



## Young England stars ready to dazzle in India

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To say the England squad heading to India for the Commonwealth Championships next week is youthful is something of an understatement.

No fewer than six of the eight players on duty are teenagers, with David McBeath the oldest in the team at the still tender age of 23.

He will feature alongside Helshan Weerasinghe, 18, Tom Jarvis, 16, and 15-year-old Alex Ramsden in the men's event. Karina Le Fevre is the oldest of the women's team, at 22, and is joined in the line-up by 18-year-old Maria Tsaptsinos and Tin-Tin Ho, who is 17. Lois Peake, 18, has pulled out injured, meaning the women's team now has three members.

For the youngest team member, Ramsden, it is another step up after making his senior debut at the Six Nations, where he and Helshan Weerasinghe finished third in the team event and both reached the singles semi-finals.

And Ramsden is delighted to be heading to India. He said: "I'm really pleased to be picked for the Commonwealths – it's probably the biggest tournament of my career so far.

"When I was selected for the Six Nations, I was pleased to be playing with Helshan because we're good friends and I was really excited that I would get to represent England as a senior.

"It was a good experience for me. I was quite nervous because I hadn't played a lot of those people before and I was nervous about how I was going to do, but I settled down after a couple of matches."

The Northampton player is expecting a bigger test in India, where the likes of Singapore and Nigeria, as well as the hosts, will be competing.

"The Six Nations was obviously only between six nations and this is much bigger and will give me a big perspective about how much better the players are and how I need to improve," he said.

"I know there's going to be a lot of good people there who are possibly better than me, but I'm going to try to get as much out of it as possible.

"I'm going to be the No 4 in the team so I'm going to try to support the team when I'm not playing and help them to win.

"I don't really know what to expect, so I don't have one big target except to play well. I'm sure we have a chance

of medals but we've got to work together as a team."

Ramsden's ultimate ambition is to get the chance to perform at the pinnacle of the world game and he added: "It's been my ambition ever since I started to get to the Olympics and to do that I need to push to get better and better. I think this is a really good stepping stone."

Weerasinghe, who also made his senior debut at the Six Nations, added: "It's difficult to tell how we will do and I'm not really sure what standard we will measure up against. We're all looking to fight as hard as we can and to do the best we can."

"It's going to be a good experience for all of us. If we prepare well we should be able to get some good results."



Karina Le Fevre (picture by Steve Parkin)

Meanwhile, Le Fevre has no fears about the ability of the youthful team to challenge for medals, having seen Tsaptsinos and Peake perform well at the European Championships in September, while Ho, who missed the Europeans through injury, already has a lot of senior appearances under her belt.

"I'm not really sure how I got to be this senior," joked Le Fevre, "but I don't think I'll have to look after the others."

"Tin-Tin is experienced as well, and Maria and Lois did really well at the Europeans. Lois actually surprised me a bit because she was called into it only a few days before and I thought she might be nervous, but she took it all in her stride."

Le Fevre has been in good form in recent weeks, including winning both team and singles gold at the recent Six Nations, where Peake was her team-mate.

"I'm really looking forward to it," she added. "I've been to India a couple of times before, so I know what to expect. I've been preparing well and I just hope to get there and play well."

"I'm pretty experienced and I've been away a lot, so I know how to prepare."

"I don't really know how we're going to do as it depends on the strength of the other teams and the draw, but I think we're always fighting for medals at this event – that's the hope."

Ho is the only survivor of the last Commonwealth Championships in New Delhi, where England won three silvers

– including in the women’s team – and two bronzes.

She said: “I think as a team we can do well. We came second last time so hopefully we can do the same or better, and I’m hoping to do well in the singles as well. I’m excited to be going back to India again.”

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