



Sam Walker added to Team GB for Rio Olympics

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Sam Walker has joined Team GB for the table tennis team competition at the Rio Olympics.

The 21-year-old Worksop player will join Liam Pitchford and Paul Drinkhall in the Team GB line-up, forming a reunion of the England Leopards team which won bronze at the World Team Championships in Kuala Lumpur earlier this year.

Pitchford and Drinkhall were [named as Team GB players in the singles competition](#) last week.

The ITTF subsequently invited the British Table Tennis Federation to select a team based on the world team rankings. The BTTF nominated Walker to the British Olympic Association, which has now ratified his selection.

In addition to Walker, Tom Jarvis has been named as the Team GB reserve for the team event having been nominated by the British Table Tennis Federation.

Walker said: "It's a dream come true. It's been one of my dreams since I started playing to represent Team GB at the Olympics and to get it so early in my career is incredible. I'm looking forward to it.

"The Worlds gave us confidence and belief – we did believe we could get those sort of results but doing it was a different story. It showed us and everyone else that Great Britain are a team to be feared and are ready to challenge for medals in big competitions.

"Realistically, we did it in Malaysia and when we play like we can and perform our best I don't see why we can't win medals."

Mark England, Team GB's Chef de Mission for Rio 2016 said: "I want to congratulate Sam on being selected for his first Olympic Games – a huge honour for any athlete.

"Sam already has medals to his name at some of the biggest tournaments in the world and, along with Liam and Paul, represent a strong team heading to Rio de Janeiro.

"It's great that we have qualified places in the individual and team table tennis events at Rio 2016 and I'm sure Sam will play a crucial part in the team's efforts this summer."

Walker feels being in the team alongside London 2012 Team GB members Pitchford and Drinkhall will help him to handle the buzz around his first Olympics.

He said: "We've got a lot of training camps and a few tournaments and we'll be training as hard as we possibly can and getting ourselves in the right physical condition and also the right table tennis condition. Probably the biggest one of all is to be mentally ready and focused not just on the Olympic experience but playing as well.

"That's something I probably need to be more focused on than the other two because it will be my first Olympics. It will be good to be with them because they can help me through that."

He is also relishing being in the athletes' village and mixing with competitors from other sports.

"The atmosphere and the buzz of being around other athletes from other sports will be interesting" he said. "I follow a lot of other sports and it will be interesting to see what they are like in competition.

"I'm ready for the whole experience and ready to take the most from it."

Simon Mills, Team GB's table tennis Team Leader, said: "It's fantastic news that Great Britain has qualified a team place by rights and full credit to the players for the hard work they have put in.

"Having won World Team Championships bronze for England this year, they will travel to Rio with confidence and in the knowledge that they can compete with the best in the world."

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