



Obituary: Les Whittaker, former National Councillor

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Les Whittaker, former National Councillor for Dorset, has died after a battle with motor neurone disease. He was 73.

National Councillor for Dorset from 2012 to 2017, Les was also a member of the South West Regional Committee. As a player, he most notably played in the Blackmoor Vale League up to 2018.

Rod Fry, Chairman of his club, Compton Abbas TTC, said: "Les joined the league in about 1998 initially playing for the Child Okeford club but from 2002 he played at the Compton Abbas club where he soon became an integral member of the club. Sadly because of problems with his shoulder, he was unable to play at all in the 2018/19 season and as his condition became worse he was eventually diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease.

"It is no secret that Les unquestionably lived for playing table tennis and competed in three different leagues, the Blackmore Vale League, the Wimborne League and at times in the Salisbury League. In addition, as if that was not enough, he would travel far and wide to play in the English Veterans tournaments both in this country and abroad.

"His enthusiasm for the sport did not limit him to just playing but also getting heavily involved in committee work within the Blackmore Vale and Wimborne leagues, the Dorset Table Tennis Association and acting as National Councillor for Dorset within the English Table Tennis Association (now Table Tennis England).

"He also had two spells as Chairman of the Blackmore Vale League, served as its Secretary for a time and was also its Vice President.

"Les was always very open and approachable off the table and extremely willing to offer advice should any club or player need help with any issue. On the table, he was a very enthusiastic player and, winning or losing, he always had a complimentary word to say to his opponent.

"It is to his credit that once diagnosed with the debilitating problem of MND, Les managed to maintain a cheerful and irrepressible persona throughout the months of his illness. When visiting him, he was always cheerful and pleased to hear about how the leagues were faring, which clubs were doing well or badly and who was winning what. Such was his level of interest, even though he knew he could no longer be a part of it.

"He received many visitors both in the Poole Hospital and latterly at the Forest Hill House nursing home for which he was very grateful as it made him still feel part of the sport he loved. As a league, we will not only miss his enthusiasm and knowledge but also for being the gentleman that he was."

David Beverley, Chair and Treasurer of Dorset TTA, added: "Les was also a very good friend of the now recently departed David Turner. I always had a good relationship with Les, both in competitive matches and in committee levels, and it is hard to lose two such good friends in such quick circumstances so close together at this time of the year."

The funeral service will be at the Harbour View Crematorium, Randalls Hill, Lytchett Minster, Dorset BH16 6AN on Friday 24th January at 11.30am. Refreshments will be provided at the same venue following the service.

Donations can be made through the Harbour View website in respect of the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

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