

THE INTERFERENCE LINE OF THINKING

based on the 2001 rules, effective 30-Apr 2001

Refereeing is a thankless but necessary task. Knowing the Rules and using the correct calls is expected of referees, but the really difficult part is making decisions when one of the players appeals for a let. Below is a summary of the thought process a referee should go through when asked 'Let Please'...

The Question ...

The Answer ...

1. Did interference occur ?

The striker has four basic rights, and interference has occurred if the opponent fails to provide him with any of these, *even if he has made every effort to do so*:

Unobstructed direct access to the ball after completion of a reasonable follow-through

A **fair view** of the ball on its rebound from the front wall

Freedom to hit the ball with a reasonable swing

Freedom to play the ball directly to the front wall

If no interference has occurred, or the interference was so minimal that the player's view of and freedom to get to and play the ball were not effected, then it's NO LET, otherwise move on to no.2

Lets Insert some names – Aaron strikes the ball – Dave tries to get there **but asks** for a let before he tries to play the ball.

2. Could the obstructed player (Dave) have reached the ball and made a good return ? And was he making every effort to do so ?

If either answer is NO, then it's NO LET, otherwise move on to no.3

3. Did the obstructed player(Dave) move past the point of interference and play on? Or create the interference in moving to the ball?

If the answer to either question is YES, then it's NO LET, otherwise move on to no. 4

4. Did the obstructing player (Aaron) make every effort avoid the interference ?

If he didn't, then it's a STROKE, otherwise move on to no.5

5. Did the interference prevent the player's (Daves) reasonable swing?

If YES, then it's a STROKE to the player (Dave), otherwise move on to no. 6

6. Could the obstructed player play a winning return?

If YES, then it's a STROKE, otherwise it's just a LET unless no.7 applies.

7. Would the obstructed player (Dave) have struck the opponent with the ball going directly to the front wall or, if going to a side wall, would it have been a winning return?

If either answer is YES, then it's a STROKE to the player.

ABBREVIATED RULES OF SQUASH

This ABBREVIATED VERSION of the World Singles Squash Rules is to help players to understand the basics. All players should read the complete Rules. The Rule numbers in brackets in each heading refer to the full Rules. This amendment is effective from 1st April 2009.

HITTING AN OPPONENT WITH THE BALL (Rule 9)

If a player strikes the ball, which, before reaching the front wall, hits the opponent, or the opponent's racket or clothing, play stops.

- If the return would have been good and the ball would have struck the front wall without first touching any other wall, the striker wins the rally, provided the striker did not "turn".
- If the ball either had struck, or would have struck, any other wall and the return would have been good, a let is played.
- If the return would not have been good, the striker loses the rally.

TURNING (Rule 9)

If the striker has either followed the ball round, or allowed it to pass around him or her - in either case striking the ball to the right of the body after the ball had passed to the left (or vice-versa) - then the striker has "TURNED".

If the opponent is struck by the ball after the striker has turned, the rally is awarded to the opponent. If the striker, while turning, stops play for fear of striking the opponent, then a let is played. This is the recommended course of action in situations where a player wants to turn but is unsure of the opponent's position.

FURTHER ATTEMPTS (Rule 10)

A player, after attempting to strike the ball and missing, may make a further attempt to return the ball.

- If a further attempt would have resulted in a good return, but the ball hits the opponent, a let is played.
- If the return would not have been good, the striker loses the rally.

INTERFERENCE (Rule 12)

When it is his or her turn to play the ball, a player is entitled to freedom from interference by the opponent.

To avoid interference, the opponent must try to *provide the player with unobstructed direct access to the ball, a fair view of the ball, space to complete a swing at the ball and freedom to play the ball directly to any part of the front wall.*

A player, finding the opponent interfering with the play, can accept the interference and play on, or stop play. It is preferable to stop play if there is a possibility of colliding with the opponent, or of hitting him or her with racket or ball.

When play has stopped as a result of interference the general guidelines are:

- The player is entitled to a let if he or she could have returned the ball and the opponent has made every effort to avoid the interference.
- The player is not entitled to a let (i.e. loses the rally) if he or she could not have returned the ball, or accepts the interference and plays on, or the interference was so minimal that the player's access to and strike at the ball was not affected.
- The player is entitled to a stroke (i.e. wins the rally) if the opponent did not make every effort to avoid the interference, or if the player would have hit a winning return, or if the player would have struck the opponent with the ball going directly to the front wall.

LETS (Rule 13)

A let is an undecided rally. The rally does not count and the server serves again from the same box. In addition to lets allowed as indicated in the paragraphs above, lets can be allowed in other circumstances.

For example, a let may be allowed if the ball in play touches any article lying on the floor, or if the striker

refrains from hitting the ball owing to a reasonable fear of injuring the opponent.

A let must be allowed if the receiver is not ready and does not attempt to return the service, or if the ball

breaks during play.

CONTINUITY OF PLAY (Rule 7)

Play is expected to be continuous in each game once a player has started serving. There should be no delay

between the end of one rally and the start of the next one.

In between all games an interval of 90 seconds is permitted.

Players are permitted to change items of clothing or equipment if necessary.

BLEEDING, INJURY AND ILLNESS (Rule 16)

If an injury occurs which involves bleeding, the bleeding must be stopped before the player can continue. A

player is allowed a reasonable time to attend to a bleeding wound.

If the bleeding was caused solely by the opponent's action, the injured player wins the match.

If the bleeding recurs no further delay is allowed, except that the player can concede a game, using the 90

second period between games to attend to the wound and stop the bleeding. If unable to stop it, the player

must concede the match.

For an injury not involving bleeding, it must be decided whether the injury was either caused by the opponent

or self inflicted or contributed to by both players.

If caused by the opponent, the injured player wins the match if any recovery time is needed.

If self-inflicted, the injured player is allowed 3 minutes to recover and must then play on, or concede a

game using the 90 second rest period between games to recover.

If contributed by both players, the injured player is allowed an hour to recover.

A player who is ill must play on or can take a rest period by conceding a game and using the 90 second

interval to recover. Cramps, feeling sick and breathlessness (including asthma) are considered illnesses. If a

player vomits on court, the opponent wins the match.

DUTIES OF PLAYERS (Rule 15)

Rule 15 provides guidelines for players. For example 15.6 states that deliberate distraction is not allowed.

Players should read this rule in full.

Some of the 8 sub-sections deal with situations related to matches under the control of officials (Referee/Marker). The use of officials is not covered in this abbreviated version.

CONDUCT ON COURT (Rule 17)

Offensive, disruptive or intimidating behaviour in squash is not acceptable.

Included in this category are: audible and visible obscenities, verbal and physical abuse, dissent, abuse of

racket, court or ball, unnecessary physical contact, excessive racket swing, unfair warm-up, time-wasting, late

back on court, deliberate or dangerous play or action and coaching (except between games).

G4. PLAYER HIT BY THE BALL INCLUDING TURNING AND FURTHER ATTEMPT

If the ball hits the non-striker the Referee shall make a decision in all cases and the Marker's call is not required until after the Referee has made this decision.

If the ball, coming from the front wall, hits the non-striker without interference occurring, the nonstriker loses a stroke unless further attempt applies (Rule 10). The definition of "Attempt" makes it clear that even a fake swing of the racket or feint at the ball is an attempt, but racket preparation comprising only backswing with no racket movement towards the ball is not an attempt.

Rules 9 and 10 cover the various situations in which the ball going to the front wall hits the non-striker. If the ball hits the striker (without interference) the striker loses the rally and the Marker shall call "Not up", because the striker has not struck the ball *correctly*. The Referee need not make a decision unless the Marker fails to make a call.

When the ball strikes either player and interference occurred, the Referee shall apply Rule 12.

In deciding to play the ball on turning, a player must ensure that the return will not hit the opponent. If the player does hit the opponent with the ball after turning, the Referee shall award a stroke to the opponent, unless the opponent made a deliberate movement to prevent a good return reaching the front wall, in which case the Referee shall award a stroke to the striker.

G5. INTERFERENCE ON TURNING OR A FURTHER ATTEMPT

When a player turns or makes a further attempt to play the ball, the opponent still has an obligation to make every effort to provide the player with freedom to sight the ball and to get to and play the ball as provided for in Rule 12. However, the act of turning or of recovering for a further attempt is often so quick that the opponent does not have a reasonable opportunity to clear before the interference occurs. In such cases, the Referee shall allow a let. Conversely, if the opponent had ample time to clear but made no effort to do so, or deliberately moved thereby creating the interference, the Referee shall award a stroke to the player.

When a player shapes to play the ball on one side and then brings the racket across the body to take the ball on the other side, it is neither turning nor making a further attempt and, if interference occurs, Rule 12 applies. This position frequently occurs after the ball has hit the side wall and the front wall simultaneously and then rebounds into the middle of the court.

G6. MAKING EVERY EFFORT AND MINIMAL INTERFERENCE

The opponent must make every effort to clear the ball after playing a return. **The opponent's route should allow the player unobstructed direct access to the ball, provided the player has not moved in to play the ball so quickly as to block the opponent's exit.** In the latter case the Referee shall allow a let, unless the player could not have made a good return, in which case the Referee shall not allow a let. However, it is equally important for the player to make every effort to get to and play the ball. **If the player does not make every effort to get to and play the ball, that is a significant factor in the Referee's assessment of whether or not that player could have reached the ball and made a good return.**

The Referee shall decide the degree of effort that the player should make to demonstrate "making every effort". This does not give the player the right to abuse the opponent physically and the Referee shall penalise significant or deliberate physical contact under Rule 12 or Rule 17.

When a player appeals for a let, having encountered some interference, the Referee, when deciding that the interference had no effect on that player's sighting of the ball and freedom to get to and play the ball, shall not allow a let. This is minimal interference and includes situations in which: the opponent crossed the flight of the ball very early in its trajectory from the front wall but still allowed the player time to sight the ball; the player brushed past the opponent on the way to the ball without affecting the player's direct access; and the racket swing brushed the opponent, the opponent's clothing or racket without affecting the racket's swing.

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However, when interference has occurred, the Referee shall not refuse a let in situations in which the player was clearly making every effort (albeit short of physical contact with the opponent) to get to and play the ball and had demonstrated to the Referee the ability to reach the ball.

G7. INTERFERENCE WITH THE STRIKER'S SWING AND REASONABLE FEAR OF HITTING THE OPPONENT

Rule 12.2.3 allows the striker "freedom to hit the ball with a *reasonable swing*". If the striker stops play because of the opponent not granting this freedom and appeals, the Referee shall consider following options:

1. If the opponent is too close and has prevented the striker's reasonable swing and is hit or would have been hit with the racket, the Referee shall award a stroke to the striker.

2. **If the striker stops play as a result of slight racket contact with the opponent, who is making every effort to clear, the Referee shall allow a let.** This is different from the minimal interference described in G6. The amount of contact must be sufficient to affect the player's swing, but insufficient to prevent it.

3. If the striker stops play for fear of hitting the opponent and the opponent, though close to, does not prevent the striker's reasonable swing, the Referee shall allow a let under rule 13.1.2 - reasonable fear of injury. As long as the opponent does not prevent a reasonable swing, a let is the appropriate decision.

4. If the striker stops play for fear of hitting the opponent and the opponent is well clear of the reasonable swing, the Referee shall not allow a let, as the striker has judged the opponent's position incorrectly.

G8. METHOD OF APPEAL

The correct method of appeal when interference or Rule 13 instances have occurred is to say "Let please" and for other occurrences under Rule 11 is to say "Appeal please".

Players sometimes use other forms of appeal including a raised hand or racket, especially when communication between players and Referee is difficult. A Referee accepting any form of appeal other than the standard "Let please" or "Appeal please" must be satisfied that the player is actually making an appeal.

G9. TIMING OF APPEALS

The timing of an appeal on interference is important.

In the case of an appeal concerning fair view and freedom to hit the ball directly to the front wall (commonly known as "crossing the flight"), the Referee shall consider the situation at the time the player could have hit the ball.

In the case of interference on backswing, the appeal must be immediate and before the player makes any attempt to play the ball. Any attempt to hit the *ball after backswing interference has occurred indicates that the striker has accepted the interference and thus forfeits the right of appeal.*

If there is interference in the act of playing the ball, which includes a reasonable backswing, hit and reasonable follow-through, an appeal is justified. The Referee shall consider whether the opponent was *crowding* and not allowing freedom to play the ball in deciding whether to allow a let or to award a stroke.

If a player appeals for not being ready to receive service, the Referee shall allow a let, unless deciding the player delayed play unnecessarily. In the latter case the Referee could apply Rule 17.

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G10. EARLY APPEAL

If a player makes an appeal for interference before the result of the opponent's return is known, this is regarded as an early appeal. If a player makes an early appeal and the opponent's return subsequently goes *down or out*, the Referee shall allow the result of the rally to stand, the player winning the rally.

When the opponent appeals for a let for interference before the player has completed a reasonable follow through, this is also regarded as an early appeal. In this case the opponent has no right of appeal and the Referee shall not award a let.

G11. CREATED INTERFERENCE

At all times an opponent must allow the player unobstructed direct access to play the ball.

However, sometimes the situation arises in which the opponent has caused no interference (i.e. the opponent has clearly provided the required direct access) but the player takes an indirect route to the ball which takes the player towards, or very close to, the opponent's position. The player then appeals for a let because of being "obstructed" in access to the ball.

If there is no genuine reason for this indirect route, the player has created the interference where none otherwise existed and, if the player appeals, the Referee shall not allow a let. Whether the player could make a good return is not a consideration - in order to remain in the rally the player must get to and play the ball.

This is different from two situations in which a player, in attempting to recover from a position of disadvantage, does not have direct access to the ball. In the first situation the player is "wrong-footed" and anticipates the opponent hitting the ball one way, starts moving that way, but having guessed wrongly, changes direction to find the opponent in the way. In this situation the Referee shall allow the player a let on appeal if the recovery is sufficient to demonstrate the player would have made a good return. In fact, if the opponent prevents the incoming player from playing a winning return, the Referee shall award a stroke to that player.

Secondly, if a player plays a poor return that gives the opponent a position of advantage, the Referee shall allow the player a let only if, in taking the direct line to the ball for the next return, the Referee determines that, but for the interference, that player would have been able to get to and play the ball.

G12. SIGNIFICANT OR DELIBERATE PHYSICAL CONTACT

Significant or deliberate physical contact is both detrimental to the game and potentially dangerous. In blatant cases the Referee shall stop the rally and award the appropriate penalty. Where the player "pushes off" the opponent and this has no significant effect on the opponent, the Referee shall allow the rally to continue and give a warning to that player at the end of the rally. Where there is a significant effect, the Referee shall stop play and apply Rule 17.