

Teenage duo move into elite GB squad

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Megan Shackleton



Felicity Pickard

Teenage table tennis stars Felicity Pickard and Megan Shackleton have been selected for the GB Para Table Tennis Team's Podium Potential Programme.

They move from the Pathway Squad to the Performance Squad, bringing the number of athletes in the elite group to 14.

Nineteen-year-old Pickard, a class 6 player from Burnley, started playing table tennis in 2010 and made her international debut a year later. She represented GB in the European Championships last year and performed with great credit at her first major championships.

“Joining the Performance Squad means the world to me,” said Pickard. “It’s been one of my ambitions and it’s definitely a great boost to my confidence.

“I’ve had a lot of ups and downs and I’ve still got a long way to go but this is an important stepping stone to where I want to be – which is winning medals at the Paralympic Games. Although I’ve been training with the Performance Squad I now feel that I’m officially part of the team and it is going to motivate me to train even harder.”

Pickard also paid tribute to GB Pathway Squad coach Shaun Marples, saying: “I really want to thank Shaun because he has worked so hard with me and helped me so much.”

Fifteen-year-old Shackleton, a year 10 pupil at Todmorden High School in Yorkshire, has made rapid progress since making her international debut in October last year and was voted the junior player of the tournament at this year’s BTTAD National Championships having won the class 1-5 junior singles title. She admitted that her promotion to the Performance Squad came as “a massive surprise.”

“I couldn’t believe it,” said Shackleton, a class 4 player. “I’ve always wanted to be in the Performance Squad as it is as high as you can go. It is great to know that the coaches believe in me and I’m now even more motivated than I was before.

“I’ve been given the best opportunity I could have and to train and compete regularly with the top players will help me a lot.”

The additional Podium Potential places in the Performance Squad were made available as the result of the increase in funding to the GB Para Table Tennis Team from UK Sport announced earlier this year. This followed a successful 2013 for the team which included eight medals at the European Championships.

GB Performance Director Gorazd Vecko said: “Felicity and Megan have both worked very hard and have been chosen because of the progress they have made and because we believe they have the potential to be medal prospects in 2020. Their target is to try and qualify for Rio but if they continue to progress they will both have a big chance to take a medal in Tokyo.”

by Francesca Bullock, GB Para Table Tennis Team (April 15, 2014)

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