

**Name: Vienna-Leigh Clarke**

**Background:**

I love PE at school, playing tennis, cricket, bench ball. I like art, maths and science. I also like rock climbing and riding my bike. I started playing TT when I was about 7 just messing around at home with my mum and my uncles' particularly at Christmas time when we were on the dining table.

My mum inspired me to play more particularly as she had joined a club and was bringing me along. I was watching at first and then her friends encouraged me to join in. So, I just sort of joined in and really enjoyed it.

Since then I gradually got to love the game and now play at Continental Stars Table Tennis Club at The Hub in Perry Barr, Birmingham.

In 2019 I started getting some coaching sessions once a week. Unfortunately, since lockdown in 2020 I've not played much but I'm so glad restrictions have been lifted and I have just this week started playing again but outside and it's really been great.

**What are your goals?**

My goal is to become a better player, fitter and making lots of new friends. I enjoy playing TT and one day I'd like to think I can become a professional player if the earnings are good! I was asked to become a female ambassador by my coach's wife who also plays. She says we need more females out there especially from ethnic backgrounds so my mum encouraged me to participate.

I notice everywhere I played when I'm with my mum it was always 99% men and boys so I think it is a good thing to let people know there's a lot more females.

**What are your achievements?**

I have entered two tournaments and although I have lost, I really enjoyed taking part and being really competitive and also learning to score and being an umpire.

Since the beginning of April, my mum was contacted by our coach and he said he has put me forward to be sponsored by Topsis in conjunction with Continental Stars TTC. I'm expecting that this will start next month in May when the restrictions will allow indoor play and I can start regular training each week and entering more tournaments as I learn to get better, gain confidence and experience and train harder alongside my school work.

The thing I enjoy most about table tennis is that my forehand is getting better and I like travelling and being part of a club that has other females playing too. The more I practice the more I surprise myself how much better I get. It is also nice that my coach sees potential in me including my mum who is happy to support me through my table tennis journey.

I would advise any females wanting to get involved in table tennis to give it a chance and try it out. I don't think if I attended at TT sessions with my mum I wouldn't have thought about TT because my school does not include that sport in PE.

I like the fact that TT has become an Olympic sport and it would be great to see a lot more girls my age playing.