

USATT Rule Interpretations and Precedents

(as intended for tournament play. Club play guidelines are in *red*)

7. Match Play without Umpires

- 7.1. When a match is played without umpires, the competitors are required and expected to follow the rules as if an umpire were present. In such matches the players are equally responsible for fair play; the match may be seen as a self-umpired match.

Thus, both players are considered co-umpires.

- 7.2 Players shall do their utmost to play the match in good faith and accept calls made by their opponents. However, if the players cannot agree on a call, they should ask the Referee to make a ruling. If a player believes that the match is no longer being played in good faith, the players should request an umpire by notifying the Chief Umpire or Referee.

This would certainly be the case for tournament play. However, for club play there generally will not be a qualified official available to render a rules-based decision. For any such cases, the two players (or teams) should attempt to come to a mutually agreed-upon decision. If agreement cannot be reached, at least one player (or team) should decide to retire from the match; the match ends prematurely and undecided. PLEASE BE AWARE THAT ANY PROLONGED ARGUING IS DISRUPTIVE TOWARD OTHER MATCHES BEING PLAYED, AND THEREFORE INCONSIDERATE OF THOSE PLAYING IN NEARBY MATCHES.

- 7.3 Disruption of Play – If the conditions of play are disturbed, such as if a stray ball enters the court, the players should call a let immediately.

Remember, the competitors are essentially co-umpires; it is their responsibility alone to call "lets." However, if your ball ends up in someone else's court, I recommend the following: 1) Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES should you simply retrieve the ball from any court where both an actual match (not just practice/warmup) is being contested AND a rally is currently underway. (Your presence in another court is liable to be a greater distraction to the players there than your ball. But more importantly, you risk potentially injurious physical contact with an unassuming player or his/her rapidly swung racket.) 2) You should call a "let" for any adjacent court(s) ONLY IF no point is actively being contested there (so you may have to wait until a point is finished). Then, but not until your "let" request has been recognized by the players from the adjacent court(s), make said players aware that you need to retrieve your ball. They may retrieve the ball for you, but should at least allow you to retrieve the ball yourself.

- 7.4 No Second Chances – A player has only one chance to win a point. For example, if play is disrupted by a stray ball, a player cannot attempt to hit a winner and then call a

let if he or she misses. It is best if the player makes a clear let call immediately; however if he continues to play, he or she must accept loss of the point if the shot misses.

This situation is treated identically for both tournament and club play. Any "let" call must be made PRIOR to your racket striking the ball. If possible however, do not wait until the last moment; call "let" as soon as you notice another ball (or player) within your court.

- 7.5 Score Disputes – To prevent scoring issues, each player should call the score aloud before serving. *(Please make sure you do this loud enough to be heard by your opponent(s). It will eliminate a lot of scoring disputes!)* If players cannot agree on the current score, they should attempt to find a previous score which they agree on. If it is discovered that there is only one or two particular points that are in dispute, those points may be replayed.
- 7.6 Illegal Service – If a receiver believes his or her opponent is serving illegally, at the first instance, the receiver should call a let and describe the error to the opponent. If the server fails to remedy the problem, the receiver may decide to permit the opponent additional attempts to serve legally, or request an umpire for the match.
Again, for club play an umpire likely will not be available. So, decide something – even if that means ending the match prematurely with no definite outcome.
- 7.7 Scorekeepers – If a match has a scorekeeper who is not serving as an umpire, the scorekeeper should only keep score and make no judgments. The scorekeeper should accept all instructions from the players, and refer to the Referee if there is a dispute .
Much like not having the benefit of an officially umpired match or even an available referee, club players should typically not expect the luxury of someone to keep score for their match. However, if there is a willing and mutually-acceptable candidate, both players are welcome to secure the services of such a person for this purpose. Doing so would be preferable if any dissension about the score is anticipated. Such a "scorekeeper" though, must be positioned sufficiently away from the action of that AND any adjacent court; along a wall (assuming a wall borders the court) and in line with the net, or at a place behind the back barriers of the court where there is a clear view of the match.
- 7.8 Non-Official Witnesses – Any claim from a third party witness such as a spectator or coach should have no bearing on a call. Regardless of what the spectators believe, the players must agree on the events that occurred and the call to be made.
For strictly club play, however, you may at least consider any spectator's view of the matter in question. If both players find the spectator to be reasonably honest and unbiased, it would be perfectly natural to base a decision upon such third-party testimony.