



Tokyo success and centenary celebrations

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Posted On: December 31, 2021

Paralympic medals, historic international performances, the return of domestic competition, a landmark diversity strategy, the launch of our centenary season and the discovery of an amazing 1920s film about table tennis – the second half of 2021 was certainly busy!

It began in **July** with the [crowning of the first national champions](#) for 16 months at the Mark Bates Ltd U10–U13 Nationals – and there was double delight for Sienna Jetha, Alyssa Nguyen and Kacper Piwowar, who [won two titles each](#).

The following week saw the [Cadet champions crowned](#), alongside the [Junior winners](#) at the Mark Bates Ltd Cadet & Junior Nationals.

Paul Drinkhall got the news he had been hoping for as he was [added to the Team GB squad for the Tokyo Olympics](#) as the legendary Vladimir Samsonov had to withdraw. And Paul certainly grabbed his chance as he [powered into the last 32](#) with some eye-catching performances. Unfortunately, his run ended there, while Liam Pitchford and Tin-Tin Ho lost in their respective opening matches.

Meanwhile, Table Tennis England Director Priya Samuel helped the UK to [succeed in its bid](#) to host the International Working Group (IWG) on Women and Sport, and [Matt Stanforth stepped up](#) to be Head of England Performance.

And, as clubs and leagues around the country prepared to get local competition back under way, we launched our [Return to the Table campaign](#).

August saw us cheering on our Paralympics stars, and they did not disappoint, bringing home seven medals from Tokyo, including [Sue Bailey's first medal](#) in six Games appearances, alongside Megan Shackleton in the Class 4–5 women's team.



The moment Sue Bailey and Megan Shackleton knew they had won a Paralympic medal (ITTF photo)

Also on the team podiums were Will Bayley and Paul Karabardak in [men's class 6-7](#) and Aaron McKibbin, Ross Wilson and Billy Shilton in [men's class 8](#), while there were [four medals in the singles](#).

But the month was not all about the Paralympics, as Sam Walker earned a [landmark doubles title](#) alongside Sweden's Truls Moregard at the ITTF Czech Open, while Kelly Sibley [came out of retirement](#) after three years to help England qualify for the European Team Championships.

The inaugural [Ping Pong Parkinson UK Championship](#) was held at St Neots TTC, our Ping Pong Parlours initiative was a [winner at the ukactive Awards](#), with TT Kidz highly commended, and we launched a new [coaching grant scheme](#) in memory of Keith 'Charlie' Childs.



Competitors at the championship at St Neots TTC (photo by Michael Loveder)

September saw Kacper Piowar become England's [first finalist at any level of WTT event](#) as he reached the under-11 boys' medal match at the WTT Youth Contender Varazdin.

He was quickly followed by Liam Pitchford & Paul Drinkhall, who [reached the men's doubles final](#) at the WTT Star Contender in Doha.

There was also success for England at the ITTF Parkinson's World Championships as Jan Fuller and George Chan [earned five medals](#) between them.

Table Tennis England launched its new five-year [Diversity & Inclusion strategy](#) – *Level the Table*.

Continuing the diversity and inclusion theme in **October**, we updated our [rules governing playing kit](#) to be more flexible, in response to feedback from female players. We also published a landmark series of [podcasts to mark Black History Month](#).

Our Ready to Return campaign was [shortlisted in the Best Covid 19 Response](#) category of the Sport Business Awards 2021.

Kacper Piowar was again in the news, [earning a place](#) in the elite European Table Tennis Union under-13 squad. Staying with the performance set-up, England coach Ryan Jenkins was chosen by the ITTF for an [important mentoring role](#).

England were knocked out of the European Championships by Denmark in the [deciding game of the deciding match](#) of their quarter-final.

As it was announced that Table Tennis England Chief Executive Sara Sutcliffe would be [leaving her role](#) after more than eight years.

November 7th saw us officially mark our 100th birthday as the sport's governing body by [launching a season of centenary celebrations](#) which will continue well into next year.

It was also the month of the World Championships, where Liam Pitchford reached the last 16 and was [beaten 4-3 in a thriller](#) by China's Liang Jingkun.



Liam Pitchford congratulates Liang Jingkun (photo courtesy of ITTF)

Pitchford & Paul Drinkhall got to the quarter-finals of the doubles, [raising hopes that a major medal](#) could be just around the corner for our leading duo.

In a month in which England and China went toe-to-toe in some momentous matches, Drinkhall [beat world No 7 Lin Gaoyuan](#) at the WTT Contender Lasko event.

Fliss Pickard [won international gold](#) at the French Para Open, adding to the title she won at the Spanish Open the previous month.

We launched our [Level the Table Grant Scheme](#) to support organisations creating opportunities for people to play table tennis, while funding awarded to table tennis clubs under the Sport England Return to Play Small Grants fund [passed the £500,000 mark](#).

Two quick-thinking teenagers were praised for [rushing to the aid of an opponent who collapsed](#) during a local league match.



A still from Table Tennis Today

December saw a fascinating insight into the early days of our sport as we were able to [broadcast the film Table Tennis Today](#), made by Ivor Monatgu, one of the sport's founding fathers. The film was tracked down by John Ruderham of the Bristol & District League and we purchased the rights to broadcast it as part of the centenary celebrations.

Liam Pitchford qualified for the season-ending WTT Cup Finals in Singapore, reaching the quarter-finals for the first time and speaking of his aim to [build on his impressive form](#) next year.

There was a first [international gold medal for Dan Bullen](#) at the Para Copa Costa Rica, while Sam Walker & Tom Jarvis [reached the doubles final](#) at the WTT Feeder in Dusseldorf.

Table Tennis England [appointed Adrian Christy](#) as interim Chief Executive and there was a great example from the Coventry League of ours truly being a sport for all, for life as 14-year-old Alex Richards [made his competitive debut](#) against 91-year-old opponent Frank Gassor – and went on to win all three of his matches.

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