

Dear Players,

Effective immediately, the USATT Board of Directors has voted to adopt the coaching rules used by the ITTF. **For all competitions, both domestic and international, coaches are permitted to give advice to players between points.**

This decision was not made lightly, and there are both good and bad aspects of this change. Please be aware that this rule has already been used in the German professional league for several years, in international competition for a few months, and in a few dozen tournaments within the US.

The Rules Committee had given this guidance for players at those few competitions which would use the new rule. Because it now applies to all tournaments, I strongly advise all players to read the guidance in order to understand the principles of this change.

### **Guidance for Conduct at Tournaments Which Permit Advice between Points**

To understand what is permitted and what is not, it is important to keep in mind that all other rules still apply, and in many cases those rules dictate when advice may be given.

The most important consideration is the requirement for continuous play. Play must be continuous between one point and the next. When a point ends, the coach is permitted to give advice, but the advice can only be given during the natural time between rallies; usually, the time it takes to pick up the ball. A player who stalls in order to receive advice should be penalized. A coach whose advice causes the match to be delayed should also be penalized.

The time between points can vary. Sometimes the ball goes to the back barriers; in that case there is a longer period between points, and advice is permitted during this time. Likewise if there is a towel break (every six points), advice may be given during the towel break, but a player should not extend the towel break in order to receive more advice. If the time between points is very short, there may be little to no time for advice.

Another overriding rule is the prohibition of behavior that may unfairly affect an opponent. It's okay if a coach says between points, "Go to the forehand". It's not okay if the coach says, "This guy's forehand is terrible, keep going there." Advice that is disparaging or unfairly affects an opponent is not permitted.

It is normal for tournaments to have dozens of tables in play at the same time. The next court may be only 10 feet away, and things that occur on your court can easily affect play on another court. If everyone starts yelling advice between every point on every court, it could be impossible to play table tennis in the gym. In the US, table tennis is an indoor sport that takes place without shouting, and officials can penalize players or coaches who go too far.

Therefore if you wish to give or receive advice between points, it may be best if you use hand signals and gestures. Signals are fast and won't disturb the environment of play.

Here are some simple examples of behavior that is not permitted. Not all situations are covered, but it should help give an idea of how things will work under the new rule:

- A player walking back to the coach between points
- A player taking a long time to pick up the ball in order to receive advice
- A player kicking the ball over to the barriers in order to delay the match and receive advice
- A player talking to the coach when the players are otherwise ready to begin the point
- A coach yelling advice while players are trying to begin the point
- A coach giving advice during a rally
- A coach yelling advice that could be considered offensive or could unfairly affect the opponent

Kagin Lee, Chair, USATT Rules Committee