

## **ITTF Equipment Committee Report to USATT**

Presented by Kagin Lee, Corresponding Member, November 12, 2014

### **New Balls**

The new non-celluloid balls continue to have a significant impact on the sport. We already have a wider variety of manufacturers than before; while there were three factories producing all of the world's celluloid tournament balls, there are now five factories producing non-celluloid tournament balls. Ball durability and quality is a major concern, and committee member Torsten Küneth (GER) continues to work on this. To ease the transition and help allow the manufacturers to set up their production, a relaxation of the tolerances has been instituted through the end of 2015. While we are seeing complications as a result of the new balls, I continue to believe that the sport will be in better shape in the end, as the quality will continue to improve.

It should be noted that in the US, four companies produce balls for almost all tournaments: Nittaku, Butterfly, Joola, and Double Fish. Nittaku and Butterfly each provide balls for about 1/3 of domestic tournaments, and while Nittaku has two different non-celluloid balls for sale, Butterfly does not have any.

There is an adjustment period necessary when switching from one ball to another. In an ideal training situation, a player should practice with the same ball that will be used in the targeted competition. Yet in the Chinese Super League, the regular season contests used a white celluloid ball, and then in the playoffs just one week later they used a different ball that was non-celluloid and half white, half orange. The top professionals should be most sensitive to these issues, but they were able to adjust in one week.

### **Racket Coverings**

I am responsible for the authorization of racket coverings (rubber). This department is a mix product licensing and compliance, and produces significant income for the ITTF. Almost all of the administrative work is handled in the ITTF Singapore office by Darren Leong and Vicky Eleftheriade, with equipment tests performed by three independent laboratories. In the past year, dozens of adjustments have been made to the specifications and the general authorization process, in coordination with the equipment suppliers. The primary intentions are to (1) define all requirements and minimize the role of human judgment; (2) remove ambiguity and reduce the potential for manipulation; (3) clarify the requirements to allow for easier compliance. This refinement will continue through the next few years. All of our proposals were accepted by the ITTF Board of Directors.

### **Racket Control**

The Japanese TTA has proposed that a simple bounce test be added to racket control. A small steel ball is dropped onto the racket's playing surface, and if the rebound exceeds a defined height, the racket fails the test due to having too much rebound. The initial intent was to detect rubber that had been

treated by the player with non-VOC boosters, but now the perspective is that the test defines and sets a performance ceiling, rather than testing for boosters.

The ITTF Executive Committee has directed the Equipment Committee to develop the bounce test for proposal and potential adoption in the future. This work is in progress.

I have been working with DHS to improve our dimensional measurement devices in racket control, and am working with other committee members to rewrite the instructions for racket control.

### **Other Topics**

There is still no technical leaflet for blades, and progress on making one is slow. There appears to be a wide variety of opinions on what a proper blade is or should be, and with no consensus it is difficult for me to write a proposal that will be agreed upon. Until this is done, there will continue to be many different interpretations of the current rules.

The ITTF Executive Committee has directed the Equipment Committee to implement a requirement that all approved and authorized equipment specify its country of manufacture. Balls are already required to specify country of origin, and discussions are in progress to expand this to other types of equipment.

Kagin Lee