



Chairman's message - April 2016

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In the March edition of our 'Over the Net' newsletter, I wrote about the hopes, challenges and ambitions of our elite athletes as they competed in the World Team Championships in Malaysia – and prepared for our own PG Mutual National Championship at home.

We can now look back on the past month with tremendous pride in the performance of our players and the progress table tennis is making in this country.

I watched, as did so many of you did, our three English Leopards – Paul Drinkhall, Liam Pitchford and Sam Walker – take on the best in the world and [secure bronze medals](#). It was a stunning performance. Congratulations, we are so proud of your achievements.

Then it was home for our own Championships, which saw Paul, Liam, Sam and the best in the country compete in a new and exciting format which attracted commercial sponsorship – thanks to PG Mutual and iPro Sports drinks – and three hours of live television coverage on ITV4 on the Sunday afternoon. For the first time, we are also able to welcome our talented athletes from the GB squad who will participate in the Paralympics in Rio. It was also so encouraging to see our younger players challenging and testing our established internationals. It is cause to give us much hope for the future.

And then, only this week, we have learnt that [Liam has broken into the top 40 in the world](#) and some of our younger players are achieving career highs in World Rankings.

We have spent the past two years examining our competitive pathway and how we can maximise the potential of our top athletes. Much preparation and 'behind-the-scenes' work has gone into this and I now feel that results are being to materialise on the table.

But this table tennis activity is not restricted to elite performance. Table Tennis England has launched many exciting initiatives aimed at bringing our sport to the workplace; clubs; schools; universities; and outdoor places. Social table tennis is taking off, bringing health, well-being and fun to all ages in all environments.

This is an important part of the development of our sport and we recognise this through our various [Loop! initiatives](#), which are proving a great success.

While we will not be complacent, we have reason to believe we are heading in the right direction.

- the World Championships have shown that our players are able compete on equal terms with the best in the world;
- our young players are showing great promise as they progress through the talent development programmes and training camps;
- recent television and media coverage is delivering the sport to a much wider audience;
- we are developing relationships with commercial sponsors;
- our social table tennis packages through Loop! are being enthusiastically taken up; and
- we are seeing green shoots of development in table tennis across all ages and abilities.

I feel we have turned a corner and this is a new beginning for table tennis in England.

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