



IWD: Jeanette Anderson's story

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Table tennis is a game that can be enjoyed by everyone, and this story below highlights how it can add value to the lives of female participants.

Jeanette Anderson discovered her love of table tennis through a Ping Pong Parlour located in her local shopping centre. She quickly began to develop her skills and use the game as a way to meet other people and expand her friendship group in retirement. In fact, 54% of Ping Pong Parlour participants are female – a much higher percentage than other areas of the game.

What's your involvement in table tennis?

"I retired and moved to a village in 2018 so it was important for me to fill my life with activities I enjoyed, and to enlarge my social circle.

In our local shopping area we were lucky enough to have a Ping Pong centre, with 3 tables and free use of bats and balls. I started playing with a friend twice a week and we really enjoyed it, but wanted to improve our skills by playing others of different levels, and to make it more of a social occasion. We advertised on a local site for other people to join us on an appointed day and time, and over the next year a pool of around 12 players joined us, and came regularly. Their playing abilities were varied and proved to be very beneficial to improve all our games. Of course, the main bonus was meeting other people and making friends!"

What do you enjoy most about table tennis?

"I enjoy most the fun and adrenaline rush of playing a good game, adjusting play when up against a different player, and last, but not least, the camaraderie and friendships made."

Have you face any challenges as a female in your involvement with TT

"I can't honestly think of any particular challenges as a female in TT. It seems to me a very level gendered arena. This may be different in a more competitive environment."

Have you faced any challenges as a female outside of table tennis?

"My biggest challenges outside of table tennis go back to the 1960s/70s when the expectations of what women could achieve in the workplace were – generally speaking – much more limited. Ambition was not encouraged or commonplace.

On reflection, my work fell in line with widely accepted female interests – I eventually owned a successful Beauty and Holistic business, and was also involved in youth work, and younger people's issues.

It is hard to know to what extent my work choices have been led by my own interests or wider social norms. We, as females have progressed greatly in the past 60 years, but there are still many boundaries to break through."

What's your biggest accomplishment in table tennis?

"I've been thrilled that this group has grown and established itself firmly, and even during Covid lockdowns, we managed to find a way to play if the tier system allowed. This was achieved by us pulling together as players and friends. My skill progression has improved and I suppose my biggest kick is beating Eileen, a good spinner... and only on occasion!"

What's your biggest accomplishment outside of table tennis?

"Being a Mother! Definitely the biggest challenge to do the very best I could, especially as a single parent. To get the balance of encouraging direction, ambition, moral compass, boundaries and awareness are just a few in what I found to be a very fulfilling and precious role.

I've been a part of great progress during my lifetime in terms of gender bias and inequality, and that has been achieved through relentless focus and promotion of women's rights and by calling out discrimination. The call to choose to challenge is positive and empowering because it's the way to move forward and change attitudes for eventual equality between the sexes."

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