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**The Newsletter of the Midland Region of the
British Motor Racing Marshals Club
Internet Edition**

EDITORIAL

***THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE
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It seems strange to be preparing for the British Grand Prix so early in the season, but for whatever reason the “powers-that-be” have decided that Easter weekend is a suitable date for our round of the FIA Formula One World Championship. Like many others I can remember the last time that the UK played host to a Grand Prix on Easter weekend; indeed we are still drying out after seven years! I hope that the weather will be slightly more clement than it was at Donington in 1993.

Of course Donington now does not have a weekend off, for those spectators who cannot be bothered with the high prices, queues and shortage of races and spectacle that make up a Grand Prix weekend, TOCA have decided to stage a round of the BTCC at Donington that weekend. For those of you who did not volunteer for the GP; those who could not volunteer for the GP or those who were not selected I know that Donington ES team (for Course, Incident and IO) and BARC (for Flags, Observers and Specialist) will welcome you with open arms.

And for those of you who do not like the shortage of spectacle and everything else that has come with the BTCC package in recent years, may I recommend the Jaguar Car Club meeting at Snetterton on Easter Sunday (23rd April). This meeting was fixed before either the GP or the BTCC meeting and I know that the JCC will welcome your support. For further details contact Nigel Barter (Regional Comp Sec).

Stay on the safe side.

DJS

Chairman's Chat

As I write this, the 2000 season has just started. There have been a few race meetings and the first GP of the year. I have attended my first race meeting of the season at Silverstone and just completed my last training engagement for the winter. I'm looking forward to a busy season with BRSCC meetings at Mallory, Donington and Silverstone, a number of days with both the Midland Hillclimb and Silverstone Rescue Units and some days on the bank.

Since I am not competing this year I have more time for marshalling and one advantage of this is that it allows me to visit quite a number of venues and do several different jobs. By not sticking to one place or job I get a variety from weekend to weekend; I find that this stops me from getting bored or stale. It also allows me to meet more people. Apart from the love of motorsport one of the best reasons for marshalling is to be sociable and to meet people. If your marshalling is at just one venue or doing just one job, why not take the opportunity to do something different or go to another venue. There is no substitute for experience and by trying something else you will get different experiences.

On the social side the committee were disappointed with the level of support for the Annual Dinner Dance. Attendance at the event was probably the lowest for a long time and perhaps not really viable for the venue. Everyone who attended had an excellent time. We were well entertained by our main guest Willie Green whose attacks on Dave Pierre and Steve Hill were well appreciated and many excellent prizes were won from the final "Dave Pierre Tombola". The committee are looking at the format of the event to see what we can do for 2001. If you have any ideas contact Steve Allison or any other committee member.

Back to the 2000 season, I hope that in some ways it does not continue as it has started. At the first Silverstone race meeting of the year Rescue 2 was deployed in the final race to extract an unfortunate Stock Hatch driver from his car. I understand that the 750MC Rescue Unit was also called into action at the first Mallory Park meeting of the season. Let us hope that this is not a portent for the rest of the year. Having said that, the racing at Silverstone was good and that hopefully will continue for the rest of the year.

In closing I will wish you a safe and enjoyable season.

Jeremy Edwards

Grading

A lot of you are probably wondering what has happened to this year's distribution of Marshals Record Cards by the Motor Sports Association.

At the time of writing (mid-March) the MSA's new, computerised database is up, but not exactly running. It currently cannot be used to search for marshals' details using the existing MSA record numbers and has yet to have its printing and reporting facilities tested.

That inevitably means further delays before this year's record cards are issued and before those of you who upgraded last year or earlier this year will get MSA cards which acknowledge your new grade.

Regrettably, the MSA's Training Steering Group - which has claimed the final say on all Circuit and Specialist Examining and Senior Officials upgrades - wouldn't make any decisions on our proposals at its recent meeting, apparently, because information from the database wasn't available at the time.

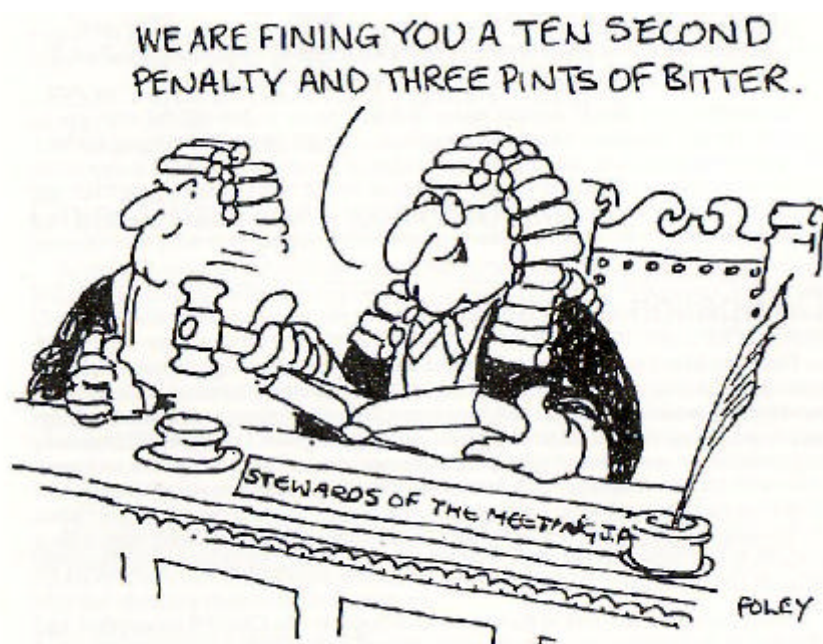
The Group's next meeting isn't until May 31 and, sadly, that means some of you who have been put forward for circuit Black X, Grey Black X and Gold badges will end up waiting seven months for an answer.

I think that is deplorable, but it would seem there is nothing that can be done about it.

Fortunately, the system for all other race grades appears to be working and we have not had any objections from other clubs involved in the new MSA grading system to our proposals.

That means marshals who have sent in cards for all grades from Course Marshal to Observer and Specialist to Experienced Specialist are getting their badges and new-style grading cards through BMRMC - albeit a month later than in the past because of the new MSA approval process and without the still to be issued MSA Marshals Record Cards.

Bob Rae, BMRMC National Grading Administrator



Formula One Flag Regulations

The following are Charlie Whiting's responses to some issues about F1 flagging and in car repeater lights that were raised by Paul Cooke, a member of ASN Canada.

POINT 1:

Regarding flagging, I hope that the regulations have been standardised for the entire season without experimentation during the race weekend or changes from circuit to circuit.

CHARLIE WHITING RESPONSE:

You can be assured of this, flag signals will be shown in accordance with Appendix H at all Grands Prix.

POINT 2:

Each car is now equipped with "flag signal" lights in the cockpit operated from within race control. This technology seems very innovative and should help to increase driver awareness, provided that the lights correspond to the flag conditions first established by the marshals at the incident and not from what is viewed on the video monitors in race control. I do not make this point lightly. Abuse of the new technology at hand can lead to confusion, indecision, inattentiveness, and boredom. These are all potentially dangerous conditions on a flag post.

CHARLIE WHITING RESPONSE:

Apart from the fact that the system is far from perfected yet, the real point is that they (the lights) will not, nor were they ever intended to be, a replacement for flags, merely an aid to assist Formula One drivers who often complain about visibility of flags. The technology existed and it was felt that this may be of help to the drivers as well as an interesting feature for television broadcasts.

POINT 3:

My primary concern is that any second guessing of the marshals' judgement or the "calling" for yellow flags directly from race control will rapidly erode confidence and the attention span of the marshals around the circuit. The marshals have already seen this happen, to a lesser degree, with the race day blue flag regulations of the past few years. Personally, I have never favoured "automated" flagging. We have all worked very hard recruiting the best, most experienced marshals from around the world to work at GP races. (Witness the severe marshal selection process for the Indy GP) Let's make good use of our collective talents and judgement on the circuit, then support it, in fact, reinforce it with new high tech innovations.

CHARLIE WHITING RESPONSE:

There will be no second guessing of marshals judgement where the cockpit lights are concerned, as I hope I made clear above. Race day blue flags are however a slightly different matter. We obviously realise that experienced marshals know when and where to wave a blue flag in the race, this task however becomes more difficult as the race goes on as an eighth place car coming up behind a thirteenth place car may not be so obvious. We now have a system in Race Control which assists in letting us know exactly when any car is within two seconds of lapping any other car, we can then convey this message to all posts in case it was not clear track side. We are not attempting to do the flag marshals' job, just assisting.

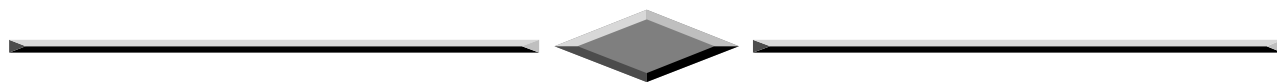
LETTERS

The debate about long race days and people leaving marshalling is one that as a new marshal eager to learn the tricks of the trade is difficult to appreciate. In my first year I have met on the whole, friendly informative and most of all helpful people who care deeply about their sport and are always ready to pass on the things you need to know so that you can contribute fully to the proceedings.

I had one occasion when I was assigned to the pits where an individual received me with less than enthusiasm due to my lack of experience as a marshal. I put this down to poor man management on his part but on reflection later could see a reason why some people might take offence at that type of attitude and question why they should give up quality time to marshal. However this was a one off and I let it pass though I felt then and still feel that negative images are more harmful than positive ones as they stay with you longer.

As with all groups marshals span the spectrum of society and are as individual as any other, but what I have found in my first year is a companionship that I have not seen in any of the other pursuits that I am involved with. I find this very refreshing and a great stimulus that has you looking forward to the next meeting wondering what is going to happen next to beat the experience you have just enjoyed. Obviously my views may be tinged with the shortness of my experience as a marshal and may change with time but never the less It must take something fairly major to make an experienced marshal walk away from the sport.

David Miller



I have had a thought, (frightening as that is). At one time we were all 'new marshals' with no idea as to where to go, what to take or who to see when we eventually get there. So, unless you were lucky enough to go to your first meeting with an experienced marshal you end up carrying the entire contents of your wardrobe and kitchen around with you all day!

Wouldn't it be nice if a nice man (a very nice man) called on you one evening just before your first meeting and showed you the contents of HIS bag and gave you some idea of how not to take enough food to feed the crowd at a GP

Lets face it, the majority of marshals do like to have a bit of a chin-wag about our chosen hobby so why not extend this to somebody who is totally unprepared for what is about to land on them? For every new member of our club there must be an experienced marshal living not a million miles away who could pass on the basic essentials of marshalling, take their bag with them and generally put the new members mind at rest before the big day.

If anybody feels this is a bit much, think back to your first meeting and how unprepared you probably were. Of course, if anybody else has any other suggestions...

Phillip Schramm

A Trainee's Travels

It was a cold grey morning that Saturday at the start of March when I set forth at some ungodly hour to make my way to Silverstone (I know I know I used the "S" word). This was my first chance of the year to pull on the orange overalls in anger. The BRDC Marshals race day was the first date I had booked this year. After reading the weather on Ceefax I must admit I had second thoughts about the whole mad idea, heavy frost with rain, winds and the possibility of wintry showers (Better pack an extra jumper).

The instructions came and I was somewhat surprised to see the organisers were saying that the meeting could run up to 20 minutes AHEAD of time (this would never happen at Donington I thought.)

Having aired on the side of caution on travel time I arrived about 30 minutes before sign on was to start. So I sat in the car with heater on and wind buffeting the car and had some breakfast. After signing on I had a slow drive out to find my post. Copse exit. After wandering about I thought I had found it but there was no one about so I sat and waited again. After a quick trip to little boys room I returned and found that marshals had started to arrive.

Good day was had by all with some good racing, from our position we had clear view of what was happening at the first corner and chance to help clear up the mess after. The best racing came from the mini winter series and the hot hatch races, which because of the number of cars had to split in two. After seeing some of their driving we re-christened the race The Joy Riders Cup.

Weather was cold and there was an odd flake of snow. It got so bad I had to wear my ear defenders not for noise but to keep my ears warm, and with all the extra clothes we look like Michelin men.

The only gripe I had was that there was no easy way to get over the wall down onto the tyres which were open then down (a long way) to the gravel. The meeting finished on time and we all got a nice crisp new 5 pound note for volunteering which was spent on nice bunch of flowers on the way home for my good lady.

Time passed and the first race of the season at Donington approached but 5 days before still no tickets, had the meeting been cancelled or horror of horrors had my availability form been lost in the post (I started to panic). I emailed Diane had to my relief I was told everything was OK and the tickets were on the way (PHEW).

I thought I had been quite clever, because I am only a trainee I am not eligible for the grand prix and there being no other meeting that week I had booked a weeks holiday on narrow boat.(thus I was able to holiday with the family a miss no meeting).But to my horror when I received the tickets for Donington guess what the BTCC meeting on the 25th and 26th of march has been cancelled and rescheduled for Grand Prix week end (The best laid plans of mice and men – Oh well).

Marc Mills

A Sideways View

Last month, I started talking about the equipment you need when you are setting up a stage, this month, lets take it a step further.

If you are setting up a single venue, don't use too many arrows and never put confirmation arrows after a junction on a single venue as it is usually only a short distance before the next corner and it confuses the driver. Chevron boards are a good alternative.

Arrowing should be kept to a minimum and only be at junctions.

Don't arrow junctions where the route is straight ahead, use tape and a box, if necessary, to keep spectators and other vehicles back.

A navigator told me about one rally he had competed in where the set up crew created no fewer than 67 junctions in just 10 miles. As you came over a brow you could see the arrows for four junctions ahead. A clear straight on indication as you crested one brow was, in fact, after a 90 right, hairpin left and 90 right, causing mega confusion among competitors.

Forest Enterprise - the Forestry Commission as we used to call it - insists on two marshals per junction, so eliminating straight on junctions is a must when it comes to conserving your marshalling power.

How many arrows per junction? It used to be four, now three - one 50 to 100 metres in advance on the side of the road where it will be the most visible - the Warning Arrow - and two (one either side of the route) at the junction - the Gate.

Try to keep the distance between the Warning Arrow and the Gate consistent and remember that the Junction Number should be on the Warning Arrow or one of the Gate arrows if there is no warning arrow.

As of last year, there is now no need for a confirmation arrow after the junction. The change brings all of rallying into line with International regulations. In any event, many clubs did not use the confirmation arrow, arguing that it was advisory, rather than mandatory, and the change is being welcomed by competitors who argue that confirmation is too late.

Finally, use a caution or bend sign to indicate hazards or acute bends. But, only use them if the bend is severe.

On Single Venues, use location numbers rather than numbering every junction.

The wrong direction should be indicated by a No Entry sign on either side of the route and a physical blockage - tree trunk, brushwood, ropes - with a boxed off area to the rear to stop spectators or vehicles back from the junction.

Although these rules apply to road junctions on tarmac and closed road stages, there is no need to block off private driveways.

Make sure the tape is where it is meant to be and that people, including marshals don't stand behind it and park well back from it.

As one co-driver told me not so long ago: "If we've got a problem coming up to a junction and I can see part of the route is taped off, that's where I'll tell him to go. Tape is there to show its safe to go up there."

He did assure me that he didn't take the same attitude if the tape was on a bend!

A Sideways View (cont.)

Don't over arrow is the cardinal rule and remember, if a sign can't be seen there is no point in it being there.

What's more, it doesn't matter if the distances are not numerically accurate as long as they are consistent on a stage and preferably an event. Almost all measurements are taken from a fixed point and measured backwards towards the stage start. It can save time to start at the finish and work towards the start - otherwise you may not see what you have done!

Ensure that notice boards are present. Even if you are not involved in the stage set up and are just turning up to marshal, check they are where they should be, at potential spectator entry points and approaching possible stage crossing points.

You must be aware of where the footpaths cross the stage and aware of any re-routed footpaths and crossing points.

Bob Rae, Midland Region Rally Rep