

ETTA Chairman Andy Seward's Obituary

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Andy Seward, Chairman of ETTA, (December 1, 1944 – January 15, 2014)



Andy had been involved in table tennis for most of his life...as a player, umpire, volunteer, administrator and representative at local, county and national levels.

However, it is probably the last six months of his life where he made his greatest contribution to table tennis and which could well be his lasting legacy to the sport.

Andy became Chairman of the ETTA following an election in early 2013 and took over the post in July 2013. He arrived at what was probably the most difficult time in the history of the national sports governing body. The ETTA and table tennis had just faced an independent review which made it clear that wholesale changes needed to be made. Andy came in when the Association was facing an uphill journey to reform itself, and demonstrate it could and would change.

The sports principal funders, Sport England, had made it clear that changes had to be made if they were to continue funding English table tennis and there was limited time to show it was back 'on the right track'.

Andy set about making those changes with a passion, determination and commitment. He drafted in new people to be on his board who had the necessary professional skills as well as involvement in the sport of table tennis. And he led that team 'from the front'.

He became frustrated when he couldn't make change happen as quickly as he wanted and always demonstrated a single-minded determination to 'get table tennis back on the right track'. He had been set targets he had to achieve to ensure future funding and was determined not just to meet those requirements but to surpass them.

For the first six months of his tenure he worked tirelessly to lay new foundations for a national sports governing body which was fit for purpose in the 21st century. Some of the decisions were tough and he knew might be unpopular but he never wavered from a belief that he would do what was necessary to lay the foundations for the future.

In a very short period of time, he introduced the plans for a new internal structure of the organisation; he identified new purpose-built premises as a head office; he changed the governance of the ETTA in keeping with the ideals of a forward-thinking governing body; he introduced talent development centres to nurture young talent; he realigned the regions to make better use of resources...and, to use his own words, he wanted to demonstrate that 'the ship had changed direction and was back on course'.

Recently, Andy had not been in the best of health, but he never let this interfere with his dedication to the role to which he had been elected.

A few weeks ago, one of Andy's last services to table tennis was to make a major presentation to Sport England to demonstrate he had started to lay the foundations for the future.

We are still awaiting Sport England's verdict on whether they were convinced we had done enough in the time available. But for those of us who were privileged to work with him during his period as Chairman, we know that no-one could have tried harder or worked with greater commitment for the future of table tennis than he did.

Background

Andy graduated with an Honours Degree in Mathematics, Statistics and Computing, and was employed in the IT industry for more than 32 years. He initially worked for Royal Insurance in Liverpool for 10 years and Cheltenham for seven years; moving to NatWest in Bristol as a Senior Projects Manager with responsibility not only for managing projects but also budgets, recruitment, testing, implementation and administration. After 15 years' service retired in 2001.

During his professional career, he managed to continue playing table tennis in the various leagues he was working. He played in the Wirral, Cheltenham and Mendip leagues and represented Somerset in the County Championships Veterans divisions on many occasions.

His 'behind-the-scenes' involvement in table tennis started with the Wirral league and subsequently he served as Treasurer and Chairman of Cheltenham league and was a member of West Wiltshire league committee since 2002. He was elected National Councillor for Somerset in 1991 and attended every National Council meeting for the next 13 years; subsequently being elected as National Councillor for Wiltshire in 2004.

He was also involved in county associations; with Somerset as general secretary, umpires secretary, and press officer; and as vice-Chairman for Wiltshire.

Umpire

Andy qualified as ETTA national umpire in 1989, an ITTF international umpire in 1992, and achieved IU blue badge status in 2004. He officiated at Athens 2004 Olympic Games; and the World Championships in Manchester 1997, Osaka 2001, Paris 2003, Guangzhou 2008. Chairman of the National Umpires and Referees Committee from 2005-2007.

County Championships

Deputy Referee 2004/5 – 2005/6

Referee 2006/7 – 2010/11

County Champs Committee Chairman 2010/11

Assistant Administrator (VETTS and Over 60s) 2011/12

Assistant Administrator (Seniors) 2012/13

ETTA Chairman

Chairman of the English Table Tennis Association (July 13, 2013 – January 15, 2014)

Andy leaves a widow, Carol and two daughters; Karen and Ali and two grandchildren; Kirsty and Jessica.

Susie Hughes

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