

SPOTLIGHT.....on Shirley Pickering

by John Bowness.

We all have certain highlights in life, with sport being no exception, but the main one as far as Shirley Pickering is concerned may well be the 2012 Olympics in London where she was given the role of Games Maker for table tennis.

She holds herself to be very fortunate to be an integral part of the team that looked after the umpires and technical officials which included also being invited to be part of the seeding and draw for the start of play. Being on hand to witness the great detail that goes into such an event had a very big impact that will stay in the mind forever. There is nothing quite like "being there".

Shirley started playing table tennis upon leaving school, playing alongside her father, Brian Pearn, for many years. It was a time when following members of the family into a certain sport was simply the thing to do. Nowadays, certainly in local table tennis circles, it is highly unusual with very few exceptions.

Starting in the Leicester League's bottom division she eventually made it up to Division Two and as well as playing in the league, Shirley represented Leicester(shire) in Midland Counties, County Teams, National Cup competitions and the Vets British League. A humble beginning leading to a very useful, as well as reliable, player to have in any team.

1965 was a significant year. Her first club was Leicester TTC playing out of the Saracen's Head in the Market Place but, when the premises closed that year, Shirley moved to Knighton Park where she has been ever since. She also found time in the same year to marry Rod Pickering and the two of them have already passed their half century together.

It is in the field of coaching where Shirley comes into her own, however, having become an ETTA coach in 2003 after completing a course alongside other members of Knighton Park. It was the first step in a new direction that was to take on an ever increasing new dimension that just grew and grew.

Busy is a word that hardly describes Shirley's current work load. Chairman of the East Midlands Regional Development committee, a National Councillor for the County Association, secretary for the latter, a Leicester League divisional secretary as well a coaching officer for both the county and Knighton Park.

For her club she oversees six sessions per week of coaching ranging from some as young as 6 to an 84 year old. She is also a freelance coach working in schools, colleges and universities, running and organising teacher training and GCSE courses alongside all the other coaching work. No wonder she has received the Maurice Goldstein award for her work on the County Committee.

Add to that the honour of being team captain to the England Schools under 16 girls team for the past two years and you have a weekly diary that is brim full of someone who puts a great deal more back into table tennis than most. I was tempted to say that Shirley puts a great deal more back into the sport than she gets out of it but, of course, at the end of the day we reap what we sow – we get out at least as much as we put in, and she puts a colossal amount into the sport, her club as well as the county and league.

The 2012 Olympics were a highlight, but watching her charges come through the ranks and performing well must also rank highly. Satisfaction of a job well done.