



## Pitchford, England and Bayley turn heads!

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From European gold medals to the glitz of Strictly Come Dancing, Liam Pitchford 'going viral' with an astonishing shot and England beating Japan in their own backyard, table tennis generated plenty of news in the second half of 2019.

Two of those European golds came in July, as Betty Bird and David Mahabir [topped the podium at the European Veterans' Championships](#) in Budapest.

There were medals too for the England senior team at the Commonwealth Championships in India, where both the [men's and women's teams won silver](#) and there were [bronzes for Tin-Tin Ho and Tom Jarvis](#) in the singles and for Jarvis and Sam Walker in the doubles.

At those championships, Alan Ransome OBE has [received the highest award from the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation \(CTTF\)](#) – Honorary Life Membership – after his 26-year service as Chairman.

Lyndon Griffiths stepped up to the top level of world umpiring as he [gained his Blue Badge status](#).

Off the tables, our new [TT Leagues and TT Memberships platforms were launched](#), allowing us to better serve our members in the digital era.

There was great news for para table tennis in August as the news came through that its [place at the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games had been confirmed](#) by the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF). Meanwhile, British Para Table Tennis Team Futures Squad member Adam Sharp was [featured on BBC flagship The One Show](#) having overcome numerous challenges to take his GCSEs.

And arguably our biggest para star, Will Bayley, was ready to strut his stuff in front of millions on primetime TV as he was [named among the contestants for Strictly Come Dancing](#).

Jenny Turner and Harry Fairchild [won gold for Great Britain](#) at the T21 European Championship for athletes with Down Syndrome, held in Tampere, Finland.



Jenny Turner with her gold medal (picture by Alexis Maryon)

Liam Pitchford [climbed to a career high No 12](#) in the world rankings in August, and the following month his [victory over legend Vladimir Samsonov](#) put England into the quarter-finals of the European Championships. Unfortunately, they were [beaten at that stage](#) by Sweden.

There was greater success – and some great stories – for the Para GB team at their European Championships the same month.

Paralympic champion Rob Davies [won his fourth consecutive men's class 1 European singles title](#) and the British men's class 6 team of Paul Karabardak, Martin Perry and David Wetherill [successfully defended their title](#).

For Wetherill, it was a particularly spectacular achievement as his medal came only [weeks after undergoing heart surgery](#).

Will Bayley returned from the Euros and went [straight into action on Strictly Come Dancing](#), with quickstep, foxtrot, salsa and paso doble in the early weeks of the series into October. But it was his [contemporary dance with partner Janette Manrara](#) which really won hearts.





Will Bayley's contemporary dance on Strictly Come Dancing (Photo by: BBCPhotographer: Guy Levy)

However, the Paralympic champion went out of the series in the cruellest fashion as injury struck during rehearsal for the jive, with Will [vowing to be fit again](#) in plenty of time for the Tokyo Paralympics in 2020.

Elsewhere in October, there was more success on the international stage for some of our young players, led by Charlotte Bardsley [winning the Junior Girls' Singles](#) at the Slovakian Junior & Cadet Open.

Naphong Boonyaprapa & Georgios Gerakios [won Cadet Boys' Doubles silver](#) at the Egypt Junior & Cadet Open, while Jakub Piwowar was [selected to join the Eurotalents Under-13 group](#).

At the 'top of the tree', Gavin [Evans took on the role of GB men's captain and coach](#) for the Olympic qualifying campaign and possibly beyond.

November was another busy month headlined by England's elite man and particularly Liam Pitchford. England's No 1 was in top form at the Team World Cup in Tokyo as he spearheaded a [superb victory over hosts and second seeds Japan](#). England reached the quarter-finals but could not emulate their bronze medal from 2018 as they were [beaten by Chinese Taipei](#).

Liam went on to cause quite a stir with a couple of [awesome behind-the-back shots](#) against Japan's Jun Mizutani at the Austrian Open – video of the shots was featured on Sky Sports News and BBC Breakfast, as well as causing a sensation on social media.

In the same month, Josh Reynolds became the [latest English umpire to get his Blue Badge status](#), putting him in the top bracket of world officials.

There were awards for Table Tennis England Chairman Sandra Deaton, who [won the Service to Sport Award](#) at the Nottingham Post Sports Awards, and England table tennis great Don Parker, who was recognised for his outstanding service to sport by being [awarded the Commonwealth Sport Order of Merit](#) 2019.

Internationally, England hosted a [highly successful ETTU coaching conference](#) and also signed a deal [licensing TT Kidz to Table Tennis Australia](#).

London 2012 Paralympics medallist Paul Davies [called time on his successful career](#), and there was a reminder about the huge impact the National Lottery has had on sports funding as it [celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary](#).

Brighton TTC broke new ground in December by [releasing a music single](#) celebrating its place in the community. The club then scooped a major accolade when it was [named the best sports club in Britain](#) in the Daily Mirror Pride of Sport Awards.

The year ended with a first for table tennis as the ['VAR-style' Table Tennis Review system](#) was in place at the ITTF World Tour Grand Finals – we could be seeing more of this in 2020!



Delegates from Brighton TTC on stage at the Daily Mirror Pride of Sport Awards

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