

Question 18.

*The referee correctly reacts to a foul by also calling a miss. The non offender approaches the table and inquires of the trainee referee if it is also a free ball. After some lengthy deliberations from this inexperienced referee, the offending player gets up from his chair, retrieves a red from a pocket and places it, as a guide, next to the ball that could be causing the confusion. At which point the non offender turns to the referee and claims a seven point penalty.*

*At no time did his opponent disturb any ball in play, either by hand or with the red he had taken from the pocket.*

*What should be the response from the referee.*

Answer.

Section 3 Rule 10 part D states that a seven point penalty is mandatory if the striker either uses any ball off the table for any purpose, uses any ball (or any other item) to measure gaps and/or distances or touches any ball during consultation of Section 3 Rule 14g, which is part of the miss rule.

The thing to remember is that the breaking of the first two of these rules in the incident described was done by the non striker, who took on that status as soon as the original foul was committed. The third rule does not come into play as the discussion was about the free ball not the replacement of the balls after the miss call.

I feel that it could be taken that the player who placed the ball on the table did so in the spirit of assisting both the inexperienced referee and his opponent who had asked the question that had brought play to a halt for so long but is a lesson to all referees, inexperienced or otherwise, to use the tools at his disposal in such situations to make accurate and speedy decisions.

There is also the possibility that this kind of thing could happen to any referee and that the deliberations need the time that is being taken and in such a case a warning not to interfere should then be given to both players.

A case in point was one that arose at the Fred Osbourne one year on whether a free ball should or should not be awarded and which involved several reds being removed from the table and ball markers being borrowed by the referee from all over the room.

No further penalty should be imposed by the referee in this or any similar incident regardless of any request.