

## **All Our Yesterdays – 50 Years Ago – John Bowness**

Back then we had the Leicestershire Closed Championships, County rather than League, but just as popular were the Leicester YMCA Open Championships, same players in effect but under the same roof each year and tables all over the place, enjoyable in spite, or perhaps because, of that.

I remember the YMCA event 50 years ago for two reasons, the Men's Singles final was between Charlie Jacques, Leicester's finest ever defender, against the power of Ernie McLeish. They clashed many times, attack versus defence, and always put on what was virtually a performance, a display, of table tennis as it should be played – competitive but scrupulously fair.

In this case it was Jacques who came through a final watched by a packed house when he won 21-11, 21-16. Charlie was in form at those championships as he took the triple crown for, as well as the men's singles, he also won the Men's Doubles with Colin Truman and the Mixed Doubles with Susan Baxter.

Without wishing to downplay any junior girls from that era in any way can I just say that I feel Susan might well have become one of the best players in England but so "sporty" was she that other sports became priorities and she was eventually lost to the table tennis.

The other reason I remember that event is that, in the Men's Singles, I was beaten in round three by Rod Pickering 21-9, 20-22, 21-17, Rod going out in the Quarters. Coincidentally Rod and I have been playing in the same team this season in Division Three. If you can't beat them, join them.

Incidentally, in the Mixed Doubles the beaten finalists were John and Jose Rogers.

The Women's Singles had, for many years, been the property of Rita Beith but this time it was the turn of Glenys Odams who defeated Rita in the semis before going on to beat Sally Elsdon in the final. Glenys had been trying for many years to get the better of Rita and got her just reward this time.

Susan Baxter teamed up with Janet Hamer to win the Women's Doubles, defeating Jose and Glenys in the final. In the junior events up and coming Paul Randell won the boys while Janet Hamer did well to take the girls' title.