



Tom determined to build on steep learning curve

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Tom Jarvis says his Rio Olympic experience has made him even more motivated to qualify for Tokyo 2020.

The Skegness teenager says he learned a lot from his role as Team GB reserve, helping the squad of Liam Pitchford, Paul Drinkhall and Sam Walker deliver Britain's best Olympic performance.

"I've been absorbing it all and watching and trying to learn," said 16-year-old Jarvis.

"I followed our boys before and after the matches and I've learned a lot from them. They are the people I've focused on but it was good to watch Ma Long too.

"I did quite a lot of practising whenever they want to practise and did whatever they needed to do.

"After the France match I went to get them all pizza and I've been collecting their washing as well, anything to try to make the boys' lives easier. I knew my place and was happy to do what I could. I felt honoured to be there, so I can't really complain.

"This is not my time yet and I've still got a long way to go. With a bit more experience and a lot of hard work, hopefully it will be me playing in four years' time.

"We had three weeks of working really hard and when it was all finished, I fell asleep at 7.30pm and next thing I knew it was 8.30 the next morning!"

Jarvis shared an apartment in the athletes' village with the rest of the team and said mixing with some of the biggest stars in Team GB and beyond was an inspiration.

"I was just across from Michael Phelps at dinner and we saw Djokovic and Nadal, Jess Ennis-Hill. It's been pretty surreal being with them every day," he said.

"It's motivated me a lot, to see what you can achieve after four years of hard work, it's made me want to work even harder."

Jarvis also relished his role as one of the 'cheerleaders' in the stands at the Riocentro arena, which quickly became known as one of the best venues for atmosphere in Rio.

Not surprisingly, he singled out the amazing team match against France which GB won 3-2, with every individual match going to five games and Walker coming from 10-7 down to beat Simon Gauzy 12-10 in the deciding set of the final match.

Jarvis said: "Sam played amazingly and Pitch did a good job to come back against Flore, and Paul beating Lebesson was a good match. It was amazing to see and to be there and support from the stands.

"When Brazil were playing, it was almost like a football match with the chants – the atmosphere has been amazing and that's been great for the sport."

Jarvis will receive his GCSE results this week and soon after is due to depart for Sweden, where he will spend the next year playing and training at Halmstad TTC.

It is a reminder of just how young he is – and he says his age did make him a target for banter from the rest of the squad in Rio.

He admitted: "I was the butt of the jokes most of the time, but quite a lot of the time it's brought on by myself, being young and naïve I guess I've been a bit slow at times!"

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