



**Champions from the past and present. Henry Buist, England 1934-2004 - A man for all seasons**

Henry Buist was one of Kent's best players and later became one of England's best senior players. He started playing in 1949, with a board over the dining room table, a common practice in the post war era. He also played with a sand paper bat and used the Asian pen hold grip, but later change to the orthodox shake-hand style.

His first tournament was in a school championship where he was beaten badly in the first round. Undaunted, Henry became more determined and saved his pocket money to purchase the (then) modern pimped rubber bat, and practiced for hours every day. After reading his favourite book " 21 Up" by Richard Bergmann, he modeled his game on the great defensive player. He then joined the RACS club and started playing in the North West Kent league.

His first big achievement was in being selected for the Kent junior team, along with Alan Danton and David Eagles, and in 1952 he then started playing in senior tournaments purchasing a new Diane Rowe bat, the queen of English table tennis at the time, which he used for the rest of his fifty-year table tennis career.

Upon leaving the forces, he began to practice and play regularly at the Barnehurst Sunday tournaments, along with many talented players from the London area. In the mid 1950s, he was selected to play for the Kent second team and was later promoted to the first team in the County Premier Division Championships. Kent had a strong team at the time, which included Ray Syndercome, Ron Etheridge, Dennis Whittaker, Joyce Fielder and Joan Beadle, all top class pimped rubber bat players.

However, in the 1970s Henry changed his game drastically from defensive play, to an all-out attacking style that gave him a great deal of success, beating many of England's international players. As a result of this game change, Henry was ranked in England's top 20.

When Henry turned 40 years of age, his game got even stronger, as he was the fittest of players in his age group, and became one of England's top veteran players, never changing to the sponge sandwich surface, choosing to continue to play with his hard rubber pimped bat. He continued playing throughout his 60s, winning numerous senior events and achieved number 1 ranking in the England senior rankings, for many years.

He represented England's senior national team on many occasions, having many international successes, which included beating the renowned Marty Reisman of the USA, on several occasions. Henry was a very modest character, and although thrilled at beating Reisman, admitted that had he played Reisman in his prime, he would have had no chance against the famous champion.

Henry proved that regardless of age, provided a player maintains top physical condition he can still continue to improve his game, challenging players 20 plus years his junior.

Sadly cancer claimed Henry's life a few years ago when he passed away in 2004. He was a modest, popular gentleman who continues to be missed by everyone that knew him.

Barry Meisel (1/4/2009)