



Chairman's Message – June 2016

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I'm sure most of you will be aware of the momentous news that Liam Pitchford, Paul Drinkhall and Sam Walker have been selected to represent Team GB at the Rio Olympics.

First and foremost this is testament to the hard work the players have put in over many years and I would like to say how proud I am of them.

Paul and Liam, who appeared at London 2012 by virtue of host nation places, on this occasion made it to Rio because of their world rankings.

The icing on the cake was when Great Britain also qualified for the team event, ensuring Sam could also take his place in South America and reunite the team which won bronze for England at the World Team Championships earlier this year.

This is the first time Team GB has qualified a team, the first time any singles players have qualified by right by right since Matthew Syed in 2000 and the first time two singles players have qualified since 1996.

The three players will travel with the knowledge that not only do they belong with the best in the world but they can also compete for medals on that stage.

Working with the BOA, we will be doing all we can to support Liam, Paul and Sam to give them the best chance of success in Rio. After the Games, they will be back in England colours and, again, we will do all we can to ensure sustained success.

This is something we are committed to throughout the performance pathway that we have been putting in place over the last couple of years.

A key event in that talent development strategy is the new Inter-Regional Finals and I had the pleasure of seeing almost 200 young players give their all for themselves and their respective regional teams at the finals in Kettering recently.

Although we know there are aspects of this event we can improve on, the feedback from players, parents and coaches was overwhelmingly positive and the Inter-Regional competition is sure to become a popular addition to the calendar.

It seems fitting that at the same time as the Inter-Regionals, some 250 veteran players from England were joining more than 4,300 others from more than 80 countries from around the world at the World Veteran Championships in Alicante, Spain.

More than 17,000 matches took place on 165 competition tables in nine age bands including O/90 – yet more evidence that ours is truly a sport for all, for life!

On that theme, we are currently analysing Sport England's newly released *Towards an Active Nation* strategy, which proposes to tackle inactivity over the next five years. The strategy particularly targets the 28% of people in England who do less than 30 minutes of physical activity a week.

Table tennis is a sport which is readily accessible, so we'll be making sure we play a key role in supporting an active nation and helping Sport England to meet their aims.

I'll keep you all up-to-date on this in the weeks and months ahead.

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