

LEWIS GRAY INVITED TO OLYMPICS ASSESSMENT

Lewis Gray, 14, from Benenden, and Yolanda King, 14, from Hastings, both members of the Weald Table Tennis Club based at Angley School, Cranbrook, have been invited to the British Olympics TTA observation/assessment camp at Lilleshall National Sports Centre Shropshire from 5th to 14th August.

Lewis, a pupil of Angley School, and Yolanda, who has just left Claremont School, St Leonards, have been warned that it is going to be a very tough and important camp, and have been given an intensive physical fitness programme to prepare for it.

Peter Charters, ETTA Vice Chairman for Selection explained, "Britain has had three levels of Olympic table tennis squads: the Development Squad of players who have the potential to reach medal winning standard by 2012, the Talent Identification Squad of players who have the potential to participate in the 2012 Olympics, and the Observation Squad, of which Lewis and Yolanda are English members, who have the potential to get into the Talent ID squad. However, we have now decided to drop the Observation Squads, but increase the number of players in the Development and Talent ID squads, and we are going to use this camp to decide who will be in these squads."

Meanwhile Lewis has gained some life experience, if not improving his play, through training with the English squad in Saudi Arabia recently. He considered that, "The people were nice but the table tennis standard was not very strong. It was very hot and the floor was slippery on the first day."

However, "It was a good experience to learn about a different culture. The men wore white cloaks and the women wore black. Some of the women had their faces covered. All the cars were big and expensive. Only whole families together could go to the supermarkets.

My friend Ping Ho liked the food which was mostly chicken and camel, but I didn't because I'm vegetarian. The only things I could eat were rice, pita bread, and chips in the evening. There was also some fruit, but only in the hotel. "