

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Use: Thursday, 10 September 2009

Sinclair and Graham into Deaflympics final

Great Britain's Anthony Sinclair and Catherine Graham will play for gold or silver in Saturday's mixed doubles final at the 21st Summer Deaflympics after a convincing victory in their semi-final on Thursday in Taipei.

Meanwhile, fellow Britons Lewis Fletcher and Darren O'Donnell will play for bronze on Saturday after missing out in their men's doubles semi-final.

After fourth place finishes in the mixed doubles at the last two Deaflympics, in Rome in 2001 and Melbourne in 2005, Sinclair, 25, from County Down and Wiltshire-based 26-year-old Graham made sure of a medal this time with a super performance to beat Japan's Tetsuya Matsushita and Yachiyo Abe 6-1, 6-1.

The British second seeds will play Italian top seeds Gianpaolo Damiani and Barbara Oddone in the final after the five-time gold medallists beat their German opponents 11-9 in the third and final set of their semi-final. Damiani and Oddone are so far unbeaten in the mixed doubles at any Deaflympics since making their Games debuts in the event in Christchurch, New Zealand in 1989.

Both Sinclair and Graham are now assured of medals from their second Deaflympics after Sinclair won silver in the men's singles and bronze in the men's doubles in Melbourne four years ago, while Graham won bronze in the women's doubles.

"Anthony and Catherine played a fantastic match - they were like a different pair today," said jubilant Team Manager Roger Jones. "Both played positively from the start, not allowing their opponents into the match at all, it was great to watch. If they play and perform like that in the final they have a great chance of gold!"

Graham said: "We are delighted to have got through to the final. Our preparation and focus today was very good. We both were really fired up and determined to win."

"If we can keep this focus and be as positive as we were today we have certainly got a great chance in the final," said Sinclair

In Thursday's men's doubles semi-finals, fourth seeds Fletcher and O'Donnell were beaten 6-2, 7-5 by Australian duo Glen Flindell and Stephen Swann. The British pairing will now face Austrians Daniel Erlbacher and Mario Kargl in the bronze medal play-off. Fletcher beat second seed Erlbacher in Monday's first round of the men's singles.

"Lewis and Darren had a lot of chances but were just unable to convert the break points they created," said Jones. "All credit to the Australians, who played a good match. Lewis and Darren now need to stay positive and focused on beating the Austrians for a bronze medal."

"We are obviously disappointed as we had a lot of chances, but we know with the tennis we are capable of playing we can beat the Austrians and get the bronze," said Fletcher.

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 -