

# USATT Table Tennis Rules

This document includes applicable ITTF Laws and Regulations. USATT Exceptions or additions are noted in italics and red color. There are also minor italics that are part of the ITTF document. Paragraphs that are shaded are not addressed on umpire exams.

## 2 THE LAWS OF TABLE TENNIS

### 2.1 THE TABLE

2.1.1 The upper surface of the table, known as the playing surface, shall be rectangular, 2.74m long and 1.525m wide, and shall lie in a horizontal plane 76cm above the floor.

2.1.2 The playing surface shall not include the vertical sides of the tabletop.

2.1.3 The playing surface may be of any material and shall yield a uniform bounce of about 23cm when a standard ball is dropped on to it from a height of 30cm.

2.1.4 The playing surface shall be uniformly dark coloured and matt, but with a white side line, 2cm wide, along each 2.74m edge and a white end line, 2cm wide, along each 1.525m edge.

2.1.5 The playing surface shall be divided into 2 equal courts by a vertical net running parallel with the end lines, and shall be continuous over the whole area of each court.

2.1.6 For doubles, each court shall be divided into 2 equal half-courts by a white centre line, 3mm wide, running parallel with the side lines; the centre line shall be regarded as part of each right half-court.

### 2.2 THE NET ASSEMBLY

2.2.1 The net assembly shall consist of the net, its suspension and the supporting posts, including the clamps attaching them to the table.

2.2.2 The net shall be suspended by a cord attached at each end to an upright post 15.25cm high, the outside limits of the post being 15.25cm outside the side line.

2.2.3 The top of the net, along its whole length, shall be 15.25cm above the playing surface.

2.2.4 The bottom of the net, along its whole length, shall be as close as possible to the playing surface and the ends of the net shall be attached to the supporting posts from top to bottom.

### 2.3 THE BALL

2.3.1 The ball shall be spherical, with a diameter of 40mm.

2.3.2 The ball shall weigh 2.7g.

2.3.3 The ball shall be made of celluloid or similar plastics material and shall be white or orange, and matt.

### 2.4 THE RACKET

2.4.1 The racket may be of any size, shape or weight but the blade shall be flat and rigid.

2.4.2 At least 85% of the blade by thickness shall be of natural wood; an adhesive layer within the blade may be reinforced with fibrous material such as carbon fibre, glass fibre or compressed paper, but shall not be

thicker than 7.5% of the total thickness or 0.35mm, whichever is the smaller.

2.4.3 A side of the blade used for striking the ball shall be covered with either ordinary pimpled rubber, with pimples outwards having a total thickness including adhesive of not more than 2.0mm, or sandwich rubber, with pimples inwards or outwards, having a total thickness including adhesive of not more than 4.0mm.

2.4.3.1 Ordinary pimpled rubber is a single layer of non-cellular rubber, natural or synthetic, with pimples evenly distributed over its surface at a density of not less than 10 per cm<sup>2</sup> and not more than 30 per cm<sup>2</sup>.

2.4.3.2 Sandwich rubber is a single layer of cellular rubber covered with a single outer layer of ordinary pimpled rubber, the thickness of the pimpled rubber not being more than 2.0mm.

2.4.4 The covering material shall extend up to but not beyond the limits of the blade, except that the part nearest the handle and gripped by the fingers may be left uncovered or covered with any material.

2.4.5 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.

2.4.6 The surface of the covering material on a side of the blade, or of a side of the blade if it is left uncovered, shall be matt, bright red on one side and black on the other.

With effect 1st October 2021, the surface of the covering material on a side of the blade, or of a side of the blade if it is left uncovered, shall be matt, black on one side, and of a bright colour clearly distinguishable from black and from the colour of the ball on the other.

2.4.7 The racket covering shall be used without any physical, chemical or other treatment.

2.4.7.1 Slight deviations from continuity of surface or uniformity of colour due to accidental damage or wear may be allowed provided that they do not significantly change the characteristics of the surface.

2.4.8 Before the start of a match and whenever he or she changes his or her racket during a match a player shall show his or her opponent and the umpire the racket he or she is about to use and shall allow them to examine it.

## **2.5 DEFINITIONS**

2.5.1 A rally is the period during which the ball is in play.

2.5.2 The ball is in play from the last moment at which it is stationary on the palm of the free hand before being intentionally projected in service until the rally is decided as a let or a point.

2.5.3 A let is a rally of which the result is not scored.

2.5.4 A point is a rally of which the result is scored.

2.5.5 The racket hand is the hand carrying the racket.

2.5.6 The free hand is the hand not carrying the racket; the free arm is the arm of the free hand.

2.5.7 A player strikes the ball if he or she touches it in play with his or her racket, held in the hand, or with his or her racket hand below the wrist.

2.5.8 A player obstructs the ball if he or she, or anything he or she wears or carries, touches it in play when it is above or travelling

towards the playing surface, not having touched his or her court since last being struck by his or her opponent.

2.5.9 The server is the player due to strike the ball first in a rally.

2.5.10 The receiver is the player due to strike the ball second in a rally.

2.5.11 The umpire is the person appointed to control a match.

2.5.12 The assistant umpire is the person appointed to assist the umpire with certain decisions.

2.5.13 Anything that a player wears or carries includes anything that he or she was wearing or carrying, other than the ball, at the start of the rally.

2.5.14 The end line shall be regarded as extending indefinitely in both directions.

## **2.6 THE SERVICE**

2.6.1 Service shall start with the ball resting freely on the open palm of the server's stationary free hand.

2.6.2 The server shall then project the ball near vertically upwards, without imparting spin, so that it rises at least 16cm after leaving the palm of the free hand and then falls without touching anything before being struck.

2.6.3 As the ball is falling the server shall strike it so that it touches first his or her court and then touches directly the receiver's court; in doubles, the ball shall touch successively the right half court of server and receiver.

2.6.4 From the start of service until it is struck, the ball shall be above the level of the playing surface and behind the server's end line, and it shall not be hidden from the receiver by the server or his or her doubles partner or by anything they wear or carry.

2.6.5 As soon as the ball has been projected, the server's free arm and hand shall be removed from the space between the ball and the net. The space between the ball and the net is defined by the ball, the net and its indefinite upward extension.

2.6.6 It is the responsibility of the player to serve so that the umpire or the assistant umpire can be satisfied that he or she complies with the requirements of the Laws, and either may decide that a service is incorrect.

2.6.6.1 If either the umpire or the assistant umpire is not sure about the legality of a service he or she may, on the first occasion in a match, interrupt play and warn the server; but any subsequent service by that player or his or her doubles partner which is not clearly legal shall be considered incorrect.

2.6.7 Exceptionally, the umpire may relax the requirements for a correct service where he or she is satisfied that compliance is prevented by physical disability.

## **2.7 THE RETURN**

2.7.1 The ball, having been served or returned, shall be struck so that it touches the opponent's court, either directly or after touching the net assembly.

## **2.8 THE ORDER OF PLAY**

2.8.1 In singles, the server shall first make a service, the receiver shall then make a return and thereafter server and receiver alternately shall each make a return.

2.8.2 In doubles, except as provided in 2.8.3, the server shall first make a service, the receiver shall then make a return, the partner of the server shall then make a return, the partner of the receiver shall then make a return and thereafter each player in turn in that sequence shall make a return.

2.8.3 In doubles, when at least one player of a pair is in a wheelchair due to a physical disability, the server shall first make a service, the receiver shall then make a return but thereafter either player of the disabled pair may make returns. However, no part of a player's wheelchair nor a foot of a standing player of this pair shall protrude beyond the imaginary extension of the centre line of the table. If it does, the umpire shall award the point to the opposing pair.

## **2.9 A LET**

2.9.1 The rally shall be a let:

2.9.1.1 if in service the ball touches the net assembly, provided the service is otherwise correct or the ball is obstructed by the receiver or his or her partner;

2.9.1.2 if the service is delivered when the receiving player or pair is not ready, provided that neither the receiver nor his or her partner attempts to strike the ball;

2.9.1.3 if failure to make a service or a return or otherwise to comply with the Laws is due to a disturbance outside the control of the player;

2.9.1.4 if play is interrupted by the umpire or assistant umpire;

2.9.1.5 if the receiver is in wheelchair owing to a physical disability and in service the ball, provided that the service is otherwise correct,

2.9.1.5.1 after touching the receiver's court returns in the direction of the net;

2.9.1.5.2 comes to rest on the receiver's court;

2.9.1.5.3 in singles leaves the receiver's court after touching it by either of its sidelines.

2.9.2 Play may be interrupted

2.9.2.1 to correct an error in the order of serving, receiving or ends;

2.9.2.2 to introduce the expedite system;

2.9.2.3 to warn or penalise a player or adviser;

2.9.2.4 because the conditions of play are disturbed in a way which could affect the outcome of the rally.

## **2.10 A POINT**

2.10.1 Unless the rally is a let, a player shall score a point

2.10.1.1 if an opponent fails to make a correct service;

2.10.1.2 if an opponent fails to make a correct return;

2.10.1.3 if, after he or she has made a service or a return, the ball touches anything other than the net assembly before being struck by an opponent;

2.10.1.4 if the ball passes over his or her court or beyond his or her end line without touching his or her court, after being struck by an opponent;

2.10.1.5 if the ball, after being struck by an opponent, passes through the net or between the net and the net post or between the net and playing surface;

2.10.1.6 if an opponent obstructs the ball;  
2.10.1.7 if an opponent deliberately strikes the ball twice in succession;  
2.10.1.8 if an opponent strikes the ball with a side of the racket blade whose surface does not comply with the requirements of 2.4.3, 2.4.4 and 2.4.5;  
2.10.1.9 if an opponent, or anything an opponent wears or carries, moves the playing surface;  
2.10.1.10 if an opponent, or anything an opponent wears or carries, touches the net assembly;  
2.10.1.11 if an opponent's free hand touches the playing surface;  
2.10.1.12 if a doubles opponent strikes the ball out of the sequence established by the first server and first receiver;  
2.10.1.13 as provided under the expedite system (2.15.4).  
2.10.1.14 if both players or pairs are in a wheelchair due to a physical disability and  
2.10.1.14.1 his or her opponent does not maintain a minimum contact with the seat or cushion(s), with the back of the thigh, when the ball is struck;  
2.10.1.14.2 his or her opponent touches the table with either hand before striking the ball;  
2.10.1.14.3 his or her opponent's footrest or foot touches the floor during play.  
2.10.1.15 as provided under the order of play (2.8.3).  
2.10.1.16 If an opponent deliberately disturbs the conditions of play in a way which could affect the outcome of the rally. (USATT only)

## **2.11 A GAME**

2.11.1 A game shall be won by the player or pair first scoring 11 points unless both players or pairs score 10 points, when the game shall be won by the first player or pair subsequently gaining a lead of 2 points.

## **2.12 A MATCH**

2.12.1 A match shall consist of the best of any odd number of games.

## **2.13 THE ORDER OF SERVING, RECEIVING AND ENDS**

2.13.1 The right to choose the initial order of serving, receiving and ends shall be decided by lot and the winner may choose to serve or to receive first or to start at a particular end.

2.13.2 When one player or pair has chosen to serve or to receive first or to start at a particular end, the other player or pair shall have the other choice.

2.13.3 After each 2 points have been scored the receiving player or pair shall become the serving player or pair and so on until the end of the game, unless both players or pairs score 10 points or the expedite system is in operation, when the sequences of serving and receiving shall be the same but each player shall serve for only 1 point in turn.

2.13.4 In each game of a doubles match, the pair having the right to serve first shall choose which of them will do so and in the first game of a match the receiving pair shall decide which of them will receive first; in subsequent games of the match, the first server having been chosen, the first receiver shall be the player who served to him or her in the preceding game.

2.13.5 In doubles, at each change of service the previous receiver shall become the server and the partner of the previous server shall become the receiver.

2.13.6 The player or pair serving first in a game shall receive first in the next game of the match and in the last possible game of a doubles match the pair due to receive next shall change their order of receiving when first one pair scores 5 points.

2.13.7 The player or pair starting at one end in a game shall start at the other end in the next game of the match and in the last possible game of a match the players or pairs shall change ends when first one player or pair scores 5 points.

#### **2.14 OUT OF ORDER OF SERVING, RECEIVING OR ENDS**

2.14.1 If a player serves or receives out of turn, play shall be interrupted by the umpire as soon as the error is discovered and shall resume with those players serving and receiving who should be server and receiver respectively at the score that has been reached, according to the sequence established at the beginning of the match and, in doubles, to the order of serving chosen by the pair having the right to serve first in the game during which the error is discovered.

2.14.2 If the players have not changed ends when they should have done so, play shall be interrupted by the umpire as soon as the error is discovered and shall resume with the players at the ends at which they should be at the score that has been reached, according to the sequence established at the beginning of the match.

2.14.3 In any circumstances, all points scored before the discovery of an error shall be reckoned.

#### **2.15 THE EXPEDITE SYSTEM**

2.15.1 Except as provided in 2.15.2, the expedite system shall come into operation after 10 minutes play in a game or at any time when requested by both players or pairs.

2.15.2 The expedite system shall not be introduced in a game if at least 18 points have been scored.

2.15.3 If the ball is in play when the time limit is reached and the expedite system is due to come into operation, play shall be interrupted by the umpire and shall resume with service by the player who served in the rally that was interrupted; if the ball is not in play when the expedite system comes into operation, play shall resume with service by the player who received in the immediately preceding rally.

2.15.4 Thereafter, each player shall serve for 1 point in turn until the end of the game, and if the receiving player or pair makes 13 correct returns in a rally the receiver shall score a point.

2.15.5 Introduction of the expedite system shall not alter the order of serving and receiving in the match, as defined in 2.13.6.

2.15.6 Once introduced, the expedite system shall remain in operation until the end of the match.

### **3: Regulations for International Competitions**

#### **3.2 EQUIPMENT AND PLAYING CONDITIONS**

##### **3.2.1 Approved and Authorised Equipment**

3.2.1.1 The approval and authorisation of playing equipment shall be conducted on behalf of the Board of Directors by the Equipment Committee; an approval or authorisation may be suspended by the Executive Committee

at any time and subsequently the approval or authorisation may be withdrawn by the Board of Directors.

3.2.1.2 The entry form or prospectus for an open tournament shall specify the brands and colours of table, net assembly, flooring and ball to be used; the choice of table, net assembly and ball shall be as laid down by the ITTF or by the Association in whose territory the competition is held, selected from brands and types currently approved by the ITTF; for selected ITTF sanctioned tournaments, the flooring shall be of a brand and type currently approved by ITTF.

3.2.1.3 Any ordinary pimped rubber or sandwich rubber covering the racket shall be currently authorised by the ITTF and shall be attached to the blade so that the ITTF logo, the ITTF number (when present), the supplier and brand names are clearly visible nearest the handle. Lists of all approved and authorised equipment and materials are maintained by the ITTF Office and details are available on the ITTF website.

3.2.1.4 Table legs shall be at least 40cm from the end line of the table for wheelchair players.

### 3.2.2 Playing Clothing

3.2.2.1 Playing clothing shall consist of a short-sleeved or sleeveless shirt and shorts or skirt or one-part sports outfits, socks and playing shoes; other garments, such as part or all of a tracksuit, shall not be worn during play except with the permission of the referee.

3.2.2.2 The main colour of a shirt, skirt or shorts, other than sleeves and collar of a shirt shall be clearly different from that of the ball in use.

3.2.2.3 Clothing may bear numbers or lettering on the back of the shirt to identify a player, his or her Association or, in club matches, his or her club, and advertisements in accordance with the provisions of 3.2.5.10; if the back of a shirt bears the players name, this shall be situated just below the collar.

3.2.2.4 Any numbers required by organisers to identify a player shall have priority over advertisements on the centre part of the back of a shirt; such numbers shall be contained within a panel having an area not greater than 600cm<sup>2</sup>.

3.2.2.5 Any markings or trimming on the front or side of a playing garment and any objects such as jewellery worn by a player shall not be so conspicuous or brightly reflecting as to unsight an opponent.

3.2.2.6 Clothing shall not carry designs or lettering which might cause offence or bring the game into disrepute.

3.2.2.7 The players of a team taking part in a team match, and players of the same Association forming a doubles pair in a World, Olympic or Paralympic Title Competition, shall be dressed uniformly, with the possible exception of socks, shoes and the number, size, colour and design of advertisements on clothing. Players of the same Association forming a doubles pair in other international competitions may wear clothes of different manufacturers, if the basic colours are the same and their National Association authorises this procedure.

3.2.2.8 Opposing players and pairs shall wear shirts that are of sufficiently different colours to enable them to be easily distinguished by spectators.

3.2.2.9 Where opposing players or teams have a similar shirt and cannot agree which of them will change, the decision shall be made by the umpire by lot.

3.2.2.10 Players competing in a World, Olympic or Paralympic title competition or Open International Championships shall wear shirt and shorts or skirt of types authorised by their Association.

### **3.2.3 Playing Conditions**

3.2.3.1 The playing space shall be rectangular and not less than 14m long, 7m wide and 5m high, but the 4 corners may be covered by surrounds of not more than 1.5m length; for wheelchair events, the playing space may be reduced, but shall not be less than 8m long and 6m wide.

3.2.3.2 The following equipment and fittings are to be considered as part of each playing area: The table including the net assembly, printed numbers identifying the table, flooring, umpires tables and chairs, score indicators, towel and ball boxes, surrounds, boards on the surrounds indicating the names of players or Associations, and small technical equipment which shall be fitted in a way that does not affect play.

3.2.3.3 The playing area shall be enclosed by surrounds about 75cm high, all of the same dark background colour, separating it from adjacent playing areas and from spectators.

3.2.3.4 In World, Olympic and Paralympic title competitions the light intensity, measured at the height of the playing surface, shall be at least 1000 lux uniformly over the whole of the playing surface and at least 500 lux elsewhere in the playing area; in other competitions the intensity shall be at least 600 lux uniformly over the playing surface and at least 400 lux elsewhere in the playing area.

3.2.3.5 Where several tables are in use, the lighting level shall be the same for all of them, and the level of background lighting in the playing hall shall not be greater than the lowest level in the playing area.

3.2.3.6 The light source shall not be less than 5m above the floor.

3.2.3.7 The background shall be generally dark and shall not contain bright light sources or daylight through uncovered windows or other apertures.

3.2.3.8 The flooring shall not be light-coloured, brightly reflecting or slippery and it shall be resilient; the flooring may be rigid for wheelchair events.

3.2.3.8.1 In World, Olympic and Paralympic title competitions the flooring shall be of wood or of a brand and type of rollable synthetic material authorised by the ITTF.

3.2.3.9 Technical equipment on the net assembly shall be considered part of it.

### **3.2.4 Racket Control**

3.2.4.1 It is the responsibility of each player to ensure that racket coverings are attached to their racket blade with adhesives that do not contain harmful volatile solvents.

3.2.4.2 A racket control centre shall be established at all ITTF World Title, Olympic and Paralympic competitions as well as at a select number of ITTF World Tour and Junior Circuit competitions and may be established at Continental and Regional competitions.

3.2.4.2.1 The racket control centre shall test rackets, according to the policy and procedure established by the Executive Committee on recommendation of the Equipment Committee and Umpires and Referees Committee, to ensure that rackets abide by all ITTF regulations including, but not limited to, racket covering thickness, flatness and presence of harmful volatile substances.

3.2.4.2.2 The racket control test shall be carried out after the match at random only where the player does not submit the racket for a before match test.

### **3.2.5 Advertisements and Markings**

3.2.5.1 Inside the playing area, advertisements shall be displayed only on equipment or fittings listed in 3.2.3.2 and there shall be no special additional displays.

3.2.5.1.1 Advertisements or markings in or next to the playing area shall not be for tobacco goods, alcoholic drinks, harmful drugs or illegal products and they shall be without negative discrimination or connotation on the grounds of race, xenophobia, gender, religion, disabilities or other forms of discrimination.

3.2.5.2 At Olympic and Paralympic Games advertisements on playing equipment, on playing clothing and on umpires clothing shall be according to IOC and IPC regulations respectively.

3.2.5.3 With the exception of LED (light-emitting diode) and similar devices advertisements on the surrounds of the sides of the playing area, fluorescent, luminescent or glossy colours shall not be used anywhere in the playing area and the background colour of the surrounds shall remain dark.

3.2.5.3.1 Advertisements on surrounds shall not change during a match from dark to light and vice versa.

3.2.5.3.2 LEDs and similar devices on surrounds shall not be so bright as to disturb players during the match and shall not change when the ball is in play.

3.2.5.3.3 Advertisements on LED and similar devices shall not be used without prior approval from ITTF.

3.2.5.4 Lettering or symbols on the inside of surrounds shall be clearly different from the colour of the ball in use, not more than two colours and shall be contained within a height of 40cm.

3.2.5.5 There may be up to 4 advertisements on the floor of the playing area, 1 at each end, each contained within an area of 5m<sup>2</sup>, and 1 at each side of the table, each contained within an area of 2.5m<sup>2</sup>; they shall not be less than 1m from the surrounds and those at the ends shall not be more than 2m from the surrounds.

3.2.5.6 There may be 1 permanent advertisement of the manufacturers or suppliers name or logo and 1 temporary advertisement on each half of each side of the tabletop and 1 on each end, and each contained within a total length of 60cm. The temporary advertisements shall be clearly separated from any permanent advertisements; they shall not be for other table tennis equipment suppliers and there shall be no advertisement, logo, name of table or name of the manufacturer or supplier of the table on the undercarriage, except if the table manufacturer or supplier is the title sponsor of the tournament.

3.2.5.7 There may be 2 advertisements on nets on each side of the table which shall be clearly different from the colour of the ball in use, shall not be within 3cm of the tape along the top edge; advertisements placed on parts of the net within the vertical extensions of the side lines of the table shall not obscure visibility through the mesh.

3.2.5.8 Advertisements on umpires' tables or other furniture inside the playing area shall be contained within a total area on any face of 750cm<sup>2</sup>.

3.2.5.9 Advertisements on playing clothing shall be limited to

3.2.5.9.1 the maker's normal trademark, symbol or name contained within a total area of 24cm<sup>2</sup>;

3.2.5.9.2 not more than 6 clearly separated advertisements, contained within a combined total area of 600cm<sup>2</sup>, on the front, side or shoulder of a shirt, with not more than 4 advertisements on the front;

3.2.5.9.3 not more than 2 advertisements, contained within a total area of 400cm<sup>2</sup>, on the back of a shirt;

3.2.5.9.4 not more than 2 advertisements, contained within a combined total area of 120cm<sup>2</sup>, only on the front and the sides of shorts or skirt.

3.2.5.10 Advertisements on players' numbers shall be contained within a total area of 100cm<sup>2</sup>.

3.2.5.11 Advertisements on umpires' clothing shall be contained within a total area of 40cm<sup>2</sup>.

3.2.5.12 There shall be no advertisements on players' clothing or numbers for tobacco goods, alcoholic drinks or harmful drugs.

3.2.6 Doping Control

3.2.6.1 All players participating in international competitions, including Junior competitions, shall be subject to in-competition testing by the ITTF, the players National Association and any other Anti-Doping Organisation responsible for testing at a competition in which they participate.

### **3.3 MATCH OFFICIALS**

#### **3.3.1 Referee**

3.3.1.1 For each competition as a whole a referee shall be appointed and his or her identity and location shall be made known to the participants and, where appropriate, to the team captains.

3.3.1.2 The referee shall be responsible for

3.3.1.2.1 the conduct of the draw;

3.3.1.2.2 the scheduling of the matches by time and table;

3.3.1.2.3 the appointment of match officials;

3.3.1.2.4 conducting a pre-tournament briefing for match officials;

3.3.1.2.5 checking the eligibility of players;

3.3.1.2.6 deciding whether play may be suspended in an emergency;

3.3.1.2.7 deciding whether players may leave the playing area during a match;

3.3.1.2.8 deciding whether statutory practice periods may be extended;

3.3.1.2.9 deciding whether players may wear track suits during a match;

3.3.1.2.10 deciding any question of interpretation of Laws or Regulations, including the acceptability of clothing, playing equipment and playing conditions;

3.3.1.2.11 deciding whether, and where, players may practise during an emergency suspension of play;

3.3.1.2.12 taking disciplinary action for misbehaviour or other breaches of regulations.

3.3.1.3 Where, with the agreement of the competition management committee, any of the duties of the referee are delegated to other persons, the specific responsibilities and locations of each of these persons shall be made known to the participants and, where appropriate, to the team captains.

3.3.1.4 The referee, or a responsible deputy appointed to exercise authority in his or her absence, shall be present at all times during play.

3.3.1.5 Where the referee is satisfied that it is necessary to do so he or she may replace a match official with another at any time, but he or she may not alter a decision already made by the replaced official on a question of fact within his or her jurisdiction.

3.3.1.6 Players shall be under the jurisdiction of the referee from the time at which they arrive at the playing venue until they leave it.

### **3.3.2 Umpire, Assistant Umpire and Stroke Counter**

3.3.2.1 An umpire and an assistant umpire shall be appointed for each match.

3.3.2.2 The umpire shall sit or stand in line with the net and the assistant umpire shall sit directly facing him or her, at the other side of the table.

3.3.2.3 The umpire shall be responsible for:

3.3.2.3.1 checking the acceptability of equipment and playing conditions and reporting any deficiency to the referee;

3.3.2.3.2 taking a ball at random as provided in 3.4.2.1.1-2;

3.3.2.3.3 conducting the draw for the choice of serving, receiving and ends;

3.3.2.3.4 deciding whether the requirements of the service law may be relaxed for a player with physical disability;

3.3.2.3.5 controlling the order of serving, receiving and ends and correcting any errors therein;

3.3.2.3.6 deciding each rally as a point or a let;

3.3.2.3.7 calling the score, in accordance with specified procedure;

3.3.2.3.8 introducing the expedite system at the appropriate time;

3.3.2.3.9 maintaining the continuity of play;

3.3.2.3.10 taking action for breaches of the advice or behaviour regulations;

3.3.2.3.11 drawing by lot which player, pair or team shall change their shirt, should opposing players or teams have a similar shirt and cannot agree which of them will change.

3.3.2.3.12 ensuring that only authorised persons are at the playing area.

3.3.2.4 The assistant umpire shall:

3.3.2.4.1 decide whether or not the ball in play touches the edge of the playing surface at the side of the table nearest him or her;

3.3.2.4.2 inform the umpire for breaches of the advice or behaviour regulations.

3.3.2.5 Either the umpire or the assistant umpire may:

3.3.2.5.1 decide that a player's service action is illegal;

3.3.2.5.2 decide that, in an otherwise correct service, the ball touches the net assembly;

3.3.2.5.3 decide that a player obstructs the ball;

3.3.2.5.4 decide that the conditions of play are disturbed in a way that may affect the outcome of the rally;

3.3.2.5.5 time the duration of the practice period, of play and of intervals.

3.3.2.6 Either the assistant umpire or a separate official may act as stroke counter, to count the strokes of the receiving player or pair when the expedite system is in operation.

3.3.2.7 A decision made by the assistant umpire in accordance with the provisions of 3.3.2.5 may not be overruled by the umpire.

3.3.2.8 Players shall be under the jurisdiction of the umpire from the time at which they arrive at the playing area until they leave it.

### **3.3.3 Appeals**

3.3.3.1 No agreement between players, in an individual event, or between team captains, in a team event, can alter a decision on a question of fact by the responsible match official, on a question of interpretation of Laws or Regulations by the responsible referee or on any other question of tournament or match conduct by the responsible management committee.

3.3.3.2 No appeal may be made to the referee against a decision on a question of fact by the responsible match official or to the management committee on a question of interpretation of Laws or Regulations by the referee.

3.3.3.3 An appeal may be made to the referee against a decision of a match official on a question of interpretation of Laws or Regulations, and the decision of the referee shall be final.

3.3.3.4 An appeal may be made to the competition management committee against a decision of the referee on a question of tournament or match conduct not covered by the Laws or Regulations, and the decision of the management committee shall be final.

3.3.3.5 In an individual event an appeal may be made only by a player participating in the match in which the question has arisen; in a team event an appeal may be made only by the captain of a team participating in the match in which the question has arisen.

3.3.3.6 A question of interpretation of Laws or Regulations arising from the decision of a referee, or a question of tournament or match conduct arising from the decision of a competition management committee, may be submitted by the player or team captain eligible to make an appeal, through his or her parent Association, for consideration by the ITTF Rules Committee.

3.3.3.7 The Rules Committee shall give a ruling as a guide for future decisions, and this ruling may also be made the subject of a protest by an Association to the Board of Directors or a General Meeting, but it shall not affect the finality of any decision already made by the responsible referee or management committee.

### **3.4 MATCH CONDUCT**

#### **3.4.1 Score Indication**

3.4.1.1 The umpire shall call the score as soon as the ball is out of play at the completion of a rally, or as soon as is practicable thereafter.

3.4.1.1.1 In calling the score during a game the umpire shall call first the number of points scored by the player or pair due to serve in the next rally of the game and then the number of points scored by the opposing player or pair.

3.4.1.1.2 At the beginning of a game and when a change of server is due, the umpire shall point to the next server, and may also follow the score call with the next server's name.

3.4.1.1.3 At the end of a game the umpire shall call the number of points scored by the winning player or pair followed by the number of points scored by the losing player or pair and may then name the winning player or pair.

3.4.1.2 In addition to calling the score the umpire may use hand signals to indicate his or her decisions.

- 3.4.1.2.1 When a point has been scored, he or she may raise his or her arm nearer to the player or pair who won the point so that the upper arm is horizontal and the forearm is vertical with the closed hand upward.
- 3.4.1.2.2 When for any reason the rally is a let, he or she may raise his or her hand above his or her head to show that the rally has ended.
- 3.4.1.3 The score and, under the expedite system, the number of strokes shall be called in English or in any other language acceptable to both players or pairs and to the umpire.
- 3.4.1.4 The score shall be displayed on mechanical or electronic indicators so that it is clearly visible to the players and the spectators.
- 3.4.1.5 When a player is formally warned for bad behaviour, a yellow marker shall be placed on or near the score indicator.

### **3.4.2 Equipment**

- 3.4.2.1 Players shall not choose balls in the playing area.
- 3.4.2.1.1 Wherever possible players shall be given the opportunity to choose one or more balls before coming to the playing area and the match shall be played with the ball chosen by the players.
- 3.4.2.1.2 If a ball has not been chosen before players come to the playing area, or the players cannot agree on the ball to be used, the match shall be played with a ball taken at random by the umpire from a box of those specified for the competition.
- 3.4.2.1.3 If a ball is damaged during a match, it shall be replaced by another of those chosen before the match or, if such a ball is not available, by one taken at random by the umpire from a box of those specified for the competition.
- 3.4.2.2 The racket covering shall be used as it has been authorised by the ITTF without any physical, chemical or other treatment, changing or modifying playing properties, friction, outlook, colour, structure, surface, etc.; in particular, no additives shall be used.
- 3.4.2.3 A racket shall successfully pass all parameters of the racket control tests.
- 3.4.2.4 A racket shall not be replaced during an individual match unless it is accidentally damaged so badly that it cannot be used; if this happens the damaged racket shall be replaced immediately by another which the player has brought with him or her to the playing area or one which is handed to him or her in the playing area.
- 3.4.2.5 Unless otherwise authorised by the umpire, players shall leave their rackets on the table during intervals; but if the racket is strapped to the hand, the umpire shall allow the player to retain his or her racket strapped to the hand during intervals.

### **3.4.3 Practice**

- 3.4.3.1 Players are entitled to practise on the match table for up to 2 minutes immediately before the start of a match but not during normal intervals; the specified practice period may be extended only with the permission of the referee.
- 3.4.3.2 During an emergency suspension of play the referee may allow players to practise on any table, including the match table.
- 3.4.3.3 Players shall be given reasonable opportunity to check and to familiarize themselves with any equipment which they are to use, but this shall not automatically entitle them to more than a few practice rallies before resuming play after the replacement of a damaged ball or racket.

### **3.4.4 Intervals**

3.4.4.1 Play shall be continuous throughout an individual match except that any player is entitled to:

3.4.4.1.1 an interval of up to 1 minute between successive games of an individual match;

3.4.4.1.2 brief intervals for towelling after every 6 points from the start of each game and at the change of ends in the last possible game of an individual match.

3.4.4.2 A player or pair may claim one time-out period of up to 1 minute during an individual match.

3.4.4.2.1 In an individual event the request for a time-out may be made by the player or pair or by the designated adviser; in a team event it may be made by the player or pair or by the team captain.

3.4.4.2.2 If a player or pair and an adviser or captain disagree whether a time-out is to be taken, the final decision shall be made by the player or pair in an individual event and by the captain in a team event.

3.4.4.2.3 The request for a time-out, which can be made only between rallies in a game, shall be indicated by making a "T" sign with the hands.

3.4.4.2.4 On receiving a valid request for a time-out the umpire shall suspend play and shall hold up a white card with the hand on the side of the player or pair who requested it; the white card or another appropriate marker shall be placed on the court of that player or pair.

3.4.4.2.5 The white card or marker shall be removed and play resumed as soon as the player or pair making the request is ready to continue or at the end of 1 minute, whichever is the sooner.

3.4.4.2.6 If a valid request for a time-out is made simultaneously by or on behalf of both players or pairs, play will resume when both players or pairs are ready or at the end of 1 minute, whichever is the sooner, and neither player or pair shall be entitled to another time-out during that individual match.

3.4.4.3 There shall be no intervals between successive individual matches of a team match except that a player who is required to play in successive matches may claim an interval of up to 5 minutes between those matches.

3.4.4.4 The referee may allow a suspension of play, of the shortest practical duration, and in no circumstances more than 10 minutes, if a player is temporarily incapacitated by an accident, provided that in the opinion of the referee the suspension is not likely to be unduly disadvantageous to the opposing player or pair.

3.4.4.5 A suspension shall not be allowed for a disability which was present or was reasonably to be expected at the beginning of the match, or where it is due to the normal stress of play; disability such as cramp or exhaustion, caused by the player's current state of fitness or by the manner in which play has proceeded, does not justify such an emergency suspension, which may be allowed only for incapacity resulting from an accident, such as injury caused by a fall.

3.4.4.6 If anyone in the playing area is bleeding, play shall be suspended immediately and shall not resume until that person has received medical treatment and all traces of blood have been removed from the playing area.

3.4.4.7 Players shall remain in or near the playing area throughout an individual match, except with the permission of the referee; during

intervals between games and time-outs they shall remain within 3 metres of the playing area, under the supervision of the umpire.

### **3.5 DISCIPLINE**

#### **3.5.1 Advice**

3.5.1.1 In a team event, players may receive advice from anyone authorised to be at the playing area.

3.5.1.2 In an individual event, a player or pair may receive advice only from one person, designated beforehand to the umpire, except that where the players of a doubles pair are from different Associations each may designate an adviser, but with regard to 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 these two advisors shall be treated as a unit; if an unauthorised person gives advice the umpire shall hold up a red card and send him or her away from the playing area.

3.5.1.3 Players may receive advice at any time except during rallies provided play is not thereby delayed (3.4.4.1); if any authorised person gives advice illegally the umpire shall hold up a yellow card to warn him or her that any further such offence will result in his or her dismissal from the playing area.

3.5.1.4 After a warning has been given, if in the same team match or the same match of an individual event anyone again gives advice illegally, the umpire shall hold up a red card and send him or her away from the playing area, whether or not he or she was the person warned.

3.5.1.5 In a team match the dismissed adviser shall not be allowed to return, except when required to play, and he or she shall not be replaced by another adviser until the team match has ended; in an individual event he or she shall not be allowed to return until the individual match has ended.

3.5.1.6 If the dismissed adviser refuses to leave, or returns before the end of the match, the umpire shall suspend play and report to the referee.

3.5.1.7 These regulations shall apply only to advice on play and shall not prevent a player or captain, as appropriate, from making a legitimate appeal nor hinder a consultation with an interpreter or Association representative on the explanation of a juridical decision.

#### **3.5.2 Misbehaviour**

3.5.2.1 Players and coaches or other advisers shall refrain from behaviour that may unfairly affect an opponent, offend spectators or bring the sport into disrepute, such as abusive language, deliberately breaking the ball or hitting it out of the playing area, kicking the table or surrounds and disrespect of match officials.

3.5.2.2 If at any time a player, a coach or another adviser commits a serious offence the umpire shall suspend play and report immediately to the referee; for less serious offences the umpire may, on the first occasion, hold up a yellow card and warn the offender that any further offence is liable to incur penalties.

3.5.2.3 Except as provided in 3.5.2.2 and 3.5.2.5, if a player who has been warned commits a second offence in the same individual match or team match, the umpire shall award 1 point to the offender's opponent and for a further offence he or she shall award 2 points, each time holding up a yellow and a red card together.

3.5.2.4 If a player against whom 3 penalty points have been awarded in the same individual match or team match continues to misbehave, the umpire shall suspend play and report immediately to the referee.

3.5.2.5 If a player changes his or her racket during an individual match when it has not been damaged, the umpire shall suspend play and report to the referee.

3.5.2.6 A warning or penalty incurred by either player of a doubles pair shall apply to the pair, but not to the non-offending player in a subsequent individual match of the same team match; at the start of a doubles match the pair shall be regarded as having incurred the higher of any warnings or penalties incurred by either player in the same team match.

3.5.2.7 Except as provided in 3.5.2.2, if a coach or another adviser who has been warned commits a further offence in the same individual match or team match, the umpire shall hold up a red card and send him or her away from the playing area until the end of the team match or, in an individual event, of the individual match.

3.5.2.8 The referee shall have power to disqualify a player from a match, an event or a competition for seriously unfair or offensive behaviour, whether reported by the umpire or not; as he or she does so he or she shall hold up a red card; for less serious offenses which do not justify disqualification, the referee may decide to report such an offense to a Disciplinary Panel (3.5.2.13).

3.5.2.9 If a player is disqualified from 2 matches of a team or individual event he or she shall automatically be disqualified from that team event or individual competition.

3.5.2.10 The referee may disqualify for the remainder of a competition anyone who has twice been sent away from the playing area during that competition.

3.5.2.11 If a player is disqualified from an event or competition for any reason, he or she shall automatically forfeit any associated title, medal, prize money or ranking points.

3.5.2.12 Cases of very serious misbehaviour shall be reported to the offender's Association.

3.5.2.13 A Disciplinary Panel appointed by the Executive Committee, consisting of 4 members and a chair, shall decide on appropriate sanctions for offences reported by the referee of an event within 14 days of the end of the event. The Disciplinary Panel shall decide according to directives given by the Executive Committee.

3.5.2.14 An appeal against the Disciplinary Panel's decision may be made by the disciplined player, adviser or official within 15 days to the ITTF Executive Committee, whose decision on the matter shall be final.

### **3.5.3 Good Presentation**

3.5.3.1 Players, coaches and officials shall uphold the object of good presentation of the sport and safeguard its integrity by refraining from any attempt to influence the elements of a competition in a manner contrary to sporting ethics:

3.5.3.1.1 Players have to do their utmost to win a match and shall not withdraw except for reasons of illness or injury.

3.5.3.1.2 Players, coaches and officials shall not participate in any form of or support betting or gambling related to their own matches and competitions.

3.5.3.2 Any player who deliberately fails to comply with these principles shall be disciplined by total or partial loss of prize money in prize events and/or by suspension from ITTF events.

3.5.3.3 In the event of complicity proven against any adviser or official the relevant national Association is also expected to discipline this person.

**USATT additions** - applicable to all US competitions except those sanctioned by ITTF

#### **4. Playing without an umpire**

4.1 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:

4.2 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 s/he was disturbed. S/he took his/her chance and doesn't get another one.

4.3 It is both the obligation and prerogative of a player to call all balls to his/her side, to help the opponent make calls when the opponent requests it, and to call against him/herself any ball that s/he clearly sees out on the opponents side of the table such as a doubles serve that touches the wrong side of the receivers table.

4.4 Players in a non-umpired match should attempt to resolve problems by applying the above rules and good sportsmanship.

4.5 Any player in a match has the right to request that the Referee appoint an umpire for that match.

4.6 For an unresolved dispute, the player should call for an umpire immediately. Do not continue playing, and complain about it later. That will not change the result of the game or the match.

*Spelling in this document is the English spelling in the ITTF Laws and Regulations.*

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