



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Like other N.U's and I.U's I received an invitation to apply for an unusual event, the World Championship of Ping Pong, to be held in London on 5th and 6th January 2013. Unusual in several ways:

- (i) Rackets will be provided for all players and are hard bats with sandpaper facings (no need for racket checks or testing?).
- (ii) Each player may, once in a match, provided he/she has not yet scored nine points in that game, nominate the following rally to be a double point for him/herself, i.e: If the server wins the rally he/she gains two points, but if the receiver wins the rally they gain only one point. This will still count as one of the sequence of two serves for the server regardless of who wins the point(s).
- (iii) All matches except the grand final will be the best of three games 11 up.
- (iv) It is not an ETTA or ITTF event.

It is certainly not the run of the mill tournament, but apparently there is a lot of money involved and there is television coverage, although the players taking part are not yet known. It is a novel event but one possibly more related to history than table tennis. I look forward to watching it but not as an umpire.

On a more serious note I attended a County week-end at Draycott as the Lincolnshire umpire for a series of Division 2 junior matches. For County Championship matches each participating County is required to provide an umpire. There were 8 Counties present only 4 umpires, and I wonder why this is happening. Why is it so difficult for Counties to provide 1 umpire for their team?

Sad to report the death of Fred Ingram of Cornwall, a regular at many tournaments. Although not a member of the Association, his presence will be missed by many colleagues.

The NURC Seminar, held at Halton in September was very successful and is to be followed by one which will be held in the South date/venue not yet known.

I attend many tournaments and welcome the opportunity to talk to members, particularly new members, about table tennis, the Association and any issues they may have.

Best wishes to all, see you around.

GEORGE TYLER

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Olympics and Paralympics have been and gone. There has been outstanding sport in all areas and the lucky people who visited the games or took part in the events as athletes, officials or spectators all reported the great “feel good” factor from the games and will have memories they will never forget.

The work of the AETTU continues and your committee will take forward any issues that you consider important to the role of the umpire. You may recall in the last magazine (Sept 2012) I drew your attention to the abuse that had been hurled at one of our international colleagues, on Social Network sites (SNS), as a result of unpopular decisions made during the ladies’ Olympic Final. The SNS were linked to the ETТА and the Chair of the ETТА did arrange for some of those abusive comments to be removed. At the request of our members I wrote to the ETТА and NURC pointing out the abusive comments that had been posted on the sites, some of which were from members of the ETТА, and asked what the ETТА and NURC intended to do about this behaviour. Despite a reminder about my letter I have not received a response.

The majority of the abusive comments were obviously from persons who did not understand the ITTF Laws and Regulations. Some were personally offensive. Current news involving the abuse and libel of high profile persons, on SNS, highlights that organisations and individuals have a duty of care when promoting or using the sites. The ETТА has such a duty of care to its members and officials and it must inform the users of such sites that are linked to the ETТА, that the sites must be used correctly and that any abusive postings could result in disciplinary or legal proceedings. If the ETТА has not already done so it must produce a policy for the use of such sites and make members aware of the policy.

At the 2012 AGM Geoff Taylor, the editor of the magazine, stood down as editor after seven years of excellent service. It was hoped that another member was going to take over the role but for a number of reasons this hasn’t happened. We are therefore looking for a new member to take on the role of editor. If you have experience in this area; ideal. If you don’t but are willing to learn and play an important role in the AETTU then please contact me.

Tom Purcell

Weekend Away

By Derek Sherratt

At the 2012 English Senior Championships in Sheffield the Referee, in welcoming the selected umpires,” thanked them for giving up their weekends to officiate at this important Event”.

I use the word *selected*, advisedly, because it was rumored that the 18 umpires at the briefing were in fact the same 18 that had indicated that they were

available for the event. In other words, no interested umpire was unsuccessful. A giveaway was the absence of a formal schedule and the use of the ladder system. This was sort of confirmed by the 'Umpire's Manager's' remarks at the conclusion of play, "that the number of umpires on duty at the Championships was the lowest recorded.

Returning to the term *Weekend*, Umpires were requested to attend the briefing at 11.30a.m. on the Friday; accommodation being provided for the Friday and Saturday nights. The scenario therefore for most was something like, check in at the hotel, say 10.30am, and stroll to Ponds Forge which takes about 15 minutes.

A quick glance at the list indicates that some umpires were from , the North East, the south coast, East Anglia and the south west; distances up to about 200 miles from Sheffield. At least two of these I was given to understand had left home on the Thursday and I believe that one of these returned home on the Monday following. It is believed that some umpires rule themselves out of selection because they cannot or are unwilling to make the indecent early start. Another factor is that unless you are retired or unemployed, time off might be a problem.

It is interesting to note that councilors attending National Council, which is held on Saturdays, may travel on the Friday and be fully accommodated if they would have to leave home before 8a.m. in order to arrive at the commencement of proceedings, usually 11.15a.m.

Another point worth mentioning is the catering arrangements. Lunch is taken at Ponds Forge around Lunchtime which can be as early as 12 Noon. Dinner, at the hotel is anytime up to 10p.m. and of course is subject to the Umpire's Schedule. There were instances this year where some officials only just made it in time. In any event it can be considered that the gap between the two meals is excessive. In addition some umpires find eating in the late evening a problem, digestion wise. On the same theme, dismissed umpires are sent home on the Sunday without any refreshment, lunch having being taken at around 1p.m.; dinner who knows when? But out of one's own pocket.

Previous writers have made similar observations regarding the junior and Under 14 Championships which together make up our premier domestic events. These are our F.A. Cup Final, our Derby, our Wimbledon and Boat Race all rolled into one. Surely we can do better?

I have previously written about the reasons why umpires might find other attractive weekend activities that prevent them from volunteering their services, and have pointed out that umpires hold great store in their opportunity for socialising at these gatherings. Unfortunately the English Championships do not et a very good example.



Reflections on London 2012 Paralympic Games.

It all started a long time ago, or so it seems, applying for a position as a Technical Official at the prestigious Paralympic Games, that's an Umpire to you and me, and oh the pleasure to be informed that one's application had been successful. There then followed many email contacts from Locog asking for all sorts of details and an up to date photograph sans glasses, never could understand why you are asked to remove your glasses for such photo's when you wear them all through the day and are seldom seen without them, surely they are part of your persona.

After many months we were then told to buy our rail ticket and submit a bill for travel expenses, this still sometime prior to travelling but he ho it must be necessary, then eventually the final travel instructions and where to report at Stratford International Station.

Perhaps I should have been aware that things might not be all Roses and Champagne when my train from Liverpool was delayed for 30 minutes and transferred to another platform as the brakes on the scheduled train had ceased to function. Add to that a mob of music festival people returning from the Creamfields festival, covered from head to toe in mud, smelling like an overfilled portaloos and you have some idea of my trepidation on the day. Add to that a gentle, naive northern lad travelling to that great den of iniquity at the side of the Thames, I was beginning to feel decidedly underwhelmed, however the transition to the games village went well and I was greeted by the first of many smiling faces I was to encounter over the next 12 days.

The Athletes village where we stayed was astounding, clean tidy, comfortable and full of exuberant athletes and officials from just about every part of the globe. Wonderful food, available 24/7 and in just about every conceivable style of cooking from British to Indian, MacDonald's to Chinese and a good selection of soft drinks, all free of charge. On our first full day we were taken to collect our supply of clothing for the event, formal for on court activities and informal for off duty use, the back to the village for lunch then off to Excel by bus for an introduction to the layout of the venue then an overly long briefing from the Referee who had difficulty with English and making himself heard, not wonderful.

Next morning, the first day of play, we were all required to be at the venue by 7.30am ready for play to start at 10.00 am, bear in mind that half of us were not required until the second round of matches at 10.45am, then consider that our accommodation was for 8 people and there was only 1 main bathroom and that we needed to eat breakfast before leaving the village and you can understand why it was necessary to be up and about by 5.30am at the latest, and all this just to attend another briefing by the referee. After that things became rather farcical behind the scene, front of house was brilliant, good arena, very good crowds throughout the whole of the playing schedule, happy competitors who showed just what sport is supposed to be about, unlike some of the rather nasty individuals who play in the able bodied ranks. I never heard one word of complaint from a competitor during the whole of the event and the level of sportsmanship was exemplary throughout.

The first 3 days of the event were horrendous for the Umpires, report at 8.00am finish work sometime after 9.00pm then back to the village for dinner by 10pm or so, then into bed ready to get up before the birds next morning. Pretty disgusting food at lunch time at the venue. By the third day the officials lounge looked like the geriatric ward of a hospital, umpires asleep in just about every seat available, but still the show went on, though not

well enough to please the referee who had some complaint or other every time he held a briefing, which was every day.

The one thing that sticks in my mind was just how friendly everybody was, I even got a smile and a friendly answer to a question from a Londoner, amazing. The standard of play was superb and the spectators were enthralled and very enthusiastic especially when a G.B. player was on court, even the English umpire were greeted by wild applause when introduced to the crowd.

So overall what were my impressions? Well a feeling of being part of something special, of experiencing a never to be forgotten event that is unlikely to ever again be repeated in this country, of respect and total admiration for the competitors who were incredible and a tremendous advert for the sport and a feeling of friendship with my umpiring colleagues. A very great feeling of disappointment at having no part in the final 2 days of the event which led me to leave on the Friday evening.

Would I do it all again? The answer is no, the demands placed on the umpire was far too great and there was a distinct lack of respect shown by the referee and his subordinates to the umpires, which soured the whole event for me, so much so that I have decided to retire from the Tournament scene as of now!

Stan Clarke IU

AN UMPIRE'S FIRST VISIT TO ENGLAND

I am sorry for being so late in sharing my experience since I was busy in settling down and in my local tournament which concluded yesterday evening. It was a three day event (District level event) where there were some 140 entries.

However, placed below is my experience during the Liverpool during the Men's World Cup Table Tennis Tournament 2012 at Liverpool.

"It was a wonderful experience being nominated to officiate in the Men's World Cup Table Tennis Tournament 2012 at Liverpool. I reached at London on 26th September, 2012 and as ETTA was aware of my itinerary, I started my journey from London to Liverpool in the Morning of September 27, 2012 by Virgin train where my fellow officials were already there and since they were communicated and advised by ETTA and they came forward and introduced themselves to me and made my journey comfortable since I was travelling to Liverpool for the first time.

I was really amazed to see that the stay arrangement made at Juries Inn was a just a walkable distance from the large Indoor Stadium Echo Arena, Liverpool. I think this was done purposely keeping in view to maximally utilise the time and the Schedule of matches

was also not very tiring for all the officials and players as there was a provision of buffer officials in case the Lead Officials could not officiate due to some unavoidable situation.

I must say that the Organizing Committee's i.e. ETTA's efforts were excellent as they were very prompt in placing the matches so beautifully that it made not only officials comfortable but players as well. The live telecast and updates on Twitter were made so that minute to minute details are available about the Championship. I found Liverpool mesmerising and the experience of stay at Liverpool was enthralling because it is a peaceful place as compared to London because of less traffic and crowded.

I found ETTA Organizing Committee very humble and really enjoyed the event. I consider myself fortunate having being nominated by ITTF and ETTA for this prestigious event and to be part of the great team. I shall like to participate in the future events in England. I have now become an associate member of the AETTU. I am pleased to meet new friends in Liverpool and hopefully we will meet again.

With warm regards,

Vipin Mehr. IU India

ITTF RULE CHANGES 2012

As in 2011, there were no changes to the ITTF Laws at this year's AGM, but there were some amendments to the procedure for racket testing. In future, rackets will normally be tested before a match and post-match testing will be limited to situations where a pre-match test could not be conducted. A player whose racket fails a pre-match test may be allowed to play the match with a replacement racket but this racket will be tested afterwards. More surprisingly, the Equipment Committee decided that it would no longer be necessary to test for glossiness, following an assurance from the Athletes Commission that none of its members had ever been troubled by reflection from an opponent's racket. However, the Committee seems to have harboured some remaining doubts because the Technical Leaflet on rackets includes the following statement:

"Testing for excess levels of rubber gloss no longer forms part of standard racket testing procedures. However, a player may ask the umpire to examine the opponent's racket for high levels of gloss before the start of a match. The umpire may, if he or she sees fit, ask for the racket to be inspected for high levels of gloss."

This suggests that the umpire should not take the initiative in questioning the glossiness of a racket, but that if a player does so the referee must be asked to decide the matter. A referee could be placed in a difficult situation if he ruled against a racket which had been passed by racket control, and it seems that the implications have not been fully thought through.

NURC

DUTY OF CARE

In the past season there have been several instances of young players being subjected to aggressive treatment amounting to bullying by over-keen coaches or parents. Although the intention was, no doubt, to motivate the players to better performance some of them were clearly distressed and this should not be allowed to happen. If an umpire believes that a young player is being put under unreasonable pressure by such action play should be stopped and the person responsible asked to desist. If this does not produce the desired result the matter should be reported to the referee for further action, which could include banishment from the playing area.

NURC

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New Yellow/red card Penalties

In a further attempt to control persistent misbehaviour the so-called "sanctions scheme" has been strengthened and the penalties made more severe. A player receives a "penalty mark" for each warning or penalty imposed by an umpire and incurring 5 penalty marks within a period of twelve months will result in his or her being suspended from competitive table tennis for a period of one month. Subsequent accumulation of 3 penalty marks within twelve months will result in a further period of suspension. For the scheme to work effectively, warnings and penalty points must be seen to be awarded fairly and consistently. In terms of penalty marks a formal warning carries the same weight as the award of a penalty point and should not, therefore, be used lightly. Bad behaviour should always be curbed but, before showing a yellow card for a first minor offence, umpires should consider carefully whether the matter could, perhaps, be dealt with by an informal warning.

SEX DISCRIMINATION?

At a recent Women's British League Weekend Barry, from the trade counter, was busy selling his goods when a female competitor walked up to stall and told Barry that she had come to the competition without any balls.

Barry, quick as a flash, replied "I think you'll find that your not on your own this weekend".

Who said the powers of observation were falling?

MEMORIES FROM THE PARALYMPICS - ALAN THOMAS IU

In the following no names are used to protect the guilty.

At the Paralympics I was a FOP (i.e. Field of Play, not Dandy) Games Maker. As a FOP there were two main roles: Leader and Assistant. The Leader led the players and umpires onto the court while the Assistant was the packhorse carrying the players' bags (and were they heavy). The Assistant also stayed at court side at the beck and call of the umpires, but at least they saw some table tennis.

As Leader the most difficult task was getting the umpires to line up properly for the march in. As an Assistant my most arduous task, apart from bag carrier was to replace our esteemed Vice Chairman's two cracked balls (and on my own initiative).

So what was the standard of umpiring like. Well mixed ranging from minor mistakes to major ones. A common minor failing was to forget to put a cheap piece of cardboard (otherwise known as a player's timeout marker) on the table after a timeout. Sad to say that this did apply to some home umpires.

On the positive side home umpires were not involved in the more serious mistakes that I witnessed. The worst was an umpire who twice lost the score leading to the players deliberately losing points to correct it. Then there were two occasions of an assistant failing to make a call when the ball hit their side of the table leading to the players and coaches getting embroiled in heated discussions.

Then there were the inscrutable Asian umpires who mysteriously produced yellow cards for no apparent reason. The moral of this story is that umpires from new to the highest International level will make mistakes and to not worry when it happens to you, but to learn from them.

The enthusiasm of the crowd, particularly when a GB player was involved, went far beyond my expectations. It was also encouraging to see the number of children who attended the ExCel arena. This enthusiasm was also evident on public transport as mobile phones were checked for the latest results and strangers struck up conversations about what they'd seen. One such conversation involved two young sisters who were 'over the moon' having seen Will Bailey play.

As a Games Maker with a distinctive uniform I had several such conversations myself. I was also approached by members of the public either thanking me for helping making the Games such a success or to ask questions such as 'where are the nearest toilets?'

Overall it was hard work, but an unforgettable experience.

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Another Lad from Warwickshire

September 2012 saw the end of an era with the publication of 'Issue 20'. of the AETTU Magazine. Geoff Taylor' Editor since its inception in May 2005, has decided to hang up his boots; rather selfishly I thought, causing the Committee Members a good deal of strife.

'A hard task to follow' was the disgruntled comment when the bombshell fell. Another opinion was 'it will not be permanent', after all he has resigned from umpiring more times than Frank Sinatra did from singing. We tried blackmail, but could not find anything more dodgy than his tendency to bore people and to use obscure racket coverings for important matches.

But it was true, Geoff had literally (no pun intended) thrown away his pen and the green sun visor that editors used to wear in old movies. Someone suggested that it was his failure to be listed for the Man Booker Prize. 'What does Hilary Mantel know about table tennis' he is reported as saying?

It took some 10 Issues before Geoff took one small step for mankind and had the temerity to emblazon the cover with something other than printing. 'Who asked for pictures?' the mob exclaimed. Issue 12 saw the emergence of the familiar Logo which is now enshrined in history.

Perhaps we could get all 20 Issues bound and described as his First Folio in the manner of his illustrious predecessor, who used to live in Stratford not far from Geoff in Warwickshire. Perhaps the Bodleian Library would also show an interest.

My belief is that the Magazine has played an invaluable role in the development of the AETTU. As our mouthpiece it has enabled members to share their thoughts, ideas and criticisms for the benefit of table tennis. It has seen our membership continue to grow in numbers and in influence.

Many thanks Geoff. You have done a magnificent job. This is written with great affection and lots of gratitude.

Derek Sherratt

FRED INGRAM – RIP

Fred Ingram a popular, friendly umpire and colleague died suddenly at his home on 2nd October 2012.

Fred had been involved in table tennis for about 66 years and he was a keen player and coach in his local league at Truro, Cornwall. Fred's involvement in table tennis extended to local and County Committee work as well as being the Secretary and Trustee of the local charity which owned the local table tennis club.

The evening before he died Fred was at his local table tennis club encouraging a crop of new junior players who were playing their first league matches.

Fred was a very popular umpire who travelled many miles and hours from Cornwall to tournaments. He really enjoyed the sport and he will be sadly missed.

Fred's funeral took place at Truro on 13th October 2012. Gill Knightly, Dot MacFarlane, Roger Vardon, Alan Thomas and Brian Gibbs attended the funeral

UMPIRE TRAINING

The NURC is developing a series of training days for existing umpires. The first training day was held at Halton where attendees were updated about changes to the Laws and Regulations, court management and procedures, dealing with misconduct, illegal coaching and ideas about how to improve one's performance as an umpire. A second training day is to be held in the South East in the near future. Umpires can also update their knowledge by visiting the URC page on the ITTF website where a number of Powerpoint presentations are shown as "Online Courses" about the Laws and Regulations of Table Tennis.

The ITTF also has a video library of service and behaviour problems often encountered by umpires.

The site can be found at:

[Www.ittf.com/Committees/Umpires_Referees/Video/training/index.html](http://www.ittf.com/Committees/Umpires_Referees/Video/training/index.html) but you do need Windows Media Player to run the videos.

TABLE TENNIS - A TRUE SPORT?

(A tongue in cheek and slightly jaundiced look at the game we all know and love ???)

Any true sport involves a high degree of skill, tactical ability and athleticism. It is, therefore, my considered opinion that table tennis is definitely not a true sport as all the players I've met inevitably fall into one of three categories - Fat - Thin - or Jammy.

Despite all this, however, a table tennis player will blindly mortgage his house up to the hilt in order to finance the deposit for the purchase of the latest 'unbeatable bat' with the revolutionary new 'sneakiness' rubber specially designed to combat everything his opponent can throw at him including the cardboard box that his new bat came in.

I am convinced that ninety nine per cent of all players have a completely wrong approach to the game. THEY GO ALL OUT TO WIN! This is a very silly thing to do as it can lose you a lot of friends. The proper attitude is merely to try and avoid disaster and of course the net (your own side, that is).

FEAR is the real key to success but not many players appreciate this as they are far too busy being afraid of being frightened. Only naive players play for fun and the back slapping, wisecracking opponent you've just beaten three straight is bravely trying to mask the abject misery of the financial losses incurred in buying the unbeatable bat which just didn't work. The joker who says "That was a cracking game, mate" doesn't fool me. What would he say if he'd just lost?

If we were honest with ourselves we would all admit to being an 'almost player' for every shot is an 'almost shot' - "It almost went where I wanted it to go - It almost hit the table - It almost went over the net - I almost beat so and so", etc. Etc.

Herein lies the misery which makes us all play the damn game. Like masochists we all continue a never ending pursuit of new and more excruciating pain. Our wives and girlfriends (or partners) may think that we are 'out having a good time' but any twit who goes home convinced that he enjoyed himself has either-just played his first ever game or his last! Or it could just be that he is drunk.

All in all I just can't wait for next match to start - you see, I've just bought this revolutionary new rubber called #####.

Frustrated Player!