



## Frank's in a league of his own – at 89!

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**Posted On:** November 04, 2015

Frank Armstrong is proof that table tennis is 'a sport for all for life', winning two league matches after being called up as a late replacement for a Walsall League fixture – at the age of 89.

Frank, who has been playing since 1950, was drafted in to the Great Wyrley J line-up for a Division Four match last month.

Despite having not played a league match for about three years, and facing a young Wood Green M team, he won two five-set matches and lost his third in four sets.

He beat Mathew Kirke 3-2 (13-11, 9-11, 11-8, 6-11, 11-5) and Amelia Baker also in five sets (11-9, 7-11, 11-8 9-11, 11-9) and lost 3-1 against Kirsty Maull (11-6, 9-11, 7-11, 7-11).

"I was asked to fill in and I thought it was great – I've always looked forward to a match," said Frank.

"I've played in most of the leagues over the years and I never really retired, I just thought at my age I didn't want to keep going out on dark nights when I was waiting outside for lifts. But I've always been to the club – I was there this morning – and I still enjoy it."

He had plenty of praise for his young opponents and felt his style and experience were key factors.

"When you're playing youngsters you've got to bring back a little bit of what you know," he said. "I'm mostly a defensive player and I've always played with a hard bat, even now."

"I had some very close matches – they are really bringing these kids on, which is good for the game."

"They like to play older players because it's more experience for them and sometimes they have to learn how lose as well, it's all part of it – you have your highs and your lows."

"They took it well, they were level-headed about it. They didn't throw any tantrums and they gave me a bit of praise as well. They are being very well brought up."

Frank, who has five grandchildren and one great-grandchild, started playing at his workplace and added: "That was the thing to do if you were keen on starting a game. A lot of these youngsters now are all coached, but we had to learn our way through the game."

And he says he plans to keep on playing – including in league matches if required.

"If you enjoy it, keep going, it's a fabulous game," he said. "If they call on me, I'll always turn out if they want me.

"I may be the oldest league player in the country, I don't know, but I reckon there's a good chance I'm the oldest in the Walsall League!"

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