

CG8

Racket abuse, particularly at the end of games

This is a surprisingly common combination. Of course you can get racket abuse at any time in a match, but there are reasons why it happens most frequently at the end of games.

- The player is about to leave the court, but is choosing to leave his racket on it – how it leaves his hand is relevant
 - He may have been completely outplayed and is annoyed
 - It may have been a close game but he has just lost out – he is disappointed
 - It may have ended on a decision against him – he is annoyed
 - He may wish to make some point to the referee
 - He may believe that he will be off court before any action can be taken
- and so for various reasons you might get a racket abuse situation at the end of a game.

The referee's priorities are to **see it** if it happens and **deal with it** if it happens.

To see it keep your eyes on the players until you are satisfied that they have left the court and nothing is happening. Do not be so relieved that the game has ended that your head goes down too quickly and you are writing the score with a view to announcing it. There may be indicators that some incident may happen eg looks from one player to you, signs of frustration with own play, imitation swipes with racket, striking own body with racket etc. Be alert at the end of the game anyway, but be particularly alert if there have been such signs.

Levels of intervention for dealing with it

Doing nothing actually tells the player that he can repeat or escalate the action.

So say something

Lowest entry level “Mr A, careful with the racket (or keep your racket in your hand or don't throw your racket”)

Warning level “Mr A, Conduct warning for racket abuse”

Stroke level “Mr A, Conduct Stroke for serious racket abuse” (yes, I would throw in the word serious here – or – if the stroke was the result of a repeat situation following a warning, I would say “for repeated racket abuse”).

This paper is specifically about the abuse taking place at the end of a game.

Therefore the player may be off the court before you can say anything.

Do not make any comment if you cannot see the player ie do not shout out something to the surrounding audience. The message has to go to both players – it is about communication and the management of this match

Do not think about it for the interval minute or so and decide to leave it alone

Do not address the guilty player on his return to the court if he arrives first, on his own.

Do wait for both players to return

Do make sure that the guilty player is aware that you are addressing him

Do issue the appropriate warning (whatever) in a factual and clear way eg “Mr A – Conduct Warning for the racket abuse at the end of the previous game” or equivalent.