



Pride awards place volunteers in limelight

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The Pride of Table Tennis Awards are getting a makeover to ensure they are an even bigger and better celebration of the volunteers who are the sport's lifeblood.

More emphasis will be placed on the Volunteer of the Year and Young Volunteer of the Year categories as the centrepiece of the awards, as part of a proposed two-year cycle which also seeks to elevate the importance of volunteers at local level.

The change follows feedback from delegates at the inaugural National Conference in March 2019, which was the venue for the gala awards dinner at which the 2018 winners were revealed. Delegates told us they would like the Pride awards to remain part of the Conference weekend.

Therefore, the new cycle will co-incide with future National Conferences, which will be held every two years.

In the first year of the cycle, starting this season, the focus is on the Club/League Volunteer of the Year and Young Volunteer of the Year awards.

Clubs and leagues can select and honour their own volunteers of the year in both categories – and all those honoured will be put forward for the national awards.

The national Volunteer of the Year and Young Volunteer of the Year will be selected by the Pride of Table Tennis judging panel and presented at the Senior Nationals in March, where they will receive a special invitation and recognition over the weekend.

We will also be surprising some of the local winners by choosing them at random to receive special 'table tennis experiences' or prizes, such as a weekend away at the Nationals with overnight stay, or the chance to train with England coaches or players.

This season's Pride of Table Tennis Awards will be launched on November 8, so look out for more details on our website.

In the second year of the cycle, starting in the 2020/21 season, local clubs and leagues will again honour their volunteers and young volunteers.

There will also be a regional stage of the awards, into which all local nominees will be forwarded, alongside nominations in other key categories.

The national stage of the awards will then feature the full range of Pride of Table Tennis Awards, including those for coaches, officials, clubs, leagues and inclusivity – and of course featuring the Blue Riband Volunteer of the Year and Young Volunteer of the Year.

These will be presented at a gala dinner to be held at the National Conference in the first half of the year.

Table Tennis England's Head of Development and Volunteering, Greg Yarnall, said: "The feedback from some of our key volunteers who were delegates at the National Conference was overwhelmingly in favour of keeping the Pride of Table Tennis awards dinner as part of the conference weekend.

"We have listened to this feedback, but obviously also wanted to retain some of the core awards during years when there is no National Conference.

"The new two-year cycle will enable the clubs and leagues which are the heartbeat of our sport to continue to reward, every year, those unsung heroes who go the extra mile to help people to enjoy their table tennis, while also allowing us to honour people in a wide range of categories at a national level."

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