



Obituary: Jack Melnick, blue riband umpire

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It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Jack Melnick. Jack was one of England's most respected and renowned umpires during the 1970s, 1980s and into the 1990s.

Jack officiated at the Barcelona Olympic Games in 1992, the sole English representative; three World Championships in Birmingham (1977), Novi Sad (1981) and Gothenburg (1985); two European Championships in Prague in 1976 and Berne in 1980; and two Commonwealth Championships, Cardiff (1973) and Edinburgh (1979).

Other umpiring appointments around the world included the Belgian Open (1974), the Scandinavian Open (1977), the Welsh Open (1983), the US Open in Miami in 1986 and the Irish Open in 1988.

The number of occasions Jack officiated at domestic competitions are too numerous to record. No doubt he would have been a Blue Badge Umpire if that scheme had been in existence when Jack was umpiring. Jack's was a truly remarkable career.

Jack was born in Highbury, North London, and was a lifelong Arsenal supporter. He was bombed out of his home in Stoke Newington during the war in 1940 and went to live in Perivale, West London, before moving to Wembley.

Table tennis was in the family as his uncle, Arthur Melnick, was an England international in the 1930s. Jack followed the traditional route of playing at the local youth club before joining the RAF and playing for his station team in 1953. At one time Jack played in three local leagues and so was active as a player as well as an official.

Jack was introduced into the world of umpiring by Doreen Stannard in 1969 when she spotted him at the Gunnersby Triangle Championships. He passed both his National and International Umpiring Exams in the same year, 1974, and is perhaps the only umpire to achieve this. The quality of Jack's umpiring was recognised when he was awarded the honour of umpiring the Ladies' Singles final at the World Championships in 1977.



Jack Melnick with Fred Groom (left) and Jack Randall (picture courtesy of Doreen Stannard)

Jack was known as one of the three Middlesex Musketeers, along with Jack Randall and Dave Perry, and they used to travel all over the country together. Jack was honoured for all his work within Middlesex when he was made an Honorary Life Member of the county he loved; he was also a Vice-President of Ellenborough Table Tennis Club. The ETTA 100 Club benefitted from Jack's membership and he attended their functions whenever he could.

A quiet and gentle man, Jack will be missed by his many table tennis friends. Our condolences go to Jack's twin brother, Joe, and his family.

Doreen Stannard, Honorary Past President of Table Tennis England, said of Jack:

One of my proudest moments was being selected for the US Open with Jack, a treasured experience. We travelled many miles together but never got lost, we just took the scenic route. I will miss him greatly and his sense of humour. In later years Jack had many health issues but never a grumble. A true friend.

The funeral will take place at the Rainham Federation Jewish Cemetery, Upminster Road North RM13, on Thursday February 15th at 2pm.

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