



**TABLE TENNIS.  
FOR ALL.  
FOR LIFE.**

**NEWSLETTER**  
April 2020

**MESSAGE FROM THE ITTF**

As we all know, the COVID-19 public health crisis has severely affected the entire world, all industries and all sports, including table tennis. These are unprecedented times and the continued uncertainty surrounding how long the pandemic will last left us with no choice but to suspend all ITTF events and activities until 30 June 2020, as an initial precaution, and we continue to monitor the situation closely.

The Hana Bank 2020 World Team Table Tennis Championships are among the many events postponed and provisional new dates of 27 September – 4 October 2020 have been agreed, with other optional dates set aside in case needed to stage our most significant annual event.

First and foremost, we have a duty to preserve the safety of the players, coaches, officials, our fans and all stakeholders involved in table tennis. This goes for all sports and all industries. The priority of human health must not and will not be compromised.

Despite no events, we are continuing to work extremely hard across multiple fronts, as is clear from the content of this newsletter, and we will continue to report all of our major “off the table” achievements during this period. Thank you to all ITTF staff for your fantastic efforts and for supporting the entire table tennis community. Together we will ensure that our sport returns in better shape and with a bright future ahead.

**WORLD TABLE TENNIS AT HOME DAY**



Physically distanced, but socially united, fans were fully engaged across the ITTF’s digital channels for 2020 World Table Tennis At Home Day, the annual celebration of the sport, taking place on 6 April, as organised by the **ITTF Foundation** and supported by the ITTF.

While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented physical activities from happening this year, fans were treated to some special social media initiatives to keep them entertained.

By sending in their videos from home, fans, players and legends all contributed to the “world’s longest table tennis rally” consisting of a grand total of 293 shots: **WATCH THIS VIDEO!**

Fans also had their eyes glued to the ITTF’s digital platforms on 6 April 2020, with 24 hours of never seen before, HD footage of many classic matches, featuring some of the sport’s greatest legends, playing on the ITTF’s Facebook, YouTube and Weibo channels, as well as on Zhibo TV, the ITTF’s streaming partner in China.

*World Table Tennis At Home Day, celebrated 6 April 2020*

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# 4 MILLION SOCIAL MEDIA FANS



## OVER 4 MILLION FANS ON ITTF SOCIAL MEDIA!

Sports events around the world may be suspended at present, but the ITTF is continuing to entertain its growing fan base on social media, which has now surpassed the four million milestone!

Despite difficult times, the ITTF is galvanising table tennis fans and new followers from across the globe to stay active and keep spirits high through a series of social media initiatives:

### #SAFETABLETENNIS

Fans have been making videos of how they are showing their passion for table tennis with anything and everything they can find, despite being quarantined at home! You can see all our posted videos on ITTF social media channels and send us your own.

### #TRAINLIKEAPRO

Home Edition: A fun spin-off of the ongoing #TrainLikeAPro series. Elite athletes and young aspiring players are filming themselves and sharing how they are staying fit and keeping their skills sharp while in isolation. Remember, just because you're inside doesn't mean you can't train!

### #ITTFMASHBACK

Every week, fans are being treated to a series of classic matches from the past on the ITTF's digital platforms. The initiative began with a bang in the last week of March, which saw the 2006 World Championships replayed with full matches on Facebook and highlights on YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. This kept fans entertained during the week that the Hana Bank 2020 World Team Table Tennis Championships would originally have been staged, but for the COVID-19 pandemic. Many more "Blast from the Past" matches will be replayed across the ITTF's social media channels over the coming weeks. [READ MORE](#)

### #BLOCKCOVID19

These videos focus on the creative methods adopted by players and fans to combat the virus and stay healthy in different day-to-day circumstances, presenting neat tips to promote good hygiene practices such as hand washing and physical distancing.



*Timo Boll training from his garden in Germany.*



*Click on the image to watch highlights from the 2006 World Table Tennis Championships!*

# WORLD TABLE TENNIS

Last month saw World Table Tennis (WTT) presented officially to the public with the launch of [WORLDTABLETENNIS.COM](http://WORLDTABLETENNIS.COM), which explains how the new entity, launching in 2021, will manage all of the ITTF's commercial and events business, elevating table tennis to exciting new heights in the future.

More than double the prize money, new marquee events, an exclusive women's tour, first-in-class TV production and compelling stories are just some of the things that fans can look forward to when WTT is up and running in 2021!

WTT is introducing a brand new event structure, which will provide a much more modern entertainment experience for the professional table tennis players, fans, broadcasters, cities and partners. Bidding is already open for cities around the world to host WTT events.

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## SUPPORT FOR PLAYERS

Training in isolation and with no clear idea yet of when events will resume, these are unprecedented times for table tennis players around the world.

Through the ITTF Athletes Commission, the ITTF ensures a direct line of communication and support network for the players, while a survey has been distributed in order to collect the opinions of all athletes on any issues in light of the pandemic.

[READ MORE](#) in this exclusive interview with Zoran Primorac, Chair of the ITTF Athletes Commission.



Zoran Primorac at home in his native Croatia.



World Table Tennis coming 2021

## STAY HOME. STAY HEALTHY. STAY FIT!

While much of daily life has been put on hold, there is no need for your training to suffer. There are many exercises to focus on to not only maintain but improve your endurance, agility and coordination skills while staying out of the gym. Keep up with your High Performance training with our tips for staying fit and healthy from home, with the tools available to you, so you can reach your peak when you get back to the table.

[READ MORE](#)



Manika Batra keeping up her exercise routine at home in India.

## HIGH PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

With the 2020 Continental Development Plans in place, activities' offers were sent also to National Associations in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The response was outstanding, the highest ever, reconfirming that the new strategic direction adopted in the areas of High Performance and Development has been warmly embraced by the membership.

Thanks to the overall expansion of the department's portfolio and the growth of the Team, which now includes also Regional Officers in Africa and Participation Officers in Asia and Latin America, it will be possible to meet even more efficiently the needs of the different stakeholders, namely National Associations, Regions and Continents.

[READ MORE](#)

# INSPIRATIONAL TABLE TENNIS

## A SHINING LIGHT FOR SYRIAN TABLE TENNIS

Competing at the Western Asia Olympic Qualification Tournament in Amman, Jordan, Syria's Hend Zaza qualified for the women's singles event at the Tokyo Olympic Games to become the youngest table tennis athlete in Olympic Games history! In the final of the Qualification Tournament Zaza defeated Mariana Sahakian of Lebanon, 31 years her senior.

Zaza not only defied the odds with her title win in Amman, but also fate. She is the first ever Syrian table tennis player to qualify for the Olympic Games. One can be sure that this is the start of long, successful career, but also one fuelled by humility and maturity way beyond her years.

[READ MORE](#)



*Achanta celebrates gold in Oman!*

## PITCHFORD STEALS THE SHOW IN DOHA

Liam Pitchford became the first English player to reach a Platinum event men's singles final with his incredible run at the 2020 ITTF World Tour Platinum Qatar Open in Doha. The 15th seed defied all expectations to make it all the way to the final, where he was eventually beaten by China's Fan Zhendong.

Simply breath-taking, Pitchford produced arguably the best performance of his career to date with a stunning 4-2 victory over world no.1 Xu Xin in the semi-finals. Pitchford also took home a silver medal in the men's doubles, partnering Paul Drinkhall to the final. [READ MORE](#)

## ITTF WORKFORCE UNITED FOR TABLE TENNIS

The knock-on financial implications of an extended period of not hosting events has led to all ITTF staff and president to decide taking voluntary salary reductions in 2020, with the ITTF Executive Committee reducing its expenses, to support the sport during these challenging times.

It is testament to the fantastic group of people working for the ITTF that everyone is united in making this sacrifice to help ensure a brighter future for table tennis.



*Hend Zaza, the record-breaker!*

## 37 YEARS YOUNG, ACHANTA'S STILL GOT IT!

A player entering the twilight years of his career, India's Sharath Kamal Achanta gave his many fans plenty to celebrate by winning the men's singles title at the 2020 ITTF Challenge Plus Oman Open.

Achanta defeated Portuguese top seed Marcos Freitas to claim the trophy in Muscat, to end a decade-long wait for a trophy, having previously won in 2010 at the Egypt Open. At the time Achanta became the first Indian player to win on the ITTF World Tour, or Pro Tour as it was known in those days.

Ten years on from that historic occasion Achanta has reminded everyone that he still has plenty to offer at an elite level, landing India its first ITTF Challenge Series men's singles gold since 2017! [READ MORE](#)



*Pitchford catches the eye in Qatar!*