



Points of Stress for College Tennis Officials

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2018-19 ITA Rule Changes

Have we got some new rules for you! Those of you who took recertification webinars in July started getting an inkling that changes were coming. For those who jumped on the earlier webinars, most of this will be news to you.

We are sorry the timing worked out the way it did, but a combination of factors conspired to delay development, discussion, writing and approval of these new rules, including a hurricane forcing the complete cancellation of the annual ITA Coaches Convention.

All of the proposed new rules have been approved. All changes are effective in any ITA-sanctioned event or dual match, which means they start with our traditional fall tournaments hosted by ITA members.

Most of these changes arose from coaches' concerns and all have been endorsed by ITA coaches for each of the divisions' operating committees, and by the ITA Rules Committee.

With that approval, the hard work begins to educate coaches, players and officials on the new rules, their interpretation and implementation. This newsletter is the first effort to address our full officiating membership on the new rules. More will come, including webinars to discuss the rules and answer your questions before the dual match season begins.

Many of the rules changes involve edits for clarity. We will not deal with those here, reserving the space for the more important substantive changes that will require you to change some officiating techniques that you have been comfortable with for many years.

So let's get to them.

Time Between Points

What is the change: The ITA has adopted the ITF rules change of 25 seconds between points (formerly 20 seconds).

What it means: Simply an extra 5 seconds between points. No change in enforcement.

What else to remember: If penalizing a player for lateness returning from a bathroom visit, Time Violations accrue every 25 seconds.

Line-up Changes & Time Between Doubles & Singles

What is the change: Singles players in all divisions must be ready to start their matches within five minutes of the conclusion of the doubles point(s). Coaches must exchange any lineup changes with each other within two minutes of the conclusion of doubles — in writing, preferably with their scorebooks. After that, no lineup changes are permitted.

What it means: The time between doubles and singles will no longer be extended because of lineup changes. The referee is no longer responsible for communicating lineup changes from one coach to another. The coaches are responsible for meeting to exchange lineup changes.

What else to remember: While the exchange of lineup changes is not the referee's responsibility, the referee should still be present when the coaches meet in order to be made aware of changes so officials can be notified, scorecards changed, etc. We recommend that during the pre-match discussion with both coaches that the dual match referee establishes a meeting place and confirms the timing of this exchange to avoid confusion.

Coaches' Code of Conduct

What is the change:

- 1) The Coach's Warning has been eliminated. When a coach's behavior violates the Coaches' Code of Conduct, the first violation is penalized with a point penalty against the coach's team at the court where the offense occurred. If the offense is not associated with a specific court, the point is applied to the highest match in progress. If the offense occurs between doubles and singles, the point will be applied to the #1 singles match when it begins.
- 2) The second offense for a specific coach shall result in ejection from the facility and the coach is barred from coaching for the remainder of the dual match.
- 3) Should the coach not leave the facility immediately, the referee may default the coach's team's remaining matches.



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What it means: The ITA recognizes that the behavior of many coaches needs to improve and have strengthened this rule to achieve that. Officials must be willing to apply this rule when necessary. Officials should not tolerate:

- disrespect from coaches, including profanity directed toward an official;
- any attempt to threaten, intimidate or harass an official;
- allusions to an official's physical condition or mental competency;
- references to the official's pay;

What to remember:

- Penalties accrue to coaches individually. They no longer apply to the coaching staff as a unit.
- While the Coach's Warning has been removed, this doesn't preclude officials from using diplomacy in dealing with a coach's borderline behavior. A comment such as, "Coach, you must be respectful," or "Coach, you can't speak like that to me," should generally suffice.
- Tone is important. A coach may verbally disagree with an official's call, but not in such a way that it is demeaning to the official.
- Keep your cool. If a coach yells at you, don't raise your voice in response or become argumentative.
- Communication among the officiating crew is essential. If a coach is penalized, all the officials must be alerted as coaches move among courts.

Where Coaches Can Coach

What is the change: Coaches can now go out on the court between points to coach their players and then return to the bench area. They do not have to "cross" the court. Between points, coaches can only stand at a net post or between the net post and the service line of the side of the court occupied by their player(s). They can sit on any player bench.

What it means: Officials will need to do a better job of timing between points. Click your stopwatch when a point ends. If a coach is on court talking to players when 25 seconds has elapsed, issue a Time Violation. In this situation there's no "extra time" to chase balls, towel off, etc. Also, if a coach comes on court and leaves, and then the players start retrieving balls and run over the time, issue a Time Violation because it was the coaching that led to the delay, not getting the balls.

What else to remember: If a coach tries standing on the opponent's side, the official should tell the coach to either sit on the player bench or stand at the net post. We're not looking to nail coaches who occasionally stray outside the designated confines, just reel them in.

Coach Interfering with Play

What is the change: When a coach interferes in the play of a point, intentionally or unintentionally, the coach's team on that court loses the point. Previously a let was called and a Coach's Warning was issued.

What it means: A coach can't stop play on a court for any reason (such as calling a let) without forfeiting that point.

What else to remember: Coaches standing between two courts in play can easily back up and interfere with play, particularly in doubles. An official should be proactive if a coach takes a position between courts near the service line and isn't attentive to their movements. Also, if a coach deliberately interferes with play in an egregious manner, such as yelling "Miss it!" as an opponent has an overhead, the official may also apply the Coaches' Code of Conduct in addition to the loss of point.

DI Bathroom Breaks

What is the change: Men are now allowed one extended bathroom break (extra 3 minutes), mirroring the rule the women have used.

What it means: When a player wants to use the bathroom on a set break or changeover, the player should make the request to an official. The official must ask the player if the player is using their extended break. The player's response is irrevocable, so a player returning early from an extended break still isn't entitled to another extended break. Conversely, if a player opts not to take an extended break and is late returning, they may not then be allowed to "convert" to the extended break.

What to remember: A player returning late from an authorized bathroom visit is always penalized with Time Violations, one for every 25 seconds of continued lateness.



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Other Divisions' Bathroom Breaks

What is the change: DII men and women will use the DI rule detailed above. Other divisions will have "reasonable time" for bathroom breaks, but that time must be established by the referee and coaches before match start.

What it means: for the other divisions, an official should tell a player requesting a bathroom break how much time has been deemed "reasonable." Time Violation penalties accrue after that time has elapsed.

What to remember: Lateness coming back from a bathroom break is not penalized under the PPS.

DII Match and Scoring Formats

What is the change: DII has adopted all of DI's match and scoring formats. That means:

- The format will be three doubles followed by six singles with seven total points in a match.
- Doubles matches will be 6-game pro sets.
- No-ad scoring will be used in both doubles and singles.
- There will be no warm-up time in a dual match
- Men will not have service lets.
- Once the outcome of a match has been decided, any remaining singles matches shall play a shortened format.

One difference is that coaches can opt to use either clinch/clinch or play/play formats, rather than the standard clinch/play. Additionally, the men will follow the Division I women's medical timeout procedures (see below).

What does it mean: Life just got simpler for officials who work matches in multiple divisions.

What to remember: Always confirm with the coaches at the pre-match meeting what format they are choosing to play. If you address teams before a match, be sure to remind them of some of the new rules, particularly the no-ad scoring and no service lets for Men's matches.

DII Medical Time-outs

What is the change: DII has adopted the MTO rule used by DI women.

What does it mean: DII players now only have one MTO per match, and an MTO taken during a warm-up counts as that one MTO.

What to remember: DII men are NOT using the DI men's MTO rule, so no point is assessed and the MTO is a max of 5 minutes, with a max of 3 minutes for treatment.

Reporting of Defaults/Ejections

What is the change: If a referee defaults a player for conduct or ejects a coach or spectator, the referee must file a report with the ITA Officiating Department by email (officials@itatennis.com) within 24 hours of completion of the match or day of competition (for individual tournaments).

What it means: Reports no longer are filed with the athletic director of the school involved. The ITA may determine if additional penalties/sanctions are warranted.

What to remember: Reports should contain all pertinent details of the default/ejection with sufficient detail that the ITA does not need to seek more information from the referee at a later time.

Post-Match Code Violations

What is the change: An official may issue a post-match Code Violation for behavior even if the overall match is completed and there is nowhere to assess a carryover penalty.

What it means: Officials must remain alert after a match is completed, watching the players come to the net to shake hands, watching the players pass at the net post, etc.

What to remember: A Code Violation issued in these circumstances must be reported by the referee to the ITA Officiating Department (officials@itatennis.com) within 24 hours of the completion of the match or day of competition (for individual tournaments).