

Former international and agent Ken Stanley passes away

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Former England international Ken Stanley recently passed away at the age of 91 after successful careers as a football agent, RAF instructor and table tennis player.

Ken's major role was as one of the first sports agents in the UK where he ran a hugely-successful business from modest offices in St George's Square, employing 25 people.

In his most important role, Ken was responsible for handling the massive commercial demands on the 1970 England football squad who were sent to Mexico to defend the World Cup.

His wife Marion, son David and daughter Susan worked alongside him – and their client list ranged from football legends such as Denis Law, Ray Wilson, George Best and Gordon Banks to tennis star Billie Jean King, cricketer Geoffrey Boycott and boxer Muhammad Ali.

Ken was born on February 19, 1922 in Hulme, Manchester. When he was 11 he joined the Manchester YMCA and took up table tennis, in which he showed tremendous potential.

Many said he could have been world champion if it had not been for the war.

In 1936, when Ken was 14, he left school and took his first job as an office boy. This was at Joshua Smiths in Manchester and it was there he met his wife to be Marion Brook, aged 17, who was already working there as a shorthand typist.

They were together for 77 years and had four children – David, Janet, Margaret and Susan.

Ken left Joshua Smiths a year later and went to work at Hart Ashworths, another cotton manufacturer in Manchester. He attended night school in the evenings but he continued to play table tennis and took part in many tournaments.

At 17 he was chosen to play for England in the world championships held in Cairo. His boss at the time said if he went he would lose his job, so lose his job he did, later finding work at an accountants firm.

When war was declared he volunteered to join the RAF to train as a physical training instructor and became Corporal Stanley PTI 1486624.

His duties took him to India and he continued to play table tennis and won the All India Cup winning the Men's Singles, Men's Doubles and Mixed Doubles.

His success brought him international attention and he took up coaching jobs, first in Scotland, then in New Zealand and Norway. He also coached again in this country where he was a major and progressive coach at his academy in Burnley.

His first tentative links with the world of a sports agent began in 1955 when he was working in Burnley, but really took off when he got a job as sales manager at Mitre Sports in Huddersfield and moved to Fixby.

Soon after the move Ken met the teenager Denis Law, who was playing for Huddersfield Town, which was the real beginning of his career as an agent. It was also the start of a very close friendship with Denis and his family as well as a business relationship.

Through Denis came George Best, Emlyn Hughes, Alan Ball, Billy Bremner, Jack Charlton – to name but a few. Then followed the World Cup Squad and Leeds United.

He gave up his job at Mitre to set up office in St George's Square. In 1975/76 Ken formed a company called Sports Leisure Promotions but in the early 80s, due to overwork and too much pressure he pulled out of this and set up another business in Brighouse and was chairman of Viktor (Emlyn Hughes) Ltd.

He and Marion moved to Mirfield and he loved visits from his children, grandchildren, great and great great grandchildren.

Finally, aged 80, Ken retired and spent the rest of his years caring for his wife Marion and like everything Ken did, his devotion and care for Marion was first class.

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