

Proposed USBGF Tournament Rules Public Comment Summary

This document summarizes the set of unique comments received from the public during the 30-day public comment period, which ends on 7/31 regarding the initial release of proposed USBGF Tournament Rules, first published on 7/1. The comments listed are limited to the comments or proposals that suggest possible substantive changes to the Rules. This summary does not include suggestions for improvements to wording or organization of the Rules document that does not alter the actual intent of any aspect of the rule set. The public comment summary is accompanied by a revision to the proposed USBGF Tournament Rules that reflects changes to the Rules that the Committee believes are merited as a result of public comment.

This document represents the unanimous consensus opinion of the members of the USBGF Rules Committee, comprised of Richard Munitz, Frank Talbot, and Neil Kazaross, along with Jeb Horton – chairman of the Tournament Directors Advisory Committee (TDAC).

In addition to summarizing the comments received, each comment listed below is accompanied by some of the following types of responses from the Rules Committee:

- **Recommended action:** Provided for all comments. States the Committee's recommended action - whether the proposed change should be accepted or rejected in whole or in part, or in some cases whether the proposed change should be tabled for consideration and further study at a future date.
- **Revision:** If the Committee believes that the proposed revision merits a change to the previously proposed Rules, then the proposed new Rules text is provided here.
- **Rationale:** If the Committee believes that the proposed revision merits a change to the previously proposed Rules, then the Committee's rationale for proposing the change is provided here.
- **Reason:** If the Committee believes either that the proposed revision does not merit a rule change in whole or in part, or that it may merit a change, but should be tabled for further research and consideration at a later date, then the Committee's reasons for this recommendation are provided here.

Several responses below refer to the What Changed document that accompanied the proposed Rules during public comment. That document can be viewed here: <http://usbgf.org/docs/rules-what-changed.pdf>

Comments are listed in the order in which the sections to which they refer appear in the Rules.

GENERAL

Comment: Can directors only impose penalties listed in the rules, or do they have more authority? If the latter, the rules should say that.

Recommended action: Accepted.

Revision: Added: ***The Director may impose penalties for serious or repeated rule violations or for unacceptable behavior.***

Revision: Removed (from Legal Moves): ***Repeated illegal moves may result in tournament disqualification or other sanctions.***

Rationale: This has been generally accepted practice, but let's make it clear that the director is so empowered and eliminate the "how am I supposed to know you can do that" excuse. With this general statement, the specific statement in the Legal Moves section is redundant. That disqualification can specifically occur as a penalty is made clear in the section on Appeals.

Comment: The rules should explicitly obligate players to correct any rule violation that they notice.

Recommended action: Accepted

Revision: Added: ***Both players must promptly point out any violation of a mandatory rule, and must correct it unless the Rules explicitly allow the opponent to condone the infraction.***

Rationale: This seems obvious. If, for example, someone rolls the dice with their hands instead of from a cup, the opponent noticing this should not be legally able to tell the person they have to reroll if it was a good roll or simply say nothing if it was a bad roll. That is certainly bad sportsmanship. It is taking a shot and we can't let anyone think this might be OK. Now, we can certainly infer from precedent that condoning a rule violation is generally not permitted. After all, rule sets in the past have always mentioned explicit cases where condoning a rule violation was permitted. There would be no need for any rule set to include such explicit statements if it was permitted in general. But the rules are actually silent on this matter and they shouldn't be. Players should be on notice that they have a responsibility to uphold the rules, whether or not it is to their advantage. The words "mandatory rule" were added because there are a number of statements in the Rules that use words like "should" instead of "shall" or "must". Those statements are not mandatory in that they only convey desired best practices that if followed will avoid disputes and unfavorable rulings.

LANGUAGE

Comment: Eliminate the requirement to use English or Official Language only since it singles out players who do not speak one of those languages well, and it is unnecessary because spectators are already prohibited from talking.

Recommended action: Rejected.

Reason: First and foremost, this really is about communication and that any communication taking place must be transparent, even if we fundamentally trust everyone as a starting point (trust, but verify). The rule does not mandate silence from spectators, it actually says "Spectators **should** remain silent". "Should" indicates best practice, whereas "shall" or "must" indicates mandatory. Violations of "should" only matter if a dispute arises, and the speaking of spectators during a match need not cause a dispute. Two opponents who each speak the same non-official language are also not going to have a dispute by

doing so. Backgammon, being a highly social game, verbal engagement of spectators is commonplace. We play in noisy playing rooms with constant chatter. The key intent then, is that everyone be absolutely clear that nothing being said is of potential impact to the game in progress, nor disturbing to the players. The rule gives the players the right to insist spectators be quiet, or at least if they do speak, to do so in a way that they can understand and remain comfortable about the nature of the conversation.

MONITORS

Comment: ABT rule 2.5 states that the Director may assign a match monitor. This is missing from proposed rules.

Recommended action: Accepted

Revision: Added new section:

MONITORS

The Director or both players by mutual agreement may appoint a match monitor who is authorized to point out irregularities during play and to require correction.

Rationale: Permitting monitors is an omission and an important one and should be added, since there is otherwise no provision in the Rules permitting anyone to fulfill this distinct role. An additional change is to permit players to appoint their own monitor by mutual agreement. This seems to be common sense, and is particularly of practical use when the players have agreed to have a match transcriber.

SPECTATORS

Comment: Spectators should be permitted to speak during a match if they are asked to do so by both players.

Recommended action: Accepted.

Revision: Amended rule as follows: **Spectators should remain silent during a match, except in a dispute when requested by the director or both players, ...**

Rationale: If the players are uncertain of the facts, and they both agree that a spectator might help them to resolve a dispute, it is common sense to allow a spectator to assist the players in that situation.

DEFINITIONS

Comment: Add new equipment preference policy of “Neutral”, for which being in force means that two equipment options are on equal footing and if one player chooses each option, they must roll the dice to decide whose choice prevails.

Recommended action: Accepted.

Revision: Added: ***Neutral: use is settled by the roll of high dice;***

Rationale: This new choice provides more flexibility to directors and provides a mechanism for introducing changes, or experimenting in a less drastic manner than moving straight from Option to Preference. Players will tend to be more accepting of new things and have a greater perception of fairness when the dice decide a preference dispute rather than their opponent being able to force the choice upon them.

AIDS; OTHER EQUIPMENT

Comment: Players choosing not to use a clock in Clocks Preference events should not be prevented from taking pictures

Recommended action: Rejected

Reason: Events are Clocks Preference to encourage the use of clocks and to protect the tournament schedule. This rule either makes players wanting to take pictures also want to use a clock, or protects the tournament schedule against unregulated picture taking if they opt out from using a clock.

Comment: Prohibit manual match transcription in Clocks Preference events just like picture taking.

Recommended action: Accepted and strengthened

Revision: Amended: In Clocks Preference events, players may not take pictures **or have a match transcriber** if they decline to use a clock. **No player may self-transcribe unless they use a clock.**

Rationale: Having a match transcribed by another individual is not a passive form of recording and it occasionally delays normal play just like taking pictures. However, transcribing one's own match by hand during play must necessarily slow down play on every move and so it was felt that this should only be permitted when a clock is in use.

Comment: A player should be disallowed from using headphones if their opponent objects.

Recommended action: Accepted

Revision: Amended: ... ***listening devices for music or noise cancelling are allowed unless the opponent or Director objects.***

Rationale: Other games like Bridge and Chess have been taking a harder line in recent years on the use of electronic devices, including headphones, with policies like outright ban from the playing area or allowing devices to be carried but requiring they be turned off. The possibility of cheating with such devices is real and documented in these games. We do recognize that backgammon tournaments do not have library-like silence like those of other games, and that between dice shaking and talking, can be

rather noisy at time. So, while a ban is definitely not being considered here, giving deference to the objection of an opponent or the director seems appropriate.

That the opponent should have a say in the matter is supported by the 2016 USBGF rule (which was derived from the European rule):

Headphone, Earbuds, Etc.

*While a match is in progress, a player shall have the right to use headphones, earbuds, or similar noise cancellation or music listening devices **unless the player's opponent expresses a reasonable objection to the player doing so**. The Tournament Director shall adjudicate all such disputes, and additionally shall have the right to prohibit a player from using headphones or earbuds at any time.*

So, eliminating the objection provision from our Rules proposal, was an unrealized rule change that we failed to document in What Changed. Unfortunately, the “reasonable objection” language is incredibly unclear. Isn’t “it makes me uncomfortable”, or “it makes it annoying to communicate when necessary with my opponent” reasonable? Anyone can say that. What would not be a reasonable objection? The director is already empowered under these rules to make an exception to the objection if, for example, the player has a legitimate need for the device, or has reason to believe that the objection was raised for unsportsmanlike reasons. In summary, removal of the “reasonable objection” provision seems warranted.

Polling...

A poll was conducted on Chicago Point regarding headphone use, and this proposed rule change is clearly the community consensus. In this poll of 433, the results were: 51% favoring unconditional veto, 20% favoring veto unless device can't do anything else but play music / cancel noise, 19% don't care and only 10% favoring allowing unconditionally. See poll #37:

<http://www.chicagopoint.com/pollresults.html>

Bridge and chess...

Bridge / ACBL – entirely banned carry into playing areas in 2008, but rescinded the ban in 2013:

The following policy will apply to all NABC events, effective July 1, 2008. Electronic devices, excluding health related equipment, capable of sending or receiving communication, including but not limited to, headphones, earphones, cellular phones and minicomputers: 1) will not be allowed in the playing areas, adjacent hallways, rest rooms or accessible break areas; and 2) will not be used during a session.

But found this at <http://www.bridge-district3.org/gnt/2015/cc.pdf> for district nationals in 2014/15 which allows carry, but requires devices to be off:

Electronic devices, excluding health-related equipment, capable of sending or receiving communication, including but not limited to, headphones, earphones, cellular phones and minicomputers shall not be turned on in the playing areas, adjacent hallways, restrooms or accessible break areas and shall not be used during a session.

Chess: FIDE rules do not specifically address headphone use, but apparently it is widely interpreted as not allowed under the latest rule set under the following rule:

12.6 It is forbidden to distract or annoy the opponent in any manner whatsoever. This includes unreasonable claims, unreasonable offers of a draw or the introduction of a source of noise into the playing area.

Found following supporting comment at <https://chess.stackexchange.com/questions/5186/do-fide-rules-allow-listening-to-music-while-playing-a-tournament-game?rq=1> :

The same question was asked to International Arbiter Geurt Gijssen in his January 2014 column (chesscafe.com/text/geurt187.pdf), and he responded it was forbidden due to article 12.6. I have also never been to a tournament where this has been allowed, I have seen people try/ask about this many times and it has always been disallowed by the arbiter (and by myself when I have been the arbiter)

<http://www.uschess.org/content/view/11970/688> regarding the USCF scholastic rules:

Last, the new Scholastic Rules add greater clarity on the subject of Electronic Devices. In particular, Rule 21.12 now states, "While a player's game is in progress, all electronic devices in his/her possession must be turned off at all times." The rule applies to any electronic devices except digital clocks, approved electronic score-keeping devices (e.g. Monroi, E-Notate), and necessary medical devices. So, if you are accustomed to playing your game while listening to music or wearing noise-cancelling headphones, you need to practice without these devices because they are examples of equipment that are not allowed while your game is in progress.

START (RESUME) TIMES AND BREAKS

Comment: Allowed break time of 6 minutes per hour is insufficient. The restroom may be far away. Females may require a bit more time as well. A 15-minute break is not unreasonable.

Recommended action: Rejected, but rule clarified

TBD – Jeb to suggest start/resume wording

Revision: Amended: ***Each player is entitled to breaks between games, in general not to exceed 6 minutes per hour elapsed since the start (resume) time. Breaks during the first such hour should be limited to urgent need only.***

Rationale: The intent of the rule was that starting from the beginning of the match, players continuously accrue 6 minutes of break time per hour (1 minute of break time every 10 minutes) in the bank as the match progresses, and that this accrued time is not lost if not used in any given hour. Break time is then subtracted from this bank as used. This means that if you don't take a break for 90 minutes, you've accrued 9 minutes of break time, which you can use all at once if you wish. While taking that 9-minute break, you have accrued nearly another minute of break time since nearly 10 more minutes has elapsed. So effectively, you can take a 10-minute break after 90 minutes of play (and opponent's breaks). The rule has been clarified to indicate that the 6 minutes per hour is based on the total amount of time elapsed since the start of play, rather than being an allotment to be used or lost during any fixed period of time. However, for matches that are adjourned due to a dinner break or overnight, all accrued break time that has not been used is lost, and the process of break allocation begins anew when the adjourned match resumes at the scheduled resume time. The expectation to avoid breaks during the first hour of play is also clarified as applying to resumption of an adjourned match and not just to the initial start.

Reason for rejection: The distance concern can be valid at some venues; however, it is not generally valid. The remedy in those situations is two-fold. Firstly, if an individual has a mobility issue that causes them to take longer than a typical person, that concern may be raised with the Director, who will likely grant an exception for that person's matches. Secondly, if the distance is unusually long at a particular venue, the Director may make a more general break time exception for the entire tournament. Such an exception is still narrowly tailored because of the unusual circumstances of the venue and the fact that no more finely targeted solution to that problem is available in such a case. But generally speaking, 6 minutes is actually a pretty long time. Allowing a separate 15-minute break each hour for each player during the middle of a match actually is incredibly unreasonable. That is potentially 50% of the total match duration spent taking breaks. As noted by the rationale for the rule clarification, players are not actually limited to breaks of maximum 6-minute duration; they can take a longer break if they have saved up sufficient break time. It is also important to remember that there is a difference between a rare single occurrence need for more time on one break than you have in the bank due to an unanticipated situation and simply giving every player more time in every match. Players are not assessed a penalty point until they have caused a 10-minute delay to the match. So, in case of an unusual situation a player cannot return on time and takes 12 minutes when they only have 6 in the bank, they won't be penalized as long as they cause no further delay. This should not be interpreted by anyone as license to abuse the grace period allowed by the rules, but it is a reminder that the intention of the break rule is not to punish people for legitimate need, but to give directors the legal tools they need to keep their events on schedule. All that said, this rule represents a new, more flexible way of looking at breaks, designed to address the scheduling concerns of tournament directors, as well as the varying needs of players. But being new, it is something of an experiment and it is therefore something we will need to pay close attention to going forward in order to see if any adjustments may be required in a future Rules revision.

PREFERENCE RESOLUTION

Comment: Make baffle boxes Preference over cups. Claim is that baffle boxes are less prone to non-random outcomes.

Recommended action: Partially accepted/rejected

Revision: Amended: **Precedence for dice-randomizing device is: 1) lipped cups; 2) baffle box; 3) another device if first approved by the Director; 4) non-lipped cups.**

Rationale: Nobody should be using non-lipped cups unless nothing else is available.

Reason for partial rejection: As a partial concession, baffle boxes will be preferred over non-lipped cups, but will not be preferred over lipped cups. Cups are standard equipment with backgammon boards so there needs to be a very compelling reason to not prefer the standard equipment. These rules presume fair play; cheating is an entirely separate matter for which other remedies are available. There is no evidence that lipped cups when properly used produce a less random outcome than a baffle box. Improper use exists, but experience over the years has shown that this problem is easily remedied by showing such a player how to properly shake and roll. Only in rare cases is a player unwilling or unable to comply as well as being unwilling to use a baffle box, in which case the Director may always impose a

baffle box. Directors have the option to make baffle boxes Preference over cups at their tournaments. It seems best for a few willing directors to experiment with this option first before making it the default.

Comment: Permit one player to use a baffle box while another player uses a cup.

Recommended action: Partially accepted/rejected

Revision: **Players may agree to each use a different type of dice-randomizing device.**

Rationale: It was decided that if both players agree to have one use a cup and the other a baffle box, that there was no real harm to allowing it. The reason for preference rules is to settle disputes. In this case, there is no dispute.

Reason for partial rejection: It was decided that a player should not be able to insist upon their own use of a baffle box without regard to the other player. There are implications to one player using a baffle box that still affect the opponent, such as having a large device looming over the board and possibly extending slightly into the playing area, as well as that the clock may need to be placed further away from the playing area in order to make room for the cube. These factors are as much of the reason why cups are Preference over baffle boxes to begin with as is the mechanics of producing a random roll.

Comment: Make precision dice Preference over non-precision dice. Then make transparent dice Preference over non-transparent dice.

Recommended Action: Partially accepted/rejected

Revision: ***Precision dice are Preference over non-precision.***

Rationale: The preference for precision dice was part of the prior ABT rule set and was an unintended omission from these Rules. There is no good reason not to retain this preference rule.

Reason for partial rejection: While transparent dice have the advantage of alleviating suspicion of foul play, they also have a disadvantage of being harder for many people to properly read the numbers. This visibility issue is especially obvious when matches are being streamed. It is hard to say which concern should prevail over the other, so we believe it best to remain neutral on the matter and that a dispute over whose dice to use should be settled by rolling for it as is already the rule.

GAME CLOCKS

Comment: Make default clock policy Clocks Obligation in Open and Preference in Intermediate

Recommended action: Rejected, but to be revisited

Reason: It was felt that it was a step in the right direction to formally standardize on the default of Clocks Preference in Open, since the previous ABT rules default was Clocks Option and the Fall 2016 USBGF

rules, while recommending the clock policies suggested by the comment, actually left the matter to directors to decide, thus establishing no clock policy if the director said nothing (meaning in practice – Clocks Option). This topic will be revisited during the next Rules review, after this rule set has seen substantial use in actual tournament play.

Comment: Older people may be less capable of moving as quickly. Amend clock policy to explicitly allow a little more time for both players (e.g. 15 seconds per point) if either player is over 60 and wants to claim the extra time.

Recommended action: Rejected

Reason: The director already has the discretion to make an exception in any specific case for which there is a physical issue that impairs the ability of an individual to play at a pace that is within expected norms. Furthermore, these new Rules somewhat mitigate the issue by providing for a looser default 15 second delay time instead of 12 below the Open level of play. While we do not dispute that older individuals may play slower on average than younger ones, there has been no evidence submitted or observed to support the implication of this proposal that the time controls established under the Rules are actually too tight for a sizable minority of older players. As a thought experiment, suppose that the Rules had instead established the default time control at 3 minutes per point and an 18 second delay. Would it still be proposed that older people should be allowed more time simply because they are older and play slower? If yes, then simply giving all players an extra minute per point would not actually satisfy the commenter, even though the proposal is to add less than that for older players. If no, then what is the magic threshold below which older people would need more time and above which they would have sufficient time? And what is the evidence to support that magic threshold being correct? And is that magic threshold actually higher than the settings under these Rules? To approve such a change, we must have actual evidence that the time controls established by the Rules are too tight for older players in general. Are older people timing out frequently? Are directors being burdened by requests for additional time or complaints from older people that they can't keep up? Do directors report that this occurs significantly more often among 65-year-old players than 45-year-old players? We find no such evidence at this time that an actual problem exists. And without a problem, a solution is not justified. If such evidence emerges as clock use becomes more prevalent, we can and will revisit the question.

VALID ROLLS; DICE LANDING ON CHECKERS

Comment: Relax requirement that both dice must land on the right side of the board.

Recommended action: Rejected

Reason: As for letting the dice land anywhere, the historical rationale has been that both dice should wind up near each other and near where they were rolled since dice mechanics could otherwise more easily distract a player with one flying die while manipulating the second one. As for being given the option to roll on the left side of the board, that is a reasonable suggestion. Historically, people have wanted that option because of cocked dice due to all the checkers on the home board side, which dice-on-checkers now mitigates. So, at this time it is felt best to see how dice-on-checkers works out. Having dice on the

right is helpful to spectators to know who's turn it is. So, it is always a question of balancing competing concerns.

Comment: Dice-on-checkers: a) I like it; b) I don't like it.

Recommended action: The dice-on-checkers rule will remain as the default with directors having the ability to opt out from the rule by providing advance notice.

Reason: The rationale for this rule can be found in the What Changed document. Ultimately, the comments have almost entirely come down to personal preference. There were some pictures provided that demonstrated that a ruling could be difficult in some cases – particularly whether dice falling between the checkers were tilted down by 1 degree (invalid) or 0 degrees (valid). This is a valid point. In these and all similar situations to date, the proper ruling was clear. Most cases of director involvement to date have been to explain the rule to players who were unsure of the rule itself, rather than there being a difficult call regarding the validity of the roll. It should be noted that the tilt problem is not new to this rule. Many rulings in the past have been required when a die lands on the playing surface, up against the rail or bar because players are unsure whether the die is supported entirely by the playing surface or if it is ever so slightly raised and supported by the vertical surface. Data will continue to be collected about the dice-on-checkers rule over the next year and if directors report difficulties in making rulings or that the number of rulings required are disruptive, we will revisit the question.

VALID ROLLS; DICE LANDING ON CHECKERS

Comment: Rules should define standards for proper rolling technique in detail. Minimum number of shakes; up and down; minimum height off the board; simultaneously, and what does that mean; don't look at the dice in the cup before rolling.

Recommended Action: Partially accepted/rejected

Revision: Amended: ***When using a cup, the dice shall be vigorously shaken at least twice up and down and rolled together freely on the right-hand side of the bar from a minimum height of 2.5cm/1".***

Rationale: Added requirements for "at least twice up and down", "together", and "minimum height". These are all essential requirements for producing a proper roll from a cup. "Together" seems like a better word than simultaneously since the two words can be interpreted synonymously, but "together" also has a definition that better conveys the rule's intent: "into or in a condition of unity, compactness, or coherence". We will permit some difference in time, but we do require compactness in time and unity in cause and effect. The 2.5 cm or 1" minimum height is in a sense arbitrary. The main objective is to keep the cup sufficiently above the playing surface so that the cup and fingers do not touch the board and so that the dice drop through the air from the cup to the playing surface. Play-testing various distances and observing players rolling show that this is a comfortable minimum distance for everyone, and that a very large number of players are not comfortable rolling at 2", 3" or higher as other rule sets have suggested doing. We would rather start with a lower minimum height and adjust it up if needed than to start too high and find that nobody is conforming.

Reason for partial rejection: Exactly what constitutes “together” is not an essential rule. Only if there is a dispute must the director judge if this requirement is being met. Similarly, the rules instruct players to avoid the appearance of impropriety. Looking in the cup fails on that account, so while being explicit is helpful for clarity, it is not essential. Therefore, any guidance on criteria or best practices in these areas will be left to the Ruling Guide. Content for the Ruling Guide is outside of the scope of this current project, so it is premature to respond on what may be written in this section. That said, the definition of simultaneous rolling in the 2009 ABT rule set will be a starting point for any discussion. Of course, players will be advised to familiarize themselves with the Ruling Guide once it is available, since adhering to that guidance is the surest way to avoid disputes and unfavorable rulings.

END OF TURN

Comment: Do not restore time for player having closed out opponent if they fail to hit clock. They should be responsible for their oversight.

Recommended action: Rejected

Reason: This rule set has consistently chosen to adhere to the Legal Moves as opposed to the Responsible Moves philosophy. See Introduction of What Changed document. In this particular case, the decision is even clearer because the opponent is also responsible for the irregularity since they are either responsible for failing to hit their own clock as required after each move by the player if they believe the player is making multiple moves, or responsible for failing to immediately point out illegal plays by their opponent if they believe the player is doing all of that rolling and moving on a single turn. The opponent should not benefit from an irregularity in which they are complicit, nor should they have an incentive to perpetuate the irregularity.

Comment: Make one set of dice Obligation over two sets of dice

Recommended action: Rejected, but to be revisited

Reason: That playing with one set of dice is better is agreed, and that is why this rule set has not only taken the significant step of authorizing it for non-clock play, but made it Preference. But playing with one set of dice without a clock (i.e. tapping the bar to end turn) is still a relatively new thing and more experience is needed. Some feedback already received has been that there is some new confusion because it is easy to miss the end of turn signal and you can't just look at the clock to see what state it is in. That is why non-expiring clocks were made Preference over tapping. And that might have the secondary benefit of encouraging more players to get clocks. But it is felt that more experience with this mode of play is needed before taking the stronger step of requiring it. Directors will have the option to require one set of dice, and any that do so may provide further feedback.

Comment: Do not allow non-expiring game clocks. Clocks should always be set to something, even if a very generous time control.

Recommended action: Rejected

Reason: Game clocks have two design functions: 1) budgeting the use of time by players; and 2) providing a mechanism for players to signal their end of turn and to clearly indicate on inspection whose turn it is at any point in time. Many clocks have mechanical plungers and are even capable of fully performing function 2 while they are turned off. A non-expiring clock is superior in every way to tapping the bar as a mechanism for ending turns and it would be an injustice to the players and the game to prohibit its use. Furthermore, the suggestion is in a sense misguided. The choice of the players here is not between whether to use a timed or non-expiring clock; it is between whether to use a non-expiring clock or tapping the bar as a means of signaling end of turn when one set of dice are in use for a match that is not required to use a clock at all. Since use of one set of dice is superior to two sets and should be encouraged, and since the use of a non-expiring clock is superior to tapping, it should not only be allowed, but should also be encouraged. The secondary benefit is to get players used to playing with a clock so that they will be more comfortable when they are required to play using a timed clock.

LEGAL MOVES

Comment: Legal Moves: a) I like it; b) I don't like it.

Recommended action: The Legal Moves rule will remain as the default with directors having the ability to opt out from the rule by providing advance notice.

Reason: This is entirely a philosophical choice that has been consistently applied throughout the rule set. See the Introduction section of the What Changed document for more discussion on this topic.

ERRORS IN STARTING POSITION

Comment: Regarding error in starting position, the error must be corrected if noticed according to the former ABT rule "prior to the fifth roll of the game", and according to the USBGF rule "before both players complete their second turns". The difference here is that the USBGF rule does not require correction if noticed between the end of the fourth turn and the beginning of the fifth turn. There doesn't seem to be any good reason for not allowing correction during this time.

Recommended action: Accepted

Revision: Amended: An error in the starting position must be corrected if noticed **before the fifth valid roll of the game, ...**

Rationale: It was not realized that the correction period had actually been changed by this rule; it was simply thought to be a bit clearer stated as it was. But the comment is correct, and this was an unintended change. Consistent with the Legal Moves rule, we say "valid roll" because there is no good reason to end the notice period if cocked dice are thrown.

GAME CLOCK PROPRIETY AND EXPIRATION

Comment: Losing match due to clock expiration is too punitive since it is too easy for players to fail to notice that they are low on time. One suggestion was for a lesser penalty in exchange for some more

time. Another suggestion was to have a small overtime allowance as is done in Go – for example, the director adds 30 seconds to the clock on initial expiry and now the player knows they only have 30 seconds.

Recommended action: Rejected, but to be revisited

This proposal has a lot of merit – particularly the overtime suggestion, though perhaps 1 minute is best due to programming ease. Even without adding any additional clock time, the rules could instruct that clocks be set for 1 minute less than normal reserve and then the 1 minute gets added back if needed. As clock play becomes more common, many more players that are new to clock play will be at risk of surprise timeout losses at tournaments and it is not good for the game to have people go home with a bad feeling, and not good for growing wider acceptance of clock play either. However, this would be a major rule change. There are potential implications to directors who would be responsible for dealing with claims for overtime. And aside from hearing the thoughts of directors, the public may have more to add to the discussion. So, it is felt that at this point in the Rules cycle, it is too late to introduce such a big change. However, the idea will definitely be explored further over the next year and could lead to a future rules revision. Reducing the penalty from match loss to a point penalty with the awarding of more time is not considered viable. The goal is to constrain total match time. Players must budget their time properly and play at a reasonable pace with the advance knowledge of how much time they have. Changing the penalty and awarding more time undermines those goals, and is potentially even more of a burden on the director than a single overtime allocation.

INCORRECT MATCH LENGTH

Comment: Clarify that for matches played to the wrong length, Crawford Game and Dead Cube rule application remains based on incorrect match length until game currently in progress is completed.

Recommended action: Partially accepted/rejected

Details: This is implied by the Rules as written, so it is unnecessary to state this as a rule. However, it is agreed that it would be helpful to be explicit in the ruling guide in case the implication is not obvious to some. These clarifications will be added to the Ruling Guide.

Comment: Rule covering matches played to the wrong length does not address whether clocks are also adjusted.

Recommended action: Accepted

Revision: Added statement: ***Clocks may be adjusted by the Director.***

Rationale: While it seems straightforward how to do this when the match length is being increased, it is certainly not so straightforward to make a correction when the match length is being decreased. So, it is best left to the judgment of the Director. The Ruling Guide may offer some recommendations.

DEAD CUBES

Comment: The previous ABT Dead Cube rule is preferable to this one because it does not provide an advantage to the leader in the match.

Recommended action: Rejected

Reason: Firstly, the difference between the two rules is that the prior ABT rule makes the cube dead only if it is at a level where either player will win the match at the current level, as compared to the proposed rule which makes the cube dead if only the player potentially doubling will win the match at the current level. It is true that this formulation is asymmetrical, just like the Crawford Rule. But an asymmetrical rule is not inherently unfair since either player may wind up being the leader in the match. This rule is another case of the Legal vs Responsible philosophical divide, and these rules have consistently applied the Legal philosophy rather than the Responsible philosophy. As a result, basic validation of the cube level is required and a player is simply not allowed to take any action that does not pass validation.