



ITTF director praises English projects

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ITTF Foundation Director Leandro Olvech has hailed two English projects as examples to the rest of the world after his recent visit to the country.

Mr Olvech spent time at the Greenhouse Centre in London and with Brighton TTC, visiting one of their projects in a local prison and seeing first-hand the work they do around inclusivity in table tennis.

His visit came after the launch of the ITTF Foundation, which will act as the ITTF's Corporate Social Responsibility arm to take on humanitarian projects, aiming to build solidarity through table tennis.

BTTC have been running a weekly session at HMP High Down since last summer and more recently have started in the women's prison next door, HMP Down View.

The Brighton project is thought to be the only programme in the world that is training prisoners to be coaches so that they can give something back and make a positive contribution during and after their prison sentence.

Mr Olvech said: "The BTTC prison project is a great example of table tennis for development being used for positive social change. The ITTF Foundation is supportive and interested in seeing other table tennis clubs in other parts of the world working in prisons."



Leandro Olvech plays alongside Wasim Alyousef (picture by Alexis Maryon)

Mr Olvech also met and played against some of the club's players and coaches, including Wasim Alyousef, a 17-year-old Level 1 coach from Syria who has been in Brighton for just a year and has made incredible progress with his table tennis

He also met Ivy Manning, a newly qualified Level 1 coach who is a Romany Gypsy and came into BTTC through sessions run in partnership with Friends, Families and Travellers. In just a few months she has seen first-hand the power of table tennis in bringing people together and now plans to set up a new club in Shoreham that will actively bring community and traveller young people together through sport.

Mr Olvech said: "BTTC is for the ITTF Foundation one of the best clubs in the world in terms of creativity to be inclusive and to integrate minority groups. It is for sure an example to other clubs in the world."



Mr Olvech alongside Ivy Manning (picture by Alexis Maryon)

While in England, Mr Olvech also visited the new Greenhouse Centre in London, which was opened by Princes William and Harry last month.

And he attended the Sport Business Awards ceremony, at which the ITTF were shortlisted in two categories for World Table Tennis Day, finishing third in the Best Sports Governing Body Initiative.

He added: "My overall visit was very satisfactory, England is always a source of inspiration with loads of activities going on. Greenhouse sports is a wonderful example, same as the Brighton TTC philosophy and their project on the prison.

"I have been mainly surprised by the headquarters of Greenhouse, that is probably the most beautiful TT venue I have ever been, Table Tennis England or even the ITTF should host an event there!

"Once again, World Table Tennis Day has won international recognition. Of course, that makes me and my team proud and motivates us to keep working in this direction."



Leandro Olvech with the third place trophy at the Sport Business Awards (ITTF photo)

The ITTF Foundation will have two new projects under its responsibility in its first year – ITTF Nittaku Dream Building with Refugees, focusing on the Za’atari Refugee Camp to use table tennis to promote positive individual and social change inside the Syrian Refugee community in Za’atari and the Bridge Program in Argentina, linking the 2018 Youth Olympic Games host city Argentina and 2020 Olympic Games host city Tokyo.

Mr Olvech invited representatives from Brighton to join celebrations at the Za’atari camp on the next World Table Tennis Day in April 6.

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