

Richard Birch (1913-

Originally from British Columbia, where he amassed an impressive record of provincial and national titles, Dick Birch moved to Toronto, joined the Carlton Club in the 1940's, and continued his winning ways.

Tall, powerful and aggressive, with a devastating smash, Dick was one of Canada's greatest players. Armed with his powerful strokes and excellent footwork, he mastered all aspects of the game and was particularly potent in mixed doubles. His record in this event is positively amazing. He won nine Canadian mixed doubles championships with four different partners with his first win in 1934. In the finals, he and Anna Kier Patrick demolished the defending champs, giving up only one point in two sets. His subsequent wins were in 1936, 1937, 1939 and 1940. The second world war intervened. There was no competition from 1941 to 1946.

Having moved to Toronto, Dick continued his winning ways by capturing the national mixed doubles diadem again in 1947, 1948, and 1950. Unbelievably, his last victory was in 1953, a mere 17 years after his first victory! One can only guess what the total might have been had there been the six championships that were missed. There is no doubt that Dick Birch would have a dozen national mixed victories under his belt!

A great singles player, Dick captured the Canadian title in 1937, and again in 1939. After the war years' break, he came back to win again in 1948.

He added to the provincial titles won in B.C. by capturing the Ontario men's doubles titles in 1950 and 1952. He also added four mixed doubles wins to his records. He won four successive mixed doubles titles in 1950, 1951, 1952, and 1953. Dick was 40 years of age when he won his last provincial title.

Dick participated in many invitational and other competitions. One of the most prestigious was the Strathgowan International Invitation. He had five wins in mixed doubles against the best teams in North America.

Dick captained Canada's entry into the first Thomas Cup contest in 1948-49. In the first round draw against India, he won three of his four matches in the 7-2 win. The three-game singles match Dick played against Davinder Mohan Lai was reported as one of the most exciting matches ever witnessed. In the second round against the United States, he also played two singles and two doubles, matched against the world's number one player in David Freeman. Dick and the team faltered. However, he and Gordon Simpson won the only match of the tie defeating the great David Freeman and Wynn Rogers.

Dick also was Captain of the Canadian team for the 1951-52 Thomas Cup Competition.

The level of Dick Birch's performance in mixed doubles can be measured by his victory with team-mate Ev Roberts over Mr. and Mrs. Clint Stephens of the U.S.A. in 1949; they had won the U.S. title in 1948 and the All-England title in 1949.

Dick Birch is Canada's undisputed mixed doubles king.