

## ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

50 years ago – December 1966

I am raiding my press cuttings from when I was Press Officer all those years ago when table tennis was very much a growing sport, particularly in Leicester. I shall try to find as many people as I can you may have heard of or even one or two that are still playing, although this will be very difficult.

Serving was becoming an art form amongst the young at that time and I had the following copy under the heading: "The Art Of Growing Up" in the Sports Mercury:

*If at the start of a game your opponent stoops to look under the table, or gesticulates somewhat strangely with his arms or even stamps his foot a number of times.....be careful. He is not fiddling with his shoelaces or catching up with body-building exercises or even practising new dance steps. More than likely he will be winding up for his "modern" serve. Not everyone can perform these intricate movements in trying to hypnotise the ball.*

On a more serious note while with the younger generation at the time.....the Leicester League had finished their junior trials and announced the ranking list. Yes, the league had trials in those days.

Ivor Billson and Bob Spring stood out with the former given the number one spot despite Spring being considered the better player, Billson just did better on the day. The next four positions were much more difficult with Steve Hobell given number three followed by John Oxborough, Tony Branson and Susan Baxter of Melton.

What a shame we lost Susan to table tennis a few years later as I feel she could have become very much a contender for national honours, she had immense potential. Unfortunately (for us) she was very much an all round sports person and she felt there were more opportunities elsewhere. As far as I know none of these six are still playing table tennis.

At the top of Division One three teams were fighting it out as the half way stage was reached: Barwell Constitutional, Leicester YMCA (three teams in Div One) and Knighton Park (four teams in Div One). At this stage the first two were neck and neck with KP hanging on, none of the three having yet lost.

Top of the averages was Barwell's Ernie McLeish with a 100 per cent record still intact and I shall be following Ernie throughout the season. Just behind were Colin Truman, Phil Powell and Dick Jenkins and then Rod Pickering of the Leicester club playing out of the Saracens Arms, and still playing in the league.

A very big feature at that time was the excellent Midland Counties League in which Leicester had several teams including two seniors, two veterans, as well as junior, intermediate and ladies teams. All were very competitive including the Veterans First who included Brian Pearn (father of Shirley Pickering), Harry Ward (father of Knighton Park) and Stan Ford who beat Walsall 6-4.

The Ladies had an excellent 8-2 success over Nottingham for the first time for a number of years when Pat Kilsby was in fine unbeatable form and ably backed by Glenys Odams, who has only recently finished league play, and Jose Rogers.

This starts the ball rolling and I hope to include a look back roughly once a month during the season.

John Bowness.