

WFDF Task Force to Consider its Position on the Spirit of the Game and On- Field Officiation Issues for Ultimate

Final Report

I. Summary

The members of this Task Force have engaged in in-depth discussions about Spirit of the Game and On- Field Officiation Issues for Ultimate. Based on these discussions, the Task Force came to the following broad conclusions:

- A new form of WFDF Official should be introduced (Game Advisor) to help reduce the amount of unnecessary delays in Ultimate, and to reduce the likelihood of players blatantly cheating
- While the USAU Observer System also provides solutions to these issues, while maintaining key aspects of self-officiating, the Task Force felt that it would be more appropriate to ensure that Players continue to make and resolve all calls
- In general the Game Advisor role should operate on the assumption that no player will intentionally break the rules, and therefore the main role of the Game Advisor is to provide support, advice and encouragement, to ensure compliance with the rules
- Clear policies and procedures need to be put in place to deal with players who do intentionally breaking the rules, and the Game Advisor should play a role in implementing these policies

The Task Force makes the following recommendations for consideration by the WFDF Congress:

- Recommendation 1: That Congress approves all the overarching statements about Spirit of the Game and the WFDF Officiating process used for Ultimate, as outlined in section 8.1 of this Report
- Recommendation 2: That Congress approves the initiative outlined in section 8.2 of this report, which recommends that WFDF encourages and supports its members to get exposure to the Game Advisor System and the USAU Observer system
- Recommendation 3: That Congress approves all the initiatives outlined in section 8.3 of this Report, which are designed to enable the overarching statements, outlined in Recommendation 1, to be achieved
- Recommendation 4: That any changes that are approved as part of this process shall be on a temporary basis and shall be reviewed by Congress following WUGC 2016
- Recommendation 5: That any changes that are approved as part of this process shall be communicated to the relevant Ultimate Committees, with specific direction that these changes be implemented

2. Background

On 30 September 2013 WFDF established a Task Force to Consider its Position on the Spirit of the Game and On- Field Officiation Issues for Ultimate:

wfdf.org/files/Press_Release_-_WFDF_Task_Force_to_Review_SOTG_and_Self-Officiation_9-30-13.pdf.

The establishment of the Task Force was prompted by issues that arose in recent years involving highly visible games that were widely commented upon: the Japan vs. Canada 2012 WUGC open pool play game, the Italy vs. Colombia 2013 WU23 open pool play game, and the Canada vs. Colombia 2013 World Games bronze medal match. These incidents were disruptive for both the spectators (live and streaming video) as well as to the players. Concerns over overly aggressive play, cheap calls, and protracted discussions have prompted calls for WFDF to adopt Observers or even referees.

3. Objectives

The taskforce was given two objectives:

1. Reaffirm WFDF's definition of Spirit of the Game and review, develop and strengthen existing programs in order to promote a clearer and more consistent understanding of how it should be applied; and
2. Answer the question on how does WFDF ensure that Ultimate athletes play a fair game that is also viewable (interesting for spectators in person and on TV/internet to watch).

4. Task Force Members

Name	Background Roles
Rueben Berg (Chair)	Rules Subcommittee chair, Australia representative
Will Deaver	Deputy Ultimate chair, US representative
Brian Gisel	Championships Subcommittee chair, Canada representative
Anna Haynes	Athletes' Commission representative
Si Hill	Ultimate Chair, UK representative
Jarna Kalpala	Women in Sport Commission, Finland representative
Makoto Ohi	Japan representative
Nob Rauch	WFDF executive representative
Luis Rodriguez	Youth and Sports Commission, Colombia representative
Valeska Schacht	Women in Sport Commission, Germany representative
Patrick van de Valk	SOTG Subcommittee chair, Portugal representative

Tiina Booth was part of the Task Force but withdraw due to time commitments

5. Task Force Process

The Task Force undertook the following steps:

- Shared background information on all members
- Received an update from the SOTG Committee on the work they are doing
- Watched game footage of key Ultimate games, including non-Observed and Observed games
- Shared information regarding the existing WFDF Officiating systems
- Undertaken an officiating survey on different aspects of the game and how they could be best officiated

- Compiled a pros and cons list for the WFDF and USAU officiating systems
- Undertaken an initial survey on the two task force objectives
- Produced an Interim Report which was publicly released on 3 March 2014 (see Appendix 1)
- Engaged in significant dialogue by e-mail, discussion forum and teleconference
- Developed recommendations regarding potential revisions for consideration at WJUC/WUCC 2014 (see Appendix 2)
- Discussed how and why any proposed changes to the current WFDF Officiating System would be different from the USAU system
- Reviewed and considered the results of the WFDF Global Disc Sports Community Survey
- Determined the specific recommendations regarding the proposed changes to the current WFDF Officiating System

6. Interim Recommendations

A series of interim recommendations were developed for implementation at WJUC/WUCC 2014 (see Appendix 2 for details). These recommendations were made to compliment the initiatives that were already being proposed for these events, including the implementation of Spirit Captains, increased Accreditation requirements and the introduction of a dedicated SOTG Director.

The recommendations were passed onto the relevant WFDF Sub-committees and Event Staff for consideration. The Task Force ensured that the nature of the recommendations were limited to the types of changes that could be implemented by the relevant groups without exceeding their level of authority in these matters.

These recommendations resulted in the following outcomes:

- The rules regarding the Tournament Rules Group have been amended to ensure they meet on a daily basis to review conduct or Spirit issues
- All players attending WUCC and WJUC will receive specific information about the role and powers of the Tournament Rules Group
- The WFDF Rules of Ultimate 2013 – Appendix was amended to include the new role of Game Advisors, whose role was limited to closely monitoring and strongly encouraging compliance with key aspects of the rules (see Appendix 3 for details)
- Appropriately trained and experienced Game Advisors will be used at key games during WUCC 2014. Unfortunately there does not appear to be sufficient resources to enable the implementation of Game Advisors at WJUC. Note: the duties of the Game Advisors at WUCC will be limited to those outlined in Appendix 3 and do not include the additional duties outlined in section 8.

The process for approving these recommendations was undertaken through the normal rule change process. These changes do not require consideration by Congress. The recommendations outlined in section 8, which are for consideration by Congress, are in addition to the changes that have already been made.

7. Task Force Conclusions

The Task Force wants Ultimate to remain a player-officiated sport. Some of the best reasons for this are:

- it has become a defining element of the sport and its culture;
- it is an extremely unusual approach, and is undoubtedly part of the sports growing wider appeal
- it removes a logistical difficulty and significant cost from the process of organising an event
- because we can (when so many comparable team sports could not)

Nonetheless we do conclude that in some situations it is beneficial and perhaps even necessary to introduce officials to support the players. This is particularly important during high profile games where there are large numbers of spectators (either present or watching remotely).

In doing this we have a number of goals:

- a) Improve the experience for spectators - and improve the chances that filmed games are presented in a manner that showcases the best aspects of self-officiated Ultimate
- b) Provide a consistent approach to handling dangerous play and other conduct problems
- c) Create a system where the act of moving between games with and without officials is easy for players
- d) Create a system that works alongside ongoing work to improve player education on rules and SOTG; and includes peer SOTG feedback as a well-defined element of the overall structure.
- e) Support the process of creating a single set of rules and a unified model for officiating that all WFDF members can support and employ.

It has long been accepted in WFDF rules that there is sometimes a reason for allowing officials to help manage the games. This has been demonstrated with the use of volunteer scorekeepers, timekeepers, and line assistants. There is also a mechanism in place for handling conduct problems, with the TRG having the authority to disqualify a player or an entire team from any event or from the entire tournament for breaches of the WFDF Conduct Policy. Furthermore in recent years we introduced a process for peer-feedback (SOTG scores) that has the potential to help with out-of-game governance.

However the Task Force believes these systems can be amended, to ensure they are further refined and enhanced. The recommendations detailed below outline how the Task Force believes these refinements and enhancements can be achieved.

8. Detailed Recommendations

The recommendations made below were chosen from a suite of possible changes that were discussed by the Task Force, including the power to enforce time limits and off-sides, to make line calls, and to resolve discussions. All these options were presented to the Task Force and voted on. Only those options that received approval for at least 80% of the task force are included. The Task Force concluded that significant improvements could be made to the current officiating system, while still ensuring that Players continue to make and resolve all calls.

- 8.1. That Congress approves the following overarching statements about Spirit of the Game and the WFDF Officiating process used for Ultimate:
- a) WFDF continues to support the work to improve player education around Spirit Of The Game (SOTG) and the rules, including the production of video resources and the translations of all documentation
 - b) WFDF acknowledges that while true SOTG is independent of any type of officiating, elements of self-officiating serve to both reinforce and highlight the values associated with SOTG and sportsmanship.
 - c) WFDF ensures that self-officiating remains a core component of its officiating process for Ultimate
 - d) WFDF ensures that critical games of Ultimate (finals, showcase games, any games that are broadcast or played in front of large crowds) are presented in a manner that showcases the best aspects of the sport, including its self-officiating system
 - e) WFDF ensures that effective and efficient systems are in place to ensure players do not intentionally cheat, and continues to raise awareness of these systems
 - f) WFDF ensures that systems are put in place to ensure that unnecessary delays in Ultimate are reduced as much as possible
 - g) WFDF encourages all national federations to play a key role in ensuring teams that represent their country at WFDF events know and understand the responsibilities involved in playing a self-officiated sport. This includes an emphasis on knowing and abiding by the rules of the game and Spirit of the Game guidelines, and addressing any issues that may arise
 - h) WFDF acknowledges that both the WFDF and USAU officiating systems make self-officiating a key aspect of the sport of Ultimate
 - i) WFDF continues to work with USAU and Ultimate Canada to ensure that where their philosophical approach to officiating align, that the systems used to manage that approach are also aligned.
 - j) WFDF continues to work with USAU and Ultimate Canada to ensure that where their philosophical approach to the rules of Ultimate align, that the rules also be aligned.

- 8.2. That WFDF encourages and supports its members to get exposure to the Game Advisor system and the USAU Observer system.

The Task Force felt strongly that referees were not appropriate or necessary for Ultimate, and that a self-officiating system should be maintained.

However it was identified that there were different ways of implementing self-officiated systems and that members and players would be better placed to evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of these systems if they had sufficient exposure to them. This exposure could be achieved either by members trialling these systems at events in their own countries, or by attending events where these systems are in place. Trials of these systems should only be undertaken with appropriately trained and skilled personnel.

- 8.3. That Congress approves the following initiatives, which are designed to enable the overarching statements about Spirit of the Game and the WFDF Officiating process used for Ultimate, stated in section 8.1, to be achieved:

- a) Implement the USAU time limit system for putting the disc in play after a turnover (10s limit for disc in field, 20s limit for disc out of field) and enable the GA to provide advice around these time limits
- b) Change the time limit for discussions after a foul from 60 seconds to 45 seconds
- c) Allow the GA to participate in discussions between players, when required, to help them make progress on coming to a decision
- d) Allow the GA to provide perspective on foul/violation calls, but only if asked (by any player)
- e) Revise penalties regarding offside to align with those of USAU (repull after first violation and then unfavourable field position)
- f) Put procedures in place to outline how and when in-game decisions around misconduct are undertaken. The GA should have the power to enforce sanctions under these procedures.

As noted in section 6, the changes outlined in these recommendations are in addition to the changes that have already been implemented regarding the role of Game Advisors (see Appendix 3 for details).

WFDF Task Force to Consider its Position on the Spirit of the Game and On- Field Officiation Issues for Ultimate

Interim Report

Background:

On 30 September 2013 WFDF established a Task Force to Consider its Position on the Spirit of the Game and On- Field Officiation Issues for Ultimate:

wfd.org/files/Press_Release_-_WFDF_Task_Force_to_Review_SOTG_and_Self-Officiation_9-30-13.pdf

It was expected that the task force would come up with an initial written report to the board discussing their definition of the scope of the review and expected target date for a final report by no later than January 31, 2014 with a final recommendation by mid-2014, in time for presentation to the 2014 Congress in Lecco.

Objectives:

The taskforce was given two objectives:

1. Reaffirm WFDF's definition of Spirit of the Game and review, develop and strengthen existing programs in order to promote a clearer and more consistent understanding of how it should be applied; and
2. Answer the question on how does WFDF ensure that Ultimate athletes play a fair game that is also viewable (interesting for spectators in person and on TV/internet to watch).

A key passage of the press release regarding the second objective stated that: "this second question is not the same as "should WFDF adopt Observers." Rather, we want our games to highlight the positive qualities of player control (fair play, personal responsibility, communication) while not allowing the negative potential of player control (misconduct, disorganization, miscommunication) to overshadow or diminish the positives." Having said that, the USAU system of Observers has been developed over the last couple decades and we agree we should not discount the conclusions that have been drawn through this experience until they have been fully considered.

Task Force Members:

Name	Background Roles
Rueben Berg (Chair)	Rules Subcommittee chair, Australia representative
Tiina Booth	Youth and Sports Commission
Will Deaver	Deputy Ultimate chair, US representative
Brian Gisel	Championships Subcommittee chair, Canada representative
Anna Haynes	Athletes' Commission representative
Si Hill	Ultimate Chair, UK representative
Jarna Kalpala	Women in Sport Commission, Finland representative
Makoto Ohi	Japan representative
Nob Rauch	WFDF executive representative
Luis Rodriguez	Youth and Sports Commission, Colombia representative
Valeska Schacht	Women in Sport Commission, Germany representative
Patrick van de Valk	SOTG Subcommittee chair, Portugal representative

Task Force Process:

So far the Task Force has undertaken the following steps:

- Shared background information on all members
- Received an update from the SOTG Committee on the work they are doing
- Watched game footage of key Ultimate games, including non-Observed and Observed games
- Shared information regarding the existing WFDF Officiating systems
- Undertaken an officiating survey on different aspects of the game and how they could be best officiated
- Compiled a pros and cons list for the WFDF and USAU officiating systems
- Undertaken an initial survey on the two task force objectives

The next stage for the Task Force will involve significant dialogue by e-mail, discussion forum and telephone.

Preliminary Task Force Outcomes:

This is a high level summary of the Pros and Cons work the Task Force undertook:

	WFDF Officiating System	USAU Observer System
Pros	Easy, works majority of the time, unique	Can overturn incorrect calls or deliberate cheating while still mostly allowing for player responsibility, better time management
Cons	Can result in awkward game delays, the system does not work if players deliberately cheat	Removes some responsibility to adhere to the moral prerogative, requires additional resources to train and staff

The preliminary results of the officiating survey the Task Force undertook showed that the majority of the Task Force members believe:

- Player should remain solely responsible for making foul/travel/pick calls
- It might assist players if they could ask for advice from a WFDF Official regarding line calls and other on field discussions
- It might help address game management issues if a WFDF Official was empowered to make calls regarding Offside and Time limit penalties
- It might help to eliminate any risks of cheating if WFDF Officials had a more direct relationship with the Tournament Rules Group

Note: The term “Official” does not necessary equate to the existing WFDF Line Assistant or Time/Score Keeper roles, nor the USAU Observer Role.

As a result of this work, it became clear that WFDF might want to consider some changes to the current Officiating system to enable it to ensure that Ultimate athletes play a fair game that is also viewable, while still maintaining key aspects of Spirit of the Game.

Preliminary Task Force Response to the Objectives:

Objective 1: At this stage the Task Force intends to endorse the work the SOTG Committee are doing around Spirit, especially in the area of education and feedback through the spirit scoring system

Objective 2: At this stage the Task Force intends to recommend that WFDF make some adjustments to the WFDF officiating process (but which could also result in a system that was different to the USAU officiating process)

Note: These preliminary responses may change based on further discussion.

Task Force Recommendation:

In addition to the preliminary responses to the Task Force Objectives, the Task Force would like to recommend that WFDF makes certain incremental changes to the current WFDF Officiating process that could easily be implemented at the WJUC/WUCC 2014 without requiring significant advance notice, while recognizing that anything more than an incremental change would not be able to be implemented in time for the WJUC/WUCC.

The Task Force intends to develop a more detailed list of specific recommendations regarding this, with the main focus being on possible changes that could be made to the WFDF Rules of Ultimate Appendix, and the role and structure of the Tournament Rules Group.

Next Steps:

The next steps for the Task Force will be:

- Initiate a dialogue around these initial background findings and begin the process of discussing alternatives in more detail
- Develop recommendations regarding potential revisions that would be considered for WJUC/WUCC 2014
- Consider the ramifications of increasing Olympic Movement involvement and overall commercial development of the sport (and the demands that sponsors and broadcast partners may make) versus protecting and highlighting the key aspects of how SOTG can be showcased
- Discuss in more detail the work the SOTG Committee are undertaking and make any necessary recommendations
- Discuss how and why any proposed changes to the current WFDF Officiating System would be different from the USAU system
- Determine the specific recommendations regarding any proposed changes to the current WFDF Officiating System
- Determine what educational tools and resources can be developed to assist with the implementation of any proposed changes
- Detail how any proposed changes should be monitored and evaluated to determine its effectiveness and efficiency
- Set a timeline for when any changes should be implemented and reviewed

It is expected that the final Task Force report will be submitted to WFDF by 30 June 2014.

WFDF Task Force on Spirit of the Game and On- Field Officiation

Recommendations to be considered for the WFDF World Ultimate Club Championships 2014 and World Junior Ultimate Championships 2014

These recommendations are made by the WFDF Task Force on Spirit of the Game and On- Field Officiation, which was established by WFDF President Robert Rauch on 30 September 2013. These are the first set of recommendations from the Task Force. The final Task Force Report will be submitted to the WFDF Congress at Lecco 2014 and may include additional recommendations for consideration by Congress.

These recommendations are made to compliment the initiatives that are already being proposed for these events, including the implementation of Spirit Captains, increased Accreditation requirements and the introduction of a dedicated SOTG Director.

The recommendations outlined below will be passed onto the relevant WFDF Sub-committees and Event Staff for consideration.

Recommendation 1: Establish a daily meeting of the Tournament Rules Group (TRG) to review conduct or Spirit issues.

The TRG should meet each day of the Event to discuss any Conduct or Spirit issues that may have arisen and any necessary actions. The Head Game Advisor (see Recommendation 3) should also be added to the Tournament Rules Group (TRG) to provide a direct means of communication between the Game Advisors and the TRG.

Background to Recommendation 1:

The Taskforce identified that previously the TRG did not meet on a regular basis and therefore did not have an easy way to monitor and consider any issues that may have arisen. By establishing a daily meeting, any issues regarding Conduct or Spirit can be appropriately monitored and addressed.

Recommendation 2: Raise Awareness of the roles of the Tournament Rules Group (TRG)

That the Event staff for WUCC and WJUC ensure that all teams are made aware of the role and powers of the TRG and the process by which issues can be raised and actioned.

This should specially include raising awareness that:

- Requests, complaints or protests may be brought to the attention of TRG by any Team Captain or Team Representative or registered competitor.
- The TRG may, at its discretion, disqualify a player or an entire team from any event or from the entire tournament whenever that player or team exhibits violent, obscene, abusive, disruptive or illegal behaviour; cheats or otherwise attempts to create an unfair advantage for themselves or disadvantages

others through circumvention of the rules; or otherwise causes substantial hardship, inconvenience or annoyance to spectators, officials or players.

- The TRG may alter or nullify the result of any event; or order an event to be partially or completely replayed.

This should be raised at the Captains meeting, but also via direct communication with all registered players.

Background to Recommendation 2:

The Taskforce recognised that while there have been several games in the past that have involved incidents that may have warranted action from the TRG, very few of these incidents were referred to the TRG. It would appear that there is not a strong understanding of the role and powers of the TRG. By raising awareness of these powers, it is hoped that this could act as a deterrent to prevent future incidents, but also ensure that any future incidents that do occur can be resolved appropriately.

Recommendation 3: Establish a new WFDF Official role of Game Advisors

That in addition to the existing roles of Scorekeepers, Timekeepers and Line Assistants, WFDF introduces a new role - "Game Advisor".

The Game Advisors should be used in the following games:

- all showcase games
- all Finals
- any other games deemed appropriate by the Tournament Director and the TRG.

The role of the Game Advisor should include:

- Have pre-game meetings with each team to discuss the role
- Ensure time limits related to the game, including time limits regarding the Pull, Time Outs and on-field discussions, are adhered to and any applicable penalties are enforced (according to Section A5 of the WFDF Rules of Ultimate 2013 - Appendix)
- Communicate calls to the crowd
- Ensure restraining line restriction are followed
- Provide rule clarifications, when asked
- Provide advice on in/out and up/down calls, when asked
- Call Spirit of the Game Timeouts if required
- Mediate off-field discussions between teams if required
- Provide warnings regarding incidents concerning the WFDF Conduct Policy
- Refer incidents regarding the WFDF Conduct Policy to the TRG

Game Advisors must not remove the responsibility for Players to make and resolve all calls during play.

The role of Game Advisor should be undertaken by experienced players/administrators who have had considerable exposure to high level play and

have received specific training on the duties of the Game Advisor. There should be two Game Advisors for each relevant game. For each event where there are Game Advisors, WFDF should designate one as the “Head Game Advisor” who will be responsible for the management of the Game Advisors and should be added to the Tournament Rules Group.

Background to Recommendation 3:

The Task Force identified that there is currently an issue with time limits not being correctly adhered to, in particular discussions going well beyond the 60 second limit. The Task Force believe that this is having a significant impact on the game, particularly for spectators. The enforcement of Time limit penalties is already a part of the WFDF system (refer to the WFDF Tournament Directors Manual, p22), however it has not be implemented in previous events primarily as there was a desire to ensure that volunteers were not given undue responsibility. The Game Advisor would be a specific WFDF Official who was qualified to undertake this role, as well as several other roles that WFDF Officials have already been undertaking in an ad hoc manner.

Extract from the WFDF Rules of Ultimate 2013 – Appendix v2

B6.3. Game advisors

- B6.3.1. Game advisors closely monitor time limits and conduct issues, and provide information to teams regarding the rules, in addition to being able to undertake the same duties as support staff.
- B6.3.2. The specific duties of game advisors are:
 - B6.3.2.1. Hold pre-game meetings with each team to discuss the game advisor role.
 - B6.3.2.2. Closely monitor rules regarding time limits, including: A5.4.1.4, A5.4.1.5, A5.4.2.2, A5.4.2.3 A5.5.3, A5.5.5, A5.7.2, and encourage teams to comply with these rules.
 - B6.3.2.3. Closely monitor rules regarding the restraining line and restraining zones, including: A1.2, A1.3.1, A1.6.5, A1.6.6, and encourage teams to comply with these rules.
 - B6.3.2.4. Closely monitor rules regarding offsides and encourage teams to comply with these rules.
 - B6.3.2.5. Provide perspective on line calls, when asked.
 - B6.3.2.6. Provide rule clarifications, when asked.
 - B6.3.2.7. Call Spirit of the Game Stoppages according to A9.1.
 - B6.3.2.8. Mediate off-field discussions between teams if required.
 - B6.3.2.9. Provide warnings regarding incidents concerning the WFDF Conduct Policy.
 - B6.3.2.10. Refer incidents regarding the WFDF Conduct Policy to the Tournament Rules Group.
- B6.3.3. Game advisors may enter the playing field during a stoppage without the need to seek approval from captains/players.
- B6.3.4. Game advisors do not remove the responsibility for Players to make and resolve all calls.