

A Who's Who in the Tennis World Converge On Sarasota to Remember Tennis Pioneer Mike Davies

Some of the biggest names and greatest legends in the tennis world arrived in Sarasota on Saturday, January 9, to honor one of the true pioneers of the game of tennis.

Mike Davies, 79, passed away late last year after a brief illness.

Mike grew up in Wales and became one of the best tennis players out of the United Kingdom when he reached the finals of the Wimbledon Doubles Championship in 1960.

But, it was what he did off the court that made him one of the most unique figures in the game.

One of his countless admirers, **Anne Worcester**, Tournament Director of the Connecticut Open, which Mike used to run, put it this way: "Mike was a master innovator who brought to professional tennis the yellow tennis ball, colored tennis clothing (as color television was introduced), its first circuit of pro tennis events, its first season-ending Championships, 30 and 90 second changeovers (to accommodate TV and sponsorship) and so much more."



Jimmy Arias and Cliff Drysdale

Anne is pictured on this page at Mike's induction into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 2012. She was among the many dignitaries who traveled to Sarasota and that converged in the clubhouse at the Landings for a Celebration of Life for Mike Davies.

Also present, the Chairman and CEO of the Tennis Channel, **Ken Solomon**, who said he spent much of 2015 on the phone with Mike hammering out a documentary about Mike and the other original legends of tennis before professional tennis events began. The Tennis Channel plans to debut the "The Barnstormers" that highlights the big names who traveled from city to city, putting on "one-night stands" for tennis fans around the country back in the 1960s. In the pre-Open era, Mike was one of this distinguished group that included players like **Jack Kramer, Bobby Riggs, Rod Laver, Ken Rosewall, and Pancho Gonzales**. Solomon showed a clip of the documentary to the packed room.

Other Hall of Famers present included **Stan Smith** (who drove down from Hilton Head, South Carolina, with his wife, Margie. (They actually drove to Sarasota and back to Sea Pines in the same day. "Fourteen hours round trip," he later reported.); **Cliff Drysdale** (who drove up from Key Biscayne with a VIP passenger **Philip Brock**, Chairman of the All England Lawn Tennis Club (Wimbledon); and **Butch Buchholz** (founder of the Miami Open) and his wife, Marilyn.

Other speakers included **Christopher Clouser**, immediate



Butch Buchholz and Stan Smith

past Chairman of the International Tennis Hall of Fame; **Ron Shaw**, retired CEO of Pilot Penn (today's Connecticut Open). Also attending were Sarasota's **Jimmy Arias** former #5 in the world) and top-world senior player **Joe Bachmann**. These tennis dignitaries were joined by dozens of other friends and supporters of Mike.

Local TV newscaster and "Voice" of the Sarasota Open, **Ray Collins** was chosen by Mike before his passing to moderate the Celebration of Life. Ray says he had three orders from Mike as passed on from his widow **Mina Davies**: "Keep the program moving, keep them drinking, and make sure they talk about me."

There was no shortage of talking about Mike. There was a lot of love in the room. And a lot of big names coming together to honor their friend Mike Davies.



Mike Davies and Anne Worcester, 2012



Ray Collins is a Sarasota-based TV newscaster and media consultant. Details at www.RayCollinsMedia.com

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