

World Record broken in Ipswich

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More than 100 players set a new world record at the Corn Exchange in Ipswich for the most people to take part in a table tennis rally.

With Eastern Regional Coach, and former Commonwealth Games player for Wales, Stephen Gertsen, feeding from one end, the rest of the congregation joined the queue hoping to be part of the big event.

Jim Farrow, the organiser of the attempt, revealed how nerves got the better of some of the younger players early on.

He divulged: "I have never seen such nervous tension, players were saying it's the hardest shot they have ever played, the atmosphere was electric. It didn't go all to plan, our first attempt was over in nine shots!

Ten-year-old Jack Pengelly put the ball off the table, so fear starts to set in around the hall by all the players. On attempt two, Jack moves to the front of the queue to relieve the pressure, but, about 22 shots in, our new Junior Girl star player Katherine Shaw, hits it too long and it's off the table once more."

As it turned out, problems with the attempt didn't just focus on matters on the table, but also off the table where a lack of equipment initiated a mild panic.

Farrow said: "We picked up a rhythm in attempt three but at this stage not everyone has a bat and so there was a mad scramble to get some bats from the front of the queue to these players."

However, despite this rush the rally continued in a strong fashion as the hopefuls closed in on success with Farrow, like many others, unaware of how near they were to achieving their goal.

He said: "We moved past the record, but we didn't know this at the time because nobody was shouting out the counts, we were concentrating so much and didn't want to add any pressure."

Farrow added: "At the end of all the players we counted and recounted, it's 108! Wait a minute, we forgot to include Stephen, it's 109! The hall went crazy; cheering, hugging, shaking of hands, everyone congratulating each other, what a feeling."

Gertsen, who takes a lot of credit for his role in the record said: It was one of the most nerve-wracking things in my life – there was a lot of pressure.

I had to make sure that I didn't mess up."

However, with the record now confirmed by the Guinness World record team he can relax and look forward to the positives from the event, which also marked the 80th anniversary of the Ipswich and District Table Tennis Championships.

Gertsen concluded: "I thought it would be a good way to promote the sport in the area and it was good to get Ipswich on the map and the sport on the map as well."



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