American Go Association Tournament Regulations

October, 2014

First Edition – 1991 Ken Koester

Second Edition 2014
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American Go Association

Acknowledgments

This edition of the regulations is firmly anchored by the original, published in 1991 by Ken Koester, and updated from time to time by him. While it makes no major changes, the passage of time and accumulation of TD experiences suggested that we update. We have made a few clarifications based on TD reports of misunderstandings, some additions to include issues related to rule sets other than AGA, and some change of structure to distinguish between actual regulations and advice to TDs on how to use them effectively. The current authors wish to recognize Ken for the fine foundation he created. It is doubtful that we would have had the courage or fortitude to take on the task without it.

We presented this edition in draft for public review and comment in June, 2014, and wish to also thank Keith Arnold, Terry Benson, Larry Gross, David Rohde, Larry Russ, Michael Scudder, Changlong Wu, and Edward Zhang and Ken Koester (who contributed again for this addition) for their thoughtful and useful commentary on content, and corrections of errors in sequence references, and other issues of organization. This work is greatly improved for the contributions they made.

I. Tournament Sponsorship and Sanctions.

The American Go Association (hereafter, the AGA) has an official interest in three different categories of tournaments as defined below.

A. AGA rated. An AGA rated tournament is one in which every player is an AGA member prior to the tournament, joins at the door, or pays the AGA one day pass fee, or is accepted as an international player whose AGA membership is not required pursuant to AGA policy providing reciprocal membership privileges to players from other countries. The results of all games in an AGA rated tournament will be submitted to the AGA ratings system for inclusion in the AGA ratings database.

B. AGA sanctioned. A sanctioned tournament is an AGA rated tournament in which the Tournament Director (hereafter, TD) and organizing committee, if one exists, agree to abide by AGA tournament regulations and procedures. The AGA commits itself in return to support the tournament and Organizers as it
is able, and, upon receipt of any member complaints, to examine the activities of the TD and/or organizing committee for infractions of said regulations.

C. AGA sponsored. A sponsored tournament is an AGA sanctioned tournament which the AGA itself through its officers and/or local representatives plans, organizes, or has established event specific standards, carries out, or assumes any financial burden that may thereby result. Use of funds from AGA rewards points is permitted, but does not in itself qualify an event as AGA Sponsored.

II. Rules of the Game.

The rule set created by the AGA itself (hereafter, the *AGA Rules of Go*) shall be the official rules of the game of go for tournament play unless otherwise superseded by tournament regulations given below. (Tournaments may also be conducted with other internationally accepted rule sets such as Ing {any version}, New Zealand, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, IGF, WAGC, or WMSG). The AGA maintains a rules page on its website, where recognized rule sets are listed and described. AGA tournament regulations may be used to conduct tournaments using variant games and/or rules, but such games will not be included in the national ratings system. The TD should consult with the AGA if using a rule set not included there.

III. Duties and Responsibilities of Tournament Authorities.

The Tournament Director (TD) shall have the authority to apply these regulations to AGA sanctioned events. The TD has the authority to delegate responsibility to Assistant TDs (ATDs) or others as necessary. (See Appendix A.) The TD will have final decision-making power over all disputes unless the TD has previously appointed an appeals committee (see section IV). Hereafter 'TD' will refer to all those with authority as delegated by the TD.

IV. Rulings and Appeals.

Regarding rulings on the rules of Go, the TD may only initiate a ruling process if and only if one of the two players of the game in question request such a ruling. The TD may otherwise not interfere with a move in play, even when an explicit rules of play violation is witnessed (see section A below). The TD may initiate a ruling if it is unrelated to the rules of play and is related to player etiquette or conduct (see section B below). See Appendix B regarding TD management of the ruling process.

A. Rulings related to the rules of play on the board. A copy of the rules should be readily available for consultation. The opportunity to request a ruling is limited to the players involved. No ruling will be made following a complaint by another person. The opportunity to request a ruling is limited to the period of time between the completion of the placement of the offending stone or the offending action, and the placement of the next stone by the other player. When a player moves, it is an explicit acceptance of the prior play.

If the TD observes a rules infraction but no protest is made, after the move is accepted by the opponent the TD may interrupt the game to explain to the players what has occurred. No ruling will be made and the game will then continue.

Note: This restriction does not apply to issues considered in section V of these tournament regulations, referred to in B below (regulations covering player conduct and etiquette).

The TD will hear the story from both players, and any bystanders determined to have pertinent information. The ruling should be clear and should cite the element(s) of the rules that applies to the decision. The TD may consult with others before ruling. In more difficult cases, the TD may refer the issue directly to an appeals committee, with or without a recommendation.

Either the ATD or the TD may decline to rule on any matter and refer the matter to higher authority (The ATD to the TD or the TD to an appeals committee). The referral may be either with or without a recommendation.

B. Rulings on issues not defined by the rules of play on the board (See Section V. A through J). In cases where a player's violations of the regulations regarding etiquette or conduct as described either here or in the AGA Code of Conduct, are disturbing either their opponent or other tournament games, the TDs may step in at their own discretion, and give a warning or initiate a ruling as appropriate. See Appendix C.

The basic principle involved in all these cases is that a player is not permitted to unduly disturb either an opponent, or other players. The TD is not limited by the specifics enumerated in section V, and may take action as deemed appropriate to keep the event orderly.

C. Appeals. The following procedure protects both the players and the TD if each is dissatisfied with the other while resolving disputes that may arise.

1. Appeal of the ATD. A player may appeal decisions of an ATD to the TD. Such an appeal must be made immediately after the ATD has rendered a decision.

2. Appeal of the TD. In general, decisions of the TD may not be appealed. However, the TD may at any time convene an **Appeals Committee** to decide a protest. The TD must then abide by the decision of the committee. The TD is strongly encouraged to employ an Appeals Committee if there is sufficient time during the event.

3. Formation of Appeals Committee. An Appeals Committee shall consist of an odd number of voting members, who are experienced players selected by the TD with no connection to any of the parties to the dispute and with no stake in the outcome.

a. The TD is a non-voting member of the committee.
b. The committee shall select one of its number as chairperson to supervise the proceedings.
c. It shall then obtain statements from each of the parties to the dispute and any other witnesses or experts that may be necessary, including the TD or ATD.
d. It shall deliberate, decide the question in accordance with these tournament regulations, the rules of the game, and such precedents as may be applicable and available. The chairperson shall communicate its decision in writing to the TD, who shall enforce it.

Note: Each such incident is a separate issue, to be decided separately. Precedent is a guide, not an extension of these regulations.

4. Next round commencement The next round cannot commence until all appeals from the current round have been settled, unless the decision will not severely impact pairings. (A round robin is an example.)

5. Player complaints Players may not appeal the decisions of a TD or an Appeals Committee to the AGA. However, upon receipt of a player complaint against a TD or tournament organizer, the AGA Tournament Coordinator shall investigate the matter and take action as under VIII.D.

V. Player Conduct and Etiquette.

A player shall generally conduct him/herself with a minimum of behavior that is disruptive or irritating to other players.

A. Noise. Noise is to be kept to a minimum in the playing area. Players who wish to replay a game should leave the playing area if at all possible; players who do not must speak softly enough not to disturb any other players still in games.

B. Kibitzing. Onlookers are specifically forbidden to indicate any opinion of the game or play whether by word, gesture or expression, or to suggest moves or corrections while in the playing area. The TD may require violators to leave the playing area; repeated offenses are grounds for disqualifying the offender from further attendance at the tournament.

C. Smoking. Smoking is subject to public law, the TD, and one's opponent: only if all three allow it can one smoke in the playing area. If there is a separate playing area for smokers, and both players agree, a tournament game can be played there.

D. Eating and drinking. A player may eat and/or drink in the playing area only so long as such behavior does not disrupt any game in progress nor disturb any other player.

E. Problem resolution. A player being disturbed by another player should attempt to resolve the problem with that player first. Only if this fails or the problem persists should he/she bring it to the attention of the ATD or TD.

F. Access. A player may not prevent his/her opponent's access to, or sight of, the board, the clock, and any prisoners under any circumstances.

G. Timeliness. A player shall endeavor to be in attendance before the start of registration and of each scheduled round during a tournament, both to ease the burden of directing from the TD and as a mark of respect for his/her opponent.

H. Cheating. Cheating is a deliberate infraction of the rules of go or of AGA Tournament Regulations.

No player shall cheat. Every player shall bring evidence of cheating to the attention of the TD as soon as possible. See Appendix D for advice on how to handle this very difficult and delicate circumstance. If cheating is determined to have occurred, the game is forfeited.

I. Atari. A player is never required to tell an opponent that the latter is in atari (check), nor is it discourteous to refrain from doing so.

J. Clock Reminder. A player is never required to remind an opponent to punch the latter's clock; however, good sportsmanship asks that they do so, at least for the opponent's first lapse.

K. Violation of the AGA Code of Conduct. The AGA Code of conduct extends to the surrounding area of the event, and is included in these regulations by reference. The TD may take knowledge of prior behavior into account in determining that a violation has occurred. An action taken by the TD with reference to these regulations does not bar further action by the AGA Code of Conduct Committee.

VI. Administration of Play.

The AGA wishes to give local TD's wide latitude in running tournaments, but also to give players a reasonable expectation as to how a tournament shall be run and a guarantee of fair play. A TD may not override any section of this document indicated as absolute and should only overrule other sections after careful consideration and announcement before play begins. **A. Preparation for play.**

1. **Ratings and ranks.**
    a. A rating is a numeric expression of playing strength assigned to each AGA member by the AGA ratings system. It varies as a result of rated games submitted to the ratings system by TD's or AGA chapters.
    b. A rank is a graded system of levels inherited from the historic Asian customs used to express the relative strengths of players. Most tournament systems use ranks as a basis for handicaps and pairings. The AGA does not recognize amateur ranks higher than 7 dan.
    c. The TD may derive approximate ranks from ratings by dropping the decimal portion of the rating. Negative ratings become kyu ranks; positive ratings, dan ranks.
    d. A player must play at a rank at least equal to that of his/her official AGA rating but no lower. (A player playing in tournament systems that use the rating to pair players shall enter at a strength at least equal to his/her official AGA rating.) **(This rule is absolute)** However, a player shall not be forced to play at a rank higher than the AGA recognizes at the time of the tournament. A player may, after consultation with the TD, elect to play at a higher rank, which is at the discretion of the TD. Unless otherwise directed by the TD, a player must play at the rank initially established for the entire tournament.
    e. If a player has no established AGA rating, the TD will assign a provisional rank using the best available information. The TD shall correct this provisional rank if subsequent play shows it seriously in error.
2. **Handicaps**. If used, handicaps shall consist of the number of stones difference in rank between the two players unless otherwise specified by the TD or tournament software and placed on the traditional points as given in the AGA Rules of Go or by free placement at the discretion of the TD. Handicaps may never exceed nine stones. e.g. a 1 Dan player will receive 3 stones from a 4 Dan, a 5 Kyu player will receive 6 stones from a 2 Dan, and 9 stones from a 7 Dan.
3. **Even game compensation and tied results.** All rule sets specify even game compensation given to white (commonly known as komi). The rule set in force governs.
4. **Choosing colors in even games**. Colors may be assigned:
    a. By the TD by lot, or by a pairing program;
    b. By a system which attempts to ensure that all players use each color as equally as possible in the event.
    c. By the players themselves. Traditionally, one player picks up a handful of white stones and the other, either one or two black stones (i.e. odd or even). If the second player correctly guesses, that player uses black; if not, white. Other mutually agreeable methods of lot will suffice.
5. **Prepared materials and consultation.** Players may not consult any reference outside their own mind. To do so is a cheat. If a cheat is determined to have occurred, the game shall be forfeit (refer to section V. H). **(This rule is absolute and applies to all following sections a through f)**. Examples are:
    a. A player shall not consult any prepared game materials, move dictionaries, problem collections, etc., during the current round.

b. A player may not use a second set to "mirror" any part of the tournament game or to work out any positional variations arising from it.
c. A player may not go elsewhere inside or out of the playing area during the current round and contravene a. or b. of this section.
d. A player may not use a computer to contravene either a. or b. of this section. A player using a computer to record a game must be willing and able to satisfy his/her opponent and the TD at any time that he/she is not so contravening this stricture.
e. A player may not consult with a third party, solicit advice, nor receive unsolicited advice on any game he/she has not finished. Anyone providing such advice in any form, even a nod or shake of the head, should be asked to leave and be reported to the TD.

f. Any behavior which in the judgment of the TD AND an appeals committee contravenes the intent of this section.

6. **Use of clocks.** If a clock is used, the player with the white stones shall choose upon which side of the board to place it. If the TD requires that the clock be on a particular side for administrative purposes, then the player of white shall choose at which side of the board to sit.

B. Play of the game.

1. **A stone laid is a stone played.** A stone is played when it touches the board (unless dropped by accident) and is moved to the intended intersection with a minimum of adjustment. Players are advised to avoid ambiguity, and TDs may warn - rather than punish - questionable infractions. Once a stone is played it may not be moved or removed except as a capture or as part of the retraction of an illegal move, as provided below.
2. **A move is either:**
    a. The play of a stone and capture of any prisoners, or
    b. A pass of the move.
3. **Completion of a move**. A move is complete when a stone is played, any captured stones removed, and the clock is punched, or, in non-clocked games, when a stone is played, and any captured stones are removed. In a clocked game, the opponent may play at any time after the other player's hand is no longer obstructing access to the board and captured stones have been removed, regardless of whether the opponent has punched the clock. **(This rule is absolute.)**
4. **Disruption of the board position.** A player who accidentally disrupts the board position must reestablish it using his/her own time. If the TD's assistance is required, the clock may be stopped. If the position cannot be reestablished to the satisfaction of both players, the TD shall adjudicate.
5. **Clarification of a move.** A player may ask an opponent to clarify the ambiguous placement of a stone only before making the next move.
6. **Illegal moves**. The penalty for illegal moves is generally determined by the rule set in force. If more lenient than immediate forfeiture (as in the *AGA Rules of Go*, or the Ing system), the TD may consider repeated illegal moves grounds for awarding a forfeit to the victim. See appendix E.

C. Adjournment of play. In the event it becomes necessary to adjourn play (typically, to break a round for meals), the following procedures should be observed.

1. **Announcement.** The TD shall announce an adjournment time before the current round begins play.
2. **Adjournment timing**. Play should be adjourned only with supervision by the TD. The TD will normally announce the nominal adjournment time before the round and warn players ten minutes before the announced time of adjournment. Players may continue to move, but with the understanding that the player "on the move" at the actual adjournment time will have to seal the next move when the TD or ATD comes by the game. (The TD is cautioned not to expect instant compliance when s/he comes to adjourn a game, nor to levy a penalty unless a player is unreasonably dilatory.) The player's clock continues to run until the move is complete as described in b. below.
    a. The player does not place a stone on the board but writes the coordinates of the next move on a slip of paper, or marks its position on a diagram.

b. The player must insure the move is unambiguously described.
c. The player or TD then stops both clocks, places the paper with the move inside an envelope provided for the purpose by the TD, and seals it.
d. The TD writes the board number, clock time remaining, and player to move on the face of the envelope; both players sign it across the flap. e. The TD takes custody of the envelope.

3. After the move is sealed. Both players must leave the board until time for the resumption of play. The provisions of VI.A.5. remain in force during the hiatus.

4. Resumption of play. To resume play, in the presence of the TD or ATD:

a. Both players confirm the board number, the position of the stones on the board, and the clock setting;
b. The player who did not make the sealed move opens the envelope and verifies the placement of the stone;

c. Unless the move is impossible or illegal, it must be played as written and sealed; if impossible or illegal, the TD shall adjudicate as under VI.D.3 and 4. below.
d. Once the player makes the move, the other player's clock is started and normal play resumes.

D. Completion of the game. Both players should continue to alternate play until all neutral points have been filled and all repairing moves made. A game is over when both players pass in succession (or after white passes last as required by AGA Rules and some other rule sets) and agree regarding the life and death of all groups. Resumption of play is governed by the rule set in use. AGA rules will apply if the rule set in use does not deal with this issue. **(This rule is absolute)** The last to play should stop both clocks.

1. **Scoring the game.** Both players shall score the game according to the rule set in use.
2. **Disputes.** If either player disputes the result, the TD or ATD can adjudicate by scoring the game independently, using the final game position, existing game records, and/or observations of spectators. The TD is NOT limited to the originally announced counting procedure in force for this purpose. Any recognized counting procedures may be used for the calculation of territory. However, if the different rule set produces a different result, the score must be adjusted to accommodate that difference. i.e. if the komi is different, (as in AGA vs. Japanese) the adjustment will be made to equal the result under the governing rule set.
3. **Reporting the results.** Both players must report the game result to the TD and fill out any reporting forms he/she may require. A written report signed by the loser and delivered to the TD by the winner is sufficient.

E. Timekeeping.

Time limits. The AGA does not absolutely require the use of clocks during tournament play, but very strongly encourages it.

1. For rating purposes, the AGA sets the following minimum time controls for a game to be accepted by the rating system:

   a) Timed with overtime 30 minutes per player per round of basic time control plus no more than the equivalent of 20 moves in five minutes per overtime control (often called Canadian overtime) OR 20 seconds 3 times (Seconds counting, often called byo-yomi)

   b) Fischer time

   10 minutes basic time plus 20 second per move added, or
   20 minutes basic time plus 15 seconds per move added, or
   25 minutes basic time plus 10 seconds per move added

   c) Sudden death - 45 minutes per player per round with no overtime control.

   d) Tie breaking approaches that require a direct quick playoff between tied players may use shorter games for that purpose, and they are valid for breaking ties. But they will NOT be rated.

2. **Clocks.** If clocks are used only in some games, the TD may put a clock (presumably made available by the end of another clocked game) on a slow game at any time.
3. **Methods of time management.** The TD shall explain time allowances, overtime method (if any), and operation of the clocks (as needed) before the commencement of play in the first round. It is strongly suggested that the TD at least summarize this explanation before commencing each round.
4. **Setting the time for the next round.** The TD may start any round with at least ten minutes notice, but no earlier than any previously announced time.
5. **Setting the clock.** Either player may set the initial time allowance on the clock. It is, however, both players' duty to assure themselves that the clock is correctly set and that they understand it is working.
   a. A player doubtful of clock setting or working must consult the TD or ATD before play begins.

b. Failure to consult the TD or ATD as above leaves a player liable for any timekeeping errors that may occur, except those attributable to clock malfunction during the course of play.

6. **Starting the round.** Games will start at the time designated by the TD. Absent players' clocks will be started by or on the instruction of the TD. If both players are absent, upon the return of either, time remaining in the round will be split equally between them, and the clock started. If clocks are not used, an absent player shall forfeit if more than thirty minutes elapse after the announced start of play.
7. **Starting the game.** The second player will start the clock for the first player prior to the first move.
8. **Punching the clock.** A player must "punch the clock" with the same hand that plays the stone. **(This rule is absolute.)**
9. **Management of clock time.** Each player is responsible for managing his/her own time. Failure to punch the clock results in time lost; it cannot subsequently be restored.
10. **Clock malfunction.** A player who suspects a clock has malfunctioned must notify the TD or ATD at once, and not continue play until the TD or ATD directs. A player may not escape the consequences of running out of time by claiming a clock malfunction earlier in the round which was never brought to the TD's attention.
11. **Stopping the clock.** Players may stop both clocks only under the following circumstances: a. Scheduled adjournment;
    b. At the direction of the TD/ATD;
    c. Removal of more than one captured stone;
    d. Exchange of prisoners;
    e. Game's end;
    f. To make a protest to the TD/ATD;
    g. To resolve a dispute with one's opponent, as under V. E.
12. **Expiration of primary time.** If the game is not over when a player has used all his/her allotted time, that player must either resign or go into overtime (if overtime is a part of the announced time control). Either the TD, ATD, or a monitor appointed for the purpose may explain conditions of overtime play to the players involved. Although some systems allow the players to conduct overtime themselves, it is preferable for the TD, ATD, or the monitor to do so if the clock in use does not do this automatically.

A player is responsible for claiming to the TD that an opponent has passed a time Control unless the TD has delegated that responsibility to a monitor. Some clocks do so automatically and verbally. Others do not. The player has the primary responsibility to claim opponent has exceeded the time limit. Tournament officials are authorized to do so. Spectators doing so will be sanctioned by the TD & may be removed from the premises. However, this will not alter the result of the game.

a. In the Canadian overtime system (see below), the monitor is always responsible for resetting clocks and counting out stones when a player has met a time control.
b. The TD may require monitors to claim forfeits when players miss an overtime control.
c. The TD may also require monitors to claim that a player has missed a basic time control.
d. The TD must announce what role monitors will play in advance of the first round.
e. If seconds reading is done by a person, that person declares all related issues including reading off the seconds, the number of periods remaining, and final forfeiture. Note: in accordance with Asian custom, the seconds are normally stated in ascending order as used. i.e. 15 seconds, 25 seconds 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 times n periods remaining. [see slight revision in original]
f. If both players exceed the time control without the game being complete, the TD will institute the most stringent control available under the system being used. i.e. 1 times 30 seconds or 20/5 Canadian. If the tournament system does not allow for overtime and it cannot be determined which player lost on time, the TD will use institute one period of Canadian overtime. The choice of limits in this case will not affect the validity of the game for AGA ratings purposes.

13. **Overtime play may be conducted in one of three ways:**
    a. Japanese:

(1) A given number of overtime periods of a given length (typically, five periods of 30 seconds) are allotted to the player either traditionally at that point of basic time

equal to the sum of the overtime periods or, more commonly, at the end of basic time.

(2) If a player completes a move in less than the time of one period, no time elapses.

(3) Whenever a player uses a period's worth of time, the number of periods available is reduced by one. e.g. as in 1 above, if 31 seconds elapse, the player is reduced to 4 periods of 30 seconds. If again, then 3.

(4) Failure to complete a move before the expiration of the last overtime period is a forfeit. Note: when only one period is left, that is the last.

(5) The "reading seconds" provision of the Ing chess/go clock is an acceptable way to carry out this method of overtime.

(6) Monitors have powers as under 12.b. and c.

b. Canadian:

(1) A given number of stones is counted out, the clock reset to a given number of minutes, and the player's stone container closed and removed.

(2) When these stones have been played, a new set is counted out and the clock reset to the specified period. Continue *ad inf*. Note: time remaining after completing the required number of moves is not retained.

(3) Failure to play all the stones counted out in the time provided is a forfeit.

(4) Monitors have powers as under 12.a. and may be given the powers of b. and c. by the TD.

F. Tie breaking procedures. Most tournament systems will result in two or more players being tied in placement at the end of the tournament. The procedures published by the AGA under the title *Resolving Ties* are recommended for that purpose.

1. The TD must announce the tie-breaking procedures to be used before first round play begins. If no announcement has been made, the standard shall be SOS, SODOS, face to face).

2. If cash prizes are being awarded, ties are broken only to award places in the event. The actual cash prizes given to the places tied are summed and divided among all the players tied, regardless of what tiebreaking procedure is adopted. **(This rule is absolute.)**

VII. Use of Computers.

Throughout this document, the word computer encompasses both the physical device and the electronically encoded instructions that run upon it. The AGA recognizes three ways computers may be used during tournaments. Computer use must never be allowed to disrupt tournament activity, but no further restrictions are placed on computer use, except as noted below.

A. TD use. The TD may use computers to register entrants, pair them, and report their game results to the AGA.

B. Player use. Players may use computers to record their tournament games and those of other players, subject to VI.A.5.d.

C. Computer entry. Anyone wishing to enter a computer as a participant must have the prior approval of the TD. Computers may enter tournaments under certain conditions and at the discretion of the TD:

1. Only the inventor of the hardware/program or his/her designated agent may enter the computer. (Hereafter, either inventor or agent are called the operator.);

2. The computer must correctly handle any move legal for it or its opponent to make and must not make any illegal moves;

3. Both computer and operator must be AGA members;
4. The operator must play computer moves on a regular board and "punch the clock" for the computer;
5. 5. The operator may enter or adjust playing parameters before a round begins, but not during a round;
6. The operator may offer to resign on the computer's behalf.

D. Classes of computer participation. There are three classes of computer tournament participation. The TD should also announce the class of tournament before first round pairings. **Unless otherwise announced, the tournament is class 1.**

1. **Class A:** No computer entrants allowed.
2. **Class B:** computers allowed, but humans have the right to refuse computer opponents. Humans wishing to do so must notify the TD before first round pairings.
3. **Class C:** computers allowed; humans may not refuse computer opponents.

VIII. Penalties.

In any situation for which the AGA rules, or the rules of the rule set in force for this tournament specify a penalty, the penalty specified by the rules governs. In other cases the AGA makes few attempts to set out specific penalties for tournament faults, as the number of potential situations is too great. Instead, it offers the following:

A. Objectives. The foremost objective of a penalty is to restore the *status quo ante* the infraction.

B. Forfeits. An infraction is not in itself grounds for awarding a forfeit unless the infraction is repeated, deliberate, the *status quo ante* cannot be restored, or the offender gives evidence of not intending to abide by tournament regulations or the rules of go. A forfeit counts as a victory for the opponent of the player who forfeits. {And the game will be reported as such for ratings.}

C. Lesser penalties. TD's may not attempt to levy lesser penalties that arbitrarily adjust the game score or clocks beyond what is necessary to restore the situation, unless the rule set in use specifies such penalties.

D. TD infractions. If the investigation of a player complaint determines that the TD's decision violated tournament regulations, the Tournament Coordinator shall take action to mitigate any injustice as well as can be done. The TD will be informed of the determination and the reasons for it.

Appendix A: Tournament Authorities.

The AGA suggests that organizers of large tournaments divide the duties of organizing and actual tournament direction between at least two people: an organizer who arranges for the site, puts out publicity, etc, and a Tournament Director (TD) who will manage the competition. A tournament with over 30 players should be considered large.

The Tournament Organizer provides the advance organizing to secure an appropriate site, publicity for the event, etc. The Tournament Director (TD) manages all aspects of the competition, such as pairing, resolving any questions or disputes, determining winners, and reporting results to the AGA.

The TD may have assistants (ATDs) in larger events who will have authority as delegated by the TD. The ATDs assist the TD as directed and has all authority (but not an obligation) to make an initial ruling on any issue unless the TD has specifically placed limits on the ATD's authority. The TD may also have monitors, who will assist in overtime and adjournment management.

The host site for the tournament may have specific rules of conduct, limits on time, or other mandated conditions. These take precedence over any issues in these regulations should there be a conflict.

Appendix B: Rulings procedures

In all cases, if the clock has not been stopped, the TD or ATD should stop the clock upon arrival at the scene. If the question is simple and the answer brief and clear, the TD or ATD may communicate immediately. If it is complex (takes more than a minute or two for the players to communicate.) the discussion should be moved away so as not to disturb other games in progress.

Appendix C: Re rulings related to etiquette or conduct

Rulings in these cases all have a judgment component. How much noise is too much? How much slurping of coffee is too disturbing? Etc. Players are often reluctant to complain, and some will push to the very limits of acceptable behavior. The player feeling disturbed is encouraged to contact the TD before the issue becomes impossible. The TDs will then quietly observe and should intervene as appropriate on their own authority. Even if no complaint has been made, a wise TD will circulate during the round and identify potential problems before they get out of hand. The TD has full authority to intervene as deemed appropriate by the TD. A player or spectator complaint is specifically NOT required. (Contrary to the case in section IV.A above) Typically the initial intervention is a warning. However, the TD is not barred from taking stronger action if the cause is severe.

Appendix D: Managing a cheating incident

With the rise of AI systems that are readily available, cheating by use of such systems has become more common, and a separate code has been written to manage accusations and sanction players in those incidents when the occur in online competition. These regulations apply to face-to-face competition. The principles are the same in both cases, but the circumstances dictate somewhat different approaches to management. We therefore treat AI cheating as a separate category here. However, we will frequently refer to the AGA AI Online Fair Play Regulations to specify regulations there that apply here as well. For brevity, we will refer to them as AIFPR.

In all cases in which the TD determines that cheating has occurred: The game will be forfeited. In most cases, the player will drop from the tournament as well, either publicly or privately, at the TD's discretion. Any allegation of cheating needs to be treated with the utmost seriousness. But the set and setting of the event will suggest very different responses by the TD in different circumstances. A case involving 9year-old double-digit Kyu players in their first exposure to a tournament is not the same as a that of a 19year-old player coveting the $100 first prize for winning the 3 Dan division in the US Open.

Discretion is the dominant theme here. The strictures mandated in AFPR regarding public disclosure of an incident or accusation are the same here. We and the TD must realize that although this is "just a game," the consequences of an allegation of cheating, with or without subsequent proof or admission, are likely to extend far beyond the tiny, cloistered universe we create in a tournament.

If AI is not a component of an accusation of cheating, a determination of cheating must be based on examination and interpretation of facts that establish proof "beyond reasonable doubt." The facts will be reported to the AGA Tournament Coordinator, who may take further action if deemed necessary. The TD should in all cases convene an appeals committee to review the circumstances and render a decision.

If AI IS a component of an accusation of cheating, the TD must convene an appeals committee, which should include at least one member of the AGA AI appeals pool committee as established in AIFPR. The tournament appeals committee shall use to mandates of AIFPR to render a judgement, which shall be binding. Note: that process does not require proof "beyond reasonable doubt".

The TD has the authority to impose any sanction within the boundaries of AGA sanctioned competition locally. i.e. “You will not compete around here for a year.” or even “You will not participate in a tournament I direct unless I am persuaded to change my mind.”

The TD will provide the AGA National Tournament Coordinator with a detailed report describing the nature of the cheating, how it was discovered, and the remedial action taken. The AGA appeals TD pool may impose additional sanctions.

The TD is NOT authorized by the AGA to do anything that will publicly shame the person and is most strongly urged not to do so. The rules in AIFPR apply here. In some cases, “everyone” already knows what the issue is. The TD has no need to add to the disturbance. In others, the incident is quite private. e.g. the 9-year-old exemplar above.
And we are well advised to let it remain so.

Appendix E:

In cases where warnings have not been heeded, the TD is entitled to take the whole body of behavior into account in ruling. Note: The punishment for an infraction is specified in the AGA rules. If the rule set in force has no provision, the AGA rule will apply. The TD is permitted to take knowledge of prior bad or questionable acts into consideration when making such a determination. This applies to Code of Conduct violations as well.

Appendix F: Re Self Promotion and Assignment of Provisional Ratings

The TD has broad discretion to assign players to appropriate ratings for the event. Players who feel their ratings are lower than their actual playing strength often request to be assigned a higher rating for the purposes of pairing the tournament. The TD may and should take any evidence into consideration to determine whether or not to grant the request. The TD's discretion in this matter is absolute. Any adjustment (even less than a whole stone) upward is permitted. Downward adjustment will be made only in a clearly demonstrable case of disability, such as a stroke. Lack of recent practice no matter how long, is insufficient.

The TD has the same discretion regarding players who do not yet have an AGA rating. Ratings assigned in other systems are the ideal gauge, but results from casual play reported either by the player or others may also be used.

If the initial estimate turns out to be clearly wrong after a round or two, the TD may make an adjustment to provide appropriate competition for the remainder of the tournament.

Revision note:

August 2018

This document was revised to include the following:

References to the AGA Code of Conduct
Specifies sponsorship standards more clearly
Allows TDs to take prior behavior into account when deciding to sanction a player

February 2023

This document was revised to include the following:

Clarified standards for definition of an AGA Sanctioned Tournament.
Specifies minimum Fischer Time conditions for rated games more clearly.
Clarifies definition of an AGA Sponsored Tournament to include State Championships and Major Tournament support subsidized events. Note: Use of Rewards Points is not included.
Specifically allows the TD to escalate a violation of etiquette or conduct to the Code of Conduct Committee, and makes any Code of Conduct violation also violation of these regulations, and extends this authority to the entire tournament venue.
Allows a TD to take “prior bad actions” into account when making a determination.
Establishes a special case for management of cheating using AI (see appendix D.
Establishes protocols in AIFPR as applying in this document as well.