



## Referees' Review January 2009

Editor: Rod Symington



### **The Three Referee System: A Work in Progress**

**by Rod Symington, WSF Senior  
Referee Assessor**

The almost universal adoption of the Three Referee System at the élite level has been a great benefit to the sport of squash. But initial evidence has emerged to suggest that the System has not yet been perfected and that there are issues that need to be addressed with a view to improving it.

1. The three officials are instructed to show their decisions *immediately* and *simultaneously*. The purpose is to ensure

that each Referee makes a thoroughly independent decision and is not influenced by what the other two Referees decide. But making an immediate – i.e. split-second – decision is not always a wise thing. Sometimes a Referee needs to take a second or two to reflect on a situation and to be sure that he or she is making a considered decision. But the present instructions to referees preclude any delay. In the interest of better decision-making, it should be possible for a Referee to take a moment to be sure that the decision will be correct. (With an electronic system this would be possible.)

2. There is still no universal agreement on whether a Central Referee should

give an explanation for a decision if a player requests one. One view asserts that the Central Referee cannot read the minds of the two other Referees and that therefore it is not possible to give the player a meaningful explanation. On the other hand, it is argued, the player can at least receive the Central Referee's reasoning, which might be helpful (and is certainly courteous). However, this could well lead to a player's asking the Central Referee for the latter's reason after *every* decision – a habit that undermined the previous experiment with a Three Referee System. (Again, with an electronic system this problem would disappear because the player would not know how the three Referees voted.

Under what circumstances, if any, should the Central Referee give an explanation? Or should every squash match be played in silence?

### **2009: The Year of the Rules?**

Yes, according to Don Ball, Chair of the Working Group that has been attempting to simplify the wording of the current Rules for so long now, its members have almost all retired from full-time employment and can now devote their whole lives to completing the project.

Draft #376 is now being circulated, and the Working Group hopes to be able to send out a final draft to Member Nations in the next few months.

But don't hold your breath...

3. At the World Championships in Manchester in October some observers remarked that there were some matches where the Three Referee System simply "didn't work". These included matches where a player was resorting to unfair tactics (short of misconduct) and where a single Referee would have been able to take some corrective action. What, for example, does the Central Referee do when he or she perceives that a player is blocking, but the other two Referees do not? What happens when the two players are constantly running into each other? How much power, if any, should the Central Referee be given to "direct" a match, by giving instructions to the players? What if the two other Referees don't agree with those "instructions"?

There may be issues other than these three that need to be addressed. But in any case it is obvious that the Three Referee System needs further debate and possible refinement.

In the meantime it would be appropriate for referees and other interested parties to hold discussions about possible proposals for Rule changes. At some time in the not-too-distant future Member Nations will be invited to submit such proposals.

The mandate of the Working Group was to produce a version of the Rules in simplified English (not an easy task). Proposals for actual changes to the Rules need to come from Member Nations.

[Ed.]

## **Reappointments 2008**

Following the review of applications received by the deadline of May 31, 2008 by the WSF Referee Review Board, the Management Committee of the WSF confirmed the following reappointments:

### **World Referee**

John Massarella  
Mike Riley

### **International Referee**

David Atkins  
Mike Collins  
Wendy Danzey  
Barry Faguy  
Jamshed Gul Khan  
Ayaz Khan  
Tahir Kanzada  
Munir Shah  
Yogi Singh

A complete list of WSF Referees can be found on the WSF website.

## **PetroSport Open, Cairo, Egypt, 28 July–4 August 2008**

### **by Damien Green, International Referee**

I like to sit and listen to the more experienced referees on the tour talk about their past experiences. Invariably, the talk turns to their experiences refereeing tournaments in Egypt and how the crowds there can be quite 'enthusiastic' in their support of local players. Many consider it one of the toughest tests for a Squash Referee to

## **Applications for Appointment as International or Re-Appointment as World or International Referee**

1. The application deadline is Sunday, May 31, 2009.
2. All candidates must be nominated by their National Association.
3. Candidates should familiarise themselves with the requirements for WSF World and International Referee that can be found on the WSF Website under "CBTA Programmes". In particular, candidates should pay close attention to the criteria relating to activity and assessments. Please note: an application that does not meet these minimum requirements will not be considered.
4. All information should be submitted in electronic form.
5. Application forms and instructions are available from the WSF Office.

come out of a tournament in Egypt alive. (O.K., that's a little bit of an exaggeration!)

I was recently invited to the PetroSport Open in Cairo, and jumped at the chance to referee at a tournament in that city. PetroSport is a new Super Series event in Cairo, which was held at the Sky Sports Club. This is a fantastic multi-sports venue quite a way outside of central Cairo. It is in a developing

suburban area with many, many houses and buildings still being built, so driving through the streets to the venue felt a little like driving through a ghost town. The upside being that we didn't get involved in any of the legendary Cairo traffic jams. There were six courts at the venue plus the perspex portable court. Four of the permanent courts backed onto an outdoor court yard and were very exposed to the heat, but thankfully all early round play was on the two courts fully inside and air conditioned.

Players, referees and administrators were accommodated at the Le Passage motel very close to Cairo airport. The motel was magnificent with all the facilities you could ever need. I even managed to get a bit of a trim done on the little bit of hair that I have left. The motel was however about thirty minutes drive from the squash venue, but a reliable and frequent bus service was provided.

Nasser Zahran and Wendy Danzey were the other two WSF referees on duty with Nasser taking on the Tournament Referee role. The qualifying rounds and early main draw rounds were quite busy for us as the three referee format was in operation from day one. We were ably assisted by a number of local referees and the players also took turns in the side referee seat for a number of the early matches.

There really were some magnificent matches early in the main draw with the standouts for me being, lucky loser Steve Coppinger putting in a huge effort to just go down to Hisham Ashour in the fifth game, and by far the biggest upset in the tournament, Tarek Momen overcoming number two seed Gregory Gaultier in an incredible five-game

effort in front of very partisan home crowd. The main disappointment for the Egyptian spectators was Ramy Ashour having to pull out after his first-round match with an injury.

As the tournament moved into its latter stages the portable court was used in the evenings; it was a bit too hot to play on it during daylight hours. The quarterfinals produced some great matches with Azlan Iskander finally ending Tarek Momen's incredible run, but he took five games to do it. Unfortunately, both Semi Finals produced a retirement because injury to one of the players, most likely a symptom of how hard this sport is on the players' bodies when they have to compete in close matches for several days running. This left an all-Egyptian final with Karim Darwish playing Wael El-Hindi. Quite a large crowd witnessed the final, but because two locals were playing they were quite subdued as they didn't have a favourite to support. Wael ended up winning the match in four games but it was not the greatest Squash spectacle ever, as there was quite a bit of body contact and lots of lets asked for, but well done to Wael.

Outside the play itself it was great to see the new PSA Chief Executive Officer Richard Graham at the tournament along with Alex Gough. Both were very happy to sit and chat about Squash in general but they were also quite interested to hear about any issues from a refereeing perspective.

Wendy and I did get some time to get out and about and see the sights of Cairo. The Pyramids and Sphinx were just unbelievable and the Cairo Museum was also fantastic, especially the

Tutankhamen exhibition. We also did a bit of shopping at the Malls and old markets.

The tournament administration team kept everything running smoothly right from the Chairman Hady Samir Fahmy and tournament director Adel Naser down to the office staff of Ahmed, Tamer and Shimaa amongst others. Robert Edwards was the technical director and MC and did a magnificent job as usual.

Personally I would like to thank Robert, Wendy, Nasser and Fram and Paul Selby for their company and conversation throughout the tournament.

I don't think I got the full Egyptian experience this time around as far as the crowds go, because a large number of local players were involved and some untimely injuries curtailed some of the matches, but it was certainly an experience I really enjoyed. I would encourage any referees to travel to Egypt if the opportunity ever arises.

### **Singapore Women's Masters, 28 July-2 August 2008**

**by Mike Collins, International Referee**

I was very pleased to learn that Singapore were again hosting the CIMB Singapore Women's Masters and to be invited to officiate. Singapore is a wonderful city to visit and especially when you are looked after so well by the local residents such as Munir Shah and Desmond Hill and, in fact, everyone you work with. Most of the top-ranked ladies were present to contest the title and there

were 2 rounds of qualification for the hopefuls wishing to make an impact in the main draw. Munir and I shared the refereeing duties, most ably assisted by the local referees, and we were all extremely impressed by the competitive and yet sporting manner in which the players conducted themselves. There were one or two surprises with some top seeds exiting early, such as Natalie Grinham and Shelley Kitchen, but it became almost inevitable that Nicol David would continue her dominant streak and contest the final against the other Grinham, Rachael. The final was well attended with a capacity crowd who were entertained by a match which saw Rachael controlling matters in the first game to take it 11/8 but then Nicol patiently playing her game to take the next 3 games 11/3 11/5 and 11/8 to win the title in 4. Whilst the squash was great, the local sights and sounds and tastes of Singapore were as great, and I can fully appreciate why this event is destined to become a permanent and popular feature on the Squash Calendar.

### **World Masters Championships, Christchurch, New Zealand, 19-25 October 2008**

**by Munir Shah, International Referee**

This was a memorable event that was quite different from most open squash championships in the world. Yes, I am talking about the World Masters, which is meant for die-hard squash players who are above 35 years of age. If ever you think that you are in the twilight of your lives, think again. The Masters gives you the opportunity to revive your compet-

itive spirit so that you can gauge your standard against players of the same vintage.

New Zealand made history by hosting the event for a second time, after having had the honour of inaugurating the first World Masters way back in 1991.

The Organizing Committee headed by Barry Gardiner, who incidentally won the Men's Over-70 final, did a fabulous job in ensuring that everyone had a minimum of 3, if not 4 matches, in the tournament. The Championship Referee, Ian Gardiner, had an enormous task in managing more than 450 matches, involving 769 players from 35 countries!

Mohamad Fayyaz of Hong Kong and I were the 2 WSF International Referees assigned to the championships, complemented by NZ Referees and some visiting Canadian National Referees, many of whom took part in the championships too.

The arrangement of requiring players to mark and referee matches, after they've played their respective matches, was a resounding success. I did not witness a single complaint by these players when they were called upon to officiate the following matches. In the early rounds the assigned referees were called upon to officiate seemingly "difficult matches" but this turned out to be an anti-climax. I found it a joy in all honesty because the players were generally very sporting in accepting the referees' decisions. On the final day all matches were handled by the WSF International Referees and NZ

National Referees.

A total of 6 club venues were used during the championships and what captivated me was the army of volunteers who helped out in the venue co-ordination, administration, transportation and even catering services. The organisers also made sure that there was a good spread of the various age-category matches (Men and Women) at these venues. It was only on the last day of the championships that all the final matches were played at the Christchurch Squash Club.

The Opening Ceremony was a colourful event which saw the participants marching down from the Bridge of Remembrance in downtown to the Christchurch Town Hall. Mid-way through the championships, there were opportunities for players and officials to learn a bit about the country's history at the Tamaki Heritage Village and soak in the Kiwi party atmosphere at The Holy Grail.

The Farewell celebration dinner and prize presentation was a huge party at a unique venue, The Air Force Museum at Wigram Airbase. Former Women's World No.1, Susan Devoy, and WSF Emeritus President Susie Simcock graced the occasion. I have never seen such an enthusiastic bunch of party animals, who were quick to go on to the dance floor soon after the initial cocktails. They showed how fit they were by jiving along with the band, whose choice of music ranged a few decades from the 60s onwards.

## From the Director .....



### by Graham Waters

We have had a very busy second half of 2008, with most WSF Referees being assigned to at least one event and many to more than that. This busy time was in spite of the postponement of both the Abu Dhabi Open and the World Doubles in Chennai, the downgrading of the Pakistan Open to a 3-star event, where they used their own referees, and two events traditionally held during this period (U.S. Open and English Open) not being held this year.

There were certainly challenges in trying to find a sufficient number of referees available to meet all of the requests that we received, so we resorted to several different tactics to meet the demand. In some cases, referees were asked to do back-to back events, in others we employed some of our Assessors, who are “retired” referees, to act as Side Referees during early rounds before going back to being a full time Assessor during the latter rounds. For the University Championships in Cairo in August, we could not find enough referees from areas that the hosts were willing to fund airfares, so we invited two European Regional Referees to satisfy the request. Please see the

accompanying chart to see who was assigned to which events in the second half of 2008.

There are still one or two WSF Referees who cannot seem to fulfil a commitment, and back out of events at the last minute. This is not fair to the promoters who are then left short, nor to other WSF Referees who may have been able to accept the assignment. I would implore all of us to honour our commitments.

As you all probably know by now, the 3-Referee System is mandatory for all PSA Super Series events, including all qualification matches. The PSA also envision it becoming mandatory for *all* PSA events in the longer term. WISPA has also made the system mandatory, for all matches played on a glass-back court. We have had discussions with both PSA and WISPA and have now issued a document “Guidelines for the use of the 3-Referee System” that has been approved by all 3 governing bodies.

As a result of the CBTA being adopted by ManCom, we have a new revised Assessment Form, and all of the existing WSF Assessors have to undertake a seminar to ensure that they are using the new criteria. As reported in the last issue, Chris Sinclair and Rod Symington have been named as “Senior Assessors” and have been conducting those seminars and evaluating the Assessors. To this point, 10 of the existing Assessors have completed this training with 3 still to do so.

You may have noticed that the WSF has adopted a new logo recently. That means that we must have new uniforms (polo shirts, sweaters (jumpers), and crests for

our blazers), and I hope that will be sorted out during the early part of the new year.

2009 appears to be another busy year with new events in Mexico City, Hurghada, and Abu Dhabi (postponed from December) in the first half, and the World Games in the second half of the year, in addition to most of the long-standing events and the upcoming World Championships in India, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Kuwait.

This is all good news, but perhaps the best news of all is that Lorraine Harding will be returning to the WSF Office in January 2009. Perhaps now we can all get back to normal!

As always, your comments and suggestions on any aspect of our program are always welcome. I look forward to catching up with many of you during what is shaping up to be another busy year in 2009.

### WSF Referee Assignments – 2nd half 2008

#### (A) – Assessor Assignment

July 27 - Aug. 8	World Junior Men	Zurich	4	Clayton, Khanzada, Parker (R/A), Aarts (Individual) Massarella (Teams)
July 28-A2	CIMB Singapore Masters	Singapore	2	Collins, Shah
July 28-A4	SKY Petrosport Open	Cairo	3	Zahran, Danzey, Green,
Aug. 22-28	World University Championships	Cairo	4	Aarts, Khanzada, Marco Potgorsek (Slovenia, ESF), Joss Garvey (England)
Sept. 13-14	Refereeing Clinic	Lagos, Nigeria	1	Parker (A)
Oct. 11-19	Men's & Women's World Open	Manchester	8	Allanach, Atkins, Clayton, Gingell, Riley, Parker, Massarella, Waters, Symington (A)
Oct. 17-25	World Masters	Christchurch	2	Shah, Fayyaz
Oct. 25-31	Qatar Classic	Doha	9	Ayaz Clayton, Collins, Danzey, Faguy, Massarella, Sinclair, Waters,, Flynn (A)
Nov. 8- 15	Pakistan Open	Islamabad		<i>Downgraded to 3 Star event – no referees requested</i>
Nov. 17-23	Hong Kong Open	Hong Kong	6	Bowl, Gingell, Fayyaz, Sinclair, Singh, Fahim
Nov. 30 – Dec. 6	Women's World Team Championships	Cairo	6	Allanach, Atkins, Fayyaz, Jamshed, Singh, Zahran

Dec. 4-11	Abu Dhabi Open	Abu Dhabi		<i>POSTPONED until mid-2009</i>
Dec. 14-19	Saudi International	Al-Khobar	4	Gingell, Massarella, Aarts, Zahran
Dec. 15-20	World Doubles	Chennai		<i>POSTPONED</i>

## **World Junior Men's Championships, Zurich, 27 July–August 8 2008**

**by Dean Clayton, International Referee**

The World Junior Men's Championships may not have the prize fund of the Saudi International, but it's a World Championship after all, and as with many of the other events to which I've been invited, I'd never been to Zurich before so this was an excellent opportunity to visit. While I did go on a school trip to Vitznau near Lucerne in the early sixties, that's probably time-barred by now and so doesn't count.

The flight into Zurich from Heathrow was pretty uneventful until the final approach. We later found that we had been stacked and had to circle Lake Lucerne three times because of a local thunderstorm over the airport, though the weather outside the aircraft was fine. Still, better safe than sorry, even if we were delayed for a while.

We were treated very well right from our arrival, starting with being met at the airport by Jasmin, the transport co-ordinator, who was holding up a monster squash racket so we couldn't miss her. I like to think I'm not the only one who's recognised someone but not remembered where from, but she was kind enough to

remind me that she had played in the British Junior Open in Sheffield so that was one problem solved. Off we went to the hotel, not the main one where most of the players stayed but a little further away and probably quieter because of that. Tony Parker solved the problem of who would have the bigger of the two beds in our apartment by taking the smaller one into the kitchen so that he could sneak outside onto the balcony for a smoke when he wanted to. Perhaps more importantly, it also saved him from being disturbed by my snoring so we killed two birds with one stone.

The majority of the squash was played at the Vitis sports centre in Schlieren, and straightaway Micky Mueller and his team made us very welcome, and by that I mean we truly felt part of the event rather than a tolerated but nevertheless unwelcome evil. As another example of just how small the squash world is, the tournament referee was John Williams who I had last seen in Amsterdam in April and before that playing in a Middlesex Open in the nineties. He did a fine job as far as most of us were concerned, as did his very able assistant Daniel who, with typical Teutonic efficiency, made sure that marking sheets, balls and players' name and match cards were always to hand in good time, which was a tremendous help for us. Another high spot for us, culinary this time, was the meal we were treated to in Daniel's restaurant in Zurich. Quite

apart from his administrative abilities, he is also a top class chef and served up a truly gourmet meal for us. The lime risotto in particular drew many compliments and I believe he was even persuaded to part with the recipe.

The first round of group matches in the team event was played at the Vitis centre while the second and third rounds took place at various clubs in the surrounding area. Each had arranged hospitality on the Saturday evening for everyone involved, including the referees, and we were all very well treated. The luckiest were taken to see the Rhine Falls and truly spectacular they were too, by all accounts.

The most surprising aspect of the whole trip (for me at least) was the weather. I wouldn't normally complain about good weather but it must have been one of the hottest two-week periods since records began and certainly belied my idea of Switzerland as a cool country. Unfortunately, there was no air-conditioning in any of the venues (unnecessary because it's normally quite mild) so it was desperately uncomfortable until industrial fans were brought in to the Vitis centre. They helped to a large extent but it was still extremely hot and humid. How the players coped with it and yet played so well still amazes me. One of the German lads sweated so much, he literally filled his boots to overflowing and had to find some different shoes to avoid making the court unplayable.

The event itself was very hard work with so few referees. Necessarily, the days tended to be rather long because of the statutory rest periods for the players, but it did give those who wanted to the

chance to sit in the sun and watch the trains go by on the eight tracks that ran just over the road from the club. As with pretty well all things Swiss, they were very punctual. Even the coach drivers who transferred us between the hotel and the sports centre joined in, so much so that Tony Parker was very close to being left behind one day and one of the Cayman Islands players actually was. Luckily for his team, he didn't miss his match, but it must have been a close thing. Micky Muller's father helped organise the transport to and from the hotels as well and always made sure we were given priority treatment when he could. Even so, the French boys tried very hard to get to the front seats before we could and did actually succeed once. A little threat to deal with them severely on the squash court soon put paid to that though (just a joke). It was interesting to see the snow-capped Alps sometimes from the coach in the morning, and as well as that spectacular sight, there were foxes and a wild boar in the fields and birds of prey soaring overhead. All this and squash as well!

The schedule allowed a day off between the individual and team events when various trips were organised. Some of us chose to go to Lucerne where most took a commercial boat trip round part of Lake Lucerne. Tony Parker and Mary Scott-Miller were brave enough to hire their own little cruiser and saw places that the rest of us missed and I don't suppose they even argued about who should drive. Others ventured further afield and went to Mount Pilatus. They must have taken plenty of warm clothes as we didn't hear of any frostbite problems.

The organisers were generous enough to host two Championships dinners and very entertaining they were too. After the individual event, one of the entertainers was a local Alphorn player. He very kindly invited Nicholas Muller and Mohammed El Shorbagy to test their skills. Nicholas put in a creditable performance and actually managed a note or two (as you might expect) while it's fair to say that Mohammed did his best. The second dinner had many of the players enthralled, and probably many of the managers, coaches and physiotherapists too, as a troupe of Brazilian samba dancers put on a memorable routine. One of the French boys was especially keen to get involved. Whether it was recorded for posterity we may never know, but he

## **2-Day Officiating Course, Lagos, Nigeria 13–14 September 2008**

**by Tony Parker, WSF Assessor**

It was with some trepidation, and not without quite a few people saying I must be mad, that I accepted the invitation (thanks, Graham) to hold a 2-day officiating course for the Nigerian Squash Federation in Lagos.

After acceptance of this assignment I received a call from Sonny Obot, the Secretary General of the Nigerian Squash Federation, asking if I had booked my flight and applied for the visa. I explained that at this time the flights would cost £690 and until they had paid money to the WSF, I would not be able to book the flights. As no money had been received after 10 days, I phoned Sonny on his mobile to tell him.

certainly seemed to be enjoying himself on the stage.

Then it was all over, yet another event consigned to memory. I'd like to thank all the referees there who made it an enjoyable experience, even those who complained because they didn't get what they saw as the top jobs. To them, I would only say that someone has to do each match (I was happy to do Ireland v Ecuador on the last day for 25th place) and one day, if they keep trying, listening and taking notice, perhaps they'll be pleased with what they are asked to do rather than jealous. Other than that, I think we generally had at least as good a time in Zurich as anywhere else and probably better than many.

A few days later the WSF received half the amount required, and Sonny

explained that there was confusion as to whether it was dollars or pounds. Again, no additional money was received and Sonny blamed the bank that said there had been a fault that stopped them sending it. Eventually it arrived but by now the flight cost had risen to £1067 and I would have to return 2 days after the course.

The WSF officer, John, alone most of the time, helped tremendously and my ticket was booked. Unfortunately, despite valiant efforts by Tracy to pay using the WSF credit card, it was apparently a rule that only the person travelling to Nigeria could pay the fare. I

went into my local travel agent who told me that they couldn't take the money for BA, as BA didn't use agents. I rang BA and was told to go the airport to pay the fare. After queueing at the desk for forty minutes, I was told that they could not accept payment for flights to Nigeria with either credit or debit cards; I would have to pay cash – and the reservation was only on hold for another 12 hours. On Saturday morning I went to my bank and withdrew £1100 (fortunately, I happened to have this amount available), and went yet again back to the airport and finally I got my ticket.

I then discovered that there is only one Nigerian High Commission in England and that was in London! By now, it was only 17 days before I was due to go. Until the money had been paid in full by the Nigerian Association, the WSF and I agreed it was not appropriate to spend any more money. Nevertheless, I downloaded a visa application from the High Commission's web-site and duly sent it off in the manner required with the £70 fee. When it came to following it up, I listened to the 3-minute introduction to the Embassy only to be cut off after another 30 seconds of pressing the visa option. I decided to try a different approach and keyed the number for the library. To my amazement, the officer in charge of postal visa applications answered the phone. He had gone there for some peace and quiet! Now only 8 days to go! He said he had the application, but they required a prepaid special delivery envelope to send it, and I had provided only a "recorded delivery" envelope which was what was stated in the visa application form. I duly bought this (for another £4), and sent it special delivery. He later confirmed receipt of my

application and promised to return my passport on the Wednesday before the flight which was due to go on the Friday. I told Sonny Obot, who reminded me that the Nigerian High Commission was staffed by Nigerians and not by British personnel and he would send an e-mail to stress the urgency. We were both relieved when the postman delivered the visa on the day before my flight...

I was already plagued with a stomach bug before I went, so I had a most uncomfortable 7-hour flight on a 747-400.

On arrival, after 30 minutes queuing, I reached the immigration desk, only to be told that I would not be allowed to enter because I had not given them an address where I was staying. I had asked Sonny for this, but he had not provided it. I told the immigration officer that I was being met by the person who knew this, and eventually he rang Sonny who provided the details and I was allowed in. Sonny was only on the other side of the desk, but of course I didn't know what he looked like! The plane had landed at 7pm and Sonny waited with me until my luggage appeared at 9pm. Welcome to Lagos!

Outside the airport were 2 other officials, the president and a vice-president of the Nigerian Squash Federation, and I was given a most warm welcome. The car was parked about ¼ mile away on what was no more than a large area of unsurfaced waste-land on which cars were parked all over the place. This was Lagos airport's car park! After a 40- minute drive through the traffic on roads where pot-holes were feet deep and amongst people pushing carts and balancing anything from

baskets of fruit to what looked like dustbins full of all sorts on their heads, we reached my accommodation.

We passed an Intercontinental Hotel, but Sonny explained he had some guesthouse for me that would be completely safe and secure. Having traversed some unmade back streets littered with stalls, hawkers and beggars, we reached the Allure Guest House, which was a small enclave surrounded by razor wire and huge iron gates.

I was greeted warmly and taken to my room which was spacious and had a plasma TV. I settled in, unpacked and decided to use the ensuite bathroom. Alas there was no bath plug and I couldn't turn the handle to make the shower work, so I rang for help. I explained the problem to the night manageress, who was a charming lady called Nneka and she came with a spanner to turn the tap for the shower. Unfortunately the connections were loose and the water simply ran down the hose and went straight through some holes at the back of the bath. She then went to fetch a plug so I was able to fill the bath and at last feel comfortable. By now it was nearly midnight and Sonny told me that I was due to be at the radio station at 8am for a programme to be broadcast live at 8.20, so he would pick me up at 7, as it was about an hour's journey to the station. The course was due to start at 9.30 in the complex that was adjacent to the main football stadium.

I got to the course at 9.40 and there was a long queue of people registering with the official staff for the event. After an adventurous visit to the loo, I returned and found that 36 Nigerians were ready

and waiting for me to start. I was given a most wonderful introduction and was warmly welcomed by all attendees. I had asked beforehand for a flip-chart and equipment to show videos and DVDs. Flip-charts I find most useful, as you can easily recap a point you have made earlier when questions are asked. Alas, no flip-chart and no DVD equipment either, but I was provided with a blackboard and some chalk – but you can't go back then so easily.

I believe that no session should last longer than 1½ hours before a break. There was no provision for tea or coffee, but bottles of water were supplied and everyone wanted to carry on. It soon became evident that Nigeria's absence from the World Squash scene for many years resulted in their marking terminology to be both out of date and in many ways peculiar to Nigeria. For example, any ball 'not good' – whether 'down, not up or out' – was called 'down ball'. They did not award a stroke but a 'rally'; and '5 all' was 'five, five'. When the server won the point, it was 'hand in' and 'no call', or 'hand out' when the server lost the point.

After three hours I assumed it was lunchtime, but again nothing had been arranged. Eventually, I was given a sandwich of unknown content and another bottle of water. Everyone seemed to want to carry on, but I insisted I needed a break, to have a cigarette if nothing else, so half an hour later we were in session again. It seems that they wanted their money's worth as everyone had paid the equivalent of £70 to attend – for which they also received a T-shirt and a rather nice hold-all, both bearing the motif 'Nigerian Squash Federation, 2 day Officiating Course, under the

auspices of the World Squash Federation' with the WSF emblem and also a large notepad and pen for taking notes.

As I needed to rest my voice and sit down, I arranged for the rather dated 'Calling the Shots' video to be played. It actually played well with the ball visible on a big screen, and they all sat down with their answer sheets through the first fifty decisions. With 36 people on the course I did not fancy marking them all myself, so I asked them to pass them to the person sitting next to them to mark. To my pleasant surprise the average mark was 37 with the lowest being 29 and the highest 42 but there were so many alterations on the sheets when I looked carefully at them later that I'm not sure that the results were accurate...

It was by now 5pm, but they all wanted to carry on with the next fifty different decisions, so we did. When I went through what each decision should have been, plenty of debate occurred – especially on the 50/50 decisions, and the marks were very similar with one attendee apparently getting 44 correct which was indeed very creditable. The session finally finished at 7.15pm. But it was not back to the guesthouse and some food, but off to different radio station and another live broadcast.

I eventually got back to the guesthouse at 9.30 to find they had finished serving food, but my friend Nneka went out and brought in chicken and chips. Unfortunately, the chicken wasn't cooked properly, so I quickly stopped eating it and just ate the chips! My stomach was worse next morning, when we had a 9am start, and there was to be a

closing ceremony attended by the Minister of Sport at 4pm.

Most of the second day was spent trying to deal with Rule 17 and 'bleeding', but it was again soon evident that these issues were not familiar to all but 2 people who were the senior coaches in Nigeria, one from Lagos and one from the new capital Abuja.

We then went across the stadium to the court where 2 top juniors had been lined up to provide some practical experience for the course. Unfortunately, they were more concerned with playing an exhibition match to show off their skill, rather than providing anything of use for the course. After 15 minutes and no more than three stoppages, I asked them to imagine they were playing for the Junior Championship and to stop when there was interference. The result meant that they kept stopping when there was no reason, producing unrealistic situations which did not help either, and with 36 people all wanting a turn at marking and refereeing, it was a bit of a nightmare. In the middle of the session, I noticed a group of people came in with TV equipment and started filming – and then the session was stopped whilst I was interviewed again – this time for Nigerian TV.

The closing ceremony was quite splendid. Everyone (except me of course) sang their National Anthem whilst standing to attention. I was given three lots of gifts by different people, one of which was a 17-piece stone tea set which was, not surprisingly, pretty heavy and filled more than half of my suitcase and doubled its weight. I subsequently noticed the tea set was made in China! The spacious hold-all

now came in very useful. We had a photo session at the end and it seems everyone wanted his photograph taken with me.

In the evening I was taken to the Lagos Country Club, which was hosting some inter-club finals competition. I was greeted by the Club's owner, obviously a wealthy business man, and I sat at the top table in a most comfortable armchair and was then introduced to the 100 or so people watching. The club was very well appointed with several courts – the main court, with a glass back, with seats for about a 100 people. The only drawback was the floor which had been stained a very dark brown, making sighting the black ball very difficult. I don't think there are any white balls in Nigeria!

We then watched some of the matches and the markers and referees, who incidentally had not been on the course, and who showed the same idiosyncratic marking I had found used by the people on the course. Two of the players were argumentative and the referee kept silent far too long while both players voiced their opinions vociferously and all the spectators were joining in. I was then asked if I would do them the honour of refereeing the main final between two players who were especially troublesome. I wasn't really given much option, because the MC for the event got up and announced that I was going to referee the final match. Afterwards I was put up to answer any questions. After 30 minutes I was whisked away for a very good meal, probably the best I'd had in Lagos.

To sum up, I now understand why the Federation were so desperate that I go to Lagos, as they had spent a lot of time

and money, as had all the participants, in arranging the course. There were, apart from the items mentioned several large banners announcing that the course would be held.

Nigeria is working towards holding the African Open, and clearly they know they need to train some people to officiate at this Championship. To be honest, there was no one there who would be competent to referee at a PSA event, and it would have taken far more than two days to get any up to the right standard. It was planned that I should meet the person due to stage the event, but he was not available whilst I was there. I also gather that the sponsorship has not been finalised. I told Sonny Obot they/he would need to bring in a Tournament Referee and at least one other International or World Referee for a PSA event. They are unaware of the PAR-to-11 scoring and as for the 3 referee system – well, it's all totally unknown.

There is no doubt in my mind Sonny Obot is trying really hard and is determined to get Nigerian squash back in the international arena but he has two major problems:

1. There is no Government funding, so the Association has to organise all its own sponsorship.
2. The visa situation is so difficult both for them to leave and others to arrive.

Sonny is appointed by the Government, but only he and a small support staff are paid. I honestly wish him and his committee every success because they are dedicated to their task.

Despite all the trials and tribulations and the undoubted stress of making the arrangements, flight, visas etc, I did enjoy the visit, if only because of the warmth and unanimous thanks of all the participants who thoroughly appreciated the course. I must say that the whole episode tested my stamina to the limit, and I'm so glad that I didn't abort the adventure some two weeks before I was due to go, when the flight and visa problems looked like causing me to give up.

## **Men's and Women's World Opens, Manchester, 11–19 October**

**by Rod Symington, WSF Senior  
Referee Assessor**

This was a spectacular event in every respect: the venue, the staging, the organisation, and the quality of play. Finally, squash was presented with the level of production values that the sport deserves. The refereeing was pretty good, too!

It was a rather small refereeing team for *two* World Opens (only nine people, along with Tournament Referee Wendy Danzey), but with the help of four English National Referees for two days, the team coped very well, using the Three Referee System from the First Round of the Men's event onwards, and from the third round of the Women's event.

One radio company now rings me on some Saturday mornings at 8.40am to speak live on their sports programme to keep the Nigerian people advised on

how Nigerian squash and the sport on a world basis are faring. I soon found out that they were more interested in the latest news of Manchester United. The whole nation is football mad and I saw hundreds of kids kicking footballs around and most were wearing Manchester United or Chelsea T-shirts.

The trip was an experience of a lifetime – but I'm afraid Lagos is not top of my list of places to revisit!

Two members of the International Olympic Committee were going to be present for the latter stages of the Tournament, so both players and referees were urged before the event started, through a letter from WSF President Jahangir Khan, to be aware of the need to display appropriate conduct on court. There were, inevitably, a few tantrums on court (and one off) by the usual suspects, but overall the standard of conduct by the players was good. We can only hope that the members of the IOC were suitably impressed.

The referees were very busy and the days were long, and the team of referees was to be seen every evening wandering the streets of Central Manchester at 11 p.m. (or later) looking for a place to eat. The Host Committee treated the referees very well (generous food vouchers at the venue every day), and the referees' hotel was modern and new – although some of us would have preferred more than six inches between the twin beds...There

was an excellent bus service between the venue and the hotels; apart from one small hitch (rectified by a series of taxis) the transportation worked flawlessly.

In the Men's Draw the biggest upset was Adrian Grant's defeat of second seed Gregory Gaultier – after which the latter accused the referees of “stitching him up” (some of us who witnessed the astonishing scene needed two translations). Ashour defeated Shabana in a hard-fought Semi-final that Shabana should have won (he led two games to one and 7–4 in the fourth). In the Final against Karim Darwish Ashour's superior talent asserted itself after he lost the first game and the outcome became more and more inevitable as he took control with relentless retrieving and glorious shot-making.

In the Women's Open the big surprise was Vicky Botwright – who had announced her imminent retirement from the WISPA Tour – reaching the Final.

## **Hong Kong Open 2008**

### **by Harvey Bowlt, International Referee**

The Hong Kong Open was held from Monday 17 November to Sunday 23 November 2008. The qualifying rounds in both the men's and women's tournaments were held on 17 and 18 November, and the draw proper started on Wednesday 19 November.

The WSF referees allocated to the tournament were world referees Chris Sinclair and Roy Gingell and international referees Yogendra Singh,

Here again, despite some fierce resistance from Botwright, Nicol David's superiority left the eventual result in little doubt. The large arena was packed every day with a very knowledgeable crowd, and the announcements, the introduction of the players, the post-match interviews – everything about this event achieved the highest professional standards. Why can't all squash events aspire to such standards, too?

The Final Banquet was a splendid affair in the magnificent Town Hall and was attended by some of the greatest names in squash (including Hashim Khan) – a fitting ending to a unique occasion.

There was a large team of organisers and volunteers ensuring that everything ran smoothly – too many to thank individually – but the Organising Committee, aided by England Squash, deserve the highest commendation for their efforts. This was a world-class performance in every respect.

Fayyaz Mohammad, Harvey Bowlt and Fahim Gul. Fahim Gul was unable to make the tournament at the last minute and as a result there were only 5 WSF-appointed referees.

Other referees sent by their national bodies were Miyuki Adachi (Japan), Kim Jae Ohan and Woo Chang Wook (South Korea), Yang Yuan Fang (Taipei) and Andy Karupiah and Aaron Soyza (Malaysia). A number of local referees assisted with refereeing duties, as the three referee system was used in both the

qualifying rounds and the main draw for the men's tournament and from the quarter finals onwards in the women's tournament.

### **The Three Referee System**

Although the system has been used at many tournaments throughout the world it was a novelty to me, as it was the first time I had used the system.

A general observation is that it seems to have been favourably accepted by the players, who consider it a fairer system and there was minimal dissent throughout the week.

Due to the fact that there were only 5 WSF referees present we were initially under the impression that we would be worked off our feet. However, the tournament referee, Anthony So, made significant use of the other visiting referees and some of the local referees/players to assist with refereeing duties and ultimately the WSF referees were, if anything, underutilized during the tournament.

Where possible, at least 2 WSF referees were used in the more difficult matches, but in many matches a WSF referee was the central referee and was assisted by one of the other national referees and/or a local referee. On occasion this resulted in some interesting situations where the central referee was either overruled by the two less qualified referees or there were three different decisions. Although WSF referees obviously make mistakes, the two examples of overruling that I saw in matches where I was not involved were clearly incorrect decisions.

I think the lesson to be learnt is that although there were very few problems throughout the tournament because of the three referee system, it is preferable for at least two WSF referees to be allocated to each match where at all possible, particularly when it gets to the later rounds of the tournament.

As regards refinements to the system, where dissent is shown it is generally addressed to the central referee and ultimately an electronic system needs to be developed where all three referees give their decision anonymously and only the consensus decision is displayed to the players. This should not be an issue with modern technology.

### **Accommodation**

The referees were accommodated at the Rosedale on the Park Hotel in Causeway Bay, which was strategically placed for transport and other facilities. Although the rooms were small they were very comfortable and the other hotel facilities were good. The players were accommodated at one of the local Marriott Hotels, which I believe was more upmarket. I understand that WSF have decided that in future referees must be accommodated in a hotel that is the same standard as that used by the players. However, I had no complaints about the referees' hotel accommodation.

### **Venues**

The initial rounds were held at the Hong Kong Squash Centre and the semi finals and finals were held at an open court in Tsim Sha Tsui on the Kowloon side of Hong Kong. Fortunately the weather for the semis and final was good and the court was at a different angle to its

position a couple of years ago, when I had the interesting experience of a ball going out of court over my head and into the sea! It was positioned so that the skyline and light show on the Hong Kong island skyline were displayed behind the front wall and it must be one of the more spectacular venues for a squash tournament in the world.

### **The Tournament in General**

I was interested to hear that this is the 23<sup>rd</sup> year that Cathay Pacific has

sponsored the tournament and Hong Kong Squash is fortunate to have such a good sponsor.

As usual the organisation of the tournament was good and my thanks to Tony Choi and his organising committee for their hospitality and the excellent lunch during the week. Thanks also to Fayyaz from Hong Kong who arranged an informal dinner on the last evening at the United Services Recreation Club in Kowloon, which was hosted by the club president, Ross Parker.

## **Lessons from Qatar, 25–31 October 2008**

**by Barry Faguy, International  
Referee**

### **The Journey to Qatar**

*“No matter where you go – there you are. Your luggage is another story!”*  
(Jewish-Buddhist saying)

The email invitation for me came in early September – the result of a cancellation by another IR. I accepted eagerly, so they sent me a Qatar Airlines ticket. If you’ve never traveled via Qatar Airlines, then you’ve missed a treat. It’s one of the world’s 5-Star airlines – there being only six of them. Although seated in the poverty-stricken part of the airplane, a poor referee couldn’t be faulted for feeling a mistake had been made and he’d been upgraded. In any case, we all got to enjoy that airline – whether we came from England, Ireland, South Africa, Pakistan – or even from Canada as two of us did.

Doha, the capital of Qatar, is the centre of it all – a city undergoing rampant construction, apparently trying to rival Dubai in ostentatious spending with each project being an architectural gem – often a head-turner. It seems that all that oil & gas comes straight out of the ground, passes through the Philosopher’s Stone and right into those buildings as cash. Some of that cash is flowing into the airport itself, where a substantial upgrade (Where do you go after ‘great’?) is underway to impress arriving passengers even more. Speaking of arrivals, here’s a glimpse of the main entrance to our hotel – The Doha Grand Regency. Not too shabby...



To put it mildly, our \$500-per-night rooms would have been somewhat difficult to afford on a referee's pay – but we had connections, if you know what I mean. This superb hotel is the where we had the lion's share of all our meals – upstairs in the Grand Gourmet International Buffet – where the week's

evening repasts became a veritable culinary 'tour du monde'. This made meal selection quite a challenge – but recalling Yogi Berra's classic advice (*"If you come to a fork in the road, take it"*) – most of us simply took some of everything each time. Problem solved! Of course, some work had to be done – and given that the courts weren't next door to the hotel, box lunches were supplied. The boxes were very nice!

### **A Motley Crew, indeed**

Sure, at first glance it looked like your usual crew, but word shortly got out about the true nature of this gang of nine. Here is what was rumoured about them:



John Massarella: Our first character from England was available because he was out on bail. You don't want to mess with this jester! His bouncing & jiggling laugh is contagious – but all meant to throw you off of his trigger-like temper which, we can attest now, quickly led to his trashing of several chairs before our very eyes.



Mike Collins: Said to be a real-estate lawyer from South Africa – we can't help but harbor doubts about his shady connections to a legal system that involves nine 'chosen' judges. His funny accent was purported to throw Canadians off the mark – probably because they are the only ones known to speak English with no accent at all!



Jack Flynn: Irish! Yeah right. If you've ever heard a phony accent – this was it, and a poor imitation at that, me boy! People in the know figure this guy to be the head of the western operation involved in vetting certain people known to be the 'decision-makers' – clearly a euphemism for an alliance involved in very 'questionable' issues.



Graham Waters: Suspected of being the anointed ringleader (which explains the aura descending onto his head from above), this piece of work has been known to pull strings to 'appoint' (ha!) judges to the halls of power. Caution tempers any inquiry into the real background goings-on in these low-life machinations.



This one, known as Chris ‘the No Let’ Sinclair, is reputedly said to be at the origin of inclusions in some ‘rules’ (read, ‘modus operandi’) about how to deal with some so-called ‘players’ (read, ‘troublemakers’) when ‘minimalist’ issues arise. Some of those ‘players’ have never been seen again. Don’t let the good looks fool ya.



All smiles – but Dean ‘the can crusher’ Clayton was often seen late at night carrying out certain ‘bags’ for disposal. Considering that habit, discretion is the better part of valor when speculation on the ultimate whereabouts of that ‘Foster’ chap (see later) who, without a trace, mysteriously disappeared from the hotel on the last night.



Wendy ‘the dazzler’ Danzey is a suspected key ‘player’ in the shady ring of gaming aficionados – and so consumed with this nefarious aspect of the ‘adjudicating’ (nudge, nudge, wink, wink!) underworld, that she is reputed to always have ‘Scrabble eggs’ for breakfast. Talk about mixing up your words – and getting points for it!



Ayaz ‘the killer’ Khan: Merciless – this character has been known to pitilessly force his victims to ‘carry on’ – paying absolutely no mind to their anguished pleas for a break in the action. He is said to have done time down south – and now released, he will soon be handed over to the British authorities. It’s quite a ‘slippery’ business.



Barry ‘Now here’s the deal’ Faguy: Another vagrant who claims to be a dentist – but that’s just another alias. This reprobate seemed the shadiest of the bunch. Careful to mask his true appearance, he is relentlessly making offers that none dare refuse. His instruments of torture are referred to as ‘decision spatulas’. Can you believe that!

So much for the unpleasant intros; let’s get on with our story...

things official – and to him we owe a great debt. Here’s his picture.

**The Culture**

*“Culture is a little like dropping an Alka-Seltzer into a glass – you don’t see it, but somehow it does something.”*  
(Hans Magnus Enzensberger)

**The welcome**

One might say that, culture here is, in a word, hospitable. There’s a guy named Allaelden Allouba, a former high-level player himself who coordinated all



A reserved, but efficient gentleman – he saw to our needs as though he had nothing else to do. In fact, all the Qataris on his team were exceptionally pleasant to work with – and it seems that we were all invited back for the next time. The line forms on the right!

## **On the roads**

We all arrived on Friday – and the place was pretty much dead in so far as traffic goes. We then learnt that Friday here is like a Sunday in the rest of the world – and Sunday here is the first day of the week. Needless to say, traffic took a turn for the worse from that point on.

We have evidence to believe that a fashion police is coordinating things in Doha. Taxis and buses are all the same color (aquamarine) – and the drivers all wear uniforms – a shirt & tie, also with aquamarine accents – all perfectly coordinated. The taxis are owned by the state. The drivers rent them. The gas is supplied. It costs 23 cents a litre! I know you don't want to read that last part.

## **Drinks**

Qatar is of course, essentially an alcohol-free society – and finding a place to have a cold beer can be a challenge. It brought to mind W.C. Fields' famous quote: *“Once, during Prohibition, I was forced to live for days on nothing but food and water.”* – and we had visions that such would be our fate. Good luck had it that we met up with an ex-pat named Foster who was able to offer some comfort under those difficult conditions.

## **Shopping**

Another neat feature of Doha is the Souk Waqif – a never-ending convolution of alleyways forming a giant bazaar with a vast array of goodies for sale. This served as an interesting diversion for match-weary officials. John Massarella

even had a couple of suits made – to compliment his sideline as a eulogist! Yes it's true – and he's apparently in great demand as people are just dying to have him speak about them. If he's that popular, maybe that's some kind of warning to stay away from this guy so as to avoid becoming the object of one of his dissertations!

## **The Main Event**

*“Early in life I had noticed that no event is ever correctly reported in a newspaper”* (George Orwell)

Considering the above quote, I guess I should mention that there was a Squash tournament. I suppose a minimalist style holds the least risk of error – so let's just say that some guy named Darwish beat another called Shabana – and some gal named David beat another named Grinham...

## **The court**

In contrast to most events where a Show Court is rented for the week, the Qatar Squash Federation has one permanently installed – within a 500-seat arena! Resources are not the problem here. And, they do a great job of the presentation too.



The VIP seating down at the front is

bedecked with flowers and carpeting, and they brought in the PSA's Robert Edwards as the dynamic, professional, info-laden, metaphor-making, presenter for each of the main matches. All in all, a first class show.

### **The 3-Referee Spatulas**

Conscious of the desire to have a truly 'player-blind' system – and not yet having an electronic device that can deliver that – we trialed a paddle/spatula system imported from the French-speaking part of the exotic land of Canada – where it had been used over the past year. Unfortunately, it was felt that it was too cumbersome to manipulate them – especially if you were the CR who had to balance the clipboard, select the correct spatula, check to see what the SR's selected, announce the consensus – and write the score. So the spatulas were put aside. Nonetheless, something still needs to be done for use at the local level electronic devices will not be available. Variations of spatulas or cards will need to fill the void to ensure anonymity.

There's no doubt that ensuring that the players cannot identify who gave what decision is a key element for this system to flourish. In turn, that state of affairs cuts down drastically on any player dissent – and that can only be good for image of the game. Total anonymity is a fundament tenet.

### **The Not-so-Main Events**

*"You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough."* (Mae West)

### **The outdoors**

It seems that most of the others had been here before – so I was alone to check out the countryside – and that meant the famous dune tour. These guys take you out to the desert an hour south of Doha in a Range Rover – bring the tire air pressures down to a mushy 15 pounds for a better grip – and take you on the ride of your life along the crest of 200-foot dunes – to then come to the edge and then – down! And on the way down – they step on the gas!

Is there a lot of sand here? Is the Pope Catholic? The tour goes on and on over miles of flats and crests – all the way down to the to the edge of the Persian Gulf where you can look over to the United Arab Emirates and Dubai. You can almost see the money – all the while standing on top of incalculable wealth of oil & gas under your feet.

We ran into (not literally!) some Sudanese camel herders who make their living taking tourists for rides (literally) – but some hot tea was all we had time for – and to take this photo. I'm the one with the two legs!



### **The indoors**

Another interesting event was the Tuesday evening gala, where the motley crew go all fancied up in their Sunday-go-to church outfits. We're not sure if that made an impression on anyone, but the Qataris sure impressed us with their impeccable flowing robes and

welcoming demeanor. Each referee was introduced and given a certificate of appreciation and a beautiful watch. The feast was held at the Mariott Hotel and the food was outstanding.. Here's a photo of the whole bunch together.



### **The Thrill is Gone**

B.B. King had it right - but he wasn't referring to the officiating of Squash. I am. We have now entered the era of the 3-Referee System for essentially all professional events. Of course, the game is not about officials – but it is the simple fact for some officials that there is now something missing at this high level – that it's unlikely that we see much one-on-one officiating. It looks like the 3-person-decision-making task force is pretty much what we'll see at most events unless some distant, out-of-the-way backwater simply has no one around.

### **Less dissent**

There's little doubt that when a true player-blind system is instituted (electronically or with some form of indicator), there should be fewer issues – either with the behaviour of upset players singling out a given official for harassment, or with recruitment of officials to participate (even including players where no choice exists) – since they know that no specific decision can be attributed to them.

### **Quotes and Anecdotes**

Of course, over the course of a week of officiating like this, there will be some amusing occurrences – and so without further ado (but with potential embarrassment) :

- A player queries John's change of hand signal from NL to YL – which would have given him the point. John answers: "The let is the right call – but my mind didn't send the right signal to my hand"! The player, Peter Barker, then replies: "I know what you mean – I tried that once on my girlfriend!"
- How many points for 'benzoxycamphors'? The Brits in attendance (Wendy, Dean, John, & Jack) seem to travel the world for the purpose of playing Scrabble in as many countries as possible – and if there happens to be a Squash tournament – then all the better.
- Mike, having just finished a conversation about Cricket between games, finds himself needing to specify an injury time out to a player – and announces: 'Self-inflicted injury – you have three wickets!'
- Since the WSF now has a new logo discussions came up about a new shirt for WSF Referees. The issue of colour was also under discussion, and an informal poll seemed to conclude on a pale blue. Now – how about that suggestion about building in dark-blue vertical stripes like referees have in other sports?! I think not!
- While the group was chatting in

Wendy's room, Dean was looking for a towel among the storage shelves. John suggested he look in Wendy's drawers! That quip was enjoyed so much by its author that it set him off into one of his famous laughing / bouncing frenzies.

- The courts were slippery. David Palmer was getting frustrated – or tired. Ayaz refuses his request to have the floor wiped for the 5<sup>th</sup> time – issuing his now iconic: “Palmer – I know what you are doing!”
- The key to the referees room was nowhere to be found. Chris said John

had it last – and John denied it. each time a search elsewhere proved futile. In fact, true to prophecy, he denied it three times (before the cock crowed!). Finally, insistence on a thorough search in the depths of his pockets proved to be his undoing! This guy can't be embarrassed.

- Proof that Mr. Foster was able to make some people laugh



## **The Women's World Teams Event, Cairo, 30 November–6 December 2008**

**by Ian Allanach, World Referee**

The referees appointed to this event were Ian Allanach, Dave Atkins, Jamshed Gul, Yogi Singh, Mohd Fayyaz and Nasser Zahran, who in the main acted as Tournament Referee. So we are talking about quality, experience and good looks.

The organisation by the Egyptian Squash Federation was first-class and all referees were met at the airport timeously and transported to the hotel, the Sonesta, a mere 5-minute walk from the event venue, the Cairo Stadium. That trip daily to the Cairo stadium was a quiet, pleasant stroll – midday temperatures were around 28C and the evenings around 20C. The fact that you

had to negotiate a nine-lane central motorway to get to the stadium was but a minor challenge. There was no bias – Cairo taxi drivers will run anyone over – but that game of “motorway hedgehog” did serve to increase the referees' adrenalin rush in preparation for the games ahead.

The enthusiasm of the Egyptians was apparent from the moment of our arrival – it probably helped that they knew they were in with a big chance of the championship, but all the helpers were full of that enthusiasm and the welcome to all was impressive.

At the Cairo Stadium centre there were four glass-back courts with superb seating on umpire-style chairs attached to the tiered seats. There we used the standard referee/marker system. On the centre court and the outside glass court (which was only used for evening sessions), the three referee system was

employed. Appropriate seating was reserved and it was a bonus that the two seats in front of the central referee were kept free to ensure unobstructed viewing – no excuses for a missed “down” call then.

The 6 WSF referees were strongly supported by a group of Egyptian referees chosen by Nasser – and boy, were they good. They refereed ties, they had great experience of the three referee system and their decision making was first class. They took on an impressive workload and stuck to their duties diligently. With the appropriate support there are at least two potential International referees there.

19 teams took part in the event and we had 3 days of pool ties, a complete day off on the Wednesday and then 3 days of quarters up to finals. A day off in a week’s tournament is a luxury and the referees made the most of it. For \$80 an air conditioned 6-seat taxi was hired with English speaking guide and we visited the Egyptian museum and, of course, the pyramids and the Sphinx.

This meant some time on the Cairo roads and as I sat facing the rear of the taxi, I was reminded of my words for a previous referees’ review from several years back (Issue Number 5 – September 1996) : “Surprisingly there is one action even more terrifying than looking forward at the chaos ahead. It is to look out of the rear windscreen at the mayhem approaching you. You are convinced that you are about to be joined in the rear seat of your taxi by any one of the six front seat passengers from the cars behind or the cyclist wedged in between”. Déjà vu.

Some things are best seen from a distance – that does not solely apply to the pyramids. It also applies to the chosen casual dress wear of certain referees on that day – the further away, the better. With Yogi, Fayyaz and Jamshed charging across the Sahara desert on camels, all we could hear from a distance were the forlorn calls of “Ian!!!”, “David!!!” – “Look at us” – “You take picture?”. All three camels came back deaf.

A star turn on any evening when Egypt played, were the “Lipton boys”. Lipton’s Tea was a sponsor and on those evenings, some 30 lads appropriately dressed in the company colours came along to chant their support for Egypt. At the semi final between Egypt and Malaysia, the atmosphere was sensational, noisy but witty, friendly but competitive. Needless to say the three referees remained completely neutral.

From the outset, the referees decided to have a “call of the week” competition. The result was a tie between two calls. In the Canada/Australia match all were surprised by the “Stroke to South Africa” call. We cannot tell you who it was – suffice to say that the Hong Kong team was not surprised. That tied with the call of “Conduct warning – racket abuse” against the Netherlands third string. The problem there was that the person making the call was the *marker* in a standard referee/marker situation (Ian – oh Ian – too quick!).

In conclusion, Egyptian Squash served the championships well. Organisation was first class, friendliness and generosity much to the fore. The venue was excellent and the weather terrific. Cairo in December ain’t bad. Of course

the Egyptians were proud that their team came through but their courtesies extended to those finishing much lower in the rankings. Egypt has passion, but it also has pride and consideration for others. This country is very much part of the future of squash.

## **Saudi International, 14–19 December 2008**

**by Roy Gingell, World Referee**

Set in the idyllic location of Sunset Beach Resort, Al-Khobar. The Saudi International proved a fitting end to the squash year of 2008.

Record prize money of \$250K ensured a top-class line-up of all 23 top-ranked players, 1 local and the 8 qualifiers from a Qualifying Event held earlier in October.

Messrs Aarts, Gingell and Massarella assembled at Heathrow for the 7hr flight to Bahrain and the 90-minute journey across the causeway to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Whilst Zahran enjoyed a much shorter 45-minute trip down from Kuwait.

Conditions at the event proved very interesting indeed: while the two outside courts proved very bouncy, when the sun set the Show Court was very cold and very dead.

To get through the first day's schedule with 16 matches required some careful planning. With all PSA players aware and willing to help in the 3-referee system it was achieved without hiccup.

Thereafter with a 6pm start each evening the rest of the schedule was a breeze.

Conditions in Al-Khobar at this time of year showed warm daytime temperatures, much to Massarella's liking. Regular 4hr stints in the resort's beach area ensured that he returned home to snowy England looking tanned and very healthy.

Aarts, Gingell and Zahran opted to chill out and use the excellent facilities at the resort. These included a credit card system for food which enabled all to eat at their leisure and full internet access.

Gingell and Zahran also undertook a 3-day workshop for 15 of the local Saudi Squash Federation's referees. A presentation of the "Calling the Shots" video and an exam ensured a lively debate on all 3 days.

Indeed on the show courts each evening the "18 referee" system was adopted: all the local referees seated directly behind the centre referee eager to show their decisions and discuss the variations the following day.

The Squash was of the highest standard, with live coverage provided by the Saudi National TV company throughout the Middle East and Gulf Area, which pleased both Egyptian and other players alike.

Men's squash and indeed squash as a whole are surely indebted to Ziad Al Turki – the promoter of The Saudi International and now chairman of PSA for his vision and enthusiasm for the sport. Once again he staged a tournament of the highest order.

## **Envoi**

My thanks to all the contributors who have made this such a successful issue of the WSF *Refererees' Review*.

The next issue of the *Review* is scheduled for June 2009. Contributions may be sent to the Editor at [symingto@uvic.ca](mailto:symingto@uvic.ca).