

Gateshead to get 'full experience'

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Team GB members Joanna Parker and Kelly Sibley lead an English table tennis invasion of Gateshead ahead of their crucial European Qualification match against Spain.

The pair, who were both on duty at London 2012 this summer, will visit three local schools in Tyne and Wear to promote table tennis ahead of putting on their own exhibition of world class table tennis at the Gateshead Leisure Centre on Tuesday 29th January.

Joined by fellow English international Hannah Hicks, they will visit Cardinal Hume Catholic School, The Shipcote Centre and Joseph Swan Academy on the Monday before their penultimate Joola European Qualification fixture.

The importance of spreading table tennis to the local community has not been lost on the pair.

English number 1 Parker explained: "It is greatly important to promote our sport in as many different regions as possible. The more people that get involved in table tennis, the greater our level as a nation can be.

Table tennis is a highly skilled sport that takes years to learn. The younger we can start, the more years we have to develop our skills. It is a great way to promote discipline and teamwork to children."

The current reigning National Champion, Sibley said: "Table tennis is really popular in schools and it's a great way to publicise the sport. The kids can see us in the flesh and say, 'she's done it, why can't I?'

With us not being from the area it's a great opportunity for them to see us and see how table tennis should be played so I hope it will inspire them."

The players' visit isn't the only table tennis activity taking place that day as current English National Head Coaches Nick Jarvis and Alan Cooke will lead a coaches' workshop at the Gateshead Leisure Centre. ([Register by 24th January to take part](#)).

Jarvis explains the benefits: "We're trying to reach out to all the coaches and help them understand what levels the players need to reach locally before they can embark on an international career."

He added: "We'll be talking about 'the winning way', which is the sort of regime we should be developing from a training point of view. It's about what attainment the players need and the level of commitment required to be an international."

There will also be a 'Come and Try it' session at the Leisure Centre from 9am to 6pm on the Saturday and

Sunday 26/27th for anyone who wants to try the game and 9 special 'mini-tables' placed around Gateshead for those who just fancy a 'little knock'.

You will find the mini table at the following venues:

1. Gateshead Leisure Centre
2. Gateshead International Stadium
3. Gateshead College
4. Dunston Activity Centre
5. Blaydon Leisure & Primary Care centre
6. Birtley Leisure Centre
7. The Sage Gateshead
8. Dunston Leisure Centre
9. Birtley Swim Centre

Please tweet pictures of your playing on twitter @ETTAtabletennis or using #GatesheadTT

Remember, tickets are still available for the England versus Spain match at the Gateshead Leisure Centre from just £3. [Click here for more information.](#)

The ETTA would like to thank Gateshead Council for their support.

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