

COMMON INCIDENTS AND DECISIONS

The following incidents and decisions have been constructed to assist with examples of the various rules and the interpretation/application thereof.

1. SERVING:

Case 1: On his second (2nd) service, the server has tossed the ball in the air and is about to strike the ball, when a line umpire calls “foot fault”, whereupon the server catches the ball instead of striking it with his/her racket.

Ruling: The line umpire’s call should be “correction” (as there could be no fault if the ball was not struck, or struck at), and the Chair Umpire should inform the player that, as a result of an interrupted service. A Let should be played, with the server being awarded a first (1st) service.

Case 2: The first (1st) service is a fault. The server is into his motion to deliver the second (2nd) serve, when an official calls “wait please”, because a ball from the adjacent court has rolled onto the court or because there is some other interference.

Ruling: This delay was caused by outside interference so the player receives a first (1st) serve.

Case 3: The same procedure as in Case 2, however, instead of the official saying “wait please” and no tennis balling coming into court from the adjacent court, the opponent indicates during the servers motion that he is not ready (verbal or by motion of hand/racket).

Ruling: The server should ensure that his opponent is ready before delivering the serve. In this case where the opponent stopped the server while in his motion, there was no third (3rd) part interference and therefore the server shall have to deliver a second (2nd) serve. However, the officials (Chair Umpire/Court Monitor) needs to be aware of possible Gamesmanship at later stages).

Case 4: In a mixed doubles match, at the start of the second (2nd) set, the male player prepares to serve for his team, although he had served last for the team in the preceding set. His opponents contend that the female must serve first, preserving the rotation.

Ruling: There is no requirement that any doubles team, mixed or otherwise, retains the same order of service from one set to another. Partners may change service order and receiving positions from one set to another.

Case 5: A server takes position with one (1) foot on the baseline. He then repositions his foot behind the baseline and commences with his motion and the ball toss. Is this a Foot fault?

Ruling: No, this is not a Foot fault. The service motion and ball toss had not commenced. If the service motion had commenced and the player then during the service motion repositioned his foot, it would then be a Foot Fault. The main principal is where was the players foot/feet when the service motion commenced.

Case 6: In a doubles match, the server hits his partner with the ball on the first (1st) serve. Does he lose the point?

Ruling: No, it is only a Fault. If it happens on a second (2nd) serve then it is a Double fault.

Case 7: A served ball strikes the net and is caught by the receiver or hits the receiver before bouncing. The server claims the point, the receiver claims it was a fault.

Ruling: Neither is correct. It is a Net. It could not be a fault as the ball has not touched the ground, irrespective of where the receiver was standing. On the other hand, since the service had struck the net, it could not have become a playable service. The ball is in play until it strikes the net. The best that the server could possibly have gotten from the delivery would be a net and the opportunity to re-deliver the particular service in question i.e. first (1st) or second (2nd) service.

Case 8: A served ball hits the receiver or his partner (doubles match) directly (not having touched the net first).

Ruling: The server wins the point. It is immaterial whether the player who was struck was inside or outside of the service court/area.

2. HINDRANCE OR INVASION:

Case 9: Player A hits a good return past his opponent, but his racket flies out of his hand and falls into player B's court, touching the ground:

- a. While the ball is still in the air, or after the first (1st) bounce
- b. After the ball has bounced twice or has gone out of play

Ruling:

- a. Player B wins the point, because the ball was still in play when the invasion occurred
- b. Player A wins the point, because the invasion did not take place while the ball was still in play

In the above cases, the timing of the actual event (when did what happen) is important in making the decision.

Case 10: The server makes a hard serve that goes into the proper court, but his racket flies out of his hand, landing in his own court. The receiver successfully returns the serve for the rally to continue.

Ruling: The receiver wins the point. Dropping the racket is not considered a hindrance, but an advantage to the receiver. If the receiver fails to make the return, the server will win the point.

Case 11: The hat of a player standing near the net is blown off and into the net while the ball is still in play.

Ruling: The player loses the point.

Case 12: During a rally (with a Chair Umpire present), a player's hat is blown off and lands on the ground.

Ruling: A Let should be called. IN an umpired match any time that a hat falls off, a ball drops from the pocket or some other item of clothing falls off. A Let shall be played, regardless of whether the item lands in or out of the court. The Chair Umpire shall advise the player that any subsequent distraction will result in the loss of point (deliberate hindrance) thereafter.

Case 13: In a match without an umpire, Player A's hat falls off and lands on the court. Both players ignore the hat, until the ball in play hits the cap.

Ruling: Play continues as both players have accepted the hat. The player whose hat is on the ground will lose the point as the hat is deemed to be part of the player. However, in cases where a player's towel is at the back of the court by the fence or in the corner of the court and the ball hits it directly, the player whose towel it is will not lose the point as the player has shown his best intention/effort to ensure that the item is as far out of the court as possible.

Case 14: Same situation as case 13, except that this time Player B stops play when the hat lands in the court and requests a Let.

Ruling: The Let shall be granted, unless the request for the Let comes after the point has been completed. IN this case, the point shall stand as played. Note, the key factor in awarding a Let and the point to be replayed is that the Let must be called immediately. This shall apply for a hat or ball falling from a player's pocket or coming into court from an adjacent court.

3. LETS:

Case 15: A rally is in progress, the ball having been put in play by a second (2nd) service, what a Let is called because of a piece of paper being blown onto court during the point.

Ruling: A Let is called. Whenever a Let is authorised, the entire point shall be replayed. A point consists of two (2) serves, which means that a first (1st) serve is always granted when a Let is played. In the above case a first (1st) serve is authorised.

Case 16: Player A hits the ball for a winner to Player B's baseline. The baseline judge calls "Out", then corrects his call to "Good". Player B claims that the point must be replayed.

Ruling: The Chair Umpire should accept the corrected call and allow the point to stand as won by Player A, if the Chair Umpire is convinced beyond any doubt that the incorrect call did not affect Player B's chance to play the ball and that it was in fact a clear winner.

Case 17: On a second (2nd) service, a line umpire calls "Fault" and immediately corrects the call to "Good". Meanwhile the receiver tries to return the serve and fails to make a good return by hitting the ball into the net. Is the server entitled to a first (1st) serve?

Ruling: Yes, on the ground that provided that the corrected call is correct. IN this case the serve would have been in play and the receiver had play on the ball so the call from the line umpire is considered a hindrance and a Let should be played.

Case 18: The receiver returns a serve out of court, then informs the Chair Umpire that he was "not ready" and asks that a Let be called.

Ruling: Point stands as lost by the receiver. His attempt to play the ball forfeits the right to any "not ready" claim.

4. PERMANENT FIXTURES:

Case 19: During a rally in a singles match played on a doubles court without singles sticks, a return apparently was going out, hits the net post and bounces into the correct singles court.

Ruling: Every effort should be made to provide singles sticks for a singles match that is played on a doubles court in order to prevent this from happening. When it does occur, the entire doubles net and the doubles posts are respectively the net and the net posts for the match. Hence, the return was good.

Case 20: A ball being served, strikes the net post (doubles posts) during a doubles match and land in the correct service block.

Ruling: This is a Fault. Obviously from the position from which the service must be delivered, such a ball had no chance of being good. The receiver should not be penalised nor the server rewarded for such a freak happening. In the case of this occurring on a second (2nd) serve, it will be considered a double fault.

Case 21: A serve that has landed in the correct service block bounces and hit the line umpire. Player B in attempting to return the serves collides with the line umpire (who remained in their position). Player B requests that a Let should be called as the Line Umpire hindered him from being able to return the serve.

Ruling: If the line umpire was in their correct position (as is the case) the point stands as played and the server is awarded the point. If the line umpire had left his assigned position, either in an attempt to avoid being hit or for any other reason, the Chair Umpire may call a Let if he feels that this hindered Player B and that Player B could in fact have played the ball had the line umpire remained in his position.

Case 22: Player A hits the ball with heavy back spin. It clears the net and lands in Player B's court very close to the net, bounces up and touches the net, remains in the air long enough for Player B to hit the ball back into player A's court without touching the net. Player A is unable to return the ball, but claims the point on the grounds that his ball "struck a permanent fixture" after landing in the proper court.

Ruling: Player B wins the point, provided that while making his shot he did not touch the net or his racket. The ball did also not bounce for a second (2nd) time before he hit the shot. The net in play is not considered a permanent fixture.

Case 23: During a singles match, Player A delivers a serve that is good, Player B attempts to return the serve, but the ball hits the part of the net between the singles stick and the net post before landing in the correct court.

Ruling: Point to player A. The part of the net between the singles stick and net post (when singles sticks are used) is considered to be a permanent fixture and therefore as the ball touched this part of the net, Player B loses the point.

5. IMPROPER STROKE:

Case 24: A player, in blocking a hard volley at the net, hits the ball back into the opponents court with the handle of his racket. The ball simultaneously touches his hand and racket handle.

Ruling: The point continues, as the hand holding the racket is part of the handle.

Case 25: In attempting to get to a lob, Player A throws his racket to the ball, the racket hits the ball and the ball goes back over the net into Player B's court. Player B is unable to get to the ball before it bounces for a second (2nd) time.

Ruling: Player B wins the point as the racket must be in the players hand at all times when playing or attempting to play the ball.

6. DECISION MAKING:

Case 26: Player A wins the toss and requires Player B to choose first (defers choice). Player B says "I will receive over here (indicating the side of the court)". Player A complains that Player B can not elect to receive and the side.

Ruling: Player A is correct. Player B must elect to receive, serve or side, the above decision is two (2) choices.

Case 27: Player A hits a serve down the centre line. The line umpire is unable to make the call. Player A appeals to the Chair Umpire for a decision. The Chair Umpire says “I know the ball was good, but unless the line umpire calls it, I can’t”.

Ruling: If the Chair Umpire knows the ball was “good” he must make the decision. If he cannot make the decision and is unsure, he can play a Let.

7. EQUIPMENT:

Case 28: The server breaks a string in serving a first (1st) service fault. He goes to his chair to replace the racket and claims he should be awarded a first (1st) service.

Ruling: He is awarded a second (2nd) service. The server is delaying his own time between first (1st) and second (2nd) serve.

Case 29: A player breaks a string in a racket and claims that he should be permitted to leave the court to get a replacement.

Ruling: If equipment other than a racket becomes unusable through circumstances outside of the control of the player, play must be suspended for a reasonable period and the player may leave the court to get a replacement. If a racket or string in a racket is broken, play may not be suspended. A player requiring a replacement is subject to the Point Penalty Schedule for Unreasonable Delay of Game. However, every effort should be made to assist the player to get another racket.

At Professional events a player may not start a new point with broken strings. At local tournaments, a player may continue playing with broken strings until a replacement is found.

Case 30: A player loses a contact lens during a rally and requests time to replace the contact lens.

Ruling: This is not a medical condition so a medical time out cannot be approved. However, the player may be granted reasonable time to either replace the contact lens or change to glasses as this is considered necessary equipment and equipment out of adjustment.

Case 31: With the ball change being 9 & 11, it is discovered at the end of the tenth (10th) game that the first ball change was not made. When should the first (1st) two (2) ball changes be made?

Ruling: At the end of the eleventh (11th) game and then after a further eleven (11) games have been played i.e. twenty second (22nd) game.

Case 32: A player stops a rally and indicates that the ball in play is a different brand to that being used by the tournament.

Ruling: If there is nothing wrong with the ball i.e. broken, then the player stopping the rally loses the point. The ball should however be removed and replaced with a suitable ball as the other match balls.

8. INJURY:

Case 33: A player's nose starts to bleed. He is unable to play and requests a medical time-out.

Ruling: A medical time-out is granted. The Referee is permitted to extend the time permitted to five (5) minutes as bleeding is reason for a possible extension. Any blood being visible on court is an automatic reason to stop play.

Case 34: At a local tournament, a player sustains an injury. There is no Doctor or Trainer on-site.

Ruling: The player's coach or parent is permitted to administer treatment under the supervision of a Court Monitor or Referee. The standard medical time out procedures are to be followed.

9. CORRECTING ERRORS:

Case 35: The server serves from the wrong court, loses the point, then claims a let should be played as he server from the wrong court.

Ruling: The point stands as played. He serves the next point from the proper court in accordance to the score.

Case 36: In a doubles match it is discovered, after a game has been completed that partner A served out of turn and that Player B should in fact have just served.

Ruling: The game stands as played. Player B will serve the next time that team A/B are to serve and the new sequence stands until the completion of the set.

Case 37: Same situation as in Case 36, except the error is discovered before the game is completed.

Ruling: All points played shall stand, including faults if discovered after a first (1st) service fault. Player B takes over serving from the point in which the error is discovered.

Case 38: In a doubles match between Team A/B and C/D, it is discovered that during Player A's service game, Player C should in fact be serving.

Ruling: All points played shall stand. The error is corrected immediately with Player C commencing serving. In the case where the error is discovered after a first (1st) service fault, Player C will be awarded a first (1st) service as the error was between the teams and not within the team.

10. GENERAL CASES:

Case 39: During a rally Player A catches a ball which was going out of play and says "Out". Reason being that was clearly going to be out and did not want to walk to fetch the ball.

Ruling: Player A loses the point. The ball is only out when it has either bounced outside the lines of the court or hit the back/side fence.

Case 40: When is a ball classified as being "a dead ball"

Ruling: Once the ball either lands outside the lines of the court, has bounced twice or touched a permanent fixture.

Case 41: Player A is defaulted through the Code of Conduct, but is still involved in the doubles event. May he continue to play the doubles event?

Ruling: The Referee shall have the final decision on the matter. The severity of the incidents resulting in the Default will be considered. At local events, it is highly unlikely that the player will be permitted to continue.

Case 42: During a doubles match in which Player A and B are playing together (both are still involved in the singles event), Player A received a Code Violation Warning for Ball Abuse. Player B later receives a Code Violation Point Penalty for Racket Abuse, during the third (3rd) set Player A swears at the Court Monitor and the team is Defaulted. Who may continue playing singles?

Ruling: Player B may continue playing in the singles as he was not involved in the incident that resulted in the Default. It is up to the Referee as per Case 41 if Player A may continue playing in the singles event.

Case 43: May the receiver "towel down" between first (1st) and second (2nd) serves?

Ruling: No. As the first (1st) service was a fault, there is no reason to "towel down" between serves and the second (2nd) serve should follow without a deliberate delay.

Case 44: Player A serves his first (1st) serve into the net, the net jumps loose.

Ruling: Player A is awarded a first (1st) serve due to the delay between first (1st) and second (2nd) serve being beyond his control. The same would apply if a singles stick were to become dislodged and fall to the ground after a first (1st) service fault.

Case 45: Same case as in Case 44, except that the net jumps loose when the second (2nd) serve is hit into the net.

Ruling: This is a double fault as the net came loose after the ball struck the net and the net did not affect the service.