



## Royal approval on SportsAid's 40th birthday

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Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cambridge has praised SportsAid's contribution to British sport in a special message to mark the charity's 40th birthday today.

SportsAid, the charity providing financial support and recognition to the next generation of British Olympians and Paralympians, has supported a number of table tennis players through those 40 years.

They include all three England Leopards who won World Team bronze last month – Liam Pitchford, Paul Drinkhall and Sam Walker.

Alan Cooke and Matthew Syed are also among the charity's 'alumni' while current young England stars Tin-Tin Ho, Maria Tsaptsinos, Marcus Giles, Denise Payet and Emily Bolton have benefited from funding.

The Duchess became the Patron of SportsAid in 2013 and has spent time with young athletes at fundraising events, training days and performance workshops, including – [alongside her husband the Duke of Cambridge – playing table tennis with Giles and Payet.](#)

The Duchess said: "In the last 40 years, SportsAid has given a helping hand to talented young sports people across the United Kingdom.

"I have been fortunate enough to meet many current and former athletes who have benefitted from the charity's support. It is always incredibly clear how the help and recognition these athletes receive at such a crucial, formative stage of their sporting lives gives them that all important boost they need to fulfil their potential.

"As Patron, I would like to wish SportsAid a very happy 40th birthday, and offer my best wishes to everyone who has played a part in their success. Thank you to those who have, and are, supporting SportsAid. Your efforts make a huge difference to thousands of young people and their families.

"Everyone involved in this great cause should be incredibly proud of the impact SportsAid has had on the success of British sport over the last four decades."

When SportsAid was founded in 1976, as part of a plan from the UK's first Sports Minister Denis Howell, the charity was the country's major source of funding for most of its top athletes as they looked to compete against usually better-resourced overseas rivals.

The SportsAid Award they received, as it still does today, helped contribute to covering a range of costs such as training and competition fees, accommodation, transportation, kit and nutrition.

Each year, the athletes are nominated to SportsAid by the national governing bodies (NGBs) of more than 60 sports. The charity is supporting 1200 athletes, the vast majority aged 12 to 18, in 2016.

The charity has also announced its inaugural SportsAid Week – from Monday September 26 to – Sunday October 2, 2016. The new initiative is encouraging schools, colleges, universities, workplaces, sports clubs and individuals up and down the country to raise funds to support up-and-coming British sporting talent.

SportsAid Week comes straight after the Rio 2016 Olympics and Paralympics and will also be used to raise awareness of the next generation of athletes coming through with hopes for Tokyo 2020. Please visit [www.sportsaid.org.uk/sportsaidweek](http://www.sportsaid.org.uk/sportsaidweek) for further information on how to get involved.

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