

British TT Confirmed for 2012 Olympics

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The British Olympic Association (BOA) today confirmed that Team GB will utilise three male and three female Host Nation Qualification Places in order to compete in the London 2012 Olympic Games table tennis competition. The decision was made following detailed consultation with the British Table Tennis Federation (BTTF).

BOA Chief Executive and Team GB Chef de Mission Andy Hunt said:

"We are very pleased to confirm that Team GB will be represented in both the singles and team table tennis events at the London 2012 Olympic Games. The British Table Tennis Federation has demonstrated to us that they have laid solid foundations to maximise the opportunity of competing at a Home Games and developed programmes to ensure a strong long term legacy for the sport.

"British Table Tennis has proven to us that the young squad of players are capable of delivering a credible performance on the field of play in 2012. In winning the silver medal at the 2010 Commonwealth Games, England's men finished above three nations who competed in the last Olympic Games in Beijing. Real progress is being made in elite performance; there are now four British players – two male, two female – ranked in the top 200 in the world compared with none prior to the Beijing 2008 Olympics.

"Table tennis is a very accessible and affordable sport for people of all ages from all backgrounds. This combined with the 'London 2012 factor' and the successful programme of innovative initiatives developed by the British Table Tennis Federation to get people involved with table tennis at grass roots level promises to have a big impact on participation and leave a tangible legacy for the sport.

"I'm delighted that the British players competing at this weekend's National Championships in Sheffield will now have the firm goal of competing on home soil in London 2012 to aim towards."

BOA Director of Sport and Deputy Team GB Chef de Mission Sir Clive Woodward said:

"We believe that participating in London 2012 will boost the opportunity for Team GB medal success in future Olympic Games. A depth of young, highly talented table tennis players has been nurtured by the British Table Tennis Federation during this Olympiad, led by 21 year old Paul Drinkhall and 22 year old Kelly Sibley – the British number one male and female players.

"The London 2012 Olympics will provide the British table tennis players with a great opportunity to learn and develop from the experience of playing against the very best in the world in the greatest competition. With the passionate support of the home fans behind them, I am sure our young players will rise to the occasion and do Team GB proud in 2012.

"I am delighted that the players can now fully concentrate on preparing themselves for becoming Team GB Olympians."

Alex Murdoch, British Table Tennis Federation Chairman said:

"On behalf of the British Table Tennis Federation I am delighted that our players will be represented at the London 2012 Olympic Games. This endorses the significant progress made across the UK by our sport from schools to grass roots to the elite level. This will be a great opportunity to showcase our home grown talent on a truly international stage and further influence the table tennis legacy.

"Hosting the Olympics will be a great British achievement, it is a chance for Britain and London to present itself to

the world and I am delighted that our table tennis players will get to do the same.”

Paul Drinkhall (Sheffield), GB men’s table tennis number one said:

“My ultimate dream has always been to be an Olympic medallist and to have the chance to compete in my home country is better than any dream. As a team we have made good progress in recent years and we will aim to produce our best performances to excite the home fans at London 2012.”

Na Liu (Northern Ireland), Team GB women’s table tennis hopeful said:

“It has always been my dream to play in the Olympic Games and this has given me the drive and ambition to put 110% into achieving this goal. Competing at the Olympics will be the pinnacle of my career.”

Darius Knight (London), Team GB men’s table tennis hopeful said:

“Playing in the Olympics means everything to me. Competing in front of the home crowd is an opportunity that will never come again. It’s a chance to put table tennis on the map in this country. Everyone at one stage has played table tennis or knows of it. It’s a great sport because it can be played anywhere, you don’t need lots of money, and your size, age, race, religion or ability doesn’t matter. It’s a sport made for everyone to enjoy.”

As the National Olympic Committee for Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the BOA, among its many duties, is responsible for approving the eligibility and entry of all British athletes who compete as members of Team GB at the Olympic Games.

For the London 2012 Olympic Games, the BOA has stipulated that any sport seeking to utilise a Host Nation Qualification Place must first demonstrate the following:

1. The ability to deliver a credible performance during the London 2012 Games.
2. A long-term strategy to deliver a meaningful legacy as a result of the profile and visibility associated with competing in the Games, with a particular emphasis on increasing opportunities for participation by athletes, coaches, officials and volunteers at the grassroots level. The decision to permit the BTTF, which is the National Governing Body for table tennis in Great Britain, to utilise the Host Nation Qualification Places was made by the Olympic Qualifying Standards Panel, which among others includes Team GB Chef de Mission Andy Hunt; the Chair of the BOA Athletes Commission Sarah Winckless; and the BOA’s Director of Sport Sir Clive Woodward.

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