

PLAYER MISBEHAVIOUR

ADVICE TO UMPIRES

The sanctions scheme for controlling misbehaviour by players has been modified and the new provisions came into force on 1st August 2012. The Player Sanction Scheme is designed to discourage players from misbehaviour but unfortunately in the heat of play misbehaviour can sometimes happen. Misbehaviour can take many forms and it is impractical to lay down precise rules and setting and applying acceptable standards of conduct is more a matter of judgment and common sense than of factual decision.

Try to avoid over-reaction to possibly unintentional instances of unseemly behaviour, for this could lead to resentment and animosity that will undermine your authority as the umpire. When you take action always try to do so in a way that does not make the situation worse, either by drawing undue attention to an incident that may not have been generally noticed or by appearing to victimise a player. An example of misbehaviour that could warrant a quiet word of reproof to a player could be gentle kicking of court surrounds or swearing where only you, as the umpire, are likely to hear it. Aggressive kicking of court surrounds or swearing at a volume at which spectators are likely to hear it are examples of misbehaviour where immediate use of the penalty system is likely to be considered appropriate.

When misbehaviour occurs, you as the umpire have to decide whether the offence is so serious that you suspend play and report immediately to the referee. Although this option is always available it should rarely be necessary on the first occasion of misbehaviour and in most circumstances the initial action should be to give the offender a warning. Example of serious misbehaviour could be threats of violence, racial abuse or deliberate damage to equipment.

In a match where you work in pairs the assistant umpire may be in a better position than the umpire to see the misbehaviour. If this occurs the assistant umpire should immediately draw this to the umpire's attention, interrupting play if necessary by calling "stop" and raising his or her hand. The umpire should then take any appropriate action.

Remember that the issuing of yellow cards should not always be your first course of action. If you issue a yellow card for a trivial offence you then have to issue a yellow and red card and award a point for any further trivial offence. If not justified, this is likely to have an adverse effect upon the player, the presentation of the match and undermine your own authority. Despite this, you should not ignore serious instances of misconduct.

It is important that you are consistent in your application of the regulations dealing with misconduct. Such consistency will increase the confidence that players, coaches and spectators have in your ability to umpire the match.

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FORMAL WARNING

A yellow card held in the hand with the arm vertical and straight (the same as the hand signal for a 'LET' call) is shown to the player or advisor who has committed the offence. The umpire should ensure that the person receiving the formal warning has seen the yellow card.

The yellow card should then be placed on the front of the scoring machine next to the score of the player who has been warned (red card is also displayed if a penalty point has been awarded). If an advisor has received the formal warning then the yellow card is not displayed on the scoring machine.

The umpire should clearly indicate on the front of the score-sheet to whom a formal warning has been issued and the reason for the issuing of the formal warning should be written on the reverse side of the match score-sheet. This will enable the referee to be aware of the issue of a formal warning so that an accurate record can be kept for the purposes of the Player Sanction Scheme.

AWARDING OF PENALTY POINTS

If a player who has been formally warned commits a further offence in the same match the umpire should award 1 penalty point to his or her opponent and for a third offence he or she should award 2 points, each time holding up a yellow and a red card together (in the same manner as for a yellow card) to show the action he or she has taken. If misbehaviour continues after the umpire has imposed these penalties he or she should suspend play immediately and report to the referee.

Penalty points may sometimes be awarded after a game has ended, or 2 penalty points might be awarded against a player when his or her opponent needs only 1 point to win the game. In these circumstances any "unused" points are transferred to the next game of that individual match, so that it starts at the score of 0-1 or 0-2 in favour of the offender's opponent, but if the match has ended they should be ignored. In this case the server is the one who should have been serving at that score according to the sequence established at the beginning of the match.

In a team match, warnings and penalties are carried over to subsequent individual matches. A doubles pair is regarded as having incurred the higher of any warnings or penalties incurred by either of the players; thus if one has been warned in a previous match and the other had incurred 1 penalty point, a first offence by either of them in the doubles match would incur 2 penalty points. A warning or penalty during a doubles match applies to the pair during that match, but only the offending player will carry it over to a subsequent individual match. The following example illustrates this point:

In a team match with 4 singles and 1 doubles matches, players A & B are paired to play the doubles match. In their first singles matches in this team match, A was warned and B incurred a penalty point. In the 2nd game of the doubles match A intentionally breaks the ball by stepping on it. The umpire awards 2 penalty points against A/B. In their next singles matches, each player carries forward 1 penalty point

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PLAYER SANCTION SCHEME

A player who is formally warned or penalised by an umpire for bad behaviour will incur 1 “penalty mark” on each occasion, and disqualification by a referee will incur 2 penalty marks. If a player incurs 5 penalty marks within a twelve month period his/her right to play Competitive Table Tennis (including local league), or to be selected to represent the ETTA, will be suspended for a period of one month.

If in the twelve months following a first suspension he/she incurs 3 penalty marks, a further suspension of one month will be imposed. If in the twelve months following a second suspension he/she incurs 3 penalty marks, a further suspension of one month will be imposed. If in the twelve months following a third suspension he/she incurs 3 penalty marks, a further suspension of three months will be imposed.

If a player who is under suspension takes part in Competitive Table Tennis an additional Suspension of six months will be imposed. A player’s record of penalty marks will be set to zero at the end of a suspension.

The Tournaments Committee will maintain a record of all penalty marks incurred in competitions under the jurisdiction of the ETTA or of Organisations in Good Standing, and in competitions in which a player is representing the ETTA. As soon as a player becomes liable to suspension the starting date and the expected end date of the suspension period will be notified to the player, the Organisers and Referees of events that are scheduled during that period, the player’s County Association and the Local League or Leagues for which he is registered.