

## Table Tennis Rules Update (March 2015) – The Serve

As you will be aware, the Special Olympics Table Tennis rules are based on the International Governing Body (I.T.T.F.) and adapted in some instances to Special Olympics Athletes where appropriate.

In order to ensure our athletes are competing using the same rules they will encounter at national and international competitions, please could Table Tennis Coaches make note of the following rules on Serving. The following is taken directly from the Special Olympics Table Tennis Rules – Version: March 2014. Key points are highlighted in **blue**.

h. A Good Service

- 1) Service shall start with the ball resting freely on the open palm of the server's stationary free hand.**
- 2) The free hand and the racket shall be above the level of the playing surface from the last moment at which the ball is stationary on the palm of the free hand until the ball is struck in service.**
- 3) The server shall then project the ball upwards, by hand only and without imparting spin, so that it rises near vertically from the palm of the hand at least 16 centimeters (6 inches).**
- 4) As the ball descends from the height of its trajectory, the server shall strike it so that it touches first his/her own court then passes directly over the net or its supports and subsequently touches the receiver's court.**
- 5) In doubles, the points of contact of the ball with the playing surface shall touch successively the right half court of server and receiver.
- 6) If, in attempting to serve, a player fails to strike the ball while it is in play, he/she shall lose a point.**
- 7). As soon as the ball has been projected, the server's free arm and hand shall be removed from the space between the ball and the net. The space between the ball and the net is defined by the ball, the net and its indefinite upward extension.
- 8) Where there is a clear failure to comply with the requirements for a good service, no warning should be**
  - a) Except when an assistant umpire has been appointed, the umpire may, on the first occasion in a match at which he/she has a doubt about the correctness of a player's service, interrupt play and warn the server without awarding a point. On any subsequent occasion in the same match in which the same player's service action is of doubtful correctness, for the same or for any other reason, the player shall not be given the benefit of the doubt and shall lose a point.**
  - b) Strict observance of the prescribed method of service may be waived (when the umpire is notified before play begins) if compliance is prevented by a physical disability, and a point should be awarded to the opponent.**

As our Coaching and Competition Adviser (Table Tennis), Kevin Watt says "I am aware from years of Coaching experience that the service action can be very difficult for some of our athletes to understand and remember, but it is the responsibility of their Coaches to include Serving practice as part of their training sessions. It will take time to change their serving actions but it will benefit the athletes and give them a sense of achievement that they can serve correctly. We want to avoid the situation where Umpires are forced to fault an athlete because of an illegal serve."

The full Special Olympics Table Tennis Rules are available at:

[http://media.specialolympics.org/soi/files/resources/Sports-Rules-Competitions/SportsRules/TableTennis\\_Rules-FINAL-March2014.pdf](http://media.specialolympics.org/soi/files/resources/Sports-Rules-Competitions/SportsRules/TableTennis_Rules-FINAL-March2014.pdf)

If you have any queries regarding the above, please do not hesitate to contact our Coaching and Competition Adviser (Table Tennis) Kevin Watt. His details can be found by [clicking here](#).