



Tournament Rules Group Decisions at the European Ultimate Championships 2007

Austria Junior Open – GB Junior Open Case

Location & Time of first meeting:

Tournament HQ Friday 3 August 2007, 17:00 - 19:30

Attending the meeting:

Voting (TRG reps)

EUC TD – Andy Kayley

EFDF Rep – Thomas Griesbaum (German Masters team)

Junior Division TRG Rep – Eric Maniez (French Junior Open)

Non Voting

Austrian Junior Open Coach – Thomas Eppacher

Austrian translator – Gerald Kalkusch (Austrian Masters)

GB Junior Open Coach – Nick Sampson

EFDF Rep who was called to the game – Adam Batchelor (GB Masters)

EFDF Women's Ultimate Rep – Alia Ayub (GB Womens)

EFDF Junior Ultimate Rep – Paul Eriksson (Russian Masters)

Complaint brought forward by Austrian Junior Open team:

The formal complaint was that the GB Junior Open team played dangerously during their semi-final, and that as a result the Austrian Junior Open team players did not feel safe to finish their game. As a result, play was suspended at 15-9.

Austria lodged a complaint as per the *Tournament Rules Group - Discipline* section in the *EFDF Championship Rules and Game Procedures* which states:

“The TRG may, at its discretion, disqualify a player or an entire team from any event or from the entire tournament should that player or team have been deemed to have acted in one of the following ways: behaving in a violent or obscene manner; undertaking illegal behaviour; cheating or otherwise attempting to create an unfair advantage for themselves or disadvantage to others through circumvention of the rules; or causing substantial hardship, inconvenience or annoyance to spectators, officials or players.”

The Facts (compiled by all attending the meeting who watched the game):

The Austrian Junior Open team and GB Junior Open team played each other on Thursday 2 August 2007 at 09.00 for their semi-final.

The summarized points raised in this meeting were that:

- The Austrian Junior Open team felt the GB Junior Open played Dangerously (causing serious injury to one Austrian Junior open player resulting in him having to leave the game, and minor injury to another). [Please note that there was not agreement amongst the independent players watching who were not on the squads in question to confirm that this was intentional dangerous play on the part of GB Junior Open]
- Adam Batchelor (the only available EFDF rep, as all the other reps were playing) was called to the game as per the *EFDF Championship Rules and Game Procedures* under the section *Spirit Issues* which states: “If the game officials consider a game to constitute a major problem in relation to Spirit issues, they will call for an EFDF official or the TD. This person will have the authority to halt the game at any point, on the grounds of Spirit problems. The action taken can be a short pause in order for the Captains to calm their teams down, or even a decision to play the rest of the game at a later time, should the schedule allow. The official shall bring any misconduct to the attention of the TRG, which may decide on sanctions according to the rules above.” (Please find a copy of the rules attached. These were also included in the Player Handbooks at EUC) Play was stopped for Adam to give a talk to all the players and to help calm the situation. Both GB and Austria sat in a circle and Adam explained that it was imperative that one play within the rules and that spirit of the game dictates that one must have mutual respect of your opposition.
- Play resumed and Adam watched the remainder of the game. Please note, he did not interfere in any calls – he just watched the game as an outside official.
- From this point, Austria did not make any violation-calls etc. However GB made a range of violation calls which were classed by the independent people watching as “bad calls.” Adam was the one to compile these opinions from people watching the game to ensure that the opinions were not only those of GB or Austrian players or coaches.
- In the final point that was played in this game, a GB Junior Open player caught a disc for the score after he and two Austrian Junior Open players went for the disc. The GB player who caught the disc then got up and physically pushed one of these two Austrian Junior Open players. The altercation did not go beyond this point as players from the sideline intervened. However, please note that an act that causes another to apprehend immediate and personal violence is known as assault.
- The Austrian Junior Open players and coach refused to finish the game as they feared dangerous play.
- This game was recorded as a loss to Austria, win to GB. Austria then went on to play their game for 3rd/4th place versus Sweden at 13:00 and lost this game.
- At 15:00 the Austrian coach/team filed a protest requesting that GB should be disqualified for dangerous and violent play as per the *Tournament Rules Group - Discipline* section in the *Championship Rules and Game Procedures* (fully outlined under the Official Complaint section above.)

- The GB Junior Open coach during this meeting mentioned that he had made the decision to exclude the GB Junior player who had assaulted the Austrian Junior Open player from any remaining games in the competition.

The above were the main points raised by the parties involved in this meeting. As a result the TRG group decided that there were 5 Options available to vote on:

1. Formally exclude the GB Junior Open player who had assaulted the Austrian Junior Open player from the competition. This would mean that he would not be entitled to play any more games at the competition or receive any medals. GB would still go through to the final.
2. Disqualify the entire GB Junior Open team from the competition. This would mean that they would not be given any finishing position in any posted results.
3. Arrange an entire re-match of the semi-final game of Austria vs GB. «Formally exclude the GB Junior Open player who had assaulted the Austrian Junior Open player from the competition. This would mean that he would not be entitled to play any more games at the competition or receive any medals.»
4. Allow Austria to go through to the final instead of GB and rank GB 4th place (the position which Austria had earned in their game for 3rd/4th place vs Sweden).
5. Allow Sweden to go through to the final, give Austria 3rd place and GB 4th place.

During this entire meeting, the only points highlighted were the faults on the part of the GB Junior Open team. The GB Junior Open coach apologized for his player who committed the assault. However it was discussed how important it was, particularly in the Junior division, to not allow such actions to pass unpunished. From a personal perspective, it seemed that the sentiment in the room was that this is a team-sport and as such we take collective responsibility for actions taken by ones team or teammates.

When the vote was taken, the 4th option was voted in. Please note that none of the members present who played on GB squads voted. The decision was taken to allow Austria to go through to the final as if they had won the semi-final versus GB as the actions on the part of the GB squad were enough to disqualify them from that match. As the game for 3rd / 4th place had already taken place, GB were to be given 4th place.

It was strongly highlighted that in the Junior division there is a higher standard of care that the Coaches hold in ensuring that their players both act within the rules and spirit of the game. As soon as they see their players going outside of this realm, it is their responsibility to reign them back in. This is different to the “Adult” divisions where players are seen to be mature enough to be able to handle themselves respectfully within the rules. Instead of observers, it was noted that

Coaches are the guardians of their players and that we ought to look into effective means to help coaches with this very difficult and important task.

This was the end of the first meeting.

GB Juniors Open appeal of above decision

Location & Time of appeal:

University Social Centre, 21:00-00:00

Attending the meeting:

Voting (TRG reps)

EUC TD – Andy Kayley

EFDF Rep – Thomas Griesbaum (German Masters team)

Junior Division TRG Rep – Eric Maniez (French Junior Open)

Non voting

Austrian Junior Open Coach – Thomas Eppacher

Austrian translator – Gerald Kalkusch (Austrian Masters)

Austrian Junior Open players – 3 players present [They came 40 minutes into the meeting once it was realized they were needed for their input]

GB Junior Open Coach – Nick Sampson

GB Junior Open players – 2 players present

EFDF Rep who was called to the game – Adam Batchelor (GB Masters)

EFDF Women's Ultimate Rep – Alia Ayub (GB Womens)

EFDF Junior Ultimate Rep – Paul Eriksson (Russian Masters)

The Appeal: An appeal was launched very soon after the decision mentioned in the case above was made.

A follow-up meeting was called where a GB Junior Open Players appeal was made. The GB Junior Open players attending firstly apologized for the assault which had ended their last game with the Austrian Junior Open team. However, they stated that they felt they needed to appeal the decision as the “badly spirited play” fell on both GB and Austria. The GB Junior Open players listed specific incidents of bad-play which they claimed occurred from the Austrian players throughout the game, occurring both before and after the EFDF representative was called to the game. The overall sentiment brought forward by the GB Junior Open appeal was that the GB Junior Open players felt intimidated throughout the game. None of these points had been raised in the earlier meeting as the GB Junior Open coach was not aware of these incidents that happened on-pitch.

It was once the GB Junior Open players made these points that the TRG realized they needed Austrian Junior players present as well. The meeting had a break and resumed once 3 Austrian Junior Open players were brought to the meeting. The GB Junior Open player was asked to repeat the list of grievances GB had during the game.

On a personal note, I was very impressed with the maturity of the Juniors on both teams. They showed a level of professionalism and drive to be honest and fair that was very fresh and welcome after such a long day of meetings with the adult representatives. Both parties were open to each other and talked through the various examples of problems that had happened on pitch. It was actually very interesting to note that many of the altercations that had happened were not necessarily due to purposeful violations of spirit of the game... but instead misunderstanding of the “culture” of how Ultimate is played in each nation.

I will give only one example, as it is preferable not to dissect this game too much, and it seemed to embody the main body of grievance throughout the match: One GB Junior Open player called a violation on the Austrian Junior Open player. The Austrian Junior player wasn't moving back to the correct position after the violation, so the GB Junior Open player pointed his finger firmly at the player explaining why he needed to return to the original spot. This firm finger-pointing was interpreted by the Austrian side as being the equivalent of a fist-wave. As a result 3 or 4 Austrian Junior players started to shout at the GB Junior Open player to not be unreasonable. Neither side understood why the other was escalating the tension to the extent it had reached... and the answer was that they simply didn't understand how the other was interpreting each others actions.

Back to the meeting, and it was getting very late and with the new information on board, the TRG Group had a quick sub-meeting. It was decided that with the new information made available one had several options:

1. To uphold the earlier decision
2. To state that given the evidence that neither GB Junior Open nor Austria Junior Open played a “fair” game and as a result the 3rd place Swedish team would advance to the final. «Formally exclude the GB Junior Open player who had assaulted the Austrian Junior Open player from the competition. This would mean that he would not be entitled to play any more games at the competition or receive any medals.»
3. To state that as both teams were at fault in the game, that the earlier score as it stood be upheld and that GB should advance straight to the final
4. To acknowledge that while both teams were at fault in the semi-final game, the action of assault on the GB side had to be more strongly punished. As such the semi-final game which had been suspended would be replayed the following morning at 8am, with GB being docked 5 points and the score starting 10 all, game to 17 and a 30 min time cap. GB would pull to Austria in a game to determine who would go to the final. If either team decided not to play this game, this would be seen as a forfeit on their part, and the other team would proceed to the final. «Formally exclude the GB Junior Open player who had assaulted the Austrian Junior Open

player from the competition. This would mean that he would not be entitled to play any more games at the competition or receive any medals.»

The vote went down to the TRG (players on GB squads again did not vote). The decision was taken to go for the 4th option of replaying the semi from 10 all. In explaining the decision, it was noted that there was unfortunately never going to be the perfect solution to the problem at hand. However, given the further evidence provided by the GB Junior Players, and as discussed with the Austrian Junior Players, it was agreed by both sides that both teams were at fault for how that game turned out.

Again, from a personal note, I was again impressed to see that both the Austrian and GB Junior Open players made an effort to speak to each other while we were away deliberating on the decision. I sincerely hope that they will continue to work on building the bridge between their teams as there is great talent on both squads, and these players will inevitably compete against each other possibly for the rest of their Ultimate playing careers.

In the end, the Austrian Junior Open team decided not to play the game on Saturday morning, and by so doing forfeited the semi-final game versus GB Junior Open. As a result, the GB Junior Open team proceeded to the final.

As players in the Adult divisions, we hold a great responsibility in leading by example and playing as we think the future should play as well. Let's try and take the positive points of what came out of these meetings.

Inevitably there will be more discussions regarding the various points raised already and by this summary. It would be great if a constructive discussion could be conducted regarding these various points. An email will be going out by the EFDF regarding positions you can run for in the running of Ultimate Frisbee in Europe. If you feel passionate enough about how you want your sport run in Europe, then run for a position or make it known that you want to volunteer your time to be on the subcommittee for that division.

In the end, well done to the Juniors on both the Austrian and GB Junior Open teams! You showed that you could act maturely and use the system provided to you to resolve disputes.

Thanks for reading,
Alia Ayub
On behalf of the EFDF