

A TRIBUTE TO DAVID JOHN BRYANT C.B.E.

Messages of condolence have flooded into our World Bowls office from every corner of our bowling world. Without exception they have also credited David with the distinction of being 'The Greatest Bowler of All Time'.

David's great friend and clubmate – Pip Branfield - has circulated DJB's 'Bowling History', which is displayed in the Clevedon clubhouse and which clearly demonstrates why such a special accolade is so well deserved. I attach it for everyone's appreciation as it is quite extraordinary in its magnitude.

I had the privilege and pleasure of playing with David in England's outdoor and indoor teams, and in 4 World Championships as part of the England 5 man team. 2 of those teams won the Leonard Trophy team gold. The 'great man' would win 4 World Outdoor Singles gold medals, 4 Commonwealth golds and 3 World Indoor golds. One of David's most outstanding attributes was his supreme ability to adapt to any playing conditions – he was as much at home on the greens of Australia, New Zealand, Scotland and Canada (where he won his gold medals) as he was on his beloved Clevedon turf.

In addition, for David there was never a bad rink – he thrived on overcoming difficult conditions. His combination of patient temperament, concentration and dogged application was unique. If it had been possible to bottle it he would have made a fortune. I well remember in 1980 our England five called in at Hong Kong on a promotional visit on our way back from the World Championships in Frankston. We played an evening fours game whilst David would play several HKLBA players at a shortened game of 11 up. We had just left 90 degrees of sunshine in Australia and it was freezing cold and wet in HK, and our lighting was dozens of single light bulbs strung above our rinks, which were interesting to say the least! David loved every minute, rubbing his hands in glee - as was his trademark sign of

enjoyment - and duly despatched his opposition at a 'fair rate of knots'. David was delighted, the ever amiable HKLBA was delighted and as I remember David spent the rest of the evening talking to every member of the host Association who were queuing to shake his hand and speak to him.

This highlights another great feature of David's fantastic career. He was humble, he oozed with enthusiasm, and upheld the integrity of our great sport in both winning, losing and socialising. He would gladly talk to anyone about the game he loved and the game he had made his own. He officially opened my little club of Wigton. In a small town this had created quite a buzz with the locals and on the day I think David must have shaken the hand of half the town's population. He did it unflinchingly and sincerely, which underlines why he was so adored around the world – our sport's finest player and our greatest ambassador.

It would be remiss if I did not include David's charming wife – Ruth – in this tribute. Ruth has been his ever-present loyal supporter and the rock upon which David built his success and I offer my sincere condolences to Ruth and family.

I will remember David with very great affection, as a true friend, a mentor, role model and a player with unique ability. I also pay special tribute to him in my position as World President. No other player has done as much to bring honour, dignity and attention to our sport. Indeed, it beggars belief that he never received a knighthood.

We are fortunate to have many icons of our sport but there is only one that stands alone on the very top of the 'Mount Olympus of the Bowling World' – David John Bryant.

John Bell

President

World Bowls