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ITSF

RULE BOOK



Foreword from the President of the ITSF Rules Commission

The rules in every sport are established to ensure fair play among the competitors and to promote an environment of good sportsmanship. It is vitally important that all players who wish to participate in a particular sport are given the resources they need to learn the rules and to adhere to them. This comprehensive rulebook of table soccer is put forth to enable players anywhere in the world to compete on any table in the world according to one set of international rules. We hope that you find these rules to be both informative and useful as you seek to excel in the sport of table soccer.

Sincerely,



**Tom Yore, President
ITSF Rules Commission**



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INTRODUCTION

All Players and organizers must follow this rulebook.

- a- The rulebook is meant as a guide to assist the Officials. Its goal is above all to explain the rules of the game. And so, as much as the Officials goal is to show his authority for the good of the game, he must also be careful not to slow it down by a too strict arbitration.
- b- Reminder: Federation Officials represent the highest authority of the rulebook in a tournament. Their decisions must be respected and cannot be disputed. A Federation Official can be called upon to advise on interpretations of the rulebook. If no Federation Official is present at the tournament, the Tournament Director assumes the duties of a Federation Official.
- c- The rules of the game of table soccer are conceived as much to facilitate ruling by Officials as by the Players themselves.
- d- The objective is to limit subjective interpretations to an absolute minimum.
- e- The aim of the rules is also to bring the game to a level of mutual respect between the Players while seeming transparent to the spectators.
- f- We remind the reader that while the Official is indisputable he is also fallible and error of judgment can be a part of the game.

QUALIFIED AUTHORITIES

- a - This rulebook has been written and edited by the Rules Commission under the responsibility of the Sporting Commission. It is put to a vote and set up at the beginning of each season by the Executive Committee of the ITSF (International Table Soccer Federation). It can be examined and amended in a general assembly.
- b - In cases of inconsistencies or of difficult situations, immediate amendments can be proposed by the Rules Commission in course of the season. These amendments must then be put to a vote by the Executive Committee.
- c - The use of the rulebook is the responsibility of the Federation Officials, the Officials and the Players.
- d - The matches can be either arbitrated or auto-arbitrated. In an arbitrated match, the Official is the qualified authority. In a match without an Official, any Official by title that is present on the premises can be solicited. In the event of an unsolvable difficulty, the Judges and Officials Commission can be summoned. They are responsible to make the decision known to the Sporting Commission which in turn is responsible to make this decision widely known to the members.
- e - An Official, solicited in mid-game in order to solve a problem, may receive advices from other Officials who witnessed the incident. If more than one Official was present, he will receive advice from the highest graded Official (up to Federation Official). If no Official is present, the solicited Official will call for the continuation of the game, without granting any request for Fault or goal.
- f - Questions, requests for explanations, as well as requests for modifications of the rules, must be addressed to the person in charge of the Judges and Officials Commission. He in turn answers to the person in charge of the Sporting Commission.
- g - The penalties and sanctions involving the loss of a game or match is the responsibility of the Head Officials. In the event of a more serious sanction, a report must be transmitted by the Tournament Director to the Discipline Commission.
- h - These rules can be modified or adapted during a tournament in very exceptional circumstances with the consent of an ITSF Delegate and/or an ITSF Head Official. Any changes must be reported to the Sport Commission and the ITSF Executive Committee immediately for confirmation or the tournament can be disqualified from the ITSF ranking.

MATERIALS AND HARDWARE

TABLE

- a - The Official tables are voted by ITSF General Assembly. This choice of table can be modified according to the agreements between the ITSF and manufacturers and partners.
- b - The organizers must provide competitive equipment (sandpapered players, clean and straight bars).
- c - In no cases may the surface of the table be sandpapered, and doing so will be penalized by exclusion of the tournament and reimbursement of the surface.
- d - Players are free to lubricate the exterior of the bars. Not interior in case of telescopic bars.
- e - The organizers may make it compulsory to utilize specific brands of lubrication products and cleaning agents. These must then be made accessible to the Players. Under these circumstances, the use of another brand will result in exclusion of the Player from the tournament.
- f - Use of resin (as used in handball) or magnesium or anything similar on the table (surface, handle, balls) is strictly prohibited, and can be penalized by exclusion from the tournament.
- g - The organizers are free to prohibit any products considered to be dangerous for the equipment or for the Players.
- h - No changes may be made to affect the interior playing characteristics of the table or men with the exception of routine table maintenance.

BALLS

- a - The Official balls are voted by ITSF sport commission. An appendix to this rule will be provided after the final choice for the season has been made.
- b - In a tournament, games must be played with balls bought on the tournament site.
- c - All Players should be able to provide a tournament ball.

HANDLES

- a- Each Player may use the handles of his choice on tables where handles can be changed. They must be able to fit onto the bars without causing damage to the table or injury to the player.
- b- The Players movements must be unassisted and unobstructed. No mechanical systems will be authorized. The handles must be securely attached to the bar on which they are installed.
- c- The organizers may rule that specific handles are dangerous and therefore require that the Player not use them. Refusal by a Player to remove his handles will lead to exclusion from the tournament.
- d- In a multiple game match players must be able to change the handles within the time allotted between games, time outs or between points.

OTHER ACCESSORIES

- a- All other accessories (gloves, elastic bands, no-skid handle-sleeves...) are authorized unless they are perceived to endanger the Player or other participants.
- b- Under no circumstances may the surface or sides of the table be modified by the accessories.

1. Code of Ethics

Any action of an unsportsmanlike or unethical nature during tournament play, in the tournament room, or on the grounds of the host facility, will be considered a violation of the Code of Ethics. Mutual respect between all players, officials and/or spectators is a requirement. It shall be the aim of every player and official to represent table-soccer in the most positive and sportsmanlike manner possible.

- 1.1 The penalty for breaking the Code of Ethics may be forfeiture of a game or match, expulsion from the tournament, and/or a fine. Whether or not the Code of Ethics has been broken, and what is the appropriate penalty for the infraction will be determined by the ITSF Disciplinary Commission or if not present by the Head Official and Tournament Director.

2. The Match

Unless otherwise stated by the tournament director, a match shall consist of 3 out of 5 games. Each game shall consist of 5 points. The final game of the match shall be to 5 points but you must win by 2 up to a maximum of 8 points.

- 2.1 The number of games played is the responsibility of the Tournament Director and will be published in the tournament announcement.
- 2.2 The Tournament Director may reduce the amount of games and points played per match if time becomes a factor.
 - 2.2.1 This decision is final and refers to all matches played in this event.
- 2.3 In every official ITSF tournament the number of games played will be announced by the ITSF Sports Commission and will be published in the official ITSF tournament announcement.
- 2.4 The penalty for breaking the official number of games or points played may be forfeiture of a match or expulsion from the tournament to both teams involved.

3. To Start a Match

A coin flip shall precede the start of the match. The team that wins the flip has the choice of table side or first serve. The team that loses the flip has the remaining option.

- 3.1 Once a team has chosen either the table side or the first serve, they may not change their decision.
- 3.2 The match officially starts once the ball has been put into play. (BUT violations such as cursing, etc. may be called by the official assigned to judge the match as soon as he and both teams are present at the table.)

4. Serve and Ready Protocol

A serve is defined as putting the ball into play at the five-man rod at the beginning of a game, after a point is scored or if the ball is awarded to a player on the five-man rod following a rules infraction. The ready protocol will be used whenever putting the ball into play.

4.1 The serve.

The serve shall begin with the ball stopped at the middle player figure of the five-man rod. The player serving the ball must then follow the ready protocol.

- 4.1.1 If the ball is served from a position other than the middle player figure and the violation is discovered before the ball is scored play shall stop and the ball will be re-served by the same team. Once a point is scored, no appeal shall be made. The penalty for subsequent violations is loss of possession to the opponent for serve.

4.2 Ready Protocol

Before putting the ball into play the player in possession of the ball shall ask the opponent if he is "ready". The direct opponent has three seconds to respond "ready". The player in possession of the ball

now has three seconds to begin to put the ball into play. Waiting beyond these time limits will be considered a delay of game (See Rule 25). The player must move the ball from one player figure to another and then wait at least one second before advancing the ball. The player is not required to stop the ball. Time limits begin one second after the ball contacts the second player figure.

4.2.1 The penalty for beginning to put the ball into play before the opponent responds "ready" is a warning and the ball shall be put into play from its original position. The penalty for subsequent violations is loss of possession to the opponent for serve.

4.2.2 The penalty for advancing the ball without making it contact two player figures or failing to wait one second before advancing the ball is the opponent's choice to either continue play from the current position (including the goal) or to serve the ball.

5. Subsequent Serves

Following the first serve of a match, subsequent serves shall be made by the team last scored upon. The first serve in subsequent games of a multi-game match shall be made by the team that lost the preceding game.

5.1 If the ball is served by the wrong team, and the violation is discovered before the ball is scored, play shall be stopped and the ball shall be served by the proper team. Once the ball is scored, no protests shall be allowed, and play shall continue as if no infraction had been committed.

5.2 If a team is awarded possession because the opposing team is penalized for a rules infraction and the ball subsequently goes dead between the five-man rods it shall be served by the team who originally served that ball.

6. Ball in Play

Once a ball is put into play it shall remain in play until the ball is hit off the table, a dead ball is declared, time out is called, or a point is scored.

7. Ball Off the Table

If the ball leaves the playing area and strikes the scoring markers, light fixture, or any object that is not part of the table, the ball shall be declared off the table. If the ball hits the top of the side rails or cabinet ends and then immediately returns to the playing surface it will be considered in play.

7.1 The play area shall be defined as the area above the playing surface to the height of the sideboards of the cabinet. The top of the side rails and cabinet ends are only in play if the ball immediately returns to the playing surface.

7.2 A ball entering the serving hole (if present) and then returning to the playfield is still considered "in play."

7.3 If the power of a player's shot or pass causes the ball to go off the table it will be put back into play at the opponent's two-man rod.

7.4 A player may not perform any shot that causes the ball to lob or volley over the opponent's rods (Example: Aerial Shot). It is not considered a penalty if a shot, which leaves the current rod of possession, deflects off another rod and then goes airborne.

7.5 Penalty for violating rule 7.4 is loss of possession to opponent's five-man rod for serve.

8. Dead Ball

A ball shall be declared a dead ball when it has completely stopped its motion and is not within reach of any player figure.

8.1 If the ball is declared dead anywhere between the five-man rods, it shall be put back into play at the five-man rod by the team who originally served the ball. (See Rule 4).

- 8.2 If the ball is declared dead between the goal and five-man rods, it shall be put back into play at the two-man rod nearest the spot of the dead ball. Play shall resume using the "Ready" Protocol (See Rule 4).
- 8.3 In the goalie area, if the ball is spinning in place but out of reach of any player figure it is not considered a dead ball and time limits shall be suspended until the ball either moves within reach or goes dead.
- 8.4 A ball that is intentionally made dead shall be awarded to the opposing team for a serve. (Example: pushing the ball from the bottom until out of reach)

9. Time Out

Each team is allowed two time outs per game during which the players may leave the table. Such time outs shall not exceed 30 seconds. If the ball is in play, time out may be called only by the team in possession of the ball, and then only if the ball is completely stopped. If the ball is not in play, either team may call time out.

- 9.1 Either team may take the full 30 seconds, even if the team that called the time out does not wish to take the full allotment.
- 9.2 In any doubles event, either team may switch positions during a time out. (See Rule 14.1)
- 9.3 A time out called between games shall count towards the number of time-outs allowed in the following game.
- 9.4 A player who removes both hands from the handles and turns completely away from the table while the ball is in play shall be deemed to have requested a time out.
 - 9.4.1 A player can take his hands from the handles to wipe them off before a shot, as long as this takes no more than two or three seconds. All time limits continue to run while the player wipes his hands. The team on defense should not relax if the opponent takes his hand(s) off the rod.
 - 9.4.2 Once the hand/wrist is replaced on the rod, a shot or pass may not be attempted until one full second has elapsed.
- 9.5 Only the player or team in possession of the ball may call a time out while the ball is in play. The time out starts the moment the time out is called.
 - 9.5.1 If the team with the ball attempts a shot or pass immediately after requesting a time out, the play shall not count, and the team shall be charged with a distraction (See Rule 20) rather than a time out.
- 9.6 If the team in possession of the ball calls a time out while the ball is in play and moving, that team shall lose possession to the opposing five-man rod for serve. If the team not in possession of the ball calls a time out when the ball is in play, that team shall be charged with a distraction (See Rule 20).
 - 9.6.1 If the ball is in play and moving when the time out is called and then falls into the same team's goal, the point shall count for the opposing team.
- 9.7 If a team is not ready to play at the end of the 30 second period, that team shall be charged with delay of game (See Rule 25).
- 9.8 A team requesting more than two time outs per game shall be issued a warning and the request will be denied. If the team is in possession of the ball and the ball is in play they shall lose possession to the opposing five-man rod for serve. Subsequent requests will result in a technical foul.

9.8.1 A team that is charged with more than two time outs in a game due to delay of game, requesting a second official during play, losing an appeal, or any other reason will result in a technical foul.

9.9 Once a player begins to put the ball back into play following a time out (by moving the ball), another time out may not be called until the ball has left the current rod of possession. Both goalie rods are considered as one rod.

9.9.1 The Penalty for violation of rule 9.9 is loss of possession to the opposing goalie. The team shall not be charged with a time out.

9.10 During a time out a player may reach into the play area to lubricate the rods, wipe the playfield, etc. The ball may be picked up by hand as long as permission is granted by the opponent and is returned to its original position before resuming play. A request to move or pick the ball up can be declined by the opposing team or by the official if present at the table (e.g. when the ball is near the edge of the goal).

9.10.1 If a player picks the ball up after the request has been declined the ball will be awarded to the opponent's five-man rod for serve. If the ball is on the edge of the same team's goal, a point will be scored for the opponent.

10. Resuming Play After a Time Out

Following a time out, the ball shall be put back into play at the rod of possession where the time out was called.

10.1 If the ball was in play when the time out was called, the player in possession must have the assurance that the opposing team is ready before moving the ball. The player must move the ball from one player figure to another and then wait at least one second before advancing the ball (See Rule 4).

10.1.1 As soon as the player in possession puts his hands back on the handles, if the ball leaves the current rod before the procedure of putting the ball back into play has begun, the opponent has the choice to continue play from the current position or to serve the ball.

10.2 If the ball was not in play when the time out was called, the ball shall be put back into play by the team legally entitled to do so according to the rules.

10.2.1 If the time-out was called between balls (after a goal is scored but before the next ball is served) the ball shall be served on the 5-rod by the team which was last scored upon.

10.3 The penalty for illegally putting the ball back into play is the opponent's choice to continue play from the current position or serve the ball.

11. Official Time Out

An official time out does not count towards the two time outs allowed per team per game. After an official time out, the ball is put back into play as though a regular time out were called.

11.1 If an official is not present at the start of the match, and a dispute arises during play, either team may request an official. Such a request can be made at any point during the match that the ball is stopped or dead.

11.1.1 The first request for an official is considered an official time out.

11.1.2 If the defensive team makes a request for an official while the ball is in play and stopped, and the offensive team simultaneously attempts a pass or shot, the request for a time out will be treated as a distraction by the defensive team. Likewise, a request for an official while the ball is in motion will also be considered a distraction.

11.2 Once play has resumed with an official at the table, any player requesting a second official will automatically be charged with a time out. Such a request may only be made during a dead

ball or when the ball is not in play. The penalty for requesting another official while the ball is in play is a technical foul.

11.2.1 If play has resumed with two officials at the table any request to replace an official will be decided by the head official or tournament director. If the request is denied, the player shall be charged with a technical foul.

11.2.2 Deleted

11.3 A team may not switch positions during an official time out, unless they are otherwise entitled to do so (see 14).

11.4 Table Maintenance - Any necessary table maintenance, such as changing balls, tightening the men, etc., must be requested before the start of the match. The only time that a player may call a table maintenance time out during a match would be in the case of a sudden alteration to the table, such as a broken man, broken screw, crumbling bumper, bent rod, etc.

11.4.1 If a player figure is broken while in contact with the ball, an official time out will be declared while the rod is fixed. Play will resume on the rod where the player figure broke.

11.4.2 If the table lighting fails, play shall immediately stop at that point (as though an official time out were called).

11.4.3 Routine maintenance, such as spraying the rods, etc., should only be done during time outs and between games.

11.5 Foreign objects on field of play - if an object should fall on the playfield, play shall immediately stop at that point and the object shall be removed. Play shall resume from the rod where the ball was when the object hit the playfield. There should be nothing on the ends of the table that could fall onto the playfield. If the ball is in motion it will be put back into play by the player who had last possession.

11.5.1 If the ball comes into contact with a foreign object on the playfield that was overlooked play shall stop and the object shall be removed. Play shall continue at the rod of possession when play was stopped.

11.6 Medical time out - a player or team may request a medical time out. This request must be approved by the Tournament Director, the Head Official, or the referee of the match if the medical necessity is evident. They will determine the length of the medical time out, up to a maximum of 60 minutes. A player who is physically unable to continue playing after that time must forfeit the match.

11.6.1 If the request for a medical time out is denied, the player will be charged with a time out. The player may also be penalized for delay of game (see 25), at the discretion of the official.

12. Point Scored

A ball entering the goal shall count as a point, as long as it was legally scored. A ball which enters the goal but returns to the playing surface and/or leaves the table still counts as a goal.

12.1 If a point is not counted on the scoring markers and both teams agree that it was previously scored and inadvertently not marked up, the point shall count. If both teams do not agree that a point was scored and not marked up that point shall not be counted. Once the next game (or match) has begun no appeal can be made and the point shall not count.

12.2 If there is a controversy over whether or not the ball entered the goal, an official should be called to make a ruling. The official may make a ruling based on information received by the players and/or spectators. If the information gathered is inconclusive the point shall not count.

12.3 Any team intentionally marking up a point not scored shall not get credit for the point illegally marked up and shall be charged with a technical foul. Further violations of this rule will be grounds for forfeiture of game or match (to be determined by the Head Official).

13. Table Sides

At the end of each game, teams may switch sides of the table before play of the next game can begin. If both teams switch sides they will have to switch after each game. A maximum of 90 seconds is allowed between games.

13.1 Either team can request the full 90 seconds. If both teams acknowledge that they are ready to resume play before the full time is used, play shall continue and the remainder of the 90 seconds is then forfeited.

13.2 If a team, is not ready to play at the end of the 90 second period, that team shall be charged with delay of game. (See Rule 25)

14. Change of Positions

In any doubles event, players may only play the two rods normally designated for his position. Once the ball is put into play, the players must play the same position until a point is scored, a team requests a time out, or a technical foul is called.

14.1 Either team may switch positions during a time out, between points, between games, or before and/or after a technical foul shot.

14.2 Once a team has switched positions, they may not switch back until after the ball has been put back into play or another time out been called.

14.2.1 A team is considered to have switched positions once both players are in their respective places facing the table. If both teams wish to switch positions at the same time the team in possession of the ball must decide their position first

14.3 Illegally switching positions while the ball is in play will be judged a distraction and the players must return to their original positions.

14.3.1 In any doubles event any player placing their hand on any rod normally designated as one played by their partner while the ball is in play shall be judged as a distraction violations.

15. Spinning the Rods

Spinning of the rods is illegal. Spinning is defined as the rotation of any soccer figure more than 360 degrees before or more than 360° after striking the ball. In calculating the 360° you do not add the degrees spun prior to striking the ball to the degrees spun after striking the ball.

15.1 If a ball is advanced by an illegal spin the opposing team will have the option of continuing play from the current position or to serve the ball.

15.2 Spinning of a rod which does not advance and/or strike the ball does not constitute an illegal spin. If a player's spinning rod hits the ball backwards into his own goal, it will count as a goal for the opposing team. Spinning of a rod away from the ball (when there is no possession) is not considered an illegal spin, but may be ruled as a distraction.

15.3 If an ungrasped rod is spun by the force of a ball hitting a player figure on the rod, the spin will be considered legal (example: a two-man shot in singles hitting the three-man).

16. Jarring

Jarring, sliding, or lifting of the table while the ball is in play is illegal. Whether or not the table jarring is done intentionally is of no consequence. It is not necessary for a player to lose the ball for jarring to be called on his opponent. Jars are accumulated for the entire match.

16.1 The penalty for violation of this rule: First and second offense - the opposing team has the option of continuing play from the current position, continuing play from the point of infraction, or serving the ball. If an illegal jar causes the player to lose possession of the ball from a rod, play may be continued from that rod. Subsequent violations - Technical foul.

16.2 Touching or coming into contact with your opponent's rods in any way shall be penalized exactly like jarring, sliding, or lifting.

16.3 Jarring of the table after a point has been scored or when the ball is not in play may be judged unsportsmanlike behavior. Slamming the rod after a shot while the ball is still in play may be considered a jar.

17. Reset

If a player exerts sufficient force on the table to impair the opponent's ability to execute a shot or pass, but the opponent's possession of the ball has not been jeopardized, the official present will call "reset" and the time of possession shall be reset. The player with the ball has the option of setting the ball up again or ignoring the reset call and continuing play from the current position.

17.1 Any movement of the ball, no matter how slight, may be considered grounds for a reset (example: a ball rocking in place). A reset can be called even if the ball is pinned or moving.

17.2 A reset call is not considered a distraction, and the player with the ball may shoot immediately. The defensive team should not, therefore, relax or look at the official upon hearing the word "reset," but rather should stay on defense.

17.3 A reset violation behind the ball shall not be considered a reset violation. It shall be considered a jarring violation. (Example: if the opposing forward is judged to have reset his opponent when the opponent has the ball on the three-man rod.)

17.4 An intentional reset by the team in possession of the ball for the purposes of attempting to get a reset call from the official shall not be allowed. The team judged to be in violation of this rule shall lose possession and the ball shall be served by the opposing team (This is not counted as a reset).

17.5 After a team is called for their first reset in a game, a team causing two subsequent resets during the same point will be charged with a technical foul. Once the first reset call is made, upon the next violation the official present will call "reset warning" or just "warning". If there is another reset violation on the same ball following a reset warning a technical foul shall be called.

17.5.1 If a technical foul is called for excessive resets, the next reset call shall not result in a technical foul.

17.5.2 Resets are charged per team not per player and are also charged per game not per match.

17.6 If the defender intentionally jars the table, this will not be considered a reset, and jarring will be called immediately.

17.7 A reset call made while the ball is on the five-man rod will reset the amount of times the ball has struck the wall as well as the time limit.

18. Reaching Into the Playing Area

It is illegal for a player to reach into the play area while the ball is in play without first having permission from the opposing team or official whether he touches the ball or not. However, whenever the opposing team or official grants a player permission to reach into the playing area, it is legal for the player to do so.

18.1 A spinning ball is considered "in-play," even if it is not in reach of a player figure. It is illegal to reach into the playing area to stop a spinning ball, even if done for an opponent.

18.2 A ball which becomes airborne over the table is still in play until it has hit something not a part of the playing area. Do not catch a flying ball over the table.

18.3 A ball which has gone dead is considered out of play (See Rule 8). The ball may be freely touched once permission has been granted by the official, or if no official is present, by the opposing team.

18.4 A player may wipe shot marks off any part of the table while the ball is not in play. He does not need to ask permission of the opposing team.

18.5 The penalty for violating any part of this rule is as follows: If the player has possession of the ball, and the ball is stopped - loss of possession to the opposing team for serve. If the player is not in possession of the ball or the ball is moving – Technical foul. If a player reaches into the playing area to prevent the ball from entering the goal a point is scored for the opposing team and the ball shall be served as if it had gone into the goal.

18.6 If a technical foul is called for touching a flying ball over the table it will be replayed as follows: If the technical shot is scored it will be served by the opposing team. If the technical shot is not scored it will be served by the non-offending team.

19. Alterations to the Table

Playing area - no changes can be made that would affect the interior playing characteristics of the table by any player. This includes changes to the men, playing surface, bumpers, etc.

19.1 A player cannot wipe sweat, spit or any foreign substance on his hand before wiping ball marks off the table.

19.1.1 Wiping rosin or any other substance on the playfield is illegal.

19.1.2 Any player using a substance on their hands to improve their grip must make sure that this substance does not get on the table or ball. If this does occur and the substance is judged to affect the play of the ball (Example: a ball coated with rosin) that ball and any others in the table similarly affected shall be cleaned or replaced immediately. The player in violation shall be penalized for delay of game and any subsequent violations the player will be prohibited from using the substance for the remainder of the match.

19.2 If a player who uses a substance, such as rosin, to improve his grip leaves a deposit on the handles when switching sides he must clean the handles immediately.

19.2.1 If the time necessary to remove the substance exceeds 90 seconds, the player will be penalized for delay of game, and the player will be prohibited from using the substance again.

19.3 A player may not place anything on the rods, handles or exterior of the table that affects the movement of the rods (example: limiting the motion of the goalie rod).

19.4 A player may switch the handles on the exterior of the tables if it can be done within the time limits and without impeding the opponent's ability to change sides between games. Taking too much time will be grounds for delay of game (See Rule 25).

19.5 A request to change balls before the start of the match must be approved by the official present or the Tournament Director. The request will be granted only if the playing characteristics of the existing balls are significantly different from the standard.

19.5.1 New ball - a player may not ask for a new ball while the ball is in play. During a dead ball, however, a player may request a new ball from the rack inside the table. Such a request will generally be granted, unless the official present judges that such a request is made for the purpose of stalling play.

19.5.2 A player requesting a new ball while the ball is in play shall be charged with a time out, unless the official present judges the ball to be unplayable, in which case no time out will be charged.

19.6 Unless otherwise specified, penalty for violation of any part of this rule may be grounds for a technical foul.

20. Distraction

Any movement or sound made away from or behind the rod where the ball is in play may be judged as a distraction. No point made as a result of a distraction will count. If a player believes he is being distracted, it is his responsibility to call for an official.

20.1 Banging the five-man rod or any rod prior to, during, or after a shot is considered a distraction. Moving the five-rod slightly after the shot has started is not considered a distraction.

20.2 Talking between teammates while the ball is in play may be judged a distraction.

20.3 It is not considered a distraction, when passing, to move the catching rod as part of a fake. Excessive motion, however, is grounds for a distraction.

20.4 It is considered a distraction, after setting up a shot, to remove a hand from the handle and then immediately shoot the ball. The ball may only be shot after both hands (and/or wrist) have been on both handles for one full second.

20.4.1 In singles, rule 20.4 only applies to a set shot on the three-rod.

20.5 A player who removes his hands from the handles and reaches down or away from the table (to wipe his hands, apply rosin, etc) while the ball is in play shall be charged with a distraction.

20.6 Penalty for distraction. For the first distraction violation, the guilty team may be charged with a warning if the official present judges the distraction to be harmless. If a shot is scored as a result of a distraction by the offensive team, the point will not count and the opposing team will serve the ball. In all other cases, the opposing team has the option of continuing play from the current position; continue play from the point of infraction, or serve the ball. Subsequent violations may be grounds for a technical foul.

21. Practice

Practice shall be permitted on any table before the match begins and between games. Once a game has begun no practice shall be permitted.

21.1 Practice is defined as moving the ball from one player figure to another or shooting the ball.

21.1.1 Illegal Practice is a judgment call by the official present at the table. Inadvertent movement of the ball does not constitute Practice.

21.2 The Penalty for illegal practice is a loss of possession to the opposing team for serve. If the player does not have possession he will be issued a warning. Subsequent violations will be a technical foul.

22. Language and Behavior

Unsportsmanlike conduct or comments made directly or indirectly by a player are not allowed. Violations of this rule may be grounds for a technical foul.

22.1 Calling the attention of the opposing team away from the game is not allowed (see Rule 20). Any shouts or sounds made during a match, even if of an enthusiastic nature, may be grounds for a technical foul.

22.2 Cursing by a player shall not be allowed. The penalty for cursing is a technical foul. Continued cursing by a player may be cause for forfeiture of games and/or expulsion from the tournament site.

22.3 The use of a spotter in the audience shall not be allowed. Furthermore, a member of the audience is not allowed to influence a match by distracting a player or official. Violation of this rule may be grounds for expulsion of the person from the tournament site.

22.4 Coaching will be allowed, but only during time outs and between games.

23. Passing

23.1 A ball which is advanced from a pinned or stopped position on the five-man rod cannot be directly caught on the three-man rod of the same team regardless of whether or not the ball is touched by the opposing five-rod. The ball must touch at least two player figures prior to advancing to legally be caught on the three-man rod. A pinned ball is one that is pinned to the wall or playfield.

23.1.1 A ball whose motion has clearly stopped may be legally passed if this pass is immediate. If there is any hesitation before the pass, the pass shall be declared illegal. Once a ball has clearly stopped and is not passed immediately it must then touch at least two player figures before it can be legally passed.

23.1.2 A ball that is briefly stubbed or pinched to the playing surface and immediately released forward can be legally caught on the three-man rod as long as the ball touches two men prior to advancing. However, if the ball is stubbed or pinched to the playing surface, released, and then passed by the same player figure it is illegal.

23.1.3 It is not considered an illegal pass from the five-man rod if a stopped or pinned ball deflects off the same team's three-man rod provided it was not caught and there was no controlled advancement by the three-man rod.

23.1.4 If the ball touches the front or back of the man prior to the motion of a pass it must touch a second man before it can be legally caught on the three-rod (or five-man rod when passing from the goalie rods). However, if the ball hits the front or back of the man on the initial contact from another rod it can be legally passed with the same man.

23.2 A player cannot make the ball strike the side walls of the table (or the side strips if present) more than twice before passing or shooting from the five-man rod. Regardless of which wall the ball touches, a total of two times is all that is allowed prior to advancing the ball. If the ball goes to the wall a third time, it may not be struck again by any player figure on the passing rod.

23.2.1 Defensive trap - if an opponent's pass or shot is caught by trapping it against the side wall, that does not count as one of the two times allowed to touch the wall by the player who made the trap and is now in possession of the ball on his five-man rod.

23.2.2 Once the ball has touched the wall or side strip, it will not be counted as hitting the wall again until it has rolled off the side strip or is sufficiently maneuvered away from the wall if there is no side strip present and the ball has come to rest against the wall.

23.2.3 Following a time-out, any strike the ball makes against the wall prior to touching a second man will not be counted against the allowed two strikes.

23.3 Passing from the two-man (or three-man goalie rod) to the same team's five-man is ruled the same as 23.1 except that if the ball should strike an opposing team's player figures, the ball is no longer considered a pass but a live ball that may be legally caught by any player. The three wall violation is also not in effect.

23.4 It is legal to have just one hand on the rods when playing defense (example: right hand on defensive five-man). It is also legal to use two hands to move one rod (example: defensive five-man). Excessive switching of the hand between the handles may be judged a distraction.

23.5 Penalty for an illegal pass - if a team violates the above rule of passing; the opposing team has the option of continuing play from the current position to serve the ball.

24. Time of Possession

Possession is defined as the ball being within reach of a player figure. Possession of the ball shall be limited to 10 seconds on the five-man rod and 15 seconds on all other rods. Both goalie rods are considered one rod of possession.

24.1 Advancement defined: A ball is considered to have advanced once it is out of reach of the player figures on that rod whether it went forward or backwards. In the case of the goalie area, a ball is considered advanced once out of reach of the player figures on the two-rod and beyond the goal area.

24.2 A spinning ball that is within reach of a player figure shall be considered in that rod's possession and all time limits shall continue, however, if the spinning ball is not within reach, the time limits are not in effect. (See Rule 8.3)

24.3 Penalty - penalty for three-man delay is loss of possession to the opposing goalie. Penalty for delay at any other rod is loss of possession to the opposing forward for serve.

25. Delay of Game

Play shall be continuous, except during time outs. Continuous shall be defined as no more than 5 seconds duration between a ball scored and the beginning of the ready protocol. A delay of game penalty may only be called by an official.

25.1 After a team is charged with delay of game play shall resume in at most 10 seconds. At the end of 10 seconds another delay of game call should be made.

25.2 The first infraction of this rule is a warning. Subsequent infractions will result in the player being charged with a time out. Example: Player charged with delay of game. If still not ready to resume play after 10 seconds - time out charged. If after the time out still not ready, another 10 seconds - second time out charged

26. Recalls and Forfeiture

Once a match has been called, both teams should report immediately to the designated table. If a team has not reported to the table within three minutes, they should be recalled. A team, upon being recalled, must report immediately to the table in order to stop the forfeiture process.

26.1 A recall is made every three minutes. Penalty for third and subsequent recalls is forfeiture of each game until the match is over.

26.2 If a team has forfeited any games due to recalls, they get the choice of side or serve once play begins.

26.3 Enforcement of this rule is the responsibility of the Tournament Director.

27. Technical Fouls

If, in the judgment of an authorized tournament official, either team competing in a match is at any time in flagrant or intentional violation of these rules of play, a technical foul may be called on the offending team.

27.1 When a technical foul is called, play shall stop and the opponent will be awarded the ball on the three-man rod. Only the player shooting and the player blocking are allowed to stay at the table. One shot will be taken and then play shall stop. If a goal was scored, the ball is served by the team who was scored on. If no goal was scored, play shall resume from where the ball was prior to the technical shot or where specified by rules.

27.1.1 A player is considered to have taken a technical foul shot once the ball has left the three-man rod. A player is considered to have blocked the shot once the ball has either stopped in or left the defender's area.

27.2 On a technical foul shot, the ball must be legally put into play before shooting. Furthermore, all rules, including time limits and resets, still apply.

27.3 A team may switch positions before and/or after the technical foul shot without being charged with a time out.

27.4 Time outs may be called during a technical shot, as long as they would otherwise be legal

27.5 A point scored on an illegal technical shot shall not be counted. Play shall resume at the rod of possession where the technical foul was called or as specified by rule.

27.6 If a technical foul shot ends the game, the opposing team gets the first serve of the next game.

27.7 Further violations of a flagrant or intentional nature shall carry additional technical fouls. A third technical foul in any one game shall result in an automatic forfeiture of the game.

27.8 The official may announce at any time after the first technical foul that further violation by that team may be cause for forfeiture of the game or match.

28. Rules Decisions and Appeals

If a controversy involves a question of judgment and the official is present at the time the events in question transpired, his decision is final and no appeal may be made. If the controversy involved an interpretation of the rules, or the official was not present at the time the events in question transpired, the official shall make the most equitable decision possible under the circumstances. Decisions of this nature may be appealed, but it must be done immediately in the manner prescribed below.

28.1 In order to appeal a rules interpretation, a player must file that appeal with the official before the ball being played at the time of the controversy is put back into play. An appeal concerning the loss of a match must be filed before the team that won has begun its next match.

28.2 All rule appeals shall be considered by the Head Official and (if present) at least two members of the officiating staff. All decisions on appeals are final.

28.3 A team making an unsuccessful rules appeal of an obvious nature, or a team that questions a judgment call, will be charged with a time out. In addition, the team may also be penalized for delay of game, at the discretion of the official.

28.4 Arguing with an official during a match will not be allowed. Violation of this rule will be grounds for a delay of game penalty and/or a violation of the code of ethics.

29. Dress Code

Players who wish to compete in an ITSF sanctioned event must wear proper sporting attire and are expected to uphold the highest level of personal and professional appearance. Enforcement of the dress code is the responsibility of the Tournament Director, the Head Official and/or a member of an official ITSF Sporting Commission.

29.1 Acceptable sporting attire consists of warm-up jackets and pants, athletic shirts, sport tee shirts, polo shirts, athletic shorts, and athletic shoes. Sport caps, visors, sweatbands, and sport bandanas are also acceptable.

29.2 Prohibited attire includes clothing displaying profanity, tank tops, denim or jeans of any kind, as well as cargo pants, cargo shorts, form-fitting Spandex or Lycra pants and shorts. Flip-flops, sandals and non-athletic shoes are also prohibited.

29.3 Players are encouraged to have the name of their country clearly displayed on their shirt and jacket. This is mandatory for the top rated players who will also be required to wear patches on their sleeves indicating their World Ranking. It is recommended but not mandatory for the player's uniform to be in their national colors with their country's name, flag, and sponsors logos prominently displayed.

29.4 The penalty for violating the dress code may be forfeiture of a game or match.

If a player is in violation of the dress code during a match he must change into acceptable attire before play can continue and the team will be charged with delay of game (See Rule 25).

30. Tournament Director

The administration of tournament play shall be the responsibility of the Tournament Director. This includes making the draws, scheduling the events, timing matches, etc. The decision of the Tournament Director in such matters is final.

30.1 All matters pertaining to rules of play (appointing officials, handling appeals, etc.) shall be the responsibility of the Head Official. The Tournament Director is responsible for appointing the Head Official.

30.2 In every official ITSF tournament the Tournament Director is subordinate to the ITSF Sport Commission.