



Bardsley off to winning start in Germany

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Charlotte Bardsley has returned to competitive action and was pleased to make a winning debut in the Bundesliga second division for TTC Langweid.

The Senior England international moved to Germany a month ago for training ahead of the league resumption and her first match saw her contribute to a 6-2 victory over Fuchse Berlin.

Charlotte, going out at No 1, recovered from losing the opening match in three straight to defensive player Katalin Jedtke, winning her second 3-2 (13-11, 4-11, 11-9, 3-11, 11-5) against Czech player Karolina Mynarova (WR 320).

The victory helped Langweid to bounce back from 2-0 down to take a 6-2 win overall, though Charlotte admitted the new Covid-related protocols took a little getting used to.

She said: "I lost my first match but then I beat their No 1, so I was happy with that for my first match for the club and the first competitive match after the lockdown.

"There have been some adaptations for the league – we had to have a Covid test before the match, there's no doubles and you have to wear masks when you're on the bench and walking around, and the towel bins are on wheels so you can take them with you when you change ends.

"Every hour they open the doors to let air circulate, even in the middle of a match. It was 2-2 in my second match when they opened them and we just had to wait 10 minutes to start again. But we just have to get used to these rules."

When she was unable to practise during lockdown, Charlotte worked on her fitness and also took time to think about how to work towards the next steps in her career.

She said: "It gave me time to reflect on my game and how to improve when table tennis could start again. I came back to the table with a clear head."

Charlotte managed to get two weeks of training in Germany earlier in the summer after restrictions had eased there – and she later worked with Desmond Douglas at Woodfield TTC when UK restrictions allowed.

She travelled to stay in Germany permanently last month and is living and practising at the Topspin Sport Table Tennis Centre in Bad Aibling, near Munich.

The 18-year-old said: “I’m really happy to be training more hours and I think I’ve got my level back and am improving as well, which is perfect.

“I’m not dwelling on the fact I haven’t been training through the summer, I’m just trying to move forward now.

“In the short-term, it’s quite difficult in terms of planning and not knowing whether events are going to be cancelled or not, so I’m concentrating on the league and getting the team winning as many matches as possible.”

Beyond that, much of the next 18 months will be geared towards the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham – restrictions permitting.

Charlotte added: “This season, if the ITTF tournaments start again, I want to play some senior events and improve my ranking, and hopefully get selected and win matches for England in the big events, and then the main goal is Birmingham.

“I’m here to train and improve as much as I can. I do miss my family and coaches back home, but I’m really happy here, enjoying the training and I feel I’m getting better – and it’s easier being away from home if you enjoy what you’re doing.”

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