

# Youth Olympics, Players Perspective

**Author:** Russell Moore

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Prior to team departure on 9th August, team GB assembled for "Kitting Out" and dinner. We arrived in Singapore the evening of 10th August feeling tired and jetlagged!

Many sports commenced their individual competitions the day after the opening ceremony (Sunday 15th) however table tennis did not start until the following Saturday therefore I had ten days to prepare myself for the Games ahead.

The ITTF organised a four day training camp for all the players participating in the YOG. This was beneficial for me as it allowed me to practise with players I wouldn't normally practise with and furthermore hadn't played before. The training camp was assisted by Jean Philippe Gatien. Gatien shared his knowledge and experience with the 64 players.

The group stage started on 21st August. In my group was Singapore's Isabelle Li Siyun (silver medallist) Japan's Ayuka Tanioka (quarter finalist) and New Zealand's Julia Wu. I knew I had a tough draw but nevertheless I went out on the table and tried to play my best table tennis. My first match was against Isabelle Li Siyun. I had two set points in the first game however lost the match 3-0. Next was Wu whom I beat 3-0. My final match-which also decided whether I played for places 1-16 or 17-32 was against Tanioka. I took the first game but her defence proved to be too strong and I lost 3-1. On Sunday I had a very good day and won my 3 matches against girls from Puerto Rico, Algeria and San Marino to secure 17th place. I was seeded 24 so I was happy to finish 17th.

In the team event, as there was not a boy from Great Britain playing, I was allowed to play with another player from Europe and played with Italy's Leonardo Mutti. Having had a disappointing loss in the group stage, having several match points in the vital doubles match, I was once again playing off for places 17-32. Claiming wins against "Intercontinental 3" and "Pan America 2", "Europe 3" (Mutti and Loveridge) finished 17th.

I expected the Youth Olympic Games to be very tough and it really was, however, I have definitely improved from the experience. Especially against defence as I don't have any practise against choppers at home so even though I lost, I'll take the positive away with me and now I know the next time I play a defender I'll be a lot more confident than I was before.

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