



Olympic legend impressed by BPTT set-up

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UK Sport Chair and Olympic rowing legend Dame Katherine Grainger paid her first visit to the British Para Table Tennis training base at the EIS in Sheffield and showed that the competitive flame still burns within her as she enjoyed a hit with double Paralympic medallist Ross Wilson and even took part in a training exercise with head coach Greg Baker.

Dame Katherine said:

I'd heard a lot about the EIS in Sheffield and what an amazing training base it is; the superstars that have trained here – Olympians and Paralympians and World champions. So there are always high expectations when you walk through the door but it was lovely and the team were incredibly welcoming.

I think it is a very hard mix to get right but there is a wonderful balance here of completely professional, really high standards of competition and excellence but a very friendly, very open, family feel. I think all sports try and marry those and it is hard to get it right but this sport has got it right. It is an incredible set up and it has been a great first visit but it is definitely just the first of many.

The five-time Olympic medallist was quick to take up the challenge of playing and admitted that the table tennis table at UK Sport may now become a destination during any rare spare time in her hectic working day.

Despite having to admit I am not an athlete any more I think the competitive gene is hard to bury underneath my normal working life. So when it gets the opportunity to resurface it comes up very quickly. It is a new sport for me so I want to be good at it. It is a hard sport and a punishing sport but it is fun and I could have stayed here and played for hours, to be honest.

The coaches were lovely and gave me a couple of bits of advice and the athletes did as well – they were very encouraging and you can see yourself making little improvements. I can see the table at UK Sport from my

window where my desk is but I haven't had a spare moment in my day to go down and enjoy it. It is about getting a balance in your daily working day so maybe a bit of escapism to play table tennis could be my way forward.

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