

# IN LOVING MEMORY



**RON BALLS**  
**1945 - 2025**





2025.11.12

To Ron's Family and Loved Ones,

On behalf of ELF's Board and Coordinators, please accept this booklet as a tribute to Ron's memory. In the lacrosse community, we were shocked and saddened by the sudden loss of a trusted friend and leader.

Ron had an outsized impact on the lacrosse world. As a federation, we wanted to give the global lacrosse community an opportunity to share a story, a memory or write a short note.

As I was reading through everyone's submissions and compiling this volume, there were quite a few times when my vision got blurry. We hope that as a family you will find solace and peace in reading these tributes as a celebration of Ron's lifelong impact to the sport we all love.

A digital version of this booklet will also be circulated to the global lacrosse community by ELF so that we can all be uplifted by stories and memories of Ron.

Please accept our deepest condolences for your loss.

With caring thoughts,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer L. Riley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Jennifer" on the top line and "L. Riley" on the bottom line.

Jennifer L. Riley  
Finance Director  
European Lacrosse Federation



"What a gentleman to know and to be able to call a friend. Ron and I bumped swords in 2010-12 when he was, I think, secretary for English Lacrosse and I was Chair of Junior and Schools in the North West of England.

In 2014 I became a coach for Wales Mens Lacrosse team. I met up with Ron in Denver at the World Championships where we chatted and found a lot of common ground in the way we viewed the game both locally and around the world. Since then we have regularly exchanged emails and texts on numerous subjects relating to World Lacrosse, the Olympics and other related matters. We continued to share very similar views and we both were not afraid to air these views!

The work he has put into lacrosse cannot be summarised as it covers so many important areas and aspects of the game. His thinking, knowledge and foresight have allowed the game to evolve and develop worldwide. I do not think many people realise how much he has influenced the game for the better. He never dropped the baton. He always fought for what he believed was best for the game. The lacrosse world has lost one of its greatest contributors and ambassadors to the game he and I both love.

I feel so lucky to have known Ron and will miss him very much."

-Rick Summers  
(Representing Wales & England)

"In 2018, we competed in Israel. Ron oversaw the eligibility assessment. At the time we did not understand how important this was for the sport. While we may not have agreed at all times in the process, we eventually found a solution. Our attending the tournament was a big boost for the sport. Had it been someone else than Ron, it is quite likely we could not have gone. We always knew about the weight Ron bore in meeting rooms, tournament ranks. We will miss him. Rest easy Ron."

*-Henning Schmidt on behalf of Luxembourg Lacrosse*



“Ron's passing was sudden, unexpected and sad. In the days that have passed since, it has been a wake-up call for me to loosen up a bit. You never ever know when something like this will happen.

I had a short video call with Ron approximately one week before he passed away - he was in his office surrounded by his lacrosse memorabilia - in his element really. We had a short chat about a topic we had been messaging about during the previous days. I was on my way to an ice hockey game with my husband when Ron and I had the call. He told us to have fun and enjoy. We wrapped up our conversation and he waved goodbye to me on that call - I did not know that would be our final goodbye.

Rest easy dear Ron - we will try our best down here to continue to carry the torch. We miss you dearly and you will always be remembered for your lifelong unwavering dedication to lacrosse - right to the very end.”

-Jennifer Riley

“Some time ago, at the Eurolacrosse in Portugal, I had a long chat with Ron about the introduction of six-a-side Lacrosse. It was a happy surprise to be met with curiosity, not judgement, motivated by a deep love for the game. Ron and I did not always agree, but I always knew that he would be open to discourse and dialogue, always caring to explain.

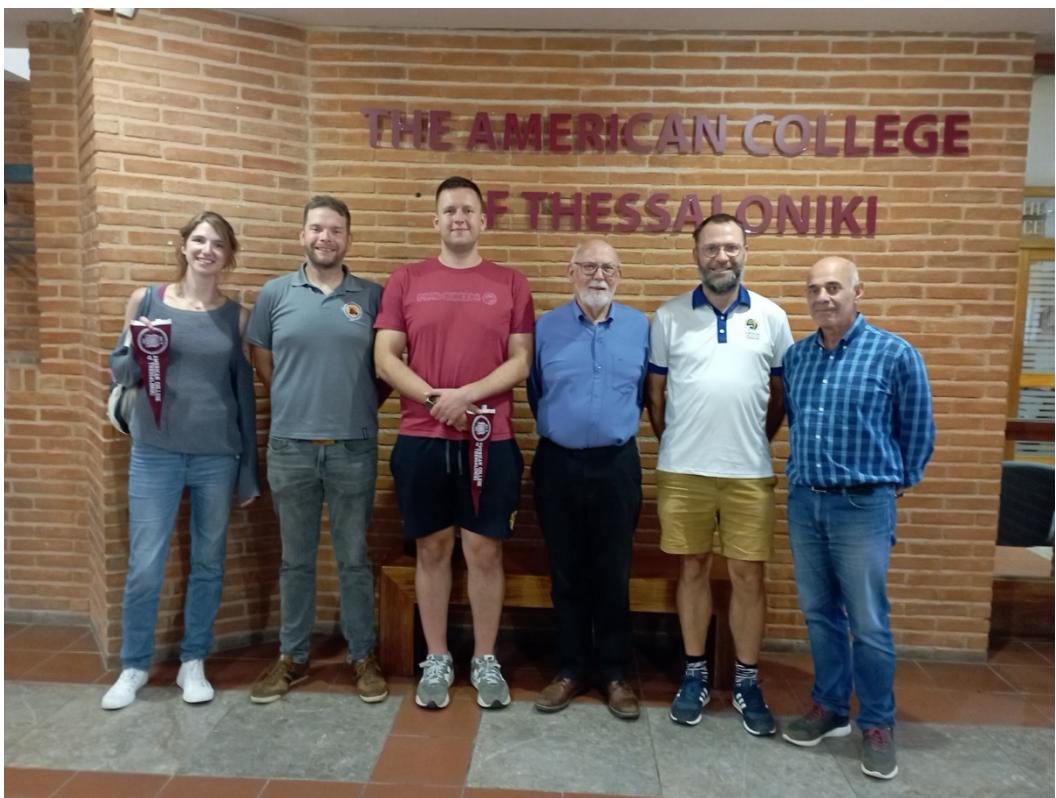
Ron leaves a hole in the group picture of people who love Lacrosse more than one can reasonably expect. Hopefully we manage to learn all the lessons from our time with Ron and make him proud. It is now on us to look after the game we love, for one more person that cannot do so anymore and future versions of this incredible, unbelievable, beautiful and unique game.

I hope that Ron now rests easy and can watch on as we try our best to support and develop the fastest game on two feet. See you soon Ron, at a field of your choosing.”

-Henning Schmidt

"I joined the ELF board under Steph, and when she announced she was leaving and appointing a replacement I was understandably apprehensive. But meeting Ron he was so assured, so deeply knowledgeable and so motivated it was clear there was no better option. He has helped me become better in my role at the ELF, been a steady guiding hand to the organisation, and been a firm friend to all of us at the ELF. He has helped guide us through a hectic and stressful few years, and leaves a shining legacy on our horizon which we can point our sails toward. Rest well Ron and my very deepest condolences to all the family and friends he leaves behind."

-Joe Watts





“When I started a brand new club in Bath in 1983, Ron was the South League secretary, he was super helpful to me, giving advice and time to a then young very keen Lacrosse person. Before computers we had to submit team lists to Ron by post (yes a stamp on a card), and over the past 40 plus years Ron became friend and confidant. I will miss his presence, always a steady ship in a sometimes turbulent ocean. RIP Ron Balls”

-Nik Roberts

“I can't remember how long ago I first met Ron but World Lacrosse was called IFWLA and has gone through several name changes since then! My memories of Ron will always make me smile: he made time to chat and was a warm welcoming face at the many lacrosse events I saw him, initially as an onfield umpire where he always had words of encouragement and reassurance, and then as an off-field mentor / evaluator / educator where Ron's calm diplomatic approach and words of wisdom were always appreciated! He will be sorely missed by the lacrosse fraternity but everyone's lives the better for having known him in however big or small a capacity.”

-Wendy Reynolds  
(Representing England)

“Ron was a central and significant figure in the sport of Lacrosse in England. His contribution to us shaped who we are today and what we will be in the future. With a powerful intellect and a clear sense of the future, Ron was at the centre of all the Key decisions in England for many decades. His achievement were many with the highlight being the successful amalgamation of the Men's and women's game in England which is the basis of the sport today. As a Lacrosse family in England we wanted to thank Ron for all that he did for us and that he will be missed by us all. Our thoughts and best wishes go to Tessa and his family at thus time. Thank you Ron.”

*-Mark Coups on behalf of England Lacrosse*

"My memories of Ron goes back to field European Championship 2004 in Prague. I remember the incredible passion with which he could talk about the future of lacrosse in Europe. For him, it was never just about bureaucracy — he always saw the game itself and the people behind it. He was the one who could discuss late into the night, overcome every obstacle fairly, with a smile and the steadfast will of a true British gentleman. My last memory of Ron is from the junior European Championship in Prague two years ago. Last night after the tournament, over a glass of wine, talking about life with lacrosse (which we both loved to play) he said that lacrosse for him was above all about the amazing people from all over the world — people he could meet, share experiences with, and work alongside to grow the sport became his lifelong friends. Rest in peace my friend."

-Barbara Bažantová  
(Representing Czechia)







“Ron you were such a fine gentleman in the world of Governance. Calm, measured and wise, with just a glint of a twinkle in your eye. Your support and guidance was always warmly welcomed and it was a pleasure to have worked with and spend time with you at various tournaments. You have made a huge impact on lacrosse in Europe and we will be forever grateful.”

-Lou Scott  
(Representing Italy / Wales)

“We are deeply saddened by the passing of Ron Balls, a true champion of lacrosse whose impact on the sport, especially in his last years in Europe, was profound. His dedication to the growth of lacrosse was evident in every effort he made, creating opportunities and fostering connections within the community.

Ron had a remarkable ability to make everyone feel welcome. His warmth and generosity brought people together, creating lasting friendships through the sport he loved.

His legacy will live on in our organization and beyond. Ron will be sorely missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him. Thank you, Ron, for your kindness and unwavering support of Sweden lacrosse. You will never be forgotten.”

*-Annika McCREA on behalf of Sweden Lacrosse*

“Ron was a man who cared about all of those involved in European Lacrosse - he made all that were working behind the scenes and on the front lines feel appreciated and valued. He had a special kind of spirit that you felt in his presence.”

-Billy McNamara  
(Representing Polska)

“Ron was always an example for me throughout my lacrosse career. Since I co-founded the Belgian Lacrosse Federation in 2009, I was always the delegate representing Belgium at World Lacrosse (then FIL) General Assembly’s. I first met him in Manchester 2010, and many times more the years after. Ron was finance director and secretary general, and so most of our contact as a new federation was with him. In 2014 I joined the ELF board, first as secretary general and later I also took up the finance director role and Ron helped me out a lot. As a World Lacrosse board member Ron was always very approachable and eager to help. Ron was always so nice and a familiar face at various tournaments across Europe. Later, when Ron joined ELF as president I got to know him in a different way. He brought so much experience to our group. He moved mountains for ELF and did it always with class and respect. I had the pleasure of spending more time with him during a lot of tournaments the last years and was glad I got to know him a bit more as a person, instead of a lacrosse board member. He will be dearly missed by everyone that he touched in the lacrosse world. I hope people won’t forget him and remember what a huge role he played in the development of lacrosse and the Olympic pathway. We wouldn’t be where we are now without Ron.”

-Jan Van Cauwenberge  
 (Representing Belgium)





"I first met Ron when I was the Official in Charge of the 2017 (and first ever) European Box Lacrosse Tournament in Turku, Finland. He made an impression as someone easy to work with, quick to laugh, and generous with his commitment to the growth of the game (even though he was pretty new to the box discipline). I have had the occasion to work and just visit with Ron many more times since 2017, and those qualities I first encountered in Turku, were always on display. As an official, I can say that he had tremendous respect for the importance and difficulty of the role. He set a tremendous example in the roles he occupied in Lacrosse and as a human being. I will miss having that great person around the next time we gather in Europe but I am so very fortunate that I had the privilege to know him and spend time with him."

-Greg Hart  
 (Representing Canada)



"Dear Ron, I have already written to you once before – when you were stepping down from your position at World Lacrosse after many years of service and I was asked if I could say a few words on behalf of the European federations at the general assembly meeting. I had been preparing for this for a long time. After all, it's not every day that you give a speech like that, especially one that is broadcast to the entire lacrosse world. At the time, I appreciated your ability to solve problems and put together perfect playing systems that always worked, even though tournaments often had an odd number of teams. At that time, I reserved the right to continue consulting with you on game system proposals, even though you would no longer be in office. Since then, I have exercised this privilege several times..."

Well, now I also have something to write, but this time it's not about leaving a position. This time, I won't be able to ask for the right to continue consulting... I admit that your (this time definitive) departure surprised me, affected me, and devastated me. I knew that age was taking its toll and that you had health issues, but still... when I got the bad news, I couldn't believe it was true for a moment. After all, just a few days ago, we were discussing details of the upcoming European Championship, which is to be held here in Prague next year! I really couldn't accept the fact that there would be no more joint consultations and that I would never again be able to turn to you for advice or opinion. I am slowly coming to terms with it, but it's not easy...

Dear Ron, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have done for world, European, and Czech lacrosse. I believe you have left an indelible mark on the history of our sport. As a fair person, as an expert, as an English gentleman, and as a true friend of mine! I'll miss you!"

-Pavel Semerák  
(Representing Czechia)



“Ron, thank you for your dedication and passion for lacrosse, especially for lacrosse in Europe! We value the exchanges we had with you and will keep them in our hearts. Your clarity on many aspects is inspiring and the impact that you had on others will last lifetimes. You will be missed!

Our sincere condolences to your family.”

- Simon Krause and Nathalie Morof  
(Representing Germany)

“It is with great sadness that we received the news of the passing of Ron Balls, with whom we shared last several intense decades of lacrosse, both within World Lacrosse (FIL) and the European Lacrosse Federation. We always knew that if there was any problem, we could turn to him and he would solve it with the elegance of an English gentleman. With Ron's departure to lacrosse heaven, we have lost a strong ally, colleague, friend, and lacrosse enthusiast.

This is an irreplaceable loss for the entire lacrosse community.

With deep respect for all the work he has done,  
Czech Lacrosse Union

PS: We are certain that from the other side, where he now resides, he is still watching over us and protecting our steps.”

*-Roman Pokorný on behalf of the Czech Lacrosse Union*

“Thank you Ron, for showing us the power and impact of longevity. You stayed with this sport through so many iterations, and so much of international lacrosse exists because of your lifelong dedication. Thank you for every brick you placed and fight you picked to build and defend our sport. We will always be grateful. With love and admiration, Anne Pedersen  
- ELF Women's VP”

-Anne Pedersen



Ron,

We were deeply saddened to hear of your passing, and our heartfelt condolences go out to your family and friends.

You were cherished within the lacrosse community—respected, admired, and a mentor to many. There wasn't a single person who didn't look up to you.

Finland had the privilege of hosting the inaugural Box Lacrosse European Championships in 2017, and you were there to ensure everything met the highest standards. That was your way—always meticulous, always committed to doing things right.

We remember you for your wholehearted support of European lacrosse. You stood by our communities, engaged with us, and made sure we had a voice on the world stage.

Thank you for everything you gave—for your leadership, your integrity, and your belief in the sport. We will always be grateful for what you did for us as a NGB, and for what you did for lacrosse as a whole.

On behalf of the Finnish lacrosse community,"

*-Caroline Sørensen on behalf of the Finnish Lacrosse Association*

"I've known Ron for many years. He was always so supportive of Sweden lacrosse and always around to have a conversation when we met at tournaments around the world. A great listener and very interested in how the development of youth lacrosse was going in Sweden.

Thanks for being genuine and kind. You will be truly missed."

*-Teckla Jackson  
(Representing Sweden)*



“On behalf of the entire French Lacrosse Association, we express our deepest sorrow at the passing of Ron. His commitment to our sport was unwavering, and his leadership helped shape the development of lacrosse across our continent.

Thanks to his vision, European lacrosse has continued to expand into new communities while strengthening the bonds between nations that share a love for the game. His work created opportunities for countless athletes, coaches, officials, and volunteers to discover and elevate this sport we all cherish.

We will remember him not only for his accomplishments, but for the generosity, determination, and passion that guided everything he did. His legacy will live on through every European competition, every young player taking their first steps onto a field, and every milestone reached in the future of our sport. Without Ron and the momentum he brought to European lacrosse, there is no doubt that our organizations — and France Lacrosse in particular — would not be where they are today. He inspired a generation of federations to make the European stage a model of competition and development.

To his family, friends, colleagues, and the entire European lacrosse community, we share in your grief and hold you in our thoughts during this difficult time.

May he rest in peace, and may we honor his memory by continuing the work he cared for so deeply.”

*-Paul Maître on behalf of France Lacrosse*