

All Our Yesterdays – 50 Years Ago, Number 3 – John Bowness

Time to focus on the ladies. At that time, as at all times, we were always trying to build up the numbers of ladies playing. Around 50 years ago we not only had a relatively higher number but the strength in depth was really beginning to build up, largely as a result of coaches such as John Ellis and his work with the likes of Karen Rogers (now Smith) and Anita Stevenson.

The year I am covering saw Leicester doing well in the **Bromfield Trophy**, a national competition for junior girls which is still going but is now only two-a-side. At that time it was still for teams of three and all the better for it.

They reached the Zone Final to face Ipswich who were expected to produce a stern test but Leicester, with Karen Rogers, Janet Hamer and Sally Elsdon, got stuck in right from the start. In those days they more often played the whole nine sets but Leicester set up a winning 5-0 score before relaxing a little, the final score 6-3.

Karen produced a maximum, all in two straight (remember it was best of three 21-up) while Janet won two and Sally one and their next opponents would be Willesden.

Shirley Pickering has been organising the **Rose Johnson Memorial Trophy** for many years. This is an individual handicap tournament for ladies which was running when I started playing so is one of our longest running events.

At that time 23 players entered and, initially, I'll pay tribute to two people. One is Shirley for all her work on running this each year and Karen Smith (then Rogers) who entered back then and still does, despite having many, many, points to make up every time she plays, trying all the way and never a complaint.

Before I get to the final let me print what I wrote in my Mercury report at the time:

Some of the most exciting matches featured the other finalist, Glenys Odams. After just getting the better of Rosemary North in a see-saw quarter final (21-15, 10-21, 22-20), Glenys gave a 12 points start to Janet Billson in the semis.

She won the first but stood 20-8 down in the second when someone was heard to remark to a neighbour "Janet's got this now". But they had not accounted for Glenys's determination and she proceeded to take the next 12 points and went on to win 24-22.

Anita Stevenson at this time was, like Karen, a constantly improving player and, as usually happens, it is very difficult to keep pace with the improvement of juniors, and she reached the final to face Glenys, albeit playing extremely well to get there.

In the end (and Karen will know and appreciate the feeling) Glenys had been giving points away all round, successively 10, 9, 11, 12 and 12 in the final. Giving such a talented junior 12 start proved too much as Anita won 21-18, 21-17 with Glenys, as ever, fighting all the way.