



Pandemic leads to new format for Schools Championships

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Posted On: September 10, 2020

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic has led to a number of changes to the Butterfly Schools Team Championships, including the removal of the regional stage.

In the light of ongoing restrictions surrounding indoor sport, Table Tennis England's Schools' Committee has reviewed and considered the format for this season's team competition.

Borough and County rounds for the Championships would ordinarily take place between October and December, progressing through Zone finals and then Regional Finals to the National Final in March.

With the challenges faced by schools in returning following lockdown in mind, and in line with Table Tennis England's competition review framework, the decision has been made to postpone the start of the Team Championships until January 2021.

This decision has not been taken lightly, and it is hoped that this relieves some pressure from schools, and the School County Secretaries who organise the competitions locally.

The Table Tennis England Schools' Committee continues to work on the details of an alternative format, and currently anticipate this to be as follows:

- Borough and County rounds to take place in January and February of 2021 and early enough that T3 forms from winners can be received by the National Organiser by February 20.
- Zone Finals to take place on March 13 and 14
- National Final to take place on April 25 at Aldersley, the scene of the National Schools' Individual Championships the previous day.

There will be **no Regional Finals** this season, with all winning Zone Finalists proceeding directly to the National

Finals.

David Maddison, Chair of the Table Tennis England Schools' Committee had this message for schools: "Firstly, may we all on the Table Tennis England Schools' Committee wish you the very best as you plot a positive and successful pathway through the exciting twists and turns of the new school year.

"Secondly, we'd like to reaffirm our commitment to help make table tennis a continuing part of your school and your ambition to provide the very best learning and growing opportunities for all the young people you serve.

"In this context, besides other work in areas such as our TT Kidz initiative, we have been working hard to come up with an alternative format, which we feel will still give us every opportunity to offer our exciting National Schools Team Championships at all its levels from County/Borough right through to the National finals.

"The Championships provide such a great framework within which children, young people and schools can challenge themselves and share in all the rewards our Table Tennis England community has to offer that we didn't want to risk it being lost this year amongst so many unexpected challenges and changing priorities."

The committee continues to work with relevant stakeholders to establish a format that puts the players and the volunteers who deliver the events at its heart and expect to issue further information by mid-October.

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