



Pat Smith

28th May 1935 – 25th April 2020

Pat Smith joined Fairham Comprehensive School in Nottingham from 1964 and I was fortunate to have him as my A level maths teacher and 1st X1 football team manager. He was an excellent maths teacher, becoming a senior housemaster, and an enthusiastic coach claiming to be the first in schools football to play with a back 4 and a 'sweeper'. He had all the right credentials of course being an old Leigh Grammar School friend of England international Roger Hunt, and a fan of Bolton Wanderers. Pat joined Nottinghamshire Grammar Schools FA and was instrumental in 1965 them attending the first ever festival of football at Bognor Regis for under 19 county teams which set the standard for all football festivals to follow. He became established on the national committee of the Conference of Grammar Schools FAs (CGSFA) in 1966 and his rise up the sporting ladder had begun.

Whilst developing players at Fairham like Viv Anderson, David McVey and Darren Huckerby, he progressed his own refereeing career, reaching football league line status. Here he put his teaching skills to good use by becoming a referee instructor and running many courses for the FA and ESFA. He kept up his refereeing even after his hip operations as he could still cope with disability football which he loved doing, and also refereed at the 1992 Paralympics in Barcelona.

In 1972 the CGSFAs were taken over by the ESFA who had only previously run football up to age 16 and Pat and others on the CGSFA became regional ESFA council members, Pat looking after the Midlands. A man of many contacts, when Pat attended Beds games at Luton he would be met at the railway station by an old refereeing pal and transported to the game in a white Rolls Royce. Pat was on the ESFA council from amalgamation to 1990 and was chairman in season 1981-82, being made a life member of the association in 1990. Pat attended everything from county games to internationals to AGMs, and of course he was at the festivals as they moved to Skegness, then Morecambe, and finally Lowestoft, usually bringing his referees kit and turning out whatever the weather.

Leaving the ESFA in 1990 was only the start of Pat's amazing journey as he became the Executive Officer of the National Council for School Sport (the NCSS), a post he held until 2004. His reports to the NCSS Council were a catalogue of meetings with ministers for sport, and health, chief executives of a whole raft of sports – his ease and confidence in dealing with people were such a benefit to the NCSS at this time. He was a great promoter of PE and competitive sport as the best way to improve the obesity problem and the overall health of the nation. I think he had his own seat on the early morning train from Nottingham to London. As the NCSS blossomed into the ISSF (the International School Sport Federation) Pat would be fully supportive of their many events, loving the travel and adventure it provided, and he would take on the very suitable role of organising the England delegation.

Pat loved his colourful dress – a red blazer and fawn slacks would be the order of the day for Pat when everyone else was in boring black and grey. Whenever Pat and I were together at an event he would introduce me with a "do you know he used to teach me!" – it became our standing joke but he was always so full of fun, fit and young for his age it could just have been true. Pat wanted everyone at his funeral to wear colourful clothes and to be ready with a very bad joke – he probably had told them all anyway.

In 2002 Pat was awarded the MBE for services to schools' sport in the East Midlands, an honour he so richly deserves.



Written by Stuart Inger for the ESFA