

UNITED KINGDOM TABLE TENNIS
FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A E T T U

**ASSOCIATION
OF
ENGLISH TABLE TENNIS
UMPIRES**

**ANNUAL
GENERAL MEETING
EXTRA**

Issue 8

October 2007

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

You may well be surprised to receive another magazine so soon - I hope you will be pleased. The reason is that the previous magazine should have contained a detailed account of the A G.M held at Bulkington in July. Due to a misunderstanding this did not happen, hence this A.G.M. special.

Most of you will have received a copy of the N.U.R.C. News by e-mail; if you do not have e-mail facilities and have not received it by post, perhaps you should let the N.U.R.C. Secretary know. Amongst other items it contains details of rule changes, composition of the N.U.R.C. and selections for overseas events.

There were no changes to the Laws. One change to the Regulations was to reverse last year's decision requiring the umpire to hold up a white card during the time-out. We are now back to the situation where the card is held up initially and then is placed on the table on the side of the player requesting the time-out. The main change was to ban all glues containing a 'volatile organic solvent'. The ban will take effect from 1st January 2008 for junior events and from the 1st September 2008 for all other events.

The Secretary has received a positive response from the new chairman of the N.U.R.C., Stuart Sherlock, suggesting a meeting of representatives of A.E.T.T.U. and N.U.R.C. to discuss issues concerning welfare, training and conditions of work of umpires. We are in the process of discussing dates and venue for such a meeting and specific issues to discuss. If you have any issues you feel should be discussed please contact Tom Purcell or me.

George Tyler

2007 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at
Bulkington Village Centre
Dulkington Nr Coventry
Sunday 22nd July 2007 Commencing 14.00hrs

After tea/coffee and biscuits the Chairman opened the meeting and thanked members who had had travelled to the AGM and hoped they had had a good journey and hoped the meeting would be productive.

Members present and Apologies.

There were approximately 25 members present and apologies from about 15 members,

Minutes of the 2006 AGM

The minutes had been circulated previously. Members agreed that they were correct and there were accepted as a true record.

Mailers arising from the minutes.

There were only a few minor points that needed clarifying and these were satisfactory dealt with.

Chairman's report.

With regret I report that Ken has decided to stand down as Secretary. He was responsible for bringing the Association into being and has been its main driving force ever since, supported by an able and dedicated Committee. On behalf of the Association I would like to thank Ken for his work and I know that he will continue to help in every possible way. If the proposed amendment to the Constitution to create a President is successful then Ken would be the ideal candidate.

Looking back to our first meeting with E.T.T.A. Ltd. at Letchworth in 2005 I recall the issues affecting umpires which we put forward. They were: recognition, travel expenses, meal allowances, accommodation, umpire friendly scheduling, selection for home and overseas events, umpires for Grand Prix events, recruitment and 'duty of care'. It is not my intention to claim that the Association has brought about changes, but it is clear to me that being in existence (although not officially recognised) has affected some changes in policy. Certainly our representations regarding uniform change brought about a rethink. Formal recognition has not yet been achieved although a letter received from the N.U.R.C. Secretary stating "this is to confirm as I have previously told you recently, the N.U.R.C. would be pleased to work with your Association with anything that would further the interests of umpires and umpiring". Is this not recognition?

Travel expenses: have been increased each year, perhaps not enough but acceptable. **Meal allowances:** for two nights are now provided at National events if a hot meal is not available. **Accommodation:** is being offered for umpires at Grand Prix and British League events. **Duty of care** for umpires has been resolved to a certain extent. **Selection** has been an ongoing issue with some confusion between what is 'selection policy' and what is 'selection guidelines'. We await a definite selection policy when the new Chairman of the N.U.R.C. Stuart Sherlock takes up his post. We are at present continuing to pursue a request for **umpiring friendly scheduling** at National events (and if possible for all events). The scheduling for the National event at Norwich was unacceptable, and representation was made to the tournament director that umpires should not be required to work from 010am until 10 pm without suitable breaks for rest and food (neither should children be required to play at 10 00pm after a full day) . We would suggest that ITTF guide lines for umpire hours of duty be followed i.e. a maximum day of eight hours with a break of 20 minutes after each 3 hour period. This is expecting a lot and we wait a response. Finally **recruitment**, the Association has offered assistance with umpire recruitment. We can all spread the word and personal contact is the best way forward.

In conclusion I would like to thank Ken again for his work for the Association, Derek for his articles, Geoff for producing the magazine and arranging venues, Steve

for keeping the accounts, Stan, Barry, Tom and John for their support. Also my thanks to all members for their support, subscriptions and loyalty to the Association. On behalf of the AETTU I should like to congratulate the England team on winning the Gold Medal at the European Youth Tournament.

Secretary's report.

Meetings, Your Committee has met on a number of occasions to deal with the affairs of the Association and it is pleasing to report that on each occasion a full Committee has been present. To reduce travelling costs we tried meeting on the evening prior to an E.T.T.A event but this was not successful and for our next meeting we reverted to a private venue. **Current issues:** The selection issue is still a matter of concern to many members and this was raised with the N.U.R.C. As we could not get a positive response we requested and were provided with a copy of the selection guidelines. N.U.R.C. claim they are using the same guidelines drawn up by our own Chairman some years ago. This matter will be the subject of further discussion by your Committee. We opposed the N.U.R.C. proposal to phase out our national uniform in favour of the I.T.T.F. uniform and we believe our input played a major part in this proposal being rejected by National Council. I should stress that in opposing the phasing out of our national uniform for home events we were not opposing the I.T.T.F. requirements that umpires working abroad should follow the I.T.T.F. dress code. An interesting point on this being that when umpiring at the European Youth recently and having purchased the required clothing I noted that a number of umpires had their National badge on the blazers and took this as an indication that they wanted their Nationality to be known. The I.T.T.F. trouser requirement is confusing and with the wide variation in shades of trousers I would probably not looked out of place had I worn my pyjama trousers with our national badge on my blazer pocket. We are pursuing the issue of late scheduling of matches that all too often require our members to work long and unacceptable hours of duty. There appears to be a definite shift in scheduling policy for national events based on taking as many entries as is possible and ignoring the obvious fact that this will involve late finishes. E.T.T.A. GP events also follow a similar pattern. If this is to be the pattern for the future we will be requesting that umpires work on a shift basis for events requiring scheduling in excess of eight hours. Utopia, maybe, costly, maybe, but E.T.T.A. have a duty of care and this involves ensuring reasonable and acceptable working arrangements. Acceptable, that is, to us as umpires rather than to the E.T.T.A. whose apparent lack of consideration for umpires appears to be gaining in momentum

The question of a possible badge or something similar has been discussed and it was felt that the umpire cards being produced and distributed by Brian Watkins were a better advert for the Association as they were not costly to produce and could be passed out to foreign umpires as the same way as a badge or personal card.

At our last meeting we discussed the way forward to ensure we are achieving our objects. Arising from this discussion we agreed to look into the almost forgotten aspect of socialising and put to members a proposal for a week-end get together including, partners etc, along with a tournament and a dinner. Grimsby has been put forward as a possible venue as their league facilities could be made available to us and obtaining a good hotel may be possible.

Website: There has been no progress on this proposal mainly due to the lack of regular and ongoing topics. To be successful and attract interest a website needs regular updates

Committee representation: We discussed the suggestion of a larger committee based on geographical representation and found this would pose a number of problems. Our membership is widespread, some areas having only one qualified umpire and in some cases non at all. We also took costs into account as at present committee member's travel to meetings at their own expense. A method of reimbursement has been agreed but it was recognised that our funds would rapidly be depleted by mileage claims and it is pleasing to report that to date no member of your committee has made a claim.

Newsletters: Geoff Taylor has produced several issues of our newsletter and made every effort to keep this topical and of interest and I would record my thanks to Geoff for his input in to what is a difficult job. To make our newsletters more topical we need greater input from members on any subject of concern to them. Many members voice their critical views on a number of issues but are reluctant to put these in writing for publication. Unfortunately this gives the impression to E.T.T.A. Management, staff and sub committees that only officers and committee members of the Association have a gripe when in fact they are merely putting in writing the views expressed to them by members. The Newsletter is your public voice and Geoff will print anything submitted even if it is critical of the Association its elected Officers and Committee members so long as it is not libellous. You should not be afraid of publicising your views as the greater volume of criticism the more notice the E.T.T.A. Management Committee, National Council and N.U.R.C. will take, bringing home to them as it would the knowledge that the views expressed are not the views of a minority of umpires but of the majority. The Association was formed because umpires were tired of being ignored and wanted their own voice but to make it work members need to put in something positive and our Newsletter is the place for this. You may be surprised to find that others share your view on a particular aspect. Your input will also help encourage others.

Membership: It is pleasing to report that membership remains not only strong but very interested, this interest again reflected in the number of A. G.M. apologies received, some having been by letter.

NURC Chairman: As many of you will now be aware Andy Seward has stood down as N.U.R.C. Chairman and his replacement is Stuart Sherlock. Regretfully, although an umpire, Andy was openly hostile to our Association and we will have to wait and see if his replacement holds a different view. No changes took place during Andy's term of office and it will be interesting to see if Stuart Sherlock adopts the same approach or makes changes to current N.U.R.C. personnel.

Nominations: With one exception current Officers and committee members agreed to their being nominated for a further year. Only the nomination by the Committee of Tom Purcell for the position of secretary along with a nomination from the Committee for all other current members has been received and all will be returned unopposed.

Secretary's Post: It was agreed at our 2006 A. G.M. that Tom Purcell be co-opted to the Committee as Assistant Secretary and throughout the year I have ensured Tom was copied in on all matters. I also passed him a copy of my PC file covering all the business of the Association since its formation. I have not had a good year healthwise and having previously had discussion on this with our Chairman, I put to the full Committee at our last meeting my proposal that I should stand down as your Secretary and Tom be nominated by the Committee as my replacement. Not unexpectedly this caused some concern to members but I pointed out the need to ensure not only a smooth handover but also to have in situ someone not only respected but also extremely capable of filling this post and who will bring with him vast experience and a high level of reliability and commonsense. Tom is also more diplomatic than I am, but we are what we are. The Association and the welfare of its members are more important than my hanging on when commonsense tells me the interest of the Association would be best served if I passed over the reins while I am still able to do so. I shall still be a member and happy to serve in whatever way I can and have never be frightened of standing up to be counted. I am confident that Tom is the ideal person to take our Association forward and ensure our members receive an excellent service.

Insurance: We followed up a request from a member on insurance cover when working abroad and discovered that the E.T.T.A. insurance policy covering members working abroad can also include umpires and referees. We decided to test the water on this but it came as no surprise when a request to cover a member was rejected. The view of the member who raised this issue, one we support, is that umpires working abroad are selected by an E.T.T.A. sub committee and as representatives of E.T.T. A. should be covered by the E.T.T. A. insurance policy.

Ken Armson Secretary AETTU

Treasurers report and balance sheet: Steve gave a summary of the accounts and there being hardly any questions the meeting accepted the report. Our bank balance at the time of the AGM was £1371 a nett profit of £50.00 over the last year. After discussion it was decided to abolish the £15.00 joining fee but the £5.00 annual members fee would remain the same for this year.

Election of Officers: Chairman:- George Tyler. Vice Chairman:- Derek Sherratt, Treasurer:- Steve Welch, Secretary:- Tom Purcell.

Election of Committee: Barry Grainger, Stan Clarke, John Lawton, Geoff Taylor.

Election of Auditor:- The meeting was unanimous in electing John Mackey.

Amendments to Constitution: Proposed amendment by Committee: rule 4 Management. Add new sentence to read ."President, Vice presidents and life members may be elected at the Annual General Meeting but only on the nomination of the Committee".

There were no amendments to the new rule and it was carried unanimously.

LETTER FROM ALAN SHEPHERD. IU
(to our Chairman)

Issue No. 7 of our AETTU Magazine contains a note from "The Editor" calling upon members for "input". Unfortunately, nowhere in the Issue are we told who is the Editor. No doubt we have been told in previous issues but I for one have forgotten! So perhaps you will be so kind as to pass this on and get him to edit his name and address into the What led to this letter is my wish to reply to Mike Payne's little piece referring to the knocked over surround at the Derby Open, which led to the calling of a "let" by the umpire, which Mike says was not a correct call. I personally disagree with Mike and would always call a let for such occurrence . Rule 2.9,2.4 requires the umpire to call a let so that "play may be interrupted" in these circumstances:

"Because the conditions of play are disturbed in a way which could effect the outcome of the rally". To my mind nothing could be clearer than that the "loud crash" described by Mike would have disturbed any normal person as required by the Rule.

Alan Shepherd IU

ADVICE NOTE

It was a bright sunny Sunday morning at the UEA Norwich as I strode purposefully to my court at about 8.55am. " I will take no agro from these little blighters" I thought, reflecting on the rather tiresome Saturday with another late finish.

A few moments later having done my court dressage act a young lady, little more than a metre high was thrusting her shiny racket into my hands. Still in my super keen potential blue badge mode, I ventured to ask if she had a coach. She looked up at me, turned her head and pointed to the back of the court. I followed her gaze. A posse of spectators stood several yards from the edge of the court. "Do you see that group of people?" She inquired, "they are my coaches". I hazarded a guess that the group consisted of Mum, clutching a bag of edibles. Dad, The Sunday paper under his arm, Grandad perhaps wondering why he had had to get out of bed so damn early, and an elder sibling.

Before I go any further let me state categorically that I do not wish to enter the debate as to the benefits or otherwise of players receiving advice during 'play' my treatise concerns the practicality of the umpire administering this heinous crime in a fair and even handed manner.

The requirements regarding the receiving advice is one of a raft of items that are quite familiar to all experienced umpires and are contained in the Regulations for International Competitions. Essentially the umpire scores the match (in league parlance) and in addition, under the direction of the Referee, attempts to administer the said Regulations. Assuming that all matters of equipment and clothing have been dealt with before actual play starts the umpire is then required to assure 'continuity of play', control behaviour and assure that any attempt at giving advice outside authorised suspensions of play is summarily dealt with. All this while doing the fundamental 'scoring the match'. Now call me old fashioned but my view is that the actual control (scoring) is paramount amongst the umpire's many duties. There is little to be gained by dotting every (i) and crossing every (t) if at the end of the day the match was a dog's breakfast. Of course the ideal would be to do everything by the book.

If there is an assistant umpire there is a fighting chance that attempts to pass advice will be detected. Again I do not wish to comment at the stage on the difference of encouragement and advice; perhaps a greater authority than me might take this up with a definite article on the matter? I estimate that an umpire working alone can command a reasonable view of around 200 degrees without dislocating his/her neck. Any further movement requires some twisting of the body. There is therefore an inviting area for the advisors to sit or stand and practice their hideous crimes with impunity. I seem to recall an instance where the alleged offender was actually sitting amidst spectators in an elevated position. There is also the problem of language, remember any action undertaken by the umpire implies cheating a serious allegation . I recall praising one umpire on his actions during a European Championships. "I didn't know you spoke Croatian"? I don't, he replied, "But one of the twiddlers does" Stories abound of such and such citing examples like scratching the left ear means keep it on the forehand or picking a nose means a short serve with backspin etc. On the other hand a wave to an acquaintance can result in a yellow card.

In team events we go for broke; anyone can chip in and in theory the whole of the bench can be removed whilst in doubles you may have two advisers per pair to deal with. At the lower end we have the interchanging coach. He has players on several courts at the same time. Similarly we have the parent with the coach holding the water or the missing coach. "He will be along soon".

I contend to do all the statutory duties in an exemplary something has to give and the I.T.T.F. perhaps be persuaded to examine this inexact science at their next jamboree.

Umpires should of course be aware of everything that happens on or adjacent to the playing area; but I would argue that there are something's which are frequently beyond their control. How often do you hear in the post match 'the umpire took no action over blatant coaching' or 'applied it unfairly'. I say enough is enough. And, whilst I have the bit between my teeth, it is an easy option for referees to instruct umpires to carry out a myriad of tasks in addition to their professional duties such as 'control cross knocking' ' watch out for glueing' and a new one, hot off the press, 'report any team guilty of leaving a mess at the courtside'. The whole system is an imperfect method of trying to achieve what some would argue are laudable objectives. Time for a change perhaps? **I NEED SOME ADVICE.**

Derek Sherratt

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A SPECTATOR'S VIEW OF THE UMPIRES AT THE EUROPEAN YOUTHS IN BRATISLAVA

I am trying to write this from an impartial viewpoint, but with my umpiring 'knowledge', that may not come easily.

I arrived halfway through the event to a rapturous welcome of 100 degree heat. I had known the day I left England that it was going to be very hot, but I could nothing of course as the cool wet weather in the UK was not transportable!!

I arrived on the free day and proceeded to walk around the old town and who should spot me from their horse and cart (that's the mode of transport in the North of England so why use anything different here) but our own (retired) Secretary, Ken Armson, with Mick Strode in tow. I was treated to a summary critique of the venue and hotel they were in, so I a little apprehensive about the venue conditions I was to attend the following day and glad I had booked my own hotel.

I walked to the venue on the first morning (Thursday) as slow as I could, but was still in need of a gallon of liquid to quench my thirst and cool me down when I got there 12 minutes later. Thank heaven I had stocked up at the supermarket opposite the hotel before I left with 2 litres of fruit juice. This of course contributed partly to my getting sweaty whilst walking - you can't win can you?!!

I entered the venue and found it a little cooler than outside - so far so good - but as the day wore on, the venue hotted up and drinking cold drinks was the order of the day. At £1.00 a bottle of drink this was 3 times the supermarket price - but it was imperative or I might suffer heat exhaustion, even though I wasn't doing anything.

Heat exhaustion is the point of my article. Although I had primarily come to watch the play and the England players, as an umpire I also kept an eye on the umpires. It seemed as though they were on the same table in pairs -that was a good start. However, the same pair of umpires seemed to be on the same table all the time, without a break (except where the 40 minute schedule for a 7 - setter was too long and the match finished two minutes early). It transpired that the umpiring schedule these first few days was either 9am to 1.30pm, with the afternoon off, or 1.30pm to 8.30/9pm, with the morning off. (Doubles matches were the best of five, however, but there was none the first day.

Over the next three days, I did not hear that any umpires had collapsed from heat exhaustion, which surprised me, because the state of some of them after their morning session was rather a sight for sore eyes. One particular morning, when Ken and Mick had been in the small hall (which was even warmer than the main one) they emerged looking more like beetroots (rather nicely boiled of course). You note I say morning session; I never stayed until 9pm any day, so I cannot comment how the umpires appeared after the 7.5 hour afternoon/evening session. But I bet there were groans when the umpiring schedule was handed out from those who had the following morning off.

The maximum sessions for umpiring were being a bit stretched here I think, but I suppose you either lump it or lump it - no-one wants to rock the boat and complain, even Ken..

Saying all this, I managed to have a good time, despite the heat. I cannot, however, speak for Ken and Mick or the other umpires, but I bet, like me, they may not jump at the chance to go to Eastern Europe in the summer quite so quickly next time! Global warming has a lot to answer for.

Barry Grainger IU

From the Editor

I do the best job I can in getting articles for the magazine. I then have to type it all up, then I have to take it to the printers to get it photocopied, the next job is to staple it altogether address the envelopes put them in the envelopes and post them. I am not a person who does this for a living and so I feel a little aggrieved when I hear people who criticise what goes into the magazine and what does not. I do not mind criticism if it is constructive but most of it is not. I get criticism it appears for only writing about international affairs, criticism for contents etc. but these same people do not bother to send anything to put into the magazine. So if people do not like what is in the magazine send me in something to print. As you will see when you read this

magazine, some people do not even know who actually edits, organises, and gets the magazines to you ,so if you do not know I will give you my details:-

**Geoff Taylor, 29 Mill Farm Park, Nuneaton Road, Bulkington,
Bedworth CV12 9SE Warwickshire
Telephone Number (024) 76387766**

e-mail address: geoff.taylor 2 @btopenworld.com

I hope that everyone will now have my address and will be sending me in articles because as soon as we have enough for a magazine there will be another one issued.

I would like to give my thanks to Ken Armson for all the work he has put into our Association, and I like everyone else hopes his health improves. I also want to welcome Tom as our new Secretary and I am certain he will continue the good work that Ken started. Our Chairman and Officers and the rest of the Committee were all re-elected at the AGM and as you will see in the reports that they are keen enough in trying to get the ETTA to accept recognition of our Association and hopefully we will be able to work in close liaison in getting better conditions and hopefully more umpires.

Geoff Taylor

