

## **HR (Bob) Smith (1934-2011)**

Bob Smith of the Alleyn Old Boys Club, who died in December 2011, was a dominant figure in what was a golden era of Fives in South East London in the 1950s and 1960s. For over a decade Bob and his various partners from the among the AOBs – John Pretlove, Roy Birmingham, ‘Bill’ Bailey, Bob Dorey, Pat Badmin, John Davis – would fight it out with the Old Dunstonians in ‘friendlies’ and in the National competitions. Bob was a finalist in the National Singles and Doubles eight times between 1955 and 1967. He won the Singles in 1957, beating Old Oundelian Mike Skliros, and was runner-up to three-time winner John Watkinson in 1965. Bob won the National Doubles twice: in 1955 with Roy Birmingham and in 1961 with John Pretlove. He was runner-up on four occasions with either Roy or John between 1962 and 1967.

Bob was a large and powerful man with enormous hands, an intimidating presence on a Fives court, invariably dressed in a white singlet that hinted at his prowess as an amateur boxer at school. He was loud, hairy and filled the court with laughter. Only Dennis Silk sweated more during a game and steamed more after it than Bob.

Bob worked for many years for Rio Tinto Zinc and was on one of his trips to the States as International Purchasing Manager for RTZ that he met, fell in love with and married the daughter of the Chief of Police of Cleveland, Ohio. In his mid-thirties Bob stopped playing Fives and was lost to the game. In 2002 he was delighted, however, to return to Alleyn’s to see one of the refurbished Fives courts named after him.

Bob Dolby



Alleyn’s 1st IV 1951 with John Pretlove (centre) and Bob Smith (2<sup>nd</sup> from right)