



Issue 19

February 2012

NEWS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The year of the Olympics has arrived and many of you will have heard of your involvement. Congratulations to Tom Purcell and John Mackey two members who have been selected to umpire at the table tennis event, and to those members who have been selected to umpire at the Paralympics. Also to all others who have been selected to help in other ways. It will be a memorable experience.

It would appear that there has been unrest about the recent change to the uniform requirements agreed by National Council 'to allow umpires the option of a navy blue blazer without badge, as an alternative to the royal blue'. Most unrest may well have been as a result of lack of consultation with umpires, but I believe that even had there been consultation the change would have been agreed any way.

However, I am sorry to see the probable demise of the distinctive ETTA umpire's blazer, and particularly disappointed to see the disappearance of the official umpire's badge.

I would draw your attention to the Annual Tournament to be held at Draycott on 23/24th June and the Annual General meeting to be held at Bulkington on the 19th August. Full details will be forthcoming from the secretary and I hope many members will be able to be present at either or both events

Best wishes,

GEORGE TYLER

A TALE OF TWO EVENTS by GEORGE TYLER

Last November I attended the Junior and Cadet National Championships at Hatfield arriving on Friday evening for a briefing at 9.00pm. There were no suitable rooms available for the meeting - so no briefing. Play commenced at 9.00am on Saturday, starting with mixed doubles followed by groups, with lunch taken between 12.00 and 1.00pm. Then more groups, followed by doubles and with long gaps and occasional matches the evening dragged on. Ultimately, the finals, with the proceedings ending at approximately 9.30pm and the umpires concerned returning to the hotel at 9.45pm for their meal. Start 9.00am-'finish 9.30pm. Sunday was easier.

The previous week-end I attended the Senior Six Nations Championships at Basildon arriving on Friday evening for a briefing and three course meal at the hotel at 6.00pm. Play commenced at 7.30pm with one set of team matches, played to a result.

Play commenced on Saturday at 9.00am with team matches at 9.00am and 11.00am played to a result and back to the hotel for lunch. Then team matches at 2.00pm and 4.00pm again played to a result, with a three course evening meal at the hotel at 7.00pm.

On Sunday play commenced at 10.00am with the individual Competition which finished by 1.30pm and officials were on their way home by 2.00pm (with a packed lunch).

MINUTES OF AETTU COMMITTEE MEETING SUNDAY 22nd JANUARY 2012

Present:- George Tyler (GT), Derek Sherratt (DS), Tom Purcell (TP), Geoff Taylor (GTay), Stan Clarke (SC), Lillian Payne (LP), Mike Payne (MP), Steve Welch (SW), Jim Kenny (JK), Barry Granger (BG).

1. APOLOGIES John Lawton.

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING 14/08/2011.

Minutes were accepted as a true copy. Proposed: G Taylor. Seconded: Lillian Payne. **Carried.**

3. MATTERS ARISING.

a) Chair to prepare list of tournaments for circulation in September magazine.

Chair informed the meeting that he had not been able to prepare the list but he will have one for the next magazine.

b) Secretary to prepare list of members for circulation in the September magazine.

Secretary informed the meeting that a list had been circulated in the magazine unfortunately some of the details re counties were incorrect. Details will be corrected for the circulation.

c) Secretary to research cost of AETTU ties.

On going.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

The Chairman welcomed members and thanked them for coming. He offered congratulations to Tom Purcell and John Mackey on their selection to officiate at the 2012 Olympic Games, and thanked GTay for arranging the venue and refreshments. He went on to mention his concern at the ongoing relationship between the Association and the NURC and suggested the committee talk about this later in the meeting.

Proposed: GTay. Seconded : Stan Clarke.

Carried.

5. SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Secretary reported that it had been a relatively quiet since the last meeting in August. The number of members continues to grow but the Association appears to have reached a period when we are not sure in which direction we want to travel. The main change during the last period was the introduction of the new rule on Umpires' uniform. In domestic events umpires were now allowed to wear a dark blazer without a badge and a dark blue sweatshirt in addition to the usual umpires' blazer and jumper. This change had been pushed through by the NURC and supported by Mancom without proper discussion with the umpires. The Olympic test events had taken place in November with the ITTF Pro Tour Finals at the Excel Centre, London.

This appeared to go well with only a few minor issues. A number of members have been selected as umpires and NTOs at the Olympics and Paralympics however the full list of umpires at the Paralympics has not yet been published.

Proposed: Mike Payne. Seconded Jim Kenny:

Carried.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT.

Treasurer presented a current balance sheet to the meeting which showed a current balance of £1473. There was a number of new members and currently 115 current members and six Associate members. A list of current members was circulated during the meeting. There was a general discussion about the report and membership.

Proposed: Barry Granger. Seconded: Stan Clarke: Carried.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

- a) **Alan Shepherd.** Letter received thanking the AETTU for awarding him with Honorary Membership. He accepts the award with pleasure.
- b) **Selection.** A letter was received about the fact that three Lincolnshire umpires had not been selected for any of the ETTA tournaments during the 2nd half of the current season. There was a general discussion re this topic. SC commented that David Edwards (Selector) usually acknowledged receipt of emails and if possible umpires should use the "email receipt" function to ensure that their messages had been seen by David. Umpires without emails should ensure they speak with David on the phone or leave a message for him. It was possible that David may not have received the applications. The County Umpire Secretary was advised to write to the NURC for clarity in the subject.
- c) **John Lawton.** Email received from John reporting his concerns on the new rule re umpires' uniforms, selection of umpires for the Olympics and the Blue Badge scheme.
- d) **Derek Sidaway.** Email received from Derek recommending that on the Sunday evening, after tournaments, umpires who have a long way to travel a long distance should be given the opportunity of an extra night's accommodation. This would be for health and safety reasons and ensure that umpires would be alert to drive home after a week-end of umpiring. Derek also suggested umpires who carry other umpires to tournaments should be given an extra allowance to encourage the sharing of transport. TP advised the meeting that Derek's email had been copied into Colin Clemett. Derek's suggestions were discussed at the meeting. Any changes would have to be supported by the NURC and the ETTA. It was decided to await the reply from the NURC.

8. UMPIRES' RECORDS

Secretary advised the meeting that a result of an action raised at the 2011 AGM he had written to the ETTA and the NURC with a recommendation that the Individual Membership registration could be amended to include details of umpires. This change would give an annual up-to-date record of umpires and their contact details thereby allowing tournament organisers to have accurate up to date records. Secretary had received a reply from Colin Clemett which he had circulated to committee members. Secretary was surprised by the negative response from CC about the suggestion. There was a general discussion about the subject. It was acknowledged that CC and David Edwards held the master list of umpires but it was agreed at the meeting that the list was not always up to date with addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers.

Secretary informed the meeting that complaints had been made by a number of umpires about the recent selection for the World School Games in Italy. An invitation had been circulated inviting two national or international umpires to apply for the tournament in Italy in April 2012. The invitation stated that English Schools Table Tennis Association (ESTTA) would select the umpires from the applicants and ESTTA would

pay for the airfare and accommodation at the tournament. Secretary was aware that 9 umpires had applied and two international had been selected by ESTTA. Secretary informed the meeting that a number of umpires had voiced concerns about the selection process and some were worried about complaining to the NURC in case it affected their future events. There was a general discussion about the selection process for the World School Games. It was identified that the same umpire had been selected for the event on more than one occasion although different umpires had been selected to accompany that umpire. It was understood that umpires applied for the tournament and the names were forwarded by the NURC to the ESTTA who made the selection. A number of members considered that the process was not fair and open. The same umpire had been selected on more than one occasion and while it was understood that the final selection of the umpires is made from the names forwarded to ESTTA it was felt that umpires who had attended the event on previous occasions should not have their names forwarded to ESTTA thereby ensuring that the selection of umpires would be fairer and more transparent. After further discussion it was recommended the Secretary will write to the NURC highlighting the concerns of members about the selection process. **Action 1. Secretary to write to the NURC.**

9. UMPIRES' UNIFORM

Chair informed the meeting that the new rule re the wearing of uniform at tournaments was now in place. This had caused the wearing of four different types of uniform which resulted in a dishevelled appearance by umpires at tournaments. There was a general discussion about the umpire's uniform. Secretary advised the meeting that at a recent tournament he had heard of a number of players discussing the different types of uniform and in their opinion that "it looked messy". The meeting agreed that the new rule did not allow for the standard presentation of umpires which had been present for many years.

10. MAGAZINE

GT advised the meeting that the next magazine was due to be circulated towards the end of February. He already had a number of articles for the magazine but would welcome new contributors. In view of the number of new members it was agreed to circulate a copy of the AETTU constitution in the next magazine.

11. TOURNAMENT

It was agreed to hold an AETTU tournament in 2012. After a discussion about various possible venues it was agreed to hold the tournament at Draycott TTC in Derbyshire on the week-end of 23-24th June 2012. Mike and Lillian Payne agreed to look for suitable accommodation and a restaurant for the Saturday evening meal. TP will circulate the agreed date to all members with a further circulation when further details are known.

12. AOB

a) Association Tie

There was a general discussion about the creation of an AETTU tie. It was agreed that the Secretary and GT would make enquiries about costs and report to the next meeting.

b) NURC

A discussion took place about the relationship between the AETTU and the NURC. The committee agreed that the relationship needed to be improved. The committee discussed issues that had caused concern including uniform, selection, training and correspondence.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING Sunday 27th May 2012

TEST MATCH

I was recently invited to assist in the Practical Test for potential County Umpires at the conclusion of a Seminar. This is a task known to most umpires, and certainly, to County Umpire's Secretaries will be all too familiar with this process. In essence it is not unlike the assessments carried out at National Events on behalf of the NURC, or indeed the ITTF 'Blue Badge' evaluations.

The candidate, you could say victim, is asked to umpire a match whilst the examiner sitting close by makes a subjective judgment on the resulting performance. For the County umpire test the examiner is instructed to mark three categories covering 'accuracy', 'control' and 'presentation'. The result is either a pass or fail for each section. The test should be repeated at a formal event and will include doubles and expedite.

This system whereby you either pass or fail on the day has always had its critics. Take the old 'eleven plus' or GCE 'O and A levels' for instance. We can and do have 'bad hair days'. A cold, painful tooth or even a family dispute can see the candidate not at his/her best. At its worst the candidate may not even turn up on the day? Now I am not pretending that failing an umpire's test is as potentially serious as an eleven plus exam but it does beg the question, is there a better fairer way?

I suggest that one way would be to develop the system used for potential National Umpires, that is the candidate is invited to umpire at an appropriate event in their area over a day even two, so that a more balanced verdict could be reached. The benefits would be twofold. First the new umpire would experience a formal event and second the Tournament Organiser would have the benefit of an additional umpire at his disposal.

Whilst I am out of touch with the system of marking the results paper I venture to suggest that more emphasis is placed on 'accuracy', and most candidates having a league background find scoring a match second nature to them. 'Presentation' can be learnt whilst 'control' can only come with experience.

It is interesting to note that this approach is being adopted more and more by the ITTF but there is one drawback. An examiner can, and will, reverse a favourable report during an event if they subsequently witness something less than expected. This however is unlikely for county umpires as the process is geared more to encouraging potential umpire material.

Derek Sherratt

WHAT IS A UNIFORM?

I recently attended the Junior / Cadet Championships held at Hatfield in far away Hertfordshire, purported to be somewhere near France or thereabouts and it was great to see so many young people enjoying their table tennis. There was a massive entry, ensuring the Umpires were kept busy all day and far into the night, but that is a different story.

I am sometimes referred to as an "Old fart" and a pain in the neck. Yes I admit it, I can be insufferable, opinionated, rude and a complaining pain in the backside, but in all my time as an umpire I have tried to uphold the standards set by my mentors when I first entered the body "Umpire"; yes there were people who acted as mentors even back then.

I was always taught to wear the appropriate clothing for the job. i.e Royal Blue blazer, white shirt, grey trousers, grey socks and black shoes and the currently approved umpires tie as decided by the N.U.R.C. No problem. I have worn this UNIFORM for every ETTA tournament I have attended, with the appropriate ITTF uniform when required and have made my opposition to the efforts of the NURC to introduce a bastardised version of the ITTF uniform for English Umpires very clear.

So what happened at the Junior Nationals? There was a horrible mixture of dress. Most of my colleagues wore the traditional English uniform but there was a rather nasty mixture of alternative dress also on view, all as suggested by the NURC directive. There were Navy Blue blazers, Royal Blue Umpires sweaters, Navy Blue Umpires sweat shirts, altogether a horrible mismatch which did little to enhance the presentation of the event and merely served to reinforce the opinions of many "Old Farts" that standards are being destroyed slowly but surely, and surely it is about time our Lady Umpires were required to wear Tie or Cravat to bring them into line with their male counterparts.

Ouch!! I can feel the knives hitting my back already and the oft repeated excuse of costs but I will leave you with something to consider and it is the definition of the word "UNIFORM" as printed in the Geddes & Grosset Dictionary and Thesaurus and I quote:

UNIFORM. Regular, unvarying, regulation dress of certain persons, constant, even, equable, equal, smooth, steady, regular, unbroken, unchanged, undeviating, unvaried, unvarying, costume dress livery, outfit, regalia, suit.

I rest my case milord.

Stan Clarke

DISPLAYING YELLOW / RED CARDS

The following email was sent by Derek Sidaway to the NURC, on 19/12/11, re:- the display of yellow and red cards during a team match.

Hullo Colin

I know that yellow and red cards should be displayed near the score indicator re:- ITTF Handbook for match Officials 17.2.2.

In a team match, where players play twice, and a player who is awarded cards, in his or her 1st. game, I believed these cards should be displayed near the score indicator at the start of the second game.

Twice this year I have been told that this is incorrect. Please say which is correct as I cannot find a rule? By displaying the cards at the start of the second match it reminds the player that a further indiscretion will incur an additional penalty.

Thanks.

Derek Sidaway.

Reply from Colin Clemett, Secretary NURC 21/12/11

Hello Derek

NURC members support your view that "carried over" penalties in a team match should be indicated by placing the relevant cards by the score indicator at the start of the next individual match. This situation is not at present covered by any procedural rule but it will be suggested to the ITTF Umpires and Referees Committee that it should be. Thank you for drawing it to our attention

Colin Clemett

**WANTED
CD Storage drawers**

Can't find any illustrations of these but the storage drawers I mean have 2 or 4 drawers and each drawer holds 20 CD's These storage drawers are made of plastic and are usually black in colour. If you need to get rid of these I would be very happy to buy them from you.

**Please contact John Mackey
01724 761005 or john.mackey@btinternet.com**

**THOUGHTS OF A SUMMER HOLIDAY IN FLORIDA BY
JOHN LAWTON**

A few years ago Judy and I were on holiday in Florida, America driving down the main road to our hotel when we noticed this big neon sign saying "Betty and Mary best barmaids in town, Pool, Darts and Ping- Pong". I said to Judy "you know where we are *going*' tomorrow night" (She did not say a word as I always take my racket on holiday with me!!!). The following night arrived and we drove up to this building. It was called the "Knot House" and it was a large wooden shack. Judy and I went and opened the door and they all stopped playing. I thought "aye aye" what have we let ourselves in for here? So I quickly pushed Judy inside (a gentleman always lets a lady enter the room first). The

guys started playing pool again (no six guns on show thank goodness). I could see the dartboards but no sign of the table tennis table. As we arrived at the bar I asked the barmaid and she pointed to the other side of the bar. A few guys were/ interested to play; I had-a good knockabout and managed to win all of the matches. I even played against the landlord who gave me a "Knot House" T shirt for the win and a funny looking smile. Then the sheriff (Mike) arrived dressed in all of his "Butterfly" gear. I thought to myself "there is 'no chance of winning here but I will give it a go". We had some good matches and I managed to beat him. He said "you will have to come down to our table tennis club on Saturday". Mike came and picked me/ up. I left Judy SUN bathing around the hotel swimming pool and we arrived at the T T club which is on the Cape/ Canaveral site. The club had a- very good set up and plenty of members. I won a few matches and then the Chinese players arrived. Then it way goodnight from yours truly, far too good even with all their nets and edges!!! After a while Mike gave me a tour around the site, even pointed out where the rockets were launched from. It was a very interesting day, but eventually I had to go back to the hotel to keep my good lady company, sunbathe and have a swim. **Thinking-about it "Life can be very hard"!!!"**

Neil and Bob's Slovenian Adventure.

Two or three months ago, Bob Williamson and I decided to apply for the most glamorous and exciting tournament available for International Umpires. Quite how we finished up in Slovenia I'm still not too sure. However, there we were, booted and suited to umpire at one leg of the ITTF Pro Tour. Just to make life even more interesting, the Slovenian Junior and Cadet Open followed on without a break. All together it would be 2 consecutive 5 day tournaments, phew!

The trip to Ljubljana was uneventful; Bob flew from Manchester to Paris. I flew from Heathrow to Paris, from there we both flew on to Slovenia in a plane holding maybe 50 passengers, and it was full. On we went to Velenje by coach looking at the pretty countryside as we travelled. On arrival at a 4* hotel we were told that this is where we would be eating but not staying. After accreditation another short mini bus trip to a Bed and Breakfast establishment where we would be sleeping and eating breakfast. The good news was, we all had single rooms. 22 umpires would be there together for the duration. The rooms were spotless, the water was warm, yet sporadic, no plug in the hand basin so running water for a shave. The heating went off at 9.30 every morning, so best to be off to the venue ASAP.

Bob and I were paired together for the whole ITTF event. We took it in turns to be U and AU for each match. Bob, having been abroad many times was acting as my mentor, advising me and honing my umpiring to bring me up to the high standard expected at such a big event. The most matches in one day was eleven, between two people that was fine by us. Towards the end of the first week, much to my surprise, Bob arranged for me to have an unofficial evaluation by Albert Rooijmans to the Blue Badge standard. The evaluation was pretty good, only 3 minor points noticed. It would have been a 'meet' apparently. I was very pleased with that; believe me.

We were now at the last 32 and 16 stages of the senior tournament on the Saturday and Bob and I were given the day off. There were, unfortunately, no trips arranged for us so it was off to the venue to watch the table tennis. We really wanted to see the schedule for the finals day, hoping to get a big

match. Our patience was rewarded. Bob and I got the men's doubles final. We could not have asked for anything better. The match was televised on Slovenian TV and in China as all the players were from China; what a surprise! The final went off without a hitch and we were told we had umpired in a very 'English' manner. We took that as a compliment.

There was no peace for the wicked. It was back to work next day at the start of the Junior and Cadet's Slovenian Open. We worked on our own for the first day then it was back to teamwork. A very uneventful week then ensued but we kept up the standard all the way. Some long days but the wine always flowed every evening. Bob flew home the day before the tournament ended so I was paired with a Belgian umpire. We worked well together; no language barrier there then. On finals' day were given 4 semis and one final. All were on the show court with TV for the final. All went without a hitch.

So there you have the story of the tournaments. The adventure started trying to get home! Mini bus to the airport was fine, a bit snowy and icy but well in time for my flight back to Paris. Had to wait 50 minutes for de-icing etc. The flight was late taking off so I missed my connection to Paris. Air France put me on the next plane for Heathrow and I just started to hear rumours about imminent snow in London. I boarded an A320 with 11 other passengers and we were outnumbered by the crew so it was lots of free wine and crisps. I arrived at Heathrow to see some snow but decided to try for home. I mean how long would it be to go 89 miles??? Little did I realise I would give up on the M25 just 35 minutes later. I was stuck on the M25 for 6 hours, eventually towed off by the police at 3.05am. Now I am in a BP garage in Sutton. I waited till 7.00am and got a truck to lift my car onto a truck bed and drive me home. 14 hours to travel 89 miles; only in the UK.

That was the end of the adventure. Would I go back to Slovenia again? You bet. Would I apply again next year? You bet. Did I enjoy the whole experience? You bet. Would I umpire again in Slovenia with Bob Williamson? You bet. Did I make a lot of new friends? You bet

Neil Curtis

This article is taken from the ETTA official magazine "Table Tennis" September 1948

SALUTE TO THE ORGANISERS OF THE XIVth OLYMPIAD, LONDON, 1948 !

A grand spectacle; a complicated job well done and that in spite of the moans of the prophets of doom. These words sum up the verdict of most honest observers; they could also apply to many such efforts in our own sport, differing only in magnitude.

How heartening to those who work for table tennis to be able to study, under the bright spotlight of Olympic publicity, and without any pressing responsibilities on their own shoulders, the problems — and the rewards — of their kindred spirit of the athletic, swimming, weight-lifting, and other "worlds" gathered together for "LONDON" 1948.

How heartening to note the improvements in performance; the increased respect of the general public for any sport when demonstrated properly; the unimportance of those "incidents" and "complaints" so easily seized upon by the reporter in search of excitement.

Most heartening of all, to come away from the nightly show feeling, *knowing once again* that there is something in the meeting of human beings for sporting struggle; something good that can hardly be

expressed in words, **and not at all in figures**. Some people have asked why Table Tennis was not actually included in the Olympics Games now that it has "become of age."

The official answer of the International Olympic Committee is that table tennis is only one of many sports knocking at their door. If one were included, the others would naturally feel equally, entitled to the honour, and the organisation would be snowed under.

One needs to think about some of the sports which are left out; Lawn Tennis, Badminton, Archery, Bowls, Golf and even Cricket! Remember also we have our own World Championships, in which *annually* as many countries compete as in any Olympic event.

Our sport did, however receive welcome recognition by the inclusion in the Olympic Games Art Exhibition of the portrait of "*Children's Table Tennis*" which was formally presented to the Hon. Ivor Montague at the Annual General Meeting of the E.T.T.A. this year.

OLYMPICS and PARALYMPICS

Congratulations to the following who have been selected for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Olympic Games:

Umpires. Tom Purcell, Mick Strode, John Mackey and Jonathan Whittaker.

Technical Officials.

Alex Mercer, Alison Woods, Barry Robertson, Ben Foote, Brian Jackson, Brian Watkins, Catherine O'Neill, Corriner Whitaker, David Goulden, Gillian, Edwards, Lynda Reid, Margaret Welch, Margot Fraser, Matt Morris, Nathan Thomas, Ron Davies, Simon Oyler and Steve Smith.

Paralympic Games:

Umpires and Technical Officials.

Alex Mercer, Alison Woods, Barry Robertson, Ben Foote, Brian Jackson, Brian Watkins, Catherine O'Neill, Corrina Whitaker, David Brown, David Cochrane, David Edwards, David Goulden, Dennis Calver, Jim Kenny, Derek Sherratt, Gaynor Robertson, Gillian Edwards, Jackie Williams, Robert Williamson,, John Hardcastle, Karen Tonge, Ken Eliot, Lesley Slack, Lynda Reid, Margaret Calver, Margaret Welch, Russell Sutcliffe, Margot Fraser, Marian Davies, Michael Payne, Michael Reynolds, Peter Higgins, Peter May, Philip McCallum, Ron Davies, Stan Clarke, Steve Smith, Tim Le Page and Neil Curtis.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

ASSOCIATION OF ENGLISH TABLE TENNIS UMPIRES

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING TO BE HELD AT
BULKINGTON VILLAGE CENTRE, WARWICKSHIRE**

DATE:- 19th AUGUST 2012 COMMENCING AT 2.00pm

**The committee would like to see as many
members as possible. Directions will be sent on
request.**

Light refreshments available on arrival.

ASSOCIATION OF ENGLISH TABLE TENNIS UMPIRES

ANNUAL TOURNAMENT 2012

VENUE:- DRAYCOTT T.T.C – DERBYSHIRE

DATE - 23rd / 24th JUNE 2012

**DETAILS WILL BE CIRCULATED WHEN FINAL
ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE.**

**UPDATE ON ONE OF OUR MEMBERS WHO HAD A CAR ACCIDENT ON THE WAY HOME FROM A
TOURNAMENT.**

Names have been changed to save any offence or embarrassment

During the local church service Suzie and Tom were attending the vicar asked if anyone in the congregation would like to express a praise for answered prayers.

Suzie Smith stood and walked to the podium. She said, "I have a praise. Two months ago, my husband, Tom, had a terrible car accident and his scrotum was completely crushed. The pain was excruciating and the doctors did not know if they could help him." You could hear a muffled gasp from the men in the congregation as they imagined the pain that poor Tom must have experienced. "Tom was unable to hold me or the children," she went on, "and every move caused him terrible pain." We prayed as the doctors performed a delicate operation, and it turned out they were able to piece together the crushed remnants of Tom's scrotum, and wrap wire around it to hold it in place." Again, the men in the congregation cringed and squirmed uncomfortably as they imagined the horrible surgery performed on Tom. "Now," she announced in a quivering voice, "thank the Lord, Tom is out of hospital and the doctors say that with time, his scrotum should heal completely." All the men sighed with unified relief. The vicar rose and tentatively asked if anyone else had something to say.

A man stood up and walked slowly to the podium. He said, "**I'm Tom Smith.**" The entire congregation held its breath. "***I just want to tell my wife that the word is STERNUM.***"

The latest news on Tom is that he is now well on the way to recovery and he can now hold Suzie and the kids and he can still give a grimacing smile.

A LITTLE BIT MORE OF TABLE TENNIS HISTORY

The game originated as a sport in Britain during the 1880's, where it was played among the upper class as an after dinner parlour game, then commonly known as "*wiff- waff*". A row of books were stood up along the centre of the table 'as a net, two more books served as rackets and were used to continuously hit a golf ball from one end of the table to the other. Alternately table tennis was played



with paddles made of cigar box lids and balls made of champagne corks. The popularity of the game led game manufacturers to sell the equipment commercially. Early rackets were often pieces of parchment stretched upon a frame, and the sound generated in play gave the game its first nicknames of "*wiff- waff*" and "*ping - pong*". A number of sources indicate that the game was first brought to the attention of Hamley's of Regent Street under the name "Gossima". The name "ping - pong" was in wide use before British manufacturer J. Jacques & Son Ltd. Trade marked it in 1901. The name "ping - pong" then came to be used for the game played by the rather expensive Jacques equipment, with other manufacturers calling it table tennis. A similar situation arose in the United States, where Jacques sold the rights to the "ping - pong" name to Parker Brothers.

The next major innovation was by James Gibb, a British enthusiast of table tennis, who discovered novelty celluloid balls on a trip to the United States in 1901 and found them to be ideal for the game. This was followed by E.C.Goode who, in 1901, invented the modern version of the racket by fixing a sheet of pimpled, or stippled, rubber to the wooden blade.

Table tennis was growing in popularity by 1901 to the extent that table tennis tournaments were being organised, books on table tennis were being written and an unofficial world championships was held in 1902. During the early 1900's, the game was banned in Russia because the rulers at the time believed that playing the game had an adverse effect on players' eyesight.

In 1921, the Table Tennis Association was founded in Britain, and International Table Tennis Federation followed in 1926. London hosted the first official World Championships. In 1933, the United States Table Tennis Association, now called USA Table Tennis, was formed.

In the 1950's rackets that used a rubber sheet combined with an underlying sponge layer changed the game dramatically, introducing greater spin and speed. These were introduced to Britain by sports goods manufacturer S.W.Hancock Ltd. The use of speed glue increased the spin and speed even further, resulting in changes to the equipment to "slow the game down". Table Tennis was introduced as an Olympic sport at the Olympics in 1988.

After the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, The International Table Tennis Federation introduced several rule changes aimed at making table tennis more viable as a televised spectator sport. First, the older 38mm balls were officially replaced by 40mm balls in 2000. This increased the ball's air resistance and effectively slowed down the game. By that time, players had begun increasing the thickness of the fast sponge layer on their rackets, which made the game excessively fast and difficult watch on

television. Second, the ITTF changed from a 21 -point game to an 11 -point scoring system in 2001. This was intended to make the games more fast-paced and exciting. The ITTF also changed the rules on service to prevent a player from hiding the ball during service, in order to increase the average length of rallies and to reduce the server's advantage.

Variants of the sport have recently emerged. "Large-ball" table tennis uses a 44mm ball, which slows down the game significantly. This has seen some acceptance by players who have had a hard time with the extreme spins and speeds of the 40mm game.

There is a move to reviving the table tennis game that existed prior to the introduction of sponge rubber. "Hardbat" table tennis players reject the speed and spin of reversed sponge rubber, preferring the 1940 - 60s style of play with no sponge and short pimples rubber. Defence is less difficult by decreasing the speed and eliminating any meaningful Magnus effect of spin. Because hard bat killer shots are almost impossible to hit against a skilled player, hard bat matches focus on the strategic side of table tennis, requiring skilful manoeuvring of the opponent before an attack can become successful.
