

Racket Control

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Chapter 1: Introduction

During World Title competitions and ITTF sanctioned events, as well as during Regional or Continental championships, rackets are checked that they are legal and results are reported to the referee under whose jurisdiction racket control resides.

The purpose of these Referee Directives regarding Racket Control is to describe the procedure for racket testing and the consequences for failures.

References:

- The Laws of Table Tennis: ITTF Handbook, section 2
- Regulations for International Competitions; ITTF Handbook, section 3
- Technical Leaflet T9; the technical procedures to achieve the correct measurements.
- LARC, List of Authorised Racket Coverings; which is published on the ITTF website.

The process of racket testing should interfere as little as possible with the preparation time of the players just before the match and it should not delay the start of a match. Nevertheless the referee must have the time to make a decision according to the rules, regulations and these directives.

Chapter 2: Racket Control centre

A Racket Control centre shall be established at all ITTF World Title and Olympic events as well as at a select number of ITTF Pro Tour and Junior Circuit events and may be established at Continental and Regional competitions.

The Racket Control centre will test rackets, according to the policy and procedure established by the Executive Committee on recommendation from the Equipment Committee, to ensure that rackets abide by all ITTF regulations including, but not limited to, racket covering thickness, flatness and presence of harmful volatile substances.

The Racket Control test should usually be carried out after the match at random, but from the quarter-finals on, Racket Control tests should be carried out before all the matches of individual events and the selected individual matches in all team matches.

Rackets that do not pass any one of the Racket Control tests before the match cannot be used in the competitions. In the case where rackets do not pass a random Racket Control test after the match, the offending player will be liable to penalties.

All players are entitled to have their racket tested voluntarily without any penalties before the match according to the procedure given in the event.

Racket testing takes place in a facility with specific requirements, which are sent to the organisers in advance. Before the event starts, the tournament organisers provide and equip the necessary facilities, for use, at the latest, one day before the competition starts.

Players are obliged to bring their racket to the Racket Control centre, if they are selected to have their racket tested. The Racket Control centre is identified by several signs in the competition venue.

Chapter 3: Chief Racket Controller

The referee usually delegates the coordination and organisation of the racket testing to a Chief Racket Controller. At events including the World Championships, Olympic or Paralympic Games, the ITTF shall recommend up to 3 people as racket testers, and one shall be appointed as Chief Racket Controller.

Each day the Chief Racket Controller does the draw and schedule for racket tests for the next day, and reports to the referee of the competition. The referee must endorse the schedule and may, at any time, change this schedule by adding or removing matches to be checked.

The referee is responsible for deciding the acceptability of playing equipment, including any allowable tolerances, and must advise the Chief Racket Controller prior to the start of competition. However any rackets that exceed the values listed in the Laws or Regulations must be referred to the referee for approval, even if they are within any agreed tolerance. The ITTF Executive Committee is responsible for setting the allowable level of harmful volatile substances. The limit has been decided as follows:

- from October 2009 to September 2010: 4ppm;
- from October 2010 to September 2011: 3ppm;
- from October 2011 to September 2012: 2ppm.

Duties of the Chief Racket Controller:

- reports to the referee;
- agrees with the referee the confidential schedule and random choice of match controls, written reports about racket failures and other activities;
- prepares and checks the documents and forms in advance for racket preparation and control to be distributed to the officials, players and umpires once approved by the referee;
- liaises with the organiser before the start of the tournament;
- inspects, as soon as possible after arrival, the racket preparation and racket control areas and meets the referee and tournament director to discuss arrangements;
- attends, if possible, the umpires' and coaches' briefing and answers all relevant questions;
- actively tests and coordinates the work of the racket testers;
- plans the duty-roster of the racket testers in conjunction with the referee;
- is considered as a match official, and the results of the measurements are a matter of fact;
- watches that the tests are conducted with care and accuracy, and that the results are correctly recorded, the player is informed and are submitted to the referee;
- if appointed by ITTF, submits, after the tournament, a report to ITTF (number of the tests, failures and their reasons, reports to the referee, other problems);
- statistics about the test results may be published.

For rackets not coming from the Racket Control centre, the detailed inspection of rackets is the duty of the umpire, who may ask the referee for a racket test, before the match, if they consider a racket may be illegal.

The racket testers may detect manufacturing imperfections or illegalities (such as pimple geometry) that are not included in the Laws or International Regulations but are against the specifications of the Technical Leaflet; these items are not referred to the referee but to the ITTF Equipment Committee.

Chapter 4: Voluntary and Compulsory racket testing

Before the tournament the referee or nominee will inform all delegations and officials, including umpires, of the details of the racket control function. This information includes voluntary and compulsory testing, procedures for the tests, the necessity to air new rubbers correctly, the location of the racket preparation area and the Racket Control centre, sanctions encountered in case of a racket failure, and procedures for appeal at World Championships, Olympic and Paralympic Games.

When collecting rackets, racket testers or umpires will cautiously take the rackets by the handle, add a note with the name of the player, and take them to the Racket Control centre.

If the player has covered the side of the blade and the sponge with trimming, the tester may carefully remove half of the trimming, if necessary to perform the tests, while remembering that the tester will have to attach it correctly afterwards.

Voluntary racket testing

- Voluntary testing is available on the day before the tournament, as well as during the tournament, without interrupting the compulsory racket testing process. Players should liaise with the Chief Racket Controller about a convenient time for a voluntary test. However, each player may bring only two rackets for one test each or have the same racket tested twice during a tournament;
- The rackets submitted will be examined carefully;
- All measurements or observations during a voluntary test will be recorded in the normal "Racket Test Report" form;
- All defaults identified will be recorded on a special form, which must be signed by the player as a record that the player was informed about the irregularity found (the specific test which was failed without an indication of the actual measurement), and which will be submitted to the referee for action if necessary;
- The member of the racket control team will then encourage the player to seek the referee's advice about the consequences of a failed test, prior to compulsory testing;
- No disciplinary action will be taken against a player whose racket fails in a voluntary test. If requested, the forms for voluntary testing are handed to the jury; otherwise they remain confidential.

Compulsory racket testing

Racket testing is compulsory during the tournament and may include before and after-match examination of the authorization and the playing properties of the racket, as well as tests for prohibited solvents, which will be carried out according to the regulations as amended from time to time.

A racket which has already been tested can not be replaced by another one before the match starts, unless it is accidentally damaged during the match in which case, the replacement racket has to be tested after the match.

Individual events

- For a **before-match test**, players have to submit their rackets to the Racket Control centre at least 20 minutes before the scheduled match time;
- When the rackets for a match have been tested, they should be kept separately in paper bags. The legal rackets are then given to the match umpires, who will give them back to players when they come into the playing area to start the match. If a racket fails any test before the match, the player may use a replacement racket which will be tested after the match;
- If it is necessary for a player to change his/her racket during play due to it being accidentally damaged, the umpires must collect the replacement used, which will then be subject to an after-match test;
- If a player brings the racket late, the racket will be tested after the match;
- For **after-match tests**, the match umpires will collect the scoresheets together with the racket control form and bags before the match. Players must leave all rackets used in the match, including the original one which may have been damaged and replaced, on the table when the match finished and the umpires must collect the rackets of both players immediately. The match umpires will cautiously take the rackets by the handle and place them in separate paper bags with the relevant racket control form and take them to the Racket Control centre for testing. Players may collect their rackets at the Racket Control centre 20 minutes later;
- If the players' rackets in a particular match are not selected for racket testing, the umpires will return the rackets left on the table before the players leave the court;
- In case of failure the referee will be informed immediately.

Team events

- For **before-match tests** in team events, a member of the Racket Control centre will inform the umpires during the draw for the selection of letters and sequence of play;
- The players who have to play the first individual match must submit their rackets to the Racket Control centre at least 20 minutes before the scheduled match time;
- The players who have to play the second individual match must submit their rackets to the Racket Control centre before the previous individual match starts. The same procedure should be followed for subsequent individual matches;
- The rackets tested will be given directly by the racket tester to the match umpires, who will give them back to players in paper bags, keeping the rackets separately when they come into the playing area;
- If it is necessary for a player to change his/her racket during play due to it being accidentally damaged, the umpires must collect the replacement used, which will then be subject to an after-match test;
- If a player brings the racket late, his/her racket will be tested after the match;
- For **after-match tests**, the match umpires will collect the scoresheets together with the racket control form and bags before the match. Players must leave all rackets used in the match, including the original one which may have been damaged and replaced, on the table when the match finishes and the umpires must collect the rackets of both players immediately. The match umpires will cautiously take the rackets used in the match by the handle and place them in separate paper bags with the relevant racket

control form and take them to the Racket Control centre for testing. Players may collect their rackets at the Racket Control centre 20 minutes later;

- If the players' rackets in a particular match are not selected for racket control, the umpires will return the rackets left on the table before the players leave the court;
- In case of failure the referee will be informed immediately.

Chapter 5: Consequences of failures compulsory racket testing

Before the match

In case of a failure of compulsory racket test before the match, the referee will decide that the racket can not be used and must be replaced by another one, which also will be tested after the match.

After the match

In case of a failure of compulsory racket test after the match, the referee will decide that the player forfeits the match.

If the player who forfeited the match, still would have to play in the same event (round robin system), this player shall gain 0 points instead of 1 point for a loss in a match played with a failed racket.

Repeated failures / Penalties applying after each racket control failure

a. Failure regarding VOC

- Disqualification from the individual match for any first failure in an after-match test.
- Disqualification from the team match where a player fails two times at any time.
- Disqualification from the tournament where a player fails three times at any time.

b. Any other Failure (thickness, flatness, etc.)

- Disqualification from the individual match for any first failure in an after-match test.
- Disqualification from the individual match where a player fails two times at any time.
- Disqualification from the team match where a player fails three times.
- Disqualification from the tournament where a player fails four times.

Remark:

- VOC infraction is accumulated with other types of failures.

c. Failing to present the racket before a match

- The racket has to be tested after the match.

Chapter 6: General policy on accumulated failures

Following 4 accumulated failures on any aspect of compulsory racket testing over a 48-month period, a player shall be suspended for 12 months from participating in ITTF events.

Notes:

1. If a player fails two tests during one racket testing session, this counts as 1 failure i.e. a player will have one failure if one racket fails both thickness and VOC test during the same test;

2. After each event, the player's association will be informed by the ITTF of the failure and number of failures accumulated by a player;
3. Any player who fails a test during compulsory testing will be registered on the database on ITTF's website;
4. Any player, who fails a 4th time within 48 months will be suspended with immediate effect and his/her 12 months of suspension will count from the day after the 4th failure.
5. This register will begin on 1 September 2010.