



### John ("Jack") Slater (1942 – 2006)

Jack, as he was universally known in the fives world, was a talented and successful left handed fives player. His record at school, university and thereafter speaks for itself.

Jack lost in the final of the National Schools' championships in 1960 and also just lost to the eventual doubles winners from Merchiston Castle with his partner Tony Windows. Jack had previously won both the singles and the doubles titles at the West of England Schools' championships that year. Three times singles runner-up in the British Universities tournament, he won the BUSA doubles in 1962 with Peter Carlile. He won various other doubles tournaments in his career and in 1968/69 had his finest season, reaching both the National Singles and the National Doubles final (with Mike Durand).

He was a graceful, somewhat balletic player who tended to specialise in long hard fought matches, during the latter stages of which his temporary incapacity due to a bout of cramp became almost legendary. He played for numerous social fives clubs in his time, and was persuaded out of retirement to make his last appearance on a fives court at the Vintage championships in Manchester in April 2005. Playing largely from memory, he was delighted to participate again and even win a game with his old partner Peter Carlile.

Apart from being a highly successful partner in the Patent Attorneys Marks & Clerk – they have their own obituary for Jack on their website – and having a wonderful family life, Jack will probably be best remembered by his fives (and real tennis) friends as a tremendous companion when on tour. He first coined the phrase "après fives" when discussing the social skills of an applicant for the Jesters' fives weekend in Manchester, regarding such "après fives" social skills as a critical aspect of the selection criteria. Subsequently his exploits in staggering into parties and later on in the same evening, hedges, on a real tennis tour to Newport Rhode Island confirmed his immense capacity to enjoy himself and entertain his friends.

Above all Jack (apart from being a highly talented fives player) was a kind, gentle and generous individual, mixing a keen understanding of the commercial realities of life with a gregarious and supportive nature, a terrific family life, and a wonderful appreciation of the comic and the absurd. His friendship and humour will be much missed by many fives players.

*John East*

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