

TONY PARKER

THE GENTLEMAN REFEREE

If I was a referee, I'd like to be one like Tony Parker; if I was a player, I would have liked him to referee my matches.

That was the sentiment of many when they heard of the death of the long-serving referee on the Friday after the

2016 British National Championships, where he had, as usual, been on duty.

On the Tuesday night of that week he had refereed in the North-West Counties League (NWCL) – as he had done so on Tuesday nights



Tony Parker displays the award, for service to squash, presented to him by the WSF

for over 30 years. He had felt unwell, was referred to hospital and although an emergency operation was planned for the Friday, he passed away that morning.

Tony was a scholarship boy at Whitgift School in Croydon,

which was founded in 1596. The independent school had squash courts, he learnt to play there and so developed a passion he took through his 76 years.

After A levels Tony went to work for ICI, spent over 25

years there as a buyer and later moved to Manchester to become a financial adviser.

When his local squash club there, the Village Hyde, was obliged to organise a competition, Tony was volunteered to referee. "Tony knows how to referee," it was said. "He learnt at school."

So started a career that saw him referee for years in the NWCL, in Cheshire, national competitions and worldwide. Later he became an assessor and instructor, travelling all over the world.

It is said by colleagues that he never gave a conduct stroke in his career. That could be true, for all his instincts were to be as non-contentious as possible. However, he was often given the most difficult matches and man-managed them to fair and successful conclusions.

"He had a tale for every eventuality and he had to top everyone's story," said fellow referee Wendy Danzey.

Colleagues fondly remember his off-the-cuff

public speaking and his impersonation of an aircraft captain on landing in Pakistan, shaking hands with the deferential passengers.

"He was a big giver to squash," said referee John Massarella. "Roy [Gingell] and I [both world referees] learnt a lot from him."

Tony loved sport, playing squash, table tennis and cricket. He was a cricket umpire at the Vymura club (the old ICI club) in Hyde.

He also had other interests – steam trains and stamps. He loved taking excursions on historic railway lines.

He loved Cornwall too, going there for holidays and travelling the Lanes in service buses. His ashes will be scattered in a cove near Land's End.

Players will miss a man of humorous and gentle charm, while colleagues will be forgiven for still looking around the entrance to clubs, expecting to find him outside having a cigarette and telling a yarn.

Ian McKenzie