

## Megan Bollen – Women & Girls Ambassador

*Theme: Women and Girls / Physical Wellbeing / Mental Wellbeing / Social and Community Development*

“If you’re intrigued to start playing my advice would be just go along to a session and see how you go, everyone starts from somewhere! Don’t be intimidated by elite players, they were beginners once and most are more than willing to help you with tips and tricks.”

I started playing table tennis aged nine at my local club after a taster session at my primary school. My nan encouraged me to get involved as she played when she was younger. The local club coach (Peter), he was so inspiring, and his coaching methods were brilliant, I’ve never met someone so passionate about the sport.

I played lots of different sports at school such as netball and cheerleading however Table tennis has remained my main sport throughout. After playing league for a few years and not winning a single game I felt defeated and nearly gave up playing, that was when I was introduced to long pimples. After a few months I switched to long pimples permanently and started to win more games and gain my confidence back. I continued to play table tennis at university finding many lifelong friends and even my boyfriend through the sport. I have a lot to thank table tennis for, it really shaped my university experience, it really wouldn’t have been the same without it. After graduating I am now playing for my local team in the second division and have completed my level 1 coaching qualification.

My greatest table tennis achievement would be getting to the quarter finals of the university BUCS Championships along side my doubles partner Diana. Playing with an elite national player as a partner was so daunting but thrilling and I really enjoyed the experience. My team also won the Conference Cup and the midlands league over the 5 years I competed, it was so fun being part of such a close team and nothing compares to winning in front of a home crowd.



Being part of a club is so rewarding and I believe it helped me both mentally and physically throughout school and university. To go to training and switch off from the world for an hour once a week helped me with exam stress and was a great way to reset from a stressful week. When you enjoy training, you don't even realise the exercise you are doing, some sessions I'll hit 10,000 steps in just an hour. I also found that most of my closest friends I have met through table tennis, having something in common is always a good start in a friendship and everything just builds from there.

I feel in recent years table tennis has become more accessible to women and girls and I'm excited to see where the sport can go in the future. I personally think that once we have established girls only sessions and got those running, we need to work on mixed events to integrate the women in with the men in more mixed tournaments. As a female player from a small county (Suffolk) I played the same 4/5 girls every year at county events, I would love for more women to feel they can enter these events so that the women's events stay just as exciting as the men's.

Table tennis has helped me communicate with people of all ages, abilities, and genders. The sport is so versatile and has shown me that anything is possible, and no obstacle is too big, especially when you have the support of your team behind you.



Sport England  
21 Bloomsbury Street  
London WC1B 3HF

[sportengland.org](https://www.sportengland.org)