



Obituary: England international Peter Shead

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Peter Shead, a former England international and prominent player of the 1950s and 1960s, has passed away aged 91 at his RAF flat in Rottingdean, Sussex.

Peter was born in Islington on March 4, 1929. He started playing table tennis in Blackpool in 1944 where he was an evacuee and before going "back home" to Sussex he had played for Blackpool and Lancashire and had international trials.

Whilst playing in the Blackpool League, Peter won the Men's Singles, Men's Doubles and Mixed Doubles, all on three occasions. His county debut came after performing well at Lancashire County trials and he was selected to play in the Premier Division for Lancashire against Warwickshire at the Grand Hotel in Blackpool on October 18, 1947.

After leaving Blackpool, Peter joined the RAF and as a result played in the Ipswich League where he won the Men's Singles title in 1948/49. Following his stint in the RAF, Peter moved to Hove and remained in Sussex. He started playing for Hove in the Brighton League and soon started his own club in Kemp Town.

Peter's senior England international debut was against New Zealand in Winchester on March 3, 1954, a match England won 10-0 with Peter winning his two singles and his doubles match partnered with Harry Venner. Other team members were Ken Craigie and Alan Rhodes.

However, Peter's greatest achievement was probably reaching the Men's Singles Round of 16 in the World Championships in 1954, the furthest an English player got that year.

He also played in the English Open on several occasions where he reached the Round of 16 in the Men's Singles in 1963. In the Men's Doubles in 1960 with Len Gunn he was a semi-finalist, and a quarter-finalist with George Livesey in 1962. The Mixed Doubles saw Peter playing with Daphne Barontini and they reached the last 64 in 1964.

The National Championships, initially known as the English Closed, did not start until 1960 and it was in the second tournament in September of that year that Peter reached his highest placing of quarter-finalist in the

Men's Singles. In the Men's Doubles he went one better in 1960/61 with David Lowe and was a quarter-finalist twice, with Andy Miller in January 1960 and David Creamer in 1962. His top ranking was Senior No 4.

Peter had success too at Open tournaments; his first recorded Open Championships result in the 'Table Tennis' magazine was in spring of 1947 when he was runner-up in the Junior Boys' Singles in the Cheshire Open. Many wins followed including the Men's Singles at the Birmingham, Bournemouth, Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Portsmouth and South of England Opens, he was also successful in the Men's Doubles at Birmingham and Bournemouth.

With his wife, Pat, Peter won the Mixed Doubles at the Southampton Open in 1953/54 and he won the South of England Open in 1961/62 with Betty Bird.

Peter was a regular county player for Sussex and winner of multiple Sussex County titles, winning the Men's Singles no less than seven times, every year from 1951-1957. He also won the Mixed Doubles with his wife, Pat (formerly Pat Rind) in the 1953/54 season. In recognition and appreciation of his representation and contribution to Sussex, Peter was made a Vice-President of his county and later a Life Member.

Using a Barna hard bat, Peter had successes over Johnny Leach and Chester Barnes as well as some European players. When he first started playing, the legendary Richard Bergmann, multiple world champion, was Peter's hero. Coaching by England internationals Ron Crayden, Ken Stanley and Harry Venner helped Peter on his road to his own England selection.

However, due to work commitments, from 1960 onwards Peter reduced his table tennis output and only attended selected tournaments. He was then working in London as a self-employed photographer; one advantage of this was that it gave him the opportunity to practice with some of the top players in London after work.

Peter described his style of play as "basically a defender with a return chop on the backhand but quick with a good hit, a good county player but not world class".

Peter will be remembered as a kindly man, who well into his 80s was still interested in Sussex activities and regularly attended Management Committee meetings and County AGMs.



Peter Shead (left) in a Hove team from circa 1950, with Stan Moore, Bert Fretwell and Tom Brookes.

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