



## Danny Reed aims for degree of success with England

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Double Commonwealth Games medallist Danny Reed is looking to get back on the glory trail with England as he returns to top-level table tennis after a year out.

The Hutton Rudby star put his sporting career on the back-burner after Glasgow to concentrate on finishing his studies at Sheffield Hallam University.

One first-class degree in psychology later, the 26-year-old is now back on the table full time – and back in the England squad for the European Championships.

He will play alongside Paul Drinkhall, Liam Pitchford, Andrew Baggaley and Sam Walker as the Commonwealth team reunites for a crack at the Euros, which begin in Ekaterinburg, Russia, on Friday.

It starts with the team competition and England, who won team silver in Glasgow, are targeting promotion from the second-tier Challenge Division back to the top of the European game, the Championship Division. They begin with group matches against Italy, Bulgaria and Estonia.

“We look pretty good. I think we’re in a strong position and although there’s a lot of teams at a similar level, there’s nobody we need to be afraid of – it’s more about us performing and playing to our best level,” said the 26-year-old. “We will hopefully win our group and we can go on confidently.

“Since the Commonwealth Games everybody seems to have gone to another level. I think we deserve to be in the top category but we’ve got to do it when it matters.”

Reed, who was part of the squad which won promotion at the World Team Championships in 2014 and also won mixed doubles bronze alongside Kelly Sibley in Glasgow, will feature in the singles and in the men's doubles, partnering Walker.

He has already had some good performances at the Austrian Open, where he and Walker reached the quarter-finals, and where Reed beat world No 135 Marko Jevtovic of Serbia in the singles. He feels that has given him some confidence ahead of the Euros.

"It's obviously a big one because last year I didn't play internationally," said Reed, who is expected to re-enter the world rankings at around the No 200 mark next month.



Happy memory – Danny Reed and the rest of the England squad which won promotion at the World Team Championships in 2014

"It was good to go to the Austrian Open and do well. It was a confidence boost how we did in the doubles and I had one good singles win. I think that's what I needed coming back after a year.

"With those results, it's nice to feel I deserve to be in the team though I definitely see myself as the No 5. But it's really hard playing at international level and I just hope I take my chances if I get them."

Having taken a year off to finish his degree, Reed now plans to spend the next year seeing how far he can go up the world rankings.

He said: "I put a lot of work into my degree and it justified my decision to take the year off. I decided I would focus on table tennis this year, to give myself the chance to practise and put in the hours and see what happens.

"My mind is a lot clearer. Finishing my degree, I feel a lot more relaxed about my future and can go out and play freely.

"Whether I further my studies or go into a job depends on my performances and where I can get to. If you can get into the top 100 you can support yourself. It's worth a year to go for it. It would take a special season but I've got nothing to lose."

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