

TT without speed gluing and boosting: coaches' perplexity

by Radivoj HUDETZ

It was rather interesting to hear coaches' point of view regarding the new table tennis without gluing and boosting, and most of them showed perplexity...



PRAUSE: "Players will try to use more the width of table"

Richard PRAUSE, coach of German men national team

"The game with the ban of gluing became surely slower, there is as well less rotation in the ball. As I see it the players will try to use for the placement more the width of the table. The tactical placement of the ball will become more important and used in the rallies. It means that the player will try to compensate less speed of the ball with adequate placement - the player will look where the opponent is positioned, which direction he moves. At the moment the players have some problems with the new material, they have to change some details in their stroke technique. As they have already used the "speed gluing" technique for quite long now it will take a certain period, maybe, some months to adapt their game fully to the new situation. That is the reason why performances during the European Championships were not quite as good as we were used to see, but it for sure will become better soon. In my opinion this changes will bring no big changes in the ranking list, the best players have the best abilities to adapt their game to the ban of glues and tuners, they will stay on the top. For sure some players will need a shorter period, some will need a longer period for their adaptation. It will be interesting to watch what will happen with defence and it will be interesting to watch what will happen with the whole game."

HANSEN: "Neutral scientific expertise to secure reliable control"

Sten HANSEN, sport director of English Table Tennis Association

"The player must now be much more physically prepared specially for the game from half- or long distance as now much more power is needed to perform strokes from distance. Without the speed glue technique the players need certain time to adapt their game to new situation. The situation with ban of not only speed gluing but as well of any use of optimizers is rather delicate - at the moment we have no approved devices for precise control of the ban at all levels. Besides I think it would be really necessary to examine if the boosters are endangering the health of players as there are quite different opinions among experts. We need a neutral scientific expertise to clear all the doubts and then secure cheap and reliable control devices."

CEGNAR: "A bigger handicap for men than for women"

Neven CEGNAR, coach of Croatian women national team

"The difference in adaptation to the new rule between men and women players is rather big. Men are playing in average 40% of balls from the distance, women only about 15 % and it is more difficult to play from distance without gluing. In my opinion new rubbers used without speed gluing or tuning give better control in return of service and passive and active play near the table, what women mostly do. The negative effects are obvious in the game from the distance, much more power is needed, the ball gets less spin and spin, smash is less effective. That is why the ban of gluing is bigger handicap for men than for women. Now the same situation will happen as it already happened in 2000 when immediately after the Olympic Games we had to change to the bigger ball - in next few months there will be more injuries than usual due to necessary changes of technique. It is now necessary to make special fitness programmes to prepare the players for new demands. Concerning the game against defenders it is now more difficult for the attackers to win a

point smashing. Attackers will have to learn to play with more spin variations, precise placement and with patience. In European Championships I saw that players had difficulties to control the ball when hitting the ball directly without spin. In future it will become even more important to choose the right combination of rubber and blade, the choice will become more and more individual. At the moment it is obvious that players playing near the table have less problems in adapting to the game without gluing."



KARSAI: "Less attractive rallies, spectators will displease it"

Ferenc KARSAI, Austrian national men team coach

"I have here my own point of view - in my opinion this new rule is not good as it is possible to do anything with the rubber in the factory, to treat it in any way but if you do it afterwards it is illegal. It is not possible to find out when this chemical treatment was made. The game became less attractive, the spectators watching the World Cup were not satisfied with the game they saw, here the same has happened. With the new rule we have less attractive rallies, the players make more easy mistakes. The spectators found attractive rallies with fast and powerful topspin strokes, rallies without that tempo and power will not be found as attractive. For me a big problem is that everybody with just little experience can trick out this regulation and "dope" his racket. Fair sportsmen will not do it, but not all are fair! The players which started to play without any glue or booster had big difficulties at the beginning. Now with the new rubber it became better, this rubbers are prepared in the factories and achieve about 70% of former speed gluing effect and are better than the old rubbers when used without glue. Besides I think that many players even with this new rubbers tune at home once or twice some time before playing and achieve therefore better effects in spite of the fact that it isn't allowed."

PETKEVICH: "Many companies not prepared with new rubbers"

Aleksander PETKEVICH, Belarus men team coach

"I am not sure that it was necessary to ban not only speed glues but even boosters. At the moment we have big problems to find out if somebody has used a kind of booster after the rubber came out of the factory. Besides I have the impression that some of the companies were not prepared to present new adequate rubbers or were not able to produce them in sufficient quantities. Because of this two facts the players have problems. The players still have only few new developed rubbers which can partly replace effects of speed gluing, they need more variations for their individual style of playing. Additional problem was the short time left for adaptation for players between Olympic Games and European Championships. When speaking about the players from my team I must say that Vladimir SAMSONOV succeeded to adapt his game really fast to the ban of speed gluing. He got from his equipment sponsor rubbers which obviously suit him very good. With his perfect technique abilities and ball control combined with the new rubbers he had less problems than expected. Of course, there are still some problems, but he is ready too perform on a very high level. He can now even better than before control the ball in passive play and in return of service, can play very good counterattack, only some problems with topspin are still present. Concerning table tennis presented at the European Championships I have the impression that there is less speed in the game but I don't think the game is now less attractive."

LINDH: "We risk to go back to the fifties..."

Erik LINDH, Swedish national men team coach

"First of all, I do not think that this new rule is a good one. We do not know how to handle it, we must have possibility to measure exactly if some booster was used or not. The big mistake is that it was not made absolutely clear before the rule was accepted. Otherwise I have not heard many complaints from my players. The game is slower, there is less spin in the strokes. I am a little bit surprised that after Olympic Games my players had so little time to adapt themselves to the new

situation and in spite of that they are playing so good. I wonder what was the reason to change the rule and even ban the boosters - are the boosters really endangering the health of players or the intention was to slow down the game. If the second was the case I really can not understand it - we already made so many changes to the game, this one was not necessary if the health was not the reason. If we slow down the game too much it can happen that the defenders will have their great time again and we go back to the fifties - I do not think it would be good for our sport. The glue provided for the game some quite new possibilities, new techniques were developed and new generations liked this game. If it is dangerous for the health I can understand the ban, but there are so different opinions about it concerning the boosters."

KALINIC: "There will be not big changes in the ranking"

Zoran KALINIC, Serbian national men team coach

"At the moment in men table tennis many players are still using the boosters. When there will be an adequate control they will stop doing it and will get used to play without speed gluing and boosting, the factories will develop more sophisticated rubbers. It will not be the same as the game with speed gluing, but top players will adapt their game to the new situation. The game will be slightly slower but I am not sure if the spectators will even notice it. Now we will have to prepare for the new game and it will be necessary to make some corrections in technique of the strokes - "speed gluing" technique will have to be adapted to new situation. I am quite sure that top players will succeed in adapting their game to new equipment and there will be no big changes in the ranking order due to the new rule - the same happened when the bigger ball and the shorter sets were introduced. I do not think that such a change was necessary but anyway it should have been better to leave the players more time for the change - at last they are professionals earning their money for living by playing table tennis. One of my players tested I believe all the rackets in the hall to find the fastest one - he is still looking for a solution for his game! "