



Girls get the Premier League experience

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It was a day for girls to enjoy all the benefits – both physical and social – that table tennis offers.

Table Tennis England, in partnership with the Premier League 4 Sport programme and This Girl Can campaign, ran a girls-only event in Birmingham to develop the sport of table tennis and to highlight to girls the importance of engaging in sports.

The empowering event saw participants represent current and former Premier League football clubs in a competitive format.

It was well attended, with a number of Premier League clubs sending representatives, and was topped with an exhibition match between England No 1 Kelly Sibley and No 4 Maria Tsaptsinos.

The first two group stages displayed some fierce competition between the girls, with all six of the competition tables in full swing, while coaching sessions with our UKCC accredited level 4 coaches Sally Shutt and Helen Lower took place on two other tables. Some of the girls even warmed up by facing a robot.

The two rounds concluded before lunch and the competition was then divided into a Cup and Plate format.

The lunch break provided time for the girls to explore the social venue of the event and participate in games such as Pool, Giant Jenga, Just Dance Wii and the Smoothie Bike. This was a vital part of the day as a major objective for the event was to promote the social side of engagement in sport to girls, rather than to simply create a space where they can play table tennis against one another.



Girls sign the table

The social space allowed girls to talk to each other and make new friends as well as leaving a lasting legacy on our three-quarter-size table where they all wrote their names to mark the date. Many of the girls took photos with their friends to participate in a This Girl Can competition to win a Fitbit Charge 2.

The start of the second half of the competition was kicked off with the exhibition match between Kelly and Maria. This gave the girls a chance to witness two England team members go head to head in an unmissable match and was an excellent opportunity for all the attendees to witness what they can achieve in table tennis if they stay engaged and committed to the sport. The mood was lightened when the athletes played the last set of their game using saucepans.

After a display of sheer excellence of women's table tennis the girls set out to finish their Cup and Plate matches, with victory to Swansea City in the Cup and Leicester City in the Plate.

Overall, the day was filled with some invigorating table tennis, displaying bright potential for the future of the sport. We engaged girls from all over the UK in table tennis and hope that they stay in the sport and one day be playing at their own exhibition matches to inspire a new generation.

Results

Cup

Cerys Gruneberg (Swansea City) bt Sufyaana Danji (Knighton Park TTC) 9-11, 11-7, 11-7. Joint third – Eleanor Fletcher & Erin Darwen (both Lillington Free Church Premier TTC)

Plate

Zara Zahid (Leicester City) bt Jean Cristie (Queens Park Rangers) 11-7, 11-9. Joint third – Catrin Daniels & Erin Sandison (both Swansea City)

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