



## Obituary: Micky Thornhill, England international

**Author:** Paul Stimpson

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Michael Thornhill, a former England international who was a founder member of the Swaythling Club International, has died at the age of 87.

Known as Micky, he was born in Croydon in 1931 and started his table tennis career in the Staines League; it wasn't long before he became their number one player. At that time the league teams consisted of four players which led to some very late nights with 12 matches being played.

All the match practice obviously stood Micky in good stead as he progressed to play regularly for the county of Middlesex before representing for England for a decade.



Micky Thornhill (centre) with Brian Kennedy and Ron Thompson at a Junior international against Sweden in 1948

He became the English Junior Boys' champion in 1948 before making his senior England debut on Saturday 4th March 1950 against the United States, a fixture England won 4-3. Many other international matches followed, including a tour of Germany in 1951, while Micky was one of a trio, alongside Brian Kennedy and Ann Haydon, to pay England's first visit to Pakistan, a 21-hour flight away.

Micky played in five World Championships, gaining fourth place in the Swaythling Cup in 1951. In the Men's Singles he twice reached the last 16 and a similar position was also reached in the Mixed Doubles with Peggy Franks in 1951. In the English Open in 1960, Micky stood on top step of the Men's Doubles podium with Johnny Leach, an achievement the pair emulated at the first English National Championships in 1960.

The winner of more than 50 open tournaments at home and abroad, Micky helped the Staines League to win the Wilmott Cup in 1955, alongside Jimmy Lowe and Bernard Crouch. He also had an impressive win against Johnny Leach, at the time the world champion, in the annual match between the Champion County and the Rest of England, a contest played in front of a 900-strong crowd.



The England team in Germany in 1952 with Micky third from left

Alongside his wonderful playing achievements, he was deservedly honoured by being made an Honorary Life Member of the Middlesex County Table Tennis Association.

Middlesex TTA Chairman Doreen Stannard said: "Micky was a lovely character and a leading figure in English table tennis in his era, with much success. His loyalty to his county of Middlesex was second to none."

Micky worked for Dunlop, where he was the Assistant Manager to Victor Barna, and was a fine cricketer, being a member of the Ashford Club in Middlesex, and a proficient hockey player.

Micky was also one of the founder members of the Swaythling Club International in 1967 and his passing means that Joe Veselsky is the only living member of that group.

The current Swaythling Club International Presidents, Ebby Scholer and his wife Diane (nee Rowe, twice world doubles champion), also have fond memories of Micky. They said: "We remember Micky as a kind and humorous person. Di of course knew him also from training sessions as well as national and international competitions in the 1950s. He was always friendly and well behaved.

"We are very sorry that his last few years were overshadowed by his illness. Our thoughts are now with his wife, Sue."

Micky's funeral will be on Tuesday August 21 at Wakefield Crematorium at 2.20pm, and afterwards at Clayton West Cricket Club.



Members of the Swaythling Club in the 1960s with Micky second right in the back row

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