



Chairman's message – Christmas 2020

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I write these words to all Table Tennis England members at the end of what must be the most challenging year most of us have ever known.

Individuals and communities across the world have faced unprecedented restrictions because of the coronavirus pandemic, and our sport and the people who play and volunteer or work in it are no exception.

My thoughts are first and foremost with those who have lost loved ones during this time. I also extend my gratitude to keyworkers – Paralympic athlete and hospital doctor Kim Daybell is one of many from the table tennis family who have been on the frontline of the fight against the disease and all deserve our thanks.

This period reminds us that, of course, sport is not a matter of life and death. And yet not being able to play our sport for large parts of the year also reminds us just how important it is to us all and how we value the positive physical and mental impacts of table tennis and the friendships we make in the sport.

Recent news of vaccines gives us all hope that the end – and a return to normality – is in sight, but until then we must continue to abide by the restrictions set by the Government in the various tiers of the country.

We placed a small number of staff on furlough and have taken all reasonable steps to minimise the financial impact of coronavirus, but our work as a National Governing Body has not stopped. We have continued to work hard on behalf of clubs, leagues, coaches, officials, schools and all other stakeholders in the sport.

This has included, among many other things, providing a series of webinars to pass on information and knowledge to clubs and coaches, creating the Return to Play protocols which have enabled play at some points of the year, making funding available to help clubs and leagues through the pandemic, supporting our elite players to train, seeking nominations for the Pride of Table Tennis Awards, and keeping our members updated through regular communications.

I would like to thank the Board and staff of Table Tennis England for their hard work and for showing great resilience and flexibility during these difficult times.

I would like to thank all of you, too, for your support of Table Tennis England. The lack of playing opportunities meant all our members had to make a decision whether or not to renew their membership for the 2020/21 season. To those who chose not to, we understand and respect that decision and hope to welcome you back soon. To those who did renew, we offer our sincere thanks for your ongoing support.

Our members are the lifeblood of the sport and our membership fees help to safeguard its future. Rest assured, Table Tennis England will continue to work hard for each and every one of our members to ensure that our sport is in the best possible shape to bounce back as life returns towards normality.

We will also continue to support all those volunteers who work in the sport, and I would like to say a huge thank you to all of those who have worked tirelessly in their local areas, keeping people connected during periods of lockdown and ensuring a safe return to play when the restrictions have allowed.

I have been impressed and heartened by the inventive ways in which members of the table tennis community have continued to engage with each other this year and to make the most of the opportunities to play while keeping to the restrictions. That offers great encouragement that our sport will indeed bounce back in 2021.

Let us not forget that 2021 will see the delayed Tokyo Olympics, as well as the full launch of World Table Tennis (WTT) – and I know many of you watched Liam Pitchford playing in the inaugural WTT event in Macao, and before that in the Men's World Cup and ITTF Finals.

The International Table Tennis Federation is to be congratulated for holding these events under the #RESTART banner, getting international table tennis going again in competition 'bubbles' and ensuring no positive covid tests at all during any of the events.

Table Tennis England will continue to play a full part in the international landscape through our collaboration with the ITTF and also the European Table Tennis Union – and I was honoured in September to be elected to the position of Vice-President of Finance on the ETTU Board.

I am fully confident that our sport will go from strength to strength at home and across the world as we return towards normal life in 2021. I look forward to all of us being able to return to the table and once again enjoying all the benefits that our sport brings us.

Have a Happy Christmas, stay safe, and I hope to see many of you next year.

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