

Blades and Rubbers

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There are a large number of companies offering a larger choice of equipment than ever before, making purchases very confusing. Equipment with the 'ITTF' logo from an established company will generally be of higher quality and is required for National and International tournaments.

Blades

The 'Blade' is the bat without the rubber. 85% of the blade must be natural wood and can be of any size, shape or weight providing the surface is flat and rigid. Thin layers of 'Carbon' fibre are one substance that has been successfully used in blades, adding to the speed, but also to the cost.

In general, blades can be categorised as follows:

- Defensive Blade
- All round Blade
- Offensive Blade
- Carbon Blade
- Soft Wood & Hard Wood

Faster blades tend to lose the 'feeling' required for touch shots such as short push. Most top players tend to choose Allround or Offensive blades, with faster rubbers to give them speed and feel. Beginners should use an 'All round' blade (which will usually be made of 5 plies) so they achieve good control.



Rubbers

All rubbers have a smooth side and a pimples side and most, although not all, are designed to be used in conjunction with a layer of sponge which is bonded to the rubber during manufacture.

'Rubbers' come in an incredible number of types and prices. Rubber must be 'ITTF' approved for use in National or International Tournaments.

Rubbers can be divided into the following categories:

- Short Pimples
- Long Pimples
- Reverse
- Anti Spin

Rubber needs to be changed much more regularly than blades, but this depends on the amount you play and the level you wish to play at.

Beginners should use reverse rubber with a 1-5mm sponge, to enable them to develop all of the basic strokes.

Short Pimples

With 'short pimples', the pimples face outward and are short, wide and close together. Short pimples are often used on one side of the bat, usually on the backhand to:

- Provide variation of spin and speed with the normal sponge rubber.
- Assist with block and counter attack strokes.
- To help players with weaker backhand.

Long Pimples

With 'long pimples', the pimples face outwards and are usually longer, thinner and further apart than short pimples. Long pimples will react as follows:

- If the player A with normal rubber pushes the ball (backspin) and player B with long pimples return the ball with a push stroke, the resulting return will be slight topspin or no spin (instead of expected backspin).
- If player A with normal rubber topspins the ball and player B with long pimples chops (backspin) the ball, the return will always be backspin. The faster the initial topspin, the heavier the backspin.
- If you topspin or counter attack with long pimples, the blade must be more open and the ball will travel slower and have backspin relative to the same shot with sponge rubber. Sidespin is reversed on return.

Long pimples are difficult to play against in the beginning but also difficult to play with and alter significantly the technique. Not recommended for beginners or until good technique is established.

Reverse Rubber

By far, the most used rubbers are reverse rubbers. With reverse rubbers, the playing surface is flat and attached to a layer of sponge. Various combinations of sponge and the playing surface are available which will affect the spin, speed and control of the rubber. Generally soft sponge rubbers are slower than hard sponge rubbers, though the introduction of 'speed glue' (see 'glues') can alter that.

Anti-spin

Anti spin is a reverse rubber with little friction on the surface so that they do not impart any spin on the ball and negates spin.

Rubber should be maintained by:

- Cleaning with water at the end of the practise.
- Having a cover for your bat to keep it 'dust free'.
- Keeping the bat out of direct sunlight and high temperatures.

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