

## Proposed USBGF Tournament Rule Changes For 2024

This document enumerates the various rule changes proposed for the USBGF Tournament Rules along with the rationale behind the changes. The new rules, once finalized, will take effect for the 2024 ABT calendar year. It is possible that tournaments later in 2023 will be offered the option to use the new rules.

### **Why is the USBGF proposing a major revision to its Tournament Rules?**

Why can't there be a single set of rules for tournament backgammon that is used everywhere in the world? That question has been asked by many for decades. Further divergence of rules world-wide was one of the objections initially raised to the current USBGF Rules. We finally have a new answer to that old question. Yes, the rules for tournament backgammon can be the same everywhere in the world. This is it!

A major rules revision is justified, and we should be willing to compromise and accept some changes that we might not be thrilled about if it results in tournaments working exactly the same everywhere in the world. That is what this set of changes will achieve. Please review the proposed rule changes contained in this document with this in mind.

The World Backgammon Federation (WBGf), formerly the EUBGF is a confederation of national federations from around the world. The EUBGF had achieved success in Europe and was getting interest from federations outside of Europe. So, it was renamed and its domain was expanded to be world-wide. However, to be the legitimate world-wide confederation of national federations would require bringing the two largest non-European federations on board – the US and Japan. Achieving that would require a number of changes, one of which was agreement on rules, since using the WBGf Rules is a requirement for any nations seeking membership. Fortunately, it was recognized by all involved that achieving world-wide unification on rules requires flexibility and open mindedness to compromise. It was also recognized that world-wide unification on rules is not achieved simply by reaching agreement with other federations as long as independent directors running some of the largest tournaments in the world did not also agree. Thus, in 2019 began several years of discussion and negotiation between representatives from federations around the world as well as independent directors seeking to agree on a common set of rules. The USBGF has joined the WBGf given the commitment by everyone to work in good faith to unify rules.

This long and difficult process was successful and generally combined the best features of all current rule sets. The WBGf ultimately accepted over 20 changes from the USBGF Rules; the USBGF accepted around the same number of changes from the WBGf Rules. In some cases, the best solution was somewhere in the middle. However, scoring that goal required that the goal posts be moved. Two key realizations occurred that enabled our ultimate success. Firstly, that there would need to be a very small set of rules having options (ultimately just two: Legal Moves vs. Responsible Moves and Dice on Checkers). Secondly, and most critically - that the true goal is not to have a single rules document that is used everywhere; it is to have tournaments work the same everywhere because whatever rules document is used at one tournament means exactly the same thing as the rules document used at another. This means that it is OK for the USBGF to create its own, concise rules document, while the WBGf creates a long rules document in English, while the Japanese Backgammon League (JBL) creates its own rules document in Japanese – as long as all of those documents have exactly the same intent and interpretation. Revised goal: the rules used world-wide must be aligned.

New rule:

These Tournament Rules govern live tournament backgammon play. They are a complete, though concise rendition of the [WBGf Tournament Rules](#), having the identical intent and interpretation.

This is the first sentence in the proposed 2024 USBGF Tournament Rules. This makes clear that although these Rules are shorter, with different words, it is complete and means the same thing as the WBGf Rules. If you read both documents and conclude that the same situation is handled differently under the two sets of rules, then your interpretation is wrong. Please bring any such situations to our attention; we will want to clarify the text to avoid any such misinterpretation. Note: the WBGf link above is to the current WBGf rules, which are also undergoing revision.

## **General - TD Discretionary Items / Rule Options**

In general, various things in the core USBGF rule set (pages 1-3) are now left to TD discretion, for example: clock policy. It has been agreed that federations may establish additional regulations, standards, limitations, etc. for tournament aspects that have been left to TD discretion by the core rules. So, the USBGF has created a Supplement to the core Rules (page 4) for this purpose that will apply in addition to the core Rules. A number of things specified in our current Rules have been moved to the Supplement. Additionally, what was previously covered by the separate Rules Options document has been folded into this Supplement; the Rules Options document is being eliminated. Aside from this restructuring, there is no net change in the effect of the combined Rules plus Supplement, unless identified below. Note that the Supplement contains a link to the Ruling Guide applicable to the previous (2019) Tournament Rules. Once the 2024 Rules are finalized, an updated Ruling Guide will be prepared and the Ruling Guide link will be updated.

The section numbers cited below are taken from the current WBGF Tournament Rules and are provided only as a means of cross-reference. Note that the WBGF Rules are also being revised. Any rule text given is taken from either the current (old) USBGF Rules, or the new (proposed) USBGF Rules.

### **1.1 Interpretation and Scope**

Clarification:

Every TD must be impartial and avoid conflicts of interest.

This ought to go without saying, but it is being stated explicitly. This is being added as a catch-all to ensure alignment with a few explicit statements in the WBGF Rules – for example, that a TD who is playing in their own tournament can't make a ruling on their own match.

### **1.1 Interpretation and Scope**

Clarification:

The TD may address any rule violation they observe.

It has always been commonly presumed that the TD is the ultimate authority with regard to rules compliance at the tournament and ought to be able to act as a monitor for any portion of any match at any time. However, it seems best that the Rules explicitly state that the TD has such a general authority without the need for them to inform players in advance that they may so act. Furthermore, by stating "may", we make clear that the TD does not have an obligation to point out every rule violation that they happen to observe while walking around, but rather that they may do so at their discretion.

### **1.2 Etiquette**

Clarification:

Players must handle equipment respectfully.

While common sense, and TD may deal with players who fail anyway, it seems sensible to set the expectation.

### **1.3 Staff – Tournament Directors**

Clarification:

Directors must be impartial and avoid conflicts of interest.

Another common-sense addition in general. However, specifically this addresses cases where a TD chooses to play in their own tournament. The Ruling Guide will explicitly make clear the intent that TDs as a collective must be impartial, meaning that if one TD is playing in the tournament, another of that tournament's TDs must make any required ruling, but none of the tournament's TDs may be a member of the Ruling Committee hearing any appeal. If there is only one TD, then any ruling required on the TD's match must go directly to a Ruling Committee.

### **1.6(ii) Spectators – Signaling**

Clarification:

Spectators must not signal or help players in any way, except ...

USBGF Rules already prohibit signaling, but we should explicitly prohibit all other forms of help.

### **1.7(i) Use of Aids**

Current rule:

Players must not use any aids during a match, including breaks, ...

New rule:

Players must not use any aids during a match, ...

This change removes the explicit prohibition against using aids during breaks. To say it differently, breaks will no longer be considered to be "during a match". The inclusion of breaks in this rule has generally been problematic. Breaks in matches can occur for dinner or overnight and clearly players are going to talk or study backgammon during those times. Even during a normal 5-minute break, players are going to chat, and it is simply impossible to expect that players will not look at their phones. This provision is simply unenforceable and it seems best that the rules not to try to police it or put players in a position where anything they do away from the board that involves backgammon places them under suspicion of violating the rules.

## **2.2(ii) Starting Times and Breaks – break schedule**

Return to a fixed break schedule based upon match length from our current flexible allocation of break time of 6 minutes per hour of elapsed match time.

Current rule:

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

New Rule:

During a match, each player may call a number of 5-minute breaks between games, up to the match length divided by 6 (rounded down). Players may tend to emergencies if no breaks remain and shall inform the TD; abuse may be penalized. The TD may modify the standard break schedule.

To achieve alignment of rules, we have agreed to revert to the fixed break schedule approach taken by WBGF and other rule sets, though they have accepted a slightly more generous break schedule as a compromise. We estimate that the new break schedule equates to break time of approximately 5 minutes per hour of elapsed match time – down from our current 6 minutes. Some of the US TDs had indicated a belief that the current 6 minutes was too generous, so this change tightens it a bit. While the flexibility of a non-fixed schedule is being lost, the fixed schedule is easier to enforce if necessary. Those players who require short but more frequent breaks for medical reasons can seek an accommodation from the TD, who may make an exception given the special circumstances. This will be noted in the Ruling Guide. However, the new rule does include a provision to address the case where a player has exhausted their allowed breaks but is faced with an emergency need to take a break – for example, they must urgently use the toilet. In that case, the rule permits the player to tend to the emergency without first locating the TD and obtaining permission. They are expected to be efficient and to consult with the TD upon their return. Such players are placed on notice that if the TD believes that this privilege is being abused, they may be penalized. The TD is also given explicit discretion to modify the standard break schedule.

## **2.2(ii) Starting Times and Breaks – breaks between matches**

Current USBGF rule:

Unscheduled matches shall have a designated start time 10 minutes after both preceding matches have been completed.

New rule:

Players are entitled to a 5-minute break between consecutive matches.

This was a case where the intent behind the original rule and the language of the rule didn't actually align. The intent was that a player who finishes their current match should have up to 10 minutes time to unwind before they had to sit down and begin playing their next match. However, as written, the next

match was deemed to start 10 minutes later, but the player had a further grace time of 10 additional minutes after that start time before penalty points could be assessed (meaning it could be dragged out to 20 minutes between matches). Unless other arrangements are made with the TD, we really want a player sitting down to play their next match 10 minutes after they have finished their previous – presuming that they have an opponent. With the new language, the player gets a 5-minute break and then a 5-minute grace period after the break, allowing for up to the intended 10 minutes between matches. When this rule says, “consecutive matches”, it is typically referring to matches without an otherwise published/posted start time – intended to be played one after the other during scheduled playing hours. It is also referring to cases where two players must play a series of matches such as “best 2 of 3”, so they are entitled to 5 minutes between the matches in such a series in addition to any breaks allotted for use during the individual matches. The previous rule did not address the case of best-of series. In cases where two rounds in the same event have scheduled start times, but a match in one round ends within 5 minutes of the time that the next match is scheduled to start, those matches have become consecutive and the players are entitled to a 5-minute break between matches; penalty points may begin 5 minutes after the scheduled start time, or at the end of the 5-minute break period – whichever is later.

## **2.2(iv)g Starting Times and Breaks - penalty for lateness**

Current USBGF rule:

The Director shall strictly assess penalty points against any player who fails to start or resume a match on time, or who takes excessive break time. A player shall be assessed one penalty point after causing a cumulative match delay of 10 minutes, and one additional penalty point for every 5 minutes delay thereafter. A player shall be forfeited when the total penalty points assessed exceeds half the posted match length. Stricter policies may apply when times are posted in advance.

New rule:

The TD may assess penalty points or start the clock against any player who fails to start or resume a match on time, or who takes excessive break time. A player may be assessed one penalty point after each 5 minutes of delay that they cause, and shall be forfeited when the total penalty points assessed exceeds half the match length. Alternatively, after a player has caused 5 minutes of delay the TD may start their clock.

### **1) Changes “shall strictly assess” to “may assess”**

The rationale is that the TD must generally have discretion here to consider all relevant factors and their hands should not be tied. At the same time, players must be kept on notice that being late carries this risk.

### **2) The first penalty point may be assessed after only 5 minutes delay instead of 10.**

This tightening seemed fine – particularly in conjunction with the removal of the strictness requirement. We will state in the Ruling Guide that after the first 5 minutes of lateness by a player, particularly when

it is the first such offense by that player at the tournament, a warning should typically be issued rather than a penalty point, if the schedule allows for it.

3) Remove “Stricter policies may apply when times are posted in advance.”

The shortening of the first penalty point period to 5 minutes from 10 tends to cover the situations that we were aiming at with this sentence. The Sunday morning 5-point Last Chance no-show can be forfeited after 15 minutes, which is what the TD typically wanted to be able to do.

4) Add TD option to use the clock instead of penalty points for penalizing lateness.

The TD is responsible for keeping their tournament running on schedule and should have the tools and discretion at their disposal to do so. When a match is being clocked, it seems reasonable to allow the TD to simply order the late player’s clock to be started instead of assessing penalty points. The compelling interest is for lateness to not delay the tournament. That can reasonably be accomplished by shortening the match (penalty points) or by reducing the amount of time available for discretionary thinking. It seems best to allow both options and leave this decision to the TD. With penalty points, a late player has 5 minutes of grace time before penalties begin to accrue. With this new option, there is also 5 minutes of grace time; the clock isn’t started until they are 5 minutes late. As with penalty points, the TD may start a late player’s clock at this time, but they are not strictly required to do so.

### **3.2 Cups; 3.4 Baffle Box**

Current rule:

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

New rule:

Each player may choose to use either a dice cup or a baffle box.

This is also a WBGF rule change. It was agreed that there is no longer a good reason to force any player to use a cup when they prefer to use a baffle box (or vice versa). Directors have been increasingly creating such policy anyway. TD retains the absolute power under the Rules to impose equipment, which means they can still set a precedence if they really wish to do so. The preference of a lipped over unlippped dice cup is now covered under Change of Equipment where we go further to state that a player may insist that an unlippped cup be replaced by a lipped cup at any time. While USBGF Rules previously established precedence for other dice rolling equipment if first approved by the TD, that isn’t really necessary. If the TD says that you can use it, or that you can use it with your opponent’s consent, then the question is settled given the TD’s power to impose equipment.

### **3.4(iv) Baffle Box; 3.5(iv) Game Clocks**

Clarification:

The clock must be placed on the home board side.

A baffle box must be placed on the non-home board side.

This has always been our intent, and is generally common practice. It is now explicit.

### **3.5(v) Game Clocks – Setting**

Clarification:

Clock reserve time shall be 2 min. times the (average remaining) match length, with 12 sec. Simple Delay per move, unless the TD specifies otherwise.

The text “(average remaining)” has been added to make explicit how a clock is to be set based upon match score when it is added mid-match.

The new Rules now only cover clock settings in the general case and permit the TD to modify the clock settings. The new USBGF Rules Supplement establishes the standard time settings for various different categories of events that were in the previous USBGF Rules. In combination, there is no net change to the standards.

New setting option:

For top skill level matches, the TD may specify a reserve time as low as 1.5 minutes per point.

This change reduces the minimum allowed reserve time for top skill matches from 2 minutes per point, as had previously been specified in the USBGF Rules Options. It was felt that this would provide greater flexibility to TDs to experiment, as well as to handle situations where larger than expected attendance results in more rounds of play than anticipated. In the latter case, the TD must often choose between shorter match lengths, tighter time controls or less sleep for players; it seems best to allow the TD to make this decision rather than tie their hands. Other live tournaments have successfully operated using such tighter time controls for their main events, and BMAB sets this same 1.5 minute per point minimum for its match submissions, so this is not uncharted territory.

### **3.7 Change of Equipment**

Clarification:

Defective equipment must be replaced immediately.

This was always the intent and the Ruling Guide stated this, instructing the TD to impose new equipment in this case. However, it really belongs in the core rules because as written, the old rules did not permit agreeing players to change defective equipment mid-game without the approval of the TD.

### **3.7 Change of Equipment**

New rule:

At any time: ... if available, a player may require: that dice cups be lipped, use of precision dice, or a board designed with checkers of diameter 35-50mm (1.5-2.0”).

The old rules gave precedence to lipped cups and precision dice at the start of the match. The Ruling Guide also instructed the TD to impose a “tournament size” board over a non-tournament size board if there was a dispute over equipment. Really, the only reason why non-lipped cups, non-precision dice or non-tournament sized boards should ever be used at a tournament is if there is no alternative. Therefore, under the new rule, if the preferred equipment becomes available mid-match, a player may insist that the inferior equipment in use be replaced by the preferred equipment. Note: the WBGF Rules specify the preferred board dimensions as between 55 x 44 and 88 x 66 cm, rather than based upon checker size. The USBGF Rules have the same basic intent but specifying the preferred board size based upon the size of the checkers it is designed for is a simplification/clarification, since boards are typically designed based upon the checkers rather than the reverse.

### **3.8 Board, Streaming and Recording**

New rule:

By attending, players consent to the streaming, recording and publishing of tournament activities as determined by the TD.

For public interest and promotional purposes, the tournament organizers and the USBGF ought to have these abilities at their tournaments and so this is now stated to preempt any possible dispute.

### **4.1(iii) Dice and Rolls - Change of Dice**

New rules:

Before games: players may ... require a mix of the game dice.

To mix dice, the requesting player rolls all four dice. Their opponent selects one die, alternating thereafter. Two more dice must be added if necessary.

Somehow, the old USBGF Rules were silent on the whole topic of dice selection and the ability of a player to require mixing of dice between games. This omission must be fixed. It was always intended that a mix of dice could be requested between games. However, with the nearly universal sharing of two dice in US tournaments, dice mixing and selection has largely ceased to be required in practice. We make clear for typical cases where only two dice were selected at the beginning of the match, that two more must be added if mixing is required.

### **4.1(iv)(a) Dice and Rolls – Valid Rolls (dice rolling mechanics)**

Current rule:

When using a cup, the dice must 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”.



New rule:

When using a cup, the dice must be vigorously shaken at least twice up and down and rolled together on the right-hand side of the bar with enough force and height to tumble freely.

This is a clarification, with no real change to intent. We are removing the minimum height requirement and instead focusing on the goal – which is for the dice to tumble freely – to be achieved through a combination of sufficient force and height. The old 1” minimum rolling height was arbitrary, not measurable and not enforceable.

#### **4.1(iv)(a) Dice and Rolls – Valid Rolls (dice on checkers)**

New rule:

Rule option: the TD shall set a preference policy for *Dice on Checkers*. When *No Dice on Checkers* is in effect, all dice coming to rest on the checkers are invalid.

The TD option regarding Dice on Checkers is now included in the core rules. However, Dice on Checkers being Required remains the USBGF standard unless the TD announces otherwise. There is no net change in effect here. It should be noted that under the new rules (including USBGF Supplement), it is clarified that the TD preference policy regarding Dice on Checkers can run the full spectrum: Required, Preferred, If Agreed, Not Used, etc.; it is not limited to the binary “always” or “never” as suggested by the old Rules and Rules Options (in reality, some directors have set policy that allows players to decide).

#### **4.1(iv)(a) Dice and Rolls – Valid Rolls (cups / which side of bar)**

New rule:

With consent, the dice may be rolled on the left. Consent is revoked when stated, a roll on the right occurs or the game ends.

This is an existing WBGf Rule and we’ve agreed to accept it since rolling on the left can only occur when both players agree; if they agree, what’s the real harm? We have been experimenting for years with dice on the left with baffle boxes, and have never had disputes over whose roll it is. As a practical matter, switching rolling to the less crowded side should not be necessary with Dice on Checkers. It is important to note that permission expires, so we are not faced with players arbitrarily rolling on any side they choose once permission is granted. If a player gets too sloppy about rolling, their opponent can simply refuse to grant permission again.

#### **4.1(iv)(b) Dice and Rolls – Valid Rolls (baffle box)**

Current rule:

When using a baffle box, the dice are dropped together from a cup (Preferred) or hand into the baffle box.

New rule:

When using a baffle box, the dice are dropped together from a hand or cup into the baffle box.

This eliminates the preference to be able to force one's opponent to roll into the baffle box from a cup. The old rule was written at a time when baffle boxes were less prevalent and there were memories of poorly constructed or defective baffle boxes. That has changed and there is no longer a good reason to presume that someone might be cheating with a baffle box. Baffle boxes must be properly constructed and in working order or they should not be permitted for use at all. If the box is properly constructed, then by design there is no need for a cup; using one is a matter of the roller's preference. If it is not properly constructed, or if there is uncertainty, a player can make their case to the TD, who can impose a cup or require use of a cup to roll conventionally, or disallow use of that baffle box entirely. Most baffle boxes today are transparent. For opaque baffle boxes where the player or TD might not be able to inspect the inner workings, we could certainly add something in the Ruling Guide to indicate that this factor alone is sufficient for the TD to make an exception and require use of a cup.

#### **4.1(v) Dice and Rolls - Premature Action (fast grab and fast roll)**

New rule:

If the opponent lifts a die before their time is activated (fast grab), the player may pause the clock to complete their move and require forfeit of the opponent's delay.

{If the opponent rolls before the player ends their turn, the player must point it out and state their choice: the roll stands, or must be redone; they may then revise their move.} This is in lieu of any delay time forfeit for a fast grab.

The {bracketed rule} is not new, but was included here for context. It seems reasonable to add a very minor penalty for fast grabs in order to deter the bad practice. However, the loss of delay penalty can be severe when the offending player is very low on time. This quirky drastic change in penalty impact for the same offense is mitigated by the "fast roll" rule. The fast roll penalty (option to require reroll or allow to stand) is intended to be a more significant penalty than the loss of delay time. However, if the loss of delay time for a fast grab becomes sufficiently severe due to low reserve time, the offending player has the option to go all in on their premature action by rolling the dice and is then charged with the fast roll penalty instead.

#### **4.1(vi) Dice and Rolls - End of Turn**

Current rule:

When playing with four dice, players end their turn by picking up their dice. Without notice of repositioning, touching a die after making a legal move ends the turn.

New rule:

When using four dice, players end their turn by lifting one or both dice, unless notice of *repositioning* is given.

A mere touch of one die after a legal move no longer ends the turn; a lift of at least one die is required. This reverts back to the original ABT rule, though makes explicit that the lifting of a single die is sufficient to end the turn. Play with 4 dice in US tournaments is increasingly rare, so this change will have minimal impact, if in fact any players still using 4 dice were aware of the old touch rule to begin with.

#### **4.2(i), 4.2(ii) Checkers and Moves – Moves / Handling of Checkers**

Current rule:

A player should: move checkers clearly to a specific location, using one and the same hand throughout their turn; keep borne off checkers away from the playing surface; and announce the roll before repositioning dice. A player should not touch any checkers during the opponent's turn.

New rule

A player must move checkers clearly to a specific location, using one and the same hand throughout their turn (including hitting the clock), keep borne off checkers away from the playing surface and should announce the roll before repositioning dice. A player must not touch any checkers during the opponent's turn.

Changes "should" to "must" in all but one case. Use of "must" indicates that these are not just recommended best practice as old rule suggests, but required practice where opponents should be pointing out failures to comply. The rules state that repeated transgressions may result in penalties. Use of two hands when moving and touching checkers when not your turn can lead to problems. Putting a bit more force behind avoiding these things seems sensible. Also adds the requirement to hit the clock with the same hand, which the old rule was silent about.

#### **4.2(iii) Illegal Moves**

Current rule:

Both players must promptly point out and correct all illegal plays noticed before the opponent has made a valid roll. Any illegality that is unrelated to the dice roll or the number of pips moved (for example, a player places their own checker on the bar, or invalidly passes their turn), must be corrected if noticed before the offending player has made their next valid roll. Correction requires reverting to the original dice roll and position and resuming play from there. Players may make later corrections by mutual agreement.

New rule:

Both players must point out all illegal checker moves. Correction requires reverting to the original dice roll and position and resuming play from there. Players may make late corrections as agreed.

Rule option: the TD shall set a policy of either *Legal Moves* or *Responsible Moves*.

*Legal Moves*: All illegal moves must be corrected if noticed before the opponent has made a valid roll.

*Responsible Moves:* If an illegal checker move occurs, the opponent must either require it to be corrected or to stand. No other type of infraction may be condoned.

The TD rule option for Legal Moves vs. Responsible Moves is now stated by the rules proper and both variations are defined. Legal Moves remains the USBGF standard unless the TD announces otherwise.

When Legal Moves is in effect, the new rule eliminates the special category of illegal moves for which there was a longer mandatory correction period. This change was a necessary compromise, as there were strong opinions that the two classes of illegal moves was an unnecessary complication.

Note that when Responsible Moves are in effect, players may still agree to make late corrections, as with Legal Moves. While not a change in intent, we state explicitly that no illegalities aside from an illegal checker move may be condoned, since it has been a common misconception that Responsible Moves allow other types of rule violations to be condoned.

#### **4.2(iii) Checkers and Moves - Illegal Moves; 1.6 Spectators – General**

New rule:

Spectators must not point out illegal checker moves unless both players agree to allow it and display a sign so stating near the board.

Under previous WBGF Rules, if both players agreed, they could simply tell the entire crowd of spectators that they were allowed point out illegal moves during that match. The USBGF objected to such a policy due to the concern that spectators might speak during other matches, either believing or claiming to believe that it was allowed in general or had been allowed for that match. A compromise was reached where this could be allowed, but that any permission for spectators to point out illegal plays must be visibly indicated by some form of flag being displayed near the board.

#### **4.2(iv) Checkers and Moves - Errors in the Starting Position**

Current rule:

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

New rule

A checker setup error must be corrected if noticed before the third valid roll of the game, ...

After the third roll of the game (the first player's next roll), things start to get more complicated and correcting an error becomes less straightforward. The Ruling Guide had lots of text devoted to how to correct errors at a later time and the results could be bizarre and unsatisfying. This simplification avoids those problems, and seems reasonable given that we permit the players to correct the error later if they agree.

#### **4.3 Game Clocks - Invalid Rolls**

New rule:

If ... then a reroll is required; the clock's delay time may be reset.

Permitting the delay time to be reset when dice are cocked is reasonable. It has become fairly common practice in the US regardless of the fact that the old rules never actually authorized it.

#### **4.7 Scorekeeping**

Current rule:

In any scoring dispute, if only one player has so maintained a written score, then it shall take precedence absent any undisputed evidence to the contrary.

New rule:

Absent evidence to the contrary in a scoring dispute, if only one player has kept a written score, then it shall prevail; otherwise, the trailer's scorecard shall prevail. All scoring errors must be corrected when noticed, even if previously agreed by both players.

This adds the provision that the trailer's scorecard takes precedence over the leader's if the TD cannot find any evidence to decide otherwise. It seems reasonable to state this so that the TD is given cover to make a ruling that is not arbitrary rather than doing something like make the players roll for it. If fairness suggests that a different ruling would be the right thing to do in the particular case, the TD can make an exception; their hands are not tied.

We also explicitly state that two players previously agreeing upon the wrong score does not make it right. If the error is discovered later, it must be fixed; it is never too late to correct an error in scoring. This has always been the intent, as discussed in the Ruling Guide, but this aims to eliminate any potential confusion.

#### **4.8 Incorrect Match Length**

Current rule:

Upon discovery that the match length used is wrong, any game in progress shall be completed. The player having the higher score shall be declared the match winner if they have reached either the correct or wrong match length. If both players so qualify due to a tie, they shall play one more game to decide the match. Otherwise, the match shall continue to the correct match length.

New rule (this is current WBGF text):

Upon discovery that the match length used is wrong, any game in progress shall be completed. The match length used shall be changed to the posted value if no player has reached either the used or the posted length.

The old rule has been a source of confusion. We've received some negative feedback arising from actual rulings that it seems a bit harsh to simply declare a match over because players have reached a score that they did not know they were playing to. The latest WBGF rule is both simpler and softer. The main difference is that when an error in match length is discovered, a match winner is never declared at the end of the game in progress or the game just completed on account of correcting the match length; if the match length is corrected, there will always be more match to play. This change ought to result in fewer bad feelings for the players involved, at the potential expense of the TD's obligation to keep the tournament running on schedule. However, the TD retains discretion to make an exception to this rule if in the particular circumstance, continuing the match to the original length is likely to result in an unacceptable delay to the tournament.

## **5.2 Disputes – Appeals; 1.3 Staff – Ruling Committee**

Current rule:

If a dispute arises, players must pause the game clock and leave all game materials undisturbed until the Director arrives. An aggrieved player may promptly appeal any ruling and intended corrective action by the Director, except for disqualification or expulsion from the tournament area. The Director shall convene a ruling committee of qualified and disinterested players to independently consider evidence and argument, and vote to uphold, reverse, or modify the Director's ruling. The Director may then cast a vote or decline to do so. An absolute majority of votes cast is required to change the Director's ruling.

New rule:

If players cannot quickly resolve a dispute, the clock must be paused, game materials left undisturbed and the TD summoned, who shall make a ruling. An aggrieved player may promptly appeal any TD ruling and intended corrective action. The TD shall convene a Ruling Committee of 3 or 5 qualified and disinterested players to independently consider evidence and argument, and by majority vote may reverse, or modify the TD's ruling. All persons involved in the dispute are entitled to make relevant representations to the TD or Ruling Committee.

There are several changes to this rule.

- 1) Clarify that the players should make the first attempt to resolve a dispute amongst themselves and that after they call the TD, the TD makes an initial ruling. This has always been the intent and practice, but the rules never actually stated this; they should.
- 2) Removal of the "except for disqualification or expulsion from the tournament area" provision. For disqualification (ejection from an event that someone has begun competing in – not refusal to accept an initial entry), due process should normally run its course. If safety is a concern, the TD can reasonably make an exception. Similar with a situation where the aggrieved player gets unacceptably disruptive to the tournament and cannot be calmed down while an appeal is handled. But the TD should be prepared to articulate any such reasons for making an exception; they should not be granted the unlimited power to deny any appeal regardless of special circumstance simply by virtue of having ruled that a player is disqualified from an event. The expulsion of any individual not competing in any event falls under TD's exclusive authority as the

event host at the venue and is not covered by these rules; therefore, not subject to appeal; therefore, no need to mention.

- 3) Elimination of the TD's option to cast a vote – effectively eliminating the TD option to require a supermajority vote to overturn. While the USBGF advocated that the TD's voice should carry some concrete weight in the final decision, the rest of the world was strongly unified against this and we had to concede on this rule in order to reach agreement. The rationale is that the appeal process should be kept independent of the TD and that once the Ruling Committee is convened, the TD should have no further influence on the final decision. The TD already has a significant impact on the final decision: the TD was able to provide their rationale to the aggrieved player for the initial decision – which may include presenting the relevant rule text; the TD is similarly permitted to present that rationale to the Ruling Committee; and the TD has the power to select the members of the Ruling Committee.
- 4) RC size must be either 3 or 5 instead of any number at TD's discretion. Without TD casting a vote, and by requiring a simple majority decision, the Ruling Committee size ought to be odd. Allowing for an even size would effectively permit the TD to put their finger on the scale.
- 5) Clarify that all people involved in the dispute have a right to make their case – as long as what they say is relevant to the dispute. They should not be limited to simply answering questions when asked. As the person whose ruling is being appealed, the TD is considered to be involved in the dispute as far as this provision is concerned.