



Chairman's Message – December 2019

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2019 has again seen challenges and opportunities to develop our sport in England. It has also brought some remarkable individual performances and achievements.

As the National Governing Body for table tennis our aim and ambition is to provide the climate for table tennis to truly be a 'sport for all for life'.

We know that we cannot do that alone and we need to work with our clubs, leagues, volunteers, partners, players, sponsors and supporters in order to facilitate that. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our sport this year.

I'd like to take a few moments to review some of the landmarks of the past 12 months. This is by no means a comprehensive list, but just some of the events which are to the fore in my mind.

Relocation: This time last year, Table Tennis England was in the process of moving to new premises. We have now had 12 months to 'settle in' to our shared accommodation with Badminton England at the National Badminton Centre. As well as bringing economies of scale in our operations, this has brought opportunities to work more closely with other sports governing bodies.

TT Leagues: I am grateful to the support we received from our Leagues around the country and the hard work of our head office staff as we implemented new IT systems. As we are now half way through the league season, we are pleased to see so many leagues using the TT League system from Table Tennis England to organise their competitions.

Individual: Our senior men have had some remarkable team and individual performances – not least beating Japan at Tokyo at the recent Team World Cup. Paul Drinkhall won the Serbia Open, while Liam Pitchford reached a career high of No 12 in the world, the highest ranking we have had for many years. It is encouraging to see our junior players performing well at international events, including Charlotte Bardsley winning the Junior Girls' Singles gold medal at the Slovakia Junior & Cadet Open, with several players winning medals at other events in

Junior, Cadet and Mini-Cadet age groups.

We also applaud the commitment of Nico Caltabiano, Lyndon Griffiths and Josh Reynolds who have reached the elite level of world umpiring after achieving their 'Blue Badge status'.

And congratulations to our Para Champion, Will Bayley, who brought recognition for Para athletes and the sport of table tennis when he won the hearts of the nation with his enthusiasm and drive as a contestant in Strictly Come Dancing.

TTKidz: TTKidz has brought table tennis fun and games to youngsters who are experiencing table tennis for the first time. Many clubs and volunteers are helping with the programme, and it has been so successful that we have seen other countries looking to roll out similar programmes.

Junior Leagues: While TTKidz is about fun and games, it is also expected that such a positive introduction to our sport will bring more youngsters into the competitive side of our sport. However, we need to face facts that our traditional league structure isn't always conducive to attracting young players with its late finishes and sometimes significant distances to travel to away games. We are so pleased to see more leagues tackling this issue by introducing Junior Leagues to cater specifically for the needs of our young players.

Volunteers: We know that we couldn't deliver table tennis without the support of our volunteers and we are delighted to be able to recognise the commitment of some of those people through our Pride of Table Tennis Awards. We have also run several regional Club and League Conferences, as well as a National Conference where volunteers can share their experiences and learn from each other.

Ping Pong Parlours: Many of you may have seen empty shops in shopping malls being transformed into Ping Pong Parlours. We are working to roll out this programme to bring table tennis to a wider audience and, in many cases, working with the local Leagues to form a pathway from Ping Pong Parlour to competitive table tennis.

Governance: On a personal note, I was delighted to be appointed to continue as Chairman of Table Tennis England. I would also like to pay tribute and thanks to several members of our Board who stood down this year, namely Mike Smith, Andrew Nixon, Keith Thomas and Kelly Skeggs. They have given of their time and expertise to help table tennis grow and develop over the past few years and I am grateful for their support.

We also welcome four new Board members, Tony Catt and Charlie Childs who joined Susie Hughes, as our new 'Elected Directors' and Steve Kemish and Priya Samuel, who bring a range of new skills and experiences as appointed, independent Directors.

We have also seen the appointment of members and first meetings of MAG – the Members' Advisory Group – who are working on projects close to the heart of our players and supporters.

And finally, I would like to thank our staff, volunteers, players, my Board colleagues and everyone who has played a part in our sport this year.

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