



Obituary: Derrick Marples, influential coach

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Former England coach and Table Tennis England Vice-President Derrick Marples has died at the age of 89.

Born in Yorkshire but resident in Derbyshire since 1963, Derrick played a key role in the development of a number of top English talents.

He coached three senior national champions – Helen Lower (three women's singles titles), Alison Gordon (four women's singles titles) and Alan Cooke (six men's singles titles).

He was also coach to the multiple gold medal-winning England team at the Commonwealth Championships in Kenya in 1997.

A local league player until the age of 85, Derrick was Derbyshire County TTA Chairman for 20 years from 1996 and Coaching Secretary/Officer for more than 30 years. He was also Deputy National Councillor for the county and held various roles in the Chesterfield League.

A Level 4 coach, tutor and assessor, his coaching career began in 1961 and he was still coaching as recently as 2015. He was ETTA Coach of the Year in 2004/05 and became a Table Tennis England Vice-President in 2015.

His family are also heavily involved in table tennis – his son Neil has held various positions in Chesterfield TTL, while his grandson Shaun is currently Pathway Manager at British Para Table Tennis.



Derrick coaching Helen Lower at the 2005 Senior National Championships

Derrick was a key influence on the career of former England No 1 Alan Cooke, who is currently Table Tennis England Technical Director. Derrick taught at Chesterfield College and Alan became a student there so that they could work together on the table and on fitness every day.

Alan said of Derrick: "He was my biggest influence by a country mile. I met him when I was 10, in 1976, and he became not only my coach but we stayed friends right up to the end.

"He was a rock and an integral part of my journey and I owe everything to him in terms of my journey in this sport and in life. He was amazing as a coach and years ahead of his time.

"It's amazing what impact he's had, not only on me but many other kids he's worked with over the years.

"He empowered you to do the playing and thinking for yourself, gave you the power to make your own decisions – he never stopped practise but preferred to talk when it had finished and he passed on his knowledge that way.

"He was a strong character and a great person and teacher of the sport. When we worked together, not one penny changed hands – it was never about that for him, he just saw in me someone who believed in what he said and wanted to do the best I could.

"We never lost contact when I turned professional and went abroad and he was always the first person I went to whenever I wanted to talk about table tennis or the things around it."

Table Tennis England Chairman Sandra Deaton added: "Derrick was totally devoted to the sport and his influence extended from Chesterfield and Derbyshire all the way to the world stage.

"Although he worked with some of our leading athletes, he also had a huge impact at a local level and was just as proud of the successes his players had at that level as he was of those who won national titles.

"Many players will remember him with fondness and gratitude and our thoughts are with Derrick's family at this sad time."

Derrick's funeral will take place on Friday November 15 at 11.30am at Chesterfield Crematorium and afterwards at the Olde House in Newbold, Chesterfield.

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