

SPOTLIGHT ON.....MIKE SMITH by John Bowness.

By the time I started gathering together information to pen a Spotlight on Mike Smith it became increasingly obvious that I would not get everything in without, perhaps, resorting to instalments. To say his service to the sport has been impressive is the biggest understatement I could make both from the point of view of quantity and, more importantly, quality as there is absolutely no doubt that Mike has put a great deal more back into table tennis than pretty well anyone else. And it continues unabated.

His first taste of table tennis came at school in the late 50's when he attended Hastings Grammar School. From there off to University when, fortunately for us all in this area, it happened to be Leicester University for whom he played in the League as well as being, inevitably, their secretary. From there he moved to British Rail to play with the likes of Harold Clark, Pat and Dennis Kilsby and Derek Noon.

A couple of seasons with Belgrave Liberals, winning Division 6 in 1989/90 followed, before the move to Knighton Park TTC for the next season where he has not only been a valued playing member for 25 or so years but has also been a constant presence in administration for which the club will be forever grateful.

Mike was also given the task of carrying the Queen's Baton as it crisscrossed Britain in recognition of his services to the local community when the Commonwealth Games were held in Scotland last year, which leads me to why this Spotlight was prompted. Not only because he is a player but because, in the field of administration, his skills are so admirably displayed.

At the Table Tennis England (formally ETTA) AGM recently Mike Smith was awarded an Honorary Life Membership of the organization for his services to table tennis. Believe me, there is no-one on Earth who deserves this award more. Only 52 other such honours in the history of the sport have been awarded which, alone, shows how highly it is valued.

We have had a small taste of what he has done locally – what about nationally?

He has been a Board Member (1997-2003 and 2013 to present). A National Councillor (2009-2013) as well as being in Operations nationally with particular reference to his involvement in achieving incorporation in 2001 and Individual Membership in 2009. More recently he was involved in the transition of governance structure during 2013/14. The importance of this will become more and more apparent during the coming years.

Mike is very much involved with the British Table Tennis Association for People with Disabilities, particularly in developing a centralized and sustainable World Class Performance Programme and various other aspects.

The award also takes in his many services to Leicester, with particular reference to the development of Junior table tennis in both League and Schools. As we know the Leicester Development League is an inspiration to most other areas all over the country. Before this he had been awarded the Ivor Montague Award in 1998 and the Malcolm Scott Award in 2001. He was made a Vice President in 2002.

I could go on as he does so much more, for club, league and national body but by now you will know what a very big asset he is, and no-one who has done even half of what Mike has done could be more unassuming. He is a man who has a job to do. Well, several jobs to be honest. He gets on with them with a passion that most of us would find very difficult to come even near to emulating.