



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The new season is upon us and I hope everyone had a pleasant and restful summer. Many of you will have seen the revised expenses policy for officials which may well make life more difficult for umpires. Your committee will be looking at this and it would help to have feedback from members. If it affects you favourably or adversely please let the secretary or any committee member know and our views can be passed onto Table Tennis England.

We are now recognised and can seek your opinion on relevant issues and pass them on to the Board.

Forthcoming events are out and hopefully enough umpires can be recruited to fill them. It would certainly help if members could make themselves available, where possible, for events in their area. I look forward to working with many of you during the coming season.

George Tyler

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MINUTES OF AETTU ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WOOD GREEN TABLE TENNIS CENTRE 2.00 PM SUNDAY 19th JULY 2015

In attendance: George Tyler (Chair), Derek Sherratt (V. Chair), Tony Chatwin (President), Steve Welch (Treasurer), Tom Purcell (Secretary), Stan Clarke (Ctte), Inky Moss, Geoff Taylor, Dot MacFarlane, Harry Jutle (Ctte), Lynda Reid, Russell Sutcliffe, Jim Kenny (Ctte), Trevor Vincent (Ctte).

1. **Chairman's Welcome:** The Chairman, George Tyler, welcomed everyone to the 2015 AETTU AGM and thanked Geoff Taylor for organising the venue and refreshments during the year. He also thanked Margaret, Joyce and Lilian for helping with refreshments and other functions at previous committee meeting and the umpires' tournament.
 2. **Apologies:** Brian Savage, Janie Kirby, Janice Crompton, Margaret Calver, Dennis Calver, Dong Xia, Diane Webb, John Mackey, Dave Edwards, John Lawton, Paul Edwards, Lyndon Griffiths, Gary Whyman, David Wilson, Mike Payne, Lilian Payne, Charles Ho, Peter Williams, Dave Griffiths, Dave Goulden, Jill Knightley, Val Murdoch, Alex Murdoch.
 3. **Minutes from AGM 2014 :** Proposed by Stan Clarke and seconded by Lynda Reid the minutes be accepted as a true record. Carried
 4. **Matters Arising:**
 - a) **Disciplinary code to be prepared for the AETTU –TP/SC**
Secretary informed the meeting that the draft Code had not yet been prepared. Table Tennis England had now re-written the Articles and Regulations regarding discipline and a draft code for the AETTU would be prepared for the next Committee meeting.
Action 1 Draft Discipline Code to be presented to next Committee meeting. – SC
 - b) **Pocket badges** – To be dealt with under item 18 on the Agenda
- Action 1. Secretary to establish who is now responsible for appointing members of the TOC.** Secretary advised the meeting that the TTE Board is responsible for appointing the Chairman of TOC and the Chairman is then responsible for appointing the TOC members and sub-committees. List of Committee members are then forwarded to the TTE SMT and Board for approval. Chairman reminded the meeting that the AETTU does not have a formal role with the TOC because we wished to remain as an independent association. There was a general discussion on this subject.
- Action 2: Secretary to contacted TOC with result of vote from the AETTU on uniforms.**

Secretary advised the meeting that he had emailed the Secretary of TOC with the result of the AGM vote on umpires' uniform. This decision had been recorded in TOC minutes and as a result all umpires will be required to wear the dark blue blazer, for all events from the start of the 2017/18 season. It was also agreed that from the start of the 2015-16 season all umpires will be required to wear dark blue blazers at the TTE National events, e.g. Seniors, Juniors etc.

Action 3: Secretary to contact Chair of TOC to discover differences between the standard IU examination and the IU examination for Young Umpires.

Secretary explained that both examinations had the same number of questions however; the Youth IU examination was completed on-line. Each on-line question took approximately 10 seconds to load onto the computer which accounted for the fact that the Youth Umpires were allowed and extra 10 minutes to complete the examination. Because the examination was completed on line there was far greater scrutiny on how the Youth Examination was completed. There was a general discussion on the subject. Secretary advised that the result of this action had previously been circulated to all members in an earlier magazine. Secretary did not know if there were plans to complete all future IU examinations on line.

5. Chairman's report

Each year I report that it has been a successful year; this year it has been more successful. Last year I reported that it would be a good time to seek official recognition and as many of you will know the Association is now recognised by Table Tennis England as an independent, professional body representing umpires who are members. We can now look forward to a fruitful relationship with TOC and our governing body.

The Secretary in his report will list the issues raised by the Association and will report on any successes, failures and matters pending.

Committee meetings throughout the year have been well attended with members travelling many miles to be present. New members of the Committee, both elected and co-opted, were welcomed and have made important contributions.

The Association is still growing and the person who had the idea and made it happen in 2004, Ken Armson MBE, would be very proud if he could see where we are today. Over 100 members, an annual tournament and dinner, quarterly magazine and AETTU "tossers and badges". What about an Association tie?

Thanks to my fellow officers, my committee members, Geoff Taylor for arranging the venue for all our meetings and to all members who pay up each year.

Proposed. John Stalker Seconded. Dot MacFarlane Carried.

6 Secretary's Report

During the last 12 months a number of changes have taken place which have affected the AETTU and issues on which the Association has had an effect.

Since the AETTU was formed in 2004 it has been striving to be recognised by the ETTA or lately TTE. We didn't have much success under the old regime of the ETTA where many saw the Association as a Union threatening strikes and conflict. That was never our intention. Andy Seward, a fellow umpire, was elected as Chairman of the ETTA and as part of his manifesto he promised to recognise and work with the AETTU. Unfortunately Andy died suddenly before this could take place and the AETTU Committee decided to let the new Chairman and team settle in before pursuing recognition. In June 2015 our Chairman submitted a new application to TTE and it is very pleasing to report that the Board of TTE agreed to recognise the AETTU as an independent association representing its members as defined in its Constitution and working with TTE and the Technical Official's Committee in the interests of table tennis and technical officials.

In June 2015 the Executive Directors of TTE were subject to an election process and it is pleasing to report that the current Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Treasurer have been re-elected for a period of 4 years. This will allow the Board of TTE to carry out the planned changes necessary to bring the organisation up to date. Not everyone is happy with the changes that are taking place but I believe they are necessary and will be

19. Magazine

Secretary informed the meeting that three editions of the AETTU Magazine had been circulated during the last 12 months. Articles had been received from a number of contributors but more articles are always welcome. There was a general discussion about the circulation of the magazine. Trevor Vincent had now taken on the role of Magazine Editor and all articles should be sent to him.

Action 2. Secretary to circulate Editor’s contact details to members.

20. AETTU Competition

Secretary informed the meeting that the 2015 AETTU competition had taken place at Draycott TTC and although there was a reduction in players and the event had made a small loss for the first time it had been a success. There was a general discussion on the subject and it was agreed that the 2016 tournament should be held at Draycott, if possible. It was also suggested that the format of the tournament should be reviewed with the possibility of a handicap event.

Action 3. Format of 2016 AETTU competition to be reviewed

21. AOB

a) Allowances. Secretary circulated a draft paper from TTE giving guidelines about proposed allowances that could be claimed by TOs attending TTE events. There was a general discussion about the content of the document. Members welcomed the document but considered that some of the wording was ambiguous especially around “accommodation”

Action 4. Members to submit observations of document to Secretary by Sunday 26/7/15.

b) Training. A number of umpires at the AGM voiced concern about the lack of refresher training for umpires and the lack of mentoring for new umpires when they started on the circuit. Chair advised the meeting that there was a group of experienced umpires who were identified as mentors by TOC and that evaluations did take place at National Tournaments but there was likely to be a reduction in the number of evaluators/mentors at tournaments because of the reduction in costs for tournaments. The evaluators/mentors were usually surplus to the umpires required for a tournament. Further discussion identified that new umpires were appointed through the TOC recruitment drives. This was a good initiative but many of the new umpires did not have contact with County Umpire Secretaries and did not have contact with mentors to assist them in their development.

Action 5. Secretary to contact TOC re refresher training courses and mentoring.

c) Tournaments. Dot MacFarlane informed the meeting that lots of umpires did not know where tournaments were taking place and therefore could not volunteer. This particularly applied to new umpires. Members identified that the ITTF posted notification of tournaments on their website and asked why TTE/TOC could not do the same.

Dot McFarlane stated that Dave Edwards was the coordinator for seeking umpires for domestic TTE events but other organisers did not have a central point where all tournaments, VBL, WBL, JBL, Junior 4* etc could be advertised and umpires invited. After further discussion it was agreed that the TOC website would be a suitable place of organisers to advertise their tournaments and obtain umpires.

Action 6. Secretary to write to TOC with suggestion for TOC site to be used for advertising tournaments.

Date of 2016 AGM – TO BE ARRANGED.

AETTU COMPETITION 2015

The 2015 competition for the Association of English Table Tennis Umpires (AETTU) once again took place at the Draycott and Long Eaton TTC over the weekend of 4-5th July 2015. This is the eight year of the competition. This year the competition clashed with the European Veteran’s competition and the Heritage Oil Competition. Some of our members who normally play in the Umpires’ competition were involved in the other

two competitions. This year there were 23 competitors and 33 players and guests sat down to the evening meal at the Hallmark Hotel in Derby.

A number of new umpires joined the AETTU competition for the first time. Val Murdoch and Alex Murdoch were two of the new competitors. Alex won the O70 event beating Ron Douglas in the Final. Val Murdoch won the Women's event unopposed after Dot MacFarlane pulled out at the last minute because of illness. Val had a busy weekend playing in a number of events and surprising a number of her opponents with the quality of her play.

The Plate competition was won by John Stalker from Worcestershire who beat John Mackey in the Final.

The 2015 Open competition was won by Dave Griffiths from Lancashire. Dave has now won the Open competition for the last four years. He also won the O50, Hardbat and Doubles Competition with Bruce Lowther. (I think we will have to encourage Paul Drinkhall to become an umpire to give Dave some competition).

President of the AETTU, Tony Chatwin, was due to present the prizes but he was taken ill at the last minute and Chairman of the AETTU, George Tyler presented the trophies to the winners.

Many thanks must also go to the friends and partners of the players who supported the competition and Joyce and Lillian who provided the refreshments during the competition and not forgetting Margaret who acted as Referees Assistant. Thanks also to Draycott and Long Eaton TTC and Brian Savage for arranging a very good venue for the competition.

AETTU COMPETION – DRAYCOTT TTC 2015

RESULTS

EVENT	WINNER	RUNNER - UP
UNDER 50's	Gary Whyman (Cleveland)	Josh Reynolds (Yorks)
OVER 50's	Dave Griffiths (Lancs)	Roy Claxton (Scotland)
OVER 60's	Ray Jackson (Lancs)	Roy Claxton (Scotland)
OVER 70's	Alex Murdoch (Herts)	Ron Douglas (Durham)
OVER 80's	Derek Sherratt(Staffs)	Ron Douglas (Durham)
LADIES	Val Murdoch (Herts)	
HARDBAT	Dave Griffiths (Lancs)	Bruce Lowther (Cleveland))
DOUBLES	Dave Griffiths (Lancs)	Josh Reynolds (Yorks)
	Bruce Lowther (Cleveland)	John Stalker (Worc)
CONSOLATION	John Stalker (Worc)	John Mackey (Lincs)
OPEN	Dave Griffiths (Lancs)	Ray Jackson (Lancs)

Tom Purcell

Hon. Secretary AETTU

Harry and Gurmit's Special experience in LA

International Umpire Harmesh 'Harry' Jutle recently travelled to officiate at the Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles.

Harry received £100 from Table Tennis England's Tom Blunn Fund to help with his travel expenses.

Here, Harry describes his experiences at the event, where the GB players were among the medals.

I met Michael Mears whilst umpiring in Luxembourg. Somehow the fact that Alan Thomas and I had umpired at the UK Special Olympics 2013 in Bath came up and this prompted Michael to invite us to the above event, especially when it was described that this was for people with special needs, so umpiring this would be very different. Michael said he is the referee for the event and welcomes our experience. I said I would only be interested if my wife, Gurmit could go.

Alan did not choose to go, but I set about what was needed to make this a reality, and had to do a lot of preparatory work, including getting Gurmit to qualify as a Local Umpire, in order to qualify as an Official to get accommodation. She did not actually expect to umpire, only be there as a general helper.

We flew out of Heathrow on Thursday July 23, landing at Los Angeles just before midnight. We attended the dinner for the Officials at Mount Saint Mary's University, which would also be our accommodation from Monday.

On Saturday we attended the Opening ceremony in the evening, for which we had bought tickets. It was an exciting and colourful event with a list of guests including Michelle Obama, Stevie Wonder, Avril Levigne and Nicole Scherzinger. The next day we used VIP tours to show us around LA.

On Monday we made our way to our official accommodation on top of a mountain where we'd had the official dinner Friday evening. Here we collected our uniform of two purple shirts, a cap and a waist-pouch each and keys for our room, which was student accommodation with two single beds, two desks and two wardrobes. The wash facilities were to be shared with next door. Food was nice here, with cold drinks available freely from chilled cabinets set outside in the yard.

On Tuesday, after breakfast we caught the half-past seven bus to the LA Convention Centre, this being the venue for some of the sports including table tennis. I wore my International Uniform and found that the referee and Michael also had theirs on, but everyone else wore the purple shirts. At the end of the day Michael asked me to wear the purple shirt for rest of the event.

The referee gave his briefing, and the deputies added their bits. There were 57 umpires and for 27 of them this was their first umpiring event. We were split into teams of three to practice and left to do whatever we wanted. Gurmit and I went shopping and returned to the venue later to catch the bus back to our rooms.

On Wednesday I was paired with Hiroshi and Gurmit with Reiko (International Umpire). Reiko was very good with Gurmit and helped her to gain confidence as an Assistant Umpire. I mentored Hiroshi in the singles matches.

Thursday was similar with conclusion of the singles events to late afternoon. In the evening it was fun night with athletes paired with celebrities, playing doubles on 20 tables. Most of the Junior umpires were rested for this event including Gurmit. I was one of the tables nearest to the crowd. As it was a fun event the rules were very relaxed as some of the celebrities did not know how to play. All the participants were given medals at the end.

On Friday Gurmit and I were paired to score doubles for the remaining two days. After the first group matches finished we were free and heard the presentation of medals would be soon and made our way there. The girls' group matches for medals had been scored by us the day before and we watched with pride as English girls Emma Hunt and Jessica Bromley were presented with the silver and gold medals respectively. We managed

to have our photographs with the English team. Overall, Simon Green and Simon Richardson won golds in some of the men's singles classes, the girls together also won a silver in the doubles. After the ceremony we returned to score more doubles.

On Saturday we continued umpiring the doubles to their conclusion. At the end we even managed to swap a couple of shirts with other volunteers for different colours. On Sunday morning we checked out and had bit of a holiday, visiting San Francisco before returning to the UK. Gurmit has enjoyed the experience and now will go for the County Umpire qualification.

Harmesh 'Harry' Jutle,

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SENIOR SPORTS MEN AND WOMEN

I sat next to a man called Charles at a dinner on Saturday night. He had spent his life working in the youth sector and in retirement has got involved in table tennis. Last year, he travelled to Auckland to play in the World Seniors Championships and, to his great delight, won the silver medal in the over-85 doubles.

"It was one of the best experiences of my life," he said. "My wife and I turned it into a six-week holiday around New Zealand and Australia, but the table tennis was the highlight. I play most of the senior competitions. It is an amazing community and it keeps me fit, too."

Seniors' table tennis may seem like a niche activity, but it is part of a wider phenomenon that is slowly changing the sport. Niche activities are growing: every week I am bumping into people who have found a new, unsung, almost subterranean activity, and have become hooked.

The son of my doctor is one of the world's best in bouldering (a form of rock climbing performed without ropes or harnesses). A neighbour is an expert in Ultimate Frisbee. Last week, I was introduced to a man who is in the UK top ten in Racketlon (competitors play a single game to 21 in each of badminton, tennis, squash and table tennis, with the winner scoring the highest on aggregate).

In his book, *The Long Tail*, Chris Anderson looked at how our culture and consciousness are being increasingly shaped by niche phenomena. Much of his argument is based on the retail sector, where in the past it was only the blockbuster DVDs and books that ended up in the local store because it was only the big hits that justified the financial cost of shelf space.

Today, that has changed. Unlimited space at online stores such as Amazon, coupled with algorithms that lead consumers deeper into the labyrinth of niche products, means that the non-hit market has grown to a vast size. Virtual communities are devoted to fringe bands. Online video companies do a roaring trade in black and white Swedish movies. Each niche product may not get many hits, but the cumulative number devoted to the sector is expanding.

Sport is experiencing an echo of these deeper, perhaps inexorable trends. Two factors are in play, the most important being that the internet can enable cohesive fringe sport communities to blossom. In the past, the few hundred people interested in over-85 table tennis were so dispersed geographically that they never felt connected to a larger network, let alone a genuine subculture.

Today, there are online forums and web pages, run by volunteers and used by the wider community. At dinner on Saturday, Charles talked to me about his rivals from China, Spain, Thailand and France, all of whom he is virtually connected to. The tournaments seem to have a deeper meaning as a result: when the community comes together, they are not attending a reunion, but developing a relationship.

If you cannot get to the competition, you can watch it online — a second factor driving niche sports. In the past, it cost about £20,000 to hire a TV crew to broadcast for a day. Today, you can stream a tournament for little more than the cost of a video camera and an internet connection.

Over recent years, I have watched the National Table Tennis Championships final online (with live commentary). For international events, the same applies, with the International Table Tennis Federation streaming many of its top competitions. The virtual community is not merely connecting participants, but spectators, too.

Perhaps the most fascinating thing is that niche sports are fragmenting. Table tennis used to be a game with a clear governance structure and set of rules. Today, it is solely a name for a family of sports that all share a resemblance, but which have their own overlapping communities.

Hardbat table tennis is played with pimples-out rackets, a throwback to the 1940s. Then there is Ping-Pong, a game with its own governing body and rulebook, and which has its own World Championships each year at Alexandra Palace under the promotional wing of Barry Hearn. Matches are played with sandpaper bats and a different scoring system.

Large sports will doubtless continue to dominate conventional mediums (television, newspapers, radio). The 80:20 rule associated with Vilfredo Pareto, the economist, whereby 80 per cent of the money and prestige of a sector is dominated by 20 per cent of the participants, will remain intact.

But the long tail will nevertheless continue to grow. I recently received an email from the association of Muggle Quidditch, in which two teams of seven players mounted on broomsticks play on an ice hockey rink-sized pitch. It has more than a dozen national associations.

For a long time, I worried about cultural fragmentation, not just in sport but beyond. Regular readers will know that I am a believer in unifying institutions. The monarchy played this role, as did the BBC and the England football team. My fear about proliferation is that we may lose our sense of solidarity. If we are all involved in our own niche interests, where is the wider sense of identity? I have come to realise, though, that this is a naive position, not least because the social and technological dynamics of the long tail cannot easily be resisted.

Talking to Charles made me realise that fragmentation is an expression of individualism. Instead of our interests being dictated by the editorial decisions of the person who chooses which DVDs to stock at HMV or which sports to air on the BBC, we can make our own choices.

We have become the curators of our own lives, the editors of our own destinies. We can play and watch football, if we choose, but we can also take a deep dive into an astonishing plethora of activities and sports that exist in our world, each nurtured by volunteers and each with a unique subculture. The long tail is here to stay. We should probably embrace it.

Mathew Syed
Times newspaper

NB

AETTU members Lynda Reid and Harry Jutle also attend the World Seniors TT Competition in Auckland 2014 where they played and acted as umpires.

EUROPEAN GAMES

When the invitation came for BB umpires to apply for the 1st European Games in Baku, Azerbaijan I was reluctant to apply. Is Azerbaijan in Europe? Isn't it near Iraq and Iran? Will I be safe? After due consideration I and others did apply and I was selected.

The European Games was based on the Olympic Games with the same terms and conditions of play. I travelled to Baku on 9th June arriving in the early hours of 10th June at a very new and modern airport. Accreditation took place at the airport and after a few initial problems at the hotel we were allocated our rooms and enjoyed a few hours' sleep. The hotel was a beach side hotel with an inside and outside pool and a gym. It also had direct access to the beach and a beach side bar which the umpires soon put to the test. Unfortunately the hotel ran out of beer after the first couple of days and we were forced to find a local bar that sold beer at half the price of the hotel.

The next couple of days were taken up with obtaining our uniforms, referee's briefings and venue familiarisation. The facilities for the umpires were excellent with a dedicated TO room with lockers, showers

and refreshments. We attended a very good opening ceremony and didn't get back to the hotel until about 01:30 but we had to be up at 07:00 to get to the venue for 09:00

As the games started it became apparent that there were some problems with the volunteers assisting with the call area and the courts. The vast majority of volunteers were local university students with little or no knowledge of table tennis. They were managing the electronic score boards and for the first couple of days there were a number of problems but it did improve. Luckily the organisers had recruited Sheila Mercer who had looked after table tennis at the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games and a number of British volunteers who had worked at the two Games. Without their knowledge and experience it may have been a different outcome.

As is usual at these tournaments the umpires worked with different partners each day. There was some excellent table tennis and the obvious countries and players made their way through the rounds. Germany played their first match with Timo Boll in the team. In the next round however, Boll didn't play. He had food poisoning and would miss the rest of the tournament.

At the end of the team competition I was selected to umpire the Women's Team final with a colleague from Kosovo. I then went back to the hotel to get changed and watch the Men's Final. While I was resting I started getting some strange feelings in my stomach and a short time later I was talking to "Hughie" on the big white telephone. I was ill for the next 36 hours with food poisoning and didn't leave my room. (Timo Boll and I have now got something in common). I went back to umpire on the Wednesday to discover that there had been a team photograph on the Tuesday. (I'm still trying to explain to my wife why I was away at a tournament for two weeks and wasn't on the published team photograph).

Over the next couple of days, with a delicate stomach, I umpired a number of matches in the single's tournament making sure I carefully planned trips to the toilet around each game. I was selected to umpire the Women's single's final with a colleague from Russia.

Overall the trip to the European Games was a good experience. Baku is a very old city which is being modernised. I didn't realise that Azarbaijan had been a massive oil and gas producing country since the late 1800s and it was strange to see oil pump jacks around the city.

The European Games are going to be held every four years. Although run in the same format as the Olympics a lot of the Olympic sports are not included and a few different sports are included. The next Games were due to be held in Holland in 2019 but they have now withdrawn and the organisers are looking for a new host country (GB?).

Tom Purcell

OF A CERTAIN AGE By Derek Sherratt

Over the years there have been attempts to define the upper age limits for active umpire. Indeed the ITTF proposals for International Umpires were I believe only thwarted by the threat of legal action in the United States. Some national associations, notably the Netherlands, compulsory retire umpires from international duties. Others, whilst not actually admitting it, almost certainly take age into account in their selection processes. Nothing wrong in that, but it does beg the question. "How old is too old?"

I recall being at an event in my early years where one of the umpires was much older than the rest of us and seemed to be used by the referee for anything but actually umpiring matches. "Could you check the net on Table 5 or can you let me know what is happening on Table 10?" The gentleman was only too happy to be of

serviced and this did not, as far as I am aware, become an issue. I have never forgotten feeling sorry for the person concerned and secretly thought it must be awful to be in that position.

The question is how should we determine an umpire's competence? If it is age related is it practicable to arrive at an arbitrary age limit Referees/Organisers could use as a guided? I am reminded that Seb Coe was once told by his coach that *Age is just a number not an index of your fitness*. It is likely then that we are left to our own devices because there will always be some work for umpires. If this then is then case we all have to make individual choices as to when we "hang up our boots" unless, due to personal circumstances, the decision is made for us.

The point I am making is that we are not always the best judge of our on court performance. It is uncommon for our colleagues to greet us with a chorus of "you made a dogs breakfast of that!" Even our Assessors are kind enough to dress up our shortcomings and we therefore carry on blind to any perceived deterioration. At the top end of the scale the presentation can sometimes be deemed more important than the actual business in hand. Failing eyesight and slow reactions are obvious areas for changes, whilst stamina, or lack of it, can be telling, particularly if long hours are required.
