



Olympic reflections: Gavin Evans

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Posted On: July 30, 2021

Coach Gavin Evans is upbeat despite results and feels the squad are technically in a good place but need more matches under their belts to really show what they can do.

He said: “We had an incredibly tough year in terms of preparation. We weren’t able to get out of the country to train with world-class players or play in international competitions.

“We can’t wait to get the preparation right for Paris in 2024 and to qualify for those Games.

“We’ve got to get more matches and play at the highest level regularly, so it’s about getting them playing as many competitions as possible and getting them into league matches, and training abroad as well. The guys have the skill level – no doubt – but it’s about belief that comes from matches.

“We never want to make excuses and we were trying to see things as a positive beforehand and get into as good shape and belief as possible.

“Pitch hadn’t played a competitive match since March and missed the Euros. He wasn’t able to play in the Japanese league matches, which he signed for as a big part of his preparation.

“All in all, playing the world No 25, he still created chances. In the rally, I thought he was the better player, but got found out a bit on the serve and receive – but that’s match-play and I was trying to get him to trust himself more.

“He missed about 20 direct receives, which is unlike him – he’s usually very good and it’s one of his strengths. I think he lost a bit of confidence, but you can’t build that back without having had matches to base it on.

“I’m quite positive about the whole thing when we get some good preparations and matches under his belt. I’m positive he will make some good things happen and there will be some good moments for him as long as he can get those matches.

"Paul played his best level. He'd never beaten Gardos before and he beat Nima, who he lost to before and he played a good match against a world-class player in Jang Woojin and pushed him all the way.

"I'm very pleased with them and I know what they need and it's more matches. But that's exactly what we're going to get in the next few months, with the Euros and the Worlds, plus the WTT events. The future looks better and I'm really positive for the Commonwealth Games."

On his own personal first experience of being part of Team GB, Evans said: "It's quite amazing how big the Team GB thing is. When you get out there, you realise what you are a part of and it's a massive privilege to be part of a great team with all the support behind it.

"That, for me, was quite a moving experience. I hadn't realised the magnitude of Team GB and what they do for you as officials and athletes.

"It was a shame because of the whole covid scenario but we tried to enjoy it as best we could."

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