

Nationals Q&A: Joanna Parker

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Joanna Parker is the current English number one woman having shot up to her highest world ranking earlier this year.

She has twice won the singles event and, alongside partner Paul Drinkhall, is looking for a record-equalling fifth consecutive mixed doubles title. She has also won three of the last four women's doubles competitions with Kelly Sibley.

Name: Joanna Parker

Age: 24

Home town/County: Chertsey, Surrey

What are you expecting from yourself for this year's championships?

I am hoping to put in a good performance and to come away with three gold medals.

Is success the only option?

It is certainly what I'm aiming for! In this year with the Olympics around the corner it is more important than ever.

How important are the next couple of months for you?

The next couple of months are very important for me with the World Team Championships at the end of March and then the Olympic Qualification Tournament in April. Everything I do from now until August is with London 2012 in mind.

Do you get nervous ahead of an event such as this?

Yes I get nervous before I compete in any event, but it is a good thing to feel nerves – it means you care and want to win. If I didn't get nervous I would be worried! If I control my nerves and turn them into positive energy and determination they can be a great weapon.

It's a great competition to play against your peers. Who are you most looking forward to facing and why?

There are two matches that usually turn into epics, they are Paul Drinkhall and myself against Darius Knight and Kelly Sibley in the mixed doubles, we have had some great matches in the past!

Also myself against Kelly Sibley in the women's singles. Mine and Kelly's matches are usually tough battles to the end with lots of long rallies, as we know each other so well!

What does it take to win a title at these championships?

It takes hard work and determination. Most of the work is done in the practice hall before you get to the tournament, but once you're there it's about forcing your game onto your opponent and using your strengths. The match play side of any sport is very psychological, you have to be mentally strong when the games get tough and not be afraid to take the game from your opponent.

Finally, with all the English players improving over the last year, does that create increased pressure on yourself or do they spur you on?

I think it is a great situation to be in, we all want to improve and when we can improve together as a team it creates a healthy environment where we all feed off of one another. It keeps everyone on their toes!

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