



## Roger earns reward for lifetime's dedication

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A lifetime of service to table tennis resulted in Roger Gillett, of Bexhill, receiving the Table Tennis England Pride of England South East Contribution to Table Tennis Award.

The presentation was made at the Bexhillians Table Tennis Club's Tournament by club member and Table Tennis England Honorary Life Member, Harvey Webb.

Roger started playing table tennis when he was 11 years old in the Scouts and moved on to playing at the Church Youth Club. Although only young he had his eye on a certain young lady, Iris Gaston, and when she moved to Bexhillians Table Tennis Club to be coached, Roger followed. He was then about 15 or 16 years old.

It was a wise move for both as Iris went on to become Sussex County Junior No 1 and Roger went on to marry Iris, to whom he still married.

Roger started playing in the Bexhill League when he was 17 but had a break when he was in the forces doing his National Service. When he came out he returned to the club and when the club coach emigrated Roger took over that role. He qualified as a 1 star coach and his knowledge, skill and gentle manner have helped many players young and old.

Roger's philosophy with coaching is that a player should gain experience and advice from more than one coach to maximise their knowledge and to learn to think for themselves. He has been involved with coaching many players to a high level in Sussex, many reaching the county first team including his son, Graham.

Perhaps the highest achievers were the three Moore siblings, Adrian, Stephen and Teresa (now Teresa Bennett, mother to Jack, Josh and Joelle). Adrian and Teresa were both England Junior Internationals, Adrian was also an England Schools international and Teresa represented GB at the World Student Games.

Roger was not only involved in coaching; he also became involved in the administrative side of the game. He joined the Hastings & District Table Tennis Association and Sussex County Table Tennis Associations in 1957 and was on both committees for over 50 years, taking on various roles. At county level Roger was on the Selection

Committee for over 30 years and also ran the Sussex Closed Tournament for approximately 25 years. He is a Life Member of the county.



Judy Rogers presents Roger with a 1066 Community Super Senior Award

Other honours Roger has received are the ETTA Maurice Goldstein Merit Award, Vice-President of Hastings League and recently the 1066 Community Super Senior Award, 2016. The latter was presented by the Mayor of Hastings, Judy Rogers, who also happens to be Table Tennis England Safeguarding and Ethics Manager. This award was not only for Roger's table tennis work but also recognised his many years of service with Polegrove Bowling Club and Bexhill 100 Club where he is an officer and Life Member.

Roger has run Bexhillians Table Tennis Club for 59 years, again from 1957. He is still ever present on match nights, still puts the tables up and clears away at the end of the evening and offers useful advice on the playing front and at 83 years old still plays.

As well as all his other table tennis commitments for the last five years Roger has helped coach a group of young people who visit the club every Thursday with their carers. They have varying mental disabilities and are looked after in a home as it is not possible for them to be looked after by their families. These young people benefit enormously from their time at the Bexhill club.

A lifetime dedicated to table tennis, Roger is the heart of Bexhillians Table Tennis Club.





Roger with members of Bexhillians

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