

English officials achieve international status

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Stephen Smith was one of the successful candidates
(courtesy of John Upham)

English officiating has gone from strength to strength with seven national umpires successfully completing their course to join the ranks of international umpires after the latest results published by the ITTF.

David Gough, Brian Jackson, Harmesh Jutle, Alexander Mercer, Joshua Reynolds, Stephen Smith and Alan Thomas all passed the test to secure their new status in the 2014 Umpires and Referees Committee (URC) list.

The successful group are all frequently in action across the English circuit – giving their spare time to help with the smooth running of tournaments. Jackson, who has also helped four junior players from the Blackpool League to become County Umpires, explained how visual the impact of English officials has been on the domestic scene.

He said: “The standard in this country is very, very high. When there’s been umpires at tournaments quite often it’s hard to say who is a county, national or international because everyone has been umpiring to a very high standard.”



Umpire and referee Brian Jackson
(courtesy of John Upham)

Jackson, who also refereed a number of Grand Prix this season, put his commitment down to the characters in the sport: “I enjoy being with the people involved with table tennis; the officials, the players, the staff – they’re the friendliest, most genuine people you are going to meet.

“I enjoy watching table tennis, coaching – it’s my passion, that is why I get so involved.”

Fellow experienced official Stephen Smith sees his qualification as a stepping stone to future developments as an international referee: “I’m looking forward to umpiring at the highest level but also to further my own progression as a referee with the invaluable experience that will come with that.

“I have no plans to further qualify as an umpire using the blue badge but only because my true passion is refereeing and I intend to progress further down that route if and when possible.”

For Joshua Reynolds, the youngest-ever Englishman to qualify as an international umpire at 20 years old, the achievement brings fresh opportunities to travel overseas having emerged through the tough qualification process.

He said: “The IU exam is always difficult as it is made to establish who is competent enough to umpire at foreign events so needs to be difficult as a result. For myself and Alex (Mercer) we undertook the test online in November – a new feature for the Young Umpires Project course – while the others took the exam by paper in May.



20-year-old Josh Reynolds becomes the youngest
English IU (courtesy of John Upham)

“I hope to be able to go abroad for events in the near future but I suspect my girlfriend, Alice, will have something to say about that!”

by Russell Moore (June 17, 2014)

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