

Kelly, Liam and Paul part of historic Team GB

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Kelly Sibley

Liam Pitchford, Paul Drinkhall and Kelly Sibley will make history as part of Team GB for the first European Games.

The three players are today named in the squad to compete in Baku between June 13 and 28.

They are part of a 153-strong Team GB travelling to Azerbaijan for the Games, which are set to take place every four years and which feature 20 sports.

The table tennis takes place from June 13 to 19. As well as the medals up for grabs, the players have an added incentive – the singles winners will gain automatic qualification for next summer's Rio Olympics.

National champion Sibley is delighted to have been named in the squad and is a big fan of the new venture.

The Leamington player said: "Any multi-sport event is special. To have a European Olympics is bringing something more to European countries and that's really exciting.

"I've played in multi-sport events before, so I kind of know what to expect, but it's the first European Games, so I also don't know what to expect!

"I'm really proud to have been selected."

Fellow national champion Pitchford added: "I think it's a good idea. They've had it in other continents and it's nice to bring it to Europe. It's another major tournament.

"Everybody will be ready for it and it's nice a year before the Olympics to feel that atmosphere again.

"It's a great achievement, I'm just really happy that I've been selected – now it's about doing the best we can.

"There's an Olympic ticket on offer, which gives me extra motivation, but I'm trying not to think about that – if I just go there and play my game then you never know what might happen."

Drinkhall added: It's a great idea and a great opportunity for us to get some good results in a multi-sport event.

"There's no reason we can't go to these events and take medals if we hit peak form. It will be a great experience."

Paul Stimpson

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