

Quartet of English officials nominated

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Josh Reynolds in action, picture courtesy of John Upham

Four English table tennis officials have been nominated for awards at the upcoming Sports Officials UK (SOUK) National Officiating Awards 2013.

Tony Chatwin (Lifetime Achievement Award), Josh Reynolds (Young Official of the Year), Karen Tonge MBE (Commitment to Officiating Development) and Tom Purcell (Performance Official of the Year) have all been shortlisted for the event at Worcester Sixways on October 31st, 2013.

They will each be competing against two other successful nominees who have also been shortlisted from their respective sports. To have four candidates in the seven award categories for the event highlights the current strength of officiating in English table tennis.

Josh Reynolds, who is a regular player in Halifax and official on the British circuit, was keen to acknowledge the support of his fellow umpires for his nomination.

He said: "It would be a huge honour to be recognised as the top official across all sports, however, this has only been possible through the help and support from other senior umpires and the National Umpires and Referees Committee in my development.

"I became an official through chance. I was at a tournament and the referee asked me if I would umpire a few games as they were short. After one match Paul Birch from the English Schools Table Tennis Association came over and asked me whether or not I wanted to umpire at the Senior Schools Internationals.

"I am hoping to become an International Umpire Blue Badge and umpire at an Olympics as well as looking into the refereeing side of the game. I am also part of the ITTF Young Umpires Project, which will hopefully lead to opportunities to enhance my career."

It's a different end of the career spectrum for another of the nominees, Tony Chatwin, who will be 80 in December, as the experienced official has been recognised for a lifetime's work in the game.

He said: "At first I was surprised, then humbled followed by pleased. I was surprised because I had no knowledge of the awards, humbled because I am involved as a volunteer and do not seek reward and pleasure because I have been recognised by my peers."

It has been a long road for Chatwin from when he first played in the Derby League in 1952 to begin his affiliation with table tennis to today where he is still helping the ITTF to screen potential new Blue Badge Umpires.

His favourite memory in table tennis came back in 1966 as he explained: "My proudest moment as an umpire was my first final at the English Open in Brighton and also at the European Championships at Wembley in 1966.

"Also as a referee as Deputy to John Wright for five English Opens and at the 1977, World Championships in Birmingham; as the first non-American to referee the American Open 1992; to referee the first World School Championships 1993 in Birmingham; also the World Student Games 1981."

Instead of seeing himself as someone who gives a lot to the sport, Chatwin instead focuses on the great experiences that table tennis has given him in return.

He said: "The greatest pleasure has been the number of friends I have made in Britain and from around the World, the countries I have visited that without table tennis I may never have seen. I have a lot to be grateful for, all due to my involvement with table tennis."



Tom Purcell has been nominated for Performance Official of the Year

Josh and Tony will be joined by Karen Tonge MBE, from Runcorn, and Tom Purcell, from Liverpool, at the awards ceremony after successful nominations from English table tennis.

Tonge previously received an MBE from Queen Elizabeth II for voluntary services to table tennis in 2008, while Purcell was chosen to umpire the Men's Singles Final at the recent London 2012 Olympic Games.

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