

# Aubrey Simons, world champion, passes away at 93

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Aubrey Simons

Aubrey Simons, a member of the England team which won the 1953 World Championship (Swaythling Cup), has died peacefully at the age of 93.

Mr Simons was also president of the Bristol & District Table Tennis Association for an incredible 50 years.

Here, the B&DTTA's John Ruderham pays tribute.

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Throughout his life, Aubrey was a quiet, unassuming and modest gentleman who also had an infectious sense of humour, but someone who you could trust wholeheartedly.

He was a good, all-round sportsman who could well have been a professional cricketer, having first captained Bristol Grammar School 1st XI and won his Gloucestershire Second XI cap in 1948.

However, it was in 1936 that a 15-year-old Bristol Grammar School boy travelling on the Queen Mary on a holiday to America decided to enter the ship's "ping pong" tournament – and won it! Aubrey had arrived on the table tennis scene.

In 1938 he had his first England trial and in early 1939 won his first Men's Singles title in the Bristol Closed Championships, before the outbreak of the Second World War temporarily curtailed his meteoric rise. He was commissioned for war service in India and Burma, where he represented the RAF against an army side in a cricket match which included Denis Compton.

After the war, Aubrey re-launched his table tennis career, which was to eventually feature five World Championships and 165 appearances for England between 1948 and 1955 with an 80 per cent win ratio.

He won the West of England Singles title five times, along with many other Open championships around the country and worldwide and became the West Country's most famous player, although surprisingly he never won the English Open Men's Singles title.

In September 1950 the ETTA had ranked Aubrey equal with Johnny Leach, with Jack Carrington writing in the Daily Mirror that "these two would chase each other around the tournaments this season", and sure enough Aubrey's first success came in the final of the Birmingham Open in October 1949.



The England team including Aubrey Simons receive the 1953 Swaythling Cup from ITTF president Ivor Montagu

The highlight of Aubrey's career, though, was in 1953 when he played a major role in England's one and only success to date in the Swaythling Cup world championship in Bucharest over Hungary. The previous year in Bombay he had pulled a calf muscle in his first match, and at four games all in the final against Czechoslovakia had bravely played the decider against numerous doctors' orders and only narrowly lost to Kalman Szepesi.

However, in 1953 he was to triumph and subsequently rated his victory over Vaclav Tereba, which finished at three o'clock in the morning and gave England a 5-4 victory in the semi-final as his best-ever performance. Later the same day, Aubrey won the first match against Josef Koczian of Hungary which set the mark for his

team-mates to follow. Thankfully, Aubrey was spared having to play the decisive ninth match two days running!

However, it was as a result of his "twilight" success for his country in that semi-final, that this unpretentious and mild-mannered man from Bristol suddenly found himself the most popular sportsman in the British tabloids and was subsequently ranked at No 4 in the world. Later that year, he was also the first recipient of the prestigious Victor Barna Trophy which was to be presented annually for the best performance by an English player in the sport.



Aubrey Simons in his pomp in December 1950

In 1964 Aubrey was elected the fifth President of the Bristol & District Table Tennis Association and set yet another record by holding that post for an incredible 50 years, and at the B&DTTA AGM in June 2007 Alex Murdoch made yet another special presentation to Aubrey of a Bristol Blue glass salver recognising a record seven decades of playing in the oldest league in the world.

His funeral will take place at 2pm on Friday 6th June at Canford Crematorium, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol BS9 3PQ. There will follow a wake from 2.30pm at the Civil Service Club, Filton Avenue, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 0AT. Further information will follow regarding flowers or donations.

Aubrey will be sadly missed by many, many friends in the table tennis world and our thoughts are with him now. It was an honour and a privilege to have known you, Aubrey. Thank you for all you have done.

**John Ruderham**  
**B&DTTA**  
**20th May 2014**

**(Additional information and photos courtesy of Diane Webb)**

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