



Female ambassador journeys: Juliet Bertie

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Posted On: January 29, 2020

Our Female Ambassador scheme was launched last year as part of our Women and Girls Action Plan, which seeks to engage more women and girls in the sport.

A total of 17 ambassadors are helping to improve the visibility of women and girls in the sport.

In the first of a series celebrating the great work they are doing, **Juliet Bertie** from Continental Stars TTC in Birmingham tells us about her table tennis journey.

“As a young girl my older brother used to take me with him when we had free time and whatever sport he was doing I would tag along and join in. Table Tennis was one of the sports he used to do and, being a bit of a tomboy, I would always have a go.

“Fast forward 25 years later I was a member of my organisation’s Sports and Social Club and unexpectedly was asked to represent the West Midlands region to slot in for someone who was unable to attend the annual national table tennis competition. Never one to say no to any sports, not even expecting to win I attended the event.

“True to form, I didn’t win, but thoroughly enjoyed it and had fun – it took my back to my younger days. The reigning champion was my mixed doubles partner so I felt lucky and we became good friends. This later developed further and he is now my husband – I believe it was fate!

“Supporting watching him play around the country at a decent level, it exposed me to some real skilful table tennis. This inspired me and I then started to feel the urge to have a go and would have a knock before and after his games.

“Starting to feel more comfortable, I then decided I wanted to play in the league. For my first season it was difficult as the standard was so much higher than mine but, the determined person I am, this was not going to put me off. Being the only female in my division was not going to put me off either and I continued to persevere.

“Due to health issues I took some time out but then later decided to return. After a few years I feel I have made some progress, I am not a groundbreaker but enjoying playing and table tennis contributes to me getting exercise because people do not realise how fit you have to be to play properly.

“My aim is to gain my coaching qualification as I really want to inspire the next generation. I want to be able to show females out there, especially black females, that this is an arena we can be part of and be a success.

Women and Girls Action plan

The Women and Girls Action Plan was developed to increase the engagement Table Tennis England has with females, to seek to address a low percentage of females in our membership and as active coaches. In the 18/19 season, only 19% of coaches were female and that figure fell to 13% for player members.

The action plan has clear objectives which will help to engage more females in the sport and improve the experience of those already enjoying it.

These objectives include the Female Coaching Bursary, as well as the Female Ambassador programme, which was an open application process whereby anyone could nominate themselves or be nominated to be a Female Ambassador. This is to help improve the visibility of women and girls in the sport and celebrate the great work they are doing.

If you know of someone who would be a great ambassador or would like to be involved, please get in contact.

We have also published a good practice guide on increasing female participation. Research suggests that there are 13 million women across England who want to be more active. This document is for those wanting to engage more women in table tennis and helps to understand the barriers to participation and how to overcome them, how to market sessions to women and girls, plus case studies of successful projects.

[Click here to download the guide](#)

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