

## DELAYING THE GAME - DISCUSSION PAPER FOR N.V.L.

Despite having been in force for over two years, rule 21 continues to give some problems in the National League; there is a lack of consistency in the way referees are interpreting this rule, and many players still do not seem to understand the basic principles of the rule change.

In an attempt to improve this situation I have set out below a personal view on the main categories of delay; I would appreciate some immediate feedback, from senior coaches and referees, so that a final instruction can be sent out to NVL referees as soon as possible.

### History

For the 1988 Olympic Congress, FIVB proposed very strict regulations aimed at preventing any delays during the game; with the introduction of floor-wipers it was, for example, to be illegal under any circumstances to delay play for the purpose of wiping the floor. Such a drastic interpretation was never fully introduced into domestic E.V.A. competition - we opted for a compromise, less harsh interpretation which would depend upon cooperation between referees and players. Generally, I believe that this cooperation has been in evidence, with a majority of participants understanding the balance which needs to be struck between ensuring the safety of players whilst at the same time not permitting players to deliberately delay the game.

I believe that a clarification of the current position may assist this balance to be maintained.

### Substitution Procedure

A player to be substituted must be ready to enter the court, in the substitution zone, immediately after the request is made by the captain or coach. The two players to be exchanged must wait, at the side-line in the front zone, until the second referee gives permission to change. As soon as this authorisation is given, the players should change over. The coach should not stand in the scorer's line of sight during a substitution, and no coaching (or giving of instructions, other than perhaps to indicate where a player is to be positioned) is permitted. Players must not enter or leave court from the back zone, behind the second referee. An infringement of any of these regulations which results in any delay of a resumption of play should be sanctioned by the referee with a delay warning.

### Time-out Procedure

Players must leave court during a time-out, and should not re-enter until the second referee has indicated the end of 30 seconds. If play is delayed when a team is slow to resume its court position (or, for example, if drinks are spilled near the court) then a delay warning should be given.

### Fastening of Footwear

A player must not ask for play to be held up for the purpose of fastening footwear; if shoelaces become unfastened, they should simply be re-tied quickly during the normal interval between rallies. In the rare situation where a shoe accidentally comes off completely, the referee should permit a small delay, to enable this to be replaced. Any player deliberately untying shoelaces, in an attempt to delay play, must be penalised. For "extended" repairs to playing kit (or, for example, spectacles) a coach may be requested to make a substitution; for such a substitution (as with an injured player, for example) the referee may allow slightly longer than is normally permitted for the exchange of players to be made.

### Returning the Ball

Where a 3-ball system is used, players should roll a "dead" ball to the side or rear of the court, on their own side; the ball should not be rolled under the net. Although this may be penalised immediately with a delay warning, I suggest that referees should first remind teams of the correct procedure, before penalising - particularly since few players are accustomed to operating the 3-ball system on a regular basis.



Where a single match ball is being used, players should roll a "dead" ball under the net; it should not be held for any length of time by a player, or passed between team members. Players who make a habit of "accidentally" rolling the ball into a post, the referee's stand or another player, etc., will risk a delay sanction. For their part, referees should ensure teams are given sufficient time to get back into position before the next service is authorised.

#### Sweat-wiping

Mostly, we do not have teams of "floor-moppers" in English volleyball; in addition to this, many sports centres have floor surfaces which are not conducive to the rapid absorption or evaporation of sweat patches. It does not seem sensible to me, therefore, to try to enforce in our own national leagues a rigid interpretation of a rule which was mainly introduced for major world events at the highest level of play.

However, neither do I feel that we can afford to ignore FIVB directives entirely; this would be politically dangerous and, more importantly, could damage the development of volleyball in England for the most experienced players, coaches and officials.

Referees have the overall responsibility for ensuring safe playing conditions, and they ought to be able to rely upon the support of teams themselves, in order to achieve this objective. I propose the following procedure be adopted for "wiping":-

- 1) The home club should be responsible for providing at least two medium-size towels, for use during a match - these to be placed either at each post, or one at each bench.
- 2) The away team should be encouraged to take a towel (or towels) to each match, to be kept near to its own bench throughout a game; this would prevent them being at any disadvantage, should the home club fail to provide as in (1) above.
- 3) The provision (or non-provision) of adequate cloths for floor-wiping should be noted on the referee's NVL match report form.
- 4) All teams should be encouraged to have at least one player on court equipped with a small personal towel, to be used for the immediate removal of small patches of wetness.
- 5) Players should not ask for sweat to be wiped; for small areas of dampness, there is time for this to be wiped (with feet / hands / kneepads, or as in (4) above) without any delay of the game whatsoever.
- 6) For larger areas of wetness on court, players should quickly fetch the larger towels provided (by the post, or from the team bench), again without asking for the referee's permission, as soon as this is noticed. Immediately this happens, the second referee must move onto court, to check whether the floor really is wet. If so, the second referee signals accordingly to the first referee, and then supervises the wiping, informing the players as soon as the task is completed. Should the second referee not find any wetness, this is signalled to the first referee who will award a delay sanction.

As with the tying of shoelaces, any player deemed to have deliberately caused the floor to become wet, in order to delay play, should be sanctioned.

#### Equipment Abuse

A player who deliberately, either in anger or out of frustration, kicks a volleyball aggressively, in any direction (or who, for example, pulls violently on the net after a rally, etc.) should be sanctioned according to rule 24 (Misconduct) and not under rule 21 (Delays to the Game).

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November 1990