

Guernsey, A Meteoric Rise in the Twenty-First Century

Photo By: Guernsey TTA



A group of young players who attended the recent course in Guernsey

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Germany's Martin Ostermann was the ITTF Course Conductor on duty at the European Table Tennis Union's Assistance Course held in Guernsey from Monday 29th May to Friday 2nd June 2006.

Part of the ITTF/ETTU Development Programme, the course proved most successful and the German coach found a table tennis association that was thriving and making major steps forward.

Guernsey is one of the Channel Islands, a British Crown dependency but only thirty miles from the French coast; it is one of the smallest countries to be a member of the International Table Tennis Federation. It has a

population of just over sixty thousand and to drive around the island's perimeter is a distance of only twenty-five miles!

Targets Achieved

It is in the twenty-first century that table tennis in Guernsey has blossomed and the reason is due largely to the splendid efforts of Derek Webb who became the President of the Guernsey Table Tennis Association in 2000. He took office with the avowed aim of involving more children in the sport of table tennis and with the goal of having the island's own dedicated table tennis premises.

In both targets he succeeded. In 2002 Rebecca O'Keefe moved from her native Wales to become the dedicated table tennis development officer and soon after, a former bowling rink was converted into a purpose built table tennis centre.

Table Tennis Centre

The venue accommodates twenty table tennis tables, has a sprung wooden floor, an office, a cafeteria and a bar; the result is that table tennis on the island is thriving.

There are currently two hundred and fifty regular players who play in four senior leagues with approximately one hundred junior players being involved. Less than six years ago there were only one hundred and twenty players of which only twenty were juniors.

Success

Table tennis in Guernsey has undergone a revolution and it is the junior players who are leading the way. Sixteen year old Scott Romeril is regarded as the island's best player with fifteen year old Gary Dodd biting on his heels.

Eleven year old Alice Loveridge is the British Primary Schools' Champion; a title she has won two years in succession whilst in Liam Robilliard won bronze in the counterpart boys' event in 2006.

Course

It is a quite meteoric rise and the comprehensive programme delivered by Martin Ostermann was another step on the ladder of progress for Guernsey. Sixteen boys and fifteen girls attended the five day course with players being divided into two groups. The first group met from 9.30am to 12.30pm with the second group being present from 2.30pm to 4.30pm. Three players from neighbouring Jersey (Max Tupper, Luke Walker and Hugo Tupper) were present with 7.30pm to 9.00pm on Tuesday and Thursday evenings being dedicated to beginners.

Martin Ostermann also had the opportunity to meet with national team players and with Phil Hunkin, the Vice President of the Guernsey Table Tennis Association as well as with the association's president Derek Webb.



Training in action the splendid National Table Tennis Centre in Guernsey

(Photo by Guernsey TTA)