

Malcolm, 81, is the man for all seasons

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Malcolm King

Malcolm King has completed an amazing 65 straight seasons of competitive table tennis in Great Yarmouth – and shows no sign of stopping now.

Malcolm, 81, started playing when he left school and has represented various clubs in the Great Yarmouth & District League – most recently Gorleston Conservative Club.

His longest stint was at the Northgate Hospital Social Club team, where he played between 1983 and 2010.

“I’ve never missed a season,” he said. “Even when I was in the RAF for three years I organised my weeks so I could come home and play in matches and tournaments.”

Malcolm was a basket-maker for the fishing industry and later became a stores manager for various local companies.

And he said he owes his longevity in the game partly to some good advice he was given near the start of his career.

He said: “I was told to go out and enjoy the game and don’t get uptight when you’re playing. If you lose a point, you can’t do anything about it, so just play the next one.

“It was very good advice – don’t dwell on what you’ve lost.”

Malcolm, who lives in Gorleston, took up the sport at the now defunct Old Priorians Club, and first played in the Yarmouth League and the Great Yarmouth Youth League in the late 1940s.

That was where he wielded his first bat – an Eric Filby – which he still owns and refers to as his prized possession.

He explained: “Eric Filby was a county player at the time and this is a solid wood bat. I discovered that the old bats were wider – I tried to take a bit of rubber off another bat and it was an inch short all the way around.”

Malcolm has seen many other changes and is adamant about which one has had the biggest impact on the game – the change from 21-point to 11-point matches.

“I can understand why they did it for the higher levels – county and above – but I think they should have let local leagues and clubs decide whether they wanted to play 11 or 21-up,” he said.

Malcolm rates Tony Archer, Maurice and John Ewles and Paul Gilbertson as the best players he has faced down the years, while his personal highlights include winning the Yarmouth Premier League and on one occasion representing Yarmouth Town B team in an inter-town match.

He sums up his career by saying: “It’s simple: I enjoy playing table tennis, end of story. I don’t care whether I win or lose, I enjoy the company and the night out.”

By Paul Stimpson (June 25th, 2014)

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