

# WHEN EAST MET WEST IN FRIENDSHIP

*by Jennie Williams*

The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Veterans Table Tennis Tournament in Kemer, Turkey is where East meets West over a week-long table tennis event in an environment of friendship and fun, as well as some strong competition. It also resulted in some very deserving English victories.



The theme of this year's tournament was Peace. At the time, the region was experiencing turmoil and conflict, the organisers and players wanted to show how sport can bring different cultures together. As a gesture on the night of the opening ceremony, we were invited to wear something white to symbolise Peace and unite everybody from all over Europe - and beyond - to enjoy what was to become a fantastic tournament.

## **Savas Ertufan**

The organiser Savas Ertufan (*right*) kindly took time out of his busy schedule to explain why this tournament means so much to him and why he chose the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the tournament to choose the theme of Peace.



*'What does this tournament mean to you?'*

'To me personally, it started as a hobby, from the very first time as a participant, then being asked to assist with the organisation. I do this voluntarily and it takes a whole year to prepare.

*'Why have you chosen to promote the theme of peace throughout the tournament?'*

'Peace is what human beings need nowadays. Maybe in England you do not feel it, but in Turkey and the Middle East, you feel it every day. Turkey borders Iraq and Syria which is approximately 900 km away and each day brings unrest and many people coming across the border to escape the war. There were three players who could not travel to the tournament due to the conflict and that's where the idea came from. Sport brings people together from different cultures and creates new friends. Therefore every occasion should be used positively to promote peace.'

*'How has the tournament changed over 20 years?'*

'Well, it grew quite gradually, but in the first 10 years, we had some positive growth. In the last six years, we have had quite a steady growth with a good team of helpers and fantastic hotels in

Antalya which we have a contract with. They assist us a lot as it is a very important event for them. Almost 400 people from the north of Turkey choose to stay for 2 weeks and bring their families too.'

*'What do you hope the players take away from this year's tournament?'*

'I hope they take away new friends, reacquaint with old friends, enjoy their time in a lovely environment and country, enjoy the weather and time with their families.'

### **Teresa Devaney**

Irish eyes were smiling for one of our most successful and popular members, Dublin-based Teresa Devaney who won Gold and Silver in the Over 60s singles and doubles (with Russian partner, Larissa Ilinskaya), as well as the open 'fun' O/60s singles event on the first day.

Together with her daughters and biggest supporters, Claire and Lorna, (*right*) they gave Turkey some Irish Girl Power, as the girls took to social media to express their pride in their Mammy's victories. I spoke to Teresa to ask her a few questions about her successes and her experience of the tournament as a whole.



*'How did it feel to win your Gold and Silver Medals?'*

'It felt really good to win, especially abroad. It's great to have all the support I received from the English VETTS they really helped and encouraged me in the semi-final against a tough opponent.'

*'What makes you come to the tournament?'*

'There is a great bunch of people in the VETTS, while they take it very seriously while playing it has a great social side to the tournament. It's a game you can play from cradle to the grave. So I would like to say a huge thank you to all who supported me in Turkey and elsewhere. With your support it made the experience so much better.'

### **Carol Judson**

Yorkshire's Carol Judson was also a double winner, this time in the Over 70s women's singles and doubles with her Australian partner and VETTS member Betty Bird. Carol's potential to achieve a triple victory ran out at the semi-final stage of the mixed doubles with partner Roy Norton. Roy Norton himself brought home a silver medal in the over 70's men's doubles with his doubles partner Emanuele Rame.

A surprise delight was Cheshire's Wayne Percival winning a bronze medal in the Over 60's Singles having beaten Hungarian legend Janos Takacs in an earlier round. Congratulations also go to Penny Perry , (bronze in O/65s); Betty Bird (silver in O/75) and our Romanian friend, Marie Gaftea (bronze O/50s).

Well done to all.

I think each and every one of the players that competed in this wonderful tournament and their families took home a little piece of Turkish delight.

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# Poolside with Perival!



The surprise of the tournament was the unseeded Wayne Percival (ranked 98 in England veterans) who to the astonishment of the crowd (especially his wife!) went on to beat his idol Janos Takacs, a member of the 1979 Hungarian World Champions squad.

However, due to an unfortunate typing error the records will show a Wayne Perival claiming the scalp of the legend.

Janos was perhaps lulled into a false sense of security with Wayne's extra-curricular drinking habits, as the duo had earlier become pool-side bar companions. Janos explaining his eight Hungarian national titles and telling tales of world champion triumphs with his team-mates Gergely, Jonyer and Klampar. Wayne reliving his three Liverpool and District Closed men's singles titles and close encounters in the Cheshire O/60 veterans team. Wayne then beat his idol in the early knock-out stages of the O/60s men's singles.

Unfortunately Wayne's luck ran out in the show-case semi finals, despite his fans' enthusiastic Mexican Wave when their hero entered the arena. His semi-final opponent, Goran Skogsberg from Sweden, proved too strong. However, Mr Perival was astounded and delighted to receive a Bronze Medal in the Over 60's Singles.

When not playing table tennis in Turkey, Wayne captained the VETTS unofficial "Keepy Uppy Squadron" to a record of 149 continuous hand-ball passes in the pool that would not be beaten by any other nation. Perhaps it could be said that his technique of 'soft hands' may have lead him to victory over his idol. I caught up with Mr Perival poolside to ask him a few questions about his amazing victory and that illustrious Bronze Medal.

*'Are you going to keep the winning name of Mr Perival?'*

'Yes, I am going to change it by deed poll, so I can get my rankings sorted out to reflect the win. Obviously I'll get more points and improve my ranking. I will definitely change it.



*'What was your greatest achievement of the tournament?'*

'Beating my hero Janos. I like his lifestyle....eating, drinking, eating and drinking. When he told me that's how he prepared for the tournament, I followed suit. He thought I would be beaten, but the new fitness regime obviously worked. Beating Janos was the best ever win I have achieved and I will live off this victory for the next 30 years! If anyone says anything to me, my reply will be 'Well you haven't beaten Janos Takacs!'

*'How did your fans help you to victory?'*

Well they thought I had no chance, but I proved them all wrong. Their support was great and gave me lots of encouragement; the Mexican Wave at the semi-finals was a real highlight'.

*'Finally, what makes you come to this tournament?'*

'It's a very friendly tournament. The players are great and the tournament has a good social side to it, which does attract me to it.....and I just love beating the Russians. I have made a lot of friends; I meet some of them only at this tournament. The social side is just fantastic and being able to combine the tournament with a holiday is just fabulous. '

At that moment in time, under the Turkish sunset, we all wanted to be a part of Wayne's World.

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