

ISSUE 30 MARCH 2016

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

With new umpires appearing at events and membership steadily arising, the Association may well be facing issues raised by recent changes.

Changes to the volunteers and technical officials expenses policy, umpires' uniform and the inevitable vagaries with selections for home events may well be questioned by members.

If you have questions or comments on the above issues please raise them so that the committee are able to discuss them at future meetings. Some members have already said that they are not prepared to apply for events which do not provide Friday night accommodation. Also negative comments have been made on the proposed changes to uniform, while the issue of selection has always been contentious.

At a recent National Council meeting there was a presentation on Clubs and Volunteers and the opening comments included 'Volunteers are the sport's most important asset'. Technical Officials are volunteers, volunteers want to help. Anyone who endured National Service was told "never volunteer", it would be a sad day if that were to be said in table tennis.

See you at the next event.

George Tyler

.....

AETTU COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES FROM SUNDAY 22nd November 2015 12:00hrs BULKINGTON VILLAGE CENTRE

Present: George Tyler (GT), Derek Sherratt (DS), Tom Purcell (TP), Stan Clarke (SC), Vincent Tony Chatwin (TC), John Stalker (JS), Lilian Payne (LP), Mike Payne (MP)

1. **Apologies:** John Lawton, Trevor Vincent, Harry Jutle, Steve Welch

2. **Minutes from Last meeting 19/07/2015:**
The Minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.
Proposed: Stan Clarke. Seconded; John Stalker Carried

3. **Matter Arising:**
Action 1 – Secretary to contact members re continued membership – Ongoing.
Action 2 – Members at AGM to be informed about proposed changes to uniform and to seek opinion. Completed
Action 3 – Secretary to circulate TV's email address for magazine articles - Completed

4. **Chairman's Report:**
It's some time since our last meeting (AGM) and we continue to see the Association grow. Looking back our main issues, apart from recognition, have been:

1. Selection – We can do nothing about that.
2. Training – there are regular sessions following our initial promotion
3. Uniform – we failed with the blazer but had success with the shirt. Details re the tie and badges are still pending.

We are now recognised by the Board and can now speak on behalf of our members on matters which affect their welfare such as:

1. The new expenses policy
2. Working conditions e.g. new BL format
3. Verbal abuse of our members

The Secretary has tabled these issues in the agenda for discussion and I would like to put forward for your consideration, following discussion:

1. To sound out TOC regarding these issues
2. To arrange a survey of members to find out what they think

Following this to send the results of the survey to TTE with a copy to TOC.

5. Secretary's report

The Secretary informed the meeting that a number of issues had been raised since the last meeting, including umpires conditions of work, abuse of umpires and expenses and these were to be discussed during the meeting.

6. Treasurer's Report

Due to work commitments the Treasurer was unable to attend the meeting but a copy of the current Income and Expenditure report was submitted. Stan Clarke noted that the AETTU competition had made a loss. Secretary advised that the loss was due to a number of factors which probably would not be repeated. After a brief discussion it was agreed to have a more detailed discussion at the next meeting.

7. Correspondence

a) Umpires Guide. Secretary reminded the meeting that at a previous meeting it was agreed that a guide for new umpires would be useful and would help them with equipment, procedures etc. A basic draft had been prepared but was not suitable for distribution. Secretary had liaised with Colin Clemett, Secretary of TOC and had been advised that TOC were in the process of preparing a new Umpires Booklet, the last one being distributed about 2007. After further discussion it was agreed that TOC was the right group to prepare such a document but it benefit if members could make suggestions about the content of the document.

Action 1. Secretary to contact TOC re content of new booklet

b) Abuse of Umpires. Secretary advised the meeting about an incident which had occurred at the Hunts 2*Open held on the 29th and 30th August in St Ives when an umpire was verbally abused by a Senior British League player. The umpire had made a formal complaint to TTE but the complaint had not yet been resolved and the umpire had not been kept up to date re his complaint..

There was a general discussion on the subject and it was agreed that the procedure had taken too long to process and the complainant had not been kept up to date with his complaint. There was a discussion on the discipline procedures involved in the Regulations and the meeting considered that the correct procedure had not been followed. The members of the meeting were also of the opinion that umpires do not fully understand the correct procedure to follow if they wish to make a complaint.

Action 2. Article to be prepared for the next magazine re discipline procedures.

Action 3. Secretary to write to TTE, on behalf of complainant member, re the slow process of the complaint and concerns about the correct process of the Discipline Regulations being followed by TTE.

c) Feedback re NU Examination. Secretary reminded the meeting that discussion had taken place about the lack of feedback given to umpires who took the NU examination. Two umpires had taken the NU exam earlier in the year and had failed. Both believed that they had a successful examination but to this day they have had no feedback about why they had failed. Secretary advised that he had contacted TOC and received correspondence from Colin Clemett who believed that umpires were made aware of why they had failed.

There was a general discussion on the subject and committee, together with other members, agreed that unsuccessful candidates would like more information about why they had failed the NU exam. It was agreed that umpires could not be given detailed information about why they had failed but guidance about areas of particular weakness would be welcomed by candidates.

Action 4. Secretary to contact TOC re feedback to umpires

8. Expenses. Secretary reminded the meeting that TTE had circulated guidelines for claiming expenses by TOs and volunteers. The guidelines pulled together guidance which had been used for a number of years but new guidance re accommodation was causing concern for umpires in particular the 7am-11pm restrictions on claiming overnight accommodation at tournaments.

There was a general discussion on this subject and it was agreed that wherever possible Referees release umpires early, who have the furthest to travel. However, some umpires have to leave home at 7am to arrive in time for the referees briefing and then have to work a long day umpiring. Under the new guidelines these umpires would not be entitled to accommodation on the Friday evening. Members pointed out that there was a difference between umpires and volunteers. Umpires had to concentrate all day during matches which can be very tiring. Secretary advised meeting that umpires can speak with members of TTE Events department if they think they are entitled to accommodation before/during/after an event. After further discussion members agreed that this ruling is likely to mean that many umpires, who normally attend events, may not apply for events and there may be less umpires available.

9. British League. Secretary reminded the meeting that the new format for BL matches had been introduced which now included 2 doubles matches on top of the usual 8 singles matches. As a result umpires were now required to umpire approximately 40 matches over a weekend with an addition of approximately 1hr per round. As a result of these additions one umpire had a very tiring weekend at Draycott where they had to work almost continually for 8hrs with little time for a break and the players refused to umpire while they had a break. The umpire had complained to the Chair of TTE and the AETTU about the additional workload and the pressure placed on the umpires.

There was a general discussion on this subject. Chair advised the meeting that the changes to BL has been made without consideration for umpires. It was agreed that the formula of 1.5 umpires per table should be

enforced at BL weekends so that umpires could have a break. Members also highlighted that umpires will be less likely to volunteer for BL weekends if this situation continues.

Secretary informed the meeting that he had spoken with Susie Hughes, D/Chair TTE and member of the BL Committee about the problem and she had attended a BL meeting on Sunday 8/11/15. The subject was raised at the meeting. BL Committee recognised the problem and hoped to resolve the problem in discussions with TOC and AETTU. The next BL meeting was on 9/1/15 and Chair of TOC and member of AETTU are invited to discuss the problem.

Action 5. Secretary to liaise with Chair TOC re attendance at BL meeting.

10. Uniform. Secretary advised the meeting that new guidelines about umpires' uniform had been drafted by TTE and was circulated for comment. (Previously circulated to Committee). Free Tie/scarves were to be distributed to "active" umpires and blazer and lapel badges would also be distributed. Secretary advised the meeting that the draft uniform guidelines also recommends that from the start of the 2017-18 season umpires should wear blue shirts rather than white shirts.

There was a general discussion on the subject and members welcomed the decision re free ties/scarves etc however, the question re "active" umpires was raised. It was pointed out that TOC has a list of active NU and IU but does not have an accurate list of active CUs. This problem needs to be resolved.

Members also discussed the suggestion that umpires' shirts should change from white to blue by 2017-18. After further discussion it was suggested that members should be canvassed on this subject before a final decision is made.

Action 6. Members to be canvassed to change of shirts.

11. Magazine. Trevor Vincent had produced the next magazine but was having trouble with his printer. The magazine will be circulated asap. Any new articles to be sent to Trevor.

12. AETTU Tournament. It was agreed to hold the 2016 AETTU tournament at Draycott. Three possible dates in June/July were discussed. Format of the tournament was also briefly discussed and it was agreed to discuss in more detail at the next meeting.

Action 7. Secretary to contact Draycott TTC re suitable date for 2016 tournament.

13. AOB

- a) Tony Chatwin informed the meeting that Liz Wilson a long established umpire had died recently. She had not umpired for a number of years but was well known on the circuit had umpired at many national and international events.
- b) Secretary advised the meeting that Rob Sinclair, General Secretary at TTE and a good friend to umpires, was retiring at Christmas to spend more time with his family.
- c) Chair advised the meeting that Bill Moran, founding member of the AETTU, was seriously ill and was currently in a care home. Bill had not umpired for a few years because of his health.

14. Date of next meeting. March 2016. Date to be confirmed.

.....

DISCIPLINE - ABUSE OF TECHNICAL OFFICIALS

The primary duty of the umpire is to decide the result of each rally. In principle, the umpire has no discretionary powers, but he or she is required to exercise judgment in applying some laws and regulations, such as deciding whether a rally should be a let because a player's service or return may have been affected by circumstances outside the player's control, or whether a player's behaviour is acceptable. The players are under the jurisdiction of the umpire from the time at which they arrive at the playing area until the time at which they leave it.

The referee is in charge of a tournament and decides any question of rule interpretation, on which he or she is the sole authority, and generally to ensure that the competition is conducted in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations.

In the vast majority of occasions the umpire controls games without any trouble and on the odd occasion, when needed, the umpire can issue a word of warning to a player before bad behaviour escalates. Occasionally an umpire may need to issue a yellow card or a yellow/red card because of a player's bad behaviour and usually this is begrudgingly accepted by the players.

On a rare occasion a player's behaviour can escalate out of control. This usually happens over a disputed point in a close match or when the player disagrees strongly with the umpire's decision. On these rare occasions the player or coach will not accept the decision of the umpire. These situations can be difficult for experienced umpires to handle but it may be the first time that an umpire has experienced this type of abuse.

What should an umpire do? The umpire may issue a yellow card or yellow/red card for the abuse but if the umpire considers that the abuse/misbehaviour is excessive then he/she should immediately stop the game and inform the referee. Make a note of any witnesses to the abuse. The referee should listen to both sides of the argument and in the extreme can disqualify the player.

If the umpire considers that the abuse/misbehaviour of the player/coach is extreme then the umpire is entitled to make a formal complaint to Table Tennis England but make sure that the referee is aware that a complaint is being made so that it can be included in the match report. The complaint will be investigated by a TTE official and if appropriate will be forwarded to the Discipline Committee for consideration.

The process for making a formal complaint is recorded in Table Tennis England Regulations – Reg. D and can be found on the TTE website or at :
<http://tabletennisengland.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/D-Disciplinary-Regulations-nov-2015.pdf>.

In a previous formal complaint made by an umpire the complaint was dealt with by the Discipline Committee. The complaint was upheld and the Chair of the Committee stated:

“Umpires give their time voluntarily. They are entitled to courtesy and respect from players. It is essential that ETTA protects umpires from abuse to uphold the reputation of the sport. There is also a risk that if umpires are subject to abuse they will not be prepared to continue to act”

Tom Purcell

.....

EDITOR'S FORUM

I would like to thank both our Chairman and Secretary (George Tyler and Tom Purcell respectively) for their help and support during the early months of myself taking over the production of the Association's magazine.

Tom, I knew, would be an extremely hard act to follow and I am sure everybody would like to say “thank you” to him for the relentless work he continues to for the Table Tennis and our Association.

Finally, I would like to end this small piece by saying “thank you” to all those that regularly contribute to the magazine, by the submission of articles and please keep them coming. Submissions are welcome from all members and it would be great to hear from members who have not felt brave enough to make s submission yet. We would also welcome hearing from our new colleagues on how they feel about umpiring, and to share some of their experiences with colleagues.

Please remember this is **our** magazine so please let us have your views, experiences and tales.

Regards,

Trevor Vincent.

(e) trevormttc@yahoo.co.uk

(t) 01263833178 or 07828175493

P.S. What do you call a group of umpires?

Printable answers only please

.....

SELECTIONS

I write this article not in anger but in dismay concerning the above. I personally have never complained about my own selections as I take perhaps a lot broader view than some of my colleagues.

However, it seems to me that the criteria for selections have changed and I feel this is very unfair without telling the umpires first. Are we not all in this together!?? I did not know you could apply to the National exam without doing quite a range of different tournament, certainly more than JBL and only one of those after which you then get selected for the Senior nationals.

I do think we should have a discussion on these matters as it seems to me that there are a lot of discrepancies in the present process.

Your comments would be appreciated.

Trevor Vincent

Editor



RACQUET CONTROL

At a recent tournament I was engaging in a conversation with an umpiring colleague whilst on a short break.

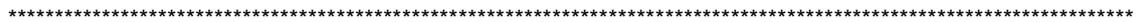
It occurred to me that we, as umpires, do not really know when we are checking a players bat what we are looking for in terms of banned rubbers etc. In fact at this tournament a list was not available. Apart from the obvious deterioration of bat rubbers where it has either been worn or ill-treated we are merely going through the motions.

Would it not be beneficial to our sport if at the start of a tournament players, when registering with the referee or his/her assistant, register their bats as well and the bat is marked accordingly. Thus alleviating the need for continuous detailed inspection of players' property and bats are confirmed as legitimate or otherwise by a higher authority, saving time on inspection and adding to efficiency and professionalism.

This would, I think,, add to the presentation of our sport in a professional way.

Any comments would be appreciated.

Trevor Vincent



UMPIRES' QUESTIONS

Selection of umpires

Should there be a review on how umpires are selected for tournaments?

My above question is based on the unfair recent selection of umpires for the National events. It is unfair that some of us have applied and received none where as others are selected for all of them which makes the process questionable. Ten Umpires have been selected for all Three National Events, again that is totally unfair. Some of these also have other events.

What is the process one may ask? There are apparently three selectors who in turn select those they wish to be put forward? So if all the selectors select for example Umpire A for all three events then does that person fills the spaces

and therefore does that make the selection easier? Is one considered if there is an intention to take IU or NU exam or indeed if there is absolute no intention to acquire further qualifications?

Are IU umpires selected even if they have no intention to work at International Events? Is consideration given to those who were not awarded last or indeed previous years? One may feel that if A.B.C. were appointed last year then how about giving X.Y.Z. the opportunity.

What criteria one may ask is used to influence a selector? Should It be based on the evaluations, are they available, their past selections and what work they have done to be awarded a National Event, their appearance, turnout and behaviour?. Some umpires become qualified to NU standard purely for National Events. Would enthusiasm be an issue, if one is eager to help to get a job done? Should one be selected if their shoes need cleaning, uniform not fitting properly, or there is an appearance of a scruffy bag'o'spuds? What is deplorable is an umpire at a hotel dinner table drinking directly from a bottle especially in view of players. Aren't we expected to show an example and avoid being undignified? The ETTA Handbook for Umpires 2009 has a good paragraph on appearance in particular 4.1.3, one would expect it is in the latest TTE edition.

Who selects the selectors? Should they select themselves for all the Nationals?

Evaluations

Evaluations are important to help one improve performance and to maintain standards. Could we be provided with a copy of our evaluation? It would be useful to see one and help us progress.

Insurance Cover

Can we know what cover is established for umpires who are injured working at an event? We have an assault course to negotiate over and around players' bags when trying safely to arrive at a table to umpire and it has been known for an umpires table to collapse. Again the request is asked for help to set up tables etc at VBL, are we covered? Who is responsible for recording accidents/injuries?

From all the umpires who would like some answers

WHY DO WE DO IT?

At a recent meeting of Table tennis England National Council there was a discussion about the importance of volunteers and the need to encourage and support them. (For umpires this is why AETTU exists).

The National Councillor for Cambridge was sitting with the National Councillor for Herefordshire and the VETTS representative to National Council. All three will be volunteering for several weekend's work away from home in the next few months. The question raised "Why do we do it?" (And perhaps[s more importantly, why do such a small proportion of the people who qualify as CUs join us?)

Umpiring can be hard work. You may spend hours stuck on a motorway then spend more hours on an uncomfortable seat in a hall that is gloomy and too hot or too cold. The games may not be interesting and the players may have little idea of correct behaviour. To umpire 18 matches in a day and to pay close attention to each one is a test of stamina as well as competence. We all make mistakes and there is always an audience when we do.

But...

- It gets you out of the house
- You spend time with colleagues/friends
- You may get cake with your afternoon tea
- There is satisfaction if you know you've done a good job

- Occasionally you get thanked by the players
- You get to know the coaches who are often very nice people
- If there were no trained person to ensure the rules are followed, it could all end in chaos and we want our sport to be played fairly
- If you stick at it, you might progress up the ladder and have the chance to go abroad at your own expense, to share a room with a stranger and to work long hours on uncomfortable chairs in different sports halls which may be too hot or too cold
- You may get to see some very good table tennis

I'm sure the Editor would welcome more ideas and between us we might decide why we Are happy to be umpires. Now I have to go off to pack my suitcase for next weekend.

Lynda Reid

P.S. And we mustn't forget that we can get a free tie/scarf from Table Tennis England.

.....

Colleagues,

I have enclosed a recent ITTF newsletter for your information. It relates to umpires' conduct at international tournaments but it also has relevance to domestic tournaments.

At tournaments I rarely talk socially to the players before a game and never ask players how they have played in previous rounds. A number of years ago at an ITTF event I was lining up with a couple of players to march onto the court. One of the players was looking very serious and I talked to him and asked him how he had been doing during the tournament. He went "ballistic" and accused me of spoiling his concentration. He was "in the zone" preparing for the next round and by asking the question I had reminded him about the previous round when he had won but hadn't played well. I learned my lesson.

Tom Purcell

ITTF NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends,

We've all worked in a lot of events already in this year and we would like to inform you about some changes, updates and new challenges.

Match Officials Code of Conduct

1. Match Officials should not take any photos with players in a tournament and also not post any private photos with players on any social media (e.g. Facebook). Referees are requested to withdraw umpires, who fail to comply with this code of conduct, from the umpires' schedule. BB/BBP who do not follow this directive will be reported to URC and recorded in the database. A subsequent offence may result in one of the "Meets Expectation" being taken away.

2. It is recommended **not** to talk with players/warn players about possible wrong services or expected misbehaviour (or coaches regarding illegal advice), before the match. The action of talking to the players/coaches before a match would indicate that the match officials are entering a match with pre-conceived ideas and making decisions based on those, rather than what they observe during the match.

3. Umpires are responsible for players' rackets at the Call Area. If irresponsibly left unattended, Referees are requested to withdraw umpires from the umpires' schedule, if feasible. If the offending umpire is a BB/BBP, one of the "Meets Expectation" will be taken away regardless if the tournament has evaluations or not. The incident will be recorded on the database for future reference.

4. BB/BBP umpires who choose not to attend Referee's briefing without valid excuse will not be evaluated if there is evaluation at the tournament. The incident will be recorded on the database for future reference.



A PERSPECTIVE BY Derek Sherratt

(original response to Paper presented to National Council in January)

Alan Ransome's Presentation to Council on 30 January was presented eloquently in his usual style and contained much of the insight and passion for table tennis that we have come to expect from the man most regard as the fountain of all knowledge in our sport. In essence however there was nothing new. Alan has been spreading the gospel for a long time, combining his active roles in table tennis with a zeal that would do credit to a missionary. I recall him bringing his crusade to the Midland almost thirty years ago. We sat there spellbound as he outlined his vision of the future that had table tennis clubs as plentiful as golf and cricket clubs, where one could take family, friends or even business acquaintances for a drink or even a meal. Well-lit car parks in the up market area of town would provide a safe clean environment for its patrons.

Let me say straight away that I too would like to be part of the above and indeed I accept that there has been a certain amount of success thanks to the work of volunteers who share some of Alan's drive and enthusiasm. In these comments I am simply acting as the *devil's advocate* in penning a different scenario, not only to Alan's vision but also to the general direction that table tennis in England appears to be heading.

During the intervening period the social changes to our lifestyles allied to the massive reduction in manufacturing, with the loss of works canteens and social clubs has resulted in the decline of our sport. The growth in the provision of leisure centres has not filled this huge gap.

Very prominent from the word go is the term 'volunteer' which in short means the workforce. It is therefore somewhat ironic that "our most important asset" appears increasingly to have less and less influence on the affairs of state; witness the changes introduced post Portas? The recent modifications regarding expenses might make economic sense in the short term but will hardly encourage new candidates or existing volunteers to continue. Some will recognise a comparison of the true volunteer with Poo-Bah, the Lord High Everything a character in Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *The Mikado*, in so much as many volunteers occupy multiple roles in table tennis...

Perhaps the most often asked question in my little pool when the matter of fee increases is raised is "What do I get out of this?" Over the years I have tended to ramble on about wider strategic goals, the bigger picture and reference to pyramids etc. Not sure though if any of my answers were really accepted. I had this in mind at the previous Council when voting issues were being discussed. I therefore raised the matter of voting at the November County Meeting. A unanimous decision "we leave it in your hands" Please note that this was decided by members of the county management Committee, guys who had taken the trouble to come out on a cold

Winters night and drive some distance to discuss table tennis. To return to Euclid, they are some way up the pyramid; it therefore begs the question what is the likely interest of those at its base?

At this point you may well be asking, what is all this to do with Alan's Presentation? It pains me to admit that many paid up members do not give a Tinkers cuss provided they can turn up each week for their match. Some would object if you suggested that perhaps they could help to put away tables. Ask if they might attend the local league meeting sometime and you are in deep trouble. My natural scepticism is therefore leading me to question my own responses, coming to the view that we are somehow losing direction.

I believe the underlying message is that there is too much emphasis on the upper part of the pyramid in pursuit of mythical goals to satisfy the 'Goose that lays the Golden Egg'. Furthermore I cannot leave this subject without reference to the apparent disconnect between the Board and the rank and file. I am also yet to be convinced that the present management structure, where seasoned table tennis people have been replaced by a new breed of administrators, can lead us to the Promised Land.

