



Interference

An Explanation of Last Years Rule Changes

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The start of the new season seems an appropriate time to explain in depth, (after a years rather patchy application of the new rule at club level), the changes to the rule on Interference.

Who better to do so than Dick Hawkey! All team players please take note!

Recently, it became necessary to tackle a problem which has bedevilled the modern game. I refer to the fact that far too many rallies end in lets.

Modern players are on the whole fit and fast about the court and tend to hit the ball hard. The result is that the ball gets very hot and rebounds violently all over the court; consequently there is no shot, other than a dead nick, that in theory cannot be reached. Knowing this, referees were understandably reluctant to refuse appeals for lets and some players cashed in by making little or no effort to move towards a ball some distance away and merely claimed, and were given, a let. The changes to Rule 12 are designed to improve the situation in a number of ways.

Firstly, there is now an obligation on the part of the incoming striker to play the ball if he can reasonably do so, even if it means making a slight detour. In the past, it was enough for him to indicate that his opponent was slightly in the way and he would get his let. This was greatly abused by tired players looking for shorter rallies who used to stand still and ask for a let because their opponent was between them and the ball and argue that they could have got to it because they could get to anything.

The answer now is that the Referee will not be convinced of that unless he sees a definite effort to get to the ball at a speed fast enough to have reached

it in time. He will argue that the player could not have got there standing still and will refuse the let!

There is also now a new phrase, "creating one's own interference". When faced with a let or stroke decision, the inexperienced Referee looks at the mental photograph he has of the final situation and judges accordingly. The good referee will not look at the "still" photograph; he will rerun his mental video in order to see how the situation came about. This may reveal that the player asking for the let has been entirely to blame and should not get it, whilst the "still photo" referee sees only that he is now stuck behind his opponent and will not allow the let.

The new rule is saying, therefore, that a player who has played a poor shot and has put himself at a disadvantage, must not be allowed to get out of the situation he has created by causing a collision!

A simple example of this would be if a player in the rear right hand corner played a poor shot that came directly to his opponent on the "T". The latter would probably play the ball into the left corner of the court. It is not now enough for the first player to run into his opponent and claim a let, even if he might have got to the ball. The reasoning is that his

opponent, not having eyes in the back of his head, cannot know which way to move and must therefore stay where he is. The first player, having played a shot that puts his opponent where he is, has created his own interference and must go around the obstruction for which he is responsible. He is not entitled to the direct path.

To sum up, a player will not now get a let under the following circumstances:

- 1 If he could have played the ball with a reasonable amount of effort, but refrained from doing so.
- 2 If he does not convince the Referee that he could have got to the ball by making a truly genuine effort and moving at a speed that would have got him there, but for his opponents position.
- 3 If he creates his own interference by playing a bad shot which puts his opponent between him and the ball, then tries to escape by running into the opponent rather than around him.
- 4 If he does not give his opponent the chance to move clear and so is himself responsible for his own inability to get to the ball.

This article is based on that written by Dick Hawkey for the Squash Referee's Society.

The following should be the Referee's Line of Thinking When Considering an Appeal Under Rule 12 (Interference).

