



## ADRIAN WRIGHT - One Player, Five Questions

Interviewed by Aubrey Waddy

Not many GB Vets members can claim a World Masters title. Even fewer (if any?) have more than one World Championship on their CV. Beyond that, it is extremely rare across worldwide Masters squash for anyone to win two World Championships in the same age group. Adrian Wright belongs in that select group: two of his four World Masters titles were in the highly competitive O-70s category, in 2012 in Birmingham, where he beat Brian Philips in the final, and then Hong Kong in 2014, where he had a narrow win over the very mobile Canadian Gerry Poulton.

All this is in a player who didn't take the game up until the age of 33. In addition to the four World Championships, Adrian's squash history includes ten National Championships, five British Opens, many regional titles ("at least 36, I'd have to count"), and eleven Leicester O-45 championships. The life he interleaved with squash has been just as full: one wife, Vivien – they've been married for almost sixty years – three children, Lesley, Martin and Stephen, and six grandchildren. Plus two complete careers. Adrian was born near Barnsley. He showed more aptitude for engineering than the three RRRs and started as a student apprentice at Wakefield Power Station, where he got an OND in electrical engineering. This was followed by an HND on a sandwich course at Rotherham College of Technology. He didn't stop there and claims to have, "fortunately scraped through the then IEE Part (III) examination," equivalent to a first class degree in electrical engineering. The IEE qualification must have been particularly fulfilling – "I knew at the age of eleven or twelve I wanted to be an electrical engineer."

In 1964 Adrian moved to the Midlands, firstly to Meaford B power station, and then in a series of promotions to other facilities in the region. He left the power industry in 1993. In 1994/5 he began his second career when he set up Silver-Fox Computers. The Silver Fox moniker comes from a colleague at Staythorpe Power Station, a fellow Electricity Supply team member. Adrian explains the meaning of the nickname: "A devious or sly white-haired git I think was the reckoning"! Computing had at least one major advantage over power stations. It didn't involve shift work, which is incredibly draining for a squash player. "Peter Lonsdale excepted."

Adrian always had an aptitude for computing. He started programming in the 1970s on the Sinclair ZX. Before setting up Silver-Fox Computers he was already using his skills in his

position as Assistant Shift Charge Engineer at Ratcliffe power station. He would build PCs and servers and did the initial work developing the Permit for Work system with the limited tools available. He succeeded in developing his business to an eventual annual turnover of £1.5 million.

Before squash, in addition to football, "my major love," Adrian played a lot of badminton and cricket. "I only made one ton. I regret packing it in," though he was principally a fast bowler. "Freddy Truman was my hero." He once took eight wickets for six runs playing for Rugeley Power Station. He continued cricket into his late fifties, but a serious back injury in 1984, which took him out of sport completely for two years, affected his bowling. "Pity I didn't keep it up as I could have been doing a Martin Pearse!"



Adrian Wright

Adrian started playing squash in 1975. For more than two years he played just a single opponent, John Gallagher, a work colleague he met at Rugeley when he was an apprentice and had since moved to Ratcliffe. They eventually joined a club in Kegworth that had recently been set up by Peter Marshall's father. "I have been hooked ever since."

Adrian's early squash years must have been a slow burn. Eventually, in 1987, soon after recovering sufficiently from his back injury, he saw a notice for the Leicestershire O-45

tournament. In the first round he dispatched the holder and top seed, Reg Fry, and won the first of his eleven titles. His good friend Dave Hardern, who he still has a game with every Monday, then, "convinced me I was good enough for the national scene." His first one-off title was in one of the forerunners of the 'Regionals' set up, at Redwood Lodge, Bristol, in 1998. Both his first and second national tournaments (Closed then Open in the same year) resulted in losses to Stan Biffin, on fitness. "I then learned he was a fell runner and would never dream of entering such prestigious tournaments without extensive training – he might have said six weeks. I realised what a very wise man was Stan. I did take some note, and Stan never beat me again."

In 1997/8 Adrian reached the semi-finals of both the Open and the Closed, losing to Roy Bradley in one and Mo Khalifa in the other, and won his first England cap. His first national title was in 2002. Because of the 'eccentric' (my word, not Adrian's) Masters selection system, he didn't play for England again until 2002, when he was sixty. Since then he made the England team for every home international series up to 2022, many times as captain. His single loss in all those matches came playing an age group down in the O-75s after he had passed his eightieth birthday.

Adrian's notable opponents are too many to list here, but his win over Jonah Barrington in the 1999 World Championships must be mentioned. "Then Perrott hammered me for two points!"

Throughout his squash career Adrian has had a big involvement in GB Vets, including some memorable tours, two to South Africa, in 2002 and 2003, the first especially provided lasting memories. He also toured in France in a visit to Adeje, to Dublin and indeed York, a tour which he managed for a few years with his old Nottingham club and teammate Nick Clifford, the Manager at the York Club.

It's worth finishing with a significant comment. For many UK players, to win your own National Championship represents the pinnacle of squash ambitions. Here is a quote about Adrian from Stuart Hardy, Chairman of England Squash Masters, at the Nationals, in February 2023: "Adrian Wright ...the most successful winner of National titles..."

What an accolade.