

Fred Beswick (1930-2012)

Fred Beswick proudly became RFA President from 1987 to 1989, the first person from the Manchester YMCA club to hold this position.

He was a member of Manchester YMCA for over 65 years, playing many sports to a high level.

He lived in the Castlefield area of Manchester and worked in his early life less than a mile from the old YMCA site on Peter Street. He was on the Board in the 80s when they decided to move to the new site in Castlefield. He had 'come home'.

Fred in his youth had given many weeks and weekends to help build the National YMCA Lakeside facility on Lake Windermere. His contributions to both Manchester YMCA and the National YMCA were recognised recently with the highest honour: Honorary Membership of Manchester YMCA and the YMCA's Order of the Red Triangle.

His interest in Fives began in his thirties and, as he admitted, he regretted not having taken it up earlier. He became club champion not long after starting to play and reached the North of England singles semi-final in 1973. With his regular partner, Danny McGregor, he won the Club Doubles championship five times.

Fred gave a very good account of himself in many championships, his drop shot and follow-up volley were feared by the best players. We all struggled to return his short serve, which prompted his leg-pulling saying during doubles, 'and the next'.

One of his favourite titles was 'Master Of The White Ball', and bringing fun into the game was one of Fred's great assets. His positive energy infected all he coached.

As everyone who came into contact with Fred soon found out, there was a game called 'Fives'. Gloves and a ball would be produced and, before the person knew it, they were on court.



Beswick (right) 'touched innumerable lives and his contribution to YMCA Fives will be unrivalled'

instigated Fred coaching students at Manchester University. Shirley's nephews, Gary, Robert, David and Brian, became players, all entering our schools tournament.

In the 70s, Fred's contact with Greater Manchester Council led to them funding our Open Schools Tournament, with over 70 competitors coming from all over the country.

Fred at that time also became a Junior YMCA Leader and developed the junior Fives club. Another role he undertook was his Father Christmas appearances at the Junior YMCA Christmas party.

In Fred's early days he attended many operas, an interest which led to many 'singing' sessions, often finishing with the toreador song from Carmen.

Fred was a fine 'theatrical' performer too, as I am sure all those who attended the annual Fives Club dinner dances (which Fred initiated and organised) would agree. With Danny McGregor, they produced an array of hilarious performances, a talent that was spotted and used on the Sports Council's National Coaching Course at Exeter University, where he became the Social Director for over 20 years.

Fred was a great observer of life and had many wonderful stories. Any visiting team would have the warmest of greetings and be treated to a beer or two in Cox's bar round the corner, while Fred held court.

Fred has touched innumerable lives and his contribution to YMCA Fives will remain unrivalled. We who try to emulate him are 'his boys' and proud to be so. He will never be replaced or forgotten, and his enthusiasm will live on for ever in us, as he is a legend in our wonderful game.

Wayne Enstone

'He will never be replaced, and his enthusiasm will live on for ever in us'

One would always know which court Fred was on because of the laughter, and his wife Shirley recounts that, in his later years, Fred was credited with inventing a variation of doubles known as 'yours!'.

At the suggestion of David Gardner, Fred helped to organise the first Lancashire Open Championship (now the North West Open) in 1968, which put the YMCA on the map as a Fives club. In addition, and as an incentive to play, competitors were treated to Shirley's 'girls' famous hotpots. This was the start of a new group of Fred's 'boys' going to tournaments.

It was also a new era from a family point of view as Shirley, with daughter Jane and son John (five-times National Doubles Champion), found themselves either travelling the country or waving Fred off for another weekend match or tournament, or having strange men in the house for the home fixtures.

A big thanks must go to Shirley for sharing Fred with us. Other family members who were also introduced to Fives were brothers Frank and Bill, who