

PRESS RELEASE

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Graham and Sinclair make mixed doubles semis at Taipei Deaflympics

British tennis players are guaranteed a second chance to play off for a medal at the 21st Summer Deaflympics in Taipei after Catherine Graham and Anthony Sinclair reached their second successive Deaflympic mixed doubles semi-final on Wednesday.

Second seeds Graham and Sinclair beat Chinese Taipei's Ta-Li Kao and Yu Chen Lai 6-4, 6-2 in their quarter-final and go on to play Japan's Yachiyo Abe and Tetsuya Matsushita on Thursday, when British players will be involved in two semi-finals.

Lewis Fletcher and Darren O'Donnell will also contest the semi-finals in the men's doubles, the fourth seeds taking on unseeded Australians Glen Flindell and Stephen Swann.

Earlier in the day on Wednesday, British interest in the singles events came to an end in the quarter-finals as Graham bowed out of the women's singles and Fletcher and O'Donnell both exited the men's singles.

Graham had been hoping to avenge a defeat by Chinese Taipei's Chiu Mei Ho at the 2007 Maere Cup, the Fed Cup of deaf tennis, but with home support Ho again had the upper hand as she progressed to the semi-finals 6-2, 6-3.

"I started the match really well, playing aggressively, and I should have taken advantage of the points I had to lead 3-1, but she then started to play much better," said Graham. "Winning the mixed made up for some of the disappointment and I'm looking forward to getting back out there tomorrow."

In the men's singles, Fletcher's fine Deaflympic Games debut was stalled by Germany's Hans Toedter, who reached the last four after a 6-3, 6-1 victory.

Meanwhile, O'Donnell had a difficult task against 2001 Rome Deaflympic Games champion Mikael Laurent, the Frenchman earning a 6-0, 6-1 victory.

"I'm obviously very disappointed that I lost, I didn't serve as well as I have been and that let my opponent back into the match," said Fletcher. "My main focus is now on my doubles semi-final with Darren tomorrow."

After his singles loss, O'Donnell said: "My opponent was just too good today, I tried to be aggressive and play my game but it wasn't good enough. I now need to keep my focus ready for the doubles."

"It's been a tough day today, but we must still stay confident, we have a great chance of going further in the men's doubles and the mixed doubles," said Team Manager Roger Jones. "There is obviously a lot of disappointment to be out of the singles, but all the players have worked hard and played well, representing their country with pride."

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.

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