



## Plenty of highlights in 2017

**Author:** Paul Stimpson

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Last year – with a World Championships bronze medal for England and a superb Olympic and Paralympic performance by Great Britain – was always going to be a hard act to follow.

So how about table tennis conquering the world for starters?

Yes, 2017 was the year the sport went truly global, as the ITTF became the [first international sports federation to achieve a full house](#) of national associations under its umbrella – as Guinea Bissau became the 226th member of the Federation.

And there was plenty else to celebrate during another busy year of achievement on and off the table.

The year started with news that [Paul Drinkhall had been chosen alongside some of the world's best players](#) to compete in the new-format T2-Asia Pacific League. It was a year for new formats as Liam Pitchford competed in the inaugural Ultimate Table Tennis league in India. More about how they got on later.

Meanwhile, the other half of the golden couple from Glasgow 2014 was on the comeback trail as [Jo Drinkhall announced that she would play alongside Paul](#) in the mixed doubles at the PG Mutual National Championships.

At the World Championships of Ping Pong, Chris Doran's quarter-final place was the best English performance as [Andrew Baggaley's attempt to win a hat-trick of titles ended in the last 16](#).

February saw the inaugural European Under-21 Championships and it was a strong performance by English pair Tom Jarvis and Helshan Weerasinghe, who [reached the doubles quarter-finals](#), while Tom got to the same stage in the singles and Tin-Tin Ho reached the last 16.



Tom Jarvis celebrates a win at the European Under-21s

Two pieces of good news for Table Tennis England saw the organisation [awarded more than £8 million](#) over four years by Sport England and also [shortlisted for Governing Body of the Year](#) at the prestigious BT Sport Industry Awards.

Paul Drinkhall reached the quarter-finals of the India Open, [losing in a thriller](#) to home hero Sharath Kamal Achanta.

The PG Mutual National Championships were played out in front of a great crowd at the University of Nottingham, with highlights on Sky Sports later. It was a golden return for Jo Drinkhall as [she and Paul won the mixed doubles](#); Paul took his sixth men's singles title and Tin-Tin Ho her second women's singles crown.

A few days later, England Leopards men and women both enjoyed [superb wins in their European Championships qualifiers](#) to confirm places in the play-offs to get into the top division.

Andy Bray from Haworth Hawks Table Tennis Club [received a prestigious Torch Trophy Award](#) from HRH the Earl of Wessex.

Two up-and-coming young female players had an exciting time in April as [Denise Payet won silver and Charlotte Bardsley two bronzes](#) at the Belgium Junior & Cadet Open. It was also the month when Denise got her [first senior England call](#), while Charlotte was a hit at the BBC 5Live studios as she [took on Olympian Matthew Syed](#) as part of the cult *Flintoff, Savage and the Ping Pong Guy* programme.

More young players shone at the Milenij Open in Croatia, including [gold medallists Mollie Patterson and Ruby Chan](#).

England's hopes of playing in the top division of the European Championships were [ended by double play-off defeat](#). But there was consolation for Paul Drinkhall and Liam Pitchford, who were [among the first athletes named in the Team England squad](#) for the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Australia.

There was more success for the British Para Table Tennis team as they took [three bronze medals at the PTT World Team Championships in Slovakia](#) in May, while there were [five gold medals for a young England squad](#) at

the Zagreb Open, where Jamie Liu was named Best Boy Player of the tournament.

The curtain came down on a glittering career at the London Grand Prix, where [Welsh maestro Ryan Jenkins retired](#) after 55 event wins.



Luke Savill celebrates his victory in Slovakia

A quartet of England players reflected on their performances at the World Championships in June, where [Sam Walker and David McBeath reached the last 16](#) of the doubles. Luke Savill had two reasons to celebrate in the Slovak Junior Open – taking a [brilliant gold in the singles](#) to add to team gold alongside Tom Jarvis, Matt Leete and Josh Bennett.

World over-85 champion [Pam Butcher was awarded the MBE](#) in the Queen’s Birthday Honours, while [twins Anna and Connor Green both won their respective singles titles](#) at the U10-U13 Nationals.

In July, Liam Pitchford helped his Falcons franchise to win the Ultimate Table Tennis League in India – where he was [named Most Valuable Player](#) after a string of impressive performances.

Paul Drinkhall was also in good form in a far-flung location as he [reached the semi-finals of the Australian Open](#), where he lost to Vladimir Samsonov.





Paul Drinkhall celebrates beating Yuya Oshima at the Australian Open

Closer to home, Tom Jarvis [reached the quarter-finals of the European Youth Championships](#), losing to No 1 seed Cristian Pletea. England returned from the European Veterans' Championships with [three gold medals](#) and a clutch of podium finishes.

In August, there was recognition for British Para Table Tennis Team's head coach Greg Baker, who [became an honorary member of UK Sport's Coaching Fellowship](#).

Table Tennis England members [voted to agree governance reforms](#) at an Extraordinary General Meeting, enabling compliance with the Government's Code for Sports Governance. This meant Sport England funding, which had been suspended following the defeat of the vote at July's AGM, was restored.

Prestigious international competitions were on the agenda as England was announced as the [host of the 2018 ITTF Team World Cup](#). Soon after, Worcester was the host city for the [Europe Youth Top 10](#), where four English players took on the best Europeans at Junior and Cadet levels.

England [women ended in 23rd place and the men in 25th](#) at the European Championships, but there was a medal in Europe for Denise Payet, who [won a team bronze](#) at the Slovenian Junior Open.

History was made at the European Para Championships in October, where [Rob Davies led a 1-2-3 for Great Britain](#) in men's class one – and there was also a bronze for Will Bayley. The team events saw [gold in men's class six](#) and there were [two more team medals](#) to boot.



The Class 1 podium, featuring Rob Davies, Tom Matthews and Paul Davies

England's top two were in good form again, [Liam Pitchford defeating top-10 player Wong Chun Ting](#) in the Champions League and Paul Drinkhall [overcame both world No 5 Timo Boll and Japanese wonderkid Tomokazu Harimoto](#) in the T2-APAC league.

English umpires Harry Jutle, John Mackey and Tom Purcell were [selected to officiate at the 2018 Commonwealth Games](#) in Australia, while after an extraordinary 58 years and more than 200 meetings, [Colin Clemett retired as Secretary](#) of Table Tennis England's Technical Officials Committee (TOC).

Gold and silver rained down in November, as the [England squad dominated the Home Countries International](#) and unseeded [Joseph Hee took an outstanding silver](#) at the Slovak Cadet Open.

Tom Jarvis [picked up his biggest career win](#), over world No 43 Gao Ning at the Swedish Open, and there was a golden opportunity for Evie Collier, who was [awarded a prestigious place on the inaugural Women's Coach Internship Programme \(WCIP\)](#) to be piloted at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games.

And this month, [China named a strong squad](#) including both men's and women's world No 1 players, for the team World Cup in London in February – a reminder that 2018 promises to keep the big stories rolling!

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