

It's Official: Alex is the cream of the crop!

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Alex Mercer with Pat Smith MBE of SOUK and Karen Tonge MBE

Alex Mercer has won the Young Official of the Year Award in the Sports Officials UK annual awards.

The 23-year-old from Grantham, who qualified in 2010 as one of the youngest English National Umpires, has this year officiated at the Youth Olympics in China and the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, as well as the English National Championships.

Alex, who was nominated for the award by Table Tennis England, was presented with the honour at an SOUK ceremony last night. He said: "The past year has been great with the Youth Olympics and the Commonwealth Games and receiving this award has really capped it off.

"Table tennis has given me the opportunity to go to different parts of the world and meet people from all walks of life and I feel that I have learned a lot.

"It's great to receive this award and it makes me feel appreciated by Table Tennis England to be nominated. It's also good to see table tennis being recognised alongside all the other sports and their officials at this event."

It is the second year in succession that a table tennis official has won the award – Josh Reynolds was the winner in 2013.

Table Tennis England also nominated Colin Clemett for the Lifetime Achievement Award, and he attended the ceremony, alongside our Deputy Chair Susie Hughes and our SOUK Council representative Karen Tonge MBE.

He has given more than 50 years to our sport and this year received the Keith Ponting President's Memorial Award for his services to Table Tennis England (then ETTA).

Although he did not win the SOUK award, reaching the shortlist is still a great achievement.



The Table Tennis England contingent of Karen Tonge MBE, Colin Clemett, Alex Mercer and Susie Hughes

Susie Hughes said: "Alex was one of the youngest to achieve the International Umpires Qualification and is a good ambassador for his country, young people and table tennis at home and abroad.

"Colin has made an outstanding contribution to international and national table tennis and is a true gentleman who is respected all over the world.

"The fact they were both recognised on the same night shows again that table tennis is a sport for all, for life."

The SOUK Awards recognise 'the immense value of sports officials and the role they play in increasing and sustaining participation within all sports'.

Last night's event featured guest speakers Howard Webb, who refereed the 2010 football World Cup final, plus Wayne Barnes (rugby) and Richard Illingworth (cricket).

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