

Ping! London Launch 2012

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The launch of Ping! London on Friday marked the beginning of a third successive year for the successful Ping! initiative which is once again hitting the streets of cities all across the UK.

This year's Ping! has taken on a special mantle with the Olympic and Paralympic Games soon to grace the capital with the world's elite sportsmen and women arriving later on this summer.



It seemed for a while as though 'summer' was not on the cards as blustery winds and lashing rain pelted the Finsbury Avenue Square where Ping! London was beginning its month-long festival of table tennis.

However, the plucky ping pong players battled through and were eventually rewarded with scorching sunshine, sumptuous drinks and a hat-full of ping pong entertainment.



Phil Smith, Director of Sport at Sport England said: "In 2005 when Sebastien Coe went to Singapore with the team to present the London 2012 Olympic bid we promised to do one thing in particular, which was to increase the number of people playing sport in this country. At the moment that's going quite well and in table tennis that's going very well indeed.

In the last four years the number of people playing table tennis regularly in this country has almost doubled and in the large part it's due to this project.

We're hoping that it will be the direct contribution to the London 2012 Olympic legacy. So anybody who is playing today, for the rest of this week, anybody who picks up a bat for the rest of this year, don't let anybody tell you that you have not seen the legacy of the London Games because you are in it and this is it."



Fifty-one Ping! tables will be springing up across the capital in locations from Victoria Park to Soho Square with events, master classes and skill sessions taking place throughout July.

Richard Yule, Chief Executive of the English Table Tennis Association, was appreciative of all the hard work that had gone on behind-the-scenes to get the project underway.

He said: "Thanks go to Colette and her team at Sing London for bringing their unique creative energy to this project. This is something that's completely different in terms of normal sports development projects but we're delighted to be a part of it.

This would not have been possible without the financial support from Sport England to enable us to actually scale up the project to reach thousands and thousands of people. Phil [Smith], congratulations on having the foresight and the courage to support this project with the level of funding that you have done. It wouldn't have happened without your support."



Ping! is truly an event for everyone with 700 tables being rolled out in Bristol, Liverpool, Brighton, Sheffield, Leicester, the New Forest and the capital itself. Its broad spectrum of patrons covers young, old, abled, disabled, rich and poor alike.

Leon Thomson, a magician and table tennis player summed up what Ping! means to people all over the country: "This is an unbelievable way to promote table tennis; loads of tables in loads of streets in the whole of the UK and especially in London. It's bringing it to the top of the tree in sport.

There is a dramatic difference between professional table tennis and social and the social is just as fun – we all love to play,"

To view pictures from the Ping! London 2012 Launch at Finsbury Square Avenue [click here](#)



By Russell Moore

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