



## A year of achievement – review of 2015

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It's been another busy year for our leading players and officials, and although perhaps not hitting such memorable heights as last year's iconic Commonwealth Games medal victories, there has been plenty to celebrate at home and abroad.

Here, we take a look at some of the highlights of 2015, with links to our website coverage at the time.



Jamie Liu with the Hungarian Mini Cadet trophy (picture by Michael Loveder)

The new year started with victory on the international stage for Jamie Liu, who [won the under-11 boys' singles title at the Mini Cadet Open](#) in Budapest, Hungary.

A couple of weeks later, Andrew Baggaley was on top of the world after [winning the World Championships of Ping Pong](#) crown in front of the Sky TV cameras at Alexandra Palace.

Back in Hungary, [Sam Walker registered one of the best wins of his career](#), beating World No 79 Kalinikos Kreanga of Greece on his way to the last 32 – which lifted him into the world's top 200 the following month.

Paul Drinkhall took on the best on the continent at the [Europe Top 16 in Baku, Azerbaijan](#), where one victory and two defeats to higher-ranked opponents meant he was eliminated in the group stage. Liam Pitchford was also

in Baku, as reserve, and the experience was to prove important for the two Englishmen later in the year . . .

February was also a good month for Tin-Tin Ho. Not only did she and Maria Tsaptsinos [reach the final of the Czech Open girls' doubles](#), losing only to the top seeds from Japan, but Tin-Tin was also [named Young Sports Person of the Year](#) at the inaugural Lycamobile British Ethnic Diversity Sports Awards.



Liam Pitchford celebrates Senior Nationals victory

Spectators at the Senior Nationals in Redbridge witnessed a classic men's singles final as [Liam Pitchford came from 3-0 down to Paul Drinkhall](#) to claim his third successive title. It was a fifth title for Kelly Sibley in the women's singles, holding off Tin-Tin Ho in the final.

Pitchford retained his good form at the World Championships in China in April, becoming the [first Englishman since 1999 to reach the last 32](#), beating world No 20 Tiago Apolonia on the way.

Alan Ransome OBE was [re-elected Chairman of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation](#). It was also announced that table tennis was set to become a [core sport at the Commonwealth Games](#) from 2022, a proposal that was ratified in September.



Kelly Sibley in action in Baku

Paul Drinkhall and Liam Pitchford were back in Baku for the European Games, where they were joined by Kelly Sibley as the historic first Team GB table tennis squad at the inaugural Games. And Paul so nearly brought home a medal, being eliminated by top seed and eventual champion Dimitrij Ovtcharov in the semi-finals before losing the bronze medal play-off. But he was quick to find [positives with the Rio Olympics on the horizon](#).



Stuart Sherlock

Talking of Rio, England's [Stuart Sherlock was confirmed as the table tennis referee for the 2016](#) Games.

Meanwhile, Sandra Deaton was [re-elected as Table Tennis England Chairman](#), with Susie Hughes and Keith Thomas re-elected as Deputy Chairman and Treasurer.

Table tennis joined the landmark This Girl Can campaign, designed by Sport England to address the gender gap between men and women playing sport. [Lauren James was unveiled as our face of the sport](#), taking her place on advertising hoardings around the country.

With help from 11-times national champion Des Douglas, the second annual #TableTennisDay reached an [estimated 4.7 million people](#) on social media. The day was also featured by Sky Sports News, who interviewed Des, Andrew Baggaley and our chief executive Sara Sutcliffe.

England's Junior Girls led the way at the [European Youth Championships](#), finishing seventh as they and the Junior and Cadet boys all hit their performance targets.

There were also a number of [last-16 appearances](#) in the individual events.

Los Angeles was the destination for International Umpire Harry Jutle as he officiated at the Special Olympics World Games – and he [wrote about his experiences](#) for our website.



Tin-Tin Ho and Maria Tsaptsinos at the England kit launch at the Orbit in the Olympic Park

The England kit went into Orbit in September when Paul Drinkhall, Tin-Tin Ho and Maria Tsaptsinos [launched the new designs](#) at the top of the landmark in the Olympic Park.

The kit had its first outing at the European Championships in Ekaterinburg, where [England's men finished 20<sup>th</sup>](#)

and the [women 22<sup>nd</sup>](#), with senior debutants Maria Tsaptsinos and Lois Peake performing well.

In the singles, Liam Pitchford reached the last 16, where he [gave eventual champion Dimitrij Ovtcharov a fright](#) before losing 4-2. He and Paul Drinkhall also reached the last 16 of the doubles.

Our junior players did England proud at the Croatia Youth Open, as Helshan Weerasinghe, Tom Jarvis and Luke Savill [returned with bronze medals](#) from the team competition.

There were also honours for England legends of the past when the [ETTU opened its European Table Tennis Hall of Fame](#).

At the School Games in Manchester, table tennis was chosen for the honour of giving the officials' oath, with [young umpire Ben Johnson doing the honours](#).

Up-and-coming Sunderland player Josh Weatherby was one of only nine players to be [chosen for the Eurotalents Programme](#).

In Plymouth, Mufid al Kurdi, a former [Syrian national champion and now a refugee](#) of the conflict in his country, put his skills to good use by coaching youngsters at the Talent Development Centre.

The GB Para Table Tennis Team took 11 medals in individual and team events at the ITTF PTT European Championships in Denmark, prompting Performance Director Gorazd Vecko to [predict great things at the Rio Paralympics](#).



Paul Drinkhall on the podium in Rio

More success on the international stage in November as [Paul Drinkhall won the Rio Olympics test event](#), while Tin-Tin Ho and Maria Tsaptsinos reached the quarter-finals of the girls' doubles at the [World Junior Championships](#), where Helshan Weerasinghe was also in action.

Proof that table tennis is a sport for all, for life came in the Walsall League, where [89-year-old Frank Armstrong won two out of three matches](#) after being called up as a late replacement for his Great Wyrley team.



Rob Sinclair

There was a medal-laden end to the season at the [Commonwealth Championships in India](#), where the men's team of David McBeath, Helshan Weerasinghe, Tom Jarvis and Alex Ramsden won team silver and the women's line-up of Karina Le Fevre, Tin-Tin Ho and Maria Tsapsinos claimed team bronze, while McBeath also [won the Fair Play Award](#).

And Table Tennis England said farewell to a true character of the sport when our [General Secretary Rob Sinclair retired](#) from the organisation after 40 years.

Finally, two huge British institutions showed that table tennis is also on their agenda – first, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, the [future king and queen, played against two young England players](#) during a charity day, before the sport [featured in a plot-line in Coronation Street](#) in the run-up to Christmas!

Royalty and soaps – where will the sport take us all in 2016?

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