

## David Hebblethwaite (1933-2017)



David Hebblethwaite (centre) at the Vintage Championships in 1995

The RFA is sad to report the death, at the age of 84, of Past President David Hebblethwaite. David had been ill with heart disease for many years, which did not stop him from playing until late in life, when cancer curtailed his involvement in the game.

David learnt to play Fives at Bedford Modern School and was a loyal and committed member of the Old Bedford Modernians; in addition he was a member of the RFA Club and of the RFA for virtually all of his adult life. He was President of the Rugby Fives Association from 1981 to 1983 and was a longstanding Jester.

A left-hander with a delicate touch David enjoyed his greatest success as a doubles player. In 1958 he reached the final of the National Doubles, playing with Derek Bristowe: they lost to the 4-time champions Silk & Pretlove. Then came successes in the Scottish Open, which David won twice, in 1966 and 1967, with Bob Dolby, followed by victory in the West of England Doubles in 1971 with David Barnes.

In subsequent years David won the Veterans Doubles six times between 1979 and 1985, each time with Geoff Prigmore; together they then won the Vintage Doubles four years running from 1989 to 1992. Aged over 70 David was twice runner-up in the Masters Doubles as well.

David was also a winner of the RFA President's Cup on four occasions.

Partners and opponents will well recall David as an ample presence on a Fives court but also as a considerable personality off it, full of stories (and jokes), with an unforgettable laugh. He will be remembered as one of the great characters of the Fives world.

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Born in Bedford, David Hebblethwaite went to Bedford Modern School where he loved his time representing the school at rugby, swimming, water polo and Fives. He later played village cricket and Real Tennis.

After BMS David did National Service in the RAF where he flew everything from Tiger Moths to Meteor jets and trained as a navigator. He did not then take up an offer to study at Cambridge University but preferred to follow an entrepreneurial route, working for London Brick and then in the car and motor transport industry. His whole life he loved and owned many cars. At one point David and some friends bought and ran Bedford Squash Club, and he ended up owning and running employment agencies in Bedford and Luton. David married Sandy in 1959 – she was to be a frequent spectator at many of his Fives matches.