



Bardsley named SportsAid athlete of the month

Author: Paul Stimpson

Posted On: November 28, 2018

Charlotte Bardsley has been named SportsAid athlete of the month following victory on her Senior England debut against Greece.

The 16-year-old Stroubridge athlete helped her country top their European Championships, Stage One group with a stunning victory over Konstantina Paridi.

She old brushed her opponent aside in three straight games to follow up fine wins by Tin-Tin Ho and Maria Tsaptsinos.

Bardsley, who has been supported by myLotto24 this year through SportsAid, was informed she had been selected for the team following the squad's final practice and repaid the faith shown in her with an outstanding performance.

Here, she reflects on her senior international debut, looks ahead to the Finlandia Open and next year's major targets, and reveals her ambition to compete at the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games in her home city.

How did it feel to make your senior debut for England? What did it feel like to be competing at that level?

"When I am playing I focus on the next point and try not to think about anything else, so the overall match can seem like a bit of a blur when you immediately come off the court. Reflecting afterwards on how it went, I feel my tactics were effective for the situation and I kept good steady pressure on my opponent throughout with some strong serving. So as matches go, this one worked out very well with a 3-0 victory and good margins in each set.

"I have played in a few tough international matches at junior level, but this felt quite different as there was a big crowd of supporters and I really wanted to do well particularly on my debut and at a home venue. It was about delivering a good performance on the night and I am very pleased that I was able to repay the faith that the England coaching team had in me and also for all of the England supporters who had come to watch us play."

When did you find out you were going to be picked? Did your team-mates help to settle your nerves?

"The squad for the match gets announced a few weeks before, but the final selection of who is playing is usually

done around midday on the actual day of the match, so I got to know the good news during the team meeting just after our final practice.

"My match was third in the order of play, so my team-mates did perhaps the best thing they could do for me, which was play very well and win their own matches. Seeing them do great just before I went out to play settled my nerves a lot. It was a nice feeling afterwards for the team that we won the overall match and we all individually contributed with our own personal victories."

How much did you learn from the experience? Has it provided you with even more of an appetite to continue playing and performing at that level?

"There is always a lot more external attention and focus on what the senior team does, and you feel that very much in all the extra preparations leading up to the match. Going through those processes now is a good learning experience for the future. I want to play a lot more at this level and it feels a natural progression from the England junior team which I have been a part of for several years."

What else is coming up in the next month? And what does 2019 have in store for you?

"I will go out to Helsinki to play in the Finlandia Open at the beginning of December. This is a senior tour competition, so I am looking forward to having some good matches as players will come from all over the world to compete there.

"Next year I will be playing in more World Tour events and then in the summer we will have the European Youth Championships in Ostrava, which is always a tournament we want to do well in, but it is a very tough event with all the top teams and players participating. Hopefully the senior team will have also successfully qualified for the European team finals which is being held in Nantes."

What are your main long-term aims in the sport?

"Table tennis is a sport which has got several competition formats so there are different types of challenges both as an individual and as a team. I want to be playing in the top European leagues as soon as I can. Currently I am playing in the Swedish and Italian leagues but not yet in the top divisions.

"Thinking a bit further ahead, we have the Commonwealth Games coming to Birmingham – where I live – in 2022. It would be such a great opportunity to compete for England in a big multi-sport event in my home city just a few years from now."

How do you balance your sport with your education?

"This year I completed my GCSEs and now I am studying for A-Levels at Old Swinford Hospital School in Stourbridge. This is a new school for me, but they have already been very supportive and helpful with my table tennis.

"Finding time for sport and studying is always a tough balance to make but what it has really taught me is how to be efficient with my time and get the best out of each moment, whatever the activity. My A-Levels will give me several good options in the future such as studying at university or a career with the armed forces."

What difference has the support from SportsAid made?

"I think it is probably the same for every athlete or player, that funding is a challenge because there are so many costs which must be taken care of. Travel can be one of the big extra costs as most of the international competitions are outside the UK and it's important to build up both your experience and your ranking at a world level. So SportsAid clearly can make a difference because now I can go to these competitions which before I wouldn't have been able to do.

"On a motivational level it is important because you feel part of something much bigger. It was a great experience to go to the awards day [with myLotto24] and meet other fellow SportsAid athletes who are trying to progress in their sport and then hear from the older ones who have advanced further in their careers with SportsAid support."

How important has the support of your family been to you in pursuing your sporting ambitions?

"Sport at any sort of serious level is not possible without a very good support network around you. My family provides a lot of this along with my brilliant coaching team. Though my parents have no direct experience in my

sport, I have been very lucky that all my family are very positively interested in what I do and can always give me extra help when I need it.”

What will you do to #SupportTheNext generation of British sporting heroes? SportsAid needs your help to ensure talented athletes like Charlotte can continue receiving the backing they rely on. You can make a regular donation to the charity and have a significant impact on the country's sporting future (<https://www.sportsaid.org.uk/get-involved/>).

Downloaded From:

<https://newsarchive.tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/archived/bardsley-named-sportsaid-athlete-of-the-month/>