

SPOTLIGHT.....on Chris Woodward

by John Bowness.

My first introduction to Chris was around six/seven years ago having reached the dizzy heights of Division Three after coming back to TT three years before. He was top of the averages and unbeaten and somehow or other I managed a win. It was then I discovered what a good sport he is in defeat, not only on the night but for a couple of weeks afterwards, telling others all about it. He gives credit where it is due yet will single-mindedly try to thrash you off the table if he can.

He is Leicester born and bred and is very much a one-club player, starting with Thorn Lighting in 1969/70 as a 17-year-old, although I think it was called AEI back then, playing with such people as Eddie Prescod and Brian Page. When Thorn Lighting was no more in 2008 Chris moved to Leicester Electricity and has been there ever since, largely in Division Three.

When I started to look through Chris's playing records throughout the years I discovered a remarkable aptitude for consistency. From the early 70's up to the late 80's, for instance, his average grading number was around 195, tipping over 200 occasionally – 216 in 1982/83 – down to 186 once or twice.

That is very difficult to achieve. When you look at nearly everyone who has played for any length of time in the league their grading has usually moved up or down considerably over the years, very often both ways at various points. To run along at 195 plus or minus less than 10 for most of the time is extremely unusual.

His current grading is 169 but in real terms it is actually 189. This reason for this is that the core average of all the gradings in the league has gone down by 20 points, so that everyone is currently 20 below what they would have been back in the 70's and 80's. I have never found anyone else anywhere near such consistency. And that has not been easy for him.

For instance, he has had three hip replacements. Now, not wanting to give the impression he has three hips, I had better explain that one which was put in place in 2009 did not "take" properly and was replaced in 2011. He has had three very dodgy hernias over the years and has recently had a few weeks on the side lines because of a shoulder operation – but he is back with a bang and playing as well as ever in Division Three.

He plays table tennis left-handed which you may think is not unusual, yet plays tennis, ten-pin bowling, golf and long alley skittles with his right hand. Ambidextrous or what? With those five sports he plays I don't know what he does on the other two days.

Over the years Chris has rubbed shoulders with many very decent players, particularly at Thorn Lighting where, in the 70's Rod Pickering who still plays in the league, played for Thorn in Division One along with his brother Graham and Ernie Pope. When the 80's came along so did Alan Mould and Mike James, spearheading the club, the latter still doing well in Division Two. Alan recently started having a go in the Monday ladder league to good effect.

Chris Woodward is an ideal club and team member who gives his all as well as encouraging his team mates and is the sort of captain the league really enjoys – one who does not believe in postponing matches. Somehow or other he will find someone to fill in rather than put a match off. Let's get on with it and make the best of it, mentality.

As ever, I really look forward to the next time I play against him, I know it will be enjoyably tough.