

16 Analysis of the 11 – point system of table tennis from the communication point of view

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1 Introduction

Every sport has its regulations, while all of them experienced many revisions in their history. Since Ping-Pong was invented, its regulations have been revised for many times because of certain reasons and background. Every revision promoted the development of Ping-Pong to a certain extent.

Since year 2000, International Table Tennis Federation has made three important revisions on Ping-Pong regulations. The first one was that the diameter of ball was increased from 38 mm to 40 mm; the second one was that the 21 – point system was changed to 11 – point one; the third one was that while serving, players were not allowed to veil the serving action by their bodies. As a whole, these three revisions brought favorable influence on the development of Ping-Pong techniques.

However, whether revisions of regulations are reasonable and scientific, it should be tested and reviewed from different aspects. This essay raised some objections towards the 11 – point system from the communications point of view.

2 Analysis of table tennis live broadcasting from the connections between sports and media

Nowadays, it goes without saying that TV live broadcasting greatly influences and promotes a certain kind of sport. According to agenda setting in communication theory, if a sport is on TV very often and for a long time, it will draw more attention. For example, although China is not a powerful country in football, because there are many football programs on TV, football has the same influence as other sports.

But considering its own benefits, TV stations won't show a sport for no reason. Most of the time they think about audience rating, which lies on the following factors: (1) the importance of the match. Generally speaking, the wider the range is, the more important the matches are. Top – ranked matches draw more attentions. (2) The intensity of the competition. For example, the intensity is higher in semi – finals and finals. (3) The dramatics. Without dramatic

factors or changes the audience rating couldn't be high, since people in front of television care much about the result of the match. The more changes are, stronger the stimulation to the audience is.

To live broadcasting, the attraction lies on the unpredictability of the matches. Therefore, during regulation revision it is very important to take probability of how to add dramatics of the matches into consideration.

3 Problems of Ping-Pong live broadcasting in 11 – point system

From the former part of the essay, we can find many problems of 11 – point system.

First of all, 11 – point system reduces the dramatics of Ping-Pong matches. In high level matches, it is always hard to say who is a better player. The key factors to win are physical strength, willpower and tactics, so the regulation should help all these factors to be brought into full play. But in this 11 – point system, if a player doesn't play well at the beginning of a set, it is very hard to win at last, since there is only very few chances left. For example, if the match goes 3 to 8, it is barely possible for the player who lags behind to win. Then the player will give up this set and put hope on the next one. If two sides are both holding this idea, the matches would be flat and dull. That is to say, 11 – point system shortens the process of each set, at the same time reduces opportunity and probability of dramatic changes.

11 – point system was revised from 21 – point one, which has some reason. For example, it forces players to get into playing state sooner, while reduces the chances of players to win with changeful serves. But after several years of practice, people may gradually find that this 11 – point system is not the best choice for Ping-Pong matches.

Second, 11 – point system makes TV live broadcasting flat and dull. The attraction of TV live broadcasting lies on its process, which is composed with dramatics and changes. 11 – point system shortens time of each set, while reduces changes, which makes the match a straight line. Without ups and downs, the audience rating will be lowered.

Third, 11 – point system reduces the brilliant attacks; increases the key points at the same time, which puts more pressure to the players. Players are not able to play well under heavy pressure, and then the competition is not splendid as before without wonderful attacks. According to the statistics of International Table Tennis Federation, in table tennis matches, spectators clap for one point has 7 or 8 rounds, while they gave thundering applause if the point has more than 10 rounds. The applause means interest and preference of spectators. And spectators mean market. In market there are commercials and functions which bring basic conditions for the development of Ping-Pong.

4 Revision of table tennis regulations

Based on the analysis above, we think the 11 – point system should be revised to a 16 – point system, in which serve is shifted every 3 points. If the score is 15 to 15, then serve is shifted every other ball. One side wins if he gets best out of 5 sets.

The advantages of the revision are: first, while making the match longer, it increases the possibility of reversing the result and adding more dramatics to the competition. Second, it reduces the set points, which makes players concentrate on every point. The wonderful attacks will attract more audience.

Like other sports, Ping-Pong should go to market and be professional in order to get more sponsors that promote the development of techniques, so that it could attract more audience. Then it would develop in a positive circle, in which regulations and systems are the baton that leads its development. That is why we raised this topic – revision of table tennis regulations.