

Ron Menchi

Joined Club:	1948
Membership Years:	1948-2009
Management Committee:	1955-1957, 1959-2009
Club Chairman	1979, 2009
Club Captain:	1957, 1959-1989
Other Contributions:	Founded Junior Club (1971) Building Committee Coach
Elected Life Member:	1959



Ron Menchi has devoted the majority of his life to furthering the sport of table tennis. He has contributed as an administrator and coach at club, school, regional and national levels. He has been involved in the sport for over 60 years and more than 50 years have been devoted to coaching and administration.

Ron's introduction to table tennis started at age 14 when he heard lots of laughter coming out of a church hall. Intrigued, he found some people playing table tennis and soon he was off to the department store to get a table tennis kit to try at home with his brother. Home was a market garden so a packing shed became the hall, shed doors became the table top and vegetable cases were the table stands. The tongue and groove doors would certainly have been good for developing reflexes.

As the brothers got more serious they went to the local catholic youth group to play. Here, on one occasion, there was an exhibition by Tom Williams who was a national junior champion. In the future Tom became a cardinal.

Soon Ron was playing interclub. In those days there were 4 player teams and 36 games in a contest. Some early big losses created a desire to get better and that led to joining Empire. He attended club sessions twice a week. This involved bus rides from Avalon to Udy street in Petone. With limited facilities, two games of doubles was all he could expect at club in the "rifle range" annex where they played.

Ron has been a member of the Empire Table Tennis club since 1948. With the exception of 1958, he has served on the club's management committee since 1955 until the present day. This includes the position of chairman in 1979 and 2009. He was club captain from 1959 until 1989. Ron was also involved as Club Selector in earlier years.

During his time with the club, it has grown from 40 members in a rented building to owning a 16 table stadium (the largest in the Wellington region) with over 300 members. Ron was actively involved in fundraising and planning for 2 major upgrades of the stadium. The result of these initiatives is that the Club is debt free with a sound financial base and excellent facilities.

Ron has been actively involved in junior development since 1962, a commitment which continues to this day. He was the founder of the Empire's junior club in 1971. This involves regular attendance every Friday. For most of this time he has been the main organizer and coach at these sessions. Ron has seen generations come through the club. He recalls two juniors that met at club, married and then later brought their children to play on Friday nights.

Coaching at this club is Ron's passion. Having set up the junior club himself, he has led it confidently through boom times and nursed it through its occasional lean years. His faith in it has never wavered. While it appeared to develop its own momentum in the early 1970s, the real attraction was Ron's own inventiveness. He introduced such novelties as "Drink Games" (beat the coach to two points and win a drink), "Cricket" (smash the ball onto the table to where no one can catch it and score a boundary) and "Relay Races" (earn an ear-splitting cheer when you win a point for your team). While the fun and the social atmosphere held the club together, its real business was to provide coaching and here Ron's skills shone forth and steadily sharpened. He had limited coaching experience prior to 1971 but is now among New Zealand's most knowledgeable club coaches. A succession of juniors reaching A Grade, some eventually representing New Zealand, testify to that. Ron has also coached school groups during the day and adult players on Monday nights and midweek mornings. He has been a staunch supporter of the midweek club as a player in more recent years and there was a period when he offered coaching tips to all midweek members during the tea break.

His years as either Club Captain or Activities Convenor, 33 in total, speak for themselves. Organising matches on a club night as Club Captain requires hard work, composure, patience and tolerance to withstand the inevitable grizzles from players who want more games or only games with players above their own standard. Ron handled this pressure for 33 years. Sure, he had a succession of assistants (of varying reliability) over the years but ultimately the buck stopped with him.

Ron's efforts at club level were recognized with a life membership in 1959. He has continued contributing for 50 years since receiving that honour.

Ron has also been involved in promoting table tennis outside of Club sessions, notably supporting and encouraging players from the Hutt Intermediate School for several years, when they have used our current facility as part of their "outside experience."

Recent developments have been supporting the promotion of table tennis at Evans Bay Intermediate School who use the Wellington Table Tennis stadium on Alexandra Road, Wellington.

Ron is currently a vice president with Table Tennis Wellington (TTW). He has held that position since the merger between the Hutt Valley and Wellington associations (around 2002). This is a continuation of his involvement with the Hutt Valley Table Tennis Association.

Ron was chairman of the Hutt Valley Association for 1 term and on the management committee for some time. Unfortunately specific details are unknown.

He assisted TTW as a member of the planning committee for the Table Tennis nationals held in Wellington in 2005.

Ron was chairman of the national association (TTNZ) for 10 years (1984-1992) and became a life member of TTNZ in 1992.

On the international scene, Ron was the Manager of the first New Zealand junior teams to travel overseas to the Australian Championships in 1978, 1979 and 1980. On the New Zealand coaching scene, he assisted the appropriate sub-committee to introduce a standard approach to coaching at national level - a model which has been considerably expanded and is constantly being fine tuned.



Ron with the 50th Jubilee bat in 1984

Ron's contribution to Empire has been enormous. Whilst it can be argued that the junior club is his greatest contribution this should not diminish his other achievements. When asked why he has continued for so long he says it is his pig-headedness. Pushed further, it is really the social reward. He knows people in all manner of places through table tennis and many more know and admire him.