



Dave Naylor 12 December 1943 to 6th January 2025

Havering AC is very sad to announce the passing of our life member and legendary middle distance coach Dave Naylor at the age of 81.

After joining Hornchurch Harriers as a young athlete in 1956, Dave's successes included winning the Essex youth's cross championship in 1960 before he enlisted in the Army as a Royal Engineer the following year. He became a qualified physical education instructor and trained the Corps to their first regimental championship for many years, but his career was cut short in 1968 when an accident in Germany left him paralysed in all four limbs, leading to his medical discharge from the Army, aged just 24.

His determination saw him recover sufficiently enough to return to Hornchurch Stadium and in 1969 he began his coaching career with the recently formed Havering Athletic Club. Starting with just one athlete, his sister Trish, he soon formed a successful coaching group, and his achievements saw him crowned Havering Sports Personality of the Year in 1970. Dave supplemented his coaching expertise by attending elite training camps and he also drew on his army PE knowledge of circuit training and mobility exercise to the benefit of his group.

His first international success came in 1973 when Lesley Kiernan (now Foley) won 800m silver for Great Britain in the European Junior Championships. Dave went on to coach a stream of numerous others to national medals at the English Schools and other championships, earning international vests at junior and senior level, the most recent being Faye Fullerton and Lauren Deadman (Reed).

At local level Dave coached athletes to achieve regular success, winning too many individual and team medals to count at county and regional levels. They formed the backbone of the strong Havering Borough teams in the London Mini Marathon, with multiple winners of this annual event since it first started over 30 years ago.

All this was achieved despite the disabilities caused by his major injury, which unfortunately limited his visits to the track and competitions and progressively affected his health and which led to his retirement from coaching in 2021.

His younger sister Sue Deane, herself a coach and Committee member at Havering AC, said "Dave inspired so many athletes and coaches. I am here at the club because of Dave and our family have admired his strength and courage throughout the years. He always had a calm encouraging manner but with a kind of magic which is hard to describe, and which got the best out of his athletes. He did this so selflessly despite his health constraints which he managed so well over the years."

Club Chairman Martin Chester said "On behalf of the club and the Committee we are in debt to Dave for the many years of service that he gave to the club. I always found him to have a very sharp sense of humour, and I loved to chat with him when I came through the gate. He was full of fun and always made me smile as I'm sure many others would agree. His athletes thought the world of him.

Our sincere condolences to his widow Eileen, son Kevin, daughter Lauren and other family members.

