

INF Service Award

Presented at INF Congress – Sydney – August 2015

MARY FRENCH

Mary has been involved in international netball for seventy years, as a Player, Coach, umpire and administrator at all levels of the sport.

Mary French has attended all 13 World Netball Championships since the event started in 1963, by travelling to all of the host countries in the capacity of Coach, volunteer or spectator. After 70 years in netball, Mary French is recognised internationally as being one of the few 'elder statesmen' of netball; she has been an inspiration, mentor, coach and confidante to thousands of aspiring young netballers and influenced considerably more through her writing. By recognising Mary through the INF service award, the INF will give tribute to one of Netball's legends.

Having been born in the year that England Netball was formed nearly 90 years ago, Mary commenced her involvement in the game whilst playing at school. She quickly cemented her enthusiasm of the game by gaining her preliminary umpiring award to enable the girls at her school to play the game.

Playing as Goal Keeper for Surrey County, her skills and dedication were quickly evident leading to her becoming captain of her County team. Her performance at County level led to her selection to the England Team as Goal Defence in 1949. She then went on to be Captain of the England squad.

Coaching at local, county and regional level, ultimately led to Mary becoming the England first team coach. In this position Mary achieved enormous success, which was evidenced by the team's consistently improved performance, achieving 2nd place at the World Championships in 1975. No other England Coach has this accolade to the England team, a feat England coaches aspire to.

Not only has Mary been a stalwart within the England establishment earning all national accolades, awards and honours available, she has also been involved in coaching South Africa and Wales. She was involved in establishing Welsh netball in 1945. Mary's work as a volunteer holds no bounds; she even volunteered to sell merchandise in the first world championships in 1963.

Mary French has given outstanding and exceptional service to Netball for over 45 years including a significant contribution at International level and we thank her for her outstanding contribution to our sport over many years.