

A.E.T.T.U.

ASSOCIATION OF ENGLISH TABLE TENNIS UMPIRES

Issue 9

April 2008

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I would to thank all those members who were able to attend Ken's funeral, it was a tremendous response and greatly appreciated by his family. I was asked to write something for the VETTS magazine and I have included it for you to see. Ken was the Association and he will be greatly missed. My thanks also to Tom Purcell, who took over from Ken, and is doing a great job as Secretary. He will report on current issues in this edition. Ongoing at the moment are the prospective meeting with the NURC, Alan Ransome's proposals "Umpire Crisis" to be discussed at the next National Council meeting, insurance for umpires, working conditions, the overcrowded calendar and glue testing.

The paper put forward to N.C. by Alan Ransome brings to light many of the problems created by the shortage of qualified umpires (and referees). He suggests possible remedies and proposes that the N.C. sets up a sub committee to meet the relevant bodies and formulate recommendations to solve the crisis. The Association will be supporting this, but don't hold your breath! Another issue is the letter we all received from Mike Holt regarding the last two U10 -14 Championships at Crystal Palace and Norwich with a request for support and a promise that things would be better this year. He is making the right noises, and I would encourage you to support this year's event to be held again at Norwich. Hopefully he will deliver.

The overcrowded calendar and the inevitable clash of events is yet another issue which needs to be addressed. So far this year many of the events have been woefully short of qualified umpires, even the prestigious European Cadet/ Junior Top Ten at Sheffield; lack of foresight probably exacerbates the problem as events appear only to be checked that players do no clash i.e. juniors with vets etc., but both events need officials and there and there are not enough to go around.

In conclusion, when reading the Table Tennis News, I noted the Chairman as saying "The lack of technical officials has also made an impact on the events programme. It has been a problem for some years and a resolution is critical for our sport. Every effort is being made to support and assist the existing technical officials "

Recognition perhaps for starters???

Best wishes for the remainder of the season and I look forward to seeing many of you at the AGM in July

George Tyler

.....

**The 2008 Annual General Meeting for the
ASSOCIATION OF ENGLISH TABLE TENNIS UMPIRES will be
held at Bulkington Village centre, Warwickshire
on Sunday 27th July 2008.**

As with any AGM the posts of the Officers of the Committee are open to re-election. Nominations for official positions and any proposed rule amendments to the Constitution or monitions for the AGM agenda must be submitted to the Secretary, in writing, no later than 1st May 2008. Unless nominations for officials are thus received the incumbent officers will, if willing, be re-elected.

+++++

A EULOGY FOR KEN ARMSON M.B.E.
READ BY STAN CLARKE AT THE FUNERAL SERVICE

On the Tuesday after Ken died his son Lee phoned with details of the funeral and said that Ken had made a proviso in his will that he required Stan Clarke to deliver his eulogy, and it must be warts and all. You see he was ordering me about even after he had passed away.

So not to disappoint I decided to deal with the "Warts" part first. Ken was beyond doubt a world class male chauvenist, who truly believed that women were put on earth to serve him as and when required. He was to D.I.Y. what Ghengis Khan was to diplomacy, the mere sight of Ken with a screwdriver in his hand sent shudders through me, as I knew that I would be soon not only need to sort out the original problem but first put right the mess Ken had caused, he was not the most proficient engineer or builder. Normally a cool sort of guy he changed into a devil in disguise when he donned his referee's mantle, barking out orders left right and centre, but strangely enough he would not umpire a match at league level, in all the years I played with him I don't remember him umpiring more than two or three sets. His excuse, I'm the club secretary and I don't do umpiring. So much for the "Warts" bit, I'm sure many of you have other tales to tell on this score, but for me that is more than enough.

I prefer to remember the other side of the man. The guy who was true to his friends, who would go out of his way to help, who would think nothing of getting out of bed at four in the morning to pick up a friend from the airport. A man who had a quirky sense of humour, often allied to the love of his home city, he once spent a night convincing a number of Italian Umpires that Luciano Pavarotti was in fact a scouser. Brian Watkins told me the story when they returned home from Italy. How many of you have been told that Liverpool is God's country, where the sun always shines, the grass is greener and the air sweeter and the place where all the good guys live. He was most of all a man who valued loyalty above all other things. His loyalty to his table tennis club was legendary, he served as club secretary for over fifty years and only reluctantly handed over control when it became obvious that he would be incapacitated for some considerable time. He dedicated all of his adult life to the club and could not understand why others could not show the same degree of loyalty, he was most hurt by players who had spent years playing for the club leaving to play for another club, something he would never have considered no matter what problems arose. He was also a man who put great faith in the concept of democracy, his one area of concern with the E.T.T. A. was that he believed that it is a fundamentally undemocratic organisation and we spent many an evening talking about it Ken's career as a table tennis official was quite meteoric, despite qualifying as a county umpire in 1972, he did not enter the national scene until 1990. He had been unable to to commit to umpiring prior to that, due to his work com mitments, but once he had retired he expressed an interest in umpiring on the tournament circuit and I was able to get him invites to a number of events and he was up and running, soon he was travelling the length of the country to officiate at events. The next step was to qualify as a National Umpire which he achieved in 1992 and rose to the the lofty heights of International in 1994. He had spoken to me on many occasions about refereeing, a subject that did not interest me, but I suggested he contact Hastings for the Tournament Referee qualification which he did and he achieved that qualification in 1995. After that the work really started, he was approached by a number of people to act as referee for their events. He quickly appreciated that to do the job efficiently he would need to use a computer, so he signed himself on to a computer course as a complete beginner, and within 12 months he was studying for the European Computer Driving Licence, which he duly passed. By this time his interest was really

roused and after a long discussion he opted to take the National Referee's exam which he passed in 1999, he reached the dizzy heights of International Referee in 2005. The funny thing was for a man who was normally confident in life he needed pushing to progress along the path of refereeing, at each level he was convinced that he would fail, he was very depressed when he returned from Paris after the International exam and was firmly convinced that he had failed and then expressed disbelief when he found that he had passed. Ken's organisation of tournaments endeared him to players and officials alike, he seemed to have the knack of finishing ahead of schedule which everyone concerned appreciated and he looked after his match officials very well, which was why he was able to staff his tournaments better than most. Despite having moved to the elevated plains of refereeing he did not lose sight of the umpires and their problems, so after speaking to a number of the more senior umpires he decided that umpires needed a voice to air their concerns and called a meeting to which all umpires were invited. This meeting resulted in the formation of the Association of English Table Tennis Umpires and Ken was selected by that meeting to be their secretary, a position that he held until last year when he resigned as he felt that the Association would benefit from him resigning from office, he would have been undoubtedly have been elected President at the next A.G.M. had he survived. Not that he needed, or indeed craved recognition for his efforts. He was already a Vice President of the ETTA and Lancashire County TTA, he was also Vice Chairman of Lancashire County and Deputy National Councillor and County Umpires Secretary. He was also Chairman of the British Table Tennis Association for people with Disabilities, and he was the mainstay of the Liverpool and District Table Tennis League was also an ETTA Coach having completed a course when I was the tutor who tried to teach him how to play a backhand shot, not overly successful as it turned out, but then it is not easy to play a backhand drive when you use "Curl Special" on that wing. It is a little difficult to describe Ken's playing style, defensive with the backhand and aggressive with the forehand is the best I can manage, but he did make a useful doubles partner, and we and we achieved a good measure of success as a pair He even helped my fitness because I had to run around him so much alas that will no longer be the case. To sum up, he was a man who I was proud to have as a friend though he could be a little prickly at times and never suffered fools gladly, he was always available to offer advice if asked and had a keen brain that often was able to go straight to the heart of a problem and find a solution. I once had a senior manager who said if you think you are indispensable then try this simple test, fill a bucket with water, then put your hand in the water, then remove your hand, the difference in the amount of water in the bucket is the measure of your indispensability. In the case of Ken if the bucket contained table tennis instead of water, when he removed his hand the bucket would be nearly dry.

I, along with so many people here today will miss him more than I can say. My deepest condolences go to Faith, Lee and Gary and all of Ken's family.

MAY HE REST IN PEACE

SECRETARY'S REPORT

This is my first few months as Secretary of the AETTU and it hasn't passed without sad and good events.

On the 1st January 2008 Ken Armson died after a short illness. I saw him just before Christmas in hospital and although he was obviously ill he was very positive and passing out instructions about AETTU business and Liverpool League business where he was league treasurer. Ken died suddenly on New Years Day and his passing has left a large void in the world of table tennis and in particular the area of umpiring and refereeing. Ken's funeral was well attended by friends and colleagues from all areas of his life. I was talking to Faith last week at the Liverpool Disabled TT tournament which Ken had originally been organising. She told me how pleased and proud she felt as she walked into the church at the funeral and saw all the umpires in

their blue jackets. As a result of donations from Association members and other TT colleagues Faith was able to donate £1000 to the Marie Curie Hospice where Ken received treatment during his last few weeks. Ken was a proud man who wasn't afraid to speak his mind. He was one of the original founders of the AETTU who believed the Association was needed to look after the welfare of umpires and advance the role of the umpire. Ken was a good friend and colleague and will be sadly missed.

Umpire Crisis

For a number of years we as umpires have been concerned about the reduction of qualified umpires and the recruitment of new, younger umpires. The working conditions at some of the tournaments and the workload put on umpires has affected attendance. This subject has recently been brought to the notice of National Council by a report from Alan Ransome in which he highlights the problem and suggests a number of solutions to umpires working conditions and recruitment. Unfortunately the document was not discussed at the January National Council meeting and has been put off until the April meeting. Recruitment and training of umpires comes under the wing of the NURC but we as umpires can assist the NURC by identifying potential recruits and pointing them in the direction of the County Umpires Secretaries. While we recognise there is a crisis re umpire recruitment I was amazed that at the European Junior Top 10 tournament at Sheffield, in January, which was supposed to be one of the most prestigious tournaments in England during 2008, the organisers hadn't arranged enough International Umpires to cover the event. They did send out invitations to other Associations but only the French and Austrians sent umpires. Even so it appears that the organisers didn't have a ring - round plan to invite other overseas umpires and as a result the organisers had to beg and borrow umpires, who happened to be attending the tournament or working in other areas to act as umpire assistants.

Association Meeting with NURC

I recently contacted Stuart Sherlock after his appointment as Chair of the NURC. The purpose of the contact was to congratulate Stuart on his appointment but also to highlight a number of concerns raised by Association members about tournament scheduling. As a result of this contact it has been agreed that members of the Association and ETTA/NURC will meet in the near future to discuss issues affecting both parties. I had hoped that the meeting would have taken place before March 2008 but to date it has not been possible. The Association Committee will be meeting in March to discuss a number of issues and to identify subjects that we wish to discuss with the NURC. I hope that the appointment of Stuart as the new Chair of the NURC will lead to an improved relationship between the two groups.

Overseas Selections

You will recall that during the past 12 to 18 months we have been pressing the NURC to send us a copy of its Policy and Procedure relating to the selection of umpires for internal and overseas events. This is ongoing with a debate of what is policy and what is procedure. At the same time we have asked the NURC to supply the Association with details of umpires who have been selected for overseas events and the number of umpires who have applied. The NURC, under Stuart Sherlock, have now agreed to this process and I will now be included in the circulation when selection or nominations have been made. To date 1 have been informed about a number of overseas selections and these have been circulated to all members.

The following overseas events were recently advertised.

The World Schools Championships in Malta.

6 Umpires applied and after evaluation by the ESTTA, Alan Harwood and Margo Fraser were selected.

The Luxembourg Open.

Only two persons applied and both have been nominated by the NURC to the Luxembourg TT Assn. Eric Pentland and Nick Osland.

The Kuwait open. 3 umpires made initial enquiries about the event but none applied.

North American Olympic Qualification Tournament. No applicants

European Olympic Qualification Tournament - France.

There were 5 applicants and Dave Brown and Stan Clarke were nominated for the tournament.

Association Badges

At the last 2 AGM's it was agreed to design and purchase lapel badges that could be used as give away badges when meeting umpires/players from other Associations Geoff Taylor grasped the nettle on this subject and designed and purchased about 120 badges. Over the last few months I've been selling these badges, for 80p, to Association members. The cost just covers the purchase price and so far a large number of members have purchased badges. They are ideal as give away gifts to overseas colleagues visiting England or when we are travelling overseas. If you are due to travel to an overseas tournament contact me and buy a few badges before you travel.

Glue Testing

As you are probably aware the use of volatile compound glue in junior events was banned from 1/1/08. At the European Top 10 at Sheffield last week end the organisers introduced a glue testing device. It was a small box in which the bat was placed and a device in the box testing for banned glues. I'm glad to say none of the bats failed, however, we were not shown the results of any testing that took place before the tournament to ensure the equipment was working correctly. At the umpires briefing we were told that someone from the ETTU/organisers would be carrying out the testing but just before the first match we discovered that we were expected to carry out the tests either at ball selection or at the table just before the match. Should umpires be carrying out these tests or should it be one of the organisers?

Association Social

At the last AGM we planned to hold an umpires weekend where we could play a few games of TT, have a nice social evening and generally enjoy ourselves. The trouble was finding a free/suitable weekend. For various reasons this hasn't yet taken place but we are hoping it can take place after the end of the TT season. In the meantime your honourable secretary has thrown out a challenge to the current umpires champion John (where's his weight gone) Mackey.

Insurance

I've raised a few questions about insurance cover for umpires. Ken wrote to Richard Yule last year but we don't appear to have had a reply. I've now received a reply from Richard with a copy of the original letter sent to Ken. The letter informs us that umpires (and referees) have liability cover when travelling to and from National ETTA tournaments as well as during national tournaments. The age limit for insurance is 75 years but the Benefit Amounts (other than death) are reduced by 50% in respect of persons aged 70 years or older. I will try to pursue the insurance age limits with the ETTA. The correspondence did not give a satisfactory response to insurance cover for umpires when attending overseas events and I have again written to Richard asking for clarity in this area.

Working Conditions

Many of you were at the UI 1/12/13/14 championships at Norwich last year. The working conditions and schedule were less than satisfactory. Mike Holt from the ETTA was at the tournament and as well as seeing conditions for himself, George Tyler spoke to him and I forwarded a letter, on your behalf, complaining about the working conditions. As part of his considerations Mike appears to have taken our concerns on board and you will have recently seen a letter he circulated to umpires promising improved conditions at this year's tournament. Time will tell but we must

give him time to make the improvements work and I would hope that as many umpires as possible volunteer for the tournaments during the second half of the season.

Blue Blazers

The ETTA now, do not supply the Material for our blazers. We have had a number of possible sources for new blazers but none have continued. George Tyler has a blazer from an umpire who no longer umpires and Tony Chatwin has handed over a couple of blue blazers for use by other umpires. Peter Williams, from Cheshire, also has a 36" chest blazer which is available to anyone who needs one of that size. If you do need a new blazer or have one that has shrunk and can be used by others the contact me and we'll arrange exchanges.

COPY OF LETTER RECEIVED BY STEVE WELCH

Dear Steve,

I would be grateful if you could pass on thanks to the members of the AETTU who generously gave donations to Marie Curie Cancer Care in memory of Ken.

In all, the monies, that were given in respect of Ken, totalled just on a thousand pounds. Marie Curie were extremely grateful for the donations and I was very proud that so much money was raised in memory of Ken. Can you also thank the members for the many cards and kind wishes that were sent to me and the family, it meant such a lot to us.

With all best wishes

Yours sincerely,

Faith.

ADVENTURES IN RUSSIA

AS RELATED BY BOB WILLIAMSON

Dave Cochrane and I were selected to umpire at the Russian Open Pro Tour event in St. Petersburg, Russia in October Last year. We had to apply for visas before we could travel to Russia, but by the time that the invitation came through there wasn't enough time to post of our visa applications. In addition there was a postal strike so Dave set of by train to London to organise our visas with the Russian embassy.

Dave came back in one piece with the visas. The Russians obviously had no intention of placing us in a Gulag somewhere in Outer Siberia so a few weeks later we set of for St. Petersburg. We stayed in the Mockba Hotel where we ate all our meals. The hotel was on the opposite side of the city from the sports stadium but there were

shuttle buses every 30 minutes There were 72 umpires from 5 continents and we operated a morning and afternoon shift system. Dave and I umpired together for the first 3 days and then we split up.

About 8pm, the night before the finals' day, Dave and I discovered that we were each going to umpire one of the semi-finals. We went to iron our uniforms but discovered that the iron wasn't working. Dave decided to go into town to buy an iron but he hadn't returned by 11pm. and I was getting worried because he was only wearing a T-shirt with no coat. Dave wasn't kidnapped and used as a toy boy but he did return minus an iron. A few more enquires at the hotel revealed an ironing room a few floors from our room so Dave and I ended up ironing our uniforms in the early hours of the morning.

Finals day was very well attended. There were approximately 4000 spectators in the hall with TV coverage on the show courts. Dave and I had a good time in Russia. It was a well managed event and we gained valuable experience in umpiring at a major tournament and met many overseas colleagues. After the tournament there was a farewell dinner at a local restaurant and the following day we returned home with a good experience under our belts.

Ken - A couple of personal memories by Derek Sherratt

There was an English man and an Irishman Sorry wrong story. There was a Dane, a German and two Englishman: all International Umpires. We were in Soham near Cambridge for the 1995 Six Nations Cadet Tournament and we four were thrown together on the Saturday evening. Oh by the way, we were informed, the bar at our hotel is booked for a private birthday party so it is off limits tonight.

Why not take our foreign guests to Ely. We could take in the imposing 12th Century Cathedral someone suggested. Sorry, we are just closing we were informed on arrival. But we have some foreign visitors exclaimed Ken; sorry but we are about to close was the reply. You do not seem to understand said Ken; getting somewhat truculent. These two gentlemen are International Umpires from Denmark and Germany. To cut a long story short we not only got in but they provided us with a guided tour.

After that we had a drink or two and went back to Soham and our off limit hotel. Again Ken did not let the problem with the birthday party spoil our evening. First he got us a table in an alcove and capped this with refreshments from the party including birthday cake. During the evening Ken bombarded our visitors with his famous Merseyside routine. Did you know that Liverpool has the best fish and chip shops, pubs, Cathedrals and football teams etc. in England or even the U.K? And Liverpool was not only the birthplace of the Beatles, but Ken Dodd, Arthur Askey, William Gladstone, Simon Rattle, Frankie Vaughan and Stan Clarke on and on.

Then he asked our Danish friend to name any famous Dane; the hesitant reply was Hans Christian Anderson. You probable did not know retorted Ken that he too was from Liverpool. This took our Danish guest aback and he seemed non-plussed almost confused. After a moment a cheeky grin appeared on Kens face. Now that's a fairy story if you like.

The second incident curiously also concerned the Six Nations Event in Canterbury this time in June 2004. We were instructed to be there to start umpiring at about 3pm. I picked up Ken on the M6 near Walsall and we arrived at the University

campus at about 1pm. to be informed that there would be no lunch just biscuits and coffee at the briefing. Bear in mind that Ken had left Liverpool sometime around 7am. Whilst this was not totally unexpected, Ken was not amused. "Pretty damn typical. Travel something like 250 miles and not a sandwich provided". Umpires of course are quite used to this sort of treatment and suggestions that there should be an Association representing umpires interested and grievances had been in the air for some years. During a break Ken and I wandered around a lake putting the world to right and feeling sorry for ourselves. It was then that Ken resolved that once and for all he was going to set the wheels in motion to see if an Association could be set up. Four months later in October of that year the inaugural meeting took place in Derby and with overwhelming support the Association of English Table Tennis Umpires was born, with Ken Armson MBE the General Secretary. Whilst I cannot claim that our stroll in Canterbury was like Bush and Blair at Camp David the effects of Ken's determination backed up by the support of members has been quite significant. The pity is that recognition of the Association by the English Table Tennis Association will not be witnessed by Ken. It will be a fitting memorial to Ken for members to continue the work that Ken initiated, I am not really a religious person, but God bless Ken.

To "V" or not to "V"

I have been watching the world championships on the television (Eurosport). In a team match between Germany and Austria, there were some strange things happening. The umpire, and assistant umpire were both oriental women and after checking the players bats, numbers etc.etc. the umpire then stuck two fingers up to both players. I assume this was not to tell the players to go away (or words to that effect) as they had just come on to the court but to tell them they have a two minutes knock up. I did not think this was a good idea as I am sure that if this happened to certain players in this country they would be shaking the umpire by the neck (although we do have a red card for protection!!).

In the same team match the serves of the German player, Dimitri Ovtcharov, looked a bit dodgy. The camera picked up Dimitri's serves from his opponent's position and all you could see was the top of Dimitri's fingers indicating the ball must have been below the table when he served in a continuous movement. In one match Dimitri changed his shirt after the end of a game but did not replace his players number on his shirt, but there again we can all make mistakes. I find the lifting of the two fingers to indicate two minutes knock up very interesting as I am unable to find this procedure in the ITTF rule book or handbook for match officials, if anyone can shed some light on this matter please contact our secretary.

John Lawton

Report to AETTU committee

EVENT CONDITIONS

The conditions for umpires at different events are frequently the subject of informal debate; the topic has also been touched on at meetings of the Association. The object of this paper is to examine ways of evaluating some of the more pertinent items which umpires feel should be addressed. The ultimate sanction an individual umpire can take if he or she is 'Not happy' with conditions at a particular event is of course to vote with their feet and not be available, to use a polite term. I say polite because most umpires are reluctant to say to the organiser "No I am not coming because last year we were working until 10pm. on the Saturday night or a baked potato for lunch is hardly food of the gods", So the answer becomes, "It's my nephews wedding or I will be on holiday that weekend".

A way forward could be the introduction of an Assessment procedure for all events. This would operate similar to the established NURC Tournament conditions form, in that a detailed pro-forma would be completed by one of our Members in order that a comprehensive database could be drawn up. In this way the Association could make their corporate view known to organisers who might hopefully take on board the findings.

It is essential that the pro-forma is as factual as possible and that subjective comments are kept to a minimum. Forms would be sent to members to complete.

Mr Jekyll, I.U. and Mr Hyde

I have confession to make; I have a dark secret; I lead a double life. By weekend I don my blue blazer, grey flannels etc. and circulate amongst the table tennis rules intelligentsia. Here one can discuss such cultural topics as 'A serves to X', whilst the ball is in flight a large insect blah blah. What action should the umpire take? Or, player B comes to the table wearing a panama hat, the umpire should a)...b)...c) problems that tax the brains of the best of us.

Where any group, flight or gaggle of umpires meet, I am not sure what the collective noun for umpires is; my favourite is 'confusion' (perhaps other correspondents might suggest a suitable name). Anyway, to get back to my thesis, at all these gatherings you get a sort of unofficial think tank formed. An umpire enjoying his digestive and instant coffee will suddenly exclaim 'had a strange situation in my last game' and this provokes a sometimes heated debate about the incident. This may continue over to the mealtime or even into the bar at the end of play (This is a sort of fairy story where play finishes early). By this means, umpires hone their skills, a sort of revision of material avidly studied for their last examination but probable long forgotten.

During the week however, with my blazer stored safely away in a wardrobe, I walk abroad in an aging track suit or if a meeting is involved a pair of corduroy trousers and an old jumper, where I meet an odd mixture of individuals with a common interest in table tennis. Here my companions, similarly dressed are usually as far removed from the academic world described above as one can be (like a footballer appearing on University Challenge). They may remember one or more names such as John Leach, Chester Barnes or Des Douglas, and that chap Matthew... Thingy', who puts table tennis on TV once a year. But generally they are mainly concerned with how many games they have won or should have won and why are the fees so high?

Occasionally (very occasionally) up crops the question 'We have a chap at our club who says 'so and so does not apply if there is an 'r' in the month, particularly during Lent'. Usually chaos ensues, and I am no longer surprised to hear such widely differing views from players who have been playing since the reformation. Sometimes I am asked for an opinion or when I cannot stand anymore nonsense, I interrupt by reminding everyone what our League Rules actually say. 'All matches will be played in accordance with the "laws of table tennis" as modified by the Association's AGM. I understand that most leagues have something similar in their constitution.

This is where it gets quite complicated for them and to a certain extent for me because mostly the topics are not covered by the **Laws**. You have probably already guessed they are quoting items from the International Regulations. If the constitution refers to the Rules of table tennis then there should be no problem because the Rules consist of both the Laws and Regulations. It is an oddity however most players within leagues, either through convention or pure ignorance, adhere in practice to much more of the common requirements of the I.R.'s. It is my

experience that players will, in general, not pass advice during play, follow time honoured customs relating to intervals and will usually not wear white shirts when a white ball is in use; to pick just three examples out of the air.

What I find surprising is that given the paucity of the material contained within the **Laws** there are, as far as I am aware, no moves to rewrite the said document. I am also astonished that there are not more incidents within the leagues regarding the misinterpretation of **the Laws/Regulations**. The present document pertaining to the **Laws**, to my mind, is totally inadequate, and, to use a term currently in favour, 'not fit for purpose'.

In your capacity as a qualified umpire you will also have officiated at tournaments where you are instructed at the briefing to ignore certain requirements on at what first glance seems to be a personal whim of the Referee. Opposing players have to have shirts of clearly different colours and the recommendations about the ITTF logo are perhaps a couple of well known instances of these phenomena. There is therefore a good argument for a reappraisal of the Rules. Why not take the bull by the horns and either revise both documents or at least issue a modified document to cover typical league play and open competitions of a minor nature.

A few years ago I raised this question at the ETTA AGM suggesting that Hastings could prepare a model for League Rules similar to the Model Rules for County Associations. Clearly it would not be practicable for leagues to simply add the I.R.'s to their constitution, overkill I hear you say. I suggest that the headings that need to be addressed are:-

- a) Continuety of play
- b) Colour of shirt/ball
- c) Towelling
- d) Advice
- e) Practice period
- f) Intervals
- g) Practice period

I would like to see umpires play a greater role in this subject, perhaps involving the National Council where there is sometimes a greater contact with the grass roots of our sport. Article 57 of the ETTA Rules includes provisions for specified divergence from the Laws (see 57.6.3 and 57.7.1) therefore certain events do include I.R.'s. I would suggest however that there is a need for a rewrite.

Derek Sherratt

If you have other comments we would like to hear from you.

At long last I have been able to get another magazine to you. The difficulty is getting something to write in it. As you will see large part of this magazine is dedicated to Ken, who I am sure we are all greatly going to miss. You will also see that the major articles are written by Derek Sherratt. I know that we do not have his ability to write as he does but you will also see a couple of articles that have been written by other members. I am sure that when you read them you will say "I could write a small account of something I have seen at tournaments, overseas events or arguments that you have had over rules etc". Now is the chance to contribute something to the magazine.

The AGM will soon be upon us and as last year it will again be held at the Bulkington Village Centre in Warwickshire. It would be great if all members could attend but we know this is asking for Utopia, but it would be great to see as many members as possible there. Please put the date in your diary and say "I am going to be there". If anyone need any directions to get to the venue let me know and I will send you maps which will get you right to the door. The venue is easy to get to because it is close to the M6 and M69 with the M1 not far away.

A snippet of news I have received is that our Committee have arranged a meeting with the NURC on the 16th June and hopefully we will be able to sort out a lot of the problems that we have been unable to talk about over a meeting table. It is good to see that there has been movement about recognition of shortage of umpires and a paper written by Alan Ransome is due to be discussed at the April National Council with a number of recommendations. We will wait with interest to see the outcome of the discussions.

So finally we are going to get - hopefully - a social weekend for members. The date decided upon is the 5th / 6th July 2008. The place for it to take place is Grimsby where Steve Welch tells us he can get a venue which the local league will host and also suitable accommodation can be found. The reason we are going ahead with the weekend is because a number of members are still showing interest. So keep your eyes open for future bulletins.

The article by Derek Sherrat - Mr Jekyll and Mr Hyde - does give a lot of food for thought. I am sure you must have noticed in your local leagues how little, it seems, is known about the difference between rules and regulations. In a lot of the leagues nowadays many players are, putting it kindly, advancing in years and they learned to play table tennis years ago and the rules they played to then were a lot more simple and regulations were far fewer than they are today and a lot of them still try to play by those rules. We do not only have to cater for up and coming stars but we also have to consider the people who still want to play the game they have played for many years in their local leagues and we cannot afford to lose them. In Warwickshire one of the most frequent asked questions is "What do I get for the fees that I pay annually to the ETTA?" The answer is, as they see it, very little and if we are honest about it, how can we explain that the bulk of the money goes on administration and our international teams and top players.

Geoff Taylor
Editor