

Name: Juliet Bertie

Background:

As a young girl my older brother used to take me with him when we had free time and whatever sport he was doing I would tag along and join in. Table tennis was one of the sports he used to do and being a bit of a tomboy, I would always have a go.

Fast forward 25 years later I was a member of my organisations Sports and Social Club and unexpectedly was asked to represent the West Midlands region to slot in for someone who was unable to attend the annual National Table Tennis competition. Never one to say no to any sports, not even expecting to win, I attended the event. True to form I didn't win but thoroughly enjoyed it and had fun - it took my back to my younger days.

The reigning champion was my mixed doubles partner so I felt lucky and we became good friends. This later developed further and ironically, he is now my husband. I believe it was fate!

Supporting watching him play around the country at a decent level it exposed me to some real skilful table tennis. This inspired me and I then started to feel the urge to have a go and would have a knock before and after his games.

Starting to feel more comfortable I then decided I wanted to play in the league. For my first season it was difficult as the standard was so much higher than mine but the determined person I am, this was not going to put me off.

Being the only female in my division was not going to put me off and I continued to persevere. Due to health issues I took some time out but then later decided to return. After a few years I feel I have made some progress, I am not a ground breaker but enjoying playing and table tennis which contributes to me getting exercise because people do not realise how fit you have to be to play properly, not even me!

What are your goals?

My aim is to gain my Coaching qualification as I really want to inspire the next generation. I want to be able to show females out there especially black females that this is an arena we can be part of and be a success.

The challenges I have faced as a female in table tennis, I feel, is being taken seriously, especially when I first started playing. I would hear patronising comments as the presumption was, I just didn't know the rules. As a parent

having to consider and make choices between table tennis and things I had to do as a mum was so difficult, as I was sometimes filled with guilt. I feel for me it is so important to mention not only are their challenges as a female but as a black female this carries double weight. Imagine the feeling of being the only female but on top of that the only black female player in a whole division.

What are your achievements?

My biggest accomplishment for me is captaining a table tennis team that has three black females aged 50+ that for me is changing the status quo!