

If you played against Stowmarket volleyball club's men's team between the years of 1976 and 2011 then it is more than likely that you competed against one of the true gentlemen of English volleyball, Ron Ames.

It is with great regret, and still with an element of disbelief, that I am writing this short note to inform you that Ron died earlier this summer.

Ron invariably wore the number one shirt when on court, but he was 'number one' in so many more ways. He formed Stowmarket Volleyball Club back in 1976. Stowmarket, a small market town in the heart of sleepy Suffolk, was to be the home (and still is) of a volleyball club for forty plus years. Ron would have been so proud to know that the club he formed all of those years ago, on a grass tennis court with a washing line as a net, has earned an invite to enter in the 2nd Division of the national league for next season (Ron's personal 'high' as a player was undoubtedly as captain of the victorious team in the Kestours cup final).

For a man of Ron's calibre, just starting one of the longest surviving clubs in the country was not enough. While the first team was progressing, with Ron at the 'setting' helm, he found time to nurture first a boys' team made up of lads introduced to the game at local schools and then doing an equally successful job with girls from the local High School. He supervised both teams at local league levels, took them to county championships, and various tournaments of the day – Ounsdale, Sandwell and Bristol. There are a plethora of volleyball players now spread around the country who have branched out from 'little old Stowmarket' thanks to Ron's teaching, coaching and nurturing.

When Ron hung up his knee pads in 2011 a life of putting his feet up and sport on the television was not an option for him. He took up running, re-discovered a former sport of his - swimming and then cycling. So, did he take part in the occasional triathlon? Not Ron. He took his newfound sport seriously, to the extent of regularly travelling to the Alps for altitude training. His professionalism and perseverance paid off and all of his old volleyball friends were so proud of him when he was selected to represent his country in his age group at the world triathlon. Having been selected to represent his country for a second time, Ron was robbed of his chance to compete, and we were robbed of any further contact with this truly amazing man, as a virulent illness took him from us.

At the crematorium where we celebrated Ron's astonishing life, over two hundred volleyball players, runners, swimmers and triathletes alongside his family, came to say their goodbyes. The sheer number of people spoke volumes of the esteem in which he was held. The moving tributes at his funeral reflected a life lived to the full, a humble man who was respected by everyone who had the good fortune to meet him and of someone who shaped the lives of many.

The world of volleyball has lost a special person indeed.