

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Use:** Tuesday, 8 September 2009

# **Fletcher and O'Donnell make Deaflympic Games progress**

Great Britain's Lewis Fletcher and Darren O'Donnell reached the men's singles quarter-finals and men's doubles semi-finals during Tuesday's third day of tennis competition at the 21st Summer Deaflympics in Taipei.

After beating Austrian second seed Daniel Erlbacher in three sets on Monday, Wiltshire-based Fletcher continued his fine start to his first Deaflympics with a 6-2, 6-1 win over the Slovak Republic's Peter Karlik.

O'Donnell impressed in his second round match against Germany's Gunnar Kett and was leading 6-3, 2-6, 3-1 when the German, who was a Deaflympic men's singles bronze medallist in 2001 in Rome, was forced to retire.

Fletcher plays Germany's Hans Toedter in Wednesday's quarter-finals, while O'Donnell has a difficult match against Frenchman Mikael Laurent, the gold medallist from the Rome Deaflympics.

"I'm delighted to get through my second match here. Once again I prepared well and played a positive match," said Fletcher. "I'm really looking forward to my doubles and my next round."

Manchester-based O'Donnell, one of five LTA licensed coaches in the Great Britain squad, was equally delighted with his progress. "I'm really pleased to get through my match today, I started very well again, taking the first set. I got a little bit nervous in the second set, but dug in deep to turn the match around in the third set by winning a long first game. I'm really looking forward to getting out there again in my next round. I feel more and more confident each day."

As a partnership, Fletcher and O'Donnell are at least guaranteed to play-off for a bronze medal in the men's doubles after coming from a set down to beat Japan's Reiki Kajishita and Testsuya Matsushita 3-6, 6-1, 6-3 in their quarter-final. The British fourth seeds will now play unseeded Australians Glen Flindell and Stephen Swann in the semi-finals later in the week. O'Donnell is bidding for a second successive men's doubles Deaflympic Games medal after partnering fellow Briton Anthony Sinclair to bronze four years ago in Melbourne.

However, there was disappointment on Tuesday for Sinclair in the men's singles as the silver medallist from the Melbourne Deaflympics and third seed bowed out against Japan's Kajashita 6-3, 4-6, 0-6 to Japan's Reiki Kajishita. Sinclair continues his quest for another Deaflympic medal on Wednesday when he partners fellow Briton Catherine Graham for their mixed doubles quarter-final against Chinese Taipei's Yu-Chen Lai and Ta-Li Kao.

With all four British representatives playing men's singles quarter-finals on Tuesday, Daniel Tunstall also saw his bid for a third successive medal in four Deaflympic Games appearances come to an end as he went out of the men's singles and men's doubles.

After a 2-6, 2-6 loss to Hungarian top seed Gabor Mathe, Tunstall, a mixed doubles bronze medallist at the last two Deaflympics, partnered 19-year-old Games debutant Jamie King for their second round men's doubles contest against Austrian their seed Daniel Erlbacher and Mario Kargl. Despite a fine effort, Tunstall and King eventually lost out 3-6, 5-7.

"Both Lewis and Darren put in another good performance today, it was great to see them back up their wins from yesterday," said Team Manager and Men's National Coach Roger Jones. "Dan had a very tough match against the top seed, but he put in a great performance, his opponent was just too good on the day. It's obviously disappointing for Anthony not to get through, but his Japanese opponent played a good match"

Wednesday's schedule in Taipei sees 26-year-old six-time National champion Graham in action twice as she faces Chinese Taipei's Chiu-Mei Ho in the quarter-finals of the women's singles before partnering Sinclair in the quarter-finals of the mixed doubles.

"It's great to see everything come together for the players here in Taipei," said Women's National Coach Lucie Ahl. "They really have worked hard over the last 12 months. It's not only exciting for them but also for other deaf players to be inspired by what they are achieving. I've really enjoyed working along side everyone, the experience we all bring has really helped the players and also created a great team spirit and atmosphere," added the former British women's No1. "The support from the Tennis Foundation has been brilliant, it wouldn't have been possible without them."

Four of Britain's six tennis medallists from the 2005 Melbourne Deaflympics are among the squad of six players selected to represent Great Britain in Taipei.

Tennis is one of 17 sports being contested at the 21st Deaflympics in Taipei and one of eight sports in which Great Britain is represented.

More than 4200 athletes and officials from 85 countries will participate in the 21st Deaflympics Summer Games.

The Games run from 5 – 15 September, with the tennis competition taking place over eight days, until Sunday, 13 September at the Rainbow Riverside Sports Park in Taipei .

The Summer and Winter Deaflympic Games are the pinnacle in international competition for elite deaf athletes. Under International Deaflympic Committee criteria, to be eligible to compete athletes must have a proven hearing loss of 55dB in the best ear.

**- ENDS -**