



## Chairman's Message – December 2018

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As we look back on 2018, we can reflect on a year of achievement and progress – but with the knowledge that there is still much to do as we seek to bring a positive experience of table tennis to as many people as possible, whenever and wherever they wish to play.

The year started with us hosting the ITTF Team World Cup at the Copper Box Arena on London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and it was an event which, for me, captured the essence of much of what we are striving to do at Table Tennis England.

There was the opportunity for thousands of spectators to see the best players in the world. We were able to introduce the sport to hundreds of local schoolchildren with free tickets and the event also saw an army of volunteers give up their time to make sure everything went as smoothly as possible.

We saw live coverage on the BBC website, bringing the sport to a wide domestic audience, as well as by Japanese and Chinese television; we worked with new commercial partners; we carried out legacy projects in the local area; and several of our umpires were also on duty, including Brian Jackson and Josh Reynolds in the finals.

The fact that England's men were able to secure a brilliant bronze medal was the icing on the cake.

I am pleased to say the ITTF were very impressed with the way the event was run – hopefully we will have the opportunity to host more international events in the not-too-distant future.

The England teams went on from there to the Commonwealth Games in Australia, where they enjoyed England's most successful Games ever, with Paul and Liam winning the men's doubles gold, Ross Wilson taking the para gold, Liam and Tin-Tin claiming mixed doubles silver, and both England teams taking bronze medals – in the case of our women, the first time they had been on the podium.

The following World Championships saw our men just miss out on another medal as they were beaten by hosts Sweden in the quarter-finals. Liam secured some outstanding results at that event, and into the autumn when

he beat a trio of recent world No 1 players in various competitions as he broke into the top 20 in the world for the first time.

Such achievements by our leading players bring our sport to the attention of the nation and serve as an inspiration to so many, whether they are current table tennis players or people of all ages who are motivated to pick up a bat for the first time.

We were delighted that the commitment and potential of the sport was recognised when the sport was recently awarded £275,000 from the UK Sport Aspiration Fund to support our athletes with a genuine qualification opportunity to reach the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

But none of this should distract us from our primary job, which is to provide as many opportunities as possible for people to play and to have a good experience in the sport, whether that is in clubs and leagues – who we support through our Be TT programme and in many other ways – or in social settings such as Ping Pong Parlours and through the Ping! initiative.

We are planning to launch our new TT Kidz programme in the spring – one of many initiatives we are working on – and, who knows, will some potential Olympians or World Cup medallists take their first steps in table tennis through TT Kidz?

We have also delivered on a commitment to have a highly-qualified and specialist team look at how we run ourselves. Among their recommendations is the creation of a new Membership Group which will work directly with the Board and Table Tennis England, to ensure the views and opinions of our members are channelled directly into the decision-making process. I am looking forward to working with that new Members Advisory Group early in the New Year.

I would like to close by mentioning the volunteers who underpin every corner of our sport. They were a highly visible presence at the Team World Cup, but it is the day-in, day-out commitment of so many thousands of others which enables much of our sport to function, and for which we remain forever grateful.

Wherever and however you celebrate this festive period, may I wish you a very happy Christmas and the very best for 2019.

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