

6 Behaviour

Your general behaviour in badminton can reflect upon you as a sportsman and affect your performance as a player. In so far as we value good behaviour, particularly in badminton, we must ask what counts as good behaviour in the sport.

The ESBA have printed a section on game ethics in their annual handbook. This is useful for reference to particular aspects on behaviour. I would like to discuss behaviour in sport in general and then apply some instances to badminton.

Morality is essentially concerned with how you should behave towards other people. A good general rule to follow is to behave with others as you would want them to behave with you. We believe, for example, it is a good thing:

(i) that people are honest and tell the truth, for then we can rely on the person's word and trust each other.

(ii) that people are fair with each other. You might have experienced at school or at home a case when you feel that the teacher or your parents have not really considered your side of the argument and weighed up all the facts before making a decision, you think you have been treated unfairly. This, I am sure you would agree, is undesirable.

(iii) that peoples' interests are considered when decisions are made affecting them.

(iv) that people's points of view are respected. In other words, you would expect your teacher to place some importance on your point of view or reasons for your action, and consequently ask your opinion and listen fairly to your comments.

These are four basic principles which are important if we are to develop as people and live together and enjoy life together, whether it is at home, at the youth centre, at school or within the game of badminton.

Now let me concentrate on badminton and see how these principles apply to your behaviour in the game.

Badminton is a game and games belong to the world of sport. Peoples have constructed various sports throughout their history and done so for the purpose of enjoyment. In sport we enjoy many things: the competition, the challenge, the test of skill and courage, the physical movement, the social life, and so on. All the different activities that make up sport have some purpose to them. The purpose of mountain climbing may be to 'get to the top', or to test one's skill and courage on a difficult or new climb; of canoeing, perhaps to navigate rapids successfully; archery, to hit a target successfully; and of games, to win. The enjoyment comes from taking part and in competing against self, others or some natural element to succeed in the aim of that particular sport.

So although the point of sport is enjoyment and the point of badminton is to win, because badminton is a sport, one must not try to win at the expense of the enjoyment. Any behaviour which lessens the enjoyment of the sport in any way is undesirable and should, if possible, be avoided.

These principles can act as guidelines to decide whether behaviour is desirable or not. In addition there are some fixed rules which tell you how you must behave in the game. In fact you must follow two different sets of rules:

1. The Laws of Badminton which tell you how to play the game.
2. Moral 'rules' which guide your behaviour in the game.

In this section I only intend to discuss the moral rules which refer to how you ought to behave as far as other people - your opponents, your partner, the officials and the spectators - are concerned.

The spectator

You might wonder why you should be concerned about the spectators' views about how you behave. Well, in some ways, it is very much your concern. If you are playing in a hall where spectators attend to watch badminton, then they are part of the badminton setting. They have come to watch competitive badminton and to look at exciting play, a challenging game, and the skill being exhibited, or to support a particular player. Spectating provides their enjoyment of the game and as such is an important part of the game. You have no choice if the game is open to the public but to behave in a desirable manner and show some consideration for the spectators' enjoyment. You must, within reason, avoid that behaviour which lessens their enjoyment, e.g. bad temper, swearing, racket throwing, cheating, unpleasant scenes, etc.

The officials

If you play in a match or a tournament, then more often than not the game will be attended by an official, i.e. an umpire or linesman. These on-court officials are backed up by numerous off-court officials.

Off-court officials

Organized badminton would not exist but for a large number of people who work hard to bring it about. At all levels, from the World Championships down to your school tournament, some persons have to work hard to organize and administer these events. They do so for a variety of reasons - interest, satisfaction, social spirit, promotion of the game, love of the game, etc. All players benefit from organized badminton, for without it there would be no way of realizing any ambitions. There would be no targets and little opportunity to compete and measure progress at different levels of play. Organized badminton takes time to arrange and must take place within a certain time-schedule. Your match at school may have to be completed by 6.30 pm for the evening institute to begin a session, the courts may be booked for three hours only, and so on.

In a large event the planning is sometimes complex and difficult. The timing can go wrong, if matches take longer than usual or someone has arrived late. Mistakes are inevitable. Where do the players stand? All the organization is for the players but it requires the players' co-operation to run successfully. How can you help?

1. Be punctual.
2. Let the officials know that you have arrived, i.e. report in.
3. Be ready to play when required.
4. Remember to hand in your result at the end of a match.
5. Don't become annoyed when things go wrong or officials appear to be irritated.
6. Be fair and don't take the officials' work for granted, as though you have a right to expect the work they do. Consider their importance as people as much you might consider your own.
7. Express appreciation for what they do. A 'thank you' for organizing and officiating is the least you can offer someone who has worked hard to make an event run successfully for you.

On-court officials

If you disagree with a decision the rules are quite clear about procedure: the umpire's decision is final. Besides this, rudeness, bad temper and undesirable behaviour of any kind, should be controlled. Behave as you would want others to behave to you. Be fair and considerate, respect their judgements, even if you disagree. In other words, once a decision is made, get on with the game. Anything less than that spoils the enjoyment of the game for everyone, yourself included.

Your partner

In a tense doubles match it is often the case that your partner can have a bad patch and make mistakes. Should he deliberately not try and cannot be bothered, then you have a right to get annoyed with him and to express your feelings to him. For in not trying he is not being fair or considerate. When you agree to partner someone in a game you become committed to co-operate fully to 'win the game'. Not to try is to be unfair; it is to let your partner down and in a sense to break your word. A poor partner in this respect may justify some sharp words from you. However, it is easy to get angry or upset with a partner who is trying hard and having a poor game. In this case you should assume that he is doing his best at the time and indeed wants to play better. In this situation it is not fair to get annoyed with your partner. Everyone has a bad patch occasionally and in a doubles team you must learn to expect it. Help your partner and take some of the responsibility and encourage him to relax and not worry; just hope that his game gets better. More often than not it will improve and you can play at full strength again - that is what teamwork is all about. Next time it might be you that has the bad patch.

At the end of the game, win or lose, always thank your partner, for in his efforts he has contributed to the game and so to your enjoyment of it.

The opponents

Your opponent plays the game for enjoyment and, just like you, he gets his enjoyment from trying to win a good contest and using his skill to do so. During the game there will be rallies in which your opponent beats you with a good move or retrieves a losing situation to his advantage. Skill and effort are something we should appreciate in the game. A good player acknowledges the skill of his opponent at times, even during the game. Sometimes it is with a comment, like 'good shot', or even a determined nod of acknowledgement. Without giving anything away, it marks the respect two equal opponents have for each other, and makes the contest so much more enjoyable.

Sometimes you will encounter a bad line decision. You may, when you play without an umpire, be confronted with bad line-calls, fault serves, time-wasting, etc. All these are acts which lose you the point. You must decide whether or not your opponent is cheating intentionally. If he is not cheating then you can point out to him that the rules do not allow certain serves or behaviour; or that you disagree with a particular decision and wish to play the point again. Between two fair and reasonable opponents any dispute can be resolved by appeal to the rules and some discussion (learn the Laws of Badminton).

The opponent who cheats is a different matter. You can point out to this opponent that he is not being fair according to the rules or the spirit of the game. If he ignores your request for fair play, then you can appeal to the referee and ask for an umpire. If this is not possible, there are several sources of action open to you. You can concentrate and make sure that you do not give him the opportunity to cheat easily, i.e. hit the shuttle well within the court. Stand back to receive his fault serve. Try to devise a tactic to combat his cheating. Do not become annoyed. Players who cheat usually do so only when they are doubtful about winning. They try to get cheap points and to upset you. Recognize cheating and gamesmanship for what they are and keep calm. In fact it helps to become even more calm and extra polite when you know that the opponent is worried.

Unfair opponents are few and far between, but they can cause upsets and unpleasant behaviour on court. In general a good contest depends on you and your opponent co-operating to make it a good one. You will both make mis-takes and be outwitted by each other. Accept your own errors, for you are human and acknowledge your opponent's skill, for he is human too. Undesirable behaviour only affects your performance and spoils the enjoyment of the game.

At the end of the game, win or lose, thank your opponent for the contest, for without his efforts there would be no contest and accordingly no enjoyment.

Whenever you step on the court, be fair. Try your best to win and enjoy the game.