

WSF Referees' Review



**WORLD SQUASH
FEDERATION**

Editor: Rod Symington

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Welcome to the *WSF Referees' Review Redux!* (For the accountants and dentists among you, "redux" means "brought back again" – i.e. reborn). After a call went out in the summer for contributions, I waited for them to pour in....and waited....and waited. Not even a dribble! I eventually came to realise how lonely previous editors of this Newsletter must have been....

Thus the first issue of the new regime has been a little delayed, while I scraped around for material from people I knew could be persuaded and would be reliable.

However, this is not the way to run a railroad: if we don't get contributions for future editions, the new *Referees' Review* will be short-lived. So it is up to you, Referees, to supply your Newsletter with scintillating material about your fascinating experiences as a Referee, or your profound thoughts about the challenging task of refereeing.

As an attempt to spark your interest, your protests, or even your anger, I have written an "Editorial" in the hope that it will provoke some sarcastic or even intelligent responses.

On a serious note: the *Referees' Review* provides us all with a forum (the only such forum we have) to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. We are dispersed all over the globe, and most of us meet in small groups from time to time at the Tournaments to which we are assigned. We never have an "Annual Meeting" of WSF Referees, at which we can conduct business and discuss the burning issues of the day in refereeing circles.

But here in this Newsletter all our voices can be heard – on any topic that might interest Referees on the international scene. So please, please, sit down at your keyboards and write down your thoughts. The world (of squash) is waiting with bated breath.... (I am that world.)

Compensating Professional Referees

*Bob Hanscom, Los Angeles Athletic Club Squash Professional**

Does "professional" still mean...one who is specially trained to do a job and receives 'just' compensation for doing so? If so...why is it that "professional" referees are not paid for doing a (difficult) job they've acquired those skills and knowledge for, in addition to being certified in providing that "professional" service?

In fact...in addition to not receiving compensation, many "professional" referees often need to pay their own way to tournaments, only to be criticised and verbally (and sometimes physically) abused for doing their job as a "professional", all while volunteering their services! That is truly a sad state of affairs.

The squash organisations and tournament organisers are evidently of the opinion that (for some unknown reason) these "professional" referees owe the game, tournaments, events, etc. their services and should be willing to "volunteer" their time, energy and expertise in assuring that an event runs smoothly regarding the officiating (and sometimes even organisation) of the event.

Would one invite a doctor, lawyer, investment advisor or some other “professional” to their home or office and expect to get “free” advice and/or service. Forget it! You can’t even call one of these “professionals” without expecting to be charged.

On one hand, when amateur or professional players are asked to sit and referee a match, in many cases, there is, at the very least...resistance. Why might this be so? Is it that those “players” feel inadequate regarding their knowledge and experience in refereeing a squash match? Probably (and rightfully) so! They are first and foremost players...and oftentimes they are not certified squash referees. It is no mystery why there are many disagreements between the players and those sitting in as referees during squash matches...either at the amateur and/or professional level.

So...realising this, “professional” referees are invited to events in order to provide a “professional” service obviously needed, which cannot be provided by anyone else...but for no or very little compensation! This doesn’t seem quite fair!

It’s about time, as in other sports like baseball, football, basketball, hockey, golf or soccer...compensation for “professional” squash officials should be considered when planning and/or budgeting events. Just perhaps...doing this may motivate a greater number of “qualified” individuals to become “professional” referees.

It has often been said, “the quality of a sport is dependent on the quality of its officiating”. Let’s bring the “quality” of squash to its rightful place by employing “professional” officials.

*Ed. Note: Bob Hanscom has been not only a long-time teaching professional in Los Angeles, but also a U.S. National Referee with considerable international experience (e.g. World Championships, Pan-American Games), and he is also a very successful promoter of professional squash tournaments.

From the Director

I am very pleased to be able to write a column in the *Referees’ Review*, now revived under the editorship of Rod Symington. Although this initial offering is somewhat abbreviated, we are hoping that it will inspire you all to put e-pen to e-paper and send your contributions to Rod for future issues. This is, after all, your newsletter, but we all need to contribute from time to time to ensure that the publication continues. I would think that we need a good cross section of news, tournament experiences, humorous anecdotes, technical articles; anything you think would be of interest to your WSF refereeing colleagues. Please send your contributions to Rod directly (symingto@uvic.ca) or to Lorraine Harding at the office in Hastings (lorraine@worldsquash.org).

As the year 2005 winds down, Lorraine has just completed the refereeing assignments for the final event in the calendar year, the inaugural Saudi Invitational in Al-Khobar. In all, there were 17 events that requested WSF Referees including several new events appearing on the calendar and using our services (Kuwait, Jamaica, and Saudi). A table showing all appointments for 2005 can be found later in the newsletter. This table shows which referees actually were appointed to the events, but does not show the restrictions placed on Lorraine before inviting anybody (must fly a certain airline, only European-based referees, this last one for a European event, etc.).

Early indications show some promise for 2006 as well. The Windy City Open, scheduled for late January in Chicago, has been growing steadily from its modest beginnings some years ago and, this year, will be a Super Series event with \$100,000 prize money. The Pace Canadian Classic, normally held in November in Toronto, will be held in early January 2006. This is a result of some renovations being done in BCE Place, the tournament’s usual home. The Commonwealth Games in March in Melbourne is yet another opportunity for many WSF Referees to participate in refereeing the top level players as well as get

some rare experience in doubles. The World Championships for 2006 are the Junior Men, to be held in North Palmerston, New Zealand, in July, and the Women's World Teams, scheduled for September in Edmonton in Western Canada. The two World Opens for 2006 are yet to be confirmed.

The IR Programme Review conducted by Anne Smith a couple of years ago has resulted in a series of working groups working out the details of how to implement the recommendations of Anne's report. Those recommendations, that were a matter of policy, have been implemented. A couple of the working groups have completed their work and their reports will be considered by ManCom in the near future.

Still others are major projects, particularly the CBTA (Competency Based Training & Assessment), which will be the cornerstone

of our programme in the future. I will be providing a progress report to the AGM in Salvador, Brazil in November.

The new DVD is now available. Thanks to Alan Mott for coming up with the winning title of "Calling The Shots". It focuses on the 4 most troublesome areas for referees, those being Blocking, Backswing Interference, Front Wall Access, and Effort. Its format lends itself to formal classroom instruction or to self paced instruction, and can also be used as a test for referees.

Welcome back to the *Referees' Review*. Please keep those cards and letters coming. As always, I welcome any comments, suggestions, and questions you may have about any aspect of the IR Programme, to my new e-mail address at mail@grahamwaters.com

Table of Referee Assignments 2005

2005

Referee Assigned

Tournament of Champions	Feb	Waters
Kuwait Open	Mar	Danzey, Lawrence, Parker and Gingell
PSA Masters	Apr	Waters, Massarella, Kramer and Allanach
Qatar Airways	Apr	Collins, Zahran and Jamshed Gul Khan
European Team Championships	Apr	Gingell and Parker
Canadian Nationals	May	Flynn
World Games	Jul	Gingell and Parker
World Junior Women's	Jul	Waters, Clayton, Lawrence and Cherington
Pakistan Open	Jul	Sinclair
Hungarian Open	Oct	Gingell and Allen
Jamaican Open	Oct	Waters
US Open	Nov	Faguy
Qatar Classic	Nov	Zahran, A Khan, Khanzada, Massarella & Lawrence
Men's & Women's World Opens	Dec	Fayyaz, Allen, Fahim, Bowlt, Sinclair and Singh
Men's Team Championship	Dec	Parker, Ayaz Khan, Khanzada, Danzey and Massarella
Saudi International	Dec	Collins, Gingell, Lawrence & Zahran

Editorial

(Note: The opinions expressed in this Editorial are the responsibility of the Editor and in no way reflect the official position of the World Squash Federation).

The efforts of the eleven Working Groups who are presently developing concrete proposals for various aspects of the International Referee Programme will, no doubt, result in great improvements to the IR Programme and to the quality of the referees who are certified under it. But there is another issue that was not (and could not be) a part of the IR Programme Review, but that greatly affects the quality of squash decision-making: the officiating system itself. (Note: this is a pet peeve of mine, and I am shamelessly exploiting this opportunity to open the issue up for debate).

Almost every major sport in the world has taken steps to eliminate officiating errors and to introduce procedures to improve the quality and accuracy of decisions. Three types of measures have been instituted: teams of officials, the use of video replays – or a combination of both.

Thus in soccer, the former touch judges whose original responsibility was simply to signal when the ball went over the touch-line, were upgraded some years ago to the status of “Assistant Referees” and now have the power to call fouls that the Referee doesn’t see (which is a major improvement). In other forms of football (e.g. American, Canadian – yes, folks, they are different!) there is either a team of officials that consults on questionable calls, or (as in American football) uses video replays to check the correctness of a call. In cricket, when I played it as a kid, there were just two umpires; now the video replay official helps the umpires on field with what are essentially marking calls (e.g. run-outs). Even in tennis, where all of the calls are essentially marking calls – and there are at least seven officials watching the lines – the introduction of video replays is imminent. Those are just a few examples from many that could be cited of where sports have made efforts to improve the quality of decisions and reduce the errors.

So why does squash – whose referee arguably has the most difficult task in all of sport – adamantly refuse to make serious efforts to improve the quality of decision-making? Is there any other sport in the world where so many subjective decisions are made by one, single referee (who is, more often than not, seated in the wrong place, far away from the action)? When did we ever have a full and frank debate about this issue?

It is true, some attempts have been made over the past 15 years to see if other systems might be beneficial – first, three referees, and then two referees were tried – but neither of those systems was given a fair test. They were fated to fail because the “experiments” were based on the false assumption that you could simply issue a set of Guidelines about the operation of the systems – and leave the rest to the referees. But all refereeing systems require training – and that was sadly lacking in the case of the experimental systems. (I could go on at length about this – and will, if you do not send in contributions...).

To speak frankly: One of the major obstacles to the improvement of the squash refereeing system is the fact that many squash referees love to be in the hot seat and don’t want the system to change. This attitude is not healthy for the sport. The growth of squash depends on many factors, but the lack of growth is strongly influenced by some identifiable major impediments. Among these are: three international organisations, three scoring systems, the refusal to place the officials in the best possible position – and the failure to recognise the progress that other sports have made in improving their officiating systems and doing likewise in the sport of squash.

The PSA has led the way in attempting to make the sport of squash more exciting and attractive – and I think their efforts have been largely successful. The next step is to open our minds and see what practical steps can be taken to improve the quality of officiating. (To be continued...)

R.S.

The Hedonism II Open

Graham Waters

It's September and the weather in eastern Canada is starting to cool off with temperatures at night dipping into single digits. Sure there are some lovely sunny days, but they are beginning to be outnumbered by the grey, drab ones, not to mention the rainy ones with a stiff nor-easter blowing!

Lo and behold, I get an e-mail from Lorraine at WSF headquarters in Hastings. Would I be available to attend a WISPA event in Jamaica the third week of October? A little research on the Internet revealed that the event was being held at the Hedonism II all-inclusive resort in Negril, a tourist area on the west coast of the Caribbean island. A visit to the Hedonism resort's website reveals that it is a "lush garden of pure pleasure"!

OK, so now I have to negotiate with the home guard. Would it be all right if I went to a women's squash tournament in Jamaica (sunny and 30 degrees+ every day) for a week in October, when the temperatures are hovering near 5-10 degrees at home, to an all-inclusive beach resort with a nude beach, a prude beach, activities such as body painting, a toga party, and the christening of the new water slide where participation "au naturel" is encouraged? Arrangements to have a week off work were a "walk in the park" compared to the discussions at home. Negotiations were tense but, with the right spin-doctoring, I was able to accept this hardship appointment, and I was soon on board an Air Jamaica jet bound for the Caribbean. I did have to take with me an extra suitcase to bring back untold riches of gold, jewellery, rum, and other Caribbean treasures.

There were three Canadian players on my flight, all entered in the qualifying of the Hedonism II Open. We were met at the airport in Montego Bay and whisked away into a waiting van for the hour drive to Negril and the "garden of pure pleasure". After settling in, we met Eddie DePass, the intrepid Tournament Director, for dinner and drinks, and off to bed as there were eight qualifying matches the next day.

I will not try to describe the matches or the progress of the tournament, as this was brilliantly chronicled by my roommate, Steve Cubbins of the SquashSite website. From a refereeing standpoint, I was THE referee, although both Noel McKreith and Eddie DePass wanted to do some early round matches and be assessed. I had a look at the draw and we agreed to give them some matches that did not appear to be too confrontational. In fact, we did such a great job of identifying those matches that they all turned out to be "invalid" for assessment purposes.

On the social side of things, Eddie had organised two evening functions where the players attended as well as an all-day outing to Montego Bay to see a bit more of the island and made sure that the referees, the press, et al, were included. All were received very well.

The event was a great success and Eddie has already booked the hotel for the same week next year. He was hoping to add a PSA event alongside the women's event, but, with only two courts, that may prove to be difficult. Plan B was to have a 4-man invitational as well as the 2nd annual WISPA Hedonism II Open. I have my sun block ordered already!

The Little Things

Graham Waters

Over the years, I have had the good fortune to be exposed to a great many of the world's best and most experienced squash referees. In the process, I have picked up a few things that you never will find in a rulebook, but are invaluable in helping to become the best squash official you can be. Clearly, the most important factor in being a top referee is your ability to interpret Rule 12 correctly and to give correct and consistent decisions when asked to decide an appeal under that rule. However, here are a few more helpful hints on how you can help the players and, in so doing, present yourself to them as a competent and confident squash official. Some of them relate to your role as a marker, some of them as a referee, some as both, but, hopefully, all will be helpful. I call them the "little things".

Anticipate Appeals

Whether you are the marker or the referee, make a mental note of every close pickup, ball close to the out line, possible fault, etc. in case an appeal comes at the end of the rally. If you are the marker, try to let the referee know whether you thought the shot was good or you were unsure. If you can whisper that with **no danger** of being heard by the players, thereby causing a distraction to them, then do so. Alternatively, try to develop a simple hand signal like the thumbs up sign for good and the wavering hand (so-so) for unsure. This communication will not only help the referee in determining a final decision but will also help identify the dubious shot. When that appeal comes at the end of the rally, the referee will know exactly which shot is being appealed and will be ready to give a clear, concise decision. The players will respect this and have more confidence in you. Contrast this with the painful pauses that we have all seen when the referee is busy marking the score sheet, has to be reminded which shot has been appealed, and, more often than not, can't remember the shot in question.

Keep Your Eyes on the Players

At the end of each rally, the referee should not immediately look down to mark the score pad, but should watch both players carefully. This is to ensure that no appeal is forthcoming. Sometimes, a player will have an appeal, even though there had been no indication of this during the rally. By doing this, you will also be able to notice some Rule 17 violations which are sometimes missed by the referee being busy marking the score sheet. Let the marker do that, you can always take that extra second or two and catch up. If you are fortunate enough to be refereeing from a balcony, this becomes even easier as you can mark your sheet and still watch the players over the top as they are still in your line of sight.

Remember the Side

Whether you are the marker or the referee, every time you write down the score, make a mental note of the side from where the next serve must come. You will then be in a position to correct a player who is moving to the wrong side or respond immediately to a request from the players. This will eliminate

that awkward situation of the players not knowing where to go and the officials staring at their pads trying to figure out their scrawl.

Interruptions

Any time a player is injured or there is some other reason that play must stop for some period of time, you must decide the outcome of the last rally played or the one in progress when the interruption occurred. Write down the resulting score before you deal with any further situations and make sure the players know that result. When play resumes, you will then be confident of what the score is, the side, etc. How many times have you seen a player get injured with all of the ensuing confusion, and when the match starts again, nobody can remember the result of the previous rally, or whether a let was allowed?

Repeat the Referee's Decision Immediately

As the Marker, it is your duty to repeat each and every Referee's decision. You should do this immediately the decision is out of the Referee's mouth with absolutely no hesitation. You should be starting to mouth the word "Yes" as the Referee is saying the word "Let". When the decision is given and repeated that quickly and decisively, it adds credibility to that decision. I am not suggesting that this alone will eliminate any arguments, far from it. However, it will have a small psychological effect of reinforcing that decision in the players' minds, and might give them reason to pause before arguing.

Call Every Ball that is Not Good

The rules state that the marker shall call every shot that is a fault, out, down, or not up. This means that you have no option of whether to make that call however obvious it may be. Most players want every ball called, and, if the call is not made, they will assume that you didn't see it, and will lose confidence in you.

I know that we are sometimes put in less than ideal positions from which to officiate and, as a result, we don't always see all of these shots, particularly shots that clip the top of the tin when legs and bodies and racquets are flashing around in front of us. Of course, in those situations, say nothing, but if you see it, call it.

Learn the Players' Sign Language

It is very important to know the accepted sign language that players employ during the course of a match. A good referee will know instinctively what the player wants and can deal with it immediately without the cumbersome questioning that we sometimes hear. This is a bit difficult to convey in writing, but let's try:

- What side, please?* - *pointing alternately to both sides of the court either with a finger or with the racquet. Sometimes players use both arms in a criss-crossing action for the same purpose.*
- Please repeat the score* - *pointing to the ear, indicating that the player didn't hear the score.*
- Towel, please* - *a shaking of the hand in a polishing type of movement. This usually happens after a player has fallen and created a wet spot on the court.*
- Let, please* - *the forming of the thumb and index finger into the shape of the letter "L".*

I hope these help, and that they will inspire confidence in the minds of the players that you will be refereeing and marking in the future.

Poet's Corner

Ode to Rule 12

What's that you say, you want a let
On a well-struck shot you wouldn't get?
I'm sure you want a call that's fair,
But on that ball, you had no prayer.

You moved to reach a tight drop-shot,
But what you thought was on, was not,
The trickle boast left you off-track –
And running into your opponent's back.

My decision stands, so please play on,
Your chance to talk has almost gone,
And wasting time is not a joke –
If you persist, it's a Conduct Stroke!

G.W.

Epilogue

I hope you enjoyed this edition of the *Referees' Review* and found something of interest in it. While no firm schedule has been set for regular issues, it would be my hope to produce at least two editions a year – and more, if enough material is submitted. So it is up to you, fellow referees, to send me material as often as you can. Referees of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!

Send all contributions for inclusion in the Newsletter to symingto@uvic.ca