



## Obituary: Jeff Ingber, England international

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**Posted On:** [July 09, 2019](#)

Jeff Ingber, star of the 1950s and 1960s, passed away on July 7 at the age of 83. Born in 1935 in Manchester, Jeff was one of the first ever junior internationals in 1950 before gaining his first senior cap against Yugoslavia in 1957 in Norwich, the first of nearly 60 caps.

He played in three World Championships, just missing out on a medal in 1961 when England men's team finished fourth. His best individual result was with Elsie Carrington in the Mixed Doubles when they reached the Round of 16 in 1959 and beat the strong USA pair of Dick Miles and Leah Neuberger.



At the 1961 World Championships (from the Jeff Ingber Collection)

Jeff also played in the European Championships and many international matches. In the Quadrangular Tournament he was part of the team which won the team event in 1960, 1961 and 1962, never losing a singles or doubles match. Jeff also captained England and was an England Selector for a while.

The English Open saw success and Jeff played in his first tournament in 1947 in Manchester at the tender age of 12 and although he lost in the first round the encouragement he received spurred him on to greater things. In 1952 Jeff reached the Semi-final in the Junior Boy's Singles and was runner-up with R Newton in the Junior Boy's Doubles that year too.

1961 was a good year when Jeff and Kathy Best were runners-up in the Mixed Doubles just missing out on the gold medal to Zoltan Berczik and Eva Foldi of Hungary. Jeff also reached the Semi-finals in several events.

The National Championships, which didn't start until 1960, saw more medals added to Jeff's collection with a silver in the Mixed Doubles with Jean McCree in September 1960 and bronze in the Men's Singles in September 1960 and 1962 as well as the Men's Doubles in 1963 with Kevin Forshaw.





England v Yugoslavia. Alan Rhodes, Ian Harrison, Jeff Ingber. (Photo by D Modrinjak, from the Jeff Ingber Collection)

The other domestic competition in which Jeff excelled was the Wilmott Cup and he was the holder for the Manchester League five consecutive times: 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961 and 1962. Jeff also won many Open Tournaments at both junior and senior level.

As a junior, Jeff undertook a tour of Sweden and Norway in 1951 with John Hunt and Cliff Booth with Tommy Sears as the Captain. The tour lasted 29 days during which time 21 matches were played plus an invitation tournament and an exhibition match. Of the 21 matches, England won 20 and Jeff won 43 of his 53 matches and distinguished himself by beating Bo Malmquist.

The team travelled extensively, sometimes undertaking 12-hour train journeys, but much of the countryside was magical in its beauty. As coffee was the only thing rationed in Sweden and coming from an austere post war Britain where much was still rationed Jeff recalled the food was amazing. His eyes were watering at all the goodies that he hadn't seen before or were very restricted in England, including chocolate, and steak was a regular item which was unheard of at home, certainly for teenage boys. There is a lovely snippet in 'Table Tennis' which reads "Bought chocolates to send home. Ate chocolates."

However, Jeff described his proudest moment winning a gold medal in the Maccabiah Games in Israel in 1957 and 1961, in the latter year he beat fellow England international Stan Jacobson, a match which was umpired by Michel Haguenauer of France before a crowd of 3,000 in the Hilton Hotel.

In recent years I had the privilege of meeting Jeff on numerous occasions and also had many wonderful telephone conversations with him, he was a brilliant raconteur and had a prodigious memory, recalling not only matches he had played in the 1950s and 1960s but even the scores and individual points.

He was one of the earliest members of the Swaythling Club International and a gold card holder of which he was

justly proud, he attended meetings at home and abroad whenever he could, to meet up with old friends and to make new ones. Jeff was as interested in the happenings of the table tennis world today as he was in the history and kept up to date with the progress of the up and coming youngsters.



Jeff Ingber (back row, second right) at a Swaythling Club International meeting in 2017

I will miss Jeff and his friendship enormously, as will all who knew him. He had a wonderful zest for life and continued to travel extensively enjoying many holidays abroad where he loved to meet new people.

My condolences go to Jeff's daughters and all the family who were so important to him.

A memorial service will be held in a few months time and information regarding this will be published when known.

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