



Talent Academy and new TDCs announced

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Table Tennis England has announced a double boost for the development of future elite athletes in the sport.

Two new Talent Development Centres have been named, taking the total to nine around the country.

And a new National Talent Academy will see some of the brightest prospects move to a school where they will get extra training alongside their academic studies.

The two new Talent Development Centres (TDCs) are at Halton Table Tennis Club in Widnes and at Ackworth School in Yorkshire.

They add to the existing network of TDCs in Plymouth, Nottingham, Harlow, Ormesby (Middlesbrough), Bristol, and the Greenhouse and Urban clubs (both London).

Ackworth will also host the new Academy, enrolling as boarders up to 10 of the country's leading junior players in addition to providing free coaching to local primary schools

Table Tennis England's performance coaching team are excited by the projects.

National Youth Coach Matt Stanforth said:

We are very excited for the National Talent Academy.

The National Talent Academy is a very exciting opportunity for the young players involved as it will provide the quantity and quality of training, physical conditioning and overall development they need to be able to compete with the best players in Europe and the world, alongside being at a leading school where they can achieve academically as well.

This in our opinion will give the players a greater chance of competing with the best players in the world and give them the skills they need to hopefully go on to be England senior players in the future.

Talent Pathway Manager Marcus Gustafson added:

It's adding more opportunities for table tennis in England to develop more players and give them a good table tennis education from a young age.

The big hope is that each TDC will produce such high level players that many will fit into the England Youth Squad and that they will come up to the level of winning medals at the European Youth Championships.

The ultimate goal is to develop them into new Paul Drinkhalls, Liam Pitchfords and Sam Walkers.

The potential definitely exists but we need to train more than we do in general, because that's what other countries are doing.

It needs to be a minimum of 10 hours a week and to come up to medal-winning level, it needs to be 15-20 hours.



The sports hall at Ackworth School

Ackworth School Head, Anton Maree, said:

This is an exciting joint initiative between Ackworth School and Table Tennis England as it will allow these leading junior players to live, study and train at the school.

We are also keen to involve as many of our local primary schools as possible in the Talent Development Centre.

Table Tennis is one of the most widely played sports in the world and is relatively easy to access. Not only is it an enjoyable sport but has great health benefits.

The first group of elite junior players commence their studies at Ackworth this week where, outside of the classroom, they will be training under Matjaz Sercer, one of the leading coaches in Europe, and Chris Parker, Head of the Talent Development Centre.

Halton TTC, based at the Select Security Stadium which is also home to Widnes Vikings, was founded in 1999 and

has almost 500 members. The head coach is former England International and Commonwealth Games silver medallist Andrew Rushton.

Gustafson said:

Halton are an established club, very well run and with good facilities which are available almost all the time.

They have a very strong head coach and for me that was the deciding factor.

It's a plus that we now have a TDC in the North West.

Halton Chairman Karen Tonge MBE said:

This is an exciting development involving the club with Table Tennis England in partnership with Halton Borough Council and local schools.

Building on the legacy of the London and Rio Olympics it will enable local young people to have the opportunity to reach national level.

Already we have Jack Hunter-Spivey from the Halton Table Tennis Club as No 7 in the world and playing in the Rio Paralympics in September.

We hope we can provide a pathway through participation, development and performance programmes giving even more children age 10-14 a chance to play table tennis in the area and hopefully on to England representation.

Halton Borough Council's Executive Board Member for Sport, Cllr Phil Harris, said:

On behalf of Halton Borough Council, I am delighted to hear that Halton Table Tennis Club has been awarded Talent Development Centre status by Table Tennis England.

I hope it continues to encourage as many people as possible to participate in this exciting sport.

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