



Table Tennis Times

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

Issue 33

Editorial

Winter 2023/24

This issue is a little delayed in reaching you, we usually get it completed before Christmas but were unable to do so this time. So, we will start by saying we hope you all had a good Christmas and send our best wishes for a healthy and peaceful 2024.

The weather here on the south coast has turned decidedly colder and much of the country has been subjected to wet and cold spells for a number of weeks. We hope you have not been too badly affected and can find time to browse through this edition.

As usual we have been collecting and collating tournament results which offer an insight into the progress some of our young players are making as well as reporting on some senior and international events.

We have two guest articles this issue; one of our regular contributors, Graham Frankel, has sent us a slightly controversial piece on the TTE Ranking Scheme which we are pleased to include. If you have any thoughts on this, or any other subject for that matter, please drop us a line or contact Graham directly on his article. Cippenham Table Tennis Club celebrated their 50th anniversary last summer and we are delighted to include Graham Trimming's article on their first fifty years as our Spotlight feature. The club is a real beacon for others to aspire to.

"What was Happening" is one of our favourite features and this time it is 1963, 60 years ago which throws up some little gems from the past. A reminder to those who remember the freezing winter of '63, it was the coldest winter for over 200 years, the coldest since 1740, the sea froze, temperatures went as low as -20 degrees centigrade and deep snow and blizzards lasted three months – and still table tennis continued!

Sadly, we saw the passing of four people who had made a significant contribution to table tennis whether as an administrator, organiser, coach or player. We pay tribute to Richard Hudson, Doreen Nightingale, Malcolm Sugden and Mike Kercher.

Finally, the next few months look to be a hive of activity which include two major events to look forward to in England - the WTT Feeder in Manchester in February and the National Championships in Nottingham in March. On the international scene the World Championships, team events, take place in February in Busan, Korea Republic, where our men will be playing but, regrettably, no qualification for the England women.

Best wishes

Diane and Harvey Webb

Home Countries International: 10th-12th November 2023: Bangor, Wales

The meeting of seven home countries, England, Guernsey, Ireland, Isle of Man, Jersey, Scotland and Wales, has been a combination of cadet, junior and senior events for several years and is now held biennially. This time around it was Wales' turn to host with the city of Bangor the destination. England sent a squad of two players in each event. Tianer Yu, having obtained her British passport in the summer, is now eligible to play for England and was selected to make her debut as an England junior. Coaches were Natalie Green (cadets), Carlo Agnello (juniors) and Gordon Fearn (seniors).

Senior Men: Connor Green, Shayan Siraj

Senior Women: Mari Baldwin, Mollie Patterson

Junior Boys: Isaac Kingham, Ralph Pattison

Junior Girls: Scarlett Anders, Tianer Yu

Cadet Boys: Max Radiven, Abraham Sellado

Cadet Girls: Sienna Jetha, Hannah Saunders



*England squad with their medals
Photo courtesy of Table Tennis England*

The team events favoured England with all teams finishing top of groups which varied in size.

Each group match comprised four singles and the Senior Men won every match against their six opponents. The Women's Team won four of their matches and drew two with Baldwin and Patterson losing one each against Jersey and Wales. However, as Jersey lost to Ireland and Scotland and drew with Wales and as Wales drew with England, Ireland and Jersey, which left England in pole position. England finished with a 20-4 win to loss result, Wales 18-6 and Ireland 15-9 leaving Jersey fourth with 14-10, Scotland fifth with 13-11, Guernsey sixth with 4-20 and the Isle of Man in seventh place 0-24.

The Junior Boys won four matches 4-0 and two by 3-1 with Kingham losing a match against both Scotland and Wales. In the Junior Girls, Yu had a successful debut winning all her matches, as did Anders in the Junior Girls, with wins against the three other teams in this event, Guernsey, Scotland and Wales.

There wasn't a full complement of countries in the Cadet events either but it was four 4-0 wins for the Cadet Boys against Guernsey, Ireland, Jersey and Wales and a 3-1 win against Scotland with Sellado losing the one match. Similarly, the Cadet Girls had three 4-0 wins over Guernsey, Ireland and Scotland and a 3-1 result against Wales with the loss to Saunders.

The individual event saw a plethora of medals. It was an all England final in the Men's Singles, Siraj beat Green 3-1 in the Men's Singles final and the pair combined to win the doubles. It was gold in the doubles too for England's women but bronze for both Baldwin and Patterson in the singles. Hannah Silcock of Jersey took the main prize beating Patterson in the semi-finals and Ireland's Mia O'Rahilly Egan in the final. Perhaps fittingly as Jersey celebrated their centenary in 2023.

Yu continued with her successes by winning the Junior Girls event defeating Wales's Lowri Hurd who had overcome Anders in the semi-final. However, it wasn't quite a full house for Yu as she and Anders lost in the doubles final to Wales' Hurd and Ruby Elliott. It was double gold for Pattison in the Junior Boys events with a win against Harri Docherty of Wales in the final who had the victory against Kingham in his semi-final in the singles with the English pair gaining victory in the doubles.

The Cadet Singles was a battle between the two English players in both events with Sellado beating Radiven 3-0 in the Cadet Boys' singles final and Jetha defeating Saunders 3-1 in the Girls' event. Further golds were added to England's tally in the two Cadet Doubles finals.

Final medal tally for England: gold x 11, silver x 3, bronze x 4.

Preston Grand Prix: 21st-22nd October 2023 **Photos courtesy of Table Tennis England**

The second Grand Prix of the season was held in Preston and it was a win for Grigory Vlasov, Russia, over Toby Ellis in the final of the Men's Singles. Losing semi-finalists were Umair Mauthoor and Felix Thomis.



Toby Ellis and Grigory Vlasov



Mari Baldwin and Jasmin Wong

The Women's title went to Jasmin Wong who defeated her fellow European Championships teammate, Mari Baldwin, in the final. In the semi-finals Baldwin had overcome multiple Grand Prix winner, Yat Poon of Hong Kong, and Wong had beaten fourth seed Aleksandra Titievskaja.

Other winners:

Under 21 Singles: Joseph Dennison and Yat Poon (Hkg)

Veterans' Singles: Victor Guang Shi

Restricted Singles: Bryan Kwan

Band 1: Felix Thomis and Aleksandra Titievskaja

Band 2: Joseph Dennison and Anjali Singh (Irl)

Band 3: Ho Leung Chan and Sophie Ackred

Band 4: Kieran Walker (Sco) and Sophie Ackred

Band 5 (Men): Neil Pickard

Band 6 (Men): Pablo Godoy

**National Championships Qualifying Tournament:
6th-7th January 2024: Nottingham
Photos by Mike Rhodes**

It was the best ever entry to a qualifying tournament with 132 men and 49 women sending in their entries for the two singles events. The format remained much the same as previous years with large groups on the Saturday - 16 men's groups of eight players, plus seven groups of ladies with either six or seven players in them. 32 players from each event went through to the knockout rounds on Sunday, the top two from each of the men's groups while the top four from each of the women's groups went through to the knockouts along with the fifth player from each of groups 2, 4, 6 and 7.

As always there were some unexpected results and in the Men's Singles, the first was when number one seed, Maxim Stevens lost his last group match to Adam Dennison in three, this left Stevens in second place with A Dennison in pole position. Group 7 saw Graeme Barella finish top with the seeded player, Umair Mauthoor finishing in second place. Similarly, Group 8's seed, Nahom Asgedom, finished in second place with Artur Caltabiano winning all his matches. Group 10 saw the biggest shock as seed, Rhys Davies (10), went out of the tournament finishing fourth. Israel Owolaja was first with a clean sheet and Nathaniel Saunders the other player to go through to the knockout stage. Group 11's seed, Alim Hirji, also finished second with India based, Rohan Dani, the top player. Group 12 and it was Joseph Dennison, seeded, who finished in second slot courtesy of a good day's play by Joe Sawyer. Max Radiven got through his group undefeated putting seeded Ollie Cornish in second place in Group 13. The other groups all saw the seeded players going through to the knockout rounds.

In the women's event the top seed had withdrawn, skewing the group a little and it was Sally Hughes who took full advantage of her absence, winning five from five. Group 4 saw a reversal as seeded Tiana Dennison came second to Bethany Ellis. Mabel Shute had a good day to finish top of Group 5 with the seed, Rebecca Savage, going through to the knockout round but in third position. In Group 7 it was second ranked player, Naomi Coker who won all her six matches and seed, Saskia Key, who finished in second place.

Sunday was the crunch day where the players fought for the guaranteed 14 places for the National Championships finals where they will join the invited top 16 ranked players from the national ranking list plus two wild cards. If any places are not taken up, the vacancies will be offered to the next players from the qualifying tournament in descending order.

The first round of the knockouts was the most critical, the way the system worked was that if you win your first match you are guaranteed a place in the top 16, if you lose that first match it is impossible to finish above 17th. So, a player could win his or her first match and then lose the remaining four, conversely a player could lose their first match and then win their remaining four matches but still fail to reach a guaranteed qualification place. It seems rather harsh that you could lose one match and win four and not qualify but you could lose four matches and win one and qualify.

Of the top 16 players in the first round of men's event, Joseph Dennison (12), Adam Jepson (16), Olly Cornish (13), Alim Hirji (11) and Umair Mauthoor (7) all lost that crucial first match and so were consigned to finishing in places 17-32. Round two saw wins in the top half of the draw for Rohan Dani (124), Graeme Barella (21), Ben Piggott (9), Nahom Asgedom (8), Ralph Pattison (3), Larry Trumpauskas (5), Maxim Stevens (1) and Joe Sawyer (41). The losers in the top half were Aaron McKibbin (19), Ashley Facey (32), Joseph Langham Ferreira (6), Bryan Kwan (4), Isaac Kingham (15), Jakub Piwowar (14), Artur Caltabiano (26) and Shaquille Webb-Dixon (2).

Round three saw wins for Dani, Piggott, Trumpauskas, Sawyer, McKibbin, Langham Ferreira, J Piwowar and Webb-Dixon. Moving on to the fourth round and it was Piggott, Trumpauskas, Barella and Pattison who were

undefeated. The fifth and final round gave victory to Trumpauskas who beat Piggott to decide first and second place. Sawyer beat Dani for third and fourth, interestingly neither of these two are based in England – Sawyer the backhand long pimple twiddler is based in France and Dani in India. Pattison beat Barella for fifth and sixth and Asgedom beat Stevens for seventh and eighth places. McKibbin and J Piwowar finished ninth and tenth and as the match between Langham Ferreira and Webb-Dixon was not played they both finished 11th-. The final two guaranteed finals places went to Kwan at 13th and Caltabiano at 14th. First reserve was Facey with Kingham as second reserve.



Larry Trumpauskas with Jill Parker



Ben Piggott



Joe Sawyer

The same system was in place for the women's event and it was Sally Hughes (18), Rebecca Savage (5), Saskia Key (7), Sienna Jetha (6), Mabel Shute (12), Xiaoman Ji (14), Parmis Ahsani (23), Anaya Patel (3), Bethany Ellis (10), Mya Sultan (8), Millie Rogove (9), Naomi Coker (13), Sophie Ackred (27), Rachael Iles (11), Luna Archard (31) and Erin Green (2) who won that vital first match. Of those who were ranked in the top 16, Tiana Dennison (4), Mia Lakhani (16) and Isabelle Lacorte (15) were the three players who lost their first match in this round.

Round two saw Savage, Jetha, Shute, Patel, Ellis, Rogove, Iles and Green take their second win. Round three and Jetha, Patel, Rogove and Green continued their run of wins and so had to finish in the top four. Jetha and Green won their round four matches with Patel and Rogove the losing duo and then in the last set of matches Jetha beat Green and Patel beat Rogove to give finishes from one to four. The remaining top 14 places went to Shute, Ellis, Savage, Iles, Ji, Ackred, Coker, Hughes, Key and Sultan with Ahsani and Archard in the first two reserve spots.



Jill Parker with Sienna Jetha



Erin Green



Anaya Patel

The invited players for the National Championships finals are:

Men - Liam Pitchford, Paul Drinkhall, Tom Jarvis, Sam Walker, David McBeath, Chris Doran, Andrew Baggaley, Connor Green, Darius Knight, Shayan Siraj, Sam Mabey, Toby Ellis, Josh Bennett, Joseph Hunter, Felix Thomis, Lorestas Trumpauskas.

Women – Tin-Tin Ho, Mollie Patterson, Emily Bolton, Tianer Yu, Mari Baldwin, Jasmin Wong, Lois Peake, Karina Le Fevre, Scarlett Anders, Lauren Charles, Ella Pashley, Anna Green, Bethany O'Connell, Letitia McMullan, Amy Marriott, Megan Jones.

Congratulations to all those who qualified and we look forward to some excellent matches between them and the invited players at the Championships.

Spotlight on Cippenham Table Tennis Club

50 years 1973-2023

By Graham Trimming



2023 was a momentous year for Cippenham Table Tennis Club as it marked the fiftieth anniversary of its founding. A celebration, well attended by current and former members, was held at the club's headquarters in June.



Cippenham TTC stalwarts Ken Phillips, Graham Trimming and Peter Hillier prepare to cut the cake at the 50th anniversary celebration

The club was founded in the summer of 1973 by Graham Trimming who, together with a few friends, established its base at St. Andrew's Shared Church in the village of Cippenham, from which the club took its name, part of the urban town of Slough, then in Buckinghamshire but now in Berkshire. The nucleus of the founding members came from the ITW company team that had won Division 5 of the Slough League in its first season. However, by the end of that season only Graham, of the regular team members, remained an employee of the company and so it was time to either join another club or start their own. The latter option was chosen and Cippenham entered two teams in the Slough League and another two in the Maidenhead League. By the following season, 1974-75, the number of teams had grown remarkably to six in Slough and three in Maidenhead, with one team in each of the top divisions of those leagues.



St. Andrews Shared Church - the club's first venue

Although numerically the club became strong and attracted some good local players, five years elapsed before the club first won a local league title when the Slough League championship was captured in 1978. That was the first of twenty-four such titles won by the Club before the demise of the Slough League in 2010. The Maidenhead League title has also been won on twelve occasions to date as was the Buckinghamshire Club Championship in its inaugural season 1984.

Encouraged by a successful “double” of the Slough and Maidenhead league championships in 1980-81, the club embarked on a venture into the National Club League (*now the Senior British League*). A team was operated for four seasons in Division 3 before it was decided to withdraw because of a lack of available local players of the required standard. Then in 1987, the ETTA initiated regional leagues and the Southern Region League was born. Cippenham promptly entered teams in both the open and ladies’ sections and, in the ten years of the league’s existence, won both sections five times.

Prior to that, the club had moved headquarters. In 1992 Haymill School closed and representatives of the club joined with those from other organisations to promote the site as a community centre. In 1994 this came to fruition and Cippenham TTC became one of the first tenants of the new centre, utilising the former school gymnasium where four match tables or six practice/coaching tables could be set up. Grant funding of £5,500 was secured to make this happen and, now with suitable facilities, a coaching scheme was launched.



Haymill Centre in use for the Club Championships 1988

Within a couple of years, the indefatigable Ken Phillips took over as Head Coach, a position he has retained ever since. Ken is one of the main reasons that the Cippenham club has been so successful as he has introduced many hundreds of young players to the sport. Under his stewardship, the club’s coaching scheme has produced over twenty international players at various levels and around the same number of national champions. The most famous of these are Joanna Parker (*now Drinkhall*), Gareth Herbert, Gavin Evans and Terry Young. Such was the success of the coaching around the turn of the century that five different Cippenham protégés won the English National Under-12 Boys’ Singles title between 1993 and 2003.



The 12 Cippenham players who played for Slough, Maidenhead and High Wycombe in the finals of the Leach Cup and Hammersley Cup in 1999: (l-r): Ken Phillips (coach); Helen Smith; Francesca Parnell; Chris Hansell; Gemma Chapman; Joanna Parker; Hannah Stone; Emma Human; Tom Mitchell; Bradley Evans; Stuart Tweedy; David Hayes; Warren Brooks; Sue Hayes (coach); Rhys Evans (coach)

In 1995 Buckinghamshire won the County Championships Junior Premier Division for the first time with an all-Cippenham team and then, remarkably, all twelve players in the 1999 finals of the Leach Cup and Hammersley Cup, involving teams representing Slough, Maidenhead and High Wycombe, were being trained at Cippenham. In total, Cippenham players were responsible for thirteen titles in the four national junior and cadet team events over the period 1996 to 2003. Alongside this, Cippenham won the Junior British League Girls' Premier Division title three times between 2000 and 2006.

However, by far the most important event in the history of the club occurred in October 1996. That was the opening of the purpose-built Cippenham Table Tennis Centre within the grounds of The Westgate School. This project was five years in the making and was achieved only after securing £520,000 funding through large grants from the National Lottery, the Foundation for Sport and the Arts (through the English Table Tennis Association) and the Funding Agency for Schools. Top-up grants came from Sports Council Southern Region, The Westgate School, Slough Borough Council and Slough Social Fund. Graham Trimming describes this project as "the hardest thing I have ever done in my life, but also the most rewarding". A Building Sub-Committee worked for five years and, apart from Graham, owes much to Alec Watson, Frank Earis and Steve Joel and also benefited considerably from assistance provided by Paul Baker who, at the time, was employed as Facilities Officer by the ETTA.



*The Building Committee 1996:
Graham Trimming; Frank Earis;
Alec Watson; Steve Joel*



Cippenham Table Tennis Centre as originally built in 1996. The front has since been reshaped with an extension to the servery and lounge areas and re-positioning of the main door

This facility has since enabled the Club to vastly expand its operations to the point where it now hosts many events on behalf of the national, regional and local associations, runs its own open tournaments, has twice-weekly open practice sessions to which anyone can come along and play table tennis plus three weekly coaching sessions that continue to produce outstanding young players.

Cippenham Table Tennis Centre boasts a playing area of 25m x 22m which accommodates eight or nine tables in high-grade tournament conditions, twelve tables for National Junior League and National Cadet League and more for general play and coaching. Adjacent is a lounge and servery that benefits from a glazed screen viewing out onto the playing hall plus entrance foyer, office, washrooms and storeroom. Changing and shower facilities are provided in the adjacent school amenities block.

It was a mere six weeks after opening that the new centre was blessed with staging a friendly men's international match between England and Slovakia and this prompted three further matches in the European Women's League. Since then, the National Junior and Cadet Masters have been staged several times plus the Senior and Junior Premier Divisions of the County Championships. For more than twenty years Cippenham has also hosted all weekends of the Senior British League.



Set up for Senior British League in 2023

That momentous year of 1996 also saw Cippenham named by the ETTA as National Club of the Year and this award was repeated the following year. A third such accolade was received in 2010 as the National Excellence *PremierClub* of the Year. Individual Cippenham members have also received many honours with Jan Chapman, Melanie Farquhar, Catherine Hayes, Sue Hayes, Gareth Herbert, Peter Hillier, Jacquie Lovell, Stephanie Mitchell, Ken Phillips and Graham Trimming all receiving annual awards from the national association. Ken also received the NCF England Coach of the Year (Local Volunteer in an Individual Sport) award in 2000 and the Berkshire Active Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017. On a more local note, the Mayor of Slough's Annual Sports Awards were, for many years, a rich hunting ground for Cippenham with a total of eight club awards and sixteen for individual members.

The first fifty years have seen a total of 890 players represent Cippenham in official club matches and the club continues to prosper with a membership of between one and two hundred, this year running twenty-two teams in various leagues including ten in the British League across all four of its sections.

A club like Cippenham can only succeed with a great deal of volunteer assistance and so training is an essential element of this. Many courses have been held at the club over the past quarter of a century and these have included coach education, umpire training, tournament organisers' courses and first aid. Volunteers are appreciated and rewarded and there is an annual award for outstanding contribution. For their immense contribution over very many years the club has also honoured four life members: Peter Hillier; Jacquie Lovell; Ken Phillips; Graham Trimming.

An 80-page publication covering much more detail of the history of the club was produced for the anniversary and can be found at:

https://www.cippenhamttc.co.uk/files/ugd/4fa328_3688758ac4204125881e61ac11ed5ed2.pdf

Photos from the club's 50th anniversary celebration can be found at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/cippenhamttc/albums/72177720308952732/>

Junior and Cadet 4* Tournaments

There have been three Junior and Cadet 4* tournaments since our last issue, one in Cleveland (originally titled Stockton Junior 4*), the second held by Cliffdale Chandlers and the third at Cippenham Table Tennis Club. There were two other events earlier in the season at Cambridge and Blackpool but the London Junior 4* which was due to have taken place on 27th and 28th January 2024 has been cancelled. The sixth and final event will be held at Plymouth on 10th and 11th February 2024.

The formats and events within each of the tournaments varies but the four main events are standard. The results from these count towards qualification for the Junior, Under 17 and Cadet National Championships. Additionally, the winners of each event automatically qualify for those championships, provided they are eligible and that they have played in at least two of the six 4* tournaments. There is a ladder board totalling the players points with five points awarded for the winner of each event, four for the runner-up, three for the semi-finalists, two for the quarter-finalists and one for those who reach the round of 16.

Cleveland Junior 4*: 28th-29th October 2023

Photos courtesy of Brenda Stephenson

(Alan Ransome making the presentations unless otherwise marked)

Winners and Runners-up:

Junior Boys' Team: Ormesby – Ben Piggott, Felix Thomis, Urban – James Hamblett, Joseph Hunter

JBS: Gavin Yuan (Sco), Ben Piggott

U17 BS: Isaac Kingham, Joseph Dennison



Felix Thomis & Ben Piggott



Gavin Yuan



Isaac Kingham

Cadet Boys' Team: Joola Plymouth – Hugo Nguyen, Leo Nguyen, London Academy – Shahuraj Nimse & Parsa Yamin

CBS: Leo Nguyen, Aarif Li

U13 BS: Aarif Li, Pablo Ramirez Rioja

U11 BS: Dimitar Dimitrov, Li Hao Chen



Leo & Hugo Nguyen



Aarif Li



Dimitar Dimitrov with David Hutchinson

Junior Girls' Team: London Academy – Sienna Jetha, Ching Sum Pang, Ormesby – Scarlett Anders, Ella Pashley
JGS: Scarlett Anders, Darcy Taylor (Wal)
U17 GS: Ella Pashley, Bethany Ellis



Sienna Jetha & Ching Sum Pang



Scarlett Anders



Ella Pashley

Cadet Girls' Team: London Academy A – Alisha Dutta, Mauli Shah, London Academy B – Chi Yun Pang, Assil Sarai
CGS: Ching Sum Pang, Sienna Jetha
U13 GS: Lok You Lam, Amber Lemmon
U11 GS: Amber Lemmon, Cindy Xiao



Alisha Dutta & Mauli



Lok You Lam



Amber Lemmon

Cliffdale Chandlers Junior 4*: 11th-12th November 2023

There were six main events plus banded events to ensure players had a good number of matches over the weekend. A nice touch was when Eva Eccles was awarded the Steve Welch Memorial Trophy for Player of the Weekend.

Winners and Runners-up:

Junior Boys': Larry Trumpauskas, Ben Piggott

Junior Girls': Joey Ma, Anna Green

Cadet Boys': Kacper Piwowar, Leo Nguyen

Cadet Girls': Alyssa Nguyen, Eva Eccles

Under 13 Boys': Pablo Ramirez Rioja, Aarif Li

Under 13 Girls': Alyssa Nguyen, Lok Yiu Lam

Cippenham Junior & Cadet 4*: 2nd-3rd December 2023

Photos by Graham Trimming

It was an excellent tournament for home grown talent, Mia Lakhani, at the Cippenham Junior & Cadet 4* Open, who although unseeded, reached the final of the Junior Girls' Singles only to be defeated at the last hurdle by Tianer Yu who is now England's top junior. Lakhani beat three seeds on the way to the final – Saskia

Key, Isabelle Lacorte and in the semi-final, second seed, Scarlett Anders. Maliha Baig, seeded three, was the other losing semi-finalist.



Tianer Yu



Mia Lakhani

The Junior Boys' event was heavily oversubscribed with the title going to Isaac Kingham who had a closely fought match in the final against Joseph Hunter, the number one and two seeds. At three and four, Krish Chotai and Gabriel Schogger went out at the semi-final stage.



Isaac Kingham



Joseph Hunter

The Cadet Girls' final was between the first and third seeds, Sienna Jetha and Eva Eccles, with the win going to Jetha. The losing semi-finalists were Bly Twomey and Sum Monica Chang.



Sienna Jetha



Eva Eccles

The Cadet Boys saw a win for top seed Max Radiven who had overcome Parsa Yamin in his semi-final match before the win in the final over second seed Aarif Li who had beaten third seed, Leo Nguyen, in the previous round.



Max Radiven



Aarif Li

A good entry of 150 for the nine tables meant that players had to be turned away resulting in some of the top juniors not being able to play.

Ranking and Rating: Time for a change

By Graham Frankel

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. This must be a popular expression among those who are responsible for investigating how competition systems could be improved in this country. The ranking and rating process is one very clear example of something that has been broken for many years. There appears to be no sign of any intention to fix it.

The system is fundamentally flawed, and arguably discriminatory. Yet somehow, the Competition Review which has dragged on for around four years and counting, has failed to address any of the key issues.

About ten years ago, a senior TTE staff member (who has since left) assured me that an overhaul of the ranking/rating system was on the agenda. Four years ago, another TTE staffer said he agreed with me that the system was not fit for purpose. I didn't need to be concerned, he added, because this was going to be dealt with as part of the Competition Review.

The latest update from the Competition Review listed the changes to ranking/rating. The top changes were listed as:

- A brand-new look to the rankings pages on the TTE website
- A new user-interface for members when logged into their profile
- Improved filter functionality

There is more of the same. While I accept that these represent minor cosmetic improvements, the fundamental issues have been left untouched.

One of the key features of the system, which has been in place for many years, is that there are eight separate rating categories. They include four separate age group categories (cadet, junior, senior and veteran). Each of the age group categories is further subdivided by gender.

Did those involved in the Competition Review ever stop to question the need for all these different categories? Did they ever look at how the issue is dealt with in other countries? One of the most attractive features of table tennis is that competitive play can and should be totally diverse. So why not replace the eight categories with a single rating? The list can then be filtered by age, gender, and even location where needed.

I used the "d" word in my second paragraph, and as you have read this far, I owe you an explanation. Soon after I started organising junior open tournaments at BATTs – about ten years ago - I began getting surprising comments from the parents of girls who were moving up the ranking lists. They didn't want their daughters to compete in my mixed events because they would not be credited with rating points for their victories against boys. I had no intention then or now of trying to split my tournaments into girls' and boys' sections. But the issue is still there and has not been changed by the Competition Review.

Much more recently, in a tournament I was running at the end of 2023, the father of a girl entrant told me that, in his view, this nonsensical approach to ratings was one of the reasons why it is harder to get girls interested in table tennis. It's a strong view, and I have no doubt that my suggestion of discrimination would be vehemently denied. But surely it would be better to overhaul the system properly and establish a single rating where the only measure is playing strength.

Fortunately, there are a reasonable number of enlightened parents and coaches, such as the father of the player I spoke with in December. They understand the importance of girls competing with boys. They know that the top women players in the sport have all done that and are undeterred by the failings of the ranking/rating system. I had another entry from a highly rated girl in an upcoming tournament. Her mother told me that her daughter was due to play in a women's even on the same day but preferred my tournament

specifically because of the chance to compete against highly rated boys rather than the same girls who she plays in so many gender-specific events.

My request to TTE is simple. If something is really broken, don't be afraid to fix it. The problem will not go away if you try and patch things up with sticking plaster.

I am always happy to discuss the issues raised in this article. Please feel free to contact me:

grahamf49@gmail.com

TTE Rankings at 1st January 2024

	Female	Male
Veterans	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sara Williams Joanne Keighley Sanja Clements 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lorestas Trumpauskas Michael O'Driscoll Kevin Dolder
Senior	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tin-Tin Ho Mollie Patterson Emily Bolton 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Liam Pitchford Paul Drinkhall Tom Jarvis
Under 21 (Sub-set of Senior)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tianer Yu Mari Baldwin Jasmin Wong 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Connor Green Toby Ellis Joseph Hunter
Junior Under 19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tianer Yu Sophie Earley Scarlett Anders 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Connor Green Ben Piggott Ralph Pattison
Intermediate Junior – Under 17 (Sub-set of Junior)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tianer Yu Sienna Jetha Maliha Baig 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ralph Pattison Larry Trumpauskas Rohan Dani
Cadet Under 15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sienna Jetha Alyssa Nguyen Hannah Saunders 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Max Radiven Kacper Piwowar Leo Nguyen
Under 13 (Sub-set of Cadet)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Alyssa Nguyen Hannah Saunders Amber Lemmon 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Pablo Ramirez Rioja Ryan Goodier Theo Kniep

Can You Help?

Noel Sewell who does such sterling work in Wiltshire is trying to find old handbooks from the Salisbury League. If you are able to help him then please get in touch with us and we can pass you on to Noel.

With so much digitised these days, future records are likely to be less comprehensive and often with changes in websites etc information disappears forever and this applies at all levels.

So, if anyone else has anything or anybody they are trying to find, we are more than happy to mention it, to try and preserve table tennis history in England or put old friends in touch with each other.

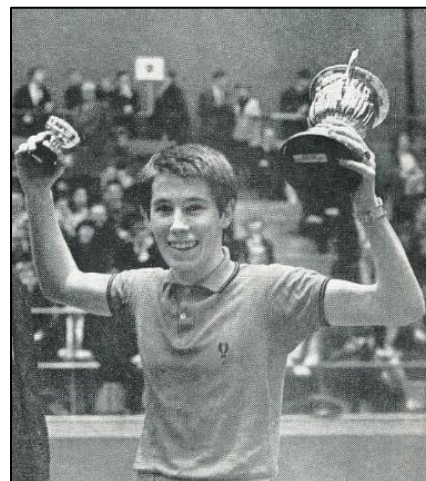
What was Happening? 60 Years Ago – 1963

- * It was the year when new young players dominated, making their presence felt at all the major tournaments. It started at the English Closed when Chester Barnes at 15 years old (still the youngest player to take the title) and Mary Wright, at 18 years old although European Champions already with Diane Rowe in the Women's Doubles, beat several older and more experienced players. The new champions were both strong



*Terence Stamp, Julie Christie, Terry Densham,
Ian Harrison*

attacking players and their style of play entranced the audience. Shannon made it a hat-trick of titles winning the



Chester Barnes

Women's Doubles with Diane Rowe and the Mixed with future husband, Brian Wright. Bobby Raybould and Bobby Stevens won the Men's Doubles title. Stars of stage and screen Terence Stamp, a former player, and Julie Christie turned up to meet old friends.

- * The English Open in Brighton starting on 28th February introduced team events for the first time. Sessions ran from 10am-5pm and 6.30pm to 10.30pm with tickets ranging from 2/6d to 12/6d on finals night. There were four titles which went England's way with Diane Rowe and Mary Shannon winning the Women's Doubles, Lesley Bell the Junior Girls' Singles, twins Christine and Pauline Holes the Junior Girls' Doubles and Mrs Doreen Crosby the Veteran Women's Singles. There was a large and very strong entry particularly from European players, other senior titles went to Zoltan Berczik, Hungary, Maria Alexandru, Rumania in the singles and doubles to Ivan Andreadis and Vladimir Miko of Czechoslovakia, and Janos Fahazi and Eva Foldi of Hungary. Czechoslovakia won the Men's Team and Hungary the Women's.
- * There was a junior tour of England by West Germany with matches at Bexhill which resulted in a 7-3 win for England (Chester Barnes, David Stanley, Dennis Holland, Lesley Bell, Christine Holes), Leicester a 6-4 win for England (Chester Barnes, Tony Robinson, Keith Jones, Lesley Bell, Jackie Canham) and London, a 5-5 draw (Chester Barnes, Tony Robinson, Les Gresswell, Lesley Bell, Pauline Holes). Lesley Bell was the star of the series winning all her six matches and only three of her games went into double figures.
- * England juniors had a further international, against Wales, which they won 10-0 with Keith Jones, Les Gresswell, Dennis Holland and Tony Robinson the winning combination for England.
- * China had a three-match tour in England winning the three fixtures at Manchester 7-3 (Michael Symonds, David Creamer, Ian Harrison, Diane Rowe, Mary Shannon); Melton Mowbray 7-1 to China (Michael Symonds, Chester Barnes, Ian Harrison, Diane Rowe, Mary Shannon); London, an 8-0 result for China (Chester Barnes, David Creamer, Ian Harrison, Lesley Bell, Diane Rowe, Mary Shannon).

- * The US TTA asked for two 'loop' players to participate in various matches in the States so their own players could practice against the style before the World Championships. Derek Baddeley and Stan Jacobson duly travelled to America for three weeks playing in ten competitive matches and participating in the US National Championships where Baddeley reached the quarter-finals and the English pair the semi-finals in the Men's Doubles, whilst Baddeley with Yvonne Kronlage was runner-up in the Mixed. Obviously, the practice and earlier matches against the Englishmen had proved fruitful. The two players returned to these shores with the American team for two international matches.



Stan Jacobson and Derek Baddeley

- * An Australian touring team had fixtures against six county teams and played in five Open Championships.
- * There was a huge entry of 14,000 in the Eagle/Girl Championships. Fancy organising that with no computers!
- * The World Championships, now held every two years, were held in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in April. Inspections were carried out on clothing and rackets, the latter had to be the same colour on both



Diane Rowe and Mary Shannon

sides and either dark red, dark blue, dark green, dark brown or black and non-reflecting. It was a far eastern domination as all titles went to either China or Japan with Chuang Tse-Tung successfully defending the Men's Singles title and Kimiyo Matsuzaki winning the Women's. China retained the Swaythling Cup and Japan the Corbillon Cup with England's men 12th= and the ladies 5th=. There was an outstanding performance by Diane Rowe and Mary Shannon who were runners-up in the Women's Doubles. They lost to the Japanese pair Matsuzaki and Masako Seki 16, -15, 15, 16. 1957 was the last time any English players had reached this stage in any event.

- * It was a close call in the County Championships as Lancashire beat Middlesex in the final round of matches of the season. The two counties both finished on 12 points but it was Middlesex who topped the table with a better games difference 44-19 as opposed to 40-23. Ian Harrison was the only player with a 100% record in the Premier Division.
- * Politics got in the way of sport when NATO countries refused to allow visas to East Germans for the proposed European Championships which was to be the opening event at the new National Recreation Centre at Crystal Palace the following April. The ETTU, therefore, withdrew the option for England to host the Championships.

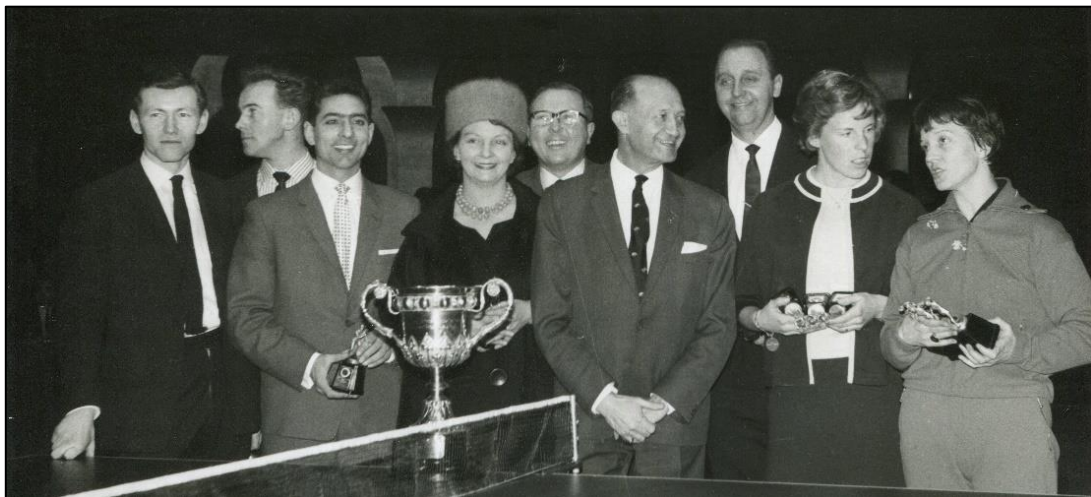


*Back: David Stanley, Margaret Fry, Tony Robinson, Laurie Landry, Christine Holes, Jackie Canham (Billington)
Front Chester Barnes, Lesley Bell*

* For the same political reason, the European Junior Championships became the West German Invitation Tournament as not all countries could play in West Germany. Lesley Bell became Europe's top junior when she won the Girls' Singles without losing a game and with Jackie Canham was a semi-finalist in the Girls' Doubles. The two girls, with Christine Holes, went on to win the Girls' Team event too. Bell with Chester Barnes finished as quarter-finalists in the Mixed Doubles. During the season Bell did not lose to any junior player showing her true class.

* A 94-page document was produced by the ETTA Development Commission which critically analysed the sport. There were 78 recommendations, amongst which were – more must be done to encourage play in schools (does that sound familiar), introducing a national inter-club competition, recommendation for a system of "Licensed players" with representation on National Council, closer liaison with county associations by abolishing the National Executive Committee and replacing it with a National Council with one representative from each county.

* At the AGM on 6th July 1963 the three officers were returned unopposed – Ivor Eyles (Chairman), Geoff James (Deputy Chairman) and Tom Blunn (Treasurer). Ivor Montagu was re-elected President. Blunn, James and Norman Cook became Honorary Life Members. Edgar Reay of Durham received the Leslie Forrest Memorial Trophy for county administration. There were no new Vice-Presidents. Bobby Stevens was presented with the Victor Barna Award.



Victor Barna, centre, with awardees of the Victor Barna Trophy - Ian Harrison, Bryan Merrett, Bobby Stevens, Rosalind Rowe, Aubrey Simons, Victor Barna, Johnny Leach, Ann Jones (Haydon), Diane Rowe

* Alan Hydes and Linda Henwood won the Boy and Girl of the Year Awards at the News of the World National Coaching Scheme held at Butlins Holiday Camps over the summer. There was an entry of 25,444. Runners-up all went on to achieve considerable success, many at senior international level – Stuart Gibbs, Tony Robinson, Jim Langan (Ireland), Haydn Thomas (Wales), Pauline Hemmings, Karenza Smith, Maureen Heppell, Linda Forkes. In the Coach and Pupil Challenge Michael Symonds and Pauline Hemmings were the champions.

- * Initial informal meetings were held to discuss and support the introduction of The International Club of England open to any former international player.
- * The National County Championships increased its number of teams to 64 from 34 counties.
- * Two new clubs opened in London: Becontree Club with Harry Venner in charge and the Fulham Table Tennis Centre run by Alan Lindsay, both international players of some standing.
- * Ian Harrison left England's shores to play in Sweden alongside Hans Alser.
- * Essex dominated the Junior Rankings with Chester Barnes (1), Stuart Gibbs (2), Lesley Bell (1), Beverley Sayer (3), Gloria Sayer (4) and Linda Henwood (5). Alan Ransome of Durham was ranked 7.
- * England's juniors beat France 7-2 with Barnes winning his three, Gibbs two and Tony Robinson two. All beat Jaques Secretin who went on to become a Mixed Doubles World Champion.
- * In the Yugoslav Open, Mary Wright won the Women's Singles and with Diane Rowe also took the Women's Doubles title and the pair were runners-up in the team event. In the Hungarian Open the ladies again took silver in the team and won the Women's Doubles. It was another silver for Rowe in the Mixed Doubles partnered by Hans Alser. Rowe and Shannon also took the Women's Doubles title in the Scandinavia Open.
- * In the Quadrangular tournament in Dublin in October, Denis Neale made a successful senior debut winning his six singles and two doubles matches. England finished in first place with wins over Scotland (10-0), Wales (10-0) and Ireland (9-1). The other members of the team were Chester Barnes, Bobby Stevens, Diane Rowe and Mary Shannon.
- * England narrowly lost to Sweden in an international in December with the score 4-5. Barnes, David Creamer, Harrison, Rowe and Shannon were the team.

The year saw the death of two former England internationals, Bernard Bernstein who played in England's first Swaythling Cup team at the World Championships in 1926 and Middlesex's John Joyce (no photo available) who made his international debut in 1935/36 season against Wales. A great character from Swindon and an ETTA Vice-President, Oliver Tarrant, also passed away.



Bernard Bernstein



Oliver Tarrant

**ITTF World Youth Championships:
26th November-3rd December 2023: Nova Gorica, Slovenia
Photos courtesy of the ITTF**

A tournament for the U19 and U15 age groups had 14 titles up for grabs. There were 12 teams in the four team events, one from each continent plus six according to world ranking. 32 players in the singles with two from each continent, two from the host country plus 20 according to world ranking. Male and female doubles had 16 pairs and mixed doubles had 32 pairs taking part.

There were no English participants but Anna Hursey of Wales qualified in 20th place in the U19 Girls' event.

Three team events went to China, both Under 19 events plus the Under 15 Boys; Japan took the Under 15 Girls' title. China also dominated in the Under 19 individual events winning all six titles with Lin Shidong, who stands at nine in the senior men's world ranking, winning the Under 19 Singles, the Doubles with compatriot Wen Ruibo and Mixed Doubles with Kuai Man. Kuai also took home three titles, beating Romanian, Elena Zaharia in the Under 19 Singles and with Xu Yi in the Under 19 Girls' Doubles defeating the European pairing of Hursey and Annett Kaufmann of Germany. Excellent results for the three Europeans to earn silver medals.



Annett Kaufmann and Anna Hursey

The Under 15 events all went to Asian players as did all the runners-up spots. However, the distribution of the gold and silver medals was a bit more mixed with Sun Yang of China taking the Under 15 Boys' Singles, Japan's Yuna Ojio the Under 15 Girls' Singles, Kuo Guan-Hong and Hsu Hsien Chia of Chinese Taipei the Under 15 Boys' Singles, Ojio and Mao Takamori of Japan the Under 15 Girls' Doubles and another gold to Japan's Tamito Watanbe and Ojio in the Under 15 Mixed Doubles.



The impressive Chinese squad with their trophies

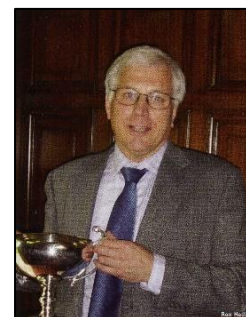
Good News Page

- New TTE Director Sally Hughes has been appointed to the ETTU Gender Equality Committee.
- Mark Bates Ltd, the title sponsor of the National Championships, has again supplemented the prize fund which will now stand at just over £13,000 covering all events.
- Young Hannah Saunders was one of 14 top European players to play in the Under 11 European Mini Masters in Belgium in October. She finished a commendable fifth overall having won three and lost three matches in her group before going into positional play off matches where she had some good results, just losing to the eventual winner, Ela Su Yonter of Turkey, 12-10 in the fifth. She then went on to defeat an opponent she had lost to in the group, France's Rozane Le Bars, followed by a win against Nadlia Ionascu of Romania whom she had also beaten earlier in her group.



"The Cleashaw" boxed set from 1920-30s

- Graham Trimming has photographed and annotated the majority of the Association's historic archives and the results can be seen on TTE Flickr pages in three albums totalling 278 images. A superb piece of work and well worth viewing.
- Simon Heaps took part in the multi-sport World AbilitySport Games in Thailand, December, winning the bronze medal in Class 5.
- Sam Walker and Tin-Tin Ho reached the quarter-finals in the Mixed Doubles in the WTT Feeder event in Dusseldorf in November.
- Buckinghamshire's County Match Secretary of over 40 years, Ron Hedley, whose other love is cricket, set himself the challenge of nine walks around cricket grounds in Buckinghamshire to raise funds for prostate cancer research. This then increased to an additional 33 walks of around five miles. The walks were planned for one in each county which plays over-60s cricket. So, far Ron has raised over £50,000 with hopes that this will be increased by the time the last walk takes place in September this year.
- A National Lottery Award went to Tim Holtam of the Brighton Table Tennis Club which now boasts 70 sessions a week, for over 1,500 people. Tim received a personal trophy as well as a cheque for £5,000 for the club.
- At the British Universities & Colleges Sport Championships, the two main titles went to Shayan Siraj and Yat Poon, both of Nottingham University.
- The English Institute of Sport in Sheffield (EIS) has been announced as the Elite Training Centre for GB table tennis. For many, Sheffield was the home of English table tennis with the National Championships held in the city from 2000-14 at Ponds Forge with the exception being in 2004 when the Championships were held at the EIS. The EIS is, of course, the former home of the English National Training Centre as well as the venue for GB Para Table Tennis and where the last two English Opens were held in 2009 and 2011. It will be a pleasure to see the city once again being the centre of table tennis.
- Congratulations to Ethan Walsh on winning the Under 23 Ping Pong World Cup in Mexico, beating world number one, Alexander Fleming, in the quarter-finals of the open event only to lose to Paul McCreery of Ireland in the semis.



Ron Hedley with the ETTA Leslie Forrest Memorial Trophy, 2008

Governance

Table Tennis England

- The new chairman of TTE is Nick Donald who was appointed by the Board. The original shortlist of five was reduced to two for further consideration and to meet the CEO, Adrian Christy, and another National Governing Body Chairman. His role commenced on 1st November 2023. A chartered accountant by profession he formally worked as head of UK Equity Capital Market for HSBC. Although no involvement with table tennis previously, he has been involved in other sports, he is a director of British Canoeing and their Finance Committee Chairman. Donald has also been on the Board of England Squash and director of Leicester Tigers Rugby Club and currently is the Chairman of a community cricket club.
- Neil Hurford was elected Chairman of National Council in a close-run ballot against Steve Longmoor. There was a well above average number of National Councillors who voted, far more than vote at the TTE AGM. Hurford was Chairman of MAG (the Members Advisory Group) which was set up following the EGM in 2017, although it had never completely fulfilled its function. Shortly after the National Council election, MAG was disbanded.
- Former Board member, Priya Samuel, who resigned in the summer has yet to be replaced leaving the Board with 11 members. Steve Kemish's four-year term of office finished in November 2023 but he has remained on the Board for the present. The adverts for the two positions are now in the public domain. As are posts for the Director of Events and chairman of the newly formed company, TT International Events Ltd, the joint venture between TTE, ITTF and WTT to run the World Championships in 2026 and beyond.
- The Board have set up an Articles and Regulations Committee and Articles Working Group to consider changes, some proposals may be put to this year's AGM.
- A change to the current membership scheme is proposed and the Board considered the draft at its December 2023 meeting.
- The Association is still without a Patron following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. A request had been made for Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales to act in this role but the request was denied.

ITTF

- ITTF President Petra Sorling has been elected as a member of the International Olympic Committee.

Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation

- The last Commonwealth Championships were held in 2019 when Vivek Kohli of India became the Chairman of the Federation taking over from Alan Ransome who had held that position for a considerable number of years. News is still awaited as to when and where the next Championships will be held.
- Although the Commonwealth Federation website seems to have disappeared there is a Facebook page with some content, mainly related to India.

ITTF World Team Cup: 4th-10th December 2023: Chengdu, China

Although the ITTF World Cup has been around since 1990, the format this year changed considerably. For the first time, rather than two competitions – one for the men and one for the women – this year teams were combined for the first mixed event.

There were 18 teams who participated and they were put into two groups of four and two groups of five for Stage 1 of the competition. The top two teams from each group went through to Stage 2 where all played all. All continental champions were invited along with eight teams according to the combined ranking of the men's and women's teams.

The order of play was – mixed doubles, women's singles, men's singles, then either the men's doubles or women's doubles followed by the single sex doubles match not played in the fourth match. The matches were played to a result only with the total number of games played the deciding factor, not the total number of matches played. This led to some matches which under normal play would be regarded as unfinished. For instance, in the Sweden versus France in Stage 2, after four matches the match score was 2-2 but the game score was 7-5 to Sweden. In the fifth game the score stood at 1-1 but as France could not overtake Sweden in games the match was concluded and Sweden the winners with an 8-6 scoreline.

The eight teams who qualified for Stage 2 were the four group winners, China, Germany, Japan and Korea Republic, with the runners-up, Sweden, Slovak Republic, France and Chinese Taipei.

The final result, not unexpectedly, had China in gold medal position winning all their matches with a game score of 56-10 and 14 points. Korea Republic were second with 13 points and a game score of 49-27 whilst Japan were the bronze medallists with 12 points and a 49-29 game score. Sweden and France both finished with 10 points but as Sweden had a better game difference finished in fourth place. Similarly, Germany and Chinese Taipei both finished with nine points and it was Germany who finished in sixth position, Chinese Taipei were seventh and in eighth position was the Slovak Republic with seven points.



*The Medallists - Korea Republic, China, Japan
Photo courtesy of the ITTF*

Although the event was heralded as a step forward in gender equality, it could be that the reverse is true. For instance, if any country has a particularly strong male or female team, they would previously have had the opportunity to play in the Team World Cup whether the men's or women's. Now, unless both sexes have strong teams there is not a possibility this will happen. It is definitely detrimental to England and many other countries; many of you will remember the elation when England's men won a bronze medal at the Copper Box in London in 2018. However, it is not just England who find themselves without the opportunity to compete as many countries have either their men's or women's teams who are significantly stronger than the other and so this now denies their players from taking part.

WTT Finals, Men: 3rd-5th January 2024: Doha, Qatar

16 of the top male players took part in the WTT Singles Finals in Doha and eight pairs in the doubles. There was big prize money, a total of \$340,000 with the singles winner taking home \$40,000 along with 1,500 ranking points. Winners of the doubles benefitted by \$8,000 and also 1,500 ranking points.

Inevitably, China dominated and six of their players started in the round of 16 in the singles with five of them going through into the next round. Five players from Europe started but only Dang Qiu of Germany made it through to the quarter-finals and was the only non-Chinese player to be in the semis where he lost to the defending champion, Wang Chuqin, who won the title for the second time when he beat Fan Zhendong in the final 4-0. Darko Jorgic, Anton Kallberg, Dimitrij Ovtcharov and Felix Lebrun were the Europeans who went out in the first round.



Men's Singles Champion Wang Chuqin. Photo courtesy of WTT

It was the first time that doubles had been in the WTT Finals and six of the eight doubles pairs were from Asia, Ovtcharov and Patrick Franziska and brothers, Alexis and Felix Lebrun, were the two non-Asian pairs. The Lebrun brothers made it through to the semi-finals where they lost narrowly to Xiang Peng and Yuan Licen - 11, -4, 9, 8, -10. Xiang and Yuan had an easier victory in the final over fellow Chinese Lin Gaoyuan and Lin Shidong 8, 2, 8.

Preview - WTT Feeder: 1st-4th February 2024: Manchester

It will be the first time since 2011, when the last English Open was held in England, that an international tournament will grace our shores.

Four English players have already been confirmed in the singles draw, Paul Drinkhall and Liam Pitchford in the main draw and Tom Jarvis and Tin-Tin Ho in the qualification rounds – all four are confirmed due to their world ranking. Several other English players will be participating but names have yet to be released.

Normally, a player ranked in the top echelons are not able to take part in Feeder events but a home countries player is exempt from this rule and so Pitchford has the significant advantage that no one ranked higher than him is able to play leaving him as the number one seed. However, there are some highly ranked players who will be attending including Anders Lind, Denmark at 31, Alvaro Robles, Spain at 44 and Tiago Apolonia, Portugal at 48. The biggest upset could come from Timo Boll, who after being out for nearly a year through injury has lost most of his ITTF ranking points and so has to start in the qualifying event. He could definitely cause some upsets.

The top three women are Lily Zhang, USA at 45, Xia Lian Ni, Luxembourg at 46 and Britt Eerland, Netherlands at 47.

In Memoriam



Richard Hudson

Richard Hudson, who died at the age of 73, had table tennis running through his veins and was one of the most able organisers and administrators from club to league, to county, to national level.

Richard was a proud Yorkshireman who served his county well, holding many positions over many years, including Chairman, Deputy Chairman, National Councillor for over 20 years, General Secretary, Treasurer, Competition/Tournaments Secretary. He was honoured with being made a

Vice-President in 1986 and an Honorary Life Member in 2004.

A longtime member of the Hull & District TTA Committee, Richard held virtually every position at various times from 1971 onwards, he was Chairman for nearly 30 years and richly deserved the award of a Life Member in 2008.

Richard gained several qualifications along the way, in 1976 he became a Level 2 coach, a County Umpire in 2011, Tournament Referee in 2016 and passed his Level 2 Tournament Organiser exam in 2008 and was awarded a Level 3 in 2019. He put these skills to good use becoming Junior British League Administrator from 2014-19, Organiser of the English League Cup Competition (ELCC) 2012-14, Secretary 2013-22 and Deputy Referee 2015-22.

Wherever Richard was, his wife Brenda, was by his side making a valuable contribution in her own right. Two of their most prestigious appointments were being in charge of hospitality at the English Opens in 2009 and 2011, helping the 2009 Open win the best ITTF Pro Tour Award for that year. Their contribution was greatly valued. Closer to home they organised the successful Humberside Open for many years.

Richard received the ETTA Maurice Goldstein Merit Award in 2008 and became a Vice-President in 2011.

I (Diane) had the great privilege of working with Richard, and Brenda, at the ELCC for ten years as well as the last two English Opens. Richard was the perfect Deputy Referee and support at the ELCC. Richard had a quiet authority, was calm, measured and very professional but he also had a twinkle in his eye and a lovely sense of humour. It was always a pleasure to meet up every year at the finals and to know that with Richard and Brenda there, all would run smoothly.

Richard's death is a great loss to his wife, Brenda, all the family as well as many in the table tennis world.



Malcolm Sugden

One of Scotland's greatest internationals and described as "a rare talent", Malcolm Sugden, passed away in October 2023 in Bushey, Hertfordshire aged 82 years. Born in England of a Scottish mother, Malcolm moved to Edinburgh in the late 1950s where he joined the local YMCA, so often a hotbed of table tennis talent. Originally, Malcolm's preferred sport was cricket, his father being a professional with Yorkshire. He came to table tennis as a player relatively late, not playing until he was a senior.

His natural talent soon came to the fore and he won his first Open title in 1962/63 at the East of Scotland tournament. He gained his first Scottish cap at the World Championships in Prague in 1963 and the following year won the first of five Scottish Championships Singles titles.

By 1966/67 Malcolm was living in Middlesex who he represented in the County Championships and played for the county, one of the strongest in the country, until 1972 when he retired in his early 30s when still in his prime. During those years he was always at or near the top of the averages. He became a valued coach and many youngsters benefitted from his superb knowledge and skill, emphasising the need for fast footwork.

In 1969 Malcolm made history when he won the Nissen Invitation Event taking home the first ever prize fund of £100 and beating top English internationals Chester Barnes, Alan Hydes and Trevor Taylor to take home the valued prize.

A supremely elegant player, fellow international Brian Kean, writes a personal tribute to Malcolm "My first meeting with Malcolm took place in the mid-1960s when we sat in opposite corners of the TT court when our respective counties (*Middlesex & Cheshire*) encountered each other in an English 1st division County match.

I was reserve in a Cheshire squad that included high ranking English players such as Mike Johns, Derek Schofield and a Scotland open singles champion in waiting, Roger Hampson.

As the match proceeded it became abundantly clear that in Malcolm, I was watching a very special talent, he was well and truly in his comfort zone and displayed a variety of skills that proved extremely challenging for my county colleagues.

This was the occasion that sowed the seeds of a special relationship in which Malcolm and Derek Schofield encouraged me to enter Scottish tournaments which I did with some success and eventually saw Malcolm and I representing Scotland in numerous World and European Championships over a period of five or six years.

Due to Malcolm retiring (*to everyone's amazement*) in his early 30s bewilderingly so while very much in his pomp denying a whole generation of Scottish players the opportunity to enjoy the talents of arguably Scotland's greatest ever player.

His performances style and speed around the table is best described by saying ...he had the footwork of Michael Flatley....the grace and poise of Rudolf Nureyev and in true Mohammed Ali style floated like a butterfly and stung like a bee.

In the mid-60s Nissen sponsored a special £100 challenge which threw into the ring the Home Nations number one players who battled it out with the winner taking all. It was Malcolm who left the arena £100 richer and importantly proved beyond doubt he was a force to be reckoned with and a player to be respected throughout the Home Nations and beyond. (Editor's note: in doing so, Malcolm made history as it was the first-time prize money of this figure was allowed, he beat Trevor Taylor, Chester Barnes and Alan Hydes to win the top prize).

Interestingly, two weeks later I visited a local cinema with a relatively new non-sporty girlfriend who couldn't understand why I often preferred ping pong to spending time with her. Could you believe that on this particular occasion Pathe News did a few minutes feature on the Nissen TT Challenge featuring the best of British in action which resulted in Malcolm collecting the £100 cheque. This prompted my lady friend to comment "I suppose you have dreams of playing like them". I just shrugged my shoulders and smiled. (*No surprise she terminated our contract a couple of weeks later*)

To illustrate best how good Malcolm was, he played at the time when the standard of play in the UK was light years ahead of where it sits today. Recently, I was in conversation with England's former champion Denis Neale who opened his phone which displayed an erstwhile European ranking list showing five England players in the top 15, none of whom would have relished the prospect of tackling "Nijinsky" (*as christened I think by Denis Neale*) due to his speed around the court.

Malcolm's abilities were recognised way beyond our home shores and I recall a pleasant occurrence at the opening ceremony of 1967 World Championships in Stockholm. As is customary all teams gather in alphabetical order in the tunnel and Scotland queued alongside host nation and European champions Sweden. Suddenly the great Hans Alser broke ranks and spoke aloud "Ah Sugden" he moved across shook Malcolm's hand and turned to his team mate Karl Bernhard .. (*and as best I could make out,*) .. said "Sugden, a player not to be underestimated".

I clearly recall an occasion when Malcolm had Hungarian World team gold medallist Istvan Jonyer literally on the rack. He led most of the way only to falter at the point when he was in a position to sprint for home... That particular match has over the years had me questioning what was it in Malcolm's make up that prevented him from collecting more scalps of leading world players.

I believe that deep down he was "too nice" and lacked the ruthlessness required to win big. His facial expressions never changed, his body language remained constant whether it be deuce in the fifth or love all. Never did I witness a fist pump or a verbal outburst which is common for most players in the heat of the battle. Notwithstanding the elevated level at which he performed I am convinced he actually played primarily for FUN and was never happier than when he was entertaining spectators by lobbing balls back while almost hurdling the barriers around the court all done with a smile and sometimes a chuckle if it had been a particularly spectacular rally.

Vindication of this belief is epitomised at the Meadowbank Scottish Open in the early 70s when together we reached the final of the men's doubles and faced the mercurial Chester Barnes partnered by Denis Neale. The pair approached us during the warmup and Denis said "Hey, Suggy, Keaney, come here you know you ain't going to win" (*they were of course favourites*) and Denis suggested that as the gallery was packed out we put on a show that will have them talking about TABLE TENNIS all the way home. Malcolm did not need asking twice, performing a relaxed exhibition with all the spills and thrills that could be conjured up with a couple of Europe's best, meant more than being Scottish Open men's doubles champion. I played my part but the performance of Malcolm, Denis and Chester was pure theatre and a joy to behold.

Over a personal TT career that has spanned in excess of 50 years I have had the good fortune of witnessing top world stars in action however in honesty there are very few matches that are firmly lodged in the canyons of my mind. Of course, I am biased but I must allude to a particular match in the Home Internationals played back in the 60s at the Balmoral Agricultural centre in Belfast. England stalwart Ian Harrison and Malcolm battled out the final match of the weekend, a match that literally stopped departing Irish spectators in their tracks. Two incredibly consistent players playing out spectacular rallies ranging between 20 and 30 shots and more with Malcolm covering every square foot of the court to retrieve the best that Harrison could throw at him. Accuse me of sour grapes but today's offerings of three or four stroke rallies with highly chemicalised adhesives and rubbers will be the death knell of our game as the public and media turn their backs on table tennis. Why have the ITTF allowed the manufacturers to dictate our equipment.

Although Malcolm retired from the competitive stage, he continued to play regularly at Connie Warren's club Larkhall and was regularly seen coaching and encouraging countless youngsters. In the 50 years that have passed since we shared rooms and carried the Scotland banner, we have never lost touch until Covid intervened. Much of what I have scribed in the preceding columns have been drawn from my aging memory bank and I apologise if I have fallen a little short on finer detail.

As ever at this sad time I am sure I speak for us all in saying our thoughts and condolences go out to all of Malcolm's family. RIP pal and thanks for the memories.



Doreen Nightingale

Doreen Nightingale, ETTA Vice-President and former valued member of staff passed away aged 87 years on 31st October 2023 in Eastbourne.

Doreen came to table tennis relatively late in life when in the 1980s a friend asked her to make up the numbers in a Local League club team in Eastbourne – and so began a long and valued association with the sport.

Doreen described how new friends led to new doors being opened and before long she was part of the team involved with the administration of the Veterans' Table Tennis Society (VETTS). It was here that Doreen became aware of the ETTA Umpires scheme and thinking it would be a worthwhile role within the sport she was coming to love.

So began Doreen's officiating journey which started with becoming a County Umpire in 1990, a National Umpire in 1996 and an International Umpire in 2000. The officiating pathway didn't stop with umpiring as Doreen also became a Tournament Referee in 2003. She was regularly seen at events around England in umpiring and refereeing capacities.

Doreen was one of the three ladies on what is, perhaps, the only all-female top table, at an Exeter Grand Prix with the late Gill Smith and Diane Kirkwood (later Webb). However, the pinnacle of Doreen's umpiring was when she was selected for the European Championships in March and April 2003 in Courmayer, Italy.

She was also part of the team of umpires at the prestigious Masters, Fairfield Halls, Croydon in 2005 and umpired the match between Alan Cooke and Sweden's former World Champion Jan-Ove Waldner – in front of television cameras. Following her early retirement as a primary school teacher in Eastbourne, Doreen was looking for an outlet for her energies and the opportunity was offered of working for the ETTA in 1991 in the Ranking and Development Department.

Initially, Doreen's work was split between ranking and development, particularly with the introduction of the Junior League which had acquired a six-year sponsorship with the Woolwich Building Society. However, as the ranking scheme developed it became a full-time job and Doreen was acknowledged as the Ranking Maestro – there didn't seem any query that Doreen was not able to resolve.

Ranking was moved into the Administration Department to enable Doreen to help in other administrative areas too, becoming secretary on numerous ETTA committees and so assisted the General Secretary, Rob Sinclair, with some of his workload.

Managing the ranking scheme was the role Doreen continued in until 2006 and hers was a familiar face in every edition of Table Tennis News when the ranking lists were printed each issue.

Always willing to help where she was needed, Doreen was an invaluable member of the team on the ETTA Information Desk at Euro '94 in Birmingham.

When she retired from the ETTA in 2006 as a full-time member of staff, she nonetheless continued to work part-time for a while and was still involved in officiating at many ETTA events as well as locally, also her involvement with the Eastbourne League and Sussex County continued.

At League level, Doreen was Eastbourne's Secretary, Umpires Secretary and County Representative. For Sussex County she was Umpires Secretary for 16 years up until 2006 and also a member of the Umpires Committee and a regular face at County meetings.

What had started as a favour to a friend had turned into many years of service and commitment with an invaluable knowledge of many areas of the sport. Doreen was always the first one in the office in Hastings every morning and her work ethic was second to none. She left a huge gap when she, eventually, permanently retired.

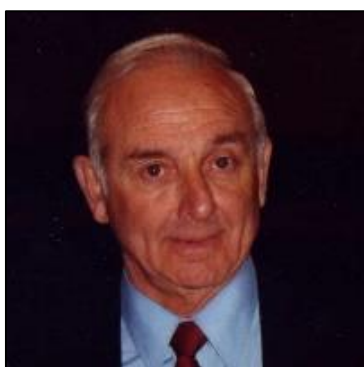
However, several former colleagues and Doreen kept in touch and met on a regular basis for lunch right up until the time of her death. She was always interested to know what was happening and kept abreast of developments.

Richard Yule, former ETTA CEO said on Doreen's semi-retirement in 2006: "Doreen's contribution to the work of the Association has been immense. A true multi-tasker, her energy, enthusiasm and expertise has touched and improved every important administrative function in the office. I welcome this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation of her outstanding work to date."

For her contribution at all levels, Doreen was made an Honorary Life Member of VETTS in 1996, a Vice-President of the ETTA in 2003 and an Honorary Life Member of Sussex County in 2009.

Never one to sit still for long, on her full-time, permanent retirement, Doreen immersed herself in church activities and became fully involved in the work of her local church.

Our condolences to all family and friends with grateful thanks for all Doreen contributed to English table tennis.



Michael 'Mike' Kercher

Surrey County Life President, Mike Kercher, passed away on 20th November 2023 in Sutton, Surrey aged 89 years. Mike was one of the most influential coaches in the south from when he first started coaching in 1957 aged 23.

His original coaching took place at Tweeddale Old Boys School on Tuesday evenings and on Saturdays. There were four tables in the gym which later extended to more tables in the Junior School. Coaching supremo, Jack Carrington, spotted Mike and asked him to take his coaching badge, which he did in 1958 and Mike went to eventually, to become an ETTA Level 4 coach.

Mike was always grateful to Jack Carrington who encouraged him to pursue his coaching qualifications and skills.

Six years later and Mike was involved with coaching juniors for Surrey County Table Tennis Association where he ended up being non-playing captain for both junior and senior teams with many successes. Over the years he coached many players who became internationals at junior and senior level. The first was junior international, Sandy Goldsmith, and Mike maintained he learnt a lot from this experience. He went on to coach senior internationals sisters, Susan and Linda Howard and also Martin Shuttle, Max Crimmins, Darren Blake and Nicky Mason all England senior internationals and David Hannah the Scottish international.

Mike also coached at the 'Guinness School of Sport' at Crystal Palace and at the Littlehampton Table Tennis Camps, the latter co-ordinated with the Reverend Bernard Rowley. In the early years, players and coaches stayed in tents, later they moved into the convent to sleep. Other top coaches – Jane Barella, David Fairholm, Peter Hirst and Gail McCulloch (later Johns) - also worked at these camps.

Mike would drive players around the tournament circuit and helped them with their player profiles, seasonal planning and review. His coaching policy was to ask open questions and encourage players to coach themselves and work out how to adjust and improve their techniques. This resulted in the players thinking for themselves at an early age which helped them improve quicker with their own understanding.

Mike's work and knowledge resulted in being appointed the London Regional Assistant Coach from 1992-94 and England Junior Captain from 1978-80. Mike's value was recognised, also, by being on several ETTA Committees – Selection Committee Member 1977-87, Ranking Panel Member 1980-84, Member of the Coaching Technical Sub-Committee and numerous roles on the National Coaching & Schools Committee including Chairman of several Regional Committees.

A member of the Surrey County Committee for many years, Mike was mainly involved with coaching although he was also their Press Officer for a while. He was awarded the honour of Life Member in 1985 and became Life President in 2008 and held the position until his death.

The Carshalton Youth League benefitted by Mike's presence and he was secretary there for several years as well as being their ETTA representative. He was also secretary of the Sutton Youth League.

Rosehill Table Tennis Club reaped the benefits of Mike's coaching skills for many years and he was still coaching there until July of this year, sharing his knowledge and mentoring and supporting the coaches. He was their Chairman until 2020 and also their President.

Although coaching was Mike's passion, he gained some notable successes as a player winning the men's Singles, Men's Doubles and Mixed Doubles in the London Breweries Championships in the 1960s and at the Surrey Closed, one of the strongest counties in England, he won the Men's Doubles with Peter Brennan, the Mixed Doubles with Susan Tame and was runner-up in the Veterans Singles.

The ETTA fittingly honoured Mike with the Ivor Montagu Award in 1985 "In recognition of his services to the National Selection Committee and his work in connection with the England team clothing".

Jane Barella was one of the Surrey players who Mike coached and she in turn became a top coach and so Mike's legacy is passed on through Jane. She says of Mike: *"Mike will be missed enormously. He touched lots of lives from eight years to 88 years old.*

He would share his stories, experiences and encourage young players to focus on what they wanted to achieve from their table tennis.

My own coaching skills had a huge head start as Mike always coached by getting players thinking and working things out for themselves ie open questions and being their own coach.

Thank you, Mike, for sharing your experiences and knowledge".

Our condolences to all who knew Mike and with grateful thanks to him for all his dedicated work from which so many benefitted.



Christine Lewis

Just as we were going to send TTT out, we heard of the passing of ETTA Vice-President, Christine Lewis. Christine worked tirelessly for the Women's British League for many years and had a significant impact on its success from its inception.

A full tribute to Christine will be included in our next issue.

Future Dates

Domestic Events:

Plymouth Junior 4*: 10th-11th February 2024

Wolverhampton Grand Prix: 2nd-3rd March 2024 – tbc

National Championships: 22nd-24th March 2024, Nottingham

Jersey Satellite Grand Prix: 12th-14th April 2024

Junior National Cup: 20th-21st April 2024, BATTs, Harlow

Junior, U17 & Cadet National Championships: 4th-5th May 2024, Nottingham

Cadet National Cup: 18th-19th May 2024, St Neots

Gloucester Grand Prix: 25th-26th May 2024

ELCC Finals: 1st-2nd June 2024

U11-U13 National Championships: 8th-9th June 2024, Wolverhampton

London Grand Prix: 29th-30th June 2024

Also note the TTE AGM will be held on Saturday 20th July 2024

International Events:

Europe Top 16 Cup: 19th-21st January 2024, Montreux, Switzerland

European Under 21 Championships: 24th-28th January 2024, Skopje, Macedonia

WTT Feeder: 1st-4th February 2024, Manchester

World Championships (Team): 16th-25th February 2024, Busan, Korea Republic

World Table Tennis Day: 23rd April 2024

European Youth Championships: 12th-21st July 2024, Malmo, Sweden

Olympic Games: 26th July-11th August 2024, Paris, France

Paralympic Games: 28th August-8th September 2024, Paris, France

European Championships: 15th-20th October 2024, Linz, Austria

Additionally, there are a number of Olympic Games Qualification events

There are also a number of World Table Tennis events

Veterans Events: For the Over 40s:

World Masters Championships (formerly World Veteran Championships): 6th-14th July 2024, Rome, Italy

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