

## **Don Cheyne**

The Eastern Suburbs and Churches Table Tennis Association (ES&CTTA) acknowledges the achievement of Don Cheyne who has contributed much to table tennis in this area and offers their congratulations to him for his recent 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Our Association has been active for 74 years. Don has been involved as either a player or committee member for more than 70 years. For 25 years Don was on the ES&CTTA committee as Secretary and later President. He is a life member of the Association because of his contributions.

Don has voluntarily run Monday night Recreational Table Tennis sessions for Eastern Suburbs and Churches Table Tennis Association for around 50 years. This was firstly at St Ninian's Hall in Orchard Grove, Blackburn South and for the past 10 years at St Johns Table Tennis Club in Forest Hill. He has spent thousands of hours coaching and mentoring players of all standards over that time. Don also organised and ran the A1 Grade competition in the ES&CTTA for more than 25 years.

Don has raised all the funds to cover the cost of buying tables, equipment, balls and venue hire. The Monday night sessions are run at a minimal cost to participants. At the end of every year, any money made is donated to charity. In 2021 he presented a cheque for \$500 to Spur Afrika. In 2022 Don was able to donate \$1500 to the current Spur Afrika campaign. A further \$7820 was donated in January 2023.

Don offers free coaching to anyone who attends. He is an experienced coach who is kind, enthusiastic, and always ready to help anyone who wants assistance. He runs these sessions because of his love for the sport of Table Tennis and his desire to help others and he thoroughly enjoys doing so every week. Children, students, pensioners and the unemployed are charged a reduced rate to make it easier to participate.

Don began playing Table Tennis at the age of 15. When I say Don has voluntarily run Monday nights for around 50 years, I use 'around' advisedly as no other players have participated for as long as Don. Even Don cannot remember the exact starting date; all he is able to give is "sometime in the early 70's". Some players have told me they started in the mid to late 70's and that it had already been going for some time. Don and his wife Pat together ran the Monday sessions up until when Pat passed away after a long illness. Don has continued to run the Monday night sessions for the past 10 years since Pat's death.

Don is a fine example to anyone simply by the way he conducts himself. He is always there to offer help and advice to anyone who asks, whether it is on Table Tennis matters or personal issues. Don is able to instil self-belief and confidence to those around him. He always takes the time to have a chat with everyone who attends on the night and makes you feel special.

Without Don's influence hundreds, perhaps thousands of people would never have made the step from hitting a ball around at home to active competition in the ES&CTTA and other competitions. His contribution has kept the ES&CTTA going by

supplying players keen, confident and with the skills necessary to be competitive within the competition.

We found out just what work, time and commitment was involved in running Monday night sessions when during the last stages of his wife Pat's illness, Don was unable to run the sessions. It was difficult to get volunteers to commit to run one, let alone multiple sessions over 5 or 6 weeks from all the members of our Association. It is mind-boggling to consider that Don has devoted his time without assistance to running these sessions for 48 weeks a year (3 weeks break at Christmas and a week at Easter) without any financial reward for around 50 years.

For many years the venue at St Ninian's was located next door to a weekly Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Don offered free participation and coaching to any of the attendees who were interested in taking up Table Tennis.

Many players have begun their Table Tennis careers as complete novices with very little experience of playing table tennis. Through Don's coaching and encouragement, many hundreds of people have established the skills and confidence to participate in organised competition.

The ES&CTTA have benefited over the time that Don has run his sessions by being able to recruit players into their Association. Don in many ways has been the person that has enabled the Association to remain viable and expand its competition.

Don has coached thousands of people, many of whom have risen to the highest grades of the ES&CTTA competition. His input has been the start of the playing careers of many junior players and has encouraged them to become the best possible player they can be. Don's sessions encompass all ages and skill levels. On any Monday night, you will likely find people playing and practicing who are anywhere between the ages of 13 and 85 and from complete beginner to A Grade standard.

Don was runner-up in the Victorian Government's 2015 Community Sport and Recreation Awards presented by John Eren, the Minister for Sport on Monday 9 November. He lost out to a company that employed more than 40 people. Recently Don won the 2022 Table Tennis Australia 50-year service award.

Apart from recognition by the ES&CTTA for his efforts by being made a life member, Don's contribution to Table Tennis is only fully appreciated by the people who have attended Monday night sessions. Don is 90 years old and despite having lost some sight in one eye is still as keen as he has ever been to spread his enthusiasm for Table Tennis.

Neville Young  
President  
Eastern Suburbs and Churches Table Tennis Association.

