

PLAYERS' CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR

All table tennis players play for the enjoyment of the sport. They play to win and the vast majority do so with good spirit and good manners. A minority of players play to win at all costs. They are bad losers and bad sportsmen. We will never do away with this type of player but what we can do to try to control it and on the odd occasion when players' conduct oversteps the boundary we must have procedures in place to punish the bad behaviour.

Qualified umpires control matches at ITTF, ETTA and other authorised competitions. The umpires have full control of matches and can use yellow cards to caution players about their behaviour and red cards to award penalty points to opponents if the bad behaviour continues during the game. In extreme cases the Referee has the power to disqualify players from competitions.

In local leagues the same control is not in place. The Laws and Regulations about players' behaviour do not count in local leagues. The vast majority of players who umpire games do so willingly to support the match. They have the most basic knowledge of the Laws and Regulations but do not have the confidence or willingness to call a foul service or warn a player about his behaviour for fear of upsetting the players and creating a "bad atmosphere" during the match.

The ETTA, over the last few years, has noticed a growing trend amongst players, particularly young players, to be very noisy while playing the game and to be more aggressive during matches. The ETTA has asked umpires at tournaments to crack down on this type of behaviour.

Unfortunately this trend of noisy, aggressive behaviour is creeping into local league matches. Nearly every player will occasionally swear or shout at the result of a point. It is usually intended to oneself and quickly forgotten. However, there are examples of players continually shouting or swearing at the result of a point or displaying aggressive behaviour. This is seen by all the players in the match but in the vast majority of occasions nothing is said to the player and no further action is taken.

It is the responsibility of all players, particularly captains and coaches, to make sure those players in their teams or under their control behave in a manner that does not bring the game into disrepute. Nobody likes to see bad conduct during a game but if we do not challenge such behaviour we will end up with a group of players who behave like petulant, premiership footballers and spoil the game for all the other players.

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