

Barry's table tennis 'legend' is mourned

★ **Table Tennis**

BARRY'S George Evans, one of Wales's best-ever table tennis players, has died at the age of 89.

In a long and successful career, he represented Wales many times and played all over the world.

George started playing when he joined his local YMCA at the age of 10. At 15, he won both the Barry junior and senior tournaments on the same day, as well as becoming Welsh junior champion.

Like his father, he was a talented all-round sportsman. He loved tennis and golf and won an international cap (presented to him by Field Marshal Montgomery) when he played under-18 football for the Wales Boys Club against England.

After studying at Holton Road Elementary School and Barry Grammar, George continued a family tradition by becoming a coal trimmer at Barry Docks. It was a hard and dangerous job, but it didn't stop George playing semi-professional football, (he had a trial for Everton FC), and winning his first of five Welsh singles table tennis titles at the age of 23.

Table tennis took George around the world. In 1979, he became the first Welshman to win every game in his category at a world championships in front of 20,000 fans in Pyongyang, North Korea.

That performance attracted the attention of a professional table tennis club in Lübeck, Germany - where George played for six years as the team's solitary



George Evans - Barry's table tennis legend.

allowed foreign player in the Bundesliga.

George's biggest achievement was winning the over-70s trophy at the European Veterans' Table Tennis Championship in Bratislava in 2005. He also reached the semi-finals in both the 2006 World Veterans' Championship in Bremen and in the 2007 Euros in Rotterdam.

George played table tennis as far afield as China and Japan, but his heart never ventured far from the Vale. A former chairman, he was unanimously elected president of Table Tennis Wales in 2018, playing an important role in the development of the game.

Table Tennis Wales has paid tribute to George's "legendary" contribution to Welsh table tennis.

A spokesman said: "He is one of the most successful players Wales has produced as he achieved success in all age categories of the game. Our small table tennis family in Wales has lost a legend and a gentlemen of our sport."

Report by Michael Prosser