



COACHES' CORNER

Mike Dale quizzes **JOHN ROBERTSON** about his 50-year career

LORD OF THE MANOR

John Robertson is rarely lost for words, but when he went upstairs to the bar after a coaching session at Brampton Manor Squash Club in Chesterfield just before Christmas, he was completely gobsmacked.

He was greeted by a room full of old friends, colleagues and luminaries who had gathered to mark his 50th year as a coach. Among them was world no.117 Ashley Davies, with video tributes arriving from other ex-pupils, including Lisa Opie, Liz Irving, Paul Walters and Danny Lee.

Now aged 72, John is still taking 40 lessons a week, barking his trademark catchphrases such as “stand and deliver” (urging players not to run through the shot), “windscreen wipers” (backhand

volley technique) and “take the ears off the ball” (drop shots). His punishing four corners practice drill is infamous. “I just love to see people suffering!” he jokes.

John’s love affair with squash started in 1966, when he met his wife, Jean, whose father happened to be former British champion Arthur Catherine. “I used to watch him play Hashim Khan and analyse every stroke they played,” he remembers.

It wasn’t long before John’s future father-in-law persuaded him to give up swimming coaching and become his assistant at Cardiff Squash Club.

After a spell at Muswell Hill, John moved to Brampton Manor (aka Princes Sports Club) 44 years ago and has been there ever since, enjoying roles with Nottingham and East Midlands junior squads along the way.

John says his best attributes are feeding (he once went on court with Jahangir Khan, whose only words to him were: “You feed very good”) and being able to diagnose and correct faults quickly. But those who know him pick out a different trait.

“He keeps lessons simple and interesting, testing your mind and body, so you are continually learning, but, most importantly, he keeps it fun,” said his assistant coach, Jane Beresford, who has known him since 1975.

“He coaches my daughter, Libby, and from the next court all I can hear is them laughing!”

John concludes: “I just love coaching and love the sport. I won’t be giving up any time soon. I reckon they’ll end up burying me underneath a squash court!”



John Robertson feeds world no.117 Ashley Davies