

ENGLISH TABLE TENNIS ASSOCIATION Limited  
COMPETITIONS DEPARTMENT

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Ref: 12/ANM/SE

11<sup>th</sup> August 2009

To: The General Secretary of every Local League,  
County Association and PremierClub

Dear Member,

**ETTA APPROVED LAWS OF TABLE TENNIS**

There has been a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding over the application of the ETTA Approved Laws of Table Tennis, particularly in relation to racket coverings, changing rackets during a match and towelling down. In order to clarify the situation I have asked the Rules Committee to draft a clear statement of the ways in which the Approved Laws apply and this is as follows:

“Under ETTA Rules, Local Leagues are required to ensure that league matches are played in accordance with the ETTA Approved Laws. A League can make its own additional rules in respect of matters not covered in the Laws, such as intervals, practice, clothing and playing conditions, but it cannot enforce any rule which would modify the Laws, such as requiring particular brands of table, net or racket covering to be used or altering the basis on which points are scored. However, under a waiver agreed by the National Council in 1994, a League can organise for its own members additional knock-out competitions in which there are divergences from the Laws, such as hard bat or handicap tournaments. This means that in Local League matches a player can use any type of rubber that complies with the requirements of the Laws in respect of thickness, colour etc, whether or not it is of a type currently authorised by the ITTF.”

I know that some leagues over the years have adopted in their own rules a requirement for players to use only racket coverings that are of types authorised by the ITTF. Players in league matches cannot be compelled to observe such a rule and it should be regarded as a recommendation or request.

The following notes give some historical background to the development of uniform laws and should help to explain why the present rules on the subject are as they are.

When the ETTA was set up it was agreed that at least one of the reasons that had led to the collapse of the game in the early 1900s had been the multiplicity of rival organisations with different names and confusingly different rival codes of rules, a group was set up a group to codify one single set of laws and regulation." This principle was embodied in the ETTA's original Constitution, and is still there today.

The Laws that were drafted were adopted by both the ETTA and the International Table Tennis Federation, and they have changed only in detail since they were first adopted in 1927. They deliberately covered only the basic rules needed for play at local league and club level, which then, as now, formed the substantial majority of competitive table tennis

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The ITTF subsequently introduced additional regulations for competitions at international level. Most national Associations have adopted some of these regulations for their own higher-level events, and the ETTA has done so for national championships and for nationwide competitions such as the Grand Prix's, British League and the County Championships. Open tournaments are, in this respect, effectively under the jurisdiction of the ITTF and the international regulations apply automatically to them, apart from any specific exceptions that must be stated in the entry form.

The ETTA normally adopts the ITTF Laws in full but it has always retained the right to allow divergences, provided these divergences apply to all competitions so that uniformity is maintained. Any general divergence has to be agreed by a General Meeting, but the National Council can authorise variations for particular competitions or particular types of competition. It did so in 1994 for certain tournaments run by local Leagues for their own members, but it was made clear then that this waiver did not apply to the normal league competition.

Requests for variations of the Laws have not generally been successful at General Meetings. Proposals to allow leagues to opt out of ITTF changes such as the increase in the size of the ball, the red/black requirement for racket blades and the change to 11 point games have all been either rejected outright or accepted for only a limited period. At present the only variation from the ITTF Laws is that under the ETTA Approved Laws the ball must be of a type that is currently approved by the ITTF, and that is mandatory for all competitive play.

Regards

**Alex Murdoch**  
**ETTA Chairman.**

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