

Merv Allardyce

Joined Club:	1969
Membership Years:	1969-2009
Management Committee:	1971-1978, 1982-2004
Club Chairman	1972-1978, 1983-1997
Other Contributions:	Junior Club Coach (1974-2009) Redevelopment Project Manager (2005-2008) Coach
Elected Life Member:	1986



Merv's involvement in table tennis extends well beyond the confines of Empire and even Wellington. Merv displayed his administrative talent in Wanganui and Manawatu before moving to Wellington. Ron Menchi knew of Merv's background and encouraged him along to Empire when they met at church in the late 1960's. Merv also went on to play a significant role with the New Zealand Table Tennis Association.

Merv's introduction to table tennis was very similar to the club's founding members. Table tennis was his winter recreation between cricket seasons. His first taste of table tennis was at Boy's Club during secondary school where table tennis was one of many sports played. After chatting with a friend whilst biking to cricket he decided to give up rugby and try table tennis. He soon joined the Gonville Club and was joined there by his sister Jean.

Once at Gonville, Merv's keenness grew and by age 21 he had become club captain and was a regular interclub player. Merv was very keen to learn about the game and when Ken Stanley from the UK toured the country in 1952 to educate players and coaches he went to watch even though he hadn't been invited to attend. Ken was kind enough to chat and teach him during breaks.

In 1953, the North Island Championships were held in Wanganui. Merv was not good enough to play but volunteered to help with the organisation. This was his first experience of a big tournament.

Merv's contribution grew and his involvements as a club representative to the association lead to him becoming secretary of the Wanganui Association and trips to Wellington for NZ Annual Meetings.

It might seem that table tennis was Merv's only love but at the same time he had a similar involvement in cricket. He was again a club representative at association level and was on the fringes of regional selection as a player. Some of his comments on cricket administration even managed to make headlines in Wanganui.

In 1960, Merv moved to Palmerston North where his involvement in cricket and table tennis continued. He became captain of the Kiatoa Cricket Club and helped them emerge from easybeats to district champions. He also spent a year or two as chairman of the Manawatu Cricket Association.

With table tennis, he joined the Terrace End club, another struggling club at the time he joined. There he ran a kid's session prior to the adult club session. Club sessions were quite small at Terrace End and 24 players was a busy night. Merv was the "admin" person, the one that kept things moving along. Although clubs were small, they were many and interclub competitions were big. For interclub in Palmerston North there were 30 tables to put up and take down for each competition night. Merv's simple suggestion for each player to pay sixpence to

have somebody set up and pack up the tables made life for players a lot easier. Putting up tables must be a pet hate as he claims the biggest motivation for joining Empire was the stadium with no need for tables to be put up and down.

In 1972 Merv Allardyce became Chairman of Empire, stepped down for four years from 1979, and then resumed the position from 1983 to 1997. This made him the longest serving chairperson in the club's 75 year history. He continued to serve on the Board after the club's restructure. After relinquishing his Board position at the end of 2005 he immediately accepted the role of Project Manager for our building extension.

He became involved in the Friday Junior club in its very early days and has coached there alongside Ron Menchi for more than thirty years.

And yet, even considering his well-proven administrative and coaching talents, it is Merv's behind the scenes practical work and handyman skills that spring to mind in reviewing this man's remarkable contribution to the club throughout his 40 year membership. The number of voluntary hours Merv has dedicated to the club in this area alone is beyond measure, even to him.

Within months of joining in 1969, Merv pitched headlong into the physical work members were called on to perform to complete the major 1970 building extension. In later years he was equally energetic with ongoing maintenance, especially painting and joinery work. Complex repairs on the building's emergency exits were carried out competently by a team led by Merv in the 1990s – work that otherwise would have required expensive professional input.

Over and above the many hours working on the club building, he has spent a lot of time on club tasks in his own workshop at home. We have Merv to thank for our Umpire Stands, and his son John for carrying out the associated welding work.

In recent years, Merv played a major role in the planning and delicate negotiations with local bodies and funding agencies that eventually secured the finance to build the huge extension which opened amid great fanfare in 2008. He was project manager for the entire venture.



Merv as an Interclub player in 1987

Merv has won age-group titles at the NZ Veterans Championships. He was a strong advocate for the introduction of a President's Grade for senior Hutt Valley interclub players, which eventually came into being. He supported it regularly as a player, after having been a high grade interclub player in earlier years. He also introduced the club's open Veterans Tournament, played annually and supported from well outside the Hutt Valley. He is a born administrator and is able to cut to the heart of administrative problems in areas ranging from tournament draws to personnel management and has an excellent grasp of financial issues. He is also not afraid to innovate. He experimented with new scoring systems at club tournaments and was the principal mover behind the club's major 1998 management restructure. Like Ron Menchi he also served the sport at national level – culminating in eleven years as Table Tennis New Zealand's salaried Executive Director.

Merv's multiple services to the club have been, and continue to be, so extensive that any attempt to put a monetary value on them would be an exercise in futility. Over and above this he is able, not unlike Alf Harding, to bring out the best in others. His skills, knowledge, energy and dedication are inspirational.