



Search is on for para stars of future

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Following the announcement of the team that will represent ParalympicsGB in the table tennis events at this year's Paralympic Games, two of the athletes selected for Rio are supporting the GB Para Table Tennis Team's search for new talent this weekend.

London 2012 medallist Sara Head will be joined by GB Pathway athlete Tom Matthews at the Talent Recruitment Day in Cardiff on Saturday, March 12 and Torpoint's David Wetherill, who will be competing in his third Paralympic Games in Rio, will be the star attraction in Plymouth on Sunday, March 13.

With a series of Talent-ID events around the UK the GB team is actively working in partnership with each respective Home Nation governing body in searching for talented players who could be part of the team in Tokyo and beyond. The Home Nations are instrumental in grassroots development and work hard to get potential athletes involved in the sport.

These events provide a free opportunity for any disabled person to come and take part in an introduction to table tennis session. Para table tennis includes classes for a wide range of disabilities, both ambulant and wheelchair-bound athletes, as well as those with learning difficulties and is one of the most inclusive of the Paralympic sports.

Since taking four medals at the London 2012 Paralympic Games the GB team has gone from strength to strength. It enjoyed its most successful ever European Championships last year with 11 medals and now boasts two current world No 1s in world champion Will Bayley and double European champion Rob Davies among its brightest prospects for the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio.

In addition to a 14-strong Performance Squad the team now has thriving Pathway and Development Squads bringing on young players and introducing them to International competition. In addition to Matthews, who won European team gold and singles bronze in 2015, other players to come through the Pathway Squad are 17-year-old Billy Shilton and 16-year-old Megan Shackleton, who also won European medals in their first major championship last year.

“We have a very talented GB squad,” said GB Pathway and Development Coach Shaun Marples, “but we are always planning for the future. At these Talent Recruitment Days we are looking for anybody who shows potential to be the next Paralympic star and once they have been identified we can assist in signposting them to their nearest club and begin their training.”

The event in Cardiff runs from 11am – 3pm on Saturday, March 12 at the Welsh Institute of Sport and the event in Plymouth runs from 11am – 2pm at Eggbuckland College. Anyone wanting further information should call 0114 261 8681.

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