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ANALYSIS OF HUMAN INTERFERENCE AS A PARAMETER THAT AFFECTS THE DECISIONS MADE BY UMPIRES AND REFEREES IN BADMINTON SPORT

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ABSTRACT

Human interference in badminton sport is a common menace faced by the officials in local circuits such as zone, divisions, district, and state tournaments. With very less media coverage and lack of video coverage make the fundamental qualification rounds very stressful for players, organizers and officials. Umpires who deliver decisive decisions experience stress throughout a match/tournament. They need to be part of the match/tournament well prior to (many hours before) start of a match and need to contribute to the ending of the match/tournament in the same way. During the



officiating time they face many challenges due to interference. Most of them are not bothered or documented so as to prevent its reoccurrences in future in local circuits. Also very fewer thoughts have been put on these to estimate their impact on the decision making skills of an official. Thus, in this study, with the help of a carefully prepared questionnaire and 100 respondents, the exactness of the human interference and their magnitude in affecting an official is discussed. From the study it was elucidated that the human interference is a key parameter that demoralizes and affects an official.

KEY WORDS: human interference, officiating, umpires, challenges, estimate, impact, questionnaire, affects, official.

INTRODUCTION

Badminton evolved, from being a simple amateur game played between two persons or team of two against two using battledores, made from wood with non-woven strings and a birdie made of 14-16 feathers of the left wing of bird goose or duck, into a World Sport through International Badminton Federation (IBF) in 1980's and as an Olympic sport with their induction in 1992 (www.olympic.org). The elevation of the sport from simple leisure sport into the fastest racket sport resulted in 130 member associations around the world with almost 14 million members under newly adopted name Badminton World Federation (BWF) ([Badminton Asia.org](http://BadmintonAsia.org), 2006). The wide coverage of the respective national and international grand prix events worldwide through television partners and using advanced data mining tools to analyze a match or predict a match

outcome by the experts could be the best example to prove their popularity (www.worldbadminton.com).

Stress many times determines the outcomes of the game (Allen Fox, 2012), making the game to be dependent on so much factors such as quality of the shuttlecock, quality of the racket Lees, (2003), quality of the turf being used for the play, quality of the shoes, quality of the atmosphere, quality of the noise dissipation/cancellation systems, quality of recording, quality of the coaches, quality of the support staff, quality of the line umpires, referee, etc (Kwan and Rasmussen, 2010). The mentioned factors can be distinguished and classified under two major heads namely 'Beings' and 'Equipment'. All the individuals who contribute to the sport fall under Beings group and any instrument/device/tool used to make a contribution to the game fall under Equipment group. Though a match outcome is dependent on both the groups, Beings groups have the resources to manipulate the outcome of the match at any instance. Among all the members of the Beings, the umpires, line umpires and match referees are those who have the utmost powers to affect the outcome of a match (Bruce Weber, 2010).

It is based on their call, the contestants are declared as winners, the best and capable when compared to other players. The calls made to award a point or penalize a contestant for a fault can change the magnitude of a serious match in a matter of minutes leading to a new or unexpected outcome of a match. With these, it could be concluded that the individual who contribute to the sport as umpires and referee suffer much pressure when compared to other individual under being. Also, with the reputation on line, it can be said that the umpires and referee must experience stress much more than any other individual belonging to 'Being'.

In ought to stress the importance of the umpire and referee and the stress experienced by them a survey study was conducted via asking national level umpires and referee to respond to a set questionnaires. The questionnaires were carefully framed by considering the on and off court situations under supervision of experts of the sport. The questionnaires were set in such a way that they exhibit the purpose of this study to showcase the difficulties faced by the umpires and referees followed by the theme to be, creating awareness about the quality of life denied for the umpires and referees of badminton sport. This paper describes the results of the study conducted through one such questionnaire. The responses for the questionnaire were collected and analyzed to find out the factors that affect them the most and those that affect them the least followed by those that never affect them at all. With enough information on those parameters that affects the umpires and coaches, steps and necessary measures can be taken to prevent the officials suffering from the stress. This shall contribute to the wellness of the sport as well.

There have been many studies describing the effect of audience and their numbers and their impact on the players as well as the outcomes of a match. Occasionally, some of the chief officials have answered in personal interviews regarding the pressure they suffer from due to officiating or while preparing to officiate a high profile match. Clearly, it is quite evident that there isn't a dedicated study yet to point out the stress suffered by the umpires and referees of badminton sport due to human interventions. Thus, this study had been taken to identify the negative impacts on an umpire when a human intervenes.

PURPOSE AND THEME OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to identify the exactness of the information regarding the troubles faced by the umpires and referee of badminton sport due to human interference. The theme was always to create awareness about the job nature and the challenges an umpire and referee face during a match/ tournament.

HYPOTHESIS

- 1) It was hypothesized that the badminton umpires and line umpires face too many human interference which demoralize them and lead to their performance in matches.
- 2) The human interference also questions their quality and piles up pressure, stress on them.
- 3) They also suffer from the stress, pressure even after the match.
- 4) This disturbs their personal life. It is also hypothesized that the experiences make the umpires nervous before the start of a new tournament.

Subjects

The subjects chosen were 100 male badminton officials, out of which 10 are referees who had served as umpires in past and 90 are serving as umpires and line umpires presently, within Tamilnadu state level. They all were considered for this study without any discretion. The respondents willingly responded to the questionnaire and they also declared that the information shared were true to their knowledge.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the umpires can act by their own will and they are not bound to anybody in making the decisions. It is assumed that the age of the officials is not a roadblock in their career. It is assumed that their marital status does not affect their life and profession. It is also assumed that the umpires are not shown any kind of disrespect and dissent due to their race.

Method

Questionnaire: The method of asking an individual to respond to a set of questionnaire has been selected in order to carry on with this study. A set of carefully framed questions approved by the experienced people of badminton sport of state Tamilnadu, India were organized in a specific way to indirectly collect answers/information regarding the real time scenarios faced by the umpires, referees, were used. A sample form with the questions preferred to carry on with this study can be found from the Table-I & II.

The questionnaire consists of two sections namely the personal details and then the questions related to human interference. The answers for personal questions were collected in order to relate their officiating life with their personal life and cross check if either one of them is affecting the each other largely.

Table - I

S. No	Personal Details
1	Name: Age: Sex:
2	Marital Status: Single
3	English Language Proficiency: Above Avg. / Avg. /Below Avg.
4	Hindi Language Proficiency: Above Avg. / Avg. /Below Avg.
5	Other Language
6	Fitness Level: Above Avg. / Avg. /Below Avg.
7	BMI: Less / High / Perfect
8	Badminton Player: Y/N
9	Player Level: District Level/ State / National / Clubs
10	Game Fitness Level: Above Avg. / Avg. /Below Avg
11	Game Experience: Above Avg. / Avg. /Below Avg
12	Officiating Exp: <5 / >5 / Beginner (1-2)
13	Coaching: Y/N
14	Giving Training: Y/N Taking Training: Y/N
15	Reference of any 5 Top Level Referees/Umpires:

Table - II

S.No	Human Interference In Matches
1	Can you Control a crowd: Y/N
2	Can you Handle Noise/Sound Effect: Y/N
3	How often you feel irritated by Sound/Noise: Very often /Sometimes/Never
4	How often People approach you: Very often/Sometimes/Never
5	How often you make a wrong call: Very often/Sometimes/Never
6	Is interference required: Y/N
7	How often you are victimized: Very often/Sometimes/Never
8	If your Team mate Experience: Y/N Elder to you: Y/N Fit than you: Y/N Reputed than you (as an official): Y/N Reputed than you (as Player/Coach): Y/N
9	Who affect you more: General Public/Coach/Player/Parents/Chief Officials
10	Are they polite: Very often/Sometimes/Never
11	Are they well mannered: Very often/Sometimes/Never
12	Does their point depress you: Very often/Sometimes/Never
13	Does their attitude depress you: Very often/Sometimes/Never
14	How often you get offended by General Public: Very often/Sometimes/Never Coach: Very often/Sometimes/Never Players: Very often/Sometimes/Never Parents/Friends: Very often/Sometimes/Never Officials: Very often/Sometimes/Never
15	Any post match incidents
16	Does it stress you: Very often/Sometimes/Never
17	How long it takes to come out of stress: 24 Hrs/48 Hrs/ More Than 48 Hrs.
18	Do you feel you are made to officiate more in one tournament: Y/N
19	Do you feel you are made to officiate too many tournaments in a year: Y/N
20	Why do not you skip matches: Fear of new comers: Y/N Fear of losing reputation: Y/N Fear of not getting invited for next matches: Y/N
21	Why do not you skip tournaments: Fear of new comers: Y/N Fear of losing reputation: Y/N Fear of not getting invited for next tournaments: Y/N
22	Is officiating the only mode of income generation for you: Y/N

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

It was identified from the questionnaire that out of the 100 subjects, 20 had +5 years experienced, 60 had 2-5 years experience and 40 had 1-2 years of experience only. Accordingly, the 14 out of 20 subjects had chosen an option that contradicts with the stated hypothesis while the remaining 6 had chosen an option that supports the hypothesis 1 and 2. This could be due to the fact that they are well trained in the sport as well as they are well trained as officials. The 14 had excellent command over their English and Hindi language. They were also excellent as a player in their prime. The fitness level of all the 20 was excellent.

Of the remaining 80 subjects, the 40 subjects with 1-2 years of experience had chosen options which makes them feel being victimized in many instances. They have been questioned and interfered many times by general public, coaches, parents, other officials. It is also identified that, the umpires were forced to react in many cases leading to few post match unpleasant events. Out of the 60, 40 of them were found to experience a stress up to 24 hours after a tournament. Among those 40, 10 always prefer not to take up officiating another tournament for a period of 2 days while the 30 had no problems in proceeding with officiating. Among the 30, 11 have been found to experience a nervousness prior to the start of a new tournament and if they came across the same player or coach or public. Out of 40 subjects 25 had chosen options which hits that they experience personal life problems due to their work stress.

The remaining 60 subjects with 2-5 years of experience have conveyed through the questionnaire that human interference happens in all matches and it cannot be controlled all the times. They confirm that there used to happen a lot of many post match unpleasant events but they never bother them or piles up any stress on them. From the options they have chosen, it is interpreted that the candidate were unaffected by the stress or pressure put on them by the external human interference as long as their call/decision is legal. It was also found that, the officials do experience stress after a match but it takes less than 4 hours to recover from the same. It was also found that, they do not have any problem in approaching the next match or tournament immediately (less than 24 hrs time).

It is observed that almost, 95% of the 80 candidates feel that there exists a stern competition among themselves and it is important for them to take up as many matches and tournaments within a year to elevate their position as well as their reputation. They feel this to be a healthy competition irrespective of their experience. 22% of the 80 were not interested in being competitive but showed interest in being elevated to higher positions based on merit.

Out of the 80 candidates, 40 of them had good English proficiency while the remaining 40 had above average English proficiency. They all were fit and they all had badminton sport background except for 12 who had only played the sport as a hobby or for a club.

From the information obtained, it can be said that, the umpires experience stress during a match/tournament due to human interference. But it is also evident that, they do not let them to disturb them or disturb the spirit of game for any reason.

CONCLUSION

Thus, it can be concluded that, the hypothesis 1 and 2 mentioned happens constantly and repeatedly many times while 3 and 4 happens very rarely to a few persons, 25 out of 100 to be precise. Though a few members are affected by the human interference, they were able to come out of the stressful situation rapidly and prepare themselves for the next tournaments. It is also proved that, the umpires have to take up as many numbers of matches and tournaments due to the lack of sufficient payments and also for the sake of promotion and reputation in the officiating domain.

Form this study, it is concluded that there has to be a well framed principles that offers protection and relief to the umpires and referees from the general public, coaches, players, parents, etc. It should be made sure that no human interference happens during a match. The governing bodies should heed to the request made by the officials with respect to crowd controlling measures. At any instance, sufficient preparation should be made to control the noise from the crowd. Furthermore, the umpires and the rest of the officials should be protected under any circumstances by the law of the respective associations. Necessary actions should be taken against the coach, player or the affiliates of the player who tend to misbehave or show disrespect to the umpire/official. Under any circumstances the rule book should followed strictly and umpires on field decision should be respected in case of lack of technology or any other evidence against a decision. All these measures can ensure, the officials perform under less stress and are absolutely not disturbed by any external sources. Thus, the overall reduction in human interference can result in quality matches which can give us quality players. All these efforts shall promote the sport as well as the reputation of all those who take up the sport as a profession.

Hence, through this study it is strongly recommended that human interference should be considered as

a serious parameter that affects the quality and growth of an umpire. Complaints regarding human interference after a match or tournament should be taken seriously by the higher authorities for the spirit of the game and future of young quality players.

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