



Table Tennis Times

A quarterly, independent, magazine from the world of English Table Tennis

Issue 22

Editorial

Spring 2021

Another year is underway, and we have high hopes that table tennis for us mere mortals will be back towards the end of it. Thankfully there has been some elite action to report on in the ITTF's new WTT events, the World Singles Olympic Qualification Tournament and the World Ping Pong Masters.

The main feature articles in this edition are the continuing story from Ken & Karenza Mathews and a piece from Brian Kean on the history of "The Table Toppers" with often hilarious tales from behind the scenes.

We are also indebted to Alan Ransome OBE, for a detailed examination of the ITTF's new WTT events, which, it is fair to say, raised concerns from many National Associations. We originally asked Alan to write for us as his knowledge is better than ours but since that time there has been an escalation of the issues within the ITTF, so much so, that the website "Inside the Games" has written several articles. The ITTF have also issued a statement on their website dated 22nd March 2021. We have always tried to keep this magazine non-political but on balance consider there was a need to provide a greater awareness.

We have included a short report on the Table Tennis England Extraordinary General Meeting held in January 2021. Again, we wish to be non-political and have reported what happened, leaving it up to you to form your own opinion.

This is an extra long issue as we pay tribute to the great Chester Barnes as well as Geof Bax and Peter Williams. The in-depth article on Chester, written by Diane, is reproduced from the TTE website of 7th April 2017. We also have two of our regular features "The Good News Page" and "What was Happening", this time from 20 years ago in 2001.

In our last issue we highlighted young Felix Thomis's cookery book and have expanded this.

So hopefully, this, our 22nd Edition continues to entertain and inform whilst we all look forward in anticipation of the day when we can start living again in pursuit of the little white ball.

In the meantime, stay safe

Best wishes

Diane and Harvey Webb

Events

World Table Tennis

Middle East Hub, Contender

The new concept of World Table Tennis which has replaced the ITTF Pro Tour events has run a couple more tournaments.

The first of their Contender series took place in Doha from 28th February until 6th March 2021. As with the event in Macao in November 2020 all players were in a 'bubble' and had to meet strict protocols. It was disappointing when all Chinese players pulled out not long before the start of the Contender and Star Contender Tournaments saying "We will not be able to send table tennis players to play outside of China until the Olympic Games due to the ongoing pandemic situation worldwide". It did reduce the quality of the tournaments.



There were four players from England participating in the first of the Contender 'Hub' tournaments, Paul Drinkhall, Liam Pitchford and Sam Walker in the Men's Singles and Tin-Tin Ho in the Women's Singles. Drinkhall and Pitchford teamed up for the doubles and Ho and Walker in the Mixed.

It wasn't a good start for the players when Walker had to concede his first match part way through due to a sprained ankle, this also meant withdrawal from the Mixed Doubles. Drinkhall's first match was against Austrian, Andreas Levenko (WR 144), a close match and Paul started well taking the first two games 6 and 14 but the remainder went in favour of the Austrian with a final scoreline -6, -14, 8, 10, 8.

Ho performed better in her first match against Slovakian, Eva Jurkova and had a comfortable win against the world number 240 by 8, 8, 7. Her next match against Sarah de Nutte (WR 76) from Luxembourg proved a different proposition and Ho lost 3, 7, -8, 9.



Liam Pitchford.
Photo courtesy of the ITTF

This left it up to Pitchford to carry the English flag in the first round of the competition proper, the last 32. An interesting draw as his opponent was Levenko who had previously beaten Drinkhall. Not a successful start to his campaign as Pitchford too succumbed to the Austrian, losing 4, 8, -5, 7.

The Men's Doubles was the last event for England but there were further problems in the camp when a pre-existing injury to Pitchford's thumb resulted in the pair pulling out of the event. The end of the line for the squad in this tournament and a disappointing and worrying restart to their competitive play.

The Men's Singles winner was Dimitrij Ovtcharov of Germany with a 4-1 win over Yun-Ju Lin of Korea. Mima Ito from Japan won the Women's Singles 4-2 against compatriot Hina Hayata.

Middle East Hub, Doha, Star Contender

The second tournament in the Middle East Hub Series started on 6th March 2021 with Paul Drinkhall playing in the 1st Preliminary Round – against Andreas Levenko, again. It was a close match with Drinkhall winning the first, losing the second, winning the third, losing the fourth and way down in the fifth. Clawing his way back he drew level before saving a match point and clinching the match 12-10 in the fifth end. It certainly had us on the edge of our seats as we saw the score twist one way and then the other.



Paul Drinkhall in action in Doha.
Photo courtesy of the ITTF

Next match in the 2nd Preliminary Round was against Mizuki Oikawa of Japan, World 63 to Drinkhall's 56. A straight 3-0 win for Drinkhall 7, 12, 8 with the games tighter than the overall result reflects, nonetheless a good win.

The 3rd Preliminary Round match was against Romanian, Hunor Szocs, who although World ranked 132 is a better player than his ranking suggests and so it proved. He went two up against Drinkhall before Drinkhall pulled one back but then lost the fourth and so the win went to Szocs 9, 7, -8, 10.



Tin-Tin Ho in Doha.
Photo courtesy of the ITTF

Tin-Tin Ho's campaign finished in the 1st Round of the Women's Singles losing 8, 8, 7 to Serbian, Izabela Lupuleska, World 97 to Ho's 93.

Pitchford entered the fray in the last 32 as he was seeded at 15. His first match proved, like Ho, to be his last. His opponent was Kristian Karlsson of Sweden, a very close game that could have gone either way but Karlsson came out the victor winning 12, -3, 7, -2, 11.

The Women's Singles final was between number 1 seed from Japan, Mima Ito and the Singaporean 5th seed Feng Tianwei, a match Ito won -10, 10, 7, 8, 6. Similarly, the number 1 seed in the Men's Singles, Tomokazu Harimoto, took the title by beating German, Ruwen Filus, 9, 9, -12, 5, -7, 8. Filus was ranked 32nd in the tournament so an excellent tournament for him to reach the final.

It is quite difficult to judge the standards of many of the players at present as there are such differing levels of practice and competitive play in different countries. Some have held their National Championships and others have been able to attend large training camps while in England competitive play for the last twelve months has been minimal or nonexistent and training at Nottingham for the top England players has been restricted to four women – Tin-Tin Ho, Maria Tsapsinos, Denise Payet and Charlotte Bardsley. The men's squad has comprised Paul Drinkhall, Liam Pitchford and Sam Walker with Tom Jarvis and David McBeath working their way back to full fitness after injury. They are the only players Table Tennis England have nominated as Elite Athletes and so eligible to practise

World Singles Olympic Qualification Tournament

With most places in the delayed Olympic Games in Tokyo allocated, the last but one chance for four British players to compete in the singles events went to Liam Pitchford, Paul Drinkhall, Tin-Tin Ho and from Wales, Charlotte Carey. The Qualifying event started on 14th March 2021, the third event in Doha. Four men's places were up for grabs and five women's. 73 men had registered for the event and 60 ladies. Pitchford was top of the seeding list. A maximum of two players per country were allowed to enter.

There were three knock-out groups for the men with the winners of each group going through to Tokyo. The losing finalists and semi-finalists of these three groups went into the second stage of the tournament which was a straight knock-out. The winner making it to the Olympics – four players in total. The women's event was on a similar basis but with four knock-out groups with the winner going to Tokyo plus the winner of the second stage of the competition.

Paul Drinkhall, ranked 14 in the event, was in the Knock-out 2 section, he had a bye in the first round and met Singaporean, Pang Yew En Koen in the last 16. Although dropping one end, the result was pretty one-sided with Drinkhall winning 4, 7, 6, -3, 8. Drinkhall's next opponent was expected to be Nigerian, Quadri Aruna, the event's number 2 seed. However, if every result went to ranking it would be fairly uneventful and this was the case when Aruna lost to Russian, Vladimir Sidorenko (World 185). So, it was Sidorenko who Drinkhall met in the Quarter-finals. The young, 18 year old, left hander won the first end in a very tight match 14-12, Drinkhall evened the score with a second game win 11-7, the next two went Sidorenko's way, Drinkhall pulled one back in the fifth but then Sidorenko won the match with a final score of 12, -7, 5, 9, -13, 11. The end of the road for Drinkhall. In the other half of this knock-out group Vladimir Samsonov was the top player but he had to withdraw before playing, leaving the group wide open and a superb chance for someone to qualify for Tokyo.



Paul Drinkhall.
Photo courtesy of the ITTF



England's new coach, Gavin Evans, with Liam Pitchford. Photo courtesy of the ITTF

Liam Pitchford as the top seed had a bye in the first round and his first match in the Round of 16 was against Benedek Olah from Finland (World 85) which resulted in a comfortable win 4-0 by 3, 6, 6, 11. Next up, Jakub Dyas from Poland (World 65). A game that could have gone either way as the players took alternate games but it was Pitchford who crossed the line winning 8, -11, 5, -8, 7, -9, 7. A long match but it meant an all important place in the Semi-finals. Next up was Czech Republic player, Lubomir Jancarik (World 94). Some close games with Jancarik winning the first 11-6, Pitchford the second 11-2, the Czech took the third 13-11, Pitchford the next 11-9 but the last two went away from Pitchford leaving him with only the possibility of qualifying for the Olympics through the second stage of the competition between the losing finalists and semi-finalists. Final score to Jancarik 6, -2, 11, -9, 7, 10.

The second stage started well for Pitchford beating Drinkhall's victor, Vladimir Sidorenko 4-1. His next challenge in the Semi-finals was against Panagiotis Gionis of Greece (World 49). A superb match with Gionis's defence and hard hitting attack against Pitchford's more subtle game. It couldn't have been tighter going to deuce in the seventh game. A close shave but a winning result for Pitchford 10, -8, 9, -5, -7, 9, 12 who doesn't have good results against defenders. Pitchford was through to the final where he met Kirill Skachkov (World 54). This time Pitchford was outplayed going down -7, 7, 8, 12, 7 meaning no place in the Olympic Games from this tournament at least. He will have to hope for a place via the European Qualification event or a place as result of his world ranking, the latter being highly probable as his world ranking is not likely to be overhauled.

So, a ticket to Tokyo for Kirill Skachkov along with the first stage qualifiers Lubomir Jancarik, Bence Majoros of Hungary and Yang Wang of Slovakia. The world 54, 94, 61 and 34 and none of the seeded players. No one would have expected that.



Charlotte Carey.
Photo courtesy of the ITTF

With fewer women than men competing the ladies started at the Round of 16. Charlotte Carey (World 151), in Knock-out Group 1, met Zauresh Akasheva of Kazakhstan (World 170), a match she won comfortably 6, 8, 7, 2. A harder challenge in the next round against Paulina Vega of Chile, (World 74). Carey fought well in her Quarter-final match but Vega came out the victor -7, 8, 2, 6, -9, 10. The second GB player, Tin-Tin Ho (World 93) had her first match against Ruta Paskauskiene of Lithuania (World 246) in Knock-out Group 2. Ho won 4-1 comfortably. The next round was a different proposition as she faced the number 2 seed, Margaryta Pesotska of Ukraine (World 32). Ho put the Ukrainian under a lot of pressure and although not winning the match did great credit to herself, the final score 6, -6, 3, -9, 5, 5.

The five places for Tokyo went to Britt Eerland (World 28) of the Netherlands, Linda Bergstrom (World 81) of Sweden, Polina Mikhailova (World 46) of Russia, and Xiaoxin Yang (World 44) of Monaco all from the first stage and the fifth and final place to Suthasini Sawettabut (World 40) from Thailand the winner of the second stage of the qualifiers.

The ITTF coverage was very disappointing for this major event. Matches could only be watched on Facebook and at times only if you had an account, which I don't. It meant it wasn't possible to view many matches. Added to which was the ITTF feed stopping at 9-7 in the decider in Pitchford's match against Gionis and not even an apology. The Live scoring function didn't work for the earlier part of the tournament so it wasn't even possible to follow matches that way. To check current world rankings meant being diverted to the World Table Tennis website where there is no search function. It was disappointing too, to have only one umpire on each court for the earlier rounds. The ITTF have so few tournaments under their control now that they should have shown greater respect to the players and viewers with more professional presentations and communications. It was also disappointing to see the GB players not in GB kit but in their England and Wales shirts.

The last chance for qualification will be at the European Qualifying event in Odivelas, Portugal from 21st to 25th April 2021 and then there is the one world ranking place allocation.

Worrying Times at International Level

By Alan Ransome, OBE

I have had some concern for some time that the ITTF appear to be taking decisions that are reducing the benefits to most of its affiliated members, the 200 plus national associations, by weakening the structure that enables them to grow and prosper also the direction that the ITTF are taking at the moment, driven by WTT, would only boost a small number of the top associations and the leading 50 world ranked senior players.

This concern has been accelerated by the formation of WTT (World Table Tennis) which is hugely controversial. WTT is a company which has acquired the lucrative ITTF marketing rights. Its Chair is Liu Guoliang, who is also President of the Chinese Table Tennis Association. Its Directors include ITTF Chief Executive, Steve Dainton, Marketing Director Matthew Pound and Khalil Al-Mohannadi from Qatar, who is also a member of the ITTF Executive Committee.

The objectives of the WTT are:

VISION

Expanding the global table tennis economy to ensure the sport is financially vibrant from the top down and, to elevate table tennis to the upper echelon of world sport which will encourage more people to play and consume table tennis.

MISSION

To become the global table tennis commercial leader by transforming the table tennis experience and how it is delivered internationally through world-class entertainment events, engaging fan-centric content and enhancements to ensure that table tennis will have a profound impact on everyone's lives worldwide.

These are basically similar to some of the objectives of the ITTF, although the ITTF objectives are much wider.

This poses the question of why a company is needed to be formed to pursue these objectives, so moving the control of our sport at international level to a very small group of ITTF staff members and officials and who are largely out of the control of the members of the ITTF, the National Associations.

All of this has caused a major split amongst the elected officials at the top of our sport. The President, Thomas Weikert of Germany, sacked the Deputy President, Mr. Khalil Al-Mohannadi, only for the Executive Committee to decide to reinstate him and then to continue to run the sport themselves. We understand that this matter is now subject to court action from the President.

My first concern with the ITTF was more than two years ago when they reduced the number of teams able to participate in the World Team Championships. This has been recently either 96 or 72 men's and women's teams. This was reduced to 32 although this has increased to 40 at the Board of Directors meeting last November. This means that many countries who have for decades been regular supporters of the World Team Championships, will not be able to participate any more. The effect of this will take away some of the incentive for their players to put in work and commitment to represent their National Teams if they have no chance to represent their country in the World Team Championships.

My second main concern is the changes which have been made to the ITTF ranking system. The ITTF system, was similar to the one in England, which has always been based, in the main, on the results of

the matches played on the basis that players who win a match gain points and players who lose, then lose points. This has generally produced an accurate list. The new arrangements, instead of awarding points for wins and losses, award them to players who reach certain stages of competitions and, therefore, the players who enter more competitions are able to gain more points. This has the advantage of encouraging more players to enter the competitions but has the disadvantage of making it more difficult for players who do not have the resources to participate in a lot of events in different parts of the world, so as a result having their ranking position diminished. This produces a ranking list without the same level of accuracy and shows up significant anomalies, with the players who can play in more events going higher and the players who do not have the opportunity going lower.

My third concern is the development of WTT who have launched a new competition programme with four major Grand Smash tournaments with huge prize money and huge ranking points. This proposal also reduces the importance of the World Championships, the Olympic Games with the World Team Championships, already diminished by the loss of around half the teams to have no ranking points at all, so reducing its importance even further. Following recent discussions, the ranking points for the Olympic Games and World Individual Championships have been increased so that they are the same level as the Grand Slams, but there are still no ranking points for World Team Championship matches.

A further problem with this is that the cost for Associations to stage these Grand Smash events is so high that it is likely that National Associations who are the main organisers of the Open Championships, particularly in Europe, would not have the resources to be able to host these events. In fact, the WTT has now employed a European Manager, presumably to expand the running of WTT events in Europe, which may have an adverse effect on the position of the European Table Tennis Union and the leading associations who have staged important Open Championships for decades, as there are only a limited number of dates in the calendar.

One of the effects of all this is to reduce the opportunities for most countries, including Scotland, Wales and Ireland to play in the World Championships. Under these new arrangements the England men would qualify, the women may not. If for any reason Liam Pitchford was lost to the team, it is quite possible that the men would fall out of the top 40 in a few years time based on the rankings of the Junior and Cadet players in England coming through at the moment.

With regard to the main WTT events, the Grand Smash tournament, it is very unlikely that many of the other English players would be able to afford the costs of participation in their main events with the high ranking points, as currently the events are all either in Asia or the Middle East and are very expensive to play in.

The removal of ranking points will take away the incentive for the best players to represent their National Teams in competitions and, therefore, reducing their relevance to their top players. This would affect many countries throughout the world. There are 226 members of the ITTF and it would only be a small number who would gain benefit from these changes with many much worse off.

I have seen first-hand how damaging all this has been with Scotland, Wales and Ireland whose selection for the National Team is a very important part of their programme. The loss of the opportunity for their players to play in the World Championships demotivates their will to train and fight for places in their national teams.

This has an adverse effect on their whole High Performance programme in those associations with not just the seniors, but also sends a negative message to their upcoming juniors and cadets. There are also major concerns that all of this, including the downgrading of team matches at international level, may have a negative effect on Club National Leagues in Europe and generally reduce the importance and relevance of team matches at international and national level.

The formation of the WTT also takes away the control of the sport from the democratically elected officials, as the ITTF Board of Directors and the Executive Committee have effectively handed control of its competition programme over to this company.

The vision of the ITTF, going back to the very early days, was to promote and expand table tennis throughout the world and the size of the World Championships was one of the main ways of doing this. They did this so that most, rather than a much lower number of national teams could compete. When we last staged the World Championships in Manchester in 1997, over 125 countries participated.

I have no doubt that all the plans that are being implemented at the moment would be of major concern to former ITTF Presidents, Ivor Montagu (England), Roy Evans (Wales), Ichiro Ogimura (Japan) if they were still alive. I am also confident that Adham Sharara, who has been President for most of the last 25 years, is also very concerned about these developments.

I have received copies of letters of concern from some of the leading Associations in Europe, in particular the German Association. In a letter under the signature of Hans Wilhelm Gab, former President of the ETTU, who expressed significant concern about all of this and felt that there was a major conflict of interest between WTT and some of the ITTF leading officials. He was also worried that the disempowerment of National and Continental entities was a serious impairment to the grass roots of our sport.

The Belgium Association have recently circulated a letter complaining about the effect that the ranking system has on the opportunities for top players in Europe to make progress in the world list, the cost of participating in WTT events. The Japanese Association are also showing concern, and the Swiss and Belgium Associations have also sent letters in the same vein. China are in favour of WTT, as are Hungary and Qatar.

An intervention from Sandra Deaton at the last ITTF Board of Directors meeting helped to stop the ITTF giving even more power to WTT.

At this stage it is not clear how all this will develop. The ITTF AGMs have been curtailed due to the Coronavirus but will now take place in September with the elections for the President, Deputy President and Executive Committee.

The outcome of these elections may well have a significant effect on sport and its future prospects in many areas of the world but, at the moment, everything looks very uncertain.

We would all like the sport to benefit from better and improved marketing, more sponsorship and TV coverage and stronger funding streams, but

1. Why does this have to be done in a way that damages, to such a degree, much of the existing and traditional infrastructure which has done so well and done so much to support, promote and develop the sport over many decades?

2. Why does this need to be under the control of the most powerful table tennis nation, together with a small group of unelected officials?

It lacks transparency and has no direct involvement of the large majority plus the National Associations who are the bedrock of our sport.

Alan Ransome OBE

English Table Tennis Centenary

It all began on 7th November 1921 and since that date there has been a continuous national association. The original title was the Ping Pong Association but due to this being a registered trade name it had to be changed and so became The Table Tennis Association and then on 24th April 1927 there was a further change to the English Table Tennis Association. It remains as such today as Table Tennis England was adopted as a trading name only and was first used with the current logo in 2014.

So, this autumn we are 100 years old! Several ways to celebrate the occasion are in the pipeline including the production of a centenary book co-written by Colin Clemett and Diane with assistance from Paul Stimpson at TTE. This is due to be available next spring – we have to wait for the 100 year landmark to pass before we can finalise the content!

Writing about 100 years of table tennis with so many landmarks and remarkable achievements and remarkable people is a vast project research work has been ongoing for many months already.

Magazines, annual reports, programmes and photographs have been looked through to glean information. However, as you can never have too much information we are still looking for additional material particularly from the pre-war era. As some of you will know all records were destroyed when the ETTA office in London received a direct hit during the 2nd World War. A devastating loss in more ways than one so there are considerable gaps in the records.

If you can help with the project to preserve a slice of table tennis history please get in touch with Diane. Contact details are on the last page.

Commonwealth Games 2022

Table tennis will take place every day at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham with the first day of play on Friday, 29th July finishing on Monday, 8th August 2022. The National Exhibition Centre, home to the World Championships in 1977, is the venue. The mascot has been launched, so, meet Perry, the cheeky, kind and strong bull. Inevitable really with the Bull Ring being such an iconic landmark in our second city. And Perry? After the Perry Barr district in Birmingham where the Alexander Stadium will be the main athletics venue. I rather like him.



The Table Toppers

By Brian Kean

The "JOHN HILTON A LIFE IN SPORT" which appeared in the previous issue made little or no reference to another prominent part of John's life, which was exhibitions.

A couple of months ago I received a call from Richard Yule in Scotland. Richard had a copy of The Edinburgh Evening News which took a stroll down memory lane and was running a feature on sport in 1961 and table tennis featured in the article. They published a photograph of two internationals, the legend that was Bert Kerr and fellow club mate Davie Hogg performing an exhibition in front of numerous youngsters from the famous North Merchiston Boys Club. It so happens, I, as a 15 year old enthusiastic member of the club's gymnastic team, was roped in to attend and lo and behold there I was sat just behind the umpire.



March 1963. Exhibition between David ... and Bertie Kerr, Brian Kean front row second left

Little did I know that five years hence following a move to Manchester I would be a fellow Scotland international and like Bert and Davie would on occasions be asked to perform low-key demos in schools and youth centres.

These low-key affairs gained momentum when in partnership with John Hilton and Phil Bowen we were being called upon regularly to provide some TT entertainment for a variety of organisations. We were no different to many county and tournament players who did similar and like us may have felt straight forward, uncompetitive table tennis exhibitions were much like football testimonial matches failing to engage with onlookers due to it lacking the tension and excitement of competition.

I was able to cast my mind back to that TT demo night in Edinburgh and while I was appreciative of the high levels of skill, and, for the reasons stated in the aforementioned paragraph I felt due to demos not having that competitive edge there had to be other aspects to exhibitions.

Humour was a leading part of our personalities and we gradually realised audiences responded well to our ad lib comments and antics and it became clear that audience interaction and participation was essential as it enhanced the experience for all in attendance. What followed was pre-arranged invites to local leading players to step up and challenge us. This provided some perspective to differing standards. Our approach to the challenge was to treat each challenger with the utmost respect. Most challengers on losing would smilingly accept with good grace realising 2nd division of the Rochdale league was no match for the class of a future European champion.

Pontins in Morecambe was where John spent a few seasons as a blue coat and his TT abilities were quickly recognised by the entertainments manager and it followed that every Sunday afternoon THE TABLE TOPPERS would exhibit their skills in the main ballroom.

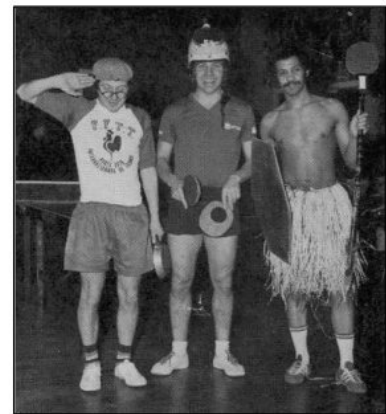
As was the case at Butlin's with their boy and girl of the week comps, Pontins had their camper tournaments which did attract a fair mixture of young and old enthusiastic challengers. Being a holiday camp there was a greater emphasis on humour and audience participation. However, some of the more competitive challengers failed to buy into the spirit of the occasion and became quite aggressive when the Irish Sea tide was not flowing in the direction expected.

We must have been the only people on camp who actually welcomed an afternoon of rain as this was when the Ballroom was filled to capacity and the normal one hour show extended well into a second hour.

At this stage I need to state we never had any illusions of TT entertainment grandeur. THE TABLE TOPPERS as we became known were basically a few mates just having a laugh. While there was loosely a structured programme (*which often went out the window when John went off piste*) spontaneity was the key. Nothing was overly choreographed, a bit like 'Ken Dodd'; timescales went out the window usually due to exuberant challengers timelessly happy to make fun of themselves which kept the party going. Beyond expenses we rarely charged and didn't consider ourselves in the same league, or as spectacular, as the brilliant Secretin and Purkart.

The great Billy Connolly says he started out as a folk singer and the comedy gradually took over. Similarly so for the Table Toppers. That said we ensured the quality of play never suffered, hence, the introduction of leading players in the area to inject an element of seriousness and competition.

In the days before 'LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR' crossed the spectrum of political incorrectness Phil Bowen's performance as a special International guest challenger was to say the least, positively outrageous. At the beginning of the evening we gave a big build up to a special international star who would appear at some point in the show. When time arrived for this super star entrance the audience would be upstanding as the piped music of Zulu warfare was played to maximum volume and MASSABULLA BOWENO INTERNATIONAL CHAMPION OF ALL AFRICA entered the room. Out he came with HEADRESS, GRASS SKIRT, WAR PAINT (*well lipstick actually from one of his many admirers*), A FULL-LENGTH SHIELD AND SPEAR both having bats attached which he actually used in warm up before using his proper bat. The detail of his performance and the verbal exchanges 'there-in' as Diane Webb would say, are stories to be told rather than written due to the verbal indecipherable international language and interaction between Phil and the audience.



Brian, John and Phil

My own contribution to the comedic part of the show depicted me as an off the street challenger named CAPTAIN CORNFLAKE who can best be described as a derivative of Benny Hill's FRED SCUTTLE. This is where John and I worked a routine involving a variety of bats (frying pans etc) a touch of gymnastic flare and some pretty good table tennis in between.

Exploration through the canyons of a memory stuffed with 50 years of experiences creates the difficult problem deciding what to leave out. Over the following pages I will allude to a number of highlights John and I laughingly recalled while sitting through hours of his cancer treatment in the Chemo ward at Manchester's Christie Hospital.

Returning home from Carlisle after a successful show for the local league, Phil Bowen travelled with Harold Myers (*compere for a brief period and a marriage made in hell*) while John and I followed ten minutes later. Midnight Sunday on the M6 through the Lake District is so quiet you could almost engage the auto pilot and get your head down in the back seat. However, we were disabused of the idea on observing blue flashing lights ahead of us. On closer inspection we realised Phil and Harold were stood on the hard shoulder as the Plod Boys were checking out the contents of the boot and rigorously questioning and requesting an explanation as to why this black guy and his mate should be driving around with an authentic looking Zulu Warriors Spear, shield and loin cloth at a suspiciously quiet time on the M6. Given the circumstances that prevail today they could be excused for thinking that potentially they were being confronted by a would-be terrorist with sinister motives. Pleasingly, the arrival of John and I confirmed we were exactly what we were, that of four harmless ping pong players bringing amusement and sporting pleasure to the 'Hillside trekking sheep farmers of Cumbria'. Guess what? They requested contact details with a view to us appearing on cabaret night at the Cumbrian Constabulary Social and Sports Club.

Bury Greater Manchester was where we were invited to attend a low-key presentation evening. The programme was to provide a brief coaching session for youngsters followed by a 30-minute exhibition involving Lindsay Thornton (she of Thornton Table Tennis), John and myself. Lindsay and I took to the table first and performed the normal mobility practice routines followed by a quick 11-up game after which I would stand down while John and Lindsay would do similar, this, prior to John and I going through our comedy routine.

On completion of my stint with Lindsay, John was nowhere to be seen. I quickly improvised by inviting one of the youngsters to step up and challenge Lindsay while I ventured through to the bar expecting to see him holding court with a few of the Friday night punters... not to be...next stop gents ...What I encountered there was akin to Vesuvius and Etna having an annual eruption contest which had extended into a penalty shootout... Sprawled on the floor in a sea of Human Lava and barely conscious was John. (*I guessed this was not the time to ask if he had clean shirt before his next game*). Notwithstanding the fact I had coaching 1st Aid certificates that would stretch the length of the M6 I called upon my wife, Karen (*Child care nurse*), who was in the TT room. Suffice to say that within 30 minutes and thanks to the paramedics, Karen was at his bedside in the A & E department of North Manchester Hospital as medics went through the examination process.

Meanwhile, back in Bury and due to unforeseen circumstances, I apologetically brought the exhibition to a premature conclusion. I soon arrived at the hospital and could have been forgiven for believing I was in the wrong place. Aleppo immediately sprung to mind, bodies everywhere, more police than you would expect on parade at a Rangers v Celtic match. Police breaking up fights, teenage lassies in various states of undress with smudged make up, mascara and tears cascading south down a dual carriageway either side of their noses rendering that afternoon's teeth whitening a futile gesture. I eventually located Karen who explained John was on a hydration drip having suffered suspected food poisoning from the prawn curry he had eaten earlier. This diagnosis eliminated the thought he may have been

suffering from morning sickness!!! (*oh Aye funny boy was John you know*). We eventually headed home around 4.30am and despite A & Es herculean efforts at human sanitisation it failed to prevent the rancid odour in my car which resembled that of a North African camel's breath after a dodgy kebab.

A Guildford presentation evening was where we were welcomed by Linda Jarvis (*nee Howard*). A small function room in the hotel was an ideal setting for an exhibition as it provided just enough room to play while creating the ideal intimacy required to engage with the audience. Despite digging deep into my memory vault, beyond John I cannot recall who else partook. However, I am fairly sure Harvey Webb brought a semblance of control and authority to proceedings resplendent in his official red MC's jacket.



Guildford: John playing a sartorial elegant local player! Harvey in the hot seat

The standout feature replayed over and over again in our minds was John playing me in my CAPTAIN CORNFLAKE challenger role. Each time John hit forehands past me the ball rolled under the chair legs of a particular lady in the front row. (*For the purposes of the narrative and identification we christened her DOLLY*). She immediately entered into the spirit of the occasion, endeavours to retrieve the ball from around her legs were hampered somewhat when she mischievously kept moving the ball thus prolonging the recovery process and increasing the inadvertent leg fondling under chair. THEN IT HAPPENED ...I was lob returning John's smashes but failed to reach one in particular and lo and behold the ball only landed in Dolly's lap. She motioned to hand it to me but teasingly diverted the direction of her hand and inserted the 3 star Nittaku delicately deep into the cavern of her more than ample, well displayed CLEAVAGE. What followed was much hilarity and innuendo as John and I discussed how best to retrieve the ball without hands straying into forbidden pastures. John suggested I try to extract it with my mouth. This created a vision of me wrapping my lips around this NITTAKU 3 STAR while my ears were buffeted either side by a couple of 5 STAR BARNA SUPERS, posing the question of how long I would survive without having to come up for air. Pleasingly, the problem was solved when Dolly stood and performed a hands-free upper torso shake and thankfully the east west movement of her BARNA SUPERS released the NITTAKU from the depth of her valley of joy, 'soeth' delivering us from evil temptation.

On completion of exhibitions we try to personally shake hands and thank members of the audience who were happy to challenge and play the 'Stooge' for some harmless good natured 'micky-taking'. Given the highly amusing contribution made by DOLLY I warmly shook her hand and thanked her for being the star of the show. Disappointingly, I had to decline the offer of joining her for drinks at the after show party!! Rejection was made easier when I explained that my 'boy friend' John was tired and we had a long drive back to Manchester.

The lovely Jan Johns (*nee Carr nee Dunning..and yes she has found a name she now likes*) invited us to exhibit our wares at the opening of the new Woodfield TTC in Wolverhampton. Again, a thoroughly enjoyable evening albeit I overheard one disgruntled dad remark with excessive loudness to his kids “Yes it’s been ok until this lot came on.” Fair enough as the saying goes “some of the people some of the time”. His displeasure was noted by others in the manner he would kick the ball away when it came near him. At the point when I was doing my Captain Cornflake routine with John (*and the room temperature was increasing considerably*) I noticed ‘Mr Meldrew’ trying to open a window at the back of room. Sure we should have ignored him as we were in full flow but I couldn’t contain myself ...I picked the ball up mid rally, turned my attention towards him saying **“excuth me thir if you wish to leave the woom do tho by uthing the door not the window”**. Yes, it was a cheap shot which received great laughter, however, we have all been subjected on occasions to having to sit through events not to our personal taste. Perception usually prevails and you acknowledge the enjoyment being derived by everyone else and either suffer in polite silence or saddle your camel and head for the star in the east. Anyway, one assumes those that mattered were happy with what they saw as 30 years later we were invited back again for an action replay to commemorate the opening of a brand-new purpose-built facility.



John Hilton with Captain Cornflake,
Hastings Association 80th Anniversary, 2008

Highs and lows in sport are par for the course, similarly, so for exhibitions. I have already alluded to the night John ended up in hospital and history almost repeated itself on a night in Salford. We were going through a lob and retrieve routine when we both run and jumped up on the table. This would see us playing push shots while stepping across the net and exchange sides. However, we failed to realise it was a fold up table and ‘sure as eggs are eggs’ the inevitable happened with the table folding in the middle leaving us crumpled in a heap on the floor. John faired quite well, while I gashed my upper leg/thigh and was unable to continue. A truncated version of the demo continued with John and Phil taking on a few enthusiastic challenges. Years later, on occasions I have met players who attended that fateful night, each of whom referred to the table collapse being one of the funniest things they have seen in table tennis (*what do we say about other people’s misfortune*).

Harold Myers was a Lancashire coach who came on board for a short time as a compere/MC. He obtained a booking from Blackburn Dept of Sport & Culture. They wanted us to provide 45-minute warm up at the annual city festival Gala Ball. On arrival John said “Keanus I have a bad feeling about this.” The room/hall was massive with the table in a central position taking social distancing and isolating to extreme levels. With trepidation we began and gradually the strictly wannabees graced us with their

presence while simultaneously “the Dead (Joe) Loss orchestra warmed up their woodwind instruments up in such random fashion that one could be excused for believing the toilet doors had been left open.

They say entertaining a Saturday night audience at the Glasgow Empire has resulted in many an artist suffering extreme mental health. Fortunately, our mental health was not affected. However, the loudest cheer of the night was when four beefcakes entered the arena, verbally abused us with soviet sounding language that would have made Chubby Brown blush and unceremoniously removed the table mid rally.

On reflection, the latter year exhibitions became more professional and better structured. We stopped using sports centres (*no atmosphere*) and importantly Cookey (Alan Cooke) came on board along with Harvey Webb who provided the missing link by doing intro’s and umpiring in a dovetailing manner that retained a semblance of order. The show took on a boxing theme with John making a dramatic entrance to the sound of Tina Turner ‘SIMPLY THE BEST’. He was kitted out in Ricky Hatton boxing attire supported by corner heavies (*biggest and ugliest from audience usually plenty to choose from!!*) administering facial wipe down, added to which local youngsters authenticated the theme by walking round court/ring with round/game placards aloft between games. As you would imagine the encounter between Cookey and Hilty provided great table tennis interspersed with riotous humour and was everything you would expect from players of this quality. It had the audience responding wholeheartedly in pantomime fashion. Boooing the archetypal pantomime Villain Hilton and cheering Cookey’s winning points.



The end of a good day

I suppose it goes without saying the fact, favourable “words of mouth” meant we performed on and off over a period of 40 years. We were, however, saddened on one occasion to receive a written complaint from one school who accused us of being SEXIST and RACIST. The sexism due to only having male challengers, this despite the fact NOT ONE FEMALE volunteered. Racism baffled us but Phil said it may have been him saying to one lad who motioned to pick up the ball, then retreated quickly when Phil walked over and said something like it’s ok son I don’t bite. On that occasion 500 youngsters (*we did two shows on the day*) were introduced to top quality table tennis and the school were provided with details of every TT club in Tameside and not a written word of thanks, albeit on the day countless teachers were delighted and thanked us for a great show that was well received by the pupils.

It may appear self-congratulatory when we say that over the years we did a great marketing job for a game that has brought us all years of enjoyment and forged lifelong friendships. Hopefully, along the way we provided inspiration for some of the many hundreds of kids in schools and youth clubs who saw THE TABLE TOPPERS.

World Ping Pong Masters

All photos courtesy of Michael Loveder from the 2020 event – with grateful thanks

Replacing Barry Hearn's World Championships of Ping Pong which has run the last few years at Alexandra Palace, this January saw an invitation event entitled World Ping Pong Masters with total prize fund of \$102,000. 24 players from various countries played, although some were based in Britain. Somehow, the event entitled foreign players to be able to travel to England and play under the Elite Sports Person Exemption!



Maxim Shmyrev

There were familiar faces from around the globe, with former champion Maxim Shmyrev of Russia and German, Alexander Flemming, as well as a first for Sabine Winter of Germany (who could have played for England as she was eligible to do so) and four English players: Ethan Walsh, Andrew Baggaley, Chris Doran and Matt Ware. Enhancing the home countries numbers were the effervescent Gavin Runggay of Scotland and Northern Ireland's, Paul McCreery and representing Ireland, Jason Sугrue.

16 players took part in the Preliminary Round, the top eight going straight through to the last 16. 18-year-old Ethan Walsh won his first match to go through to the main draw and Matt Ware also won his Preliminary match against Jason Sугrue.

The luck of the draw – or bad luck depending on your viewpoint – saw Ethan Walsh meet the experienced Andrew Baggaley in his round of 16 match which resulted in a win for Baggaley. A second home countries clash had Gavin Runggay face Matt Ware and it was the Scot who got into the Quarter-finals. Chris Doran also reached this stage as did Sabine Winter, playing in her first sandpaper bat tournament.



Ethan Walsh



Andrew Baggaley

Quarter-final clashes had Baggaley v Winter for a place in the Semi-finals, a fixture Baggaley won. He was joined by Runggay, Doran and Flemming. Both the Semi-finals were tight 3-2 matches with Baggaley again reaching a final with a win over Runggay and Flemming pipping Doran in the other match.

Not such a tight finish in the final where Alexander 'The Flash' Flemming won in three straight to lift the crown and a cool \$25,000. Baggaley also went home with a substantial pay check of \$12,500 and even those who lost in the Preliminary Round received \$1,500.

An entertaining event shown on Sky TV and although it is not proper table tennis it certainly is proper prize money - but it still defeats me how Elite status was afforded.



Alexander Flemming

Good News Page

GB Table Tennis has been awarded £1,350,000 from UK Sport to take table tennis through to the Olympic Games in 2024 in Paris. TTE will administer this Progression Funding Award on behalf of all British table tennis and is to cover the performance pathway rather than any particular individual. There are six other sports in the 'Progression' Category: Basketball, Climbing, Fencing, Skateboarding, Surfing and Weightlifting. Basketball, Surfing and Weightlifting also received £1,350,000 whilst Climbing was allocated £1,562,811 and Fencing and Skateboarding both £1,672,485 each. 18 sports are in the World Class Programme and receive differing amounts from £2,134,257 for Archery to £27,601,684 for Cycling.

British Para Table Tennis is to receive £3,717,787 as their share of the overall £352 million covering 43 sports. New sports to appear in 2024 include 'breaking' (a competitive form of break dancing), surfing, skateboarding and climbing.



Kim Daybell. Photo by Alan Man

Paralympian, Kim Daybell, was one of three sportsmen who received the National Lottery Spirit of Sport Award in December 2020. A Senior House Doctor working with Covid-19 patients in North London, Kim, put his Tokyo Paralympic Games on hold to help in the battle during the pandemic.

Competitive table tennis for under 18 year olds (government definition under 18 on 31st August 2020) and disabled players can restart from 12th April 2021 providing there are no setbacks. 'Bubbles' of 15 will be permitted. Adults should be able to commence playing again from 17th May 2021 in 'bubbles' of six. Junior competitions are in the TTE calendar in April and May at Sycamore, Nottingham and St Neots and an Open and Veterans in Hereford.

Congratulations to John Mapletoft, right, on receiving a British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours for coaching for over 50 years in Grantham. John was made an ETTA Vice-President in 2020 and is also a Vice-President of Grantham League. Some of the players John has been involved with have gone on to represent England at senior international level; they include Emily Bates, Tom Jarvis and Matthew Leete many more have had considerable success at junior level.



Congratulations too, to Kelly Sibley, on her appointment as England Women's Team Coach. Kelly will carry out the duties of the post alongside her existing table tennis commitment at Nottingham University where she has worked for several years now bringing much success to the university team. A well deserved appointment, we couldn't think of anyone better to take up this post.

There is still the possibility the World Championships will take place later this year. We will keep you updated.

The Ken and Karenza Mathews Story continued

1972: continued:

Ken: Again this year I was running the coaching course at Mosney in Ireland and by now I had arranged for it to be transferred from the public hall where it had previously been run, to another hall on the campsite where the pupils could hear what we were saying and concentrate on their practice. Each year, Karenza and I would invite different top players to come with us to Ireland to act as coaches on the course. We have been trying to remember who went each year but we cannot be certain who went when! Anyway this year we returned home on 3rd September.

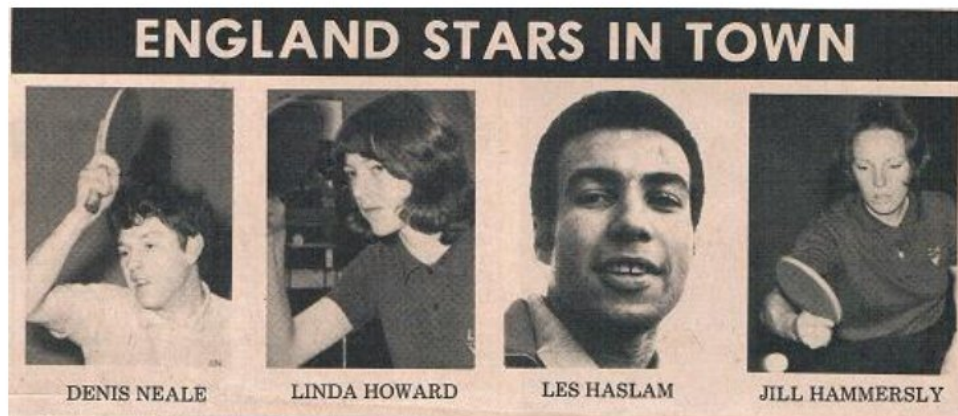
Monday night training started again at Sydenham on 11th September. The next day Karenza started a new appointment as table tennis coach at Beverley School at Worcester Park; long sessions from 4 – 6 pm. On the 20th another coaching job, this time at Reedham School at Riddlesdown – which at least had the advantage of being not too far from home. But another, even longer session from 2.30 – 5.30 pm; a really long time to be standing around coaching particularly in, what was then, a pretty rough school. So to give an example of Karenza's week: Tuesday 4-6pm at Beverley, Wednesday 2.30 - 5.30 at Riddlesdown, Thursday 2.00- 4.30 at Merton Technical College. Oh, and the following Monday she started at Cheam High School! Obviously she couldn't do all of these sessions and so Mary continued to help out together with Joan Warren, Connie's wife, as they were still living near to us at Purley. On the 22nd there was an invitation tournament to celebrate the opening of the Monks Hill Sports Centre at Riddlesdown near Croydon. Karenza beat both Jill Hammersley and Linda Howard to win the event.

A week later, on the 29th, Karenza went up to Manchester for the North of England Three Star tournament. She lost to Jill 19 in the third in the final of the Singles but won the Women's Doubles with Linda and the Mixed playing with Les Haslam; originally from Jamaica, a very good player who had been competing very successfully on the English circuit for some years.

Karenza: On 6th October I left with the team to fly over to Brussels for the Belgian Open; it was held at Anderlecht from the 6th to 8th. In the team event we beat a West German second team but then lost to their first team consisting of Di Scholer and Agnes Simon. I lost in the 2nd round to Hendrikson – dammit - I had easily beaten her in Guernsey! I also lost to her and her partner in the Mixed when I was partnering Mike Johns.

Three days later I was off to a training camp with the squad at Lilleshall. This lasted until the Friday. I returned home and the next day drove down with Ken to Hastings for the annual Sussex Open. I won the Women's Singles beating Shelagh Hession in the final; I also won the Women's Doubles with Linda and the Mixed partnering Norbert Van de Walle, the number one Belgian player who was playing in some of the English Tournaments.

On 17th October we played an exhibition match at Shrewsbury for the Shrewsbury and District Table Tennis Association. Local Counties or Leagues took these events very seriously and tried to get as much publicity for them as possible; they had to pay for the squad to come to town and wanted to get as big a crowd in as possible.



Ken was the Manager of the International Squad and he had done a lot of work to improve the presentation of the exhibitions. The programme was quite involved and provided audiences with an insight into the tough regime of training and practise together with some fun games. After an interval this would be the format:

1. Men's Doubles (2 games)
2. £100.00 challenge match. This would be a game between a top local player and one of the men from the squad. The £100 would be placed under the net on the table. The locals loved that one but thankfully the local player never won!
3. World counter-hitting record.
4. Ladies Singles (2 games)
5. Presentation of pennant to local organisers.
6. Men's Singles (2 games)

The exhibitions had become more sophisticated and complicated. But the players all knew the training exercises and those who took part regularly would know what to do – and would help anyone who had not taken part before. The exhibitions were very successful as there was quite a lot of serious stuff – together with some really fun things like Piggy Ping.

It was at these exhibitions that Ken started the world counter-hitting record attempts. He formulated the rules and set it all up in conjunction with the Guinness Book of Records. New world records are still attempted but the Guinness Book of Records tells us that:

The most table tennis counter hits in one minute is 180, and was achieved by Mima Ito and Tacshow Arai (both Japan) on the set of 100 Handsome Men and Beautiful Women, at the Kojimachi NTV studio in Tokyo, Japan, on 13 November 2011.

(Not too sure what handsome men and beautiful women have got to do with it!) Anyway we attempted the record at all of the exhibitions – I think that Nicky Jarvis and Denis Neale held the World Record in those early days.

On 24th October I flew with the team to Budapest to play Hungary in a European League match. We lost quite convincingly 6-1. Jill played the Singles and lost to Beatrix Kishazi, and Denis and I lost to Istvan Jonyer and Judit Magos in the Mixed Doubles. The following day we played a friendly and again lost, this time a bit better 5-2. I beat Molnar the number two Hungarian girl.

We returned home on Friday 27th, just in time to go up to Hull for the Humberside Three Star. There, I lost 22 in the third to Jill in the final but won the Women's Doubles with Linda and the Mixed with Denis.

Another training camp followed at Lilleshall after which, on the 21st we travelled to the University Sports Hall at Leeds to play West Germany in a European League match. Lost again I'm afraid, the score 5-2. Denis and Jill won two Singles but Denis and I lost to the Scholers' 19 in the third. So frustrating!

On November 23rd we flew to Boras in Sweden for the Scandinavian Open. This annual tournament was always well attended by teams from all over Europe – and from the Far East. The Chinese were particularly keen to play against Sweden's Stellan Bengtsson who was the reigning World and European Champion; they wanted to know how he, out of all the Europeans, had managed to beat their players. This time however it was to be Sweden's Kjell Johansson who won the Men's Singles title; the Chinese took endless film and went into huddles trying to find answers to the Swedes' great attacking games.

In the team event Jill and I lost to North Korea. In the Singles we each lost to players from South Korea – both of whom went on to contest the Women's Singles final. Denis and I had a good win over Gabor Gergely of Hungary and Kishazi but then lost to two Japanese. I was paired with a South Korean girl in the Doubles but we lost to two Chinese players who went on to reach the final. We flew home on Monday the 28th.



Jill Hammersley



Linda Howard

The following weekend we were off to The Royal Horticultural Hall at Westminster for the Middlesex Open. These pictures were taken at that tournament. The first is of Jill, the second of Linda. I won the Singles beating Jill two straight in the final and then partnered Jill to win the Women's Doubles. Denis and I rounded up a good tournament by winning the Mixed.

No rest for the wicked! Coaching for the next few days and then a European League match against Sweden on 7th December. We lost 5-2, our wins coming from Jill who beat Birgitta Radberg and Denis and I when we won the Mixed. On Friday 15th we flew to Moscow for the European League match against Russia. Terrible! - We lost 7-0! I lost to Zoja Rudnova. We were now in trouble in the Premier Division of the European League having played four and lost all of them.

To be continued.

Chop, Slice, Smash then Serve



In our last issue we told you about a cookery book that had been produced by young England player, Felix Thomis, along with his Mum and Dad. The book was produced for charity with Ackworth School Table Tennis Academy, where Felix attends and trains, and also charities for the elderly and homeless in West Yorkshire. At the time we had ordered a copy of the book but not received it, so we were reporting from hearsay.

When we did receive the book we were blown away by it. The quality of the production was superb, the pictures and layout were impressive, the number of people who had been contacted and replied was amazing and the concept a credit to all involved.

Oh, yes and the recipes! Something for everyone and from every continent ranging from Quadri Aruna's Nigerian Rice and Fried Stew, Charlotte Carey's Welsh Cakes, Marcos Freitas's Black Swordfish Fillets, Sabine Winter's Pumpkin Soup, Hugo Calderano's Veggie Lasagna and a delicious sounding Chocolate Crepe Cake from Felix's fellow Ackworth pupil, Harry Yip. 65 recipes in all.



Recipes from Jasmin Wong, Felix Tomas and Hugo Calderano

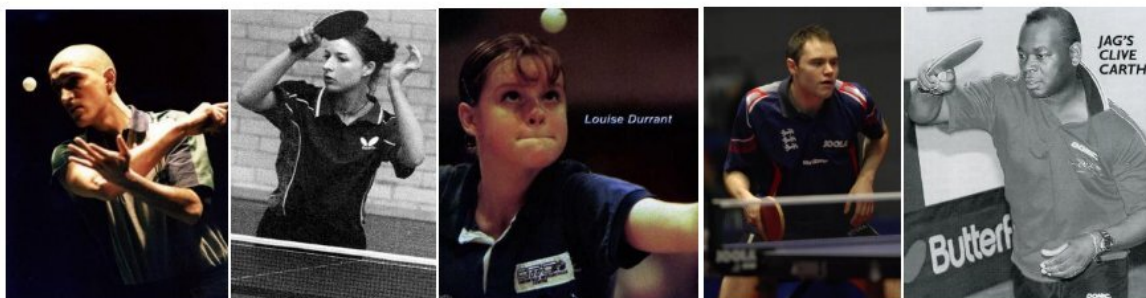
So, who is Felix – one of England's top juniors from Berkshire and currently junior number 9 and cadet number 6 last season. He attends Ackworth Table Tennis Academy where the table tennis is run by that excellent coach, Eli Baraty. Felix is a member of the England Junior Squad and during lockdown has been working with England coaches with lots of virtual training on table tennis specific exercises and also fitness training, with weekly improvement targets and objectives. With schools re-opening on 8th March 2021, Felix, at last, was able to start training again with his fellow pupils. Although with mock GCSEs happening at the moment the amount of table tennis has to be balanced with those all-important exams, particularly as the main exams in the summer have been cancelled, so mock results will be all important. Once those mocks have finished and with no exams in the summer there will certainly be more time to practise and play. The planned restart for junior competitions is 12th April. Good luck with everything you do in the future, Felix.



If you want to buy the book, if you haven't already, you can contact Yasmin Thomis on andythomis@gmail.com Cost is £10 +£2.95 postage, Yasmin will advise how you can pay via Bank Transfer.

What was Happening 20 Years Ago? 2001

- ITTF Rule Changes: 11 up was adopted with serves changing every two points and also that they must be visible at the point of contact to the receiver.
- The 64th English Open at Chatham was won by Wang Liqin and Yoshie Takada in the Men's and Women's Singles respectively.
- At the beginning of the year Matthew Syed and Nicola Deaton were England Number 1s, Gareth Herbert was in pole position at the year end. Top of the Juniors were Dale Barham and Katy Parker who retained the position all year, Cadet categories saw Gregory Baker and Joanna Parker start the year at the top and Tim Yarnall and Abigail Embling at the year end. Bradley Evans and Lauren Spink were the U12s in January and Paul Drinkhall and Lauren Springthorpe in December. In the Veterans, George Pittas was later overtaken by Desmond Douglas and then Chris Rogers whilst sister, Karen Smith, retained her top spot all year.
- Awards for All over 18 months saw a total of 330 table tennis organisations receive £1,120,515.
- At the National Championships Matthew Syed and Nicola Deaton won the main events with Louise Durrant and Andrew Rushton the U21s. Clive Carthy won the Veterans Men's' Singles, there was no Veteran Women's Singles event.



- The ETTU brought together the best U12s in Europe, the Euro Kids programme, for training camps, which included Darius Knight, Paul Drinkhall and Bradley Evans – the latter two also went to China to train and play.



Steve Kerns with Brian Halliday

- Steve Kerns won the ETTA Press Officer of the Year Award which was presented by Brian Halliday, Vice-Chairman, Public Relations. Steve at the time had been Press Officer for the Chelmsford League for 10 years and Essex County for eight years. He also wrote for the East Anglian Daily Times, the Essex Chronicle, Essex Courier, Table Tennis News as well as producing his Local League magazine, Scimitar, plus producing the Chelmsford League website. A well deserved award.

- Yorkshire won the County Championships Premier Division, Kent the Veterans and Surrey the Juniors.

- Grantham College established the first Further Education Table Tennis Academy.
- The English Institute of Sport project in Sheffield received £23,540,000 from Sport England.



Gareth Herbert

- Gareth Herbert was the first recipient of the Johnny Leach Trophy, awarded for the most improved member of the England squad.

- The Junior Boys team at the European Youth Championships reached the Quarter-finals with their team of Bryn Drinkhall, Dale Barham, Matthew Kenny and Michael Chan.

- The Grand Prix Finals were won by Alex Perry and Barbara Kiss of Hungary, the overall series winners were Alan Cooke and Nicola Deaton.

- At the Commonwealth Championships in India, Matthew Syed won the Men's Singles for the third time; the Men's Doubles was won by Alex Perry and Terry Young. The Men's Team finished 4th and the Women 9th. Other medals went to England, bronze in the Men's Singles to Gareth Herbert and another bronze to Alex Perry with Helen Lower in the Mixed Doubles.



Commonwealth Championships Men's Doubles Champions
Terry Young & Alex Perry with Brian Halliday

- The Junior & Cadet National Championships saw Matthew Kenny and Kate Steward win the Junior titles while Gregory Baker and Joanna Parker took the Cadet titles.
- The British League increased from 60 to 72 teams for the 2001/02 season. The County Championships were up from 225 to 240 teams with new sections added for Cadets and Over 60s. The numbers also increased for the National Junior League and the National Cadet League.
- Matthew Syed came third for Labour in the General Election for the Wokingham seat.
- The Home Countries Senior International Team event was won by England – Gareth Herbert, Andrew Rushton, Terry Young, Nicola Deaton, Helen Lower and Katy Parker. Scotland's Euan Walker and Nicola Deaton won the singles events.

- The former ITTF Headquarters in St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex were sold for £55,000. They moved to a wonderful chateau in Lausanne, Switzerland. The premises in St Leonards-on-Sea were converted into a hairdressing salon.
- Darlington Club won the 'Sportsmatch Best Schools Award', their project involved 89 schools and over 2,000 children. Keith Wilson was the main behind the project backed up by Reg Thompson from Jarvis Sport.



ITTF HQ.
St Leonards-on-Sea

- Preparations were well under way for the Commonwealth Games in Manchester the following year, the first time table tennis had been included.
- Success at the World Championships was limited with the Men's team of Andrew Baggaley, Bradley Billington, Gareth Herbert and Terry Young finishing 20th and the Women 34th with their squad comprising Natalie Bawden, Louise Durrant, Helen Lower and Katy Parker. One of England's top officials, John Jermyn, was a Deputy Referee at the Championships and Andy Seward and Brian Watkins were umpires.

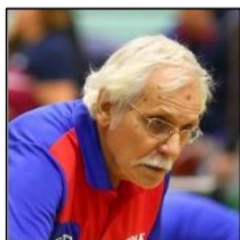


Back: Michel Gadai, Andrew Baggaley, Terry Young, Gareth Herbert, Soren Ahlen, Bradley Billington.
Front: Katy Parker, Helen Lower, Louise Durrant, Natalie Bawden

- Bryan Merrett (international player, National Champion and England Captain), Jack Randall (International Umpire) and Mike Watts (ETTA Vice-President and former Events Manager and Tournament Organiser supremo) passed away.



In Memoriam



Geof Bax

We were sad to learn of the death of World Veteran Over 80s Champions, Geof Bax on 28th January 2021 aged 88 years. Geof won his gold medal at the World Veteran Championships in Stockholm in 2012 and we were privileged to spend time with Geof and his wife, Sally, during his time in that city, having many a pleasant evening in their excellent and amusing company. After playing for over 60 years the win in Stockholm was certainly Geof's most momentous one.

However, it was not his only medal at international events. Geof also won a gold medal in New Zealand in 2014 in the Over 80s doubles with German, Gunter Kraus, another World Veteran title, added to which was a European Veteran bronze medal in the Over 85 Men's Singles in 2017, back in his favourite city of Stockholm.

Many of you will have seen the delightful video clip when Geof appeared in the National Lottery promotional film with fellow veterans against several Greenhouse table tennis youngsters. The twinkle in his eye and the big wink before he blasts the ball past the youngsters epitomised Geof's love for life and his great charm.

He will be missed by all who knew him and the Veteran's circuit will be poorer by his absence. We send our condolences to wife, Sally, and all family and friends.



Peter Williams

Another loss when former England International, Peter Williams, passed away on 20th February 2021 at his home in Rushden, Northamptonshire aged 74 years.

Peter first started playing table tennis in Hatfield where he lived with his parents and sister, Judy, who too went on to become an England International as well as English Women's Singles National Champion before playing for the Netherlands.

The beginning of the family achievements were in an old wartime prefab, purchased and reassembled by their father in the grounds of the small hotel, Dagmar House, which the family owned and ran. It made a perfect games room and with enough space for a table tennis table the two youngsters practised for many hours. Eventually, a couple of teams were formed which played in the Welwyn and Hatfield Leagues until the family moved to Eastbourne when Peter was 16 years old.

While in Hertfordshire though, Peter received personal coaching once a week from Geoff Harrower and his wife which laid such good foundations and were one of the major influences in his game. Peter went on to become Hertfordshire number 1 junior as well as playing for the senior county team and representing various leagues in the county at junior and/or senior level – Welwyn Garden City League, Hatfield League and St Albans League. At the Hertfordshire Closed in 1963 Peter reached the Men's Singles final, the youngest player to do so, having beaten three seeds before losing to England

International, Terry Densham. An impressive achievement for a 16 year old, he also won the Junior Boys Singles title that year and the junior title at the St Albans Closed.

Butlin's Holiday camps must have been a highlight of Peter's summer where the News of the World Scheme was running and he was nominated as the Runner-up in Most Promising Player of the Year Competition in the summer of 1959 and in 1960 was the Boy of the Year Runner-up.

During this period, Peter played in several Open tournaments and had quite some success winning both the Kent and Sussex Junior Open U13 Boys Singles in 1958/59 and 1959/60 and the Kent Junior U13 Boys Doubles in 1959/60 with Stuart Seaholme amongst other titles.

The move to Sussex resulted in Peter representing that county too, where he eventually was ranked as their number 1 player and also acted as Captain. He had more success at the Sussex Closed holding eight titles altogether between 1967-71 in the Men's Singles, Men's Doubles, Mixed Doubles and U21 Men's Singles. He also won multiple titles in the Eastbourne League.

Peter continued to enter tournaments and took titles at the Bournemouth, Buckinghamshire Letchworth, Gwent, Hastings Tigers, North East England and Portsmouth Opens at senior level. He remained holder of the last of these titles for many years, as the tournament was not held again for several decades.

The call for his first senior international came when he was 21, playing with Chester Barnes and Connie Warren against Israel on 21st October 1968 in Southgate, London. The team won 9-0 with Peter, as well as Chester and Connie, winning all their three singles matches. Further England caps were in the pipeline as Peter was selected for a tour of Ireland. The future looked promising.

However, disaster struck during a county match on 16th November 1968. Unaware that he had broken his foot during the match, Peter carried on playing and didn't get any treatment until 10 days later. The damage caused led to a slipped disc at the base of his spine and he was never able to fully train again. Looking on the bright side, Peter said that at least he remained unbeaten for his country and was never dropped! An amazingly positive attitude when his future international career was cut short. Peter did carry on playing eventually but never at the same level.

One of Peter's proudest moments during his playing career was helping his Sussex team reach the County Championships Premier Division in 1966 when he won all his singles matches in the 2nd Division South Play-offs. In 1967/68 with the score at 4-4 in three county matches against Middlesex, Yorkshire and Gloucestershire, Peter had to play the deciding matches and won all three beating senior internationals on all occasions which resulted in his team finishing third in their division. For his contribution to the county Peter was made a Vice-President in 1973.

On a lighter note Peter told the tale of being asked to star in a 45 second television advertisement, playing table tennis and then downing about a third of a pint of Whitbread Tankard beer, one of a series featuring different sports. It took about eight takes by which time Peter was little tipsy. Peter's manager at NCR (National Cash Register Company) saw it and asked him about it, his future wife Linda also saw it before they ever met. They eventually married on 8th September 1973.

At the beginning mention was made of Peter's sister, Judy, but the siblings weren't the only players in the family as Peter and Linda's younger son, Robert, also played to a good standard, representing Northamptonshire Juniors and Oxfordshire Senior 2nd team.

From Harvey Webb: "I came to know Peter in 1970 when we met socially at an event run by the National Cash Register Company where we both worked albeit at different locations. This was after his accident had curtailed his England career and, as a joke, I told him he could always come and play for the Company TT Team in the Willesden League. Peter respectfully declined the offer but went on to say that he would happily visit the club and provide some coaching. I thought that he was returning my joke, but I was wrong, he was being serious. That summer he made several trips to our club on practice nights and I have to say that by just being able to practise against him put around 5 points on my game and that of my teammates. His ability, even though slightly hampered by his foot, was inspiring, as was his general demeanour. He was truly a gentleman.

Our paths would cross again in the 1990's when I was working for a Recruitment Company in Bournemouth and Peter came to us for some advice and I hope I was able to return the kindness that he did for my team 20 years earlier".

Our sympathy and sincere condolences go to wife, Linda, sister, Judy, and all the family and friends.



Chester Barnes

The legend that was Chester Barnes died suddenly on 19th March 2021 aged 74 years. No one that saw Chester play will forget him, a true star of the 1960s and 1970s whose influence and impact extended far beyond table tennis aficionados. His charisma was in the league of George Best and Alex 'Hurricane' Higgins and like them was not always in favour with the establishment.

He was the youngest ever National Champion just short of his 16th birthday and went on to win the title five times, winning 12 titles in total. His coach, Harry Venner, had a big influence on his play in those early days. Chester reached the dizzy heights of World number 16 and had a following that hasn't been known before or since. He fluctuated between brilliance and a rather offhand attitude, both of which created headlines and kept table tennis at the forefront of the nation's consciousness.

The records will remain and the charm and memories will stay with all who knew or saw Chester, mine among them. We thank you Chester for all you brought to table tennis during that relatively short period when you entertained us nobly.

After retiring from play in 1975, Chester went on to be the assistant to racehorse trainer, Martin Pipe, and became well known on that circuit.

Our condolences go to Chester's wife, Jane, son, Lester and all family and friends.

Donations in Chester's memory for Prostate Cancer UK can be made on the Just Giving page: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/karen-taylor132?experiments=b2c_048_show_hide_fitness_data%2Cb2c_054_show_hide_fitness_totaliser&successType=StaticDonateButtonClick&utm_medium=socpledgemobile&utm_content=karen-taylor132%3Fexperiments%3Db2c_048_show_hide_fitness_data%2Cb2c_054_show_hide_fitness_totaliser&utm_campaign=post-pledge-mobile&utm_term=XQVQ3VraJ&fbclid=IwAR0_FAkWfG4YhGYhWglQDJj23d64uiBvwPkmV8bAL7M6V69jgvPn3ukiGHI

Chester Barnes

Written by Diane Webb 7th April 2017 for the TTE website



George Barnes doesn't have quite the same ring about it but that is how the table tennis player known as Chester Barnes was christened. Chester was the wonder boy of the 1960s and early 1970s. An Essex lad born in the East of London in 1947 his England debut was in 1963; the same year he won his first England Men's Singles National title at the tender age of 15 years. Two years later Chester was 16th in the world, a meteoric rise of a player who often courted controversy. At his height Chester was one of the most recognised sportsmen in England and along with the likes of George Best and Alex 'Hurricane' Higgins his antics off as well as on the table led to many pages of press coverage and a reputation that transcended table tennis.

So where did it start? When he was 12 years old Chester had a holiday at Butlin's in Clacton. He was taken by Len Hoffman with a group of lads from his youth club. Although Chester didn't win the weekly tournament he was rewarded for all his hard work and progress by coach, Harry Venner, by being made the 'Boy of the Week'. This was the start of Chester playing seriously. Harry had a good eye for talent and asked Chester to train at his club in Putney. Less than three years later that talent had developed to make him number one in the country and National Champion. In those days the winners of the Boy and Girl of the week were invited to a week, free, at Butlin's in Bognor. A disgruntled Chester didn't win the coveted title of 'Boy of the Year' in 1959 but he was back the following year.

A two-week holiday in 1960 with Mum and Dad, again at Clacton, this time with England number one, Ian Harrison, as coach. Chester had seen Ian win the English Open Men's Singles title at the Royal Albert Hall and he was his hero. This time at Clacton, Chester won the tournament as well as the 'Boy of the Week' accolade. Another trip to Bognor for the finals and although not the best player there, once Chester's tender years were taken into account he was nominated as 'Boy of the Year', making it an Essex double with Lesley Bell the 'Girl of the Year'. The pair graced the front cover of *Table Tennis*. This year saw another impressive win for Chester too as the *Eagle* U13 Champion. The tournament had attracted 11,000 entrants.



November 1960

Chester's play was making people sit up; he worked hard and as well as his coaching, training and tournament play, played in a different league every night of the week. The reward was being named as Essex County Number 1 Junior and Number 3 Senior in the 1961-62 season; Chester became the youngest ever senior county player.

However, the rewards at national level did not appear. Despite winning all ten matches at the England Junior Trials a less than happy Chester was only ranked fifth by the ETTA. He gave a rather forthright interview to the press which probably cost him the opportunity to represent his country that year. However, results have a way of talking and becoming *Eagle* U15 champion and winning nine Open Junior tournaments, more than anyone else that season, meant Chester could not be ignored for long.

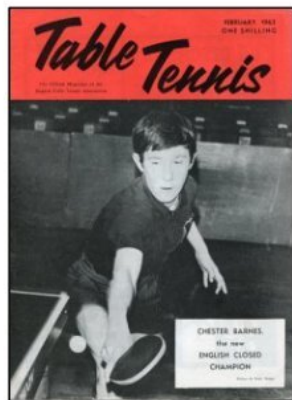
Incidentally, Brian Brumwell who was England Non-Playing Junior Captain and also on the ETTA Selection Committee resigned as a result of Chester's non-selection. A man of principle.



Cheshire v Essex.

Judith Heaps, Derek Schofield, Chester Barnes, Roger Hampson, Mike Johns, Brian Kean

The 1962-63 season was more promising and Chester became England Number 1 Junior and was selected for his first Junior International against Belgium in Folkestone. A fixture England won 8-2 with Chester winning both his matches. He also won the first of many senior Open tournaments at Portsmouth. All the playing and travelling was becoming more expensive and when Chester left school two weeks before his 15th birthday – as you could in those days – with his parents support it was decided that Chester would concentrate on playing table tennis full time to enable him to be the best he could be. His parents support included his Mum going out to work to help finance all the expense of



February 1963

tournaments, leaving Chester as much time as possible to practice and play. The reward for this sacrifice and the hundreds of hours Chester put into his playing came at the National Championships, a tournament that Chester didn't want to enter, preferring to try for the Yorkshire Junior Open title. Parental pressure won and at 15 years old, Chester is still the youngest ever winner of the National Championships Men's Singles. It is hard to imagine anyone ever improving on this achievement. Chester defeated five England Internationals on the way to the title: Terry Densham, Jeff Ingber, Michael Thornhill, David Creamer and in the final, Alan Rhodes. He had definitely arrived.

The win at the Nationals saw Chester selected for the World Championships Swaythling Cup team, a tour of Jersey and an international match against the USA. He was ranked on the England Senior list for the first time, at number 3.

However, these selections were not the only result of his win. At the end of finals day Chester was approached by Victor Barna who introduced him to Alec Brook, himself a former international, and before long a management contract had been signed. Unlike the usual percentage fee it was agreed that Chester would receive £15.00 per week, the contract was for five years. A delighted Chester had a regular income. However, after a disastrous trip to Nigeria later in the year the contract was terminated and Chester wisely decided to manage his affairs himself.

Despite all the success on the table Chester's reputation off court wasn't always a good one. The interview after his non-England Junior selection in 1961-62 was a definite black mark which was exacerbated by his attitude when he lost. A bad loser by his own admission he often wouldn't shake hands with his opponents when he wasn't on the winning end of a match in his earlier days. It was the

start of a love/hate relationship with the press and officialdom that continued throughout his playing days.



England Team.

Captain Ron Crayden with Mary Wright, Karenza Mathews, Chester Barnes, Ian Harrison

In 1963-64 Chester did not attend the Ranking Meeting for the top ten players. Although at the time of notification it was not compulsory to attend it later became so. Chester's non attendance meant there was no international selection for him despite being England Number 3. Another black mark.

Building up his profile Chester had a clothing contract with Fred Perry and had his name emblazoned on his bat case, holdall, shoulder bag for all to see. He made sure all his kit was in a prominent position for the television cameras at the England v Sweden international. In this match Chester beat Kjell Johansson who was considered by many to be the top player in Europe and at 17 years old had just won the Hungarian Open. A most impressive win. More publicity followed and Chester set up his own Fan Club although it only lasted about a year, not quite the same status as the pop stars of the day. There were television appearances, interviews and exhibition matches, a spot on 'Sportsview' with David Coleman with viewing figures of 12 million. Later Chester had a contract with Lou Hoffman for a whole range of clothing and a continuation of that famous square bat that was such a trademark.

Chester Barnes Bat	57/- each
Chester Barnes Bat Cover	18/- each
Chester Barnes Shorts	52/6 each
Chester Barnes Men's Shirts	21/6 each
Chester Barnes Ladies' Shirts	21/- each
Chester Barnes Track Suit Men's	191/- each
Chester Barnes Track Suit Ladies'	175/- each
Chester Barnes Track Suit Junior	155/6 each
BALLS 3-25	
"Schlösser" White or Yellow	2/6 each

ALL AT YOUR LOCAL SPORTS SHOP

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61-73 7291.



Title Number 2

Chester's play on the table continued improving, although at times it was erratic, a string of Open titles, numerous international caps and two further Men's Singles National titles in 1964 and 1965. In 1964 Chester teased the Press by saying he would not drop a game during the English Closed, a feat he almost achieved. It was only in the final against Brian Wright that he lost one end to take the title with a 3-1 victory. The 1965 win made it three in a row, aged 15, 16 and 17 years old.



Title Number 3

Chester first played in the English Open in 1962 when he reached the Semi-finals of the Junior Boys. The following year he got to the final but lost to Walter Dahlman of West Germany. In that year of 1963 Chester alongside Harry Venner reached the Quarter-finals in the Men's Doubles. No medals that year but it was gold in 1970 and 1971 in the team event with Denis Neale and a silver in 1965 with Ian Harrison. In the individual events Chester got as far as the Semi-finals in the Men's Singles in 1970 and was Runner-up with Denis Neale in 1971 in the Men's Doubles. Three silvers were added to the collection in the Mixed Doubles – with Mary Wright in 1967 and Karenza Mathews in 1970 and 1971.



1970 English Open Team Champion with Denis Neale, Bryan Merrett is Team Captain

In the Quadrangular tournament (later the Home Countries/ Six Nations) Chester never lost a match in the four years he played, 1963, 1965, 1966, 1967 and was rewarded with a further four team golds.

At the World and European Championships Chester never seemed to quite reach his potential, on some occasions there were some outstanding results at other times it was felt he put no effort in and even threw matches. Chester played in the Swaythling Cup team in 1963, 1965, 1967 and 1969 with a highest finish of 6th in 1969. In the individual events Chester never finished above the round of 32 in the Singles although with Denis the pair were Quarter-finalists in 1967 in the Men's Doubles.

It was a similar story in the European Championships playing in the team event in 1964 (8th), 1966 (6th) and 1970 (7th). Chester only reached a high of the round of 16 in the Men's Singles in 1964 and 1966 although he did get as far as the Quarter-finals in the Men's Doubles, again with Denis Neale and was Runner-up in the Mixed Doubles with Mary Wright in 1966.

As well as these major tournaments Chester played in many European League matches from 1968-1972 and also in many international matches and Open tournaments abroad and in 1969 Chester brought out his biography 'More Than a Match', a most entertaining read.



1970 Royal Albert Hall,
Chester Barnes, Denis Neale, Karenza Mathews, Jill Shirley, Bryan Merrett

National Men's Singles title number four came along in 1971. It was the year of another triple title with Trevor Taylor in the Men's Doubles and Karenza Mathews in the Mixed. In total Chester won five Men's Doubles titles – four with Ian Harrison in 1965, 1966, 1967 and 1968 and one with Trevor Taylor in 1971. Winning two Mixed Doubles titles, with Diane Rowe in 1965 and Karenza Mathews in 1971 made it a round dozen of Senior titles at the National Championships – or English Closed as it was titled in those days.

1971 was also the year that Chester was selected to play in the first Commonwealth Championships followed immediately by the World



1971 Chester Barnes and Karenza Mathews new National Champions

Championships. The Japanese Association had asked England to tour on their way back from the Worlds and due to contractual obligations neither Chester nor Denis could extend their stay. After some dispute neither Chester nor Denis played in those Commonwealth or World Championships. Chester did, however, take part in the China tour to England later at the end of 1971.



The team selected for the first Commonwealth Championships,
Alan Hydes, Trevor Taylor, Denis Neale, Chester Barnes



China Tour 1971.
At 10 Downing Street with Prime Minister, Edward Heath



1974 England Champion for the
fifth time

In 1974 despite being suspended from Essex County for twelve months and not playing in any major tournaments that season Chester entered the Nationals and took his fifth Men's Singles title. He was reinstated at Number 1. Later in May 1974 an early exit from the English Open and the non appearance at Open tournaments saw a slide to Number 5 and with a whimper rather than a bang Chester disappeared from the table tennis scene.

The announcement of Chester's retirement came in the April 1975 issue of 'Table Tennis News' by way of an article headed "What the Papers Say" giving a quote from the London Evening News. After all Chester had brought to the game – good and bad - it seemed a very damp squib to have no further comment from the establishment or any table tennis writers in the official magazine. Table tennis was undoubtedly enhanced by Chester's presence and his high profile brought a huge amount of publicity and recognition not only to Chester personally but also to the game of table tennis.

The records show Chester's achievements, however, no record can show the impact that Chester had on the game nor the fact that he was a household name throughout the country and not just within table tennis circles. As Stuart Gibbs, fellow England international and Essex team mate said *"County matches in Essex at venues holding 6-7,000 people used to be sold out the season before when Chester was playing and people would queue for hours to watch him because you never knew what would happen next"*.



A brilliant star that maybe burnt out too quickly.

Everyone who met Chester had a story to tell. If you would like to share yours then get in touch.

Table Tennis England Governance

A Table Tennis England Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) was called by a membership Elected Board Director, Tony Catt, and was held on Monday 25th January 2021. This was as a result of a certain amount of conflict within the Board.

There were three propositions with commonality being a vote of no confidence and instruction to the Board to the remove from the Board the Elected Board Member as mentioned, the Chief Executive Officer and the Chairman, additionally, for the Chief Executive Officer and Chairman to be removed from any other table tennis related posts held domestically or internationally.

216 members attended the meeting which was held virtually via Zoom. Only Company Members i.e. Board Members, County Company Members (National Councillors) or League Representative Company Members, one for each affiliated league, were allowed to speak or pass written comment.

The meeting lasted just under three hours with speakers both for and against all propositions.

The result of the voting was that no propositions were carried and so the status quo remained.

Following the EGM, the Board, required the Elected Board Director to agree to certain conditions. These went considerably further than the recommendations in the Board's independently commissioned investigative report. It was ultimately felt by the Elected Board Member that these were unacceptable and the final outcome was that he resigned from the Board.

The election for the Elected Deputy Chairman vacancy will be announced by the end of March.

AGM: Table Tennis England has announced that due to the pandemic their AGM on 17th July 2021 will be held virtually. It is understood there will be several rule change propositions, mainly around giving the membership more say in governance.

Late News: It has been announced that the European Team Championships in 2023 will be held in Malmo, Sweden.

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