

A.E.T.T.U.

ASSOCIATION OF ENGLISH TABLE TENNIS UMPIRES

Issue 6

March 2007

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

We spent some time at our recent committee meeting in Bulkington talking about failure to gain recognition. The secretary has spelled out quite clearly the issues involved and in my opinion, and in his, it is unacceptable to refuse to recognise a democratically constituted organisation unless it is against the law to do so. Whatever the reason for refusal we must move on. We will continue to act responsibly. We will continue to make our views known, to ask questions and to offer advice and assistance on behalf of our members.

At the meeting it was decided that we ask for a full selection policy from the N.U.R.C.. The 'selection policy' as outlined in N.U.R.C. News No. 17 is far from definitive. In my view there appears to be 4 areas to be covered:

1. Events involving blue badge qualification/evaluation.
2. Overseas events not involving blue badge qualification/evaluation.
3. High profile domestic events eg. National Championships, U.K. Schools Games, 6 Nations etc.
4. Other events.

It was also decided that we offer assistance in any possible way with umpire recruitment. With regard to recruitment I believe the best way forward is by personal contact. Seminars are good for training; personal contact may well be the best way forward for recruitment. It has been suggested that members could try and get a friend interested who could come along to an event and 'have a go'. If a few did, it would be a good step forward. One member has already done this and we now have a new umpire on the block. What about it.

As an Association we need to be solid. Your committee need you to continue to take an interest and a pride in your Association. At recent events there has always been a high percentage of members, let's talk to each other, let's know what you think about issues that concern you. Can you write something for the magazine? Can you add anything to the magazine from your own experiences. We need to hear praise as well as criticism

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RECOGNITION - A ROCKY ROAD TO NOWHERE

Your committee recently had an in-depth discussion on our quest for recognition having been knocked back a second time by National Council. After considering all

the facts your committee decided it would not be in the best interests of the Association not to pursue this at present and agreed to leave this on the table for the time being.

This decision was not an easy one to make and members need to know why this decision, albeit a reluctant one, was taken. You also need to know the facts surrounding the rejection of our request. One major reason linked to our decision was the overall view that we are now strong enough to move forward without the support of official recognition as at all levels of ETTA Ltd our correspondence is being replied to. Not always satisfactorily, but we can and do follow up inconclusive replies. We are also aware that some of the changes that have taken place or been agreed are a direct result of our input and because ETTA are fully aware of our Association. We will continue to take up relevant matters with ETTA and we know they will respond.

So why were we knocked back once again? Our second knock back came by way of a supporting resolution tabled by Essex to the January National Council requesting NURC work with us. The sting so far as National Councillors were concerned was in the tail, the resolution going on to say that in the event of an issue that was outside the remit of the NURC we could go direct to Mancom. This last sentence was unacceptable to National Councillors and gave rise to much debate and the inevitable allegations that we are too critical of the NURC, one speaker alleging we slag them off, Bodies such as ours are not wanted etc. Frequent references were also made to the amount of time already taken up at previous meetings discussing our Association. What was never voiced or considered were the rights of umpires to have their own Association if this was their wish. An onlooker might possibly have gained the impression that the view of most National Councillors, 22 of them, was that umpires had no right to a voice of their own.

The resolution to me was innocuous and the wording was perfectly acceptable and there was no justification for the spin put on the wording by quite a number of delegates. The ETTA is supposed to be a democratic organisation and as such any member has the right to raise an issue with anyone they wish. If a member raised an issue with the wrong person or Body then it would be passed to whoever would be able to deal with this. If a member has a problem that can only be dealt with by Mancom then they are within their rights in taking it to Mancom. Would National Council adopt the same attitude if a sponsor bypassed the Trade Committee and went direct to Mancom? I very much doubt it. Anyone in this country can take an

issue to the Queen; She probably would not deal with it, but no one would deny them their right You can email or write to the Prime Minister, any Minister, but ETTA Mancom is off limits. The mind boggles.

There was much comment on alleged criticism and NURC have also referred to this in their correspondence to us. Presumably if we had passed no judgement on anything connected to NURC and only praised them National Council would have been happy to recognise us. Because we used our democratic right of freedom of speech we became taboo. NURC have been the subject of intense criticism for many years, the current NURC Chairman having been a strong critic of selection. Probably the daftest part of it all was comments relating to what did we mean by recognition, or we don't understand what is meant by recognition. If you are recognised you are viewed as a valid organisation. For example a change of government in a country is either recognised by, or not recognised by, other countries. If recognised they will deal with them, if not they won't. Simple and straightforward but viewed as sinister by National Council.

Those are the basic facts and having given them careful consideration your committee see no point in banging their heads against a door no one currently wants to open, but we know eventually it will have to open. When it does, and it most certainly will, the only winner will be common sense.

One final point that might interest you and possibly strengthen your resolve to ensure your Association prospers, an influential ETTA member recently bent the ear of a newly qualified umpire urging him not to join our Association as we are not recognised. I rest my case

Ken Armson

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

Since our last newsletter your committee have met twice and covered quite a lot of ground. We tried meeting the evening prior to a national event but as expected this was not successful and for our next meeting we reverted to a closed meeting at a venue of our own choosing.

We discussed in depth our current membership as a small number of members have still to renew their membership for the current year. This will always be an ongoing problem as we tend to rely on catching up with members at events and this is time

consuming. Outstanding members were divided amongst committee members to be followed up and we agreed the introduction of a reminder and request notice to go out with notification of our AGM.

Members need to bear in mind that there are quite a few who oppose us, some openly, and they all hope the Association will fade away and eventually collapse. If you are slow in renewing your membership you are giving encouragement to those outside our Association who would dearly love to see the back of us. Do we need a better reason for ensuring that our Association flourishes and prospers than the knowledge that our existence is seen by some as some sort of threat? If we were to collapse the shutters would come down and umpires would once more have no voice of their own. So make a firm promise to yourself to ensure that you renew on time and make sure your support for the only Body that supports you known loud and clear.

It is important that members do not view their Association as being a quick fix or trouble shooting Body as this was never the intention. In our first year we took up a number of items that but not always with any degree of success. We now need to move on to allow us to take up any new matter raised by members. But there have been improvements and whilst no one will ever admit to it these are clearly linked to the formation of our Association. Our aim is to raise the profile of umpires back to the level it was once at and ensure that umpires are treated fairly and correctly. When carrying out our duties on behalf of the ETTA we are entitled to the same benefits we enjoy at home, regular meals of good quality and good accommodation. So far as work is concerned we should not be expected to work whatever hours of play have been agreed or scheduled without proper breaks if this involves long hours on duty. It is noticeable that recent and forthcoming events have been scheduled for longer periods with play spread over 12 hours. This will involve umpires leaving their hotel before 08.30hrs and in some cases not getting back until 22.00hrs. The recent introduction of a complete break in play for lunch whilst welcome carried a sting in the tail. If play ceases for an hour you don't have to be an Einstein to realise that the tournament will finish one hour later than would be the case if there were no stoppage for lunch. Sitting in a rest area is not my idea of a break, to enjoy a proper break requires being released for an agreed period to enable umpires to get some fresh air, have a smoke or just stretch their legs. I realise this is Utopia but should it really be so difficult to arrange.

We recently requested information from ETTA on insurance cover following a letter on this subject from a member. The information was some time in coming because it had to be obtained in full by ETTA but it made interesting reading. We are now actively

following two aspects up and will let members know the outcome of our testing of the water.

We also discussed how best we could help with recruitment and retention of umpires but felt we needed to step warily on this subject as this is the domain of the NURC and we have no wish to trespass on their territory. What we did agree was that we would write to the NURC offering our assistance if NURC consider that we can be of assistance.

Also discussed was my pet subject, a competitive and social week-end for members. I believe, and I know I am not alone, that for too long umpires have drifted along and getting together socially at events has become more difficult due to the longer hours of play leading to later finishing times. It was interesting to learn that a similar project has recently been floated for international umpires. Stan Clarke has written on this proposal and I hope members will make their views known on this. We all play table tennis, some of us, such as Stan the Man, not all that brilliantly, but he did nearly beat the current Pretender to the Crown, John Mackey, but a foil scale event accompanied by a social get together should find us a true champion. This will also enable wives, partners etc to be part of the scene for what could become an annual event. Think about this and give your support as it is important we can be together in a proper social atmosphere accompanied by a good meal and a few drinks.

The uniform proposals also came up for discussion but it was agreed that this was a difficult area, many members holding differing views. It was interesting to note that when proposals to change the agreed ETTA uniform were put by NURC to National Council it was expected to go through on the nod but it got a bloody nose instead and NURC have had to go back to the drawing board. We played a little part in this, not to prevent any change but to try and ensure you, the people affected, would be properly consulted.

We discussed in depth the way forward, how best to meet the needs of members and how to achieve our aims by way of sensible discussion. We were all agreed that whatever the way forward sensible progress will only be achieved when others stop burying their heads in the sand and accept, like it or not, that we are not going to go away.

Also discussed was member representation as when the Association was set up the geographical spread of committee members as opposed to officers appeared satisfactory. Since then we have looked more closely at the geographical spread of the membership and it is clear the composition of the committee does not adequately

represent the areas of membership. We feel there is a clear need for at least two more committee members.

Meeting/travel costs were discussed, always a delicate subject, and although we reached agreement on this aspect it is worth reporting to you that no member has claimed any travel costs to date. All have travelled at their own expense or shared expenses as Stan, Tom Purcell and I do. This aspect alone should send out a message to those who oppose our existence, for every member of your committee believes in the Association, believe it can meet the needs of its members, believe in its aims and are prepared to make a personal sacrifice to ensure it remains solvent and meets the aspirations of you the members in raising the profile of umpires and tackling issues on behalf of members that cannot be progressed successfully without the strength an Association brings.

It is worth noting that whilst we work for you, the NURC like the Tournament Committee and other ETTA sub committees work for the ETTA. All members elected to any ETTA sub committee are rightly expected to work only in support of the interests of the ETTA. There would be no point in having an ETTA committee that worked against the interest of the ETTA and no one, certainly not me, would expect otherwise.

This is why the profile of umpires has slumped, this is why your workload has increased, it is why no one takes notice of your problems, it is the reason at times we are treated at times in a cavalier fashion. Are we really expected to believe that all National Councillors are interested in the needs of umpires when they tell us we have no democratic right to form our own Association to look after our interests? We are not and do not want to be a militant body, we want to resolve differences sensibly and may sometimes have to compromise. Although it was once said that to compromise is to acknowledge defeat. But in today's world compromise is often the name of the game.

We also discussed how best to advertise our Association and after much discussion it was agreed badges were an expensive method and would be in all probability finish up in a draw etc. We discussed personal cards but again these tend to get filed away. Brian Watkins has been busy producing red, yellow and white umpire cards and we agreed that this was the way forward. However we did not feel the flowery font currently being used by Brian is suitable as there is too much content on the card. I will be talking to Brian to suggest a more suitable font giving a more business like finish and at the same time advertising the Association. These are relatively cheap to produce and make ideal exchange gifts when meeting up with umpires from other associations. Brian will be in charge of production and we will try

to sort out costs as at present Brian has been passing these out to umpires at no cost. It may be he will want to continue doing so and this will be for Brian to decide after taking into account production costs.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at Bulkington Village Hall on **Sunday 22nd of July commencing at 2pm.** tea/coffee will be available on arrival. Geoff Taylor will send out travel directions before the AGM and we are looking forward to having a good turnout. This is your Association, your meeting and your chance to show your support and express your opinions openly amongst friends. So make sure you join us as a strong show of support will help ease the way forward and bring recognition that is our right closer.

Recognition is not dead for we never expected progress would be easy and a rocky road lay ahead but we will succeed because we have right on our side, our opponents have nothing because they openly and undemocratically oppose our right to have a voice in what we do as qualified ETTA umpires. This will be raised again when we consider the time is right and it may well be that the ETTA might approach us when they realise that it makes more sense to work with us than to alienate us.

To conclude on an interesting note, the Chairman of ETTA, Alex Murdoch, has recently qualified as a County Umpire and I congratulated him and extended an invitation to become a member of our Association.

KenArmson. Secretary AETTU

DON'T FORGET A.G.M. SUNDAY 22nd JULY MAKE IT A DATE

DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROAMEV UMPIRE

The recent sad news regarding the deaths of Frank Stevens and George Turton caused me to reflect on the present problem of reduced umpire numbers.

Once upon a time there used to be lots of umpires and to be selected for one of the national events was an event in itself. At least that is what we like to remember. It probably was never quite like that.

If there ever was a golden era the period between 1966 and 1981 fits the bill. (50 years of service NURC 1950-2000).

As I was not part of the umpire circus at that time I cannot be catagorical about this. I have however listened to stories, usually over a well earned pint at the end of play, and it never struck me that our predecessors had problems with numbers.

So when and why did numbers become critical? Without access to NURC records I can only make intelligent estimates, (which is a bit better than guesswork).

The document referred to above gives some indication as to numbers for National and International qualifiers during the period of the study. If we then assume that the number of other qualified umpires namely County or Tournament, is proportional to the former total any statistical conclusions can be considered valid.

One can therefore conclude that the number of umpires qualifying is now substantially lower than the glory years. There are probably numerous reasons why we are seeing this steady decline in the number of umpires at what I call the bread and butter end of the market. That is an event open to all qualified umpires or in many cases anybody who has played table tennis at whatever level.

At the top end there is I believe no shortage of applicants for Pro Tour, World and Olympics events. Trips to off shore locations and seaside resorts and any prestigious ETTA events are also well subscribed to. The numbers here are swelled by that category of casual former umpire and referee/umpire

At the business end I refer to the guys and gals who week in and week out can be seen doing the business in some draughty hall in England's dark satanic towns.

This where the likes of Frank and George stand out. Forget for the moment the sometime pompous I.U. who has just returned from the Middle East and will soon be off to Monrovia. "Who will be motoring up to Stoke or Stockport at some ungodly time on a Saturday morning to umpire groups of four in the under 13 Band 1 event?"

The ETTA has from time to time raised the issue of recruitment and has eventually it seems accepted that the retention of umpires is also vital.

So where are these umpires that are so significant by their absence? Well sadly, Frank and George are at that great tournament in the sky. I hope they are getting a little more recognition than I fear was the case on earth.

Returning to the above quoted publication, a perusal of the list of umpires show that remarkably many International Umpires, who qualified after 1990 are no longer with us whether metaphorically or otherwise I have no way of knowing.

It could be that the falling numbers mirror the decline in the sport in this country or it could be that umpires have other interests to occupy their time at week-ends. It is possible that they have fell out of love with umpiring having experienced a lot of hard work for no apparent reward or even regard. Whatever the reasons the future is not orange; more like red, unless positive steps are taken to try to address the problem.

All that is human must retrograde if it does not advance"
(With apologies to Edward Gibbon)

Derek Sherrett

OBITUARY
JOHN GEORGE TURTON (1925 - 2006)

Born 29th September 1925 in Pontefract. His mother died when he was still a baby. His father remarried. George became a very good footballer playing for Pontefract Town. He was known as "Knicker Turton" in those days.

He met his nature wife loyce and they married on Bastille Day 14th July 1951. In 1953 George was admitted to Castleford hospital where he had an operation on his spine - being in a plaster cast for over six months he had to wear a steel corset after that, until they invented a more comfortable one. They were blessed with a daughter Julie in 1960. They have two grand children Emma (who is with child) and Ian (who is a semi-professional Rugby League player with Dewsbury Rams in Division 1 of the Rugby League).

He had a spell in the army ending up as a storeman. He worked for Vaux Brothers, where he used to fill 16 stone bags of flour and then load them onto a lorry before delivering them to customers. This is when his spine was injured followed by his operation. When he recovered he returned to work as a despatch driver. He moved to work at the Ferrybridge Power Station in the stores - he later became a chauffeur/driver at the power station. He had to retire with his back problems at the age of 60.

Table tennis was his forte. He was a very good coach, and along with his wife Joyce they ran a coaching club for over twenty years at the Northgate School in Pontefract. He passed as a county umpire in 1977 and was invited to the World Championships in Birmingham. He was in a squad with Brian Webb and John Masters where he gained great experience.

He encouraged me to become an umpire, and as records show we went all over the country as a team to various tournaments. He was well known for his generosity, he always took liquorice allsorts to tournaments. He was well liked both by players and officials. He was also at the Manchester World Championships where he worked in the 'bat testing team' - he really enjoyed doing that. The following year he was at the World Veteran Championships as an umpire. He was a very good player - playing for Coaching Club in the Pontefract / Castleford League and St Marys in the Doncaster League.

He was Vice President of Yorkshire TTA - He also received his 25 years service certificate from YTTA for his long service to table tennis. He was a very good friend and will be greatly missed by all who knew him

MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU OLD FRIEND

Tarrafonar

John Hardcastle



"A TALE OF TWO CITIES"

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times Jarvis Lorry boarded the Dover coach

No! this is the wrong story; this is not about London and Paris the setting of Charles Dicken's novel set in the eighteenth century. The cities in my story are historic Nottingham and the modern city of Milton Keynes in the twenty first century.

By chance I recently had the opportunity to sample two hotels in these fine cities, booked under the auspices of the ETTA.

In Nottingham as an umpire I had the somewhat dismal experience of a rather tired hotel with no off street parking or even on street parking. Parking was recommended in a multi story block some two hundred yards down some rather ill lit road.

For this facility I had (the ETTA) to pay £7.50 per night after having my ticket validated at the hotel.

The hotel was part of a national chain and the food provided was good. That gets rid of the pluses. It was downhill all the way in that the place had that look familiar to all umpires.

Arriving at the hotel at about 11pm on the Friday night we were asked to pay £4.00 entry to a private function if we required a drink. (We rejected the offer)

I can see no valid reason why I would want to return to this establishment.

Over the same period I attended National Council at Milton Keynes. Talk about a culture shock. The differences were numerous. The hotel is a few yards from the motorway, parking is within the hotel grounds and the general ambience was excellent. Apart from my buffet lunch which was very good, I am unable to comment on the general accommodation questions but I formed the opinion they would be satisfactory.

I would certainly consider taking my loved ones to this establishment or even my family.

The question I keep asking myself is why the difference? When problems like this are raised the answer is usually "got to keep to the budget" if I was cynical I would be thinking there was some hidden agenda, we cannot have National Council meeting in some seedy hotel with inconvenient parking. The irony is that much of the time on the Saturday National Council were debating why umpire numbers were falling.

I have to admit that the gloomy picture set out above is not always the case and on many occasions we umpires are accommodated in hotels which range from adequate to desirable.

In working out the economics of tournament finances the hotel cost must be offset against additional mileage claims and for car parking fees. Other factors such as convenience and security should also be considered if organisers are to attract umpires in any numbers.

IMPRESSIONS FROM RUSSELL SUTCLIFFE'S FIRST SENIOR NATIONALS

This was my first time at the Senior Nationals

The joining instructions were fine, but I would have appreciated more specific guidance about parking.

The venue was good and the room for officials adjacent to the playing area was very convenient. I received various comments about the lighting and it appeared that the half of the playing hall with the high ceiling was not as bright as the side with the spectator seating.

I enjoyed the food, but missed not having plenty of fruit. The evening meal would have benefited from cakes/fruit with the savoury. I felt the tea and coffee provision was primitive and did not appear healthy or 'Fair Trade'. [as a leading sports organisation, it should be not too difficult to operate in the healthy eating agenda}.

I was also sorry that the scheduling did not allow for the umpires to have a communal meal on the Saturday evening. This was something I particularly enjoyed at a Masters event at Cippenham last year.

The organisation of the event was generally good. However I was surprised with the uncertainty shown for the umpire allocations on the Sunday. I expected that this regular event would have well established procedures

I appreciated the umpire assessments. Whilst they made me nervous - my first time as a National Umpire and doing hand signals - the assessments were very helpful. The process was positive and supportive. It provided critical feedback on an actual performance and constructive advice for improvement. I look forward to the ETTA organising out of event group training sessions for umpires.

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"OUT OF THE BLUE?"

A PERSONAL VIEW OF THE PROPOSAL TO CHANGE OUR "UNIFORM"

The proposal to change the Uniform of English Umpires from the traditional royal blue blazer and grey trousers/skirt to the bland and somewhat non-descript navy blue blazer and tan trousers/skirt advocated by I.T.T.F. leaves me completely cold, there is to be no badge on the blazer so umpires will become indistinguishable from each other, with no national identity on show. Some people will argue that this a good thing and umpires should be anonymous and un-noticed and that national pride has no place in the sport, that in my opinion is nonsense. I am proud to be an English umpire, trained over the years by some of the best umpires on the planet. It was said, for many years that English umpires were the best in the world, not necessarily true at this

moment in time, but I do still believe that our training is among the best and harshest in the world, one look at the number of applicants who fail our National Umpires exam, but sail through the International Umpires exam, would seem to confirm this. On some of the occasions when I have umpired abroad I have seen people walk into the venue with the required navy blue blazer and have been given a slip of card to fit into their top pocket saying "Umpire", these people then proceed to umpire throughout the tournament, when in fact they are not qualified umpires. Our existing blazer badge, with the three Leopards and the text, E.T.T.A. Umpire, makes it absolutely clear that you are an umpire, qualified by the E.T.T.A. The lapel badge indicates to which level you are qualified, County, National or International etc.

I am justifiably proud to wear my Royal Blue English blazer and its gold badge of nationality, I worked hard and long to be entitled to wear it and I do not believe that anybody has the right to say that I should not be allowed to wear it, or that it should be changed to suit some faceless official of the I.T.T.F.

It would be interesting to hear the views of my fellow umpires on the subject, this newsletter is the perfect forum for you to air your views, and why not write to NURC and let them know how you feel.

Stan Clarke. I.U



TABLE TENNIS AS I SEE IT

I started playing table tennis when I was 13 years old at my local youth club in the local youth league. It was enjoyable. Now 62 years later I am still playing in my local league but how times have changed . The game now has now gone more professional lots more money has been injected and it is now, in my opinion, almost all of the fun has gone out of the game because of this. We all pay annual subscriptions to the ETTA and what do grass root members get out of this, virtually nothing. All the money it seems that we inject helps along with monies from Sport England to support our National team. They are so good that we cannot get any reports in national newspapers, we cannot get any television time so it appears to me there is something seriously wrong. If you have a winning team or perhaps a winning player this will help with publicity and get more, perhaps it is time for the ETTA elders to look at themselves and say why is this happening - What can we do differently, before we have a catastrophe?

Geoff Taylor

ASSOCIATION CHALLENGE

The much awaited challenged by our eminent vice-chairman to the holder John Mackey was held at the B.U.S.A. Championships and was watched by competitors and officials. The umpire was David Edwards, a former challenger, who said he was looking forward to being in charge of this 'little and large' encounter. Pleasantries were exchanged and the match began. The first game was close but unexciting until the score reached 10-10 when John exercising clever use of the net ran out the winner 12-10. Careless errors by John in the second game took Derek to an early lead. John fought back to 7-7 and with some aggressive backhand shots took the lead only to falter again and lose 10-12. One game all. The third game started with nets and edges, one to Derek and three to John 3-1. This looked good for John who raced to a lead 7-4, then 10-6, finally winning 11-6. Two-one. Derek took an early lead in the fourth with some fierce hitting. John fought back to 6-6 and then showed his excitement by using a 'naughty' word. The umpire did not appear to hear this so no yellow card appeared and Derek went on to win 11-9. Two games all. The fifth game began with John putting pressure on Derek's forehand and led 7-5 when the umpire finally found his yellow card which he showed to John. Tension was high and you could have heard a car crash when the score reached 9 all. At this point John's coach called 'time out'. This seemed to settle John who retained his title at 12-10. An interesting contest which showed that while faith can move mountains, elegance and artistry couldn't. Next one please.

IN MY OPINION (for what it's worth)

I, like Stan Clarke whose opinion on English Umpires keeping the "Blue Blazer" as written about earlier is exactly the way I feel. Before we had blue blazers we used to have navy blue/ black blazers. When the World Championships came to Birmingham in 1977 it was decided by the powers to be, who made decisions at that time that all umpires would be supplied with the now blue blazer and mid grey trousers with the ETTA badge which now seems to mean nothing to the faceless wonders of ITTF as referred to by Stan. This has been the uniform since that time and I think most of us (I know certain people do not agree) that we do need to change. My opinion is if umpires wish to go overseas to tournaments and they have to wear the ITTF uniform as is spelt out by ITTF, let them purchase them to wear at those tournaments. But again in

my opinion any English umpire who umpires at a tournament in England should wear our own blue blazers and this should apply to all umpires and referees. Like I said at the beginning this is only my opinion but like Stan I feel strongly about it. I am sure there must be very many opinions and we would like to hear about yours from you.

Geoff Taylor.

AN UMPIRE'S OBSERVATION FROM THE ENGLISH NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

We all know about umpires. They are always alert to everything around them. They don't miss a trick. If a rubber overhangs by two and a quarter millimetres, the scissors must come out. Let a coach wink in a suggestive way and he will get a yellow card. If a player **thinks** a rude word, he will get another. And these umpires are not known for always being polite to their colleagues.

As for Umpire Assessors, they must be even more sensitive to the smallest deviation from perfection. We are all criticised even when we are on our best behaviour. These Assessors certainly miss nothing.

So what if I tell you that at the Senior National Championships one umpire was not wearing black shoes for one whole day. Nearly two dozen umpires were there but no-one said a word about it. So here is the challenge. If you can identify the umpire in question, and say what colour the shoes were, tell the editor. And the umpire will send £10.00 to Guide Dogs for the Blind if you are correct. (Referees need not apply!)

Name withheld.

ENGLISH NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS REPORT

The championships in general were well organised and the playing schedule worked very satisfactory. I do feel however the number of umpires was not enough to cope with the workload on the Friday and Saturday. At an event that is prestigious as this the quality of umpiring cannot be maintained with the heavy workload of day one and two.

By far the biggest criticism I had was the umpire's chairs. The chairs provided gave no lumbar support whatsoever for those with or without back problems. We spend long hours sitting during tournaments and it is time the umpires seating was improved to at least health and safety standards.

The car parking left a lot to be desired and better arrangements should be made for officials in future. Several of the umpires noted that the evening meal allowance had not been given. The meals provided at the venue were very good but where does everyone come from at mealtimes? The hotel was very good.

On the lighter side did anyone else notice the old chap in the umpires uniform on the Sunday afternoon? He walked into the entrance hall and took off his raincoat revealing his uniform complete with an N/U badge and strolled in past the door staff. I noticed him later sat watching the games with his coat on. I wonder how many years he has done this.

David Brown

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not paid this year's annual subscription could you please make every effort to do so. It will be the best £5.00 you will spend this year, and it will help to strengthen our resolve for recognition by ETTA

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UMPIRES SOCIAL WEEK-END

The committee of A.E.T.T.U. feel it would be desirable to organise a weekend for our members, so that we could get together socially for a meal and a few drinks on Saturday evening and a table tennis tournament for members on the Sunday.

The proposed venue for the week-end would be Grimsby, yes, I hear you say it may be an awkward place to get to, but we have had the offer of a free venue for the tournament and my colleagues from the area are looking for suitable hotels. . Yes, I was surprised to hear that they had hotels in that part of the world as well.

We would like to think that our members would enjoy a week-end get together (away from the usual place of meeting, namely tournaments) and enjoy a glass of wine and a chance to show your skills on a table tennis table. You could also bring your wives or girlfriends (just make sure they do not meet). If you are interested let Ken Armon, George Tyler or any committee member know, we would need to start organising as soon as possible. Just for your information you do not need a passport to enter Grimsby and they do accept British currency. Further details will be available when we have some indication of numbers interested, no date as been set as yet, but it will be during the closed season, possibly sometime in July.

If you have any further ideas of locations, venues etc. where we could hold a weekend let the committee know as at the moment we are open to any suggestions (as long as it is reasonably priced and the chance of reasonably priced hotels).

Many years ago an umpires weekend was held and it a wonderful weekend. We arrived at the venue on Saturday lunch and in the afternoon we started playing the tournament, at a reasonable time we halted play for the day and all went to the hotel to book in (if they had not previously done so) and all got their best bib and tuckers on (in those days jeans were only used as overall at work). For those who had bought their partners with them and there were quite a few female and male (it was a mixed tournament). We had a good meal and afterwards everyone had a good natter which even in those days were novel as we still never really had time to get together at tournaments. The following morning everyone was at the venue and the show got under way. The knockout stages were played and also we had doubles, with the partners drawn out of the hat, and we also had a plate event. When all the titles had been won and the prizes had been given out, all agreed it had been a wonderful weekend and it was said we should hold another one.

THIS WOULD BE THE IDEAL OPPORTUNITY.

Geoff Taylor
