

## **THE SPIRIT OF ETON FIVES**

*Fives depends for its unique appeal upon the players playing the game scrupulously fairly. It is a game almost invariably played without a referee, and so it is each player's responsibility to call his own shot down or out, to keep score accurately and agree it regularly, to make room for opponents to play their shots, and to be generous in offering and scrupulous in accepting lets. It is also each player's responsibility to encourage his partner to do likewise.*

*The Spirit of Fives involves RESPECT for:*

- *your opponents (and their right to have an opinion that differs from your own)*
- *your partner*
- *the game's traditional values.*

*It is against the Spirit of Fives:*

- *to continue with a rally knowing that either your or your partner's return was not valid*
- *to falsify the score*
- *to deliberately obstruct your opponent or deny him room to play his shot*
- *to deny a let when there are reasonable grounds for one*
- *to accept the offer of a let when you did not have a GOOD chance of returning the ball fairly.*
- *to make excessive or prolonged noise under the guise of enthusiasm and motivation of your own pair.*
- *to make any derogatory remark about your opponents or their play.*

*Infringement of these principles intensely compromises the integrity of the game and thereby the enjoyment and satisfaction of every player.*

## ETON FIVES ASSOCIATION

### A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COACHES – 3rd draft (3/18)

The *Spirit of Eton Fives* encapsulates the philosophical standards and the *Code of Conduct for Players* the playing standards expected from every player, and both should constantly be borne in mind when coaching the game. Whenever a player falls from these standards, there is bound to be resentment, and the quality of any match will be diminished.

What follows is a more detailed explanation of the key points for coaches, but teaching the *Spirit of Eton Fives* as you coach your players is an essential pre-requisite for understanding the game's traditional values, and teaching the guidelines in the *Code of Conduct for Players* is crucial to embedding the principles of fair play into your players.

1. When organising fixtures, bear in mind the quality and relative experience of your opposition, and select your team accordingly. This is particularly important if you are potentially stronger than your opposition; there is little point in a one-sided fixture, and your own players will benefit much more from close matches (win or lose). If you have to cancel pairs or a fixture, do so with as much notice as possible.
2. When hosting a fixture, always welcome your opponents and any supporters, and explain the location of any relevant facilities, procedures for injuries and any local playing rules. Be mindful of any potential needs and offer refreshments where possible.

When taking a team away, explain clearly the standards of behaviour expected to your players and be sensitive to the environment that you are visiting. You are responsible for their whereabouts and behaviour at all times. This is particularly important when some pairs have finished early.

At the end of the match, be sure to thank your opposite number and his players if possible. When playing away, check that your players have all of their belongings and that they have left any changing area in an acceptable condition.

3. It is vital that your players **respect** the opposition whether they are playing or watching. A match where one pair disregards their opponents completely and treats them as robots to be annihilated ruthlessly is a very unsatisfactory experience for both pairs.

Teach your players that their opponents have a right to a point of view when discussing any dispute, and that any subsequent discussion should be conducted in a civilised manner, without either the intensity or volume of the conversation being raised. Teach them the principle that a let should result in any situation where agreement cannot be reached, and that it is the players' responsibility to resolve any disputes themselves; they should only seek advice when that

becomes impossible, and there is no consensus to play a let.

Discourage your players from excessive noise or encouragement of each other which is either designed to or will inevitably put off their opponents. Forbid any comments about their opponents, especially those which are personal or derogatory about their play. Discourage foul language or swearing at all times.

If any of your other players are watching a match, they should not encroach too close to the playing area, they should not interfere either verbally or by any other action with the conduct of the game, and they should not make excessive noise or encouragement which is either designed to or will inevitably put off the opposition. In particular, they should not make any comment about whether or not a shot is valid or give any opinion about lets.

**Coaches should adopt the standards above at all times, except as described in paragraph 4. below.**

**No opposition player should ever feel intimidated by anything other than the quality of their opponents' play.**

4. Coaches should only intervene during the course of a match in the following circumstances:
  - (a) Coaches should intervene once a rally has ended if they see **their own pair** unfairly return a shot or fail to return it within play, and should advise their pair to concede the point immediately. They should also intervene if they feel that **their own pair** is in the wrong when discussing a disputed point. It is inappropriate (and tantamount to cheating) to remain silent in these situations knowing that your pair is behaving unfairly.
  - (b) Once it is clear that the players are unable to resolve a dispute or to achieve consensus to play a let, a coach should intervene and instruct that a let be played, unless **all four players** agree to ask his opinion on the point at issue.
  - (c) If a coach is certain that the score is incorrect, he may ask **his own pair** to check the score, but it is all four players' responsibility to agree it ultimately.

It is inappropriate for a coach to intervene in a match if he believes that the **opposition pair** is playing unfairly. He should consult his opposite number, point out any concerns, and ask him to talk to his players immediately.

It is inappropriate for a coach to impose a score on a match just because he is **certain it is correct unless the players ask his opinion**. All four players must agree any change to the score. If no agreement is possible he should consult his opposite number to help resolve the issue.

If it is not possible for the coaches from each side to resolve a dispute, then the Tournament Director should be summoned, whose decision is final. At his discretion, or at the request of either side, a referee may be appointed to ensure that the match is played fairly; his decision is final.

5. It is important that a coach teaches his players the Laws of the Game, and in particular the following points should be clearly understood:
  - (a) The etiquette of offering lets, especially that a let should **always** be offered if there is any possibility that a player has obstructed his opponent.  
The etiquette of accepting lets, especially that a let should only be accepted if a player feels that he had a **good** chance of returning the ball fairly.  
That a let should result when the players cannot resolve a dispute.
  - (b) That the cutter's partner may attempt to catch the ball provided that he is of the opinion that the cut is going out of court. However, if he drops it, he must not interfere with it and obstruct his opponents' right to try to return the ball before it bounces for a second time. This is the only occasion that a player may prevent the ball from going out.  
However, the cutter's partner may **not** attempt to catch a **'game ball' cut**.
  - (c) That a **'blackguard' cut** which goes directly out does **not** count as a point.
  - (d) That the ball must be struck cleanly, and not be held, to constitute a fair shot, and that if the ball hits both gloves either simultaneously or consecutively it is a foul stroke **which the offending player should declare**.
  - (e) That the **server's** partner has choice of position in the back of the court, and the cutter's partner must adopt a position which allows him a free stroke; this is especially important at 'game ball'.
  - (f) That if the score reaches 10-10, then the **cutting pair** have the choice of playing 'game ball' at 11, 12 or 14 (i.e. up to 12, 13 or 15 respectively).  
That if the score reaches 11-11, then the **cutting pair** have the choice of playing 'game ball' at 11 or 13 (i.e. up to 12 or 14 respectively), unless the game has already been set at 10-10.  
That having set the game, if both sides reach 'game ball' it is 'sudden death'.
  - (g) That it is **compulsory** to change cut once the **cutter** has lost two points, but that it is not possible to do so until he has lost two points.  
In determining which player has lost a point, if neither player has touched the ball before the second bounce, the loser of the point is resolved by the **first** bounce, if on top step the cutter, and if on bottom step his partner.  
However, it is **not** possible to change cut if the opposition reach **'game ball'**.

6. It is important that a coach teaches his players the Spirit of the Game, and in particular the following points should be clearly understood:
- (a) That whilst a player may hold his ground as he completes a stroke, the opposition should always be given a clear opportunity to play the ball.
  - (b) That it is unfair to deliberately obstruct an opponent or to prevent one of his shots going up by moving across its line, or to deliberately play a shot to hit himself, especially when the opposition are serving.
  - (c) That every effort should be made not to obstruct a 3-wall cut, and to be well forward of its line by the time the ball passes.
  - (d) Every effort should be made to prevent an obstruction of a 'game ball' cut which misses the buttress.
  - (e) That it is unfair to continue with a rally when it clear that a player or his partner's shot has not been returned fairly, or to deliberately falsify the score. A coach should **insist** that his players are scrupulous on both these counts.
  - (f) That it is unfair to make excessive noise or encouragement under the guise of motivation or to comment in any way about the opposition or their play.
  - (g) That it is unfair for any player, coach or spectator to 'bully' the opposition in any way, other than by the excellence of his play.
  - (h) A coach should insist that players treat each other with **respect** and in a cordial and civilised manner at all times; in particular they should ensure that any discussion regarding a dispute is conducted in a balanced and fair way.
  - (i) A coach and any of his players or parents who are supporting should be encouraged to acknowledge and applaud good play by **both sides**, and not just support their own players.
7. **Unless agreed otherwise at any stage**, coaches should not give any **tactical coaching by word or action** during a **game**. Encouragement by word or action is allowed, provided that neither its volume nor frequency is excessive, and provided that it does not put off opponents. Tactical coaching by word or action **is** allowed **between games**.

**Players will adopt the standards that their coach teaches them, and that he himself adopts when playing with or watching them. When doing so, a coach should ensure that his own standards are impeccable, and intervene and advise when his players' standards are not, so that they are in no doubt of what is expected. If his players fall from the expected standards it will reflect poorly on how he has coached them and will ultimately be his responsibility.**

(The masculine gender is used for simplicity and economy, but any reference to it is intended to apply to both genders)

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