



Friday Photos 93: Diane Scholer's remarkable career

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Diane Scholer is one half of the famous Rowe Twins who were at the very top of English and World table tennis in the 1950s. A perfect pair in doubles, with Diane the left-handed player, and Ros the right-hander.

It was always felt that being twins they had greater awareness and empathy when playing together which gave them an edge over their opponents. There must be something in that as they twice won the World Women's Doubles title, in 1951 and 1954.



Rosalind Rowe, Margaret Fry, Diane Rowe.

How did Diane and Rosalind become involved in table tennis? The start was not auspicious as the girls received table tennis bats instead of much hoped for bicycles at Christmas when they were 14 years old. However, they were soon hooked and the dining room table was commissioned for practice.

This was followed by playing on a newly acquired table in a spare room at home before moving on to a club. Within three years they were Women's Doubles Champions of the World in Vienna. Three years later, on their 21st birthday, and on home soil they repeated their success to become World Champions for a second time.



Lou Laza with Australians, Bill Hodge and Geoff Jennings shows his unusual grip to Di, Ros and Victor Barna at the West Ealing Club.

In 1949 the girls joined the West Ealing Club and were coached initially by England international, Ken Craigie. It was Ros who was first selected to play for England at senior level later in that year, in Czechoslovakia, aged 16 years.

Meanwhile, back home, Diane was competing in the Daily Mirror tournament, a tournament which she won and as a result became entitled to free coaching from the legendary Victor Barna, a partnership which led to two World titles and lasting friendship.



Diane winning the Daily Mirror tournament, Royal Albert Hall, 1949. Her opponent was Mrs P Lammin from Grimsby.

The twins' fame spread after their 1951 World title and they achieved many more successes at home and abroad and became involved in more than the playing side of the game.



Diane and Ros, with Bill Vint and Kathleen Pegg, looking on as preparations are underway for the Daily Mirror Tournament which had 12,000 entries. Full time staff were specially employed to handle the entries, 1952.

In 1953 the twins made a three-month tour of Australia and New Zealand going out on the ship Mataroa. Hey played in 28 towns in New Zealand before moving on to Australia, an extensive tour but one which had a very special benefit for Ros as she met her future husband, Dr John Cornett on the outward sea journey.



Rowe twins. Ministers of Social Welfare and Internal Affairs, Wellington, New Zealand, 1953.

1954 proved to be that very special year, not only did they win their second Women's Doubles title but this wonderful achievement was on their 21st birthday – what a way to celebrate!



The W J Pope Trophy (World Championships Women's Doubles Trophy) presented by Lady Swaythling.



Birthday congratulations on a more than average special occasion, 1954.

1955 was the year the twins' book was published, aptly entitled 'The Twins' on Table Tennis'. However, Ros gradually reduced the amount she played, leaving Diane to set up some excellent doubles partnerships with Mary Shannon, Ann Haydon and Kathy Best.

'The Twins' on
TABLE TENNIS



*Diane and
Rosalind Rowe*

1955 saw the publication of the twins' book which included a little bit of history and tips on playing.

The mid-1950s saw more titles added to the already glittering array with many World Championships being played including Tokyo, where Di played with Ann Haydon in the Women's Doubles and reached the semi-finals, although perhaps two left-handed players was not the best combination.



Diane and Ann Haydon at a reception in Tokyo, talking to Roy Evans, 1956.

The English National Championships did not commence until January 1960 when the first event was held at Greenwich Baths in London. Diane was not only the first Women's Singles champion but took all three titles that were available to her; the Women's Doubles with Jill Rook (later Mrs Mills) and the Mixed Doubles with Johnny Leach. In all, Di won four titles in each event.



Diane, first Women's Singles English National Champion, 1960.

Diane's playing record is unlikely to be equalled. She played in 11 World Championships and won two silvers in the Corbillon Cup and five bronze medals. Diane was semi-finalist in the Women's Singles and runner-up in the Mixed Doubles with Johnny Leach in 1952. In the Women's Doubles, as well as her two gold medals, she had five silver and two semi-final placings.



European Champions, Lesley Bell, Mary Shannon, Diane Rowe, Irene Ogus; Ron Crayden with the trophy, 1964.

The European Championships which were inaugurated in 1958 saw team gold in that year as well as in 1964 and two second places. With Mary Shannon in the Women's Doubles there were a further two gold medals in 1962 and 1964 and a silver in the Women's Singles.



Diane with Mary Shannon (Wright).

The English Open saw another clutch of medals with gold in the Women's Singles in 1962, 12 titles in the Women's Doubles and one silver. The Mixed Doubles again saw further medals with six gold, the last in 1969 with husband, Ebby.



Di and Ebby, far end, playing in the English Open, 1969, on their way to the title.

In recognition of her achievements Diane received the Victor Barna Award from the ETTA an amazing six times in 1954, 1955, 1958, 1963, 1964 and 1965. She also became a Vice-President of the Veterans English Table Tennis Society in 1987 and was inaugurated into the ETTU Hall of Fame in 2016.



Rosalind Rowe playing with Victor Barna.

No doubt Diane would have won many more English titles were it not for the fact she married German International, Eberhard (Ebby) Scholer, in 1966 and moved to Germany. Here she had many more successes at international and national level, winning seven German titles.



Sisters in action.

Once Diane's playing days had finished she turned to coaching before becoming heavily involved with the Swaythling Club International, of which she was President for many, many years before handing over to husband, Ebby. Di is now an Honorary President of the SCI and still travels the world and is ever-present at many major ITTF events and at the World Veterans' Championships which the SCI are responsible for.



Diane, second left, at the 2010 World Junior Championships. Photo courtesy of the ITTF: Remy Gros.

Diane's involvement with the SCI is a lasting tribute to her coach, mentor and great friend, Victor Barna and a way to keep Victor's flame burning brightly. She has been at the heart of this organisation which keeps so many world championship players and officials, in touch with each other in a spirit of friendship.

The SCI Fair Play Award is presented annually at our and other national association championships and this year Tin-Tin Ho was the recipient. It was an honour and a privilege that Di and Ebby were present to make the presentation.



Ebby and Diane presenting Tin-Tin Ho with the SCI Fair Play Award at the English National Championships, 2017.
Photo by Alan Man.

A remarkable record, a remarkable lady.

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