

TT At World Summer Games

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The largest multi-sports event in the world in 2011:

185 Nations, 7500 athletes

Ian Bradford, 50, Table Tennis, Montrose, Angus

Gail Bromley, 53, Table Tennis, Wolverhampton (Coach)

Patrick Cox, 16, Table Tennis, Blaby, Leicester

Gwilliam Jones, 26, Table Tennis, Oswestry, Shropshire

Jane McCrudden, 41, Table Tennis, Nantwich, Cheshire

Jennifer Turner, 34, Table Tennis, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

Kevin Watt, 45, Table Tennis, Wolverhampton (Head Coach)

22 February 2011 – London – After 4 years of dedicated training and competing, 157 learning disabled athletes from England, Scotland and Wales have qualified to represent Great Britain at the world's largest multi-sports event in 2011: Special Olympics World Summer Games, Athens, 25 June – 4 July 2011. The British squad will compete in 17 out of the 22 sports disciplines offered including: Aquatics, Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Bocce, Cycling, Equestrian, Football, Golf, Gymnastics, Judo, Kayaking, Powerlifting, Sailing, Table Tennis, Tennis and Ten Pin Bowling. The team will be accompanied by 57 volunteer coaches.

The 2011 Special Olympics World Summer Games is the Olympics before the Olympics and celebrates the abilities and accomplishments of people with learning disabilities. The Special Olympics story is not just about sport: it's about families, it's about triumphing over personal challenges, and it's about the pride you feel representing your country: it's about Great Britain.

The Games will feature over 7,500 Special Olympics athletes from 185 countries, 2500 coaches, 25,000 volunteers, 40,000 families, 3,000 event officials and over 3000 members of the media. The XIII Special Olympics World Summer Games follows the enormously successful World Summer Games in Shanghai in 2007 and Dublin in 2003.

Special Olympics is recognized as the third member of the Olympic family along with the Olympics and Paralympics but it is not just a global event every four years. The Special Olympics programme is a year-round sports and competition programme for children and adults with learning disabilities. Day in and day out across the country, 8000 British learning disabled athletes' lives are being transformed through sport. They become more self-confident, improve their fitness, health and wellbeing, and for many, they have for the first time, not only teammates, but mates.

Special Olympics GB Team 2011 athletes were selected from 2,500 competitors who competed at the Special Olympics GB National Summer Games in Leicester in July 2009 and represent each of the organisation's 19 local regions across the country (see regional athlete list below).

This will be the first World Summer Games missing the dynamic charm of Special Olympics founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver who passed away in 2009 at the age of 88 and Sargent Shriver, the co-founder of the movement who died on 18 January this year aged 95 years old. Their vision of empowerment through sport for the learning disabled is now embraced in nearly 200 countries, and embodied in the 3.5 million athletes worldwide that are proud to be Special Olympics athletes.

Special Olympics GB President, Lawrie McMenemy MBE, said: "The Special Olympics World Games are often overlooked. We are the third member of the Olympics – the year before the Olympics. The pride of representing your country and making your family proud are a huge part of our Games. Our athletes will be standing on the podium to accept medals for Great Britain. Each and every one of them had to raise £2000 on their own to attend. Don't wait till 2012! It's time to support British athletes of all abilities now!"

http://www.specialolympicsgbteam.org.uk/support-the-gb-team_support-your-region-online

Timeline:

17 March:

100-day Countdown event London

13-15 May 2011

Special Olympics GB Team 2011 Training Weekend, Runcorn:

The full squad will be meeting at sports venues throughout Runcorn and come together with other teammates, sports stars and celebrities from around the country to prepare for the competition of a lifetime.

20 – 24 June Skiathos Host Town Programme

for athletes and coaches to acclimate to the heat, train and embrace the Greek culture.

25 June Athens: Opening Ceremonies

featuring the traditional parade of athletes by country, international celebrities and recording artists

26 June – 4 July: Competitions

27 June Athens Welcome Reception

at the British Ambassador's Residence in Athens

4 July Athens: Closing Ceremonies

Sporting Thoughts:

Lisa Littlemore, 31, of Widnes, Artistic Gymnastics

"Special Olympics has given me more confidence in my own ability and helps me to understand that I AM GOOD AT SOMETHING!"

Laura Campbell of York, 19 Sport Tennis

According to Laura's parents, Andy and Liz, "Special Olympics has been a great opportunity for Laura to gain unique experiences that most of us will never have. We're so proud that she is representing her country!"

Adrian Hickman of Shrewsbury, 32 Sport Badminton.

According to his mother, Brenda, "We are so proud of him! Taking part is as important as achieving a medal. Special Olympics has given Adrian more confidence and friendship – and it's been fantastic for him to meet other athletes with learning disabilities just like him..."

Samantha McInnes of Leeds, 41, Sport Athletics

According to her father, Keith, "I am very happy and proud. Samantha's involvement with Special Olympics has made me much more aware of how sport can help people with special needs and improve their lives."

By Jane Silverman

Special Olympics Great Britain

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