

I have always loved table tennis even as a child playing on the dining room table before going on to play at the local youth club as a teenager along with near neighbours John Ellis and Bryan Hall.

On leaving school in 1944 I enrolled on a secretarial course at the College of Art and Technology (now De Montfort University). I was delighted to find that there was a thriving table tennis club which I quickly joined. With plenty of good practice available my game soon improved and I started to play in a team in a low division of the Leicester & District Table Tennis League. I had no idea then that there was a league in Leicester where you could play matches against other clubs, but my involvement started there and continued for many years. I played with Mick Hibberd and Norman Taylor and well remember one week when we were drawn to play away against Newfoundpool Working Men's Club. Having never been to a working men's club I had no idea what to expect. I met up with my team mates and we duly presented ourselves at the club only to be stopped by the doorman who told me that I could not go in as ladies were not allowed inside the premises. We explained why we were there – to play a table tennis match - not to use their bar or other facilities. There was no way I was allowed to enter so we came away disappointed as my team mates refused to play without me.

A few years later I had a very different reception at Braunstone Working Men's Club which had a strong table tennis section with a lot of players graduating from youth clubs on the Braunstone Estate. I was asked to play in an exhibition match against Gordon Bradley, the then Leicester City goalkeeper who, as well as being an excellent goalkeeper, was also one of Leicester's top table tennis players. I was honoured and excited although somewhat nervous as Gordon was a much stronger player than I was. I need not have worried as, lovely person that he was, Gordon adapted his game to my slower one to enable me to cope and I am sure made me look a far better player than I actually was. This remains a happy memory and one of the highlights of my involvement in table tennis.

One of my favourite fixtures over many years was at Northwood where close friends Kelvin Smith and Keith Greenhill were the mainstay of the Division 2 team. Two nicer people would be hard to find and we always had close fought lengthy games, sometimes going their way and others mine, but enjoyable whoever won. The icing on the cake came at the end of the match when Kelvin's late wife Anne provided delicious refreshments, sausage rolls, sandwiches etc. Anne was not a player herself but rarely missed a match. She was a charming lady who sadly died a few years ago and Kelvin is now happily married to Maureen.

The last team that I played for in the league was at Knighton Park alongside Kelvin, Glenys Odams and Robert Geary.

In both John and Martin's reminiscences they mentioned the late Fred Day as being a fine person with which I totally agree. I had known Fred since we were 5 years old going to the same Infants School (Medway Street) and always found him to be the perfect gentlemen. We had many long battles over the years both being defensive players who did not have the attacking shots to beat the opponent easily (if at all) – it must have been very boring for our team mates - and I usually ended up as the loser.

For a short spell I played for a YMCA team alongside Eric Jackson another real gentlemen. I recall paying doubles with him and wherever the ball ended up I never had to go and pick it up as he was always there first.

Table Tennis has been a real family sport for the Rogers clan. I met my late husband John soon after he moved to Leicester from his home town of Shrewsbury. I was playing for the College of Art and he was representing the YMCA. I was attracted to this unknown player, who incidentally beat me, as he went on to do regularly. We went on to enjoy 55 years of happy marriage and we both represented the County for several years. We have been blessed that our daughter Karen and son Chris have also represented Leicestershire for many years. In addition grandson Jack is now also flying the family flag and is currently the number one junior in the County and played for the County senior team for the first time this season alongside both Chris and Karen. Jane (Chris's wife) and Joanne (Chris's sister in law) have also represented the County many times and their parents John and Glen are keen supporters with Glen still regularly attending league matches to watch the team in which Chris and Jack play.

Jose Rogers