

It's Grey expectations as Roy Norton takes on TV challenge

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Roy Norton in action

Table tennis ace Roy Norton is striking a blow for the older generation on ITV's new Saturday night hit Amazing Greys.

The 72-year-old is one of a team of talented pensioners taking on the 20-somethings in a series of challenges – with a £10,000 prize up for grabs for the youngsters if they can overcome their elders.

Roy, who has won medals at both the European and World Veterans' Table Tennis Championships, was chosen to be part of ITV's team of resident experts after the broadcaster contacted him in his capacity as chairman of the Veterans English Table Tennis Society (VETTS).

"They wanted somebody who has got some kind of a record in table tennis and somebody with a bit of character," he said. "They came to see me play and I fitted the bill.

"Other people say I'm a pensioner but even at 72 that doesn't ring a bell with me. I'm still very enthusiastic, I still play twice a week in the first division of the Walsall and Wolverhampton leagues, I play every weekend and I travel abroad a lot.

"I retired 16 years ago and I've taken nearly 400 flights since then to play table tennis."

That includes to Hohhot in China, where he won bronze in the men's doubles alongside Brian Hill in the World Veterans' Championships in 2010. He will be flying out to Auckland in New Zealand next month to take part in this year's event.

Among his other achievements are representing the UK deaf team in 2012, alongside team-mates who were all in their 20s, and winning silver in the over-70s doubles category in the European Veterans' Championships in Bremen last year, alongside Emanuele Rame of Italy.

Those experiences have stood him in good stead for the show, which is presented by Paddy McGuinness and Angela Rippon.



The Amazing Greys line-up

He appears in two episodes – this Saturday (April 19) and May 3.

He said: "They've adapted games to even it up because if you take somebody off the street, even if they're sporty, they shouldn't be able to beat someone who's good at sport. They've tried to even it up to make it interesting.

"It's not an actual game of table tennis we play, it's a challenge which involves hitting a target area. I play a woman on one occasion and a man on the other, both in their 20s."

Roy is sworn to secrecy about the outcome, but says he thoroughly enjoyed his time filming the show.

"It's nice to appear on TV, the experience of being there and seeing how they do everything was wonderful," he said.

"There must be 20 cameras all over the place and a room with 20 screens and they have the rehearsal to work out where to place everything. It was amazing to see how it all worked.

"The team spirit of the Greys was fantastic. I've played in many teams and I've never seen such a good team. Everybody was supporting everybody else. It was a wonderful experience."

Amazing Greys is on ITV at 8.20pm on Saturday.

by Paul Stimpson (April 16th, 2014)

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