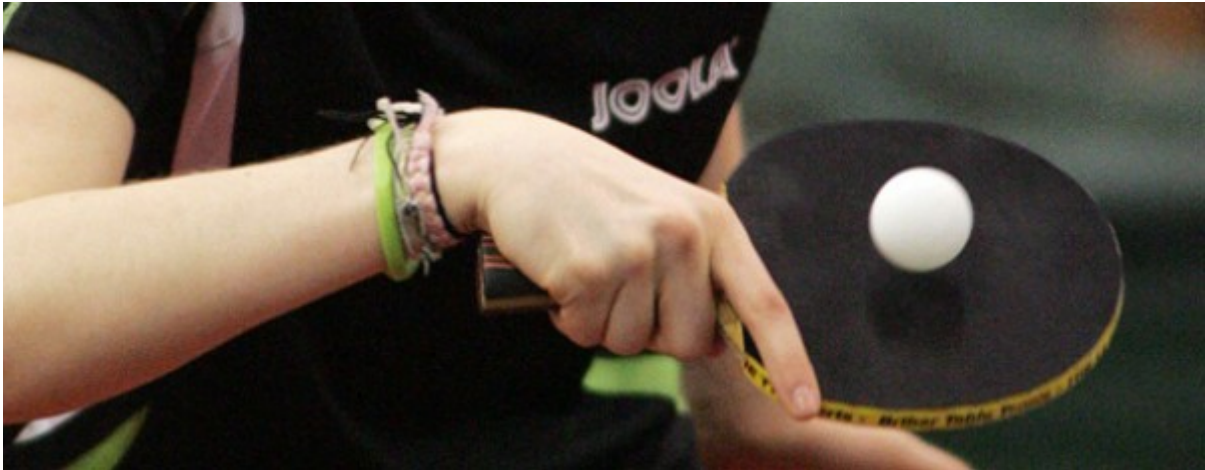


British Paralympic Association wishes Special Olympics good luck

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As the country prepares to celebrate the anniversary of the London 2012 Paralympic Games, the British Paralympic Association (BPA) sends words of support to the athletes competing in the upcoming Special Olympics National Games.

The event, which kicks off in Bath on August 28, is the UK's largest sports event for athletes with a learning disability. Across three days of competition, approximately 1,700 athletes from England, Scotland and Wales will compete in 12 sports.

Special Olympics Great Britain, who organise the National Summer Games, are a charity that provides year-round sports training and competition programmes for children and adults with learning disabilities. The programme is designed to allow athletes of all ages and abilities to learn, enjoy and reap the social and other benefits from participation in individual and team sports.

The sports on the programme for the Special Olympics, are: Aquatics, Athletics, Badminton, Boccia, Football 5-a-side, Golf, Gymnastics (Artistic), Gymnastics (Rhythmic), Table Tennis, Ten-Pin Bowling and Tennis.

Tim Hollingsworth, Chief Executive of the BPA, said: "At the British Paralympic Association, we applaud all disabled sportsmen and women who achieve in their chosen sport. As the Special Olympics get underway in Bath, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all of the athletes taking part the very best of luck, as we know that they will have been training hard to prepare for this event."

He added: "The Paralympic Games and the Special Olympics are two very distinct and separate events. Special Olympics is a grassroots programme and not all of the 12 sports on the programme for these Games are Paralympic sports. The National Summer Games are a great opportunity for children and adults with a learning disability to compete in structured sport to increase their competitive experience, in addition to highlighting the underlying physical and psychological benefits of sporting engagement."

Tracey McCillen, Chief Executive for UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability, welcomed Hollingsworth's words of support. She said: This is a great event for athletes to just enjoy their sport – my best wishes to all the competitors involved. Perhaps we might see some athletes from the event who could potentially consider a move to the performance pathway beyond Special Olympics programmes. Grass roots events like the National Games could be a starting point for those athletes of higher ability to pursue the rigours that elite sport has to offer through the Paralympic pathway or route to Global Games."

Athletes who progress to the performance pathway are from that point supported by the respective Sports Governing Body, the UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability (UKSA) and its members. This may in time lead to selection in some cases for the UKSA INAS Global Games Team or ultimately the ParalympicsGB team.

Currently three sports are open to athletes with learning disability at the Paralympic Games; Athletics, Swimming and Table Tennis. There is also an opportunity to compete at the INAS Global Games, an elite multi sport event for athletes with intellectual disability which is scheduled in the year before each Paralympic Games.

The Special Olympics will open on August 28 and close on September 1. For more information, please visit www.bath2013.org.uk.

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