

PLAYER PROFILES: 23rd Summer Deaflympics, Samsun, Turkey

JACK CLIFTON

Age: 21

Trains: Virgin Active Surrey Health & Racquets Club

Lives: Purley, Surrey

R/L: Right-handed

Major achievement: 2016 European Deaf Tennis Championships men's doubles bronze medallist and 2012 European Deaf Tennis Championships Under 18 boys' singles silver medallist.

Jack's Story: Jack started playing deaf tennis in 2007 after attending a Tennis Foundation deaf tennis training session. He joined the Deaf Tennis Performance Programme in 2012 and has gone on to represent Great Britain in numerous international Deaf tennis events including the Dresse Cup, Deaflympics, European Championships and World Championships. In August 2015, Jack became the first Great Britain deaf tennis player to begin a college tennis scholarship in the USA. Jack has recently gained a minor in sports marketing. Jack has inspired his younger brother Toby to compete in Deaf Tennis. He is also a keen footballer and supports Crystal Palace FC.

Quotes: *"It fills me with great pride and satisfaction that I will again be representing Great Britain at the Deaflympics in Samsun, Turkey. My first Deaflympics in Sofia in 2013 was a great experience and a huge learning curve and eye-opener for me at the age of 17.*

"I am looking forward to being a part of DeaflympicsGB, and feel in great shape and form going into the Games. We have all worked extremely hard and the training camps led by Catherine Fletcher have been excellent towards helping me prepare. I feel confident that I am able to put in a good performance at the upcoming Games. Furthermore, I am excited to play doubles with Lewis Fletcher, who has a wealth of experience and I'm look forward to competing alongside him. I would like to express my gratitude to the Tennis Foundation, who have been extremely influential towards improving my tennis and providing me with the opportunities I have had to be able to train as much as I can and represent my country at international level."

TOBY CLIFTON

Age 15 :

Trains: Virgin Active Surrey Health & Racquets Club

Lives: Purley, Surrey

R/L: Right-handed

Major achievement: Boys' doubles silver medallist partnering Esah Hayat at the 2016 European Deaf Tennis Championships in Portoroz, Slovenia.

Toby's Story: Toby was inspired to start playing deaf tennis by his brother Jack. Toby joined the Deaf Tennis Programme in 2015. He first represented Great Britain at the Deaf Youth Cup in Hamburg in 2014 and has since represented his country at the 1st World Deaf Tennis Championships in Nottingham in 2015 and the European Deaf Tennis Championships in Slovenia in 2016.

Quote: *"I am very happy to have been selected for my first Deaflympics. It is my fourth time playing for Great Britain, with the Deaflympics being my first senior tournament, so I can't wait to get out there and enjoy the experience.*

"I have great memories competing for Great Britain in the past, and always feel very proud every time I step on court to represent my country. I am looking forward to meeting the rest of the Deaflympics GB Team.

"I have been working hard to improve my tennis and give myself the best preparation possible including attending monthly training camps with the National Deaf Tennis Squad led by National Coach Catherine Fletcher and they have really helped me to continue improve.

"My main aim for the Deaflympics in Turkey is to learn as much as I can from the experience, and to enjoy the occasion in order to prepare for the future and hopefully climb up the rankings!"

LEWIS FLETCHER

Age: 31
Trains: Ramsbury Tennis Club
Lives: Burderop, Wiltshire
R/L: Left-handed

Major achievement: Reaching the men's doubles semis at the Deaflympics in 2009, winning the mixed doubles bronze medal at the European Championships in Koblenz in 2012 and winning the men's doubles bronze medal at a the European Championships in Portoroz in 2016.

Lewis's Story: Lewis started playing tennis aged 14. As a junior he competed in numerous tournaments around the country including British Tour events. He joined the Tennis Foundation Deaf Tennis Performance Programme in 2001, aged 16. From the age of 17 he opted to play full-time tennis with the PTR academy in London and has gone on on to represent Great Britain in numerous international Deaf tennis events including the Dresse Cup (Davis Cup equivalent), Deaflympics, European Championships and World Championships. Lewis has built a successful coaching career alongside his playing career and he is currently joint head coach at Ramsbury Tennis Club in Wiltshire alongside his wife Catherine, whom he met through deaf tennis.

Quote: *"I am delighted to be representing GB at my third Deaflympics. To represent your country is a prestigious honour and to be able to do this playing a game I love is a bonus.*

"My aim for Turkey is to get into a medal position for doubles. A key highlight for me that stays in my mind is my win against the second seed at the 2009 Deaflympics. I will also always cherish the match I played with Catherine at her last ever Deaflympics as a player and it was just unfortunate we had to settle for fourth place and missed out on a medal. But it is still an everlasting memory and to share that with her made it more special."

ESAH HAYAT

Age: 15
Club: Westway Sports Centre
Lives: Finchley, London
R/L: Right-handed

Major achievement: Winning the boys' singles gold medal at the 1st World Deaf Tennis Championships in Nottingham in 2015, which was only Esah's second experience of playing internationally.

Esah's Story: Esah started playing tennis when he was eight years old and first learnt about deaf tennis through the North London Deaf Children's Society in 2013. He subsequently attended a Tennis Foundation deaf tennis camp at Gosling Tennis Centre. Esah competed in his first National Deaf Championships in 2013, winning the junior event, and he went on to join the Deaf Tennis Performance Programme in 2014. Later that year he made his international debut for Great Britain in the Deaf Youth Cup in Hamburg. Esah has gone on to represent Great Britain at the 1st World Deaf Tennis Championships in Nottingham in 2015 and the 2016 European Deaf Tennis Championships in Portoroz. Esah regularly competes in LTA sanctioned events and his sporting hero is Andy Murray. Esah was named Young Deaf Sports Personality of the Year for 2015/2016.

Quote: *"I am very proud to represent GB in the men's category in the Deaflympics because I have never played in this event before, and I am very excited to be playing it a young age. It will be a new experience, and I hope to take a lot from it and learn more about being a GB athlete.*

"When I am in Samsun, I hope to play the best tennis possible, and try my hardest in all my matches so hopefully I can do well in them.

"The biggest thing I learned at the European and World Championships was about how to compete at an international level, and how to stay focused throughout an entire tournament, staying hydrated and eating well. I also saw the high levels of tennis from around the world, which has motivated me to improve even more."