



Saluting our amazing Pride of Table Tennis winners

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Our sport's top volunteers have been honoured at the first Pride of Table Tennis Awards.

The winners were named at a lunch attended by shortlisted nominees, dignitaries and other guests during the PG Mutual National Championships in Nottingham today.

The Pride of Table Tennis Awards were launched this season to build on the existing Volunteer Awards and more than 200 nominations were received from the table tennis family, in a range of categories including clubs, coaches, volunteers and officials.

A judging panel selected the shortlist, and today was the day the winners were revealed.



Young Volunteer of the Year went to Liam McTiernan, who is president of the University of Nottingham table tennis programme and has played a key role in raising both performance standards and participation. Runner-up was Naomi Hayes.

Mark Dare was named Coach of the Year for his work in Norwich and the wider East Anglia area, with players of all ages and abilities from beginners to elite. Daniel Basterfield was also on the shortlist

Mark said:

"It feels absolutely fantastic to win the award since there are so many other coaches who do fantastic things, improving standards in table tennis.

"I got involved in table tennis basically because I was no good at anything else. I just gave it a go one day when I was 10 years old and have been coaching ever since. It's really enjoyable to teach and work with young people."

Volunteer of the Year was Dennis Artess, who Dennis started the Crewe Central TT club four years ago with only five or six members and has presided over an increase in membership to more than 100 currently. Tony Halse was the runner-up.

Dennis said:

"I'm totally delighted and quite proud of the club. It's good to be a representative of it."

The winner of the Contribution to Table Tennis award was Brian Hall, who has played a major role in the development of table tennis in Portsmouth, in coaching, committee and organisational roles for more than 20 years. Gordon White was also shortlisted.



Margot Fraser was named winner of the Technical Official of the Year award. An umpire at both national and international levels, Margot has been instrumental in helping young officials to develop and in recruiting new officials. Steve Smith was runner-up.

The Inclusivity Award was won by Neil Harris, who runs the Sport in Mind charity, which uses sport and physical activity as a form of rehabilitation for those suffering from mental health illness. Sanket Shah was the runner-up.

Neither Margot nor Neil were able to attend the ceremony.

Club of the Year went to Brandon & Byshottles from County Durham. Only founded in 2013, the club has a thriving competitive arm, as well as having set up numerous initiatives to get people playing the sport as part of a healthy and active lifestyle. The other shortlisted club was Nottingham Sycamore.

Table Tennis England's Head of Workforce, Greg Yarnall, said:

"Pride of Table Tennis is our chance to put the spotlight on our amazing volunteers who do so much to help our sport to thrive.

"It was a fantastic ceremony and we were thrilled to see so many dedicated people there – and we know there are many, many more people out there who give so much of their time in so many roles.

"We are planning to launch this year's Pride of Table Tennis Awards in April, which is a chance for people up and down the country to let us know about the unsung heroes in their areas.

"I'd also like to thank former national men's singles champion Paul Day, whose company Turners of Soham made a contribution to the costs of the ceremony."

The ceremony also saw several other award winners recognised:

Victor Barna Award (for outstanding performance by England player(s) on the international stage): Paul Drinkhall, Liam Pitchford, Sam Walker.

Johnny Leach MBE Award (to the most improved England player of the year): Tin-Tin Ho.

Mike Watts Achievement Award (to the girl and boy who made the greatest improvement in ratings points between August 1 2015 and July 31 2016): Jasmin Wong and Jonathan Heslop.



BBC Unsung Heroes: Viv Woodcock-Downey and Sylvia Worth.

Ping! Personality of the Year: Rob Searle.

Additional reporting by Martina Milkova

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