

# Table tennis needs an important update - now!

Corona changes everything. And reveals many previous alibis and weak points. Tomorrow's problems in our sport can therefore no longer be solved with yesterday's tools. Previous thinking is a big part of our problem. Time for a critical look at the things that should change in Germany. And when asked what the future of our sport is worth to us.

by  
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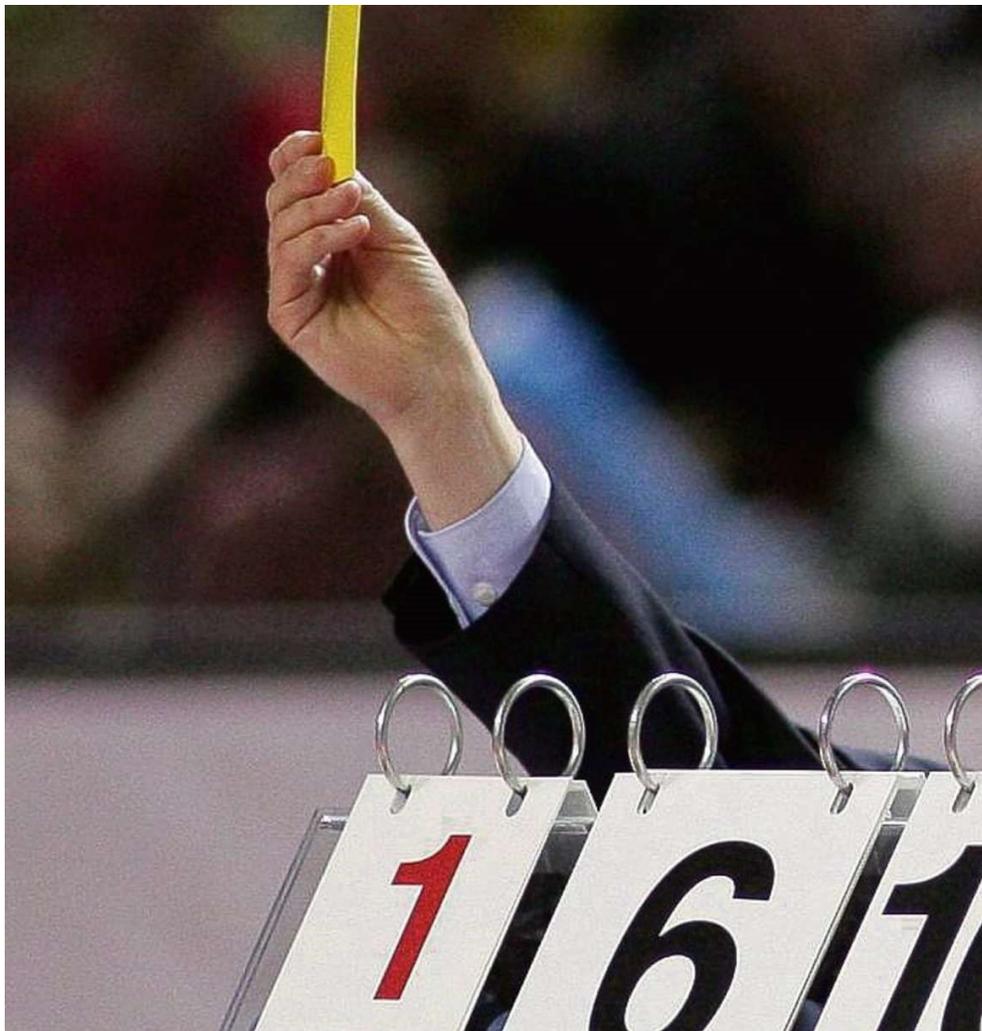
(Part 2)



Unusual times require unusual measures. The second part of my article on the need to change our sport is about "rules for our rules" and a uniform game system for our sport throughout Germany.

The third and last part deals with the recognition and necessity of professionally qualified training and professionalized training work as support for a significant structural change in our sport. This will appear around the end of August 2020.

### **3. Creation of a functioning judiciary of the associations at all levels of competition operations (Why are we not able to enforce our own set of rules at all levels?)**



One sport that cannot enforce following your own rules is an expiring sport. Why are we not able to enforce our own set of rules at all levels?

***"... Everyone who does sports must follow the constitutive rules and be able to rely on the others to behave accordingly ..."***

*"Those who take part in sport have to make a promise that they will adhere to the membership rules of the sport system (set of rules). This in turn means that in the sense of an upstream rule for our actions in sport it can be formulated: Every athlete must assume that his partner tries just as sincerely to adhere to the constitutive rules of sport as he does himself." (Prof. Helmut Digel, from "Sport quergedacht")*

But what if the majority of all table tennis players do not know the current rules or do not know them well enough ("I heard it is so and so ...")?

What if there are no trained referees in the lower half of all divisions and tournaments in our sport who control and enforce our rules and their observance by all players?

The answer is clear: the rules cannot and will not be applied and compliance with them is no longer required ... many "issues" arise again and again and again and again. With fatal consequences. The image as a boring sport that is not taken seriously because it does not take itself seriously is cemented. Arbitration tribunals are also being called on more and more frequently. The practice in at least half of all divisions in our sport looks like this: There are leagues in which only "customary law" is played; True to the motto: "We're not in the Bundesliga here" or "We have never done it like this before". Killer phrases as factual arguments!

Many players no longer dare to insist on adhering to the rules because they are quickly labeled as "spoilsport", "quarrel seeker" or "fraudster". And this is all the more evident the fewer referees with official titles are actually present at these games ...

Based on my experience and our practical work all over Germany, I would, with a cautious estimate, come to the conclusion that, in the best case, 25% of all players are regular. Referees who could remedy this "educational deficit" by applying the current rules are absent from the competitions. Appealing to clubs that all their players make themselves familiar with the rules and that they even train their players in the elementary and important issues would be just a drop on a stone - regardless of whether it is hot or cold.

Referees, who are missing in a relatively complicated and often "individually designed" set of rules like in table tennis in almost all competitions at the lower

and middle level, automatically create a "parallel world with its own rules". However, where the game is played according to customary laws instead of valid rules, a sport is worth almost nothing or loses its credibility ("Before the game starts, the ball is under the table, if you guess correctly, you have a serve!" was applied somewhere during a hot summer ... and then made its triumphant advance into the table tennis world)).

At the same time, however, many regional associations levy a "fine" for their clubs if they do not send a candidate for referee training - and try to put pressure on this unsatisfactory situation. Despite these administrative fines - which could (or in the best case should?) Be used in the sense of punishment for "creative solutions to the problem" - has there been no change in the system of missing referees for years? Nothing!

Players - when they come into contact with a referee (and even if only with a "scoring or auxiliary referee with factual decision-making authority", who mostly comes from their own or opposing team) - often do not take this referee as a "sportsman" true. Instead, they see him as a "punisher" and quickly accuse him / her of partiality. An independent referee is an integral part of the game ... and must be! But: in which other sport is it common for a party involved in the competition to provide an "independent" referee for this competition? And that too, without, in most cases, these players knowing exactly the rules?



#### 4. Creation of a single and uniform game system throughout Germany for team competitions by the associations at all levels of competition operations

How many players should a team consist of in order to play a meaningful team competition?



This question has been answered differently for more than 30 years in all regional associations and their different divisions ... 3-man, 4-man, 6-man team ... many different game systems all over Germany, which obviously have only one goal: Consensus in every corner of Germany and to achieve harmony, not to hurt anyone, to please everyone, to meet different "conditions". But apparently the goal is not being pursued to create a "recognizable characteristic", for example a uniform game system for teams so that all table tennis players, the public, potential sponsors, coaches, and young players can finally come together can get used to the game system that applies throughout Germany. In which - for example - the competition ends after a maximum of 120-150 minutes with an attractive system. And that our sport would surely one day create a consistent system and a more stable image. Maybe even animate more girls and women ... change? Currently none in sight!

All individual game systems have advantages and disadvantages. However, these are not relevant as long as there is no insight into the general advantages

of nationwide uniformity for table tennis as a team sport. These include first of all an acceptance plus, an image gain, a relative planability, team interest before particular individual interests, better marketability, etc. Because:

Table tennis competitive sport in team play is a very ambivalent phenomenon. For just as it constitutes itself, the endangerment of its own foundations is always inherent in itself; also and especially due to the above-mentioned lack of judiciary and a nationwide uniform system. The fairness (which is represented by many players) is often opposed to the unfairness (by no less players). Rules can be obeyed, rules can be broken (and will be broken all the time). If we take a closer look at the current situation of table tennis team games and their diverse game systems in Germany, we have to recognize that the dangers have multiplied in recent years, yes, that one could speak of a risk of self-destruction in team games: always fewer teams, in all ages and leagues. Some of the hazards can refer to a long tradition (in clubs it has always only been calculated in teams) and it seems to be the case that those responsible for team play are only slightly up to these risks ... precisely because it has been around since 30 Years ago there were constant requests for changes and demands for other game systems here and there ... and Pandora's box is constantly opening.

The probably more important problem of the modern team sport of table tennis can be seen in the fact that the active players brought their own particular interests from the very beginning, which from a certain perspective can clearly be described



as external interests (e.g. of the clubs or coaches). Team sport in gaming lives without any self-interest and is operated in such a way that the interests of individuals lead beyond it. In this way, children and young people still meet and compete in competitions all over the world. This is how the vast majority of all competitive sports compete on weekend after weekend.

In our sport, around 75% of all team teams in the lower half of the league play Monday through Friday. Milled in with main arguments such as: "If I had to play on the weekend, I would quit" or "The hall is already occupied on the weekend". Is there a better example of how individual interests can ruin our idea of team sport? Why does this work differently in all other sports? Why are football, handball, volleyball, basketball, gymnastics or swimming and riding competitions held at the weekend? It's a fine example of how long our sport has missed

discovering the weekend not only for tournaments, but also for team games. Without placing particular interests in the foreground ...

The ideal game system? I don't know either. But I sympathize with a nice idea of what a good team competition could look like, which could better combine organizational, media and social aspects and make team competitions of an individual sport more vivid and appealing:

- 3 players form a team - it is played at one table. A double first, then a single (up to the fourth or fifth point for one Team)
- The team competition ends after 2 1/2 hours at the latest
- Matchday and time: Saturday at 3:30 pm or Sunday at 10:00 am

