



Volunteer Clive happy to be back at the centre of events

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Volunteer Clive Oakman said he felt right at home at the Mark Bates Ltd National Championships as he returned to the sport he served with distinction more than 20 years ago.

Clive was a familiar face around the table tennis scene in the 80s and 90s, most notably as tournament director of the European Championships in Birmingham in 1994.

But he had not been involved in the sport since the mid-90s until he volunteered on all three days of the Nationals in Nottingham recently.

"I just came across an advert and it's only 45 minutes away from where I live, so I signed up," said Clive. "I thought it would be nice to see a few people and just to be involved as a volunteer."

It meant for Clive, now 72, a return to a sport he had played from the age of 14 in the Burnham & District in Essex.

His route to championships director of the Euros began when he became involved in tournament organisation at local and then county level, running 3* and junior 2* events.

He began to help out at National tournaments under the tutelage of Harvey Webb and Mike Watts and then made the step to English Opens and international matches and also organised a tour by China to this country in the late 80s and also tours by Japan, Poland, Sweden and France, each lasting from three to 14 days.

When England was awarded the rights to host the Europeans in 1994 in Birmingham, Clive was appointed to the full-time role as championships director for the two-year run-up to the event. He sold his table tennis equipment business and worked for the ETTA in Hastings for the first year and then in Birmingham in the 12 months before the event.

After the Euros, he worked as an event manager for the ETTA, before moving on to other pursuits in the

mid-1990s.

Since retiring, has done a lot of volunteering including at the cycling during the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and at the Track World Championships and on the Tour of Britain, as well as at Parkrun, but this was his first return to table tennis.

“What was really strange was standing in the corner of the arena by the tunnel and I felt right at home, even though I hadn’t done it for 20 years. It was weird but really, really nice,” said Clive.

“So much is similar but it’s moved on, the presentation is better and the play is much quicker.

“It’s good to see the way the focus has gone for the one table set-up on Sunday. It’s a lot more professional – though over 25 years, you’d expect that.

“It was a really good, enjoyable weekend and surprising how many other volunteers I’ve met doing other volunteering work.”

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