



Umpire Josh steps up to top level

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Josh Reynolds has joined the ranks of the world's best umpires, having had his Blue Badge status confirmed by the ITTF.

The 26-year-old from Halifax is the third English official to reach that level this year, after Nico Caltabiano and Lyndon Griffiths.

It takes the total number of English umpires on the Blue Badge list to eight, with Neil Curtis, David Edwards, Harry Jutle, John Mackey and Tom Purcell also having the same status.

Josh has already experienced major finals from the umpire's chair, having taken charge of the women's final at the ITTF Team World Cup in London in 2018 and also the European Team Championships men's final between Germany and Portugal this year.

Here, Josh talks about his journey to the elite level of umpiring.

Why and where did you get into umpiring in the first place?

✘ I got into umpiring at a Grantham 2* in my final year of juniors when Cathy Steeples asked if I could do some matches as more often than not I was knocked out of the competition early on! From there, I was invited to umpire at the Senior Schools Invitational at Lilleshall where I passed my county umpire assessment under the watchful eye of Peter May.

What made you decide to push on from Level 1 (county) into national and international umpiring?

✘ I enjoyed umpiring and therefore it was a natural progression to move into national. I was placed in the Young Umpires Project with Alex Mercer and we did our International Umpire exams in 2014 and then I sat my Advanced Umpires Training Course in 2016 at the Europeans in Hungary.

What was it like umpiring the European Championships final?

☒ It was a great experience especially to be able to lead out players of the quality of Freitas, Apolonia, Boll and Ovtcharov. There is also a great deal of respect from the players and coaches at an international level, a lot more so than many sports.

There was a funny moment in the final when Ovtcharov didn't shake my hand after his singles match and Roskopf (the German coach) reminded him to and he came running back apologising for not doing so. You can also see the respect from the players after the match when all of them came and shook the 2 umpires' hands, from both the German and the Portuguese team.

What do you hope to achieve in the future in your umpiring career?

☒ I would like to do an Olympic Games as these are the pinnacles of both a player's and an umpire's career. I would also like to do the World Championships and the Commonwealth Games as I have I had not done these yet.

Who has been the biggest influence on your umpiring career?

☒ I was always helped out by the more experienced umpires whether it was assistance on umpiring from Tom Purcell/David Edwards to getting lifts to events from John Mackey when I didn't have a car. I also spent a lot of time with the late John Hardcastle, who was the Yorkshire umpires secretary at the time.

What do you feel you get out of umpiring?

☒ I feel like I am putting something back into the sport I love to be involved in. I really like going abroad to umpire at foreign events and now I have done a few, players and coaches are recognising me, which is nice as they will smile or say hello.

What would you say to anyone thinking of taking up umpiring?

☒ It's a very worthwhile experience and if you are prepared to put the time in you will be able to achieve the high levels which our umpires enjoy. I only started umpiring in 2011 and have got to this stage in 8 years and this shows that nothing is impossible.



Josh Reynolds before the ITTF Team World Cup final in London last year

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