



**Writers:**  
Harvey Hymas  
Lewis Peedle  
Zoe Weaver  
Alex Elliott



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**BRITISH  
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IN TOKYO

## England Blind Football Team

Last term, we, 4 of BST's football enthusiasts were given the opportunity to interview the English blind football team while they were competing at the World Grand Prix in Japan. We all thought of some meaningful and thought provoking questions for the players. We weren't only entertained by their answers but we were inspired by their commitment they showed towards the sport. It was a really intriguing experience that we won't forget. We'll try and give you an insight into interview and how the BST community can promote Paralympic sport leading up to the 2020 Olympics.

Throughout the whole interview, it was clear how much trust there was between all players in the team. The players told us that in a sport like blind football, you need to construct a map of the game in your own head through what your team but most importantly your goalkeeper, the only sighted player in the team, has communicated with you. This relies on the trust and communication the team shares and this was apparent with some players having played in the national squad for over 15 years together (as the playing career for the sport is longer than of sighted football). However, it was not only the players who were vital to this, but also the coaches in the team. From the hour we spent talking to them, we all got the impression of the team as one big family, supporting one another on and off the field no matter if you were the star player, the manager or the newest player to get called up to the national team, everyone was valued; an refreshing sight to see in modern sports but also in the world. The team also talked to us about the pride which came with putting on the England shirt and the whole feeling of representing your nation, for a cause that you love like football.



Many of the players that we were able to talk to mentioned their struggles and hardships in life but also in football with blind football not having enough recognition and funding for them to get into it early on. However, they also mentioned that when they put the national shirt on, all of their struggles were forgotten and instead felt honoured and proud to be able to represent their country (which for all was a childhood dream). This mentality was a true inspiration for us to see that despite all of the pain they have encountered in their life, they can keep fighting and bounce back from them and to also use it as motivation.

After our conversation with the team we realised how vital trust and a positive team spirit is to a national team but also to any school sports team. The team inspired us to strive for greatness in sports and confirmed that hard work and dedication can lead to success. When people talk about football or any sport in fact, we often forget about

the others who dedicate them to the sport but with disabilities of some sort. However, with the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics not long away, we are in a great position to change that. We will for sure give these tremendous athletes, who overcome hurdles to achieve greatness, the attention they deserve by going to events and we hope many more will as part of the BST community in 2020.

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