



## Volunteers take Pride of place at Nationals

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Volunteers shared centre stage with national champions as the Pride of Table Tennis Awards winners were presented on Finals Day at the Mark Bates Ltd National Championships.

The shortlisted nominees in both the Volunteer and Young Volunteer of the Year categories were given VIP treatment at the Nationals and the winners were announced in front of hundreds of spectators.

First up were the nominees for the Young Volunteer of the Year, which recognises a volunteer under the age of 25 who has made a significant impact within a club or league in the past 12 months.

The award went to Sophie Storey, who was nominated by Neil Hardisty for her commitment to table tennis in the Weymouth & District area, where she has made a significant contribution to encourage people to play table tennis, most notably being an important member of the 'This Girl Can' sessions and organising the inaugural youth presentations for Weymouth & District League.

The runners-up were Vishaal Sharda from Knighton Park TTC in Leicester and a trio of youngsters from Wensum TTC in Norwich – Ed Horton, Kelsey Fordham & Ella Barnard.

Sophie, Vishaal and Ed were also presented with their certificates for reaching 50 hours of volunteering under our Young Ambassador programme.

The second ceremony honoured the Volunteer of the Year nominees, awarded to someone over the age of 25 who has made a significant impact in a club or league.

This award went to Pat Johnson from Bishop Auckland TTC. Nominated by Matt Porter, Pat has given table tennis opportunities to a wide range of people including a flourishing women and girls' session and her warm and caring demeanour has made participants feel welcomed and included at all sessions.

Pat said: "It was an absolute honour. Table tennis has been my passion since I was a youngster and I just hope my enthusiasm and commitment can empower women, girls – and anyone else on the planet – to take a small

step through a club's door and find out what happens inside and how great it is to play this sport.

"I had such a wonderful time over the weekend and I was so well looked after. I was absolutely delighted to be able to watch those players on that table, it was fantastic. I've never been that close to them. Everywhere I went during the weekend everyone, even the professionals, all gave me a welcome."



Volunteer of the Year Pat Johnson with Liam Pitchford and Paul Drinkhall

The runners-up were Bob Edwards from Skelmersdale TTC and Colin Gower from Bromley TTC in Dudley.

Greg Yarnall, Table Tennis England's Head of Development and Volunteering, said: "It was great to honour our winners and runners-up at our flagship national event, where they had a wonderful reception from the spectators.

"We owe all our volunteers a debt of gratitude for the commitment and dedication they show to helping people to enjoy and achieve in table tennis – they are the lifeblood of the sport."

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