

Q&A with Greenhouse ace Mitchell Jones

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Mitchell Jones. Picture courtesy of Michael Loveder

A total of 10 Greenhouse players have qualified to compete in the Cadet & Junior National Championships at the Sir Tom Finney Sports Centre, Preston.

Here, the club catches up with Mitchell Jones, a student at [Harefield Academy](#), to find out how he feels about the upcoming competition.

You can read more about Mitchell's journey and find out more about the club by visiting its website – [click here](#)

Q. Tell us about your qualifying match. Was it closely fought?

I actually automatically qualified for the National Championships as I was a top ranking player (ranked 23 in England). It's been great to move up the ranks after working hard and not to have to worry about qualifying. I've only missed out on qualifying for Nationals once so I've been very lucky.

Q. What part of the National Championships are you most looking forward to?

I would love to say the singles but I do really enjoy the doubles and the different dynamic of those games. Doubles are rarely played in tournaments so the Nationals always create a unique experience where I can play with my partner Danny, who also goes to Harefield.

We both play completely different games; he has a very relaxed style while I'm an attacking player so we complement each other well. We're in the same classes and do the same subjects so we're a unit and we both improve together.

Q. In training, what aspects of your performance have you focused on, in preparation for the competition?

At the moment I'm focusing on being quicker and faster on my feet, allowing me to get to balls quicker which gives me more advantage in the game. Danny and I train a lot together in preparation for our double sessions and we do secret hand signals under the table to each other before a serve which indicates to your team-mate how you're going to play and what you would like them to do.

Q. How do you feel when you think about the competition?

I'm really nervous, to be honest, as I want to do really well this year, but of course I am really excited at the same time to be playing in the best and biggest tournament of the year.

The crowd and atmosphere is really good as you have your coaches around you and other games are playing at the same time so it's very hectic. The main thing for me at that time is to remain focused.

I support Danny and he supports me when we're playing in single matches, I can get frustrated sometimes and he is always there to calm me down.

Q. Has your Greenhouse Coach, Eli, given you any advice for the competition?

Eli does a lot for me. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him; he's taught me everything I know. Up to the tournament I'm sure we'll be doing some specialised foot training.

I would say he is like a parent in a way; he takes the team away on so many tournaments, spends the whole week with us in training and watches us all grow as players. We have a deep trust and connection with him.

Just before a match he will give me some key words of support so I can focus and reminds me to calm down

and enjoy it.

Q. What do your teachers, school and family think about your qualifying for the National Championships?

They are all really supportive. Attending a sports academy means the teachers all know about what you're up to and congratulate you on successes all the time.

My mum was the one who started me off initially playing table tennis, as she used to play the sport. She coached me before and she used to play for England.

Q. How will you help to support your team-mates who will be playing in the competition?

I just try and encourage them, even if they aren't having the best game, I'll tell them to keep going.

My mum will be supporting me in Preston and that's a really good thing, she can calm me down and give me good advice. I want to make her proud and that encourages me to be better. Mum and Coach Eli get on well, she thinks he is a nice guy and disciplined; teaching me life skills.

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