. After making a determination that action is required to ensure a fair competition, the Referee may:
 - 7.h.3.a. Advance the player to a higher group he may have been trying to avoid.
 - 7.h.3.b. Default the player from the event or competition.
 - 7.h.3.c. Withhold any prize money. Prize money must be held in escrow pending any appeal.
 - 7.h.4. If either action is taken it must be reported to the USATT Disciplinary Chairman. The Referee may make a

recommendation for further disciplinary action or recommend that no further action be taken.

8. Hard Bat Competition. Tournaments are encouraged to include hard bat events.

8.a. The striking surface of the racket must be pips out with no sponge. No long pips are permitted. The two sides of the racket may be any color. Rubber must be on the Hard Bat Committee approved list and need not comply with the red/black rule. The covering on both sides of the racket must be the same if they are striking surfaces.

8.b. Hard bats meeting the requirements of the above paragraph may be used in any event in domestic tournaments *except the US Open, USOTC and NATTC*

9. Umpire Requirements. Enough umpires should be available to meet tournament needs and their identity known to the referee or chief umpire.

9.a. The rules provide that there is an umpire for each match. At major USA tournaments and in most parts of the country this is not done but an umpire is provided on request of any player in a match. This system is authorized and is preferable to having unqualified umpires that are only keeping score but not enforcing the rules.

9.b. Only qualified umpires may be assigned to umpire a match. If players or others who are not qualified as umpires volunteer they may be assigned as scorekeepers. Such volunteers must not be assigned umpire duties. The players must be informed that s/he is a scorekeeper and that the players are responsible for determining the outcome of each rally.

9.c. An umpire, and assistant umpire if possible, should always be assigned to all final matches and to semi-finals of major events in the tournament.

9.d. Umpires should be given some recognition and/or compensation. An umpire fee may be charged on the entry blank. Umpires can then be paid based on the number and level of matches they umpire. Higher fees can be paid based on umpire rank and/or stage of the tournament, e.g. finals. Any umpire fees collected and not paid must be sent to the USATT with the tournament report for use by the USATT Rules/Officials Committee.

9.e. An umpire may be assigned to a match already started. Often players will start a match and not request an umpire until there is a dispute such as a disagreement on the score or questioning an opponent's serve, delay of the game, etc. This is the most difficult job for an umpire because s/he is going into a known disagreement. When an umpire starts a match these situations seldom occur. When umpiring a match already started the umpire will:

9.e.1. Determine from the players the facts and the service order at the beginning of the match.

9.e.2. Resolve the immediate dispute and resume play as quickly as possible. A player may have requested an umpire simply to disrupt his opponent.

- 9.e.2.a. If there is a conflict concerning rules, explain the rules as necessary and resume play.
- 9.e.2.b. If legality of serves is in question, explain the service rule and enforce it strictly on both players.
- 9.e.3. If there is a disagreement on the score the umpire must use his/her best judgment in determining the score and resume play with minimum delay. The same solution should not be used each time or an unscrupulous player may calculate when it is to his/her advantage to contest the score and call for an umpire. Fortunately nearly all players display good sportsmanship and most disputes in score are honest disagreements. Some methods of resolving score disputes:
 - 9.e.3.a. Determine the last score at which both players agree and play from there.
 - 9.e.3.b. Try to determine the score from spectators, giving consideration to your knowledge of both players and spectators questioned and their possible bias.
 - 9.e.3.c. After determining each player's opinion of the correct score, toss a coin and accept the score favored by the winner of the coin toss.
 - 9.e.3.d. Consider your knowledge of the reputation of the players for getting into similar disputes. Players that often miscount the score frequently have an umpire assigned in the middle of a match.
- 9.e.4. Players have the right to request an umpire before a match begins. If they request one during a match, they are in no position to contest any method determined by the umpire for resolving the dispute.
- 9.f. The referee must be alert to players who frequently request umpires after a match has started or whose opponents frequently request an umpire when playing him/her. The referee may decide to watch a few of that player's matches and/or assign an umpire for each of those matches.

10. Point Penalty System (PPS). In 1989 the ITTF adopted, with only minor changes, the point penalty system which had been used for several years in USATT major tournaments. It was developed as a means of improving player conduct by giving referees and umpires more effective control of unruly players. Without the point penalty system the referee could either tolerate bad conduct or default the offender. With the point penalty, there are intermediate steps that can be taken. With the 11 point game, players are not likely to give up points by their conduct.

- 10.a. The point penalty system will be used in all USATT tournaments provided qualified umpires are available to administer it.
- 10.b. Penalties will be imposed as follows (for each match):
 - 10.b.1. 1st offense: Warning. The umpire should briefly display a yellow card so it can be seen by the players and interested spectators.

- 10.b.2. 2nd offense: Loss of point. The umpire should display both a red and a yellow card, held fan like, in one hand. The point is awarded to the player's opponent. No point is taken away.
- 10.b.3. 3rd offense: Loss of 2 additional points. The umpire should display both a red and a yellow card. The points are awarded to the player's opponent. No points are taken away.
- 10.b.4. If misbehavior continues after imposition of penalties by the umpire, the umpire shall suspend play and report to the referee.
- 10.b.5. The referee will normally default the player after being called by the umpire in the above circumstance. The default may be from a match, an event, or from the whole competition (tournament).
- 10.c. The referee may, at his discretion, disqualify a player for persistent unfair or offensive behavior, whether reported by the umpire or not; such disqualification may be from a match, from an event, or from a whole competition (tournament).
- 10.d. The referee will normally default a player if he changes his undamaged racket during a match. The default should normally be limited to that match. The referee may use discretion if the player is inexperienced. If points have been played with the new racket the referee may require points or games to be replayed to provide a fair result.
- 10.e. Following imposition of a point (or points) penalty the serve goes to the player who should be serving at the score reached after imposition of the penalty.
- 10.f. The intent of the system is to deter unsportsmanlike conduct by having appropriate stages of punishment available. This authority must be used with considerable discretion. Properly used it provides an effective solution without having to tolerate poor behavior or default the offender.
- 10.g. Conduct which may warrant imposition of the point penalty system:
 - 10.f.1. Delay of game; e.g. excessive toweling, deliberately hitting the ball out of the playing area, or taking excessive time between points or games.
 - 10.f.2. Intentionally breaking the ball or hitting the table or net with a racket. (Intentional damage to a table should be handled by the referee under para 7.c., above)
 - 10.f.3. Conduct offensive to opponent, spectators, or officials; e.g. audible or visible inappropriate language or gestures, loud outbursts or remarks which tend to disrupt other matches in progress, or deliberately throwing a racket.
 - 10.f.4. Accepting coaching during a game or from anyone other than his designated coach between games. Both the coach and player should be warned at the first recognition of coaching during a game. At the second violation the umpire will direct the coach to leave the area and briefly display a red card to indicate to the coach, players, and spectators the action taken. A point penalty should not normally be assessed for coaching. Very often the player is not seeking advice even if it is given. The player should not be punished for the actions of the coach.

- 10.g. In evaluating "loud outbursts" the umpire must consider the total situation. We don't want to discourage competitive enthusiasm, particularly that displayed in a championship final when there are no other matches being played. In such a situation, consideration must be given to allowing reasonable expression without giving offense to spectators.
- 10.h. The referee may direct umpires to call him/her when issuing a warning. This should be done whenever possible, particularly if the umpire suspects that he may have to go further in the system. This will enable the referee to be on the scene should a player make an appeal from the umpire's imposition of a penalty point.

11. Continuity of Play. The referee and umpires are responsible for ensuring that matches start without excessive delay for warm-up and that play is continuous except for authorized breaks such as intervals between games and the one time out per side in each match.

- 11.a. An emergency suspension of play may be authorized by the referee for the shortest reasonable time in the event of injury to a player or damage to his clothing or equipment. Only one suspension of play may be given to the same player or team as a result of the same accident. For injury the maximum time to resume play or retire is 10 minutes; for damage to equipment, 5 minutes. No time is allowed for a damaged racket; the player should have a spare racket in the playing area or he may have one handed to him from outside the playing area. No suspension should be granted if the referee determines that the suspension would be unduly disadvantageous to the opposing player or pair.
- 11.b. Under no circumstances will the players themselves make any decision as to continuation of a match. It is the duty of the umpire to determine whether the injury or damage is real or whether the player is using unsportsmanlike tactics.
- 11.c. Any illness or injury known at the start of a match will not qualify for a suspension of play. Likewise injury caused by the stress of play such as cramps does not justify a suspension of play. The player must play on or retire from the match.
- 11.c. Each player or pair is allowed a one minute time out in each match. Coaching *by both sides* is permitted during that time out. Play must resume when the side that called the time out is ready or at one minute, whichever is sooner.

12. Playing Conditions. The following conditions are mandatory for all sanctioned tournaments.

- 12.a. Only USATT approved tables, nets, and balls will be used. Only one model of table may be used for a tournament except as indicated below:
 - 12.a.1. In Major tournaments (3 Star and above), it is permissible to use more than one model of the same brand table. This is sometimes desirable to accommodate wheelchair players or to provide a slightly different model in an "arena". The playing characteristics of such tables must be substantially similar.

- 12.a.1. For small closed and small One Star tournaments it permissible to use more than one model of table. Each make and model must be included in the entry blank.
- 12.a.2. Players in the highest event should not be required to play on more than one model of table.
- 12.b. Dimensions of the playing area.
 - 12.b.1. For Open International competition the required playing area for each match is 46 ft (14 m) long by 23 ft (7 m) wide with lights at least *16.4 ft (5 m)* high. Each court must be separated from other courts and the gallery by suitable barriers.
 - 12.b.2. For other competition the required playing area for each match is 40 ft (12 m) long by 20 ft (6 m) wide with lights at least 13 ft (4 m) high. Tables placed side by side must have at least 10 feet between tables, preferably 12-14 feet.
 - 12.b.3. In the event that the above space requirements cannot be met, any deviation must be included in the entry blank so players are informed of the reduced playing area before they enter. The minimum playing space that will be approved for a sanctioned tournament is 30 feet long with 10 feet between tables.
- 12.c. The playing area shall be enclosed by curtains or other barriers to separate the playing area from adjacent playing areas and from spectators.
 - 12.c.1. The number of tables within each playing area must be decided by the tournament committee.
 - 12.c.2. The final matches of any tournament should be played on tables individually enclosed.
- 12.d. Flooring should be hardwood. Concrete, or composition flooring are also acceptable but not carpet or other cushioned surfaces. A relatively new floor mat is used at the World Championships, U.S. Open, US National Championships and some other major tournaments. This type flooring is preferred but not normally available to smaller tournaments. The type flooring must be included in the entry blank.

13. Medical Emergencies. Because of the extreme health hazards that may result from contaminated blood, the following procedures are mandatory at any time a player or match official is bleeding.

- 13.a. The referee will direct a suspension of play until the following actions are completed. The suspension may exceed 10 minutes if, in the opinion of the referee, it is necessary to ensure safe playing conditions. The players should not be penalized for any delay caused by the tournament management's cleaning of the playing area.
- 13.b. Any player who is obviously bleeding is required to stop play until the bleeding has been completely stopped or securely covered. (A bandage may be sufficient

in some cases but not all.) Bloodied playing apparel must be replaced and specific, localized bloodied playing areas cleaned.

- 13.c. If a match official is bleeding that official should be treated or replaced (at the discretion of the referee) as quickly as possible. If any blood is in the playing area it must be cleaned up before resuming play.
- 13.d. Each tournament should have on hand latex surgical gloves. The gloves should be used when applying bandages and cleaning up spilled blood. Blood should be wiped from the playing area with a domestic cleaning product or 70% alcohol and disposable towels. The towels and the gloves should be put in a plastic, seal tight bag and placed in a designated container.

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