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The need to increase the participation of women and girls in table tennis in England was discussed at length at the Women's Seminar, held during the English Open in Sheffield at the English Institute of Sport, on Friday 28th January 2011.

The participants included national and regional coaches, regional development managers, officials, staff from the English Table Tennis Association and delegates from Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Jill Parker, former European champion and Development Manager for the English Table Tennis Association, made an inspiring talk about her life as a player, official and coach.

Coaching and Umpiring

She was followed by her daughter, Katy Parker, a regional coach.

Katy discussed the difference between coaching strategies for male and female athletes; whilst Margot Fraser, International Umpire, explained the path she took to become an International Umpire.



A smiling Katy Parker addresses the Women's Seminar in Sheffield *Photo By: Courtesy of Lilamani De Soysa*

Increasing Participation

Meanwhile, the Youth and Development Manager of the European Table Tennis Union, Lila de Soysa, addressed the meeting with regards to the actions undertaken by the International Table Tennis Federation, which included partly funding this forum through the ETTU-ITTF Development Program.

The role that the English Table Tennis Association had to play to maintain and support the aims and goals of the International Table Tennis Federation to increase women's participation within Continental and international table tennis was stressed.

Conclusion

Matters concluded with Eileen Shaler, expressing her views on development and sharing good practice being followed by Liz Davidson from Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation who discussed how to get more women and girls involved in table tennis

.Health Issues

All interesting contribution but one which raised the eyebrows was the question of health and sport.

The subject was discussed at length.

Osteoporosi

Statistics from England show that English women still need to be active in order to avoid osteoporosis. It is a proven fact that women who do sport are less likely to suffer from osteoporosis:

Currently approximately three million people in the United Kingdom have osteoporosis and there are more than 230,000 fragility fractures every year.

Statisticis

Also, one in two women and one in five men over the age of 50 will break a bone, mainly because of poor bone health; broken wrists, hips and spinal bones are the most common fractures in people with osteoporosis.

It is estimated that off the 70,000 people who have osteoporotic hip fractures each year, 30% will die within a year from causes related to the fracture.

Alarming figures and important to recognise; such is the value of sport, such is the value of table tennis.



An attentive audience for the speakers at the Women's Forum

Photo courtesy of Lilamani De Soysa