

## Referee Column: Australasian Taekwondo magazine.

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Suggested headline:

### **Managing fights with the new amended taekwondo competition rules.**

The new WTF reform competition rules are being implemented this year. In this issue, I will suggest some ways for players to manage their fights within the limits of what the referees and the rules will allow.

The most significant change will be re-introducing the 4 corner judges system. To get a valid score point, a player will now have to convince at least 3 of the judges that their technique is legitimate, accurate and powerful enough. Therefore a player needs to have at least 75% majority decision to get a point whereas it was 67% in the 3 corner judge system.

The best strategy would be to make sure the kick or punch has sufficient power and accuracy. By power the kick has to generate impact such as loud sound from a roundhouse kick or body mass displacement from the other kicks. By accuracy means the kick has to be effective and land on the chest protector or head guard without any barrier in the way eg a blocking arm. If parts of the kicking foot wraps around a blocking arm, it has to hit the chest protector sufficiently hard enough to be considered a point score. Kicks landing on the arms cannot be considered as accurate, so make sure you practice efficiently.

Punches can be scored, but the criteria is not as generous as the kicks because the punch has to hit with the front two knuckles, the arm straight and there must be body mass displacement. Body mass displacement means there is some movement of the target point where punched.

Good sportsmanship goes a long way. Referees take notice of players and coaches that have excellent sportsmanship and good taekwondo spirit, and the referees enjoy refereeing them. The WTF wants to eliminate bad sportsmanship and bad behavior, so take note of that as referees will be strict in enforcing this. There is no place for unruly behavior or bad conduct in taekwondo sport. The rules allow referees to enforce this under the misconduct or the interruption of the match penalty guidelines.

Positioning of match play is important so that at least 3 of the corner judges can have uninterrupted view of the kicks. The best positions will be around the centre of the contest area or the triangular halves rather than positioning plays near the corners or boundary line edges where only two judges have uninterrupted views. This will be a changed strategy from the 3 corner judge system, where play could be positioned close to 2 judges.

The contest area is smaller now, ie 10m by 10m, compared to before. Therefore the playing area has now shrunk by 30%. There is not as much room to move around, so players will have to be fitter, and move faster especially when close to the boundary line (remember 10m boundary). Players will now have to be very conscious and alert of the boundary line as there will be no attention line to "pre-warn" them that they are getting close to the boundary line. One foot out of the boundary line will be penalized, unless done during an active fighting exchange or pushed out.

The matches are now shortened to 2 minute rounds, dropped from the 3 minutes ie a drop by 33%. Matches will now be faster paced as players will want to give themselves every opportunity to score more points in a shorter time. In the longer rounds, players will have to think faster and move more quickly. Coaches will have to work harder in their in play strategies.

Negative match play without any active engagement for more than 10 seconds will be picked up by the referees and a likely penalty will be given. So players will have to play their matches more actively, and with more attacking or counter attacking moves. Taekwondo has been criticized for being "boring" because there is too little active play. In any case, more points can be scored if there is more active engagement of fighting moves rather than just bouncing and waiting for mistakes. Just be conscious of the 10 second guideline.

When the sudden death round was introduced, it was a very popular move and it is very exciting. There is more pressure on everybody, the players, the coaches, the corner judges and the referees. The first to score the point wins the match and any mistake is punished almost instantly. Players and coaches are extra careful in sudden death rounds. There is mixed opinion on which is a better strategy to use, attacking to land the first kick or waiting for mistakes and to counter attack. Either strategy will work. It is very much the preference of the player and the coach. Referees will allow a little more time for players to work in their strategies, and the 2 minutes is not really that much time anyway. In the event there is no point scored in the sudden death round, the player that did more attacking or taking the fight forward more will win the match by superiority, so make that part of your game plan.

The head region now includes the neck, so kicks to this area can score 2 points, and similarly any punches to this area is penalized by a full point deduction.

Winning by the 7 point gap will be introduced. Some players who start very fast may be able to score points rapidly and finish the game quickly. This will give the player more rest time and more energy for the next matches. It will also finish off less competitive (and generally less interesting) matches quickly.

Winning by the 12 point ceiling is like a sudden death match. Players getting close to the 12 point ceiling will undoubtedly move faster and try to get the re first. If the match is close eg 10 point each, we could see a very exciting match indeed.

Note the 7 point gap and the 12 point ceiling follows the same determination as the tied score for sudden death. The net score after deduction points and penalties is used, and not the raw score before deduction of points and penalties.

The other rule interpretations remain unchanged. Irrespective of that, players should try to score as many points as possible through positive and active match play rather than negative match play.