


# TABLE TENNIS FACTS



- TABLE TENNIS WAS INVENTED IN ENGLAND IN THE 1880's
- THE INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS FEDERATION (ITTF) WAS FORMED IN 1926 BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TABLE TENNIS ASSOCIATIONS OF ENGLAND, AUSTRIA, GERMANY AND HUNGARY
- TABLE TENNIS BECAME A MEDAL OLYMPIC SPORT IN THE 1988 SUMMER OLYMPICS IN SEOUL
- 34 MILLION PEOPLE IN CHINA WATCHED THE MEN'S SINGLES FINAL AT THE 2012 LONDON OLYMPICS ON TV
- TABLE TENNIS IS THE MOST POPULAR INDOOR SPORT IN THE WORLD WITH 222 ASSOCIATIONS AFFILIATED TO THE ITTF
- EARLY TABLE TENNIS PADDLES WERE NORMALLY MADE OF CORK, CARDBOARD, OR WOOD, AND COVERED WITH CLOTH, LEATHER OR SANDPAPER
- TABLE TENNIS WAS BANNED IN THE SOVIET UNION FROM 1930 TO 1950. THE SPORT WAS BELIEVED TO BE HARMFUL TO THE EYES
- A MODERN TABLE TENNIS MATCH AT THE ELITE LEVEL LASTS ON THE AVERAGE ABOUT 30 MINUTES. TOP PLAYERS OFTEN SMASH THE BALL AT SPEEDS EXCEEDING 100 MILES PER HOUR
- HOW MANY BALLS CAN TWO PLAYERS HIT BACK AND FORTH IN 60 SECONDS? THE CURRENT RECORD IS 173 SET BY JACKIE BELLINGER AND LISA LOMAS IN 1993
- A MODERN TABLE IS 9 FEET LONG, 5 FEET WIDE, AND 2.5 FEET HIGH. THE NET IS 6 INCHES HIGH

## FEATURE INTERVIEW

WITH SARA SUTCLIFFE, CEO  
OF TABLE TENNIS ENGLAND

Table tennis is the most popular racquet sport in the world and ranked second overall in terms of participation with over 10 million players competing in sanctioned tournaments each year. At the elite level, the sport is dominated by China; a country where it has a major and passionate following. However, despite a high level of participation the sport does not generally have the same profile in the West. Touchline spoke to Sara Sutcliffe, Chief Executive Officer of Table Tennis England, to find out what was being done to increase the profile of table tennis and whether English players had a chance of breaking the Chinese supremacy any time soon.

*How did you become involved in sports administration?*

Sport has always played a big part in my life. I was good enough at it to be picked for school teams and even the county on occasion but I was never a sporting superstar. Growing up in New Zealand meant that sport and physical activity was just part of life. So when as a junior lawyer I spotted the opportunity to go in house as the Legal Director at the British Olympic Association I applied, and it changed the direction of my career. I spent 12 years at the BOA, with the opportunity to be part of Team GB at four Olympic Games, being part of the London 2012 bid team and being there when the curtain came down on those magnificent Games four years ago. But by then I decided that I wanted to remain in sports administration rather than being a lawyer and took the opportunity six months later to take up the position of Interim Chief Executive Officer (which subsequently became permanent) of Table Tennis England. I also felt I had skills to offer other Boards and took up two positions as Non Executive Director on GB Taekwondo and British Gymnastics.

*Are the sports administration issues that you encounter similar across the organizations that you have been involved with? What are the main issues?*

Most sports bodies have had to tackle governance issues in the last few years, especially in the UK where the funding agencies, UK Sport and Sport England, have made it part of their funding criteria. For decades National Governing Bodies have been largely run by dedicated and hard working volunteer structures with a skeleton of paid staff. The arrival of public funding changed that and over time the governance structures of NGBs has had to adapt to become more 'business-like' whilst not losing the knowledge and commitment of the volunteer base.

One of the other big challenges facing Governing Bodies is being clear on their purpose. The Government strategy is changing to one of wider physical activity with outcomes ranging from participation to social values – rather than supporting sport for sports sake. That is a challenge for NGBs who traditionally have focussed on supporting and growing their core regulated sport; we are not experts in social change for example. But by working in partnership with other organisations whose main focus is health, social inclusion and community engagement we can provide the 'products' to help deliver the wider strategic aims, without ever losing sight of what our core membership require us to deliver for them.



## Global magazine features interview with Sara Sutcliffe

**Author:** Paul Stimpson

**Posted On:** April 27, 2016

An interview with Table Tennis England Chief Executive Sara Sutcliffe features in the latest edition of Touchline Magazine.

The interview covers subjects as diverse as the England team, sports administration, participation in table tennis and use of social media, and covers five pages.

The edition also includes a half-page advertisement for our Loop at Work package, which supplies subsidised equipment to workplaces to help them get their staff more active through table tennis.

Touchline Magazine is produced by Sportscover insurance and has a global distribution to thousands of professionals in the sport and leisure industries.

[Click here to read the interview](#)

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