



Official ITA Team Match Protest Ruling

Division & Gender: Division I Women Date of Match: 04/22/18

Match: University of Arkansas vs. Tennessee State University

Team Protesting: Kansas State University

Ruling Committee: ITA Division I Women's National Ranking Committee

Protest Summary:

The ITA Division I Women's National Ranking Committee has thoroughly reviewed the third-party line-up protest statement submitted by Coach Danielle Steinberg (Kansas State) regarding three of the six dual matches contested between the University of Arkansas and Tennessee State University on April 22, 2018, as well as the subsequent defense statement submitted by Coach Michael Hegarty (Arkansas).

The Committee has ruled that the University of Arkansas **did** violate **ITA Rule I.E.4** (*...lineup changes in back-to-back dual matches, Page 4 of the 2017-18 ITA Rulebook*) on three separate occasions, detailed below:

1. After competing at line #4 in dual match #1, Agne Cepelyte competed at line #2 during dual match #2, playing ahead of Natsuho Arakawa, who played line #2 in the prior match. Per ITA rules, the removal of Tatum Rice from the #3 position, allows Cepelyte to move up to the #3 position, but she cannot then be flipped with Arakawa. This would be considered two moves and would need to be conducted over the course of two dual matches. It should also be noted that, per ITA Rule I.E.2, if player Rice was physically able to play, even if the coach had no intention of playing her, she should have been listed at her appropriate position in the lineup and then scratched prior to singles.
2. After competing at line #2 in dual match #2, Agne Cepelyte competed at line #5 during dual match #3, playing behind Martina Zerulo and Peyton Jennings, two players she competed ahead of in the prior dual match.
3. After competing at line #6 in dual match #3, Jackie Carr competed at line #2 during dual match #4, playing ahead of Martina Zerulo and Peyton Jennings, two players she competed behind in the prior dual match.

In his defense statement, Coach Hegarty stated that items #2 and #3 (listed above) were agreed to by the opposing coach and were done in an effort to allow his players to compete against different opponents over the course of these six dual matches and not to gain any "competitive advantage." While these statements may very well be true, the Committee wishes to note that these are not acceptable reasons for violations of ITA Rule I.E.4.

As for the protest resolution, the Committee wishes to note that unlike direct, head-to-head line-up challenges, ITA third-party protest policy provides for specific ramifications once a coach has been found to be in violation:

"If the coach is found to be in violation of this rule, for the first infraction - a written letter will be sent from the ITA to the coach and his/her Athletic Director, explaining that they have violated an ITA rule and that the line-up must be reset to what it was prior to the match in violation. The letter will also explain that any further violations of this rule will result in a 7-0 default in the team match. Each coach who is found to be in violation will receive one warning letter that will carry over year after year. Coaches who are responsible for both a men's and women's program will only be give one warning letter. For example, if a coach violates this line-up rule with his/her men's team and receives a warning letter but the following year breaks this same rule coaching his/her women's team, the women's match would be defaulted."

The Committee wishes to note that this is a unique situation in that this protest concerns **multiple** dual matches whereas the ITA third-party protest policy is clearly written to address a one dual match at a time scenario. It is the Committee's interpretation that the intent of the current policy is for the ITA office to provide a written warning prior to any actions taken with respect to a match result (such as a 7-0 default). In light of this, the Committee issues the following resolutions to this protest:

1. The original match results from dual matches #2, #3 and #4 (all wins for the University of Arkansas), will be allowed to stand.
2. The Committee wishes to issue a formal reprimand to Coach Hegarty for multiple violations of **ITA Rule I.E.4** (...lineup changes in back-to-back dual matches) during the University of Arkansas' dual matches #2, #3 and #4 against Tennessee State University on Sunday, April 22, 2018. In accordance with ITA third-party protest procedures, future violations of ITA Rule I.E.4 will result in a 7-0 team default for that match. Coaches who are responsible for both a men's and women's program will only be give one warning letter. For example, if a coach violates this line-up rule with his/her men's team and receives a warning letter but the following year breaks this same rule coaching his/her women's team, the women's match would be defaulted.
3. This ruling will be provided to Hunter Yurachek, Director of Athletics at the University of Arkansas.
4. This ruling will be provided, along with all Division I protest resolutions, to the NCAA Division I National Tennis Committee for review, and in advance of, the 2018 NCAA Division I Tennis Championships selection meetings.

Finally, the Committee wishes to note that had these line-up violations been challenged by the opposing coach, under precedent set by this and other ITA committees, the final result could have involved the nullification or overturning of all or some of the dual matches in question.

Please note that decisions made by the ITA Division I National Ranking Committee are final, and no appeals will be accepted. Please also be aware that ITA policy does not permit coaches involved in the protest to contact committee members before or after a protest decision is made to question this decision or ask for additional information.