



Highbury history as women make league step

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Highbury Table Tennis Club have tapped into Be TT funding to launch their first ever female team – and the initiative was so successful that they actually got three new teams up and running!

The club applied for funding in year 1 of the Be TT programme, which supports clubs and leagues to build better experiences for all participants across our sport.

Highbury's aim was to grow the number of female players in the club and to be able to enter new women's teams into the local league. Women-only coaching sessions were arranged over a set period and the sessions had 15-20 women and girls attending, many of whom were new to table tennis.

This led to Highbury entering their first female team in Central London Table Tennis League with Cecile Roudaut as the first female team captain. This was the first ever female team to take part in Central London Table Tennis League.

And the history-making did not end there. Highbury have on average 10 women and girls coming to drop-in sessions on Tuesday and Thursday and the sessions have led to three all-female teams in the Central London League for 2018/19, with more than 15 women playing league matches every week.

The club has started a mentoring programme for all female participants, whereby elite and experienced players from the club help and guide the female league players on areas such as training tips. The club have also set up coaching clinics to support the women playing in the league.

The sessions are run by coach Sanket Shah and here is what some of those taking part have said about them:

I find Sanket's weekly table tennis sessions for women both useful and fun. Each session starts with an introduction of a new skill, like serve, topspin or forehand smash, with a good balance of theory and practice, and ends with a 'top table' competition. Apart from the general training I have learned a fancy new serve, which is already proving effective in matches. Very happy!" – Natalia

Ladies' table tennis sessions at Highbury Table Tennis Club have been the highlight of my week. I played a little table tennis in the past but not on a regular enough basis and mostly with friends, so it was really good to have weekly lessons to not only improve my game and break bad habits, but also meet like-minded people who share the same passion for table tennis, no matter how advanced they are. Even if the ladies are all of different skill levels, the atmosphere during class is really positive and supportive – Julija

Table Tennis England are hosting an online webinar to talk through our new Women and Girls Action Plan and answer any questions on the evening of Monday November 26. Please email jenny.leach@tabletennisengland.co.uk if you are interested in signing up the webinar or have any queries.

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