

HUNDREDS CLAIM ON 'WINNING' COKE BOTTLES THAT AREN'T



# It's the real thing, but then again perhaps not

THINGS don't always go better with Coca-Cola, as hundreds of disappointed customers are finding out.

They are victims of a blunder which led them to believe they were prizewinners in the drink's latest promotion.

Anyone who finds the letters M, G or B engraved inside a

By **AUBREY CHALMERS**

bottle cap is entitled to claim a £260 games computer.

Delighted callers blocked the firm's hotline saying they had found all three letters at once,

But the sparkle went out of their day when the firm explained that it had bungled by using the same letters for the prize promotion and a batch reference.

The MGB embossed inside the plastic cap was a batch code for

thousands of bottles which had been distributed. The prizes require only a single letter.

Now the firm is having to spend a fortune on advertising to explain.

It is not possible to withdraw the offending bottles from sale because the letters cannot be seen until the caps are off.

The clanger came only two weeks after Hoover sacked three top executives over its free flights promotion, which proved so popular that there were problems meeting demand.

Coca-Cola will be giving away tens

of thousands of pounds worth of Sega computer games machines before the promotion ends in September.

Yesterday, customers who called the hotline heard only an answering machine which told them the lines were engaged.

External affairs manager Ian Muir said: 'It is an unfortunate coincidence that the letters are the same.'

'But winning caps have only one of the letters M, G or B, while the technical code consists of all three.'

'The winning letters are 4mm

high, about twice as large as the technical code.' Mr Muir said the firm has consulted the Advertising Standards Authority, which has approved the way it is trying to set the record straight.

He added: 'Consumers are accepting the explanation.' He declined to say how many bottles were in the batch.

A spokesman for the Advertising Standards Authority said: 'There has been no intention to mislead, and it is a totally unforeseen set of circumstances. We believe that Coca-Cola is behaving in a responsible manner.'