

A E T T U

**ASSOCIATION
OF
ENGLISH TABLE TENNIS
UMPIRES**

Issue 7

September 2007

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Two years on and the Association is now a well-known factor in English table tennis. A full report of our second A.G.M. can be found in this issue by new Secretary Tom Purcell, who takes over from Ken Armson, the person who was responsible for the formation of our Association. We all owe a debt of gratitude and our thanks to Ken for his drive, hard work and enthusiasm and I am glad to say that he will be around to help the committee to press forward.

On a sad note, John Jermyn, International Umpire and International Referee passed away on the 2nd September. Although not a member, John was one of the few National Councillors who supported our request for recognition by National Council. Our sympathy goes to his wife Di.

The Association welcomes the new Chairman of the N.U.R.C. Stuart Sherlock, who I am given to understand, is anxious to establish good relationships with our Association, as we are with the N.U.R.C. to further the well-being and interests of all umpires regarding conditions of work, and welfare.

Following our comments regarding the national event at Norwich, ETTA Ltd agreed the late finish on Saturday was not acceptable for match officials, coaches and young players. The change from 18 to 24 tables, due to the large entry, meant that the number of umpires required was insufficient for the event and the Secretary has taken this up with the N.U.R.C. and hopefully this will not occur again next year when the event will again be held at Norwich.

A point to note is from September 2007 only CRB checked officials can be used for English Championships. To be CRB checked, umpires should contact Judy Rogers at ETTA office in Hastings.

At the U.K. School Games along with other umpires and some coaches. I attended the Child Protection Course, which lasted over three hours. The course was obviously aimed at coaches. If for umpires only it could have taken half the time. As it obviously costs money I would ask was it value for money or for the time spent? Again apparently all umpires are required to take the course.

With the new season here and selections for the first half out, it is worrying to that all bar one of the events were under subscribed. It is understandable that some umpires can only make themselves available for a few occasions during the season, so could I make a plea that, if possible, they choose the events where many umpires are required eg. the National Championships, British League Events, Junior, Womens, Veterans etc., also the Junior 4 Star events. This may go some way to ease the umpire shortage situation. The selection may well be compounded by the selection of dates for events, with so many of them coming after Christmas and some very close together eg. Cadet/ Junior Championships 22-23 March and the Senior National Championships 28-30 March.

If you have any comments, observations, opinions or moans please let the Editor or any of the officers or committee members know. It's your Association. You have a voice.

On a lighter note

If any of you have watched the TV show "Identity" a show in which contestants have to guess peoples identities (profession, hobby etc.), you would have seen one of our esteemed members appearing on this show a few weeks ago as a "table tennis umpire". His identity was guessed although not in uniform; was his yellow card showing?

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TIME WILL TELL

The 6 Nations Tournament was held at Warwick University in March. All the umpires attended the referee's briefing on the Friday evening where Ken Armson stated what he expected from the umpires and he reminded everyone that Summer Time started on Sunday morning and that the clocks would be going forward one hour. Ken's wrath would befall any umpire who forgot to put their clocks forward and were late on Sunday morning.

After the briefing the umpires retired to the bar to discuss events and socialise, after a few glasses of sleeping mixture they retired to bed. Brian Watkins volunteered to wake everyone up on Saturday morning in time for breakfast. The following morning Brian, up with the larks, knocked on the bedroom doors and arranged to meet his fellow umpires in the restaurant for breakfast when it opened at 7.30am He was surprised when he arrived at the restaurant to discover it was still closed and he challenged the staff.

It was obvious that Brian had been affected by Ken's Summer Time warning because he and the waking umpires soon realised that Brian had bought his clock forward one day early ensuring that the umpires weren't late for the start of play.

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FROM THE SECRETARY

At the AETTU A.G.M. on July 7th. Ken Armson stood down as Secretary of the Association. Ken has had some bad health during the last year and felt that this was the time to step down. I was elected in his place and hopefully I can follow on the good work done by Ken, Chairman George Tyler and the Association Committee. On your behalf I pass on our appreciation for his work in umpiring and his work for the Association.

While I am catching up with correspondence and previous items discussed by the Association I'm reminded that the intention of the Association is to be a platform and represent the views of our members on any subject, whether this relates to to something the NURC has done or intends to do or something our members wish to raise as a specific item.

At the recent ETTA A.G.M. Andy Seward stood down as chair from the NURC and his replacement is Stuart Sherlock. Stuart is very experienced in the areas of umpiring and refereeing and I will be writing to him offering our support in identifying new umpires, identifying improved working conditions and welfare for umpires and hopefully improved consultation between the NURC and umpires.

UMPIRES HOURS OF WORK In 2006 the UI 1/U12/U13 and U14 National Championships were held in Crystal Palace. After the Championships there were lots of complaints from umpires about their working conditions, in particular their long hours of

work, lack of breaks and accommodation. A complaint was made to the ETTA about the conditions with the hope that they would improve at the 2007 Championships. It seems our concerns were not heeded because at the U11/U12/U13/U14 National Championships in Norwich this year many of the same unsatisfactory conditions continued:

1. 26 umpires for 24 tables which meant umpires worked almost non-stop.
2. Because of the high number of entries play was scheduled from 9am.until 9.30pm but actually finished about 10.30pm.
3. Although the umpires had a good lunch, the schedule ensures that they were not able to eat again until about 7pm. with some umpires not returning to their hotel until about 11pm.

The Chairman has already brought our concerns to members of the ETTA and I will be writing to Alex Murdoch, the NURC and Doreen Stannard reporting our complaints and the danger that some umpires will not be attending next years championships.

SELECTION POLICY. Our attempt to have sight the NURC selection policy when deciding which umpire attends which tournament, in particularly international tournaments, is still ongoing. During the last year there has been correspondence between the Association and the NURC but the process has not been explained to our satisfaction. We are not trying to dictate how selections should be made. That is the role of the NURC, but we do believe that umpires should have confidence and clarity in the process and that all parties should know who has applied for tournaments and should be informed whether they have been successful or not.

INSURANCE I was greatly surprised when I started umpiring overseas to discover although I was representing the ETTA I was not covered by its insurance. At one stage it looked as if there might be cover but when of our members recently travelled abroad and enquired about insurance he was informed that it was not available for umpires and referees. Further enquires also revealed that most of us were not covered when we umpired around the country although there was some event cover at events organised by the ETTA. I don't think that this is satisfactory and I will be pursuing the subject with the ETTA.

Your committee has thought for some time that it would be a good idea to have a social week-end for members where we could play some table tennis, enjoy good food and have a few drinks. This was discussed at the AGM and it was agreed to have a week-end towards of November or the beginning of December subject to clashes with tournaments. Grimsby has been suggested as the venue and we will be following this up to set a date as soon as possible.

Finally I am pleased to say that membership of the Association is strong and we should make other non members aware of our aims and objectives. As stated in our constitution our aim is: a/ To promote the welfare of members, b/To improve the working conditions of members. c/To safeguard the interests of members, d/ To make representations to ETTA Ltd. on any matter involving the Association or its members. e/ To assist informally in the recruitment and retention of umpires who shall be trained and qualified by ETTA Ltd. f/To establish links with other National Table Tennis Umpiring Associations to enable us to exchange views, information and agreements to attain standardisation for umpires.

Tom Purcell

Hon. Secretary

R U A GUD UMPYRE?

Well spotted, there are a few spelling errors in the title but are you just as good at spotting or recognising your umpiring errors. We all like to believe we are as good as the next umpire, but are we? Consistently in all areas is a requirement most of us fail to achieve. The formation of our own Association may not yet have been formally recognised but its input has brought the work of our members to the forefront and we need to recognise that if, as we believe, we are the best then we have to prove this at all levels when carrying out our duties.

No doubt some of you, perhaps all of you, as you read this will feel hurt that anyone should even hint that as umpires we may have shortcomings but unfortunately the proof of the pudding etc. Truth is often hard to swallow but if we want respect then we have to earn it and to do this we have to be reliable, consistent, diligent and un-officious.

Wearing my crooked referee hat, crooked because I have had my share of referee mistakes big time, as well as umpire errors, I can talk about shortcomings of umpires that do not necessarily apply to everyone but some of us may have been at fault sometime. The true indication of being good at anything is to be able to recognise a problem, resolve it, and ensure that it does not happen again. When, as sometimes happened, a statement is made that umpires for finals will be considered from those considered the best everyone gets hot under the collar. Generally we feel slighted having given of our best when officiating and don't see how Joe Smith can be considered a better umpire than we are.

Most referees know that being viewed as the best covers a lot of ground. Timekeeping, an important aspect of umpiring but viewed by some as of no importance. I believe as a referee I am pretty lenient and try to make life as easy as possible but when I say arrive 15 minutes before play is due to start to ensure that an event gets off to a prompt start I know the umpires who will report early, some stroll in five minutes before start of play and those who will honour the event with their presence only after play has commenced. Invariably the latecomers will not be ready to officiate, want time to take their coats off, check if the urn is boiling before considering doing what they are actually there to do. Invariably the last to arrive are generally the first to start hinting about being released, never taking into account that their late arrival and other shortcomings may have contributed to any late running. So ask yourself the question are you one of the turn up late and want to get away early brigade

Resting: another problem area, and if you return to the umpire area and wait until required you are working correctly. But there are some who appear to be attached to the the Trade Stand by invisible elastic and when not officiating can be found glued to the Stand. If wanted they have to be chased after and don't always respond immediately. Another section always want to wander off to watch a particular match, chat to an acquaintance, disappear for a quick drag or just wander off and never think to let the UC know where they can be found.

Then there are the Briefing experts who instead of taking this seriously view it as an opportunity to ask irrelevant questions to try to embarrass the referee whose only objective is trying to obtain consistency and also to remind those present of any recent changes and how these should be applied. Seeking sensible and reasonable clarification is one thing, asking a silly question is another. How about the 'take as long as you can to report back' brigade. Yes, there are those who take as long as possible after a match has been completed to report back presumably hoping this will give them a longer break. It is not unusual for some to take 5 or 6 minutes including strolling back as slowly as possible and talking to people along the way.

Do we all regularly study the Laws to refresh our memory? Do we ensure we go promptly to the court when given a match, check everything is correct including the net and let the Control table know if players have not arrived after two minutes? Or are you one of those who indulge in a chat with the umpire on the next court, watch a nearby match or waste time in other ways. I have only touched the tip of the iceberg but if you fall into any category mentioned or indulge in other ways of making life hard for referees and UC's then you are unlikely to be viewed as being one of the best umpires. Respect and recognition of ability has to be earned and unfortunately many of us have our shortcomings and I don't exempt myself from criticism. Players are entitled to expect consistency from every umpire; referees are entitled to the best from every umpire as are Umpire Controllers. Most of all everyone at a tournament whether as a competitor, coach, parent or spectator should view each of us as ambassadors of table tennis. Often we will be their first contact and knowing we are qualified they will be expecting from a qualified umpire a qualified service. We all need to ensure we give of our best and that we are the best. The way to do this is to do our best to ensure that those in charge of us and those who we officiate for see each one of us as being the best. We must not forget the umpire who knowingly or otherwise forgets to let the Umpire Controller know they have returned from officiating and so ensure their name does not go on the next up list when it should have done.

Blue badge scheme: I know I am a cynic and if you have been in the many situations I have been in you, too, would be a cynic. I believe this scheme will affect recruitment, split umpires and possibly deter some from trying to improve their status. However, the main thrust of BB status is what I have written about, consistency. But the only thing any BB is likely to have achieved is the ability to convince an assessor on four occasions that he/she meets expectations. I wonder how many BB qualified umpires meet expectations from the time they report for duty to the time they finish. My guess would be very few, if any. But we must all work towards consistency at all times and not concern ourselves over BB status because as I have stated previously a Blue Badge will not an umpire make nor iron bars a cage. Don't try to be a yellow card flasher or Blue Badge scheme, just work at being a consistent and respected umpire at any qualified level and you will have then earned the accolade of best umpire and most importantly the respect of your colleagues.

We should not be surprised at the many flaws in the BB scheme when we take into account that the ITTF can't even get the glue issue right and lack the ability to do any job properly. Who selects these assessors? Who assesses them? Who assesses those who assess assessors? Who ensures consistency, fairness and equality in assessments? If what happened to Dave Brown is anything to go by there is no consistency, no fairness, no equality and worst of all no appeal against an injustice. Human rights is an alien area to the ITTF.

In conclusion if I ever needed confirmation that the BB scheme is fatally flawed, which I don't, I received this very recently when I learned an umpire alleged to be an IU has been awarded BB status. Perhaps to pass the time as we travel to events we should play "guess the BB umpire who is a joke.

Ken Armson



PUZZLE CORNER

A continental umpire travelled part of the journey home in company with an English IU and commented later to another English umpire that this person never stopped talking about himself and what he had done etc. including a lot of name dropping.

Guess who he was referring to.

We now have our own Association but do you know of any previous Umpire Association.

- 1 .. What was the name of the previous Umpire Association?
- 2... Who sent out the invitation to the inaugural meeting?
- 3... Where was the venue?
- 4... In what year was the Association formed
- 5... How many members were recruited?
- 6... When and why did it eventually fold?
- 7... Name one member of its Committee still active in table tennis?



A STICKY BUSINESS

I am sure that by now you will all know know that I.T.T.F. have decided that the use of speed glue is a potential health hazard and it's use must be banned. .All well and good and most reasonable people would agree with the decision, however, with I.T.T.F. fudging it has been decided that a total ban will not be introduced until September 2008, after the Beijing Olympics, because the top players involved in the Olympics cannot be expected to adapt to conventional glues in such a small length of time, (16 months), an argument I find hard to believe, if a professional player cannot adapt his/her game in that length of time they have no right to be in that exalted position

However to prove how tough they can be I.T.T.F. came up with the idea of banning speed glues for the use by Junior players from January 2008, therefore making a two tier system which will last for a period of 9 months before the total ban is introduced. Questions inevitably arise, will a junior playing in a senior tournament be allowed to "Glue up" because it is not a junior event? or will they be forced to use an accepted glue against senior players who are permitted to use speed glues? Will the current England players be allowed to use speed glues in international matches bearing in mind that the current England team frequently consists of three juniors.

More to the point just how will we, as match officials, be expected to ensure that the new rules are observed? Will we be expected to "sniff bats" before a match starts as we did when England unilaterally enforced a glue ban some years ago? The major result of that were Umpires walking around "Half Cut" from the fumes.

Management Committee have advised that bat testing kits are available, made in America, but at a cost. I have no doubt that the E.T.T.A. will purchase some test kits for use at National events, but what about the events run by local leagues? which incidentally includes all of the Junior 4 Star events? Will we be expected to judge by the sound of the ball on the bat? Good luck if that is the case, my own bat sounds as if it is "Glued Up" but it isn't, it is a carbon fibre with pre tensioned rubbers and I do have difficulty convincing others that I do not use "Speed Glue" so "Hey Ho" here we go again with another problem to exercise the poor down trodden Umpire.

Stan Clarke



GLORIOUS FOREIGN TRAVEL

You can keep your Nottingham and Doncaster, Liverpool and Derby, even Grantham in the exotic east. I knew that when I became an I.U. that the world would open up. The delights of trips abroad would become reality.

And of the possibilities, what could be better (in Europe) than the European Championships, the pinnacle of our sport. So the phone call from Croyden was greeted with an uplifting of the spirit. Spring in Belgrade. The Blue Danube. Challenging work, compensated for with a lively social scene.

We were greeted at Belgrade airport, whisked through our own immigration channel and on to accreditation in the superb Belgrade Arena. (OK they had lost my e-mailed photo but this was a minor slip up). Then back in the new minibus to the hotel. Along the boulevards sweeping out of the city, a right turn and there was Hotel Putnik. (A little dark but perhaps they were being 'green' and saving energy).

Up to the bedroom, already with signs of occupation in it. We definitely had a bed each, and there was a space at the side of my bed to put my suitcase, and lots of space in the wardrobe (when I stood on the other bed) to hang my uniform (hang? was there something missing?). And I could definitely fit in the bathroom. The television showed Serbia 1, Serbia 2, blank, blank, Serbia 2 again, quiz show in Serbian, programme with Serbian sub-titles, blank, blank

Already time for dinner before the umpires' briefing. Would it be international cuisine or local specialities? I soon found out. It was veal cutlet, some mashed potato and a side dish of shredded cabbage, followed by an apple. Wow!!

Everything was made plain at the umpires' briefing. We would be expected to eat **all meals** at the hotel. There were **three** buses each way every day. We would get our spending money **sometime** in Serbian Dinars. How could Mr Bajdik of Hungary stand up and complain?

Perhaps I would be too busy to notice these minor problems. The schedule gave me the answer. Day 1: a team match at 13.00hrs. Day 2: a team match at 16.00hrs. Day 3: a mixed doubles match at 16.00hrs.

Back to the hotel. Let's have a drink and meet my fellow umpires. But it is 22.00hrs and the waiter has gone home. No bar. No drinks, and so to bed. But don't feel too sorry for me. Before long we had hourly buses, food at the arena and we had discovered the 24 -hour off-licence across the road. On day 5 we had our pocket money in Euros, and we had an apology from the president of the ETTU by letter and in person. So for those who come after, you are guaranteed by Mr Bosi a hotel of at least the same standard as that for the players. Good luck.

Lynda Reid.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Now is the time for me once again to ask you for input into the magazine. You will see that once again that members who regularly contribute to the magazine are the same ones who have contributed to this magazine. I am trying to make each edition as interesting as possible and as I have said in every magazine I do need input. I am in

the process of trying to obtain some badges for the Association. Hopefully these will be circular with our Association name around the edge and in the middle will be the 3 lions/ leopards as on our blazer badge. I hope we manage to get a week-end for members to get together. I have been to one in the past and I can assure we will have a good week-end plenty of table tennis in the daytime and at night time a few drinks, good food and plenty of laughs.

Geoff Taylor
Editor

