



IWD: Milestone performance highlights

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On International Women's Day, we look at three milestone performance highlights by England athletes on the world stage through the ages.

1951: Diane & Rosalind Rowe become world champions

Winning a world title at any age is a huge achievement – to do so at the tender age of 17 is very special.

Yet that is exactly what twins Diane and Rosalind Rowe did in 1951, teaming up to take gold in the women's doubles at the World Championships in Vienna.

The semi-final and final were both tense affairs which went to fifth games. First, the English teenagers defeated G Farkas & R Karpati of Hungary 21-14, 6-21, 21-15, 15-21, 21-12 to assure themselves of at least a silver.

And then, in the final against Roseanu & Szasz of Romania, they withstood a fierce comeback to win 3-2 (22-20, 21-19, 19-21, 20-22, 21-12) and take the gold.

Among many other accolades in tandem and as individuals, the twins later won a second world doubles title in 1954 – on their 21st birthday!

1976: Jill Hammersley wins European Championships gold



Jill Hammersley (Parker) with the European Championships trophy

Jill Hammersley became the first English player to win an individual European title when she triumphed over Maria Alexandru of Romania in Prague.

It was a tense affair, Jill winning 23-21, 21-16, 17-21, 21-19 in a 75-minute marathon which saw the expedite rule applied at 7-6 in the first game.

For good measure, Jill also won the women's doubles gold at the same event, in partnership with Linda Howard.

Jill was also three times the Europe Top 12 champion and won eight golds at various Commonwealth Championships. She also leads the way in the National Championships hall of fame with seven women's singles victories.

Now Jill Parker MBE, she is very much still involved in our sport and is President of Table Tennis England.

2018: A first Commonwealth Games women's team medal



England women on the podium in Gold Coast (Photo by Phil Walter/Getty Images)

Having beaten Guyana and Vanuatu in the groups, and then Canada in the quarter-finals, England's dreams of gold were ended in the semi-finals by India, who themselves went on to become champions.

The bronze-medal match pitted England's squad of Kelly Sibley, Tin-Tin Ho, Maria Tsatsinos and Denise Payet not just against their opponents but also the crowd – it was host nation Australia at the other end of the table.

It was a dramatic match in which Ho's double led England to that historic first team medal, beating Melissa Tapper 3-2 in the opening tie and then completing a 3-1 overall victory by seeing off Miao Miao, also in a decider.

In between, there was yet another deciding set in the second tie, Sibley losing 3-2 to Jian Fang Lay, a match in which the second game went to an old-school 21-19 scoreline. Sibley & Tsatsinos then restored England's advantage with a 3-1 doubles triumph over Lay & Miao and Ho's second victory brought it home.

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